THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER
THE MUSICAL

BOOK & LYRICS BY
Jahnna Beecham

MUSIC & LYRICS BY
Malcolm Hillgartner

BASED ON THE PLAY BY BARBARA ROBINSON

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Much gratitude to Patricia McLaughlin and Adam Burke.
And big bouquets to Margie and Carolyn,
daughters of the amazing Barbara Robinson.
Thank you for trusting us with the Herdmans.

**Cast of Characters**

**The Herdman Kids**

RALPH--the oldest and coolest. He’s the enforcer, 13.
IMOGENE--leader of the Herdmans. She’s loud, bossy, and crafty, 12.
LEROY--Ralph’s backup. Very confident in the muscle department, 11.
CLAUDE--scrappy and smart, 10.
OLLIE--a bit of a naïve urchin who follows the older boys’ leads, 9.
GLADYS-- little but fierce. Nothing scares Gladys, 8.

**The Bradleys**

GRACE--sweet, good-humored, slightly frazzled mom, 35–40ish.
BOB--easygoing dad, wry sense of humor, 35–40ish.
CHARLIE--typical kid brother, says what he thinks, 10.
BETH--Charlie’s older and wiser sister. She’s honest and kind, 11.

**Church People**

HELEN ARMSTRONG--organized steamroller. She’s always in charge, 40–50ish.
REVEREND HOPKINS--occasionally befuddled, always well-meaning, 40–50ish.

**Church Ladies**

LUANNE--sassy, tells it like it is, 35–40ish.
BETTY--sweet southerner, calls everyone “honey,” 30–40ish.
CONNIE--direct, no-nonsense type, 30–40ish.

Kids
ALICE WENDLEKEN--know-it-all. She thinks she’s perfect, 11.
ELMER HOPKINS--preacher’s kid, which means he needs to behave and be nice, 10.
TEDDY SHOEMAKER--wimpy kid with glasses, asks too many questions, 9.
IVY REED--Beth’s earnest friend who is sometimes a goody-goody, 11.
Various kids to play angels and shepherds in the pageant and possibly other kids in lunchroom.

Setting
December 1960s, a small town in Southern Ohio.

Acknowledgments
The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical opened November 25, 2016 at Children’s Theatre of Charlotte in North Carolina. It was directed by Adam Burke, choreographed by Ron Chisholm, and music-directed by Mike Wilkins. Tom Burch designed sets, Magda Guichard designed costumes, David Fillmore designed lights, and Jason Romney, sound. Hazel Doherty was stage manager. The production featured the following cast:

GRACE BRADLEY    Ashley Goodson
BOB BRADLEY      Bobby Tyson
CHARLIE BRADLEY  Bennett Harris
BETH BRADLEY     Arella Flur
RALPH HERDMAN    Colin Samole
 IMOGENE HERDMAN  Carlyn Head
LEROY HERDMAN    Rixey Terry
CLAUDE HERDMAN   Will Giannuzzi
OLLIE HERDMAN    Isa Long
GLADYS HERDMAN   Charli Head
HELEN ARMSTRONG        Allison Snow Rhinehardt
CONNIE                 Tiffany Bear
LUANNE                 Olivia Edge
BETTY                  Tracie Frank
REVEREND HOPKINS       Dan Brunson
ALICE WENDELEKEN       Ryann Losee
IVY REED               Laurel Farr
ELMER HOPKINS          Wilson Moroz
TEDDY SHOEMAKER         Luke Linkel
ENSEMBLE               Lydia Farr, Allie Joseph, Max Joseph, Andrew Henriques, Julianna Kantor, Haley Vogel

All production groups performing this play are required to include the following credits on the title page of every program:

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical
Book and Lyrics Music and Lyrics
Jahnna Beecham Malcolm Hillgartner
(At 50 percent of author title:)
Based on the Play by Barbara Robinson
Orchestrations and Vocal Arrangements by Deborah Wicks LaPuma

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever:
The Musical
by Jahnna Beecham & Malcolm Hillgartner
BASED ON THE PLAY BY BARBARA ROBINSON
The Best Christmas Pageant Ever
Vocal Ranges

ELMER

BETH

REVEREND

ALICE

CHARLIE

HELEN

GRACE

IMOGENE

RALPH

GLADYS

BOB

CHURCH LADIES

BROADWAY LICENSING™

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The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical
Scenes, Characters, Musical Numbers, and Pages

Act One

Scene 1..........................................................................................................................1
Reverend Hopkins, Church Ladies, Helen, Kids, Herdmans, Parents

#1 (Track 1) Our Perfect Little Town (Church Ladies)
#2 (Track 2) The Horrible Herdmans (Ivy, Elmer, Beth, Teddy, Alice, Charlie, Kids, Reverend Hopkins, Helen, Church Ladies, Herdmans, Parents)
#2A (Track 3) Horrible Playout (Instrumental)

Scene 2..........................................................................................................................8
Bob, Grace, Charlie, Beth

Scene 2A..........................................................................................................................14
Helen, Church Ladies, Grace, Charlie, Beth, Bob

#3 (Tracks 4-8) Countin’ On You (Helen, Church Ladies, Grace, Beth, Charlie, Bob)
#3A (Track 9) Countin’ Playout (Instrumental)

Scene 3..........................................................................................................................20
Ivy, Alice, Beth, Elmer, Charlie, Ralph, Imogene, Leroy, Claude, Ollie, Gladys, Teddy, Kids

#3B (Track 10) Herdman Entrance (Instrumental)
#3C (Track 11) Herdman Shopping (Instrumental)
#4 (Track 12) Take My Lunch (Charlie, Beth, Elmer, Alice, Teddy, Herdmans, Kids)
#4A (Track 13) Take My Lunch Transition (Instrumental)

Scene 4..........................................................................................................................29
Helen, Grace

#4B (Track 14) Perfect Little Town Transition (Instrumental)
Scene 5.................................................................................................................................31

Herdmans

#4C (Track 15) Horrible Transition (Instrumental)

Scene 5A......................................................................................................................................33

Grace, Teddy, Alice, Ivy, Beth, Elmer, Herdmans, Kids

#4D (Track 16) Herdman Entrance II (Instrumental)
#5 (Tracks 17-18) Hey Mrs. Bradley! (Herdmans, Kids, Grace, Teddy, Ivy, Elmer, Alice
#5A (Track 19) Mrs. Bradley Playout (Instrumental)
#5B (Track 20) Problem Transition (Instrumental)

Scene 6.........................................................................................................................................39

Helen, Church Ladies, Grace

#6 (Track 21) Problem (Helen, Church Ladies, Grace)
#7 (Track 22) Baskets For The Needy (Instrumental)

Scene 7.........................................................................................................................................41

Reverend Hopkins, Church Ladies

(#7 (Track 22) Baskets For The Needy cont’d) (Reverend Hopkins, Church Ladies)

Scene 7A.......................................................................................................................................44

Helen, Reverend Hopkins

Scene 7B.......................................................................................................................................45

Church Ladies

(#7 Baskets For The Needy cont’d) (Track 23) (Church Ladies)
#7A (Track 24) Silent Night Transition (Instrumental)
Scene 8

Grace, Kids, Herdmans

(#7A (Track 24) Silent Night Transition cont’d) (Kids, Herdmans)
#8 (Tracks 25-27) My Mother Said (Ivy, Beth, Alice, Kid Voices)
#9 (Track 28) Problem Reprise (Instrumental)

Scene 9

Helen, Grace, Bob, Charlie

(#9 Problem Reprise cont’d) (Helen, Grace)
#10 (Track 29) Maybe (Bob, Grace)
#10A (Track 30) Angel Transition (Instrumental)

Scene 10

Beth, Alice, Elmer, Ivy, Charlie, Grace, Herdmans, Kids,
Church Ladies, Reverend Hopkins

#11 (Tracks 31-32) Die, Herod, Die! (Herdman, Kids)

Act Two

Scene 11

Church Ladies, Reverend Hopkins, Parents, Kids, Grace, Bob,
Beth, Charlie

#12 (Track 33) Baskets For The Needy Reprise (Church Ladies
Reverend Hopkins, Kids)

Scene 12

Grace, Beth, Herdmans

#13 (Track 34) The Best Gift Of All (Herdman)
#14 (Track 35) Carol Transition (Instrumental)

Scene 12A

Bob, Charlie, Beth, Grace
Scene 12B..................................................................................................................77
Reverend Hopkins, Grace

Scene 13..........................................................................................................................79
Grace, Bob, Teddy, Charlie, Ivy, Alice, Reverend Hopkins, Kids

Scene 14..........................................................................................................................82
Grace, Bob, Kids, Herdmans, Reverend Hopkins, Helen, Church Ladies, Entire Company)

#15 (Tracks 36-43) The Pageant (Grace, Kids, Bob, Leroy, Claude, Ollie)
#16 (Tracks 44-45) On A Night Like This (Imogene, Ralph, Herdmans, Kids)
#17 (Tracks 46-47) Let There Be Joy (Kids, Grace, Bob, Beth, Alice)

#18 (Track 48) Bows (Instrumental)
ACT I
SCENE 1

THE CHURCH

(REVEREND HOPKINS is at the pulpit...the CHURCH LADIES are in the choir loft behind the minister being conducted by HELEN ARMSTRONG...the audience is the congregation...lights dim and we hear the music introduction...CHURCH LADIES sing as lights come up)

Track 1

#1 OUR PERFECT LITTLE TOWN

CHURCH LADIES

WHEN IT’S CHRISTMAS IN OUR PERFECT LITTLE TOWN
WHEN THE CRISP WHITE SNOW COMES TUMBLING DOWN
EACH CHILD HAS A SMILE
NO ONE EVER FROWNS
AND EACH BELL THAT IS KNELLED
MAKES THE SWEETEST SOUND
AND OUR CHRISTMAS STAR GLEAMS LIKE A CROWN
WHAT COULD BE MORE PERFECT THAN CHRISTMAS
IN OUR PERFECT LITTLE TOWN

REVEREND HOPKINS

Thanks to Helen Armstrong for writing that holiday melody for the choir and for arranging last night’s potluck supper. And now I’m told Mrs. Armstrong’s Sunday school class has something to share with the congregation. Helen?

HELEN

Thank you, Reverend Hopkins. This week I’ve asked some of our youngest boys and girls to tell you their favorite thing about Sunday school. Ivy?

(spotlight on the STUDENTS)

IVY

My favorite thing about Sunday school is the good feeling I get when I go there.

HELEN

Very nice, Ivy. Teddy?

TEDDY

I like hearing all the stories.
HELEN
I like that, too. Elmer?

ELMER
My favorite thing about Sunday school is seeing my friends.

HELEN
Good. Alice?

ALICE
My absolute favorite thing is the annual Christmas pageant.

HELEN
That’s my favorite. Charlie?

CHARLIE
Ma’am?

HELEN
What is your favorite thing about Sunday school?

CHARLIE
The best thing about Sunday school is there are no Herdmans there.

HELEN
What did you say?

CHARLIE
No Herdmans.

(music intro begins)

Track 2

#2 THE HORRIBLE HERDMANS

REVEREND HOPKINS
(laughing nervously)
Now Charlie, we must be careful what we say about others.

IVY
Yeah, if the Herdmans ever found out, you know what they’d do.

ELMER
PUT WORMS IN YOUR SANDWICH

BETH
ANTS IN YOUR PURSE
TEDDY

FLATTEN YOUR TIRES

ALICE

AND MUCH MUCH WORSE

REVEREND HOPKINS

Those are terrible things to say.

CHARLIE

(protests loudly)

But they’re all true! The Herdmans are the worst kids in the history of the world!

KIDS

(conspiratorially)

THE HORRIBLE HERDMANS ARE THE ROTTENEST KIDS
JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU HEAR ABOUT THE THINGS THAT THEY DID
THEY HIT AND THEY STEAL AND SMOKE SMELLY CIGARS
THEY OUGHTA BE ARRESTED AND PUT BEHIND BARS

THERE’S NOTHING THAT THOSE KIDS WON’T DO
NOTHING THEY WON’T DO TO YOU
DON’T FIGHT YOU’RE ALWAYS GONNA LOSE
THEY’LL FIND YOU AND THEY’LL POUND YOU
’TIL YOUR FACE IS BLACK AND BLUE

REVEREND HOPKINS

They can’t be that bad.

KIDS

SIX OF THE HERDMANS ARE LIKE SIXTY OF US
THEY BULLY LITTLE CHILDREN THEY SPIT AND THEY CUSS

BOYS

THEY PULL DOWN YOUR GYM SHORTS

GIRLS

LOOK UP YOUR DRESS

KIDS

WHEN THEY LEAVE A CLASSROOM, IT’S ALWAYS A MESS
WHY US
WHAT DID WE DO TO THEM
WHY US

HOW WILL WE GET RID OF THEM
HELP PLEASE THERE’S GOT TO BE A WAY
KIDS (CONT’D)
TO RUN THE HERDMANS OUT OF TOWN
TO SOMEPLACE FAR AWAY

REVEREND HOPKINS
NOW, CHILDREN THAT’S TOO MUCH
THOSE KIDS CAN’T HELP THEMSELVES
THEIR MOTHER WORKS SO HARD SHE’S NEVER HOME
THEY’RE ALL ALONE

(REVEREND HOPKINS turns to HELEN in hopes she’ll stop the
children’s complaining...instead she leads the CHURCH LADIES
in agreement)

HELEN
You’re so right.

THOSE POOR LITTLE DEARS
THEY’RE A TERRIBLE CREW

CHURCH LADIES
THE PLACE THEY LIVE IN’S NOT A HOUSE
IT’S MORE LIKE A ZOO

HELEN
BLESS THEIR HEARTS
MUST THEY RUN WILD IN THE STREET
WHY CAN’T THEY BE POLITE
WHY DO THEY CUSS, LIE, AND CHEAT

CHURCH LADIES
BLESS THEM THEY’RE A ROWDY BUNCH
DEAR LORD TELL THEM IT’S NOT NICE TO PUNCH
PLEASE, PLEASE WILL SOMEONE CALM THEM DOWN
BEFORE THOSE LITTLE HERDMANS MAKE A MESS OF OUR TOWN

KIDS & CHURCH LADIES
YES OH YES
THEY REALLY MAKE A MESS
YES OH YES
IT’S SUCH A MESS

(the church now opens to reveal the town and the HERDMANS…
IMOGENE is pushing a grocery cart filled with stolen Christmas
decorations and HERDMANS are riding on the cart and running
alongside it)
Wee! Ride ‘em, cowboy!

Wait for me, Imogene!

Yer slower than molasses!

Another Rudolph!

Gimme the nose!

No! Give it to me!

Cut it out!

That nose is mine!

(\text{\textit{jumps on the cart}})

Go fast, Imogene!

\textbf{HERDMANS}

\textit{WE’RE THE HORRIBLE HERDMANS}

\textit{AN UNBEATABLE SQUAD}

I’m Imogene!

I’m Ralph!

I’m Leroy!

I’m Claude!

\textbf{RALPH, IMOGENE, LEROY, \\ & CLAUDE.}

\textit{HERE’S OLLIE AND GLADYS}

\textbf{OLLIE & GLADYS}

\textit{WE’RE SMALL BUT WE’RE MEAN}
HERDMANS
(without GLADYS)
JUST ONE BITE FROM GLADYS CAN SURE MAKE YOU SCREAM

CHURCH PEOPLE & KIDS
AND NOW THAT IT’S CHRISTMAS
LOOK WHAT THOSE KIDS HAVE DONE

HERDMANS
WE LASSOED ALL THE REINDEER IN THE TOWN
AND PULLED THEM DOWN

RALPH
I WRAPPED UP ELMER HOPKINS

ELMER
Dad!

RALPH
LIKE A CHRISTMAS TREE
IN A STRING OF RED LIGHTS

ELMER
Help!

REVEREND HOPKINS
Elmer!

LEROY
RALPH, GRAB THE CANDY CANES
WE’LL HAVE A BIG SWORD FIGHT

(they sword fight with candy canes while ELMER struggles to get
loose…GLADYS runs on with Frosty’s snowball “head” and a
carrot…the other two snowballs are being tossed around by the
other HERDMANS)

GLADYS
I PLUCKED OUT FROSTY’S EYES
STUCK A CARROT IN HIS CHEST

(the CONGREGATION surrounds the HERDMANS as they sing
to each other in the street…REVEREND HOPKINS tries to untie
his son, ELMER)

KIDS, CHURCH LADIES & PARENTS
SOMEONE OUGHTA MAKE A CITIZEN’S ARREST
REVEREND HOPKINS
YES OH YES A CITIZEN’S ARREST

KIDS, CHURCH LADIES & PARENTS
YES OH YES A CITIZEN’S ARREST
THE HORRIBLE HERDMANS HAVE RUINED OUR TOWN

(CLAUDE and OLLIE roll out shopping cart with plastic Santa in clown mask and wig)

CLAUDE & OLLIE
WE DRESSED UP THE SANTA TO LOOK LIKE A CLOWN

PARENTS
THEY’RE A NATURAL DISASTER

KIDS & PARENTS
A PLAGUE

CHURCH LADIES, KIDS & PARENTS
A STAMPEDING HERD

(HERDMANS pose with stolen Christmas stuff on the cart, raising big candy canes)

[SFX: Siren in distance]

MAN (V.O.)
Someone set the Stampers’s shed on fire!

WOMAN (V.O.)
Who did it?

MAN (V.O.)
The Herdmans, who else!

ALL
THEY ARE THE WORST KIDS
IN THE HISTORY
OF THE WORLD

HERDMANS
WE ARE THE BEST KIDS
IN THE HISTORY
OF THE WORLD

TRACK 3
#2A HORRIBLE PLAYOUT
SCENE 2

THE BRADLEY HOME

(Home is decorated for Christmas…there is a dining table, chairs, and poinsettia centerpiece…GRACE is either setting the table with TV dinners or she runs in as the doorbell rings)

[SFX: doorbell ringing and ringing and ringing]

BOB

(offstage)
Grace! Grace!

GRACE
Bob! Stop ringing the doorbell. People will think I locked you out.

BOB

(offstage)
I need your help. I can’t open the door.

(GRACE opens door offstage or, depending on the set, onstage)

GRACE
Come inside.

(BOB enters, carrying a briefcase, a bag of ice cream, and a newspaper under his arm)

BOB
I tried to call but you weren’t home. I bought dessert.

GRACE
Ice cream! You’re a saint.

(kisses him…takes ice cream to kitchen)

GRACE
We’re having TV dinners.

BOB
Again?

GRACE
You won’t believe what happened today.

(CHARLIE enters)

CHARLIE
Claude Herdman brought his cat to show-and-tell.
It was a disaster.

You should have seen it, Dad. The Herdman’s cat shot out of his box and clawed four big long scratches all the way down the blackboard.

Wow.

Then it started scratching kids, and shedding fur, and scattering books and papers everywhere.

(entering)
All the kids were running up and down the halls screaming.

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—whole!

BOB
What did Ramona do?

BETH
She cried so much they had to send her home.

BOB
What happened to the Herdman kid?

CHARLIE
Nothing. Nothing ever happens to them.

BOB
I’ve seen that cat before. Mrs. Herdman walks it on a chain down by the railroad tracks. It’s missing an eye and has that short leg and broken tail.

GRACE
The postman thinks it’s a bobcat.

(Grace puts TV dinners down during the next few lines)

BOB
I don’t think you can tame a bobcat.

CHARLIE
The Herdmans don’t want to tame it. They just want to make it the meanest cat on the planet.

GRACE
Well, I was called in to administer first aid. Then the whole class, including Miss Brandell, was given recess for the rest of the day.

BOB
That’s much more exciting than selling insurance.

(Charlie and Beth rip foil off their dinner trays)

CHARLIE
TV dinners! All right!

(Charlie checks out Beth’s and sticks his fork in her dessert)

BETH
Charlie, stop! Mom!
GRACE
Charlie Bradley, that’s Beth’s dinner.

CHARLIE
I’m starved. Leroy Herdman stole my lunch.

GRACE
Again? That’s the third day in a row.

CHARLIE
Fourth.

GRACE
That’s it! I’m talking to the principal about those Herdmans. They’re a menace.

CHARLIE
Please don’t! Ralph would kill me.

GRACE
Somebody has to take a stand. They’re bullying everyone.

BOB
Who’s Ralph?

CHARLIE
Leroy’s brother. He’s mean.

BETH
But not as mean as Imogene.

CHARLIE
They’re all mean!

BETH
And now that Christmas is coming, the Herdmans are getting meaner than ever.

GRACE
Christmas!
(leaps up from chair to get flyer)
I almost forgot.

BOB
Beth, can’t you help Charlie out in the lunchroom?

BETH
Me?

BOB
You’re the older sister.
CHARLIE
Dad, that’s even worse. Don’t worry. I’ll handle it.

GRACE
(reentering with flyer)
This flyer was in the church newsletter. Helen Armstrong is holding auditions for the Christmas pageant this Sunday.

BOB
Not anymore she isn’t.

GRACE
What are you talking about?

BOB
I ran into Ed Armstrong. Helen fell on the ice.

GRACE
Oh, no!

BOB
She’s in the hospital.

CHARLIE
Hooray!

BETH
We don’t have to do the pageant!

GRACE
That’s terrible.
(swats at them with towel or hand)
Someone else will just have to direct the pageant.

CHARLIE
Can’t we just stay home this year?

BETH
Yeah, and watch Mr. Magoo’s Christmas Carol on TV!

BOB
Sounds good to me.

[SFX: phone ring]

GRACE
No one’s staying home, and no one’s watching Mr. Magoo.

[SFX: phone ring]
BETH
But it’s just going to be the same old thing. Alice Wendleken will play Mary.

CHARLIE
Elmer Hopkins will play Joseph.

[SFX: phone ring]

BOB
And I’ll have to go.
SCENE 2A

THE BRADLEY HOME / HELEN’S HOSPITAL ROOM

(lights up on HELEN in her hospital room with leg and arm in traction and head wrapped in bandage…the CHURCH LADIES [BETTY, CONNIE, LUANNE] are huddled together around Helen’s bed, making assignments…BETTY holds the phone for HELEN)

GRACE

Hello?

HELEN

WE HAVE A SITUATION HERE

GRACE

Helen?

HELEN

A CRISIS
DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR
I SHATTERED MY LEG AND ARM

GRACE

No!

HELEN

YES, I NEARLY BOUGHT THE FARM
AND NOW I’M IN THE HOSPITAL
AND I NEED
YES I NEED YOUR HELP MY DEAR

GRACE

Of course! What can I do?

HELEN

Direct the Christmas pageant.
Me? Direct? What about Betty?

Betty

Sorry honey.

Grace

Or Luanne?

Luanne

No can do.

Grace

Or Connie?

Connie

My dance card is full.

Track 5

(The family makes frantic “Don’t do it!” gestures as the church ladies gather around the phone singing into it like a girl group at a microphone)

Church ladies

We’re countin’ on countin’ on you Grace
It’s a role that the three of us can’t face
Now it’s up to you to do that play
Besides we took the other jobs you have to say okay

Betty

A job like this is oh so easy

Connie

A piece of cake

Luanne

It’s a breeze

Church ladies

Little kids dressed up like little angels
What could go wrong

Grace

Everything!

(Charlie and Beth tug on their mom, pleading)
No, Mom!

We’re begging you! Don’t do it.

That pageant’s never any fun.

For them… or me.

Don’t worry; I’m not going to direct the play.

[SFX: doorbell]

I’ll take the auction.

[door opens… CHURCH LADIES are standing in the doorway]

No way!

WE’RE COUNTIN’ ON COUNTIN’ ON YOU GRACE
YOU’RE THE ONLY ONE TO EVER REPLACE
OUR HELEN CAN’T YOU SEE IT’S TRUE
NOBODY ELSE CAN DO IT QUITE LIKE YOU-OO

WAIT THAT JOB TAKES REAL TALENT

YES IT TAKES NERVES OF STEEL

AND GUTS AND HEART AND ALL THOSE SKILLS

YOU’RE THE ONE TO GET US UP THAT HILL

WE’RE COUNTIN’ ON COUNTIN’ ON YOU GRACE

PLEASE DON’T I COULD NEVER REPLACE
OUR HELEN I DON’T HAVE A CLUE
KIDS
No!

(KIDS push CHURCH LADIES out the door…they return, walking in time to music, back to HELEN)

KIDS
WE’RE COUNTIN’ ON COUNTIN’ ON YOU MOM
CAN’T YOU SEE IT’S GONNA BE A BIG BOMB
WE MEAN IT MOM, JUST SAY NO
’CAUSE IF YOU DO THE PLAY WE WON’T GO-OH

GRACE
What?! Bob, talk to them.

BOB
Oh, no! I’m with the kids. If you do the pageant, then we’re all doing the pageant.

And we don’t want to do the pageant!

GRACE
Well, if that’s how everyone feels—

(HELEN’s bed is turned to face the Bradley home--by a CANDY STRIPER, who’s been holding the phone up to her ear-- or CHURCH LADIES…music stops)

HELEN
(into phone)

Not everyone.

TRACK 6

(music begins again…CHURCH LADIES move HELEN’s bed as she sings…they all end up in a general musical comedy area between Helen’s hospital area and the Bradley home)

HELEN
GRACE LET ME MAKE ONE THING QUITE CLEAR
IT IS ALL YOUR FAULT I’M HERE

GRACE
You’re kidding.
HELEN
REMEMBER WHEN YOU SAID YOU’D HELP ME LOAD THE VAN
YOU NEVER SHOWED AND HERE I AM

(Grace gasps in realization)

HELEN
You owe me.

TRACK 7

CHURCH LADIES & HELEN
WE’RE COUNTIN’ ON COUNTIN’ ON YOU GRACE

BOB & KIDS
YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID NO IN THE FIRST PLACE

CHURCH LADIES & HELEN
YOU’RE THE ONE WHO HAS TO DO THIS SHOW

GRACE
GUYS DON’T YOU SEE I CAN’T SAY NO

(CHURCH LADIES move HELEN out of general area during the next lines, leaving the BRADLEYS by themselves)

CHURCH LADIES & HELEN
WE KNEW GRACE

KIDS
Aw, Mom!

CHURCH LADIES & HELEN
WE COULD COUNT ON YOU GRACE

BOB
Really, honey?

CHURCH LADIES & HELEN
WE COULD COUNT ON YOU

(as they sing the last refrain GRACE hangs up phone)

GRACE
Well that’s it. We’re doing the pageant and auditions are Sunday.

(groan from the KIDS)
BOB
Does that mean I have to go?

GRACE, CHARLIE & BETH
Yes!

TRACK 8

TRACK 9

#3A COUNTIN’ PLAYOUT

[SFX: school bell]
SCENE 3

SCHOOL LUNCHROOM

(KIDS are eating lunch and chattering)

IVY
Alice, I heard Beth’s mom is directing the pageant. Has she ever directed a play?

ALICE
No, but Mother said we don’t have to worry—Mrs. Armstrong will be giving Mrs. Bradley orders from the hospital.

IVY
Mrs. Bradley knows you always play Mary, right?

ALICE
I’m sure Mrs. Armstrong will tell her. Oh, there she is.

(BETH enters)

ALICE
Beth! Come sit by me and Ivy.

BETH
Did you hear? Mrs. Armstrong is in the hospital.

IVY
It’s all over school.

ALICE
I’m so excited your mom’s going to direct. Now you can be the leader of the angel choir, which is perfect for you!

BETH
You really think so? I can barely read music.

ALICE
But you just look so angelic. And besides, as Mary, I like to know I have someone I can count on to lead the younger angels in and out and tell them to be quiet when I’m onstage with Baby Jesus.

IVY
It’s the shepherds you have to worry about. They’re always whamming each other with their canes.

ALICE
That’s true, Ivy, but don’t you think Beth should play the lead angel?
IVY
Of course, Alice!

BETH
Don’t worry, Alice. I don’t want to play Mary.

ALICE
Beth! I didn’t even think—

BETH
You have to play Mary. You’re smart, and neat, and well, so holy-looking.

ALICE
(feigning modesty)
I’m not really. But if you really believe that…

IVY & BETH
You’re perfect!

TRACK 10
#3B HERDMAN ENTRANCE

(ELMER rushes in, then runs to join CHARLIE)

ELMER
The Herdmans are coming!

ALL KIDS
(panicked whisper)
The Herdmans!

IVY
(to her friends)
Quick, eat your dessert.

inston (the HERDMANS appear and pose in the doorway of the cafeteria, punctuated by cymbal crash)

RALPH
Well lookee here.

(as each HERDMAN kid identifies a food item, the good KIDS clutch the item to their chests or try to eat it fast)
IMOGENE

I smell something good!

LEROY

Ham and cheese!

CLAUDE

Peanut butter!

OLLIE

Fritos!

GLADYS

Chocolate milk!

RALPH

What are we waiting for? Let’s go shopping!

TRACK 11

#3C HERDMAN SHOPPING

(the HERDMANS dance through the cafeteria like a swarm of locusts...when they move on from each kid, the victims look like they’ve been mugged)

RALPH

Gimme that.

CLAUDE

That’s mine!

OLLIE

Mine!

LEROY

Mine!

GLADYS

Yes!

(the group surrounds TEDDY)

IMOGENE

Fork it over, Teddy.
TEDDY

What?

IMOGENE

You know what.

(*TEDDY gives her his lunch*)

IMOGENE

All of it.

TEDDY

(*shaking his head back and forth*)

No!

(*IMOGENE slams his head in his lunch box*)

TEDDY

Okay. Here.

IMOGENE

Nice.

(*the HERDMANS huddle together to inspect their plunder*)

LEROY

(*to OLLIE*)

What’d you get?

OLLIE

Get away from me.

RALPH

Ollie, show it. Now.

(*OLLIE pulls a smashed food packet out of his torn coat pocket*)

GLADYS

A Hostess cupcake? Give it here.

OLLIE

No. It’s mine.

IMOGENE

Let him have it, Gladys. You can have some of Sally Martin’s cake from her birthday party.
CLAUD\textsuperscript{E} \\
How’d you get that?

IMOGENE \\
She gave it to me, just so I wouldn’t go.

(CHARLIE has passed out some carrot sticks but is hoarding his dessert)

LEROY \\
Wait a minute! Charlie’s mom always packs those Rice Crispie Treats.

CHARLIE \\
Oh no!

BETH \\
Charlie, look out!

HERDMANS \\
(circling CHARLIE) \\
Come on, Charlie …

CHARLIE \\
Back off!

TEDDY \\
You’re surrounded.

HERDMANS \\
Cough it up!

ELMER \\
Run, Charlie, run!

CHARLIE \\
Nooooo!

\textit{TRACK 12} \\
\textbf{#4 TAKE MY LUNCH}

CHARLIE \\
I can’t take it anymore!

(KIDS are IVY, ALICE, BETH, TEDDY, and ELMER)

CHARLIE \\
WANT MY LUNCH \\
JUST TAKE IT
CHARLIE (CONT’D)
HERE’S THE BAG
GO BREAK IT
WILL I CARE NO WAY
IT’S JUST A P-B-J
SO TAKE MY BAG OF CHIPS
OR HAVE A GREAT BIG SIP
OF CHOCOLATE MILK OR MAYBE
APPLE JUICE IS WHAT YOU NEED

RALPH
Careful! It’s a trap!

CHARLIE
WHY STOP AT LUNCH
YOU KNOW I HAVE A HUNCH
YOU WANT MY HOMEWORK TOO
OR WOULD YOU LIKE MY SHOES
MY SHIRT’S ABOUT YOUR SIZE
AND HERE’S THE REAL BIG PRIZE
IT’S MY BIKE IF YOU LIKE
I DON’T CARE ’CAUSE I’VE GOT
A SPECIAL PLACE
WHERE I WON’T HAVE TO SEE YOUR FACE
AND I CAN HAVE ANYTHING I PLEASE
ICE CREAM COOKIES CUPCAKES
TWINKIES BY THE BUNCH
AND HAWAIIAN PUNCH

IMOGENE
What is this place?

CHARLIE
MY SUNDAY SCHOOL
IT’S SO VERY COOL

KIDS
SUNDAY SCHOOL

HERDMANS
SUNDAY SCHOOL

CHARLIE
YOU KNOW, I START TO DROOL
JUST THINKIN’ ABOUT THOSE TREATS
THEY MAKE FOR US TO EAT
CHARLIE
AT SUNDAY SCHOOL

KIDS & HERDMANS
SUNDAY SCHOOL

CHARLIE
WHERE THE KIDS ALL RULE

HERDMANS
YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL

KIDS
SUNDAY SCHOOL

RALPH
YOU REALLY GET FREE FOOD

IMOGENE
LIKE CHERRY COKES WITH ICE

CHARLIE
AND PIZZA BY THE SLICE

BETH & CHARLIE
SO TAKE MY LUNCH

CHARLIE
IT’S MY TREAT

ELMER, ALICE, BETH & CHARLIE
TAKE MY LUNCH

CHARLIE
I REPEAT

KIDS
UNDERSTAND THAT WE’VE GOT BETTER PLANS THAN JUST TO EAT AND RUN IT’S REALLY LOTS OF FUN IN OUR OWN SPECIAL PLACE WHERE WE WON’T SEE YOUR FACE

HERDMANS
SUNDAY SCHOOL

CHARLIE
IT’S SO VERY COOL
CHARLIE
MY SUNDAY SCHOOL

KIDS
SUNDAY SCHOOL

IT’S REALLY KIND OF CRUEL
THAT YOU AND ALL YOUR KIN
WON’T EVER BE LET IN

WON’T EVER BE LET IN

KIDS

(the KIDS shout at the HERDMANS and offer their lunches or throw them at them)

CHARLIE

SO TAKE MY LUNCH

ALICE

NO TAKE MINE

ELMER

TAKE MY LUNCH

TEDDY & BETH

NO TAKE MINE

CHARLIE & KIDS

UNDERSTAND THAT WE’VE GOT BETTER PLANS
WE’RE OFF TO SUNDAY SCHOOL

HERDMANS

THAT’S WHERE THE KIDS ALL RULE

CHARLIE

AND THE BEST PART OF ALL

CHARLIE & KIDS

BEST PART OF ALL

CHARLIE

BEST PART OF ALL

KIDS

THERE ARE NO
CHARLIE & KIDS
HERDMANS THERE AT ALL

RALPH
So when is this Sunday school?

ALICE
Sunday. Duh.

LEROY
(grabs CHARLIE’s lunch)
See you there, loser!

(HERDMANS exit.)

BETH
Charlie Bradley! What have you done?

TRACK 13
#4A TAKE MY LUNCH TRANSITION
SCENE 4

HELEN’S HOSPITAL ROOM

(lights up to reveal HELEN in her hospital bed…next to her bed is a giant bulletin board that looks like a CSI/Homeland board with strings connecting pictures of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Elmer and Alice…HELEN gives GRACE the official Christmas pageant overstuffed notebook and then uses a pointer to describe the auditions…GRACE is anxious to leave)

HELEN
Don’t be nervous, Grace. Just start the auditions with Mary. Tell the kids how important she is because Mary was the mother of Jesus.

GRACE
I know that, Helen.

HELEN
Then move on to Joseph. You can tell them God chose Joseph to be Jesus’s dad. But don’t spend too much time on that subject. It can be confusing. Besides Elmer is always Joseph. He knows all about Mary and Joseph.

GRACE
But we’re holding auditions. All parts are available.

HELEN
Right. And don’t let the Wise Men stand next to the shepherds. They always start hitting each other.

GRACE
Helen, I really have to get to the church.

HELEN
The angels should not wear makeup or earrings or high heels.

GRACE
I’m going, Helen.

HELEN
And the baby angels are going to be your biggest problem. Someone has to push them on.

GRACE
I mean it.

HELEN
Bob could help.

GRACE
Very funny. Bye, Helen.
(GRACE exits)

HELEN

(calling after her)
And absolutely no live animals!

TRACK 14

#4B  PERFECT LITTLE TOWN TRANSITION
SCENE 5

CHURCH—AUDITION DAY

(the HERDMANS stand outside the bathroom door at church...wall is decorated with pictures of Jesus...a sign on the wall reads “AUDITIONS FOR THE PAGEANT TODAY”)

IMOGENE

So, this is what a church looks like.

GLADYS

It’s not that scary.

CLAUDE

Where’s the bell?

LEROY

Where’s the people?

OLLIE

I wanna ring that bell.

RALPH

I don’t see any Twinkies.

IMOGENE

Me neither.

LEROY

Charlie Bradley lied to us.

(ALICE enters)

IMOGENE

Hey, Alice! Where are the snacks?

ALICE

We’re having Kool-Aid and cookies after the auditions for the pageant, if that’s what you mean.

CLAUDE

What’s a pageant?

ALICE

It’s a play.

IMOGENE

What’s it about?
ALICE
Jesus.

IMOGENE
(checking out the church)
Everything here is.

ALICE
And it’s about Mary. Mostly it’s about Mary.

IMOGENE
Who’s Mary?

ALICE
I am. I mean, probably I am. I know the part. And she is the star of the show.

(ALICE exits into the bathroom)

IMOGENE
We’ll see about that.

(IMOGENE puts cigar in mouth and grins, as HERDMANS follow ALICE into the bathroom...last one in checks to make sure no adults are following...we hear intense murmuring)

TRACK 15

#4C HORRIBLE TRANSITION

(lights up on center stage)
SCENE 5A

CHURCH REHEARSAL ROOM

(the KIDS are seated on the floor facing GRACE, who’s giving instructions about the rehearsals, costumes, and auditions in front of a chalkboard full of information...TEDDY keeps frantically raising his hand)

GRACE
Okay, kids. Here are the rules of engagement. We have three rehearsals so you have to come to every one. Teddy?

TEDDY
What if we get sick?

GRACE
You won’t get sick. Which brings me to the lead roles. If you want to be Mary or Joseph you really have to come to every rehearsal. Teddy?

TEDDY
What if they get sick?

GRACE
They won’t get sick. We’ll be casting those roles today. But remember, all parts are important.

(ALICE enters...she is red-faced and clearly upset...sits down next to IVY)

GRACE
Now who would like to play Mary?

(KIDS all look at ALICE)

GRACE
Alice?

ALICE
(shakes her head and stares at her lap)
No, I don’t want to. No.

GRACE
But you always play Mary.

ALICE
No!
(IMOGENE and the rest of the HERDMANS enter)

CHARLIE
(whispers)
Mom! Bad news.

GRACE
Why look…it’s the Herdmans.

(the KIDS quickly move to the opposite side of the room, giving the HERDMANS space…TEDDY raises his hand frantically)

TEDDY
Mrs. Bradley. Mrs. Bradley!

GRACE
What is it, Teddy?

TEDDY
I’m gonna be sick.

TRACK 17

#5 HEY MRS. BRADLEY!

IMOGENE
HEY MISSUS BRADLEY
I WANNA BE IN THE SHOW

HERDMANS
HERE’S HOW IT’S GONNA GO

IMOGENE
SINCE MARY IS THE STAR
I’M GONNA HAVE THAT PART
MISSUS BRADLEY

IMOGENE & HERDMANS
MISSUS BRADLEY
IMOGENE

PUT ME INTO THE SHOW

KIDS

UH-OH
WHY WOULDN’T YA WANNA DO IT
OH NO
YOU’RE GONNA RUE IT

IMOGENE

HEY MISSUS BRADLEY
RALPH WANTS TO BE IN THE SHOW

HERDMANS

HERE’S HOW IT’S GONNA GO

IMOGENE

HE WANTS TO BE COOL
NOT LOOK LIKE A FOOL
MISSUS BRADLEY

IMOGENE & HERDMANS

MISSUS BRADLEY

IMOGENE

PUT ‘IM INTO THE SHOW

KIDS

THIS IS BAD
IT’S REALLY GONNA HURT US
IT’S GONNA BE
A THREE-RING CIRCUS

GRACE

NOW’S THE TIME FOR ONE OF YOU TO STAND UP
LAST CHANCE, WON’T SOMEONE PUT THEIR HAND UP
COME ON ALICE ELMER BETH OR TED

KIDS

SORRY MISSUS BRADLEY
BUT WE’D END UP DEAD

GRACE

Well, we need someone to play Mary’s husband Joseph.
IMOGENE

That’s Ralph.

BETH

(upset)

Mom!

GRACE

Or he could be one of the Three Wise Men.

ALICE & IVY

(aghast)

Mrs. Bradley!

OLLIE, LEROY & CLAUDE

That’s us.

(group groan filled with “oh no’s”)

GRACE

I almost forgot—there is the Angel of the Lord who appears with a message for the shepherds.

ALICE

(squeezing her eyes shut)

Not Gladys. Anybody but Gladys.

GLADYS

HEY MISSUS BRADLEY
I WANNA BE IN THE SHOW
HERE’S HOW IT’S GONNA GO
I WANNA BE THAT ANGEL THING
WITH THE BIG PINK WINGS
MISSUS BRADLEY
MISSUS BRADLEY
PUT ME INTO THE SHOW

KIDS

THIS IS BAD
A FEDERAL DISASTER
GONNA HAUNT US
NOW AND EVER AFTER OOOOH

ALICE

HEY MISSUS BRADLEY
I CAN’T BE IN THE SHOW
TEDDY
I REALLY HAVE TO GO.

GRACE
What?

IVY
MY FAMILY’S LEAVING TOWN

ELMER
TOO BAD WE HAVE TO LET YOU DOWN

KIDS
MISSUS BRADLEY
MISSUS BRADLEY
WE CAN’T BE IN THE SHOW

GRACE & HERDMANS
NO ONE

GRACE
IS GONNA QUIT THIS PAGEANT

GRACE & HERDMANS
NO ONE

GRACE
IS GONNA LEAVE THIS TOWN
NO ONE WILL HAVE A CONFLICT EVER
NO ONE IS GONNA LET ME DOWN

(good KIDS all frantically wave their hands to be called on)

ALICE
BUT MISSUS BRADLEY

TRACK 18

KIDS
MISSUS BRADLEY

GRACE
YOU’RE ALL IN THE SHOW
(KIDS run off as GRACE moves bulletin board off...ALICE pulls BETH downstage)

ALICE
Why did your mother let the Herdmans take over our pageant?

BETH
Why didn’t you speak up? I thought you wanted to play Mary.

ALICE
Imogene told me she was playing Mary and if I even opened my mouth, she would get a pussy willow and jam it so far into my ear it’d come out the other side.

BETH
You know she wouldn’t do that.

ALICE
She would too! Remember when Ollie had that plant growing in his ear? Ralph did that to him.

BETH
They beat on each other all the time, but they wouldn’t do that to you.

ALICE
Herdmans will do anything. To anybody. None of us are safe. Your mom should have thrown them out of the room.

BETH
Well, that’s just mean.

ALICE
Those Herdmans are going to ruin our pageant. And it’s all your mother’s fault!

BETH
Alice!

ALICE
Wait till Mrs. Armstrong hears about this.

TRACK 20

#5B PROBLEM TRANSITION
SCENE 6

PHONE TREE AREAS

(HELEN is still in traction in hospital…pinspots come up on individual CHURCH LADIES as they talk to each other on the phone tree)

HELEN

WHAT?! Where did they come from? Who let them in?

CONNIE

Grace! She just let them take over.

LUANNE

And Imogene Herdman is playing Mary?

BETTY

Yes. Can you believe it?

LUANNE

She’s the mother of Jesus, for Pete’s sake!

CONNIE

Where was Reverend Hopkins, I’d like to know?

He was visiting shut-ins.

HELEN

I’m a shut-in. He wasn’t visiting me. Something has to be done about this!

(HELEN starts dialing)

TRACK 21

#6 PROBLEM

[SFX: phone ring]

GRACE

Hello?

HELEN

PROBLEM
WE’VE GOT A PROBLEM GRACE
YOU’RE MAKING A MESS OF MY SHOW

GRACE

Oh no!
HELEN

OH YES
HOW COULD YOU CAST THOSE HERDMANS
THAT KIND OF THING WON’T GO
YOU CAN’T DEPEND ON THOSE KIDS
IT’S AN INDISPUTABLE FACT
BUT HOW COULD YOU HAVE KNOWN MY DEAR
YOU CAN’T BE BLAMED FOR THAT

GRACE

Blamed?

HELEN

GRACE YOU MUST REPLACE THEM
IT’S THE CHRISTIAN THING TO DO
IF NOT THEY’LL LOOK LIKE FOOLS
WHEN THEY DON’T COME THROUGH

GRACE

WHAT ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS
AFTER SUCH A BLOW

HELEN

TRUST ME I’M A DIRECTOR
THEY – MUST – GO

(hangs up phone)

GRACE

Helen? Helen?

TRACK 22

#7 BASKETS FOR THE NEEDY
(CHURCH LADIES and REVEREND HOPKINS at church preparing food baskets)

REVEREND HOPKINS & CHURCH LADIES
BASKETS FOR THE NEEDY
BASKETS FOR THE POOR
FOOD ENOUGH FOR TWENTY
AND A LITTLE MORE

SANTA BRINGS THEM TREASURES
WE DELIVER JOY
EACH ONE PACKED WITH OUR LOVE
AND A LITTLE TOY

(REVEREND HOPKINS ducks out of sight, or out of the room, to get more supplies)

LUANNE
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH GRACE

CONNIE
SHE MUST BE OUT OF HER MIND

BETTY
PUTTING THOSE KIDS IN THE PLAY

REVEREND HOPKINS
(pops his head in)
PERHAPS SHE WAS BEING KIND.
(exits)

LUANNE
HAVE YOU SEEN THOSE KIDS

BETTY
YOU KNOW, THEIR MOTHER'S NEVER HOME

CONNIE
I’M NOT SURPRISED, THEY’RE A PAIN
REVEREND HOPKINS
(pops his head in)
THOSE KIDS ARE ON THEIR OWN
(exits)

CONNIE
WHAT HAPPENED TO THEIR FATHER

BETTY
HE LEFT YEARS AGO

LUANNE
HOPPED ON A FREIGHT
NEVER LOOKED BACK

BETTY
DO YOU BLAME HIM

CHURCH LADIES
NO

(REVEREND HOPKINS reenters, joins CHURCH LADIES as they pack baskets)

REVEREND HOPKINS & CHURCH LADIES
A BASKET FOR THE JOHNSONS
A BASKET FOR THE KEENS
MISSUS SANCHEZ COUNTS ON US
AS DOES MISTER GREEN

REVEREND HOPKINS
THIS ONE’S FOR THE HERDMANS
SEVEN SOULS IN NEED
WHO WOULD LIKE TO TAKE IT

LUANNE
NOT ME

CONNIE
NOT ME

BETTY
NOT ME
REVEREND HOPKINS

I see…

(music vamps as scene transitions…REVEREND HOPKINS exits and appears in HELEN’s room with a poinsettia)
SCENE 7A

HELEN’S HOSPITAL ROOM

HELEN
Reverend! I’ve come up with a way to save the pageant.

REVEREND HOPKINS
I didn’t know it was in need of saving.

HELEN
Take the Herdmans out of the show and put them in concessions.

REVEREND HOPKINS
We don’t sell concessions.

HELEN
Then have them hand out programs.

REVEREND HOPKINS
What programs? We’re putting all our money into baskets for the needy.

HELEN
There must be a loophole. They’re not even members of our church.

REVEREND HOPKINS
Maybe they’ll join.

HELEN
If you’re trying to give me a heart attack, you’re doing a very good job.

REVEREND HOPKINS
Then it’s a good thing you’re in the hospital.

(REVEREND HOPKINS punctuates line by putting potted plant in HELEN’s lap, then exits)
SCENE 7B

THE CHURCH

TRACK 23

(music transitions to CHURCH LADIES…lights out on Helen…CHURCH LADIES sing in a round as they tie bows on baskets)

BETTY, LUANNE & CONNIE

BASKETS FOR THE NEEDY
BASKETS FOR THE POOR
FOOD ENOUGH FOR TWENTY
AND A LITTLE MORE

SANTA BRINGS THEM TREASURES
WE DELIVER JOY
EACH ONE PACKED WITH OUR LOVE
AND A LITTLE TOY

BETTY

Baskets go out next week.

CONNIE

Music rehearsal for the pageant tonight.

LUANNE

Why rehearse? This is going to be the worst Christmas pageant ever.

TRACK 24

#7A SILENT NIGHT TRANSITION
SCENE 8
CHURCH REHEARSAL ROOM – FIRST REHEARSAL

(GRACE is trying to teach songs to group…KIDS are holding sheet music…HERDMAN KIDS huddle together and make fun of “Silent Night…” they say “fart” and do fart sounds then pretend like they’re innocent until they get to the verse and then they…let ‘er rip…GRACE blows pitch pipe and the kids sing the first word like angels)

KIDS & HERDMANS
SILENT

HERDMAN BOYS
FART
(fart sound)

KIDS
HERDMANS
(HERDMANS louder than KIDS)
HOLY
DEADLY

HERDMAN BOYS
FART

ALICE
I’m telling!

HERDMANS
SUCH A SMELL WILL STOP YOUR HEART

ALICE
Mrs. Bradley!

(while the HERDMANS continue to sing and hold their nose and wave hands in front of their faces, GRACE interjects)

GRACE
All right. All right. That’s some joke. Now come on. Come on.

HERDMANS
COUGHING AND GAGGING, SEE THEM RUN
EATING BEANS IS SO MUCH FUN

(GRACE claps to stop them)

GRACE
Good. You’ve learned the tune. Now let’s sing it the right way.
(GRACE blows pitch pipe again but is interrupted)

RALPH
Hey Mrs. Bradley. If this is a play, why aren’t we playing?

LEROY
(shoves CHARLIE)
Tag! You’re it.

GRACE
Leroy, don’t push.

GLADYS
(running around the kids, hitting and kicking them)
No! Duck, Duck, Goose. Duck! Duck! Duck! Duck!

IMOGENE
No! Red Light. Green Light.

GRACE
We’re singing the Bell song.

OLLIE
The dumbbell song!

CLAUDE
That’s Ralph’s song.

RALPH
Who you calling a dumbbell?

GRACE
(blow whistle)
That’s enough. Over here. NOW!

(stunned, the KIDS quickly comply while ALICE, BETH, and IVY huddle off to the side, talking while GRACE either takes them offstage or arranges them in a chorus upstage)

ALICE
It’s clear your mom can’t control the Herdmans. That’s what my mom said.

BETH
What does your mom know? She’s not even here.

ALICE
I tell my mom everything. I write it down.
BETH
That’s pretty sneaky.

ALICE
I’m not the sneak. Gladys is. At auditions she took three sips of communion wine.

BETH
That’s just grape juice. Everybody knows that.

IVY
But it belongs to the church.

**TRACK 25**

#8 MY MOTHER SAID

ALICE
What about the kindergarten Happy Birthday bank?

BETH
What about it?

ALICE
I shook it and it doesn’t make a sound.

BETH
So?

ALICE
Last week it made a sound.

BETH
What kind of person shakes the Happy Birthday bank?

ALICE
A person who cares.

**TRACK 26**

KID VOICES

(continue under)
DING-DONG DING-DONG

IVY
MY MOTHER SAID HER MOTHER SAID
YOUR MOTHER’S IN OVER HER HEAD
BETH
YOUR MOTHER'S WRONG YOUR MOTHER TOO
MY MOTHER KNOWS JUST WHAT TO DO

IVY
MY MOTHER SAID

ALICE
MY MOTHER TOO

ALICE & IVY
YOUR MOTHER HAS NOT GOT A CLUE

BETH
YOU TAKE IT BACK

ALICE
WHY WHEN I’M RIGHT
(gestures to HERDMANS offstage)
SHE PUT THEM IN
JUST OUT OF SPITE

BETH
THAT ISN’T TRUE MY MOM GAVE YOU ALL A CHANCE
BUT YOU WENT AND TURNED SCAREDY-PANTS

ALICE
GLADYS PUT A CRAYON IN HER POCKET
AND YOUR MOTHER DIDN’T TRY TO STOP IT

BETH
THAT’S SUCH A LIE

ALICE
YOU KNOW IT’S TRUE

ALICE & IVY
THERE’S NOT A THING YOUR MOM’LL DO

IVY
SHE LET THEM TAKE
ALL THE GOOD PARTS

ALICE
WITHOUT A FIGHT
ALICE & IVY
THAT WASN’T SMART
O.S. VOICES
DING DONG

BETH
DON’T BLAME MY MOM IF YOU DING
WENT AND LOST YOUR NERVE
YOU’RE JUST GETTING WHAT
YOU DESERVE

ALICE
I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS UNTIL TODAY

BETH
FRIENDS WOULD NEVER SAY THE THINGS YOU SAY

ALICE
THAT ISN’T FAIR
O.S. VOICES
DING

IVY
WE REALLY CARE
DONG

ALICE & IVY
I NEVER SAID DING
SHE NEVER SAID DONG
YOUR MOTHER’S IN OVER HER HEAD DING DONG

IVY
IT WAS HER MOM
DING

ALICE
THAT’S WHAT SHE SAID
DONG

And my mom is never wrong.

KID VOICES
DING
DONG-DING
DONG

TRACK 27

(the girls stomp off…BETH, who is very upset, shouts to Mom, then exits)

BETH
Mom! I need to talk to you!
[SFX: phone ring]
SCENE 9
THE BRADLEY HOME / HELEN’S PHONE AREA

(GRACE is on the phone, surrounded by boxes of costumes…BOB carries more in…they are shepherd and angel costumes…HELEN is in wheelchair with phone)

HELEN

PROBLEM
WE’VE GOT A PROBLEM GRACE
BUT I CAN SAVE THE SHOW

GRACE

Oh, no.

HELEN

OH YES
THE ANSWER’S VERY SIMPLE
JUST LET THE HERDMANS GO
THOSE KIDS ARE NOTHING BUT TROUBLE
YOU’VE MADE A BIG MISTAKE
IT’S CLEAR THAT THIS WAS JUST TOO MUCH
TO PUT UPON YOUR PLATE

GRACE

Now, wait …

HELEN

GRACE YOU MUST REPLACE THEM
FOR THE TEAM THE CHURCH THE TOWN

GRACE

I CAN’T I WON’T I NEVER WILL
I WON’T BACK DOWN

HELEN

GRACE DON’T YOU SEE
YOU’RE RUINING MY SHOW

GRACE

ARE YOU THE DIRECTOR
I DON’T – THINK – SO
(GRACE hangs up)

HELEN

Grace? Grace? Grace!!!

(GRACE marches over to BOB)

GRACE

That Helen Armstrong makes me so mad!

BOB

Why?

GRACE

She’s turned everyone against me. Even the kids!

(CHARLIE enters with boxes)

CHARLIE

Teddy’s mom heard about the way the Herdmans sang “Silent Night” and she wants to switch churches.

BOB

You’re kidding!

GRACE

See? They all say I should get rid of the Herdmans.

CHARLIE

You should.

GRACE

I can’t! It would hurt their feelings.

CHARLIE

Why do you care about their feelings? They don’t care about ours!

(CHARLIE slams box down and exits)

BOB

Charlie!

(to GRACE)

Don’t mind him.

GRACE

He’s right. They’re awful.
BOB
The Herdmans?

GRACE
Yes! Today Imogene locked herself in the bathroom and Teddy wet his pants.

BOB
That’s not good.

GRACE
And Leroy and Claude broke the steeple bell.

BOB
Wow!

GRACE
(getting more and more upset)
Ralph and Gladys stole all the cookies. And that tattletale Alice was in there writing everything down.

BOB
They’re just kids. It’ll be okay.

GRACE
No, it won’t! The Herdmans really are the worst kids in the history of the world!

(she collapses in chair)

TRACK 29

#10 MAYBE

BOB
Honey? Are you okay?

GRACE
I don’t know …

MAYBE THEY’RE RIGHT
MAYBE IT’S TIME TO GIVE UP THE FIGHT
MAYBE I’VE MADE THE BIGGEST MISTAKE
MAYBE IT’S TIME TO PUT ON THE BRAKES

BOB
MAYBE YOU’RE STRONG

GRACE
BUT WHAT IF YOU’RE WRONG
BOB
MAYBE YOU’VE BEEN RIGHT ALL ALONG

GRACE
I’M REALLY AFRAID THOSE KIDS WON’T SHINE

BOB
MAYBE JUST MAYBE IT’LL BE FINE
DON’T YOU SEE GRACE
IT ALL COMES FROM YOU GRACE
YOU’RE THE GLUE GRACE

GRACE
Oh, Bob …

BOB
YES IT’S TRUE

GRACE
MAYBE IT’S JUST A SMALL TOWN PLAY

BOB
MAYBE THINGS WILL BE OKAY

GRACE
MAYBE THOSE KIDS NEED SOMETHING NEW

BOB
MAYBE WHAT THEY NEED IS YOU

GRACE
(hugs him)
Maybe you’re the best husband ever.

BOB
Does that mean I still have to go?

GRACE
Yes.

(slams turban on his head)

TRACK 30

#10A ANGEL TRANSITION
SCENE 10
CHURCH REHEARSAL ROOM—SECOND REHEARSAL

(the stage is strewn with boxes of costumes labeled “angel wings,” “shepherd robes,” and “animal ears...” BETH and ALICE and the good KIDS are giving the HERDMANS instructions)

BETH
The shepherds always stand over here.

ALICE
And Mary comes on from there.

BETH
With Joseph. And the inn is offstage.

LEROY
What’s an inn?

TEDDY
It’s like a motel—

ELMER
—where people go to spend the night.

CLAUDE
What people? Jesus?

ALICE
Oh, honestly! Jesus wasn’t even born yet. Mary was great with child.

RALPH
Pregnant? Mary was pregnant!

ALICE
Don’t say that!!

(lots of snickering... GRACE enters with boxes of stuff she pulled, followed by CHARLIE, who is helping her)

GRACE
Okay, team, put a cork in it. We all know Mary was pregnant.

(GRACE exits to get more boxes)

ALICE
I don’t think it’s nice to say “pregnant” in church.
BETH
But Mary was.

ALICE
I’m not even allowed to say “pregnant” out of church.

ELMER
And this is the barn where Mary had her baby.

IVY
She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger—

CHARLIE
—because there was no room for them at the inn.

IMOGENE
They didn’t have room for Jesus?

ALICE
Well, nobody knew the baby was going to become Jesus.

IMOGENE
Didn’t Mary know? And what’s the matter with Joseph? Why didn’t he tell the innkeeper? I mean, my god, she was pregnant!

ALICE
Stop saying that!

OLLIE
What’s a manger? Some kind of bed?

(Grace enters with more supplies)

GRACE
They didn’t have a bed in the barn so they put him in the manger, which was a big feeding trough for the animals.

IMOGENE
(outraged)
This is getting worse and worse!

ALICE
On the word manger, the angels are supposed to sing.

(BETH, ALICE, IVY start humming “Away in a Manger”…enter CHURCH LADIES)

BETTY
Hello, Grace, we wanted to pop in to see how it’s going.
GRACE
What? Oh, we’re just getting started.

IMOGENE
(continues to rant)
So Mary wrapped her baby in wadded-up clothes and stuffed him in a feedbox?

CONNIE
It sounds like you could use some help.

(ALICE nods vehemently to her mother, CONNIE)

IMOGENE
Where was her social worker?

GRACE
I can handle it, Connie.
(to IMOGENE)
They didn’t have social services in those days.

IMOGENE
I guess not!

GLADYS
The social worker is at our house every other week.

BETTY
We’ll be in the kitchen making applesauce cake.

LUANNE
Holler if you need anything.

GRACE
(calls to LUANNE as they leave)
Don’t worry, I won’t.

RALPH
What kind of story is this anyway?

GRACE
It’s the Christmas story. Don’t you know the Christmas story?

(ALICE, BETH, and IVY stop humming)

LEROY
Never heard of it.

(ANGELS and the other KIDS start whispering, “They don’t know the Christmas story”)
CLAUDE
What’s the big deal?

BETH
Do you think they really don’t know the Christmas story?

IVY
I think they don’t.

ALICE
Of course not. They’ve never been in a church in their life. They just came for the snacks, which your brother told them we had.

CHARLIE
I said I was sorry.

GRACE
Okay, then. Everyone come here for a moment.

(KIDS gather on floor around GRACE)

GRACE
You see, Jesus is born and the Angel of the Lord—

GLADYS
(raising fist in the air)
That’s me!

GRACE
That’s right—and the angel tells the shepherds about it and they go visit.

BETH
Then King Herod sends Three Wise Men to find baby Jesus.

IVY
They follow a star that leads them to Jesus. Then they give him very special gifts.

Like what?

LEROY

CHARLIE
Gold, frankincense—

TEDDY
—and myrrh.

CLAUDE
What’s that?
GRACE

A fragrant oil.

RALPH, IMOGENE & GLADYS

Oil!?

IMOGENE

What kind of cheapo king gives oil for a present?

OLLIE

We get better stuff from the firemen.

ELMER

It turns out that King Herod is an evil guy who is worried that Jesus will take over and become the king when he grows up.

TEDDY

So he wants to kill baby Jesus.

IMOGENE

My god, they’re gonna kill a baby?

ALICE

Not the Wise Men. King Herod.

RALPH

Is that true, Mrs. Bradley?

GRACE

Well, yes, it is.

GLADYS

Sounds like something straight outta Action Comics.

(KIDS all talk at once… “Did you hear that? Action Comics!” “Jesus isn’t a comic book character…” “Who says?”)

TRACK 31

#11 DIE HEROD DIE!

IMOGENE

Shut up, everyone. Shut up!

(this song has sword fighting, pirate moves, lots of swash and buckle…GRACE tries to regain control of the situation and can’t)
IMOGENE
I WANNA HEAR ABOUT THE BABY AND THE EVIL KING
AND MARY AND JOSEPH AND THE ANGEL WITH WINGS

OTHER KIDS
THE ANGEL HAD A MESSAGE TO DELIVER THAT NIGHT
SHE GAVE THOSE SHEPHERDS A TERRIBLE FRIGHT

HERDMANS
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE WISE MEN WHAT ABOUT THE KING
WASN’T HE ABOUT TO DO A REALLY BAD THING

GLADYS
SHAZAM SAID THE ANGEL WITH THE BIG PINK WINGS

What?

GLADYS
I’VE GOT SOME NEWS AND I’M GONNA SING

ALICE
Is she kidding?

GLADYS
DIE HEROD DIE SHAZAM
LOOK AT ME I’M THE ANGEL OF THE LORD
DIE HEROD DIE KERPOW
I CAN FLY LIKE AN EAGLE AND I GOT A BIG SWORD

ALICE
She had a harp!

SHEPHERDS
LOOK AT US WE WANNA FIGHT

BETH & GRACE
Fight?

GLADYS
FOLLOW ME SHEPHERDS
STAY LOW AND TIGHT

ALICE
Uh-oh.

HERDMAN BOYS
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE WISE MEN WHO CAME FROM AFAR
KIDS
THEY GOT ON THEIR CAMELS AND FOLLOWED THAT STAR

(KIDS are joining in...this is fun...GLADYS and the
HERDMANS are tossing out weapons)

HERDMANS & KIDS
DIE HEROD DIE SHAZAM
DIE HEROD DIE KERPOW
DIE HEROD DIE

RALPH
(ready to destroy whoever it is)
Hey, who’s playing Herod?

GRACE
He isn’t in the play.

LEROY
He’s out to kill baby Jesus and he isn’t even in the play?

ALICE
He’s never in the play.

IMogene
Somebody better be Herod. Charlie—be Herod.

CHARLIE
Noooooo!

HERDMAN BOYS
Hey, Herod!

BETTER WATCH OUT WE’RE COMING FOR YOU
COME ON BOYS WE GOTTA JOB TO DO

GLADYS & IMogene
TIME FOR SOME ACTION NO TIME TO BOAST

HERDMAN BOYS
KERPOW SAID THE WISE MEN THAT GUY IS TOAST

CHARLIE
I’m not Herod!

GRACE
No one is going to be Herod.
**ALL KIDS (EXCEPT CHARLIE)**  
DIE HEROD DIE KER-SPLAT

**CHARLIE**  
They’re going to kill me!

**GRACE**  
There’s no Herod!

**ALL KIDS (EXCEPT CHARLIE)**  
DIE HEROD DIE TAKE THAT

**BETTY**  
Grace, what’s going on?

**GRACE**  
We’re rehearsing, Betty.

**IMOGENE**  
I’M GONNA HIDE THE BABY  
BURN DOWN THE INN

*(IMOGENE puts her cigar in her mouth and heads for the kitchen door)*

**BOYS**  
WE’LL TIE UP HEROD

**CHARLIE & GRACE**  
No!

**BOYS**  
TAKE HIM FOR A SPIN!

**GLADYS**  
ALL OF YOU ANGELS, RING THAT BELL  
IT’S TIME TO SEND HEROD STRAIGHT TO—

*(GRACE claps hand over GLADYS’s mouth as CHARLIE yells)*

**CHARLIE**  
H-E-E-E-L-L-L-L-P, Mom!

**LUANNE**  
Is that a cigar in Mary’s mouth?

**GRACE**  
No! What? Imogene put that out!
(smoke creeps into the room from the kitchen)

BETTY
Smoke! Fire!

CONNIE
Call the fire department!

HERDMANS & KIDS
DIE, HEROD, DIE!

LUANNE
Get the kids out!

REVEREND HOPKINS
What’s going on?

BETTY
The Herdmans have set fire to the church!

HERDMANS & KIDS
DIE HEROD DIE

GRACE
Everybody! Don’t panic. Just stay calm!

HERDMANS & KIDS
YOU CAN KISS THIS WORLD GOODBYE

[SFX: Distant fire engine sounds]

(the HERDMANS are delighted to hear the fire trucks and dance around like demons…a frazzled REVEREND HOPKINS shouts over the chaos)

REVEREND HOPKINS
That’s it!

(music stops abruptly)
I’m canceling Christmas!

EVERYONE
What?!

TRACK 32
(musical finish…blackout)

End of Act I

INTERMISSION (OPTIONAL)
(if no intermission, CHURCH LADIES, with baskets and/or lanterns, come downstage as scene changes...they are eventually joined by REVEREND HOPKINS and CHURCH KIDS all carrying baskets and candles)
ACT II
SCENE 11

STREET ON THE POORER SIDE OF TOWN

TRACK 33

#12 BASKETS FOR THE NEEDY REPRISE

(music underscores as EVERYONE BUT THE BRADLEYS enter with Christmas baskets and weave their way around the stage to the music of “Baskets for the Needy...” CHURCH LADIES pause to gossip)

LUANNE
CAN YOU BELIEVE WHAT HAPPENED

CONNIE
IT’S ALL OVER TOWN

BETTY
POOR GRACE SHE MUST FEEL AWFUL

CONNIE
HE HAD TO SHUT IT DOWN

BETTY
CHRISTMAS WON’T BE CHRISTMAS

LUANNE
WITHOUT OUR CHRISTMAS PLAY

CONNIE
TOO BAD ABOUT THOSE HERDMANS

CHURCH LADIES
NOW WE ALL MUST PAY

BETTY
WHAT HAPPENS CHRISTMAS SUNDAY

LUANNE
I HAVEN’T GOT A CLUE

REVEREND HOPKINS
I THINK WE SHOULD PRAY
CHURCH LADIES

YES—LET’S—DO

REVEREND HOPKINS, CHURCH LADIES & KIDS
A BASKET FOR THE KEATINGS
A BASKET FOR THE REEDS
FOOD FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER
SO MANY FOLKS IN NEED

SANTA BRINGS THEM TREASURES
WE DELIVER JOY
EACH ONE PACKED WITH OUR LOVE

(pause as the BRADLEYS enter…BOB has a flashlight…GRACE is carrying a basket with a tag that says “Herdmans” on it…the CHURCH LADIES exit in different directions)

REVEREND HOPKINS, CHURCH LADIES & KIDS
LA LA LA LA LA

GRACE
Did you see that? They’re shunning me.

BOB
Grace! They didn’t even see you!

BETH
Well, Alice and Ivy saw me and didn’t even say hello.

CHARLIE
They think it’s Mom’s fault the church caught fire.

BOB
That’s ridiculous. It was just smoke. No one was hurt and nothing was damaged.

GRACE
But now the pageant is cancelled.

(they stop in front of a broken-down fence with a “Beware of the Cat” sign on it)

BOB
This is the house.

GRACE
Are you sure? There’s no number.
BOB

(pointing flashlight at sign)
The sign says “Beware of the Cat.”

BETH

Then this is the place.

GRACE

We’ll just hurry in and give the Herdmans their basket.

CHARLIE

Mom, do I have to go? I’m kind of scared.

GRACE

Then you stay here and Beth will come with me.

BOB

What should I do?

GRACE

Watch out for the cat.
SCENE 12

THE HERDMAN GARAGE

(lights come up slowly on the Herdmans’ garage, which is filled with old toilets, broken strollers, broken trikes, a tire, and things the kids have collected over the years…there is a bare light bulb hanging over the debris…GRACE and BETH carefully make their way through the debris and call up the stairs that lead to their apartment over the garage)

GRACE

Mrs. Herdman?

BETH

Ralph? Gladys?

GRACE

Anybody home?

BETH

I don’t think they’re here. Let’s just leave the basket and go.

(GRACE sets the basket on a rusted, broken wagon and turns to leave, then hears the HERDMANS coming home…they are having a heated discussion…GRACE and BETH panic and duck around the side of the garage)

LEROY

It’s just not fair!

IMOGENE

We didn’t start the fire.

OLLIE

Which fire?

IMOGENE

The one at the church.

OLLIE

Oh, that fire. No we did not.

IMOGENE

It was those ladies’ cakes that burned. And they blamed us.

(GRACE and BETH look at each other wide-eyed)
Yeah.

LEROY

RALPH

I don’t think one guy can just cancel Christmas.

CLAUD

Who does he think he is, God?

OLLIE

I’d like to give him what for.

LEROY

Me too.

GLADYS

I’d like to sic the cat on him.

ALL HERDMANS

Yeah.

GLADYS

I really did want to be that angel with the big pink wings.

IMOGNE

(picks up the bald baby doll)

I wanted to be Mary. But I wouldn’t have named my baby “Jesus.” What kind of name is that? I would have named him “Buddy.”

CLAUD

That’s way better.

(they pull the light bulb chain and discover the magnificent Christmas charity basket sitting on the wagon…it looks jam-packed with goodies…the ham has a bow on it)

ALL HERDMANS

Whoa!

RALPH

What’s that?

GLADYS

It looks like a baby in a manger.

OLLIE

It’s little baby Buddy!
LEROY
No! It’s like a gift from the Three Wise Guys.

(the kids start to approach the basket)

IMOGENE
Don’t touch it until Ma sees it. She’s gonna love it.

RALPH
Ma won’t care.

LEROY
(pushes his brother away)
She will too.

RALPH
Don’t push me.

(RALPH and LEROY push each other and crash into GLADYS, who kicks them both)

GLADYS
Cut it out, you two.

LEROY
Ow! Gladys, that hurt.

(OLLIE grabs CLAUDE’s stocking cap and runs)

CLAUDE
Hey, that’s mine!

OLLIE
Not anymore.

LEROY
You git back here!

RALPH
Ollie Herdman! You’re gonna git it!

(IMOGENE is about to follow her brothers when she pauses at the door and turns around and sees GLADYS looking at the basket)

IMOGENE
Gladys, you better not get into that basket.

GLADYS
I’m not. I just want to look at it.
GLADYS
All year I dream of this—the perfect Christmas gift.

(GLADYS starts the song, identifying what’s in the basket of food...the rest of the HERDMANS return slowly in the song)

GLADYS
A BOX OF MASHED POTATOES
A BIG OL’ HAM

IMOGENE
A BAG OF DAY-OLD ROLLS
TWO KINDS OF JAM

IMOGENE & GLADYS
AND FOR ONE MAGIC NIGHT OF THE YEAR

GLADYS
NO ONE GETS ANGRY

IMOGENE
NO ONE SHEDS A TEAR

IMOGENE & GLADYS
AND THE BEST GIFT OF ALL
IS OUR BASKET FULL OF CHEER

IMOGENE
RALPH LIGHTS A CANDLE

GLADYS
MA SINGS A SONG

HERDMANS
WE ALL STAND IN A CIRCLE
AND TRY TO GET ALONG
AND FOR ONE MAGIC NIGHT OF THE YEAR

BOYS
NOBODY’S HUNGRY
EVERYONE’S ALL RIGHT

AND THE BEST GIFT OF ALL
IS WE’RE TOGETHER
TONIGHT

 nông

(to BETH)
LOOK AT THEM
THERE’S A LIGHT IN THEIR EYES
FULL OF LOVE AND HOPE
WHY SHOULD IT COME AS A SURPRISE

SOMEHOW I FEEL THAT WE’RE THE ONES
WHO LET THEM DOWN
TO TELL THEM THEY’RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH
FOR OUR LITTLE TOWN

AND FOR ONE MAGIC NIGHT OF THE YEAR

NOBODY YELLS AT US

OR TELLS US THAT WE’RE WRONG

AND THE BEST GIFT OF ALL
IS THAT TONIGHT

WE BELONG

(at the end of the song GRACE and BETH try to sneak away but
BETH trips over some junk)

Someone’s spying on us.
Who’s there?

RALPH

Maybe it’s a possum.

LEROY

Let’s catch it.

CLAUDE

(guiltily reveals herself)

GRACE

It’s just us.

IMOGENE

Mrs. Bradley!

OLLIE

Beth!

IMOGENE

(suspicious)

What are you doing here?

BETH

We came to deliver your basket from the church.

GLADYS

It’s bigger than ever this year.

GRACE

Yes…I, uh, also have a message for you kids.

RALPH

Are we in trouble?

GRACE

No, no. I just want to say we’re doing the pageant after all.

BETH

And you’re still in it.

IMOGENE

Did that man change his mind?

GRACE

Not yet. But he will. Be at the church at 5:00 p.m. tomorrow.

LEROY

Do we need a baby Jesus? I can get one from the grocery store. There’s lots of ’em just sitting around in grocery carts.
GRACE
Thank you, Leroy, but that won’t be necessary. Do you kids have a doll?

(IMOGENE holds up the most beat-up shabby doll on the planet…no hair, no clothes…it’s clearly been through six kids)

IMOGENE
Just this one.

GRACE
He’s perfect.

CLAUDE
Do you need a cat?

GRACE
Good heavens no. I mean, thank you, Claude, but we don’t. We’ll see you all tomorrow night.

TRACK 35
#14 CAROL TRANSITION

HERDMANS (ALL AT ONCE)

OLLIE     IMOGENE     GLADYS     RALPH     CLAUDE     LEROY
Yay!      We’re doing it! I get to be an angel after all! Cool! All right! The show is on.
SCENE 12A
STREET ON THE POORER SIDE OF TOWN

(BOB and CHARLIE are waiting as BETH and GRACE run out of the Herdmans’s with big news)

BETH
Mom’s doing the pageant!

CHARLIE
With the Herdmans?

BETH
Yeah!

BOB
Grace, are you sure?

GRACE
I’ve never been so sure of anything in my whole life. Beth! Charlie! Go tell the kids. Bob! Call the parents.

(GrACE starts to head the other direction)

BOB
Where are you going?

GRACE
To see the Reverend.

BOB
So, does this mean I have to—

BRADLEYS
Yes!

(GrACE heads for the church…BOB, CHARLIE, and BETH exit the other way)
SCENE 12B

THE CHURCH

(REVEREND HOPKINS at the podium, checking the list to make sure he delivered all the baskets)

GRACE
Reverend Hopkins! I’m so glad I caught you!

REVEREND HOPKINS
Grace! What’s the matter?

GRACE
The Herdmans had nothing to do with the fire last night.

REVEREND HOPKINS
Are you sure?

GRACE
It was Betty’s applesauce cakes that burnt!

REVEREND HOPKINS
And we blamed those kids?

GRACE
Which is why we have to do the pageant.

REVEREND HOPKINS
But I already alerted the phone tree.

GRACE
Then un-alert them.

REVEREND HOPKINS
And we’ve got sets to build—

GRACE
Yes!

REVEREND HOPKINS
And costumes to finish—

GRACE
Yes! And only 24 hours to do it in.

REVEREND HOPKINS
Then why are we standing here? We’ve got a show to do.

GRACE
(hugs the REVEREND really hard and exits)

Thank you!!
REVEREND HOPKINS

Good lord! What have I done?

[SFX: Five rings of the broken church bell]
SCENE 13

THE CHURCH

(in front of the pageant set, which could be on a wagon pulled on by the KIDS…it’s pageant night…TEDDY comes across the stage wearing his full shepherd costume and a fake beard)

TEDDY

Mrs. Bradley? Mrs. Bradley?

(CHARLIE appears in his shepherd outfit panicked, followed by IVY, ALICE, and BETH who are all in a tizzy…they all need GRACE’s help…GRACE enters in white shift, wearing angel wings, carrying a box of supplies)

CHARLIE

Mom! The shepherds are clonking each other with their canes.

IVY

I can’t find my script. Who took my script?

(CHARLIE hands her a spare script)

GRACE

Here.

(BOB enters carrying a potted plant)

BOB

You said I should bring this, but I don’t think it looks anything like a palm tree.

ALICE

Someone’s been using my mascara. That’s so unsanitary…

(CHARLIE hands ALICE a new tube of mascara)

GRACE

Take this. It’s new.

BETH

Mom, it’s crazy downstairs. I have no idea what I’m supposed to do.

(CHARLIE hands her halos)

GRACE

You and Alice lead the angels onto the stage. Charlie, you lead the shepherds. Bob’s got the Wise Men. Here’s the order.
(GRACE passes out running-order pages to CHARLIE, BETH, ALICE, and BOB)

REVEREND HOPKINS
(pops his head in)
There’s a line halfway around the block!

CHARLIE
Mom, I don’t know when the shepherds come on.

GRACE
I’ll cue you.

REVEREND HOPKINS
I’m letting them in.

ALICE
Mrs. Bradley.

GRACE
What?

ALICE
I brought my Mary costume just in case.

GRACE
What are you saying?

TEDDY
(enters in shepherd outfit)
Mrs. Bradley!

REVEREND HOPKINS
Places, everyone!

(KIDS squeal and bolt for the wings with GRACE starting to follow them)

TEDDY
Mrs. Bradley!

GRACE
(putting on her own halo)
Everyone take deep breaths. Try to stay calm.

TEDDY
Mrs. Bradley!
(out of patience)
What is it, Teddy?

TEDDY
The Herdmans aren’t here.

GRACE
Shoot me now!

(blackout)
SCENE 14

THE PAGEANT

TRACK 36

#15 THE PAGEANT

(the set is a homemade crèche...there is a manger made of a cardboard box with hay in it...yellow paper stars hang from strings overhead...music: “O Little Town of Bethlehem” plays as lights come up onstage...ANGELS, led by BETH and ALICE, enter and take a position in a half circle around the manger...CHARLIE leads on shepherds... GRACE brings up the rear...ALICE and BETH are downstage...shepherds off to the side tending their sheep)

KIDS & GRACE (NO HERDMANS)

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
HOW STILL WE SEE THEE LIE
ABOVE THY DEEP AND DREAMLESS SLEEP
THE SILENT STARS GO BY

YET IN THY DARK STREETS SHINETH
AN EVERLASTING LIGHT
THE HOPES AND FEARS OF ALL THE YEARS
ARE MET IN THEE TONIGHT

(GRACE nods at IVY, who is at the podium)

IVY

In the days of Caesar Augustus a decree went out that all the world should be taxed, and Joseph went into Bethlehem with Mary his wife, who was great with child. And while they were there, she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them at the inn.

(KIDS are looking around and whispering to each other...GRACE starts them singing “Away in a Manger” accompanied by piano, and then bolts offstage to look for the HERDMANS)

TRACK 37

(music “Away in a Manger”)

GRACE

AWAY IN A MANGER
KIDS & GRACE (NO HERDMANS)

NO CRIB FOR A BED

(the KIDS stop singing and hum under following lines until RALPH and IMOGENE appear)

ALICE

(whispers loudly to BETH)
I knew this would happen. Those Herdmans chickened out. Now we don’t have a Mary or a Joseph. What are we supposed to do now?

(RALPH and IMOGENE appear on the opposite side of the stage from where GRACE went)

BETH

Quiet. Here they come.

(IMOGENE and RALPH step onto the stage, stare out at audience amazed that they are in front of all these people...GRACE steps out from where she left and nods at them...after a few moments of silence, they speak to each other, making up dialogue...it’s not stilted...it’s genuine)

IMOGENE/MARY

Oh, Joseph, I don’t know what to do. There’s no bed for our little baby.

RALPH/JOSEPH

Yes, there is, Mary. This barn’s full of hay.

(he pats the soft hay in the manger)

Look! It’s soft, like a mattress.

(GRACE, IVY--and any other ANGELS that might have been added--and ELMER, CHARLIE, and TEDDY hum one verse of “Silent Night” under the following dialogue)

TRACK 38

(music: “Silent Night”)

ALICE

Mary and Joseph aren’t supposed to talk.

BETH

Why not? They’re trying to decide what’s best for the baby.

(IMOGENE puts baby Jesus on her shoulder and starts patting his back)
ALICE
Look at that! She’s burping Jesus. That’s just not right.

BETH
Maybe he has colic and is fussy just like any other baby.

ALICE
But he’s not any other baby.

(IMOGENE puts baby in the manger and a star lights up above their heads...if it hasn’t stopped already, humming stops)

IVY
And in that region, there were shepherds in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. When lo, an angel of the Lord appeared to them.

TRACK 39
(music: harp arpeggio)

(everyone looks stage right for GLADYS)

IVY
Lo! An angel of the Lord appeared to them.

TRACK 40
(music: harp arpeggio)

(everyone looks stage left)

IVY
(loudly)
An angel of the Lord!

[SFX: footsteps and crash box]

TRACK 41
(music: piano low tremolo)

(GLADYS appears, either knocking down kids or leaping on the stage or above the manger)

GLADYS/ANGEL
Hey everybody! Unto you a child is born. His name is Jesus and he’s in the barn. Wanna see him?

(the SHEPHERDS, afraid of GLADYS, frantically shake their heads no)
GLADYS/ANGEL
Come on! Come on!

(the SHEPHERDS get up and move to the manger…music transitions to “We Three Kings”)

IVY
And Wise Men came from the East to worship the newborn baby.

TRACK 42
(music: “We Three Kings”)

KIDS
WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE
BEARING GIFTS, WE TRAVERSE AFAR
FIELD AND FOUNTAIN
MOOR AND MOUNTAIN
FOLLOWING YONDER STAR

(the THREE WISE MEN walk stiffly on as the KIDS sing…they turn, point, and freeze on “following yonder star…” the music plays another verse…KIDS hum under the following dialogue)

ALICE
Look at them. They’re not moving.

BETH
They’re scared.

ALICE
They should be. Look what they’re wearing. They look like Trick or Treat.

(BOB appears in his bathrobe with a towel wrapped around his head like a turban…BOB starts singing a capella, snapping his fingers and swinging the beat)

BOB
OH STAR OF WONDER, STAR OF NIGHT
COME ON GUYS LET’S GET THIS RIGHT

(THREE WISE MEN join BOB, harmonizing on “perfect light”)

BOB & THREE WISE MEN
WESTWARD LEADING STILL PROCEEDING
GUIDE US TO THY PERFECT LIGHT

TRACK 43
(piano enters again, and KIDS hum the next verse as BOB and the THREE WISE MEN walk to MARY)

ALICE
What have they got? I bet it’s something awful.

BETH
Like what?

ALICE
Like a burnt offering. You know the Herdmans.

And the Wise Men were bearing gifts.

IVY

LEROY
(holds up box)
We got mashed potatoes!

CLAUDE
(holds up can)
Pork ’n’ beans!

OLLIE
(struggles to lift ham)
And a big ol’ ham!

(humming stops)

BETH
That’s the Herdmans’ entire food basket from the church.

ALICE
What happened to the gold, frankincense, and myrrh?

BETH
This is better. Much better!

RALPH/JOSEPH
Hey look, Mary! It’s the Three Wise Guys and, uh—

BOB
Bob.

IMOGENE/MARY
Thank you, Wise Guys and Bob, for bringing my family a ham.
RALPH
We can live on this for a whole month.

ALICE
What’s that sticking out of the corner of the basket? That white thing?

BETH
It looks like a diaper.

IMOGENE/MARY
(holds up the diaper)
And this is something we can really use.

ALICE
That’s gross.

(THREE WISE MEN sit down)

ALICE
Why are the Wise Men sitting down? They’re supposed to leave.

BETH
I guess they’re hungry. Besides, you wouldn’t expect them to just show up, hand over the ham and leave. They came a long way!

(music intro begins the last phrase of “Silent Night”)

TRACK 44
#16 ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS

RALPH/JOSEPH
Look, little baby Jesus is getting sleepy.

(IMOGENE puts her finger to her lips and gives the group a gentle ”shhh!” as they all gather close to IMOGENE/MARY to look at the baby)

IMOGENE
(a capella)
ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS
WHEN THE WIND WAS STILL
A STAR CAME OUT
ABOVE A LONELY HILL
ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS
THERE WAS NOT A SOUND
TO BREAK THE PEACE
ON THE COLD HARD GROUND
**TRACK 45**

(accompaniment enters)

**IMOGENE**

ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS  
ALL THE WORLD LOOKED DOWN  
ON A PEACEFUL TOWN  
CRADLED IN SNOW  
AND A YELLOW MOON  
CAST A GLOW THAT FOUND  
ALL THE MEN AND BEASTS  
HUDDLED BELOW

**IMOGENE & RALPH**

‘ROUND A SWEET LITTLE BABY  
LYING IN A MANGER  
LOOKING UP AT STRANGERS  
WITH GIFTS IN THEIR HANDS  
NOT KNOWING HE WAS MEANT TO BE  
THE HOPE OF HUMANITY  
BORN TO BRING SOME HARMONY  
TO A TROUBLED LAND

**HERDMANS**

ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS  
ALL THE WORLD LOOKED DOWN  
ON THAT PEACEFUL TOWN  
CRADLED IN SNOW  
AND A YELLOW MOON  
CAST A GLOW THAT FOUND  
ALL THE MEN AND BEASTS  
HUDDLED BELOW

**HERDMANS & KIDS**

‘ROUND A SWEET LITTLE BABY  
LYING IN A MANGER  
LOOKING UP AT STRANGERS  
WHO CAME FROM AFAR  
JUST A CHILD LIKE YOU AND ME  
FULL OF HOPE AND FULL OF NEED  
OR WAS HE JUST A RESTLESS SEED  
FROM A WANDERIN’ STAR
ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS

 IMOGENE
ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS

(IMOGENE bends over and kisses the baby)

 IVY
And on that night, all was calm and all was bright.

(the cast freezes as the light frames them all in a final pose)

[SFX: a chime sounds as a star lights up or twinkles overhead]

(REVEREND HOPKINS comes onto the stage, clearly moved)

 REVEREND HOPKINS
Thank you to all the children and Mrs. Bradley. That was...that was something—

(he’s going to say “else” but GLADYS, as the Angel of the Lord, appears over the top of the manger...she likes being the star of the show...the kids all break their poses to look at GLADYS)

 GLADYS
Hey, everybody! Unto us a child is born!

 REVEREND HOPKINS
(smiling up at GLADYS)
Let there be joy in the world!

 TRACK 46

#17 LET THERE BE JOY

(KIDS sing as they remove costume parts, run off to the sides of the stage – some clonking each other...or just generally goofing around with that “We did it!” energy)

 ALL KIDS
LET THERE BE JOY JOY JOY JOY
IN THE WORLD
LET THERE BE PEACE LET THERE BE JOY
IN EVERY GIRL IN EVERY BOY
LET THERE BE JOY JOY JOY JOY
ALL KIDS (CON’T)

IN THE WORLD

(at intervals in the song, the music vamps, allowing the following vignettes to occur, as the cast merges on stage to form the final tableau—CHURCH LADIES rush onto the stage where the KIDS are already goofing around, while REVEREND HOPKINS tries to get them to stay on the stage for a photo...he has the camera with a flash...each vignette ends with a camera flash)

BETTY
(clutching a handkerchief)
Could you believe that was Imogene Herdman up there? She had me in tears.

LUANNE
The kids are just so darn cute.

CONNIE
And that little Gladys brought a lot of spirit to the Angel.

LUANNE
Who was the baby Jesus?

CONNIE
That was a doll.

BETTY
Oh, I don’t think so, Connie. I’m sure I saw his little hand reach for the rattle.

CONNIE
Wait till Helen hears about this. I don’t know what she’s going to think.

(HELEN rolls up in a wheelchair)

HELEN
It was the best Christmas pageant ever.

(HELEN gestures for GRACE to join her and takes her hand)

HELEN
I knew picking Grace was the right decision.

TRACK 47
(music starts)
HELEN
COME ONE AND ALL

CHURCH LADIES, HELEN & GRACE
AND CELEBRATE THIS DAY
WITH THOSE YOU LOVE FROM NEAR AND FAR AWAY
REACH OUT YOUR HAND AND WELCOME BACK AGAIN

ALL
ONE AND ALL LIKE A LONG LOST FRIEND

(music vamps...CHARLIE running up to LEROY)

CHARLIE
Hey, Leroy. Don’t forget your food basket.

LEROY
That’s a gift. You don’t take back a gift. Want a candy cane?

Sure.

LEROY
(whispers)
I gotta whole bag of ’em hid back here. Come on.

(CHARLIE runs off with LEROY...BOB and BETH join GRACE
in another area, hugging her)

BETH
Mom, you did it!

BOB
There’s my Amazing Grace.

GRACE
You’re still in your bathrobe.

BOB
I’ve talked to the Herdmans and we’re forming a singing group and taking it on the
road. The Three Wise Guys and Bob.

(GRACE laughs and kisses BOB on the cheek...camera
flash...during this ALICE joins them taking BETH’s hand)

GRACE, BOB, BETH & ALICE
LET THERE BE PEACE LET THERE BE JOY
IN EVERY GIRL AND EVERY BOY
GRACE, BOB, BETH & ALICE (CON’T)
LET THERE BE JOY JOY JOY JOY JOY
IN THE WORLD

(lights up on the HERDMANS and REVEREND HOPKINS who is trying to corral them back with the rest of the cast take a group picture)

REVEREND HOPKINS
Thank you, kids, for joining our pageant. I have to say, we’ll miss you next year.

RALPH
Don’t worry. From now on, we’re doing the Christmas pageant every year.

GLADYS
But next year, I’m playing Mary.

IMOGENE
Yeah! The heck you will!

(GRACE steps between GLADYS and IMOGENE as they lunge for each other)

GRACE
SO LIFT YOUR HEARTS AND DO NOT TURN AWAY FROM THOSE IN NEED WHO MAY HAVE GONE ASTRAY

ALL
REACH OUT YOUR HAND AND WELCOME BACK AGAIN ONE AND ALL LIKE A LONG LOST FRIEND

(final tableau: The BRADLEYS and REVEREND HOPKINS upstage – GRACE and BETH as angels, BOB and CHARLIE as shepherds...the HERDMANS and OTHER KIDS scuffle to get the best spot...the final pose as GLADYS poses in the back with arms held high)

ALL
LET THERE BE LOVE
LET THERE BE JOY
IN EVERY GIRL
IN EVERY BOY
LET THERE BE JOY JOY JOY JOY

ECHO
LET THERE BE LOVE
LET THERE BE JOY
IN EVERY GIRL
IN EVERY BOY
LET THERE BE JOY JOY JOY JOY
ALL (CON’T)                          ECHO (CON’T)
JOY                                        JOY IN THE WORLD

LET THERE BE
JOY                                        JOY
JOY                                        IN THE WORLD
JOY JOY JOY                                 IN THE WORLD

IN THE WORLD
IN THE WORLD

**TRACK 48**

| #18 BOWS |

End of Play
THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER
THE MUSICAL

BOOK & LYRICS BY
Jahnna Beecham

MUSIC & LYRICS BY
Malcolm Hillgartner

BASED ON THE PLAY BY BARBARA ROBINSON

Score Sample Perusal
1. Perfect Little Town
from "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical"

Music by M. Hillgartner
Lyrics by Hillgartner & Beecham

CUE: Top of Show

Sweetly \( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \frac{4}{4} \)

When it's Christmas in our perfect little town, when the
crisp white snow comes tumbling down, each child has a smile, no one

\( \text{Bm} \) \( \text{F#m} \) \( \text{F#7} \) \( \text{Bm} \) \( \text{G} \) \( \text{E7} \)
ev - er frowns, and each bell that is knelled makes the sweet - est sound, and our

D Bm F# D dim7 F#m G/D Em A7

Christ - mas star gleams like a crown. What could be more per - fect than

D Em F#m G D

rit.

Christ - mas in our per - fect lit - tle town?

Em Em F#m G A7 Bb D
2. The Horrible Herdmans

from "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical"

Music by M. Hillgartner
Lyrics by Hillgartner and Beecham

CUE: CHARLIE
"No Herdmans."

TRACK 2

Intense and Scary  \( \frac{4}{4} \) = 145
VAMP until:
"...you know what they'd do."

ELMER:

mf

Put worms in your sandwich.

BETH:

Ants in your purse.

TEDDY:

Flat-ten your tires.

ALICE:

And

REV: "Those are terrible things to say!"
CHARLIE: "But they're all true! The Herdmans are the worst kids in the history of the world!"

much much worse!
The Horrible Herdmans are the rottenest kids. Just wait until you hear about the things that they did. They hit and they steal and smoke smelly cigars, they oughtta be arrested and put behind bars. There's
No - thing that those kids won't do, No - thing they won't do to you.

Don't fight You're al - ways gon - na lose. They'll find you, then they'll pound you 'til your

face is black and blue!

REV: "They can't be that bad!"
Six of the Herdmans are like sixty of us. They bully little children, they spit and they cuss. They pull down your gym shorts and look up your dress.

When they leave a classroom, it's always a mess. Why us?
What did we do to them? Why us? How will we get rid of them?

Help, please, there's got to be a way to run the Herd-mans out of town to some-place far a-way!

Now, chil-dren, that's too much! Those kids can't
help them-selves. Their mo- ther works so hard, she's ne- ver

home! They're all a- lone!

poor little dears, they're a ter- ri- ble crew. The place they live in's not a house, it's
Helen:

more like a zoo!

Bless their hearts, must they run wild in the street? Why

Church Ladies:

can't they be polite? Why do they cuss, lie and cheat? Bless them,

they're a rowdy bunch. Dear Lord, tell them it's not nice to punch.
Please, please! Will someone calm them down before those little Herdsmans make a mess of our town? Yes! Oh yes! They really make a mess!

Yes! Oh yes! It’s such a mess!
2. The Horrible Herdmans

VAMP until:
"Go fast, Imogene!"

HERDMANS:

We're the

Horrible Herdmans, an unbeatable squad. I'm Imogene! I'm Ralph! I'm

CLAUDE:

All Four:

OLLIE & GLADYS:

LEROY:

OLlie and Gladys. We're small but we're mean!

IMOGENE:

RALPH:

Le-roy! I'm Claude! Here's Ol-lie and Gladys. We're small but we're mean!
HERDMANS (except GLADYS):

Just one bite from Gla-dys can sure make you scream.

HERDMANS:

look what those kids have done. We las-soed all the rein-deer in the town and pulled them down!

RALPH:

I wrapped up
2. The Horrible Herdmans

ELMER: "Dad!"

El-mer Hop-kins like a Christ-mas tree in a string of red lights!

LEROY:

Ralph, grab the candy canes, we'll have a big sword fight! I

GLADYS:

plucked out Fro-sty's eyes, stuck a car-ret in his chest! Some-one ought-ta make a

CHURCH LADIES, PARENTS & KIDS:
2. The Horrible Herdmans

REV:

citizen's arrest! Yes! Oh yes! A citizen's arrest! Yes! Oh yes! A

PARENTS & KIDS:

citizen's arrest! Yes! Oh yes! A citizen's arrest! Yes! Oh yes! A

CLAUDE

& OLLIE:

ruined our town! We dressed up the Santa to look like a clown! They're a

PARENTS:

ruined our town! We dressed up the Santa to look like a clown! They're a
natural disaster! a plague! A stampeding herd!

VAMP until:
"The Herdmans. Who else?"

They (We) are the worst kids in the history of the World!

Immediate Segue
8. My Mother Said

from "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical"

Adapted from "The Carol of the Bells"

CUE: IVY "But it belongs to the church."

ALICE: "A person who cares"

[GO ON]

**Close down to the "ng" immediately, to mimic a bell ringing**
Your mother's wrong, your mother too! My mother knows just what to do!

My mother said. My mother too. Your mother has not got a clue.

You take it back! Why, when I'm right? She put them in just out of spite.
That isn't true! My mom gave you all a chance, but you went and turned scare-dy-pants.

Gladys put a cray-on in her pock-et, and your mother didn't try to stop it.

That's such a lie! You know it's true. There's not a thing your mom'll do.
She let them take all the good parts. Without a fight. That wasn't smart.

Don't blame my mom if you went and lost your nerve, you're just getting what you deserve.

I thought we were friends until today. Friends would never say the things you say.

8. My Mother Said
That is - n't fair! We real - ly care. I ne - ver said. She ne - ver said.

O.S. VOICES:

That is - n't fair!

That is - n't fair!

mollo rit.

your moth - er's in ov - er her head. It was her mom. That's what she said.

We real - ly care.

Freely

O.S. VOICES:

a tempo

I ne - ver said.

Segue