

JINGLE ALL THE WAY

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REWRITE
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CLOSE ON: MOLTEN PLASTIC ...

Being poured into a MOLD. The MOLD SQUEEZES SHUT and MOVES across the screen ...

(BEGIN CREDITS SEQUENCE)

INT. TOY FACTORY - DAY

The MOLD moves along the FULLY AUTOMATED ASSEMBLY LINE, and opens to reveal a GLOSSY HUNK OF HARD PLASTIC. It pops out of the mold, looking like a little MUSCULAR CHEST with a T-SHAPED INSIGNIA stamped on it. The torso continues down the line and we watch as ...

An ARM is snapped into place. A LEG is snapped into place. A HELMETED HEAD is popped on. TINY JETS spray PAINT in the right areas. Until finally, emerging on the belt is a shiny new ACTION FIGURE. It has a brief moment of glory -- heroic smile frozen on its' square jaw -- until it drops down a chute and falls into a BOX, emblazoned with the logo "TURBO TOM". The box is shut and travels down a belt to join HUNDREDS of OTHER BOXES in a PILE.

CLOSE ON: THE BOXES being loaded into a TRUCK. The truck doors SLAM shut and the truck DRIVES OFF.

INT. TOY STORE - DAY

The boxes are being placed on the shelves by a STORE CLERK. He fits the last box between the others when suddenly ... we hear a LOW RUMBLE. The clerk turns around and a look of PANIC crosses his face. He scrambles out of the way, just as a MASS OF HUMANITY thunders to the shelves in a BLUR.

Within seconds, the MAD SHOPPERS retreat, revealing the now EMPTY SHELVES. Only one Turbo Tom doll remains, rocking on the edge of a shelf. Before it can even fall, a HAND shoots into frame and GRABS it. And then there were none.

(END CREDITS SEQUENCE)

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

INT. MIRACLE MATTRESS CO. - DAY

A GLASS-WALLED OFFICE overlooking the Production Floor. A small but bustling enterprise. HOWARD PUTTNAM (30's), sits behind his desk, facing a MAN in a LARGE COWBOY HAT. Howard (also wearing a COWBOY HAT) reaches across the desk to shake the man's hand.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

So, Sam, do we have a deal?

Sam hesitates.

SAM

Now hold on a minute here, Howard. Explain to me again why I should be buyin' these here super deluxe queens instead of the regular queens.

HOWARD

(confident)

Well, it's like I was saying, Sam. You want the guests at your hotels to get the best night's sleep they ...

Howard trails off as he notices his secretary, MARGARET (20's) through the window over Sam's shoulder. She is making all kinds of WILD KARATE MOTIONS and MOTIONING AT HIM. Howard looks at her like she's crazy. He turns back to Sam.

HOWARD

Uh ... can. Yeah.

SAM

Hmm. But it's a mite more than I intended to spend ...

Howard's about to respond when he notices Margaret again. This time she's WAVING and holding up a HANDWRITTEN SIGN that reads: "YOUR SON'S KARATE CLASS -- 30 MINUTES!!!" Howard's eyes widen.

HOWARD

Are you kidding?!

Howard looks at his watch. How'd it get so late?

SAM

What -- are you callin' me cheap? I mean, we did discuss a budget, Puttnam.

HOWARD

(backpedaling)

No no! You're not cheap! No way. What I'm saying here is ...

He trails off as Margaret holds up another sign. It reads: "HURRY UP!!!"

CONTINUED:

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I am!

SAM

You're cheap?

Howard looks around. Thinks ...

HOWARD

Yes ... Yes I am. I mean ... my prices are cheap. The cheapest you'll find. I guarantee it!

SAM

Well now you're talkin'!

HOWARD

Yes I am! Talking! Too much! So let's make you a good deal on those super deluxes. And let's make it now!

He pounds his fist on the desk for emphasis.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRACLE MATTRESS COMPANY - DAY

Margaret sits at her desk outside Howard's door. She sighs and shakes her head. Finally, Howard's door opens, and Margaret quickly puts on a COWBOY HAT. Howard emerges from his office shaking Sam's hand.

SAM

Well, Puttnam, looks like you got yourself a deal! And thanks for takin' that extra time to work things out.

HOWARD

I've always got time for you, Sam.

Sam mimes drawing a six-gun. 'Shoots' Howard. Howard acts like he's been shot. Sam laughs hysterically.

SAM

(wiping a tear away)
All right. Puttnam -- a pleasure. You have a nice Christmas now, ya hear?

HOWARD

I hear.

Sam enters the ELEVATOR and mimes shooting at Howard again. Howard goes down. Sam laughs hysterically as the ELEVATOR DOORS CLOSE. Howard immediately jumps up and looks at Margaret.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD (CONT'D)
(worried)
How much time do I have?

MARGARET
You're not gonna make it.

She throws him his COAT. He quickly puts it on.

HOWARD
I'm gonna make it.

Margaret gestures at her cowboy hat.

MARGARET
Can I take this off now?

HOWARD
(gathering his things)
Margaret, you can take the rest of the
day off. In fact ...

Howard grabs a NEARBY MICROPHONE. His VOICE ECHOES ON THE
PRODUCTION FLOOR.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
Attention! Everybody, this is Howard. I
want you all to take the rest of the day
off. In fact, I want you to take tomorrow
off too. We just closed the biggest deal
of the year! Merry Christmas!

A BIG CHEER ERUPTS from the floor.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
Oh, and you can take the hats off now,
too.

A BIGGER CHEER ERUPTS. Through the window, we see COWBOY HATS
FLY INTO THE AIR from the production floor. Howard races to the
elevator.

MARGARET
You're not gonna make it.

The elevator doors open. Howard gets inside.

HOWARD
I'm gonna make it ...

Howard TOSSES his hat out into the office as the elevator doors
close.

CONTINUED:

CUT TO:

We HEAR the loud sound of APPLAUSE. CUT TO:

INT. KARATE ACADEMY - EVENING

Mothers, fathers and siblings applaud as the kids are awarded their belts. The SENSEI is working his way down the line of kids to JAMIE (7-8), who gives an expectant look at the crowd. He frowns.

We see LIZ (30's), Howard's wife and Jamie's mom -- give a big wave and smile. She yells Jamie's name and cheers louder than anyone -- perhaps compensating for the noticeably EMPTY SEAT next to her.

TED (30's), two seats away, is capturing the ceremony on VIDEO.

TED
(shouts)
Johnny! Johnny!

JOHNNY (7-8), right next to Jamie, looks and waves at the camera. He nudges Jamie, who manages to force a smile and wave. Then Jamie glances over at the DOOR. No Howard. Liz notices and looks at the door as well. She sighs.

LIZ
Shoot.

TED
(still filming)
Don't worry Liz, I'll make you guys a copy for Howard. He shouldn't have to miss this.

The Sensei stops in front of Jamie.

LIZ
(sadly)
No. He shouldn't.

Liz cheers and whistles, shouting Jamie's name. He accepts the belt, but doesn't seem nearly as happy as the other kids.

EXT. KARATE ACADEMY - EVENING

The families are exiting to the parking lot. Jamie and Johnny walk out the doors, followed by Liz and Ted.

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY
(holding his belt)
This is so cool! Isn't it cool?

JAMIE
I guess.

JOHNNY
Turbo Tom's gonna be on when we get home.
You wanna watch together?

JAMIE
I dunno.

Liz overhears this exchange and frowns. A SINGLE MOTHER catches up to Ted and presents him with a BAG. She's a bit flustered.

MOTHER 1
Ted. Hi. I thought you'd be here. I, uh,
baked some cookies for you. You know, to
thank you for fixing my screen door.

TED
Oh, well thanks, Judy.

She smiles and blushes. Ted continues talking to Judy as Liz catches up to Jamie. She puts her arm around him.

LIZ
I'm sorry, sweetie. I'm sure Dad did his
best to get here on time.

Jamie nods sadly.

EXT. HOWARD'S CAR - SAME

Howard pulls into the parking lot to see everyone leaving.

HOWARD
Damn.

He pulls to a stop and gets out. Spots Jamie and Liz walking over to her car. He hurries over to them.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
Liz! Jamie!

They turn to see him. Liz looks less than pleased.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
Guys, I am so sorry. I left on time but
there was a big tie-up on --

CONTINUED:

Liz holds up her hand, stopping him.

LIZ
You're over an hour late.

She shakes her head, disappointed. Howard frowns. Stands there helplessly. He looks down at Jamie.

HOWARD
Hey, buddy, how'dya do?

JAMIE
Okay.

HOWARD
So, those hands registered weapons yet?

JAMIE
No.

Howard sighs. Ted pops his head in.

TED
Hey Howard! Merry Christmas!
(holds up the camera)
Sorry you missed it. But I got it all on video for ya!

Howard barely forces a smile. For some reason, this guy just rubs him the wrong way.

HOWARD
(dryly)
Gee. thanks, Ted.

Ted nods and smiles genuinely. Jamie and Johnny wander off together as one of the other MOTHERS strolls by, child in tow. She puts a hand on Ted's arm, a bit too friendly.

MOTHER 2
Ted! Thank god I found you. You know, I was wondering if you'd mind taking a look at my porch light for me. It doesn't seem to want to work.

TED
Sure. You know, it may just be the cold--

The mother leads Ted away as they talk. Howard shakes his head.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

There he goes. Champion of the Lonely Housewives.

LIZ

I don't think you've got any room to talk right now. At least he was here tonight.

HOWARD

Aw, come on Liz! You think I wanted to be late? I know how much Jamie was looking forward to this. I left work early and everything. I mean, if you only --

LIZ

Look. Let's just talk about this at home, okay?

Howard sighs.

HOWARD

I'm sorry.

Liz looks at him. What can she say? She spots Jamie and Johnny, comparing their belts. Howard sees them too.

HOWARD

Letme drive him home. I'll take him for ice cream.

(calling out)

Hey! Jamie! Wanna ride with me?

Jamie looks at him, then purposefully walks over to Liz's car. Liz looks at Howard.

LIZ

He's upset, Howard. What did you expect? We'll meet you back at home.

She walks off to the car, leaving Howard alone in the parking lot.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Jamie lies on the floor, inches away from the TV. He's watching his favorite show, TURBO TOM.

LIZ. (O.C.)

Jamie, move back. You'll ruin your eyes.

Jamie ignores her and watches the screen, transfixed.

CONTINUED:

ON THE TV:

NEGATOR, a MUTANT ALIEN CREATURE with a BLACK CAPE, holds a LITTLE BOY hostage in his LARGE CAVE-LIKE LAIR. It is guarded by his ROBOTIC HENCHMEN, BOLT and DOLT.

NEGATOR

(after an evil villain laugh)
So you see, computer whiz, now you're trapped. And if you ever expect to get out of here, you'd better tap into the system that controls that laser satellite. Then my revenge will be complete, and there's nothing Turbo Tom can do to stop me!

Negator laughs maniacally again. Suddenly, there's a LOUD EXPLOSION and a HOLE is BLOWN OUT of the CAVE WALL. As the smoke clears, we see ... it's TURBO TOM (in his slick looking superhero suit -- complete with HELMET and JET-PACK).

TURBO TOM

Think again, Negator. It's Turbo Time.

Jamie smiles as Turbo Tom springs into action. He continues to watch as we PAN to the KITCHEN DOORWAY.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Howard and Liz are arguing with hushed voices.

LIZ

Do you know Jamie waited to be the last one to test tonight?! Just in case you showed up at the last minute? Honestly, Howard, it'd be one thing if this was the first time! Or like, the hundredth. But it's all the time! You can't keep disappointing him like this. I mean, how many excuses am I supposed to make for you? It's enough!

HOWARD

I -- I don't know what to say. I was closing this deal and ... god, I'm so sorry.

LIZ

Yeah, well don't tell me. Tell him.

Howard hangs his head and shuffles back into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Howard is about to say something, but doesn't want to interrupt the show. He leans against the wall and watches with Jamie.

ON THE TV: Turbo Tom is battling with Bolt and Dolt, while Negator grabs the boy and CLIMBS a LADDER to the top of the cave. Turbo Tom uses his EYE BEAM LASERS to knock back Bolt and his TURBO-RANG (a powerful boomerang) to take care of Dolt. FANG, Turbo Tom's PINK FLYING-SABERTOOTH-TIGER SIDEKICK, makes a ROARING SOUND and points up at Negator.

TURBO TOM
I see him, Fang!

Turbo Tom FIRES UP HIS JETPACK, and just as Negator is about to toss the little boy off the ladder, Turbo Tom swoops in to save him. Fang roars in approval.

Jamie cheers. Howard smiles.

JAMIE
Yes!

Meanwhile, Turbo Tom has TWISTED THE LADDER around Negator, trapping him. He lifts the boy into his arms.

TURBO TOM
What do you say we get you home, Bobby?

He takes off into the sky, holding little Bobby.

BOBBY
Turbo Tom, you're the best! I knew you'd make it -- you always show up right on time!

Jamie nods in agreement. Howard notices and his smile fades.

TURBO TOM
Glad you could count on me.

They exchange the special Turbo Tom SALUTE and soar even higher into the sky as the closing MUSIC plays triumphantly. Jamie MIRRORS the salute by himself.

Howard steps away from the wall and clears his throat.

HOWARD
Uh, Jamie? Hey champ -- Look, about your class tonight. I'm really ...

CONTINUED:

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Jamie just looks up at Howard and then RUNS UP THE STAIRS TO HIS ROOM. Howard calls out after him.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Jamie?!

We hear his bedroom DOOR SLAM. Howard walks over to the stairs.

Howard passes Liz, watching him from the kitchen. She saw Jamie run off too. She shakes her head at Howard, disappointed.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I'll talk to him.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Howard taps on Jamie's door.

HOWARD

Jamie? Can I come in?

No answer. Howard opens the door.

INT. JAMIE'S ROOM - SAME

HOWARD

Hey kiddo.

Jamie lies on the bed, his back to Howard. Howard enters the room. He sees the PURPLE KARATE BELT hanging on the back of a chair.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Whoa! Is this it?

He picks up the belt. Jamie turns back around and nods.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Now this is really cool! How do you ...?

He tries to tie it around his waist.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

What, does it go like this?

Jamie doesn't react. Howard ties the belt around his forehead like a samurai warrior.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Or like this?

Howard strikes a "Kung Fu" pose. Starts making silly karate sounds and movements. Jamie doesn't even smile. Howard pulls the belt off of his head and sighs. Sits at the foot of Jamie's bed.

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(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I did something really stupid today, huh?

Jamie shrugs.

JAMIE

I don't care.

Jamie rolls back over.

HOWARD

Aw, Jame. I sure hope that's not true.
Because I really wanted to be there,
today. Believe me ...

Jamie turns around again.

JAMIE

But you always say that -- and you never
come anyway. Purple was important, Dad!
It's one away from green and that's three
away from black!

HOWARD

Well ... I saw you get yellow.

JAMIE

But you missed blue.

HOWARD

(sighs)

You're right. And I can't tell you how
sorry I am. I just wish there were some
way I could make it up to you ...

Jamie thinks.

JAMIE

Well, are you coming to the parade
tomorrow?

HOWARD

The parade?

JAMIE

The Lights Before Christmas Parade. We go
every year. Well, you didn't go last
year, or the year before -- but I always
go. Anyway, Turbo Tom's gonna be there
and Johnny and I are planning something
really cool so you could --

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

Sure, sure. I'll go. But -- I was talking more like something special just for you. Like ... I don't know. Maybe if there was something really neat you wanted for Christmas?

JAMIE

Oh. I already wrote Santa a letter. He'll get it for me.

HOWARD

Well you know ... Santa can get awfully busy this time of year. And sometimes he even asks Moms and Dads to help out a little. So if there's a certain something you really want, maybe I could get it for you so Santa can concentrate on, you know ... everything else.

JAMIE

I dunno. It's not important. And you're probably busier than Santa anyway.

HOWARD

I'm not that busy. And, hey, don't worry about me. Just tell me what it is. I'll take care of it.

JAMIE

All right.

(spewing)

I want the Turbo Tom action figure with the arms and legs that move and the boomerang shooter and the eye beams and the removable jet pack and accessories sold separately, batteries not included!

HOWARD

Whoa. Glad you had to stop and think about it.

JAMIE

Johnny's gonna get one from his Dad and so'll everybody else I know. Whoever doesn't will be a real loser.

HOWARD

Well, that definitely won't be you.

JAMIE
How do you know?

HOWARD
Because something tells me you're going
to find a brand new Turbo ... uh ...

JAMIE
Tom.

HOWARD
Turbo Tom doll under that tree Christmas
morning.

JAMIE
Really?

HOWARD
Really. Ready for bed?

JAMIE
I dunno. Can I draw for a little?

HOWARD
Sure.

Howard turns the light on over Jamie's little desk-set. Jamie sits down and gets out his crayons. He starts to draw -- tongue sticking out of the corner of his mouth in concentration. Howard watches, smiling.

HOWARD
Whatcha drawing?

JAMIE
A picture of you.

HOWARD
Me?

Howard looks over Jamie's shoulder.

HOWARD
Hey! That does kinda look like me. Except
... is my head really that big?

JAMIE
No ... It's bigger.

Jamie laughs.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

(laughs)

Oh it is, huh? Well, if you need a bigger piece of paper so you can get it all in, you just let me know, okay?

JAMIE

Okay.

Howard walks to the door.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

I love you, Dad.

Howard turns around, touched.

HOWARD

I love you too, Jame.

Jamie looks back down and continues drawing. Howard watches him for a moment and then leaves.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Howard enters. Liz is on the bed, WRAPPING CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

HOWARD

I think he'll be okay. Gave me a good left hook to the eye, but I guess I was askin' for it.

LIZ

Yeah. You certainly were.

She looks up at Howard and gives him a little smile.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Look, I'm sorry about before -- but I just want Jamie to feel like he can depend on you. That you'll keep your promises. You know, if you say you're gonna be at his karate class, you'll be there with the other dads ...

Liz enters the closet. We hear her rummaging around.

HOWARD

Sure ... like Ted.

(makes a face)

Mr. Got-It-All-On-Video. But I guess if I sued my company for chronic migraines due to -- what was it--

(waves his hands around)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD (cont'd)
 toner fumes from the copy machine, I
 could stay home all day too. Fix
 everything for the neighborhood ladies.

LIZ (FROM CLOSET)
 Howard --

HOWARD
 You know who I feel bad for is Johnny.
 The fact that he's gotta spend weekends
 and holidays with the guy --

Liz comes out holding another gift to be wrapped.

LIZ
 Howard. That's not nice. And you're
 completely missing the point. I don't
 want you to be like Ted. I just want you
 to be more like Howard the father.
 Instead of Howard the businessman, okay?

She gives him a kiss on the cheek. Smiles.

HOWARD
 I am Howard the father.

Liz puts the box down and goes back into the closet. Howard
 takes off his pants, stands there in his boxers and socks.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
 I mean, you should've seen us in there
 just now. Drawing, talking Turbo Tim ...

LIZ (FROM CLOSET)
 Turbo Tom.

HOWARD
 Right. There was some real father-son
 bonding going on in there.

LIZ (FROM CLOSET)
 Oh -- that reminds me. You got the doll,
 right?

HOWARD
 The doll?

LIZ (FROM CLOSET)
 The Turbo Tom doll. I asked you to pick
 one up two weeks ago.

Howard smacks his forehead.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD
That was the doll?

Liz pops her head out of the closet, exasperated.

LIZ
Oh Howard! You didn't!

HOWARD
No no -- I meant, that was the doll. The doll that I -- got. Turbo T-- ... T-- that one.

Liz smiles. Relieved.

LIZ
Whew. Great! Is it wrapped?

HOWARD
Huh? Uh -- uh -- no!

LIZ
Great. I'll go get it and do it now.

HOWARD
No! I mean, yes! It -- it is wrapped. They wrapped it for me. The people I ... bought it from.

Howard walks into the bathroom, nervous.

LIZ
Okay. I'll go get it. That way we can put it under the tree tonight.

She grabs his CAR KEYS off of the nightstand. Howard rushes out of the bathroom and TRIPS over his pants. Falls.

HOWARD
I'll go. It's uh -- cold in the garage. And I'm still dressed.

She looks down at Howard. Pants around his ankles. He looks up.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
You know what I mean.

She shrugs and tosses him the keys. He scrambles to his feet and exits. Liz shakes her head, baffled.

EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Howard is closing the garage door, the NOW WRAPPED anti-freeze container under his arm. He bumps into something and YELPS, coming face to face with a LIVE REINDEER. It snorts. Ted trots over, grabbing for the reindeer's leash.

TED

Whoa! Sorry about that, Howie. A little Christmas surprise for Johnny.

HOWARD

Well. You just think of everything, don't you.

TED

(agreeing)

Howard, I'm of the mindset that you can never do too much to make a child's Christmas magical.

HOWARD

Ah. And what happens to Blitzen after Christmas?

TED

(tugging reins)

I've been watching a small family of deer down by Glendale Lake. I'd like to take him down there and set him free. And if Nature's kind ...

(patting the deer)

... they'll take him in like he's one of their own.

Ted mists up, emotional. Howard rolls his eyes.

HOWARD

Well, Ted, that's ... touching.

Ted's too choked up to talk, so he just nods. Howard starts to back away, just as Ted composes himself and notices the package in Howard's arms.

TED

What're you doing up so late anyway? A last minute gift?

HOWARD

Sort of.

CONTINUED:

TED

I thought Liz did all the Christmas shopping.

HOWARD

Funny, that's what I thought too.

The BOW pops off. Ted hands it back to Howard.

TED

What is it?

HOWARD

If you must know, it's one of those Turbo Toms Jamie wanted so bad.

TED

Hey! That's great! I got one for Johnny months ago. It's nestled safely under our tree.

HOWARD

(hoisting the box)

Well, I'm off to nestle this one under ours.

The box SLOSHES audibly. Howard grips it tightly to his chest, then taps his belly.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Hoo boy. Indigestion. Chili for lunch ...

He BELCHES. The reindeer makes a SIMILAR NOISE and LICKS Howard.

TED

How 'bout that? Must be some kind of mating call. I think he likes you.

HOWARD

(backing away)

Wonderful. Be sure to give him my number. Look Ted, I gotta go.

TED

I understand. Merry Christmas Eve Eve!

HOWARD

And a Happy ... New Year New Year ...

Ted laughs and yanks the reindeer away. Howard shakes his head and enters the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Howard carefully places the package under the tree. As he tiptoes upstairs, we see the bow pop off again.

INT. HOWARD/LIZ'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Howard lies in bed alone. His eyes shoot open. He looks at the clock. It's five to nine. He looks out the window. There's SNOW on the ground.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Howard comes rushing down the stairs, getting dressed along the way.

HOWARD

Liz! Why'd you let me oversleep?

He peeks into the kitchen. No one's in there. He heads back through the living room to the front hallway.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I've got a lot of important things to do today. Crucial business --

He notices the FRONT DOOR is OPEN, and there's a large LADDER propped up against the front of the house.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

What the ...?

He steps outside to see Ted stringing LIGHTS on the front of the house. Liz stands under the ladder, feeding the lights up to him. Jamie and Johnny hover excitedly.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

(to Liz, re: Ted)
What is he doing?

TED

Just a second, Howard! Okay everyone!
Ready? One ... Two ...

He PLUGS in the final strand of lights.

TED (CONT'D)

Three!

The whole front of the house lights up. It looks great. Jamie, Johnny and Liz "ooh" and "ahhh" appreciatively. Howard looks irritated as Ted climbs down from the ladder.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD
(to Liz)
I could've done that.

TED
(overhearing)
It was no problem, Howard. I had some extra lights in the garage and since you hadn't put any up yourself, I figured -- what the heck! Why not spread some Christmas cheer around the neighborhood?

Howard's about to make a remark, but is interrupted by Jamie -- who's staring up at the house, awed.

JAMIE
Wow! This is cool!

HOWARD
(beat)
Uh, Liz -- can I talk to you for a minute?

He pulls Liz into the front hallway of the house.

INT. FOYER - SAME

Howard speaks in hushed tones.

HOWARD
Look, I've gotta run to the office for a little bit, so --

LIZ
Howard! It's Christmas Eve Day! You are not going into the office!

That was loud enough for everyone to hear. Jamie runs up from the lawn.

JAMIE
You're going to work?! You can't! You said you'd come watch the parade!

HOWARD
Oh ... right. The parade. Well --

JAMIE
Dad, Turbo Tom's gonna be there! You can't miss it!

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

I won't. I'll be at the office for an hour, tops. I'll make it, don't worry...

Jamie looks at him doubtfully. He goes back to join Ted, who's now building a SNOWMAN with Johnny.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I promise!

He turns to Liz who just stares at him, disappointed. She joins the group in the snow and Howard sighs. He starts walking to his car.

TED

You know, Liz, speaking of sharing with neighbors, I just installed a new alarm. And I'd feel a whole lot better if someone next door knew the code. May I give it to you?

Howard stops and turns back to Ted.

HOWARD

What? She doesn't need your alarm code.

TED

(ignoring him)

It's "WELCOME". You know, the last thing an intruder would ever expect -- a warm welcome ...

Liz nods. Howard rolls his eyes and heads for his car.

TED (CONT'D)

Oh -- Howard! You know, they say it may get icy later. Maybe you should put chains on your tires.

Howard forces a smile and waves.

HOWARD

(through gritted teeth)

Maybe you should go home ...

He gets into his car and leaves.

EXT. THE CITY - DAY

A clean, mid-sized urban setting. Howard's car passes a BANNER advertising the annual "LIGHTS BEFORE CHRISTMAS PARADE -- Sponsored by Funtime Toys. MEET TURBO TOM! Live and in person!" A picture of Turbo Tom waves from the banner.

EXT. EASTSIDE MALL - DAY

Built during the first mall boom in the sixties. It's certainly seen better days. A virtual sea of cars. Like everyone else, Howard's searching for a parking pace.

HOWARD

What are all these people doing here so early?

INT. TOMMY'S TOYS - DAY

One of the last of the small-time independents, but today the place is stuffed to the gills. Customers fight over what's left. Howard heads for a long line. Passes a SHORT LADY going the other way with a store bag.

SHORT LADY

I got one! I can't believe I got one!

Howard cranes his neck to see how long he may have to wait. Too long. So he pushes his way toward the front of the pack. Those he cuts off hurl obscenities. A harried SALES CLERK is dealing with a suicidal MOTHER, her LITTLE GIRL in tow.

MOTHER SHOPPER

She wants a B-A-R-B-I-E but you don't seem to have any B-A-R-B-I-E's. Are there any in back?

SALES CLERK

I'm sorry, but we're all out of B-A-R-B-I-E's. We do have a few S-K-I-P-P-E-R's left ...

LITTLE GIRL

But I don't want a Skipper! I want Barbie!!!

The girl starts SCREAMING. The mother angrily tugs her kid away. Customers surge forward. A short, nervous MAILMAN (burdened with an OVERLOADED MAIL SACK) turns to Howard.

MAILMAN

Some people just can't take the pressure. Know what I mean?

HOWARD

It's N-U-T-S.

CONTINUED:

SALES CLERK

Next!

CUSTOMER 1

That's me!

HOWARD

Just a second. I just have one quick question. Do you mind?

Customer 1 turns to Howard with a glare that would make Hannibal Lecter shiver.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

But it can certainly wait.

MAILMAN

(shakes Howard's hand)

Myron Larabee. Letter carrier.

HOWARD

Howard Puttnam. Frantic.

MYRON

Little last minute shopping, huh?

Howard nods.

MYRON

Me, I got no choice. Busiest time of the year. Gotta move all those important Christmas cards from people who never even speak to each other during the rest of the year. Then there are the presents from relatives that'll probably get returned anyway. Not to mention all the stinkin' letters to Santa at the North Pole -- 'course we just send those straight to the furnace!

A little BOY has stopped in front of MYRON. He heard that last bit and looks like he's about to cry. His FATHER quickly takes his hand and leads him away.

FATHER

He didn't mean that, son. He was only joking.

(back to Myron)

Jerki

CONTINUED:

MYRON

Hey, I know where you live, pal!
 (turns to Howard)
 Great. Now Santa'll get a letter from
 that kid again next year.

Howard's getting a little nervous.

HOWARD

Sounds like a tough job.

MYRON

I can handle it.
 (defensive)
 You think I can't handle it?

HOWARD

No, that's not what I'm saying --

SALES CLERK

Next!

Howard and Myron exchange a look.

MYRON

What the hell, go ahead. Just, whatever
 it is, don't put it in the mail.

HOWARD

Thanks. I owe you one.

SALES CLERK

Can I help you?

HOWARD

Yeah. Where can I find a ... a Turbo Tom?
 It's for my son, and he really wants --

Howard stops because the Sales Clerk is LAUGHING at him.

SALES CLERK

A Turbo Tom?! He's looking for a Turbo
 Tom!

CUSTOMER 2

You're lookin' for a Turbo Tom?!

MYRON

So am I. What of it?

Customer 2 begins to laugh too. Pretty soon the entire crowd is
 splitting their sides. "He's looking for a Turbo Tom!" It just
 makes them laugh harder. The hysterics seem to spread out into
 the mall too. Howard and Myron look perplexed.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

It shoots eye beams or something ...

MYRON

And its' arms and legs are supposed to move around ...

SALES CLERK

Not for you guys they won't.

HOWARD

What're you talking about? Why not? What'd I say?

SALES CLERK

Where've you been, mister? Turbo Tom's the biggest seller of the season.

CUSTOMER 2

Take my word for it. You gotta better chance of bein' elected Pope than you than you do of findin' a Turbo Tom.

SALES CLERK

Especially on Christmas Eve.

The world is crashing in on Howard.

HOWARD

No ... don't tell me that. It can't be -- It can't ...

Myron is doing his best to contain his own panic.

SALES CLERK

(gesturing)

But, we've got plenty of Turbo Tom's faithful pet saber tooth tiger Fang ...

Howard and Myron take a look at a pile of the repulsively cute stuffed Fangs. Yuck.

MYRON

(teeth clenched)

I don't want a Fang. I want a Tiny Todd like him!

HOWARD

You mean Turbo Tom.

CONTINUED:

MYRON

Whatever!

HOWARD

There must be one left somewhere.

SALES CLERK

Last one left a minute ago. Short lady had it on layaway. Next!

HOWARD/MYRON

Short lady?! What short lady?!

Howard and Myron race out of the store.

INT. EASTSIDE MALL - DAY

Howard and Myron race out of Tommy's Toys, looking frantically about for the short lady. There are way too many people in the mall. Suddenly, Howard sees a woman carrying a Tommy's Toys bag, entering a DEPARTMENT STORE. Myron spots her too. They both dash off. But Myron immediately collides with a passing shopper. His mail bag flies open. Letters and packages fill the air. Myron's got to drop to the ground and pick them up.

Howard pinballs his way through the crowd of shoppers, struggling to keep his eyes on the bag. He finally reaches the store and runs inside.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Howard is immediately greeted by cheery SALESPeOPLE. They shove their wares at him, forming a human gauntlet.

HAWKER 1

Try our new perfume?

A spritz nearly blinds Howard. AAAH!

HAWKER 2

You'd never know it's fat free!

A horrible tasting candy is shoved into his mouth. YUCK!

HAWKER 3

Free make-over consultation?

He's hit with a big powder puff. COUGH!

HAWKER 4

Promotional tie pins?

CONTINUED:

Howard screeches. Stuck in the chest. Smiling HAWKER 5 is next. But before he can say anything, HOWARD TOSSES HIM ASIDE. His wares go flying and Howard keeps moving.

Howard finally catches up to the bag. He grabs the SHORT LADY carrying it. She turns to see Howard, out of breath, clutching his chest, powder caked on his face, and CHOKING on the awful candy. He can't get a word out.

SHORT LADY
What do you want?!

Howard keeps her from walking away. Makes more choking sounds.

SHORT LADY
You're disgusting. I'm going to call security!

Howard can't communicate. Getting even more frustrated.

SHORT LADY
Look. If you have something to say to me, just spit it out!

And Howard does just that. Right on to the Short Lady's fur coat.

HOWARD
Sorry. Stuck in my throat.

SHORT LADY
(repulsed)
Not anymore.

HOWARD
I've been chasing you halfway across the mall.

SHORT LADY
Just to spit on me ...

Howard tries to flick the candy off.

HOWARD
Sorry, no. Your bag.

SHORT LADY
You want to spit in my bag?

HOWARD
No, no! I just wanted to offer you twice what you paid for it.

CONTINUED:

SHORT LADY
(shocked)
Twice?!

HOWARD
Okay -- three times! And a little extra
for dry cleaning. Whaddaya say?

SHORT LADY
I say for that kind of profit, here ...
knock yourself out.

She grabs the money and disappears. Howard takes a breath before opening the bag ... a pulls out a pink fluffy FANG. He growls with disappointment.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Liz is baking a batch of CHRISTMAS COOKIES. Cookies are EVERYWHERE, and she's covered in FLOUR and FOOD COLORING. Ted enters through the kitchen door, brushing off his hands.

TED
Hi Liz. I was shoveling my walk and I noticed a nasty patch of ice by your garage door. I didn't want anyone to slip, so I put some rock salt down.

LIZ
Thanks, Ted.

Ted opens and closes the kitchen door. It makes a little SQUEAKING sound.

TED
Hmm. Does this squeaking bother you?
'Cause you know I could take care of it
with a little oil.

LIZ
Well -- sure. If you want to.

Liz holds a plate out.

LIZ (CONT'D)
How 'bout a Christmas cookie?

Ted holds his hand up, refusing.

TED
Oh, no. I couldn't. They're for the
children.

CONTINUED:

LIZ

There's plenty for everybody. Go on.
Consider it payment for services
rendered.

Just then, Jamie and Johnny run in from the living room.

JAMIE

Mom I have a question -- ooh can I have a
cookie?

LIZ

(laughs)

Yes. Was that the question or just an
afterthought?

Jamie and Johnny help themselves to cookies.

JAMIE

(mouth full)

Um. An afterthought. Cnd me an Johhy go
to thf parade ulungh?

LIZ

Swallow, please.

JAMIE

(swallowing)

Sorry. Me and Johnny wanna go to the
parade alone.

LIZ

You mean alone like without us? No.

JAMIE

Why not?

Johnny, cheeks full of cookies, MUMBLES AN UNINTELLIGIBLE
PROTEST as well.

LIZ

Because it's going to be crowded and we
should all go as a group.

JAMIE

Aw Mom, come on. We go every year and
this always happens! You're gonna wanna
leave so late and we hafta leave early
this time so we can get seats up front
near Turbo Tom! You just don't think
we're grown up enough to go alone. But we
are, I swear! Right, Johnny?

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY
(mouth still full)
Umfff.

Cookie chunks fall from Johnny's mouth.

TED
Johnny -- not with your mouth full.
Sorry, Liz.

Liz kneels down in front of the kids.

LIZ
I'll tell you what. How about we make a deal? We let you leave early: on your bikes, in light-colored clothing, with hats ...

The boys make a face at one another. Hats. Ick.

LIZ (CONT'D)
And we all decide ahead of time on a meeting place. That's where you'll go -- and stay -- until we get there. Deal?

JAMIE
We gotta stay in one place the whole time?!

JOHNNY
But we can't!

Ted looks at Johnny pointedly.

TED
Hey. Remember when we talked about compromising? How sometimes it feels better to make everyone happy?

Johnny nods. Liz looks at Jamie.

LIZ
I think it's a pretty good offer.

The kids look at each other, considering ...

LIZ (CONT'D)
So ... whaddaya say? Deal?

JAMIE & JOHNNY
All right. Deal.

CONTINUED:

LIZ

Okay.

They run outside. Liz sighs.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Ugh. What a day.

She looks around at the cookie mess, then at her watch.

LIZ (CONT'D)

And I've still got to make lunch ...

TED

You know Liz, it seems like you could use a little 'you' time. Go up, take a shower, relax ... I'll clean up in here and fix some sandwiches for the boys.

Liz laughs, amused.

LIZ

Ted!

TED

No, really. It's no problem. It's a season for giving ...

Liz shakes her head in disbelief.

LIZ

All right. If you say so.

She heads upstairs.

EXT. EASTSIDE MALL - DAY

In a phone booth, Howard rifles through the directory and dials.

HOWARD

Yes, can you tell me if you have any Turbo Toms left?

HYSTERICAL LAUGHTER. Then CLICK. Howard tries another number.

HOWARD

Do you have any Turbo Toms?

VOICE (ON PHONE)

Oh sure. I've got them in the back room. Elvis and Bigfoot are playing with 'em!

CONTINUED:

Click. Howard tries one more number.

RECORDED MESSAGE

Toys Unlimited. No Turbo Toms left. If you'd like further information, please press one ...

Howard slams the phone down.

EXT. GARAGE - SAME

Jamie and Johnny are exiting the garage. Jamie carries one of Howard's huge MIRACLE MATTRESS BOXES on his head, while Johnny drags a BOX crudely marked "supplies".

JAMIE

Everything's going according to plan.

JOHNNY

Uh-uh -- Your mom said we have to stay in one place, remember? That messes up everything.

JAMIE

Nah. She was just saying that. Besides, when everybody sees what we're gonna do they'll be too impressed to be mad.

JOHNNY

You think so?

JAMIE

Totally. I mean, how many other kids are smart enough to figure out a way to actually meet Turbo Tom?

Johnny nods. This is gonna be cool ... The boys drag their stuff into the back SHED and close the door behind them.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ted's wearing a "KISS THE COOK" APRON. The whole kitchen is cleaned and organized. Lunches containing all four food groups are set out for the boys. Ick. Ted pours himself a cup of coffee as the phone rings. Once. Twice. No one picks up, so he does.

TED

Merry Christmas! Puttnam residence!

INTERCUT WITH HOWARD

HOWARD

Hi, I -- Ted?

TED

Howard! Hey!
(genuinely concerned)
How's work going?

HOWARD

(annoyed)

Fine. Let me talk to Liz.

Ted picks up a CHRISTMAS COOKIE. Takes a bite.

TED

Mmm! Oh, Howard! Excuse me -- but your
wife's cookies are out of this world!

HOWARD

Who said you could eat my cookies?

TED

She did. "Payment for services rendered".

HOWARD

Services ren -- look. Lemme talk to her,
okay?

Ted calls out for Liz. No answer.

TED

Huh. I think she's still in the shower.
Do you want me to go check?

HOWARD

NO!!! I mean, no. That's fine. On your
way out, tell her I'm going to be a few
minutes longer but she shouldn't worry.

TED

No problem. Hey, by the way, the kids
asked if they could go to the parade
alone today. Liz and I discussed it and
said it would be okay.

HOWARD

You and Liz discussed it.

TED

(taking another cookie)

Well, we didn't want to bother you at the
office. It's hard enough on you having to
work today ...

CONTINUED:

Ted takes another bite of cookie.

TED (CONT'D)

Oh, wow! Howard, these cookies! I've gotta get the recipe from Liz.

HOWARD

PUT THAT COOKIE DOWN! NOW!

TED

Howard? Is something bothering you? Because this time of year there's a very high incidence of stress-related breakdowns. You may want to try some deep breathing or --

Howard's about to launch into a full-scale attack when a GROUP of PANICKED SHOPPERS race by. One of them shouts:

SHOPPER

"Toy Warehouse" at the Westside Promenade just got a last minute delivery of Turbo Toms!

The shopper TRIPS and FALLS. The crowd TRAMPLES right over him. Howard drops the phone and takes off for his car. The phone dangles there.

TED

(through phone)

Howard ...? Howard ...?

EXT. HOWARD'S CAR - DAY

Howard races for his car and is nearly run down by Myron, who is careening by in his POSTAL DELIVERY JEEP. Howard dives into his car and peels out.

EXT. HOWARD'S CAR - DAY

As it darts in and out of traffic, Howard's hands and feet alternate between the horn, gas pedal and brakes. Suddenly, he pulls up alongside Myron's mail jeep. Their eyes meet.

Myron looks a bit wild-eyed. Men on a mission. It's Howard's sedan versus Myron's tiny jeep. Myron FLINGS a POORLY-WRAPPED FRUITCAKE at Howard's car. It BOUNCES OFF THE HOOD as Myron speeds ahead. Howard tries to catch him -- as he does, Myron LAUNCHES an armful of CHRISTMAS CATALOGS. They SPREAD ACROSS HOWARD'S WINDSHIELD. Howard turns his WIPERS on to clear the catalogs -- just in time to witness himself running a red light. Myron follows.

CONTINUED:

OFFICER HUMMELL

Gee. Words can not express just how relieved I am about that, sir. Have a Merry Christmas now ...

HOWARD

I'm trying ...

Howard pulls away. Off to the side of the road: An entire WALL pasted with "Lights Before Christmas Parade" POSTERS.

EXT. WESTSIDE PROMENADE - DAY

Howard drives into the parking lot. It's jammed with cars. He circles, looking for a space. He spots an OLD MAN loading packages into his ancient Dodge Dart, his movements excruciatingly slow. Howard can't wait any longer.

HOWARD

(mutter)

He'll be dead before he's done loading those.

He spots a LOST SHOPPER.

HOWARD

Excuse me, are you on your way out?

LOST SHOPPER

I would be if I could remember where I parked my car. Oh wait! There it is.

Howard coasts behind her.

LOST SHOPPER

Nope. That's not it.

HOWARD

You know, maybe I can help. What kind of car is it?

LOST SHOPPER

A rental. See, I wrecked my car and the insurance company --

Someone behind Howard HONKS. The shopper looks off into the distance. HONK! HONK! Howard checks his watch.

HOWARD

Hey ... Maybe I could drive you around and help you look for it. Then you could give me your space.

CONTINUED:

LOST SHOPPER

Wow. That's so nice. I love this time of year.

The lost shopper opens Howard's door. Just as Howard notices a SPACE clearing out up ahead.

HOWARD

On second thought, never mind.

Howard screeches away, sending the LOST SHOPPER falling to the pavement, packages flying. Ironically, Howard loses the empty space to Myron's jeep, which snakes in ahead of him.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Hey ...

Myron sneers and flips Howard off as he hurries into the mall. Howard backs the car over to the lost shopper.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Still up for that ride?

She looks at Howard, furious. Then, without warning, she winds up and KICKS a HUGE DENT in Howard's car door.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Hey! What's your problem?!

She GRABS at Howard's NECK through the car window.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

What are you, crazy? Help! Someone help!
I'm being mauled by a crazy person!!

He hits the gas, propelling the car forward until the shopper releases him and face-plants on the asphalt. She glances up.

LOST SHOPPER

Oh. There's my car.

INT. SHED - DAY

Jamie stands in front of a wall, Johnny sits in front of him. A big piece of CARDBOARD holds a CRUDE DIAGRAM with sections marked: "PARADE ROUTE", "TURBO TOM'S FLOAT", "WEREHOUSE", and an 'X' labelled "US". A LARGE SHEET covers the kids' grand project, which sits in the corner. Jamie points at the plan.

JAMIE

-- and then we move to Point B. Where we unveil the secret weapon, preparing for its eventual rendezvous with the float at Point C.

CONTINUED:

Jamie stops, holding the pointer with both hands. Serious.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

You realize, of course, only one of us is going to be able to make the jump to Turbo Tom's float.

JOHNNY

(grave)

I was aware of that possibility.

They stare at each other. A showdown.

JAMIE

I suggest a round of "rock, paper, scissors" to see who gets to go.

Johnny nods. He knows it's the only way. They both concentrate, wind up and throw ... Jamie has paper. Johnny, a rock. He frowns, clearly disappointed.

JOHNNY

Aw, man!!

JAMIE

"Paper covers rock". Sorry, Johnny.

JOHNNY

Aw, man!!

JAMIE

Hey. I promise, when I get up there I'll make Turbo Tom come down and meet you too.

JOHNNY

Swear?

Jamie nods. Offers his hand. They do the secret Turbo Tom Salute to bond the deal.

INT. WESTSIDE PROMENADE - DAY

The antithesis of the last mall. Brand new. Ultra-modern. And even busier. As time runs out, shoppers are getting more anxious to buy their last minute gifts. Howard is among them.

INT. TOY WAREHOUSE - DAY

A virtual mob scene. The crowd overflows into the mall. Howard fights his way inside. A young, pimply-faced STORE MANAGER emerges under EMPLOYEE ESCORT. He speaks condescendingly through a child's TOY MEGAPHONE.

CONTINUED:

STORE MANAGER

Listen up people, 'cause I'm only gonna say this once.

The crowd hushes reverently.

STORE MANAGER

Now, to answer your first question -- Yes, the rumors are true. We have received a quantity of the action figures known as Turbo Tom ...

The crowd cheers in excitement.

STORE MANAGER

I'm not going to ask you people for quiet again, do you understand me?!

The crowd hushes again.

STORE MANAGER

The unfortunate news is that we only have thirty of them.

The crowd moans and grumbles. The manager glares again.

STORE MANAGER

So here's how this is going to work. You will all form an orderly line so that an employee can hand you a numbered ball. The balls will then be drawn in a standard lottery fashion to see who gets the dolls. I'd like to add that if you're not one of the lucky few, we do have plenty of Turbo Tom's faithful pet tiger Fang in stock.

Boos from the crowd.

STORE MANAGER

Oh, and by the way, the new list price for each figure just doubled.

More boos. The crowd has formed a line and the teenage employees begin handing out the numbered ping pong balls. Howard, meanwhile, walks up to the Store Manager and smiles confidently.

HOWARD

(extending his hand)

Hi, Howard Puttnam. Nice to meet you.

CONTINUED:

STORE MANAGER
(still talking into megaphone)

What?

Howard tries to tilt the megaphone down and begin a discreet conversation.

HOWARD
(conspiratorially)
Look, I run a very profitable business in town and I was just thinking that if you could perhaps set aside a doll for me, we might be able to work out some kind of compensation ...

STORE MANAGER
(through megaphone)
Sir ... are you trying to bribe me?!

The crowd hears. Howard turns. They start booing him now.

STORE MANAGER
(through megaphone)
Get to the back of the line!!!

People try to swing at Howard as walks to the back of the line. The crowd's getting ugly. The teenage employees start to panic. Finally, as the crowd starts to surround them, the employees THROW the remaining BALLS INTO THE AIR and run for their lives.

Chaos erupts as the balls BOUNCE everywhere. It's a free for all. Howard drops to the ground with the rest of the shoppers madly looking for a stray ball. He's bumped and kicked and bitten and stepped on, until he finally spots one rolling toward the entrance. He dives for it -- and smacks heads with MYRON, of all people. Myron tries to grab the ball out of Howard's hand.

HOWARD
You again ...?!

MYRON
It's mine! Besides, you said you owed me one!

HOWARD
It was just a figure of speech!

MYRON
Uh huh -- I'll bet you're the kind of guy that sends letters *postage due*!

Myron YANKS the ball away from Howard. Grins victoriously. Howard's furious. At a loss, he points at Myron and yells:

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(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD
HEY! HE TOOK TWO!!!

Suddenly, an angry hoard of shoppers FILE ON Myron, completely burying him. The ball rolls out of the pile, into the mall and under a VENDOR CART. Another mob of shoppers UPTURN THE CART to get to it. Then Howard spots another ball trickling out of the store. He sneaks away from the crowd and chases after the ball.

He's almost got it, when it rolls right off the walkway ... DOWN to the lower level of the mall. Howard watches it bounce off the mall PIANO PLAYER'S head and roll across the floor.

Howard leaps into the GLASS ELEVATOR and pounds the DOWN BUTTON. Loads of other shoppers pile in, PRESSING HOWARD'S FACE UP AGAINST THE GLASS. He tries to follow the ball (it's kicked along the floor by dozens of shoppers) as the elevator descends.

DING! Everybody piles out of the elevator and Howard dashes after the ball. He gets close enough to see a TODDLER pick it up and wander into a PLAYROOM containing HUNDREDS OF PLASTIC COLORED BALLS. Howard follows the kid inside, stumbling through the knee high balls. He's not expecting the SLIDE at the other end. He slides down and finally grabs the toddler at the bottom.

HOWARD
C'mon, sweetie, let me have the itty
bitty ball ... Pretty please? With sugar
on top?

The kid sticks the ball in his mouth and starts sucking.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
No, no, no ... you want something to eat?
I'll buy you anything in the mall. Just
hand over the ...

Howard tries to pry the kid's slobbery mouth open when -- WHUMP!
He's hit right in the head with a PURSE.

ANGRY MOTHER
Get away from my kid, you sicko!

She continues to hit Howard until he lets go. She carries the toddler away, but not before other angry mothers join in pummeling Howard with their bags, yelling: "Pervert! Sicko! Creep!" ... etc. Howard tries in vain to crawl away and lifts his woozy head to see the toddler finally drop the ball ... as a mad group of shoppers spill out of the elevator to scoop it up.

Howard COLLAPSES in a heap and starts BANGING HIS HEAD against the floor in frustration. He stops as he hears ...

CONTINUED:

VOICE (O.S.)

Psst! Psst!

Howard looks up. Who's signalling him? Peeking out from the other side of the pillar ... SANTA. Well, actually, a mall Santa and his DWARF/ELF sidekick, TONY. They look a bit ratty.

MALL SANTA

Hey. You wanna --

His FAKE BEARD FALLS OFF. He hurriedly attempts to put it back on, but it won't stick. He's gotta hold it as he speaks.

MALL SANTA

You wanna Turbo Tom for Christmas?

Howard looks at the ratty Santa in disgust.

HOWARD

Forget it, buddy. I'm not sitting on your lap, okay?

MALL SANTA

Hey chief, I ain't no pervert. Just a reputable businessman looking to give you a leg up out of that stinking pit you call a life. But with your attitude, I don't think I wanna give you access to this --

The ELF thrusts out a POLAROID It's the Santa, HOLDING a TURBO TOM in one hand and the DAY'S NEWSPAPER in the other.

TONY THE ELF

Dat was taken dis morning.

MALL SANTA

Ahh, forget it Tony. This guy doesn't want our help. Let's go.

They start to walk away. Howard chases after them.

HOWARD

Whoa. Now hold on there just a minute. We're all ... businessmen. Correct? Who am I to walk away from a potentially lucrative transaction?

He looks at the duo. Santa's beard falls off again.

CONTINUED:

MALL SANTA (cont'd)
so show a little respect for the suit.
Now do you want the doll or not?

Howard grits his teeth and unlocks his car doors. Santa and Tony pile in.

MALL SANTA (CONT'D)
On Dasher, on Dancer, on Prancer and
Vixen, on Comet, on Cupid, on Donner and
Blitzen!

Howard looks at him.

TONY THE ELF
Ya got seatbelts in da back?

EXT. SHED - DAY

Back at home. We slowly MOVE IN to the backyard shed. We see SILHOUETTES moving around in the tiny window, and the CLANKING and BANGING sounds of the boys' production.

JAMIE (O.C.)
Hammer.

JOHNNY (O.C.)
Hammer.

JAMIE (O.C.)
Screwdriver.

JOHNNY (O.C.)
Screwdriver.

JAMIE (O.C.)
Scotch tape.

JOHNNY (O.C.)
Scotch tape.

JAMIE (O.C.)
Juice box.

JOHNNY (O.C.)
Juice box?

JAMIE (O.C.)
I'm thirsty.

JOHNNY (O.C.)
Oh. Juice box ...

CONTINUED:

We hear a loud SLURP.

EXT. HOWARD'S CAR - DAY

The car enters a SEEDY-LOOKING part of town.

MALL SANTA

Turn right at the wino over there.

HOWARD

Geez, buddy! How much longer?

MALL SANTA

Don't call me "buddy". I'm Santa, okay?

Howard looks at him, exasperated

HOWARD

Fine ... Santa, it's getting late, I've got a parade to get to, we've been driving for over twenty minutes, and I have yet to see any sign of your supposed Turbo Tom doll, while presently as I waste time with you morons my in-touch-with-his-feminine-side neighbor is busy attacking my wife's cookies!! All right?!!

MALL SANTA

Hey. Spare me the details of your twisted sex life, okay?

Howard groans.

MALL SANTA

Make a left up at the dumpster.
(scoffs)
Cookies.

The car pulls into an EMPTY LOT, next to which sits a huge WAREHOUSE. Santa, Tony and Howard get out of the car.

MALL SANTA

This way.

They keep walking. Howard carefully sets his CAR ALARM.

TONY THE ELF

Yeah, like dat's gonna do any good.

Howard looks worried and races after them. He follows them to the door of the warehouse. They approach a STEEL DOOR. Santa KNOCKS "Jingle Bells". A SMALL SCREEN slides open.

CONTINUED:

VOICE
(from door)
Password.

MALL SANTA
(hushed)
Jingle bells, Batman smells ...

Howard raises an eyebrow at Santa, who shrugs as the screen SLAMS shut and the door is opened.

TONY THE ELF
Get in.

Howard follows Santa and Tony into the warehouse.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

HOWARD
Okay. Let's do this --

He stops. In front of him: about 20 GUYS IN SANTA SUITS (of all shapes and colors), a LARGE GROUP OF ELVES, and a SMATTERING OF MRS. CLAUSES stand frozen, staring him down.

MALL SANTA
It's okay. He's cool.

There is an AUDIBLE SIGH as the group gets back to work. Everywhere you look are BOXES and BOXES of TOYS. It looks like the stock room of a Toys 'R' Us. Santas are doing box counts as Elves mark checklists. The Mrs. Clauses sit at a CARD TABLE, wearing GREEN VISORS and counting STACKS OF CASH.

MALL SANTA
I know what you're thinking.

HOWARD
You have no idea.

MALL SANTA
Well stop thinking it. And forget it all the minute you walk out that door because we got a good operation going on here. Tony, go get the man his Turbo Tom.

Tony hurries off into the stacks.

HOWARD
Uh ... Santa, I gotta tell ya, there's something here that doesn't seem quite... ethical.

CONTINUED:

MALL SANTA

Ethical? This from the man who tried to assault a toddler for a ping pong ball...

HOWARD

Good point.

MALL SANTA

Look, we're providing a service here. Us guys in the malls work hard this time of year. The pay's bupkes, and every five minutes we're cleaning up another stain left by some nervous kid on our lap. But worse than that is the heartbreak. We gotta listen to all those kids when they tell us what they want -- this game, that doll ... And in our hearts we know that most of you morons are too busy with your jobs and marital problems to ever take note, to even care ... The thought of those kids waking up Christmas morning without that special gift ...

(his voice cracks emotionally)

That's heartbreak. Poor kids. And that's where we come in. We stop heartbreak.

Howard's a bit taken aback.

HOWARD

Gee, I ... So ... Wow.

(gesturing)

Where does all this stuff come from?

MALL SANTA

(totally recovered)

Who're you, the Question King?

A harried Santa runs by.

HARRIED SANTA

Santa, we got any Super-Loop Glowing Racecar Sets? I got a customer over on the East side who'll by.

MALL SANTA

Check aisle 4, Santa.

(to Howard)

You know, last year we made enough money to take a Santa Surf 'N' Sun trip to Maui. This year we're trying for Bali.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

Oh god oh god oh god!

He fumbles with the SEATBELT and manges to fasten it before the car skids around another bend. He pulls the wheel to avoid colliding head-on with a BEER TRUCK. The car does a 360, SLAMMING into a curbside parking space. A NEON "Al's Beer Bar" SIGN flashes nearby.

Howard pants and pants -- he looks up to see: a HUGE BILLBOARD for the PARADE. Turbo Tom smiles down in all his glory. Mocking him. Howard slumps over onto the steering wheel. HOOOONK!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Liz is at the table, decorating the Christmas STOCKINGS with GLITTER and GLUE. Ted's in there as well, oiling the squeaky door. He swings it back and forth.

TED

Quiet as a mouse.

Liz nods, engrossed in her work.

TED (CONT'D)

Hey, Liz -- I'm gonna be bringing some old clothing down to the local shelter tomorrow. Spread a little Christmas warmth. Is there anything you may want to donate?

LIZ

(looks up)

Ted! That's really thoughtful of you.

He shrugs modestly.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Well I've got a ton of stuff upstairs. I'll throw a bag together for ...

She trails off, noticing Jamie and Johnny -- trying to sneak by carrying more 'supplies': A GREEN TABLECLOTH, a MAKEUP MIRROR and ROPE. Liz stops them.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Hey you two -- what's with all this sneaking around?

JAMIE

We're not sneaking around.

CONTINUED:

Johnny quickly hides the rope behind his back.

JOHNNY
Nuh-uh. Not at all.

Liz takes the rope from Johnny. She looks at the two of them.

LIZ
Hmmm. So what exactly are you guys
working on back there?

Johnny flashes a panicked look to Jamie.

JAMIE
Ummm .. it's a project. A secret project.

JOHNNY
Yeah -- For school.

LIZ
For school? But you're on Christmas
vacation.

JOHNNY
(oops)
Oh, yeah ...

JAMIE
(covering)
And that's what's so secret about it. We
can't tell anybody about it 'cause we're
not in school but it's for school so, you
know -- and we didn't think you'd mind
because it's for extra credit and stuff
like that.

Johnny looks at him. Good save. Liz doesn't buy it for a second.

LIZ
Nice try. You boys had better not be
doing anything dangerous ...

Just then, Ted steps in from the kitchen.

TED
You know gentlemen, I know how important
it is for everyone to respect each
other's privacy, so I'm not going to ask
you to tell me what it is you're doing
out there. I only hope that you're being
careful -- and if there's anything you
can't handle, that you'll come in and ask
for help before you try it yourselves.

CONTINUED:

The boys nod, grateful.

JAMIE
Okay. We will.

JOHNNY
Yeah. We promise.

TED
(winks)
Okay then. Now why don't you two get back to work.

They smile at Ted and run off to the garage. Liz smiles, somewhat impressed. Ted stands and faces her.

TED (CONT'D)
Sometimes I have to remind myself how capable they are of doing things on their own. God -- they grow up so fast ...

He mists up again. Sheesh. Liz looks uneasy. She carefully pats him on the shoulder.

LIZ
It's okay, Ted. They're only eight.

She walks back into the kitchen. Ted looks at the spot on his shoulder where Liz touched him. He gently places his hand there. Looks at Liz with a different sort of interest. Uh-oh.

He peers into the kitchen. His eyes follow Liz as she reaches up to get something on a shelf. He steps forward.

TED
(flustered)
Uh -- Liz ... do you -- do you need any help with that?

Before he can get any closer -- the PHONE RINGS.

LIZ
Would you mind?

TED
(voice cracking)
Sure --
(clears his throat)
Uh, sure.

Ted goes back into the living room to pick up the phone.

CONTINUED:

TED (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Puttnam residence.

INT. AL'S BEER BAR - DAY

Howard is on the payphone in the back of an empty dive bar.

HOWARD
 Ted? Are you still there?

INTERCUT WITH TED

Who turns away from the kitchen and covers the receiver.

TED
 Oh! Howard. It -- it's you. You... you
 still working?

HOWARD
 What? Look, Ted, I need to speak to Liz.

Behind Howard, we see dozens of leather-clad, beer drinking
 BIKERS pour into the bar. They look pretty rowdy.

Ted starts edging away from the kitchen with the phone.

TED
 Oh. Well I -- I don't know if she can
 come to the phone right now. Maybe I
 could -- give her a message? Yeah.

HOWARD
 Ted, just lemme talk to my wife!

Suddenly the bikers start blasting deafening HEAVY METAL. They
 SHOUT and SMASH BOTTLES to show their approval.

TED
 Howard? What was that? Are -- are you
 still at work?

Howard shouts over the music.

HOWARD
 Of course! That was just the ...workmen--
 here to ... remodel my office!

Ted backs up all the way to the Christmas tree.

CONTINUED:

TED
Remodeling? On Christmas?

HOWARD
You know, this is really none of your
business --

Ted STEPS ON Howard's wrapped anti-freeze, RIPPING THE PAPER.

TED
Oh no! Howard! I'm so sorry! That present
you wrapped for Jamie! I --

HOWARD
DON'T TOUCH THAT!

A pair of rough-housing bikers CRASH into Howard.

TED
But I --

HOWARD
Just leave it alone!!

Ted peers down at the ripped paper. The anti-freeze LABEL is
clearly visible. Ted looks confused.

Howard ducks as a BOTTLE whizzes overhead and SMASHES against
the wall.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
Look! Just tell Liz not to worry! I'll be
home soon!

Howard hangs up the phone and ducks again as another bottle
flies by.

Back at the house, Ted quietly hangs up the phone -- just as Liz
enters.

LIZ
Wait -- was that Howard?

TED
Uh, why?

LIZ
(annoyed)
Ted.

CONTINUED:

TED

Well ... he couldn't really talk. He was very busy.

Liz grabs the phone.

LIZ

I'm calling him back. I can't believe he didn't wait to talk to me ...

Ted waits, nervous, as Liz dials.

RECORDED MESSAGE

(on phone)

Hello, you have reached the Miracle Mattress Corporation. We are currently closed for the holiday season. Please try us again during our regular hours ...

Liz looks annoyed. She hangs up.

LIZ

He is really treading on thin ice today.

Suddenly she looks up at Ted's face, studying him. He swallows. Could it be ... ?

TED

(croaks)

Liz?

She reaches up and vigorously rubs at his cheek with a dishtowel.

LIZ

You've got a big smudge of oil. There!

Job done, she walks back into the kitchen. Ted stands there, dazed, carefully touching "Liz's" spot on his cheek. He swoons.

EXT. AL'S BEER BAR - DAY

A frustrated Howard steps out. Just as a ROARING MOTORCYCLE careens by, nearly flattening his toes. He looks at the street: an OCEAN of MOTORCYCLES parked several deep along the entire block. Some BIKERS hang outside, revving their engines. A SALVATION ARMY BELL-RINGER stands beside a pot, ignored.

Howard suddenly notices that each bike has a NEW TOY STRAPPED to the HANDLEBARS. And sure enough, one of the choppers has a gleaming TURBO TOM -- perched on it like a figurehead. Howard grins. He glances about. Thinks. Makes a decision. Attempting to remain cool, Howard roams around the bike -- covering himself by DROPPING SOME CHANGE into the Salvation Army pot.

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(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BELL RINGER

Bless you, son.

Howard reaches for the toy, just as a DRUNK BIKER bumps into him. Howard quickly retracts his hand. When the coast is clear, Howard grabs for it again. but it won't come off. When one hand doesn't do it, he tries BOTH. Before long, he's dropped all pretense and is tugging as hard as he can. Finally, he gives it one big YANK -- FREEING THE TOY, and SENDING THE BIKE DOWN with it. Falling, THE BIKE HITS THE CHOPPER NEXT TO IT ON THE WAY, CAUSING SEVERAL OTHERS TO FOLLOW SUIT in a noisy domino effect. Suddenly, all eyes are on Howard, including a monstrous BIKER DUDE, rendered speechless by Howard's audacity.

HOWARD

I saw the guy! Did you see him??! The nerve! He took off down that way, the coward!!

Nobody's buying it.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

That way ...! Over there ...!

Biker Dude growls, his face turning beet red. Howard realizes he's been gesturing with the Turbo Tom doll. A SHEEPISH LAUGH, then Howard BOLTS down the street.

BIKER DUDE

He took my toy...! He took my toy!

Outraged, some of the BIKERS follow on foot, while others mount their hogs. The angry Biker Dude guns his engine.

EXT. VARIOUS CITY STREETS - DAY

Howard runs full-out with the toy tucked under his arm like a football. The tattooed bikers are close behind. Howard turns a corner and ducks into an alley, hiding behind a DUMPSTER. He doubles back after the mob passes by. When they spot him going the other way, Howard pulls open a DOOR marked "EMERGENCY EXIT".

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Howard slams and LOCKS the door behind him. Realizes he's ON THE LANES of a jam-packed bowling alley in the midst of a CHRISTMAS TOURNAMENT. COSTUMED theme-teams (The Wise Men, Santa's Reindeer, Eight Candles and a Dreidel) bowl away. Howard hears POUNDING on the door behind him and starts running across the lanes.

Howard dodges BOWLING BALLS and FLYING PINS. He stumbles. Looks up just as a LARGE PINK BOWLING BALL comes rolling towards him..

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CONTINUED:

He ROLLS INTO THE GUTTER just in time -- but THE BALL KNOCKS TURBO TOM OUT OF HIS HANDS AND INTO THE PINS.

Howard quickly crawls to the end of the lane. The toy teeters on the edge of the pin deck. Suddenly, the PIN SWEEPER drops. Howard grabs it, struggling to hold it back from the doll.

The BIKERS SMASH THE DOOR OPEN. Several are promptly KNOCKED ON THEIR BUTTS by fast-moving balls. BOWLERS are furious. Some of the bikers try to slip away -- a few try to outrun the balls, diving into the pins at the ends of the alleys.

Howard is just about to nab the Turbo Tom when it FALLS INTO THE PIT. He slips and slides to his feet, just in time to see the package drop into the RETURN TUBE.

He races for the other end.irate bowlers mob him. Fling FOOD, CRUMPLED SCORE SHEETS and MINI PENCILS at him. Howard reaches into the RETURN SLOT, his FINGERS PINCHED between returning balls. Finally, the toy is spat out. He grabs it.

Howard hops up the steps. Threads his way through a COFFEE SHOP. SLAMS into a WAITRESS, sending food flying. He spots the EXIT and dashes OUT.

EXT. BOWLING ALLEY ENTRANCE - DAY

The bikers angrily burst through the doors, looking for Howard. He's nowhere to be found.

INT. CITY BUS - DAY

Howard rides in the back of a bus holding the Turbo Tom doll. He smiles down at it happily.

HOWARD

Time to take you home. You have no idea what I've been through for you, little man.

A beer bottle SMASHES against the outside window, startling Howard and the passengers. The bus is completely surrounded by bikers on motorcycles. They WHACK the vehicle with CHAINS and KICK at it with their boots. The passengers start to SCREAM.

BUS DRIVER

What the hell's going on back there?!

PASSENGER #1

They're attacking the bus!

A terrified passenger looks at Howard.

CONTINUED:

PASSENGER #2
What do they want?!

HOWARD
(hugs the doll tighter)
I can't imagine.

A BIKER DUDE revs up alongside.

BIKER DUDE
That guy ... He took my Turbo Tom!

ANOTHER BIKER
Every year we give toys to sick children!

BIKER DUDE
For charity! And he stole my doll!

PASSENGER #1
Doll? What doll?

Howard looks around, feigning concern.

HOWARD
I saw a guy up front with a doll!

SMASH! The bikers pound on the bus some more.

BIKERS
WE WANT THE DOLL!

BUS DRIVER
Who's got the doll?! Who's got the doll?!

They RAM the bus again. Howard is KNOCKED forward and the DOLL FLIPS OUT OF HIS ARMS. All the passengers look at it.

HOWARD
(sheepish)
Oh. That doll.

PASSENGER #1
GET IT!

Howard dives for it. Everyone piles on top of him.

HOWARD
Please! You don't understand! I promised
my kid!

CONTINUED:

PASSENGER #2

Give it up!

SMASH! A beer bottle SHATTERS the driver's side-view MIRROR.

BUS DRIVER

(close to tears)

For god's sake someone give 'em the doll!

The passenger wrestles the doll away from Howard and opens a window up front. The other passengers hold Howard back.

HOWARD

Aw c'mon, where's your Christmas spirit?

The passenger sneers and tosses the doll out the window, into the air.

Outside, the biker dude reaches for the doll, flying towards his hands. He grabs for it, but DROPS it. It bounces to the ground and is RUN OVER by the BACK WHEELS of the bus. Crushed. The bus drives off as the bikers stop in front of the smashed toy.

BIKER DUDE

It's busted!

He cradles the smashed toy sadly. Another biker shakes his fist at the bus.

OTHER BIKER

We'll get you, toy thief!

The rest of the bikers pump their fists and roar in agreement.

EXT. STREET CORNER - AFTERNOON

The heavily DENTED city bus pulls to a stop. Its front FENDER DROPS OFF. The door HISSSES open and FALLS OFF ITS HINGES. And a disheveled Howard is unceremoniously TOSSED OUT on his butt. The bus spews BLACK EXHAUST in his face as it pulls away. Rattling.

INT. LIZ & HOWARD'S BEDROOM - DAY

Liz puts away laundry. Jamie runs in, Johnny close behind.

JAMIE

Mom! Mom! Is he home yet?

LIZ

No. Not yet, hon.

CONTINUED:

JAMIE

Are you serious? We're leaving soon!

Johnny shakes his head, commiserating.

LIZ

I know. But he'll be back in time to say
goodbye. And if he gets held up ...

(stops herself)

... which he won't --

She starts quickly putting clothes away but it's too late.

JAMIE

Held up?! You mean he might not make it
to the parade at all?! Mom, he's just
gotta be there! I want him to see me go
up on the float and -- OOF!

Johnny elbows Jamie in the ribs. Shhh!

LIZ

(turning around)

What float?

JAMIE

What?

LIZ

You want Dad to see you go up on what
float ...?

JOHNNY

He didn't say float. He said ... flow. He
wants Mr. Puttnam to see him ... go with
the flow.

(makes a little hand "wave")

Go with the flow. Outta site ...

LIZ

"Outta site"?

JOHNNY

I heard it on TV.

Liz looks puzzled by all this lame double-talk.

LIZ

Look, I don't know what you boys are up
to, but --

CONTINUED:

JAMIE

Mom we're not doing anything. Now is Dad coming home or not?

Liz looks at Jamie's anxious face. Sighs.

LIZ

Yes. Definitely. In fact, he called just a little while ago. He should be here any minute.

Jamie nods and runs out. Johnny follows. Liz stands there, hoping she's right.

TED (O.C.)

Liz, these are just great!

She turns. We realize Ted is INSIDE LIZ'S CLOSET. He comes out holding an ARMPFUL of CLOTHES.

TED (CONT'D)

You're really being far too generous.

He dumps the clothes on the bed and begins folding them.

LIZ

(picking through the stuff)

Well Ted, I had to finally admit to myself that the "Flashdance" look just isn't gonna come back in style.

She holds up one of those awful CUT-NECK SWEATSHIRTS.

TED

Look, Liz. I -- about before. When Howard called. I should've come to get you right away ...I don't know what I was thinking.

LIZ

(scoffs)

It's not your fault. If he's too busy to wait five seconds to even talk to me ...

(she trails off)

Anyway, don't worry about it.

She goes back into the closet for more clothes. Ted sorts through the pile on the bed. He spots a FUZZY PINK SWEATER and picks it up. Looks over at Liz, sorting through SHOES in the closet. He SNIPFS the sweater longingly. Sighs. As Liz exits the closet with more clothes, he quickly SHOVES the sweater back into the pile. He clears his throat and continues folding.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A shivering and soot-covered Howard shuffles down the street. He looks at the horizon, then checks the face of his now-CRACKED WATCH. It's getting late. He passes by a BUS STOP BENCH. On it, an AD for the PARADE. And a big ol' grinning Turbo Tom face. Howard growls and KICKS the poster, not realizing that it's backed by the steel and concrete of the bench. He HOWLS in agony, grabbing his foot. He hobbles into a DINER across the street.

INT. DINER - DAY

A near-empty, run-down diner. It seems a bit trapped in some bygone era (old signs, vending machines); but it's more eerie than retro. RADIO MUSIC plays from a crappy PA SYSTEM. One MAN sits at the counter, hunched over a COFFEE CUP. A sole COUNTER MAN wipes stuff down. Howard looks around, then spots the PAYPHONE. He limps over and deposits a coin.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Jamie and Johnny are packing "provisions" for the parade (cookies, juice boxes) as the PHONE RINGS.

JAMIE
I GOT IT MOM!

He picks up the phone.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
Hello?

INTERCUT WITH HOWARD

HOWARD
Jamie! How ya doin' buddy? Listen, lemme talk to Mom.

JAMIE
You can't.

HOWARD
How come?

JAMIE
She's up in the bedroom with Ted.

HOWARD
SHE'S WHAT?!

CONTINUED:

JAMIE

Listen, Dad. Are you coming home soon?
 'Cause Johnny and me are leaving for the
 parade now and you have to be home in
 time to get Mom so you can come meet me.

HOWARD

(still in shock)
 Jamie. Go get your Mother please.

JAMIE

Well, are you?

HOWARD

Am I what?

JAMIE

Coming home soon.

HOWARD

Yes. Immediately. Please get your Mother.

Johnny, eating a cookie, speaks up.

JOHNNY

(mouth full)
 Tell 'um he promised.

JAMIE

'Cause Dad, before you left you promised
 me you were gonna be at the parade. And
 you haven't been here all day, so you
 can't miss it.

HOWARD

Jamie, please --

JAMIE

'Cause when someone makes a promise they
 definitely should keep it. You know, it's
 like Turbo Tom says: "Always keep your
 promises if you wanna keep your friends--"

HOWARD

ENOUGH! Enough with the Turbo Tom, okay?!
 I've had it up to here with Turbo Tom! If
 there's anyone I don't want advice from
 right now it's TURBO TOM! NOW GET YOUR
 MOTHER!

Jamie's silent. His lip quivers. Howard realizes he's just gone
 off the deep end with his kid. Tries to make amends.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Oh geez. I didn't mean to --

JAMIE

Wh -- well what would you know about keeping a promise anyway?! You never keep your promises! You never do anything you say you're gonna do! EVER!

He slams the phone down. Swallows back his emotions. Johnny stands behind him in mid-cookie, scared to move.

JAMIE

(stoic)

Come on. Let's go.

INT. DINER - LATE AFTERNOON

Howard hangs up the phone. The kid's right. He's a failure. Howard walks over to the counter and sits down. He looks really depressed.

A CUP OF COFFEE is slid in front of him. Howard looks up to see BARNEY, the slight, bespectacled proprietor.

BARNEY

Here you go, pal. Warm you up.

HOWARD

thanks.

EDDIE, a garishly dressed, alcoholic salesman, sits on the stool next to Howard. He toasts Howard with his FLASK.

EDDIE

Cheers.

Howard turns to Barney, who just shrugs. What can you do? Howard drinks.

BARNEY

Rough day?

HOWARD

Like you wouldn't believe.

EDDIE

It's the damn holidays, if you ask me. Generally speaking ... they suck.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

I never used to think so. But I'm beginning to believe you may be right.

EDDIE

You're damn right I'm right.

Eddie drinks from the flask. Howard from his cup.

HOWARD

So I couldn't find the kid a doll. Does that make me a bad father? No -- yelling at him for no good reason. That makes me a bad father ...

EDDIE

Ahh, you can't be any worse than my old man. May he never get a minute's peace.
 (takes another slug)
 Yeah, to my old man ... Christmas was just another chance to let people down. Especially me. Worst time was the year I had my heart set on one of those "Johnny 7 OMA" guns. Remember those? They were the coolest ...

Howard and Barney shake their heads no.

EDDIE

OMA ... One Man Army. It was the commercial that got me. Best friends playing in the back yard.
 (doing voices)
 "Johnny to Peter: Enemy sighted!" "Roger, open fire Johnny!" And Johnny would whip out his "Johnny 7 OMA!" Seven guns in one. "Count em!"
 (imitating announcer/sound fx)
 One, it's a grenade launcher! Two, it's an anti-armor gun! Three, it's an anti-tank gun! Four, it's a rifle! Five, it's a Tommy gun! Six, it's an anti-aircraft gun! And seven, was a cap firing pistol.
 (misty eyed)
 Man, that looked like a blast. Anyway ... if anything, the old man sure was consistent. I never got a Johnny 7 OMA.
 (takes another slug)
 But you know Henry Starger of "Starger Industries"? My old neighbor. He got one.

CONTINUED:

VOICE (CONT'D)
Well WROK has good news for you!

They all turn to the radio.

VOICE (ON RADIO)
If you're the first caller who can name all eight of Santa's reindeer you'll be the winner of your very own Turbo Tom doll. Complete with eye beams, jet pack and Turbo-rang! Just call 555-WROK now!

HOWARD
T-t-turbo -- he did say Turbo Tom, right?!

Barney and Eddie nod. Afraid of Howard's sudden mania.

HOWARD
(heavenward again)
Oh thankyouthankyouthankyou!

He races back to the phone and dials. It's BUSY.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
Dammit! I know the reindeer! Santa said it in my sleigh this morning!

BARNEY
(like Howard's crazy)
Uh ... yeah. I can never get through on those contests either. You know ... that radio station's just a few blocks south from here --

Howard races out the door.

VOICE (ON RADIO)
Remember that's 555-WROK! And you could be the proud new owner of the hottest toy since the Johnny 7 OMA!

EDDIE
(depressed)
Ohhh.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - EVENING

Jamie and Johnny tow their creation (covered by a bedsheet) behind their bikes. Jamie still looks a little upset.

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY
You okay, Jamie?

JAMIE
(not convincing)
Uh huh. Yeah. I'm fine. Let's just get to
Turbo Tom ...

He pedals harder. Determined.

EXT. CITY STREETS - EVENING

Howard is running as fast as he can through the streets.

HOWARD
WROK, Santa's reindeer...WROK, Santa's --

Howard notices a familiar DOORLESS CAR driving by.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
Hey -- that's my car! Get outta there!

Howard stops to chase after the TWO CAR THIEVES who are driving his car. They swerve and CRASH into a STREETLIGHT and dash off, abandoning the car. Howard turns and keeps running for the station.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
It doesn't matter. WROK, Santa's
reindeer...

EXT. WROK RADIO STATION - NIGHT

A neon WROK-AM/FM flickers outside. Howard slides to a stop right in front.

HOWARD
WROK! Santa's reindeer! I'm here!

He dashes inside.

INT. WROK LOBBY - NIGHT

A long-haired SECURITY GUARD is awakened after Howard charges into the elevator. He assumes it was nothing and goes right back to sleep.

INT. ELEVATOR

Howard taps his foot and checks his watch. The broadcast is heard over a monitor.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

But I had the right answer! I said it first!

The DJ's eyes shift to somebody emerging from behind the door. It's MYRON THE MAILMAN, readjusting his BENT NOSE. An even crazier look than usual is in his eyes.

HOWARD

You ...?!

MYRON

And I don't need the right answer to win.

HOWARD

(to DJ)

Oh, now this is hardly fair. I'm calling the FCC with a formal complaint! This isn't right --

DJ

He's right. He doesn't need the right answer. Or any answer ...

HOWARD

What?! Why not?!

A maniacal Myron lifts his hand to show Howard the GRENADE he's holding.

MYRON

Because this is all I need. Just a little orphan I grabbed out of the "Guns 'n Buns" bin down at the office. Thought it might come in handy one day ...

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Liz sits anxiously at the kitchen table, looking at the clock. The radio is on. Ted is pouring her a cup of tea.

MYRON'S VOICE

(on radio)

And I'm gonna pull the pin in ten seconds if I don't get that prize like I was promised!

LIZ

Kind of inappropriate for the holidays.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED

Precisely what I was thinking.

HOWARD'S VOICE

(on radio)

Have you gone insane?! Put that thing away! This isn't worth it!

MYRON'S VOICE

(on radio)

You're only saying that 'cause you want it! Only I deserve it!

TED

Doesn't one of those guys sound kind of familiar ...?

LIZ

Just another bad actor, Ted. They're a dime a dozen.

Liz and Ted both reach out to change the station at the same time. Their hands touch. Ted's eyes shoot up at Liz. His hand lingers -- until Liz quickly pulls hers away and Ted changes the station.

Barbra Streisand sings "Evergreen". "Love, soft as an eeeasy chair ..." Ted smiles dreamily at Liz. She doesn't even notice as she reaches out and changes the station again. Ted frowns.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

It won't be long now before the annual "Lights Before Christmas" parade gets underway, sponsored by Funtime Toys, the company that manufactures this year's phenomenon, Turbo Tom ...

Liz gets up and walks to the living room window.

LIZ

(to herself)

Come on, Howard. Where are you ...?

INT. RADIO STATION - EVENING

Howard is staring at the grenade in Myron's hand.

MYRON

And you! You turned them against me! Alone in that toy store fending off thousands of rabid shoppers. Plain common civilians! Letter-writers! The same people who persecute me for wearing my

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

This is crazy. We're two grown men. It's just a toy. Take it easy. After all, it's Christmas. There's gotta be a way we can work this out ...

DJ

Um, I hate to bring this up now, but were you two under the impression that I had a doll right here in the studio?

HOWARD

Of course.

MYRON

That's what you said on the radio ...

DJ

No. What I said was whoever won would get a doll. Eventually. All we have here is a gift certificate.

HOWARD/MYRON

Gift Certificate???!!!

DJ

Sure. You can pick up a doll as soon as they get more in stock --

Both Howard and Myron POUNCE on the DJ. SIRENS are heard approaching.

DJ

(choking)

Th-the ... C-c-cops ... help --

EXT. WROK RADIO STATION - EVENING

Police cars skid to skewed stops. Disgorging armed officers.

INT. WROK LOBBY - NIGHT

The police rush past the sleeping guard and into the elevator. The guard wakes up too late once again. Shrugs and goes right back to sleep.

INT. WROK HALLWAY

Howard and Myron both try to squeeze through the door to the booth. They struggle with each other to get ahead. Finally, Myron swings his MAILBAG into Howard and makes a dash for the elevator. Myron pounds the down button.

CONTINUED:

MYRON

(to Howard)

Ha! Ha! Better luck next time, loser!

The doors open. And Myron is facing a dozen policemen.

MYRON (CONT'D)

You wouldn't shoot a fellow civil servant, would you fellas?

They cock their weapons and take aim. Myron gulps. Meanwhile Howard dashes into the STAIRWELL with a SLAM. It's just enough to distract the cops. Myron knocks them aside with his mailbag and DIVES into the elevator. The doors CLOSE just before the cops can open fire.

INT. WROK LOBBY - NIGHT

Howard tiptoes out of the stairwell door. The security guard wakes up. He thinks Howard's entering rather than leaving.

SECURITY GUARD

Hey! You! No visitors allowed without a clearance.

HOWARD

Oh ... okay. But I wanted to request "Stairway to Heaven"?

SECURITY GUARD

Sorry. Ya gotta do it over the phone like everybody else.

HOWARD

Awww, that sucks. Zeppelin rules!

He flashes the universal headbanger hand-sign and runs out.

SECURITY GUARD

(flashing signal back)

Rock on, man.

EXT. CITY STREET - DUSK

Howard trudges to his abandoned car. He's done. Going home. Except there's a FAMILIAR FIGURE in UNIFORM standing by his car, writing TICKETS. OFFICER HUMMELL turns around. Nods. Sticks another TICKET on the WINDSHIELD and starts another.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD
Aw, you're kidding.

Hummell shakes his head. SLAPS another TICKET down.

HOWARD
You can't possibly be doing this. Do you have any idea what I've been through today? Do you?!

He looks at Howard's dishevelled appearance, then at the car. Then starts writing the next ticket.

OFFICER HUMMELL
Gee. I'm sorry sir. Why don't you tell me? Because I'd like nothing more than to spend my entire Christmas Eve issuing citations for your illegally parked, barely street-legal vehicle whilst you regale me with glorious stories about your very special day. Would you like me to sit down and pour some hot cider as well, sir? Because I have a hard time listening to a story without a toasty beverage in hand.

Hummell RIPS off another ticket and slaps it down. Howard's at his boiling point. He growls, stamps, spins around, gestures wildly -- but knows he can't say anything back. At his highest moment of frustration, Howard stomps over and KICKS the REAR TIRE of his car.

Which causes it to slowly ROLL FORWARD into Hummell's parked CRUISER. Crunch! Hummell's BUMPER FALLS to the ground with a CLATTER. Howard looks at Hummell.

HOWARD
That's Puttnam with two T's ...

Hummell begins carefully writing ANOTHER TICKET.

EXT. HOWARD'S CAR - DUSK

Howard rattles home. He speaks to himself.

HOWARD
(cheery)
"Liz, I'm sorry. I did everything I within my power to get that doll for Jamie. But look! I got a gift certificate, which is just as --"

CONTINUED:

He stops. How lame. Tries again.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

(angry)

"Look, Liz. I ran around all day like a crazy person looking for that stupid doll! And if Jamie's upset, well too--"

Stops again. Too harsh. He starts again.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

(trying to sob)

"Honey, I didn't get one. I'm so sorry. Can you ever forgive me? If I could only make it up to you and Jamie. No -- don't throw me out in the streets. I'll leave..."

He stops again.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I am pathetic.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Liz enters the living room. She spots Ted on a LADDER by the tree. He's PUTTING THE STAR ON top of THE TREE.

LIZ

What are you doing?

TED

Well, your star wasn't on. It's Christmas Eve. You gotta have your star up ...

LIZ

No no no -- I know that. It's just --

EXT. HOUSE - SAME

Howard PULLS UP TO THE HOUSE. Looks at it. All lit up for the season. It's beautiful. Then he spots LIZ in the living room window. She's looking up at TED on a ladder, his HAND ON THE STAR of the tree. Ted's putting up his star?! He's aghast. He drives forward a bit and parks behind some bushes, not wanting them to see him.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Ted is climbing down from the ladder, star in hand. He hands it to Liz.

CONTINUED:

LIZ

Sorry about that. It's just, well, that's Howard's job, Ted. He puts the star on.

TED

I see.

(clears his throat)

Of course, I can't help but notice that Howard hasn't really been around to do his job lately...

Liz looks at him for a moment. Frowns. He's right.

LIZ

I'm gonna try him at the office one more time.

She exits. Ted looks frustrated.

EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

Howard creeps up the driveway. His world is falling apart around him. He mutters to himself.

HOWARD

That son of a -- I'm out all day and he's inside putting up my star! On my tree! What's he trying to pull anyway? He thinks he's so great ...

Suddenly, he hears TED'S VOICE in his head.

TED'S VOICE

"I got one for Johnny months ago. It's nestled safely under our tree ..."

Remembering, Howard turns and looks at Ted's house.

TED'S VOICE

"... nestled safely under our tree ..."

HOWARD'S POV: Closer. The CHRISTMAS TREE in Ted's FRONT WINDOW.

TED'S VOICE

"... safely under our tree ..."

Howard smiles slyly. He dashes quietly over to Ted's DOOR.

EXT. TED'S HOUSE - EVENING

Howard stands in front of the door, looking at the ALARM KEYPAD. What was the code?

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

Okay. "The last thing an intruder would expect"... "COME IN"? No ... "HI THERE"? No ... "ENTER"? ... "WELCOME"! Yes!

He punches in the letters and de-activates the alarm. He slips inside.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Looks like a department store in here. Decorated to the ceiling in Christmas cheer. There's even a close-to-life-size NATIVITY SCENE by the fire. Howard shudders in disgust. He tiptoes over to the tree. SHAKES A FEW BOXES, trying to find the right one. Then he sees it. Wrapped in TURBO TOM PAPER.

HOWARD

Bingo.

INT/EXT. TED'S HOUSE - EVENING

Howard carefully cradles the box as he quietly SHUTS THE DOOR behind him. We see the ALARM quietly RE-ACTIVATE. Howard looks down at the package. Smiles. Then sees the TAG: "To Johnny". He frowns.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

What am I doing? Look at me -- stealing from a kid ... I can't do this. Enough, Howard. You lost. Just go in and face Liz like a man.

Howard nods. Yes. He will. But first he's gotta put the gift back. With steely resolve, he opens Ted's door ... FORGETTING ABOUT THE ALARM. Which immediately begins to WAIL.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Oh shit.

He tries punching in some letters, but nothing's happening. At a loss, he runs into Ted's house.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Howard runs in, gift in hand. He's heading for the tree. But TRIPS over a STRING OF LIGHTS. He pulls -- yanking down a whole set of them. He rolls around, the lights wrapping around his body.

INT. PUTTNAM LIVING ROOM - SAME

Ted runs in from the kitchen. Looks at Liz.

CONTINUED:

TED
That's my alarm.

LIZ
Should we call the police?

TED
I'll check it out.

LIZ
I'm coming with you.

Liz grabs a BROOM from the kitchen and follows Ted.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Howard can't seem to get out of the lights. He scrambles to get up and HURLS himself into the NATIVITY SCENE, knocking the head off a WISEMAN. It rolls into the FIRE. Howard drops the box and goes for the head. He manages to SCOOP IT OUT -- but it's AFLAME. He bobbles it with his feet, then, given no other option, he picks it up and HURLS IT THROUGH THE LIVING ROOM WINDOW. Crash!

EXT. FRONT OF TED'S HOUSE - SAME

A group of CAROLERS are strolling by, singing. They look up at the CRASH to see a FLAMING, BEARDED HEAD plop down in the SNOW in front of them. They SCREAM and RUN.

EXT. SIDE OF TED'S HOUSE - SAME

Ted and Liz, creeping up to the OPEN side door, hear the CRASH as well. And the SCREAMS. They look at each other, panicked. Ted SHUSHES Liz. He takes the broom and creeps into the house. Liz follows.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Howard glances at the BROKEN WINDOW. There's no time. He lunges for the Turbo Tom box, grabs it, and is about to SHOVE IT BACK UNDER THE TREE when ...

LIZ (O.C.)
Howard?!

He freezes. Looks up. Liz and Ted are standing in the doorway. He stands. Still holding the BOX.

HOWARD
Oh. Hi.

CONTINUED:

TED
My wiseman!

He drops the broom and rushes to it as Liz looks around incredulously. Then she spots the box in Howard's hand.

LIZ
What is that?

TED
(looking)
That's Johnny's Turbo Tom!

LIZ
What?!

HOWARD
Wait -- this isn't what it looks like --

LIZ
Oh it isn't?! Really! Then do tell me what it is! Because as far as I know we've got our own Turbo Tom sitting under the tree!

Ted quickly slips out of the room. Where's he going?

LIZ (CONT'D)
And while you're at it, I'd also like to know where you've been all day! Because you sure as hell weren't at work! And now I find you breaking into our neighbor's house -- breaking things and stealing presents from under his tree?! I sat home all day explaining to our son why his father wasn't home yet and I wasn't even close, was I?!

HOWARD
Liz, if you'd just give me a second. I -- I want to tell you the truth here. And I know parts of this are gonna sound completely ridiculous, but just hear me out. Okay. All day today I've --

Ted comes barreling through the door, panting. He holds the WRAPPED ANTI-FREEZE box. Hands it to Liz.

TED
(breathless)
Liz ... I -- I thought you should know.

CONTINUED:

Liz handles the box. SLOSH! She glares at Howard, then rips the WRAPPING OPEN. Sees the anti-freeze. She GASPS, then spins around and walks out. Howard chases after her.

EXT. TED'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Howard rushes out after Liz.

HOWARD

Wait -- Liz, I was getting to that. See--

She spins around, fuming.

LIZ

Not another word, Howard. I'm too angry right now to even look at you, let alone listen to another excuse. I'm just glad Jamie wasn't here to see this, because...

She trails off, emotional. Then collects herself.

LIZ (CONT'D)

I'm going to the parade. To meet our son. And I think it'd be better for everyone if you'd just stay home. You've done enough damage as it is.

She stalks over to Ted's car and gets inside.

HOWARD

Liz ...

Ted looks at Howard as he gets in the driver's side.

TED

Honestly, Howard. And on Christmas Eve.

They drive away, leaving Howard standing there alone. He trudges into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Howard enters through the kitchen door. He shuffles over to the table. Completely beaten. He walks to the fridge, pulls out a BEER. Slams the door. And sees ...

A CHILD'S DRAWING. Jamie's, to be exact, hanging on the refrigerator door. It's the one he was making in his room. Howard looks at the finished product: A guy marked "DAD", with a SMALLER PERSON ON HIS SHOULDERS marked "ME". THEY'RE AT THE PARADE. And passing by is "TURBO TOM". Howard's eyes rest on the smiling picture of Jamie on his shoulders.

CUT TO:

EXT. PUTTNAM HOUSE - NIGHT

Howard storms out of the house, full of determination. He climbs into his wrecked car. He's going to that parade.

HOWARD

I made a promise.

EXT. PARADE ROUTE - NIGHT

The street is decked out with HOLIDAY DECORATIONS and FAMILIES are quickly starting to line the sidewalks. Bundled against the cold. Sipping hot chocolate. Vendors hock souvenirs. Kids stand on tiptoes in anticipation. The biggest night of the year.

Located on a wobbly platform above it all, are saccharine local TV personalities GALE STORM and LIZA JOHNSON. They look extremely excited to be doing anything that requires the use of those goofy headsets (their broadcast can also be heard over the parade's PA system).

GALE

Well everybody, looks like it's that time of year again! The annual "Lights Before Christmas Parade"!

LIZA

Merry Christmas. I'm Liza Johnson of AM/Live and I'm here with weatherman Gale Storm, and we're high atop Channel 5's Parade Central to keep you updated on all the action for this year's parade...

The crowd buzzes with excitement. We MOVE CLOSER to reveal Jamie and Johnny, pulling up to an empty spot next to the PARADE BARRIER.

JOHNNY

Good spot?

JAMIE

(looking around)
Perfect! Let's move.

They start unpacking their gear. Jamie checks his watch,

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Estimated launch time: ten minutes.

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY

Roger that.

Jamie and Johnny keep working, but can't help smiling in excitement.

JAMIE

This is gonna be so cool!

EXT. TED'S CAR - NIGHT

Ted pulls his car into the parade-area parking lot. Liz sits next to him, sadly looking down at the UNWRAPPED ANTI-FREEZE she's still holding in her lap.

TED

I'm sorry you had to go through that back there.

LIZ

Yeah, well... let's just go find the boys, okay?

TED

Sure. But ... well, I just want you to know, if you ever need someone to talk to-- a shoulder to cry on ... I'm here.

Liz sighs.

LIZ

Really, Ted. I'm fine.

She looks out the window. Ted gazes at her.

TED

You deserve better, Lizzie.

Liz looks a little nervous. She turns to him.

LIZ

Uh, Ted --

TED

Someone who understands you. Someone sensitive to your needs. Someone close by...

He puts a hand on her leg. She GASPS, surprised.

CONTINUED:

TED (CONT'D)
I know. I'm feeling it too.

LIZ
No Ted, I don't --

TED
I don't know how it happened either.

LIZ
Look, Ted. I --

Liz tries to gently remove his hand from her leg, but he takes it as a gesture of affection and CLASPS HER HAND IN HIS.

TED (CONT'D)
I love you too, Liz!

He lunges to KISS her. She YELPS.

LIZ
Ted!

TED
(mauling her)
Liz!

LIZ
Get off of me!

But Ted's too far gone now.

TED
Oh, Liz! Liz!

Liz doesn't know what to do. Finally, she SLUGS HIM IN THE HEAD with the ANTI-FREEZE container. She JUMPS OUT of the car and slams the door. Disgusted, she stalks off into the crowd.

Ted sits in the car, anti-freeze oozing down his face.

TED (CONT'D)
Well. That didn't exactly go as well as I had hoped.

EXT. CITY PARK - NIGHT

The parade's starting point. Howard pulls his car to a stop at a barrier. We see the FIRST MARCHING BAND enter the route to start the parade. Their COSTUMES are LIT UP with dozens of TINY LIGHTS. The BAND STARTS MARCHING, playing a Christmas favorite. Gale and Liza's voices ECHO in the distance.

CONTINUED:

GALE

Ladies and Gentleman, Funtime Toys
presents the fifteenth annual "Lights
Before Christmas Parade"!

The CROWD CHEERS wildly. Howard hops out and begins to wander through the various PARADE WORKERS and BANDS and FLOATS preparing to join the parade.

HOWARD

Liz? Jamie ...?

He searches around, bumping into everyone and generally getting in the way. He makes a turn and sees ...

The BIKERS. Preparing their own float. It reads: "HELLHOGS ANNUAL TOY DRIVE." The bikers are all depositing their toys on the float ... all except the BIKER who had the Turbo Tom. He sits sadly on the edge of the float. A fellow biker consoles him.

FELLOW BIKER

It's all right, man. It's all right ...

BIKER DUDE

But I never would have dropped it if it hadn't been for that jerk who stole it in the first place ...

Howard silently tiptoes backwards, to avoid being seen. But-- BOOM! -- he backs right into a BIG BASS DRUM, being worn by a BANDMEMBER. The DRUMMER falls, knocking over the ENTIRE PERCUSSION SECTION. Very noisy. The bikers turn to see the commotion, and spot Howard standing amid the fallen drummers.

BIKER DUDE

Dude ... that's him! That's the guy!!!

The bikers REV UP and start coming for Howard.

HOWARD

Whoaaaaa!

Howard spins and runs for his life. The bikers drive over the drummers in hot pursuit.

Howard runs down a BACK ALLEY, desperate for a place to hide. He spots an OPEN WAREHOUSE DOOR. He dives inside ...

EXT. REVIEWING STAND - NIGHT

The first band is passing by. The crowd applauds enthusiastically.

CONTINUED:

GALE'S VOICE

Here comes the Eastside High Marching Band -- hey, isn't that the same song they played last year?

LIZA'S VOICE

Oh, Gale. Isn't that the same joke you told last year?

The laugh mechanically. Meanwhile, Liz is making her way through the crowd, trying to find the boys. She's starting to worry.

LIZ

Where are they?

EXT. PARADE ROUTE - NIGHT

Jamie and Johnny carefully lift the parade barrier away from its sawhorse legs. Now there's nothing between them and the parade. Johnny's about to pull the cover off of their huge contraption.

JOHNNY

Now?

JAMIE

Not yet ...

He checks his watch and looks down the street at the oncoming floats.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Howard ducks behind the door, breathless. He can hear the BIKERS approaching. Suddenly, a VOICE shouts at him.

VOICE (O.S.)

YOU!

Howard spins around to see a PARADE WORKER staring at him.

HOWARD

Yeah?

PARADE WORKER

What are you doing here?! Are you the guy?!

Howard can hear the bikers SHOUTING ANGRILY and REVVING their ENGINES outside. He can't get kicked out of here.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

Uh ... yeah, sure. I'm the guy.

PARADE WORKER

(relieved)

Oh thank God!

The parade worker immediately grabs Howard and drags him further into the warehouse. Suddenly, Howard is surrounded by a WHOLE TEAM of FLOAT WORKERS. Within seconds, they are ZIPPING an ELABORATE COSTUME around Howard. It's like some kind of a SPACE SUIT. He tries to struggle, but there are just too many of them. The first parade worker goes down a rapid fire checklist.

PARADE WORKER

Okay, we're running way late here, so pay attention. You already read the manual we sent you so you know about all the important controls. Let me just go over a few of the changes. There are three cutoff valves for the nitro-fluid. Here, here, and here. The normal readout on the pressure gauge should read anywhere below 50, not 70 like you were told earlier --

Howard opens his mouth to speak, he can't even get a word out.

PARADE WORKER

Your emergency cutoff switch is here and your primary controls are here. Right goes right, left goes left ... etc. The procedure is the same as we talked about over the phone. If you just stick to that there shouldn't be any trouble.

Howard tries to speak again.

HOWARD

Uh, look, I don't think --

PARADE WORKER

Wait. Before you say anything, let me speak for everyone when I thank you for filling in for Pete on such short notice. It was a total freak accident at the rehearsal, and we really think we've got all the kinks worked out of the system.

HOWARD

Accident? What --?

But it's too late. They've just shut the HELMET down over his head. They LOCK IT INTO PLACE.

CONTINUED:

PARADE WORKER

Oh, and you should know, the doctors said Pete actually showed some brain activity this morning. That's a really good sign.

The parade worker gives him a THUMBS UP. The rest of the team applauds -- drowning out Howard's muffled cries.

They PUSH him up on to the bottom of an ELABORATE FLOAT. It's so HUGE it casts a DARK SHADOW over Howard, making things difficult to see. Howard is greeted on the float by a CHAIN SMOKING GUY in a PINK FUZZY SUIT (without the head on).

CHAIN SMOKER

Where the hell have you been? What am I supposed to wait all friggin' day for your sorry ass?

Suddenly, the HUGE DOORS in front of them SLOWLY start to OPEN. The chain smoker takes a last drag and then puts on his COSTUME HEAD. Howard seems to recognize it ...

HOWARD

Wait -- I know that ... it's -- it's ...
(astonished)
You're FANG !

FANG

Yeah, and who the hell'dya think you are?
Santa Claus?!

The doors open wider, creating a WIDENING BAND OF LIGHT on the float. Howard looks down at his own costume, recognizing it now.

HOWARD

Oh my god ... I -- I ...

He turns to look up at the float. A big TURBO TOM SIGN.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I'm Turbo Tom.

The float is now moving out of the warehouse into the full glare of the PARADE. The crowd gasps in awe.

LIZA'S VOICE

And now the moment you've all been waiting for! Here he is, boys and girls, live and in person! Funtime Toys' very own ... TURBO TOM!!!

The crowd goes bonkers. Everybody and their kids wants to get a glimpse of Turbo Tom. Meanwhile, Howard is frozen stiff on the float.

CONTINUED:

FANG
Wave, you idiot! Wave!

Howard begins waving to the crowd. They eat it up. The float continues on the parade route, FLASHBULBS POPPING and KIDS SQUEALING.

EXT. PARADE ROUTE - NIGHT

Jamie looks down the parade route. He can see the huge Turbo Tom float, awash in lights. He turns to Johnny.

JAMIE
Now!

And as everyone else in the crowd looks the other way for a glimpse of the Turbo Tom float, Jamie and Johnny excitedly WHIP the cover off of their creation: THEIR VERY OWN FLOAT. It's a CHRISTMAS TREE, made from the the A-frame structured MATTRESS BOX and covered with every GREEN and CHRISTMASSY ITEM in the house. They've even stolen actual ornaments and put a big SHINY STAR ON TOP. From their LOW ANGLE it looks like a masterpiece. They admire their work for a second, and then climb inside.

INT. FLOAT - NIGHT

The whole float is mounted to JOHNNY'S BIKE. The star at the top of the "tree" is actually a PERISCOPE, made from a mailing tube and Liz's makeup mirrors.

JAMIE
All systems go!

Johnny climbs on his bike and Jamie crouches on his skateboard. They strain to push off and get moving.

JAMIE/JOHNNY
It's ... Turbo ... time!!!

And finally they get off to a wobbly start.

EXT. PARADE ROUTE - NIGHT

Nobody seems to notice the small new float WOBBLING into the parade. Actually, from this angle it looks a lot less like a Christmas tree and more like a SHAGGY GREEN MOUNTAIN.

EXT. FLOAT - NIGHT

Howard is still riding the Turbo Tom float, past hundreds of adoring fans. He's actually getting a little into it. WAVING to the crowd. POSING like a superhero.

CONTINUED:

BOB

And in a few moments, Liza, we'll announce that special drawing which will let one lucky child win a special edition Turbo Tom doll that's on that very float right now!

The guy in the FANG SUIT holds up the doll to the crowd for a second. They cheer. Howard BLOWS THEM KISSES.

FANG

(to Howard)

Hey, Rock Star! Don't get carried away. Remember, Negator's jumping the float in a couple blocks ...

EXT. PARADE ROUTE - NIGHT

A few blocks ahead. A guy in a NEGATOR SUIT takes a nip from a BOTTLE IN A BAG. He checks his watch, when CLUNK! He's KNOCKED OVER THE HEAD -- out cold. A PAIR OF HANDS drag the guy in the costume away ...

EXT. PARADE ROUTE - NIGHT

An ELF walking beside the SANTA FLOAT notices an ODD GREEN SHAGGY MOUNTAIN bearing down on him pretty fast. He has to LEAP out of the way to avoid being hit.

ELF

(calls out to shaggy mountain)

Hey! You're going the wrong way!

INT. BOYS' FLOAT - NIGHT

Jamie and Johnny are pedaling against the flow of the parade, trying to get to the Turbo Tom float at the back. Jamie looks through the periscope.

JAMIE

I've made visual contact! Full speed ahead!

JOHNNY

Aye, aye!

He pedals harder.

EXT. FLOAT - NIGHT

The shaggy mountain closes in on the TURBO TOM float. Fang sees it coming -- and watches it ZIP RIGHT PAST.

CONTINUED:

Jamie waves back to Johnny, who has slowed the Tree float down and is watching from the side of the road. Johnny gives a brave SALUTE to his friend.

EXT. FLOAT - NIGHT

Jamie can't believe he's actually on the float. He can see Turbo Tom waving at the front end!

JAMIE

Yes!

He takes a few steps toward the front of the float, when FANG spots him.

FANG

What the -- ? Oh! Geeez ...

Thinking he's been caught, Fang quickly snuffs out his cigarette and shoos a giggling, SEXY ELF away from the float.

FANG (CONT'D)

(to sexy elf)

I've got your number, right? I'll call you!

Fang turns back to Jamie, embarrassed.

FANG (CONT'D)

Congratulations, kid. Guess you must be the contest winner! 'Course it woulda been nice to have a little warning ...!

EXT. ANNOUNCER'S STAND - NIGHT

Gale and Liza are similarly confused. They shuffle frantically through their PREPARED SCRIPTS.

GALE

Oh ... what's this? Uh, it looks like our little contest winner has been brought up on to the float ...?

LIZA

(trying to find the page)

Yes ... and the name of that lucky young child is ... uh, his name is ... uh, Jason Cole!

Adorable little JASON COLE stands next to Gale and Liza on the announcer's stand.

CONTINUED:

JASON

But ... but I'm Jason Cole.

Gale and Liza stare at him in confusion. He looks like he's about to cry.

GALE

(covers his mic)
Well ... then who's that?

Back on the float, Fang hands Jamie the SPECIAL EDITION TURBO TOM DOLL.

FANG (CONT'D)

There you go. Have fun. Merry Christmas.
Now get lost.

Fang pats Jamie on the back. Then he looks around for the ELF again.

FANG (CONT'D)

Damn. Where the hell'd she go ...?

Jamie tucks the doll under his arm and keeps moving forward across the other side of the float.

EXT. PARADE ROUTE - NIGHT

Off to the side, we see NEGATOR re-emerge within the crowd. He's looking for something.

NEGATOR'S POV: Through his dark visored helmet, we see Negator looking around at the Turbo Tom float. Suddenly he stops when he sees Jamie carrying the doll. We ZOOM IN on the DOLL.

EXT. THE PARADE ROUTE - NIGHT

Negator LEAPS over the parade barrier, and RUSHES toward the Turbo Tom float. The crowd "Oooohs".

EXT. ANNOUNCER'S STAND - NIGHT

Gale and Liza think this is their cue and shuffle ahead in their scripts again.

GALE

(terrible acting)
Oh no, kids! It looks like that's Turbo Tom's arch enemy, Negator!

CONTINUED:

LIZA
And he's trying to ruin the parade!

The crowd BOOS loudly. Negator FLIPS THEM OFF as he continues running to the float.

GALE
(aside)
Well that was a bit much ...

EXT. PARADE ROUTE - NIGHT

Off to the side, a GUY in a BOLT COSTUME notices Negator about to jump on the float.

BOLT
What's he doing? He's way too early!

EXT. FLOAT - DAY

Negator jumps onto the back of the float. Bolt comes running out of the crowd to join him.

BOLT (CONT'D)
What the -- ?! You totally blew your entrance!

He leaps onto the float as well -- only to have Negator KICK HIM OFF THE BACK. THUD!

Hundreds of KIDS CHEER and RUSH UNDER THE BARRICADES, into the street to PUMMEL BOLT.

Negator turns back around. He sees Jamie creeping ever so slowly toward the front of the float -- still holding the doll. He's almost at Turbo Tom ...

Jamie swallows, just a few feet away from his hero.

JAMIE
Uh ...T-T-T-Turbo Tom? Excuse me ...? Mr. Tom? ... Sir?

Turbo Tom turns around.

HOWARD
(from inside helmet)
Jamie?!

Jamie is stunned. His mouth drops.

CONTINUED:

JAMIE

Turbo Tom? ... You know my name?!

HOWARD

Of course I do, Jamie. It's me, --

But before he can say it, Jamie is GRABBED FROM BEHIND by Negator!

MYRON

(from inside Negator helmet)
Not so fast! Now gimme the doll and nobody gets hurt!

Howard recognizes that voice.

HOWARD

Myron?!

MYRON

That's right, Mr. Reindeer Man. Thought you could outsmart me again, huh? Pretty slick with that costume idea ... but I'm one step ahead of you, as usual!

HOWARD

Myron, C'mon this is absurd!

Fang approaches Myron from behind and taps him.

FANG

Hey, buddy, this isn't how we rehearsed it --

Myron just PUNCHES Fang right in his furry face. He drops off the float and MORE KIDS RUSH OUT under the barricades to PUMMEL FANG.

The rest of the crowd BOOS. Jamie managed to slip away when Negator punched Fang, and he's now got the doll high over his head.

MYRON

Aww, kid, now don't be a pain ...

JAMIE

You'll never get away with this, Negator!

HOWARD

Uh .. Jamie, maybe you should just let him --

CONTINUED:

Suddenly the crowd starts calling out to Howard.

THE CROWD

(with growing intensity)

Come on, Turbo Tom! Stop Negator! Save the kid! You can do it! Get him Turbo Tom! (... etc.)

Even the announcers get into the act.

LIZA

Looks like it's up to Turbo Tom to save the day!

GALE

If anybody can do it, he can!

Negator is moving closer to Jamie. He tries to grab for the doll, but Jamie uses ONE OF HIS KARATE MOVES and KICKS Negator in the shin.

MYRON

Ooooch! Why, you little --

Myron rubs his shin and tries to chase after Jamie.

JAMIE

Turbo Tom! Help!

Howard looks around.

HOWARD

Somebody! Help!

Jamie looks at Turbo Tom curiously. Negator is getting too close.

JAMIE

Do something! Use your eye beams!

HOWARD

(searching on the suit)

Eye beams, eye beams ... eye beams ...

Negator is grabbing Jamie again. Jamie SCREAMS.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Eye beams!

He hits a button on his helmet, and TWO STREAMS of a RED SILLY STRING-LIKE SUBSTANCE shoot out from the sides of his helmet. They land at Myron's feet and he SLIPS AROUND in the GUNK. Jamie gets away. The CROWD CHEERS.

CONTINUED:

JAMIE

Quick, Tom -- use your Turbo-rang!

HOWARD

My what?

JAMIE

The boomerang. In your holster!

Howard reaches down to the BOOMERANG hanging from his belt. Just as Myron is getting back to his feet, Howard throws the TURBO-RANG at him.

WHOOSH! Myron DUCKS and the boomerang sails right past his head. Myron picks his head up and LAUGES ... only to have the BOOMERANG hit him in the BACK OF THE HEAD on its return. THWACK! The CROWD CHEERS again.

Myron picks himself up again and is pissed. He scrambles around the float, trying to catch Jamie. CRRRRACK! His foot goes through the floor of the float --

INT. INSIDE THE FLOAT - SAME

-- And into the DRIVER. Hit in the head by Myron's boot. KNOCKED OUT COLD ...

EXT. FLOAT - DAY

The float starts to drift a bit as Myron pulls his foot back up and corners Jamie against a wall.

JAMIE

Turbo Tom! Use your Jet Pack! Use your Jet Pack!!!

Howard searches for the button.

HOWARD

(scoffs)

Yeah ... like this thing actually has a working jet pa-- AAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!

WWWHHHOOOOOOOOOSHHEEE! Howard shoots right off the float. DISAPPEARING into the SKY.

Negator and Johnny both look up at the TRAIL OF SMOKE. Then Myron laughs.

MYRON

Good work, kid. Now gimme the doll!

CONTINUED:

JAMIE

Never!

He holds the doll away.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE SKY - NIGHT

Howard is SCREAMING his lungs out as the GROUND QUICKLY SHRINKS beneath him. He HITS a SWITCH that immediately causes him to LOOP AROUND uncontrollably.

HOWARD

Whoaaa! ... Whoaaa! ... WHOOAAA!

EXT. FLOAT - NIGHT

With Howard looping above, Negator finally grabs the doll from Jamie. He's just about to jump off the float, when HOWARD -- DIPPING DOWN in one of his WILD LOOPS -- accidentally SMACKS RIGHT INTO HIM, knocking the doll from his hand. The CROWD CHEERS WILDLY.

GALE'S VOICE

Wow! I tell ya, they're putting on quite a show for us this year!

Howard loops back up and gets TANGLED in a large BANNER hanging over the parade route.

Meanwhile, the float is DRIFTING back and forth. Dangerously close to the crowd. A few parents nervously pick their kids up from the curb.

Negator is pulling himself back onto the float, while Jamie spots the doll. They both scramble across the float for it.

EXT. REVIEWING STAND - NIGHT

Liz is still looking for the kids. Then she spots ...

LIZ

Johnny!

Liz runs over to Johnny, who's walking over with his bike.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Where have you been? Where's Jamie?!

Johnny glances at the oncoming float and shrugs.

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY

I dunno ...

Liz turns to the float, to see ...

Jamie -- holding the Turbo Tom doll aloft.

JAMIE

I got it, Turbo Tom! I got it!

Negator tries to grab Jamie, but he dives between his legs.

Liz looks like she's about to freak.

LIZ

Oh ... my ... god ... JAMIEEEEE!!!!

She goes running toward the float. Johnny just looks at his friend in awe.

JOHNNY

Excellent!

Ted comes racing out of the crowd, trying to catch up with Liz.

TED

Liz! Wait! Can't we talk this out?!

He stops when he sees Johnny, who looks up at him curiously -- Ted's quite frazzled and covered with anti-freeze.

JOHNNY

Dad? What happened to you?

CUT TO: Howard, still tangled in the banner. He struggles to get free.

On the float, Negator is closing in on Jamie -- but he freezes as he notices the float's VEERING into the ANNOUNCER'S STAND. He and Jamie both TAKE COVER.

EXT. ANNOUNCER'S STAND - NIGHT

Unaware of what's below, they go to a COMMERCIAL.

DIRECTOR'S VOICE

And we're going to commercial ...

Liza and Gale turn off their on-air personalities.

CONTINUED:

LIZA

Ugh. I'm telling you, this is the last time I cover this lame parade.

GALE

Tell me about it. It's the same boring crap every year --

That's when they both look down to see the float CRASHING INTO THEIR STAND. They SCREAM and leap off, just in time.

EXT. FLOAT - NIGHT

The announcer's stand CRASHES to the GROUND and the float VEERS to the other side of the crowd. People are now FLEEING in terror.

Liz tries to fight the crowd to get closer to the float.

LIZ

Jamie! Hang on! I'm coming for you sweetie!

Negator tosses debris aside and pounces toward Jamie again.

Howard sees this from above, still tangled in the banner.

HOWARD

Hey! Stay away from my kid!!!

He finds the BUTTON that fires the JET PACK again, and ... WHOOOOSH! He goes soaring straight towards the float.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Hey ... I think I'm getting the hang of this!

THWACK! He KNOCKS A CHUNK OF THE FLOAT RIGHT OFF and flies on-- CLANK! SLAMMING INTO A LAMPPOST. He drops to the ground.

The jolt to the float knocks Negator to the ground and sends the whole thing veering into the opposite direction ...

Headed RIGHT FOR LIZ! She screams and dives out of the way.

The float goes crashing through the PARADE BARRIERS. The crowd SCREAMS and scatters for their lives.

Negator lifts himself from the hole. He looks around the float. Where's Jamie?

ANGLE ON - JAMIE, HANGING OFF THE FRONT of the float for dear life.

CONTINUED:

The DRIVER underneath COMES TO and peeks his head out the hole. He sees the float is about to break through another barrier -- into an INTERSECTION and ACTUAL STREET TRAFFIC. Just as they BURST THROUGH THE BARRIER, the driver SLAMS ON THE BRAKES.

But the DRIVER'S LITTLE CART SMASHES THROUGH THE BACK OF THE FLOAT. He's stopped, but the rest of the float is ROLLING AWAY WITHOUT HIM. Or any way to steer or stop.

As the float drifts further into the intersection, Negator spots Jamie hanging on with one hand, and clutching the doll in the other.

CARS start to SWERVE out of the way of the float. More paradegoers scream.

Howard picks himself back up at the base of the lamppost. He hears the screaming in the distance ...

Negator is reaching down to Jamie at the front of the float.

MYRON

C'mon, kid, just gimme the doll and I'll help you up.

Jamie looks like he might fall off.

JAMIE

Never!

MYRON

Fine. Then I guess I'll just have to take it from you ...

He reaches down to grab the doll ... and doesn't see the LARGE TRUCK HEADED RIGHT FOR THE FLOAT.

Liz sees it. And SCREAMS.

LIZ

JAIIMEEEEE!!!

Howard hears Liz's scream. He looks up, above the trees, to see the TOP OF THE FLOAT and the TOP OF THE TRUCK speeding towards each other.

HOWARD

(steeling himself)

It's Turbo time.

He HITS THE ROCKET BOOSTERS ONE LAST TIME. WHOOOOSH! Howard takes off ... and is actually controlling the jet pack this time! He rockets towards Jamie and SWOOPS DOWN -- just as Jamie

CONTINUED:

loses his grip on the float. Howard PLUCKS JAMIE OUT OF MID AIR. Just in time.

Myron looks up at Howard, soaring away with Jamie -- and then turns to see the TRUCK. Just as it SMASHES INTO THE FLOAT. Shearing it to SPLINTERS.

Howard soars HIGH INTO THE NIGHT SKY with Jamie, who is smiling wider than any kid in the world. He looks at Turbo Tom, and back down at the ground. He's living a dream!

JAMIE

Thanks, Turbo Tom! I knew you'd save me.

HOWARD

(proud)

Glad you could count on me.

He hugs Jamie tighter and flies even higher.

Meanwhile, back on the ground, Myron struggles to climb out of the wreckage of the float. He pulls the HELMET off his WOOLY HEAD -- and sees the Turbo Tom doll amidst the debris. He hugs it to his chest.

MYRON

I got one! I finally got one!

We hear the sound of dozens of GUNS being COCKED. Myron is surrounded TONS OF COPS. ALL TAKING AIM AGAIN. He drops the doll and raises his hands over his head.

MYRON (CONT'D)

Problem, officers?

Down the street, Liz watches as Turbo Tom gently descends from the sky, LANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF HER, holding Jamie.

HOWARD

(playing the hero)

Here you go, ma'am.

JAMIE

Mom! Did you see that?! I was flying with Turbo Tom! He saved me! From Negator! It was the coolest! Did you see?! Did you?!

LIZ

I saw, I saw ...

(to Howard/Tom)

Thank you, sir. Whoever you are. Thank you so much. I don't think you know how important he is to me.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD

Oh, I think I've got an idea.

JAMIE

I wish Dad coulda been here. He woulda loved that ...

(Jamie gets sad)

But he didn't come. And it's all my fault.

(to Liz)

He's mad at me. We had a fight on the phone and I got sorta angry ...

Jamie trails off and looks at the ground. Liz puts a protective arm around him. She looks guilty.

LIZ

It's not your fault, honey ...

Inside the suit, Howard's all choked up.

HOWARD

Hey. Your Dad's not mad at you, Jamie. I know that. For a fact. Why, your Dad loves you more than anything in the whole wide world. You're his all-time favorite person...

As Howard talks, he TRIES TO REMOVE HIS HELMET.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

The problem was, he just didn't realize what was really important -- until it was almost too late ...

But he can't get the helmet off. Struggles with it some more.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

And you know how I know that? I know that because I'm --

Suddenly a CROWD RUSHES TOWARD THEM.

CROWD

TURBO TOM! There he is! It's Turbo Tom!
He saved the parade! He's a hero!!!

The crowd ENVELOPS HOWARD and SWEEPS HIM UP ONTO THEIR SHOULDERS. They CHEER as they start to CARRY HIM AWAY.

Howard looks at Liz and Jamie. They're getting further and further away. They wave at him ... and FINALLY, HE'S ABLE TO GET THE HELMET OFF.

CONTINUED:

Jamie's jaw drops. Liz's drops even wider.

JAMIE

DAD????

LIZ

HOWARD????

Howard smiles at them and holds up his hands. The crowd continues cheering. Liz shakes her head, still in shock. Howard blows her a kiss. He mouths, "I'm sorry! I love you!" to his family.

Liz laughs. Howard gives Jamie the Turbo Tom Handshake in the air. Jamie points up at Howard, for all to see.

JAMIE

(proudest kid in the world)
THAT'S MY DAD!!! THAT'S MY DAD!!!!

Howard beams proudly. Liz hugs Jamie, emotional. They wave to Howard, who is carried away by the crowd.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS DAY

Jamie, Howard and Liz sit cozily on the sofa. Jamie's still in his pj's -- unwrapped gifts everywhere. But Jamie's not playing with any of them -- he's completely focused on his dad.

JAMIE

Dad, where does Fang sleep when you come home at night?

Howard and Liz look at one another. It appears this has been going on for quite some time. Liz smiles at her husband.

HOWARD

Look, Jame -- I'm not really Turbo Tom. Lemme explain again. See, I was coming to the parade to --

JAMIE

Hey! Show me again how you kicked Negator's butt!

Howard looks at Liz pleadingly. She shakes her head no.

HOWARD

(to Liz)
Please?

CONTINUED:

JAMIE

Aw come on, Mom! One more time!

The PHONE RINGS. Liz gets up to answer it.

LIZ

Okay. But this is the last time.

(scotto to Howard)

And then explain it to him for real.

Howard nods. Liz smiles and kisses him. Exits to get phone.
Howard jumps up happily and begins a dramatic reenactment.

HOWARD

All right. So there I was, standing on
the front of the float, waving to my
fans...

(he waves, then stops)

When I get this "feeling", see. Like all
of a sudden it got real quiet and cold,
right? And I turn --

(he turns quickly)

To see Negator rushing out of the crowd--

Jamie looks like he's about to keel over from excitement.

LIZ (O.C.)

Howard! It's Margaret!

Howard WINKS at Jamie. Like it's a big secret.

HOWARD

(whispers)

Fang.

Jamie nods knowingly as Howard dashes off to get the phone.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Howard grabs the phone from Liz, who rewards him with a
passionate kiss as she leaves the room.

LIZ

Don't be too long ... Turbo.

Oh my.

HOWARD (INTO PHONE)

Margaret?

CONTINUED:

MARGARET(ON PHONE)

Howard. I checked the machine yesterday and got your message -- you said "Turbo Tim" but I assumed you meant "Turbo Tom", anyway, my friend's cousin works for Funtime Toys and he's got like a hundred of 'em just lying around so I grabbed one and Special Fedexed it. It'll be there this afternoon. Is that okay?

A hundred of 'em? Howard looks a bit pale, but then laughs. A lot. Hysterically, to be exact.

MARGARET(ON PHONE)

Howard? Mr. Puttnam?

Howard catches his breath and wipes the tears from his eyes.

HOWARD

Yes, Margaret. This afternoon is certainly okay. Thank you very much. And Margaret, I know I gave you yesterday off, but actually I'd prefer it if ... if you just took the rest of the week. Come back after New Year's, okay?

MARGARET(ON PHONE)

Are you kidding? What about you?

HOWARD

I'm also taking the week off.

MARGARET(ON PHONE)

(confused, but genuine)

Well -- thanks. thanks. Uh, is there anything else you need? Before I go?

Howard peeks into the living room.

ANGLE ON: Liz and Jamie. Cuddled up on the sofa.

HOWARD

You know what, Margaret? I think I've got everything I need right here.

He smiles, says goodbye and hangs up. The DOORBELL RINGS.

INT. LIVING ROOM/HALLWAY - DAY

Howard SLIDES by the living room in his socks. Very slick.

CONTINUED:

HOWARD
(heroic)
I'll get the door.

Jamie laughs.

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

Howard opens the door to see TED. Johnny by his side.

TED
Uh, hi Howard.

Howard smiles. Nothing's gonna break his mood. Liz appears behind him.

LIZ
(icy)
Hello Ted.

TED
Hi Liz. Um, it's a very emotional time of year. And I think perhaps yesterday I may have gotten caught up in some emotions that weren't quite ...
(glances down at Johnny)
... appropriate. And I hope my behavior won't effect what up until now has been a warm and mutually respectful relationship. You've always been so kind to me --
(his voice breaks)
I'm so ashamed.

He's all choked up. Liz and Howard share a look. Sheesh.

LIZ
Oh Ted, please.

She turns and walks back into the living room. Ted looks at Howard pleadingly.

TED
If there's any way I can --

He chokes up again. Howard grins.

HOWARD
Actually, my gutters have been looking pretty clogged lately. I've been meaning to clear 'em out but ...

CONTINUED:

Ted holds up his hand.

TED
I'll get on it right away.

Ted turns to go. Johnny stops him, tugging at his sleeve.

JOHNNY
Dad ... You promised!

TED
(really embarrassed now)
Oh. Oh -- Right. Um ... Turbo Tom, Johnny wanted to know if he could come in and play with you for a while.

HOWARD
Why I think that'd be all right.

JOHNNY
Outta site!

Johnny comes running into the house. Ted goes off to start on the gutters. Howard shuts the door and smiles.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Howard and Liz snuggle on the sofa. Jamie and Johnny sit in front of the TV. "A Turbo Tom Christmas" is on.

LIZ
Kids, move back. You'll ruin your eyes.

They completely ignore her. Howard warns them.

HOWARD
Gentlemen ...

They immediately scoot back. Howard kisses Liz happily. Just as a COMMERCIAL BREAK comes on: an ad for Turbo Tom products. Jamie and Johnny turn and look at Howard, GOOFY GRINS on their faces. Who needs a toy when they've got the real thing?

But then ...

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE
(from TV)
Introducing the newest arrival from
Funtime Toys! Sent down from the Planet
Dominion to save the human race -- it's
SONIC SOLDIER!

CONTINUED:

Jamie and Johnny WHIP back to see the screen.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

Yes kids, Sonic Soldier is here, and he's coming soon on a brand new afternoon show! But you can have Sonic Soldier in your home before he even hits the screen!

ANGLE ON: THE SCREEN. Music -- Sonic Soldier in action. This is one amazing toy. Sleek, shiny, a zillion moving parts and weapons... a must-have. A must-have NOW.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

(from TV)

Hurry, supplies are limited.

Jamie turns around to Howard.

JAMIE

DAD!

Howard's eyes widen. Not again ...

THE END