



Possible Side Effects

Augusten Burroughs

Download now

Read Online ➞

Possible Side Effects

Augusten Burroughs

Possible Side Effects Augusten Burroughs

National Bestseller

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Running with Scissors* comes Augusten Burroughs's most provocative collection of true stories yet. From nicotine gum addiction to lesbian personal ads to incontinent dogs, *Possible Side Effects* mines Burroughs's life in a series of uproariously funny essays. These are stories that are uniquely Augusten, with all the over-the-top hilarity of *Running with Scissors*, the erudition of *Dry*, and the breadth of *Magical Thinking*. A collection that is universal in its appeal and unabashedly intimate, *Possible Side Effects* continues to explore that which is most personal, mirthful, disturbing, and cherished, with unmatched audacity. A cautionary tale in essay form. Be forewarned--hilarious, troubling, and shocking results might occur.

Possible Side Effects Details

Date : Published April 17th 2007 by Picador USA (first published May 2nd 2006)

ISBN : 9780312426811

Author : Augusten Burroughs

Format : Paperback 291 pages

Genre : Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction, Humor, Writing, Essays

 [Download Possible Side Effects ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Possible Side Effects ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Possible Side Effects Augusten Burroughs

From Reader Review Possible Side Effects for online ebook

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Augusten Burroughs gives me a happy. While *Running With Scissors* contains MANY shocking/graphic/awful stories that are frosted with humor, *Possible Side Effects* provides all the giggle without the remorse of laughing at someone else's expense. Burroughs' essays are sheer comedic genius. Truly laugh out loud funny – so much so that I was CONSTANTLY inundated with “what’s so funny, Mom?????” from the small people who live with me. FYI – the appropriate answer to that question when reading Augusten Burroughs 99.9999% of the time is “NOTHING!”

Alex Duncan says

This book shows what happens when you go back to the well and the well is dry. I hated it.

Mallory says

Augusten Burroughs is a fantastic writer. *Dry* is a fantastic book - funny, heartbreaking, insane, moving, all the words you want to use to describe a memoir - and *Running with Scissors* is hysterical and troubling. This book is a collection of short works, which, while still good reading, falls short of Burroughs' standard.

Burroughs' short fiction, in my opinion, lacks the depth of his other writing. Some stories are incredible, but a lot of them fall short of the mark. My biggest problem is with his endings; the stories will start off strong, gather steam and... end. Abruptly and poorly. They often left me wanting more, but not in the good way... in that "Oh, it's done?" sort of way.

Some of the stories in this anthology are gorgeous: *Mrs. Chang*, *A Forecast for Sommer* and *Little Crucifixions* are incredible. Others are laugh out loud funny: *Team Player*, *The Sacred Cow*, *Killing John Updike* and *GWF Seeks Same* made me self conscious as I chuckled on the train or alone in my apartment. Some of the stories, like the masterful *Kitty, Kitty*, are both hysterical and heartbreaking (there's great symbolism in this story). But a lot of them are abrupt, random and uninteresting. They feel like the sorts of jokes that are building over time to a fantastic punchline, but then the joke teller forgets the punchline and the joke falls flat. A lot of the stories meander from one story or topic to another without completing either bit.

Even at his most disappointing, Augusten Burroughs is a talented writer and always worth the couple of hours and \$15 tops that it costs to read one of his books. While I wanted to love *Possible Side Effects* I came away liking it enough. At very least it's engaging and you get some wonderful reoccurrences of favorite characters from other memoirs (Pighead! <3, Augusten's mother!, Assburger!) and a few new gems (both Grandmothers!). If possible, grab this one at the library and save yourself the money, but enjoy the read. While not spectacular, there are enough gems in this collection that make it a perfectly respectable read.

Benjamin Siess says

In "Running With Scissors", I flat out didn't believe Burroughs. I felt that his story was probably 50% true. There is nothing wrong with someone writing a memoir and stretching the truth, but I couldn't shake the feeling that he was flat out lying. Along with his horrifyingly vivid description of his early teen sexual experience with a 30 year old man, I felt like he was trying to hard to be shocking for the sake of being shocking. I enjoyed his style, but I had a hard time respecting him.

In "Possible Side Effects", it seemed that Burroughs didn't try to force things. He has stories that don't rely on overly fantastic situations. He leans upon his writing instead of the situations he puts himself in and I think the book benefitted greatly for it.

I made the mistake of reading "GWF seeks same" during my Latin class. My instructor was at the board translating sentences as I tried my damndest to suppress giggles in the back of the class. It was definitely the best essay in the book in my opinion.

"PSE" reads fast. If you didn't like "RWS", don't give up on the Burroughs. "Possible Side Effects" isn't a great book, but I definitely liked it. I hear that "Magical Thinking" is his best book yet, so that'll be the next one I try.

Kalisa Hyman says

You want to know why I love Augusten Burroughs so? Because he writes sentences like this:

“And with these words – *I don't think you're supposed to be aware of your own heartbeat* – this unknown woman in a burnt orange poncho doomed me to a life of pathological overawareness of my own cardiac activity.”

That right there is just fucking brilliant writing.

The chapter entitled "The Wisdom Tooth" where they stay at an inn owned by a doll collector is classic. That essay should be studied in colleges everywhere.

Peacegal says

Most of this book's chapters were laugh-out-loud hilarious. While I truly enjoyed the majority of the book, my enthusiasm was dampened a bit by the author's stories about his experiences buying dogs.

“Kitty, Kitty,” chronicles the author's short-lived ownership of a Wheaten terrier puppy named, well, KittyKitty. Burroughs impulsively buys the dog at a time when his life is in shambles and he is in no place to take on the responsibility of a pet. He would have had an excuse, I suppose, if he were totally ignorant of the sad reality behind pet store dogs, but no, he's more than well-informed:

I did know that you're never supposed to buy a puppy from a pet store. And the reason is that you support the puppy mill industry. A puppy mill is a disreputable breeder who churns out puppies the way Nabisco churns out Oreos. Often the dogs are inbred and have health problems. But all of this knowledge evaporated once I went inside the pet store and saw the adorable puppies.

He continues:

A rational person would have seen the filthy cages where the dogs were kept and known better than to slap down his credit card and take one home. But I saw the filthy cages and thought, I must save one.

I found myself cursing the puppy mill industry who play upon the dogs' plight as a selling point and use their suffering to appeal to sympathetic shoppers. The author doesn't get off the hook, either, though: "Saving" a pet store puppy by buying him is a pointless endeavor, as he'll only be replaced by another suffering puppy, and so on as long as the cash register keeps ringing. And he *knows* that. That's the maddening part.

KittyKitty turns out to be too overwhelming for Augusten (that's another feature of irresponsible pet shops: they don't assess a customer's ability to care for an animal, only pay for him). With a heavy heart, the author takes him to an animal shelter. Happily for KittyKitty, he is adopted into a much more stable home belonging to a shelter employee. However, I found myself mourning for KittyKitty's parents, still trapped at the puppy mill.

One would think after this disastrous experience, Burroughs would swear off buying dogs. But no! The chapter titled "The Sacred Cow" has he and his partner purchasing a tiny French bulldog puppy at another pet store. And while "Cow's" life is much more secure than KittyKitty's, once again, the miserable cycle of puppy mill breeding continues. Come on, Augusten. You have a big heart. If you really want to "save" a dog, you need to head down to your animal shelter.

Tim says

Apparent brutal honesty of retelling stories of his life had me feeling a wonderful range of emotions. Interest, pondering, laughter, empathetic sorrow and pain, anger and a peculiar sense of justice.

He writes very well for a self confessed high school drop-out. Each chapter is an event from a period in his life, which he weaves into something which is eminently re-tellable.

Perhaps it is just my own sense of connection with events which had me nodding along between chuckles and often finding myself inadvertently making a mental note of a life lesson. Definitely an easy read and one i went into with no expectations or prior knowledge and have ended up excitedly wishing to share parts and reading out loud passages to friends and writing more than a couple of words of review.. Cheers Augusten :)

Dan says

I don't know if it's a new thing but, there seems to be a developing genre of authors who's focus is on their own lives, which have been tortured by mental illness and any number of substance abuse problems. Actually, when I stop to think about it, maybe this style has been around longer than I think. Jack Kerouac? Ernest Hemingway?

Whether it is a new genre or not, Augusten Burroughs' writing falls squarely in this realm. "Possible Side Effects" is a collection of hilarious but also often sad essays on Burroughs' life both past and present. His delivery will keep you laughing out loud but the pathos that lies beneath most of his writing will, at times, have you concerned for his safety.

In a lot of ways, Burroughs' reminds me of his fellow gay humorist, David Sedaris but, as hard as this may be to believe, I think Sedaris is more comfortable in his own skin. There is a dangerous edge to most of the writing in "Possible Side Effects" that makes it as powerful, thought provoking and compelling as it is funny.

I really can't say enough good things about this book. When I finished it, I had to resist the urge to simply turn back to the beginning and start again.

Patti McAllister says

I enjoyed Running With Scissors as much as anyone else who enjoys a read that makes your family look significantly less fucked up, so I decided that I'd give Possible Side Effects a shot. I found this book to be a lot less organized than Running With Scissors, and the essays themselves offered little to no payoff. Most of them end in the "and then I found \$50." fashion that is consistent with Burroughs's essay writing. The difference here is that the essays in Running With Scissors were significantly more engaging, so I was able to overlook a lot of the anticlimactic conclusions. Some of the stories in Possible Side Effects invoke nothing more than a "so?" response that made it hard for me to get through the whole book. On the other hand, there are a few accounts worth reading hidden inside. I'd say read it if you're an Augusten Burroughs fan, but don't expect too much.

Carmen says

RE-READ 03/09/2014

I think my reaction to Augusten Burroughs's short stories is based on my mood.

If I am in an exceptionally great mood - happy, well-fed, just had a great conversation or meal with a friend - I think his stories are hilarious. I laugh out loud and grin. "Oh, Augusten," I think, shaking my head in amazement. "You're so funny!"

But if it's any other time - then I see Augusten Burroughs as a man who has suffered through a lot of pain. And I think his stories are a reflection of that.

The truth is a mixture of both.

Burroughs is a wonderful writer. He has an uncanny way of guiding you through a story so that you end up just where he wants you to be. Sometimes that's not at all the place you thought you'd end up when the story started out.

To reiterate: Burroughs had the childhood from hell. (Read a review of RUNNING WITH SCISSORS). And I believe that this childhood turned him into a selfish, very damaged person who is only able to see other people are selfish and damaged. This makes him mean. And of course, it's funny. It's very funny to read someone make mean, truthful observations about life - things that you yourself would never think or say...but

you can't exactly fault his reasoning either.

But the reason I find this less than enjoyable most of the time is because it makes me sad that he thinks humans are so...well, not exactly evil, but only out for themselves - selfish and ruthless in equal parts.

When I finish a book by him, I can shake off this gloomy worldview and return to my normal, cheerful self. But I know that he can't.

Some of these stories are about his childhood, some are about his job at the ad agency, some are about being a writer, some are about dogs. There's at least 3 dog stories in this book. Some are about his long alcoholic period.

The best story in the book, by far, is KITTY, KITTY about a time when a severely alcoholic Burroughs buys a Wheaton terrier from a puppy mill pet store. He names it KittyKitty. His descriptions of the idiot dog and how it acted were truly hilarious. I laughed so hard tears came to my eyes. Someone heard me laughing como una loca (like a madwoman) and asked me what was so funny. So I handed her the book and said "Read this story." She did, and when she brought the book back, she said, "That was so sad." What? That wasn't the reaction I had - or the reaction I expected her to have. But she was looking at it from a different perspective - Burroughs is a drunk in this story who's life is falling apart. He's in no position to care for a dog - and at the end of the story, (view spoiler) Same story, but we had totally different reactions.

You could interpret the whole book this way. You could just choose to focus on the funny part of a story - the part of the story that makes you laugh because Burroughs is hilarious and he wants you to laugh. Or, you could focus on this constant dark undertone that's in every single thing he writes. I'M DAMAGED!, he screams. Pain bleeds from the pages and it really does make your heart hurt when it all sinks in.

SAMPLE: (from Kitty, Kitty) I named him KittyKitty. Because he looked like a kitty. But twice the size. And he was so gentle and sweet that for the first two weeks I thought he might be mildly retarded. His kind brown eyes were always half-closed and he licked my hand, even after I pulled it away. His little tongue just continued lick, lick, licking the air. It was endearing, but also a little pathetic. Yet I knew I'd made a good purchase because he was almost no trouble at all, like a potted cactus. He made less noise than my answering machine, and housebreaking was easy because my floor was already covered with magazines and foreign newspapers, which I couldn't read and only bought because I was pretentious.

But by the third week KittyKitty became alarmingly energized, as if awakened from a long, deep hibernation.

When he wasn't barking at the exact frequency that causes windows to shake, he was leaping from the sofa to the floor to the chair and then running full speed down the hall to the front door, sliding into it and knocking the jackets hung on it to the floor.

Lain says

Augusten Burroughs is that wonderfully witty guy in the cubicle behind the filing cabinet who sends you snarky e-mails about your co-worker's shoes and your boss' receding hairline. Oh, how I wish I knew this guy in person! Fortunately, with "Possible Side Effects" I can pretend for a while that he is on my speed dial.

"Side Effects" is another collection of stories of dysfunctional relationships, love affairs gone awry, childhood horror stories, and more tales of life in the big city. Though he's covered much of this same ground before, the essays are never repetitive or boring; instead, I grow to love Burroughs more and more as he reveals ever-deeper layers of himself, his insecurities, and his quirks and foibles. I laughed, even as I

hated myself for laughing. But that's what makes it so great.

Rachel says

Reminiscent of the works of David Sedaris (amusing anecdotes told tongue-in-cheek and very much informed by the sexual identity of the author) these stories lack the reluctant depth that keeps Sedaris afloat. Although Burroughs has clearly endured some trying experiences, he lacks either the writing chops or the perspective to transfer them to the page in a non-static way. Although some of his tales are lovely and funny, some of them fall quite flat, as though tossed in between the real stories to bulk up the length. He also has an annoying habit of throwing in a trite one-liner ending as a substitute for a substantive development of some kind of point to the story.

I haven't read "Running With Scissors," but I'd like to, if only to see where all the hype comes from--and if it's justified, why his novel might be so different from his short stories. It's not that I'm not enjoying the collection; it's just not the sort of book I would advertise that I enjoy.

Gk says

Like reaching past the Harvest Wheat and grabbing the Coco Puffs and loving it.

Kelly says

YAWN

The first few stories bored me to tears. Boy loses tooth, NEXT! Man spends days in London hotel room watching BBC, stuffing his fat face and bashing Americans. Ok. Men acquire naughty puppy. zzz I don't need my books to be action-packed, but the pace of these essays is so slow that even the punctuation is starting to piss me off. Sentence fragments galore make for an even slower read. In the subsequent stories I have chuckled a few times, but I am irritated at Mr. Burrough's masturbatory method of writing. He is just SOOOOO important that people are going to want to buy his cruddy old underwear on e-Bay. Yeah. I don't doubt there are freaks out there who would want this kind of memorabilia, but our author seems to be a little too proud of it for me to like him. In fairness, perhaps if I had read "Running with Scissors" first, I would have fallen in love with him and then would be amused by these glimpses into the mind of the author. Stories further into the book pick up a little for me, but I'm not sure if it's because they were truly more entertaining and better written, or if it's because I felt nostalgic for the places Augusten described, since I went to college in Western Mass. I agree with another reviewer on the point that Augusten's attempts at sentimentality seemed phony and overdone, especially in the story about the badly burned dermatologist. Puh-leeze. Entertainment Weekly editors must have been on laughing gas to call this man one of the 15 funniest.

Carolyn says

Another great book from one of my favorite authors. I bought this for my dad as well. He also loved it.

Favorite quotes:

Although my parents never attended church or mentioned Jesus except when they screamed at each other—and then they used his full name, 'Jesus Fucking Christ'.

I am prone to envy. It is one of my three default emotions, the others being greed and rage. I have also experienced compassion and generosity, but only fleetingly and usually while drunk, so I have little memory.

The thing is, I worship John Updike...I would drink his bathwater.

He tossed his head slightly, in such a way as to cause his hair to sweep back. This made me feel actual pain, so extreme was my hair envy.

Now maybe I'm just ultrajudgmental, but I really feel that only two groups of people have any business collecting dolls: little girls and grown women who lost all their children in fiery car accidents. Other than these two exceptions, doll collecting is just plain creepy.

For someone like me, somebody who has large vacant holes where character should be...

Touring a client's factory was akin to spending the afternoon with the parents of the world's ugliest baby and being forced to endure eight hours of home movies.

I remained quiet for a moment because i could not risk opening my mouth and having 'Now listen here you stupid motherfucker' come out.

There's probably not a connection, but when I started drinking again, my apartment wandered back into squalor.

I, with my salad bar of insecurities...

Now, I found myself having third, fourth, fifth dates with people i didn't care for. Even people that i loathed and wished would get caught in a grinding, malfunctioning escalator.

There is a little German in me, therefore I don't do cuddly.

Be excited when you encounter cosmetic surgery mistakes. Be excited when a birth defects marathon runs on The Discovery Channel. But don't be excited because you had some coffee.

When you insult the Midwest—land of corndogs, casseroles, and all my favorite packaged food products—you insult me.

Give me down. And give me polaroids of the fifty geese that had to die in the process.

There was smooth, creamy dog shit everywhere, blended into the cedar chips like some kind of awful urban casserole.

...whose name had simply bounced off my forehead.

She was incredibly funny, but in a way that made you say, 'That's horrible,' before you laughed until you accidentally farted.

As with most things from childhood, I eventually outgrew my love for McDonald's and my desire to be an Afro-American. I adjusted to my own life as a standard-issue white male alcoholic.

But perhaps my gay gene, the gene responsible for my desire to own platform shoes at an early age, somehow mutated because of my mother's heavy hairspray use.

If a green body-builder with acromegaly or a geriatric dwarf who lived in a hollow tree didn't sing, dance, or otherwise celebrate the product, I didn't want it on my plate.

Any of us would happily have licked the inside of a toilet rather than attend music class.

Deb says

I am about halfway through this collection of autobiographical essays, and I love it every bit as much as I loved "Magical Thinking." Burroughs presents himself as this detached, selfish, self-absorbed man, but the stories he shares reveal him to be a tenderhearted person who is acutely aware of his foibles.

I love reading about his relationship with Dennis. I love that he marvels that someone as wonderful as Dennis could love him so much. Their unabashed adoration of their dogs hits home with me.

Burroughs is unpretentious, honest, insightful and a deft manipulator of the English language. What more could a reader want?

Chris says

Turns out I'm not a fan. This is no wonder, as I am not a fan of David Sedaris, either; these two authors share a lot of similarities in my opinion. Both remind me of better educated Paris Hiltons. Both write with a smugness that I find distasteful. They both seem to share the disdain for America in favor of Europe and the *laissez-faire* attitude that seems to prevail there. They both assume that the reader knows who they are and have read all of their previous books, so therefore the reader knows all of their boyfriend's idiosyncrasies.

While reading this book, I came to realize that the stories had the potential to be very funny, but because of the author's attitude, I found myself not liking HIM. I stopped reading this book after I realized that. Because I have come to dislike the author as a person, his stories would have a difficult time becoming funny to me.

Fabian says

The snobbery that made "Running with Scissors" and "Dry" so memorable & unique is dispersed, often in gigantic dollops, within these memoirs that are often so much like the musings of a child: i.e.

Inconsequential. The tee-hee anecdotes vary from physical ailments and childhood misunderstandings, to newer first world traumas (no need for that) and--my favorites--additional stories, unexpected returns to Burrough's first (and best) memoir, of his demented mother.

Andre says

In case you didn't know, this, along with "Magical Thinking", is a book of short stories. ("Magical Thinking" received better reviews on both goodreads.com but the same rating on Amazon. I'll read MT sometime soon and you'll probably see a comparison in that review.)

Not as good as Dry or Running With Scissors, but it's a quick read. I wouldn't recommend reading them all (unless you're just completely bored). Here is what I'd consider "required" and "optional" reading. (Not all of the stories are listed below).

*** I've tried to place them in the order that I liked them.

Required Reading:

Try Our New Single Black Mother Menu ("So if McDonald's is for blacks, what's for whites?"), *Moving Violations* ("I would then hold the picture against the window and Debby would either speed up to pass the offending car, or she would slow down so they could get a good look. The images were all hardcore pornography."), *Mrs. Chang* ("It was because of Mrs. Chang that I spent my childhood secure in the knowledge that Santa Claus as Chinese."), *Bloody Sunday* ("We are obsessed with sex in an unnatural way."), *Killing John Updike* ("But that's what happens when you die. The vultures come. Sometimes, even before you die."), *GWF Seeks SAME* ("What does a lesbian bring on a second date?' Christy was fond of saying. 'A moving van.'"), *Kitty, Kitty* ("And then I thought, maybe seeing for myself means something, makes a difference."), *You've Come a Long Way, Baby!* ("What if in the future I met somebody that I thought was glamorous and exciting and they smoked? If it ever became necessary for me to begin, I'd better be damn ready and already know my brand."), *Little Crucifixions* ("I could lie to my parents because I felt that they were only temporary. I constantly felt on loan to them and overdue to be returned."), *Julia's Child* ("My mother engaged Julia Child as my babysitter. In the form of a public television cooking series on WGBH, our local PBS station.")

Optional:

Getting to No You ("When you begin discussing toilet intimacies on the first date, you have failed the first date."), *Taking Tests, Taking Things* ("A truant teenager loitering outside a movie theater is going to be far more motivated to return to school when he has the barrel of a .45 pressed against his cheek."), *Pest Control* ("Although my parents never attended church or mentioned Jesus except when they screamed at each other - and then they used his full name, 'Jesus Fucking Christ' - they did explain that he was a man who lived in the sky and granted wishes to certain people. People he liked."), *The Georgia Thumper* ("Like every child, I adored her. Until I formed a brain and got to know her.")

Run Along, Lil Chillens! Git back to work...

Rogine says

I finished Augusten Burroughs' breakthrough memoir *Running with Scissors* a few months ago, and I must say that I totally loved every page of it. It was a wild rollercoaster ride from start to finish. I picked up

Possible Side Effects, expecting the same thrill and excitement I felt when I read *Running with Scissors*. Unfortunately, this memoir did not give me the same entertainment and shock value that made me appreciate Burroughs in the first place.

Possible Side Effects is a collection of short stories ranging from his quirky childhood to his messy adulthood. What turned me away from this book is the lack of organization and connection in his stories. It became somewhat difficult for the readers to indicate which part of his life is being described because of the fact that his stories are all over the place. He would tell a story from his quirky childhood about his crazy poet of a mother and then suddenly follow it up with a story about the time when he was an alcoholic. It seems like he used this method to show some sort of correlation between his unconventional upbringing and the issues in his adult life. However, it only ended up being confusing and flat because of the lack of that "wow" factor from the readers. Some stories just ended up being disappointing because there seemed to be no point in writing and publishing them in the first place.

It is pretty evident that I was a little disappointed when I finished this book. I delved into it with such high expectations because of the high bar *Running with Scissors* set. I know it is a little unfair for me to compare the two books as they are different in content and style, but it is quite unavoidable when some parts of the book were parallel with each other. It seemed like he recycled some stories from his previous memoirs and stuck them together in this book.
