



Colorful

Eto Mori

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Counterpoint Press (Jul 20, 2021)

Softcover \$16.95 (224pp)

978-1-64009-442-0

Eto Mori's novel *Colorful* is a warm and compassionate tale about personal growth and second chances.

Prapura is an angel who informs the narrator, who has just died, that he has won a lottery. His prize is a “do-over”: he gets to return to Earth in someone else's body for further training and possible restoration to the cycle of rebirth. His job is to remember the grave mistake he made in his previous life, which he attempts to do while he's living in the body of Makoto, a fourteen-year-old boy who just died by suicide.

The narrator's struggles to adapt to Makoto's world result in narrative tension. He discovers his place in his new family and school, and, as Makoto, grapples with his brother's hostility, his anger at his parents' mistakes, his classmates' coldness, and his disillusionment with the girl he loves. Then he learns that the people around him are not all that they seem. As he discovers the truth about himself and others, the book's characters are revealed as deep and complex.

The novel's tone is often playful, as befits the lighthearted premise of the lottery system. Prapura is a comic figure, more awkward than majestic, and the narrator's adjustment to teenage life is often funny. Mori evokes school settings, especially the art classroom that is so important to Makoto, with lively, entertaining details. But her characters also struggle with depression, infidelity, betrayal, and suicide. Still, Mori maintains balance between her serious subject matter and her light tone well: such problems seem real and urgent, though the overall mood is hopeful.

A departed man has a second chance in the novel *Colorful*, working to develop compassion and self-knowledge.

REBECCA HUSSEY (July / August 2021)

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