

The Quantum Flock of Altus

Written by

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**SUPER: SOMEWHERE IN OKLAHOMA...**

**INT. CHICKEN BARN - DAY**

CRUNCH. SCOOP. SPRINKLE. STEP. CRUNCH some more.

A vast, dilapidated barn. Little ventilation - or wing room.

Dirty farm boots shuffle through a surging sea of CHICKENS.  
A hand throws bird seed - left, right. Left again.

Famished birds swarm wherever morsels land. It's a battle of survival. Whoever can get to food first.

ZEKE (17, dirty blond, skinny - plaid shirt) wades in deeper still. Swinging his SEED PAIL, he whistles to feathered "friends" as he goes.

ZEKE

Hey Red, Feedin' Time! No hide n'  
seek. Where'd ya go?

He spots a RED FEATHERED CHICKEN a few feet away. Zeke grins so wide it nearly splits his freckled face.

ZEKE

Ah-ha! You stick out like a Step  
Child. Don't ever try ta hide from me  
in this here barn!

He tosses a heaping handful "Red's" way, continues on.

A BABY CHICK scampers under Zeke's descending boot! Zeke sees it - hops to course correct.

Trips over a WATER BUCKET - and falls flat on his face.

ZEKE

Ooooof!

Birds surge over Zeke like he's a speed bump. He spits out feathers, sits up.

ZEKE

This place ain't got no manners.  
Tramplin' on good folks like that's  
wrong!

PEEP! Inches away, the baby chick trembles against the stampede. Zeke upends the water bucket. Scoops the baby into a gentle palm. Placing the fluff ball on top, he pats its tiny yellow head.

ZEKE

You stay right there, little feller.  
That'll give you a top notch view of  
this shithole. Make you King of the  
Hill for now.

Zeke starts to stand - realizes: His bucket of seed's MIA!

Squinting past feathers, he spots the metal container - on  
its side a few feet away.

Zeke belly crawls towards it. Bats chickens from his face.

ZEKE

Move your tail feathers, KFC! Human  
here's got right of way.

At the overturned seed bucket: Chaos. Every chicken and  
their nephew digs a beak into that bonus meal.

Zeke pulls chickens back. Feathers fly. He blasts a classic  
two finger WHISTLE. Birds scatter.

Leaving the now *almost* empty bucket alone.

Except for... a BLACK FEATHERED CHICKEN. A touch of red  
sprinkled across its brow.

Strangely still, it stands beside the bucket, stares at  
Zeke. The teen rears back. THIS is weird. He flaps fingers  
at the bird.

ZEKE

Shoo!

Dark Bird doesn't budge. Zeke grins again as a tactic comes  
to mind. Scooping seed from the ground, he chucks it to Dark  
Bird's left.

ZEKE

Go n' git it, Drumstick!

Dark Bird cocks its head at Zeke. Fails to take the bait.

Zeke inches a hand toward the pail. Slloooooowwwwly. No  
sudden moves. Until -

CAL (O.S.)

Zeke!!! You gonna fart around in that  
chicken coop *all day*?!?

Zeke startles. Jumps. Fingers almost graze the pail.

A DOOR creaks open at the far end of the barn. A wedge of light intrudes. As does a face:

CAL (17, red neck - even redder hair) peeks in, annoyed.

CAL  
Zeke, where'd ya disappear to? You  
git Raptured after slopping hogs?

Zeke sticks his head up from the swarm of chickens.

ZEKE  
Cal - over here!

Cal rubs his eyes. Not the brightest bulb in the county, it takes awhile for Zeke's words to sink in.

CAL  
You know you're supposed ta stand  
when feeding stock? Not do the  
breaststroke in tha dirt!

Zeke staggers to his feet, dusts himself off.

ZEKE  
I fell, OK? Don't tell old man  
Sumpter. We clear?

CAL  
'Bout Sumpter. He says he wants you  
to go inta town and buy some  
fertilizer. So chop chop! Stop  
playin' n' do your job!

Cal retracts his head, disappears. Left alone (except for hundreds of chickens), Zeke rolls his eyes - mocks Cal.

ZEKE  
(falsetto)  
Hi, I'm Cal Brewster! I had to repeat  
10th grade, but I know how to shine  
Old Man Sumpter's shoes real good!

Zeke grabs the pail's handle. The bucket rolls to one side.

Revealing: Weird SCRATCHES in the dirt under it. Zeke  
squints. Deliberate. Not the random kind.

And that dark feathered bird? Still standing. Staring.

Zeke side-eyes the fowl. He fumbles in his jacket for his  
phone; an ancient Samsung Note.

It's covered with dust from the barn. Zeke blows it off.

And scrolls through apps. Manga comics. Lists of colleges.

Reaches his camera, then: CLICK! Zeke snaps a picture of those scribbles in the dirt.

He lifts the seed pail. Chickens swarm into the empty space.

Zeke locks eyes with the Dark Feathered Bird.

ZEKE

Stare all ya want, McNugget. You still ain't my type.

The bird looks oddly pissed. Zeke salutes it, ambles away.

ZEKE

Go peck something. I'm out!

#### **EXT. FARM - EVENING**

Zeke sits on a TRACTOR. Surfs an image reverse search site on his cell.

Not only is the signal weak, but the results pull up nothing. After several attempts, Zeke sighs.

Switching to an art app, he doodles a tree nearby.

Below him: Cal rests against a muddy tire - drinks beer. Glances up at Zeke, weary.

CAL

You sketchin' flowers again? Cain't you draw anything else?

ZEKE

Not *flowers*, Calvin. A whole tree.

CAL

(beat)

It's CAL. Not "Calvin". Git it straight! An'... no offense, but I'm startin' to think you're the "artsy" type.

Zeke ignores him. Keeps doodling.

ZEKE

So? What if I am?

CAL

So? You darned well know what I mean!

Cal leers, makes over-the-top "gay" gestures. Zeke kicks his hand with a boot.

ZEKE

Even if I was.... None a' your business. Just fuckin' stop.

CAL

Stop what?!? You're the one messin' around in the barn. If you're gonna dick around at work, who says you don't dick around other places, too?

Zeke glares daggers at Cal. Spits. The gob hits the ground, inches from Cal's feet.

ZEKE

I wasn't dickin' around. Like I said - I fell!

CAL

(huffs)

You think I left, but you're the one who's fooled. I saw you takin' pictures of the birds. You one a' those infiltrator animal activists or vegan tweaks?

ZEKE

An "infiltrator?" I've lived in Altus all my life!

Scrolling through pictures, Zeke finds the photo he took in the barn. Dangles the cell before Cal's face.

ZEKE

I took pictures 'cause a THIS!

Cal squints at the photo. Neurons spark slowly in his brain as he reads:

CAL

E - Hv-

ZEKE

(beat)

You sure... that's a V?

He hops down, sits beside Cal in the weeds.

ZEKE

Well, gosh be darned. I thought that was a U, but you're right!

CAL  
Of COURSE I'm right!  
(beat)  
Sometimes.

ZEKE  
Looks like an equation, don't it?

CAL  
Math stuff in a barn? You pulling  
some kinda Youtubes hoax?

Zeke zooms the picture in.

ZEKE  
Nah. There was a bird I never saw  
before. Seemed to be guarding it.

CAL  
"Guarding" an equation? How's THAT  
work? N' why?

ZEKE  
Beats me. But...  
(reads more)  
"HC". What's that squiggle there?

He points to a symbol, which looks like a dousing rod.

ZEKE  
An upside down Y. Maybe?

He turns off his phone.

ZEKE  
Maybe it's just claw marks. And our  
imagination's makin' stuff up.

Cal giggles. Slurps down brew.

CAL  
You're the one with imagination. I  
just see stupid ass chicken scratch.  
Who's wrong here?

An awkward pause. The two stare out at the setting sun.  
Suddenly: a change in tone -

CAL  
Zeke?

ZEKE  
That's my name. Don't wear it out!

CAL  
You've lived here all your life. Me  
too. You... ever wanna leave?

ZEKE  
Whenever *don't* I?

CAL  
If you did - what would you do?

Zeke shrugs - the hopeless kind.

ZEKE  
Go to college somewhere, I suppose?

CAL  
Mr. Brainac moving up in this world!  
What would you major in?

ZEKE  
I'm thinkin' - maybe Anime painting?  
You know, like the Japanese.

CAL  
No shit?!? Drawing Pokemon n' stuff?

ZEKE  
Kinda. Or Ghosts in the Shell.

CAL  
"Ghosts in the"... excuse me?

ZEKE  
(groans)  
Never mind. Maybe I'll double major -  
get my CPA. That's what my folks  
really want.

CAL  
That sounds.... cool.

The sun's setting low by now. Zeke's spirits ebb, too.

ZEKE  
Whatever gits me outta here. I just  
want a *free range* life!

He glances towards the chicken barn, which looms like a  
black monolith in the distance.

ZEKE  
But for reals. Not like what those  
guys got.



**INT. CHICKEN BARN - MORNING**

CREAAAAAAK. The door slivers open. Holding a newly filled seed pail, Zeke slips inside.

And starts doling out seeds again.

Learning from his "oopsie" last time, he's a bit more careful where he steps.

Passing Red Feathers, he waves.

Halfway across the barn, Zeke spots Dark Feathers next.

This time, the bird's not alone.

Six chickens line up like feathered soldiers in front of the bird. Dark Feathers picks up pebbles in her beak, drops a stone in front of each.

Zeke stops and watches the procession - intrigued.

Dark Feathers moves the stones around, a simulated orbit. Definitely NOT random moves.

She reaches Chicken #5. Noticing Zeke spying, she stops.

Dark Feather flutters, stalks off to a corner in a huff. Huddles beside a wall with LOOSE BOARDS.

The chickens in the line don't budge. They seem to be waiting for something. An order?

Zeke fumbles for his cell to take a picture....

Dark Feathers SQUAWKS. The other chickens grab their pebbles. Break formation and melt into the feathered mob.

ZEKE  
(whispers)  
Something 'bout this... ain't right.

The teen slouches towards the exit. Recoils from a huge PILE OF CHICKEN POOP near the door.

ZEKE  
Ew.

**EXT. FARM - AFTERNOON**

Near one of the barn's exterior walls.

Cal shoots a beaten up BASKETBALL at an even sorrier looking makeshift HOOP.

Zeke sits on the "sidelines", surfs his phone. He's searching for that "equation" image on Google again.

Cal shoots. The ball circles the hoop rim. Tumbles off.

CAL

Dag. Didja see, Zeke? I came THAT close!

ZEKE

I thought you were into football.

CAL

Tried my best. Turns out, I suck. And since when is that *your* business, Mr. Artsy-Type?

ZEKE

I'm just sayin' - basketball's more... urban.

Cal retrieves the ball. Dribbles once or twice. Aims again.

CAL

Well, not for nuttin', but since we wuz talkin' about college plans yesterday, I started thinkin'...

ZEKE

That's a first, huh?

CAL

I mean, I ain't no smart whiz like you, but maybe if I got a sports scholarship, that might get me a ticket outta here.

Zeke's nose is buried in Google. Potential matches to the equation light the screen. He perks up.

ZEKE

(distracted, to Cal)

A ticket to... where?

CAL

Any place, really. But escaping to New York might be cool.

Zeke looks up, startled.

ZEKE

New York City? That far?

CAL

If'n I make it, wanna be my roommate?  
I hear they got good art schools.  
Everyone *needs* roommates out there,  
so I hear. So if I go, better you  
than some stranger. They might be  
inta drugs, all sorts of city stuff.

A slow smile spreads across Zeke's face.

ZEKE

Well, if'n you DO git that  
scholarship. AND I go to art school-

CAL

Or get that CPA your folks want...

ZEKE

Either way, it's a deal.

Cal takes aim. Shoots again - scores. And fist-pumps.

CAL

Booyah!

Zeke crows, too - but for a very DIFFERENT reason. He's just  
found an exact match to the equation!

He jumps up, runs to Cal. Points at the screen.

ZEKE

Holy moley. Cal, look!

Cal squints at the cell, reads slowly.

CAL

"Plank Energy Frequency Relation..."  
(to Zeke)  
"Relationship" with Plants? That's a  
sin. Gross!

ZEKE

No. That's "Planck", not plants. This  
is quantum physics stuff!

He looks up at Cal, eyes wide.

ZEKE

Dark Feather's writing quantum  
physics? Who knew?

CAL

Dark WHO?!? What you babblin' about?

ZEKE

That chicken who was actin' strange!  
I saw her again today. She had a  
whole buncha other chickens in  
formation. It was as if she was  
tryin' to teach 'em something. And  
when they saw I was watchin' - she  
called 'em out, and they ran away!

Cal hugs the basketball to his chest.

CAL

Speakin' a drugs... You on something  
you wanna tell me about, Zeke?

**INT. CHICKEN BARN - LATE AFTERNOON**

Cal and Zeke tiptoe inside. FLASHLIGHTS play over the backs  
of birds. Mostly asleep. Zeke puts a finger to his lips.

ZEKE

Shhh. No need to rile 'em up.

He sweeps the flashlight beam around the room.

ZEKE

Wish I knew where Dark Feather was.  
Of all the little clucks in here,  
that one's the hardest to see.

He inches over to the corner with the loose boards. And  
finds lines of seeds, arranged strangely like a circuit  
board! He yanks Cal over, points.

ZEKE

When Dark Feather saw me, she ran  
over here. Maybe she's hidin'  
something she don't want humans to  
know about?

CAL

Or maybe you're outta your cotton  
pickin' mind, Zeke!

Zeke leans closer - spots intricate SCRATCHES in the wood.  
Equations. Diagrams. Primitive drawings of chickens, too!

ZEKE

Holy Planet of the Chickens. What's  
this here?

Hands shaking, he whips out his cell, snaps pictures. Then darts from the barn, a baffled Cal in tow.

**EXT. FARM PORCH - EVENING**

Zeke sits on peeling steps; his cell in his left hand. Cal's battered smart phone in his right.

He multi-tasks frantically, searches for what those new equations are.

Zeke almost drops Cal's cell. The teen freaks.

CAL  
Don't go breakin' my tech, HG Wells!  
They don't give replacements. And  
I've got a contract with Cricket for  
a year.

ZEKE  
I got this. Promise.  
(squints)  
You've gotta be shittin' me.

CAL  
I wouldn't -

ZEKE  
No, not you. This!

Zeke points at his screen: It's an image match to the equations on "Dark Feather"'s board.

The title: Quantum Computing Fundamentals.

On the other phone - another match: "Q-Bits Entanglement".

Zeke chokes. Reads in awe:

ZEKE  
They're... building a quantum  
computer? No!

CAL  
Chickens can't build anything. We  
even gotta help with nests, too!

Cal snatches his phone out of Zeke's hand. Compares the pictures taken in the barn to equations onscreen.

CAL  
This has gotta be a coincidence.

ZEKE

Not necessarily. You know how they said in class a buncha monkeys could type Shakespeare?

CAL

Only if you give 'em lots of time.

ZEKE

Well, what's harder, Shakespeare or quantum computers?

CAL

Don't ask me. I took Shop!

Zeke squints, reads further.

ZEKE

Says here, quantum computers work off "discrete bits" - a bunch of separate dumb points, which form a big, loose brain. So - maybe chickens are dumb... *individually*, but can each be their own Q-Bit?

CAL

Some friendly advice, Zeke: you gotta lay off the Japanese cartoons!

ZEKE

But there's at least five hundred a' them in there. It's not like they've got much else to do.

(gasps)

Maybe THAT'S why they call it "Quark"!

CAL

(rolls his eyes)

That's "quack". And those are chickens, not ducks. I thought I was the stupid one...

The teens lapse into silence, contemplate the weirdness of it all.

CAL

Quantum computers: they're powerful?

ZEKE

Way more than a John Deere. And better than what NASA's got.

CAL  
If they're building one in there...  
what for?

ZEKE  
What would YOU do if you were a  
chicken. With that kinda power, I  
mean?

CAL  
(whispers)  
I'd escape. And maybe - take over the  
world?

Zeke thinks it over. Gulps.

ZEKE  
When I left yesterday, I saw a huge  
pile of poop by the door. They  
normally go everywhere, unless...

CAL  
(beat)  
Explosives?

CAL AND ZEKE  
No!

In horror, the two jump to their feet. And run like hell  
towards the barn door.

CAL  
Old Man Sumpter's gonna kill us!

ZEKE  
If those birds don't do it first!

#### **INT. CHICKEN BARN - NIGHT**

The teens throw open the door. Moonlight floods in...

And bathes the sight of Dark Feather, standing before  
several HUNDRED chickens now!

As the humans enter, all the chickens turn in unison -  
eerily stare at the boys as one.

Dark Feather bobs her head towards the teens. Squawks.

At the command, fifty chickens dive bomb the boys!

Zeke and Cal fend the feathered assailants off. Screaming,  
the boys turn tail.. and run.

**EXT. FARM - NIGHT**

Out the door. The teens sprint down a gravel path. Just in time. Because seconds later...

BOOOOOOM! An explosion rips the barn doors clean off! Zeke turns, mesmerized by the flames.

ZEKE

That chicken bomb actually worked!

As the two boys gawk, an ARMY of chickens march calmly from the barn. Dark Feather leads the swarm.

The baby chick Zeke rescued before bounces at her side.

Zeke spots "Red Feather" in the mob. He waves reflexively. The bird chirps back. Continues on.

Dark Feather locks eyes with Zeke, hesitates. It's a moment of profound understanding. The teen looks her over, nods.

ZEKE

I really can't blame you. Both of us want out, too.

The outnumbered humans step out of the way, let the swarm pass. Zeke and Cal turn to each other solemnly.

ZEKE

I dunno 'bout the "whole world", but they're definitely gonna take over town.

CAL

Time to head to NYC?

Zeke grins - so wide it nearly splits his face.

ZEKE

Sounds like a plan to me. Let's go!

The chickens march off, down the road. Dark Feather leads the way.

FINAL FADE OUT: