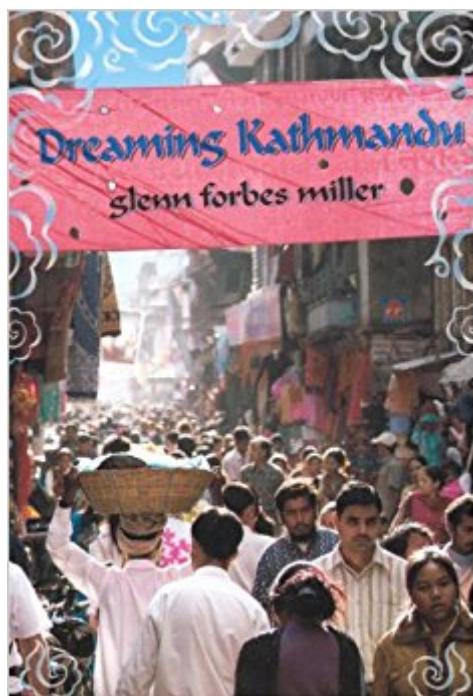


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Dreaming Kathmandu



Synopsis

In 2008, Glenn Miller, his wife, Graz, and his two adult children, Megan and Andrew, set off for the high plateaus of Kathmandu. Much preparation goes into a trip of this sort, and the author was careful to do so. Of course, one cannot plan for every contingency . . . On a trip of this sort, the human dynamics quite often threaten to overshadow everything else. Yet the author has let the beauty of the place sink into his core and has given us a concentrated elixer of sheer poetry."Outside, somewhere, a street dog is barking, and its barking sets off the yapping of another, and then, farther away, a third joins the chorus. But he does not much care; let the street dogs bark, he thinks, let the cattle lie down and rest, let the fish sleep, for he knows sleep will come; and with first light he will awaken and find himself dreaming in Kathmandu."Even Miller's use of such archaic words as "clatterynge" and "erumpent" simply add to the music and just seem to belong, somehow.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Glenn Forbes Miller is a retired high school English teacher but keeps his hand in by supply teaching for the Toronto Board of Education. His wife, Graz, is a retired high school biology teacher. Trekking and travelling are high on their priority list. In addition to their trek in Nepal, they have walked the famous El Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route across northern Spain; they have visited Athens and a number of Greek Islands and, in the same trip, Turkey; they have been to Macchu Picchu in Peru and to the River; and they toured Morocco and surrounding areas in 2010. The author enjoys reading ancient history and writing poetry; and is into photography and outdoor sports. No grandchildren yet.

Real life adventure and insight of the author. I share similar feelings with members of my family as the author toward his family.

Glenn Miller's trip is a daring but calculated proposition: to go to Kathmandu, accompanied by his wife, Graz, and grown children, Andrew and Megan, trek through Nepal with an English-speaking guide and two porters. Initially, Glenn seems the most enthusiastic. This is a high-stakes reunion with neither fast-food restaurants nor fluffy hotel-guaranteed futons. Given his literary and romantic-adventurer disposition, considerable hiking experience, as well as intense commitment to the project, it makes sense that he would invest a great deal in pleasing everyone. All members of the party are seasoned world travellers; his son is a professional photographer who supplies many of the photographs in the book. Only Glenn and his wife Graz are in shape for the trek, or so he thinks. We begin with a tease on Day 17 at Thorung Phedi, 14,750 feet. He sweeps us up into the narrative as if we've already adjusted to the altitude and just as we're dizzy with the thought of it all he plunks us back into the entry point of the trek, Kathmandu. To get down to business, reality bites fast and hard. Kathmandu is a slap in the face after sixty hours of travel-induced wakefulness: modern, noisy, blunt, colourful and seething with life, acute with sensory input and awash in vivid images, not necessarily the kind he had anticipated. Predictably, there are audible moans from his companions about food, accomodations and other shortcomings that Dad failed to anticipate. 'The Diarist', as his family calls him, sets about to collect as many moments as he can, "and we all have them, those moments when life claims all of our attention and adventure seems to sing to us with arresting clarity. Those are the moments to remember." The miracle of the thing is that on many levels as the trek progresses the plan actually seems to work, even if the only person who seems to be smiling in the pictures at times is their intrepid daughter Megan. It is November, not April, and this is not the Canterbury Tales; these pilgrims are in contemporary Nepal, which is barely nibbling at the edges of modernity, and headed for 16,230 feet. That everyone mostly manages to do what they set out to do is a tribute to the Miller family's emotional mortar that shores up chinks along the way as well as the excellence of Dorjee, their guide, and the two compassionate porters. The Millers are tough travellers and very real. They aren't afraid to tackle life without handrails. We hear it as it happened, in intimate, gritty detail that is strangely comforting and endearing. This is a soulful trek by increments, not a pampered idyll. I literally held my breath when the family struggled to cross the harrowing landslide near Tilicho Lake base camp (Manang to Tilicho, 12,600-14,440 feet) as much from the emotional tautness between them as projected fear of what could happen to any one of them. I found myself dreaming strange dreams while reading the book, reprising my own reaction to

high altitude, grateful that I was surviving on more than their lentils and Kit-Kat chocolate bars. I loved the book for the passionate dedication to sensory detail that swept me up from the very first chapter. What distinguishes The Diarist from certain other travel writers is not his acute dedication to absorbing every moment of the trip as if he were a sponge, but rather his reflective honesty and artistry in blotting his own rorschach so exquisitely back onto the paper. My only disappointment was that he left me at 2,690 feet in Beni with a brief itinerary of the rest of his trip. To usurp a couple of lines from his poem that appears at the front of the book I can only imagine as The Diarist and his family "(you) disappear into the strangeness/into the flicker of a silent movie/that keeps unreeling..." I can't wait to be a fly on the backpack of The Diarist's next trip and I hope another book is soon forthcoming. Next time, I am setting up comfortably in my armchair with my provisions so that I can match every step and savour every moment.

If you love words, Glenn Forbes Miller's book, Dreaming Kathmandu, will captivate you. If hiking is your passion, you will be treated to an adventure. If you love traveling, the sights and sounds will reach out to the tourist in you. Miller has captured the rugged and rustic beauty that is Nepal. His eloquence paints an ephemeral glimpse of a world that is as yet unspoiled, for the most part, by modern advancements. When he reaches fabled Tilicho Lake, the highest lake in the Himalayas at 16,232 feet, its pristine beauty moves him to philosophical musings. "One has to observe the beautiful and be moved by the phenomenon for the beautiful to exist. Things in and of themselves are only things. A mountain. A valley. A gelid blue lake. Each, all exist without me. And if I perceive one of them as beautiful, it exists because I am there to behold it, to declare it, to think it into existences." Then there is the human dynamics. Four family members, Miller and his wife and two adult children, always within yelling distance for 34 days. It is not always a smooth ride. Other trekkers along the way also become characters in his book as he weaves them in with interesting side stories. Add to that mix the local people brought to life with words that he seems to have an endless supply of. Certainly a book worth reading.

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