



Bright and Distant Shores: A Novel

Dominic Smith

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Selected for Kirkus Reviews "Best Books of 2011"

From the award-winning author of *The Mercury Visions of Louis Daguerre* and *The Beautiful*

***Miscellaneous* comes a sweeping historical novel set amid the skyscrapers of 1890s Chicago and the far-flung islands of the South Pacific.**

In the waning years of the nineteenth century there was a hunger for tribal artifacts, spawning collecting voyages from museums and collectors around the globe. In 1897, one such collector, a Chicago insurance magnate, sponsors an expedition into the South Seas to commemorate the completion of his company's new skyscraper--the world's tallest building. The ship is to bring back an array of Melanesian weaponry and handicrafts, but also several natives related by blood.

Caught up in this scheme are two orphans--Owen Graves, an itinerant trader from Chicago's South Side who has recently proposed to the girl he must leave behind, and Argus Niu, a mission houseboy in the New Hebrides who longs to be reunited with his sister. At the cusp of the twentieth century, the expedition forces a collision course between the tribal and the civilized, between two young men plagued by their respective and haunting pasts.

An epic and ambitious story that brings to mind E. L. Doctorow, with echoes of Melville and Robert Louis Stevenson, *Bright and Distant Shores* is a wondrous achievement by a writer known for creating compelling fiction from the fabric of history.

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