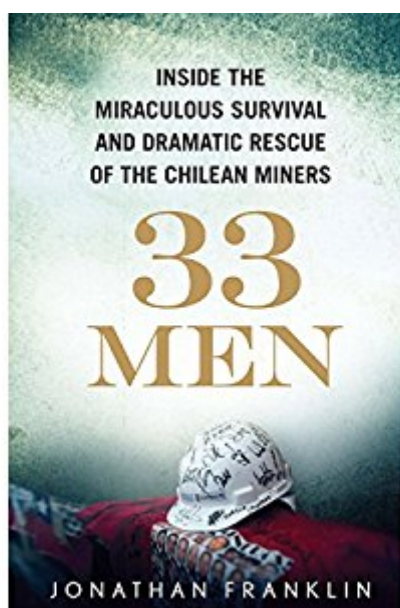


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# 33 Men: Inside The Miraculous Survival And Dramatic Rescue Of The Chilean Miners



## Synopsis

Having had unparalleled access to the Chilean mine disaster, award-winning journalist Jonathan Franklin takes readers to the heart of a remarkable story of human endurance, survival, and historic heroism. *33 Men* is the groundbreaking, authoritative account of the Chilean mine disaster, one of the longest human entrapments in history. Rushing to the scene when the miners were discovered, Franklin obtained a coveted "Rescue Team" pass and reported directly from the front lines of the rescue operation, beyond police controls, for six weeks. Based on more than 110 intimate interviews with the miners, their families, and the rescue team, Franklin's narrative captures the remarkable story of these men and women, in details shocking, beautiful, comedic, and heroic. Gripping and raw, with never-before-revealed details, *33 Men* is a true story that reads like a thriller.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I was fascinated with the Chilean Miners' story when it was happening and picked this book up not expecting to learn anything new because of the extensive coverage at the time. But this is a great story with rich details I hadn't heard before, brought to life by someone who is clearly an excellent writer. I know it's a cliché, but I couldn't put it down! I recommend this to anyone who wants to read a very well written story of adventure and heart. This is truly a remarkable 21st century saga of human trial and survival with just enough cultural context and technical information to make it a book that also teaches something about what's possible in this global hi-tech world we live in.

Just finished reading the book and what a fascinating story. I saw the story unfold on TV when it happened 5 years ago and saw some of the rescued miners on TV here in the US (Edison Pena on the Late night show with David Letterman doing his Elvis impression). However, what was hidden from the public was the backstory of the rescue operation that went on behind closed doors. I had the impression that President Pinera and his presidential staff recognized their opportunity to showcase the can do spirit of their country of Chile. He literally gambled and won! What a foresight and what luck. He almost choreographed the entire rescue and like a Hollywood movie, it had a tragic beginning, a suspenseful middle with unresolved issues fraught with danger, and then the ultimate climax, a happy one, the rescue of 33 miners! That is one for the ages, my friends. The author evidently had unprecedented access behind closed doors and even had the opportunity to interview almost everybody that was involved in the rescue. He had access to his fellow American, Hart, the expert mine rescue driller who labored to get the miners out as his singular ambition while he was there. The Chilean government wanted the best driller and they went and got him in Afghanistan while he was working for the US forces there. Franklin interviewed the miners after their rescue and also talked to the miners families. With that kind of access, the story he wrote about these lucky brave men (Los 33) is factual and believable. I have not seen the movie that was released recently. I don't know if it was successful or not. The 33 miners deserve the money that they hopefully got from the movie producers. These simple miners were literally thrown to the adoring public and just as they were being recognized for their bravery and courage, once the story got cold, the trail to their money treasure disappeared. They were expecting just rewards and retire on the money that they expected to come their way. That is evidently not what happened. After a whirlwind of tours and overseas travel, they quietly returned to their towns and went back to simple miners once again, minus the riches that they expected for their retirement. Author Franklin touched on the possibility of the 33 miners getting paid for the movie rights of their rescue but he did not elaborate on that. There was even a mention in the book about a famous Chilean businessman who advocated on behalf of the miners that the Chilean government should pay each man a million dollars each after their rescue but that did not get developed either. I wish there was an update to the 33 men from the author. I would like to know what their life is like these days. I don't plan to see the movie in the theatres but I will catch it when it gets on DVD or streaming service.

I decided on this book based on other online reviews. The cover of the book also matched the cover of the movie. I also found that reading the book and watching the movie filled in gaps between the two. The book focused more on the miners story, while the movie focused more on the rescue

option. The pictures included in the physical book helped as well.

In honesty, I prefer the other account, but this book was a good companion to the other. It fleshed out the story and added perspective. I am disappointed that neither book spent more time on the Plan A and Plan C drills, especially since the film *The 33* makes it seem as if those simply gave up.

As a social experiment it could hardly have been devised better. Put 33 men 2300 feet underground and seal them in with limited supplies and with no guarantee that they will be rescued. Then leave them there for 69 days. What would happen? Would they divide into packs and begin to destroy one another a la *Lord of the Flies*? Would they resort to cannibalism? Would they resort to homosexuality? These are the questions people were asking when just such an accident happened at the San Jose copper-gold mine in the Atacama Desert near Copiapo, Chile. 33 men were trapped when a slab of rock the size of a skyscraper came between them and the outside world. And all the world watched to see if they could be saved from their tomb. The last man was rescued from that mine on the 13th of October, 2010. On February 14, 2011 *33 Men* hit store shelves, a book detailing the disaster and response. 4 months. That hardly seems like enough time to write a book, not to mention fact-check it and edit it and print it. But I've got to say, this isn't a bad book at all. It's well-written and engaging and, as far as I can tell, quite accurate. What I find particularly interesting is not the disaster in itself. A mine collapsed, men were trapped and a massive rescue operation was launched. It's a good story. But what was even more interesting to me were the social, psychological and spiritual dynamics. What would happen when 33 men were trapped deep underground, completely isolated for 17 days and then then in touch with the world but still cut off for a further 52 days? What kind of society would develop? How would the men behave? Quite well, it seems. At least, initially. The first day or two was rough as the men struggled to adapt to their new reality. "As those first hours passed, the thirty-three miners began to act like a roaming band of hungry animals, haphazardly s--g and urinating throughout their reduced world. Ignoring calls for group unity, they set up disparate caves in random corners of the tunnel. Few of the men slept that first night." But it did not take long for the men to begin some kind of order. They divided into 3 camps, but remained relatively peaceful. "By 6:30 am on Day 3 the men were awake and ready for prayer. Henriquez was cheerful and promised that God would respond to their prayers. Every day that passed, his sermons and prayers felt like a lifeline, a single feature to grab on to and hold tight. The rescue might or might not be coming close, but the miner's faith was helping sustain them. They began to refer to Jesus as 'the thirty-fourth miner.'" If there are no atheists in foxholes it seems

that there are none trapped in mines either; even the least devout was driven to his knees in desperation. There were some power struggles, but quickly the men settled into a routine. A leader stepped up. They divided the food equitably, each consuming about 100 calories a day--not nearly enough to sustain them for any time. But in their desperation they allowed themselves to be led and they carried on with some semblance of order. On day 17 a drill head popped into their world and with it a link to the outside world. With this link to the world came trouble. Though that link was nothing more than a 3.5 inch tube, it was a conduit for a surprising number of items. Some were the very stuff of life--food and medicine. But there also came drugs--marijuana and amphetamines. Those on the ground even investigated a way of sending blow-up sex dolls down the tube, but finally settled for passing along a quantity of pornography (something you probably don't remember seeing on CNN). Down the tube came a projector and a screen. And down another tube came a communications cable. And now the men had television. "What really screwed us up was the TV. When the TV arrived, it ruined the communications, it was a big problem... Some of the guys would just stare at it; they were hypnotized and watched it all day. ... Fights and arguments erupted from the constant battle over which channel to watch. Urzua called up and complained that the TV was 'destroying the organization' and asked for the broadcasts to be limited to news, some soccer and the occasional movie." When the men began to achieve some level of celebrity, 2300 feet below the surface, even more problems began. "Divisions among the group began to surge. Luis Urzua was unhappy that some of the miners ... had acquired a video camera and were filming the others. And when a copy of Ya magazine arrived with an interview in which Sepulveda bragged that he was 'the leader' of the pack, further squabbles erupted." Soon the men were fighting over who would be their representative to the outside world. A public relations expert was called in to coach them on the fame that would await when they were rescued. Pacts were drawn up to promise that all money would be divided equitably and that none of them would speak of certain events that had happened far below. Those pacts wouldn't survive the first twenty-four hours after rescue, a rescue that was watched by up to a billion people worldwide. This event brought out the best and the worst of those above ground and those below. For every noble and selfless deed there was another ugly and self-serving one. For every good guy there was a bad guy, for every smile a tear. It's a fascinating little study of humanity. What did I learn from 33 Men? I learned that people crave order and authority. Though we tend to rebel against both of these, we hate their absence even more than their presence. When these men were trapped outside of society's structures of authority, they quickly created their own. They knew that they would need them in order to survive. And I know that there is a further lesson in what happened with the establishment of that link to the outside world.

There was the draw of fame that caused the men to begin to turn on one another. That thin tube brought them life in food and medicine, but it also brought death in drugs and fame and pornography. I just can't crystallize that lesson in my mind. Without that tube they would have died, but even with that tube some kind of death came into that mine. It was a great blessing and it was a great curse. 33 Men is just the first of what is bound to be many books on the disaster and rescue. I doubt it will prove the best. But it's a good start and well worth a quick read.

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