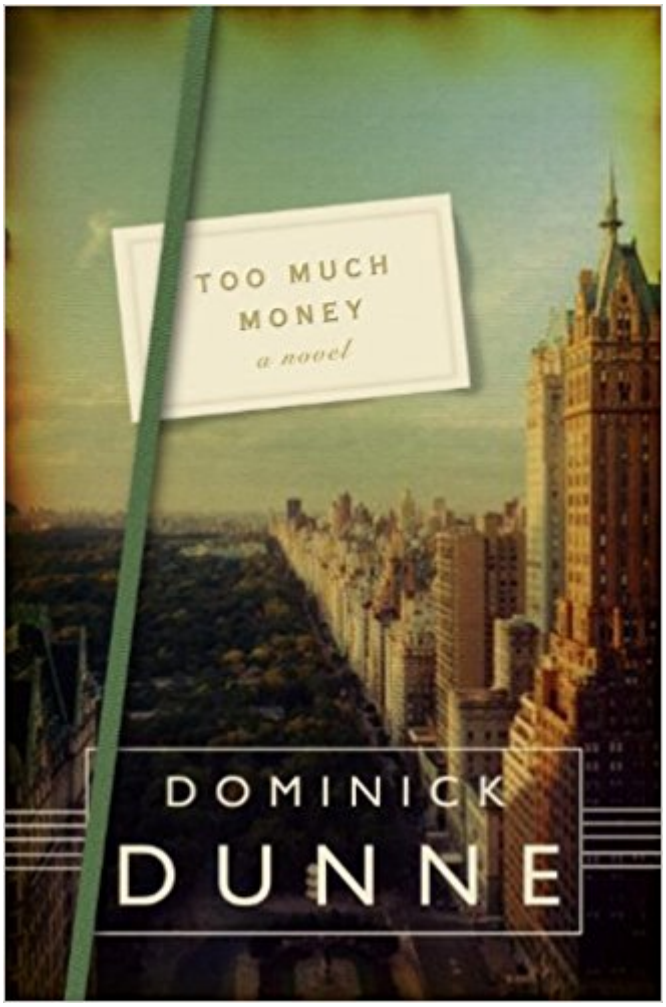
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Too Much Money: A Novel



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Synopsis

My name is Gus BaileyÃ¢â ¬Â¦It should be pointed out that it is a regular feature of my life that people whisper things in my ear, very private things, about themselves or others. I have always understood the art of listening.Ã Â The last two years have been monstrously unpleasant for high-society journalist Gus Bailey. His propensity for gossip has finally gotten him into trouble Ã¢â ¬â •$11 million worth. His problems begin when he falls hook, line, and sinker for a fake story from an unreliable source and repeats it on a radio program. As a result of his flip comments, Gus becomes embroiled in a nasty slander suit brought by Kyle Cramden, the powerful congressman he accuses of being involved in the mysterious disappearance of a young woman, and he fears it could mean the end of him.Ã Â The stress of the lawsuit makes it difficult for Gus to focus on the novel he has been contracted to write, which is based on the suspicious death of billionaire Konstantin Zacharias. It is a story that has dominated the party conversations of Manhattan's chattering classes for more than two years. The convicted murderer is behind bars, but Gus is not convinced that justice was served. There are too many unanswered questions, such as why a paranoid man who was usually accompanied by bodyguards was without protection the very night he perished in a tragic fire.Ã Â Konstantin's hot-tempered widow, Perla, is obsessed with climbing the social ladder and, as a result, she will do anything to suppress this potentially damaging story. Gus is convinced she is the only thing standing between him and the truth.
Ã Â Dominick Dunne revives the world he first introduced in his mega-bestselling novel People Like Us, and he brings readers up to date on favorite characters such as Ruby and Elias Renthal, Lil Altemus, and, of course, the beloved Gus Bailey. Once again, he invites us to pull up a seat at the most important tables at Swifty's, get past the doormen at esteemed social clubs like The Butterfield, and venture into the innermost chambers of the Upper East Side's most sumptuous mansions.Ã Â Ã Â Too Much Money is a satisfying, mischievous, and compulsively readable tale by the most brilliant society chronicler of our time Ã¢â ¬â •the man who knew all the secrets and wasn't afraid to share them.Ã Â Ã Â

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Customer Reviews

For every striver who claws his way to the top of the moneyed heap, another must fall from grace to make room; in the work of late novelist and journalist Dunne (1925-2009), those falls are usually preceded by a vigorous shove. In his final novel, the players include grande dame Lil Altemus, banking heiress (and suspected murderess) Perla Zacharias, and flight attendant-turned-jetsetter Ruby Renthal, alongside journalist Gus Bailey (Dunne's minimally-fictionalized surrogate). A sequel to 1988's People Like Us based on Dunne's real-life experiences as a society crime writer, Dunne brings an expected level of intimacy to his unflattering look at New York's wealthiest citizens, incorporating his own spectacular Hollywood fall from grace and subsequent comeback, as well as his legal standoff with a congressman whom Dunne implicated in the disappearance of intern Chandra Levy. A fitting cap to Dunne's notable career, this novel is more parody than satire-populated by jeer-worthy caricatures hard to sympathize with-but proves to be a compulsively readable diversion, showcasing Dunne's razor wit and furious disdain for those who believe that laws apply to everyone but themselves. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Readers mourned DunneÃ¢â ¬â„¢s passing in August 2009, bereft at the thought of life without his keen novels and incisive Vanity Fair profiles of the rich and shameless. But Dunne grants us one more good read (which he would have greatly refined), a shrewd comedy of ManhattanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s elite in the time of Bernie Madoff. As a farewell gesture, Dunne bestows his own traits, trials, and tribulations on Gus Bailey, who is privy to the juiciest gossip and writes about the megarich gone wild for a posh magazine and in risky romans Ã ƒÂ clef. But now his career is in jeopardy. How could he have fallen for that bogus story about a California congressman and his missing intern? And how far will the ferocious Perla Zacharias go to stop his novel about the suspicious death of her husband? This is a scathing critique of excess and insularity to decode and delight in, what with ruthless Ruby, the wife of an incarcerated financier; a Brooke Astor variation; Ã¢â ¬Å“extraÃ¢â ¬Â•

men who escort women with Ã¢â ¬Å“too much moneyÃ¢â ¬Â• and too little love; and a hilarious scene involving pearls and pea soup. But DunneÃ¢â ¬â„¢s glittering high-society satire harbors sorrow at its heart as DunneÃ¢â ¬â„¢s burdened hero ponders his secrets and regrets. --Donna Seaman

For his final novel, Dominick Dunne turned back to the same cast of characters that populated what was probably his most fun roman a clef, PEOPLE LIKE US, to show what has happened to the unimpeachably correct Van Degens and the arriviste Renthals since that earlier comic novel. Twenty years have passed, except it seems for some mysterious reason the characters behave as if only seven years have; even more mysteriously, the characters speak in the most tortured expository manner you can imagine. "Lord Biedermeier, I would like you to meet a lady you have heard a great deal about," one of the characters says while introducing another to another, in a typical passage. "This is Mrs. Konstantin Zacharias. She is the widow of the greatest financial genius of his time, who was tragically asphyxiated in a fire started by an unstable male nurse who is currently doing ten years in the Biarritz prison."This great lady it seems, is up to no good where it concerns Dunne's thinly disguised version of himself, the beloved and hugely popular Gus Bailey, who receives no end of compliments from everyone but his enemies. Since we last saw Gus murdered by Andrew Cunanan at the end of Dunne's last novel, ANOTHER CITY, NOT MY OWN, it seems he has some explaining to do; but there's an awkward first-person introductory bit (the rest of this novel is told in the third-person) where Gus relates he couldn't think of a way to end ANOTHER CITY and so invented the Cunanan bit because he was desperate to leave the next day with his publisher for the Cannes Film Festival. Ah ha! Gus seems to like to play a bit fast and loose with the truth, and in the novel he frets and worries about a slander suit brought against him by an ex-congressman for implying he was involved in the disappearance of his intern: it should be noted that while Gus admits he fell for a story concocted by his enemies to entrap him in such a suit, and that he shouldn't have said what he said, he never once wastes any sympathy whatsoever for the ex-congressman whose career was ruined or for the murdered intern--only for himself.It's tempting to want to snipe further at Dunne's bizarre self-depiction, or at the fact his cast of characters seem stuck entirely in another era (the only popular celebrities they seem to admit existing are Audrey Hepburn, for example, or Elizabeth Taylor, here given another name that is always followed by the appellation "the former movie star"). Most of the characters in the novel are all well into their sixties or seventies (or are even older), but one of the pleasures of reading this novel is to see what has happened to these society dinosaurs from the 80s and before. And even if they don't talk like

anyone human (most of what they tell us must even be repeated three or four times, as if we were having as much trouble with our memories as some of them seem to be having), at least they do talk, and it's a lot of fun seeing how awful they can be to one another or how they spend most of their time having to talk to their maids and cooks and doormen because they're too good to speak to anyone else. Dinosaurs may belong in a museum, but it's still a treat to get to see them there, stuffed and mounted on display for our easy enjoyment.

It made me sad to know that this was Dunne's last novel. I loved his Vanity Fair columns and his books. Since I knew before ordering the book that it had been completed in a rush due to his terminal illness, I was willing to forgive the continuity errors with the previous book. But the book still met my expectations -- it's a good fun read, full of juicy details about high society life. I like the way he wrapped up several of the characters' storylines. For instance, Lil Altemus went broke and thought she'd lost everything, then had a new, successful career as a realtor at the age of 76. And all at the suggestion of her father's young second wife, whom she hated! That was a great plot twist.

The first thing I want to make clear as a reviewer is that I am not knowledge about the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“realÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• people involved in Dommick DunneÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s novels. A lot of people read the novels and can immediately pinpoint the society individuals they are based off of. I was not one of them, and yet I still found this novel and DunneÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s other books to be an extremely honest and witty look at the rich and powerful and the influence they have over the media, justice system, and general public.Too Much Money has an amazingly well-developed cast of supporting characters that really give life to the novel. With most of these people, I couldnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t decide whether I loved them or found them to be disgusting. But Dunne helped me understand them to some extent and caused me to experience sympathies I never thought I would have.

Part of the appeal of Dominick Dunne's novels is that he rips the veil off the rich and powerful; underneath he gives us the stench of corruption and desperation. And yet his first-person narrator --- Gus Bailey, a thinly disguised stand-in for Dunne --- gets asked back to dinner. Talk about your unlikely hero!The aging hostess and the dying guest are staples in Dominick Dunne's final book. Written while he was dying --- and knew it --- this is a book about older people, Society figures from Dunne's novels of the 1980s and 1990s.There are some new elements. On a radio show, Gus has shared a piece of gossip about a Congressman who's a suspect in the disappearance of an intern;

just as Dunne was by Gary Condit, Gus has been sued for millions. The editor of Park Avenue Magazine assures Gus that the boss will cover his legal fees, inspired, no doubt, by a promise that Vanity Fair's Graydon Carter reportedly made to Dunne. And Gus confesses to his lawyer that he's bi-sexual, though he has been celibate for decades.If you didn't read Dunne's first few novels, think twice --- you'll have a hard time figuring out who's who here, to say nothing of what they're fighting about. But for the millions who loved his sleek prose, inside dish and deep skepticism about the rich, Dominick Dunne's exit interview is surely necessary reading

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