

26 THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

MOTHER. Herod isn't in the play.

LEROY. He's out to kill the baby, and he isn't even in the play?

IMOGENE. Well, somebody better be Herod. (*singles out a victim*) Let Charlie be Herod, and he says, go get me that baby. And they say okay, because he's a king and all . . .

OLLIE. (*warming to this scenario*) But then they don't do it! They go back and get Herod! (*He makes a throttling gesture.*)

CHARLIE. I'm not going to be Herod!

MOTHER. No one is going to be Herod! (*The HERDMANS, caught up in the spirit of things, are ranging over the stage, arguing, shoving other kids out of the way. CHARLIE scrambles over the choir risers, other kids, and his own feet to get to his MOTHER.*)

CLAUDE. No . . . Joseph gets the shepherds together and they go wipe out Herod! (*He makes a machine gun gesture.*)

CHARLIE. See? They're going to put one in, and it's going to be me, and I'll get killed!

MOTHER. (*desperate*) Forget about Herod! There's no Herod!

IMOGENE. And I run away with the baby till the fight's over!

RALPH. (*collaring a stray shepherd by the front of his shirt*) Somebody ought to fix the innkeeper . . . Gladys, you wipe out the innkeeper!

GLADYS. I can't! . . . I'm an angel!

(*Curtain falls. Spotlight on the HERDMANS as they enter from the wings s.l. and gather on and around the set piece. They are arguing about the pageant.*)

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IMOGENE. Well, I wouldn't just hang around out in the barn. I'd go get a room.

CLAUDE. She said there wasn't any room.

IMOGENE. Then I'd throw somebody out. I'd tell them I've got this baby and it's the middle of winter . . . so either get out or move over.

RALPH. I'd go after ol' Herod.

LEROY. I'd send the angel after him. She could just point her electric finger and turn him into a pile of ashes.

GLADYS. (*happily*) Yeh! . . . Zap!

OLLIE. What's the name of this play? She never said.

CLAUDE. Christmas pageant.

OLLIE. That's no name. That's what it is.

GLADYS. I know a name! . . . I know a name! I'd call it . . . Revenge at Bethlehem!

(*Spotlight off HERDMANS: Up on BETH, s.r.*)

BETH. Revenge at Bethlehem! The Herdmans thought the Christmas story came right out of the F.B.I. files! At least they picked out the right villain—it was Herod they wanted to gang up on and not the baby Jesus. But the baby Jesus quit the pageant anyway. It was supposed to be Eugene Slocum, but Mrs. Slocum said she wasn't going to let Imogene Herdman get her hands on him. So we didn't have a baby Jesus, and that bothered my mother. She kept trying to scratch up a baby . . . even at the last rehearsal.

(*Spot off BETH. Curtain up on church scene. Children are assembling for the rehearsal, in a motley assortment of costumes. MOTHER is counting noses, so*