



Riding in Cars with Boys: Confessions of a Bad Girl Who Makes Good

Beverly Donofrio

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Trouble began in 1963. I'm not blaming it on President Kennedy's assassination or its being the beginning of the sixties or the Vietnam War or The Beatles. The trouble I'm talking about was my first real trouble, the age-old trouble. The getting in trouble as in Is she in trouble? trouble. As in pregnant. As in the girl who got pregnant in high school. Beverly Ann Donofrio wasn't bad because she hung out with hoods - she was bad because she was a hood.

Riding in Cars with Boys: Confessions of a Bad Girl Who Makes Good Details

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From Reader Review Riding in Cars with Boys: Confessions of a Bad Girl Who Makes Good for online ebook

Amy says

I adored the movie adaptation of this book, it made me roar with laughter and even made me cry which is a rarity. However, Riding In Cars With Boys by Beverly Donofrio just didn't live up to my expectations.

In this memoir we follow Bev's journey as she becomes a teen mum and wife. She battles with her hate as she sees everyone around her moving on while she is stuck dreaming of having an education and a better life; without her son.

I feel a connection to Beverly, I'm not exactly sure why but I related to her thought processes entirely and sympathized with how her life turned out. I've seen a lot of reviews that hate on Beverly's behaviour while she and her son were growing up because the drugs and sex clearly affected her son in a negative way. However, I just found it incredibly real and honest as well as eye opening because it just goes to show *life is not perfect*.

I love that Beverly is described as a hippie and we get to see more of what she stood for as a woman. I liked that she wanted to be independent without a husband because at the time this was mostly unheard of. We see more about her life in College while looking after a baby and her struggle with balancing all her responsibility. I'm suprised that Ray, Beverly's ex husband did not have a bigger part in this memoir and I do think that the screen adaptation showed his story in a much more shocking way.

Compared to the movie the book is quite different but not necessarily in a good way. The story isn't as structured and there is a lot of abrupt time jumps.

When Beverly gives birth the details are written quite graphically, I'll definitely be reading this again if my future partner ever tries to convince me to have children just so I know to say no, *haha*. However, while Beverly is in hospital I didn't find it very funny which was a let down compared to the movie as I remember having to pause it just because I was laughing so hard.

The book just fell a little flat for me and we don't really get much of a connection or feel for the characters like I hoped. The ending was a let down because there isn't much closure and I didn't find it as touching as the film adaptation.

Don't get me wrong this is a outstanding story with such a poignant message but I didn't enjoy it quite as much as the film.

Amy says

This book is the author's own story about being a young single mother to a little boy. It is sad in parts, and very funny in others!

I really liked this book (and the movie too!).

Arianna Connal says

It was an honest account of a selfish kid who had a child and kind of raised it, but she never seemed to grow up herself. Not even as she was writing this stuff did she seem to have any remorse... She seems to be proud of what she did, even though, by her own account, she was a selfish, crappy mom. I think I would have enjoyed it more if it were one of those books with the person saying, "Look, I'm not happy with what I did, but this is how it was." Instead of, "Look at how I took advantage of everyone around me and screwed the system to get where I am educationally! Oh, yeah, by the way, I have a son that I really didn't want until he was old enough to take care of himself, but I'm proud of how he turned out. Because of me, of course."

Hristina says

This book was a wild ride (pun intended). I enjoyed it a bunch.

Ami Nicholson says

This is a great story. I saw the movie years ago, and I am glad that the novel is absolutely nothing like it. I almost wish the film directors hadn't taken such liberties with the story, because I would love to see a movie of this as written. What I loved most about this book was the raw honesty of Beverly Donofrio. We automatically assume that all women have some sort of maternal capacity, and that attitude is a disservice to women everywhere. Some of what she put her son through was shocking, but she owned her imperfections. This story was about her struggle with her own inadequacies, and how she rose above all of the things in her nature that kept her down. Most people try to put a positive spin on their past, but she laid her sins bare for her readers, and I applaud her for it.

I wish it had been a bit longer, but it was a great memoir. It's a light read and very punchy. Two enthusiastic thumbs up.

Kristi says

As part of a grad school psychology class, I was required to analyze a movie from one of a variety of topics. The movie version of this book was the option I chose. I actually felt that the characters, as portrayed in the movie, were somewhat sympathetic. It felt, in the movies, like Beverly was struggling but doing the best she could while seemingly stuck in adolescence. There was some growth in the character...

The book was, sadly, not as compelling as the movie. Yes, many of the stories were the same, but those that were left out of the movie gave a MUCH different feel for Beverly. In the movie, her involvement with drugs was through her ex-husband's use, her occasional experimentation, and her attempts to make money to help raise her son - foolish, yes, but using adolescent reasoning, it wasn't unforgivable. In the book, one could see that this wasn't the extent of it at all. In all honesty, she wasn't struggling against things beyond her control due to a mistake - she continually created those problems.

I give it 3 stars because of the brutal honesty (though I wonder how much she edited out to make herself look

better - and the thought that this is the "better" makes me shudder!). I didn't see much growth in her character even at the end. I feel bad saying this because it is her life's story, but it feels more like a repeated telling of how she used and manipulated those around her, including her child, to get where she is. Perhaps if I wasn't expecting something more inspirational of this book, I would have liked it more. But as a parent, I just can't say that this is inspirational. All I can think of is her poor child - his is a story that might be a MUCH better read.

Amy says

I'd read *Looking for Mary* (which I loved) by the same author and have heard her on NPR and sought this book out on BookCrossing in trade. Talk about brutal honesty! Donofrio doesn't hold back. But with it all, the book is fresh and engaging. Such a different take on life from mine, even though we're not too far apart in years. But she drew me right in and kept me engaged through-out her story.

I loved one description, especially--she's just gotten some news- some very good news, and writes:

I felt like Hester Prynne must've felt in the next chapter, the one that never got written, the one where she's in the woods on her way to the rest of her life and finally rips off that ridiculous A and throws it in the camp fire.

I created a new tag just because of this book -- "Yikes"

Rachel says

I picked this up at the library as a book on cd. I was in a rush and recognized the title as something I'd heard of before (probably from the movie that was apparently made from it) and the blurbs said it was funny. I'll spoil that one for you right now, it was not funny. Not even a little. The best thing it has going for it is that it's short. She keeps reminding us over and over how much her entire life sucks because she got pregnant in high school and she's so dramatic about it ("...no no no, you have to understand, *I'M* the girl who got pregnant in highschool"). Frankly, there are entire towns of teenage mothers that have gone on to be productive citizens without begging for sympathy from anyone that will listen. We get it, it's hard, there is no one that will contradict that.

The whiny tone that the book is written in feels like she's trying to elicit all of this understanding from the reader about her neglect of her son (she mentions that after her mother points out how dirty her kid is, she realizes she can't even remember the last time she bathed him). Feel sorry for me, it's hard to be a teenage mother and I don't really want my son (and she's still complaining about this fact when she's more than a decade passed being a teenage mother). She also occasionally reminds how sometimes she likes to be mean to her kid, because it's funny. It goes on like this and you keep waiting for the part where she realizes that she's the most self-absorbed person on Earth and decides to make a change (not to mention, I'm waiting for the part that makes me so much as crack a smile) and it never comes. The audio book comes with a special interview with the author done 10 years after the book came out and she still doesn't get it. In her 40's still acting though she's the only one on Earth that matters.

I'm glad I didn't pay for this book, why would I want to reward someone financially for committing to paper that she's a neglectful and sometimes abusive mother. You don't get a pass card because you admit it. I get

the feeling that if you bedazzled a track suit with "TERRIBLE MOTHER" across the ass, this woman would buy it and think she was clever.

Heather says

I truly enjoyed this book. I also really like the movie that is based on the novel, and I have seen many reviews claiming the movie is better than the book. I truly feel both are special in their own ways. One of the things the book adds that is missing from the movie is how remarkably honest Donofrio is about herself. The movie paints her character as someone who means well, but is a victim of misfortune. Donofrio doesn't hold back in exploring her selfish, self-destructive tendencies. Many reviews have also claimed this as a reason to pass on the book. Without a doubt, it was my favorite part. Because Donofrio goes to a place that is true and real and fully reflects the experience of a working-class teen mother trying to grow up with a burden she never wanted and struggles to truly love. I also felt like this book really helped me to fully understand my own mother and childhood more. My mother shares little with Donofrio's experience outside of being a very young mother, but in those sentences I felt a flash of recognition.

I am having a hard time really explaining myself, which tells me this book will be one I will be thinking about and pondering for days to come. That 4 stars may just turn in to a 5 star over the next few days. Truly, a thought-provoking, harsh, honest and beautiful book.

Tima says

This only gets 3-stars because the back story from the movie was embedded in my head. If I had never seen the movie, this book would've come across completely flat. This is a rare instance where I would say that the movie is way, way better than the book; including all of the story plots that were changed for the movie.

Not to mention, that Penguin books did a terrible job converting this book to an eBook edition. Spacing was mid-word "im matterialy", "Si mone", etc and every single time the word "corner" was in the book it was written as "comer". Every time.

This would be a book I'd say isn't really worth reading if you've seen the movie (or even if you haven't). It only makes half-sense unless you have all the life and characters pumped in from the movie..

Dana says

I was looking forward to reading this because it came so highly recommended, but I was so sorry I wasted my time on this book. Beverly, the main character gets pregnant as a teenager by a loser who she barely knew. What comes next is a series of time periods in her life where you are convinced that at any moment, Beverly will grow up, quit whining and do what she must to raise her son, now on her own. But with each passing year in her book, my realization grew stronger that Beverly was a selfish baby who should have done the right thing by her son and put him up for adoption and let responsible adults raise this child. I was incredibly disappointed in this book and instead of sympathizing with Beverly and her situation, I wound up despising her and felt incredibly sorry for her poor son who had Beverly as his mother.

Rebecca McNutt says

This book took a few pages to get into before it started to get interesting, but as it goes on, it becomes a memoir fueled by a rebellious main character who dreams of a better life, and by events that allow her to get there.

Rachel Hallock says

I read *Riding in Cars with Boys*, by Beverly Donofrio. There's a movie based on it with Drew Barrymore, but before I read the book I hadn't seen it. As a notorious Barrymore-hater, I figured the movie would be atrocious, but surprisingly was the best I've ever seen Drew. I must admit I did read the book because it had a movie to go along with it, but as usual, I liked the book better than the movie.

To summarize briefly, Bev is a teenage girl living in the projects who gets into some "trouble", meaning she gets knocked up. As a pregnant teenager, she deals with the hardships of having to grow up too quickly and trying to balance her own life with caring for her child.

Beverly is absolutely crazy, but she is inspiring in her own right. Actually, her insanity is legitimately proven when she visits the division of vocational rehabilitation.

"If I scored crazy and smart enough, they'd send me to college; if I scored crazy and wasn't smart, I'd get vocational training." (Donofrio 140)

She scores crazy and smart, but doesn't quite have the initiative the DVR is looking for. They send her to community college, but she has to find her own transportation and childcare for Jason.

Beverly is a captivating author. She has a brash style and doesn't glaze over anything, but with what she has been through, that's to be expected. It is obvious from the very beginning that she was much more intelligent than a "hood" is expected to be. She knows it, too, and tries to make the best of her life.

I liked this book. It was interesting and fast paced. Usually I'm not a big fan of biographies because people's lives really aren't all that interesting. As Bev says,

"All life is, is three or four big days that change everything." (Donofrio 94)

I can't help but agree. Usually biographies drag on with unnecessary information, but *Riding in Cars with Boys* isn't like that. It's all relevant.

The only thing about this book that irks me is the end. Suddenly the book jumps from Bev and Jason finally moving to New York, with Jason being only about 7 years old, to him attending college. I really would like to hear more about their time in the city and how Bev grows from still being a kid herself to finally becoming the mother that she needs to be.

Bev isn't a famous person who I just wanted to learn more about. She's just a person who was born into sub-ordinary circumstances and made the best of her dismal decisions. I generally like books where at least on main character is more than a little crazy and end up idolizing them a bit more than they might deserve, but Bev, although crazy, is a good person and a good role model.

S.L. says

I read this book because I was a so-so fan of the film. I wanted to read the actual memoir.

Bev is a self-centered woman who regrets the conception, birth, and life of her son. She only cares about herself, and there were moments where she seemed to glory in her child's misery. The scene that really stands out to me is when she tells Jason that Ray is gone and she seems to say how they'll be without money

or food over and over until Jason breaks down, scared and unhappy. What sort of mother does that?

Her heavy drug use, her use of men while having a young child in the house, the drinking, everything led me to asking why did no one take her child from her? She was a danger to herself and her son, though she didn't care. Someone should have. Though I hope that Jason grew up to be a lovely, well-adjusted young man, I can't help but think he'll carry scars that will bleed over into his own child rearing.

I read the book quickly, but I was angry throughout most of it. Bev's behavior, her acidic and unloving thoughts of her child, and her unjustified hatred/resentment of her family just blew me away. Most of what I read, I couldn't believe anyone would openly admit to, and I felt sorry for Jason. This book immediately went into my 'resell on Amazon' pile once I finished it, and I cannot recommend it to anyone. It's just an awful, self-indulgent vomit session of a selfish, narrow-sighted woman.

Kris - My Novelesque Life says

3 STARS

A memoir of a women remembering her teenage pregnancy and how it has come to shape her life. I enjoyed Drew Barrymore's role in the movie as much as I liked this novel - the movie and novel are different.
