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MORE!

WWE
WORLD WRESTLING
FEDERATION

HAVE A NICE DAY!
A TALE OF BLOOD AND SWEATSOCKS
MICK FOLEY

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Introduction

I came bounding in the door of my house in the Florida Panhandle on May 17, 1999, with an almost unbelievable amount of energy. After a trip that had consisted of an hour's drive from my hotel in London to Heathrow Airport, a two-hour layover, an eight-and-a-half-hour flight to New York's JFK airport, a two-hour layover, a two-hour flight to Atlanta, another hour-and-a-half layover, a one-hour flight to Pensacola, and an hour drive home, I should have been exhausted. But I wasn't. My wife, Colette, saw how upbeat I was and assumed that I'd gotten a lot of sleep on the flight. "No, not really," I said. "Actually I didn't sleep at all." She suddenly got concerned and asked me if I'd done drugs while on the plane. "Of course not," I answered, but Colette looked worried. After all, what could account for this great rush of energy her normally exhausted husband had? "What have you been doing then," she asked, to which I answered, "Writing."

I had written the entire length of the trip back to Pensacola, as well as the whole way to England. Really, I'd been writing for almost the entire time since May 7, when I convinced the World Wrestling Federation's head of marketing that I could write my own autobiography. I hate to spoil the surprise for a lot of people, but most autobiographies are not actually written by the supposed authors, but by biographers and ghostwriters. Talking into a tape recorder and having someone else make a book out of it didn't bother me, but the idea of "creative license" did. I just wasn't comfortable with the idea of a writer putting words in my mouth. If the book was boring, it wouldn't be the writer taking the rap, it would be me, and I wasn't willing to put that much faith in someone else's hands. Hey, if this book stinks, I want it to stink because of me. At least I want you as the reader to have the comfort of knowing that if the words stink, they are my own words, and if the stories stink, they are my stories told well.

My mom used to try to convince me to write a book when I was younger, because she thought I had a gift for it, but I lost interest when she told me that I couldn't write bad words in it. When I started wrestling, my dad told me I should keep a journal, so that one day I could write my memoirs. He kept saying that I would, and he kept telling me that I should do it soon, before I forgot everything. As it turned out, my memory is outstanding, which is a little scary considering all the shots I have taken to the head over the years. My main problem in writing this book is that my trusty old Sears electric typewriter, which I used to type out my school reports with one finger, had bitten the dust five years earlier, and being computer illiterate, I had no realistic way to put my story on paper. Except the old-fashioned way. So I hope you can appreciate that what you are about to read was written by hand on 760 pages of notebook paper in the seven weeks spanning May 7 to July 1, 1999.

There are a few different subjects I'd like to touch on before you embark on this daring literary journey into the world of sports entertainment.

Hardcore Legend-I will occasionally refer to myself by this name throughout the pages of this book. Please don't take it seriously. I just get a kick out of referring to myself by that name. Al Snow's name appears often, and what I say about him is not usually meant to be taken seriously. Al and I have had a longstanding insult contest, which had to be stopped a few months ago when feelings started getting hurt. It is my hope that the cheap shots and digs I get in at a defenseless Al will jumpstart our contest, because causing Al Snow pain and embarrassment is one of the simple joys in my life. In truth, Al is a great guy and an excellent wrestler, and if he gets the chance to write a book, I would consider it an honor to be insulted by him in it. Then, after buying Al's book, I will buy some rock salt to sprinkle on all the places where hell just froze over.

Ric Flair-Hey, I know Ric Flair is a legend, and I enjoy him as a performer, but as a boss, I didn't think too much of him, and would be less than honest if I told it any other way.

I really hope that some of the people who read this are not wrestling fans. Professional wrestling is truly an amazing world, and I think that fan and nonfan alike will be intrigued by what goes on behind the scenes. I refer occasionally in the book to what I consider the three best things I have ever done in the wrestling business. Writing this book has been a joy and privilege, and I honestly feel that if I were to hang up the tights (or in my case the sweats) tomorrow, my career will have been made complete because of writing it. I now truly consider it among the four best things that I have ever done.

Enjoy the book, and if you do, recommend it to a friend because I would really consider it a triumph to see my name on the bestseller list. From then on, I could appear on talk shows as Mick Foley Wrestler/Bestselling Author, and that, I know would make my parents proud. If you don't enjoy it, well, let's just keep that our little secret.

Read on, prosper, and oh, HAVE A NICE DAY.

Sincerely,

Mick Foley

July 1, 1999, in a trailer in Los Angeles on the set of the USA television series GvsE

Chapter 1

March 17, 1994 Munich, Germany

“I can’t believe I lost my fucking ear; bang bang!” Now, I’m not a big proponent of the “F” word, in fact, I went from age six to age twenty one without saying it once-but this was a special occasion and it cried out for a strong expletive. In fact, without the “F” word, that statement just isn’t as impressive, is it? Bang bang? Well, for those who know, no explanation is necessary, and for those who don’t, well, well get to “Bang bang” soon enough.

March 17, 1994, wasn’t shaping up to be a real great day anyway, even before the F’ing ear incident. The question was torn off the side of my head. I was not all that happy with my current place of employment. World Championship Wrestling was owned by Ted Turner, but even with Ted’s deep pockets behind it, WCW had never really seemed to be on the right path. Part of the reason for the problems was, of course, of the reason, actually was a blatant misuse of talent, a category that I, as Cactus Jack, certainly fell into. In this case we were on a two-week tour of Germany, and I was the only guy on the tour who spoke German. Good German. So it would seem like a natural to have Cactus Jack leading the promotional charge, right? Well, not exactly. In the first week of the tour, I did a few local radio spots while the other guys appeared on national television shows, print work, and promos.

On the first day of the tour Ric Flair, our booker (wrestling vernacular for the guy who makes the decisions that breaks you), admitted he wasn’t familiar with my work as a babyface (good guy). Now, Flair was a legendary performer in the ring-great charisma, conditioning, and promos that could raise goose bumps on your arm. But apparently, preparation wasn’t the Nature Boy’s forte. Not familiar with my work? What the hell does that mean? It’s his job to be familiar. I’d been a babyface for all of half a year, fourteen months back with the company. I’d main-evented Pay-Per-Views that he wrestled on. Not being familiar with the talent he was in charge of meant that, in my book (and hey, this is my book) he was every bit as bad on the booking side of things as he was great on the wrestling side of it.

About an hour before the match, Flair had talked to me for a long time about changing the course of my career. Naitch, short for Nature Boy, felt that I needed to be a heel (bad guy). His rationale was simple.”You and Vader had the most brutal bouts I’ve ever witnessed,” began Flair in his trademark drawling voice, a strange combination of lisping and perfect enunciation “But your rematch didn’t raise the ratings at all. Nobody cares about you as a babyface.”

Even before the Monday night Raw/Nitro wars, WCW had always lived and died by its television ratings. At that time, its flagship show was WCW Saturday Night. Also at that time, there were no quarter-hour breakdowns to more accurately determine just who was responsible for viewing patterns. In other words, Flair was holding my fifteen minutes on air responsible for the ratings of the entire two-hour show. He also failed to realize that ratings increases are more a result of trends and ongoing story lines than just one match. In my book (and once again, this is my book) Flair was wrong about the ratings. But he sure as hell was right about the brutality of my matches with Vader.

Vader, the real life Leon White, was in 1994 the greatest monster in the business. Guys were terrified of him. His style was the stiffest in all of wrestling. Some guys have a style that looks like they’re hurting guys when they’re not, which is good. Some guys’ stuff looks like crap, but it hurts like hell, which is bad. Vader left no room for error; his stuff looked like it hurt, and believe me, it did.

Some of the newer guys used to actually leave the arena if they saw their name on the board opposite Vader. Other guys would hide until that evening’s card had been drawn up, and then come out

of hiding if Vader wasn't their opponent. Really, underneath it all, Vader was a nice, sensitive guy. I even saw him cry in the dressing room after he paralyzed a young kid named Joe Thurman (Joe recovered the feeling below his waist a few hours later). Still, when that red light turned on, the '90s Vader's sensitive side seemed to turn off.

Strangely, I enjoyed my battles with Vader. I'd pump myself up for days before a big match and I would usually hurt for a few days after. The two matches that Flair had mentioned had indeed been brutal. During the first match, at my suggestion, Vader did a number on my face, even though it seemed that my interpretation of "try to raise a little swelling around my eyes" varied dramatically from his. The toll after match number one was impressive: broken nose, dislocated jaw, fourteen stitches in my eyebrow and seven underneath my eye. The second match almost put me out of wrestling for good.

Now, we should probably get something straight. I know you didn't pay \$25 (unless your cheap ass waited for the paperback) to have your intelligence insulted. I will not try to portray professional wrestling as being a "real, competitive sport." I will readily admit to occasionally stomping my foot on the mat, and always placing a greater emphasis on entertainment value than on winning. I have, however, over the course of fifteen years of blood, sweat, and tears, compiled a list of injuries that would compare to that of any "legitimate" athlete. So unless otherwise noted, please consider all my injuries to be legit. In our strange little world of sports-entertainment, I hope you will see that life can often be both "real" and "competitive."

Anyway, back to March 17, 1994. My opponent for that night: you guessed it, Vader. Except that this was an injured Vader, who was having trouble with the feeling in his fingers. He even asked for the night off, but Flair said no. "It's no problem, Ric," I said, "I'll work around it." As a matter of fact, I looked forward to the challenge of coming up with a good match with an opponent who was injured. It was the one of the signs of a good worker (wrestler). As a matter of fact, for a guy with all the natural athletic ability of a giant three-toed sloth, I had a pretty damn good bag of tricks up my sleeve. One of these "tricks" would send me home from Europe without my ear.

After about ten minutes of back-and-forth action, I charged at Vader, who was standing against the ropes. Earlier in the match, I had caught Vader with the patented Cactus clothesline, a move I had already successfully completed minutes earlier. In this move, I clothesline my opponent and let my momentum carry me over, as well. It was a pretty impressive sight, especially when you consider that in this case, over 750 pounds of humanity were tumbling to the floor. This time, however, Vader moved out of the way. I launched myself into the ropes and prepared to catch my head and neck between the second and third ropes, sail my body over, and, using precise timing and my own body momentum, twist the second rope over the third. This is a move known as the hangman because the end result is the illusion of a man being hanged by his neck while his body kicks and writhes in an attempt to get out. Although it is a planned maneuver, it is no illusion, as the man actually is hanging by his neck and the body really does kick and writhe in an attempt to get out.

I was probably the sport's foremost practitioner of the move, and I had the scars to prove it—about fifty of them behind both ears. It's funny, as many times as my ears were stitched, and as many times as I would watch them turn from black to purple to blue to slight shades of green and yellow, I never did have a problem with cauliflower ears the way some guys do. As a matter of fact, unless you looked closely behind my ears, at the zippers that decorated my auditory landscape, you wouldn't know that I'd been a veteran of so many late-night emergency room visits.

There was no doubt about it; the hangman was a difficult move, but even more so in World Championship Wrestling. WCW didn't actually use ring ropes—it used elevator cable covered with

rubber casing, and when the cables were entwined, they were almost impossible to pull apart. Now I had to throw a human head into the equation, and were talking about considerable pain. This night in Munich would turn out to be even more pain. Too Cold Scorpio, a brilliant high flyer (aerial wrestler), had wrestled in the evening's first match and had complained that the ropes were too loose. Unbeknownst to me, the German roadies had tightened the cables to the maximum; there was no give on the ropes at all.

With my head caught in the ropes, I could immediately feel the difference. Instead of the normal pain that I had long ago accepted as a consequence for this exciting move, I felt as if my neck was in a vise. I literally felt like I was going to die right there in the Sporthalle in Munich. I'm usually known as a pretty good ring general, and I had kept a calm head in some pretty bizarre conditions, but in this case I was panicking big time. I began to do what no toughguy, big-cheese, blood-and-guts wrestler would ever, under normal conditions, even think of- I began screaming- and I do mean SCREAMING- for help. Vader later took the credit for getting me out, thereby saving my life, but video evidence showed the big SOB with his back to me, yelling at the crowd and doing his "who's the man?" gorilla-grunting routine.

Even with the panic setting in, I knew enough about the human anatomy to know I was in trouble. I knew that if the pressure continued on my carotid arteries, which run along both sides of the neck, I would soon pass out, and then, without exaggeration, could suffer brain damage and even death. With that grisly knowledge in mind, I made one last effort to get myself free and wrenched my head from between the ropes. I later likened it to a fox that chews off its paw to escape a trap.

I lay on the floor momentarily, and then got to my knees. Blood was literally pouring out of my right ear. I could actually hear the pitter-patter of drop after drop of bright red blood hitting the blue protective mats that surround the ring. This struck me as strange- I mean, as many times as the back of my ears had been laid wide open, they had never really bled. They are made up mostly of cartilage after all. But this was different. It was gushing. For some strange reason, I didn't initially touch the right ear; instead I felt behind my left. To my disgust, there was a split I could damn near fit my fingernail in. "If this one feels like this, the other one must be real bad," I remember thinking. I climbed into the ring and the match continued. "Nice juice, huh?" I said to Vader as he set me up for a monstrous forearm to the head. Loosely translated, that means "I'm bleeding pretty bad." At this point, my ear was still hanging on ... barely. I blocked Vader's third forearm and threw a blow of my own. When that happened, a fan's videotape clearly shows something fall off the side of my head. Also at this point, at any other event, a ripped-off ear would probably be cause for a time-out. I mean, if Mark McGwire were beamed out at the plate, he probably wouldn't jog to first base with a missing body part. Shaquille O'Neal drove the lane and came up a near short of a pair, he probably wouldn't go to the foul line with juice" running down his tank top. But in our sport, the fake sport, we have a single rule- "The show must go on." And I went on as best I could.

The events that happened next are almost too ridiculous to be real. Almost. Because two of our referees had been injured on the tour and had been sent home, a referee from France had been flown in. Because he spoke no English, he was unable to tell me that he had picked up part of my body and was holding it in his hand. He handed the ear to ring announcer Gary Michael Capital. With his face turning white, Gary tiptoed the ear back to the dressing room, where he informed Ric Flair, "I have Cactus's ear; where should I put it?" Flair, being the thoughtful guy he was, arranged to have it put in a bag of ice for me. I later asked Cappetta what the ear looked like, and he told me in his perfect announcer's voice, "Well, it looked like a piece of uncooked chicken, with tape on it."

I have often imagined how this entire scene would play out on film, with Martin Scorsese

directing, in black and white if possible. Dramatic music in the background. Vivid close-ups of the e as it pirouetted in the air before dropping gracefully to the canvas, old-fashioned flashbulbs going o all the while. The referee screaming in French with tears streaming down his face. Cappetta sprintin to the back, trying not to lose his lunch. Flair, played perhaps by Buddy Ebsen, crying at the fate o Cactus Jack. Except in the movie version, Ill be damned if I'm going to scream for help. No, I' going to take it like a man on the big screen.

Anyway, back in the ring, the match continued for about another two minutes. Yeah, I know, would be great to say that I won the match and was carried away victoriously on the fans' shoulder. But even though I'm writing about a sport that some feel is not "real," this is a real story, and the re truth is I did the job that night (lost the match). With the match won, Vader went back into his "who the man?" when Doug Dillinger, the head of security, rushed in and told him to get the hell out of th ring. I reached for my right ear, and, well, there wasn't a whole lot there to feel. I got a sick feeling my stomach, and then sucked it up and headed back to the dressing room.

Believe it or not, I was actually in high spirits when I got there. I have often been referred to b doctors and nurses as "the most cheerful patient they've ever treated." I like that. It may not be badass as "the toughest SOB in the World Wrestling Federation," or as colorful as "the mo electrifying man in sports-entertainment," but it's something I'm proud of nonetheless. Can't you ju hear Howard Finkel at WrestleMania XVII as he announces: "Ladies and gentlemen, making his wa to the ring, he weighs in at 287 pounds and is known around the world as the most cheerful emergenc room patient in the world ... Mick Foley!"

Vader, once again showing his sensitive side-the big softy-was pretty upset about the whole thing. He even wanted to ride to the hospital with me. Of course, being shaken up about it would not preven him from claiming for years that he had been the man who tore Cactus Jacks ear off. Too Cold Scorpio offered to show me my ear in the plastic bag. I declined. Emergency medical technicians prepared to take me to the hospital. But, wait ... something was missing ... I couldnt leave yet. This event need to be recorded for posterity-we needed a camera. I grabbed an English photographer named Colin, and he snapped about a dozen photos of the gruesome injury. If you look closely at the photos you ca detect a gleam in my eye and just the slightest hint of a smile.

I hopped into the Krankenwagen, or ambulance, and we headed for the Krankenhaus, or hospital. Amazingly, we were denied access to the first hospital. Luckily, there was room at the second, and I hopped out, but not before uttering a German sentence that probably had never been used before, and possibly will never be used again:"Vergessen Sie nicht, bitte, mein ohr in der Plastik Tasche z bringen," or "Please don't forget to bring my ear in the plastic bag."

A plastic surgeon was called in and he gave me some unfortunate news. I should mention at th point that I had the utmost confidence that the wonders of medical science would enable him to se my ear on in no time. After all, John Wayne Bobbitt had been sewed up, right? Oh, but I guess th wasn't an ear. Anyway, the surgeon explained to me that unlike an ear that had been cut off and woul be relatively easy to repair, mine had more or less been pushed off my head and had been too bad destroyed to salvage. There was hope, however. I underwent a four-hour operation during which all th cartilage from the missing ear was removed and placed in a man-made pocket an inch above m remaining lobe. By doing this, the cartilage would remain vital for a reconstructive operatio somewhere down the road. And yes, I am at this very moment feeling that lump of stored cartilag like a play toy that I'll never misplace.

After the operation, one of the Krankenschwesterns, or nurses, showed me the remains of my ea except by now, without my cartilage, it looked like a giant skin flap, kind of like the cheese on a pizza.

that's been sitting at room temperature. I asked her if I could have it "Ich mochte mein ohr zu haben". She looked at me as if I'd just farted in church, pinched her nose with her fingers, and replied that the ear would become schutzig, or dirty and smelly. Now that's a hell of a thing to say about something as near and dear as my ear, but as I searched in vain for the German word for formaldehyde, the Krankenschwester did something, the image of which would haunt me for months. She calmly stepped on the foot pedal that lifted the lid of the medical waste basket, and with a flick of her wrist, disposed of my former ear forevermore. She then turned to me and with the inquiring eyes of a child said, "Der catch ist alles schauspiel, ya?" or "Isn't wrestling all fake?"

Welcome to my world, the world of professional wrestling, where fact is often stranger than fiction, and the line between the two keeps getting tougher and tougher to distinguish.

Chapter 2

I was eighteen in the fall of 1983. Upon graduation from Ward Melville High School in East Setauket, New York, that June, I had spent the summer lifeguarding at the Stony Brook Racquet Club and daydreaming about professional wrestling. Up on the stand for continuous eight-hour shifts, I had plenty of time to envision suplexes and dives off the top rope like my idol, Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka while I watched over the well-being of a bunch of spoiled rich kids. My brother, John, on the other hand, was in his third year as a prestigious "Town of Brookhaven" lifeguard, which meant that, unlike me, he guarded at an actual beach that actual good-looking women frequented. In addition, he was given an hour off for every hour worked, during which, rumor had it, the town guards would pump up with a pair of dumbbells before taking the stand.

But, hey, my job had its benefits too, such as free tennis privileges at the club, which I used liberally-until my racket-throwing, yelling, and court-diving ways led to the termination of my court privileges. Looking back, I think I may have actually thrown the town lifeguarding test to avoid the indignity of wearing the official bikini bathing suit that the town guards were required to wear. Even at a lean, mean 200 pounds, Mrs. Foley's little boy was never cut out for Speedos. So as a result, I grudgingly accepted my responsibility to watch out for children.

Hell, it wasn't so bad. I was actually something of an institution at the club; I had not only guarded the summer before, but worked at Arthur's Take Out in the winter. Arthur's Take Out was the brainchild of club owner Arthur Grower, who paid me and my buddy Rob Betcher minimum wage to cook and deliver broasted (a combination of broiling and roasting-but it looked like fried) chicken out of the freezing snack bar. There was no heat in the place, so we would have to throw water on the stove and do calisthenics to keep warm while we waited for the phone that seemed to never ring.

As a result, we had lots of free time in the snack bar, and I had taken to whittling objects out of potatoes and then broasting them. One night, Danny Zucker, who would later go on to manage me in the Dude Love movies, called in an order, and I set out whittling my best potato penis complete with two potato testicles that we attached to the starchy shaft through the miracle of toothpicks.

I set out with two orders in my car, and after dropping off the first, headed over to the Zucker residence to unveil my unique sculpture. "You're going to love this, Zuck," I promised, as Danny opened the box to reveal a normal order of fries. Oops. I never did find out if Mrs. Smith on lower Sheep Pasture Lane enjoyed her meal.

I had been on several recruiting trips with Rob Betcher during the winter and spring, as we were prized players on the Ward Melville High School lacrosse team, which were perennial county champions. I was a goalie and Betch played attack. It didn't matter that the two of us hardly played as juniors-the important thing was that we played for Joe Couzzo's Patriots and had been seen in summer camp action by college scouts. It was actually at Couzzo's Suffolk Lacrosse Camp that I had honed the skills necessary to promote a big wrestling match.

The situation started innocently enough-I was taunting one of the counselors, a Ward Melville graduate named Dave McCulloch. Dave had been my idol when I was a sophomore, and I felt such a bond to him that I even fell for his girlfriend, Crystal Kost, in a crush that only lasted for two years. I eventually went to the prom with Crystal-at her request-but left prom night without even so much as a kiss on the cheek or a dance. Back then, even as a popular if somewhat strange kid, I would have had trouble scoring even if she had pulled the goalie.

Dave and I were good friends, but there was a small resentment that he'd felt for me ever since

had sung a song I wrote about him and Crystal over the school intercom. Feel free to sing along to the tune of “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald,” by Canadian legend Gordon Lightfoot.

“The Ballad of Dave and Crystal” by M. Foley

His day was a loss, he was playing lacrosse, he had nothing else better to do.

But he came to his home to answer the phone, and the voice of Bob Whelman came through.

He said “I’ve got a notion, let’s go to the ocean, we can ride those big waves.

We’ll have some fun, we’re leaving at one, what do you say to it, Dave?”

And if it’s all right with you, there is someone else too, to go on this trip we are planning

It isn’t just Sean, who will bore you till dawn, but a pretty female companion

She looked so good on the beach that Dave could not speak—she was wearing a nice white bikini

And the look of that suit on her body so smooth, sent a tingle right down his big weenie.

Oh, there was more, much more, but because the song was fictional and I was using creative license, it got a little graphic and unfortunately ended in one of the three ways that my songs always did—pregnancy, venereal disease, or the cutting off of the penis. Actually, it was the latter subject that I had won the high school talent show for me and my buddies, John Imbriani, John McNulty, Scott Darragh, and Zucker—collectively known as the B.P.s (The Brothers Penis). However, the next day we were called into the principal’s office and told that we were disqualified for “inappropriate song material,” and that we would therefore have to forfeit the grand prize of \$40 worth of Chinese food. “Man, I sure could go for an egg roll right now,” I mumbled as Mr. Marschack continued to admonish us.

“You really think this is funny, don’t you, Mickey?” Marschack asked me. “I mean, this is humorous to you, isn’t it?”

“No, Mr. Marschack,” I politely answered. “I don’t think it’s funny. We were judged to be the winners by a team of judges, and now you are stripping us of our rightful prize.”

Marschack laughed, because as my seventh grade English teacher who had remained friendly with me over the years, he knew that I was dead serious. I wanted the food. “Mickey, I cannot in good conscience give the grand prize to a bunch of guys who sing about a penis.”

Now he had me mad. “Mr. Marschack, there’s a lot more to it than just a penis. It’s about the guy who is attached to the penis, who can’t cope with his guilt and therefore has no other alternative than to get rid of the part of his body that’s causing him so much pain. It’s actually a pretty touching song.” I then recited the sensitive song and waited for Marschack’s ruling, which came about a second later. “No food for you guys” was the final word.

After all these years, I still feel that we were wronged, and now you can be the judge. Sung to the tune of the Kinks’ “Lola,” and with sincere apologies to Ray Davies, here is the award-winning “Boner” by Mickey Foley.

Well I don’t acquaint with girls I don’t know, and I don’t go to parties, I stay at home—I’m a loner.
L-0-N-E-R Loner.

But I saw her out there alone on the street, her body was built; I looked at my meat—I had a boner.
B-0-N-E-R boner, bo bo bo bo boner.

She said, “Hey boy won’t you come inside, and when I walked inside, I felt my penis rise into a boner.
boner. Bo bo bo bo boner.

We sat at the bar and I bought her a drink, and she glanced at my pants, and she said, “I think you’ve got a boner.”
Bo bo bo bo boner. Bo bo bo bo boner.

Well I could feel the blood flow through my sack and I could feel the cloth stretch in my slacks.

Actually, I forget the rest, but it had something to do with becoming oversexed, and cutting off the

penis as a cure. Probably not much of a cure. Just as important as the lyrics was our show-stopping finale, in which I did a horrible front handspring into a flat-backed landing, and sat up just in time for Danny Zucker to smash me over the head with a plastic "Village People" guitar. Sure the guitar was fake, as were all the B.P.'s instruments (we had a real band behind the curtain), but it was still a pretty impressive sight, and a sign of things to come.

Let's get back to Joe Couzzo's camp. The tension between Dave and me was growing to the point that it would have to be settled in a "bout," which was the name given to camp boxing matches in the cabins, with lacrosse helmet and gloves on for protection. Actually the lacrosse helmet is a lot lighter than a football helmet, and its shock absorbing usefulness was arguable. I began promoting this bout to the best of my abilities. I wrote humiliating facts about Dave in Magic Marker on my chest. I did pushups during lunch with a plate of beans beneath my face and scoffed down a bite between each poorly executed push. I even wore a bull's-eye over my balls for the camper-staff game, of which Dave was a part.

By the time the bout rolled around, it was the hottest issue at the camp. For some reason, all of the younger kids looked up to me, and my entrance was met with great enthusiasm from the camper Vince McCulloch, however, was booed relentlessly. There was no bell, so someone blew on a horn, and the bout was on. I came out fast and furious and threw everything I had at the college sophomore. Left rights, hooks, uppercuts-you name it, and I threw it-for about thirty seconds. At the half-minute mark my arms felt like lead, my legs felt even worse and my entire respiratory system felt like it was failing me.

I looked at Dave, and he was smiling. He knew I had nothing left, and he began throwing punches with bad intentions. Dave was damn near a man, and I was just a boy, and he was hammering me relentlessly. I got through the round, but tasted the stale iron of my own blood. His punches had split my lip, and I was, to quote many a wrestling show, "busted wide open." The coaches stepped in, and seeing that I was getting the crap beaten out of me, stopped the fight. I believe it was the last "bout" ever held at the Suffolk lacrosse camp. When they stopped me, I went ballistic. "Don't stop it, Coach! I'm okay," I argued.

"Mick, it's over," Coach Ray Weeks told me. "Now go clean yourself up."

"This isn't right," I yelled for the whole camp to hear, "I was just getting started."

Slowly, I walked outside to the bathroom building. I stepped inside and shut the door. I looked in the mirror at my bloody face and had to admit that I liked it. I envisioned a big wrestling match, with Vince McMahon screaming, "Look at Foley, my goodness, he's busted wide open!" I smiled at the thought and then another thought hit me. "Thank God they stopped that damn fight."

Lacrosse had been my passion for several years. At my father's request, I had also played football and basketball as a sophomore, but I had sucked at both of them. I think I had one tackle and one basket for the entire season on each of those teams. It wasn't that I wasn't a good athlete-I just seemed to be an underachiever when it came to team sports. In football, I would actually bend down to tie my shoes when it came time to pick sides for practice. In basketball, I liked to stand outside and wait for long-range jumpers.

Contact wasn't the issue. In a game of one-on-one, or even up to three-on-three, I was impassioned when it came to boxing out, or playing defense, or driving the lane. When the game turned to five-on-five, or eleven-on-eleven, I just kind of disappeared and figured my teammates would take care of it. To this day, I've kept a little bit of that inside me, which is why I've always preferred wrestling as a single. As a single, I get caught up in the match easily-as part of a team, I really have to fight the tendency to rely on my partner.

I guess that's why I enjoyed playing goalie in lacrosse. Even though I was part of a team, the responsibility was all mine. I loved the challenge of stopping shots without a chest protector or cup. It was my propensity for playing without a cup that led to the much-publicized "testicle the size of a grapefruit" story on Raw Is War fourteen years later. Actually the whole story is slightly misleading as I didn't make a habit of playing without a cup, I just oftentimes forgot to wear one. My ball wasn't exactly the size of a grapefruit either-more like a medium-size tangerine.

Lacrosse was so important to me that as a senior, I went out for the winter track team strictly to shape up for the spring season, during which I would grace the goal for the Patriots. The fact that I was no runner was soon discovered, and I began taking to bailing out on the far side of the track and hiding in the woods for a couple of laps. I threw the shot-put and discus too, but one look at my shoulder development should tell you how I fared at that endeavor.

One day before practice, I was talking to fellow B.P. John McNulty, who was nicknamed McNugget in honor of the McDonald's food of questionable origin. "Track, huh, slick guy," he said before adding, "You might be the slowest guy in the school."

"I know," I agreed, "but I just want to get in shape for lacrosse."

John thought it over before saying the words that would have a profound effect on my life: "Why don't you go out for wrestling," he wondered. "Even if you never have a match, it will get you in better shape than track will."

Wrestling, now there was an idea. With my father as the school district's athletic director, I had grown up watching amateur wrestling in addition to the fake stuff on TV. I knew Coach Jim McGonigle well, as he had coached my brother for two years and also had been my instructor for my driver's education. Hell, I'd even covered the team for the local newspaper and baby-sat the coach's children on a couple of occasions. In addition, my living room matches with my brother, John, had taught me techniques that would prove invaluable on the mat. In gym class, I had even dominated a school bully so bad that he begged me not to pin him and ruin his reputation. After that, Rob Pilla and I always had a special bond, even though if I had to do it all over again, I would have pinned his ass. "What the hell," I said, laughing, "I'll do it."

I went out for the team and had the time of my life. I loved it. I loved the competition and the pressure, and the knowledge that whatever I did was done on my own. I highly advise any kid to wrestle, as I learned more about being a man during one season on the mats than I had in the seventeen previous years put together. A lot of athletes won't go out for wrestling because of the potential ego and image damage it can do. Who wants to lose or, worse yet, be pinned in front of his friends especially if he just ran for touchdowns a month earlier on the football team?

I was moderately successful right from the start, as I defeated and pinned bigger and more experienced opponents with my unorthodox style I had learned in the Foley living room. One match in particular sticks out in my mind during my time in the green Melville singlet. I was sick as hell one night and was not even scheduled to wrestle, but the meet was close and it would be decided by the final match. Coach McGonigle looked at me, and I looked back, and without saying a word, I started warming up. I looked across the mat at Artie Mimms, who was a big muscular black guy with an imposing Mohawk that made him look like Mr. T. Remember this was back in early 1983, before Mr. T ended up in the "where are they now" file. Mimms was ranked second in the county. I put on my headgear, and I walked over to Coach McGonigle, who patted me on the back and said, "We need a pin to win, Mick, a pin to win." I nodded and went out to get the job done.

Actually this is one of those "good news/bad news" stories. The good news was, there definitely was a pin. The bad news was, I wasn't the one doing the pinning. I put up a hell of a fight, but not

“double underhook into a body scissors” backfired, and I ended up throwing myself on my back at the very start of the third period, after nearly two minutes of fighting the inevitable. I tried to breathe, and no air entered my lungs. A moment later, I heard a slap on the mat and I was done.

I looked up at the crowd and saw a few of my friends with sadness in their eyes. I spotted a few girls whom I had actually lusted over, and guessed that they weren't lusting over me. I got up slowly and shook Mimms's hand. I then walked over and shook his coach's hand. I then walked over and shook Coach McGonigle's hand, as he put his arm around me. “It's all right, Mick, ya know why?” he said, as I smiled a disappointed smile. “It's all right because that's the best I've ever seen you wrestle. I was laughing to myself, because I couldn't believe how well you were doing against that guy.” I walked away disappointed but proud. I continued walking down two flights of stairs to the wrestling room where we practiced under hot conditions. Only during meets did we venture upstairs to the gym. I sat down in the empty room and I cried my eyes out.

I hadn't cried in almost three years-when I found out that Renee Virga was going to the junior high prom with Chris Lenz instead of me. It would take seven more years, after the death of my brother and my cat Snowy, until I shed tears again. Nowadays, forget it, I cry during the Christmas episode of Happy Days-the one where Richie spots Fonzie heating up a can of ravioli by himself on Christmas Eve. Yeah, and I cry at the end of Old Yeller also.

John McNulty came into the room as I was about all tapped out, and he made me laugh at some of his weak humor. I got dressed and drove my brother's old Mustang II home. My parents were visiting my brother in Indiana and so a few friends came over to cheer me up. I actually had a good time, and I remember that night with friends warmly. Conspicuous by his absence, however, was John Imbelliosio, who skipped out on his distraught buddy to see Taboo II at the Rocky Point cinema with the Renee Virga-stealing Chris Lenz. What a guy. The sequel to my all-time favorite Kay Parker film, and he leaves me hanging.

I finally did get to kiss Renee Virga at John Imbelliosio's wedding in 1989. I saw her recently and told her she was going to be in my book. I also asked her if she'd seen the Chris Lenz issue of The Guide.

I really only had one problem with wrestling. I simply liked it so much that I lost my desire to play lacrosse. I had been a big pro wrestling fan for a long time, but I never considered it as a career option. Now, however, with a little bit of amateur background behind me, I began to see the possibilities. I began studying tapes of my favorite wrestlers. I became obsessed with the sport/art form, and began to believe I could actually do it. In June 1983, I attended my first match at Madison Square Garden to see Jimmy Snuka battle Don Muraco in a bloody double disqualification. I was hooked. I didn't need lacrosse anymore-I had pro wrestling.

The absence of lacrosse as a factor brought about a problem of its own. I had applied to colleges with the intention of playing goalie, and now that intention was gone. I really had no desire to go to the schools that had recruited me: Salisbury State, in Maryland, or Western Maryland in, well, Western Maryland. Instead, I settled on Cortland State University, which was located in between Syracuse and Binghamton in upstate New York.

Upon enrollment, I immediately began a quest with Scott Darragh, my old B.P. buddy, to be an amazingly average student. And in that quest, I was successful. I was on course to achieving straight C's across the board when I went home for fall break. Fall break presented a tricky schedule problem. I was supposed to return to school on Sunday, October sixteenth, in order to be at classes on Monday. This would be a direct conflict to the highly anticipated rematch between the Superfly and Muraco, which was scheduled for October seventeenth. I considered my options. On one hand, I had sociology

class with John Alt. On the other, I had my favorite wrestler and his bitter rival at the most famous arena in the world-inside a steel cage, no less. I thought about John Alt, who had lost me the moment he said, "Let's talk about narcissism, or more simply, narcissistic self-proliferation." Then I thought about Snuka and his dive off the top of the cage a year ago in a matchup with Bob Backlund. It was no contest. John Alt and his vocabulary that was so ridiculous we were required to carry a dictionary with us to tests had lost out to the man who Vince McMahon had declared was "no less than phenomenal."

Yes, I was going to the matches, but that was still a problem. My dad would never buy a cage match as an excuse to miss college. No way. He was going to drive us to the Greyhound bus station twenty minutes from our house, drop me and Scott off, and continue with my mom on to Indiana for a visit with my brother. I saw an opening and devised my plan. It was pure genius. I would go with my mom and dad to the bus station and be dropped off as scheduled. After all the goodbyes, we would wait until my parents drove away and then hide in the woods and await the arrival of John Ambrioni who was attending a local college. The three of us would take the train to New York City the following day, and then feast on the buffet of bloodshed that the Superfly and the Magnificent One would surely serve up.

The plan was taking effect. We were in the car on the way to the station and my parents were chatting amiably to us. I got the slightest twinge of guilt in my throat as I thought about the people I was planning to lie to and deceive.

Chapter 3

My Father Jack Foley The Original Cactus Jack-was a true legend in the field of athletic administration. After starting out at the Setauket High School, which is now an elementary school, my dad went on to become the director of health, physical education and recreation for a school system that was made up of five elementary schools, two junior high schools, and Ward Melville High School, a place so nice that it could pass for a college campus.

In addition, he was the chairman of basketball and lacrosse in our county, was host to the year county wrestling championships and the Special Olympics, and was a member of so many groups and organizations that I can't count them all. For his efforts, he was selected as the athletic director of the year for the entire nation in 1988-which is kind of like a World Wrestling Federation title belt for ADs. Upon his retirement, the ultimate honor was bestowed upon him, when the Ward Melville Gymnasium was officially renamed the Jack Foley Gymnasium.

I recently asked my dad if he'd been by the gym to see the plaque honoring him as the gym namesake. He replied that he had, but that he'd had to move a soda machine in order to see it.

My mom was the first member of her family to attend college, earning a degree in physical education from Brockport State in upstate New York and later a Masters from Stony Brook. She became a phys-ed teacher at the Setauket school, and it was there that she fell for the vaunted Foley charm. After giving birth in 1964 to my brother, John, she gave up teaching to become a full-time mom. It's funny, my dad has the doctorate, but any time I had a question, I always went to my mother. She had a thirst for knowledge that made her almost like an encyclopedia-or a Jeopardy! contestant. My mom would take college courses just for the hell of it-if she wanted to learn more about a certain subject, she'd just sign up. She'd then come home from class with her notebook and proceed to copy her notes directly into another notebook-again, not to pursue a degree-just to pursue knowledge. This is something I always found admirable ... or a little sick-I'm not sure which. Even to this day, my mom will still polish off at least two good-size novels a week.

My dad also liked to read, but his reading had a dark side to it. No, I'm not talking about stacks of porno magazines at the Foley house-Im talking about newspapers. Lots and lots of newspapers. I'm convinced that somewhere in his childhood, my dad must have had a traumatic episode involving a newspaper, because he had an obsession with the damn things. Two papers every day. Two local papers every week, and four-count them-four newspapers every Sunday: Long Island Newsday, the New York Times, the Daily News, and the Long Island Press. Sometimes he'd bring home a New York Post just for the hell of it.

Most of the time my dad was so busy that he would leave for work before we woke up, and he'd return when it was just about bedtime. I would go downstairs to get him a Schmidt's of Philadelphia and he'd knock off a few pages of Newsday while swigging down what many would consider the worst-tasting brew of all time.

Now Sundays were a different story. That was paper day. With the accompaniment of either a Yankee, college basketball, or pro football game in the background, depending on the season, my dad would launch into a day-long quest to devour the news. It didn't matter that much of the news was damn near a week old, he'd read it anyway. Not just read it, but underline the important parts-I'm not kidding. A small correction here-if the Sunday reading sessions fell between November 25 and December 24, the audio of the ball game would be turned off and would be replaced by the soothing sounds of classic Christmas music, cracking and popping on our antique turntable. I still to this day

carry at least one Christmas CD with me on the road at all times. There's nothing like "White Christmas" on a hot July afternoon, even if old Bing did beat the crap out of his kids.

Unfortunately for my dad, he would usually run out of time before he'd run out of papers. But I couldn't bear to part with them. Instead of throwing them out, he would stack them in the garage where over the course of time they resembled many pulpy, musty leaning towers of Pisa. By the time my mother gave him an ultimatum last year, my dad had papers dating back to the early seventies swearing up to that horrible day the commercial Dumpster arrived that he would one day find the time to read them all. My brother said it was quite a sight to watch my dad getting rid of over twenty-five years of treasures. He couldn't just throw them out, he had to look through them first-a fighter till the end.

The reason I dwell on the papers so much is that, other than that one particular peculiarity, my dad was the straightest guy you could ever meet. I mean, he has looked basically the same for the last forty years: crew cut with sport coat and tie-or when he's relaxing, golf shirt and shorts with green or black socks pulled up as high as they'd go, and a pair of loafers to complete the ensemble. That's my dad. No photos of embarrassing pork chop sideburns to hide, no leisure suits or medallions hanging on a bare chest to try to explain to my kids. No, times may change, but my father never will. Come to think of it, my own look hasn't changed a whole lot since I was eighteen, give or take a tooth or an ear.

I probably attended more sporting events than any other kid in Three Village history. As athletic director, my dad was always checking out the various teams, and he would bring me and my brother with him. In addition to the big ones-football, basketball, and baseball-we caught everything from bowling to wrestling to women's field hockey to volleyball. But of all the sports, baseball, or more accurately its little cousin wiffleball, was the one I liked best.

Wiffleball was practically a religion to the neighborhood kids on Parsonage Road. Our backyard was the original stamping grounds for the Parsonage Pirates: Tom and Matt Dawe, Joe Moose Miller, Brett Davis, Marc Forte, and the Foley Boys.

My dad was more than happy to feed our baseball hunger. We were frequent spectators at the old Yankee Stadium-the house that Ruth built. He'd even pick us up from school early so we could start outside the lot where the Yankees parked and wait for autographs. Remember, this was the early seventies when ballplayers still did that type of thing. I'll never forget the day that I received my hero Thurman Munson's autograph. It was my birthday, which also happened to be Munson's, and he must have felt the cosmic connection, because he passed by all the kids but me and jotted down his John Hancock.

What I liked about Thurman most was the little things he did that often went unnoticed. People who really know baseball are the only ones who really know how good he was. Now, as a wrestler, I like to compare myself to Munson in that way-by doing all the things that only other wrestlers notice. Thurman Munson died tragically in a plane crash when I was thirteen. I don't think I've watched a dozen baseball games since. But I'll always fondly recall my days at Yankee Stadium.

Those road trips were also educational, because it was in the car on the way to and from the stadium that I became aware of curse words. There is a line in the movie *A Christmas Story* where Ralphie recalls, "My dad worked in swear words like some artists work in oils or watercolors." Well, my dad was an artist as well. Like a lot of men from that era, my dad would refuse to ask directions no matter how lost we were or how many innings we missed. Seeing as how my dad liked to leave the game at the end of the seventh inning to "beat the traffic," we needed to get as much game time in as we could. So when we got lost, he reached his boiling point, and he'd let it rip. "Welcome to New York City-the fun capital of the world," he'd usually begin. And then the bad words would appear.

Lots of Ss and GDs, but never any Fs. In all my life, I only heard him say the “F” word once, and that was when he was quoting somebody—so that doesn’t even really count.

But the “S” word was a different story. Old Jack could weave such a rich tapestry of “S” words to leave a kid in awe. One night, when my cousin Doug was visiting, the Yankees were on the road, so my dad made a rare Shea Stadium appearance to see the Mets play. After the game, which was attended by only about 8,000 fans (this was back when the Mets sucked), my dad in a rare moment of weakness asked a police officer for directions. Needless to say, we wound up lost. My dad started with a few innocent observations about the men in blue. “You can always tell a New York City cop—a fat mick with a beer belly.” He then helpfully pointed out the attendance woes the Mets had been having. “And they wonder why they only draw 8,000 fans? Eight thousand assholes. Only an asshole would go to Shea!” I’m not sure if my dad was including us in that group of assholes. And then it happened. At first it was just a rumbling way down in his chest and then it gathered momentum until it became an unstoppable force just waiting to release its wrath on the three innocent kids cowering in the 1970 white Mustang. Seven “S” words in a row. Almost like a vulgar haiku: “Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit.”

My poor dad also did a lot of cursing every summer. That is when he would work on his dissertation to complete his doctorate. I don’t know if it was a real rule, or just my dad’s rule, but the papers had to be typed perfectly—no white-outs, no typos, no erasers. As a result, the sounds of summer in our house went something like this: “Click, click, click, click, click, click—oh shit, oh damn to hell, goddammit.” For me and my brother, this was our cue to run behind the house and laugh. When we did so, my mom would admonish us. “You’re father is working very hard, you’d better not let him catch you laughing like this.” I don’t know why my dad didn’t just pay somebody to type the damn thing—I guess he would have considered that cheating. If he’d only had a word processor or a computer he would have saved a couple of years of his life.

Strangely, even though I was exposed to a great deal of swearing as a kid and even though half the guys in the dressing room can’t go a full sentence without an “F” word—“I shot him in the fuckin’ ropes, I caught him with the big fuckin’ elbow, and then, fuck, I made a big fuckin’ comeback”—I have escaped almost F free. One time when I was waiting on the drive-through line at McDonald’s, my son Dewey calmly asked if he could “get some fuckin’ fish.” I didn’t get mad, but just gently told him that we didn’t use that word at the house, and neither should he. I haven’t heard it used since.

My daughter Noelle is especially cute when she hears bad words. I took the family to see *There’s Something About Mary* without realizing all the bad language. Every time she heard a bad word, and there were plenty of them, she would turn to her mother, Colette, and give her the patented DX sign (crotch chop). Last week I mentioned that I was going to water the plants with the hose. She gasped and said, “You said the bad word.” I guess in her mind she envisioned the Godfather’s girls coming over to help me with the yard work.

Maybe my poor dad should be entitled to his papers without the ridicule from his family. After all, this was a man who worked monumental hours, but still found ways to spend quality time with the family, even if it meant taking the family on business trips and turning them into little vacations. For some reason it seems that he was never around, but on closer examination, I realize just how far out of his way he went to spend time with us. Yankee games, Mets games, school sports, camping in Nova Scotia, NCAA basketball tournaments, Santa’s Village, Playland, Amish country, a rare trip to the movies so I could see *Rocky* for the seventeenth time, and too many others to list. Any time I think I had a rough childhood—please, somebody slap me.

Apparently all of those fond memories didn’t mean quite as much as the thought of Snuka in

cage. My parents dropped us off, and I quickly said my goodbyes. Too quickly, as it turned out. Before their car was even out of sight, we hightailed it into a thinly wooded area along the back fence, where we lay waiting against a slight embankment for the car that would take us home. To this day, I have no idea why we hid instead of just waiting. After several minutes, Scott peeked his head up to look for Imbriano's car. I heard him gasp, and he dropped down quickly.

"What is it?" I asked as I looked at Scott, who had suddenly turned pale.

"It's your parents!" he exclaimed.

"That's impossible," I stated, before taking a look for myself. I too dropped down and got pale. "Oh my God, you're right," I gasped. "What are we going to do?" I had seen them only for a moment, but I'll remember the image of them on their manhunt forever. My mom searching for evidence as if she were Angela Lansbury on *Murder She Wrote*. My dad was on the lookout as well—he was looking for us. "We're done for, Nom," I said, using Scott's nickname derived from the heavy-drinking Mr. Peterson on *Cheers*. "My dad's giving us 'the look.'"

Nom knew all too well what "the look" was all about—every kid who had ever attended a Warren Melville basketball game knew it too. "The look" had many uses, but it was mainly a way to keep control at basketball games. Sportsmanship was highly valued by my dad, and the common practice of stomping feet and yelling during an opposing team's foul shot was strictly taboo. (No, not the *Ka Parker* movie.) From his spot ten feet to the right of the basket, my dad would ready himself for the noise, and when it began, he'd give "the look," and the noise would magically subside. It never failed. I'd seen plenty of tough high school punks try to withstand its force, but they all eventually went down. That look had caused me considerable discomfort when I was a kid trying to rid myself of the stigma of being "Dr. Foley's son," but never as much discomfort as it caused me right then. I had not been hit by my parents since the Parsonage Road spanking incident back in '68 that had left handprints on my little ass comparable to the handprints I leave on Al Snow's ass now. But, hey, there was always a first, and this blatant slap in the face of education just might set it off.

Don't get me wrong, my dad liked wrestling, and the sport had actually done a lot to make us closer. It wasn't easy growing up with a man like Jack Foley for a father and for a few years things had been a little tense between us. Wrestling, however, gave us a common bond. My dad used to look up from his papers, and be amazed at some of the things he saw. "Hey, Mick, these guys are pretty good athletes," I once heard him say, and from then on, his glances up from his paper became more frequent. Eventually, it reached a point where he wouldn't look at the paper at all, and we'd watch the hot World Wrestling Federation action as father and son.

Yes, my dad was a wrestling fan, and under different conditions, he might have been up for seeing a little double juice inside a cage. But not where school was concerned. Yeah, if my dad found me, the guy getting juice might be me.

Minutes later, I saw them leaving, and sighed a deep sigh of relief. Scott and I decided to wait for the next bus, which was four hours later, and go back to school. John Ambrobocop showed up minutes later, and the three of us sat back and reminisced about things we hadn't done yet.

When I got back to school, I had the terrible feeling that I had let myself, the World Wrestling Federation, and, most importantly, Snuka himself down. If he truly was going to dive off the cage, as I believed he would, then certainly I should make the extra effort to be there. Where there is a will, there is certainly a way. Now, as a wrestler, I pride myself in making my dates, no matter what. Several times I have driven all night and switched flights to make personal appearances that others would have canceled. When I give my word, I want it to mean something—and in a strange way, I feel as if I'd given Snuka my word.

I tried the easy way first. As I ran up and down the third floor of Fitzgerald Hall I yelled desperately, “Hey, does anyone want to go to New York City?” No takers. I guess I should point out now that I didn’t have a car until a year later. Finally, I did get someone to give me a ride-to the Greyhound station.

At Greyhound, I left the driving to them-for forty miles to Binghamton. From there, I walked the highway, stuck out my thumb, and waited ... and waited, while visions of Superfly Splash danced through my head. About three rides and eleven hours later, I showed up at Madison Square Garden, where, to my dismay, the marquee read “Sold Out.” Fortunately for me, the institution of scalping was alive and well in New York City, and because I was by myself, was able to procure a third-row seat for only \$40-only ten hours of lifeguarding.

Most of the card was forgettable, or maybe I was just exhausted, but when Howard Fink announced an intermission, and I saw the chain link fence come out, I felt my senses tingle. I actually was nervous. This was the culmination of the bloody Snuka-Muraco wars, and I knew that at Madison Square Garden, inside a steel cage, they would let it all hang out. Back in 1983, and for decades before that, MSG was the place to be. Before Pay-Per-View and huge Monday night telecasts, the Garden was actually the biggest show in all of wrestling. Even today, there is just something about the place that makes you want to give just a little more. I remember clips of Vince McMahon Sr.’s posthumous induction into the Madison Square Garden Hall of Fame were shown on World Wrestling Federation programming, and Vince Jr. saying, “Before he died, my father said to me-Vinnie, the Garden will always be the Garden.”

I later must have watched a video of that Snuka-Muraco cage match a dozen times, and in truth, it was just an average cage match; little on the short side as well. But the magic in the air was unmistakable. I wasn’t the only one anticipating something special. Within minutes, both combatants were busted wide open. Because this was before the day of 20/20 exposes and The Secrets of Professional Wrestling on national TV, I knew nothing about the blood, but of course assumed it was fake. I would find out the hard way that it wasn’t. So, as a result, I kept looking for a blood capsule, or that other ridiculous theory-the bottle of ketchup underneath the ring.

Just as Snuka had things going his way, the thing was over. He sprang off the ropes and delivered a flying head butt that sent Muraco through the ropes and out the door. “That’s it,” I said out loud, “a twelve-hour trip for that?” Sure it had been a good match, but it wasn’t what I paid to see. Suddenly, I saw Snuka’s unmistakable display of rage inside the ring. When it came to displays of rage, no one was more animated than Snuka. Really, it’s pretty much the Ken Shamrock “snapping” routine-translated into a modern perspective. I felt my heart rate pick up a little as the Fly went after his opponent outside the ring. A moment later, both men were back in ring, and a Snuka suplex had the Magnificent One lying prone in the middle.

Immediately, Snuka climbed to the top rope, and the Garden stood in unison. We were about to see the famed Superfly leap. This was back in 1983-before the day of moonsaults, saltos, planchas, and a lot of other foreign words that faceless Mexicans perform to little or no response. For my money, the impact has always been more important than the flips, and I would later learn just how much impact that splash had. That’s one of the “secrets” of professional wrestling; make it hurt for real. Then, with nothing but a glance, I realized my vision was about to come true.

All it took was that one glance upward, at the steel mesh that surrounded him, and the Garden started to buzz. A loud buzz that grew with each upward step that Snuka made. After all these years it’s still the most impressive sight I’ve ever seen-the muscular Snuka standing barefoot on top of the cage, his face a mask of crimson, while flashbulbs bathed him in light. In a moment it was over, but

the memory will live with me. It was a defining moment in my life-it was the day I knew without doubt what I wanted to do with my life. I wanted to be a wrestler, but even more, I wanted to make people feel the way I had just felt.

I got back to school at 10 A.M.-twenty-eight hours after my departure. A week later, I talked to my parents. "How was the match?" my dad wanted to know.

I started to lie, but realized it wasn't worth it. "It was great, Dad, but how did you know?"

My dad laughed and said, "Because your Mother and I watched the tape, and saw our son sitting in the third row with his red flannel shirt." He had caught me red-handed, and now he wanted to play Columbo and figure out the events of the crime. "You seemed to be in an awfully big hurry for us to leave, so we felt like you must have hid somewhere and had a friend come get you. Were we right?"

I proceeded to tell what might generously be called a half-truth. I was a future wrestler, damn it. "No, Dad, I definitely caught a bus to Cortland, and then I hitchhiked the next day."

Chapter 4

December 1983 I knew what I wanted to do with my life-I just didn't know how to go about doing it. A snowy winter night shortly before Christmas break would serve as a strange catalyst for my professional wrestling career.

I was in a bar called Toody & Muldoon's on a Saturday night, courtesy of the fake ID I had purchased in New York City during my first Snuka-Muraco encounter back in June. The bar had two levels; one that played rock and roll, and one that played dance music. Somehow, against my better taste and judgment, I always ended up in the basement listening to "It's Raining Men," and trying to look cool. Probably failing at it, too. I was hanging with my buddies, John Hennessey and Steve McKiernan, who was now my roommate.

Steve had started out as Scott Darragh's roommate, but Nom had never quite been happy at Cornell State, and had let his grades fall to nearly unchartable levels. At one point, a mutual friend named Dave Hegerty (a.k.a. "Hags") had shown up, and the two of them were miserable together for about a week. "I swear," Steve had told me during that time, as we walked back from class, "if I walk into my room and see Hags and Scottie D. looking through their yearbook and listening to Bonnie Tyler, I'm going to scream." Moments later, he opened the door and I heard a husky female voice singing "your love is like a shadow on me all of the time," followed by screams.

Nom really bottomed out when a combination of girlfriend problems and not making the baseball team sent him into a tailspin. Many was the time that I had heard a knock on the door, followed by a disheveled Nom simply saying "three." I felt for Scott, and would immediately hand him side three Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, which was our standard album side for depression and misery.

I was having fun at school, however, and this night was shaping up to be a good one. The World Wrestling Federation was on the television above the bar, and a rare title match was taking place. In the present-day wrestling scene, hot matches take place all the time on television-but back in '83, the World Wrestling Federation, like most shows, filmed a series of one-sided matchups. So it was with great excitement that I witnessed Tony Atlas and Rocky Johnson, whose then eleven-year-old son Duane would go on to become the most electrifying man in sports-entertainment, defeat the Wild Samoans for the World Wrestling Federation tag team championship.

I would have been perfectly content to just bask in the glow of that glorious title change, but my night suddenly went from great to history making when I saw Kathy walk down the stairs. Man, I liked Kathy. She was beautiful, she was funny, but more important, she made me feel great just to be around her.

At this point in time, I could probably be described as a shy, insecure, poorly dressed, weird guy who also happened to be polite, kind, funny, and borderline not too bad-looking. I was like a diamond in the rough, but man, you had to look pretty hard to find me. My failure with women was legendary. It wasn't that they didn't like me, but I had a tendency to be too ambitious with my choices, and had a terrible lack of finesse in closing the deal. In other words, I had no killer instinct, and a knack for not saying or doing the right thing.

I had flubbed a major one during my first week in school only about a foot from where I stood on that December evening. A hot chick walked up to me and started talking to me, while breathing dangerously close to my ear, which guaranteed instant wood. My ears were always real sensitive; it's a shame that one of them is missing, and that the wax content keeps my wife miles away from the other one. I swear, my mom used to irrigate my ear, and things the size of marbles used to fall out of there.

Anyway, after a few minutes, this hot-blooded woodmaker leaned in a little closer and informed me “I’ve been looking at you since you were a freshman.” I thought her comment over, and somewhere the resources of my mind came back at her with “But I’m a freshman now.” In a moment it was gone, all of it. The hot breath, the arm around the shoulder, the girl, and the wood. Gone, gone, all gone!

A girl named Amy probably represented the pinnacle of my ineptitude. This was also during the first week of school, on the second day actually, when a group of us third-floor Fitzgerald people were invited to the room of Battling Bill Esterly and John Heneberry, whom we would affectionately call Dingle. Bill and John were sophomores from Baldwinsville, New York, and wanted to hold a little social function in their room to help the new people get to know one another better. Within minutes, I was getting to know Amy better, as the vaunted Foley charm was striking in a big way.

Amy was beautiful, and had a figure that was impossible for me to take my eyes off of. Usually, I don’t like people when they’re smoking, but she had a look about her when she took a drag of her cigarette that put a twinkle in my eye and a bulge in my trousers. That rare combination of sexy voice, gorgeous face, swinging sweater puppets, and a somewhat morally casual attitude had my heart racing when we found ourselves somehow alone in Sue Kootz’s room. I believe she could sense my innocence as she began questioning me in a very suggestive way.

“Have you ever had sex before?” she purred.

“No,” I quickly gulped, “have you?”

She smiled as she sexily replied, “Lots of times.” Her questioning wasn’t over yet. “How about oral sex-has a woman ever done that to you?”

She was smiling seductively as I squirmed on Sue’s bed. I’d heard my friends talk about it, and I’d seen Kay Parker perform it, and from all indications, I felt it was something that I wanted to be a part of. “No,” I replied, “how about you, have you ever done it to a man?”

“Oh yeah,” came her sex kitten answer.

I pressed further, sensing what she was interested in. Yeah, I could smell what this chick was cooking. “Do you like it?” I had the nerve to say, with my right eye squinted like the Clint Eastwood poster I had hanging on my dormitory wall.

“Love it,” she simply said, as she snuggled up next to me, with a hand on my thigh and her blouse dropping down at the neck so that I was afforded a view of what looked to be paradise. Her next words were ones that I’d thought I’d never hear-“Can I kiss you?”

Man, this was too good to be true. I really felt that this could be my one way ticket out of the “V Club” which, along with Chris Walker and John Ambria, I’d been a card-carrying member of for a long time in my life. No doubt about it, this was the moment of truth. I leaned in and proceeded to give her the worst kiss in the history of Cortland, maybe even in all of the seven valley region. It was a kiss that was just a right, but a kiss with no parted lips, no probing tongue-not even any real pressure behind it. Foreign soccer players kissed each other with more passion after scoring a goal. I’d blown it-underneath all the amusing anecdotes and leftover summer tan and (at that time) perfect smile, I was really just a dummy and she’d seen right through me. In a matter of moments, she too was gone, gone, all gone.

Actually, Amy would go on to be responsible for some of my finest passionate moments-it’s too bad that she wasn’t present while they were happening.

Kathy was different, though. I didn’t judge her by the stretching in my slacks, but rather how much fun I had talking to her. Her eyes would light up, and she would literally beam when I talked to her. It didn’t matter to me that she was my friend Kevin’s former girlfriend, and that he’d dropped her like a bad habit-I would be there to pick her up. She was too good for Kevin anyway. I could talk to her for hours, and I did so on that fateful evening. It also didn’t matter that she was slightly intoxicated and

that the intoxication made walking quite difficult for her. I was there for that too. "Lean on me," I told her, "when you're not strong, I'll be your friend, I'll help you carry on. Just call on me, Kathy, and I'll lend a hand." Well, maybe those weren't my words exactly, but I'm sure they were pretty damn romantic.

The downtown area in Cortland was at the bottom of a hill that led to the campus. Kathy's dorm was directly at the top of the hill, and I accompanied her on the walk home, while flurries of snow fell softly. Without warning, her cold little hand was in mine, and despite the winter chill, I started sweating, because, believe it or not, I'd never been that far before. But Kathy's presence calmed me down, because, after all, this wasn't the same girl I was clumsily going to grope at the end of our stroll-she was my Kathy, dammit, and she was all I'd ever wanted in a girl.

When we got to her dorm, we talked for a few more minutes. I wasn't about to weasel my way into her room, as I was confident that there would be plenty of time for that type of thing in our future. I thought of my Amy failure, and decided to show romantic fortitude for once. "Can I kiss you goodnight, Kathy?" I politely asked the Irish beauty with the glowing smile. Man, she looked incredible, even in a slightly drunken haze. She didn't answer me verbally, but instead responded by reaching up and pulling my head down to her softly. I was ecstatic to be the recipient of a genuine and tender kiss that included neither parted lips nor probing tongue, but consisted of just the right amount of lip-to-lip pressure. I didn't have a lot of experience to draw from, but it seemed to me like a perfect kiss.

Up to that point, it was certainly the most romantic moment in my life, and even now rates up there in the top ten. I looked into her eyes, and they were smiling, as I gently rubbed her chilled cheek with my thumbs. "Good night, Kathy," I said softly. "I had a great time with you."

She responded with the words that buried my heart, but launched my career, "Good night, Frank."

My whole life felt like a record needle being scratched across an album as I struggled to gain my bearings. Frank? There had to be an explanation. Maybe she was thinking of my middle name, Francis, and just figured she'd call me Frank for short. Yeah, that was logical. Yeah, my ass it was logical. Reality had bit me, and it was holding on hard, and reality was that this girl I thought so highly of didn't know my name. My mind and heart were hurting bad as I bounded home, which was another half-mile away. I looked at my shadow on the wall of the Fine Arts Building, and I could see that my hair was getting long. After a lifetime of short hair, including unstylish ridiculed crew cuts, and a Mohawk that nearly got me thrown out of my house, I wanted to have long hair. Hair that would bounce when I dove off a top rope or cage-hair like the Superfly.

Like Superfly, I too was going to fly tonight. Physical pain always somehow seemed to relieve mental pain for me, and I was in need of some relief. And how did I spell relief? S-U-P-E-R-F-L-Y. I had a ritual that was a big hit with a few friends. They would fill the room with clouds of baby powder (our version of dry ice) to the opening chords of "Diary of a Workingman" by Blackfoot. By the time the tempo picked up, I would be pumped for my move, and the dive off my bed would take place just as Ricky Medlocke hit the high-pitched scream in the song. I felt like this ritual would make me forgive about the whole Kathy incident, even if just for a little while.

I walked into the room, and Steve McKiernan was already there. "How's it going, Mitch," he cheerily said. He always called me by the wrong name on purpose, in honor of a guy named Bruce Schenkel, who never could get my name straight. I don't get it-is Mick really that tough to remember? Anyway, I didn't like getting into details, and I simply told Steve to get the baby powder and the Blackfoot album ready because I was ready to take flight. After the dive, which knocked the wind out of

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