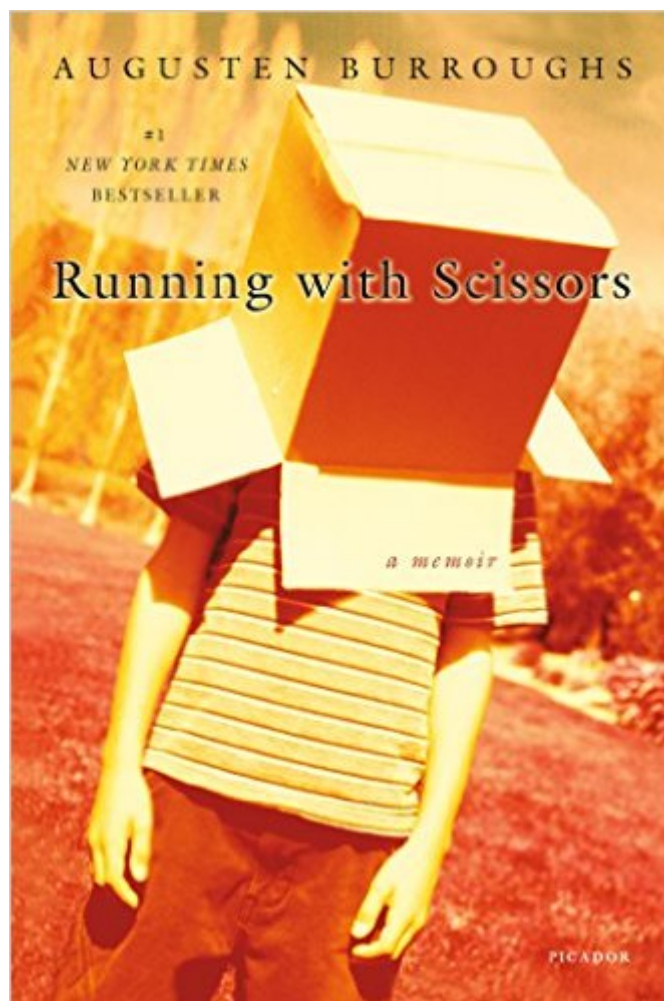


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Running With Scissors: A Memoir



Synopsis

The #1 New York Times Bestseller
An Entertainment Weekly Top Ten Book of the Year
Now a Major Motion Picture

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There is a passage early in Augusten Burroughs's harrowing and highly entertaining memoir, *Running with Scissors*, that speaks volumes about the author. While going to the garbage dump with his father, young Augusten spots a chipped, glass-top coffee table that he longs to bring home. "I knew I could hide the chip by fanning a display of magazines on the surface, like in a doctor's office," he writes, "And it certainly wouldn't be dirty after I polished it with Windex for three hours." There were certainly numerous chips in the childhood Burroughs describes: an alcoholic father, an unstable mother who gives him up for adoption to her therapist, and an adolescence spent as part of the therapist's eccentric extended family, gobbling prescription meds and fooling around with both an old electroshock machine and a pedophile who lives in a shed out back. But just as he dreamed of doing with that old table, Burroughs employs a vigorous program of decoration and fervent polishing to a life that many would have simply thrown in a landfill. Despite her abandonment, he never gives up on his increasingly unbalanced mother. And rather than despair about his lot, he glamorizes it: planning a "beauty empire" and performing an a capella version of "You Light Up My Life" at a local mental ward. Burroughs's perspective achieves a crucial balance for a memoir: emotional but not self-involved, observant but not clinical, funny but not deliberately comic. And it's ultimately a feel-good story: as he steers through a challenging childhood, there's always a sense

that Burroughs's survivor mentality will guide him through and that the coffee table will be salvaged after all. --John Moe

"Bookman gave me attention. We would go for long walks and talk about all sorts of things. Like how awful the nuns were in his Catholic school when he was a kid and how you have to roll your lips over your teeth when you give a blowjob," writes Burroughs (Sellelevision) about his affair, at age 13, with the 33-year-old son of his mother's psychiatrist. That his mother sent him to live with her shrink (who felt that the affair was good therapy for Burroughs) shows that this is not just another 1980s coming-of-age story. The son of a poet with a "wild mental imbalance" and a professor with a "pitch-black dark side," Burroughs is sent to live with Dr. Finch when his parents separate and his mother comes out as a lesbian. While life in the Finch household is often overwhelming (the doctor talks about masturbating to photos of Golda Meir while his wife rages about his adulterous behavior), Burroughs learns "your life [is] your own and no adult should be allowed to shape it for you." There are wonderful moments of paradoxical humor Burroughs, who accepts his homosexuality as a teen, rejects the squeaky-clean pop icon Anita Bryant because she was "tacky and classless" as well as some horrifying moments, as when one of Finch's daughters has a semi-breakdown and thinks that her cat has come back from the dead. Beautifully written with a finely tuned sense of style and wit the occasional cliché; ("Life would be fabric-softener, tuna-salad-on-white, PTA-meeting normal") stands out anomalously this memoir of a nightmarish youth is both compulsively entertaining and tremendously provocative. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Memoir, even a few of the greatest examples in the genre, can sometimes fall short of engrossing, may crawl along as the author drags readers through events that fail to universally engage. This is NOT the case with Burroughs's work. This book never slows down, and you won't want it to. This is a you'll-lose-sleep-to-finish-it-in-one-setting kind of book. The language, subject-matter, and overall tone are explicit - properly so, as this boy's childhood was explicit. The title says it all; Augusten ran, break-neck, through a psych ward of formative years, wielding a plethora of too-sharp, age-inappropriate objects along the way. If you're easily offended, you might want to skip this one. Otherwise, buy it, settle in when you have plenty of time, and hold on tight.

I did enjoy reading this book! I read it pretty quickly and the plot was really unexpected, different than anything I have ever read. The reviews I had read before choosing this book spoke about

vulgarity and explicit content, and the novel definitely has both of those! It's one of those situations where you want to stop because it feels wrong but you can't because it's so interesting. If you become uncomfortable easily, I probably wouldn't read this one. Try and keep an open mind while you read and you will enjoy the honesty and vulnerability the author offers.

Something I felt was missing in this memoir though it was funny and crazy. I felt it was such a different kind of read for me and I enjoyed it so much. Ok so I read the book and I was laughing so hard and thought to myself that I have to watch the movie and the movie sucked big time. Ok and now as for the book, I have to say Auggie had one of the most stangest childhood I have ever read about and he was surrounded by some pretty colorful characters. There were times I was laughing out pretty loud and at times I sadly went "oh dear" (his sexual experiences etc) Sometimes I really wondered about lifestory while I commuted to work. Some of the scenes were rather graphic and pedophilic undercurrents in the network of the family was disturbing. Auggie's mother is a poet (mind you also with mental illnesses) and his father is a teacher/professor who is an alcoholic and boy do they fight. And their son, the author, is sent to live with his mother's therapist, Dr Finch. Dr Finch and his family are really a mix of hippies and oddballs and other disturbing elements. But they are endearing too. Well, everyone is entitled to their beliefs and practices and so are the Finches. And so his quirky stories begin. This is not a typical memoir. The author includes all the ugly stuff in it as well. What I loved about this book: The author never makes himself look like a victim or survivor. He tells everything as it and how he constantly tried to make sense and struggle with growing up. I highly recommend it to anyone who wants a different memoir to read!

And I just love that Augusten survived and got out and became a writer. I am amazed at his wit. I don't have words to express how I feel about this book. It is crude and I don't find it funny. I admire the resilience of this person and I don't know how he kept his sanity. Enjoy !

I was late to the party on reading this. A friend of mine years back told me it was hilarious, and I never got around to reading it until recently. I was poking through DVD's at a dollar store, and I saw the movie for sale (Shows the success of the film). Remembering what my friend said, I decided to give the book a shot. I will preface this by saying I was a bizarre sense of humor. Though I consider myself a feminist, I find cliché porn to be over-the-top funny. I still grin at the memory of my mother, who was experiencing psychosis and probably has a hint of a personality disorder, calling the cops on me when I wouldn't pick up the phone one day. Why was it funny, you ask? I was newly single,

and sending a hot guy in uniform to check on my well-being was just the thing I needed at the time. When my OCD flares up? Spending hours upon hours looking up rare diseases and feeling sheer terror about having one yet knowing it's all random BS in my head - you wouldn't believe some of the crap I've come up with! Oh yes, and the wacky funeral for my husband's grandmother - the minister wore a shiny gold suit. A gold suit! Plus he stumbled over Psalm 23:4. As human beings, we have this idea of normal. When something isn't normal, we either find it distressing, or we find it so freakishly weird we can't imagine in what universe something like that could happen - and we can't help but laugh. I fall into the laughter category, so I totally get Burroughs's take on his life. Man, I'd laugh too if some of that stuff happened to me. Burroughs is a wonderfully gifted writer. His descriptions are vivid, his word choice is perfect, the emotions he invokes (and provokes) are delightful. The editing in this book is fabulous as well. Hats off to the folks who made this possible in the sense that it is so well-written. My issue with it is that the tone feels rather judgmental at times. I suppose judgment is to be expected, but I found it to be a turn-off. When one writes a memoir, you write things as how you remember them - and perhaps there's a bit of embellishment here and there. As someone who has experienced trauma and worked with people who have experienced it, your perspective on events is rather...irrational. A rational person would be judgmental in the midst of dog food eating and a masturbatory room in a psychiatrist's office. Someone with trauma? Well, things don't quite surprise you - or at least as much. Your sense of judgment on what is "normal" is very different. Perhaps pain or a bit of incredulous feelings, but recognizing absurdity - probably not to the extent as what Burroughs did at the time. For me, I would expect a memoirist to portray the emotions he or she was experiencing at the time of which they were writing. I don't know if I believed that Burroughs was so aware that things in his situation were as wrong as what he perhaps does now. I also felt that the characters were a little flat. Everyone seemed like a caricature rather than a human being. I think fleshing out some of the people would have helped the story. My criticisms are based on my preferences as a reader. It's not a bad book per se - it simply isn't for me and probably not for some others.

Given that this was an autobiography, I was quite disturbed by the neglect and sexual abuse which was graphically depicted in this book. I wondered why the parents and other responsible adults were not charged with a variety of crimes against this child (the author.).

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