



# at Twilight

For three decades, Hulk Hogan has been the world's biggest, baddest professional wrestler. But now life's got him in a sleeper hold – and he just can't fight his way out  
By Erik Hedegaard ★ Photograph by Peter Yang

**S**HORTLY AFTER DAWN, IN THE BEDROOM OF A BEACH HOUSE IN CLEARWATER, Florida, Hulk Hogan is struggling to get out of bed. His legs won't work – they're numb – and he's in pain. Actually, he's in constant pain, which is what happens when you've spent 30 of your 55 years in the ring as the world's most famous professional wrestler. It's a great big case of be-careful-what-you-wish-for. He knows it. He's living it. "My tailbone is bent from landing on my ass, 400 times a year, twice on Saturdays, twice on Sundays," he says. "My back's got all kinds of problems. The pain injections only last two weeks, I'm crippled. My legs get numb, and I can't go up stairs. My hands are numb. My forearms are numb. My neck, too. I've got arthritis and scoliosis. I'm six-four. I used to be six-seven." ★ Shrinking and hurting, Hulk plants his big, meaty palms on his big, meaty thighs and pushes himself to his feet, wobbling forward into the bathroom. ★ "It ain't easy, brother," he says. "It ain't easy." ★ He takes a leak, then looks at himself in the mirror and scowls. What he sees

is a balding guy with a low fringe of hair that's getting lower all the time. "Bozo the Clown," he says, unhappily. In fact, lots of stuff has been changing for Hulk recently, most of it for the worse, ever since the end of his VH1 reality show, *Hogan Knows Best*, which ran from 2005 to 2007. Whereas once he was known as the Hulkster, the Incredible, the Immortal Icon of Professional Wrestling, a.k.a. Hollywood Hulk Hogan, who set records in the ring never to be bested, acted alongside Sylvester Stallone in *Rocky III* and was told by Muhammad Ali, "Hogan, you are the greatest of all time," today he is a man beset by disaster on all sides.

Last year, his son Nick, 18, spent 166 days in jail on a felony reckless-driving charge after causing a car crash that left family friend and Iraq War veteran John Graziano, 24, crippled with severe brain damage. The Graziano family has since filed a multimillion-dollar civil suit against the Hogans. Then, Hulk's wife, Linda, ditched him after 23 years of marriage, initially asking for a settlement of \$4.75 million plus, according to Hulk, \$144,000 a month. Then, with Linda gone, Hulk had to bleach his hair himself, to maintain that famous brilliant-white ponytailed Hulk Hogan look. Only, the first time he did it, he left the bleach in too long and watched his ponytail swirl down the drain: He did the only thing he could, he had brilliant-white hair extensions glued in. And that's not even the half of it.

Still, he keeps chugging forward. Today, he finally makes it into the kitchen, inhales several cups of coffee, begins to feel half-way human, hops into his gigantic yellow truck – the one powered by a Dodge Viper engine – and heads on over to Largo Fitness, to work on his muscles. Along the way, he says he doesn't really want to talk about Linda, but then his mind starts turning over some of the details. Not only did she dump him, but shortly thereafter, she started dating some shaggy-haired pool boy 30 years her junior, set up solo residence in the \$18 million one-time Hogan family home, tossed her boyfriend the keys to Hulk's cars, motorcycles and boats, doesn't appear to mind that she's now known as the Cougar Queen, and is currently plowing through Hulk's money at a furious clip of \$40,000 a month. And soon enough he can't help but talk about her.

"I could have turned everything into a crime scene, like O.J., cutting everybody's throat," he says. "You live half a mile from the 20,000-square-foot home you can't go to anymore, you're driving through downtown Clearwater and see a 19-year-old boy driving *your* Escalade, and you know that a 19-year-old boy is sleeping in *your* bed, with *your* wife, and going to the Four

Contributing editor ERIK HEDEGAARD profiled actor Jason Segel in RS 1074.

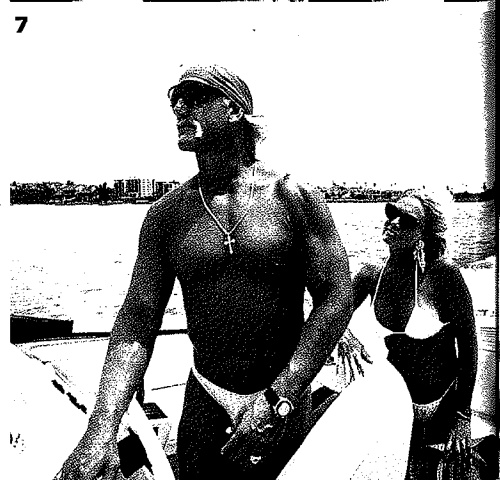
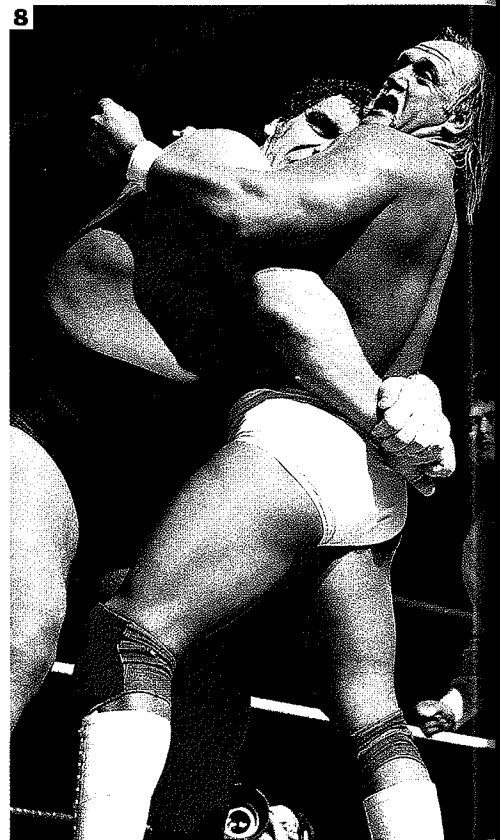
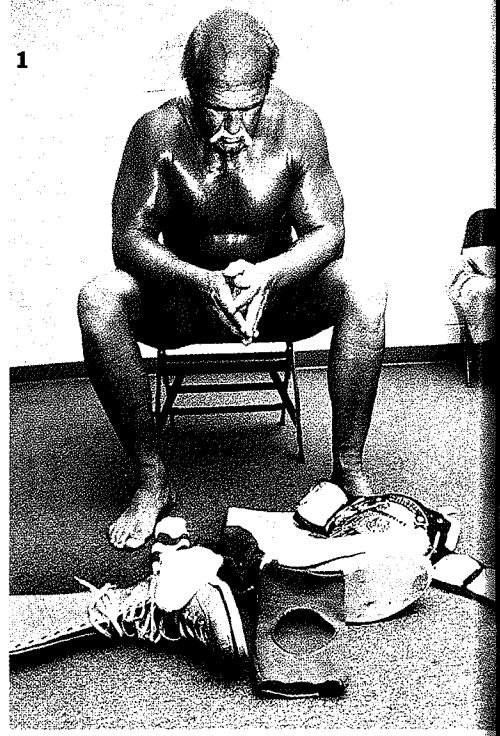
Seasons, where you're paying for the toilet paper he wipes his ass with. I mean, I totally understand O.J. I get it."

That he didn't go the O.J. route he chalks up to lessons learned from reading a slew of spiritual self-help books, foremost among them *The Secret*, by Rhonda Byrne. The basic premise of *The Secret* is that positive thinking leads to a positive life, as mandated by some kind of universal Law of Attraction. It made sense to Hulk. More important, it seems to have worked. Thinking positively, he didn't kill the pool boy, and he did get a statuesque new girlfriend, Jennifer McDaniel, 34, an artist, a former Delta Air Lines' Crown Room Club hostess and a Law of Attraction believer herself. She helps him shave his back ("I shave everything. If not, I look like *Harry and the Hendersons*") and, thankfully, bleach to brilliant white what remains of his hair.

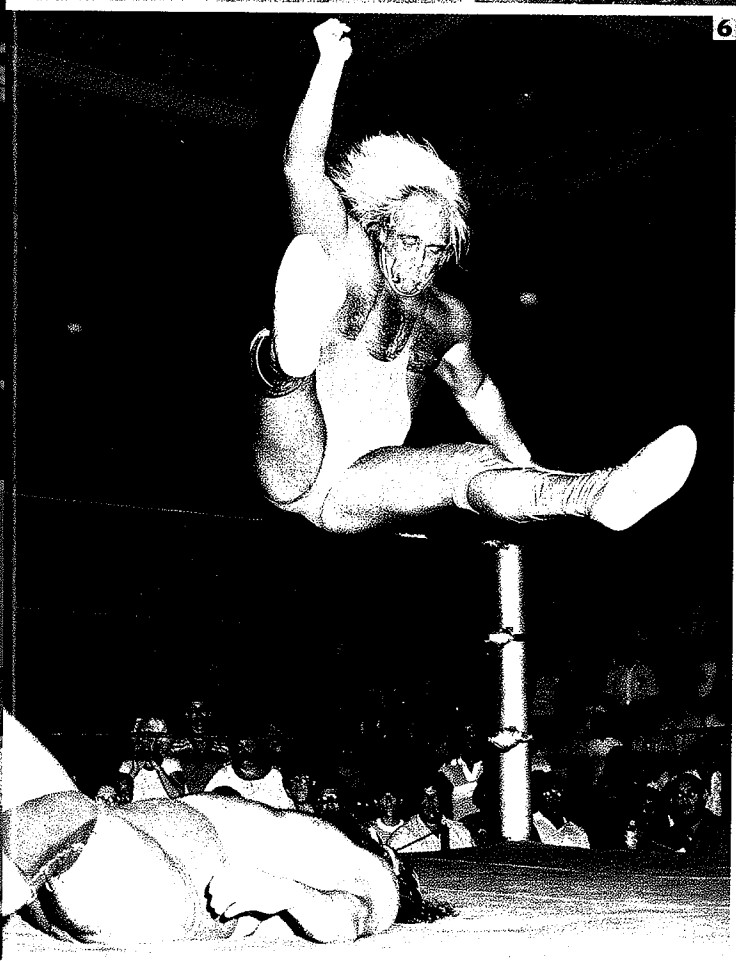
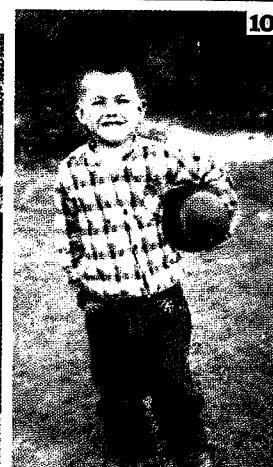
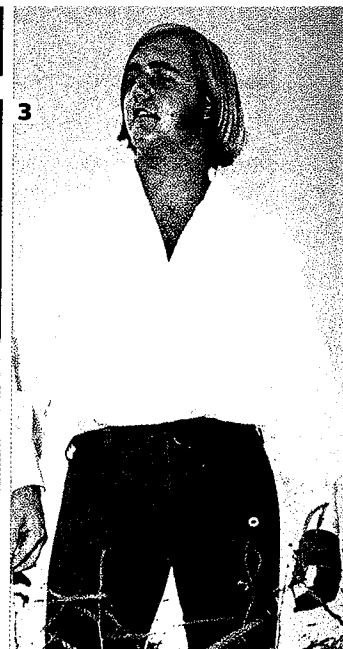
"So it's all good now, brother, and I've got a smile on my face," he says, pulling up to the gym. His *American Gladiators* show on NBC and his *Celebrity Championship Wrestling* show on CMT were both surprisingly successful. He's got an updated autobiography due out in October. And who knows, someday soon he may show up in the ring wearing the old red and yellow: He's been talking to his wrestling nemesis, WWE boss Vince McMahon Jr., about performing in an upcoming WrestleMania event. It depends on a lot of things, not least of which are his numb legs, hands, forearms and neck. But he'd like it to happen. It could return him to what he once was, before it recedes into the distance, like his marriage, gone once and for all.

AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS fame in the Eighties and Nineties, Hulk Hogan wasn't just a wrestler, he was a pop-culture sensation, a guy who crossed over into worlds no wrestler had entered before. He showed up at the 1985 Grammys on the arm of singer Cyndi Lauper as her bodyguard. He starred in his own movies, with titles like *Suburban Commando* and *Mr. Nanny*. He had his own cartoon series, *Hulk Hogan's Rock 'n' Wrestling*. MTV was all over him and his souped-up, ad-friendly message of "Train, say your prayers, eat your vitamins." He became the first and so far the only pro wrestler to appear on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. Other wrestling names might have packed crowds in – including the Iron Sheik, Andre the Giant and the Rock – but no one did it quite like Hulk Hogan.

"He's the first big iconic star we had," says McMahon. "He had the charisma. He had the gift of gab. He had the larger-than-life persona." And he had the moves. The way he would end a match – kneeling on the mat, absorbing punch after punch, trembling like a volcano, then rising to his feet and shivering a finger at his oppo-



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### The Rise and Fall of Hulkamania

Before transforming himself into Hulk Hogan, Terry Bollea was just a poor fat kid from South Tampa, Florida, who spent years training to become the greatest pro wrestler of all time. (1) Backstage after a match in 1991 and (2) in the ring in 1994. Hulk suffers constant pain from the abuse his body took. (3) A page from Hulk's high school yearbook, 1971. (4) With Muhammad Ali and Liberace at WrestleMania I in 1985. In the 1980s, Hogan helped pro wrestling become a force in popular culture. (5) Hulk, Brooke, Linda and Nick in 2005, during the disastrous reality show *Hogan Knows Best*. In its wake, Nick ended up in jail, and Linda and Hulk split up. (6) Dropping the bomb on an opponent in the 1970s. (7) Hulk with Linda in 1991. (8) In the grip of Andre the Giant, 1987. Today Linda enjoys the family home (9) in Clearwater, Florida; Hulk lives nearby. (10) Hulk as a boy in the 1950s.



ment and shouting, along with the crowd, "You!" and after that, punching his opponent - One! Two! Three times! - punching him back into the ropes, where he could grab him and toss him across the ring, into the opposite ropes, and when the guy bounced off them - *pow!* - he'd lay him out flat and end the match with his patented superduper Atomic Leg Drop - the crowd blew its stack. And sure, all of it was choreographed, with the wrestlers, heels and faces alike, thinking of their audience as dupes and marks. And most of the blood was caused by razor blades they cut themselves with. But no one knew that then. There wasn't a movie around like *The Wrestler* to clue them in.

Hulk loves *The Wrestler*. He thinks Mickey Rourke did a great job. His only complaint is it didn't go far enough with the gritty details. "For instance, when Mickey gets locked out of his trailer and sleeps in his van for one night - I slept in my van for two years," he says. "And where he's so careful with the razor blade - I'd go into the ring with it in my mouth, cut my head, cut the referee, cut the other wrestler and, later on, drink beer all night with it still in my mouth." He points to some hash marks, pits and divots on his forehead. "See all that? All of it from using the blade probably 3,000 times. And then, after the fight, when Mickey shakes his bottle of pain pills, there's, like, four in it - when I shook my bottle, there were 400 or 500."

He does say that he thinks Rourke's Ram Robinson is based on him; just check out the way Ram always uses the word "brother" and wears a dorky fanny pack. But other than that, nah, Hulk's not like Ram at all. Not down and out like Ram. Not at the end of his rope like Ram. Not a loser like Ram. And for the most part, especially in a historical sense, Hulk is right. During almost all his wrestling years, he was a golden boy who could not be kept down, no matter what came his way. In the early days, he smoked weed, he snorted coke, he never got caught. A steroid scandal in 1994 did hurt him. Called to testify about steroid use as part of a case the federal government was (unsuccessfully) trying to build against Vince McMahon Jr., Hulk admitted to having been a major steroid user for 13 years - even though not long before, he'd gone on *The Arsenio Hall Show* and denied being a user. "When Arsenio Hall said, 'Are you on steroids?' I said, 'No,' because at the time I wasn't. I was just playing with words. I should have just fessed up and said, 'Yeah, I did them,' because it backfired on me." The fans went from loving him to hating him. At fights, they held up signs that said, "Hogan, did you take your shot today?" and "Hogan is bald because he takes steroids!" When he finally came back, however, he came back as big as ever. Another time, he quit the WWE because he felt undervalued and

went to Ted Turner's World Championship Wrestling organization, which he helped turn into a real McMahon-beater. Then, several years later, in 2002, he rejoined McMahon's WWE, took on the Rock and was still just as big. At his peak, he raked in maybe \$20 million a year. Over his career, he figures he generated revenue in excess of \$1 billion. And all along the way, he was known, and revered, for his charity work, especially on behalf of the Make-A-Wish Foundation. He was a good guy. He was a rich guy. He was on top of the world.

Somewhere along the line, though, his luck changed.

Today, with his assets frozen by court order in the divorce case, he doesn't even have enough money in his bank account to cover his bills. He spends most of his days talking to lawyers. One of Hulk's favorite things to say is "It's all good, brother, it's all good." But clearly it is not. His son, Nick, has taken off for L.A., to escape "the lynch-mob mentality in this little town here," Hulk says. Daughter Brooke is doing OK with her own VH1 reality show, *Brooke Knows Best*, which revolves around her attempts to become a pop star. But then one of the Hogan Chihuahuas gets run over. Or Hulk Hogan's Ultimate Grill starts flash-frying people's faces and has to be recalled. Or there's some new crazy demand from Linda. ("Brother, she's a totally different animal than you've ever seen," Hulk says. Says McMahon, "She's eccentric, shall we say." Says Hulk's best friend, radio personality Bubba the Love Sponge, "She's drunk with power and money, and Hulk ate shit sandwiches for years.") Or there's some new twist in the tragic Graziano business; just the other day, Graziano's father pleaded not guilty for allegedly attempting to put a hit out on his wife and offering a \$13.06 gift certificate from a pizza joint as partial payment. Or Hulk pops a gas-ket, as he did in front of TMZ's cameras outside the courtroom, engaging in a loud argument with one of Linda's attorneys.

Crazy nonsensical stuff like that.

"He's got this black cloud sort of hanging over him, and I really hope he gets out from under it," says McMahon. "I've talked to him in the last few weeks, and even with all this stuff going on around him, he seems to have this positive attitude. But then he does what he did with Linda's attorney. Come on! Don't get close to those TMZ video cameras! Stop it! Just walk away!"

But he doesn't. And sometimes it almost seems like *The Secret's* Law of Attraction must be working against him instead of for him. How else to explain all the bad stuff still coming his way?

EVERYWHERE he goes in Clearwater, people know him. They know him by his flashy vehicles. They know him by the do-rag on his head, the Fu Manchu on his chin, the muscles piled up high. Happy to see him, they shout, "Hulk!" And Hulk, being the personable guy he is, always shouts back an equally enthusiastic "Hey!"

But, really, ever since retiring from steady pro wrestling gigs in 2003, Hulk has been Hulk Hogan a lot less than he used to be. These days he's mostly just Terry Bollea, the name he was born with. It's not Hulk Hogan you see in *Hogan Knows Best*, for instance. It's Terry Bollea, easygoing, laid-back, overprotective dad and beleaguered husband. And it's not Hulk Hogan you see driving around town in a Viper-powered pickup. It's Terry Bollea, who every time he passes over the Clearwater Memorial Causeway can see the \$18 million French-country-style mansion where some pool boy is enjoying the fruits of his aching back and busted-up knees.

Terry Bollea grew up in South Tampa, Florida, the redneck son of redneck parents living in a two-bedroom wood-frame house on cinder blocks. His father worked construction, while his mom stayed at home to raise him and his older brother, Allan, who died in 1986 after years of hard living, brawling and drug-abuse.

"I could've turned everything into a crime scene, like O.J., cutting everybody's throat," Hogan says. "You see a 19-year-old boy driving your Escalade, sleeping in your bed, with your wife. I mean, I totally understand O.J."

As a kid, one of Terry's favorite things to do was stick rocks up his nose; he has no idea why. One of his father's favorite things to do was go out back to his shed and stare at the girlie pinup he'd dug out of a garbage pile. Minute steak for dinner was a big deal. The boy got a bike one year; it got stolen. He never got another.

He was fat, weighing 200 pounds by age 12. He had one "inny" nipple and one "outty" nipple, and when he went to the beach, he was so embarrassed by his mismatched nipples that he refused to take off his shirt. What he did like to do was bowl, and starting at the age of eight, he and a pal

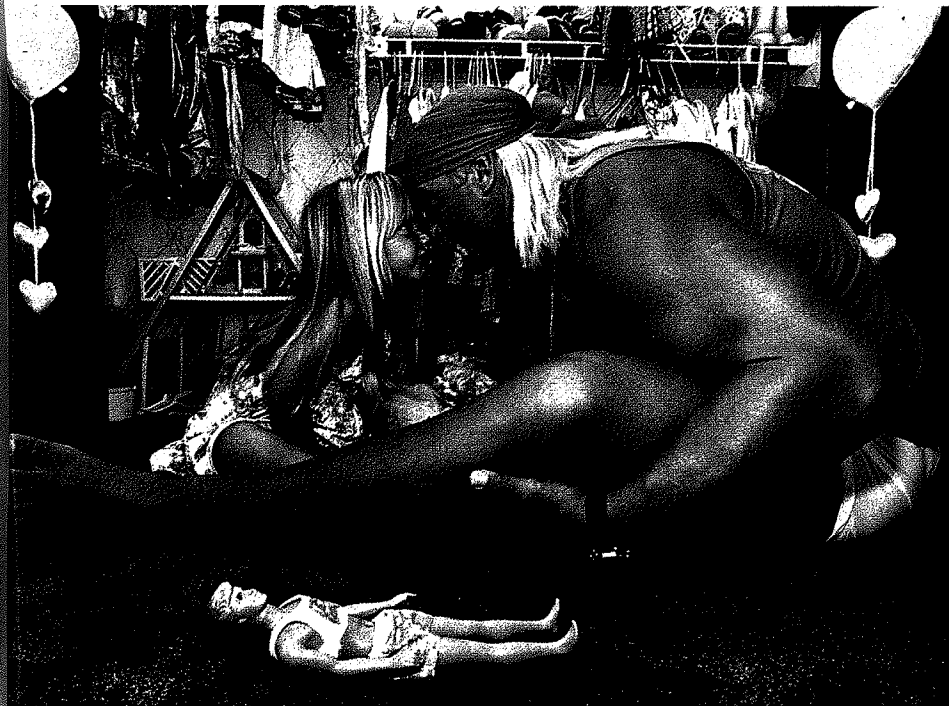
more than Terry Bollea. He wanted to be a larger-than-life Greek god too. Finally, in 1977, around his 24th birthday, he got his start on a regional wrestling circuit and soon traded in the name Terry Bollea for a few others. He was the Super Destroyer, he was Sterling Golden, he was Terry "the Hulk" Boulder - and he was on his way.

Looking back at those early years, he says, "We were running hard. Never flew anywhere, always drove our cars. Driving all day and all night. Wrestlers would smoke a joint, drink a beer, do a hit of speed or something to stay awake. No one was educated, steroids were legal,

sake. Then, in March 1985, came the first WrestleMania event, at the Garden, which pitted Hulk and Mr. T against "Rowdy" Roddy Piper and Paul Orndorff in a match viewed by 1 million people on closed-circuit TV, setting a record at the time. But the big news was that Vince McMahon Jr. had the idea to cross-promote the event with MTV, building on celebrity appearances by Cyndi Lauper and Muhammad Ali (not to mention Liberace). It made pro wrestling hip. And the biggest, most flamboyant pro wrestling hipster of them all was Hulk Hogan.

"He was a serious performer who tried to give a good show," recalls former pro wrestler Bret "the Hit Man" Hart. "As for the wrestlers, we would fall all over ourselves trying to work on his card. You knew you were lucky to be on his show. Every wrestler in the dressing room looked up to Hulk."

But once he retired, Hulk found himself with more time on his hands than he knew what to do with, so in 2004, when VH1 came along with its proposition for *Hogan Knows Best*, he was primed. "I'm here for a reason other than being a wrestler," he would later say, proudly. Plus he thought the show could do his kids some good in their careers, Nick as a race-car driver, Brooke as a singer. What Linda would get out of it was more of the good life, which is what she seemed to want most. At the dinner table one night, Hulk pitched it to all three of them: "With cameras in the house, you're always going to be under scrutiny. You're going to walk differently and talk differently and act differently. Once you get on TV, good, bad or ugly, things aren't going to be the same. So, do you want to do it?" They all said yes, and that was that, for good, bad or ugly - mostly for ugly, as it turns out, but who could have known that then?



**FATHER KNOWS BEST** Hulk at home with his three-year-old daughter, Brooke, in 1991.

were the Florida State doubles champions five years running. He also was one great Little League ballplayer, until he blew his arm out. Mainly, though, from the age of six or seven on, he was a pro wrestling fanatic, watching it every Sunday evening on TV, then getting his dad to take him to live events at the Tampa Armory, or he'd sneak off to the Sportatorium. He saw all the greats of the era, among them Haystacks Calhoun, Crusher Verdu, Ox Baker and Dusty Rhodes, the American Dream. "Wrestlers were like Greek gods to me," he once said. "They were giants."

Years later, after graduating from high school, spending time in college studying business, playing guitar in various small-time rock bands, getting to know some wrestlers at the local bars and starting to beef up and lose his fat at Hector's Gym, where he met more wrestlers, he one day got up the nerve to tell his new friends that he wanted to be one of them. He was Terry Bollea, and he wanted to be

and doctors would prescribe anything. I'd drive 400 miles somewhere, cut myself all up, drive 400 miles back the same night - all for \$25."

In 1979, he came to the attention of Vince McMahon Sr., who signed him to the World Wrestling Federation, as his burgeoning wrestling empire was then called, and decided that Terry "the Hulk" Boulder should become Hulk Hogan, an Irish-American wrestler, just as, say, Joe Scarpa of Philadelphia had been called on to become Chief Jay Strongbow, a Native American wrestler. Later that year, at Madison Square Garden, Hulk entered the ring as a bad-guy heel in his initial WWF event and defeated Ted DiBiase; the match lasted only 11 minutes, but Hulk's win would reverberate for years to come, as he transformed himself into a good-guy face and started up with the Hulkamania business, where he'd run around the stage shaking, quivering and ripping off his T-shirt just like his Marvel comic-book-series name-

**H**E'S STANDING IN THE kitchen at his beach house, do-rag wrapped tightly around his head, fake hair hanging in a limp ponytail down his back. Brooke - buxom and blond, just like her mother - is scurrying about, getting ready to go to the airport. Ever since her parents separated, she's been through the wringer too. First, she lived with her mom and refused to talk to her dad, feeling betrayed that he had started dating a friend of Brooke's. Once they cleared that up - the woman had provided a shoulder for Hulk to cry on, and things got out of hand - Brooke returned to his side. Today, at 20, she sounds happy that her parents are getting divorced.

"It was a vicious circle, with her bad mood, then his bad mood, then she'd hate him, then he'd hate her," Brooke says. "It was like living in an insane asylum."

# HULK HOGAN

Hulk is looking at a large photograph hanging prominently on a kitchen wall. It's of the Pontiac Silverdome, taken from way up high, and shows him standing in the middle of the ring during his 1987 bout with 500-pound Andre the Giant, surrounded by a crowd of 93,000 people. "The Rolling Stones were there the week before me and did 88,000, and the pope was there the week after me and did 80,000," he says. "It was the largest indoor attendance ever."

Factually, this isn't exactly true, but to Hulk it is and always will be. It's a misty moment. He sways a little.

Just then, Brooke recalls a few stories her dad used to tell her when she was little, about life on the road. She says, "My favorite is the one about him going with Andre the Giant to a hotel in Japan where the bathrooms were too small. Andre couldn't use the bathroom, so he laid newspaper down on the bed, took a big horse dump on the bed, and said to my dad, 'Hey, boss, come look at this!'"

She laughs and Hulk hugs her.

"You know what I miss?" he says. "I miss being in the center of the ring, looking at that crowd, and it's so fucking loud it hurts my ears and makes my jaws water. I don't like it when people say, 'Hey, you used to be the man!' I like when people say, 'Man, keep going,' I miss being in the mix and the way it made you feel."

**A**ND MAYBE THAT'S PART of what's getting him into trouble these days. He misses the mix. As McMahon says, "Who wouldn't? When you're receiving standing ovations and the accolades of being an iconic individual, it's an elixir that you would never want to stop drinking." McMahon goes on, "Some might also say that the human being became the character, that Terry Bollea actually became Hulk Hogan, or he's confused as to who Terry Bollea is and who Hulk Hogan is, and that's another one of the reasons he gets himself in these jams. Of course, I'm just speculating here. But it's complex, that's for sure."

So, there's that, the possibility some kind of psychic confusion is constantly leading Hulk to make ill-advised decisions. Among wrestlers, there's also a karmic-justice theory in circulation. Says McMahon, "Some think he didn't give back as much as someone of his stature should have, that he's been a bit selfish." Says Bret Hart, "It's like what goes around comes around. When I worked underneath on his cards, I treated him with respect, and when I became champion, I thought he would be the first one to congratulate me. But it wasn't like that. It was like now I was the enemy."

Another possibility - at least for what he does, as opposed to things that hap-



**HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE WORLD** Hogan in his beach house in Clearwater, Florida

pen to him - is that he just doesn't have the wherewithal to look before he leaps. At one point, while Hulk is driving to the airport in the gigantic Viper-powered pickup truck, Brooke sees some friends in a car ahead and urges her father to pull alongside them.

"Tito!" Brooke shouts out the window. "T! What's up? Where you goin'?"

Suddenly, Terry or Hulk or whoever he is does the strangest thing. It's like he still has that old, arrogant vanity license plate attached to the car, the one that read COEHSR (capable of eluding high-speed pursuit). He

floors it, the Viper engine thundering and shaking and blowing forward down the highway at some kind of insane speed.

Brooke shrieks, "Dad!"

But then she starts laughing, and Hulk backs off on the gas, laughing too. It really is a surreal moment, though. Had not his son, doing exactly this sort of thing, gotten into a car wreck that left another young man permanently damaged? Has common sense escaped him totally? Why would he do this?

And, for that matter, why didn't he himself override his family's vote and turn

down the reality-show gig? "I tried to warn them about what they were in for - now look what happened," he said in the aftermath - as if they somehow should be blamed. But, truly, Hulk was the only one with celebrity experience. He knew, or should have known, what was coming.

"Reality shows exaggerate, intensify and exacerbate every problem you have," says Patrick Wanis, a so-called celebrity life coach who once worked briefly with the Hogans. "In a family situation, your emphasis turns away from raising your children to worrying about how you look to the cameras. And all that exposure and fame can result in delusions of grandeur, where not only do you engage in acts of stupidity, but you develop this sense of invincibility. You begin to think, 'I'm a god. I can do anything I want. I'm untouchable.' And then reality hits."

In the Hogans' case, reality came in different forms. For the parents, it's been the final dismantling of a marriage that was already in big trouble. "We had problems and issues for 20 years," Hulk says. For Brooke, it's been having to discover that her dad was banging one of her friends and that a pimply-faced pool boy she went to high school with is hooking up with her mom. And while people may think they know the Hogans from the show - and thus feel free to judge them mercilessly - they really don't know them, if only because the Hogan reality show, like all reality shows, didn't reflect any kind of reality at all.

Says one former member of the *Hogan Knows Best* technical crew, "For the first two weeks, it was like, 'Let's follow them around and see what we get.' Then it was 'OK, we'll loosely script it.' And by the end, the family realized they had to do scenes. Terry and Linda would be arguing, and we're all like, 'Wow, she's really pissed off!' And then she'd come out and go, 'How was that?' But the truth is, this family is one of the nicest families I've ever been around. I mean, with Nick, what you saw on the show is him

being a kid who shows off. But he's really one of the kindest people you'd ever want to meet. It's a shame Hulk and Linda couldn't work out their troubles. Certainly, Hulk was into it. He was always about Team Hogan. But over the years, you could see it wear on both of them - and the kids."

Just one more consequence of the show: During Nick's sentencing, the judge repeatedly said, "If you weren't who you were," implying that, if he wasn't Nick Bollea, infamous because of a reality TV show, his sentence might be far lighter than the 166 days ultimately meted out, 28 of which Nick spent in solitary confinement.

If Hulk feels bad about any of this, he doesn't let on. He just plows forward, like he did a few moments ago in his Viper-powered pickup, damn the consequences. Anyway, he's got other things on his mind - for instance, the upcoming *WrestleMania* event and the pros and cons of his wrestling in it.

"If I go back," he says, "I might embarrass myself. And I have no idea what'll happen if I land on my ass. My back might snap in half. If it did, it would be *The Wrestler* all over again. On the upside, if it worked out OK, people would be saying, 'Oh, my gosh, he's the man!' Perceptionwise, I'm right back to where I was before."

He turns up the CD player on one of Brooke's poppy, catchy tunes and sings along with it. Then he turns it down again.

He says he's got big plans for the future. "Brother," he says, getting all worked up, "this is intermission for me. In the first half of the game, I did a lot of stuff, seen the Pyramids, beat three car companies three years in a row in revenue worldwide, raised a lot of hell, but that's nothing compared to what's going to happen in the second half. It's going to be the resurrection of Hulk Hogan, who could have been a great American tragedy - my son going to jail, the divorce, everything - but has decided to dust himself off and not only get back up but also move forward in life in a positive way."

And what could be bigger than that?

LATER ON, HULK STEPS INTO his favorite sushi restaurant for an afternoon meal and a few gulps of sake chased with Diet Coke. His first words to the sushi chef are "You seen my ex-wife in here, bro?"

The guy nods. "She had the young boy."

"They partying?"

"No..."

Hulk shrugs, then takes a stool at the sushi bar and starts talking about the time after Linda left, when he was living in the big house, all alone, surrounded by family photos of what used to be. He says that at one point he thought about killing himself. "I was drinking, eating Xanax, I couldn't sleep, I was in a trance. I was walking around the house with everyone gone, going, 'Where'd everybody go? How did this happen?' I got crazy. I started second-guessing, 'Why keep going?' I gave my gun - I just have one, a 9mm - to my attorney. It didn't scare me. But the thought process was there. It wasn't good. It was real bad."

Just then, Hulk lurches to his feet and staggers around the room.

"Oh, my back," he says. "Something's going on."

He's in what seems to be a wretched amount of pain, like maybe he should be home in bed taking it easy. But a minute later, he returns to the stool and starts talking about the Law of Attraction as it pertains to his life.

"I'll get off this kick in a bit," he says, "but the thing is, everything that happens in your life happens because you're attracting it. The reason I was the greatest wrestler and the greatest celebrity and made a ton of money was the Law of Attraction. I had a positive message: 'Do your training, say your prayers, eat your vitamins.' But I was also attracting all this negativity with this other message of 'Eat your vitamins, but also drink beer, snort cocaine, eat pills and do pot.' When I explained the Law of Attraction to Nick, Nick said, 'You're going to be so upset with me, but I have to tell you that the night before the accident, me and John sat up for hours, and all we did was watch car crashes on YouTube. I think I attracted the accident.' But, see, here's the point. Ask and you shall receive."

"I know everybody thinks I'm a goof and halfway wacked out. And, yeah, I know I have problems. But they're not what my life is about anymore. So for whatever it means, we're all going to have to sit back and watch and see where I end up. Me, I feel great about what's going on. I'm going someplace else."

"The Law of Attraction. Think it. Believe it. Manifest it."

And with that, he's jolted off his stool again, back seizing up on him again, for whatever reason, and not for the last time on this particular day.

"The reason I was the greatest was the Law of Attraction: I had a positive message. But I also attracted negativity with this other message of 'Eat your vitamins, but also drink beer, snort cocaine, eat pills and do pot.'"