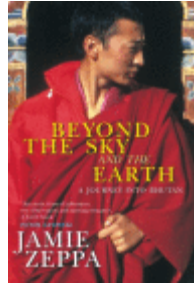


Beyond the Sky and the Earth



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by Jamie Zeppa

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As a teacher of English literature, Jamie Zeppa would understand how the story of her journey into Bhutan could be fit into the convenient box of "coming-of-age romance," a romance with a landscape, a people, a religion, and a dark, irresistible student. An innocent, young Catholic woman from a Canadian mining town who had "never been anywhere," Zeppa signed up for a two-year stint teaching in a remote corner of the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. Despite the initial shock of material privation and such minor inconveniences as giardia, boils, and leeches, Zeppa felt herself growing into the vast spaces of simplicity that opened up beyond the clutter of modern life. Alongside her burgeoning enchantment, a parallel realization that all was not right in Shangri-La arose, especially after her transfer to a college campus charged with the politics of ethnic division. Still she maintained her center by devouring the library's Buddhist tracts and persevering in an increasingly fruitful meditation practice. When the time came for her to leave, she had undergone a personal transformation and found herself caught between two worlds that were incompatible and mutually incomprehensible. Zeppa's candid, witty account is a spiritual memoir, a travel diary, and, more than anything, a romance that retraces the vicissitudes of ineluctable passion.