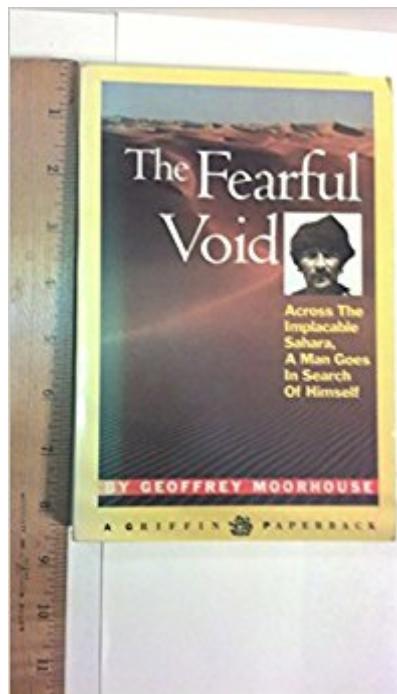


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The Fearful Void



Synopsis

VERY-GOOD EXCEPT SPOTTING TO OUTER AND TOP PAGE TIPS

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Griffin/Clarkson S. Potter; 1st Griffin ed edition (January 12, 1989)

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Customer Reviews

VERY-GOOD EXCEPT SPOTTING TO OUTER AND TOP PAGE TIPS

Vanity was the basis of this endeavor and the author completely fails at any sincere of real connection with his surroundings or the individuals he encounters, even at the most basic level. His contempt for and sense of superiority over the people he meets including his hosts in a foreign land are obvious and the result is a distasteful and one sided account of a failed journey that is as shallow and superficial as the writing itself. Picked this up as it was mentioned in Lesley Hazleton's "where mountains roar" (which is an amazing book btw) and couldn't have been more disappointed

The title says, "This book had a profound effect on my life." And you're thinking, "Oh, really?...Pray tell" OK... I read it as an armchair traveler in 1976. I dreamed of going to someplace so utterly, utterly "other". Fast forward, ten years, I'm living and working in the Mideast and was there for the better part of 20 years." I lack Moorhouse's courage, and, speaking from experience, his fool-hardiness. And I like my creature comforts. Sadly, the fearful void he describes has probably by now disappeared. Modernity is everywhere. Rather than traveling with a sextent, today he could use satellite GPS to locate waterholes. Is there a Starbucks in Timbuktu? Wouldn't be surprised. I remember a Bedouin singing a song "Wadi sheeda yatoolayayi..." or something like that about

winter in the desert. Between his broken English and my broken Arabic he tried to explain, "Fire, circle, my brother, like this: (he put his arm around me: this is warmth and closeness), night cold..." Finally he just gave an expression of disgust as if to say " this tribal closeness in a wilderness is something a modern person could never understand." No. Not the way he did. But at the time, I thought about "The Fearful Void" and it did give me a bit of an inkling of the importance of courage, and trust, and loyalty so necessary for survival. I am so glad I found it on to re-read and keep on my shelf.

I first came across this book after being entranced by the burning desert of the film Lawrence of Arabia. Many years later while at a study group in Claremont-McKenna College, I was hugely disappointed by the nearby desert in Southern California and was only mildly struck while visiting Las Vegas. But that is another story. My younger son brought my attention back to this book while researching a project for social studies. Taking it back off my library shelves after so many years, I found myself becoming completely transfixed as I reacquainted myself with his travels across the Sahara. This certainly is a compelling book not only to a young reader but also to someone treading nervously into middle age. You can almost feel the wind in your face, the sand in your mouth and the smell of the camel as you share the author's arduous journey across most of a continent. Even now I find the text easy to read and the empathy one develops with the author is a marvellous testament to his powers of communication. At the end of one evening when I finally laid the book to rest, I applauded Moorhouse for his guts and tenacity and his sheer vision required to begin a project like this. I would highly recommend this book to everyone as one book they should certainly consider reading at least once in their life.

Moorhouse is masterful in describing his travails traveling across North Africa in the mid-1970's. Reading this, you share his frustrations and occasional joys, see "Timbucktu" thru the eyes of a westerner arriving from the desert on camelback. Highly recommended.

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