



A Song for Satawal

Kenneth Brower

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A SONG FOR SATAWAL is a lyrical portrait of science and sorcery in Micronesia, outrigger canoes steered by starlight, monitor lizards, tattooed grandmothers, Yapese crazies, and ghosts. The cluster of tiny islands in the vast Pacific emptiness southeast of Japan is an area at once isolated and accessible. Left virtually untouched for centuries, and then dominated successively by the Spanish, Germans, Japanese, and Americans, these islands have become vulnerable to the "progress" that can be fatal to primitive cultures. In A SONG FOR SATAWAL Kenneth Brower transports us to this enchanting and fragile world. We meet Margie Falanruw, who teaches the children of Yap about the wonders of their island; Lino Olopai, who learns how to pilot a canoe over thousands of miles of ocean by relying only on chants that encode information about currents and star courses; and Kathering Kesolei, who collects the oral folklore of Palau. Through their efforts, these three truly remarkable people are preserving a part of their islands' history and culture that are in danger of perishing.

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