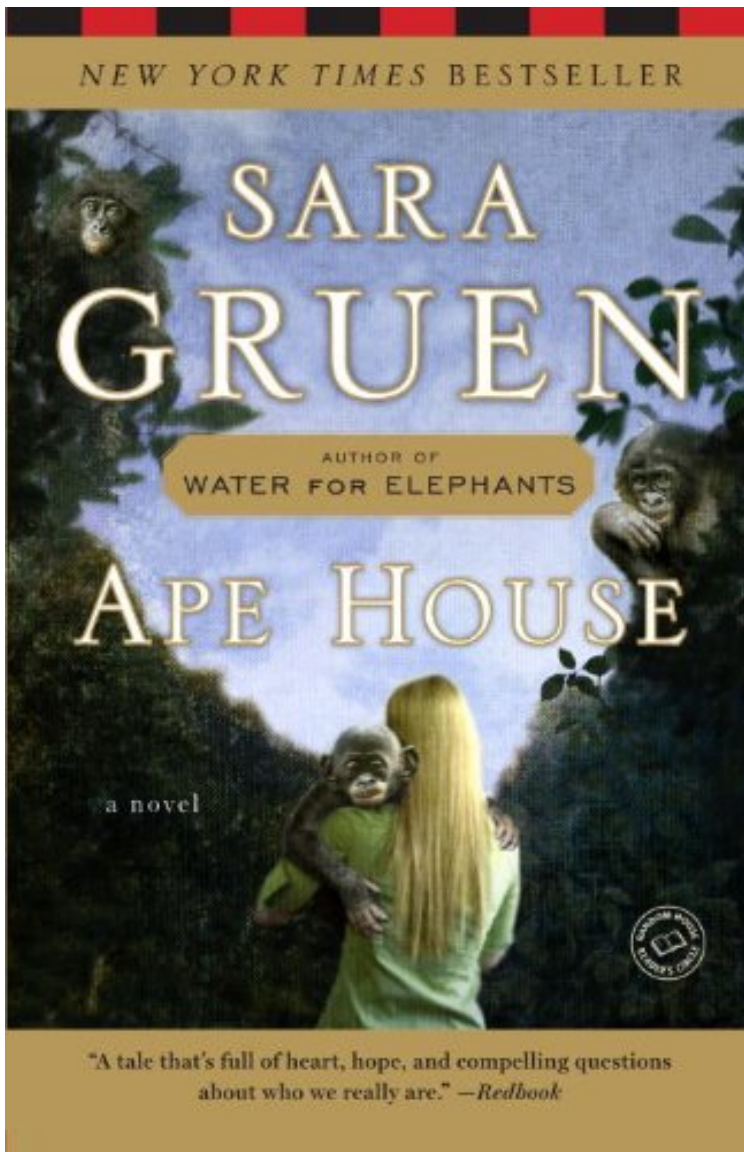


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Ape House: A Novel



Par Sara Gruen
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Par Sara Gruen : Ape House: A Novel before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ape House: A Novel:

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe wildly entertaining new novel from the bestselling author of Water for Elephants.BONUS: This edition contains a reader's guide.Sam, Bonzi, Lola, Mbongo, Jelani, and Makena are no ordinary apes. These bonobos, like others of their species, are capable of reason and carrying on deep relationshipsbut unlike most bonobos, they also know American Sign Language.Isabel Duncan, a scientist at the Great Ape Language Lab, doesnt understand people, but animals she getsespecially the bonobos. Isabel feels more comfortable in their world than shes ever felt among humans . . . until she meets John Thigpen, a very married reporter who braves the ever-present animal rights protesters outside the lab to see whats really going on inside.When an explosion rocks the lab, severely injuring Isabel and liberating the apes, Johns

human interest piece turns into the story of a lifetime, one hell risk his career and his marriage to follow.

Then a reality TV show featuring the missing apes debuts under mysterious circumstances, and it immediately becomes the biggest and unlikeliest phenomenon in the history of modern media. Millions of fans are glued to their screens watching the apes order greasy take-out, have generous amounts of sex, and sign for Isabel to come get them. Now, to save her family of apes from this parody of human life, Isabel must connect with her own kind, including John, a green-haired vegan, and a retired porn star with her own agenda. Ape House delivers great entertainment, but it also opens the animal world to us in ways few novels have done, securing Sara Gruens place as a master storyteller who allows us to see ourselves as we never have before.

Chapter One

The plane had yet to take off, but Osgood, the photographer, was already snoring softly. He was in the center seat, wedged between John Thigpen and a woman in coffee-colored stockings and sensible shoes. He listed heavily toward the latter, who, having already made a great point of lowering the armrest, was progressively becoming one with the wall. Osgood was blissfully unaware. John glanced at him with a pang of envy; their editor at The Philadelphia Inquirer was loath to spring for hotels and had insisted that they complete their visit to the Great Ape Language Lab in a single day. And so, despite seeing in the New Year the night before, John, Cat, and Osgood had all been on the 6 a.m. flight to Kansas City that same morning. John would have loved to close his eyes for a few minutes, even at the risk of accidentally cozying up to Osgood, but he needed to expand his notes while the details were fresh. Johns knees did not fit within his allotted space, so he turned them outward into the aisle. Because Cat was behind him, reclining his seat was not an option. He was well aware of her mood. She had an entire row to herself an unbelievable stroke of luck but she had just asked the flight attendant for two gins and a tonic. Apparently having three seats to herself was not enough to offset the trauma of having spent her day poring over linguistics texts when she had been expecting to meet six great apes. Although she had tried to disguise the symptoms of her cold ahead of time and explain away the residual as allergies, Isabel Duncan, the scientist who had greeted them, sussed her out immediately and banished her to the Linguistics Department. Cat had turned on her legendary charm, which she reserved for only the most dire of circumstances, but Isabel had been like Teflon. Bonobos and humans share 98.7 percent of their DNA, she said, which makes them susceptible to the same viruses. She couldnt risk exposing them, particularly as one was pregnant. Besides, the Linguistics Department had fascinating new data on the bonobos vocalizations. And so a disappointed, sick, and frustrated Cat spent the afternoon at Blake Hall hearing about the dynamic shape and movement of tongues while John and Osgood visited the apes. You were behind glass anyway, right? Cat complained in the taxi afterward. She was crammed between John and Osgood, both of whom kept their heads turned toward their respective windows in a futile attempt to avoid germs. I dont see how I could have given them anything from behind glass. I would have stood at the back of the room if she had asked me. Hell, Id have worn a gas mask. She paused to snort Afrin up both nostrils and then honked mightily into a tissue. Do you have any idea what I went through today? she continued. Their lingo is completely incomprehensible. I was already in trouble at discourse. Next thing I knew it was declarative illocutionary point this, deontic modality that, blah blah blah. She emphasized the blahs with her hands, waving the Afrin bottle in one and the crumpled tissue in the other. I almost lost it on rank lexical relation. Sounds like a smelly, overly chatty uncle, doesnt it? How on earth do they think Im going to be able to work that into a newspaper piece? John and Osgood exchanged a silent, relieved glance when they got their seat assignments for the trip home. John didnt know Osgoods take on todays experience they hadnt had a moment alone but for John, something massive had shifted. Hed had a two-way conversation with great apes. Hed spoken to them in English, and theyd responded using American Sign Language, all the more remarkable because it meant they were competent in two human languages. One of the apes, Bonzi, arguably knew three: she was able to communicate by computer using a specially designed set of lexigrams. John also hadnt realized the complexity of their native tongue during the visit, the bonobos had clearly demonstrated their ability to vocalize specific information, such as flavors of yogurt and locations of hidden objects, even when unable to see each other. Hed looked into their eyes and recognized without a shadow of a doubt that sentient, intelligent beings were looking back. It was entirely different from peering into a zoo enclosure, and it changed his comprehension of the world in such a profound way he could not yet articulate it. Being cleared by Isabel Duncan was only the first step in getting inside the apes living quarters. After Cats banishment to Blake Hall, Osgood and John were taken into an administrative office to wait while the apes were consulted. John had been told ahead of time that the bonobos had final say over who came into their home, and also that theyd been known to be fickle: over the past two years, theyd allowed in only about half of their would-

be visitors. Knowing this, John had stacked his odds as much as possible. He researched the bonobos tastes online and bought a backpack for each, which he stuffed with favorite foods and toys bouncy balls, fleece blankets, xylophones, Mr. Potato Heads, snacks, and anything else he thought they might find amusing. Then he emailed Isabel Duncan and asked her to tell the bonobos he was bringing surprises. Despite his efforts, John found that his forehead was beaded with sweat by the time Isabel returned from the consultation and informed him that not only were the apes allowing Osgood and him to come in, they were insisting. She led them into the observation area, which was separated from the apes by a glass partition. She took the backpacks, disappeared into a hallway, reappeared on the other side of the glass, and handed them to the apes. John and Osgood stood watching as the bonobos unpacked their gifts. John was so close to the partition his nose and forehead were touching it. He had almost forgotten it was there, so when the MMs surfaced and Bonzi leapt up to kiss him through the glass, he nearly fell backward. Although John already knew that the bonobos preferences varied (for example, he knew Mbongos favorite food was green onions and that Sam loved pears), he was surprised by how distinct, how differentiated, how almost human, they were: Bonzi, the matriarch and undisputed leader, was calm, assured, and thoughtful, if unnervingly fond of MMs. Sam, the oldest male, was outgoing and charismatic, and entirely certain of his own magnetism. Jelani, an adolescent male, was an unabashed show-off with boundless energy and a particular love of leaping up walls and then flipping over backward. Makena, the pregnant one, was Jelani's biggest fan, but was also exceedingly fond of Bonzi and spent long periods grooming her, sitting quietly and picking through her hair, with the result that Bonzi was balding more than the others. The infant, Lola, was indescribably cute and also a stitch. John witnessed her yank a blanket out from under Sam's head while he was resting and then come barreling over to Bonzi for protection, signing, bad surprise! bad surprise! (According to Isabel, messing with another bonobo's nest was a major transgression, but there was another rule that trumped it: in their mothers eyes, bonobo babies could do no wrong.) Mbongo, the other adult male, was smaller than Sam and of a more sensitive nature: he opted out of further conversations with John after John unwittingly misinterpreted a game called Monster Chase. Mbongo put on a gorilla mask, which was John's cue to act terrified and let Mbongo chase him. Unfortunately, nobody had told John, who didn't even realize Mbongo was wearing a mask until the ape gave up and pulled it off, at which point John laughed. This was so devastating that Mbongo turned his back and flatly refused to acknowledge John from that point forward. Isabel eventually cheered him up by playing the game properly, but he declined to interact with John for the rest of the visit, which left John feeling as if he'd slapped a baby. Excuse me. John looked up to find a man standing in the aisle, unable to move past John's legs. John shifted sideways and wrangled them into Osgood's space, which elicited a grunt. When the man passed, John returned his legs to the aisle and as he did so caught sight of a woman three rows up holding a book whose familiar cover shot a jolt of adrenaline through him. It was his wife's debut novel, although she had recently forbidden him from using that particular phrase since it was beginning to look as though her debut novel was also going to be her last. Back when *The River Wars* first came out and John and Amanda were still feeling hopeful, they had coined the phrase a sighting in the wild to describe finding some random person in the act of reading it. Until this moment it had been theoretical. John wished Amanda had been the one to experience it. She was in desperate need of cheering up, and he'd very nearly concluded that he was helpless in that department. John checked for the location of the flight attendant. She was in the galley, so he whipped out his cell phone, rose slightly out of his seat, and snapped a picture. The drinks cart returned; Cat bought more gin, John ordered coffee, and Osgood continued to rumble subterraneously while his human cushion glowered. John got out his laptop and started a new file: Similar to chimpanzees in appearance but with slimmer build, longer limbs, flatter brow ridge. Black or dusky gray faces, pink lips. Black hair parted down the center. Expressive eyes and faces. High-pitched and frequent vocalizations. Matriarchal, egalitarian, peaceful. Extremely amorous. Intense female bonding. Although John had known something of the bonobos demons... *Revue de presse* Consider reality TV, meth labs, over-the-top animal-rights activists, Botox, tabloids and Internet diatribes, and you, too, might come to the conclusion: People should be more like animals. Sara Gruen's entertaining, enlightening new novel will certainly leave you thinking so. *Miami Herald* Propulsive... Gruen writes with the commercial breathlessness of a cozier Dan Brown. *Entertainment Weekly* Gruen delivers a tale that's full of heart, hope, and compelling questions about who we really are. *Redbook* Animal lovers, gather round... [Ape House] is much better [than *Water for Elephants*] funny because of some weird characters and circumstances that make life difficult for our intrepid reporter, and at the same time, compelling because those apes put to shame our beloved *Homo sapiens*. *Newark Star Ledger* Part expose, part thriller, part gothic romance and part comedy

and farce...Gruen is a master at the popular novel plot. Asheville Citizen Times Gruen is clearly enjoying herself here. It is fun...the conceit of a household of language-endowed apes as the ne plus ultra of reality TV leering humans greedy for profits and naughty thrills...apes who are at once innocent and more compassionate and dignified than the producers and the viewers is terrific: an incisive piece of social commentary. New York Times Book "[Ape House] hums along with a pop-culture plot full of slick profiteers, sleazy pornographers, idiotic reality TV and gossip rags with botox and ape sex thrown in for entertaining reading. Des Moines Register Gruen has a knack for pacing and for creating distinctive animal characters. Scenes involving the bonobos are winsome without being sappy, and the reader comes to share Isabel's concern for the animals. Boston Globe "Gruen's astute, wildly entertaining tale of interspecies connection is a novel of verve and conscience. Booklist (Starred review)"Has the dramatic tension of a crime thriller...Twists and turns, lies, and treachery abound in this funny, clever, and perceptive story." Library Journal (Starred review)"Sara Gruen knows things she knows them in her mind and in her heart. And, out of what she knows, she has created a true thriller that is addictive from its opening sentence. Devour it to find out what happens next, but also to learn remarkable and moving things about life on this planet. Very, very few novels can change the way you look at the world around you. This one does." Robert Goolrick, author of *A Reliable Wife*"I read *Ape House* in one joyous breath. Ever an advocate for animals, Gruen brings them to life with the passion of a novelist and the accuracy of a scientist. She has already done more for bonobos than I could do in a lifetime. The novel is immaculately researched and lovingly crafted. If people fall in love with our forgotten, fascinating, endangered relative, it will be because of *Ape House*." Vanessa Woods, author of *Bonobo Handshake*