

JUST THE FACTS

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

Based on a true story

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"There are no facts, only interpretations."

- Friedrich Nietzsche

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. Doughy. 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
 sleazy 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, heavyset, 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

