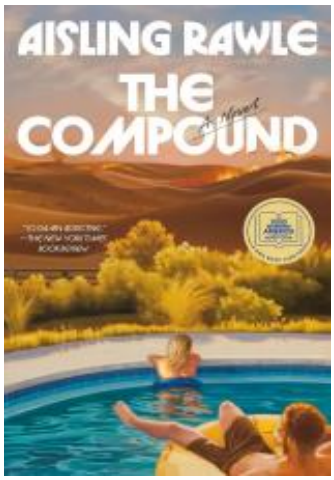
The Compound

by Aisling Rawle



About the Book

Nothing to lose. Everything to gain. Winner takes all.

Lily --- a bored, beautiful twentysomething --- wakes up on a remote desert compound, alongside 19 other contestants competing on a massively popular reality show. To win, she must outlast her housemates to stay in the Compound the longest, while competing in challenges for luxury rewards like champagne and lipstick, plus communal necessities to outfit their new home, like food, appliances and a front door.

Cameras are catching all her angles, good and bad, but Lily has no desire to leave. Why would she, when the world outside is falling apart? As the competition intensifies, intimacy between the players deepens, and it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between desire and desperation. When the unseen producers raise the stakes, forcing contestants into upsetting, even dangerous situations, the line between playing the game and surviving it begins to blur. If Lily makes it to the end, she?ll receive prizes beyond her wildest dreams. But what will she have to do to win?

Addictive and prescient, THE COMPOUND is an explosive debut from a major new voice in fiction and will linger in your mind long after the game ends.

Discussion Guide

1. How is power distributed within the compound? Do the contestants truly have agency, or are they being manipulated by unseen forces? How does the illusion of choice factor into the novel?

2. What role does the desert environment play in the story? How does the harsh, isolated setting affect the characters? behavior and the overall tone of the novel?

3. How does Lily evolve throughout the narrative? What qualities make her compelling or frustrating as a main character? Do you think she changes for better or worse by the end?

4. How do the rules and mechanics of the competition clash with the contestants? basic instincts --- survival, trust, empathy, etc.? What moments illustrate this tension most clearly?

5. What commentary is Aisling Rawle making about the ethics of reality television, materialism and the entertainment industry? How does the novel reflect real-life examples of exploitative media and consumerism?

6. Are there parallels between how the producers control the contestants and how society at large influences individuals? Who benefits from this control in the story?

7. How are gender roles portrayed in THE COMPOUND? Do contestants perform or resist stereotypes in their pursuit of rewards or survival?

8. How do characters define what it means to win the game? Is victory purely material, or is there a deeper, more personal sense of success for some?

9. What did you think of the ending? Who did you expect to win? Which contestant would you have rooted for as a viewer?

10. Would you ever consider entering a competition like the one in THE COMPOUND? Why or why not? What would your strategy be --- and how long do you think you?d last?

Author Bio

Aisling Rawle was born in 1998 and raised in County Leitrim in the West of Ireland. She now lives in Dublin. THE COMPOUND is her first book.

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