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Sometimes I worry
about being a success
in a mediocre world.
-- Lily Tomlin



Photo: Courtesy Tristar

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My Bitter Valentine

Cinema for Curmudgeons

We know. The Ides of March is nothing compared to That Damned 14th of February. While couples seem to swoon endlessly around you in a ballet of bliss, your online personals account was just closed for lack of activity. And if you see another stupid Hallmark window display, you're going to wind up on Cops.

Having accrued several years of being single on The Day That Dare Not Speak Its Name (including once being dumped on the Day Itself), I've become something of an expert on Bitter Valentines. I suggest hitting the video store and stocking up on those unhappily-ever-after films... both of them.

Cynicism notwithstanding (even though that's the whole point of this piece), there are a few relationship films that won't leave you tearing out your hair.

Walking and Talking - A pre-Being John Malkovich Catherine Keener shines opposite Liev Schreiber (yep, again). An agonizing and highly amusing look at being single when all your friends are getting married.

Miami Rhapsody - In a twist on the cheatin' heart, Sarah Jessica Parker is the one who can't commit to Alec Baldwin. Think of it as Dysfunctional Relationships and the City.

Say Anything - Okay, I know it's all about love and that kind of crap, but this film features Lili Taylor in one of the best broken-heart roles of all time. Besides, it's really hard to be bitter while watching a John Cusack movie.

The Truth About Cats and Dogs - Janeane Garofalo is unparalleled when it comes to actresses willing to capitalize on their cynicism. Just watch the first 95 minutes. The last two will make you roll your eyes, but Janeane Garofalo.

A Walk on the Moon - Set during the summer of 1969 in the Catskills, this drama follows the breakup of a marriage and features an exceptional performance by Anna Paquin (who, btw, is not the divorcee).

The Ice Storm - If your (or your parents') marriage broke up in the '70s and you're still pissed off, this is the film for you. It's almost

unfair to recommend it on such a tongue-in-cheek list, as it's a brilliant (but extraordinarily depressing) film.

The Daytrippers - I'm not sure what it means that this is the third Liev Schreiber film on the list, except that he chooses excellent scripts (Jakob the Liar notwithstanding). Stanley Tucci, Hope Davis and Parker Posey round out the cast in this film about one family's response to infidelity.

My Best Friend's Wedding - When else are you going to see Julia Roberts rejected?!

If your distaste for Valentine's Day is so strong that you lean more towards the macabre, well, there's always *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*. 🍷

-- Sarah Chauncey

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