



## Playing My Mother's Blues

*Valerie Wilson Wesley*

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In her triumphant new novel, bestselling author Valerie Wilson Wesley, one of the most respected and acclaimed voices in contemporary African American fiction, poignantly examines the stubborn bonds of family, passion, and a past that insists on repeating itself. Dani Carter was seven years old -- her sister, Rose, seventeen -- when their beautiful, impetuous mother, Maria, walked out of their lives, abandoning her husband and family for a love affair that would end tragically mere months later. Over the decades that followed, Dani was able to overcome the persistent pain and feelings of betrayal, eventually wedding a successful man and giving birth to a wonderful son. But love has long been missing from her marriage, propelling her into the arms of another and inspiring troubling thoughts of escape. If it were not for the distress caused by the recent death of her father, she might well have already been gone. The sins of the mother, Dani fears, have been visited upon the daughter. Dani's sister, Rose, never spoke or speaks of their lost parent. And their iron-willed, driven father -- who channeled his shame and anger into phenomenal business success -- always made it brutally clear that he considered his ex-wife to be evil incarnate. But Dani remembers a sweet, funny, vivacious young woman who did everything with exuberant love and tenderness. And now that she finds herself in a similar heartbreakin situation, Dani can't help but wonder who Maria really was. It's a puzzle that may soon be completed, after a lifetime of searching for missing pieces. Maria, calling herself Mariah, is about to reenter her daughters' worlds -- at a time of emotional confusion and physical chaos -- bearing secrets and bitter truths ... and, perhaps, long-awaited answers to what could possibly drive a mother to sacrifice what was dearest to her heart.

## Playing My Mother's Blues Details

Date : Published May 1st 2006 by Thorndike Press (first published 2005)

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## **From Reader Review Playing My Mother's Blues for online ebook**

### **Shannon says**

Good read which communicates that a mother's influence or lack thereof has major effects on their offspring. Easy read but powerful stuff with good messages all throughout.

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### **Pam says**

07/17/08 rec via bookmooch

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### **Christy Walker says**

I've been reading this for a while. I found it interesting because of the premise, a woman leaving her children and then spending time in jail for murder. the characters were different but somehow the same in the way their roles mimiced their elders. The secrets were numerous and the ending a tear-jerker. I liked that it was unclear how they would end up in the future.

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### **Linda Boyd says**

This book is about a mother, Maria and her 2 daughters, Dani & Rose. When I started this book, the mother got on my nerves, she was so naive, that I could not believe anyone could be that clueless. As I continued on, I felt sorry for her realizing that she was sheltered while growing up and she did not make the best choices for her children. Maria, ends up not raising her daughters due to some bad choices that she made, when she realized it, it was too late. Very good book and I gave it 4 stars.

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### **Essence Cropper says**

I didn't enjoy this book. It was kind of boring.

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### **Ruth says**

Spent the day nursing a cold made quite enjoyable by the company of this book. Thanks Heidi! An excellent and quick read.

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### **Denise Billings says**

A page turner. A lot of my own experiences showed up in the story.

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### **Debdanz says**

I'm always happy to read books that expand my world view. All we have is our perception of the world and that can be very narrow. This book made me very sad that people spinning in their own little worlds can hurt themselves and each other so much. But it is nice to think of a world where time and love can help repair damage.

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### **Malika says**

I am really surprised by the drubbing this book has taken. It is not a light hearted book. The characters are deeply flawed, but there is a thread of love and sense of family that is quite compelling.

I think the publisher did the book a disservice by putting reviews on the back cover that were incongruous with the book. I'd grabbed this book in the Library thinking it was a "romantic comedy" based on the back cover...After the first 50 pages, I read the cover more closely and found that those comments were praise for "previous books."

This book is a bittersweet family tragedy, and a departure for Ms. Wesley. So if you are not into family melo-drama, and heartbreak, you may want to skip.

But, if you do appreciate a family drama with secrets, lies, heartbreak and flawed characters, then this will be one to enjoy. I thought it was a worthwhile read...and very well written.

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### **Valencia says**

Last book discussion with book club Word Sisters before we take a break for the summer. Good read, short read with a lot of powerful points to talk over. Looking forward to the last Sunday of the month.

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### **Kim says**

From July 2005 School Library Journal:

Valerie Wilson Wesley is in high form in her latest novel—this time with a story about mother-daughter relationships. When she was in her 30's, Mariah had an affair that led to her leaving her husband and her two daughters. Several months later, she shot her lover and spent time in prison for his murder. Now Rose and Dani are grown and she has just read of her ex-husband's death. Desperate to make peace with her daughters after all these years, she makes plans to attend the funeral. Meanwhile, Rose and Dani have spent their lives trying to come to terms with the desertion of their mother. The choices that they have made in their relationships reflect both the influence of their Aunt Lucille, who raised them, and the lingering memories of Mariah. When the three women meet again, long-buried issues are brought to the surface, and change each of their lives in ways they could not have anticipated. Told from the first person perspectives of Mariah, Rose, Dani, and Lucille, the story is rich and compelling, and much more complex than it appears on the surface. Interwoven into the story of Mariah and her daughters are themes of racial relationships and the drug culture of the sixties and seventies. Wesley, a contributing editor at Essence, and the author of several previous novels, shows her skill at developing characters who are utterly believable in their various combinations of grace and flaws. High school students will identify with the struggles of each of these women to define themselves rather than letting their circumstances define them.

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### **Shevi says**

I had this on my shelf for a while decided to read it during the Blizzard of 2010. It was a wonderful surprise! Sorry I waited so long to read it.

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### **Mahoghani 23 says**

I don't like stories told by one person at a time. Three women, a mother and her two daughters along with their aunt, narrates the story.

Maria, better known as Mariah, is the mother of two kids, Rose & Danielle, describes her life and how she really had no identity. Her mother was "color struck" and got by on her looks. Maria is set up by her mother to marry a man twenty years her senior, Hilton Dells. As the years go by, he treats her like she's less than the dirt on his shoes. Maria meets Darnell and falls for him hard only to find out that he's not what makes himself out to be. She finds him in bed with her oldest daughter and she kills him. She's sent to prison for twenty years and haven't seen her daughter's since the day she left to be with Darnell.

Hilton has prevented Maria from seeing her daughters and now he's dead. Maria finally sees her daughters and they each tell their part in the story.

I have mixed feelings about this book. It was slightly boring and full of real life scenarios. I wish it would have just been written from a different perspective.

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### **Zilverña says**

I like the story... but I don't quite like the ending.. :( . I want to know what will happen to Dani and Chance,

Rose and Marshall, and Lucille and Mira.. :(( . I hope there'll be a sequel to this story...:(

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