

**Bummer Lamb**  
**By Gregory JM Kasunich**

From time to time (for reasons unknown)

A ewe,  
perhaps possessed by some unknown genetic precursor,  
primal prejudice,  
or just plain maternal disdain

Will reject her lamb,  
cleaving the babe from the flock,

Remorselessly leaving the theave to parish among the ragged heather.

This is the Bummer Lamb.

We do not know why this happens. But it does. Almost always.

A one in one hundred inevitability.

The formative rejection smithched to the down,

untouched by the tup,

unloved and roundly reproached,

the bummer lamb accepts and succumbs,

Head hung low, the exile begins,

a threnodic solitary procession,

to a certain demise.

A small death upon the Verdant Felids.

Yet. Yet.

It is such a lamb that the shepherd notices.

It is this lamb that is crooked and carried,

not to the slaughter,

but to the hearth.

Bottle fed and blanketed.

Plaintively praised,

not for something resplendent or unseen, no,

but loved - merely for needing it, for lacking it,

faultless in its neonate castigation.

It is here the bummer lamb recovers,

Daring to hold its head high,

emboldened by the shepherd's voice,

the touch of kith and kin knotted

in the wire of wool.

And when I learned about the phenomenon (of the bummer lamb,)

I pitied myself, for I saw my shame,

a young bummer lamb

cleaved from the cafeteria and cast out among

the concrete glen of the school yard

My young-self, a hoggart in need of a spale, and in you,

You, I found my hearth and home,

and learned to hold my head high.

Your fingers in the wool of my scalp. Your voice, a harbor.

In your crook I found my fank, my voice, my fire, my flock.

I told you this and you asked

“What happens to the bummer lamb,

once they are strong?”

“They are returned to the meadow to be with the others.”

I answered.

“But when the Shepherd calls, they are the first to come, and the others follow”

I added.

Bemused you smiled that crinkle-lipped grin.

And touched your temple -

telepathically admonishing my myopic misconception.

And you didn't have to say it.

I already knew.

I straightened my spine,

held my head high.

And led myself home.