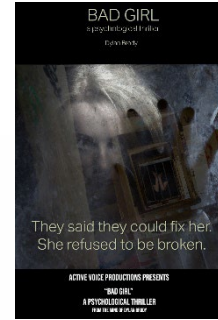




BAD GIRL

A Psychological Thriller

from Dylan Brody



Synopsis: Smoking weed with a group of teenagers behind the school at night, DALIA MARCUS (14) looks up and sees a police car. Dalia tells the others not to worry; it's a minor offense. But the others flee, leaving Dalia holding the joint. Next thing Dalia knows, she's in a car with her parents LOUISE and STANLEY, driving through the desert to the Tahoe Project (a school for troubled girls).

Dalia tries to convince her parents she didn't do anything bad (and that other kids do far worse things). Her parents insist they've tried their best, but are out of patience. Dalia grabs the wheel, causing the car to swerve off the road. Stanley brings the car to a stop and Dalia opens her door and makes a run for it. She runs through fields, but soon realizes they're in the middle of nowhere and there's nowhere to escape to. Dalia stops and returns to the car and her parents. Dalia tries to bargain with her parents. She says she can change and offers to get a weekend job. Louise says that's not necessary; Stanley makes a good living. Stanley is furious with Dalia and says she could have gotten them all killed by grabbing the wheel. When they get to the Tahoe Project, Louise says they're doing this all for Dalia's own good.

Students ANDI and FRED (short for FREDERICKA) meet Dalia and her parents at reception. Andi gives Dalia a tour while Fred takes Louise and Stanley to see headmaster MR. BYRON. In the exercise yard, MISS ALVEREZ leads students in a yoga class. Mr. Byron says there are no guarantees, but he expects the school's combination of education and tough love will work for Dalia. Stanley hands over a cashier's check for Dalia's tuition.

Andi and Dalia pass the dorm room of a sick student on the way to Dalia's room. Andi demonstrates how to make the bed with hospital corners, warning Dalia that there are consequences for those who can't get things right. Dalia threatens to run away and Andi says the punishment for that is very severe. Dalia asks to talk to her parents, but they're already gone.

School psychiatrist DR. HOLDER conducts an intake interview with Dalia. Dalia insists she did nothing wrong and is only at the school because her parents are assholes. She says her parents never worried about her until they got a pamphlet from the Tahoe Project in the mail. She mentions that Stanley has three DUIs, but kept his license after giving the District Attorney a \$60,000 campaign contribution.

After Dalia gets back to her room, wheelchair-bound Dorm Adviser THERESA tells the girls lights out is in 20 minutes. Dalia complains that it's early. Theresa says lights out is at 8:30 and Dalia will have to get used to it. Dalia's roommate BRANDY says Theresa was once a student at the Tahoe Project and is in a wheelchair because she tried to run away. Dalia takes out her cell phone. Brandy says it's against the rules to have a phone. Brandy bolts from the room and tells Fred that Dalia has a phone. Fred and the other girls gather around and try to decide who to call. Fred dials 911 to get an ambulance to come take care of the sick girl. Hearing Theresa

coming, Fred hangs up, unplugs the battery, and stuffs battery and phone under Dalia's mattress. An ambulance arrives and Dalia rushes out to see what's happening. Dalia stuffs a note in the pocket of a paramedic. Theresa shouts at Dalia to get back to her room.

After the paramedics leave, Mr. Byron gathers the students and demands to know who smuggled in a phone and dialed 911. He tells the girls they are all mentally defective. Miss Alvarez finds a cell phone in the bathroom. Theresa says it's her phone and she doesn't know how it got away from her. No one will admit to calling 911, so Mr. Byron orders the lights to flash and heavy metal music to play over the loudspeakers every 20 minutes all night long so the girls won't be able to sleep. Dalia goes to the bathroom and screams. No one can hear her with the music blasting.

Dalia slowly gets used to life at the Tahoe Project. During lunch periods, Dalia sits by a fence with a group of girls who are reading. Dalia brings a book, but what she's really doing is slowly cutting the fence with a nail clipper. The girls all attend group therapy sessions. Dr. Holder targets different girls for everyone to yell at. When Dr. Holder calls PATRICIA to a boy-crazy slut, Patricia yells that she doesn't like boys. The group chants "Dyke Slut" at Patricia. Later, Dalia goes to Dr. Holder's office and asks him to help her understand how anything the school is doing helps the girls. Dr. Holder says Dalia must give up her identity so she can fit into society without feeling she is special. Theresa arrives for a therapy session and Dr. Holder turns on a video camera. Dalia walks into the hall. Dr. Holder orders Theresa out of her wheelchair and makes her crawl into his office. He then tells Theresa to crawl back to close the door and calls her "the cripple." Dalia feels ashamed just watching and hearing this abuse.

One day, MR. BROCK tells the girls to get mats and go outside for yoga. Patricia gets up, but Brock stops her and says she's too fat and no one wants to see fat girls do yoga. Miss Alvarez leads the girls in yoga poses while Mr. Byron meets with the local Sheriff and the paramedic from Dalia's first night. From the exercise yard, Dalia sees the paramedic give the Sheriff Dalia's note, which he passes to Mr. Byron.

In the exercise yard, Dalia mouths off to Miss Alvarez, who assigns her to clean up dishes as punishment. In the kitchen, Theresa swats Dalia with a spoon and asks if Dalia wants to be a fuck-up for the rest of her life. Patricia tells Dalia to let it go. Theresa calls Patricia "fatty" and tells her to shut up. Patricia snaps and lifts Theresa out of her wheelchair and stuffs her into a sink. Patricia grabs a butcher's knife and slits Mr. Byron's throat when he enters the room. Patricia yells at the other girls to follow her down a hallway and they march to Mr. Byron's office. Suddenly Theresa yells at Patricia. Patricia snaps out of her fantasy; she's still in the kitchen and didn't stuff Theresa in the sink or stab Mr. Byron. Dalia asks Theresa why she's so mean. Theresa says Dalia has no idea what mean is and warns her not to push her luck.

The next morning, Dalia tells Patricia she needs to learn to run faster and build up her stamina. Dalia says she's planning to get all the girls out. KELLY, another student, climbs the fence and runs across the desert, yelling that she'll destroy the school. Kelly drops high-tech land mines around her and a helicopter arrives to pick her up. ATVs and drones chase Kelly and capture her. Teacher MAI snaps at Kelly. Kelly's still in the exercise yard; her escape was just a fantasy. Mai tells Kelly to stop being so dramatic. Dalia tells Patricia she has a plan and Patricia

says Kelly had a plan, but failed. Mai spots Patricia and Dalia talking; she says if Patricia she has enough breath to chat, she has enough breath to run. Dalia speeds up ahead of Patricia. Mai yells at Dalia to fall back and stop showing off.

That evening, Theresa calls out for the “new girl.” LINDA appears and insists on being called by her name. Theresa says she meant the “old new girl.” Theresa takes Dalia to her on-campus apartment and makes them tea. Dalia spots her missing cell phone on a shelf. Theresa asks how Dalia is doing and notes that the school hasn’t broken Dalia yet. Dalia doesn’t trust Theresa, who tries to earn Dalia’s trust by revealing that she and her sister were students there when the school first opened. Dalia asks why Theresa was sent to the Tahoe Project. Theresa says she asked to go. Her parents were sending her older sister to the school and her sister protected Theresa from their alcoholic father, so Theresa asked to go as well. Theresa’s sister climbed over the fence and was captured and brought back to the school. Theresa says the school killed her sister by making her install razor wire without gloves as punishment. Theresa’s sister was working on the fence when it was struck by lightning and she fell. Theresa says the school bribes the Sheriff to look the other way. Dalia wonders why Theresa would help the Tahoe Project break other girls. Theresa insists she’s there to help girls, not break them. Dalia tries to take her phone when she leaves, but Theresa tells her to put it back. Theresa says Mr. Byron wants to meet with Dalia in the morning.

Dalia finds Patricia and threatens her, believing Patricia ratted her out to Theresa or Mr. Byron. Patricia assures Dalia she didn’t say anything to anyone and then says she loves Dalia. The next morning, Dalia meets with Mr. Byron, who shows her the note Dalia gave the paramedic. Dalia says it was her first night and she was scared. Mr. Byron says Dalia will stay at the school until she’s “fixed.” Mr. Byron calls Dalia pretty (in a distinctly menacing and creepy way). Dalia flirts with him. He calls her a slut and dismisses her, but promises (also in a distinctly menacing and creepy way) that he’ll give her and her punishment some thought.

Dalia runs into Miss Alvarez and asks if Dr. Holder secretly tapes Miss Alvarez doing yoga and puts the videos online. Miss Alvarez says there’s no good internet connection at the school and assures Dalia that nothing at the school gets recorded. Dalia finds Patricia in the exercise yard and apologizes for accusing her of telling people Dalia planned to escape. Patricia asks why Dalia sits with the readers at lunch. She says she knows Dalia isn’t reading since Dalia reads slowly and moves her lips when she reads. Dalia pretends not to know what Patricia is saying. Patricia says Dalia doesn’t have to hang out with her. Dalia says Patricia is the only person at the school who isn’t an absolute dick all the time. Mai trips Patricia as she passes by and Patricia gets up, ready to fight. Dalia pulls her away and tells Patricia to let it go. Andi commandingly tells the other girls they can’t allow rage to break them. The girls capture Mai and lead her to Mr. Byron’s office. Andi tells Mr. Byron off, but Dr. Holder emerges and mocks Andi. Suddenly, Andi is back in the exercise yard. She’s not yelling commands like in her fantasy, she’s whispering tentatively for the girls to stop. Mai drags kids away from each other and makes everyone kneel in the dirt. Mai calls the girls “retards” and sends word that they won’t be in their classes because they are being punished. Another girl calls Patricia a dyke and Dalia promises to kick the crap out of anyone who threatens Patricia. When it gets dark, Mai finally lets the girls get up. She tells them to shower because they “stink of sweat and stupid.”

Dalia claims she has dirt in her eye and gets sent to the nurse. The nurse roughly washes Dalia's eye and gives her a small bottle of eye drops. The next day, Mr. Brock comes to get Dalia at lunchtime for a session with Dr. Holder. Dalia drops her nail clippers and hides them in the dirt. Brock notices the clippers. Patricia says they're hers and picks them up. Brock nods and follows Dalia into the main building. In Dr. Holder's office, Dalia asks why the red light from the camera isn't on and asks about the recordings. Dr. Holder says he records sessions for his own records and then deletes the tapes. He gets up to switch the camera on. Dalia squeezes eye drops into his coffee before he sits back down. Dr. Holder asks what happened when Dalia went home for Thanksgiving. In a flashback, Louise and Stanley talk about how they got a flyer from the school offering a discount if they refer other problem students. Dalia tells Dr. Holder that her parents never asked how she was. Dr. Holder excuses himself to use the bathroom. Dalia stops the camera. She finds a flash drive in the desk and starts copying the "Sessions" folder from Dr. Holder's computer. Hearing Dr. Holder returning, Dalia restarts the camera. Moments later, Dr. Holder excuses himself again and says he'll have to continue the session later. Dalia stops the camera. She sees the file copying is complete and grabs the flash drive. Dalia leaves to go to her next class. She swears to herself that she'll find a way to get every one of the girls out.

Dalia walks down to the parking lot, where Mai is waiting. Dalia claims she was sent down there to make sure someone heading to the school doesn't miss the turn. Mai says she's already taking care of it. An ambulance arrives to take Dr. Holder to the hospital.

That night, Patricia and Dalia are in the kitchen washing dishes. Patricia says there's a rumor that Dalia killed Dr. Holder. Dalia says Dr. Holder will be back and breaking spirits again in no time. Dalia notices that Theresa isn't yelling at anyone. Patricia says Theresa only yells when Mr. Byron is around so he won't think she's slacking off. Dalia again asks Patricia to escape with her. Patricia says she's weak and slow and would get them caught. Dalia knows this is true, but promises to come back for Patricia. Patricia gives Dalia back the nail clippers and Dalia says she has evidence that can get the entire school shut down. Patricia wonders where she'd go if that happens and speculates that Theresa wouldn't make it in the outside world. Patricia warns Dalia that she could die out in the desert. Dalia says she doesn't care. Mr. Byron enters the kitchen and Theresa immediately starts verbally abusing Linda. Mr. Byron orders Dalia and Patricia outside in the yard. He tells them to weld metal plates to the chain link fence. It starts to rain and Dalia sees lightning in the distance. Mr. Byron yells for them to pick up the pace. Patricia slips and an iron plate nearly crushes her. A lightning strike hits the plate, propelling Patricia backwards. Dalia rushes to Patricia's side. They hug when they realize they're both okay. Patricia wonders if they have superpowers from being hit by lightning. Mr. Byron tells the girls to stop "mud wrestling" and finish the job. He says lightning won't strike the same place twice, so they'll be fine.

Someone brings Mr. Byron Linda's body wrapped in a bedsheet. He tells the girls he has to take care of something and wants the fence work complete when he returns. Later, Theresa reminds herself she can't save anyone, Patricia murmurs "I love you" to Dalia (even though Dalia's not with her), and Dalia sits in the bathroom alone vowing to save every goddamn one of the girls.

The next day, Mr. Byron announces to the girls that Linda tried to escape and he doesn't know where she is or what happened to her. He says they are all a family and he considers the girls at

the school to be his daughters. At Dalia's next session with Dr. Holder, he congratulates her on compartmentalizing and not believing her thoughts are important. This, he says, will help her not stand out. Dalia tries to leave, but the door is locked. Dr. Holder asks if Dalia lied to Mai and said Mr. Byron sent Dalia to flag down the ambulance. Dalia says she let Mai believe that and admits she considered running away.

In the exercise yard later, Dalia tells Patricia she feels like she's losing herself and has to get away. Patricia warns Dalia that she might be killed if she's caught. That evening in the kitchen, Patricia sees Dalia slip a knife into her pocket. That night, Dalia sneaks into Patricia's room. Patricia begs Dalia not to kill her and says she knows Dalia stole the knife. Dalia says she'd never kill Patricia. Fred (Patricia's roommate) calls Dalia and Patricia dykes and Dalia says she'd kill Fred in a heartbeat. Dalia gives Patricia one last chance to come with her. Patricia says she can't, but says she loves Dalia. They hug and Fred calls the two of them creepy. Dalia sneaks out of the room and walks out of the building.

Patricia goes to see Theresa and says she's worried because Dalia's went out into the yard. Theresa tells Patricia to go to bed and says she'll handle it. Outside, Dalia places knives between slats of the fence, creating footholds. Theresa wheels up to the fence and tells Dalia to wait. Dalia thinks Theresa will try to stop her, but instead Theresa says there's a reservation six miles away, a half mile past the railroad tracks. She tells Dalia not to lie down on the railroad tracks even though she'll be tired. Dalia realizes Theresa did exactly this and that's how she lost her legs. Theresa pulls several knives out of the fence and urges Dalia to remove the others so Mr. Byron won't know how she escaped. Dalia kicks the last two knives free. She uses her blanket to protect her from the razor wire as she goes over the fence. Theresa collects the knives to return to the kitchen. Watching Dalia, she mutters good luck and makes her way back inside.

Dalia runs until she reaches the railroad tracks. She's exhausted and stops for a moment, but remembers what Theresa said and keeps going. At an FBI office, someone puts Dalia's flash drive into a computer. Later, dozens of black sedans and SUVs approach the Tahoe Project. Mai is arrested. An FBI agent orders Theresa to get in her wheelchair or they'll put her in it.

Six years later, Dalia (now 20) is working as a waitress at a roadside diner. Patricia, now in military fatigues and accompanied by two enlisted men, sits at a table. Dalia serves them food. Dalia recognizes Patricia and says they were at the Tahoe Project together. Patricia says she barely remembers the place; she was only there for six months before it was shut down. Dalia says she's the one who got the school shut down. Patricia says she doesn't think so; it closed after a video leaked. Dalia insists she leaked the video and saved everyone. Patricia is dismissive when Dalia asks her questions. Dalia says she loved Patricia so much. The enlisted men tease Patricia for "lesbians in prep school." Patricia tells them to shut up. When Dalia turns away, Patricia calls her a dyke. Dalia's boss yells for Dalia to keep up with the food orders. Dalia responds "Yes, Sir! Sorry, Sir!" This gets Patricia's attention; she watches Dalia working. Clearly, Dalia is happy, content, not unaffected, but unbroken.