

## Better Than The Movies by Lynn Painter

Reviewed by Charlotte

Better Than The Movies by Lynn Painter follows Liz Buxbaum and her hopeless romantic heart as she attempts to find her Happily Ever After. Ever since Liz's mom let her watch Bridget Jones' Diary in the second grade, Liz has been a rom-com fanatic and obsessed with the idea of love. So when her childhood crush Michael Young comes back to their town in Omaha, Nebraska weeks before senior prom, Liz is convinced it's meant to be. There's only one problem - she has no way to get closer to him. Cue in Wes Bennet. Wes, Liz's next-door-nemesis whom she fights with over the parking spot in front of their houses, happens to be good buddies with Michael. With this in mind, they make a deal. If Wes will put in a good word to Michael for Liz and help her land him as a prom date, he will be granted 24/7 access to the parking spot. As Liz schemes with Wes and spends more time with him, she starts to realize he isn't the horrible guy she perceived him as. Even weirder, she finds herself wanting to hang out with Wes. But Michael is supposed to be the key to her Happily Ever After....right? I scarcely rate books five stars, but Better Than The Movies somehow made the cut. It was the first book I ever read by Lynn Painter, and since then I've read three more of Lynn's young adult books, and have only rated them four stars or more. She has become an auto-buy author for me, and I always look forward to her new releases. Liz Buxbaum is a character you will find yourself relating to because of how real she is. Even if at times I found myself getting annoyed with her about some rash decisions she makes, it showcased her realness and her character growth is immense. I was baffled by how clueless she was when it came to Wes at times and it had me internally screaming! But once she thought through and figured out her feelings, I was jumping for joy. Liz lost her mom while she was in fifth grade, and Better Than The Movies goes into detail about how she handles her grief and her relationship with her step-mom, Helena. Learning about her grief and how it mixed with her perception of the events of her last year in high school will give you a new perspective on life. The slow burn was slow but it was so worth it and only made me want to read more! Wes and Liz's relationship is both goofy and at the same time serious. Even though their banter is playful and they're always bickering, you can tell they care deeply about one another. The plot-twist at the end will have your jaw on the floor once you find out the meaning behind the battle of the parking spot. Overall their relationship was incredibly sweet and had my heart beating outside of my chest. To summarize, I have no complaints about this book and would 100% recommend it! If you look for tropes like fake-dating, young adult, slow-burn, and highschool romance, or if you usually find yourself clicking on a rom-com whilst looking for movies to watch, then Better Than The Movies is the book for you! Trust me when I say this, but once you pick up Better Than The Movies you won't be able to put it down.