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Good Girl

Christina Frank
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The perfect escapist romance, this is a guaranteed pleaser with plenty of spicy details.

Christina Frank's *Fifty Shades*-inflected romance *Good Girl* is surprisingly sweet, with plenty of blush-worthy scenes that keep the pages turning.

"Good" isn't good enough for billionaire Noah Bentley. He insists on the best. This is one of the first lessons that ingenue Gabriella Rossi learns after she accepts a six-month arrangement with Noah that requires that she do everything in her power to please him.

Gabriella is a full-on Jersey girl, from her love of pizza to her devotion to her family. She's working in her father's pizza shop when a handsome stranger, Noah Bentley, approaches her with an offer. In exchange for a million-dollar real estate deal, which would buy out the shop's location, he wants six months. Of her.

Gabriella, who's spent more time rolling pizza dough than dating, is hesitant, but agrees to the commitment. The setup, which is part Beauty and the Beast and part Bluebeard, gives a charming peek at privileged life in Manhattan while also exploring the tension between two people who have agreed to be stuck with each other. In some ways incredibly chaste, *Good Girl* manages a lovely combination of believable details and pure fantasy—the perfect balance for a well-written romance.

Good Girl is Frank's first novel, but it's head and shoulders above many others in its genre. Frank shows a natural sense for dialogue and character, and isn't shy about throwing in a few interesting plot twists and side characters to add dimension. Rather than fall back on well-worn S and M tropes, Frank humanizes Noah and Gabriella, showing them with their families and in their difficult moments. It's hard to be too scared of Noah, as imperious and punishing as he can be, after seeing him with his family: "The children run rampant throughout the entire dinner, doing everything but hanging from the chandelier. The brothers guffaw obnoxiously…like frat boys."

Gabriella's a good observer, and through her, Frank shares the sights, sounds, and sensations of her new glamorous life—six months with the one percent. For example, a spontaneous trip to Tiffany yields a "floral cut diamond cocktail watch. The entire platinum face is encrusted with brilliant round diamonds…I never knew that such a thing existed." Small, sparkling details keep *Good Girl* grounded in reality, even as the primary relationship gets increasingly fantastic. Frank consistently shows that Noah, for all his rules, is surprisingly changeable, and keeps Gabriella on her toes; in some of the best dialogue, Gabriella challenges him, searching for cracks in his hard outer shell. The novel's pacing slows deliciously during sex scenes, which are rich in skin-tingling details.

Good Girl is the perfect escapist romance, a guaranteed pleaser with plenty of spicy details to bring this refreshing first novel to life.

CLAIRE FOSTER (September 30, 2016)

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