

MRS ARMSTRONG. ALL CHURCH LADIES

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THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

FATHER. What?

MOTHER. I have to direct the Christmas pageant.

FATHER. Does that mean I have to go?

(Stage lights down: Spot on BETH, DS.R.)

BETH. Our Christmas pageant isn't what you'd call four-star entertainment. Mrs. Armstrong breaking her leg was the only unexpected thing that ever happened to it. It's always the same old Christmas story, and the same old carols, and the same old Mary and Joseph . . . and that's what my mother was stuck with . . . that, and Mrs. Armstrong.

(Spot out on BETH: Up on MRS. ARMSTRONG in hospital bed s.l. She is in the middle of phone conversation. The phone conversation and the family conversation are to be simultaneous, with the phone conversation to be background. Key parts of MRS. ARMSTRONG's conversation are underlined and should be heard. This dialogue can be blocked, just as movement is blocked, and MRS. ARMSTRONG's speeches are deliberately lengthy and full so the audience can be aware of her droning on in the background.)

MRS. ARMSTRONG. . . . tell you again, Grace, how important it is to give everyone a chance. Here's what I do—I always start with Mary and I tell them we must choose our Mary carefully because Mary was the mother of Jesus . . .

(Spotlight up on dinner table scene DS.R. FATHER and CHARLIE seated: BETH setting the table, pouring water, etc. MOTHER on telephone.)

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MOTHER. I know, that, Helen.

MRS. ARMSTRONG. Yes, and then I tell them about Joseph, that he was God's choice to be Jesus' father. That's how I explain that. Frankly, I don't ever spend much time on Joseph because it's always Elmer Hopkins, and he knows all about Mary and Joseph . . .

CHARLIE. I thought Mrs. Armstrong was in traction. How can she talk on the phone if she's in traction?

BETH. What do you think traction is?

CHARLIE. Like when they put you to sleep?

FATHER. No such luck. . . . Beth, we need salt and pepper . . . and napkins . . . (*BETH exits to kitchen.*)

MRS. ARMSTRONG. . . . but I do explain about the Wise Men and the shepherds and how important they are. And I tell them, there are no small parts, only small actors. Remind the angel choir not to stare at the audience, and don't let them wear earrings and things like that. And don't let them wear clunky shoes or high heels. I just hope you don't have too many baby angels, Grace, because they'll be your biggest problem . . .

~~(FATHER takes slice of bread, hands the plate to CHARLIE, who takes five or six slices, and reaches for butter.)~~

~~FATHER. You will leave some for the rest of us, won't you, Charlie?~~

~~CHARLIE. I'm hungry. Leroy Herdman stole my lunch again.~~

~~FATHER. How can you let him do that to you, day after day?~~

~~CHARLIE. How can I stop him? . . . Where's the chicken?~~

~~FATHER. (to MOTHER) Grace, where's the chicken?~~

~~MOTHER. (hand over phone) It's still in the oven.~~