

DIDDLER ON THE ROOF

Written by

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Writer's note: This one is really tricky folks. I can't get Tickle Me Elmo as a subject without addressing the underage sexual accusations upon Elmo's creator and Puppeteer. The real trick here is to not play the script for cheap jokes. It is dark material. It's meant to illicit some laughs, but not in a over-played, wink at the audience, rim-shot kind of way. There's a deeper message of redemption and re-invention I wanted to get across. And I think we can do this two ways:

Play the musical numbers as serious, *Fiddler on the Roof* performances. Don't try and bring "schtick" into the dancing or musical segments. Play the bris scene with the utmost reverence and respect. This is the scene where Elmo is tested. Where seeing a baby being circumcised makes him question his values and the path he has chosen. So Elmo in this scene has to convey as much conflict and weakness as possible without eliciting laughs. There will be some, it's unavoidable. But I want the seriousness of the ceremony to come through. We're all creative adults. We strive to take complicated subject matter, digest it and interpret it in ways that sheds new light and points of view upon it. Child molestation is not funny and I'm not making a joke about it. I am bringing in enough humor to make the audience slightly uncomfortable. But then we give Elmo a chance to redeem himself. An important message that I hope comes through. Good luck and thank you.

MUSIC: KLEZMER MUSIC OPEN

Music fades. Lights up on center. Entering center stage is SYLVIA GREENBAUM. She is a middle aged, b-grade theatrical agent. She has tinted blonde hair, huge sunglasses, lots of jewelry and a fur coat. She speaks on her cell phone. She is very Jewish.

SYLVIA

Hiram? Sylvia Greenbaum. Are you sitting down?...What?...What are you having? Pastrami with Swiss?...Watch your gall bladder, Hiram. You're not a young man anymore...Are you sitting down? I have big news, Hiram. Big, big news...Well, I have a new client. He's a big name, a huge name, but he's fallen on some hard times lately. It was in all the papers. Anyway, he wants to make a comeback, and he called me...

Lights dim. Sylvia exits. Elmo and his puppeteer enter and stand center. Elmo wears a yarmulka and a prayer shawl. The

lights come up. We make no attempt to hide the fact that the puppeteer is voicing Elmo.

MUSIC: TRADITION

ELMO

*What, day and night, possesses all
my thinking, keeps my eyes from
blinking, dances in my dreams?
And what is the thing, the master
of my loins, that makes me lose my
mind and cream?*

As he sings MALE ACTOR #2 and FEMALE ACTORS #2 and #3 come on stage dressed in traditional, Fiddler on the Roof costumes. They join in the singing of the chorus.

ELMO, MAN AND WOMEN

*The Penis, the Penis! Fellation.
The Penis, the Penis! Fellation.*

ELMO AND WOMAN #2

*What is that small thing that makes
a proper bone, a rigid bone, a
turgid bone? What will raise the
blood pressure and stiff the bone,
So johnson's free to raid the sweet
star fruit?*

ELMO, MAN AND WOMEN

*The Anus, the Anus! Erection! The
Anus, the Anus! Erection!*

ELMO AND MAN

*At twelve, I went to all-boys
school. In wrestling I got 'A's.
I've got a brand new lab partner. I
hope he's pretty.*

ELMO, MAN AND WOMEN

*The Semen, the Semen. Secretion!
The Semen, the Semen. Secretion!*

ELMO AND WOMEN #3

*When I was on the playground the
boys would punch and kick, But all
that sweaty contact was jet fuel
for my prick.*

ELMO, MAN AND WOMEN

*The Hormones, the Hormones! Orgasm!
The Hormones, the Hormones! Orgasm!*

The Penis, the Anus. Fellation!

MUSIC FADES.

Lights dim. Sylvia enters. She sits and is on the cell phone again. Lights up.

SYLVIA

No, Hiram...No, just put on a hot compress and stop picking at it--

BUZZER SOUNDS:

SYLVIA

Oh, that's my three-thirty, I gotta go...No...No, leave it alone, I'm telling you!

She hangs up.

SYLVIA

Come in.

Elmo, without yarmulka or scarf, and Puppeteer enter.

SYLVIA

Elmo! So good to finally meet you!

ELMO

Hello, Ms. Greenbaum.

SYLVIA

"Sylvia", please. Have a seat.

SYLVIA

Something to drink?

ELMO

No, thank you.

SYLVIA

What about, uh...

She points to the Puppeteer. The Puppeteer starts to accept.

ELMO

(cutting him off.)
No, he's fine.

The Puppeteer gives Elmo a dirty look.

SYLVIA

You look good. You lost weight?

ELMO

Well, I bought a treadmill, you know...

SYLVIA

Tell me about it. So, what brings you to my humble little agency?

ELMO

I got your number from my Uncle Ernie.

SYLVIA

How is he?

ELMO

Fine.

SYLVIA

And Burt?

ELMO

Good.

SYLVIA

Such a cute couple.

ELMO

Like old yentas, those two.

SYLVIA

So what can I do for you?

ELMO

Well, as you know, my career has hit a couple of teeny snags lately.

SYLVIA

I know, I'm so sorry.

ELMO

Well, what are you gonna do?

SYLVIA

Keep your fuzzy little hands out of the cookie jar, for one thing.

ELMO

I know, I know. Well, since then I've had to keep a low profile. The bookings dried up. Oscar's had me blacklisted from The Street...

SYLVIA

Such a shame.

ELMO

So I thought I'd try and jump start my act again. But go back to my roots, you know? Like my zayda in the Yiddish Puppet Theatre.

SYLVIA

A very good idea. Start slow. Little venues uptown or in the Catskills.

ELMO

Exactly. And Uncle Ernie said you were the best in that venue, so...

SYLVIA

So you came to me. I'm honored. I'll do what I can. I don't have much time today, my nephew has his barmitzvah later this afternoon, so-

-

ELMO

Nephew?. How old is he?

SYLVIA

(Obviously, duh.)
Thirteen.

ELMO

(trying to hide his lust.)
Thirteen...ahhhhhhhhh.

SYLVIA

You all right?

ELMO

(composing himself.)
Yeah...yeah, fine. So you'll help me out?

SYLVIA

I will, on one condition.

ELMO

Anything.

SYLVIA

I need you to promise me that you have your...little problem, under wraps and under control.

ELMO

Sylvia, you have my word.

LIGHTS DIM:

Sylvia, Elmo and Puppeteer exit. Women #2 and #3 enter center stage. They are dressed like 12 year old boys, with pants, shirt, yarmulka, scarf and those long curls at the temple. They also wears a boy scout sashes full of merit badges. They act timid and frightened.

LIGHTS UP:

MUSIC: MATCHMAKER

WOMAN #2

Scoutmaster, Scoutmaster, give me a badge, Let's start a fire without a match. Scoutmaster, Scoutmaster lets just set camp, and let me keep on my pants.

WOMAN #3

Scoutmaster, Scoutmaster, don't make me wail, don't rub me there, you could go to jail. Keep in your thing and don't try to touch me, and I'll forget all I see.

Elmo and the Puppeteer enter. Elmo wears a small Scoutmaster's hat.

WOMAN #2

I swear I won't tell my Father.

WOMAN #3

Your praises my Mother will sing.

WOMAN #2 AND WOMAN #3

And me, I swear I won't holler if you promise next time that it won't sting. Scoutmaster, Scoutmaster, a message we've sent, leave us alone in our own tent, Night after night in the darkness we pray, that you'll change your mind, and go away.

The two huddle together and scurry offstage as Elmo and the Puppeteer hurry after them.

LIGHTS DIM:

Sylvia enters and sits center. Elmo and the Puppeteer enter and stand downstage, facing the audience. Elmo is reading Jack and Jill magazine.

LIGHTS UP:

Sylvia dials her phone.

PHONE RING SFX:

Elmo answers.

ELMO

You got Elmo.

SYLVIA

Elmo, Sylvia Greenbuam, how are you? Am I interrupting anything?

Elmo tosses the magazine.

ELMO

Nope. Not a thing.

SYLVIA

I have good news. My friend Hiram Goldstein owns a nice little theatre venue upstate. A vacation area; lots of trees, fresh air, the whole blintz. Folks come up for long weekends over the Summer, he packs 'em in. Well this year he's doing a big, upscale version of *Fiddler*, and guess who I'm selling him on for Tevye?

ELMO

Me?

SYLVIA

None other, boobala. But there's one catch.

ELMO

Sylvia, I already promised you--

SYLVIA

No, no, that's not it. Hiram is concerned that you're not, well...Jewish enough.

ELMO

What?!

SYLVIA

He just thinks you might want to go back into the community, take in some of the local color, get your footing.

ELMO

I don't know...

SYLVIA

Piece of cake. I already booked you for a bris later today.

ELMO

A bris? isn't that where they cut the, uh--

SYLVIA

That's right.

ELMO

Ahhhhhhhhhh...

SYLVIA

You okay? Elmo?

ELMO

Yeah, fine...fine.

SYLVIA

It's at the Alan King Temple at two o'clock. Don't let me down, kid.

LIGHTS DIM:

MUSIC UP: BRIS MUSIC

Note: I am trying to represent a solemn religious ceremony. The whole scene is not played for comedy, but to, hopefully, shed some sympathy on the Elmo character. To infer some kind of redemption.

Under the dimly colored lights Man #1 enters dressed as a Rabbi. He carries a baby wrapping in swaddling clothes. He is followed by Woman #2 and Woman #3. They all march slowly on stage as the music plays. They make their way around the perimeter of the stage until they come full circle and end up stage center.

Elmo and the Puppeteer enter. Elmo is wearing his yarmulka and prayer scarf. As the music continues, the Rabbi holds the baby above his head and turns, slowly. He then hands the baby to Woman #2 and takes an ornate knife from his pocket. He gestures Elmo over. Elmo is unsure, but wanders over.

The Rabbi gestures to Woman #2 and she holds out the baby to Elmo. Elmo puts a shaking hand on the baby as it is laid on to a chair. The Rabbi opens the baby's clothes and Elmo quickly turns away, shaking. The Rabbi pantomimes a quick cut.

SFX BABY CRYING.

The smiling Rabbi hands the baby to Woman #3 who takes it off stage, followed by Woman #2. Elmo looks out after them, then slowly turns out. He walks downstage trembling and hanging his head.

LIGHTS UP:

The Rabbi walks over to Elmo, smiling.

MAN #1

You did a fine job, my son.

ELMO

(unsure.)

Yeah...sure...thank you, Rabbi.

MAN #1

Is there anything wrong, my son?

ELMO

No, it's just...I have a few personal problems I'm trying to work through.

MAN #1

Tell me about it.

Elmo looks at the Rabbi, surprised.

MAN #1

What? You don't think I read the papers?

ELMO

I'm trying to walk a straighter path, Rabbi. To be a better person. But it's not easy.

MAN #1

We all have our burdens to bear, my son. But I believe God gives us exactly enough strength as we need to bear those burdens...if we honestly choose to. That's up to you.

ELMO

(dejected)

There are days I just can't figure out how.

MAN #1

Sometimes you have to look inward. What has happened along the path you've traveled? What events, what circumstances, what endless variety of factors have led you to be the person you are today? The person you're trying to change.

ELMO

Well...I've had a grown man's hand up my ass for the last twenty-two years.

MAN #1

(after a pause.)

That'll do it.

LIGHTS DIM:

Sylvia, Woman #2 and Woman #3 enter in traditional Fiddler garb. They dance and sing backup for Elmo.

MUSIC UP: IF I WERE A RICH MAN

LIGHTS UP:

ELMO

If I were a good man, Yubby dibby dibby dibby dibby dibby dum. All day long I'd leave alone the bum, of the little happy child. (Hey!) I'd leave alone the playground. Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle dum. If I were a biddy biddy good, Idle-diddle-daidle-normal man. I'd just go out with men well past legal age, we'd hit all the singles clubs and bars. I might commit I might date a lot of guys. There could be Sean and Mike and Arthur and Bob, and maybe a Christopher or John, and one named Long Dong Silver, just for show. I'd see the boys at camp and out playing ball, and respect all their innocence and joy. As fragile and fresh as a new fallen bank of snow.

And they would all come around and ask my advice, like I was their mentor or their pal, As if to say 'Here stands a healthy man.' If I were a good man, Yubby dibby dibby dibby dibby dibby dum. All day long I'd act like an adult. If I were a healthy man. (Hey!) I'd leave alone the chat rooms. Yubby dibby dibby dibby dibby dibby dum. Lord who made a questionable man, Can I just choose to be who I am? May I put a wrinkle in your plan? And make myself a healthy man!

LIGHTS OUT:

THE END