



Africa in My Blood: An Autobiography in Letters

Jane Goodall

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AFRICA IN MY BLOOD is an extraordinary self-portrait in letters of Jane Goodall's early years, from childhood to the publication of *IN THE SHADOW OF MAN*, revealing this remarkable woman more vividly than anything published before, by her or about her. We see her at eleven founding the Alligator Society ("You have to be able to recognize 10 birds, 10 dogs, 10 trees and 5 butterflies OR moths"); at seventeen developing a crush on the local minister ("He has a beautiful long nose and he loves dogs"); at twenty punting at Oxford -- and falling out of the boat ("And I stood in the water -- up to my chest -- and roared and roared with laughter"); at twenty-two working at a film company and saving for a trip to Africa.

At twenty-three, she took that trip, to "the Africa I have always longed for, always felt stirring in my blood." In Kenya's White Highlands, she rode horses, danced, and developed her observational skills on both animals and men ("He is very handsome & Clo & I sat in the car admiring his bottom & feeling sorry for him because he was getting filthy & oily"). The men returned her interest ("What the devil am I to do with all these middle aged married men. They hang in multitudinous garlands from every limb and neck I've got").

The turning point of her life came when a friend told her, "If you are interested in animals, you must meet Louis Leakey." And when she did meet the legendary anthropologist, he saw in this young secretarial school graduate the ideal candidate to undertake a revolutionary study of chimpanzees. He sent her to the Gombe Stream Chimpanzee Reserve on Lake Tanganyika, where she immersed herself in the lives of wild animals as no one had ever done before. Goodall has told this story in other books, but never so immediately and emotionally. She describes a chimp rain dance ("Every so often their wild calls rang out above the thunder. Primitive hairy men, huge and black on the skyline, flinging themselves across the ground in their primaeval display of strength and power . . . Can you begin to imagine how I felt? The only human ever to have witnessed such a display in all its primitive, fantastic wonder?"); a female chimp mating with five males early in the morning ("Hello -- No 5 is queuing, down on the bottom branch. 'Thanks Big Boy, but don't hang around.' No 5 leaps out of the way as No 4 charges down . . . Soon over & off he goes. Now perhaps a girl can have a bite of breakfast"); a colobus monkey clasping its dead baby ("She kept trying to groom its poor little coat. Oh, it was heart rending. I'm only so glad I've never seen a chimp with a dead baby. I just couldn't bear it").

AFRICA IN MY BLOOD is a dramatic, moving, funny, and important book that tells the story of how an English girl who loved animals became one of the greatest scientists of the twentieth century.

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