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Lemmings

by Mari Syrad Grieves

They were late. Yesterday and the day before they had been early, so why now, were they late. She had forgotten to worry about them being late but she would be sure to add it to the checklist. The list was on a length of papyrus so worn and extensive that the end of it skimmed the tops of the waves as she waited, legs dangling over the edge of the cliff. Just as she remembered to worry about whether they were going to come at all, they arrived.

They were all very small with dusty bald heads and sooty hands, about thirty of them today. A disappointing turnout. With the backdrop of the sea behind her and the huddle of little men in front, she began to speak.

“I believe you all know why you are here today, and I would like to sincerely thank you for your willing sacrifice.”

A murmur rippled among them, becoming more animated until eventually one of the men cleared his throat.

“Ah, uh...sorry, very sorry but, what, er, what was that about a...a sacrifice there?”

A sea of expectant faces rather cutely stared up at her as she beckoned the speaker closer, away from the group. It only took a split second for the atmosphere to change as she spun around and kicked him high into the air and down towards the sea below.

The huddle were squeaking and bobbing now, half turning, unsure how to proceed now that the only brave one had perished.

“As I was saying,” she continued, “the only way to get rid of the big black cloud is to write all the worries down on this list here, and then dispose of all of you so there’s no one left to carry those sooty little clouds into the chamber which have been making me quite mad.”

Each sweet face looked to the ground in grave acceptance and formed an orderly queue as before, only with no little cloud to carry this final time. One by one, they stepped forward and over the edge of the cliff to the waves below.