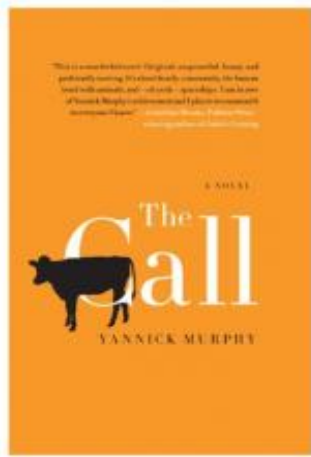


The Call

by Yannick Murphy



About the Book

The daily rhythm of a veterinarian's family in rural New England is shaken when a hunting accident leaves their eldest son in a coma. With the lives of his loved ones unhinged, the veterinarian struggles to maintain stability while searching for the man responsible. But in the midst of their great trial an unexpected visitor arrives, requesting a favor that will have profound consequences --- testing a loving father's patience, humor, and resolve and forcing husband and wife to come to terms with what "family" truly means.

The Call is a gift from one of the most talented and extraordinary voices in contemporary fiction --- a unique and heartfelt portrait of a family, poignant and rich in humor and imagination.

Discussion Guide

1. How does the format employed in the novel (CALL; ACTION; THOUGHTS ON DRIVE HOME; WHAT THE WIFE MADE FOR DINNER; etc.) affect your sense of the narrative? Are you aware of this element throughout the reading? Have you read any other works that feature a similar device? Why do you think an author would choose such a format for a novel?
2. In **The Call**, our sense of time passing is very much connected to the changing seasons. How would you characterize this "natural" approach to time? Is the way time passes for the family in **The Call** unique, or does this represent for you an accurate depiction of the way time goes by?
3. As evidenced by the author bio, elements of this story are autobiographical. Why do you think the wife is not a more prominent character, given her relationship to the author?
4. It's interesting that the main character, a veterinarian, chooses to hunt when his occupation is helping sick animals.

Why do you think this is? What is it about the human psyche that allows for those two activities to exist at the same time? Can you point to similar contradictions in your own life?

5. The father has many hobbies aside from his main work, including German and swimming. Did these activities inform your reading of him as a character? If so, how?

6. The mention of spaceships and the arrival of the spaceman introduce a supernatural element to the novel that contradicts the natural (seasons, animals). Do you see these as polar worlds, or as intersecting? Does the supernatural play a role in other elements of the book?

7. How does this book answer the question of what "family" really means? How do you see this family evolving over the course of the novel? Did the spaceman drastically change the family dynamic for you? Why or why not?

8. The life portrayed in **The Call** is certainly distinctive, but routine is also a part of the family's daily life, as it is for most of us. Can you give examples of "calls" in your own life? What rhythms can you identify?

Author Bio

Yannick Murphy is the author of the novels **THE CALL**, **SIGNED**, **MATA HARI**, **HERE THEY COME** and **THE SEA OF TREES**. Her story collections include **STORIES IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE** and **IN A BEAR'S EYE**. Her children's books include **THE COLD WATER WITCH**, **BABY POLAR** and **AHWOOOOOOOO!**.

She is the recipient of various awards including a Whiting Writer's Award, a National Endowment for the Arts award, a Chesterfield Screenwriting award and her story **IN A BEAR'S EYE** was recently published in the 2007 O. Henry Prize Stories.

Critical Praise

"This book delights with its discrete structuring... The pieces snap together in odd juxtaposition, surprising, making a picture more sturdy and dependable than the seamless whole. It has the power of good old Byzantine mosaic."

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