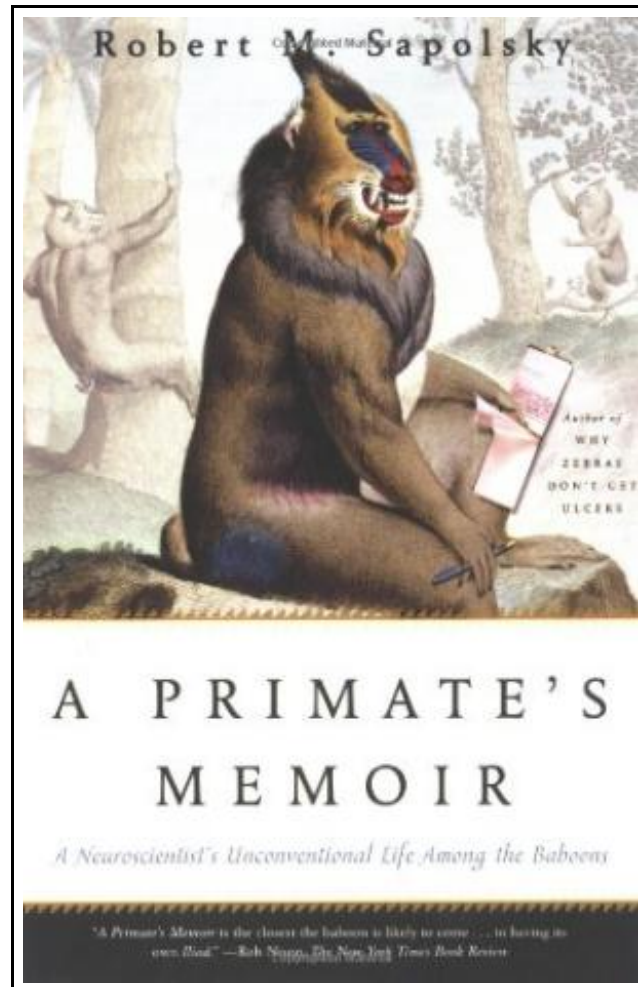


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(Johathan Haag)*

A PRIMATE'S MEMOIR: A NEUROSCIENTIST'S UNCONVENTIONAL LIFE AMONG THE BABOONS

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Touchstone. 1 Paperback(s), 2001. soft. Book Condition: New. "I had never planned to become a savanna baboon when I grew up; instead, I had always assumed I would become a mountain gorilla," writes primatologist Robert Sapolsky in this witty and riveting chronicle of a scientist's coming-of-age with a troop of rambunctious baboons in Kenya. Also the author of *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers* and the recipient of a MacArthur Genius Grant, Sapolsky writes of his 21 years among the baboons, interweaving serious scientific observations with descriptions of culinary atrocities, gunpoint encounters, and a surreal kidnapping, while witnessing the encroachment of the tourist mentality on the remotest vestiges of unspoiled Africa. "Few would relish a job requiring proficiency with a blowgun as well as a willingness to put up with parching heat, low pay and copious amounts of baboon shit. But for Sapolsky, a Stanford professor and MacArthur grant recipient, it was literally a dream come true. As a boy in New York City, he'd wanted to live in one of the African dioramas at the Museum of Natural History. One week after graduating from Harvard in the mid-1970s, he got his chance: he went to Kenya to study social behavior in baboons. Hilariously unprepared for the challenges of living in the bush, the naive grad student learned to deal with supply and transportation snafus, army ants and giant cockroaches, safari tourists, dinners of canned spaghetti coated with a mixture of sugar and rancid camel's milk, and surreal government bureaucracies. He developed great fondness for 'his' baboons, whose behavior seemed uncannily like that of a bunch of quarrelsome human adolescents, and discovered that their interactions didn't necessarily conform to accepted theories. While Sapolsky's primate observations are always fascinating, his thoughts on Africa and Africans are even more compelling. As funny and...



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