

Monster PDF (Limited Copy)

John Gregory Dunne



More Free Book



Scan to Download

Monster Summary

"Hollywood's Chaotic Pursuit of Cinematic Success."

Written by Books1

More Free Book



Scan to Download

About the book

In "Monster: Living Off the Big Screen," John Gregory Dunne peels back the glittering veneer of Hollywood to expose the frenetic yet addictive world of screenwriting and movie-making. Through a razor-sharp lens, Dunne chronicles the exhilarating and often maddening journey of transforming the acclaimed novel "Up Close and Personal" into a Hollywood film. As readers delve into this behind-the-scenes memoir, they are swept into the tumultuous dance of creativity and commerce, where artistic vision clashes with the demands of studios and star power. Dunne's candid and humorous narrative offers a compelling glimpse into the labyrinthine process of film production, capturing the chaos, despair, and euphoria that define the life of a screenwriter. For anyone fascinated by the alchemy of storytelling and cinema, "Monster" promises an unforgettably authentic backstage pass to the heart of the film industry.

More Free Book



Scan to Download

About the author

John Gregory Dunne was an accomplished American novelist, screenwriter, and literary critic, known for his keen insights into the workings of Hollywood and the larger landscape of American culture. Born on May 25, 1932, in Hartford, Connecticut, Dunne's education at Princeton University set a strong foundation for his prolific writing career. He made a significant impact on both literature and film, often collaborating with his renowned spouse, Joan Didion. Dunne's career embraced a wide range of genres, from novels and essays to film scripts, where he intricately explored themes of celebrity, illusion, and integrity. His works, such as "True Confessions" and "The Studio," are celebrated for their wit, depth, and unflinching examination of the American psyche. Through his nuanced storytelling and incisive commentary, John Gregory Dunne left an indelible mark on 20th-century literature and film before his passing in 2003.

More Free Book



Scan to Download



Try Bookey App to read 1000+ summary of world best books

Unlock **1000+** Titles, **80+** Topics

New titles added every week

- Brand
- Leadership & Collaboration
- Time Management
- Relationship & Communication
- Business Strategy
- Creativity
- Public
- Money & Investing
- Know Yourself
- Positive Psychology
- Entrepreneurship
- World History
- Parent-Child Communication
- Self-care
- Mind & Spirituality

Insights of world best books



Free Trial with Bookey



Summary Content List

Chapter 1: Foreman

Chapter 2: Rudin

Chapter 3: Rudin & Avnet

Chapter 4: Avnet

Chapter 5: Avnet II

More Free Book



Scan to Download

Chapter 1 Summary: Foreman

In the spring of 1988, writers Joan Didion and her husband were approached to write a screenplay based on Alanna Nash's biography of the network correspondent Jessica Savitch, titled "Golden Girl." Over the following eight years, the project evolved, unspooling Hollywood's intricate storytelling, industry dynamics, and more personal themes of mortality and dissatisfaction. Ultimately, the screenplay transformed into "Up Close & Personal," significantly diverging from Savitch's biography by its 1996 release.

The writer recalls meeting John Foreman, a former English literature instructor turned successful Hollywood producer best known for films like "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid." Foreman attempted to attach Didion and her husband to various film projects, exhibiting the compelling yet often frustrating nature of Hollywood collaborations. A key project was Joyce Carol Oates's screenplay, which underwent many rewrites but ultimately died. Other projects, including a movie on the California water wars and Savitch's biography, navigated through the labyrinthine processes of Hollywood development deals.

The narrative navigates the 1988 Writers Guild of America strike, unpacking the cultural and economic labor tensions between freelance writers and studio executives. The strike provided studios with a legal excuse, under



“force majeure,” to cancel many ongoing contracts, forcing the couple to seek new projects like "Golden Girl" amidst economic pressures, including the need to maintain health insurance.

John Foreman and attorney Gregory “The Hook” Hookstratten offered Didion and her husband a project derived from Savitch’s biography, "Golden Girl." They agreed to work on it if it was set up with a studio, leading to a fortuitous meeting with Disney. Here, Disney shaped a Savitch-based tale into a more commercially viable story, distancing from the original true-life elements in favor of an uplifting narrative. Didion and her husband were initially reluctant but eventually pursued the project out of necessity. The studio landscape of the late '80s and early '90s played a considerable role, wherein the release of "Pretty Woman" reinforced Disney's confidence in creating commercial hits.

The personal lives of Didion and her husband weave through the timeline of events, as he recounts a life-threatening cardiac condition narrowly averted, a reminder of life's fragility that kept them connected to their Hollywood pursuits. The tale progresses with the project's evolution at Disney, including many rewrites to suit the studio’s demands for a family-friendly narrative that still reflected the essence of Savitch’s character arc, although notably softer. Ultimately, the production faced stagnation from Disney's exacting standards, putting the screenplay in a near paralyzing state.

More Free Book



Scan to Download

In parallel, the couple explored other professional endeavors while experiencing personal losses and health challenges. Aborted projects with director Tony Richardson, along with other disinclined studio engagements and some intriguing prospects — from adapting UFO conspiracies to redrafting the narrative on Savitch's life — depicted the cautious dance between creative ambitions and the business realities of Hollywood. The involvement with Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer, known for distinctive, high-energy films, proffered the possibility of new collaborations amid Hollywood's tight orbit.

Through phone calls and meetings, the narrative circles back to "Up Close & Personal," reflecting Hollywood's fraught team dynamics where projects frequently survive due to persistent, if not serene, core relationships—as was evidenced in John Foreman's persistent championing of the film. Sadly, Foreman passed away before seeing the project to completion, a poignant reminder of the inevitability of mortality amidst the mirage of Hollywood productions.

In a harmonious yet fractious world, the tale of this screenplay unfolds as a testament to creative perseverance, laced with the personal and professional trials that ultimately shape the human condition alongside the imagined stories screenplays endeavor to tell.

More Free Book



Scan to Download

Chapter 2 Summary: Rudin

In the narrative surrounding "Rudin" and "Blue Dharma," the story unfolds within the chaotic world of screenwriting and film production. This period was particularly challenging for Joan and her partner, who juggled personal grief and professional setbacks. Joan's father passed away in December 1992, and amidst her travels between New York and California for her father's funeral and family responsibilities, she and her partner were also navigating complex Hollywood dynamics.

Their script, "Dharma Blue," had thrilled producers Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer initially, but subsequent communications went silent, leaving the writers uncertain about the project's future. When feedback finally arrived, it was filled with the usual litany of vague, demanding notes from Simpson, who was known for his erratic, high-pressure style. Despite the confusing feedback, the writers meticulously responded, refuting each point by referencing their draft details. This led to more silent tensions until Jerry Bruckheimer quietly indicated that the partnership might be over, despite a promise of full payment for their work.

This payment essentially granted them a financial reprieve, allowing them to focus on personal projects. However, another project, "Up Close & Personal," which had previously been stalled, began percolating again as a former collaborator reached out, eager to rekindle the project. Yet, the memo



rehashing previous notes suggested the same core dilemma: tailoring a compelling story for mainstream audiences while maintaining its integrity.

Enter Scott Rudin, the larger-than-life Hollywood producer known for his demanding yet effective approach. Rudin, notorious for his intense work ethic and love for the theater, saw potential in "Up Close & Personal" but wanted the narrative to focus on ambition and human complexity akin to "Richard III," not "Pretty Woman II."

Rudin's approach involved concise meetings filled with humor and a distinctive insistence on "delivering the moment," pushing the writers to elevate the script to a star-driven film. Despite the revolving door of suggestions and rewrites, Rudin had a knack for charming writers into doing free drafts, driven by the promise of production and potential future collaboration with him at Paramount.

While simultaneously working on other projects, including a cable revision of "Broken Trust," the writers navigated dubious legal adaptations and received more feedback from Disney. Rudin, however, provided a refreshing perspective by encouraging them to address notes selectively, focusing on real problems rather than prescribed solutions.

This process led to the climatic discussions with Jon Avnet, a director with a successful track record ("Fried Green Tomatoes"), scheduled for Memorial

More Free Book



Scan to Download

Day. The challenges continued as the writers wrestled with what the film truly represented, grappling with their identities and ambitions in a high-stakes industry known for its unpredictability and relentless pursuit of the 'next big thing.'

More Free Book



Scan to Download

Critical Thinking

Key Point: Rudin's Emphasis on Ambition and Complexity

Critical Interpretation: In your journey through life, let the approach of relentless ambition and complex exploration, akin to that of Scott Rudin's producer mind, inspire you to persist despite obstacles.

Embrace Rudin's directive to focus on real change rather than superficial solutions, embodying a mindset that thrives on delivering moments of brilliance in every aspect of your personal and professional endeavors. In balancing artistic integrity with mass appeal, strive for genuine communication and authenticity, providing clarity to your aspiration-driven journey, even amidst a whirlwind of challenges. As you navigate the chaos of an unpredictable world, channel this ethos, reassuring yourself that understanding the depth of human ambition and complexity will ultimately guide you towards success.



Chapter 3 Summary: Rudin & Avnet

The chapters from the book detail the tumultuous yet ultimately successful collaboration and complex dynamics between the book's authors and filmmaker Jon Avnet during the production of the movie "Up Close & Personal." Initially, the authors and Avnet did not get along; the authors felt their expertise as journalists was undervalued, and they disliked Avnet's controlling style and lengthy meetings. Despite their differences, they had to cooperate for the project's success, although the initial meetings were fraught with disagreements over the script's direction and details.

The story unfolds during a time when the authors had already invested six years and fifteen drafts into the script. The "Prison Sequence," a critical but problematic storyline within the script, needed adjustments, and Avnet's vision required substantial alterations that were often met with resistance by the authors. The complexity of finding a suitable ending led to many iterations, with the authors trying to balance narrative coherence with the commercial demands of star-driven cinema. The persistent tension stemmed from disagreements about the thematic focus, such as Avnet's desire to explore "tabloid journalism" as a pivotal theme versus the authors' reluctance to embrace this view as it clashed with their perception of journalistic integrity.

The narrative takes a personal turn as they balance professional obligations

More Free Book



Scan to Download

with the tragedy of an old friend's passing and reflect upon personal loss and aging. Amidst Hollywood's fast-paced environment, characterized by power plays and high-stakes negotiations, they manage to navigate the film industry's challenges. Their working relationship with Avnet evolves from hostility to mutual respect, becoming one of their best collaborative experiences through persistence, compromise, and engaging in long-distance communication.

After resigning from the project, partly due to the influence of producer Scott Rudin and industry logistics such as actor commitments and contract negotiations, the authors are drawn back. The involvement of major actors Robert Redford and Michelle Pfeiffer pivots the project, highlighting Hollywood's nature of serendipitous opportunities—the combination of 'ifs' that aligns actor availability with project readiness.

The complexities of power dynamics at Disney, exacerbated by corporate restructurings and executive upheavals, create an environment of uncertainty but also opportunity. This reflects in their own experiences of navigating industry politics, the constant back-and-forth of deal-making, and ultimately securing what they were owed for their contributions.

In essence, the chapters portray a vivid picture of Hollywood's behind-the-scenes machinations—where creativity, business acumen, and personal relations intersect and where projects evolve due to a complex



interplay of individual contributions and external circumstances.

Chapter	Summary
Chapter Content Overview	The chapters explore the challenging yet fruitful collaboration between the authors and filmmaker Jon Avnet during the film production of "Up Close & Personal." The narrative captures professional discord, negotiation, and eventual harmony.
Initial Challenges	Initial meetings between the authors and Avnet were filled with conflicts due to different creative visions, particularly over the "Prison Sequence." Avnet's direction required script changes that the authors resisted.
Script Evolution	After years of drafting, the script required substantial adjustments, especially finding a fitting ending, balancing narrative integrity with commercial needs.
Thematic Disagreements	Disagreements emerged on thematic focus, with Avnet wanting to emphasize "tabloid journalism," which clashed with the authors' views on journalistic integrity.
Personal Reflections	Alongside professional demands, the narrative delves into personal themes of loss and aging, against a backdrop of Hollywood's fast-paced lifestyle.
Improved Collaboration	The authors' relationship with Avnet improved, evolving from conflict to mutual respect, culminating in a successful collaboration.
Industry Challenges	Factors like producer influence, actor schedules, and contractual demands influenced the authors' decisions, reflecting the unpredictable nature of film production.
Hollywood Dynamics	The chapters highlight the complex, serendipitous nature of the industry, where actor availability and project timelines rarely align.
Corporate Influences	Disney's corporate shifts affected the film's production environment, presenting both challenges and opportunities in deal-making and political navigation.



Chapter	Summary
Overall Impact	The narrative illustrates the intricate, behind-the-scenes dynamics of Hollywood, where creative efforts, business strategies, and personal relationships intertwine.

More Free Book



Chapter 4: Avnet

The chapters from the book "AVNET" focus on the intricate and often chaotic process of making a big-budget Hollywood film, featuring a myriad of behind-the-scenes aspects that contribute to the final product. This particular story revolves around the production of a movie tentatively titled "Up Close & Personal," starring Hollywood icons Robert Redford and Michelle Pfeiffer. However, the path to create this film was fraught with numerous challenges.

It all begins with a producer and writers quitting just before production, usually a crisis in Hollywood terms because everyone tries to avoid negative publicity. The industry-standard solution is low profile problem-solving, with producers being replaceable and high-paying rewriting jobs being common practice. The exorbitant fees for top script doctors illustrate the stakes involved when studio executives, under pressure to avoid the financial disaster of a canceled project, justify high expenditures to keep the film afloat.

Amidst this chaos, Avnet, the director, and producers are left to find a way forward. The struggle of replacing screenwriters is a particularly pressing issue, considering the competitive and expensive market for script doctors. The narrative highlights the economics of Hollywood, especially from studios' perspectives, where paying a script doctor is often considered a



minor expense compared to abandoning a multimillion-dollar project.

The search for projects continues with options like "Ice Queen," centered on DEA agent Heidi Landgraf, and a remake of "The Day the Earth Caught Fire." The transition to these projects becomes viable especially after conflicting attitudes within the "Up Close" production cast doubt on its completion. This is exemplified by Redford and Pfeiffer's dissatisfaction with Anthony Drazan's rewrite, which strayed too far from their vision.

When executive producer Donald DeLine tries to woo the previous writers back, they initially refuse. But after Patty Detroit, their agent, reports that Robert Redford himself expressed interest in their version of the script at the Sundance Film Festival, things begin to shift. Redford is seen as a pivotal, respected figure who can bring people together and finesse the project back on track. His direct involvement and interest in the script signal a turning point, with his demands and critiques of the script carrying substantial weight.

The story delves into the professional relationships tested and slowly mended through these negotiations. Avnet takes on the task of restructuring the project, with detailed exchanges of script ideas through faxes as a constant medium of communication. Numerous drafts and scene revisions unfold—a laborious yet essential process for achieving clarity and vision.



Despite setbacks, such as content debates (differing visions for character development) and behind-the-scenes turmoil (handling personality clashes and creative disagreements), the script begins to take shape. The tirelessly iterative process yields rewrites of key scenes—often accompanied by compromise and collaboration. Redford's production experience and Avnet's

Install Bookey App to Unlock Full Text and Audio

Free Trial with Bookey





Why Bookey is must have App for Book Lovers



30min Content

The deeper and clearer interpretation we provide, the better grasp of each title you have.



Text and Audio format

Absorb knowledge even in fragmented time.



Quiz

Check whether you have mastered what you just learned.



And more

Multiple Voices & fonts, Mind Map, Quotes, IdeaClips...

Free Trial with Bookey



Chapter 5 Summary: Avnet II

Summary of "AVNET II" from Deep Background

Returning focus to "Ice Queen," a screenplay project initially sidelined in favor of "Up Close & Personal," the authors become reinvigorated by their interactions with diverse insiders, including a reformed drug lawyer and Congressman Robert Torricelli. These interactions offer rich insights into the tangled relationships among intelligence agencies such as the DEA, CIA, NSA, and FBI, shaping the narrative's backbone. Drawing from past work and feedback from Columbia executives, they gradually redefine the story. The film proposes women as nuanced antagonists, seeks a complex portrayal of the money-laundering dynamics, and integrates Columbia's President, Lisa Henson's suggestions. The screenplay project, once put on hold, gains traction and moves towards completion.

Summary of "The Serpent"

As they progress with "Ice Queen," Jon Avnet, the director, engages in the editing of "Up Close & Personal." Advances like digital editing make the process quicker yet demanding, with deadlines pressing Avnet to reduce the film's length to comply with contractual obligations. Although screenwriters



generally have limited input in such a stage, Avnet surprisingly involves the writers to review and advise on cuts, which receives scrutiny from the industry owing to Avnet's authoritative reputation. Their collaboration extends as Avnet prepares for a test screening in San Diego, a crucial step towards finalizing the film.

Summary of "Big Whoa"

The San Diego screening brings promising feedback yet fails to physically include all collaborators due to Joan's medical emergency. Concurrently, the screenwriters face pressure from Disney to adjust for mass appeal, ensuring "Up Close & Personal" targets women and educated men, amid competitive industry dynamics. The unfolding tragedy of the sudden death of a physician linked with infamous producer Don Simpson signals industry challenges and foreshadows an ongoing battle with these darker aspects of Hollywood.

Summary of "Thousand Oaks"

A second preview of "Up Close & Personal" occurs in Thousand Oaks, attended by key industry figures including Michelle Pfeiffer. The screenwriters work intimately with editor Deb Neil, refining the narrative to bolster audience engagement. Despite the promising audience reaction and

More Free Book



Scan to Download

continued collaboration, unresolved issues with the "Ice Queen" script loom, indicating tensions with Columbia and the necessity of navigating the project under an industry burdened by high expectations and unforgiving timelines.

Summary of "The Magic Word"

Having reached the final cut phase, "Up Close & Personal" prepares for its imminent release, though the screenwriters remain sidelined in its marketing campaign. The duo continues to engage in creative processes, while their ongoing ordeal with Columbia over "Ice Queen" underscores the transactional and confrontational nature of Hollywood's business dealings. Meanwhile, industry pressures mount with an impending release — the box office's "opening" weekend becomes crucial, a make-or-break moment reflecting the industry's gamble akin to high-stakes play.

Summary of "Ms. Russell"

The failure of "Ice Queen's" production team to formally communicate the script's progress hints at strained relations and questionable industry practices. Industry executives engage in behind-the-scenes maneuverings, attempting to undercut the contractual obligations owed to the writers. The

More Free Book



Scan to Download

writers stand firm, supported by the Writers Guild, against Columbia's attempts to sidestep payment terms amidst corporate shake-ups and fiscal failures reflecting broader industry tensions.

Summary of "And Again, R.I.P."

While viewing "Up Close & Personal," the news of Don Simpson's death brings both professional reflection and personal introspection. Despite receiving critiques during production, the team recognizes Simpson's direct approach to feedback, contrasting the convoluted external negotiations experienced with "Ice Queen." The industry respects those capable of bold decisions and assertive leadership, attributes Simpson was known for, albeit with personal costs.

Summary of "Outmonstering the Monster"

Persistent and transparent negotiations eventually compel Columbia to meet their financial obligations to the writers, highlighting a rare victory in a landscape rife with corporate obstinance. This resolution reflects the daunting nature of creative labor against commercial pressures, reinforcing the importance of solid union backing in negotiations.

More Free Book



Scan to Download

Summary of "March 1, 1996"

The release of "Up Close & Personal" coincides with significant political events, likening film releases to political campaigns through strategic marketing and audience polling. The film's Broadway opening becomes a testament to the anxieties underpinning film debuts, with market performance expectations heightened by strategic song and publicity choices aimed at broadening audience appeal. Industry appraisals vary, with reviews marking both the strengths and conventional weaknesses of star-driven projects.

Summary of "L'envoi"

Reflecting on the years invested in "Up Close & Personal," the authors recognize their parallel literary pursuits and broader industry engagements. Despite confronting challenges within this endeavor, they remain committed to future projects and open to continued collaboration amidst fluctuating industry tides.

Summary of "Coda"

More Free Book



Scan to Download

Ultimately, "Up Close & Personal" finds commercial success, aided by robust song partnerships and timing strategies within the market, achieving notable box office and retail milestones. This commercial closure speaks to the intricate balance of cinematic art and business strategies, solidifying Disney's role and capital recoupment in a competitive entertainment landscape.

More Free Book



Scan to Download