

After the Wind: Tragedy on Everest --- One Survivor's Story

by Lou Kasischke



About the Book

Near the top of Mount Everest, on May 10, 1996, eight climbers died. At the time, it was the worst tragedy in the mountain's history. Lou Kasischke was there. *AFTER THE WIND* tells the harrowing story of what went wrong, as it has never been told before --- including why the climbers were so desperately out of time as the rogue storm struck. 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. At the time, 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.

Discussion Guide

1. Before reading this book, how much did you know about climbing Everest? Were you familiar with the 1996 climb that resulted in this disaster?
2. While the author outlines many ways that he feels tragedy could have been averted, what do you think was the main reason that so many climbers continued on to the top after it was too late? At what point do you think it should have been called off?
3. What do you think the roles of both the expedition leaders and the climbers are on these kinds of adventures? Should both be held responsible for the outcome? How do ego, peer pressure and aspirational goals all come into play here?
4. Did the drawings and maps enhance the experience of reading the book?
5. This is a very personal story for Lou. How did you feel about him at the start of the book? Did your feelings change as you read?
6. After reading *AFTER THE WIND*, are you inspired to read more about Everest or this particular climb?
7. Do you have any desire to climb a mountain like this? What do you think draws people to aspire to such risky experiences? How would you feel about someone you know embarking on a climb like this?

Author Bio

Louis Kasischke has lived his entire life in Michigan, but his enduring love of the mountains and alpine endurance sports have taken him to many remote parts of the world, on all seven continents. His professional career, especially as a lawyer and a venture capital advisor, often focused on taking high-stakes business risks, managing risk and making decisions with far-reaching consequences. This part of Lou's life made his several decades as a serious mountain climber a natural extension. And it also explains his perspective and the important purpose that led him to closely examine, analyze and explain what went wrong on Everest and his experience there.

Lou is retired from law and business and lives with his wife, Sandy, on the northern shore of Lake Michigan. He remains active with alpine sports and other endurance challenges in the great outdoors.

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