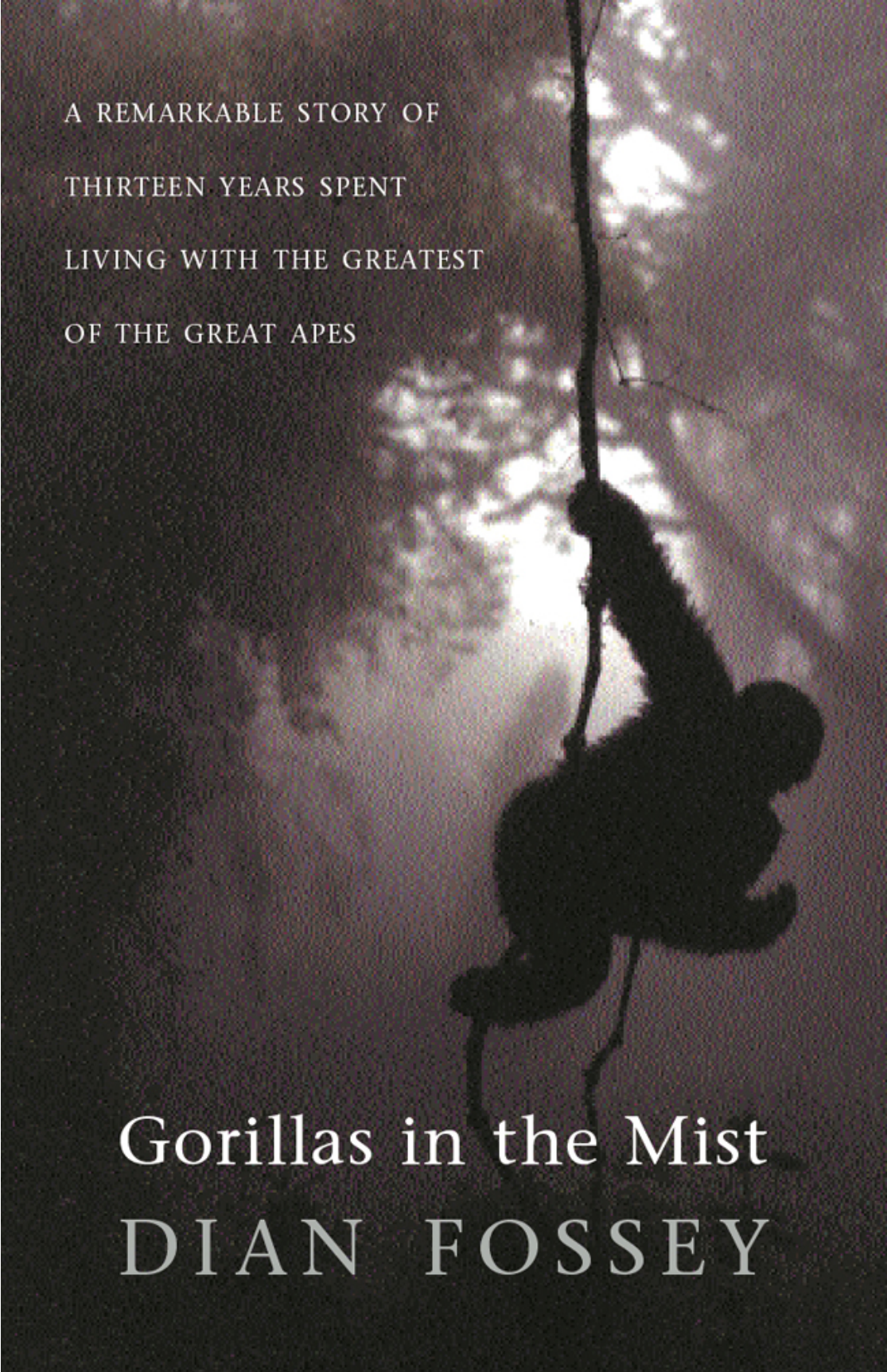


A REMARKABLE STORY OF
THIRTEEN YEARS SPENT
LIVING WITH THE GREATEST
OF THE GREAT APES



Gorillas in the Mist
DIAN FOSSEY

A black and white photograph of a gorilla hanging from a tree branch in a misty forest. The gorilla is silhouetted against a bright, hazy background of trees and mist. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

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Gorillas in the Mist

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To the memories of Digit,
Uncle Bert, Macho, and Kweli

The mist of light
from which they take their grace
Hides what they are.

—RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES
(LORD HOUGHTON) 1809–1885

Contents

Title Page

Dedication

List of Illustrations

Preface

1. In the Mountain Meadow of Carl Akeley and George Schaller
2. Second Beginning: Karisoke Research Centre, Rwanda
3. Karisoke Field Impressions
4. Three Generations of One Gorilla Family: Group 5
5. Wild Orphans Bound for Captivity: Coco and Pucker
6. Animal Visitors to the Karisoke Research Centre
7. The Natural Demise of Two Gorilla Families: Groups 8 and 9
8. Human Visitors to the Karisoke Research Centre
9. Adjustment to a New Silverback Leader: Group 4
10. Growing Family Stability: Group 4
11. Decimation by Poachers: Group 4
12. Formation of a New Family Lends Hope: Nunkie's Group

Acknowledgments

Epilogue

Bibliography

Illustrations

About the Author

Copyright

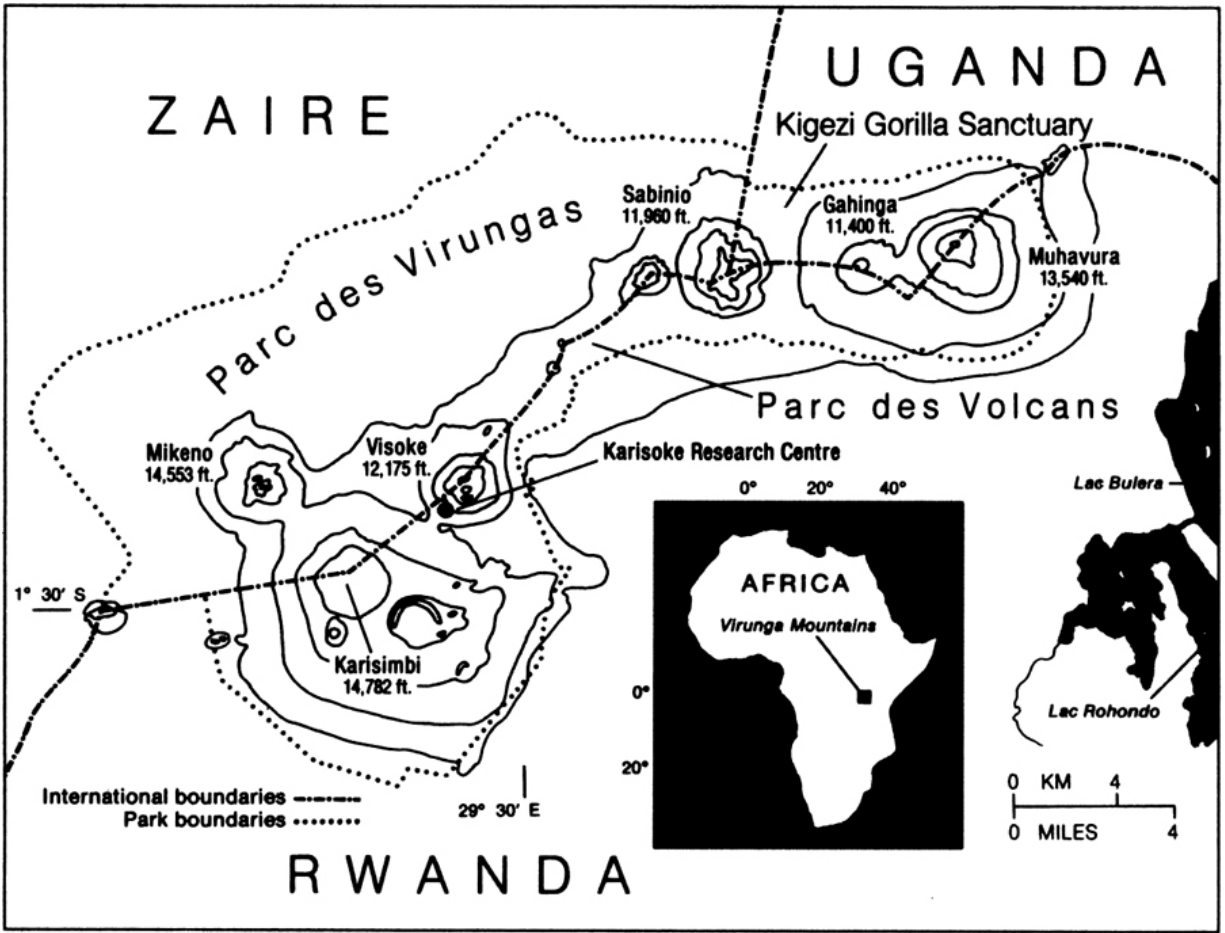
Maps

Habitat of the Mountain Gorilla

Gorilla Food Vegetation Zones

Gorilla Group Ranges

Family Lines



Preface

GORILLAS IN THE MIST recounts some of the events of the thirteen years that I have spent with the mountain gorillas in their natural habitat and includes data from the fifteen years of continuing field study. Mountain gorillas live only on six extinct mountains within the Virunga Volcanoes and do not frequent the two active volcanoes of the chain. The region inhabited by the gorillas is some twenty-five miles long and varies in width from six to twelve miles. Two thirds of the conservation area lies in Zaire (formerly known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo) in the Parc National des Virungas; about 30,000 acres of conservation area lie in Rwanda and are known as the Parc National des Volcans. The small remaining northeastern portion of the mountain gorillas' habitat lies in Uganda and is known as the Kigezi Gorilla Sanctuary.

My research studies of this majestic and dignified great ape — a gentle yet maligned nonhuman primate — have provided insight to the essentially harmonious means by which gorillas organize and maintain their familial groups and also have provided understanding of some of the intricacies of various behavioral patterns never previously suspected to exist.

In 1758 Carl Linnaeus, the first serious student of classification, officially recognized the close relationship between humans, monkeys, and apes. He devised the order name Primates to encompass them all and to denote their high ranking in the animal kingdom. Man and the three great apes — orangutan, chimpanzee, and gorilla— are the only primates without tails and, like most primates, have five digits on each hand and foot, the first of which is opposable. Anatomical features shared by all primates are two mammae (nipples), orbits directed forward to permit binocular vision, and, usually, a total of thirty-two teeth.

Because of the scanty record of ape fossils, there is no universal agreement on the origin of the two families, Pongidae (the apes) and Hominidae (mankind), which have been separated for millions of years.