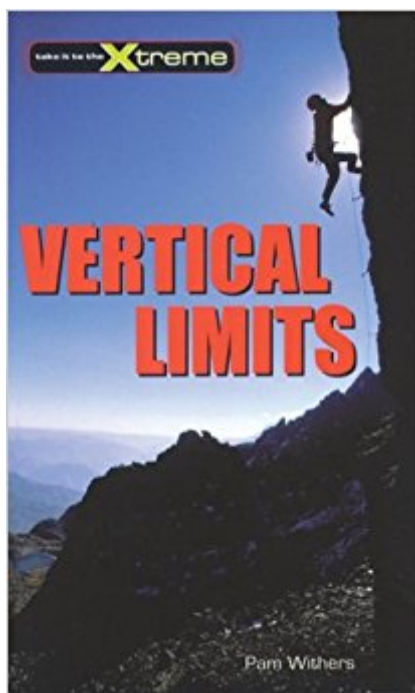


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Vertical Limits (Take It To The Xtreme)



Synopsis

This time, when Jake and Peter stumble upon adrenaline-pumping adventure, it's high in the peaks of the Bugaboo Mountains just west of the Rockies. Fifteen-year-old Jake is obsessed with solo-climbing a soaring granite spire. His best friend, Peter, is as absorbed with filming Jake for a video as he is in not divulging his secret fear of heights to the runaway girl who joins them. Though a talented climber, the surly runaway girl seems possessed by a death wish. When Jake arrives at the halfway mark and cheerfully hangs his overnight cot on anchors at a death-defying 150-storey height above the ground, all seems well, but the next day, a lightning storm begins to unravel this carefully planned high-risk adventure. When a crisis prompts the girl to put her life at stake for Jake, it falls to Peter to overcome his fear to get everyone home safely. Packed with mountaineering lore and cliff-hanging tension, *Vertical Limits* features adventures in competitive gym climbing, outdoor urban climbing, and wilderness rock climbing.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 15 years

Grade Level: 7 - 10

Customer Reviews

Pam Withers lives in Canada's "Adventure Central", Vancouver, British Columbia. When not in the outdoors, this award-winning author helps writers with editing, book proposal writing, manuscript evaluation, writer coaching, and other services in the publishing field.

Chapter 1 The Gym Smearing. That's what the situation called for, and luckily that's what Jake Evans was good at. With the toe of one shoe jammed carefully into a crack in the wall, and both fingers gripping the lip of the shelf above him, he needed only a little friction from his other foot to help move himself upwards. Pretend you're climbing El Capitan in California's Yosemite National Park. Pretend you'll fall to your death if you don't make this move -- now. He pressed the rubbery sole of his free foot against the unforgiving vertical wall, hoping the pressure would smear, or stick, the shoe to the surface for the split second he needed it. Then, elbows stuck out as far as they'd go and back muscles straining, he lifted himself onto the mantel. Breathing hard, he glanced two storeys down. "You nailed it, Jake! Way to go. Nearly there." That was his blond and curly-haired buddy Peter Montpetit, looking pint-sized from this distance. He was shouting from the gym floor, cheering him on as crowds of mostly teen boys milled about. "Shhhh," Jake imagined his judge scolding Peter. That would be the bearded, clipboard-wielding judge in charge of Jake's fifth climb in today's indoor rock-climbing competition. Yes, Jake was now within feet of the finishing hold, marked brightly with a cross of red tape. Once he reached it, he'd get points for having completed "Problem No. 30," one of the five routes he'd chosen in the open-style division of Seattle's annual Tier Two Climb. Unfortunately, to get there from here required trusting much of his body weight to a one-finger pocket hold, a pretty extreme move. If he slipped, his belayer -- the safety person managing his rope far below -- would instantly tighten his grip and save Jake from injury. But then the judge would mark it as a fall, and all Jake's hard work on this route would count for zero points. Jake couldn't bear the thought. Pretend you're on the face of Mount Everest in a blinding snowstorm, and gripping that last hold is your only hope. Jake grimaced and stepped up to the footholds above the mantel, keeping his heels low to lessen the risk of slipping. Then, like a martial artist in slow motion, he lifted one foot and crossed it over the other, keeping his body and one arm frozen and balanced until his searching fingers reached the awkward hold. He pressed it as if he were ringing a doorbell in an emergency. On the strength of that pressure, he maneuvered farther upwards until he was clutching the final, bulkier handhold just inches beneath the ceiling. It was the last hold on his 5.11-level climb -- 5.11 on a scale of 5.0 to 5.15. Solid intermediate, and as tough as Jake could handle. His limbs ached from accomplishing five climbs in a matter of hours, but now he could call it a day. A good day. Pretend you've planted a flag on the peak of the mountain. Smile for the camera. "Okay!" the judge's voice boomed from far below. Relaxing his hold, Jake shouted, "Tension'." The belayer responded by lowering him gradually to the padded gym floor. As he descended, his face to the rafters and harness-secured body hanging almost horizontally mid-air,

Jake let his feet walk backwards down the bumpy wall. He loved that bit. Kind of like being a weightless astronaut or moonwalker. When his feet touched the floor mat, he untied from the rope attached to his harness the strong webbed strapping that was buckled securely around his waist and thighs. "Thanks," he addressed both his belayer and judge as he ran a hand through his sweaty brown hair and collected his newly stamped card, the "passport" of routes he'd chosen and completed. A bruising, congratulatory slap landed across his back. Even before he spun around, he knew who it was. "You looked a little tense up there, old buddy. Like you were on a real mountain or something," Peter declared too loudly, stepping back and crossing his arms over his electric-green vest. Jake knew he'd chosen to wear that to show off his lean upper body, which was pretty muscular for a fifteen-year-old. Jake worked out just as much as Peter, but electric green wasn't his style. Rumpled shorts and a ripe T-shirt were good enough for him. "Tense, but you aced it," Peter continued. "Just waiting for results now, hey? Whatdoya say we celebrate by wandering over to the food table?" Jake smiled. His hyperactive buddy's biggest interests were climbing competitions and food, not necessarily in that order. "That's assuming you haven't polished off all the food already. Sure you're still welcome over there?" "They love an enthusiastic customer," Peter replied, cracking his usual wide grin. "It is my local gym, remember: Seattle's best indoor climbing wall, in my humble opinion." He swept his arm around the facility as if he owned all one hundred competitors, judges, belayers, and spectators milling about the fifty designated climbs, some of which rose three storeys. "I've never known your opinions -- or anything else about you -- to be humble, Peter," Jake teased his best friend. But he figured Peter was right about this being Seattle's best indoor climbing hangout, which is why Jake had taken to visiting Peter lots of weekends lately. Never mind that doing so required getting a lift or a bus to Seattle from his hometown of Chilliwack, British Columbia, just north of the U.S./Canadian border. "And how's the bouldering competition?" Jake asked, referring to the low, curved, cave-like walls at one end of the gym. Climbers on the bouldering section used no ropes and never scaled anything higher than eight feet. If they fell, spotters and special mattresses prevented injury. "Didn't expect you to finish before my last climb. How'd you do?" "Thought you'd never ask!" Peter said as he clapped chalk from his hands, the chalk that climbers use to counteract sweaty fingers. "Results won't be posted for an hour, but I nailed all my routes. I think only one guy was better." "Nice going," Jake replied, amused as always by Peter's exuberance, confidence, and total lack of humility. "So when are you going to grow up and do real walls?" He regretted saying it when Peter's face flushed red for an instant. Peter couldn't help it if he had a fear of heights, and Jake knew he shouldn't really tease him about that. "Half the height, twice the climber," Peter retorted, swiping an energy bar from the refreshment table with one hand

and pouring himself a cup of yellow-colored sports drink with the other. "Boulderers have way more strength and stamina than you guys." "But wall climbers have better endurance," Jake finished off their usual competitive exchange, dropping to the mat to do a dozen push-ups before jumping up and directing a cupful of the yellow stuff down his own parched throat. Endurance was super important to him lately. He was into testing his limits as often as he could. "Just seems a shame that you can do all the moves I can, but we can't climb together." "Climb together? You're the one who's always going on about your dream of roped-soloing the big walls of the world. Solo means one, remember?" "But that's only 'cause you won't climb anything higher than eight feet, Peter. That means I don't have anyone to climb with. No one I like, anyway. "Eight feet is enough to be your Kemosabe, Lone Ranger," "What the heck is that supposed to mean?" "It means' Peter said, leaning toward Jake and lowering his voice conspiratorially, "that I'm your most trusted assistant. But more important, it means I got my dad to buy me a video camera. So I'm in business."

"Business?" "Filming extreme sports, dummy. Remember? I've always wanted to produce my own extreme-sports videos. Now I can. And you can be my main star. Assuming you aren't just bluffing about being able to solo a big wall, that is." "Bluffing? You know I've done a couple of local big walls with partners already. But it's not like I have the time, gear, or money to do a solo this summer, even if my parents would let me." "Earth to Jake. School's out next week. And what do you think Sam's Adventure Tours is for?" Jake shook his head, confused at this mention of their summer employer. He stepped aside as a group of competitors squeezed past them. "You know as well as I do that Sam's Adventure Tours doesn't do climbing trips, let alone hand out climbing gear and free days off to its junior guides. Plus, Sam told us he doesn't need us until mid-July this year." That only intensified Peter's grin. "Jake, I'm not talking about Sam. I'm talking about his younger brother, Steph." Jake scratched his head. "Steph Miller, the one they call Gecko? Yeah, I know he's a rock-climbing fanatic. What about him?" "Last time we were at Sam's, Gecko told me he'd been accepted to train in the Bugaboo Spires as a certified mountain guide. His course starts in early July. I asked him if he'd give us a ride up there, maybe even loan us some climbing gear and do a wall or two with us before his training starts. He said no problem." Jake stared at Peter. "The Bugaboos? In the Canadian Rockies?" "Actually, just west of the Rockies in the Purcell Mountain Range." "That's got some of the most amazing walls in the world -- good as anything in Yosemite or the Pyrenees or the Alps..." "Granite spires over 10,000 feet high," Peter agreed. "Perfect for filming. And like you said, Sam doesn't need us until the middle of July." "And my parents would let me go if they knew Gecko was going. But wait!" Jake said, suddenly suspicious. "Why haven't you told me this before?" Peter shrugged. "Had to get my camera first." His eyes shifted upwards. "Hey!

Look at that guy pump plastic -- not." Jake lifted his head in the direction Peter was pointing, knowing that the expression referred to the plastic holds on the wall. A Tier One competitor, someone in the division above his, was on a 5.13 route wearing brightly colored pajamas, the ...

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