



Stories I Only Tell My Friends

Rob Lowe

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A wryly funny and surprisingly moving account of an extraordinary life lived almost entirely in the public eye

A teen idol at fifteen, an international icon and founder of the Brat Pack at twenty, and one of Hollywood's top stars to this day, Rob Lowe chronicles his experiences as a painfully misunderstood child actor in Ohio uprooted to the wild counterculture of mid-seventies Malibu, where he embarked on his unrelenting pursuit of a career in Hollywood.

The Outsiders placed Lowe at the birth of the modern youth movement in the entertainment industry. During his time on *The West Wing*, he witnessed the surreal nexus of show business and politics both on the set and in the actual White House. And in between are deft and humorous stories of the wild excesses that marked the eighties, leading to his quest for family and sobriety.

Never mean-spirited or salacious, Lowe delivers unexpected glimpses into his successes, disappointments, relationships, and one-of-a-kind encounters with people who shaped our world over the last twenty-five years. These stories are as entertaining as they are unforgettable.

Stories I Only Tell My Friends Details

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Tracy says

Just brought this one home yesterday. Yes, I have 4 papers due Monday. Yes, I have a full-time job and two children with many end-of-year activities. But I also have a weakness for celebrity biographies - the trashier the better - and come on. It's ROB LOWE. I'm thinking he's got some stories to tell. Plus, the back cover photo is...well...inspiring. Pure eye candy and the reading is pure mind candy. Awesome.

Well, I'm finished. Rob, what can I say? You dished...sort of. Although the celebrity stories were fun, the "Aw shucks I'm just a geeky guy" thing didn't quite work for me. Dude, you are one of the hottest men ever in life. It's just a fact. And to pretend that your beauty hasn't affected your experience in life is just silly. Sure, I accept that beautiful people can feel insecure and have problems. But I don't buy for one second that it was just happenstance that you ended up where you did. People are drawn to you because you are drop-dead gorgeous. You can't tell me in one sentence that you were such a geek that Malibu high school kids wouldn't let you surf (what? They had access to the whole ocean and the ability to keep you from it?) and then share the story about how you lost your virginity when you were seduced at 14 on that same Malibu beach. Those two things do not compute, Rob.

Typical of most celebrity bios, Rob glossed over some of the more unsavory aspects of his past. He barely discusses Melissa Gilbert, although he does acknowledge that he didn't treat her well. Still, according to her book, he knocked her up and left her, which is bit crappier than he admits to. And he also barely mentions his sex-on-tape scandal from 1988. I didn't know anything about it, so I looked it up on Wikipedia. I wouldn't judge him too harshly for most sexy hijinks - sure, banging two women, one of them a 16 year old, on videotape is undoubtedly unsavory, but I think it was consensual. A 16 year old is young enough that she hasn't outgrown stupid, but old enough to say "yes" and mean it. But the part that is more repugnant is that Rob was having sex with a woman or women with one of his friends taking a turn as well. Not as a threesome but as a bonding experience. That goes past unsavory to flat out wrong.

The sex scandal prompted Rob to go to rehab for alcohol abuse. He claimed to love rehab, which struck me as especially self-involved. Isn't it supposed to be painful to work out your addiction by figuring out what makes you tick? Not for Rob, who enjoys getting to know himself this way. He's just such a fascinating guy after all. In a self-deprecating kind of way.

I'm sounding harsher than I mean to about this book. Rob doesn't seem to be a bad guy. And his stories and observations about the people he came into contact with were interesting. He opens the book by gushing about Robert Kennedy Jr. in such a way that I thought this was an introduction to the book by someone else, written about Rob. I think he was trying to show that he was subject to hero worship and being upstaged by a better looking man just like an average Joe. What it demonstrated to me, though, that he had to compare himself to someone who was not only good-looking but was America's form of royalty to top himself.

I guess I just can't quite forgive him for not being Sam Seaborn.

Trudi says

I don't read celebrity gossip rags or keep track of who's marrying / divorcing / screwing who at any given time (not that there's anything wrong with that people!). I definitely didn't pick up this memoir of one of Hollywood's all-time pretty boys hoping for a salacious tell-all about who wears women's underwear or who includes small animals in their sex play.

So why the hell did I pick up this book? Several reasons top the list:

1) Reviews promised it offers a poignant, self-deprecating coming-of-age tale in the long shadow of the Hollywood sign (I'm happy to report that's mostly the case).

2) Rob Lowe: yes, I did crush on him when I was a teenager, and lo and behold these many, many years later, I was curious to see what kind of a man he had grown up to be. Not ever having seen one episode of *The West Wing* or either Austin Powers movies (a ridiculous gap in my pop culture history), I lost track of Mr. Lowe somewhere in the late 80's.

3) I'm a sucker for memoirs that focus a lot on the making of movies. Don't ask me why -- I don't act, have never wanted to make a film, but I love movies as only a fan can and every so often a memoir will come along that captures the magic of movie making in a way that enthralls me. I'm one of those geeks who will listen to director's commentary and "the making of" extra features, not for every movie, but always for the films I love. Should you care, my favorite memoir of this sort is Bruce Campbell's *If Chins Could Kill: Confessions of a B Movie Actor*. Bloody brilliant!

So for all of these reasons, I knew pretty early on Rob and I would be spending a few evenings together. I went with the audio version and am so glad I did. Rob's voice is lovely, but he also offers up a pretty decent impersonation of almost every person he has crossed paths with. Not all of them are great, but most are funny, and a few are so spot on they had me rolling with laughter. He certainly had Patrick Swayze down cold. I particularly loved his wry assessment of his super energetic co-star: "he makes Tom Cruise look lobotomized".

I had no idea Rob's early life included close friendships with the Sheen and Penn family. His one anecdote about the first time he meets Martin Sheen is hilarious -- considering Martin is just returned from the jungle and the two year *Apocalypse Now* drug-induced, frenzied insanity that was that.

There are no earth-shattering confessions. Much of the book reads like a love letter to his long-time wife (a rarity in Hollywood for sure) and children (two sons), and for a man approaching 50, that is as it should be, and I was glad to hear that he chose the road of sobriety and sensibility. Heaven knows it could have gone the other way -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ciFGqXIUPU&feature=relmfu>

Sarah Wilsman says

Okay, I have to say that I met Rob in Arizona in the early 90's...and I was very surprised then at how charming, self-deprecating and intelligent he was...and, yes, beautiful...This memoir reveals all of that, although thanks to SNL and *West Wing*, his wit and intelligence have already been revealed. The best review that I read of this book said that it was a love letter to his wife...and it is. He has matured and I very much

enjoyed his look back at the journey thus far.

I also listened to the audio, which is basically Rob telling you the stories himself...and the man is a brilliant mimic - you have to hear him do all the famous voices.

Kayla says

Rob Lowe's life sounds so insanely cool that it's hard to believe it all actually happened to one man. I mean, before I even reached chapter ten he'd already befriended the Sheens and Penns, been on the set of Star Wars and seen the taping of The Muppet Movie. Then he goes on to make some of the greatest films of all time, receive random gifts from Bill Murray and got to work for Aaron Sorkin (genius). If it weren't for the alcoholism and numerous deaths of family and friends, it'd be a perfect run.

He's one of my favourite actors and so I found it extremely thrilling and interesting to have this glimpse into his life. But I'm so impressed with how well it was written. I want to read it again already.

Also, the photo on the back? Um, yeah. Insanely good-looking.

Ashley Brooks says

I often forget how old Rob Lowe is, and subsequently how popular he was in the 80's. I listened to this on audio, which I highly recommend, and found it really enjoyable. Apparently Tom Cruise has always been a bit of a weirdo, no surprise there.

Julia Reed says

Bought this on a whim and really ended up enjoying it. Lowe is funny, witty, and at times even eloquent (mostly when he talks about lessons learned from fatherhood, or being a recovering alcoholic). You can tell why he called this "Stories I only tell my friends," since much of the book is: "One day, I was walking down the street, and I met this girl, and she was really pretty, and really nice, and she told me she was into acting, and I said I was too. Oh and by the way, she was [insert famous name here]". After about the 30th time this scenario plays out, you start to think "if this guy wasn't Rob Lowe, I probably would never believe this." But it IS Rob Lowe, and he really did grow up next door to Martin Sheen and shoot home movies with Sean Penn and Sean Penn's brother. He really did talk his way into Liza Minelli's hotel suite in Ohio when he was five and act with a very young Janet Jackson in a short lived TV series. And of course, he really was Sam Seaborn on the West Wing. So you can't help but believe it all and surrender to the hilarious anecdotes of a life in show business.

What's great about the book is that it doesn't feel like he's dropping names for the sake of it. He grew up in film, and this is his community. Just as you might write about someone at your job (assuming you want to get fired...) he writes about the people in his industry. His friends and confidants. Only his have enormous mansions and make million dollar incomes (where do I get me some of those friends?)

Mainly he manages to pull off the "Celebrities are people too" thing, without being annoying. His self deferential, accepting of the absurdities of Hollywood, serious about his craft, surprisingly lacking in ego when talking about the ups and downs of his career, and yes, he has some funny stories to impart. Final word: definitely better than your run of the mill celebrity story. Funny, down to earth, and really entertaining. Also, c'mon, it's Sam Seaborn!

Vaishali says

Not just a beautiful face. A soulful tour through a humble childhood, high school with Charlie Sheen and Sean Penn... and the constant threat of auditioning against a young, assassin-like Tom Cruise. Get the audiobook for Rob's celebrity impressions!

Cool Excerpts :

"I wanna see the spaceship," I say.

"It's right over there," he says, pointing to another corner of the warehouse. "It's called the Millenium Falcon."

In history class I bond with a hilarious, madrigal-singing maniac called Robert Downey Jr. No one is funnier or more brilliant at streams of conscious banter.

It's about 110 degrees in this sweatbox of a studio as Tom Cruise is called to the floor. Now I have real issues; he's giving my role a try... I watch him, and I think, that's it, I'm done. He's clearly a force to be reckoned with, and is more focused and ambitious than I ever thought about being.

But then... Tom has stopped. Stopped the scene! Right in the middle of the monologue! A hush falls over the room.

"Um, I'm sorry..." he says, looking directly at Francis. "This just isn't working for me."

Holy shit! Not working for him? I thought Francis Ford Coppola was the judge of what works and what doesn't.

I see Gregory Peck, Robert Wagner, Cary Grant, and Prince Ranier and approach the group. "Excuse me. I just wanted to say good-bye and thank you for letting me be a part of a wonderful evening." Then, when I am almost out of earshot, I hear Wagner say "Ya know guys, I think that kid's banged every one of our daughters."

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As Matt Dillon's character, Dallas, arrives on the scene, I observe another phenomenon - the power of charisma. Matt is not revved up; he is not blazing like a nova. He is relaxed and confident. He can just stand there and the camera loves him. I have watched actors on a set and they look just fine, then shifted my eyes to look at them on the monitor... and suddenly they look otherworldly, amazing. Matt is one of those guys.

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"Young man," she says. "I had no idea you were such a good singer. Please come sit with me."
I realize it is Lucille Ball. I go sit with her and she takes my hand and holds it tightly... I watch as she goes on to receive her Lifetime Achievement Award to a standing ovation.
When Lucille Ball likes what you do, it's hard to give a shit about anyone else.

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Kaliki says

I really gained a lot of respect for Rob Lowe through reading this book. He's genuine, honest, he talks openly about his talents, his escapades, his addictions, and his insecurities. I listened to the audio version, read in his own voice and I feel like that made it more personal. I listened to it at the same time as I was reading Patrick Swayze's *The Time of My Life* and while I enjoyed that one also, it wasn't nearly the read that this one is. I did however, enjoy the parallels between their two careers, as well as the level of respect with which they both speak of each other.

Rob Lowe is clearly an intelligent guy. A GORGEOUS guy, who's image and appearance took any spotlight away from his intelligence (at least from the public's perspective) for many years. He's articulate, well-thought, and dynamic. I was never a swooning fan over him in his heyday -- but I am now.

I highly recommend this memoir. I didn't want it to end, and would read anything else he writes.

Kat says

If there's one thing I dislike about celebrity autobiographies, it's the amount of affectation and pretension that exist within the pages. While Rob Lowe's memoir certainly contains a lot of name dropping, I couldn't really hold that against him — after all, if you're telling the story of how you worked your way up in Hollywood, it'd be hard *not* to mention the names of other famous people you met along the way.

I haven't seen much of Lowe's work. I've probably seen two or three of his movies, and none of his TV shows. I never crushed on him as so many other women have (and obviously still do). So I came to the book with very little knowledge of him or his life. It was interesting to learn about his childhood. However, I find it hard to believe that a young boy as good-looking as Rob had trouble getting girls to pay attention to him. Maybe it's because he was so serious about acting from an early age, everyone thought he was gay (he does mention that his classmates called him "faggy" for wanting to act).

Lowe manages to tell the story of his climb to superstardom without mudslinging his fellow actors in the industry. I found that refreshing, because so many other celebrity authors tend to bad-mouth people they've worked with or met in the past, all for the sake of selling a book.

Rob Lowe seems like a decent, stand-up guy who owns up to the mistakes of his youth. I think it's true that

beautiful people are often judged harshly because people think they get everything handed to them on a silver platter. But Rob has proven that he's earned his position in Hollywood through a lot of hard work, rejections and tough lessons learned on the price of achieving success at so young an age. So while I might've previously dismissed Mr. Lowe as just another pretty boy, I'm now curious to watch his films and see his talent for myself.

Joanna Silverstein says

I got this book as a get well present from a friend (thanks, Jan!), and it was a decent mindless read. I only rated it ok because he doesn't dish any dirt, which is what I hope for in a celeb autobiography. The way he writes it, everyone he's ever dealt with was wonderful, every movie another experience for him to grow and make BFFs (when all I want to hear is stories like "I once did PCP with Charlie Sheen and we ended up eating his cat").

Kelli says

Color me surprised! This autobiography kept my attention and brought me to the edge of tears on at least three occasions. There was an air of nostalgia to it with talk of growing up in the seventies and so many eighties movies I had long since forgotten about, but it was also genuinely interesting and surprisingly well-written. Rob Lowe, an actor worth \$30 million, comes across as humble, hardworking, grateful, and relatable...no small feat. He eluded to his big videotape scandal a few times without ever really directly speaking about it, which I thought odd because he could've handled it in a sentence or two with the same wisdom and class used throughout. Maybe I just missed that part. This makes me want to read *The Outsiders* and find the original movie, the one with all Rob's later cut scenes. 3.5 stars

Emily says

Before I read this book, this was my entire conception of Rob Lowe:

so I was definitely surprised to run across an excerpt of this book in *Vanity Fair* and realize that Rob Lowe used to be a bona fide star in the 80s. WHAT.

This book is downright hilarious for any number of reasons, but it is also surprisingly fun to read. The section on the making of Francis Ford Coppola's *The Outsiders* takes up about 1/4 of the book, and it's absolutely fascinating. If you aren't interested in reading this whole book, I'd really suggest reading the excerpt published in *Vanity Fair*. Child actors, the Brat Pack, teenage Tom Cruise turning down roles because the part "doesn't work for him" - it's awesome.

As for the rest of the book, Rob Lowe is a decent writer, and he has some great stories to tell. He tries to paint himself as a winning, sincere kid from Ohio who never really gets into the politics of show business, a

characterization that falls somewhat flat given that he spent his teenage years next door to the Sheens and the Penns in Malibu. It seems like he wants to resist name-dropping, but he li-ter-ally cannot help himself. (When he gives in, he knows how to name-drop in one way: "My agent sets up a meeting with a girl who's tearing up Broadway. We talk. Sarah seems nice. I know she'll have great success. I say goodbye ... to *Sarah Jessica Parker*." BOOM. Rob Lowed.) As the book progresses, you get the sense that he blames studio politics - never himself - for the gradual decline of his acting profile. He also brings up this sentiment a few times too many:

When you hear a star is "difficult" or a "diva" or "demanding," there are a few possible scenarios. The most likely, however, is that he or she has been surrounded by people who don't give a shit about the project at hand, and whose sole creative agenda is to cover their asses and save a nickel whenever possible. The star is the only one with the power to stand in the way of mediocrity and expedience, and often when they do, they are scapegoated.

So even though he skips over some of the more interesting chapters in his life - like the fact that he was one of the first stars to have a leaked sex tape! - I felt like I got a pretty good sense of Rob Lowe from this book. He's earnest, mildly grating, and well-connected. The pacing of this book might be totally out of whack (West Wing fans will be disappointed), but you can't argue with midnight Paris hangouts that include Bill Murray. I also laughed out loud every time Tom Cruise reappeared. For example:

I do manage to spend time with Cruise, who is shooting *Risky Business* in town, but since both of us are so busy, it isn't the same. Also, Tom has a new perspective on his acting style, telling me, "I want to spend time hanging with you but Joel [his character] doesn't."

Finally, here's a gif of Rob Lowe from his sex symbol days.

WHAT'S UP SODAPOP

Twobusy says

Um... yeah. So I read the Rob Lowe autobiography.

Why? Perfectly fair question. The answer lies in the fact that Vanity Fair ran a long excerpt from it a month or two ago, featuring the segment where Lowe talks about his experiences auditioning for and then appearing in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Outsiders*. And when I read it, I was surprised to find... it was good. Really, really good. Well-executed, thoughtful, and offering tremendous insight not only into what was going through Lowe's head at the time but also into what happens behind the scenes when one of cinema's greatest directors brought together a slew of the finest young actors of the 80s. It was totally engaging and fascinating — enough so that I ordered the book in spite of the fact that I've never been a big Lowe fan.

Unsurprising discovery: the excerpt was the best part. While the rest of the book is also very smoothly and

competently written, it also doesn't come close to matching the insight of *The Outsiders* section anywhere else over the course of his career — he ends up glossing over much of his film career, barely touches on his sex scandal, and even the chapter on his (very publicly troubled) history with *The West Wing* goes to great lengths to be bland and positive (presumably so as not to ruin his chances of ever working with Aaron Sorkin or the rest of the cast again). Which leaves us with a celebrity autobiography that had a legitimate chance to be great... but instead settled for vanilla. Well-rendered and flavorful vanilla, but vanilla nonetheless.

Stephanie says

Rob Lowe is an icon from the '80s and I have had a crush on him for many years. His memoir is sweet, funny, and engaging. He seems to be a very down to earth guy in spite of spending his growing up years in the spotlight and hanging around with the likes of the Sheen/Estevez brothers and the Penn brothers. Stories of his geeky youth and his Ohio roots were bittersweet, especially the parts about his parents' divorce, moving away from Ohio to California, and his mother's many illnesses.

If you're a fan, you'll enjoy reading about the making of "*The Outsiders*" and get some major insight into what really happened on that set and how deeply affected Rob was in the making of his very first major movie with world renowned director, Francis Ford Coppola. Rob has had many opportunities and many setbacks in his life, and he glosses over some of the messiest bits but doesn't pull many punches when he talks about hitting rock bottom and getting sober after many years using alcohol as an anesthetic against the difficulties of life.

I listened to the audio book which was read by Rob himself and I think it made the experience even more enjoyable.

Holly says

I don't believe there were many straight girls or gay boys who did not have a crush on Rob Lowe in the 1980s. That said, his career has had its major ups and downs and who didn't cringe when he hosted the Oscars? But as he tells his life story thus far, you start to get to know the "man behind the mask" so to speak. I found Lowe an intelligent, sensitive and quite eloquent man and he really has a great story to tell. I heard of his childhood and all the pain and laughter that entailed, his rise to stardom, his battle with alcoholism, and his love for his wife and boys. It's really a great story and if you have any interest in either Lowe or actors (especially the "love" of acting), then you should check this out.

Linda says

Rob Lowe was a heart throb of my generation, though he wasn't my heart throb. Emilio was my brat pack crush. Which may be why I procrastinated on listening to this highly rated memoir.

Rob Lowe tells a great story, and I'm so happy to be among his friends that he shares with. I was captivated with his unfolding of his youth, including the details of casting, shooting and immediate stardom of *The Outsiders*. He affectionately describes his friendships and his mentors. The book is beautifully paced, not uneven like some memoirs.

I highly recommend - Nay, I *insist* that you choose the audio version of this book. Not only is Rob a great storyteller, but who knew he was a talented mimic? He voices icons that he meets in his life with respect and some accuracy, including Cary Grant, Martin Sheen, Michael J Fox, Christopher Walken, Andy Warhol, Matt Dillon and many more.

I have emerged from this book with admiration for Rob Lowe, in spite of his admitted youthful philandering assholery. All grown up now, his intelligence, candor and insightful sharing are top notch.

Also, there's lots of Emilio!

[Emulating a friend, I'm going to stop giving star ratings for memiors, because rating someone's life story doesn't seem right. But I enjoyed and recommend this book.]

Misty says

I really enjoyed the audiobook read by Rob Lowe. Listening to this on a long car ride, the first two-thirds of the book was a fun guessing game of which celebrity Lowe was referring to in his story! Lowe also does great impressions of the celebrities he discusses.

Rob Lowe has definitely lived a #blessed life - his family moving to Malibu when he was young, introduced him to some of the great actors of his time and gave him lots of opportunity. It is really amazing that he turned his life around so quickly and at a young age to focus on family and his career.

I think he is an under appreciated actor, but he remains humble and loves what he does.

Keep seeing the positive in the world, Lowe!

Saleh MoonWalker says

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Nothing in life is unfair. It's just life.

Diane says

This was a surprisingly enjoyable read. I generally avoid celebrity memoirs, but I saw a nice excerpt from Rob Lowe's latest one, "Love Life," about how emotional he was when his son went away to college, and decided to give his first autobiography a chance.

I am a child of the 80s, so I grew up with Lowe's movies and those of the so-called Brat Pack. *The Outsiders* was popular when I was a kid, ("Stay gold, Ponyboy") and I also loved *St. Elmo's Fire* and *About Last Night*. Lowe's book had good behind-the-scenes stories about those movies and others, and he was frank about his womanizing and drinking problem back then. One sobering story occurred when Rob was about 14 and he met John Belushi at a party. When Belushi heard that Rob wanted to be an actor, Belushi said, "Stay out of the clubs." Rob wrote, "I should have listened. Instead, I got my first agent."

Lowe also describes how he got his start in acting, and his early friendships with Charlie Sheen, Emilio Estevez, Tom Cruise, C. Thomas Howell, and every other 80s movie star you can think of. One of my favorite chapters was about making *The Outsiders*, and how close the cast became during a long shoot in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Unfortunately, a lot of Rob's scenes were cut from the 1983 movie, but 20 years later, Francis Ford Coppola made a director's cut that restored a lot of that footage, and was more faithful to the S. E. Hinton novel.

Rob admits he had a reputation for partying in the 80s, but his redemptive moment came after he met Sheryl, the woman who has been his wife since 1991. He went to rehab and maintained his sobriety, and he has continued to do good work in movies and TV. (I thought he was great on *The West Wing* and *Parks & Recreation*.)

Overall, this was a nice, diverting read -- an excellent start to summer.

My rating: 3.5 stars rounded up to 4

Shannon says

A fun, quick read. Great stories with cameos by Cary Grant, Dick Wolf, Demi Moore. Lots of time spent on the making of the *Outsiders*...but breezes through the *West Wing* and stops there. Where's the dirt on Sally Field and Calista Flockhart and the week-after-henious week of bizarre plots on *Brothers & Sisters*, which drove him into a persistent vegetative state, which sounded like a good deal if it meant getting off that show?! *Lyon's Den*, anyone?

One item of note: you'll perhaps be unsurprised to learn that Rob Lowe has had a lot of sex. Like, a lot. The book is usual celebrity mix of extremely selective, self-serving and self-justifying stuff about how life as a hot star is, well, hard. Really, Really Hard. But he's a good enough writer (who thinks he's a great writer) without being mean-spirited or a gossip. I would have liked to get much more dirt on, say, the sex tape, Princess Stephanie, and the *West Wing* behind-the-scenes drama, instead of one-sided half-analyses from which he emerges sounding reasonable, balanced, gracious, humble, and never possibly the cause of the problems. Just the victim. Yet it was more charming than I expected. He loves his kids, he loves his wife (and is still married after 20 years) and he's humble and forthright about his addiction and sobriety, which I always respect. All in all, a fun read. But really, you don't need to read it, because as it turns out, there are pictures of him throughout. And in many of them, he's shirtless. So, you know.
