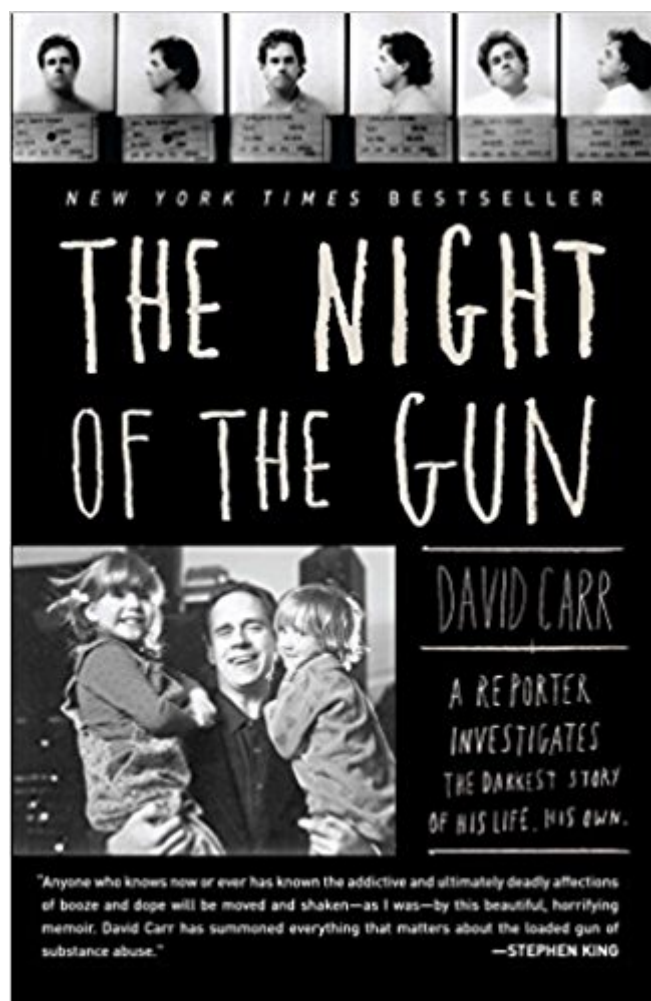


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The Night Of The Gun: A Reporter Investigates The Darkest Story Of His Life. His Own.



Synopsis

From David Carr (1956–2015), the “undeniably brilliant and dogged journalist” (Entertainment Weekly) and author of the instant New York Times bestseller that the Chicago Sun-Times called “a compelling tale of drug abuse, despair, and, finally, hope.” Do we remember only the stories we can live with? The ones that make us look good in the rearview mirror? In *The Night of the Gun*, David Carr redefines memoir with the revelatory story of his years as an addict and chronicles his journey from crack-house regular to regular columnist for *The New York Times*. Built on sixty videotaped interviews, legal and medical records, and three years of reporting, *The Night of the Gun* is a ferocious tale that uses the tools of journalism to fact-check the past. Carr’s investigation of his own history reveals that his odyssey through addiction, recovery, cancer, and life as a single parent was far more harrowing—and, in the end, more miraculous—than he allowed himself to remember. Fierce, gritty, and remarkable, *The Night of the Gun* is “an odyssey you’ll find hard to forget” (People).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Let's say, for the sake of argument, that a guy threw himself under a crosstown bus and lived to tell the tale," David Carr writes. "Is that a book you'd like to read?" Good question. Indeed, it's the question that prospective readers of "The Night of the Gun", Carr's warts-and-all memoir, will have to consider --- because this is that book. Consider: A talented kid without much direction graduates from high school pot smoking to cocaine at college. He starts a career in journalism that has him

reporting on police and government officials by day --- and freebasing cocaine at night. He hooks up with a woman who deals dope. Driving to see her, he's so wrecked he almost crashes into a station wagon filled with kids. He skids into a ditch, has to spend the night in jail, misses his girlfriend's birthday. When he finally shows up, he gives her what can't be bought in any store: a black eye and a broken rib. He introduces his girlfriend to crack. She gets pregnant. They become so thoroughly addicted that, just as her water is breaking, he's handing her a crack pipe. Their twin daughters are crack babies. He splits with his girlfriend, and, because he has a nice job, keeps the girls with him. This does not stop him from locking them in the car while he runs into a dealer's house to score. The gun: As he recalls it, he was so out of control that his best friend not only has to call the cops but wave a gun at him. His best friend remembers it another way --- as David's gun. In detox, his arms are so nasty that the staffers have him reach into a tub of detergent so they don't have to touch him. It takes a full month for the drug psychosis to wear off.

I really wanted to like this book, and because of that I forced myself to read the final 200 pages, even though every instinct in my body told me to stop halfway through. I should have followed my gut. This book lacks any sort of actual depth. You don't get a good sense of what he went through, and I'll have to take his word that it was awful (it clearly was, but only because I know what his experiences were like, but he doesn't present the emotions in any way that you can connect to). Furthermore, I found the vast majority of it to be self-indulgent, almost as if he wanted to shout "These terrible things happened to me, and I did terrible things to others, but I'm actually a great, smart, funny, good looking guy!! I swear!!" A perfect example of this is as the end of the book he finally gets around to talking about the interviews he did with his daughters. An excellent opportunity to demonstrate how his behavior took him from being a God in their eyes to showing how low he could fall. Instead what does he do? In a 3 page chapter covering both daughters he has about a paragraph from each of them, and in each paragraph they both say how intelligent he was. He doesn't conduct any interviews with the people who don't think he's great. For example, he talks about meeting his wife and how people told her to stay away from him. Why didn't he talk to any of them about what he did that made them hate him so much? Instead of interviewing some of his former employees who hated his guts he talks to the ones who say he was the best boss they ever had. I'm not saying he's a jerk, but everyone has people that dislike them, and in order to truly understand the awful things he did and how they affected people he should have talked to some of them.

The concept behind David Carr's memoir is intriguing. Stoned and drunk for much of his early life, the fact that he couldn't trust his own memories was brought home to him when he was shown that he completely misremembered an incident with a gun (hence the book's title). So, reporter that he is, he set out to interview people who knew him back in the day. He became an investigative reporter tracking down the young David Carr. Along the way, he discovered lots of things he said and did, but of which he has either no or distorted recollections. So the angle that *Night of the Gun* takes is attractive. That's the good news. The bad news is that Carr can't quite deliver. For starters, the book is way too long and so the episodes Carr recounts (often with cinematic speed and compactness) tend to become repetitious. So there's a lot of words but not a lot of depth. Moreover, the lack of depth is reflected in the tough guy, Mickey Spillane style Carr chooses to write in, a style that comes across as inauthentic and, within just a few pages, incredibly annoying. Perhaps the point of the style is to create a living-on-the-edge ambience. But it doesn't work very well. Ultimately, and most seriously, it's difficult to see what the point of Carr's book is. Is it to draw attention to the mysterious ways in which our memories deceive us? But if so, there's precious little real reflection on the issue, and most of it consists of unenlightening one-liners. (What a lost opportunity.) Is it to impress upon us the terrible things that drug and alcohol addictions do? But surely this has been done a bazillion times already in other memoirs as well as in films and novels (read anything by Hubert Selby, Jr., for example). Is the book intended to be a sort of celebrity confessional?

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