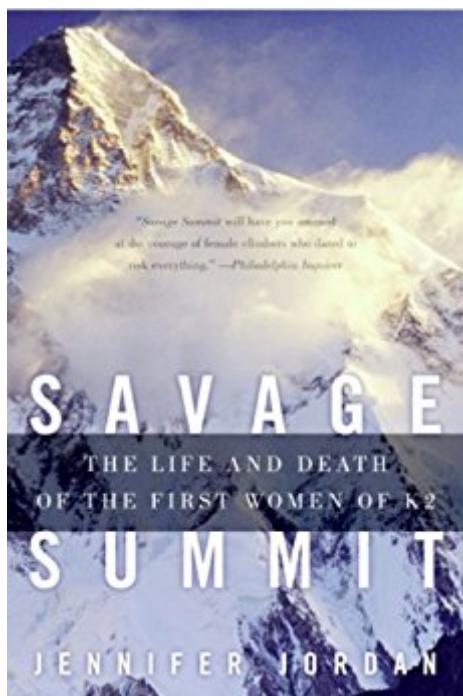


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# Savage Summit: The Life And Death Of The First Women Of K2



## **Synopsis**

Though not as tall as Everest, the "Savage Mountain" is far more dangerous. Located on the border of China and Pakistan, K2 has some of the harshest climbing conditions in the world. Ninety women have scaled Everest but of the six women who reached the summit of K2, three lost their lives on the way back down the mountain and two have since died on other climbs. In *Savage Summit*, Jennifer Jordan shares the tragic, compelling, inspiring, and extraordinary true stories of a handful of courageous women -- mothers and daughters, wives and lovers, poets and engineers -- who defeated this formidable mountain yet ultimately perished in pursuit of their dreams.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I really liked this book--a great amount of background on the female "Himalayan greats" (though I admit, I had not heard much of Alison Hargreaves before this book). Jennifer Jordan did a great amount of background work on her subjects, and provides insights about them that I had never heard of in other books. One thing that has been bothering me, however, is her conclusion regarding Chantal Maduit's death. Some spoiler space:\*\*\*\*\* Jennifer Jordan concludes

that Chantal's years of mountaineering experience would make it highly unlikely that she would "allow" herself to be smothered in her tent in a snowstorm--that it would be a horrible "rookie mistake" for her not to know to shovel out periodically during the storm. However, Jennifer Jordan spends the bulk of the chapters about Chantal detailing how she was very good at manipulating her male teammates to do mountain work, relating stories from multiple partners (albeit male) indicating that Chantal never hesitated to sleep in and let the guy do the hard work (whether laying ropes, pitching tents, or going to a lower camp to pick up a sleeping bag). Chantal is a fantastic climber, but from the snapshot we obtain from the stories in the book, I can see it being highly probable that she and her friend Pemba Sherpa reached a camp spot, he no doubt did all of the work prepping it, and then she went in, let him make water, food, etc, and she promptly went to sleep secure in the belief that he would get up the multiple times necessary to clear the tent in the storm. Ms Jordan even notes how quickly one can suffocate in a closed tent. The simple mistake of Pemba Sherpa falling asleep could have doomed them both to a death from smothering, and then damage to the bodies by avalanche post mortem. In short, Ms Jordan didn't sufficiently build her case that Chantal had the adequate camp skills in order to save her own life in a storm. Climb an 8000 meter peak? Yes. But all stories of Chantal in camp, whether at BC or on the mountain, indicate how much she hated camp work and would leave it to others. Chantal was an excellent climber, but not a mountaineer, in my opinion. Because mountaineers actually live on the mountains whereas Chantal just climbed.

Overall, I enjoyed the general writing style of this book. Some of the descriptions of the people and places were much more evocative than descriptions of the same in other K2 literature. On the other hand, the author's attempts to develop the internal dialogues and thoughts of her subjects eventually became a bit heavy-handed. There also seemed to be a few mathematical errors with dates and numbers of climbers. By the end, it was also clear that the author was unable to maintain journalistic distance from one of her subjects. In fact, it seemed as though she had fallen in love with the climber who served as the anchor of her book. This seems to have led her down the path of casting aspersions on the incredible achievements of Edurne Pasaban and Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner, two incredible, determined women that have surpassed the author's hero and summited all 14 8000m peaks.

Why are the deaths of women disproportionately higher on K2 when compared to men? Is it that the women lack skill? Are less physically adapted to the challenge? And why are women criticized for

leaving their families to attempt such a risky climb when men aren't? Jennifer Jordan explores these issues while telling the intensely personal stories of the first five women to summit K2. Jordan's writing style pulls you into the stories of these five incredible climbers. As flawed as these women are, we identify with them, cheer for them, grieve for them. We learn about their careers in the mountains, their personal lives, their love lives, their quirks, and for the two survivors, what they did after K2. The story of Wanda Rutkiewicz' death on Kangchenjunga in 1992, six years after her summit of K2, was particularly moving. I could not put this book down. The only thing that would make this book better would be an update that includes the story of Edurne Pasaban, a Spanish climber who summited K2 in 2004 and Oh Eun-Sun who summited in 2007. I would be particularly interested in Jordan's take on the competition between these two women to become the first female to conquer all 14 of the 8,000+ meter summits. The controversy that resulted could even become a book that stands on its own, and Jennifer Jordan would be the ideal writer for that book.

I read all the books offered here related to Everest and K2 and, to be honest, this one was pretty low on my wish list. As it turns out, "Savage Summit" is one of my favorite mountain books. What sets it apart is the quality of the writing. If you open it you will more than likely read it straight through. Highly recommended.

While the book was not extremely well written, but the stories it tells and the efforts made by the author to create balance among the many strong opinions expressed by climbers about other climbers made it an engrossing book. Jordan maintained a journalistic distance that made the book very interesting reading, though I was almost daunted in the first few pages when the writer said something to the effect that "women die more often than men..." Well, no. We all die once, regardless of gender... However, the writer did not seem to know how to end the book. She brought it back to herself -- a voice we had not heard before in the book (and should not have heard at all). The last line really annoyed me. It gives the sense that all these great climbing women died so that this writer could have "...my book."

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