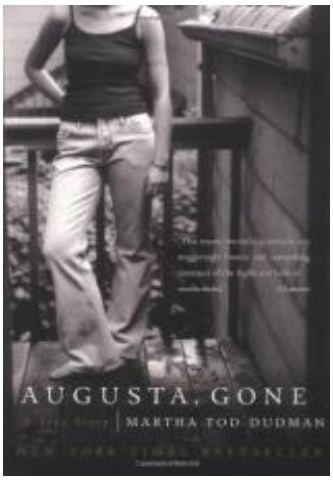
Augusta, Gone: A True Story

by Martha Tod Dudman



About the Book

"I'm not telling you where I am. Don't try to find me."

Remember **Go Ask Alice**? **Augusta, Gone** is the memoir Alice's mother never wrote. A single parent, Martha Tod Dudman is sure she is giving her two children the perfect life, sheltering them from the wild tumult of her own youth. But when her daughter Augusta turns 15, things start to happen: first the cigarette, then the blue pipe, and the little bag Augusta says is aspirin. Just talking to her is like sticking your hand in the garbage disposal. Martha doesn't know if she's confronting adolescent behavior, craziness, her own failures as a parent -- or all three. The story of a girl who is doing everything to hurt herself and a mother who would try anything to save her, **Augusta, Gone** is a sorrowful tale, but not a tragic one.

Discussion Guide

1. Martha Tod Dudman knew her teenage daughter, Augusta, was in serious trouble long before she accepted it. Like many parents, Dudman did not want to confront her daughter's out-of-control behavior -- the smoking, the drugs, the bulimia, the disappearing for days at a time. What role does denial serve a parent? Can you be a good parent and be in denial about your child? Was the mother in this story a good parent? What about the father? Do all parents deny aspects of their children's personality or lifestyle?

2. People often argue about nature versus nurture in human development, especially when it comes to parent-child. Was Augusta destined for a rough adolescence because of her personality or was her mother and father's parenting to blame? Is Augusta's wildness genetic payback for Dudman's own rebellious youth? What could have been done differently to avoid the drastic measures that were eventually taken with Augusta?

3. Compare the behaviors of Augusta with her brother Jack. How can two children with the same parents be so different?

If Augusta had not been sent away, would Jack have followed in her rebellious footsteps? Discuss Augusta and Jack's sister-brother relationship -- was there sibling rivalry?

4. The mother in **Augusta, Gone** is a high-powered executive and a single mother with a boyfriend. How do you think she was able to maintain this relationship during the height of Augusta's problems? How can women balance the demands of corporate life, motherhood, and their needs as women? Is Dudman a successful example of this?

5. From her children's youngest days, Dudman tried to be the kind of parent who really talked to her children. Why do you think her relationship with Augusta degenerated into "lies and exaggerations?" Is it just a normal part of teenage life?

6. Is **Augusta, Gone** a beacon of comfort and hope for parents or a cautionary tale? How did the characters in **Augusta, Gone** change from start to finish?

Author Bio

Martha Tod Dudman served as President and General Manager of Dudman Communications, a group of radio stations, from 1990 to 1999. Now a professional fundraiser, she lives in Northeast Harbor, Maine, with her son and daughter.

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