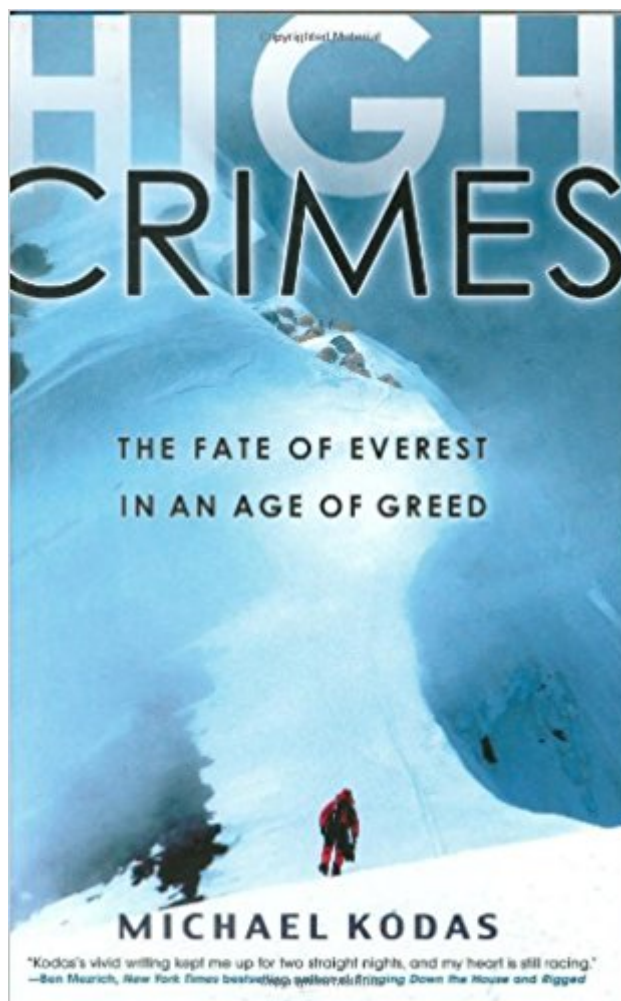


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High Crimes: The Fate Of Everest In An Age Of Greed



Synopsis

"The perfect follow-up to Krakauer's riveting account of a perfect storm."--Miami Herald"Kodas's absorbing description of the narrow moral compass governing human interaction at the top of the world is bound to shock both armchair adventurers and seasoned mountaineers."--Chicago Tribune"(Kodas) discovered more deceit, thievery, and double-crossing among his climbers than you find in a Martin Scorsese gangster film. High Crimes is both an adventure story and an exposé of a sport riddled with danger and corruption."--Washington Post Book World"Kodas's descriptions of the struggles confronting even the best-prepared climbers leave the reader breathless."--Dallas Morning News"[High Crimes] is hair-raising and lays bare the excitement and fear that face great explorers at the top of the world. . . . Well written, and as deftly plotted as the finest mystery novel, Kodas brings to life a disturbing picture of society at high altitude."--Austin Chronicle"Kodas does an excellent job exposing the ways in which money and ego have corrupted the traditional cultures of both mountaineers and their Sherpa guides. . . . His narrative is as hard to turn away from as a slow-motion train wreck."--Publishers WeeklyHigh Crimes is journalist Michael Kodas's gripping account of life on top of the world--where man is every bit as deadly as Mother Nature.

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Customer Reviews

Journalist Kodas has written a disturbing account of stupidity and greed on the slopes of Mount Everest. On assignment for the Hartford Courant in 2004, Kodas joined an expedition led by a couple who had summited the mountain more than a dozen times between them. As he moved up

Everest, Kodalas watched his expedition disintegrate in a mess of recriminations, thefts, lies and violence. At the same time, a sociopathic guide was leading a 69-year-old doctor to his death on the unforgiving slopes. The twin disasters led Kodalas to delve into the commercialization of Mount Everest, and to discover that such experiences were becoming a depressing norm. A thorough reporter, Kodalas does an excellent job exposing the ways in which money and ego have corrupted the traditional cultures of both mountaineers and their Sherpa guides. He also brings a painful focus to the delusions, misunderstandings and indifference that allow climbers to literally step over the bodies of dying people on their way to the top. Oddly enough, Kodalas writes less ably about himself, and the reasons for his own expedition's collapse remain unclear; the sequencing of story lines is confusing as well. Nevertheless, his narrative is as hard to turn away from as a slow-motion train wreck. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"High Crimes is both fascinating and terrifying. As someone who shies away from climbing stairs, let alone mountains, I was completely blown away by the high-stakes drama and intrigue of this Everest story. Kodalas's vivid writing kept me up for two straight nights, and my heart is still racing! The story is tragic, yet somehow also uplifting--a true masterpiece!" -- Ben Mezrich, New York Times bestselling author of *Bringing Down the House* and *Rigged*"Seeking to experience the high ambitions of an Everest climb himself, Michael Kodalas found instead the little-known underworld of the world's tallest peak . . . compelling reading for anyone who thinks mountaineering is a noble pursuit." -- Greg Child, author of *Over the Edge*

I love this type of book (Jon Krakauer's books and some I've read about the Tour de France immediately come to mind), but this one gave me a headache. It's clear that Michael Kodalas put a lot of time and effort into collecting this information, but the format he chose to use is painful. In this book, he is chronicling various misdeeds over a 10+ year period. There are two or three (I'm not even sure) main stories that intersect or at least run somewhat parallel, but it's impossible to keep the characters and timelines straight with all the jumping around. It got to the point where I, who love this type of real story, wanted to toss this one. I was so confused that I just didn't care anymore. I struggled with this rating. It's well written, with no obvious typo/grammatical errors, but I don't know why his editor or publisher didn't suggest another way to tell these stories that would have been more reader-friendly or make the flow more coherent. I'm still not really sure what the "Fate of Everest" is because that wasn't really addressed in the end.

This book jumps around quite a bit between the stories and personalities it uses to illustrate the author's assertion that opportunism and greed are creating an even more dangerous environment for Everest climbers. It is hard to follow the various narratives, and despite the author's believable overarching criticism, much of it focuses on the author's own attempt and it seems to lack the depth of introspection evident in Jon Krakauer's account of Everest in "Into Thin Air." There are so many points in the book where you think, gee, dude, that wasn't enough of a red flag for you to clue in and bail out on this obviously doomed mission? But like many of those he criticizes, he has the same "summit fever" that leads him deep into denial about what is actually going on around him. There is plenty of blame he hands out to his "teammates," some of whom are obviously ethically and morally challenged, but you have to wonder how his own self-centered attitude added to the problem. You don't get the sense that there was any real examination of his own role in the bad situation he found himself in and that is disappointing, coming from someone who is clearly claiming the moral high ground. I'm 3/4 through the book and debating on whether or not to finish it, as it has become too tedious to keep track of the various people and events in the book. Had it been written less from his own point of view, and focused more on other people's experiences (and better organized), it could have been a more worthwhile read.

Journalist and Everest veteran presents a picture of the great mountain as lawless and unregulated as a gold rush town in the 19th century. It is a fascinating account in which theft, fraud, negligence and mayhem are all present and accounted for. On a mountain in which the fragility of life is so evident even small crimes as sleeping in someone's tent and sleeping bag can be life threatening larger crimes can have dire consequences. As Kostas states: "Those attempting to domesticate The Goddess Mother of the Universe with ropes and satellites shouldn't be surprised that she isn't submitting gracefully to being a mere mortal's mountain." At high altitude with little oxygen the brain becomes impaired as does judgment at a time when they are both most needed. Memories blur and the mind becomes confused, reality becomes obscured. The focus becomes the summit and we find people quite willing to step past the dying in their quest for the top. Kostas explains that there are high stakes on Everest money, fame and prestige are all things which will bring out the criminal element. Selling dysfunctional oxygen containers, lying about experience, neglect and shirking responsibilities, spousal abuse, threats, assault and fraud are all detailed in *High Crimes: The Fate of Everest in an Age of Greed*. If you find this interesting especially with the setting of Mount Everest, this is a book you should read.

Very depressing read. I cannot concur on the expeditions, but the amount of people heading into Everest, their total disregard for the environment and their supreme egos make even being around the area from Namche into Everest a very unpleasant experience. If it were not for the views and the wondrous mountains I think one would do better to climb more isolated mountains with fewer groups, less garbage closer to home. I wouldn't even want to be around most of the unbounded egos described in this book. Seems to defy the very notion of why one mountaineers in the first place. Having been the Himalayas a few times over the past 20 yrs I was immediately struck by the fact that the carrying capacity of environment is out of balance with the number of people there. It has reached the point where you are seriously hindered by large groups of tourists with their own agenda and their own egos to assuage. At times I have stood beside the trail into Everest base camp and had to wait 30 minutes for the crowd of German tourists to pass by me. The attitudes are a problem as well. Mr. Kordas describes the cold egotistical distance that surrounds some camps, literally camped beside one another, yet who do not talk to each other. This state of affairs extends to the mountain where common courtesy is ground into the dust as the desire for profit for the expeditions and the desire for a fully placated ego for the new urban-corporate-sports-gym climber dominate the mountain. Greed. Money and sex are never far beneath the service as Kordas relates. I personally could relate to the attitudes of some of the people Kordas describes. I will never forget the lady we deemed the "Canadian Cow" from Montreal, who severely reproached me for washing a child's parasitic wounds with soap and then bandaging her legs, giving her the soap and telling her to wash regularly.... "ohhhh, you shouldn't do that with them, it just encourages them... besides, who knows... they might have HIV" (???!!). Needless to say, this spirit of outright meanness is not only profoundly depressing, but seems, according to Kordas, to be getting worse and worse. Everest is still the highest, but there are greater challenges in the outback of Australia, or the nether reaches of so many unclimbed peaks of Canada, or Russia or South America or other places in the Himalayas... but no longer on Everest. Very nice book, but depressing at places.

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