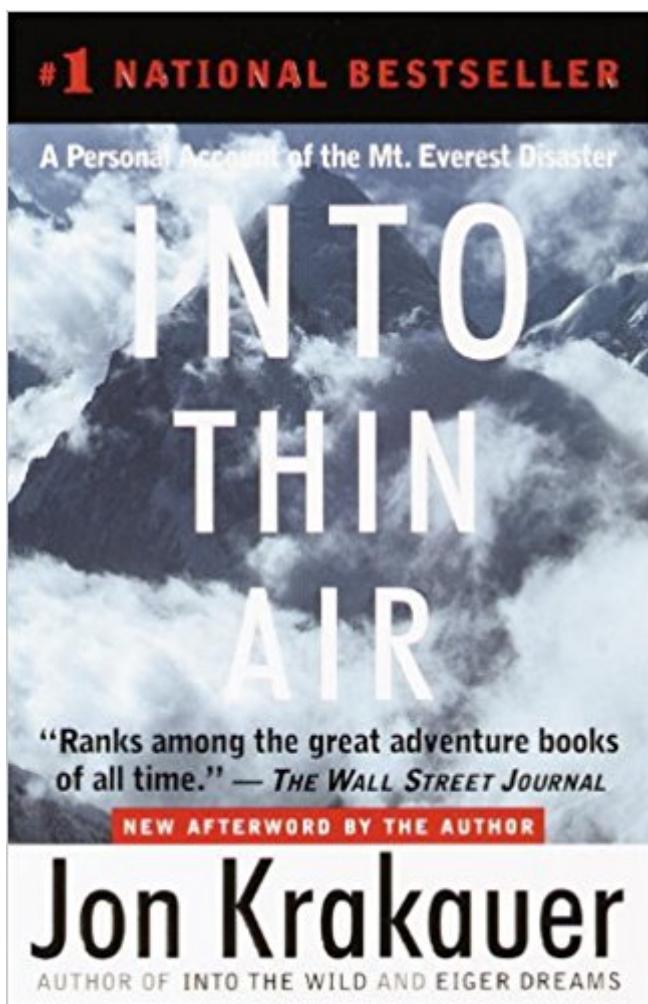


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# Into Thin Air: A Personal Account Of The Mt. Everest Disaster



## Synopsis

National Bestseller— A bank of clouds was assembling on the not-so-distant horizon, but journalist-mountaineer Jon Krakauer, standing on the summit of Mt. Everest, saw nothing that "suggested that a murderous storm was bearing down." He was wrong. The storm, which claimed five lives and left countless more—including Krakauer's—in guilt-ridden disarray, would also provide the impetus for *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer's epic account of the May 1996 disaster. By writing *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer may have hoped to exorcise some of his own demons and lay to rest some of the painful questions that still surround the event. He takes great pains to provide a balanced picture of the people and events he witnessed and gives due credit to the tireless and dedicated Sherpas. He also avoids blasting easy targets such as Sandy Pittman, the wealthy socialite who brought an espresso maker along on the expedition. Krakauer's highly personal inquiry into the catastrophe provides a great deal of insight into what went wrong. But for Krakauer himself, further interviews and investigations only lead him to the conclusion that his perceived failures were directly responsible for a fellow climber's death. Clearly, Krakauer remains haunted by the disaster, and although he relates a number of incidents in which he acted selflessly and even heroically, he seems unable to view those instances objectively. In the end, despite his evenhanded and even generous assessment of others' actions, he reserves a full measure of vitriol for himself. This updated trade paperback edition of *Into Thin Air* includes an extensive new postscript that sheds fascinating light on the acrimonious debate that flared between Krakauer and Everest guide Anatoli Boukreev in the wake of the tragedy.— "I have no doubt that Boukreev's intentions were good on summit day," writes Krakauer in the postscript, dated August 1999. "What disturbs me, though, was Boukreev's refusal to acknowledge the possibility that he made even a single poor decision. Never did he indicate that perhaps it wasn't the best choice to climb without gas or go down ahead of his clients." As usual, Krakauer supports his points with dogged research and a good dose of humility. But rather than continue the heated discourse that has raged since *Into Thin Air*'s denunciation of guide Boukreev, Krakauer's tone is conciliatory; he points most of his criticism at G. Weston De Walt, who coauthored *The Climb*, Boukreev's version of events. And in a touching conclusion, Krakauer recounts his last conversation with the late Boukreev, in which the two weathered climbers agreed to disagree about certain points. Krakauer had great hopes to patch things up with Boukreev, but the Russian later died in an avalanche on another Himalayan peak, Annapurna I. In 1999, Krakauer received an Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters—a prestigious prize intended "to honor writers of exceptional accomplishment."— According to the Academy's citation, "Krakauer combines the tenacity

and courage of the finest tradition of investigative journalism with the stylish subtlety and profound insight of the born writer. His account of an ascent of Mount Everest has led to a general reevaluation of climbing and of the commercialization of what was once a romantic, solitary sport; while his account of the life and death of Christopher McCandless, who died of starvation after challenging the Alaskan wilderness, delves even more deeply and disturbingly into the fascination of nature and the devastating effects of its lure on a young and curious mind."

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Into Thin Air is a riveting first-hand account of a catastrophic expedition up Mount Everest. In March 1996, Outside magazine sent veteran journalist and seasoned climber Jon Krakauer on an expedition led by celebrated Everest guide Rob Hall. Despite the expertise of Hall and the other leaders, by the end of summit day eight people were dead. Krakauer's book is at once the story of the ill-fated adventure and an analysis of the factors leading up to its tragic end. Written within months of the events it chronicles, Into Thin Air clearly evokes the majestic Everest landscape. As the journey up the mountain progresses, Krakauer puts it in context by recalling the triumphs and perils of other Everest trips throughout history. The author's own anguish over what happened on the mountain is palpable as he leads readers to ponder timeless questions. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Heroism and sacrifice triumph over foolishness, fatal error, and human frailty in this bone-chilling narrative in which the author recounts his experiences on last year's ill-fated, deadly climb. Thrilling

armchair reading. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ever since I watched the movie "Everest," I have been spellbound by the tragic events of that fateful day, May 10, 1996, and the circumstances that lead to the disaster. I wanted to know more, to learn about the lives of those who perished, and survived, and try to understand why. I sought out books, starting with this one; but also happened upon a series on the Discovery Channel entitled "Everest - Beyond the Limit," episodes of expedition led by team leaders who guide paying clients to the top via the north as well as the south climbing routes. It was quite fascinating witness the harrows of the ascent with the ultimate goal of the summit assault. The shows brought to life for me all of events I was reading about while providing insights to the treacherous terrains, precipitous slopes, plunging temperatures and staggering heights of an actual climb to a place perched atop a death-defying, jetliner cruising altitude of 29,028 feet! Told in gripping detail of the horrifying and unimaginable events that unfolded on that day, climber/journalist Jon Krakauer on assignment for "Outside" magazine, begins his account in the days leading up May 10. Krakauer introduces us to the climbers, the sherpas and team leaders of his own expedition as well as other competing companies all vying to guide their clients, many of whom paid up to \$65,000, to the rooftop of the world! From there, with fascinating anecdotes of the author's own experiences, Krakauer guides us on his own personal journey--his physical challenges and struggles as well as the emotional suffering of the climb, the deaths, the survival and the flashbacks that continue to haunt him to this day. As with all personal accounts, there's always another side to the story and "Into Thin Air" is no exception. At the end of the book in postscript, the author includes notes about literary attacks, many of which he defends successfully; and sorrowful, some quite angry, responses from members of the families of those who lost their lives. I can't imagine what Krakauer must have lived through and his continuing nightmare about that disastrous day more than 20 years ago. A must read for those interested in attempts to summit Everest and to bear witness to the perseverance, sacrifice and steadfast determination that possesses intrepid explorers and drives them to stand on top of the world. Remember, reaching the summit is only half the journey and 80% of the Everest fatalities occur on the way back down.

Pretty good account from one of my favorite genres: True-life survival biography. I found the book compelling from the get-go, and downright gripping at times. He did a good job of piecing together where the various actors were on the mountain at pivotal moments of the final ascent and descent

to and from the summit. My only beef: Could've benefited from more photos, e.g. Some of the other major characters in the story (The rich, deletente, Sandy Pittman; The guides and clients of the expedition; the members of the other expeditions [the Taiwanese team, the South Africans]...and especially THE SHERPAS! Why no photos of the SHERPAS?).

I have only read the Kindle version and now understand there are some differences between it and the original text. Whether anything of significance has been omitted, I don't know, but to me what I read is great. Why anyone would do what Krakauer, Boukreev, Hall, and so many others did, voluntarily risking their lives, mystifies a couch potato like me, but they all have my deepest respect for their skill and courage. So I am only in a position to judge Krakauer's storytelling; everyone made mistakes on that day, and his book does not leave me with a lesser opinion of any of the climbers. The story kept my rapt attention from beginning to end, every word, every name he credited, his postscript, and the criticisms by Boukreev, DeWalt, and others. At no point did Krakauer seem as though he were deflecting blame away from himself. I've never climbed a mountain, yet at times Krakauer had me gasping for air.

I knew very, very little about Mt Everest (i.e. "Isnt that a big mountain?") before coming across this book. I am such a more informed person since reading it thanks to Mr. Krakauer. I enjoyed reading this book, however, it was not an "easy" read for me. The author's choice of vocabulary had me constantly looking up words (thank heavens for the built- in dictionary on my iPad), which I found rather annoying. The other issue I had with the book was that there are so many expedition participants that I lost track of who was who and it didn't help that Mr. Krakauer would interchange the participant's first name and last name. I kept having to refer to the first pages of the book that listed the expedition participant's name and role. Other than these issues, I enjoyed reading it and am now reading another book about K2. I am now officially an armchair mountaineering enthusiast.

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