



Among the Dead: A Novel

By Michael Tolkin



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Michael Tolkin's acclaimed second novel, *Among the Dead*, is an arresting examination of public and private grief in the wake of unspeakable disaster, a slow-burning tour de force of psychological fiction. When Frank Gale writes a passionate letter to his wife confessing an affair, he hopes all can be forgiven on the warm beaches of Mexico. But the farewell kiss of his girlfriend causes him to miss the flight carrying his wife and daughter, and when he learns that their plane has crashed in a crowded city, his life changes in the course of seconds. Soon Frank's letter is discovered among the dead, and suddenly one man's struggle to comprehend his loss and grief becomes consumed in a media circus of legal drama, family quarrels, and public scandal.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The author/screenwriter of *The Player* scores again in this drolly morbid novel, a gleefully vicious combination of satire and propulsive storytelling. The night before L.A. businessman Frank Gale is to take his wife, Anna, and daughter to Mexico, he writes a letter he plans to give Anna on their arrival, confessing an affair and asking for her understanding. Next day, he breaks up with his mistress at lunch but misses the flight. Frank calls Anna from his limo phone, promising to follow her on the next plane out. She tells him she has found the letter in his suitcase, but boards the aircraft anyway; the plane crashes, killing everyone. *Among the Dead* is, on one hand, the excruciatingly detailed story of the aftermath of such an airline disaster--the claiming of bodies, the legal maneuvering with the airline, the media sensationalism. On the other hand, it is the chronicle of Frank's private anguish, in an interior monologue just absurd enough to be believable. Tolkin has carefully plotted Frank's unravelling so his descent is absolute, the kind of breakdown that is impossible to look away from, where the worst you can imagine happens, and proves horrible and uproarious at the same time. Uniquely incompetent despite his sharp eye, Gale is both repugnant and compellingly human, a creation worthy of J. P. Donleavy. Author tour.

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From Library Journal

In this novel, which could be titled *Worst-Case Scenario*, we follow the thoughts and actions of Frank Gale, whose wife and daughter are killed in the crash of a flight he was supposed to be on as well. Gale misses the flight because he is having a final lunch with his mistress, before ending the affair. He had intended to give his marriage a fresh start on vacation. Tolkin, author of *The Player* (LJ 6/15/88), which was made into a successful movie in 1992, takes us inside the mind of Gale as he tortures himself, imagining every possible sequence of events that might have happened. Sometimes the narrative's primary form of punctuation is the question mark. But despite the unpleasantness of the subject matter, this is a highly readable novel, one that is difficult to put down and that succeeds on the highest level as a dark comedy of morals. Previewed in *Prepub Alert*, LJ 12/92.

- *David Dodd, Benicia P.L., Cal.*

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From Kirkus Reviews

Red-hot novelist/screenwriter Tolkin comes up with an equally affectless twin to Griffin Mill of *The Player* (1988): music-store owner Frank Gale, whose plan to rekindle his marriage by breaking off with his mistress runs into the kind of cosmic bad luck only a master of black comedy could invent. The night before he's to fly to Acapulco with wife Anna, Frank writes a letter confessing his sins and naming insurance-assistant Mary Sifka as his lover. His plan: to hand Anna the confession after they've been in Mexico for a few days and he's made nice to her. But when a farewell lunch with Mary keeps him from making his flight, Anna finds the letter in his luggage, tells him off by phone, then boards the plane--only to die in a "massive fireball" when a disgruntled former employee shoots up the plane and it comes down on a San Diego street. For two days Frank floats in an aura of martyrdom as the airline employees, worried that he'll join a lawsuit against them, ply him with room service and grief-counseling as he's constructing elaborate what-if scenarios based on Anna's not finding that letter and wondering why his brother and partner Lowell--who's fighting to take charge of the lawsuit--has always been so much more effective than he has, what advantage he can get out of widely being thought dead (his name was published on the passenger list), and whether his bereavement will give him more opportunities to hit on women. Entranced by the need to make his calamity more real, he wanders back to San Diego, sneaks onto the crash site, and is arrested rifling his own luggage.

But the crowning irony is still to come.... A high comedy made even darker than *The Player* by Tolkin's eye for the cold-water detail that strips Frank naked--from the Ford Explorer he imagines Lowell to be crying in to his description of the standard configuration of a 737. -- Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Daniel Rogers:

Do you have favorite book? For those who have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing for us to learn everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim or maybe goal; it means that publication has different type. Some people feel enjoy to spend their time and energy to read a book. They are reading whatever they acquire because their hobby is definitely reading a book. Think about the person who don't like studying a book? Sometime, man feel need book when they found difficult problem or exercise. Well, probably you should have this *Among the Dead: A Novel*.

Charlie Hartman:

Reading can called imagination hangout, why? Because when you find yourself reading a book specifically book entitled *Among the Dead: A Novel* your brain will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each and every aspect that maybe unidentified for but surely will end up your mind friends. Imaging each word written in a guide then become one contact form conclusion and explanation in which maybe you never get before. The *Among the Dead: A Novel* giving you yet another experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful data for your better life in this particular era. So now let us demonstrate the relaxing pattern is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished studying it, like winning a. Do you want to try this extraordinary investing spare time activity?

Michael Ogden:

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