

*The Way I Used To Be*, Review by Leah FEB 2025

*Break To You* is a realistic fiction book written by Amber Smith and published recently in 2016. The book has a total of 367 pages, which is split up into 4 different sections: freshman year, sophomore year, junior year, and senior year. Her whole life, Eden has been a dorky girl; she does not have many friends and she plays the clarinet in band. Her life revolves around her family until one day, her brother's best friend, Kevin, assaults her. Eden realizes her life will never be the same again.

"What was once simple is now complex". Eden does not know how she can move on from anything. When she tries to tell her mom or her brother, Caelin, it almost seems as if they are not even paying attention to her, and she ultimately gives up. So Eden buries the way she used to be deep inside of her.

Eden hides herself at school, making herself barely noticeable. One day, when she walks along the hallway, a junior year basketball player bumps into her, causing her to crash to the floor. Eden recognizes him as Josh, one of the star players on a team. "What a jerk," Mara, Eden's best friend, and only friend, says.

When Mara has the idea that the pair should reinvent themselves for sophomore year of highschool, Eden goes along with it. Eden dyes her hair, changes glasses into contacts, shops for new clothes. On the first day of sophomore year, Eden doesn't even recognize herself. But deep down, she still feels like her old self.

Since she dropped band class, Eden has a new study hall fourth period. As she arrives into the class, she sees that the only seat left is next to Josh, the basketball player she had bumped into the year before. Eden wonders if Josh recognizes her. To her surprise, Josh starts talking to her. Besides Kevin and Caelin, a boy had never talked to her before.

After talking the whole class, the bell rings, and Josh asks Eden if she wants to hang out with him at his house after school. Eden agrees, excited that her plan to reinvent herself worked. As Eden waits for Josh behind the baseball field, she picks at dandelions in the ground. When Josh arrives, he tells Eden to close her eyes, and then he hands her what he calls an in-between dandelion: where the yellow petals are gone, and the white is just starting to come through. The dandelion reminds Eden of herself, in a way.

However, even though Eden and Josh begin to get to know each other better, Eden is still scared. The thought of Josh being like Kevin in any way terrifies her. But when Eden faces a devastating heartbreak, she becomes a “bad kid” and becomes known around school for the terrible things that she does with other people.

This book was very engaging, and it kept me hooked as I kept on wondering what would happen next. The ending had a very hopeful and inspirational message, and I particularly love how so many people can relate to the book and find strength from it. I would recommend this book for 16+, as there are some scenes with difficult context and some scenes that are inappropriate for younger ages. There is a second book to this series, *The Way I Am Now*. This book tells more about Eden and Josh’s story, and I definitely plan to read it. Overall, *The Way I Used To Be* was an amazing book!