



Surviving the Extremes: A Doctor's Journey to the Limits of Human Endurance

Kenneth Kamler

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Physiological constraints confine our bodies to less than one-fifth of the earth's surface. Beyond that fraction lie the extremes. What happens when we go to them? Dr. Kenneth Kamler has spent years observing exactly what happens. A vice president of the legendary Explorers Club, he has climbed, dived, sledded, floated, and trekked through some of the most treacherous and remote regions in the world. A consultant for NASA, Yale University, and the National Geographic Society, he has explored undersea caves, crossed the frozen Antarctic wastelands, and stitched a boy's hand back together while kneeling in knee-deep Amazonian mud. He was the only doctor on Everest during the tragic expedition documented in Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* and helped treat its survivors. Kamler has devoted his life to investigating how our bodies respond to "environmental insults"-a nice way of saying the things that can kill us-and watched while some succumbed to them and others, sometimes miraculously, overcome them. Words like "extreme" and "survival" have lost some of their value from overuse and media hype. By showing us what happens when life itself is at stake, and the body's capacities put to their greatest test, this book reminds us what they truly mean. Divided into six sections-jungle, open sea, desert, underwater, high altitude, and outer space-*Surviving the Extremes* uses first-hand testimony and documented accounts to illustrate what happens in environments where our instinctive survival strategies must become fully engaged. These stories reveal how infinitely complex are the workings of the human body-and also how heartbreakingly fragile. At the heart of this book is a quest for the source of our will to survive and the haunting question of why some can, and others cannot, summon its awesome and nearly mystical power at their moment of greatest need. Surgeon, explorer, and masterful storyteller, Kamler takes us to the farthest reaches of the earth as well as into the uncharted territory within the human brain. *Surviving the Extremes* is a scientific nail-biter no reader will forget.

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