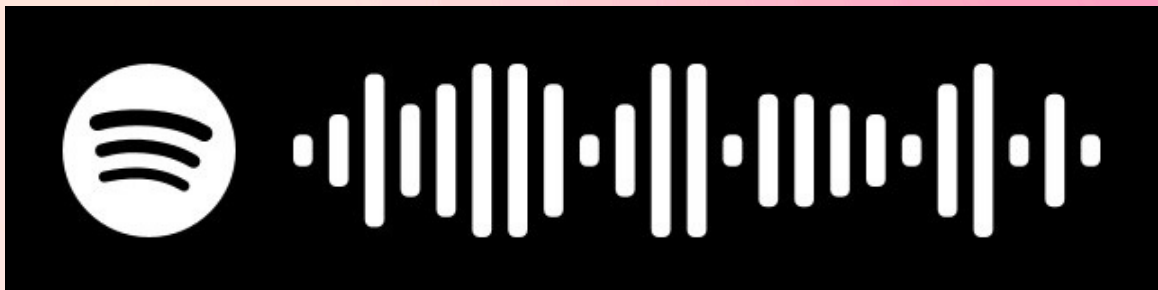




EARTH TO ALIS

THE TRACKLIST

CURATION AND COMMENTARY
BY LEX CARLOW



SCAN OR CLICK THIS LIL GUY TO
ACCESS PLAYLIST ON SPOTIFY

AUTHOR'S NOTE/ PREFACE THING

I have always been a very big music lover, despite being terrible at playing instruments. This love runs in my family. My mom even remembers the album she cranked the most while I was in the womb (it was *Yourself or Someone Like You* by Matchbox Twenty). Going to concerts is my favourite past-time, and if you asked me to choose between books and music, I honestly don't know what I'd pick. Pretty serious stuff!!!

So of course, I never write without music, and I cannot overstate how strongly the songs on this playlist are fused with *Earth to Alis* in my brain. If any of you listened to any songs while reading that are now a permanent part of the experience, I would *love* to know.

Before we begin though, some notes about this tracklist:

1. **THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS SPOILERS.** While I tried to avoid explicit spoilers, it does give away the general shape of the story. I would highly recommend not reading this if you haven't read *Earth to Alis* yet.
2. The playlist is 60 songs long. I only cover 23 songs on this tracklist, because most people don't want to read a playlist dissection that is 60 songs long (I do, though). On a related note, the actual playlist I used is 191 songs long which is 12h29min, and no one needs that, so I selected the songs that are most emblematic of the book for me and put those together in a smaller one.
3. I have this thing where it's very difficult for me to listen to lyrics. I rarely, if ever, listen to a song for its lyrics. I am aware of the irony of a writer that doesn't care about lyrics, but seriously—I must consciously decide to listen to them, and it takes work. So, unless I state otherwise, all of these songs are here for their vibes, and if the lyrics don't make any sense with the story, that's why (and if they do, that was totally on purpose.)
4. On Spotify, the playlist is (sort of?) in the order of the narrative, but that wasn't entirely possible given I skipped around a lot. The ones that are associated with specific scenes are probably covered here, and the rest were just playing on shuffle throughout the writing process.

That's all! Thank you so much for signing up for my newsletter. I hope you enjoy this, and all that is to come.



Familia - The Holy

Imaginary Opening Titles Sequence

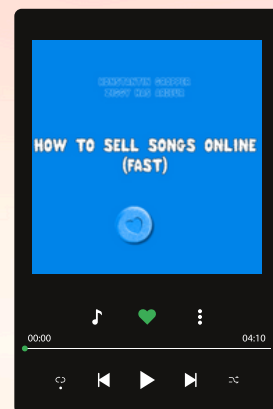
This was what I listened to on my walks when I was imagining that *Earth to Alis* was a movie and the opening credits were sliding in over a montage of European vistas. Let me dream.

Firestarter - Konstantin Gropper & Ziggy Has Ardeur

Imaginary Trailer Music + The Muse

I first heard this song in the German Netflix series *How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast)* and I don't know what this book would be if I'd never discovered it.

This song inspired the entire arsonist arc, which was a springboard for everything else. Also, I get chills thinking of it as the trailer music for the aforementioned *Earth to Alis* movie. 😞



DID YOU KNOW?

Alis was the star of about 5 different (unfinished) manuscripts I tried to write before I finally figured out what his story was.



Sky Musings - Wolf Alice

Opening Scene: Moody Flight to Paris

Safe to say this song was instrumental (no pun intended) in getting me into Alis' headspace in the opening scene. The opening was actually the second scene I thought of for the story; the first, the "kernel scene", was the party, where Jordan (originally named Carly before that became too close to Craig) betrayed Alis. *CW for the song: suicidal ideation.*

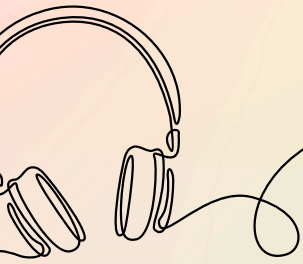




Only a Shadow - Cleaners From Venus

Ch.5: Eiffel Tower Brooding (Original)

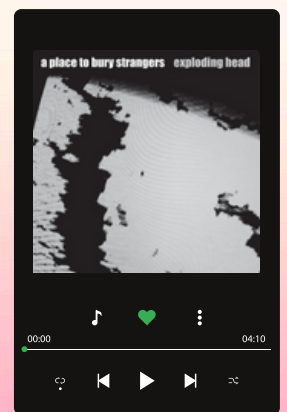
Canonically, Alis listens to A Place to Bury Strangers on the Eiffel Tower, but originally he was listening to this. I thought it was appropriately moody, and the lyrics are eerily reminiscent of Alis' hang up about Jordan; seeing her everywhere, in everything, because of the mark she left on him. The song may have been cut, but I still listened to this *constantly* throughout writing the first draft.



Everything Always Goes Wrong - A Place to Bury Strangers

Ch.5: Eiffel Tower Brooding (Canon)

I ended up changing the song to this one because I thought Alis would probably be listening to something harsher in that moment. Plus, the thought of Craig catching him listening to a band called A Place to Bury Strangers was really funny to me.



DID YOU KNOW?

Le Refuges des Fondus is an actual restaurant in Paris, and while I had a better time there than Alis did, it really was as charmingly chaotic as described.





40 Days - Slowdive

Ch.11: A Bad Day on Harder Kulm

I try to be pretty sparing with media/pop culture references in books as I find they can either date the story and reduce its relatability for future generations, or come back to bite the creator in the ass (see: the authors who are now wishing they could remove all those *Harry Potter* references from their books). But I did put this one in the book. Luckily, Slowdive's *Souvlaki* album is timeless, and the guitar/synth riffs throughout...I don't know how to explain this, but they are Alis' aura. They encompass the noise in his brain. They evoke all of his emotions at once. Maybe you don't agree, and that's okay. But the wall-of-noise quality of this song really helped me with his characterization.

DID YOU KNOW?

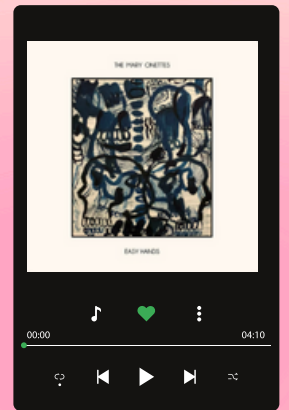
Originally Craig went with Alis up to Harder Kulm where Alis picked a spider off him (because he likes spiders, obviously). He actually had major spider lore but I had to cut it for length. ❤️🕷️

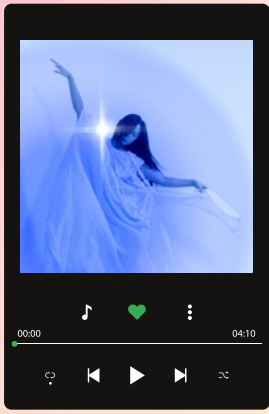
Easy Hands - The Mary Onettes

Part II: Switzerland

I played this to death while I was writing the entirety of Part II in Switzerland. The song feels like a growing spark between two people, which is exactly what Switzerland was for Alis and Craig.

Also, Alis really likes Craig's hands.

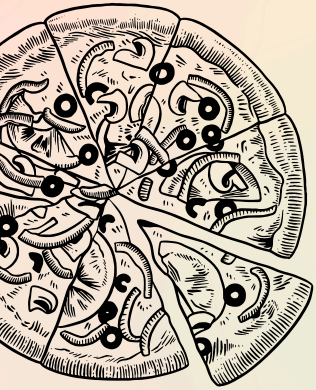




Oh No Darling! - Sarah Kinsley

Ch. 15/16: Alis Lookin' Fancy, Craig's Heart Eyes

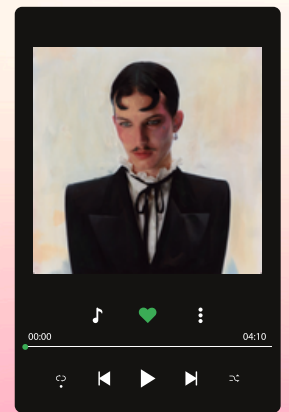
If you ignore the pronouns and most of the lyrics in this song and just go on vibes alone, this is literally what goes on in Craig's head when he looks at Alis. When I was writing Chapter 15 & 16, I kept imagining Craig was secretly watching Alis come down the stairs like a slomo girl-comes-down-the-stairs-in-her-prom-dress situation and Craig was like 🗨️ 💋 🗨️ and nothing but the chorus of this song was going on behind that boy's eyes. I will not elaborate further at this time.



Lights (ft. Cruel Santino) - Gus Dapperton

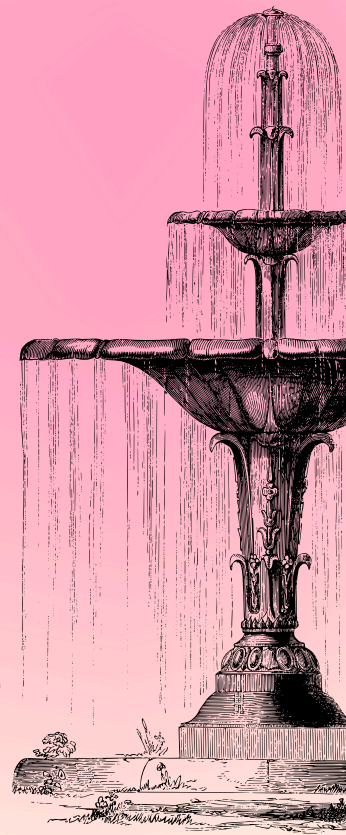
Ch.17: Rome Shenanigans, Craig in his Flirt Era

I was fully in my writing buzz when I got to Rome. I was like *holy shit, this actually might be something*. Appropriate, because Alis was having a similar moment while he was in Rome, feeling for the first time in forever like things might be okay. I think this song encompasses that feeling well, and it was on a loop when Craig and Alis were being cute on the Spanish Steps, and when Alis had his pink sky moment at the Trevi Fountain.



DID YOU KNOW?

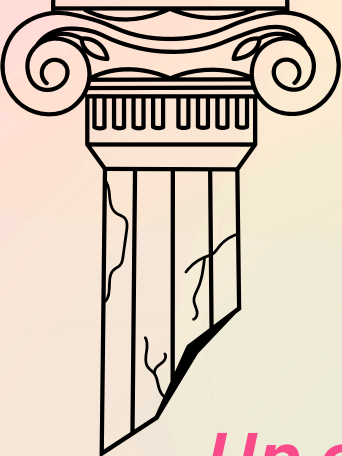
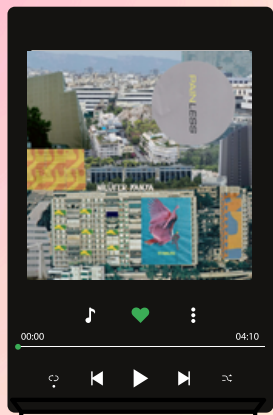
The trip to Europe in this book has the exact itinerary of a trip I took with a group tour company in 2018 (minus a few locations). I was the human embodiment of anxiety at the time and I don't know how I managed it, but it changed my life because it showed me what I was capable of. It also made me realize I'd always felt geographically misplaced in Canada, and inspired me to move to Europe.



stabilise - Nilüfer Yanya

Ch.17: Things Go South at the Pantheon

I almost feel like I have to credit Nilüfer Yanya in this book for how much I listened to her while writing it. This song and H3AT RISES in particular have this frenetic, anxious, cynical quality to them. I came up with the scene where Alis dissociates at the Pantheon while listening to this on a walk. 60% of my scene ideas come to me while I'm walking my dog, 20% while I'm trying to sleep, and another 20% while I'm in the shower and can't write them down. 😞



Upon the Ladder - Radiohead

Ch. 20: Theo Attacks Alis 😞

This scene was probably most difficult to write in terms of my squeamishness, and the research I had to do to get it right. It was a necessary scene in a lot of ways, but I was very glad when I'd finished it, and I don't like listening to this song anymore because of it!



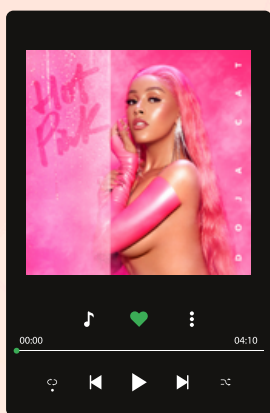
DID YOU KNOW?

Mrs. Lachlan desperately needed a vacation after this vacation.

Addiction - Doja Cat

Ch. 22: Craig's Nightmare Is About to Become A Lot Less Nightmarish

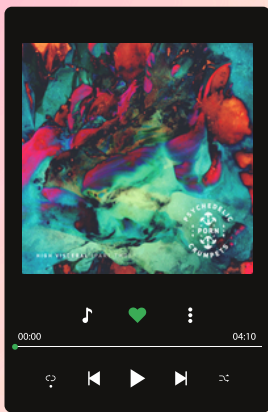
Look: I'm aromantic asexual, and intimate scenes are not my forté because I personally have no experience in that department. I needed to find a song that I thought was steamy in order to get in the headspace, and this one just did the job, don't ask me why. 🙄 CW for song: drug use.



November - Psychedelic Porn Crumpets

Non-Existent Karaoke Scene

In like the earliest *earliest* draft of this, I had a scene in Florence where the class was doing karaoke (because I did karaoke for the first and only time in Florence once. I sang *All Star* by Smash Mouth). And after karaoke, people were requesting songs, and Craig requested this one and Lachlan looked at him like he had three heads when she heard the band name (because Lachlan was the DJ, of course). But yeah, this is Craig's music taste in a nutshell.



DID YOU KNOW?

This book was not only my debut, but also the first manuscript I ever finished, beginning to end!

Idaho Alien - Youth Lagoon

Ch. 25 + Florence in General

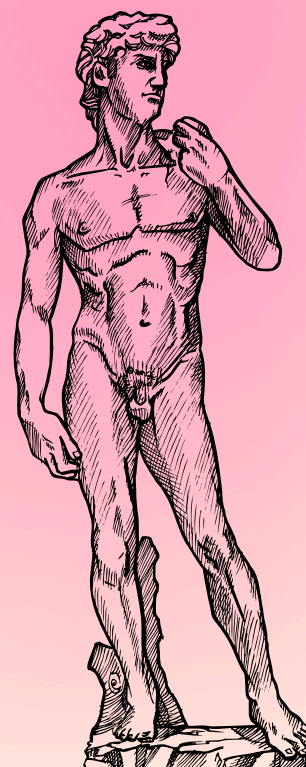
I was obsessed with this whole album at the time of writing, but this song in particular is permanently intertwined with *Earth to Alis*. It's dark but also weirdly lighthearted? And I was like, yeah, this book is like that too. For some reason it's reminiscent of the sandwiches/River Arno scene, so I must have had it on repeat while writing that.

CW for song: drug use, problematic family dynamics, vague violence/blood?

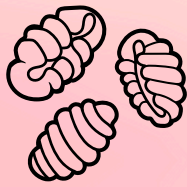


DID YOU KNOW?

I cut a scene that took place in the Uffizi Gallery. It involved Craig, Noor, and Alis looking at chiseled statue butts.



Guys - The 1975



Ch 29: Momentary Peace on the Rooftop

I imagined this was playing on the rooftop in Florence when Alis was eating gnocchi and thinking about how Craig held his hand, because this song is just so mushy “omg I have friends now I am so blessed” vibes. And of course, these lyrics: *“The moment that you took my hand was the best thing that ever happened. The moment that we started a band was the best thing that ever happened.”* First statement: Craig. Second statement: Noor (Nightmare People. lykyk). UGH they’re so FUCKING cute.



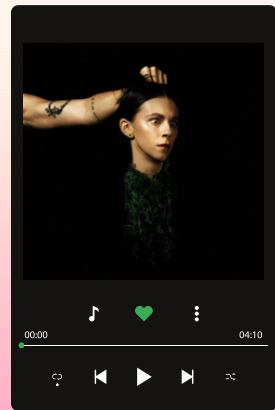
DID YOU KNOW?

At one point the rooftop celebration was a retirement party for Mr. Bilodeau, but I got too sad. He's not allowed to retire.

I DON'T WANNA DO THIS ANYMORE - PVRIS

Ch. 29: They Knew the Whole Time

This was Alis’ boiling point song, as implied by the title. I was listening to it when I brainstormed how the whole Craig-and-Noor-confronting-Alis scene would go. PVRIS is very good for angry queer music.



Funeral Pyre - Phantogram

Ch. 30: Florence Bathroom Scene

A very tough scene to write, both technically and emotionally. Emotionally for obvious reasons, and technically because I knew I had to strike a very delicate balance—I needed to make it clear why Alis would resort to this without glorifying it, without painting it in a light that would encourage it. I actually don’t remember much about writing this scene, but I listened to this song a lot while brainstorming it.

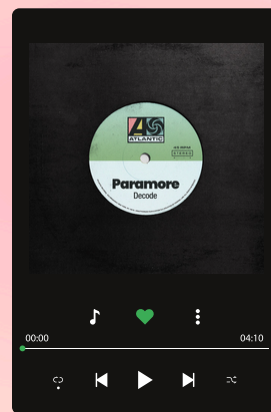




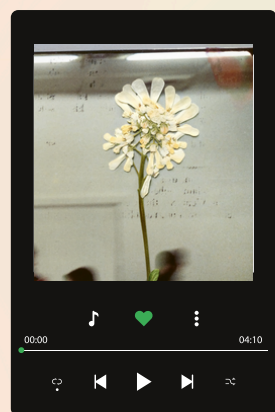
Decode - Paramore

Ch 33: Bus Ride to Venice

You had to know this would be on here. Canonically, Alis doesn't listen to Paramore on the bus to Venice because it reminds him of Jordan and we are not thinking about Jordan. But I was listening to this because it was the perfect soundtrack for Alis' Dark Night of the Soul. And yes, between feverish typing sessions, I was air drumming.



I USED TO KNOW
YOU SOOO
WEEEEEEELL



DID YOU KNOW?

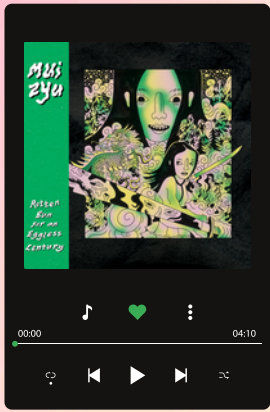
The first draft of *Earth to Alis* was 130k words long (it is now 95k)

Wish I Could Cross the Sea - Daughter

Ch. 34: The Gondola Scene

This was, hands-down, the most technically difficult scene to write in the whole book. I must have rewritten it at least a dozen times. There were just so many ways it could have played out, so many possible conversations that could have been had here, and I didn't know where to land. But then I found this song, and it was like it spoke directly to my soul and told me exactly what needed to happen. I'm not even surprised—I've loved Daughter since I was a tween and I wrote many a fanfic to their songs. They're one of my soul bands. There's something nautical about the instrumentals in this song, like the canals of Venice, and something haunting and heartbreaking, like seeing a phantom of your mother on a bridge in the distance. This song echoed all of the pain Alis had been through and urged him toward catharsis.





Ghost With a Peach Skin - mui zyu

Ch. 37: Everything is Better in the Rain

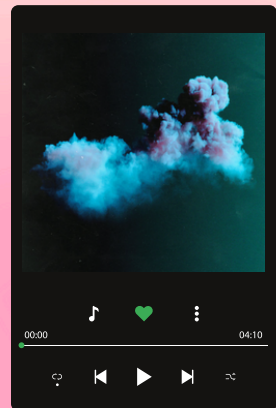
If someone asked me to choose just one song to represent *Earth to Alis*, it would be this one. It feels so Alis, both in the lyrics (yes, I listened to them!) and in the haunting, synthy instrumentals. While this is not a very steamy song, I listened to it to death while writing the steamy bit of this chapter. The scene *before* the steaminess was arguably Alis' biggest moment of growth in the book before the epilogue, and so this song and Alis' entire character arc are permanently wired together in my brain. Also, I saw mui zyu live in Glasgow shortly after I wrapped up this chapter, and oh my god, the goosebumps.



Heaven Hanging Low - Art School Girlfriend

Ch. 38: Alis Apologizes to Noor

This is a Noor and Alis song. Those two are so special to me and I'm so happy people have latched on to the fact that Alis' bond with her was just as important as his relationship with Craig. They are ride or die, and I can only imagine their friendship getting stronger the more they learn about each other.



DID YOU KNOW?

The book was originally titled *Nothing But Fire*. Very glad I changed it.



Richmond Avenue - Ben Howard

Reaching "The End"

One evening, when I was very close to finishing this book, I went for a walk. The sky was pink. I was listening to this song, and I was thinking about how easily this story came to me, how it flowed out of me faster than I could keep up, and I became overwhelmed with emotion. I thought it was just the pride and joy of having finally finished something (I'd wanted to be an author since before I could remember), but in retrospect, I think it was catharsis. While this novel is not autobiographical, much of it was informed by personal experience. It was a result of a lot of bottled-up shit being uncorked. And I think it just hit me in that moment how I had reached a point in my life where I was able to write about it like I had, and that was beyond healing. I cried like a baby.

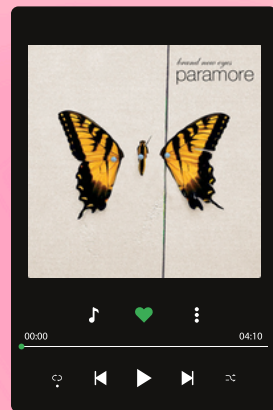
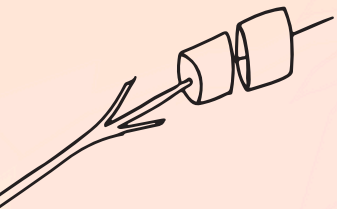
The Only Exception - Paramore

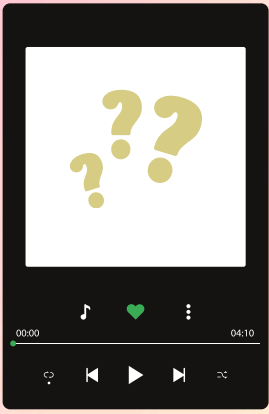
Epilogue

The way I made myself sob listening to this while writing the final draft of the epilogue. Still my proudest moment, though.

DID YOU KNOW?

The epilogue used to be 10k words long (ridiculous) and from Craig's POV. The Craigilogue may see the light of day as bonus material one day...





END CREDIT MUSIC???

I can't decide what will be playing during the end credits of the *Earth to Alis* movie, so if you have any ideas, please entertain me. I'm leaning toward ***Now or Never Now by Metric***. Canadian band, sort of relevant lyrics, appropriate hopeful vibes, would be cool to walk out of a theatre to. I realize I would probably have no say in the end credit music for this hypothetical film, but again—let me dream. Also any producers out there, hmu.

Thank you for indulging me, friends. I hope you found this at least mildly entertaining/interesting. I can always be reached on Instagram, TikTok, or via the form on my website, if you wanna drop your end credit music ideas, tell me what songs you associate with the book, or just talk. I'm not famous and I don't have friends, so I'll probably answer!

Take care and enjoy the playlist!

Lex 

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BOOKS2READ.COM/EARTH-TO-ALIS

Lex Carlow is a Canadian-born, Scotland-based author of queer young adult fiction. ***Earth to Alis*** is her debut novel.



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