

Slaughterhouse

I was woken up by a sudden howl and shriek sweeping over the broken farm. The stale air filled my lungs. I immediately got up on my four legs and walked off the hay filled barn to be met by no one. Instead, the fields of wheat grass stretched as far as the eye could see. A land once home to an array of vibrant colours and emotions, now lay motionless in eerie silence.

The remaining sheep were inside the barn, sleeping cosily, comfortable, completely unaware of what they would wake up to. The rest of our friends were gone. I did not know what had happened to them. The land outside used to be crowded with tens of thousands of sheep. Tens of thousands of our friends and family.

A creaking sound echoed from the main house located in the centre of the farm. I peeped out the barn's window to find some clues as to where my friends had gone, but it was only Mr Brown, the man who had fed and cared for us. He was sweating like a pig whilst wiping his head with his forearm. He turned around, covered in a sort of red ink all over his smock. He held an axe in his other hand dripping with the same cherry red ink down his arm. I squinted and realised it was not ink. It was blood. Mr Brown had killed them. All of them. Mr Brown had murdered all of my friends. He was like the angel of death. My friends all had names once, cheered on by the masses. Now that too had been forgotten, sinking into the dark presence which had consumed their very existence. All I knew now was emptiness and solitude. Every glance through this window was only going to be met with dying shrieks roaming across a broken land, with a shadow draining all underneath it into submission.

I should have known. Mr Brown had always said, "Never go into the house unless you wish for the worst" and I should have listened. I could have warned everyone. Maybe if we had truly understood what he meant we would not be in this position, we could have been able to devise a plan to escape earlier.

His home had always been covered entirely with newspapers and planks of wood nailed onto the windows shutting us out. Although the house was closed off, he would leave one window open displaying the sitting room. If not for the lack of light inside his home, the room would seem as if it belonged in a museum. Medals, muskets, and a plethora of taxidermies on his walls suffocated the living area - a constant reminder of what was to him an achievement. He would occasionally emerge from his worn-out mahogany chair to gaze over his medals once more. If only we knew what he had in store for us, why we were really being taken in.

Booming footsteps began to mimic the sound of drums. Mr Brown approached the barn; the rusty handle greeted his palms with a long, lost warmth. It was too late, he had already gotten to Noah, one of the youngest sheep. Blaring shrieks and screams were heard creating a sense of fear as Mr Brown had carried him straight into the house. Noah was too young. He was a sheep with a bright future who dreamed about fields filled with grass and dandelions. Now the land was burdened by the heavy shadows whose reach had seeped through every crack and crevice.

Everyone was awake now and soon Mr Brown would take us all. The confused looks on everyone's faces sank my heart. Having to explain what had happened to all the other sheep and our youngest, Noah, had caused great commotion. Revealing the mystery and devilish deeds of what Mr Brown was planning for us in the main house had caused us to be sick to our stomachs. Some sheep even planned to flee but it was of no use. Even though the farm had stretched out for what seemed like forever, it was traced with an electric fence, keeping us isolated.

Whilst everyone else was planning an escape I had accepted my fate. I came back to the window and watched the wind hit the trees. A beautiful red headed woodpecker sat on the nearest oak tree, and after drawing a short breath he began to peck. Each impact between the bird's beak and bark of the tree reverberated around the barn. With each hit, I could feel the darkness fade and the light slowly enter my life once again. With each combination, each rhythmic pattern, I could feel the rush of euphoria embrace my body. As I closed my eyes, I was transported to a beautiful countryside, where the earth sang with a gentle breeze, and the damp ground lay home to fields upon fields of green. The bird continued to hammer the tree. The shadows continued to lift. The sky was filled with lively colours, the clouds danced in time with each rhythmic beat. I, a sheep once on the verge of surrender, found himself running through golden fields of wheat, looking ahead, towards an array of sheep grazing in lush meadows, with their freshly white coats full of fluff.

I opened my eyes. The once vibrant room now lay empty. Though I remained on the same drought riddled farm, the earth's vicious screams did not sound so harsh. The cold bony fingers of Mr Brown were unable to reach me, and if they did it would all be okay.