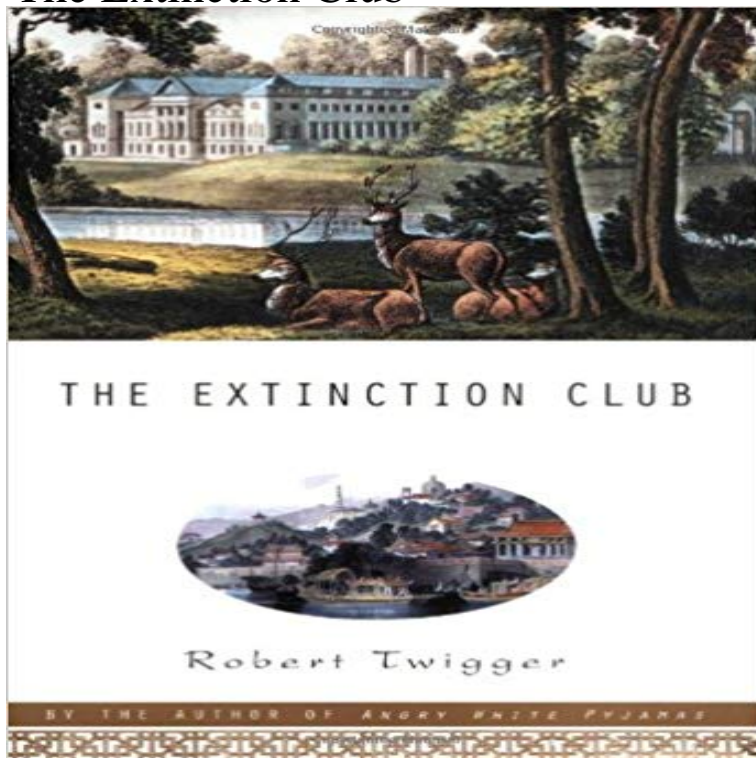


The Extinction Club



From Robert Twigger, the internationally acclaimed author of *Angry White Pyjamas* and *Big Snake*, comes *The Extinction Club*, the brilliant, peculiar, and complex tale of the Milu. For one thousand years, the Milu, an exotic species of deer with the neck of a camel, the horns of a stag, the feet of a cow, and the tail of a donkey, existed only in the Chinese emperors private park in Beijing. But in the second half of the nineteenth century a Basque missionary, Pere David, became the first Westerner ever to see a Milu. Transfixed by the strange beast, he risked his life to obtain a specimen, then embalmed it and sent it to Paris in a diplomatic bag. The preserved remains caused quite a stir across Europe, and zoologists clamored to get hold of a live animal. Within a very short time, every major nation in Europe possessed a Milu. But most failed to thrive and died quickly in their new surroundings, and due to war -- most notably the Boxer Rebellion -- they became extinct in their native habitat as well. Yet the exotic deer were able to survive in one place -- Bedfordshire, England -- due to the nurturing of a devoted caretaker, the 11th Duke of Bedford, who kept a herd at Woburn Abbey. This labor and persistence paid off nearly a century later in 1986, when a part of the British herd was returned to China. And to this day the very rich hunt the Milu -- for a steep price -- in wild game reserves throughout the world, but most notably in Texas. In his fascinating tale of nature, civilization, and history, Robert Twigger poignantly recounts the story of this strange and rare animal while providing a riveting meditation on a number of human obsessions -- evolution, truth-telling, extinction, myth-making, and survival.

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