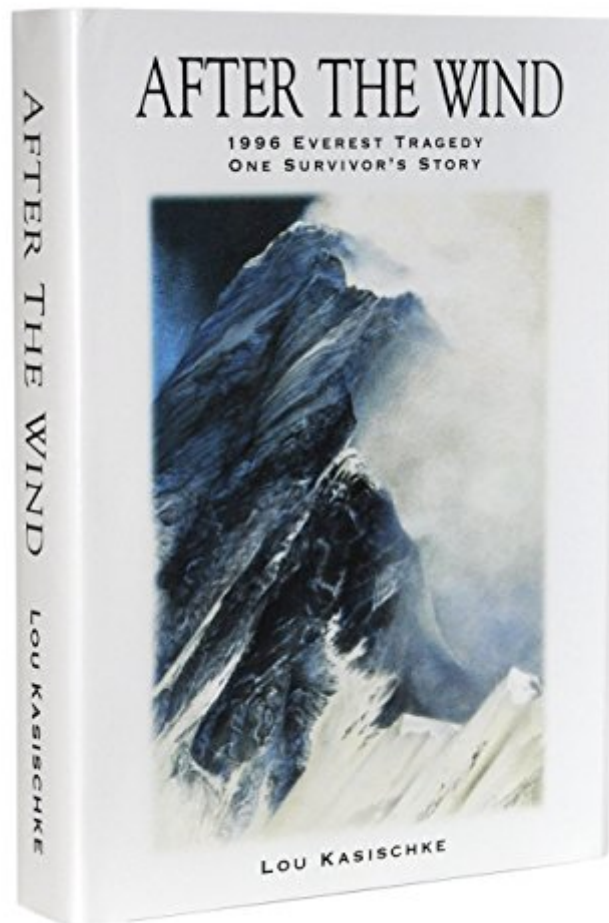


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After The Wind: 1996 Everest Tragedy - One Survivor's Story



Synopsis

Near the top of Mount Everest, on 10 May 1996, eight climbers died. It was the worst tragedy in the mountain's history. Lou Kasischke was there. Now he tells the harrowing story of what went wrong, as it has never been told before - including why the climbers were desperately late and out of time. His personal story, captured in the title *AFTER THE WIND*, tells about the intense moments near the top. These moments also revealed the love story that saved his life. In the spring of 1996, Lou Kasischke joined renowned climber Rob Hall's Mount Everest expedition. When he said goodbye to his wife, Sandy, he knew he faced major physical and mental challenges against rock, snow, ice, avalanches, and extreme high altitude to climb the highest mountain in the world. What Lou didn't know was that he also stood at the threshold of a living hell. Six weeks later near the top, things went wrong. Lou and his fellow climbers faced a challenge even greater than the mountain - the internal struggle about what to do when you are close but out of time. There were no second chances. Decisions were made. Some lived. Some died. It was the worst tragedy in Mount Everest history. Lou wrote his account of the events 16 years ago in the aftermath of the tragedy, but only now is he ready to let it go. He tells two stories. One is about the historic events. His perspective and analysis about what happened and what went wrong have never been told, and his account differs markedly from what others have written. The truth in the story depends on who is telling it. Lou also tells a very personal story about how he came back home. An inspiring story about where to go for inner strength when facing a tough decision. A story about his wife Sandy's part in his survival. A story about what he heard, after the wind - the voice of the heart. A love story. Awards for *After the Wind* Kirkus Reviews Best Nonfiction Books of the Year GOLD MEDAL: Benjamin Franklin Book Award: Best New Voice in Nonfiction BRONZE MEDAL: Foreword Reviews Book of the Year Award: Adventure WINNER: New York Book Festival: Memoir WINNER: National Indie Excellence Book Award: Adventure and Memoir BRONZE MEDAL: Independent Publisher Book Award: Sports WINNER: The Eric Hoffer Award for Independent Books: Memoir WINNER: Shelf Unbound Best Independently Published Book WINNER: Pete Delohery Award for Best Sports Book

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Customer Reviews

Commercial guided expeditions for risky endeavors are more common than ever. So it is interesting and useful to have a rational account presented of the decision making of this survivor, and so far as he can relay it, by Rob Hall, as to why this expedition went so wrong. If you ever join an expedition with similar life threatening risks, it might be useful to you. Some of what might have been motivating Hall is information I had not read before. What motivated the author was love, responsibility, and a desire to return alive and whole to family -- when he could clearly see this expedition was taking the level of risk to an unimaginable level. But why was it raised to that level? I've never understood why Hall continued to guide his group so late, when he knew if they went to summit they were going to run out of oxygen before they returned to the oxygen cache. Apart from the issues of daylight, weather, relative strength, etc, the logistics of oxygen, for those using it, were incompatible with success with that timetable. Hall had to know it, particularly for Hansen - who'd had a problem crashing in the previous year. Hearing Mr. Kasischke relate his problems with his oxygen system, added to complaints from others, made me wonder if that gear was flawed. A bad oxygen system would contribute to the poor decision making. Kasischke relates his own psychology of why he climbs, why he chose the Hall group, his disappointment when Hall made decisions counter to the reasoning he chose him in the first place, and when and why he broke with Hall's leadership when he determined it was fatally flawed. I think all these are useful for anyone who might need to make similar decisions in the future.

While Lou Kasischke's "After the Wind" clearly acknowledges the tradition of narratives written in

the wake of major climbing feats (Maurice Herzog's "Annapurna," David Roberts' "Moments of Doubt," and more recently Jon Krakauer's "Into Thin Air" or Anatoli Boukreev's "The Climb" the latter two both produced within months of the same events described here), Kasischke ultimately transcends the expedition narrative form altogether. Kasischke allowed nearly 18 years to "settle" his thinking about the events on Mount Everest in May of 1996; he applies his considerable skills in both mountaineering and risk assessment to help understand how a series of faulty decisions led to such disastrous consequences even as he leads the reader deeply into his own personal narrative of a gently sophisticated love, not for a mountain or a set of skills, but for his dedicated and understanding, though deeply skeptical, wife. These expedition narratives often employ a subtle passive construction either to emphasize the climbers' frailty in the face of the mountain's power, or to diminish responsibility for decisions with poor outcomes. Kasischke carefully documents the facts that led him to select Rob Hall as his expedition leader; chief among those facts was Hall's apparent ability to make good decisions about route finding, group safety, and weather, even under the pressure of proximity to the summit, clients' expectations, and his own need to build a business of leading paying clients to summit prizes.

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