

God's Little Angel  
By Bonnie Copeland  
(949) 646-9494  
[bonmail@pacbell.net](mailto:bonmail@pacbell.net)  
Entry: Category 2  
Word Count: 871

Flo-Ann Householder is the most stuck-up girl in Pittsburgh. She's fat, with a pig nose. squinty blue eyes and a teeny-tiny mouth that makes a lot of noise on the playground.

We are standing in the hall near the Colfax Grade School auditorium waiting for the Christmas Program rehearsal to begin. The brown paper sign over the auditorium door says, "Merry Christmas Happy Chanukah Happy New Year 1949." Flo-Ann is the first person in the sixth grade line even though her last name starts with "H." I'm third-from-the-end of the second grade line because my name starts with "S."

The sixth graders are angels in white smocks, silver tinsel haloes and aluminum foil wings. Flo-Ann must have been absent the day the teacher told the sixth grade what to wear. Her smock is silver and her halo and wings are gold.

A radiator hisses behind me. The pipes clang like a trolley-car. It's cold and snowy outside. I stomp my feet to warm my toes and my orthopedic oxfords sound like reindeer hooves on the tile floor. Out of the corner of my eye I watch Flo-Ann balance on the tips of her white patent Mary-Janes like a ballerina. Her blonde curls shimmer as she looks into the auditorium through the round window in the door.

Inside the auditorium the school orchestra lurches into "Oh Come All Ye Faithful." The doors swing open and the kindergarten children march in, two-by-two, holding hands. They're wearing reindeer horns that they made themselves out of brown paper bags. Their teacher, Miss Johnson, is so tall that her horns almost brush the lights. She hustles the children into the first row and squirms into the center aisle front-row seat.

The first grade tramps behind them in crayon masks, mooing and quacking like farm animals. I dance down the aisle with the second grade. We carry sparkly cardboard stars that bob above us on straightened coat-hanger wires.

Third, fourth and fifth grades follow. The boys wear flannel bathrobes and sandals with curled crepe-paper beards swinging from their ears on elastic loops. The girls walk behind the boys with towels wrapped around their waists and scarves over their heads.

The girl with the pillow on her tummy is Mary. The tallest boys are Joseph, the innkeeper, and the three wise men. The wise men carry crooked sticks and wrapped gifts for Baby Jesus. The rest of the third, fourth and fifth graders are citizens of Bethlehem. Several carry well-worn, well-loved stuffed bunnies, bears and lambs.

Finally the sixth grade angels enter. Flo-Ann is the only one without a partner. I gasp as she passes the sixth-grade section and walks up to Miss Johnson's center front-row seat!

Flo-Ann stands next to Miss Johnson and stares at her. Miss Johnson gives Flo-Ann her seat and scurries behind the stage curtains.

The orchestra wobbles into "The First Noel," the curtain opens on an empty stage, and the play begins. Someone dangles a star on a stick from the wings and the wise men set off on their journey. Joseph leads a reluctant donkey and Mary towards Bethlehem. He argues with the innkeeper. The wise men walk in circles.

The orchestra squeaks, "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," and everyone goes on stage except for Flo-Ann Householder.

Mary, Joseph and the wise men kneel beside the manger surrounded by giggling reindeer, braying farm animals, citizens of Bethlehem and angels. We second graders cross the stage behind them waving our stars.

Suddenly the music stops and Flo-Ann Householder stands up, alone in the audience. She twirls to face the dark auditorium and the blonde curls on the back of her head seem to float above the empty seats. Then she turns sideways so I can see one squinty blue eye and her little pig nose, opens her teeny-tiny mouth and sings, "Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus lays down his sweet head."

I shake in my shoes. I have never heard such a sound! The notes are round and full like chocolate kisses, sweet and light like cotton candy.

"The stars in the sky look down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay," Flo-Ann sings.

The sound rings in the air long after Flo-Ann sits down.

I am stricken with fear. I leave the stage on quaking knees and take my seat.

I creep next to Flo-Ann Householder on the playground later that day. She has a red stocking cap wrapped so far up her face that I can't see her teeny-tiny mouth, but I can hear it. "Take this," she yells at a sixth-grade boy. She molds an ice ball in one mitten and blasts him.

The other hand is bare, hanging by her side with the empty mitten swinging from a safety pin on the sleeve.

I keep my back turned so she can't see me reach out and touch her bare hand.

It is ice cold!

Terror and remorse squeeze the blood out of my heart. I spread my arms, look to heaven and pray.

Please, God, forgive me for my evil thoughts. I didn't know, but I know now.

Only one of your angels could sing like that!

© Bonnie Copeland 2008. All Rights Reserved.