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Opening extract from

Ouch! Extreme Feats of Human Endurance

Written by

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Published by

Macmillan

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Please print off and read at your leisure.

Georgina Phillips studied design before deciding that being a writer would be easier and more fun. She worked as an in-house copywriter before going solo in 2000 and now writes for museums and galleries on topics as diverse as war, outer space and food. She has one daughter and lives in North London. She hasn't endured anything very tough at all in her life but is full of admiration for anyone who does. This is her first book.



Alan Rowe was told by one of his teachers at school, when caught drawing silly pictures in his maths exercise book, that he'd never earn a living drawing silly pictures. Since completing a degree in silly drawings, at Kingston in 1985, he has been doing just that.



He has a silly partner, who also draws silly pictures, three very silly children, two silly cats and lives in a silly place in Surrey . . . seriously.

Introduction

What's the toughest thing that you've ever had to endure? Maybe you broke your leg and ended up in hospital, or ran the school cross-country race in the rain? Have you ever been camping in winter? Do you enjoy getting to the top of a hill on a windy day? And have you *ever* gone for longer than a week without anything normal to eat?



If you don't like the idea of being **cold**, **uncomfortable**, **wet** or **hungry**, this book may make you shudder. But don't worry. It's much, much safer to read *OUCH!* than to feature in its pages. This book is full of stories about people who have pushed themselves to the very limits of endurance. The kind of people who think of a tent as luxurious accommodation. The kind of people who don't seem happy unless they are doing things like swimming in freezing cold seas, running triathlons, falling off mountains and paddling boats down rivers filled with man-eating crocodiles.



It's also about the (sometimes terrible) things that humans put each other through – and about all the



trials of living on an exciting planet, where almost anything can happen.

Whether you are an endurance expert or a luxury-loving layabout, you'll be amazed to see just what we're made of.



How could they?

Do you ever wonder how people could have lived in caves, eaten raw meat or even managed without an indoor loo? What we can put up with depends on what we're used to. And, if it came down to it, you might be able to endure a whole lot more than you think you can!

Everyday hardships for an average ten-year-old

. . . in the twenty-first century

- The central heating stops working in the middle of winter
- You can't chat to your friends online because your broadband is down
- Your mum doesn't buy your favourite cereal this week
- You get soooo much homework and the maths is really tricky
- The batteries in your games console run out when you're just about to get to the next level

. . . in the nineteenth century

- The only heating your family has comes from one fire – and it's not in your bedroom
- You can't see your friends because they all have consumption (a very serious coughing disease)
- It's porridge for breakfast every day – and that's only if you're lucky
- You have to work in a factory from dawn to dusk, even on Saturdays
- What are batteries?

Some people can't get enough of frightening and dangerous exploits. The reason could be adrenaline – a hormone that surges through your body in times of danger and makes you feel very alert and alive. Being in danger gives you a chance to save your own skin!

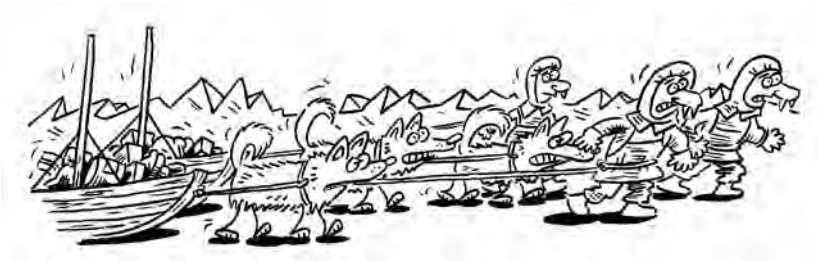
Ernie's *Endurance*

On 9 August 1914 a man called Ernest Shackleton embarks from Plymouth on the expedition of a lifetime. Taking some fearless explorers with him, he sets sail south in a ship called the *Endurance*. His plan is to cross the Antarctic via the South Pole, using dog sledges (a trip so dangerous that nobody has even bothered trying before). As you will see, this expedition ends up testing the patience, as well as the physical endurance, of Shackleton and his men.

Trial 1 The first thing Shackleton has to put up with is his ship becoming wedged in ice before reaching land in Antarctica. A frustrating but not impossible situation. OK, the radio isn't working so they can't call for help, but all they have to do is wait until the ice breaks up in the spring. Unfortunately the ice just drags the ship further from where they're trying to go.

Trial 2 After a tough winter spent playing football on a white pitch, the ice doesn't break up as planned. But the ship does, because the ice crushes it. How annoying.

Shackleton's only option is to ask his men (and dogs) to get out, put their stuff in some small boats and walk – pulling the boats behind them. Off they go into biting winds, freezing snow and certain frostbite.



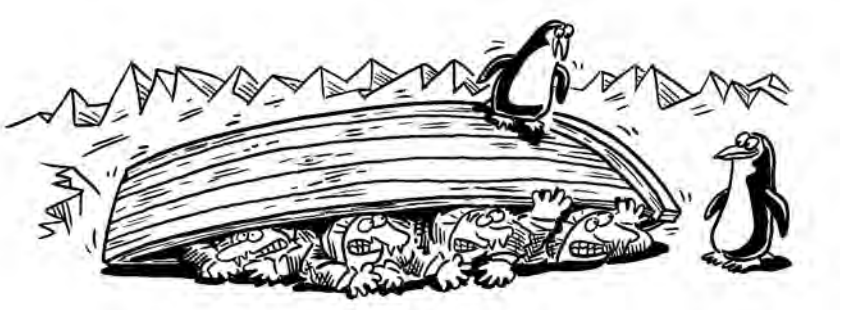
Trial 3 The explorers are now stranded on a raft of ice on a sub-zero sea. They can only hope that floating around will bring them closer to land. No chance. After six months the ice breaks up and they have to get in one of their small boats and row along with frostbitten fingers. At night they camp on an ice floe.

> ***Stop!*** *Let's just have a think about how much cold, wet, scary danger is squashed into that last little sentence alone. Sitting comfortably? On with the story then …*

Trial 4 A year and a half after last seeing land, the shattered men finally arrive at a place called Elephant Island. A deserted, cold, lonely bit of the world and not somewhere you'd go for a relaxing holiday, but you can bet they're glad to see it. Shackleton knows there's no chance of being rescued, so he decides to row out from there to a whaling station on the tiny island of

South Georgia with five of the crew. It's a short hop 745 miles away across the Southern Ocean, the most dangerous sea in the world.

Trial 5 The men left behind protect themselves against freezing solid by hiding under their upturned rowing boats. At sea, Shackleton and the others fight to keep their boat from sinking, frantically chipping ice off the deck twenty-four hours a day. Their sleeping bags have turned into blocks of ice, so it isn't as if they have anywhere to cuddle up in comfort anyway.



Trial 6 They finally spot the island. But storms drive them on to rocks and it seems like the end of the road (or sea) for Shackleton.

Trial 7 Miraculously they land safely the next evening. But they soon realize that the whaling station (where there are bound to be good solid whale-hunting boats, toasty fires and warm food) is on the other side of

Five essentials for adventures in cold places

Today	Fifty years ago
• A mobile phone so you can call your mum and the newspapers • GPS (Global Positioning System) technology so you don't get lost • High-performance clothes to keep that nasty, cold wind out • Lightweight waterproof rucksacks filled with NASA-developed food and protein drinks • An optional film crew to record your achievements for the world to admire (use a camcorder if nobody is brave enough to come with you)	• A pencil and paper so you can write a note to whoever finds your body • A compass and a map (which might be correct, but nobody really knows) • A warm woolly jumper – well, it's not that warm when it gets wet, and it's a bit itchy, but it's better than nothing • Heavy canvas rucksacks filled with tins (don't forget the tin opener) • A diary so your grandchildren can publish your memoirs and make lots of money

the island, over a frozen mountain range. Are you starting to think that someone is playing a bad joke on Shackleton? He must have been wondering too. But, with his last reserves of endurance, he leads his men over the treacherous glaciers to the whaling station. Hooray!

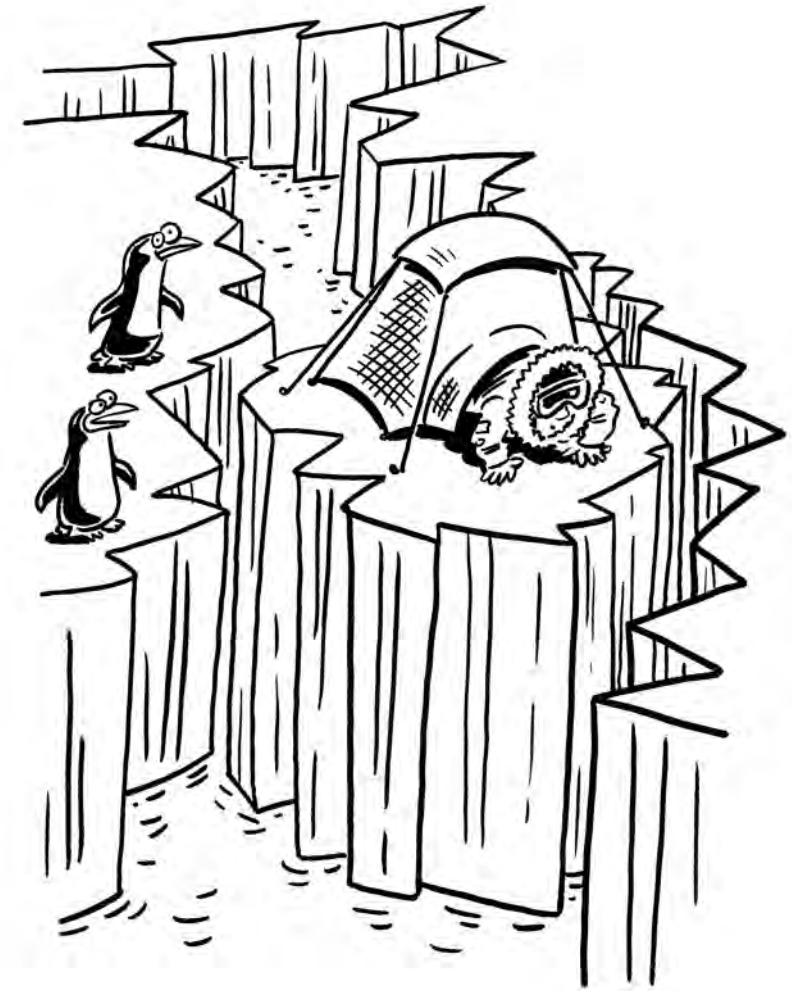
Trial 8 Now all he has to do is go back and rescue the rest of his men from their diet of seaweed and seal bones. Three months later he manages it, and the men go down in history for their magnificent feat of endurance – even if they didn't succeed in crossing the Antarctic.



The pole is never a stroll

We might have more modern gizmos and ultra-warm clothes these days, but getting to the poles isn't really that much easier than it was back in Shackleton's day – particularly if you are planning to do it solo. After being the first woman to reach the South Pole on her own, Rosie Stancer wanted to make it a double act by reaching the North Pole in 2007. She struggled across 326 miles of ice – often in zero visibility and temperatures that plummeted to –55 °C. (Much much colder than inside your freezer at home!)

As the ice cracked and shifted around her, Rosie was forced to swim across freezing stretches of water. At one point she even had to retrace her steps after the ice split right open next to her tent, just as she was about to go to sleep! In some of the worst weather ever seen on the Arctic ice cap, she had to abandon her expedition when she was only eighty-nine miles from her goal.



Here's what Rosie says about coping with frostbite: 'Pain was part of my life. But I found I didn't cry out there. Sometimes I would howl like an animal. That helped.'

Fearless fact

If you get so wrapped up in these stories that you start dehydrating, remember this . . . You can collect rain with a funnel, suck water from the roots and leaves of lots of plants, squeeze liquid from fresh elephant dung, suck the blood and eyes of animals – even get liquid from frogs that store moisture in their skins while they sleep in the mud-baked bottoms of water holes. Or you could just go and get a drink from the tap.



A lot of bottle – but no water!

Lost in the vast Taklamakan desert – in a sunny little spot known as the Sea of Death – explorer Sven Hedin and his men ran out of water. This happened because they hadn't checked that their water bottles were full before leaving the last river. Filling up your water bottle every chance you get is very important in a desert and something that even learner explorers should get right – as Sven was soon to discover.

Anyway, they all got so thirsty that they had to start killing their chickens and goats and drinking their blood. They had a few swigs of brandy too. (Notice how they hadn't forgotten to stock up on brandy.) The blood helped a bit, but the brandy made them sick. Sven and two men finally got out alive, although they left a trail of dead men and camels along the way.

To prove my point . . .

In 1947 Norwegian Thor Heyerdahl sailed 4,300 miles from Peru to the Tuamoto Islands in the South Pacific on a flimsy balsa-wood raft called *Kon-Tiki* (balsa wood is the stuff that you make models out of because it's so easy to cut with a knife). For 101 nerve-wracking days and nights, Thor and his crew drifted through storms and shark-infested waters – all just to prove his theory that settlers could have done it a long time ago.

. . . and another thing!

After more watery adventures, Thor got into ancient reed boats made of papyrus. Everyone said these boats would never make it across the Atlantic because the reeds would get waterlogged after just two weeks in water. Once again, Thor proved them wrong. His first papyrus craft – *Ra* – got within one week's journey of Barbados. His confidence boosted, he tried again with the smaller 12-metre *Ra II*. This time he succeeded in crossing the widest part of the Atlantic from Safi to



Barbados, covering 3,790 miles in fifty-seven days. By sticking at it, he showed that craft made from bouyant reeds could prove seaworthy.

This is getting out of hand!

Sometimes it's a choice between you or your fingers! After getting deep frozen on one of his daring expeditions to the parky Poles, the explorer Ranulph Fiennes had to cut off his frostbitten fingers to save his own life.



Frostbite is what happens when you get much too cold for much too long. Your fingers, nose, ears and face are the first to suffer because less blood is reaching them. The first warning sign is your skin tingling as it begins to freeze. Unless you can rub the warmth back in, it's downhill from there. Frostbite can spread really quickly and it sometimes ends up with dead bits of you dropping off completely. So, although cutting off your fingers sounds extreme, it could be the only way to save the rest of your hand, arm – or even your life!

Wolf children

Imagine being brought up away from your family – in fact, away from all humans and home comforts – and living wild. In 1920 Reverend Joseph Singh, a missionary in Northern India, rescued two girls aged about three and five who had been brought up by wolves in a lair since they were babies. Nobody knew how they had ended up there. The girls had matted hair on their heads and walked on all fours.

You might think that life got better for them once they'd been rescued, but you'd be wrong . . . The girls had lived like wolves for so long that they didn't know any other way to act. They tore off their clothes and would only eat raw meat. They slept curled up in a ball, growling and twitching in their sleep, only waking up after the moon rose – when they would howl to be set free. And they'd spent so long on all fours that they couldn't walk upright. The Reverend said their eyes were extra sharp at night and glowed in the dark like a cat's. They could smell a lump of meat right across the yard. Their hearing was very sharp too – but they didn't respond to human voices.

Not long after being rescued, the younger girl got sick and died. The older one did eventually begin to walk, eat normal food and sleep like the other children, but she never really learned to speak and only ever knew about forty words. She died of typhoid when she was still quite young.