



Last Breath: The Limits of Adventure

Peter Stark

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Sudden, extreme deaths have always fascinated us-- and now more than ever as athletes and travelers rise to the challenges of high-risk sports and journeys on the edge. In this spellbinding book, veteran travel and outdoor sports writer Peter Stark reenacts the dramas of what happens inside our bodies, our minds, and our souls when we push ourselves to the absolute limits of human endurance.

Combining the adrenaline high of extreme sports with the startling facts of physiological reality, Stark narrates a series of outdoor adventure stories in which thrill can cross the line to mortal peril. Each death or brush with death is at once a suspense story, a cautionary tale, and a medical thriller. Stark describes in unforgettable detail exactly what goes through the mind of a cross-country skier as his body temperature plummets-- apathy at ninety-one degrees, stupor at ninety. He puts us inside the body of a doomed kayaker tumbling helplessly underwater for two minutes, five minutes, ten minutes. He conjures up the physiology of a snowboarder frantically trying not to panic as he consumes the tiny pocket of air trapped around his face under thousands of pounds of snow.

These are among the dire situations that Stark transforms into harrowing accounts of how our bodies react to trauma, how reflexes and instinct compel us to fight back, and how, why, and when we let go of our will to live.

In an increasingly tamed and homogenized world, risk is not only a means of escape but a path to spirituality. As Peter Stark writes, "You must try to understand death intimately and prepare yourself for death in order to live a full and satisfying life." In this fascinating, informative book, Stark reveals exactly what we're getting ourselves into when we choose to live-- and die-- at the extremes of endurance.

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