

I Was Looking for a Lamb When the Angel Appeared

A Monologue for a Shepherd

*Selected from the collection
"VOICES OF THE NATIVITY"*

By Jill Lamkin

Length: 3 pages of dialogue (1288 words)

Performance time: About 8 minutes

The Story

A simple shepherd tells his story of angels and their pronouncement to find the Newborn King. The shepherd finds the stable, and there the Baby Jesus asleep in his mother's arms. The shepherd falls to his knees in reverence and prayer. As he leaves, he remembers his lost lamb and spies it by the manger, also sleeping peacefully.

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A Monologue for a Shepherd

I was looking for a lamb when the angel appeared. The same little lamb that always wanders off. Every day and most nights, I have to look for him. That night I found him standing beside an outcropping of rocks. He stood motionless. His small woolly face was turned toward the sky. I looked up, too. At first, I saw only the black sky and the brilliant stars. Then, the stars seemed to dim when a bright light began to shine just above the rocks. In the middle of the light was the angel. I was terrified. I wanted to call out to the other shepherds. I wanted to run, but all I could do was stand there beside the lamb, and look up into the sky and tremble.

A shepherd expects visitors when he's out with his flock; wolves, bears, mountain lions. But not angels. I had never seen an angel. Wasn't sure they even existed, except in stories. And I never took the stories seriously, because (*Pauses.*) they would have scared me, and nothing scared me. Except maybe God. But of course, I had never seen Him either. When I thought of God, I imagined Him to be like the bears or the lions. I respected His strength and tried to keep my distance.

I had seen the little gods. They are scattered across the countryside. They stare with eyes of wood or gold or stone; some laughing, some crying, most of them angry. But these gods didn't scare me, nor did I respect them. Each was only god over a small piece of nature. I've seen too much of nature to think they have any real power. No, there can only be one God...one God of the stars, and the pastures, and the streams, and the lambs, and the people, but of all people? Of me? I didn't know.

There are people who know. They dress in costly robes, and burn incense and say prayers. They sacrifice animals. They know God. They are accepted by him. And there are people like me, who live with their flocks of sheep. People who wear coarse clothes and burn whatever they can find in the field to keep warm. People whose prayers are for a night of safety or a lost lamb. (*Pauses.*) Do they burn incense for us? Do they pray for our sins? I didn't know that either.

When I looked up at the endless sky, I wanted so much for there to be a God...one God...a big God. I'm not sure how to say it...I...I wanted God to notice me out here... notice the other shepherds, even notice the sheep. This was the kind of God I hoped for, a God who cared about my little lost lamb. I could worship...even love a God like this. (*Long pause.*) The angel looked at my hand trembling on the lamb's head. "Do not be afraid," he said. "I am bringing you good news, news of joy for all people." I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Did this messenger realize he was in a field talking to a shepherd? When he said all people, did he mean it? All people? Me? The angel seemed to look all the way to my heart. Then he said, "Today, in David's city a savior has been born for you. He is Christ the Lord. Go and find him. This is a sign for you, the baby is wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly, there were (*Pauses as though at a loss for words.*) beings in the sky, hundreds of them, even more. They outnumbered the stars. When they spoke together it sounded like music. I understood their words. "Glory to God in the highest, and on the earth, peace among men with whom God is pleased." As suddenly as they came, they were gone. I stood by the little lamb, again staring up into the starry night.

We just stood there for a while, neither of us moving. The angel's words ran through my head. I had to listen to them again. They were too incredible. Good news...for all people. All people! A savior born...for me...today! And the sign. What did the angel say? A manger? The baby was sleeping in a feed trough? I could go to a feed trough. I could never go to a palace, or into the temple. Maybe this Christ, this Savior was born for me. A feed trough! I had to go find him. I had been invited by an angel.

When I could move again, I picked up the lamb and ran to find the other shepherds. One of them stood staring into the sky, as I had done, the others were talking excitedly about where the baby might be. We found a safe place for the sheep, and left to find the baby. I took the little wandering lamb with me.

In the first place we looked were only animals. The second was a stable with a manger in the corner, but it held only food. The third place was a stable on the edge of Bethlehem. It was usually empty, but when travelers were in town, their animals would stay in there for the night. The little lamb squirmed. My arms ached from carrying him. I set him down.

We looked across the field at the stable, wondering if it held a baby. My friend said, remember when we were boys and we overheard that old shepherd talking about the treasure hidden in the caves? Remember searching through the caves? We looked through so many, but we were always sure the treasure would be waiting for us in the next cave.

My other friend asked, "Did you ever find it?" I shook my head. Still I was determined to look inside the next stable. The night was so quiet that we heard the tiny, new cry. It came from that stable. We ran across the field and stopped just outside the door. We weren't sure what to do or what to say, but we looked in. A young woman smiled and motioned us in. The young man behind her said, "He's over here. He is just going to sleep. You can see Him." We walked through the shadows and past the animals to where the young man stood. Then I saw he stood next to a manger. He reached into the manger and tenderly lifted out a baby. He was wrapped in cloths and couldn't have been more than a day old. The young man said, "It's a boy. His name is Jesus."

I touched His tiny hand and he curled His fingers around mine. I stood there looking into a little, wrinkled, sleeping face. Then I did something I had never done. I knelt down in the dirt and the straw and I prayed. I prayed to the one true God. I had no incense or robe, but I know He accepted my prayer. I know He accepted me. My friends told the young man and woman about all the angels had said. They looked as amazed as we were.

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