



Reunion

By Alan Lightman

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Charles, a once-promising poet, is a professor at a minor liberal arts college, admiring of passion but without passion himself. Now living a desperately comfortable existence, he decides to return to his thirtieth college reunion. While there, he relives an intense love affair he had with a beautiful ballerina that forever changed his life. At times shocked, admiring, and furious with his younger self, Charles remembers contradictory versions of events, until reality and identity dissolve into a haze of illusion. **Reunion** explores the pain of self-examination, the clay-like nature of memory, and the fatal power of first love.

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Reunion By Alan Lightman Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Lightman (Einstein's Dreams, etc.) indulges his romantic side in this fourth novel, coming dangerously close to mawkishness with a tale of an aging professor pining for his lost youth. Charles, 52, teaches literature at a small college; once an aspiring poet, he is now content to read instead of write. Divorced from his wife and not particularly close to his grown daughter, he is lonely but takes defensive pleasure in material comfort ("Do I lead the life of a selfish shit? So be it. I am content in my shithood"). Upon attending his 30-year college reunion, a vision of his 22-year-old self startles him into recalling in exhaustive detail the great love affair of his life. Juliana, a fiercely ambitious New York City dancer, bewitches him with her beauty, determination and sheer unknowableness. After he meets her at a coffee shop, he makes many two-hour bus trips into the city to see her, attending her rehearsals and meeting up with her after hours in the dancers' dressing room. On a brief visit to Charles's college, Juliana meets his wolfish poetry professor; some time later, Charles discovers she is sleeping with him, too. This dramatic if unlikely development is quickly followed by another, which threatens to end Juliana's dancing career and leads to Charles losing her. In revisiting pivotal confrontations, Charles realizes that he has remembered things crookedly, altering the facts to view his actions in a more favorable light. Lightman's re-narration of key episodes as re-remembered by Charles is a clever device, and his Vietnam-era scene setting mostly skirts cliché. But even Lightman's elegant prose can't infuse the all-too-familiar love story with fresh life. Juliana is numbingly idealized, and Charles, despite his self-knowledge (or because of it), is frustratingly solipsistic. In previous novels, Lightman's scientific and metaphysical inquiries gave a bracing rigor to his romanticism. Here, unadulterated sentiment leaves the reader flailing for a foothold.

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Time and the theory of relativity fascinate Lightman, a theoretical physicist as well as a trenchantly inventive novelist, as does the continuum of reverie, memory, and fantasy that constitutes our inner lives. In *The Diagnosis* (2000), he considered this dimension of being within the stressful frenzy of the digital age. Here, in this tautly constructed and haunting tale of lost love, he tells a more intimate tale. Alienated, seemingly selfish English professor Charles' mantra is: "I don't want to be disturbed." Then why attend his thirtieth college reunion? Lightman's stellar satirical gifts are in full force as he describes this pathetically awkward event and a strange tumble in time that causes Charles to meet up with himself as a 22-year-old infatuated with the poetry of Emily Dickinson and madly in love with Juliana, a ballerina suffering from every neurosis that punishing discipline engenders. Lightman infuses even the simplest scenes with quiet menace as he explores the cataclysmic power of both erotic love and shocking betrayal. Like the light beamed by a star that takes eons to reach us, Charles' exploded past emits distress signals that he is finally able to decipher. *Donna Seaman*

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Review

"Elegant . . . spare, economical and charged with meaning ." --*The New York Times Book Review*

"One of a handful of writers in America capable of injecting the necessary quietude into his prose. . . . *Reunion* is that rare thing in this age: a genuine work of art." --*Denver Post*

"A skillful exercise in the evocation of memory and loss. . . . Lightman's delicate prose turns [**Reunion**] into a fascinating study." —*The Washington Post Book World*

"Marvelously written. . . . A worthy addition to Lightman's work." --*Rocky Mountain News*

"Lightman's prose leaps and twirls, circles his subjects and raises them up. If Degas or Manet had written prose it would read like this. . . . **Reunion** is that rare thing in this age: a genuine work of art." --*Denver Post*

"A skillful exercise in the evocation of memory and loss. . . . Lightman's delicate prose turns [**Reunion**] into a fascinating study." --*The Washington Post Book World*

"Reunion seeks . . . to plumb life's most complicated and enduring relationship: that between who one was and who one is. . . . **Reunion** most powerfully explores the seductions and betrayals of young love." --*The New York Times*

"Undeniably affecting. . . . Memorably lovely. . . . Lightman's lyrical meditation on aging and nostalgia [will] hit home for just about any reader." --*San Francisco Chronicle*

"Haunting. . . . He has a Proustian concern for manipulations of time and memory . . . [a] melancholy grasp of the sovereign ineluctability of time, that 'hour of eternity.' . . . Such a rueful consciousness is a pleasure to witness." --*Boston Globe*

"A profoundly human story, rich in depth and nuance. . . . Lightman writes with a lightness, a lyrical understatedness that belies the underlying depths and complexities of the novel. . . . **Reunion** is the work of a great writer." --*The Globe and Mail* (Toronto)

"Prose both luminous and precise. . . . The images of lightness and beauty and grace, of complexity and obsession that Lightman conjures through Charles' vision of his lover make us participate in Charles' yearning." --*The San Diego Union Tribune*

"A subtle and haunting novel. . . . In Lightman's hands, the act of remembrance becomes a meditation on time, loss, and the ultimate selfishness of love. His writing gets under your skin precisely because of its measured and undemonstrative tone." --*Daily Mail* (London)

"An achingly beautiful story about memory and the loss of passion. . . . Lightman succeeds in writing an inventive, unsentimental love story." —*The Newark Star-Ledger*

"Uncommonly rich imagination . . . a masterful touch." -- *Rocky Mountain News*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gerald Conway:

As people who live in typically the modest era should be change about what going on or info even knowledge to make them keep up with the era which is always change and advance. Some of you maybe will probably update themselves by reading books. It is a good choice for you but the problems coming to a person is you don't know which you should start with. This Reunion is our recommendation so you keep up with the world. Why, because book serves what you want and want in this era.

Sabrina King:

Now a day individuals who Living in the era wherever everything reachable by connect to the internet and the resources within it can be true or not call for people to be aware of each information they get. How individuals to be smart in acquiring any information nowadays? Of course the solution is reading a book. Examining a book can help folks out of this uncertainty Information mainly this Reunion book as this book offers you rich data and knowledge. Of course the information in this book hundred percent guarantees there is no doubt in it you probably know this.

Harry Blalock:

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William Marsh:

Are you kind of occupied person, only have 10 as well as 15 minute in your day to upgrading your mind expertise or thinking skill even analytical thinking? Then you are receiving problem with the book when compared with can satisfy your limited time to read it because pretty much everything time you only find book that need more time to be learn. Reunion can be your answer since it can be read by you who have those short spare time problems.

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