



The Lampshade: A Holocaust Detective Story from Buchenwald to New Orleans

Mark Jacobson

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Few growing up in the aftermath of World War II will ever forget the horrifying reports that Nazi concentration camp doctors had removed the skin of prisoners to make common, everyday lampshades. In *The Lampshade*, bestselling journalist Mark Jacobson tells the story of how he came into possession of one of these awful objects, and of his search to establish the origin, and larger meaning, of what can only be described as an icon of terror.

From Hurricane Katrina–ravaged New Orleans to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem to the Buchenwald concentration camp to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, almost everything Jacobson uncovers about the lampshade is contradictory, mysterious, shot through with legend and specious information. Through interviews with forensic experts, famous Holocaust scholars (and deniers), Buchenwald survivors and liberators, and New Orleans thieves and cops, Jacobson gradually comes to see the lampshade as a ghostly illuminator of his own existential status as a Jew, and to understand exactly what that means in the context of human responsibility. One question looms as his search progresses: what to do with the lampshade—this unsettling thing that used to be someone?

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