



The Eiger Obsession: Facing the Mountain that Killed My Father

John Harlin

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In the 1960s an American named John Harlin II changed the face of Alpine climbing. Gutsy and gorgeous -- he was known as "the blond god" -- Harlin successfully summited some of the most treacherous mountains in Europe. But it was the north face of the Eiger that became Harlin's obsession. Living with his wife and two children in Leysin, Switzerland, he spent countless hours planning to climb, waiting to climb, and attempting to climb the massive vertical face. It was the Eiger direct -- the *direttissima* -- with which John Harlin was particularly obsessed. He wanted to be the first to complete it, and everyone in the Alpine world knew it.

John Harlin III was nine years old when his father made another attempt on a direct ascent of the notorious Eiger. Harlin had put together a terrific team, and, despite unending storms, he was poised for the summit dash. It was the moment he had long waited for. When Harlin's rope broke, 2,000 feet from the summit, he plummeted 4,000 feet to his death. In the shadow of tragedy, young John Harlin III came of age possessed with the very same passion for risk that drove his father. But he had also promised his mother, a beautiful and brilliant young widow, that he would not be an Alpine climber.

Harlin moved from Europe to America, and, with an insatiable sense of wanderlust, he reveled in downhill skiing and rock-climbing. For years he successfully denied the clarion call of the mountain that killed his father. But in 2005, John Harlin could resist no longer. With his nine-year-old daughter, Siena -- his very age at the time of his father's death -- and with an IMAX Theatre filmmaking crew watching, Harlin set off to slay the Eiger. This is an unforgettable story about fathers and sons, climbers and mountains, and dreamers who dare to challenge the earth.

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