



After Elias

Eddy Boudel Tan

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Eddy Boudel Tan's debut novel *After Elias*, whose climatic prologue is arresting, rides on a trajectory wherein every mystery solved begets a dozen more.

Coen Caraway descends upon Isla de Espejos several days before his groom-to-be is scheduled to arrive. There's a week to go until the happiest day of his life. But then a commercial plane, co-piloted by the love of his life, plunges into the Arctic Ocean. Coen responds to this inconceivable tragedy by, instead of cancelling the wedding festivities, re-christening them as a celebration of Elias's life.

But the ground shifts again, unleashing a tsunami of conjecture about what caused the horrific crash that resulted in the loss of 314 lives. One question arises out of the void: What could possibly be worse than losing the one person Coen knows better than he knows himself? The answer resides not just in how well Coen knew Elias, but also in how well he knows anyone or anything.

Coen's talent for reading people, describing places, and bringing relationships to life through dialogue renders him an ideal narrator. The crash becomes a pivot point for a pendulum that swings backwards and forwards in time and space. From the years before the crash that he spent in Canada, to fifteen days after the crash in Mexico, the inherent momentum of his story provides historical context and fleshes out other characters.

The epicenter of the deftly crafted novel *After Elias* dwells in Isla de Espejos (Mirror Island). In this paradise, truth and lies are reflected through the honesty of the truth seeker. Coen's journey eventually sheds its pretense of being anything other than every truth-seeker's journey through loss.

LINDA THORLAKSON (September / October 2020)

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