

# Other People's Children

*by* John Wentworth Chapin

Jocelyn has always been a special child, and that's just the way it's always been. Other children fidget, cry, stamp their feet, get runny noses — but not Jocelyn. Pageant kids are usually better behaved than the non-pageant variety, of course, but even so, Jocelyn is a standout. Of course Teddy and I have loved her with all our hearts her whole life, but it's almost like she just *knew* how to act regardless of the coaching. I watch the other mothers smile with their mouths and not their eyes when their girls are on stage, but when Jocelyn does her talent routine or her Promenade, I'm relaxed. When I look in some of those poor little girls' eyes, I see that they don't like this: they don't like the mascara, they don't like sequins, they get tired of their dance or majorette routines. Sometimes the mothers hiss under their breath or the child rips off a false eyelash in front of a judge. And that's where I draw the line. Children should not be made to do things unless they want it. It's like Oriental sweatshop children — they don't want to be there. Jocelyn wants to be there. Every bouncy ringlet, every crisply executed split, every careful moment of eye contact with each judge: you know Jocelyn wants to be there, and the judges know it, and the other parents know it, too.

