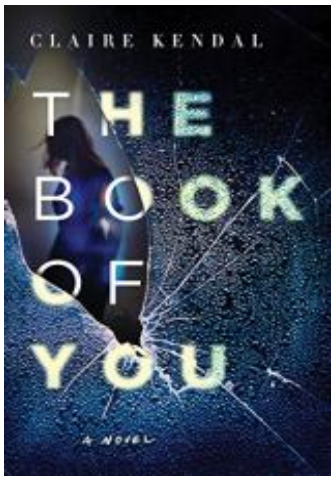
The Book of You

by Claire Kendal



About the Book

A mesmerizing tale of psychological suspense about a woman who must fight to escape an expert manipulator determined to possess her, Claire Kendal?s debut novel is a sophisticated and disturbing portrait of compulsion, control, and terror that will appeal to fans of BEFORE I GO TO SLEEP, THE SILENT WIFE, and INTO THE DARKEST CORNER.

His name is Rafe, and he is everywhere Clarissa turns. At the university where she works. Her favorite sewing shop. The train station. Outside her apartment. His messages choke her voice mail; his gifts litter her mailbox. Since that one regrettable night, his obsession with her has grown, becoming more terrifying with each passing day. And as Rafe has made clear, he will never let her go.

Clarissa?s only escape from this harrowing nightmare is inside a courtroom --- where she is a juror on a trial involving a victim whose experiences eerily parallel her own. There she finds some peace and even makes new friends, including an attractive widower named Robert, whose caring attentions make her feel desired and safe. But as a disturbingly violent crime unfolds in the courtroom, Clarissa realizes that to survive she must expose Rafe herself. Conceiving a plan, she begins collecting the evidence of Rafe?s madness to use against him --- a record of terror that will force her to relive every excruciating moment she desperately wants to forget. Proof that will reveal the twisted, macabre fairy tale that Rafe has spun around them?with an ending more horrifying than her darkest fears.

Masterfully constructed, filled with exquisite tension and a pervasive sense of menace, THE BOOK OF YOU explores the lines between love and compulsion, fantasy and reality, and offers a heart-stopping portrait of a woman determined to survive. Claire Kendal?s extraordinary debut will haunt readers long after it reaches its terrifying, breathtaking conclusion.

Discussion Guide

1. Consider Charles Perrault's folktale "Blue Beard," referenced before the novel begins. What tone does it set? What issues or questions does it introduce?

2. What is gained by the novel being written in large part as dated journal entries? What changes when the narrative shifts to a more objective point of view?

3. What are the effects of the journal being a second-person, direct address to Rafe? Do these change as the story progresses?

4. Rafe makes the sinister statement to Clarissa that "men need secret places." What might be healthier, more understandable reasons to have a secret place to visit or keep things?

5. One of the various taxi drivers, a woman, helps defend Clarissa. Where else in the novel are there examples of strong or courageous women?

6. What does the brutal parallel experience of Carlotta Lockyer and the trial add to the novel? What specifically does Clarissa seem to learn from it?

7. Is the adversarial legal system justified in treating a victim like Carlotta as it does?

8. In what ways might Rowena's ideas about her own body and the need to "limit [her] expressions" be relevant to the danger Clarissa is in?

9. In the restaurant with Rowena and Rafe Clarissa comments on the Deco paintings of nude women. Is such a public display, however artistic, an element of the threat Clarissa and other women face?

10. What do various mentions of poetry --- Keats, Yeats, etc. --- add to the novel? In particular, what does Clarissa?s reading of Anne Sexton's TRANSFORMATIONS add to our understanding?

11. What kind of man is Henry, Clarissa's ex-boyfriend? What do we learn about Clarissa through her many memories of him?

12. What's appealing to Clarissa about Robert, the fireman?

13. On more than one occasion Clarissa asks Robert to tell her about fire. What might she be interested in or fascinated by? Where else does fire or objects relevant to it appear in the novel?

14. Sewing is very important to Clarissa. Why? In what ways is it valuable to her? Are there ways the skill serves the novel metaphorically?

15. Of what significance is Clarissa's memory of being punched and robbed of her bag when she was just a teenager?

16. At one point Robert tells Clarissa, "anyone could do violence." Is this idea helpful or disturbing?

17. Is DC Hughes a good man? Is Robert? Are there men in the novel that deserve the title? What characteristics or actions make them so?

18. What do you make of Clarissa's decision regarding Robert at the end?

Author Bio

Claire Kendal was born in America and educated in England, where she has spent all her adult life. Her first novel, THE BOOK OF YOU, was translated into more than 20 languages. Claire teaches English literature and creative writing, and lives in England?s South West region with her family.

Critical Praise

?A gripping tale, well-written and cleverly plotted...[that] demonstrates vividly how destructive [stalking] can be.?

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