

AUDITION SIDE #1 – Mother/Father/Beth/Charlie (pg. 2-3)

Beth: *(to audience)* 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!*

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.

Father: That's not a very Christian sentiment, it seems to me.

Mother: 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.

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.

Father: I'm sorry I asked. Just stay away from all of them.

Charlie: That's what I said. Stay away from them. Go to church.

Mother: I'm glad to hear you feel that way.

Charlie: *(suspicious)* Why?

Mother: No arguments this year about the Christmas pageant.

Charlie: I don't want to be a shepherd again!

Mother: Tell Mrs. Armstrong you want to be a Wise Man.

Charlie: I don't want to be *in* it!

Mother: Everybody's in it. Think how I'd feel sitting there on Christmas Eve, if my own children weren't in the pageant. Think how your father would feel.

(There is a moment of silence, as everyone looks at Father, knowing exactly how he feels on this subject.)

You'd feel terrible, wouldn't you, Bob?

AUDITION SIDE #1 – Continued....

Father: Well...actually, I didn't plan to go.

(as Mother starts to protest)

You know how crowded it always is, they can use my seat. I'll just stay home, put on my bathrobe, relax... There's never anything different about the Christmas pageant.

Mother: There's going to be something different this year.

Father: What?

Mother: Charlie's going to wear your bathrobe. *(She exits into kitchen.)*

Father: *(calls after her)* You just thought that up, Grace!

Beth: *(to Charlie)* Why don't you be Joseph? Elmer Hopkins'll pay you a dollar to be Joseph.

(to Father) Elmer's sick of being Joseph all the time just 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.

AUDITION SIDE #2 – Mother/Ralph/Imogene/Alice/Beth/Claude/Gladys (pg. 17-19)

Mother: All right now. (finds the place and starts to read) There went out a decree from Ceasar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed... And Joseph went up from galilee with Mary his wife, being great with child...

Ralph: *(not so much trying to shock as he is pleased to understand something)* Pregnant! She was pregnant! *(There is much giggling...)*

Mother: All right now, that's enough. We all know that Mary was pregnant. *(mother continues reading under the Beth and Alice dialogue)*

Alice: *(in a side conversation with Beth)* I don't think it's very nice to say that Mary was pregnant.

Beth: Well, she was.

Alice: I don't think your mother should say Mary was pregnant. It's better to say 'great with child'. I'm not supposed to talk about people being pregnant, especially in church.

Mother: *(reading)*And wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Imogene: My God! They didn't have room for Jesus?

Mother: Well, nobody knew the baby was going to be Jesus.

Imogene: Didn't Mary know? *(point to Ralph)* Didn't he know? What was the matter with Joseph, that he didn't tell them? Her pregnant and everything...

Claude: What's a manger? Some kind of bed?

Mother: Well, they didn't have a bed in the barn, so 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.

AUDITION SIDE #2 – Continued....

Claude: What were the wadded-up clothes?

Mother: The what?

Claude: (pointing in the Bible) It said in there... she wrapped him up 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....

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

Gladys: The Mighty Marvo, in Amazing Comics.. out of the black of 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 of night, right?

Mother: Well... in a way...

Gladys: *(repeating her big line almost to herself as she sits down, looking pleased)*
Shazam...!

AUDITION SIDE #3 – Charlie/Leroy (pg. 8-9)

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'll even give you my dessert. I get all the dessert I want in Sunday school.

Leroy: *(interested in this)* Oh, yeah? What kind of dessert?

Charlie: All kinds. Chocolate cake and candy bars and cookies...and Twinkies and Big Wheels. We get refreshments all the time, all we want.

Leroy: You're a liar.

Charlie: ...And ice cream, and doughnuts and cupcakes and...

Leroy: Who gives it to you?

Charlie: *(momentarily stumped)* Uh...the minister.

Leroy: Why? Is he crazy?

Charlie: No...I think he's rich.

Leroy: *(pause)*...Sunday school, huh?

AUDITION SIDE #4 – Mrs. McCarthy/Mrs. Slocum/Mrs. Armstrong (pg. 14-15)

Mrs. McCarthy: *(on the telephone)* Jane? ... Edna McCarthy. Did you hear about the... Well, it must be Grace's fault somehow! How else would the six of them end up in a Christmas pageant, when they ought to be in jail!

Mrs. Slocum: *(on the telephone)* Vera? ...Irma Slocum. I just heard that Imogene Herdman is going to be Mary in the Christmas pageant, and I... Is that a fact? All six of them? Vera, I live next door to that outfit and I'd rather live next door to a zoo. Has Grace gone crazy?

Mrs. Armstrong: *(on the telephone)* Where did they come from? Who let them in? Imogene Herdman! ...What kind of a child is that, to be Mary the Mother of Jesus? Where was Reverend Hopkins, I'd like to know... He was what? ...Visiting shut-ins! Well, I'm shut-in, and he wasn't visiting me!

Mrs. McCarthy: I said, why don't you let them hand out programs at the door? Grace said we never have programs for the pageant, but I said...

Mrs. Slocum: ...Better nail down the church and lock up the silver service and hide the collection plates before they clean them out...

Mrs. Armstrong: What was the matter with Grace? Couldn't she have sent them away? Tell them to go home? Oh, I feel responsible... If I'd been up and around this never would have happened!

AUDITION SIDE #5 – Hobie/David/Elmer/Charlie/Mother (pg. 12-13)

Mother: (*flurry of raised hands*) There, we do have some volunteers after all! Yes, Hobie, would you like to be a Wise Man?

Hobie: No, I just wanted to say I can't be a shepherd. We're going to Philadelphia.

Mother: Why didn't you say so before?

Hobie: I just remembered.

David: My mother doesn't want me to be a shepherd.

Mother: Why not?

David: I don't know. She just said, don't be a shepherd.

Charlie: I'm not going to be a shepherd!

Mother: (*reverting from pageant director to exasperated parent*) Oh, yes, you are! ...What's the matter with all of you?

Elmer: I don't want to be shepherd... Gladys Herdman hits too hard!

Mother: Why, Gladys isn't going to hit anybody! The Angel of the Lord just visits the shepherds in the fields and tells them Jesus is born.

Elmer: And hits them!

Mother: Elmer, that's ridiculous, and I don't want to hear another word about it, from anyone. No shepherds may quit...or get sick. Now that's all for today, boys and girls, and you can go...But I expect to see everyone here on Wednesday at 6:30!

**AUDITION SIDE #6 – Mother/David/Imogene/Alice/Shirley/Juanita/Doris/
Hobie/Charlie (pg. 23-24)**

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.

Mother: And, Imogene...you know Mary didn't wear earrings.

Imogene: I have to wear these. I got my ears pierced and if I don't keep something in them, they'll grow together.

Mother: Well, they won't grow together in an hour and a half. What did the doctor tell you to do?

Imogene: What doctor?

Mother: Well, who pierced your ears?

Imogene: Gladys.

Alice: (*to Beth*) She probably did it with an ice pick. I'll bet Imogene's ears turn black and fall off.

Mother: Well, we'll find something smaller... Now, is that your costume? Is that what you're going to wear? (*to the whole group*) You're all supposed to have your costumes on today.

Shirley: I can't find my halo.

Juanita: My wings got all bent.

AUDITION SIDE #6 – Continued....

Doris: Janet's got my robe.

Shirley: My mother doesn't have any white sheets. Can I wear a sheet with balloons on it?

Hobie: I haven't got a costume. I was never a shepherd before.

Charlie: You have to wear your father's bathrobe. That's what I have to do.

Hobie: He hasn't got a bathrobe.

Charlie: What does he hang around the house in?

Hobie: His underwear.

Mother: All right... pretend you're wearing costumes.

David: Are we going through the whole thing?

Mother: Yes, of course... *(mutters and groans from children)* ... But first we're going to practice just the entrances, so all of you go where you're supposed to be, and we'll start with the shepherds.

AUDITION SIDE #7 – Rev Hopkins/Mother (pg. 28-29)

Rev Hopkins: I've been on the telephone all day, and I can't make heads or tails of it. Some people say they set fire to the ladies' room. Some people say they set fire to the kitchen. Vera Wendleken says all they do is talk about sex and underwear.

Mother: That was Hobie Clark talking about underwear. And they didn't set fire to anything. The only fire was in the kitchen, where the applesauce cake burned up.

Rev Hopkins: Well, the whole church is in an uproar. I don't know... Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," but I'm not sure he meant the Herdmans... Grace, don't you think we should cancel the pageant?

Mother: I'll bet that was Helen Armstrong's idea.

Rev Hopkins: We could blame it on the fire...makes a good excuse.

Mother: I'll bet that was Edna McCarthy's idea.

Rev Hopkins: Everyone seems to think it's going to be a...a...

Mother: Disaster? (*Obviously, that's the word he had in mind.*) Well, they're wrong! ...It's going to be the best pageant we ever had!

Rev Hopkins: But, Grace... I don't think anyone will come to see it!

AUDITION SIDE #8 – Mother/Alice/Maxine/Beth (pg. 9-10)

Mother: Come on, Beth... Charlie, you and David *come*. Now this won't take very long if you all settle down... Today we're going to decide who will play the main roles in our Christmas pageant, but of course everyone will have an important part to play. You know what Mrs. Armstrong always tells you---there are no small parts, only small actors. Isn't that what Mrs. Armstrong always says?

Beth: That's what she always says, but she never says what it means.

Mother: Don't you know what it means?

Maxine: I know what it means. It means that the short kids have to be in the front row of the angel choir or else nobody can see them.

Mother: Well...not exactly. It really means that the littlest baby angel is just as important as Mary.

Alice: (*full of herself*) I don't think anyone is as important as Mary.

Beth: Well, naturally that's what you think, Alice. I think Jesus is more important.

Maxine: I still think it means short kids have to be in the front row.

Mother: Girls, girls! ...*Everyone* is important... Mary, Jesus, *and* the short kids. Now, is everyone here? Beverly, will you just step out in the hall and see if anyone else is coming?

AUDITION SIDE #9 – Mother/Leroy/Claude/Elmer/Alice/Ralph/Ollie/Imogene/Beth
(pg. 16)

Mother: *(setting up the scene)* The inn is back here, offstage...and the shepherds come in and gather around the manger...

Leroy: Where'd all the shepherds come from, anyway?

Claude: What's an inn?

Elmer: It's like a motel where people go to spend the night.

Claude: What people? Jesus?

Alice: Oh, honestly! Jesus wasn't even born yet. Mary and Joseph went there.

Ralph: Why?

Elmer: To pay their taxes.

Ollie: At a motel?!

Imogene: Shut up, Ollie! Everybody shut up! I want to hear her. *(to Mother)* Begin at the beginning.

Mother: The beginning...?

Imogene: The beginning of the play. What happens first?

Mother: Imogene, this is the Christmas story from the Bible... Haven't you ever heard the Christmas story from the Bible? *(Pause, as she realizes that they have not.)* ...Well, that's what this Christmas pageant is, so I'd better read it to you. *(looks for Bible and finds one)*

Beth: *(side conversation with Alice)* I don't believe that, do you? That they never heard the Christmas story?

Alice: Why not? They don't even know what a Bible is, and they never went to church in their whole life, till your dumb brother told them we got refreshments. Now we have to waste all this time for nothing.

AUDITION SIDE #10 – Mother/Father/Beth/Charlie (pg. 30-31)

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) 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 moldy 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 and didn't have any place to stay, didn't know anybody. They were probably cold and hungry and tired... and messy.

(Beth is struck by the sense of this new idea. Charlie is not.)

Charlie: I don't know about cold and hungry, but they're sure messy,

(They leave.)

Mother: Oh dear... Do you think I should...

Father: I think you worry too much. Now... *(briskly, to get her mind off the Herdmans)* ... I'm going to push baby angels onstage, and I'm going to hand out shepherds' crooks and then push them onstage... When do I do all that?

Mother: *(hands him a script)* Just follow this script.

Father: *(flips through script)* Baby angels...shepherds...wise men... It doesn't say here where the fire engines come in.

Mother: *(in no mood for jokes)* Oh-h-h!

Father: Just kidding. *(he pats her shoulder, collects the crooks, and exits)*

AUDITION MONOLOGUES

Beth

The Herdmans were the worst kids in the whole history of the world. They lied and stole and smoked cigars, even the girls, and talked dirty and cussed their teachers and took the name of the Lord in vain and set fire to Fred Shoemaker's old broken-down tool house.

There were six of them --- Ralph, Imogene, Leroy, Claude, Ollie, and Gladys --- and they went through the Woodrow Wilson school like those South American fish that strip your bones clean. They went around town the same way – stealing things and tearing things up and whamming kids...so it was hard to get away from them. There was only one safe place.

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!

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 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!

Grace

(immitating Mrs. Armstrong) "...If I'd been up and around, this never would have happened!" Well.. let me tell you... Helen Armstrong is not the only woman alive who can run a Christmas pageant! I made up my mind just to do the best I could under the circumstances, but now I'm going to make this the best Christmas pageant ever, and I'm going to do it with the Herdmans! After all, they raised their hands and nobody else did, and I don't care... you're going to help me!

(Audition Monologues con't...)

Mrs. Armstrong

(on the phone) ...Tell you again, Grace, how important it is to give everyone a chance. Here's what I do---I always start with Mary and I tell them we must choose our Mary carefully because Mary was the mother of Jesus...

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...

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...

You'll have to get someone to push the baby angels on, otherwise they get in each other's way and bend their wings. Bob could do that, and he could keep an eye on the shepherds too. Oh, another thing about the angel choir. Don't let them wear lipstick. They think because it's a play... that they have to wear lipstick, and it looks terrible. So tell them...

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 of turns out to be fussy, you can always switch them...

Reverend Hopkins

I've been on the telephone all day, and I can't make heads or tails of it. Some people say they set fire to the ladies' room. Some people say they set fire to the kitchen. Vera Wendleken says all they do is talk about sex and underwear... Well, the whole church is in an uproar. I don't know... Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," but I'm not sure he meant the Herdmans...Grace, don't you think we should cancel the pageant? We could blame it on the fire... makes a good excuse.