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## Bad Girlz: A Novel

By Shannon Holmes

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The bestselling author of *B-More Careful*, Shannon Holmes, delivers *Bad Girlz*, another wild adventure into the streets. The setting this time is the Badlands, one of the toughest and poorest communities in Philadelphia.

**Bad Girlz** takes you into the mysterious and often dangerous lives of young women who turn to the streets and strip clubs as a means of survival. These are girls who, along the way, suffer bad breaks and find themselves ripe for exploitation by men and women who pretend to be their saviors.

Tender and Goldie were taken under wing by Kat, a veteran stripper, who enjoyed the life and the risks she had to take to stay in the mix of the sex trade. Both of these young and beautiful girls had ended up in dire straits and in need of Kat's help in different ways, but ultimately for the same reasons: They lacked the love and support that most of us expect to get at home and in our communities. Where they live, illegal money is often the only money to be made, and the difference between the law and the outlaw is tough to discern.

Holmes tells a page-turning story of sex, money, and murder in the name of survival and reveals the many ways that good girls, trying to get by in desperate situations, become *Bad Girlz*.

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## Editorial Review

About the Author

**Shannon Holmes**, author of *B-More Careful* and *Bad Girlz*, is copublisher, with Vickie Stringer, of Triple Crown Publications.

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### Chapter One

"C'mere, Tonya!" her mother yelled, as she passed her coming out of the bathroom. The woman's eyes focused like laser beams on her daughter's neck. Tonya pulled up her shirt collar in response, desperate in her attempt to hide the focus of her mother's attention.

Veronica Morris had forewarned her daughter time and time again about being fast with boys. "Stay away from them. Keep your legs closed. I'm not trying to be a grandmother yet," she repeated. But like any single mother raising a teenaged daughter, she was overwhelmed. Ms. Morris was as strict with Tonya as she could be. She made no concessions. Tonya was seventeen years old, and still not allowed to have a boyfriend, to date boys or even have them call the house. She was a typical teenager though; she found a way to do the normal things that young people do for fun despite her mom. Tonya had always managed to hide any disobedient act from her mother. That is, until now.

Veronica grabbed Tonya by the shirt collar and snatched her back into the bathroom to examine her in the light.

"What the hell is this?" she asked, touching the discolorations along the right side of her daughter's neck.

"Nuttin!...I...I...I was fightin'," Tonya stuttered.

"These ain't no damn bruises or scratches," her mother said. "You think I'm stupid? Huh? Huh?..." Her head jerked and she began viciously slapping her daughter in the face.

"You little hussy! You think I don't know passion marks when I see 'em?" She continued slapping her.

"But Mommy, I didn't do nuttin..." Tonya cried.

Veronica Morris was a heavyset woman, who was once endowed with a lovely figure, to match her face. But Father Time and neglect had conspired to rob her of her beauty. Her once shapely butt, thighs and hips were sagging under the weight of cellulite. The excess weight that she carried made her heavy-handed; she hit like a man. Tonya was dizzy from the punches against her body.

The mother beat her daughter like she was a stranger, hurling her against the bathroom walls, knocking down shelves and toiletries. She flung the girl to the hard floor and pounded on her back.

"You come home pregnant, heifer, so help me God, I'ma stomp it outta you!" she promised.

Tonya curled up into a fetal position, and wondered what she had done to deserve a beating like this. She let a boy pet and kiss her. And now she was getting the beating of her life.

Veronica was immune to her daughter's pleas and cries. She broke a wooden toilet plunger over the girl's back. She wanted to teach her a lesson, one she would not soon forget.

Veronica knew that there was no better time than the present to be a woman, especially a minority woman. The window of opportunity was wider than ever. She wanted Tonya to avoid the mistakes she herself had made. She became a teenaged mother and was robbed of her once promising future. She didn't want her daughter to follow in her footsteps.

The last thing she wanted was for Tonya to succumb to the soft touch, the careless whisper, the lies and deceit of a boy, who had vowed they would be together forever, only to abandon her in her time of need. No, she longed for Tonya to go to college, graduate, get married, make it out of the ghetto, and not get stuck in some menial job, living paycheck to paycheck. After Tonya's father left Veronica, she ate. Food became her friend. Her weight then ballooned to outrageous proportions, making her unattractive to most of the men around her, except for Pete. He happily accepted her and was willing to take care of her child too. Pete loved big women, even though he was 125 pounds, soaking wet.

Veronica could not look at Tonya, much less strike her, without being reminded of her daughter's no-good father, Raymond. Tonya looked just like him. The resemblance caused Veronica to feel, again, and again, the pain of a broken heart, the sting of rejection, and the words of a broken promise.

She had a live-in boyfriend but not even her relationship with him could heal the wound. Pete woke up when he heard all the commotion. Partially clothed, he rushed into the bathroom.

"That's enough, Veronica!" he said, as he bear-hugged her and dragged her out the bathroom. "You gonna kill that po' girl."

"Lemme go!" she pleaded. "And I will kill that hot heifer!"

When her mother was safely out of the room, a hysterical Tonya got up off the floor and looked into the mirror. She had a puffy right eye, a split lip and a bloody nose.

"I didn't even do nuttin'," she sobbed, and tried to clean herself up.

Tonya passed her mother in the small apartment hallway while heading to her room, and flinched. Veronica had almost forgotten that she would be due to show up for work. Shortly, she was on her way out to get to her job as a home attendant.

"Don't take ya hot ass ta school today!" Veronica ordered. More than anything she was scared some nosy school official would question her daughter about her bumps and bruises. She didn't want to risk arrest on child abuse charges or her daughter being removed from her home by some child welfare agency. "I ain't finished wit you, Ms. Thang." That said as she wobbled out the door, off to another hard day of work.

Tonya went to her room, closed her bedroom door, flopped down on the bed and cried some more. She replayed the beating in her mind over and over again. After about an hour or so, there was a knock on her door. It was Pete with a glass of Kool-Aid in his hand.

"Tonya, you alright?" he asked, while he ran his eyes all over her body. Over the years, Pete had earnestly watched as Tonya's body began to fill out. As she was growing up, he would sneak a feel on her young body, under the pretense of horseplay. Seemingly overnight she had arrived at womanhood. The Morris family and

close friends had often wondered what Veronica Morris saw in Pete. Other than the SSI disability check he received every month. He was twenty years her senior, and an alcoholic. But love is blind and he had caught Veronica at a vulnerable time in her life. She had just given birth to her only child, Tonya.

"Yeah, I'm okay," Tonya mumbled, sitting back down on her bed.

"You know ya mother didn't mean to do you like that. You know how crazy she gets 'bout you and dem boys."

"Look at my face!" she screamed. "She ain't have to go dat far. She coulda talked ta me. Shoot, she ain't no angel, her damn self."

Tonya loved that she could vent all her pent-up frustrations about her mother to Pete, and not have to worry about him repeating her comments. Over the years, he won her trust and became a valued confidant. At times he even acted as a go-between, squashing beefs they had....

"Tonya, you know ya mother only wants the best for you. She just goes about things wrong sometimes. But that's still ya mother and she loves you."

r"Loves me? If she loves me, she sure gotta funny way of showin it. She beat me worse than a dog."

Pete sighed. "I know how you feel. Things did get a little outta hand. But y'all will get through this. Y'all always do. Here, drink this."

"I don't know 'bout dis time. Dis time it's different," Tonya informed him. "She ain't neva beat me like that. I'll neva forget it for as long as I live."

"Don't worry, you will. Just give it some time."

Tonya was thirsty and gulped the drink down in a hurry. Pete leaned up against her dresser and dug into his front pocket. He pulled out a hand-rolled cigarette.

Aside from being a chronic drunk, Pete was a weed smoker, especially when his woman wasn't around. He and Tonya had secretly shared a few joints together on several occasions. Tonya thought that was so cool of him.

"Here," he said, extending his hand. "you light it up. You had a rough day already."

Tonya took the joint and lighter, and without even thinking twice proceeded to do as she was told. She was about to receive a welcomed escape.

Unbeknownst to Tonya, this was not marijuana. This was PCP, angel dust, a hallucinogenic drug that sometimes renders the user dangerous or helpless. A novice weed smoker, she never noticed the strong difference in smell. Maybe she was too mad or distracted to question it. She just wanted to get high. So she inhaled the fumes.

"Hun," she said, handing the joint back to Pete.

"Naw," he responded. "You go 'head and finish it up."

"Okay, but you don't know what you missin'. This weed is pretty good."

Pete did know what he was missing. PCP could sometimes be a terrible high for first-time users. He declined her offer. He wanted to keep his mind right while he did what he planned to do.

The drug took effect. In mid-sentence Tonya's speech became slurred. She visibly began to move slowly, almost robotic. The joint fell out her hands and landed on the floor, as she fell back on the bed. She began seeing spots on the wall.

Pete picked the joint up from the floor and put it in an ashtray. He began stroking himself through his jeans. It didn't take long for his manhood to respond. Looking at Tonya sprawled out across the bed did the trick. The black stretch pants she wore hugged every crevice of her lower body. They were so tight on her thigh and hip area, it seemed like she was about to bust out of them. Tonya's above-average breasts pushed her bra to the limit. His long black rod reached maximum size, bulging out of his pants. She was a fine young thing, the kind that was always out of Pete's reach, even in his youth. He longed for this day when he could act on the sexual fantasies that he had for Tonya.

He undressed, then began to undress her. Tearing at her shirt and bra, he freed her breasts. Then he yanked her stretch pants over her wide hips. When that was done he climbed on top of her, kissing and caressing Tonya, like this was consensual sex and he was making love to her. He stuck his alcohol-laced tongue in her mouth, stealing a one-sided French kiss. Then he slowly ran his tongue all over her copper-toned body, leaving a trail of saliva, from her breasts down. Continuing past her pubic hairs, he reached her vagina. Once there he began rapidly flicking his tongue in and out, lapping up her juices. He made her wet, preparing her for penetration. Tonya didn't respond because she couldn't under the influence of the angel dust. He took his time. He knew that Tonya's mom wouldn't be home anytime soon. Rock hard, he was now ready to enter her. Spreading her thick thighs apart, Pete inserted the head of his penis into her warm vagina, slowly working in a little of his large manhood at a time. Tonya was so tight, he thought he had died and gone to heaven. Bit by bit, he crammed the rest of himself inside her. She was a virgin. A thin coat of blood formed on his uncircumcised penis. He had popped her cherry. If she had been sober, she would have been in pain. But as it was, she was just a prisoner, unable to fend off a predator.

Sweat rolled off his body as he pounded away at her vagina. In his twisted mind, he felt like he was owed this -- for all the years he supported her, all the years her mother robbed him of his checks. Pete humped himself into a frenzy. The head of his penis began to swell, he was about to explode. Pulling out in the nick of time, he shot cum all over the girl's stomach and chest. Still Tonya didn't even move. Drained, he sat on the edge of the bed, hyperventilating.

Resting in between, Pete violated her over and over for hours. He placed Tonya in all kinds of positions. He even sodomized her. He lived out his wildest fantasies on her and she was powerless to stop him.

When Pete was done, he gently washed Tonya up and put clothes on her. Then he tucked her in bed, as if she were sleeping. He then went to gather up his clothes and left the apartment.

Tonya drifted into sleep. This was a good thing. She was able to sleep off the ill effects of the angel dust. Veronica Morris entered the house and went straight to her daughter's room. All throughout her work shift she thought about Tonya and what she had done to her. She knew she had gone off the deep end. Having had a change of heart, her intention was to apologize for her outrageous behavior. Something stopped her when she entered her daughter's room. She smelled the stench of sex in the air. She smelled the strong body odor of her man, Pete, as well. Further, she looked at the covers on Tonya's bed and noticed the blood and cum

stains. The rage that she'd let go of returned in a flash. She paced back and forth. Then she went over to her daughter's TV, took the extension cord from it, and began to beat Tonya awake.

"Aaahh! What you doin'?" Tonya screamed.

"Bitch, I should be askin' you that question. Who was you fuckin' up in my house? Huh?"

Tonya rolled off the bed, ducking and dodging her mother. She tried to shake off the drowsiness. Her legs were like rubber. She couldn't get away from her mother fast enough. She began to feel sharp pains coming from her anus and vagina. What had happened to her? she thought. But she was more worried about avoiding the vicious stings from the extension cord.

"You li'l tramp!" her mother hollered. "You was in here seducing my man? Huh?"

"I don't know what you're talkin' 'bout," Tonya cried. "Why are you doin' this ta me? Where is your man?" she shouted.

Suddenly she stopped whipping her daughter. It was as if something clicked in her head. She left the room to look for Pete.

Tonya curled up on the floor in the corner of her room, crying, burning up from the licks inflicted upon her inside and out. She strained her brain trying to recall what had happened to her over the last few hours. Her mind was flooded with images of her mother and Pete, treating her like a dog.

Storming back into the room, her mother said, "Go get yaself cleaned up. We goin' to da hospital." The nurses and doctors drilled the woman and her daughter with questions they wouldn't and couldn't answer.

They administered a rape kit, though Veronica tried to deny that a rape could have occurred. She was angrier than ever, but at Tonya. She wanted to believe that her daughter brought this on herself and her household. She also wondered, Where the hell was Pete?

Veronica checked Tonya out of the hospital, but it took a whole lot of talking to convince the doctors that she was actually going to the police. Veronica and Tonya spent the following days avoiding each other as much as they could. Each stayed behind the closed door of their bedrooms or the bathroom. Tonya longed for her mother to say something or to touch her. Veronica's ego wouldn't allow her to be a mother and do what she could to make things right for her child.

Months later, Tonya came home from school and thought her home had been burglarized. The apartment was empty. It wasn't until she saw that everything was gone except her clothes that it occurred to her that her mother had moved out. There was no note, no forwarding address left for Tonya. She was on her own.

Tonya would have first gone to her grandmother but she had died. So she bounced around from family member to family member for months, looking for a stable home. She found no takers. Her mother had dragged her name through the mud, ruining the girl's reputation with their family. She told the story of how her household was broken and made Tonya the villain.

Tonya's aunts and female cousins saw her as a threat to their own happy homes and relationships. To them, she was just another hot freak. If she did it with her own mother's man, then she'd do it to anybody's, they reasoned. In the absence of her maternal grandmother, there was no one left to give any motherly guidance

and love.

Her uncles and male cousins became predators, trying to get in her pants every chance they got. They wanted to believe the rumors about her being a freak. They even propositioned her with money.

Tonya rode the L train back and forth, as much as she could. Otherwise, she would catch a few z's at the Greyhound bus station, until she was run out of there. Wherever she could get some shut-eye, in peace, she laid her head. She ate at soup kitchens with total strangers. Then she began to trade food and shelter for sexual favors.

The neighborhood boys began passing her around, sneaking Tonya into their bedrooms late at night, feeding her, having sex with her, and getting rid of her by morning. Having sex brought back the rape and her mother's sudden departure every time she did it. Pete and her mother took her innocence, shattered her heart and threw her away.

"Tonya, dance fa me," Todd said as he sat back on the bed.

She slowly danced naked to some imaginary rhythm that only she could hear, doused by the red light.

"I don't know if anybody ever told you this," he commented, "but you should be a stripper. I swear on everythang I love, you'd get paid! Tonya, you got one of the tightest bodies I've ever seen."

She moved toward him, continuing to dance. She bent over and brushed her breasts across his face. Playfully, he licked at them. He enjoyed being teased; he enjoyed every minute of her show. She was a bit more relaxed with him than she normally was. Out of all the dudes she slept with, Todd treated her best.

"Seriously, you should think about strippin'. I mean it beats doin' what cha doin'. You know." He felt bad about using her the way he did. It wasn't right and he knew it. But rather than say so, he'd at least try to help her out. "Listen, I gotta cousin named Katrina from West Philly who dances. I'll introduce you to her. And she can definitely plug you in."

She wasn't sure whether this was good news or not but she said "Aiight." Just to shut him up.

"C'mere, girl," he whispered. "Gimme soma that thang."

They fucked themselves to sleep. Early the next morning, Todd awoke and gave his cousin a call. Since they were close like that, she immediately came over. Tonya woke up hearing their loud conversation in the kitchen.

"...You was right, she is pretty. But...damn, how old is she? Ain't no older chick gonna let you young niggas run up in her like that. So she gotta be unda age," Katrina said.

"She almost eighteen," he replied. "But she ain't silly-actin' or young-minded. Shorty just fucked up in da game right now. Dat's all."

Katrina laughed, "Nigga, what you runnin' a fuckin' group home here? I didn't know you cared. Whatever happened to all that Snoop Dogg shit, Bitches ain't shit but hos and tricks. Remember? What you getting soft on me?...Go wake her up. Let's see what she tryin' ta do. Hope you ain't have me come out here fa nuttin'."



Todd went to his room and gently shook Tonya awake. She pretended to be fast asleep.

"Huh?" she softly moaned.

"Git up! My cousin's here and she wanna meet you. Now!" he announced.

Tonya climbed out of his warm bed and slipped on a pair of his basketball shorts and a plain white tank top. Following Todd into the kitchen, unsure of what to expect, she was somewhat awestruck by this gorgeous light-skinned girl with long black hair and cold catlike gray eyes.

"How you doin'?" Katrina warmly greeted her. "I'm Katrina, but I dance under the name Kat. My cousin here tells me he thinks you got da goods to be a stripper? Do you wanna dance?...I wanna hear it from you?...And why?"

Tonya didn't know where to begin or what to say. When she was initially approached with the idea of stripping she thought it was a joke. She only agreed to it to silence Todd. She never thought that he would actually call his cousin. She couldn't believe that he actually took her seriously. But he did. So here Tonya was, on the spot, face-to-face with Kat.

"Yeah, ya cousin told you right," she bashfully admitted. "I wanna strip."

"Girlfriend, you gots to speak a li'l louder than that," Kat said, as she took a good look at her body. Tonya was stacked. She definitely had that in her favor. There was no question about it, she could be a stripper on looks alone. But it took more than that, it took desperation, desire. "Yo, Todd, excuse yaself while us girls talk."

Excusing himself, Todd went back to his room and closed the door.

"Have a seat," Kat told her. "Relax, we 'bout to have a serious talk. Now, what's da deal?"

Tonya sat down at the small kitchen table, directly across from her, and looked her in the eye. She automatically felt something real about Kat, something sincere. Whether this vibe was real or imagined, she didn't know. All she knew was she was at ease around this stranger.

Kat reiterated, with a stern look on her face, "So you 'really' wanna strip, huh?"

"Yeah!" Tonya spoke up.

"Are you positive you wanna do this?" Kat asked again, questioning her motives. "You gotta have confidence to strip. You can't have any hang-ups about ya body. Can't be no shame in ya game. This definitely ain't fa everybody...."

Telling her no, she couldn't or wouldn't was a luxury Tonya didn't have. It wasn't as if she even knew where her next meal was coming from or where she would lay her head. She straddled an imaginary fence, caught between what she knew was wrong and what she had to do. Somewhere in the middle of the two, lay reality -- her fate.

"I'm sure I wanna do it," she stated firmly. "I got to. I take care of myself. My family don't fuck with me. It's a long story."

"Well," Kat said. "I got a minute or two. What's up?"

"See, what happened was, my mother's boyfriend gave me a joint of weed. Only it wasn't weed, it was dust. Before I knew what was goin' on, he raped me. And after dat, things with my moms been goin' from bad to worse."

Tonya went on. She told Kat everything while tears trickled down her cheeks. This was the first she'd talked about her situation. Her family hadn't even wanted to listen. Kat was blown away. For all that she had seen and done, she couldn't picture any mother turning against her own daughter like that. Yeah, she thought, I'll take Tonya under my wing.

"Go get ya things," Kat commanded her. "You comin' ta live wit me and my girlfriend, Goldie. She's cool, you'll dig her."

Just like that Kat rescued Tonya off the streets. She was about to show the young girl a hustle, one that wouldn't just feed her for a day, but possibly a lifetime. If she played her cards right.

Tonya's body had been a burden her entire young life, attracting lots of unwanted attention from boys and men alike. But it was about to turn out to be her greatest asset. She was entering a world where men would again only be interested in her body, but at least they would pay good money to see her, and maybe not touch her.

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