



WVATM

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BOOKS, MUSIC AND SPIRITUAL SOUNDS

But mostly what you get is teardrops and toe tapping performed with the minimum of fuss and the maximum of feel.

Mighty fine.

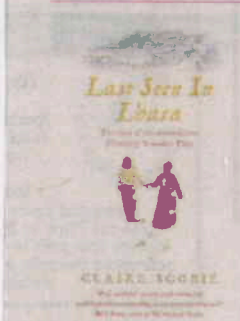
BOOKS

Last Seen in Lhasa

by Claire Scobie

Published by
Random House

REVIEW BY
ROSAMOND BURTON



Last Seen in Lhasa gives the reader a rare insight into life in Tibet at this time - the red light district which has grown up near the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, monks with mobile phones, and young Tibetan women now dressing in the latest Chinese fashions, rather than their traditional outfits. This is a country in which people are no longer free, and there is a risk of heavy fines or imprisonment if someone is found with a photograph of the Tibetans' beloved leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Claire Scobie gives a moving account of the anger and despair of several men she encountered on her travels. They are powerless to act against the Chinese regimen and can do nothing as their culture is being rapidly destroyed. Also, she observes, the Chinese originally repressed the Tibetans, but sadly the Tibetans have also been repressing each other - there are many corrupt and cruel Tibetans who are either in the

police, or act as informers.

In contrast to this sad aspect of Tibetan life is Ani, the wandering hermit nun, whom the author befriends. Ani has very few possessions and spends her life on pilgrimages or meditating and living alone in isolated mountain caves. She is a Buddhist nun, who devotes her life to spiritual practice and the development of compassion.

In 1997, Claire Scobie had a successful journalism career and was working in London for *The Telegraph Magazine*. But with a desire for more than the cutthroat media world of deadlines and bylines, she decided to leave her job, become a freelance writer and travel with a friend to a remote part of Tibet in search of a rare red lily.

This trip with a group of enthusiastic botanists was the first of seven, over an eight year period, she made to Tibet. However, the group's permits were torn up by the police before they were able to find the elusive *lilium paradoxum*.

So Scobie returned three months later with another group, and it was then she met Ani, who joined the expedition as an informal spiritual guide. Scobie describes this woman's devotion, her determination (despite the hardships) and, most importantly, the positive effect that being in Ani's presence had on her. In 2000, they made the pilgrimage to Mount Kailash together, and the author describes the support she feels from Ani - physically, emotionally and spiritually.

This wonderful book is about Tibet today, and its dying culture, and also the beautiful and enduring friendship of two women.