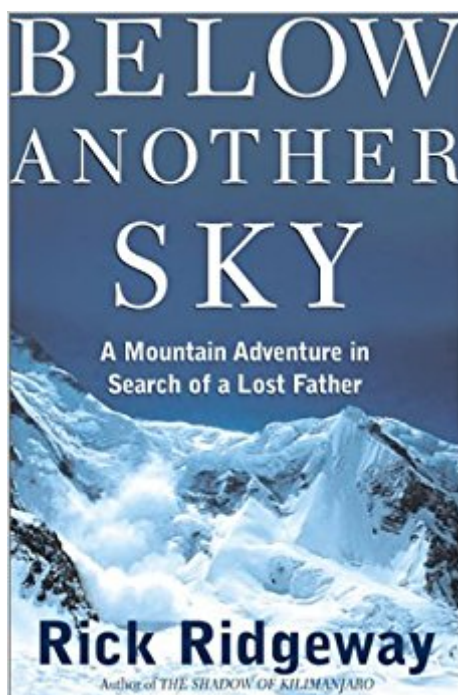


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Below Another Sky: A Mountain Adventure In Search Of A Lost Father



Synopsis

A renowned adventurer travels to Tibet with a young woman in search of her father's memory and gains a fresh perspective on his own life. Combining gripping adventure writing with intimate memoir, Rick Ridgeway takes readers to the mysterious mountain domain of Tibet, and into the remote corners of his past. Twenty years ago, in the wake of a massive and terrifying avalanche, Ridgeway cradled his dying friend Jonathan in his arms and pledged to keep watch over Jonathan's infant daughter, Asia. Now Asia is a vibrant, headstrong young woman; hoping to help her connect with the father she never knew, Ridgeway takes her to the Himalayas Jonathan so cherished. Together, they search for the place where he died. Their trek through remote and forbidding terrain—under constant threat from lethal storms and jumpy Chinese military patrols—is a fitting backdrop for the precarious emotional journey that Ridgeway and Asia share, as they venture into alien landscapes of memory and self-discovery. Ultimately, the truths they both seek are revealed, not in the images of a life long gone but in the bright promise of future possibility. In a stunning conclusion on a treacherous and wind-battered mountain face, both Ridgeway and his dead friend's daughter finally embrace the deepest realities of death, and of life.

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Customer Reviews

On October 13, 1980, alpinists Rick Ridgeway and Yvon Chouinard, in company with National Geographic photographer Jonathan Wright, were struggling up the slopes of the little-explored Tibetan mountain Minya Konka when an avalanche swallowed them. Wright, only 28 years old, died. As he did, Ridgeway writes, "something left him. I saw it." The survivors buried Wright in a

rocky grave on Minya Konka's flanks and, dispirited, returned home with the haunting vision of that death always in their memories. Fast-forward nearly 20 years. Wright's daughter, an infant when he died, asks Ridgeway to take her to Tibet, climb Minya Konka with her, and find her father's grave. Their remarkable journey in honor of a lost friend and father, one that would honor Wright's vow "to live each day as though it were my only one" and that would take them into mountains that had never before been climbed, forms the heart of Ridgeway's thoughtful memoir, which is sure to become a classic of mountaineering literature. The book is, however, more than a simple narrative of a difficult task accomplished; it affords Ridgeway an opportunity to reflect on his many perilous adventures (kayaking in the stormy waters off Tierra del Fuego and scaling Mount Everest among them) and on what drives him to undertake such challenges in the face of hard-earned knowledge of the risks involved--all of it having something to do, as he writes, with "telling yourself you're not sure you can make it, but making it anyway." Like Peter Matthiessen's *Snow Leopard*, Ridgeway's book involves a voyage of personal discovery that's rich with meaning. And, like Matthiessen's book, *Below Another Sky* deserves a place on the shelves of anyone possessed by the spirit of adventure. --Gregory McNamee

In November 1980, legendary mountaineer Ridgeway watched his friend Jonathan die in his arms after being caught in an avalanche in the Himalayas. Now, 20 years later, as he leads Asia, Jonathan's daughter, on a quest back to the mountains of Tibet in search of Jonathan's grave site, Ridgeway reflects on his friend, on Tibet and on his career as a climber in a moving and exciting tale that is part memoir, part adventure story. To give both the reader and Asia a young woman who has no recollection of her father a fuller understanding of the man Jonathan was, Ridgeway incorporates entries from his friend's journal into his narrative. Ridgeway's writing is vivid, uncluttered and, mostly, unsentimental. Indeed, the author's voice is most authentic describing climbing itself--the lure of the challenge, the thrill of the danger and the sheer beauty of the adrenaline-charged and psychically compelling experience. Although never overtly religious, Ridgeway digs deep to explore his own spirituality in a profoundly spiritual place, recounting his discussions with Asia about Jonathan's commitment to Buddhism and how they may be able to incorporate elements of his beliefs into their lives. Author tour. (Jan. 9) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Because the "Lost Father" in the title of this book was a close friend and had, and continues to have, an enormous impact on my life, I picked up Rick's book with anticipation and some trepidation

as well. Any fears were groundless. Rick has woven a marvelous fabric of adventure intertwined with a young woman's courageous journey into unknown parts of the world to search for the answers to questions she has asked her entire life. He binds the story with the thread of his own soul searching and past adventures, described in a straightforward, heartfelt manner. This book touched me deeply. And also entertained me. Rick is a great story-teller, using simple, matter-of-fact language to describe hair-raising, and even life-threatening situations. This is a book for lovers of adventure, for those in the middle of their lives, taking time to look back as well as forward, for those with unanswered questions in their lives, and for anyone with a father - known or unknown. I highly recommend this book

What a wonderful story this is! Rick Ridgeway writes and reflects with maturity and humility of his initial climb up Minya Konka in China's Sichuan province, the loss of his friend Jonathan in an avalanche during the climb and then his return to the mountain a decade and a half later with Jonathan's now-grown up daughter, China. I read this entire book in two long sittings and as with all great books hated to see it come to an end. The narrative, which weaves together earlier climbs and adventures, growing up and taking risks, along with the trek back to Nepal, Tibet and China is a spiritual as well as a geographical journey. Ridgeway has learned much from his incredible life -- about things that are of consequence and things that are not. His wisdom and common decency, his kindness and his loyalty to friends and to memories, and the way in which he imparts this to his friend's surviving daughter is inspiring and touching. I'll read this book again sometime soon and I'll think about it for a long long time because although it is a story that begins with tragedy and death and concludes with a visit to the site of that tragedy, it is at the same time a superb hymn to a life lived full and well and true.

This book is a trek into memory and is one that is held together by two riveting and story-unifying scenes. It's scenes like these that keep the book still haunting my own memory two weeks after finishing it. The book, just like real life, is merely a cycle - a repetition of connected events. Both scenes involve the author's dead friend, Jonathan Wright, once a professional photographer and mountaineer who was tragically killed by an unpredicted avalanche. The author, Rick Ridgeway, is asked by Wright's daughter to take her back to the grave site of her father on the flanks of Minya Konka in "wild Tibet." While hiking the well-worn trail to Tengbocke Monastery, Ridgeway describes himself identifying the white-capped river chat on the banks of the Dudh Kosi. He is perhaps a few hundred yards of Asia Wright, the dead climber's daughter. Ridgeway is suddenly reminded of doing

the same identification some twenty years earlier when Jonathan came upon Ridgeway at the river's edge. Back then, they together thumbed through the bird book until they indentified it as the same one they were looking at. Now years later, in almost the exact same spot, Asia Wright comes up the trail, and seeing Ridgeway squatting next to the river, stoops and says, "What are you looking at?" Dizzying deja-vu. The second motif occurs at the end (don't read this if you don't want to know the surprise). Here, Ridgeway has found the grave site where twenty years before he had buried Jonathan after the fatal avalanche. He approaches the tumbled stones that still partially cover the body. He shifts a rock and sees the hair of his friend. Ridgeway reaches down and holds the strands between his fingers, rubbing them slowly and gently. Years before, Ridgeway had done the same right before Jonathan had died. Ridgeway held Jonathan in his arms. He remembers when he moved his fingers through his hair while Jonathan's lips changed color and suddenly his face paled and something "went out of him," and he died. These scenes are lasting memories for Ridgeway. I connect with the author as he connects with his past. Below Another Sky is a touching account of an aging mountaineer with a rich heritage and valuable advice to those of us too timid to climb mountains and risk our lives.

This was a great book. Ridgeway did a great job of weaving in stories of his mountain adventures, along with his current quest: taking his best friend's daughter to a high altitude climb they did 20 years before to find her father's grave. It is really touching - and a quick read. I am looking forward to possibly reading another book by Ridgeway now.

As a climber and lover of mountains, I have read many mountain adventure books. They provide an enjoyable vicarious pleasure, and occasionally even penetrate to a significant illumination of the mysteries of the human spirit that make the experience of hardship and danger in nature (be it mountains, desert, ocean, etc.) such a powerful lure for many. This book, while it had those elements, was something totally different. My wife lost her father when she was eight years old, also in the mountains. From there the stories diverge in many ways, but the central theme of trying to find, and restore into her life, the father who she never knew, made Asia the star of this book, and her gift in allowing such an intensely personal story to be shared by the world is simply extraordinary. From my own experience I felt I understood her quest and her reactions, and yet the literary grace of the book, along with the beautiful design of the trip itself, left me with a far better understanding of my own wife (and a whole lot of tears). This book is about the living, not the dead; and that is the real lesson at the end. Thank you Asia, and thank you Rick, for sharing it. It is a

glorious gem.

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