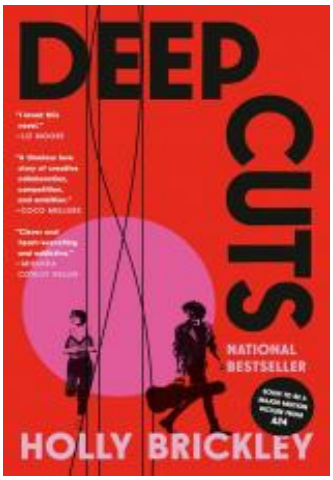
Deep Cuts

by Holly Brickley



About the Book

Look, the song whispered to me, that day in my living room. Life can be so big.

It?s a Friday night in a campus bar in Berkeley, fall of 2000, and Percy Marks is pontificating about music again. Hall and Oates is on the jukebox, and Percy --- who has no talent for music, just lots of opinions about it --- can?t stop herself from overanalyzing the song, indulging what she knows to be her most annoying habit. But something is different tonight. The guy beside her at the bar, fellow student Joe Morrow, is a songwriter. And he could listen to Percy talk all night.

Joe asks Percy for feedback on one of his songs --- and the results kick off a partnership that will span years, ignite new passions in them both, and crush their egos again and again. Is their collaboration worth its cost? Or is it holding Percy back from finding her own voice?

Moving from Brooklyn bars to San Francisco dance floors, DEEP CUTS examines the nature of talent, obsession, belonging and, above all, our need to be heard.

Discussion Guide

1. What drives Percy?s love for music? What does music give her? What does it give you?

2. Why do you think Joe doesn?t welcome an intimate relationship with Percy early on in the novel? What did you think of their ?promise??

3. Discuss the friendship triangle between Percy, Joe and Zoe. What does each character get out of it?

4. How would you describe Percy?s particular talent? What about your own talent(s)? Do you have any unique skills that may be hard to identify or categorize? Have you ever wished for a different talent, and why do you think that is?

5. Percy has her own metrics for judging a great song. ?How deep does it cut? How close to the bone? How long do you feel it?? What do you think of these metrics, relative to the way Percy?s classmates view music? What are some songs that are ?deep cuts? in your own life?

6. Percy?s mom tells her that Percy ?didn?t get the music gene? and that it was a ?relief? to her. What does she mean by that? In what ways does Percy?s mom shape her view of the world and herself?

7. Why do you think Percy turns to Zoe to tell her what to do?

8. Several people in her life, including Raj and Zoe, tell Percy that she?s avoiding something with her actions. What is she avoiding? Why?

9. How do the men in DEEP CUTS view music made by men versus music made by women? Why doesn?t Joe initially give Percy her due as an artist? In what ways do you see this reflected in today?s music opinions?

10. How are the times (2000?2008) and the places (Berkeley, New York, San Francisco, etc.) integral to the story?

11. How does each character in the novel find their own ?voice?? How do they help each other to do so?

12. Throughout the novel, Percy struggles with an insecurity that might be called ?imposter syndrome? today. In her moments of triumph, what factors, both internal and external, help her push past this insecurity?

13. What changes within Percy once she hears the ?Bay Window? song performed live?

14. What did you think of Joe?s reaction to Percy working on a song with his former bandmate?

15. How did the ending make you feel? What might the future look like for Percy and Joe?

Author Bio

Holly Brickley studied English at UC Berkeley and received an MFA in fiction from Columbia University. Originally from Hope, British Columbia, she now lives in Portland, Oregon, with her husband and their two daughters. Her debut novel, DEEP CUTS, has been translated into 15 languages and is being developed into a film by A24 Studios.

Deep Cuts

by Holly Brickley

Publication Date: March 3, 2026
Genres: Fiction, Women's Fiction
Paperback: 288 pages
Publisher: Crown
ISBN-10: 0593799100
ISBN-13: 9780593799109