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Book Critic Alan Cheuse Pens Long-Awaited Epic Novel

"I first encountered Curtis's photographs of the American Indian while I was in college—in fact I remember the first time I saw them. The Brattle Theater in Cambridge, Mass., a great old rerun house, mounted an exhibition of them in the lobby in the late nineteen fifties. That was the first time I saw Curtis's work. I have long forgotten what movie I saw that evening in Cambridge, but I never forgot the faces and tones and settings of those portraits.

Curtis's struggle to help open the eyes of all Americans to the power, dignity, and beauty of the old Indian ways, in the face of family difficulties, financial upsets and psychological turmoil, serves as the focus of the novel. An authentic American hero of his time—and ours."

— Alan Cheuse

To Catch the Lightning (October 21, 2008; 978-1-4022-1404-2; \$25.95 U.S./ \$28.99 CAN; Hardcover; Fiction) is the story of a forgotten America, a bittersweet sepia-toned exploration of the intertwined plights of Edward Curtis, a real-life frontier photographer, and the American Indian. This engrossing novel is based on the true story of Curtis's lifelong passion: to photograph and document every Indian tribe on the continent. Following Curtis's sojourn through the Western states, this stirring saga reveals the double-edged sword that is the frontier spirit, telling a remarkable tale of a quest made all the more powerful by its historical roots.

Bankrolled by J.P. Morgan, befriended by Teddy Roosevelt, and a towering figure in his own right, Curtis sees his epic work consume his life. Cheuse skillfully portrays the mounting tension as Curtis's quest to keep the Native American alive threatens to destroy his own family. It's a story of the disintegration of the Indian people, of a massacre, seen through the eyes of one white man, and how the real personal cost of his determination to make a difference, to somehow save them, could mean the end of his family as he knows it.

With the ear of a poet and the eye of a historian, Cheuse has crafted a masterwork of American historical fiction. Lyrical, beautifully written, and impressively researched, ***To Catch the Lightning*** is a novel of the American spirit, sure to engage and enlighten.

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