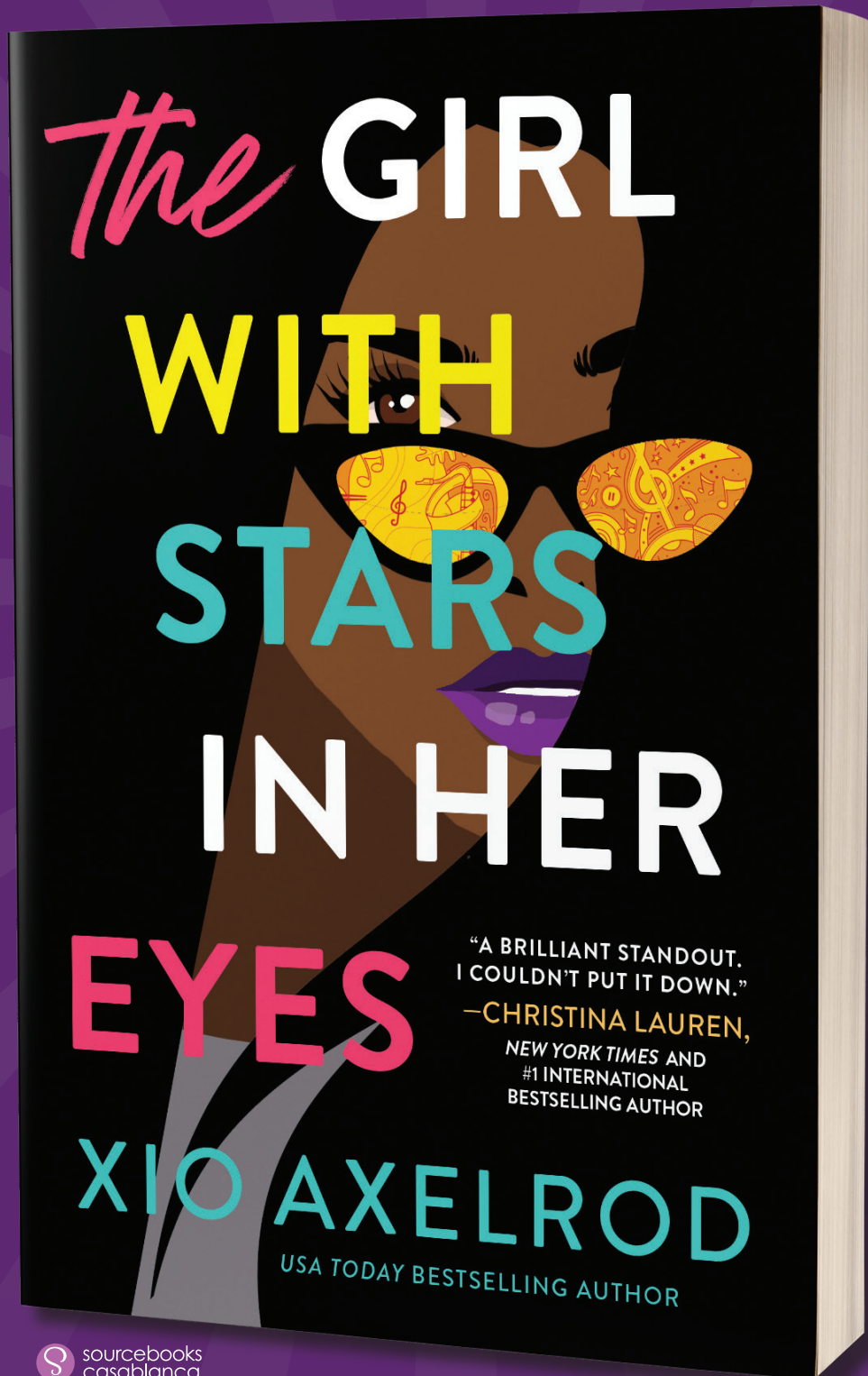


THE GIRL WITH STARS IN HER EYES

Reading Group Guide





Enjoy your exclusive

VIP BACKSTAGE PASS

AS XIO AXELROD TAKES YOU ON A TOUR
OF THE WORLD OF THE LILLYS,
including:

ABOUT THE BAND + LINKS TO THEIR MUSIC

SHEET MUSIC FOR AN ORIGINAL SONG
WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY XIO

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR NEXT
BOOK CLUB MEETING

A CONVERSATION WITH XIO
ABOUT HER DUAL LIFE AS A
MUSICIAN AND AN AUTHOR

A SNEAK PEEK AT WHAT'S
NEXT FOR THE LILLYS



sourcebooks
casablanca



THE GIRL WITH STARS IN HER EYES

ABOUT THE BAND

Ask any fan of the Lillys to describe them, and you'll hear words like "hypnotic," "fierce," and "unapologetic." This uber-enigmatic, all-female unit isn't interested in labels. They are utterly unconcerned with image, status, or style.



The four members of the Lillys—Kayla Whitman on drums, Tiffany Kim on bass, Candi Fair on guitar, and Lilly Langeland on lead vocals—came together through chance and no small amount of karmic intervention.

Some think the Lillys exploded onto the New York music scene with their cover of the Toadies alt-rock classic "I Burn," but they first paid their dues playing in small clubs and dive bars. Known for their raw and raucous performances, fans have wondered aloud what will happen to the band's signature sound now that they've been picked up by a major label like YMI. Rest assured, the Lillys are here to melt your brain and upend any preconceived notions you may have about girl-bands. These women rock.

TO LEARN MORE

(and to hear their smash hit cover of "*I Burn*"), follow the Lillys:

THE LILLYS' WEBSITE

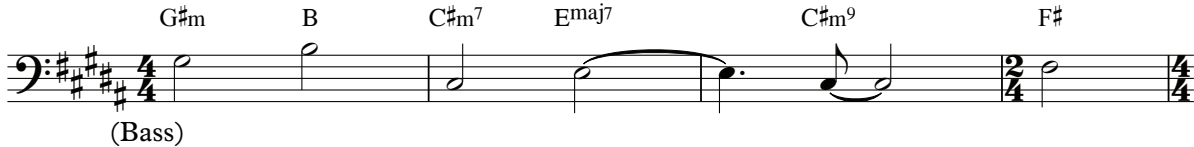


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Hurt (U)

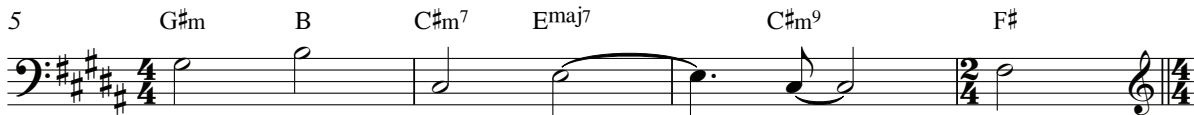
♩ = 128

G#m B C#m7 Emaj7 C#m9 F#



(Bass)

5 G#m B C#m7 Emaj7 C#m9 F#




9 **A1** G#m F# Emaj7 C#m9 F#



I hear you breath-ing so I know you're there,

13 G#m F# Emaj7 C#m9



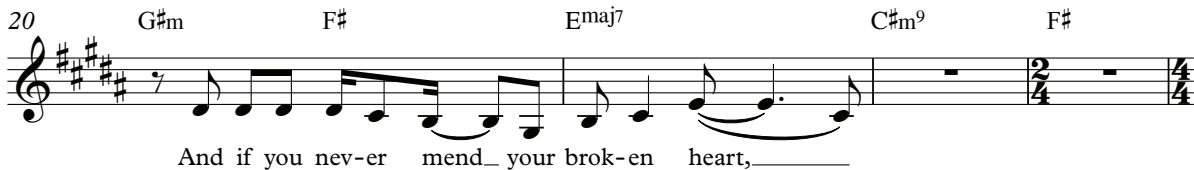
you should stop wor-ry- ing_ I know you care_ sur prise_ sur prise,

16 F#



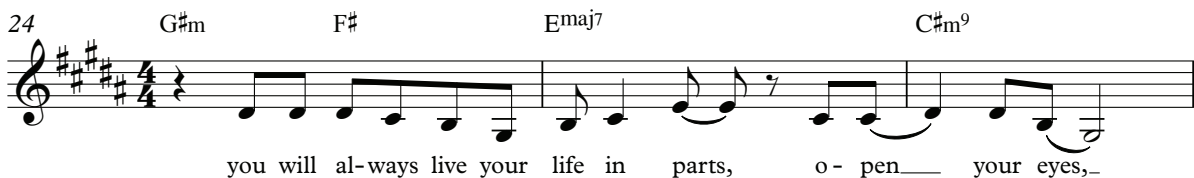
you made an- oth - er sac - ri - fice._

20 G#m F# Emaj7 C#m9 F#



And if you nev-er mend_ your brok-en heart,_____

24 G#m F# Emaj7 C#m9



you will al-ways live your life in parts, o - pen_ your eyes, -

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THE GIRL WITH STARS IN HER EYES

2

27 F#

the truth is it was all a lie.____ Though you

31 **C1** G#m B Emaj7 G#m C#m E

nev-er meant to hurt the one that you love____ hurt you.____ No, you

35 G#m B Emaj7 G#m

nev - er meant to hurt____ the one____ that you love____

37 1. C#m 2. C#m

____ hurt you.____ Though you (love)

41 **A2** G#m F# Emaj7 C#m9 F#

Wake eve-ry morn-ing with the same re- grets,

45 G#m F# Emaj7

it seems you have - n't learned your les - son yet,____ don't ro -

47 C#m9 F#

- man-ti- cize,____ in the end the mar-tyr al ways dies.

51 G#m F# Emaj7 C#m9 F#

If noth-ing I have said____ gets through to you,____



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3



and when you've bit-ten more_ than you can chew, don't e - u - lo- gize,_



e - ven-tual-ly the sun will rise._

Though you



nev-er meant to hurt

the one_that you love__

hurt

you.__

No, you



nev-er meant to hurt

the one_that you love__

hurt

you.__

Though you



(love)

the one__

that you

love__

BRIDGE



the one__ that you love__

Ah__



Ah__

Ah__



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4

A3

82 G#m F# Emaj7 C#m9 F#

I hear you breath-ing so I know you're there,

86 G#m F# Emaj7 C#m9

you should stop wor-ry- ing I know you care, don't be sur prised,

89 F# **D.S. al Coda**

the truth is it was all a lie. Though you

93 E D#m C#m D#m

(love) the one that you love the one that you love

97 E D#m C#m D#m

the one that you love the one that you love

101 E D#m C#m D#m

(1st time only) Repeat to fade



THE GIRL WITH STARS IN HER EYES

READING GROUP GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. The first few years of Toni's life were spent on the road with her mother, Mary. How do you think being raised around dive bars and clubs influenced Toni as she grew?
2. What do you think drew Toni and Seb to each other when they first met outside Mo's bar? What made Seb decide to talk to Toni?
3. Seb and Toni's friendship blossoms over a shared love of nineties alt-rock, which they carry with them into their adulthood. What is the music that most shaped you growing up? How does it feel to listen to those songs now?
4. Both Mary and Mo claim the Gibson Minx was theirs. What do you think the backstory is there? Why did Mary let Toni take such an expensive instrument, and why did Mo let her have it back years later?
5. Seb, Candi, and Lilly have a complicated history together. What do you think happened between them, and how has it impacted their current relationship?
6. Toni both seems to crave and be repelled by the spotlight. Why do you think that is? What makes her so adamant that she doesn't want to be the center of attention?
7. The relationship between all five Lillys is complicated, thanks to Candi. Why do they keep giving her more chances? What would have been the final straw for you?
8. Is Candi being honest when she says she cares about the Lillys? Does she really want to change, or is she manipulating the Lillys into believing she will?
9. Seb left Toni behind without a word when he was forced to flee their small town. Was what he did justified? Would you have forgiven Seb for leaving if you were in Toni's position?
10. We see multiple instances of men in the industry (other artists, executives, and so on) trying to gaslight or control Toni B. and the Lillys. Do you think this is an accurate portrayal of the music industry? What do you think it's like for young women in music?
11. In their final performance, a clearly intoxicated Candi is thrust out onto the stage. Why did the executives want her there? If you were Toni, would you have agreed to dub over her music from backstage, knowing you were being used?
12. The future looks bright for Toni, Seb, and the Lillys, but there's a long road ahead of the band. What do you think is in store for them? How will their complicated relationship with Candi play into their future?

THE GIRL WITH STARS IN HER EYES

A CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR

What was the inspiration for *The Girl with Stars in Her Eyes*? What did you draw on as you developed the story?

A: There's a long answer and a short answer to this question.

The long answer is that I grew up in the music industry. I've seen—firsthand—how it operates on almost every level.

As a performer trying to carve a path in an industry that didn't want to take me seriously, I fought to be seen and heard. I watched people close to me rise to the very top and vicariously experienced all the trappings that came with that level of worldwide acclaim and notoriety. I think it gave me a firm grasp on the realities of the business of music.

With all that knowledge and experience swimming in my head, it was probably just a matter of time before it spilled into my writing.

Okay, that's the long answer.

The short answer is that I came across two photographs—one of Taylor Momsen performing onstage in cutoff jeans and ripped fishnets, and one of a young (maybe twelve-year-old?) Jurnee Smollett cradling an acoustic guitar—and I had one of those what-if moments we writers are known to have. What if these two lives, these two worlds, collided?

Music obviously plays an important part in Toni B's life. What role has it played in your life? What are the songs and bands that shaped you as an artist?

A: To answer the first question, music is my life. I'm what you would call a melophile. Unless I am actively listening to something (or watching something), I have a constant soundtrack running in my head.

As for the second question, that's a big one. I grew up listening to whatever my family had lying around. My father wrote and produced a lot of R&B, soul, and disco for artists like the O'Jays, the Spinners, and the Village People. He was a big part of the Sound of

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Philadelphia in the seventies. I don't think I was aware of any other genre—except for, maybe, Broadway and classical—until I was about eleven or twelve years old.

Around that time, I discovered classic rock, and it was like waking up to a whole new world. There were so many bands I'd never heard before—Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, the Who, Genesis, the Police, Steely Dan—and I remember being devastated that most of them weren't around anymore. It hurt to know I'd have little chance to see them in concert.

Of course, there were groups like Radiohead, Pearl Jam, and Soundgarden and, later, Muse, the Arctic Monkeys, Cage the Elephant, Tool, etc. I live for live music, and I've been to over four hundred shows.

Asked to point out any direct influences, my answer might seem a bit all over the place. And it would probably change the next time I was asked, but I'd cite artists like Dead Can Dance, Ella Fitzgerald, Bloc Party, the Cocteau Twins, the Psychedelic Furs, Bjork, XTC, Jeff Buckley, David Bowie, the Noisettes, PJ Harvey, the Yeah Yeah Yeahs... It is an ever-growing list.

At the top, though, there always seems to be what I call the three M's: Metric, Mutemath, and Massive Attack.

You're a recording artist, as well as an author. Do you see any connection between your two arts?

A: People have told me I have a lyrical quality to my prose, which I have decided to accept as a high compliment. It isn't intentional. My writing style is truly a happy accident. I've just found a different way to express myself. I found my other voice, I guess.

I admit it is kind of freeing to think I might approach a novel like a song—with an intro, several verses, a bridge, a chorus, and an outro. The way songs ebb and flow, I suppose it fits the narrative. And since I tend to pants my way through my books, it's all improvisation anyway. Haha!

I also listen to music when I write. In fact, I find it hard to work without it. I know that's not the case for some authors, and that amazes me. Like, how? I need music to focus. I often sleep with it on.

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What are some of the instruments you play? Toni B also has an interest in producing. Is this an area you have experience in?

A: After voice, my primary instrument is piano. I played regularly for a long time but not so much anymore. I still use a keyboard to compose, and I have pretty good tonal memory that extends to other instruments. For instance, although I am not a guitarist, I can pick one up and play a simple line to record a demo or to convey to my band what I hear in my head. To that end, I own several instruments, including a few guitars, a couple of bass guitars, a full-size keyboard, a toy piano, a Celtic drum, a melodica, and a bunch of percussive accessories. My favorite instrument is one I don't own, yet: the cello. I'm also fond of the hammered dulcimer, and I would love to get a drum kit, but I think Mr. X would toss it out in the middle of the night!

My most prized possessions are a vintage Fender Rhodes Mark I stage piano and a vintage Gibson ES 355 guitar similar to Minx, the one Toni plays in Gwishi. (For you gearheads, Minx is the more valuable ES 335.)

These instruments used to belong to my dad, and both have some serious musical history behind them.

As for the second question, I've produced all my own stuff and a little bit for my siblings. Production is something I hope to delve into more someday. I know quite a few producers, and none of them are women.

You recorded a cover of the song “I Burn” for this series. What made you choose that song for the Lillys? What’s the history of that song?

A: I wish I had an answer to this question that made sense to anyone but me! “I Burn” is a relatively obscure song, but it's one that has floated through my head, off and on, since the very first time I heard it. In fact, that entire album—*Rubberneck* by the Toadies—haunts me.

There are conflicting accounts of how those songs came to be, and I'd love to know all the secrets behind those lyrics because there's a lot going on there.

“I Burn” somehow became Lilly's anthem. I could see and hear her performing it very clearly in my mind. When I put together my Spotify playlist for Gwishi (the Girl with

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Stars in Her Eyes), it was the first song I added. I would listen to it on repeat, for hours at a time, while the scenes from the book coalesced in my imagination. Much later, it occurred to me that I could record the song with my own band—as the Lillys—and that’s what I did.

You also used one of your original songs for the Lillys. What was the inspiration there? Tell us the story behind “Hurt (U).”

A: Actually, two of my songs are referenced in *Gwishu*. The first one is “Butterflies,” which is the track from the fictional band Caspian’s Ghost that Toni and Seb sing together at the Electric Unicorn. (Don’t ask me where that band name came from. I wish I’d thought of it sooner. I would have used it myself.)

“Hurt (U)” was on my last full-length album, *Stranger*, and it was a total outlier in a track list full of outliers. I wanted to be a rock-and-roll girl so badly, but I couldn’t get my foot in that particular door, no matter how hard I tried. “Hurt (U)” is my quirky, indie-pop-rock anthem, and it’s one of my favourite songs to perform live. My band likes to tease me because I always want to speed it up when we play it. Really rock it out.

I thought the song fit the Lillys’ sound and dynamic. The lyrics are about hurting the people you love and being hurt by them, despite everyone having the best of intentions. It’s almost as if I wrote the song for the Lillys themselves. It fits so well.

Toni starts the book as a “hired gun” musician. What does that mean, and what does a typical job look like for a hired gun?

A: A hired gun is a musician who is brought in to fill a position, either in a live band or in a studio setting. They aren’t official members of the bands they work with, and it’s often a thankless job. There’s no fame in it, the money varies, and you usually never know when or where your next gig will be.

Think of them as contract workers. Most contracts are short-lived. You could work with someone on one album or tour, but they might not call you in for the next one, or there might be a scheduling conflict.

Some hired guns do manage to stay with an artist or a band for years. Decades, even. If you’re really good—look up bass player Gail Ann Dorsey, for instance—you’ll develop a

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reputation in the industry, and people will seek you out. Gail is a great example, actually. She's had some fantastic residencies with artists like Tears for Fears, The National, and Lenny Kravitz, but she played with David Bowie for over twenty years. They had an incredible working partnership. Incidentally, she's from Philly, too.

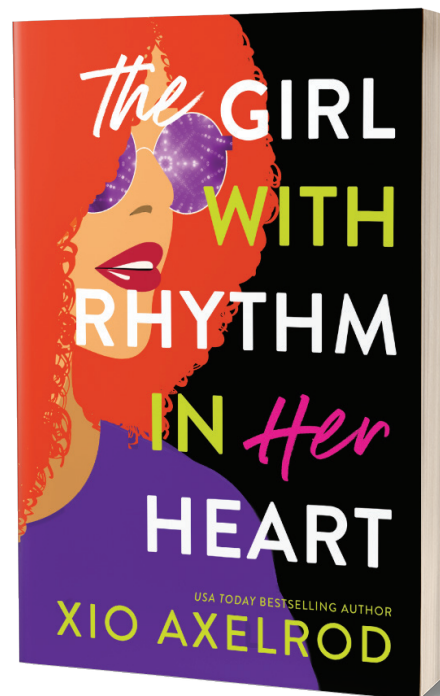
What advice would you give to young writers or musicians out there?

A: No matter what your medium is, be confident in your voice. People seem to find it easy, even comfortable, to put things in neat, little boxes. Don't be afraid to spill over the sides. Take up all the space your talent demands, and don't let anyone tell you there's only one path to get where you want to go. Someone always has to go first. Why not you?

A SNEAK PEEK AT WHAT'S NEXT:

THE GIRL WITH RHYTHM IN HER HEART

When Kayla Whitman was fifteen, the pressure to be perfect nearly broke her. Then she picked up a pair of drumsticks, altering the entire rhythm of her life. Since then, she's fought hard to keep her past a secret. But when she meets a man whose heart beats the same tempo as hers, she can't help but want to share the most hidden parts of herself. With her star on the rise and her band's reputation in the balance, can Kayla pursue her dream without destroying everyone around her?



COMING SOON