

side

Beth, Charlie, Mother, Father

6 THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

Start

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.

7 THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

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. (*as she enters*) 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.*)

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

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~~

END