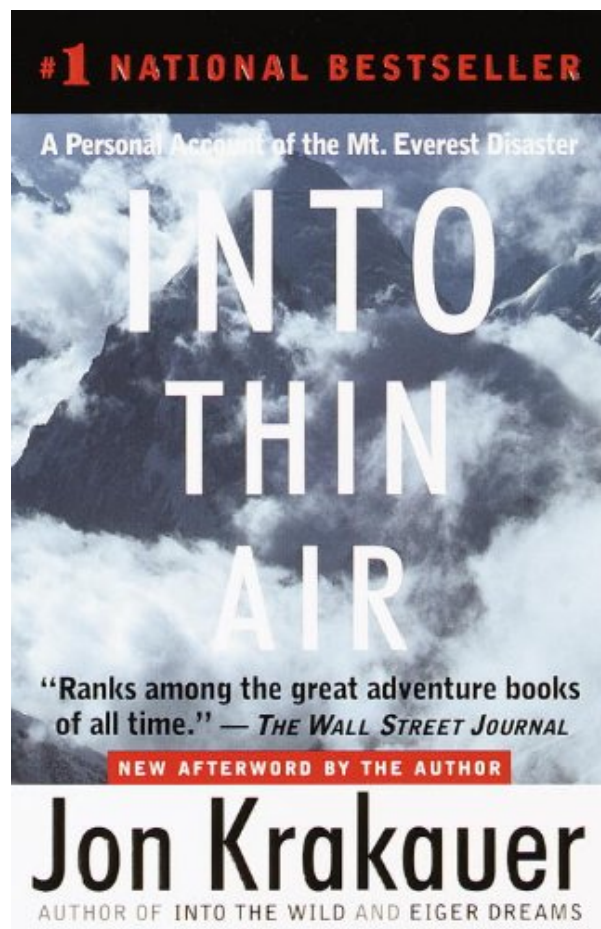


# INTO THIN AIR: A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE MT. EVEREST DISASTER BY JON KRAKAUER



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A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster

# INTO THIN AIR

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**NEW AFTERWORD BY THE AUTHOR**

# Jon Krakauer

AUTHOR OF INTO THE WILD AND EIGER DREAMS

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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 denouncement 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."

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Most helpful customer reviews

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Very Excellent Book For Anyone With An Interest In Mount Everest

By T-Rex 5

This is a superb, well-crafted, true story about the 1996 disaster on the Nepal side of Mount Everest. This book will be of interest both to people into mountaineering, and people who know nothing about mountaineering. I am dismayed by the 1 star reviews of this very excellent book, the criticisms just do not ring true. Krakauer writes a very fair and non-biased appraisal of the event. He goes into detail about all the personalities, on both Hall's & Fischer's teams, but also other teams on the mountain that he interacted with. He gives a step-by step dramatic retelling of all the events leading up to, and following the Everest storm that claimed several lives. The book is not written so technical as to be confusing to someone with no mountaineering experience, but it contains enough detail to make it relevant to those with mountain climbing experience. Rather than placing blame, he looks at areas where better decisions could have been made (including himself, even though he was a paying client and had no direct responsibility to anyone on his team)--this discussion is (and already has been) of value in future mountain-climbing endeavors. For example, Boukreev used supplemental oxygen on his guiding expeditions after the Everest disaster. Later editions of the book contain a post-script in which he answers criticisms by Boukreev. This story is historical, its well known how it will end, but Krakauer's version brings this story to life in a way that newspaper articles can not. His book is a beautiful memorial to the people on his team who lost their lives, and to Scott Fischer. The only thing lacking from this book, is there was no discussion on how the storm affected and caused tragedy on the teams ascending from the China side of the mountain, but its understandable that Krakauer chose not to include that portion, as he had no personal knowledge of that side.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

I loved this book

By Donna Fuller

I loved this book. Every page I turned made me feel like breathing. It was a wonderful book. I also met Jon



in Richardson Tx. when he gave a lecture about the climb. He is a wonderful amazing person who was my pleasure to meet. If you want to read a real page turner and if you want to get an ideal for what it was like to climb Everest on that fateful climb I highly recommend this book to everyone. I was working at a Beauty Salon in Dallas at the time that Jon came to Richardson Tx, to give his account of fateful events on this climb. I passed the book on to everyone in the Salon and they equally loved it.

My husband and I actually were following the climb when we came home from work every day and listened to live feed coming from the climb on our computers. We heard Rob and his Wife talking to one another which was truly heart breaking. I never imagined that Rob wouldn't make the climb back. I blame Doug for Rob's death. I would have left Doug behind and sent someone else back for him. Doug should have never been on this Mountain and Rob should have left him long before the Storm moved in.

The story that Jon tells here will amaze you and you won't be able to turn the pages fast enough. I loved the book and meeting Jon in person was a once in a life time experience.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Impressive and factual. Fascinating read.

By Mimmo Panunzio

I really enjoyed reading this account of events in 1996. I feel Mr Krakauer was able to put ego aside and with extensive research and interviews to back up his personal experience, present a morbidly fascinating insight. I also felt a great deal of compassion in his account towards fellow climbers and even critics in the main body and afterwords.

It must take great discipline to write about such a deeply personal event with such diligence towards fact and wherever speculation was presented the reader was always made aware, and repeated attempts to offer technical/clinical explanations for behaviours that seem out of character or normal behaviour.

I remember hearing about this tragedy when it happened but was only inspired to learn more after seeing the highly holywoodized movie Everest. This book truly reminded me how important separating fact from fiction/entertainment really is and highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to learn more from a highly endearing account from a humble human and gifted writer who happened to be there.

Thank you to the author for giving us a chance to hear your story and the events as you presented.

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