

A CERTAIN SMALL SHEPHERD

Adapted from the story by Rebecca Caudill
New Meadow Run School, 1977

SCENE 1: INTRODUCTION

Instruments: Overture of "Shepherds Rejoice"

Choir: "Sing All Men" v. 1,2,3,4.

(Enter Narrator, an old Appalachian Granny, who crosses stage to rocking chair, sits down, gets out handwork.)

Lights: Spot on Narrator:

Narrator: Hit surely does pleasure us that you-uns has come to hear this here story. It be a strange and wondrous one! 'Twas on a Christmas morn at Hurricane Gap, and not so long back at that. But before you hears 'bout Christmas morn, you-uns should hear tell 'bout Jamie, 'cause 'thout Jamie there haint no story to tell.

Now Jamie he was aborn on a queersome November night. That cold movin' in from North laid hits great heavy hand all a sudden on this here Gap!

In one hour's time, the nekked groun' turned brittle. Line Fork Creek fruz sollit in hits windin' bed, and lay still like a string drapped at the foot a' Pine Mountain.

Nothing but dark wind was ablowin' down the holler. Wild critters crept to thar dens. Cows stood haunched in their stalls. Women folk stuffed rags 'neath their doors.

Open Curtain:

At the foot of the Gap stood Jamies house. The wind howled hits fury. Hit pounded the doors of the house. Hit rattled the winders. Hit wailed like a banshee in the chimbley. (pause) On that there night, Jamie was aborn.

Enter: Angel with baby across the stage.

Choir: Hum: "Sing Hallelu" (once)

Sing: "Down in a Valley" v.1

Enter: Father with baby. Goes to fire.

Father: Saro, you and Honey, come see Jamie.

Enter: Saro & Honey, peer at baby in blanket.)

Saro: Hit's such a wee little brother!

Father: Give him time. He'll grow. When he's 5, he'll be big as Honey. When he's six, he'll be as big as you. You wants to hold him?

(Sara sits down, holding Jamie. Honey pulls back blanket and puts her finger in it. She looks up smiling at Father.)

Instruments and Choir: Hum "Sing Hallelu" (one time) EXIT FAMILY.

JAMIE GROWING UP

Narrator: Now, very soon after Jamie were born, the Lord took the mother to Himself. But Jamie, he et and slept and grew. Like other babies, he cut teeth. He larned to sit alone, and to crawl. When he was mos' a yar old, he toddled about, jes' like any one-year. At two, he toted sticks and stones, like other two-years. He throwed balls and built up wood chips, and knocked 'em down. Everthing that any other two-year-olds could do, Jamie could do 'ceptin fer one thing. Jamie couldn't talk; he couldn't speak nary a word.

Enter: GOSSIPS (improvised conversation)

1st Woman: You heard about that Jamie, Liza?

2nd Woman: I heerd hits two years old and cain't talk yet.

3rd Woman: Aye, wasn't that boy born on Wednesday? Wednesday's child is full of woe.

Father: (who has entered and overheard them) You ole cacklin' hens! You gossips! Jamie gets everything he wants by pointing. Give him time. He'll larn talking.

2nd Woman: Some poor folks will try even with a Wednesday's child.

Narrator: By three yars, Jamie could zip his shirt and tie his shoes. By four he follered his Father to the stable at milkin. He still couldn't speak nary a word. All he done, was make queer grunting noises.

One day, when he was five, Jamie he found a batch of new born kittens in a box behind the fire-place. He was wantin' in the worst way to tell Father. He was wantin' to say he'd been feelin' around in the box fer a ball he'd lost, and sudden like, his fingers felt somethin' warm and squirmy, and here was all them kittens.

Enter: Father (stamping feet, Jamie hides kittens again and runs to explain and tell. He can't and is frustrated and throws himself on the ground. Father comforts him.)

Father: Aw now Jamie. Don't fret yourself none. It's OK. (improvise)

Narrator: But now, how can you tell a somethin' iffen when you open your mouth you only grunt?

Instr. & Choir: hum "Sing All Men" (two times)

Narrator: Now one day the children of Hurricane Gap got together to play a game.

Instr. & choir: Sing "Old Joe Clark" (once)

(Children appear, cross stage in front of home, Saro & Honey come out of house.)

(The children greet each other freely, decide what to play...What shall we play?...Tip-tip-tap!...Hide and Seek!...Wolf-Wolf!...they decide on Hide and Go Seek. Jamie wanders out of the house, looks hopefully at Saro, who asks him if he wants to play. He nods and she tells the others. Who's it? Some arguing. They decide on _____, who counts to 50 while they run and hide on and offstage. As game goes on, he calls on those he catches. Saro calls: I'm home free!

When all are in, _____ says it's Jamie's turn. He sits on porch steps, begins to count in grunts. Children have started to run off when Clive calls, "Listen to Jamie." They stop to listen, and all except Honey and Saro laugh. Jamie runs after the children and pounds them. Honey helps him. They run away. Jamie throws himself on the ground, face down, kicking.)

Instr. & Choir: hum "Sing All Men" (once)

Enter: Father. (Sees Jamie, speaks gently)

Father: Now, now Jamie, have those chiluns been teasin' you again? Don't you pay 'em no mind. There's a new calf in the pasture. You hear me? A new calf. (Pause. Jamie lies still, listening.) I need you to help me bring it in to the stable. (Jamie sits up. He wipes his eyes. His father puts an arm around him. Jamie leans against him.)

I need yer to help me feed the cow extra, and make a clean bed of hay for the calf. (Jamie sniffs and nods his head.) In the mornin', I'll need yer to help plow the corn. You can walk in the furrow beside me, to watch that I plough straight. You might get some worms fer fishin'.

(Fathers leans back against the tree, and Jamie lies beside him.) It's a fine day, ain't it, Jamie? You can see a long way. Look at those birds. They like it too. See, way over there by the mountain, that old turkey vulture against the white clouds? See it turn up hits wing tips? Thets how you knows 'em. And lookie, thar's an old lazy carrion crow flapping away. Remember the sharp-shinned hawk I showed yer yesterday? Come on now. Thar's work to be done! Let's get us out to the ten-acres and...(EXIT)

Instr. & Choir: Hum "Old Joe Clark" (once)

JAMIE GOES TO SCHOOL

Narrator: Ever yar in September the school opened up at Hurricane Gap.

Saro: (to Honey) Come on, Hon. We mustn't be late.

Honey: Wait a minute. I've lost my pencil.

Saro: Good bye, Daddy.

Father: I'll be bringing Jamie to school later this morning. You keep an eye on him, Saro. He might be a-needin' yer.

Saro: Yes, Daddy.

Honey: Good bye! (Both rush out)

Father: Jamie, boy, come here. Yer going to school today, Jamie. Here's a store-boughten book, and a box of crayons for you. I'll go with you this morning. Oh, and here's your lunch, too.

CURTAIN: (They come out of house to front of stage. As they walk to school, out come the 3 old gossips again. They watch them go by, shaking their heads.)

1st Woman: Look at him would ya! Taking that there child to school!

2nd Woman: A poor foolish father, tryin' to make a somebody out of that no-account boy.

3rd Woman: Nuthin' 'll come of it....hyar?

Instr. & Choir: Sing "Old Joe Clark" (two times)

SCENE 2

Lights on School, CURTAIN OPENS

(Father and Jamie arrive at school. Miss Creech is already teaching reading and the others are doing assignments with natural movement and whispering between children. Honey & Saro are all attention as Father & Jamie enter.)

Father: (hesitantly) Mornin', Miss Creech.

Miss C: (surprised out of her teaching) Ah...Good Morning. 4th grade, go back to your desks and read on to page 12. Now, what can I do for you?

Father: I've done brought Jamie to school, Ma'am.

Miss C: But Jamie can't talk. With all these children and all these grades, I haven't time for a boy who can't talk.

Father: Aw, Teacher, 'taint no need fer you to larn 'im nothin'. Jes' let 'im set thar in school and he'll pick up a heap o' larnin'.

Miss C: But what will Jamie do all day long?

Father: He'll listen. He's pert as a cricket.

Miss C: All right. We'll try it. Jamie, come and sit here.
(Leads him to desk in front row.)

Father: Thank you, Miss Creech.

Miss C: I'm only trying it, now. If it doesn't go.....

(Father leaves before she can say more. School continues. Miss Creech picks up her lesson with 4th graders and Jamie looks all around and listens.)

Chanting: (4th grade chants 5 times table, lights fade at 5 times 5, and Narrator butts in:)

Narrator: So Jamie he went to school day by day. And ever day Jamie he listened. He larnt ever last word out'n the pages of his book. He larnt how to count. but the part of school Jamie liked the bestest was that there big piece of paper Miss Creech give him ever' day.

Miss C: Here, Jamie. Here's your sheet of paper to draw your letters and numbers on. Yesterday you did the best paper in the first grade. Everybody stop work and look at Jamie's neat letters and numbers and his picture of a fish. (Holds up) Now Jamie, see what you can do today.
(She resumes class, then rings bell for recess. Raining outside. Improvise conversation. She divides class into two teams, asks nature questions first of one side, then the other, and chalks up points.) Several questions, then:

Miss C: Now, who can tell the way you sight a turkey vulture?

(Jamie is the only one who raises his hand, tries to get out his answer, children laugh. He explodes by throwing all his books and crayons on the floor and running out of school...)

Miss C: Saro, go after Jamie and see if he's all right.

(Lights fade)

Instr. & Choir: Hum "I wander as I wander" (once)

Narrator: As day by day passed by, Jamie he kept on at school, and soon winter come, and Christmas time come.

Lights up on school:

Miss C: Now, children, look up from your work. It is time to begin practicing for the Christmas Play, and today I want to give you your parts. Joan, will you be Mary? And Honey, can you bring your doll to be the Baby? Henry, I'd like you to be Joseph, and Saro, you are to be an angel. How about you, Clive, taking the innkeeper's part? Joel, Beanie & Todd are to be the 3 Wise Men from the East. Then we need some Shepherds. You, Charlie, and Randy, and Ben can be the shepherds watching the sheep in the fields by night. The rest will sing carols. Remember to really sing out.

Now, let's try the scene where the angel appears to the shepherds. Push the desks back to make room. (action) Good. The shepherds are over here around the fire. Everyone else on this side, with the singers in front. Let's sing a verse of "Shepherd's Rejoice" while the shepherds are sleeping. (Jamie, in the front row, stands quietly. Then shoves Milly.)

Choir: "Shepherds Rejoice" vs. 1

Miss C: Now the angel appears to the shepherds. Saro, I think you know the angel's message.

Saro: (stiffly) Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people.

(Miss Creech beckons to shepherds. The shepherds jump up.)

1st Shepherd: Let us now go even unto Bethlehem to see this thing which is come to pass.

Choir: "Shepherds Rejoice" vs. 2 (Gets interrupted by the following)

(During singing, Jamie gets more and more restless. Miss Creech keeps putting him in place. He pulls Honey's hair, grabs ball from shelf and bounces it. Singing breaks down.)

Miss C: Wait a minute, children. Jamie, how would you like to be a shepherd?

Millie: He's too little.

Saro: No, he ain't. If my father were a shepherd, Jamie would help him for sure.

Miss C: All right, Jamie, you join the shepherds. Let's do the whole verse again, right to the end, with the shepherds finding their gifts for the child.

Choir: "Shepherds Rejoice" vs 2,3,4. (Only shepherds exit to the front. Curtains Close during vs. 3)

SCENE 3
HOME STORY FROM BIBLE

Instr. & Choir: Sing "Jesus born in Bethlea" v. 1,2,3,4.
CURTAIN OPENS after Vs. 3

(Honey, Saro make paper chains. Jamie strings popcorn. Father could be whittling.)

Honey: Father, we're practicing a Christmas play at school.

Saro: It's about the Christ Child. Cain't you read us the story from the big Bible, Father.

(Father takes large Bible and reads Christmas Story)

Father: And it came to pass in those days, that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. Everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up into Galilee to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, with Mary, his espoused wife. While they were there she brought forth her first born son (Jamie wanders off) and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. And in the same country there were shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. (Father continues in low voice, while Narrator speaks over him) Imagine, they shepherds all huddled up. Cold like. Shivering and watchin' out for their sheeps agin the wolves and lions...

Narrator: (Speaking on top of Father, as indicated above.) Jamie didn't hear nary a word. He was fer away on a hillside tendin' sheep.

ENTER ANGEL: (Goes to Jamie and puts arms out over him.)

Father: And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy. For unto you is born this day a Savior which is Christ the Lord."

Choir: Begin to hum very softly: "No Shelter for Mary"

Father: ...And ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (EXIT Angel) And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, (LOW voice cont. Narrator speaking simultaneously) And on earth peace, and good will toward men. The shepherds said one o another, Let us now go to Bethlehem to see this thing which is come to pass. And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger.

Narrator: (Speaking over Father...in the highest). And even if he was a wee shepherd and could only grunt when he talked, an angel wrapped around with dazzlin' light h'd told him that a wondrous thing would happen down in the hollow in a cow stall.

Honey: Jamie's asleep.

Father: (Gets out trundle bed, lifts Jamie into it, popcorn and all. Takes out package and hands it to Saro.) I got this at the store the other side of Pine Mountain today.

Honey: Look, green, gold, white, and red!

Father: Saro, make Jamie a shepherd's coat, like the picture in the Bible, and I'll find a crooked limb of a tree for a shepherd's crook.

CURTAIN CLOSE.

Choir: Sing "Sing Hallelu" vs. 1,2,3,4.

SCENE 4
AT SCHOOL

CURTAIN OPENS.

School children enter from front.

Narrator: And ever' day 'til Christmas, Jamie he went to school carryin' his Shepherd's crook and his shepherd's coat over his arm. He'd wear his coat 'n' carry his crook whenever the boys and girls played their play.

(Jamie enters carrying coat and crook)

School work--7th grade recite "Declaration of Independence." Fading voices down.

Narrator: All day Jamie he waited to practice the play. All day he sat listenin'. But who could tell whose voice he heerd. It might ha' been Miss Creech's. It might ha' been an angel's.

(Jamie sits in school with coat & stick)

Miss C: Now let's practice the last scene of our play. (She places children)

Instr. & Choir: "No Shelter for Mary" vs. 1,6,7,8, (While costumes are being tried on. Choir sings "No Shelter for Mary" vs. 1,2,3,4. and "Jesus born in Beathlea" vs. 1,3,4, while children act manger scene.

Miss C: That was good. Now, forget you are Joan, Henry, Saro, Clive, and Jamie. Remember you are Mary, Joseph, and an Angel and a shepherd and strange things are happening in the hollow where you live.

Children: Good bye, Miss Creech. Have a Happy Christmas, etc. (Children exit out back, get off dress-ups, take out slates and books.)

CURTAIN CLOSE

Instruments only: "Shepherds Rejoice" (two times)

Choir: Hum, "No Shelter for Mary" until the curtains open.

SCENE 5
HOME ON CHRISTMAS EVE

Curtain Opens

Honey: It's Christmas Eve. Tonight we do the play at school, Jamie.
(Jamie claps hands.)

Saro: (Looking outside) Look! Look everybody! It's snowing! You can't see across Line Fork in this storm. And where is Pine Mountain?

Honey: Where is the school, that's what I'd like to know.

Enter: Father with something for Jamie. Jamie looks at them questioningly.

Honey: If it had been snowing hard that night in Bethlehem, Jamie, the shepherds wouldn't have had their sheep out in the pasture. They would have had them in the stable, keeping warm. Wouldn't they, Father? Then they wouldn't have heard what the angel said, all shut indoors like that.

Father: Whin angels have somethin' ter tell a shepherd, they can fin' him any place, in any weather. If'n the shepherd is listenin', he'll hear.

Sound: of telephone ringing

Father: Hallo!

Miss Creech's voice on telephone: I've just got the latest weather report. this storm is going on all day and into the night. Do you think...(fade) (Children look at each other in dismay.)

Father: Let's seen what's Henny doin'.

Phone voice: (Glenn) Hallo. This's Henny's father, Miss Creech. We can't get out of Little Laurel patch in this weather, I'm afraid...

Narrator: That telephone! Once hit started, hit wouldn't stop. Ever one on Hurricane Gap listened in, and the news they heerd was always bad.

(Taped phone conversations...pauses between...different voices:

Ring long & short:

1. We've got drifts 10 feet high piled up along the Trace Branch Road. It's no use...

Ring 2 longs & short:

2. Hello. This is Henny's father, Miss Creech. We can't get out of Little Laurel patch in this weather, I'm afraid.

Ring short & 2 longs:

3. The road up Pine Mountain is closed from Hurricane Gap all the way to the rock quarry. I won't be able to get Joan down.

Phone goes dead. (Family clusters around phone during tape. Silence from children.)

Father: Some wather! Haven't had a storm like this since Jamie was born. People won't stir out of their houses on a day like this. Let's get somethin' to eat. (All eat except Jamie)
Shepherd's gotta eat, Jamie.
(Jamie stares into the fire.)

Saro: Honey and I don't feel like eating either, Jamie. But see how Honey's eatin'?
(Jamies still stares into fire)

Saro: Know what? Because we're dishappointed, we'uns won't save us that there Christmas stack cake for tomorrow. We'll jes' have us a slice today. Here, Jamie, have some now.

(No response from Jamie)

Honey: You still think that play was for real, don't you Jamie? Hit warn't for real. Hit was jes' a 'play-actin' we was doin' like some story in a book we'd made up.

Jamie: (Bursts into sobs, runs to father, who puts arm around his shoulders.)

Father: Sometimes, Jamie, angels say to shepherds: "Be of good courage."
(Father puts wood on fire. The storm still rages.)
Bring that popper, Jamie, and I'll pop some corn for you.
(Jamie shakes head.)

Saro: Want I should read to you?
(Jamie shakes head.)

Father: Why don't you help Honey to crack hickory nuts?
(Jamie shakes head.)

Honey: Jamie still thinks he's a shepherd.
(Jamie goes to window, stares out.)

Choir: "I Wonder as I Wander" vs. 1 & 3

(Jamie motions to father to come. Honey & Saro go to window too)

TAPE OF WIND STORM

Father: Lord, have mercy! (Opens door)

Come in from the cold!

(Couple enter, brush clothes, stamp feet, follow father to fire.)

Father: Saro, bring chairs for the folkses. Here, in front of the fire.

(Children stare at couple.)

Father: Where be ye come from?

Man: The other side of Pine Mountain.

Father: Why didn't you put up sooner?

Man: We did stop. At three houses. Nobody had no room.

(Silence)

Father: How far you goin'?

Man: Down Straight Creek. To her sister's.

Father: You'll never make it there tonight.

Man: Maybe...maybe there'd be a place in your stable?

Father: We could lay you'uns pallets on the kitchen floor.

Woman: The stable be better.

Father: The stable's that cold!

Woman: It'll do.

Father: Wait, I'll get some warm kivers. (Returns with quilts, lights the lantern.)

(To Saro:) Get them some supper ready, Saro.

Dulcimer & Choir: Hum "I Wonder as I Wander" once.

(Father & Couple exit. Children go to window & watch. Father returns.)

Honey: How long be the man and woman stayin'?

Father: All night tonight, maybe more. Here, put some supper in the bucket for them.

Saro: I'll put them some of the Christmas stack cake in.

Father: (picking up the bucket) It's cold in that there stable, bitter cold. Might git some more kivvers. (Turning back) Don't wait up for me. I may be gone a good while. (EXIT)

Sound: Wind blowing (Children look out of window)

Narrator: Over the earth, the dark thickened. Still the wind blowed and the snow whirled.

Sound: Clock strikes 8.

Honey: I wish Father'd come. Why don't Father come?

Saro: Why don't you jes' hang up yore stocking and go to bed, Honey? Jamie, it's time to hang up yore stocking too and git to bed.

Honey: That Jamie! He still thinks he be's a shepherd. (She hangs up her stocking).

Saro: Jamie, ain't you goin' to hang up yore stockin' now and get to bed? (She hangs up her stocking.) Jamie, good night! (EXITS) } 0

(Jamie stares into fire. Soft wind sound. He listens, but then drops off to sleep.)

Choir: Hum "Sing Hallelu" one time.
Sing: Vs. 2 "Mary had a Baby" one time

(Angel passes Jamie on way to stable. Pauses over him. Jamie sits up with a start, listens, and lies down again.)

Choir: "Gloria" (no instruments)

(Jamie wakes and sits up. Lies down and pulls quilt over head. Father enters and hangs up Jamies's stocking--puts in oranges. Improvises conversation to himself.)

Father: Get up, Jamie. Put your clothes on, quick now!

(Jamies jumps up.)

Father: Why, Jamie, you're already dressed! Honey, Saro, come quick!

Saro: What's happened, Father?

Honey: What are we going to do?

Father: Get your coats on. Get some boots, too. Come with me.

Honey: Where are we going?

Father: To the stable. (Father leads children out to the stable where the couple is seated on bales of hay.)

CURTAIN CLOSE: Choir: Hum "Jesus Born in Bethlea" once. Sing vs. 1.

SCENE 6
STABLE

CURTAIN OPEN:

Mother: You came to see? (Saro, then Honey peek in blanket)

Saro: You look too, Jamie.

(Jamie takes one quick look, runs out. Saro starts running after him calling, "Jamie!")

Father: Wait, Saro.

(Jamie runs to house. Puts on shepherd's coat, picks up stick. runs to door, looks back. Runs to stocking, empties it, and takes dime in one hand, orange in other. Runs straight back to the child. Father and Saro stand back as Jamie enters.)

Jamie: He-He-Here's a Christmas gift for the Child

Saro: Father, Father, listen to Jamie!

(Jamie runs to Father who hugs him)

Jamie: (Lays orange by child) And here's a Christmas gift for the Mother. (Puts dime into her hand.)

Woman: Surely the Lord lives this day!

(Family kneels near Jamie)

Father: Surely, the Lord does live this day and all days, and He is loving and merciful and good.

Choir & Instr: "Sing All Men" vs. 1 & 2.