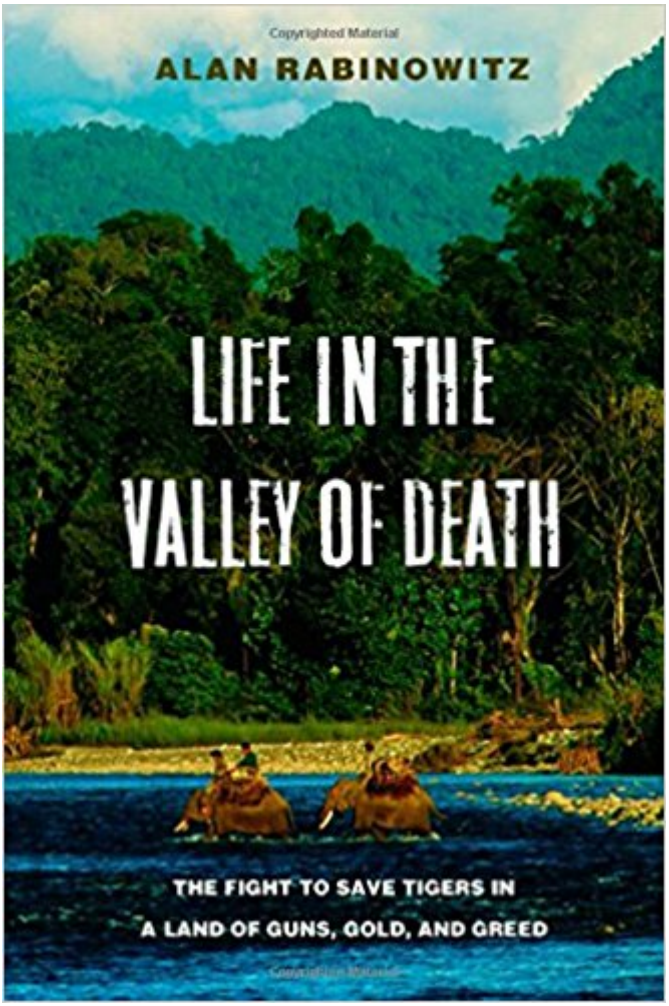
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Life In The Valley Of Death: The Fight To Save Tigers In A Land Of Guns, Gold, And Greed



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Synopsis

Dubbed the Indiana Jones of wildlife science by The New York Times, Alan Rabinowitz has devotedÃ¢â ¬â •and riskedÃ¢â ¬â •his life to protect natureÃ¢â ¬â„¢s great endangered mammals. He has journeyed to the remote corners of the earth in search of wild things, weathering treacherous terrain, plane crashes, and hostile governments. Life in the Valley of Death recounts his most ambitious and dangerous adventure yet: the creation of the worldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s largest tiger preserve. Ã Â The tale is set in the lush Hukaung Valley of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. An escape route for refugees fleeing the Japanese army during World War II, this rugged stretch of land claimed the lives of thousands of children, women, and soldiers. Today it is home to one of the largest tiger populations outside of IndiaÃ¢â ¬â •a population threatened by rampant poaching and the recent encroachment of gold prospectors. Ã Â To save the remaining tigers, Rabinowitz must navigate not only an unforgiving landscape, but the tangled web of politics in Myanmar. Faced with a military dictatorship, an insurgent army, tribes once infamous for taking the heads of their enemies, and villagers living on less than one U.S. dollar per day, the scientist and adventurer most comfortable with animals is thrust into a diplomatic minefield. As he works to balance the interests of disparate factions and endangered wildlife, his own life is threatened by an incurable disease. Ã Â The resulting story is one of destruction and loss, but also renewal. In forests reviled as the valley of death, Rabinowitz finds new life for himself, for communities haunted by poverty and violence, and for the tigers he vowed to protect.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Life in the Valley of Death is not your typical chronicle of rescuing wildlife. Rather it's a clear-eyed rendering of conservation's unruly, dangerous, and chaotic side." (Audubon)"Rabinowitz deserves credit for a political courage no less real than his physical bravery, for being willing to sit down with the devil, occasionally, to save a tiger." (TIME)"Life in the Valley of Death is the triumphant story of his toughest job to date...Rabinowitz had to gain the cooperation of the ruling military junta and navigate an elaborate bureaucracy. That he succeeded testifies to his modesty, patience, and ability to persuade powerful people of the importance of saving tigers." (National Geographic Adventure)"For 20 years, he has traveled the world, imploring the power elite of democracies and dictatorships to dedicate large parcels as reserves for these imperiled felines." (The New York Times)"By engaging Myanmar's ruthless military dictatorship, Alan Rabinowitz has pulled off extraordinary feats for tiger conservation. His is a story of drawing linesÃ¢â ¬â •geographic, political, and moral." (Conservation)"The story of how this lofty goal is accomplished makes for absorbing reading; this very personal account of the nuts and bolts of international conservation will resonate with lovers of the earth's last wild places." (Booklist)"Engaging. . . [Rabinowitz] is a man on a mission and we are not really surprised when that mission ultimately proves successful." (Explorer’s Journal)"In an inspiring, personal book, Rabinowitz recounts his struggles to protect the tiger population in Myanmar, formerly Burma. . .Ultimately, his book is about challenges, possibilities, and hope." (Library Journal)"Alan Rabinowitz is a hero of mine. He combines the courage and initiative of nineteenth-century explorer with the knowledge of a modern wildlife scientist, thereby achieving solid conservation in some of the most remote and critical parts of the world. Life in the Valley of Death represents a high point in a remarkable life." (Edward O. Wilson, University Professor Emeritus, Harvard University)"I could not put down this remarkable book. Alan Rabinowitz's personal journey is every bit as moving and inspiring as is his passionate and courageous battle to save the world's most endangered great cats. We need the mystery and majesty of wild things and wild places. I am convinced that the efforts of Alan and his colleagues will have a profound effect on our collective soul." (Glenn Close, actress)"Move over Indiana JonesÃ¢â ¬â •Alan 'Burma' Rabinowitz is a great man with a great vision. His dramatic story of hope and heroism facing tangled jungles, political intrigue, and a personal battle with cancer will have you on the edge of your seat, cheering for both him and the tigers." (Sy Montgomery, author of "Spell of the Tiger" and "The Good Good Pig")"By turns sad and uplifting, Life in the Valley of Death tells the amazing tale of Alan Rabinowitz's courageous and spirited efforts to protect Burma's (Myanmar's) remaining tigers and establish the Hukawng Valley Reserve. It is hard to imagine a more passionate or exciting account of

today's conservation challenges, or a more thoughtful rendering of life, death, and politics in Burma's most remote corners." (Thant Myint-U, author of "The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma")"As a general rule, books by saints are best avoided... The exception to this rule: Alan Rabinowitz. ... Suffice it to say that the guy's halo is green, bright and fully deserved. But he's also a hell of a good writer, which is why Life in the Valley of Death is anything but another desperate dispatch from a shrinking corner of the wild." (Men’s Journal)

Alan Rabinowitz is President and CEO of Panthera, the world’s largest wild cat conservation organization. He has authored dozens of scientific and popular articles and six books, including Jaguar, Chasing the DragonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Tail, and Beyond the Last Village. Dr. Rabinowitz has been profiled in The New York Times, Scientific American, Audubon, and National Geographic Adventure, and was the subject of a highly praised PBS/National Geographic television special, Ã¢â ¬Å“In Search of the Jaguar.Ã¢â ¬Â•

Very odd that one reviewer would call this a "terrible" book. Either they had a short attention span or are not capable of feeling complex human emotions. And this book is brimming with emotion. Ostensibly, "Life in the Valley of Death" is about the efforts to save the tigers and other wildlife in that region. But this is also a book about Rabinowitz’s acceptance of, and struggles with, a disease he has been diagnosed with. He also opens up and give the reader insights into his marriage (to a Thai woman) and being a father. An additional dynamic is the way he interacts with the local people, particularly the bureaucrats and officials in Myanmar, a "necessary evil" since they are the ones who can grant him permission, not only to visit the country, but to make this wildlife sanctuary a reality. I love the way that Rabinowitz combines these many threads to weave a compelling narrative. You don’t need to have an interest in saving wildlife to enjoy this book. This is just good human drama. That said, I found this to be a notch below his other book, "Beyond the Last Village." That previous book (also about establishing wildlife parks in Myanmar) was so moving and so compelling, I thought it would be hard to top it. And it was. But "Life in the Valley of Death" is a still a very engrossing read, and an important book. Clearly, Rabinowitz loves not only wildlife, but also the people of Myanmar. He does an excellent job of conveying that passion to the reader.

Alan Rabinowitz has successfully helped to establish wildlife preserves in foreign countries, and when asked to expand the wildlife sanctuary in Myanmar, he readily agrees. Nothing could have prepared him for the changes that were to take place in that country over the next year, and how

those changes would affect the vision he had for saving the tigers from extinction in that area of the world. This book details that struggle, describing his efforts to convince the Myanmar government as well as the people living in the Hukawng Valley to agree to work together to create the Hukawng Valley Tiger Reserve.Mr. Rabinowitz has his own style of writing: while he doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t present his story in original, colorful images, his paragraphs are very rich in detail and provide the reader with a thorough picture. His descriptions are usually straight to the point. Sometimes they are delivered with a bit of humor: Ã ƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Ã ƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦since several of our elephant handlers, called mahouts, are addicted to opium, an early morning start is not part of their repertoire.Ã ƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Other times, you can easily see what is in his heart. For instance, he states that the life expectancy of an elephant is Ã ƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Ã ƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦shortened considerably when Ã ƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœwhite goldÃ ƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ protrudes from your head.Ã ƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•This is an excellent book, revealing one manÃ ƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s passion for effecting positive change and the difficulties he encountered during his multi-year mission.

While there has been a lot of criticism of Alan Rabinowitz's efforts in Myanmar, this book should put them to rest. Rabinowitz makes clear his desire to incorporate local stakeholders in the Hukawng Tiger Reserve and give them a surprisingly open voice in an otherwise closed society. Moreover, he makes a good argument that the reserve will bring aid and funds directly to villagers in northern Burma that otherwise might have been neglected.Some of the highlights in the book include Rabinowitz's meetings with high level Burmese officials, including former prime minister Khin Nyunt, and senior leaders of the KIO. I appreciate the fact that he wrote so openly of his relations with these officials, especially as some of them (particularly Khin Nyunt) are no longer in power and whose association could brand WCS with a stigma within Burma. Of course, the central story of the book, setting up the reserve, is full of adventure.I am also impressed by how intimately Rabinowitz shares his emotions and thoughts with the reader (and not always in a light that makes him look good). While I can't claim to know him well, he seems honest and straightforward in his account (a relief after reading so many political autobiographies).In short, this is a great book if you want to go beyond the very important headlines about Burma and see what it's really like to travel, work, and do conservation in this challenging but fascinating country (for those looking for books on Burma's politics, I highly recommend the books by David Steinberg and Thant Myint-U).

This is a very interesting story of an American's efforts to create a tiger refuge working with one of the world's most repressive governments, while also coping with a daunting personal challenge.

Although there are sections where the writing is a bit too dry and hard to follow due to the introduction of many unfamiliar names of people and places (especially in the beginning, when Rabinowitz "sets the table" with some history of the region), this book is a good read overall.(Side note, Rabinowitz mentions in passing that he has (or at least had in childhood) a "severe" stutter. Considering how much his efforts required verbal communication, I would have liked to have known how he and/or those around him dealt with this challenge.)This is not the type of book I have typically chosen to read, but the e-version was available for free through BookBub (sans photos, unfortunately), so I took chance on it. I'm glad I did, as I found this story fascinating, and very much recommend it.

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