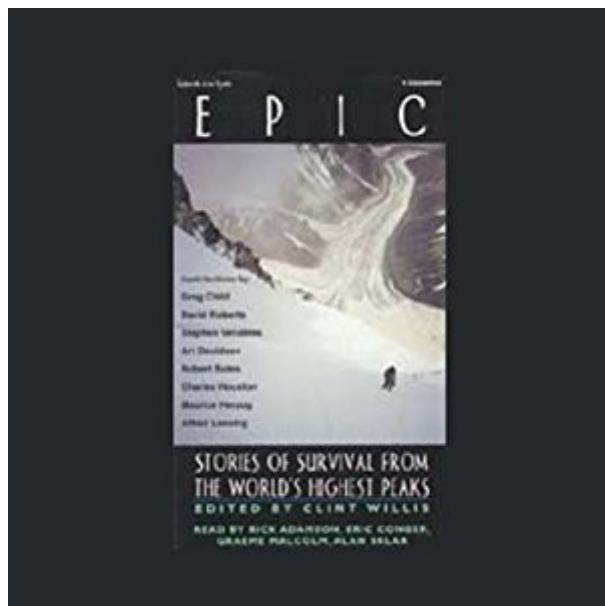


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# Epic: Stories Of Survival From The World's Highest Peaks



## **Synopsis**

"Epic" is a mountaineering term that evokes a sense of treacherous disaster. The climb that went wrong: fighting blinding snowstorms and horrific avalanches; days spent tentbound running low on food, water, and oxygen; surviving broken bones and shattered spirits. This program offers a collection of the most memorable accounts of legend-making expeditions to the world's most famous peaks, often in the worst possible conditions.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I have enjoyed all the books in this series of adventure...or misadventure...stories told by a wide variety of writers, people who were actually there to do the deed and then lived long enough to tell the tale.

An excellent collection of stories for the armchair mountaineer. A great way to preview the writers before finding and reading their other works.

This book is like a sampler box of climbing stories. It's not a bad collection, but in the end it's a rather unsatisfying meal. The problem is that most of the stories are excerpts from books, making it hard for readers to fully understand the context of the events they're reading about. It's as if you're suddenly thrown into a dramatic scene on the edge of a mountain without knowing who your climbing partners are or how you got there. Also, several of the stories leave the reader hanging at the end. The best story of them all was John Climaco's "Dangerous Liaisons," a tale of his

exasperating battle with the arrogant Pakistani liaison officer who ruined his expedition. (Ironically, it is only tangentially about climbing.) I also liked Art Davidson's tale of being pinned down in a storm on Mt. McKinley, one of those stories where you can practically feel the chill wind down your back and the frostbite in your toes. Still, it is one of the excerpts that leaves the reader wondering what happens next. In all, readers interested in mountain climbing stories will be better served by seeking out the original books from which these stories are taken.

A rather commercial book! This is a compilation of reports of well known mountaineers on their glorious deeds on the highest and also mostly exploited mountains of the world, the Mt. Everest and the K2. It comprises a period of 60 years. Among the writers are exclusively protagonists, such names as Messner, Smythe, Bonatti, Bonington and others who report about their personal experiences. Triumph and tragedy are nowhere so much close together as in the high altitude mountaineering. This becomes clear with this collection of stories. But thirst for glory and self-affirmation are also always included. They only remain unspoken mostly. So far mountaineers are always egoists. And this is often in conflict with the ethos which regards man as superior to his deeds. Of these one can read a lot, self-criticism is not the potency of the aspirant up-coming. Is this all not going to become boring in the era of commercialization of those peaks and of the purchasability of adventures? No, because human tragedies as well as man's victories are again fascinating. And it is not always the big deals! Fears and longings! Joys and grief! The one is tested hard when he climbs above a precipice on an alu-ladder on Everest North Col, the other is longing for the sunrise over China which will lessen the icy wind on the K2 and bring some warmth for the freezing hands and feet. Nobody is satisfied with the spectacular views from base camp! In the death zone everybody is for himself, is often asserted. Matt Dickinson's contribution tries to make this clear. He climbed the mountain 1996, at the same time as Lene Gammelgard, for who it was also the first adventure of such impact. She also wrote a report on the drama of these days. Mountains are mainly high, but mostly they have deep impact (and depth effect). And this even before you are up on them! Gale Rowell's and Brummie Stoke's extractions from "In the throne room of the mountain Gods" and "Soldiers and Sherpas" they are in contrast to the others. Rowell is documenting the dissensions among the expedition participants. "The alliances, often called conspiracies from the others, are mostly nothing else but expression of the bilateral egoism." You ally yourself for the "common" goal to be the first on the summit! These kinds of contradictions are sometimes expensive to pay! Stoke depicts the painfulness and difficulties somebody who returns to his normal life has to face in case of serious frost-bites. The simple life is sometimes frightening

mean and unheroic! Mountaineering is shrinking to a silly hobby! And when Gammelgards spiritual balance after the survival of the 1996 tragedy is just: "The true, final valid rule is properly that nature does not allow to be controlled", then everybody knows that even mountaineers are teachable - and down to Earth! Sometimes you have to suffice with the little things! The contribution of David Roberts has to be underlined. The German Kurt Wiesner was the leader of the US-expedition of 1939 in the course of which four mountaineers lost their lives. Wiesner had been blamed for this very long - unjustified. In fact Wiesner refrained from the very close summit success in favour of security. Robert is adjusting this. The texts contain not the most important successes on these mountains, instead they were chosen after the principle that they should be entertaining. This they do. But you get only half of the story and less. And this is not really satisfying. Whoever is more interested in a chronological or historic description, is better served with Walt Unsworths "Everest" or Jim Curran's "K2".

This book is a collection of short stories about some very very very difficult climbings in the most dangerous places(mountains) under the most terrible conditions. Among the stories are some classics like: The West Ridge-Everest(1.st ascent - Hornbein & Unsoeld); Annapurna(1.st ascent - Herzog version); k2 The Savage Mountain(The Schoening belay - by Bates and Houston); McKinley winter's ascent(by Art Davidson). The book provides a good taste of the difficulties a climber must surpass in order to succeed(survive), the only downpoint is that some stories just missed a more traditional ending, basically because in the end you don't know what happened to the climbers, you can only assume they survive.

Like everybody else, I read "Into Thin Air" and bought more mountaineering books, this being one. Luckily, climbers tend to be a pretty literary lot, because the basic theme of all these books is : Damn, we're out of food/its cold/ I can't feel my feet/hands/nose/my brain is swelling up/I lost my way/tent/sleeping bag/gloves/I almost (or you DID) fall off this cliff. All this is followed by the endless anticlimax of the summit if reached and, worst of all, endless navel contemplation about the meaning of it all. I don't know why this stuff is so compelling, but there it is. I read this book in four sittings when I had a lot of more important stuff to do. Then I went out and bought Everest: The West Ridge by Tom Hornbein. And I live in Florida , have never been higher than 5,000 feet and have never climbed anything higher than the roof of my house. Go figure. I will say that these mountaineering books have a significant collateral benefit - they scare the hell out of the wife.

This book is essentially a compilation of short stories from books written by world class mountaineers. Anyone who is well read in this genre will immediately recognize these short stories. The stories are exceptionally well written and edited. Some are epic survival tales and others document the never ending string of tragedies that befall many mountaineering expeditions. The format works well even though the stories are in no particular time sequence. I highly recommend this book, and many of the other books from which the stories have been excerpted. Pick some of your favorite short stories from this book and follow up with the complete tomes. You will not be disappointed.

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