



THE NIGHT LAGOON

PLAYLIST BY JO MOREY

I started building the playlist for my literary suspense, *The Night Lagoon* not long after I began drafting. It set the mood for various scenes and characters, and it also kicked off my subconscious brain to do the emotional heavy lifting for me when I wasn't sat at my desk. I subjected my husband and kids to it on car rides for two years, and they quickly fell in love with it, and started asking for it on every journey.

The novel is set in Belize, and the playlist kicks off with the opening track, **Reem's 'Trips'** which, with its swaying palm trees, instantly evokes a paradise island escape... "Let's go" is the opening lyric and it sets up the whole soundtrack, and the novel. It relates to the first scene where we're easing into a tropical vacation that will fast go downhill ("Sip on some drinks that will make us delusional").

We ease into the jungle with the jazzy and soulful **'Green Garden' by Laura Mvula** and the hypnotic and dreamy guitar of **'Jungle' by Tash Sultana**, which is perhaps the defining song of the novel. I absolutely love its tantalizing loops and the mesmeric vocals. **'Black Catbird' by Belizean band, The Garifuna Collective** is another creature-filled teaser of a tune.

The Night Lagoon has a dual timeline, one of which follows our protagonist's father, Ellis as a botanist studying orchids in Belize in the 1980s. Regina Spektor's frantic and feverish **'Up the Mountain'** (which features in the novel when the main character, Laelia plays it on her father's record player) brings the two stories together. The lackadaisical **'Down in Belize' by Jerry Jeff Walker** with its "sunny days of fishing in the salty air" feels like the quintessential song for Ellis's story and when I was writing his chapters I would listen to this on repeat.

In the contemporary timeline, we have songs like **'Belize' by Danger Mouse and Black Thought featuring the late MF Doom**, and the menacing **'No Church in the Wild' by Jay-Z and Kanye West** which builds to the crescendo of a humiliating scene for Laelia at a cocaine-fueled party in the middle of the jungle.

Tinnitus is a key theme in the novel, and so finding an appropriate cacophony of sound was important to me on the playlist. Songs like **'Tinnitus' by Evil Ware, Antima** and **'True Loves' by Hooray for Earth** encapsulate this necessary screechy and discordant clashing. Similarly, finding tunes that reflect the complicated passion and control of a coercive relationship was key. Olivia Rodrigo's hauntingly beautiful **'Favorite Crime'** with its awesome lyric, "The things I did just so I could call you mine" was the track I would play over and over again to lock into these emotions. But also, the painful love and desire reflected in songs like **Friends' 'I'm His Girl'**, **'Feeling You' by Harrison Storm**, and the romantic nostalgia of **Amor Fati's 'Washed Out'** set me on my way. **James Bray's 'Hear Your Heart'** kills me every time I hear it with its raw vulnerability and reference to sound.

Several songs are featured in the novel itself. **'Come on Eileen'** occurs in two separate scenes (played in an early birthday party scene, and later, on the piano in an acoustic rendition). **The Eurythmics' 'Sweet Dreams'** also features a couple of times. Both are timeless 1980s tracks. An acoustic interpretation of **The Foo Fighters' 'My Hero'** is sung in a memorial scene. I heard a guitar version of this at a funeral not long before I wrote that scene, and it was the most moving thing I've ever heard in a church. I cannot listen to the **Gabrielle Aplin** version without the tears flowing down my cheeks. Similarly, **Beth Orton, Daughter, and Frazey Ford's** chillingly beautiful 'Firecracker' serve as tributes to memory and the past, which are key themes in the book.

I loved writing this novel, and I love how quickly I can reconnect with it again by clicking on the playlist. **Kick back with *The Night Lagoon* and a lime daiquiri (2 oz rum, 1 oz lime juice, tsp sugar syrup - shake with ice and strain) and listen yourself via Spotify: <https://shorturl.at/RP3eN>**

