

## Questions to Help Guide Your Reading

### Chapter 1 “Beyond the Sky”

1. What dangerous event opens the chapter and book?
2. Who was the first climber to scale El Capitan? When did he climb? How long did it take? How was his climb different from Slakey’s? Where is El Capitan?
3. What event in Slakey’s childhood had the greatest effect on how his personality evolved? How does he describe his own character?
4. What is one of the most important elements of climbing, what Slakey calls “the mantra of climbing”?
5. Why does Slakey climb mountains? Why does he no longer climb solo?

### Chapter 2 “Be Strong”

1. What was Slakey like when he began his journey to climb the highest mountain on every continent and surf every ocean?
2. What was Slakey’s mother’s advice to him before she died? How did he interpret that advice?
3. What subsequent tragedy reinforced Slakey’s detachment from others? What was he like as a teenager?
4. What “rescued” Slakey from the destructive path he was on? What gift did Slakey’s brother give him when Slakey graduated? What did it signify?

### Chapter 3 “Three Pillars”

1. What was the purpose of Slakey’s “surf and turf” experience?
2. What was his fitness routine like?
3. How was Slakey able to maintain a career and also spend so much time climbing?
4. What were his teaching methods in the classroom? Were they similar to those of teachers you’ve had? Do you think they were effective?
5. What was Slakey’s first mountain to climb in his “surf and turf” journey? What were conditions like in Tanzania? How did Slakey relate to the Masai?
6. How did other people see Slakey? What were his three pillars—his three basic assumptions for his life? What did they reveal about his character?

### Chapter 4 “The Amulet”

1. In this chapter, Slakey describes his climb up Mt. Everest. Where is Everest? What was the experience like?
2. What life-changing event (at least it changed his life a few years later) occurred at Thyangboche?
3. How much did it cost to climb Everest? What supplies and equipment was needed?

4. What photographer did Slakey meet at the base camp? Did they see the world the same way? (Spoiler alert: She will be very important in Slakey's story later in the book. 😊)
5. Who are the Sherpas? What are they like? What purpose do they serve?
6. What is the experience of reaching the summit like?
7. What are the effects of the high altitude on the brain? What events does Slakey witness that cause him to reflect on his own vision of the world?
8. What is Slakey's principle of climbing and of life?

#### Chapter 5 "Cold and Broken"

1. Where is Vinson Massif? How do Slakey and his climbing party reach the base of the mountain? What are the inherent dangers?
2. What sensual stimulation does Slakey experience in Antarctica? What does he smell, hear, see, and touch?
3. How does Robert Scott's diary affect Slakey?
4. What unplanned event delays the climbing party's ability to leave the camp? What epiphany did Slakey experience during the delay? Did it change him in any way? If so, how?
5. In this chapter, Slakey also describes his climb up Denali. Where is Denali? What occurred during that climb that reveals Slakey's developing outlook on life?

#### Chapter 6 "The Ambush"

1. What confusion affects Slakey's choice of which mountain to climb next? What is the final decision? Have you heard of Oceania? Where is it?
2. What were the political and cultural conditions in Indonesia at the time of Slakey's climb?
3. What part did the Freeport-McMoRan's Grasberg mine play in the climbing adventure?
4. What was the climbing party's experience with the Indonesian military as they proceed to the climbing base?
5. What does Slakey explain as the reason he climbs and surfs?
6. What happens at the "shakedown"?
7. A few days after Slakey's "shakedown," another group experiences a similar but much worse event. What happens? How does that event affect/change Slakey?

#### Chapter 7 "Shared Purpose"

1. How has Slakey's life changed direction? How does he say that the change came about?
2. Who is Patsy Spier? What was Slakey's "shared purpose" with her?
3. What was the end result of the events in Indonesia?
4. What was Slakey's "humanizing moment"?
5. According to Slakey, how are surfing and mountain climbing essentially alike? How are they essentially different?

6. If mountain climbing and surfing are the “yin and yang of athletic endeavors,” what is Slakey’s “yin and yang”? How does he achieve his harmony?
7. What caused Slakey to pull out the amulet that he had received in Thyangboche? What role did a dog play in Slakey’s transformation?

#### Chapter 8 “Interconnected”

1. Why do Slakey and Gina go back to Tibet? What was their experience there like? What pillar fell?
2. In their trip to Bhutan, they have an experience with a Snake Goddess. What was that about? What did Slakey learn?
3. What does Slakey learn about Buddhism? How does Lama Kinle explain happiness? Why is Lama Kinle so happy to talk with Slakey and Gina?
4. In Old Delhi, Slakey says he was “immersed in the human Deep Field.” What does he mean?
5. What happens to Slakey in Sri Lanka, when he goes there to surf?
6. What does Slakey mean when he says that “we live in a world of bound threads”?
7. In Chapter 6, “The Ambush,” Slakey tells Gina, “When there’s a reason, science can explain it. Anything else is just coincidence.” Is he still convinced of this assertion by the end of Chapter 8? How do you know?
8. What do the events in Asia teach Slakey? (Hint: It’s the title of this chapter.) What does that word mean to Slakey?

#### Chapter 9 “A Map Comes Alive”

1. Why does Slakey decide to try out for *Dangerman*? What does he want to tell the world?
2. How do Slakey’s teaching methods change?
3. How does Slakey propose to unite scientific method with “a touch of humanity”?
4. What is the Program on Science in the Public Interest? How does it work?
5. Slakey once said that he would climb, put one foot in front of the other, *to the last breath*. What does he conclude at the end of his journey is worth working for *to the last breath*?