



Preparing the Ghost: An Essay Concerning the Giant Squid and Its First Photographer

Matthew Gavin Frank

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A Shelf Awareness Best Book of 2014

Memory, mythology, and obsession collide in this strikingly original and enigmatic account of the first man to photograph a giant squid.

Moses Harvey was the eccentric Newfoundland reverend and amateur naturalist who first photographed the near-mythic giant squid in 1874, draping it over a shower curtain rod to display its magnitude. In *Preparing the Ghost*, what begins as Moses's story becomes much more, as fellow squid-enthusiast Matthew Gavin Frank boldly winds his narrative tentacles around history, creative nonfiction, science, memoir, and meditations about the interrelated nature of them all. In a full-hearted, lyrical style reminiscent of Geoff Dyer, Frank weaves in playful forays about his research trip to Moses's Newfoundland home, Frank's own childhood and family history, and a catalog of bizarre facts and lists that recall Melville's story of obsession with another deep-sea dwelling leviathan. Though Frank is armed with impressive research, what he can't know about Harvey he fictionalizes, quite explicitly, as a way of both illuminating the scene and exploring his central theme: the big, beautiful human impulse to obsess. 15 drawings

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