

Thank you for your interest in our production of The Best Christmas Pageant Ever. It is a play about putting on a play (pageant). The Pageant itself is the penultimate scene of the play and you will be onstage in costume accompanying the children's choir.

We will need you at most rehearsals. They will be Wednesday evening 6-8.
Friday afternoon 1-3 and Saturday morning 9-Noon. From October 20 to December 6.

For your auditions we would like you to prepare 1 monologue from our production. There are many parts for many characters. The character list will be on the website's information page.

In the packet there are colors on the side of the page that will let you choose which one to use.

Blue - Boys

Pink - Women

Yellow - Men

Peach - Girls

Green - Small Children (6 and younger)

Thanks again, and we hope to see you audition.

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Because he keeps them miles away.

BETH. That's my little brother, Charlie. That's what he said when the Sunday school teacher asked what was his favorite thing about church. Charlie said, "No Herdmans." That made the teacher mad because all the other kids said nice things about God and Jesus and good feelings. But old Charlie told the real truth — *No Herdmans!*

(Spotlight off BETH. HERDMANS exit s.l. Curtain rises on living room-dining room set. There is a table and four chairs s.r.: A door u.r.c.: A sofa, lounge chair, end tables, one with telephone, s.l. As curtain rises, MOTHER, FATHER, and CHARLIE enter through the door. BETH moves back to join them. They are returning from church, and all except BETH wear coats. FATHER has a newspaper under his arm. CHARLIE speaks as he enters.)

CHARLIE. I don't care what everybody else said, that's what they really thought. All that other stuff is okay but the main good thing about church is that the Herdmans aren't there, ever. *(CHARLIE drops his coat on sofa.)*

FATHER. *(taking his coat off)* That's not a very Christian sentiment, it seems to me.

MOTHER. *(collecting the coats)* It's a very practical sentiment. Charlie was black and blue all last year because he had to sit next to Leroy Herdman in school. *(She exits to hang up the coats.)*

FATHER. Is he the worst one? Leroy?

CHARLIE. They're all the worst one.

BETH. Ralph's the biggest, so if Ralph gets you . . .

CHARLIE. That doesn't make any difference. Gladys isn't big, but she's fast, and she's mean, and she bites.

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Mary had to use whatever there was. What would you do if you had a new baby and no bed to put the baby in?

IMOGENE. We put Gladys in a bureau drawer.

MOTHER. (*slightly taken aback*) Well, there you are. You didn't have a bed for Gladys, so you had to use. . . something else.

RALPH. Oh, we had a bed . . . only Ollie was still in it and he wouldn't get out. He didn't like Gladys. (*yells at OLLIE*) Remember how you didn't like Gladys?

BETH. (*to ALICE*) That was pretty smart of Ollie, not to like Gladys right off the bat.

MOTHER. *Anyway . . . a manger is a large wooden feeding trough for animals.*

CLAUDE. What were the wadded up clothes?

MOTHER. The what?

CLAUDE. (*pointing in the Bible*) It said in there . . . she wrapped him in wadded up clothes.

MOTHER. *Swaddling* clothes. People used to wrap babies up very tightly in big pieces of material, to make them feel cozy . . .

IMOGENE. You mean they tied him up and put him in a feedbox? Where was the Child Welfare?

GLADYS. The Child Welfare's at our house every five minutes!

ALICE. There wasn't any child welfare in Bethlehem!

IMOGENE. I'll say there wasn't!

MOTHER. (*raising her voice*) . . . And there were shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the Glory of . . .

GLADYS. (*Leaps up, flinging her arms out*) Shazam!

MOTHER. What?

GLADYS. Out of the black night, with horrible vengeance, the Mighty Marvo . . .

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MOTHER. Yes. She suggested your father.

FATHER. Does that mean I have to go?

(Spot off family: Up on MRS. ARMSTRONG, in mid-sentence of yet another telephone directive.)

MRS. ARMSTRONG. And, Grace, don't use just anybody's baby for Jesus . . . get a quiet one. Better yet, get two if you can . . . then if one turns out to be fussy, you can always switch them . . .

(Curtain comes down during this speech. Spot on BETH, D.S.R.)

BETH. My mother didn't pay much attention to Mrs. Armstrong. She said Mrs. Armstrong was stuck in the hospital with nothing to do but think up problems, and there weren't going to be any problems. Of course, Mother didn't count on the Herdmans. That was Charlie's fault.

(Spot off BETH: Up on LEROY HERDMAN and CHARLIE, entering S.L.)

CHARLIE. Hey, Leroy, you give me back my lunch!

LEROY. Sure, kid, here. *(hands him a lunch bag)*

CHARLIE. *(looks inside)* You stole my dessert again!

LEROY. How do you know?

CHARLIE. Because it isn't here.

LEROY. What was it?

CHARLIE. Two Twinkies.

LEROY. That's right. That's what it was. *(starts to leave)*

CHARLIE. Hey, Leroy! You think it's so great to steal my dessert every day and you know what? I don't care if you steal my dessert. I get all the dessert I want in Sunday School.

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because his father's the minister. Nobody wants to be Joseph.

CHARLIE. Nobody wants to be *in* it!

FATHER. (to BETH) What are you going to be this year?

BETH. I'm always in the angel choir.

FATHER. Well, why can't Charlie be in the angel choir?

CHARLIE. Because I can't sing!

FATHER. From what I've heard in the past, that's not a serious drawback. *Away In A Manger* always sounds to me like a closetful of mice.

CHARLIE. (to BETH) What do you wear in the angel choir?

BETH. Bedsheets.

CHARLIE. Oh, boy, some choice . . . a bathrobe or a bedsheet. Come on, let's go watch tv. (*They start out.*)

MOTHER. (*entering from kitchen with coffee cup*) You know, Mrs. Armstrong works very hard to give everyone a lovely experience.

BETH. Oh, Mom, Mrs. Armstrong just likes to run things. (*They exit.*)

MOTHER. They're right, of course. She directs the pageant, she runs the potluck supper, she's chairman of the Bazaar . . . I think Helen Armstrong would preach the sermon if anyone would let her.

FATHER. Is that George Armstrong's wife?

MOTHER. Yes.

FATHER. Well, maybe she'll try to manage the hospital, because that's where she is. I saw George at the drug store and he told me his wife broke her leg this morning. . . . she'll be in traction for two weeks and laid up till the first of the year.

MOTHER. The first of the year! . . . Why, they'll have to cancel Christmas.

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of scotch tape, box of tissues and a big white first aid kit with a red cross on the side of it.)

MOTHER. I thought it might look like a palm tree. (*looks at the plant*) I see now that it doesn't. . . . Oh, I don't have any idea what's going to happen tonight! We've never once gone through the whole thing, and the Herdmans still think it's some kind of spy story. It may be the first Christmas pageant in history where Joseph and the Wise Men get in a fight and Mary runs away with the baby.

(They are setting up the tree, the manger, counting the shepherds' crooks, etc. during their dialogue. House lights remain up, so that when the pageant begins, the lights can go down, and we will see it as a play within a play.)

MOTHER. Where are the kids?

FATHER. All the kids in the world are down in the basement, putting on bedsheets.

MOTHER. I mean our kids.

BETH. (*as they enter from s.l.*) We're here.

MOTHER. Well, go get your costumes on. It's getting late.

BETH. It's just going to be awful, you know. They look like trick or treat—all dirty and fastened together with safety pins and wearing their mouldy old sneakers . . . Mary and Joseph, I mean. They look like refugees or something.

FATHER. Well . . . that's what they were . . . Mary and Joseph. They were refugees, in a way. They were a long way from home, didn't have any place to stay, didn't know anybody. They were probably cold and hungry and tired... and messy.

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MOTHER. I know, that, Helen.

MRS. ARMSTRONG. Yes, and then I tell them about Joseph, that he was God's choice to be Jesus' father. That's how I explain that. Frankly, I don't ever spend much time on Joseph because it's always Elmer Hopkins, and he knows all about Mary and Joseph . . .

CHARLIE. I thought Mrs. Armstrong was in traction. How can she talk on the phone if she's in traction?

BETH. What do you think traction is?

CHARLIE. Like when they put you to sleep?

FATHER. No such luck. . . . Beth, we need salt and pepper . . . and napkins . . . (*BETH exits to kitchen.*)

MRS. ARMSTRONG. . . . but I do explain about the Wise Men and the shepherds and how important they are. And I tell them, there are no small parts, only small actors. Remind the angel choir not to stare at the audience, and don't let them wear earrings and things like that. And don't let them wear clunky shoes or high heels. I just hope you don't have too many baby angels, Grace, because they'll be your biggest problem . . .

(*FATHER takes slice of bread, hands the plate to CHARLIE, who takes five or six slices, and reaches for butter.*)

FATHER. You will leave some for the rest of us, won't you, Charlie?

CHARLIE. I'm hungry. Leroy Herdman stole my lunch again.

FATHER. How can you let him do that to you, day after day?

CHARLIE. How can I stop him? . . . Where's the chicken?

FATHER. (*to MOTHER*) Grace, where's the chicken?

MOTHER. (*hand over phone*) It's still in the oven.

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ELMER. Well, Beverly got sick and we didn't even start yet.

MOTHER. We don't *know* that Beverly got sick. Now, I want you to think about Mary. . . . We all know what kind of person Mary was. She was quiet and gentle and kind, and the girl who plays Mary should try to be that kind of person. Who would like to volunteer for that part? (*Everyone looks at ALICE, but it is IMOGENE who raises her hand.*)

MOTHER. Did you have a question, Imogene?

IMOGENE. No, I want to be Mary . . . and Ralph, over there, he wants to be Joseph.

RALPH. Yeh, right.

MOTHER. Oh. Well . . . Well, I'll just make a list of volunteers for these parts and then we'll all decide who it should be. (*writes on her clipboard*) Ralph Herdman. Now, who else would like to be Joseph? . . . Did you raise your hand, Elmer?

ELMER. No.

MOTHER. Just raise your hands, please, any volunteers. . . . Any of you shepherds? (*Her eye falls on CHARLIE, who makes every effort to seem invisible.*) Very well . . . Ralph Herdman will be our Joseph. Now, Imogene has volunteered to be . . . (*Tiny break here, as if she can hardly bear to connect IMOGENE with MARY.*) . . . Mary. I'll just write that down. . . . What other names can I put on my list? . . . Janet? . . . Roberta? . . . Alice, don't you want to volunteer?

ALICE. (*choking it out*) No, I don't want to.

GLADYS. I'll be Mary!

IMOGENE. Shut up, Gladys. I'm already Mary. You be a Wise Man.

MOTHER. Well, the Wise Men are usually boys. Of course, they don't *have* to be, and we could . . .

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cake. We'll try not to bother you . . . I guess this is your dress rehearsal.

MOTHER. (*glances at the uncostumed crowd*) It's supposed to be. . . . Oh, Edna . . . didn't I hear that your niece had a baby a month or so ago? . . . A little girl?

MRS. McCARTHY. (*pleased and proud*) Yes! She's five weeks old, and . . .

MOTHER. Well, I wonder how it would be if I were to call your niece and ask if we could borrow . . . (*Mrs. McCARTHY, seeing the lay of the land and not liking it, leaps in.*)

MRS. McCARTHY. Grace . . . no! I could make up some lie and tell you the baby's sick or cranky or something, but the truth is that she's perfectly healthy and happy and beautiful, and we all want her to stay that way. So we're certainly not going to hand her over to Imogene Herdman. Sorry, Grace. (*MRS. McCARTHY leaves.*)

DAVID. Mrs. Bradley, you can have my little brother for Jesus.

MOTHER. (*newly hopeful*) I didn't know you had a new baby, David.

DAVID. He's not new. He's four years old, but he's double-jointed and he could probably scrunch up.

MOTHER. Well, I don't think . . .

IMOGENE. I'll get us a baby.

MOTHER. How can you do that?

IMOGENE. There's always two or three babies in carriages outside the supermarket. I'll get one of them.

MOTHER. Imogene! You can't just walk off with somebody's baby! . . . I guess we'll forget about a baby. We'll just use the doll.

IMOGENE. Yeh. That's better, anyway . . . a doll can't bite you.

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may quit . . . or get sick. Now that's all for today, boys and girls, and you can go. . . . (*There is a scramble for the door. BETH and ALICE move D.S. calling after them.*) . . . but I expect to see everyone here on Wednesday at 6:30! (*MOTHER moves D.S. and takes ALICE's arm.*) Alice, what's wrong with you? Why in the world didn't you raise your hand?

ALICE. (*miserably*) I don't know.

MOTHER. You don't know! Alice, I expected you . . .

(*Sounds of a scuffle offstage; yells—ouch! . . . Cut it out! . . . Let go. . . . Let me go!*)

VOICE. Mrs. Bradley! Get Gladys offa me!

MOTHER. . . . to volunteer. Don't you want to be Mary?

VOICE. Mrs. Bradley!! (*MOTHER exits, with an exasperated look at ALICE.*)

BETH. Oh, come on, Alice! (*mimicking her*) I don't know. . . !

ALICE. I didn't dare raise my hand. Imogene would have killed me! She said, "I'm going to be Mary in this play, and if you open your mouth or raise your hand you'll wish you didn't." And I said, "I'm always Mary in the Christmas pageant." And she said, "go ahead then, and next spring when the pussywillows come out I'll stick a pussywillow so far down your ear that nobody can reach it . . . and it'll sprout there and grow and grow, and you'll spend the rest of your life with a pussywillow bush growing out of your ear!"

BETH. You know she wouldn't do that!

ALICE. She would too! Herdmans will do anything. You just watch, they'll do something terrible and ruin the whole pageant . . . and it's all your mother's fault!

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ble offstage. Angel Choir stand around waiting for the full run-through. RALPH and IMOGENE slouch over to the manger and sit down. MOTHER comes down off the stage and stands in the aisle, or sits in the first row of seats.) Just read the last few words, Maxine.

MAXINE. . . . shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night . . .

MOTHER. Music . . . shepherds! (*Shepherds straggle in, pushing and shoving each other, and assemble around the manger.*)

MAXINE. And an Angel of the Lord appeared to them and . . .

GLADYS. (*bursting out from behind the choir*) Sha-zam!

MOTHER. No, Gladys!

GLADYS. (*swooping at the Shepherds*) Out of the black night . . .

MOTHER. No! (*takes GLADYS by the arm and heads her back to the choir risers*) Go on, Maxine. (*As MOTHER returns to her seat, GLADYS makes another threatening swoop toward the Shepherds.*)

MAXINE. . . . a multitude of the heavenly host . . .

MOTHER. Music . . . angels!

(*The Baby Angels come on and are corraled into position.*)

MOTHER. Music . . . Wise Men! (*LEROY, CLAUDE, and OLLIE enter, slouching aimlessly down the aisle and up to the manger. As they approach, IMOGENE holds up the doll by the back of the neck, waving it in the air.*)

IMOGENE. I've got the baby here . . . don't touch him! I named him Jesus!

MOTHER. (*hurrying on stage*) No, no, no! You don't say . . .



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(RALPH grabs the doll. He and IMOGENE tussle over it as the shepherds scramble out of the way, creating a tangle of bodies and voices.)

MOTHER. (*nerves fraying away*) . . . anything! Mary doesn't say anything. No one says anything! Mary and Joseph. . . .

IMOGENE. (*to RALPH*) Let go! . . . Give it back! . . . (RALPH and IMOGENE are pounding each other, till MOTHER gets in the middle and separates them.)

MOTHER. (*total exasperation*) . . . make a lovely picture for us to look at while we think about Christmas and what it means! . . . Now, put the doll back.

IMOGENE. (*disgruntled*) I don't get to say anything. . . . some angel tells me what to call the baby. . . . I would have named him Bill.

ALICE. Oh, what a terrible thing to say! (*scribbles in her note book*)

RALPH. What angel was that? There's angels all over the place. Was that Gladys?

MOTHER. No, Gladys brought the good news to the shepherds.

GLADYS. Yeh . . . (*yells at the Shepherds*) Unto you a child is born!

IMOGENE. Unto *me!* Not them, me! I'm the one that had the baby!

MOTHER. No, no, no. That just means that Jesus belongs to everybody. Unto *all* of us a child is born. (*big sigh*)

IMOGENE. Why didn't they let Mary name her own baby? What did that angel do, just walk up and say "Name him Jesus?"

MOTHER. (*fed up with this*) Yes.

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s.R. and crosses, sniffing the air, to exit s.L., as BETH speaks.) The five minutes turned into fifteen minutes, and Imogene Herdman spent the whole time smoking cigars in the ladies' room. Then Mrs. McCarthy went to the ladies' room and saw all the smoke and called the fire department. And they came . . . right away.

MRS. MCCARTHY. (*running on stage*) Fire! There's a fire!

(She is followed by children running in from both directions. Sound of fire siren. Two firemen hurry up center aisle, carrying fire extinguishers and coiled hoses, shouting . . . ("Take the big hose in the side", "The place is full of kids", "Get the kids out", "Get everybody out", "Somewhere on the first floor") All the children, the firemen, MRS. MCCARTHY and MOTHER mill around the stage, herding children off s.R. and L. the HERDMANS are square in the middle of all this, grabbing at hoses, jumping on a fireman's back, etc. Lights down on set: Spotlight on BETH, DS.R.)

BETH. They cleared everybody out of the building and dragged a fire hose through the church looking for a fire to put out . . . but the only one they found was in the kitchen . . . all the applesauce cake burned up. Of course all the ladies were mad about that, and Mrs. McCarthy was mad, and my mother was mad.

(Spot off BETH: Spot up on MOTHER and MRS. MCCARTHY DS.L.)

MOTHER. Why in the world did you call the fire department about a little smoke?

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then at the others) . . . It's almost Christmas. (We hear, offstage, the sound of carillon bells.)

MOTHER. . . . almost Christmas, kids.

BETH. . . . almost Christmas, Charlie.

(Lights dim: Candles still on, as they reach out to each other, to touch hands, to draw together. We hear (with the bells and rising above them) a reprise of lines from the pageant, spoken by different people, so there is a mix of voices and pace. The lines should flow together.)

Ann "And it came to pass in the days of . . ."

Rew "And there were shepherds abiding. . . ."

Ryan "A multitude, praising God. . . ."

Ralph "I bring you good tidings of great joy . . ."

GLADYS. (offstage) Hey! . . . (She runs on to c.s. (spotlight on her), and points at the audience.) . . . Hey, unto you a child is born!

(All lights down for slow count of 4-5. Lights up. Entire company on stage, to sing 'Joy to the World'. We should hear the first phrase in a strong burst.)

CURTAIN

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MOTHER. I don't know what you're talking about, Gladys.

GLADYS. *The Mighty Marvo, in Amazing Comics . . . out of the black night, with horrible vengeance . . .*

MOTHER. This is the angel of the Lord, who comes to the shepherds . . .

GLADYS. Out of nowhere, right? In the black night, right?

MOTHER. Well . . . in a way . . . (*GLADYS repeats her big line, almost to herself, as she sits down, looking pleased.*)

GLADYS. Shazam. . . !

MOTHER. (*reading*) Now when Jesus was born, there came Wise Men from the East, bearing gifts of gold and frankincense . . .

CLAUDE. (*to OLLIE*) What's that?

MOTHER. . . . and myrrh . . .

OLLIE. What's that?

MOTHER. They were . . . special things. Spices, and precious oils . . .

IMOGENE. Oil! What kind of a present is oil? We get better presents from the welfare!

LEROY. Were they the welfare? The Wise Men?

MOTHER. They were kings and they were sent . . .

IMOGENE. Well, it's about time somebody important showed up! If they're kings, they can get the baby out of the barn, and tell the innkeeper where to get off!

MOTHER. (*ignoring this turn of plot*) . . . They were sent by Herod, who was . . . well, he was the *main* king, and he wanted to find Jesus and have him put to death.

IMOGENE. My God! He just got born! They're gonna kill a baby?

RALPH. Who's Herod in this play?