

Eminence Rising

Thomas Owais Campbell

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In the supernatural thriller Eminence Rising, an unusual, gifted man fights to stop a serial killer.

In Thomas Owais Campbell's thriller *Eminence Rising*, a lawyer born with preternatural gifts works to solve a murder that's connected to his tumultuous past.

Eros was an intelligent child, albeit a bit misunderstood. He was able to perceive and manipulate energy, including the energies regulating human bodies; his intense emotions triggered fainting spells and worse in his classmates. Eventually, he withdrew from those around him. Indeed, his personality became near sociopathic.

But then Eros met Erin, a kindhearted girl who accepted him and appreciated his intelligence. He became protective of her; he even almost killed her bully. In turn, Erin kept him from becoming a villain. Instead, Eros became an attorney at the age of nineteen. But when Erin is murdered by a person on a killing spree, Eros's life becomes unstable once more.

Eros is a hero in continual turmoil, and his interactions with others reflect this. When he feels in control, his speech is a cyclical pattern of staccato connected words leading into an extended series of complicated phrases evocative of the floweriness of Victorian language. But when distressed, he's casual; when in conversation with a friend, he allows himself to joke. In the same way, he vacillates between an impulse to unleash his abilities, which could lead to evil, and his desire to harness his skills and protect others.

The narrative style also shifts—between italicized, clinical flashbacks and dense, sprawling paragraphs that cover Eros's investigation. This split is reflective of the book's two timelines as well: in part, it is concerned with detailing Eros's childhood experiences with Erin, through which he first learned to feel concern for other people; it also covers his young adulthood struggles to master his supernatural abilities, during which Erin's influence is still apparent. Indeed, Eros even utilizes his abilities for his clients during the legal process. However, this split results in split interest: Eros and Erin's childhood stories are engaging as they feature his early struggles to be moral and mature, while Eros's later quest to find Erin's murderer is less precise—diluted as he reflects on his past, even while pursuing clues.

Still, Eros—with the assistance of a friend, Xuan—draws nearer to finding Erin's killer as the book progresses. His investigation is resolved in an abbreviated, unsatisfying way, though, and the killer's motives are underexplained in the process. A potential continuation of his story is suggested via an email from a shadowy organization that covets Eros's talents, however.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (July 5, 2023)

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