



Bad Marie

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Bad Marie is the story of Marie, tall, voluptuous, beautiful, thirty years old, and fresh from six years in prison for being an accessory to murder and armed robbery. The only job Marie can get on the outside is as a nanny for her childhood friend Ellen Kendall, an upwardly mobile Manhattan executive whose mother employed Marie's mother as a housekeeper. After Marie moves in with Ellen, Ellen's angelic baby Caitlin, and Ellen's husband, a very attractive French novelist named Benoit Doniel, things get complicated, and almost before she knows what she's doing, Marie has absconded to Paris with both Caitlin and Benoit Doniel. On the run and out of her depth, Marie will travel to distant shores and experience the highs and lows of foreign culture, lawless living, and motherhood as she figures out how to be an adult; how deeply she can love; and what it truly means to be "bad".

Bad Marie Details

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Author : Marcy Dermansky

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From Reader Review Bad Marie for online ebook

Suzanne says

Burned through this in 48 hours and I wasn't even trying.

Bad Marie is a hard character to like, but fun to follow around on her adventures. I kept marveling at her talent for self-delusion and wondering where her brazenness would take her next. People who need to like a character to like a book may not enjoy this, but I appreciated the plot-driven story, the entertainment value, and the wry writing.

This is a woman whose moral compass is permanently on the fritz. Marie is always just Marie, self-absorbed, narcissistic, living for the moment and her own immediate needs, worrying only about where she is going to get her next meal, hopefully a gourmet one, or find her next bathtub (she really likes her baths, usually with a bottle of whiskey). Her exploits are fun to watch, whether she is running away with her friend/employer's husband and baby, eating croissants in Paris, dodging police officers on the Champs de Elysee, dating a famous actor in Nice, trying to re-connect with her dead lover's family (not the friend's husband – other one, the bank robber), or using stolen credit cards to check into high-end Mexican resorts, all with a kidnapped 2-year-old in tow. Inconvenient things annoy her, such as how, in France, everybody is always speaking French, or how she has to deal with the friend's husband's grief when his grandmother dies (when will he stop whining!). When the toddler gets fussy, she feels sorry for herself (Hello! You kidnapped this child). And nothing is ever her fault, nothing is ever her responsibility. Occasionally she ruminates on the topics of fate and planning, but there are no revelations here, just always more delusions and a repetition of her philosophy that she never has regrets. Actually this is repeated so frequently, I think the lady doth protest too much.

Although some of the people around her are themselves about as bad as she is, the best parts are where she gets judgmental about other people's morality. Hilarious.

Myfanwy says

Bad Marie is a bad influence. I say this because while reading Marcy Dermansky's second novel, Bad Marie, I was driven to do something that I, as a mother of a small, active child, never do anymore--and that is stay up past 11PM reading, which should tell you something about how engrossing this novel is if even an exhausted mother will stay up late reading it.

It is that good.

So what about Marie? Who is she? She's a nanny. She's an ex-con. She's a fuck up. She's also got a big, twisted heart that wants love and healing and happiness and yet all of the people she's ever loved have let her down; basically, Marie makes bad choices about who to love. Except for one. And that one is the little kid she babysits for, Caitlin. And in this relationship between caregiver and child is the crux of the story.

Of course, being a two-year-old there is one crucial moment when Caitlin does disappoint Marie because she cannot possibly respond in an adult. In that moment, Marie first decides to respond in her typical way, but finds she can't do it. She has grown. She has learned to put this child's needs above her own. And that, my

friends, is pretty close the love a parent feels.

Okay, so Marie is still not technically doing the right thing in that she kidnapped Caitlin from first her mother and then her father, but her heart is eventually in the right place. Ultimately, she does feel guilt and does want what's best for Caitlin; she just lacks the skills to figure out how do the right thing.

Here is a book that is both literary and plot driven, humorous and heartbreaking. Here is a book that makes you feel for the protagonist despite the horrible things she does. After all, she is still that hard luck kid whose friend's mother took pity. Okay, she is a grown up and she's doing a horrible thing by keeping this child from her parents, but, in the end, her intentions are sort of good. In the end, I believe she will bring Caitlin home.

This is not to say I want to befriend Marie or have her watch my kid (and sleep with my husband), but I do understand her a bit more. I do feel for her. With that said, I was extremely anxious as I read the final 20 or so pages of this book and felt that I constantly needed to make sure that my kid was okay. As such, I finished the book sitting on the couch next to him as he watched Cyberchase with his bare feet tucked up under my leg to keep them warm. I did not want to let him out of my sight.

All this is to say, it's a book that stirs up a lot of complex emotion and it's a brave book. There are readers, I'm sure, who will judge the book solely on the actions of the character. If they did so, they would be missing out. Bad Marie is a book you will not want to miss.

Jane says

So strange and wonderful. Bad Marie makes one bad, no make that "catastrophic," choice after another. It begins with a love affair with an accomplice to a bank robbery and murderer, flight from the law, and six years in jail.

Marie is bad but so believable and so oddly likable. Like Marie's life, the book is pure escape, hurtling from one choice and piece of bad luck after another. I have one more Dermansky book to read. She's going to have to get busy so I can keep reading her.

Linda Lilja says

I loved this book about a young woman who lives on the edge of life. It was a quick read and one I will reread. It reminded me of going to a movie in the afternoon, being totally immersed in the experience and feeling startled when it was over and I exited into the bright daylight. I will read her other novel. Hope it is in Sony.

Emily says

I LOVED this book. Marie is, indeed, bad, as the inciting incident of the novel is her stealing her childhood friend's husband (and two-year-old daughter!) and escaping to France. But the narrative is so good that I wanted Marie to make it, and it was so fun to read about a female antihero who is simply living from moment to moment. This is all over the place and it is delightful. Dermansky says at the end that she wanted to write a book that read like a French noir film, and she definitely succeeded.

Ethel Rohan says

This deceptively simple book was a gripping read and I felt my chest clutch throughout, and whole body sigh at the novel's end. Told in clear, concise prose, Dermansky's characterization of the novel's protagonist, Marie, is masterful. Though a deeply flawed character, I cared a great deal about Marie and found myself hoping for her all the way, even while knowing her situation was impossible.

That sense of the inevitable and the impossible at the end of the novel will stay with me for a long time. I so, so wanted a different end for Marie. It's a testimony to Dermansky's skill that she delivered the right ending to this novel, an ending that although inevitable was also surprising and affecting. On finishing this novel, I felt the same pain I've felt on losing a loved one--that mad desire to turn back time, to bring back the dead. I found Marie's quiet acceptance at the end of this novel instructive and healing. So much about life is about putting up a good fight, it's also about accepting what we can't change.

Thank you, Marcy Dermansky for this wonderful novel and memorable protagonist.

4.5 stars.

E Singer says

It was intriguing to be inside the head of Marie. I've never come across a character like her. I would guess she is a sociopath, consumed with only herself and her immediate desires. She will take you on an unexpected journey and you will not be able to put the book down! Can't wait to read Marcy Dermansky's other novel, The Twins!

Caitlin Constantine says

I found this book through a discussion of unlikeable characters at The Millions, which is one of those random literary happenstance events that have been occurring quite a bit for me these days. Anyway, the point of the discussion was that oftentimes many readers will gauge their appreciation of a book on how much they liked the main character (or even worse, how much they could relate to the main character). The author held up Bad Marie as an example of a book with a rotten main character that you can't help but cheer for anyway.

I didn't exactly cheer for Marie. Rather, I found myself feeling sorry for her. She may have been thirty and she may have been an ex-convict, but she was also staggeringly naive, in a way that would have been acceptable for a teenager but just seemed sad in a full-grown woman. She made terrible choice after terrible choice, with almost no regard for the way it affected those around her. I won't go so far as to say she's "bad" but she's definitely deficient in all of the ways that count. (I think she maybe recognized that deep-down inside, because she kept repeating that she had no regrets like a mantra, as if she said it enough times it would eventually become true. But how can you have no regrets when every choice you make - and continue to make - limits your future?)

Part of what made the book so compelling for me - as I read this book in one afternoon, while sitting in a

sunroom during a rainstorm - was Dermansky's writing. Dermansky said she wanted to write a novel that was like a noirish French film, and I think she succeeded, as the book was gritty and stylish at the same time. But what I liked (liked may be the wrong word for this) was that Dermansky, by choosing to write a character who was so "bad," created someone who was entirely believable. Maybe it's just my own life experiences, but I have seen any number of people who, when faced with a decision, will invariably choose the path that gives them what they want right now, no matter the consequences down the road. Shoot, I see it every time I open my work email and find myself confronted with news releases detailing the drug-fueled abuses, financial scams, passionate assaults and cold-blooded murders committed by my fellow humans. In fact, most of us can point to times in our lives when we have made decisions that were entirely about what we wanted at that moment in time, consequences be damned.

I know that I am sometimes guilty of wanting my main characters to be likable and heroic, and I appreciate it when a writer reminds me that human nature is way more complex than that. But if you have a problem with characters who practically revel in amorality, then you might want to avoid this book.

Beverly says

This is a truly vile book. I can't imagine why anyone would give it a positive rating. It is a slight but ugly story about weakness and evil in which the author, through the protagonist, exploits the fear and loneliness of a kidnapped 2 year old and portrays an abandoned cat so starved and desperate that it loses its teeth trying to bite through metal to get at food. Why present child and animal suffering as central features of a novel along with an unending exposition of fraud, betrayal, theft, and suicide? I have no idea. To show that life is a hideous nightmare, even in Paris and on the beach? This book actually nauseated me.

Some readers have actually applauded the vile and pathetic 'heroine' because she does whatever she wants to do. But this is a clear misreading, because even the author, for all of her willingness to roll around in shit, shows that the protagonist is deluded and doesn't belong outside of an institution. I read this because it is bracketed in the Morning News Tournament of Books, but consequently I've lost all respect for that competition. By the way, the cover is ugly too.

Greg says

For the second time in about as many weeks I've come across a book with gushing blurbs from well-respected authors that don't seem to fit the book. "...*deliciously evil...worthy of Flaubert....a naughty pleasure, a philosophical romp, heady hedonism...so very very bad....*" these are just a sampling of unworthy praises on the front and back cover of the book. Never mind the gushing words to be found in the three pages of blurbs inside.

'*Bad' Marie* is a kind of dopey, hapless woman who does bad things because she has the awful luck to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Almost every 'bad' she does gets explained away by some kind of circumstance that makes her more of a schmuck than even slightly mischievous.

The book isn't awful, nor is it uninteresting; it just isn't the book being advertised by the blurbs. Since the book comes with no little synopsis to help give the reader an idea of what to expect one can only take the word of some respected authors like Antonya Nelson, Mary Robison, Fredrick Barthelme and Margot Livesey to get an idea of what the book is about. There words and the cover picture of a pixie looking girls smoking (Marie is 30. At 30 smoking is no longer cool, nor does it make one 'bad'. A little stupid and

addicted but not 'bad', unless one accepts the definition of 'bad' to be like Michael Jackson when he screeched about being 'bad', in which case she still isn't 'bad' because I'm fairly certain one must be able to dance to be 'bad' like that, and I have no idea from the book if Marie can dance. She can drink whisky and show her big boobs to a guy. It is difficult for the reader to forget that Marie has big boobs. I'm surprised there aren't big boobs on the cover of the book, it's like a recurring thing in the book, how big Marie's boobs are).

After reading the over-written prose of *Witz* this book with it's almost Carver-like-cum-Creative-Writing-Program prose read super fast. Sort of like I'd been warming up with a few of those bats with the donuts on them, and took a swing with a whiffle ball bat. Or like a hot knife through butter or something fast and easy (Insert your own joke here). Which was nice. It was satisfying to just read something with a story and not much of the extra baggage hanging from it.

Monica says

This was exactly the reading jumpstart I needed. I've been struggling through books lately, pushing my way through book club selections and endless classics and not a bit excited about any of them. Then came *Bad Marie*. I read it in less than 24 hours, something I can't remember having done in the 12+ months since my daughter was born.

Its paperback, its short, its fabulously twisted and full of vicarious thrills. I came away with a love and appreciation for despicable Marie. I had this on my list because it ended up on the Morning News Tournament of Books shortlist for 2011, and it did not disappoint.

I'm avoiding a plot description because my little paperback did not have one and I think it made it a richer read. Find and enjoy.

christa says

I don't know Marcy Dermansky, but I have to imagine the novelist behind the ridiculously delicious joy-ride *Bad Marie* spent a lot of time bent over a keyboard cackling as she pulled the wings off her title character.

Fiction just got fun again, friends. This is the kind of book you sprint through, only to realize everyone else is doing it wrong. Writers are taking themselves -- not to mention their characters -- far too seriously.

Lets start where Dermansky starts: With a glass of whiskey and a bathtub, which she says in the novel's version of a director's cut is the image that inspired the book.

Marie just got out prison after a six-year stint for abetting a criminal. She didn't actually hate her hard time, which included a monotonous job in laundry, three squares a day, and hours in her bunk re-reading the novel *Virginie at Sea*, a one-hit wonder by the French author Benoit Doniel. Marie appeals to Ellen, a well-to-do friend from childhood with whom she has a very complicated give-take-take-take relationship, and ends up nannying for her 2-year-old daughter Caitlin. But! Ellen's husband, it turns out, is Benoit Doniel! When the couple comes home and finds Marie drunk, passed out in the bathtub with their daughter -- and Benoit seems appropriately distracted by her big wet breasts -- Marie decides to give him the humpty-hump treatment. She commits to this extra-hard the next day when Ellen takes her out to dinner to tell her she's fired.

Her final days on the job are all very sexy and whirlwind. Baguettes, Ellen's red kimono, and trips to Central Park. Coffee from a bowl, Benoit murmuring in French-lish. Caitlin nonplussed by the image of her father and her nanny bumping faces. Instead of spending a final day together wading in tear-stained nudity, they pack up some organic string cheese and jet off for France together with Caitlin.

The honeymoon period doesn't last a day.

From here, Dermansky takes this hussy without a conscience and beats the shit out of her in a handful of new, surprising, and yes, improbably ways. I'd like nothing better than to sit in a room with four other people who have read this book and flush out why Marie emerges from this novel more likable than when we started, despite the ever-growing resume of bad behavior.

As far as I can tell, this novel has been under-read. Released in soft cover, reviewed by the likes of Elle, but not by major book media. Quite a bit of blog chatter from women who preface their critiques with information about receiving a review copy of the book.

I can't imagine the NYT Book Review could review this, then look at themselves in the mirror in the morning. Pan it, and they are self-righteous dicks. Like it too hard, and they would risk being taken seriously in the future. They would have to address the implausibility, and show concern about how a recently-released convict had such speedy access to a passport. They would suck the ample life out of the novel by thinking about it too hard, which is precisely what no one should do while reading it. Which is fine.

"Bad Marie" makes for a fantastic cult classic. Something passed along between friends and raved about in dark booths of Chinese Restaurants. Our little secret.

paula says

DAMN. Literature with a capital L, and you know, it's idiotic of me, but I always forget that Literature with a capital L is frequently just as entertaining and readable as Literature with a capital Crap. Why do I forget that? How do I not remember that, even though I read Chelsea Cain and Christopher Moore and John Burdett, my FAVORITE books are by Cormac McCarthy and Updike and Walker Percy and Liz Jensen?

I don't know. Blame Marie. Everyone else does.

Marie is too much. She is beautiful and greedy, a thirty-year-old child in a tall, titsy body, moving through life at the whim of adults who treat her like some kind of badge. When we meet her she's working as a nanny for her childhood friend Ellen, a super-successful Manhattanite with a brownstone, a toddler, and a French novelist husband.

Marie gets everything but the brownstone, of course.

I don't want to give too much away, but Marie, despite being a homewrecker and a kidnapper, a thief and an adulteress, is not the worst character in this book - and the badness of the others is breathtaking. Short, picturesque, and mesmerizing. Bad Marie: good novel.

Patrick Brown says

This reminded me of a Highsmith novel, only the anti-hero's adventures aren't played for suspense in exactly the same way. There aren't really many near misses with the authorities, though there are a few twists and turns. But there's the same insane, off-kilter moral equivocating (stealing an old frienemy's husband and child are justifiable, but not stealing a stranger's stroller), the same delusional self-confidence. It takes real talent to walk that tightrope that stretches the span between "I can't believe this person!" and "I hope she makes it!" and Dermansky pulls it off in style.

I loved the repetition of certain phrases -- "the French actress" -- the contempt, the bitterness disguised as something else. Marie was fascinating from page one to the end of the book, and the narrative style was a big reason why.

This is a great book to read on a long flight or a short vacation. It's fun without sacrificing style, and it will keep you turning the pages. I'll admit to being sort of a fanboy for the unlikeable character in fiction, but it's mystifying to me why this book has a 3.44 star rating. It's about a sexy bad girl with big breasts who escapes to France with a louche writer and his daughter. Who doesn't want to read that?

T. Coughlin says

I have to give this novel 5 stars because I can't see how Marcy Dermansky could have done a better job portraying Marie. As bad as Marie is, I found myself rooting her on and hoping for redemption. It's a real page turner. Dermansky's prose is extremely readable and contemporary. This is a fun read.
