



# Elf Confidential

by Andrew Dombrowski

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“Smile for the camera.”

Click. Flash.

“NEXT!”

“Actually, I don’t mind it. My day goes shuffling one kid after another onto Jim’s lap. I’ve been working at the Mill Valley mall for two months now. We set up the fake snow, oversized candy canes and animatronic reindeer a little before Halloween. The green screen we have behind Jim allows the parents to pick between two different holiday backgrounds. We have a purely secular North Pole scene for those parents who know the true meaning of Christmas. Or, for those parents who know the true meaning of Christmas, they can choose a manger setting with Santa and their child superimposed next to Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus.

A little joke about the true meaning of Christmas.

I work 10 a.m. until close, which is 10 p.m. on the weekends. The hours are long, I’m on my feet all day, but honestly I’m too old for dwarf tossing.”

“Smile for the camera.”

Click. Flash.

“NEXT!”

“Yeah, back in my younger years it was no problem for me to be thrown ten feet across the room. I would always land on my feet. Bachelor parties, corporate team-building functions, bar mitzvahs, I did them all. My base fee just to show up and do my act was \$200. Me and Jim over there had a routine, pretty funny stuff, a little stand up, some prop comedy, even a little magic, and of course him throwing me across rooms. I can show you some of the standup when we get a break in twenty minutes. It’s a little dated...”

“No that’s O.K.”

“Anyway after our show, I’d charge people 20 bucks a pop to give me a good toss. If I didn’t land on my feet, then they got their money back. I got laid all the time at these parties. Chicks that go for guys like me are generally pretty wild. And who wouldn’t want me standing underneath their legs, if you know what I mean? Oh, great, we got a crier.”

“Smile for the camera.”

Click. Flash.

“NEXT!”

“But back and ’92 Jim threw out his back at a party. He bent down and reached between his legs and grabbed my hands. Then he was supposed to stand up, slinging me forward so I could do a summersault before landing. This wasn’t our most difficult move, I just think he wasn’t paying attention or maybe had too much to drink.”

“Shut up lardo. Get me the next kid.”

“It’s true I had put on some weight, but nothing that made me difficult to throw. With Jim out of commission I hooked up with someone I knew through a colleague. Turns out he was a complete amateur, threw me into a wall one night and broke my neck in five different places. Luckily I don’t have any nerve damage, but it was one of those moments you know...one of those times you wake up and it’s like you’ve been given a second chance. Not that I saw God or nothing like that.”

“Smile for the camera.”

Click flash

“NEXT!”

“But I knew I had to change. Unfortunately my resume didn’t help much. I had skipped out of school when I learned how much money and women I could get at these parties. I was basically qualified to be thrown across rooms or for this, which thankfully didn’t have any requirements. So I’ve been doing this for the past couple of years. I hooked Jim up with this job too; he’s been kinda down on his luck lately. He needed some money, so I pulled a few strings”

“You ain’t pulled shit”

“Well what the hell else would you be doing? Sitting in a filthy apartment waiting for Sheila to come back? She ain’t coming back, Jim.

God damn drunk.

Sorry bout that. So where was I? Oh right, and so like I said they’ve been good to me here at Mill Valley. I think I’ve worked here every year for like 8, no wait 1997, 98....”

He counted briefly on his short fingers.

“Nine years. I’ve worked here every Christmas season for nine years now. And the way things are going, keeping my fingers crossed, with the holiday season starting earlier and earlier, I might be hired on full time some day with benefits and paid vacation.”

“Smile for the camera.”

Click flash

“NEXT!”

Later that night, during Mike Michaels’ rant on the 11 p.m. local newscast about the Christmas season starting too early, the above interview was excerpted as follows:

“So, what do you think of the Christmas season starting earlier and earlier?”

“I work 10 a.m. until close, which is 10 p.m. on the weekends. The hours are long, I’m on my feet all day.”

“How are you holding up?”

“Luckily I don’t have any nerve damage.

Tiny Tony was fired two days after the story aired. He got to keep the elf costume.