

# **Bad Boys** *and* Naughty Girls

There are bad boys . . . and then there are *bad* boys. One of the most difficult tasks in writing an imperfect character is losing reader sympathy. Your reader must care about what happens to your hero and heroine. Your reader needs to have sympathy for them in order to be invested in the main characters and root for them all the way to the end.

But good girls and boys aren't as fun to write, and not always realistic. But there are ways to make your "baddest" hero appealing, and ways to make your most evil villain believable. And it all happens near the beginning.

This workshop focuses on how to create great heroes and fantastic heroines from your bad boys and naughty girls . . . and how to create compelling villains who are worthy of your protagonists.

Meet the panelists:

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**Jordan Dane**, debut author with Avon with her back-to-back romantic suspense trilogy starting with *No One Heard Her Scream* in April 08. Watch for her new "Sweet Justice" series beginning in February 09 with *Evil Without a Face*. Visit: [www.jordandane.com](http://www.jordandane.com).

**Cindy Gerard**, NYT bestselling author of sexy and adventurous romantic suspense, launches her new "Black Ops" series with Pocket this fall starting with *Show No Mercy* in October 08. Winner of a RITA and five-time finalist, visit her at [www.cindygerard.com](http://www.cindygerard.com).

**CJ Lyons**, a pediatric ER doc, blazed onto the writing scene with her cross-genre women's fiction thriller series "Angels of Mercy" with *Lifelines* (Mar 08) which *Publisher's Weekly* called "a spot-on debut" and garnered her a Top Pick from RT. Check her out at: [www.cjlyons.net](http://www.cjlyons.net)

**Lucia Macro**, Executive Editor at Avon, who says Jane Eyre is hands down her favorite heroine. Visit the Avon romance blog at: [www.avonromanceblog.blogspot.com](http://www.avonromanceblog.blogspot.com).

And the moderator, NYT bestselling author and three-time RITA finalist **Allison Brennan**, who RT says produces "not only memorable heroes but also unforgettable villains." Next up is *Playing Dead* (Oct 08.) Visit her at [www.allisonbrennan.com](http://www.allisonbrennan.com).

**How to make a “bad boy” the good guy?**

Some tricks to avoid turning your bad boy hero into a obnoxious jerk, unworthy of the heroine’s love:

-- clue the reader in on his very (very, very, very) good reasons for being bad, even if the heroine doesn't know or understand

-- give him a human side, make him a soft touch. There's a good reason everyone loves Hannibal Lecter—he's Clarice's knight in shining armor with a code of honor we can respect even as we despise him.

-- let the people around him admire him, respect him. We all look up to leaders, even when they might not be acting in a very leader-like way—just look at Bill Clinton.

**How to make a good boy the bad guy?**

-- give the bad guy the same or similar motivation for his goal as the good guy. This provides instant conflict and makes him seem human, not contrived. In other words, if the hero is doing everything possible to stop the bad guy because that's the only way to save his family, then have the bad guy also fighting to save his own family. High stakes for everyone!

-- give the bad guy a shot at redemption. At a point near the climax, you give the bad guy one last chance to make a decision—and he chooses the "wrong" path. Think *The Empire Strikes Back* when Darth Vader could decide to save Luke or kill him....he chooses to try to kill him and is cemented in our minds as the ultimate villain. Of course, George Lucas obviously fell in love with Vader and gave him one more shot at redemption in *Return of the Jedi* and Vader took it.

-- let the reader see how human the bad guy is. Maybe he stops the car chase to save a kid who ran out into the road or maybe he has a fondness for animals. Even the worst fictional sociopath has a soft spot somewhere, let the reader see it.

-- make sure the reader understands the villain’s “goals, motivation and conflict” as well as the hero’s. The villain’s backstory is just as important—the reader has to buy-in the *why* of his evil acts.

**Remember, every bad guy is the hero of his own story!**

All of the above applies to Naughty Girls as well, except there's still a stigma attached to a few characteristics that go along with being a strong,

independent woman. Readers will accept a woman with a diverse sexual history, a woman who has killed (like Jordan Dane's female assassin character), or a woman who has made mistakes in her past.

What they won't accept is a woman arguing. This is true in real life as well. Psychologists have done many studies and found that a woman arguing (even when using the same scripted words and verbal intonations as a male counterpart) is seen as defensive, shrill, and shrewish.

In other words, weak and whiny instead of strong and assertive. Strong female characters simply voice their case once, straightforward and simply and then they walk away and do what they need to do.

Sometimes this works, a lot of the times it blows up in their face—such as when Lydia almost gets fired in CJ's *Lifelines*. But they never, never seem weak or whiny.

### **Bad boys and naughty girls - How do we make our readers love them as much as we do ?**

#### *Make them vulnerable*

Seed in background information – betrayed by love, lost the love of their life, or other tragic life experiences – Cindy's bad boy heroes are all warriors. Her naughty girls are all fighters. They've lost friends, lost their bearings, lost faith and conviction. Make them afraid, sometimes of themselves. Give them a weakness – booze, adrenaline junkie, emotional unavailability. Make them battle with their deepest fears to make them worth the hero/heroine's struggles to win them over.

Have them see life through personal experiences that we can only imagine but they have lived through. Make trust an issue because they have been betrayed. Both a bad boy and a naughty girl must be much more vulnerable than they are cynical to deserve the kind of mate it takes to open them up to love and commitment.

#### *Make them real*

To be real, they must be honest. The honesty of the emotions, of the reactions, of the dialogue are what invest your readers in your story and in your people. The reader must believe what motivates them, moves them, angers them, weakens them or gives them strength. You achieve this by listening to the character you've created. Anticipating how they would react when faced with a specific situation. Get into their heads **AND THAT MEANS YOU** get into the moment. You put yourself there, in their place, in their predicament, in the moonlight, in the bed, in the boat that's sinking, in the building that's been

bombed, and you say, what would I do if this happened to me? What would I think?

**But sometimes, we get stuck. In that case . . .**

When you need inspiration...go to the movies! Or at least get a Netflix subscription. You won't regret it!

Ten movies, old and new, where the men are so bad they're good...or maybe they're so good because they're kind of bad. Anyway, you'll see what Lucia Macro mean when you watch!

Five Choices in Color

- 1) The Bourne Identity (2002): Is Jason Bourne good? Is he bad? Is he somewhere in between? Make up your own mind as you watch this action packed minute thriller.
- 2) Any James Bond Movie: You can pick your Bond (Lucia's favorite is Connery followed by Craig); pick your era (1960s-present) and pick your villain. You can also find where Mike Myers got all of his good ideas for Austin Powers.
- 3) LA Confidential: (1997): You get good guys, bad guys, and all the grey areas in between. Not a lot of female-empowering characters, but somehow you end up not caring too much
- 4) Silence of the Lambs (1991): One movie I do like better than the book. Of course, Lechter is all bad, but for some reason we're fascinated anyway. A really interesting study in how to make the villain fascinating.
- 5) Insomnia (2002): Did you ever think there was sometimes something creepy about Robin Williams? Yeah, me too, and he's pretty creepy in this quiet, quirky thriller.

Five Choices in Black and White

- 1) Suspicion (1941): Is Cary Grant going to kill his wife? You won't be able to figure it out till the very end...and, without giving anything away, the original ending is very different from what you see here.
- 2) Double Indemnity (1941) If your biggest memory of Fred MacMurray is from *My Three Sons*, well, take another look here.
- 3) The Big Sleep (1946): Don't worry if you can't figure out the plot; no one else, including the writer, could either. But you have Bogart as a shades of grey detective and Bacall as the not-quite-pristine woman he helps.
- 4) The Third Man (1949) : A non-fat Orson Welles turns up as Harry Lyme. He's crooked, he has no morals, and yet, fascinating
- 5) Strangers on a Train (1951): Watch this for the performance of Robert

Walker, as one of the most awful, devious, creepy villains ever shown on screen.

## **Bad is Sexy - A look at Jordan Dane's debut trilogy**

### **Nicholas "Nicky" Charboneau & Jasmine Lee - Bad or Anti-Heroes? You Decide**

- Nicky is a crime boss & Jasmine is his assassin in *NO ONE LEFT TO TELL & NO ONE LIVES FOREVER*
- He's a sexy Tony Soprano who can order someone killed with remorseless ease yet maintains a fierce loyalty for people he loves. And she's his dark humored sidekick. Beautiful and exotic, Jasmine is Nicky's bodyguard, assassin, lover, and secretly in love with him.
- They're both fascinated by death and consider morality a handicap that could get them killed.
- *NO ONE LEFT TO TELL* sets the stage for Nicky's story of a misguided vengeance infused with his twisted brand of love and loyalty—the driver behind the plot.
- In the sequel *NO ONE LIVES FOREVER*, everything Nicky values is at risk after he's kidnapped, forcing him to examine his life's choices in the harsh light of what he has become. And both Nicky and Jasmine must look into their hearts for their version of love, if they live through the experience.

### **Nicholas Quotes from NO ONE LEFT TO TELL & NO ONE LIVES FOREVER**

- "Revenge is an act of passion. And as you know, I am a very passionate man."
- "Guilt makes a person weak. And I find it a mercy that I haven't been plagued by such things."
- Nicholas traced a finger down the side of her cheek, letting a sad expression linger. "The best lie comes with an element of the truth, my dear Jasmine. I do have regrets in my life. Some are worth rectifying. And some I consider terminal character defects."

### **Jasmine Quotes from NO ONE LEFT TO TELL & NO ONE LIVES FOREVER**

- "I doubt I will ever understand the endearing qualities of the minivan."
- "I find myself a mere three blocks from the gates of hell. But rest assured, Nicky, I'm never so far from civilization that I cannot find a Starbucks."
- Nicholas had released her to hunt Logan McBride. Relishing the thought, she smiled. Nicky always did know how to please a woman.
- "I'm not exactly the religious type," Jasmine replied. "But I've put the fear of God into plenty of men. I prefer to think of my work as improving the gene pool."

**And then there is evil . . .**

Villains are often the most fun to write . . . and the most difficult to portray. Why? Because we often fall to stereotype. Serial killers were abused as children, they have issues with their mother, their father, were abandoned. We debate the role of “nature” versus “nurture” because some of our heroes and heroines have the same types of backgrounds as the villain. So why do some people grow up to kill . . . and some people grow up to stop them?

Why is your villain evil? What motivates him? What’s his backstory? Who was his first kill? How? Why? Put yourself in his (or her) shoes.

In *Tempting Evil*, Allison creates a villain who is certainly evil, but elicits sympathy from readers at the same time. Aaron Doherty had been repeatedly abandoned by his mother, left with friends, family, and strangers, throughout his childhood. He was her toy, and she grew tired of him because her own needs always came first. He never had any real human attachments, because she severed them whenever he had a chance at a normal life. Is it any wonder he grew up to become an erotomaniac?

**Exercise!**

List your top five favorite heroes from fiction and why.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List your top five favorite villains from fiction and why.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.