



Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors: Earth Before Humans

ANN DRUYAN' 'CARL SAGAN

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Cosmos, the widely acclaimed book and television series by Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan, was about where we are in the vastness of space and time. Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors is an exploration of who we are. How were we shaped by life's adventure on this planet, by a mysterious past that we are only just beginning to piece together? "We humans are like a newborn baby left on a doorstep," they write, "with no note explaining who it is, where it came from, what hereditary cargo of attributes and disabilities it might be carrying, or who its antecedents might be." This book is one version of the orphan's file. Sagan and Druyan take us back to the birth of the Sun and its planets and the first stirrings of life; to the origins of traits central to our current predicament: sex and violence, love and altruism, hierarchy, consciousness, language, technology, and morality. Many thoughtful people fear that our problems have become too big for us, that we are for reasons at the heart of human nature unable to deal with them, that we have lost our way. How did we get into this mess? How can we get out? Why are we so quick to mistrust those different from ourselves, so given to unquestioning obedience to authority? What is male and female? Why are we so anxious to distance ourselves from the other animals? What obligations, if any, do we owe to them? Is there something within us that condemns us to selfishness and violence? When Sagan and Druyan first undertook this exploration it was "almost with a sense of dread. We found instead reason for hope." This book presents important ideas with the clarity for which the authors are famous. Daring, passionate, with a breathtaking sweep, Shadows is a quest for a new perspective - one that integrates the insights of science into a vision of where we came from, who we are, and what our fate might be.



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