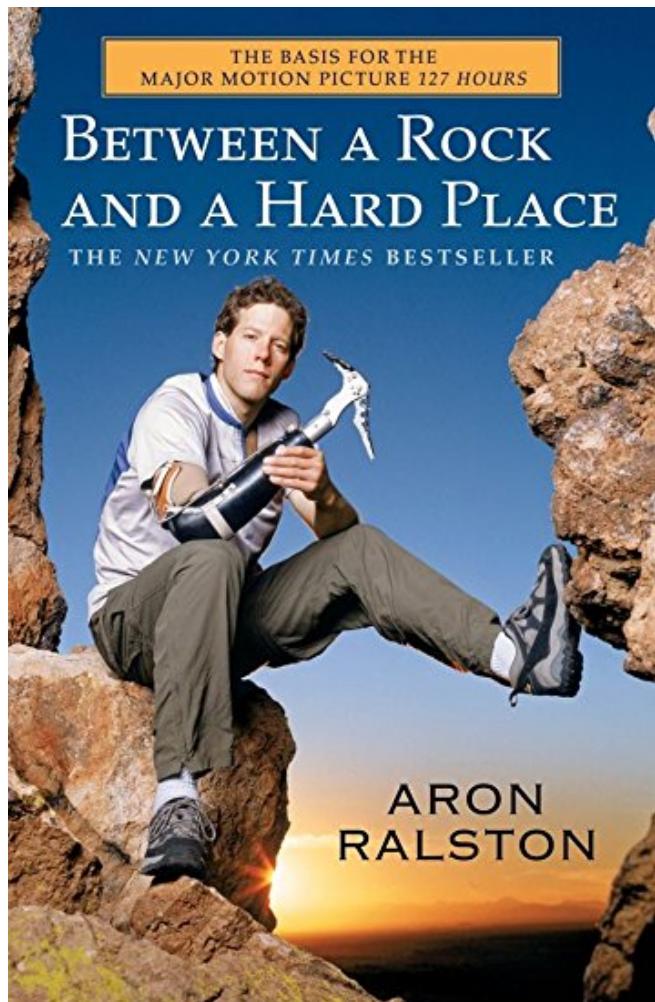


The book was found

Between A Rock And A Hard Place



Customer Reviews

I saw the Dateline NBC special about Aron's ordeal when it aired 3 years ago. I was stunned, as I'm sure everyone who saw it was, and I made a mental note to read this book. But here it is, 2007, and I've only just now gotten around to it. I don't think this book is all good or all bad - I share many of the same opinions of the others who have reviewed it. One thing I will say is I don't think it's possible to be completely objective and review the BOOK alone, separate from "reviewing" Aron as a person. But when someone writes their autobiography, I think they put themselves out there for judgment, so I won't attempt to make that separation. First, the writing style. Yes, there are many instances where the descriptions are incredibly overwritten, where you can almost see his conscious effort to make his writing seem "poetic." And his penchant for \$2 vocabulary words couldn't be more annoying. But for me there was a huge difference between the writing in the "background" chapters (overwritten and over-detailed) and the writing about the entrapment itself, which is nothing short of vivid, stunning, and remarkable. His ability to put you right there in that canyon with him is amazing. He really is a very good storyteller, and I found myself very intrigued and delighted on numerous occasions to read the unique ways that he describes things. As others have said, there is way too much technical detail, particularly when he's recounting his past outings. In those passages I found that even with pages of description, I still had a hard time picturing exactly what he was talking about because I'm not a climber (or a skier, or a white-water rafter, or a canyoneer, or a rappeller or a...).

I feel like an 800-pound boulder going in to write anything less than an overwhelmingly positive review of "Between a Rock and a Hard Place". How many people have said they'd give their right arm to have their memoirs reach the bestseller list? Well, outdoorsman Aron Ralston actually did that. Who, then, am I to judge his writing style? There's no listed ghostwriter, and you can believe Ralston did structure and write the whole book himself. A Carnegie Mellon grad with five years as a mechanical engineer, and well versed in outdoor literature, Ralston comes off as a talented writer (one would hope, however, that he'd avoid the inevitable trap of making his next book a thinly veiled roman-a-clef about a trapped rock climber). However, the book is bogged down by two authorial -- if not editorial -- decisions: First, the writing style is very technical, and therefore dense. I'm not an outdoorsman; probably the most extreme things I've done in my adult life are to climb the Diamond Head on Oahu, which really just involved walking up a lot of stairs; and an extremely little bit of caving outside of Rapid City, South Dakota. Although Ralston cites to Jon Krakauer as a writing inspiration, he lacks Krakauer's ability to make the extraordinary seem achievable. I felt I could

climb partway up Everest after reading "Into Thin Air". After "Between a Rock and a Hard Place", I didn't even think I could ride a bicycle again. Second, the alternating chapters. I understand the structure of the book: in order to tell his whole life story, while keeping the suspense going, Ralston only describes his ordeal in odd-numbered chapters.

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