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## Dark Shadows: Inside the Secret World of Kazakhstan

Joanna Lillis

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Dark Shadows is a compelling portrait of Kazakhstan, a country that is little known in the West. Strategically located in the heart of Central Asia, sandwiched between Vladimir Putin's Russia, its former colonial ruler, and Xi Jinping's China, this vast oil-rich state is carving out its place in the world as it contends with its own complex past and present. Journalist Joanna Lillis paints a vibrant picture of this emerging nation through vivid reportage based on 13 years of on-the-ground coverage, and travels across the length and breadth of this enigmatic country that lies along the ancient Silk Road and at the geopolitical and cultural crossroads where East meets West.

Featuring tales of murder and abduction, intrigue and betrayal, extortion and corruption, this book explores how a president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, transformed himself into a potentate and the economically-struggling state he inherited at the fall of the USSR into a swaggering 21st-century monarchy. A colourful cast of characters brings the politics to life: from strutting oligarch to sleeping villagers, from principled politicians to striking oilmen, from crusading journalists to courageous campaigners.

Traversing dust-blown deserts and majestic mountains, taking in glitzy cities and dystopian landscapes, Dark Shadows conjures up Kazakhstan as a living, breathing place, full of extraordinary people living extraordinary lives.

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