



Privileged Hands: A Scientific Life

Geerat J. Vermeij

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His fingers move across the surface of a shell, feeling the ridges and contours, searching for clues, gathering information unnoticed by the untrained eye. For Dr. Geerat Vermeij's fingers *are* his eyes. One of the most accomplished evolutionary biologists of our time and the world's leading authority on an ancient "arms race" among mollusks, Dr. Vermeij is blind.

No ordinary autobiography, *Privileged Hands* is the story of Dr. Vermeij's challenge and triumph. What makes his story so compelling is how he sees and what his insights reveal about the wonder of life on planet Earth. His exhaustive research of ancient and living mollusks, particularly shells, is extraordinary in its scope and perspective about how species arm themselves, compete, and survive. This is an intriguing irony for someone whose incomparable story is characterized by an unfailing determination to thrive in a sighted world and in the world of science. For Dr. Vermeij's self-portrait is also a portrait of the practice of science--his views on evolution and biodiversity, and the importance of observation are as much the story as are his family relationships, education, and position on arritmatic action.

Privileged Hands is provocative and intelligent storytelling: it reveals as much about our own lives as it does about this one, remarkable, scientist's life.

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