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Fish paleontologist Shubin illuminates the subject of evolution with humor and clarity in this compelling look at how the human body evolved into its present state. Parsing the millennia-old genetic history of the human form is a natural project for Shubin, who chairs the department of organismal biology and anatomy at the University of Chicago and was co-discoverer of Tiktaalik, a 375-million-year-old fossil fish whose flat skull and limbs, and finger, toe, ankle and wrist bones, provide a link between fish and the earliest land-dwelling creatures. Shubin moves smoothly through the anatomical spectrum, finding ancient precursors to human teeth in a 200-million-year-old fossil of the mouse-size part animal, part reptile tritheledont; he also notes cellular similarities between humans and sponges. Other fossils reveal the origins of our senses, from the eye to that wonderful Rube Goldberg contraption the ear. Shubin excels at explaining the science, making each discovery an adventure, whether it's a Pennsylvania roadcut or a stony outcrop beset by polar bears and howling Arctic winds. I can imagine few things more beautiful or intellectually profound than finding the basis for our humanity... nestled inside some of the most humble creatures that ever lived, he writes, and curious readers are likely to agree.