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The Wilderness Family: At Home with Africa's Wildlife

Kobie Kruger

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The Wilderness Family: At Home with Africa's Wildlife Kobie Kruger
Everyone warned Kobie Krüger that being the wife of a game warden at a remote ranger station in South Africa's largest national park would be an arduous move. The heat was unbearable, malaria would be a constant danger, her husband would have to be away for long stretches, there were no schools or nearby doctors for their three daughters, and of course the area teemed with wild animals. Yet for Kobie and her family, the seventeen years at South Africa's Kruger National Park were the most magical of their lives. Now, in The Wilderness Family, Kobie recounts the enchanting adventures and extraordinary encounters they experienced in this vast reserve where wildlife has right of way.

Kobie and her husband Kobus were overwhelmed by the beauty of the Mahlangeni ranger station when they arrived with their little girls in the autumn of 1980. Golden sunshine glowed in the lush garden where fruit bats hung in the sausage trees; hippos basked in the glittering waters of the Letaba River; storks and herons perched along the shore. Kobie felt she had found heaven on earth--until she awoke that first night to find a python slithering silently across her bedroom floor. It was the perfect introduction to the wonders and terrors that awaited her.

As the Krügers settled in, they became accustomed to living in the midst of ravishing splendor and daily surprises. A honey badger they nursed back to health rampaged affectionately through the house. Sneaky hyenas stole blankets and cook pots. Ordinarily placid elephants grew foul-tempered and violent in the summer heat. And one terrible day, the shadow of tragedy fell across the family when a lion attacked Kobus in the bush and nearly killed him.

But nothing prepared the Krügers for the adventure of raising an orphaned lion cub. The cub was only a few days old and on the verge of death when they found him alone. Leo, as the girls promptly named the cub, survived on loads of love and bottles of fat-enriched milk, and soon became an affectionate, rambunctious member of the family. At the heart of the book, Kobie recounts the unique bond that each of the Krügers forged with Leo and their sometimes hilarious endeavor to teach him to become a "real" lion and live with his own kind in the wild.

Writing with deep affection and luminous prose, Kobie Krüger captures here the mystery of untamed Africa--its fathomless skies, soulful landscapes, and most of all, its astonishing array of animals. By turns funny and heart-breaking, engaging and suspenseful, The Wilderness Family is an unforgettable memoir of a woman, her family, and the amazing game reserve they called home for seventeen incredible years.

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