

The Traditional Holiday Pageant?

'Twas the night before Christmas
when all through the house
the tension was rising
'tween in-laws and spouse.

Expecting the onslaught, she'd shopped, wrapped, and baked,
Mum verged on exhaustion, her back cramped and ached.

"This year will be perfect!" determined she vowed
Then she lined up her brood, and she ordered aloud,

"Now, listen up, kids! Clean your ears, so you'll hear it!
You'll stop all your whining and get into the spirit!"

Their kinfolk were traveling from locales afar,
to watch little Sal as she held up the Star, Raymond
as drummer, and Kevin as goat,
and the rest of the rugrats playing Heavenly
Host.

The pastor who cast them, though 'twas said
he was braver
didn't trust Baby Paul to portray the sweet
Savior.

Dad paced with impatience, beating
tracks on the floor.

Jenny rushed from the house, clipped one
wing in the door.

Momma, on round-up, was prodding the herd.
Jenny wailed with dismay, "I WILL LOOK LIKE A NERD!"

Loading four vans full, they skidded to church,
side-swiping two carolers, came to rest with a lurch,
and disgorged the uncles, the cousins and aunties,
the angels and livestock, three Wisemen, and Granny.

When all were assembled they commanded three pews.
Freckled shepherds processed and proclaimed the Good News.
Momma leaned on Dad's shoulder, her stamina tested;
on the other, the video camera was rested.
Training its lens on his offspring with pride,
disgruntled he found there was no tape inside.

He cursed much too loud for his present location.
His pious Aunt Tina prayed for his salvation.
Granny sighed disappointment, "Tsk, tsk, what a shame."

Momma glared at her husband, volleyed bullets of blame.

Dad was soundly upbraided by a clan 'twas adjacent
Poor pastor feared rightly that brouha' was nascent.
The man behind bellowed, "Sit down in the front."
Dad howled, "Go to blazes, you overgrown punk."

How the threats escalated, I haven't a hunch.
And no one remembers who threw the first punch.
But the fray that ensued was a Mother of All
right up to the altar, 'round the heavenly stall.

Fur and feathers were flying, taunts rang through the air.
There was gnashing of teeth and the pulling of hair.

The peace of nativity wrenched by the roar,
the manger upset, dolly rolled 'cross the floor.

The choir tried vainly to scream out the lines,
of the old-fashioned favorite, 'The Tie That Binds.'

Once innocent angels from heaven were falling,
and even wee Drummer was biting and brawling.
The candlesticks tottered, the altar was battered,
the tree lying prone, pastor's vestments were
tattered.

Then sweet, one-winged Jenny, fearing huge conflagration,
was sparked by the blaze of Divine inspiration.
She gathered up all of the cherubs, I'm told,
and began tearing one wing from each little shoulder.

When the dust finally settled, only one light remained,
A lone Christmas candle whose heavenly flame
bathed the children in gold, with arms 'round each other,
turning angels with black eyes to sisters and brothers.
Their timorous voices sang out, 'Silent Night,'
overpowering the fracas and ending the fight.

So this story of angels with singleton wings,
who like the blest infant, humbled powerful kings,
taught a lesson of love to the grown-ups that night:
Only Bearing Each Other Up, Can We Take Flight.

And the pastor blessed all, waved them home with relief,
"Merry Christmas. Go Home. And May God Grant You Peace!"

