

For Want Of A Nail

By V.J.

In the lands far, far away, there existed a small town of Iskariot and it was full of seemingly kind and lovable animals. This town was known for its hospitality and good looks and everyone lived in perfect harmony. Simply put, the town of Iskariot was like a dream.

As with all seemingly happy stories, there is a 'but'. One day, a group of strong-looking pigs entered the town, sporting angry looks on their faces, as well as a red headband. They were up to no good, for they were thieves, the experts of their criminal craft. Using their cunning techniques and incredible strength, the thieves left the town in shambles. Everyone panicked. "How will we live like this?!", cried chickens in despair and the mayor, the mole, already started estimating the amount of damage done. The number was staggering and the future of Iskariot was looking bleak. In the darkest hour, however, when all hope was lost, came their saviors in the form of a lamb and his sister, carrying everything the town residents needed after the raid: food, clothes, materials needed to rebuild the town, everything Iskariot desperately needed. The two of them entered the town, offering their gifts with a healthy dose of kindness, as well as a request for a place to stay. Iskariotians gladly accepted.

Months passed and the lambs proved to be the best visitors Iskariot had ever had. The lambs had their house built on an empty patch of land that the mayor had given them for a small fee. Lambs also decided to contribute to the community as much as they could: there was more food, houses and an orphanage were built and, for the first time in Iskariot's history, there was a school, as well as a proper government, consisting of pigs and sheep from the richest layers of the society. Everyone was happier than ever before but, another thing also grew: curiosity.

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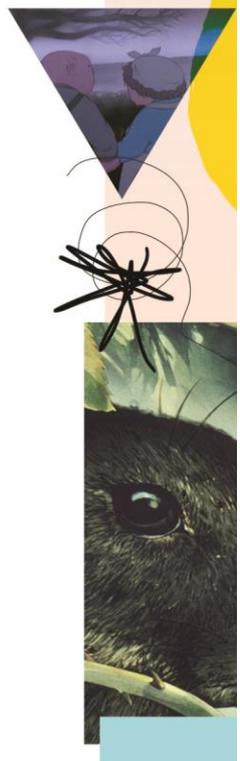




One day, a crow landed in the center of the town, bearing only four words: “Not what they seem”. And with that, it flew away and the seeds of doubt were planted. The town couldn’t just ignore this: it was too interesting to pass on.



And so, everyone started snooping around the lives of the lambs. Their neighbors, rats, were the first, watching their house with a keen eye and would report to the community their findings. When that failed to produce anything, the fox decided to approach them a bit more directly. She devised a cunning plan in which she would pose as an animal and then, overnight, would sneak around their house, looking for the incriminating evidence of their ‘crimes’. The plan worked. Inside one of the drawers lied a dirty red headband, the same one thieves used on that fateful day. Furious, the inhabitants surrounded the lambs in the center of the town. The lambs desperately tried to explain that the headband was just something they had picked up on their way to Iskariot, thinking someone had lost it. For a moment, everyone started believing them, from sheep to ducks. The donkey, however, was persistent, consistently showing the headband as the proof. Even though the argument was weak, everyone went right back to judging the lambs, sticks and stones were thrown at them, pitchfork and torches were raised and they started fearing for their lives. Then, the unimaginable happened: the donkey, fed up with them, lashed out and the female lamb was killed. Everyone went silent. The brother looked at his sister: gone, all because of a misunderstanding. He turned around as if to start a fight and get revenge. But, he did nothing. Clutching the body of his sister, he left the town, crying.



The lambs were the only thing keeping Iskariot floating. After that fateful event, the town was, once again, raided, leaving Iskariot in despair. The town soon disappeared from all known maps of the world, never to be seen again.

THE END

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