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How to Be Alone: Essays

Jonathan Franzen

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How to Be Alone: Essays Jonathan Franzen
Passionate, strong-minded nonfiction from the National Book Award-winning author of *The Correction*s

Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections* was the best-loved and most-written-about novel of 2001. Nearly every in-depth review of it discussed what became known as "The *Harper's* Essay," Franzen's controversial 1996 investigation of the fate of the American novel. This essay is reprinted for the first time in *How to be Alone*, along with the personal essays and the dead-on reportage that earned Franzen a wide readership before the success of *The Corrections*. Although his subjects range from the sex-advice industry to the way a supermax prison works, each piece wrestles with familiar themes of Franzen's writing: the erosion of civic life and private dignity and the hidden persistence of loneliness in postmodern, imperial America. Recent pieces include a moving essay on his father's stuggle with Alzheimer's disease (which has already been reprinted around the world) and a rueful account of Franzen's brief tenure as an Oprah Winfrey author.

As a collection, these essays record what Franzen calls "a movement away from an angry and frightened isolation toward an acceptance--even a celebration--of being a reader and a writer." At the same time they show the wry distrust of the claims of technology and psychology, the love-hate relationship with consumerism, and the subversive belief in the tragic shape of the individual life that help make Franzen one of our sharpest, toughest, and most entertaining social critics.

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