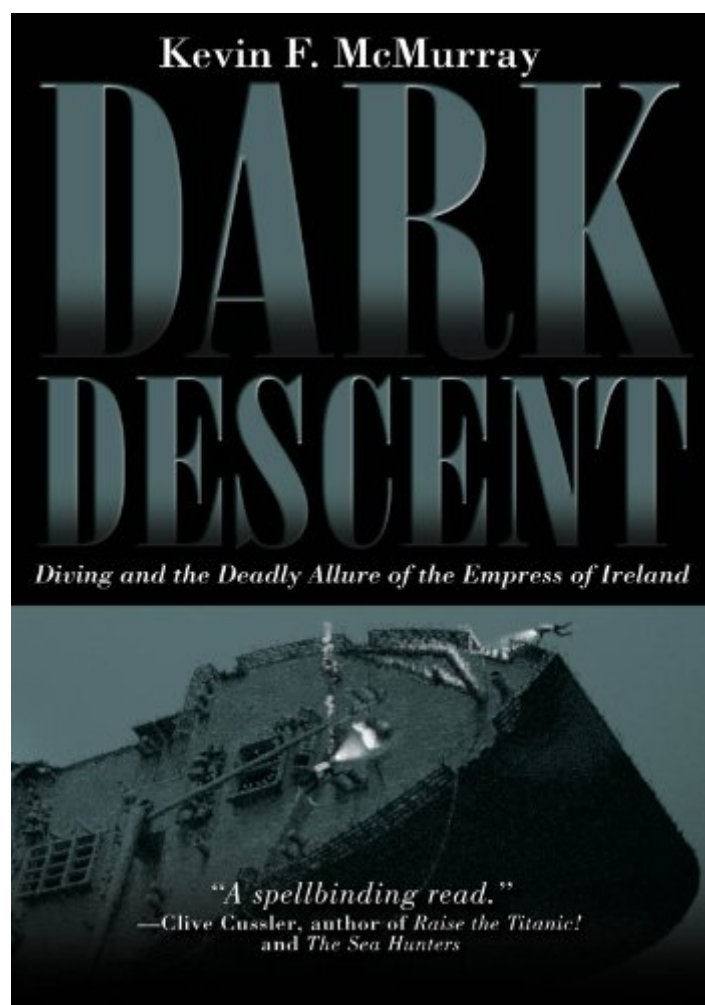


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Dark Descent



Synopsis

"Dark Descent makes the reader a vicarious participant in what is a very extreme sport."â "Philadelphia Inquirer On May 29, 1914, the passenger liner Empress of Ireland was struck by the freighter Storstad and sank in fifteen minutes, taking more than 1,000 victims with her. It remains one of the largest losses of life ever in a maritime accident. At more than a hundred feet deep in the frigid Gulf of St. Lawrence, diving the Empress is like trying to navigate an unfamiliar sixty-story building lying on its side at a forty-five-degree angle, in pitch blackness with only a flashlight. In Dark Descent, Kevin McMurray takes us deep into the bowels of the lost ship, first to relive her tragic death and then to join the divers who have probed the wreck's secrets. It's an adventure from which some divers don't return. "Impressively researched. . . . For those who love the lure of the deep water and the mysteries of shipwrecks, this specialized history will be a pleasure."â "Publishers Weekly "Kevin has a remarkable knack of adding life and realism. A great job."â "R. W. Hamilton, Chairman of the Board, Divers Alert Network

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Customer Reviews

Dark Descent: Diving and the Deadly Allure of the Empress of Ireland is a book for everyone! I am definitely not a member of the diving community, though if I were I would love the book as a guide to equipment and techniques. I am, in fact, alternately revolted and fascinated by extreme sports and the people who practice them, a combination of feelings that compels me to seek understanding in books like Dark Descent. This page-turner of a book goes a long way towards providing enlightenment and does it in a most interesting way. Deep wreck divers are tourists! McMurray's abbreviated yet complete rendering of the Canadian ocean liner Empress of Ireland's history and the tragedy of her 1914 sinking on a routine voyage from Quebec City to Liverpool reads like a Michelin guide to an exciting historical site. Immediately one feels that reading about it isn't enough. One is compelled to visit. The bulk of the book is a history of tourism, a very difficult kind of tourism, to one of these sites. In tightly written, chronological chapters, McMurray describes all the expeditions to the Empress, as they illuminate the technical progress of diving and, more importantly to this reader, the motivations of the divers and the rivalries and sportsmanlike competition between them. Though the retrieval of artifacts provides a financial incentive for early explorers of the wreck, diving continues after the government of Canada declares the wreck off limits to salvage. Why? All tourism involves a certain amount of discomfort and risk, and it is really these that make the tourist feel as if he or she has a special connection to the past, somehow more real than the experience of reading a book or watching a program on the History Channel.

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