

Green Acres Farm

Mackenzie Simms

Green Acres Farm, 8:38^{P.M.}

The night was quiet. Dew settled on the grassy pasture where hundreds of different animals roamed freely awaiting their last meal of the day. Animals were funny in the way that they didn't have any idea what was to come for them. They didn't know that they were alive for the sole purpose of death. They didn't know that their bodies served no uniqueness to the outside world; flesh, coats, and organs were all the people desired. Maggie thought that they must be happy, they know no better. She often thought about the irony of this as she sprinkled seed and old bread for the animals to eat; what was the point in this? Did no one feel remorse? Then she'd watch guiltily as the animals flocked to the mountainous troughs of food and devoured what was given to them, some of them doing so for the last time ever.

On the farm, the process was very simple: raise the animals, slaughter them, turn them into something more; be it coats, furniture, or meat. Her family's land consists of thousands of acres organized intentionally. Maggie's job is to feed the unchanging number of animals being raised for meat. They eat whatever is given to them; hodgepodes of old vegetables and breads, mainly eating grain feed along with the grass they graze on all day. Maggie's sister used to help her feed the animals, that is, before she moved to the city to take over the marketing operations of the business. She was bred for success from a young age, always taught logistics of the family farm. But Maggie? She was left to feed the pigs, cows, chicken, and horses. She was left for the grunt work.

She closed the doors to the barn, retreating back to the house to get ready for bed. She trudged through the narrow halls of their tiny home, the smell of tonight's dinner still lingering in the air. Maggie walked in saying goodnight to her mom as she passed, giving her a hug and a kiss on the cheek. Her mother was sweaty from her housework, cleaning up from dinner and

from the mindless mess her husband and children left behind. She gave her dad a wave signaling goodnight, as he was always on the phone at this hour. She knew he was a busy man, he would probably be on the phone about the farm until late. Maggie showered, brushed her teeth and hopped into her unmade bed ready for a good night's rest. She set her alarm for 6:00 A.M. when she would do the same day all over again. Week after week, month after month, every day was the same.

The House, 2:57^{A.M.}

Maggie walked toward the barn, the bright sun overhead blinding her as she looked directly at it. She grabbed one of the gray, metallic buckets from off one of the hooks in the barn and began her routine tasks for feeding. She grabbed some of the slop for the pigs out of its large barrel and began tossing it into the troughs. She did this for several minutes before looking down to one of the pigs that sat at her feet. He craned his fat neck to meet her gaze and said in a low voice, "He's not what he seems." Terrified, Maggie dropped the bucket, screaming, and began running from the trough section of the pasture to the side with the entrance closest to the house. The pig that spoke chased after her, gathering the rest of his herd as he went. "IT'S NOT WHAT IT SEEMS" the pigs continued chanting all together this time. When Maggie got to the gate, it was locked, the barbed wire on the outside of the fence making her unable to climb over it. She was trapped. She ran to the only part of the barn where she knew she would be able to lock the animals out for good; she ran inside the main stalls of the barn. The herd, still following her and chanting, was getting louder with every cry. She rushed inside one of the stalls in the barn smashing the door shut behind her. Unsure of what to do about the talking pigs that she had just

come to know, she curled up in the hay and began to weep. All of a sudden, she began to feel a warm sandpaper-like wetness on her cheek.

Green Acres Farm, 5:14 ^{A.M.}

Maggie found herself in the darkness crouched on the ground. She felt the same warm sandpaper-like wetness on her cheek as she turned her head to see a large pink pig licking the side of her face. Was she in the barn? She looked at the electric clock on the wall of the barn and read the time. Was it really 5:23? How did she end up here? She stood up petting the happy pig that was just nearly on top of her. She walked outside to the food barrels, contemplating how she ended up outside of the house this early in the morning. Was she sleep-walking again? She was still taking the medicine that her mom gave her to take when this happened years ago, what changed now? Groggy, Maggie continued the day, effortlessly throwing food to the hundreds of animals that roamed freely, in the confinement of their pens. Her body was completing all the right motions but her mind was in the clouds. She could not stop thinking about her dream. What wasn't what it seemed? Finishing her last trough fill-up for the night, Maggie decided to stop worrying about the dream. Thinking about it wasn't doing her any good. What if her worrying would cause it to happen again? After all, she knew there could be side effects of her medication, even though mom said she wasn't concerned about that. Maggie walked through the grass as the sun set beautifully over the hills that surrounded their tiny home. She walked into the house for dinner that her mom worked hard to prepare. She sat at the table, ready to consume fresh steaks and vegetables, straight from the farm. It was only Maggie and her mother at dinner, her father's seat empty as he worked late on the farm. After dinner, Maggie looked out at the barn through

the small window over the sink. She silently washed the dishes, dream still in the back of her mind, whether she liked it or not.

The House, 11:54 ^{P.M.}

Maggie began to feel rain pattering down on her braided blonde hair. She looked around to see herself in the horse's grazing field, up on the rolling hills. To her surprise on her left, she found her favorite horse from childhood: Gracie. Gracie came right up to Maggie as she always did before she passed away, expecting a nose rub and to get her hair braided to match Maggie. Delighted by the finding of her favorite friend, she automatically hopped on top of Gracie and the two began riding to the furthestmost left edge of the property. Bouncing as her horse raced around the grounds, Maggie started to remember the chilliness of the rain overhead. "We should go back to the stables Gracie girl, this storm looks like it's gettin' bad," Maggie shouted over the wind that whipped around her wet face. Gracie didn't listen. She raced faster and faster, further and further away from the house and the stables. Once the two reached the very back of the property, Gracie bucked Maggie off of her, running directly back in the direction of the stables. Panicking, Maggie looked around her and saw the loads of dirt patches: Green Acres Farm Graveyard. She knew it existed—after all, animals deserved humanic treatment as well, at least that's what her dad always said— but she'd never been back here before. She glanced back at the pile of dirt where she was bucked off and noticed that Gracie had dropped her at a specific grave. Maggie looked at the tombstone and read the name, "GRACIE THE HORSE, DEAD ON MARCH 25" Suddenly overwhelmed with grief, knowing that this was her horse's grave, she began to blanket the dirt with her tears. Maggie looked back at the grave through her clouded vision, at the bottom of the tombstone she read the small words, "*help us*". Now with a pit in her

stomach, Maggie looked back on the thousands of graves that surrounded her, she noticed that because of the rain, the dirt started melting away. Instead of revealing animal carcasses, she saw human skulls and remains. She screamed into the night, the sound of her horror muffled by the pouring rain.

Green Acres Farm Graveyard, 4:12 ^{A.M.}

Feeling the wet grass that blanketed the dew-coated ground, Maggie sat up from the dirty grave where she lay. It was Gracie's grave. She read the tombstone again, this time there was no "*help us*" in tiny letters at the bottom. She saw the sun overhead and started walking in the only direction that made sense; towards the graveyard gate. She was saddened by her dream and overwhelmed with the loss of her horse all over again. She remembered when it happened. When her father told her that her horse was sick beyond help. How she wasn't going to live through it this time. The bright sun made her squint as the Farm was finally in her sight.

Green Acres Farm, 8:49 ^{A.M.}

Exhausted and sweating as the dawn turned morning, Maggie finally reached the Farm. Her mom ran out of the house towards the back pasture as she saw Maggie emerge. She enveloped Maggie in a big hug, asking where she had been all morning. She rambled on about how they almost called the police to report her missing, but they were just sure she would show back up at the house or the Farm, or at least somewhere on the property. Barefoot with dirt all down the left side of her body from her sleep, Maggie went into the house to change out of her pajamas from the night before and put on her work clothes. She threw on her stained overalls and battered old work boots and headed out toward the north end of the pasture to catch up on the

round of feeding. Maggie's dad told her she could have the rest of the day off to relax. Her parents were convinced stress was what was causing her to sleep walk again, but this time Maggie felt different. The sleepwalking wasn't as harmless as when she was a kid. This time it felt real, like someone or something was calling out for her. Only, she didn't know how to answer it.

The House, 11:52 ^{P.M.}

The dreaded time finally came a few hours ago for Maggie; night time. She didn't even want to sleep that night. She begged her dad to let her work the night shift just so she didn't have to go back to her subconscious. He refused. He told her that there was important work happening at night, something she wasn't ready for yet— especially with the sleepwalking. Maggie laid awake watching mindless cartoons, hoping it would coax her out of the cursed dreams she was so scared of having again. After all, why even try to sleep if you know it won't be restful? She knew her father was also probably awake somewhere on the grounds, either working late in his office or watching cartoons in the living room. She almost went out to see him, she really did, but she was too comfortable to get out of her warm bed. Eventually she couldn't restrain herself any longer. Her eyes fell heavy and she drifted off to sleep.

The House, 1:22 ^{A.M}

Maggie felt her body pulling her silently down the stairs to her dad's office; almost as if something was calling out to her. She knew she wasn't allowed down here, but something was propelling her forward. She opened the creaky wooden door and entered her dad's office. Pictures coated the walls; anatomic posters of the human body and the body of animals, like the

ones that they raised on the farm. She scanned the walls, consuming the details of the foreign room. As she paced around the room, she heard a clanking metal sound over one square of the tile floor. Curious, she crouched down where she heard the metallic sound, and noticed a keypad on the ground. Frantic to know what this room was hiding, she began scouring the desk for any trace of a code. She ripped open drawers, riffled through old vendor receipts, desperate for any trace of a keyword or order of numbers. After what felt like hours, Maggie reached underneath the wooden desk and felt a paper. She ripped it off the bottom of the desk revealing the code, “32805427”.

The Basement, 3:43 ^{A.M}

Maggie awoke on the cold metal of her father’s office. She had a slip of paper in her hand, revealing a code. After hitting “ENTER”, she heard a noise coming from outside the office. She ran out the door and saw the wall of the basement slowly retract into itself. The basement was dark and resembled that of a pig pen. The stalls went on for what seemed like miles, metal bars at the front locking whatever creature inhabited this basement in tight. Maggie looked for the light switch desperate to know the truth.

The light flipped on a fluorescent white to reveal rows and rows of cages, some full of small children, some full of meaty adults. Their faces pressed up against the metal bars eager to see what was waiting for them. They acted like animals; happy and excited because they thought that Maggie brought them food. The children were all ghostly pale, probably from a lack of sunlight. They were dressed in the same gray, cotton t-shirt and shorts, barefoot on the concrete ground. There had to be at least fifteen children packed in each stall. Not knowing what to do, Maggie went up to the one little girl in the cage. She reached her arm out delicately, hoping that

the young child had some sort of humanity in her. The child looked back at Maggie, right in the eyes, then looked at her outreached hands. Before she knew what was happening, the child drove its sharp teeth into the flesh of Maggie's palm. Maggie cried in terror and pain as she didn't know what to do. The child cried, soon followed by thousands of other cries as she thought Maggie was reaching out to give her food.

The Hospital, 9:01 ^{A.M}

Maggie awoke to the same fluorescent lighting that she remembered in the basement. She became alert of her surroundings as she heard a rhythmic "beep...beep...beep..." sound next to her. She was laying down in a bed, arms tied at her sides, her hand wrapped in white bandages. She started squirming and yelling out for someone to help her. Before she knew it, her father and mother appeared over the side of her bed. They grinned at each other and then looked down at her.

"There's no need to worry dear" Maggie's mother said to her as she stroked her arm gently.

"W-w-why am I tied up then mom?" Maggie replied, tugging her arms up, the restraints making them collapse, limp on the bed next to her.

"Daddy found you in his office honey," Maggie's mom said looking nervously towards her silent husband, "he didn't want you to get hurt baby. Dr. Trasaud believes we need to increase your dosage of your meds, that's all."

"But there were... people! Lots of them! Please mommy, you have to help them!" Maggie begged her mother with tears in her eyes.

“Enough of this,” Maggie’s father finally broke his silence. “Doctor, put her back to sleep,” he said, refusing to make eye contact with Maggie.

“No, no, please I—” Maggie pleaded before the heavy sedation kicked into her system once again.

The House 6:00 ^{A.M}

Maggie woke up like any typical day. She jumped out of bed and put on her stained overalls and dirty work boots. She walked down the narrow hallway of her home and said good morning to both her parents. It had been a week since her hospital visit, but Maggie was ready to get back to her animals and her work. She was finally cured of sleepwalking once again, and hopefully for good this time. Her parents exchanged a worried glance as Maggie sat down at the table for breakfast. Her mom handed her a plate of pancakes and fresh sausage, right from the family farm with a slight grin. Maggie cleaned her plate of food before she went out to the farm and began by feeding the pigs, scooping bucketfuls of slop into their enormous troughs.