

# ***The Supremes Sing the Happy Heartache Blues***

by Edward Kelsey Moore

## **About This Book**

When a late-in-life love affair blooms between Mr. Forrest Payne, the owner of the Pink Slipper Gentleman's Club, and Miss Beatrice Jordan, famous for stationing herself at the edge of the club's parking lot and yelling warnings of eternal damnation at the departing patrons, their unlikely wedding calls a legend back to town: Mr. El Walker, the great guitar bluesman, even though he'd sworn never to set foot in Plainview, Indiana, again.

But El is not the only Plainview native with a hurdle to overcome. A wildly philandering husband struggles to prove his faithfulness to the wife he's always loved. A young transwoman searching for her true self lights out for show biz and Chicago; to escape her Indiana past and live an authentic life. And among those in this tightly knit community who show up every Sunday after church for lunch at Earl's All-You-Can-Eat are the lifelong friends known locally as "The Supremes" — Clarice, facing down her longing for, chance at, and fear of, a great career; Barbara Jean, grappling at last with the loss of a mother whose life humiliated both of them, and Odette, reaching for her husband through an anger of his that she does not understand.

Edward Kelsey Moore's lively cast of strong, funny characters, each of whom have surmounted serious trouble and come into love, need not learn how to survive but how, fully, to live. And they do, every one of them, serenaded by the bittersweet and unforgettable blues song El Walker plays, born of his own great loss and love.

## **Suggested Discussion Questions**

1. What are the main themes of this novel?
2. El Walker says at the beginning of the book that he wants to sneak in and out of town without seeing his son James. Is he telling the truth about what he really wants? Do you think that El would have found a way to see his son even if he hadn't ended up in the hospital?
3. Barbara Jean's mother brought her a great deal of suffering. What does Barbara Jean gain from looking into her mother's life?
4. Why does Odette bring El home when she knows James will not approve?
5. What does it say about Clarice that she still desires Richmond after he has broken her heart so many times in the past? Has he truly changed?
6. It is clear why Terry might need Odette. Why might Odette need Terry?

7. How are each of the men who love the Supremes—James, Richmond, and Chick—a reflection of the woman he loves? And what does each husband give to the woman in his life that she treasures, despite his failings?
8. Whether alive or dead (or a ghost), the mothers of the Supremes play a major role in their daughters' lives. How do their mothers continue to exert an influence on them? Who is hurt most by it? Who is helped by it? Who is most like her mother?
9. Forgiveness is a major theme of the book. Which characters have the most to forgive and which have the most to ask forgiveness for? Who do you think is able to gain or grant forgiveness and who can't?
10. What qualities make the friendship between Odette, Clarice and Barbara Jean so extraordinary? In what ways do they help one another?
11. Barbara Jean and Ray both suffered great losses as youngsters. Neither believes they understand happiness. Do you think Barbara Jean and Ray can ever become truly happy?
12. What do you think happens next for Clarice and Richmond?
13. Near the end of the book El and Lily see a couple coming into the club. Do you think it was Odette and James?

## **About the author**

Born and raised in Indiana, Edward Kelsey Moore currently lives and writes in Chicago. His essays have been commissioned by Minnesota Public Radio and *The New York Times*, and his short fiction has appeared in many literary magazines. *The Supremes Sing the Happy Heartache Blues*, published in the summer of 2017, is his second novel. It received starred reviews in *Library Journal* and *Publishers Weekly* and is slated for publication in 2018 in several international editions. Edward's 2013 debut novel, the *New York Times* and international bestseller *The Supremes At Earl's ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT*, received excellent reviews and was awarded the 2014 First Novelist Award from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association. *The Supremes At Earl's* continues to be a popular choice among book clubs and community discussion groups across the country.

In addition to his writing, Edward Kelsey Moore enjoys a career as a professional cellist. His playing has been featured on many recordings and he has toured nationally and internationally. Mr. Moore currently performs with a number of orchestras, including the Chicago Sinfonietta and the Joffrey Ballet Orchestra.

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