

# [PDF] Chasing The Sea: Lost Among The Ghosts Of Empire In Central Asia

Tom Bissell - pdf download free book

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**Books Details:**

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Author: Tom Bissell

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## Description:

**From Publishers Weekly** Bissell's first journey to the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1996 was cut short by heartache and illness. Memories of that failure dog his return in 2001 to write about the rapidly deteriorating ecosystem of the Aral Sea. Once the size of Lake Michigan, the sea has already lost most of its water and will likely disappear by the middle of the next decade, leaving thousands of square kilometers of salty desert. Journalist Bissell examines that story, but also ponders broader questions about Uzbekistan and its people. Hooking up with Rustam, a young interpreter, he sets off on a road trip across the country. The format of the ensuing travelogue-cum-history lesson resembles that of itinerant political commentators like Robert Kaplan, right down to the repulsively exotic cuisine (e.g., boiled lamb's head) and digressory mini-essays

on the history of European imperialism in Central Asia. But Bissell rails against the way other authors "pinion entire cultures based upon how [their] morning has gone," aiming for a more accurate and balanced portrayal. An ongoing dialogue with Rustam over the region's history and culture, and the extent to which both were shaped by the Soviets, adds a personal dimension. The account doesn't flinch from portraying the region's corruption-crooked cops appear regularly on the scene-but despite the frequent bouts of despair, for both the region and himself, Bissell refuses to give up on the Uzbeks entirely. The humor and poignancy in this blend of memoir, reportage and history mark the author as a front-runner in the next generation of travel writers.

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**From** The title of this erratic but enthralling travelogue refers to the attempts of fishermen in Central Asia to pursue the receding waters of the Aral Sea, which has shrunk, since 1960, to less than a third of its original size. In 2001, the author, a self-described "adventure journalist" and failed Peace Corps volunteer, arrives in Uzbekistan to investigate this ecological disaster. Bissell doesn't so much chase the sea as meander toward it, and nine-tenths of the book concerns his detours—to Samarkand, Bukhara, and the guerrilla-infested mountains of Kyrgyzstan—and his run-ins with suspicious local police forces. Bissell shines as a raconteur, if not as an analyst, and his ebullient narrative harks back to the travel classics of the nineteenth century, when the journey was an end in itself.

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