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Higher Love: Climbing and Skiing the Seven Summits

By Kit DesLauriers

HIGHER LOVE: CLIMBING AND SKIING THE SEVEN SUMMITS. Kit DesLauriers. Mountaineers Books, 2021. Paperback, 288 pages, \$19.95.

Every once in a while, someone attempts a feat so ambitious, it seems nearly impossible. We can't wrap our heads around it. When Kit DesLauriers set out to climb and ski the Seven Summits in 2005, she was ahead of her time. She dared to dream bigger than anyone had before.*

Higher Love is an honest and thoughtful account of DesLauriers' endeavor, one she was able to finish in an astonishing two years. Her story is sure to inspire more people, especially women, to climb and ski the world's highest peaks. But more than that, it gives the reader permission to dream, to write down goals and attempt the unattainable.

As a reader, I appreciated the details she provided in terms of logistics and the experience she had on each mountain. In a sense, the book could serve as a guide for a climber attempting to repeat parts of her project. Her book also gives the reader a glimpse into the mind of an elite athlete. Her honesty and transparency about her climbing style and personal approach is refreshing. DesLauriers is straightforward about how she financed her adventure.

As a woman, I appreciated when she shared the vulnerable moments where she confronts imposter syndrome, as well as the interpersonal dramas that played out on some of the mountains, and especially the conversations with her husband.

Sometimes, her matter-of-fact reporting seems like it was meant to deflect criticism or to answer questions about the style in which she was able to accomplish such an audacious goal. As a woman mountaineer who has had my own accomplishments diminished, questioned, and undercut many times, I can understand why she wrote the way she did. If she hadn't provided all the details, readers likely would have asked for them.

There is not a clear way to combat the double binds that women face in the male-dominated sport of ski mountaineering. (It is another one of the many double binds women have to live in.) If you focus too much on relationships, on the backstory and the emotions, climbers will fail to recognize your accomplishments. Women don't just face the physical and mental challenges of the mountains; there are also cultural barriers to overcome. There's still a societal stigma about where a woman's place is, and many people continue to believe that's not on the top of high mountains.

DesLauriers leans into the double binds as she shares her inner dialogue when she has to think hard about asking for help. At times, I feel like she has to adopt to the masculine norms of leadership in order to be taken seriously. I would've liked to have her lean into her femininity more. I wanted more of the love, heart, and soul. There are moments where the wall around her starts to crack, but it doesn't quite open up all the way to let the reader in.

Kit is a personal hero of mine who paved the way for me to be who I am today. Her contributions to ski mountaineering will live on in history, and *Higher Love* gives the readers insight into how she accomplished them. To climb and ski the Seven Summits in two years, everything needed to line up,

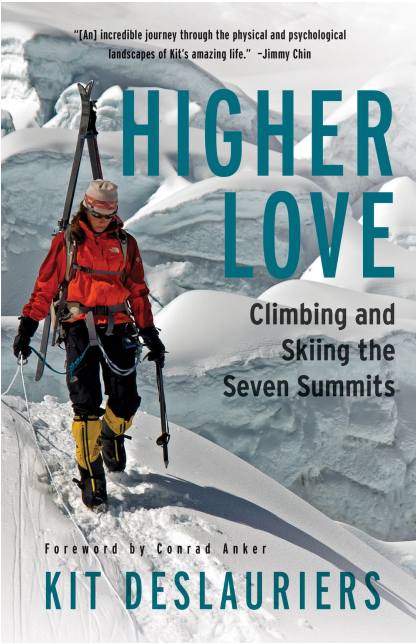
not just physically and mentally, but also logistically, culturally, financially, and politically. It took luck, skill, and loads of hard work.

The biggest takeaway is to do it now. Take the moment to write down your wildest dreams and make them happen.

— **Caroline Gleich**

* **Editor's Note:** It should be noted that Davor Karničar (Slovenia) had skied most of the Seven Summits when DesLauriers began her quest, and he completed them one month after she finished.

Images



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