



# Early Sobrieties

## Michael Deagler

HC ISBN: 9781662602245 | eBook ISBN: 9781662602252

“Just give me one more day,’ Monk says, and *Early Sobrieties* is such a wise and piercing book that we believe him.”

—Charlie Lee, *The New York Times Book Review*

★ “Wry, sharp, charming, resistant to neat closures and easy turns—a debut of enormous promise.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)



### ABOUT THE BOOK

---

Don't worry about what Dennis Monk did when he was drinking. He's sober now, ready to rejoin the world of leases and paychecks, reciprocal friendships and healthy romances—if only the world would agree to take him back. When his working-stiff parents kick him out of their suburban home, the 26-year-old spends his first dry summer couch surfing through South Philadelphia. His run-ins with former classmates, estranged drinking buddies, and prospective lovers challenge his version of events past and present, revealing that recovery is not the happy ending he'd expected, only a fraught next chapter.

Like a sober, millennial *Jesus' Son*, Michael Deagler's debut novel is the poignant confession of a recovering addict adrift in the fragmenting landscape of America's middle class. Shot through with humor, hubris, and hard-earned insight, *Early Sobrieties* charts the limbos that exist between our better and worst selves, offering a portrait of a stifled generation collectively slouching towards grace.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

---

1. As the novel begins, Dennis is six months sober. What challenges does the decision to start the book at that point in his story present for the narrative? What about opportunities?
2. How would you describe the narrative structure of this book? How does that structure shape your understanding of Dennis as a character or of the experience of sobriety?
3. Dennis is going through cycles, drifting through Philadelphia, almost like a wandering samurai. Which literary archetypes does Dennis either fit into or remind you of? Why?
4. The book is significantly about gentrification. Dennis and his acquaintances are mostly outsiders—young professionals—who have moved into South Philadelphia. Dennis is both similar to his associates—he's a young professional from out of town—and different—he's unemployed and can neither pay rent nor afford to buy a home. Where does he fit into the gentrification narrative?
5. Do you think this novel could take place in any other city, or is Philadelphia (and specifically South Philadelphia) an essential character in this particular story? How might a change in setting affect the narrative?