

## Sheep

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**I**T was the beginning of winter. As I stood on the sidewalk late at night, a heavy fog brushed against my cheeks and earlobes like hard powder. I had shoved a French grammar I use in tutoring into my overcoat pocket and, drawing myself in against the cold, waited for the last bus to the suburbs as it approached, swaying like a ship in the fog.

On the sturdy neck of the girl conductor, there was a tender, pink, sweet acne sore like a rabbit's sex organ. She pointed to the empty seat in a corner at the back of the bus. As I moved toward it, my foot caught in the hem of a raincoat that trailed on the floor, and I staggered. It belonged to a young teacher who had a pile of elementary school examination papers spread on his lap. I was exhausted and sleepy and couldn't stand up straight. I bowed halfheartedly in apology and then went to sit in the narrow space in the back seat that was occupied by some foreign soldiers returning to their camp in the outskirts of town. My thigh came into contact with the plump but hard buttock of a soldier. As my facial muscles relaxed in the humid air inside the bus, I felt a weariness and a feeble sense of relief. I yawned and secreted white tears like a beetle.

The soldiers who had squeezed me into my corner were drunk and in high spirits. They were all young, and most of them had low

brows and the large, moist eyes of cows. One soldier, his thick fleshy red neck choked by the collar of his khaki shirt, had a short, moon-faced Japanese woman on his knees. He was whispering ardently in her ear—the ear was as dry and lusterless as a piece of wood—while the other soldiers cheered them on.

The woman, who was also drunk, seemed annoyed by the smoothly rounded lips of the soldier. She kept shrugging her shoulders and tossing her head. Seeing her do this, the other soldiers roared as though they had gone berserk. The Japanese passengers sat in the seats that ran parallel to the windows and averted their eyes from the commotion. It became clear that the woman had been arguing for some time with the soldier. I leaned back in the hard seat and, to avoid bumping my head against the window, kept my head down. When the bus started off, the cold once again silently chilled the air. I slowly drew into myself.

Suddenly, with a raucous laugh, the woman got up and, shouting abuse at the soldier, came crashing down against me.

"I'm an Oriental, see? Who do you think you are? You don't give up, do you? Don't push me too far, you hear?" The woman pressed her flabby body against mine and screamed in Japanese. The soldier in whose lap she had been sitting now sat with his long thighs



spread apart like a monkey's and watched the woman and me with an open look of puzzlement.

"You bastard! What do you think you're doing to me before all these people?" Tossing her head, the woman screamed at the soldier who remained silent. "What do you think you were doing to my throat? You're filthy!" The girl conductor, her face rigid, turned away. The woman doggedly kept shouting at the soldier. "When you're naked all of you have hair even on your back! I want to go to bed with this boy."

The Japanese passengers in the front seats—the young man in the leather jackets, the middled-aged man who looked like a road worker, the office worker, and the others all stared at me and the woman. I shrank away and attempted a victim's smile—a feeble, tentative smile—in the direction of the teacher, who had put up the collar of his raincoat. But he stared back, his eyes full of reproach. At the same time I realized that the soldiers had begun to direct their attention more toward me than to the woman, and I felt my body flushing with consternation and embarrassment.

"Well, what do you say? I want to sleep with you, little boy."

I tried to pull myself away from the woman and stand up, but her dry cold arm was wrapped around my shoulders and would not let go. Then, exposing yellowish-brown gums and spraying my whole face with a fine spittle that reeked of alcohol, she screamed at the soldiers, "You guys go mount a cow. Me and this little boy... see?"

As I got to my feet, shaking off the woman's arm, the bus lurched violently, and all I could do to keep from falling was to just barely grab and hang on to the rod that ran across the windows. The result was that the woman spun around with her arm around my shoulder and rolled, face up and yelling, onto the floor of the bus where she began to kick her short thin legs. I saw that her unnaturally swollen thighs above her garter fasteners had turned gooseflesh with

the cold and were mottled black and blue. There was nothing I could do to help her. She made me think of a wet plucked chicken, laid out on the tile counter of a butcher shop, that suddenly began twitching.

One of the soldiers leaped to his feet and helped the woman up, and while he held the woman, who had suddenly gone pale and was gasping for breath as she bit her lower lip, he glared at me. I jogged my memory for words of apology, but with the eyes of a group of foreign soldiers focused on me, the words stuck in my throat. I shook my head and was about to sit down. A soldier grabbed me by the shoulders with powerful hands and lifted me up. I jerked away from him and as I did I saw that his chestnut-colored eyes were ablaze like minute fireworks with anger and alcohol.

The soldier shouted something, but I could not comprehend the threat in those terrifying words that were so full of sibilants. He suddenly fell silent, peered into my face, and then began shouting more violently than before. I was panic-stricken and watched with fascination at the way he twisted his bull neck and at the sudden swellings in the skin along his throat. I did not catch a single word he uttered.

The soldier grabbed me by the throat and screamed as he shook me. I made no sound against the pain as the collar of my student's uniform cut into my neck. I could not get him to release his arm with its thick growth of coarse blond hairs from my neck. He kept on shouting as though he had gone mad, spewing a fine spray over my wobbly, unturned face. Suddenly he shoved me away, and I fell in the seat, hitting my head against the window. I sat there, cowering like a small animal.

The soldier roared what sounded like an order, and only the sound of the engine humming filled the sudden silence that followed. As I turned my head toward the soldier from the position I had fallen I saw that the young man was gripping a knife that glittered icily in his right hand. I got up slowly and turned toward the soldier who was jiggling the knife



at his side, and the woman with the plain frozen face beside him. Both the Japanese passengers and the other soldiers were now watching us intently.

The soldier repeated what he had said earlier, pausing between syllables, but the only sound I heard was that of blood boiling up inside me. I shook my head, hoping he would understand. Exasperated, the soldier once again repeated the syllables that were now almost too starkly clear. When I understood the meaning of the words, my guts churned in sudden terror. "Turn around! Turn around!" What could I do? I obeyed his command and turned around. Beyond the wide glass window at the back of the bus, fog swirled like the wake of a ship and flowed by in gusts. The soldier shouted again in a hard voice, but I did not understand him. When he repeated a slang word that had a nasty ring to it, the soldiers around me broke out in a fit of laughter. I twisted my head to look at the soldier and the woman. The woman's face was beginning to recover its lewd animated expression. Then the soldier, with an exaggerated threatening gesture, shouted like a child engrossed in a game it had just thought up. I was astonished at the way the feeling of terror was receding, but I could not grasp what the soldier wanted of me. I slowly shook my head and turned away. He's only playing a joke on me. I don't know what I am to do, I thought as I stared at the current of fog on the other side of the window, but at least I am in no danger. All I have to do is stand like this. He will eventually let me go.

But the burly hands of the soldier grabbed me firmly by the shoulders and instantly tore off my overcoat as though they were skinning the fur off an animal. There was nothing I could do to prevent several soldiers from grabbing at me, laughing uproariously as they did so. They loosened my belt and roughly pulled my pants and shorts down. To hold up my falling pants, I spread my knees. As I stood in that position, my arms were pulled outward from both sides and a powerful hand pushed my head down.

I bent forward dejectedly like a four-legged beast, exposing my buttocks to the jeers of the soldiers. I struggled, but my arms were held out and my head pushed forward with force. On top of that, my pants were wrapped around my feet, restricting movement.

My buttocks felt cold. They stuck out toward the soldiers and I could feel the skin breaking out in goose pimples and turning a blue-gray color. Cold hard steel touched me lightly on the coccyx, and every rattle of the bus sent a spasm of pain over my back. I visualized the expression of the soldier who was pressing the knife against me at that point.

With my head pushed down, I saw, just in front of my forehead, my penis shrivel with the cold. Consternation gave way to a burning shame that washed over me. Then an anger like the helpless tantrums I used to throw as an angry child began to boil up inside me. But each time that I struggled and tried to free myself from the soldiers, all that happened was that my buttocks quivered.

All at once, the soldiers began to sing, and then I suddenly heard, through the uproar, the Japanese passengers tittering. I felt as though I had been crushed and beaten to a pulp. When the pressure against my arms and head relaxed, I found I had lost the strength even to stand up straight. Thin streams of gummy tears worked their way down the sides of my nose. The soldiers sang a simple ditty like a children's song over and over again and, as though to keep time, they slapped my buttocks which by now had begun to turn numb with cold, and roared with laughter.

"Sheep killer! Sheep killer! Bang! Bang!" Lustily they sang this song over and over again in an accented foreign language. "Sheep killer! Sheep killer! Bang! Bang!"

The soldier with the knife moved to the front of the bus. Several soldiers went with him. There was a nervous agitation among the Japanese passengers. Then the soldier shouted. Like a policeman controlling a parade, he shouted with authority for a long time. Even with my



head down, I could see what they were up to. When I was grabbed again by the scruff of my neck and turned toward the front, I saw, lined up in the middle of the bus, the sheep, their legs spread to brace themselves against the lurchings of the bus and bent over with their bottoms exposed. I was the last sheep in the line. The soldiers had now whipped themselves into a frenzy and sang in a crescendo of sound.

"Sheep killer! Sheep killer! Bang! Bang!"

With every jolt of the bus my forehead bumped against the office worker's flat brown-spotted buttocks that were hard with the cold. The bus suddenly veered to the left and stopped. My head fell forward against the office worker's calf with its bulging muscles holding up a garter.

There was the sound of the door being opened hurriedly. The girl conductor, uttering a scream that echoed on a limpid note like a child's, fled into the fog of the dark night. Bent over, I heard the child-like piercing cry recede in the distance. Nobody went after her.

"That's enough," the soldier's girl said to me in a low voice, her hand on my back. I shook my head like a dog, looked up into her glum face, then bent forward to resume the position like the sheep in front of me. In a frenzy, the woman joined in the soldiers' song at the top of her lungs. "Sheep killer! Sheep killer! Bang! Bang!"

After a while, the driver removed his white gloves and, with a look of weary distaste on his face, dropped his pants, baring large, plump buttocks.

A number of cars scraped past our bus. Some men on bicycles tried to peer in through the fog-bound windows. It was a late winter night like any other. The only difference was that we had our buttocks bared to the cold air inside the bus. We kept that position for a very long time. Then the soldiers tired out with singing, suddenly got off the bus, taking the woman with them. They abandoned us, with our exposed behinds, like so many stripped trees knocked over in a storm. We slowly straight-

ened up. It required some effort to endure the pain in our backs and shoulders. We had been sheep that long.

With my eyes fixed on my old overcoat that lay on the floor like some muddled animal, I pulled up my pants and fastened my belt. Slowly I picked up the overcoat, and when I had brushed the dirt off, I took my seat in the back, my head sunk forward. My buttocks, which had taken so much punishment, felt feverish inside my pants. I was so tired I did not bother about putting my overcoat on.

All the men who had been made sheep slowly drew up their pants, fastened their belts, and sat down. The sheep look dejected and they shivered, biting down on pale lips. The others, who had not been made sheep, pressed their fingers against their flushed cheeks and stared. Nobody said a word. The office worker, who sat next to me, flicked the mud from the cuffs of his trousers. Then, with fingers trembling with nervousness, he wiped his glasses. Almost all of the sheep were clustered in the back of the bus. The teacher and the others who had been spared were sitting in the front where, to a man, they turned excited faces to observe us. The driver, too, sat in the back with us. Mutely we sat and waited. Nothing happened. The girl conductor did not come back. There was nothing for us to do.

When the bus driver drew his gloves on, got back into the driver's seat, and started the bus, the people regained their sense of animation. They whispered among themselves in low voices and stared at us. The teacher in particular caught my attention. He was looking intently at us with burning eyes, and his lips were trembling. To avoid his gaze, I sank deeper in my seat, dropped my head, and closed my eyes. Somewhere inside me, shame hardened like a stone and began breaking out in poisonous spores everywhere.

The teacher stood up and came to the rear seat. I did not look up. He bent forward, holding on the metal rod running across the window, and addressed the office worker. "That



was an awful thing those scum did to you, wasn't it?" he said in a voice fiery with emotion. There was authority and passion in his voice, as though he represented the feelings of the people in the front of the bus—those who had escaped.

"Imagine making human beings do such a thing!"

The office worker remained silent and, with bowed head, stared at the hem of the teacher's raincoat.

"I am ashamed of myself for having watched in silence," said the teacher gently. "Are you in pain?"

The unhealthy-looking skin of the office worker's throat twitched as he tried to say, Why should I be in pain just because I bared my arse? Why don't you leave me alone. But he remained silent, his teeth clamped hard on his lower lip.

"I can't understand why those fellows were so obsessed with what they were doing," said the teacher. "I can't think it normal for them to treat Japanese like animals and enjoy it."

One of the passengers up front who had not been molested stood up to come and stand beside the teacher and, like him, peered at us with righteous indignation and impassioned eyes. Then all of the others in the front seats, cheeks flushed with anger, came and took their places alongside the teacher, jostling each other and looking down at us sheep in a group.

"Does a thing like that often occur in this bus?" one of them asked.

"It never got in the papers so I don't know, but it probably wasn't the first time," answered the teacher. "They went about it as though they had done it before."

"I could understand it if they got the women to lift up their skirts," said a man in an intense, angry voice. He was wearing the sturdy boots of a construction worker. "What was their idea getting men to drop their pants?"

"They were disgusting riffraff."

"There's no reason for us to keep quiet and let them get away with it," said the construction

worker. "If we don't say anything, they will grow bolder and make a habit of it."

Surrounding us like dogs out for the kill in a rabbit hunt, the passengers talked among themselves in loud angry voices. We sheep looked down meekly, sunk in our seats, and suffered them in silence.

"You must report what happened to the police," said the teacher in an increasingly strident voice, appealing to us. "I'm sure there will be no trouble locating the camp where the soldiers are stationed. If the police don't take action, I feel the victims can band together and appeal to public opinion. I am sure that nothing has been made public up to now only because the victims remained silent and knuckled under to them. I know—I've seen it happen."

The passengers who had been spared made emphatic sounds of approval around the teacher. But we who were sitting remained mute with bowed heads.

"Let's report this to the police. I will serve as witness," said the teacher in an animated voice as he placed his hand on the office worker's shoulder. Every inch of his frame seemed to say that he represented the will of the other passengers.

"I will testify, too," said another man.

"Let's do it," said the teacher. "Well, come on, all of you—don't sit there like deaf mutes. Stand up for your rights!"

Mutes—we sheep had turned into reluctant mutes. No one among us made an effort to open his mouth to speak. My throat felt dry, as though I had been singing for a long time, and my voice simply died in my throat. Shame had taken shape heavily like lead deep inside me, and even to move required too much effort.

"I think it wrong for you to remain silent and put up with your humiliation," said the teacher, exasperated at us sitting there with our heads hanging down. "It was also inexcusable for us to have watched and not said anything. We ought to get rid of our attitude of accepting things so spinelessly."

"We ought to teach those bastards a lesson,"



said another passenger, nodding in agreement with the teacher. "We will all support you."

But the sheep made no attempt to respond to their encouragement. We looked down in silence, as though their voices had been deflected by a transparent wall and lost on us.

"Those of you who were insulted, those of you who suffered this humiliation, must band together!"

Trembling with a sudden and violent anger, I looked up at the teacher. The sheep began to stir. Then one of us—he was wearing red leather jackets and had been huddling in a corner—stood up and, the rigid expression on his pale face not changing at all, went for the teacher. He grabbed the teacher by the throat and glared at him, a spray of spittle spewing out from narrowly opened lips; but he was unable to make a sound. The teacher offered no resistance and kept his hands down. There was a look of astonishment on his face. The passengers fell silent in their surprise and made no effort to restrain the man. The man shook his head as though he had given up the idea of hurling insults at the teacher, and then hit him hard on the chin. But when the office worker and another sheep held back the attacker who was trying to get at the fallen teacher, all strength suddenly drained away from him, and he went limply back to his seat. When the office worker and the other sheep sat down in silence, we all humbly hung down our heads again like small exhausted animals. The other passengers who were standing fell silent with uncertainty, and then went back to their seats in the front. Their sense of urgency had suddenly cooled, leaving in its wake the beginning of an accumulation of an uncomfortable and gritty sediment.

The teacher picked himself up from the floor and peered at us with eyes that had a trace of sadness about them. He carefully dusted off his raincoat. He made no attempt to speak to anyone, but from time to time he would turn to look at us, his face still blotched with red. I thought it unseemly of me to have tried to

deaden my sense of shame a little by watching the teacher get knocked down, but I was much too exhausted to let that idea torment me. Besides, it was cold. Yielding myself up to the faint vibrations of the bus, I fought off sleep by biting hard on my lip.

The bus stopped at a gasoline stand at the entrance to the town. All the sheep excepting the office worker and me, and some of the non-sheep, got off. As the driver made no move to take the tickets in the conductor's absence, several of the passengers rolled up the small, thin bits of paper into a ball and dropped them on the conductor's seat as they got off.

When the bus started off again, I sensed the eyes of the teacher, from which there was no escape, directed at me, and I fell prey to a faint terror. I could clearly feel that he wanted to strike up a conversation with me, and I did not know how to fend him off. I turned away and, twisting my body, tried to look out the wide window at the rear of the bus, but every inch of the glass was covered with tiny drops of fog and it dimly reflected the interior of the bus like a darkened mirror. I saw the face of the teacher looking intently at me, and I was seized by an unbearable irritation.

At the next stop I got off the bus almost at a run. When I passed in front of the teacher, I had to reject his pleading look by turning away as though to avoid some fatal contamination. Fog stagnated on the streets, and the air was like water with a thin density. I warded off the cold by raising the collar of the coat around my neck and gazed after the bus as it moved away, setting in motion lazy swirls of fog. I nursed a pitiful sense of relief. The form of the office worker rubbing the glass with the palm of his hand as he tried to look out at me loomed whitely at the rear of the bus. I felt an emotional shock as though I were parting from a member of my family. He was one of our group that had shared the experience of exposing our buttocks. But I grew ashamed of this ignoble bond between us and turned my eyes away. In order to set off for home to face



my mother and sister who I was sure were waiting for me in our warm family room, I had to pull myself together, I thought. I must not let them sense the humiliation deep inside me. I decided that, like a happy child, I would start running for no earthly reason, and I wrapped my overcoat tightly around me.

"Hey, there," said a disembodied voice behind me. "Hey, wait for me, will you?" The voice reopened the loathsome wound that was rapidly healing. My shoulders drooped with fatigue. I did not have to turn around to know that the voice belonged to the teacher in the raincoat.

"Wait for me," said the teacher again, this time in an excessively gentle tone of voice after he had extended his tongue to moisten his lips that were dry with the cold. I was filled with the premonition that it was going to be impossible to elude this man, and I listlessly made him wait to go on. The teacher exuded a strange power that seemed to envelop me like a cocoon. He was smiling.

"I certainly hope you're not going to suffer the incident in silence," he said, his eyes riveted on me. "The others are hopeless, but *you* will not tolerate their insult, you *will* fight them, won't you?" Fight them? I was aghast and looked closely at the teacher's face which concealed a passion that was about to burst into flames under a thin skin. The expression was one meant to console and coerce me at the same time.

"I will co-operate with you in your fight," said the teacher, one jump ahead of me. "I will go and testify wherever you want me to." I vaguely shook my head to reject his offer, and as I started to walk off, an arm vibrant with encouragement slipped under my right arm. "Let's go to the police and report it. We had better not put it off. The police box is right over there." He overrode my fumbling resistance, and as he walked along with resolute steps, almost dragging me along with him, he spoke again, laughing. "It will be nice and warm in there. There's no heat in my boarding house." Looking for all the world like close friends

despite the sharp antagonism I felt toward him, we crossed the road, arms linked, and stepped into the police box, its narrow frame of light looming out of the fog.

Inside the box, a young officer was bent over a notebook crammed with thickly-drawn letters. The red-hot stove had caused his slender, youthful neck to glow with the heat. "Good evening," said the teacher. The policeman raised his head and stared at me. I became flustered and looked up at the teacher, but he only stared down at me, standing between me and the entrance as though to prevent my dashing out from the booth. The policeman shifted his sleepy, bloodshot eyes from me to the teacher and there they rested. When they looked at me again, the policeman's eyes were alert. He seemed to have caught a signal from the teacher.

"Well, is something wrong?" the policeman demanded of the teacher, but keeping his eyes fixed on me.

"It's a matter concerning the foreign soldiers at the camp," said the teacher slowly to test the policeman's reaction. "This person was their victim."

"The soldiers?" asked the policeman, tense. "He and some others were assaulted by them." The look in the policeman's eyes tightened as they rapidly passed over my body. I knew he was trying to locate bruises or cuts on my skin, but they throbbed and festered not on my skin but underneath it, and I had no desire that anyone should poke around on them.

"Wait a minute. I'm not sure how to handle this by myself," said the young policeman getting up, suddenly beset by uneasiness. "I want to be very careful how I deal with problems connected with the camp." When he disappeared behind the woven rattan partition, the teacher extended his arm and put his hand on my shoulder. "Let's you and I do what we must." I hung my head and said nothing, feeling the warmth of the stove melting with an itching sensation the cold-stiffened muscles of my face.

A middle-aged policeman came in after the young policeman, rubbing his eyes in an effort



to shake off sleep. Then he turned his head on a neck hung with folds of tired flesh and looked straight at us. He offered us chairs. I ignored the offer and remained standing. The teacher took a chair, but stood up precipitately to stand guard over me. When the policemen sat down, the atmosphere of an interrogation filled the room.

"You say you were beaten up by the camp soldiers?" asked the middle-aged policeman.

"No, he wasn't beaten up," said the teacher, drawing in his chin with the black and blue bruise left there by the punch from the man in the leather jackets. "It was a more vicious assault."

"Make yourself clear," said the middle-aged policeman. "What do you mean by 'assault'?" The teacher looked at me with encouragement in his eyes, but I said nothing.

"Well?"

"Some drunken soldiers in a bus got him and others to take their pants off," said the teacher, underlying every word. "And on their backsides..." Shame shook me like the delirium of a fever. I clenched my hands as my fingers had begun to tremble in my overcoat pockets.

"What did they do to his backside?" asked the young policeman, making no attempt to conceal his puzzlement. The teacher looked at me and hesitated.

"Did they injure it?"

"They went slap slap on it with their hands," the teacher blurted out. The muscles on the young policeman's cheeks quivered as he struggled to suppress a laugh.

"What are you driving at?" asked the middle-aged policeman, peering at me with eyes avid with curiosity. "You're not playing a joke on us, are you?"

"What? Why should we..."

"All right, so let's say he had his backside slapped," said the middle-aged policeman, cutting off the teacher. "It wasn't fatal, was it?"

"No, it wasn't *fatal*," said the teacher vehemently. "But he was made to expose his but-

tocks in a crowded bus and to get down on all fours like a dog." Even I, looking down and burning with shame, could feel the policemen becoming intimidated by the force in the teacher's voice.

"Was he threatened?" asked the young policeman, mollifying the teacher.

"With a large knife," said the teacher.

"And you have no doubt it was the foreign soldiers from the camp?" asked the young policeman, his voice taking on zeal. "Try and give me all the details."

The teacher gave him all of the particulars of the event that took place in the bus. I listened to his report with my head drooping. Inside the wide, inquisitive eyes of the policemen I felt myself once again being stripped of my pants and drawers, sticking out my bare buttocks sprinkled with grainy pores like a chicken's, and bending forward.

"That's a terrible thing," said the middle-aged policeman, not even bothering now to suppress a lewd laugh that revealed his yellow gums. "And I suppose the others looked on in silence?"

"I was not looking on in a calm state of mind, I can tell you," said the teacher in a croak like a moan between clenched teeth.

"I see you've been hit on the jaw, haven't you?" said the young policeman, shifting his eyes from me to the teacher.

"Yes, but it wasn't a soldier," said the teacher sullenly.

"Well, at any rate, let's have him file a complaint, shall we?" said the middle-aged policeman. "Let me remind you that we must act carefully in cases like this, otherwise it will cause a lot of embarrassing repercussions."

"I hardly think our case will cause any repercussions," said the teacher. "They clearly resorted to violence and humiliated him. We refuse to bury the incident and pretend it did not happen."

"Well, I wonder what the legal aspects of the case are," said the middle-aged policeman, ignoring the teacher. "Give me your name and address."



"My name is..." began the teacher.

"Not you—the injured party first." I was panic-stricken and shook my head fiercely.

"Well?" said the young policeman, small frown-lines forming between his brows.

I must stubbornly refuse to reveal my name, I thought. Why had I followed the teacher into the police box? If fatigue overwhelmed me and I allowed myself weakly to act the role of the teacher's puppet, I would soon be broadcasting and advertising my humiliation to the world at large.

"Give them your name and address," said the teacher, his arm around my shoulder. "Then we will press charges."

I shook his arm off, but I did not know how to tell him that I had no intention of pressing charges. I was suddenly a deaf mute. I bit hard on my lower lip, and I felt a faint nausea from the smell of burning coal. I wished irritably that the whole thing were over with.

"Since this student is not the only victim, couldn't we do this—I will be the witness and make a report on the incident," said the teacher, taking another tack.

"We can't get involved in such a confusing case as this—where the victim himself hasn't said a word. And don't expect the papers to take it up either," said the middle-aged policeman. "We're not dealing with a murder or an injury. They slap his bare bottom. They sing." The young policeman quickly averted his face and smothered a laugh.

"Come on, what's the matter with you?" asked the teacher, exasperated. "Why haven't you said anything?"

Still looking down, I tried to slip out of the police box, but the teacher had maneuvered himself to block my move and, with feet firmly planted, had cut off my retreat.

"Come on, please," he said earnestly, pleading with me. "One of you has got to act as sacrifice in that incident. You may want to keep quiet and forget about it, but take the plunge—be the sacrifice. Be the sacrificial lamb."

Be a lamb? Anger roiled in me at the thought.

The teacher tried gravely to look into my eyes, an imploring, virtuous look on his face. I was more than ever determined to remain silent.

"If you keep silent, you are cutting the ground from under me. Come on, now, why are you acting this way?"

"Come by tomorrow or whenever you get things settled between you," said the middle-aged policeman, getting up. He was watching the two of us glaring at each other in silence. "But even if you do, you must understand that I won't guarantee we will take any action against the soldiers in the camp."

Stung by this, the teacher formed a retort, but the policeman laid massive hands on our shoulders and pushed us out as though he were seeing close friends on their way.

"It won't make any difference if we wait 'til tomorrow, will it? By then I hope you will have everything straightened out."

"But tonight is when I..." said the teacher, flustered.

"Haven't you given us the gist tonight?" said the policeman, a slight edge to his voice. "Besides, the man directly involved—your victim—has no intention of pressing charges, has he?"

The teacher and I stepped out of the police box. The light from the booth glowed thickly and was hemmed in by the lustrous fog.

"Do you intend to suffer your humiliation in silence?" asked the teacher in chagrin. Silently, I walked into the cold dark night beyond the enclosure of fog. I was exhausted and sleepy. I would go home, have a late meal in silence with my family and, to hug my humiliation I would draw my knees up in bed, pull the quilt over me, and fall asleep. Probably by next morning I would feel a little like my old self...

But the teacher would not leave me alone; he was right behind me. I walked faster. The vigorous footsteps of the teacher picked up the pace at my back. I turned around and for a brief moment our eyes locked. The teacher's eyes were feverishly exasperated. Tiny beads of fog clung to his brows and glittered.



"Why didn't you say anything to the police? Why didn't you file a complaint against the soldiers? Do you think you can forget by remaining silent?"

I turned away and, bending forward, started to walk rapidly away. I had decided to ignore the man on my heels. I walked on, not bothering to wipe away the cold drops of fog that froze my face. All the shops on both sides of the street had their lights off and their shutters down. Only my footsteps and the teacher's resounded in the deserted, fog-muffled street. At the moment that I was to leave the street to turn into the lane my house was located on, I took a swift backward glance at the teacher.

"You're a coward if you intend to keep your humiliation to yourself," he said, as though he had been waiting for me to turn around. "You'd be knuckling under without a fight."

To stress the fact that I had no intention of following his advice, I ran down the lane, but the teacher quickened his stride and kept up with me. I suspected he wanted to go so far as to push his way into my house to learn who I was. I glanced out of the corner of my eye at the gate light in front of my house and went by it. When I turned at the end of the lane and came out into the street again, the teacher slowed down and kept right after me.

"At least give me your name and address," he said behind my back. "Then I will keep in touch with you about steps for our future plan of action."

I was burning with irritation and anger. But what could I do? The shoulders of my overcoat had grown wet and heavy with the fog, which brushed coldly against my neck. Shivering, I walked along in silence. We walked like that for a long time.

When we approached the amusement center of town, I could see a streetwalker lying in wait for us, stretching out her neck from the dark like an animal. To avoid her, I stepped onto the road and crossed over to the other side. It was cold. I didn't know how to relieve the painful lump in my bladder. After hesitating

a moment, I urinated against a corner of a concrete wall. The teacher stood alongside me and, as he urinated, appealed to me. "Come on, now, at least give me your name, won't you? We just can't forget about that incident."

The streetwalker was peering at us through the fog. I buttoned up my overcoat and began silently to walk back the way I had come. When the teacher came abreast of me the prostitute threw a terse and obscene word at us. Stung by the fog, the mucous in my nasal passage throbbed, and I felt a chill. I felt battered by fatigue and the cold. My calves were in knots, and my swollen feet hurt inside my shoes.

I should have turned on the teacher, even with physical violence, and taken a stand against his absurd pursuit. But I remained speechless like a mute, and I felt exhausted. All I harbored against the teacher who kept walking alongside me was a helpless rage.

When we came again to the lane that led to my house, the night had deepened. I was seized by a fierce desire to collapse on my bed and give myself up to sleep. When I passed in front of my house, I could not bear the thought of going much farther away from it. An impulse welled suddenly inside me and took over. I bit down on my lip and shoved the teacher without warning away from me. Then I ran down the dark narrow lane. Dogs barked furiously inside the fences on both sides of the lane. Gasping for breath and with my chin stuck out, I ran, uttering a sound like a scream. My side began to hurt, but I pressed against it and kept running. At the corner at the end of the lane where the street light softly lit the fog, I was grabbed by the shoulder from the rear by muscular arms. The teacher drew me to him as though to embrace me, and he was breathing hard. Through my mouth and nostrils came puffs of my breath that melted white into the fog.

I will have to walk about the cold streets all night with this man on my tail, I thought, exhausted. A leaden feeling of helplessness filled my body, and from the depths of that feel-



ing a fretful sadness began to spread. With the last ounce of strength, I tore aside the teacher's arms. His large sturdy frame loomed up in front of me, rejecting my desire for escape. Floundering in despair, I glared at him. I did not know how to prevent defeat and misery from registering on my face.

"So you're going to keep your name from me, are you?" said the teacher in a voice hoarse with fatigue. It took all my will and all my

strength merely to glare silently at him. "Don't worry—I'll find out who you are," he said, his voice quivering with emotion. Suddenly tears welled up in his furious eyes. "Don't worry—I'll tell the whole world your name and about your shame. And I'll heap shame on both you and the soldiers so that you'll want to die. Until I learn your name you'll never get away from me."

*Translated by Frank T. Motofuji*

## A Note About the Author

"Sheep" (*Ningen no Hitsuji*) is the third of Ōe Kenzaburō's stories to appear in the *Japan Quarterly*. "The Catch" appeared in Vol. VI, No. 1, and "Lavish Are the Dead" in Vol. XII, No. 2. John Nathan, translator of "Lavish Are the Dead," wrote at the time, "His theme, if one can speak of themes apart from specific books, is the dignity of man, or rather the indignity to which society exposes him." These words apply equally well to "Sheep," also written in 1958. The critic Etō Jun wrote of "Sheep" as follows: "According to the postscript to his first collection of stories, *Lavish Are the Dead*, the unifying theme of this book is 'life in a state of imprisonment, a state of confinement within walls.' This 'state of imprisonment' is, if viewed in historical terms, the frustration experienced by modern man. Yet in a more abstract sense it is that sense of discontinuity experienced by those who view 'social justice' through a fictional structure. The originality of Ōe Kenzaburō's work lies in the double image formed by his superimposition of these two views of 'imprisonment.' 'Sheep' is a work which treats this contrast clearly and directly. The hero, a student living on part-time work, stands in direct opposition to the teacher who urges him to hide behind the shield of social justice and reveal publicly the insults to which he was subjected by the American soldiers on the bus. This clear-cut confrontation gives an allegorical quality to the story; this could just as well be victims of the atomic attacks and members of the anti-atomic-weapons movement. Throughout the entire work runs the authors' hatred and contempt for outsiders."

Subsequently the author has published numerous novels, short stories and essays, chief among which are: *Our Times* (novel), 1959; *A Solitary Youth's Vacation* (collected stories), 1960; *Sexual Man* (novel), 1963; *A Personal Matter* (novel), 1964 (New York, Globe Press, 1968); *Solemnly Walking the Tightrope* (essays), 1965; *Football in the First Year of Mannen* (novel), 1967; and *The Enduring Volition* (essays), 1968. In particular, his *Football in the First Year of Mannen* has earned Ōe recognition as a writer who has, as one critic has said, "transcended in an unprecedented manner the style that brought him popularity in his youth to enter the domain of literary maturity."