

[PDF] Smashed: Growing Up A Drunk Girl

Koren Zailckas - pdf download free book

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Author: Koren Zailckas
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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Starred Review. This isn't just one girl's story of sneaking drinks in junior high, creeping out for night-long keg parties in high school and binge-drinking weeknights and weekends through college—it's also a valuable cautionary tale. At 24 (her present age), Zailckas gave up drinking after a decade of getting drunk, having blackouts and experiencing brushes with comas, date rape and suicide. She weaves disturbing statistics (from Harvard School of Public Health studies and elsewhere) into her memoir: most girls will have their first drink by age 12, and will have the experience of being drunk by 14; teenage girls drink as much as their male peers, but their bodies process it badly (they get drunk faster, stay drunk longer and are more likely to die of alcohol poisoning); and date rape and booze go hand-in-hand. Zailckas had alcohol poisoning at 16 after a night of downing shots at a party with friends, but having her stomach pumped in the emergency room and enduring a month of being grounded didn't check her desire to drink. Fraternity keg parties led to drunken sexual encounters not-quite-remembered; drinking began to replace intimacy.

Alcohol defined Zailckas's adolescence and college years to such an extent that, as she tells it, she lacks the tools to be an adult: she's unsure how to maintain relationships and unclear about sex without an alcohol buzz. Zailckas is unsparingly insightful and acutely aware of what drinking can and does do to girls. She explains that while kids are taught that drugs are always dangerous, alcohol is perceived as an acceptable rite of passage. Her book is deeply moving, written in poetic, nuanced prose that never obscures the dangerous truths she seeks to reveal.

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From Zailckas doesn't have the "genetically based reaction to alcohol that addiction counselors call 'a disease.'" But throughout her adolescence and early adulthood, she abused alcohol heavily: "I drank for the explicit purpose of getting drunk, getting brave, or medicating my moods." Her first sips of hard liquor, before she started high school, hit her with the force of a crush-- "as hopeful and as heartbreaking as kissing a boy." By the time she entered Syracuse University, she had already been hospitalized for alcohol poisoning, and her binge drinking through college, wholly supported by the Greek system, contributed to heartbreaking, empty sexual encounters and difficulty relating to anyone without "the third wheel" of alcohol. Zailckas muses about the societal factors that contribute to the astonishing rise in women's drinking. Most unnerving, though, are her honest, detailed accounts of her own profound abuse, which was accepted, encouraged, and chillingly commonplace; thousands of young women share her story. Like Caroline Knapp's *Drinking: A Love Story* (1996), this raw, eye-opening memoir will deepen readers' understanding of American culture and perhaps their own lives. *Gillian Engberg*

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