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Four Against The Arctic: Shipwrecked For Six Years At The Top Of The World



Synopsis

While reading Valerian Albanov's *In the Land of White Death*, David Roberts came across the mention of an old legend of four shipwrecked Russian sailors who had managed to survive six years stranded on a barren island in the high Arctic. Incredulous, Roberts -- an expert on exploration literature who had never heard of this account -- was determined to learn the truth behind this extraordinary story. Little did he know that his search would ultimately bring him closer to the experiences of these four survivors than he had imagined. In 1743 four survivors of a Russian shipwreck in the Arctic Ocean were trapped on a tiny island with only twenty pounds of flour for food. With ingenuity and courage they endured six years of nearly unimaginable hardship, with only driftwood to fuel their life-saving fires, and the constant threat of attack from polar bears (they would kill ten with homemade lances). Roberts's quest to document their story would take him across two continents and culminate in his own expedition to the remote and desolate shores where these mysterious sailors had been marooned. Riveting and haunting, *Four Against the Arctic* chronicles an incredible true story.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's amazing the story of four Russian sailors' survival on the sub-arctic island of Svalbard for six years isn't better known, considering it's probably the most amazing feat of arctic survival in the long and checkered history of arctic and antarctic exploration. Unfortunately, I have to agree with many of the other reviewers here that the "signal to noise ratio" of the book is pretty low; there really isn't that much information about the sailors' story, and most of the book is really about the extensive

research the author did and his own personal journey to discover the facts of the story. Unfortunately, very little real information seems to be available and the result shows in the final book. There is no doubt that the author went to considerable trouble and did very thorough and extensive research to glean what little information was available, and the author certainly deserves credit for that. As a former researcher myself I understand the fascination of doing research and the thrill of discovery in ferreting out all the facts, but the end result here unfortunately is still pretty thin. The author also spends too much time finding fault with the French academic's style who originally interviewed the sailors, considering that Roberts's style itself is a little too ponderous and grandiloquent at times, especially about pretty trivial matters. On the positive side, however, I did learn a few interesting details of how the sailors managed to survive for the time they did, and I enjoyed that. For example, they were able to build a wooden hut from the driftwood that floats up on Svalbard's rocky shores. Svalbard itself has no trees, but what it does have is literally tons of driftwood.

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