



The Bad Girl: A Novel

By Mario Vargas Llosa

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A New York Times Notable Book of 2007

"Splendid, suspenseful, and irresistible . . . A contemporary love story that explores the mores of the urban 1960s--and 70s and 80s."--*The New York Times Book Review*

Ricardo Somocurcio is in love with a bad girl. He loves her as a teenager known as "Lily" in Lima in 1950, when she flits into his life one summer and disappears again without explanation. He loves her still when she reappears as a revolutionary in 1960s Paris, then later as Mrs. Richardson, the wife of a wealthy Englishman, and again as the mistress of a sinister Japanese businessman in Tokyo. However poorly she treats him, he is doomed to worship her. Charting Ricardo's expatriate life through his romances with this shape-shifting woman, Vargas Llosa has created a beguiling, epic romance about the life-altering power of obsession.

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The Bad Girl: A Novel By Mario Vargas Llosa Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #124533 in eBooks
- Published on: 2011-03-04
- Released on: 2011-03-04
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Veteran Peruvian novelist Vargas Llosa's appealing, nostalgic latest opens in the summer of 1950, as Ricardo Slim Somocurcio, a rambunctious teen in the affluent Miraflores section of Lima, meets 14-year-old nymph Lily. With her younger sister, Lily is masquerading as a wealthy, liberated Chilean girl to disguise her slum origins. She is soon exposed by a jealous schoolmate and disappears, but Ricardo is smitten. There are dashes of *Vertigo* and *Last Year at Marienbad* in what follows. As an adult, Ricardo's work as a translator for UNESCO takes him over the decades everywhere from late '50s Paris to the Beatles's London to gangland Tokyo. Everywhere he goes, his bad girl shows up in dramatically different disguises, denying she was his childhood sweetheart or that they've ever met before, but ravishing him completely. None of the characters is particularly nuanced, but Vargas Llosa is a master of description, and his gift for evoking sounds, smells and tastes makes each (often very graphic) encounter with Lily fresh. And with Ricardo's knack for being where the action is, whole scenes of the postwar period flare into view, as Lily's sexual perfidy eventually leads to serious trouble. The result is rich but not in the least deep. (Oct.)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

No one can quite understand why Mario Vargas Llosa hasn't yet won the Nobel Prize in Literature. As *The Bad Girl* proves, Vargas Llosa can create something new and exciting even out of a well-worn plot and stock characters. Though this isn't one of his major works (see our profile of Vargas Llosa in Issue No. 15, March/April 2005), critics love that this novel paints a panoramic history of four decades of South American and European life, continually challenges readers' expectations, and questions the very nature of identity, "goodness," and "badness." But for all its thoughtful tackling of complex themes, *The Bad Girl* is certainly not all seriousness; as the *Washington Post* declares, "Obviously, the novel was written for the sheer fun of it—the fun for Vargas Llosa in writing it, the fun for us in reading it."

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Review

"Llosa writes an unabashed love story and makes no apologies for it. He seamlessly weaves it into the rich texture of the social atmosphere of the times. . . . Written with passion and energy that delivers."--*Rocky Mountain News*

"Perversely charming . . . irresistibly entertaining."--*The Washington Post Book World*

"A marvelous novel."--*Chicago Tribune*

"Spans decades and continents--and in the process, with a deftness that borders on literary sleight of hand, bridges the personal and the universal."--*San Francisco Chronicle*

"A beautifully constructed, stinging tease of a novel."--*The Seattle Times*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jean Smith:

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