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BETH,
DAD,
+
MRS.
DRAPER
(13^{pp.}-15)

DAD. I suppose this would be a bad time to mention that your cousin Tracy is coming.

BETH. "Terrific Tracy?" Why are they bringing her - didn't she escape the asylum?

DAD. Maybe it was just a three day pass.

(They both chuckle.)

Either way, she'll still be here. Now, could you please go and put the ham back in the oven?

BETH. Why don't I move the rugs - you move the meat?

DAD. Suit yourself.

(He crosses into the dining room, picks up the ham and exits into the kitchen. BETH begins rolling up the small rug in front of the door when the doorbell rings. Before she can stand up to answer, the door opens and MRS. DRAPER enters nearly stepping on BETH)

BETH. Whoa!

MRS. DRAPER. Well, heavens-to-Betsy, Beth - what are you doing down there?

BETH. The better question is: what are you doing in here?!

MRS. DRAPER. I came over to borrow a cup of sugar.

BETH. You couldn't wait for me to answer the bell?

MRS. DRAPER. The last time I rang the bell, I waited and waited, and it was forever before anyone answered the door. I didn't want to freeze to death in the snow.

BETH. Mom probably saw it was you and was pretending she wasn't home.

MRS. DRAPER. *(misses the insult)* Oh my, aren't you the funny one.

BETH. That's what they tell me.

(DAD enters from the kitchen, through the dining room, and into the living room.)

DAD. Beth, who was at the - Oh, hello Mrs. Draper. How are you this evening?

MRS. DRAPER. I am wonderful, just wonderful, but I am in need of a little sugar. Do you think that you could spare a cup? I've no interest in driving in this mess.

DAD. Of course. Beth, go and get Mrs. Draper two cups of sugar.

BETH. She only asked for one.

DAD. She may need a little extra and we wouldn't want her to have to come back...

(He waves her off. She rolls her eyes and exits.)

Are you all ready for Christmas?

MRS. DRAPER. Other than this last batch of cookies - yes. But apparently you aren't.

DAD. What do you mean?

MRS. DRAPER. Well, I don't want to sound like a busybody, but...well, Thomas... *someone* hasn't turned on their lights yet and it's been dark for well over thirty minutes.

DAD. What?

MRS. DRAPER. Your Christmas lights aren't on and it's already dark... You know how the neighborhood coalition feels about uniformity. Someone isn't conforming...

(BETH enters with the sugar.)

DAD. We've had a busy day - Janet is in Vermont on business and we have relatives coming over for dinner and -

MRS. DRAPER. *(condescending)* We're all busy Thomas - it's Christmas Eve.

BETH. Here you go - sweets for the...for you.

MRS. DRAPER. Well, I suppose I'd better get over there and finish those cookies while you tend to those lights. Merry Christmas Eve!

(She exits in a hurry.)

DAD. *(as she's exiting)* Merry Christmas Eve... *(under his breath, still smiling)* I hope you slip on the walk and fracture something.

BETH. Now who's Ebenezer?

DAD. *(smiling)* Bah humbug!

(Lights fade to blue. End of scene.)