



The Lost Island: Alone Among the Fruitful and Multiplying

Alfred van Cleef

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A striking narrative of a man's inadvertent discovery of the life force that persists in the most secluded of places--and isolated of beings

After the death of his father, Alfred Van Cleef--the last of a family of Dutch Jews--learns that he is unable to have children. Seeking the remotest spot on the planet, far from the gleefully reproducing couples of Amsterdam, Van Cleef picks a forbidding island in the Indian Ocean, a bizarrely bureaucratic French weather station, two thousand miles from the nearest continent.

Finally entrenched on this lonely, wind-battered rock--following an eight-year odyssey to obtain a visiting permit and three weeks' rough passage--Van Cleef anticipates a total escape from the sexual frenzy of humanity: the island, ironically named Amsterdam, is inhabited solely by a group of thirty-six men. Yet this stark environment turns out to house a riotously mating society of albatrosses, sea elephants, fur seals--and especially bdelloid rotifers, an all-female species able to reproduce without males. It is in this unlikely setting that Van Cleef is forced to reckon with his most profound existential concerns.

With wry humor and probing insight, Van Cleef weaves geography, natural history, and biology into *The Lost Island*, an original narrative of a lost island and a man, finally found.

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