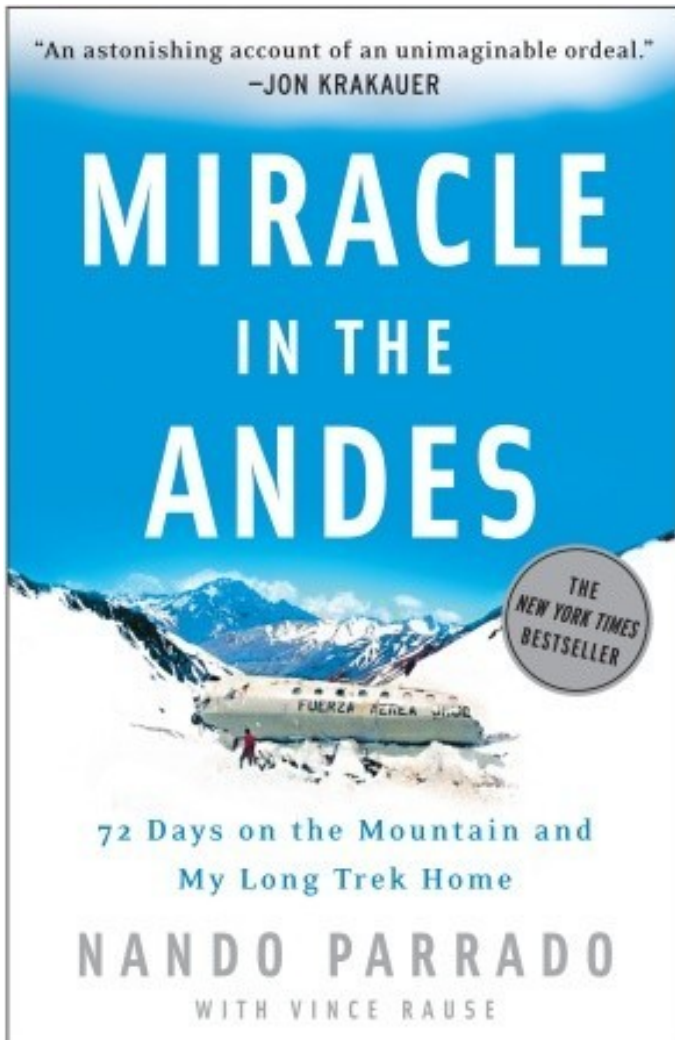

Nando Parrado

Miracle in the Andes



Title: Miracle in the Andes

Author: Nando Parrado

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Description

In the first hours there was nothing, no fear or sadness, just a black and perfect silence.

Nando Parrado was unconscious for three days before he woke to discover that the plane carrying his rugby team, as well as their family members and supporters, to an exhibition game in Chile had crashed somewhere deep in the Andes. He soon learned that many were dead or dying—among them his own mother and sister. Those who remained were stranded on a lifeless glacier at nearly 12,000 feet above sea level, with no supplies and no means of summoning help. They struggled to endure freezing temperatures, deadly avalanches, and then the devastating news that the search for them had been called off.

As time passed and Nando's thoughts turned increasingly to his father, who he knew must be consumed with grief, Nando resolved that he must get home or die trying. He would challenge the Andes, even though he was certain the effort would kill him, telling himself that even if he failed he would die that much closer to his father. It was a desperate decision, but it was also his only chance. So Nando, an ordinary young man with no disposition for leadership or heroism, led an expedition up the treacherous slopes of a snow-capped mountain and across forty-five miles of frozen wilderness in an attempt to find help.

Thirty years after the disaster Nando tells his story with remarkable candor and depth of feeling. *Miracle in the Andes*—a first person account of the crash and its aftermath—is more than a riveting tale of true-life adventure: it is a revealing look at life at the edge of death and a meditation on the limitless redemptive power of love.

From the Hardcover edition.

Insightful reviews

VaultOfBooks: By Nando Parrado and Vince Rause. Grade: A+

'Miracle in the Andes – 72 Days on the Mountain and My Long Trek Home' is the story of adventure, courage, tragedy, horror, terror, love and much more of a group of individuals who survive for seventy two days at more than twelve thousand feet in the Andes. Penned by Nando Parrado (one of the survivors) and Vince Rause, it is an autobiographical account of the days Nando and his comrades had to face high in the Andes.

The blurb goes like this -

Nando Parrado was unconscious for three days before he woke to discover that the plane carrying his rugby team to Chile had crashed deep in the Andes, killing many of his teammates, his mother and his sister. Stranded with the few remaining survivors on a lifeless glacier and thinking constantly of his father's grief, Parrado resolved that he could not simply wait to die. So Parrado, an ordinary young man with no particular disposition for leadership or heroism, led an expedition up the treacherous slopes of a snowcapped mountain and across forty five miles of frozen wilderness in an attempt to save his friends lives as well as his own.

Thirty years after the disaster, Parrado tells his story with remarkable candour and depth of

feeling. 'Miracle in the Andes', a first person account of the crash and its aftermath, is more than a riveting tale of true – life adventure; its a revealing look at life at the edge of death and a meditation on the limitless redemptive power of love.

This is not just a mere story. It is a nerve jangling tale of a rugby team who had taken the ill fated charter flight from Montevideo in Uruguay to Santiago in Chile which crashed high in the Andes on October 13, 1972. As the plane crashed, it broke into numerous pieces. The wreckage, bodies, luggage – everything seemed scattered for miles. Not many can survive a plane crash. But a group of twenty nine people did. They managed to survive the crash only to be confounded by a new danger. They were on top of a glacier at a height of several thousand feet in the Andes. For miles and miles, all they could see was snow; no trees, no animals, no food, not a living thing as far as eyes could see.

Sadness, fear, tension, tragedy, horror – Nando describes each and every emotion with such an utmost care for detail that makes the reader live those seventy two days with that group. The challenges they faced every day, whether it was drinking snow water, tackling the avalanches and blizzards, having to turn cannibals to stay alive, seeing their loved ones suffer painful deaths, confound altitude sickness from the thinning air and survive deadly temperatures – all of it and much more makes us feel as if we haven't really faced much in life.

When a simple man like Nando could lead a trek up and down a seventeen thousand feet mountain for more than fifty miles to take people to safety, why can't we take initiatives to make our lives better and keep ourselves happy all the time? Nando makes the point that love for his family and for his friends was what that kept him alive throughout the days of tragedy. If one thought sentimentally or emotionally in the mountains, his/her death was a near certainty. Nando's descriptions are vivid and a reader can visualize all what the group must have been through. He has also taken the pain to describe the backgrounds of most of his teammates. The narrative is a bit slow at places where Nando describes each of them. But to get a real feel of what exactly the group went through, those descriptions are a necessity.

My favourite line – "Savour your existence. Live every moment. Don't waste a breath"
Don't read this book like a story or novel. It's a triumph of human spirit, courage and the indication of humans will to fight against all odds. It would be up there as one of the most inspirational stories of all time.

Originally reviewed at :www.vaultofbooks.com

Lisa (Harmonybites): Even in the minds of the co-authors, this book is overshadowed by another, Piers Paul Read's *Alive*, which told this story of a plane crash and the months that followed in the Andes using interviews of the survivors. Nando Parrado, one of those survivors called *Alive* a "magnificent book" and said he had not tried to tell his own story for 30 years because he felt that book already covered "all the public needed to know." Vince Rause in his acknowledgments admitted wondering if another book was necessary since *Alive* "told that story in such exhaustive detail, and with such definitive scope and power." I read *Alive* decades ago--it was assigned reading in high school, and it made an indelible impression. There was little in this account that was a surprise to me, because I remembered so many of the details of that other book, and I'd certainly say if you're going to read only one account of this story, it should be that one--it's wonderfully and sensitively written.

But Rouse said he thought another account would be worthwhile if Parrado was really willing to open up and take you back on that mountain and help you think what he thought and felt what he felt and take you along on the spiritual and physical journey he took, and in that I think it succeeds wonderfully. In fact, at certain points I was even moved close to tears, and that isn't easy. *Alive* emphasized the importance of their shared faith in the ordeal they underwent. There were 45 passengers and crew on that plane, and within a week there were only 27 survivors with all the food running out. To stay alive, those remaining had to resort to eating the bodies of the dead. To allow themselves to do that, some clung to their faith, even trying to see their taking nourishment from their dead as a form of communion.

It was different for Parrado, who would take his survival into his own hands and with one companion make a near impossible climb over the mountain to go get help. Certainly, if there was one survivor of that ordeal whose story I'd want to know, it's his--because he didn't just wait to die. For him in the end the miracle of the Andes wasn't from God. He wrote that he found the "opposite of death is not mere living... courage or faith or human will." It's love. In the end, it was his love for the family that would be grieving for him that pushed him to endure. Parrado's account of the psychology of survival reminded me of nothing so much of accounts I've read of survival in concentration camps--which went well beyond the mere physical. This doesn't to my mind replace *Alive*, but it's a book well worth having together with it on your shelf.

Pam: "In that moment all my dreams, assumptions, and expectations of life evaporated into the thin Andean air. I had always thought the *life* was the actual thing, the natural thing, and that death was simply the end of living. Now, in this lifeless place, I saw with a terrible clarity that *death* was the constant, death was the base, and life was only a short, fragile dream. I was dead already. I had been born dead, and what I thought was my life was just a game death let me play as it waited to take me.....The mountains, for all their power, were not stronger than my attachment to my father. They could not crush my ability to love. I felt a moment of calmness and clarity, and in that clarity of mind I discovered a simple, astounding secret: Death has an opposite, but the opposite is not mere living. It is not courage or faith or human will. The opposite of death is *love*....Love is our only weapon."

"In that moment, I stopped running from death. Instead, I made every step a step toward love..."

"I did feel something larger than myself, something in the mountains and the glaciers and the glowing sky that, in rare moments, reassured me, and made me feel that the world was orderly and loving and good. If this was God, it was not God as a being or a spirit or some omnipotent, superhuman mind...It was simply a silence, a wholeness, an awe-inspiring simplicity....and I have often thought that when we feel what we call love, we are really feeling our connection to this awesome presence...I don't pretend to understand what it is or what it wants from me. I don't *want* to understand these things. I have no interest in any God who *can* be understood, who speaks to us in one holy book or another, and who tinkers with our lives according to some divine plan, as if we were characters in a play. How can I make sense of a God who sets one religion above the rest, who answers one prayer and ignores another, who sends sixteen young men home and leaves twenty-nine others dead on a mountain?"

over 30 years, pay attention him describe what he has realized and what's vital to him. classes for us all.

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