



# Chasing the Sea: Lost Among the Ghosts of Empire in Central Asia

*Tom Bissell*

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In 1996, Tom Bissell went to Uzbekistan as a naïve Peace Corps volunteer. Though he lasted only a few months before illness and personal crisis forced him home, Bissell found himself entranced by this remote land. Five years later he returned to explore the shrinking Aral Sea, destroyed by Soviet irrigation policies. Joining up with an exuberant translator named Rustam, Bissell slips more than once through the clutches of the Uzbek police as he makes his often wild way to the devastated sea.

In **Chasing the Sea**, Bissell combines the story of his travels with a beguiling chronicle of Uzbekistan's striking culture and long history of violent subjugation by despots from Jenghiz Khan to Joseph Stalin. Alternately amusing and sobering, this is a gripping portrait of a fascinating place, and the debut of a singularly gifted young writer.

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