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Fredy Neptune: A Novel In Verse



Synopsis

A riveting, beautiful novel in verse by Australia's greatest contemporary poet, winner of the 1996 T. S. Eliot Prize. I never learned the old top ropes, I was always in steam. Less capstan, less climbing, more re-stowing cargo. Which could be hard and slow as farming- but to say Why this is Valparaiso! Or: I'm in Singapore and know my way about takes a long time to get stale.-from Book I, "The Middle Sea" When German-Australian sailor Friedrich "Fredy" Boettcher is shanghaied aboard a German Navy battleship at the outbreak of World War I, the sight of frenzied mobs burning Armenian women to death in Turkey causes him, through moral shock, to lose his sense of touch. This mysterious disability, which he knows he must hide, is both protection and curse, as he orbits the high horror and low humor of a catastrophic age. Told in a blue-collar English that regains freshness by eschewing the mind-set of literary language, Fredy's picaresque life-as, perhaps, the only Nordic Superman ever-is deep-dyed in layers of irony and attains a mind-inverting resolution.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an odd book; even down to its dimensions. It's taller than average...a good thing if you plan to travel with it. I dunno, some things just carry easier. As for the content, all I can say is it sometimes carries the same tune as Bukowski in his rare "sensitive" moments, when the ugly monster disappears and is replaced by something far more palatable. I bought the book at a bookstore blowout, when all that was left were Road Atlas's, How To books and posters of various 'has beens' and 'what-nots'. There it was, completely ignored on the shelf, and probably because as the title suggests, it's completely in verse. It's not in rhyming verse though, which is a plus for those of us who are annoyed by musicals and slant rhymes. One bit of irony is that while the book is about a

man who has lost his ability to "feel", both literally and figuratively in some cases, it is extremely sensuous and is able to condense into one verse what a regular novel would take pages to resolve. The book is dark, gritty and you can smell the stink of the various docks and ship holds and whores our hero meets on his travels. Hell, I'm raving about it and I haven't even finished it yet. I take it with me while I'm sucking down coffee, and there are various markings and underlinings and cheap tea stains all over it; I suspect that I will destroy this book before I reach the final page, which is fine, because I really don't want it to end, which sounds rather childish, even sophomoric. Whatever. I'll be searching for more of Murray's work. I would give you a verse but it wouldn't do the whole any justice whatsoever. It sings like "The Man Without Qualities", and in fact has a lot in common with that book. They just "feel" the same.

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