

***Momma's
Got the Blues***





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Got the Blues*



David Sherman



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Guernica Founder: Antonio D'Alfonso

Michael Mirolla, general editor

Gary Clairman, editor

David Moratto, cover and interior design

Guernica Editions Inc.

287 Templemead Drive, Hamilton, ON L8W 2W4
2250 Military Road, Tonawanda, N.Y. 14150-6000 U.S.A.
www.guernicaeditions.com

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For Reisa.
She always hits the right notes.



Sometimes **MaryAnne** thought it was madness: words and words, widows and orphans and wandering phrases; sometimes a verse or two, scribbled on legal pads, scraps of paper, backs of envelopes, restaurant napkins, a bloody cliché, that. Words that meant nothing, words that meant everything, idle thoughts waiting in line to be turned into songs—one day. Though her thoughts were rarely idle, especially when she sat at her table, her guitar on her lap, computer at her fingertips, cell recording to catch bits and pieces of chord progressions melded with a lyric or two. And the ubiquitous working tool, her ashtray and hand-carved walnut box of kush to jump start her brain. Get lost in that space. Until the phone rang.

“Maryanne, you sitting down?”

"I'm standing, scribbling words," she said, putting her phone on speaker, pressing the red dot that killed the recording.

"You're stoned? Of course, you're stoned, you're working."

"What's up, Joey? I got a sweet melody. I'm mining for lyrics."

"Phoning to see how you're doing."

"Give me a break," she said. Her kid never called to see how she was doing. "What's up? I need a couplet."

"You need a grandkid?"

"I need a couplet."

"Sorry, no couplet. Maybe a grandkid."

MaryAnne put the pencil neatly on the table, perfectly parallel to the lined page of the latest sheet of lyrics and scratches and dark Xs. Too many verses, too many ideas, too much of nothing. She felt her heart rate accelerate.

"You're pregnant." She needed time, chew on this new reality a little. But her brain was cumulus, a bit of cirrus, with a jet stream blowing them around inside her skull.

She was going to be a grandmother?

"How are you?" she asked her daughter. "When? Was this your idea?"

"No, but I think someone's trying to tell me something. You know, tick tock, tick tock ... I'm great. Over-the-moon."

"You're enjoying life too much, might as well drop anchor, jump overboard and tread water for a couple of decades?"

She stashed her stash and started packing her long-stemmed glass pipe. Easy on the throat.

"That what I did to you?" Joey said. "Threw you over-

board? I love talking to you when you're stoned and the panties come off and you get all macho aggressive."

"I'm not stoned. But I will be any second and my panties are on and I knew how to swim, Joey. And, I had my shit together. There a guy in the picture?"

"Wasn't immaculate conception, mother. Believe me. Though it was rather heavenly. I did see stars a few times."

"I'm happy for you. What're you going to do?"

"Give me a break, Mother. I have no idea. I'm not yet down with the reality of diapers, nannies, jammies and crib shopping. I think I'm maybe six or seven weeks. I'm going to see a doctor. Don't know when. Maybe I can go viral. Take a belly bump picture every day and post it on Instagram and do something with it when I pop the zygote."

"You know the guy?"

"Course," Joey said. "Met him in the washroom at the Meat Market."

"Joey?!" MaryAnne figured this called for sternness, staunch motherhood.

"I know the guy, I know the guy," Joey said. "I stopped doing guys in bathrooms in January. It was a New Year's resolution."

"I'm happy you're maintaining your sense of humour. Joey, I know this isn't about me, and I'm happy for you, if you're happy for you, I think, but this is what you want? Now? The world is a fucking mess, you have no job, you drink too much, and what're you going to do with a kid?"

"Bounce it on my knee?" Joey said, not really enjoying this exchange, contemplating the bottle of red beckoning. She looked at her watch. It was almost noon. Close enough. "What does anyone do with a kid? Screw it up, I guess."

MaryAnne took a deep puff, held it in. Exhaled.

“I’m too young for the grandmother shit, Jo.”

“MaryAnne, believe it or not, when ... uh ... Felix and I were having a drug and wine-drenched evening of multiple orgasms, I didn’t have a single thought of you. Not even a trace of one of your melodies floated through my mind as I screamed, ‘Do me again, Big Boy.’ I was in another dimension.”

“Exactly.”

“And I don’t have a clue what to do. That a lyric for you, Mother? ‘I got screwed and I don’t have a clue what I should do.’ It sings, doesn’t it?”

“I don’t need images of you rolling around a bed with some guy who probably wears a baseball cap and his pants around his knees when he’s out buying groceries, if he knows how to buy groceries.”

“You think the only guy that would sleep with me is a loser?”

“No, I think you pick losers to sleep with. It’s a self-esteem thing fueled by your appetite for alcohol and drugs.”

“Thanks, MaryAnne, you’ve always been so supportive.”

“Jesus. Daughter, if you’re happy, I’m happy for you. Stop the scotch and the rum and Coke and the coke and the dope and the wine and get more exercise. And keep the quantity and quality of your happy endings to yourself. It’s good you’re remembering them so vividly ’cause as the belly expands the sex life contracts. Actually most of life contracts until you’re nothing more than an incubator. You want to do this? Abortion’s legal here, you know?”

“I’m not sure about anything. But, MaryAnne, thanks

for the feel good, mommy dearest moment. I'm going to go get drunk." And she was gone.

MaryAnne took the latest sheet of scribbles and ripped it into a few thousand pieces and threw it over her shoulder.

"Mama said there'll be days like this, there'll be days like this, Mama said," MaryAnne sang, kind of downbeat, not even close to the Shirelles.



Joey, phone in one hand, extra-large lime-green plastic cup in the other, sat on the stoop and watched the world go by. The stoop was a refuge from the home she called My Little Dump. The sofa and arm chair she had been so proud to find at a Friperie for \$25 now revealed itself as junk, just like the carpet worn of its pattern, and the coffee table she had fashioned from abandoned wood crates discovered in the back alley. The walls were faded or yellowed, depending on what substance she was abusing at the time and the whole place needed an injection of energy and cash, neither of which she had in sufficient quantity. Her Little Dump was a shithole, she knew, and refuge was found on the front stoop, at least in warmer weather.

Things moved out there. She didn't know where everyone was going or why but they were going. Zoom, zoom, zoom.

Guys and women on bikes, couples holding hands, a tall kid on a skateboard, and cars, always cars, making the

turn off Van Horne and accelerating. She took a 12-second video of a guy on a board rolling by.

My life, she thought. *Watching the world go by*.

It was either give up the booze or give up the pregnancy, she thought, sipping hungrily at the cold, thin wine, enjoying the way it immediately coddled her brain. She had read the warnings on the bottles, seen the warnings on TV, even read the research on the Internet one night when she was a half a bottle over the line, suddenly curious what she was doing to herself.

“The choice, Ma, is stay drunk or stay pregnant,” she said to no one. “Or, stay drunk and pregnant and have a very fucked up baby. Whatya think, MaryAnne? What would you do? Course, you’re a doper. You probably smoked when I was in the womb. Think that’s why I seem to have an unquenchable thirst? No shit, Sherlock.”

People rushing by were no help. Maybe she should go somewhere, too, but it was easier to sit here and watch other people blowing by, sometimes film them, transfer it to her computer. My life in video. Trying to edit it was a mind bender. Especially since she didn’t understand the software.

“Why was everything so complicated?” she’d mumble, usually *EUI*, editing under the influence, or trying to.

The glass was filled with eight square, glossy ice cubes and the cheapest red the dep had, a litre of Chilean at about \$14 with tax. The ice killed the bitterness and one thing she had a lot of was ice. Bought 12 trays at the dollar store, filled and froze one as soon as she emptied it. It was compulsive. A freezer well stocked with ice calmed her. The fact that it was void of edibles didn’t bother her at all.

So, she sipped from the big, tall plastic cup and contemplated where everyone was in a hurry to get to. Sometimes she figured she should get off her ass, get off the stoop and get going. But where? And why? Especially now. She was fucking pregnant. Again. Jesus!

Thing that nagged at her, even after half a litre, was maybe she should be doing something. Maybe paint. Or write. Lap dance. Work a bar. Work in a supermarket. No. Bookstore. Did they still exist? Café? There were a million right here in the 'hood. Travel? But where? Pretty fucking moot now.

“Yeah, I'd love to work here but I'm taking mat leave in seven months, that okay?” she said aloud. Had to watch that. She was talking to herself.

A woman in running shoes and a short, flared skirt, Spandex top, all in white, good haircut, just long enough, walked by holding hands with a guy in jeans and a T-shirt a few sizes too small. Showing off his pecs. They were laughing and enjoying each other too much for Joey's liking. She emptied the glass, filled her mouth with the vestiges of sweet ice and decided to kidnap the bottle waiting for her on a shelf on the fridge door.

She climbed up but the hallway started spinning too fast. Now, that was funny. She had had too much wine to go and get more wine. If you want to drink more, she said to herself, you're going to have to learn to drink less. She tried not to, but she couldn't help but giggle.

She lay down in the narrow corridor, spilling the red-stained ice onto the plastic Persian carpet, its shades of burgundy perfect to hide wine accidents. And, glass in hand, was out cold.



Michael was chopping onions, MaryAnne was smoking and changing strings absent-mindedly. The kitchen was steamy, scented with garlic and hot oil and marijuana, but only Michael could smell the grass. She was immersed in it.

“Ya know, I wasn’t a bad mother. There for her. After school. ‘Tell me the best thing that happened today’ at dinner, every damn night when I was home. ‘Nothing happened, Ma.’

“Jo didn’t even need me. She learned living online. She won’t do Lamaze, she’ll use a birthing app. Hope she remembers to charge the phone before she goes into labour.”

Michael had moved to chopping ginger. He was doing Chinese tonight. MaryAnne liked to watch him cook; he seemed so sure of himself, pirouetting between fridge, pantry, counter and stove with razor-sharp German carving knives in hand. Get a good buzz going and talk at him. He only half-listened—he was building the meal—but half-listened well. Didn’t mind her rambling, foggy monologues. She was like background music. The guy was a catch. A tad self-contained, a little remote, but a catch. He let her live and breathe.

“So, like, I’m not sure if I have to be thrilled by this, or maybe I’m a real bitch,” she said. “I want Joey to be happy, she wants to have a kid, great, but leave me out if it. I don’t have to watch her screw up her life.”

“Sure, you do,” Michael said, grinding salted black beans in the pestle with garlic, ginger and soya sauce. “You’ll

be drooling over the little turkey like all grandmothers. It's the nurturing gene, comes with breasts and the womb. You'll see your factory-fresh grandkid, you'll melt."

"I musta got a Walmart special," she said. "The nurturing gene was left out of the box of reproductive goodies. I want to finish the CD. I know it'll disappear without a trace but I have to. And I'm doing that little tour around Northern Ontario."

"Put the grandkid on a video, go cute, go viral, like YouTube kittens," Michael said. He fired up the gas under the wok. "If she has the baby."

"Michael, I sing about teenage hookers, rusty factories and homeless kids—can't think of a better way to illustrate all that than with a cootchie cootchie coo baby video," she said. "Have they recruited you to reprogram me? I'm not going back to mothering, no matter how bloody grand it's supposed to be."

She took a deep puff, continued tuning.

"Kids are antidotes to cynicism and despair," Michael said.

"How would you know?"

He paused, a cloud passed in front of his eyes and then he went back to work.

"Musta read it somewhere," he said.

"Besides, she won't have the kid. Who are we kidding? Her head's a mess."

"Darling, your kid might have a kid," Michael said, using a metal spatula to make his dinner do backflips in the wok. MaryAnne was mesmerized by the spinning meat and broccoli.

“Life’s a bagel,” he said. “Mrs. Gross told me. It’s the way it’s supposed to be.”

“Bagels are about cream cheese and smoked salmon,” she said. “I’ve done my Earth Mother thing.”

MaryAnne eyed what was left of the joint, took a last puff and carefully killed it, saving the rest for dessert.

“She has no business getting knocked up. She has some philosophical disagreement with the pill, patch, IUD, so she opts for condoms and guess what?”

“I thought you didn’t talk to your daughter about birth control.”

“I found them when I was snooping through her shit before she moved out. That and a couple of grams of coke. Which she’s probably still doing. And drinking. And who the fuck knows what else.”

“What’d you do with the coke?” Michael said, emptying the wok onto a hot serving platter he pulled from the oven.

“Didn’t sleep for three nights,” she said, pouring a glass of wine. “Don’t know how I used to do that. You know, she’s too young to be doing all that shit. And she’s too young to be pregnant and too fucked up to be pregnant and who the hell knows who the father is?”

MaryAnne removed the ashtray from the table, grabbed dishes from the cupboard, cutlery from the drawer and laid them out in perfect symmetry.

“When you had her what kind of shape were you in?”

“That was different, times were different,” she said.

Michael started serving, pushing beef in black bean sauce and broccoli onto her plate, then a scoop of rice. He was careful. He knew she didn’t like the sauce commingling with the pristine white rice. She loved him for that.

He'd been pushing her to switch to brown rice but he couldn't argue with her when she said, "Show me a single Chinese restaurant that serves brown rice."

"What's different, darling, is you don't wanna be a grandmother," he said, filling his own plate, spooning the beef on the rice. Commingling didn't bother him. Not much did, she thought.

"Being a granny reminds you of your age, you can hear the grave calling and you're worried you might have to be on call 'cause Joey'll probably need help navigating this."

"Michael, I had a kid, good kid and I did when I could and didn't do when I couldn't. Marriage was a nightmare then the asshole ... died. I didn't mourn. No long black veil for me. Marijohn Wilkin, rest her soul. Great tune. Maybe I should cover it.

"Anyway, I did the mother and the father part. I'm almost 60, I'm not doing mother redux for the rest of my life. I'll look after you, darling, not that you need lookin' after. But if this bundle of soiled joy, should it hatch, wants to get to know his or her grandmother, he or she best wait until he or she can zip over in his or her Miata, roll a joint and tell me what's up."

"Sure, baby," Michael said.

"I'm pissed this colossal intrusion into my game plan, my future, was perpetrated without even consulting me."

Michael could sense her temperature rising, confirmed when she went back and retrieved her ashtray and her box of herb, papers and mechanical grinder.

"And you know what, sometimes you're too fucking logical and together. This is a major fuckup, and you're standing there worried about your dried black bean sauce.

You ever get upset by anything? It's not that your feathers don't get ruffled, I'm not sure you even have feathers. Can you please support me on this not-anxious-to-be-a-grandmother thing? I did not sign on for this upheaval. So please go fuck yourself."

"If I must," he said to himself. "But after dinner, okay?"

But she left the kitchen at high speed, smoke billowing behind her and he sat down to savour his cooking.



The guy who interviewed Felix was about his age and didn't give a shit. About anything. He was dressed in jeans and a worn, faded dress shirt. Felt like he had gone through this process a few thousand times. To keep his job, he needed warm meat to do the job. The pay was a dollar above minimum wage plus bonuses. Beat the quota, make another dollar an hour. Really beat the quota, you could earn as much as 15 bucks an hour. Doing the math, Felix figured he could gross 600 a week, decent coin. Bring it on. He signed a bunch of forms he didn't read—pledges to secrecy, pledges not to steal, pledges to give a minimum of notice when he quit—and everybody quit, sooner rather than later—and not to work for a competitor when he did quit.

Then he was handed off to a woman, also about his age, in jeans and a black spandex top, to tutor him in the fine art of fulfillment.

The corridor was narrow. Her name was Jeanine.

"First thing," she said as they walked down the long hall with closed doors on both sides, "is this place is full

of shit. Best advice I can give you, get out now. The work sucks. It kills you, mind and body. After 5, if they let you go home, all you can do is crawl into a bath and smoke a shitload of dope, get drunk or both. Anything stronger really fucks you up the next day and they'll be on your case like ticks on a dog."

"What's the downside?" Felix said.

"That there's always a tomorrow," she said and pushed open a set of double doors revealing an insanely bright room big enough for several Dreamliners with row after row of tall shelves stretching beyond the horizon. There were self-driving carts on thin tracks moving silently between the shelves, forklifts with pallets of boxes going in all directions and people just like him frantically plucking stuff off shelves and dropping them into baskets balanced on a blinking, rolling, motorized device the size of a coffee table. No one was walking, everyone was doing a slow trot behind the electric footstools, made for anything other than resting your feet on. The light made him squint.

"Yeah, you'll have headaches almost every day," she said. "Bring Advil. And drink a lot of water—give you an excuse to go to the can. They probably have hidden cameras in the can so they'll know if you're pissing or not ... This is a good place compared to others I've worked. Let you piss when you need to."

He was staring into the chaos, kind of mesmerized.

"Why do you stay if you hate it so much?" he said.

"I like to eat, pay the rent," Jeanine said. "C'mon, I'll walk you around, show you how it works."

The amount of stuff was overwhelming. Anything anyone could possibly want was on a shelf somewhere.

“We don’t have perishables, here. No refrigeration. That’s at another centre. We have everything else.”

“Who, like, owns all this stuff?” he said. “Who’s actually selling it?”

“They don’t tell us. We just run around filling orders, putting them on those little robots we chase that are sent by computer and then they’re forwarded by the computers to the proper station or to shipping. You’re assigned to, let me see your papers, Station 12Q. That’s mostly pharmacy stuff, OTC drugs, toilet paper, makeup, you know, shit you’d find at a big pharmacy, which is almost everything these days, but here it’s mostly stuff for the bathroom: shampoo, shaving cream, toilet paper, diapers for kids and oldsters, whatever. Follow the robot. When it’s done with you, it tells you and moves on and another robot will beep at you, tells you it needs filling.”

“I’m working for a robot? Really?”

“Really,” she said. “They’re cute, aren’t they? If you try and fuck them up, they know it and they report you. You get fired immediately. You can take a dump in aisle six, maybe get reprimanded, but fucking with the little mechanical bastards is a firing offence. But, don’t worry, the robots, unlike us, are indestructible. You can play basketball with them and they keep on rolling.”

“What company’s web site are we working for?”

“Doesn’t matter. They don’t tell us. Everyone sells everything so who knows. They don’t want you to know. It could be Amazon, Walmart, Costco, Shopper’s, could be all of them. Doesn’t matter. You fill the order as quick as you can so you can get the next order and fill that as quick

as you can. Welcome to your new life. When you've had enough, razor blades in row 112B3."

He had no idea what that meant.

She led the way, pointing out sections, helping him get his bearings. There was nothing in the world that could fit on a shelf that wasn't here. From corn flakes and canned soup to car parts and stuffed toys for humans and dogs. Everything wrapped in shiny plastic, everything packed with the promise of a better life. If Santa, or Satan, had a warehouse, this would be it.

She stopped him near the entrance to the employee locker room. There was a traffic light shining green attached to the wall over the door.

"That tells you if you can go home," Jeanine said. "Green means, when your shift ends, you can get felt up or security cleared, as they put it. Usually takes about 20 minutes and they don't pay you for it. Same at lunch if you wanna leave. Yellow means you might be able to go home, OT is optional, if they get enough volunteers. Red means you're trapped like a rat, you can't go home, OT is obligatory. Light rules your life. You burn the red, don't come back. Green means it's slow, you might not get your eight hours, they might send you home after two or four, whatever they feel like."

"That legal?"

"If you read what you signed, you agreed to be treated like a robot yourself. As I said, razor blades are at 112B3."



Yes, Michael was chill. Almost frosty. He had done a stint with anger and rancour in a previous relationship and had spent 30 years or so with rock 'n' roll crazies, rigging sound and lights for shows that often sounded as musical as jet engines. Front of stage, back stage, it has always been out of control, miraculous and simply nuts. He had served his time in the land of This Makes No Sense at All and now preferred to reside in No Drama Today, Please, which was what life was usually like with MaryAnne.

Michael had always loved screaming guitars, honky tonk piano, horn sections, swing bands, girl backup singers, Motown and the Wall of Sound. But he knew there was no money in it, not for 99 per cent of the people who were like him: kids who could spend their days and nights smoking hash between two large speakers or camped out in a field for a few days listening to act after act and watching the girls go by. What could be better than sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll?

He never picked up a guitar or a horn. He didn't have what it took to be a player. He figured you had to be born with it.

So he picked up books: the physics of sound, tensile strength, light, speakers, staging, rigging, scaffolding, everything he could find at the McGill libraries, everything he could pick from his professors' brains and from crews at shows, trading info for hash and beer when he had to.

By the time he was 20, Michael knew as much as there was to know about building a stage, stacking giant speakers, monitors, hanging lights, building fog machines, turning wide-open football fields into decent concert halls.

Michael became the man in Montreal and soon, Canada. He made the music pop. And more than a few acts passing through paid him big money to come on tour with them; Europe, Australia, the Orient. Soon it was operas and ballet and symphonies. He saw the world from back stage and up in the air.

By the time he was 45, he had banked some serious coin, owned a few duplexes and triplexes in Montreal, bought for a song every time the Parti Québécois's independence platform threatened. When he hit 50, he called it a day. His ears and nerves were shot, as were his shoulders and knees, as was his fascination with the whole business. Kids and venues were using computers or subcontractors and cheap labour to replace him. Yeah, a few stages collapsed, lighting towers toppled, but there was insurance to take care of the fallout.

Most of the music sucked today, nothing he could tap a toe to, and he had begun to loathe climbing on planes, commercial or private. He had had his share of women. He was, to quote Dylan, who he sang incessantly, "Keeping away from the women ... giving them lots of room." Until he met and heard MaryAnne.

Michael had popped into the café she was playing. He knew Phil, the owner, and he had seen MaryAnne a couple of times before, having coffee and shooting the shit, usually between sets. One night he stayed to listen to her. MaryAnne was trying out a trio of new tunes and as she sang, she watched him looking back, intent and intense.

He was touched by the songs but more, the simplicity, the tenderness, the no-bullshit performance. He had seen them all and so few stayed who they were. But MaryAnne

struck him as who you see is who you get. She was counting the cash when he asked her out.

“Did you write those songs?” he asked, looking out the picture window. Her tunes had touched him, the poignancy cut through his decades-old cynicism.

His shyness attracted her. He couldn't seem to look her in the eye.

“I did,” she said. Three hundred, forty dollars. She used to make \$3,500 a night minimum. Before that, there were years of \$5,000 nights. Paid the band \$1,500, hotels, meals, she still came out with a couple of thousand and a good feeling about life. Three hundred and forty dollars. Who was this guy?

“Good tunes,” he said. “Something about them. Evocative. No broken hearts and tears-on-my-pillow soap operas. Smart stuff.”

“Thank you,” she said, folding the cash and putting it in the breast pocket of her performance-only embroidered denim shirt. She'd been hit on thousands of times and she'd succumbed to more than a few. Attraction, loneliness, anger, fatigue or boredom. What else was there to do playing three nights in Hayfield, Manitoba? Or New York, New York, for that matter. All that was waiting for her was a bar and a room, maybe one more elegant than the other, but still a barstool and an empty bed.

But this guy ... calm, confident, in shape, lots of hair, deep eyes—when she could see them—seemed worth spending time with.

“I'm rigging the Stones at the Big O next week when I get back to town,” he said. “You can hang out backstage if

you like that kind of thing and we can go out to dinner when I'm done or listen to the show, whatever you like."

Turned out he wasn't rigging. The Stones travelled with their own crew. Michael, never Mike, supervised. He knew the idiosyncrasies of the venue, how the sound bounced, he told her later over Thai.

She watched him work from the side of the gigantic stage, bigger than any club she worked, even if you threw in the parking lot. The Stones toured with an armada of 18-wheelers. She toured in an old, rebuilt Saturn wagon. The crew was scrambling, they were running late, but Michael was in control, his hair delightfully rumped, looking as if he could fly a 747 through a hurricane and not break a sweat.

Then Jagger walked by in tight jeans and an oversized silk blouse, short and thin, stood next to Michael, who ignored him.

"We're running a tad late, ain't we, mate?"

"Yeah, we are," Michael said.

"We going to be ready for curtain?" Jagger said.

"We will," Michael said.

"I hate being late," Jagger said.

"Me too," Michael said. "But I hate having a guy in the crew kill himself rushing. And I hate when the artists can't get their extravagant gear together on time. If you need to perform with a portable Carnegie Hall, gotta get it here on time."

"I guess that's true," Jagger said, laughing. "What's your name, man? Whatya do?"

"Michael. I make sure the lights and sound go up and

don't fall down and kill a few hundred ticket-paying customers or the guys in the band. What's your name and what do you?"

She remembered Michael never looked at Jagger, kept his eyes on what the crew was doing.

"I'm Mick. Like in Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones. Maybe you've heard of us." He laughed.

"Pleased to meet you, Mick. Why don't you let me concentrate on what we're doing so this shit doesn't fall on your head when you're singing?" And Michael walked away, leaving Jagger alone, stage centre. The curtain was closed but the noise from the 50,000 or so on the other side was building, the beast growing restless. Jagger turned, smiling, and walked past her, nodding hello. Seemed a decent sort.

After, she followed Michael to his choice of dinner spots. Pretty great meal. The guy knew the restaurant, the owner and his way around the menu. She felt looked after.

"You gave Mick Jagger shit," she told him over a table weighed down with platters.

"Well," he said, grabbing a sliver of curried duck from the plate they were sharing. "Into everyone's life a little shit must fall. He'll be a better man for it."

She wanted to take him home. But thought, no. This might be worth savouring. Let it simmer, then with luck, bring it to a boil. He drove her home, walked her to her door, kissed her on the cheek, said, "I'll call you, okay?" And did.



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About the Author

David Sherman came of age when a man was defined by the size of his stereo speakers. Only woofers big enough to rearrange your heartbeat would do. As a journalist, he often wrote about music. Free time was often for bars and clubs with music on stage. David worked as an editor, writer, filmmaker and playwright, but ended most nights plunking on a guitar, writing songs. At the age of 59, as the music biz began to crumble under the tsunami of streaming, he was signed to a recording contract and played listening rooms and bars from Nova Scotia to Victoria.

If one sees life with three legs—love, work and music—one knows music can see you through days of empty pockets and nights in an empty bed.

After decades of writing and playing, *Momma's Got the Blues* is the author's way of writing about playing, fashioning a tale set in Montreal's Le Plateau, Canada's bagel capital.