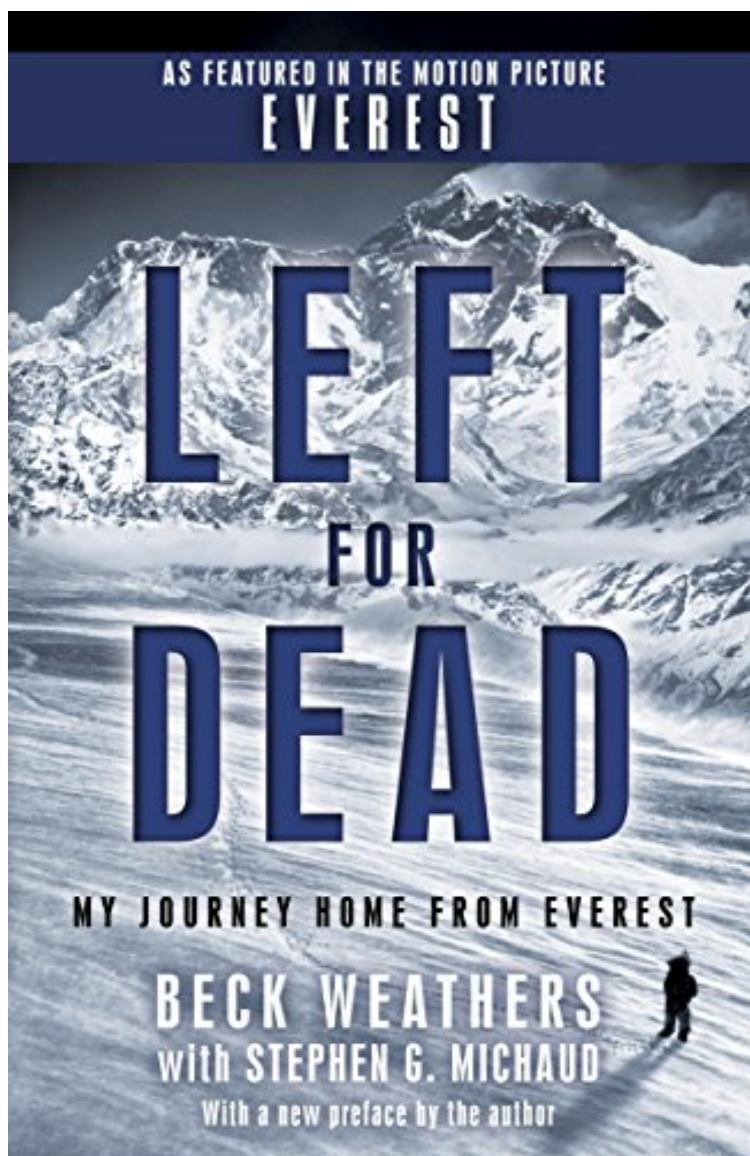


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Left for Dead: My Journey Home from Everest



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Par Beck Weathers, Stephen G. Michaud : **Left for Dead: My Journey Home from Everest** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Left for Dead: My Journey Home from Everest:

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWith a new preface by the author As featured in the upcoming motion picture Everest, starring Jason Clarke, Josh Brolin, John Hawkes, Robin Wright, Emily Watson, Keira Knightley, Sam Worthington, and Jake Gyllenhaal I can tell you that some force within me rejected death at the last moment and then guided me, blind and stumblingquite literally a dead man walkinginto camp and the shaky start of my return to life. In 1996 Beck Weathers and a climbing team pushed toward the summit of Mount Everest. Then a storm exploded on the mountain, ripping the team to shreds, forcing brave men to scratch and crawl for their lives. Rescuers who reached Weathers saw that he was dying, and left him. Twelve hours later, the inexplicable occurred. Weathers appeared, blinded, gloveless, and caked with icewalking down the

mountain. In this powerful memoir, now featuring a new Preface, Weathers describes not only his escape from hypothermia and the murderous storm that killed eight climbers, but the journey of his life. This is the story of a mans route to a dangerous sport and a fateful expedition, as well as the road of recovery he has traveled since; of survival in the face of certain death, the reclaiming of a family and a life; and of the most extraordinary adventure of all: finding the courage to say yes when life offers us a second chance. Praise for

Left for Dead Riveting . . . [a] remarkable survival story . . . Left for Dead takes a long, critical look at climbing: Weathers is particularly candid about how the demanding sport altered and strained his relationships. USA Today Ultimately, this engrossing tale depicts the difficulty of a mans struggle to reform his life. Publishers Weekly From the Trade Paperback edition. Extrait ONE On the evening of May 10, 1996, a

killer blizzard exploded around the upper reaches of Mount Everest, trapping me and dozens of other climbers high in the Death Zone of the Earths tallest mountain. The storm began as a low, distant growl, then rapidly formed into a howling white fog laced with ice pellets. It hurtled up Mount Everest to engulf us in

minutes. We couldnt see as far as our feet. A person standing next to you just vanished in the roaring whiteout. Wind speeds that night would exceed seventy knots. The ambient temperature fell to sixty below zero. The blizzard pounced on my group of climbers just as wed gingerly descended a sheer pitch known as

the Triangle above Camp Four, or High Camp, on Everests South Col, a desolate saddle of rock and ice about three thousand feet below the mountains 29,035-foot summit. Eighteen hours earlier, we had set out from the South Col for the summit, heartened as we trudged along by a serene and cloudless night sky that

beckoned us ever upward until dawn, when it gave way to a spectacular sunrise over the roof of the world. Then confusion and calamity struck. Of the eight clients and three guides in my group, five of us, including myself, never made it to the top. Of the six who summited, four were later killed in the storm.

They included our thirty-five-year-old expedition leader, Rob Hall, a gentle and humorous New Zealander of mythic mountaineering prowess. Before he froze to death in a snow hole near the top of Everest, Rob would radio a heartbreaking farewell to his pregnant wife, Jan Arnold, at their home in Christchurch. Another sad fatality was diminutive Yasuko Namba, forty-seven, whose final human contact was with me, the two of us

huddled together through that awful night, lost and freezing in the blizzard on the South Col, just a quarter mile from the warmth and safety of camp. Four other climbers also perished in the storm, making May 10, 1996, the deadliest day on Everest in the seventy-five years since the intrepid British schoolmaster, George

Leigh Mallory, first attempted to climb the mountain. May 10 began auspiciously for me. I was battered and blowing from the enormous effort to get that far, but I was also as strong and clearheaded as any forty-nine-year-old amateur mountaineer can expect to be under the severe physical and mental stresses at high altitude.

I already had climbed eight other major mountains around the world, and I had worked like an animal to get to this point, hell-bent on testing myself against the ultimate challenge. I was aware that fewer than half the expeditions to climb Everest ever put a single member client or guide on the summit. But I wanted to join an

even more select circle, the fifty or so people who had completed the so-called Seven Summits Quest, scaling the highest peaks on all seven continents. If I summited Everest, I would have only one more mountain to go. I also knew that approximately 150 people had lost their lives on the mountain, most of them

in avalanches. Everest has swallowed up several dozen of these victims, entombing them in its snowfields and glaciers. As if to underscore its vast indifference to the whole mountain-climbing enterprise, Everest

mocks its dead. The glaciers, slowly grinding rivers of ice, carry climbers shattered corpses downward like so much detritus, to be deposited in pieces, decades later, far below. Common as sudden, dramatic death is among mountain climbers, no one actually expects to be killed at high altitude. I certainly didnt, nor did I

ever give much thought to whether a middle-aged husband and father of two ought to be risking his neck in that way. I positively loved mountain climbing: the camaraderie, the adventure and danger, and to a fault the ego boost it gave me. I fell into climbing, so to speak, a willy-nilly response to a crushing bout of depression that began in my mid-thirties. The disorder reduced my chronic low self-regard to a bottomless pit of despair and misery. I recoiled from myself and my life, and came very close to suicide. Then, salvation. On a family

vacation in Colorado I discovered the rigors and rewards of mountain climbing, and gradually came to see the sport as my avenue of escape. I found that a punishing workout regimen held back the darkness for hours each day. Blessed surcease. I also gained hard muscle and vastly improved my endurance, two novel sources of pride. Once in the mountains (the more barren and remote, the better), I could fix my mind, undistracted,

on climbing, convincing myself in the process that conquering world-famous mountains was testimony to my grit and manly character. I drank in the moments of genuine pleasure, satisfaction and bonhomie out in the wilds with my fellow climbers. But the cure eventually began to kill me. The black dog slunk away at

last, yet I persisted in training and climbing and training and climbing. High-altitude mountaineering, and the recognition it brought me, became my hollow obsession. When my wife, Peach, warned that this cold passion of mine was destroying the center of my life, and that I was systematically betraying the love and loyalty of my family, I listened but did not hear her. The pathology deepened. Increasingly self-absorbed, I convinced myself that I was adequately expressing my love for my wife, daughter and son by liberally seeing to their material needs, even as I emotionally abandoned them. I'm eternally grateful that they did not, in turn, abandon me, although with the mountain of insurance I'd taken out against the possibility of an accident, I should have hired a food taster. In fact, with each of my extended forays into the wild, it became clearer, at least to Peach's unquiet mind, that I probably was going to get myself killed, the recurrent subtext of my life. In the end, that's what it took to break the spell. On May 10, 1996, the mountain began gathering me to herself, and I slowly succumbed. The drift into unconsciousness was not unpleasant as I sank into a profound coma on the South Col, where my fellow climbers eventually would leave me for dead. Peach received the news by telephone at 7:30 a.m. at our home in Dallas. Then, a miracle occurred at 26,000 feet. I opened my eyes. My wife was hardly finished with the harrowing task of telling our children their father was not coming home when a second call came through, informing her that I wasn't quite as dead as I had seemed. Somehow I regained consciousness out on the South Col I don't understand how and was jolted to my senses, as well as to my feet, by a vision powerful enough to rewire my mind. I am neither churchly nor a particularly spiritual person, but I can tell you that some force within me rejected death at the last moment and then guided me, blind and stumbling quite literally a dead man walking into camp and the shaky start of my return to life.

TWO The expedition began with a flight from Dallas on March 27. I had to lay over one night in Bangkok before finally arriving in dusty, bustling Katmandu, the capital of Nepal, on the twenty-ninth. At Tribhuvan International Airport I spied a tall, very athletic-looking fellow waiting in the line to check in. Assuming he was also a climber, I approached him and introduced myself. Sure enough, he was Lou Kasischke, an attorney from Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, who'd come to Nepal to climb Mount Everest, too. Lou and I quickly realized that of all the climbers in our group, we had the most in common. We were both professionals of about the same age and climbing experience, with similar socioeconomic backgrounds. We both were married with kids, and both our wives disapproved of climbing. Over the coming weeks, we would become good friends, as well as tent mates for the expedition. It took a while to get through customs. Not knowing how things are done in Katmandu, I'd made the mistake of acquiring a visa in advance, which meant I'd stand in a line at least ten times longer than any of my visaless fellow travelers. I was far and away the last person on my flight to finally get out of the airport. Outside, I joined up with Lou and a couple of other members of our expedition. A van was waiting to carry us through Katmandu's chaotic traffic to our hotel, the Garuda, an open and airy place and a comfortable haven that clearly catered to a climbing clientele. The walls were covered with posters of the world's great mountains. At the top of the stairway, grinning down on us, was a poster of Rob Hall himself. Katmandu was a busy, hot and friendly place, with numerous tourists and trekkers, plus us climbers. We enjoyed wandering around the city but did no real sightseeing. I put off buying gifts for the children and the usual peace offering for Peach, incorrectly assuming there'd be plenty of opportunity for that when I returned from Everest. Two days later, Rob Hall put us into a Russian-built Mi-17 helicopter, an enormous, shuddering contraption that bore us unsteadily to the 9,200-foot-high Nepalese village of Lukla, where we would begin our trek to Everest itself. It takes about a week to walk through Nepal's rugged Khumbu region from Lukla to Everest Base Camp. This is Sherpa country: high valleys and deep gorges, where the natives, about twenty thousand of them, traditionally have been subsistence farmers and hunter-gatherers. No more, however. The roadless Khumbu is now tourist country. In 1996, an estimated 400,000 tourists swarmed across Nepal, many of them through the Khumbu, a motley herd of foreigners with fistfuls of hard currency to buy food and shelter, trinkets and entertainment. By far the most important among these visitors were questers such as myself, the deep-pocketed (by Sherpa standards) foreigners who arrive each year to climb Sagarmatha goddess of the sky as Everest is known locally. The practical-minded Sherpa have traded their hoes and hunting tools for backpacks to act as porters for the various expeditions. Today, a Sherpa can earn a couple of thousand dollars or more lugging gear up and down the mountain for a typical two-month climbing expedition. That's more than ten times Nepal's annual per capita income. The downside, of course, is that the work is arduous and dangerous: Memorial cairns erected along the upper reaches of the narrow trail to Everest remind you that one in three of those who've died on the mountain has been a Sherpa. In his definitive chronicle of our doomed expedition, *Into Thin Air*, the journalist Jon Krakauer would describe me as garrulous on the walk in. That's probably

charitable. I could have talked the ears off a rubber rabbit. I was eager to be liked, accepted, a member of the group. Under such circumstances, I typically talk a lot. If someone had thrown a Frisbee, I would have caught it with my teeth to please them. The long trail, which rises ever upward through the Khumbu, is the important first step toward preparing yourself to withstand high-mountain conditions that no organism of more than single-cell complexity was ever meant to endure. Its a pleasant trek, in any event, or can be if the route isnt choked with trekkers, climbing parties and the Khumbus ubiquitous yak trains. Every once in a while you come around a turn and there, off in the distance, is this giant rock, nearly six miles high, thrusting its head up above everything around it. On clear days you can see a steady plume of ice and snow streaming for a mile or so off Everests summit. This is the mountains distinctive white banner, highlighted against the cobalt sky, and a signal that the jet stream, with its winds of 150 to 200 miles an hour, is screaming right over Everest, as it does for most of the year. No one tries to reach the top in these conditions. But at one time in the spring, and once more in the fall, the banner fades. The ferocious winds lift off Everest, offering a brief window of opportunity for you to go up there, try to tag the top and then hope that you get back down alive. The Khumbu trail leads up out of the valleys past the treeline to the lower stretches of the twelve-mile-long Khumbu Glacier. At an altitude of approximately sixteen thousand feet you encounter the last settlement of any consequence, a pestilential, medieval hellhole known as Lobuje. One of the ironies of mountain climbing is that in order to achieve the pristine heights, you must inevitably slog through noisome hog wallows such as Lobuje. There is a straightforward explanation for this. Remote settlements like Lobuje were not established with hordes of visitors in mind. Put several hundred humans and the odd herd of yaks together in a primitive hamlet where dried dung soaked in kerosene is the primary fuel, and sanitation a foreign expression, and you get these characteristically foul trailside settlements. In Lobuje, there was the added frisson of knowledge that the hands that piled up the dung also put out your dinner. Our single hope was to get in and out of Lobuje without contracting any major diseases. The second I saw Lobuje I realized there was no way I was going to patronize any of its facilities for travelers. Lou and I decided instead to pitch a tent. We had to scout for some time to find a spot both free of offal and upwind of the dung fires. That season there had been heavy snow on the trail up to Everest Base Camp, about seven miles beyond Lobuje. Yaks still couldnt negotiate the final stretch, meaning that all gear, equipment and food had to be carried the last few miles on human, mostly Sherpa, backs. Even beneath Lobuje the path was steep and deep with snow. At one turn we saw a bloody yak leg sticking straight out of a snowbank. We were told the limb simply had snapped off as the animal had struggled through the snow. In Lobuje, we received word that one of our Sherpas had fallen 150 feet into a crevasse and broken his leg while scouting trails on the mountain above us. We all spent an extra day in Lobuje while Rob Hall and one of his guides went ahead to help manage the Sherpas rescue and evacuation. Everest Base Camp, where you actually begin to climb the mountain at 17,600 feet, is higher than all but two points in the United States, both in Alaska. Interestingly, you cannot see the upper part of Mount Everest from Base Camp. As it is, you are huffing and puffing by the time you get there, and you wonder when you finally arrive, exhausted, just how in the world youre ever going to survive. We arrived on April 7. *Revue de presse Riveting . . . [a] remarkable survival story . . . Left for Dead takes a long, critical look at climbing: Weathers is particularly candid about how the demanding sport altered and strained his relationships.* USA Today Ultimately, this engrossing tale depicts the difficulty of a mans struggle to reform his life. Publishers Weekly From the Hardcover edition.