



The Balance Thing

By Margaret Dumas
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Introduction

A modern, urban, successful woman in today's world would never be obsessed with finding her knight in shining armor. Surely not. A grown up career woman knows what she wants and how to go about finding it in a reasonable, organized way, right? Well, sort of. Margaret Dumas understands that smart, successful women can also be a bit blind to their own best interests when it comes to love, and she demonstrates this with flair, hilarity, and a lot of fun in *The Balance Thing*. Becks Mansfield and her friends Connie, Vida, and Max are the kind of friends who indulge in dessert and truth-telling, and are always there for each other, either for support or exasperated criticism. Becks has been laid off one too many times since the dot com collapse, and she tosses away boyfriends like empty ice cream cartons. So is she "date-lazy," as Connie and Vida say? Or does she need a new job? One thing Becks doesn't lack is energy, and as she careens through Connie's fairy tale/nightmare wedding and her "secret" career as the voice of a cartoon vampire, she will discover that happiness doesn't always

show up on spreadsheets.

Questions for Discussion

1. Who is your favorite character in this novel, and why?
2. What does the "fairy tale" wedding tell you about Connie as a person?
3. Does the character of Josh evolve over the course of the novel, as Becks's perception of him begins to shift? In what ways?
4. Is this a "happily ever after" story? Why or why not?
5. How do Becks's organizational skills work as either a support or an obstacle in her life?
6. How did you feel about Dumas's portrayal of Max and Phillip's relationship?
7. Did you feel as if you knew these characters? What do you have in common with them? What would you like to say to them if you could?
8. Which do you think is more likely to provide lasting happiness in life--a healthy relationship, or a career that you love?
9. Max paraphrases Bette Davis as having said that "if a man asks for what he wants, he's a man, but if a woman asks for what she wants, she's a bitch" (Page 66). Do you agree? Is this statement as true these days as it was in Bette Davis's time?
10. How did you feel about the end of this novel? Would you have changed it in any way?

About the Author

Margaret Dumas is a technical writer and computer software executive. She lives in the San Francisco Bay area, where she splits her time between working on her next novel and searching for the perfect cocktail.