



The Last Heathen: Encounters with Ghosts and Ancestors in Melanesia

Charles Montgomery

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In 1892, the Bishop of Tasmania set sail for Melanesia with the intent of rescuing islanders from lives of fear, black magic and cannibalism. Over 100 years later, his great grandson, **Charles Montgomery**, followed the bishop's route through the South Pacific, seeking out the spirits and myths his missionary forebear had sought to destroy.

Montgomery explored remote shores where gospel and empire never took hold. He rubbed shoulders with barefoot preachers, witch doctors and gun-toting rebels, only to discover that the pagan spirits were more tenacious than the missionaries had imagined. Melanesians had stirred Jesus and Mary into an already spicy broth of ancestor worship, ghosts, shark gods and magic. Through confrontations with a bizarre cast of characters -- the randy ethnographer, the soft-talking assassin, the leper prophet -- the journey becomes a debate on the nature of magic, myth and faith, and a metaphor for the transforming power of story.

The Last Heathen marks the debut of an exciting young writer who charts his adventures with passion, insight and grace.



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