

# **Dry Study Guide**

**Dry by Augusten Burroughs**

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## Plot Summary

Augusten Burroughs is an advertising executive in New York City. In the nonfiction book "Dry" he details his struggles with alcohol. When he was thirteen, his mother gave custody of him to her psychiatrist. He grew up in a dysfunctional family with no rules and no school. He is able to land an advertising job based on his talent when he is nineteen. He is now twenty-four and living in an apartment in New York. Augusten is frequently hungover at work, and eventually his co-worker Greer complains and he is ordered to rehab. Augusten agrees to go to the Proud Institute, a gay rehab establishment. Augusten tells his best friend, George Stathakis, whom he calls Pighead, that he is going to rehab. Pighead, who is HIV positive, thinks it's a good idea. His friend Jim thinks the idea of going to rehab is funny. At rehab, Augusten stays for 30 days and faces the fact that he drinks too much. He meets Hayden, a crack addict and alcoholic, and they become good friends.

Augusten Burroughs returned to his apartment in New York City and goes to see Pighead, who tells him he looks very different and much healthier. Augusten needs to leave because he has to go to a meeting. He has been sober for thirty days. At his group therapy session, he meets Foster, a crack addict and alcoholic who lived with an abusive British man named Kyle. Augusten is attracted to Foster. Hayden tells him he is leaving rehab tomorrow and asks if he can come stay in New York City with Augusten. Augusten learns his agency is one of the finalists for the Wirksam beer account. When Augusten goes to see Foster, he thinks he may be smoking crack again, but Foster says he's just been tired. At group therapy, Augusten finds out Foster's been smoking crack for a month and has quit the group. Augusten goes to see Foster, who apologizes. The two sleep together. Augusten gets word that Pighead is in the hospital. Augusten spends a lot of time taking care of Pighead and neglects to go to therapy and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. Pighead takes a turn for the worse and dies, and Augusten falls off the wagon. He drinks and does drugs until he gets alcohol poisoning. Pighead had ordered a gold pig head with a message to Augusten to stop drinking. Augusten gets this after Pighead dies. Augusten eventually reclaims his sobriety. He and his friend Jim come out of an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. A streetlight that always goes on when Augusten passes goes on, and Augusten thinks it's Pighead saying hello to him.

# Start of Part 1: Chapter 1, Just Do It

## Start of Part 1: Chapter 1, Just Do It Summary and Analysis

Augusten Burroughs is an advertising executive in New York City. He is good at his job because it is based on giving people false expectations, something he has been doing all his life. When he was thirteen, his mother gave custody of him to her psychiatrist. He grew up in a dysfunctional family with no rules and no school. He is able to land an advertising job based on his talent when he is nineteen. He is now twenty-four and living in an apartment in New York. Augusten is at home after work, checking his mail. He has trouble writing checks, frequently paying his bills late. This indicates that he has problems with responsibility. His unusual upbringing means he is not used to rules and structure. His friend, Jim, meets him at the Cedar Tavern, a bar. Jim is an undertaker who is now in "pre-arrangements" selling coffins. The Cedar Tavern is a dark, dimly lit bar, with typical greasy bar food. Augusten feels comfortable here. A girl catches Jim's eye, but Augusten says she's not his type because she's drinking coffee, not alcohol. Augusten tells Jim he can't stay out late because he has to meet clients from Faberge at the Metropolitan Museum. They talk about their jobs, and Augusten says he hates his. They move to another bar, and Jim tells him horror stories about his job. Augusten eventually finds himself on a stage somewhere, doing karaoke. As they leave, Augusten realizes somehow it has become 4 a.m.

Augusten Burroughs clearly thinks he has a handle on his drinking, but as he describes a typical night out, it is clear he does not. He chooses where to drink based on how big the drinks are and has no self-control or ability to stop once he gets started. His problems seem to stem from the lack of stability he had growing up as a boy. His mother gave up custody of him, and he grew up with a very unconventional family. Even as an adult, Augusten has difficulties getting a grip on responsibility. Even though he knows his bills are due, he has trouble paying them on time. He does not want to deal with responsibility; he knows he has this problem, unlike most people who would just be considered scatterbrained or flighty. Although he is young, Augusten has a good job, but it is clear he is not ready for the responsibility. Even when he tries to be responsible, such as making sure he leaves the bar at a reasonable time, alcohol prevents him from sticking to his guns. It is clear that alcohol is having a bad effect on Augusten's life.

# Chapter 2, Those Fucking Eggs

## Chapter 2, Those Fucking Eggs Summary and Analysis

Augusten Burroughs manages to wake up early and tries to hide that he's hungover. When he gets to the museum, his partner at the ad agency, Greer, tells him he smells like alcohol. Resigned, she tells him she will cover for him again, implying she has done this several times. Augusten is relieved he has been caught, since he doesn't have to hide it from her anymore. When they go to lunch, Greer tells him to order an alcoholic drink in case no one has yet noticed he smells like alcohol. That night, he's so relieved to be away from people when he comes home that he has a drink immediately. He tells himself it will just be one drink but finishes the bottle. The next day, he's late for a meeting at work. He gets there just as the meeting is ending. His boss, Elenor, tells him he smells like alcohol and tells him to apologize to the client. Augusten does, and Greer makes a sarcastic remark about his suit, the same one he was wearing the day before.

Greer yells at him, telling he is affecting her career, too. Augusten tries to apologize, but Greer says she's not going down with him. At home, Augusten watches his commercials. The next day, Augusten is called into a meeting in Elenor's office, with Greer, Rick and the head of human resources. Elenor tells Augusten that he has a problem, and they want him to go to rehab. Augusten agrees to go to the Proud Institute, a gay rehab. Augusten tells his best friend, George Stathakis, whom he calls Pighead, that he is going to rehab. Pighead thinks it's a good idea. Jim thinks the idea of going to rehab is funny. Augusten tries to figure out what caused his alcoholism, a faux decanter set he bought as a child or possibly his alcoholic father. His father once burned him between the eyes with a cigarette while drunk.

Augusten Burroughs is late for work because he stayed out much too late drinking. He managed to drink so much that he is still drunk the next morning, and he smells like alcohol. Augusten goes to great lengths to cover up that fact, but it is to no avail. His partner, Greer, quickly notices that he smells like alcohol and tries to cover for him. It is clear she's done this many times before and is getting sick of doing it. Augusten's other coworkers also notice his problems. After a night where he stays in drinking, he misses a meeting. This shows that his irresponsibility is a pattern related to his use of alcohol. His boss, Elenor, forces him to go to rehab if he wants to keep his job. Augusten, thinking that rehab must be somewhat like a spa, agrees to go. However, when he looks for reassurance from his friend, Pighead, he learns that even his friends thinks it's a good idea. Only Jim, who also seems to display alcoholic tendencies, finds the idea laughable. Augusten ponders where he got his alcoholic tendencies from. His discussion of his father and his father's blackouts make it clear that alcoholism runs in his family.

# Chapter 3, Nothing to be Proud Of

## Chapter 3, Nothing to be Proud Of Summary and Analysis

Augusten Burroughs arrives at the airport in Minnesota. A woman from the Proud Institute is supposed to meet him. Augusten waits, but when he doesn't find her he decides to take a cab to rehab. He's hoping for a glitzy rehab with relaxing spa treatments. However, he is disappointed to see it is in an industrial-type building. Peggy, a counselor, leads him to Sue, an intake counselor, who takes his information. She is surprised Augusten found his own way to the center, but Augusten said he didn't know he was supposed to wait for someone because he doesn't want to get that person in trouble. He is taken to a room to drop his things and then goes through some more procedures before he meets Kavi, another patient. Kavi is a sex and cocaine addict there for treatment. He shows Augusten around and introduces him to some of the other patients, including Bobby, an alcoholic.

Augusten continues to think about leaving rehab. After lunch, he goes to group therapy, where he meets the chemical dependency counselor, David, and several patients, including Paul, Marion, Tom, Brian, and Dale. Tom tells the group how he got into an accident with his parents and his mother's legs are now paralyzed. Another counselor has Augusten list how much he's been drinking and doing drugs throughout his life. He tells her he also takes Benadryl because he has an allergic reaction when he drinks. At dinner, he talks to Brian, a doctor who got addicted to Valium and gave his patients placebos so he could keep their Valium. At night, during a daily ritual called Affirmations, the patients sing a song about two stuffed animals, Monkey Wonkey and Blue Blue Kitten, and give them to Augusten.

Augusten finds that rehab is nothing like he imagined. There are no spa treatments, and the whole building looks like a rundown office. Augusten wants to turn around and leave, but the counselors don't give him a chance. Augusten finds himself disturbed by the other patients and can't imagine being friends with any of them at first. However, he meets a doctor named Brian and finally finds someone to whom he can relate. When the patients do their nightly ritual, Augusten is surprised at the silliness and doesn't seem to buy into the idea that the stuffed animals will make him feel better. Augusten is shocked when he finally adds up how much he's been drinking the past few years. Even though he's only in his mid-twenties, he's drunk more alcohol than many people do in their entire lives.

# Chapter 4, Alcoholism for Beginners

## Chapter 4, Alcoholism for Beginners Summary and Analysis

At a morning Affirmations, Augusten Burroughs listens as each person admits what they are, and that they are a good person. Rae, a counselor, talks about consequences of drinking. Augusten tells her about his apartment, which is full of empty Dewar's bottles. No one ever comes to his apartment. Rae tells them how she was once a doctor's wife but began drinking and ended up working as a prostitute before getting her life cleaned up. Augusten tells his group about how he met Pighead when he first moved to Manhattan. He called a number to talk to single guys in the back of the Village Voice. Augusten asks the men he talks to about their toothpaste brand, which gets him rejected until Pighead answers the question. The two hit it off and meet. They become involved, and although Augusten falls in love, Pighead doesn't want to be pinned down to one person.

After Pighead is diagnosed HIV positive, he then falls in love with Augusten, but Augusten has already gotten over him. Rae tells Augusten during one-on-one therapy that he will need to have therapy when he leaves, as well as go to Alcohol Anonymous meetings. She tells him his friends, family, and co-workers are puzzle pieces and by recovering, his piece has changed shape. The other pieces must also change to accommodate him, or he must find a new puzzle. Augusten meets a new patient, Hayden, a British man who is addicted to alcohol and crack cocaine. Augusten and Hayden become very good friends and spend a lot of time together.

Augusten is finishing his time at rehab. He's learned a lot of valuable lessons from the counselors at rehab and seems shocked at how much they have gone through. He is especially interested in Rae's story. While she looks like a matronly, happy woman, he is shocked to learn of her journey from doctor's wife to prostitute. Augusten also meets Hayden, and the two quickly becomes good friends. Augusten finds someone else who's going through the same thing he is, which gives him someone to whom he can relate. Augusten doesn't seem to have many good friends. When he met his friend Pighead, he immediately fell in love with him. However, Pighead was a successful banker who did not want to be exclusive with Augusten. Augusten claims he is over Pighead and does not love him anymore, but this remains to be seen. It appears Augusten is trying to distance himself from Pighead because it is too hard to watch him die.

# Start of Part 2: Chapter 5, Prepare for Landing

## Start of Part 2: Chapter 5, Prepare for Landing Summary and Analysis

Augusten Burroughs returned to his apartment in New York City. The apartment is full of empty Dewar's bottles, and there are fruit flies everywhere. There is one full bottle, which Augusten pours down the toilet. He calls information to get directions to an Alcoholic Anonymous meeting. He goes to see Pighead, who tells him he looks very different and much healthier. Augusten needs to leave because he has to go to the meeting. He has been sober for thirty days. The speaker at the meeting is Nan, who has 90 days sobriety. Nan started drinking in high school and continued drinking throughout her life. She became a fashion editor at a young age and lived a partying lifestyle. However, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, she decided to get sober so she could spend her last days doing what she wants to do and living life. At the gym, Augusten is depressed because while others might think he is a normal person, he knows he's different. At work, Greer welcomes Augusten back. She tells him they are doing a campaign for Wirksam beer. Augusten goes to meet his therapist, Wendy. Augusten continues to work on losing weight to accelerate the loss of his beer gut. At his group session, he meets Foster, a crack addict and alcoholic, who lived with a abusive British man named Kyle. Augusten is attracted to Foster.

Augusten is a different person when he returns to his life. He is now looking at his life through a lens of sobriety and is uncomfortable with what he sees. His apartment is a mess, littered with the many bottles from his drinking career. He starts his new life by cleaning up the mess, a metaphor for how he's cleaned up the mess of his own life in rehab. Augusten goes to see Pighead, who tells him that he's undergone a physical transformation as well. Augusten seems unnerved by his feelings for Pighead and leaves to go to a meeting. The speaker is Nan, another woman who's been through a lot. Her story strikes Augusten, much like Rae's did. Augusten realizes that her message is very inspiring. Augusten goes back to work, where it takes him some time to get comfortable again. It doesn't help that the first account he must work on is a beer campaign. It seems Augusten's will is going to be tested, both by alcohol and his attraction to Foster.

# Chapter 6, The British Invasion

## Chapter 6, The British Invasion Summary and Analysis

Hayden calls Augusten Burroughs from The Proud Institute. Hayden tells him he is leaving rehab tomorrow and asks if he can come stay in New York City with him. Augusten agrees excitedly and plans to get a stuffed animal for Hayden to curl up with at night. At work the next day, Augusten learns his agency is one of the finalists for the Wirksam beer account. Fabrege, another potential client, has decided not to launch a new perfume, and Augusten is relieved. Augusten finds several magazine ads for beer crammed into a drawer in his desk. Augusten is very disturbed by this. Hayden's plane is delayed, and Hayden arrives at 2 a.m. He and Augusten go out for dinner and then talk about planning their sobriety. When they wake up, they both feel like they have hangovers, and Augusten realizes that he is not accustomed to feeling happy without punishment. Hayden, a classical music editor, is going to look for work. Augusten hopes Hayden doesn't look at his music collection. At work, Greer says she wishes she was an alcoholic because Augusten is getting such good advice in therapy. Greer says she's practicing some of the techniques Augusten's told her about to help her be less angry. Augusten realizes she is a puzzle piece re-shaping herself because of him.

At group therapy, Augusten tells his group about Hayden coming to stay with him, and Foster tells the group about how he's going to ask Kyle to leave. After the session, Foster gives Augusten his number. Hayden and Augusten go to play ping-pong, and Augusten tells Hayden about his feelings for Foster. Hayden warns him to be careful. Augusten visits Pighead, who has hiccups and can't get rid of them. Jim calls and asks Augusten to meet him and his girlfriend, Astrid, at a bar. Augusten goes but feels very uncomfortable. He tells Wendy, his therapist, about it. She urges him to stay away from bars and if something like that happens again, he should go to a meeting right after. After therapy, he encounters Foster, and they go for cappuccino and flirt with each other. Augusten tells Foster he is attracted to men with furry arms, which Foster has. Augusten tells Foster about his family. Augusten has to ask himself if his feelings are for Pighead or for Foster. He believes they're for Foster. Pighead was never interested in being trapped, held down by one man. Now, Pighead loves him, and Augusten isn't interested. On another day at work, Augusten gets a call that Pighead is in the hospital.

Augusten is very excited to learn that Hayden is coming to stay with him, as he thinks they will be able to have a mini-rehab and keep each other going on the path of sobriety. Augusten enjoys being with Hayden because the two men can relate to each other because of their problems. Hayden is also Augusten's only friend who did not know him before he went to rehab. Someone at his workplace begins to bother Augusten, stuffing pictures of beer in his desk. It appears someone wants to unnerve him, that someone is threatened by him. Augusten is also falling for Foster. He knows it's a bad idea because he isn't supposed to make any big changes early on in his sobriety. However, he's not sure if he can help himself, especially if he's displacing his

feelings for Pighead onto Foster. Augusten continues to not face his feelings for Pighead, but that gets harder when Pighead is in the hospital.

# Chapter 7, The Dangers of Cheez Whiz and Pimento

## Chapter 7, The Dangers of Cheez Whiz and Pimento Summary and Analysis

Augusten goes to the phone and talks to Pighead in the hospital and asks what happened. He thought the hiccups weren't serious. Pighead says they wouldn't go away, and his doctor wanted to run some tests. Augusten calls and offers to come over, but Pighead tells him there's nothing he can do. At group therapy, Foster claims he kicked Kyle out of his apartment. Augusten tells the group about Pighead. Foster sees him after group and tells him he needs a Cheez Whiz and Pimento sandwich. They go to Foster's apartment, where Foster erases messages from Kyle on his answering machine. Foster tells Augusten how crazy Kyle is. Kyle calls again, and Foster tells him he can't talk. Augusten realizes he hasn't been attracted to anyone like this before. He thinks back to when he was thirteen, and Neil Bookman, a man who abused him as a child. Foster moves to Augusten and puts his hands on him. Augusten says he has to leave and pulls himself away. Hayden tells Augusten he is not concentrating on his addiction and focusing on Foster. He thinks Augusten is getting too involved. Augusten tells Hayden about Pighead, which gets his attention off Foster. At work, Augusten is suspicious when his office door is unlocked. He realizes someone has been snooping in his office, and he thinks it's Rick, because Rick has a hard time coming up with ideas. Greer thinks he's being too suspicious.

Augusten reaches ninety days of sobriety and speaks at an AA meeting. He tells Hayden how he thinks Rick is messing with him. Foster calls Augusten and asks him to come to his apartment so they can walk to group together. They kiss and cuddle on the bed before arriving late to therapy. Hayden and Augusten are walking down the street when a man in a wheelchair asks them for help. Augusten, who is resentful at first, carries the man up to his apartment and is surprised to see his apartment is stunning. The man reminds Augusten of his mother, who had a stroke. Augusten doesn't feel he owes his mother anything, since she never stopped Neil Bookman from abusing him. Sometimes he fantasizes about a mother who would be more together, who cared about him and what he did with his life. However, he figures he would them probably be an alcoholic lawyer who hated his mother for overprotecting him.

Augusten calls Pighead to see how he is doing, but when Pighead says there is nothing he can do, Augusten continues with his life. He goes to therapy and hooks up with Foster, who attempts to make him feel better about Pighead. Foster demonstrates that he is caring and worried about Augusten, who is touched. Hayden thinks their relationship is a bad idea; however, this may only feed into Augusten's desire to be with Foster, since most people only want more what they can't have. It also appears that Augusten doesn't discuss Foster with Pighead, showing that he is having unresolved

feelings about whom he truly loves. As if Augusten doesn't have enough problems with his friends and relationships, he is still being harassed at work. He also examines some of the reasons that may have contributed to his alcoholism, including his abuse at a young age. However, he theorizes that even if his upbringing had been different, he would have still ended up an alcoholic.

# Chapter 8, Crack(s)

## Chapter 8, Crack(s) Summary and Analysis

Augusten Burroughs tells Hayden that he almost slept with Foster. Hayden suggests he tell his therapist, but Augusten doesn't want to be thrown out of the group. Augusten thinks Foster could be as addictive as alcohol. He thinks how his counselors have recommending no major life changes for at least a year. Another man in his group relapses, and Augusten thinks how horrible that would be. At work, Greer and Augusten meet with their German beer client. He wants them to do a campaign based on German heritage. He tries to come up with something that wouldn't be trite or relate to the Nazis. He sees a bottle of gin tucked on one of his shelves in his office and believes Rick placed it there. Augusten buys a pair of black leather pants and a midnight-blue velvet shirt. He is somewhat embarrassed by them. Augusten finds he has too much free time now that he's not drinking. He goes to see Pighead, who tells him he is proud of him. Augusten apologizes to him, and Pighead says he wishes he realized how much Augusten loved him when they were together.

Augusten goes to Mystic, Connecticut, with Foster. When he kisses Foster, he tastes salt from the ocean. Augusten has canceled group therapy and not gone to AA meetings for some time since he is busy at work. Elenor doesn't like any of their ideas yet. Rick tells them to stay away from one of their ideas, and Greer and Augusten get suspicious since they never presented it. Augusten accuses Rick of going through his things. When Augusten goes to see Foster, he thinks Foster may be smoking crack again, but Foster says he's just been tired. At group therapy, Augusten finds out Foster's been smoking crack for a month and has quit the group. Augusten goes to see Foster, who apologizes. He says Augusten doesn't understand that it's not that easy for him to stay sober. The two sleep together that night.

Augusten continues sliding towards some kind of climax regarding the stress he is under in his life. He has finally given in to Foster's advances, just after Foster relapses. Augusten is disappointed in Foster but cannot resist him. As Foster relapses and gives in to his addiction to crack, Augusten gives in to his addiction to Foster. Augusten himself is not attending meetings or therapy regularly, instead throwing himself into his work. However, this only further exposes him to temptation, since he must work on a beer campaign. He spends a lot of time on this campaign. Someone, possibly Rick, continues to harass him by leaving alcohol-related items in his office. It is clear Augusten is being pushed closer and closer to the edge.

# Chapter 9, What'll it Be?

## Chapter 9, What'll it Be? Summary and Analysis

Augusten goes home, where Hayden tells him he almost relapsed. Hearing that Foster is smoking crack triggered something in him, and he went in a bar and ordered a drink. However, he left before it came and went to a meeting. Augusten tells Hayden he slept with Foster. Hayden tells Augusten again that Foster is becoming his drug. At Augusten's next therapy session with Wendy, he confesses he has been seeing Foster. She tries to help him see how bad Foster is for him. Augusten realizes he bought all of the furniture in his apartment when he was drunk or hungover, so nothing is practical. Foster calls and tells Augusten he's going to Narcotics Anonymous. Augusten tells Pighead about Foster. Pighead seems to be getting better, and Augusten is happy to spend some time with someone normal. Augusten's German client finally buys a campaign, a trite, meaningless commercial of people leading active lives.

Foster hasn't contacted Augusten, and Augusten tries not to let himself get dragged back in by Foster. Hayden tells Augusten Hayden has to go back to London to work on a project. Augusten is shocked. Foster comes over and Hayden is excited because he has never met him. Foster says he's going to go to rehab, and Augusten encourages him. Hayden and Augusten go see a Broadway musical before Hayden leaves for London. Foster calls to tell Augusten he's okay and is going to just stay at home, but the operator cuts in, revealing he's at a pay phone. Hayden leaves. Augusten goes to work and finds out someone spilled alcohol all over his office. Elenor comes by and notices, and Augusten tells her again that it's Rick, but she doesn't believe him. Augusten goes to a bar and orders a Diet Coke. He sucks it until there's nothing left and leaves.

Hearing that Foster has been smoking crack is almost enough to make Hayden relapse. This shows how fragile an addict's control can be over his sobriety and how fragile Augusten's control can be. Hayden is able to overcome temptation this time; however, Hayden warns Augusten that Augusten has a new addiction, to Foster. Augusten realizes Foster is not good for him but cannot help himself. Foster tries to convince Augusten that he's going to get better, but Augusten can see the truth. Augusten appears to be dancing closer to relapsing. The stress from all angles of his life is becoming overwhelming. He actually goes to a bar but recovers himself and only orders a soda. However, he is getting closer to falling off the wagon.

# Chapter 10, The Mirrors of LA

## Chapter 10, The Mirrors of LA Summary and Analysis

Greer and Augusten go to California to shoot a commercial for the German beer client, whom Augusten calls the Nazi. They stay at the Chateau Marmont. Greer and Augusten talk about how they hate babysitting clients during commercials. Augusten removes the small bottles in the minibar so he isn't tempted. He feels more shallow when he's in Los Angeles. At dinner, he and Greer sit with the Nazi, who doesn't want to make small talk. He is only interested in talking about work. Augusten notices the Nazi's furry arms, which makes him miss Foster. The next morning, Greer and Augusten are walking when they see a bus that has "help, call police" on its marquis. Greer pulls out her phone and Augusten thinks she's calling 911, but Greer only wants to remind one of their co-workers to resize the ads to fit buses. Augusten chastises Greer for it. Later, they go to the set to approve the final wardrobe for the commercial, a task they both hate. The model hired to dance on a beer cap passes out due to her eating disorder. Augusten gets his room service bill and sees he's charged for \$1,600. He realizes it's because he removed the bottles from the minibar and fondled them several times, then put them back. The hotel charged him for moving them. They present the commercial to the Nazi back in New York. During the presentation, Augusten gets word that Pighead is in the hospital.

Augusten is very apathetic about his work and views going to California to shoot a commercial as just a chore. The trip does give him a much needed break from his turmoil over Foster and Pighead, but he is still close to relapsing. During his time in California, Augusten continuously caresses the liquor bottles in the minibar. He cannot help thinking all the time about taking a drink and pays the price when he gets his room service bill. When they return to New York City, Augusten is still lackadaisical about his work, until he finds out that Pighead is in the hospital. That sends Augusten into a panic.

# Chapter 11, Running Underwater, and Chapter 12, The Butterfly Effect

## Chapter 11, Running Underwater, and Chapter 12, The Butterfly Effect Summary and Analysis

Augusten Burroughs goes to see Pighead, who looks very sick, in the hospital. The doctors don't know what's wrong with him, and he's hiccuping again. Augusten gives him some water and when Pighead falls asleep, Augusten finds himself very sad. The next day, Augusten finds it hard to think, hard to comprehend that Pighead is in the hospital bed. The night before, before Augusten left the hospital, Pighead wrote on a Post-it note that Augusten should remember he loves him. Augusten wants to care for Pighead but is afraid to lose him. Foster is staying with Augusten until Foster moves into his new apartment. Augusten tells Wendy he has stopped going to meetings, and she encourages him to start back. Augusten seems to realize that his relationship is not good for him, and Wendy says he has a sense of perspective that is common of people who achieve long-term sobriety. Kyle comes over to Augusten's to see Foster, and Augusten turns him away. Foster doesn't come home. Augusten goes to see Pighead, whose mother is also at the hospital. Foster comes home and says he's going back to Kyle.

Chapter 12, "The Butterfly Effect": Augusten has been taking care of Pighead at Pighead's apartment, including giving him injections, changing his diapers and cleaning up after him. He looks like a skeleton, and the doctors have run out of tests to perform. When Pighead is more alert, he and Augusten talk about the past. Hayden calls from London and tells him he relapsed in a bar. Augusten tells Hayden he's not scared about Pighead and doesn't feel anything. Augusten asks how bad Hayden's relapse was, and Hayden says that he is just trying to see how bad a relapse would be. He tells Augusten to go to a meeting. He calls Greer and tells her he is taking a leave of absence. Pighead recovers for a few days and feels better. Augusten stops at a liquor store and buys a bottle of alcohol.

Augusten has been Pighead's primary caretaker ever since he got really sick. It's hard for Augusten to comprehend because there isn't something specific that doctors can find that is causing Pighead's illness. However, Augusten knows he has to be there for Pighead this time, although it's putting him under a lot of stress. Foster leaves Augusten, giving him one more reason to lose his control. When Hayden relapses, Augusten tries to find out how bad it was because Augusten is considering doing the same thing. Hayden sees through this and tries to encourage Augusten to go to a meeting; however, Augusten does not heed his advice. Although Pighead is getting better for a few days, this is when Augusten goes out to buy alcohol. This shows that he is unable to cope with the up-down nature of Pighead's illness. He goes to the liquor

store and buys a bottle of alcohol, although it is not clear if he will actually drink it or if he is just testing his limitations.

# **Chapter 13, The Deep End, Chapter 14, Dry and Chapter 15, One Year Later**

## **Chapter 13, The Deep End, Chapter 14, Dry and Chapter 15, One Year Later Summary and Analysis**

Augusten Burroughs takes the bottle home and takes a drink. He goes to a bar and meets a man named Keith. They score some cocaine and end up in Keith's bed; however, Augusten can't stand it and has to leave. Greer calls to tell Augusten they have to do a re-edit on their commercial, but he doesn't care. They argue, but Greer calls back to tell him Rick has been assigned to Direct Marketing, which makes Augusten happy. Augusten is called to the hospital after Pighead almost died. Augusten talks to Jerry, Pighead's brother, at the hospital but goes to the bathroom to do some cocaine. When he comes back to see Pighead, Pighead doesn't respond. Pighead's mother calls Augusten to update him. When he comes back to the hospital, Pighead is only able to open one eye and look at him. That night, Augusten is woken up by a call from Jim, who tells him Pighead died. Augusten goes to the wake early, after drinking for the past 30 hours. He views Pighead's body alone. Augusten tells Greer that Pighead is dead but just keeps drinking. Foster calls and says Kyle is gone again. Augusten goes over to his apartment, and Foster shows him how to smoke crack. Augusten thinks it's the best feeling he's ever experienced.

Chapter 14, "Dry": About ten months later, Augusten is walking around drunk and someone asks him if he wants to buy crack. He does but doesn't know how to smoke it. He asks a hooker named Serena. Augusten goes in a car with her and some men to some apartments, where he smokes crack with the people there. He is surprised how normal they seem, talking about their daily lives even as they're not smoking. In the morning, Serena tells him he shouldn't be doing this, and he gives her \$100. At his apartment, he gets drunk again. Eventually he wakes up and listens to his messages. A jeweler called, saying he has a special order that Pighead had made up for Augusten. Augusten goes to the store, where the jeweler gives him a gold pig's head engraved with "I'm watching you. Now stop drinking." Augusten cries and is elated, until he gets home and realizes Pighead is still dead. Augusten goes to the liquor store and gets more alcohol, then rereads Pighead's old emails. Augusten starts to hallucinate. One night, he almost drinks so much he poisons himself and is violently ill. When he recovers, he vows never to drink again. Chapter 15, "One Year Later": A year later, Augusten is going to Alcoholics Anonymous again and so is Jim. Foster has moved to Florida. Augusten has managed to stay sober and is working with Greer freelancing after both of them left the ad agency. As they walk, a streetlight comes on just as Augusten passes by, something it's been doing for some time. Augusten smiles and whispers hello to Pighead.

Augusten Burroughs final snaps and relapses. He's been under so much pressure in every aspect of his life and can't face what's happening to his best friend and love, Pighead. He gives into temptation and begins drinking again. He is antagonistic to the people in his life again, as evidenced by his conversation with Greer. However, it appears Rick has gotten what's coming to him by being promoted to a dishonorable position. Augusten is called to the hospital when Pighead almost dies, and Pighead seems to be admonishing him to quit drinking; however, Augusten cannot and continues drinking even after Pighead dies. He knows he needs to move on, but when he goes to Foster, he only gets dragged in deeper to addiction as he tries crack for the first time. Augusten falls farther and father in the months after Pighead's death, eventually buying crack on the street. He meets a prostitute and goes with her to her apartment. The prostitute and her friends realize Augusten doesn't belong there with him. Augusten seems to get a sign from beyond from Pighead, but when he realizes that it doesn't mean Pighead is not dead, he discounts it. His true epiphany doesn't come until he goes through a bout of alcohol poisoning. That experience gives Augusten the strength he needs to overcome the temptation of alcohol.

# Characters

## Augusten Burroughs

Augusten Burroughs is the author and narrator of the novel, *Dry*. He grew up in New England. His mother gave him away to her psychiatrist's family at a young age, and Augusten has a tumultuous life growing up. His father was an alcoholic and sometimes hurt Augusten during his blackouts. He was also abused by Neil Bookman while living with the family. Augusten meets Pighead on a phone call-in line for single gay guys. He and Augusten hit it off immediately, and Augusten falls in love with Pighead; however, Pighead doesn't want to be tied down in one relationship and tells Augusten this. Eventually, Augusten gets over Pighead, but Pighead soon learns that he is HIV positive. Pighead now realizes he is in love with Augusten; however, Augusten claims to be over Pighead. However, it appears that Augusten is still in love with Pighead but can't stand to be around him and watch him get sick. Augusten is an advertising executive in his twenties. He drinks every night, which affects his work. His coworkers can only put up with it for so long, and his boss Elenor makes him go to rehab. He goes to the Proud Institute, a rehab center for homosexuals. Augusten learns a lot about himself, and faces the fact that he drinks too much. When he gets back to his apartment, he realizes that he has been living in a dump. He tries to fit back into his life and go to Alcoholics Anonymous. However, he faces bigger and bigger challenges. He has to work on a beer advertising campaign at work, and he falls in love with Foster, a crack addict who has trouble staying sober. Pighead gets sick and dies, and Augusten starts drinking again. He falls off the wagon and begins drinking and doing drugs until he gets alcohol poisoning. He eventually gets sober again.

## George Stathakis/Pighead

George Stathakis, known as Pighead, is Augusten's best friend and quite possibly the love of his life. Pighead is a rich investment banker who is HIV positive. He meets Augusten on a phone call-in line for single gay guys. He and Augusten hit it off immediately, and Augusten falls in love with Pighead. However, Pighead doesn't want to be tied down in one relationship and tells Augusten this. Eventually, Augusten gets over Pighead, but Pighead soon learns that he is HIV positive. Pighead now realizes he is in love with Augusten; Augusten claims to be over Pighead. However, it appears that Augusten is still in love with him but can't stand to be around him and watch him get sick. Pighead does take a turn for the worse, and Augusten does care for him. However, this creates a lot of stress in Augusten's life and he starts drinking again. When Pighead dies, Augusten smokes crack for the first time. Pighead orders a gold pig's head to be made for Augusten at a jeweler's. It comes to Augusten after Pighead dies.

## Hayden

Hayden is a British man who lived in New York City until he went to rehab. Hayden is addicted to alcohol and crack cocaine. He meets Augusten in rehab at the Proud Institute and the two become good friends. Hayden and Augusten look to each other as a support network. However, Hayden eventually returns to London and relapses. He tells Augusten about this.

## Foster

Foster is a man Augusten meets when he begins going to group therapy. He is a crack addict who lives with his abusive boyfriend, Kyle. Augusten feels an unexplainable attraction to Foster. They eventually sleep together after Foster begins smoking crack again. When Pighead dies, Augusten goes to see Foster one more time and Foster shows Augusten how to smoke crack. Foster eventually goes back to Kyle.

## Jim

Jim is a friend of Augusten Burroughs. Jim is an undertaker in New York City and one of Augusten's drinking buddies. He eventually joins Alcoholics Anonymous with Augusten.

## Greer

Greer is Augusten's creative partner at work. She supports him in his effort to get sober. Once Augusten returns from rehab, she shifts to fit his new goals.

## Elenor

Elenor is Augusten's boss at the advertising agency.

## Rick

Rick is Elenor's partner at the advertising agency. Augusten believes Rick has it out for him and is the one who has been hiding alcohol related items around Augusten's office.

## Nan

Nan has 90 days of sobriety. Nan started drinking in high school and continued drinking throughout her life. She became a fashion editor at a young age and lived a partying lifestyle. However, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, she decided to get sober so she can spend her last days doing what she wants to do and living life.

## **Neil Bookman**

Neil Bookman is a man who abused Augusten sexually when he was thirteen.

## **Kavi**

Kavi is a patient at the rehab center, The Proud Institute.

## **Paul**

Paul is a patient at the rehab center, The Proud Institute. Augusten calls him Pregnant Paul because of his large stomach.

## **Marion**

Marion is a patient at the rehab center, The Proud Institute.

## **Brian**

Brian is a patient at the rehab center, The Proud Institute. He is a doctor who could lose his license after becoming addicted to Valium.

## **The Nazi**

The Nazi is the name Augusten and Greer use for their German beer client.

## **Astrid**

Astrid is a girl whom Jim dates after Augusten gets out of rehab. She appears to drink as much as Jim initially but eventually breaks up with him.

## **Augusten's father**

Augusten's father is divorced from Augusten's mom and lives with his new wife. He is also an alcoholic.

## **Augusten's mother**

Augusten's mother has suffered a stroke, and Augusten barely keeps in touch with her.



## **Monkey Wonkey and Blue Blue Kitten**

Monkey Wonkey and Blue Blue Kitten are two stuffed animals given to patients at The Proud Institute.

## **Kyle**

Kyle is Foster's on-again, off-again British boyfriend.

## **Virgil**

Virgil is Pighead's dog.

## **Keith**

Keith is a man Augusten picks up in a bar after he falls off the wagon.

## **Rae**

Rae is a counselor at the Proud Institute. She was a doctor's wife before she began drinking too much. She was a prostitute before getting clean.

## **Wendy**

Wendy is Augusten's therapist when he gets out of rehab.

## **Serena**

Serena is a hooker who shows Augusten how to smoke crack.

## **Jerry**

Jerry is Pighead's brother.

## **Peggy**

Peggy is a counselor at the Proud Institute.

## **Ellen**

Ellen is a counselor at the Proud Institute.

## **David**

David is a counselor at the Proud Institute.

## **Sue**

Sue is an intake counselor at the Proud Institute.

# **Objects/Places**

## **The Proud Institute**

The Proud Institute is a rehab center for gays who have problems with substance abuse. Augusten Burroughs goes to rehab there after people at work confront him about his problems.

## **Alcoholics Anonymous**

Alcoholics Anonymous is a group that helps alcoholics live sober and face their addiction.

## **Cedar Tavern**

Cedar Tavern is a bar in New York City.

## **Faberge**

Faberge is a company that considers using Augusten's advertising competition.

## **Healing Horizons**

Healing Horizons is a counseling program Augusten uses.

## **The Metropolitan Museum**

The Metropolitan Museum is a large museum in New York City.

## **Dewar's**

Dewar's is a brand of scotch that Augusten Burroughs favors.

## **Wirksam Beer**

Wirksam beer is a German beer. Augusten and Greer are part of the creative team that works on their advertising.

## **Chateau Marmont**

Chateau Marmont is a hotel in Los Angeles where Augusten and Greer stay during a commercial shoot.

## **Piccadilly Circus**

Piccadilly Circus is a place in London, where Hayden relapses.

## **Manhattan**

Manhattan is a borough of New York City where Augusten Burroughs lives.

# Themes

## Alcoholism

The primary theme in Augusten Burroughs' creative nonfiction work, *Dry*, is Augusten's struggles to confront and overcome his alcoholism. Alcoholism is a disease, and those who suffer it frequently drink alcoholic beverages at a level that interferes with physical health, mental health, and social, family, or job responsibilities. Those who find themselves completely dependent on alcohol sometimes need to use rehabilitation programs to stop drinking, much like Augusten. The first step he needs to take is to admit he has a problem, which he does in rehab. However, for alcoholics, sometimes just stopping drinking isn't enough to keep temptation at bay. Augusten learns this when he stops going to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings because he is too busy taking care of Pighead. The temptation eventually gets too great for him, and just before Pighead dies, Augusten relapses and starts drinking again. Alcoholics like Augusten need to use therapy and meetings to keep up their willpower; if they stop going, it greatly increases the chances that they will relapse. They need a support system of other alcoholics who can buttress each other. Augusten has a disease that he will have for the rest of his life, and he needs to concentrate on trying to stay on the wagon.

## Dependency

Throughout his life, Augusten has been shuffled from place to place. Growing up, his father was an alcoholic and would sometimes harm him during blackouts. His mother, who thought she was a great poet, left him with her crazy psychiatrist's family, where a man named Neil Bookman sexually abused him and no one put a stop to it. Augusten was forced to find his own way in the world and became an advertising executive in New York City. Throughout his life, Augusten has never found anyone upon whom he can depend. All his family abandoned him, and when he does make friends with someone such as Pighead, he has trouble being there for them because no one was ever there for him. He's more comfortable hanging out with drinking buddies like Jim, where all they do is make small talk and have fun. As Augusten confronts his problems with alcohol, he needs to start depending on people more. He finds a kindred spirit in Hayden, possibly his first true friend, and this helps him stay on the wagon. However, when Hayden goes back to London and Augusten must take care of a sick Pighead, Augusten has trouble being the one upon whom Pighead depends. It is at this point Augusten turns back to alcohol to get him through Pighead's death. It is only after Augusten goes through a bout of alcohol poisoning that he resolves to stay sober.

## Control

Augusten has very little control over his life at the beginning of the memoir. Although he is a talented writer, his drinking gives him little control over his actions, and he is

frequently late for work. His apartment is such a mess that he can't have anyone else come over. He has no control over life, instead letting his drinking run his life for him. As Augusten goes to rehab and tries to get a handle on his drinking, he has problems controlling himself. In order to maintain control over drinking, an alcoholic needs to attend meetings and go to therapy sessions. Augusten begins doing this after he gets out of rehab, but as life intrudes, his control starts slipping. While he constantly thinks of alcohol, his obsession gets worse the more stressful his life becomes. When he travels to California and stays in a hotel, he takes the bottles of liquor out of the minibar and caresses them. After a hard day, he goes in a bar but is able to resist and drink a soda. Finally, he loses control when Pighead is dying. In the days that follow, Augusten drinks more and more and even does hard drugs such as crack. Once the door is opened, he cannot control himself anymore. It takes alcohol poisoning to give him his control back and allow him to take charge of his life.

# Style

## Perspective

Augusten Burroughs is the author and first-person narrator of the nonfiction book, *Dry*. It is a memoir that describes his battle with alcohol over a ten-year period of his life, although events are compressed and combined to make the story more concise and interesting. He grew up in New England. His mother gave him away to her psychiatrist's family at a young age, and Augusten has a tumultuous life growing up. His father was an alcoholic and sometimes hurt Augusten during the father's blackouts. Augusten was also abused by Neil Bookman while living with the family. These experiences color Augusten's early life and are some of the contributing factors that make him an alcoholic. Augusten is living in New York City and working as an advertising executive at the time of the novel. His writing outlines his own personal experiences; instead of distancing himself by using a third-person narrative, Augusten uses a first-person narrative to make his experiences more personal to the reader. He allows the reader to step inside his world and get an intimate perspective on his life. He is willing to discuss details of his love life, his relationship with his friends and coworkers, as well as his struggles to overcome temptation when everything around him seems to be falling apart. By using his own perspective, Augusten gives the reader insight to his world and all the good times and bad times that have made him who he is today.

## Tone

Augusten Burroughs is the author and first-person narrator of the nonfiction book, *Dry*. In his narrative, Augusten uses a first-person point of view, which allows him to take a very casual tone with the reader as he narrates his struggles with alcohol as an advertising executive in his early twenties in New York City. For the most part, the experiences he is describing are very serious, and he sometimes contemplates his frame of mind and how he feels about other people and things. He is very self-reflective throughout the novel, discussing his motivation for his actions and how significant events affect him. However, throughout the novel it is clear that Augusten has a sense of humor. Augusten also frequently interjects scenes using humor and a zany tone throughout the book and accomplishes this without detracting from the heart of the story. At times, his lighthearted or sarcastic tone takes the edge off a very serious scene. However, when it matters, Augusten is able to keep things serious and relate to the reader the importance of what he is saying. By this technique, Augusten creates a balanced, believable story that is enjoyable to read, while also imparting the seriousness of his message.

## Structure

Close to the beginning of his narrative, Augusten Burroughs, the author and first-person narrator of the nonfiction book, *Dry*, admits he has problems with rules, order and responsibility. It therefore follows that his novel is not bound by stringent chapter order or regimented sections. Instead, Augusten loosely divides the story into two parts, before and during rehab, and then after rehab. Within these parts are unnumbered chapters, fifteen of them, each signified by a brief title that describe the subject matter of the chapter. Each of the chapters describe certain stages of Augusten's struggle with alcohol and his attempts to stay on the wagon. The novel follows a chronological structure, starting with details about Augusten's life before rehab so we understand the reason that he needs help. It then follows Augusten during his time in rehab and continues to describe his return to New York and his time readjusting to his life. Using the chronological order of events makes the story easier for the reader to follow. This structure also allows the reader to follow Augusten along as if we are actually there through every step of his journey. It allows the reader to personally experience the highs and lows of Augusten's life.

## Quotes

"Advertising makes everything seem better than it actually is. And that's why it's such a perfect career for me. It's an industry based on giving people false expectations. Few people know how to do that as well as I do, because I've been applying those basic advertising principles to my life for years." Ch. 1, "Just Do It," pg. 1.

"A body in motion tends to stay in motion. (Reebok, Chiat/Day.) Just Do It. (Nike, Weiden and Kennedy.) Damn it, something isn't right. (Me, to my bathroom mirror at four-thirty in the morning, when I'm really, really plastered.)" Ch. 1, "Just Do It," pg. 2.

"I'm so relieved when I walk in my door, so grateful to be home where I don't have to hold my breath or explain myself that I have an immediate tumbler of Dewar's. One drink, I tell myself. Just to calm my nerves from today. After I finish the bottle, I decide it's time for bed." Ch. 2, "Those Fucking Eggs," pg. 12.

"The thing is, I know I drink too much, or what other people consider too much. But it's so much a part of me, it's like saying my arms are too long. Like I can change that?" Ch. 2, "Those Fucking Eggs," pg. 16.

"The fact is, I have accepted Pulitzer Prizes, Academy Awards, met wonderful people, and had healthy, loving relationships, all in my mind, while drinking. How did this happen to me? I need to figure it out before I go to rehab so I don't make a fool of myself there." Ch. 2, "Those Fucking Eggs," pg. 29.

"I think for the first time I can see, right up there on the board, that I do drink much more than normal. And the pills I have to swallow to drink. Like my body is allergic to alcohol and is telling me I shouldn't be drinking, but I do it anyway. And when I sit there looking at what I've written, I almost can't help but feel like it's possibly a good thing I am here. Or rather, that this has been drawn to my attention, made serious and not just a joke." Ch. 3, "Nothing to be Proud Of," pg. 59.

"So far, mental health sucks." Ch. 3, "Nothing to be Proud Of," pg. 66.

"And then I think of Pighead. How we never talk about his HIV because we never need to because he's fine. Except for sometimes." Ch. 4, "Alcoholism for Beginners," pg. 72.

"I like the idea of seeing a shrink once a week at maintenance. It's another chance to talk about myself without being interrupted." Ch. 4, "Alcoholism for Beginners," pg. 84.

"I don't think I have ever had such a close friend in my life, made instantly like Tang." Ch. 4, "Alcoholism for Beginners," pg. 90.

"I am not prepared for what I see when I unlock the door to my apartment. Although I have obviously seen it before, lived with it even, I have never encountered it through the lens of thirty days of sobriety. My apartment is filled with empty Dewar's bottles, hundreds of empty Dewar's bottles. They cover all surfaces; the counters in the kitchen, the top of the refrigerator. They are under the table I use as a desk, dozens of them there, with a small clearing for my feet. And they line one wall, eleven feet long, seven bottles deep. This appears to be far more bottles than I remembered, as though they multiplied while I was gone." Ch. 5, "Prepare for Landing," pg. 97.

"Like cubic zirconia, I only look real. I'm an impostor. The fact is, I'm not like other people. I'm like other alcoholics." Ch. 5, "Prepare for Landing," pg. 111.

"Then I realize what's happening: Greer is shape-shifting. She is a puzzle piece who is reshaping herself to accommodate the newly reshaped me. More or less." Ch. 6, "The British Invasion," pg. 129.

"Alcoholic friends are as easy to make as Sea Monkeys." Ch. 6, "The British Invasion," pg. 130.

"Meetings are the Hail Marys of alcoholics. You can do or almost do anything, feel anything, commit any number of non-sober atrocities, as long as you follow with an AA chaser." Ch. 6, "The British Invasion," pg. 140.

"For some reason, the fact that Pighead is in the hospital lets me off the hook with Hayden. And then, this awful feeling. I feel happy that Pighead is in the hospital, deflecting the attention. And I'm a monster again." Ch. 7, "The Dangers of Cheez Whiz and Pimento," pg. 157.

"I'm worried that all of the inner mess that was channeled into alcoholism is now channeled into other disturbing rivers. That I've drained the lake to flood the city." Ch. 8, "Crack(s)," pg. 176.

"And it occurs to me: if I wore the black leather pants and the midnight-blue velvet shirt, and carried Virgil's new giant dog bone, I could get into any club in Manhattan." Ch. 8, "Crack(s)", pg. 180.

"I feel so happy, loose and warm, like I could fall asleep right there, standing up, dripping onto my mother's fresh page. I never lost time like that before. I never lost time like that again." Ch. 8, "Crack(s)," pg. 187.

"He's like this incredibly beautiful Van Gogh painting with slashes all through it. True, it's a Van Gogh. But look at those slashes." Ch. 9, "What'll it Be?", pg. 209.

"In rehab we learned that it's easy to cross-addict from one thing to another. Like you give up crack and you pick up dope. Or you give up booze and pick up a crack addict." Ch. 9, What'll it Be?, pg. 213.

"I realize that I actually fear returning to new York because now that Hayden has gone back to London, I am worried he has taken my mental health with him. That he accidentally packed it in his suitcase along with his dirty socks and the hard cheese he bought at Dean & DeLuca." Ch. 10, The Mirrors of LA, pg. 222.

"I should go back now and lie in bed next to him and hold him in my arms. This is what I ought to do. Lean back on his articulating steel hospital bed with the thin, scratchy sheets, rest his head on my chest, wrap both arms around his new, tiny frame and hold him. But what if he died there in my arms? If the embrace was so comforting that it took the edge of his fight? I did not want to see Pighead sigh deeply and relax into death." Ch. 11, Running Underwater, pg. 240.

"You can't move away from your addiction, it will follow you wherever you go," Ch. 11, Running Underwater, pg. 249.

"At home, I sit at my desk and open the bottle. I bring my nose to the opening and inhale. The smell is sharp, powerful. For a moment, I think, How could anyone drink this stuff? This could power a lawn mower. But then I'm pouring it into a plastic cup and bring the plastic cup to my lips, like a lawn mower with hands. I talk to myself. 'I can't relapse, this is just classic. I know better. I should go immediately to an AA meeting. This is code blue.' It burns going down." Ch. 12, The Deep End, pg. 257.

"I walk in the bathroom and look in the mirror. 'He's dead,' I tell my reflection. 'Do you

understand? Pighead is dead. You will never see him again. How does this make you feel?" Ch. 12, The Deep End, pg. 267.

"Now I can remove your number from my speed dial on my phone. I can forget your birthday. I don't have to put rubber gloves on and inject you with my medication. I don't have to worry about getting stuck with a needle. Or fill you humidifier. Or change the lightbulb in the kitchen. Or answer the front door. I don't have to wonder how long you'll live. I don't have to tell you I can't see you today. I don't have to ever put more ice in your glass or pick up hot dog buns on the way to your apartment." Ch. 12, The Deep End, pg. 268.

"Time passes. A harrowing amount of it." Ch. 12, The Deep End, pg. 271.

## Topics for Discussion

How does Augusten's job and lifestyle contribute to his drinking? Why is he unable to see he has a problem, although it is evident to those around him?

Augusten mentions several reasons that may be the cause of his drinking, including his upbringing, the abuse he suffered as a teenager, and his alcoholic father. How does he show how each of these affect his mental state? What is the hardest reason for him to deal with? Why?

Describe Augusten's relationship with Pighead. Although he says he no longer loves Pighead, is this true? Why or why not? Why does Augusten seem to be hesitant to be around Pighead, even though he's his best friend?

How does Greer benefit from Augusten's therapy? What issues does she have that prevent her from living a normal life? Why do she and Augusten get along so well and work so well together?

Compare and contrast Foster and Pighead. How do their relationships with Augusten differ? Which relationship is healthy and which one isn't? Explain your reasoning.

How do Hayden and Augusten become a support system for each other? What happens to both of them when they are separated? Would they have gotten to that place if they had never stayed together?

Why does Augusten turn to alcohol at a point when Pighead is more mentally alert? Why does Augusten refuse to go to Alcoholic Anonymous meetings even though he knows he needs support at a time like this?

What enables Augusten to recover again after he falls off the wagon after Pighead's death? At what point does he realize he needs to get sober again?