



Buckley, Kate

CHOICES

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A Catholic teenager collides head-on with the doctrine of her youth.

Buckley's first novel for young adults sets the charged issues of date rape and unwanted pregnancy up against the Catholic faith. Set in Denver, 15-year-old Kara MacNeill narrates the story of her sophomore year in high school, a trying time for most teens, which for Kara proves to hold as many dramatic peaks and valleys as the Rocky Mountains of her native Colorado. The only child of a strict, workaholic father and kind but actively pro-life mother, Kara's intelligence, good looks and charm help her easily succeed at St. Ursula's Academy for Girls. But Kara begins to find the confines of her childhood world—"All I ever got to do was go to church, school, or dumb sleepover parties"—a bit too restrictive the night Jake Dodson, the senior basketball star of

Cherry Creek High, takes an interest in her. Petrified that her "drill sergeant" father will put the kibosh on her budding relationship, Kara starts to sneak out after curfew to be with Jake, who wastes no time introducing her to his partying crowd. Kara succumbs to peer pressure one raucous night and gets so drunk that, when Jake forces himself upon her, she cannot fend him off. While still reeling from the fact that her first boyfriend has raped her, Kara learns she's pregnant. This discovery sends her into a free fall; her grades plummet as she questions whether to seek an abortion in a state that requires parental consent, which means Kara will have to tell her conservative parents and risk incurring their—not to mention God's—wrath. The crux of the story centers on this dilemma and the options open to a teen who feels that she has none. Catholics will find the novel's resolution as wildly controversial as the subjects it explores, but one suspects that is Buckley's point.

A fast-paced story that portrays real events to which many teens can easily relate.

