

IMOGENE • HERDMAN GIRLS 143

THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

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MOTHER. All right now. *(finds the place and starts to read)*
There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all
the world should be taxed...

*(All the kids are visibly bored and itchy, except
the HERDMANS, who listen with the puzzled but
determined concentration of people trying to make
sense of a foreign language.)*

MOTHER ...And Joseph went up from Galilee with Mary his
wife, being great with child...

RALPH. *(Not so much trying to shock, as he is pleased to
understand something.)* Pregnant! She was pregnant!
(There is much giggling and tittering.)

MOTHER. All right now, that's enough. We all know that
Mary was pregnant. *(MOTHER continues reading, under
the BETH-ALICE dialogue.)* ...And it came to pass, while
they were there, that the days were accomplished that
she should be delivered, and she brought forth her
firstborn son...

ALICE. *(to BETH)* I don't think it's very nice to say Mary was
pregnant.

BETH. Well, she was.

ALICE. I don't think *your* mother should say Mary was
pregnant. It's better to say 'great with child'. I'm
not supposed to talk about people being pregnant,
especially in church

MOTHER. *(reading)* ...And wrapped him in swaddling
clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no
room for them in the inn.

IMOGENE. My God! They didn't have room for Jesus?

MOTHER. Well, nobody knew the baby was going to be
Jesus.

IMOGENE. Didn't Mary know? *(points to RALPH)* Didn't he
know? What was the matter with Joseph, that he didn't
tell them? Her pregnant and everything...

LEROY. What's a manger? Some kind of bed?

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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. (light takes check) Well, there you go. V~~

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. 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. *(ignoring this turn of plot)* ...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 this play?

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

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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.*)

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 stage left and gather on and around the set piece. They are arguing about the pageant.*)

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.