

Benjamin Starling

Book and Lyrics by Danny Pitt Stoller
Music by Jessica Fogle

Story adapted by the authors
from J.M. Barrie's *The Little White Bird*

Benjamin Starling was workshopped and developed at the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. It was first produced at the Spirit of Broadway Theatre in Norwich, Connecticut, under the direction of Brett Bernardini.

Synopsis

Jamie has been terrorizing her younger brother Tommy with tales of a fire-eyed goat that haunts their bedroom. Her parents suspect that she's trying to cope with their recent divorce, but they can't seem to change her behavior. Jamie's attitude only starts to change when she starts identifying with her father's stories about Benjamin Starling, the boy who tried to be a bird. As Benjamin's fantastical adventures unfold onstage, we see Jamie developing a new understanding of her family and herself.

Characters

Jamie — An eleven-year-old girl, precocious and obstinate.

Tommy — Her eight-year-old brother.

Linda — Their no-nonsense mom.

David — Their starry-eyed dad.

Benjamin — The boy who would be a bird.

Various birds and other animals.

Scene One

The bedroom of JAMIE and TOMMY. LINDA, the children's mother, is tucking them into bed. JAMIE, a spirited young woman of eleven, is not tired.

LINDA

Now you sleep good tonight like a good boy, okay?

TOMMY

I'll try.

LINDA

You don't want to be tired tomorrow.

JAMIE

I'm not tired!

LINDA

You don't have to go to sleep right away, okay? You can stay up and read as long as you want. You have your itty bitty book light?

JAMIE

Tommy can't sleep with it on because he's a baby.

LINDA

Well – you two will just have to figure something out. Goodnight, sweetheart.

TOMMY

Goodnight!

LINDA

Jamie, don't stay up too late.

She switches off the light and exits. JAMIE sits up in her bed and reads with the book light. TOMMY tosses and turns, obviously a million miles away from sleep.

JAMIE

Can you stop wiggling around in your bed?

TOMMY makes an obvious effort to keep still, but he is too anxious. He continues tossing and turning.

JAMIE

I'm trying to read!

TOMMY puts a pillow over his head – puts it under his head – beats the pillow out of exasperation. He can't sleep.

JAMIE

Tommy!

TOMMY

I can't sleep!

JAMIE

Well, that's just great. I can't read 'cause you can't sleep.

TOMMY

I try closing my eyes but they just open by themselves.

JAMIE

That's beautiful. Are you gonna do this every friggin' weekend?

TOMMY

I can't help it.

Something whispers a mischievous idea in JAMIE's ear.

JAMIE

You know, it's a good thing there aren't any *goats* here; they get very mad at little boys who don't go to sleep.

TOMMY

There aren't any goats.

JAMIE

I know. That's what I just said. Pretty lucky for you.

TOMMY

Shut up.

JAMIE

You shut up. I just hope the window's locked.

TOMMY

Check?

JAMIE

You check.

TOMMY

Anyway goats can't go through windows.

JAMIE

Some of them can. Some of them can go through walls because their eyes are made of fire and they can burn right through anything they want.

TOMMY

Shut up, there's no such thing!

JAMIE

You're right. There's no such thing.

["GOAT SONG"]

SEE THAT SHADOW
OVER THERE?
DOESN'T IT LOOK
LIKE AN ANIMAL
READY TO POUNCE?
WHAT WAS THAT SOUND?
SOUNDS LIKE IT COULD BE
GETTING CLOSER

TOMMY

I'm gonna tell Mom.

JAMIE

DON'T WORRY, NOTHING'S
GONNA SCARE
YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOOK
AT THAT ANIMAL
REARING ITS HEAD
OVER YOUR BED!
DON'T THINK IT COULD BE
GETTING CLOSER

TOMMY

Stop it!

JAMIE

BUT I HEARD OF A TIME
WHEN THIS BOY
WAS SLEEPING IN HIS BED
AND A GOAT CAME

JAMIE (CONTINUED)

INTO HIS ROOM
AND IT BROKE
OFF THE DOORKNOBS
WITH ITS TEETH SO HE COULDN'T GET
AWAY AND IT RAN
AROUND IN THE ROOM
AROUND AND AROUND AND
AROUND IN THE ROOM
AND IT ATE HIS TOES

TOMMY

MOM!!!

LINDA

Entering hurriedly:

What?! What is it, honey?

TOMMY

Jamie's saying there's a goat in the room and it's gonna eat my toes!

LINDA

Tommy. There's no goat in this room.

TOMMY

Crying:

I know.

LINDA

So just close your eyes and try to relax. You need to sleep so you can go to the park tomorrow with your dad. Jamie – cut it out.

She exits.

JAMIE

Tattletale.

TOMMY

Mommy said cut it out.

JAMIE

I'll cut *you* out.

TOMMY

That doesn't mean anything.