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Shamed pol Anthony Weiner describes his secret life as he considers mayoral run

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“I knew when I did it, almost from the moment I did it, there was no good way for it to end. When I sent that fateful tweet.”

For the first time, shamed former Congressman Anthony Weiner has described in detail his secret life online and the three-year fascination with late-night sexting that imploded his career.

In a lengthy interview with The New York Times Magazine posted online yesterday, Weiner, 48 — who sat for the interview with wife Huma Abedin, 36, in an effort to rebuild his image as a public official — revealed:

* He’s eyeing a 2013 mayoral bid — “I don’t have this burning, overriding desire to go out and run for office . . . [but] to some degree, it’s now or maybe never for me in terms of running for something.”

* The former representative initially told his wife that the infamous boxer-brief crotch shot he accidentally tweeted wasn’t his, and she believed him. “I lied to her. The lies to everyone else were primarily because I wanted to keep it from her.”

* Abedin’s decision to stay with Weiner wasn’t easy. “I did spend a long time saying and thinking: ‘I. Don’t. Understand.’ And it took a long time to be able to sit on a couch next to Anthony and say, ‘OK. I understand and I forgive.’”

Before Weiner shot off the “fateful tweet” of himself in boxer shorts to a 21-year-old Seattle college student in May 2011, he said he hadn’t thought of his Internet relationships with half a dozen women — which had spanned the entire length of his relationship with Abedin — as “all that serious” and said they “didn’t seem to occupy a real space in my feelings.”

“I wasn’t really thinking . . . is this risky behavior? Is this smart behavior? To me, it was just another way to feed this notion that I want to be liked and admired.

“This fix of having an emotional back-and-forth on the Internet at 2 a.m. seemed, to me, like getting something that I didn’t really have a lot of, and it was easy and it never really got in. It bounced off.” He occasionally worried that he’d be found out.

“I would stop, or say I was going to stop, talking to someone. Or not be responsive because I’d gone on to other things or whatever. And someone would get upset. One of these people would say ‘You’re not paying enough attention to me’ or ‘What’s going on with our relationship?’”

“It wasn’t until after the train had run me over that I really understood that playing on those tracks was going to be problematic.”

His ill-fated foray into social media grew out of “me wanting people’s approval.”

“Twitter and Facebook allowed for me [to] sit and hear what people were saying all around,” said Weiner, adding that he went from reading people’s online comments about himself to “trying to engage them.”

“And it just started to blur into this desire to engage in it all the time. Someone stops me in the airport and says, ‘Wow, you’re amazing.’ Well, OK, now, at 2 o’clock in the morning, I can come home from playing hockey and I can find someone saying ‘Oh, that was great’ or ‘You’re an idiot.’”

“Sometimes it would start out about politics and then, ‘You’re a great guy.’ ‘Oh, thanks, you’re great, too.’ ‘I think you’re handsome.’ ‘Oh, that’s great.’” Weiner said.

“You know, like spin the wheel! Find someone to say something to you! And if it wasn’t 2011 and it didn’t exist, it’s not like I would have gone out cruising bars or something like that. It was just something that technology made possible and it became possible for me to do stupid things.

“It’s clear it wasn’t because I didn’t love Huma,” said Weiner, who began dating Abedin in 2008 and married her in 2010.

“It wasn’t because there’s anything about my relationship with Huma that was missing that I was looking for elsewhere. Even that would be pat, kind of understandable on some level.”

Weiner’s fatal tweet went out on May 27, 2011, while Abedin, a top aide to then-Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, was out of the country with her boss.

“I knew it was bad,” Weiner said. “Huma was coming back from overseas, and I called her and left her a message. . . . I lied to her.”

Just days earlier, Abedin had been staying in Buckingham Palace and penned her husband a note that read, “I cannot believe what an amazingly blessed life that we live, these incredible experiences we’ve both had.”

She readily bought her husband’s story that his Twitter account had been hacked.

“I’ve never been on Twitter,” Abedin said. “I couldn’t tell you the first thing about how it works. And Anthony had told me in the past that there were these sort of trolls on the Internet who were trying to damage him, take him down.

“Anthony was Anthony. Confident! Determined! Defensive! I was right there with him: ‘Let’s fight! Defend! I don’t understand. Why don’t you just say this is not your picture?’ I was with him. One hundred percent.”

The public didn't know at the time that Abedin was pregnant.

"All the while we have this secret," Abedin said. "Going to doctors' appointments, finding out if the baby is OK. I was also sleeping a lot. I was falling asleep at 6 o'clock at night on the sofa."

By Friday, June 1, when Weiner told reporters "I can't say with certitude" whether the crotch-shot picture was of him, he decided to tell Abedin the truth.

He says he "sat her down" and told her during a stay at a friend's house in the Hamptons that weekend. She says it wasn't until they had packed up the car to leave.

"The weekend was over [and] Anthony said, 'I have something to tell you. I can't lie to you anymore. It's true. It's me. The picture is me. I sent it. Yes, these stories about the other women are true,'" Abedin recalled.

"And it was every emotion that one would imagine: rage and anger and shock.

"But more than anything else, in the immediate, it was disbelief. The thing that I consciously remember saying over and over and over again is: 'I don't understand. What is going on? What's happening to our lives?'"

Said Weiner, "Basically, we drove back to the city, and she said: 'You've just got to tell everyone the truth. Telling me doesn't help any.' It was brutal. It was completely out of control.

"There was the crime, there was the cover-up, there was harm I had done to her. And there's no one who deserved this less than Huma. That's really the bottom line. No one deserved to have a dope like me do that less than she did."

Weiner was stunned at the size of the resulting media explosion, but chalked it up to "my last name; the fact that I was this combative congressman; the fact that there were pictures involved; the fact that it was a slow news period; the fact that I was an idiot about it; the fact that, while I was still lying about it, I dug myself in deeper by getting beefy with every reporter.

"But it was also this notion of how much attention our relationship had gotten, this kind of Camelot feel to it. It turned out to make it harder on both of us, and it made the explosion that much bigger."

"I felt like I couldn't breathe," Abedin said. "I felt like I was in an airplane really high in the air, and all of a sudden, the plane is coming apart at the seams, and I am just doing all I can to hang on for dear life."

Days later, Abedin took off for Africa and Dubai with Clinton. When Huma returned in mid-June, she sneaked out to see Weiner in the trunk of her friend's car. By then, Weiner had decided to resign his congressional seat.

"We go away to another friend's house in the Hamptons, just the two of us, trying to figure out if we can save our marriage and what we're going to do and everything else," he said.

"First, there was the decision to resign. Huma didn't really want me to, frankly. But I just had to cull

that part of the conversation out of our lives and focus on my marriage, my family, her family . . .”

“My career seemed the least important of all of those other things. That wasn’t easy for Huma. Her frame was: ‘We’ve gotta get back to normal somehow.’”

Abedin said it wasn’t “an easy or fast decision” to stick with her husband.

“At the time, we were very early in our marriage, but it was an old friendship. He was my best friend. In addition to that, I loved him. There was a deep love there, but it was coupled with a tremendous feeling of betrayal.

“It took a lot of work, both mentally and in the way we engage with each other, for me to get to a place where I said: ‘OK, I’m in. I’m staying in this marriage.’ Here was a man I respected, I loved, was the father of this child inside of me, and he was asking me for a second chance.

“It was the right choice for me. I didn’t make it lightly.”

As he mulls entering the New York City mayoral race, Weiner said he’s still taking the pulse of voters.

“I don’t have this burning, overriding desire to go out and run for office. It’s not the single animating force in my life as it was for quite some time. But I do recognize, to some degree, it’s now or maybe never for me, in terms of running for something. I’m trying to gauge not only what’s right and what feels comfortable right this second, but [also] is this the time that I should be doing it?”

“Also, I want to ask people to give me a second chance.

“Put it this way: It’s hard to forget even for a moment that you have become a figure of fascination. Like, you know, I don’t travel too far without someone turning around and looking or taking a picture of me or coming up to say hello or whispering to their buddy.

“People are generally prepared to get over it, but they don’t know if they’re prepared to vote for me,” said Weiner, who has hired pollsters. “And there’s a healthy number of people who will never get over it. It’s a little complicated because I always attracted a fairly substantial amount of people who didn’t like me anyway.”

He said that if he does run, “it won’t be something as pedestrian as, ‘Do I think I’ll win?’ It will be something more like, ‘Does it feel like I should be involved in this debate?’

“I’m really trying hard to let things come to me a little bit more and be less about leaning into every element of my life. And I think I’m a better person for that reason.

“But you know, it will be December, and I’ll be like: ‘OK, I’m going to run! What the hell!’”