



The Extinction Club: A Tale of Deer, Lost Books, and a Rather Fine Canary Yellow Sweater

Robert Twigger

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For one thousand years, the Milu -- an exotic species of deer with the neck of a camel, horns of a stag, feet of a cow, and tail of a donkey -- existed only in the Chinese emperor's private park in Beijing. But in the nineteenth century, a Basque missionary risked his life to obtain a specimen, then embalmed it and sent it to Paris.

The preserved remains caused quite a stir, and soon every major nation in Europe possessed a Milu. But most died quickly, and due to war -- most notably the Boxer Rebellion -- they became extinct in their native habitat as well. Yet the eleventh duke of Bedford was devoted to preserving the Milu. Under his care at Woburn Abbey, a herd flourished, and nearly a century later, in 1986, part of the British herd was returned to China.

In his fascinating tale, Robert Twigger poignantly recounts the story of this strange and rare animal while providing a riveting meditation on evolution, truth-telling, extinction, myth-making, and survival.

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