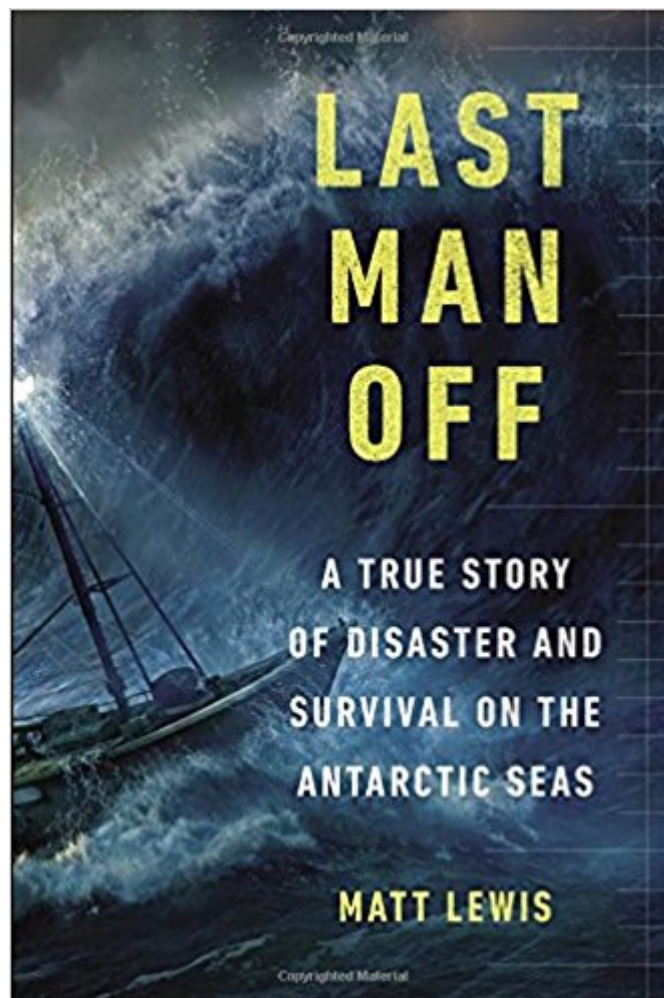




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Last Man Off: A True Story Of Disaster And Survival On The Antarctic Seas



Synopsis

“A sinister version of *The Perfect Storm*. A Thrilling.” •Sunday Times (UK)
For readers of *The Perfect Storm*, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, and *Into the Wild*
There’s nothing that armchair adventure lovers relish more than a gripping true story of disaster and heroism, and *Last Man Off* delivers all that against a breathtaking backdrop of icebergs and killer whales. On June 6, 1998, twenty-three-year-old Matt Lewis had just started his dream job as a scientific observer aboard a deep-sea fishing boat in the waters off Antarctica. As the crew haul in the line for the day, a storm begins to brew. When the captain vanishes and they are forced to abandon ship, Lewis leads the escape onto three life rafts, where the battle for survival begins.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An Best Book of May 2015: In 1998, a young Scotsman named Matt Lewis sought to boost to his budding career as a marine biologist by securing a position as the "scientific observer" on a fishing vessel. Though he would be considered an officer, his role would be limited and relatively tame compared to the rest of the crews: documenting wildlife the boat encountered, while also keeping notes on the crew's adherence to fishing regulations. A coin flip landed him aboard the *Sudur Havid*, a South African boat bound for the outer waters of Antarctica's frigid and tempestuous Southern Ocean. Even though his novice eyes, Lewis was immediately struck by its apparent unreadiness, including a dearth of adequate boots and survival suits, and a crew seemingly unprepared for work in the harsh polar environment. His misgivings were soon realized. As winds rose and whipped the seas into a ship-tossing frenzy, the fuel- and fish-heavy

boat listed, taking on water. A disastrous and inexplicable chain of decisions--starting with the Sudur Havid's chief officers and running down through the ship's engineers and some of the crew--doomed the ship, putting Lewis in the unlikely position of organizing the frantic evacuation. These are not spoilers--Lewis's narrative is rich with detail, putting readers in the thick of the action as the panic-struck men stuff themselves into three inadequate rafts and embark on a nightmarish struggle on the open ocean. Last Man Off is a tale of survival, not an adventure story; and while the particulars are often grim and the outcome unhappy, Lewis's book is a sort of catharsis, a compelling testimonial to his experience and the ones that didn't return. --Jon Foro

"A story that reminds us of the unforgiving nature of the sea and the courage that lies within the everyday heroes that have found themselves in hell." •Bear Grylls, bestselling author of Mud, Sweat, and Tears
"Reads like a sinister version of The Perfect Storm... Thrilling, compelling, unsettling, rewarding."
•Sunday Times
"A dramatic tale of survival in one of the most brutal situations on earth. Feels like reading the diary of a doomed man...so personal and chillingly real; totally takes you there in a way that is not always comfortable."
•Steve Backshall, Deadly 60

My brother and dad were both on this vessel. My dad is one of the survivors who underwent this horrible experience, my brother however did not make it :(After reading this book, many years later I now fully understand what had happened and what my dad, brother and the rest of the crew members had gone through. The detail in this book makes it difficult not to visualize what each individual went through. A big thanks to Matt, the author for explaining this experience in such depth and adding some closure to the loss of my only brother and the ongoing pain my dad faces thinking back on the Sudur Havid.

A gripping story, very well written, and very moving. As an account of the harsh realities of life in this kind of fishing boat, it trumps any discovery channel tosh by quite some margin. Well done Matt.

I was on the other boat, the Northern Pride and met Matt briefly in London. We travelled together to Cape Town and spent a few hours on the quayside before we joined ship and went our separate ways. This book is a faithful account of his story and an accurate depiction of the life of a fisheries observer in some of the most dangerous and treacherous waters in the world. My ship was bigger

(and didn't sink) but we had our fair share of problems - inadequate radio mast, autopilot stopped working, clogged filters, life rafts strapped down so that they would not have deployed even if we had sunk. The most appalling thing to me was the fact that the crew were untrained, poorly equipped (as Matt's book relates) and were paid something like US\$20 a week for 12 hrs a day, 7 days a week. Matt "had greatness thrust upon him" through the experience he survived - I'm not sure if I would have behaved so heroically and I admire him for both his actions and for telling his story so honestly.

The author of this excellent book reveals his innermost fears as he relates surviving the harrowing sinking of a fishing vessel in the Antarctic. His gritty discussion of appalling conditions on the vessel, total lack of preparedness for emergencies and failing leadership on the bridge make for captivating reading. The author does not aggrandize his own actions, which are surely heroic, as he honestly describes those who met the many challenges and those who failed. This is a great read.

Enjoyed the horrifying perspective of a novice scientific observer thrown into a nightmare aboard a fishing vessel in the Southern Ocean. A very cool recollection by the author. While it would be easy to cast blame and end grudges, the author is very measured and even in his account. As a physician, I am surprised that any of the men in the author's lifeboat survived hypothermia. He describes partial immersion in seawater at 1 C for 3 or 4 hours. It is a miracle really that any survived. And what are the odds of a rescue boat finding not one but two rafts without beacons? 1 in a million?

A well written depiction of an incredible survival story at sea. Like many others who reviewed the book, I also couldn't put it down. Matt's writing pulled me right into the open seas and I could truly feel the rocking of the boat and I cringed reading about the numbing cold. I am glad Matt was able to tell the story despite his own painful experience. The story needed to be told and it's truly an honor to those so tragically and needlessly lost and those lucky enough to tell their stories....not to mention to elaborate on who was responsible.

What a harrowing story and brutally honest as it should be. The author told it like it was sparing no one dead or alive. For the sake of history this is how it needs to be done. I am left wondering did Matt ever ask Bubbles about the Chilean radio conversation he overheard? They did spend several hours together in a raft. Curious if Bubbles was coherent enough after his apparent heart attack to

discuss such a thing. He was able to do roll call multiple times. Excellent read though, highly recommend.

Well written story of survival after a shipwreck. The author does a good job of being as objective as possible on the causes of the sinking.

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