

## ***Fiva: An Adventure That Went Wrong* by Gordon Stainforth (Golden Arrow Books)**

### **Some press and online reviews and comments**

*FIVA* by Gordon Stainforth - Wonderful, nostalgic, gripping, classic epic yarn with great humour deserves to win many many awards - read it :)

**Joe Simpson**, author of *Touching the Void*, *Twitter*, 6 July 2012

Agree, agree, agree, agree!

**Sarah Payne**, *Twitter*

The most intelligent disaster story to appear for years

**Stephen Venables**, mountaineer and author of *A Slender Thread* etc

I think it an outstanding book and I was mentioning this to someone yesterday only to be told, 'yes, I already know that!'

**Richard Else**, TV producer, *Triple Echo Films*

It is the flavour of laconic self-mockery that makes this book such a delight. Epics are standard fare of mountaineering narratives; what elevates *Fiva* is the manner of Gordon Stainforth's telling of it. If there is any justice left in the publishing world it will be a best seller. *"Touching the Void"? Move over!*

**Stephen Goodwin**, editor *Alpine Journal*, *Amazon review*

I found *Fiva* wholly absorbing, alive in every muscle and nerve, and with a wholeness of experience quite often lacking in 'extreme' books. In *Touching the Void*, the writing doesn't quite match the intensity of the experience; in *Fiva* it does. I do hope the book gets the currency it deserves.

**David Craig**, author of *'Landmarks'* etc

Once or twice in a lifetime a mountaineering story crosses the divide between pure mountaineering and human interest, bridging the gap and becoming a "mainstream" hit. Like *Touching the Void* it reaches far beyond the limitations of the sport and into the realm of epic survival stories. Success, failure, life and death hangs in the balance throughout as the twins discover they've bitten off something far bigger and far harder than they could have imagined with the daunting face of the mountain taking on its own persona as they pit themselves against it.

Each single sentence is individually honed and crafted in such a way that the book, like the climb, becomes all consuming. *Fiva* breaks the modern trend of psycho-analysing everything from "why I climb" to family relationships in being a pure adventure story in the best traditions of *"Boys Own"* but in it's own unique way it answers those questions like no other book.

*Fiva* may be a book about a mountaineering epic, but in reality it's far more. It's a doorway into the mind of not just the author and his brother, but into the glow of youth. The quality of the writing superb, the pace slowly builds as the story unfolds making it almost impossible to put down. *Fiva* is a work of art, a superbly crafted story that once read will never be forgotten.

**Dave Mycroft**, *MyOutdoors.co.uk*

What a story! ... As it becomes clear they have bitten off more than they can chew - which is pretty serious hanging 3000 feet above certain death - the fear is palpable.... Things get bad, and then they get worse. By a third of the way through the book, I was absorbed, finishing it in one sitting and worn out by the end. What this book conveys most, however, is how youthful enthusiasm, combined with poor planning and preparation, can have disastrous results.... A rollicking adventure story.

**Daniel Neilson**, *The Great Outdoors*

A high octane read

*Fiva*, by Gordon Stainforth falls squarely into the 'sticky book' category - a book so adhesive that no matter how hard you try, you simply can't put it down until you've finished it.... The pace is flat out from the very first page. This is not a book you'll slowly meander through over a period of months, it's a high octane read.

**Gareth Hanson**, *Rock Climbing UK review*

Some natural raconteurs are unable to translate their gift into the written word but Gordon achieves an immediacy and pace that keeps the reader turning the pages in anticipation of the next twist in the story – a Boys' Own adventure gone wrong to which we can all relate ... Gordon has captured the physical and mental transition that led in a few hours from youthful overconfidence, to growing apprehension, to a desperate fight for survival ... he succeeds wonderfully in strapping the reader into the emotional roller coaster of the participants.

For everyone, climber or non climber, it's a ripping yarn well told. Buy a copy for a long train journey or your next holiday and tell your mates about it.

**Nick Gregory**, *Climber*

*'Fiva: an adventure that went wrong'* is a finger nail whittling account of two gauche young adventurers – Gordon and twin brother John – who took on a Norwegian giant Troll and lived to tell the tale.... As in all the finest tales of mountaineering epics 'the best laid schemes of mice and men' unravel as surely as a kitten with a ball of wool!... Gordon writes in a contemporaneous first person style and gives the account the authentic feel of story written by a young man recounting events which had happened but a few weeks before. That is not to suggest that the writing is in any way unrefined. Far from it. The author crafts the tale in a manner befitting the subject matter. Tightly drawn, to the point but not without humour....If [the reader is] looking for a book which is well written, perfectly paced and which ratchets up the tension by degrees in the manner of the very best works of Mountaineering non-fiction then *Fiva* delivers.

**John Appleby**, *Footless Crow*

Gordon does a great job of painting the *Fiva* and the Trollveggen in all their dark and dank glory, the face the third main character in the book ... the first person and minute by minute account - means that the reader is as blind as the leader to what is unfolding, and you get a very real sense of what it is to climb such a face; the mountain unfolding bit by bit; that unique excitement and terror of new ground ... As an epic climb this one really delivers the goods, and as near-death goes, they got as near as you can and write a book about it ...

**Andy Kirkpatrick**, *UKClimbing*

### ***Climber's brush with death is a thrilling read***

Every step of the terrifying, life-changing journey, from leaving their tent onwards, has been chronicled in thrilling and frank fashion in Gordon's latest book. *Fiva: An Adventure That Went Wrong*, which hit the shelves yesterday, has already garnered significant praise from reviewers, whether they know about climbing or not; testament to Gordon's ability to write in an engaging and accessible way.

**Jonny Birkin**, *The Derby Telegraph*

I finished reading 'Fiva' last week whilst on holiday, and felt utterly wrung out and a bit emotional by the end, which I hadn't been expecting at all - as if I'd lived through the epic alongside Gordon and his brother. It feels as if he's nailed his experience completely, right down to the public schoolboy terminology, the all-consuming preoccupation with one's pain, the mindless songs and sayings that haunt us at all the wrong moments.... It reminds us that we're all human, and we can all screw up, and we can all be terrified.

**Clare Danek**, *Textsmith*

Might today's fifteen and sixteen-year-olds find it hard to identify with two public school-educated nineteen-year-olds from 1969? I think we underestimate them ...

Might the book encourage readers to emulate the authors? If it did I think it would be no bad thing. Let's embrace danger!

**Bookwitch**, online book blog

It's brilliant – every young climber needs to read it.

**Colin Mortlock**, *Spirit of Adventure Foundation*

Just brilliant, I could not put it down. It must be a strong candidate for [a famous award] this year. Keep up the great writing.

**Allan Brown**, director *Dundee Mountain Film Festival*, *Facebook*

### **Some online comments:**

This true story left me exhausted and triumphant.

**Mary McLean Farmer**, *Facebook*

This book hasn't been written, it's been crafted. There's no filler ... the tempo moves the reader along as the climber moves – steady as the climbing gets reserved yet suddenly explosive as the climber's adrenalin rises. You know that something bad is going to happen, you don't know when and you don't know how. But when it does happen, and the panic kicks in, the writing goes all over the place. Go back and savor it. Bring out the whisky and take many evenings to re-discover what I think will become known one of the best pieces of climbing literature written for many years.

**Jim Walton**, *UKClimbing* forums,

The book is one of only two climbing books that gripped me so much that I read them non-stop at full pace, the other being *Touching the Void*.

**Steve Clarke**, *UKClimbing* forum

I was completely blown away by *Fiva* and found it compulsive reading. It's in a league of its own and Gordon should be very proud of it.

**Nicholas Livesey**, *UKClimbing* forum

I've just finished reading *Fiva*. Brilliant book, well written and a good story. Makes my epics look like a nice easy day out in the countryside. The fact that it's written in first person definitely makes it all feel a little more personal. It's as though you're watching in real time, knowing you can do nothing to help.

**Dan Lane**, *UKClimbing galleries and forum*

I read it last week, and found it difficult to put down. I enjoyed the "first person"-ness of it. I felt to be "inside the head" of the author in a very powerful way, and therefore to be part of the adventure. And I enjoyed the sort of (public) schoolboy banter that could quote Les Dawson and Milton in nearly the same breath. The "crunch point" at which it all starts to go horribly wrong surprised me in both its timing and intensity. To sum up: a fantastic book. I commend it to the house.

**Richard Walsh (Yrmenlaf)**, *UKClimbing forum*

I'll echo what all the other reviews have said. REALLY involving read, I felt like I was living it with Gordon. Very erudite, without being overly pretentious. A really well written account of a hardcore ascent, which I'm sure many of us aspire to - either in spirit or in reality.

**crustypunkuk**, *UKClimbing forum*

A treat to read – Gordon's devastatingly honest description of his youthful naivety also makes it very funny in places.

**Ben Brockway**, Dunedin, New Zealand, comment on *UKClimbing*

Possibly the most "sweaty palms" climbing book I've read. Reminiscent of *Touching the Void*, but I never felt "that could be me" with the latter.

**Peter Neame**, *UKClimbing* forum

For me, *Fiva* perfectly (uncannily) captures the mountaineering near-death epics of our youth (be they miniature or massive - Cerro Torre or some slimy Welsh gully). Fortunately most of us 'lived to tell the tale' - and happily, for mountaineering literature (as well as for his own personal catharsis and tribute to his youthful character), Gordon has lived to write his engrossing tale.

**Marc Chrysanthou**, *UKClimbing* forum

Just finished reading *Fiva* by Gordon Stainforth: an epic misadventure, brilliantly written, it brought tears to my eyes.

**Nigel Dodd**, *Twitter*

## Amazon reviews (all 5-stars)

### ***Best climbing book of 21st Century so far***

Often in climbing books you find yourself skip reading long sections to get to the 'fun bits' but not with *FIVA*. To me the writing has the story telling skill of Peter Gillman, the dramatism of Rene Desmaison whilst retaining the poetic feeling of Giusto Gervasutti. A book to be read and read again, this isn't a dull "we went out, climbed a route, it was hard, nearly died but didn't" story. Nor is it a book trying to explain "why we climb etc". It's just a great story that happens to be true written by a true craftsman. Gordon is one of the few climbers out there who can actually write. This book is destined to become a classic.

**Jim Walton**, *Amazon review*

### ***Fever Pitch - A Gripping Yarn***

This really is THE most gripping book I have ever read! Gordon grabs your attention right at the beginning then holds it to the very end at an incredible pace. Better known for his superb mountain photography, Gordon shows that he can also pen at the highest level, writing here at his brilliant best. Forty years on from when the events took place, Gordon disarmingly bares his soul in this frank account of youthful naivety and exuberance, wonderfully capturing the unbridled enthusiasm that so quickly turned into a true mountaineering epic and near total disaster for himself and his twin brother John. This is so much more than a tale of derring-do and disaster in the mountains, and deserves a much, much wider audience. I'd certainly put it alongside, if not above, *Touching the Void* and *127 Hours*. Gordon deserves immense success - a thoroughly refreshing, absorbing and compelling story.

**Cragrat**, *Amazon review*

### ***Pick this up and you won't put it down until the last page!***

Absolutely brilliant Young Adult account of three days in the life of two young climbers who very nearly did not live to tell the tale. Think *Touching the Void* with jokes!

**Kevin McKay**, *Amazon review*,

I got my copy of *Fiva* a couple of days ago and couldn't put it down, although at times I wanted to as the way the drama unfolds minute by minute had me feeling totally involved as if I was on the route with them. It's beautifully written and though a blow by blow account it doesn't become remotely tedious as many mountaineering tales can. Once I've got my breath back I'm gong to read it again!

If you haven't got it, then get it. I seriously think Gordon's got a future classic on his hands. *Touching the Void* was brilliant but *Fiva's* even better and possibly the best mountaineering book I've ever had the pleasure of reading.

**Nick Livesey**, *Amazon review*

After finishing *FIVA*, I'm left with the profound feeling that this is one of the best books about mountain misadventure that I've ever read. There are plenty of climbing books out there that feature harder routes, or higher mountains, even higher stakes. The beauty of *FIVA* is the unflinching honesty, the authenticity, and the intimacy. In experiencing such a harrowing experience from Gordon's perspective, so skilfully written, we experience it for ourselves in a way that many climbing books just can't manage. It deserves to become a classic of the genre.

**Alex Roddie**, *Amazon review*

I have long been a fan of Gordons photographic work but this book proves that he can tell a great story as well as take great pictures. As a tale of endurance and survival it ranks with the best - setback after setback hit Gordon and his brother John on the Fiva Route on Store Trollind. The writing draws you into the utter despair and distress of the climbers and I almost forgot that they must survive to write the story. Fantastic little book - I heartily recommend it.

**Keith Ratcliffe**, *Amazon review*

You don't need to be a climber to enjoy this book An absolutely incredible story, very emotional and even though I know nothing about climbing, I felt as if I was there. Very easy to read and it really is unputdownable! The author proves himself indomitable in this life threatening situation and we can only wonder if we would have the same spirit. Highly recommended for all.

**Mary Farmer**, *Amazon review*

### ***Gripping, engrossing story of the follies of youth***

I had trouble putting this down. But it's so intense that I had to take a break at a couple of points! This book has been writing itself in the authors' head for 40 years and like a fine wine, it has matured into a classic piece of prose. I was completely carried along as he contemplated his mortality...

**Peter J. Neame** "PJN" (Tampa, FL), *Amazon review*

### ***A superb adventure story!***

I cannot recommend this true-life gripping, ripping yarn of the Stainforth twins too highly. Gordon Stainforth's story-telling style is completely captivating. My palms were sweating for the entire book which I could not put down.

**Teresa James**, *Amazon review*

A great little book I picked up this, Joe Simpson's and Simon Yates' new books last time I was overseas and *Fiva* was head and shoulders above them, enjoyable as they were. I really enjoyed it - sweaty palms and a terrible sense of dread, but laugh out loud moments of wide-eyed naive innocence too.

**Ben Brockway** (New Zealand), *Amazon review*

I'm possibly the least adventurous person I know – an omniphobe. I picked up the book after a run on Saturday, and after two pages was totally gripped. Fast-forward six hours, a bag of toffee and numerous cups of tea later and I'd had one of those holy grail of reading moments - a truly unput-downable read. I really can't recommend the book highly enough. If you loved Joe Simpson's *Touching the Void*, you'll love this.

**Lissa Cook**, *Lissa Cook PR, Amazon review*

The first time in 2 years I have read a book in 2 days! I am one of those people who has 3 or 4 books on the go at once, and read a few pages here and there. But not with *FIVA*. Had it delivered from Amazon, unwrapped it, read half, was busy until the next day, read the other half, done! I have read pretty much all contemporary mountaineering books that have been published, and this is up there with the very best of them!

**Andy Mountains**, *Amazon review*

I received *Fiva* on World Book Night back in April from the author himself. Usually when someone raves about a book (particularly when it's the author!) it's easy to become sceptical. However the following week I sat down with it and found it hard to put down from then on. It truly is an amazing story of two foolhardy, courageous, foolish, brave, stubborn, cocky, endearing twins. I went from rolling my eyes at their antics to gripping the sides of the book willing them onwards.

**dpm**, *Amazon review*

### ***Twins on the Peak - a heart stopping drama!***

Not knowing my belay from my bivouac, I approached this book with a certain amount of trepidation. I need not have worried; the teen spirit of the adventure immediately drew me in and I was soon clinging to the rock face with the Stainforth twins, willing them to survive. This is a superbly crafted account with a refreshingly authentic narrative voice and vivid, original imagery. The tension is maintained throughout and the cliffhangers are for real. A perfect page turner for the armchair mountaineer!

**Annie Williams**, *Amazon review*

### ***Brilliant!!***

For once a book who's cover reviews I whole heartedly agree with. This book gripped me from beginning to end. I finished it in a day, quite unlike me. The writing is excellent, found I was totally emotionally drawn in. I can not recommend this enough!!

**antidote-to-confusion**, *Amazon review*

### ***Epic misadventure***

This is a fabulous book. The story of two climbers, twin brothers, getting into a life-threatening situation is told with immense skill by Gordon, who manages to create unbearable tension, mix horror with humour and keep us hanging on right until the very end. I found the book immensely involving, exciting and ultimately rather moving. The book wears its climbing knowledge (and jargon) lightly - my 9 year old daughter picked it up after me and couldn't put it down. It deserves to become a classic.

**Nigel Dodd** (London, UK), *Amazon review*