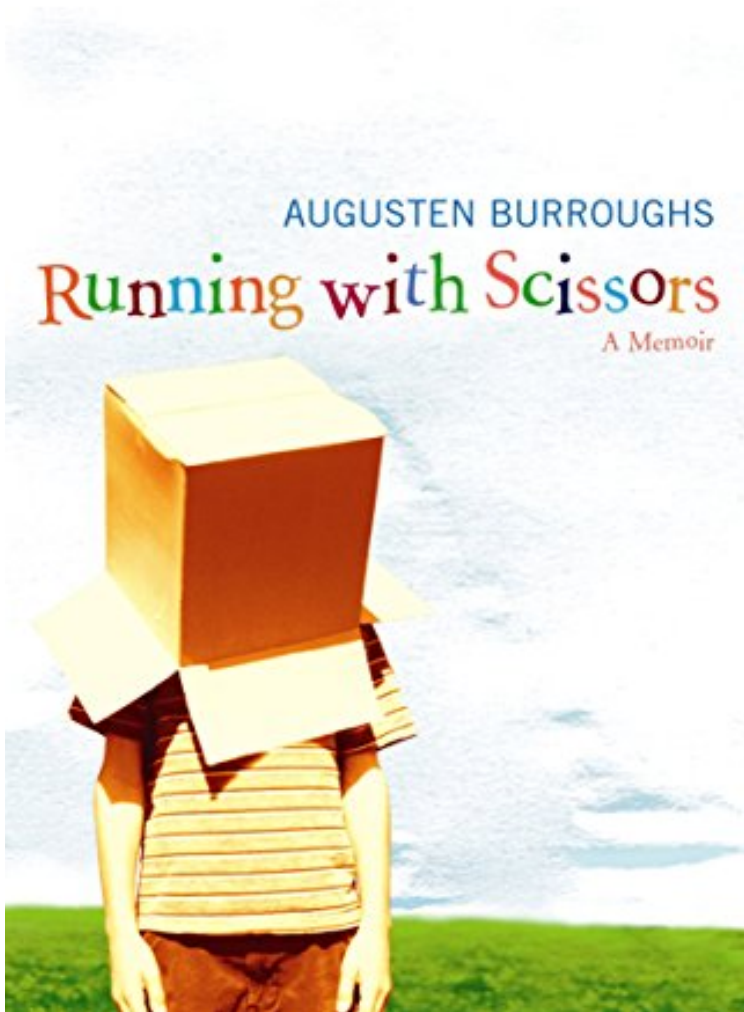


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Running With Scissors: A Memoir (English Edition)

'The Brady Bunch on Viagra' Rachel Cooke, *Observer*



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur'This is the Brady Bunch on Viagra... it is impossible not to laugh at all the jokes; to admire the sardonic, fetid tone; to wonder, slack-jawed and agog, at the sheer looniness of the vista he conjures up' Rachel Cooke, *Observer*This is the true story of a boy who wanted to grow up with the Brady Bunch, but ended up living with the Addams Family. Augusten Burroughs's mother gave him away to be raised by her psychiatrist, a dead ringer for Santa Claus and a certifiable lunatic into the bargain. The doctor's bizarre family, a few patients and a sinister man living in the garden shed completed the tableau. In

the perfect squalor of their dilapidated Victorian house, there were no rules and there was no school. The Christmas tree stayed up until summer and Valium was chomped down like sweets. And when things got a bit slow, there was always the ancient electroshock therapy machine under the stairs....com

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

From Publishers Weekly

"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.