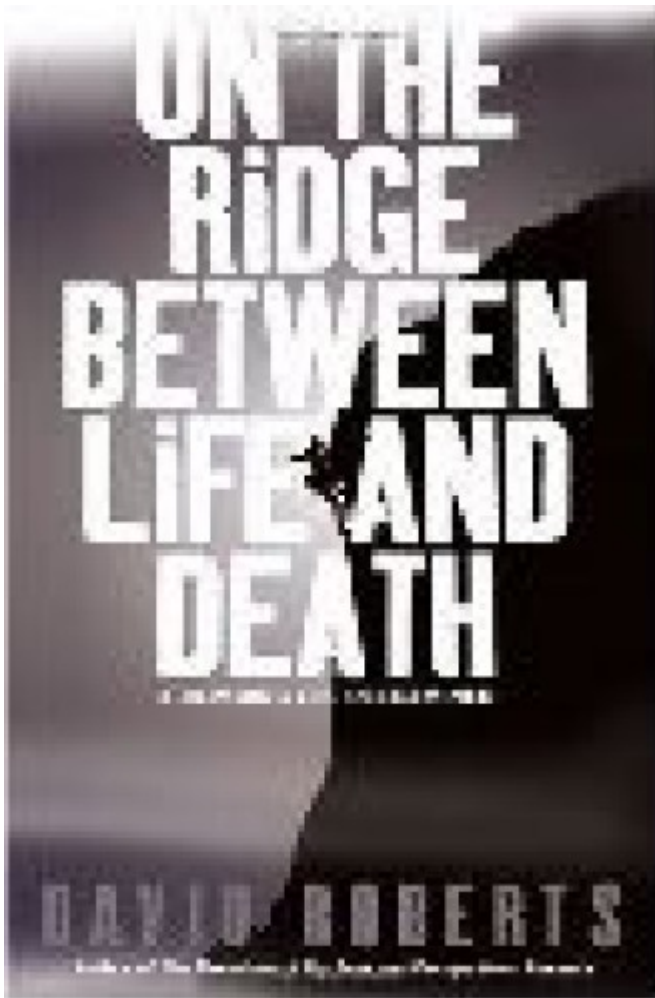


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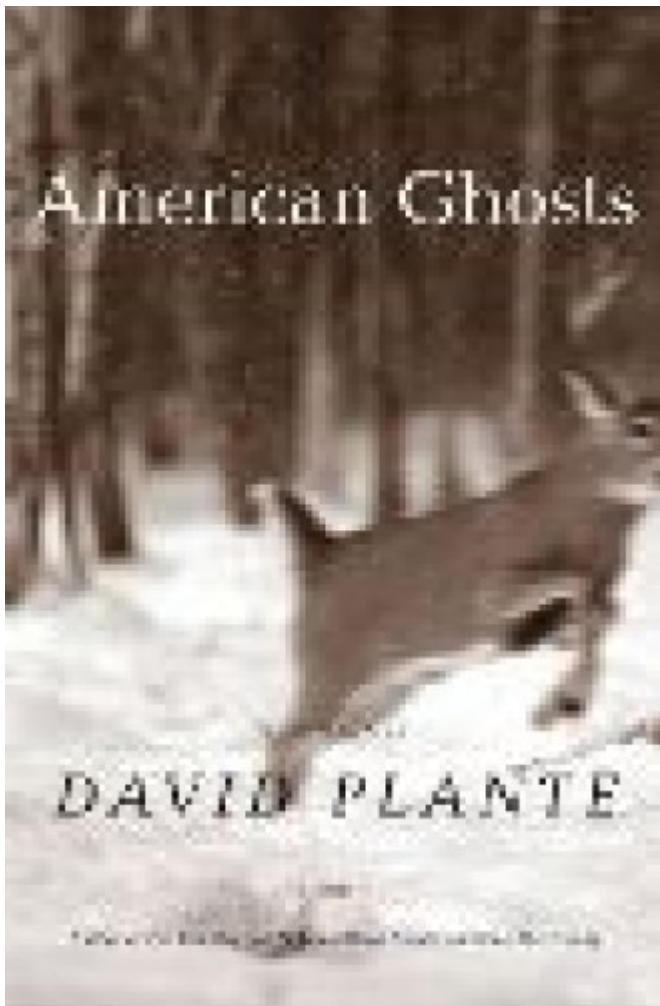
Books in the [December 13, 2005](#) issue

In Review



On the Ridge Between Life and Death: A Climbing Life Reexamined

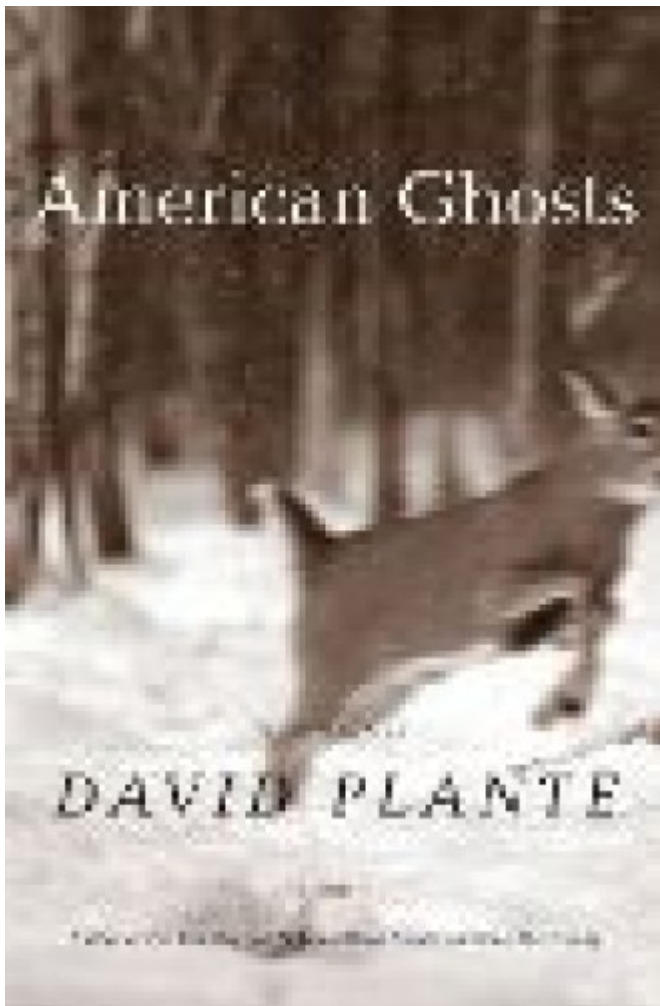
David Roberts
Simon & Schuster



American Ghosts: A Memoir

David Plante

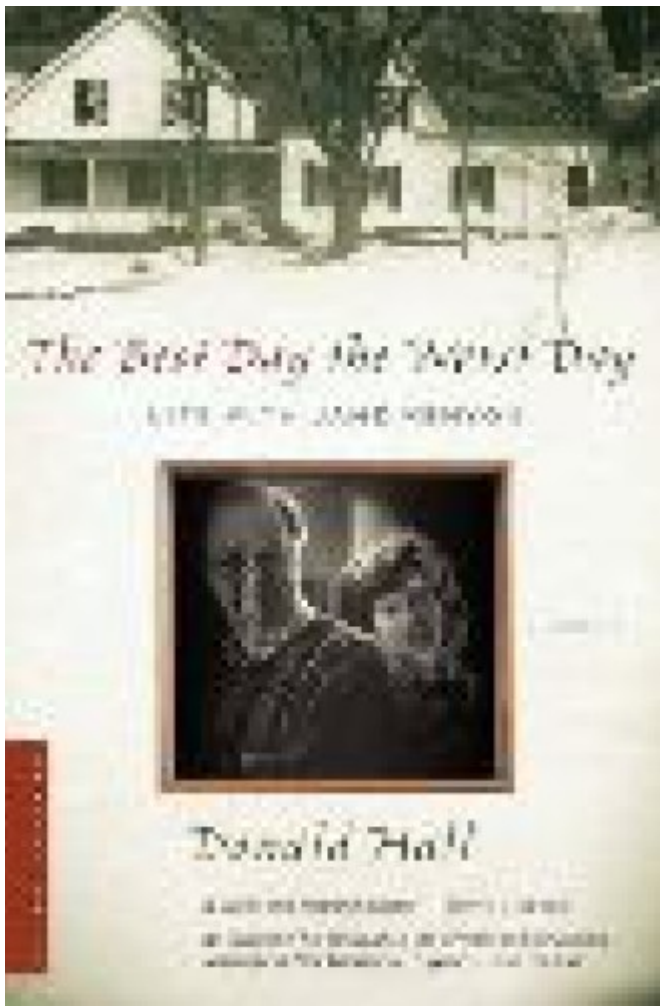
Beacon



American Ghosts: A Memoir

David Plante

Beacon



The Best Day the Worst Day: Life with Jane Kenyon

Donald Hall

Houghton Mifflin

People who liked Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* should like this book, which is part memoir, part adventure tale. Award-winning author Roberts (*The Mountain of My Fear* and *Deborah*) grapples with why mountain climbers take such risks to feed their passion for adventure. An atheist, he says that for him climbing is "a way of rebelling against the void fore and aft" (borrowing a line from Vladimir Nabokov). After a lifetime of climbing, Roberts is still haunted by climbing deaths he's witnessed, starting with the death of a high school climbing partner in Colorado.

Poet Jane Kenyon is probably better known in death than she was in life, and one can only speculate how her life and work would have progressed had she not died a premature death at age 47 in 1995 after a valiant fight with leukemia. Husband

Donald Hall, a poet himself, elegantly and lovingly tells the story of their life together of 23 years, starting with their stormy courtship when she was his student at the University of Michigan, and then taking up their move to and life in his ancestral home in New Hampshire. This is a “coming back to faith” story too, as they both became deeply involved in a small congregation.

Publishers Weekly calls this “not so much a memoir as a beautiful diary of the making of a writer, [an] evocative work [that] hauntingly resurrects the ghosts residing in his life.” The two ghosts are his family’s history and the God he was taught about by the nuns in the French-speaking Rhode Island parish he grew up in. Although it is not exactly a “hound of heaven” story, Plante does dig at his roots, and thereby he reaches a point of rediscovery about both God and his ancestry.