

# Secret Agent

*Few people realise that psychologists also take a vow, promising that at some point in their professional lives they will publish a book, a chapter or at least an article that contains the sentence: 'The human being is the only animal that...' ... it is with good reason that most psychologists put off completing The Sentence for as long as they can, hoping that if they wait long enough, they might just die in time to avoid being publicly humiliated by a monkey.*

— Daniel Gilbert, *Stumbling on Happiness*

NON AGNI SED ALPACAE

For I will consider my alpaca Otto.  
For he is the master of his own agency duly and daily serving it up.

For his name in his own language  
is not a word  
it's a face.



For Otto likes to tease people:  
alpacas, cows, you know: *people*.  
It doesn't do him any good, any more than it does me  
any good  
To think my own thoughts, wish my own wishes  
act my own actions, regret them  
and then do them again.

For Otto is very clever.  
For he is a geek.  
For he gets picked on.  
He *hates* that.

For when he was little, Otto used to tease his boss. Yes,  
here is Otto's boss's name  
in alpaca language:



For when he was little, Otto used to bite his boss's ankles  
and then  
and then  
and then whip round  
and lie on his back.

Nobody's going to retaliate  
while you're being submissive.

All his boss could say was  
"What the fuck?"

Humans instinctively misunderstand  
pretty much  
everything.

#### ABSTRACT

In an ethological study  
of male *Vicugna pacos* it was discovered  
that juvenile alpacas of low dominance status  
tend to bite the ankles of their most  
dominant herdmate

And then turn submissive to avoid reprisals, although  
the study included only one alpaca  
who exhibited this behavior.

No, that's not right. Let me try again.

Random events in a juvenile alpaca's development  
may cause its play to take the form of biting ankles before  
turning  
submissive, a behavior  
for which we have coined the term ...

No, that's not right.

Alpacas display idiosyncratic behavior in certain  
circumstances.  
This behavior, however, is well understood scientifically and  
has been proven to be nothing more than

Instinct.  
That's it.  
Instinct.