

“They should never let any of us go to the movies. They really shouldn’t.”

She’s probably right. What do we learn from the movies anyway? There are all these beautiful people with really cool jobs and really cool apartments who just can’t seem to find true love until... Oops! There it is! The embrace begins, the music swells, the credits roll... but the fact is, the credits never roll in real life. Still, we subject ourselves to the ridiculous standards set by everything from *Cinderella* to *Mildred Pierce* to *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* or something or other. Throughout *Bad Dates* we watch Haley wrapping herself in expectations of all sorts of clichés. The dastardly villain, the ideal romance, the stunning outfit, the perfect body.... While she “relentlessly mocks” these unattainable benchmarks in others, she still succumbs over and over to pursuing those pop culture, fairy tale “shoulds.” Which is why Theresa Rebeck was able to use her to paint such a compelling picture, not only of a real woman with a real life and real problems, but also of the relationship she has with unreal expectations.

Haley is real. There is no magic word or glass slipper in her world (though there’s probably something that could pass for a glass slipper in her collection). Instead there are the relationships, the connections, the people who weave the real stories of her stranger-than-fiction life and ultimately surpass any drama she could imagine or attempt on her own.

Sound familiar?

My mom often reminds me that “life is what happens when you’re busy making other plans.” She and Mr. Lennon and Ms. Rebeck are right. Feel free to make plans... just be ready to take the unexpected twists and turns when they come along. They’re probably better than what you planned anyway.