

Ding! Lilith's phone chimed and it startled her out of her trance of reading. The sunlight blanketed the room with a warm glow as Lilith went up to see who sent her a message. She lifted her phone from her desk and perched on her bed as she read the message. "A blocked number..." she murmured as she scanned the text, "*Lilith I'm achingly sorry, and I know you won't want to see me again, but I need you. The new people I've experienced won't come, I know that you will come though. I can't tell you where I am, or they will come, but I need you. From Fire Egg Rabbit Night.*" Lilith rolled her eyes. It must be some stupid teens who she blocked but worked their way around it. The once bright sun began to set, and Lilith burrowed under her blanket. It was a cold winter night, and she had her science test tomorrow, so she needed sleep. Her eyelids fluttered, and she drifted off to sleep.

A shriek arose from the corridor in front of her and then a slashing sound. Lilith stood up abruptly and scanned her surroundings. A pitch-black corridor lay with a torch resting in front of her. Vines clung to the wall like a child holding tightly to its mother. Lilith flicked on the torch and illuminated the clearing. Lilith walked through a corridor with white walls and cream floors, where vines trailed along the walls and art pieces were displayed at every turn. Lilith wandered through the halls until something caught her eye – a carving etched into the wall. She flicked on her torch, revealing the words 'rules' scrawled above a list of sentences, the messy handwriting spreading unevenly beneath it.

1. Be quiet or leaders will find you.
2. If lights go on, hide.
3. Don't touch the art pieces.
4. If a leader extends their hand to you, you've been chosen.
5. If you see a leader on the ground motionless, back away slowly, it's not dead, it's INFECTED and escaped.

6. Find an escape, take longer than 20 years you will be punished, the escape is

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Lilith drew back in horror. “No...” she muttered to herself. She froze at the sound of approaching footsteps. From the shadows emerged two figures – one, a tall man with curly brown hair and pale skin, and the other, of medium height, with black hair and tanned skin. They looked at Lilith in surprise “another captive?” Lilith spoke “*where are we?*” The man with brown hair quickly responded, “*Shh!*” He paused for a moment before adding, “*I’m Mark, and this is William. We’ve been here for two years... I’m guessing you’re new?*” Lilith nodded, “*what are... leaders?*” Mark explained how leaders were a creature with long, dark grey legs and arms that scuttled around when someone broke a rule.

They walked down the seemingly endless hallway until, without warning, William and Mark came to a sudden stop. “*What is it?*” Lilith asked confused. “*We can’t go any further... this is the last place a leader got infected...*” William shuddered. Lilith couldn’t understand. How could two people so calm, experienced be so...afraid? Lilith continued walking, ignoring their protests. Her foot stepped on something squishy. A dark grey figure lay on the floor in front of her. She took a step back and screamed. Mark yelled “*No loud noises!*” The leader got up. It was one of the infected. “*Okay... I think we gotta...*” William began, Mark cut him off sharply. “*Get the hell outta here!*” The trio ran as fast as they could along the hallways. Lilith ran her fingers along the art pieces, drawing a confused look from William. “*If we’re gonna die, might as well break some rules.*” From up ahead, Mark shouted, “*Or attract more leaders!*” Before Lilith could mutter an ‘oh crap’, it was too late - the leader had already grabbed her. She shrieked in pain, then remembered the scissors she had in her pocket. She stabbed the leader in its neck, it hissed and let her go. “*You, okay?*”

Mark yelled while running. *“Never better”* Lilith replied. Two more leaders appeared in front of them blocking their path. Lilith grabbed the leaders’ legs and pushed it into the wall. *“What are you doing...”* Mark began then realised. If Lilith wasn’t the one making the noise, she couldn’t get in trouble! Technically, the leader was making noise. A second leader scuttled in and attacked the first. Soon the leaders loomed over the trio and went to attack when... BANG a gunshot sounded, and everything seemed to stop. The leader face planted into the ground, and Lilith couldn’t believe who she saw... it was Fern!

“Fern...” Lilith’s face turned bright red. *“You picked the perfect time to come back, huh?”* Lilith held back tears. Fern spoke softly *“I sent you the text. It made you come here. Got into your brain I guess.”* Lilith glared. *“You sent me here?”* Fern tried to shush her as gently as possible, but Lilith didn’t hear it. *“You left me... to be... ‘popular’”* Lilith spat out that last word then continued. *“You left me alone... making me the third wheel. Ruining my life... then... sending me here to end it? Expecting help?”* Fern said softly. *“Because you’re a good person... not like the others.”* Lilith said nothing but gestured the others to follow her. *“Let’s leave before the leader’s wake up.”* Fern stopped her. *“But Lilith, I know the way out.”*

They ran through the hallways as Fern guided them to the escape. They finally made it. Lilith stepped forward to leave, but Fern stopped her. *“Lilith, I forgot to tell you... I’m infected so I can’t come.”* Lilith couldn’t believe it. *“w-what...?”* Fern stepped back into the shadows and walked away. Lilith was achingly upset, but knew she needed to escape. She stepped through the exit and found herself in an arcade, with a list of rules on the wall.