

Rudolph Rides Again

Scene 1 - Rudolph's Cottage

SOUND CUE #1 (Introduction) - In/Fades out as ...

Lights up on stage, bare except for one battered mailbox, DC in front of an ancient travel trailer (his "cottage") up on cinderblocks. The name "RANDOLPH" is stenciled on the side of the box and a formerly cute wicker basket hangs beneath it with a sign that reads in large red letters "Newspaper goes HERE" A Newsboy on bicycle rides on & tosses paper so that it lands hard against the upstage "house" wall and then rides off, ringing his bicycle bell.

Rudolph *(from off, as soon as the paper hits the wall) Hey! (jogging on from "inside house" - he is middle-aged ... exaggerated pot belly, bathrobe, a carrot "cigar stub" in corner of mouth, hair mussed, glasses on nose, bunny slippers, - shouts after newsboy) Hey! (pointing to sign) Can you read or what? (glance back at paper) For the luvva ... (sighs loudly, X's to paper, still speaking off) I got a basket here, don't I? (bending down) A basket, for the luvva ... (standing, grabs back) Ow! (deals with pain silently for a beat, then shouts off again) What kinda reindeer games you think I'm playin' with this basket here?*

NOTE: *The following sequence, including questions from "the audience", actually take place in Rudolph's head. He lives alone, he's a little crazy, and sometimes he hears voices ... we hear them, too.*

(looks at audience from side to side, a little frightened, a little disoriented at first) And what are you looking at, huh? (looks down at slippers, back at audience) What? What? I just woke up, whaddaya want from me? (beat) OK, look, I'm sorry. You came here for cute, right? (partial aside, fiddles with cigar) O-dark-thirty in the morning and these people want cute, (hand up in surrender) but fine ... fine ...uh, tell ya what ... (scratches 5 o'clock shadow, looks around) uhhhh ... (sees Tiny Reindeer in front row) there! ... Hey, kid! Yea, you. Come here, honey. (Tiny Reindeer walks up to stage) Place is crawilin' with cute, you just gotta know where to look. (to Reindeer, as it moves to position) Come on, that's right. There we go. (positions Tiny Reindeer DC facing audience) There. (speaks to Reindeer, smiling ingenuously, indicates audience) You deal with this, OK? (starts to leave, Tiny Reindeer looks up at Rudolph, eyes wide) What? (take to audience, take to Reindeer) What I do?. (realizes Reindeer wants to whisper in Rudolph's ear) Oh, OK. (listens) But ... yea, but ... but... (Reindeer stops whispering) Aw, for the luvva ... (stands up again, grabs back) Ow! (to audience) Not supposed to talk to strangers. Fine. Why don't you go play? (Tiny Reindeer leaves, Rudolph stares into audience, a cloud passes over his face) I don't have time for this. (turns to leave ... he is interrupted by "the voices in his head" ...)

SOUND CUE #2 (dream music) - In

Voice #1 *(standing) Are you supposed to be Rudolph?*

Rudolph *(stops, turns) No!*

Voice #2 *(standing) Are you the Rudolph who pulls Santa's sleigh?*

Rudolph *(this is a sore subject) No I am not.*

Voice #3 *Hey, Rudolph!*

Rudolph *(very irritable) I'm tellin' ya, there's nobody here named Rudolph!*

Voice #3 *(standing) What's the matter with you?*

SOUND CUE #2 - Out

Rudolph *(beat) Excuse me?*

Voice #3 *What is the matter with you?*

Rudolph *(to no one, to everyone)* What's the *matter* with me? What's the *matter* with *me*? I'll tell you what's the *matter* with *me*. I am a two hundred year old antelope. I have a bad back. I have ingrown hooves. I have no hobbies, I have no friends ... I have *no* idea who I'm talking to right now ... *(beat, then shouts in direction of newsboy's departure)* and I have a paperboy that couldn't hit the broad side of a barn with a bazooka!

SOUND CUE #3a - In

Musical No. 1 - *You Were Expecting Maybe Sweet?*

Rudolph *(spoken to audience)* But excuse me. *(mood lightens visibly as "soft shoe" intro plays in - he smiles casually - he is, after all, an old showman at heart)*

YOU WERE EXPECTING MAYBE SWEET? *(half of Left Reindeer Chorus taps on from L)*
SOMEBODY LIGHTER ON HIS FEET? *(other half of Right Reindeer Chorus taps on from R)*
SOMEBODY FRISKY AND ENTHUSIASTIC,
MORE ELASTIC,
AND PETITE?

SO YOU COME BARKING UP MY TREE,
AND DISCOVER ME,
A DISAPPOINTMENT AND A CONTRADICTION,
NOT THE POPULAR FICTION
BUT UNPOPULAR REALITY.

(Properties Reindeer has run on with Rudolph's ratty tophat and broomstick cane which Rudolph uses to lead the chorus in a traditional step-kick hat 'n cane strut)

(spoken) Step aside, son, it's showtime!
I'M JUST A REINDEER,
THOUGH I MAY LOOK MORE LIKE A COW.
BE OFFENDED IF YOU MUST, WE
OLDER ANTELOPES ARE CRUSTY
AND A BIT ... LOW ... BROW.

All HE'S (I'M) JUST A REINDEER,
THOUGH HE (I) MAY LOOK MORE LIKE A COW.
BE OFFENDED IF YOU MUST, THE (WE)
OLDER ANTELOPES ARE CRUSTY
AND A BIT ... LOW ... BROW.

Rudolph *(spoken)* But anyhow,
YOU WERE EXPECTING MAYBE NICE?
MISTER HOLIDAY ON ICE?
MISTER LEMONS INTO LEMONADE,
MISTER CHRISTMAS PARADE,
SO MAY I OFFER YOU SOME GOOD ADVICE?

JUST LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE.
(spoken) Because, you see ...
FOR EV'RY EXPECTATION SEWN,
SOMBODY ELSE IS PLANTING SEEDS OF DOUBT
NOBODY EVER WEEDS OUT
AND *THIS* LITTLE GARDEN'S OVERGROWN!

All *(Rudolph awkwardly down on one knee - Al Jolson)* HE'S (I'M) JUST A REINDEER,

Rudolph *(spoken)* Gimme a break!

All THOUGH HE (I) MAY LOOK MORE LIKE A COW,
BE OFFENDED IF YOU MUST, THE (WE)
OLDER ANTELOPES ARE CRUSTY

AND A BIT ... LOW ... BROW.

Rudolph YOU WERE EXPECTING MAYBE CUTE?
A BEACON FOR SNOOT?
YOUR EXPECTATIONS ONLY SERVE TO REMIND ME
THAT THE BEST IS BEHIND ME
AND MY SNOOT
IS KAPOOT

BUT IF I'VE CAUSED YOU ANY PAIN,
ME LESS OF REINDEER, MORE OF RAIN,
PERHAPS YOU'LL BE SO KIND AS TO FORGIVE,
TO LIVE AND LET LIVE
AND DON'T ... COME AGAIN

All HE'S (I'M) JUST A REINDEER!
THOUGH HE (I) MAY LOOK MORE LIKE A COW,
BE OFFENDED IF YOU MUST, THE (WE)
OLDER ANTELOPES ARE CRUSTY

Rudolph AND A BIT ... LOW ... BROW.
Don't mean to be rude. (*passes off hat and cane to Properties Reindeer*)

All AND A BIT ... LOW ... BROW. (*right half of chorus begins moving off*)

Rudolph Comes naturally. (*X's up to "door" of "house"*)

All AND A BIT ... LOW ... BROW. (*left half of chorus begins moving off*)

Rudolph (*turns, shouting offstage*) The basket, huh?

All AND A BIT ... LOW ... BROW. (*all are gone*)

Rudolph (*out to audience*) Gives me a pain in the antlers. (*exits, slams door*)

SOUND CUE #3a - X-fades out into:

SOUND CUE #3b (Transition) - X-fades in, then fades out

Scene 2 - Central Distribution Office - North Pole

Klondike (*mailbox is stricken, Distribution Office set pieces - if any - are brought on, Klondike enters R with McGee and Other Elves, all of whom are highly agitated*) No one is going to tell him anything until I say so. Is that clear?

McGee Oh, great! So, Kringle doesn't find out what's happened until *tomorrow* night, is that it? ... *Christmas Eve* he straps himself into his sleigh, he shouts ... "let's go do it..."

Onus "Dash away all."

McGee Whatever ... and nobody moves a muscle because the lead reindeer's laid up with pneumonia.

Bonus Stomach cramps.

McGee Whatever ... my point is that it's *our* responsibility to make sure Kringle's got eight reindeer ... not six, not seven ... eight ... *plus a lead* reindeer, without which, as you well know, none of the other reindeer will budge. (*to others*) Am I right? Am I right? (*chaotic arguing begins among Elves*)

Klondike (*topping the rabble*) Will everyone please stop *arguing* and let me *think!* (*all are quiet*)

McGee (*after a moment of silence, all eyes on Klondike*) Well?

Klondike We need a replacement.

Onus (*very sarcastic*) Oh, right!

Bonus *(equally so)* A replacement *lead* reindeer?

McGee What did you have in mind, Klondike? A horse?

Onus Who do we have in training?

McGee *(exasperated, referring to clipboard)* The closest thing we have to a bona fide replacement is *(reading)* Aphrodite Jones and she will be up for certification next year, but for right now ...

Klondike So what about Aphrodite, then?

McGee *Next* year, Klondike. She'll be up for certification *next* year.

Klondike *(as much to himself as to anyone else)* Can't wait that long. Need a reindeer - need a lead reindeer by tomorrow night. *(Aphrodite enters L with her Associates, including Schatzie, unnoticed by Klondike & company. Aphrodite's group should be wearing business suits. They're polished and professional. They observe Klondike's group with smug interest.)*

McGee *(somewhat confidentially)* Of course, if we eliminated some paperwork, adjusted a few figures ...

Klondike What are you saying, McGee?

McGee I'm saying this is a *crisis* and maybe we need to be a little *creative* in our thinking.

Bonus He means we need to be dishonest. *(others grumble agreement, McGee protests)*

Klondike I will have no part in any... *(notices that he's being observed)* ... in any sort of ... May we help you?

Aphrodite *(striding confidently toward Klondike while entourage remains posed behind.)* No, gentlemen, but I believe that I can help you.

Klondike *(to McGee)* Who is this?

McGee This is the one I was telling you about. *(Klondike doesn't understand)*

Aphrodite *(extending her hand, startling Klondike, who takes her hand involuntarily)* Aphrodite's the name, Aphrodite Jones ... *(big smile, leans in)* Call me A.J. *(indicating entourage)* These are my associates. Associates?

Associates *(precise enthusiasm)* Check!

Aphrodite *(beat, smiling, still gripping Klondike's)* And you are?

Klondike Oh, yes ... my name is Klondike ... Henry Klondike ... which is what I'm called.

Aphrodite Yes, yes, I've heard of you. Career elf. Long-timer.

Klondike I suppose you could say that, yes ...

Aphrodite Excellent! *(releasing Klondike's hand to his visible relief)* Let's get down to business. *(as one Associate carrying folders X's to Klondike)* Klondike, my resume. *(Associate slaps a folder into Klondike's outstretched hand. Klondike reads.)* I believe you'll find everything to be in order.

Klondike *(glancing over folder's contents)* You appear to be very well documented, Ms. Jones, but ...

Aphrodite A.J.

Klondike A.J. But I see nothing here about certification. *(Aphrodite snaps finger and an Associate pointedly takes folder away from Klondike and returns to group)*

Aphrodite I am a licensed aerial gymnast, Klondike, a cum laude graduate of Blitzen University, and I defy you or *anyone* to ...

Klondike But are you *certified*?

Aphrodite *(recovers composure, smiles broadly)* In all but name.

Klondike Be that as it may ...

McGee The lead reindeer has to be certified.

Aphrodite A technicality!

Klondike Not a technicality - Kringle's law and the only way any reindeer has ever been allowed to lead.

Aphrodite Desperate times, Klondike, call for sensible measures. Besides, aren't we losing sight of what's really important here?

Klondike (*as intro plays*) I'm afraid I don't follow.

Aphrodite The children, Klondike. The presents! Two days from now all your precious paperwork won't amount to a row of pins. (*to Associates*) Am I right?

Associates (*spoken*) Check!

Klondike The children, yes, but ...

Aphrodite And when those children go bouncing down the stairs on Christmas morning to find nothing, *nothing* they've asked for, which of those forms will you fill out then, hmm?

Klondike I grant you it's a difficult ...

Aphrodite What *rules* will you invoke?

Klondike I'd appreciate a moment to reflect.

Aphrodite Oh, please! (*out, for benefit of all, especially Associates*) This is just the kind indecision that makes me want to ... (*recovers composure, smiles*) Very well, Klondike, you think it over. I have all the time in the world. Do you? (*snaps fingers, exits, Associates follow*)

McGee (*after Associates have left*) What other choice do we have, Klondike? Aphrodite's qualified and available *right now*.. And so what if we bend the rules a little ...

Klondike No.

McGee What then?

Klondike I need to think!

Gunter (*after brief pause*) I have an idea.

Klondike (*looks at Gunter, speaks to McGee*) Who is this?

McGee I'm sorry, this is Gunter Haagendass. He's here this week as an intern. (*to Gunter*) Please, Gunter, we can discuss your idea some other time.

Klondike No, no, I'm very open to suggestions right now. Gunter?

Gunter Well ... why don't we use a reindeer that's *already* certified?

McGee There's only one reindeer certified as a *lead* reindeer at any given time, Gunter, and *that* reindeer happens to be very sick just now. Where did you train, son?

Gunter I wasn't talking about a reindeer on *active* duty, sir.

Klondike Then what ...? (*beat, light dawns*) ... I see. Yes, I see.

McGee You see what?

Klondike (*excitement growing*) There must be thirty or forty reindeer ... in retirement ... and three or four of them are certified to lead. It's a lifetime status, you know.

McGee Call a retired reindeer out of retirement to lead the pack on Christmas Eve? There's no precedent ...

Klondike Of course there's no precedent! Nothing like this has ever happened before!

Onus No lead reindeer has ever gotten sick?

Bonus Not on Christmas Eve!

McGee So let's say we *do* decide to go with a retired reindeer, how do we find one? They're a secret society, Klondike! Only Kringle knows where they live.

Gunter Maybe I can help here, too. *(everybody looks at Gunter)* I ... well, I deliver papers part time for extra money, and ...

Bonus I don't see what this has to do with anything.

Gunter On one of the routes I ride, there's a little shack at the end of a dirt road ... a reindeer lives there. A very old, very grumpy reindeer.

Onus And you think the reindeer in the shack is a retired *lead* reindeer? *(all laugh)*

Gunter *(starting to feel a little silly)* Probably not. Sorry I brought it up.

McGee Let's move on ...

Klondike Wait. What's the reindeer's name, Gunter?

Gunter Randolph.

McGee Anybody here ever heard of a Randolph Reindeer? *(all shake their heads)* Neither have I. Klondike, if we don't ...

Klondike Just a minute, McGee. *(looks Gunter in the eyes, speaks kindly but seriously)* Could the reindeer's name by any chance be ... Rudolph?

Gunter Rudolph?

McGee Rudolph?! *(laughs, as do some others)* He was ... he was *six teams* ago, Klondike ... team *one*! What do you think the chances are any of those reindeer are still alive?

Klondike Slim. But if it *is* Rudolph, he might be living under an alias. None of the first team ever had much use for publicity. *(fleeting introspective)* Not like today.

SOUND CUE #4 - In

Musical No. 2 - *The Team One Attitude*

REINDEER THESE DAYS AREN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE.
GOTTA TREAT 'EM CAREFULLY,
OTHERWISE THEY'LL POUT AND

McGee DEVELOPE WARTS 'N GOUT AND

Klondike THESE DAYS SEEMS LIKE EV'RY DAY'S A HOLIDAY,
LOOKIN' FOR THE EASY WAY,
EASY WAY OUT.

McGee DISAPPOINTING, WITHOUT A DOUBT.

Klondike	REINDEER	Elves	REINDEER
	USED TO BE		USED TO BE

McGee HARD-WORKING

Onus UPSTANDING

Bonus HIGH-FLYIN' BRUISERS!

McGee NOW WE GOT A BUNCHA WHINY HAIRBALL PROFESSIONALS

Klondike MEMO-WRITING

Onus CLOCK-WATCHING

Bonus GOOD FOR NOTHIN' LOSERS!

K & M OH, FOR THE OLD TEAM ONE ATTITUDE

McGee POLISHIN' THE JINGLE BELLS, WAXIN' DOWN THE SLED

Klondike NOW YOU GOTTA PROMISE 'EM BENEFITS 'N BONUSES

K & M JUST TO GET THEIR CARCASSES OUT OF BED!

All OH, FOR THE OLD TEAM ONE ATTITUDE
POLISHIN' THE JINGLE BELLS, WAXIN' DOWN THE SLED
NOW YOU GOTTA PROMISE 'EM BENEFITS 'N BONUSES
JUST TO GET THEIR CARCASSES OUT OF BED!

McGee GOTTA KEEP THE BARN ABOVE A CERTAIN TEMP'RATURE

Klondike WON'T EAT HAY UNLESS YOU PUT IT ON A PLATE

McGee ONLY WORK HALF A DAY A YEAR, BUT SURE AS ANYTHING

Klondike EV'RY YEAR THEY SHOW UP FOR WORK

Onus IN A BAD MOOD

McGee EV'RY YEAR THEY SHOW UP FOR WORK

Bonus OUT OF UNIFORM

K & M EV'RY YEAR THEY SHOW UP FOR WORK

Gunter IF AT ALL

K & M A HALF AN HOUR LATE

Klondike	REINDEER USED TO BE HARD-WORKING UPSTANDING	Others	REINDEER USED TO BE HARD-WORKING UPSTANDING
-----------------	--	---------------	--

Klondike OHHHHHH,

All OH, FOR THE OLD TEAM ONE ATTITUDE
POLISHIN' THE JINGLE BELLS, WAXIN' DOWN THE SLED
NOW YOU GOTTA PROMISE 'EM BENEFITS 'N BONUSES
JUST TO GET THEIR CARCASSES, HMMMM
JUST TO GET THEIR CARCASSES, HMMMM
JUST TO GET THEIR CARCASSES OUT OF BED.

SOUND CUE #4 - Out

Klondike *(to Gunter)* Tell me Gunter, how is that newspaper subscription listed? Under what name?

Gunter Just initials. *(tracing letters in the air)* R. R. R. ... Randolph something Reindeer, I guess.

Klondike Or *Rudolph* ... Rudolph the ...

McGee Impossible!

Klondike Improbable, but not impossible, McGee. *(looks hard at McGee)*

McGee *(beat)* I'll see to the details. *(starts ad libbing quiet instructions to other elves)*

Klondike *(puts his arm over Gunter's shoulder and leads him off R ... others follow)* I have an errand for you, son. Is your bicycle parked outside? Good. *(voice trails off, they are gone)*

Aphrodite *(re-entering L with Schatzie, her chief associate, she speaks facing R, as though lost in thought)* What can you tell me about Rudolph?

Schatzie *(searching her memory)* Team One lead reindeer ... retired end of the last century ... supposed to

have been some kind of navigational genius or something. Mostly kids' stories.

Aphrodite Team One. (*chuckles disbelievingly*) How old, do you suppose?
Schatzie Pushing two hundred easy, if he's still alive.
Aphrodite Amazing.
Schatzie Should we have somebody follow the Gunter boy?
Aphrodite No, probably nothing to it. (*turning to leave*) But keep your ears open, just the same.
Schatzie (*making a note*) Check.
Aphrodite (*stops, confidentially to Schatzie*) Oh, and ... how is the current team leader? Any word on his condition?
Schatzie Still pretty sick, I'm told.
Aphrodite And likely to *stay* that way until Christmas morning, eh?
Schatzie At *least* until Christmas morning. Something he ate, I guess.
Aphrodite (*arm over Schatzie's shoulder, breaks into a broad smile*) My compliments to the chef.
Schatzie (*tipping imaginary chef's hat*) Don't mention it. (*laughing, they exit together*)

SOUND CUE #5 (transition) - In/Out

(*Distribution Center set pieces - if any - removed, mailbox placed DC*)

Scene 3 - Back At Rudolph's Cottage

(*Rudolph enters carrying a large sign - X's to mailbox. Grumbling, he removes the "Newspaper Goes HERE" sign and replaces it with the much larger sign he's brought with him. This sign reads "NEWSPAPER GOES IN THE BASKET!!" with arrows pointing to basket. Gunter rides in on his bicycle, stops, dismounts and props the bike up with its kickstand. He X's to position behind Rudolph who is now busy lashing the sign to the mailbox post with rope*)

Gunter (*awkward, clears throat, but Rudolph pays no attention*) Excuse me.
Rudolph (*looks behind him, double-takes*) Yea, wha ...? You! (*stumbling to feet*)
Gunter (*backing away*) Yes, I ...
Rudolph (*advancing on Gunter*) You're the newspaper kid, aren't you?
Gunter Yes, sir, but I ...
Rudolph You're the newspaper kid who doesn't know how to read?
Gunter I *know* how to *read*, sir, but ...
Rudolph You do, huh? Then maybe you can tell me what *this* says. (*holding up smaller sign which he still has with him*)
Gunter "Newspaper goes here."
Rudolph Give the boy a cigar! (*X's to basket*) Now let's say you saw *this* sign hanging under *this* basket? Whaddaya think *that* would mean?
Gunter I would think ...
Rudolph Would you think it meant throw the old reindeer's newspaper in the bushes?
Gunter No, sir, I ...
Rudolph Give the boy another cigar!
Gunter Sir, please!

Rudolph What?

Gunter I have this message for you. (*hands Rudolph envelope*)

Rudolph (*looks at envelope*) I thought you said you knew how to read.

Gunter I do.

Rudolph (*pointing at mailbox*) What's that say?

Gunter "Randolph."

Rudolph Correct. (*holding up envelope*) And this?

Gunter "Rudolph."

Rudolph Correct. (*handing envelope back to Gunter*) Now you take this back to whoever gave it to you and tell 'em they made a mistake.

Gunter I'm sorry, sir. I can't do that. (*turns, goes back to bicycle*)

Rudolph Hey! Where you think you're going? You listening to me? There's nobody here named Rudolph. (*Gunter mounts bike*) Are you listening to me, kid? (*Gunter kicks back kickstand, turns bike around*) I'm tellin' you there's no Rudolph. (*Gunter rides away*) My name is *Randolph* and you tell 'em what sent you I said so! (*Gunter is gone*)

SOUND CUE #6 (dream music) - In

(*looks at envelope, starts to tear it half, doesn't, opens it instead, begins to read*)

Klondike (*steps in from R wing to "speak" what he has written - speaks to Rudolph who continues to "read"*)
"Dear Sir. It has come to our attention that a reindeer, possibly a *lead* reindeer, may be living under an alias in retirement at this address.

McGee (*steps in from L wing, mirroring Klondike*) We believe his actual name to be ... Rudolph.

Klondike If there is such a reindeer living at this address,

McGee we ask that he respond to this letter immediately.

Klondike The current lead reindeer has fallen ill and will be unable to lead his team at the appointed time tomorrow Christmas Eve.

McGee Because no other reindeer on *active* duty is certified to lead

Klondike and no other *retired* lead reindeer can be located at present

Klondike & McGee we are contacting you.

McGee If you are able, we request that you report to Runway Alpha, North Pole tomorrow evening at midnight.

Klondike *Please*, consider the matter carefully.

McGee Sincerely, ...

Klondike Klondike

McGee and McGee

Rudolph Klondike & McGee? (*looks back at letter*)

Klondike & McGee Vice presidents in charge of distribution. (*both exit*)

Rudolph Hmph! (*lowers letter, smirks as the "voices" begin ...*)

Jonas What's wrong with the lead reindeer?

Voice #2 Got soft. (*Rudolph chuckles*)

Voice #3 Got tired. (*chuckles again*)

Jonas Got *re*-tired.

Rudolph (*expression changing quickly*) Hey!

Voice #2 How's the nose, Rudolph?

Rudolph (*stuffs note in pocket, returns to working with the ropes*) Forget the nose, already! The nose was a gimmick! (*pointing to head*) It's what I had up here ... up *here* that counted!

Voice #3 (*to Voice #3*) And how's that ... *other* problem?

SOUND CUE #6 - Out

Rudolph Other problem? (*looks out to audience, somewhat worried*)

Aphrodite (*entering L with Schatzie & other Associates*) What other problem is that? (*Rudolph returns to ropes, grumbling as before, but softens over next sequence and stops working with ropes - visibly in thought, struggling with issues*)

Schatzie (*handing folder to Aphrodite who immediately begins scanning it*) According to this confidential memo, Rudolph Reindeer retired because ...

Aphrodite (*overlapping Schatzie, reading*) ... because Rudolph Reindeer was ... (*looks up, looks at Schatzie, chuckles, then bursts out laughing, as do other Associates - Aphrodite then takes Schatzie by the shoulders*) Schatzie, you have just earned yourself a promotion.

Schatzie Thanks, AJ!

NOTE: Sound Cue 7a/b - MUSICAL NO. 3, normally inserted here, has been removed for this elementary/middle school edition of *Rudolph Rides Again*.

Aphrodite But no raise. Now take a letter. (*Schatzie prepares to write as Klondike enters R with McGee - Klondike is opening the letter - he "reads" as Aphrodite "dictates" and Schatzie "writes" L*) Dear Klondike ...

Klondike It's from Aphrodite.

Aphrodite ... and McGee.

McGee That's me! (*reads over Klondike's shoulder*)

Aphrodite I deeply regret to inform you it's come to my attention ... (*smiling sideways at Schatzie*) by confidential means ... that Rudolph Reindeer, toward the end of his flying career, is said to have developed ... a nagging fear (*mouths words as Klondike & McGee speak ...*)

K & M (*looking at each other, wide-eyed*) Of heights?!?! (*Elves enter excitedly, having heard the news*)

Aphrodite Just thought you'd want to know. Sincerely,

Klondike Aphrodite. (*looks up from letter as Aphrodite & Associates exit, quite pleased with themselves*)

Rudolph (*entering UC, X's DC - he's having an argument with himself*) Doesn't mean I couldn'ta changed. Maybe I *have* changed. Maybe if I just put *on* the goggles, put *on* the scarf ... maybe if I *look* the way I used to, I'll *fly* the way I used to ... the way I did before I ... before ... (*makes up his mind, sort of*) Right. (*exits UC*)

McGee Time's running out, Klondike! We have to do *something* and we have to do it *now*.

Klondike I am all too aware of how much *time* we have, McGee. I don't need to be reminded of the *time*.

Bonus (*after a brief pause*) So what have you decided?

Klondike I haven't! (*McGee sends Elves off so that Klondike can think in peace*)

Rudolph (*re-entering admiring himself in his scarf, goggles and very ill-fitting vest*) Not bad. Kinda reminds me of somebody I used to know ... back when Mr. Rudolph Reindeer was somebody. (*more thoughtful*) Somebody. (*building steam*) OK, Klondike, I'll do it. (*strikes a few "flying" poses, maybe tries to do a few pushups during ...*)

McGee We have no choice.

Klondike (*resigned*) I suppose you're right. (*takes out paper, pen, writes*)

Rudolph (*still exercising, posing*) Got yourself a lead reindeer!

Klondike Call in Gunter.

Rudolph A *real* lead reindeer.

McGee Gunter!

Rudolph (*almost wistful, staring out*) Lead reindeer.

Klondike (*as Gunter enters*) Gunter, I want you to take this to Rudolph ... immediately. (*Gunter exits quickly, Klondike speaks to McGee*) I don't like this, McGee.

McGee Maybe Aphrodite's right. Maybe two days from now it won't matter *how* we got the packages through.

Klondike Strange to say, old friend, but part of me hopes you're wrong. (*they exit*)

Rudolph (*snapping out of reverie*) Rudolph rides again, they'll say! (*as if reading it written in the sky*) The Day Rudolph Saved Christmas! (*laughs as Gunter enters on bike*) Hey, it's the newspaper kid. Nice day we're havin', eh, kid? (*Gunter hands Rudolph the letter*) What's this? (*Gunter rides quickly away*) Hey! What's the hurry? (*to self*) Kid needs to slow down. (*reading envelope*) From Klondike. (*referring to Gunter*) Gonna give himself a heart attack. (*opening letter*) So whatta we got here, Mr. Klondike? (*removes letter, reads*) Dear Rudolph. Please disregard previous message. Never mind. (*looks up*) Never mind. (*clearly hurt, he tries to be strong*) Yea. Well, probably for the best. I'll just, uh ... (*taking off goggles or scarf*) get these things put away and, uh, maybe ... maybe take a nap or something ... (*exits UC*)

Scene 4 - Central Distribution Office - The Next Morning

Schatzie enters briskly L with Associates, lines them up quickly and preens them - adjusting ties, picking lint, etc.

Aphrodite (*entering energetically L*) Good morning, everyone!

All Good morning, AJ!

Aphrodite Schatzie, take notes.

Schatzie Check. (*pulls sheet of looseleaf paper from valise & begins to write*)

Aphrodite I appreciate everyone meeting me here on such short notice, but word has just come down from Klondike & McGee. An entire year of planning is about to ... (*stops, looks around*) What was that?

Schatzie What was what, AJ?

Aphrodite Is this room secure?

Schatzie Yes.

Aphrodite Is the hall outside this room secure?

Schatzie Yes.

Aphrodite Double check.

Schatzie Linus! Terwilliger! Smith! Wesson! Fan out! (*these four immediately go to four extreme points of*

stage and peer out) Status?

- Linus** Clear!
- Terwilliger** Clear!
- Smith** Clear!
- Wesson** Clear!
- Schatzie** All clear, AJ.
- Aphrodite** Good. Must've been my imagination.
- Schatzie** Check. (*resumes writing*)
- Aphrodite** Don't write that down. (*Schatzie erases entry & resumes writing as Aphrodite continues speaking*) As I was saying, an entire year of careful planning is about to pay off. With the lead reindeer on medical leave and my elderly rival, Rudolph, discredited ... (*nod to Schatzie*) thanks to Schatzie.
- Schatzie** (*protesting modestly*) All in a day's work, AJ. (*Schatzie continues to jot down notes throughout the scene*)
- Aphrodite** The top slot has fallen to me. (*Schatzie leads the others in a round of polite applause, Aphrodite bows*) I am the lead reindeer now and the other reindeer, true to form, will go wherever I lead them. (*pause for emphasis*) This year, I plan to lead them to a place they've never gone before.
- Linus** Where's that, AJ?
- Aphrodite** (*motions others to gather around - they lean in*) Nowhere.
- Terwilliger** Nowhere?
- Aphrodite** That's what I said, Terwilliger ... nowhere. Nowhere that is except the end of Runway Alpha where they'll be loaded into a cattle truck along with Kringle, Kringle's sleigh and ... (*smiling, feigning forgetfulness*) and what was that other thing?
- Smith** The sack?
- Aphrodite** Oh, yes! The sack ... containing ... what was it, again?
- Wesson** The presents?
- Aphrodite** The presents, he says. (*chuckling*) No, I don't think so. This year, Kringle's sack will contain no presents, my friends. This year, it will be brimming instead ... with merchandise! (*motions others to listen up - they move in*)

SOUND CUE #8 - In

Musical No. 4 - *Quality Sells*

(*removes small teddy bear from pocket, holds it out and speaks in verse*)

(*chord*) Take for example this bear a la teddy

(*chord*) Expected for Christmas, all wrapped up and ready,

(*chord*) By someone or other whose mummy or deddy

(*chord*) On Christmas will sadly discover

(*chord*) Their baby in tears at the foot of the tree

(*chord*) Crying "Where is the teddy you promised me?"

(*chord*) I'll bet they'd pay rather handsomely

(*chord*) That teddy to recover.

(*speaks in prose during silence*) And, as you know, we make a quality product here.

(*reading bear's tag, sings*) DOUBLE-STITCHED, FIREPROOFED, STAIN RESISTANT,

QUALITY SELLS! QUALITY SELLS! (*tosses bear over shoulder, moves DC*)

MAINLY 'CAUSE THE KIDS ARE SO INSISTENT

All QUALITY SELLS! QUALITY SELLS!

Aphrodite GIMME! GIMME! GIMME! GIMME!
HEY, HEY, HEY!
PROMISES MADE COME DUE,
YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT'S HAP'NIN' TO YOU
NOTHIN' IN THE STOCKINS', NOTHIN' UP THE FLU
WHAT IN THE WORLD WILL YOU DO
CHRISTMAS DAY?

THAT'S WHEN ...

Associates QUALITY SELLS! QUALITY SELLS!
PROMISES MADE COME DUE ...

Aphrodite YOU CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S HAP'NIN' TO YOU!

Associates PROMISES MADE COME DUE ...
CHRISTMAS DAY

Aphrodite NO MORE GIVEAWAYS, NO HALF-PRICE
YOU GET THE SAME DEAL IF YOU'RE NAUGHTY OR NICE.
WHAT DEAL IS THAT, WHAT PRICE YOU SAY?
THE DEAL'S WHATEVER YOU'RE WILLING TO PAY
TO MAKE THAT LOOK OF DISAPPOINTMENT

Aphrodite BREAKIN' MY HEART! **Associates** MAKE THAT LOOK OF DISAPPOINTMENT
BREAKIN' MY HEART! TO MAKE THAT LOOK OF DISAPPOINTMENT

Aphrodite GO AWAY, EV'RY TIME

All QUALITY SELLS! QUALITY SELLS! QUALITY SELLS!
QUALITY SELLS! QUALITY SELLS! QUALITY SELLS!

Aphrodite PRICE, YOU KNOW, IS DRIVEN BY SUPPLY AND DEMAND.
AND MOST FOLK SIMPLY GOTTA CATCH AS CATCH CAN.
BUT WE GOT ALL THE PRODUCT, SO WE PULL THE STRINGS
NOW EV'RYBODY'S GONNA START BUYING THINGS

Aphrodite FROM US! FROM US! **Associates** QUALITY SELLS! QUALITY SELLS!
FROM US! QUALITY
WE'RE GONNA BE RICH! SELLS!

Some FROM US! FROM US! **Others** QUALITY SELLS! QUALITY SELLS!
FROM US! QUALITY
WE'RE GONNA BE RICH! SELLS!

(spoken) Take it on back!
(the Associates get down and, of course, get funky)

All GIMME! GIMME! GIMME! GIMME!
HEY, HEY, HEY!
PROMISES MADE COME DUE.
YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT'S HAP'NIN' TO YOU -
NOTHIN' IN THE STOCKIN', NOTHIN' UP THE FLU.
WHAT IN THE WORLD WILL YOU DO
CHRISTMAS DAY?

Aphrodite QUALITY SELLS.

Associates CHRISTMAS DAY.

Aphrodite IT SELLS VERY WELL.
Associates CHRISTMAS DAY.
Aphrodite (*spoken*) And we are open for business.

SOUND CUE #8 - Out

Got that down, Schatzie?
Schatzie (*putting pen away*) Check. (*snaps folder closed*)
Aphrodite Good. I'll need a complete list of our regional distributors by tomorrow morning. Are those press releases ready, Terwilliger?
Terwilliger Check!
Aphrodite When word gets out that Kringle has failed for the first time in history to make his appointed rounds, I expect business to be extremely brisk. (*laughs, as do others, as she and others are exiting L*) Schatzie take a letter.
Schatzie Check. (*takes out sheet of paper and, by doing so, accidentally causes another sheet - THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING - to drop to the floor, unnoticed by any of the Associates*)
Aphrodite (*dictating until she and others are out of view*) Dear Mrs. Kringle. Please accept my condolences during this time of sorrow. If there is anything that I or any of my Associates can do, please do not hesitate to ... (*all are gone*)
Gunter (*enters R as the last of the associates disappear around the corner - he sees the paper that Schatzie dropped and picks it up, calling off to the Associates*) Excuse me! Excuse me, you dropped this! (*gives up, looks at paper, eyes widen*) Oh, no! (*looks L, looks R, quickly turns bike around and exits R*)

SOUND CUE #9 (transition) - In

(*Rudolph's mailbox is brought DC as meeting set pieces, if any, are removed*)

SOUND CUE #9 - Out

Scene 5 - Rudolph's Cottage - Later That Day

(*Rudolph enters grumbling, dressed as before in frumpy morning attire. He glances around his yard looking for newspaper. Not finding it, he X's DC to box and looks in paper basket ... nothing.*)

Rudolph (*calling off R*) What's the deal here? Now I don't get any paper *at all*?
Gunter (*riding on L*) Mr. Reindeer! Mr. Reindeer!
Rudolph (*whirling around*) What the ...? So *there* you are! What's going on around here? Where's my newspaper? (*Gunter breathlessly hands Rudolph the sheet of paper*) What's this? (*shaking paper in Gunter's face*) This is *not* my newspaper!
Gunter Please, sir! Please read it!
Rudolph Oh, for the luvva ... (*Rudolph reads for a moment*) Where'd you get this?
Gunter Somebody dropped it.
Rudolph So nobody knows you have it?
Gunter No, sir.
Rudolph Why are you showing it to *me*?
Gunter I thought ...
Rudolph Yeah?

Gunter I ... I thought maybe ...

Rudolph You thought maybe *what*?

SOUND CUE #10 (dream music) - In

(Gunter freezes)

Voice #1 *(from audience, as always)* He *thought* you were Rudolph.

Rudolph *(out)* OK, OK, I'm Rudolph, alright? Satisfied? I'm Rudolph!

Voice #2 *(from audience)* Which Rudolph?

Rudolph How many Rudolphys do you know? *The Rudolph. (striking prideful pose)* Rudolph the ...

Voice #3 *(interrupting)* Rudolph the *has been* Reindeer.

Rudolph Look, don't start with me!

Klondike *(enters R holding "good" mask in front of face)* They need you Rudolph. They don't know it, but they do.

Rudolph Why don't you leave me alone?

Aphrodite *(enters L holding "evil" mask in front of face)* Yeah, why *don't* you leave him alone?

Rudolph They had their chance.

Aphrodite And they blew it.

Rudolph I'da flown that sleigh. I coulda done it if they'da let me.

Aphrodite But they said *(speaking close to Rudolph's ear)* "never mind."

Rudolph "Never mind," they said. Never mind! So fine! So now they get what's comin' to 'em.

Klondike *(placing a hand on Gunter's head)* Not so.

Rudolph Whaddaya mean?

Klondike Now *nobody* gets what's coming to them. Nobody gets *anything*. You're seeing to that right now by doing nothing.

Rudolph *(covering ears)* I don't need this.

Klondike This isn't about what *you* need, Rudolph.

Aphrodite Aw, give it a rest, why don't you? Can't you see he's had a hard life?

Klondike Yes, I can. *(to Rudolph)* I can also see the reindeer he *used* to be ... *(to Aphrodite)* That reindeer wouldn't have hesitated!

Aphrodite *That reindeer is dead!*

Rudolph Enough already! *(Klondike & Aphrodite turn upstage)*

SOUND CUE #10 - Out

Gunter *(unfreezes)* Mr. Reindeer?

Rudolph *(K & M exit L & R, walking in unison, masks still up, while Rudolph thinks for a moment)* OK, kid, you did what you had to do. Now get back to work before they find out you're missing. *(referring to minutes)* Here. Take this to that Klondike fella. He'll know what to do with it. *(Gunter hesitates)* That's it, kid! Go! *(Gunter starts to exit dejectedly)* And not a word about this to anybody else. The folks who wrote this find out you showed it to Rudolph and you'll be in *plenty* deep. *(Gunter smiles, turns bike around, mounts)* Hurry! *(Gunter exits L hastily, Rudolph looks around, sighs)* This is nuts.

SOUND CUE #11a - In

Musical No. 5 - *Nothin' To Lose*

IT LOOKS LIKE I'M THEIR ONLY HOPE,
ONE FLABBY ANTELOPE,
(*puffing up*) AGAINST A HERD OF SCHEMING GANGSTER DEER,
DON'T KNOW THE MEANING OF FEAR.
(*deflating*) WHAT A DOPE!

BUT I'VE DECIDED
THAT, IF I LET THEM TAKE THE DAY
WITHOUT PUTTING UP A FIGHT,
I'LL NEVER SLEEP ANOTHER NIGHT,
BESIDES, I AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' TO LOSE
I AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' TO LOSE ... ANYWAY.

(*spoken*) I gotta be outta my mind. (*exits*)

SOUND CUE #11a - X-fades into ...

SOUND CUE #11b (transition) - In/Out

(*Mailbox is removed. Distribution Center set pieces, if any, are put in place*)

Scene 6 - Central Distribution - Moments Later

- Schatzie** (*entering L quickly with Schatzie & other Associates who begin a silent, thorough search of the area - this search should move into the audience as quickly as possible.*) I'm sorry, AJ, I just don't remember.
- Aphrodite** Unacceptable! Unacceptable! Un-ac-ceptable! If Klondike gets wind of those notes before takeoff tonight, there is *no* doubt in my mind he'll try ... (*notices a member of the audience*) Wait a minute. I haven't seen *him* around here before. (*moving D*) You! Yes, You! What is your name? (*regardless of reply*) Sure it is. Stand up. (*ad lib until audience member stands up*)
- Schatzie** AJ, what are you doing?
- Aphrodite** I'm questioning a suspect.
- Schatzie** But AJ, you can't just ...
- Aphrodite** Why can't I? Nobody's looking. (*to audience suspect*) Where were you fifteen minutes ago? (*regardless of reply*) We'll see about that. Wesson! Terwilliger! (*Wesson & Terwilliger take up positions on either side of suspect, Aphrodite speaks to suspect*) Hands up! Up, I said! All the way up! (*ad lib until suspect complies - Wesson & Terwilliger frisk him*) Well?
- Wesson** He's clean, AJ.
- Aphrodite** (*to suspect*) All right, sit down. But stay where I can see you. (*to Associates in the audience*) Keep looking! (*to Schatzie*) Something about that guy I don't like ...
- Schatzie** (*slaps forehead, remembering*) The boy!
- Aphrodite** (*glancing around*) What boy? Where?
- Schatzie** After the meeting! I saw him running after us, but I didn't think anything of it. I must have dropped the minutes as we were leaving ... and he picked them up ... and he must have been trying to get our attention ...
- Aphrodite** And you *ignored* him?!
- Schatzie** How was I supposed to know he ... ?
- Aphrodite** (*to Associates*) Find the boy! (*to Schatzie*) What's his name?
- Schatzie** (*who sees Gunter entering R from around the corner*) Gunter. (*Gunter stops dead in his tracks*)

Aphrodite Find Gunter!

Schatzie Don't bother.

Aphrodite Why?

Schatzie (*pointing at Gunter*) Because Gunter ... has found us.

Aphrodite (*audience search stops, all eyes on Gunter, Aphrodite becomes artificially cordial, arms wide*) Gunter. (*Xing to Gunter with calculated ease*) I couldn't have asked for a more perfect gift. (*without taking gaze from Gunter*) Associates! (*snaps finger, Associates quickly leave audience and surround Gunter*) My name is Aphrodite, but my friends call me AJ. (*extends hand to him, he reaches to take it, she takes it away*) Are you my friend, Gunter? I'm not so sure you are. (*snaps fingers - Associates hold up Gunter's hands, frisk him, find the paper, hand it to Aphrodite who passes it to Schatzie*) Gunter, Gunter. Something tells me you're not the only person who's seen this. Am I right, Gunter?

Schatzie Klondike!

Aphrodite No, if Klondike had seen this, we'd have heard from him by now. (*to Associates*) Let him go. (*Associates release Gunter, shoving him DC, Aphrodite X's behind him, speaking over his shoulder*) Got any secrets you'd like to share with us, Gunter? (*Gunter is obstinate*) Too many secrets, you know, can weigh a little boy down ... weigh him down so hard sometimes he just... disappears.

Gunter I'm not telling you about Rudolph! (*realizes instantly that he's spilled the beans, covers his mouth*)

Aphrodite & Schatzie (*to each other*) Rudolph? (*both burst out laughing, as do Associates*)

Aphrodite Thank you Gunter. By the time Rudolph makes his decrepit way here, we'll be half way around the world. (*to Associates, gesturing to Gunter*) Cold storage. (*some Associates escort Gunter off L, Aphrodite levels her stare on Schatzie*)

Schatzie (*uncomfortable, trying to lighten the moment*) That was close, eh ... AJ? (*Aphrodite doesn't respond*)

SOUND CUE #12a - In

Musical No. 6 - *Schatzie's Revenge*

AJ? (*Aphrodite ignores Schatzie, moving D with other Associates, leaving Schatzie behind*)

Aphrodite GIMME! GIMME! GIMME! GIMME!

Associates HEY, HEY, HEY!

Aphrodite PROMISES MADE COME DUE,
YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT'S HAP'NIN' TO YOU
NOTHIN' IN THE STOCKIN', NOTHIN' UP THE FLU
WHAT IN THE WORLD WILL YOU DO ...

Associates CHRISTMAS DAY?

Aphrodite (*spoken*) Proceeding as planned.

Associates CHRISTMAS DAY.

Aphrodite (*spoken, to Schatzie*) And one other thing.

Associates CHRISTMAS DAY.

Aphrodite You're fired. (*plucks minutes from Schatzie's hand*) Terwilliger, take notes. (*Terwilliger holds out hand to Schatzie, who reluctantly hands him the notebook*) Associates, follow me. (*exits L with Associates, leaving Schatzie alone*)

Schatzie I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S HAPPENING TO ME,
BUT IF THAT'S THE WAY SHE WANTS IT TO BE,
WE'LL JUST SEE.

WE'LL JUST SEE. (*exits L*)

SOUND CUE #12a - X-fades into ...

SOUND CUE #12b (transition) - In/Out

Scene 7 - Runway Alpha

(*Stage is cleared except for a single sign, placed to one side, that says "RUNWAY ALPHA"*)

- Klondike** (*entering with McGee, X's thoughtfully DC, looks up to sky*) It's a good night for it, anyway. A clear, windless night. How's the lead reindeer?
- McGee** Which one?
- Klondike** The *new* lead reindeer.
- McGee** Said she had some last minute details to take care of. Double-checking distances, I guess, lattitudes, longitudes - that sort of thing. (*glancing at pocket watch*) Whatever it is, she still has ten minutes.
- Klondike** (*still staring at the sky*) And the other one?
- McGee** Not well. Improving, though. (*trying to break tension*) Looks like we've got a good layer of snow on the runway this year; sleigh's liable to take off by itself. (*chuckles unconvincingly*)
- Klondike** (*beat*) We did everything we could.
- McGee** (*beat, serious again*) You think Kringle will notice he has a new lead reindeer?
- Klondike** (*beat - looks at McGee*) I think Kringle notices everything, my friend. As to why he *mentions* some things and not others. (*shrugs, looks up again*) We can only do what we can do.
- Onus** (*entering R*) The reindeer are ready, Mr. Klondike.
- Klondike** (*glad for the interruption*) Ah! Good, good. I'll be right along. (*Onus exits, Klondike tries to be upbeat*) Care to assist me with the final inspection, Mr. McGee?
- McGee** (*responding in kind*) Certainly, Mr. Klondike. After you. (*they exit R*)
- Rudolph** (*entering from back of house - wearing vest, scarf & goggles*) Just the way I remember it! (*jogging to stage, he sizes up the center aisle "runway"*) Five hundred paces north by south. (*licks index finger, holds it up to test breeze*) No wind. (*looks up*) No clouds. (*snapping out of nostalgic reverie*) What am I doing? I don't have time for this! Speaking of time ...(*looks at pocket watch, looks around*) Holy mackerel! Where is everybody? (*calling off*) Anybody here? Anybody? Hmm. Maybe they don't use this runway anymore. (*has a thought*) Maybe they took off already! Better find somebody to tell me what's going on. (*exiting L*) Hey! Anybody here?
- Klondike** (*entering R with McGee and **The Eight**, the sleigh reindeer who constitute some or all of the Reindeer Chorus that sang backup during Musical No. 1*) Take your positions quickly, we're almost to time. (*Reindeer get into place - maybe a flying "V" formation to accomodate sightlines - as Klondike ad libs directions*) McGee.
- McGee** (*calling roll - each reindeer replies to his or her name by saying "Ready"*) Spandau! (*pronounced "span'-dow"*), Molecule! Jackson! Rooter! Toby! Yolanda! Humphrey! Scooter! All ready and set.
- Klondike** Where's the new lead?
- Aphrodite** (*entering with Associates - minus Schatzie - who array themselves menacingly upstage*) Not to worry, gentlemen, Aphrodite is here. (*strides to place DC at "head" of team, preens a bit, then announces with cool assurance*) Team in position.
- McGee** Team in position!
- Klondike** McGee, notify Kringle the team is in position and ready for takeoff.
- McGee** Aye, aye! (*starts to exit*)

Rudolph (*entering R with Gunter*) Not so fast there, fellas. (*all look at Rudolph*) Got a little announcement to make.

Klondike Excuse me, but this runway is a *restricted* area Mr ... uh ...

Rudolph Reindeer. *Rudolph* Reindeer.

Aphrodite You!

Klondike (*to McGee*) But we... (*to Rudolph*) but you...

Rudolph But me no buts, buddy, and (*to Aphrodite*) yes, ma'am ... *me*. You must be Aphrodite.

Aphrodite How did you get here so quickly?

Rudolph I'm a *reindeer*, ain't I? (*to Klondike & McGee*) Lookin' for a coupla penpals of mine named Klondike & McGee. Ever heard of 'em?

Klondike I am Klondike, but ...

Rudolph Figured as much. (*to McGee*) Guess that makes you McGee, don't it?

McGee Yes, I guess it does, but ...

Rudolph I'm here to make sure you guys get what's comin' to you.

Klondike (*thinking he's being threatened*) Now, see here, we ...

Rudolph Settle down, green britches. I just wanna make sure you get your piece of Aphrodite's *hijack* action. (*seeing he has everyone's attention*) That's right ... (*to Aphrodite*) stowin' away Kringle and the reindeer and then sellin' all the toys to the highest bidder. (*to Klondike*) Figured you guys'd want a heads up so's you wouldn't get shut out like Gunter here, poor kid. Found *him* in the vegetable cooler.

McGee What about the lead reindeer? Did she ...?

Rudolph All part of the plan.

Klondike Is this true, Aphrodite?

Rudolph The jig is up, lady, come clean.

Aphrodite The jig? Up? (*chuckles, very composed*) Now, Rudolph, look what you've done. I wanted to *surprise* Klondike, but now I suppose I'll just have to settle for *sacking* the whole *lot* of you! (*snaps fingers - two Associates produce a large sack into which Klondike, McGee and Rudolph are forced to step ... the sack is pulled up around their necks and pulled tight with a rope drawstring; those who are being "sacked" ad lib protests & resistance*)

Gunter No! (*starts toward sack*)

Aphrodite Hold him! (*two Associates restrain Gunter*) Linus, go get some bricks for the bottom of that sack. (*to Klondike et al.*) Better button up in there. I hear the Arctic Ocean can be awfully, awfully cold this time of year. (*laughs, stepping to lead position DC of team*) Look sharp, tiny reindeer! Terwilliger, go tell the fat man his team is ... (*confused look spreads across her face as she stares C into audience*) team is ... (*Schatzie appears R, cocoa mug in hand, X's to Aphrodite*) Wait a minute. (*losing balance, lists to one side*) What's ...? (*drops to one knee, reaching out for balance*) What's going on? (*Schatzie is at Aphrodite's side by now, staring down at her*) What are you ... ? (*loses balance, falls over*)

Schatzie (*offering mug to Aphrodite*) Care for a little more hot cocoa?

Aphrodite Hot co ...? Hot co ...?

Schatzie Left over from last week ... you know, (*confidentially*) the *special* blend.

Aphrodite (*struggling toward Schatzie on all fours - Schatzie doesn't move - Aphrodite flails past her, seeing double, disoriented*) You are in *big* trouble, Schatzie! *Big* trouble, you hear me! (*flails past again*)

Stand *still* when I'm talking to you! Stand ... (*collapses, motionless, far DR*)

Rudolph (*after a beat, staring at Aphrodite*) I never cared much for chocolate myself.

Schatzie (*to other Associates, holding up mug*) And if anybody *else* drank any of this, they'd *better* start looking for the antidote I hid in the barn ... *now!* (*Associates' eyes widen, they all run off L, some holding their stomachs, others holding their mouths*)

Klondike Schatzie? (*Schatzie turns to Klondike*) Is there really an antidote in the barn?

Schatzie Nope. (*taking vial from pocket*) Got it right here. I'll give it to 'em later.

Klondike And the lead reindeer?

Schatzie Him too.

Klondike Schatzie, would you please untie this sack? (*Schatzie X's to them & does so*) Thank you. (*stepping out of sack*) Despite your change of heart, you know that you and the other Associates will have to be punished, don't you?

Schatzie (*contrite*) Yes.

Klondike (*stepping out of sack*) Now go to your office and stay there until you are sent for.

Schatzie (*hangdog*) Yes sir. (*exits*)

Klondike Gunter, please ask two or three of the other elves to help you take Aphrodite inside.

Gunter Yes sir! (*starts to leave*)

Rudolph Hey, kid.

Gunter (*stopping, afraid he's going to get yelled at again*) Yessir?

Rudolph Thanks.

Gunter (*brightens*) You're welcome! (*exits*)

PRODUCTION NOTE: *Whenever the elves return to drag Aphrodite's body off, the action will pause. Rudolph will say to the elves, "Just put her down anywhere," to which Klondike will reply "You are not in charge here, Mr. Reindeer." Klondike will then turn to the elves, who should be almost off, and say "Just put her down anywhere." Gunter may be part of the removal team.*

McGee Looks like Kringle's going to have to try to fly the sleigh without a lead reindeer.

Klondike (*stepping among The Eight*) A very dangerous thing for him and the other reindeer to have to do.

Rudolph Wait a minute!

Klondike What is it, Rudolph?

Rudolph Whaddaya think *I* am? Whaddaya think I'm *doin'* here?

Klondike Well, of course you *used* to be a lead reindeer, but the letter we sent you clearly ...

Rudolph *Used* to be?

McGee Please, Rudolph ... may I call you Rudolph?

Rudolph Whatever.

McGee Your fear of heights, Rudolph, is something that ...

Rudolph (*Xing to lead position DC*) My fear of heights is *my* business. You got a job to do and I'm here to do it for you. (*pulls goggles over eyes*) Now let's get this show on the road before the Easter Bunny shows up, huh? (*crouches down to takeoff position*) Team ready?

The Eight Ready!

Klondike (*to McGee*) What have we got to lose? (*all on stage except Rudolph freeze*)

Rudolph (to himself) I been asking myself that same question.

SOUND CUE #13 (dream music) - In

Voice #1 What *have* they got to lose by letting you try?

Rudolph The way things stand now? Not much.

Voice #2 And what have *you* got to lose by trying?

Rudolph (*nods miserably*) Nothing.

Voice #3 But if you *succeed*, what do *all* of you have to *gain*?

Rudolph (*light dawns*) Everything!

SOUND CUE #13 - Out

Onus (*running on*) Kringle is coming! Everybody look sharp!

Klondike (*looking at his watch*) No wonder! We're five minutes late! Good luck, Rudolph!

Rudolph Luck ain't got nothin' to do with it.

SOUND CUE #14 - In

Musical No. 7 - *Everything To Gain*

(*The Eight move into dance positions during intro*)

I KNOW I AM YOUR ONLY HOPE -
THIS FLABBY ANTELOPE.
I ALSO KNOW THAT LIFE IS PASSING ME BY
AND IF I DON'T EVEN TRY
TO FLY AGAIN I REALLY AM A DOPE.

SO I DECIDED,
IF I DON'T VENTURE, I WON'T GAIN,
AND IF THE SKY IS CLEAR AND SUNNY,
WHY THROW AWAY YOUR MONEY
BUYING UMBRELLAS TO FIGHT THE RAIN?

All (*Elves and Remaining Good Reindeer, if any, enter singing*) SO HE DECIDED,
IF HE DON'T VENTURE, HE WON'T GAIN,
AND IF THE SKY IS CLEAR AND SUNNY,
WHY THROW AWAY YOUR MONEY
BUYING UMBRELLAS TO FIGHT THE RAIN?

Rudolph SO SAY "HELLO" TO MR. NICE,
(*spoken, shaking the hand of the nearest reindeer*) How do you do?
MISTER HOLIDAY ON ICE,
(*shaking another reindeer's hand*) Charmed, I'm sure.
MISTER LEMONS INTO LEMONADE,
MISTER CHRISTMAS PARADE,
AND MAY I OFFER YOU SOME GOOD ADVICE?

JUST DO WHAT I DO!
GO OUT AND SIEZE EACH WAKIN' DAY
AND EVEN IF IT HURTS TO DO IT,
BROTHER, GOTTA HANG ONTO IT,
'CAUSE YOU AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' TO LOSE
ANYWAY!

(*Gunter runs on during the verse that follows. He hands a newspaper to Rudolph. Rudolph opens*

paper, smiles.)

All JUST DO WHAT HE DID!
GO OUT AND SIEZE EACH WAKIN' DAY
AND EVEN IF IT HURTS TO DO IT,
BROTHER, GOTTA HANG ONTO IT,
'CAUSE YOU AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' TO LOSE

Rudolph *(holding up newspaper to audience - it reads "EXTRA! Rudolph Rides Again")*
AND MAYBE EV'RYTHING TO GAIN

All *(Kringle enters to general applause and goes directly to Rudolph)*
AND MAYBE EV'RYTHING TO GAIN
(Kringle extends his hand to Rudolph)

Kringle *(shaking Rudolph's hand)* Welcome back, old friend.

All ANYWAY.

Kringle *(spoken under verse that follows as sleigh advances up center aisle to back of house and out of hall)*
On Spandau and Molecule, Jackson and Rooter! On Toby, Yolanda, Humphrey and Scooter! To the
end of the runway and over the wall, now dash away, dash away, dash away all!

(all wave and cheer as "sleigh" moves up center aisle to back of house and out of hall)
All JUST DO WHAT WE DO!
GO OUT AND SIEZE EACH WAKIN' DAY.
AND EVEN IF IT HURTS TO DO IT,
BROTHER, GOTTA HANG ONTO IT,
'CAUSE YOU AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' TO LOSE
AND MAYBE EV'RYTHING TO GAIN
AND MAYBE EV'RYTHING TO GAIN ...

*(All on stage cup one ear and look in the direction of Rudolph's exit ... they want to hear what he's
about to say)*

Rudolph *(from off)* Up! Up! And away! *(Klondike points up, tracing the arc made by the sleigh shooting
across the sky as all eyes are trained to where he is pointing ... then the sleigh is "gone")*

All Hooray!

SOUND CUE #14 - Out

Rudolph rides again.