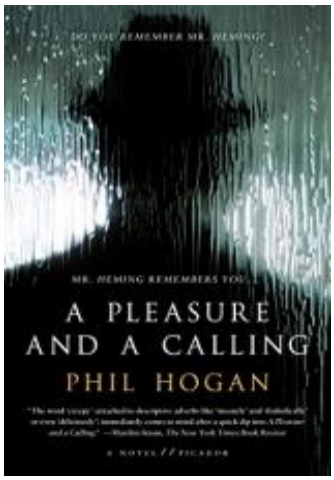
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A Pleasure and a Calling

by Phil Hogan



About the Book

Mr. Heming loves the leafy English village where he lives. As a local real estate agent, he knows every square inch of the town and sees himself as its protector, diligent in enforcing its quaint charm. Most people don't pay much attention to Mr. Heming; he is someone who fades easily into the background. But Mr. Heming pays attention to them. You see, he has the keys to their homes. In fact, he has the keys to every home he's ever sold in town. Over the years, he has kept them all so that he can observe his neighbors, not just on the street, but behind locked doors.

Mr. Heming considers himself a connoisseur of the private lives of others. He is witness to the minutiae of their daily lives, the objects they care about, the secrets they keep. As details emerge about a troubled childhood, Mr. Heming's disturbing hobby begins to form a clear pattern, and the reasons behind it come into focus. But when the quiet routine of the village is disrupted by strange occurrences, including a dead body found in the backyard of a client's home, Mr. Heming realizes it may only be a matter of time before his secrets are found out.

A brilliant portrait of one man's obsession, A PLEASURE AND A CALLING by Phil Hogan is a darkly funny and utterly transfixing tale that will hold you under its spell.

Discussion Guide

1. Did you think that Mr. Heming?s problems and decisions were believable or realistic?

2. Talk about the secondary characters. Were they important to the story? Did any stand out for you?

3. Do you think that the unsettling nature of this novel stems from the fact that the crimes and trickery take place in the home, so are more believable than an unfamiliar location?

4. Talk about the location. Was it important to the story? Was the author's description of the landscape/community a good one?

5. What events in the story stand out for you as memorable?

6. What was more important, the characters or the plot?

7. Did you ever sympathize with Mr. Heming?

8. Did anything make you laugh?

9. Do you feel Mr. Heming?s actions are justified revenge or just vindictive and malicious? Why?

10. Do you think A PLEASURE AND A CALLING is a fitting title for the content of this novel?

11. Critics have said that A PLEASURE AND A CALLING is reminiscent of Highsmith's THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY, do you agree?

12. What do you think about the female characters in this novel? Were they portrayed in a positive way?

13. The author used the structural device of flashbacks; how did this affect the story and your appreciation of the book?

14. Was the ending what you expected? Did you feel it tied up all the loose ends? Would you have changed anything?

15. Finally, what else struck you about the book as good or bad? Were you glad you read this book? Would you recommend it to a friend? Did this book make you want to read more work by this author?

Author Bio

Phil Hogan was born in a small town in northern England, and now lives in a small town in southern England. A journalist for 25 years, he has written for *The Observer* and *The Guardian*. He is married with four children.

Critical Praise

"I loved A PLEASURE AND A CALLING --- gripping, sinister, original and brilliant!"

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