



Breaking Trail: A Climbing Life (Lisa Drew Books (Hardcover))

Arlene Blum

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Arlene Blum is a legendary trailblazer by any measure. Defying the climbing establishment of the 1970s, she led the first teams of women on successful ascents of Mt. McKinley and Annapurna, and was the first American woman to attempt Mt. Everest. In her long, adventurous career, she has played a leading role in more than twenty expeditions and forged a place for women in the perilous arena of high-altitude mountaineering.

Breaking Trail is the story of Blum's journey from her overprotected youth in Chicago to the tops of some of the highest peaks on Earth. Chronicling a life of extraordinary personal and professional achievement, Blum's intimate and inspiring memoir explores how her childhood fueled her need to climb -- and how, in turn, her climbing liberated her from her childhood.

Each chapter in *Breaking Trail* begins with a poignant vignette from Blum's early life. Using these as starting points, she traces her evolution as a climber, from a hilariously incompetent beginner to an aspiring mountaineer to a successful, confident, and world-renowned expedition leader. Along the way, she takes us to some of the most extreme and exquisite places on the planet, sharing the exhilaration, toil, and danger of climbing high. Blum also relates the story of her scientific career, which, like her mountaineering, challenged gender stereotypes and was filled with singular accomplishments, including the banning of two cancer-causing chemicals and the initiation of an important area of biophysical research.

Writing with remarkable candor and introspection, Blum recounts her triumphs and tragedies, and provides a probing look at what drove her to endure extreme physical discomfort -- and even to risk her life -- attempting high, remote summits around the world. In her story, she shares intimate insights into how and why climbers persevere under the harshest circumstances, cope with the deaths of their comrades, and balance their desire for adventure with their personal lives.

Complemented with breathtaking personal photos and detailed maps, *Breaking Trail* is a deeply moving account of how one woman overcame adversity to become one of the world's most famous climbers, and a testament to the power of taking risks and pursuing dreams.

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