

The Reunion

Beth Reekles

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A group chat spawns the idea of a ten-year class reunion in Beth Reekles's lighthearted romance novel *The Reunion*, about reinventions and roles that never changed.

Ten years after graduating, Bryony, who was supposed to become a famous actress, is a drama teacher who fakes a glamorous life on social media. She agrees to organize the reunion for the class of 2014 despite her fear of being caught in her lies. Her former classmates include Steph, who, though she's engaged, flutters to encounter her past flame; Hayden, once a technology-minded wizard and now a work-from-home parent; and Ashleigh, who feels compelled to prove her worth. Their other classmates face discrepancies between who they were and their present lives, hiding their insecurities behind bravado.

For all of the classmates, the party is a source of both nostalgia and trepidation. As people reencounter their peers, they enjoy party features including a slideshow, a red carpet, a spiked punch bowl, and balloon arches, experiencing both fun and awkwardness: Some people wonder whether others even cared about them, some names are forgotten, and a few rivalries linger. But the high school archetypes that the classmates once depended on, including to understand the "squares" and rugby jocks among them, crumble, giving way to nuance.

The single event bears the full progression of each person's story, and there are intense conversations and raw emotions as the evening unfolds. There are questions about certain couples who could have lasted; elsewhere, sparks fly between classmates who thought they hated each other. Beyond the fun of people striving to maintain their personas are unguarded revelations that lead to a satisfying conclusion.

In the spirited romance novel *The Reunion*, the past catches up with former classmates who learn new truths about each other and their bonds.

KAREN RIGBY (January / February 2025)

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