

Nightshift

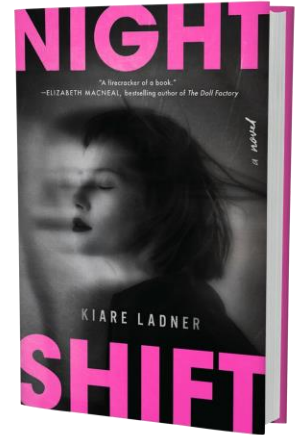
Mariner Books

By Kiare Ladner

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Introduction

A haunting, compelling debut novel of complex female friendship and obsession, following one young woman's decision to abandon her normal life and join the otherworldly, nocturnal existence of London's nightshift workers.



“A firecracker of a book—toxic, sexy, pacey and packed with humor. It's a long time since I read something so gloriously nihilistic, and I won't be forgetting it anytime soon.”
—Elizabeth Macneal, internationally bestselling author of *The Doll Factory*

NAMED A MOST ANTICIPATED BOOK BY NYLON * BUSTLE * THE MILLIONS * LIT HUB * DEBUTIFUL * CRIMEREADS

When twenty-three-year-old Meggie meets her distant and enigmatic new coworker Sabine, she recognizes in her the person she would like to be. Meggie is immediately drawn to worldly, beautiful, and uninhibited Sabine; and when Sabine announces she's switching to the nightshift, Meggie impulsively decides to follow her. Giving up her daytime existence, her reliable boyfriend, and the trappings of a normal life, Meggie finds a liberating sense of freedom as she indulges her growing preoccupation with Sabine and plunges into another existence, immersing herself in the transient and uncertain world of the nightshift worker.

While the city sleeps, she passes the hours at work clipping crime stories from the next day's newspapers. The liminal hours between night and day are spent haunting deserted bars and nightclubs with her eclectic coworkers and going on increasingly wild adventures with Sabine. Yet the closer she gets to Sabine, the more Sabine seems to push her away, leaving Meggie desperately trying to hold on to their intense friendship while doubting if she truly knows her friend at all.

A fresh twist on the coming of age story and a dark love letter to city life, *Nightshift* explores the thin line between self-invention and self-destruction, as Meggie's sleep deprivation, drinking, and fixation with Sabine gain a momentum all their own. Vividly set in late-nineties London and framed by Meggie's present-day reflections, *Nightshift* is a captivating and moving debut that asks profound questions about who we are and if we can truly escape ourselves.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think the author chose to frame the book through the eyes of an older Meggie looking back at her youth? What does this perspective add to the story?
2. How reliable of a narrator is Meggie? Can any of us be truly reliable and objective when telling the stories of our own lives? Or do our own emotions and perspectives ultimately come into play?
3. Fairy tales are referenced multiple times in *Nightshift*, from Meggie describing Sabine as “a brave heroine in a dark fairy tale” to referring to themselves as “fairy tale friends.” In what ways is the plot of *Nightshift* similar to that of a fairy tale? Why is it particularly meaningful when Meggie believes that Sabine had “found herself a fairy-tale ending after all,” and what is the double meaning here once we learn Sabine’s ultimate fate?
4. What do you think it is about Sabine that draws Meggie in so fiercely? What does she see in her that she wants to see in herself?
5. How does the contrast between Sabine’s scarab necklace and Graham’s sheep necklace both reflect the differences between Graham and Sabine, and help illuminate Meggie’s choices of what she wants in life? Does the meaning behind the scarab necklace change when you ultimately find out who gave it to Sabine?
6. Why do you think the author chose to set *Nightshift* in the 90s? How would the book be different if it were set in modern day, with cell phones and social media? How has young adulthood changed since then? How has it stayed the same?
7. Many of the characters in the book, primarily Meggie and Sabine, live in London but come from somewhere else. How does being an immigrant contribute to their feeling as outsiders, as isolated?
8. When Graham tells Meggie that her name comes from the word “pearl,” she immediately thinks of “how a pearl forms due to a foreign particle in an oyster.” Knowing this, why is Megan such a fitting name for her? Does Meggie only grow based on external forces, or is there any point when she begins to be more internally motivated?
9. How does the anonymity of living in a big city allow Meggie to explore her identity in a way that her hometown didn’t allow for?
10. Thinking about her mother, Meggie reflects that “Our intimacy depended on my being the person she wanted me to be, not the person I was.” In what way does she then fall into a similar pattern with Sabine? Why is it harder to figure out who you really are rather than seeing yourself through the eyes of others?
11. How did meeting Xavier make you see Sabine in a new light? Did you find his perspective reliable? Who do you think was more trustworthy when it came to the details of their childhood and shared background – him or Sabine?

12. What do you think Meggie means when she says that “Negative space is the lifeblood of obsession”?
13. Xavier tells Meggie that nothing happened to make Sabine the way she was, she had a perfectly uneventful childhood. Why do we assume that troubled people like Sabine must have experienced some kind of trauma to make them that way? Is it really “the saddest part” to understand that sometimes it’s not possible to pin down a cause so easily?
14. What did you think of the ending? Were you satisfied with where the characters ended up? Was it what you expected?
15. Music plays a big role in *Nightshift*; one of the many things Meggie picks up from Sabine is her taste in music, and the author even created a [Spotify playlist](#) with songs that are mentioned in the book or inspired her writing. Are there any songs that make you think of the book or its characters? What would you include on your ultimate 90s soundtrack?
16. Meggie reflects that “I was a slow reader, a distracted thinker; when I came across lines I liked, I’d mull them over for hours...” Were there any particularly memorable lines from *Nightshift* that you “mulled over” like this?