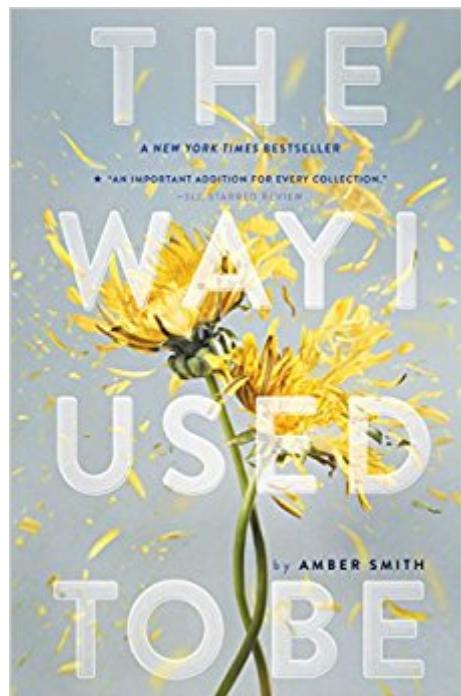


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The Way I Used To Be



Synopsis

A New York Times bestseller. In the tradition of *Speak*, this extraordinary debut novel "is a poignant book that realistically looks at the lasting effects of trauma on love, relationships, and life" (School Library Journal, starred review). Eden was always good at being good. Starting high school didn't change who she was. But the night her brother's best friend rapes her, Eden's world capsizes. What was once simple, is now complex. What Eden once loved—who she once loved—she now hates. What she thought she knew to be true, is now lies. Nothing makes sense anymore, and she knows she's supposed to tell someone what happened but she can't. So she buries it instead. And she buries the way she used to be. Told in four parts—freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior year—this provocative debut reveals the deep cuts of trauma. But it also demonstrates one young woman's strength as she navigates the disappointment and unbearable pains of adolescence, of first love and first heartbreak, of friendships broken and rebuilt, all while learning to embrace the power of survival she never knew she had hidden within her heart.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Way I Used to Be explores the aftermath of sexual assault with a precision and searing honesty that is often terrifying, sometimes eerily beautiful, and always completely true. It is The Hero's Journey through a distorted circus mirror--one girl's quest to turn desperation into courage, to become a survivor instead of a victim. Amber Smith gets it exactly right." (Amy Reed,

author of BEAUTIFUL and CLEAN)STARRED REVIEW "This is a poignant book that realistically looks at the lasting effects of trauma on love, relationships, and life." Teens will be reminded of Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*. VERDICT An important addition for every collection. (School Library Journal) "A difficult, painful journey, but teens who have experienced rape and abuse will be grateful for this unvarnished and ultimately hopeful portrait. Eden's shell-shocked narrative is an excellent narrative conduit for what Smith has to say." (Booklist February 1, 2016) "This is far from a feel-good read, but I can't implore how necessary it is to read a book like this one . . . As unforgettable and stirring as Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*, Smith's provocative debut is best described as a survival story with hope and anger serving as prominent themes so fully explored they simmer off the page." (The Young Folks) "Readers will root for her as she gathers the courage, at last, to speak up." (BN Teen blog) "The Way I Used To Be is an intensely gripping and raw look at secrets, silence, speaking out, and survival in the aftermath of a sexual assault. A must-have for every collection that serves teens." (SLJ / Teen Librarian Toolbox) "Easily one of the hardest books to read on this list. Brutal, raw and emotional Eden's story gets told on her terms, in her voice. An honest look at one teen's struggle to find her way back to herself, to mold herself into the survivor she is." (FANGIRLISH) "THE WAY I USED TO BE promises to be meaningful, significant, and truly unforgettable." (FIKTSHUN) "Don't let a book of this magnitude pass you by. Pick it up and read it because Eden's story demands to be read." (Once Upon a Twilight) "With an achingly beautiful narrative and carefully crafted plot, The Way I Used to Be is more than just an excellent book; it's an important one." (NOVEL NOVICE) "Bottom Line: powerful, emotional and raw." (BRANDI BREATHES BOOKS) "Edy's exploration of the meaning of sexuality and intimacy will be thought provoking for teen readers of various experience levels, and this title is likely to find space alongside [Laurie Halse] Anderson's *Speak*." (BCCB) "A heart-twisting, but ultimately hopeful, exploration of how pain can lead to strength." (The Boston Globe)

Amber Smith grew up in Buffalo, New York, and now lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with her two dogs. After graduating from art school with a BFA in painting, she earned her MA in art history. When she's not writing, she is working as a curator and art consultant. She has also written on the topics of art history and modern and contemporary art. She is the author of *The Way I Used to Be* and *The Last to Let Go*. Visit her online at AmberSmithAuthor.com.

I was hooked after the first paragraph. I absolutely love Amber Smith's writing style. She's very narrative, and that's something I like from authors. Eden's story is so unique and relatable, I feel even to those who aren't victims of sexual assault. I related to her depression so much, in a way, that the book was hard to read at some points. This is the first book that really made me FEEL! I could read this book over and over again. It's addicting.

I will never forget this book. It was so emotional. My heart broke for Eden so many times. Sexual assault is such a hard subject to talk about. I think Amber Smith did an amazing excellent job telling Eden's story. Even though this is a fictional story, things like this do happen. I highly recommend this book

More books should be written like this. The story focused on Eden's life in high school along with the backdrop of her coping with her rape... brilliantly written and well thought out... dark but not overwhelmingly so. I felt like jumping into the book to help Eden out. Love the style of the ending and the fact that the book was broken up into years... it's not something you see everyday, I highly recommend!

This book is amazing. "The Way I Used To Be" demonstrates how, over the course of several years, a traumatic event such as rape can stay with someone and affect their every day life.

Great book! I could not put it down when reading. It really gives great detail and keeps you interested.

Hated how abruptly it ended! But such a good book over all. I was so attached to Eden I needed not time with her, more of a followup or an epilogue would have been amazing! Still highly recommend!

Great book....a lot of heart went into this book. Very well written. Highly recommended.

For more book review check out the blog at [...] Honestly, I'm not sure many books have tugged at my heartstrings in the way this one has. It was deep, profound, and utterly heart wrenching. At 14 years old, Eden was raped by her older brothers best friend. Kevin had been a fixture in her family's life for years, a second brother to Eden, trusted and loved. The book follows the roughly three years following the assault as Eden attempts to navigate this new world of "after" that has shattered her

life, and is told in four parts, Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior, as Eden attempts to silently bear her burden. The effect on her relationships, both old and new as well as her sense of self is challenged as Eden slowly evolves into someone unrecognizable from the girl she was before the assault. Everyone should read this book, boys and girls alike. It was so raw and gut wrenching and unfortunately all too common in our world today, and seemed to tell a story that is so often unspoken or quieted. Watching Edens spiral downward was emotional for me as a reader, I found myself setting the book down more than once to just stop and feel. Amber Smith perfectly captured the gravity of the subject matter with her prose and tone, the pages simply radiated emotion. To see Eden feel so betrayed by her own body and feelings, doubting her self worth and building that steel wall around her heart and mind, so heartbreaking. I don't think I've ever wanted to jump into the pages of a book more to rescue someone from themselves. One by one she destroyed every relationship of meaning, most heartbreakingly the one with herself. Without giving away the ending, I'll just say that Amber Smith really did the characters justice with the conclusion and I felt so proud of Eden for her courage. It was interesting to see the ripple effect throughout the book and all the various characters who were in some way indirectly affected by the assault. Alice Smith sends a powerful message with this book, one that I think everyone needs to hear. It is never your fault, someone will believe you, and have courage.

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