

# CONTENTS

---

*Foreword ix*

*Introduction 1*

## **Part 1: El Graeco and the Split Between Chimpanzees and Humans**

1. Questioning the Origins of Humans: The Detective Work Begins 7
2. The Greek Adventure: The First Fossil Apes From Pikermi 12
3. In the Queen's Garden: Bruno von Freyberg's Discovery 18
4. In Search of Forgotten Treasure: A Journey Into the Catacombs Beneath the Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg 23
5. Magnetometers and Microtomography: Ancient Bones in a High-Tech Lab 28

## **Part 2: The Real Planet of the Apes**

6. Disasters and Successes: A Short History of the Search for Our Origins 41
7. African Beginnings: The Golden Age of Ape Evolution 57
8. Progress in Europe: Great Apes in Oak Forests 67
9. Apes in the Allgäu: Was Udo a Missing Link? 78

## **Part 3: The Cradle of Humanity: Africa or Europe?**

10. The Primal Ancestor: Still an Ape or an Early Hominin? 97
11. Fossil Footprints From Crete: Puzzling Prints of an Ancient Biped 107
12. A Skull in the Sand and a “Secret” Thighbone: The Shady Case of *Sahelanthropus* 118
13. From Early Hominin to Prehistoric Human: The Out-of-Africa Theory Begins to Wobble 131

## **Part 4: Climate Change as a Driver of Evolution**

14. Not Just Counting Bones: Reconstructing the Environment Is Key 151
15. Buried in the Sands of Time: Landscape and Vegetation in El Graeco’s Time 162
16. The Great Barrier: A Gigantic Desert Becomes an Insurmountable Obstacle 177
17. A Gray-White Desert and a Salty Sea: The Mediterranean Dries Out 185

## **Part 5: What Makes Humans Human**

18. Free Hands: Lots of Room for Creativity 197
19. Wanderlust: Curiosity About the Unknown 209

- 20. Hairless Marathoner: The Running Human 228
- 21. Fire, Intellect, and Small Teeth: How Diet Influenced  
the Development of the Brain 238
- 22. Vocal Connections: From Alarm Cries to Culture 248

**Part 6: The Lone Survivor**

- 23. A Confusing Complexity: The Problem With the Family  
Tree 263
- 24. A Puzzling Phenomenon: Humans From Denisova  
Cave 272
- 25. And Then There Was One: The Rational Human 281

*Epilogue* 289

*Acknowledgments* 293

*Notes* 295

*Illustration Credits* 322

*Index* 324