



South of the Clouds: Exploring the Hidden Realms of China

Seth Faison

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South of the Clouds offers a fascinating, intimate portrait of China by telling the story of an American man who ventures into its hidden realms---romance, politics, the criminal underworld, and Tibet. As he matures from a wide-eyed student into a journalist and a seasoned observer, he develops a passion for uncovering secrets, about China and about himself.

The author navigates his way past forbidding walls to peek inside the dark corners of Chinese society, relying on a remarkable collection of friends and acquaintances who help guide the way: an embittered policeman in Xian, a gay professor in Shanghai, and a Buddhist monk in Tibet, who presides at an ancient burial ritual where the corpse is carved up and fed to wild vultures.

The Tiananmen Square massacre, people smuggling, and the Falun Gong movement are among the political and social upheavals that the author explains as he witnesses China's uncertain road toward capitalism and its place in the modern world.

Along his travels, the author wrestles with his own cultural identity, his sexuality, and his spiritual bearings. He finds an erotic outlet in the Chinese "Sauna Massage" and a stirring emotional connection with Jin Xing, a brilliant choreographer and China's first openly transsexual citizen. Ultimately, he discovers the answer to lifelong questions on a mountaintop in Tibet.

Seth Faison, with a subtle understanding of Chinese culture, brings past and present events to life in a thought-provoking account of this mysterious nation and its people.

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