

Better than the Movies Book Review by Abigail

Better Than the Movies is an immersive, enthralling novel that takes the reader along the journey of Liz Buxbaum, the protagonist created with the fatal flaw of being a hopeless romantic. Lynn Painter does a commendable job of allowing the reader to explore her mind. Liz's internal conflict, bustling with chaos and turmoil, deepens the external conflict and truly implants the reader inside her head, allowing the reader to experience all her feelings simultaneously and relate to her even when differing in personality. The themes of acceptance, confidence, and character growth are prominent in *Better than the Movies* and enrich the novel further, allowing a captivating experience for anybody willing to pick up Lynn Painter's bestselling debut novel.

The story follows Liz when she is alarmed with the news that her childhood crush Micheal has returned to her hometown in Nebraska and is instantaneously in love again the moment she lays eyes on him. Hoping he feels the same, she embarks on a mission to get him as her prom date. She can already envision in her mind the perfect romantic daydream; she and her childhood friend locking hands after having not seen each other for unbearably long. It would be just like the screenplays her mom wrote, full of meet-cutes and happy endings. Only Liz would need assistance from her rival Weston (Wes), who had constantly stood as a hindrance to her ideal life ever since she was a child. Though Liz slowly begins to realize Weston isn't the kind of person she'd always thought him to be. Instead, he is kind, patient, and caring. But not Micheal, who she'd always loved, who her mom had loved as well, and who was not being responsive to what she thought would be the perfect plan to get him to ask her out. Apprehensive of the coming future, Liz grows worried that her picture-perfect romance won't turn out the way she thought it would; maybe, Micheal's feelings weren't aligned with hers, and the plan she had spent countless moments thinking about would fall apart. The perfect romance she and her mother had always wanted for her would be nothing short of a fantasy. Though she was yet to realize the fantasy she truly yearned for was just within reach-only she didn't know how badly she yearned for it.

Liz is a relatable protagonist whose romanticized view of the world is both her strength and her flaw. Throughout the novel, her interactions with Weston during her pursuit of Micheal challenge her preconceptions, leading her to a deeper understanding of what love and happiness truly mean. Painter's writing is lighthearted and witty, making it easy to immerse yourself in Liz's journey. The banter between Liz and Weston adds humor and charm, while moments of introspection allow readers to connect with Liz on a deeper level.

Better Than the Movies stands respectively as a sweet and engaging romantic comedy that will appeal to fans of classic rom-coms and lighthearted romance novels of all ages. While it may not break new ground in terms of tropes, it excels in delivering a heartwarming story with an important message about self-acceptance and the unpredictability of love. Lynn Painter's debut is a feel-good read that will leave you smiling, perfect for anyone who enjoys fun, uplifting romances with relatable characters.