

YOUNG ROCK

by

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FADE IN:

INT. NEWS TV STUDIO - DAY - **YEAR 2032**

Sitting at an anchor desk, OPRAH WINFREY addresses CAMERA.

OPRAH

Well, the primaries are finally over and the nominees for the 2032 Presidential race are set. And one name... you may have heard before.

Oprah turns and addresses another CAMERA, switching angles.

OPRAH

You know him as professional wrestler, turned movie star, turned media mogul. And, come November, you *might* just know him, as President of the United States.

CUT TO: a campaign poster. It's DWAYNE JOHNSON, looking very presidential. The slogan reads, 'Dwayne Johnson For President 2032: Just Hang On, I'm Coming'.

OPRAH (V.O.)

Candidate Dwayne Johnson has wasted no time getting his campaign rolling, starting with his 'No Muss, No Fuss' bus tour...

CUT TO:

'NO MUSS, NO FUSS' TOUR - MONTAGE - (**B-ROLL FOOTAGE**)

--A bright yellow bus with the words 'No Muss, No Fuss' emblazoned across the side rolls down a highway.

OPRAH (V.O.)

...traveling cross-country to talk to American voters face to face.

--Dwayne shaking hands with people in a diner. Someone hands him a baby. He looks thrown for a moment, then smiles.

--Holding court while getting his head shaved in a barber's chair. Whatever he said makes everyone BUST UP LAUGHING.

--At a farm, picking up a chicken with two hands, making an impressed face.

DWAYNE

Weighs about as much as Kevin Hart!

OPRAH (V.O.)

But that level of fame also has its
downside.

INSERT SHOTS: of various news headlines: "Is Candidate Dwayne Johnson Out of Touch?" / "Will the Rock put Interests of U.S. Above Chinese Box Office?" / "Too Fast, Too Furious, Too Famous to be President?"

OPRAH (V.O.)

Dwayne Johnson's success is being
used against him by his critics.
They say he's lived the cushy
Hollywood life for so long, he
can't relate to the struggle of the
average American...

EXT. BEAUTIFUL HOUSE - DAY

In DOCU-SERIES STYLE FOOTAGE, we see Oprah knock on the front door, camera crew behind her.

OPRAH (V.O.)

...but of course, Candidate Johnson
has something to say about that.

Dwayne opens the door.

DWAYNE

Welcome! Come in, come in.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY (**DOCU-SERIES STYLE FOOTAGE**)

Dwayne and Oprah walk down the hall, chatting and laughing.

OPRAH (V.O.)

He asked to sit down for a candid,
raw, "no holds barred" interview to
set the record straight.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - **YEAR 2032**

Oprah and Dwayne (wearing a blue and red striped tie, white dress shirt with sleeves "casually" rolled up) sit in plushy armchairs in front of a fire, literal "fireside chat" style.

DWAYNE

I hear all the noise, Oprah: I'm
out of touch, I'm a diva, I've got
soft rich man hands... nothing
could be further from the truth.
(holds out hands to Oprah)
Feel these bad boys.

Oprah touches his palms.

OPRAH

Wow, lotta callouses.

DWAYNE

Yes. I've had to work hard for everything. I have an amazing life but I certainly wasn't born into it. And I want to tell people that story, my real story.

OPRAH

Do you think people know the real you?

DWAYNE

No. They know my public persona, but they don't know *me*. Little things, like the fact that I cried during "Toy Story 8". Or every time I open a refrigerator I sing--

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Dwayne opens the refrigerator door. As he gazes inside:

DWAYNE

(softly singing)

Yummy, yummy, yummy, I got love in my tummy...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - BACK TO SCENE

Dwayne and Oprah are as we left them.

DWAYNE

And bigger things about how I got to where I am today. It's been a wild journey but I can honestly say, despite all the trappings of fame, I'm one of the most authentic people you'll ever meet. Because I know what it feels like to not be authentic.

OPRAH

Because of your days as an actor.

DWAYNE

No. Because of the way I grew up. What I learned from my dad--

OPRAH

Your dad being Rocky Johnson, the professional wrestler.

DWAYNE

That's right. When I was a kid, I watched him do this thing all the wrestlers did, called "working the gimmick". They would sell the reality of their personas in and out of the ring.

OPRAH

So they put on a show.

DWAYNE

Exactly. They always said: it doesn't matter if it's real, as long as it feels real...

Off this, we...

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

"Get Down On It" by Kool & The Gang PLAYS as a WRESTLER (who looks like it could be Dwayne Johnson in his 20s) exits the arena. He's dressed in a black leather jacket, black shirt open, gold necklaces, gold rings, gold watch... and has a smile that would put a baby in your sister.

He greets excited fans pressed against metal barricades that form a walkway. They've clearly been waiting for him.

EXCITED FANS

Oh my god!!/There he is!/Sign my chest?!!

The Wrestler signs autographs, poses for photos, then gets in a beautiful black Lincoln Continental and drives off.

INT. LINCOLN CONTINENTAL/EXT. HAWAII - NIGHT

The SONG continues over SHOTS of the Wrestler driving through the streets of Hawaii at night. Over this our TITLE CARD:

YOUNG ROCK

EXT. THE ISLAND BREEZE MOTEL - A SHORT TIME LATER

The Continental pulls into the parking lot of a dumpy motel. The Wrestler walks up to the door of one of the rooms.

What's he doing at this place? Is he meeting a lady? Is there a party? He unlocks a door and opens it...

INT. THE ISLAND BREEZE MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

...REVEALING a 10-year-old boy sitting in front of a TV, watching the Wrestler give a pre-taped, post-fight interview.

BOY

Dad!

WRESTLER

(smiles)

Hey, Dwayne.

As the boy runs over to give his Dad a hug...

Chyron: "Hawaii, 1982".

We realize the boy is 10-YEAR-OLD DWAYNE (DEWEY) JOHNSON and the Wrestler is his dad, ROCKY JOHNSON.

DEWEY

You're still on TV! Did that guy you fought go to the hospital? Are you sore from that choke slam?? Do you need some Ben-gay??

ROCKY

You're gonna need some Ben-gay...!

Rocky picks him up and play-body slams him into the couch. Dewey laughs, it's clear he idolizes his father.

They continue to play-wrestle as ATA enters from the bedroom with a notepad and pen.

ATA

(to Dwayne)

Nice sleeper hold, honey.

(to Rocky)

Hey, babe.

Rocky gives her a kiss on the cheek.

ROCKY

Hey, babe, how's the song coming?

ATA

(re: notepad)

Good, tell me what you think.

(singing, to the tune of

"Physical")

I'm here ev-ery day!

(MORE)

ATA (cont'd)

Ev-ery night!

I'm telling you, ev-ery day!

Every day turns into night!

Hmm hmm something something...

(then, spoken)

I don't have those last words yet.

Rocky and Dewey just stare blankly at her.

DEWEY

It sounds like that Olivia Newton-John song, "Physical".

ATA

Yeah, I love that song, so I'm writing my lyrics to that music, then I'll change the music.

ROCKY

(beat)

Sounds good. Who's hungry?

DEWEY

Me!!

ROCKY

Let's go to your grandma's so I can get paid, then I'll take you both out to dinner.

Excited, Dewey puts on his shoes. Rocky looks around.

ROCKY

I wish you'd let me check us into a nice hotel.

ATA

What? This place is great! Dewey and I found free shower caps in the bathroom, we put them over our faces and played astronauts.

DEWEY

We had to take breaks because it was hard to breathe!

Dewey runs out. Ata turns to Rocky.

ATA

We're fine. We need to save money.

ROCKY

No we don't, babe, you should've seen the crowd tonight!

(MORE)

ROCKY (cont'd)

It's about to break wide open for
me, I can feel it.

She smiles. Rocky struts out as Ata goes to turn off the TV.

ON THE TV: Rocky's post-match interview is over and the
WRESTLING ANNOUNCER is talking to CAMERA.

ANNOUNCER (FROM TV)

...an amazing night of wrestling,
folks. Stay tuned for an interview
with Jerry Lawler...

Behind the Announcer, we see Rocky laughing and signing
autographs for a group of female fans.

Ata's smile falls. A beat, then she turns off the TV.

EXT./ESTAB. - LIA'S OFFICE/APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

A nondescript, fairly worn down two-story building.

INT. LIA'S OFFICE/APARTMENT #1602 - SAME

LIA MAIVIA opens the door to Rocky, Ata and Dewey.

LIA

Eyyy, get your buns in here!

DEWEY

Hi, grandma!

They all enter, hugging and AD-LIBBING hellos. They turn and collectively RECOIL and REACT at the sight of Lia's white poodle, Francine, sprawled out on the couch (we only shoot the dog from behind, so we can't see what they see).

DEWEY

What's wrong with Francine again?

LIA

It's a belly tumor. Don't worry,
it's benign.

ROCKY

Doesn't look like it.

There are a FEW OTHER WRESTLERS there, drinking beers,
hanging out, and also giving the dog a very wide berth.

ROCKY

Hey, boys! Dewey, go shake
everyone's hand. This is--

DEWEY
The Junkyard Dog!

Dewey runs up to the JUNKYARD DOG and shakes his hand.

JUNKYARD DOG
You can call me Sylvester, little
man.

DEWEY
(disappointed)
Do I have to?

JUNKYARD DOG
(confused)
No.

Dewey sees TWO LARGE, SCRUFFY LOOKING GUYS WITH BIG HAIR.
Dewey's eyes widen, he pulls at his dad's shirt.

DEWEY
Dad! It's the Wild Samoans!
They're in a feud with you, we
gotta get outta here--

ROCKY
Hey hey, it's okay, son, they're
still your cousins --

DEWEY
That makes it worse! Betrayal!

ROCKY
And we're in a truce.
(pointedly)
Isn't that right Afa? Sika?

Rocky looks at them both, like "play along".

AFA ANOA'I
Uh, that's right, Dewey. We called
a beer-drinking truce.

ROCKY
Exactly. A three beer--

SIKA ANOA'I
Six.

ROCKY
--a six beer truce is in effect.

Satisfied but still wary, Dewey shakes their hands. Lia
hands Rocky an envelope of cash.

ROCKY

Great house tonight. You're promoting the hell out of these matches.

LIA

Polynesian Pacific Pro Wrestling, baby. Tell your friends.

A HEAVY KNOCK on the door makes everyone jump. Lia opens it, revealing the 7'4" ANDRE THE GIANT, holding a case of wine.

LIA

Andre!

ANDRE THE GIANT

Bonjour.

He bends down to get under the doorway and enter.

ANDRE THE GIANT

Great show tonight--
(sees the dog)
JESUS! *Répugnant.*

Andre takes a step back as Francine STRETCHES ON THE COUCH. They all greet Andre. Junkyard Dog turns to Dewey, concerned.

JUNKYARD DOG

Do you not like my name, or...?

Lia hands Andre his cash envelope.

ANDRE THE GIANT

Merci. Anyone want to play cards?

Everyone (including Rocky) AD-LIBS yes. He turns to Ata.

ROCKY

You don't mind if we order food here, right babe?

Ata looks frustrated.

DEWEY

Yeah Mom, I wanna hang with the guys!

ROCKY

We'll go for ice cream after.

Seeing her son's excitement, Ata relents.

ATA

Sure.

ANDRE THE GIANT

You wanna play *Belote* or *Mouche*?

Everyone groans.

ROCKY

Dude, come on. No French crap.
We're playing poker.

DEWEY

Can I play??

ROCKY

No Dewey, it's just for the adults.

DEWEY

Can I get you beers while you play?

The guys all nod, "yeah, why not". Andre hands Dewey a bottle of red wine.

ANDRE THE GIANT

You know how to use a corkscrew?

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER. Lia, Rocky, Andre, Junkyard Dog and Afa sit at a card table, mid-hand. Dewey lies on the floor, drawing on some notebook paper, listening to the adults talk and loving it (we don't see what he's drawing yet).

The CAMERA ROTATES AROUND THE TABLE for their conversation:

JUNKYARD DOG

I worked a match in Detroit with Bobby Riggs. Ton of talent, terrible body.

ANDRE THE GIANT

He looks like a loaf of bread.

LIA

He's gotta work the gimmick.

AFA ANOA'I

Exactly. You can have all the skill in the world...

ROCKY

...but if the audience doesn't buy your look, you'll never get over.

ANGLE ON: The couch, where Ata sits with Sika, snacking on pistachios. They sit as far away from Francine as they can.

ATA

How's your girlfriend doing?

SIKA ANOA'I

Not so great. She stabbed me.

(then)

How's your music coming?

ATA

Pretty good. I'm blending the melodies of Olivia Newton-John with the honesty of Fleetwood Mac, but more danceable and less sad.

SIKA ANOA'I

(emotional)

My girlfriend would love that.

As Ata goes to pop a pistachio in her mouth, Francine BARKS.

Keeping eye-contact with Sika to avoid looking at Francine, she reaches across the couch and sets down a nut for the dog.

AFA ANOA'I (O.S.)

Dammit!

BACK ON: the game. Afa throws down his cards, cleaned out.

AFA ANOA'I

I wish we had played *Mouche*!

ANDRE THE GIANT

(booming laugh)

With Lia running things you'll have plenty more where that came from!

LIA

I hope so! I've come a long way from when Peter first took me to his matches. I mean, I used to think wrestling was *real*...

INT. ARENA - NIGHT - FLASHBACK - 1950'S

PETER MAIVIA wrestles in the ring. He gets his head smashed into the turnbuckle by his opponent and starts bleeding.

Suddenly, we see a woman in a dress with a flower in her hair climb into the ring. It's YOUNGER LIA. She takes off her shoe, and tries to beat her husband's opponent with it.

YOUNGER LIA
I'll kill you!!

PETER
Lia! Lia!

As Peter tries to stop Lia from attacking his opponent...

INT. LIA'S OFFICE/APARTMENT - BACK TO PRESENT

They all LAUGH at Lia's story, when:

DEWEY
Wrestling isn't real??

Everyone looks down at Dewey on the floor, caught.

ROCKY
Uh, of course wrestling is real!
Your grandma was just...

LIA
Joking, ha ha ha! Funny grandma...

Everyone AD-LIBS how wrestling is real, etc. Dewey looks at them, skeptical.

DEWEY
Grandma, you just said, "I used to
think wrestling was real".

JUNKYARD DOG
Damn kid's like a tape recorder.

ANDRE THE GIANT
Let me handle this.

Andre pushes back from the table and stands. He walks over to Dewey and picks him up by his shoulder, lifting him 7 plus feet up in the air so they're eye-to-eye.

ANDRE THE GIANT
Does this feel real?
(Dewey nods)
Then it's real. Problem solved.

Andre sets Dewey back down, his faith in wrestling restored.

LIA
Uh, alright, game over I think.

As the game breaks up, the guys talk among themselves...

AFA ANOA'I
We're gonna go hit a couple bars.

ROCKY
Count me in.

ANDRE THE GIANT
You promised the kid ice cream.

ROCKY
Oh yeah, right-right.

He turns to Ata and Dewey - we think he's going to say it's time for ice cream, but instead:

ROCKY
Slight change of plans. I'm gonna go with the guys-- to the gym.

ATA
(skeptical)
The gym. At this time of night.

ROCKY
Yeah, they're keeping it open late for us.

ATA
You're wearing crocodile loafers.

ROCKY
Uh, I got my gym stuff in the car.

DEWEY
Can I go to the gym too??

ROCKY
No, it's Night Gym. It's just for the adults.

Ata looks furious as Rocky puts a hand on Dewey's shoulder.

ROCKY
I promise I'll take you for pancakes tomorrow, okay? I'll even let you order coffee.

Rocky hugs Dewey, who gives him a small smile.

ROCKY
That's my boy. Love you.

Rocky and the guys exit. Disappointed Dewey turns to his mom.

DEWEY

Why doesn't Dad let me do anything
with him?

A beat... which way is Ata going to take this? She smiles.

ATA

Night gym just has different rules,
baby. You wouldn't like it.
There's an old man working there
who tickles you while you lift.

DEWEY

(gasps)
That's not safe.

ATA

And he smells like cheese.
(Dewey laughs)
Come on, I'll take you for ice
cream.

LIA

Good idea, let's all go!

DEWEY

Okay!

The two women exchange a quick glance as they follow Dewey
who runs to the door. He stops and gestures to the dog.

DEWEY

Oh wait, what about Francine?

LIA

She's fine, she's asleep.

DEWEY

But her eyes are open.

LIA

The tumor pushes them open, that's
how she sleeps.

Dewey nods and they exit, passing his drawing on the floor.
CAMERA TILTS DOWN and we see it for the first time: a picture
of him and his dad as a WRESTLING TAG-TEAM DUO.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOINT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - **YEAR 2032**

Oprah and Dwayne continue their fireside chat. Oprah is clearly moved by what she's just heard.

OPRAH

Sounds like your mom knew that sometimes there are bad lies and sometimes there are good ones.

DWAYNE

She was always looking out for me. She knew my dad was my hero and that was more important to her than telling me a truth I wasn't ready to hear.

OPRAH

(knowing)

It didn't matter if it was real, as long as it felt real.

(Dwayne nods)

Was it hard growing up in a family where, for whatever reason, people weren't being real all the time?

DWAYNE

It definitely affected me. I struggled with how to be authentic for a long time. I'd bought into the idea of working the gimmick, putting on a show--

A FRAZZLED LOOKING WOMAN runs into the room.

FRAZZLED WOMAN

Um, Dwayne? I don't know if we should be going down this road--

DWAYNE

Roxanne, it's fine.

(then, to Oprah)

Of course my PR team doesn't want me talking about this stuff. They'd prefer the story we've all heard before: grew up with great core values, always did the right thing, can't tell a lie, whatever.

Dwayne makes the jerk-off gesture. Roxanne looks like she's about to have a heart attack and tries to block the camera.

ROXANNE

Candidate Johnson, stop!

OPRAH

(to someone O.S.)

Can we get this Roxanne outta here?

DWAYNE

I told you I was gonna get real today, Roxanne. And the real is, I did some bad stuff as a kid--

ROXANNE

Oh my god.

DWAYNE

--I knew what it felt like to want what I couldn't have...

TRANSITION TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

In a SERIES OF QUICK CUTS we see a hand grabbing shirts, pants, a jacket... and stuffing them all into backpack. REVEAL it's 15-YEAR-OLD DWAYNE JOHNSON, now 6'1" 200-pounds and sporting a mustache.

Chyron: "Bethlehem, PA, 1987".

Dwayne puts the backpack on and heads for the exit. A SALESPERSON stops him.

SALESPERSON

Need any help finding anything?

DWAYNE

Nah, nothing's really catching my eye. Thanks though.

The Salesperson smiles and moves off. Dwayne glides towards the exit, smoothly snagging a pair of Timberland boots off a display shelf.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FIRESIDE CHAT - **YEAR 2032**

Dwayne sits across from a judgmental Oprah.

DWAYNE

Honestly, who among us hasn't done a little five-finger boost?

OPRAH

I haven't.

We CUT BACK AND FORTH between Dwayne and Oprah just staring at each other.

INT. FREEDOM HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - THE NEXT MORNING - 1987

"Push It" by Salt-N-Pepa PLAYS over a BEAUTY SHOT of Dwayne strutting down the hallway in his "new" gear: leather jacket, shiny shirt, designer jeans, Timbos. All the kids notice him as he passes. CUT TO: a FOLLOW SHOT and we see the back of his jacket has a large Woody Woodpecker patch on it.

INT. CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dwayne enters and takes a seat next to a PRETTY GIRL. She gives him and his outfit the up and down.

PRETTY GIRL

You must be rich.

DWAYNE

(smiles)

Yeah.

INT. CAFETERIA - LATER

Lunch is in full swing. Dwayne sits at a table with his friend, GABE (15, Greek), who eats chicken.

GABE

All you said was 'yeah?'

DWAYNE

Gabe, you're missing the point. Now that I look rich, I'm finally getting attention from girls. Like Karen from Algebra class.

GABE

Big Hair Karen?

DWAYNE

No, Fine Ass Karen. She looked me up and down like you did with that rotisserie chicken.

Gabe laughs as Dwayne takes off his jacket, revealing a BIG BLUE INK STAIN on the back of his shirt.

GABE

You take a nap on some grapes?

Dwayne realizes, quickly puts the jacket back on.

DWAYNE

I couldn't get the security tag thing off so I banged it with a rock and all this ink exploded out.

GABE

Amateur move. You gotta hook it to a car battery, zap it off.

DWAYNE

Great, anyway, best part is Karen invited me to a party tonight.

GABE

Life is good, huh?

DWAYNE

It is.

GABE

(puts down chicken leg)
Well it's not gonna last.

DWAYNE

Come on, man.

GABE

Fine Ass Karen aside, the reason girls haven't been giving you the time of day isn't 'cause you look poor. It's 'cause you look like an undercover cop. Like Johnny Depp in "21 Jump Street."

DWAYNE

What? No one thinks that.

GABE

Dude, everyone thinks that.

Dwayne looks around the cafeteria: it's true. Everyone is looking at him, whispering. The same looks he was getting walking down the hallway earlier, but now we know why.

DWAYNE

I'm 15!

GABE

You have a full mustache and you're bigger than a dad. You look like a Samoan Mario Brother.

DWAYNE

Whatever, none of that matters now
that I got a girl into me.

GABE

Yeah, but that girl thinks you're
rich and you're not...

INT. BUS - LATER

Dwayne rides the bus as we hear Gabe finish his thought.

GABE (V.O.)

...you ain't fooling anybody riding
the bus.

Dwayne pulls the cord and stands up.

EXT. STREET/SUNRISE APARTMENTS - CONTINUOUS

He walks around the side of an apartment building. A long
beat, then he returns back in his "regular" clothes, shoving
his new clothes in his backpack. He walks up the steps.

INT. APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Dwayne enters. The apartment is well-maintained but dated.
(On a wall is a framed album cover featuring Ata with 80's
hair and headband in an Olivia Newton-John type pose. The
album is called "Night Vision" and the font looks like it was
made by the scratch of a tiger.)

ATA (O.S.)

Hey, baby, how was school?

Ata enters in a cleaning uniform that says "Maids Inc."

DWAYNE

Why does dad have to have our car?

ATA

(we've been through this)
Because he needs it. He's driving
hundreds of miles, city-to-city,
wrestling around the territory.

DWAYNE

But we need it too, Mom. You're
cleaning houses, I'm working at El
Greco Pizza after school and we
both have to take the bus.

ATA

What's wrong with taking the bus?
There was a man sitting across from
me playing the flute yesterday and
it was beautiful.

DWAYNE

(petulant)

Karen will think I'm poor if she
sees me riding the bus.

ATA

Who's Karen?

DWAYNE

Can't we just get another car?
Isn't Dad sending us money?

ATA

He sends us money but not second
car money.

DWAYNE

(thinking, then)

Well, I have some money saved, I
can get one.

ATA

How much money?

DWAYNE

\$103.

ATA

Dewey, you won't be able to get a
car for that. But you know what
you could do?

DWAYNE

A rental car could work I guess...

ATA

No. You could help us with
groceries and bills.

DWAYNE

Karen doesn't care about that
stuff!

ATA

Who's Karen??

DWAYNE

She's a pretty girl I like!

ATA

Wha-- since when does "a Karen" matter?! You need to check your priorities.

DWAYNE

Oh are we telling each other what matters now? Fine, I don't think we need a subscription to National Geographic!

ATA

It's classy for when we have guests!

(then)

You know what, I don't have time for this, I'll be late for work.

Disappointed, Ata exits. Off Dwayne's frustration...

INT. EL GRECO PIZZA - LATER

Dwayne and Gabe, both in uniforms, work the counter. Dwayne is on the phone, taking an order.

DWAYNE

Two larges with the works, got it. Hey, while I have you, do you happen to be selling your car?

Gabe looks on, shaking his head. Dwayne hangs up.

GABE

Man, have some respect for this pizza place.

DWAYNE

Why?

Gabe is stumped.

DWAYNE

I'm desperate, man, I've called every ad in the paper. Nobody's selling their car for 103 bucks.

GABE

You're not bargaining right. Start at a dollar and meet in the middle.

VOICE (O.S.)

You need a car?

REVEAL a HOMELESS LOOKING MAN (BILLY) seated at a table in corner, eating a huge slice of pizza (way too big for the cheap paper plate it's on).

BILLY

I got a car for sale.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Dwayne and Billy look at a beat-up '72 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme.

BILLY

Yep, this baby is all hood. Takes up two-thirds of the car.

DWAYNE

I'll give you a dollar for it.

BILLY

I overheard you say you had \$103. Just give me that.

DWAYNE

Deal.

Dwayne pulls out his wallet and hands over the cash to Billy and he tosses Dwayne the keys.

BILLY

Congratulations, kid.

(then, re: keychain)

Oh and FYI, that other key on the chain is to my old apartment. Do not go there unless you want to meet a woman who will scream at you to get a job.

EXT. STREET/INT. CUTLASS - LATER

Dwayne beams, cruising down the street in his new car. Gabe sits shotgun, messing with the radio, which is all static.

DWAYNE

Man, this ride is smooth.

(then, pointed)

I said this ride is smooth. Be supportive, bro.

GABE

Yeah, man, it's smooth. Just trying to get us some tunes. This radio can only pull one station.

DWAYNE

Who cares, blast it.

Gabe cranks up the volume.

DEEP VOICE (ON RADIO)

This is AM 580 The News. In world events, Libyan forces have been driven out of Chad...

CUT TO OUTSIDE THE CAR. Dwayne and Gabe look hard as hell, cruising down the street, with 'AM 580 THE NEWS' echoing out of the open windows. They stop at a red. Dwayne notices a couple girls on the sidewalk, he says 'sup' to them, but all they can hear is:

DEEP VOICE (ON RADIO)

...the Army of Chad attacked Libyan forces in the northern village of Aouzou and routed them...

Off the girls' puzzled look, BACK INSIDE THE CAR as the light turns and they drive off. Gabe turns down the radio a bit.

GABE

So what's our plan for tonight?

DWAYNE

Grab some beers and hit that west side party Karen invited me to.

Unbeknownst to them, a groggy SECOND HOMELESS LOOKING MAN sits up in the backseat, looking confused.

GABE

Every place around here ID's, how we gonna get beer?

DWAYNE

I guess we can drive to that one store in the next county where that dude is blind--

The Man leans forward.

MAN

Where we heading?

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The car screeches to the curb and Dwayne and Gabe jump out.

DWAYNE

Who the hell are you?!

WAFFLE

I'm Waffle. Where's Billy?

GABE

Billy sold my boy this car.

WAFFLE

(shakes head)

Billy's always selling things
Waffle is in.

DWAYNE

I'm sure that's true hey can you
get outta the car?

WAFFLE

Allow me to present a second
option. Heard you're going to a
party on the west side. What if
you let me hitch a ride with you?
My buddy Bernard's townhouse is
near there.

GABE

No way, dude, get out.

WAFFLE

I also heard you say you needed to
buy some beer.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE PARKING LOT/INT. CUTLASS - LATER

Waffle exits with a case of beer and hops in the car.

WAFFLE

Got us some Slim Jims!

DWAYNE

Yesss, my mom loves those. She
cuts 'em up, puts 'em in eggs...

WAFFLE

Oh you mean a Sunny Side Slim?
Best.

They drive off as Waffle hands them the jerky.

GABE

No, thanks. I don't think food
should be in the shape of a stick.

Waffle looks insulted. Dwayne holds up a hand to calm him.

DWAYNE

Don't engage with him, Waffle.
That's what he wants.

Gabe looks pissy as Waffle settles back in his seat. He lights a cigarette and EXHALES, satisfied.

DWAYNE

Yo man, no smoking in my new ride.

WAFFLE

My bad. But just so you know, the previous owner did not have that same rule. Smoked a lot of things back here.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - LATER

Music blasts from a ranch house, teenagers are everywhere. The Cutlass parks down the street and they all get out.

GABE

Dew, I gotta find the can, I'll see you in there.

Gabe grabs the beer and heads inside.

WAFFLE

Didn't even say goodbye.

Dwayne opens the trunk, pulls out his backpack, and starts taking out his stolen clothes, including the shirt with the blue ink stain. Waffle notices.

WAFFLE

Five-finger boost, huh? I've been there, man.

DWAYNE

No offense, Waffle, but me and you are not the same.

WAFFLE

I was once a poor kid trying to front and impress people who don't matter.

DWAYNE

You gotta see this girl. Trust me. She matters.

WAFFLE

But does she really *matter*?

DWAYNE

(thinks, then)

I mean, yeah... just trying to look sexy for her...

WAFFLE

Take this for what it's worth, but if I was going to do my life over again - and believe me I would - I'd have gotten my priorities correct and cared more about the people who cared about me.

This gives Dwayne pause. He looks down at the ink-stained shirt in his hands, thinking...

EXT. BUS STOP - LATER

Ata waits for the bus. After a beat, the Cutlass rolls up. Dwayne calls through the window:

DWAYNE

Need a ride?

ATA

Dewey? What on earth--

DWAYNE

Just get in, I'll explain.

Confused, she does. Waffle leans forward from the backseat.

WAFFLE

Hey Mama, I'm Waffle.

ATA

Hello, Waffle. Whose car is this?

DWAYNE

It's ours. Mine and yours. Look at what \$103 can buy.

Ata looks around, skeptical. Dwayne tries to sell it.

DWAYNE

It has seatbelts... and a hole where a cigarette lighter once was... and it gets the news, you love the news... okay, maybe I paid too much.

She laughs.

DWAYNE

I'm sorry about earlier.

ATA

It's okay. I'm glad you got the car you needed.

DWAYNE

I don't need this car. There's a lot of things that we need and I'm gonna start helping with that.

They share a warm smile.

DWAYNE

But I promise you this: one day I'm gonna get you a Mercedes.

ATA

(smiles, humoring him)
Forrest green?

DWAYNE

All the colors. One for every day of the week.

WAFFLE

What if there are more colors than days of the week?

ATA

I like you, Waffle.

They drive off.

EXT. SUNRISE APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

The Cutlass pulls up outside. Ata exits the car. Dwayne turns to Waffle.

DWAYNE

Hey man, I appreciate that advice you gave me.

WAFFLE

No problem, kid. I can tell how much your mom and you love each other. I know you're gonna do all those things for her one day. As long as you keep doing one thing...

Dwayne leans in, all ears.

WAFFLE

...all you gotta do is--

Waffle's wisdom is cut off by a DEATH GURGLE. He slumps over.

DWAYNE

All I gotta do is what, Waffle?

(beat)

Waffle?

EXT. DAIRY QUEEN PARKING LOT - LATER

Dwayne is at a payphone, the receiver to his ear. We see the Cutlass parked in the background.

OPERATOR (THROUGH PHONE)

911, what's your emergency?

DWAYNE

Uh, yeah, there's a dead guy named Waffle in a Cutlass.

OPERATOR (THROUGH PHONE)

Sir, where are you--

He hangs up, then quickly speed-walks away.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEINT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - **YEAR 2032**

Oprah and Dwayne continue their fireside chat.

DWAYNE

Waffle showed me it can't all be about clothes and cars and working the gimmick. Sometimes you have to be real and take care of the things that truly matter.

OPRAH

(gets emotional)

Gosh I... wasn't expecting to care about Waffle so much.

DWAYNE

Yeah, that's what Waffle does. I knew him for 25 minutes, changed my whole life.

OPRAH

And you kept the promise you made to your mom. I think we have a picture of what she's driving now.

INSERT PHOTO: of a smiling Ata sitting in the driver's seat of a HUGE ASS BLINGED-OUT 2032 VERSION OF A MERCEDES G-WAGON.

DWAYNE

(good-natured)

Sometimes it is about the cars.

(then)

My critics will look at that and think, oh he's rich, he's out of touch. But really, what's more relatable than working your ass off to take care of your family? Who wouldn't do that if they could?

OPRAH

So you were a bad kid turned good?

DWAYNE

Ehhh... it's complicated. I think we're all formed by where we come from. And we either find our way out of that, or we don't.

OPRAH

Looking back, was there a moment
you remember that was the beginning
of you finding yourself?

DWAYNE

(thinks)

When I first started playing
football at the University of
Miami. I was recruited and went
there on a full scholarship... that
was a crazy time. It was 1991 and
'The U' wasn't just a football
team, it was a movement...

REAL DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE - U OF MIAMI FOOTBALL - 1980'S/90'S

In REAL VIDEO FOOTAGE we see the following montage:

--Head Coaches Howard Schnellenberger (1983), Jimmy Johnson
(1987), Dennis Erickson (1989) are each carried off the field
on the shoulders of Miami Football Players.

DWAYNE (V.O.)

3 National Titles under 3 different
head coaches in the 80's...

--Jimmy Johnson and the team, in suits, hand Ronald Reagan a
football jersey with the president's name on the back.

DWAYNE (V.O.)

...an incubator for future stars...

--Clips of Michael Irvin, Vinny Testaverde, Bernie Kosar,
Bennie Blades, Jerome Brown, Cortez Kennedy.

DWAYNE (V.O.)

...the 'Canes became legends for
the joy they played with...

--Michael Irvin high-steps with his arm behind his head. /
Players do a dance routine in the end zone. / A player does a
groin-forward dance while standing over a sacked quarterback.

DWAYNE (V.O.)

...and the swagger.

--A series of massive hits on the field, players trash
talking, players fighting their opponents.

DWAYNE (V.O.)

Playing at 'The U' meant you were
part of a cultural phenomenon...

--Vanilla Ice decked out head-to-toe in Miami gear in the "Ice, Ice Baby" music video, 2 Live Crew in Miami gear in the music video for "Do Wah Diddy."

DWAYNE (V.O.)

And I thought I was ready for it...

INT. MIAMI FOOTBALL FACILILITES - HALLWAY - DAY

A nervous 20-YEAR-OLD DWAYNE JOHNSON (now 6'5" and 250 pounds), dressed in athletic gear, gym bag slung across his chest, walks down the hallway. Painted in huge letters on the wall is a motto: "ALL IT TAKES IS ALL U GOT".

DWAYNE (V.O.)

...but really, I was terrified.

Chyron: "Miami, 1991".

Dwayne takes in the trophies and memorabilia that line the walls, awestruck. He reaches the double doors, opens them...

INT. MIAMI FOOTBALL WEIGHT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...and walks into the weight room, an avalanche of SIGHTS AND SOUNDS, packed with the best athletes in the world. It's an intense scene and Dwayne looks intimidated.

VOICE (O.S.)

There he is, 'The Beast of Bethlehem'!

COACH KARMELO (40's thick body, thin hair, D- Line coach), approaches. **(Note: He swears a lot, which will be BLEEPED.)**

DWAYNE

What up, Coach Karm?

COACH KARMELO

How the fuck are you, son? Welcome to Miami football. Ready to make your mark on the game?

DWAYNE

Just gonna earn it one day at a time, coach.

COACH KARMELO

Bullshit, who am I Brent Musberger? Is this a postgame interview?

DWAYNE

Sorry, Coach, I mean-- I'm just gonna keep my head down and work my ass off.

COACH KARMELO

Hell yeah! Ass off. That's what we're all about. First team meeting with Coach Erickson is at noon. Until then, anything you need, just ask. Now get your motherfucking lift on.

Coach Karmelo pats Dwayne on the shoulder and crosses off. Dwayne wanders over to a squat machine. The quarterback, GINO TORRETTA, approaches.

GINO

Freshman, that's my machine.

DWAYNE

Oh, sorry. Can I work in?

GINO

Nah.

Dwayne nods and moves off. He approaches a rack of free weights. A couple PLAYERS approach.

PLAYER #1

Yo, are you Dwayne Johnson?

DWAYNE

(surprised)
Yeah...?

PLAYER #1

Man, congrats. Your pops told us you're gonna be on a Wheaties box.

DWAYNE

(thrown)
How do you know my dad?

PLAYER #2

Rocky Johnson, right? He was in here an hour ago bragging on you.

DWAYNE

He was here?

PLAYER #1

Yeah, I got his autograph.

Player #1 shows Dwayne his elbow brace which has: "Keep Rockin'" and Rocky's autograph written on it.

PLAYER #2

We're both fans, grew up watching him do that "Rocky Shuffle."

PLAYER #1

He said Wheaties is putting you on their box for some "Next Generation Athlete" type thing they're doing.

PLAYER #2

When does it hit the shelves?

Dwayne sighs... which way is he going to take this?

DWAYNE

See, what you need to know about my Dad is...

(beat)

...he can't keep a secret. But the thing is, we did that for Wheaties Asia. It's not gonna come out in the States.

PLAYER #2

Oh cool, I got some family out in Singapore, maybe they can peep it.

DWAYNE

Nah, see, that's the thing, that's South Asia, and it's coming out in North Asia.

The Players stare at him.

PLAYER #1

Is that the bullshit part of Asia?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. COACH KARMELO'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Upset, Dwayne is on the phone alone in the coach's office. A glass window looks out into the weight room behind him.

DWAYNE

Dad, what the hell, you were here this morning??

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. WAREHOUSE - SAME

Rocky is on a wall phone, the receiver to his ear.

ROCKY

Yup. Drove three hours from Tampa to be there when the weight room opened. I go out of my way to set my son up for success.

DWAYNE

But you didn't even come see me!

ROCKY

That would've spoiled the surprise.

DWAYNE

What surprise??

ROCKY

I 'put you over' with the guys. It was your first day in the program and I wanted to make you look good.

DWAYNE

By telling them I'm gonna be on a Wheaties box?

ROCKY

Surprise!
(excited)
Are you surprised?

DWAYNE

I had to cover and tell them it was for Wheaties Asia!

ROCKY

Wheaties Asia? No, see, now you're messing it up. All you gotta do is work the gimmick.

DWAYNE

There's no gimmick to work, I'm not gonna be on a Wheaties box!

ROCKY

But they don't know that. What they do know is champions are on Wheaties boxes. Mary Lou Retton. Bruce Jenner. Michael Jordan--

DWAYNE

They're not going to think I'm a champion, they're gonna think I'm a liar! This isn't wrestling, this is real life and in real life I'm just another freshman--

ROCKY

You're not just another anything. You hear me? You're the best.

DWAYNE

(frustrated)

I was gonna keep my head down-- you always do this. You create a huge mess with your lies and then I have to clean it up.

ROCKY

When? When do I do that?

DWAYNE

You told that grocery clerk I was a Make-a-Wish Kid and my one wish was a full thanksgiving dinner.

ROCKY

And did we eat well that holiday or not?

Dwayne hangs up on him.

ROCKY

Hello... hello?

We STAY WITH Rocky as a MANAGER approaches.

MANAGER

Hey champ, truck's loaded up and all ready for delivery.

REVEAL Rocky's in a liquor warehouse with trucks visible in a loading dock. He wears the uniform of a delivery man.

ROCKY

You got it, boss, just talking to my kid.

(into phone, acting like someone's on the line)

Papa's gotta work now. Love you, son. No, I'm not the best, God's the best.

He hangs up, smiles at the manager and heads toward a truck.

INT. COACH KARMELO'S OFFICE - SAME

A frustrated Dwayne sits at the desk, staring at the phone. Then looks through the window into the weight room --

HIS POV: a group of players (including the two from earlier) are looking at him, laughing, clearly talking shit. We RACK FOCUS to a huge chart on the wall behind them: "Weight Room Records."

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door to the coach's office opens with a BANG and Dwayne walks out, intensely focused.

In a SERIES OF CLOSE UPS he loads weights onto a bench press bar, then chalks his hands. He sits down on the bench.

DWAYNE

Yo, someone spot me.

A player does. Dwayne lifts the bar and starts doing reps of 225 pounds. 1, 2, 3... 9, 10... 15, 16, 17... as the numbers climb, guys nearby take notice.

PLAYER #3

Kid's knocking those out.

PLAYER #4

What's he on?

PLAYER #3

20.

PLAYER #4

(impressed)

Okay.

A group forms around Dwayne. CLOSE ON Dwayne as he pushes the bar up, over and over again. REVEAL the group of onlookers, which has grown in number.

PLAYERS

25!

CLOSE ON Dwayne as he keeps busting out reps. REVEAL an even larger group of players watching, including Player #1 and #2.

PLAYERS

30!

CLOSE ON Dwayne's face, focused, straining. ANGLE ON the gym wall: "Freshman Record -- Bench Press -- 35 reps". BACK ON Dwayne who throws up another rep.

PLAYERS

35! / Come on, man! / You got this!
/ Dig, son, dig deep!

Dwayne takes a deep breath and lowers the bar again to his chest. The bar inches upward, Dwayne's pushing himself to the limit. Out of sheer will, he knocks out that last rep.

PLAYERS

36!!!

Dwayne racks the bar as they lose their minds, CHEERING and mobbing him. Dwayne high fives and daps up his teammates.

PLAYERS

Freshman! That was crazy! / Imma
be watching you. / Gotta work
harder, you're coming for us.

Dwayne beams on the inside but keeps a no-big-deal attitude on the outside. Coach Karmelo approaches.

COACH KARMELO

Holy fuck! What happened to
keeping your head down??

DWAYNE

(playing it cool)
Thought I'd come out and make a
statement instead. Let everyone
know who I really am.

Coach laughs and shakes his head as he walks off. The two Players from earlier approach.

PLAYER #1

Your dad wasn't lying, holy shit.

Dwayne smiles, "no comment." They introduce themselves.

PLAYER #1

Jesse Armstead.

DWAYNE

Nice to meet you.

PLAYER #2

And I'm Warren Sapp. I'm actually
a freshman too.

DWAYNE

Yeah? What position you play?

WARREN

Tight end.

DWAYNE

Good. Keep it that way.

Off Warren nodding like, yeah, man, it's cool...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - **YEAR 2032**

Oprah and Dwayne continue their fireside chat.

DWAYNE

Trust me, no one asked me about the Wheaties box after that.

OPRAH

Wouldn't it have been easier to say your dad made the whole thing up?

DWAYNE

You gotta protect family. He was a complex person, but he was my dad. I know he did what he did out of love.

OPRAH

In his own way, he pushed you to be the best version of yourself.

DWAYNE

(nods)

Which ironically wasn't about working gimmicks, but about real ability. That was the moment I realized that being myself in a tough situation would lead to the best result.

OPRAH

Whoo, that's a lot to process. I need a sip of water.

She reaches for a glass of water and takes a sip.

DWAYNE

That's just the beginning. There are so many more stories and moments and people in my life that no one knows about. Like the time Andre the Giant came to my fourth grade classroom--

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

A 10-year-old Dewey sits in class. 'Career Day' is written on the blackboard. A FIREMAN is addressing the students.

FIREMAN

...and so yes, the Dalmatian lives
with us--

BAM! The classroom door is kicked in by the GIANT BOOT of Andre the Giant in his one-strap wrestling unitard.

ANDRE THE GIANT

(booming voice)

DEWEY!!!!!! *Je suis désolé!!!*

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - BACK TO SCENE

Oprah spreads out her hands.

OPRAH

Well, if you're willing to share,
I'd love to hear about all of it.

DWAYNE

I think you're gonna need more
water. And maybe some crabcakes...

OPRAH

Sure, I'll get in on some
crabcakes.

Dwayne smiles.

DWAYNE

Are you ready for this one?

As he opens his mouth to begin another story, we...

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF SHOW