

A Readers' Theater Adaptation of R.J. Palacio's

Wonder

by Betty Potter

Readers:

August (Auggie) Pullman Olivia, Auggie's sister Mom Dad
Mr. Tushman Charlotte Jack Will Julian

Auggie: (stepping prominently to the front of the readers) I know I'm not an ordinary ten-year-old kid. I mean, sure, I do ordinary things like eat ice cream, ride my bike, and play Xbox. And I feel ordinary...inside. But I know ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. I know ordinary kids don't get stared at wherever they go. My name is August, by the way. I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse. Mom is beautiful, by the way. And Dad is handsome. My sister Via is pretty. In case you were wondering. (step back into the group)

Via: (stepping prominently to the front of the readers) I honestly can't remember my life before August came into it. I look at pictures of me as a baby, and I see Mom and Dad smiling so happily, holding me. You can see that I really was the first child, the first grandchild, the first niece. I don't remember the day they brought August home from the hospital. I don't remember what I said or did, or felt when I saw him for the first time. I know I never saw him the way other people saw him. I really didn't understand why strangers seemed so shocked when they saw him - horrified, sickened, scared. For a long time I didn't get it. I'd just get mad. "What the heck are you looking at?" I'd say to people. Then when I was eleven, I went to stay with my grandmother for four weeks while August was having his big jaw surgery. This was the longest I'd ever been away from home, and it was so amazing to be free of all that stuff that made me so mad. No one stared. No one pointed. No one even noticed Grans and me. (step back into the group)

(Dad, Mom, and Auggie step prominently forward)

Dad: You should tell Auggie what you've been thinking Isabel.

Mom: We should talk about this later.

Auggie: No. It's about me. I want to know.

Mom: Don't you think you're ready for school, Auggie?

Auggie: No.

Dad: I don't either.

Mom: I just think you need to learn more than I can teach you at home.

Auggie: (babyish) I don't want to.

Dad: You don't have to do anything you don't want to do. We won't make you do anything you don't want to do.

Mom: But it would be good for him Nate.

Dad: Not if he doesn't want to, not if he's not ready.

Mom: Let's just talk about it later.

Auggie: (to the audience, not part of the conversation) I could tell Mom and Dad were going to get into a fight about it. I wanted Dad to win. Though a part of me knew Mom was right.

(Dad and Mom step back into the group)

Auggie: Next week I start fifth grade. Since I've never been to a real school before, I am pretty much totally and completely petrified. People think I haven't gone to school because of the way I look, but it's not that. It's because of all the surgeries I've had. Twenty seven since I was born. I'm kind of a medical mystery and I used to get sick a lot. My mom and dad decided it was better if I didn't go to school, so my mom homeschooled me. My mom took me to meet the principal at Beecher Prep. I would have been more nervous if I'd known I was also going to be meeting some of the kids too. I couldn't stop thinking about all the jokes Daddy had made about his name. I mean, really! Mr. TUSHman. He seemed nice, and his butt wasn't as big as I thought it would be.

(Mr. Tushman, Jack Will, Julian, and Charlotte step out of the group to stand with Auggie)

Mr. Tushman: Hi, August. It's a pleasure to meet you. Your mom and dad have told me a lot about you.

Auggie: (looking down) like what? What have they told you?

Mr. Tushman: Well, that you like to read and that you're a great artist. And you're into science, right? Are you ready for a tour of the school? I thought it would be nice if you met some of the students that will be in your homeroom. This is Jack Will. (Jack and Auggie shake hands) This is Julian. (Julian and Auggie shake hands) And Charlotte.

Charlotte: (smiling) Hi, August. Nice to meet you.

Auggie: (to the audience, not part of the conversation) I looked at Mom. I wanted her to see how mad I was at her. But she seemed more scared than I was, so I just followed the other kids when they started out the door.

(Mr. Tushman step back with Mom and Dad)

Charlotte: Beecher has all kinds of electives – theater-arts, chorus, band. There's leadership.

Julian: Only dorks take leadership.

Charlotte: Julian, you're being so obnoxious!

Julian: (laughs)

Auggie: I'm taking the science elective.

Julian: The science elective is supposedly really hard. If you've never, ever been in a school before, why do you think you're suddenly going to be smart enough to take the science elective?

Jack Will: Let's just go to the library now.

Charlotte: He was homeschooled, Julian! (to Auggie) I'm sure you'll do fine.

Julian: (sounding annoyed) Why is your hair so long?

Auggie: (shrugs)

Julian: What's the deal with your face? I mean, were you in a fire or something?

Charlotte: Julian, that's so rude!

Jack Will: Geez, Julian...just shut up. Come on, August. Let's just go to the library already.

Auggie: I followed Jack and he held the door for me. As I passed by, he looked me right in the face and whispered "Julian's a jerk." I smiled. The thing is, because of the way my face is, people who don't know me don't always get that I'm smiling. But somehow Jack Will got that I smiled at him. And he smiled back.

Jack Will: But, dude, you're gonna have to talk.

Auggie: (nodding at Jack) The word is 'supposedly,' by the way.

Charlotte: (to Julian) You said the science elective is supposedly really hard. I heard you.

Julian: (glaring at Auggie) I absolutely did not.

(Charlotte, Jack Will, and Julian step back into the group. Mom steps to the front with Auggie)

Auggie: When I told Mom about Julian and the tour later, at home, she pressed her fingers on her forehead like she was pushing against a headache and said...

Mom: I'm so sorry, Auggie. You don't have to go to school if you don't want, sweetie.

Auggie: It's okay, Mom, really. I want to. (turning to the audience) And I'm not lying. It's going to be a monumental year. There will be some good things and some bad things – a lot of bad things – but in the end, for the first time I can ever remember, I won't be thinking about my face. In fact, and I don't mean to brag here, but it seems kind of like everyone wants to get close to me, not even caring about my face.

Mom: Thank you, Auggie, for everything you've given us - for coming into our lives - for being you. You really are a wonder, Auggie. You are a wonder.

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