



Down and Out in Kathmandu

Jennifer S. Alderson

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Librarian's Note: This is an Alternate Cover Edition for ISBN10: 151936590X ISBN13: 9781519365903.

Zelda wants to teach children English and "find herself" in Kathmandu.

Ian wants to get stoned and trek the Himalayas.

Tommy wants to get rich by smuggling diamonds.

How their stories collide will leave you on the edge of your seat!

Travel from the dusty, tout-filled streets and holy sites of Nepal to the sultry metropolises and picture-perfect beaches of Thailand, as Zelda and Ian try to outsmart the smugglers and escape Asia alive.

A fast-paced, thrilling travel mystery sure to captivate readers thirsty for some armchair adventure.

Travel to Nepal and Thailand with three twenty-somethings as they fumble their way towards self-discovery and perhaps a bit of wisdom.

Similar to *The Beach, Are You Experienced?, Losing Gemma and Backpack, Down and Out in Kathmandu: A Backpacker Mystery* is the perfect book for lovers of backpacker fiction and (mis)adventure novels.

All four mysteries in the Adventures of Zelda Richardson series are stand-alone novels and can be read in any order:

Down and Out in Kathmandu: A Backpacker Mystery

Holiday Gone Wrong: A Short Mystery Story

The Lover's Portrait: An Art Mystery

Rituals of the Dead: An Artifact Mystery

Related subjects include: thrillers, action, adventure, suspense, intrigue, travel fiction, Asian travel, backpacking, smuggling, volunteering, Kathmandu, trekking, cultural heritage, humor, international adventure, whodunit, amateur sleuth.

Down and Out in Kathmandu Details

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From Reader Review Down and Out in Kathmandu for online ebook

Melissa Burovac says

What I initially took to be a story about a traveler teaching English in Nepal turned out to be a thriller with a gang of diamond smugglers and intrigue.

I loved the detail of Kathmandu and Thailand, the main characters, the families and the villains. I would have liked to hear more about the children she taught, but I could feel her humiliation as a teacher.

Full of confidence as she began her trip, Zelda goes back and forth between that and complete self-doubt, depending on what situation she finds herself in. As a traveler, I could identify with that!

I enjoyed this book, it kept me interested until the end.

Jacqueline (Fall In Love With The Sound of Words) says

This book has been on my radar for some time when I came across it in a Goodreads giveaway. I was fortunate enough to come across it again during the Mystery Thriller Week. Needless to say, I was pretty damn excited to be able to reach out to the author and read her novel.

I am an avid adventurer! I love everything about going out and traveling the world, getting lost and finding yourself. I was totally jealous of Zelda Richardson's ability to leave everything behind and start an adventure. I can really get behind her need to experience the nitty gritty of the culture. However, Zelda's naivety of the touch western culture has on just about everything was her downfall. The second downfall was how angry she got at anything that did not go her way! She came off often as privileged and entitled. However, she was still a very likable character, whom I felt really grew as she continued through her experiences.

I kind of adored Ian, despite his obsession with getting high...but hey, he was on vacation. He was very chill, and just kind of wanted to have a good time. I think he was very good at smoothing Zelda's sharpness.

I have to say I wasn't too thrilled with the middle of this story. It drags on a bit with very little action, romance, or even adventuring. You get to see Zelda interacting with her students and her new family, but most of the time she is whiny and feeling sorry for herself, granted the family wasn't so great. Ian was the one who did all the adventuring but his parts were small. I would have loved to see more of the Nepalese setting.

However, the ending was amazing. It was fast paced and I had no idea which direction it would go. I am very happy with the outcome, and I can't wait to read more of Zelda Richardson's travels!

Happy Reading,
Jackie

Janice Richardson says

Wow. What a ride.

It isn't every day you find a book that keeps you up late and is hard to put down. Down and Out in Kathmandu was such a book.

We were all there once, young, idealistic and self-centered. Zelda, Ian, Tommy - looking for adventure and

meaning, finally realizing that they were responsible for their own actions and happiness. The story builds slowly, teasing you until the final chapters. I was holding my breath. Definitely a 5 star read.

Pamela Allegretto says

Zelda Richardson ditches her secure computer-programming job in Seattle and heads to Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, to work as a volunteer English teacher, in what turns out to be an undisciplined, free-for-all classroom. Nevertheless, this somewhat naïve but gutsy young woman is determined not to allow this country and its 25-plus million people get the better of her, even as her preconceived romanticized notions are quickly squelched. However, it's not only the country she collides with, but also, the charming Australian trekker who ends up more fixed on drugs and alcohol than scaling the Nepalese peaks.

Alderson's portrayal allows the reader to view the underbelly of the city, with all its smells and sounds, its chaos and pathos. In fact, Kathmandu becomes its own character and leaves the reader to decide if it's an antagonist or protagonist.

This is a well-researched (on site experience) and entertaining read for both armchair travelers and trekkers.

Robyn says

Reviewed for Mystery Thriller Week 2017

The Book

Zelda Richardson has hit that point in her life where it just doesn't feel...right. Her job is not bringing her any fulfillment and she feels like she's wasting her life and missing out on potentially incredible experiences while stuck behind her desk. Taking the decision to quit and sign up for a volunteer program teaching kids in Kathmandu, Nepal may not have been the easiest thing to do, but she's going to make a go of it, even if it kills her. Meeting Ian at the airport little does she realise that their paths will cross with potentially devastating consequences.

What I liked

1. My aunt travelled to Nepal, she also stayed with locals and helped out at schools and I truly appreciated the personal connection that immediately came with this book. It felt like I knew the concept having read so many of my Aunts blog posts.
2. Zelda doesn't go to Nepal bursting with confidence and I imagine that this'd be how I would react too... hesitant, a little unsure about whether it was the right decision. But still damned determined to make it work. It's something many experience – that feeling that a change is needed – but that few follow through on.
3. There's a subtle hint of humour and wit in Down and Out which I enjoyed, though I admit it may not capture many, I found myself chuckling at a few of the characters and their responses to the situations in which they found themselves.

4. Ian. Ah the underwhelming, slightly dodgy Aussie. I love Australians. My god father is Australian. My uncle and his family are too. He's bumbling and silly and hopeless but has such an amazing heart and desire for adventure. I loved him.

5. Tommy. Now that guy. I initially didn't like him. The typical macho male, arrogant and cocky and almost contaminated with ego issues. But, for some reason I really enjoyed him. He had me sitting there thinking that I really, really shouldn't like him, but he's so... oblivious, it's funny. Like, he tries to be a badass but really just ends up looking like an emotional donkey.

What I disliked

1. It was a bit too slow in progression. I had anticipated far more action on the diamond lord front, and while we do get to see quite a bit of the dark underworld of diamond smuggling, it's only much later in the book where it picks up to being really captivating.

2. The reaction she has when saying goodbye to her Nepalese family confused me. I mean, she spends most of her time disliking them, and I'll admit I feel she was justified there, but then suddenly finds enlightenment and understanding only to still run away without looking back? I dunno... it just didn't sit well with me.

3. In fact, her entire reaction to her family and their ways was a bit off. I mean, they're opening their home up to you – be a little more pleasant about it? I dunno if I just caught the wrong end of the stick here though so yeah...

4. Zelda is waaaaayyyyy to judgy. I mean, she's not exactly perfect but seems to spend a fair amount of time identifying the not-to-pleasant in others. Battling her own insecurities and fears I'd have expected her to embrace people with a bit more openness. Maybe I misunderstood her?

Conclusion

While it could have been a little quicker in pace, I really enjoyed it. It shows just how easily one can succumb to temptation, and also that every dog does indeed get his day. Adventure, diamonds, travel and culture abound and while I may not have seen eye to eye with her, I look forward to meeting Zelda again on her next adventure.

Jennifer S. Alderson says

Loosely based on my own experiences traveling around Southeast Asia, Down and Out in Kathmandu is meant to be a somewhat silly, slightly cynical, travel adventure story. It offers a peek into the backpacker culture of Nepal and Thailand, and insight into what life can be like for a Westerner volunteering in a developing country. What do you think, did I succeed?

Tripfiction says

Novel set in Nepal and Thailand (“a silly carefree tourist”)

This review first appeared on our blog: <http://www.tripfiction.com/novel-set-...>

Three strong characters appear in this novel, Zelda, Ian and Tommy. How their paths cross is part of the storyline's progression and the reader is kept guessing until the end.

Zelda is from Canada, has stepped off the work treadmill for a while, and opted to join a charitable scheme

for a few weeks based in Nepal, teaching local children. Her accommodation is provided and she is soon, somewhat uncomfortably, ensconced with her family. She had hoped for authentic lodgings, with thangkas on the wall, and other local paraphernalia to colour her life, but sadly she finds herself in a bit of a concrete jungle.

She is not a natural traveller (she the silly carefree tourist of the title) and finds her bile rising as she succumbs to scams. Teaching is not her natural forte, consequently she finds herself challenged on more fronts than she can tolerate. She is also focussed on comparisons between home and Nepal, and although she tries to catch herself doing it, she does stray into the territory of the whinger. And a whining tourist doesn't make for an edifying read.

Ian has taken a break from teaching in Australia, is a bit of a pothead, and he is a fast worker as he has grown his hair into dreadlocks especially for this adventure. Needless to say he gets himself into some scrapes along the way.

Tommy is based in Thailand – a bit of a surprise bearing in mind the title – and a fair proportion of the story takes place there. He is an unlikeable waster, who thinks he has an eye for the girls, but is an insecure pretend playboy. An insufferable buffoon, basically.

All three in their different ways take on gangland mobsters, and this is where the story becomes a little implausible. Amateur travellers take on big time gangsters. Goons and henchmen abound and ‘the boys in blue’ also get a look-in. It is in the latter half of the book that the competent writing at the start begins to wane, and annoying typos creep in – is body order the same as body odour, I wondered? If not, what is it? “what a second, should, I imagine, be wait a second and a sentence like “..taking him for a fool just like him mom” left me scrabbling for the sense. The Khao San Road morphs into the Kho San Road and whether the sentence “it was the same day she’d gone on a hike with Ganesh the other volunteers in the Kathmandu Valley..” is missing punctuation, a word or simply features a typo, I am not sure. More than a couple of errors can rather impact on the reading experience. It is imperative, always, as an author to engage the services of a reputable proof reader.

Interestingly the author has chosen to have the content type set to the left. Books are usually (just check any random book on your shelf) centred and there is a reason for this. The eye, as it skims across the text from one side to the other, needs the regular straight boundary at the edge of the block text, both left and right. However, when the eye has to keep searching out the end of the line, the fluidity is jarred and the reading experience is impaired. It becomes a ragged read rather than smooth flowing and pleasurable.

The locale is certainly hot and steamy and successfully brings to life the trip Zelda undertakes in the company of her guide, Khamel, to, for example, Swayambhunath Monkey Temple – this outing is well rendered (the temple was sadly damaged in the Nepal Earthquake of 25 April, 2015). Kathmandu really doesn't come across as an easy place. Money is the main language and Zelda finds herself preoccupied with the dirt and squalor.

Finally to the cover. Block colours are often shorthand for a manual rather than a novel. “Adventures in Backpacking” which appears under the main orange title is pretty much lost, as black on dark blue simply doesn't stand out sufficiently clearly. Nor am I sure that the composition works – is the main image a stupa? And what of those rather beady orange eyes looking out at the potential reader? They left me feeling a bit creeped out. I think I would also find it irritating, as an author, that the cover artwork isn't centred, that there is more red background on the right than on the left.... but hey, each to their own about what is acceptable and what isn't...

This book is however a reasonably solid read, and if some of the content issues are addressed in the next print run, then it is worthy of a good 3.75* book to take to Kathmandu because it does convey the venal, buzzy feel of the city.

Thomas says

The blurb describes this book as an adventure by Zelda Richardson, a volunteer teacher in Nepal. She is not trained as a teacher, having quit her job in a computer company in Seattle. The book is told from the perspective of 3 people, Zelda, Ian, an Australian who has come to Nepal to use recreational drugs, and Tommy, a Canadian who smuggles diamonds.

Pros-- The author clearly has spent time in Nepal, describing in vivid detail the sights, sounds and smells unfamiliar to an American.

Quotes:

Exiting the airport--"As the doors slid open, her nasal cavities were assaulted by a wave of feces, unknown spices, and body odor."

Traffic--"Insane motorcyclists, belching buses, three wheeled breadboxes, kamikaze bicycles and brightly dressed woman competed with her cab for room."

Walking in Kathmandu--"By the time she had reached her first major turn, Zelda had stepped in too many piles of cow, goat, dog and human shit to count."

Cons-- There is too much time spent on describing Ian's buying and smoking marijuana(a whole chapter) and then another chapter on buying and smoking hashish. The author probably wanted to establish the fact that Ian was prone to making stupid decisions.

The plot resolves all the various threads satisfactorily. I rate it 3.5 out of 5 stars(rounded up to 4)
Thanks to the author for sending me this ebook.

J. Schlenker says

Fast paced and an easy read, and hard to put down. There were three main characters, Zelda, Ian and Tommy. I could relate to Zelda on a few different levels, her unpreparedness and not having too much of a clue. And, also the teacher part (have substituted and tutored) and taking off to a foreign country on her own. Have also done that, although, not Nepal. Still she managed to survive and I believe is wiser for the experience.

Ian - you have to have the rugged, handsome Australian trekker with dreadlocks to make the story complete. However, Ian didn't seem to do much trekking. He was more interested in smoking pot than anything else. His idea of love I found a bit shallow. I think the reward of his adventure was finding a true friend in Zelda.

As for Tommy, he was my least favorite character, but he was needed for the plot.

I could easily imagine the Nepal culture, as it seemed to be similar to the Indian culture, which I'm familiar with. The author paints a good picture.

Theresa says

Actual rating is probably 4.75 stars. The missing quarter star is for the few quirks I describe below. However, for the sake of the Goodreads rating system I'm giving this book 5 recorded stars

Wow, this was a really fun book to read. It made me want to dig out an old backpack from storage and hit the road for a month long trek to "nowhere". Ok, maybe life itself sends me fantasizing about this scenario without the help of the book **BUT** it still was a fun read. I've traveled all over Europe but have never made it to Asia. Someday I would love to get to Kathmandu, Mongolia, and Tibet (I can dream, right?) but in the meantime it was fun reading about it instead.

The author Jennifer S. Alderson is extremely talented! I loved her writing. I cannot understand why she has not been published by any number of the big companies. (Forgive me for my naiveté if the lack of publication is a personal choice) However, I can see where it might be difficult to find the correct landing place for her book. I myself have trouble coming up with exactly what genre this book falls into. Which in no way is a bad thing! I actually think it is part of this book's charm as it covers so many genres and is very unique and not a copycat of any other book I've read. Now having said all of that, I could see this book being marketed as a more sophisticated cozy type mystery. Now wait!!!! I know when I say "cozy mystery" some people will scoff off and roll their eyes because those stories sometimes are so cutsie you fear saccharine poisoning. But **THIS** book could be a whole new sub-genre in cozies. A "cozy mystery" for a younger set. A "cozy" for people who live in the real world. A "cozy" with an edge! A cozy with sex and real life problems! I would for sure read these books. (I guess I should say this here..... I do plan on continuing with this series too.)

Ok, now that I've digressed far from the review of **THIS** book, let me get back to it. I am so close to giving this book an extremely rare 5 star rating except for a couple of nit picking craw stickers.

1. The lead character Zelda just seems a bit "off" to me. She is kind of dumb, I don't think it's inexperience but rather she comes across as kind of an airhead. (forgive me Jennifer if she truly is based on you. I don't think so because the other characters are so well written and have not got this flaw). I'd like to see Zelda somehow grow up really **QUICKLY**.

2. I think I got a contact buzz just from reading. Holy smokes (haha I crack myself up) there was a lot of spliff talk in this book. Maybe I'm just old and not the exact intended demographic but I could have used a little less drug use without consequence. I keep thinking about all the evil of drugs talks I've given my son lately. (He's 14)

So-- friends read this book! Take a chance, give it a try. I suspect you will not be disappointed. Support a great Indie writer!

In compliance with FTC guidelines-----I received this book free from Goodreads Giveaway in exchange for an honest review. The content of this review is not influenced by that fact. The feelings expressed are solely mine. I sincerely appreciate the chance to read and review this book.

Joanna Kafarowski says

Zelda Richardson is burnt out and over-worked and decides to follow a dream and travel to Kathmandu,

Nepal. She is giddy with excitement at the prospect of making a difference in the world by volunteering at a local school and living with a Nepali family. She wants to fully immerse herself in this vibrant culture. But she is brought down to earth with a bump as the gritty realities of Kathmandu life do not meet her rosy expectations. An on-again, off-again romance with a mysterious and rugged Australian drifter only makes life more complicated. She is determined to stay the course until she inexplicably becomes entangled with a ruthless gang of international smugglers. For every reader who has ever yearned of escaping- be careful what you wish for!

Elizabeth Lloyd says

"Down and Out in Kathmandu" is the first adventure of Zelda Richardson. I came to it having already met the determined Zelda on her second adventure in "The Lover's Portrait." In this earlier story, Zelda has just left her secure IT job in Seattle to volunteer as an English teacher near Kathmandu for 3 months. Nepal proves to be a culture shock and the work a hard task for a young woman with no teaching experience or training. She must live with a Nepali family who live a more western life than she had expected and yet she has to adapt to a very different diet including freshly slaughtered goat.

But first Zelda encounters Ian, an Australian backpacker who has taken a break in his teaching career to find pleasure and marijuana in Kathmandu. They spend time together exploring the city, but part when Zelda commences her volunteer work. With his dreadlocks and casual attitude, Ian seems less appealing than Zelda, but gradually I warmed to him.

The third character in the novel was a surprise. Tommy is an unpleasant wastrel, bumming around in Thailand but wishing to return to Toronto as a successful man. He decides to make his fortune by double-crossing the Greek, a gangster for whom he smuggles jewels. He is doomed to fail but what can this have to do with Ian and Zelda?

The three threads are drawn together towards the end of the story after we follow Zelda's failure as a teacher and her anger at the way the Rana family try to use her to further their ambitions for their children. Jennifer Alderson's knowledge of Kathmandu bring the poverty, dirt, danger and beauty to life and add credibility to the dramatic later chapters. It is events in the city which most caught my imagination but Zelda's experiences based on Jennifer's life are very interesting. I would like to have read more about her experiences but this would have weakened the structure of the dramatic events.

A very readable story set in a fascinating world and a great introduction to this likeable heroine and I will follow my interest in Nepal and Thailand by reading Jennifer's book "Notes of a Naive Traveler."

Robert Krenzel says

Down and Out in Kathmandu takes the reader not only to Nepal, but also into the minds of self-centered twenty-somethings as they fumble their way toward self-discovery and perhaps a little bit of wisdom.

The author brings Nepal to life. The descriptive detail leaves no doubt that she has been there and done that, and the vivid prose takes the reader along for the ride.

The characters are brilliantly conceived. They are not necessarily likable, but they are very real. Their many flaws make them all the more relatable.

The plot is really several plots that all converge at the end. I am still undecided as to whether Tommy and his storyline make the plot stronger or weaker.

Overall, *Down and Out* is a fun read, and I look forward to Zelda's next adventure!

Kathy says

I wasn't sure at first, whether the characters were likable enough to keep me reading. But as I got to know Zelda, who is hopelessly unprepared and naive to be taking a teaching job in Nepal, I found her sympathetic. Ian, an Australian teacher taking time off to come to Nepal for the best dope, doesn't seem like the best person to learn from. And Tommy, the friendless creep, who has gotten himself in deep with the gangster who moves drugs and cash between Thailand and Nepal, is pretty hard to care about. But somehow I wanted to know more, and was glad to see how much self knowledge Zelda had gained from her experience, and I look forward to the next book.

Kathy says

one of several books I tried out with a view toward trying out authors new to me...this one is not for me
