



Adventure Trippin'

>What is it with extreme athletes and paranormal experiences?

IF YOU THINK REINHOLD

Messner's yeti sightings were nutty, wait till you hear the tales Maria Coffey turns up in her new book, *Explorers of the Infinite* (Tarcher/Penguin, \$27). The veteran adventurer and author of 2003's *Where the Mountain Casts Its Shadow* had a couple of extrasensory experiences after her boyfriend died on Everest and she nearly drowned in Morocco, which got her wondering: Why do certain athletes—climbers, snowboarders, singlehanded sailors, and other hard-driving types—seem to have more spiritual and supernatural epiphanies than your regular Joe 10K? Thin air, mental exhaustion, and dehydration



Reinhold Messner in Italy's Dolomites

might be part of it. But Coffey posits a more curious theory: that athletes' ability to push "beyond human consciousness into another realm" helps them break physical boundaries, and vice versa. Here are a few of the mind-boggling tales in her case files:

>In 1985, after Mexican climber Carlos Carsolio attempted Nanga Parbat's Rupal Face with a Polish team, tapes of their dicey descent revealed that Carsolio had spoken in Spanish while the other climbers spoke Polish. "But when we were up there we had understood each other perfectly," Carsolio said.

>While climbing in the Dolomites, British mountaineer Adrian Burgess says, he once watched a basketball-size rock crash directly toward his brother Alan's head—then stop in midair before floating to the right and landing gently on Alan's daypack.

>In 1992, a few weeks after Polish climber Wanda Rutkiewicz died in the Himalayas, her mother got a late-night phone call. "She heard her daughter's voice," Coffey writes. "'I am very cold,' the voice said. 'But don't cry, everything will be fine. I cannot come back now.' Then the line went dead." —JASON DALEY

NATURE BOYS

David Guterson's *The Other* features an unclaimed \$440 million inheritance and a mummified corpse found in Washington's Olympic Mountains, but it's no murder mystery. Guterson (*Snow Falling on Cedars*) uses these circumstances as the backdrop to an otherwise quiet tale of two Seattle friends, "of the generation that was slightly late for the zeal of the sixties and slightly early for disco." When they meet, in 1972, John William Barry is an aristocratic prep-schooler and Neil Countryman is a wannabe novelist from a blue-collar family. But the two forge an unlikely friendship through a love of dope, literature, and nature. While Countryman eventually marries and finds a job, Barry—"the contrarian who hears his conscience calling in the same way schizophrenics hear voices, so that, for him, there's no not listening"—only retreats deeper into the woods. When he hatches a plan to disappear for good, Countryman feels compelled to help him. With prose that's as careful and quiet as a mountain lion, *The Other* asks, and helps answer, two of life's most perplexing questions: How do we live in an imperfect world, and what are our obligations to those we love? —STEVEN RINELLA



REQUIRED READING

Red Summer

By Bill Carter

(SCRIBNER, \$25)

Bill Carter spent four summers slipping on salmon guts as a commercial fisherman in Egegik, Alaska, and the book he came away with is an honest, refreshingly understated look at a profession that's known for, well, exaggeration. Carter, an Arizona-based journalist, simply gets everything right, from the damaged, broke, drunk fishermen with their carpal-tunnel-racked arms to the sound of a thousand fish hitting a net at once.

A Voyage Long and Strange

By Tony Horwitz

(HENRY HOLT, \$28)

"An awful lot happened between Columbus and the Pilgrims," writes Horwitz, but you didn't necessarily learn about it in fifth-grade social studies. Horwitz (*Blue Latitudes*) fills in the gaps by retracing the North American routes of European explorers like Cabeza de Vaca and Hernando de Soto, checking out tourist traps and meeting colorful locals along the way. As always, Horwitz is a smart, hilarious, and informative guide.

Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It

By Elizabeth Royte

(BLOOMSBURY, \$25)

Fryeburg, Maine—where citizens are battling a multinational corporation that's pumping and selling H₂O from their aquifer—is ground zero for this thirst-quenching look at the social and environmental consequences of bottled water. Our addiction to the stuff, especially when tap water is so cheap and safe, might be the "biggest scam in marketing history," writes Royte (*Garbage Land*).



You're So Undead

"I know enough about high-altitude physiology to appreciate that the cold should have killed me, cerebral edema should have killed me, hypoxia should have killed me ... [But] if I was dead on the evening of May 25 but alive on the morning of May 26, what happened?" —Aussie climber Lincoln Hall, on a night alone at 28,000 feet, in *Dead Lucky: Life After Death on Mount Everest* (Tarcher/Penguin, \$25)