

MY LIFE AS AN EXPERIMENT

"Pilot"

by

Josh Goldsmith & Cathy Yuspa

Based on the book

"My Life As An Experiment" by A.J. Jacobs

January 25, 2011

ACT ONEFADE IN:

CLOSE ON a lit-up brain scan on a computer. We hear a VOICE.

AJ (V.O.)
Hey, how's it goin'? I'm AJ. And this
is my brain.

We PAN OVER to see our hero, AJ WILDER, inside a whirring MRI MACHINE. AJ is gutsy, lovable, smart, and just a bit demented, with an irresistible urge to poke at the hornet's nest of life.

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Don't worry, nothing's wrong with me --
I'm just doing a little experiment to see
how much I love my wife, in purely
chemical terms.

INT. MRI ROOM - DAY

Inside the tube, AJ looks up at a screen. On it, a photo of his wife, STACIE (we'll meet her for real in a minute).

AJ (V.O.)
You're probably thinking, "that might
upset her," or, more bluntly, "bad idea,
douche." But hey -- it's my job. I'm
what's called an immersion journalist.
I've explored religion...

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY (FLASHBACK)

AJ, in a long white robe, sandals, and a huge beard, is strolling confidently along. In fact, no matter what quirky endeavor AJ is up to, he always seems very comfortable in his own skin. He gives an up-nod to some passing ROLLERBLADERS.

AJ
'Sup? How ya doin'?

A frisbee lands at AJ's feet, and a fiftysomething GUY comes to retrieve it. He looks AJ over.

GUY
What's up with the outfit?

AJ
Oh, I'm following the rules of the Bible
to the letter of the law to see if it
makes me a more spiritual person. Don't
worry, I still got briefs on under this.

CONTINUED:

GUY

Well, I'm an adulterer. Wanna stone me?

AJ

That'd be great!

AJ picks up a handful of pebbles.

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I've tried to survive on zero dollars a day, just to see if I could...

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

AJ casually walks past a room service cart, and sees a half-eaten burger and fries. He looks around to make sure no one's watching, then grabs the plate and dashes away.

AJ (V.O.)

I've experienced the thrill and humiliation of a nude photo shoot...

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

AJ is in front of a white background, wearing a bathrobe. He inhales deeply and drops the robe -- and is now totally naked. He realizes he still has something in his hand.

AJ

Uh, could somebody hold my keys?

A PHOTOGRAPHER starts snapping pictures.

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And somehow I've convinced a national magazine to pay me to write about all of it.

Off of a CAMERA FLASH, we DISSOLVE TO...A GLINT OF SUNLIGHT coming off a LARGE MANHATTAN OFFICE BUILDING. WE PUSH IN to a high window, and we are in...

INT. R & R MAGAZINE - DAY

The slick glass offices of a glossy, upscale magazine. AJ is at his very messy desk, typing on his trusty red laptop.

AJ (V.O.)

Why do I do this? Why do I keep turning myself into a human guinea pig? I've just always had this itch to break the mold of ordinary life.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And what I've found is, sometimes things actually make a little more sense when you shake 'em up.

PANNING around, we see a National Press Club award, photos of AJ and his family, and odd artifacts from previous experiments. WE LAND ON a framed article: "My Life as an Experiment" by AJ Wilder. Next to the by-line -- his face in a box. WE PUSH IN, and we're back in...

INT. MRI ROOM - DAY

We're TIGHT ON AJ again, still staring at the picture of Stacie. In a side room, a super-serious scientist, DR. GENE FRANKLIN, observes AJ's brain on a monitor.

AJ (V.O.)

But this time, I was dumb enough to involve my wife.

DR. FRANKLIN

(through a microphone)

Okay, now as a point of comparison, we're going to chart your brain activity while you imagine having a playful sexual encounter with Ms. Angelina Jolie.

On the screen in front of AJ, Stacie disappears and is replaced by a very sexy picture of Angelina Jolie, with exposed back tatoo. AJ swallows hard.

AJ (V.O.)

I'll tell ya how this experiment started...

INT. AJ AND STACIE'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A very comfortable, lived-in Brooklyn brownstone. Books and magazines everywhere. Family photos and children's action figures line every surface. In the kitchen, STACIE -- feisty and adorable, but with an edge -- is multitasking as usual. She's on a work phone call, watching TV, and microwaving macaroni and cheese for the kids, COOPER (8) and ELLA (6).

STACIE

(into phone)

Look, you can threaten us all you want, my client isn't settling for that offer.

ELLA

Can we watch a kids' show?

CONTINUED:

STACIE

No, sweetie, Mommy's watching her Reality TV right now.

(back into phone)

Just go back to your boss, have him add a few more zeros to that number, and-

(her eyes drift to the TV)

-you're giving a rose to that skank? You have such better chemistry with Savannah!

(back into phone)

I think you get my point.

She hangs up, takes two bowls of mac and cheese from the microwave, and gives them to the kids, as AJ bounds in. He and Stacie have a spirited, fun energy together.

AJ

Date night! A magical journey of mystery and seduction.

STACIE

Wow, what are we doing?

AJ

Oh -- I thought you planned something.

STACIE

(shakes her head, then)

So, how was work?

AJ

Great. I still don't have an idea for my next article, but thanks to a weird internet app, I now know what I'll look like as a very old man.

(hands her print-out)

You're welcome.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Stacie opens it. It's LUCIANA, their hot as hell Brazilian babysitter, dressed in sparkly, tight leggings and very high heels. AD-LIB warm hellos all around - she's clearly been sitting for them for a while.

AJ (CONT'D)

(looking at his laptop)

Hey, we could go see the new Angelina Jolie movie.

STACIE

What is it with you and Angelina Jolie?

AJ

The movie seems interesting, it's not about her.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

AJ (CONT'D)

She's too thrilling and powerful, without giving up a shred of femininity. That's gross.

Stacie gives AJ a look, then, to LUCIANA...

STACIE

So, I just gave the kids dinner.

LUCIANA

(looking Stacie over)

Great. Let me take over, so you can go get changed.

Stacie, dressed in old jeans, a hoodie, and a ponytail, has already grabbed her purse. An awkward beat.

STACIE

I did change.

LUCIANA

Oh.

(then, smiling weakly)

You look nice.

Stacie and AJ head out.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

AJ and STACIE cruise down the street in their Mini Cooper. IN THE CAR, AJ drives, as Stacie goes off.

STACIE

...I mean, seriously, she's judging me for what I'm wearing? I should be judging her for coming to my house in six inch heels and "hey, check out my vagina" pants to feed our children mac and cheese.

AJ

Honey, don't worry about it. You look totally hot, in a MILF with mustard on your shirt kind of way.

(spots something)

Ooh, ATM. I'm just gonna grab some cash.

He pulls over. Before he gets out...

AJ (CONT'D)

Let's just relax, forget about the stress of kids, and jobs, and look forward to whatever this crazy city has in store for us.

CONTINUED:

He smiles, hops out, and quickly gets some money from a machine. He returns to the car, and looks over at Stacie, who is now...SOUND ASLEEP and kind of snoring.

AJ doesn't quite know what to do. Not wanting to wake her, he sits there for a beat. His eyelids start to get heavy, and he slowly FALLS ASLEEP himself. WE PAN OVER to the car clock which reads 7:35.

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AJ AND STACIE'S CAR - NIGHT (LATER)

The clock now reads 11:03. AJ and Stacie are still dead asleep. After a few beats, AJ lets out a snore/cough/choke that wakes both of them up. They take a minute to gather themselves. He looks at the clock.

AJ

That was weird.

He starts the car up, makes a U-TURN, and they head home.

INT. AJ AND STACIE'S BEDROOM/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Later that night. Like the rest of their place, AJ and Stacie's bedroom is more of a shrine to interesting reading material, DVDs, and medicinal hand creams than to wild romantic nights. AJ's brushing his teeth in the bathroom off their bedroom. He seems preoccupied. Stacie enters, stretching, very refreshed.

STACIE

God, I feel good.

AJ

(staring at the mirror)

I think I woke up with a reverse Mini Cooper logo on my forehead.

She starts clipping her toenails over the toilet.

STACIE

Hey, my dad left a message that the cardiology association is giving him an award for that stent or shunt or whatever it was he invented. There's a big banquet for him next Saturday.

AJ

Sounds like someone's getting the world's creepiest human heart trophy.

CONTINUED:

She shoots him a look, heads to the bedroom, and starts applying lotions. He follows.

AJ (CONT'D)

Sorry. I look forward to an evening that gives your dad more proof that he's God, and I'm the moron who married his daughter.

STACIE

He doesn't think you're a moron.

AJ

He called me a moron three times on my last birthday card. Why give me the card at all?

STACIE

He just doesn't get you the way I get you. But deep down, he cares. He actually said he's stuck on his speech, and wondered if you could stop by the hospital to give him some advice because you're such a great writer.

AJ

He said "great"?

STACIE

Well, he said "writer." And then he said my Great Aunt was coming to visit. So he did say the words "great" and "writer," just not in that order, or referring to you. But he really wants your help.

AJ

Okay -- how much is it worth to you
(with an arched eyebrow)
... sexually?

STACIE

That's just weird.

Stacie climbs into bed and slips her night guard into her mouth. Clearly, nothing's gonna happen right now. AJ considers. After a beat...

AJ

Let me ask you something. Do you have any problem with what happened tonight?

STACIE

(through night guard)
Whaddya mean?

CONTINUED: (2)

AJ

You know, our "date night"?

STACIE

(takes night guard out)

I actually think it was one of the best dates of my life. Check that, one of the best nights of my life.

AJ

You do realize we just paid a sitter seventy-five dollars so we could take a nap in our car.

STACIE

Yah. Would've paid a hundie. Nighty-night.

Things are still not sitting well with AJ. After a beat...

AJ

Do we still have "it"?

STACIE

Honey, of course we don't have "it." I don't know how that could be more clear.

AJ

I'm horrified by what you're saying.

STACIE

Don't be, it's a good thing. Having "it" is exhausting. Being so comfortable that we can fall asleep on a date, and we don't have to get each other ridiculous little stuffed teddy bears for Valentine's Day anymore, or say "I love you" at the end of every phone call, like those freaky young couples do -- that's the stuff of fairy tales. I love our life. It's just the reality.

AJ

I disagree. I'll tell ya something -- I still feel sparks when I kiss you.

STACIE

No you don't.

AJ

Yes I do.

CONTINUED: (3)

STACIE

You so don't feel sparks. When was the last time you literally felt sparks?

AJ

(beat, trying)
...that time...at the thing...you were wearing a white dr-

STACIE

Our wedding?

AJ

No! No -- you've worn white stuff since then! The point is, I feel sparks. You're telling me you never feel sparks when we kiss?

STACIE

Um, usually I kiss you because I'm trying to get by you.

AJ thinks, then grabs his laptop and starts typing, excited.

AJ

Okay, hotshot.

STACIE

What are you doing?

AJ

Your exceedingly poor attitude just gave me an idea for my next article. I'm gonna put our relationship under the microscope, and I'm gonna prove we're still hot for each other -- with cold, hard scientific facts.

STACIE

And I am gonna go get some cereal.

She gets out of bed, and goes. He calls after her.

AJ

It's happening! We dig each other!
We're magic!
(then)
Will you make me a grilled cheese?

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

MUSIC KICKS IN, as we see a MONTAGE of AJ starting his process:

INT. AJ AND STACIE'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

AJ sits at his kitchen table with ten years' worth of receipts and credit card statements spread around him.

AJ (V.O.)

So, the question at hand was this: Did Stacie and I still have the fire, the juice, the electric dynamite?

TIGHT ON AJ's laptop screen, as he types: "Do I Dig My Wife?: An Investigative Report."

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I gathered my receipts for flowers, presents, and romantic dinners from the last ten years and started crunching numbers.

He punches data onto a spreadsheet on his laptop. He then clicks "Create a graph" and we see the resulting line graph emerge (superimposed in front of AJ).

As three red lines labeled "flowers," "gifts," and "dinners" decline in plummeting free-falls, so does AJ's face.

AJ (V.O (CONT'D)

Initial results weren't promising. But maybe flowers were just superficial -- they weren't the true measure of passion in our relationship. In fact, a few years ago, Stacie told me:

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. AJ AND STACIE'S BROWNSTONE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Stacie talks directly to AJ (INTO CAMERA).

STACIE

Don't get me flowers anymore. If I have to say, "They're so pretty" and dig out a vase one more time, I'm gonna scream.

AJ (V.O.)

I decided to go deeper and hit the streets.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - DAY

AJ walks along a bustling street carrying a notepad. He spots a COUPLE about his age, having a lively, fun conversation at a sidewalk café. AJ approaches them.

AJ

Hi. AJ Wilder. I'm doing some research on relationships for R & R Magazine, and you two seem to have a very similar energy to me and my wife. May I ask how often you two make love?

MAN

(beat)

We're brother and sister.

AJ

(nods)

'Kay, then. Here's hoping you don't make love too often.

AJ turns and continues down the street.

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I wasn't gonna give up.

INT. AJ AND STACIE'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

AJ's at the kitchen table internet surfing on his laptop. Behind him, their babysitter, Luciana, prepares some lunch for the kids.

AJ (V.O.)

After some research, I struck oil.

We go TIGHT ON the computer, where we see an image of an offbeat SCIENTIST, who looks like he only combed his hair for the picture because someone told him he had to.

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

His name was Dr. Gene Franklin, a neuroscientist, who was a pioneer in the field of Love Science and strange hairdos. His theory?

We ZOOM into the picture, and it becomes live action...

INT. DR. FRANKLIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Franklin sits at his desk with a phone to his ear. Behind him, a bunch of MRI images with areas of the brain glowing red and blue. INTERCUT between this and AJ's kitchen, where AJ listens on speaker phone and takes notes.

CONTINUED:

DR. FRANKLIN

(into phone)

What we call "love" comes from three distinct drives in the brain: attachment, romance, and sexual attraction -- which are created by the hormones vasopressin and oxytocin, the chemical dopamine, and the hypothalamus. So what we can do is give you a brain MRI, while you look at pictures of your wife and imagine scenarios relevant to these three aspects of your relationship.

AJ

Sounds like a party.

DR. FRANKLIN

We'll also do the same tests while you're looking at a picture of an attractive female movie star of your choice. You know, just as a point of comparison.

AJ

How about Angelina Jolie?

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...I said, like a big fat idiot.

AJ performs a search and a kittenish picture of Angelina Jolie comes up. He clicks on it to expand it. Over the speakerphone, we hear...

DR. FRANKLIN

(through phone)

Perfect. Let me check my schedule.

AJ turns to see Luciana, who has overheard his conversation, and is staring daggers at him.

AJ

What?

LUCIANA

Putting a number on your feelings for the woman you love, like some sports game? On behalf of women everywhere -- shame on you.

AJ

Come on, she'll be fine with it.

CONTINUED: (2)

LUCIANA

She'll be crying like a baby on the inside. You're a bad man. No wonder she doesn't dress for you!

Luciana turns and goes.

INT. R & R MAGAZINE OFFICES - DAY

We are in the EDITOR'S OFFICE, in the middle of a staff meeting. Several writers, including AJ, sit around. Leaning on the edge of his desk in a power suit is the Editor-in-Chief, and perhaps the manliest man in America, DAN MEADOW. Currently, he's showing off his new crossbow.

DAN

Meet the Wildcat camouflage crossbow, with magnesium riser and four point five pound trigger pull. You've gotta see this baby in action.

(calling out)

Get an intern in here and put an apple on his head!

AJ

Dan -- as your friend, I'm gonna remind you that just 'cause they're interns doesn't mean they can't die.

DAN

(disappointed)

There's no more fun left in this business.

(calling out)

Never mind!

AJ

I didn't even know you hunted.

DAN

Oh, I don't, I just buy expensive man-toys to fill the void in my fairly empty life. And you know what? They really do fill the void. I'm a pretty happy guy. Because of stuff.

A long-haired, self-important writer named MARTIN pipes up.

MARTIN

Um, I know crossbow talk is really important, but maybe we should get back to ideas for the next issue?

CONTINUED:

DAN

Good -- let's do that. Talk to me.

MARTIN

Well, I'd like to embed myself in a platoon in Afghanistan, to expose the horror of what's really going on over there.

DAN

(considers)

Uh-huh, uh-huh. AJ, whadda you got?

AJ

I'm working on a story where I go into an MRI tube and have my brain waves read while looking at a picture of my wife, and then Angelina Jolie.

The room perks up and reacts, amused.

DAN

(face lighting up)

I like that, 'cause we can run a picture of Angelina Jolie.

AJ is clearly Dan's favorite go-to writer.

DAN (CONT'D)

Good job, AJ. That's lunch.

The meeting breaks up and people file out. Martin looks disgruntled, and approaches Dan.

MARTIN

Dan, could you give me a tip here? Just wondering why you always seem to go for AJ's stuff.

DAN

Because he writes things people want to read.

Martin goes. As the office empties out, Dan throws his arm around AJ's shoulder, delighted.

DAN (CONT'D)

This might turn into your best article ever. It will end your marriage, but I can't wait to see it.

AJ

It's not gonna end my marriage.

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN

Look. I know relationships aren't my "thing" -- I'm more into fleeting encounters with chicks with crazy eyes. And I'm sure you're still really hot for your wife after seeing her naked five hundred thousand times. But it seems like going into a machine and putting her up against Angelina Jolie has the potential to offend her in some way.

AJ

You'd think, but I told Stacie exactly what I'm doing. She's fine with it. She already thinks we're dead inside, and she loves that about us.

DAN

Well, she sounds like a pretty special lady.

AJ

She is.

DAN

And yet, isn't there that thing where when a woman says she's "fine," it really means she's not fine? I believe I read something to that effect in a series of essays by Nora Ephron.

AJ

Look, I love Nora Ephron as much as the next guy, but she's never met my wife. Stacie's just not threatened by other women. A year ago, one of my ex-girlfriends moved onto our street. I asked Stacie if she was nervous, and she said:

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. AJ AND STACIE'S BROWNSTONE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Stacie again looks directly at AJ (INTO CAMERA) and this time, she just bursts out laughing.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. R & R MAGAZINE OFFICES - SAME TIME

DAN

Fair enough.
(eyes AJ, impressed)
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

DAN (CONT'D)

You know, you are one crazy little man.
You see a tank of piranhas and you wanna
jump right in, don'tcha?

AJ

(shrugs)

It's what I do.

Dan smiles, then turns and yells out to an unseen assistant.

DAN

I'm looking at my desk and I'm not seeing
a rare steak on it!

INT. SAM'S HOSPITAL OFFICE - DAY

A doctor's office in a big New York hospital. AJ sits across the desk from his father-in-law: the pompous, arrogant DR. SAM BOBKIN (60's). Impressive diplomas and medical awards surround him.

SAM

Thanks so much for coming down to help me
with my speech, AJ. I'm always amazed at
how much free time you seem to have for a
grown man.

AJ

Uhh, you're welcome?

SAM

You know, in a way, I admire you. I'm
always so busy with surgery or lectures
or trips to the bank to deposit money.

AJ smiles tightly and fights the frequent urge to tell his wife's father he's an a-hole.

AJ

(beat)

Okay, let's get started. How about this?

(reads some notes off a pad)

"I'd like to thank the association for
giving me this incredible award. I
actually think every heart surgeon
deserves one for not throwing up when
they see the inside of a guy's body."

SAM

Oh, you and your quirky wit. Don't think
this is quite the crowd for that.

CONTINUED:

AJ

How about, "I gladly accept this award for Most Handsome Cardiologist"?

SAM

What else ya got?

AJ

Well, going a little more serious here: "Every day, I'm reminded of the technical complexity of the human heart, but the really incredible thing is what the heart can feel. That's why we do what we do."

SAM

(beat)

Sounds a little fruity.

AJ

Why exactly did you tell Stacie you wanted my help?

SAM

Frankly, I thought you were more talented than this.

There's a friendly knock on the half-open door.

SAM (CONT'D)

Craig! Come in!

DR. CRAIG ROLLÉ, a guy about AJ's age, enters. Craig's also a heart surgeon, and he's basically Mr. Perfect -- fantastic looking, ripped, confident, and annoyingly nice. Sam lights up around this guy.

SAM (CONT'D)

AJ, you know my protégé, Dr. Craig Rollé.

AJ

Of course. The guy who dated my wife after she and I started dating.

CRAIG

Hey -- Stacie may have been ambivalent about you at first, but eventually, you won her fair and square, man.

AJ

You married yet, Craig?

CRAIG

Nope. Still waiting for my Stacie to come along.

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

Well, someday a very lucky man is going to get to call you his son-in-law.

(a bit sadly under his breath)

Just not me.

(then)

So we're working on my speech for the banquet. Any thoughts?

CRAIG

How about, "I'd like to offer my heartfelt thanks for this award."

Sam chuckles mightily at this pitch.

SAM

You're too much. I gotta write that down.

AJ

Yeah, that's great. Heartfelt thanks. 'Cause he's a heart surgeon. Funny stuff.

CRAIG

(to Sam)

Well, I just stopped by to say great job on that transplant last week. It was masterful.

(to AJ)

This man held a still-beating human heart in his hand.

AJ

Cool. Last week, I went around with a cockney accent just to see how people would react.

(in cockney accent)

"'Ello!"

CRAIG

(genuinely amused)

That's funny. You're a provocateur. That's what you are. What do you got going on this week?

AJ

(to Craig, but clearly a zetz to Sam)

Well, right now I'm actually working on a piece about relationships. After this, I'm headed downstairs to get an MRI to see how much I love his daughter.

CONTINUED: (3)

Sam puts his hand on AJ's shoulder and looks into his eyes.

SAM
(very friendly)
If you ever hurt Stacie, I'm coming for
ya.

INT. MRI ROOM - DAY

AJ is on his back in the MRI tube. Dr. Franklin is in the adjacent room with the monitors and microphone.

DR. FRANKLIN
(into microphone)
...Okay, we're moving on. Remember to stay still. You have the panic button if you get claustrophobic. So we've covered attachment and romantic love -- now we'll begin our last phase, the sexual attraction area of your brain. We'll start with your wife and then we'll move on to Angelina Jolie.

On a screen above AJ's face, the picture of Stacie we saw earlier snaps on -- in a backless dress, looking seductively over her shoulder into camera.

DR. FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
And here's some music that might get you in the mood.

Dr. Franklin hits a button, and the BEE GEES' "How Deep Is Your Love" kicks in.

AJ
The Bee Gee's. Nice. Nothing like three brothers with feathered hair to get me feelin' randy.

DR. FRANKLIN
Would you like me to turn it off?

AJ
No, I was actually kinda serious.

DR. FRANKLIN
Okay. So now I need you to start imagining a sexual scenario with Stacie.

AJ stares at Stacie's picture, trying to get something going in his head. After a beat...

AJ
Hm.

CONTINUED:

DR. FRANKLIN

Is there a problem?

AJ

No, it's just funny -- guess I'm not used to fantasizing about my own wife. We have a decent sex life, but fantasizing about it seems kinda redundant.

DR. FRANKLIN

That's perfectly normal. Just relax, close your eyes, and it'll come to you.

AJ closes his eyes and smiles. WE PUSH IN on him, and DISSOLVE TO AJ'S IMAGINATION. We're in...

INT. AJ AND STACIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (AJ'S IMAGINATION)

AJ and Stacie are in bed together, kissing. It's all very sexy, and going well. Then...

STACIE

Wait. Did you throw out the chicken?

AJ

Excuse me?

STACIE

The chicken from the other night. It's gonna go bad.

AJ

Honey, we're in a sex fantasy, let's not talk about chicken.

AJ starts to kiss her again. But then he pulls back.

AJ (CONT'D)

Now I'm thinking about the chicken.

INT. MRI ROOM - SAME TIME (BACK TO REALITY)

In the MRI tube, REAL AJ opens his eyes, a bit worried.

AJ

Hey Doc. I'm trying to prove a point to my wife, here. If these numbers don't get where I need them to be, you can goose them up a skosh, can'tcha?

DR. FRANKLIN

Unfortunately, no, the results go directly into the computer for statistical analysis.

CONTINUED:

AJ

Uh-huh.

DR. FRANKLIN

Okay, now we'll switch to Angelina Jolie.

On the screen above AJ, Stacie disappears, and in her place a pictures of Angelina appears.

AJ

Wait! I wasn't done! It takes a little time for me and the wifey to start the engines.

DR. FRANKLIN

Sorry. I'll go back.

Angelina disappears, and Stacie's picture pops back up. AJ stares hard at it.

AJ (V.O.)

Okay, Sex Part of My Brain. Pull it together, forget about the chicken, and make some hot, dirty, pretend MRI love to your wife!

He gets a determined look on his face, and closes his eyes.

INT. AJ AND STACIE'S BROWNSTONE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Stacie is taking a frozen pizza out of the oven. She walks over to the kids, who are sitting at the table coloring.

STACIE

Hey, cuties, here we go.

COOPER

I don't want pizza, I'm not hungry.

ELLA

I'm not hungry either.

STACIE

I likes what I'm hearing.

The kids exit to their rooms, and she heads over to the couch, flicks on the TV, puts the pizza down and starts slicing it. As she eats, we hear:

TV ANNOUCER (V.O.)

Welcome to "The Biggest Loser." Meet Fredda, a plus-sized diabetic nurse who has devoted herself to helping others, but now must help herself.

CONTINUED:

She snarfs down pizza with one hand, while turning the volume up with the other. After a beat, AJ enters, in a triumphant mood, holding a big, already opened envelope.

AJ
(to Stacie)
Hey, how was work?

STACIE
Oh, this new client is driving me insane. He found out I went to Harvard Law, and now he expects me to "keep him out of jail."

She rolls her eyes and continues to watch TV. He goes and sits next to her.

AJ
Do you wanna hear how my day was?

STACIE
I definitely do during a commercial.
(re: the TV)
Check it out. This dude used to weigh three hundred and fifty pounds, now he's down to a buck-ninety. I'm so going jogging tomorrow.

AJ watches the TV, and finally a commercial comes on. She mutes it and turns to him.

STACIE (CONT'D)
Okay, sorry, what?

AJ
I did the MRI today. The love MRI. I have the results right here.

STACIE
Oh, great. So what's the dealio?

He happily pulls a print-out from the envelope.

AJ
I've already gone through them with the doctor, and let's just say -- Daddy knew we had the fuego, and Daddy was right. Check it out.
(he starts to read)
First off, for attachment. That feeling of connectedness. "The vasopressin levels were very high in my ventral palladium."

CONTINUED: (2)

He looks at her and smiles cockily. Beat.

STACIE

I have no idea what that means.

AJ

My brain went off like fireworks. I'm off the charts attached to you.

STACIE

And I to you, sir.

AJ

He actually said I resemble the prairie vole, a rodent known for lifelong mating. Which is rare, 'cause apparently, most rodents are sluts.

STACIE

Lucky me. Movin' on.

AJ

Okay, for romantic love. The news was pretty good. My levels weren't off the charts, but they were respectable. Certainly not non-existent, as your cynical heart would like to believe. He said basically, romantic love works like a drug in the brain -- it has the same effect as cocaine. But my love for you is more like...a bottle of Snapple.

STACIE

Snapple?

AJ

Yeah -- and who doesn't like a refreshing bottle of Snapple?

STACIE

I, for one, am a big fan.

AJ

(excited)

And it gets better. Let's talk pure sexual attraction, deep down in the primitive lizard part of my brain. Remember, it was you against international movie star and sexual pussycat Angelina Jolie. And guess what? Wait for it...it was a tie!

CONTINUED: (3)

STACIE

(beat)

What's that, now?

AJ

A tie! My levels were exactly the same! We've been married ten years. We have two kids. I've found Cheerios in your bra. And yet, I'm just as sexually attracted to you as I am to Angie! Isn't that awesome?! We're on fire, baby!

(kisses her)

I gotta go write.

He hurries off happily. Stacie is left staring at the results. She's not happy at all. In fact, she's pretty mad. As her eyes narrow, we go to...

INT. AJ AND STACIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

AJ is in bed, happily typing away on his laptop. Stacie enters. Gone are the old jeans and headbands we usually see her in. She's now in lingerie. She dims the lights.

STACIE

(breathy)

Hey there.

She moves towards him, and seductively crawls onto the bed.

AJ

Well, well, well. Looks like somebody ran out to the mall.

STACIE

Hm?

AJ

Tag's still in.

He shows her the price tag dangling from the lingerie. She yanks it off, then smiles seductively and starts to kiss him.

AJ (CONT'D)

So, you kinda liked the results of my little experiment, hm?

STACIE

(sexy, as she kisses his neck)

Yeah -- not really.

AJ

Why not?

CONTINUED:

STACIE

I guess the fact that I tied with another woman in the sex part of your brain makes me think you're kind of a jackass.

AJ

What? A tie is great! And you didn't tie with just another woman, you tied with Angelina Jo-
(off her look)
-ugly. And anyway -- I thought you said you were okay with all this!

STACIE

(still sexy)

I did. And I was -- in theory. But in reality, I'm totally pissed. Now take off your pants.

Stacie goes for his jeans.

AJ

Wait! No!

(then)

I mean, yes, of course I'll take off my pants, but this is weird. You've never been mad and touching me there. What's going on?

STACIE

You're going back into that love tube. I made you another MRI appointment for Saturday -- that gives us five days to get our sex numbers up. And they will be higher than Angelina's. They will be.

(a whisper)

That big-lipped bitch is going down.

AJ

You're scaring me.

STACIE

Good.

She grabs a bottle of massage oil and squirts a long stream of oil into her hand, as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEFADE IN:

INT. R & R MAGAZINE OFFICES - DAY

We're back in Dan's office. He's at his desk, AJ's on a chair, looking exhausted, telling Dan what's going on.

AJ

...but then when she heard it was a tie, she totally flipped out.

DAN

I'm not gonna say "I told you so." But I did mention this might occur.

AJ

Isn't that just, "I told you so" with bigger words?

DAN

Perhaps. Still, I did tell you so.

AJ

Now you've said it twice.

DAN

So now what? She's furious? She won't sleep with you?

AJ

No, that's the thing. She wants me to go back in the tube and get higher numbers, so she's all over me. We've had sex twice a day since this happened!

DAN

So you being in the "doghouse" is sex twice a day?

AJ

Yeah -- and not the usual "keep your socks on and watch 'The Daily Show' out of the corner of your eye" sex. It's dirty, and loud, with outfits and lotions and some kind of hammock she got off the internet.

DAN

What a sad sad time for you.

CONTINUED:

AJ

I know it sounds like it should be great, but it's too much pressure! We did it standing up, Dan. I don't have that kind of power in my legs anymore. I'm not sure I can keep up this pace. I just want to fall asleep in my Mini Cooper!

Dan crosses to his bar.

DAN

You seemed stressed. Can I get you a drink? Whisky? Scotch? Brandy?

AJ

No thanks.

DAN

Gin? Vodka? Tequila? Cognac? Absinthe?

AJ

Really, I'm-

DAN

Goldschlager? Cointreau? Jagermeister? Creme de Banana?

AJ

Please stop.

(beat)

Wait, "Creme de Banana"? That sounds incredible. Hit me with that.

DAN

(pouring AJ a shot)

They call it the Monkey's Milkshake.

Dan hands AJ the drink. AJ downs it.

AJ

Stacie also read somewhere that being in actual dangerous situations can increase sexual attraction. So she's insisting we go on a date tonight in a pretty bad part of town. Maybe I could borrow your crossbow to defend myself.

DAN

(re: the crossbow on his desk)

Yeah, I don't think you have the arm strength to hold this thing up. But you are welcome to borrow my gun.

CONTINUED: (2)

He opens a drawer and pulls out a pretty big automatic pistol. AJ blinks.

INT. MRI ROOM - DAY

A totally beat AJ is strapped back onto the examination table that slides into the MRI machine. Stacie stands over him, still angry, and now dressed like a pretty big slut.

DR. FRANKLIN (O.S.)
(through microphone)
We're all set.

STACIE
(to AJ)
Okay, my dad's award banquet starts at six, so you should just meet me there after you're done. I'm gonna go.

She leans in and gives him the wettest, most inappropriate public kiss ever.

STACIE (CONT'D)
If that doesn't break the tie, don't bother coming out of this tube.

As a final incentive, she lifts her shirt all the way up and flashes him her breasts, then turns and goes. Dr. Franklin hits a button, and AJ starts sliding slowly into the tube, terrified.

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Stacie, still in the overly sexy outfit, sits at a large round table with her dad Sam, Craig (looking perfectly studly in a well-tailored suit), and a few others. There's an empty seat next to her -- clearly, AJ is late.

STACIE
You know, I like AJ's experiments most of the time. I even thought it was funny when he dressed up like a homeless guy and stood outside our building. And Grandma gave him money. And he spent it on booze. But he crossed the line with this one. What am I gonna do here?

SAM
Well, there are a few ways we could handle it. Of course, I know the best divorce lawyers in town. We will get you through this. And although being single again is scary, you needn't worry.
(with a glance to Craig)
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SAM (CONT'D)

There are many other wonderful fish in the sea.

STACIE

I don't want to get divorced, Dad!

SAM

(beat)

Definitely not?

STACIE

No!

(exhales, then takes a beat)

This is all actually my fault. I was too casual about our relationship. I let things slide, I didn't care enough. Now he's hot for another woman, and I'm alone at a heart award dressed like an aerobics teacher slash hooker.

CRAIG

You know, with the passion you're talking about AJ, it seems like you actually do care a great deal.

STACIE

But it's too late. We don't have "it" anymore! Now it's all about "attachment." AJ and I are off the charts on attachment. And do you know what attachment is? Attachment is ass.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

AJ is walking slowly, with a still-sealed envelope of new results in his hand. It's starting to rain.

AJ (V.O.)

I didn't know what was inside the envelope -- I couldn't bring myself to open it. I did know I was so worked up in the tube that I got locked on an image of Stacie carrying a naked Angelina Jolie piggyback-style through Costco. Needless to say, this experiment had gone very very wrong. And I needed to figure out a way to make things right.

As he walks, he notices a display of stuffed animals in the shop window next to him. A glimmer of an idea.

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Stacie is still mulling the situation over, as she chews on a roll from the bread basket.

STACIE

I mean, Angelina Jolie is kinda cute, I guess -- but I am a sexy woman. I'm super-sexy, am I not, Dad?

An awkward moment, as Sam doesn't quite know how to respond. After a moment, Stacie hears the DING of a text on her cell phone, which reads, "*Look behind you.*" She does, but is confused, seeing only a sea of random people. A beat, and another text comes in. She reads, "*The other way. Near the salads.*" She turns around and this time, sees...

...AJ. Wet from the rain, and leaning against a wall in the midst of a sea of salads the caterers are bringing out. He walks over to her, and before Stacie can say anything, he launches in. This is his moment, and he needs to grab it.

AJ

Okay, I have the new results here. But before we open them, I want to say something. I know you're mad. I know your feelings are hurt. But the thing is, I know I love you. I've always loved you. I love the way you say "ahhh" after sipping a beverage, like you're filming a commercial. I love that you've divided my sweater drawer into "outside sweaters," "in-house only sweaters," and "sweaters I need permission to wear at all." I love that the finale of the reality show "Joe Millionaire" made you cry as much as the birth of our first child. No matter what it says in this envelope, I know all of these things are true.

Stacie takes this in. A long beat, then...

STACIE

(taking envelope from him)
But are you hotter for me than Angelina Jolie? 'Cause I knew all that other crap already.

AJ

Guess we're about to find out. But wait, before you open that, I wanna give you one more thing. Your dad's not the only one getting a heart award tonight.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AJ (CONT'D)
I present you with AJ Wilder's first
annual "Heart-sy" Prize!

From his pocket, he pulls out small bear clutching a red heart.

AJ (CONT'D)
That's right, I got you a ridiculous
little stuffed teddy bear. We're those
people.

Beat. Beat.

AJ (CONT'D)
Did I mention it plays "Baby I Need Your
Lovin'?"

He squeezes the bear, and it indeed starts playing a bad electronic version of the Motown classic.

AJ (CONT'D)
By the way, congratulations, this is a
very big honor.

She looks down at the envelope in her hand, then back to AJ -- an adorable, wet guy in a corduroy jacket and sneakers, standing there, one eyebrow raised hopefully, while making the stuffed bear dance. And for a moment, all of her cynicism melts away. She goes over, kisses him, pulls back, and smiles.

STACIE
Oh my God. Sparks.

AJ exhales, relieved, and smiles big. He's got his wife back.

AJ
Toldja.

STACIE
(re: the envelope)
You know what? Let's not open this. I
know we have "it" without even looking.

They start kissing again while AJ squeezes the bear for a second round of the song. Sam glances over at them and rolls his eyes.

We TIME DISSOLVE to...

LATER. AJ and Stacie are at the table. Sam is up at a podium, accepting his award.

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

...first, I would like to offer my
heartfelt thanks for this award.

He lets this joke land, but nobody laughs. Sam is a bit thrown by the silence. He looks over at Stacie and AJ holding hands at the table, and sees how happy his daughter looks. He pauses, then softens just a little...

SAM (CONT'D)

You know, everyday, I'm amazed by what the human heart can do in all its technical complexity. But what those in our profession don't often stop to think about is what the heart can feel.

AJ smiles, and gives Sam a mini-salute. Sam pretends he didn't see it.

INT. AJ AND STACIE'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

AJ, Stacie, and the kids are on the couch watching TV, eating cereal, newspapers strewn around, the stuffed bear prize tucked next to them -- the perfect image of family "attachment."

AJ (V.O.)

We never did open the envelope, but the experiment was still a success. It kind of woke us up. Sure, the whole thing started as an attempt to quantify our love with numbers. But no numbers can really define the leap of faith that is a relationship. When you know something is true, you don't need to see results on paper -- especially when those results could be pretty damning stuff.

We PAN OFF the family, and up to a huge bookcase of papers, files, and envelopes. We can just make out the MRI results envelope, but, like the last shot of "Raiders of the Lost Ark," -- it's pretty well buried in there forever, where it can't hurt anyone.

We FLY PAST the bookcase, out the window, and go higher.

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm not sure what my next experiment will be, or where it'll take me.

Down below, Brooklyn, with people scurrying around, doing their business, gets smaller and smaller.

CONTINUED:

AJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But in a way, aren't all of our lives experiments? We're all just going through time and space, a product of our biology, the choices we've made, and random circumstances that affect us when we're least expecting them. The results are sometimes joyous, sometimes disappointing. But if we're honest, and really look ourselves, they're almost always interesting. My name is AJ Wilder. And my life is an experiment.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

TAGFADE IN:

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

AJ and Stacie are once again driving down the street. This time, they're both kinda dressed up and feeling good.

AJ

Date night! We are makin' it happen!

STACIE

Yeah we are! So whadda we got goin'?

AJ

Korean barbecue where you cook your own meat right at the table, then a movie, followed by drinks at a hip bar that used to be an old boxing gym.

STACIE

I'm not sure, but that could just be the perfect evening.

They drive along for a beat. AJ yawns a little. Stacie rubs her face, trying to stay awake.

STACIE (CONT'D)

Did you buy those movie tickets already, or...?

AJ

No, I figured it wouldn't be sold out.

STACIE

(thinks, then)

So we're not out any money yet?

AJ

Not a dime.

Beat. Beat. Finally...

STACIE

You wanna-

AJ

(quickly)

Yah.

He pulls the car over to the side of the road, and puts it in park.

CONTINUED:

STACIE
G'night.

AJ
G'night.

They take each other's hands and drift off to sleep, as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW