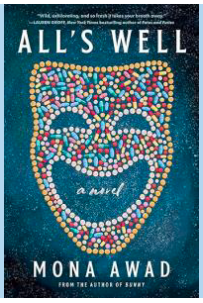
Discussion Guide



All's Well
Miranda Fitch

Simon & Schuster
2021
368 pages
ISBN: 978-198216966

Chronic Pain

Summary

Miranda Fitch's life is a waking nightmare after an accident ruins her acting career, and leaves her with chronic back pain, a failed marriage, and a deepening dependence on painkillers and alcohol. On the verge of losing her job as a college theater director, Miranda lives out her broken dreams through an upcoming production of Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well,* when the unimaginable happens. She suddenly recovers, but at what cost?

Questions

1. Miranda encounters three strange men at the Canny Man. After drinking the golden remedy drink, her chronic pain is temporarily relieved. Who or what do you think these three men represent?
2. Miranda frequently references her performance as Helen in *All's Well That Ends Well*, her most successful role. In what ways does Helen's character shape her relationship with her students, coworkers, lovers, and herself?
3. Miranda's chronic pain is regularly dismissed by her male physical therapists (and her friend Grace) as a matter of mind over body. What does this disparity in experience and treatment indicate about the way chronic pain conditions are viewed? How is the experience of pain management gendered in *All's Well*?
4. Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* is commonly categorized as a "problem play," or both a comedy and tragedy. Would you describe this novel similarly? In what ways are they alike, and in what ways are they different?
5. How does pain translate to performance throughout the novel?
6. Have you ever studied or watched a performance of *All's Well That Ends Well*? What was your experience of the play? Discuss the themes which pair with *All's Well.*
7. When Briana makes her abrupt return following her illness and discovers Ellie has taken over the role of Helen, she demands to play the role of the King. After noticing that Briana "attempts threat, confrontation, but she can only manage so much through the veil of pain" (p. 208), Miranda allows her to perform Act Two, Scene One of the play. How does this performance reflect the dynamics between Miranda and Briana?
8. Have you ever participated in theater or performance arts? How did your experience compare to its portrayal in *All's Well*?

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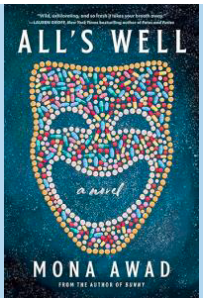

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9. Miranda's perception of Briana and Ellie vary greatly. What do their representations reflect about how Miranda sees herself?
10. In the beginning, Miranda's theater students are seemingly unafraid of her. After the theater received its largest donation from the three men and Briana gets sick, the students, and even Grace, grow distant and fearful of her. How does this fear affect Miranda?
11. The golden remedy drink at the Canny Man is eventually taken off the menu due to a limited supply (p. 351). What do you think its significance was throughout the novel?
12. Do you think this is the beginning of Miranda's end?

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