THE
ALCOHOLIC’S
DAUGHTER
She asked him to write her a love song with the word “darling” in it.

“No one has ever called me darling,” she said. So he did. He called it *Forever.*

*If there’s forever, I’ll find you without fail*

And they would not fail. After so many trials and so many errors—serial monogamists, serial screw-ups, they were the real deal. So much to talk about, so many people in common. It was the love of a lifetime, they told each other, curled in bed, waltzing around the kitchen to music only they heard, driving down the highway to wherever. They were forever.
He increasingly found himself spending the hours before dawn on the shitty green sofa he had bought at one of those insidious box stores off the 40. It was cheap and not particularly comfortable, but it did the job. The cats would often be on each arm. His laptop would often be on his lap. A glass of scotch would often be on the floor within easy reach. Annie didn’t like coffee tables. He would work in the dark, silent house, revelling in the peace, broken occasionally by the sirens running down Papineau St. or the late-night clubbers drifting from the bars on Mount Royal to their cars parked in front of his door, their voices giddy with booze, music and the anticipation of sex.

When he became too tired to bang away at whatever he was working on or research for something Annie was doing, he would put the Mac away and pick up the scotch and remember. The scotch was a recent friend. It woke him, it fortified him, it made him smile.

Evan had not always found solace in the wee hours, in the solitude, in the absence of stress that floated through the living room in the middle of the night like a cool breeze. Now he was only too happy to embrace it when he awoke at three or four a.m. He had given up on tossing and turning in the hunt for sleep when the gargoyles attacked. He had
She got him. Her tight condensed body, good hips, tiny breasts, short legs — he sent her an e-mail later with the salutation, My Dear Truncated Turnip — electric mind, crackling and sparking. Yeah, there was an occasional short circuit, smoke and burnt wires, but her killer smile, dimpled highlights, green eyes, man, they lit up a room.

Yes, Annie looked good for 50. She spent a lot of time on a clunker of a bike she pedalled everywhere with a burdened, swaying motion he would recognize two blocks away, her legs pumping like pistons. And she jogged with a seniors group almost every morning. On the run at 6:30, so she could get to her computer by 8:30. Yeah, she had a lot of energy that woman. Her small body was in shape.

Evan taught screenwriting once a week in the weathered meeting room of a faded downtown library, a dusty anachronism with a card catalogue and librarians just this side of senile. He liked to teach and he liked the library.

Workshops are an intimate endeavour, eight or 10 adults around a table and Evan had learned early on how to work the room. Most people liked nothing better than to talk about themselves and Evan exploited that to break the ice, get to know them, get to know what in their life could be mined for story material.
“My name is Evan and I’ve been doing this for a few years,” he would say, “and so far I have succeeded in killing no one. Workshops, however unfortunate it might be, are about work. And since you’re all grownups and there are no credits or degrees involved, the amount of work you do is entirely up to you. I will not be sending notes home to your parents or partners.”

He always said his lines with a straight face, see who was with him, who was receptive to his charms, who smiled, laughed, or gave him the long, cold stare. He discovered he liked having an audience to play to, he fed off their smiles, their laughter, their questions.

Heterosexual men would be the hardest sell. They trusted the least and needed to impress the most. Evan had to prove he had a bigger dick, measured in screen credits, sense of humour, knowledge and proving himself non-threatening to their egos.

“What do they want, what do they fear, who do they sleep with?” he said. “My mantra for characters. That’s where the stakes are and your characters’ sex lives or lack of, is indicative of who they are. Put it on the wall in front of your eyes. Carl, tell us about your story.”

Carl had wedged himself into a tight T-shirt, maybe two sizes too small. He was short, a wispy goatee hung from his chin, pointing to his impressive pecs and arms. Probably a gym rat.

“I work in a garage,” he said, “you know, changing tires and working their diagnostic computers, aligning wheels. Cars are all computers, now. But I thought it would be a cool story, this gay guy working in this macho grease pit, everyone talking about horsepower and CCs and this one guy, just likes cars and deals with all these swearing, smoking homophobes, staying in the closet, pretending, talking like the rest. You know, every time a woman comes in, ‘like to see what’s under her hood’ or ‘Wonder what she does zero to 60 in,’ and this guy just likes cars but has to pretend he’s het. I don’t know. I thought it would be kind of interesting, the contrast of who he is and who he pretends to be.”

“That’s fascinating,” Evan said. “Do you have the story?”

“Not yet, I thought I could work on it here in workshop,” Carl said.

“Find the arc, find his journey, where’s he going,” Evan said. “And why he’s afraid to come out. Bring us into the garage. Use the jargon, use the sounds, bring the audience into this noisy, greasy, all-male world. Show us the reality of a place we think we know. And don’t run from the politics. Who’s the boss? What’s the pay like, working hours. Everyone can relate to working for the boss. Don’t be afraid of that. What you take for granted the rest of us don’t know so use it. It’s a great idea.”

You had to win them over, almost one by one, encourage them, point out they were all different, jack up their confidence. And self depreciation was a great tool. This time he aimed the tired line straight at Annie, sitting in the middle across the table, smiling, entranced, even eager.

“William Goldman, one of Hollywood’s most successful screenwriters, wrote a book called Nobody Knows Anything, meaning exactly that. I can’t teach you what’s good and what’s bad, I can’t teach you how to write, I can only discuss with you the basics of three-act storytelling going back to Aristotle and the foundations of Greek tragedy. I might make suggestions as to how a character might need more
Annie walked into the room, his domestic congress slipped his mind.

Annie watched his every gesture, listened to every word, eyes ablaze. And almost as soon as she walked into the room that first night, he was smitten. Maybe it was the flirtatious air about her. Or maybe it was time for a change. Home life kept drifting from fractious to psychotic.

Last couple of years, Evan had often found himself naked on crisp cold sheets of hotel rooms with participants in the workshop, a habit he came to late but a habit he had grown to enjoy. They were all grownups and there was no degree at the end of this predicated on their availability. And he never made the first move. The couplings in the overlit rooms on stiff linen came guilt free. He wondered about that. Sometimes.

"It’s all about compartmentalizing," Roberta had said, her head and mane of blond curls draped across his belly in a room at the downtown Delta. They had gone from the workshop to the bar to the elevator. "Danielle is in one place and we’re in another. I kind of like where we are right now.”

"It’s about living," Evan said, still breathing hard, stroking her hair. "About living as much as you can in the little time the big guy hands you. What you and I have nothing to do with Danielle.” To prove the point she moved her head down his belly and there was nothing more to say.

Evan smiled at the intrusion of the memory as he watched Annie. She liked the students, was open to their opinions, engaged in the discussions, loved to critique their work. “It’s great that this man collects hunting knives and seems obsessed with his collection, a good visual element, but I have no clue as to why he suddenly would stab his definition, how a story might need a clearer arc, but I warn you, pay as little attention to me as possible.”

That was usually enough to bring most people onside. And on this particular fall evening, it was enough to hit a home run with Annie. There was an older, heavy woman, Helenie, walked with a cane, scribbled compulsively in a notebook, remnants of Greece in her accent, who laughed and she and Annie exchanged glances. Evan knew it was going to be a good group. They would come along for the ride.

Give workshops to adults, leavened with a touch of charm, a little humour, and usually one woman a semester will make her feelings known. An e-mail, a smile, too much attention. Evan imagined to them he was a writer. If they had a window into his bank balance they would see he enjoyed a little disposable income, enough to pay for habits good and bad. A plane ticket to a beach now and then, moderate indulgences like Cantonese lobster in Chinatown and a new lease on a Mazda every four years. But they knew only he had written films and plays, had hair and no belly to speak of. And he made them laugh and, occasionally, think. They didn’t see the man with the aching back who often wondered if he was teaching ‘cause he wasn’t doing. Or maybe he needed an audience and any kind would do. The class clown several decades down the road.

When times had been good with Danielle, their domesticity a sea of relative tranquility, a few laughs and lots of tumultuous sex, he would mention her to the groups early and often. “I saw this with my girlfriend” or “My girlfriend writes and we were discussing” ... No misunderstandings, though if he was clarifying his lack of availability to them or him was a question he never asked himself. But when
Delta late one night, his legs a little shaky, his dick sore: “I was really proud I was able to seduce you.”

It hadn’t taken much effort. She was gorgeous. Turned out to be seriously bipolar, mad as a fucking hatter, but then that was part of the charm, wasn’t it? Normal was a bore. Who needs sane when you can crawl between the legs of crazy and wonder what surprises awaited you?

Was there anything more fascinating than a beautiful woman, her shining eyes millimetres from his, their hips locked, he bestowed with the wondrous honour of pleasing her?

A guy he had worked with once compared him to a dog chasing a car: “You run after it but once you catch it you don’t know what to do with it.” But those days were gone. He knew exactly what to do with it and had no compunctions about doing it.

neighbour,” she told Brian, a 40-something journalist who worked the trade mags. He was riveted to her every word. So am I, Evan thought.

“If he’s homicidal, we should have some inkling of it, some foreshadowing, I think; otherwise, I don’t believe it.” Then she flashed Evan a shy smile. He reciprocated.

“Yeah, Brian, Annie’s probably right,” Evan said. “Maybe give us a taste of his predilection for evisceration, and we’d find it more credible. Good film writing is about making the incredible credible.”

But he wasn’t looking at Brian, he was still looking at Annie who was looking right back.

So he played to her, waltzing in front of them, imitating a beautiful scene from The Human Stain, Gary Sinise and Anthony Hopkins dancing on the porch under incandescent light at night in the dead of winter.

“Movement,” he said. “It’s motion pictures. Give your scenes motion. Don’t worry about long shot, medium shot, close-up; let the director worry about that. Your job is to give him something to work with.”

He was waltzing around the table, his arms around thin air, his eyes on Annie, wondering if he was making a fool of himself but she was smiling. She was impressed. And that had become his job this workshop. Impress Annie.

He had taken to the workshops not as a way to make a buck. He had enough money, at least these last few years, a novel experience, stoked by non-stop work. But he liked the teaching — it made him think. He liked meeting new people, he liked the stage it offered, and, of course, the potential of sexual conquest. Though as one young woman had told him as they came down the elevator of his favoured Downtown
The adrenaline always kicked in about 10 minutes before 10 — showtime. The little bar would be full, the tables covered in beer bottles, the room swallowed by cigarette smoke as thick as fog. It was all part of the charm, waiting for the band to climb onto the little stage. The anticipation was almost as intense as watching a new lover undress for the first time but the Mickey Roberts Blues Band, unlike some women, never disappointed. Fiery guitars and big thumping bass lines and the syncopated drums would take him places, get him moving, give him goose pimples. What had it been, three, four decades since the first time he took a seat in the back of the 12 Steps Bar & Grill and discovered their brand of blues? It was raw but tasty and addictive and transformative. Man, he came in there any night they were playing, usually four nights a week, three weeks in a row, several times a year, and nothing else mattered. Not what was happening at the paper, not the shallow balance of his bank account, not whatever drama was playing out with a lover. Here with these four or five guys, he would lose himself. Every woman he met, it was their initiation.

“There’s this band playing tonight, Mickey Roberts, you know ‘em? I thought we could grab some dinner and catch a set or two.”

Yes, women came and went, jobs and bosses came and went, problems confounded and aggravated, but the band was there, various combinations, a new drummer, a different guitar player, but somehow the band worked its magic, distilling the blues to its essence, and on those nights in the smoky bar, it was all that mattered. And if the woman he was courting didn’t get it, it was a good indication she wouldn’t be getting him. Music was life, it was his heartbeat, the bass and the drums pumped the blood from the head to his feet, the guitars were the brains, the melody, the soul, the travel agent that booked the flight and away you went. How could anyone not “get it?”

And when there was no women in his life, well, a few evenings listening to the band to the last set, sometimes wandering with them to Chinatown and finishing the evening over fried crab or steamed pork with Chinese sausage and cold beer, was as good as it could get. Trouble was, of course, when he went home and picked up his guitar and strummed a few basic chords, it sounded shit and he would put it aside in disgust, sometimes for months. What was the use?

He discovered with Annie he was behind the curve. Most of the workshop knew her and wanted to impress her. It turned out she was a vedette, a well-known French writer and former radio host, now out of work and looking to write a screenplay.

She, the Paul Theroux of Quebec in a minor key, wrote travel — acerbic, critical, arrogant and determinedly feminist. Her books were not just travelogues, they were dissections from a feminist perspective, her audience small but respectable.
She could speak in paragraphs. There were no circumlocutions peppered with “like, you know, oh my God, really” that was the increasingly common lingua franca of those weaned on the digital nipple.

Her English writing was not as strong. She had problems with syntax. But she sure knew how to talk, a perfect radio voice, didn’t need to come up for air. The workshop basked in her celebrity while he basked in his ignorance of it and her smile.

Evan was busy. Keeping the bank balance inflated meant working nights as an editor at The Gazette and editing a film magazine during the day and working on a play. He had two nights off a week and one of them he was teaching. Danielle was pissed at him for working so much but Danielle was often pissed at him and now, when he locked himself in his office in their renovated rowhouse in Mile End to work or jumped in a cab to go to the paper, he found his thoughts focusing on Annie. Danielle seemed to be less relevant by the day. He was being a bastard but he couldn’t help himself. He was hooked like a trout. She started to sneak into the songs he liked to write on the guitar late at night, thoughts he couldn’t speak he could sing.

“What’s that all about?” Danielle asked, as he picked at the Yamaha, verses floating up from his subconscious.

“Just a song,” he’d say. He didn’t really know where the songs came from or why but he knew what they were about. He had come to terms with the reality of his lacklustre musical talent. He was never going to be a guitar player. But he could write rhymes and in the guitar there were melodies that offered themselves. In the guitar and the songs he was writing was escape. Poetic? Doubtful. Poignant? At least to him. Addictive? Absolutely. No editors or publishers to intrude. His songs were his own and TV and movies and magazines and who was hot and who was not, mattered not a damn. He just kept cranking out songs. It was a disease.

Evan thought it was only fair to make a night or two of it when he had an evening off so he took Danielle to her favourite restaurant, Paris Beurre, where she liked the sweet breads and he did the giblets. They shared a little wine and soon she was on his case.

“You hardly have any free time and you book a lunch with Allison, you don’t even ask me what I’m doing next week.”

“I haven’t seen her in months,” he said. He was tired. The long shifts on the desk were killing him. But not as tired as this argument over why he didn’t spend all his free time with her. “It’s next week for Chrissakes.”

“I hate that fucking job,” Danielle said, twirling her wine glass, something she did only after she crossed the line from sobriety to anger. It usually took two glasses and a bit. “You never asked me about it, you just took it and I have to spend all my nights alone.”

He wanted to tell her if she had friends she wouldn’t have to be alone but he didn’t. He could be an asshole but he didn’t want to be cruel.

“Nothing is written that I have to check my work choices with you. I love newspapers. It was a great chance to get back in.” He could’ve said he used to love newspapers ’cause where he was working was a far cry from what a newspaper used to be. He remembered when he started out as a feature writer. There was a day desk and a night desk. Editors took the time to talk to you. Writers had the time to research, write and rewrite. The newsroom was thick with cigarette smoke.
and the clack of typewriters and the jangle of phones. Now the only noise was your heart thrumming from caffeine as you raced to push the pages out, no time to talk to anyone.

“Look, the lunch is next week, can we just enjoy tonight?” Evan asked, knowing there was no chance.

“Sure, if you say so,” she said, talking with the glass hung on her lower lip, another sign she would soon be radioactive. “Let’s always do what Evan says, what Evan wants. My feelings have no importance. It’s always about you. Why should you care that I spend every night by myself.”

“Make some fucking friends,” he said. And he was off. God, he was tired of this. “My criminal lunch is not until next week. This is my night off, we’re out at a great restaurant. Can we just be here now, kind of thing?”

“Of course, Mr. Evan, anything you want, isn’t that the rule? You want to work nights, who gives a shit Danielle is home staring at the walls? You want to have lunch with Allison, Danielle can just go screw herself. That’s what I have to do anyways.”

“You know what? You can go screw yourself,” Evan said, standing, reaching into his pocket. “Sit here and argue with yourself.” He dropped five twenties on the table. Inside he was laughing at the gesture, too clichéd to make it into a script, he would’ve told the workshop. “Have another bottle of Bordeaux. I’m going to enjoy my night off.”

He left Danielle at the table, sipping wine. Yeah, Annie had him hooked.

Thought about her all week and after the second session he skipped down the stairs to track her to where her bike was locked. Seemed to take her a long time to get that lock pacified.

“How about dinner? We could discuss your script,” he said. They both knew he didn’t give a shit about her script.

Staring at the bottom of the glass, wondering if he should pour another finger or two, he remembered she probably ate the salmon, that’s what she usually ate and that he let her do most of the talking and she was fine with that. She talked about her radio adventures in a little Radio Canada studio that was without air or natural light, a magazine she worked on without a budget or readers, a little television that she worried showed her age flagrantly, her books which sold poorly but paid the bills thanks to grants and lecture fees and a lot of travel.

She liked flying, the airlines pampered her, the hotels pampered her, she hobnobbed with ambassadors and consular officials and here and there a head of state or two. But she was used to that, she said, shrugging. She was born to upper echelon public servants, raised in the good life in various embassies and consulates in Italy, the Soviet Union, Colombia. Had a full-time travelling nanny who taught her three languages. She was raised on a set of sterling silver spoons.

“I don’t tell too many people that,” she said. “It’s embarrassing. I usually say I learned Spanish and Russian and Greek travelling. But it was my nanny. She had worked all over and spoke to me in a different language every minute.”

“Must’ve been nice. You stay in touch?”

“No. I don’t know where she is. I went off to college out west and my father died and I guess my mother let her go. I guess she’s dead now. I don’t know.”

In a way they were both orphans, his parents irrelevant, hers dead, and they had left the Mother Corp., the CBC,
“I write songs, too, for fun, on the guitar, four-chord stuff,” he said.
“Do you perform?”
“No one would want me to, believe me.”
Evan told her he preferred editing stories to writing them. How many words had he written in his 25 years of banging on a keyboard? He preferred the control room to the studio, being in the audience to being on the stage, singing songs around the kitchen table to no one or for Danielle. Performing held no temptation.

Annie and he seemed right then, with only an inch remaining in the wine bottle. They were a perfect media match, they knew a lot of the same people. “How come we never met before?”

He didn't want the night to end. Here was the future, he told himself. How could they fail?

The recession had high-priced men all around him falling like trees in a forest being clear cut, while businesses held tight to women over 50. They were in no danger of getting pregnant, their kids were grown and they worked cheap. Free Trade deals were a bonanza for the venture capitalists and the factory owners. Promises that free trade and the flow of goods would create jobs were bullshit. Unions were decimated, factories emptied, salaries slashed, men found themselves at McDonald’s, drinking $1 coffees as their wives went to work. The gender over 50 was being put to pasture.

But Evan was hanging in, making enough to give the impression of being a successful artist. Staying in shape by wrecking his back on the squash court, lifting some weights, riding his bike. To him, he was scratching and clawing to

behind. Evan had checked out of the chattering classes two decades ago. He had produced a current affairs show on CBC radio for a few years and found it a mad rush to fill airtime, one guest as good as another, with minor variations, shovelling coal into a giant tireless locomotive, a constant chattering machine. Where else but live radio do you have to worry about two seconds? Maybe when you're launching a space shuttle.

She still liked the radio microphone, the platform from which to add her pennies to the deluge of endless opinion that increasingly filled low-budget, no-budget radio and TV. He had seen the sausage being made and had lost the appetite for it. He saw no reason to spoil hers.

No, she wasn't full of herself, a rare trait among media types, at least not that night in a dark corner of a little French bistro he frequented when the occasion called for a dark corner, candlelight and a bottle of wine. Romance was his drug, one of many, not the least destructive, and the crash and hangover was right up there on the Richter scale. But he was ready to go all in. Sharing a moment, a table, a bed, it was all good. What else was there, except for maybe finding the groove on a new song?

“I can tell you're a journalist,” she said. “You're asking all the questions and I'm the radio host, doing all the talking.”

Evan filled her in on himself, mindful the clock was ticking and Danielle was at home, waiting. Yes, he started working newspapers when he was in his 20s and went on to make documentary films and edited magazines and produced public radio and wrote a few feature films and stumbled into the theatre after he went back to work at the paper.
hold onto everything, each play a nightmare, the magazine a brothel, the newspaper an assembly line where they kept cranking up the speed. His dalliances with the women that had succumbed to his charms—or had he succumbed to theirs—had shown he had market value. But Evan saw the cracks in the tent poles holding up his facade. He was under no illusion. A good storm could wash his life away.

Then, inebriated enough to ignore he had a woman waiting at home and knowing there would be lies to tell, they went for a walk around the block, just to be together, to avoid ending the evening. It almost seemed he should take her hand. He wanted to, but he didn’t. But he knew. He wanted Annie. And she wanted him. He could feel it.

He drove Annie and her bike home, sat in the car as she wheeled it through her front door and waved to him.

“I went home and smoked a cigarette in the backyard,” Annie told him later. “I knew my life was going to change.”

The next week after the workshop he had to pick up his cat, Fritz, boarded at his son’s house. Evan and Danielle had flown to Nova Scotia to visit his father. The old man spent his time in front of the TV or the newspaper and resented leaving his armchair so Evan spent much of the time thinking of Annie even as he slogged through the rain and the mud of the Bay of Fundy at low tide, his clothes stuck to his skin, his mind stuck on her while Danielle waited and watched from the car. She didn’t like getting wet.

The tides in the Bay made the world tilt but she didn’t care. He marched through the red ooze, hoping wind, rain and cold would cleanse his guilt or clarify his confusion. All it did was saturate his clothes.

The trip had been dark; there was little to say to Danielle and less to say to his father who was riveted to Murder She Wrote and a string of antiquated shows and whatever sport was on in the evening.

“I have my breakfast and then I take my blood pressure pills and go back to sleep and then I read the papers and I like my programs that start at one so there’s no point coming before 4 o’clock,” his father told them.

Hmm, if only he had known that before he dropped $4,000 on airplane tickets, rent-a-car and hotel. All he wanted to do was get home. Really all he wanted to do was see Annie. He felt like a two-faced, lying asshole, which made sense ‘cause he was. He took comfort yelling into the wind: “You’re seriously fucked up.” But the great Bay of Fundy didn’t give a rat’s ass. Somehow, he thought of Annie as a last chance at happiness with a woman. Someone to grow old with. He wanted an end to Danielle’s anger, drinking, neediness, condemnation. Yes, she loved him, but the price was high. Annie had a life, a career, had it together. She would be the final piece of the great puzzle of his life. There would be happiness there. He deserved it, didn’t he?

Annie was again fiddling with her bike lock when he asked if she’d like to drive over with him and pick up Fritz, maybe have a bite and then he’d drop her and her bike home. “Sure,” she said.

In the narrow hallway of his son’s apartment, Fritz came to him, about 18 lbs of furry Maine Coon, as faithful as a dog. Evan lifted him up, his hand under his butt and hoisted him so he could rest his front paws on his shoulder and purr in his ear. Sometimes he liked to wrap himself around his neck like a collar and ride around on his shoulders.

“When I saw your big hands on Fritz, I knew I wanted
them on me,” Annie said many times, a wistfulness in her voice. She loved his hands, always worried when he wasn’t wearing gloves. “Your hands are so warm,” she said over and over again. “I love your hands on me.” And she had no problem taking his hands and placing them exactly where she wanted.

Evan watched the tall woman doing squats in front of the full-length mirror. She was wearing Spandex tights and a top designed to show off her breasts. She was around 40, which meant looking at her from the corner of his eye from his perch on the bench press was not lechery, only admiration. She never looked at him, but he noticed as he got older, fewer women did.

But that was okay. The gym was his refuge, an escape from self-doubt, work, home and phone. Here, between sets, he was alone, free to exchange banalities with some of the other guys trying to beat back time, free to sit and catch his breath and ignore the fluorescent-lit sea of machines and mirrors and sweating, grunting and primping. Free to find a lyric or a lead to a story. Oxygen was a great catalyst.

When more pressing matters didn’t intrude, he puzzled over why women at the gym liked to work out in as little as possible. He had once pinched a finger between two 45-pound plates, transfixed by a woman in a bra top doing barbell lifts. Men could bleed, too.

Working in the house, living in the house, he needed to get away. Wasn’t sure why but the walls had started to press in on him.

Evan watched the woman bending over to place the
David Sherman has worked as a newspaper and magazine journalist and editor, CBC radio producer, playwright, filmmaker, screenwriter, singer/songwriter and now novelist. He abandoned the newspaper business when layoffs and budget cuts decimated the industry and concentrated on writing for the theatre and writing and performing as a folksinger. His latest play, *Lost and Found*, produced by Infinitetheatre and written with his partner Nancy Lee, is a musical, inspired in part, by *The Alcoholic’s Daughter*. They wrote the songs and story and performed the play in Montreal, B.C. and the Laurentiens. Sherman is also a gym rat and was an avid squash layer and cyclist before the body said enough and the medicine chest overflowed. He is now working on another novel in between walking in the woods with his Chocolate Lab named Jesse and swimming in the lake behind his house, a century-old former fishing lodge, where he occasionally obsesses over dinner parties.