



The Road Through Wonderland: Surviving John Holmes (5 Year Anniversary)

By Dawn Schiller

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Painstakingly honest, this chilling memoir reveals how a teenager became immersed in the bizarre life of legendary porn star John Holmes. Starting with a childhood that molded her perfectly to fall for the seduction of “the king of porn,” this autobiography recounts the perilous road that Dawn Schiller traveled—from drugs and addiction to beatings, arrests, forced prostitution, and being sold to the drug underworld. After living through the horrific Wonderland murders of 1981, she entered protective custody, ran from the FBI, and turned in John Holmes to the police. This is the true story of a young girl’s harrowing escape from one of the most infamous public figures, her struggle to survive, and her recovery from unthinkable abuse.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The 2003 movie *Wonderland* vivified Schiller's teenage experience under the thrall of a drug-addled porn star in L.A. in the late 1970s, while this long docudrama expands on that raw era to include her peripatetic, dysfunctional upbringing and aftermath as a survivor. The daughter of a Vietnam vet and a German woman he met and married overseas, Schiller spent her early years moving around to accommodate her father's military career, especially between New Jersey and the suburbs of Miami. After a free-wheeling road trip, the family ended up in Glendale, Calif., where Schiller met John Holmes, the charismatic 32-year-old married manager of an apartment complex they happened to crash in. Holmes clearly took on a fatherly role to young Schiller, whose own father left her to her own devices, including feeding herself. She was 15, and he had a thriving secret career as a porn star. She eventually moved in with Holmes and his sympathetic wife, Sharon, though drugs soon changed the dynamic to erratic behavior: Holmes beat and prostituted Schiller before she fled, and he became entangled in the so-called *Wonderland* murders of 1981. This is the grim, interminable plight of a "throwaway" teen with nowhere else to go, a cautionary tale in workmanlike prose.

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From [Booklist](#)

Curiously enough for a book concerned with notorious pornographic film star John Holmes, there is very little emphasis on sex here. Instead, Schiller, who met Holmes in 1976 when she was just 15, details their five-year love affair, the stability he provided in the wake of her troubled childhood, and the deterioration of their relationship after Holmes became addicted to cocaine and was ultimately arrested. While in the grip of drug-fueled paranoia, he would beat her while also forcing her to prostitute herself for money to feed his habit. Her vulnerability is revealed by the fact that she spends as much time describing the way he casually destroyed her beloved Christmas gifts as she does the degradations he forced her to undergo. The most fascinating person in the book is Holmes' wife, Sharon, a dedicated nurse who claims she was ignorant of Holmes and Schiller's relationship; indeed, she became more of a mother to Dawn than her own mother ever was. Dawn's story is so volatile and dysfunctional that even her labored prose can't mask the drama of lives spinning out of control. --Joanne Wilkinson

Review

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"The emotions are strong throughout this well-written book and lead the reader into a world few travel and survive. I was unable to put the book down!" —Susan Murphy Milano, violence expert and author, *Time's Up: A Guide on How to Leave and Survive Abuse and Stalking Relationships*

"Dawn Schiller manages to write so beautifully about something so shatteringly repulsive." —National Center for Victims of Crime

"Gritty and starkly honest." —Mike Sager, writer at large, *Esquire*; author, *Scary Monsters and Super Freaks*

"Dawn Schiller's courageous and intimately detailed memoir has given us a rare backstage glimpse at the tragic life of one man whom the porn industry used to sustain its myth-making machinery—and the havoc he wreaked in the life of a vulnerable young woman." —Dr. Jackson Katz, author, *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help*

"The most mesmerizing memoir since Jeannette Walls' *The Glass Castle*." —AOL News

"[Schiller's] unflinching prose makes a gruesome story that much more compelling." —*Los Angeles Magazine*

"Schiller's writing is gripping, and the reader gets sucked in to this twisted tale. The story is so shocking it's hard to believe that she lived through these terrifying events. This book is hard to put down and definitely provokes the reader to want to continue to see what happens next." —Nicole Will, *Portland Book Review* (March 2011)

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