



# Party

By Tom Leveen

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It's Saturday night in Santa Barbara and it seems like everyone is headed to the same destination. The reason is simple: to celebrate the end of school. But for eleven different people the motives are bit more complicated—to be noticed, to hook up, to make friends, to numb the pain, to get over an ex, to say goodbye. As each character takes a turn and tells his/her story, the eleven individuals intersect, reconnect, and combine in ways that none of them ever saw coming.

Combine the poignancy of *Thirteen Reasons Why* with the energy of films like *American Graffiti*, *Dazed and Confused*, and *Sixteen Candles* and you get *Party*—a sneak peek into the lives of contemporary teens over the course of a single night. Alternating points of view and the timeless setting of an end-of-school party make this a compelling read. Those who pick it up cannot put it down.

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## **Party By Tom Leveen Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### About the Author

TOM LEVEEN has been involved in theater since 1988, directing over 30 plays. As the artistic director and a co-founder of an all-ages, nonprofit visual and performing venue in Scottsdale, Arizona, he frequently works with young adults at various events including theater, visual art exhibits, and especially the live music scene. Tom is an Arizona native, where he lives with his wife, Joy. *Party* is his first novel. You can visit Tom at his web site: TomLeveen.com.

#### From [Booklist](#)

As “everyone from school” descends on a Santa Barbara party, 11 teenage partygoers narrate their experience of the night’s drunken sexual encounters, a fight fueled by racial epithets, several reconciliations, and the sweet start of a new relationship. First-time author Leveen uses the varied points of view to touch on myriad issues, from the loss of a parent to sex, religion, and the war in Iraq. Despite the often-heavy subject matter, the young narrators’ compelling and largely believable voices lighten the tone of the novel. Their yearning to connect with each other shines through their pained actions, awkward slang, and frequent bursts of profanity. As the various threads of the story begin to converge, the author wraps everything up neatly for an upbeat ending. Although the plot feels somewhat contrived, it is ultimately satisfying to see the characters—from jock to outsider—begin to overcome their pain and affirm the value of deeply held relationships. Grades 9-12. --Miriam Aronin

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Beckett

Morrigan

Tommy

Brent

Daniel

Azize

Ryan

Anthony

Josh

Max

Ashley

I’m the girl nobody knows until she commits suicide. Then suddenly everyone had a class with her.

You know the one I mean.

You don’t pick on her, because you don’t know she’s there, not really. She sits behind you in chemistry, or across the room in Spanish. You’ve seen her naked in the locker room after physical education—a contradiction in terms if ever there was one—but you don’t know what color her eyes are. What her name is.

What grade she’s in.

She’s always been there, like the gum under your desk in math class. And when you do bother to explore under there with your fingers, the first thing you do upon contact is jerk back and say, Ew! And when that girl leaves, it doesn’t matter, there’s another one ready to take her place.

To be That Girl Who.

That Girl Who always reads comic books in the library during her free period or lunch. That Girl Who wears the long, flowy dresses and Rastafarian tam and peasant tops—except for that month freshman year when she wore a Tony Hawk T-shirt after seeing an absolutely spectacular X Games in San Diego with her best friend and her family. That Girl Who smiled at you once and who you maybe meant to smile back at, but couldn't find the time because you just got a text from a friend you were going to talk to three minutes later in the hall.

It's no big.

Girls like that are like that by choice. One way or another, we choose to blend in, keep our heads down, not cause a scene. Our individual reasons might vary a little from girl to girl, but the result is the same.

We're safe.

We avoid all the high school BS because the fact is, there are a lot bigger things going on outside those halls. Things that no one else knows about.

I know.

Like the girl who never participates in class? Goes to games or plays or dances or pep rallies? Or talks to anyone? Truth is, she doesn't have time. She has to—had to—get home to take care of her sick mother. No one knows she's living by herself now because her dad took off years ago and never exactly left a forwarding address, and she's scared that someday the school will find out and make her go into a foster home. That soon the money is going to run out, which means she'll have to drop out of school and work for minimum wage to try to pay rent. That her junior year in high school will have been her last.

These are the things no one else knows about.

Things no one else knows about me.

I miss my mom.

If she hadn't added my name to our little—stress little—bank account in January, the month before she died, I don't know what I would've done. I was sixteen by then and managed to take care of all the “arrangements,” as the funeral director called it. I had her cremated and spread her ashes on Shoreline Beach and in the Pacific. That's what she would have wanted. There was no service, no funeral, no piles of ass-casseroles in the fridge brought by suitably sorrowful relatives and friends.

My mom was not like me. She was lively. “Free-spirited,” my father would call her, while secretly screwing a viola player from Seattle. We lived alone together ever since Dad bailed on us, and that was fine with Mom. “I don't need a penis to raise my daughter,” she said when she changed both our names back to her maiden name when I was twelve.

So other than an occasional visit from a nurse when we could afford it those last couple of months, it was just us. Musicians, if you didn't know, generally don't make a lot of money. Jennifer M. & The Pasadena Theory never hit it big. Plus Mom stopped writing music during her first round of chemo, but her Gibson Epiphone acoustic and recording equipment were still in the little studio she'd built for herself. People still

bought her albums, every once in a while—I knew because I’d gotten a couple of checks for like five bucks, royalty checks from this indie label she worked with. I knew any future royalties would go to me now. The people at the music company were among the few who knew her and knew she was gone. I didn’t even tell the people who’d known us the longest. Ashley, or her family, or Anthony and his family. Because I suck.

I might have to sell all her gear soon. For the cash. I don’t want to.

On Saturday evening, the night of the biggest party of the year, I walk to the nearby Santa Barbara Mission, where I sit alone in the chapel. I stare down at my woven bag, which is stuffed with everything I had planned to bring to the party, if I go—my change purse, my cell phone, my used copy of *Batman: Year One* in case I get bored, the key to my apartment; everything.

I know the old lady who runs the gift shop, and she lets me in without paying admission. I like to come here and sit in the back pew, looking at the statues of Jesus and the saints, and the tourists who snap away with their digital cameras and pretend to have some sense of reverence. A lot of them don’t bother pretending, I’ve noticed.

That’s okay. Jesus and the saints don’t seem to mind. There’s more important things to worry about. There’s a war on, after all. And people dying of cancer. Jesus and the saints probably have their hands full.

If there’s no one else in here, which happens maybe half the time, I talk to Mom. I don’t know if she hears me or not. She never went to church, so I don’t know if she’s allowed here now.

“So there’s this party tonight,” I tell her now. The Mission is closing, and most of the tourists are already gone. Any minute the janitor, Carlos, is going to chase me out with his big dust mop, which he likes to do. He tries to act like he’s all upset with me, but he can’t not smile when he shakes the mop at me. I like Carlos. He’s real. I know because he sees me.

“I don’t know if I’m going to go,” I tell her, out loud but quiet in case someone happens to walk in and think I’m a total nutjob. And maybe I am, sitting here and talking to my mother who died almost five months ago as if she’s going to talk back to me, or make a Virgin Mary statue cry or something.

“I mean, I don’t know any of them,” I go on. “I know of them. I know their names and who they hang out with and what colleges they want to go to. I know Antho still wants to play for the Raiders even though I haven’t talked to him since—whenever. But I don’t really know them. I’ve never been to a party before, not really. I mean, I couldn’t . . .”

I trail off. Mom knows why I couldn’t.

I was too busy feeding her when she was too weak to do it herself. That and six dozen other chores you don’t want to imagine, involving every possible fluid the human body can produce, in quantities you don’t want to think about.

“I feel like I should just do it,” I say. “Just go. Like, I should go because I don’t know anyone. Just say hi or something. Or maybe goodbye. To someone.”

I close my eyes. “I haven’t been to a party since Ashley’s birthday right after freshman year.”

Ashley Dixon. I almost smile. We’d been friends since kindergarten, all the way until Mom got sick. Then

Morrigan Lewis moved to town and I didn't see Ashley much after that. I'd watched them throughout sophomore year, jealous at first. Then, consumed by Mom's illness, I'd stopped keeping tabs on my old friend. Jealousy was a luxury for girls who didn't have to drive their mothers to the hospital for chemotherapy. After a few months, it was like I'd never known Ashley in the first place. The day Mom told me about her diagnosis, she also made me swear not to tell anyone.

"I'll be fine," she said, and back then, her voice was still strong and lovely. "We'll be fine."

"What about Ashley?" I'd asked her. "Or her mom and dad? Can't we—"

"No one, kiddo. Not even Bob and Dianne."

"Antho and Mike . . ."

"No, not the Lincolns either, sweetheart. No one. Promise me."

So I promised and I kept it. I hid the worst news of my life from my best friends.

I feel a pang of guilt, realizing this is the first time I've really thought of Ashley in more than a year, despite seeing her every day at school. She'd say hi, relentlessly, every day, while Morrigan would roll her eyes. But the last few months, I haven't even looked at her. And Antho, he's been looking distracted, and hasn't seemed to notice me slowly becoming invisible.

"Okay, I'll go to the party," I say to Mom. "If you really want me to. I'll go and I'll . . . I'll talk to someone. Ashley. Or someone. I'll make small talk. If you really think I should."

Mom, Jesus, and the saints are quiet.

When the Mission closes for the night—some other janitor who I can only call Not Carlos is the one closing up—I take a bus, a.k.a. the Loser Cruiser, toward the house where the party is being held, but I change my mind after the bus crosses State Street. I get off at Micheltorena to catch another bus back toward State. When I transfer buses, I have to pretend not to notice Morrigan Lewis screaming at me from across the street. Ashley is probably nearby and I don't want to run into either one of them.

I jump on the bus the instant it stops, telling Mom there's no way I'm going to this party.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **John Moore:**

As people who live in the actual modest era should be change about what going on or information even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era that is certainly always change and move ahead. Some of you maybe will probably update themselves by looking at books. It is a good choice to suit your needs but the problems coming to you actually is you don't know what type you should start with. This Party is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you

want and want in this era.

**Billy Reynolds:**

Reading a guide tends to be new life style with this era globalization. With studying you can get a lot of information that may give you benefit in your life. With book everyone in this world can certainly share their idea. Ebooks can also inspire a lot of people. Many author can inspire their particular reader with their story or perhaps their experience. Not only the storyplot that share in the ebooks. But also they write about the information about something that you need case in point. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your sons or daughters, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors in this world always try to improve their proficiency in writing, they also doing some investigation before they write to the book. One of them is this Party.

**Lynn Jordan:**

Does one one of the book lovers? If yes, do you ever feeling doubt when you find yourself in the book store? Try and pick one book that you just dont know the inside because don't determine book by its cover may doesn't work at this point is difficult job because you are afraid that the inside maybe not while fantastic as in the outside look likes. Maybe you answer could be Party why because the wonderful cover that make you consider in regards to the content will not disappoint a person. The inside or content is fantastic as the outside or perhaps cover. Your reading 6th sense will directly assist you to pick up this book.

**Andy McNeil:**

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