

Left for Dead: My Journey Home from Everest Study Guide

Left for Dead: My Journey Home from Everest by Beck Weathers

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Contents

Left for Dead: My Journey Home from Everest Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-5.....	4
Chapters 6-10.....	7
Chapters 11-15.....	9
Chapters 16-20.....	12
Chapters 21-Epilogue.....	15
Characters.....	18
Objects/Places.....	21
Themes.....	23
Style.....	25
Quotes.....	27
Topics for Discussion.....	29



Plot Summary

In *Left for Dead: My Journey Home From Everest* by Beck Weathers, with Stephen G. Michaud, Beck recalled a miraculous survival after a disastrous expedition to the summit of Mount Everest. He wrote about the history that led up to the noteworthy climb, he covered his details from the climb itself as well as his rescue, and discussed the impact the experience made in his life and relationships.

As a child, Beck Weathers was average. With a father in the military, he moved around a lot and was able to experience different cultures. He, along with his two brothers, played the typical pranks a young boy would enjoy and learn about camping and scouting. School was not a number one priority, although he was more inclined to study and to socialize with other children his age. Unbeknown to him at the time, Beck had a family that was prone to escaping from life's harsh realities rather than chasing them. His father turned to alcohol, his brother turned to alcohol and exercise, and Beck found himself chasing away depression, which he calls the black dog, by obsessing on different activities.

While on a family vacation one year with his wife and two children, he discovered a love for hiking. This became a new obsession, which he pursued by taking more dangerous routes. He realized that he thrived on the thrill of survival in precarious situations. The pursuit did help him drive away depression, but it also threatened to break up his marriage and put his relationship with his children in jeopardy. Every mountain that he climbed took him closer to the ultimate Mountain, Everest. Each mountain that he climbed drove him farther away from his family.

The year he was going to turn fifty, Beck signed up for an expedition with the famous guide, Rob Hall. Despite his promise to his daughter, he was going to tackle Everest. Unexpected storms came in, and many people died, including his leader. When the rescue team went out and found Beck, they left his body and went back to camp to send a message to his wife, Peach, that he was dead. Miraculously, he opened his eyes and laboriously made his way back to the camp, astonishing everyone.

After the expedition, Beck went home to Texas to rebuild his world physically and emotionally. While he was in peril on the mountain, he reevaluated his life and found out where he was lacking. As he went through numerous surgeries and learn to live without both his hands, Beck also had to take steps to help reconcile his marriage and gain his wife's trust back.

Throughout their lives, both Beck and Peach had supporting family and friends who were ready to help them in time of need. This book tells Beck's story from his own perspective, his wife's perspective, the children's perspective, and the friends' perspectives with alternating points of view. The disastrous expedition was actually the catalyst to change Beck's world around and offer him life.



Chapters 1-5

Chapters 1-5 Summary and Analysis

In *Left for Dead: My Journey Home From Everest* by Beck Weathers, with Stephen G. Michaud, Beck recalled a miraculous survival after a disastrous expedition to summit Mount Everest. He wrote about the history that led up to the noteworthy climb, he covered his details from the climb itself as well as his rescue, and discussed the impact the experience made in his life and relationships.

Chapter 1, Part One, opens right in the heart of the action. It's May 10, 1996, and the main character and co-author of the book, Beck Weathers was trapped in the Death Zone in a blizzard on Mount Everest along with dozens of other climbers. He described how the storm came in bringing in overpowering winds and frigid temperatures that plummeted to 60 below zero Fahrenheit. Beck was descending the Triangle above Camp Four on the South Col approximately 30,000 below the summit of the tallest mountain in the world. He reflected on the climb eighteen hours earlier as they headed toward the peak in glorious conditions. Next, he reflected on how only six in the group actually summited, and of those six, only two lived through the storm. Beck had started the day filled with optimism, thrilled to be part of the venture. He was aware of the dangers of climbing, but didn't believe anything would happen to him. He reflected on the way he used mountain climbing to escape depression and how his wife, Peach, said his obsession with climbing was breaking up the family. The storm was almost the death of him, and Peach received a phone call telling her that Beck died on Everest in the storm. As she was telling the children, Beck opened his eyes and came back to life.

Chapter 2 begins with Beck in the airport before the expedition. He met a fellow climber and connected socially via life similarities. They headed off to a hotel in Katmandu for a couple of days then took a helicopter up to Lukla, where the team began its hike to the base camp at Everest. He met the Sherpas, a farming culture that turned to guiding tourists up Everest out of practicality. Beck reflected on his journey hiking the Khumbu trail toward Everest, through Lobuje. All along the way they saw signs of the dangers of Everest including a yak leg that had snapped off an animal and was stuck in a snow bank. They also heard about a Sherpa guide who had fallen 150 feet into a crevasse. They arrived at the Everest Base Camp 17,600 above sea level. Beck mentioned the boredom they faced at Base Camp and how he tried to keep in shape. He wrote about the history of climbing Everest and the dangers of their upcoming challenge, climbing up Khumbu Glacier. As they stayed in Base Camp, the climbers became acclimated to the new oxygen levels of the air. They had to get used to climbing with that amount of oxygen and practiced a bit daily. They also had to get used to the exercise and caloric intake a body required at that altitude. Beck described different medical situations that put a climber's life in danger. He introduced the members of his team, highlighting their individual strengths. Generally, when Beck climbed mountains, he didn't stay in touch with family members. On this trek, he faxed home several times. The last two



paragraphs shift from first person writing from Beck's viewpoint to faxes from his wife, Peach and daughter, Meg.

Chapter 3 covers the actual climb. The team was acclimated, and they began their ascent. The story is once again in Beck's point of view. They scaled the Khumbu Icefall and carefully navigated Lhotse Face. A Taiwanese climber slipped on Lhotse and fell to his death while they were climbing. The team stuck to its schedule and hit the High Camp on the South Col in the late afternoon. It was windy and very cold. Beck was starting to feel very fatigued, and was grateful for a rest before the final assault for the summit in the Death Zone. The wind died suddenly at 10 p.m., and the team headed out. Beck was particularly concerned for two team members - one who was feeling ill and having a hard time climbing and another who was tough but tiny. He reflected on a climber's drive. Some climbed to reach the summit. Others, like him, climbed to experience the joy and challenge of the climb. It was okay if he didn't reach the peak. This was good because after climbing for a while, he lost his vision and decided to stay put for a while, hoping it would clear. He made a pact with the guide that he would stay in that spot until the guide came back down from the summit if his vision didn't clear in half an hour. It didn't clear, and he stayed in that spot even when another team descended and offered for him to join them. They had no idea a storm was coming in, and that the guide Beck was waiting for wasn't ever going to come back down.

In Chapter 4, Beck had expected his guide, Rob, to return by 3 p.m. the latest. He started worrying after 5 as the sun began to set, and the wind picked up. He began to lose his sight again. He slowly began to freeze and hallucinated. Jon Krakauer came down, and Beck came back to reality a bit. Jon said that Rob was several hours behind and another guide was twenty minutes behind Jon. He offered to help Beck back to camp since Beck needed assistance with his declining vision. Beck knew that Jon was exhausted and with another guide coming, he turned down the offer for help. Later the guide, Mike Groom, came into view with tiny Yasuko, who looked exhausted. More team members appeared. Less than an hour hike from camp, the group was slammed by a blizzard, and they lost their sense of direction while getting pummeled by frigid air. Unknowingly, they stopped less than twenty-five feet from a drop that would have killed them all. There was a break in the storm and the group split. The strongest, unhandicapped members headed for camp while the rest (Yasuko, Charlotte, Beck and Sandy) stayed behind. Tim Madsen also decided to stay to be with Charlotte. The chapter finished with Charlotte Fox and Beck offering reflections intermittently. They were sure they were going to die and took turns helping each other fight sleep and death.

As Chapter 5 begins, the stronger team members did find camp, but didn't have the strength to go back and get the others. A guide from Russia named Anatoli Boukreev set out to rescue them. He made three rescue trips, bringing back Tim, Charlotte, and Sandy, who were part of the Fisher group. He left Yasuko and Beck, part of the Hall team, behind. At this point in the chapter, Beck addressed the groups lost climbers: Rob Hall, Andy Harris, and Doug Hansen. Doug had climbed unwisely and when Rob radioed to camp, they told him to leave Doug. Rob chose to stay and help him, aided by an exhausted Andy, who had to re-climb part of the mountain to help them. Andy and



Doug died on the way down. Rob stayed alive long enough to talk with his wife when Base Camp realized he wasn't going to make it and called his wife, patching the two together via radio. They named their unborn daughter and everyone heard Rob quietly crying as death approached. He didn't know his radio was still on.



Chapters 6-10

Chapters 6-10 Summary and Analysis

As Chapter 6 opens, the storm had abated and three Sherpas and Stuart Hutchinson set out to find Yasuko and Beck. They find Yasuko with three inches of ice over her face, yet still breathing. Beck was barely alive. They were both in a hyperthermic coma, which people don't survive, so the rescue team went back to camp to inform everyone of their death. They called Peach to tell her Beck was dead. Around 4 p.m. Beck did the unthinkable. He opened his eyes as a living man. He was some ways away from Yasuko, yet he didn't remember moving. He vividly saw his family, which gave him the drive to get back to camp even though he didn't feel like moving. Despite hardships such as fatigue and hallucinations, Beck made it back to camp.

Chapter 7 shows an astonished camp that quickly went to help the frozen Beck. They radio down the mountain regarding his survival but are told that he won't live anyway and that they shouldn't bring him down. They wrapped Beck up and put him in a tent, leaving him alone to die. The storm came back pummeling the tent, pressing in on Beck and threatening to suffocate him as it wrapped around his face. Beck rolled to his side so he could breathe. He lost consciousness and the storm whipped into the tent, filling it with snow and blasting him out of his sleeping bag. At this point in the chapter, the point-of-view shifts to Peach, who expresses frustration that no one was there to help the dying Beck. The chapter then shifts back to Beck's point-of-view. As they packed the camp up, Beck called out, and they were shocked once again to find him alive. They struggled down the mountain, meeting up with the IMAX film team. Beck was descending with some of the world's best climbers. They made it back to Base Camp Two where they waited for a helicopter rescue initiated by Peach. The rest of the chapter covers the rescue from Beck's point of view and the helicopter pilot's point-of-view. Madan saved Beck's life with a daring rescue, taking a helicopter where no one else thought it was possible.

In Chapter 8, Beck learns the reality of his rescue. He learned that the incident made news around the world, and the paparazzi were out in full force, but he wasn't ready to meet them. Beck was taken to the American Embassy, where he had a medical checkup and called Peach. She told him that his brother was on his way to meet him. The next few pages are from Peach's point-of-view. The reader finds out that while Peach loved Beck, the marriage was on very shaky grounds, particularly due to his obsession with climbing. He regularly neglected the family in order to climb different mountains. It had surprised her to get faxes from him since he didn't usually communicate when he was away. She had little tolerance for his complaints. When she received the message that he was dead, she felt that her nightmare had come true. Peach called in her close friends and phoned her brother before going to tell the children. Bub felt as if it were a bad dream. Meg kept reflecting on how she had told her dad not to go. As she was coming to terms with the death, they received a phone call



saying that Beck was alive after all. The chapter ends with Beck pondering his role as a father. He realizes that he comes out lacking greatly.

Chapter 9 opens in Peach's point-of-view. She didn't realize that the caller who told her Beck was alive was trying to prepare her for the worst, thinking that Beck would probably die. All she felt at that moment was hope for his survival. She wanted to get him home safely. The next section of the chapter is from Cecilia Boone's point-of-view. She pointed out how many people were coming and going within Peach's household and Peach was amazing at getting everything organized and orderly. The story flips back to Peach's point-of-view and shows how she arranged for Beck to be rescued and cared for. Her friend, Linda Gravelle, called the governor, who couldn't help them, then they tried contacting Tom Daschle, who was able to help them. At 10 p.m. in Dallas time, they received a phone call from New Zealand, telling them that Beck had been airlifted off the mountain successfully. He would be back at home before they had a chance to fly out to him. Peach reflected how she talked to Beck on the phone on Monday, and it was unusual because he actually wanted to talk with his family. In the next part of the chapter, Beck discusses his life in his own point of view as he tries to stay in a hotel and live life normally without his hands. He was very thankful when his brother appeared and helped him. Dan, the brother, wrote about his meeting with Beck and how he felt when he found out his brother was dead. They were very close, and he was ecstatic to learn that his brother survived after all. He flew out to join him and learned all he could about Beck's medical condition. He was much more aware of the reality of the situation than Beck was. The chapter closes in Beck's point of view, where he talked about meeting Yasuko's family in a sobering event. He did everything he could to comfort them while feeling guilty that he was alive.

In Chapter 10, Beck faces a life of contrasts. He remembered facing death, and he contrasted it with living. He remembered how he used to look and compared it to how he looked now. Some people were repelled by his looks. He flew back to Dallas, met the press, then met his family. His marriage was still on the rocks, but he could sense Peach's love for him and knew he wanted to stay with her. The future was unknown for him, since the marriage was so badly damaged. He found out that Peach had planned on telling him that the marriage was over when he came back from this climb. That was before he almost died. She agreed to give him one year to show that he had really changed. Beck made a decision to save the marriage and restore the trust. Beck was very happy to be home, but he had a long way to go medically. His body fought infections, and he struggled to maintain the use of his hands. It was a futile effort since he lost both of his hands. He slipped into what the psychiatrists called a reactive depression. It forced him to make decisions about his life. He once again determined to save his marriage.



Chapters 11-15

Chapters 11-15 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 11, opening Part Two, brings the reader back to Beck's childhood. He was born in Georgia to a mother who had a biology degree and taught high school and a father who was an aviator. During the war years, his father worked as a flight instructor and after the war he sold insurance. In 1948, he joined the US Air Force and left for Japan. Beck spent his early years in Japan, where he had memories of his brother's illnesses and air raids. In 1951, the family moved back to United States to Atlanta, where Beck started first grade as a five-year-old. He had a difficult time reading due to the weak muscles in his eyes. This links together with the eye trouble he had on top of Mount Everest later in his life. While living in Georgia, Beck enjoyed getting to know his relatives. In 1954, the family had to pack up and move again. This time they went to San Antonio. They dreaded the move, but everything worked out well for them. Dan commented that he always admired his brother Beck, who was highly competitive. Beck continued relating the family history with the military. His father was transferred Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in 1958. Beck enjoyed living there with the free movies and the officers club and the community swimming pool. He also enjoyed playing Little League and fishing in the Persian Gulf. He learned some survival skills as a Boy Scout and practiced the skills while hunting in Ethiopia on holiday vacation. Beck's other brother, Kit, recalled their parents' parenting skills and the emphasis the parents placed on goals. He pointed out that the brothers all tended to take risks. He felt that Beck was the deepest thinker of all the brothers. In high school, Beck avoided sports due to problems with his eyes. The school didn't place a high emphasis on education, and that did not bother Beck. This made it difficult for him to get into a noteworthy college. He decided to go to Midwestern State and found college classes more difficult than he thought they would be.

Beck reflects on his own self image in Chapter 12. During high school, he thought of himself as a relatively smart wimp. He also remembered being unhappy. He slipped into depression when he was a freshman at Midwestern. Beck didn't appreciate the weakness that he associated with depression, and it only made things worse for him. He considered suicide. After a few months, the horrible depression left him, but he also had an awareness that it would return sometime, and he also felt that some day he would commit suicide. Dan recalled times when Beckett talked to him about his depression. He, himself, felt lethargy and energized himself through activity. Their father used alcohol to combat negative feelings, and the brothers discussed different ways to deal with emotions. Beck did not let the depression interfere with his education. After a rough start in college, he pulled up his grades and focused on his studies. He wasn't very social, which was good for his studies. Beck decided to become a premed student. Dan and Beck roomed together the last year that Beck attended Midwestern. After he graduated from college, he moved to Texas to attend the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. He studied, worked hard, and discovered that



he enjoyed pathology. Beck especially appreciated looking directly at a disease under a microscope.

Chapter 13 switches back and forth from Peach's point of view to Beck's point of view and back again. Peach pointed out that the women in her family were accustomed to domestic catastrophes as both her grandmothers lost their husbands to sudden deaths. Her own father suffered from radiation exposure and died a lingering death. The women stuck together and helped each other through the tough times. Peach's brother, Howard, was a surrogate father to her, since she barely remembered her own father. Beck found that from the earliest stages of his relationship with Peach, he felt competitive with Howard. Peach was adept at academics, but wasn't great socially. Her brother, Wayne, suggested that she attend the University of Georgia to become a teacher. She did attend the college, where she earned an undergraduate degree in political science and became a certified resource teacher for gifted children. In 1974, Beck and Peach, whose real name was Margaret Olson, met. After graduation, Beck entered Southwestern and Martha moved to Dallas to teach. Neither of them were affected by a whirlwind romance. Rather, they respected each other. Beck appreciated how bright and articulate Peach was and how sensitive she was with other people. He felt she would be a good mother. Peach remembered Beck's energy and his ability to make her laugh and think. Peach received her nickname from Beck's medical school buddies who called her the Georgia Peach, then G. Peach, then just Peach. She knew the nickname came out of affection, but later in the marriage, the nickname made her feel as if she had lost even more of her own identity. After the residency in Texas, Beck was offered a fellowship in Boston. Peach said she wouldn't move with him unless they were married, and he realized that he loved her so he agreed.

When Chapter 14 opens, Peach recalled that Beck never officially proposed. He just informed her that he couldn't live without her. He never gave her an engagement ring and forgot to reserve a room for their wedding night. When they moved to Boston, Peach a hard time finding a job. She volunteered at the hospital and typed up some of Beck's notes. She felt very alone. Beck loved living in Boston, where he could walk to work. He had to do autopsies, which he did not like very much. He began to slip into depression again, a point that Peach figured out later on in the marriage. To escape depression, Beck felt as if he always had to work. He didn't have Peach's skills for communication, and the two started becoming more separate. This made her feel as if she wasn't interesting enough for him and that's why he was never around. She decided to just be happy that he was a good provider.

Chapter 15 introduces some new characters. After living in Boston for a while, Beck heard from a fellow pathologist from Southwestern named Tom Dickey. He and some others that Beck had gone to school with invited Beck to join a private partnership. In 1977, the couple returned to Dallas. When Beck wasn't working, he enjoyed exercising, and he soon was running thirty to forty miles a week. Peach became more and more lonely with Beck gone all the time. She decided she wanted a child and their son, Beck, was born in October of 1978. Beck wasn't ready for a child, but he was always away working, anyway, so it didn't really matter. Peach became friends with Pat White, whose husband, Terry, also worked with Beck. They had their first children around the same



time. She also became friends with Cecilia Boone, and their second child became best friends with Peach and Beck's second child, Meg. Pat White commented on Peach's personality, stating that she valued her opinion. Cecilia Boone called Peach her best friend. She appreciated Peach's practical mind and ability to separate emotions from difficult situations. By the time Meg was born, Beck was more accustomed to parenthood. The children reflected on their father's parenting. Bub (young Beck) remembered him as emotional, and Meg knew that she was daddy's little girl. They both remembered him crying over situations found on the TV show *Rescue 911*. The family also had a cat named Muffin, who was a terror, and a sheltie named Missy. She was a very dedicated dog who always showed love for Beck. Muffin finally died, and Peach got a new cat named Baby, who Peach turned to whenever she needed comfort. Beck didn't like Baby at all. After Everest, Missy figured out who Beck was and came up to him to keep him company. Beck and Baby came to a tentative agreement, and when Baby died in 1998, Beck missed him. He also missed the comfort the cat brought to Peach.



Chapters 16-20

Chapters 16-20 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 16, which begins Part Three, Beck remembered the early years of his marriage. He wasn't completely happy with his relationship with his wife and ran away from the lack of connection by diverting himself and trying different challenges. He had a tendency to get carried away with his new interests. When he decided to learn how to sail, he took correspondence courses and went on bareboat excursions. Obsessed with the next step, he earned a variety of licenses and certificates. Professionally, Beck rose to the top. In 1982, he became president of the 1,200-person medical staff at Medical City. He was only thirty-five years old. Beck felt that he contributed to the household by earning enough to keep the family comfortable. It didn't occur to him that money wasn't enough, and that they actually needed him around. The presidency lasted for three years, and when it was over, he gradually slipped back into depression. It was during the second depression that Beck began to hike. He got together with friends, and they would try pushing themselves and finding more challenging hikes over the years. His friend Ken Zornes and he learned about mountaineering. They began having their own agendas on family vacations, leaving the families behind so they could hike. By 1987, the black dog, as Beck called his depression, was his constant companion. He refused to turn to medication, and he didn't want the depression to show professionally. He began thinking about suicide seriously again. Instead of succumbing to it, he turned to the mountains.

In Chapter 17, Peach offered her take on the Beck's depression. At first she blamed herself for being a poor wife, then she came to the realization that it wasn't her fault. The children wrote about how they never doubted their father's love for them, and Meg remembered when she asked her father never to climb Mount Everest and he agreed. She wished her father were around more often. While the family was looking for a husband and a father, Beck and Ken were planning the next climb. This time they planned to hike up Longs Peak. On this mountain, he took lessons to learn how to climb rocks. After that, they learned about climbing glaciers. It was trickier than they realized. Beck was proud of himself for overcoming his fear of climbing and getting down the mountain without mishap. That night at a family dinner in a restaurant he practically fell asleep onto his food.

Chapter 18 opens with Peach remembering Beck's different obsessions. She tried to share his interests, but couldn't keep up. Peach remembered the way Beck always looked toward the next thing. Before he and Ken were even done hiking down Longs Peak, Beck was already planning to climb McKinley. The two headed to Alaska to climb Mount McKinley, which was very dangerous. They watched a film about the dangers of climbing the mountain before they set out. Beck talked about the hardships of the climb and how one morning they woke up to find the corpses of some of the climbers they had met up with the day before. This was a foreshadowing of some of his experiences on Everest. The evidence of danger didn't stop Beck, and he continued with the climb.



They were stuck at high camp due to a storm, and they ran out of food. The trip down the mountain was exhausting as they hiked through storms. Beck had a very difficult time seeing because his glasses kept fogging up. On the way down the mountain, Ken said that they should decide right then whether or not they would continue mountain climbing. Beck told him that they couldn't make a decision at that point. That type of decision should be made back at home. They made it down to the camp and decided that the climb was wonderful after all.

After the McKinley expedition, Chapter 19 opens with a celebration back in Dallas. Everyone was happy the climbers were alive, and Peach hoped that Beck would stop pursuing this obsession. The people close to Beck realized that his obsession might be getting a bit dangerous. Beck disagreed and headed out to climb two volcanoes in Mexico in 1990. Despite some sickness, the climb went well, and Beck was grateful for the relief from depression that he felt while he was mountaineering. He also came to the conclusion that he enjoyed the terrors that came along with some of the climbs. Peach recalled a time in the spring of 1991 when Beck told her that he was suicidal, and he blamed her for his unhappiness. He told her that she wasn't supportive of his hobbies, and at that stage of the game she was willing to take the blame on herself. Beck agreed to see a counselor who also felt that someday he would kill himself. Peach felt an incredible sadness for Beck because he couldn't feel the family's love or even love himself. The only way he could be happy was to move from goal to goal.

Beck explained how he chose the mountains that he planned to climb in Chapter 20. The bottom line was that he looked for mountains that had an available, competently-led expedition at a time that worked well into his schedule. This is how he ended up at Mount Elbrus in the Caucasus Mountains in August of 1991. It was the tallest mountain in Europe. The trip was off to a poor start, with horrible food and filthy accommodations. When they reached the summit, Beck looked forward to viewing the bronze head of Lenin mounted on a beautiful pedestal. Instead, he found an empty pedestal with pipe wrench top of it. After the climb, the group enjoyed a wonderful meal, which Beck enjoyed until he realized it was attended by prostitutes.

While Beck was out climbing the mountains, his family was reflecting on their family trips. They had given up on having Beck come along with them on family vacations, but enjoyed the company of Peach's brother, Howie. The children had very good memories of Howie, and Peach enjoyed adult companionship.

Beck was so obsessed with his climbing that he didn't even realize he was missing out on family vacations. In January of 1992, he decided to climb Aconcagua in the Argentine Andes. It was the tallest mountain in the Western Hemisphere and was filled with rock and ice. The area was ripe with filth and disease, and Beck remembered looking up to see a waterfall that consisted of rock instead of water. The leader of their expedition had to leave due to illness, and the second in command took over. It was a precarious climb that was exhausting, but Beck made it. This made him feel really good.

While Beck was out chasing his next goal, Peach was coming to terms with her marriage. She began thinking about divorce and counted on her friends as a source of



strength. She wasn't ready to give up and still wanted to work on the marriage but was realizing it might be a futile effort.

Meanwhile, Beck was with his mountaineering companions discussing the highlights of their latest expedition. He asked one man what it was like to try Everest, and the man said that someone like him could do it. It was then that Beck decided to try climbing Everest. He began to train relentlessly for it, destroying his body as he tried to make it stronger. He began working with a personal trainer. As a chapter closed, Peach and the children were expressing how Beck really wasn't part of the family anymore. Even when he was physically there, his mind was preparing for more mountaineering.



Chapters 21-Epilogue

Chapters 21-Epilogue Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 21, Beck was trying to get Peach to pick up a hobby. He decided that she couldn't be happy just taking care of the children, and he didn't want to think about her happiness. This upset her because she realized that she was happy taking care of the children. She began gaining some strength of character. Beck was now so obsessed with climbing that he couldn't think about anything else. He had already climbed two of the seven summits and had five to go. He decided to go for a unique one next, and set off for Antarctica's Vinson Massif. He did this through Adventure Network International, which was also providing transportation for three other expeditions in Antarctica. They all had different plans of attack for the mountain. Beck commented that everything that was connected to this adventure was delayed and protracted. While he was in the mess tent, he saw a poster highlighting Rob Hall. He was very impressed with Hall's climbing plan. Beck and the team reached the top, but didn't see any of the spectacular view. His glasses were fogged over, and the world was gray as bad weather came in. The group returned to base camp blindly, similar to his descent in Denali and his visual problems on Everest. Their transportation arrived on time, but the weather turned sour, and they were all stuck for a few days waiting for the weather to improve. Each team member gave names of family and friends who were supposed to be notified regarding the delay. They didn't know that the messages never went through. Peach remembered the lack of communication and how unnerving it was to arrive at the airport to find out that Beck wasn't on the plane. She called the tour operator and was informed that he was probably fine since she would have been contacted if he were dead. Peach decided that she couldn't live with that kind of fear anymore. When he got home, she informed him that they needed to go to marriage counseling.

Chapter 22 marked the beginning of Part Four. At the beginning of the chapter, the marriage was in extreme jeopardy, but the parents kept this fact away from the children. The first counselor they went to didn't work, and they went on to a second one who was equally useless. The second counselor encouraged Beck to live his dreams. Peach came to the realization that she had to make some changes and stop blaming herself for her broken marriage. She knew that the mountain climbing obsession was killing the marriage. The chapter closed with Beck recalling a delusion he had that everything regarding his marriage would be fine after he was done climbing Everest. He later realized that in all honesty, after Everest he would have just moved on to another mountain. He also realized that he still loved Peach and would not initiate a divorce.

Chapter 23 opens with Peach mentioning that Beck climbed mountains for attention. He didn't realize that his stories often drove people away. However, some people were engrossed in the stories. In 1994, Beck headed out to climb the Cartensz Pyramid in an Indonesian province called Irian Jaya. He shared a helicopter with a group that was led by Rob Hall, the guide from the poster he saw in Antarctica. He was very impressed with Rob's dedication to safety. On this trip, he met a climber who also impressed him.



Her name was Yasuko Namba. Beck had a new experience while climbing the Cartenza Pyramid. Around 13,000 or 14,000 feet, his vision shifted. This time his eyesight didn't blur, it just seemed different. He figured it was a minor side effect from his recent operation where he had his vision corrected. At that point he didn't realize that this was a warning to the way snow, light, and altitude would blind him on Everest.

In chapter 24, Peach was getting more and more frustrated with Beck and the way he dealt with depression. He was continuing with the mountain climbing and also went out and purchased a motorcycle. She had always hated motorcycles. The motorcycle had many problems, just as their marriage did. Beck said he would sell it, but came up with excuses of why he wouldn't. Peach realized that it was going to be up to her to deal with, just as the marriage was her problem.

In 1995, Beck went to Africa to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. He looked forward to climbing Mount Everest in the spring. He had already contacted Rob Hall who had agreed to be his guide, and he would be celebrating his fiftieth birthday that year. Peach heard about the climb when they were out eating in a restaurant and someone congratulated Beck on his acceptance to the \$65,000 expedition. Peach's friends knew that this was a very bad thing for their marriage, and friends were also concerned that Beck would get frostbite again. Meg felt as if her father was breaking his promise to her and didn't understand why he had to climb. Beck didn't understand what all the fuss was about. He kept telling everyone that the climb wasn't dangerous.

Chapter 25 brought the reader back to the events after Beck came home from Mount Everest. He didn't realize the extent of his own injuries. Since he couldn't feel his hands, he didn't know how badly they were injured. He found out that he was going to lose both his hands. He also lost his nose. Beck was reliant on those closest to him, including Peach. He underwent physical and emotional pain as he dealt with people's reactions to his unsightly body and fought infections. He had eleven surgeries over the next year. The pain was excruciating.

Peach began to notice some differences in his mental attitude. He was reaching out to her and seemed to care about all the pain he caused others. She wasn't ready to completely trust the change in him at first, but saw some drastic changes in him after her brother Howard developed a mass on his liver. Beck was right by Peach's side throughout the illness and through Howie's death. He did everything he possibly could to help Howie survive. While Howard himself did not survive, his illness showed Peach how much Beck really had changed.

In the Epilogue, Beck summarized his experience. He covered the spiritual ramifications of his experience and recognized that every person has determination and strength within themselves, and that hardship bring the strength out. He decided that he wouldn't have traded his experience, and he would relive it consciously, if he could have the same results. It was this experience that taught him to truly appreciate his family and his own life. Peach and the children address the changes in their own relationships with Beck. The marriage is on solid ground, and the children understand their father really

loves him. Pat White closed the book highlighting Beck's great heart and Peach's great strength.



Characters

Beck Weathers

Beck Weathers was a driven man who had a knack for completing difficult tasks, yet a complete lack of social and relational skills. He was professionally successful and was able to provide for all his families wants and needs, but he wasn't physically there for them. He loved his family, but instead of spending time getting to know them and to be with them, he was always pursuing the next goal. This was because he was always fighting depression, and keeping his mind on the task and obsessing on it helped him drive away the black dog, as he called his depression. When he came back to life after his death on Everest, Beck realized that he'd had to change his relationships and identify what led to the rift. In this book, he wrote in first person about his internal drives, his pursuit of endless dangerous goals, and his realization of what is truly important in life: his family.

Peach

Peach was Beck Weather's wife. Her real name was Margaret Olson, but his colleagues endearingly called her Georgia Peach, then G. Peach, then just Peach. Her father suffered after a lingering death from radiation exposure, and she barely recalled him. She was mostly raised by her mother, two brothers, and her grandmother. Her mother was a hard worker and good provider who was more focused on providing monetarily than she was on providing emotionally. Peach found her main sources of influence from her grandmother and her brother, Howard. She graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in political science and certification as a resource teacher for gifted children. Her marriage with Beck lacked emotionally, but she felt that she had the strength to endure the marriage because of her years with her mother, who was similar to Beck in monetary provision rather than emotional provision. Peach loved being a mother, but hated mountaineering because it took her husband away from her and the family. She was a strong woman who aided him in his recovery in spite of their differences. She worked hard to restore the marriage.

Beck II

Beck (aka Bub) is Peach and Beck's oldest child. He is very easy-going and forgiving. While he wished Beck were around more, he understood that his father loved him, even though he was constantly away climbing mountains.



Meg

Meg is Peach and Beck's youngest child. She is more outspoken than her brother, and outwardly voices her disappointment with her father's choices to leave the family behind while he pursues his obsessions.

Howard Olson

Howie, born Howard Olson, is the brother Peach sees as a surrogate father. He is there to act as a father figure for Bub and Meg when Beck is away. He is also the catalyst for fixing Peach and Beck's marriage.

Dan

Dan is Beck's brother who flies over to help him after the disastrous expedition. The brothers are very close.

Ken Zornes

Ken Zornes was a family friend who frequently climbed with Beck. He seemed to know the limits of the obsession where Beck did not.

Pat White

Pat White is Peach's friend. Their sons are also friends and Beck works with her husband, Terry.

Terry White

Terry White practiced at Medical City with Beck. The two are friends.

Ceclila Boone

Cecilia Boone is Peach's best friend. She was there to help Peach with marriage issues and when Peach found out Beck was dead.

Rob Hall

Rob Hall was the leader who died on the fateful Everest expedition. He was known for his climbing prowess and dedication to safety. He left behind a pregnant wife when he died.



Yasuko Namba

Yasuko Namba was a climber that Beck met and admired. She was with him on the Everest expedition and died right next to him.

Lieutenant Colonel Madan K.C.

Lieutenant Colonel Madan K.C. is the forty-two-year-old who risked his own life to rescue Beck in a flight that no-one would dare attempt. He is part of the warrior caste in Nepal and felt that he had a brave heart, but was looking for a chance to prove it in a challenge. This was his chance.



Objects/Places

Mount Everest

Mount Everest is the tallest mountain in the world. It's where Beck lost his hands and almost lost his life.

Midwestern State

Midwestern State is where Beck went to college. He met Peach while he was a student at the college.

University of Georgia

The University of Georgia is the college Peach attended.

Boston

Boston is the city Beck moved to after receiving a job offer. Peach wouldn't move with him unless he married her. He did.

Dallas, Texas

Dallas, Texas is where Peach and Beck lived after Boston. It's where they were living when Beck climbed Everest.

Texas Big Bend National Park

Texas Big Bend National Park is where Beck got his first taste for hiking when vacationing with friends.

Chilkoot Trail, Alaska

Chilkoot Trail, Alaska is where Beck went for a more challenging hike after Texas Big Bend National Park.

Longs Peak

Longs Peak is where Ken and Beck went for rock climbing and ice and snow climbing lessons.



Mount McKinley

Mount McKinley is the highest peak in North America. Beck climbed it and ran into problems that included lack of food, eye trouble, and heavy storms.

Popocatepl

Popocatepl is a volcano Beck climbed that taught him to respect mountains. It erupted several years after his climb.

Mount Elbrus

Mount Elbrus is the mountain Beck climbed only to be disappointed at the summit. It was nothing like the brochure promised. It is one of the seven summits.

Aconcagua

Aconcagua is the tallest mountain in the Western Hemisphere. Beck maneuvered through tricky, rocky terrain that slid precariously as he climbed to the top. It is one of the seven summits.

Vinson Massif

Vinson Massif in Antarctica is another one of the seven summits that Beck climbed. It's the most remote and inaccessible of all the summits. It was on this expedition that Beck learned about Rob Hall.

Kilimanjaro

Kilimanjaro is a mountain in Africa that Beck climbed. It is another one of the seven summits.

Carstensz Pyramid

The Carstensz Pyramid in Irian Jaya is another one of the seven summits that Beck climbed.



Themes

Depression

Beck struggles with depression throughout the entire book. His first major bout with depression was when he was a college student. There were many times that he was unhappy, but in his periods of depression, he sank so low mentally that he considered different ways of killing himself. He was anti-medication, yet didn't want his depression to effect him professionally. He would take on challenging tasks such as learning to sail or working overtime or exercising in the extreme to combat the depression. Beck found that mountaineering helped him fight off depression. He ran when the black dog, as he called a depression, was after him and moved from one goal to another, each one more risky than the last.

At one point he blamed his wife for his depression, but later realized that the problem lay within himself. He went for professional help in dealing with the depression, but didn't find any advice other than to pursue his own passions, even though they were destroying his marriage. The counselor said that it was highly probable that his life would end by his own hand. Beck was able to talk about his depression with his wife and with his brother. While talking with his brother, he discovered that his family had a history of fighting the harshness of reality by escaping from it. His brother turned to exercise and alcohol, his father turned to alcohol and Beck turned to excessive hobbies.

Healing

The novel opens with the main character in desperate need of healing. Ironically, he had survived his own death, and his body was trying to keep what little life he had left in him going. Physically, he had lost the use of his hands and had lost his nose. Beck flew back to the United States to his home in Texas to heal under the care of friends and family. He underwent surgeries within one year, fights infections, and got a new nose. It seemed obvious that a main part of this novel is about healing. What isn't as obvious is that most of the healing of trust in the book is more emotional than physical. Beck came to terms with the fact that his relationship with his wife was on the rocks. As he was dying on Everest, he came to realize how much his family meant to him, and he was confronted with the realization that he was not a good husband or father.

The book traces back in time to the roots of Beck's obsessive personality. He identified the fact that he used mountaineering to combat depression, and realized how much damage his interest in mountain climbing had caused the family. Since he survived Everest, he had a second chance to make things right in his family. The novel shows realistically how a man proved to his family that he loved them and that he would accept their help in healing the rift that had come between them, especially with his wife.



Friendship

Throughout the novel, there is a strong sense of the power of friendship. It was through a family vacation with friends that Beck discovered his love for hiking and mountaineering. He got a great job thanks to Franz and was able to climb and share experiences with other great friends. Sometimes the friends who surrounded him were his own relatives, such as his brother Dan, who flew to Timbuktu to help take care of him after he came down from Everest.

Peach also benefited and garnered strength from her friends. When her marriage was falling apart, she was able to talk with her friends and express her feelings. When she found out her husband died, her friends immediately came to be with her and help her with her children. When she received a phone call saying that he was still alive, her friends rallied to support her and helped her in obtaining aid to get Beck off the mountain. She, too, had relatives who were her friends, such as her brother Howie, who was always there to help her and her family when Beck was not around.

Beck met many people throughout his travels, but his true friends were the ones he worked with. Peach found friends who were married to her husband's coworkers and who were parents of children that were in her own children's classes. Friends were drawn to Beck because of his sense of adventure and his energy. Friends of Peach were drawn to her because of her quiet strength and her ability to remain objective in emotional situations.

Style

Perspective

Left for Dead: My Journey Home From Everest was written by Beck Weathers, along with Stephen Michaud. When this book was written, the writer, Stephen G. Michaud had co-authored and authored nine books in topics that ranged from biographies to history. Beck Weathers was a pathologist with an obsession for climbing mountains. This novel is a first-person account of the Everest expedition, the life that led up to it, and life after the experience. The majority of the book is written from Beck's point-of-view, but it also shifts to other people's points of view, especially Peach's. The authors separate Beck's point of view from the others with a line between paragraphs. When a section is from another person's perspective, the authors write the person's name with a colon after it then add their thoughts in first person perspective.

Beck would describe a particular situation he was in and offer information on the events related to a particular part of his life. Sometimes he used the stories and events to set the stage for another event that will come later in the book or to explain something that had already happened in the book.

When the story was in Peach's perspective, she would sometimes talk about a situation Beck already covered, from her own angle. Other times she would relate a new story that linked into Beck's journey through life rather without repeating an event. The perspective and point-of-view also included sections written by Beck and Peach's children, Meg and Bub, as well as some of their close friends.

Tone

Left for Dead: My Journey Home From Everest Is a novel that shows the realities of life. It's very subjective, written in first person, yet showed different peoples' points of view. The reader understands from the very start of the book the jeopardy that Beck has put himself in, to the point of risking his own life. As Beck fought for survival, the reader also observed his determination and immense willpower. He had the tenacity to stick to a task even when times were tough, focusing on putting one foot in front of the other to survive.

The reader also gets clear insight into Peach's character, and realizes that in her own way, she had the same strength, determination and courage that her husband had. Their marriage had always been on shaky ground, and things were getting worse, but she had the determination to make it last as best she could. When things were about to completely fall apart, she stuck by her husband's side even though the going was tough. The two survived due to their own determination and thanks to the support of friends and family. Shown through action, and their own person perspectives, the reader sees

how the friends' support kept Beck and Peach moving forward toward healing. The novel is a very realistic account of overcoming physical and mental hardships in life.

Structure

Left for Dead: My Journey Home From Everest is split into four parts. Each of the four parts begins with a few pages of pictures. Part One consists of ten chapters that portray Beck's experience on Mount Everest. The images preceding this chapter show Beck at Everest Base Camp and also show Beck with his brother Dan in Nepal after the expedition. The chapters do not have titles, and are written from Beck's perspective until the middle of Chapter 4.

Part Two contains chapters eleven through fifteen. The images before this section show Dan and his two brothers when they were young, Peach and her two brothers when they were young, and Beck and Peach in 1979 with their own son. In this section, the reader learns about Beck and Peach in their growing up years, see how the two met and married, and how they set up their home life After marriage.

Part Three covers chapters sixteen through twenty-one. The image shown at the beginning of the chapter is Beck at WindyCorner, Mount McKinley in 1989. This section of the book shows how Beck became interested in hiking then moved on to more intense mountaineering. It shows how his obsession toward the family apart, and how Peach tried to counteract the mental separation that resulted from his mountain climbing.

Part Four covers chapters twenty-three through twenty-five as well as an Epilogue and a section of acknowledgment. The pictures for this chapter show Beck and Peach in 1998, Howard Olsen, and a family portrait of the parents and the children in 1999. This section focuses on family healing and explains why Beck wrote the book the way he did. It also summarizes his thoughts on the entire experience.



Quotes

"Four other climbers also perished in the storm, making May 10, 1996, the deadliest day on Everest in the 75 years since the intrepid British schoolmaster, George Leigh Mallory, first attempted to climb the mountain."

Chap. 1, p. 4

"On a family vacation in Colorado I discovered the rigors and rewards of mountain climbing, and gradually came to see the sport as my avenue of escape."

Chap. 1, p. 6

"My wife was hardly finished with the harrowing task of telling our children that their father was not coming home when the second call came through, informing her that I wasn't quite as dead as I had seemed."

Chap. 1, p. 8

"If you, the reader, were by some magic instantly transported to the top of Mount Everest, you would have to deal with a medical fact that in the first few minutes you'd be unconscious, and in the next few minutes you'd be dead."

Chap. 2, p. 23

"A traverse is an inherently more dangerous kind of move in mountaineering."

Chap. 3, p. 38

"Climbing down a mountain is a lot more dangerous than climbing up. If you're going to get yourself killed, that's generally what happens."

Chap. 4, p. 46

"Suddenly, the blizzard detonated all around us."

Chap. 4, p. 47

"The miracle was a quiet thing: I opened my eyes and was given a chance to try."

Chap. 6, p. 60

"That's when I discovered that when Madan returned to get me, he was flying the Squirrel on just seven minutes of fuel."

Chap. 7, p. 80

"Maybe we all just take our heroes for granted."

Chap. 7, p. 81

"I had a lot of class, and all of it was low."

Chap. 8, p. 89



"He had to nearly die before he opened his eyes."

Chap. 9, p. 94

"That seems to be a keyword for me: exertion."

Chap. 12, p. 137

"I would learn that loving someone, even loving them so hard your teeth hurt, is necessary, but not sufficient if you are not there for them."

Chap. 16, p. 181

"As events on Mount Everest would later attest, one of the most important things that a guide can tell you was when not to climb."

Chap. 18, p. 213

"There was also the sheer thrill of facing down my demons."

Chap. 19, p. 223

"At one point, I turned to Ricardo and asked them what it takes to try Everest. He casually answered, 'Well, somebody like you could do it.' "

Chap. 20, p. 247

"It was a horrible foretaste of what she'd go through when she was told he'd died on Everest."

Chap. 23, p. 274

"One of the odd twists to this story was that nobody-including me-knew how badly I was injured. First I was dead. Then I wasn't. Then I might as well have been dead."

Chap. 25, p. 304

"I've been wrestling with the question Who do you love? And realized it was my family, the people who make up my existence."

Chap. 25, p. 323

"Howie just understood better than most of us the importance of daily deeds, rituals and traditions, as opposed to grand entrances and exits; that it's the journey, not the destination, that matters in our lives."

Chap. 25, pp. 331-32

"I once was lost, but now am found."

Chap. 25, p. 333

"I learned that miracles do occur. In fact, I think they occur pretty commonly."

Epilogue, p. 335

"That day on the mountain I traded my hands for my family and for my future. It is a bargain I readily accept."

Epilogue, p. 338



Topics for Discussion

How did this book get its name?

Do you think the climbers were correct in the way they treated Beck after they found him? Why or why not?

What led up to the infamous Everest expedition?

What were some signs that Beck was going too far with his hobbies?

What were some alternative paths Beck could have taken to avoid disaster in his marriage and on the mountain?

What impact did family relationships have in this novel?

Why would Beck want to live through this experience again?

What were the signs that Beck really had changed after Everest?