

**JUST THE FACTS**

The Rise & Fall of AJ Daulerio,  
Gawker Media, and Digital Journalism in the 21st Century

Based on a true story

Written by

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*"There are no facts, only interpretations."*

**- Friedrich Nietzsche**

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**Bubba "The Love Sponge" Clem:** *"So, Hogan, you're claiming, to maybe have a 10-inch cock?"*

**Terry "Hulk Hogan" Bollea:** *"I'm not claiming. Those are the facts, Jack."*

**- DJ Bubba The Love Sponge Radio Show, 2006**

OVER BLACK.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
You were under oath in your  
deposition, right?

AJ  
Yes.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
You raised your right hand and you  
swore to tell the truth, right?

AJ  
I did.

**TITLE: Pinellas County, Florida - March 9, 2016**

FADE IN:

**INT. COURTROOM - DAY**

AJ DAULERIO, 41, is on the stand. Fast-talking. Street-smart. Dressed in a cobalt blue suit, his face is expressionless as an arrogant PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY continues to chip away at him.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
And in that deposition, you were  
asked a question about the central  
issue of this case, were you not?

AJ starts to sense he's being set up. Uneasy, he loses focus.

AJ  
I'm sorry, the central issue of  
this case being?

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
Newsworthiness.

From AJ'S POV: the packed courtroom; news media; spectators; lawyers; HULK HOGAN in a black suit & matching bandanna.

On AJ, soaking in the absurdity of the moment. We FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
Right now, American journalism is  
pretty much fucked.

**CONDE NAST - MAGAZINE COVERS**

New Yorker. Vanity Fair. Vogue. W. Wired. Golf Digest.

AJ (V.O.)

Conde may look like a media juggernaut but they've been hemorrhaging cash for years.

**THE NEW YORK TIMES - PRINTING PLANT**

Fresh copies of the 'Grey Lady' rush out of printing presses.

AJ (V.O.)

The Times has been online since 1996 and they still haven't figured out a digital model that works well enough to offset their rapidly declining subscription rate.

**TRIBUNE NEWSPAPERS - FRONT PAGES**

Chicago Tribune. Baltimore Sun. LA Times. Orlando Sentinel.

AJ (V.O.)

You read any Tribune Newspapers?  
Yeah, neither does anyone else.

**1211 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS - NEW YORK CITY**

A twine-wrapped bundle of WSJs thuds down on the sidewalk.

AJ (V.O.)

As for the Wall Street Journal, well, we all know how that's going.

Above, a gloomy skyscraper. Its sign reads: NEWS CORPORATION.

AJ (V.O.)

Then you have the "new media" outlets which aren't any better...

**ARIANA HUFFINGTON**

with Oprah; Alec Baldwin; Jennifer Aniston; Ashton Kutcher.

AJ (V.O.)

Huff Po is an AOL-backed celebrity circle jerk.

**BREITBART**

Steve Bannon. Milo Yiannopoulos. Anne Coulter. James O'Keefe.

AJ (V.O.)

Brietbart is a behemoth but it  
reads like Mein Kampf fan-fiction.

**BUZZFEED**

Quizzes. Listicles. Videos starring grossly underpaid actors.

AJ (V.O.)

And Buzzfeed pretends to be news  
but it's really just a union-  
busting digital sweatshop using  
wacky gifs and listicles as a  
thinly veiled ruse to get  
millennials to drink more Pepsi.

**NEWS OUTLETS**

NPR. PBS. The Washington Post. New York Magazine. Vice.

AJ (V.O.)

Sure, I could rattle off a couple  
places who are holding it together  
but this is my story and like any  
other self-respecting reporter, I  
plan on cherry-picking only the  
facts that best support my own  
thoughtfully crafted narrative.

**MOGULS**

Rupert Murdoch. Ted Turner. Sheldon Adelson. Jonah Peretti.

AJ (V.O.)

Anyway, the point I'm trying to  
make is that Freedom of Press no  
longer exists because every  
organization I just named is in  
some way, shape or form bound by  
the shackles of corporate interests  
or a mustache twirling Board of  
Directors. Except for us.

**GAWKER**

SLOW MOTION shots featuring a bunch of attractive 20-somethings in the midst of beer-spraying, coke-snorting, face-sucking excess. And at the center of it all: AJ.

AJ (V.O.)

Gawker: a hedonistic pirate ship filled with scrappy young fuck-ups and misfits who get to say whatever we want as long as it's interesting and as long as it's true and as long as we bring in enough people to read it. But doing that requires one to make certain... *choices*.

**INT. COURTROOM - BACK TO PRESENT**

Still FROZEN on AJ, as he was.

AJ (V.O.)

Which is how I got here. Locked in a \$100 million legal battle with a dude who's publicly referred to his penis as "the Loch Ness Monster".

FROZEN on an earnest and reserved looking Hulk Hogan.

Back on AJ, UNFREEZE.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

That's your defense, right? That's the First Amendment?

AJ

That is.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

And do you recall a portion of your deposition where you discussed what kinds of hypothetical sex tapes would not be newsworthy?

As AJ flashes back in his head, dread begins to envelop him.

BLACK OUT.

AJ (PRE-LAP)

I don't remember.

TITLE CARD: **PHILADELPHIA, PA - NOVEMBER, 2007**

INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE - PHILADELPHIA MAGAZINE - DAY

AJ's leaning back in his seat. His hair is shaggy. He's noticeably younger. Brighter. Self-assured.

A sample layout of the magazine's masthead is on the desk in front of him. He stares, longingly. The title. The power. He wants it.

EDITOR

You don't remember?

A hand shuts the folder containing the samples. It belongs to a stern, graying EDITOR sitting across from AJ.

AJ

Yeah, you say a lot of things so it's hard for me to keep track.

EDITOR

Listening is a vital skill for a journalist to have and as your boss, I find it deeply disconcerting that you lack it.

AJ

It's not that I lack it, I'm just selective in its application.

EDITOR

Okay, that actually might be worse.

AJ

I'm sorry, what was that?

The Editor openly ignores the joke. Moving on--

EDITOR

I asked you to give me two hundred words on the three best grilled cheese sandwiches in Northern Liberties.

(holds up stack of papers)

And you gave me two thousand words on a City Councilman who has a father-in-law that owns a private towing company.

AJ

To be fair, only four hundred of those words were about the Councilman.

(MORE)

AJ (CONT'D)

Another four hundred were focused on how much money his father-in-law stands to make when the city rolls back its street parking hours and the other twelve hundred covered their carefully coordinated effort to manipulate public legislation in the favor of their family business.

The Editor grows frustrated, rubs his eyes.

EDITOR

That wasn't the assignment. You can't just write what you want. This is *Philadelphia Magazine*, not *AJ Daulerio Presents Philadelphia Magazine*.

AJ is dumbfounded by his Editor's lack of interest.

AJ

So I scoop the Inquirer on a City Council corruption story and you're pissed at me because I didn't write about grilled cheeses?

EDITOR

You're not supposed to scoop anybody. That's not what we do. We're a family-friendly, locally focused print magazine. We are not in the business of take-downs or probing corruption or stories that piss off important members of the local community who also happen to be the same people whose ad buying underwrites our very existence.

AJ

(realizing)

You're scared to run it.

The Editor, laughs to himself. Leans back. Softens.

EDITOR

AJ, you're a smart guy. A *really* smart guy. But you've got a mouth that'll be the end of you if you don't figure out how to keep it shut. So before you open it again, I want you to think long and hard about how much you need this job.

(MORE)

EDITOR (CONT'D)

Because if the next words out of it  
are anything other than  
"Understood", you won't be working  
here anymore.

AJ thinks. Swallows hard. Forces a smile.

AJ

Understood.

**EXT. MARKET STREET - GOLDEN HOUR**

Center City's skyscrapers are bathed in an orange glow. AJ  
exits an Irish Pub with a happy hour buzz, lights a smoke.

AJ

The job is all the stuff I hate  
about journalism with none of the  
stuff I like about journalism.

WILL LEITCH, 32, follows. Baby-faced with a flop of brown  
hair. He's AJ's best friend and former co-worker.

WILL

It's a steady paycheck. And you're  
at a magazine.

AJ

You're saying that like it's a good  
thing.

WILL

I wouldn't mind being in print. It  
has a certain... prestige to it.

Will's mind drifts. He really wouldn't mind it...

AJ

You mean the prestige of working in  
a rapidly dying medium?

WILL

Journalism as a whole is a rapidly  
dying medium, not just print. And,  
think of all the great writers who  
got their start in print. Ernest  
Hemingway.

AJ

Drunk who killed himself.

WILL

Norman Mailer.

AJ  
Drunk who beat his wife.

WILL  
Joan Didion.

AJ  
Yeah, sure, she looks innocent, but there's something dark going on there. Also, I'm fairly certain that when all of those people were working at magazines, they weren't writing restaurant round-ups for Mainline soccer moms.

WILL  
At least being in print means you're no longer a traffic slave. Worrying about Deadspin's numbers is taking years off my life.

AJ  
You're the Editor-in-Chief of a sports blog where you get to write whatever you want. Sweating page views is a small price to pay.

WILL  
Look on the bright side, you're living in a great--

Will steps around a homeless junky nodding off on the sidewalk in front of an abandoned building.

WILL (CONT'D)  
Okay, maybe not great, but Philadelphia is definitely a... city.

AJ smiles, shrugs off Will's playful jab.

AJ  
Philly is great. But living with your parents in a suburb of Philly, not so much...

WILL  
If you're so unhappy, then why don't you move back to New York?

AJ  
And work where?

Will tries hard to think of a place. He can't.

AJ (CONT'D)  
That's why.

Will gives AJ a tacit nod as they come to a stop in front of the towering concrete columns of 30th Street station.

WILL  
Hey, you know you're always welcome to freelance another one of your Cultural Oddsmaker columns for Deadspin. Our readers love 'em.  
(off AJ's grateful nod)  
It was good seeing you.

AJ  
You too.

They enter into a back-slapping bro hug. A gruff PHILLY GUY in a McNabb jersey brushes past, mutters--

PHILLY GUY  
Faggots.

AJ  
(don't say it)  
Philly is great.

#### **INT. AJ'S PARENT'S HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING**

Split-level home that was decorated during the Reagan administration. AJ eases the door open, slips inside.

AJ tiptoes past his PARENTS in the living room, doing his best to avoid detection. As he creeps by, he stops.

The TV's light flickers on his face as he observes the pair, stupefied by some network procedural. His eyes travel over the room: the floral print furniture; the ugly carpeting; the chintzy knickknacks. It's all so heartbreakingly ordinary.

After a beat, AJ shakes his head, continues on up the stairs.

#### **EXT. AJ'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT**

AJ trudges in, drops his bag. Flops onto his twin bed. Tired. Defeated. He takes in the room: Little League trophies; Philly sports paraphernalia; a big 90's-era computer monitor.

He sighs. Grabs a remote, flicks on a 13" SDTV. The final 'da-da-da' of the "SportsCenter" theme song blares.

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)

Early Wednesday morning, Miami Dolphins running back, Ricky Williams, was reinstated by the NFL following an eighteen month suspension for his fourth violation of the league's drug policy.

AJ stares at the TV. The gears in his head start to turn.

SPORTSCASTER

There's no doubt that the 0-9 Dolphins are glad to have him back but is Ricky's return too little, too late? And can the former Heisman trophy winner keep himself away from the green stuff?

AJ rips his laptop from his bag, cracks it open. As he rapidly taps his fingers over the keys, the world falls away.

AJ (V.O.)

*After eighteen long months, Ricky Williams has cast aside his beloved bong, shaved off his beloved dreadlocks, and returned to the NFL. But his league-mandated drug tests aren't going away. And neither is the Rickster's overwhelming desire to get baked.*

### **DEADSPIN - WEBSITE**

*DEADSPIN -- Sports News without Access, Favor, or Discretion*

*CULTURAL ODDSMAKER: What Will Be Ricky Williams' New Drug Of Choice?*

AJ (V.O.)

*Since buying clean urine from local high school kids can be a real hassle, uhh, or so I've heard, Williams best course of action may be to find a way to get high that doesn't involve any of the league's long list of banned substances. Which is why this week, I'm placing odds on what I think will be Ricky Williams new way to catch a buzz.*

**INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT**

A skinny college kid giddily reads AJ's post on his computer.

AJ (V.O.)

*Whip-its: 4/1. Whip-its aren't just for that greasy crew of kids who hang out behind your local gas station. They're a cheap, easy, and delicious way to get high. They also hold the potential for a ultra-pasteurized and delightfully creamy endorsement deal with Redi-Whip.*

**INT. SUBURBAN HOME - EARLY MORNING**

A middle-America mom is at her kitchen table in a bathrobe. She sips coffee, stares into her laptop, chuckles to herself.

AJ (V.O.)

*Colorado River Toad: 1/1. It's a sticky Sunday afternoon in Miami. The game's tied up with two minutes to go. What better to take the edge off than a couple discreet sideline licks of the powerfully psychoactive venom of the Colorado River Toad. Plus, it doubles as an adorable little reptile companion.*

**INT. HEDGE FUND OFFICE - MORNING**

I-Bankers in headsets are gathered around a Bloomberg terminal, doubled over with belly laughter.

AJ (V.O.)

*Peyote: 2/1. Need to "Ghost Dance" your way around a NFL drug test? Look no further than the Navajo Tribe's cactus of choice. And on a 12-16 hour spiritual journey, what could possibly go wrong? Aside from stripping naked and running through the streets of South Beach whilst being chased by an imaginary Minotaur with the head of John Madden.*

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - MORNING**

Exposed beams and brick. Dim lighting. Pin-drop silent.

Twenty or so hip, young writers sit on either side of a long table running down the center of the room with a bank of computer monitors spanning its length.

Will is seated at the end. On a monitor, he jostles between AJ's post and the up-to-minute traffic data it's drawing. A finger taps him on the shoulder. He tightens.

**EXT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - ROOFTOP - MOMENTS LATER**

It's overcast. The skyline of lower Manhattan can be seen in the distance. Will is pleading his case.

WILL

Okay, sure, Deadspin's following may be small, but it is very loyal.

NICK DENTON, 41, considers a tiny joint he's just taken a hit off. Cropped gray hair. Slim build. He has a terminal 5 o'clock shadow and a bone dry British wit.

NICK

And there's nothing advertisers love more than the word 'small' when it comes to audience size.

Nick flicks the joint off the roof.

WILL

So that's what this about, Nick? Advertisers?

NICK

You do understand the economics of digital journalism, yes?

WILL

I thought Gawker Media was supposed to be about editorial independence and not giving a shit what advertisers think?

Nick pulls out his Blackberry, starts absently typing.

NICK

It is. But in order to maintain said independence, our collective of sites need to draw enough traffic to maintain those advertisers and right now, Deadspin simply isn't growing fast enough.

Will looks off. Nick puts his Blackberry away.

NICK (CONT'D)

Now I let you create your little...  
ball and stick blog--

WILL

Sports news, Nick. *Sports. News.*

NICK

I know what I said. My point is, I  
let you create it. I let you run it  
on my servers and under the  
umbrella of my brand, but unless  
you start publishing content that  
moves the needle, I'm afraid I'm  
going to have to reconsider.

WILL

(what the fuck)  
*Move the needle?*

Nick crosses to the stairway door. Will follows.

NICK

Publishing content that draws  
eyeballs or causes controversy.  
Like Gawker outing Peter Thiel or  
Jezebel offering a cash bounty for  
woman's magazine cover photos  
before they've been retouched.

WILL

But that's not what Deadspin is.  
Deadspin is-- it's-- satire.

Nick stops at the door, pivots around to Will.

NICK

It's also not working. So either  
figure out a way to shake things up  
or I'm shutting it down.

Nick enters the stairway. Will is frozen. Thinking.

NICK (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)

Absolutely not.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - MOMENTS LATER**

Walk and talk. Will trails just off Nick's shoulder.

WILL

AJ is a perfect fit.

NICK  
AJ isn't a perfect anything.

WILL  
He's sharp, edgy, controversial--

NICK  
Lazy, slovenly, dreadful--

We FREEZE on Nick's face, mid-sentence--

AJ (V.O.)  
So if it isn't already obvious,  
Nick Denton is an asshole.  
(then)  
But then again so am I.

### **NICK DENTON - 90'S**

More hair. Less gray. Face still entirely devoid of emotion.

AJ (V.O.)  
Nick got his start at the Financial  
Times back in the UK where he  
realized he hated three things:  
writing about boring shit, the  
rules of conventional journalism,  
and not being rich.

### **NICK DENTON - '02**

Nick, slightly older, sits in the living room of a cramped  
apartment in front of an old school white Apple Macbook.

AJ (V.O.)  
So after a few years covering the  
tech scene in Silicon Valley, he  
made his way to New York City where  
he started Gawker out of his living  
room with the express purpose of  
using the blog format as...

### **GAWKER - '02**

A dated-looking Beta version of Gawker on a Netscape browser.

AJ (V.O.)  
 ...a way to publish the true stories journalists discussed over drinks but couldn't put into print because of editors, advertisers, and-- well, you know-- ethics.

### **GAWKER MEDIA BLOGS**

Stylized graphics of other Gawker Media-owned blogs fly in: Deadspin. Gizmodo. Lifehacker. Jezebel. Jalopnik. Kotaku.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Following Gawker's success, he cofounded a number of other snark-saturated, youth-skewing blogs under the Gawker Media umbrella with subjects ranging in everything from video games to women's issues. Six years and 12 million in annual revenue later...

### **INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - BACK TO PRESENT**

Back to Nick's FROZEN face.

AJ (V.O.)  
 He's here. Being an asshole.

UNFREEZE.

NICK  
 --and completely incompetent.

FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
 He also fucking hates me.

### **AJ - FLASHBACK - VARIOUS**

AJ at a bar getting hammered. AJ hits an alarm, oversleeps. AJ rushes into the office, hung over, papers everywhere.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Because one time he hired me to run a sports betting blog under the Gawker umbrella and, in hindsight, I suppose I could have put in a little more effort. Or any effort.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - BACK TO PRESENT**

UNFREEZE as Nick and Will's walk-and-talk continues.

WILL  
Oddjack was ages ago.

NICK  
Two years isn't "ages".

They come to a stop in front of Nick's desk, in the center of the long table. He doesn't have an office.

WILL  
Nick, he's a draw. People love him.  
Just look at the traffic from his  
latest column. You can't deny it.

Will taps a few keys, brings up an analytical page on a monitor. Nick is impressed. Off Nick, ruminating--

**EXT. PENN STATION - NIGHT**

AJ, bags in hand, pushes his way through a sea of people beneath the neon glow of Midtown NYC. He smiles to himself.

AJ (V.O.)  
My first few months at Deadspin  
were amazing.

MUSIC KICKS IN, carrying us into a high energy--

**MONTAGE --**

-- Will's apartment. On TV, Sportscenter is running a story about Carmelo Anthony's DUI. Will and AJ sip beers. Will is typing on his laptop. AJ, stops him. Leans over, hits a few keys. Will looks over his work, pleased.

AJ (V.O.)  
Sure, traffic wasn't improving...

**DEADSPIN:** *"Boozer-Beater: Carmelo Anthony Gets Fouled For Drunk Driving"*

PHOTO of Carmelo Anthony in sunglasses with a gold briefcase.

-- Gawker office. AJ's on the phone. Will's a desk over, listening in, hand over the receiver, fighting back laughter.

AJ (V.O.)  
...and we pissed some people off.

AJ  
 I'd just like to know if you think  
 Mr. Leinart's beer bong holding  
 technique will have any impact on  
 his throwing arm heading into camp?  
 (then)  
 Hello? Coach Whisenhunt? Hello?

**DEADSPIN:** *"Matt Leinart Does Some Off-Season Cross Training"*

PHOTO of Matt Leinart holding a beer bong flanked by girls.

-- Strip club. Dancers grind all over AJ & Will.

AJ (V.O.)  
 But we were having the time of our  
 lives.

**DEADSPIN:** *"Nothin' But a G-Strang: Our Night at Deja Vu"*

PHOTO of AJ surrounded by strippers and a comically sad Will  
 sitting off to the side looking lonely. END MONTAGE.

AJ (V.O.)  
 We even started to gain some  
 industry notoriety.

**INT. "COSTAS NOW" STUDIOS - NIGHT**

A cheesy "COSTAS NOW" graphic sweeps in as the studio  
 audience applauds.

Garish monitors displaying photos of athletes in action give  
 the set a dated feel. One simply reads: "The Internet".

Applause fades as a very tan BOB COSTAS addresses the camera.

BOB COSTAS  
 Joining us now at our roundtable  
 are Deadspin founder and Senior  
 Editor, Will Leitch.

Will, in a shirt and suit jacket with no tie flashes an  
 awkward smile. He looks nervous. Uncomfortable.

**INT. DIVE BAR - SAME TIME**

AJ's sitting at the bar with a shot and a beer. His head  
 craned up at a TV airing the show live. He looks on, proud.

BOB COSTAS (V.O.)  
 Pulitzer Prize winning reporter and  
 author of "Friday Night Lights",  
 Buzz Bissinger.

**INT. "COSTAS NOW" STUDIOS - INTERCUT**

BUZZ BISSINGER, 50's, gray hair slicked back, jaw clenching. He's clutching a folder and seething like an old man whose lawn has just been violated by a teenager's frisbee.

Will wearily eyes Bissinger, who's one seat over. Veins are throbbing in the guy's neck and head. Will starts to sweat.

BOB COSTAS (V.O.)  
 And Cleveland Browns Pro Bowl Wide  
 Receiver, Braylon Edwards.

BRAYLON EDWARDS, statuesque, unsure why he's even here.

BOB COSTAS  
 (turning to Will)  
 Will, your essential argument is  
 sports blogs allow average fans an  
 opportunity to voice their opinion.  
 (off Will's nod)  
 Which is valid. But what's not  
 valid is the cruel, mean spirited,  
 and oftentimes disgusting form  
 their opinions take.

Costas's easygoing manner is gone. It's now apparent that he's as bloodthirsty as Bissinger. Will seizes up.

WILL  
 Well, I think that-- of course, any  
 time that you-- I--

BUZZ BISSINGER  
 Excuse me, if I may interject.

Bissinger shifts around to Will, leans in close.

BUZZ BISSINGER (CONT'D)  
 I think you're full of shit.

Will leans back, away from Bissinger. Swallows hard.

Braylon Edwards looks on uncomfortably as Bissinger waves a stack of papers he's pulled from his folder in Will's face.

BUZZ BISSINGER (CONT'D)  
 This is from your publication,  
 Deadspin! Is this guy's name--  
 (reading)  
*"Balls Deep"*?

The crowd breaks out in laughter. Will, shameful--

WILL  
 Actually, it's *"Big Daddy Drew  
 Balls"*.

**INT. DIVE BAR - INTERCUT**

AJ's gets angry as he watches Bissinger pummel Will.

BUZZ BISSINGER (V.O.)  
 (reading)  
*"He didn't need to see Rich Garza's  
 tits in order to glean insight into  
 how he pitches."*

He grows impatient as he waits for Will to fire back.

**INT. "COSTAS NOW" STUDIOS - INTERCUT**

More audience laughter. Will looks to the crowd, pleading--

WILL  
 Okay, that was from a commenter on  
 the site. *Not a writer.* Also, for  
 the record, Rich Garza-- I am-- not  
 familiar with his breasts.

Bissinger smacks his hand against the paper for emphasis.

BUZZ BISSINGER  
 How can you be proud of that  
 stuff!?

ON WILL, eyes downcast as the audience jeers.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Will wasn't the same after that.  
 But then again, after one of your  
 literary heroes eviscerates you on  
 live TV, who is?

**INT. DIVE BAR - INTERCUT**

AJ's frustration has boiled over into disappointment at Will's perceived weakness.

BOB COSTAS (V.O.)  
 Alright, Buzz. Let's hear someone  
 else's thoughts on the topic.  
 (then)  
 Braylon Edwards... do you blog?

AJ knocks back his shot, downs his beer.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - MORNING**

Will's slouched at his desk, staring blankly at his computer.

AJ watches him from a distance. EMMA CARMICHAEL, 22, walks up holding a coffee carrier. She has dark hair and a quiet confidence. She follows AJ's gaze over to Will.

EMMA  
 You worried about him?

AJ  
 (pause)  
 Yeah. A little.

EMMA  
 He'll pull out of it. Eventually.

AJ turns to her, encouraged by her optimism.

AJ  
 You think?

EMMA  
 Or he won't and he'll spend the  
 rest of his life being a shell of  
 the person he once was. I dunno.  
 I'm not a shrink, I'm an intern.  
 Here's your coffee.

Emma hands AJ his cup, walks off. AJ takes a sip. He forces himself to brighten, then bounds over and drops down into the empty seat beside Will.

AJ  
 Check this out...

Will's hollow gaze remains unbroken as AJ reaches over to his keyboard, taps a few keys. He brings up a PHOTO of six blonde co-eds posing suggestively in bras and underwear.

AJ (CONT'D)

ASU's AD just eliminated their entire cheerleading squad over these pictures.

(off Will's silence)

With the right title, I'm thinking this could get us 10k in uniques easy.

Will is unblinking. Distant.

WILL

Sure.

AJ's smile fades, imploring--

AJ

You've gotta get over this. You can't let that guy dictate how you feel about yourself or your work.

WILL

Which guy? The one with the truck load of Emmy's or the one with the Pulitzer?

AJ

Since when do awards matter?

WILL

Since always.

AJ

Well, not anymore. The times are changing. And the Costas' and the Bissingers' are getting left behind which is why they're angry and scared. Do you have any idea how important what we're doing here is?

Will looks at the half-naked co-ed picture, then back at AJ.

WILL

No, AJ. I don't think I do.

AJ

We have an outlet where we can speak our minds with virtually zero interference while also reaching more people than any other time in human history. This isn't just big for sports journalism, it's big for journalism with a capital J.

WILL

This isn't journalism, AJ! This is pulp! We're getting our bread buttered by embarrassing people and giving a platform to the faceless trolls that lurk in the darkest corners of the internet! You read the comments, I mean, are we really making the world a better place!?

AJ

That's not our job.

WILL

Then what is?

AJ

To tell the truth. And if the occasional lewd photo or salacious video is how we have to underwrite it, so be it.

Will goes quiet as he contemplates AJ's words.

WILL

Deadspin was supposed to be fun. A place where I could crack jokes about something I loved.

AJ

Yes, and it's become something so much more than that.

WILL

I'm not sure how I feel about it.

AJ is getting frustrated.

AJ

How much longer are you gonna be like this?

WILL

One week.

AJ

(pause)

That was oddly specific.

WILL

I just took a job as a Contributing Editor at New York Magazine.

AJ  
 (disgusted)  
 You're going to work in print?  
 (catches himself)  
 I mean congratulations. That's  
 great, man.

WILL  
 Thanks.

AJ  
 (pause)  
 So who's taking over Deadspin?

Will goes quiet. AJ knows what his silence means: *no one*.

AJ's eyes travel over the Gawker offices. Time slows down as he realizes his second chance is about to be ripped away.

Will knows he's fucked AJ over. He tries to make up for it.

WILL  
 But don't worry, you've been doing  
 killer work. I'll start reaching  
 out and we'll find you a new gig--

Suddenly, something comes over AJ. He springs to his feet and bolts out of the office, a man on a mission.

**INT. BALTHAZAR - MOMENTS LATER**

French brasserie where SoHo's elite power lunch. Nick's at his corner booth, sipping espresso, reading the NY Times.

AJ (O.S.)  
 I wanna take over Deadspin.

AJ is now sitting at Nick's table. Nick continues reading throughout their conversation.

NICK  
 I'm afraid that position is taken.

AJ  
 Oh come on, you know Will's going  
 to NY Mag.

NICK  
 Yes, but I was hoping you didn't  
 know so I wouldn't have to have  
 this conversation.

AJ  
But here we are. And I wanna take  
over Deadspin.

NICK  
No.

AJ  
No?

NICK  
Yes.

AJ  
Really? Just like that?

NICK  
(flips a page)  
I'm afraid so.

AJ  
So you're not even going to  
consider what I could do for the  
site because you don't like me?

Nick snaps the paper down on the table, eyes blazing--

NICK  
No, I'm not considering what you  
could do for the site because I  
don't *trust* you. Not liking you is  
merely a happy byproduct. Also,  
there isn't a Deadspin for you to  
take over. It hasn't given me the  
results I've desired so I'd prefer  
to focus my resources on something  
that better serves the needs of my  
company. Now please leave before  
I'm forced to reconsider your  
severance.

Nick raises the paper, returns to reading. AJ's face falls.  
Beat. He rises, takes a couple steps. Stops. Steels himself.  
Turns back, charges over to the booth, where he drops down  
beside Nick and throws a Hail Mary.

AJ  
You're shutting Deadspin down  
because it's not growing fast  
enough and it's not growing fast  
because Will's too soft.

It explodes out of his mouth. AJ looks surprised he's even  
said it, but it gets Nick's attention so he doubles down.

AJ (CONT'D)

He's spent the last three years satirizing the sports media establishment when he should have been burning the whole fucking thing to the ground. If you give me the site I will give you fire and brimstone and sex and controversy and if those things don't get you the traffic you want then you can kick me to the curb.

Nick stares at AJ. Silent.

NICK

Okay, fine. Then I will.

AJ blinks, incredulous.

AJ

Wait, does that mean I have the--

NICK

Your median average views per post is currently at 10k. I'm giving you a month to pull it up to 15.

AJ

Um. Okay. It's just that's kind of a big jump for me to do alone...

Nick snaps his paper back open.

NICK

So hire someone.

Off AJ, teeming with confusion, excitement, and fear.

AJ (V.O.)

And just like that I was off to gather Deadspin's new team 'Magnificent Seven'-style.

**INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - DAY**

Rundown midtown lunch spot with outdated decor.

AJ (V.O.)

Actually, it was more like 'Magnificent One'.

TOMMY CRAGGS, 30's. Doughty. Anxious. Speaks with a WAITER.

TOMMY

And you're positive there's no nuts  
in the chicken?

(off waiter's 'yes' nod)

Wait, was that nod 'yes' there's  
nuts in the chicken or 'yes'  
there's no nuts in the chicken?

We FREEZE on Tommy as he pushes his glasses up on his nose.

AJ (V.O.)

Okay. Fine. 'Neurotic One'.

UNFREEZE.

AJ, seated across from Tommy, laptop open on the table. He  
sips on a vodka rocks observing the peculiar exchange.

Tommy remains on edge as the waiter brusquely nods, departs.

AJ

What happens if you eat nuts?

TOMMY

I dunno.

AJ

Are you even allergic to them?

TOMMY

Well, no, but you can develop a nut  
allergy late in life and my throat  
kinda itches right now so I figure  
it's better to play it safe.

AJ shakes his head, gets down to business.

AJ

So I read your blog.

Tommy puffs with pride.

TOMMY

And what'd you think?

AJ

It's terrible.

Tommy is stunned. He didn't expect that.

TOMMY

I can't tell if you're being  
sarcastic.

AJ

I'm not.

TOMMY

So then why are we here?

AJ finishes his drink, signals for another.

AJ

Free wifi and a full bar.

TOMMY

No. I meant why am *I* here?

AJ

Cause my first two choices backed out.

TOMMY

I see.

AJ

But then in the midst of my accepting you as the analogical equivalent of the last girl at the bar when the lights come on, I read some of your print work and... I was really impressed.

TOMMY

Seriously?

AJ

Seriously. And I think you're the right guy to help me take Deadspin in a whole new direction.

Tommy seems confused by the last part.

TOMMY

Why does it need to go in a new direction?

A fresh drink arrives for AJ. He downs half in a single gulp.

AJ

Because you'll never turn on SportsCenter and hear a story about Michael Jordan's gambling problem.

AJ looks confident. Tommy looks even more confused.

TOMMY

I'm not sure I follow.

AJ finishes his drink, signals for another.

AJ

Every media outlet who covers sports intentionally omits and/or overlooks certain truths-- ugly truths, seedy truths-- because they're scared. They're scared of the leagues, the athletes, the advertisers, the public. We're not.

TOMMY

And why aren't we?

AJ

Because if we piss off the leagues, they don't have broadcasting rights to strip from us. If we piss off the athletes they can't stop giving us access because we already don't have any. And if we piss off those first two groups enough, the readers will come just for the spectacle which will generate enough ad revenue to fund said pissing off because advertisers would throw a banner ad up over footage from Auschwitz if they thought it would sell their product.

Tommy is rapt, intoxicated by AJ's roguish confidence. Beat.

TOMMY

Okay. I'm in.

AJ and Tommy shake.

AJ (V.O.)

Tommy wasn't the coolest guy...

The second they release, Tommy pulls out a bottle of Purell and slathers it all over his hands.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - DAY**

Tommy working the phones.

AJ (V.O.)

But he was a damn good reporter.

He knocks the phone cord into his coffee cup, spilling its contents all over his lap.

AJ (V.O.)

In his first six months on the job he managed to break a huge story on a crooked NBA scorekeeper...

**DEADSPIN:** *"Who's Really Keeping Score In The NBA?"*

AJ (V.O.)

...and got his hands on an advance copy of an NBA ref's depraved memoir that revealed massive corruption within the league.

**DEADSPIN:** *"The NBA Is Not Gonna Like This Book"*

PHOTO of disgraced NBA referee Tim Donaghy mid-game.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - DAY**

AJ is at his desk. Nick passes by like a prison warden counting down the days till AJ's execution.

AJ (V.O.)

But as good as those stories were, I knew they weren't gonna be enough to keep us alive. So I started to focus on creating content that had the potential to provoke a more emotional response from the public.

AJ exhales. Puts on a brave face, forges ahead.

AJ (V.O.)

Which I guess, is kinda just a fancy way of saying...

**SERIES OF SHOTS**

SNAPPY MUSIC plays over a stylized parade of different PHOTOS and VIDEO STILLs of pixilated penises.

AJ (V.O.)

Dick pics. Like a lot of dick pics. They kinda became our brand. Snarky sports commentary sprinkled with pictures of pro athletes doing sleezy sex stuff. And it worked.

**INT. WILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Will's sitting on his couch with his laptop open.

AJ (V.O.)

Our traffic went up and Nick kept us online. But not everyone was a fan of our new direction...

Red faced. Furious. He slams his laptop shut.

BLACK OUT.

TITLE CARD: **NEW YORK, NY - JULY, 2009**

**INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT**

Will boils. Dressed in J. Crew, he picks at the label on his beer bottle.

AJ, now bearded, wears a ratty t-shirt & jeans. He slams vodka-rocks while recounting Deadspin's recent success.

AJ

Like we don't even have to go to the advertisers anymore! They come us! Did you even think that was possible a year and a half ago!?

WILL

(holding back his rage)  
No. I guess I didn't.

AJ

And we just keep growing.

Finally, Will hits his breaking point.

AJ (CONT'D)

More employees, more posts, more--

WILL

Dicks.

AJ

I was gonna say 'work' but--

WILL

Chris Cooley's dick, Visanthe Shiancoe's dick. Hell, you even managed to get Jeff Bostic's dick and he retired in '93.

AJ

We can't take full credit for Bostic. We aggregated that one.

WILL

It just seems like all Deadspin ever posts anymore are dicks.

AJ

You know the saying in the news business. If it...

(thinks)

Well, I can't think of any dick-related words that rhyme with 'leads', but you get the idea.

AJ's joke is met with silence. Only then does AJ notice Will's scorn.

AJ (CONT'D)

Wait, are you like actually this upset over a couple of dick pics? We've averaged forty posts a week over the past year and you just named three. I think you're being a little hyperbolic.

WILL

It's not just the dicks, AJ!

Heads turn to their table. Feeling the collective gaze, Will composes himself and lowers his voice. AJ looks baffled.

WILL (CONT'D)

It's the site as a whole. It's... changed. It's gotten darker and meaner and--

AJ

Better.

AJ's shaken off his bewilderment. Now he's ready for a fight.

WILL

*Better?*

AJ

We're getting twice the amount of traffic we were getting a year ago.

WILL

And do you like how you're getting it?

AJ

I like that we're getting it.

Will produces his iPhone, taps the screen, slaps it down on the table for AJ to see.

**IPHONE:** *DEADSPIN -- "ESPN On The Hunt For Erin Andrews Peeper"* with a still from the infamous Erin Andrews tape.

AJ looks at the phone, up at Will. Unflinching. Beat.

AJ (CONT'D)

So that's what this is about...

WILL

I get that it's a story but this woman's privacy was violated and you linked to the fucking video!

AJ

And then I took the link down and published an apology.

WILL

Yeah, after four other writers wrote pieces trashing you for it.

AJ, cut by Will's sarcasm, takes the gloves off.

AJ

You might not like the dark and mean Deadspin, but dark and mean are what's keeping our lights on and our coverage independent.

Will scoffs at the absurdity.

WILL

Oh, so it's all in the name of ethics?

AJ

That's right.

WILL

That's bullshit. You were staring down the barrel of unemployment so you sidelined what little morality you had and turned my site into a troll-targeting traffic factory.

AJ

You know, Will, I don't think the guy who's writing TV recaps of 24 is qualified to be an arbiter of journalistic integrity. Also, it's not your site anymore.

The realization hits Will hard. After a beat, he rises, flings a twenty out of his wallet.

WILL

You've waded into a swamp that you may never be able to get out of. Good luck with that.

Off AJ, seething as he watches Will go--

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - THE NEXT DAY**

A bank of nine blank monitors, lined in three rows of three, simultaneously flicker to life. Neat, colorful tables of real-time data ranking the page views of different headlines from each of the Gawker Media sites are displayed on each screen.

Nick stands before it, staring up, almost moved to tears.

NICK

It's... beautiful.

Nick turns, faces his busy employees, finger whistles.

The employees lower their headphones; silence their conversations; rise to get a better look at what's happening.

NICK (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, meet your new God!

Nick is hauntingly backlit by the glow of the monitors.

NICK (CONT'D)

This is the "Big Board", a multi-monitor real-time display of the posts generating the most traffic from all of Gawker Media's sites. If your post isn't up here, it doesn't matter. And if your post doesn't matter, neither do you.

The staff's faces are a mix of muted horror and tacit acceptance as they enter a dark new chapter in journalism.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Monthly bonuses will be given to  
 those whose work draws the most  
 traffic. Starting with this month's  
 winner... Mr. AJ Daulerio.

A smattering of awkward claps. A beat passes. Nick squints out. Finds AJ at his desk, still seething from last night. Headphones on, he's oblivious to what's happening.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Back to it then. Carry on.

Nick claps his hands as everyone sheepishly returns to work.

**INT. AJ'S DESK - GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - MOMENTS LATER**

MUSIC UP on a thumping track as we drop into AJ's POV: "On Erin Andrews: How Far Is Too Far?" by Will Leitch.

Each sentence of Will's scathing critique cuts AJ deeper than the one that preceded it. The MUSIC abruptly CUTS OUT.

A startled AJ looks up, finds Nick standing beside him holding the headphones he's just ripped from AJ's ears.

NICK  
 (re: Will's essay)  
 There's a reason you're here and  
 he's not.

Nick sets an envelope down in front of AJ and walks away.

AJ picks it up, slices it open. His eyes go wide.

AJ (V.O.)  
 It was when I started getting those  
 traffic bonus checks that shit  
 really started to change for me.

BACK UP on that thumping track as it launches us into--

**MONTAGE --**

-- AJ steps inside of an unfurnished loft with exposed brick and huge windows showcasing the skyline of Lower Manhattan.

AJ (V.O.)  
 I'd never had an apartment without  
 roommates.

-- AJ steps into a hip downtown bar. Total strangers greet him with appreciative handshakes, head nods, and free drinks.

AJ (V.O.)  
Or been recognized in public.

He's taken aback by his new celebrity, but quickly settles into it. He spots a gorgeous BLONDE WOMAN across the bar.

-- AJ's loft is now stylishly furnished. He enters with the Blonde Woman by his side. He pulls her in close.

AJ (V.O.)  
Sure, I'd gotten laid before but never because I was the guy who wrote shit like this.

**DEADSPIN:** *"Greg Oden's Giant Dick Is On The Mend"*

PHOTO is a blurry, pixillated shot of a nude Greg Oden.

AJ (V.O.)  
And the best part was I finally started getting treated like a legitimate sports writer.

-- Fireworks explode over a jam-packed crowd in Miami's Sun Life Stadium as the half-time show reaches its conclusion.

**TITLE: SUPER BOWL XLIV - MIAMI GARDENS, FL - FEBRUARY 7, 2010**

**INT. VIP AREA AREA - SUN LIFE STADIUM - NIGHT**

The MUSIC FADES as we come in on AJ gleefully making his way through a scrum of stressed out journalists from around the world. He sips his drink, delights in his surroundings.

JENN  
They actually let you in here?

JENN STERGER, 27. A brunette beauty with a thousand-watt smile and a biting sense of humor struts up to AJ.

AJ sips his drink, looks around genuinely astonished.

AJ  
I'm just as surprised as you are. And what are you doing here? The Jets aren't playing in this thing.

JENN  
I'm no longer with the Jets.

AJ

Really?

JENN

Yep. But a Florida girl isn't about to miss a Miami Superbowl.

FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)

And she was a *Florida* girl alright.

**FOOTBALL GAME - FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY - 2005 - FLASHBACK**

Jenn, in a garnet-colored bikini top & cowboy hat, does a seductive take of FSU's Tomahawk Chop in the stands.

BRENT MUSBURGER (V.O.)

*"I think I just became an Florida State Fan..."*

AJ (V.O.)

Her big break came when Brent Musburger perved out after seeing her on camera at an FSU game.

**JENN STERGER - VARIOUS**

Doing a Sprint ad. Posing in Playboy. Holding a news mic.

AJ (V.O.)

Which she then parlayed into an ad campaign, a Playboy spread, and a sideline reporter gig for the Jets.

**INT. VIP AREA AREA - SUN LIFE STADIUM - NIGHT**

Still FROZEN on Jenn.

AJ (V.O.)

Also, anything we posted about her always brought in big traffic.

UNFREEZE. Picking up with AJ--

AJ

So I guess that makes you available to model in Deadspin's long-awaited Swimsuit Project?

JENN

It does... But I'd like to do something that requires a little more mental bandwidth than just standing still and smiling.

AJ nods, sips his drink, considers Jenn's ambitions.

AJ

How about writing a column for us?

JENN

(taken aback)  
Seriously.

AJ

Yeah. Your sports knowledge is strong and we could use a female voice like yours on the site.

Jenn smirks. She's amused by AJ.

JENN

Okay. What would you want me to write about?

AJ

Whatever you want.

As Jenn pauses to think, a trio of pro linebackers in flashy suits ogle her figure as they pass. Their collective leering leaves her feeling frustrated and disgusted.

JENN

(re: linebackers)  
You're in the dick pic business, right?

AJ

(correcting)  
Illustrated phallic journalism.

JENN

How about I write about all the unsolicited ones I've got here.

Jenn brandishes her iPhone 3GS. AJ lights up.

AJ

No shit, lemme see.

He reaches for Jenn's phone, but she snatches it back.

JENN  
Not a chance. I was joking. I  
wouldn't really do that.

AJ  
But you do have them, right?

JENN  
Yeah.

AJ  
Then at least tell me who the most  
famous one you've got on there is?

Jenn pauses, smirks. Scans the area, lowers her voice.

JENN  
We off-the-record?

AJ  
Sure.

JENN  
Swear?

AJ  
Uh-huh.

Jenn goes to open her mouth. FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
Brett. Fucking. Favre.

### **BRETT FAVRE - GAME FOOTAGE - VARIOUS**

Throwing touchdowns. Breaking tackles. Smiling sans helmet.

AJ (V.O.)  
The 11-time Pro Bowl Quarterback,  
Brett Favre. This was huge. But  
there was one problem...

### **EXT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT**

Jenn posing in front of a step-and-repeat. Dressed to the  
nines, smiling big. Flashbulbs strobe.

JENN  
(smiling)  
No.

**INT. EQUINOX - DAY**

Jenn, in athletic attire, runs on an elliptical machine.

JENN

Nope.

**INT. MAKEUP ROOM - DAY**

Jenn's in a chair wearing a robe with curlers in her hair. A Makeup Artist applies mascara to her eyelashes.

JENN

Absolutely not.

FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)

Jenn was a little reluctant.

UNFREEZE.

JENN

Also, where did you get that vodka?

AJ sits in the makeup chair beside her, sipping on an airplane-size bottle of vodka. He turns furtive.

AJ

Brought it from home.

Jenn gives him a sideways glare in the mirror's reflection.

AJ (CONT'D)

Fine. I stole it from the Green Room.

JENN

(re: makeup artist)

Can you give us a second?

The Makeup Artist exits. As the door shuts--

AJ

Look, I'm sorry, okay? The door was open and I only took one--

JENN

I don't care about the vodka, AJ.

AJ

Really? Okay, cool.

AJ discards the empty one he's holding. Produces another one from his back pocket, cracks it open.

JENN

I give you the picture, I go on-the-record, do you know what that makes me?

AJ

The woman who took down a philandering scumbag who's spent the last two decades passing himself off as some All-American family man.

JENN

*The Favre girl.* The sideline floozy who tried to leverage dick pics from some famous quarterback into a career for herself.

AJ

Jenn, come on. I know that's not what you're trying to do.

JENN

But that's what people will think.  
 (making an earnest appeal)  
 Being attached to a story like this would put a stain on my name that would never come off.  
 (then)  
 I'm sorry, AJ. I'm not doing it.

Off AJ, disappointed but understanding.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - A FEW WEEKS LATER**

Emma and a group of writers are gathered around the Big Board, looking up at it in astonishment.

AJ spots the group. Curious, he walks over and joins them.

AJ

What's everyone looking at?

EMMA

That.

Emma gestures to a headline at the top of the board: *"Guess Who Has Apple's Latest iPhone? - Gizmodo"* w/ a 100k+ views.

AJ

Fuck me running. That traffic is crazy.

EMMA

I know. Some Apple engineer left a prototype phone at a bar in California and Nick gave Jason Chen \$5k in cash to buy it off the guy.

Across the office, Nick pops a bottle of celebratory Champagne alongside Jason Chen. Laughing. Smiling.

Off AJ, watching the duo, frothing with jealousy--

**INT. AJ'S LOFT - NIGHT**

AJ's slumped on his couch, watching TV. Behind him, DANA, the blonde woman from earlier, monitors him with concern.

Dana sits on the couch, puts a comforting hand on his thigh.

DANA

Why don't you turn this off and come to bed?

AJ

(gaze unbroken)  
I will. In a little bit.

Dana lingers, waiting... After a beat, she gives up, exits.

AJ (V.O.)

Okay, so I was jealous.

AJ flips through the channels, catatonic. CNN. MSNBC. FOX NEWS. CNBC. The Gizmodo story is on every single one.

AJ (V.O.)

The iPhone story was all anyone was talking about. It had stopped the news cycle. I wanted to do that.

(then)

And I knew the story that could make it happen...

As AJ stares longingly at the TV, an idea takes shape.

TOMMY (PRE-LAP)

No. Fucking. Way.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - NIGHT**

It's late. Empty. AJ's in front of a MONITOR displaying an in-progress post with PHOTOS of Brett Favre and Jenn Sterger.

AJ  
(lying)  
I don't see what the problem is.

Tommy paces behind him.

TOMMY  
I'd say burning a source is a fairly significant one.

AJ  
I'm not burning her. She said she's ready to go on-the-record.

TOMMY  
But she hasn't yet. And until she does you can't put her name in it.

AJ  
What am I supposed to do? Run it blind?

TOMMY  
How about not run it at all?

AJ  
We've got a future NFL Hall of Famer who sent a sideline reporter an unsolicited photo of himself masturbating while wearing a pair of orange Crocs and the same wrist watch he had on in his misty-eyed retirement press conference where he mentioned his wife's name no less than six times.

TOMMY  
No, we don't. We have a couple cropped pictures of his wrist. We don't have the real photos, videos, texts, voicemails or a source that's willing to go on the record, so as of this moment, we don't have a story.

The hard truth finally settles in over AJ. He goes quiet.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

You're not trying to convince me  
it's okay to do this. You're trying  
to convince yourself. So just--  
stop.

AJ's eyes shift back to the post on the monitor. After a  
beat, he x's it out but keeps staring at the empty screen.  
Tommy appears satisfied by the move.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

It's late, I'm tired and I think  
the stress from this conversation  
is giving me Muscular Edema.  
(vigorously rubs shoulder)  
I'm going home.

Tommy gathers his things, starts out. After a beat.

AJ

(calling after)  
It's *Macular* Edema, it's an eye  
disease, and you *don't* have it.

TOMMY (O.S.)

You don't know that.

The door shuts. AJ is alone in the empty office. His eyes  
move to the Big Board. He stares at it, lost in thought.

EMMA (O.S.)

Is that true?

AJ's startled. He sits up, scans the office, finds Emma  
sitting at a desk on the other side of the room.

AJ

Yeah, it's buildup of fluid in the  
eyes and he definitely doesn't--

EMMA

No, the Favre thing.

AJ throws her a sideways look. *How much of that did she hear?*

AJ

It's midnight, Emma. What are you  
even doing here?

EMMA

It's August and my apartment  
doesn't have A/C so I've been  
sleeping under my desk. Is it true?

AJ shrugs, laces his fingers behind his head.

AJ

Yeah, it's true. I've been sitting on it for six months.

EMMA

(calling bullshit)

The biggest QB on the planet sent cock shots to a sideline reporter and you're the only one who knows?

AJ smirks, amused by the kid's skepticism.

AJ

She hasn't exactly kept the lid on it. She forwarded his voicemail and pictures to a few girlfriends and a couple writers at majors told me they heard it from her too. I've also got some cropped pictures.

EMMA

If everyone knows then how come no one's run it?

AJ

Aside from the fact that she won't go on-the-record, no major news organization is gonna run a story about Brett Favre's dick.

EMMA

By forwarding that stuff and telling people hasn't she kind of already gone on the record?

AJ

(intrigued)

I suppose.

EMMA

Also, the story's not about Brett Favre's dick.

AJ

What's it about?

EMMA

Workplace sexual harassment.

This is a revelatory moment for AJ.

EMMA (CONT'D)

A powerful figure within the organization she's working for sends her an unsolicited picture of his dick. Smart money says she probably wasn't the first and if you don't bring some attention to it, she definitely won't be the last. It's an important story.

AJ scratches his chin, silently considering Emma's argument.

AJ (V.O.)

Most Senior Editors wouldn't take advice on the morality of a major story from a 24-year-old who'd been an intern for two-and-a-half years. But Emma was smart. And...

AJ pivots his seat toward to the Big Board.

AJ (V.O.)

She told me what I wanted to hear.

AJ gazes into it. Numbers and headlines rapidly rearranging their order. It's mesmerizing. The board gets blurry. Hazy...

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - THE NEXT MORNING**

*"Brett Favre: Cock Shot Casanova - Deadspin"* on top of the Big Board leading the other posts by a couple thousand views as the other headlines shuffle below.

The office is buzzing over AJ's controversial story. When AJ enters, all eyes land on him. As he makes his way to his desk, the writers from the other Gawker sites greet him with a mix of backslaps, encouragement, and quiet jealousy.

AJ takes his seat next to Tommy, who's watching the board. A crumpled brown paper bag sits within an arms reach. Together, they watch the board in silence.

AJ

You mad at me for running it with her name?

TOMMY

No. I knew you were gonna do it.

AJ

Then why'd you put up such a fight?

TOMMY

Cause I wanted to see if there was  
a line you wouldn't cross.

(then)

Now I know. Bagel?

Tommy offers the brown bag to AJ. AJ looks down at the bag, back at Tommy. As he reaches into the bag, he spots Nick heading toward the entrance to the rooftop. AJ jumps up--

**EXT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - ROOFTOP - MOMENTS LATER**

It's sunny. Cloudless. Warm. Nick's a drag into his joint, looking out over the city when AJ swaggers over, beaming.

AJ

So what do you think?

NICK

(exhaling)

About what?

AJ

The Favre story?

NICK

Huh, that's funny.

AJ

What is?

NICK

This whole time I thought it was  
pronounced Fave-ray.

AJ

It's already north of 20k in  
traffic.

NICK

Yes, and?

AJ is thrown by Nick's lack of enthusiasm.

AJ

I dunno, I just thought you'd be...

NICK

Pleased?

AJ

Yeah.

NICK  
I'm not. In fact, I'm actually  
disappointed with your work on it.

AJ's stomach drops. *Did his big gamble actually backfire?*

AJ  
Because I used her name?

NICK  
Because you didn't get the  
evidence. If you had dug just a  
little deeper and come up with the  
Fave-ray's--

AJ  
(correcting)  
Far-ve.

NICK  
--photos and voicemails, the story  
would have already *cruised* well  
past 30k.

AJ is crushed. Nick flicks his joint off the roof.

NICK (CONT'D)  
On stories this big, either come  
correct or don't come at all.  
(walking away)  
Hope you enjoyed the pun.

The rooftop is empty. AJ is alone. Deflated. As he lights up  
a cigarette, his phone vibrates. He takes it out, it's Jenn.  
He takes a breath. Calm and with a smile--

AJ  
Hey Jenn...

**INT. JENN'S APARTMENT - INTERCUT**

Jenn's in sweats, no makeup. Her face is red with rage.

JENN  
I can't figure out whether you're  
biologically incapable of empathy  
or just an asshole.

AJ  
I've sat on this for six months,  
you knew this day was coming.

JENN

Yep, it really could go either way.

AJ

Don't act like I blindsided you. I gave you plenty of chances to comment on the story.

JENN

This isn't a *story*, AJ! This is my life! Did you ever stop to think about that!?

AJ goes quiet. He didn't. His mind races to come up with a way to rationalize his actions.

AJ

I understand that you're upset, but *did you ever stop to think about* how you're probably not the only woman he did this to? And your story being out there could inspire other women he's mistreated to come forward.

AJ (V.O.)

Okay, yeah. So maybe that was a stretch, but desperate times...

Jenn is gobsmacked.

JENN

Let me get this straight, the guy who runs a website that has an entire category dedicated to college co-eds flashing their tits at football games is actually a champion of women's rights?

AJ

(bashful)

I mean, I don't know about *champion*, but...

JENN

It's real easy to sit behind a computer all day and take cheap shots at public figures but you need to realize that on the other end of your snarky little barbs are *real people*. Actual human beings with careers and families and feelings.

(MORE)

JENN (CONT'D)

All of which have the potential to be irreparably harmed with just a couple of key strokes.

Jenn hangs up. AJ is rattled by the conversation's intensity.

AJ (V.O.)

I fucked up. Big time.

He closes his eyes, tilts his head skyward.

**INT. AJ'S LOFT - NIGHT**

Ice drops into a rocks glass. Some Ketel One glugs in behind it. AJ brings it to his mouth, takes a long sip. His red eyes are locked on site traffic running on his laptop.

AJ (V.O.)

And the worst part was the traffic on the story wasn't even that good.

DANA

Are you even listening to me?

Dana's hand slaps the laptop shut. A few seconds pass before AJ snaps out of his trance.

AJ

Huh?

DANA

Jesus, AJ. Even when you're here, it's like you're not even here.

AJ

What do you want from me, Dana? This is my job.

DANA

And look at what it's doing to you!

AJ glimpses himself in the reflection of a nearby window. Bags under his eyes. The glass in his hand is already empty.

DANA (CONT'D)

You're always drinking, you're always miserable, and it's all because you measure your self-worth by those stupid numbers and the validation of that stupid man!

AJ  
 (snapping)  
 What am I supposed to do!?

DANA  
 Leave!

The realization hits AJ like a bolt of lightning. Sensing the shift, Dana moves in. Grabs his hands, gazes into his eyes.

DANA (CONT'D)  
 Just walk away. You can find  
 another job where you're happier.  
 Where we're happier.

On AJ, grappling with his decision--

AJ (PRE-LAP)  
*To whom it may concern...*

**INT. AJ'S LOFT - BED - LATER**

AJ's sitting up in bed on his laptop, typing. Dana's curled up beside him. Both giggly and elated from makeup sex.

DANA  
 Eh, too formal.

AJ chuckles at Dana's critique.

AJ  
 What do you mean 'too formal'? It's  
 like the standard opening for any  
 letter of resignation.

DANA  
 Since when is "standard" your  
 style?

AJ  
 (nods agreeably, typing)  
*Hello, you smug British asshole...*

DANA  
 Much better.

AJ  
 (typing)  
*It is with screaming, writhing,  
 orgasmic pleasure, that I would  
 like to announce my departure from  
 Gawker Media effective--*

*DING!* An email from an unknown address pops up. AJ stops typing. He sobers as he reads it over. Dana looks up.

DANA

What's wrong? Why'd you stop--

AJ's face takes on a sense of renewed purpose. Dana clocks it, immediately starts to shake her head 'no'.

DANA (CONT'D)

No. No, AJ. No.

Dana leaps out of bed, starts throwing her clothes on.

AJ

You don't even know what it said.

AJ, stark naked, springs to his feet, following her around his place as she races to gather her things.

DANA

I don't have to cause I know that look.

AJ

What look?

DANA

That narrow-eyed, single-minded, obsessive look that you get when you get a lead on a story.

AJ

I'm a journalist! Even if I left Deadspin, I'd still get that look!

Dana stops, levels an icy glare in AJ's direction.

DANA

So now you leaving is an "if"?

AJ

(pause)

I will, I promise, just not yet.

(pleading)

I just got a big break on the Favre thing and--

Dana throws her hands up, exasperated.

DANA

That's it. I'm done.

Dana hurriedly cobbles together the last of her belongings. AJ watches her helplessly. After a beat, he explodes--

AJ

I can't, Dana! I can't go back to being a nobody staff writer covering the grilled cheese beat at some bullshit print magazine!

DANA

You *can't* or you *won't*?

AJ gazes down at his feet, doesn't answer.

DANA (CONT'D)

You can either have me or you can have that stupid story but you can't have both. So what's it gonna be?

On AJ, shaking beneath the weight of his decision. FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)

In that moment, I was given the choice between the love of a good woman and a grainy dong photo.

(then)

And I chose...

### INT. BALTHAZAR - THE NEXT MORNING

A plate of scrambled eggs and two plump links of sausage land in front of Nick. Seated alone in his usual booth, he casts aside his newspaper. Goes to slice into the sausage--

AJ (O.S.)

I'd like to reach into the sack of scuzz money and pay for pictures of Brett Favre's dick, please.

Nick looks up. Finds AJ seated across from him, dead serious.

NICK

(pause)

Okay.

AJ (V.O.)

Turns out my Jenn post did inspire someone to come forward...

**AJ - VARIOUS**

AJ skims an envelope filled with crisp hundreds. AJ trades the envelope for a flash drive. AJ hops in the back of a cab.

AJ (V.O.)

One of her friends who she'd sent the voicemails and pictures to. 12 grand and a short cab ride later, they were in my possession.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

Shades drawn. Nick's feet are up on a the table. AJ paces, full of nervous energy. From a phone speaker--

ATTORNEY (V.O.)

As your legal counsel, my first question is: are you sure it's really his?

Nick looks to AJ for confirmation.

AJ

I'm fairly certain but what if I'm wrong?

ATTORNEY (V.O.)

He can sue you for defamation.

NICK

I think she means dickfamation?

AJ

I think she means schlongder.

AJ and Nick exchange a fraternal smirk. It's the warmest we've seen them be with one another.

ATTORNEY (V.O.)

*Defamation*, AJ. I said *defamation*. And if it actually is him, you're distributing an image of his genitals without his consent which is a violation of privacy law that has serious consequences attached. Are you willing to go to jail for a picture of some guy's dick?

AJ's smirk is gone. He's solemn. Ashen. Nick notices.

NICK

Hey, can you give us a minute?

Nick mutes the call, turns to AJ.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 AJ, she's right. This is serious.  
 You're risking your entire life for  
 what most would consider is...  
 (gestures to open laptop)  
 ...a very homely penis.  
 (then)  
 Are you sure you wanna do this?

AJ looks at Nick, genuinely touched by his concern.  
 Internally, he weighs the risks. *And the rewards.* After a  
 beat, AJ reaches over, takes the call off mute.

AJ  
 It's not just some guy.  
 (then)  
 It's Brett Favre.

BLACK OUT.

OVER BLACK.

AJ (V.O.)  
 And that dude's dick changed my  
 entire life.

**MONTAGE --**

-- Overlapping FLASHES of different News Anchors:

*"Football star Brett Favre..."; "Jets Quarterback Brett Favre..."; "...is in hot water over"; "...racy text messages..."; "...x-rated photos to TV personality, Jenn Sterger."; "...the allegations first appeared on..."; "Deadspin"; "Deadspin"; "...the racy sports blog, Deadspin"*

AJ (V.O.)  
 I had done it. Not only had I  
 succeeded in stopping the news  
 cycle, I'd also catapulted Deadspin  
 into the sports media mainstream.

-- FOOTAGE of a flustered Brett Favre responding to the  
 allegations in a post-game press conference:

BRETT FAVRE  
 I'm not-- getting into that. I've  
 got my hands full with the Jets.

-- *"Quarterback Sneak: That Time(s) Brett Favre Showed Jenn Sterger His Dick"* racks up 400k + in views on the Big Board as the headlines hopelessly flutter and rearrange themselves beneath it.

-- Overlapping FLASHES of News Anchors:

*"Joining us now..."; "Here to discuss the controversy..."; "...the man who broke the story..."; "...Deadspin's Senior Editor..."; "...AJ..."; "...AJ..."; "...AJ Daulerio."*

AJ

I started doing TV panels and--

-- Overlapping FLASHES of a brazen AJ with a sinister smirk as a TV news talking head happily taking on all comers.

-- PHOTOS of AJ kneeling on a toilet in a bathroom stall wearing headphones, holding a parabolic microphone for a GQ feature. The Favre story has made him a bonafide celebrity.

AJ (V.O.)

--magazine spreads.

-- AJ opens a bonus check, double takes at the number on it.

AJ (V.O.)

And I started making way more money  
and doing way more drugs.

-- Overlapping FLASHES of wild parties in AJ's loft; loads of coke; a plethora of pills; clouds of pot smoke.

AJ (V.O.)

I'd always been a low key garbage head, but with a six-figure salary and a long leash at work, my casual use became a full-time thing. I was pretty open about it too.

-- Overlapping FLASHES of AJ's drug-fueled pitch attempts:

AJ (V.O.)

I dropped acid, tried to recreate Dock Ellis's famous LSD no-hitter on a Nintendo Wii and posted it.

*"Am I pitching right now?"; "I think this umpire's squeezin' me on strikes here."; "Sonuvabitch!"; "Motherfucker!"; "I keep thinkin' those Christmas lights are on but they're not."*

-- AJ is warmly greeted by famed sportscaster, JOE BUCK, as he enters the Broadcasters' Suite at Metlife Stadium.

AJ (V.O.)

I Woody Allen'd an entire bag of blow in the Broadcasters' Suite at MetLife Stadium in the middle of a Giants playoff game.

-- INSIDE the bathroom, AJ accidentally rips a tiny plastic bag of coke open in a powdery white explosion. He panics.

-- OUTSIDE the bathroom, broadcaster & former NFL star TROY AIKMAN jiggles the locked door's handle. Annoyed, he hammers his fist against the door.

-- BACK INSIDE, AJ is on his hands and knees, racing to snort all the coke he can off the floor. Snaps his head up--

AJ

Uhh, just a second!

-- AJ emerges from the bathroom, hair tousled, eyes crazy. He quickly brushes past Aikman and out the door.

-- RESTAURANT, AJ shakes hands with two men dressed in suits. Later, he does the same with another pair of men. And later on, another pair.

AJ (V.O.)

And in spite of all that, people were trying to poach me.

(then)

But I only wanted one thing...

-- ACROSS THE STREET, Nick watches AJ and the men from his booth at Balthazar, afraid he's losing his golden goose--

END MONTAGE.

**INT. THE WAVERLY INN - NIGHT**

Fancy as fuck. Delicate discs of black truffle are shaved over a plate of pasta by a stolid waiter. AJ gulps down a \$30 glass of red wine, enthralled by the experience. Nick observes him quietly from across the table.

NICK

I know you've been getting offers.

AJ is jolted by Nick's declaration.

AJ

(mouthful)

How'd you know that?

FREEZE on AJ & Nick.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Actually, I knew exactly how he  
 knew that.

**RESTAURANT - FLASHBACK**

AJ shakes hands with the same two men we saw a moment ago.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Because I took all of my interviews  
 directly across the street from  
 where Nick ate lunch every day in  
 order to ensure that he knew that.

PUSH OUT THE WINDOW, to Nick watching from across the street.

**INT. THE WAVERLY INN - BACK TO PRESENT**

UNFREEZE, AJ & Nick.

NICK  
 I know everything, AJ.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Yeah. Right.

AJ sets down his fork, tries to downplay it.

AJ  
 Okay, so I've gotten a few...

Nick focuses, prying.

NICK  
 How many?

AJ  
 Enough.

NICK  
 From who?

AJ  
 A few startups and a legacy outlet.

NICK  
 What are they offering you?

AJ  
 Bullshit titles and gobs of money.

NICK

What if I countered with Editor-in-Chief of Gawker and unadulterated autonomy?

AJ (V.O.)

Bingo.

AJ subdues his excitement, keeps a poker face up.

AJ

Maybe. What's the salary look like?

NICK

Ten percent more than you're making now plus bonuses.

AJ

Try again.

NICK

No.

AJ

No?

NICK

Yes. AJ, I know those interviews you took directly in my sight line were bluffs just like I know this silly salary push is a bluff.

AJ (V.O.)

Ah, shit.

NICK

You don't want money or titles, AJ. What you want-- and what you can't get from anyone else-- is freedom.

AJ nods knowingly. There's a paternal warmth between them. Nick extends his hand. AJ shakes it. He smiles.

AJ (V.O.)

November of 2011 was an exciting time at Gawker Media.

### **INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - THE NEXT DAY**

The CAMERA travels through the office. The place is buzzing. There are now twice as many employees. Happy. Excited. Young.

AJ (V.O.)

The company was finally generating big-time revenue so the employees started getting big-time perks.

We drift past a chef flipping omelettes for a line of people before moving onto an in-progress staff-only yoga class.

AJ (V.O.)

There were omelette bars and yoga classes and a health insurance plan that included a young journalist's Holy Grail: dental coverage.

Further down, we land on Tommy sitting at his desk. AJ is standing over him, giving him the good news.

AJ (V.O.)

Since I was moving to Gawker, Tommy got tapped to take over Deadspin.

TOMMY

Fuck yeah!

As Tommy thrusts his arms skyward in triumph he accidentally spills his coffee all over his lap.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Ah. Dammit.

AJ (V.O.)

Which meant I needed to find myself a new right hand for Gawker...

### **EMMA'S DESK - MOMENTS LATER**

AJ speaks closely with an apprehensive Emma.

AJ (V.O.)

Albeit, a reluctant one.

EMMA

But I don't have any experience editing or managing or--

AJ

You've got good instincts. You'll figure it out.

EMMA

But what if I don't? I got bumped up from intern like a year ago--

AJ  
This isn't the kind of thing you  
say 'no' to, Emma.

The sincerity of AJ's words begin to sink in with Emma. He looks in her eyes, holds out his hand. She shakes it.

AJ (V.O.)  
And I was still partying. Hard.

**INT. BAR - NIGHT - SERIES OF SHOTS**

AJ guzzles beers; downs shots; scores blow off his dealer.

**INT. BATHROOM STALL - BAR - MOMENTS LATER**

STYLED SHOTS of AJ hustling into the stall; gleefully breaking into an eight-ball; snorting rapid-fire key bumps.

AJ leans against the stall door. Saucer-eyed. Elated.

He exits the stall, spots someone. Freezes.

Will is standing at the urinal, having just unzipped. Sensing a presence, he glances back, notices AJ. An awkward beat.

WILL  
(pause)  
Hey.

AJ  
Hey.

Will squints, focuses in on AJ. Clocks his giant pupils; sweaty brow; fidgety movements. He grows concerned.

WILL  
You okay man?

AJ's wasted. He turns defensive.

AJ  
I'm better than okay. I'm great.  
I'm the new Editor-in-Chief of  
Gawker.

Will, still at the urinal, is stung by the word 'Gawker'.

WILL  
(pause)  
Congratulations.  
(then)  
(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)  
 Look, I'm kind of in the middle of something here, would you mind if we catch up in a sec?

AJ glares at Will, burning with righteous, coked-out rage.

AJ  
 Why can't you just be happy for me?

Will fidgets around at the urinal, stammering--

WILL  
 I-- AJ-- like *can we not* right now?

AJ  
 You're just jealous of me. You've always been jealous of me. Cause I have what you don't.

Annoyed, Will gives up on the urinal.

WILL  
 (zipping, turning)  
 Integrity?

AJ  
 Balls.

AJ is so drunk he's teetering. Will's burning with rage.

WILL  
 Yeah, being the Edward R. Murrow of athlete dong makes you real fucking fearless. Do you like who you are? Cause nobody else does.  
 (off AJ's silence)  
 You better stick with Nick for as long as you can, cause Gawker's the only place where there's upward mobility in being a heel.

Will exits. Off AJ, gutted by Will's caustic words--

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. AJ'S LOFT - BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT**

AJ's sitting up on his laptop. Wired from blow, his bloodshot eyes bore into the screen as he gulps vodka from the bottle.

AJ (V.O.)

Will wasn't wrong. In a few short years, I'd managed to become one of the most hated people on the internet. I was right up there with Octomom and that lady who posted a photo of herself holding a puppy inside of a closed Ziploc bag.

On his computer, he flips through different media outlets announcing his promotion. He races to the comments section.

AJ (V.O.)

And the weight of it was starting to take its toll...

Overlapping FLASHES of remarks in the Comments Section:

*"Fuck that guy!"; "AJ is an asshole!"; "HE RUINED DEADSPIN!"*

AJ (V.O.)

But what was I supposed to do? Start being nice? Fuck no.

The pace of the FLASHES gets faster:

AJ (V.O.)

I'd gotten to where I was by being an asshole so I wasn't about to stop now.

*"Scumbag!"; "Piece of shit!"; "Awful human being!"; "He doesn't deserve to live!"; "AJ SHOULD KILL HIMSELF!"*

AJ (V.O.)

Even if it killed me...

AJ grows pale. Hurt. Overwhelmed. Angry. Slams his laptop shut. Panting. Panicking. He scrambles for a cigar box on his nightstand, fumbles through for a Xanax. Chokes it down with some vodka. Off AJ, shaking with tears in his eyes--

#### **INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - MORNING**

AJ is nestled into a dark corner of the office. His stare is vacant. Emma is seated beside him. She looks antsy.

EMMA

Shouldn't we be like... I dunno, writing?

AJ

Not yet. First, we observe.

EMMA

It's been a month, haven't we done enough observing?

AJ turns to Emma, arches an eyebrow--

AJ

I dunno, Emma. Have we?

EMMA

If I knew your management style would consist entirely of cryptic rhetorical questions, I wouldn't have taken this job.

AJ

Gawker is broken. What do you think is wrong with it?

EMMA

You mean besides the fact that its Editor-in-Chief talks in riddles?

Emma eyes travel over the office. It finally dawns on her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

They all look like they wanna kill themselves.

One employee has her head down on her desk; another employee openly applies for a another job on his computer; five employees stand in front of the "Big Board" gazing into it, rapt with fear. One slugs back a bottle of Pepto Bismo.

AJ (V.O.)

Nick's demanding metrics goals had every writer living in constant fear of losing his or her job.

### **GAWKER - TRAFFIC CHART**

A line graph shows declining traffic from 2.8 million to 2.2.

AJ (V.O.)

Their low morale was also hurting traffic, so I had a problem.

### **INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - BACK TO PRESENT**

On AJ, as he was, keenly observing from the same spot.

AJ (V.O.)  
 I had to figure out a way to hit  
 Nick's numbers while also keeping a  
 gaggle of needy, emotional writers  
 happy. An impossible task.

**GAWKER:** *"Gawker Presents... A Week Of Adorable Kittens And  
 Nip Slips, All In The Name Of Science!"*

Beneath, a COLLAGE made up of the aforementioned images.

AJ (V.O.)  
 So I sought some help from  
 humanity's old friend Science...

### **INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - DAY**

Two writers sit at their computers, skimming over viral  
 content at warp speed.

AJ (V.O.)  
 For a week, I had two writers a day  
 do nothing but dig up big viral  
 shit like Waffle House parking lot  
 fights and sneezing baby pandas.

PAN AROUND to the other side of the room where six other  
 writers type away on their computers.

AJ (V.O.)  
 While they were doing that, the  
 rest of the staff was writing  
 actual worthwhile shit like  
 touching personal essays and  
 longform pieces.

### **GAWKER - TRAFFIC CHART**

A line graph labeled "New Visitors Per Post" is on the rise.

AJ (V.O.)  
 The result was an extra 10k in new  
 visitors per post.

### **AJ**

strokes his chin, as he considers the new data.

AJ (V.O.)  
 But I didn't wanna give up each of  
 my writers one day a week to farm  
 this garbage so I brought in a  
 ringer.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - DAY**

NEETZAN ZIMMERMAN, 30's, bald and unassuming, stares at a  
 computer monitor with laser focus. FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Neetzan Zimmerman created The Daily  
 What, a Tumblr that was and is a  
 viral content receptacle.

**THE DAILY WHAT - WEB SITE**

Girl falls off a skateboard. Pizza with a cheeseburger crust.

AJ (V.O.)  
 If you saw a girl fall off a  
 skateboard or a pizza crust made  
 entirely out of cheeseburgers on  
 the internet at any point between  
 2008 and 2011, odds are Neetzan was  
 the man who brought it to your  
 attention.

**GAWKER - TRAFFIC CHART**

A line graph labeled "Monthly Page Views Per Writer" has  
 Neetzan's line beating everyone else's by 20 million.

AJ (V.O.)  
 His impact on traffic was instant.

**INT. GAWKER OFFICES - DAY**

Neetzan, as he was. UNFREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
 With Neetzan strip mining the  
 darkest reaches of the internet, we  
 were able to easily hit Nick's  
 traffic quota which freed up the  
 writers to create content they  
 could actually be proud of.

The writers work with a renewed sense of purpose.

**GAWKER:** *"The Darknet's Drug Bazaar"*

AJ (V.O.)

I was using videos of dancing fat kids to underwrite good journalism.

**GAWKER:** *"Here's The Identity Of Reddit's Super Troll"*

AJ (V.O.)

We stood at the nexus of The New Yorker and World Star.

**GAWKER:** *"Who Will Be The Next Adam Lanza?"*

AJ (V.O.)

Which meant if you were an advertiser hungry for urban dwelling millennial eyeballs...

### **ADVERTISERS**

American Express. Budweiser. Intel. Mercedes-Benz. Amazon.

AJ (V.O.)

We were your goddamn wet dream.

### **INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - NIGHT**

The SLOW MOTION beer-spraying, coke-snorting, face-sucking shots from the opening appear with AJ dead center.

AJ (V.O.)

This was Gawker's golden age. We were a fearless, excessive, and incestuous incubator for young, talented journalists.

### **INT. THE HOTEL ON RIVINGTON - ROOFTOP - NIGHT**

The chic hotel's terrace is packed with young, gorgeous attendees for a *"40 Under 40 in New Media"* event, as indicated by an extravagant ice sculpture in the center.

AJ (V.O.)

By July of 2012, I was riding high.

Find AJ, tucked away in a corner sneaking a key bump.

AJ (V.O.)

Maybe a little too high...

As AJ shakes off the bump, his phone vibrates with an email.

**CLOSE ON EMAIL:** *"Hello AJ, I am an attorney representing a client who is in possession of a sex tape featuring Hulk Hogan. My client is not interested in money. He would just like you to view it. Are you interested?"*

AJ briefly considers the peculiar offer. FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)

Real quick, what you've gotta understand is that getting an email like this was by no means a strange occurrence in my life.

UNFREEZE. He taps out a simple reply: *"Sure. Send it."*

AJ (V.O.)

So when I got an email promising a sex tape featuring Hulk Hogan, I didn't think anything of it. In fact, I completely forgot about it.

AJ pockets his phone, snakes through the crowd, up to the--

## BAR

AJ leans over it, nods at a BARTENDER in a black shirt & tie--

AJ

Vodka rocks.

BARTENDER

I'm sorry, sir. We are only serving signature cocktails for this event.

(gestures to a menu)

The Media Movers Mojito or the 40 Under 40 Ounces to Freedom.

AJ is equal parts annoyed and confused.

AJ

Is the second one like a 40 ounce of malt liquor?

BARTENDER

No, it's a 10 ounce glass of rum punch.

AJ

So why is '40 ounces' in the name?

BARTENDER  
 (correcting)  
Under 40 ounces...

AJ  
 I hate this place so much.

CAT (O.S.)  
 Tell me about it.

AJ follows the voice to CAT MARNELL, 30. She has a tangled mess of blonde hair, a permanent layer of smoky eye shadow and a zero-fucks-given attitude. A slinky cocktail dress hangs off her rail thin frame. She extends her hand.

CAT (CONT'D)  
 I'm Cat.

AJ meets it. FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
 I knew who she was. *Everyone* knew who she was.

#### **CAT MARNELL - VARIOUS**

Cat posing at the Lucky offices. Cat, slightly disheveled posing at the XO Jane offices. Cat in a fur coat, wild-eyed, cigarette in her mouth, holding a bottle of Grey Goose.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Cat was a Beauty Editor at Lucky. Until she was fired for her gratuitous drug use. She then landed at XO Jane. Where she was again fired for her gratuitous drug use. After that, she got herself a job at the one place where her gratuitous drug use was not only tolerated, but encouraged: writing a column for Vice.

#### **BAR - BACK TO PRESENT**

AJ & Cat, as they were FROZEN. UNFREEZE. Instant chemistry.

AJ  
 AJ.  
 (then)  
 How'd you end up on this lame list?

CAT

I wrote an essay about how Plan B is my preferred form of contraceptive. They said it was "brave". You?

AJ

I posted Olivia Munn's naked photos and sexts to Chris Pine. They said I was a "maverick".

They look over the party, bored by how lame it is. Cat pulls a flask from her clutch. Hands it to AJ, he takes a sip.

AJ (CONT'D)

I've, uh, got a little blow on me.

CAT

A *little blow*, uh? That's cute.  
(holds up her clutch)  
I'm holding an eight-ball, a Dutch packed with Angel Dust, and enough Xany Bars to sedate Sigmund Freud.

AJ's practically salivating. He takes another sip.

CAT (CONT'D)

Also, you might wanna go easy on that. It's GHB.

AJ coughs, looks at the flask, then up at Cat.

AJ

You wanna get outta here?

CAT

I thought you'd never ask.

AJ (V.O.)

We couldn't have been worse for each other. But we didn't care.

MUSIC UP on a lush classic Italian Opera ballad that sends us into a dizzy dream-like--

### **MONTAGE**

-- AJ & Cat on an EPIC bender. It's a hazy, orange-tinted surreal orgy of excess. Drinking. Snorting. Smoking. Fucking.

AJ (V.O.)  
We'd meet up at 5am, party till  
10am and then I'd go to work.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. AJ'S LOFT - BED - MORNING**

It's dark. Slender beams of sunlight poke through the window curtains. They illuminate a collage of cigarette butts, empty liquor bottles, and other drug refuse. A cell phone VIBRATES.

AJ (V.O.)  
Well, sometimes I'd go to work.

AJ's rustles awake on a bare mattress. Cat's out cold next to him, a sleep mask over her eyes. He blindly feels around for his phone. After a few failed attempts, he finds it, answers--

AJ  
(groggy)  
This-- this is AJ.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - INTERCUT**

Emma's at her desk, phone to her ear. She looks unamused.

EMMA  
Hi AJ, it's Emma, Gawker's Managing  
Editor who's been filling in for  
its Editor-in-Chief because he  
hasn't shown up at the office in  
two weeks.

AJ puts his feet on the floor. Grimaces. Rubs his eyes.

AJ  
Think of all the invaluable  
experience you're getting.

EMMA  
You know what, you're right. Like  
just now, I had the privilege of  
viewing grainy footage of the star  
of 1993's action-comedy 'Mr. Nanny'  
fucking his best friend's wife.

AJ  
You just watched a video of Sherman  
Hemsley fucking his best friend's  
wife?

An ash tray whizzes by AJ's head. He turns.

CAT (O.S.)  
Shut. Up.

EMMA  
Hulk Hogan, AJ. Hulk. Hogan.

AJ rises, crosses the loft, lowers his voice.

AJ  
Ahh... I forgot all about that.

Emma is holding a DVD away from herself by her thumb and forefinger, as if it's a piece of toxic waste. She shudders.

EMMA  
Funny, I don't think I ever will.

AJ  
Is it legit?

EMMA  
I only got through the first two minutes, but I'm gonna say it is. I mean, unless there's another 6'7, balding blonde man with a thong tan line who likes to use the word 'brother' during foreplay.

AJ  
I'll be at the office in an hour.

AJ hangs up.

CAT (O.S.)  
Bring back Newports!

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - LATE AFTERNOON**

The Hogan video has just ended. AJ and Emma sit in stunned silence. Pale. Unblinking. After a beat, AJ reaches into his desk, pulls out a fifth of vodka, takes a long swig. He passes it to Emma. She knocks it back.

AJ  
Why was it shot on a surveillance camera?

EMMA  
Why did he keep talking about how much he'd just eaten?

AJ and Emma go quiet again as they digest the "film". Beat.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
So what are you gonna do with it?

Off AJ, contemplating his next move--

**GAWKER**

*"This Is What Hulk Hogan Having Sex Looks Like"*

Below the headline, a night-vision STILL of a shadowy Hulk Hogan and Heather Clem with a 'play' button in the center.

AJ (V.O.)  
In terms of posts I thought might put my career in jeopardy, the Hogan Tape didn't even rank.

DISSOLVE TO:

**TV NEWS FOOTAGE**

Different TV NEWS ANCHORS from different TV NEWS OUTLETS facing the camera with a Hogan-related graphic beside them.

AJ (V.O.)  
Naturally, Hogan sued. But so did everyone. We got sued so much for stories like that, Nick estimated the company lost somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 million annually to legal fees and dropped ads. But he didn't care.

DISSOLVE TO:

**AROUND THE WORLD**

QUICK FLASHES of MEN and WOMEN of different ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds staring into their computer screens with an identical look of morbid curiosity in their eyes.

AJ (V.O.)  
Cause those were the stories that brought in the most traffic.

BLACK OUT.

OVER BLACK.

AJ (V.O.)  
 In January, I finally decided to  
 leave Gawker for a very lucrative  
 editorial gig at Spin Media.

**TITLE: NEW YORK, NY - JANUARY, 2013**

**INT. NICK'S LOFT - NIGHT**

Chic. Modern. Sprawling. It's a party. Booze flows freely. Dozens of past and present Gawker employees throw down beneath a big paper banner that reads: "FUCK OFF, AJ!"

AJ (V.O.)  
 No one could have predicted what  
 was about to happen with the Hogan  
 Case. And even if I did know, I was  
 too fucked up to care.

**INT. NICK'S LOFT - BATHROOM - SAME TIME**

AJ hoovers a six inch rail off the sink. He blinks. Rubs his nose. Notices something, rolls his eyes.

AJ  
 Can you maybe *not* raid my boss's  
 medicine cabinet for drugs?

AJ taps another line out of a small clear vial as Cat continues examining the cabinet's contents.

CAT  
 I just got out of rehab so I need  
 to rebuild my stash. Also, he's not  
 your boss anymore.

AJ reaches over, shuts the cabinet. Cat rolls her eyes, holds up some small vials filled with liquid and a bottle of Advil.

CAT (CONT'D)  
 Whatever. All he had in there was  
 poppers and Advil anyway.

AJ lowers head, readying himself for his next line.

NICK (O.S.)  
 (muffled through the door)  
 Where is AJ Daulerio!?

AJ looks up, freezes.

AJ  
Shit. Stay here.

AJ rushes out, shuts the door. Cat tosses aside the Advil, tucks the popper vials into her purse, finishes AJ's line.

**INT. NICK'S LOFT - CONTINUOUS**

Nick's standing on a chair, drink in hand. He gleefully waves AJ over. The room goes quiet, focuses in on the happy pair.

NICK  
AJ Daulerio has been called a lot of things: an asshole, a moron, a talent-less hack who's single-handedly destroying western civilization.  
(pause, then)  
Anyway, enjoy the party everyone!

The room erupts in laughter. AJ embraces the good-natured ribbing. Nick places a paternal hand on his shoulder.

NICK (CONT'D)  
AJ is like no one I've ever known. He's fearless. He takes big chances. Not just on stories, but on people.

In the crowd, Tommy and Emma look on lovingly at AJ.

NICK (CONT'D)  
He elevates those around him to greater heights. And one of the greatest joys of my career has been watching him blossom into the man he is today....  
(then)  
A talent-less hack who's single-handedly bringing down western civilization.

More laughs as everyone raises their drinks.

NICK (CONT'D)  
To AJ!

The music rises. The party gets moving again. Nick hops down from the chair next to AJ.

AJ

Correct me if I'm wrong but did I just detect Nick Denton expressing genuine sincerity toward me?

NICK

(going cold)

You're wrong. I had Emma and Tommy write it for me.

AJ's face drops. Nick comes back to life.

NICK (CONT'D)

Jesus, you're easy. Of course, I wrote it. And I meant it.

### ACROSS THE ROOM

Emma watches AJ down his drink as he chats with Nick. Her face takes on a look of sisterly concern.

EMMA

Does AJ seem like he's going a little harder than normal lately?

(then)

Tommy?

Emma turns, finds Tommy staring at a tray of sandwiches.

TOMMY

I really want one of those mini monte-cristos but I'm concerned that the their internal temperature is within the bacterial danger zone for foodborne illnesses.

Emma smacks his arm to get his attention.

EMMA

Do you think AJ's partying has been getting a little out of control?

Tommy looks across at AJ chatting with Nick, considers it.

TOMMY

AJ is a medical anomaly. Like Keith Richards. His drug and alcohol intake is load-bearing.

EMMA

Load-bearing?

TOMMY

Yeah, the drugs and alcohol aren't destroying his life. I actually think they might be the only thing holding it together.

Tommy's assessment does little to comfort Emma.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Do you think Nick has a meat thermometer in his kitchen?

Emma looks back at AJ. Off her disquieted look--

**BACK ON THE OTHER SIDE**

We pick back up with AJ and Nick mid-convo--

NICK

Are you going to forget about me at your new big fancy corporate job?

AJ cracks a smile.

AJ

I won't. And I'm sure we'll still see plenty of each other. In a courtroom across from Hulk Hogan.

NICK

(scoffs)  
He'll settle. They always settle.

The warm moment is interrupted by a wasted Cat.

CAT

AJ, can we leave yet--

Cat trips, her purse hits the floor sending the popper vials tumbling out. Nick looks at the vials, up at Cat. Beat.

CAT (CONT'D)

(re: poppers, to Nick)  
I think you dropped those.

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

AJ gazes out at the city from the floor-to-ceiling windows of his corner office. *He's made it.*

EXEC

Hey, AJ.

AJ turns. A grim-faced EXECUTIVE is standing in the doorway.

EXEC (CONT'D)  
You got a second?

AJ (PRE-LAP)  
You're firing me?

**INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

AJ is bewildered. The Exec is seated across from him, flanked by a hapless HEAD OF HR who's scribbling notes on a legal pad.

EXEC  
Not firing, *terminating your deal.*

AJ  
Okay. What's the difference?

The Exec and the Head of HR exchange a look. A beat passes.

EXEC  
Hmm, now that I think about it,  
there actually isn't one.

HR HEAD  
Our leadership has recently changed  
hands and there's now a feeling  
that someone with your...

The Head of HR trails off, unsure of how to word this.

EXEC  
Background.

HR HEAD  
(nods)  
Yes, background. Someone with your  
*background* may not be the right fit  
for our brand.

AJ, rankled by their bullshit, calls them out.

AJ  
This is over the Hogan stuff, isn't  
it?

The Exec and the HR Head exchange another awkward look.

AJ (CONT'D)  
 (irate)  
 That's ridiculous! It's not like  
 you didn't know that this was happ--

The HR Head scribbles a number down on the legal pad, rips the page off. Hands it to the Exec who slides it forward.

EXEC  
 This is your severance.

AJ picks up the paper, reads the number. His eyes go wide.

AJ  
 (pause)  
 No shit?

MUSIC UP on a whimsical concerto as we drift into a woozy--

### **SERIES OF SHOTS**

AJ's hand trades wads of cash for bags of white powder; dehydrated mushrooms; pills of varying colors, shapes, sizes.

AJ (V.O.)  
 That check was the best and worst  
 thing that ever happened to me.

As the concerto reaches its climax--

BLACK OUT.

TITLE CARD: **NEW YORK, NY - SEPTEMBER, 2013**

PRE-LAP: *KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK.*

### **INT. AJ'S LOFT - FRONT DOOR - DAY**

Emma is standing outside of AJ's door. Muffled House Music seeps out. Something crashes inside.

AJ  
 (muffled by the door)  
 Ow. Fuck. Hold on!

The door opens. A disheveled AJ is in a bathrobe. Bags under his eyes. Scraggly beard. A ghoulish grin on his face.

AJ (CONT'D)  
 The fuck are you doing here?

**INT. AJ'S LOFT - MOMENTS LATER**

The House Music is on full blast. The place is a disaster. Rotting food. Empty cans & bottles. Overflowing ash trays.

AJ

Yeah, sorry about the mess.

Emma struggles with the smell and general disarray as she follows AJ through his self-made carnage.

AJ (CONT'D)

I keep meaning to take a bunch of Adderall and clean the place, but after I take it, I just end up playing Mario Cart for ten hours.

AJ rips a plug from the wall, stopping the music. An awkward beat between them.

EMMA

So... how's Cat?

AJ

Beats me.

EMMA

Did you guys break up?

AJ

Sort of.

AJ flops back onto a couch covered in garbage.

AJ (CONT'D)

A few months back, she smoked a bunch of PCP, thought she was being attacked by bats and destroyed my place. Haven't seen her since.

(then)

But I still got some of that PCP if you're interested.

AJ grabs an old cigar box off the floor, opens it for Emma to see. It contains every drug you can imagine.

EMMA

Jesus Christ, AJ. That thing looks like Hunter S. Thompson's glove compartment.

AJ

I know. Cool, right?

Emma shuts the box, sets it aside. She goes to take a seat beside AJ, sizes up the garbage on the couch, opts not to.

EMMA

No one's seen or heard from you in awhile so I just wanted to come by to see what you've been...

Emma trails off as the horror of AJ's life finally lands.

EMMA (CONT'D)

...up to?

AJ

Ratter.

EMMA

Ratter?

AJ

Ratter.

EMMA

And Ratter would be...

AJ fumbles around for his laptop. Hyped. Frantic.

AJ

My new project. It's Gawker, but for small towns. Hyper-localized with citizen journalists doling out the same sharp brand of writing but on a municipal scale.

AJ finally finds his laptop. He flips it open to show it off. But it's dead and the screen is cracked. AJ notices. *Shit.*

AJ (CONT'D)

Just try to imagine this screen but instead of cracked, it's got all the stuff I just said on it.

Just then, Emma realizes something.

EMMA

Wait, your laptop's broken?

AJ

(fiddling with it)  
It's not broken, it just needs a little extra love.

The laptop snaps into two separate pieces.

AJ (CONT'D)  
Ah, shit.

EMMA  
(growing alarmed)  
What about your phone? Is your  
phone working?

AJ looks up at the ceiling, thinking.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
You do know you have your  
deposition, right?

FREEZE on AJ's face, crinkled with confusion.

AJ (V.O.)  
I didn't. In fact, I'd forgotten  
all about the case. Mostly because  
my life was a shit show, but also  
because our counsel told me the  
thing wasn't ever going to trial.

**INT. NONDESCRIPT CONFERENCE ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING**

AJ's seated at the head of a long table. He looks like death.

AJ (V.O.)  
So that's how I treated it. Like  
the whole thing was a fucking joke.

The Plaintiff Attorney from the opening scene questions him.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
When did you first hear about the  
Hulk Hogan sex tape?

DISSOLVE TO:

**MID-DAY**

AJ's in the same spot. Slouched in his seat. Bored. Annoyed.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
When did you decide that you wanted  
to publish the sex tape?

DISSOLVE TO:

**AFTERNOON**

AJ's tired. Pissed off. Ready to blow.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
Did you think that publishing a  
celebrity sex tape would generate  
traffic for the web site?

AJ  
Yeah, why else would I publish it?

The Plaintiff Attorney sizes up AJ. This is the moment he's  
been waiting for.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
I don't know. That's why I asked.

AJ  
Well, now you do.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
So if a celebrity is prominent  
enough, a sex tape involving them  
is newsworthy and would therefore  
bring traffic to the site?

AJ  
Yes.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
Can you imagine a situation where a  
celebrity sex tape would not be  
newsworthy?

AJ  
If they were a child.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
Under what age?

AJ and the Plaintiff Attorney lock eyes. *Really, asshole?*  
After a long beat, AJ goes to open his mouth--

SMASH CUT TO:

**INT. AJ'S LOFT - BED - DAY**

AJ's lying on his back. Staring at the ceiling. Isolated.  
Alone. He lights a cigarette. Sits up. Exhales. Sighs.

AJ (V.O.)  
Everyone's bottom is different.

**TIME LAPSE**

AJ paces his loft. Chain smokes. Drinks. Snorts. Waits.

AJ (V.O.)  
 For some people it's blowing a  
 Korean businessman under a freeway  
 overpass for a \$10 rock.

The sunrise and sunset slip in through cracks in the  
 curtains. Different dealers enter and exit. Garbage piles up.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Or stabbing your mom in the leg  
 with a pair of kitchen scissors  
 because she flushed your stash.

The stash in his trusted cigar box empties out. AJ stares at  
 it, looks around his place. It's filthy.

AJ (V.O.)  
 In my case, it was as simple as  
 looking around my apartment one day  
 and thinking 'I don't wanna live  
 like this anymore'.

CLOSE ON AJ's face. Thin. Pale. Wild eyed. *KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK.*

AJ's fugue state is broken. He lurches to the door, opens it.  
 A bright red eviction notice is plastered on the other side.

AJ (V.O.)  
 I was also out of drugs, out of  
 money, and was getting evicted.

**INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DOOR - LATER**

AJ stands in front of a door. Desperate. Sick. He knocks.

AJ (V.O.)  
 But I still needed a push.

The door opens. Will, fresh-faced, looks out. Long beat.

**INT. WILL'S APARTMENT - LATER**

The place is a stark contrast to AJ's. AJ and Will sit on the  
 couch, nursing beers in an awkward silence. The Mets/Cubs  
 National League Championship series plays on TV. Will finally  
 takes a crack at making polite conversation.

WILL

It's nearly impossible for a team to come back from being two-zero in a series.

AJ

You were right.

WILL

I know. The data is there.

AJ

No. About Deadspin, about 'wading into the swamp', about everything.

Will swallows. Shifts his eyes to the floor.

WILL

(pause)

I didn't wanna be.

AJ

But you were and now...

AJ trails off. Will looks at AJ. It's hard for him, but he keeps his eyes on AJ, for a long time.

WILL

Why?

AJ

Why, what?

WILL

Why did you do it? Why did you willingly become this... villain? If you'd just stayed out of the gutter and played ball like everyone else, you could've gone anywhere in this business.

AJ takes a long beat to consider his answer.

AJ

I liked the way it made me feel.  
(reflecting back)  
Whenever I wrote a good Cultural Oddsmaker or a snarky headline trashing A-Rod and I saw the spike in page views... I got this rush. It was like the worst version of me was the best version of me.

(MORE)

AJ (CONT'D)

Suddenly, I wasn't a faceless cog at a shitty print monthly or a 34-year-old loser living with his parents in Churchville, Pennsylvania. I was somebody important. Somebody who mattered. And that was all I ever wanted.

The two old friends sit in silence for a long beat.

WILL

So which version of AJ am I sitting with right now?

AJ

The one who's a broke, unemployed drug addict, who's burned every bridge he's ever crossed.

WILL

Okay. But I think there's another one somewhere.

AJ

Another one?

WILL

Yeah. Another AJ who goes to rehab, gets clean, and ends up doing some of the best work of his life because for all the fucked up things he's done and for all the mistakes he's made, he's still a good writer who's bursting with raw talent.

Will's words are honest. Earnest. Genuine. We PUSH IN on AJ's face as they seep into AJ's psyche.

DISSOLVE TO:

**AJ'S FACE**

Uncertain. Scared. He's standing in front of--

**EXT. HARP REHAB CENTER - DAY**

Palm trees flank the entrance of a modern glass building. The south Florida sun beating down on him. After a long beat, he opens the door and steps inside.

BLACK OUT.

TITLE CARD: **NEW YORK, NY - APRIL, 2015**

**CENTRAL PARK**

Summertime. Blue skies. Soaked with sweat, AJ effortlessly glides beneath a lush green canopy of trees. Smooth. Easy.

AJ (V.O.)  
A year and a half later, my whole  
life was different.

**AJ'S FACE - RUNNING**

Clear eyed. Sober. Brimming with optimism. He smiles.

AJ (V.O.)  
I was clean, fit, and blissfully  
unaware of how fucking bad shit was  
about to get.

FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
See, while I was drying out and  
trying to piece my life back  
together, some stuff had happened.  
Like, for example, remember this?

**INT. NICK'S LOFT - FLASHBACK**

Nick speaks to AJ at his going away party.

NICK  
(scoffs)  
He'll settle. They always settle.

FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
Yeah, well, he didn't.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

It's a legal war room filled with open laptops and coffee cups. White paper towers of legal documents are everywhere. Nick and Gawker's attorneys pore over them.

AJ (V.O.)  
 The case had been going on for over two years and was now going to trial, leaving us all to wonder...

Nick looks up in utter disbelief.

NICK  
 How in the bloody hell does he have the money for this?

FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Turns out, he didn't. But we'll get to that in a moment. With legal fees putting a major dent in Gawker's cash flow, Nick did the unthinkable...

**NICK - INVESTOR MEETINGS - VARIOUS**

Nick meets with three separate INVESTORS.

AJ (V.O.)  
 He tried to sell off his majority stake of the company.

INVESTOR #1  
 No.

CUT TO:

INVESTOR #2  
 No.

CUT TO:

INVESTOR #3  
 No.

Nick fights to suppress his anguish.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Even with a \$450 million evaluation, Gawker was a risky investment. And its risk certainly wasn't mitigated by this...

**GAWKER:** *"Conde Nast's CFO Tried And Failed To Pay A Gay Pornstar For Sex"*

Selfie PHOTO of David Geithner, unassuming, mid-40's.

AJ (V.O.)

In July, Gawker outed David Geithner for allegedly trying to bang a gay escort on a business trip to Chicago. Don't know who David Geithner is? Therein lies the problem.

**NEWS OUTLET WEBSITES - VARIOUS**

Overlapping FLASHES of different headlines:

*"Gawker Gay-Shames"; "More Bad News For Gawker"; "Gawker Crossed A Line With Conde CFO Story"*

AJ (V.O.)

Geithner wasn't a celebrity. He was a private citizen. So within hours of its publishing, the story had gone radioactive. And with the Hogan trial looming, Nick couldn't stomach the bad press or ad losses.

**GAWKER:** *"We Are Taking Down The Conde Nast CFO Story"*

AJ (V.O.)

So he pulled it.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - DAY**

Nick is surrounded by a mob of screaming Gawker employees.

AJ (V.O.)

And the writers went ape shit... They felt like Nick had turned his back on them in the name of money. Which he had. Leading the surprisingly-now-fearless Executive Editor of Gawker Media to resign.

Tommy stands on a chair, shouts at Nick--

TOMMY

I QUIT!

AJ (V.O.)

Meanwhile, I was trying to get a new writing job.

**AJ - JOB INTERVIEWS - VARIOUS**

AJ meets with the three separate EDITORS.

AJ (V.O.)  
But being attached to a hundred  
million dollar sex tape law suit  
made things a little challenging.

EDITOR #1  
No.

CUT TO:

EDITOR #2  
No.

CUT TO:

EDITOR #3  
No.

AJ fights to suppress his anguish.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

Nick, in different clothes, is back in the legal war room  
amid his team of attorneys and stacks of documents.

AJ (V.O.)  
And to top it all off, Hogan's  
people had dropped the claim for  
emotional distress.

An attorney comes up and whispers something in Nick's ear.

AJ (V.O.)  
Which sounds like a good thing  
until you realize that it meant--

Nick drops his head, kneads his eyes.

**EXT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - ROOFTOP - GOLDEN HOUR**

The summer sun is sinking. Nick blows out a cloud of pot  
smoke. It does little to relieve his stress.

AJ  
I'm no longer covered by our  
liability insurance?

AJ scratches his head, trying to understand what this means.

NICK

Not just *you*, AJ. *Us*. You, me, Gawker, the entire company.

AJ

But I don't understand. Hogan dropping that claim means he stands to get way less money if he wins.

NICK

This isn't money, AJ. This isn't even about Hogan.

AJ

What are you talking about?

NICK

We've spent the last two and a half years wondering why he won't settle and wondering how he has the money to drag out a case like this. It's because he's got someone underwriting this thing for him.

AJ

Who?

Nick takes a long drag, thinks. Flicks the joint over.

NICK

I don't know but they're rich and powerful and they won't stop until Gawker is dead and buried.

The grim reality hits AJ hard. He starts to shake, stammers--

AJ

What if we lose?

NICK

We'll appeal.

AJ

But that could take years and more money and I don't even have a job--

Nick's gears shift. He turns ferocious.

NICK

You need to pull yourself together right now because I've got a lot more to worry about than you and your little fragile set of psychological circumstances.

AJ  
Like what? Yourself?

NICK  
A \$450 million company and 300  
employees.

Nick turns away, looks out over the city. The sun is gone.

NICK (CONT'D)  
(wondering aloud)  
What do you do when you're facing  
off against someone who has all the  
money in the world?

AJ  
(pause)  
Cheat!

Nick ignores him. AJ, impotent, breaks down, storms off. We stay with Nick as he looks out. After a beat, an idea forms.

#### **AJ - VARIOUS**

AJ hits the AA circuit. He meditates in a park. He scribbles a 'gratitude list'. Frustrated, he crumples it, throws it away.

AJ (V.O.)  
I did everything I could to stay  
sober. I went to meetings, I  
meditated, I wrote gratitude lists.

Off AJ, desperate for the relief only booze & drugs can provide.

#### **EXT. NYC STREETS - DAY/NIGHT**

AJ wanders aimlessly. He longingly eyes bars where he used to drink, street corners where he used to cop.

AJ (V.O.)  
But no matter how many times you  
say the 'serenity prayer'...

Day turns to night. The city's lights come on, making every bar and restaurant he passes appear all the more tantalizing.

AJ (V.O.)  
 ...It doesn't take away from the fact that your entire life and future rests is the palm of six morons from Tampa. Fucking. Tampa.

**INT. NYU DIVE BAR - NIGHT**

Bustling with young, happy co-eds enjoying summer break. Find AJ, at the bar, facing a wall of TVs. The BARTENDER sets a double vodka rocks in front of him. AJ stares at it.

The fresh ice in the glass slowly dissolves. The crystal clear mixture becomes one. Condensation saturates the cocktail napkin beneath it.

The house lights are up. Chairs are up on the tables. AJ hasn't moved an inch.

BARTENDER  
 Hey buddy--  
 (off AJ's silence)  
 HEY!

AJ's daze his broken. He looks up.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)  
 Slam it or leave. We're closing up.

AJ gives him a limp nod. He wraps his hand around the glass. Steadies himself. Raises it his lips. Stops an inch short. His focus moves beyond the glass, to a TV behind the bar.

ON TV: TMZ features Hulk Hogan beside a graphic that reads:  
*"Hulk Hogan Wrestles With Racism"*

**TMZ**

Harvey Levin, thermos in hand, listens intently as one of his underlings recaps the latest development in the Hulk story.

TMZ WRITER  
 The Hulkster is in big trouble. The WWE just fired him for dropping a whole lotta N-bombs in his infamous 2006 sex tape.

**INT. NYU DIVE BAR - MOMENTS LATER**

AJ is gone. His drink is still sitting on the bar, untouched.

BLACK OUT.

OVER BLACK.

HULK HOGAN (V.O.)

(actual audio)

*I mean, I'd rather if she was going to fuck some nigger, I'd rather have her marry an 8-foot-tall nigger worth a hundred million dollars! Like a basketball player!*

**MONTAGE**

-- Overlapping FLASHES of different News Anchors:

*"The WWE used its finishing move on Hulk Hogan..."; "...was fired..."; "...accusing his daughter, Brooke..."; "...a racist rant captured during a secretly recorded sex tape..."*

-- FOOTAGE of an emotionally vulnerable Hulk Hogan, in a white bandana, sans sunglasses, on 'Good Morning America':

HULK HOGAN

Oh my gosh, please forgive me. I'm a nice guy. I'm just a normal man.

AJ (V.O.)

I know this kinda seems like a deus ex racist rant, but it wasn't.

-- Hogan rushes by paparazzi outside his home in FL. FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)

It was actually a rather precisely engineered chess move.

**GAWKER**

*"This Is What Hulk Hogan Having Sex Looks Like"*

Below the headline, a night-vision STILL of a shadowy Hulk Hogan and Heather Clem with a 'play' button in the center.

AJ (V.O.)

See up to that moment, I didn't know about Hogan's rant.

(MORE)

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 It wasn't on the tape I saw because  
 that part was being withheld by  
 this guy.

**KEITH DAVIDSON**

A scummy looking tan dude in a suit smiles.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Keith Davidson, a disgraced LA  
 attorney and sex tape broker. Which  
 apparently is a job one can have.

**BUBBA "THE LOVE SPONGE" CLEM**

Bubba, 50's, heavysset, in a wife beater with his pants around  
 his ankles. He holds '105 The Rock FM' over his bare waist.  
 Above him, a graphic reads: "I'M A FAT PIECE OF SHIT"

AJ (V.O.)  
 When Hogan's then-best friend,  
 Bubba "the Love Sponge" Clem, seen  
 here promoting his radio show,  
 fucked over one of his employees,  
 that employee took the tape as  
 payback and leaked it to Davidson.

**NEWS OUTLETS - VARIOUS**

Gawker. TMZ. The Dirty.

AJ (V.O.)  
 So Davidson sent a portion to me  
 and a couple other outlets hoping  
 we'd run it which would give him  
 major leverage in his negotiations  
 to sell the tape back to Hogan, who  
 he figured would pay a lot of money  
 to keep the racist part of the tape  
 from ever seeing the light of day.

**INT. PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY**

The Plaintiff Attorney is on the phone.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Which is actually a pretty good  
 plan until you realize that it's,  
 what do you call it? Oh yeah,  
extortion.

He hangs up the phone. Thinks. Picks up the phone, dials.

AJ (V.O.)  
So Hogan's attorney turns around  
and calls the FBI.

**INT. SANDPEARL RESORT - HOTEL ROOM - DAY**

Nondescript hotel room. Keith Davidson is handed an envelope filled with cash. He skims through, smiles big.

Six FBI Agents in windbreakers flood in, guns drawn.

FBI AGENT  
FBI! GET ON THE FUCKING GROUND!

Davidson is tackled. His face is pushed into the room's tacky carpeting as he's cuffed.

AJ (V.O.)  
So Hogan got the whole tape back.

**INT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

Nick pores over stacks of documents with his attorneys.

AJ (V.O.)  
And our attorneys found out about  
the missing deliciously racist  
portion in discovery.

One attorney rushes up to Nick with a paper. Nick reads it over, sits back pleased by what's he's reading.

AJ (V.O.)  
But it was confidential.

**EXT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - ROOFTOP - FLASHBACK**

AJ and Nick are together.

AJ  
Cheat!

On Nick, an idea forming. FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
At least, it was supposed to be.

BLACK OUT.

OVER BLACK.

AJ (V.O.)  
 I don't know if Nick was the one  
 who leaked it, but someone did. And  
 truthfully, it helped.

TITLE CARD: **PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA - MARCH 14, 2016**

**EXT. PINELLAS COUNTY JUDICIAL BUILDING - DAY**

It's a circus. Hogan and his team of attorneys push through a mob of shouting press photographers. He wears all-black, a black bandanna, with a silver crucifix around his neck.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Hogan still had the stink of N-Word  
 Gate on him heading into the trial.

AJ, Nick, and Gawker's team, all in suits, push through too.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Which was great considering we had  
 the stink of fourteen years of  
 celebrity dong pictures and  
 mercilessly cruel headlines on us.

**INT. COURTROOM - DAY**

It's packed. The place is bubbling with tension.

AJ wearily eyes Hogan's table. He's nervous. Sensing it, Nick leans over, whispers --

NICK  
 AJ?

AJ  
 Yeah?

Nick stares into his eyes, sniffs at the air. Nods.

NICK  
 Good. You're sober.

AJ sinks, stung by Nick's callousness.

BAILIFF (O.S.)  
 All rise.

**COURTROOM - TIME LAPSE**

Hogan's attorney makes his opening statement in MOS.

AJ (V.O.)

The case broke down like this:  
Hogan owned the tape, therefore  
Gawker posting an excerpt of it  
without his consent was a violation  
of his privacy.

Gawker's attorney gives his opening statement in MOS.

AJ (V.O.)

Our defense was that Hogan was a  
celebrity who had a reality show  
about his personal life and had  
publicly boasted about his sexual  
prowess on multiple occasions, thus  
making the tape newsworthy and  
covered under the First Amendment.

AJ and Nick look on. FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)

Now I know what you're thinking:  
that's ridiculous. And you're  
right. But it's also *incredibly*  
important. Which I'll get to in a  
moment. First, Hogan's testimony.

**HULK HOGAN - WITNESS STAND - VARIOUS**

Hogan raises his hand to be sworn in.

AJ (V.O.)

Hogan claimed Hulk Hogan is a  
character, while Terry Bollea is a  
man who deserves privacy. Curious  
about the difference between the  
two men? Here's some of the  
Hulkster's **actual** testimony to  
explain...

CUT TO:

Hogan, calm and collected.

HULK HOGAN

When I wrestle Rick Flair, and he beats me up and I pull his pants down and his rear end hangs out and he walks around the ring with his rear end hanging out, it's a joke. That's entirely different than coming into Terry Bollea's house and taking a private video.

CUT TO:

Hogan begins to unravel.

HULK HOGAN (CONT'D)

I don't *like* talking about Hulk Hogan's penis, but I've already tried to explain to you that I gave up my right as *Hulk Hogan* to have *Hulk Hogan* have any privacy.

CUT TO:

Hogan is now exasperated.

HULK HOGAN (CONT'D)

It's not *mine* because mine isn't that size, but we were discussing the length of *Hulk Hogan's*.

(then)

No, seriously, I do not have a 10-inch penis. No, I do not.

**INT. APPLEBEES - NIGHT**

Fine dining in Tampa, FL. Nick's sipping Scotch at the bar with AJ, who's got a club soda. They're cracking up.

AJ

...when he said he still didn't know how to use email.

NICK

Or when he said he and his wife recorded their trip to marriage counseling for ratings.

AJ

Or when he called the Howard Stern Show "character-driven".

Teary-eyed with laughter, they calm.

NICK  
The poor bastard was coming undone.

Nick scans for potential eavesdroppers, leans in to AJ--

NICK (CONT'D)  
I don't want to count any chickens  
but I'm starting to think that--

AJ  
We might actually pull this thing  
out.

The two friends struggle to suppress their giddy excitement.  
The moment passes. They turn back to the bar.

NICK  
(pause)  
AJ, I--

Nick stops short, stares down at the bar, remorseful. Beat.

NICK (CONT'D)  
I can't help but feel like your  
problems...

Nick trails off.

AJ  
What about my problems?

NICK  
(spitting it out)  
I put so much pressure on you and I  
demanded so much and I always  
wanted more and I can't help but  
feel like I had a hand in making  
you... the way you were.

AJ is stunned. *Is Nick really apologizing?* AJ looks into  
Nick's eyes for what feels like forever.

AJ  
They have a lotta bullshit sayings  
in AA. "One day at a time" or "Let  
go and let God", ya know that kinda  
thing. But there's this one I  
actually believe in: "Never be  
defined by your past. It was just a  
lesson not a life sentence."

Nick nods as he contemplates the quote.

AJ (CONT'D)

The past is the past, Nick. I know  
I learned from it. And it sounds  
like you did too.

They wrap one another up in a back-slapping man hug. PUSH IN  
ON AJ, smiling. At peace.

**INT. COURTROOM - THE NEXT DAY**

AJ is on the stand, hand raised. He settles into his seat.  
Looks over at Nick, they exchange a supportive silent nod.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

Mr. Daulerio, you gave your  
deposition for this case on  
September 30th, 2013, right?

AJ's face turns expressionless as the Plaintiff Attorney  
ambles up. *And we're back to where we were in the opening.*

AJ

Yes.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

You were under oath in your  
deposition, right?

AJ

Yes.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

You raised your right hand and you  
swore to tell the truth, right?

AJ

I did.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

And in that deposition, you were  
asked a question about the central  
issue of this case, were you not?

AJ starts to sense he's being set up. Uneasy, he loses focus.

AJ

The central issue of this case  
being?

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY

Newsworthiness.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY (CONT'D)  
That's your defense, right? That's  
the First Amendment?

AJ  
That is.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
And do you remember a portion of  
your deposition where you discussed  
what kinds of hypothetical sex  
tapes would not be newsworthy?

AJ flashes back in his head. Dread envelops him.

AJ  
(pause)  
Yeah, I do.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
Excellent.  
(turns back to the jury)  
I'd now like to direct the court's  
attention to a videotape of Mr.  
Daulerio's testimony.

AJ takes a breath, braces for impact.

### **AJ'S DEPOSITION**

Grainy video. AJ, looking worse for wear, faces the camera.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY (O.S.)  
Can you imagine a situation where a  
celebrity sex tape would not be  
newsworthy?

AJ  
If they were a child.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY (O.S.)  
Under what age?

AJ  
(eyes narrow with disdain)  
Four.

FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
I can give you all the excuses in  
the world.  
(MORE)

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Like how I was obviously joking or  
 how I was in the midst of a serious  
 substance abuse problem or how I  
 never ever thought this thing was  
 actually going to go to trial, but  
 at the end of the day, I still said  
 it. Under oath. In a deposition.

**INT. COURTROOM - BACK TO PRESENT**

AJ is on the stand waiting for it.

AJ  
 (on video)  
 Four.

The air leaves the courtroom. AJ sinks in his seat. Nick hangs his head. Hogan swells with smug satisfaction.

AJ glances back at his parents in the gallery. They're overcome with shame and embarrassment. He hangs his head.

AJ (V.O.)  
 And then it was finally my turn...

**MONTAGE --**

-- Overlapping FLASHES of different News Anchors:

*"AJ Daulerio...; "The man behind Gawker's posting of the now infamous sex tape"; "...hammered by Hogan's attorney's..."; "...shocking the courtroom..."; "...child under the age of 4"*

AJ (V.O.)  
 Me and my dumb mouth became the  
 story that stopped the news cycle.

**EXT. PINELLAS COUNTY JUDICIAL BUILDING - MORNING**

The press storms a stoic AJ as he enters the courthouse.

AJ (V.O.)  
 The rest of the trial was  
 agonizing. Whether it was having  
 stupid jokes from work chats being  
 read aloud and out of context.

**COURTROOM**

The Plaintiff Attorney addresses the court.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
 (reading)  
 AJ Daulerio responds "*His penis is  
 also wearing a little do-rag too.*"

**WITNESS STAND**

Emma suffers through the Plaintiff Attorney's questions.

AJ (V.O.)  
 Or watching a beloved friend and  
 protégé suffer through an insulting  
 barrage of personal questions.

PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY  
 Have you ever had an intimate  
 relationship with Mr. Daulerio or  
 Mr. Denton?

EMMA  
 No.

**DEFENSE TABLE**

AJ watches. Disgusted. Ashamed. Helpless.

**EXT. COURTHOUSE - PARKING LOT - LATER**

Emma, upset, bolts out of the courthouse. AJ races after her.

AJ  
 (calling after)  
 Emma! Emma!

AJ catches up to her.

AJ (CONT'D)  
 I'm sorry. I'm so sorry that you  
 had to suffer through that.

Emma pivots around, her eyes welling.

EMMA  
 You gave me a career, AJ. You took  
 a chance on me. You believed in me,  
 and-- I let you down.

AJ is flustered. Confused.

AJ  
 What-- No, you didn't--

EMMA

There were so many times when I could have stopped you. When I could have said something. Not just about the Hogan story, but about your drug use, your drinking, your... everything. And I didn't.

AJ

No, you couldn't have! No one could've! Because I wanted it! All of it!

(then, emotional)

I am a broken person, Emma. I have this gaping hole inside of me that I've spent my life trying to fill with a complete and total disregard for whoever I was hurting to do it.

AJ gestures back to the court house, then himself.

AJ (CONT'D)

So this-- me-- I'm sorry. For everything.

Emma closes her eyes, nods. Quietly walks away. AJ is left alone in the steamy Tampa parking lot, gutted.

AJ (V.O.)

And then, just like that, it was over.

PRE-LAP: GAVEL BANG

**PLAINTIFF TABLE**

Hogan cries tears of joy. His attorney smiles, consoles.

AJ (V.O.)

Hogan won 130 million from Gawker, 10 million from Nick, and 100k from me. The only reason mine was so low was because my unpaid student loans gave me a negative net worth.

**EXT. PINELLAS COUNTY JUDICIAL BUILDING - LATER**

AJ and Nick wriggle their way past hordes of shouting reporters and flashing cameras and into a waiting--

**EXT./INT. TOWN CAR - CONTINUOUS**

The doors shut. The madness now obscured by limousine window tints. The car pulls away. Beat.

NICK

This is all your fault.

AJ doesn't answer. He knows it is.

NICK (CONT'D)

I never wanted to bring you back but against my better judgement, I did. I was stupid enough to listen to that weak little bastard Leitch.

AJ's posture shifts at the mention of Will's name.

AJ

Yeah, Nick. This mess is everyone's fault but yours.

NICK

(explodes)

Four years old, AJ! You said Four fucking years old in a deposition!

AJ

Yeah. I did. And I posted the video too. I pulled the trigger. I take responsibility. But your hands aren't clean either. You set the tone. You made Gawker what it is. Ugly. Cruel. Demented. But that's not what you wanna hear because you only like the truth when it suits you. And the truth is this is as much your fault as it mine.

The car eases to a stop at a light. AJ opens the door, hops out, slams it shut. Nick scowls. Broods. The car pulls away.

BLACK OUT.

TITLE CARD: **NEW YORK, NY - MAY 23, 2016**

**INT. NICK'S LOFT - DAY**

Stacks of cardboard boxes are scattered throughout. An anguished Nick watches movers scurry back and forth.

A mover bumps a box he's carrying into the door frame as he passes. Something inside shatters. Nick cringes.

NICK

(dryly)

No, it's fine. Don't worry about it. It's not like these boxes are filled with anything of value.

Nick's phone vibrates in his pocket. He pulls it out.

NICK (CONT'D)

Yes, hello.

RYAN MAC (V.O.)

Hi Nick, Ryan Mac at Forbes. As I'm sure you're well aware, the identity of Hogan's legal financier has finally been revealed so I'm calling for comment.

NICK

(pause)

Hogan's what?

FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)

Yeah, so funny story.

## **FORBES**

*"Hulk Hogan Had A Billionaire Backer In His Gawker Suit"*

PHOTO of a devious looking Peter Thiel smiling beneath it.

AJ (V.O.)

Turns out, it actually was entirely Nick's fault. Remember this?

## **EXT. GAWKER MEDIA OFFICES - ROOFTOP - FLASHBACK**

Nick is speaking with Will. We pick up mid-convo.

NICK

Publishing content that draws eyeballs or causes controversy. Like Gawker outing Peter Thiel--

FREEZE.

AJ (V.O.)  
Peter Thiel never forgot it.

**PETER THIEL - VARIOUS**

Thiel doing a TED talk. Speaking at the 2016 Republican convention. Sitting beside Donald Trump at the White House.

AJ (V.O.)  
After being outed by Nick and Gawker in 2007, the billionaire founder of PayPal, angel investor of Facebook, and Trump surrogate made it his personal mission to destroy Nick, the site, and by proxy, me, by any means necessary.

**WALL STREET JOURNAL**

*"Gawker Goes Bankrupt, Heads To Auction Block"*

AJ (V.O.)  
In June, Gawker and Nick both filed for Chapter 11.

**CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

*"Univision Buys Gawker For \$135 Million"*

AJ (V.O.)  
In August, Gawker Media was bought at auction by Univision who then shuttered Gawker, castrated every other blog's editorial side, and changed the company's name to the Gizmodo Media Group.

**BUSINESS INSIDER**

*"Gizmodo Media, Formerly Gawker Media, Struggles Under Univision Banner"*

AJ (V.O.)  
It hasn't been going well.

**INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY**

AJ has his laptop open. He sips coffee.

AJ (V.O.)  
The same can be said for me.

AJ practically chokes on his coffee.

LAPTOP: *A court order hold is on your account for \$230,200,000.00.*

AJ (V.O.)  
Seriously. This happened. You see Nick and Gawker had filed for bankruptcy while 'ol Mr. Negative Net Worth here, didn't.

AJ stares at the screen in slack-jawed astonishment.

AJ (V.O.)  
I figured what's the point in paying to file for bankruptcy when I have nothing. What are they gonna do? Repossess my rice cooker?

**INT. AJ'S STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY**

It's a sad looking place. AJ watches Repo Men carry out a set of golf clubs, a box of books, and a rice cooker.

AJ (V.O.)  
Actually, that's exactly what they did. With both Gawker and Nick bankrupt, the damages fell squarely on me. And they wanted *everything*.

The door shuts. AJ is alone in his now empty apartment.

AJ (V.O.)  
With my back to the wall, I got a personal attorney who worked out a deal to make it all go away.

**INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY**

AJ is seated at a table, defeated. A small stack of paperwork is dropped down in front of him by AJ's ATTORNEY.

AJ'S ATTORNEY

It breaks down like this: your damages will be forgiven in exchange for you officially waiving your right to appeal the verdict against Hogan and ever bringing any sort of legal action relating to the case against Thiel.

AJ

So all of it, all the money I owe, will go away?

AJ'S ATTORNEY

Yes.

AJ sighs, nods. He picks up the pen.

AJ'S ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

But AJ, there's one more thing.  
(off AJ's look)  
You'll also be surrendering the copyright to any and all past, present or future properties relating to the trial.

AJ

Meaning?

AJ'S ATTORNEY

You can never publicly write or speak about your experiences relating to the case or trial.

AJ hadn't considered this. He stares at the stack of paper.

AJ'S ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

I knew that was gonna be tough for you. But they're not budging on it.

His attorney softens, sits down beside him.

AJ'S ATTORNEY.

You're still young. You've got your whole life ahead of you and quite frankly, this is the best deal you're going to get. Take it.

AJ holds the pen against the dotted line. He closes his eyes, accepting his fate. A beat passes. He opens them, looks up.

AJ

Tell them I said they can both go fuck themselves.

AJ drops the pen on the table, rises, walks out the door.

AJ (V.O.)  
I wouldn't say this story has a  
happy ending, but some of us did  
fare better than others...

**INT. HUFFINGTON POST OFFICES - DAY**

Ugly fluorescent lighting. Endless lines of cubicles. Find Tommy, sitting at his desk.

AJ (V.O.)  
Tommy is now the Senior Enterprises  
Editor at the Huffington Post.

His phone rings. He reaches for it, knocks over his coffee mug, spilling its contents onto his lap.

**INT. GIZMODO MEDIA GROUP OFFICES - DAY**

It's the old Gawker Media offices, but with a slightly tweaked decor. Emma monitors traffic on her computer. Her laser focus on the numbers is eerily reminiscent of AJ.

AJ (V.O.)  
Emma continued to run Jezebel for  
another few years before departing  
the company for good in the summer  
of 2017.

**INT. BARNES & NOBLE - DAY**

Cat signs copies of a book for a line of young women who look like miniature clones of her.

AJ (V.O.)  
Cat wrote a memoir about being a  
drug-fueled trainwreck. It was an  
instant New York Times bestseller.

The book's cover: *How To Murder Your Life by Cat Marnell*

**INT. CAFE - SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE - DAY**

Nick sips a cappuccino, types on a laptop.

AJ (V.O.)

And Nick moved back to Europe to work on some messaging-startup or something. I don't really know the details because we no longer speak.

### **EXT. MADISON AVENUE - GOLDEN HOUR**

Yellow taxis and MTA busses whoosh past. AJ swaggers down the sidewalk, finally at peace with himself.

AJ (V.O.)

There are facts and there are truths. Facts are indisputable.

AJ continues on, heading toward downtown. We PAN UP to the skyline of lower Manhattan as the sun disappears behind it.

AJ (V.O.)

While truths... are more like beliefs. And the truth is that the Hogan verdict was bullshit. Not because it put me in 233 million in the hole.

### **NEW YORK TIMES**

*"Felony Charges Brought Against Journalists Arrested at Inauguration Protests"*

AJ (V.O.)

But because of what it means for the future of a free press.

### **NEWSWEEK**

*"How A Billionaire Murdered Gothamist and DNAInfo"*

AJ (V.O.)

Thiel essentially gave the one percent a blueprint for how to destroy a news outlet when they don't like what it has to say. And Gawker was the canary in the American press-hating coal mine.

### **FINANCIAL TIMES**

*"Former Hogan Attorney Representing Trump In Libel Case"*

AJ (V.O.)  
 Sure, it was a rag verses an ex-pro  
 wrestler this time, but what about  
 the next time?

**TRUMP RALLY FOOTAGE - VARIOUS**

Angry supporters shout insults at the press area.

AJ (V.O.)  
 I guess I got what I deserved.  
 During my time at Deadspin and  
 Gawker, I did some bad things.  
 Horrible things, really. And the  
 truth is, I know I made the world a  
 darker, crueller place.

BLACK OUT.

OVER BLACK.

AJ (V.O.)  
 But at Gawker Media's peak, we were  
 doing 912 million page views a  
 year. So odds are, you had a hand  
 in it too.

DISSOLVE TO:

**LAPTOP SCREEN**

*"So odds are, you had a hand in it too."*

The cursor blinks at the end of AJ's final sentence.

REVERSE TO:

**AJ - PRESENT DAY**

Contemplating his words on the screen. He's now back in his  
 twin bed in his childhood bedroom, laptop perched on his lap.

His eyes shift up from the screen so that he's now looking  
 right at us. After a beat passes, he slams his laptop shut.

BLACK OUT.

**THE END**

