



Hope in a Jar

Beth Harbison

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Twenty years ago, Allie Denty was *the pretty one* and her best friend Olivia Pelham was *the smart one*. Throughout high school, they were inseparable...until a vicious rumor about Olivia—a rumor too close to the truth—ended their friendship.

Now, on the eve of their twentieth high school reunion, Allie, a temp worker, finds herself suddenly single, a little chubby, and feeling old. Olivia, a cool and successful magazine beauty editor in New York, realizes she's lonely, and is finally ready to face her demons.

Sometimes hope lives in the future; sometimes it comes from the past; and sometimes, when every stupid thing goes wrong, it comes from a prettily packaged jar filled with scented cream and promises.

Beth Harbison has done it again. A hilarious and touching novel about friendship, Love's Baby Soft perfume, Watermelon Lip Smackers, bad run-ins with Sun-In, and the healing power of "Gee Your Hair Smells Terrific." *Hope in a Jar*: we all need it.

Hope in a Jar Details

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From Reader Review Hope in a Jar for online ebook

Christy Douglas says

This was probably a 3.5. It caught my interest right away and kept me interested the whole time. My main problem was that it's about 38 year olds and they go to their 20 year reunion and everything that happens seems for fitting for 28 year olds at a 10 year reunion. They were too old for the story. Other than that it was really enjoyable. Quick read too. A little language.

Melody says

Bailing out. I can't find a damned thing to like about the POV character. The brand-checking struck me as way over the top. At first it was amusing, but it pretty quickly became eye-rollingly annoying to me. Further, I can't buy the incarnation of her group at nearly forty, they read much more late 20s to me. There were some wicked funny lines, I will give Harbison that.

Jen says

First and foremost, I do not read chick lit on a regular basis, but I was at a point that I needed some fluff, and Hope in a Jar delivered that and more.

For me, Hope in a Jar was like devouring an entire box of those Little Debbie Oatmeal Cream Pies and dousing them down with a sugar and caffeine laden Dr. Pepper, which is something I hadn't let myself have in years. Full of empty calories, but yet tasted so good and so familiar, it was a wonderful treat while it lasted. The pop culture references and quotes from old ads, which were right on target when I was in jr. high and high school, were just like the little Hershey's kisses along the way, just a little extra sugar rush to make you smile.

If you need something to lift your spirits and make you believe that sometimes old friends are always the best ones in life, this book is just what the doctor ordered.

Mary says

This book could have been a three, but for one ironic event alone.

Spoiler Alert:

In the opening chapter/lines of the book the main character, Allie, walks in on her boyfriend cheating on her. The opening line is "The only thing worse than finding out your boyfriend is cheating on you with a beautiful woman is finding out he's cheating on you with an average woman." I laughed and chuckled and was instantly hooked.

The writing throughout the book was mediocre, but there were these one liners that were so witty and funny

it propelled me on through the book. As I neared the end Allie, who has supposedly revamped her life- although she hadn't really, from this initial experience ends up sleeping with her lifelong best friend who is a male and in a relationship with a prettier woman. So she has now just done what she caught her boyfriend doing in the beginning. Although in the end I don't think the author intended the irony or the scene to act as any reflection back to the beginning. Not only that but Allie's friend knows that his current girlfriend is pregnant when he does it with Allie.

I'm horrified and appalled that "lifelong love" justifies this behavior. I hate cheaters, seriously. In my opinion it is just a symptom of a weak person. How lame do you have to be to not cut the ties in a nonworking relationship early on. Also....how horrible that a person can't restrain their physical urges enough to cut the ties once they realize their previous relationship is bogus because of their current one and then do the hibity. And last the hypocrisy of the main character, Allie, is so blaringly obvious I can't have fond feelings for her.

Jennifer Fisher says

This book reminds me very much so of a Sophia Kinsella book, just set in US. I started off SO very slow, therefore I was only reading about a chapter a night, which got to be confusing. This is because each chapter is a trade off between two characters, Olivia and Allie. One chapter will be Allie's POV, then the next will flash to their childhood, then the next will be whatever is going on with Olivia. I would definitely suggest to be able to tackle about 2-3 chapters at a time, or dedicate yourself to reading often, or you'll get confused.

The book basically revisits two childhood friends in their adult life, who are no longer friends now. The book begins loosely strung around a 20th high school reunion that is coming up. The friends still share a common denominator, Noah, whom Allie keeps in touch with often and Olivia very occasionally.

Like I said, the book starts off slow, but towards the middle, you would not be able to put it down, its a GREAT read.

Krystal says

In her latest novel, Harbison taps into the universal fear of having to attend one's 20-year High School Reunion when your life is far from what you'd envisioned it would be at graduation. When she discovers her live-in boyfriend in the arms of another, Allie Denton takes a serious look at where her 38 years have gotten her: working unsatisfying jobs through a Temp agency, fifteen pounds overweight, and now, single again. To make matters worse, her best friend from high school, Olivia, shows up to the reunion looking better than ever and working as senior editor for a prominent fashion magazine. Despite their falling out twenty years before, the girls find they have a common goal when their mutual friend, Noah, announces he is marrying the meanest "mean girl" from high school.

Though the plot was pretty predictable, I appreciated Harbison's message that beauty products do not make the woman. At the beginning of each chapter she includes classic advertising slogans for beauty products, reiterating how ridiculous claims such as "Hope in a Jar" really are. I especially enjoyed Harbison's depiction of the girls' high school years, their friendship proving to be one of the more complex and realistic relationships in the book. Overall, I wouldn't say that Hope in a Jar offers any life changing revelations, but it's a perfect easy, summer read.

Alice says

I was quite disappointed in this book. The heroine and three other classmates meet up at their 20th high school reunion. None of them are married. The heroine does temp work, just dumped her cheating boyfriend, and doesn't seem to have a life. The plot might have worked had the characters been 23 or maybe even 28, but 38? I kept thinking how immature they were, especially the heroine and the villain. I've read other chick lit and thought the characters had deeper issues. Also, the ending was quite predictable. Not my favorite book.

Maureen Ann says

I feel as if I have been reading books that are entirely predictable lately, and this book was no exception. What made this book a standout, however, was the use of the past and the present and Harbison's ability to weave the two together. It is the story of two childhood best friends who have a large fight senior year of high school. Fast forward 20 years and the two have not spoken since, but they both remain friends with Noah, another classmate. Noah sets it up for the two former best friends to meet unexpectedly at the high school reunion, where he reveals his new girlfriend.

Mostly, I appreciated that the turning point, where the adult relationship began, did not occur until more than halfway through the book. This allowed for plenty of time for the story to be set and the characters to be developed, preventing an early preference for or dislike toward one of the characters.

This book was a lot like its namesake, Philosophy's *Hope In A Jar*, in that it was utterly predictable, but there was not much to be dissatisfied with. It is a quick read and just interesting enough to keep the reader going.

Angela says

This is by far Harbison's BEST book to date.

Hope in a Jar starts out with a bang just like all of Harbison's books do. The difference with Hope in a Jar is that the book just keeps getting better and better.

The plot of the mysterious death of friendship between best friends, the too-good-to-be-true guy friend, and the rivalry between classmates which reignites at a 20 year high school reunion is handled well by Harbison.

The parallel plot lines between the past and the present work well and increase tension. All of the characters are well-drawn and real, even the "evil" Vickie who sees herself as a victim.

I can't praise this book enough. I stayed up very late last night to finish it.

I'm glad I picked this up, and if you're a fan of chick-lit, you'll be glad you picked it up too!

Love Fool says

Twenty years ago, Allie Denty was the pretty one and her best friend Olivia Pelham was the smart one. Throughout high school, they were inseparable...until a vicious rumor about Olivia— a rumor too close to the truth—ended their friendship.

Now, on the eve of their twentieth high school reunion, Allie, a temp worker, finds herself suddenly single, a little chubby, and feeling old. Olivia, a cool and successful magazine beauty editor in New York, realizes she's lonely, and is finally ready to face her demons.

This was a funny and cute book with a serious twist. It reminded me of 13 going on 30 with the flashbacks and I liked it. It also got me interested in reading Beth Harbison's other books. It's nice to have a chick-lit book with some sad and cheesy moments. Plus, the book had a clear villain which I appreciated. Sometimes, it feels good to hate someone.

Cathy says

I was kind of disappointed by this book. After reading Beth Harbison's *Shoe Addicts Anonymous*, I thought for sure I'd found a new author who I'd love all her work. Maybe I hoped for something too similar to the first book, and would fare better reading her second novel, *Secrets of a Shoe Addict*. Despite its title, "Hope" in a Jar, this book was a little bit of a downer. I suppose I give Ms. Harbison credit for tackling some deeper and tougher issues, but I found its efforts to do so combined with trying to maintain the lightheartedness of the genre was a miss. Not all bad, I did enjoy the characters, Allie and Olivia, and seeing their friendship get reignited. I also liked the format of the book. The chapters alternated between the present and their high school years, with the high school years providing much background for the circumstances of the present. I don't want to discount Ms. Harbison as one of my favorite authors yet, and will definitely be checking out her second novel soon.

Vicky says

2.5 stars

I was looking for some light chick lit, but didn't enjoy this one as much as other books by Beth Harbison. I felt like the characters did not act their supposed ages. As it was their 20 year high school reunion, they'd be 38 years old. I felt like their actions were more like those of 28-year-olds. The only thing that would have needed to change were some of the references to beauty products from their teens and make it a 10 year reunion. Also, while I definitely believe that a fight in high school could break up a long term friendship if Allie and Olivia, it was weird to me that (view spoiler).

Katie Kenig says

This is a sweet, fluffy, caramel-sticky Chicklit book. If you like that sort of thing, this will be right up your

alley. Sometimes, that's just what I want - sweetness and light and redemption through makeup and a new hair style. It makes life seem easy. It makes you appreciate your girly-girl friendships and the girls you tried on makeup with when you were 12.

“Well, that's what everyone wants, isn't it? Even these people who go out and have their noses shaved down to pencil erasers, and who get implants, and fillers, and who Botox their faces into immobility, they're all in search of the miracle that's going to make them feel like...” She searched for the word. “Like themselves.”

I rate books on what they are, not against books that are decidedly different from them, which is why this scores such a high rating. It's fluff, but it's well-designed fluff. It's fun fluff. It's oreo cookies, hot chocolate, pop music and your best friends curled up on a fuzzy blanket with you at a ski lodge fluff.

This book moves back and forth between the 80's and present day, exploring the friendship between Allie - the pretty one in school, now the broken hearted, lonely, has-put-on-weight-lately and is kind of miserable one - and Olivia - in school the mousy, smart one, now the fashionable independent one. Their friendship fell apart years ago, though a high school reunion has brought them back together, possibly just in time for them to save one another from themselves.

There's not a lot more to say about this book. It's a cheerful kind of book. I read a big chunk of it in a bubblebath and read the rest curled up with tea on the sofa. It's a quick read, a fun read, and a very easy read. Kind of a brain vacation.

Autumn says

4.5 stars really. I bought this book for \$2.99 because of an after-holiday sale on the barnes and noble website. I bought it because it sounded semi-interesting but kind of like a soap opera. Which it was. However, I found myself really enjoying it. At some points I couldn't even put it down. I spent most of the day yesterday reading it. It's interesting how 20 years after their high school graduation Olivia and Allie have pretty much traded places. I really enjoyed the flashbacks of Allie, Olivia and Noah. It was effective in measuring how much they had changed in two decades. The story moved along at a nice pace and was engaging. I wished that in the end the author included something about Allie's career because she really felt stuck just doing temp jobs and it would've been nice to see what she was doing other than being Noah's wife. I liked the set up of the epilogue. It was a nice touch, and good to see that Olivia was still in contact with the couple.

Stina says

This book was weird...

I feel like the author was so hell bent on making sure that she could incorporate nostalgic products from her youth that she forgot to develop characters that anyone would give a shit about. Also, she could have used Lip Smackers and Love's Baby Soft and STILL had characters who were closer to 28 than 38. I had a hard time envisioning these morons being close to 40 years old.

The drama was stupid... I read a lot of chick lit and I can't stand the unresolved fight... "_____ was pissed about something she heard _____ did and never spoke to her again." It's easy and convenient writing and it makes me want to throw books.

Ugh... the more I write about it the less stars I want to give it. I'm going to stop now, while it still has two.
