Rami’s heart was beating faster than her ears could register. Where was he? Could she even call it a gender?

*No,* it responded. *I do not deserve such grace.*

**\*\*\***

Rami swore. It seemed like only a few minutes ago that her car had half-full of fuel. *Fleeced again,* she sighed. Swinging open the door, she stepped out into the wilderness. It was a weird environment, the woods, particularly at night. A cool breeze blew across her, causing her to shiver, clinging to whatever warmth her plaid skirt would allow.

The Dolphin torch that had served her so loyally over the past few years was flickering. As little as she could see with the two dark pits that accompanied her face, she had always been able to sense things during a conversation. All it meant however, was that nobody could pull the wool over her eyes.

Sheep had truly hit the fan.

**\*\*\***

An eerie shout echoed across the bush. Rami woke with a start, wondering where she was. Her eyes soon adjusted, dimly revealing the scene that lay before her. Her torch had been taken apart carefully, and now sat on a rock a few metres away with four AA batteries laid across its handle.

She looked down, the moonlight revealing her torn school uniform. Her senses came back on, and a sharp pain raced up her leg. She hesitantly looked towards it, shifting her body in such a manner as to make sure no more damage was caused. A long line had raced up her calf, starting from her trotter and stretching as far as her knobbly knee.

It was bandaged with what seemed to be plant material, and only tiny traces of blood could be found. A small note was attached to her index finger.

*‘Hide and Seek. You’re hiding.* *-10TKL*’ she read.

The word ‘hiding’ had been scratched in manically, and already an aura of panic surrounded Rami.

She had to move.

\*\*\*

Tenty had to stop this awful business. As much as his instincts told him to stalk and kill the Lamb, he couldn’t. Why? Why of all possible times of falsely shepherding poor souls to their doom did he face regret now?

The Elders would be watching. He had to act quickly, or face his own demise. There was a soft crushing of footsteps coming from behind him. He climbed up a tree before he was fully seen.

\*\*\*

Ramikin’s heart leapt slightly. She must’ve been seeing things. Surely it would’ve just been a branch. Yet she could not shake the feeling of someone watching her.

*Stage Two of Paranoia,* she recited from the days she spent learning about humans. Stage One would be the isolation, the shaking of fingers. She’d already passed that. Stage Three would be hearing sounds that never were spoken and seeing things that never existed as if they were always there. Stage Four would be an all-out panic as if being pursued.

Stage Five would mean mental trauma.

She had to calm down and remember the three things that would always make a human scared. Vision, hearing and imagination. Reduced visibility would be a pain if she hadn’t grabbed a torch, but she could barely see with black eyes. Hearing was always a large problem with sheep, having already defined hearing at the age of 1.

Imagination was always a question.

Ramikin stomped desperately through the wilderness, in hope of finding a path soon.

\*\*\*

Tenty slapped himself. Why had he passed up such an easy opportunity? The Elders would certainly notice him now. He’d never really been cut out for stealth anyway. At least for now he was momentarily free from all the restraints. He was going to die anyway.

He slowly approached the sheep.

\*\*\*

Rami’s head was swimming. How much time had passed? Hours? Days?

Her trotters hurt and her torch was flickering. If only there was some wildgrass around here. River water had seemed like a proper choice at the time, but her headache was telling her otherwise.

An appendage slithered down the trunk.

\*\*\*

The smell of bacon and always been enticing towards Hug, particularly in the mornings. Although suits would seem a strange choice of house clothes towards a human, black-eyes were always fitted with a nature of observe-then-forget. Plus, baldness and suits had always suited him.

Something was missing. Bacon, yes. Pepper, yes. A small ramekin of steamed mushrooms, yes. What was missing? The noise.

Rather, the absence of noise. No sheepish shuffling of a half-asleep Ramikin. She was probably hibernating. Hug shrugged the concern off and started p-lowing into his breakfast.

\*\*\*

Ramikin sat down, exhausted. She needed to think to stop thinking about overthinking. Stage Four was always the point of no return. At least, without permanent damage. Something about the atmosphere seemed *off.* Of course, slithering shapes and dark places were physically out of the ordinary, but something else was out of place.

A figure moved into view. Rami stood stock still, shocked.

‘Hi,’ it croaked.

Ramikin shrieked and ran back the way she came.

\*\*\*

Her heartbeat rang through her ears. What *was* that thing? It body consisted of tufts of fur and green appendages. Ramikin didn’t want to know. She needed to get out of hear more than ever. It could be anywhere- it could be-

*Stage 4*, Ramikin thought. *No turning back.*

The moonlight was dimmer. It was getting closer to morning.

Ramikin was out of options. She could climb a tree, but so could the monster. Running had proven to be futile before, and hiding would be a death-wish. It had found her before, it could do it again.

Ramikin huddled into a ball, and wept.

\*\*\*

Hug had been spending way too much time looking out the window, trying to recognise the high-fenced building across the street with what little eyesight his kind had. He’d made the poor mistake of wolfing down the bacon first, and then eating the mushrooms. It’d left a grassy taste in his mouth.

It was now 10:12 in the morning. Thankfully, it was a weekend, but that just left Hug more time to worry about Rami. He got up, cleaned his plates, and then headed towards Rami.

\*\*\*

What was happening? What could’ve possibly started this? Ramikin curled into a ball tighter and tighter, her uniform bundled into her face. She couldn’t take it any more. She picked a direction, and started walking, leaving behind the now dead torch.

After a few minutes, she heard a loud crash in the distance. Blindly fumbling through the underbrush, Rami started to panic again. She broke into a mishappen sprint, and made for a now visible clearing. The crashes were beginning to get closer, louder, faster.

A booming voice carried throughout the area. It called her name, again and again. She was nearly at the clearing, illuminated by dim moonlight. The grotesquery towered before her.

Ramikin woke at a start, flinging herself blindly at the suited man that sat on the side of her bed.