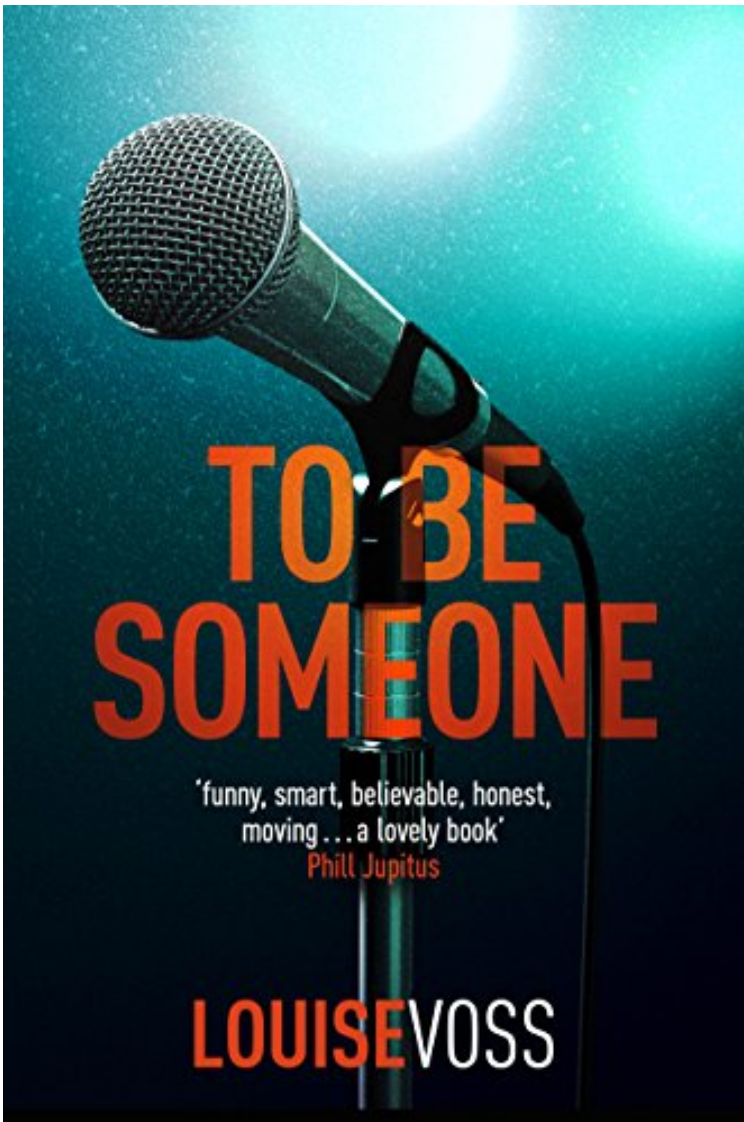


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To Be Someone (English Edition)



Par Louise Voss
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Par Louise Voss : To Be Someone (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To Be Someone (English Edition):

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Description : Description du produitNo matter how the lyrics of your life are written, how you play the song is up to you.Helena Nicholls is no ordinary girl. In fact, shes famous. For many years she was the bassist and lyricist for Blue Idea, a band worshiped by adoring fans all over the world throughout the eighties. Following their breakup, Helena switched gears and became the most popular morning DJ in London with her all-request show. Listeners could call her and request songs, but Helena wouldnt play them until the callers gave the details of why they wanted her to play themwhere they were when they first heard the song, what they were wearing, who they were with, and why the song means so much to them. The shows success put Helena back on the map, but now all thats over.After a night of partying ends in a horrible accident, Helena wakes up in a hospital bed. As she groggily opens her eyes, she realizes that her irresponsible behavior, so completely uncharacteristic of her, has left her bruised and battered. The doctors tell her it will take months to recoverwho knows if her wounded ego will ever heal.To make matters worse,

the accident has made international headlines. Her boss, unhappy with all the negative publicity, has had her fired from her prime time radio show and offered a humiliating demotion to the two a.m. slot: the graveyard shift. Desperate, depressed, and sure her life is over, Helena comes up with the Plan. She is going to create a playlist of songs that have defined her life and write her autobiography, using these songs as the chapters. As the Plan begins to unfold, so does this poignant, funny, compulsively readable novel. Stringing the most important aspects of her life together with pop songs from the seventies, eighties, and nineties, Helena starts to deal with all of the unsettled parts of her past and the uncertainty of her future. Whether she's confronting a new love interest or mourning the recent death of her lifelong best girlfriend, Helena continues to find solace and wisdom in the one thing that has gotten her through every crisis: music. Only one question remains: What will she do for an encore? A High Fidelity for women, *To Be Someone* is a hip and engaging novel featuring a unique protagonist given to dark self-introspection but with an irrepressibly funny, self-aware voice that speaks directly to every woman who has had a best friend, felt awkward moving to a new school, dated the wrong guys, obsessed over a new band, or fought with her mother.

Helena Nicholls - ex world-famous pop star and prime-time DJ - wakes up in hospital to find her looks, her career and her personal life in tatters. She has been let down by her boyfriend, and the one person she loved most in the world - her best friend since the age of five - is dead. She feels that she belongs nowhere, and her sense of identity, fragile at the best of times, is in pieces. So Helena turns to the one thing that has always got her through, the one thing that has real resonance: music. And she begins to concoct The Plan. Using the request format that made her radio show so popular, where listeners rang in with detailed stories about why certain songs were so meaningful for them, she sets out the story of her own life, chapter by chapter, track by track. Thinking about the songs that represent important chapters in her own life, Helena begins to come to terms with her past. But the present is more of a problem as, while in hospital, she has met an old friend to whom she is still hugely attracted. Her strict adherence to The Plan, however, means that time is not on her side. If she is to have a future at all, she must work out what it really means to be someone. With its wry, appealing narrative voice, and its insider's take on the world of pop music, *To Be Someone* is a stunningly mature first novel which swings with wide smoothness between past and present, child and adulthood, joy and tragedy, love, loss and the meaning of true friendship.

Waking Up in Hospital

There was a story about a drunken seventeenth-century shepherd I discovered in a book at school once, when Sam and I were doing a history project about Salisbury Cathedral. When I awoke in hospital a day after the accident, I was oblivious to the operations that had removed my damaged eyeball, reconstructed my nose, wired my jaw, and stitched my cheek, and I did not realize that I was deaf in one ear, but I clearly remembered that legless peasant. It was the annual Whit-Week fair in the cathedral close, cattle and sheep for sale in rickety wattle pens, urchins peddling ribbons and knickknacks, a well-patronized ale and cider tent; merchants, farmers, and the usual cast of pickpockets and tricksters milling around. Anyway, a local shepherd patronized the ale tent so thoroughly that he convinced himself and his friends that he'd suddenly learned to fly. Before anyone could stop him, he bolted into the cathedral and up the little staircase hewn from the thickness of the nave walls, right to the top of the tower. At the point where tower meets spire, there was a room with doors that opened out onto all four vistas of the surrounding valley. He opened the door overlooking the festivities beneath, spread his arms wide, and leapt into the void, planning to sail away over the cattle pens and maypole dancers. Predictably enough, he couldn't fly. But the memorable part of the story was that, because he was so drunk, he staggered away completely unhurt. A little dazed and confused, probably, but then he was that before he jumped three hundred feet to the ground. Though I couldn't remember at first what had happened to me, I knew that I'd had some kind of fall, because all I could think about was that peasant plummeting down to earth, headfirst. In the past I'd always imagined him sort of floating down to the soft green grass of the cathedral close, a soporific smile on his pissed face, falling in slow motion like a Disney character drifting off to sleep on a pile of feathers. Now, however, he fell through my mind like a boulder, gathering speed, leaving a crater in the lawn outside the north front. I envied him the miracle of his intact skull. I didn't know what state my own was in, but I had an unbelievable headache, and my whole face hurt like hell. Hazy I remembered something else I learned at school: that if you dropped an egg off the top of the cathedral, it wouldn't necessarily smash, not if it landed the right way up. I began to envy the egg. In my morphine-sodden mind, I saw an image of my nose breaking on a dark floor like a wrong-way-up egg; and then like a flour-bomb, a

great cloud of cocaine spilling out on impact. This was more information than I felt able to handle, so I went back to sleep again. The next time I opened my one remaining eye there was a familiar face peering anxiously at me, wavering in and out of focus. "Another flagon of ale, wench," I mumbled, but all I heard was "Mmmh, mmmh, mmmh." It seemed that someone had their hand over my mouth. Not funny, I thought, trying to shake it off. The movement set every nerve in every cranny of my skull jangling and pulsing with yet more pain. Christ, have I ever got a hangover. Or did I fall off a roof? My brain couldn't fully articulate the scenario, but I had an embryonic vision of myself having performed some vastly heroic action, saving someone from a fire or something. Goody, I thought vaguely. That'll do my public profile good. I reached a hand up toward my face to try to wrest away the joker who was preventing my speech, but someone restrained me gently. It was my mother, her face looming into mine, lips moving but no sound. She looked awful, red-eyed, with her normally immaculately coiffed hair all whooshed messily upward and to the side, as if she'd just spent an hour with her head stuck out the window of a moving car. It wasn't until she shifted position so her mouth was near my right ear that I could actually hear what she was saying. "Don't try to talk, darling, your jaw is all wired up because you broke it in the fall." Oh, a broken jaw. Well, that would soon mend, I thought. But it must be serious if Mum had flown over from New Jersey (she'd hardly been back at all since we emigrated there in 1980). Besides, judging by the throbbing, I thought it must be my nose that was broken. I gave a pathetic whine and pointed toward it. Mum stroked the back of my hand with her finger as if I were a newborn kitten. Her voice was strained and distorted, as if she were speaking to me from the bottom of a fish tank. "You broke your nose as well, sweetheart." This was getting worse. I tried to glance across the bed, to see if Dad was there, too, but there was something heavy resting on my left eye, and I couldn't turn my head far enough to see out of my right. Oh, no. Not my eye, too. Mum read my mind. "I'm so sorry, Helena darling. You got some glass in your eye, and the doctors had to operate. Don't worry about it for now, though. Just try and get some more sleep." My free eyebrow crumpled up with consternation. Even through all the painkillers I could tell she was keeping something from me, but I didn't feel ready to find out what. This all felt like a weird, horrible dream. Perhaps the cocaine had been laced with PCP or something, and I was hallucinating. Oh God, the coke. Oh God, the nightclub. Oh God, the seesawing with Justin. Shit. What had I done? A big nurse with hoofy shoes came in and stuck a needle in my arm, without asking permission. I wondered if this was how it had been for Sam at the end, this awful swirly painful feeling, as much emotional as physical, knowing and yet not knowing what was going on. Seeing details but not the big picture. Other than to visit Sam, I'd never been in hospital before. It was a disturbing shift of perspective, for me to be the one lying propped up in Sam's place. She'd lain there for so many weeks, white on white, a tube in her throat to breathe through. As I floated back off to sleep, I imagined that I had become Sam--a comforting feeling, because it meant that she was still alive. Or maybe I was dead. The doctor officially broke the news about my eye, very gravely and slightly patronizingly, as if I were a small child whose hamster had died. I half expected him to say, "Your eye has gone up to live with Jesus," but instead he began to talk about "options"--prosthetics, breakthroughs in medical science, blah, blah--until I cut him off. I'd always been really squeamish about eyes in general, to the point where I'd nearly passed out when Sam once explained to me how the doctors had operated on her cataracts, so the thought that my eyeball had actually been removed was too much to bear. Denial was clearly the only sensible option. After a week in hospital, once I was vaguely compos mentis again, I made them move me to the second floor. My original ground-floor room came complete with paparazzi jostling about on stepladders outside, and I couldn't stand having the blinds pulled down day and night. It was bad enough having only one eye and one working ear, let alone dwelling in permanently artificial light. Apparently the police came regularly and moved them on, but they were constantly hassling the receptionists and nurses, claiming to be relatives, friends, therapists. One even tried to convince the staff nurse that he was my personal tarot card reader. I hadn't had so much press attention since Blue Idea broke up, and I'd almost forgotten how hideous it was. I couldn't understand why the press was so interested in my accident. Yes, I was still pretty well known in London, since I had the New World breakfast show, but I tried to keep a low profile, and didn't really go out to the groovy places much anymore. Then I found out. One of the hospital cleaners slunk into my room about a week after I arrived, clutching a blurry tabloid, all soft and graying from too much handling. "Didn't want to bother you before, Miss Nicholls, what with you being so bashed up an' stuff, but wouldya autograph this for me sister? She loved Blue Idea, cried for days when you all split up--a nasty business, weren't it?" I couldn't believe my eye when I saw the headline and accompanying picture. It seemed like a blue idea at the time! It pulsed at me. And the picture--oh Jesus, the shame. Me on Justin's back, legs kicked in

the air, stockings and a flash of knicker showing, eyes closed and a goofy expression. To think I'd believed we looked cool. A few too many at the UKMAs, chaps? Shortly after this picture was taken at Britain's top music industry award show, these high jinks ended in near tragedy for Helena Nicholls of former chart-topping band Blue Idea. Nicholls, 31, now a DJ at top London station New World, is in intensive care with extensive facial injuries, including the loss of her left eye. Her fellow band member and now successful solo artist, Justin Becker, 33, escaped unharmed. . . . The piece rambled on about Justin for a couple more paragraphs and then concluded with a firsthand account that we were both "off our trolleys on drugs." I was outraged, until I remembered that it was true. I screwed up the paper in fury, trying to scream as loudly as I could through my wired-up jaw at the hapless cleaner to get out, leave me alone, fuck off. But the only sound I managed to produce was a high-pitched groan, like a rutting dolphin or a ferret in a trap. Thankfully it was enough to summon a passing nurse, who realized what was going on, ejected the cleaner, removed the tabloid, and administered a sedative. So it was no great surprise when I received a visitor a couple of days later. It was Geoff Hadleigh, the boss of New World. He brought me an enormous bunch of white lilies, and I didn't have the energy to tell him that I couldn't stand them, their sickly perfume and funereal smell, and their nasty, staining orange pollen. Thankfully my jaw had been unwired the day before and I could talk again, after a fashion, although it was really embarrassing. One of my front teeth had broken in half horizontally, and the other one had split vertically, resulting in a ludicrously thick spluttering lisp, as my tongue couldn't decide where to put itself (I didn't even want to think about the aesthetic effect). It all just added to the humiliation. Geoff was a weaselly, gummy sort of man, skinny and loose in his jeans in a manner indicating underendowment. We'd never really got on; his deputy program director, Gus, had originally hired me for an evening shift, so I wasn't one of Geoff's "people." Plus Geoff had obviously never thought that in just a few months I'd build up such a big following. Eventually, when the slot had come free, he'd been pressured by Gus, the other board members, listeners, and production staff to promote me to the coveted breakfast show, where I'd worked to prove myself day and night: researching, broadcasting, writing, taking hardly any time off. My "trademark" as a DJ was to take requests on air from the public, but I would play their selected record only if they could give a valid reason for why it was so important to them. What they were doing when they heard it, what they'd felt, wore, ate, touched, said, and why this was memorable. I was tough, too. My listeners knew it wasn't enough to ring up and say, "Please play 'The Power of Love' because my girlfriend and I were dancing to it when I proposed"--oh, no. I wanted to know what her exact response was, what kind of party they were at, what sort of shoes she was wearing, what brand of perfume. People confessed secrets, scandals, tragedies to me. They sometimes cried, or said how much better they felt for getting whatever it was off their chest. The press had in the past compared me to a disc-spinning Frasier Crane, or "Claire Rayner in a DJ booth." Damn, I was good at it. "God is in the details," I always said, and, "It's not just about the music." It was so important to set the scene, get people to dredge their minds for even the tiniest little piece of extra information. It made the record even more precious to them, while giving them a few minutes of fame and a Londonwide audience. At first I worried that people would find it all too self-indulgent, and get bored listening to strangers' stories of woe, but I was wrong; the format was a runaway success. Listeners really did want to know why "Only You" by Yazoo reminded Sharon from Herne Hill of how she once hid behind a crumbling car-park wall, in school uniform. When they found out it was because she was two-timing her boyfriend with an amber-eyed sixth-former, and that the amber-eyed sixth-former was killed in a car crash six weeks later, there were tears all round the M25. But my novel format was another reason Geoff Hadleigh wasn't my biggest fan. Commercial stations had strict quotas of records to stick to, playlists A, B, and C. He thought I'd never be able to fit requests in around the morning rituals of news, travel bulletins, ad breaks. But I had. We'd struck a deal whereby I could get away with sixty percent playlisted tracks and forty percent requests, unheard of on a breakfast show. It hadn't made me popular with the other DJs, but I didn't care. I knew I was a good DJ. It felt so different from being in Blue Idea, where, even though I'd written the songs, I'd never felt that it was truly my achievement, because it was a group effort. New World was a whole new and revelatory ball game, where I'd succeeded because people liked my personality. Plus I didn't have to go on tour for months at a time. It had come to mean everything to me. And my hard work had paid off--I'd doubled the station's breakfast-show listenership in less than a year. From the Hardcover edition. From Publishers Weekly. Former rock star and fab London DJ Helena Nicholls ponders her final playlist while recuperating from a horrendous party accident. Seeing herself smeared over the tabloids as a doped-up floozy, booted from her popular morning slot to the graveyard shift by her "weaselly, gummy" boss, Helena dreams up a plan to play a list of the most meaningful songs in her

life, after which she will kill herself and go off the air for good. This plodding first novel follows Helena home from the hospital and across jagged leaps of memory, from her first and dearest friend, Samantha (whose untimely death from leukemia still gnaws at her), over to the U.S. for the formation and quick rise to fame of her band, Blue Idea, then back to the U.K. for the radio days. Each chapter is titled after one of the songs Helena associates with memorable events in her life: the artists include Blondie, Elvis Costello, Sinead O'Connor, the Cure and the Jam, with the latter's song providing the book's title. Voss manages to traverse both the music and radio industries without saying much about either, devoting reams to Helena's inner turmoil and the terrible experience of watching a close friend deteriorate before her eyes. Except for Helena herself, the characters do not exist beyond their lines, and the meandering plot (to off oneself or not, and why) is further bogged down by the tiresome flashbacks. Considering Helena's environment amid gaudy rockers and their entourages, the prose is antiseptic and low-impact. (Oct. 2)Forecast: Is Brit pop fiction wearing out its welcome stateside? Perhaps although Voss may find an audience among 30-somethings nostalgic for the '80s. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.