



If They Only Knew

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Part feminist, part superhero, Chyna has blazed a trail where no woman had gone before. She has gained the respect of the men inside the World Wrestling Federation, and the world at large. She was the first woman to wear the Intercontinental Championship belt, yet these were not her most significant battles.

She has battled her entire life: against a controlling mother; against a scheming father; and against a world with a predetermined view of what beauty and success should be. She has battled and won her entire life.

If they only knew offers a rare glimpse behind the scenes of the World Wrestling Federation, and a rarer glimpse of what it takes just to get there -- the hurdles that must be overcome... and the broken hearts and broken body parts that are suffered along the way.

Chyna -- a.k.a. Joanie Laurer -- lets us in what it's like to live your dream and overcome your nightmares. Complete with insights from other WWF Superstars, this is a must read for any fan of the WWF and for anyone who wants to see how a real-life hero overcame adversity.

If They Only Knew Details

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Natalie says

My ex was hugely into WWE and consequently bought every wrestling "autobiography" (most are ghostwritten, and this one was no exception) available. I picked this one up mostly because I wanted to see what the wrestling world was like from a female perspective. It was trainwreck-ish in the way that most celebrity biographies are, except on steroids.

Johnny Andrews says

An interesting book from the first half of her life leading up to the beginning of her life with the WWF/WWE would have liked a bit more but it's a good read. Sometimes she seems to digress but often apologises for it. A bit of everything for a biography really the sad family life-to a point. Funny moments. Then some little insights into the world of wrestling from the Indie circuits and the big WWF/WWE. If you love wrestling it's a good read. If you liked Chyna then it's a very good book. Just feel like there could be more.

David says

I liked the book and appreciated her life story....I could picture her speaking as I was reading through her book.

I didn't know that she was as "all over the place" as this book revealed to me. It was hard to follow at some points, and there was a few times where I just had to close the book and say "that's enough for today" I guess I was hoping for more wrestling stories, either in ring, from others, or on the road. I am glad that I read it and hope she get's into the HOF some day soon.

JenniferJ says

I enjoyed reading about Chyna aka Joanie Laurer's rise to fame and stardom. The photo's were awesome. I loved and miss Chyna so much.

Lyndsey Plitt says

Alot of people say it doesn't have the substance to it that "The Rock" or "Mankinds" books did and in a way they are right. It does seem to rely a little heavily on pictures and the flow of the book is a bit off...it jumps around a bit and can feel like a collection of articles on Chyna's life more then an autobiography. However considering what this woman has gone through in her lifetime she approaches the subject matter with touching warmth and good humor. It's also a very honest look at tough subjects like family estrangement,plastic surgery,traumatic abusive events,and whats its like to be a woman trying to make it in a

mans world.

Willow Redd says

Reading this now that she has passed, it is truly tempting to say "Poor Joanie." Of course, a lot more awful stuff was waiting for her on the other side of this book, which is what eventually led to her death, and many of the people she mentions here are responsible for that *cough* Vince *cough*. Of course, I could write a whole diatribe about the awful things that man has done to people, so we'll leave it at the cough for now.

Joanie Laurer, the woman who would be Chyna, had a difficult childhood. Not necessarily a terrible childhood, but certainly rough. An overly paranoid mother and an absent father, who would later take serious advantage of her, led her to some tough times. Eventually though, she found her calling.

This was an interesting story, and Joan doesn't pull her punches.

Jim says

This isn't something I would normally find myself reading, but with the recent unfortunate demise of Joanie Laurer (the titular Chyna) I thought I would pick up her book to see if there was any explanation or rationale behind some of her unorthodox behaviour. The book was written when Chyna was at the peak of her career, after her Playboy shoot but before her porn films.

One point was established early in the book: Joanie had a wall between herself and just about everyone. She was estranged from her family eventually, and doesn't give them much credit for anything in her book. Her background was not ideal, but it wasn't particularly traumatic either. She was always fed, schooled, and housed (sometimes in some decent digs). Her mother and biological father split and Joanie was to have a succession of stepfathers, but that's not particularly unusual any more. There are signs that she was self-centred and had some anger control issues, a condition that has a tendency to leave one friendless. I may be wrong, but my impression was that she wasn't being particularly fair to some of her associates and family in the book.

So Joanie took up bodybuilding, and a fine job she did. She sculpted a magnificent body that some might think too mannish for a woman. She attended Killer Kowalski's wrestling school. she had some cosmetic surgeries done. She made contacts and got accepted as a professional wrestler and, to make a long story short, eventually becomes intercontinental champion. All of which means nothing, of course, because the winners and losers are scripted. A win is less a victory than it is a business decision. By the end of the book, she has endorsements, guest appearances, a Playboy shoot and tons of fans. She had the world by the balls on a downhill drag...so how did that go all to hell? Sadly, that answer can only be guessed at.

There are hints, of course: there is a certain narcissism here, as evidenced by the surgeries, the ginormous store-bought titties that were eventually named for her. In fact, she seems to be obsessed with them, referring to them variously as tits, titties, breasts, boobs, funbags, sweater puppies and juggage. I may have missed a couple. She refers to herself and other wrestlers in glowing terms but speaks disdainfully of others: "*Sarah Jessica Parker, so tiny, so hospital-bed thin*" is an example...you don't endear yourself to people by speaking to them in those terms.

Some incidents left me with the impression that some information was being left out. Like the time she was asked to leave the set of the *Drew Carey Show* after her boyfriend Hunter had appeared on an episode. I can't imagine that they would ask her to leave for no reason...she's a celebrity in her own right, and I just can't see her being escorted off set except in case of some type of disruption.

And what's with the porn? I don't understand it at all! There is nothing in this book that indicates that this Amazon would ever drop that far. I was just gobsmacked when child actress Dana Plato turned to porn, and I wonder if the same circumstance existed here? Possibly drugged out, incoherent, overdosing your life away because you can't be the star any more. No longer capable in the ring, no longer in your sagging mid-forties able to make a living in the sex trade, unable by disposition to settle down to a life as an ordinary person selling real estate or coaching wannabes. There is one big hint that Chyna had this fear of being nobody. This from page 273:

And that's what really hurt the most. I began to feel...normal. I began to feel ordinary. My great rise to the extraordinary would be fraught with the usual setbacks, struggles, dead ends, and false starts that come with the ordinary. All of those awful proverbs: "In the fullness of time..." or "Patience comes to those who wait" or, gulp, "Maybe next time..." I felt like a piece of shit.

So other than not really being what I wanted in a book, I can see where a wrestling fan might like this one a lot better than I did, being written at the peak of her career and richly illustrated with colour photos showing this magnificent specimen before her descent down that slippery slope.

Garrett Burnett says

I can't imagine a worse book being written at any point ever. On the plus side, it was great to see Joanie emerge back to prominence on *Celebrity Rehab*.

Miss says

To those of you who gave this book a bad rating I'd like to give you all the middle finger! Seriously there was nothing whiny and boring about this book. I've heard way worse. Chyna is just telling her story of how she fight to be where she is today. Everyone has to do that! Chyna didn't whine or complain about it. She sucked it up and did what she had to do. Sometimes she would even get frustrated and put up a fight which I don't blame her for doing. Although I disagree with some things she did such as getting plastic surgery and posing for playboy she's still a great role model. She's an example that not all women are sex toys or girls who make men's food in the kitchen. We're just as strong and tough as they are. I really enjoyed this book and it deserves better reviews than what it has been given so far.

Celeste says

I love Chyna she is one of my favorite wrestlers. And although she insists she never did drugs ,the suspicions will always be there. I will believe her since she is no longer here to defend herself

Marcy says

I read this book when it first came out when I was 13. I think it took me about a day to read it and I read it multiple times after that. Chyna has always been my favorite wrestler. I recently read it again after her passing and still enjoyed it as much as I did back then. It's a good read if you want to learn more about her.

Soho_Black says

In the world of professional wrestling, women aren't unusual. But where they do exist, they tend to be restricted to supporting roles where their main job is to look pretty and little else and on the rare occasion they do get to wrestle, they're often restricted to wrestling other women. Even in mixed wrestling bouts, it's far more common to see both women in the ring together than any actual mixed wrestling.

But as with anything, it only takes one person to change attitudes and in the case of women in wrestling, that person was Joanie Laurer, better known to WWE fans as Chyna. She was the first female wrestler to win one of the main titles and the first to really compete with the men as equals, even if she did frequently win by hitting them below the belt.

Chyna leads us through her life from her very early days of living with her mother's frequent changes of husband and boyfriend and some even swifter mood swings. We hear how her mostly absent father was always her main cheerleader, whilst being at best unreliable and at worst a schemer; taking out loans in her name and setting up all sorts of projects that usually failed horribly and finally, making money out of her name despite not having seen her for years.

Unusually for such books on wrestlers, there's a fairly even split between Chyna's life outside the ring and her life inside the ring. She's been through quite an emotional time, with her parents letting her down and it seems that, at the time parts of the book were written, she was having some trouble with her boyfriend at the time, wrestler Triple H, which has coloured the tone of the book rather a lot.

Indeed, the tone of the book is quite dark. Although she wasn't abused as in many of the books around at the moment, she has been through family break ups and bad relationships. She had tried and failed at any number of things before getting her break and finally, having worked very hard to be a minor success, a serious car accident robbed her of that chance as well. After a series of life events like this, it's difficult not to be bitter and Chyna doesn't quite manage to disguise that she is.

It seems that WWE was about the only completely positive influence in Chyna's life, so in the sections where she's talking about that, she does sound a lot more upbeat. Even here, though, she starts on a downbeat note as she struggles against the deeply ingrained attitudes of many of the wrestlers she had to work with. It is only when she starts being accepted and starts being successful that the tone lightens and we get to see a happier side of Chyna.

This gives Chyna's story a different tone and a different perspective to many wrestling biographies around. The focus she gives her life before wrestling takes a much greater stage than her life in the ring. Admittedly, in terms of the amount of time spent, her wrestling career has been a relatively short part of her life and if she

was just talking about that, this would be a very short book indeed. However, most of the wrestlers who have "written" books have tended to skip over their lives somewhat and give the wrestling fans what they want, which are generally stories from the locker room and from back stage. Chyna takes things from a different perspective and seems determined that this will be the story of her whole life, not just her wrestling career.

The tone of the book makes it a little more uncomfortable than other wrestling biographies as well. The way she tells it, Chyna's life seems to have lurched between disaster and disappointment, with only very few glimpses of enjoyment in the middle. Most of the wrestling biographies I've read have been completely the opposite, with the wrestlers talking about how great it is to be in the sport. More often than not, the worst thing that has ever happened to them is a wrestling injury, or having to slum it in cheap hotels or worse when they were coming through the ranks, paying their dues and trying to get a break.

Whilst I did find this new perspective and this new tone quite refreshing after reading several wrestling biographies of the other type, this does make "If They Only Knew" quite a tough read by comparison. Chyna's anger and bitterness frequently comes through and it makes reading her story slightly uncomfortable at times. This isn't a book you can sit down and really enjoy, as the tone is a little like a growling dog; you can never really relax for fear that it could turn around and bite you at any moment.

This is now quite an old book and Chyna has been gone from the WWE for some time now does make the storylines she mentions from her time there seem very dated to the more up to date fan,. If you were ever a fan in the past, or fancy reading a wrestling biography that offers something just a little different from the usual "I beat this guy to win the belt", it's well worth a look at those prices.

This review may also appear, in whole or in part, under my name at any or all of www.ciao.co.uk, www.thebookbag.co.uk, www.goodreads.com, www.amazon.co.uk and www.dooyoo.co.uk

Merritt K. says

I never would have read this book if a friend hadn't loaned it to me, thinking I might like it.

She was right—this is an entertaining telling of an unconventional life. She was one of the first women to wrestle against men professionally, and there's a lot about the struggle to get there in the book, but for me the more gripping parts were when she discussed her complex feelings towards her body. So much of the book is about her struggling to achieve peace with herself, with her physical form. She laughs a lot of this off, as she does with her abusive upbringing and teenage sexual victimization.

This is a book about a messy, self-deprecating, physically unusual woman striving to deal with her trauma. If you replaced the WWF with Little, Brown, it could be your typical New York writer memoir. I'm glad it isn't.

And I mean, how can you not love someone who had custom-made breast implants named after her? Queen.

Rebecca says

Chyna inspires me to be what I want to be. To train my body to be like no other and never give up in

achieving what I want. She was my favorite WWF wrestler and to this day!—I find her beautiful and an inspiration.

(I would've liked for her to have signed my copy, but alas, she passed away before I could get a chance to meet her. Still my favorite wrestler. Still a great author. Still my most beautiful hero!)

Jeff Lynsky says

In the world of professional wrestling, women aren't unusual. But where they do exist, they tend to be restricted to supporting roles where their main job is to look pretty and little else and on the rare occasion they do get to wrestle, they're often restricted to wrestling other women. Even in mixed wrestling bouts, it's far more common to see both women in the ring together than any actual mixed wrestling.

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