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

Matthew Gavin Frank

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Memory, mythology, and obsession collide in this “slyly charming” (*New York Times Book Review*) account of the giant squid.

In 1874, Moses Harvey—eccentric Newfoundland reverend and amateur naturalist—was the first person to photograph the near-mythic giant squid, draping it over his shower curtain rod to display its magnitude. In *Preparing the Ghost*, what begins as Harvey’s story becomes spectacularly “slippery and many-armed” (NewYorker.com) as Matthew Gavin Frank winds his narrative tentacles around history, creative nonfiction, science, memoir, and meditations about the interrelated nature of them all. In his full-hearted, lyrical style, Frank weaves in playful forays about his trip to Harvey’s Newfoundland home, his own childhood and family history, and a catalog of peculiar facts that recall Melville ’s story of obsession with another deep-sea dwelling leviathan. “Totally original and haunting” (*Flavorwire*), *Preparing the Ghost* is a delightfully unpredictable inquiry into the big, beautiful human impulse to obsess.

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