

TICKLE ME ELMO

**THE TRUE STORY OF HOW ONE TOY SAVED SESAME STREET,
SHOCKED WALL STREET, AND TICKLED THE NATION**

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Dear Reader:

In the 1990s, my dad worked as VP of Sales for Tyco
Preschool.

As a summer intern at the company in 1998, I was told the
following story by those who lived it.



INT. AIRPORT - DAY

The hustle and bustle of TRAVELERS wearing baggy jeans and windbreakers. A TEENAGER listens to music on a SONY DISCMAN.

Super: **GUANGZHOU BAIYUN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**
 SOUTHERN CHINA
 1996

We land on TWO AIRPORT SECURITY GUARDS chatting in MANDARIN next to the X-RAY MACHINE.

Innocuous-looking bags pass through the machine, until one guard sees WHAT LOOKS LIKE A BOMB - a big battery with wires coming out of it stuffed into the fuzzy outline of a doll.

AN ALARM SOUNDS. The guards look at each other, panicked.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

A frazzled AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN (40s) is shoved onto a chair. He has a closely cropped beard and is wearing a tie with pictures of SLINKYS on it.

A SILVER HARD SHELL CASE is placed on the table in front of him. SIX ARMED CHINESE POLICE OFFICERS hover menacingly.

 AMERICAN
 I'm trying to tell you guys, it's
 just a toy.

 COP
 (broken English)
 Open it. Slowly.

The American gets up. The Cops watch his every move. He slowly opens the case. The Cops get even more nervous and chatter to each other in Mandarin.

Finally, we see what's inside: The Iconic Doll We All Know And Love.

 AMERICAN
 It's called Tickle Me Elmo.

The Cops don't know what to make of it.

 AMERICAN (cont'd)
 From Sesame Street?

Blank looks from the Cops.

AMERICAN (cont'd)

This is the very first one. I just
picked it up from the factory and I'm
transporting it to-

COP

Open it.

AMERICAN

Oh, I don't know if I feel comfortab-

COP

Open it!!

AMERICAN

Okay okay.

While the Cops watch warily, The American picks up the Elmo
and opens the fur in the back. But he accidentally presses
the doll's stomach - causing Elmo to laugh and talk.

TICKLE ME ELMO

He he he he! He he he he he!

AMERICAN

Crap sorry sorry.

TICKLE ME ELMO

That tickles!

The Cops all look at each other quizzically. The American
continues fiddling with Elmo, trying to open the battery
module. He accidentally presses the stomach again.

TICKLE ME ELMO (cont'd)

He he he he! He he he he he! Oh boy!

The Cops start to grin. Elmo is pretty irresistible.

AMERICAN

Okay I should be able to get the
batteries out now.

But he accidentally presses the stomach a third time. NOW
ELMO STARTS TO LAUGH AND SHAKE UNCONTROLLABLY.

TICKLE ME ELMO

(shaking)

HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE!

The American panics. But the Cops love it! They start
laughing right along with Elmo. Relieved, The American
smiles - thrilled and validated by this reaction.

AMERICAN

Right?

TICKLE ME ELMO

(shaking)

HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE! OH
BOY THAT TICKLES!

But instead of stopping, Elmo keeps on laughing and shaking. The Cops are still laughing too - EXCEPT FOR ONE COP, WHO STARTS TO GROW NERVOUS.

TICKLE ME ELMO (cont'd)

(shaking)

HE HE HE HE HE HE! HE HE HE HE HE HE!

AMERICAN

Sorry, it's supposed to stop. I just
need to disconnect-

The strange toy continues vibrating. THE NERVOUS COP never takes his eyes off it.

TICKLE ME ELMO

(shaking)

HE HE HE HE HE HE! HE HE HE HE HE HE!

The American struggles to stop Elmo from shaking. The rest of the Cops are hysterical, except for The Nervous Cop, who reaches for his hip.

TICKLE ME ELMO (cont'd)

(shaking)

HE HE HE HE HE HE! HE HE HE HE HE HE!

The Nervous Cop has had enough-

HE DRAWS HIS GUN.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

We see the skyline's iconic sights: the Twin Towers, the Chrysler Building, and of course: The Empire State Building.

Super:

FOUR MONTHS EARLIER

We pan to the top floor of a Midtown Manhattan office building...

INT. TYCO TOYS BOARDROOM - DAY

A staid corporate boardroom sports a TYCO TOYS logo on the wall. The EXECUTIVES around the conference table are predominately male, wearing suits and ties.

MAGNA DOODLE EXECUTIVE
I'm pleased to report that revenue
from Magna Doodle hit an all-time
high last quarter.

The Executive looks very pleased with himself as he awaits a reaction from the INTIMIDATING MAN in a three-piece suit sitting at the head of the table. This is DICK GREY (60s).

DICK GREY
Revenue? What about costs? Gimme the
bottom line. Did net profit margin
reach an all-time high?

MAGNA DOODLE EXECUTIVE
Well, no-

DICK GREY
Are you running your balance sheet on
an actual Magna Doodle?

MAGNA DOODLE EXECUTIVE
Um, no we use Microsoft Excel-

DICK GREY
That was rhetorical you moron!

Super:

DICK GREY
(ACTUAL NAME)
CEO, TYCO TOYS

DICK GREY (cont'd)
Who's next? Brian?

Everyone at the table now looks nervous.

MATCHBOX EXECUTIVE
Um, the Matchbox division is looking
at 12% growth year over year, and-

DICK GREY
Hot Wheels reported 16% growth.

MATCHBOX EXECUTIVE
Sir?

DICK GREY

You're not growing. You're actually losing market share, idiot.

MATCHBOX EXECUTIVE

But-

DICK GREY

Your entire job is making toy cars for little boys. They literally sell themselves. How could your sales be so pathetic?

(shakes his head)

People think the toy industry is "fun." Well it's not fun. It's a business.

(sighs)

Gentlemen, gentlemen, gentlemen-

THE TWO FEMALE EXECUTIVES in the room clock their erasure. Dick Grey glances at a report in front of him.

DICK GREY (cont'd)

Who's next?

(groans)

Tyco Preschool. The division that's been racking up losses and dragging down the company for years. Not to mention getting its lunch eaten by a purple freakin' dinosaur.

The rest of the Executives snicker, relieved to be out of the firing squad.

DICK GREY (cont'd)

Well Neil, what do you have to say for yourself?

NEIL FRIEDMAN (40s), the American we met in the airport, sits up. Unseen in the meeting until now, he's the only executive not wearing a jacket. He wears another Slinky tie.

NEIL

First of all, thank you for that rousing introduction.

Super:

NEIL FRIEDMAN
PRESIDENT, TYCO PRESCHOOL

NEIL (cont'd)

As you know, I'm trying to turn Preschool around, and in order to-

DICK GREY

Remind me Neil, what was your groundbreaking toy last year?

NEIL

(shifts in his seat)

Tweety Bird Walkie-Talkies. Kids loved them but, admittedly, they didn't resonate as well as I expected sales-wise.

Dick Grey refers to the report in front of him.

DICK GREY

A plastic Mickey Mouse radio. A Porky Pig play gym. A Kermit the Frog xylophone. Not exactly winners.

NEIL

Dick, I can only work with the licenses I have.

DICK GREY

All I'm hearing are excuses. I've built Tyco from the 22nd largest toy company in the country to the 3rd largest. And I'm taking us to #1. On the backs of simple, tried and true, reasonably priced toys.

The other Executives nod their heads in docile agreement.

DICK GREY (cont'd)

Neil, you need to ask yourself, "What's my Barney?" What toy can I plop in front of these kids that will keep them quiet for twenty minutes. That's all anybody wants.

NEIL

I'm sorry Dick but I don't agree with that. We should be talking TO children. Not down to them.

DICK GREY

Neil, they're children. They don't know what they want. We tell them what they want.

Dick Grey chuckles and his supplicants follow suit.

DICK GREY (cont'd)
 Toy Fair is in four months. Every
 retailer in the country will be
 there. You better find a hit by then.
 Or maybe I'll just strip the
 Preschool division and sell it for
 parts.

Dick Grey stares down Neil, who gulps.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Following the meeting, Neil boards a crowded elevator.

TIME CUT: The elevator stops and a few people get out.

TIME CUT: The elevator makes another stop and the crowd
 thins. Neil looks at his watch.

TIME CUT: The elevator finally reaches the lobby. Everyone
 else gets out. A GUY holds the door for Neil.

NEIL
 Thanks, but I'm still going down.

The guy looks at Neil quizzically and exits. Neil presses
 BASEMENT and the doors close once again.

INT. TYCO PRESCHOOL - DAY

The elevator doors open at the basement level and Neil steps
 out into the offices of the PRESCHOOL DIVISION. In contrast
 to the staid boardroom, this is a toy-filled menagerie.

A FEW DOZEN EMPLOYEES crisscross the floor, some carrying
 BLUE MUPPET FUR, others shooting each other with NERF GUNS.

The receptionist HELENE hands Neil a coffee in a MARVIN THE
 MARTIAN MUG.

HELENE
 Hi Neil!

NEIL
 Thanks Helene.

Neil walks the floor (cubicles in the middle, offices along
 the walls) greeting employees, and trading nods and hellos.
 He catches a Nerf football with one hand and tosses it back.

AMANDA (O.S.)
 Hey, Neil?

Neil turns to see AMANDA VAN HOLT (early 30s, sharp as a tack) in a cubicle overflowing with toy boxes and sketches.

AMANDA

Can I show you something?

She flashes a smile that lights up the room.

Super:

**AMANDA VAN HOLT
DESIGN**

Neil heads over to her cubicle.

NEIL

Hey Amanda. Sure, what's up?

AMANDA

I'm just working on the box for the
Elmer Fudd toy piano.

(holds up a sketch)

I think we should tweak it. Right now
he's holding a gun. Feels a little
"play this or else" ya know?

NEIL

(smiles)

That's a great catch.

He glances at her desk. There's a New York Yankees Don Mattingly BOBBLEHEAD and a photo of a TWO-YEAR-OLD BOY.

NEIL (cont'd)

How's Jacob?

Amanda beams at the mention of her son.

AMANDA

So good. Really obsessed with
doorknobs now. Specifically opening
every single one he sees.

NEIL

Yeah at that age they're like little
velociraptors.

AMANDA

Right? I baby-proofed the apartment
but he keeps outsmarting me.

NEIL

Try putting a sock on the door knob.
He won't be able to turn it.

AMANDA

Wow. That's great idea. Thanks.

NEIL

Enjoy this time. Now that I have two boys in high school, I don't want to touch any of the socks in the house.

Amanda laughs - and it brightens Neil's day. He just stands there, enchanted by her. But after a beat, it gets awkward.

AMANDA

Do you... need anything else?

NEIL

No, I, uh, guess not. Gotta go.

Neil walks away, not exactly sticking the landing. Amanda watches him go with a grin. Then she notices he left his Marvin the Martian mug.

AMANDA

(calling out)

Neil, you forgot your mug!

Neil can't bear to turn around. He blurts out-

NEIL

Keep it forever!

INT. NEIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Neil comes home to an empty apartment - but a pile of boys' sneakers and sports gear indicates it's not always so quiet. The place is modest but feels cavernous when he's all alone.

A NOK HOCKEY board sits on a table. He picks up a stick and shoots the puck. After a beat, he walks around to the other side of the board, and starts playing against himself.

Then he notices the light flicker on his answering machine, and listens to a message from his two high school age sons:

MESSAGE (O.S.)

BRANDON: Hi Dad you said to call when we got to Mom's. COOPER: Let me talk to him! BRANDON: I'm leaving a message dummy. No, stop it! [BRANDON LAUGHING] COOPER: Dad, Brandon keeps hitting himself. [COOPER LAUGHING] Brandon, get off! [DEEP, HYSTERICAL BELLY LAUGHING FROM BOTH] Beep.

Neil looks at a photo of his sons on the refrigerator and smiles. Hearing them laughing is just what he needed.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

In a windowless conference room with toys stacked and strewn everywhere, Neil sits at a table with his THREE SENIOR TYCO PRESCHOOL EXECUTIVES.

NEIL

Okay guys, here's the deal. Yesterday Dick Grey told me that if we don't come up with a hit, and fast, we're all gonna be out of a job.

One of the executives, GERRY CLANCY (40s, salt and pepper, serious) turns to Neil.

GERRY

He never gives us a marketing budget. How are people supposed to buy the toys if they don't know they exist?

Super:

**GERRY CLANCY
MARKETING**

NEIL

Gerry, let's worry about that after we've figured out a new product.

Another executive, AL KARO (40s, thinning hair, pugnacious) turns to Neil.

AL

You just give me something to sell, and I'll sell it.

Super:

**AL KARO
SALES**

NEIL

I know you will, Al. I've scheduled a day of pitches from independent inventors, so let's see what they come up with.

The last executive, BOBBY "SUNSHINE" BEDROSIAN (40s, a stout, unfiltered Armenian guy) turns to Neil.

SUNSHINE

You're telling me Dick Grey's mom didn't know what she was doing when she named him? I mean come on.

Super: **BOBBY "SUNSHINE" BEDROSIAN**
 MANUFACTURING

 NEIL
Believe me, Sunshine, I've asked
myself that many times. Okay, let's
get the inventors in here.

TIME-CUT: INVENTOR #1 stands in front of the executives,
holding a massive, unwieldy helmet with huge goggles.

 INVENTOR #1
Each virtual reality helmet will come
with interchangeable disks that alter
the landscape you're looking at.

 NEIL
So it's a Viewmaster that you strap
to your head?

 SUNSHINE
Have you ever met a three-year-old?
That'll snap its neck in a second.

TIME-CUT: INVENTOR #2 dumps a bucket of plastic bricks onto
the table, and starts snapping them together.

 AL
So, Legos?

 INVENTOR #2
No, Legos have round pegs. "Super
Blocks" have square pegs.

 GERRY
I think we could be sued just for
looking at this.

TIME-CUT: INVENTOR #3 is holding a cuddly teddy bear.

 INVENTOR #3
Why play with a teddy bear, when you
can play with a Reversibear!

The Inventor puts his hands into a seam in the teddy bear's
bottom and pulls it inside out, revealing another bear.

 NEIL
I'm sorry, does the second bear come
out of-

 AL
-the butt. It comes right out of the
butt.

TIME-CUT: INVENTOR #4 holds an action figure over a bowl of boiling hot water.

INVENTOR #4
All you have to do is dunk Boil-o-Bots into hot water and-

NEIL
Nope.

TIME-CUT: INVENTOR #5 holds out a cute baby doll.

INVENTOR #5
Shhh. Hear that?

A faint THUMPING is heard.

INVENTOR #5 (cont'd)
It's the first doll whose heart you can actually hear beating. I call her Angie O'Plasty.

Neil hangs his head. Gerry and Al cringe.

SUNSHINE
I don't hate it.

TIME-CUT: The gang is demoralized and rubbing their eyes.

INVENTOR #6 holds a PLUSH TOY MONKEY with wires coming out of it that lead to an external plastic module.

INVENTOR #6
All of the electronics would be inside the doll of course, but when you tickle him...

The Inventor presses a button on the external module. A speaker in the module emits a CUTE MONKEY CACKLE.

INVENTOR #6 (cont'd)
He starts laughing.

Neil sits up in his chair.

INVENTOR #6 (cont'd)
If you tickle him some more...

The Inventor presses the button again. The monkey starts laughing even harder. Neil is mesmerized. The other Executives are a bit more on the fence.

INVENTOR #6 (cont'd)
And finally, if you tickle him one
more time...

He presses the button again. Now the monkey starts
hysterically laughing. Neil finds himself laughing right
along with it.

NEIL
Very interesting...?

INVENTOR #6
Ron. Ron Dubren.

NEIL
What do you call it, Ron?

INVENTOR #6
Tickles the Chimp.

NEIL
(deep in thought)
Tickles the Chimp... Okay, we'll get
back to you.

Ron nods, packs up, and exits. The team confers.

GERRY
Neil, a laughing monkey?

AL
It looks expensive.

NEIL
Think about it. Laughter is the one
thing that brings us all together. It
doesn't matter what's going on in
your life, you can just hear someone
laugh, and suddenly it's all okay.

The rest of the gang isn't quite sold.

SUNSHINE
Could we see the bear that comes out
of the other bear's butt again?

NEIL
I think we can build something great
with this. A doll you can make laugh.
That you can laugh with. I want to
buy the rights from Ron. But we're
not doing a monkey. We gotta figure
out something else to put the
mechanism in...

PRE-LAP: We hear the beginning of a VERY familiar song:
*Sunny days, Sweepin' the clouds away, On my way to where the
 air is sweet...*

INT. KAUFMAN ASTORIA STUDIOS - DAY

Can you tell me how to get, How to get to Sesame Street...

We land on a television studio in Queens where an episode of
 Sesame Street is being filmed on a soundstage. BIG BIRD is
 holding a paper bag. COOKIE MONSTER approaches.

BIG BIRD
 Today we're gonna talk about hope.
 Cookie Monster, do you know what's in
 this bag?

COOKIE MONSTER
 I don't.

BIG BIRD
 Is there anything you hope is in this
 bag?

COOKIE MONSTER
 I hope it's a cookie!!!

BIG BIRD
 It's not a cookie.

Cookie Monster is sullen.

BIG BIRD (cont'd)
 It's ten cookies!

Big Bird empties all of the cookies out of the bag and
 Cookie Monster starts gobbling them up.

BIG BIRD (cont'd)
 Well, nine cookies. Eight...

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside the control room, PRODUCERS are watching live feeds
 from different camera angles on a bank of monitors.

But one determined executive, ANN KEARNS (40s) is lost in
 thought. Her eyes are glued to a monitor in the corner
 that's playing PBS. It's an episode of BARNEY & FRIENDS.

We can faintly hear the Barney Theme Song: *I love you, you
 love me, we're a happy family...*

Ann scowls, oblivious to a YOUNG PRODUCER (20s) trying to get her attention.

YOUNG PRODUCER
Ann. Ann? Ann!

The Executive finally snaps out of it.

Super: **ANN KEARNS**
CHILDREN'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP

ANN
Sorry. Can you believe people watch this stuff?

YOUNG PRODUCER
You have a story meeting.

Ann changes the channel and follows the Young Producer out.

The new channel is CNN. Onscreen, we see the chyron HUNT
CONTINUES FOR UNABOMBER and a police sketch of the suspect.

INT. KAUFMAN ASTORIA STUDIOS (CORRIDOR) - DAY

Ann and the Young Producer walk and talk through the halls.

ANN
Things just haven't been the same since Jim passed.

The studio is adorned with Sesame Street memorabilia, including a black and white photo of JIM HENSON.

ANN (cont'd)
Public funding is drying up. People are watching cable. Our ratings are tanking. Not to mention-

YOUNG PRODUCER
Barney.

ANN
Shh. We never say his name. But if we don't find a new way to generate revenue, we're gonna have to start laying people off. I can't believe I'm about to say this, but if things get worse, this could be the last season of Sesame Street.

YOUNG PRODUCER
So what do we do?

ANN

Hope for one cookie. Pray for ten.

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - MORNING

Neil approaches the Tyco Toys building to find a frazzled Amanda standing outside, holding her two-year-old son JACOB.

NEIL

Hey Amanda, is everything okay?

AMANDA

My ex was supposed to pick up Jacob this morning but he never showed.

NEIL

Oh man. Hi Jacob!

Cute but shy, Jacob gives Neil a little wave.

AMANDA

I couldn't find anyone else to take him, I didn't know what to do.

NEIL

(to Jacob)

Do you want to come to work with me and your mom? We've got a busy day though and I am going to need you to fill out a W-2.

Jacob giggles. Amanda appreciates Neil talking to him. Neil is comfortable around kids and is in his element now.

AMANDA

Are you sure it's okay?

NEIL

Of course. We're a toy company. Besides, as someone whose ex-wife is... unpredictable, I've been there.
(then, to Jacob)

Are you ready for an adventure?

JACOB

Yeah!

Jacob smiles, Amanda relaxes a bit, and they head inside.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Neil is meeting with his core team - Gerry, Al, and Sunshine - when Amanda comes in holding Jacob.

AMANDA

Sorry...

NEIL

Come come, sit.

(then, to the gang)

I asked Amanda to sit in.

Amanda sits with Jacob on her lap. Gerry and Al give each other a look: This is a bit out of the ordinary.

AMANDA

Hi guys. Sorry about this.

Jacob coos and reaches for Sunshine, who recoils a bit. Neil holds up Tickles the Chimp, with the control module sticking out of it.

NEIL

Okay, we're introducing a new category called "Feature Plush" - stuffed dolls embedded with electronics that kids can actually interact with.

AL

Again, sounds expensive.

NEIL

Not if we can create a premium product by using this new technology in one of our of existing licenses.

GERRY

But the only license Tyco Preschool has to manufacture plush is Sesame Street. And Sesame Street toys are classified as "educational." No one wants to play with a Sesame Street doll. That's why our sales are struggling.

NEIL

This is a complete paradigm shift, Gerry. I'm willing to bet that once people see this thing, and hear it laugh, it'll change the game.

Neil proceeds to put FIVE STUFFED DOLLS on the table: Oscar the Grouch, Cookie Monster, Bert, Ernie, and Big Bird.

NEIL (cont'd)
 Okay, this is Sesame Street's
 Murderers' Row. The question is, who
 would you rather tickle?

The gang considers their options from the doll lineup.

AL
 Well, Oscar the Grouch probably
 doesn't like being tickled.

GERRY
 Cookie Monster's thing is more...
 cookies.

SUNSHINE
 And Bert and Ernie are gay.

Everyone looks at Sunshine. Amanda covers Jacob's ears.

SUNSHINE (cont'd)
 What? We're all thinking it. Do "best
 friends" really take baths together?

NEIL
 Sunshine.

SUNSHINE
 What? I don't have a problem with it.

NEIL
 Okayyy, so I guess that leaves Big
 Bird. He is the most popular
 character on Sesame Street. He's the
 star of the show.

Everyone looks at the stuffed Big Bird, but no one seems
 especially excited.

AL
 But what does Big Bird's laugh sound
 like? Like can you even picture it?

Everybody tries to imagine Big Bird laughing. They even emit
 a few SQUAWKS. But nobody seems convinced. The group
 considers their options, but looks kind of defeated. Then-

JACOB
 Elmo.

The gang looks at Jacob but doesn't pay him much mind.

JACOB (cont'd)
 (pointing)
 Elmo.

AMANDA
 Shhh.

JACOB
 Elmo!

AMANDA
 Sorry guys. Jacob, there's no Elmo
 here.

But then Neil notices something. In a pile of toys in the corner of the room, a FURRY RED HAND is sticking out. Neil reaches into the pile and pulls out a STUFFED ELMO DOLL.

Jacob lights up, and Neil has an idea.

JACOB
 (clapping)
 Elmo!!!

Neil hands Jacob the doll and Jacob hugs it.

AMANDA
 Sorry. He loves Elmo. Obviously.

The rest of the gang senses Neil's wheels turning.

SUNSHINE
 Neil, no one cares about Elmo. He's
 just a glorified Grover rip-off.

GERRY
 Yeah he's hardly even on Sesame
 Street. He's basically an extra.

AL
 Elmo is a secondary character - at
 best.

Neil looks at Jacob cuddling with Elmo, and stands up.

NEIL
 That's why Elmo's perfect. Don't you
 guys see? We're secondary characters.
 Nobody cares about us at this
 company. We're underdogs. We're Elmo!
 But what if this is our opportunity?
 Kids relate to Elmo. Elmo is curious.
 Elmo makes mistakes. Elmo is silly.

AMANDA

Plus red is the first color babies
can see.

NEIL

Yes! Kids love Elmo because Elmo is a
kid. Elmo is the youngest Muppet -
three years old.

AMANDA

And the way Elmo talks - exaggerated,
high-pitched, third-person -

(imitating)

Elmo loves you!

(then)

It mimics the way parents talk.

(to Jacob)

Mommy loves you!

Jacob shrieks with delight.

NEIL

Plus, Elmo loves to laugh.

Amanda nuzzles Jacob's nose with Elmo. Jacob laughs out
loud. The rest of the gang nods, slowly coming around.

AL

Neil, if we're gonna put unproven
technology into a secondary character
for a whole new category of plush, we
gotta keep the costs down. Otherwise
Toys R Us is gonna pass.

NEIL

I get it. I'm also gonna need Dick
Grey's sign-off to pay for the R&D.
But let me worry about that. What are
we gonna call it?

GERRY

Laughing Elmo?

AL

Elmo's Tickle Time?

SUNSHINE

Tickle My Elmo?

AMANDA

It needs to be more active. Something
a parent is gonna see on the box and
know exactly what to do.

(MORE)

AMANDA (cont'd)
What about, Tickle Me Elmo? It tells
you everything you need to know.

NEIL
(nods)
Tickle Me Elmo. I like it.

Jacob coos again and holds out his Elmo.

JACOB
Elmo!

NEIL
Dick Grey can't say no to this.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE PLANE - DAY

Dick Grey is sitting in a plush seat on his private plane,
screaming into the Airphone.

DICK GREY
There's absolutely no way you're
putting that kind of money into Elmo!
Are you kidding me? That's your big
idea? Tickle Me Elmo?! Who the hell
cares about Elmo?!

INT. NEIL'S OFFICE - DAY (INTERCUT)

In his office adorned with Slinkys, Neil pulls the phone
away from his ear, Dick Grey is so loud.

NEIL
I know it's a gamble, Dick, but Elmo
could fill a hole in the market and
actually speak to kids.

DICK GREY
Are you trying to tell me about the
toy market? I've been in the business
forty years! I've forgotten more
about toys than you'll ever know!

NEIL
But I already agreed to buy the
rights to the laughing technology.

DICK GREY
Then you're gonna put it in Taz.

NEIL

What?

DICK GREY

Put it in the Tasmanian Devil. Tickle Me Taz. I just landed the license to make Looney Tunes plush.

NEIL

I'm sorry, you acquired a new plush license without consulting me first?

DICK GREY

I saw the opportunity and I took it. All the research says Taz is the most popular Warner Brothers character, so that's what you're gonna do.

NEIL

But Taz doesn't really... laugh.

DICK GREY

THEN YOU MAKE HIM LAUGH! WHAT DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? I'M NOT GIVING YOU AN OPTION! I WANT A TASMANIAN DEVIL!

SPIITTLE flies out of Dick Grey's mouth - not unlike the Tasmanian Devil himself. Then he calms down, a bit.

DICK GREY (cont'd)

Listen Neil, Mattel just announced it's acquiring Hasbro. That's the #1 toy company in the country acquiring the #2. I will not be left holding the bag. I will get us to #1.

Neil starts nervously playing with a Slinky in his office.

DICK GREY (cont'd)

If you don't make Tickle Me Taz, I'll find someone who will.

Dick Grey slams down the Airphone.

INT. IRISH PUB - NIGHT

Neil and his team - Gerry, Al, and Sunshine - commiserate over beers after work at a bar near the office.

AL

So unless we make a Tickle Me Taz, we're all fired?

NEIL

Once again, instead of listening to what kids want, we're telling them what they want. Or Dick Grey is.

GERRY

Can't win 'em all, right? Remember Micro Machines?

Neil and Sunshine groan.

AL

What happened with Micro Machines?

GERRY

Mid '80s, the three of us were at Kenner. Neil wanted to do miniature toy cars. Said kids would flip for them. Management said no, so the inventor sold them to Galoob instead. Couple of years later, we're watching Home Alone. And what does Macaulay Culkin put at the bottom of the stairs for the burglars to step on?

NEIL / SUNSHINE

Micro Machines.

GERRY

They flew off the shelves.

NEIL

I said I would always trust my gut after that. But hey, maybe we'll get to do Tickle Me Elmo next year.

They solemnly clink their glasses.

ALL

To next year.

Then the WAITRESS arrives at the table.

WAITRESS

You guys ready to order?

SUNSHINE

I'm torn between the french fries and the onion rings. French fries or onion rings. I just can't decide.

WAITRESS

You could always do both.

This comment sparks something in Neil.

SUNSHINE

I don't know. My wife wouldn't like that. I'm watching my figure. You guys go and then I'll decide.

The rest of the gang proceeds to order. And then-

NEIL

We could always do both.

SUNSHINE

So you do want to get the french fries and the onion rings?

NEIL

We could always do both!

WAITRESS

(writing order)

One french fries and one onion rings.

NEIL

No! I mean, yes, sure.

(then, to the gang)

We can do Taz and we can do Elmo!

WAITRESS

Sounds like you guys need more time.

She exits.

AL

What are you talking about, Neil?

NEIL

We tell Dick Grey we're working on Tickle Me Taz, but we'll secretly also build Tickle Me Elmo. When both products are done, and he sees how amazing Elmo is, he'll have to green light that one into production!

GERRY

How are we going to build a whole other toy without Dick finding out?

NEIL

He's never once come to the basement! He'll never know! Plus we'll actually build Tickle Me Taz just in case.

AL

Neil, we barely have the R&D budget for one toy, let alone two.

NEIL

I'll find the money somewhere. We have to bet on ourselves. You guys know this is the only way.

The gang contemplates this, starting to see his point.

NEIL

But it's risky. If this blows up in our faces, we might never work in the toy business again. Do you trust me?

The gang looks at each other: Gerry and Sunshine will follow Neil to the ends of the earth. Al reluctantly goes along.

SUNSHINE

I just have one question. Are we actually getting both french fries and onion rings?

INT. MARK'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Neil, Gerry, Al, and Sunshine stand in a workshop in the back of the Tyco Preschool office that is absolutely crammed from floor to ceiling with toy parts.

MARK JOHNSON-WILLIAMS (40s, thick glasses, mad scientist vibes) is inspecting the Tickles the Chimp prototype.

MARK

So I can't tell anyone I'm working on Taz and Elmo? Not even my mom?

NEIL

You can tell your mom, Mark.

MARK

Good, 'cause she's my best friend.

Super:

**MARK JOHNSON-WILLIAMS
ENGINEERING**

NEIL

Can you get it done?

Sitting on a table in front of Mark is a Tasmanian Devil plush doll and an Elmo plush doll.

MARK

Well, all I gotta do is shrink down the speaker and the sensor that triggers the laughing into a small enough module that will fit into both dolls, none of which has ever been done before.

(picking up up Taz)

Taz is pretty much all head, so the module will have to go in his noggin.

(holding up Elmo)

Elmo is more evenly proportioned, so I can squeeze it into his tummy. The button needs to be sensitive enough for a small child to be able to press it but not too sensitive that it's going off all the time.

NEIL

Is that a yes?

Mark looks up at the gang.

MARK

Do you want it good, fast, or cheap?

AL

Cheap.

Neil puts his hand up to shush Al.

NEIL

It's gotta be good, it's gotta be cost-effective, and we need full-blown production models in our hands by Toy Fair in less than four months.

MARK

Ooh, this is so exciting! I'll have to order some specialized components from the World Wide Web.

SUNSHINE

(sotto)

What does that mean?

GERRY

(sotto)

No idea. Act impressed.

Sunshine and Gerry cross their arms and nod.

EXT. MIDTOWN STREET - EARLY EVENING

Neil and Amanda are standing outside a bar. It's the end of a beautiful spring day in April.

AMANDA

Thanks for the drink, Neil. That was so fun.

NEIL

No thank you for pushing us in the right direction with Tickles the Chimp. You mean a lot to me- your opinion I mean.

AMANDA

(smiles)

To be fair, it was really Jacob who had the Elmo idea, not me.

NEIL

Should I have bought him a drink?

AMANDA

(laughs, then)

How's Mark's classified project?

NEIL

Strange packages are arriving at all hours of the night and he's almost blown up his workshop a few times.

AMANDA

For Mark that's progress! Hey, so I'm actually gonna pick Jacob up from the nanny now... You wanna take a walk?

Neil smiles.

TIME CUT: Neil and Amanda stroll down the street, chatting.

AMANDA (cont'd)

...the thing with my ex is that he never fought for me, you know? Our relationship, our marriage, Jacob. Even our divorce. He just kinda, gave up. So I got a place for me and Jacob and attempted to move on. Just a girl from Iowa trying to make it in the big city. Well, Hoboken, New Jersey.

(then)

I'm sorry, what was the question?

NEIL

(grins)

I don't even remember.

AMANDA

Oh my God, I'm just rambling, you don't care about any of this.

NEIL

No, no, of course I care! I like learning more about you.

AMANDA

Fine but enough about me for now. I realize I don't even know how you got in to the toy business.

NEIL

Oof, well I wasn't the best student in college. I majored in keg repair. And the only job I could get when I graduated was driving a truck for a toy company called Poof Products, and that was only because I lied and said I could drive stick. I rode the clutch so badly that they eventually just moved me into a sales role. And they only made one thing: Slinkys.

AMANDA

That explains the ties, and the general obsession.

NEIL

A Slinky is the perfect toy. It's simple. It's elegant. It's affordable. And kids can interact with it.

They stop at a PLAYGROUND, watching KIDS and PARENTS run around. A LITTLE GIRL is holding a CABBAGE PATCH KID.

NEIL (cont'd)

Cabbage Patch Kids. Cute, sure. But it just sits there. There's been no innovations in dolls since the 1800s.

A BOY and his FATHER are sitting on a bench. The boy is holding a TEDDY RUXPIN.

NEIL (cont'd)

Teddy Ruxpin. Okay great you can put a cassette tape in the back of a teddy bear. But then it just reads you a story. You can't play with it.

The Boy gets bored and tosses the Teddy Ruxpin aside.

NEIL (cont'd)

But Tickle Me Elmo, I really think Tickle Me Elmo could be the next Slinky.

AMANDA

Richard T. James invented the Slinky, but he became so obsessed with it that his wife Betty divorced him and he left the company to become a missionary in Bolivia.

(off Neil's look)

The History of Toys was a requirement for my design major at FIT.

Neil smiles, impressed.

JACOB (O.S.)

Mommy!!

Jacob comes running from his NANNY into Amanda's arms.

AMANDA

Hi sweetie!!

Amanda scoops him up.

AMANDA (cont'd)

(to the nanny)

Lindsey, this is my boss-

NEIL

Just Neil is fine.

NANNY

Nice to meet you. See you next week Amanda. Bye Jacob!

Jacob gives his nanny a cute wave. She exits.

AMANDA

Jacob, remember Mommy's friend Neil?

Jacob gets shy and hides his face on Amanda's shoulder.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Is someone being shy? Are you
ticklish?

Amanda starts TICKLING Jacob. Jacob GIGGLES. He also starts
to WRIGGLE in Amanda's arms. It's adorable and infectious.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Is someone ticklish??

Neil watches Amanda tickle Jacob, who continues to LAUGH and
SQUIRM. Once again the wheels begin to turn in Neil's head.

INT. BLOCKBUSTER - NIGHT

Neil is strolling through the store with his teenage sons,
COOPER and BRANDON, looking for a movie to rent.

COOPER
(holding up a tape)
Dad, how about this?

NEIL
Cooper, we're not renting Indecent
Proposal. You're sixteen.

Cooper rolls his eyes. Then Neil picks up a tape and shows
it to the boys.

BRANDON
Sleepless in Seattle? Again?

NEIL
Why not? It's cute!

COOPER
You know, you have a real "sad
divorced dad" thing going.

Brandon gives his brother a playful smack.

COOPER (cont'd)
What? He never goes on dates. He
never talks about girls. Meanwhile
Mom has a different guy every week.

NEIL
Coop, I really didn't need to know
that. And just so you know, I've been
spending time with a wonderful woman
named Amanda. We work together.

The boys groan.

NEIL (cont'd)

What?

BRANDON

Dad, hanging out with your coworker isn't dating. It's... working.

NEIL

I know. But I'm not sure I'm ready.

The boys roll their eyes and continue walking through the store. Then a tape catches Cooper's eye and he grabs it.

COOPER

Ooh, what about your favorite movie, Dad? It's about a weird grown man who plays with toys all day.

He holds up the VHS case - the movie is BIG. Neil shakes his head and grins while the boys laugh.

INT. MARK'S WORKSHOP - DAY

The workshop looks like a bomb hit Toys R Us. There are wires and doll parts and swatches of Muppet fur everywhere. Neil, Gerry, Al, and Sunshine look on.

MARK

I've been pushing the envelope on the number of components I can smush into a doll. But I did find a posting on a Usenet group that helped me cut down on the CPU power we need. Also a yummy paella recipe.

NEIL

Can we see it?

MARK

Of course! I just need to microwav-

NEIL

Not the paella, Mark.

MARK

Right.

Mark produces a rough Taz prototype with no arms or legs. He presses Taz's face, and the doll plays the laugh from Tickles the Chimp.

MARK (cont'd)
Obviously the laugh is just a
placeholder. Then there's this.

Everyone looks around furtively as Mark pulls a second rough
prototype from a drawer: a scary looking furless Elmo.

He presses Elmo's stomach and Elmo also laughs like Tickles
the Chimp. The gang looks at each other: Not a bad start.

NEIL
That's great, Mark. Excellent work.
But it has to shake too.

AL
Shake? What are you talking about?

NEIL
When you get tickled, you don't just
sit still and laugh. You move, you
squirm, you shake.

Neil tickles Sunshine under his armpits. Sunshine SQUEALS
like a little girl and flails his arms.

NEIL (cont'd)
See?

Sunshine looks violated.

MARK
A shaking doll. Hmm. That would
entail integrating a small motor into
the module. I suppose I could add
another microchip.

AL
Guys guys guys, what are we talking
about here? Another microchip? Are we
building a doll or The Terminator?

NEIL
We're building something new, Al.
Something kids will love. Why do you
have to fight me on everything?

AL
I'm trying to help us win. It's real
easy being the "big picture" guy,
Neil. And I know we don't go way back
like these guys. But you hired me to
sell. And buyers are only gonna see
the price tag. Plus isn't all that
shaking gonna drain the batteries?

NEIL

What if it didn't shake every time?
What if it only shakes when Elmo gets
really ticklish? An escalation.
Tickle Elmo once: a laugh. Tickle
Elmo twice: a bigger laugh. Tickle
Elmo three times: Elmo goes nuts.

GERRY

The shaking would be great for TV
ads. A laughing doll is fine, but
television is a visual medium. Seeing
it move in a commercial, that could
be a game-changer.

Al shakes his head, unconvinced. But Neil plows ahead.

NEIL

What do you say, Mark? Can you put a
motor in these suckers?

Mark doesn't say anything - he's already lost in his work,
taking apart another Elmo. The gang starts to exit the
workshop, leaving him be.

SUNSHINE

(to Neil)

Don't ever tickle me again.

And with that, we are launched into a **MONTAGE:**

In MARK'S WORKSHOP, Mark opens a package of off-brand
electronic components and places a motor into an Elmo. When
he tests it, Elmo catches on fire!

In a CHASE MANHATTAN BANK, Neil discusses something with a
BANKER. After deliberating, Neil signs a stack of paperwork.

In his PRIVATE PLANE, Dick Grey reads an article in the New
York Times titled: MATTEL ACQUISITION OF HASBRO IN JEOPARDY.

In KAUFMAN ASTORIA STUDIOS, Ann watches glumly as the Young
Producer and a few OTHER EMPLOYEES carry boxes of personal
effects and hug people goodbye - they've been laid off.

In the TOYS R US FLAGSHIP STORE IN TIMES SQUARE, Neil and
Amanda stroll together, inspecting some of the popular toys:
Koosh Balls, Tamagotchi, and Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers.

Back in MARK'S WORKSHOP, Mark beats the flaming Elmo against
a table. Finally, he uses a fire extinguisher to put it out.
He closes the blinds to keep out any lookie-loos.

In a NEARBY OFFICE, Gerry, Al, and Sunshine are chatting when they hear BANGING and see SMOKE drifting out of Mark's workshop. They shrug and continue their meeting.

Back in his PRIVATE PLANE, Dick Grey puts down the newspaper and makes a call. No one picks up. Dick Grey fumes. In NEIL'S EMPTY OFFICE, Neil's phone just rings and rings.

Back in TOYS R US, Neil and Amanda giggle as they hide all the BARNEYS behind other toys. But when a STORE CLERK catches them, they run away and share a flirty laugh.

END MONTAGE

INT. TYCO PRESCHOOL - DAY

A MAN and WOMAN (both 40s) in business casual attire approach Helene at the reception desk.

HELENE

Welcome to Tyco Preschool. How can I help you?

MAN

We'd like to speak to Mark Johnson-Williams please.

HELENE

Oh, um, I don't think anyone's ever scheduled a meeting with Mark before. I'll have to check with-

WOMAN

This is an unscheduled visit.

She flashes an FBI BADGE. Helene is taken aback.

INT. MARK'S WORKSHOP - DAY

The man and woman (actually FBI AGENTS) sit across from Mark in his chaotic workshop.

FEMALE FBI AGENT

So you graduated college at 15, is that correct?

MARK

(sheepish)

14.

MALE FBI AGENT

And have you always been interested in building electronic devices?

MARK

I like to take things apart and put them back together. Sometimes stuff even blows up.

(nervous laughter)

Can I ask what this is about?

Outside the workshop, a group of employees including Neil, Amanda, and Sunshine, have gathered and are watching through a window, though they can't hear what's happening.

The Female FBI Agent picks up a crude Taz prototype with a control panel sticking out of it.

FEMALE FBI AGENT

Where did you get this pressure sensor? It's not approved for commercial use. It's typically used in improvised explosive devices.

MARK

The internet. You can really get your hands on anything these days!

The Agents look at each other, then slide a POLICE SKETCH across the table. Outside the workshop, Neil looks on:

NEIL

Oh my God. They think he's the Unabomber.

SUNSHINE

I knew it!

Neil glares at Sunshine. Back in the workshop:

MALE FBI AGENT

(re: the sketch)

Mr. Johnson-Williams, do you recognize this man?

MARK

Nope. I've seen this on the news just like everybody else.

FEMALE FBI AGENT

Mark, is there anything you're not telling us? Don't lie to us.

MARK

Well, there is one thing...

Mark looks around. The Agents lean in, intrigued.

MARK (cont'd)

(sotto)

We're making an Elmo, that you can
tickle.

Mark's eyes light up. The Agents look at each other.

TIME CUT: The Agents carry out several boxes of components and prototypes. Neil passes them as he enters the workshop.

NEIL

Are you okay, Mark?

MARK

Yeah, they were actually really nice.
They even gave me their card.

He holds up an embossed FBI business card.

NEIL

The stuff they took...

MARK

Will probably set us back a few
weeks. But I'll just get to build it
all over again. Bonus!

NEIL

I don't know if we have that much
time...

INT. DICK GREY'S OFFICE (RECEPTION) - DAY

Neil waits outside Dick Grey's penthouse office. He checks his watch. Finally he walks over to the RECEPTIONIST.

NEIL

Sorry to bother you again, but Dick
is the one who called this meeting
and I've been waiting for an hour.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm so sorry. Let me check if he's
available. And it was Noel...?

NEIL

Neil! Friedman. President of Tyco
Preschool? We're in the basement?

The Receptionist picks up the phone and has a hushed conversation that Neil can only hear bits of.

RECEPTIONIST
Friedman... preschool... basement.

Neil rolls his eyes. She hangs up.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)
He just became available.

Neil shakes his head, adjusts his Slinky tie, and enters.

INT. DICK GREY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Neil enters the capacious corner office to find Dick Grey staring out of a large window with impressive views of the New York City skyline, including the Empire State Building.

There are stuffy black leather chairs to sit on, and off to the side, two plastic toddler chairs in the shape of Big Bird and Cookie Monster. Neil decides to sit on Big Bird.

Still gazing out the window, Dick Grey finally speaks.

DICK GREY
Tyco was the 22nd largest toy company
in the country when I took over.
We're #3 now. And we're going to #1.
That's gonna be my legacy.

NEIL
(sarcastic)
Didn't know that.

Dick Grey continues to gaze out the window.

DICK GREY
When I became CEO in 1973, Tyco was
owned by Sara Lee. Did you know that?

NEIL
The cake company?

DICK GREY
Yes. Turns out selling toy trains and
frozen bunt cake doesn't create a lot
of synergy, but I made it work.

NEIL
I'm sorry are you gonna stare out the
window the whole-

DICK GREY

My point is that I've seen it all in this business. But what I've never seen, is my Preschool division, which is already hemorrhaging money-
(finally turns around)
GETTING RAIDED BY THE FBI!

Neil is startled and almost falls off the Big Bird chair.

DICK GREY (cont'd)

What are you doing down in the basement?! Why is Tickle Me Taz taking so long? Toy Fair is in two months and I still haven't seen anything.

NEIL

We're working as fast as we can.

Dick Grey eyes Neil suspiciously.

DICK GREY

You're not still hung up on Elmo...

Neil shifts in his seat but manages to keep it together.

NEIL

I promise, we're working on Tickle Me Taz. The raid set us back a bit, but I'll redouble our efforts.

DICK GREY

Do not. Disappoint me. Again.

And with that, Dick Grey turns back to gaze out the window.

NEIL

Oh, um, is the meeting over?

Neil shrugs, then gets up and shows himself out.

INT. MARK'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Neil, Gerry, Al, and Sunshine gather in the workshop, where furless Taz and Elmo prototypes sit on the table. Gerry makes sure the door is closed.

NEIL

Okay Mark, it's been a few weeks. Please tell me something good.

MARK

Otters hold hands when they sleep to prevent them from drifting apart.

Neil just looks at him.

MARK (cont'd)

Oh you mean something good about the prototypes. I think you'll be very pleased. Then again I also thought you'd appreciate the otter fact.

He presses the Elmo prototype's stomach. It laughs like Tickles the Chimp. He presses the stomach again. More laughter. He presses it a third time:

The prototype starts laughing and SHAKING. The gang smiles. Neil nods. Now we're getting somewhere.

NEIL

Sunshine, once Mark signs off, how long will it take the factory to turn around working models for Toy Fair?

SUNSHINE

I'll call Teresa. Should be pretty quick. But as for full-scale mass production, that's another story.

NEIL

We'll cross that bridge. In the meantime, who wants to cross the Queensboro Bridge?

AL

Where are we going?

NEIL

(grins)
Sesame Street.

INT. KAUFMAN ASTORIA STUDIOS - DAY

Neil, Gerry, Al, and Sunshine stand with Ann from Children's Television Workshop. They're watching a scene from Sesame Street being filmed between ELMO and OSCAR THE GROUCH.

Elmo is happily setting out three jars with coins in them.

OSCAR THE GROUCH

Hey what's with all the trash, Elmo?

ELMO

This isn't trash! This is for Elmo's allowance. One jar is for saving. One is for spending. And one is for sharing! Maybe I'll buy you a new trash can. Elmo loves you!

OSCAR THE GROUCH

When you're done I want those jars.

Oscar groans and ducks back into his can.

DIRECTOR

And cut!

THE CREW resets for another shot. The Tyco Preschool team watches in amazement at this behind the scenes moment.

OSCAR'S PUPPETEER emerges from behind the set. He looks exactly like you'd think the voice of Oscar the Grouch would look like - bushy eyebrows and a gravelly voice.

Then, ELMO'S PUPPETEER emerges from behind the set. The toy execs are surprised to find that Elmo is voiced by a tall, striking Black man (30s).

Super:

**KEVIN CLASH
PUPPETEER**

Ann leans over to Neil.

ANN

If you watch early episodes, Elmo's got this gruff voice, talks like a caveman. Kevin took over in '85 and changed everything. Created the voice and remade Elmo's entire personality.

Neil watches as KEVIN CLASH chats with the crew, in a completely un-Elmo-like baritone voice.

ANN (cont'd)

Come on, let's hit the booth.

As they all walk off, Sunshine chats to Gerry.

SUNSHINE

I'm terrible at saving. I should really try that three jars thing.

INT. VOICEOVER BOOTH - DAY

Neil and the gang enter one side of the recording booth, joining Ann and an ENGINEER. Sunshine struggles to squeeze into the booth without hitting any buttons on the board.

NEIL

Thanks for arranging this so last minute, Ann. And for keeping it quiet. How's it going over here?

ANN

Cloudy days. We've had to let some people go. We're trying new segments but nothing's hitting. And we're still losing share to you know who.

NEIL

Same. I hate that freakin' dinosaur. But I think we've got something really special here.

ANN

I'll take anything at this point. We're circling the drain.

Kevin Clash enters the other side of the sound booth. The Engineer presses a button so Kevin can hear them.

KEVIN

Hey guys! So what are we doing today?

NEIL

It's a doll called Tickle Me Elmo. You press his stomach and he laughs. You press it again and he laughs harder. You press it a third time and he laughs hysterically and shakes.

KEVIN

Love that. But one thing. You said "he" laughs. Elmo isn't a boy.

SUNSHINE

Elmo's a girl?!

KEVIN

Elmo's not a boy or a girl.

SUNSHINE

But Elmo's gotta be... something.

KEVIN

Elmo is Elmo.

AL
That's perfect. We can sell it to
boys and girls.

GERRY
"A monster for everyone."

AL
Yes!

NEIL
Okay, now that we've settled on the
gender of a three-year-old Muppet,
let's try a take.

The gang settles, and the Engineer starts recording. Kevin
grows silent, gathers himself, takes a deep breath, and then
magically transforms into the voice of Elmo.

KEVIN (AS ELMO)
He he he he! He he he he! That
tickles!

The gang looks at each other - it's quite incredible to
watch Kevin do the voice sans puppet.

KEVIN (AS ELMO) (cont'd)
He he he he! He he he he he! Oh boy!

The gang beams - they are witnessing something special.

KEVIN (AS ELMO) (cont'd)
HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE! OH
BOY THAT TICKLES!

Kevin clears his throat.

KEVIN
Something like that?

From Kevin's POV: He can't hear anything on the other side
of the booth, but he watches the gang hoot, holler, and
cheer his performance as if on mute. He nailed it.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Back at the office, Amanda is standing at the conference
table, which has a PLANK OF WOOD on top of it. Neil enters.

NEIL
I've been looking all over for you.
We're making a ton of progress on
Elmo so it's time to think about-

AMANDA
Packaging and design?

NEIL
(smiles)
Yeah.

AMANDA
Way ahead of you.

She produces a SLINKY. This piques Neil's interest.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Fun fact. The Slinky debuted just
over 50 years ago. And do you know
what happened when it first came out?

NEIL
It bombed.

AMANDA
Exactly. They couldn't give them
away. Because people didn't
understand what it could do. So on
November 23rd, 1945, at Gimbel's
Department Store in Philadelphia...

She puts a block under the plank of wood, lifting up one
side and forming a slope.

AMANDA (cont'd)
...Richard and Betty James set up an
incline plane in the store...

She puts the Slinky on top of the slope, and watches it
slink down.

AMANDA (cont'd)
...and let the customers try it for
themselves. It sold out in a day.

NEIL
So what are you suggesting?

AMANDA
I call it "Try Me mode."

She pulls out some sketches.

AMANDA (cont'd)
For the first time ever, a doll will
be displayed in a box without a
plastic window, so the customer can
play with it on the shelf.

NEIL

(absorbs this)

Okay, I like where your head's at.
But that would mean batteries need to
be included. Not even Teddy Ruxpin
did that. Al is not gonna like the
added cost. And if I'm being honest,
I'm a little scared of him.

AMANDA

Neil, do you know what November 23rd,
1945 was?

Neil shakes his head.

AMANDA (cont'd)

The very first Black Friday. We're
part of a long tradition of toymakers
doing crazy things because we know
it's right.

Neil really contemplates what Amanda is proposing. Then:

NEIL

How quickly can you get a box ready?

Amanda grins.

INT. ZHONGSHAN FACTORY - DAY

The phone rings in the back office of an industrial factory
in Southern China. A sprightly woman named TERESA CHAN (50s)
answers in MANDARIN.

INT. SUNSHINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

Sunshine talks on the phone in his cramped office - everyone
else is gone for the night.

SUNSHINE

Teresa, it's Bobby Bedrosian from
Tyco Preschool.

TERESA

(switching to English)

Sunshine!!

Super:

TERESA CHAN
MANAGER, ZHONGSHAN FACTORY

TERESA (cont'd)

How are you little guy? Haven't heard from you in a while.

SUNSHINE

And it's been a while since anyone called me little. Listen, I've got a major product coming down the pipeline. Do you have capacity?

TERESA

For you, Sunshine, always.

SUNSHINE

Thanks Teresa. We'll have specs soon.

TERESA

When are you coming to China to visit?

SUNSHINE

Come on, you know I don't fly. Don't trust it. I'll be in touch.

He hangs up. END OF INTERCUT.

Teresa exits the office and walks onto the factory floor. The ASSEMBLY LINE is churning on all cylinders. Teresa watches as HUNDREDS OF PLUSH BARNEY DOLLS go whizzing by.

INT. MARK'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Neil and the team are in Mark's workshop, looking at several different iterations of the still furless Elmo prototype.

NEIL

Great work, Mark. It makes a ton of difference actually having Elmo's real voice in it. We'll record Taz too.

SUNSHINE

I can still hear Tickles the Chimp laughing in my dreams. It's haunting.

MARK

I do need to test Elmo with some fur just to make sure it doesn't, you know, catch on fire.

NEIL

I'll pretend you didn't say that.

AL
The problem is it's still too expensive.
(pointed)
Batteries included, Neil? You thought I wouldn't find out?

NEIL
Al, people will pay a premium price if we give them a premium product.

AL
No offense Neil, but I'm the one who's actually gotta sell this thing, and I'm telling you buyers are gonna be skittish.

NEIL
No offense Al, but if you're so good at sales, then sell it.

GERRY
Guys...

AL
I don't like your tone. Can we replace your voice too?

NEIL
Why don't you go ahead and try!

CUT TO:

INT. TYCO BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Dick Grey exits the elevator into the lobby, trailed by some JUNIOR EXECUTIVES. They all make for the exit.

DICK GREY
I want a full report on cost-cutting at Matchbox. Can we cut down on wheels, maybe focus more on motorcycles? And get my plane ready to go to El Segundo. Also I need-

Dick Grey trails off when he notices a DELIVERYMAN walk past him, carrying a ROLL OF DISTINCTIVE RED FUR.

JUNIOR EXECUTIVE
Sir?

Dick watches as the Deliveryman gets in the elevator. But the floor indicator above the elevator doesn't go up. It goes DOWN, to the Basement.

DICK GREY
(scowling)
Preschool.

INT. TYCO PRESCHOOL - DAY

Helene the receptionist is signing for the fur delivery when the elevator opens. Her jaw drops.

Dick Grey comes marching into the basement for the first time ever, and blows right past her and into the office!

Helene quickly reaches under her desk, pulls out a TWEETY BIRD WALKIE-TALKIE, and speaks into it.

HELENE
Neil, do you copy?!

INT. MARK'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Neil and Al are still yelling at each other, with Gerry trying to keep them apart.

AL
It's too expensive!

NEIL
It's a premium product!

Sunshine and Mark stand to the side, not getting involved.

MARK
Wanna see my glue gun?

Sunshine nods enthusiastically. But as Neil and Al's argument continues, a muffled voice is heard.

HELENE (O.S.)
Neil! Neil do you copy?!

Neil and Al momentarily stop jawing at each other.

HELENE (O.S.) (cont'd)
Neil [static] Grey! [static]

GERRY
Where is that coming from?

Neil spots a TWEETY BIRD WALKIE-TALKIE buried under some toys and grabs it.

NEIL
This is Neil, over!

BACK AT RECEPTION:

HELENE
We have a Code Grey! Repeat, Code Grey!

BACK ON NEIL, TRYING TO HEAR:

HELENE (O.S.)
[crackling] Code [crackling] Grey!

Neil's eyes go wide.

NEIL
It's Dick Grey! He's here!

Sunshine lets out a high-pitched YELP. The gang scrambles.

MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE GREATER OFFICE: Dick Grey marches through the cubicles on a rampage. Employees stop what they're doing mid-conversation and gawk as he stomps past.

BACK IN THE WORKSHOP: Neil and the gang try to pull out the Taz prototypes and hide the Elmos. But it's too late.

DICK GREY (O.S.)
Neil!

Dick Grey has entered Mark's workshop. The gang freezes, looking pretty suspicious.

DICK GREY
What the hell is going on here?

NEIL
Sorry Dick, we're still jamming on that Tickle Me Taz prototype.

DICK GREY
Do you think I'm stupid?

MARK
(sotto, to Gerry)
Who is that?

GERRY
Not now Mark.

DICK GREY
Have you been building Tickle Me Elmo
behind my back?

NEIL
No, Dick, I swear.

DICK GREY
THEN WHY IS HE LITERALLY HOLDING A
TICKLE ME ELMO BEHIND HIS BACK!!

They look at Sunshine who is very obviously trying to hide an Elmo prototype behind his back. He sheepishly puts it on the table. Dick Grey seethes.

NEIL
I can explain. We're building both.
Tickle Me Taz and Tickle Me Elmo.
When they were done, we were gonna
show them to you and let you decide.

DICK GREY
Oh you were going to let me decide?
The CEO of the company?

NEIL
I just meant-
(gathers himself)
I believe in Tickle Me Elmo. With
every fiber of my being. We're gonna
bring laughter to children and their
parents. I know we will. Let us demo
it for you right now. Please. I swear
if you don't absolutely love it, I'll
resign on the spot.

GERRY
Neil, what are you doing? It's not
ready-

NEIL
I'm trusting my gut. Come on Dick,
what do you say?

INT. TYCO PRESCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

ALL THE TYCO PRESCHOOL EMPLOYEES are now gathered around a table that's been dragged into the middle of the office. Dick Grey waits impatiently for the impromptu demo to begin.

Neil taps his foot nervously. Gerry sidles up to him.

GERRY

This gonna work?

NEIL

It better. Remember when I said I would find the money for R&D? Well I took out a second mortgage to fund it myself.

GERRY

Neil, are you nuts?

Neil gives him a look: *Maybe*.

Then, Mark finally appears with the prototype, which he has evidently just stapled red fur onto at the last moment. It's janky, but all things considered looks pretty good.

As Mark puts it on the table, Neil leans over to him.

NEIL

(sotto)

This gonna burst into flames?

MARK

50/50.

Mark slinks into the waiting crowd. Neil picks up the doll.

NEIL

I present to you, Tickle Me Elmo.

Neil hands the prototype to Dick Grey. Then Neil catches eyes with Amanda - she gives him a big, supportive smile.

Dick Grey inspects the prototype, turning it over in his hands, not showing any emotion.

NEIL (cont'd)

So what you do is press-

DICK GREY

Yes I know how to work a children's toy thank you.

Dick Grey presses Elmo's stomach. Kevin Clash's Elmo voice is heard.

TICKLE ME ELMO

He he he he! He he he he! That tickles!

The room is dead silent. No reaction from Dick Grey. He presses Elmo again.

TICKLE ME ELMO (cont'd)
 He he he he! He he he he he! Oh boy!

Still no reaction from Dick Grey. Neil looks at Amanda. She crosses her fingers. Mark casually puts on SAFETY GOGGLES.

Dick Grey presses Elmo a third time. And - nothing happens.

Everyone looks at each other nervously. Dick Grey presses Elmo again - nothing happens.

Al and Gerry look at each other, fearing the worst. Neil maintains a brave face.

Dick Grey presses Elmo again. ELMO STARTS SHAKING AND LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY!

TICKLE ME ELMO (cont'd)
 (shaking)
 HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE!

Dick Grey holds Elmo out as it continues to shake and laugh.

TICKLE ME ELMO (cont'd)
 (shaking)
 HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE!

Dick Grey continues to inspect the toy.

TICKLE ME ELMO (cont'd)
 (shaking)
 HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE HE! OH
 BOY THAT TICKLES!

Elmo stops. Dick Grey continues to look at it. You can hear a pin drop in the room. Mark takes off his goggles and breathes a sigh of relief. All eyes are on Dick Grey.

He doesn't even betray a smile.

DICK GREY
 Can you have this ready for Toy Fair?

NEIL
 Yes sir.

DICK GREY
 I want to be clear, you're not
 getting any more money. No paid TV.
 Not after you went behind my back.

Dick Grey unceremoniously shoves the Elmo into Neil's chest.

DICK GREY (cont'd)
You better be right about this.

And with that, Dick Grey marches out of the office. The employees are silent as they watch him get in the elevator.

But as soon as the elevator doors close, EVERYONE CHEERS!
Hugs and clapping and whooping abound!

Amanda jumps into Neil's arms and they share a moment. Gerry and Al shake hands. Sunshine gives Mark a bear hug and lifts him off the ground. Then, Neil approaches his team.

NEIL
Congrats guys. Mark, impressive work.

Mark nods and salutes him.

NEIL (cont'd)
Okay, we won the battle, but there's still a war to be fought. Everybody chips in from here on out. Sunshine, fax the specs to the factory ASAP. We need a production model ready for Toy Fair in three weeks.

SUNSHINE
On it.

NEIL
I want you to pick it up yourself. We can't risk losing the production model or it falling into the wrong hands.

SUNSHINE
Ooh, you know I don't fly, boss. We drove to Florida for vacation last year. Kids hated it.

NEIL
Fine, then I'll do it.

AL
Are you sure?

NEIL
I've always wanted to go to China.

Al nods, impressed with Neil's commitment. Neil and Al shake hands, resolving their tension - for now.

NEIL (cont'd)
Besides, what could go wrong?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

A Nervous Chinese Airport Cop points a gun in Neil's face.

NEIL
No no don't shoot!

The Cop barks at him in Mandarin as Neil desperately tries to stop the Tickle Me Elmo from shaking.

NEIL (cont'd)
I'm trying I'm trying!!

The rest of the Cops are hysterically laughing, making it even more chaotic. The Nervous Cop takes off the safety on his gun and barks more orders in Mandarin.

NEIL (cont'd)
Put the gun down, please!

The Nervous Cop stands his ground, finger on the trigger. This is it... And then Neil is finally able to remove the batteries from Elmo and it stops shaking.

NEIL (cont'd)
(breathless)
See, it's just a toy. Toy.

He shows the Elmo and the module to the Nervous Cop.

NEIL (cont'd)
Toy. Elmo.

The Nervous Cop finally puts his gun away. Neil hands him the doll. The Cop takes it. He inspects Elmo. Then, at last, he breaks into a smile.

NERVOUS COP
El-mo.

INT. TOY FAIR - DAY

Carrying Elmo in its case, Neil finds Al in the concourse of a busy convention center.

AL
How was your trip?

NEIL
Uneventful.
(MORE)

NEIL (cont'd)
 (then)
 You ready for this?

AL
 Neil, this is my Super Bowl.

They enter the convention floor and look out onto a massive, magical, sensory overloading trade show unlike anything you've ever seen before.

Super: **TOY FAIR 1996**
JAVITS CENTER

FOUR MONTHS UNTIL BLACK FRIDAY

They walk the floor, where companies stage elaborate booths to exhibit their toys and allow buyers to play with them.

To their left, a booth features a miniature New York City sewer system and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle action figures.

To their right, BUYERS are playing a Sega Saturn video game console hooked up to a big screen.

As they continue, Neil and Al pass legendary local reporter SUE SIMMONS (50s) recording a segment with a CAMERA CREW.

SUE SIMMONS
 Sue Simmons, WNBC New York, reporting live from the 93rd annual Toy Fair. It may be a boiling July day outside, but inside this is the coolest place on the planet. Closed to the public, buyers and sellers from all the major toy manufacturers and retailers gather here to determine what is going to be on the shelves this Christmas. But the big news of the day is the five billion dollar merger between Mattel and Hasbro, which fell apart this week, sending toy company shares tumbling across Wall Street and casting a pall of uncertainty over the industry. Everyone here wants to know two things: Who is the next acquisition target? And what will be the hot toy of 1996?

Next, Neil and Al come upon the biggest and most extravagant booth on the whole floor: BARNEY. Bright and purple, the booth is blaring the Barney theme song from twin speakers.

I love you, you love me, we're a happy family...

The Barney EXECUTIVES look well-dressed, well-tanned, and well-compensated, everything Neil and Al are not. Al glowers at them, but Neil encourages him to move on.

NEIL

Come on, let's find our booth.

TIME CUT: Neil and Al finally make it to their booth, which is the smallest and most bare bones of them all. It's basically just a folding table. Amanda is there setting up.

AMANDA

Hey guys!

AL

(re: the booth)

This is it?

NEIL

All we could afford.

Neil pats Al on the back and continues into the booth. Neil and Amanda hug, and Al clocks that it lasts a beat longer than a typical work hug with your boss.

NEIL (cont'd)

Thanks for helping out, Amanda.

AMANDA

Of course. This is my first Toy Fair!
I'm so excited. Check this out.

She pulls out her design for Tickle Me Elmo's box, which is covered in Calls to Action like "Try Me" and "Press Tummy."

Neil opens his silver case and pulls out the Tickle Me Elmo. Amanda puts Elmo in the box - which has an open front so you can touch and play with it.

AMANDA (cont'd)

The box forces Elmo's arms up and out. Like Elmo wants a hug.

NEIL

Incredible work, Amanda. You really are... incredible.

They smile at each other.

AL

Okay you two can we sell some toys?

Neil nods and that launches us into a MONTAGE of Al pitching the toy to FIVE DIFFERENT BUYERS (INTERCUT).

BUYER #1 picks up the box.

BUYER #1
Tickle Me Elmo? Hmm.

AL
I promise you, Bruce, this is unlike
anything you've ever seen before.

BUYER #2 also examines the toy.

BUYER #2
Sesame Street is educational so am I
putting this on a shelf with puzzles
and chemistry sets or...?

AL
Forget everything you know about a
Sesame Street toy.

BUYER #3 takes Elmo out of the box.

BUYER #3
Is this targeted to boys or girls?

AL
Elmo is for boys and girls. It's a
monster for everyone.

BUYER #4 presses Elmo's belly, and Elmo laughs.

BUYER #4
Hm. Cute.

AL
It's the world's most universal
emotion: Laughter.

BUYER #5 presses Elmo's belly a second time, and hears the
escalating laughter. She laughs along with it.

BUYER #5
Kinda reminds me of my kid.

AL
Exactly, Erika. This is an
interactive experience that both
parents and kids can relate to.

Back to Buyer #1, who has pressed Elmo a third time and
watches Elmo shake and laugh hysterically. (Thankfully this
time Elmo stops when it's supposed to.)

BUYER #1
I love this! What's the economics?

AL
(clears throat, hint
of apprehension)
Wholesale: \$19.99. Suggested retail
price: \$29.99.

BUYER #2
30 bucks???

BUYER #3
No one's gonna pay that much.

Buyer #3 immediately puts Elmo down.

BUYER #4
You're kidding, right? 30??

BUYER #5
No one is gonna pay 30 dollars for a
doll, Al.

NEIL
(stepping in)
It's not a doll. It's feature plush.

BUYER #1
I don't care what you call it. It's
half the profit margin of a typical
toy for us.

Buyer #2 also puts Elmo down.

BUYER #2
I don't even want to touch this, it's
so expensive.

NEIL
It's a premium price for a premium
product.

BUYER #3
A talking Sesame Street doll is not a
premium product. It's like really
expensive homework.

Buyer #4 also puts the toy down.

BUYER #4
I'm sorry, I can't see going big on
this one guys.

BUYER #5

Neil, Al, this is my 22nd Toy Fair. I thought I'd seen it all. Toxic Play-Doh. That Easy Bake Oven that burst into flames. My Buddy - the doll they based Chucky on. But this... this is a certified turkey.

END OF MONTAGE

The buyers are gone. Neil turns to Al.

NEIL

If you say "I told you so" you're out of a job.

AL

I think that might happen regardless at this point.

Gloom has descended upon the booth. Everyone is downtrodden. Trying to drum up interest, Amanda spots an excitable, PREMATURELY BALDING BUYER (early 30s) walking by.

AMANDA

Hi you wanna try Tickle Me Elmo?

He stops, and comes over to the booth.

BALD BUYER

Sure, looks cool! I'm Jeff.

The Buyer tickles Elmo, and laughs a nerdy laugh, impressed. Al sees an opportunity.

AL

What toy store are you with?

BALD BUYER

Actually, I own a bookstore. But we're moving into toys.

AL

Where are you located? Northeast?

BALD BUYER

Not exactly. We're everywhere. And nowhere. It's called Amazon.com. We launched six months ago.

The Tyco Preschool gang looks at each other. This is Greek to them.

BALD BUYER (cont'd)
But we don't really buy inventory.
It's more of an on-demand situation.

AL
You know what? Get out! Get outta
here!

Al gets in the Buyer's face. Neil and Amanda hold him back.

AL (cont'd)
What the hell are you talking about
you don't "buy inventory"?! What kind
of store doesn't buy inventory! I'll
kill you!

NEIL
Al, relax! It's not worth it.

Al finally calms down, and JEFF BEZOS scurries away.

NEIL (cont'd)
Who was that guy?

TIME CUT: Toy Fair is winding down. Our gang is in the
dumps. Al calculates their orders with a pen and paper.

NEIL (cont'd)
How bad is it?

AL
Between Toys R Us, K·B Toys, Walmart,
Target, and a bunch of mom and pops,
I managed to cobble together about
25,000 orders.

NEIL
How many do we need to break even?

AL
250,000.

Neil lets out a long sigh. This is not good. He looks at
Elmo staring back at him from the box.

NEIL
What are you laughing at?

INT. NEIL'S OFFICE - DAY

Neil, Gerry, Al, and Sunshine are gathered in Neil's office
for an update, and everyone is looking glum.

NEIL

Okay Al, lay it on us.

AL

It's been a month since Toy Fair and I've got bad news and good news. The bad news is that retailers have sold less than 5,000 Elmos. We didn't sell that many units wholesale, but the ones we did sell are languishing on the shelves and stores are starting to complain. Not to mention all the units we manufactured in China that haven't even shipped to the States yet.

NEIL

And the good news?

AL

(reaching)

Anyone who wants an Elmo can get an Elmo?

Neil hangs his head, but then steels himself.

NEIL

Okay, come on guys. We're not giving up. How do we turn this thing around? There's no bad ideas.

GERRY

What if we got the Empire State Building to light up in Elmo colors? That would get people talking.

NEIL

That's good, Gerry, that's outside the box. Give 'em a call.

GERRY

On it.

SUNSHINE

What if we made a Black Elmo?

NEIL

I'm sorry?

SUNSHINE

A Black Elmo. You know, people might want more diverse Elmos.

The rest of the gang looks at him quizzically.

AL
Sunshine, Elmo's red. It's not a
black or white thing.

SUNSHINE
I just think it'd be nice to have an
Elmo that looks like me.

AL
You're Armenian, not Black!

SUNSHINE
I thought there were no bad ideas.

AL
Of course there are bad ideas, that's
just a thing people say!

NEIL
No, no, Al, he's right. Thank you,
Sunshine.

Sunshine nods. Then Gerry gets up and starts pacing.

GERRY
Here's our marketing problem: Most
people don't even know the product
exists, and if they do, they have no
idea how amazing it is. If people
could see how incredible Tickle Me
Elmo is, we all know they would love
it. So how do we create that demand?
Television. That's the whole reason
we added the shaking to begin with.
Because it would play well on TV.

NEIL
(shakes his head)
I'm on thin ice with Dick Grey as it
is. He's breathing down my neck to
cut costs and I've been fighting him
tooth and nail. He specifically said
we can't do any TV advertising.

GERRY
No, he said we couldn't do any paid
TV advertising. He didn't say
anything about free advertising.

NEIL
What are you thinking?

GERRY

We get Tickle Me Elmo featured on the #1 daytime talk show in the country.

Sunshine scoffs. Al does too.

AL

Yeah right.

Neil also looks doubtful.

NEIL

Sure, that's a great idea in theory, Gerry. But there's no way we're getting on The Rosie O'Donnell Show.

SUNSHINE

Uch, I love her.

NEIL

Everybody does! But she's never responded to any of our pitches before. Rosie O'Donnell is just too big for us.

GERRY

That's just because we've never had anything undeniable to offer her before. But what if we send her 200 Elmos and see if she'll give them away to her studio audience?

NEIL

I don't think Rosie's people will go for it, but I guess it's worth a shot. It's not like we don't have any extra product to send her.

SUNSHINE

I mean, if we're gonna do something crazy like that we should at least try a Black Elmo.

Before Neil can respond to that, a bright-eyed girl named RACHEL (19) knocks on the door and enters.

GERRY

Oh hey sweetie! Come in! Guys you remember my daughter Rachel. She's gonna be interning with us for a few months.

They all greet her warmly.

GERRY (cont'd)
Don't worry, it's unpaid.

RACHEL
Dad.

NEIL
Rachel, it's great to have you on board. This is an... exciting time to be at Tyco Preschool. Lots of upside.
(then, to the gang)
Guys, I want daily updates on our progress. I'll try to hold off Dick Grey as long as I can.

RACHEL
There's someone here named Dick Grey?

Super: **THREE MONTHS UNTIL BLACK FRIDAY**

INT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER, STUDIO 8G - DAY

A DELIVERYMAN wheels a hand truck with SEVERAL LARGE BOXES on it into the reception area manned by a young ASSISTANT.

DELIVERYMAN
I've got a delivery for The Rosie O'Donnell Show? There's like 15 more boxes in the truck.

ASSISTANT
What is it?

DELIVERYMAN
Tickle Me Elmo.

ASSISTANT
Tickle me what?

DELIVERYMAN
Hey I just deliver the things.

ASSISTANT
(sighs, over it)
This way.

The Assistant leads the Deliveryman down a hall.

DELIVERYMAN
Is Rosie here? I love her.

ASSISTANT
(curt)

No.

The Assistant opens the doors to a Storage Room.

ASSISTANT (cont'd)
In here. This is where we put all the
stuff Rosie gets sent.

The Deliveryman enters a CAVERNOUS room filled floor to ceiling with products. He wheels in the boxes of Elmos like the final scene of RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK.

INT. GERRY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gerry is making calls at his desk. His daughter/intern Rachel sits by his side.

GERRY
Yes, exactly. Red with hints of white
for the eyes.
(listening)
Uh huh. Okay. But- Okay, thanks.

He hangs up and turns to Rachel.

GERRY (cont'd)
The Empire State Building will do
green for Oscar or blue for Cookie
Monster. But they said Elmo doesn't
have wide enough appeal.

RACHEL
Well that's a bunch of bull.

GERRY
You're right. It is a bunch of bull.
But it's hard to argue with a
building I guess. Now watch your old
man call The Rosie O'Donnell Show and
get Elmo on national television.

Gerry picks up the phone and dials.

GERRY (cont'd)
Yeah hi this Gerry Clancy at Tyco
Preschool. We sent 200 Tickle Me
Elmos to Rosie the other day and-
(glances at Rachel)
Yes, thank you. Yes, I agree this
would be a great segment for the
show. Let's chat details tomorrow.

He puts down the phone.

RACHEL

They hung up immediately didn't they.

GERRY

Yes they did. But I'm gonna call every single day until they listen.

INT. SUNSHINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sunshine is pulling a late night when his phone rings and he picks up.

SUNSHINE

Bobby Bedrosian.

INT. ZHONGSHAN FACTORY - DAY (INTERCUT)

Halfway around the world, factory manager Teresa is sitting in her own office on the phone.

TERESA

You convinced me to clear out capacity and now I've got a backlog of thousands of Tickle This Elmos!

SUNSHINE

Tickle Me.

TERESA

Ew, Sunshine, this is not the time for flirting!

SUNSHINE

No, not tickle me, Tickle Me Elmo.

TERESA

I don't care who gets tickled, I just want these red pieces of crap out of my sight. I could be manufacturing Barneys right now!

SUNSHINE

Teresa, why did you give me the nickname Sunshine?

TERESA

Because you always call me first thing in the morning.

SUNSHINE

Oh. I thought it was because I'm warm
and everybody likes me.

TERESA

Definitely not.

SUNSHINE

Well the point is, we've been doing
business for twenty years. Have I
ever steered you wrong?

TERESA

No...

SUNSHINE

So please just give me a little more
time and I'll sort this out.

TERESA

Okay Sunshine. I can't stay mad at
you.

SUNSHINE

One more thing. Got any Black fur?

INT. YANKEE STADIUM - DAY

It's now early September and Neil and Amanda are in the
stands at a Yankees game. The voice of legendary public
address announcer BOB SHEPPARD booms across the stadium.

BOB SHEPPARD (V.O.)

Now batting for the Yankees, Number
2, Derek Jeter. Number 2.

AMANDA

This is our new rookie. He's got the
goods.

(then)

This is awesome! Thanks so much for
inviting me, Neil.

NEIL

Of course. I just really needed to
get out of the office for a few
hours. Clear my head.

AMANDA

You've been pulling some late nights.
Any good news at all on Elmo?

Neil shakes his head. He looks pained.

NEIL

I talked to Ann Kearns at Children's Television Workshop the other day. Things are grim over there. I thought I could deliver a win for them. But it looks like Tickle Me Elmo could be the last toy Sesame Street ever licenses before they go under.

AMANDA

Don't say that. It's not over yet. I believe in Elmo. I believe in you.

NEIL

Sometimes I think you're the only one who does.

AMANDA

Remember, the Slinky didn't perform well at first either.

NEIL

Didn't the creator go crazy and move to Bolivia?

AMANDA

Yes but his wife inherited the company and became a multimillionaire.

NEIL

So there's hope for us.

AMANDA

Us?

NEIL

No, uh, I just meant-

All of the sudden, the FANS around them start to cheer and point. Neil and Amanda have no idea what's going on until they notice the Jumbotron. They're on the KISS CAM.

Neil looks sheepish, but Amanda grabs him and kisses him! He kisses her back! The crowd roars.

INT. GERRY'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Al and Sunshine are loitering while Gerry makes a call.

GERRY

Yes, hi, I've been calling for two weeks now. I sent 200 Tickle Me Elmos
(MORE)

GERRY (cont'd)
to Rosie and I was hoping- no no
don't hang up- hello?

He slams down the phone in disgust.

SUNSHINE
I think they're coming around, Gerry.

Al spies Neil and Amanda walk into the office together,
wearing Yankees gear, both with a spring in their step.

AL
Of course that's who he was with.
(then, to the guys)
Come on, he's back.

Al flags Neil down. Neil smiles at Amanda, who heads back to
her cubicle. Neil enters Gerry's office.

AL (cont'd)
Neil, we need to talk to you about
something. It's kind of sensitive.

NEIL
(covering)
I was thinking we could do Yankees
plush characters. Me and Amanda were
just, um, doing some market research.

AL
Uh huh, sure. But it's not about
that. It's about Sesame Street.

NEIL
Did Ann get laid off? I just spoke to
her!

AL
No. It's Kevin Clash.

NEIL
The puppeteer?

GERRY
Guys, it's on.

Gerry turns up the volume on the small TV in his office, and
they all cram around to watch the local NBC News broadcast:

SUE SIMMONS (ON TV)
Shocking allegations today from the
world of children's television.
(MORE)

SUE SIMMONS (ON TV) (cont'd)
Kevin Clash, who has been a puppeteer
for Sesame Street since 1983, has
been accused of having relationships
with three teenage boys who have
filed lawsuits in federal court.

NEIL
Oh my God.

SUE SIMMONS (ON TV)
Clash has denied the charges but-
wait, I'm hearing his press
conference is about to begin-

CUT TO:

INT. KAUFMAN ASTORIA STUDIOS - DAY

Kevin Clash is holding a press conference, reading from a
statement while somber SESAME STREET STAFF (including Ann)
look on.

KEVIN
I plan to fight the charges against
me vigorously. All the relationships
I've had were between consenting
adults. That said, I have exercised
poor judgment, and this is diverting
attention away from the important
work Sesame Street does. Therefore,
with a very heavy heart, I am
resigning from Children's Television
Workshop, effective immediately.

Gasps are heard from the onlookers.

KEVIN (cont'd)
I have loved every day of my 13 years
working for this exceptional
organization. I ask that you give me
and my wife time to resolve these
personal matters privately.

INT. GERRY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Gerry shuts off the TV. Neil, Gerry, Al, and Sunshine all
look at each other, not knowing what to say. Then Helene the
receptionist pops her head in.

HELENE

Neil, Dick Grey is on the line. Says it's urgent. I patched it through to your office.

INT. NEIL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Neil sits at his desk and looks at the blinking light on his phone. He takes a deep breath and picks up. We can hear Dick Grey screaming on the other end.

DICK GREY (O.S.)

ARE YOU KIDDING ME NEIL? THIS IS WHO YOU'RE ASSOCIATING WITH?

Neil pulls the phone from his ear.

INT. PRIVATE PLANE - DAY (INTERCUT)

In his usual plush seat, Dick Grey continues his tirade.

DICK GREY

WE'RE A TOY COMPANY! YOU'RE GONNA TAKE EVERYONE DOWN WITH YOU! I SHOULD HAVE FIRED YOU AS SOON AS YOU LIED TO ME ABOUT TICKLE ME TAZ!

NEIL

Dick, I can assure you we didn't know anything about this. Besides, no one cares who Elmo's puppeteer is, let alone the voice of a doll. I think we'll be fine.

DICK GREY

(laughing to himself)

He thinks we'll be fine. He thinks we'll be just dandy.

(erupting)

WE'RE NOT GONNA BE FINE! IT'S OVER! DUMP THE REST OF THE ELMOS! FIRE SALE! EITHER SHIP THEM TO THE DISCOUNTERS OR LITERALLY SET THEM ON FIRE! I DON'T CARE!

NEIL

Dick, I can turn this around if you could just give us a little bit of budget for TV-

DICK GREY

I'm sorry, are you asking for more money? Neil, I've seen the numbers. Elmo is a bomb.

NEIL

You sound happy about that.

DICK GREY

No, I'm not happy about that, Neil. I know that you love to dream big, but what you never seem to understand is that I'm responsible to our shareholders. And right now they want me to increase profitability, reduce overhead, and stop losing money on follies like yours.

NEIL

We just need a little more time.

DICK GREY

Time's up Neil. This was the last straw. I need you to reduce your headcount by 50%, immediately.

NEIL

Come on, that's a massive cut. These people have families.

DICK GREY

Fifty percent of Preschool has to go.

NEIL

I can't just fire half the division!

DICK GREY

I'll make it easy for you. I'm freezing all your new toy development. Cut the engineering and design teams first.

NEIL

Design...? No, I won't do it. I'll quit!

DICK GREY

You do realize that if you quit I'm still gonna fire half the division. Then where does that leave you?

NEIL

Why aren't you firing me?

DICK GREY
I need a scapegoat.

There's a heavy silence. Neil almost can't argue with that refreshing honesty.

DICK GREY (cont'd)
Get it done by the time I get back
from California.

NEIL
Dick, please- hello?

But Dick Grey has already hung up. END OF INTERCUT.

Neil hangs his head. Then, he sets a Slinky in motion. It slinks twice and then dives off his desk into the garbage.

INT. MARK'S WORKSHOP - DAY

The next day, Neil stands in front of a glum Mark.

NEIL
I'm really sorry, Mark.

MARK
It's okay. It was fun while it
lasted.

NEIL
Do you know what you're gonna do?

MARK
My mom has this really cool cabin.
Middle of nowhere. I was thinking I
might tinker for a while.

NEIL
Just try not to burn it down.

They share a laugh. Mark looks around at his menagerie of a workshop.

MARK
You think I could take some of this
stuff? For sentimental purposes?

NEIL
I won't tell if you won't.

Mark gives Neil a big hug, and Neil hugs him back.

INT. TYCO PRESCHOOL - DAY

Neil trudges past Gerry's office. Rachel is watching her dad call The Rosie O'Donnell show again.

GERRY

Yes hi, this is Gerry Clancy at Tyco
Preschool no no no don't hang up!

Instead of slamming down the phone, he hands it to Rachel.

GERRY (cont'd)

You take over the calls.

RACHEL

You're giving up, Dad?

GERRY

I'm delegating.

They can't catch a break. Neil takes a deep breath and slowly makes his way to Amanda's cubicle. She smiles when she sees him.

AMANDA

Hey!

But then she sees the grim look on his face.

NEIL

Can I talk to you in my office?

INT. NEIL'S OFFICE - DAY

Neil and Amanda are sitting in his office. Neil is emotional, and struggling to get the words out.

NEIL

I'm so sorry.

AMANDA

Neil, please, I can barely take care
of Jacob as it is. My ex hasn't been
paying child support.

NEIL

We'll figure something out. I'll help
out. I promise.

AMANDA

I don't want your charity. I want my
job. It means everything to me.

NEIL

I'll hire you back as soon as I can.
I care about you so much. But right
now, I just don't have a choice.

AMANDA

You always have a choice, Neil. You
can roll over, or you can fight. And
it just... it just doesn't seem like
you want to fight.

Neil reaches out to comfort her, but she bolts up and out of
the office.

INT. IRISH PUB - DAY

With his back to us, Neil is on the PAYPHONE at the back of
the pub, making a call. He gets an answering machine:

MESSAGE (O.S.)

AMANDA: Hi you've reached Amanda.
JACOB: And Jacob! AMANDA: We can't
come to the phone right, so please
leave a message at the beep! *Beep*.

NEIL

Hey Amanda. It's me again. I just
wanted to say I'm sorry. And I would
really love to see you and Jacob.
I'll come to Hoboken whenever you're
free. Call me back. Sincerely, Neil.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Amanda is playing with Jacob. She stops to press a button on
the answering machine.

ANSWERING MACHINE

You have one new message. Message
deleted.

INT. IRISH PUB - DAY

Back at the pub, Neil finally turns to face us and we see
that he's sporting a week's worth of unkempt beard growth.

NEIL

(to himself)
Sincerely, Neil?

He shakes his head then trudges back to a booth where Gerry, Al, and Sunshine are drowning their sorrows. Neil slumps in his seat.

GERRY

If it's any consolation, the Empire State Building won't return my calls either. The writing's on the wall, gents.

The WAITRESS delivers another round of drinks. Neil takes a big sip.

SUNSHINE

What do you think we'd do? You know, if we didn't do this?

NEIL

(tipsy)

Sunshine: mall santa. Al: used car salesman. Gerry: multilevel marketing scheme. And me... Bible sales in Bolivia.

AL

Okay, you're taking this way too personally. Maybe we should cut him off-

NEIL

I haven't been able to make payments on my second mortgage. The bank is threatening to foreclose. If my ex finds out that I might lose the apartment, I don't know what she'll do. She could try to take the kids.

GERRY

Come on, that's insane.

NEIL

Is it? Or is me betting every last penny on Tickle Me Elmo insane?

The gang looks at each other. Neil's got a point. He downs the rest of his drink.

NEIL (cont'd)

At least it can't get any worse.

Then Sunshine notices something on the TV. His eyes go wide. He flags down the waitress.

SUNSHINE

Excuse me! Could you put the volume on?

They all look at a TV above the bar that's playing CNBC. The chyron reads: **A SURPRISE IN TOYLAND, MATTEL TO BUY TYCO**

CNBC ANCHOR

In a jolt to the toy industry, Mattel, the maker of Barbie, has just announced it's acquiring Tyco Toys, America's third-largest toy company, for \$737 million.

NEIL

What?? No!

The rest of the gang is up in arms too. Then Dick Grey appears onscreen:

DICK GREY (ON TV)

This acquisition will generate incredible synergies for both companies, enabling us to reduce approximately 2,000 additional redundancies across the board.

Gerry buries his face in hands.

GERRY

We're screwed.

NEIL

I can't believe Dick didn't give me a heads up we were getting bought! I gotta get him on the phone.

He rushes back to the payphone and makes a call.

INT. TYCO PRESCHOOL - SAME

The reception desk is empty and Helene's phone is just ringing and ringing. Pulling out, we see that the office is a shell of itself. Half the employees are gone.

INT. IRISH PUB - CONTINUOUS

Back at the pub, Neil is still listening to the phone ring.

NEIL

Why isn't Helene picking up?

AL

You laid her off, remember? And now we're next.

INT. NEIL'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Gerry, Al, and Sunshine watch as Neil paces around his office - animated, disheveled, and drunk.

NEIL

I can't believe I didn't see this coming. Hasbro was too big for Mattel to swallow, but as soon as that deal fell through, Dick Grey saw an opening. He must have had this in the works for months. That's why he was always trying to cut costs. That's why he was always flying to California - Mattel is in El Segundo. All he wanted was to be the #1 toy company in the country. And if you can't beat 'em, get bought by 'em.

AL

The worst part is Mattel already has a preschool division: Fisher-Price.

SUNSHINE

We're dead men walking.

GERRY

We'll be the first to go.

NEIL

All because of Tickle Me Elmo. But I guess there's nothing we could have done.

Al emits a pointed snort.

NEIL (cont'd)

Something you want to say, Al?

Al shrugs - he clearly does want to say something.

AL

Nothing we could have done? I mean, we're all thinking it: The box design. Try Me mode. The batteries. All of that made the toy way too expensive. That's why it bombed. And you only did it to impress your not so secret girlfriend.

GERRY
Whoa whoa whoa, Al.

NEIL
Be very careful about what you say next.

AL
I think you shoulda been careful about tanking our best shot at a hit because you were sleeping with an employee.

Neil gives Al a look: furious but also just a bit sheepish.

AL (cont'd)
You're kidding me. So you never even...? That's even worse! At least close the sale!

With that, Neil fumes, then CHARGES at Al, driving Al into the wall and taking him to the ground!

Al manages to throw Neil onto his back, then Al climbs on top of him and PUNCHES NEIL IN THE FACE!

SUNSHINE
Al, stop!

Sunshine tries to pull Al off of Neil, but slips and falls backward, taking Gerry down to the ground too! A bookshelf falls on both of them!

Neil grabs Al's face and scratches him, drawing blood! Neil throws Al off of him!

NEIL
Never talk about Amanda like that!

Neil lunges at Al but Gerry grabs Neil from behind! Al cocks his fist to punch Neil but Sunshine grabs Al from behind!

Al and Neil still manage to claw at each other and the four grown men grapple and groan on the floor, Slinkys raining down on them from the shelves above. And then:

RACHEL (O.S.)
Dad??

The gang stops fighting for a moment, and looks up. Rachel is standing there.

GERRY
Oh hi sweetie we were just-

RACHEL
You gotta come quick! Rosie O'Donnell
is on!

GERRY
On the phone?? Patch her in here!!

RACHEL
No! On TV! And she's giving away
Elmos!

The gang looks at each other and scrambles to their feet!

INT. GERRY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Rachel and the gang - who are bruised and bleeding - pile
into Gerry's office where his small TV is playing The Rosie
O'Donnell Show.

ROSIE O'DONNELL is indeed giving out Tickle Me Elmos to her
AUDIENCE OF 200 PEOPLE, and they are going absolutely nuts.

ROSIE (ON TV)
Everyone in the audience today is
getting a Tickle Me Elmo!!

The crowd goes wild!

GERRY
Holy cow.

ROSIE (ON TV)
You're all getting Elmos!!

Our gang can't believe their eyes.

GERRY
(to Rachel)
They finally took your call?

RACHEL
No, I sent them an email.

GERRY
We have email?

As Rosie's crowd continues to go nuts we PUSH IN TO:

INT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER, STUDIO 8G - CONTINUOUS

Now we're in the studio at The Rosie O'Donnell Show. Rosie
is holding up a Tickle Me Elmo.

ROSIE
Guys, I absolutely LOVE this toy.
Check it out. You don't even need to
take it out of the box. You press
Elmo once.

Elmo laughs.

ROSIE (cont'd)
You press Elmo twice.

Elmo laughs again.

ROSIE (cont'd)
You press Elmo a third time...

Elmo starts shaking and laughing hysterically! Rosie laughs
right along with Elmo!

The crowd is going absolutely bonkers as they tickle their
own Elmos! Everyone is laughing and cheering!

QUICK CUTS TO PEOPLE WATCHING THE SHOW:

-A frazzled FATHER is trying to calm his crying DAUGHTER.
She sees Rosie holding the toy on TV and smiles immediately.

LITTLE GIRL
Elmo!

-A MOTHER is watching Rosie with her SON with Down syndrome.
He leans forward, enthralled with the toy. Then the mom
tickles him, and he giggles right along with Elmo onscreen.

-A GROUP OF TOURISTS watches Rosie on a TV in the window of
a store in Times Square. A STREET PERFORMER IN A BARNEY
COSTUME tries to get their attention but they ignore him.

INT. GERRY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The gang is glued to the TV as Rosie continues to sing
Tickle Me Elmo's praises and her audience goes wild.

GERRY
Now this is great television. It's
basically a free infomercial.

NEIL
Rachel, how many people watch this?

RACHEL
I don't know, like six.

NEIL

Six hundred thousand? Wow.

RACHEL

No. Six million.

The gang all looks at each other, wide-eyed. And then- a phone is heard RINGING.

And then another phone in the office starts RINGING. Then the phone in Gerry's office starts RINGING.

Now it seems like EVERY phone in the office is ringing.

The gang looks at each other, then bumps into each other as they scramble to get to the phones. Rachel sniffs the air.

RACHEL (cont'd)

Are you guys drunk?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

The gang has set up a war room in the conference room to take calls. They're all nursing their injuries. Al dabs the bloody scratch on his face while working the phones.

AL

You got it, Bruce. Absolutely, we'll ship those out as soon as we can.

Al hangs up and turns to the gang.

AL (cont'd)

Toys R Us put in a massive order this afternoon, and then called back to double it - twice. The buyer said phones at the stores are ringing off the hook with customers demanding Elmos.

Gerry is holding a call on another phone, and has a bandage wrapped around his forehead.

GERRY

Al, I got Target on this line.

Al grabs the phone from him.

AL

Eddie, boobala, sorry things have been a little crazy around here.

Al start scribbling furiously on a notepad.

AL (cont'd)
That's a big order. We'll get that
out to you ASAP. I know, we're
working as fast as we can.

Al hangs up.

AL (cont'd)
I've never seen anything like this.

He looks at Neil, who has a makeshift ice pack on his eye.

AL (cont'd)
Neil, I'm-

NEIL
Don't worry about it. What's done is
done.

AL
I was gonna say Neil I'm surprised I
didn't punch you sooner.

That draws a laugh from Neil and cuts the tension.

AL (cont'd)
I shouldn't have said anything about
Amanda. We all miss her too. Sorry.

NEIL
Thanks. I appreciate you saying that.
For now let's all just try to focus.
Sunshine, remember when Dick Grey
told me to dump all the Elmos we had
and I told you to ship all the
inventory to the discounters?

SUNSHINE
Couldn't bring myself to do it, so I
lied to you and said I did. They're
all in the warehouse in the Garment
District, and Al just sold 'em.

NEIL
Good work, minus the lying. If Elmo
does the business I think it's gonna
do, we just might save our jobs. Not
to mention stop the bank from
foreclosing on my place. So the
question is, can we fill all these
orders in time for the biggest
shopping day of the year?

SUNSHINE

I've already left Teresa ten messages, which she is sure to enjoy when she wakes up. But if you're asking if we can pull off the greatest feat in the history of toy manufacturing, why not? Look at this team. We're seasoned professionals.

Rachel enters to deliver a box of supplies.

RACHEL

Tylenol for your headaches. Water for your hangovers. And Muppets band-aids for your boo-boos.

SUNSHINE

Ooh, is there a Miss Piggy one?

Super: **TWO MONTHS UNTIL BLACK FRIDAY**

INT. TYCO BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Neil is loitering in the lobby, hiding behind a newspaper (headline: RAPPER TUPAC SHAKUR SHOT IN LAS VEGAS). When he puts the paper down we see he has a healing black eye.

Neil sees Dick Grey leaving the building. Dick Grey looks back and spots Neil, but pretends not to see him and hurriedly exits. Neil chases after him.

EXT. MIDTOWN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Neil catches up with Dick Grey and they walk and talk. Fall has arrived in New York and the leaves are changing colors.

DICK GREY

Not now Neil I've got to get to a meeting.

NEIL

I've been trying to reach you for days. You're usually very reachable, when you want to yell at me.

DICK GREY

Bigger fish to fry.

NEIL

Did you see Rosie? Everybody's talking about it. Everybody wants Tickle Me Elmo.

DICK GREY

You know, everyone thinks Teddy Ruxpin was this huge success. But remember it took Coleco down in '88. You can't build a company off one product.

NEIL

Can I have some of my staff back?

DICK GREY

We're on a hiring freeze until the Mattel acquisition closes.

NEIL

But you told me to find my Barney, and I did!

Dick Grey stops.

DICK GREY

When Mattel made the deal to acquire us, they didn't know Tyco would have the hottest toy on the market - because we didn't know. But now the Feds think something's fishy and that we didn't disclose material information. So I'm not making any more waves.

NEIL

But-

DICK GREY

Listen, Neil. Fads comes and go. What makes you think this isn't just another flash in the pan?

Dick keeps walking and leaves Neil behind. Neil starts to think about what Dick said. Then something catches his eye.

Neil crosses the street and finds himself in front of CARTIER'S flagship store on Fifth Avenue.

On display in the window is a Tickle Me Elmo draped with a SHIMMERING DIAMOND NECKLACE and a price tag: \$1,000,000.00

A sign reads: FREE ELMO WITH PURCHASE!

Neil shakes his head in disbelief. This is not gonna be just another flash in the pan.

INT. SUNSHINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The phone rings and Sunshine picks up.

SUNSHINE
Teresa my love.

INT. ZHONGSHAN FACTORY - DAY (INTERCUT)

Teresa is on the phone in her own office.

TERESA
Sunshine you don't need to leave me
messages every night. I'll tell you
the same thing I told you yesterday
and the day before that. We're making
Elmos as fast as we can. We have to
get the fur and the microchips from
other factories.

Teresa looks at the assembly line, which is now pumping out
Elmos as far as the eye can see.

SUNSHINE
These other factories. You think
they'd want to get in on the action?

TERESA
Sunshine, how many Elmos do you think
you're gonna sell?

SUNSHINE
More than you could possibly make.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SKY - DAY

A SKY DIVER with a Tickle Me Elmo strapped to his chest
jumps out of an airplane.

TIME-CUT: The Sky Diver has deployed his parachute and is
gliding toward the ground, where a MASS OF PEOPLE are
waiting for him to land.

ONE MAN manages to grab the Elmo off the Sky Diver's chest.
He jumps for joy, celebrating directly to the camera as we
push into a news report:

EXT. TOY STORE - DAY

A TV REPORTER is standing outside an Illinois toy store.

REPORTER

That was the scene in Springfield this morning as part of a promotion from radio station WFMB. Hundreds of people came out to try and grab the Tickle Me Elmo first - and why not? It's the hottest toy this holiday season, maybe any holiday season ever. Elmo-mania is sweeping Illinois and the nation but as we get closer to Black Friday, few local stores seem to have them in stock, forcing customers to try anything to get their hands on one. We stopped by this K·B Toys in Enos Park to see if anyone has had any luck.

Insert: INTERVIEWS (INTERCUT) from inside the store.

HARRIED GUY

I've been to seven stores all over the city and they've all been sold out. My wife told me if I don't find a Tickle Me Elmo for the kids, I shouldn't bother coming home.

KID

I love Tickle Me Elmo because Elmo laughs the way I laugh!

STORE CLERK

Sorry folks, we're all out and we don't know when we're getting any more in stock.

ALL

Boo!!!

Back to the reporter outside the store:

REPORTER

As for those lucky few who have managed to find an Elmo, some are trying to sell them for a tidy profit. Some enterprising folks are even using "cyberspace" to sell their Tickle Me Elmos on a new virtual auction webpage called eBay.com.

Insert: We scroll through dozens of listings for Tickle Me Elmo on a primitive eBay site.

REPORTER (cont'd)

Prices of Tickle Me Elmo on the black - or should I say red - market have reached as high as \$7,000. Here's hoping Tyco Preschool, the company behind the toy, will be able to stock more and soon. Otherwise kids across America will be getting a lump of coal in their stocking for Christmas. Or worse, a Barney.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Amanda is dressed business casual and is rushing to try to leave the house. The nanny is there to watch Jacob.

AMANDA

Thank you so much Lindsey. I really need this interview to go well.

NANNY

Of course. It's crazy what's going on out there.

AMANDA

You mean with Tickle Me Elmo? I know. Jacob really wants one.

NANNY

Have you spoken to...?

Amanda shakes her head no.

AMANDA

He keeps calling, but... I just need some space. The way it all went down, I don't know, it's just complicated. I need to focus on Jacob right now.

NANNY

Well if you do get your hands on an Elmo, let me know. I'll do anything. And I mean anything.

Amanda gives her a look and hustles out the door.

EXT. TOYS R US IN QUEENS - NIGHT

Late at night, TWO TEENAGE CLERKS are locking up a Toys R Us in Douglaston, Queens, when they're approached by TWO WISE GUYS in expensive suits and slicked back hair.

TEENAGE CLERK #1
Sorry, we're closed.

WISE GUY #1
You sure? Because my associate would really like to do a little shopping.

The Clerks look past the Wise Guys into the parking lot, where a VERY GANGSTER-LOOKING MAN leans against a Cadillac.

TEENAGE CLERK #2
Dude. That's John Gotti Jr.

Clerk #1 squints and takes a closer look.

CLERK #1
No it's not.
(to the Wise Guys)
Sorry, can't help you, we're closed.

Wise Guy #2 takes a step toward them and lights a cigarette.

WISE GUY #2
Nice Toys R Us you got here. Be a shame if anything happened to it.

The Teenage Clerks look at each other.

TIME-CUT: JOHN GOTTI JR. and the Wise Guys exit the store, carrying armfuls of Tickle Me Elmos.

The Teenage Clerks just stand there helplessly. Wise Guy #1 doubles back to them and starts peeling off hundred dollar bills. He hands the money to the Clerks.

WISE GUY #1
This should cover it. There's a little extra in there. Buy your parents something nice for Christmas. Or Hanukkah as the case may be.

Super: **THREE WEEKS UNTIL BLACK FRIDAY**

INT. TYCO PRESCHOOL - DAY

Though still operating with half their staff, the office is buzzing with energy and ringing phones.

INT. SUNSHINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Sunshine is on the phone on a conference call.

SUNSHINE

Talk to me ladies. I need Elmos and I need them now. I got buyers breathing down my neck, customers breathing down their necks, and the freakin' Gambino crime family strong-arming stores from here to Staten Island. If I don't get some of that furry red good stuff we're gonna have riots.

We see a split-screen of his conference call: It's Teresa and THREE MANAGERS AT OTHER CHINESE FACTORIES, ALL FEMALE.

Behind the Four Factory Managers, we see assembly lines pumping out Tickle Me Elmos. The three new managers speak rapidly over each other in Mandarin. Teresa translates.

TERESA

They say they are honored to be doing business with the legendary Sunshine, and that they are manufacturing product as fast as they can. The problem isn't on our end. It's shipping. We have a backlog.

SUNSHINE

Let me worry about logistics. I've got every cargo ship I can find packed with Elmos and making its way here. If it's got four wheels, I'm loading it with Elmos. I'll deliver if you can just make more.

The women chatter again in Mandarin and Teresa translates.

TERESA

We're on it, Sunshine. And we also shipped your special request.

SUNSHINE

(in halting Mandarin)
Thank you, ladies.

The women are shocked and gleefully cheer this attempt. We WHIP PAN to-

INT. GERRY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gerry is working the phones.

GERRY

Are you kidding? I'm not sending Conan any Elmos. He's gonna be fired any day now. Besides, we're already committed to Leno.

Gerry hangs up, but his phone is already ringing again. He picks up.

GERRY (cont'd)

Gerry Clancy. No, look, Good Morning America is just gonna have to take a number. Katie Couric and Matt Lauer are doing a segment with Elmo on the Today Show and they're America's Sweethearts.

He hangs up. Rachel knocks on Gerry's door.

GERRY (cont'd)

What's up sweetie?

RACHEL

Al Gore is on the phone.

GERRY

Pff, yeah right.

RACHEL

I'm serious. I talked to his office myself. He wants an Elmo.

GERRY

I don't have time for this.

RACHEL

What should I tell him?

GERRY

Tell him I'm a Republican.

We WHIP PAN to-

INT. NEIL'S OFFICE - DAY

Neil is leaving another message for Amanda.

NEIL

Hey Amanda, it's me again. I realize you're probably not even listening to these messages, but I just wanted to say congrats on the Yankees.

(MORE)

NEIL (cont'd)
I wish we could have watched the
World Series together. I'm really
sorry. It's Neil. From work.

Neil hangs up and shakes his head. He's lost in thought. But
he's snapped out of it by Sunshine rushing into his office.

SUNSHINE
Neil, I just got a call that we've
got thousands of Elmos at the port in
Jersey. They need to get to the West
Coast and there's no way they'll get
there in time for Black Friday by
train or truck.

NEIL
(ponders this)
What about a plane?

SUNSHINE
How are we gonna charter a cargo
plane on such short notice?

NEIL
Who said anything about a cargo
plane?

INT. DICK GREY'S OFFICE (RECEPTION) - DAY

Neil marches right through the reception area toward the
doors to Dick Grey's office.

NEIL
I'm just gonna head in.

RECEPTIONIST
Excuse me! You can't just go in
there! He's in a meeting!

INT. DICK GREY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Neil bursts into Dick Grey's office to find: All of the
heads of the other divisions - aka the Executives from the
opening Boardroom scene - toasting Dick with CHAMPAGNE.

The Receptionist runs in behind Neil.

RECEPTIONIST
I'm so sorry, Richard.

DICK GREY
It's okay, Vicky. It's fine.

The Receptionist glares at Neil and then exits, closing the doors behind her. Neil turns to Dick Grey.

NEIL

"Richard?" Never heard anyone call you that before. You just look like a Dick, you know?

Neil scans the room, looking at all the other Executives.

NEIL (cont'd)

Toasting the acquisition I'm guessing. Must have missed my invitation.

DICK GREY

What do you need, Neil?

NEIL

Your plane. I've got a shipment of Tickle Me Elmos that needs to get to California and I know you're heading there anyway to hash things out with Mattel.

DICK GREY

What am I FedEx? Figure it out yourself.

Dick Grey's supplicants all laugh at Neil. But Neil's not going down without a fight. He walks right up to Dick.

NEIL

You always say that the toy business isn't supposed to be fun. But sometimes it is. This is one of those moments. It's like we just walked over the giant piano in FAO Schwartz and now we gotta play!

DICK GREY

What?

NEIL

Have you never seen BIG?!

(then)

You know what's going on out there. This is a once in a generation toy. We gotta get these Elmos to stores. We gotta get these Elmos to kids.

DICK GREY

I don't have to do anything.

NEIL

Look, Dick, I know you want this deal to go through, make it to #1, and be done with me for good. But I promise you, this acquisition is not gonna be your legacy. This toy is gonna be your legacy. Companies come and go. Heck, we used to be owned by Sara Lee! No one even remembers that! But what we do here today, that is what people will remember.

Dick Grey remains unconvinced, and the other Executives scoff and sip champagne.

So Neil grabs the Big Bird toddler chair and THROWS IT AGAINST THE WALL! That gets everyone's attention.

DICK GREY

Have you lost your mind?!

NEIL

I literally mortgaged my entire life for this! That's how much I believe in it. And you guys are standing around patting each other on the back. It makes me sick.

Neil turns to everyone in the room.

NEIL (cont'd)

You could've had any job in the world, but you chose toys. Think about why you got into this business in the first place. Think about why we're all here!

Neil finally lands back on Dick:

NEIL (cont'd)

Christmas is coming. So, Dick, you gotta ask yourself: Are you gonna be Scrooge, or are you gonna be Santa?

Dick Grey scowls.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE PLANE - DAY

We are tight on Dick Grey's scowling face. As we slowly pull out, we see Dick is sitting in his usual plush seat on his jet, which is filled to the brim with THOUSANDS OF ELMOS.

Dick Grey has never looked more unhappy, and that's saying something.

PILOT (O.S.)
We're about to hit some rough air
over the Rockies, so please buckle
your seat belts.

After a moment, the plane hits some turbulence, shaking the
boxes. ALL OF THE ELMOS start laughing in unison.

THOUSANDS OF ELMOS
HE HE HE HE! HE HE HE HE! THAT
TICKLES! HE HE HE HE! HE HE HE HE!
THAT TICKLES!

Dick Grey snarls.

INT. NEIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Neil is talking on the landline in the kitchen while his
sons wait for him to start Thanksgiving dinner.

NEIL
Thanks for the update. Yup, we did
our best. I hope so. Fingers crossed.
Happy Thanksgiving, Sunshine.

Neil hangs up and joins the table. But he looks preoccupied.

BRANDON
You okay, Dad?

NEIL
Yeah, just got a big day tomorrow.
We've got every plane, train, and
automobile in the country shipping
Elmos, but I still don't know if
it'll be enough. And if it isn't...
well, there might be some changes
around here.

BRANDON
What does that mean?

NEIL
Nothing you need to worry about right
now. I- I shouldn't have said
anything. What's going on at school?
Any girls I should know about?

COOPER
You're seriously asking us about
girls? What happened to Amanda?

Brandon kicks Cooper under the table.

COOPER (cont'd)
What? He hasn't mentioned her in
forever.

NEIL
I kinda fired her.

COOPER / BRANDON
Dad!

NEIL
I had to!

BRANDON
Have you tried calling her?

NEIL
I leave her a message every day.

COOPER
Little creepy.

Brandon grabs the landline.

BRANDON
Call her again. It's Thanksgiving.
She's probably home.

COOPER
Yeah Dad, you gotta try a little
harder.

Neil looks at his sons, grab the landline, takes a deep
breath, and dials. It rings and rings and rings and then...

AMANDA (O.S.)
Hello?

Brandon and Cooper silently cheer. Neil shushes them.

NEIL
Hey Amanda, it's Neil Friedman.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (INTERCUT)

Amanda is having a makeshift Thanksgiving dinner with Jacob
on the floor. Her apartment is full of BOXES.

AMANDA

I know who it is, Neil. I got your messages. Sorry I've just been dealing with some stuff.

NEIL

Can I help?

AMANDA

Neil, the only reason I picked up is to tell you that I'm moving. Back to Iowa. I couldn't land another job so I'm gonna stay with my mom for a while. I can't afford Jersey anymore.

NEIL

What? When do you leave?

AMANDA

Tomorrow night.

NEIL

I don't know what to say.

AMANDA

I really enjoyed getting to know you, Neil. I did. But it just wasn't meant to be. Happy Thanksgiving.

She hangs up. END OF INTERCUT.

Neil turns to his sons and shakes his head.

BRANDON / COOPER

Sorry, Dad. / It'll be okay

NEIL

Thanks boys. I'm just grateful I get to spend the holiday with you. Nice, quiet moments with family. That's what this time of year is really all about...

EXT. WALMART IN GLENDALE - EARLY MORNING

Outside the store, a crowd of RABID AND UNRULY SHOPPERS is banging on the locked sliding doors.

RABID SHOPPERS

Elmo! Elmo! Elmo!

EXT. TARGET IN MINNEAPOLIS - EARLY MORNING

A mob of BUNDLED-UP SHOPPERS forms outside the store in the middle of a BLIZZARD. They're also chanting.

BUNDLED-UP SHOPPERS
Elmo! Elmo! Elmo!

EXT. TOYS R US IN AUSTIN - EARLY MORNING

A diverse crowd of SHOPPERS, including COWBOYS AND GOTHs, is banging on the locked doors of the store.

COWBOYS AND GOTHs
Elmo! Elmo! Elmo!

WE SEE A SPLIT-SCREEN OF ALL THREE STORES: THREE ELMO-
CHANTING MOBS READY TO RIOT.

Super: **NOVEMBER 29th, 1996**
BLACK FRIDAY

INT. WALMART IN GLENDALE - EARLY MORNING

Inside the store, a shift of anxious WALMART CLERKS is looking at the plush aisle: There are only two Elmos in stock, and about 500 people outside.

ROBERT (O.S.)
Guys! I found one more!

Walmart clerk ROBERT WALLER (30s) is holding a Tickle Me Elmo.

ROBERT
It was under a box in the back!

He starts to walk over to the plush aisle, but passes the entrance of the store just as the clock hits 5:00 AM.

WALMART CLERK #1
Robert, no!

The doors open and a MOB OF SHOPPERS STAMPEDES INSIDE!

RABID SHOPPER #1
He's got one! He's got an Elmo!

Robert's eyes go wide as the crowd charges at him! The mob attacks him and he falls to the ground! Still desperately clutching the Elmo, he's slowly swallowed by the unruly mob!

INT. TARGET IN MINNEAPOLIS - EARLY MORNING

The blizzard outside blows into the store as the doors are stuck open by the continuous stream of shoppers charging in. TWO WOMEN are in a full-on FIST FIGHT over the last Elmo!

INT. TOYS R US IN AUSTIN - EARLY MORNING

Cowboys are turning on Goths as they all fight over the scant few Elmos! A small child is caught in the eye of the maelstrom, empty-handed, wailing inconsolably.

CHILD

Elmoooooooo!!!!

Her DESPERATE FATHER produces a Barney doll instead.

DESPERATE FATHER

What about a Barney?

CHILD

Fuck Barney!

INT. WALMART IN GLENDALE - EARLY MORNING

Back at the Walmart, Robert is in danger of being torn limb from limb! His shirt rips! The crowd is trampling him!

WALMART CLERK #2

Somebody help! Please!

Robert takes a kick to the face! It's getting grim. Then:
WAILING SIRENS ARE HEARD. Everyone stops brawling for a moment as the sirens seem to grow closer and closer.

RABID SHOPPER #2

Look!

A TRACTOR-TRAILER with TYCO PRESCHOOL emblazoned on the side arrives at the store accompanied by a FULL POLICE ESCORT!
The shoppers in the store are awash in red and blue lights.

INT. TARGET IN MINNEAPOLIS - EARLY MORNING

The two women are still in a fist-fight over the last Elmo.

SHOPPER

Look!

A fleet of SNOW PLOWS has braved the blizzard and made its way to the store!

PLOW DRIVER
Special delivery!

The DRIVERS open their trucks to reveal cases of Elmos. The two women stop fighting when they are handed a second Elmo. They quickly regain their senses - ie. *What have I become?*

INT./EXT. TOYS R US IN AUSTIN - EARLY MORNING

Several Tyco Preschool delivery trucks are seen parked at the back of the store. Inside, the Cowboys and Goths have reconciled as they help unload the trucks together.

The Child is happily playing with her Tickle Me Elmo.

DESPERATE FATHER
So you love Daddy again, right?

But she ignores him and keeps tickling Elmo. As the Cowboys and Goths pay for their purchases, the unmistakable CHACHING of cash registers starts to fill the store.

WE SEE ANOTHER SPLIT-SCREEN OF ALL THREE STORES: EXCITED ELMO BUYERS ARE SPENDING MONEY HAND OVER FIST, AND THE "CHACHINGS" REVERBERATE THROUGHOUT.

EXT. WALMART IN GLENDALE - EARLY MORNING

The other Clerks watch as PARAMEDICS remove a woozy Robert from the store on a stretcher, wearing a Cervical Collar.

WALMART CLERK #1
This is not worth minimum wage.

ROBERT
Tell my story!

INT. TYCO PRESCHOOL - DAY

Reporter Sue Simmons and her camera crew are interviewing Neil in the reception area of the office. Gerry, Al, Sunshine, and Rachel the intern look on.

SUE SIMMONS
Neil, it's fair to say that Tickle Me Elmo has tickled the nation, and while there are still reports of shortages, we understand that most stores have received a last minute influx of inventory just in time.

NEIL

We're working around the clock to get as many Tickle Me Elmos into customers' hands as possible by Christmas. We now have four factories producing Elmos 24/7. And we will continue to ship throughout the day.

SUE SIMMONS

Did you ever envision Tickle Me Elmo would have such an impact?

NEIL

Envision this? No. All I know is that when you play with Tickle Me Elmo for the first time, it brings a smile to your face. It's like magic. Laughter is the one thing that brings us all together. And that's what I hoped Tickle Me Elmo would do.

SUE SIMMONS

Thank you, Neil. Congratulations on a gangbusters Black Friday.

NEIL

Thanks Sue, but I only played a small part. We have an incredible team here at Tyco Preschool.

He looks to Gerry, Al, and Sunshine, then back to Sue.

NEIL (cont'd)

And there are countless others, some of whom you might never meet, who contributed to this phenomenon...

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - DAY

In a remote cabin, Mark Johnson-Williams sits at a workbench, wearing safety goggles, happily tinkering on a toy robot with a soldering iron.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

A bevy of heavily armed FBI AGENTS, ATF AGENTS, AND U.S. MARSHALS surround a cabin.

Inside the cabin: Mark thinks he hears some RUSTLING outside, looks up, but then continues to tinker.

Outside the cabin: The Agents surround the cabin, rifles drawn, and prepare to breach the door.

Inside the cabin: Mark hears something at the front door. He gets up, takes his goggles off, and walks to the door.

Outside the cabin: The Agents break down the door, swarming inside with guns drawn!

FBI AGENT #1

Go go go go!

A FIGURE makes a run for it!

FBI AGENT #2

We got a runner!

The Agents tackle him!

FBI AGENT #3

I got him I got him!

There's a brief tussle on the ground.

FBI AGENT #4

Cuff him!

The Agents finally manage to cuff the subject. Guns drawn, they roll him onto his back. It's a very UNKEMPT MAN (50s) with a scraggly beard.

FBI AGENT #1

Ted Kaczynski, you are under arrest
for murder, attempted murder, and the
transportation of bomb-making
materials through the mail.

They pull him up and frog march him out of the cabin.

INT. CABIN - DAY

In his cabin, Mark opens the door and steps outside - but there's no one there. He looks down and sees a box on the ground with a Tyco Preschool logo.

He takes the box inside, sits at his workbench, and opens it. Inside is a LIMITED EDITION TICKLE ME ELMO with a plaque that reads: **Thank You For Everything Mark - Tyco Preschool**

He smiles. He looks at a shelf that has every Elmo prototype he developed. At the end, he places the final product.

INT. KAUFMAN ASTORIA STUDIOS - DAY

The Sesame Street staff is buzzing with anticipation as they prepare to shoot a scene. Ann looks at the Young Producer, who has evidently been rehired.

ANN

It's good to have you back.

YOUNG PRODUCER

Thanks. How do you feel?

ANN

We're betting the whole company on this so... nervous.

DIRECTOR

Quiet please!

A NEW PUPPETEER carrying the Elmo Puppet takes the stage.

DIRECTOR (cont'd)

Okay, this is "Elmo's World." Episode 1, Scene 1, Take 1.

The New Puppeteer crouches so that only Elmo is visible.

DIRECTOR (cont'd)

And... action!

ELMO

(singing)

La la la la la la la la Elmo's World!

La la la la la la la la Elmo's World!

Ann and the Young Producer look at each other and grin: This is gonna be huge.

INT. GERRY'S OFFICE - DAY

Neil, Gerry, Al, and Sunshine are now the ones drinking champagne - out of plastic flutes. They're watching a bulletin on CNBC called TICKLE-DOWN ECONOMICS.

CNBC ANCHOR

On this hectic Black Friday, we are tracking the Mattel-Tyco acquisition. Shares in Tyco have soared and the FTC has just opened an antitrust investigation into the deal, which would combine the maker of Barbie with the maker of the most popular toy on the planet, Tickle Me Elmo.

(MORE)

CNBC ANCHOR (cont'd)
All of which has put the status of
the acquisition in serious doubt.

Gerry shuts off the TV.

GERRY
Maybe we saved our jobs after all.

They clink their plastic flutes.

GERRY (cont'd)
(to Neil)
And you just made Tyco enough money
to pay back all the R&D you footed
yourself. Plus interest.

He puts his hand on Neil's shoulder.

GERRY (cont'd)
Now who's crazy for betting it all on
Tickle Me Elmo, huh?

Neil can't help but grin: It was still pretty crazy.

SUNSHINE
We're selling 'em as fast as the
factories are making 'em.

AL
I still think it's too expensive.

They all laugh and rib Al. Then Rachel appears at the
doorway holding a box.

RACHEL
Hey Sunshine, this just came for you.

She hands Sunshine the box and exits.

SUNSHINE
Finally.

AL
What is it?

Sunshine rips open the box and pulls out... A BLACK ELMO,
ie. a Tickle Me Elmo with Black Fur.

GERRY
What on earth...

SUNSHINE
Cool, right? This could be a whole
new market for us.

Nobody seems very enthusiastic.

NEIL

Sunshine, what I want you to do is lock this away somewhere, and never speak of it again.

SUNSHINE

You guys have no imagination.

Rachel comes back into the office.

RACHEL

Sorry Sunshine, now there's an issue at the warehouse in the Garment District. They can't get all their inventory out today. They want you to come down there.

SUNSHINE

(groans)

Okay, will do.

NEIL

No, no, I'll take care of it.

SUNSHINE

Are you sure?

NEIL

Yeah, you guys enjoy yourselves.

(then)

Hey, I'm really proud of you. Thank you for everything. I couldn't have asked for a better team.

They raise their glasses to Neil.

Then Neil exits, leaving Gerry, Al, and Sunshine alone. They look at the Black Elmo.

GERRY

No one can ever know about this.

Sunshine reluctantly hides the Black Elmo away in a cabinet.

INT. GARMENT DISTRICT WAREHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Neil enters the warehouse, where a string of Tyco Preschool box trucks (UPS-style delivery trucks) packed with Tickle Me Elmos are pulling out. Neil finds the FOREMAN.

NEIL

Hey, Neil Friedman. What seems to be the problem?

FOREMAN

Wow, they sent the President of the division?

NEIL

Everybody does a little of everything at Tyco Preschool.

FOREMAN

We don't have enough drivers. We can't hire them fast enough and the ones we do hire get scared away by customers chasing them.

NEIL

Scared away by soccer moms and small children?

FOREMAN

Have you seen what happens when someone sees an Elmo? They're out for blood. Anyway, I got most of the trucks out today but there's two left. I'm gonna drive one.

NEIL

Then I guess I'll take the other.

FOREMAN

Are you serious? Do you even have a commercial license?

NEIL

I do, actually. But it expired in 1974.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. BOX TRUCK - LATE AFTERNOON

Neil pulls out of the warehouse in the Box Truck, starting and sputtering as he tries to DRIVE STICK.

He reads a clipboard that lists his delivery sites.

NEIL

Midtown. Midtown. Uptown.
(exhales)
Okay, you can do this.

TIME CUT: Neil maneuvers the Box Truck through Manhattan gridlock. Due to the Tyco Preschool logo on the truck, and him riding the clutch, he's getting a lot of honks.

He continues driving until he see a street sign that reads:

HOBOKEN, NEXT EXIT

He sighs, then continues driving, honking, and getting honked and flipped off. Then he sees another street sign:

NEW JERSEY, LAST EXIT

Neil is torn. He wrestles with something deep inside. The exit is fast approaching and he doesn't know what to do.

Finally he tosses the clipboard and makes a HARD RIGHT ACROSS MULTIPLE LANES! He gets honked and flipped off!

NEIL (cont'd)

Sorry!

But he manages to maneuver himself into the LINCOLN TUNNEL.

INT./EXT. HOBOKEN - EARLY EVENING

Neil emerges from the Lincoln Tunnel in the Box Truck - still sputtering - and drives into Hoboken. He's anxious as he tries to navigate.

NEIL

Come on come on!

Finally, he reaches a modest apartment building. He parks the Box Truck, one wheel up on the curb, and hops out.

He runs to the front door, but it's locked. He looks at the buzzer and rings Amanda's apartment. No answer.

Then he runs around to the side of the building and peers into her first-floor apartment: It's empty. She's gone.

He hangs his head, then trudges back to the truck. He's too late.

AMANDA (O.S.)

Neil?

Neil turns to see Amanda, carrying a box, walking from the other side of the building. Jacob totters behind her.

NEIL

Amanda! You haven't left yet.

AMANDA

Just putting a few more things in storage. We have a red eye.

JACOB

Wed eye!

NEIL

Hi Jacob.

AMANDA

What are you doing here?

NEIL

I'm pretty sure I can hire you back now.

AMANDA

That's what you came to say?

NEIL

Uh, no, actually...

(deep breath)

I came to say that when I'm around you, I feel like I can do anything. I came to say that when I walk into a room and you're not there, it just feels dark and empty. I came to say that I always thought the best part of my day was getting to make toys. But it wasn't. It was getting to make toys with you.

Amanda lets her guard down a bit.

AMANDA

Ya know, you could have said all that a lot sooner.

NEIL

I wish I had. More than anything.

Amanda puts the box down and picks Jacob up. We notice something sticking out of the box - it's Neil's Marvin the Martian mug. She kept it. Neil steps closer to Amanda.

NEIL (cont'd)

Don't go. Please. I will fight for you. In fact, not too long ago, I took a punch for you.

AMANDA

You did?? From who?

NEIL

Al Karo. It's a long story.

Amanda steps closer to Neil. Jacob grabs Neil's beard.

AMANDA

He's got a thing for beards now.

Then Amanda notices the Tyco Preschool Box Truck parked on the curb. Jacob points at it.

JACOB

Elmo!

NEIL

That's right, Jacob.

Neil looks right at Amanda.

NEIL (cont'd)

Elmo will always be there for you.
Elmo will always support you. And
most importantly, Elmo loves you.

Amanda smiles, touched.

AMANDA

I hear those Elmos are pretty hard to find.

NEIL

Good thing you know a guy.

Amanda and Neil share a laugh, and then, they kiss!

Jacob coos happily as we start to pull out from the three of them on the lawn.

We pan, looking across the Hudson River at the magnificent New York City skyline at dusk.

As night falls, lights begin to twinkle on across the city.

The Twin Towers light up.

Then the Chrysler Building.

Finally, the Empire State Building lights up, twinkles for a moment, and then glows: IN BRIGHT, ICONIC RED.

CUT TO:

EPILOGUE:

Tickle Me Taz was never released.

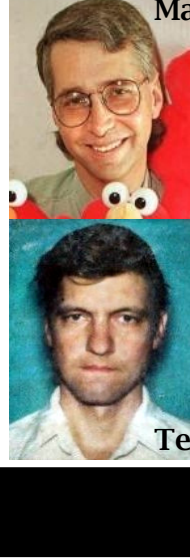
The prototype was donated to a toy museum in Rochester, New York, where it is displayed alongside the original Tickles the Chimp.



Dick Grey took Tyco Toys from the 22nd largest toy company in the country to the 3rd. He was inducted into the Toy Industry Hall of Fame in 1996 and retired in 1997.



Due to his possession of highly restricted electronic components, Mark Johnson-Williams was interrogated by the FBI Unabomber Task Force. He was cleared upon Ted Kaczynski's capture in 1996.



IN ITS QUEST FOR UNABOMBER, FBI EVEN QUESTIONED ELMO'S DESIGNER

Puppeteer Kevin Clash created Elmo's iconic voice and mannerisms. He resigned from Sesame Street after being accused of sexual misconduct. The charges were dismissed when a judge determined the statute of limitations had run out.



He never voiced Elmo again.

Rosie O'Donnell's giveaway of 200 Tickle Me Elmos to her studio audience on October 2nd, 1996, ignited Elmo-mania. Rosie continued to dominate daytime television until she left the show in 2002 to spend more time with her children.



Walmart clerk Robert Waller was trampled by a mob of customers who saw him holding a Tickle Me Elmo. He was knocked unconscious, and suffered a broken rib and a concussion. After being released from the hospital, he told his story on national television.



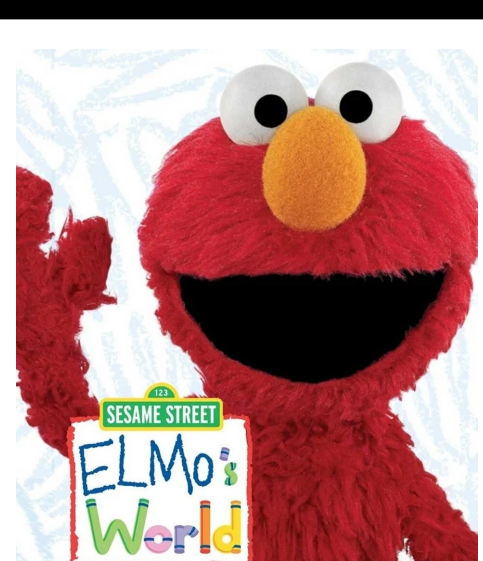
John Gotti Jr. insists the Tickle Me Elmos he acquired during an after-hours visit to a Toys R Us in Queens were donated to a children's charity. There is no record of the transaction since he paid in cash.

*The New York Times
A Christmas Tale
of the Gottis and
Tickle Me Elmo*

One Black Elmo was ever produced. In exchange for this photo, the screenwriter has agreed to keep its current location secret.



Tickle Me Elmo returned Sesame Street to cultural relevancy, and royalties from the toy saved it from financial ruin. In 1998, the show began featuring "Elmo's World" at the end of every episode - the first recurring segment dedicated to a single character. It continues to run to this day.



Tyco's stock price tripled during Elmo-mania, triggering a six-month antitrust investigation by the Federal Trade Commission. Nevertheless, Mattel completed its acquisition of Tyco Toys in 1997. By 1999, Tyco Preschool ceased to exist.

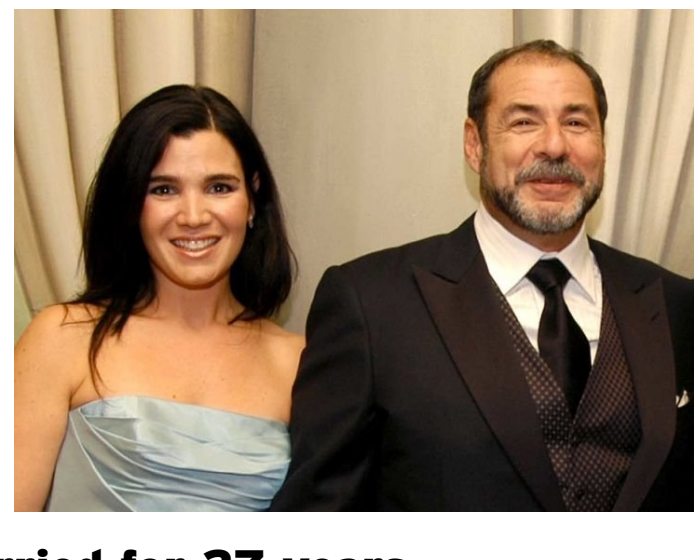
*The New York Times
A Surprise in
Toyland: Mattel to
Buy Tyco*

Neil was named President of Mattel in 2005, where he is credited with revitalizing the company's most stagnant and underperforming toy: Barbie.



He was inducted into the Toy Industry Hall of Fame in 2004.

Amanda was working on Elmo's box design when she first met Neil.



They've been married for 27 years.

In 1996, Tyco Preschool manufactured, shipped, and sold one million Tickle Me Elmos. The company chartered 747s to get them to stores in time for Christmas.

Gerry, Al, and Sunshine received limited edition Elmos for their efforts.



In 1997, when the factories in China finally caught up to demand, another four million Tickle Me Elmos were sold.



It is one of the bestselling toys of the 20th century.

TICKLE ME ELMO
He he he he he he he, that tickles!

FADE TO RED:

THE END