

Dangerous Friends

By Peter Viertel



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Reexamining his relationship with Hemingway and Huston, a former aspiring screenwriter describes how both men influenced him, Hemingway's tendency toward self-caricature, Huston's self-absorption, and more.



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Dangerous Friends By Peter Viertel Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As the only abstinent member of a hard-drinking group of writers, directors and actors, Viertel gives a clear-eyed and detailed account of life in the company of Ernest Hemingway, John Huston, Humphrey Bogart, Ava Gardner and other celebrities during the 1950s. Viertel's view of Huston has not mellowed since he wrote White Hunter, Black Heart, a novel based on his experiences working on Huston's classic film The African Queen; here, again, he presents the director as a boozing womanizer obsessed by fox hunting. Viertel wrote the screenplay for The Old Man and the Sea and attended bullfights with Hemingway, which led to a friendship with matador Luis Dominguin. Hemingway, past his prime and frequently moody, is seen as charming and powerful nonetheless. In this frank and interesting memoir Viertel reveals much about his own young life and love affairs as well as those of his famous friends. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

While the two famous H's named in the subtitle get the lion's share of the coverage, screenwriter and novelist Viertel (The African Queen; White Hunter, Black Heart) talks mostly about himself while spilling the dope on fellow writers (Irwin Shaw), a slew of movie big shots (Ava Gardner, Humphrey Bogart), and the two leading bullfighters of the time. Though many popular celebrities appear, it's hard to find anyone likable. Almost all are either drunks, adulterers, or, in most cases, both. At the top of the Hollywood dung heap is Huston. Hemingway's reputation is well known, but next to Huston he comes off like a saint. Viertel neither praises nor buries his subjects, but his adoption of many of their passions--from fox hunting and bullfighting to extramarital gymnastics--is evidence of their influence upon him. Clearly, Viertel's admiration of his subjects has sugarcoated his memories too thoroughly to make them truly reliable. Large film and biography collections may want this book, but otherwise it is a marginal purchase.

- Michael Rogers, "Library Journal"

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From Kirkus Reviews

Reserved but involving memoir of novelist/screenwriter Viertel's lifelong friendships with John Huston and Ernest Hemingway, among other fabulous folk. Viertel (American Skin, 1983, etc.), son of a European theater director and of Sasha Viertel, scenarist of six movies for her buddy Greta Garbo, attended his mother's Hollywood Sunday soirees for Thomas Mann and other refugee literati, and at 15 met John Huston. Viertel finished his first novel at 18, worked on screenplays, and married Budd Schulberg's ex-wife, Jigee. After a second unsuccessful novel, and years as a Marine officer in European Intelligence in WW II, he wrote a Broadway play with Irwin Shaw, which failed, and then met his idol, Hemingway, while skiing in Idaho. Friendships with Hemingway and Huston could be rocky. When Huston hired Viertel to co-write We Were Strangers, a Havana- based melodrama, Hemingway accepted Huston and Viertel as guests at his Cuban home and gave them testy advice about their picture. Viertel's roman ... clef White Hunter, Black Heart tells of hazarding the African jungle with Huston to film The African Queen. Viertel worked on many Hemingway scripts and followed the bulls with "Papa" for many years. Endless celebrities became deep friends: his agent Irving "Swifty" Lazar, Orson Welles, Ava Gardner, Robert Capa, Slim Hayward, Humphrey Bogart, Darryl Zanuck, Anatol Litvak, and a dozen more, who appear here in the flesh and full of obsessions. Viertel abandoned Jigee while she was pregnant, for a model who later abandoned him for Aly Khan. A marriage to Deborah Kerr has lasted about three decades. Not stylish, but honest. Viertel's most memorable book, and a likely big winner. (Forty b&w photographs--not seen.) -- Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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