

Book Club Questions for Quiet Tenant by Clémence Michallon

1. Let's talk about Emily and Rachel. What strengths and vulnerabilities do each of them possess, and how do they compare? Are there any parallels in their experiences that stood out to you?
2. As Rachel shares her rules for survival, such as "He always wins" and "He's always right, and you're always sorry," what do these reveal about her state of mind and Aidan's control over her? Have you encountered similar dynamics in real-life relationships?
3. Aidan seems to manipulate Emily and stoke her crush on him. How does he achieve this? What tactics does he use to maintain control over those around him?
4. The voices of Aidan's previous victims play a haunting role in the story. How did their perspectives affect your understanding of the narrative? What significance do the artifacts in the basement hold for Aidan?
5. Cecilia's worldview and coping mechanisms come into focus throughout the book. What are her beliefs about love, security, and gender dynamics? How do her experiences shape her perceptions?
6. Describe the evolving portrait of Caroline, Aidan's wife. How did your opinions of her change as the story progressed?
7. Aidan's wife's illness seems to trigger his obsession with control. Why do you think he developed a sadistic appetite? What could be the reasons behind his decision to spare Rachel for an extended period?
8. Rachel's narration style, with second-person pronouns and present-tense verbs, stands out. How does her storytelling technique affect your connection to her experiences? How does her narrative voice contrast with Emily's, Cecilia's, and the voices of Aidan's victims?
9. The novel contrasts scenes of mouthwatering food in Emily's restaurant with Rachel's descriptions of starvation. How does the book explore the themes of hunger and need, and what do these representations teach us about the characters' experiences?
10. As Rachel reflects on her relationship with her brother, what insights does her journey reveal about the human will to survive? How does her brother's influence shape her perception of life, and what lasting impact does he leave on her?
11. In Chapter 41, "The Woman Without a Number," Rachel vividly recounts her abduction. How does this scene provide us with a glimpse into the predator's mindset and the chilling moment of entrapping their victim? What emotions and techniques does it evoke?

12. When Rachel's true identity is unveiled, what does this reveal about her ability to maintain a sense of self during her captivity? How do her memories of family and past trauma shape her resilience? To what extent do our innate characteristics versus external influences define our identity?

13. "The Quiet Tenant" explores the theme of concealed evil within ordinary life. What traits and behaviors enabled Aidan to blend seamlessly into his communities, even garnering sympathy from a judge? Did the book alter your perception of the world's hidden complexities? Have you ever found yourself in a situation where appearances masked the truth, and you were at the mercy of someone's deceptive facade?

14. "Was The Quiet Tenant what you were expecting from the cover and blurb? Did you find it difficult or upsetting to read at any point?

15. Have you read many other books in the psychological thriller genre? If so, how does The Quiet Tenant compare to them? Can you identify any potential crossover into other genres?

16. What do you believe are the primary themes of the novel, and how are they intricately explored through the different perspectives?

17. The deliberate absence of Aidan's perspective is noticeable. Did you observe this while reading, and how does it contrast with other works in the thriller or true crime realm that do give voice to the antagonist?

18. How did Clémence Michallon's choice of second person narration for 'Rachel' impact your engagement with the story? Do you think it altered your perception of, or connection to, her character? Compare this narrative approach with Emily and Cecelia, who share their viewpoints through first person narration.

19. How did the alternating perspectives of Rachel, Cecelia, and Emily influence the book's tone and pace? Did you find yourself becoming more invested in certain characters due to their knowledge or lack thereof? How might the narrative dynamic have shifted with only one perspective?

20. Reflect on the book's epigraph: 'Alas! Who does not know that these gentle wolves Are of all such creatures the most dangerous?' (Charles Perrault, Little Red Riding Hood). Do you think the choice of a children's story reference was intentional, and if so, why? Who do you believe the author is alluding to with this quote?

21. "It's embedded in you, once you've been a girl..." (pages 26-27). What does this quote signify to you, and how does it relate to the bonds that form between Rachel, Cecelia, and Emily?

22. What are your thoughts on the ending of the novel? How do you envision the future for each of the women involved?