

**My Fair Junkie: A Memoir of Getting Dirty and Staying Clean**  
by Amy Dresner  
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Hachette Books

*Review by Timothy Gager*

**T**HIS IS AN IMPORTANT BOOK, considering the heavy weight of the opioid crisis in this country. It is important because the story and the author are very real in this struggle. It is important because people need to meet people like Amy to understand a lot of this crisis.

Unlike our President's attempt to placate the African American population by bringing Kanye West to The White House, there are no popular drug addicts invited to wow the Oval Office. Why? Because what we learn in actual recovery holds the key to fighting this crisis. It's not less drugs on the street, but rather more sober people in recovery willing to help others.

Amy Dresner was one of the featured guests at the last Dire Literary Series, October, in Somerville, and she was as real as it gets. Her book, *My Fair Junkie: A Memoir of Getting Dirty and Staying Clean*, chronicles her struggles with her disease, which included six trips Rehab Hospitals, four psychiatric wards, four suicide attempts, multiple Emergency Room visits, endless rounds therapy, a slew of fired sponsors, and as a cherry, a felony arrest for assault with a deadly weapon. Society doesn't have much empathy for events such as this. The average citizen (oh, to be average) is not about to rally to battle anything having to do with serious drug and alcohol use and the wreckage it brings.

But aren't they? When you read this book, you're rooting awfully hard for the author. She tells her story with self-effacing humor, combined with real life terror. It is both frightening and hilarious. She is vulnerable and as some say about alcoholics and addicts when using, an ego-maniac with an inferiority complex.

The book alternates life before recovery with her court ordered work on The Clean Team (a wonderful double meaning) a street sweeping unit in Los Angeles. The Clean Team, works convicts to beautify the city and to cover the terms of their sentences. While doing this dirty work, Dresner simultaneously was living in a sober house, going to AA meetings, meeting with a sponsor and doing the required work on herself. Her story reports the importance of what losing everything, and becoming humble really means. These are extremely measurable traits for being and staying clean and sober, according to The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. The book though, isn't about Alcoholics Anonymous, but rather is about a brave and determined journey of one single individual. It is the kind



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of book which has already helped so many people, and should be on the reading list for those not in recovery, as well, as those who don't even have a problem with drug and alcohol use. "The book also helps me stay accountable, I mean, I can't exactly promote it if I'm skyping into readings from my seventh rehab!" Dresner told me.

*My Fair Junkie: A Memoir of Getting Dirty and Staying Clean* is funny, well written, and entertaining, while offering hope. It presents a person who had no hope left, tried multiple times to get sober, only to fail each time, as a strong person who succeeds triumphantly in the end.

As someone who knows their way around the rooms of AA, Dresner's book took me from, no, not me, to I totally identify with so much of this, but one doesn't have to have these kind of experiences to enjoy this book. My only criticism of *My Fair Junkie* came after meeting Amy Dresner a few weeks ago. She is someone who is successful, talented, and extremely alive, but the book wraps up too quickly to give this justice. I, for one, would like others to see her the way she lives in the world right now, as a strong woman, and a powerful example to those in recovery. We might never see Amy Dresner invited to The White House, but you can read the book in your own house, and learn, first hand, what this crisis really is about.