

THE FIRST  
BAD MAN  
A NOVEL BY  
MIRANDA  
JULY

**The First Bad Man**

*Miranda July*

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# The First Bad Man

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## **The First Bad Man** *Miranda July*

From the acclaimed filmmaker, artist, and bestselling author of *No One Belongs Here More Than You*, a spectacular debut novel that is so heartbreakingly beautiful, so dirty, so tender, so funny--so Miranda July--readers will be blown away.

Here is Cheryl, a tightly-wound, vulnerable woman who lives alone, with a perpetual lump in her throat. She is haunted by a baby boy she met when she was six, who sometimes recurs as other people's babies. Cheryl is also obsessed with Phillip, a philandering board member at the women's self-defense non-profit where she works. She believes they've been making love for many lifetimes, though they have yet to consummate in this one.

When Cheryl's bosses ask if their twenty-one-year-old daughter Clee can move into her house for a little while, Cheryl's eccentrically-ordered world explodes. And yet it is Clee--the selfish, cruel blond bombshell--who bullies Cheryl into reality and, unexpectedly, provides her the love of a lifetime.

Tender, gripping, slyly hilarious, infused with raging sexual fantasies and fierce maternal love, Miranda July's first novel confirms her as a spectacularly original, iconic and important voice today, and a writer for all time. *The First Bad Man* is dazzling, disorienting, and unforgettable.

## **The First Bad Man Details**

Date : Published January 13th 2015 by Scribner

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Author : Miranda July

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Genre : Fiction, Contemporary, Novels

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**Download and Read Free Online The First Bad Man Miranda July**

## From Reader Review The First Bad Man for online ebook

### lp says

WOW! I have never turned on a book so quickly in my entire life. When I started it I was in LOVE with its unique, odd hilariousness. But then shit got REAL weird. Fantasy sex stuff that wasn't interesting or funny at all. Just as I'd be about to give up, July would go back to her normal funniness about something totally mundane (the Japanese "customs" of her bosses, the therapist) and I'd remember how enjoyable she is when she's just developing characters. In the end, I was really touched by the characters. My response was surprisingly emotional.

People say they wish goodreads had half-stars. I wish goodreads had a "?" you could put after the stars. As in. I liked it—QUESTION MARK? Three stars?????

PS this is the last time I get psyched about a book 10% in.

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### Oriana says

Oh my god this book is so totally weird and wonderful.

Reading this is kind of like watching an insane person dance. There's all these bizarre jerks and twists and feints that are completely implausible until they happen, and you open your mouth to protest but Miranda just says *shh shh shh, it's going to be fine* and somehow it is.

Despite being, plotwise, so bonkersly unlike anything you have ever thought of before, I don't mean to suggest that it's absurdist or surreal or *Naked Lunch*-ian or anything like that. It's normal people doing things that are only a beat or two off of normal; you just have to go with it, and then before you know it it has become perfectly reasonable and you're on to the next thing.

And in fact it is also an absolute astonishment of meticulous construction, one you don't even ever see coming. All the pieces fits so bizarrely & perfectly together—click, click, click, like they're magnetized.

I realize this is very vague and obfuscating but the book isn't coming out for like six months and I don't want to be a spoilery asshole. So here is a teaser list of things you will find in this book; I know it won't make much sense probably but oh well: role-playing therapists, appallingly selfish shirking of parental and grandparental duties, self-defense as fitness, *globus hystericus*, sexual-preference fluidity, May–December romances, a sort of two-person female Fight Club, a bucket of snails, simultaneous baby reincarnation, chromotherapy, the most awkward sex ever and also the most compellingly, disturbingly sexy masturbation fantasies.

Sorry, that's all you get. I loved this so so so much and you will too. Good luck with the wait. : )

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## **Will Walton says**

I read the final pages twice silently, once aloud. Am currently considering getting them tattooed on my body. It's rare (or, at least, I feel like it's rare) for books as blunt and as bold as 'The First Bad Man' to leave you beaming from ear to ear. I don't care that there's weird sex all throughout; I'm gifting this book to my parents.

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## **Jen says**

The first BAD book by Miranda July...not sure as it is the first and last I'll read by her. Bizarre is a good way to describe it. The main character Cheryl - mid 40's - faces anxiety with disturbing sexual fantasies. She suffers from OCD and is mentally unstable. She is unlikable and the story is just plain weird. Three quarters through and no improvement. It's a hands down loser. Throwing this one in the abandoned pile.

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## **Courtney says**

Miranda July has such beautiful insights that resonate with one's sometimes secret inner thoughts. Like when she writes that she sits perfectly still while someone is talking about her because she "loves to be described". Or how she looks at babies to see if she has a secret connection with them that's stronger than that with their mother. These are the little things that can pass through the mind without a second thought, but here she brings them to a whole new level.

The characters have free reign to act on and explore all their deep impulses--they have let go completely of normal social rules. Things definitely get weird, as they would if anyone let their innermost, darkest parts of themselves guide their everyday lives.

July's writing is so unique. There is no one who has her voice, though there are a lot of imitators out there. I loved this book for its small moments and beautiful turns of phrase. That being said, the plot line and extremes of the story turned me off a bit. It just got too dark and strange for a book where the writing is quirky and funny. I'll always read whatever Miranda July puts out, but for me, short stories are her most pure and honest form.

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## **Library\_boyfriend says**

i...i dont know...this was either brilliant or odd. or both. i need time to process

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## **Anita Pomerantz says**

I feel the need to give prospective readers of this book a quiz.

Do you like HBO's Girls? YES NO

Do you think you would like HBO's Girls on steroids? YES NO

Do you generally appreciate black humor? YES NO

Do you like performance art? YES NO

What if that performance art came in the form of a book? YES NO

Score each Yes with 1 point. Make sure you score at least a 4 before proceeding.

Seriously, this book is simultaneously whacked out, hysterical, disgusting, and oddly moving.

Initially I thought the book was spoofing 50 Shades of Grade.

And then I thought it wasn't spoofing, but was actual porn.

Fortunately, that was just for one chapter.

The first half of the book and the last half are very different. The first half screams "look at me, look at me, I'm cool, I'm hip, I'm a performance artist writing a book." It also is very, very funny. It's entirely black humor. If you think it is serious, then you really won't like the book. I NEVER laugh out loud at books. Not books written by comedians, but there are some scenes in this one that definitely had me chuckling.

The second half is much more of a traditional novel and is more sweet and touching.

It's the combination of the two that probably convinced Amazon to recommend this as one of the best books of January. Trust me, you will think the editors lost their mind if you don't actually finish the whole book.

The book revolves around a woman, Cheryl, in her forties who is narcissistic and really hasn't grown up. She also is a little nutty in some of her belief systems . . . just a little on the fringe. Clee, the 20-something daughter of Cheryl's bosses, needs a place to live and moves in with Cheryl. The book revolves around the two women, but there are a number of sub plots that somehow in the end do actually connect together. They all made me feel a little dirty while reading them to be a little honest. But on some level, this train wreck of a first half barrels down the track to a touching second half, and I find myself reflecting back on the whole thing as a fun, very fresh, read.

I'm recommending this to exactly no one unless you pass the quiz above. Really.

Whatever you do, do NOT bring this book up as a suggested title for your face to face book club.

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### **christa says**

Typically when I don't like a buzz book I delight in mocking word choices and flimsy chapters or the thin line separating the novel's plot and the author's bio. The book becomes a contender for worst-of-the-year and I quietly, okay not-so quietly, dare someone, anyone to write something worse.

When I don't like a book by Miranda July, my second inclination is to assume that there must be something wrong with me.

I adore Miranda July The Artist and all the weird shit that brews behind those slightly alarmed-looking eyes. I was with her that time she did that social experiment involving the Penny Saver and I was with her when she made the movie that included a talking cat. I downloaded her app (until I needed the storage space) and I subscribed to the Email Project.

But sometimes I'll just be walking along and I'll think of the short story from her collection "No One Belongs Here More Than You" that starred a woman who taught land-based swimming lessons in her living room and I'll kind of shake my head because that one still doesn't make sense and even kind of bugs me.

In July's "The First Bad Man," Cheryl is a socially awkward 40-something who works at a non-profit that has recently rebranded its self-defense how-tos as fitness videos. She quietly pines over a 60-something board member who is always saying asshole-y things to her, which she assumes is done in an ironic way. She's honed her home life to a smoothly-run operation built around the optimization of her every movement. She understands that if things get lax, if dishes pile up, it's the fast track to depression which ends with peeing in mason jars.

Phillip, the board member, seems to be returning her affections, but really he is just warming her up to confess that he has fallen in love with an underaged girl but that he hasn't yet consummated the relationship and he won't -- unless Cheryl gives the okay. As he waits for her to decide if it's okay, he sends her status updates on the sexual side of things: The girl has been rubbed through the jeans. She's held his stiff member. That sort of thing.

Meanwhile, Cheryl ends up sharing her home with Clee -- her bosses' big blonde daughter who is supposed to be looking for work in Los Angeles. Things are a bit contemptuous on the Clee-to-Cheryl front, and eventually the former is waging physical attacks on the latter -- which Cheryl combats by turning these go-rounds into reenactments of the Open Palm video series. Then it starts to get pant-y between them -- though Clee's foot odor is a bit of a bonerkiller.

Through all of this is a situation with a therapist who plays a receptionist as a twice yearly bit of role playing, and Cheryl is drawn to certain babies who speak to her on a cellular level. And there are the regular texts from Phillip, which she uses in her super rich fantasy life.

At first I was ambivalent. I'd moved past caressing the cover and dug in deep to find that ... well, it wasn't screaming to me every time I set it aside. Then I actively hated it for a while. This ugly period faded and I had a sort of-kind of renewed interest that morphed into something along the lines of This is a Book with Words in it That I am Reading For Now. The End.

In the meantime, everybody is loving this book. Lena Dunham posted a photo of herself holding a copy and she credited July with being "fresh." New York Times likes it, though the reviewer sounds like she's trying to convince herself along with Book Review readers, Boston Globe, AV Club, etc. To not like this book feels like an inadvertent admission of a character flaw. The opposite of a humble brag. It's not July; It's me.

Writing about this book and talking about it with other readers has made me question my own judgement. It sounds funny. You're right Lena, it does sound fresh! There are great lines, there are interesting ideas about relationships and the characters are truly unique. It is, I believe, even pretty funny.

The problem: It's not fun to read. The characters' actions are nonsensical. The plot twists aren't compelling. When a character gobbles at her placenta like it's leftover spaghetti I rolled my eyes so hard I almost pulled a forehead vein.

I've defended July against this in the past, but this time it's true: Quirky for quirky sake. The worst kind of quirky. I just didn't like it.

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### **Carina says**

On a scale of 1 to 5, I'd rate it yellow. Or helicopter. It's likely perverse. It's probably clever. I'm a little too shell shocked to really be of any use with this review. If you do decide to read it, tell someone where you'll be and what time you'll be home.

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### **Kevin says**

In her debut novel, *The First Bad Man*, Miranda July presents the story of a lonely 40-something woman named Cheryl Glickman. Cheryl looks at the world in her own hopeful and peculiar way. She fantasizes about an older man who is busy seducing a teenage girl, she tries to make psychic connections to a long-lost baby named Kubelko Bondy, and she has therapy sessions with a woman who is not really a therapist and is actually having an affair with the therapist Cheryl should be seeing. When Cheryl lets her bosses' daughter, a young surly woman named Clee, move in with her, she takes on a person that she initially fears, but eventually loves and feels protective over. Without giving too much away, I'll say that what happens between Cheryl and Clee makes *The First Bad Man* one of the strangest and most surprising novels of the year. The way Miranda July writes about the inner-life and longing of her characters is a thrill to read. It's like she has a special kind of X-ray vision, where she can see the way her characters really think and act, and even when they're weird or inappropriate, she still presents them to us unashamedly. And among their character flaws and their need to be loved, we, as readers, see ourselves.

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### **Jenny (Reading Envy) says**

This book is bizarre. I was talking about it with a librarian who had read this and her short stories, and he said something that I'm going to put here and possibly misquote. Quirky characters and strange situations are more tolerable in short stories, because they are in and out, you can marvel at them but not have to live with them; in a novel it can cause agony to the reader as you dive deeper into strange people making confusing decisions. Agreed, agreed. I would probably like July's short stories, and plan to read *No One Belongs Here More Than You* at some point. I'm not sure I would recommend this book to anyone.

On the plus side, I laughed a lot while listening to the audio. Miranda July reads her own novel in a perfect tone, with a practical straightforward voice that makes Cheryl come across the way she probably does in the world of the novel - a boring almost middle-aged woman on the outside and CRAZY on the inside. We are treated to an almost constant internal dialogue, of magical babies with the presence of Kubelko Bondy, of sexual fantasies that are anything but enticing, of the tolerance of horrible people that seem to surround her - inept therapists with imaginary specialties, bosses that are a flavor of "enlightened" plus an incredible variety of selfish that seemed actually pretty familiar to me, a man trying to get her approval to have sex with a teenager, and a teenager who lives in her house while physically abusing her and disrespecting her space. I'm not sure about your internal dialogue. There are certainly thoughts I have in my head that I wouldn't want

shared, but Cheryl's internal life surpasses the absurd.

I notice a few people on my friends list abandoned the book, some were affronted by the sex, some couldn't take the forced quirky, but I wanted to make it to the end to see what happens.

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### **Katie Parker says**

Miranda July, you wonderfully weird creature. This book is probably one of the craziest things I've ever read, but it works, absolutely and completely. She crafts sentences that make you think the world was missing something until they were written. She finds genuine humor in the sadness, and poignancy in the mundane.

"I wondered how many other women had sat on this toilet and stared at this floor. Each of them the center of their own world, all of them yearning for someone to put their love into so they could see their love, see that they had it."

"If you were wise enough to know that this life would consist mostly of letting go of things you wanted, then why not get good at the letting go, rather than the trying to have?"

And, of course, it wouldn't be the same if I wasn't scarred for life by a piece of her work. (Has anyone else seen "Me and You and Everyone We Know"? Then you know what I'm talking about.) I really hope none of my fellow bus riders were reading over my shoulder during the odd, explicit sex parts. As uncomfortable as they often were to read, though, they were so often bookended by incredible passages that pulled me right back into the story.

In summary, it was amazing, though not without its cringeworthy moments. But they aren't cringeworthy because they are bad; they are cringeworthy because people are weird and flawed and real, and it's rare to see that in such a transparent way.

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### **Lolly K Dandeneau says**

My brain is scrambled. This is the weirdest story I have read in years. The characters are all off their rocker, or maybe we are all just as strange deep down inside.

Cheryl is a bit disturbed and her hunger for Philip and the connections she sees with him are outlandish, so starts the novel as it spins madly into the strange and unusual. When her bosses need a place for their daughter Clee to live and chose her, her tight ship of a life will sink. Clee is a brutish knockout, in more ways than one. She will bring 'life' to Cheryl's dull existence and a love that she never knew she could have. There are so many moments of humor, outrageous behavior, obscene acts gathered in this story that may be overwhelming for light readers.

I was able to get my hands on an arc, and was not disappointed- it really is that unique and beyond quirky.

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### **Sian says**

I'll admit, I am kind of Miranda July's target audience, and perhaps my glowing review won't be particularly

surprising. Other than her film *The Future* (like, I'm sure it's brilliant, but if I wanted to be super sad about cats I'd just go to my local pet shop) I've been into everything else she's ever done and this probably isn't a super impartial review so take this with a grain of salt of whatever.

This book somehow perfectly captures all the sad ugliness that exists in a mediocre life, specifically the mediocre life of a woman. The illogical magic that means when you finally forget someone or delete their number, they text you. The pathetic desperation of knowing you and a man have travelled through lifetimes together....while he's busy telling you about someone else. How easily it becomes to become stuck inside your mind, inside patterns. As the reader, I understood Cheryl's body as something ugly - not because it was or wasn't, but because of the way Cheryl moved through life inside it. *The First Bad Man* is hyperreality, but still reality. Some parts were desperately uncomfortable to read but mostly because they reminded me of an ugliness inside myself. Cheryl was pathetic, but not over-exaggeratedly so, and the way her mind worked was breathtakingly familiar to me. The way so many babies become Kubelko Bondy. The way that sex - masturbation - becomes ritualised, inaccessible, too big to control. An aggressive maternalism that repulses and juxtaposes itself. I feel like I'm seeing more and more of these ugly, internal, hyperreal, powerful/powerless women in literature of late and I for one think it's about f\*cking time.

I kinda feel like those who don't get it probably aren't women trapped inside their own minds, with that pathetic, desperate ugliness inside of them. Good for them, I guess! Those who are should pick it up and find themselves.

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### **Matthew says**

Waited for weeks to get it at the library. Checked it out first day. Forgot it at The Mill. Remember leaving it on the bar. Enjoy the free discard, Mill person. I am the 2nd bad man.

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### **Danger says**

I am a big fan of Miranda July's films (*I loved You & Me & Everyone We Know*) but I never dove into her fiction before. This book managed to evoke an ocean's worth of heartache out of me, as what July manages to do is create characters that are so alien (and alienated) yet so emotionally real and resonant, it's almost impossible to not empathize with them. And the truths she CONSTANTLY unveils, one after another like machine gun fire, are sometimes funny and sometimes sad, but they are always profound.

THAT SAID, the story does suffer a little bit in the second half, meandering a little too much for my tastes, and as the idiosyncratic main character starts to grow as a person, the oddness of this novel starts to level out.

THAT ALSO SAID, it wraps itself up quite nicely in the end, and left me satisfied. This is less of a novel and more of an experience; one that you'll undoubtedly walk away from a better person. Good stuff.

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### **Paul Bryant says**

If you take a chisel and gently chip off the elaborate encrustation of florid psychology that at times sends this novel moonwalking towards the field of dreams that is bizarro fiction but really only up to its multihued

verges and peeking across, then what I think you get is the plot of the 1966 *Swingin' London* film *Georgy Girl* blended with the lunatic character swerves and switcheroos from any Iris Murdoch novel garnished with the sweet suburban Miss Lonely atmosphere of Miranda July's own gorgeous movie *Me and You and Everyone we Know*. Or : if A M Homes and Miranda July went to a party dressed as each other no one would notice. Lorrie Moore, though, she'd be fuming (they're wearing her dress but it looks sexier on them!), but you can't copyright being really funny and sad about American suburbia.

There's a Bad Sex in Fiction award given yearly by the (British) *Guardian* newspaper. Miranda July will not win. All the sex in this novel is bad, but it's deliberately very bad, wince-inducing, and there's quite a lot of it. I will spare you the details but do not read most of this book while eating cereals, they may well go up your nose.

So as I was saying

*Hey there, 42 year old Cheryl Glickman  
Swingin' down the street so fancy-free  
Nobody you meet could ever see the loneliness there - inside you  
Hey there, 42 year old Cheryl Glickman  
Why do all the boys just pass you by?  
Could it be you just don't try or is it the clothes you wear?  
Don't be so scared of changing and rearranging yourself  
It's time for jumping down from the shelf*

So she jumps or actually she's kind of violently pushed by a strapping 21 year old blonde bombshell called Clee and .... Well, all the other reviews will tell you what happens then, or you could let MJ tell you herself. When I pick a novel to read I don't want to know much about it except *it's supposed to be good*.

It seems people have been dancing naked in the streets to celebrate the wonderful loveliness of this novel. Well, I wouldn't go that far. I'd doff my overcoat and loosen my tie and say "yeah, pretty good" a few times. It was nice. It was in favour of people and it has an understanding that there are those who in the midst of a teeming planet live lonely lives. I kind of sort of maybe-ish well yes okay recommend this. If you don't mind a lot of detailed bad sex and even more where the characters are thinking about the bad sex they want to have or have had. 3.5 stars.

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## R. says

Well, I finished it and...huh.

I will say that July is a talented writer but...the characters. Each and every character (up to and including the preemie baby) was just simply creepy, got under my skin (a tip of the hat to July, I guess). I'm OK with creepy in a book (*Lolita*), but this was just overboard and, yes, very obnoxious ("Look at my wacky cast of dysfunctional characters! Don't you see yourself and everyone you know in their quirks and calamities?" July seems to be shouting...and puts the exclamation mark on the whole thing with Bowie's "Kooks" as

incantation, anthem.)

Everything was going along swimmingly, hopefully, in the read until Cheryl (following a revelatory session with her creepy therapist) decided she was in a female Fight Club with Clee - and it went downhill from there. I was, like, really? It would have been interesting to read a feminist Fight Club short story, but July must've, I dunno, gotten pregnant at some point in the writing and wanted to share her homebirthing experience with the reader, share her observations of maternity, motherhood, or whatever.

I wanted more for Cheryl other than her life's plan being dictated by the poor choices of a psychotic houseguest (I never really got why the parents didn't just give Clee money to live on her own...I wanted to strangle Carl and Suzanne in every appearance...sic some of Marcellus Wallace's crew on Philip). Too bad July didn't. Want more for Cheryl, that is.

P.S. I can't believe George Saunders blurbed this novel. Eggers, yes, because a byline is a byline. Homes, yes, because her book (*May We All Be Forgiven*) is turning out to be just as creepy. But Saunders? Dude.

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Prediction: This will probably be turned into an "independent" movie (or FX TV series) starring Kristen Schaal in a few years time.

### **Barry Pierce says**

*"I've been meaning to buy that one myself,"*

*"Yeah I saw Lena Dunham gave it a good review so I had to pick it up!"*

-The interaction between the lady behind the counter in Waterstone's and I when I bought this book.

*The First Bad Man* is a novel that has been hyped for months. Literally every single of those "Reads to Look Out For in 2015" lists has had this one near the top. I must admit that this is my first experience with July's writing. I know she has some short stories floating around somewhere so I'll catch them eventually. So, is *The First Bad Man* deserving of the hype? Yes. Or no actually. No, yes. Hmm. Maybe? Let's see.

We are presented with Cheryl Glickman, our protagonist. A woman who Dave Eggers called, '*one of the most original, most confounding and strangely sympathetic characters in recent fiction.*' I have a feeling that Eggers has been diagnosed with a severe case of hyperbole here. In many ways, Cheryl reminded me of a highly neurotic version of the protagonist of Jenny Offill's brilliant short novel *Dept. of Speculation*, one of the best novels of last year. I've seen many review of this novel describing Cheryl as "quirky". God I hate that word. I refuse to ever use it. Cheryl is highly individual, eccentric, and idiosyncratic. She's Frances Ha and Annie Hall. She gets dumped with her boss' daughter, nineteen-year-old Clee, and this is where the novel tries to begin. Not only does Cheryl, a woman in her early forties, have to deal with a teenager claiming squatter's rights on her sofa, she is also kind of obsessed with Phillip, a man who is twenty years her senior. However, Phillip has other, Nabokovian, plans.

The first half of this novel middles along. It mainly concerns Cheryl's life and those around her. Nothing much happens. I might even go so far as to say the first half is boring. Well it isn't *boring* per se. To use Art

Historical terms, the first half is Northern Renaissance and the second half is Rococo. The novel comes alive in the second half due to an event which inverts everything on its head. Suddenly you begin caring about the characters. You see their human side. It was in the second half that I really began enjoying this odd, odd novel. The plot is like that of the seminal classic *Weird Science*. At first it's great, partying with mid-1980s Kelly LeBrock but then you've got to deal with real issues. Like Bill Paxton being turned into a gigantic talking pile of shit.

This novel is definitely weird. It's different. There isn't a single sane character in there. It's like an episode of *Kath & Kim* but also not like that at all. Margaret Atwood meets Woody Allen in this novel but not in the way you want. So, can we answer the question now? Is *The First Bad Man* worth the hype? I say, yes. Yes because it is unlike any other novel I've read. Yes because it makes you laugh at the most inappropriate of things. Yes because of the phrase "mutual soaping". Yes because it is a realistic portrayal of life, no matter how zany. Yes. It is worth the hype.

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### **Snotchocheez says**

*Auteurs* like the evidently multi-talented Miranda July generally don't receive much attention 'round these here parts, so I was thrilled that our little library got a copy of this...yet the curious generic black cover, the riotous blaze of colors on the inside front and back covers, and Ms. July's stay-away-from-me-and-my-book photo all seem to non-verbally yet overtly communicate THIS IS ART! in a way that makes me scoff dubiously.

Shouldn't have scoffed. She's got herself a new fan here in Alabama. *The First Bad Man* has just about everything one could ask for in a refreshingly weird, quirky-cool novel: girl-fights, bizarre sex, snails, Ojai, Japanese office etiquette, gender confusion, etc. etc. At its heart though, stripping away the strange, is just a lonely OCD lady trying desperately to find love, in the most unlikely manner possible.

Ms. July's debut (!) novel (and her supah freakay protag Cheryl Glickman) are certain to stay in my brain a good long while. Can't wait to read more from her.

(I'm teetering toward 5-star land on this one, but mah pea-brain didn't quite grasp the ending; If anyone can clue me in, please do. I'd really like to bump this one up!)

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