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**ISN'T IT ROMANTIC IS THE VALENTINE'S DAY 2020 "WINNER-TAKE-ALL" HONOREE**

Media literacy expert Dr. Mary-Lou Galician confers her 18<sup>th</sup> annual  
*Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance*® Awards™  
for the worst & best relationship strategies in 2019 mass media portrayals of sex, love, & romance

In a surprising major departure from media literacy expert Dr. Mary-Lou Galician's usual Valentine's Day announcement of the recipients of the 26 categories of her *Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance*® Awards™ (for the worst and best relationship strategies in the previous year's mass media portrayals of sex, love, and romance), *Isn't It Romantic* (#55 of 2019's 100 Top-Grossing Films)—a rom-com spoof starring Rebel Wilson, Liam Hemsworth, Adam DeVine, and Priyanka Chopra—is the "winner-take-all" of the 18<sup>th</sup> annual awards.

"It finally happened!" explains Galician, creator of *REALISTIC ROMANCE*®: *The Thinking Person's Relationship Remedy*™ and author of the pioneering textbook *Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media: Analysis and Criticism of Unrealistic Portrayals and Their Influence* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition/Fall 2019; Kendall Hunt). "A very entertaining top-100 film actually addresses all 12 unhealthy, potentially dangerous relationship strategies encapsulated by the 12 media *Myths* and stereotypes of my *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz*® (online at RealisticRomance.com) and then—best of all—debunks them by demonstrating the wisdom of adopting the research-based successful strategies of each of my 12 antidotal *Dr. Galician's Prescriptions (Rx)*s for happier, healthier sex, love, and romance (also online) that benefit both women and men but are rarely presented in media portrayals."

Galician is delighted that colleagues at schools around the country who teach courses using her book as well as former students told her it's as if this film's writers took the class, read her book, or visited her website. "We all loved that *Isn't It Romantic* deftly delivers important messages with a comic touch, so it was a slam-dunk choice for my *Realistic Romance*® *Grand Prize*™—the overall award the for the previous year's portrayal with the most *Dr. Galician's Prescriptions*."

**New 2020 Awards Format Selection & Change: "Winner-Take All"**

This film's unique presentation of all 12 *Myths* as well as their corresponding *Rxs* prompted a major format change for the 2020 awards. As followers know, recipients in 26 categories (for the 12 *Myths* and the 12 *Rxs* plus the two overall awards) usually include not only feature films but also TV and popular songs across different *genres* of these media (not just rom-coms). However, although *Isn't It Romantic* focuses on skewering *rom-com* storylines, this film nevertheless uniquely addresses *all* 26 categories and provides an exemplary platform for what has always been the *purpose* of the annual Valentine's Day awards: "to create awareness about what we learn from media portrayals and how they influence us—even if we think they don't."

That's why no other media examples are included this year, and the overall *Stupidest Cupid Award*™ (for the most *Myths*) is not officially bestowed. Instead, citations (reason for awards) for the individual 12 *Stupid Cupid Awards*™ and 12 *Realistic Romance*® Awards™ all refer to portrayals in this *Realistic Romance*® *Grand Prize*™-winner. This new format is particularly instructive, because the 12 *Myths* are best understood in terms of their corresponding antidotal 12 *Prescriptions*—and vice versa.

**For ALL recipients of these annual awards since the first year (2003)**, visit the Awards Archives (linked from the AWARDS tab at RealisticRomance.com). The new 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of Galician's book provides 150 classic examples and past award recipients.

**And just so you know...**

- "Realistic" in Galician's work refers to a focus on *Prescriptions (rather than Myths)*—NOT "dramatic realism or naturalism," so even fantasies and animated features have earned *Realistic Romance*® Awards™ over the years.
- And "worst" and "best" refer to bad or good relationship strategies (*Myths or Rx*s, respectively)—NOT to artistic merit.
- Even media portrayals with *Prescriptions* usually include one or more *Myths*, because most media narratives rely on them. However, *Prescriptions* are the *dominant* themes of *Realistic Romance*® *Grand Prize*™ winners.
- The counterproductive strategies of the *Myths*, which abound in the media, might make interesting media narrative—but these beliefs and behaviors can actually "ruin real-life relationships." **You don't have to be a cynic—and you can enjoy all kinds of media portrayals.** Just practice critical thinking to be fully aware of the messages that are subconsciously promoted.

*Dr. Mary-Lou Galician*—known affectionately as **Dr. FUN** because of her musical motivation program **FUN-dynamics**® (**The FUN-damentals of DYNAMIC Living**)—is an expert on the influence of mass media portrayals on real-life relationships. After a successful media career, she joined the faculty of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communication at Arizona State University, where she served as founding head of media analysis & criticism and created the online media literacy course **Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media**, reaching thousands of college students in the classroom as well as worldwide. She is the Cronkite School's first Professor Emerita.

**THE CITATIONS WITH THE DETAILS OF WHY THIS FILM EARNED ITS AWARDS BEGIN ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

**THE 18<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL DR. FUN'S STUPID CUPID & REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDS™  
FOR THE WORST & BEST RELATIONSHIP STRATEGIES  
IN 2019 MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF SEX, LOVE, & ROMANCE**

**CURATED & CONFERRED ON VALENTINE'S DAY 2020**

by

**Dr. Mary-Lou Galician**

(The Original "Dr. FUN")

Creator of *Realistic Romance*®

Author of *Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media*

**NEW FOR 2020: SPECIAL "WINNER-TAKE-ALL" FORMAT**

**OVERALL AWARD**

***Dr. FUN's Stupidest Cupid Award™***

**for the 2019 media portrayal with the most**

***Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz Myths®***

**NOT AWARDED**

—but as described below,

***ISN'T IT ROMANTIC* addressed and debunked all 12 *Myths***

**OVERALL AWARD**

***Dr. FUN's Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™***

**for the 2019 media portrayal with the most**

***Dr. Galician's Prescriptions® (Rxs)***

***ISN'T IT ROMANTIC***

(film)

**First-ever honoree to demonstrate all 12 *Rxs***

Beginning on the next page, you'll see the OVERALL AWARD citation (reason for the award) of the film *Isn't It Romantic* (including a synopsis of plot), followed by a side-by-side citation of each addressed *Myth* and its corresponding antidotal *Prescription (Rx)*.

## OVERALL AWARD CITATION

***Dr. FUN's Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™***

### ***ISN'T IT ROMANTIC***

Remarkably, this entertaining, engaging film (ranked #55 of 2019's 100 Top-Grossing Films) actually addresses all 12 unhealthy, potentially dangerous relationship strategies encapsulated by the 12 media *Myths* and stereotypes of my *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz*® and then—best of all—debunks them by demonstrating the wisdom of adopting the research-based successful strategies of each of my 12 antidotal *Dr. Galician's Prescriptions (Rxs)* for happier, healthier sex, love, and romance that benefit both women and men but are rarely presented in media portrayals.

With a charming comic touch, this film spoofs and skewers the storylines of classic rom-coms and, thereby, deftly delivers important media literacy messages about sex, love, and romance built on firmer ground.

**New-for-2020 Format Change:** This film's unique presentation of all 12 *Myths* as well as their corresponding *Rxs* (some more forcefully than others—as it's a satire) prompted a major change to a first-ever “winner-take-all” format for these 2020 awards, in which this Overall Award-winner also serves as the sole recipient of each of the 12 individual awards for the *Myths* and the 12 individual awards for the *Rxs*.

### **SYNOPSIS**

Brilliant Australian full-figured comedian Rebel Wilson stars as Natalie, a New York City architect with a cynical attitude about romance and love (and romantic movies). She endures a minuscule apartment, a lack of respect and recognition at her job, and demeaning treatment by everyone from the local falafel cart owner to a “CW hot” billionaire new client Blake (Liam Hemsworth). Her only friends and office supporters are her assistant/rom-com devotee Whitney (Betty Gilpin) and project manager/longtime buddy Josh (Adam DeVine, Wilson's love interest in the *Pitch Perfect* films).

After she's mugged in a subway and knocked out, she wakes up in a hospital where the handsome attending doctor makes a pass at her and men whistle their admiration as she walks down the street in the very outfit (provided by the hospital) that Julia Roberts wore in the rom-com classic *Pretty Woman*—with that film's eponymous theme-song punctuating the background. Allusions to other classic rom-coms are also sprinkled throughout, with their nonsensicality appropriately and accurately mocked by Natalie, who notices that her grubby neighborhood has been transformed to resemble a sanitized set in a romantic comedy. Even her swear words are bleeped out. (“My life has become a PG-rated rom-com!”). Within minutes of leaving the hospital, she's nearly run over by a chauffeured limo, from which the formerly disinterested hot-client billionaire Blake emerges and instantly is “beguiled” by her.

They begin a comically typical rom-com relationship, but Natalie senses she's in an alternate universe where she's become an unwilling leading lady with now-magnificent digs, a closet full of designer clothing, due respect at work as the star architect of a major project (although typical of the genre Natalie cannot understand or abide, the easy-going Whitney has become her snotty arch-rival), and an always-there offensively stereotypical rom-com gay bestie/personal advisor Donny (Brandon Scott Jones).

Josh saves the life of a choking woman, who turns out to be swim-suit model and “yoga ambassador” Isabella (Priyanka Chopra), and they instantly become a couple. A few days later, at a party at Isabella's estate in the Hamptons, Isabella and Josh surprise the hundreds of guests (including Natalie and Blake) with the announcement that the party is actually their wedding, which will take place the next day.

This wedding news moves Natalie (who can't stand Blake's annoying pursuit of her and his lack of character) to finally realize that her BFF Josh, who has always had a crush on her, is the appropriate partner she should have appreciated. But although she aggressively tries to win him from Isabella, she fails.

Fortunately, Donny has advised her to “love herself first”—and she takes his advice, promising herself to “do me.” The spell is broken, she wakes up in the real world, gets a big contract from real-world Blake, and begins a romantic relationship with Josh. (A rousing full cast dance number in the park ends the film.)

**AWARD CITATIONS FOR EACH OF THE 12 MYTHS & THEIR ANTIDOTAL 12 Rxs**

Each *Myth* should be understood in terms of its corresponding (same #) *Prescription (Rx)*, and each *Rx* should be understood in terms of the corresponding *Myth* of the same number, to which the *Rx* serves as that serves as that *Myths* “antidote.”

<p><b>STUPID CUPID AWARDS™ (Myths)</b></p> <p>The <i>Myths</i> and stereotypes appear in the “Alternate-world Rom-Com.”</p>	<p><b>REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDS™ (Rxs)</b></p> <p>The <i>Prescriptions</i> appear in both the “Alternate-world Rom-Com” (where Natalie calls out the foolish devices and behaviors of that genre) AND in the real world.</p>
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<p><b>Myth #1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.</b></p> <p>When Natalie appears (in a copy of the red gown Julia Roberts wore in <i>Pretty Woman</i>) at the moonlit boat-dock of his mega-yacht, Blake insists they’re soul mates because “Destiny” brought her there.</p>	<p><b>Rx #1: Consider countless candidates.</b></p> <p><i>[This doesn’t mean all at once! And it doesn’t recommend promiscuity. The point is: There’s more than one appropriate partner in the world, but we often overlook potential candidates while seeking the “perfect” one—who’s not always so perfect anyway.]</i></p> <p>She reminds Blake that <i>he</i> sent his chauffeur to pick her up and bring her there for their pre-arranged date—and that the “soul mate thing” is a “so cliché.” She continues get-togethers with Josh.</p>
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<p><b>Myth #2: There’s such a thing as “love at first sight.”</b></p> <p>Blake is immediately smitten with “beguiling” Natalie, as are Josh and Isabella (who wed after knowing each other for only a few days).</p>	<p><b>Rx #2: Consult your calendar and count carefully.</b></p> <p><i>[In other words, take time to really get to know a romantic partner.]</i></p> <p>Natalie reminds rom-com-world Josh and Isabella that they just met and don’t really know each other. In the real world, Josh and Natalie have a long and happy history of friendship.</p>
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<p><b>Myth #3: Your true soul mate should know what you’re thinking or feeling (without your having to tell).</b></p> <p>Blake expects Natalie to know what he’s thinking and planning because they’re “soul mates.”</p>	<p><b>Rx #3: Communicate courageously.</b></p> <p><i>[Don’t expect mind-reading from partners. If you can’t talk openly, safely, and courteously, it’s not an “intimate” relationship.]</i></p> <p>Before his “wedding” to Isabella, Josh admits to Natalie, “I always thought it would be the two of us” (not Isabella) in a serious relationship. Back in the real world, Natalie admits she thought Josh was frequently gazing at a sexy poster of Isabella.; he then demonstrates it was Natalie he was gazing at. <i>Perspective!</i>) At the end, Natalie finally has the courage to tell Josh she loves him (“Let’s got out sometime!”), but never felt worthy of true love until she first began to love herself.</p>
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<p><b>Myth #4: If your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful.</b></p> <p>Natalie can’t remember her night with Blake, because it fades out (on a continuous loop) right before the non-PG-rated part—but he keeps telling her how spectacular it was.</p>	<p><b>Rx #4: Concentrate on commitment and constancy.</b></p> <p><i>[“Easy, wonderful” sex is not always instant—and it’s not the only thing to consider.]</i></p> <p>Her relationship with Josh is shown to be based on long-standing friendship and mutual support—professionally and personally.</p>
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**Myth #5: To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.**

Natalie has been told from childhood that someone with her plus-size figure can never attract a desirable romantic partner, so she doesn't even try in the real world. And in the rom-com universe, Josh is instantly attracted to swim suit model Isabella and marries her almost immediately meeting her.

However, what IS delightful is that the beautiful, smart, kind, and funny Natalie is the love interest of a handsome billionaire (whom she finally learns is not worthy of HER.)

**Rx #5: Cherish completeness in companions (not just the cover).**

*[Impossible-to-attain looks are a foolish criterion, especially if the person inside is not attractive.]*

Josh and Natalie model this Rx for each other in both worlds, and particularly in the return to the real world.

**Myth #6: The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.**

Blake insists Natalie should quit her job and marry him. Josh has rescued her and save her life when she was choking. (On the other hand, Isabella IS far wealthier than Josh—so that's one instance where they don't fit the *Myth*. However, this duo demonstrates a *countertype*, which is not the Rx; the Rx is *peer coupleship*.)

**Rx #6: Create coequality; cooperate.**

*[This does NOT mean the woman should be superior! That's just a countertype, which is merely another stereotype. Peer coupleship—in which power is balanced and shared—is the most healthy and beneficial for both partners.]*

Josh and Natalie appear to be candidates for a peer relationship in both worlds.

**Myth #7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a “beast” into a “prince.”**

Natalie has tamed the “beast” that was the Blake of her first encounter with him.

**Rx #7: Cease correcting and controlling; you can't change others (only yourself!).**

*Stay away from “bad” partners. Instead, seek one who doesn't need to be changed by you.]*

Natalie doesn't try to change the beast that Blake reveals himself to be in the alternate world. She simply ends her relationship with him in the alternate world.

**Myth #8: Bickering and fighting a lot mean that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.**

Blake thinks Natalie's snippy comments are “beguiling.”

**Rx #8: Courtesy counts; constant conflicts create chaos.**

*Respectful disagreement is healthy, but bickering and fighting—and lack of respect—are signs that the partners are simply not truly suited to each other.]*

Josh and Natalie have always treated each other with courtesy.

**Myth #9: All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values.**

Josh and Isabella have very different values—but they go ahead with their wedding anyway.

**Rx #9: Crave common core-values.**

*[Partners from different cultures, ethnicities, and races can have successful relationships if they share values, but partners with totally different values usually cannot. When romantic partners share values, mutual respect naturally flows—and they can be themselves, rather than walking on eggs and wearing masks.]*

In the rom-com world, Josh tells Natalie he always thought they'd wind up together because “you should marry your best friend. Well, maybe in a *different* world.”

<p><b>Myth #10: The right mate “completes you”—filling your needs and making your dreams come true.</b></p> <p>Isabella marries Josh, the man of her dreams—who rescued her and saved her life (when—from afar in a park—he noticed she was choking, so he rushed to her side to apply the Heimlich maneuver).</p>	<p><b>Rx #10: Cultivate your own completeness.</b></p> <p><i>[This Prescription does NOT advocate counter-dependence. It IS a reminder that no one else can complete you or make your dreams come true. It commends (a) the importance of realizing that you are not incomplete if you don't have a partner and (b) the value of being able to be independent at times and to focus on your own growth, whether or not you have a partner. “Wanting” an appropriate partner is normal and healthy, but “needing” one indicates you are not a good candidate. Two half-persons cannot constitute a healthy consummate relationship.]</i></p> <p>Natalie finally realizes, “I’m smart, kind, funny, and passionate about work”—and changes her own life, professionally and personally. After Natalie and Josh share their first kiss and agree to date, she says to Whitney: “Just to be clear, Josh does NOT complete me. I complete myself.”</p>
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<p><b>Myth #11: In real life, actors and actresses are often very much like the romantic characters they portray.</b></p> <p>Josh becomes infatuated with Isabella, a famous swim suit model and “yoga ambassador” (and “influencer”)—believing that her public persona is her true self.</p>	<p><b>Rx #11: (De-)Construct celebrities.</b></p> <p><i>[Realize that celebrities are NOT necessarily what you might think, even if you think you “know” them. Appreciate their professional performance—but don’t use them as role models for your personal life unless their personal lives have been consistently documented as ethically worthy over the years. Even better: Make yourself the star of your own real-life love story.]</i></p> <p>This comedy cleverly skewers and satirizes fans’ conflation of media celebrities’ “reel lives” and real lives by demonstrating Josh’s infatuation with celebrity character Isabella (and by Natalie’s critiques of Isabella’s “yoga ambassador” and “influencer” role).</p>
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<p><b>Myth #12: Since mass media portrayals of romance aren’t “real,” they don’t really affect you.</b></p> <p>Natalie claims not be influenced by rom-coms, which she describes as stupid and toxic.</p>	<p><b>Rx #12: Calculate the very real consequences of unreal media.</b></p> <p><i>[Don’t be fooled into thinking you’re never influenced by media portrayals. Be media literate about the media you use. Through media literacy strategies and skills, we can become more aware and proactive, thereby increasing our own chances of enjoying satisfying and successful real-life close relationships. We can still enjoy the metaphoric meanings and pure “escape” that romantic media myths offer us (though stereotypes are always harmful to us and others), but it’s not wise to use media myths—or media celebrities—as models in our real lives. It’s much healthier and smarter to make yourself the hero or heroine of your own true happy and healthy love story.]</i></p> <p>The film’s opening (Natalie, as a child, watching <i>Pretty Woman</i> and wishing for a similar relationship with a hot millionaire partner) sets up the enduring influence of media portrayals of sex, love, and romance on the adult Natalie, whose disappointment at not fitting the inanely narrow rom-com criteria of what it takes to qualify for a happy romantic relationship has nearly sabotaged her chances for a loving relationship. When she finally (like Alice in <i>Wonderland</i>) wakes up from her bizarre rom-com “nightmare,” she realizes that despite her cynicism about that genre’s <i>Myths</i> and stereotypes, she had never stopped being negatively influenced by them. That “awakening” ultimately frees her from those unhealthy <i>Myths</i> and stereotypes, empowering her to embrace successful positive strategies—encapsulated by the <i>Prescriptions</i> the film endorses. Moreover, her spot-on critiques of the absurdities in her rom-com fantasy also support this <i>Rx</i>.</p>
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