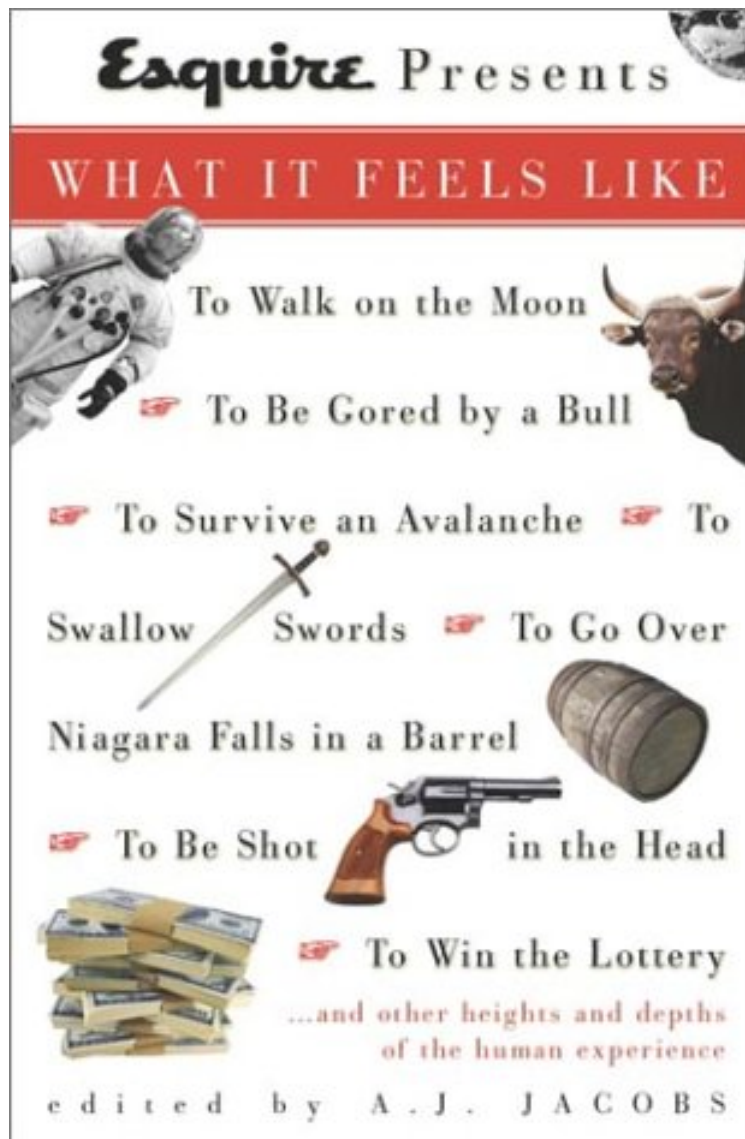


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Have you ever wondered what it feels like:to be stuck in a tornado?“[It] is exactly the feel of a freight train approaching—that low, ever-louder howl and the shuddering ground.”to participate in an orgy?“And all the while, the thought that keeps going through your mind (and through the cab ride home, and into breakfast the next day): ‘I’m at an orgy! I’m at an orgy!’”to have a severe stutter?“The thing is, there’s a disconnect thing between my mind and my tongue. My mind’s processing a thousand words a minute, and the tongue is only squeezing out ten or twelve.”to be a mob hitman?“It’s nerve-racking. Don’t let anyone tell you any different. Anybody who’s any good at this is concentrating with every nerve in their body, trying to get it done right and trying not to get caught.”to be 105 years old?“I was born in 1897 and I’ve seen a lot in the world. I’ve seen everything there is to see. You look back and tell yourself, ‘What have I been doing all these years?’”If these tidbits whet your appetite for real, first-person accounts of some of life’s most exhilarating, harrowing, or downright strange experiences, then you’ll be sucked in by Esquire Presents: What It Feels Like. Collected by the ever-curious editors of Esquire magazine, here are more than fifty gripping tales—straight from the mouths of the people who’ve lived them.

From the Inside FlapHave you ever wondered what it feels like:to be stuck in a tornado??[It] is exactly the feel of a freight train approaching?that low, ever-louder howl and the shuddering ground.?to participate in an orgy??And all the while, the thought that keeps going through your mind (and through the cab ride home, and into breakfast the next day): ?I?m at an orgy! I?m at an orgy!??to have a severe stutter??The thing is, there?s a disconnect thing between my mind and my tongue. My mind?s processing a thousand words a minute, and the tongue is only squeezing out ten or twelve.?to be a mob hitman??It?s nerve-racking. Don?t let anyone tell you any different. Anybody who?s any good at this is concentrating with every nerve in their body, trying to get it done right and trying not to get caught.?to be 105 years old??I was born in 1897 and I?ve seen a lot in the world. I?ve seen everything there is to see. You look back and tell yourself, ?What have I been doing all these years???If these tidbits whet your appetite for real, first-person accounts of some of life?s most exhilarating, harrowing, or downright strange experiences, then you?ll be sucked in by Esquire Presents: What It Feels Like. Collected by the ever-curious editors of Esquire magazine, here are more than fifty gripping tales?straight from the mouths of the people who?ve lived them.About the AuthorA.J. JACOBS is a senior editor at Esquire magazine. He is the author of The Two Kings: Jesus and Elvis, America Off-Line, and Fractured Fairy Tales. He lives in New York City with his wife.Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.IntroductionJust taking a stab here, but in all likelihood, you’ve never walked on the moon. You’ve probably never won a Nobel prize, been swept up in a tornado, gone over Niagara Falls in a barrel, or been mauled by a ferocious mammal, not counting pet hamsters. And if you’re like me, you’ve never touched fake boobs or been within shouting distance of an orgy. Even safer bet: You’ve never touched fake boobs after winning the Nobel prize for going over Niagara Falls in a barrel. Not to worry. We’re here to help. The profession of journalism is populated, on the whole, by a bunch of unmitigated wusses. As a professional journalist and a first-class wuss, I should know. But as voyeurs, we’re fearless. There’s nothing we like better than experiencing the heights and depths of the human condition—just as long as we can do it while sitting comfortably on our big butts, preferably with a nice vodka tonic within arm’s reach. Which is why, for the past three years, Esquire magazine has collected a series of exhilarating first-person tales for our recurring feature, “What It Feels Like.” The result of our exhaustive research is this disturbingly entertaining book.Thanks to Buzz Aldrin, we can share with you what it’s like to stomp your boots on the fine talcum

powder that covers the moon. Thanks to a California spearfisher named Rodney Orr, we can describe the crunch of a great white shark chomping down on your skulls. Thanks to 7'6" tall basketball star Shawn Bradley, you'll learn how it feels to peer down at the bald spots of everyone in a crowd. And thanks to an exceedingly candid man, we almost feel like we've touched the grapefruit-like orbs that are fake boobs—and without inciting the wrath of our lovely wives. Now you'll feel the same way. The contributors featured here have been fearless—both for experiencing these things for us, and for being generous enough to tell a bunch of dorky journalists all about it. Some, like Jeff Noble, survivor of Hurricane Floyd, approached us themselves, eager to share their tales. Others we tracked down through endless phone calls and Internet searches. Still others we just stumbled on thanks to pure dumb luck (when we featured a photo spread on actress Laura Elena Harring in *Esquire*, she happened to mention that she also survived a gunshot wound). Some of these essays have appeared in *Esquire* before, but most are new to this book. Regardless, we know what it feels like to be grateful to the folks who talked to us. So sit back on your wide butt, turn the page, and read what they went through for you.—A. J. Jacobs

What It Feels Like to Be Struck by Lightning [By Max Dearing, 44, sound engineer] I have a degree in electronics, so I know about the destructive power of high-voltage energy, but this was beyond what I could have imagined. I was struck on a typical North Carolina July afternoon—little billowy clouds floating by, mostly sunny. I was out golfing in Durham with four of my coworkers on a Friday afternoon. We were on the fifth hole when it started to sprinkle. We decided to get under a shelter and wait it out. We were standing there, just kind of harassing each other the way we always did, just talking junk. I remember the air had a sweet ozone smell to it. That's about the last thing I recall before the strike. When the bolt hit, I was absolutely frozen, just as cold as I've ever been in my entire life, but then part of me was incredibly hot, too. I saw these red flashing lights, and I kept thinking, "It's a fire truck! A fire truck!" as if I were a little kid. Then there was the most incredible noise I'd ever heard. The sound was so loud that I honestly couldn't hear anything. Evidently, it's so loud that it blows the cilia in the ear completely flat. I felt as if I'd been slammed between two Dumpsters. It was like every case of the flu you've ever had, at one time. My arms and my legs and my hands all felt as if they weighed 5,000 pounds. Every bit of my body was just in absolute pain. It was such a dull ache, and so sharp at the same time; it was like everything from a migraine headache to a hangover to needles being stuck in every millimeter of your body. My hair hurt, my eyelashes hurt; I could feel it when my hair moved, when the wind blew across me. The lightning bolt had gone down along a tree next to us, taken off some branches on its way down, and then hit the overhang of the shelter, putting a huge hole in it. Then it went through Terry, one of my buddies. He was struck through the top of his head, and it came out his knee. It killed him immediately. Then it shot up from the ground and hit the rest of us. It went up through me and left an exit wound in my head that needed eight staples. Now I have a hard time with addition and subtraction. I can handle some fairly complex math involving trigonometry and calculus, but don't ask me to add. The doctors say, "Oh, there's nothing wrong with you." But I know there is. Figuring out how to fix it, that's about like shooting mosquitoes with a shotgun. —As told to Daniel Torday