

side 5

Edna McCarthy, Irma Slocum, Mrs Armstrong

20 THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

(During the ALICE - BETH conversation the curtain closes behind them. At the end of the conversation they move off. The phone conversations are spotlighted in different areas of the forestage. Spot up on MRS. McCARTHY, telephoning.)

Start

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!

(Spot off MRS. McCARTHY: Up on IRMA SLOCUM, telephoning.)

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

(Spot off MRS. SLOCUM: Up on MRS. ARMSTRONG in hospital bed, or in wheelchair, with leg in a cast, propped out in front of her)

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!

(Spots up on all ladies: Following speeches are simultaneous, till MRS. ARMSTRONG's last line.)

MRS. McCARTHY. I said, why don't you let them hand

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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!

END

(Spots off all three ladies: Up on MOTHER and FATHER as they enter from the wings s.r. Each is carrying a grocery bag, and we can assume that some good friend in the supermarket has relayed MRS. ARMSTRONG's message.)

MOTHER. (in high dudgeon, mimicking MRS. A.) . . . if I'd been up and around, this never would have happened! Well, let me tell you . . .

FATHER. Don't tell me, I'm on your side . . . the cat's over there.

MOTHER. 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. . . .

FATHER. Good for you, Grace. (trying to move her along) The cat's over there . . .

MOTHER. And you're going to help me!

FATHER. (stopped by this) Does that mean . . .

MOTHER. You have to go!