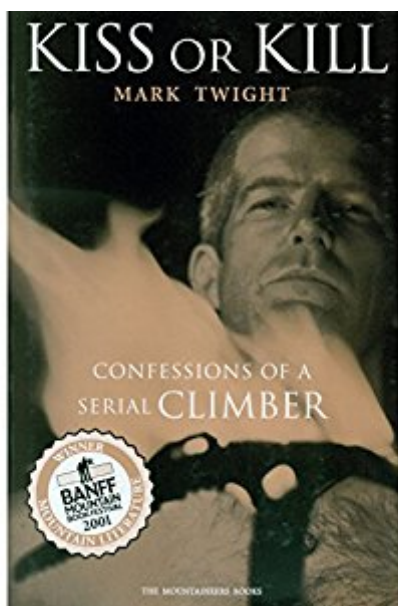


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Kiss Or Kill: Confessions Of A Serial Climber



Synopsis

Sit back and join the ride with this collection of edge-of-your-seat climbing stories by Mark Twight, aka Dr. Doom. "Somewhere out there somebody understands these words and knows they matter. They were written in blood, learned by heart." (Mark Twight) Mark Twight is a BANFF award-winner, an extreme climber, an extreme writer, and an extreme personality. No matter what he's doing, Mark Twight takes a definite, and often controversial, stand. Anyone who knows climbing knows Twight's name, and anyone who knows Twight's name will want to listen to this audiobook. Each story is told in Twight's taut, in-your-face style. Brand-new epilogues bring each piece full circle, providing updated information and fresh, hindsight perspectives.

Book Information

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Nonfiction > Sports & Recreation

Customer Reviews

Long, long ago, I saw Mark give a show in Boulder. It was laced with profanity and although it was entertaining at times, it was also so dependant upon proving that Mark was different, better, more intense and more... Twight, than any of us could ever be, and ultimately, that made the whole seem less than the sum of the parts. Over the years, I've read his articles and have seen more of his talks, all of which were a testament to the Mellowing of Mark. Yes, he has mellowed, but that is not to suggest that he is mellow. Kiss or Kill has a similar flavor to it, showing the change of Dr. Doom over time and place. I found it extremely funny, extremely sad, extremely entertaining and sometimes extremely overcooked. In short, extremely Twight. It belongs on any committed climber's bookshelf.

This is an intense book. VERY INTENSE. In his forward, Twight challenges the reader directly when he says that he wants to make them think, think really HARD, about what he's writing. Twight expects the reader to put it down periodically to do that thinking. He succeeded. This book is an intensely personal perspective on climbing, the ethos of climbing, and the friendships of climbing. The stories are, sometimes, not easy to read -- I sometimes found myself re-reading parts of them just to make sure that I didn't miss anything. Later in the book, Twight indicates that the "Dr. Doom" persona that he put on was sometimes (maybe) overdone for the articles he wrote. Nonetheless, the feelings of anger and rage and the feeling that he just wants to climb his own way and to his own standards, without interference, appear completely genuine starting right from his quotes from his favorite punk rock songs. Adding to the level of interest are Twight's comments after every article where, with some experience and maybe mellowing of time, he adds some additional reflections on what the story meant to him then and now. (Note: This book won the 2001 Banff Mountain Book Award for Mountain Literature.)

The Rollins of alpinism has collected several snarling essays in a thin tome that covers everything from the death of close friends to the disintegration of relationships. Nowhere in the book do we get any idea why this guy pushes the hard routes but that's not the point. Who cares? Sure he's brash and egotistical and opinionated and he mocks your vacuum packed, complacent, Must See TV dog kennel of a world. And there are no bucolic Muir riffs on fields of alpine meadows or pleasant nights passed in a starry bivy. This guy is a war correspondent from a self-inflicted war and if it gets a bit self-indulgent at times at its best it's the stink of pure alpinism, which is hopefully why you'd buy this book in the first place.

Mark Twight wants you to know how hardcore he is. And how punk he is. The thing is, though, that he comes across as more of a goth kid who's mad at the world because his parents don't understand him. Having something to prove doesn't make for compelling reading, and there is almost nothing in these essays that describe the actual climbing. The prose is atrocious. Provoking reactions seems to be the only motivation. Chapters begin with Nietzsche quotes, which is funny. If you're an Existentialist who believes that we're totally alone in the universe, maybe you shouldn't adhere to someone else's philosophy. There are ruminations on loss- mostly to illustrate what a dangerous life he leads. There are admissions of weakness- mostly to try and convince the reader that his ego isn't totally in control. Which, of course, proves that it is. False humility is bad acting. He rails against people who lead commonplace lives, while sleeping in their spare bedrooms and back

offices. He whines a lot, which seems at odds with his seemingly total devotion to the idea that the world doesn't owe anyone anything. In short, I found nothing compelling about reading Kiss or Kill. Do you have an angry teenager at home? Sneak into their room and read their diary. There- I just saved you ten bucks. His ideas about European style alpine climbing, and his proof of its superiority are the sole redeeming qualities of the book. Unfortunately, they consist of about 10 pages. I may sound like a curmudgeon, and this is the only time I've ever given a single star review, but I was shocked at how disappointing this book was. With his list of accomplishments, Twight could have come up with a much better collection of writings. Instead, he seems more interested in promoting his reputation, and then complaining about it. Others have enjoyed the book, so I'm in the minority, I guess. I just find it hard to believe that no one else thought this book was ridiculous.

This isn't your typical climbing/adventure book that goes through all the trials and tribulations of a particular climb or expedition. It's much more introspective and gives you a glimpse into the author's (Mark Twight a world-famous Alpinist who is now in his 50's and is into a lot of different things) mind. It's a compendium of his articles and essays published in the past. The author presents each piece pretty much as it appeared when first published, then has a couple of updates at later dates--penned several years later and then several years after that. It's an interesting presentation--you get a feel for the changes in the author's perspective over time. Some of the early stuff is pretty overwrought, as Mark admits in his updates. It's also not nearly as well-written as later material. It's interesting to see the great improvement as he learns the writer's craft. Aside from the very early stuff, the writing is top notch, at least in my opinion. There are enough great climbing stories to satisfy, but for me the best stuff are Mark's insights into some of the psychological (or dare I say spiritual?) aspects of climbing both as an individual and with friends with whom one shares unique and un-duplicatable challenges of the highest order. He also has a lot of good takes on the climbing "scene" as it has evolved over the years and, sadly, seems to be going the way of all things in this consumer-oriented, "star" based culture. C'est la vie. There is supposed to be a movie coming out that Twight has some role in about climbing in the French Alps. Can't wait to see it. I'll never be a climber, but there's a lot to admire and aspire to here.

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