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Arctic Daughter: A Wilderness Journey

Jean Aspen

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Jean Aspen : Arctic Daughter: A Wilderness Journey before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Arctic Daughter: A Wilderness Journey:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I didn't know if these two "kids" were stupid or beyond brave but this was an excellent readBy Pat R.I didn't know if these two "kids" were stupid or beyond brave but this was an excellent read. What a grueling experience and a good thing she had lessons from her mom or they would never have made it. It ran the gauntlet of my emotions and I recommend this book to all who enjoy living the Alaskan dream vicariously through hardy people like this. Love, love, loved it!!!1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Truly an amazing book. It is so rare to find or ...By Curt SeefeldtTruly an amazing book. It is so rare to find or read about a person's life that has as much depth and understanding as this book does. There is much to be learned here. In today's world so much is what I would call "plastic"....in other words fake or synthetic values. There is a new god that people for the most part seem to blindly worship/follow. It is called materialism. The author in my opinion was able to see through all that junk and identify with true reality. Every person who reads this book can benefit from this author's insight. A marvelous work indeed.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This one stands alone as the best I have ever readBy Raymond GreinerOver my lifetime I have read of many adventures such as Jeanie and her partner Phil experienced. This one stands alone as the best I have ever read. I felt I was right there with these two extraordinary young adventurers. Jeanie writes magnificently and her words flow and keep flowing on and on throughout this wonderful piece of writing. I feel blessed to have experienced this book. My reaction was to send Jeanie's book to a few friends but could not part with my copy so I ordered separate copies to share. Jeanie has an

advantage over many of us adventurers, she is the daughter of Bud and Constance Helmericks, two iconic arctic adventurers, so gene energy comes in play here. Thank you Jean Aspen, writer and adventurer of the highest order. You have mesmerized me.

Setting off in an overloaded canoe, they journeyed down the Yukon River and walked upstream into the remote Brooks Range to build a cabin and live off the land. She was twenty-two, daughter of a famous woman adventurer. He was her childhood sweetheart. Four years later, they emerged from the Alaskan wilds. Now in her sixties, Jean Aspen updates her spellbinding tale of adventure in a harsh and beautiful land for a new generation. ARCTIC DAUGHTER is at once an extraordinary journey of self-discovery and a lyrical odyssey. A READER'S DIGEST book selection, this remarkable tale of survival and courage measures the value of dreams against the unforgiving realities of the natural world. First published in 1988 by Bergamot Books, Minneapolis, MN.

This stark, philosophical work chronicles Aspen, an artist and daughter of the author-adventurer Connie Helmericks, who, at the age of 22, chose to sojourn into the wilderness of Alaska, above the Arctic Circle, and live off the land. Aspen was accompanied by her first husband-to-be Phil; her harsh, relentlessly honest journal depicts two stoics who ate salted and dried horse meat, berries, even under miserable circumstances raw, rubbery moose that contained the wriggly pearl of a maggot. The couple encountered no other humans for almost a year, and in that time the author sought the essence of experience . . . that elusive something that makes the world sparkle. Aspen believed that civilization snatches away more than it gives in return: Im not certain that all our toys are worth what we pay for them. Rather, she endured the brutal weather and exalted when the sun returned after a 60-day absence: Life isnt safe, no matter how carefully you plan. . . . You may as well enjoy the ride. Aspens journey isnt pretty reading, but her voice is memorable and her endurance marvelous. PUBLISHERS WEEKLY"Full of fine sense details . . . fascinating reading . . . joins that scant handful of good books by women about the challenge and hard-won joy of bush life lived to its fullest. THE ANCHORAGE Timestips from the author and husband on DIY cabin building in New Pioneer Magazine: "Very well written book of two peoples' adventure into the back woods of Alaska and truly living off of the land. Follow their story as this young couple travel the Yukon River in a dangerously overloaded canoe packed with winter supplies, food and building materials. Hunting and fishing along the way for food to survive. With the help of a old miner's cabin and cache they were able to add to their building materials to build a log cabin to survive the winter. Living off of the small supplies of food they were able to pack in the canoe and what they could kill for meat they more then once were on the verge of death from the cold, lack of food and the raging river." Trish Schmidt, Alaska HistorianAbout the AuthorJean Aspen holds baccalaureate degrees in biology and nursing. Her classic books and the documentary she and her husband produced form a lifetime tapestry centered on wilderness. They live in Alaska and continue to spend much of each year afoot in nature. See more at www.jeanaspen.com and their ARCTIC SON Facebook page.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Finding the old gold town put us at last on the map, and we carefully marked each days travel with little penciled lines. It was encouraging to see the daily change in the landscape that now marked our upstream progress. The river no longer rambled freely, but was often bounded on one side or the other by a two-hundred-foot cutbank, confining it to a broad glacial cut where it swung from side to side as if seeking escape. I tried to imagine what the land had looked like ten thousand years ago when a massive ice field capped the Brooks Range and a river of ice had carved this valley. A people very much like ourselves had hunted moose and bear in the Yukon flats, and fished the rivers washing out of the glaciers. In the fall, they picked cranberries and blueberries with their children, and in the spring they saw the ice go out and watched the birds return. They nursed their babies and cared for their old people and told stories around the night fires. One day the river swung abruptly, butting into the bare bones of a mountain mass. For some time it had paralleled the range as if undecided, then turned resolutely northward, wedging open a wide valley into its secret heart. Soon we were leaving our familiar gray crags behind for another set of landmarks. As the river began its climb in earnest, we developed a different method for surmounting rapids. These were now strewn with large boulders, boat eaters we called them, interspersed with deep holes. Water gushed over slippery rocks the size of basketballs and crumbling bluffs often dropped steeply into the river at a bend, affording no beach. In the past, we had grabbed the bow and muscled the canoe up the watery stairs together. Now one of us braced against a boulder, holding the craft in the turbulence of its wake, while the other worked the rope upstream. Finding secure footing, the one with the rope would haul the canoe (and the person guiding it) hand-over-hand up the racing chute. Already behind us lay nearly a thousand feet of elevation. We were approaching another fork in the river when we pitched camp on a sandy, white beach late one afternoon. It was a clear, still day and the low-hanging sun gave the country that peculiar golden quality that outlines every detail in color. A few yards upstream a sandspit protruded into the current in graduating shades of blue, sheltering the canoe from the main stream. There were few mosquitoes on the bar. Their numbers naturally diminish by midsummer. We stripped off our clothes and hung them on small willow bushes to dry. A slight breeze tickled the naked hairs on my back and legs as I worked, but did nothing to deter several bloodsucking flies. They were as long as a finger joint with iridescent, rainbow eyes and sharp, triangular mouths. I staked down the tent floor as Net-Chet circled my legs,

whining. She was never happy until home was established. Pushing in the last peg, I tightened the nylon guy lines. Phil had plucked a small seagull and was heating water to cook it when I plopped down in the warm sand by the fire. A large spider danced away, lugging her egg sack. We need to refill Wonderbox, I said. Again? Phil was squatting near the blaze, positioning the teapot. Well, were out of pancake mix, oatmeal, sugar, and powdered eggs. He looked helplessly at me. Weve eaten a third of our supplies. I know, but we have to eat something. And so does Net-Chet, and she eats almost as much as we do. If there were more small game or fish . . . I trailed off. We both knew the problem. In the far north small animal populations are cyclic. We had seen only four arctic hares all summer and no spruce grouse. Our attempts to fish on the main river had been fruitless. We now ate the tiny tree squirrels. Well, we may be hunting big game before too long, he stated. I havent seen any of that either, I said. We stared at one another in silence.