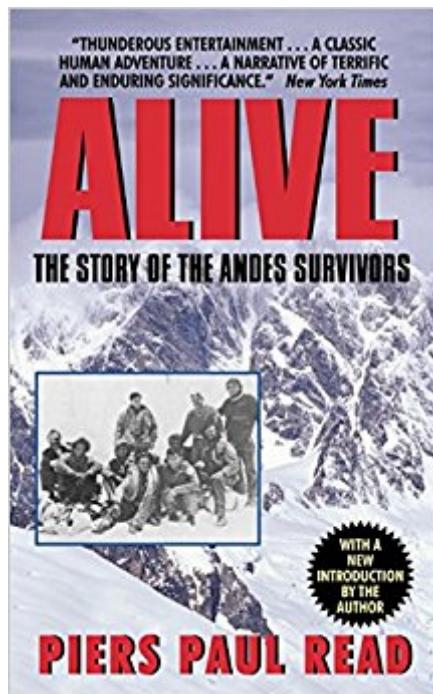


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Alive: The Story Of The Andes Survivors



Synopsis

On October 12, 1972, a plane carrying a team of young rugby players crashed into the remote, snow-peaked Andes. Out of the forty-five original passengers and crew, only sixteen made it off the mountain alive. For ten excruciating weeks they suffered deprivations beyond imagining, confronting nature head-on at its most furious and inhospitable. And to survive, they were forced to do what would have once been unthinkable ... This is their story -- one of the most astonishing true adventures of the twentieth century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book was amazing. There's really no other way to describe it. Read captures magnificently the true story of a rugby team from Uruguay, along with a few relatives and close friends, whose plane crashed in the Andes Mountains on the way to Chile, where the boys were to play against another rugby team. Amidst a sea of death and horror, the people who survived the initial plane crash are forced to take immediate action in order to preserve their lives and the lives of others around them. Only the hope of a rescue that never comes carries the boys through their first few days on the mountain. When they realize that the rescue has been called off, their adventure truly begins. This is a story of brotherhood in the purest sense. Stranded in the freezing Andes, cold, hungry, weak and desperate, the survivors struggle against all odds to remain alive. They prove to be quite inventive and ingenious, using what remains of the plane to create a better world for themselves in the Andes. They maintain hope even as their friends continue to die and in their extreme hunger they are forced to consume the flesh of the corpses. It is their optimism and brightness of spirit that carries the final

sixteen through to the end. In the meantime, their parents and families continue to search for the boys even when the countries of Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina abandon the search. Although many don't see how the boys could still be alive, they do not give up hope. At the end of the book, to see each boy reunited with his family is quite amazing. Words cannot express the depth of feeling that emerges from these pages. The story of the Andes survivors and their families is one that begs to be told. No work of fiction could compare to the inspirational quality of this work.

One of the most striking things to me, while reading this book, was that the author devoted only the barest minimum of text to the actual crash of the plane... barely a third of a page. This alone should illuminate the style in which this book is written. It is not gratuitous, nor fictionalized. Everything is laid out in a straightforward, almost documentary fashion. This approach to telling such an indescribable tale actually serves the story well. The experience of these young men over the 71 days they were lost in the Andes Mountains is simply unfathomable. To cloak the telling of the story in a barrage of parables and adverbs and overwrought descriptions would, I think, diminish the power of its truth: The will of these 16 human beings to survive at all costs rose above every brutal reality thrown at them on a sustained basis for 10 weeks. Truly, it's hard to imagine their plight being much worse. It's equally hard to read this book without being consumed by the question of "What if that was me?" We each doubtlessly like to think that we'd have been one of the 16 survivors, but as each chapter unfolds, I couldn't help but wonder to what extremes could I be pushed before succumbing? Having seen the movie and read the book, I can't help but think that the movie cheated the audience somewhat, first by sanitizing the eating of the dead. For the most part, the survivors were only shown peeling back strips of muscle tissue which looked an awful lot like chicken. I don't think it should have been a major focus in the film, but the reality of cannibalism in the extreme was what enabled these men to survive and cannot be overlooked or brushed aside with only a perfunctory acknowledgement. The book was not remotely indulgent or gratuitous on this issue, but no details were spared.

Time has not diminished the drama of the tale of the Uruguayan rugby team whose plane crashed in the Andes Mountains. Of the forty five people on the plane at the time of the crash, sixteen came down from the mountain about seventy days later with a saga of survival not easily forgotten. Theirs is a journey born of tragedy and human endurance. The author unfolds a tale that is gripping in the telling, as enthralling as it is almost unbelievable. It is investigative reporting at its best, because it does not fail to convey the human drama and pathos behind the story of this remarkable struggle for

survival high up in the Andes Mountains. Masterfully written, it is a well balanced narrative that takes great pains to ground the experience of the survivors in the context out of which it arose. The plane had crashed in the Andes Mountains on Argentinian territory. It was an exercise in terror for those on the plane, as it barreled down the mountain, before finally coming to rest in a valley of snow high up in the Andes. Of the forty five persons on board, thirty two had initially survived the crash. Some, however, had sustained serious injuries. Time would not be their friend. Moreover, with little warm clothing (keep in mind that October is springtime in South America), the survivors were exposed to the extreme cold of the night air, high up in the Andes. Though spring, this still meant temperatures well below freezing. Damp, cold, and hungry, amid the anguished cries of the injured, thus began the first of many such nights. By their tenth day in the Andes, the limited food supplies, which they had rationed with all the care of a miser, had virtually run out. Starving and ravenously hungry, they voiced what they all knew to be true, but had not dared to voice before.

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