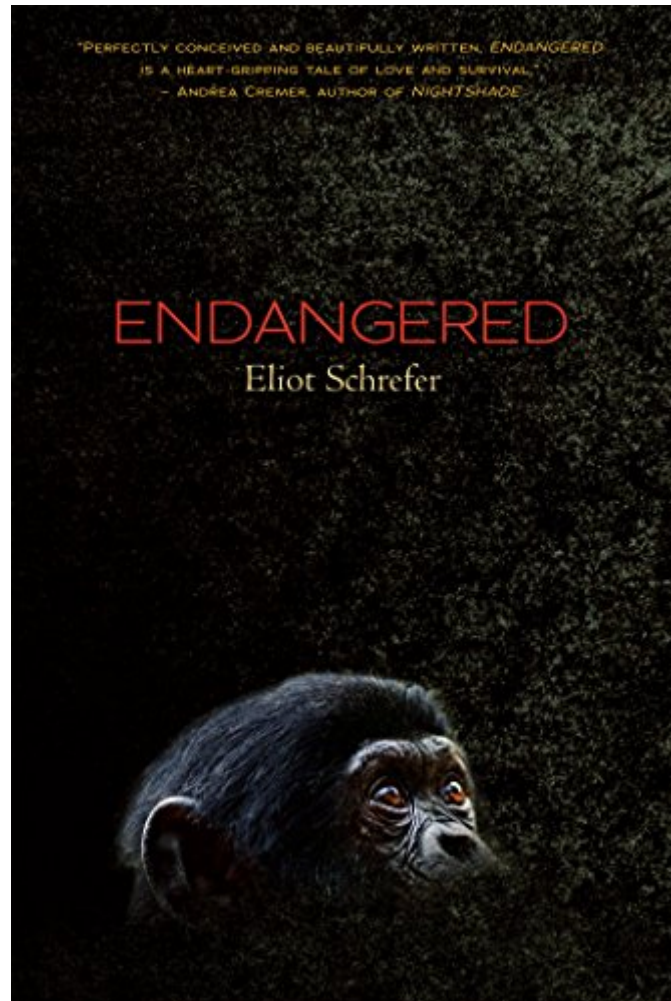




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Endangered (Ape Quartet)



Synopsis

From National Book Award Finalist Eliot Schrefer comes the compelling tale of a girl who must save a group of bonobos -- and herself -- from a violent coup. Congo is a dangerous place, even for people who are trying to do good. When Sophie has to visit her mother at her sanctuary for bonobos, she's not thrilled to be there. Then Otto, an infant bonobo, comes into her life, and for the first time she feels responsible for another creature. But peace does not last long for Sophie and Otto. When an armed revolution breaks out in the country, the sanctuary is attacked, and the two of them must escape unprepared into the jungle. Caught in the crosshairs of a lethal conflict, they must struggle to keep safe, to eat, and to live. In *ENDANGERED*, Eliot Schrefer plunges us into a heart-stopping exploration of the things we do to survive, the sacrifices we make to help others, and the tangled geography that ties us all, human and animal, together.

Book Information

File Size: 1329 KB

Print Length: 277 pages

Publisher: Scholastic Inc. (October 1, 2012)

Publication Date: October 1, 2012

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B009AJH9Y2

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

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Customer Reviews

Schrefer has crafted a story that is both eye-opening and touching. A story that seems historical but

is very much contemporary. Through the eyes of one young girl, the reader gets a glimpse into the deep-seeded challenges of a conflict-riddled third-world country. Sophie has come to stay at her mother's wild animal preserve in the heart of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Being biracial complicates things a bit (Congolese mother, white American father) as she's seen as foreign both in America and in the Congo, but she's learned to deal with that. What she doesn't expect to happen on this visit is falling in love with an injured baby bonobo that she can't help but buy from a local bush-meat trader. This spontaneous act sets off a series of events that leaves Sophie feeling guilty and conflicted. And things take a turn for the worse when just after her mother sets off to release some bonobos into the wild, the Congo once again erupts into devastating violence. As Sophie struggles to keep herself and her bonobo, Otto, alive, she's forced to face the consequences of her own actions as well as the horrible results of war. Despite the devastation that Sophie sees both inside and outside of the bonobo sanctuary, Sophie remains determined to survive, but at what cost. Is it possible to survive a war without being corrupted by it? Several close calls (including a near rape) leave Sophie desperately hoping to find her mother in all the chaos. The book does contain numerous references to violence including burned villages, dead bodies, and vague references to rape. I found the relationship between Sophie and Otto to be very compelling as I read quickly to find out what would happen to them. Schreffer has created a remarkable story of survival and hope in a world gone to pieces.

Endangered is a marvelous book for teens, but it is a book adults should read as well. It deals with the plight of endangered bonobos, but not in a didactic way. Rather, the reader experiences along with Sophie, the young protagonist, the perilous political situation in the Congo and is led to see through Sophie's eyes all the complexities that make saving the bonobos difficult. In her attachment to Otto, the bonobo infant she rescues and assumes responsibility for, we see why saving the bonobos is so important. Her harrowing trek through the jungle with Otto and the constant threats they endure make the book impossible to put down. The perils Sophie and Otto face reveal in microcosm the precarious state in which the people of the Congo exist.

Endangered is a riveting, realistic survival, adventure, coming-of-age story. The nail-biting suspense is smoothly fused with historical information on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and beautiful descriptions of the geography. I really appreciated that author, Eliot Schreffer, did not idealize the efforts to save endangered species or simplify the complex problems in wartorn, poverty ridden Democratic Republic of the Congo. As protagonist Sophie quickly learns, nothing ever has a simple

solution or a simple cause. Like many 14 year olds, Sophie would rather spend her summer hanging out with her friends than her mother. She resents being forced to leave Miami to go live in the jungle of the Congo where her mother runs a sanctuary for bonobos. A sincere, but foolish, mistake on her first day in the Congo results in Sophie becoming a surrogate mother to a baby bonobo. Sophie did not plan on spending her summer babysitting, and little Otto requires almost 24 hour care. When a violent revolution erupts and the violence finds its way to the sanctuary, Sophie refuses to abandon Otto and evacuate. Soon, Sophie is all alone surrounded by ruthless soldiers. She is determined to save herself and Otto. Sophie must use the bonobos as her teachers for jungle survival and her instincts to keep them all alive. Her chances of finding anyone to help them or a place safe from the violence are grim, but Sophie knows without her the bonobos are doomed. Sophie's commitment is admirable, but very close to suicidal. Luckily, she has Otto, and the other bonobos, as her protectors.

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