



Blue Nile: Ethiopia's River of Magic and Mystery (Adventure Press)

Virginia Morell

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GREAT ADVENTURE SET AGAINST POLITICAL DRAMA: Besides the dangers of white-water, crocodiles, and bandits, Morell and Weir had to deal with political unrest and a border war fought between Ethiopian and Eritrean military forces. **MYSTERY AND ALLURE OF THE NILE:** Morell weaves the stories of other explorers of the enticing and forbidding Blue Nile as well as the history of the peoples and kingdoms who inhabit the mile-deep gorge it cuts through the heart of Ethiopia. Although explorers have been drawn to the Blue Nile since the first European walked along the shores of Lake Tana in the early 1600s, it was only fully mapped 30 years ago - and by helicopter, since its gorges and canyons make hiking near impossible. Virginia Morell's expedition and the adventures along the way provide the narrative line for *On the Blue Nile*. The expedition members, beginning with Nevada Weir and the head guide, Michael Speaks, who's been described as the "consummate outdoors man," are the main characters. But the river and the mile-deep gorge it cuts through the heart of Ethiopia are 'characters,' too - forces team members dealt with every day, and which began to take on personalities of their own. To give the book depth and breadth, and to put the trip in context, Morell weaves in the stories of other explorers of the Blue Nile, as well as the history of the peoples who inhabit the gorge. The setting couldn't be richer, encompassing a mix of tropical and mountainous Africa, and highland and lowland cultures. It is this mix of the enticing and the forbidding that gives the Blue Nile its appeal. While Moorehead focused on the early explorers, such as Bruce, and on the French and British military campaigns along the Nile proper, he wrote only a summary of the 20th century explorations - and of course, nothing about the successful attempts to raft the Blue Nile. All of this, as well as Morell's own journey, will be new to readers.

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