

## Mother

**MOTHER.** *(entering from kitchen with coffee cup)* You know, Mrs. Armstrong works very hard to give everyone a lovely experience.

**BETH.** Oh, Mom, Mrs. Armstrong just likes to run things.  
*(They exit.)*

**MOTHER.** They're right, of course. She directs the pageant, she runs the potluck supper, she's chairman of the Bazaar... I think Helen Armstrong would preach the sermon if anyone would let her.

**FATHER.** Is that George Armstrong's wife?

**MOTHER.** Yes.

**FATHER.** Well, maybe she'll try to manage the hospital, because that's where she is. I saw George at the drug store and he told me his wife broke her leg this morning... She'll be in traction for two weeks and laid up till the first of the year.

**MOTHER.** The first of the year! ...Why, they'll have to cancel Christmas.

**FATHER.** She's in charge of Christmas?

**MOTHER.** Well, she's in charge of the pageant, and she's in charge of the bazaar... I feel sorry for Helen, but who's going to do all those things?

*(Spins off all three ladies: Up on MOTHER and FATHER as they enter from the wings stage right. Each is carrying a grocery bag, and we can assume that some good friend in the supermarket has relayed MRS. ARMSTRONG's message.)*

**MOTHER.** *(in high dudgeon, mimicking MRS. ARMSTRONG.)* ..."If I'd been up and around, this never would have happened!" Well, let me tell you...

**FATHER.** Don't tell me, I'm on your side... The car's over there.

**MOTHER.** Helen Armstrong is not the only woman alive who can run a Christmas pageant! I made up my mind just to do the best I could under the circumstances, but now I'm going to make this the best Christmas pageant ever, and I'm going to do it with the Herdmans! After all, they raised their hands and nobody else did, and I don't care...

**FATHER.** Good for you, Grace, *(trying to move her along)* the car's over there...

**MOTHER.** And you're going to help me!

**FATHER.** *(stopped by this)* Does that mean...

**MOTHER.** You have to go!

## Adult Women - Audition Pieces

### Mrs. Armstrong

**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 downstage right. FATHER and CHARLIE seated: BETH setting the table, pouring water, etc. MOTHER on telephone.)*

**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...

### Mrs. McCarthy - a Mother

*(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 cake. We'll try not to bother you... I guess this is your dress rehearsal.

**MOTHER.** *(glances at the uncostumed crowd)* It's supposed to be... Oh, Edna...didn't I hear that your niece had a baby a month or so ago? ... A little girl?

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** *(pleased and proud)* Yes! She's five weeks old, and...

**MOTHER.** Well, I wonder how it would be if I were to call your niece and ask if we could borrow...

*(MRS. MCCARTHY, seeing the lay of the land and not liking it, leaps in.)*

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** Grace... No! I could make up some lie and tell you the baby's sick or cranky or something, but the truth is that she's perfectly healthy and happy and beautiful, and we all want her to stay that way. So we're certainly not going to hand her over to Imogene Herdman. Sorry, Grace.

*(MRS. MCCARTHY leaves.)*



Mrs. McCarthy (cont.)

Women (pg 2)

**MOTHER.** Why in the world did you call the fire department about a little smoke?

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** It was a lot of smoke. The ladies' room was full of thick smoke.

**MOTHER.** It couldn't have been. You just got excited. And now look—the church is full of firemen and the street is full of baby angels crying and shepherds climbing all over the fire truck and half the neighborhood...! Didn't you know it was cigar smoke?

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** No, I didn't know it was cigar smoke! I don't expect to find cigar smoke in the ladies' room of the church!

Mrs. McCarthy, Mrs. Slocum, Mrs. Armstrong

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** Jane? ...Edna McCarthy. Did you hear about the... Well, it must be Grace's fault somehow! How else would the six of them end up in a Christmas pageant, when they ought to be in jail!

(Spot off **MRS. MCCARTHY:** Up on **IRMA SLOCUM**, telephoning.)

**Mrs Slocum**  
**IRMA.** Vera? ...Irma Slocum. I just heard that Imogene Herdman is going to be Mary in the Christmas pageant, and I... Is that a fact? All six of them? Vera, I live next door to that outfit and I'd rather live next door to a zoo. Has Grace gone crazy?

(Spot off **MRS. SLOCUM:** Up on **MRS. ARMSTRONG** in hospital bed, or in wheelchair, with leg in a cast, propped out in front of her.)

**MRS. ARMSTRONG.** Where did they come from? Who let them in? Imogene Herdman! ...What kind of a child

is that, to be Mary the Mother of Jesus? Where was Reverend Hopkins, I'd like to know... He was what? ...Visiting shut-ins! Well, I'm shut-in, and he wasn't visiting me!

(Spots up on all ladies: Following speeches are simultaneous, till **MRS. ARMSTRONG**'s last line.)

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** I said, why don't you let them hand out programs at the door? Grace said we never have programs for the pageant, but I said...

**MRS. SLOCUM.** ...Better nail down the church and lock up the silver service and hide the collection plates before they clean them out...

**MRS. ARMSTRONG.** What was the matter with Grace? Couldn't she have sent them away? Tell them to go home? Oh, I feel responsible... If I'd been up and around this never would have happened!

Mrs. McCarthy & Mrs Slocum

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** Could you believe that was Imogene Herdman? And all the rest of them? Irma, this was the best Christmas pageant we ever had, and I'm not sure why, but I think it was them. Could that be?

**MRS. SLOCUM.** Oh, I always get weepy about the pageant. I guess it's the children and the carols and all... But you're right, this was the best one...and it should have been the worst.

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** There was just something...different.

**MRS. SLOCUM.** Well, the Angel of the Lord was different!

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** Yes, but you know, I liked that! Had lots of spirit. Sometimes you can't even hear the Angel of the Lord, (starts off stage left.) I must find Grace, and tell her...

**MRS. SLOCUM.** (following) I just wish now that I'd let her have Eugene to be the baby Jesus.

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** (stops) Who was the baby Jesus?

**MRS. SLOCUM.** Why, it was a doll.

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** Oh, I don't think so, Irma. That was no doll.

**MRS. SLOCUM.** Well... It did seem real.

Mrs Slocum, Mrs Clark, Mrs. Clausing

(Lights offstage: Spotlight up downstage left on **MRS. SLOCUM**, telephoning.)

**MRS. SLOCUM.** Yes, I'll take over the bazaar, Edna, if you'll do the potluck supper. I don't know what in the world we'll do about the pageant, unless... How about Grace?

(Spot off **MRS. SLOCUM:** Spot up downstage right on **MRS. CLARK**, telephoning.)

**MRS. CLARK.** I just can't, Edna. I've got company all Christmas week... How about Grace?

(Spot off **MRS. CLARK:** Spot up downstage left on **MRS. CLAUSING**, telephoning.)

**MRS. CLAUSING.** ...How about Grace?

(Spot off **MRS. CLAUSING:** Up on **MRS. MCCARTHY**, downstage right, telephoning.)

**MRS. MCCARTHY.** Hello... Grace...?

(Spot off **MRS. MCCARTHY:** Stage lights up on living room-dining room set. **MOTHER** hanging up phone with stunned expression.)

**MOTHER.** Bob...

**FATHER.** What?

**MOTHER.** I have to direct the Christmas pageant.

**FATHER.** Does that mean I have to go?