

# MOTHER

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## ■ THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

MOTHER. Girls, girls! . . . *Everyone* is important . . . Mary, Jesus, *and* the short kids. Now, is everyone here? Beverly, will you just step out in the hall and see if anyone else is coming? (*BEVERLY exits.*) Now you little children will be our angels, so please remind your mothers that you'll need bedsheets. . . . (*As she talks, the HERDMANS enter, with GLADYS bringing up the rear, having dispatched BEVERLY. Other children begin to murmur, wiggle around, poke each other, point at the HERDMANS.*) People in the angel choir will need bedsheets too, and if any of you have old bathrobes at home. . . . (*Aware of the rising clamor, she stops.*) . . . Now, what's the matter?

~~(As MOTHER turns and sees the HERDMANS, they move in. RALPH and LEROY shove their way onto a bench, causing a ripple of movement there. GLADYS does the same on another bench. IMOGENE, CLAUDE and OLLIE start across the stage to do likewise. To forestall any mayhem.)~~

Well, let's make some room there, for the Herdmans. (~~A lot of room is made, like the parting of the Red Sea, and the HERDMANS occupy their space.~~) Now what happened to Beverly?

GLADYS. I think she went home. I think she got sick.

MOTHER. Did she say she was sick?

GLADYS. She just left. All I did was, I just said "Hi, Beverly" . . . and she just left.

MOTHER. I see. Well, will someone please tell Beverly about the rehearsals? . . . the next four Wednesdays, after school. Plan to be here for every one.

ELMER. What if we get sick?

MOTHER. You won't get sick. Of course, Mary and Joseph must *absolutely* come to every rehearsal . . .

ELMER. What if they get sick?

MOTHER. They won't get sick either, Elmer.

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ELMER. Well, Beverly got sick and we didn't even start yet.

MOTHER. We don't *know* that Beverly got sick. Now, I want you to think about Mary. . . . We all know what kind of person Mary was. She was quiet and gentle and kind, and the girl who plays Mary should try to be that kind of person. Who would like to volunteer for that part? (*Everyone looks at ALICE, but it is IMOGENE who raises her hand.*)

MOTHER. Did you have a question, Imogene?

IMOGENE. No, I want to be Mary . . . and Ralph, over there, he wants to be Joseph.

RALPH. Yeh, right.

MOTHER. Oh. Well . . . Well, I'll just make a list of volunteers for these parts and then we'll all decide who it should be. (*writes on her clipboard*) Ralph Herdman. Now, who else would like to be Joseph? . . . Did you raise your hand, Elmer?

ELMER. No.

MOTHER. Just raise your hands, please, any volunteers. . . . Any of you shepherds? (*Her eye falls on CHARLIE, who makes every effort to seem invisible.*) Very well . . . Ralph Herdman will be our Joseph. Now, Imogene has volunteered to be . . . (*Tiny break here, as if she can hardly bear to connect IMOGENE with MARY.*) . . . Mary. I'll just write that down. . . . What other names can I put on my list? . . . Janet? . . . Roberta? . . . Alice, don't you want to volunteer?

~~ALICE. (*choking it out*) No, I don't want to.~~

~~GLADYS. I'll be Mary!~~

~~IMOGENE. Shut up, Gladys. I'm already Mary. You be a Wise Man.~~

MOTHER. Well, the Wise Men are usually boys. Of course, they don't *have* to be, and we could . . .