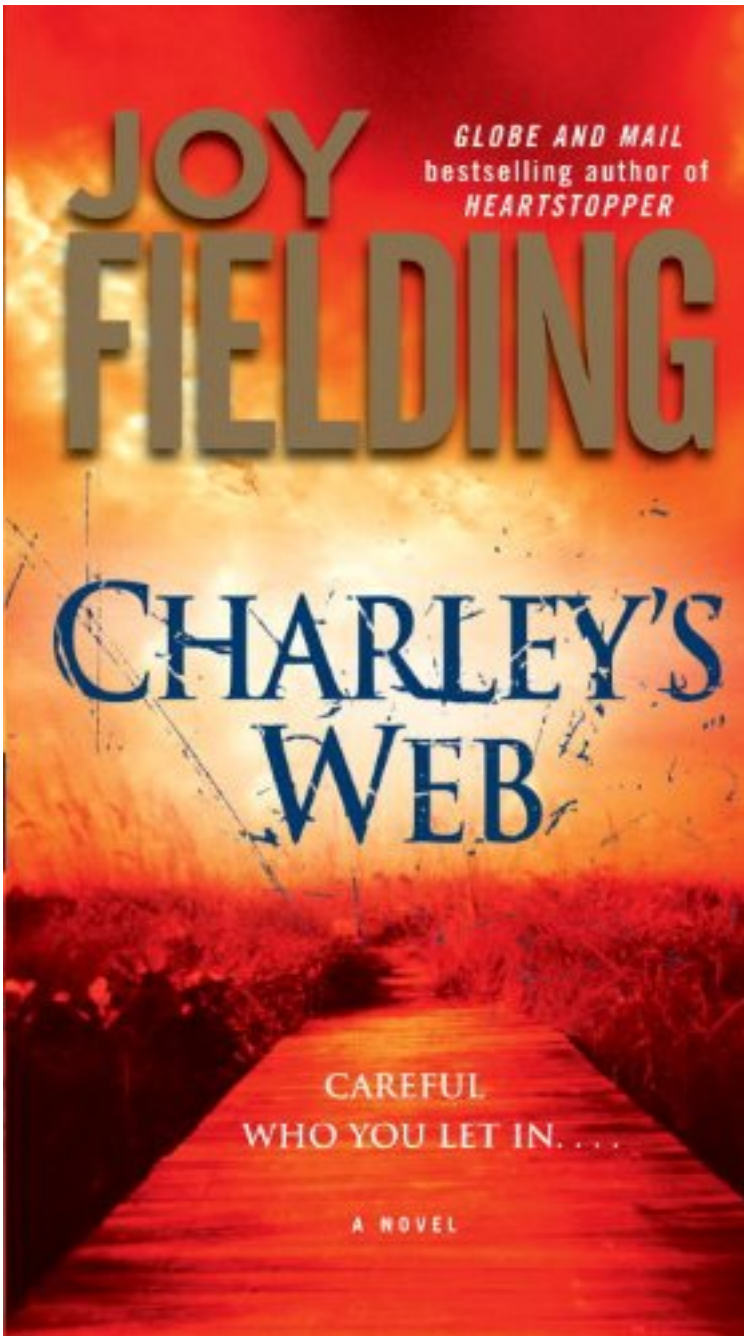


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Charley's Web



Par Joy Fielding
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe New York Times and internationally bestselling author is at her heart-skipping best with her latest mesmerizing triumph . . . Charleys Web.Charley Web is a beautiful single mother who writes a successful and controversial column for the Palm Beach Post. Shes spent years building an

emotional wall against scathing critics, snooty neighbors and her disapproving family. But when she receives a letter from Jill Rohmer, a young woman serving time on death row for the murders of three small children, her wall slowly begins to crumble. Jill wants Charley to write her biography so that she can share the many hidden truths about the case that failed to surface during her trial including the existence of a mysterious man she calls Jack, who may just be the actual killer. Seeing this as an opportunity to gain journalistic credibility, Charley begins her journey into the mind of this deeply troubled woman. But when a series of anonymous letters, threatening to harm her son and daughter, land in Charley's in-box, she knows her assignment has gone way too far. As Charley races against time to save her family, she begins to understand the value of her seemingly intrusive neighbors, friends and relatives. As she discovers, this network of flawed but loving people might just be her only hope of getting out alive. From the Hardcover edition. Extrait Chapter 1 -----

FROM: Irate Reader
TO: Charley@Charley'sWeb.com
SUBJECT: YOU ARE THE WORST COLUMNIST EVER!!!
Date: Mon, 22 Jan. 2007, 07:59:47-0500 -----

Hey, Charley: Just a brief note to let you know that aside from being THE WORST COLUMNIST WHO EVER LIVED!!! you are quite possibly THE MOST SELF-ABSORBED WOMAN ON THE PLANET!!! It's obvious from your photograph -- the long, wavy, blond hair, the knowing glance from large, downcast eyes, the subtle smirk on those no doubt Restylane-enhanced lips -- that you think the sun rises and sets on your lovely shoulders. Your insipid columns about shopping for the perfect stilettos, searching for just the right shade of blush, and coping with the demands of a new personal trainer have only solidified my assessment. But what on earth would make you think there is anyone who is even moderately interested in learning about your latest foray into the world of the sublimely shallow -- a Brazilian wax?!!! Before your graphic and unnecessarily lurid description regarding the denuding of your nether region in Sunday's paper -- (WEBB SITE, Sunday, January 21) -- I actually had no idea there even was such a thing, let alone that any grown woman -- I know from a previous column that you celebrated your thirtieth birthday last March -- would willingly consent to such a barbaric procedure. I wonder how your poor father reacted when he read about his Harvard-educated daughter infantilizing her body in such a demeaning way. I wonder how your mother manages to hold her head up in front of her friends with the constant public airing of such private -- dare I say, pubic? -- matters. (At least they have two other daughters to keep their spirits buoyed!!! Kudos to Anne, incidentally, for the stunning success of her latest novel, Remember Love -- number 9 on the New York Times bestseller list, and climbing!!! And to Emily, who made such a lovely impression when she subbed for Diane Sawyer on Good Morning America last month!!!) Those are truly daughters to make any parent proud. And speaking of daughters, what must your eight-year-old think when she sees you parading around the house in the nude, as I'm sure you do, judging from how much you obviously enjoy exposing yourself in print!!! Not to mention the teasing your five-year-old son will be subjected to in his kindergarten class from other children whose parents were no doubt similarly appalled by Sunday's column! Last week's article about sex toys was bad enough!! Can you not look beyond the tip of your pert little nose -- courtesy of the best plastic surgery money can buy, no doubt -- and consider the effect of such indiscreet blathering on both these young innocents?! (Although what can one expect from a woman who prides herself on never having married either of her children's fathers?!!!) I've had it up to here with your inane yapping about all things Charley. (Thank you for not using your given name of Charlotte. At least you spared us the desecration of that most wonderful of children's books!) After three years of reading -- and shaking my head in dismay!!! -- at your dimwitted musings, I have finally reached the end of my rope. I would rather hang myself by my own still intact pubic hairs than read one more word of your puerile prose, and I can no longer justify supporting any newspaper that chooses to publish it. I am therefore canceling my subscription to the Palm Beach Post as of today. I'm sure I speak for many disgusted and disgruntled readers when I say, WHY CAN'T YOU JUST SHUT UP AND GO AWAY?!!!! -----

Charley Webb sat staring at the angry letter on her computer screen, not sure whether to laugh or cry. It wasn't just that the letter was so nasty that had her feeling so unsettled -- she'd received many that were worse over the years, including several this very morning. Nor was it the almost hysterical tone of today's letter. Again, she was used to reader outrage. And it wasn't the wildly overused punctuation either. Writers of angry e-mails tended to view their every sentence as important and therefore worthy of capital letters, italics, and multiple exclamation points. It wasn't even the personal nature of the attack. Any woman who devoted a thousand words to her recent Brazilian wax had to expect attacks of a personal nature. Some -- including a few of her colleagues -- might even say she invited them, that she prided herself on being provocative. She got what she deserved,

they might say. They might even be right. Charley shrugged. She was used to controversy and criticism. She was used to being called incompetent and lightweight, as well as a host of other more unflattering epithets.

She'd grown used to having her motives questioned, her integrity impugned, and her looks dissected and disparaged. She was also used to being told it was those same looks that had gotten her a byline in the first place. Or that one of her more famous sisters must have pulled some strings. Or that her father, a highly esteemed professor of English literature at Yale, had used his influence to get her the job. She was used to being called a bad daughter, a worse mother, a terrible role model. Such slurs usually rolled off her "lovely shoulders." So what was it about this particular e-mail that had her trapped between laughter and tears? What about it made her feel so damn vulnerable? Maybe she was still smarting from the fallout from last week's column. Her neighbor, Lynn Moore, who lived several doors away from Charley on a once-decrepit, now verging-on-fashionable, small street in downtown West Palm, had invited her to a so-called Passion Party, just before Christmas. It turned out to be a variation of the old neighborhood Tupperware party, except that instead of a variety of heavy-duty plastic containers on display, there were vibrators and dildos. Charley had had a wonderful time handling all the assorted objets, and listening to the hyperbolic sales pitch of Passion's perky representative -- "And this seemingly innocuous string of beads, well, ladies, let me tell you, it's nothing short of miraculous. Talk about multiple orgasms! This is truly the Christmas gift that keeps on giving all year round!" -- then performed a neat evisceration of the evening in her column the following month. "How could you do this?" Lynn had confronted Charley in person the day the column ran. She was standing on the single step outside the front door of Charley's tiny, two-bedroom bungalow. Charley's column was scrunched into a tight ball in her clenched fist, her fingers curled around Charley's paper throat.

"I thought we were friends." "We are friends," Charley had protested, although, in truth, they were more acquaintances than actual friends. Charley didn't have any actual friends. "Then how could you do this?" "I don't understand. What have I done?" "You don't understand?" Lynn had repeated incredulously. "You don't know what you've done? You humiliated me, that's what you did. You made me look like a sex-crazed fool. My husband is furious. My mother-in-law's in tears. My daughter is beside herself with embarrassment. The phone's been ringing off the hook all morning." "But I didn't say it was you." "You didn't have to. My hostess," Lynn recited from memory, "a fortyish brunette sporting tight capri pants, two-inch crystal-studded nails, and three-inch heels, lives in a charming white clapboard house filled with fresh-cut flowers from her magnificent garden. A large American flag waves proudly from the tiny, manicured front lawn. Gee, I wonder who that could be." "It could be anybody. I think you're being overly sensitive." "Oh, really? I'm being overly sensitive? I invite you to a party, introduce you to my friends, pour you not one, but several glasses of champagne..." "For God's sake, Lynn. What did you expect?" Charley interrupted, annoyed at having to defend herself. "I'm a reporter. You know that. This sort of story is right up my alley. Of course

I'm going to write about it. You knew that when you invited me over." "I didn't invite you over as a reporter." "It's what I do," Charley reminded her. "It's who I am." "My mistake," Lynn said simply. "I thought you were more." There was a moment of awkward silence as Charley struggled to keep Lynn's words from sinking in too deep. "Sorry I disappointed you." Lynn brushed off Charley's apology with a wave of her two-inch nails. "But not sorry you wrote the column. Right?" She began backing down the front walk. "Lynn..." "Oh, shut up." WHY CAN'T YOU JUST SHUT UP AND GO AWAY?!!!! Charley stared at her computer screen. Was it possible Lynn Moore was her Irate Reader? Wary eyes skipped across the words Irate Reader had written, searching for echoes of Lynn's subtle southern drawl, finding none. The truth was that Irate Reader could be anyone. In her thirty years on this planet, three at this desk, Charley Webb had managed to ruffle an awful lot of feathers. There were plenty of people who wished she would just shut up and go away. "I thought you were more," she repeated under her breath. How many others had made the same mistake? -----FROM: Charley WebbT0: Irate

ReaderSUBJECT: A reasoned responseDATE: Mon. 22 Jan. 2007 10:17:24-

0800 -----Dear Irate: Wow!!!! That was some letter!!!! (As you can see, I, too, have an exclamation mark on my computer!!!!) Thanks for writing. It's always interesting to find out how readers...From Publishers WeeklyJill Rohmer, a convicted child killer with a borderline personality disorder, lures Charlotte Charley Webb, a popular columnist for the Palm Beach Post and single mom, into a web of danger and deceit in this spine-tingler from bestseller Fielding (Heartstopper). When Jill invites Charley to collaborate on the true story of what really happened to the three children she was convicted of murdering, Charley at first thinks it sounds like a great idea. Her sister Anne is, after all, a bestselling romance author, so why couldn't Charley have a nonfiction bestseller? Charley meets with Jill's attractive

lawyer, Alex Prescott, who secures a book contract. After committing to the project, Charley begins dating Alex. Then Charley learns Jill had an accomplice, someone on the loose whom Jill calls Jack. Fielding pulls out all the stops as the identity of the ruthless murderer becomes obvious, and Charley must race against time to catch the horrible Jack and save his next target's son. (Mar.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.