



Smashed: Story of a Drunken Girlhood

By Koren Zailckas

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Garnering a vast amount of attention from young people and parents, and from book buyers across the country, *Smashed* became a media sensation and a **New York Times** bestseller. Eye-opening and utterly gripping, Koren Zailckas's story is that of thousands of girls like her who are not alcoholics—yet—but who routinely use booze as a shortcut to courage and a stand-in for good judgment.

With one stiff sip of Southern Comfort at the age of fourteen, Zailckas is initiated into the world of drinking. From then on, she will drink faithfully, fanatically. In high school, her experimentation will lead to a stomach pumping. In college, her excess will give way to a pattern of self-poisoning that will grow more destructive each year. At age twenty-two, Zailckas will wake up in an unfamiliar apartment in New York City, elbow her friend who is passed out next to her, and ask, "Where are we?" **Smashed** is a sober look at how she got there and, after years of blackouts and smashups, what it took for her to realize she had to stop drinking. *Smashed* is an astonishing literary debut destined to become a classic.

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Smashed: Story of a Drunken Girlhood By Koren Zailckas Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

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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Review

"An astonishing revealing debut...riveting, with a powerful message for parents of teenaged girls." -- *Kirkus Reviews*

"Koren Zailckas' story is raw and terrifying. Every daughter's mother should read this book." -- *Martha Toddman, author of Augusta, Gone*

"Smashed blows to smithereens the myth that alcohol is the 'safe drug' in young people's lives." -- *David Jernigan PhD, Research Director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth*

"Zailckas has captured what's unfortunately become a quintessential American girlhood." -- *Mary Karr,*

author of The Liars' Club and Cherry

"Zailckas' writing is exhilarating. Smashed burns the page with insight that belongs to women far beyond her years." -- *Rachel Simmons, author of Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Edward Baca:

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Joann Huertas:

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