

The Fiddler is a Good Woman

Geoff Berner

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The language of The Fiddler is a Good Woman blends the profane and poetic.

Geoff Berner's *The Fiddler is a Good Woman* pieces together the fictionally fragmented life of a Canadian rock violinist named DD, known for her many moods and talents, now seemingly gone without a trace. Through alternating chapters, friends, lovers, bandmates, and fellow musicians offer diverse perspectives on the mystery that is DD, with a general consensus that her personality was intense and her musical talent uniquely remarkable.

A musician himself, Berner's firsthand experience of the long haul of touring and playing gigs and festivals is the marrow of the novel, as is knowing the passion for music that fuels performers and fans. He also introduces an intriguing roster of alternative acts, clad in vintage dresses or "Clark Kent" glasses, erratically united in their fight against bland music.

DD and her bandmates are on rock's indie fringe, and the time frame of recollection centers around the years just before social media began to dominate the fame of groups. Indie was a bit more indie then, and packaged image and branding not as integral.

While much of the sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll legend has been centered around men, DD is the charismatic lover and user here, swinging "between girls like Tarzan from vine to vine." She drinks and parties hard, partakes in more than her share of substances, and is capable of considerable charm, compassion, or violence. Of Native American heritage, DD was adopted and raised by "German super-culty" Christians. Her mother later tried to "beat the gay outta her," but DD ran away.

The language of *The Fiddler is a Good Woman* blends the profane and poetic. There are also mordantly funny observations about the Canadian music scene and Canada itself, like the raucous Steerpunchers mega-bar in Calgary, soulless Ontario blues players, or images of strip-club patrons watching the show and the hockey game on TV with equally drunken interest. On the side of Canada's natural beauty is DD's description of a favorite place in far-western British Columbia, lush and green as a "King Arthur legend."

Melodic and chaotic, with a wide range of voices, *The Fiddler is a Good Woman* creates an artist of complex character, unapologetically flawed and almost too real to be fictional.

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