



# A Man's Life: Dispatches from Dangerous Places

*Mark Jenkins*

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"Brought to life by a poetic and muscular style, Jenkins's writing is a brew of history, philosophy, and raw emotion. His journeys are as intellectual and spiritual as they are physical, and we are by his side, in his head." So wrote Robin Russin for the *LA Times* about Mark Jenkins's last book, *The Hard Way*.

In *A Man's Life*, Jenkins walks across northern Afghanistan, retracing the ancient route of Marco Polo; clandestinely enters northern Burma, slipping along the forgotten Burma Road; climbs a new route in Uganda's Mountains of the Moon; bicycles across Lithuania with a long-lost friend; canoes through Surinam with the Maroons, descendants of escaped slaves. Described by critic Bill Berkeley as having a "Whitmanesque openness to experience," Jenkins's desire to explore and understand the world has pushed him to extremes most of us cannot imagine—being arrested in a dozen different countries from Tibet to Tajikistan, breaking a dozen bones, climbing inside glaciers in Iceland, narrowly escaping falling glaciers on Mont Blanc. Through his willingness to put himself out there, Jenkins captures profound glimpses of our chaotic, contradictory, ever-morphing world.

*A Man's Life* shares how these experiences change Jenkins from a reckless young globetrotter to a mature, contemplative family man who seeks adventure because he viscerally must, and yet is constantly aware of the dangers of the world and its cool-faced indifference to one man's life. Each departure from home could be permanent and each homecoming is layered with pathos—his latest journey might have cost him his daughter's first steps or his wife's birthday. The tales in *A Man's Life* explore the razor's edge between life and death, as well as the nature of love and friendship, failure and redemption. Together, they unite Jenkins's stunning travels with his lucid contemplations on the meaning of it all.

Praised by Richard Bernstein in *The New York Times* for being able to "[transform] a common sight into a moment of pure magic" and by Amanda Heller in the *Boston Globe* as "blessed with a rare combination of physical and intellectual grace ... he makes us understand what pushes the man who pushes the envelope," Jenkins is one of the rare writers who channels action-packed adventure into lyrical, evocative storytelling.

### A Man's Life: Dispatches from Dangerous Places Details

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Author : Mark Jenkins

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## From Reader Review A Man's Life: Dispatches from Dangerous Places for online ebook

### Megan says

Amazing book. Part travelogue, part philosophical treatise. At once heart-pounding and thought-provoking. I've never had so many "aha!" moments reading a book.

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### John says

Pretty cool stuff. He talks alot about culture and history in addition to his adventures.

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### Jason says

"There are many ways to lose your life besides death"  
Great book.

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### Cri says

Get ready to feel deprived of adventure!

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### Bob Peru says

i love me some mark jenkins. da dude lives da fuckin' dream.

the last chapter'll make ya cry. really. like a li'l girl.

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### Alisa Cunningham says

Amazing stories. Made my life seem kind of ho-hum, but that's okay. Maybe one day I can write about my own adventures....

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### thefourthvine says

Adventure writing is usually a frustrating read for me - frustrating because the authors are usually willfully, forcibly blind to the levels of privilege and entitlement you have to have just to be a professional adventurer. Mark Jenkins is worth a read if for no other reason than that he gets that - gets that what he's doing is selfish,

that adventure consumes resources that will never be replaced, despoils places that should not be despoiled.

He also understands the personal cost of adventure. I actually bought the book for the first essay, which is about his family, and which is an honest portrayal of what he, his wife, and his kids give up so that he can live his dreams. It's interesting and heartfelt, and it's on a topic that's rarely addressed by the gung-ho adventure types. Even better, though, is the last essay, which talks about his best friend; that one is heartrending, intense, and well-written, and it honestly made me cry.

If only all these essays could have been as good. Jenkins seems to get more of what's behind adventure travel, but, except in those two stand-out essays, he's just not a very good writer. Most of his pieces are journalistic: we went here. We saw this. We climbed that. We came back. Adventure writing, to be good, has to be more personal, more idiosyncratic, and more revealing; sadly, Jenkins spends most of his time not managing to hit those notes, or even come close, and so the book is surprisingly pedestrian; Jenkins manages to report on phenomenal places and activities and make them only slightly more interesting than old chewing gum.

Still. If you can get this book from a library, it's worth reading for those two essays alone.

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### **Greg Coates says**

This book collects a series of articles about adventure (e.g. mountaineering, rock climbing) and travel that Mark Jenkins wrote for Outside magazine. They are wonderful, and there were more profound moments than I expected for a book of this type.

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### **Joyce Nelipot says**

There's so much washing linen in this book. It will dampen your enthusiasm. Others have not tackled it, but I will.

This guy enjoys being an invisible man. Maybe he's not comfortable with his sexuality, craving for more macho cover-ups. My main point is, Don't Leave Your Babies. That a 12,000 foot mountain is dangerously delicious is just Mark Jenkins's incredible vanity. Yes, vanity. Because he wants to be famous in justifying leaving one's family. Because he wants to be with his equally attention-deficit pals. Fame all for the wrong reasons. What could be more dangerous than your kids climbing the high cabinet top, falling and smashing their small skulls? As a father of two, why crave for a dangerous mountain when a couple of drug addicts could easily drop a whiskey bottle and smash your windshield on the highway while your kids are inside on the way to school? What could be more dangerous than a world of gangsters who would climb your terrace (while you're climbing Mt. Stanley) and break in through your windows to kill your family and steal? What could be more dangerous than your family members getting suddenly sick of Zika, cancer, red tide poisoning, or temporary insanity due to a hot stovetop being left to burn the entire kitchen? What could be more dangerous than your kids being amateur cooks and playing with knives and other stuff?

Stuff that you care less about than a crevice that can smash your fingers and make you into a burden to your family later?

Anyway, on to the technicalities of the book. Well, yeah, I'm a tomboy who collects stones. Well, yeah I have a dream area I keep comin' back to in my ruminations. Very nice beginning, very nice. But the rest of the book? I seriously thought of prematurely hiding it under the bed instead! But I remembered I paid for it , though only through sale.

This is a book with transitional and descriptive problems. Only trying hard to be Hemingway like the others, he obviously sprinkled it up hurriedly with numerous clichés and padded it up with excerpts from other authors, to compensate for its lack of philosophical anchorage.

Hero? Not for me. But it is up to you if a heap of broken bones and biking blisters are your ideas of heroic feats for a flighty father , no-show brother or a constantly disappearing husband (crampons are Portkeys). But if that should be highlighted, it should not be in disregard for the rest of the picture: Jenkins the author is a mass of contradictions, deliberately appearing as a case of a guilt "trip" and an outdoor love "trip".

I like adventure. I like some hikers, even amateur ones. I wish I could have respect for ALL adventurers. But I cannot. Because of this book. There are others worth my eyestrain out there. I'd rather read that a real scientist with tedious graphs or that a socio-analyst makes dispatches from dangerous places, (then make a university paper of it afterwards). But, Jenkins? I may never read him again. Let alone purchase.

It's just that - Mark Jenkins, you suck . This book should be entitled A Man's Lie: Dispatches From Where Mark Becomes an Interminable Burden to his Family And Milking It For All It's Worth Because He is an Emotionally Starved Narcissist Who Likes Taking In TLC More Than Giving It. He belongs to the long list of repressed men who willingly assimilate any kind of masochistic pain just to milk in the worry and concern from their unduly tortured, long- neglected ( and gullibly naïve!) family. (Then brag about it like what people do in Facebook and social networking Sites -- that's not false analogy, man.) From the sound of it, he indulges in the "circulating love" without regard to how grave it is that he will go away again, flinging away intentions to give what is within his capacity to give. He goes home, then after some length of time confesses agitation (huh?!), and then he will delight to freakin' take flight again for so long - to fill in his starved machismo and embrace the westerner's culture of hubris masked as naturalistic endeavor (or worse, a cover-up for his homosexuality, it's just always a probability guys. )

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### **Jaime says**

I love adventure books. This book makes me want to go to Iceland, the Himalayas, the Grand Canyon (again), and take up mountaineering. At this point will settle for camping out in the living room. Gotta start somewhere!

This is a great book for guys who don't read: short pieces all true stories, tons of adventure and excitement.

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### **Kyle says**

This book makes me want to go outside. It makes me want to sleep outside. It makes me want to sleep outside on a cliff face hundreds of feet up in the air. It makes me forget that I hate bugs, love sleeping indoors, and hate going without coffee in the morning.

After reading it, I planned a new bicycle adventure. We're thinking about 1600 miles through a different country\* this summer.It's that kind of book.

\* Admittedly, that country is Canada. But close to the French part.

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## **James Ritchie says**

Jenkins is both a man's man and a writer's writer, at least in the context of first person accounts of outdoor adventures, in some of the most exotic and fabled adventure destinations around the world. He has gone to the meccas of outdoor adventure that the rest of us only dream about. He has experienced adventures that most of us would not dare confront. As a writer, he has the skill to draw us into his life and his feelings so that we can share, from the safety of our homes, his feelings and see his world in our own mind.

"A Man's Life" is a series of short stories, most of which had been published in Outside Magazine. The stories take us mountain climbing, ice climbing, and rock climbing trekking, mountain and road biking, canoeing through jungles, and more in places like Uganda, Afghanistan, Burma/Myanmar, New Zealand, Iceland, China, Mt Blanc, Tasmania, Bhutan, Suriname, Ghana, Norway, Lithuania, among others. Jenkins addresses the dilemma of family, mortality, death itself, risk and fear. He rubs elbows with all the famous outdoor adventurers on a world scale - here is a man who can pick up the telephone and call the best climbers, riders, trekkers, etc. in the world to embark to a destination across the ocean in two days.

I greatly enjoyed this book. Jenkins does many of the things I do, albeit on a much grander scale, so I was able to relate to his feelings and experiences. As an instructor of creative writing at the University of Wyoming, he writes the way writers are taught to write but seldom do. His writing is tight and structured, I would recommend this book to anyone who can relate to the adventure bug and has had their boots on the ground.

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## **Anthony says**

- 1) The process is what it's all about.
  - 2) We seek out mentors and teachers
  - 3) Attitude changes everything
  - 4) Vivir la vida
  - 5) Love those around you.
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## **Brian says**

This book was absolutely riveting. Jenkins is a frequent contributor to Outside and other magazines, and this book is a collection of his periodical essays. They cover the full gambit. The first section was a bunch of heart-felt essays about how difficult it is to be both an adventurer and a father. There were stories about sneaking into the Congo for a first ascent, following famed Washington alpinist Fred Beckey into the remote Sierra Madre Occidental, sneaking into Burma to interview oppressed peasants, moving to Spain with his family for a year, climbing in the Wind River Range with the founder of Patagonia, finding uncharted passes on Bhutan, cycling across Siberia... This guy just does it all. There were a few elitist chapters on climbing that pissed me off (he doesn't believe in bottled oxygen or even top-roping a climb), but for the most part I found his adventures exhilarating and inspiring. This guy licks the Liberty Bell big time.

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## **Sharon says**

Each chapter is a different story. Some are great. Most are so,so. Not as good as some of his other books

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