

TOM the SHEEP

By Rachel Adams

WHY WE LIKE IT: *Aesop meets Monty Python on SNL! We were WTF is going on here when we first read this clever little yank on an age old fable. But it was the wonderful consistency of the metaphor as it spread to details throughout the story that won us over: ‘...becaaaause...because it is better graaass than ours maaan’. Like sheep taaalking, OK? The breezy tone and sprightly prose combine to deliver an entertainment that in its quirky originality reminds us of certain stories by Sherman Alexie. And that’s our laaast word.*

There once was a sheep named Tom. He lived in a big flock with all his buddies. That was the great thing about Tom, he was a likeable guy, made friends with everybody. He was known for his jokes, and was always playin pranks, and messin with other sheep. Tom was the class clown, the rebel, the Mr. funny guy, a trailblazer, if you will. The type of guy you’d want to hangout with for a good time. He liked to party hard and prioritize the fun things in life. For instance, Tom always liked to put chapstick on his whole face then roll around in the grass till his face was covered and hide behind stuff to scare baby sheep just for fun. Some of his other favorites were peeing in the water bowl, tapping sheeps on the shoulder of the opposite side he was on, tying his friends paws together while they were asleep, feeding them peanut butter, and pushing unsuspecting ones over really fast. But one of Tom’s greatest pranks of all time was when he shaved his fur off and went streaking around the pasture pretending he was possessed. The only

bad thing about Tom was, he didn't know when to stop the foolishness, always took it too far. Although people liked him, sometimes they needed a break from the tom-foolery.

There was one guy however that never got annoyed at Tom, and that was his best friend Howard. When Howard was a baby his mother accidentally suffocated him with her fluff, and his brain didn't get oxygen for a long time. He's been slow ever since. Slow talker, walker, and thinker, but Tom liked him despite all that. Once when Howard and Tom were in 5th grade, the whole class had made a circle around Howard and were throwing rocks and things at him because he smelled bad and was ugly. Tom felt really bad for Howard and knew that he shouldn't be treated like that so he went and laid by Howard in the middle of the stoning. He knew they wouldn't throw things at him since he was cool and popular. He was right, the tormenting stopped and Howard couldn't understand why someone like Tom would do that for him. They quickly became best friends and sheeps left Howard alone from then on. Howard loved Tom.

Howards most favorite thing to do all day was eat grass. He would lay on his stomach in his favorite spot in their fenced in pasture and eat the grass till he felt really happy. Tom joined him often but not nearly as much as Howard spent out there. Howard couldn't go one day without chillin in the grass. It was where he did all his best thinking. One day when he and Tom were laying on their backs, eating grass together he said,

“Heyyyy Tomm”

“yah man”

“Sometimes I think thaaat...that they don't let us have the graass on the other side of the fence becaaause...because it is the better graaass than ours maaan.”

“yah I don't believe what they say about it being too strong for us.”

“Tomm that is some soliiid adviice.”

“That wasn’t advice Howard.”

“Yahhh man you said we should go eat the graaass outside the fence.”

“Did not say that but I really want to know if that grass is actually deadly”

“Nooooo wayyy mann I’m not coming with you”

“But you just said we should.”

“Tommm”

“What”

“I dare you to...to try some of that graaass.”

“No man what if it actually is deadly?”

“Puussyyy”

“Okay okay I’ll do it.”

Tom and Howard trotted out to edge of the fence and made sure no other sheep could see them. They spent around twenty minutes trying to figure out how to get over the fence, they tried digging under it, running through it, trying to naw a hole in it, until Tom got the idea to get on Howard’s back and go over the top of it. He landed on his back and Howard said,

“Baaaad ass maaan baaaad ass.”

Tom walked and sniffed around for a minute and said to Howard,

“We were right man, this stuff isn’t deadly it smells way better than our grass. They were just depriving us from the good stuff.”

“Sickkkk maaan I want some good graaass I thiiink it would...would taste good with soome...some vienna sausaaages or chocolate brownies.”

Tom climbed back over using some logs on the other side and said,

“Howard do you think it would be the sickest prank ever to lay out here and pretend I’m dead for a long time to freak everybody out like this grass really was deadly and then scare people when they check on me man.”

“ha ha ha...world claass maaaaan world claass.”

“Man thas what I thought, this is the sickest prank I have ever thought of, Howard go run to the others and tell them I got over the fence and the grass made me dead el oh el.”

“Ha Ha savage. Foor suuure maaan but can you hand mee sooome...some of thaaat...that good graaass first maaan”

“Honestly Howard you need to lay off the grass”

“Nahhhh maaan.”

Howard ran to the other sheeps and told them as best as he could that Tom was dead and they needed to go get his body. Soon all the sheeps were galloping toward the location of Tom’s dead body. When they were all staring through the fence at lifeless Tom, he jumped up and screamed really loud. Half of them fell over because they got scared which made Tom and Howard laugh really hard. They thought that was great. Most of the sheep were annoyed and warned Tom that they were not supposed to go past the fence but Tom didn’t care, he was already planning on doing this again and again. The next day he did the same thing and everybody got more mad at him. Howard never got to go on the other side of the fence because after Tom used him to get over, there was no one to help him over, so he sat and was a good boy on the safe side and stuck his face in a whole in the fence and just watched Tom eat all the good grass without him. Sometimes he even teared up a little thinkin about all the grass he didn’t get to have.

Tom pulled this prank for four days in a row. Each day he played dead for longer but fewer sheep showed up and no one cared, no one thought it was funny. After the sheep left on the sixth day he could barely stand up he was so baked. On the seventh day Tom told Howard,

“Howard, I’m gonna play dead longer than ever so they really think I’m dead this time”

“Tomm you are thee...the funniest guuyy i ever met maaan. That is savage mann.”

This time only one sheep came and waited to see if anything was gonna happen. Tom was doing an excellent job playing dead this time. Howard noticed that his eyes were open and that was really adding to the affect. The one sheep stayed for about an hour, then rolled his eyes and peaced out. After he left, Howard said to Tom,

“Maaan they are are gonna think you're dead soo good thiss...this time Tommm. This is the the longest youu have been dead foor maaan.”

Six hours later Howard starts to get tired and hungry and lays down as close to his friend as he can with the fence in the way and just waits for him to wake up. He tries throwing stuff at Tom to see if he’ll quit but he knew he wouldn’t. He knew Tom was pulling off the best prank of his life and nobody was gonna stop him. Tom wouldn’t even flinch when a big fly went up his nose. Howard was so impressed, he just sat there and thought about how much he loved that guy and cherished their friendship. Tom was his only friend, nobody else was nice to him. Nobody liked him, everyone made fun of him. He knew it was because he was different but Tom treated him like he was normal and that’s why Howard wanted them to be best friends forever. So he talked to and watched his friend lay there for hours thinking about all his favorite memories with him. Eventually he asked Tom,

“Heyy maaan you want soome...some vienna sausages....I could...could bring us some if you want.”

“....”

“I’m pretty hungry maaan so I’m gonna go get soooome...some vienna sausages
andddd...and I’ll be baaackk maaan.”

“....”

Howard came back with some vienna sausages and thought maybe Tom would get up because those were both of their favorites, but he didn’t. So Howard rolled them to Tom under the fence. One even touched Tom’s mouth but he still didn’t move. Howard sat there all night with Tom and patiently waited. He was still very impressed by how long Tom was playing dead for but was slightly concerned that he wasn’t eating. So every day Howard brought Tom Vienna sausages and rolled them one by one to Tom. He did this for two weeks and noticed that bugs were eating the sausages and accidently eating on Tom because they thought he was a sausage too he figured. Howard missed talking to Tom and waited for hours. He noticed Tom smelled because he hadn’t showered, and was swelling up like a balloon. He thought something might be wrong so he went to the other sheep for help. But nobody came. They were all sick of his jokes and didn’t want to waste their time. Howard didn’t know what to do, so he went back to check on Tom only to see the shepherd carrying him away. Howard didn’t know where they were taking him and a tear rolled down his face. Tom was the only guy that was nice to him and they were taking him away. Howard stuck his head through the fence and watched the Tom till his tears made his vision blurry. He didn’t know where he went, but Howard never saw his best friend again.

AUTHOR’S NOTE: *The idea of this story hit me like a brick in the face, when the idea first entered my head about two sheep who get high off the grass they ate I just knew the world needed to know, and frankly, would want to know. Just kidding but really I think I just read somewhere that some sheep got high and thought it was funny. So a mixture of that and*

probably subconsciously that old cartoon 'Shaun the Sheep'. My only intention when writing this was to make somebody laugh. As for stylistic and literary influences...John Green. His humor and voice control is flawless. Oh and my man Aesop of course, I ripped off 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf'.

BIO: I'm a junior at the University of West Florida majoring in Pre-Law and will be attending law school. I have never had anything published before (clearly) and randomly took a creative writing class 'just for fun'. I ended up really enjoying it. One of the assignments was to submit something to a publisher, so I did, thinking I'm only going to make the editors hate their job even more but alas! Here I am!