

BETH,

ALICE P. 721

THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

*to speak. BETH and ALICE meet DS. ALICE is writing in a small notebook. They are, by this time, on somewhat testy terms—ALICE constantly on the attack, BETH on the defense.)*

BETH. What do you keep writing in that book?

ALICE. It's . . . like a diary.

BETH. (*snatches the book and reads*) It is not. It's all about the Herdmans. (*reads aloud*) Imogene curses and swears all the time. Ralph talks about sexy things. Mrs. Bradley . . . (*gives ALICE a fierce look*) . . . Mrs. Bradley called Mary pregnant . . . (*if looks could kill*) . . . Gladys Herdman drinks communion wine . . . It isn't wine, it's grape juice.

ALICE. I don't care what it is, she drinks it. I've seen her three times with her mouth all purple. They steal, too—if you shake the birthday bank it doesn't make a sound, because they stole all the pennies out of it. And every time you go in the ladies' room the whole air is blue, and Imogene Herdman is sitting there in the Mary costume, smoking cigars!

BETH. (*angry*) And you wrote all this down? What for?

ALICE. (*nose to nose with BETH*) For my mother and Reverend Hopkins and the Ladies Aid Society and anybody else who wants to know what happened when the whole Christmas pageant turns out to be a big mess!

MOTHER. All right, everyone, let's get quiet. Beth, will you and Alice please come up here so we can get started. Now, this is our last rehearsal, and we're going to . . . (*MRS. McCARTHY enters in apron, carrying a baking pan.*)

MRS. McCARTHY. Grace, I just wanted to tell you that we're all back in the kitchen making applesauce