

*[Lights up on P.J. and SHAWN, sweating in the sun. They're somewhere in a deserted patch of California, just far enough away from civilization that they could get away with plenty of noise. Shawn is setting up a video camera on a tripod. He holds a gun. P.J. has on a bulletproof vest under his t-shirt. He keeps adjusting it.]*

SHAWN

P.J., what's the problem?

PJ

Huh? I don't have a problem.

SHAWN

You keep messing with it.

PJ

It's not as comfortable as I thought it would be. Cops have to wear this all the time. You'd think it'd be a little more breathable.

SHAWN

It's not supposed to be comfortable. It's supposed to do its job.

PJ

"Supposed to." Damn, let's hope. *[He cackles like a crazy person. Shawn does not smile.]* I'm sweating like an animal in this thing.

SHAWN

I'm sweating like an animal and I'm not even in it.

PJ

That's pretty sexy, Shawn. I tell ya, if I wasn't a kept man... *[He laughs again. Shawn does not respond.]* Can we hurry up? There's a gas station only like half a mile back. What if someone drives--

SHAWN

I can't shoot you.

PJ

You have to.

SHAWN

You're engaged. What if it goes wrong? How the fuck am I gonna face Susie? I'm the one who introduced you guys.

PJ

How can it go wrong? Just don't shoot me in the head.

SHAWN

You mean just don't shoot you anywhere except square in the chest. How do we know my aim is that good?

PJ

How bad could it be? Just concentrate.

SHAWN

Yeah, just concentrate. I'm only going to shoot one of my oldest friends in the chest for the sake of some dumb article for a dumber magazine. What could possibly throw me off?

PJ

See, being sarcastic isn't gonna help you focus. Let's just get it over with.

SHAWN

Does it have to be right this second? Can you give me some time?

PJ

I'm sweating my ass off. Please, Shawn? We already did so much work. We talked it up all week. Josh is expecting it. We'll get nailed if we pussy out.

SHAWN

We won't get nailed. He can't replace us, P.J. We're the last functioning non-junkies who write coherent articles about skateboarding and other stupid crap for miles around.

PJ

I don't know how much of a functioning non-junkie I am.

SHAWN

That's not... you're not the only person in the office who... you won't get fired if you don't write this, PJ.

PJ

No, YOU won't get fired if you don't write it. You're half the content every month. I've never gotten anything to publication.

SHAWN

You've been here for months. Why would he fire you now?

PJ

Because he said he would.

SHAWN

Wait, really?

PJ

"Get me a real story or you're fired" he said.

SHAWN

I don't think this is what he meant.

PJ

Look, I'm getting fired one way or another, right? Get it?

*[Shawn clearly gets it. He's not amused. They hear the noise of a car approaching. Shawn quickly pockets the gun and both men force as casual a pose as possible. It doesn't work very well. The car passes.]*

PJ

How do you think the shot looks on the camera?

SHAWN

It looked fine when I set it up. Is it safe for us to get any closer?

PJ

I don't know.

SHAWN

You don't know? You didn't do any research?

PJ

I thought you would.

SHAWN

It's not my article, idiot.

PJ

Good point.

SHAWN

No research? None? How did you even get one of those?

PJ

Josh got it for me.

SHAWN

Of course he did.

PJ

Look, I called this shooting range that said—

SHAWN

You called? You didn't even go to see them?

PJ

They said it would feel like getting hit by a hammer, which I thought was reassuring. And pretty interesting, right?

SHAWN

No. Can we stand further apart?

PJ

We'll lose detail in the shot, I think.

SHAWN

I don't need detail. I need you to live.

PJ

Chill out, dude.

SHAWN

I can shoot you or I can chill out but I can't do both.

PJ

Then let's do it. Right now. We'll do this super quick and we'll go get beers at Bar Louie and chill out. Take aim. Let's do this. Tell me when to count off.

*[Shawn braces himself and raises the gun. PJ turns away. Shawn adjusts his aim. A lot.]*

PJ

Are you just... aiming?

SHAWN

Yeah.

PJ

I thought you've done this before.

SHAWN

Shoot someone? Seriously?

PJ

But you said you've shot a gun.

SHAWN

I went to a range when I was sixteen.

PJ

Yeah, right, for your birthday. I remember. Not since then?

SHAWN

Nope.

*[PJ pauses. Maybe out of real worry. Then:]*

PJ

I bet you're a natural!

SHAWN

Do you want me to check the camera one more time?

PJ

You're stalling.

SHAWN

I want to be your best man.

PJ

I know.

SHAWN

I can't do that if I kill you. You finally found a woman patient enough to deal with your shit, who you're marrying next month, and now you're writing some feature where you get shot in the chest

PJ

"In which" I thought.

SHAWN

What?

PJ

I think the correct grammar would be writing a feature "in which" I get shot, not "where" I get shot.

SHAWN

How can you be so cavalier about this?

PJ

Because I'm wearing a vest whose whole purpose is to let me be cavalier about this!

SHAWN

Cops are not cavalier about getting shot, even with a vest.

PJ

It'll work.

SHAWN

If you're so sure it's gonna work, how come you proposed this article as "testing" it?

PJ

Dramatic effect, maybe?

SHAWN

Great. A drama. I hope me killing you isn't the climax.

PJ

I'm not gonna die, Shawn. I'm never gonna die. The worst that could happen is you get me in the arm or something by accident. I'll live through that. Lots of people do.

SHAWN

What if it malfunctions?

PJ

The gun?

SHAWN

The vest.

PJ

How does Kevlar malfunction?

SHAWN

Maybe Josh got something cheap.

PJ

Josh is our editor. He wants this article to work out, and he doesn't want his magazine to go down in a pile of burning lawsuits, he just wants to try writing about something shocking and cool and innovative. He wouldn't green light this if he really thought we were gonna die. I trust him...

*[P.J. looks away from Shawn and the gun.]*

SHAWN

Finish that sentence.

PJ

With my life. Yeah, with my life.

SHAWN

I wouldn't. We're talking about a man who wants to turn this fucked up idea into a web series.

PJ

If I die, he won't be able to publish it.

SHAWN

Obviously you don't know Josh like I do.

PJ

Would you please shoot me already?

*[Shawn preps the gun. He aims it. P.J. fights laughter.]*

PJ

Did you ever think anyone would say that to you?

SHAWN

I should never have convinced him to hire you.

PJ

In three... two... one.

SHAWN

I can't do it!

*[Shawn puts the gun on the ground. As he talks, P.J. picks up the gun.]*

SHAWN

Just find another job, dude! There's other magazines to work at. I know you think this one is most rad or punk or whatever stupid bullshit you think is cool these days, but there has to be some sort of compromise. This is not some skateboarding video with some impossible flip, this is serious. This is getting hurt for real. Besides, fuck, whoever said you had to work at a magazine? Find a record company or something!

*[PJ has turned the gun on himself.]*

SHAWN

That's not funny.

PJ

It's hilarious. Everything about this is hilarious.

SHAWN

Nothing is funny about you for sure dying now.

PJ

I'm not going to die, Shawn.

SHAWN

I know you think you're immortal but please put that down. [No response.] I'm not fucking around, put it down!

PJ

It's going to work. I'll show you.

SHAWN

That range is so dangerous. P.J., please. Peter? Please. I'll do it. I promise.

*[After a long pause, he hands Shawn the gun.]*

PJ

I'm never gonna die.

SHAWN

I know.

*[PJ and Shawn lock eyes. Shawn raises the gun. Blackout.]*