

Reading Group Guide

Someone Should Pay for Your Pain by Franz Nicolay

Someone Should Pay for Your Pain by Franz Nicolay hits the backroads with singer-songwriter Rudy Pauver as he navigates a conflicted relationship with a successful protégé and the unexpected arrival of his spirited young niece.

In the doldrums of a career as a cult figure, Rudy has been overshadowed by Ryan Orland, to the point where Rudy is now identified as an imitator of the younger man. Ryan is generous and supportive, but Rudy finds it hard to be grateful, especially after a sordid confrontation results in their estrangement. When his sister's daughter, a teenage runaway, turns up asking to join him on the road, Rudy has to come to terms with the limits of his ambition and the nature of his obligation to family.

Someone Should Pay for Your Pain is an exploration of the nature of creativity and popular success; artistic and ethical influence; the pathos of the middle-aged artist; changing standards of sexual morality; and guilt and penance in a post-religious society.

Someone Should Pay for Your Pain by Franz Nicolay is published by Gibson House Press, August 2021. Paperback, \$16.95. ISBN-978-1-948721-13-4. Ebook formats, \$9.99; 978-1-948721-14-1.

About the author

Franz Nicolay is a musician and writer living in California's East Bay and New York's Hudson Valley. He is a member of The Hold Steady among other groups and solo projects. His first book, *The Humorless Ladies of Border Control: Touring the Punk Underground from Belgrade to Ulaanbaatar*, was named a "Season's Best Travel Book" by the *New York Times*. *Someone Should Pay for Your Pain* is his first novel.

Reviews

“*Someone Should Pay for Your Pain* smashes Don DeLillo’s *Great Jones Street* against a chaste *Lolita*. Nicolay’s book focuses on the illusion of stardom and the reality that most musicians play mainly in dingy clubs to sparse if passionate fans.”—Darcey Steinke

“Nicolay’s ear goes beyond music. There is confidence and grace in these pages, characters that feel pulled from daily life, none of their rough edges sanded down. A debut novel not just for artists, but anyone who’s ever felt like they’ve grown up and distorted, uncomfortable moving through the world.”—Jean Kyoung Frazier, author of *Pizza Girl*

“I love this for novel for its sensitivity to the tenderness and absurdity of human after human, city after city, year after year. *Someone Should Pay for Your Pain* is a marvel, and when I finished it, my first emotion was to return to the opening pages and read it all over again.”—Rivka Galchen

“*Someone Should Pay for Your Pain* is a poignant and powerfully honest meditation on aging, art-making, and failure. With a sharp ear and an unsparing eye, Franz Nicolay has reinvented the road novel, stripping it of wide-eyed, Kerouac-ian grandeur to expose the frozen landscapes—both external and internal—that are part and parcel of a rootless existence.”—Adam Wilson, author of *Sensation Machines*

“Franz Nicolay’s poetic takedown of a musician’s extended adolescence goes down smoother than a drink ticket beer. Read it before you get in the van.”—Chris L. Terry, author of *Black Card*

“Wise, brutal and funny, *Someone Should Pay for Your Pain* is a bruising and beautiful glimpse of the endless tour of broken dreams some of us call life.”—Sam Lipsyte, author of *The Ask* and *Hark*

“Nicolay gives us the sort of fully-realized, *there’s no going back* kind of story that’s hauntingly reminiscent of Denis Johnson, but filtered through the lens of somebody who has actually gotten in the van.”—Jason Diamond, author of *Searching for John Hughes*

Conversation starters

1. If you were Lauren, would you have let Lily go with Rudy?
2. In what ways is Jules a good father?
3. How can you justify Rudy’s resentment of Ryan?
4. What does Rudy owe to Ryan, if anything?
5. Is Rudy supposed to be any good as a songwriter and performer? Does it matter? Who do you think he sounds like?
6. Are we our parents? Compare/contrast Lauren and Jules as parents with Lauren and Rudy’s parents.