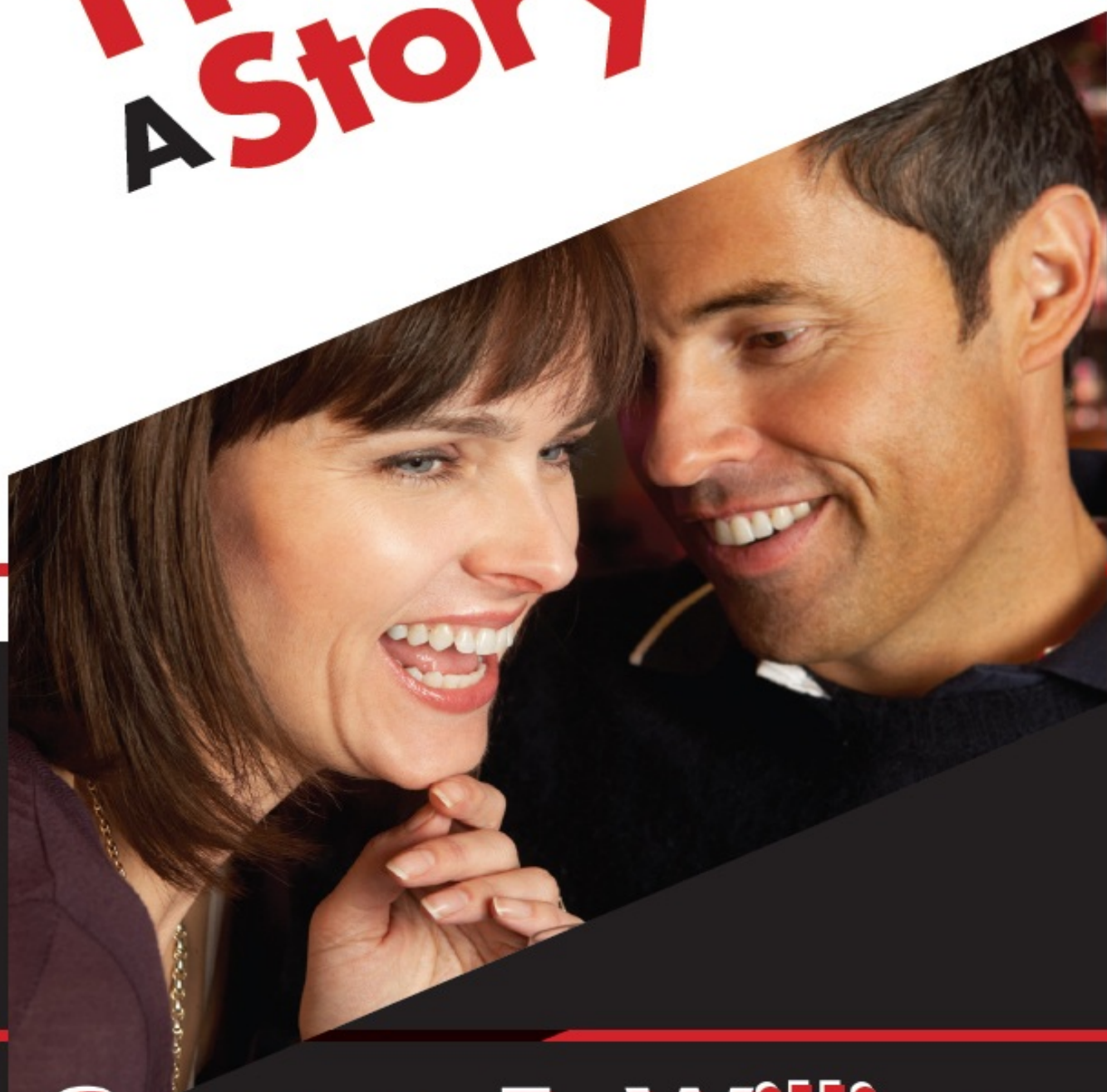


**Have I Got  
A Story For You**



**George E. Williams**

Have I Got A Story For You

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# Contents

So You Want To Be a Rock and Roll Star

The Great Son - My Alter Ego

Living With A.D.D.

The Signs

Once Bitten, Never Shy

Growing Up In a Haunted House

Hospital Employee

Things That Piss Me Off

My Girlfriends

## So You Want to Be a Rock and Roll Star

As far back as I can remember, I've always loved rock and roll. I have older sisters who listened to Elvis, The Everly Brothers, and Chuck Berry...to name a few.

I was probably, tapping my feet and snapping my fingers while still in the womb.

You've seen very young children shaking to the music, as soon as they can stand, anyway. My dad swears I was bobbing my head to the music while I was still crawling. Yeah, yeah, no big deal.

As soon as I was using the furniture to stand, I was hitting my hands on it. My mom and sisters had music going constantly. Ok, I'm hitting the furniture like most toddlers. How many toddlers have you seen hit the furniture and stomp their feet at the same time. Yeah, me neither!

My dad made a big mistake when he said, "I swear that child is going to be a drummer." I grew up like any normal child—who wakes up to rock and roll in the morning and falls asleep to it at night. My mom and sisters were addicted.

Now I'm about five and beating on everything. Minus you know what, yet. Mom and Dad surprised me with a pair of bongos. I drive them nuts. I take them everywhere. I'm not allowed to take them to school. So I beat the hell out of the top of my desk. You know, the desk top actually had a very unique tone. In no time, I have my very own drum line at school. Now try to imagine about six five-year-olds beating on their desks. Yeah, I'm in my first shitty group.

Now I'm all the way to fourth grade.

We have band try outs just to see which kids have any potential. Well, I had seen videos on TV, and I had always paid closest attention to the drummers. So I walked right over to the snare drum—just a little uncertain how to hold the sticks. The instructor shows me how to hold them.

I pop around a bit. Probably looked and sounded like hell. The instructor grabs another pair of sticks. Now he's sitting directly in front of me. He says, "Try this." He starts with something easy to follow. It gradually gets harder, but I'm staying right with him. He immediately gets me enrolled into music theory class. I learn how to read music very quickly.

In no time, I'm in the orchestra and the marching band. Mom and Dad come to all our performances.

Orchestra is a little boring at times. Not at all my type of music, but Mom and Dad like it.

Now marching band is great. Believe me it is all about the percussion section.

After home games, we go out to the fifty -yard line, just a small group, and play some popular rock songs. Hardly anyone stays around to listen. But, for about five minutes, we are having a great time. Mom and Dad always sit patiently. Dad will ask the same question every time: "Who does that song?" When I tell him, he says the same thing every time. "You should let them do it." Mom always gives him that look. I give Dad a laugh. I don't

mind the tease at all.

The next few years just fly by. By the time I'm in eighth grade, I'm reading music, in the orchestra, and the marching band.

At home I have an old hi-hat cymbal that I bought at a flea-market. I bring my snare drum home and play along to my sisters' records.

Now in walks, or should I say in bursts, the so-called British Invasion.

The Beatles are it. Everyone loves them. Ringo is kind of goofy looking, and he can't play for shit. Hey, still, he's a drummer, and that is cool in my book.

One night, I get home late after band practice. I say hello to Mom and Dad. Mom says "Your room is a mess. Go clean it up."

Hey, I never question my mother, "I was heading that way in the first place." Mom just grins, and Dad sort of snickers. I'm a little suspicious now.

I open my door and there sits the crappiest drum set I've ever seen.

After the immediate shock is over, I tell them that I love them. Dad says, "I know they're kind of sad, but what do you think?"

"I think with some new heads and maybe one or two more cymbals, I'll be set. Oh, a bass pedal would be nice."

"Your birthday is coming up." You know, I always hated waiting for my birthday. "Maybe we can check them out Saturday."

Well I rearrange them to my liking. In about thirty seconds, I'm knocking out a beat.

OK, I just happened to have the sticks—I always carried them in my backpack.

Dad used to say to me, "You never know when you might get attacked by a drum."

I would always respond with, "You have to be prepared."

Mom would say, "You two are no Martin and Lewis"

I don't say it in front of my sisters, or any girls for that matter, but I'm already a better drummer than Ringo.

Then The Who, invade. I'm thinking Keith Moon is simply the best. Although I thought his playing was a little exaggerated, he had Ringo beat.

So now I've got a cute little drum set. Between me and dad they are professional looking in no time. Of course for the next few months, I'm doing double the chores to buy more and better pieces.

Now, I'm playing on them every day. I get bored after a while. Dad tells me to start a band. One thing you can say about the British Invasion, every little boy wanted to learn how to play the guitar. I had no idea that so many of the band goofs were taking guitar lessons.

So I put up a notice on the bulletin board in the band room. Man, in no time I had six guitar players. Then I'm thinking, I'm about to make a few enemies.

Dad and I decide to have the try outs at the house. I got to tell you, some of these goofy guys can rock.

“Dad, this is going to be tough.”

“Do you know if any of the other drummers have a set?”

“As a matter of fact yes.”

“I’ve got an idea, Son. Talk him into starting a band. See where I’m going with this?”

“I’m right with you, Dad.”

So I talk to my buddy about the idea. You start a band, and later on we can have a battle. No, we didn’t start the phrase. So he actually ends up with the better guitar players. I end up with the more cooperative ones. We have a lead, rhythm, and a bass player. He ends up with three guys that all want to be lead. Hey, not everyone gets to be Pete Townshend.

After about six months, we plan this big battle. Long story short, they were very good. We were ok. I’ve got to tell you, the first time you hear a large audience applaud, you will never forget it, at least not until your first standing ovation.

Over the next four years, the members are in and out of the group. I’m cool with it. I’m serious about playing. Dad told me that not everyone will have my passion. I probably go through a dozen guitar players through high school.

Of course, I get a music scholarship. Yes, I have a band, three guitars, an organ player, and a lead singer. I keep it a secret, but I start writing songs. Wow! I have a whole new respect for the professionals. Writing good music takes up all your spare time.

So one night when we are done practicing, I drop the bomb on them. “Hey you guys, how would you guys like to do some originals?” I’ve never seen any other musicians so receptive to a new idea.

Our bass player says, “I’ve written a couple of tunes.” I’m stunned.

Our lead singer says, “I’ve got about four.”

“What the hell, have you guys been holdin’ out?”

“Everyone wants to hear covers.”

“Yeah, that is bullshit.”

“Everyone bring the songs next time.”

Before you know, we have six of our own tunes. We play a few gigs, and they are right. No one wants to hear our originals. So one night I get on the microphone, and I announce, “Hey! We have some of our own material, and if you all get up and dance to them and applaud when we’re done we’ll play an extra hour.” Well as you might guess, they didn’t dance, they didn’t applaud, and we were told to leave at the regular time.

It’s a long way to the top if you want to rock and roll. Amen to AC/DC.

Well we weren’t trying to make it anywhere at the time.

The band is together all through college. Hey, you gotta love it.

We are invited to do a battle of the bands. First place is a record contract. My god, we practice every night, and my grades show it. Mom and Dad are furious.

When I tell Dad about the contest, he says, “Hell, Son. Took me six years to get my degree, and we’re doing just fine. Just do me a favor.”

“What, Dad?”

“Just win, damnit.”

So we get together to talk about what songs we are going to do. It is unanimous. We are going with four original tunes.

The big day comes. Good grief, some of the bands are great. We finally get our turn. In a panic, our lead singer says, “We need to do at least one cover; that’s what they want to hear. Band, what’s it going to be?”

Our bass player is the first to speak. “Fuck that, we may not get another chance to put our music out there.”

Ok, it’s decided again.

We play our songs, and the time up on the stage seems like an eternity.

As you may guess, we don’t even get an honorable mention.

I’m walking out, hoping no one recognizes me, when this guy stops me. “Did you write those songs?”

“No it was a collaboration.”

“Those are really good.” I’m really close to kicking this guy in the nuts when he hands me his business card. “Call me, Son.”

At the next practice I show the card to the rest of the band.

“Who the fuck is he?”

“Never heard of him.”

The usual comments. You know how musicians can be. No! Have you been living in a cave!

I’m not saying I’m the leader of the band, but I got stuck researching this guy.

I showed the card to Dad and Mom. Dad says, “I’ll show it to my lawyer buddy.” I swear, Dad has a buddy for every situation.

Days go by and his lawyer friend calls.

“Well, Dad, what did he say?”

“Not much, and the guy really only works for Atlantic Records.”

“Holy shit, really?”

“I shit you not, Son.”

“Wait till I tell the band.”

We are practicing that night. Oh, by the way, we are renting a small building. Kind of expensive, but spacious—great acoustics. Ok, we are just tired of hearing, “Garage Band.” I was beginning to think it was our name. I can’t tell you our name! That would ruin my story!

So we go see this guy. We talk for hours. When we tell him we are all music majors and have written about twenty songs, you can almost see the dollar signs in front of his eyes. He immediately wants to be our manager.

Ok, the hard road to stardom can be a bit boring. Let’s jump ahead to the fun stuff, Ok? Ok.

So, we have our first CD, and it rules, to say the least. Then we get tour dates. Like anyone starting out, we do small venues. The crowds are still loud and grateful.

Now we have: the songs, the recognition, dedication and money. Yes it’s pretty much sex, drugs, and rock and roll. That is a whole different story that you will have to buy next time.

We are having fun, playing, and meeting some really great musicians and some very important people in the record business.

Life is good. The band is together five years now, sort of like a marriage. We lost our lead singer to another group. Bass player got married and opened a music shop. Kind of a cliché, right? But he seems very happy. His wife is very cool.

As you know, I hate sad endings. So keep reading, dang it.

It’s close to eight years now. We have four CDs. Believe me, writing music is hard work, but the rewards are priceless. For me it’s the satisfaction of completing something big.

So, we are in the studio, which we now own, working on our fifth CD. We argue everyday about the tunes, but when it comes together, it is heaven. We have changed managers probably twelve times. We finally have one that lets us just do it.

Mom and Dad still come to the concerts. My sisters make it to some.

I can’t complain about life. I have family, friends, and a great band.

Am I a rock and roll star? I guess I am. Oh! You better believe it!



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