

BIG BOX

by

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FADE IN

INT. ON A TELEVISION SCREEN - DAY

ANDY BRADFORD (50), CEO of Electronic Emporium is grilled by CHARLIE ZIP (65), a hunch-shouldered Larry King wannabe on his studio show: The Zip Hour. Bradford's at ease, an overgrown school-boy dressed in business casual.

Charlie speaks to the POV.

CHARLIE

Joining me tonight, Andy Bradford, Chairman and CEO of Electronic Emporium, the nation's largest electronics retailer. The company recently made headlines for what some are calling shady business practices.

Charlie turns to Bradford.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Andy Bradford, thanks for joining us.

ANDY BRADFORD

Thanks for having me, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Set us straight. Consumer groups claim Electronic Emporium engages in unscrupulous practices and customer deception.

ANDY BRADFORD

Not true. Sure, there've been a few isolated incidents. Rogue employees. Kids who acted contrary to corporate policy. Contrary to the culture we're trying to foster. But those are just cultural anomalies.

CHARLIE

Culture. It comes from the top, right?

EXT. ELECTRONIC EMPORIUM - PARKING LOT - DAY

A modern big box electronics chain. The parking lot is full. CUSTOMERS and EMPLOYEES come and go. WE HEAR the interview continue.

ANDY BRADFORD (V.O)

Well, that's true. As an officer of the company, I have a duty to lead and show the way. But I also have a duty to our shareholders. With over six hundred stores and more than 37000 US-based employees, it's hard to know what's going
(MORE)

ANDY BRADFORD (V.O) (CONT'D)
on at the customer level for every single
transaction.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
Is that plausible deniability?

INT. ON A TELEVISION SCREEN - DAY

Bradford grins: *Who? Me?*

ANDY BRADFORD
We push policies and procedures down the
line and hope our message isn't perverted
along the way.

Charlie changes tone. New question.

CHARLIE
What happened to the customer always
comes first?

ANDY BRADFORD
I'll tell you what happened, the internet
happened, and wow, what a wake-up call.

INT. ELECTRONIC EMPORIUM - DAY

A bustling store. Color coordinated. Bright lights. LOUD MUSIC.

ANDY BRADFORD (V.O.)
Suddenly we had to compete on price and
price alone.

Absolutely *everything* appears to be on sale.

EXT. ELECTRONIC EMPORIUM - FRONT ENTRANCE - A FEW YEARS AGO - DAY

SEASONED SALESPeOPLE walk out, most in their 50's. They wear
blazers, have grey hair, and smoke. They carry boxes of personal
belongings. They look disgusted.

ANDY BRADFORD (V.O.)
We fired our commissioned salesforce.
Outsourced is the word of the day.
Replaced them with hourly associates.

Next to the door is a table with 'JOB FAIR TODAY' tagged to it.
YOUNG APPLICANTS (late teens) line up. They're really perky.

ANDY BRADFORD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We backfilled with an endless supply of
kids that had fun working with the latest
and greatest in technology.

INT. ON A TELEVISION SCREEN - DAY

Charlie leans close, tries to understand...

CHARLIE

Low prices, cheap labor, what went wrong?

ANDY BRADFORD

To keep up with the internet, we had to slash prices. Costs rose. Margins shrunk. Hasn't been a dollar to be made in electronics in, oh, 15 years now. The only profit left is in services.

CHARLIE

Ah. The infamous product service plan. You catch a lot of flack about that, don't you?

ANDY BRADFORD

Hey, it's not right for everyone...

INT. ELECTRONIC EMPORIUM - CASH REGISTER - DAY

A CONFUSED CUSTOMER (40) looks at a PSP pamphlet as a A PERKY CASHIER (17) explains it MOS. She smiles a lot.

ANDY BRADFORD (V.O.)

... but the PSP is the vehicle, bar none, that keeps the blood in the Emporium's heart pumping. If we didn't have the PSP we'd be out of business. It's gotten to the point that we'd be better off not selling the item if the customer doesn't buy the PSP.

The Confused Customer shrugs, nods 'yes.' The Perky Cashier rings him up. We see the total: \$349.99.

INT. ON A TELEVISION SCREEN - DAY

Charlie looks confused.

CHARLIE

Not sell the product?

ANDY BRADFORD

It makes no sense us to sell an item without a PSP. No sense.

CHARLIE

Does that worry you? That your entire business hinges on one key component. One key idea?

A mischievous grin.

ANDY BRADFORD

No, no. We're on the side of the angels.

INT. O'ROURKE FAMILY ROOM / KITCHEN - DAY

RYAN O'ROURKE (18), dressed in graduation gown sans cap sits on the couch, sips on a beer, and watches the end of Charlie Zip's interview. The credits roll.

CHARLIE (ON TV)

And that's it for today! Thanks to Charlie Bradford of Electronic Emporium for joining us today, and we'll see you next time on The Zip Hour.

KEVIN O'ROURKE (35) enters in his work coveralls. He notices a graduation cap on the kitchen table and smacks his head with his hand: *idiot!*

KEVIN

You in there, Ry'?

RYAN

Yep.

KEVIN

Ah geez. How was graduation?

RYAN

Pretty much a non-event.

KEVIN

Need a beer?

RYAN

I'm good.

Kevin grabs a beer and heads to the family room.

KEVIN

Sorry I missed it Ry'...

Ryan tries to wave it off. Kevin feels guilty.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

... I had to replace an attic water heater over at Ms. Mendoza's. By myself.

RYAN

No prob, pop. Plenty of more high school graduations.

Kevin looks at Ryan, unsure of the last comment. Ryan smiles.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Really. No big deal.

KEVIN

Damn back's killing me.

Kevin gingerly lowers himself to the couch next to Ryan.

A commercial for "Whores on Ice" comes on. In the commercial, hot chicks skate around, not very well, but very hotly. Kevin and Ryan perk up.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Hey now. This doesn't look too bad.

ANNOUNCER (ON THE TV)
That's right! The girls are back in town!
The ice is cold but these girls are hot!

On the TV, a SKATER approaches the POV.

ANNOUNCER (ON THE TV) (CONT'D)
Tickets still available for Friday and
two shows Saturday!

The Perky Skater thrusts her arms above her head exposing full breasts barely covered by tight spandex.

ANNOUNCER (ON THE TV) (CONT'D)
BE THERE!!!

KEVIN
Hell yes! Wish there was some sort of
technology where we could rewind that and
watch it again.

A new commercial starts. Horribly overproduced with a THUMPING BEAT and dutch angles. MTV-style. Electronics shimmer.

EMPORIUM ANNOUNCER (ON THE TV)
Get in for the fun! Get in for what's
hot! Don't be left out on the deals this
weekend at Electronic Emporium.

On the TV: Appliances. Smiling employees. Smiling customers.

EMPORIUM ANNOUNCER (ON THE TV) (CONT'D)
All electronics over 500 dollars, 7
years, no payment, no interest. All big
screen TV's delivered next day!
Guaranteed!

KEVIN
Sweet God in Heaven! Seven years!

EMPORIUM ANNOUNCER (ON THE TV)
Open 10 a.m. till midnight 7 days a week!
Electronic Emporium, thousands of
solutions! There's probably one for you!

Several pages of impossibly small fine print flash by.

KEVIN
Not a lot of thought on that slogan.

They sit in silence for a moment.

RYAN
How's the back?

Kevin shrugs: *not good.*

KEVIN
Had to can Karl. You gonna be ready to go on Monday?

RYAN
I 'spose. I'll need to check my calendar. What happened with Karl? Thought you liked him.

KEVIN
You know Ms. Mendoza, on Pine?

RYAN
Manuel's mom?

KEVIN
Yeah, her. She say's Manuel's into a gang now. Anyway, Karl's telling her she needs to replace this and that. Replace the faucet. Replace the disposal. She's saying "no thank you" to him. Real polite-like. He's pressing. She starts getting mad. He keeps pushing. She musta' said "no" five times. Luckily I was able to step in before he did some real damage.

RYAN
Where did he get the idea he had to hard-sell your customers? Your idea?

KEVIN
Not me. I don't know where he got the idea that fuck the customer was job one. I told him if we sell something, I'd give him a taste.

RYAN
Kids today, huh?

KEVIN
It's that something-for-nothing-what-have-you-done-for-me-lately culture . Karl didn't care that Ms. Mendoza already called us ten times and, as long as we treat her right, she'll call us ten more--

RYAN
And tell her neighbors.

KEVIN
Tell her neighbors! Damn straight!

Kevin shakes his beer. It's empty. He stands.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Another?

Ryan BURPS and nods 'yes.' Kevin walks towards the kitchen.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Listen, Ry', you mighta not seen your
life going this way, but you and me, we
gotta stick together. I need your help.
I'm too damn old to be doing this by
myself...

RYAN
I can see that.

Kevin continues from the kitchen.

KEVIN (O.S.)
... plenty of time down the road for
college. Maybe you can take some night
classes at the JC in the fall or
something. You don't need to rush.

The "Whores on Ice" commercial starts again. Kevin hurries back in with the beers.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Yes! Here we go again!

Just as the Perky Skater raises her hands, the TV blinks out.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
No! Good God! No!

As Kevin scrambles for the remote the television blinks back on.

ANNOUNCER (ON THE TV)
Be there!

KEVIN
I'm gonna hit the shower. I'm covered in
some stranger's fecal particulates.

RYAN
Nice.

KEVIN
Hey. Tomorrow. Why don't you check out
Electronic Emporium? See if there's
something that might replace ole' Bessy?

INT. ELECTRONIC EMPORIUM - BY THE DOOR - DAY

AUBREY (18) enters. He wears a red store shirt and an Electronic Emporium name tag. A plain kid with an honest face and wide eyes.

Guarding the door and controlling a store camera is a buff LOSS PREVENTION GUY (20). He has a monitor built into his console. On it, a SHOPLIFTER (21) walks the DVD aisle. "REC" blinks in the bottom of the corner.

ON THE VIDEO MONITOR

The Shoplifter picks up the DVD "Passion of the Christ."

LOSS PREVENTION GUY (O.S.)
Oh no. Don't do it, dude. Not Passion of
the Christ!

The Shoplifter slips the DVD into his waistband.

LOSS PREVENTION GUY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
There's a special place in hell for you,
my friend.

BACK BY THE LOSS PREVENTION STAND

The Loss Prevention guy looks up as Aubrey enters.

LOSS PREVENTION GUY (CONT'D)
Wassap, Bro!

AUBREY
It's a great day at Electronic Emporium!

LOSS PREVENTION GUY
Except for this poor fuck stealing
Passion of the Christ.

AUBREY
Express freight train to hell. ALL
ABOARD!

LOSS PREVENTION GUY
Heh. Amen brother!

The Loss Prevention guy glances at a clock.

LOSS PREVENTION GUY (CONT'D)
Better hurry. You've about a minute to
clock in or you're heading home.
(beat)
You could use some work on your pecs,
dude.

The Loss Prevention guy flaps his massive pecs at Aubrey.

ON THE VIDEO MONITOR

Two yellow-shirted loss prevention goons fly into the Shoplifter.

INT. ELECTRONIC EMPORIUM - TV DEPT - DAY

Red-shirted employees RAY (17) and LARRY (16) watch LORD OF THE RINGS. The picture is beyond perfect.

RAY

Damn. Look at that picture.

LARRY

That's a custom satellite feed my friend.

Ray looks confused. Larry shakes his head in pity.

LARRY (CONT'D)

You don't think this is what the customer is gonna' see when they get it to their house, do you?

Ray still looks lost.

LARRY (CONT'D)

This is a state-of-the art satellite feed. Sure, it looks pretty cool here, but after you drop seven grand, do you think you're gonna see a picture like this at home? Not unless YOU have a state-of-the-art multi-million dollar satellite sitting in a dedicated geosynchronous low earth orbit.

Ray shakes his head 'no.' It's all too much.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Dude, it's a sham! You can not, repeat, can not, get this picture at your house. Here. You wanna see how this set will look like at your house?

Larry switches the channel. He lands on a nature channel. A calf suckles at the teat of a cow. The quality is horrible.

RAY

What is that? A cow? And a baby cow?

LARRY

A calf.

Ray has to squint to make out the picture.

RAY

Look at that little one go! That milk thing sort of looks like my dick.

(beat)

Bet that little cow would suck a dick.

(beat)

Bet'cha it'd suck a dick real nice.

Larry looks at Ray, a little uncertain.

Aubrey walks by.

LARRY

Hey Aub'.

AUBREY

Jeez, look at that little cow go!

FOLLOW Aubrey as he continues on, passes row after row of televisions, all showing the "Whores on Ice" commercial.

INT. ELECTRONICS EMPORIUM - THE HUB - DAY

The Hub is the break room for Electronic Emporium employees.

A few EMPLOYEES eat lunch and chat. As Aubrey walks in TIM (20) leads ANN (19) out by the hand. She tries to hold her blouse together with her free hand.

ANN

Hey Aub'!

Aubrey makes his way to the time clock.

AUBREY

Hey you two. Up to no good?

Aubrey swipes his badge and a green LED flashes atop the clock.

INT. ELECTRONIC EMPORIUM - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

The room is almost dark. A lamp casts a circle of light on the table. JACK (18) and PETE (20), sharp-angled, clean-cut, closely shorn boys sit at the table. Both wear blue shirts. Jack has a magazine open in the circle of light.

JACK

Ok. Ok. Lemme see if I can find it...
Remember what we were talking about last week? High school's over. The Emporium isn't gonna be here forever. We need real careers. All that shit?

PETE

Yeah?

JACK

And remember, we were talking about what would be the coolest thing in the world?

PETE

Porn star?

JACK

No. Wait. Yes. We did say that but that's not what I'm talking about.

(prompting)

But remember? You and me?