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Spiritually drained by her life in Los Angeles, first-time memoirist Sherpa signs up to trek Nepal's Annapurna Circuit in search of answers, but comes home with more questions than when she began—and a Nepali fiancé.

"My life was flat, so I sought out altitude with attitude, and the faster, the better," Sherpa says as she gamely departs on her adventure, much to the disapproval of colleagues, family and friends, all of whom believe she should behave like everyone else for whom "two weeks...should be enough." Intrepid Sherpa's journey to the other side of the world sounds enticing, but, once there, her flat descriptions fail to transport the reader; "For several hectic days, I maneuver [Hong Kong] and absorb its architecturally significant high-rise buildings as well as its more colorful shops, markets, ferries, food, and gardens," she summarizes. Sherpa's unadorned style more effectively communicates the deceptive monotony of the treacherous Himalayan terrain, but once she falls for trekking guide Nima, her emotional ups and downs take over the narrative. In contrast to her peaceful surroundings, Sherpa's thoughts—and her prose—churn with questions. "I drop back. He falls behind. I am confused. Does he do this in deference to me, or out of habit from traveling on narrow trails?" Sherpa's insecurities would be annoying to a girlfriend forced to listen over cocktails, but on the page her incessant, unanswerable queries viscerally convey the stomach-twisting paralysis of many new relationships. But romance blossoms and Nima returns to LA with Sherpa, where he transforms from mountain deity to poor, badly dressed immigrant with a third-grade education. "What if someone sees us together?" Sherpa worries. While many would wonder the same, few would admit it. But Sherpa's brutal, self-effacing candor is blunted when she writes about Nima, who remains two-dimensional—"sherpa" as idea, not Nima Gyalgen Sherpa, the unlikely partner for whom the author leaves her lucrative job and fast-paced city life to attempt a simpler existence built around Buddhism and family. The story rings true because Sherpa avoids the trap of turning her life into a fairy tale. Sherpa's memoir asks the difficult question—what is the right way for me to live... right now? Bold spirits like hers will ask and heed the answer, even when it means venturing down a rocky, unfamiliar road. And when they reach their destination, they breathe...and ask again.

Less sensational and more uncomfortably authentic than other memoirs in the climb-Mt.-Everest-and-be-forever-changed vein.

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