

**INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY**

AUGUSTEN (38) sits at a table. On the table is a sign that reads, "AUGUSTEN BURROUGHS BOOK SIGNING." A fan, BOB (mid-20s) approaches him. He hands Augusten a book.

AUGUSTEN  
Hello! Am I signing to someone in particular?

BOB  
(nervous)  
Bob--me. My name is Bob. Bob  
Sylvester Johnson-Jackson.

AUGUSTEN  
Okay, Bob. Quite a mouthful. You  
want your *full name* on there?

BOB  
Yes. Please.

AUGUSTEN  
Okay. Can you repeat, like, the  
whole thing? Slowly, if you don't  
mind.

BOB  
Yeah. Bob...

AUGUSTEN begins writing Bob's name. His hands are covered in cuts.

BOB (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Sylvester...

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

AUGUSTEN (10), sporting a bowl cut, gold rings and a hot pink shirt, picks at his fingers while he sits at his desk. His teacher, MRS. ANDERSON (35), a tall, important-looking Asian woman, lectures about math while pointing to the board.

MRS. ANDERSON  
So then, we take the 2x and put it  
over the y...

He continues picking his fingers.

MRS. ANDERSON  
But don't forget about the plus  
five over here...

Pick. Pick. Pick. Blood spills onto the desk.

Anderson notices.

MRS. ANDERSON  
Augusten!

Augusten looks up, like a deer in headlights.

MRS. ANDERSON  
Again?

Augusten shrugs. The kids around him laugh.

MRS. ANDERSON  
(head in hands)  
Just...go to the nurse.

He exits.

UNNAMED CHILD 1 (O.S.)  
Isn't this the third time this  
week?

UNNAMED CHILD 2 (O.S.)  
I don't know, but what is he  
wearing?!

#### INT. NURSE'S OFFICE

NURSE JOY (80), grey hair and covered in wrinkles, smoking a cigarette, sees Augusten enter. She frantically stomps it out on the ground and throws it out as he opens the door.

JOY  
(shooing him)  
Get the fuck outta here.

Augusten begins to leave.

JOY  
I'm kidding, come back.  
(Under breath)  
I wish I could just send you back.

Augusten goes up to Joy as she grabs a band-aid for him.

JOY  
Jesus fuckin' Christ. It's a  
massacre.

She holds up his fingers for him to see.

JOY  
See, you've massacred your own  
fingers. Again.

She sees his rings.

JOY  
And what is this shit? Your poor  
mother.

She puts the band-aid on him.

JOY (CONT'D)  
Go play with a football or  
something. This is a *bad habit*.

AUGUSTEN  
I know, I've been trying to stop  
picking, but-

JOY  
No, not the picking, you idiot.  
(pointing to shirt and  
rings)  
These.  
It's a *bad habit*. You don't want  
people thinking you're a-

The used cigarette catches fire in the trash.

JOY (CONT'D)  
(running to stop it)  
Fucking shitface motherfucker bitch  
wad...

Augusten turns around and sneakily leaves.

**INT. HALLWAY - DAY**

Augusten looks down at his hands.

AUGUSTEN  
(mocking voice, to self)  
It's a "bad habit" blah blah  
blah...

The rings sparkle. He smiles.

**INT. MOM'S ROOM - DAY**

Augusten sifts through his mother's closet with bloody, cut hands. He picks at them as he browses. He picks up a blouse and tries it on. He looks in the mirror, puts it back.

He goes for the jewelry box. His hands cover everything in blood while he scavenges.

He puts on an emerald necklace. It's half red by the time it makes it to his neck. He smiles in the mirror.

He puts on a bra, fumbles with getting it on. Sure enough, it becomes tainted with red.

He takes a cocktail dress, puts it on. He almost falls over.

He wipes his mouth with his bloody hands. It looks like he's wearing lipstick that got smudged. He grins in the mirror.

Behind him, MARGARET (40), skinny with grey, frazzled hair, opens the door. She sees him in her now bloody clothes.

MARGARET  
AUGUSTEN!!

SUPER: LITTLE CRUCIFIXIONS.

**INT. CAR - DAY**

Augusten sits in his mom's minivan as she drives on the highway. He picks at his fingers as he looks out the window. He wears a slightly bloodied emerald bracelet.

Margaret moves her hands a bit more than she should while she drives. The car swerves accordingly.

MARGARET  
How many times have I told you to stop picking?! I mean, first the couches, then the light switches, and now my clothes?!

She looks at him and sees that he is actively picking at his hands. Her hands on the wheel follow her gaze.

**EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY**

MARGARET (CONT'D) (O.S.)  
(taking both hands off the wheel, swatting at Augusten)  
Stop that!

The car veers off the road, obliterating the grass.

**INT. CAR - DAY**

Margaret puts her hands on the wheel and gets back on the concrete. Augusten stops picking. He continues to look out the window, unfazed.

MARGARET

And is that *my bracelet* on your hand? I told you, you need to stop with this whole dress-up thing. Do you know the other boys are probably bullying you ruthlessly right now?

Augusten looks down at his hands.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Do you know that?

AUGUSTEN

Mhm.

MARGARET

They're probably calling you names *as we speak*...talking about how Augusten is a weird little sissy who puts on his mom's bras. How he puts on make-up and does his hair like a *girl*. Who knows, in this economy, they might even beat you up!

Augusten picks at his fingers again anxiously, eyes fixed on the window.

MARGARET

Do you want them to beat you up?

AUGUSTEN

(in the negative)

Nn-nnh.

A beat.

MARGARET

Maybe I'd have more sympathy if you had better *taste*.

(with sudden passion)

I have two bracelets.

(MORE)

MARGARET (CONT'D)  
 One was 50% off at Hobby Lobby and  
 the other is premium Versace. Guess  
 which one you picked?

AUGUSTEN  
 (shamefully)  
 ...Hobby Lobby.

MARGARET  
 Yes, Hobby Lobby.

Margaret turns on her blinker. She makes an exit.

AUGUSTEN  
 At least I bled on this one and not  
 your Versa-

MARGARET  
 (grabbing Augusten's wrist)  
 YOU bled ON MY HOBBY LOBBY  
 BRACELET?!

She inspects the bracelet with both hands.

MARGARET (CONT'D)  
 (as if someone has died)  
 Good lord!

#### EXT. ROAD - DAY

The car veers halfway into the grass as Margaret inspects. A red light is in the distance.

#### INT. CAR - DAY

Augusten looks up to see the oncoming red light.

MARGARET (O.S.)  
 Oh, it's ruined!

AUGUSTEN  
 Um, there's a, uh-

MARGARET  
 Here, let me-

Margaret puts her thumb in her mouth. She uses it to vigorously rub the blood off the bracelet.

AUGUSTEN  
 Mom, the-

MARGARET  
That's better.

AUGUSTEN  
(beginning to pick fingers  
nervously)  
Mom-

MARGARET  
(swatting Augusten's hands)  
Stop doing that-

AUGUSTEN (O.S.)  
THE LIGHT!

Augusten braces for impact. Margaret looks up. She puts her hands back on the wheel and slams the brakes.

**EXT. ROAD - DAY**

An ear-splitting "HOOOONK" from an oncoming car. They remain halfway in the grass as the minivan stops, a car length after the stopping line. The oncoming car swerves around them.

**INT. CAR - DAY**

MARGARET  
Fuck you too, asshole! People these days. Promise me you're not gonna be a bad driver, if and when you grow up.

Augusten looks at her judgmentally.

MARGARET (CONT'D)  
Anyways, I must warn you: our dermatologist--Dr. Ledford--is a bit...strange looking...but she is a beautiful soul. *Beautiful* woman. Don't judge her by her appearance. Okay?

Augusten is silent, distracted by looking out the window.

MARGARET (CONT'D)  
Augusten?

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY**

Margaret stands with Augusten, facing DR. LEDFORD, 70. She has visible chemical burns on her face. Her skin droops at her cheeks. Her arm is extended as she waits for Augusten to shake her hand. He is busy staring curiously at her face.

MARGARET  
(whisper-yelling)  
Augusten!

Augusten snaps out of his stare. He looks down and shakes Ledford's hand.

DR. LEDFORD  
Nice to meet you, Augusten.

Augusten nods.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D.)  
Now I'm going to have you follow  
me.  
(to MARGARET)  
Don't worry mom, we won't take  
long.

Dr. Ledford turns around and gestures for him to follow her. He trepidatiously complies as he nervously picks his fingers.

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

Augusten looks around. Ledford's office is filled with posters and trinkets. It is colorful and packed and it somehow does not look messy.

Ledford closes the door. She walks to her rubber glove box, which sits on a pile of books.

DR. LEDFORD  
(putting on gloves)  
So, I hear you have a finger-  
picking problem.

Augusten is stuck staring at the oddly vibrant room. Ledford turns around to look at him. He looks back at her, then down.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
Is that true?

Augusten shrugs.

Dr. Ledford pulls up an office chair and sits on it.



DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
Let me take a look.

She gently puts Augusten's hands in hers. She inspects his hands with care. He sneaks a glance at her droopy face.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
Yes, I see. This here.

She looks up at him. He averts his gaze shamefully. She smiles.

Ledford gets up and sifts through her shelves.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
So, the good news is, it's entirely, and very easily, treatable. I'm going to give you a cream to put on your hands--where is it?--Oh! There it is.

She hands him the cream and sits back on the chair facing him.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
Put this on every day, before you go to sleep. And I know it can be very hard, but try your best to not pick at your fingers. Okay?

He nods, looking at the ground.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
And then tell your mom to make an appointment in two weeks, just so we can make sure everything's working the way it should be. Sound good?

He nods again, looking down. Ledford smiles.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
Does my face scare you?

Augusten finally looks up at her, but not at her eyes--more like a child inspecting a dead animal than a someone having a conversation with another.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
Because it scares a lot of kids. Truthfully, it can be hard to look at a face like mine.  
(MORE)

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
But I understand that, and I  
understand that usually it comes  
from curiosity. Would you like to  
know what happened to me?

He nods. Ledford leans back in her chair.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
A very, very long time ago, I was  
in a car accident. I wasn't that  
much older than you. And there was  
a fire in the car, and I was burned  
very, very bad. And it hurt a lot.

Augusten's gaze shifts to something more akin to human  
interaction rather than texture analysis.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
And I had to have many, many  
operations.  
(chuckling)  
And you can see for yourself how  
the operations turned out.

Augusten smiles.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)  
I became a skin doctor because one  
of the things I understand is what  
it feels like not to have nice,  
pretty skin. I have very ugly skin.  
And my face is spooky. But do you  
know what? Underneath this face? I  
am exactly like you, but much older  
(pointing to his bracelet)  
and without such pretty jewelry.

Augusten's smile drops as it turns to wonder. A beat.

AUGUSTEN  
Can I touch your cheek?

DR. LEDFORD  
Of course.

Ledford stands up, leaning down so Augusten can feel her skin.  
It is visibly different than regular skin: thicker, but more  
malleable. Augusten puts his hand back. Ledford leans back up.

DR. LEDFORD  
So what are you going to do when  
you get home?

AUGUSTEN  
Put on the cream. Every night.

DR. LEDFORD  
And?

AUGUSTEN  
Tell my mom to make an appointment  
to come back.

DR. LEDFORD  
In how many weeks?

AUGUSTEN  
Two.

DR. LEDFORD  
Wonderful. It was nice meeting you,  
Augusten.

She turns around and exits. Augusten looks around the room,  
then at his bracelet.

#### **INT. CAR - SUNSET**

Augusten sits in the passenger seat of the minivan. His mom  
drives on the highway.

MARGARET  
(slamming the brakes)  
She said *what*?!

Cars honk as the minivan stops in the middle of the highway.  
Margaret ignores them.

AUGUSTEN  
She said that we have to come back  
every two weeks for a year. Or I  
have to get an amputation.

MARGARET  
An *amputation*?!

AUGUSTEN  
I'm just repeating what she said!

Margaret flips off a passing driver.

MARGARET  
You must have heard her wrong.

AUGUSTEN  
No, I'm 100% sure she said that.

MARGARET  
(skeptical)  
Okay.

Margaret lifts her foot off the brake and drives again. Augusten smiles contently. He picks his finger hard and quickly, with intention.

**MONTAGE:**

Augusten picks his fingers on the couch, in his bed, while trying on his mom's clothes, while cooking food.

In the bathroom, he scoops half of the cream out. He flushes it down the toilet.

He continues to pick at school, walking home, in the car with Margaret, while he sleeps.

**INT. BATHROOM - MORNING**

He scoops out the remaining half of the cream. He flushes it. He looks at his hands: bloody, covered in cuts and marks. He wears the Hobby Lobby bracelet. He beams with pride.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY**

In her office, Dr. Ledford sits across from Augusten. She looks at his hands with horror.

DR. LEDFORD  
I don't understand.

AUGUSTEN  
I swear I've been using the cream,  
I've been doing everything you told  
me to, I don't kno-

DR. LEDFORD  
Be honest with me. Have you been  
picking at your fingers?

Beat--a long enough beat where he can't say no.

AUGUSTEN  
Maybe.

DR. LEDFORD  
But why?

AUGUSTEN

Because.

DR. LEDFORD

Because why?

AUGUSTEN

Because...

Ledford raises her eyebrows and tilts her head.

AUGUSTEN (CONT'D)

Because I don't want them to get better, because then if they do, then I won't be able to come back here anymore because you're the skin doctor and I won't have any more skin problems.

Ledford laughs, but it turns into a bit of a cry. She wipes her eyes.

DR. LEDFORD

Oh no, please. Don't think that at all. You need to get your hands better! You need to use your cream every single day, just like I told you, right before you go to bed.

(holding his hands in her palms)

And then whenever you get sick or you have a checkup or you need a shot or anything at all, whenever you come here to the doctor's office, you can see me. You just have to tell the nurse you're here and wherever I am, I will come and say hi to you.

She caresses his bracelet.

DR. LEDFORD (CONT'D)

Okay?

Augusten nods. He tries to suppress a tear.

AUGUSTEN

I think you're the prettiest person I've ever met.

Beat as Dr. Ledford smiles.

DR. LEDFORD  
 (getting up)  
 Thank you.

She looks at Augusten. She leaves.

# **INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

MRS. ANDERSON teaches a lesson. Augusten, wearing an even brighter pink shirt, and even more rings, zones out. His hands are healthy looking. No scars.

MRS. ANDERSON (O.S.)  
 So, in poetry we use *stanzas* rather  
 than *prose*, because...

Augusten's nose bleeds. He frantically snaps out of his stare and raises his hand.

MRS. ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
 ...so if we look at Robert Fro-  
 (seeing him)  
 Yes, you can go to the nurse.

He leaves.

# **INT. NURSE'S OFFICE - DAY**

Augusten walks in. Nurse Joy is vaping. She sees him and throws the vape out the window.

JOY  
 Fuck do you want?

AUGUSTEN  
 (hurriedly)  
 Tissue.

Joy hands him a box of tissues.

JOY  
 What did I tell you about these  
*habits* of yours?

AUGUSTEN  
 I know. I haven't been doing it,  
 though. See, look at my fingers.

JOY  
 What?  
 (Shaking head)  
 No, you imbecile. Your *bad habits*.

AUGUSTEN finishes plugging his nose with tissues.

He looks at her, walks toward the window. He fishes out her vape from the grass and hands it to her. He exits.

**INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY**

Adult Augusten resumes writing Bob's name on his book. His finger cuts open up. They bleed on Bob's book.

AUGUSTEN  
Sorry, uh. Let me get you a new  
one.

**CUT TO BLACK.**