PDF | K2: Life and Death on the World's Most Dangerous Mountain

by Ed Viesturs and David Roberts
A thrilling chronicle of the tragedy-ridden history of climbing the world’s most difficult and unpredictable mountain, by the bestselling authors of The Mountain and No Shortcuts to the Top

Ed Viesturs, one of the world’s premier high-altitude mountaineers, explores the remarkable history of K2 and of those who have attempted to conquer it. At the same time, he probes the mountain’s most memorable sagas in order to illustrate lessons about the fundamental questions mountaineering raises—questions of risk, ambition, loyalty to one’s teammates, self-sacrifice, and the price of glory. Viesturs knows the mountain firsthand. He and renowned alpinist Scott Fischer climbed it in 1992 and got caught in an avalanche that sent them sliding to almost certain death before Ed managed to get into a self-arrest position with his ice ax and stop both his fall and Scott’s.

Focusing on seven of the mountain’s most dramatic campaigns, from his own troubled ascent to the 2008 tragedy, Viesturs crafts an edge-of-your-seat narrative that climbers and armchair travelers alike will find unforgettable. With photographs from Viesturs’s personal collection and from historical sources, this is the definitive account of the world’s ultimate mountain, and of the lessons that can be gleaned from struggling toward its elusive summit.

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Exclusive: Christopher Reich Reviews K2: Life
Is there anything more enthralling than a true tale of high adventure well told? Stories about men and women braving impossible odds under daunting conditions in far flung locales, often risking life and limb, keep me glued to the page every time. I’m talking about books like *Papillon*, *Alive*, *Into Thin Air* and *The Perfect Storm*. Well, today, I’m happy to add another book to that list. *K2: Life and Death on the World’s Most Dangerous Mountain* by Ed Viesturs with David Roberts.

*K2* is the world’s second tallest mountain. Located in the Karakoram Range in northern Pakistan, it has more than earned its nickname as the "world’s most dangerous mountain." Just a year ago, thirteen climbers lost their lives on the mountain in a single day. A few mountains may have killed a higher ratio of those who have tried to climb them, notably Annapurna, but none combine the danger, lore, and prestige of K2. In Viesturs’ new book, he tells the story of six expeditions to the fabled mountain. Some successful. Some ill-fated. All spellbinding.

First, a word about the author. Ed Viesturs is widely acknowledged to be among the world’s top five living mountaineers. In 2005, he became the first American to summit all fourteen of the world’s 8000 meter peaks. And he did so without supplemental oxygen. (His fine memoir, *No Shortcuts to the Top* chronicles that adventure.) To offer but one example of his prodigious skills, Viesturs once climbed 7,000 feet from an altitude of 16,000 feet to 23,000 feet up a near vertical slope in only eight hours. Did I mention he was carrying a forty-pound pack on his back? The man is to mountaineering what Michael Jordan is to basketball. If that is, Michael Jordan had risked losing his life every time he stepped onto the basketball court.

Be impressed. Be very impressed.

In *K2*, Viesturs recounts the most dramatic expeditions to the mountain and he does so in today’s frank and honest terms. Older tellings followed the time honored "gentlemen’s code" of ne’er speaking poorly of one’s climbing partners. To read, "The White Spider," by Heinrich Harrer, the story of the first ascent of the Eiger Nordwand written over fifty years ago, is to believe that anyone who ever strapped on a helmet and a harness was "noble fellow," or a "strong willed lad," whose motivations were as pure as knight seeking the Holy Grail. Viesturs sifts through such rose hued accounts and casts today’s halogen spot light on them. Friendly disagreements amongst climbing pals become knock down, drag out arguments between the fiercest of rivals. Mild discomfort morphs into severe frostbite that costs a man his fingers and toes. And an analysis of where a climber might better have situated an upper altitude camp becomes an indictment of attempted murder. The best example is to compare *The Green Berets* versus *Platoon*. Both are about Vietnam; but one is quite a bit more realistic than the other. Similarly, Viesturs’ modern updating makes for fascinating reading.

In a sense, *K2: Life and Death on the World’s Most Dangerous Mountain* is a book written by a mountaineer for mountaineers. Afterall, Viesturs is telling the same story over and over again. But that is exactly what lends the book its magic. Though all of the expeditions shared the same goal, each followed its own unique course. In fact, I often felt as if Viesturs were describing a different mountain altogether. The lesson I took away from this outstanding piece of nonfiction is that K2 seemed to somehow alter its very topography to defeat the "strong-willed lads" and "noble fellows" who tried to conquer it.
And it succeeded much too often.

Product Description

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