

# Things to Do

by Bobbi Lewis

My tablet marked “things to do today” was growing. 1. Pick up shirts from the cleaners. 2. Drop off dress at the cleaners 3. Go to Jazzercise class (if it doesn’t take me too long at the cleaners; I may have to stall.) 4. Decide on menu for Book Club 5. Cut fresh flowers to brighten up the table for my guests. “I’ll do that tomorrow,” I thought as I made my way to Books a Million. I was referring to the book choice for the next month’s Book Club. We’d be meeting at my house, and I wanted to choose something that everyone would enjoy. I sorted through the self-help books, the shelves of books written by the celebrity exercise enthusiasts, and the rows and rows of fiction. I was attracted to the lime green book with the lady’s high-heeled shoe on the cover. I guess I was interested because of the bright shade of green that reminded me of the pistachio pudding that I’d had for dessert last evening.

I picked up the book and read the cover, not to judge a book by its cover, mind you. The Next Thing on My List. Hum, that’s an interesting title. My mind wandered as I scanned the pages. I always scan from back to front. I know that’s weird, however, I never allow myself to read the ending. Promise. Oh, look a recipe. It sounded delicious. I was interested enough to begin to read chapter one. The first page grabbed my attention. I added all the pluses. I liked the color, the catchy title, and the first page filled with dialogue and excellent descriptions. Those were enough good reasons to place the book into the cart and make my way to the cashier.

As I pulled out my wallet, I noticed that the only bill I had was the crisply folded twenty dollar bill that Greg had given me after he had cashed a check before we went to the movies on Thursday night. It was his turn to pick a movie, not mine, so we saw an action flick. I started to hand the twenty to the cashier when she said, “That will be \$24.95.” What a joke! I really didn’t want to pay that much, but I was already committed to some degree, so much, that I added a bookmark at the last minute. I whipped out the old Visa card and handed it to the pleasantly plump twenty - something girl that stood across the counter smiling at me, waiting to take my money. She made the necessary scans of my card

and handed it back to me along with my receipt. I signed and grabbed my bag with my book and my new bookmark. (I'd probably misplace the new bookmark after a day or two, and then I'd have to fold down the page to hold my place for me anyway.)

Making my way home, I tried to pick up my book between stoplights. I like living on the edge, I guess. Driving and reading do not mix. I repeat. Driving and reading do not mix. But...I was trying to balance the book on the gearshift while rotating my glance between the book and the road. After the ringing of my cell phone, a near miss of a 1998 Dodge Neon, and the passing of two state troopers, I decided the book would have to wait until I got home. I wanted to get there in one piece.

I could tell by the first couple of pages that the main character, Lisa, was leaving to go to a Weight Watchers meeting. Hmmm! Maybe the setting of my newly purchased book would keep me on track with my diet, too. I didn't need to get that Suzanne Sommers' Diet and Exercise book after all. Maybe it was destiny that I picked up this book. I was hearing my inner voice saying, "Bobbi, get your big butt back to Weight Watchers." Ok, maybe it was not my inner voice; maybe it was the fact that my pants were cutting off my circulation, and I was feeling guilty about missing my jazzercise class. Next page: a recipe for taco soup. So what I know about this book based on its title, topic, and the first chapter, I had my Dr. Phil self-help book, Paula Deen Cookbook, and steamy novel all rolled into one.

When I got home I made the recipe of taco soup and sat down as the ingredients began to blend together. The smell throughout the house would send my husband and children directly into the kitchen, so I made my way to the bedroom.

The characters were beginning to come together. The plot and the taco soup were beginning to thicken. After the Weight Watchers meeting, a girl named Tina approaches Lisa and asks her for a ride home. Lisa agrees, though she feels awkward and a little uncomfortable about giving a complete stranger a ride. However, the time the two spend together in the car is very relaxing and calm. They talk and share tips and successes about how to lose the weight and maintain the weight loss. They laugh and chat nonstop during the fifteen-minute journey. The most horrific thing happens next. As Tina is reaching in the back seat for her purse, Lisa, the driver, is distracted. The green and silver truck, which the twosome had been following for the last seven miles, comes to a full stop in the middle of

the long winding country road. Lisa's car strikes the truck in front of her, and Tina is killed instantly. No, this book was not supposed to start out this way! It's supposed to be funny. The jacket says so. I may have to get my \$24.95 back; that's false advertisement, isn't it?

Days after the accident Lisa notices a sheet of wrinkled blue paper that had slipped under the front seat of the mangled 2002 Toyota Highlander. She pulls out the paper, unscathed by the impact of the crash, and notices it was not her own messy, almost illegible, handwriting. At the top of the page are the words, "The next thing on my list – Thirty things I want to do before I'm thirty – Tina Davis." Tina has only one item marked off her list. "Lose 100 pounds". Lisa's heart melts for the girl that she met only briefly and decides to take on the list to complete. She is puzzled and confused by the entry that says, "Get even with Buddy". I wonder what that could mean. Did Buddy scorn her? Did he harass or ridicule her before she was able to shed those surplus pounds? Was this an old school acquaintance?

So Girls, please consider using this book for our next book club discussion. It is written in a whimsical, comical way as the main character sets her goal to complete Tina's extraordinary but outlandish list. She must go braless, kiss a stranger, wear sexy shoes, and try to boogie board among other things. You know how crazy our group is, we may even have to create a fun list of "things to do" of our own. I'd be able to cross off the ones about going on a blind date, walking a thirteen-mile race, and sailing in the Caribbean. Not to mention, the entry about holding a twenty-five pound boa constrictor, even though I'm terrified of any reptiles. What do you say? You know how wild and crazy we forty-something women can be. I think this one is a keeper.

I think our book club would enjoy this much more than the book we read last month. You remember the one. The historic setting wasn't interesting. Wasn't it set somewhere in West Virginia, where ever that is? It wasn't as well written as this one. This one will be entertaining and offers a hint of spice.

Let me know what you decide, so I can head back to the bookstore. I'll get our extra copies of the book, hopefully at a discount. This time I'll grab a latte instead of a bookmark.