

The Story of the Shepherd Boy

～ Lisa Miccio

Editor's Note: *This story was written for a little boy on the autism spectrum in Lisa Miccio's kindergarten class. This therapeutic protection story was presented as a puppet story to introduce a shepherd's tent that was hung up in the classroom. Appropriate songs can be added at various points in the story.*

Once upon a time there was a little boy who lived with his father and brother. They lived in a valley at the bottom of a tall mountain. Fir and spruce trees grew in the forest atop the mountain. The trees grew close together and formed a dense canopy of branches. Little sunlight shined through the canopy or made it down to the forest floor. Animals roamed the woods, and owl, raccoon, and a pack of wolves made their home in the forest.

Down in the valley the sun shined brightly, and even when the rain fell from the sky, the boy's father and brother would venture to their fields and meadows to tend to their sheep. The summer days were long, and as the boy played with the lambs, he dreamed of becoming a shepherd like his father and brother. He wanted to help them protect and guard the sheep.

Summer's sun soon began to fade, and the days grew short. Frost returned to the valley. As the boy was tucked into bed in the evening, he could hear the mountain wolves singing songs to the autumn moon, and he was glad that his father was keeping watch over the little lambs. He knew that they would be safe from all harm.

One night the boy awoke suddenly. He heard voices outside his window and when he peered out into the moonlit evening, he could see snow blanketing the fields and meadows of the valley. His father and brother were herding the sheep into the shelter of the barn.

The boy quickly jumped from bed and hurried to the kitchen door. He pulled on his warm wool coat, his boots, and hat, and hurried outside to where his father stood counting the sheep. A sheep and lamb were missing, and as his father turned to go back to the fields to find them, the boy tugged on father's sleeve, and shyly asked him if he could help him find the lost lamb.

"A storm is coming, and it's hard to see in the dark. I can't worry about you getting lost while I look for the sheep and her lamb," his father replied. His brother



Leslie Burchell-Fox with the Shepherd Boy table puppet play.

was busy herding sheep into the barn. Certainly, father could use help finding the ewe and her lost lamb. So, the boy looked up at his father with quiet longing and determination until his father gazed down at him and said, "Tonight, you become a shepherd." Then together they went in search of the missing sheep.

Before long, the boy heard the bleating of the little lamb. He found it behind brambles growing at the edge of the meadow, but there was no sign of the ewe. Thick snowflakes were falling faster and heavier than before, so father took the shepherd's tent from his pack and put it up near the brambles. The boy had never been allowed inside the tent because it was not a place to frolic and play. Only the shepherds used it. Sometimes to sit quietly after a mid-day meal or to rest at night when watching over the sheep.

"You must stay here in the shelter of the tent and protect the little lamb, while I continue to search for its mother. I will return as soon as I find her," father said to him. Gently holding the lamb in his arms, the boy entered the shepherd's tent and closed the flap. It was cozy and quiet inside the tent. As he gently stroked and comforted the little lamb, he felt safe and warm. Father, he knew, would be back soon.

Then sure enough, just as the boy was drifting off to sleep, father opened the flap of the tent. The snow had stopped altogether. Sunlight glowed pink and gold in the morning sky as the shepherd boy and his father returned home with the sheep and her lamb following safely behind them. ♦