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Posted on 14 August 2018 By Jon Krakauer

## BOOK ? Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster ?

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I'll be the first to admit that I'm not the biggest fan of non-fiction. I prefer to listen to podcasts or interviews, rather than read straight-up non-fiction about a certain topic. And as someone who isn't particularly interested in climbing or sports in general, this wouldn't be a book that I'd normally read. But I'm so glad that I did. It definitely reads like a memoir, since the author was present for the events of the story. That made it a much palatable read for me, rather than a book about an event where the author does all the research but has no first-hand experience of the thing. However, after having read this, I would definitely read anything else Krakauer has written or writes because he is such an amazing storyteller. I was never bored reading this book. He blends history and personal accounts into a gripping, harrowing, horrifying, fascinating story. It's truly awful, but I couldn't put it down. I'm not sure how I particularly feel about being so interested in reading about a tragedy like this, but I also think it opened my eyes to SO many new things that there is definitely merit to the story. On top of that, I can only imagine it was a story Krakauer felt he had to tell after having lived through it. I will definitely be recommending this book to friends and suggesting it to people who, like me, are hesitant to pick up non-fiction books that aren't memoir. This is not a review. I don't feel like writing a review for this book, but I feel like I should at least say something about it because I did enjoy it. I mean, it did make me utter Jesus Christ out loud more than one time, and I don't often talk to myself while I am reading a book. I almost want to post a picture of a LOLcat with a caption that says "This book wuz gud, but I don't have one." So these are a few things I learned from reading this book: 1. If a person decides to climb Everest, they are likely to encounter dead bodies along the route up to the summit. 2. Lobu je, which is on the way to Everest Base Camp, is a place that overflows with human excrement. While Krakauer was there in 1996, he wrote "Huge stinking piles of human feces lay everywhere; it was impossible not to walk in it." Lovely. Insert: "Want to get away from it all?" commercial here. 3. Without the assistance of Sherpas, it is unlikely that climbers would be able to reach the summit at all. Besides schlepping tons of your crap, they also know the way, and they place climbing ropes and, in some instances, repair ladders, so people will be able to ascend the trickier places. The place would also be a lot dirtier without them because they are partially responsible for removing some of the trash that Everest has accumulated over the years. One camp reported having around a thousand empty canisters of supplemental oxygen. As I said below in a review comment, so I might as well stick it in here, too. 4. In 1996, it cost 65,000 to be a client on a guided tour climbing Everest. 5. It is very easy to develop high-altitude sicknesses and/or hallucinations as a climber gets closer to the summit. In fact, the every-man-for-himself attitude that people had, whether or not they had to have it in order to survive, was a little disturbing. On this particular excursion, two climbers got stuck on the mountain during a storm. They spent the

night at 28,000 feet without shelter or supplemental oxygen and were believed to be dead. The guide sent to look for them the next day found them barely breathing after chipping off three inches of ice from their faces. Believing that they were beyond help, he left them there. One of the climbers, my personal hero, woke up from his coma hours later and was lucid enough to get himself back down to one of the camps. Sure, he lost half an arm, his nose, and all of the digits on his other hand to frostbite, but he's still alive. Oh, and sure, the events that happened on Mt Everest in 1996 were tragic, but I do think the people who climb it know what they are risking.

**BOOK ? Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster ? 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 Including Krakauer S In Guilt Ridden Disarray, Would Also Provide The Impetus For Into Thin Air, Krakauer S Epic Account Of The May Disaster**

i feel beyond guilty for finding so much fascination with what was the most horrific moment in Krakauer's life. i am a terrible human, but i honestly couldn't put this down. there is just something about Krakauer's writing that makes me think his grocery lists are equally alluring and knowing how personal this was for him made this book that much captivating for me. i loved how this is formatted, the way the facts are presented, and how coherent the timeline and his commentary is. just everything about this invites the reader in in such an informative and also highly emotionally way. i truly can't imagine what i would have done or how i would currently feel if i was in his shoes but i am so grateful that he felt the desire to share and document this story so tragic, and yet so fascinating. 4 stars

Find all of my reviews at [Everest](#) has always been a magnet for kooks, publicity seekers, hopeless romantics, and others with a shaky hold on reality. Welcome to one of Kelly's creepy obsessions. Advance apologies this might get rambling. Okay, so I'm totally obsessed with all things Everest and CAN NOT WAIT to see the movie that details the same tragic events which are covered in this book even though just watching the preview in IMAX 3 D made me have diarrhea. I have spent the past month watching EVERYTHING Everest related on Netflix and YouTube. Note I highly recommend the television series Everest Beyond the Limit as well as Ultimate Survival Everest unfortunately the IMAX Everest documentary which was filmed during this fateful 1996 expedition didn't end up so great. Kudos to the filmmakers for attempting to produce a final product, but really once you've watched 8 of your fellow climbers die your heart probably isn't in the project so much. Anyway, back to my bizarre fangirl squealing. Because I'm ignorant I had no clue that Into Thin Air was an Everest book or that it was THE Everest book detailing the storm of the century. Note 2 The film is the same story, but the rights to Krakauer's book were not purchased in order to make it. It's a conglomeration of all of the survivors' memories. I had read Into the Wild and enjoyed Krakauer's ability to spin a tale, but wasn't thrilled with the story as a whole so I put his name on the backburner of authors I would read in the future should I come across him.

Then everyone started reading Missoula Rape and the Justice System in a College Town which brought him back to the forefront and me searching for his books which leads to long story long HOLY SHIT HE WROTE AN EVEREST BOOK Please note I have zero desire to ever attempt to climb Mt Everest or anything higher than a flight of stairs EVER First, I m fat and have resigned myself to the fact that I will always be at least a little bit so Second, I m terrified of heights We re talking I can t climb a stepladder And third, EVEREST Seriously You know what you die of on Everest Your BRAIN F ING SWELLING TO THE POINT WHERE YOUR EYEBALLS BULGE OUT OF YOUR HEAD Either that or you drown on your own lung juices Drowning in water terrifies me, drowning because I was dumb enough to attempt to climb to the height of where a jumbo jet flies is beyond my comprehension All that being said, I did the next best thing to really make me feel part of the action I read this book while walking at a 30% incline on my treadmill Just like being there I m sure I can never wrap my brain around the fact that people spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to go on a vacation where there is a one in four chance of dying rather than reaching the summit That s cray I also am one of the nutters who, although totally obsessed with the climbing of Everest, doesn t really want anyone doing it Everest is one of the natural wonders in the world and due to the cool factor that one gets should they reach make it safely to the top and back down again it is also the home of 10 tons of garbage and heaping pyramids of human waste It s also a place where inexperienced adventure seeking overgrown children think they can buy their way to the top, but as Rob Hall one of the expedition leaders who lost his life to the mountain said With enough determination, any bloody idiot can get UP this hill The trick is to get back down alive For a price of between 50,000 to 100,000 nearly anyone can attempt to make the climb and many believe the hiring of Sherpas and the hopes of being short roped if the going gets tough will let them achieve their dream While Krakauer was lucky enough to be matched up with some experienced climbers between Rob Hall and Scott Fischer s groups there was TONS of publicity advertising money at stake so they needed everyone to summit safely in order to promote their expedition companies they were still a rag tag team of climbers that mixed expedition leaders, guides, sherpas, a lawyer, several doctors, a personnel director, a publisher, a postal worker and a journalist together The reality of an Everest expedition is this once you re at altitude and the shit hits the fan You might as well be on the moon And with the price being one that the wealthy can easily afford or that the middle class can save a lifetime for in order to achieve the biggest bucketlist item out there , Mt Everest doesn t even have to throw the curveball of bad weather This is often times the kiss of death With the summit visable from this vantage point, climbers are nearly impossible to turn around leading to a greater chance of hypothermia, frostbite, not making the descent before dark, running out of oxygen, etc In my opinion, it should cost a million dollars per person to climb Everest That would be enough money for clean up and deter the wannabe super wo men from attempting the climb Because seriously, while this book was fascinating in a watching

a trainwreck type of way it should have served as Exhibit A of why massive changes in the rules regulations regarding Everest needs to happen. Recommended to anyone who likes to experience adventure and defy death from the safety of their reading chair My only advice is to familiarize yourself with the specific locations which are continually talked about with respect to the Everest climb Places like the Lhotse Face, Khumbu Icefall or the Hillary Step It s easy to forget the danger that is the Khumbu Icefall if you don t know that this is what it looks like. Note to self take climbing Everest off bucket list. Utterly harrowing and propulsive I could not put this book down This is another book that details people s misguided quests to conquer nature to see nature as something to be conquered It s also another great cold weather read, to make you realize that, really, it s not so cold out after all. This book suddenly became very relevant no less than TEN climbers have died this week 18 25 May 2019 on Everest The reason for this horrible turn of events is given as inexperienced guides leading inexperienced climbers combined with the usual weather restrictions leading to these ghastly insane queueing situations Yes, that s the top of the highest mountain in the world Anyway, original review follows

**TEENAGE HAIR KISSING BOOK DEFACER** This is the most defaced book I ever read It must have been used in a school at one point Up to page 69 there are two different people highlighting passages in pink and green but then in the margins, suddenly there is this Katie is Eric s fave, to bad for him, he is silly, I hope he s a good kisser And then on page 77, which otherwise would be blank This is the most boring book I have ever read, I swear if anyone read this book by choice they are the biggest idiot in the world Jason is such a dork Jonathan has been a fag lately I HATE THIS BOOK It will be funny when you ask Jason if he kisses our your hair Ask is he kisses your hair, then if he kisses anyone elses hair Always Spicy On page 88, in a different hand, we read Eric Conner, Feb 24 2000 he asked me out And on page 107 Troy is hot but I never said that And her friend writes We should go to the movies, you, me, Troy Eric coz they re friends Troy s hot, so you could have fun Okay, I will spare you the rest There s a poignant contrast between this dreamy teen hair kissing and the terror stricken narrative that Jon Krakauer patiently lays down here It s clear that the teenagers just didn t connect to the story, and in some ways I can see why In an attempt to be scrupulously correct, JK almost turns the events which killed eight people on Everest on 10 11 May 1996 into a stolid police report

**THE GULF OF COMPREHENSION BETWEEN MOUNTAINEERS AND NORMAL PEOPLE** Mountaineers voluntarily put themselves in harm s way, spend loads of money on their own obsessive self centred dreams and then expect to be congratulated by the rest of us for their feats Lugging your mortal flesh into very high altitudes is madness There was no forgetting that we were than three miles above sea level Walking left me wheezing for several minutes If I sat up too quickly, my head reeled and vertigo set in The deep rasping cough I d developed worsened by the day Sleep became elusive Most nights I d wake up three or four times gasping for breath, feeling like I was suffocating Cuts and scrapes refused to heal My appetite vanished my arms and legs gradually began to wither to

sticklike proportions This was at 16,200 feet The summit of Everest is 29,000 feet The further you go up, the likely you are to get HAPE high altitude pulmonary edema , where you froth blood, lapse into a coma and die or HACE High altitude cerebral edema , where you become deranged, lapse into a coma and die Krakauer is also keen to deny that mountaineers are adrenalin junkies We lubbers may imagine that when they get to the summit they experience some great euphoria Not at all, he says Getting up a mountain is grinding your way through great pain in the knowledge that getting back down from the summit is dangerous than getting up to it Mountaineering does not sound like a healthy outdoor pursuit to me.

### THE MOUNTAINEERING CLASS SYSTEM

Climbing the big mountains like Everest is very dangerous, but it s popular A lot of ridiculous rich white people want to do it So they join guided expeditions On an Everest expedition there are three classes of people. The guides these are the white expert mountaineers who organise everything and guarantee client safety The clients these are the rich white people who have nothing better to do We know they are rich because it costs an arm and a leg to be a member of an Everest expedition The Sherpas these are the Nepalese guys who do the actual manual labour of lugging all the rich white people s food and essentials from base camp to camp 2 to camp 3 to camp 4 and back again along with making sure the white people don t kill themselves in the fifty different ways available to them Sherpas put in the route, set up the camps, did the cooking, hauled all the loads This conserved our energy and vastly increased our chances of getting up Everest This enforced client passivity earns these guided expeditions great contempt in other radical mountaineering circles That s not really climbing a mountain at all, they say These rich clients have no mountaineering skills themselves It s like herding rich white sheep And some of the haughty sneerers also say that using oxygen tanks is cheating too They say that you can only say you ve climbed Everest if you do it without Sherpas and without oxygen And guess what, some of these hard core guys have gone right ahead and climbed Everest without Sherpas and without oxygen, and when they got to the top they looked down on everyone else, you can bet your life.

### THE TURN ROUND TIME

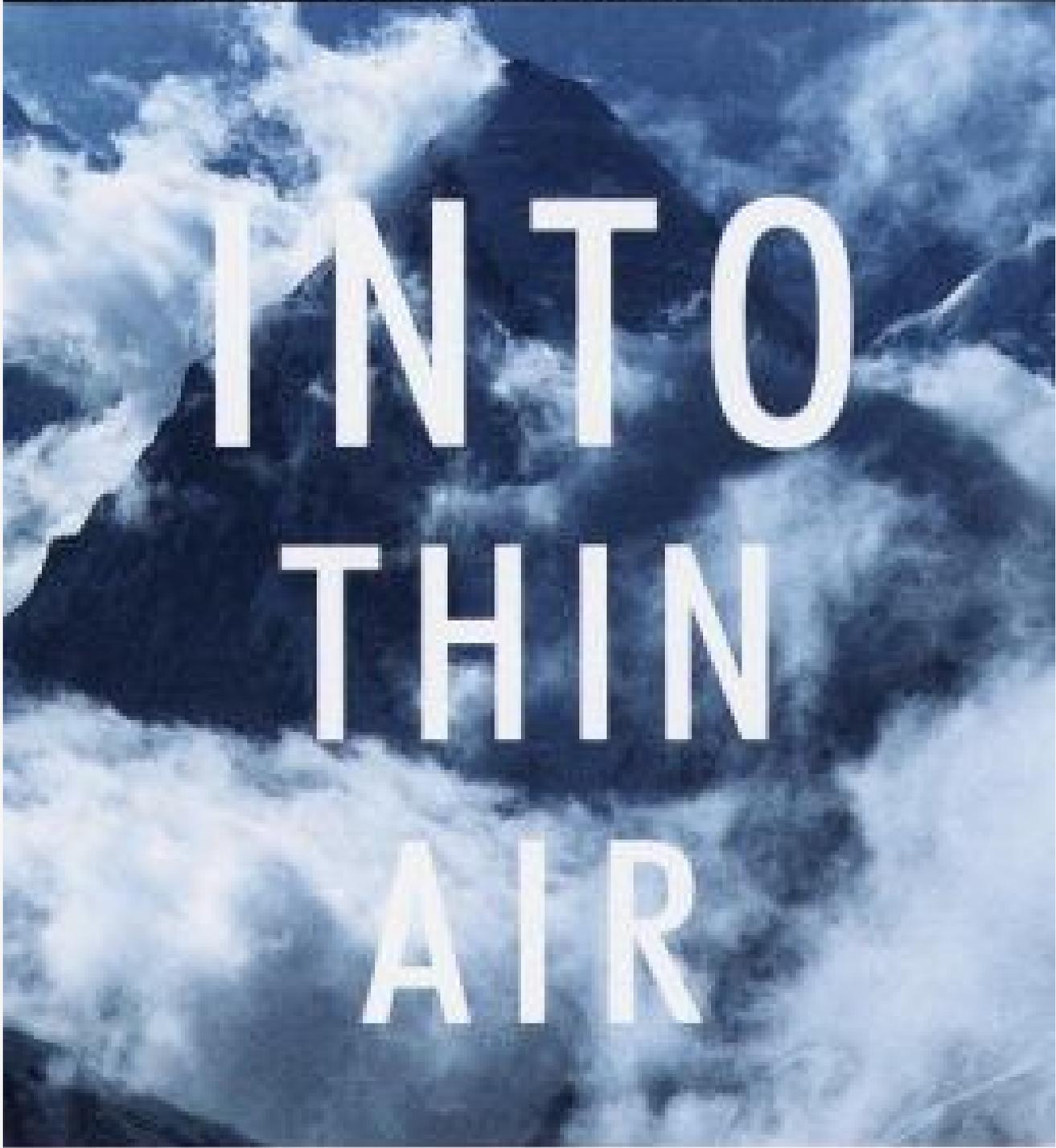
Into Thin Air is sometimes flawed by not explaining important concepts clearly enough for us non climbers One crucial concept was the TURN ROUND TIME This was a big part of why eight people died and it took me a while to work out why On the day your team is going to reach the summit the guide will announce a turn round time, usually 2 pm This means that wherever the client is, they must turn round and begin descending at that time, even if they haven t reached the summit yet They might be only 30 minutes away but they must turn round and start descending How ultimately frustrating There were several companies guiding clients to the summit on 10 May 1996 and one of them was new and very keen to get all of its clients to the summit So keen that they allowed some stragglers to continue to the summit up to 4pm that day According to JK, this contributed to some clients getting swallowed up in the sudden blizzard that hit the summit in the afternoon No one saw it coming But there was a whole tangle of wrong decisions that

day, including some made by JK himself. It's a complicated picture, but to complicate it further, at least one other book has been published slagging off the conclusions and accusations made by JK in this book. So, a self-inflicted confused disaster, many of the details of which are disputed. At the end of it all, I was convinced than ever that I will never, ever understand the motivations of many of my fellow human beings.

**RELEASE THE KRAKAUER** seriously, it is time to just raze everest and be done with it already. I mean, it's big and impressive but it is just taking up all this room and killing people so why do we even need it any? Can't we just get over it really, I think it has reached its peak and is all downhill from here. Shameless punning aside, so this started out as an article that KRAKAUER was asked to write for Outside magazine about the commercialization of everest. It should embarrass us that something that costs 75,000 dollars to even attempt even has the potential to become commercialized. For example, I just balked at shelling out 7.17 for the sandwich I am eating and like everest, it is kind of crappy how misplaced is our spending for fifty bucks a toe, I will chop yours right off and you can pretend you climbed everest and had a gay old time. Everyone wins but there are purists who think that there was golden age of everest and everything since then has just been compromised and now everest is a trash heap full of inconvenient dead bodies and empty oxygen bottles and really just anyone can climb everest so it isn't even a challenge any. **THAT IS THE KIND OF ATTITUDE THAT EVEREST WILL FUCKING KILL YOU FOR HAVING** do not climb everest it is a trap when I was making this year's Thanksgiving meal, I decided to have a little fun and incorporate things I learned from everest into the prep because I had soooo many brussels sprouts to prepare, as well as parsnips, carrots, beets, sweet and regular potatoes, turnips, onions, cauliflower, etc. It was a lot of peeling and I tried to see how many I could peel while holding my breath, and what that did to my motor skills. All I learned is that I really like to breathe and any activity in which I cannot breathe is not for me. By the end, I was weeping, KRAKAUER wouldn't give up. He would chop allllll the brussels sprouts but from everything I have read of everest, note two books it is **THE WORST** all of the reaching of the summit which should be time for celebration is always so anticlimactic. You can't stay up there very long because humans need to breathe and all there is no fireplace and hot cocoa like at the top of the Viennese Alps, and then there is the small matter of **DESCENDING** all that bullshit and putting up with for ten seconds of experience I gave all that up in high school, thank you very much. Oh shit I have class now I will review later. Okay, so I went to class I learned some stuff. And I don't have much to say about this. It is not as action-packed as Peak, and a lot of it reads like KRAKAUER working through his personal demons and dealing with his culpability, but it is still interesting. I still think everest is unnecessary. It is like a hot fourteen-year-old who needs that kind of temptation, right? Oh, and also, this seriously everest who needs it. I recently attended the Banff Mountain Film Festival in Canada. One of the key speakers was Simone Moro, the close friend of Anatoli Boukreev, the climber who was killed in an avalanche several years ago on Annapurna and whom Krakauer pretty much

vilifies in this book as not having done enough to save the lives of those caught in the blizzard on Mount Everest in May of 1996. Needless to say, the vibe in the room was chilly whenever the subject of Krakauer's version of events came up; he was accused of slander and some in the room even claimed that he had not done much himself to save the lives of those in danger during the Everest disaster. Nevertheless, as a reader of climbing nonfiction, I stand by Krakauer. I have always found his account of the Everest disaster an intensely moving and thought-provoking one. Like Joe Simpson's books, *Into Thin Air* reveals its speaker to be a climber with a conscience. Krakauer loves climbing but is completely honest about the fact that such a dangerous sport so often puts one in the agonizing position of having to make life-or-death decisions under conditions that make clear thinking nearly impossible: the cold, the lack of oxygen, the immense strain on the body at that great elevation. One gets the sense while reading that he is trying to make sense of this crazy sport as he writes, that this book is his process of figuring out the answer to the question with all of the dangers and fatalities that result from climbing Everest, why on earth do people actually sign themselves up for this kind of thing? In the years since I first picked up this book, I have discovered many other great climbing books in the adventure genre, although Krakauer's remains one of my all-time favorites. For accounts of the Everest disaster, see also Boukreev's *The Climb* and Beck Weathers' *Left for Dead*. If you enjoy Krakauer's writing, you might also enjoy Nando Parrado's *Miracle in the Andes*, a true account of the narrow escape of some members of a Uruguayan rugby team that survived by any means necessary and I do mean ANY means necessary: two grueling months in the Andes after their plane crashed in the mountains on the way home from a game. In addition, Joe Simpson's *Touching the Void* is a similarly remarkable story of a climber who survives unlikely odds after breaking his leg on the side of the mountain Siula Grande in Peru. There are also movie versions of both, titled *Alive* and *Touching the Void*, respectively. In addition, a movie version is due out soon for one of Krakauer's other wilderness adventure books, *Into the Wild*.

A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster



INTO  
THIN  
AIR

**Jon Krakauer**

AUTHOR OF INTO THE WILD

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