

Audition Sides - The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Beth

The Herdsmen 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.

Charlie

Charlie: Hey, Leroy, you give me back my lunch!

Leroy: Sure, kid, here.

Charlie: 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.

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: 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: Uh... the minister.

Leroy: Why? Is he crazy?

Charlie: No, I think he's rich.

Reverend Hopkins

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: Every one seems to think it's going to be a... a....

Mother: Disaster? Well, they're wrong! ... It's going to be the best Christmas pageant we ever had!

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

Church Ladies

Mrs. McCarthy: 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!

Irma: 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 to that outfit and I'd rather live next door to a zoo. Has Grace gone crazy?

Mrs. Armstrong: 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!

Kids

There are no small parts, only small actors. Isn't that what Mrs. Armstrong always says?

Elmer: 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: 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?

Now you little children will be our angels, so please remind your mothers that you'll need bedsheets...

People in the angel choir will need bedsheets too, and if any of you have old bathrobes at home... Now, what's the matter?

Well, let's make some room there, for the Herdsmans. Now what happened to Beverly?

Gladys: I think she went home. I think she got sick.

Mother: Did she say she was sick?

Gladys: She just left. All I did was, I just said "Hi, Beverly"... and she just left.

Mother: I see. Well, will someone please tell Beverly about the rehearsals?... The next four Wednesdays, after school. Plan to be here for every one.

Elmer: What if we get sick?

Mother: You won't get sick. Of course, Mary and Joseph must *absolutely* come to every rehearsal...

Elmer: What if they get sick?

Mother: They won't get sick either, Elmer.

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?

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. 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? Very well... Ralph Herdman will be our Joseph. Now, Imogene has volunteered to be... ...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: 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...

Leroy: I'll be a Wise Man!

Ollie: Me too. Claude, you wanta be a Wise Man? Raise your hand.

Claude: What's a Wise Man?

Ralph: Just raise your hand!

Gladys: What's left to be?

Imogene: Some angel.

Gladys: I'll be that. What is it?

Other: It's the Angel of the Lord, who brought the good news to the shepherds. 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: Oh, yes, you are! ... What's the matter with all of you?

Elmer: I don't want to be a 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!

Alice, what's wrong with you? Why in the world didn't you raise your hand?

Alice: I don't know.

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

Voice: Mrs. Bradley! Get Gladys offa me!

Mother: ... To volunteer. Don't you want to be Mary?

Voice: Mrs. Bradley!!

Beth: Oh, come on, Alice! I don't know...!

Mother/Father

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.

Father: She's in charge of Christmas?

Mother: Well, she's in charge of the pageant, and she's in charge of the bazaar... I feel sorry for Helen, but who's going to do all those things?

Mother: Bob...

Father: What?

Mother: I have to direct the Christmas pageant.

Father: Does that mean I have to go?

Mother/Kids

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: 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. Remember how you didn't like Gladys?

Beth: 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: 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: ...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: 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 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: Shazam...!

Mother: Now when Jesus was born, there came Wise Men from the East, bearing gifts of gold and frankincense...

Claude: 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: ...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 the play?

Mother: Herod isn't in the play.