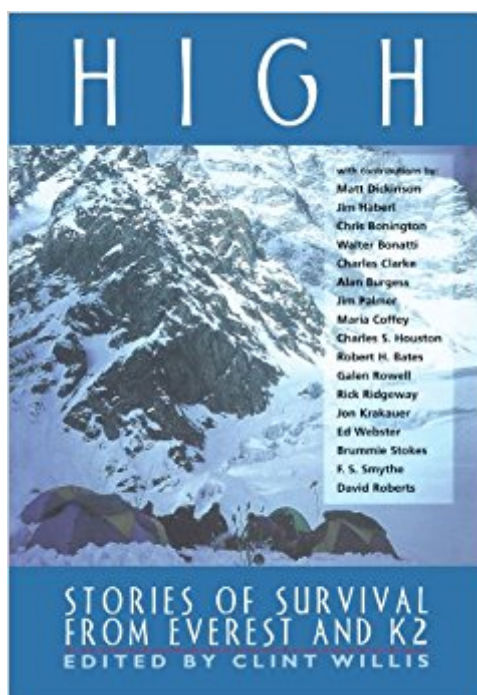


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High: Stories Of Survival From Everest And K2 (Adrenaline Books)



Synopsis

In this pioneering anthology, Clint Willis presents 75 years of great writing -- from Neil O'Dell to Jon Krakauer -- on the fabled peaks. Here are stories of two British expeditions to Everest in the 1920s; a piece on the 1939 K2 attempt that claimed four climbers' lives; a firsthand account by the Sherpa who reached the summit of Everest in 1953 with Edmund Hillary; the story of the first successful American assault on K2 in 1978; a British photographer's view of the calamitous 1996 storm on Everest; and many more -- a cornucopia of mountaineering thrills for adventurous readers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Editor Clint Willis collects some of mountaineering's finest writing in these tales from storied expeditions to grails like Everest and K2. Included are classic accounts of early American attempts on K2, by consensus the most daunting and ruthless peak to summit. Frank Smythe's telling of his 1933 attempt and Charles Houston and Robert Bates's from 1938 typify the wooly-knickered bravado of pre-war climbing. As counterpoint, Willis serves up Galen Rowell's sad and unadorned journal from the tempestuous 1975 failed expedition. But there are other angles as well. Tucked in the middle of High is a gem told by an Everest widow, Maria Coffey, who traveled to the base of the mountain that took her husband and his partner: "I could pick out the ridge where Joe and Pete were last seen. The image blurred, tears were washing down my face and collecting in the jacket collar pulled tightly around my chin." In a collection of writing that soars it is a moving--and grounding--reminder of mountaineering's risks. --Tipton Blish

YA-A collection of excerpts from mostly real-life experiences that will leave even the most jaded armchair adventurers gasping for air and thoroughly waterlogged. Both titles depict humans at their most physically challenged in environments that they sought out but for which they were not necessarily completely prepared. High features Jon Krakauer, David Roberts, and Chris Bonington. An excerpt from Matt Dickinson's *The Other Side of Everest* is also included. A touching narrative is taken from Maria Coffey's *Fragile Edge*, in which the author recounts her visit to Tibet to find some closure over the death of her sweetheart, who disappeared from Everest's Northeast Ridge. Many of the writers in *Rough Water* describe such dire straits out on the open sea that one wonders how they ever survived to tell their tale. Memorable moments from maritime literature include a selection from F. A. Worsley's *Shackleton's Boat Journey*, in which the South Pole explorer and his men rowed 14 days across 800 miles of some of the earth's most treacherous seas in a small boat. Another classic excerpt depicting a heartless captain is taken from Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s *Two Years before the Mast*. Readers who still have not gotten enough of the Titanic stories will be intrigued by yet another viewpoint from *The Loss of the S. S. Titanic*. And there's more. Bibliographies lead readers to the rest of the stories. Cynthia J. Rieben, W. T. Woodson High School, Fairfax, VA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Some amazing stories in this book. They will have you on the edge of your seat. Particularly, if you've watched the movie "K2" or "Into Thin Air" and other Everest documentaries.

These aren't short stories, they are excerpts from full books about Everest and K2. If I had known that I would have skipped it. When I read non-fiction about Everest I want to read something from start to finish and get invested in the people whose story it is. Reading about loss and survival on Everest isn't nearly as meaningful when you know so little about the people. Great stories deserve full telling.

Another tale collecting tour de force by Clint Willis who again invites we armchair mountaineers to join him and his pals in some positively hair raising expeditions.

I read Jon Krakauer's "Into Thin Air" before this book. I was mesmerized and enthralled by that book. Based on my experience with that book, I thought this book would be cool. It wasn't. I found out that if you've read one book about this topic, you've read them all. Every story in this book was just like the one before it. I stopped 85 pages short of finishing this book (I HATE not finishing a

book but I just couldn't stand it anymore). I threw the book in the recycle bin. What a complete waste of money. If you've never read a book like this, read "Into Thin Air" and stop there.

This attractively presented volume is a compilation of excerpts from various accounts of attempts, successful or otherwise, to climb Everest and K2. These accounts are for the most part from different English and American expeditions from the 1930s onwards, but include for variation the first-person narrative of travels through Tibet toward the fatal mountains by the widow of a fallen climber. Some expeditions take a massive army-style assault on the peaks, using complicated supply chains, support teams, hundreds of Sherpas, and tons of equipment. This is sort of the "Humanity Conquers Nature" approach. Others plan for basically a sprint up the mountain, traveling light with minimal support and small groups, and eschewing the use of oxygen cylinders and fancy gadgetry. This is the "Triumph of the Will" approach. These purists are always keen on trying routes no one else has attempted, and they avoid using the ladders and fixed ropes and stuff left by previous expeditions. It's that latter style of climbing that has become especially dangerous, because once someone has reached the pinnacle without oxygen, the bar has been dramatically raised, and anyone who follows and doesn't try the same looks weak. So ever-escalating feats of bravado must necessarily follow, where it won't be long before we'll see accomplishments such as "first to climb Everest while naked" or something like that. While there are a number of gripping scenes related in this book, there's also a great deal of repetition. A whole lot of verbiage is devoted to, essentially, "Man, it's cold up there!" So we read again and again about firing up stoves and snuggling into sleeping bags and taking an hour to put on boots and the like. There's also a lot of technical language to be encountered, which is likely to be appreciated more by climbers than the layperson, who has to wade through a lot of "I jumared down the fixed 5mm rope across a transverse field of powder to reach the couloir beyond cul that led to the cwm". Climbers will be nodding knowingly; armchair adrenaline junkies will be scratching their heads. (Note that a glossary of terms is hidden at the back of the book where it does no one any good.) Ultimately, the most interesting tales prove to be those where the climbers hate each other and fall into bitter bickering over who gets to make the dash to the top, or who fouled up and ruined everything. The mountains have many ways to kill people, but a lot of the tragedies are of the "and they were never seen again" variety. I'm not advocating that we should be exposed voyeuristically to all of the gory details of horrible deaths, but most of the disasters are rather pallidly rendered, and frankly the human drama ends up being more interesting than hearing again and again about the interesting technical challenges of getting over the Abruzzi Ridge or whatever. An assortment of maps would have helped immensely.

Even if you have never been anywhere near a mountain, this is a terrific book. Actually, I did put it down....had to when I got to work, or occasionally to turn the light out at night. The short story format makes it an excellent companion volume for dipping into. I found some of the K2 stories especially 'breath-taking' and the edge-of-the-seat drama present everywhere. I agree with the review that says the piece by widow Maria Coffey is a gem - another perspective on the mountain climbing experience. I also liked the older, more historical tales, contrasting some of the world's views about climbing with more modern attitudes evident in some of the newer books, especially now focussing on the commercial aspects of climbing especially Everest. Am I alone in thinking that mountain climbing to the point of summiting used to be a more collective, comradely pursuit, and now it is 'everyone for themselves'? I know there is a lot of bunk that could be said - and I don't hold that the class-ridden older (especially British) school of mountaineering in the days of Mallory et al was some kind of 'golden age'. But on the other hand, there was something in the spirit of the times then lacking now...and the difference is not just money. The old Siege-like expeditions required vast amounts of sponsorship....but it was aimed at the collective effort, whereas now it is anyone who can stump up \$65 000 of their own wealth. I might be wrong, but I think there is something different now. Not being an expert, I'm interested to continue exploring this. This volume is a good place to start reflecting on some of those issues.

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