



NEVEREST New Insights: Inside Scott Fischer's Mountain Madness Expedition (A #SHAKEDOWN TITLE Book 8)

Nick van der Leek

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In 2006 freelance photojournalist and amateur climber Nick van der Leek wrote a five page analysis of the 1996 Everest disaster titled MOUNTAIN MADNESS, and published in HEARTLAND magazine. His distillation was described at the time by THE CLIMB co-author, Weston DeWalt, as ‘the clearest exposition of the 1996 disaster I have ever seen’.

Now, nine years later, having honed his penmanship within the rigors and deceits of the True Crime genre, Nick van der Leek is taking on the Everest narrative once more but with a fresh approach.

Compared to his 2006 article, NEVEREST is a much larger and deeper analysis of the events leading up to ‘the deadliest day on Mount Everest [May 10]. Van der Leek makes no bones about the purpose of this narrative: “We’ll be treating the 1996 disaster as a criminal investigation; and the mountain itself as a crime scene.”

From this unique and fascinating vantage point the reader is dragged back into a deadly ‘storm over Everest’, one that brings readers and amateur climbers face to face with something more terrifying than the mountain itself. What are the motives of the men climbing the world’s tallest mountain? What Van der Leek manages to achieve in NEVEREST is to show the naked ambition and base morality of many of the men and women who returned from the dismal heights to a hero’s welcome. What if some of them weren’t heroes?

Using the psychology ‘it takes a thief to catch a thief’ professional photojournalist and one time climber of Kilimanjaro, Nick van der Leek demystifies the heroism of climbing. “The question is whether climbing a real mountain is an authentic process towards growing ones symbolic self, and the question is whether climbing the world’s highest mountain means accessing the highest parts of the self.” Would we climb that mountain if there were no picture taken at the top? Would we still push for the summit if it meant coming back and not telling a soul?

By following the narrative of the MOUNTAIN MADNESS team, Van der Leek investigates and cross references what Scott Fischer’s mostly American crew and clients did right as opposed to their rivals on Everest: Adventure Consultants [five members of Hall’s team died on the mountain including Rob Hall].

As Van der Leek pursues an explanation to account for this incongruity he finds and then mines the golden thread buried within the great mountain. Were the teams locked in a deadly rivalry, or did they just run out of oxygen and time? Was it the weather or human error or the result of something else? What role did hubris play in Everest’s deadliest day, and what role does it play in your life?

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