

JANE YOLEN AND HEIDI E. Y. STEMPLER

ILLUSTRATED BY REBECCA GUAY

SIRENS, JEZEBELS,  
MURDERESSES, THIEVES  
& OTHER FEMALE VILLAINS

BAD GIRLS






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JANE YOLEN  
HEIDI E. Y. STEMPLER

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 Charlesbridge

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TO THE STEMPLE BAD GIRLS, YOUNG AND OLD,  
ESPECIALLY MADDI AND GLENNY.  
AND FOR JUDY O'MALLEY—THE BADDEST . . . AND THE BEST  
—H. E. Y. S. AND J. Y.

FOR MY SWEET, FUNNY, QUIRKY, CREATIVE "BAD GIRL," VIVIAN  
—R. G.

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# BAD, MAD, OR THOROUGHLY ROTTEN

*AN INTRODUCTION*

"WHEN I'M GOOD, I'M VERY GOOD.  
BUT WHEN I'M BAD, I'M BETTER."

—Mae West in *I'm No Angel*

THERE ARE MORE BAD GIRLS in history than we can count: murderesses, drunkards, torturers, batterers, fences, slatterns, liars, layabouts, and total louts, as well as wicked mothers, grandmothers, and stepmothers. The list is endless, even though females are supposedly the gentler sex.

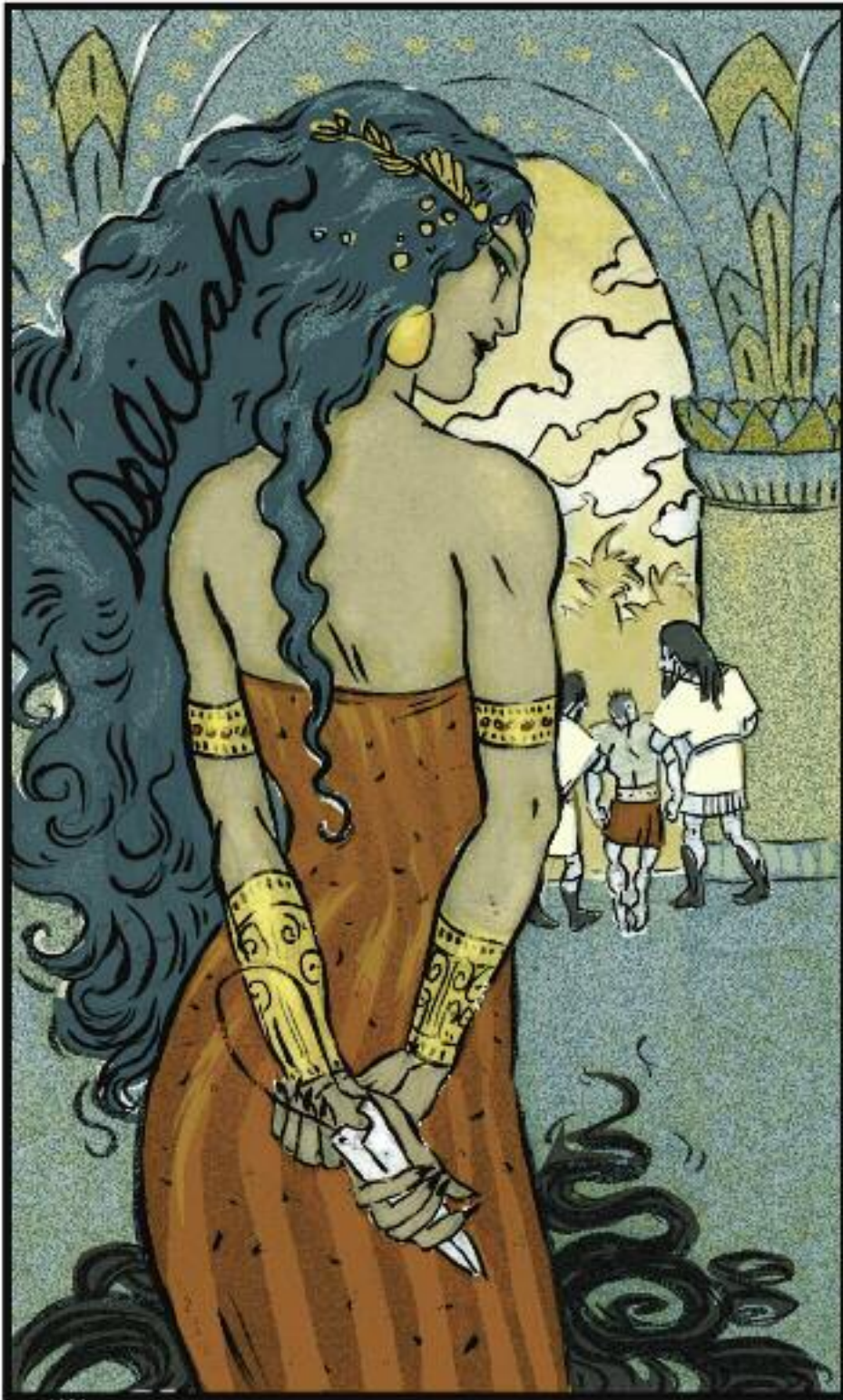
Often, though, a tough girl, an outspoken girl—an active, smart, forward-looking girl—is mistaken for a bad one. A strong leader is considered a wrong leader when that leader is female.

In this book we are taking a look back through history at all manner of famous female felons. We're looking at the baddest of the bad, as well as those who may have been just misunderstood. The crimes in question

happened hundreds, even thousands, of years ago—and some of them may have never happened at all. Our bad girls are a mixed bag. Some committed criminal acts, some morally wrong acts. Some acts are, perhaps, less criminal than justifiable, brave, or even committed in self-defense. We cannot compare badness by counting bodies. After all, do three hundred Protestants burned at the stake by Queen Mary outweigh the two that Lizzie Borden was accused (though acquitted) of killing? Nor can we compare badness by measuring crimes—Pearl Hart’s stagecoach robbery might seem tame in comparison to Salome’s hand in a great prophet’s execution. Each bad girl can only be judged standing on her own.

Everyone is entitled to her own opinion, and you will see ours. We certainly don’t always agree with each other, and we don’t expect you to agree with us either. Every crime—no matter how heinous—comes with its own set of circumstances, aggravating and mitigating, which can tip the scales of guilt. And views change. The line between right and wrong, criminal and hero, good girl and bad, is sometimes very thin. Though some acts—and some girls—will always be bad through and through.





CIRCA 110 BCE

# DELILAH

*A MERE SNIP OF A GIRL*

**THE STRONGER A MAN**, the harder he falls. Delilah was counting on it.

When Samson was born, his mother was so happy to have a baby that she promised an angel she would raise him as a Nazarite. Nazarites were people consecrated to God who never cut their hair. In exchange, the angel promised that Samson would have extraordinary powers and help deliver the Israelites from the hands of the Philistines who ruled them.

As Samson grew up and grew hair, he became as strong as the angel had promised. In one battle he single-handedly killed over a thousand Philistines using just the jawbone of a dead donkey. It was an astonishing feat. For the man and for the donkey.

Next Samson ripped the gate of Gaza from the ground and carried it on his shoulders while the Philistines fled. Samson led the Israelites for twenty years. He was the man.

Now the Philistines wanted Samson dead, but no man had the courage to face him. So of course they sent a woman to do the job.

That woman was Delilah. It is not known if she was a Philistine herself, but she was certainly in their pay. She was promised eleven hundred pieces of silver from each of the five Philistine chiefs to discover the source of Samson's strength.

Delilah was young, beautiful, smart—and sly. She put herself in Samson's way, and he fell for her. Hard. One day Delilah smiled her sexy smile, batted her sexy eyelashes, and said to Samson, "You are so strong. What makes you that way?"

Since he had promised his mother never to tell his secret, Samson lied. "Bind me with seven green bowstrings that have never been dried, and I will be as weak as any man."

While he slept, Delilah bound Samson with seven fresh bowstrings. Then she cried out, "Wake up, Samson, my love, the Philistines are here!" He woke, and snapped

the bowstrings as if they were straw. So she knew he'd lied.

Delilah pouted. She wanted those pieces of silver. So she tried again. She smiled her sexy smile. She batted her sexy eyelashes. And Samson told her he could be weakened if bound with new ropes that had never been used. When he fell asleep, Delilah bound him again. He broke the ropes easily, too.

Delilah sulked. She swore Samson's lies were proof he didn't love her. But once again he lied, and once again she tried to weaken him while he slept. It didn't work.

After that, she would not stop nagging. Day and night Delilah complained. Night and day she whined. Until at last she threatened to leave if he lied to her again. So this time Samson told her the truth. It was his hair. Cut his hair, and he would be weak and wobbly and worthless. He would be wimpy and wilted and worn.

Delilah knew the truth when she heard it. When Samson fell back asleep, she had a servant come in and cut his hair and shave his beard. Then she called for the Philistines to bind Samson. He was caught. Delilah took her silver coins and left quickly.



Bound and weak, Samson was taken to a prison in Gaza, where his eyes were put out. The Philistines tied him to the pillars of their temple. Now bound, weak, and blind, he was left for everyone to see. Night after night, the Philistines were all so busy jeering at Samson and drinking wine, dancing, and partying that they didn't notice his hair had begun to grow again. As it grew, so did his strength. Finally, with that last bit of power, Samson tore the temple pillars down, killing himself and everyone inside.

But Delilah, the bad girl responsible for all that carnage, was long, long gone, along with her silver coins.



SO OFF OUR AUTHORS GO—AWAY FROM COMPLTERS AND STACKS OF BOOKS. WHILE IT MAY NOT ALWAYS LOOK LIKE RESEARCH, THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BAD GIRLS CONTINUES.

IT SEEMS CLEAR TO ME THAT DELILAH WAS A PAID ASSASSIN. IT DOESN'T GET MUCH "BADDER" THAN THAT.



IT DEPENDS ON WHO TELLS THE STORY. THE PHILISTINES THOUGHT OF HER AS A HERO. AFTER ALL, SAMSON HAD SLAIN THOUSANDS OF THEIR PEOPLE.

THAT BAG WORKS BETTER WITH THOSE SHOES.



DELILAH WAS PAID TO PRETEND SHE LOVED SAMSON. WE HAVE A NAME FOR THAT SORT OF WOMAN.

SPY? UNDERCOVER COP? ACTRESS? MODEL?



DON'T BE DENSE. SHE WAS A NOODGE.

IF NAGGING WERE A HANGING OFFENSE, THE TWO OF US MIGHT BE AWAITING EXECUTION RIGHT NOW!



VERY NICE.

NICE WAS NOT THE LOOK I WAS GOING FOR. BUT DELILAH WAS. SHE FOOLED SAMSON INTO THINKING SHE WAS NICE, BUT WAS COMPLICIT IN HIS MAIMING AND MURDER.

ALL SHE DID WAS GATHER INFORMATION. SHE HAD NO HAND IN ANY "MAIMING" OR "MURDER." SHE PROBABLY BELIEVED SAMSON WOULD BE GIVEN A FAIR TRIAL. I THINK SHE LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.



YOU ARE SUCH A ROMANTIC!

ROMANTIC WASN'T THE LOOK I WAS GOING FOR!



CIRCA 1500-1536

# ANNE BOLEYN

*SHE LOST HER HEAD FOR LOVE*

HENRY VIII of England was married to Queen Catherine when he fell in love. Oh, not with his queen. That would have been too simple. He fell in love with a graceful, black-eyed, dark-haired woman almost ten years his junior named Anne Boleyn.

The people who hated her—and there were many—believed Anne Boleyn was a witch who had enchanted their king. Their proof? She supposedly had six fingers on her left hand and a variety of moles on her body. They also said she had ruined the king and the queen and the Catholic Church. They were partly right.

At least she wasn't a witch.

Anne was the daughter of Thomas Boleyn, a remarkable man from whom Anne inherited a talent for languages. She was a very smart girl.

Thomas Boleyn arranged for Anne to be educated at

court so she would learn to read and write at a time when few women not of the royal family could do so. She was being trained to marry well. Perhaps even to meet King Henry? Well, a pretty girl, a smart girl who was already part of the aristocracy, might become a favorite of the king's. From there her good marriage would be assured. It was a game most of the best families played.

Before this happened, however, Anne Boleyn fell in love with a boy her own age, the rich Lord Percy. They promised to marry one another even though marriages at the time were arranged for reasons of power, not love. The two lovebirds may have married secretly, but if they did, they kept it quiet.

But then young Anne met King Henry. He was thirty-five and married to a queen he liked but did not love. He needed a son as heir to the Tudor throne. Queen Catherine had given Henry a daughter but was now too old to have any more children.

Suddenly a black-eyed, dark-haired, sharp-tongued, bold young woman appeared in court as the queen's newest lady-in-waiting. Smitten, King Henry wrote to Anne in 1526 that he was "struck with the dart of love," and he meant it.

By May 1527 the king had made up his mind. He

wanted to marry Anne. But he was already married. And he was Catholic. All of England was Catholic. Catholics—even Catholic kings—were not allowed to divorce. So as a last resort, lovesick King Henry dissolved the British Catholic Church, set himself up as supreme head of his own religion—the Church of England, a form of Protestantism—and divorced his wife.

What did Anne Boleyn do to encourage this? Everything she could. She told the king she was unmarried and a virgin who would bear him sons. She encouraged him to declare his daughter Mary illegitimate. She sang and danced with him. She rode out hunting with him. She wrote poems to him. And the king was so besotted that anyone who spoke a bad word about Anne was immediately thrown into prison.

Anne did not complain. She teased him, flattered him, made all kinds of promises, and at last, in January 1533, just days after his divorce, she married him. She was crowned queen five months later.

When she gave birth to the child she'd been sure would be a son, no one was more surprised than she that the baby was a girl. That girl, Elizabeth, would one day become the greatest queen of England. But

Anne Boleyn would never live to see her daughter reign.

Henry, of course, still wanted a son. So Anne got pregnant again, and quickly. This baby was born dead. The unhappy king was surrounded by beautiful young women vying for his attention. Eventually he turned that attention to Jane Seymour. The *really* unhappy Queen Anne got pregnant for a third time, but she miscarried again, a boy child.

As Jane Seymour received more and more of the king's attention, the new queen raged at her husband. King Henry did not take her rages lightly. It was the beginning of the end for Anne Boleyn.

King Henry had already divorced one wife. Queen Anne he treated even more cruelly. On trumped-up charges that she had had love affairs with many men, including her own brother, she was imprisoned in the Tower of London, where it was said that she plotted the king's murder. Wouldn't you?

That's where Queen Anne Boleyn lost her head. Literally. The day after she was beheaded, Henry engaged himself to Jane Seymour, and they were married less than a month later. And after that, no one—*no one*—had anything nice to say about Anne Boleyn.





1910-1934

# BONNIE PARKER

*CLYDE'S GIRL*

IT MAY HAVE BEEN the Great Depression, but Bonnie Parker wasn't depressed. She was in love.

A petite, pretty Texan, Bonnie Parker first met Clyde Barrow in 1930, when she was just nineteen years old. Though she was young, she was already married to a bad boy by the name of Roy Thornton. But Roy was in prison for murder. Lonely Bonnie, who still wore Roy's ring and had a tattoo bearing his name, fell hard for Clyde.

And that's where the trouble began.

Clyde was already wanted by the law. But Bonnie didn't care. She liked bad boys. So when Clyde got himself locked up, Bonnie stole a gun and smuggled it into the prison for Clyde's jailbreak.

BONNIE PARKER

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Clyde was quickly recaptured, but Bonnie promised to wait for him, even though his fourteen-year sentence seemed like forever. Clyde, too, couldn't stand to be away from his beloved for that long. Plus, he hated the hard work he was forced to do in prison. Clyde convinced a fellow inmate to cut off two of Clyde's toes, and though the injury did not get him out of all work duty, he was out of jail in two years because he wasn't strong enough to do the heavy jobs.

Once Clyde was free, Bonnie was again by his side. Soon Bonnie began acting as a lookout for Clyde and his ever-changing gang of hoodlums. She even did some time herself.

But that didn't stop her.

The killings started as an accident. A botched robbery and nervous outlaws with shaky fingers netted the gang one dead body. More followed. Now they were on the run. The law was after them, and the Barrow Gang stayed one step ahead by robbing, stealing, kidnapping, and even killing. They outgunned the police and always shot first, sometimes without so much as a warning.

And their legend grew. How it grew! Bonnie's presence in the gang captured the nation's attention.

Photographs they took of themselves on the road were found by the police and released to the press. Always conscious of her image, Bonnie asked one kidnapped police officer to tell everyone she did not smoke cigars, even though she had posed with one in her mouth. She may have been an outlaw, but she was not a smoker!

Beaten down by the Depression, the American public was riveted by tales of the gang. Bonnie and Clyde were the ultimate bad guys. But they were also the ultimate heroes, doing what many destitute Americans wished they could do—sticking it to the system that had failed them.

Life on the run wasn't easy. The gang tried to settle into an apartment, but that ended in a shootout with police that left two officers dead and two others seriously wounded. Later, when a getaway car crashed, Bonnie was pinned underneath while it exploded into flames. Too well known by then, she couldn't go to a hospital.

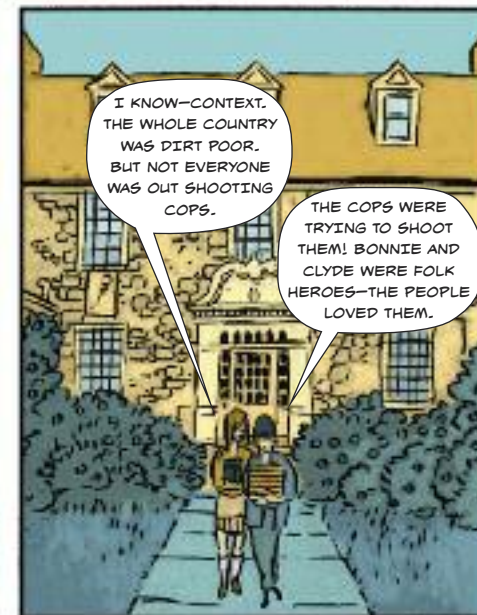
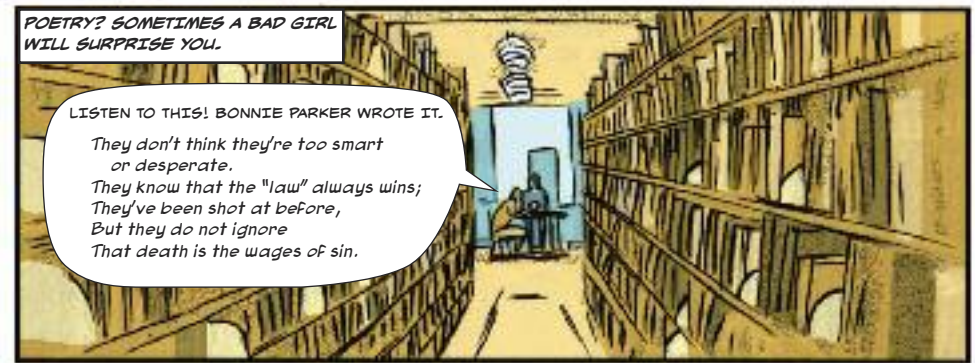
But not even Bonnie's injury slowed down the Barrow Gang. Their crime spree continued. They robbed and murdered their way through Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, New Mexico, and Louisiana. In a gunfight with

police, most of the rest of the gang was injured and Clyde's brother was killed. Bonnie and Clyde escaped to rebuild their gang, which included breaking old friends out of prison and killing a guard in the process.

But this was the beginning of the end. The reputation of Bonnie and Clyde had grown too large—they had to be stopped.

The big gun called in to do the stopping was a man named Frank Hamer. He swore he would find Bonnie and Clyde. He would shoot to kill. And like the gang, he would not give any warning.

Hamer tracked the outlaws and set a trap. When Bonnie and Clyde stopped to help a friend on the side of the road, Hamer and his hidden police posse opened fire on the outlaws, shooting round after round after round with their machine guns and stopping only when Bonnie and Clyde were both dead. Bonnie Parker was twenty-three years old.



# CONCLUSION

## MODERN TIMES AND CHANGING GENDER ROLES

"I'M NOT BAD.  
I'M JUST DRAWN THAT WAY."

—Jessica Rabbit in  
*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*

IF SALOME dropped her veils today, would we call her bad? Or would we arrest her parents for a variety of crimes against a child? If Mata Hari made up a whole new self tomorrow and danced her way into a criminal lifestyle, would we execute her or send her to counseling for post-traumatic stress disorder? Would we encourage Lizzie Borden to move into her own apartment, Bloody Mary to establish an ecumenical council, and Typhoid Mary to take some nursing courses at a community college? Would we still consider these women bad? Or would we consider them victims of bad circumstances? As our world changes, so does our definition of *bad*. Especially when it comes to half the world's population—the half that happens to be female.



With women's relatively new rights—to speak out, to vote, to have power over their own bodies—comes a new set of responsibilities. Women are no longer required to do a man's bidding—no matter whether that bidding is legal or not. But no longer can a woman say that she was just following a man and count that as justification for bad acts.

We measure guilt and innocence today on a sliding scale. And never has it been easier for the general public to “weigh” the misdeeds of its favorite modern-day bad girls. The nightly news, tabloids, blogs, and the fast pace of the Internet all make sure of this. Today, as throughout history, the court of public opinion is capable of swaying or tempering the criminal courts.

Now that you have been introduced to some of history's bad girls, you will have to decide for yourself if they were really bad, not so bad, or somewhere in the middle. And perhaps you will see that even the baddest of bad girls may have had a good reason for what she did.

