

## "When Disaster Strikes"

By Dennis May, Kirkland Town Library staff

Last week, my cat and I were rudely awoken by a loud crash and a big bang. Without the faintest idea of what caused the noise, my immediate thought was, "My house is falling apart!" Panicked, I ran down stairs to make sure a) my floors hadn't caved in, and b) to get myself and my cat out of the house before we were buried in the rubble. To my relief, the floors were right where I left them the night before and the house was still upright. Still wondering what could have decided to ruin my much needed sleep, I went back upstairs and looked out the window to see, much to my chagrin, that a tree had decided to faceplant on the roof of my house. My joy at seeing this was insurmountable (read that with the most sarcasm you could muster). After receiving help from my neighbors, and given the proper numbers to call, I spent the better part of the day waiting for a tree service to remove the leaf ridden infiltrator and for a roofer to tell me how much damage had been done. Talk about a disaster!

Let's face it, we all think we are prepared for when a disaster strikes, like a tree collapsing, a flooded basement, or - and I hope I'm not jinxing us - an earthquake in Central New York. The truth is, we can only be prepared for so much. Sure, we should all have insurance and emergency contacts, and we should all be able to handle the stress when disaster strikes, but we are usually not prepared when the time arises. After having a week to let my insurance take the proper steps to get my roof repaired, it has inspired me to present you with a few titles in the realm of the "disaster" genre.

*The Storm of the Century*, by Al Roker (*The Today Show*), paints a vivid picture of the deadliest natural disaster in American history. The unexpected happened in Galveston, Texas in 1900 when a massive hurricane ripped through the port city, leaving over 8,000 dead. It's a true story, during the time of America's rise to modernity, of one town's heroism and resilience in the face of tragedy. Roker combines his weather knowledge and ability to write heart-wrenching narrative in this memorable reminder of nature's powerful and unpredictable fury. This book is perfect for history buffs, those interested in weather science, and readers who enjoy sweeping narratives and unforgettable characters.

*Into Thin Air*, by Jon Krakauer, is a harrowing tale of the author's experience in the 1996 Mount Everest Disaster, which claimed the lives of eight people. If you're in the mood for a true story about a place that very few will ever visit (and probably won't want to after reading this book!), this is a great choice. Krakauer's gripping narrative leads the reader through the preparations for an Everest ascent, time spent in Mount Everest base camp, treacherous mountainside climbs, and finally to the summit of the highest mountain in the world - although that finish line is only the halfway point in this disaster story. Krakauer's impressive ability to blend research with personal narrative is on full display here, and fans of mountaineering and drama alike will enjoy this one.

*The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) is the silliest, most improbable, and vastly entertaining title on this list, telling the intertwining tales of graduate students, meteorologists, oceanographers, and

the U.S. Vice President trying to survive three superstorms that change the entire planet's climate. This movie features hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, blizzards, and hungry wolves roaming around in the barren icy wasteland of Manhattan. Critics panned this film for its scientific inaccuracies, but that doesn't make it any less entertaining, particularly with its stacked cast including Dennis Quaid, Jake Gyllenhaal, and Emmy Rossum.

While a tree falling on my house certainly doesn't compare to the disastrous storms and mountaineering accidents depicted in these titles, it gave me a fright! I've never experienced anything like it and I consider myself fortunate not to have lived through more horrific crises. Perhaps next month, I'll look into titles that have to do with tree care so I can be more prepared if another tree decides to take a nap on my roof.