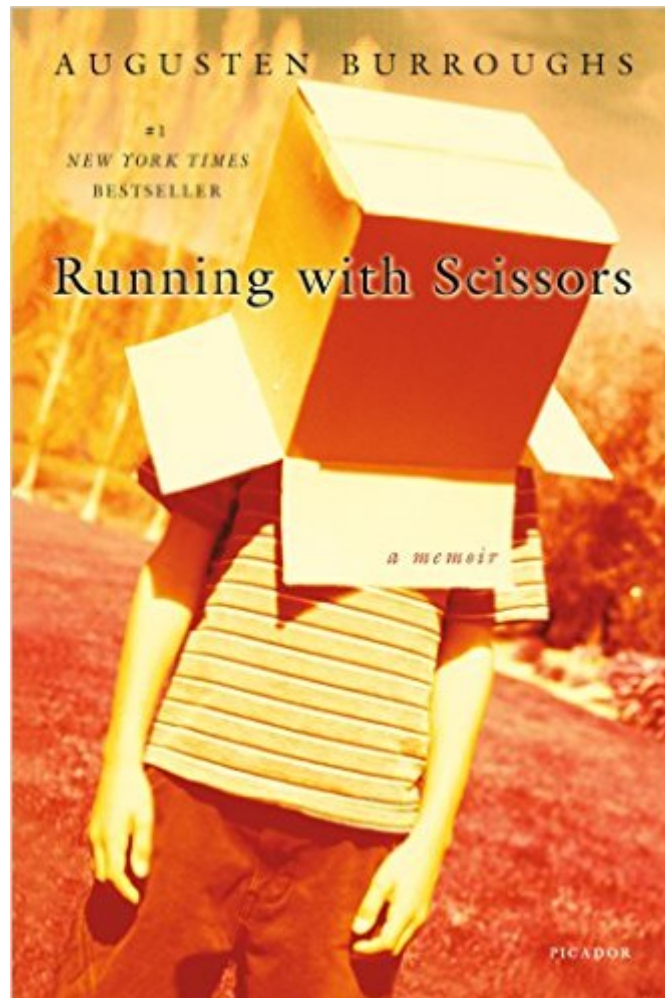


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Running With Scissors: A Memoir



Synopsis

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

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Picador; 1st edition (June 1, 2003)

Language: English

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Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (1,361 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #23,957 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) [#8 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > New England](#) [#34 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > LGBT](#) [#148 in Books > Deals in Books](#)

Customer Reviews

When he was a teenager in Massachusetts during the 1970s, Augusten Burroughs kept daily journals recording everything that happened to him. "Running with Scissors" is a result of those journals, but it's unlikely that anyone who suffered experiences like his would need a journal to recall them. Instead, his diaries both gave him the therapeutic outlet he needed while growing up and supplied this book with the rich detail that makes it, at times, so unbelievable. Burroughs's mother was a struggling poet who wanted to be like Anne Sexton, and, lacking any talent, she instead suffered Sexton's psychotic episodes. The father, unable to deal with his wife's instability, drank himself out of the relationship. Eventually, Burroughs is abandoned by his family and adopted by his mother's psychiatrist, a certifiable lunatic who dispenses drugs and sex far more diligently than sound advice and who believes discipline is an evil to be avoided at all costs. To complicate an already disastrous situation, other members of this adopted family include several deeply disturbed individuals, including a pedophile who finds a ready victim in the 14-year-old Burroughs. I read this book two months ago, and, while I found it simultaneously appalling and enjoyable, I didn't know what to make of it. Since then, I've read several press reports that address some of the rumors generated by this book's publication. No, none of the people described in this book have sued (or threatened to sue) the author for libel. True, no child with the name "Augusten Burroughs" ever lived

anywhere near Northampton--because Burroughs legally changed his name when he was 18. In sum, I've read nothing to indicate that Burroughs is making it all up.

I wanted to like this book, and don't get me wrong, I did enjoy it on some level. Although some of the scenes are grotesque, they are certainly alive with detail and stick in your brain the way well-written scenes should. However, I feel like Burroughs had a great opportunity to write a truly moving memoir here and he passed it by. The amazing amount of material he had to work with- his insane mother, the intriguing Finch family, his affair with a pedophile- these things could have produced a deep and memorable book. But Burroughs doesn't go that far. I felt as though he skated the surface, anxious to fit in as many gross and weird scenes as possible, without delving into character development or drawing any conclusions from what occurred. Examples of what I mean: Did anyone feel as though they knew Natalie? We don't even get a clear description of her until the last few chapters, yet she's a main character. Same with Hope, who starts out as the capable and sweet receptionist of the dr. and is later shown as religious and weird- during the cat scene, I actually had to flip to the front of the book and verify that this was the same Finch daughter, because she was acting so different from the original image of her we had been given. Ditto for the dr. and the revelations at the end of the book about him (I won't give it away)- and for Augusten himself. These characters slowly begin to show their colors in the first few chapters, then suddenly they do a bunch of weird stuff and act in ways we don't expect, and then the book is abruptly over, with a dissatisfying epilogue about where these people ended up. We never get to know them on more than a surface level. This could have been a classic memoir- Burroughs certainly had the material for one.

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