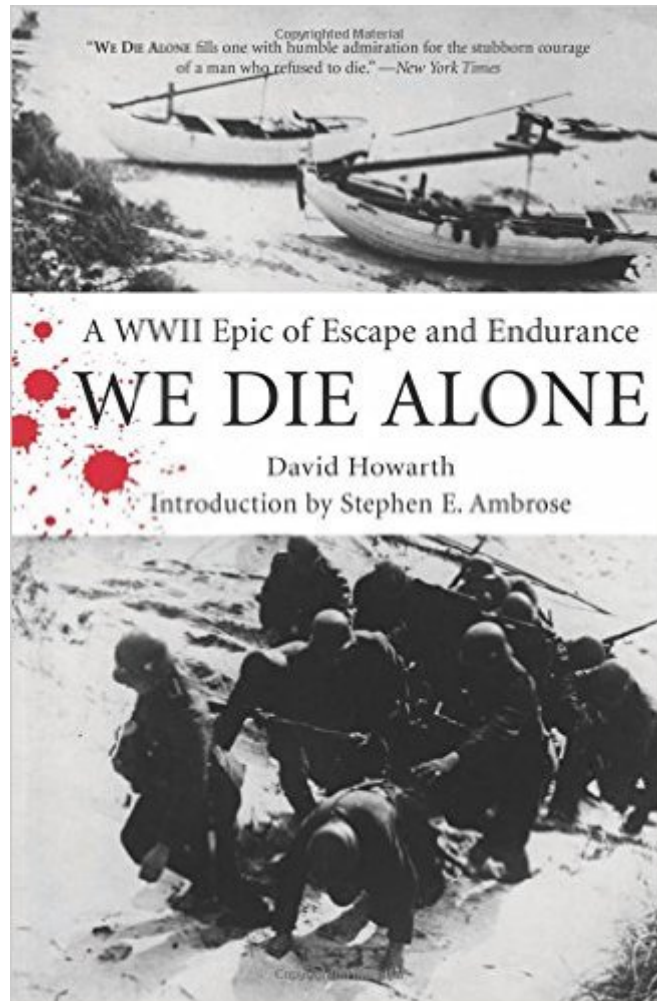


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We Die Alone: A WWII Epic Of Escape And Endurance



Synopsis

A World War II chronicles of Jan Baalsrud's escape from Nazi-occupied arctic Norway. *We Die Alone* is an astonishing true story of heroism and endurance. Like Slavomir Rawicz's *The Long Walk*, it is also an unforgettable portrait of the determination of the human spirit.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There are few tales of epic endurance that can match this, in fact I find it hard to believe that anyone could have lived through this at all. I kept re-reading parts because I couldn't believe what I was reading. David Howarth's true story of the escape of Jan Baalsrud, a Norwegian Saboteur, in the Spring of 1943 was a page turner, I kept wondering how it could possible get end up, and each time I thought things were as bad as they could get it got worse. It is a simple tale of escape and those brave souls who helped him make his way from Norway to neutral Sweden. In March 1943 Jan was part of group of 11 other men who travelled secretly to German held Norway in order to sabotage an airbase. However through an extraordinarily bad coincidence the contact they made there was with a man who betrayed them. Their boat was ambushed by the Germans the following morning, 30th of March. Interestingly there is the German news account of this ambush in the appendix at the back of the book and it does not tally well with the real event. Only Jan managed to escape from the ambush. The fate of the rest of his crew, which is only known in sketchy detail was horrific so his decision to try flee rather than surrender proved the right thing to do. However this left him alone on a bleak tiny island in the Norwegian Sounds with his toe shot off in the freezing arctic spring. The next two months he swam through icy seas, got caught in blizzards and avalanches and finally too

injured to carry on himself, was carried by partisan Norwegians to Sweden. I don't know what is more incredible about this story or this man. His will was astonishing. For one week he was left alone on a deserted plateau alone with almost no food, frost bitten feet and wet clothes.

~~~~~ IN FAVOUR: ~~~~~I found this to be an intriguing true story. Jan Baalsrud, the sole survivor of a foiled commando mission in German-occupied Norway cheated death about half-a-dozen times before eventually escaping to neutral Sweden (from which he had been expelled years before). The man's travails are extraordinary: surviving three days of wandering in the far north completely snowblind; amputating nine of his own toes with no anaesthetic; being literally buried under a blanket of snow for a week and thus - ironically - surviving the blizzard which raged above it. The story takes so many turns for the incredible that one begins to understand why author David Howarth prefaced his book with the assertion that he made every effort to verify the details of Baalsrud's account. The even stranger thing is that Baalsrud is arguably not even the hero of the book. The real heroes are the ordinary rural Norwegians who took him in, cared for him, and ran enormous risks for him - because for much of this story Baalsrud was incapacitated. Each Norwegian he met after the initial Quisling who betrayed his team risked their own lives and that of their families in order to ensure that Baalsrud made it to safety. This sequence of events is even more remarkable in view of the fact that there was nothing the locals could have gained from Baalsrud's survival even by proxy: one crippled soldier, after all, could mount no resistance to the Germans who persecuted them. So the denizens of Norway's far north were not helping Baalsrud so that he would help them: What they did for him was done from motives of purest solidarity. ~~~~~ AGAINST: ~~~~~There are, however, two things which vitiated this reading experience.1.

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