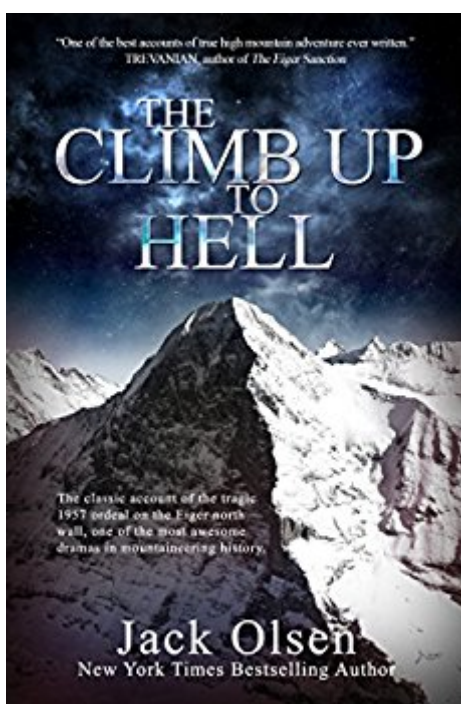


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# The Climb Up To Hell



## Synopsis

In the heart of the Swiss Alps stand the three majestic peaks of the Bernese Oberland, Europe's most famous mountain range. The highest, at 13,638 feet, is the Jungfrau. Next is the Mönch, at 13,465 feet. But it is the smallest, the Eiger, rising 13,038 feet above sea level, that is by far the deadliest. Called a "living" mountain for its constantly changing conditions-unpredictable weather, disintegrating limestone surfaces, and continuously falling rock and ice-its mile-high north wall is perhaps the most dangerous climb in the world. And that may be just what beckons elite Alpinists to scale the treacherous peak against the odds. In 1957, nearly forty years before the well-known Mount Everest tragedy, two teams of confident climbers set out to summit the north wall of the Eiger Mountain. Not long into their journey, onlookers could tell that the four men were headed for disaster. Soon rescue teams from all over Europe raced toward the Eiger-yet only one of the four climbers survived to face unfounded international accusations. In a story as fascinating as any novel, Jack Olsen creates a riveting account of daring adventure, heroic rescue, and one of the most baffling mysteries in the history of mountain climbing.

**KIRKUS REVIEW** The forbidden, formidable north wall of the Eiger Mountain in the Bernese Alps, while it was first successfully climbed in 1938, has remained a supreme challenge to the most seasoned climber and in 1957 two teams of two Germans and two Italians again made the attempt with devastating results. Corti, the only survivor, was perhaps talented- all were seemingly uninformed and ill-prepared, certainly for the wind and weather conditions which were to defeat them and make their rescue so difficult. Corti's partner, Longhi, was the first to entertain misgivings and was soon worn out, suffering frostbite as well; the Germans lost their food and were sustained chiefly by an innate, irrational mystique. Rescue crews were quickly organized, but only Corti, who "looked like a live corpse", was salvaged; his partner had been left lower down- to die, and the bodies of the other two ropemates were only found months later. In the avalanche of blame, resentment (against the guides as well as Corti) to follow, no true judgement could be reached although Olsen, a Sports Illustrated staff writer, does absolve Corti after a final interview... The folly and the fascination of "vertical Russian roulette", the courage compounded with stupidity, the doubts and recriminations which lingered on long after this disastrous ascent, all intensify the drama of this attempt and revive the furor it occasioned at the time. It will keep its readers on the ropes.

The award-winning author of thirty-three books, Jack Olsen's books have published in fifteen countries and eleven languages. Olsen's journalism earned the National Headliners Award, Chicago Newspaper Guild's Page One Award, commendations from Columbia and Indiana Universities, the Washington State Governor's Award, the Scripps-Howard Award and other honors. He was listed in Who's Who in America since

1968 and in *Who's Who in the World* since 1987. The Philadelphia Inquirer described him as "an American treasure." Olsen was described as "the dean of true crime authors" by the Washington Post and the New York Daily News and "the master of true crime" by the Detroit Free Press and Newsday. Publishers Weekly called him "the best true crime writer around." His studies of crime are required reading in university criminology courses and have been cited in the New York Times Notable Books of the Year. In a page-one review, the Times described his work as "a genuine contribution to criminology and journalism alike." Olsen is a two-time winner in the Best Fact Crime category of the Mystery Writers of America, Edgar award.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book chronicles the dramatic 1957 rescue of an Italian, amateur mountain climber from the north face of the Eiger. It is written in somewhat of a potboiler style which makes it a real easy reading, page turner. It is filled with facts and names from mountaineering history which will delight climbing enthusiasts. The famous Chamonix guide and one of the four climbers who figured prominently in the successful, yet tragic 1950 French conquest of Annapurna, Lionel Terray, figures prominently in the rescue portion of this narrative. The account focuses on a somewhat inept,

amateur mountaineer, Claudio Corti, from the Lecco region of Italy. Having lost a number of his roping partners to the grim reaper on prior ascents with him on various mountains, he naturally encountered some difficulty in finding one to accompany him on an expedition to climb the nearly vertical, north face of the Eiger. He finally inveigled Stefano Lhonghi, a very inexperienced climber, to accompany him and attempt one of the most perilous ascents in the world. This two man rope team was simply not prepared to make this ascent properly. Along their way up the north face of Eiger, they encounter two very experienced, German climbers also making the ascent of the Eiger's north face. What happens during their encounter, when disaster strikes, makes for some riveting reading. While Claudio Corti comes across as a thoroughly despicable buffoon, one's heart cannot help but break for the hapless Stefano Longhi and the poignancy of his tragic end on the brink of rescue. The rescue itself is an amazing account of courage, bravado, and confusion, as a multitude of mountaineers converge upon Eiger in order to try and save the four mountaineers who had not returned.

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