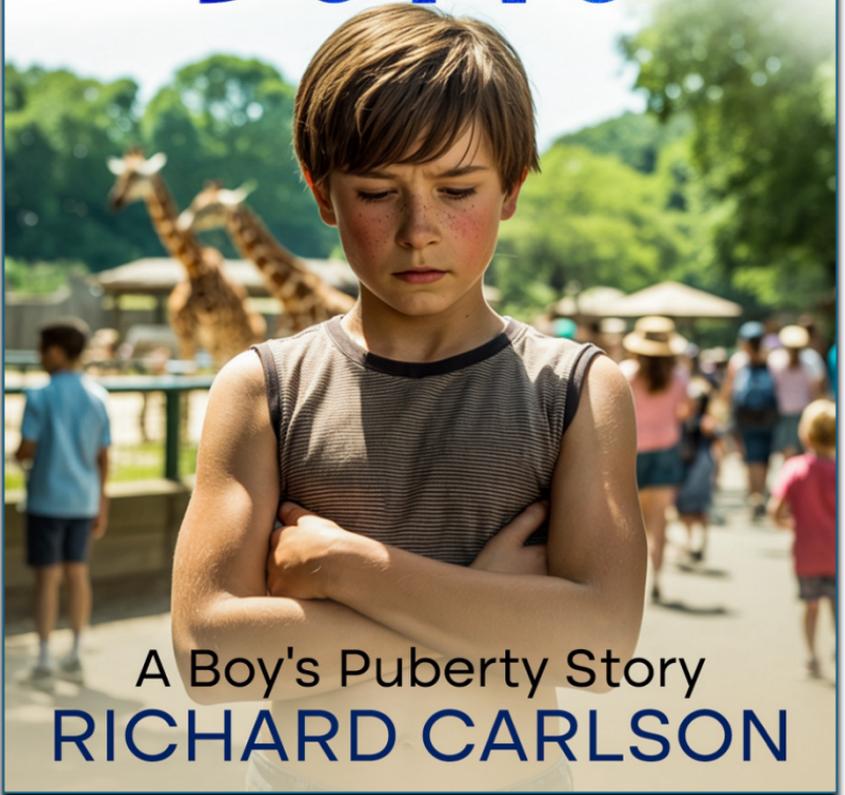


# BABOON BUTTS



A Boy's Puberty Story

**RICHARD CARLSON**

# **Baboon Butts: A Boy's Puberty Story**

Richard Carlson

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Twelve-year-old Richard walked with his parents and three younger brothers at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. It was April 1983. Richard had turned twelve only a month ago. Everyone was having a fun time.

Then, they approached the Hamadryas baboon exhibit.

“Look at those baboons’ butts. They’re bright red,” Dad said to his sons.

That’s when it happened. Richard was embarrassed to see the red baboon butts: his face turned bright red. He was in puberty, so, emotionally and physically, he was in a phase of no longer being a child

and changing into an adult. He knew there was nothing wrong with red baboon butts, but couldn't help but feel embarrassed about seeing them.

Dad laughed. "Richard is embarrassed about the red butts," he said. "His face is just as red as the baboons' butts!"

Mom and his brothers laughed and giggled, because it was silly for him to be embarrassed. Richard folded his arms across his chest because he didn't like his father teasing him about being so embarrassed. He wished they would all leave him alone.

Richard didn't feel comfortable around the baboons because he was a tween. He couldn't help but feel the way he did.

Richard exclaimed, "I don't like it, okay?" as he looked down at his shoes. He didn't like being embarrassed: he wanted his family to leave the baboon exhibit right away.

That wish did not come true—in fact, just the opposite occurred. Dad took several pictures of Richard and his family in front of the exhibit—and Richard's face was still red! He kept his arms folded across his chest and stood scowling at the camera.

Dad then read the exhibit sign and explained, “Red bottoms reveal to the other baboons that the baboon is ready to breed. The baboons reach sexual maturity at the age of four or five, and that is when the baboons show red bums.”

Great. That’s just what Richard wanted to hear about—baboon sex.

His family continued walking around and looking at all the nice animals in the zoo.

At the gift shop, Dad found something special for Richard: a postcard with a picture of several Hamadryas baboons. Richard didn’t know how to

reply. Dad bought it for him to always remember this day.

At home, Richard smiled as he looked at the postcard. Now I'll never forget today, he thought. He put it in his photo album.

Dad got the film developed and had prints made. Richard put one picture of his family and him in front of the Hamadryas baboons exhibit in his photo album, next to the postcard. He was very happy! Richard grew up and never forgot that day.

Sometimes, we get upset in the moment but can laugh at ourselves later.

## References

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**About the story:** Richard, a shy and sensitive twelve-year-old boy, is extremely embarrassed by what he sees at a zoo's baboon exhibit. Idea from a true story that took place in Tucson, Arizona, in the southwestern USA, in 1983.

**About the author:** Richard Carlson is an author of children's and coming-of-age books. He is a highly sensitive person, or HSP. You can learn more about him at

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