



Magical Thinking: True Stories

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From the #1 bestselling author of *Running with Scissors* and *Dry*--a contagiously funny, heartwarming, shocking, twisted, and absolutely magical collection. True stories that give voice to the thoughts we all have but dare not mention. It begins with a Tang Instant Breakfast Drink television commercial when Augusten was seven. Then there is the contest of wills with the deranged cleaning lady. The execution of a rodent carried out with military precision and utter horror. Telemarketing revenge. Dating an undertaker and much more. A collection of true stories that are universal in their appeal yet unabashedly intimate and very funny.

Magical Thinking: True Stories Details

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From Reader Review *Magical Thinking: True Stories* for online ebook

Anthony says

Augusten Burroughs is an immature jerk that I wouldn't give the time of day. I found nothing nothing charming about *Magical Thinking* and while I was reading it all I could think was that he represents the unshaven underarm of society – the type of person who finds everything wrong with the world and the slice of pie he has been delivered but fails to notice the good things like the fact that he is eating pie. Why am I so disgusted by him? This is the type of guy that steps on a child's hand in a store and instead of comforting the child, he slips away unnoticed because the child has a delay in her cry response that gives him the opportune amount of time to flee the scene – and then he writes a story about it that makes him pay his bills. That is just one of the examples of the cynical "voices of the new century," to quote the cover's excerpt from *USA Today*, yeah, the *USA Today*. The only reason I finished *Magical Thinking* was that I needed something to occupy my time in the bathroom.

Tung says

A few years ago I read *Running with Scissors* and found it over-the-top but tolerable. Then I read the sequel (*Dry*) and thought it was okay. Last year, I read *Sellelevision* and detested it, swearing off Burroughs forever. But then I realized something: Burroughs is not a fiction writer – he's a memoirist. So I decided to give *Magical Thinking* a chance because Burroughs was going back to his strength, and because rather than a full-length memoir, *Magical Thinking* is a series of short snippets of his life. Overall, I found it uneven. There are several snippets that are hysterical (my favorite being "Vanderbilt Genes"), but there a number that are fairly uninteresting. Burroughs' trademark wit is still here, so I'm sure fans of Burroughs will like this very much. My biggest problem is, as I have written elsewhere, Burroughs is a poor man's David Sedaris – the same crazy life stories flush with humor – but Burroughs lacks likability, and he admits that. Burroughs admits that he's a terrible person with lots of issues, so the only thing that I can think of that makes him so popular is that he's so open to revealing his terrible side to everyone it's captivating in a horrible way. It's like watching a train wreck happen. If you're into keeping up with what stupid thing Britney Spears did this week, you'll probably enjoy the Burroughs memoirs, too. I think this one is the last one for me, thanks.

K.D. Absolutely says

Shameless. Unabashed. He just does not care whether you like him or not.

These are what make Augusten Burrough's memoirs very different from what I've read so far. He does not give an eff when he recounts how many Catholic gay priests he had sex with. He tells each sexual encounter like he is telling them to his gay *close* friend inside an enclosed room. All the details, including the unprintables, are mentioned and their intimate conversations in verbatim.

This is my fifth book by Burroughs. I used to hate him: *Running With Scissors* (2 stars); *Wolf at My Table* (1 star) and *You Better Not Cry* (2 stars). I did not like his hysterics and his stories seemed to be insensitive to the people he grew up with. I mean *why wash your laundry in public when you can do it in private?* It was

only a couple of months back when I began to understand his style, since it seems to be consistent throughout all his works. This was when I read *Dry* (3 stars) and his sensitive *gay* side comes out when he said inside the gay bar: "*this place is full of naked lonely souls.*"

So, in this book, when he said "*I am not normal in anyway.*" I believed him. He is hysterical. He is shameless. He does not fear anyone. He is what he is. So, if you don't like him, don't buy and read his books.

Which for me is originality. The guy has the balls to show to the world who he is. He knows that he is read mostly by gay guys and he is not ashamed that he gets fan mails with gay guys sending him pictures of their penis. He was fascinated though, when old women recognized him on the street and told him that they've read his works. He told a couple of stories about those encounters and I just laughed out loud this morning.

What am I doing reading all these books by Burroughs? Ah, don't entertain the idea that I am gay. This is my last book by him in my possession and I have no plan to buy and read his other works. I am done with Burroughs. I just wanted to heal my hatred for him and there was no other way I could do that but know more about him. So, I read these two other books, *Dry* and *Magical Thinking*. My hatred for him used to be as high as the sky and had I stopped there, my soul would not be at peace. I don't want to have that hate in my heart when I die.

Lesson: After a book and you hate a certain author, read more books by him/her. Reading books by a certain author gives you more idea of who he/she is as a person. Chances are, you'll accept and love him/her just the same. Then you don't have that hate in your heart anymore. Only love resides in your heart.

I love the fact that I now understand Augusten Burroughs.

Sue Smith says

3.5 stars

This is an interesting book of short stories. Well stories isn't exactly the right word, but I can't really pin which word I should use not stories .. musings, maybe?no, no ...not musings um, diary entries? no.not exactly diary entries, but closer I think. Actually - more like written self-therapy journal entries - which is probably the essence of this exercise!!

So how did I feel about this collection of stories you ask? Hmmm. So how did I feel about this collection. Well, it was a mixed bag of stories and my feelings were about the same. It was all over the map for me. Sometimes I was snorting out loud and laughing uproariously. Other times were just plain squirmy for me. The awkwardness was wayyyyyy too uncomfortable. The rawness was like flayed skin and some things were funny, but not really a light humor at all. Thankfully the end stories were the lightest ones and I was grateful for that. My favorite one was the one that this book is titled after - *Magical Thinking*.

I get magical thinking actually. Personally, I know it works. I can't tell you how many times I've thought of someone only to have them call me or contact me shortly afterwards. It's a weird feeling and I won't call it coincidence either because it's just happened too many times to say that it's not magical. I also believe in karma - the old 'what comes around, goes around'. That is an absolute in my life too. So I've usually just let things run their course - the old 'let go, let God' idea. It happens. The trick is to know that it will and not worry things to death. I'm still working on that.

Anyways, an interesting book with some uncomfortable spots and lots of great funny moments. Well worth the read.

Libby says

Hmmm something happened after I read the Chapter "The Rat Thing". I struggled. A lot. I found myself unable to connect with him anymore. I couldn't laugh anymore because I thought he was just plain cruel most of the time whether it be to animals, children or adults. Now I havent read Running with Scissors or Dry yet but I do understand that he had a very screwed up childhood...but that fact still doesnt make me like the fact that he is so incredibly self-absorbed and mean (even if he does have his guilty moments - and I do have a sense of humour - honest!)...the backcover blurb says "Augusten Burroughs gives voice to the thoughts we all have but dare not mention" - ummm nope not me. I have a lot of trouble laughing at other peoples pain, Augusten seems to revel in it and make it a source of his happiness. Bleh.

Carmen says

03/06/2014 RE-READ

I am going to describe each of these stories for you in a Victorian Chapter Title. Because it's fun. :)

- 1.) Commercial Break. In Which Young Augusten Is Selected to Be In a Tang Commercial, But Discovers He is Horrible At Acting.
- 2.) Vanderbilt Genes. In Which Young Augusten Discovers What He's Suspected All Along – His Parents Aren't Really His Parents but Instead He Is A Lost Vanderbilt Child, Heir to Millions.
- 3.) Transfixed by Transsexuals. In Which Augusten Explains His Obsession with Transsexuals, Which Began in the Fourth Grade.
- 4.) Model Behavior. In Which Augusten Tells Us About Modeling School.
- 5.) I Dated An Undertaker. (Self-explanatory)
- 6.) And Now a Word From Our Sponsor. In Which Augusten Talks About His Hair, Or Lack Thereof.
- 7.) The Rat/Thing. In Which Augusten Kills a Mouse. Horrifying. I can't read this. Animal cruelty.
- 8.) Debby's Requirements. In Which Augusten Hires a Psycho Maid. Psycho maid vs. psycho Augusten. Hilariously funny story. The absolute best story of the whole collection.
- 9.) Roof Work. In Which Augusten Pierces a Cyst in his Mouth, and Ends Up Having Dental Surgery.
- 10.) Beating Raoul. In Which Augusten Dates a Perfect Man Who Turns Out to Be Not So Perfect.
- 11.) Holy Blow Job. In Which Augusten Recalls the Three Separate Occasions in Which a Priest has Sucked him Off. Trigger warning: one is when he was 14.
- 12.) Mark the Shrink. Augusten dates a shrink and becomes neurotic. At the end of the story the shrink kills himself.
- 13.) Telemarketing Revenge. In Which Augusten F*cks Around with Telemarketers.
- 14.) My Last First Date. In Which Augusten Goes on a Great Date.
- 15.) The Schnauzer. In Which Augusten is in Love with the Guy in the Previous Story.
- 16.) Key Worst. In Which Augusten Travels to Key West, and Hates It.
- 17.) Ass Burger. In Which Augusten Discusses his Genius Brother Who Has Asperger's Syndrome.
- 18.) Life Cycle of the North American Opossum. In Which Augusten Struggles with a Possum that Likes to Eat His Dog's Excrement.

- 19.) Cunnilingusville. In Which Augusten Makes Observations about the Amish.
- 20.) I Kid You Not. In Which Augusten Explains Why He Will Never Have Children.
- 21.) I'm Gonna Live Forever. In Which Augusten Explains What It's Like to Be A Famous Author.
- 22.) Total Turnaround. In Which Augusten Describes his Love for His Boyfriend.
- 23.) Roid Rage. In Which Augusten Explains Why He Takes Steroids and How They Affect Him.
- 24.) Magical Thinking. In Which Augusten Uses the Powers of His Mind to Kill A Woman, Get a Boyfriend, and Become a Nationally Acclaimed Author.
- 25.) Puff Derby. In Which Augusten Goes to the Kentucky Derby and Meets Puff Daddy.
- 26.) Meanwhile, Back At the Ranch. In Which Augusten and his Boyfriend Shop for a Summer Home.
- 27.) Up the Escalator. In Which Augusten Goes to Kmart to Buy Dennis an Iron, and Realizes He Is Becoming Domesticated.

This book is funny. Actually, it is very funny. I laughed out loud a lot. However, and this is worth noting, this book is very mean. Very mean. In this book, Burroughs makes fun of people with Down's Syndrome. He talks about priests giving him blowjobs (one when he was 14). He calls women "bitch" and "cunt." He calls other gay men "fag." He makes fun of people for being retarded, fat, short, ugly, and for having a tiny penis.

It's also fair warning for parents who read this book that Burroughs actively dislikes children. He even has a whole chapter devoted to this topic. On one occasion he accidentally steps on a baby's hand (age 1 1/2, about) and instead of apologizing to the parent, walks away quickly and pretends he did nothing. The child then gets scolded for crying. Burroughs thinks this is hilarious. On another occasion, he threatens a kid who has been kicking him and stepping on his toes. He calls her a cocksucker and threatens to push her mother into the ocean, hurt her daddy, and become her new daddy.

Now, I know I'm making out Burroughs to be some kind of monster. And he is, definitely, a jerk. But his ability to be a jerk and say whatever comes into his head and do things that normal people only fantasize about saying but would never really say is why he's so funny and why people read his books.

It's fair to note that because of his horrendous childhood (see my review of *RUNNING WITH SCISSORS* for more details) Burroughs is deadened to any sense of kindness, generosity, compassion, or pity. He only looks out for himself, number one. He is fiercely loyal and protective of his boyfriend, but again, I believe that is because his boyfriend makes him happy, and is therefore valuable to Burroughs.

Burroughs is vain, selfish, self-centered, materialistic and shallow. And he freely admits these things and makes fun of himself for them. However, after reading this book, even if you laugh a lot, you would never, ever want to be his friend because you know how he thinks and talks about people.

If you are going to read an Augusten Burroughs book, I would suggest *DRY*. In *DRY*, Burroughs portrays himself as more human, with feelings and struggles. He really allows you into his mind and even though he's still got his edge, he's a bit vulnerable and more of a human being. In this book he is more or less a caricature of himself.

SAMPLE: I have always loved eavesdropping. But even more, I love knowing that somebody is eavesdropping on my own conversation. My former art director, Greer, and I had a lot of fun playing games with people. We'd be traveling on business, off to L.A. to shoot a commercial, and we'd be sitting near the gate waiting for our flight and chatting. Then we would become aware that somebody else was listening, so I would say, "Honey, tell me you arranged for your parents to stay with the baby." And she would feign horror. "Oh my fucking God, I totally forgot. The baby is alone. Shit. Do you think she can last on her own for two days?" And I would reply, "Well, I guess. Babies are supposed to be pretty durable."

Tortla says

Amusing enough to make me laugh out loud a few times. It doesn't get five stars because Burroughs is amusing but not endearing. And he made a few typos and can't seem to get his facts straight (did he start working in advertising when he was 18 or 19? does he use magical thinking to keep planes aloft or not?). Sooo...four stars.

Victoria Weinstein says

After enjoying Burrough's bitchy humor for a few chapters, I began to find the stories lacking in any redeeming qualities. They were just mean and bitchy rather than insightful and bitchy. I always appreciate a self-aware narrator, but although Burrough's is admirably self-aware and vulnerable, he is profoundly unhealthy in his thinking and behavior. I haven't read his autobiography, "Running With Scissors," so I can't fill in the background of his frequent references to a terribly abusive upbringing. What I eventually realized is that in Burroughs I was hoping to find another David Sedaris -- a funny, bitter, bitchy gay man with a keen memory and scathing attention to detail but with an evident heart and soul. Burroughs is not Sedaris. He's a nasty man I chose not to spend any more time with after the first 7 or 8 chapters.

I appreciate hyperbole and use it a lot in my own writing, but Burrough's hyperbolic statements just seem inflammatory in an adolescent and obnoxious way.

The chapter on killing the mouse in his bathtub totally lacked a point -- and the second half of the book badly needed an editorial hand. I have the feeling that this book got a fairly free editorial pass after the success of "Running With Scissors." It is very badly organized, and the structure of the essays gets sloppier and sloppier as the book wears on.

A few fabulous laugh lines and insights.

Allie says

I really love this book. Because the stories are short, pretty quick reads, it's great for those times when you want something to read but have a lot of distractions around. That's why I took it to the DMV with me a few weeks ago when I was getting my driver's license renewed. It was a long wait, and the lobby was packed with all kinds of cranky people and their unruly kids. As I read about Burroughs' experiences dating an undertaker, getting blowjobs by priests and dealing with a psychotic housekeeper, I kept bursting out laughing. At one point, I might have even cried. It definitely made the hellish DMV experience a lot more bearable.

Karin says

I didn't read the whole thing--only to the essay where he writes about how he tortured a rat. I got so mad I

tore the pages out of the book then tossed the book into the first trash can I found.

João Roque says

Augusten Burroughs é um dos meus escritores favoritos, não só porque escreve bem, mas especialmente porque é um escritor que escreve sobre si próprio.

Ora, e não sendo eu um escritor, sempre preferi nos meus escritos, escrever sobre a minha pessoa do que ficcionar uma história.

E como Burroughs consegue transformar uma série de recordações da sua vida, em pequenos episódios, plenos de humor e sarcasmo é totalmente visível neste seu “Pensamento Mágico”.

E, é neste livro que ele fala abertamente e de uma maneira muito bela do seu relacionamento de muitos anos com o seu companheiro, Dennis.

É já o quarto livro que leio deste autor e todos eles autobiográficos: “Correr com tesouras”, “A Seco”, “Efeitos Secundários”, todos eles e por ordem cronológica falam de circunstâncias especiais da sua vida, e agora neste quarto, ele prefere ir falando de assuntos não tão específicos, mas todos eles definidores de um modo de ser e de um modo de vida

Philip says

I got this book on a whim after reading all it's praise on the front cover. I mean 237 positive critiques from the worlds most reputable sources can't be all wrong, can they?

Besides, I love David Sedaris, and out of the 237 reviews, 235 of them had a fond comparison.

One of the things that gets under my skin is the way he approaches his homosexuality. It defines him. And he comes across as saying, "I don't want to be defined by my homosexuality, but let me tell you about the catholic priests I've seduced," or "my boyfriend likes big black men with tight butts..." I'm toning it WAY down, and the list goes WAY on... David Sedaris is gay too, but I didn't feel that in his writing it defined who he was. I don't walk away from David's book saying, "memoirs of a gay man," just like if I ever write I would hope people walked away with more than, "*sigh* another straight man's memoirs..."

Not that there weren't funny anecdotes in here. The "rat thing" was great, and I loved the episode with his cleaning lady. But they weren't enough to elevate the book above, "it was ok."

Alex Duncan says

Nice Augusten Burroughs book. My favorite after Dry.

David says

A solid collection of humorous stories, with a smattering of heartfelt and touching stories to boot. Burroughs is no David Sedaris, but he is certainly an enjoyable comedic author.

Andre says

I just recently got out of the shower. No lie. The shower came after I cleaned the shower but, get this, before I took a bubble bath.

Now what sense does that make? Who takes a bath and THEN gives the bathtub a deep scrubbing?

... I've done lots of things in odd orders. I think hot tea in the summer and down gallons of iced tea in the winter. Sometimes I drink Rockstar or Monster or Go Girl™ immediately before going to sleep.

Earlier today, at the grocery store, I went to the frozen section *first*, then proceeded to shop for the items which didn't need to be refrigerated. Then I came home and took my pork chops out of the package and seasoned them, the whole time knowing damn well that I had no clean pan that I was willing to cook said pork chops on. So I had to put the pork chops back in the fridge, wash some dishes, then pull them back out when they were ready to go.

Sometimes I take a shower, get dressed, then decide that I want to shave. Who does that? Honestly... So what do I do? I take off my shirt, then shave, then put back on the shirt. Then remember that my shirt is wrinkled so I have to take my shirt back off to iron it.

Yesterday (meaning Sunday since I haven't gone to sleep yet), I was at Hina's when this incredibly attractive girl, with a very loud green, yellow and silver shirt and jean shorts was in there. I briefly considered asking her for her number before I asked her for her name. Then I realized that this made absolutely NO sense. I did ask her for her name, though. Steve thinks I should have asked her for coffee (the irony of that being that we were in a Tea store).

I read Dry before Running with Scissors, and you would have thought that I would have learned my lesson a second time through. I didn't realize that Dry was written AFTER Running with Scissors until after I read the latter. If you've been keeping track, I finished Possible Side Effects last week and moved onto Magical Thinking a few days ago. And, again, it didn't cross my mind one bit to ask myself, "which novel came first?"

In this case, however, it worked out well. I would not have given PSE 3 stars, I would have given it two, and this memoir three. But two straight weeks of Augusten Burrough's short stories (with D?gen sandwiched in between) is two straight weeks too many.

PSE basically consists of rejected stories from MT. MT is the real shit. Debby's Requirements, Beating Raoul, and Model Behavior *are* the book. Granted, Possible Side Effects contains more funny stories, the best stories in MT are better than the best stories in PSE. But MT kinda tapers off - after he talks about his

first date with Dennis, the book spirals into constantly talking about Dennis, which left me pretty tired. And after reading 193 pages today, that's too much time to spend in one day about his boyfriend.

Maybe Augusten Burroughs and I think the same way. Any normal author would have instantly recognized that some 6-8 straight chapters of Dennis after all the good stories (regardless of the somewhat chronological order of the chapters) made no sense. Just like me baking dessert before making dinner. //

Stephanie says

In the past, I have only listed books on Goodreads that I have enjoyed and would recommend. So this is my first negative rating/review. Today, a friend put *Magical Thinking* in her TO READ pile. I commented that I did not want her to read it because in one of AB's essays, he describes wishing a boss dead (the origination of the title) and incredibly goes on to gleefully reveal that she did die after hoping it would happen. This boss of his was also a Creative Director of mine at a different ad agency----a mentor, a friend, a guest at my wedding. When she died, she left a husband, an eleven-year-old daughter, and all of the friends that she had "mothered." She was a quirky, interesting, wonderful person whose death did not deserve to be fodder for this poor man's Sedaris. When I negatively commented on the book as it was listed on my pal's page, Goodreads removed the comment. I have no idea why. If Augusten Burroughs can present his sullen version of the truth (sorry he hated "Charlotte"; maybe there was a reason she disliked him), then so can I.

Yes, this is why I hated the book. I think that's a good enough reason. And in this forum, shouldn't this comment be allowed to stand?

Erica says

So Anthony bought me this book last weekend and I finished it in 3 days.

It's a collection of his essays, much like the style of David Sedaris. And just like David Sedaris, only a couple of these essays are "laugh out loud" funny.

The first 5 essays feel like he's just trying to fill space in the book with nonsense "what if" stories that are obviously all taking place in his head. This led me constantly think, "I thought this was a memoir based on things that actually take place." But again, I'm uber critical because I get bored easily and need to be constantly entertained.

I would say that my favorite essays (which actually did make me laugh) were *Beating Raoul*, which is about a "almost-perfect" date (read to find out why I used the words almost-perfect") and *I'm Gonna Live Forever* which is about Burroughs' experiences with new found fame in New York City.

Overall Grade: B+

Rebecca McNutt says

Ugh, why the hell do I ever even bother trying to read books by this Augusten Burroughs guy? Another

bunch of vulgar and lewd sob stories by a man with a severe case of exaggeration and trying to pass off fabrication as fact.

Mariel says

The government called and said we can't afford David Sedaris anymore. It's the recession, y'know. Guess it's the poorest man's David Sedaris: Augusten Burroughs.

Burroughs would be better if he'd at least admit he's a bitchy gay man instead of trying to tack on "But everybody is okay" drivelt messages at the end of his bitchiness. He reminds me of guys I know who make up obviously bullshit stories made more annoying by the obvious fact they expect you are impressed by it (I'm not). Only vaguely amusing... (Or people who tack on "Now don't get offended" before being absolutely offensive dicks...)

I couldn't help but remember all of Bill Hicks' anti-advertising people bits when reading this. Wonder what Hicks would have made of Don Draper. I dig how immoral and ethical Draper is, and how he relates advertising to what people think everybody else thinks and try to conform to that view (however, I'm never impressed by his epiphanies. I don't care about selling things catchily). That's Burrough's problem. Not that he's good enough for me to bother with. I only read this 'cause it was a Christmas prezzy. (Christmas rolls around once a year and I'm gonna get more books I feel obligated to read... I'd rather read my own crap.)

Courtney Maum says

Obnoxious but compulsively readable. Burroughs is pretty damn funny when he's not being an ass.
