Into Thin Air By Jon Krakauer: Reader's Diary

The first chapter of “Into Thin Air” sets the story near the middle of the book. It can be understood that the narrator of the book is Jon Krakauer. Krakauer describes himself on top of Mount Everest with “one foot in China and the other in Nepal”(5). He describes how the journey to get to the top was extremely troublesome by not sleeping for 57 hours and only eating ramen and some M&Ms. Once at the summit, the experience was anticlimactic. He was expecting a huge release of sensation and emotion, but in reality, he couldn’t care less. He also took some photos with companions. He decides to descend the mountain only after being there for five minutes but stops when seeing a blanket of clouds. He travels his way down the mountain in an extreme anxious manner due to his oxygen tank being almost empty. Harris came up from behind Krakauer and helped him by turning off the oxygen tank for which he satisfied. Krakauer describes his condition improving when abruptly he recognized himself losing consciousness. Harris made a horrible mistake by mistakenly turning the oxygen valve to full flow rather than off. There was another oxygen tank near the South summit 250 feet below but to get to it he needs to pass a dangerous terrain without any oxygen gas. Krakauer does this feat and receives the tank to only realize that a storm is approaching.

Chapter 2: This chapter takes a step back from Krakauer’s story to a more historical view of Everest. Everest was discovered and recorded by an Indian company and was the first to measure the mountain. Sir Andrew Waugh named the mountain after Sir George Everest in his honor. Once word spread of the tallest mountain, many came to climb Everest. Krakauer then goes on to describe the many attempts to reach the summit of the mountain. He then takes this information from Everest and connects it to himself. He says that he is a climber and loves it with a passion. However, he never aspired to climb Everest because of the thought that Everest is not as demanding as other mountains are. Things changed though when Outside magazine came into the picture. They hired him to do a story for the magazine to go to Everest and stay at base camp not actually climbing to the summit of Everest. He decided nevertheless that staying at base camp would be too torturous for 2 months so he began to train to climb the mountain to the top.

Chapter 3: Chapter 3 unofficially starts Krakaueur’s journey. He’s on an airplane to Kathmandu when Everest comes into view. He describes how the summit of the mountain is nearly as high as where the airplane is at the moment. Krakauer, once he gets off the plane, meets Andy Harris, Lou Kasischke, and Rob Hall. Hall is the leader of the expedition and a very experienced one. He guided 39 climbers to the summit and said that his company was extremely famous. Once acquainted with his group, they all fly to the base camp by helicopter. Krakauer speculates on his group by explaining how dangerous climbing with a group can be. One weak link in the group could be the downfall for the rest. Krakauer has to rely on Hall due to this fact.

Chapter 4: The first 5 nights and days are told of in this chapter. The first night they spent their time in the hamlet of Phakding. They then began a long hike towards Everest and soon abruptly found themselves in Namche Bazaar where Krakauer meets Mike Groom who is another paid guide. During dinner, Krakauer also meets doctors Stuart, John, and Beck. Following the introduction of his new friends, Krakauer gives insight into the Sherpa people and culture. Soon after dinner, the group arrives at Tengboche where they receive blessings from the priest. Time

goes on when the group enters at Khumbu Glacier, the gateway into Everest. They decide they would stay in the village of Lobuje for only one night until morning where they would advance onto a 5-day hike to base camp. Something tragic occurs however when a sherpa falls a 150 feet fall.

Chapter 5: This chapter begins with great news in regards to the sherpa. A hand-held radio describes how they'd gotten the sherpa down and carry him through the icefall and into Base Camp. The group then hiked to Base Camp while Krakauer and Helen had to help Andy Hall along due to his sudden illness. There at Base Camp, they meet Scott Fischer who has a crew of his own and is very ambitious. Base Camp offered many difficulties despite its comforts. For example, lightheadedness, headaches, lack of appetite, and trouble breathing were all side effects of the high altitude. Hansen seems to have the worst of it.

Chapter 6: It's pretty obvious that Everest is an extremely long and tedious journey and requires a well thought out plan. The plan being which very experienced Sherpas heading up first onto the mountain setting up four camps above the camp they are at right now, Base camp, hauling food and oxygen vessels. To adjust their bodies to the altitude, the group will be conducting a series of trips between the camps. To reach Camp One the group has to overcome Khumbu Icefall and many dangerous ladders to travel across gaps in the ice. Once passing a huge block of glacial ice, they reach the first camp. By 10:00 AM the hikers decided to return back to Base Camp. However, while hiking back Krakauer undergoes a really bad headache and is required to sustain restorative therapy.

Chapter 7: Krakauer provides insight to the people at Base Camp at the time by describing them as extremely confused. He goes off on many examples proving his point that there are some weird people at the camp. In contrast to the weirdos of the camp, Krakauer describes the veteran climbers that happen to be there. He also explains how this one unit called the South African team lead by Woodall is very inexperienced. Woodall claims to be a part of the military service but soon we learn that he lied about this among other things he claimed to be and have. Their sponsor, Sunday Times, withdrawals their support to the company soon after learning of the truth of Woodall.

Chapter 8: After resting for two days, Hall's group begins their second trip to the first camp. The only difference in this expedition from the other is that this time they will be staying at Camp One for two nights instead of only a couple of minutes. The group arrives at Camp One and Krakauer meets a sherpa named Ang Dorje. Dorje has made a pretty good reputation for himself because of him climbing for most of his life. Hall's group after only one day starts heading towards Camp Two which is regarded as a fairly easy climb. While climbing camp two Krakauer stumbles across some dead bodies of sherpas. Krakauer also stumbles upon Fischer's doctor who tells that Ngawang got really sick and had to be evacuated by a helicopter. Time was against them when Ngawang suffered from brain damage before receiving any medical treatment. Many people produced dispatches over the death of Ngawang including Pittman. Pittman was a famous person and was known for hiking in style.

Chapter 9: Krakauer was awake at 4:00 AM ready to hike up the mountain up to camp 3. The only obstacle Krakauer faced is the Lhotse Face described as a "cast tilted sea of ice that gleamed like dirty chrome in the dawn's slanting light"(124). The thought of climbing the face wasn't a big deal at the time but boy was he wrong. The fear of frostbit starts to become a threat to Krakauer and almost makes him turn back, but a buzz from his radio from Rob Hall

tells everyone to head back to camp 2. Camp 2 is a gloomy one when Krakauer returns due to many others suffering from his similar problem of frostbite. There are also many problems at Camp Two including fights between the South African team and the Taiwanese team. Likewise, a couple had sex on the mountain which created a stir.

Chapter 10: Hall's team makes another try at reaching Camp Three after failing previously by wind and cold weather. This trip was remarkably painful and unpleasant but nonetheless, Krakauer successfully makes it. Once at arrival Camp Three proved to be different from the previous camps because of its awkward position on the side of the mountain. Krakauer is also pretty scared that he might have high altitude sickness. Hall's group makes its final descent to Base camp marking the last time of them adjusting to the altitude.

Chapter 11: At 4:30 AM on May 6 Hall's group embarks onto the summit of Mount Everest. After some hiking, they arrive at Camp Two where they decide to rest for a day. It was noted that Fischer was acting odd by being exhausted which wasn't like him. While the group ascended to camp 3 a problem occurs. Andy Harris gets struck in the ribs by a falling rock but claims to be ok. The very same night, they provide the group with compressed gas since the high altitude called for it. The following morning arrives when Chen Yu-Nan falls 70ft onto a crevasse. His team decides to leave Chen Yu-Nan behind while they go to the summit. Unfortunately for Chen, his injuries worsen and he dies.

Chapter 12: Krakauer arises the morning of May 9 only to see that most of his team are already on the ropes toward Camp Four. He rushes to join his group on the ropes to see a huge queue of climbers ready to move up. This proves to be unsafe because it is quite risky to unhook and pass a person on a rope. Nonetheless, Krakauer reports at camp four to see how bad the weather is. Many people from different groups including himself aren't doing so good. Some can't eat or sleep while others are just plain delusional. Luckily for everyone at camp four, the storm stopped which allowed them to proceed up the summit. Many teams headed up the mountain now looking closely at the time of day. Time is extremely important because the hikers must arrive at the summit near the dawn of day or turn around for if they don't a descent down the mountain can lead to their demise.

Chapter 13: Climbers were now in the Death Zone. Every moment in the Death Zone slowly kills your body due to the high altitude. In addition to the altitude, other dangers like HAPE, HACE, frostbite, impaired judgment, and hypothermia seemed apparent to every climber. A huge problem arose when the hikers arrived near the summit to which there was no rope strung along the ridge. The lead guides had forgotten to wake up early to replace the ancient rope and set up a new one. Huge amounts of traffic accumulate all the while Krakauer worries about time. Kraueker soon arrives at the Hillary Step where he decides to help some guides set up ropes. He passes the Step and arrives at the summit!

Chapter 14: In Chapter 14 the story arrives back to where it had been in chapter 1. As described in chapter 1, Krakauer sees the clouds around the peak. Krakauer heads down to the Hillary Step when Harris blasts his oxygen gauge rather than turning it off which empties his tank in seconds. In a blur, Krakauer goes to the south summit where he sees Harris going through a bag of oxygen tanks but a nearby guide claims that they are all empty. Luckily, Groom arrives and gives Krakauer a filled oxygen tank. Krakauer goes back down to camp four because of worsening weather conditions. The only thing in the way of Krakauer is a huge ice slope with no ropes. Assessing the situation, Krakauer assembles all of his concentration and

strength to go down when Harris starts frantically running behind him and sliding down the icy slope to hit the ground hard. The funny thing is that Harris is actually ok and waves at Krakauer while he heads back to Camp Four. Krakauer imitates the descent down the slope only much safer.

Chapter 15: Chapter 15 provides insight into how the other climbers reached the summit. Beidleman appears at the top of the summit only shortly after Krakauer had. Unlike Krakauer, Beidleman stays on the summit for a very long time waiting for Fischer and his other teammates. Soon many of the group arrives to meet Beidleman except for Hansen and Fischer. Hall offers to stay back to wait for Hansen who arrives at 4:00 PM. Even though Fischer has not arrived yet, Beidleman directs the group down the mountain. During their descent, they meet Fischer in bad condition. The weather continues to get worse and worse and can only be described as a hurricane. Beidleman decides that they need a safer route to Camp Four so he trailblazes down the mountain only to realize that they are lost. It's getting so cold that the group had to make a team huddle to obtain warmth. The group decides they need help so one half led by Beidleman chooses to head down to Camp Four to receive help while the other half stays. 12:45 AM the group arrives at Camp Four looking really bad. The horrible weather prevents any rescue mission from being undergone so only one man, Boukreev, heads out. After a long time, he finally finds the 5 climbers looking nearly dead. Boukreev's only option for rescue is to lead one person at a time so his first choice was Fox. While the others were waiting for return, Weathers suddenly walks into the storm with no regard for survival. Boukreev soon arrives back to lead the other two back to camp.

Chapter 16: Harris is reported missing by Stuart Hutchinson next morning. Krakauer finds this legitimately strange due to the fact that he says Harrison returned to the camp with his very own eyes. While looking around the camp, he notices faint tracks heading to the edge of a cliff presumably belonging to Harris. Things take a big turn here though once it is revealed that the man who is thought to be Andy Harris is actually Adams.

Chapter 17: In this chapter, we see how Scott Fischer ascended to the summit. Fischer arrives at the summit around 3:40 PM on May 10 only to descend a few minutes later. After Fischer leaves, Makalu Gau arrives with two sherpas. Later, Hall is seen alone on top of the summit idling for the arrival of Hansen. Hansen soon arrives to head down the mountain, but with time against them, it is too late. Hansen collapses on the ground with no oxygen. Hall calls to Camp Four for help but all they said was to leave him behind due to increasing weather conditions. Things aren't looking good for the two as when sherpas arrive they can not head down the mountain due to the weather. During this Hansen dies. Base Camp is able to give Hall and his wife one last call with each other and to share their goodbyes.

Chapter 18: While all of this is happening something horrible occurs on the north side of the mountain. An Indian group is on their descent to the summit when weather conditions worsen, so most of their group heads back except three of them. The three of them suspect they have reached the top when in reality they were off by a considerable amount. Because of the weather, the three of them died. What makes this story even more tragic is that a Japanese group passed the three of them and offered no aid.

Chapter 19: The story returns back to Krakauer. Morning arrives and Krakauer was having trouble comprehending what had happened. A search team was dispatched to search for survivors and they happen to find Weathers and Namba. Barely alive the search team returns

back to the camp, knowing that they would not survive on their journey back. Word spread about the disaster and many sent their condolences in the form of oxygen tanks. The next morning something crazy happens. Weathers barely returns to the camp on the brink of death. The following night the storm blazes over Camp Four which required Hall's group to leave.

Chapter 20: Hall's group descends the mountain in a feeble fashion. They soon arrive at Camp Two to see Lopsang Jangbu morning the death of Fischer. An evacuation of the mountain requires a helicopter and Krakauer has to land it.

Chapter 21: Finally, Krakauer passes the IceFall to safely arrive at the face of the mountain. Krakauer was devastated by crying like he was a little boy. He claimed he cried for his lost teammates and his gratefulness to still be alive. A memorial service was held the following afternoon. Once Krakauer returns to society, what greets him is a bombardment of reporters and news outlets. Stressed out, Krakauer heads to a hotel to smoke weed and ease his sadness. Krakauer then arrives back to the United States contemplating whether he could have saved his fellow comrades.