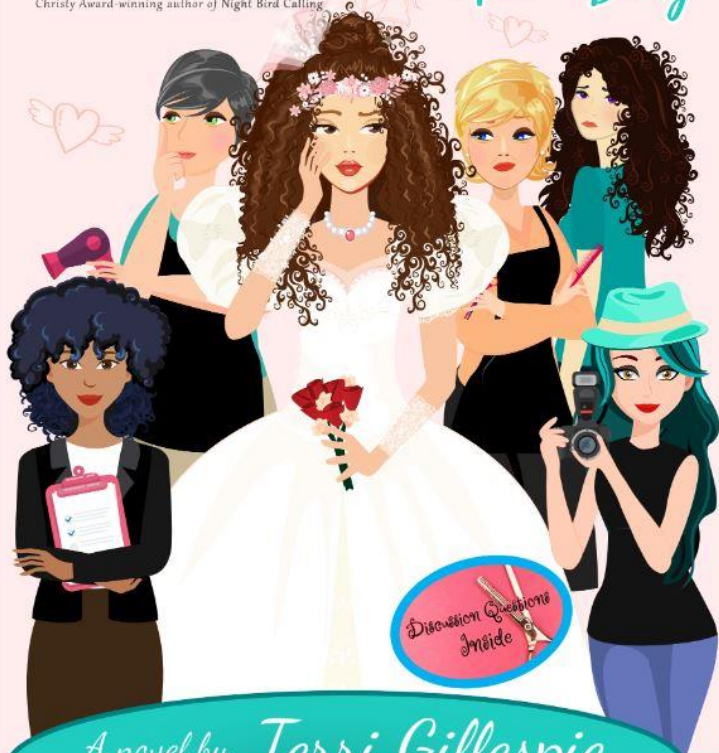


Really Bad

The Hair
Mavens
Book Three

"Engaging, vibrant, sassy, sincere—"
Cathy Gohlke,
Christy Award-winning author of *Night Bird Calling*

Hair Day



Discussion Questions
Inside

A novel by Terri Gillespie



Really Bad Hair Day
Sometimes what's really bad is really good.

Chapter 1—Say “Yes” to the Dress?

Shira Goldstein

I'm so far behind.

Shira's sigh fogged the sliding door's glass. She turned from the wintery backyard and climbed onto a stool at the breakfast bar. The counter before her was cluttered with a growing magnitude of details necessary to plan her dream wedding.

On top of the venue, catering, limo, various brides' magazines, and the best bride planning notebook ever, was the printed page from the Kleinfeld's website. Shining pure in white and gold was “The One.”

The perfect dress certain to transform her into the virginal bride she had longed to be—she was certain Jesse wished she were—all for a mere five thousand dollars, plus veil, shoes, and anything else the sales people would inevitably talk her into. And if for some unfathomable reason it was not the one, she had at least a dozen more options, all clearly

marked with neon pink heart-shaped sticky notes on the pages of her magazines.

She flipped to the schedule tab in her planner and scrutinized the “Where You Should Be by This Time” calendar. *Oy*, was she ever behind.

Katya, Beulah, and she were taking the train in a few hours to New York where she hoped to say, “Yes!” to her wedding dress.

Two days after Jesse had proposed she had contacted the legendary Kleinfeld Bridal Shop in Manhattan, where every designers’ dresses were available for the discerning, fabulously fashionable woman. Unfortunately, the earliest appointment available had been two months later. She sipped her lukewarm coffee.

At last the day had arrived.

Her pen hovered over the little box next to FOUND THE DRESS! She longed to enter an elegant hot-pink ink checkmark.

Soon. Hopefully today.

Missing from her entourage were Harriet, Miss Linda, and— She sniffed. Cari. She laid the photo down and folded her hands.

Harriet and Bob were on another of their many road adventures. Since their marriage two months ago, they traveled every other weekend—Bob had arranged these outings back in November. This weekend the newlyweds were in Lancaster at a quaint bed and breakfast— according to the photos Harriet had showed all the mavens. The thought of the adventurers made her smile—even though she was disappointed.

With a June 19th date, Shira had less than four months to pull this affair together. The ever-organized Miss Linda had been a welcomed asset, however, since January her priority was the new Edna's School of Beauty. Business always seemed to be Miss Linda's main concern. Shira should be thankful, but sometimes she worried her salon manager had taken on too much.

She looked at her phone, hoping she had missed a text from her best friend. Nothing.

While Shira understood why Harriet and Linda couldn't be there, it irked her that Cari, as her matron of honor—of all people—wouldn't be there.

Since her best friend had announced her pregnancy four weeks ago, Cari had developed a monster case of twenty-four hour a day, seven days a week morning sickness. So, Shira hadn't seen much of Cari and they barely spoke. She and Jesse missed their double dates with Cari and Aaron.

She slipped the dress photo into the plastic page protector in her planning book and began packing up everything into her spacious Michael Kors satchel.

Truth be told, Shira was a little put out by Cari's absence in the overall wedding plans. She shrugged as she slipped the magazines into the pouch. Women had babies every day, what's the big deal?

Where were you for Cari's wedding?

Shira's face heated. *Yes, Lord.* Where *had* she been for her best friend? Anywhere but where Shira needed to be, to support Cari.

Forgive me, Lord.

The last thing she wanted to turn into was a bridezilla.

What did the woman who led their Bible Study say? “Stay in the moment. Be grateful.”

Shira closed her eyes, took a deep breath then exhaled. A smile formed. She *did* have so much to be grateful for.

The salon was more successful than she could ever have imagined. The Edna School of Beauty had opened to a full enrollment—six eager women—and the mavens were enjoying teaching their own classes.

Linda was the best manager and school director she could have hired. Even young Daye had become a sweet, efficient addition to The Hair Mavens Salon.

And, best of all, she was getting married to the man of her dreams—the man God had saved for her! The warmth in her cheeks as she thought of Jesse always amazed her. Such a virtuous response from someone like her.

She shook her self-reprisal from her thoughts and continued loading her purse.

Today was the day she would find the dress to knock her future husband out of his argyles!

Noises came from the basement. She rolled her eyes as she buckled her satchel. Her dad had been puttering down there for days. He had banned her from even opening the door.

At this point she didn't care what distracted him from his strange funk since Harriet's wedding. The bottom line was he had a thing for Beulah, but her

friend was oblivious, and her father had wimped out—again—and not told her of his feelings.

Instead he watched as Beulah day by day grew in her affections for the handsome police chief, Shaun O’Shea.

She scoffed. These people were close to fifty! At what point did adults outgrow all this stuff? She sipped her coffee and thought of the attraction and love she felt for Jesse. She chuckled. Hopefully, never.

Her cell rang. Katya’s photo appeared on the screen. “Hey, girlfriend, did you decide what you’re going to do?”

“*Nyet*. No, not yet.” Katya sighed. “I do not want to hurt Tom’s feelings. And Beulah might get angry with me.”

“It’s just lunch. Yuri has a girlfriend, he’s clearly moved on, right?”

“I suppose . . .”

“What’s going on?” Shira knew Katya. Was this caginess because her friend still had feelings for the handsome Russian she had left behind in New York? Did she want to resume where they left off? Shira bit her lip. Surely not.

Besides, Katya would never leave The Hair Mavens, much less break up with such an amazing man like Beulah’s son, Tom Montgomery.

A crash came from downstairs.

“Yes!” Her father yelled. He clomped up the stairs and appeared in the kitchen holding a large, dented pink box. His thick salt-and-peppered hair stuck up like he hadn’t slept in days, and cobwebs

and basement grunge covered his face and hands. “I found it, Shira!”

What on earth?

“Katya let me call you back.” She disconnected the call and hopped off the stool. “Are you okay?”

He beamed like a little kid. “I found it!” He said again.

“What? What did you find?”

He set the dusty box on the counter, covering her expensive purse and then lifted the lid with a flourish. She leaned over. The musty smell hit her first. Yellowed, wrinkled tissue paper still covered his prize.

He wiggled his bushy brows. “Open it.”

The moment her fingers touched the tissue, her stomach curdled. She didn’t have to look to know what was waiting underneath. She peeled back the wrapping.

“Your mom’s wedding dress!” Dad extended his arms like a ringmaster.

Her stomach sunk to her cranberry-red painted toes. Yes, it was her mother’s ball gown—giant puffy sleeves and lace—wedding dress. “Wow.”

Her father placed an arm across her shoulders. “I know, it’s beautiful, right? I have been looking for days. Ever since I heard you were going all the way to Manhattan to look for a dress.”

Gently, she lifted the dress by the huge puffy sleeves that could hide a toddler. The bodice was of imported lace and delicate beading, obviously hand stitched. No question the craftsmanship was exceptional, but it was the epitome of over-the-top 1980’s fashion and would never work for her. She

flashed to her wedding day, wearing the dress with her hair teased out to kingdom come.

She shivered. This would never work. Ever.

Her dad wiped his hand on his pant leg. “I can still see your mom walking toward me in this dress,” he gently caressed the sleeve, then whispered, “She looked so beautiful. Like an angel.”

Shira gazed into her dad’s dark brown eyes. The hope and love she witnessed there were painfully evident. Two tiny puddles of moisture were about to escape those vulnerable orbs and roll down his cheeks.

“Your mom always wanted you to wear her dress. Now you don’t need to go to New York, Button.”

Shira swallowed. *Oy.*



Katya Stavropolsky

Katya thumbed off her cell and set it on her bed, now covered with a half-dozen outfits of different colors and styles.

Even though she wanted to discuss fashion choices with Shira, she was somewhat relieved that their call was cut short. Her friend had no trouble probing the motives she had been ignoring for weeks. Motives she should think about.

Instead she refocused her attention on her clothing options. She had narrowed it down to these

six. What she wore had to be perfect . . . for Shira and this trip to Kleinfeld and . . .

“Stop it, Katya.” She rubbed the back of her neck, then folded her arms against her churning stomach.

This was not about the trip to look for Shira’s wedding dress—even though she felt honored to have been invited. This was about Yuri Malikov. The man who had been the love of her life. The man she had abandoned.

Yuri had called her nearly every day since she had told him about the trip to Kleinfeld’s with Shira. Prior to that they had spoken from time to time.

Their conversations had originally stayed away from why she left and focused on their lives today. He laughed at the stories of the grannies and Harriet. Lately, however, he frequently asked her why she left him. Why she had lied when she said she did not love him anymore.

She chewed her lower lip. It was a mistake to have told him she had not meant the mean things she had said to him three years ago.

If she met Yuri for dinner would he think she wanted to resume their relationship?

She paced around her bedroom then moved into the living room, her fists tightening until her fingernails cut into her palm. Did she want to get back together?

Sometimes he spoke about his girlfriend, Natasha who lived with him. She plopped onto the couch and rubbed her temples. It was difficult to not

feel jealous that someone had replaced her and was now living grandly in his Manhattan penthouse.

Did this woman use the thick Egyptian cotton towels Katya had picked out? The china?

She inventoried her humble surroundings and huffed.

When Yuri asked about Tom, she felt uncomfortable sharing that Tom was only a police officer and her modest apartment was all she had to show for her new life away from him.

Around her was simplicity—simple furniture, simple furnishings, simple, simple, simple. Her gaze landed on the collage of picture frames on the wall. She stood and walked toward them.

The first photo that drew her eyes was Edna. It had been taken a few weeks before her death. Katya's unruly curly hair nearly covered her face. She had worn those outrageous black horn-rimmed glasses and a faint grin. How frightened she was back then.

Edna held Katya in a sweet embrace, with a smile that lit her face and spoke of the love and genuine compassion residing in her heart. Katya owed her life to that amazing woman.

Next to the picture were recent photos taken by Daye. Nearly all of them were of her and the mavens. Each shot caught a moment of laughter and joy. At Harriet and Bob's wedding. At the opening of the Edna's School of Beauty. The newspaper clipping of Beulah, Harriet, Linda, Daye, and she after Beulah had talked their way out of a hostage situation.

She took a step toward the framed photo of Officer Tom Montgomery in his uniform receiving a medal for saving a young woman's life. Another, of the two of them dancing at Harriet and Bob's reception. Her heart fluttered at how handsome he looked in his tux. The way he gazed at her and not the camera. She touched the smile dimple on his cheek.

Why did she feel embarrassed about her life? Or about Tom? He was a hero. A gentleman.

Her life was filled with people who loved her. It was both real and magical.

But she had that persistent longing for more. She knew what that life was like—with Yuri.

Tom would never be able to give wealth and status to her.

She bit her lip. Did that make her a bad person?

Had she only loved Yuri for his wealth? She turned away and returned to her bedroom.

Would Beulah or Shira hate her if she revealed these feelings that had troubled her sleep for weeks?

Part of her wanted to talk it out. Part of her wanted to meet with Yuri and make a clean, permanent break of the relationship that was clearly growing.

Then, there was this other, nagging part that wanted to throw herself into Yuri's arms and beg him to take her back.

Her phone buzzed with a text.

Yuri. Her heart burned as she read.

DID YOU DECIDE?

**ARE YOU MEETING ME FOR
DINNER?**

Katya exhaled. She glanced toward the photos, then toward the ceiling. Now her heart pounded in her chest like it wanted to escape.

It was just dinner. She scoffed.

Gripping her cell tighter, she typed her response.

YES.

Thanks for signing up for my email newsletters and important announcements.

I'm still writing Book 3 of the *Hair Mavens*, so watch for more sneak peaks, as well as another story I'm so excited about.

God bless you!

Terri