

The Christmas Coffee

Ann Pugh



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THE CHRISTMAS COFFEE

This 20-minute comedy is easily mounted on a stage or in a recreation room. List of simple props found in Production Notes. The comedy can appropriately precede a coffee hour. Suggestions for a Reader's Theatre performance are in Production Notes.

The actresses' clothing is what the women likely have in their personal wardrobes. The colorful attire for the male or the female Hip-Hop Rapper is described in Production Notes.

The Cast In Order Of Appearance

RUBY, the Committee Chairman . . . impatient perfectionist and ego-centric head honcho

SANDRA, a Committee Member . . . loyal worker, sensitive and easily intimidated

LUCY, a Committee Member . . . more a joiner than a worker, vain, never intimidated

HIP-HOP RAPPER, 'teenage' cameo role . . . M or F - African American or White -- cast from senior theatre group or staff, or borrowed from school or community theatre

Setting: The Day Room In a Senior Citizen Center

Time: A Morning In Late December

Pre-curtain music: either a recording of 'White Christmas' or 'We Need A Little Christmas' from the musical "MAME." Song establishes the mood for the annual free "Christmas Coffee," and suggests the music comes from an unseen lobby, where guests are gathering to await the opening of the doors into the Day Room.

The Day Room is just off the imaginary lobby, which would be out in the audience area. Imaginary double-doors downstage center open into the Day Room, but the imaginary doors are now closed. Offstage left leads to a kitchen, a parking lot, etc.

At rise the Day Room is empty except for three card tables with decks of playing cards, plus four metal chairs holding a cardboard box and three brown paper grocery sacks containing small props.

(Ruby enters hurriedly from left, followed closely by her assistants: Sandra, and Lucy. Each wears a reindeer antler headdress, but is otherwise tastefully gussied up for the morning coffee in a best dress or slacks and sweater, etc. Ruby is in Christmas-red; practical Sandra is in Christmas-green; Lucy, the most fashionable, is in white with jewelry. Each has a purse and a container holding small props. Music fades out as dialogue begins.)

Ruby: *(breathless)* Whew! That's it. The last load! *(sets box #1 and purse on chair)* Traffic was horrible! We have to be ready in twenty minutes!

Sandra: *(cheerfully, sets box #2 and purse on chair)* I hope I remembered to lock my car.

Lucy: *(unhappily sets a boutique store shopping bag on card*

table and fusses with antler headdress) Ruby, would you kindly tell me just why I have to wear these tacky reindeer antlers! *(disgusted)* I've ruined my hair-do!

Ruby: Our antlers are a tradition now because they were so popular at our Christmas Coffee last year. Remember the Living and Lifestyle photographer from The Post ran my picture on her front page and--

Lucy: *(interrupting)* I wasn't here last December. *(smugly)* I was on a cruise to Hawaii with my daughter, remember?

Sandra: *(enthusiastically, to Ruby, while clearing tables of cards)* I remember! Lucy's daughter won the trip in the Elk's Club lottery!

Lucy: *(pointedly, correcting Sandra)* Lion's Club lottery.

Sandra: *(apologetically)* I always forget which is which. Anyhow, Lucy showed our bridge club those cute snap shots of her in a grass skirt and that . . . uh, pretty . . . thing of orchids . . . *(embarrassed)* I forgot what it's called.

Ruby: *(impatiently)* It's a lei, Sandra. You should try taking ginkgo for your memory.

Sandra: Does it help?

Ruby: Let's hope. Now, back to these antlers. The photographer from The Post is Mary Blain's niece, and she told Mary she'll definitely be here today.

Sandra: (*gasping, excitedly*) Really? For sure?

Ruby: (*nods*) Mary says her niece is doing a Feature Story about reindeers.

Sandra: (*delighted*) We're in her story! My grandkids will think "Wow! How co-ool"!

Lucy: I think how stupid! My hair will look all--

Ruby: (*interrupting, impatiently*) Enough of that! I must open those lobby doors (*indicating down center*) in exactly eighteen minutes and introduce the Madrigal Choir.

Sandra: Those young boys are so cute in their long red robes with that tall (*gesturing*) pleated collar.

Ruby: (*with superior air*) It's called a ruff. A Renaissance ruff. (*beat*) Girls, you can move these chairs over out of the way. (*Sandra and Lucy begin moving the chairs downstage left and right*) The choir will enter from (*indicating stage right*) the dressing room and form a semi-circle behind our serving table. Their performance must begin on time.

Sandra: Uh huh. The invitation said they'll sing at 'ten-thirty.' Eleanor in the office did a lovely job with the invitations.

Ruby: No, Eleanor did a miserable job!

Sandra: (*blankly*) Oh?

Ruby: (*super critical*) She used the cheapest copy paper! Ordinary font! Black ink! The woman has no class! I had to re-do them. I chose a dignified font, and in color. (*smugly*) Our red and green color-scheme, naturally.

Sandra: They turned out beautiful.

Ruby: *(correcting)* Beautifully. *(beat)* Thank you.

Lucy: I bet she's ticked off! Eleanor can be a bitch! *(merely shrugs at Sandra's gasp of disapproval)*

Ruby: *(shrugs)* I can't be bothered about Eleanor. She's only a secretary. I always say when you want something done right, do it yourself. *(checks boxes and bags)* Now, I hope you girls brought everything I assigned you.

Lucy: *(offhand)* I'm sure I did. *(concentrating on flecking dust from clothing and using purse mirror to primp make-up and hair)*

Sandra: *(somewhat worried)* Golly, Ruby, I hope I did, but lately I can't seem to remember where I put things. I'll try those pills you suggested.

Ruby: *(interrupting impatiently)* At least you remembered to wear green. It's important that our color scheme be . . . *(moves table #1 to precisely center stage)* There! Now, lets link the tables together.

(Sandra obediently moves table #2 upstage of table #1)

Ruby: No, Sandra! Not like that! Don't you remember the tables are to go *(indicating a line parallel to footlights)* across the room?

Sandra: Sorry. *(moves table #2 left of table #1)* I guess I forgot.

Ruby: Yes, *(moves table #3 to right of table #1)* so it seems. There! *(proudly admiring the table placement)* Now, when we open the double-doors *(indicating imaginary double-doors downstage center)* and I step out to welcome the guests, they'll have a magnificent view of our elegant table surrounded by the choir.

Lucy: *(moves downstage, listening to guests out in the lobby)*
Sounds like a big crowd.

(Ruby whips a colorful red and/or green table cloth or sheet from Sandra's box # 2)

Ruby: You did press this, didn't you? *(flips cloth open, inspects it)*

Sandra: Yes, I did.

Ruby: Steam press? (*spreading cloth on table with Sandra's help*)

Sandra: Yes, ma'am.

(Lucy has approached double-doors, and reaches for doorknob the very instant that Ruby happens to glance her way)

Ruby: (*firmly, a command*) Lucy, don't open those doors!

Lucy: I only wanted to take a peak and--

Sandra: (*shocked*) Lucy Jennings, I can't believe you'd say that!

Lucy: (*confused*) Say what?

Sandra: (*in embarrassed semi-whisper*) Take a leak? That's so unlike you!

Lucy: (*exasperated*) I said I wanted to take a peak, and see. Why would you think I would say that?

Sandra: I'm so sorry, dear, but I assumed you wanted to go out through the lobby to get to the rest room. Forgive me.

Lucy: (*ticked off*) You need a hearing aid! I said take a--

Ruby: (*interrupts, adjusting cloth so downstage side reaches floor*) You don't need to peak. I can tell you the lobby's filling up fast.

Sandra: They certainly start arriving early.

Ruby: Our annual Christmas Coffee brings them a half-hour early.

Lucy: How many do you think?

Ruby: Well, you remember last year we had-- No, you weren't here last year.

Lucy: I was in Hawaii, with my daughter, the nurse. She won a--

Ruby: (*interrupting, impatiently*) So you've told us! Last year we served exactly sixty-four women and nine men.

Lucy: (*coolly*) Any handsome un-attached men?

Ruby: Who knows. But just mention free food, and-- Lucy, where are the

red tapers?

Lucy: Well, I, uh . . . (*scampers over to shopping bag*) I bought these. (*fishes through bag to pull out four chunky candles in dark burgundy*)

Ruby: Burgundy?! Are you getting color-blind in your old age?

Lucy: (*bristles*) I'm barely sixty-seven. (*vainly*) The cruise ship Social Director said I look fifty.

Ruby: (*with an 'I've-heard-that-before' look*) Whatever. I distinctly asked you to pick up red tapers. Christmas red!! (*sighs*) With my centerpiece burgundy would be a disaster!

Lucy: All the Hallmark stores were completely out of red.

Ruby: (*sighs impatiently*) Because some people plan ahead. Some people don't wait 'til the last minute to shop. (*digs into box #1*)

Lucy: I shopped three weeks before Thanksgiving. Ask Sarah Cox. Sarah was with me, and she bought that ceramic turkey we--

Ruby: (*interrupting*) I'm not interested in turkeys. (*sighs*) This is most distressing. Fortunately, I come prepared for this sort of thing. (*pulls six white tapers from box #1*) I had these on hand.

Sandra: (*soothingly*) Oh, they'll look fine, Agnes.

Ruby: Not what I envisioned to accompany my centerpiece (*from tissue paper nest in box #1, proudly brings out a large 'Nutcracker' figure*) It belongs (*pausing to concentrate on its placement, as if it were a priceless museum piece, and finally deciding to place it facing downstage*) right here!

Sandra: Oh, how lovely!

Ruby: (*explaining to the un-schooled*) The Nutcracker from the French classical ballet.

Lucy: (*pointedly*) Russian ballet by Tchaikovsky! And (*beat*) I've seen it at Lincoln Center (*beat*) Twice!

Ruby: (*ignoring Lucy's put-down*) So appropriate with our Madrigal choir.

Sandra: Very pretty, and white candles will set it off.

Ruby: Well, they'll have to do. I have no choice (*pointedly to Lucy, who just shrugs*) this late. Now, about the holders. Sandra, did you remember to borrow Jennifer Benson's--

Sandra: (*interrupting, eagerly*) Yes, I borrowed her candle-sticks.

Ruby: (*correcting Sandra*) Candelabra. Properly candelabra if it holds several candles. Jennifer has a pair, and that's properly called--

Lucy: (*snaps smugly*) a Candelabrum.

Sandra: (*politely to Ruby & Lucy*) Thank you. (*digs into box #2*)

Ruby: A person of breeding must try to remember that.

Sandra: I will try. Here are the (*cautiously*) candel-a-brum. (*brings a pair of branched candle holders from box #2*)

Ruby: Very good. Lucy, help her put the tapers in, please.

(Sandra and Lucy cautiously place six candles in holders, and place holders on the table. But not at all to Ruby's satisfaction. Ruby scoots holders over a few inches, then steps back from the table to survey it from several angles, and moves holders another two inches.)

Ruby: (*satisfied, at last*) There! Perfect! Now for the food.

Sandra: (*nods left toward kitchen*) The coffee's perking in two huge pots. They make thirty-four cups each.

Ruby: (*hinting*) Unless you forgot to plug them in?

Sandra: Oh, I'm positive (*then, with self-doubt*) . . . that is . . . I'm almost positive . . . (*nervously*) I better go check.

Ruby: Yes, I think you better.

Sandra: I'm, uh . . . (*nervously*) be right back. (*exits left*)

Ruby: (*to Lucy*) You baked eight dozen cup cakes?

Lucy: (*proudly*) I certainly did. (*scampers over to bring tray of cup cakes from box #3 on chair*) In the cutest little mini-size paper cups.

Ruby: With the red and green holly design?

Lucy: (*proudly, self -confident*) Absolutely!

Ruby: Good. Put them (*indicating exact place on table*) here. Without exception, the table must reflect the elegant taste of our committee, and be in keeping with the classical music.

Lucy: I frosted four dozen red. Four dozen green.

Ruby: Good. Put them on the table.

Sandra: (*returns from stage left, beaming and chirping proudly*) I didn't forget to plug them in! (*beat*) Coffee's perking!

Lucy: (*admiring cup cakes*) I never-ever use grocery store food dyes. My daughter's a nurse, as you know, and she says food dyes are harmful.

Sandra: I heard that on "Oprah" . . . (*uncertain*) Or . . . was it on "Martha Stewart?" Did you see the show when . . . one of them said red dye is the worst?

Lucy: (*arrogantly*) I never watch TV, but I used the safest possible coloring for my red frosting.

Sandra: (*enthusiastically*) Beet juice?

Lucy: Nope. Guess again.

Sandra: (*enthusiastically*) Cranberry juice?

Ruby: (*exasperated*) Damn it, Lucy, you're wasting time! What did you use?

Lucy: (*proudly*) Mercurochrome.

Ruby: (*aghast*) Mercurochrome?!

Lucy: (*nodding, smugly*) Yes, Mercurochrome.

Ruby: (*distraught*) Are you serious?

Lucy: *(self-assured)* Indeed, I am. *(brings tray of green frosted cup cakes from box #3)* I play it safe. *(proudly places tray on table)*

Ruby: *(hyper)* Sandra, quickly hide those with red frosting under the table until I have a chance to-- *(consults wrist watch)* Darn! It's almost time to open the doors! *(stares at 2nd tray of cup cakes)* Lucy, what did you use for this green coloring?

Lucy: *(self-assured)* Crème de menthe. *(beat)* You realize it is a food.

Ruby: *(frustrated)* I realize it is a liqueur! *(Sandra gasps)* And it's against the law to spend tax-payers' money to buy alcohol for a city function.

Lucy: *(shrugs)* I didn't buy it. A lovely gentleman on the cruise gave it to me. *(smugly)* Besides it was Duty Free!

Ruby: *(frantically)* Be sure that photographer from The Post is too busy snapping pictures to notice cup cakes!

Sandra: Is it time for the custodian to bring the coffee in?

Ruby: *(hurriedly)* Yes, and time to get out the strawberries and coffee cream. And light the candles! Who has the matches?

(Sandra & Lucy look blank, shake their heads no)

Ruby: *(frustrated)* Didn't either of you bring matches?

Sandra: *(nervously)* Wasn't on my list.

Lucy: *(shrugs)* Nor mine!

Ruby: *(getting hyper)* I probably brought some. I always come prepared for . . . *(frantically digs into box #1, but with no success)* No matches!

Sandra: Want me to go look in the kitchen?

Ruby: *(irritated)* No, you'll forget what you went for. I'll go. If I want *(heads for left exit, grumbling)* something done, I have to do it my-- *(disappears without finishing)*

Sandra: I'll get the strawberries *(getting bowl from box #2, and puts it on*

the table.) You have the paper napkins?

Lucy: Yes. *(pulls napkins from shopping bag)* Right here. *(hands napkins to Sandra with a sly smirk)* Red and green for Madam Chairman's table, right?

Sandra: Right. And you brought coffee cups and spoons?

Lucy: Yes, I did. *(getting coffee cups and spoons from shopping bag)* But I simply loathe eating with plastic. *(puts cups and spoons on table and arranges them with Sandra's help)* But who wants to hand-wash seventy cups and spoons? *(admiring fingernails)* Detergents ruin a manicure!

Sandra: Ruby must be having a hard time finding matches.

Lucy: *(cynically)* If anyone can find them, Madam Chairman can! *(goes to grocery sack #3 on chair and gets cream pitcher)*

Sandra: Ah, you have coffee cream. Good. *(pulls holly garlands or lengths of red or green tinsel from grocery sack #2 on chair)* Now for the swags. *(drops garlands on one end of table)*

(Smirking, Lucy gets crème de menthe from shopping bag. Pleased with herself, she puts it and the cream pitcher on the table.)

Sandra: *(gathering up a load of boxes and sacks)* We need to hide all this stuff.

(Sandra and Lucy quickly hide boxes, grocery sacks, Lucy's shopping bag and three purses under table. Table cloth conceals everything.)

Sandra: That's better. *(picks up holly garland, as Lucy picks up another one)* Now for this.

Lucy: Think the garlands will really help?

Sandra: In this bare room they add a cheerful note. *(with Lucy's help, loops the garlands across the table to create swag trim on downstage side of table)*

Lucy: Hope it satisfies Madam Chairman.

Sandra: Looks like Christmas to me! And we're ready as soon as-- *(stops mid-sentence at sight of Ruby)*

(Ruby enters stage left a defeated woman with a large white band-aide over her nose. Her reindeer antler headdress is askew and badly damaged! One side hangs precariously loose above her forehead. She has a fire-starter and a big coffee mug.)

Sandra: *(shocked)* Ruby, what happened?

Ruby: Bumped into a cabinet door!

Lucy: *(cynically, aside)* She's Ruby, the white-nosed reindeer!

Ruby: The custodian doctored my nose and lent me his fire-starter.

Sandra: Here, *(taking fire-starter)* I'll light the candles. Everything's ready! *(lighting candles)* Sit down, and catch your breath.

Ruby: *(dropping exhausted onto a chair down left)* The custodian says there's a television crew out front, and the parking lot's so jammed they hired a cop to keep order.

Sandra: *(exuberantly)* Hooray! *(to Ruby)* Your invitations did it!

Lucy: *(sarcastically)* With some help from the Madrigal Choir.

Sandra: Ruby, how's your coffee?

Ruby: I use cream. Is there any cream on the table?

Lucy: *(dashes for cream pitcher)* You bet! *(takes cream pitcher to Ruby and pours cream generously into Ruby's coffee mug)*

Ruby: *(aghast at the sight of the cream)* It's green! *(incredulously)* Green cream?

Lucy: *(proudly)* Neat, huh? Green *(beat)* to fit our color scheme.

Ruby: *(repulsed)* Ugh! It's hideous! Looks like a muddy stagnant creek! Ugh! *(suspiciously)* And just what did you color this with? *(pushing the mug of untasted coffee toward Lucy)* Chloroseptic mouthwash?

Lucy: *(insolently)* No! *(beat)* Crème de menthe!

Ruby: *(resigned)* Oh, well, *(jerking back the coffee mug)* hell,
give me a snort! *(takes a swig of coffee)*

*(Clock from lobby chimes the half-hour as instrumental
'Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer' tune begins, and house
lights flicker.)*

Ruby: Ten-thirty! Damn! We're in deep do-do! *(determined, stands)* As
Shakespeare . . . or Joan Crawford . . . or somebody once said,
"The show must go on!" *(takes another whopping swig of coffee
and hands mug to Lucy, who sets it on the table)* Here we go!
*(flanked by Sandra and Lucy, moves down to double-doors,
inhales deeply and orders:)* Okay, open the doors!

*(Sandra and Lucy each pantomime flinging open a door. Ruby
steps out to greet the actual audience as Music fades out.
Sandra and Lucy remain with her.)*

Ruby: Good morning, Ladies! Do I spot a gentleman or two out there? If
so, welcome, Sirs! This is a Christmas Coffee we'll never forget.
Now let's hear *(turns to stage right to announce)* The McLean
Madrigal Choir!

(Nothing happens. No choir. Just stony silence)

Ruby: *(calls to offstage right)* Hello, back there! *(coyly)* Young men, don't
be shy! We're waiting to hear you sing.

(Still, nothing happens)

Ruby: *(baffled, smiles apologetically to audience, then faces stage right,
begging politely)* Will the Conductor come out, please!

*(A bewildered Hip-Hop Rapper saunters on from right like a
lost alien on Mars. He/she is as baffled by the surroundings
as Ruby, Sandra and Lucy are by this stranger clad in all
yellow! See Rapper attire page 21)*

Ruby: *(stunned)* You're not the Conductor.

Sandra: *(fascinated, nudges Lucy)* But he's cuter!

Ruby: *(confused, shaking head 'no')* You're not . . . uh . . . a Madrigal

(Hip-Hop Rapper simultaneously shakes head 'no' also) singer?

Hip-Hop Rapper: No, Lady, I'm *(turns around 180° with back to audience, and points up over shoulder to a logo spelled in big bold letters on back of oversize shirt. Logo reads: RAIN DEARZ RAPPER.)*

Ruby: *(stunned)* Rain Dearz Rapper?

Hip-Hop Rapper: *(turning full front)* Yeah, that's me, Lady! I'm with The Rain Dearz Rappers. The other guys couldn't come on such short notice.

Ruby: There's some mistake.

Hip-Hop Rapper: *(shakes head)* No. See, that Conductor dude took sick, so Miz Eleanor hired me to come here. *(beat)* I'm supposed *(stares into audience, searching for something)* to be on television. *(happily spots TV cameras)* Hey, there's *(points out into audience)* my man with the camera! Yeah, and another dude. Miz Eleanor got the TV station to send two cameras! *(impressed)* She's one awesome lady!

Ruby: *(nods bitterly)* Yes, *(beat)* she certainly is!

Hip-Hop Rapper: *(indicating Ruby's bandaged nose and broken antlers)* Lady, you got a big bandage on your nose. You been dukin'? Dukin' with your man?

Ruby: *(cautiously)* Dukin'?

Hip-Hop Rapper: You know *(emulating a fast-punching fist fighter)* like fightin' with your dukes. *(explaining)* Dukin'.

Ruby: *(shaking head)* Oh, no. No. No dukin'.

Hip-Hop Rapper: Oh, I get it! You got your face all fixed like that to be on the TV show.

Ruby: I'm not on any show, but you *(beat)* are definitely on! *(determined to remain in control, addresses the audience)* Ladies and gentleman, it is my pleasure to introduce our guest: the Rain Dearz Rapper!

(Ruby waves H-H Rapper a cordial 'salute' then she, Sandra, and Lucy dart for stage left exit, but en-route Ruby grabs

crème de menthe from the table and takes a hearty swig before she disappears left.

H-H Rapper, with fake hand-held mike, commands the stage with a strong beat, easy rap, accenting capitalized words and using rap body movement)

Hip-Hop Rapper: *(he raps)*

Ole San--ta's COOL, a groo--vy DUDE

Yes, San--ta's COOL, a groo--vy DUDE

With jin--gle BELL cool at--ti--TUDE

Yes, jin--gle BELL cool at--ti--TUDE

Has a long TRUCK, but it got BROKE

San--ta de--CLARED this ain't no JOKE.

No time to MESS with this bad LUCK.

Cain't ease on DOWN with--out no TRUCK.

I'm jazz--in' UP my an--tique SLEIGH.

Ru--dolph's my MAN who knows the WAY

In sleigh piled HIGH with Christ--mas GOODS

My man will FIND the neigh--bor--HOODS

When Ru--dy's DONE re--ward that 'DEER

With bar--be--QUE, and a can of *(beat, then mischievously strong)* BEER!

(Alternate last line if desired: "can of root BEER")

*(During repeat of rap, the now captivated Ruby, Sandra and Lucy return, bouncing to the beat. Ruby's broken antler sports a comically oversize bandage. The trio emulate Hip-Hop Rapper's body movement (also join him on rap words if desired) in faux finale, during which Sandra appears not too keen about the beer line, but smiles innocently and joins in. The foursome share Curtain calls. *)*

Fast Curtain or Blackout

** If audience participation is desired, Hip-Hop Rapper invites the audience to join them in a 'Rap Along' with these words on screen or big posters. After the 'Rap Along' he says: "Now, go tell your kids and grandkids that you dudes are rappers!"*

PRODUCTION NOTES

In order to keep the Hip-Hop Rapper appearance a complete surprise, the character's name should not be revealed in cast of characters, but appear as 'Mr. (or Mrs.) H.H. Rapper'. And the actor playing that role can be listed with a pseudonym - perhaps a maiden name. Ruby then springs an added surprise by introducing the actor or the actress to the audience with his/her real name at Curtain Call.

Personal Props

Ruby: reindeer antler headdress; an identical antler headdress, but broken with half of it dangling loose; purse; cardboard box #1 with 6 white tapers; 'Nutcracker' figure in bubble-wrap or tissue paper; white band-aid; fire-starter; coffee mug; and oversize bandage for broken antler.

Sandra: reindeer antler headdress; purse; cardboard box #2 with Christmas table cloth (red or green) or a bed sheet (red or green); pair of 3-branch candle holders.

Lucy: reindeer antler headdress; purse with mirror/ comb/lipstick; large shopping bag from a pricey boutique; 3 chunky burgundy candles; bottle with green liquid; red or green paper napkins

Hip-Hop Rapper: hand mike w/o cord - made with a cone-shape cup holding tennis or golf ball and covered with man's black sock.

Furniture and Small Props:

3 card tables w/ playing cards; 4 folding metal chairs

Box # 3: tray of red frosted mini cup cakes; tray of green frosted mini cup cakes

1st Brown Paper Grocery Sack holding white plastic coffee cups; white plastic coffee spoons

2nd Brown Paper Grocery Sack holding garlands of holly, or two lengths of red or green tinsel

3rd Brown Paper Grocery Sack holding a cream pitcher

Sound & Lighting

Pre-curtain music for opening: a lively “White Christmas” or “We Need A Little Christmas” from the musical ‘MAME’.

Sound Effect: clock chiming half-hour. House lights flickering.

Instrumental “Rudolph, The Red-Nosed Reindeer”.

Hip-Hop Rapper’s Attire:

He (or she) wears the customary oversize baggy blue jeans plus a largely oversize unbuttoned shirt in a dazzling yellow or orange to contrast with Ruby’s red-and-green color scheme. The shirt color is repeated in ‘tims’ boots with loosely-tied shoe-strings (or painted tennis shoes). A matching baseball cap turned sideways tops a dozen pencil-slim 10 inch long hair braids. A big wrist watch on each arm has a watch band to match shirt, etc. If the performer does not have braids, they can be found in a costume/wig shop, or can be made by braiding black crepe hair found in theatrical supply stores, or by braiding black wool yarn. Rapper has a fake hand-held mike w/o cord. A **big bold black** logo on back of shirt reads: RAIN DEARZ.

Suggestions for Reader’s Theatre Production

Cast and narrator are seated on four bar stools, preferably the swivel type. Cast can be provided music stands for scripts in identical black loose-leaf notebooks for easy page-turning. Without music stands, the notebooks are hand-held. Senior actors often find it comfortable to have a one-step footstool in front of their bar stools. For a smooth reading, free of stepping on lines or pausing awkwardly each of the four actors should underline her own lines with yellow highlighter. The selected lines of the Narrator would be clearly indicated if underlined with pink highlighter in all five scripts.

Clothing for Cast and Narrator may be basic black - perhaps identical black turtlenecks and slacks. To establish and maintain the four characters, have Ruby, Sandra and Lucy wear identical reindeer antler headdresses, and top their black turtlenecks with silk scarves. Ruby’s scarf would be red. Sandra’s would be green and tied in the least fashionable manner. However, Lucy’s white scarf or shawl should appear pricey, be arranged in the most fashionably elegant style. Lucy might

wear an added piece of chunky jewelry, or in lieu of scarf, wear multiple strings of white pearls, or a handsome white fur collar, or an otherwise fashionable white neck accessory.

For Ruby's exit and return, there are two possibilities:
(1) If using swivel stools, Ruby can swivel around with her back to audience and remain in that position to put band-aide on her nose and release the broken part of antler (fixed with Velcro) so that the damaged half dangles. (2) If stools do not swivel, Ruby can slip off and exit to make the visual changes, and return to her stool on cue.

It is imperative to keep Hip-Hop Rapper's entrance a surprise. If bits of costuming are used, he (or she) should not be seen until the entrance at play's end. See note page 20 regarding program listing.

For added fun H-H Rapper can enter in full costume to occupy the stool vacated by Narrator. Or, H-H Rapper's attire can be limited to basic black plus bright oversize loose shirt and a baseball cap worn sideways over attached long black hair braids. The visual business of his revealing the logo on shirt back can be physically performed.

Narrator occupies one of the 4 stools, does an introduction, and reads necessary descriptions of stage business. An occasional word change in dialogue also helps to clarify the visuals. Word changes are left to the discretion of the director. Narrator can slip offstage just prior to H-H Rapper's entrance, vacating 4th stool for H-H Rapper to occupy. It may be possible for Narrator to double as H-H Rapper.

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Why Not a Coffee Hour after The Show?

Following the bows the Cast can invite the audience onstage while a Crew Member or Custodian brings on the coffee, sandwiches, fruit, etc. The infamous red frosted cup cakes are noticeably set on the table. A cast member or person from the host group pours coffee. For added bit of whimsy why not have the Director, Host Committee, Custodian, etc. also wear reindeer antlers?

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