

Size Zero

Abigail Mangin

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In the world of high fashion, no model is too thin, no price too high, and no design too grotesque. So reveals Abigail Mangin's painful, zany satirical novel *Size Zero*, about the exploitation behind the elaborate fashion shows and glamorous runways of the luxury garment industry.

Plucky Ava was sold to a modeling agent when she was young. Now, she is embittered and disillusioned by the career she was forced into. When a cape made of human skin debuts on a New York runway—"Purple beads and evergreen sequins were embroidered into skin. Human hair was braided into a bun on the hood."—Ava's convictions solidify: fashion eats people. With the help of Cecil, a monk with connections to the corpse, Ava investigates a glittering, gory trend that shows no signs of slowing down.

Size Zero is visceral and disturbing. The narrative exposes the dark underbelly of modeling, focusing on unethical practices, charlatans, mental and physical illnesses, and the abuse that young women face as they pursue celebrity. Elements of the novel are splashy and outré, distorting stereotypes of glitterati and their carefully guarded world. Cecil, returning to fashion after a stint in a pastoral monastery, provides an "outsider" perspective on the horrors Ava has acclimated to. Their relationship is functional, and characters balance one another well in their missions to discover the source of human leather.

The novel is rich with descriptions of private spaces and backstage areas, resulting in titillating glimpses under the skin of the glamour industry. Each chapter reveals more grisly secrets, resulting in intense momentum. Despite some clunky passages, this is undeniably a page-turner.

Beautifully packaged and true to its idealistic vision, *Size Zero* pierces the myths that perpetuate and protect an abusive, exploitative industry.

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