

The Gales of Alexandria

Ehab Elgammal

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In the face of global political events, connected people are set on different paths of self-discovery in the thoughtful thriller The Gales of Alexandria.

Ehab Elgammel's political adventure novel *The Gales of Alexandria* zeroes in on humanity and love.

Omar is a professor living in Egypt. His son, Nasser, died after becoming involved with dangerous terrorist groups. Matt, a US intelligence agent, tasks Omar with decoding Nasser's journal, which is believed to contain the plans for an attack. As Omar goes through his son's journal, he reflects on political oppression around the world and how it led to his son's fundamentalist indoctrination.

The overarching mystery represented by Nasser's journal is exciting, but this comes second to the book's powerful stories of various, interconnected lives. It covers a wide expanse of time and geography from multiple perspectives, including those of Nasser's fiancée, sister, and close friends, whose distinctive voices align with central themes of faith, injustice, and family devotion. For example, the plight of Nasser's sister, Houda, is complex. She dotes upon her father and brother and looks forward to marrying and settling down. Even as she battles the loss of Nasser to fundamentalist faith, she considers wearing a niqab. Her desire to embrace "traditional" womanhood is juxtaposed with the values of independence and gender equality held by Dalia, Nasser's fiancée. No judgment is passed on any perspective; all are on different paths of self-discovery.

Each portion of the story is accompanied by its own metaphorical gale and exquisite title pages. While the prose is direct, people's conversations abound with rich questions about faith and justice. Houda explains to Omar why she wants to wear the niqab; Nasser explains to his friend, Adham, where his brokenness led him. In these and other instances, people express themselves with stunning eloquence.

The exciting pace is fed by political intrigue, including descriptions of military missions and cipher decoding. One portion of the novel takes place on the ground in New York City on the morning of 9/11 and is focused on firsthand experiences—a turning point that enhances the rumblings of unrest felt by all of the characters in the novel. Nasser's close friend Adham is there, and his fear, confusion, and helplessness are apparent.

As Omar reads further into his son's journal, plot points concerning war and espionage are brought more to the fore. Shown in flashback, Matt and Nasser are in Iraq; this is where the narrative pinpoints the exact cause of Nasser's death. With everyone else's storylines wrapped up, this moment of Omar's decoding work receives full attention. By its last page, *The Gales of Alexandria* has answered its central questions, delivering a cohesive reflection on the casualties of war.

In the thrilling novel *The Gales of Alexandria*, people's personal stories heighten the stakes of a political mystery.

ANNA KARNEDY (February 12, 2025)

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