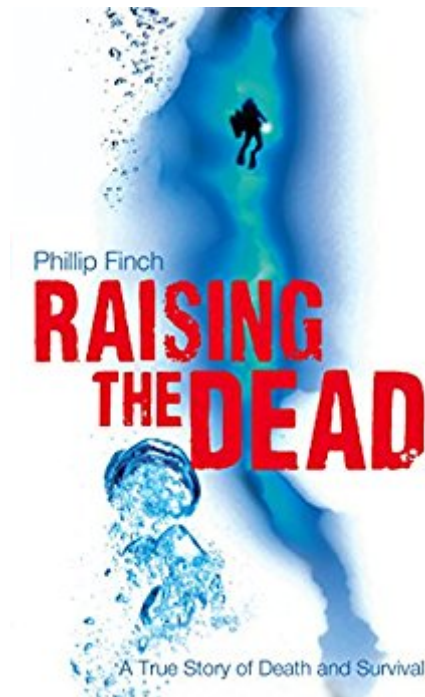


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Raising The Dead: A True Story Of Death And Survival



Synopsis

A true story of death and survival in the world's most dangerous sport, cave diving. Two friends plunge 900 ft deep into a water-filled crater in the Kalahari Desert to raise the body of a diver who had perished there a decade before. Only one returns. Unquenchable heroism and complex human relationships amid the perils of extreme sport. On New Year's Day, 2005, David Shaw travelled halfway around the world on a journey that took him to the Kalahari Desert of South Africa, to a site known locally as Boesmansgat: Bushman's Hole. His destination was nearly 900 feet below the surface. On 8 January, he stepped into the water. He wore and carried on him some of the most advanced diving equipment ever developed. Mounted to a helmet on his head was a video camera. David Shaw was about to attempt what had never been done before, and he wanted the world to see. He descended. About fifteen feet below the surface was a fissure in the dolomite bottom of the basin, barely wide enough to admit him and his equipment and the aluminum tanks slung under his shoulders. He slipped through the opening, and disappeared from sight, leaving behind the world of light and life. Then, a second diver descended through the same crack in the stone. This was Don Shirley, Shaw's friend and frequent dive partner, one of the few people in the world qualified to follow where Shaw was about to go. In the community of extreme diving, Don Shirley was a master among masters. Twenty-five minutes later, one of the men was dead. The other was in mortal peril, and would spend the next 10 hours struggling to survive, existing literally from breath to breath. What happened that day at Bushman's Hole is the stuff of nightmarish drama, juxtaposing classic elements of suspense with an extreme environment beyond most people's comprehension. But it's also a compelling human story of friendship, heroism, unswerving ambition and of coming to terms with loss and tragedy.

Book Information

File Size: 1343 KB

Print Length: 320 pages

Publisher: HarperSport (September 4, 2008)

Publication Date: September 4, 2008

Sold by: HarperCollins Publishers

Language: English

ASIN: B002RI9OVY

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #492,217 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #75

in Kindle Store > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Exercise & Fitness > Swimming #104 in Kindle Store >

Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Sports > Extreme Sports #221 in Kindle Store > Sports & Outdoors >

Extreme Sports

Customer Reviews

As an experienced ocean diver and cave diver I generally approach books such as these with a fair degree of cynicism and expect to be disappointed. Why ? Because most authors who deal with topics of extreme sport cannot resist the lure of lapsing into simplistic hyperbole and writing something that bears little resemblance to the facts. The authors themselves either don't know it's complete nonsense (because they're not in that field), or don't care because they are trying to invent what is to their minds 'an exciting story' Cave divers are also well used to their sport being sensationalised by all forms of media who don't care for nuance and always feel the need to spin any story about cave diving as if every dive is a death defying escape from sure death ... which is complete nonsense. So it was particularly surprising and refreshing to read 'Raising the Dead'. Phillip Finch is first and foremost a fine writer and it's that foundation that ensures the quality of this book. His prose is sure and succinct but it is the *structure* Finch employs that really makes this book rise to it's lofty heights. When we pick up the book, we already know how the dive ends. In a lesser writer's hands that may not have stopped them from writing a traditional linear narrative. But Finch does an excellent job of rotating between the various characters and themes of the book in logical and enthralling fashion without slavishly following a rote chronological timeline. Indeed we begin at the end and then move around the story in a non-linear sense time wise but in way that makes perfect sense of how Dave ended up at Boesmansgat that day. The structure works very well in the same way that a movie like say Pulp Fiction works. As a cave diver himself Finch has also done an excellent job ..

It is inevitable that comparisons will always be made between great books within the same genre. Such is the fate of Phillip Finch's "Raising The Dead". This engaging book concerning the rarefied world of deep diving will forever be compared to the ever-popular "Shadow Divers" by Robert Kurson. In both sagas the story unfolds at unimaginable depths where even the slightest

mishap/mistake can and does cascade into a fatal event. Notwithstanding further comparisons, "Raising The Dead" is about a diver (David Shaw) who in the span of only 5 years went from a "rank beginner (diver) to one of the most accomplished and ambitious divers" in the history of sports diving. The depths to which Shaw achieved (700 ft to 900 ft) were often record dives on a non rebreather apparatus; "more men have walked on the moon." In June 2004, during a cave dive at Bushman's Hole Shaw descended to an astounding depth of almost 900 feet. What he inadvertently discovered was the body of a young cave diver lost to a diving mishap some 10 years earlier. Though the author makes little note of the fact that Shaw is deeply religious and that Shaw had a previous dream envisioning that he would discover this body, Shaw felt that God has guided him to the body so that he can retrieve it for the still grieving parents of the young diver. All this would be little known to the world except for the fact that the mainstream media picked up the story; a story in which the media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television and a video team) intended to document this Herculean effort to retrieve the body at the bottom of a 900 ft deep cave. This is diving at the extreme! Unfortunately all does not go as planned and as a result, the media and the reader witnesses a tragedy in the making.

I chose this title on the recommendation of an reviewer (Kindle Paperwhite Reader) who claimed, having read only two chapters of Peter Hunt's "Setting the Hook", that this book was "much, much better." Although I enjoyed it, I preferred "Shadow Divers" (another book he said it was better than) and thought "Setting the Hook" was just as good, though for different reasons. As with "Shadow Divers" by John Chatterton and Richie Kohler, "Raising the Dead" is primarily the story of two men, Don Shirley and Dave Shaw, both skilled tech divers, who become friends because of their common love of the sport. Although Don has lots of experience and runs a school for divers, Dave, who makes a living as a commercial airline pilot, enters the diving game late, but quickly increases his skills comparative to his newfound friend. When, on an extremely deep cave dive, Dave sees the body of Deon Dreyer, who died years earlier at age 20, he feels compelled to return to retrieve the body. Don, along with an entire support crew of folks of differing talents, agrees to assist. The dive is significant in that a documentary crew plans to film the dive. Minutes into the dive, things fall apart. And when support team members try to assist, things go from bad to worse. Although much of the book includes information about the lives of the two individuals, Don Shirley and David Shaw, the story's real excitement is the dive and recovery effort. A lot goes into its planning, including the use of police divers, other support divers, a record-breaking female tech diver, doctor, and on site decompression chamber. The only thing that I found strange about the story (besides

the level of daredevilry that it takes these guys and gals to do these deep dives) was the part about Daveâ€™s religion.

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