

NOTES FROM: *What Makes Sammy Run?*, by Budd Schulberg

SUMMARY: Published in 1941, this is a *classic* cautionary tale about ambition, power and greed, set in Hollywood and featuring the ruthless, conniving Sammy Glick.

Sammy starts off as a copy boy at a New York newspaper, and eventually steps on enough people to become the most powerful movie producer in Hollywood. The story is told by Al Manheim, who starts off the novel with Glick at the paper in New York and essentially becomes his only friend, as Glick dives deeper into his own narcissism and paranoia.

This would *already* be a memorable book, storywise, but Schulberg's sentences make it even more so. Sharp and surprising and often extremely funny, Schulberg can also string a sentence together that's a little bit longer, leaving you unsure of whether he's still in control, but then carries you to exactly where he wants you to go. I *loved* this book, and it's a relatively fast read, so if you have a few hours you may want to check it out!

“About the most fun you can have in the world is showing people who aren't used to it a good time.”

“I could see what Sammy was doing and I had to hand it to him. If there's anything every successful writer loves, it's to hear praise for some obscure failure which he is still convinced is one of the best things he ever wrote.”

“Even though Sammy knew I could read him like the top line of an optometrist's chart, he also knew that he could relax with me because I wasn't willing or didn't know how to use him for a ladder the way he used me.”

“When I woke again around four I had a bad taste in my mouth and a worse one in my mind and all I thought about was getting out of there as quickly as possible.”

“Going through life with a conscience is like driving your car with the brakes on.”

“I noticed he was never too much of an egotist to take criticism when he knew it would help.”

“I stared at Sammy as if I were practicing to be an X-Ray machine.”

“She smiled at me as if she was going to laugh and then remembered she didn't have time.”

“Well, the first day Sammy came into my office to save California from annexing itself to Russia, I felt like tearing him limb from limb and at the same time I had this crazy desire to know what it felt like to have all that driving ambition and frenzy and violence inside me.”

“Hollywood may be full of phonies, mediocrities, dictators and good men who have lost their way, but there is something that draws you there that you should not be ashamed of.”

“Sammy Glick without his confidence was not a pretty sight.”

“I still think the guy had something when he said forgive them for they know not what they do.”

“People out here are always sneaking off to get married when there’s no one around even vaguely interested in trying to stop them.”

“I didn’t realize until she was all finished that she had said yes.”

“I drove back slowly, heavy with the exhaustion I always felt after being with Sammy too long. I thought of him wandering alone through all his brightly lit rooms. Not only tonight, but all the nights of his life. No matter where he would ever be, at banquets, at gala house parties, in crowded night clubs, in big poker games, at intimate dinners, he would still be wandering alone through all his brightly lit rooms.”

“I thought how, unconsciously, I had been waiting for justice suddenly to rise up and smite him in all its vengeance, secretly hoping to be around when Sammy got what was coming to him; only I had been expecting something conclusive and fatal and now I realized that *what was coming to him* was not a sudden pay-off but a process, a disease he had caught in the epidemic that swept over his birthplace like plague; a cancer that was slowly eating him away, the symptoms developing and intensifying: success, loneliness, fear. Fear of all the bright young men, the newer, fresher Sammy Glicks that would spring up to harass him, to threaten him and finally to overtake him.”