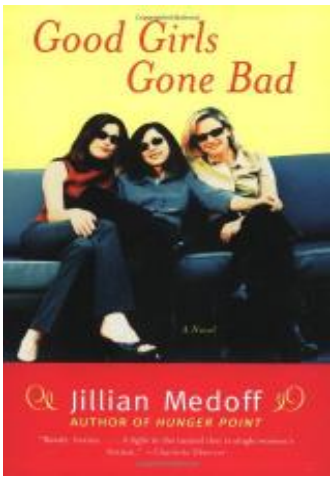
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Good Girls Gone Bad: A Novel

by Jillian Medoff



About the Book

"A fact every actuary learns: Regardless of how many 'What, if" scenarios you design or assumptions you make, reality is always an ambush."

Janey Fabre is an actuary, a profession in which she's required to study mortality tables. She's also harboring a number of secrets -- about herself, her long-lost mother, and the way she stalks her ex-boyfriend Tobias through the streets of New York City.

Determined to get over Tobias and move on with her life, Janey joins group therapy. Once there, though, she's convinced the other women she meets are truly unbalanced. Suzanna prefers the company of her lap dog to human beings. Laura is a nymphomaniac. Bethany, a forty-year-old divorcee, still lives with her mother. Valentine, a painfully shy beauty, eats compulsively; Ivy, a sweet-talking southern belle, binges on Botox; and Natasha wears a facemask to protect herself from unseen pathogens. Of course, what the girls don't realize about quiet Janey is that she's haunted by her mother's disappearance and keeps in her purse a detailed list of suicide options.

Eventually, the girls learn to confide in each other and once empowered, dedicate themselves to collectively solving one another's problems. Like Janey, each woman is fearful of emotional intimacy. Their individual neuroses enable them to cope with this fear, and the result is as comedic as it is tragic. What begins as harmless mischief escalates into a vengeful prank that climaxes with a cracked skull on a boardroom table and surprising, deeply painful revelations, especially for Janey. How the girls gain control over themselves -- and each other -- is the driving force of this unabashedly funny and profoundly intelligent dark comedy. A stunning tale of revenge and redemption, **Good Girls Gone Bad** is a poignant, bittersweet mediation on family -- the families in our past, as well as the ones we create as adults.

Discussion Guide

1. Despite its comic overtones, **Good Girls Gone Bad** is a sincere portrait of a woman struggling to choose life over death. How is humor used throughout the book to underscore serious issues? Does Janey's ironic tone enhance or hinder the book's emotional depth?

2. Describe Janey Fabre. Is she as invisible to the world as she believes? How does her image of herself differ from other people's perception? Do most people see themselves as others do?

3. Janey is an unreliable narrator. How does her unwillingness -- or inability -- to tell the truth bear on her relationships with women and men? With her family? On the story itself? Should the girls have confronted her or were they right to let her get caught in her own lies? Could their betrayal be considered a good thing in light of how the story ends?

4. What role does actuarial science play in **Good Girls Gone Bad**? How is the metaphor of actuarial probability used?

5. Suicide and suicide ideation is explored at length in this novel. How does Janey's relationship with her mother bear on Janey's suicidal impulses? Janey's relationship with her father? Do you think self-destructive behavior is learned within a family?

6. American culture is obsessed with youth and beauty. What does **Good Girls Gone Bad** seem to be saying about women aging? Does it create a realistic portrait of how women over forty feel about themselves? Do you believe society is as harsh as the girls believe?

7. Why do the women in the book call themselves "girls?"

8. **Good Girls Gone Bad** has been described as a black comedy. What are the elements of a black comedy?

9. Look at the book's epigrams. To whom does the Elizabeth Bishop quote refer: "When you write my epitaph, you must say I was the loneliest woman who ever lived?" Janey? Janey's mother? The girls?

10. What do you think about how the men in the novel are portrayed? Tobias? Janey's dates? Her father? Does the book depict relationships between men and women realistically? If not, is this done on purpose?

Author Bio

Jillian Medoff is the author of the national bestseller I COULDN'T LOVE YOU MORE, as well as the novels WHEN WE WERE BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL, THIS COULD HURT, GOOD GIRLS GONE BAD and HUNGER POINT. A former fellow at MacDowell, Blue Mountain Center, VCCA, and Fundación Valparaiso, she has an MFA from NYU. In addition to writing fiction, Jillian has a long career in management consulting and is currently a Senior Consultant at the Segal Group, where she advises clients on all aspects of the employee experience.

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