

Behind the Pages

BOOK CLUB KIT



After the Alarms



DIANA DIAS BRITO

A letter to your group

Dear Reader,

The doors of St. Gabriel close behind Eleanor and Julian, but the night follows them. A sentence they cannot take back. A silence they keep returning to. The weight of having been the person standing beside a bed when a decision had to be made.

What unsettles me most in this story is how gradually certainty can grow. A person feels understood. An explanation begins to sound reasonable. Then a familiar voice asks a question that makes the whole explanation tremble.

Perhaps someone at your table will understand Eleanor before they understand Julian. Perhaps another reader will hold on to a family's words long after everyone else has moved to the next scene. I would love for you to give those words their time. Let the room grow quiet if it needs to.

When your meeting ends, I hope you carry away a little more patience for a difficult question. Thank you for sitting with this story, and with everything its characters have yet to learn about themselves.

With gratitude,

Diana Dias Brito



Before the conversation

At St. Gabriel Medical Center, ICU nurse Eleanor Jones and intensivist Julian Hart work through nights where suffering, exhaustion and the pressure to act rarely let up. Their growing understanding of one another draws questions of judgement, trust and responsibility into increasingly uncomfortable territory.

Threads to follow: grief and moral judgement; compassion and certainty; professional authority; the language of records; patients and families; the cost of working without rest.

Meeting detail	Your group
Group / host	
Date and time	
Location / online link	
Edition being read	

A FLEXIBLE 60-MINUTE MEETING

Time	Conversation
0-10 min	Share one scene and your first response to it.
10-35 min	Choose four or five questions from pages 4-6.
35-50 min	Try the reading-group handover on page 7.
50-60 min	Share a passage and one question still open.



Exhaustion & moral distance

SPOILERS: FINISH THE BOOK BEFORE CONTINUING

01 THE ALARM AT 2:17

The novel opens with an alarm that no one immediately answers. How does that opening shape your reading of the unit? Where does familiarity become emotionally unsettling?

02 WHAT CLAIRE LEAVES BEHIND

How does Eleanor's memory of Claire shape the way she sees suffering? Which scene helped you understand that grief without resolving your judgement of Eleanor?

03 A CLEAN RECORD, A TROUBLING GAP

What do the pump and alarm timestamps in Daniel Mercer's chart reveal about the difference between a record and a complete account? How does uncertainty affect Julian's response?

04 UNDERSTANDING IS NOT AGREEMENT

Compare Julian's decision not to intubate a dying man who does not want machines with his conversations about Eleanor's actions. Where does the novel invite comparison, and where must the reader distinguish the situations?



Trust, authority & certainty

SPOILERS: FINISH THE BOOK BEFORE CONTINUING

05 THE RELIEF THAT FRIGHTENS THEM

Relief after a death recurs in the story. What different things might that feeling mean to Eleanor and Julian? When does their explanation of it become less convincing to you?

06 TASHA CHALLENGES THE PATTERN

Tasha tells Julian that he is beginning to see every prolonged intervention as fear. What does she notice that he struggles to recognise? Find a scene that supports or complicates her criticism.

07 THE UNIT DECIDES FIRST

Before the formal review, colleagues change how they behave around Julian. How does that loss of informal trust affect him? How do you read the difference between accountability and distancing?

08 A QUESTION FROM A SON

When a son asks Julian whether he would have stopped if the patient were his father, what does the question expose? Does Julian's silence change your interpretation of his authority?



Uncertainty & the ending

SPOILERS: FINISH THE BOOK BEFORE CONTINUING

09 WHOSE OBSERVATIONS COUNT?

Amelia's parents report responses that are documented but not initially confirmed. How does the later attention to those notes change the story's handling of uncertainty and the family's voice?

10 MAKING ROOM FOR POSSIBILITY

Compare Julian's growing certainty earlier in the novel with his response to Amelia after surgery. Which specific action shows a change, rather than simply a change in what he says?

11 THE UNANSWERED THREAD

The final chapter leaves gaps around a photograph, a phone call and an earlier patient. How do those unresolved details affect your reading of the ending? Which theory can you support, and what remains unknown?

12 AFTER THE FIGHT

By the end, Julian no longer needs every answer before taking the next step. How does that differ from his earlier confidence? What does the title suggest about what remains after an alarm stops?



The reading-group handover

SPOILERS: FINISH THE BOOK BEFORE CONTINUING

Choose one turning point in the novel. In pairs, prepare a handover for a reader who has reached that scene but knows nothing beyond it. Use the text to separate information available then from what you learn later.

What we pass on	Our reading / chapter or page
What has happened? Facts available at this point.	
What does each person believe? Eleanor, Julian, a colleague or a family member.	
Which voice is easiest to miss? Find a line that brings it back.	
What must stay open? A question the evidence cannot yet settle.	

Swap handovers. Another pair identifies one assumption presented as a fact. Revise it together. Then ask which later scene most changes the account you have just made.

ONE ASSUMPTION WE CORRECTED



The silence we heard

Choose a short passage in which silence matters: an unanswered question, a pause after a decision, or the absence of an alarm. Ask another reader what they hear in that same silence.

CHOSEN BY / CHAPTER OR PAGE

THE PASSAGE

WHAT THE SILENCE MEANT TO ME

WHAT ANOTHER READER HEARD IN IT



What happened at our table

DATE / GROUP

Reader	Rating / 5	One word after the discussion

THE DECISION THAT DIVIDED US

A VIEW THAT CHANGED DURING THE MEETING

OUR STRONGEST UNANSWERED QUESTION



Keep the conversation open

BEGIN WITH A MOMENT.

Ask each reader for one scene before discussing whether Eleanor or Julian is justified. Return to the passage when opinions move faster than evidence.

SEPARATE EMPATHY AND JUDGEMENT.

Try: “What helps us understand this character?” followed by “What does that understanding leave unresolved?” Sympathy need not settle the second question.

TRACK WHO KNOWS WHAT.

Use chapter references to distinguish what a character knows at the time from what readers learn later. Notice whose information is ignored or delayed.

RETURN TO THE PATIENT AND FAMILY.

When discussion centres entirely on staff, ask which patient or family voice is missing. Locate a passage that changes the balance of the conversation.

MAKE ROOM FOR A PAUSE.

Some scenes involve death and grief. Let readers pass on a question, and keep discussion centred on the story rather than asking for personal disclosures.

CLOSE WITHOUT FORCING CERTAINTY.

Ask everyone to finish: “The question I understand differently now is...” A useful discussion can end with greater care and less confidence in a simple answer.



After the last question

Thank you for spending time with Eleanor and Julian beyond the last page. Their story asks you to stay close to people whose choices can be difficult to understand, and sometimes harder to defend.

I hope your conversation has given you something to return to: a voice you heard differently, a pause you had overlooked, or a question you now ask with more care.

OTHER WORLDS TO STEP INTO

A Whisper Beyond Our Eyes

A romance of desire, vulnerability and the courage to be seen.

Where We Are Not Allowed

Book One of The Quiet Ruin Series. Memory, intimacy and control.

Entre Dois Mundos

Fiction in Portuguese. Available in paperback.

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