



## SUNRISE

By Robert Crooke

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Crooke offers a dark tale of alcoholism, recklessness and the less-attractive aspects of the 1960s as they played out one long-ago summer in the beach town of Montauk, N.Y.

Narrator Stephen Dahl returns to Montauk, on the eastern end of Long Island, after an absence of some three decades to attend the funeral of an old friend. It's not an easy return. Montauk was where he drank himself to oblivion on more nights than he can remember, if he remembers those nights at all. The portrayal of alcoholism here is scorching and grim and rises off the page like poisonous fumes. Stephen is now on the wagon, and with the aid of his old lover, Alexis Jordan—who ultimately dumped Stephen, thanks mostly to the booze, and took up with his old pal Tom Westlake, now deceased—he revisits his sodden behavior that summer. Some serious dirty laundry emerges slowly and gratifyingly by Crooke, who is a good hand at quietly trolling hints and insinuations before the reader, then letting them pop like a jack-in-the-box. Along the way, Crooke has Stephen explore how his behavior reflected the drearier byproducts of the counterculture: the “œdead end of celebrity, simplistic religion, crackpot political theories, and economic binges and hangovers.” Stephen is calling himself to take honest account of grave mistakes, and the metaphor’s embrace reaches all the way to the ruinous, fear-fueled adventurism of American foreign policy. These various and disparate critiques have the potential of being forced upon one another, but here they have a canny, house-of-mirrors quality, bouncing and echoing before taking their place in the puzzle. Only rarely does Crooke overreach—of a Montauk “œat the end of the road where time was suspended and all bets were off,” which is more sound than substance—for his writing has a natural sense of timing; the threads of the story come together with ease and deep discomfort.

Crooke gives radioactive potency to Stephen’s many false steps, and they may well cook his newly reformed goose.