

From earliest experimentation to habitual excess to full-blown abuse, twenty-four-year-old Koren Zailckas leads us through her experience of a terrifying trend among young girls, exploring how binge drinking becomes routine, how it becomes the usual. With the stylistic freshness of a poet and the dramatic gifts of a novelist, Zailckas describes her first sip at fourteen, alcohol poisoning at sixteen, a blacked-out sexual experience at nineteen, total disorientation after waking up in an unfamiliar New York City apartment at twenty-two, when she realized she had to stop, and all the depression, rage, troubled friendships, and sputtering romantic connections in between. Zailckas's unflinching candor and exquisite analytical eye gets to the meaning beneath the seeming banality of girls getting drunk. She persuades us that her story is the story of thousands of girls like her who are not alcoholics-yet-but who use booze as a short cut to courage, a stand-in for good judgment, and a bludgeon for shyness, each of them failing to see how their emotional distress, unarticulated hostility, and depression are entangled with their socially condoned binging. Like the contemporary masterpieces *The Liars Club*, *Autobiography of a Face*, and *Jarhead*, *Smashed* is destined to become a classic. A crucial book for any woman who has succumbed to oblivion through booze, or for anyone ready to face the more subtle repercussions of their own chronic over-drinking or of someone they love, *Smashed* is an eye-opening, wise, and utterly gripping achievement.

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