



A Hologram for the King

By Dave Eggers



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Editorial Review

Review

“Mr. Eggers uses a new, pared down, Hemingwayesque voice to recount his story... he demonstrates in *Hologram* that he is master of this more old-fashioned approach as much as he was a pioneering innovator with *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*....[This] sad-funny-dreamlike story unfolds to become an allegory about the frustrations of middle-class America, about the woes unemployed workers and sidelined entrepreneurs have experienced in a newly globalized world in which jobs are being outsourced abroad.... A comic but deeply affecting tale about one man’s travails that also provides a bright, digital snapshot of our times.”

—Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*

"A spare but moving elegy for the American century."—*Publishers Weekly*

"Eggers can do fiction as well as he likes."—Carolyn Kellogg, *The Los Angeles Times*

"A potent, well-drawn portrait of one man’s discovery of where his personal and professional selves split and connect."—*Kirkus Reviews*

"An extraordinary work of timely and provocative themes...This novel reminds us that above all, Eggers is a writer of books, and a writer of the highest order....An outstanding achievement in Eggers's already impressive career, and an essential read."—Carmela Ciuraru, *The San Francisco Chronicle*

"Eggers understands the pressures of American downward-mobility, and in the protagonist of his novel, Alan Clay, has created an Everyman, a post-modern Willy Loman....The novel operates on a grand and global scale, but it also is intimate."—Elizabeth Taylor, *The Chicago Tribune*

"Fascinating...Although Godot may be *Hologram*'s philosophical source, Eggers is no Beckettian minimalist. The novel is paradoxically suspenseful, but it's also rich in character and in Eggers's evocative writing about place...*A Hologram for the King*, as far from home as it might seem, is an acute slice of American life."—Colette Bancroft, *Tampa Bay Times*

"Dave Eggers is a prince among men when it comes to writing deeply felt, socially conscious books that meld reportage with fiction. While *A Hologram for the King* is fiction...it’s a strike against the current state of global economic injustice."

—Elissa Schappell, *Vanity Fair*

"Completely engrossing."

—Daniel Roberts, *Fortune*

"A heartbreaking character study."—Nick DiMartino, *Shelf Awareness*

"Deft and darkly comic...Beautifully enlivened by oddball encounters and oddball characters, by stranger-in-a-strange-land episodes."—Steven Rea, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"Eggers’ spare prose is a pleasure, and *A Hologram for the King* proves to be a deft blend of surreal

adventure, absurd comedy and pointed observations.”—Georgia Rowe, *San Jose Mercury News*

“As the kingless days pass, Alan ventures from the tent and hotel into the rich, unsettling realities of the Kingdom, and Eggers ventures deeper into Alan, as well as into the question that has seemingly guided Eggers’ work for years: What does it mean to be an American in a world that has places like the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, or post-Katrina New Orleans?”—Alan Scherstuhl, *San Francisco Weekly*

“[*Hologram*] has at its center a sort of moral vision quest... Alan’s plight is endearing in its universality, even while being singularly his.”—Jonathan Messinger, *Time Out Chicago*

"Eggers has given us a work of fiction that works as a perfect commentary on this American decade."—Jason Diamond, *Vol.1 Brooklyn*

“The power of this thing sneaks up on you... While Alan cools his heels, he bonds with memorably drawn locals; has some adventures that illuminate the tragicomedy that is globalism; and gets us meditating on what appears to be the theme...: How can we all get over ourselves long enough to really, truly notice other people?” — Jeff Giles, *Entertainment Weekly*

“Eerie, suspenseful and tightly controlled... Exciting stuff.”—Cynthia Macdonald, *The Globe and Mail*

“Alan feels like Eggers’s most fully-realized character to date ... A sad and beautiful story.”—John Freeman, *The Boston Globe*

“[A] supremely readable parable of America in the global economy that is haunting, beautifully shaped and sad ... With ferocious energy and versatility, [Eggers] has been studying how the world is remaking America ... Eggers has developed an exceptional gift for opening up the lives of others so as to offer the story of globalism as it develops and, simultaneously, to unfold a much more archetypal tale of struggle and loneliness and drift.”—Pico Iyer, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Hits you with prose as stark and luminous as its Saudi Arabian setting...It should confirm Eggers's position among America's leading contemporary writers."—*Independent*

About the Author

Dave Eggers is the author of six previous books: *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, *How We Are Hungry*, *You Shall Know Our Velocity*, *What is the What*, *The Wild Things* and *Zeitoun*. *Zeitoun* was the winner of the American Book Award and the Dayton Literary Peace Prize and *What is the What* was a finalist for the 2006 National Book Critics Circle Award and won France's Prix Medici. Eggers is the founder and editor of McSweeney's, an independent publishing house based in San Francisco. A native of Chicago, he lives in Northern California with his wife and two children.

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I.

Alan Clay woke up in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. It was May 30, 2010. He had spent two days on planes to get there.

In Nairobi he had met a woman. They sat next to each other while they waited for their flights. She was tall, curvy, with tiny gold earrings. She had ruddy skin and a lilting voice. Alan liked her more than many of the people in his life, people he saw every day. She said she lived in upstate New York. Not that far away from his home in suburban Boston.

If he had courage he would have found a way to spend more time with her. But instead he got on his flight and he flew to Riyadh and then to Jeddah. A man picked him up at the airport and drove him to the Hilton.

With a click, Alan entered his room at the Hilton at 1:12 a.m. He quickly prepared to go to bed. He needed to sleep. He had to travel an hour north at seven for an eight o'clock arrival at the King Abdullah Economic City. There he and his team would set up a holographic teleconference system and would wait to present it to King Abdullah himself. If Abdullah was impressed, he would award the IT contract for the entire city to Reliant, and Alan's commission, in the mid-six figures, would fix everything that ailed him.

So he needed to feel rested. To feel prepared. But instead he had spent four hours in bed not sleeping.

He thought of his daughter, Kit, who was in college, a very good and expensive college. He did not have the money to pay her tuition for the fall. He could not pay her tuition because he had made a series of foolish decisions in his life. He had not planned well. He had not had courage when he needed it.

His decisions had been short sighted.

The decisions of his peers had been short sighted.

These decisions had been foolish and expedient.

But he hadn't known at the time that his decisions were short sighted, foolish or expedient. He and his peers did not know they were making decisions that would leave them, leave Alan, as he now was — virtually broke, nearly unemployed, the proprietor of a one-man consulting firm run out of his home office.

He was divorced from Kit's mother, Ruby. They had now been apart longer than they had been together. Ruby was an unholy pain in the ass who now lived in California and contributed nothing financially to Kit's finances. College is your thing, she told him. Be a man about it, she said.

Now Kit would not be in college in the fall. Alan had put his house on the market but it had not yet sold. Otherwise he was out of options. He owed money to many people, including \$18k to a pair of bicycle designers who had built him a prototype for a new bicycle he thought he could manufacture in the Boston area. For this he was called an idiot. He owed money to Jim Wong, who had loaned him \$45k to pay for materials and the first and last on a warehouse lease. He owed another \$65k or so to a half-dozen friends and would-be partners.

So he was broke. And when he realized he could not pay Kit's tuition, it was too late to apply for any other aid. Too late to transfer.

Was it a tragedy that a healthy young woman like Kit would take a semester off of college? No, it was not a tragedy. The long, tortured history of the world would take no notice of a missed semester of college for a smart and capable young woman like Kit. She would survive. It was no tragedy. Nothing like tragedy.

They said it was a tragedy what had happened to Charlie Fallon. Charlie Fallon froze to death in the lake near Alan's house. The lake next to Alan's house.

Alan was thinking of Charlie Fallon while not sleeping in the room at the Jeddah Hilton. Alan had seen Charlie step into the lake that day. Alan was driving away, on his way to the quarry. It had not seemed normal that a man like Charlie Fallon would be stepping into the shimmering black lake in September, but

neither was it extraordinary.

Charlie Fallon had been sending Alan pages from books. He had been doing this for two years. Charlie had discovered the Transcendentalists late in life and felt a kinship with them. He had seen that Brook Farm was not far from where he and Alan lived, and he thought it meant something. He traced his Boston ancestry, hoping to find a connection, but found none. Still, he sent Alan pages, with passages highlighted.

The workings of a privileged mind, Alan thought. Don't send me more of that shit, he told Charlie. But Charlie grinned and sent more.

So when Alan saw Charlie stepping into the lake at noon on a Saturday he saw it as a logical extension of the man's new passion for the land. He was only ankle-deep when Alan passed him that day.

II.

When Alan woke in the Jeddah Hilton he was already late. It was 8:15. He had fallen asleep just after five.

He was expected at the King Abdullah Economic City at eight. It was at least an hour away. After he showered and dressed and got a car to the site it would be ten. He would be two hours late on the first day of his assignment here. He was a fool. He was more a fool every year.

He tried Cayley's cellphone. She answered, her husky voice. In another lifetime, a different spin of the wheel wherein he was younger and she older and both of them stupid enough to attempt it, he and Cayley would have been something terrible.

—Hello Alan! It's beautiful here. Well, maybe not beautiful. But you're not here.

He explained. He did not lie. He could no longer muster the energy, the creativity required.

—Well, don't worry, she said, with a small laugh — that voice of hers implied the possibility of, celebrated the existence of a fantastic life of abiding sensuality — we're just setting up. But you'll have to get your own ride. Any of you know how Alan will get a ride out here?

She seemed to be yelling to the rest of the team. The space sounded cavernous. He pictured a dark and hollow place, three young people holding candles, waiting for him and his lantern.

—He can't rent a car, she said to them.

And now to him: —Can you rent a car, Alan?

—I'll figure it out, he said.

He called the lobby.

—Hello. Alan Clay here. What's your name?

He asked names. A habit Joe Trivole instilled back in the Fuller Brush days. Ask names, repeat names. You remember people's names, they remember you.

The clerk said his name was Edward.

—Edward?

—Yes sir. My name is Edward. Can I help you?

—Where are you from, Edward?

—Jakarta, Indonesia, sir.

—Ah, Jakarta, Alan said. Then realized he had nothing to say about Jakarta. He knew nothing about Jakarta.

—Edward, what do you think of me renting a car through the hotel?

—Do you have an international driver's license?

—No.

—Then no, I don't think you should do this.

Alan called the concierge. He explained he needed a driver to take him to the King Abdullah Economic City.

—This will take a few minutes, the concierge said. His accent was not Saudi. There were apparently no Saudis working at this Saudi hotel. Alan had assumed as much. There were few Saudis working anywhere, he'd been told. They imported their labor in all sectors. We must find someone appropriate to drive you, the concierge said.

—You can't just call a taxi?

—Not exactly, sir.

Alan's blood went hot, but this was a mess of his making. He thanked the man and hung up. He knew you couldn't just call a taxi in Jeddah or Riyadh — or so said the guidebooks, all of which were overwrought when it came to elucidating the dangers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to foreign travelers. The State Department had Saudi on the highest alert. Kidnapping was not unlikely. Alan might be sold to al-Qaeda, ransomed, transported across borders. But Alan had never felt in danger anywhere, and his assignments had taken him to Juarez in the nineties, Guatemala in the eighties.

??*

The phone rang.

—We have a driver for you. When would you like him?

—As soon as possible.

—He'll be here in twelve minutes.

Alan showered and shaved his mottled neck. He put on his undershirt, his white button-down, khakis,

loafers, tan socks. Just dress like an American businessman, he'd been told. There were the cautionary tales of overzealous Westerners wearing thobes, headdresses. Trying to blend in, making an effort. This effort was not appreciated.

While fixing the collar of his shirt, Alan felt the lump on his neck that he'd first discovered a month earlier. It was the size of a golf ball, protruding from his spine, feeling like cartilage. Some days he figured it was part of his spine, because what else could it be?

It could be a tumor.

There on his spine, a lump like that — it had to be invasive and deadly. Lately he'd been cloudy of thought and clumsy of gait, and it made a perfect and terrible sense that there was something growing there, eating away at him, sapping him of vitality, squeezing away all acuity and purpose.

He'd planned to see someone about it, but then had not. A doctor could not operate on something like that. Alan didn't want radiation, didn't want to go bald. No, the trick was to touch it occasionally, track attendant symptoms, touch it some more, then do nothing.

In twelve minutes Alan was ready.

He called Cayley.

—I'm leaving the hotel now.

—Good. We'll be all set up by the time you get here.

The team could get there without him, the team could set up without him. And so why was he there at all? The reasons were specious but had gotten him here. The first was that he was older than the other members of the team, all of them children, really, none beyond thirty. Second, Alan had once ...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jenna Springer:

Do you have favorite book? If you have, what is your favorite's book? Book is very important thing for us to understand everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim as well as goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people feel enjoy to spend their time and energy to read a book. They are really reading whatever they consider because their hobby is reading a book. How about the person who don't like looking at a book? Sometime, man or woman feel need book when they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you should have this A Hologram for the King.

Benjamin Martinez:

Information is provisions for people to get better life, information currently can get by anyone from everywhere. The information can be a information or any news even restricted. What people must be consider whenever those information which is from the former life are challenging to be find than now could

be taking seriously which one is suitable to believe or which one the particular resource are convinced. If you obtain the unstable resource then you have it as your main information there will be huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen throughout you if you take A Hologram for the King as the daily resource information.

Patrick Myers:

On this era which is the greater person or who has ability to do something more are more special than other. Do you want to become one among it? It is just simple way to have that. What you must do is just spending your time not much but quite enough to possess a look at some books. Among the books in the top collection in your reading list is A Hologram for the King. This book which is qualified as The Hungry Hills can get you closer in growing to be precious person. By looking upwards and review this publication you can get many advantages.

Robert Banks:

As a scholar exactly feel bored to help reading. If their teacher inquired them to go to the library as well as to make summary for some publication, they are complained. Just minor students that has reading's heart and soul or real their hobby. They just do what the teacher want, like asked to go to the library. They go to there but nothing reading very seriously. Any students feel that reading is not important, boring as well as can't see colorful pics on there. Yeah, it is to become complicated. Book is very important for you. As we know that on this age, many ways to get whatever we would like. Likewise word says, ways to reach Chinese's country. So , this A Hologram for the King can make you truly feel more interested to read.

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