

# CUCKOO TOOTH

By LH Trevail

*Darkness.*

*A small light.*

*Feathers fall.*

**Narrator.** Once upon a time there was a girl without feathers...

*Music.*

*Light begins to reveal a Girl.*

**Narrator.** ...and she was neither strong nor weak, neither good nor bad, neither right nor wrong...

*The light reveals a pram with the Girl. Both have their backs to the audience.*

**Narrator.** ...and she bore a child by a man she would never see again, a man who was neither strong nor weak, neither good nor bad, neither right nor wrong... And the child was without a father, and without feathers also.

*The light has by now fully illuminated the Girl and pram.*

**Narrator.** But the child was stolen...and...replaced...

*The Girl slowly moves the pram so that you can see her hollow tear stained eyes and the pram containing an enormous egg. Very slowly a crack appears along the surface of the egg. The gap widens. We see membrane and something trying to push through. It breaks through. It is almost a baby's hand...*

*Lights fade.*

*In the darkness we hear a strange sound. Partly the cry of a baby, and partly the cry of a bird.*

*Lights up on a different part of the stage. A table in a fast food restaurant. The Bird-Baby (toddler) is sitting in a high chair. It is mostly human, but has a beak (with teeth) and funny stunted wing-like arms. The Girl enters the pool of light with two fast food meal bags: one for herself and a kids meal for the Bird. When he sees her he*

*focuses all his attention on her and opens his beak wide. Makes a horrid demanding noise.*

*She looks around, apologetic and embarrassed. After some work she manages to get him to be quiet. Stuffs a burger in the beak and leaves the chips for him to peck at. She opens her own meal. She can hardly bear to watch him eat. She turns her attention to the toy that comes with the meal. Opens the plastic wrapper. It is something that must be assembled.*

*She tries to build it. Sometimes the Bird-Baby watches, but mostly it is trying to find something more interesting, probably the Girl's food, which she gives him. Sometimes she tries to draw his attention to the toy, and sometimes she ignores him. The music does a lot of work.*

*She finishes building it at last. She does not understand what it does. The Bird-Baby is not interested. She puts the toy down on the table. A part of it flies into the air as it is supposed to do. Immediately the child gives this his full attention. The Girl is startled by the sudden movement of the toy. She looks around embarrassed and apologetic. The child follows the path of the flying toy. She notices this by accident and reacts.*

*The light fades.*

*And up again. The Bird (a bit older) is playing. Throwing things. It scratches itself. Throws things. The Girl is watching.*

**Girl.** Archie, no.

*The child ignores her.*

*The Girl goes down to his level. Looks at him straight.*

**Girl.** Archie. No.

**Bird-Baby (Archie).** Archie. No.

*The Girl looks astonished.*

**Archie.** Archie. No. Archie. No. Archie. No.

*She picks him up and holds him close to her.*

**Girl.** Archie...

**Archie.** Archie...Archie...Archie...

*Light fades.*

**Narrator.** Archie grew and learned and grew and learned. But he did not understand.

**Archie.** Archie...Archie...Archie...Are you a good boy, Archie?

*Faint light gradually up on Archie (older again), who is standing very still, talking to himself. You can see his throat moving.*

**Archie.** Are you a good boy? Are you? Yes you are a good boy. Are you my boy? Are you my beautiful boy? Talk to me. Talk to me Archie.

*Archie scratches himself.*

*Light fades.*

**Narrator.** Archie grew and learned and grew and learned and grew...feathers.

*Small light. Feathers falling.*

**Narrator.** The Girl was ashamed.

*Light reveals the source of the feathers. The Girl is shaving Archie, and the feathers are falling.*

**Archie.** You alright, Archie? You alright? I'm going shopping. I'll be back in a minute. Little hot feet you got, Archie. Are you my beautiful Archie? Are you?

*Lights begin to fade.*

**Archie.** You're getting big now aren't you Archie. Aren't you getting big.

*Crossfade to a similar scene. A hand is shaving a head, but this time it is Archie's own hand and Archie is fully grown. An oddly shaped, but man-sized, male. He has a mirror. Every so often he pecks at his reflection.*

*The Girl enters with a tray of food. Archie turns to her with his full attention, opens his mouth and makes his demanding noise.*

**Narrator.** Every day, every week, month, year, she was reminded that he was not her son. Until one day she left for the supermarket, and instead took an aeroplane...

*She flies the food into Archie's open mouth. Abyssal aeroplane sound. Lights are dragged in with it.*

**Narrator.** ...as far as she could go. (Which meant she ended up in almost the same place...

*Lights up again on the same room. Different coloured lights. Blue. Electric buzzing. Some things have changed.*

**Narrator.** ...but not quite...)

*The armchair at the back of the room has its back to the audience. We see a hand appear, then disappear. It is sewing, so this movement is repeated. The mother is standing in a snow-covered coat, looking at this.*

**Narrator.** Once upon a time there was a girl without feathers...and she was neither strong nor weak, neither good nor bad, neither right nor wrong...

*The armchair turns around to reveal a man about the same age as Archie. He is sewing feathers into shuttlecocks. Feather Boas, quill pens, feather pillows are all around him.*

*He is also narrating the story.*

*He turns the chair around.*

**Narrator.** ...and she bore a child...

*The Girl runs to him and throws her arms around him. They embrace.*

**Narrator.** I am happy, mother. Are you happy?

*The Girl cannot answer. She weeps.*

*Feathered shadows flicker at the boundaries of our field of vision.*

**Narrator.** They are not monsters, mother. They treat me well and I make my living. They are industrious but have no fingers...

*The Girl is still weeping.*

**Narrator.** You should not be weeping. You have been rewarded.

**Girl.** Rewarded?

**Narrator.** Look closely at your skin, mother. And at your reflection. You have not lost a day. You have not altered since the day I was taken from you.

**Girl.** Come home.

**Narrator.** I will not.

*They look at each-other.*

**Narrator.** Your reward would be lost. You would die. Stay.

**Girl.** I will not. It's time to feed Archie.

*Darkness.*

**Archie.** I'm just going shopping. I'll be back in a minute. I'm just going shopping. I'll be back in a minute.

*Lights up. Archie is sitting, staring at the empty plate.*

*The Girl walks in. Archie looks at her.*

**Narrator.** He was not her son. She was not his mother.

**Archie.** I am your beautiful Archie.

*They move closer.*

**Narrator.** They are not monsters.

*Lights fade.*

*We hear the cry of a baby. Slightly bird like.*

*Lights up on a tableaux. Archie and the Girl side by side. They are holding a very young baby between them.*

**Narrator.** ...and she was neither strong nor weak, neither good nor bad, neither right nor wrong. And she bore a child to a man she would never see again...

*The Girl crumbles away...*

*...leaving Archie with the baby, which is crying...*

**Narrator.** ...a man who was neither strong nor weak,  
neither good nor bad, neither right nor wrong. And they  
were without a mother... And without feathers also.

*Lights fade.*

*Music ends.*

[Note: For the dream in which the Shuttlecock Maker first appeared, visit  
the sleeping brain of Ellan Parry.]