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The Call of the Ice: Climbing 8,000 Meter Peaks in Winter

By Simone Moro

The Call of the Ice: Climbing 8,000 Meter Peaks in Winter. By Simone Moro, Foreword by Ed Viesturs, translated by Monica Meneghetti. Mountaineers Books, 2014. 224 pages. Paperback, \$19.95.

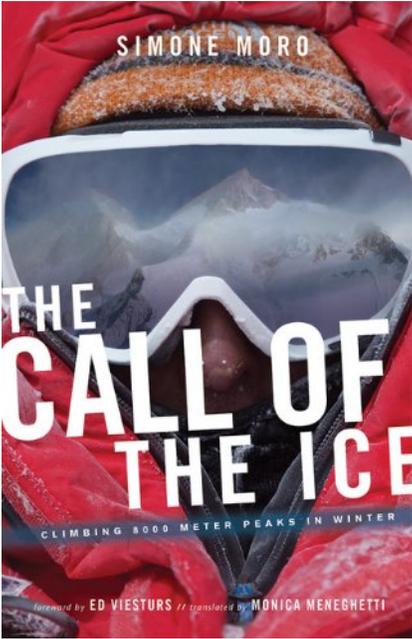
Simone Moro (Italy) is a remarkable high-altitude specialist, likely well known to Americans for the recent controversy with Ueli Steck and Jon Griffith on Everest, or perhaps for his first winter ascent of Gasherbrum II with Denis Urubko and Cory Richards, as chronicled in the short (excellent) film *Cold*. This is Moro's third book, but the first to be translated to English. His climbing CV (one of three appendices) lists 45 expeditions through 2012, including 12 attempts on Nanga Parbat, three of those in winter. As Moro points out in his preface, there are two subjects to this book: winter and the "nearly impossible."

The entire book was written in 20 days on his 2012 Nanga Parbat attempt, "with frozen and gloved fingers and a hot water bottle under the laptop to conserve the battery in the coldest hours." Each chapter begins with a note marking his progress on that climb. He starts with his first winter climb on Aconcagua and moves quickly to a summary of the avalanche on the south face of Annapurna in which Anatoli Boukreev and Dimitri Sobloev were lost and he miraculously survived. He has written elsewhere and at greater length of this, but it's a powerful and formative experience well worth repeating: "truly my lost extreme adventure." His later partnership with Urubko, a Kazakhstani like Boukreev, is central to many of the climbs recounted here.

All the climbing is intensely rendered. Despite Moro's claim that his memory "sucks," he provides many closely observed details suggesting the opposite. Throughout he is rational and opinionated, for example in his response to criticism over his satellite connection: "As if those chunks of battery-operated plastic rendered the cold less intense or the danger virtual." This book is among the very best reportage from the "nearly impossible" that we have.

– David Stevenson

Images



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