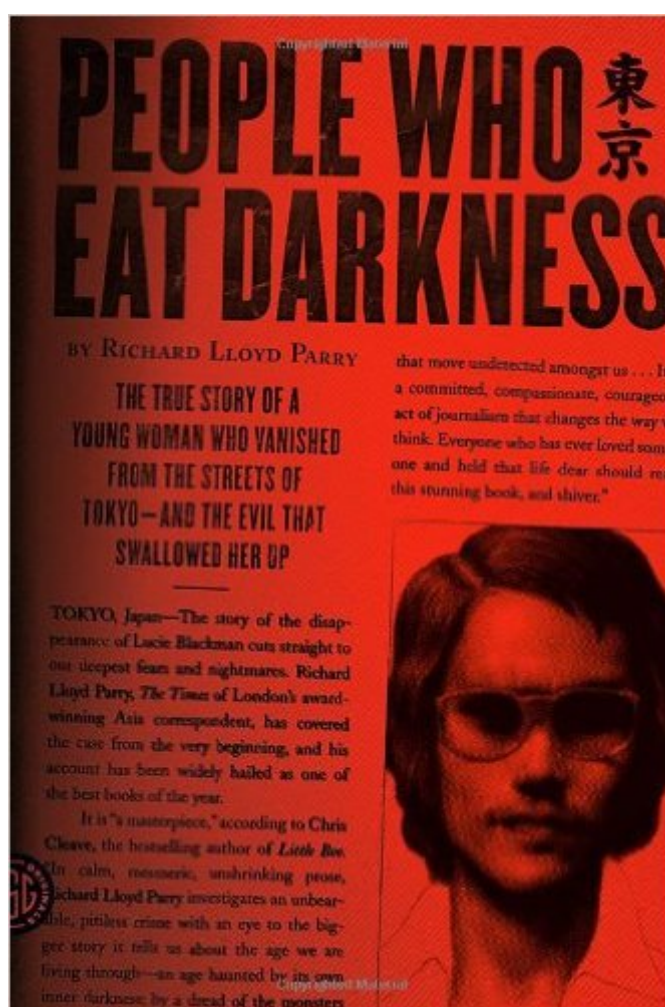


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People Who Eat Darkness: The True Story Of A Young Woman Who Vanished From The Streets Of Tokyo--and The Evil That Swallowed Her Up



Synopsis

Lucie Blackman—a tall, blond, twenty-one years old—stepped out into the vastness of Tokyo in the summer of 2000, and disappeared forever. The following winter, her dismembered remains were found buried in a seaside cave. Richard Lloyd Parry, an award-winning foreign correspondent, covered Lucie's disappearance and followed the massive search for her, the long investigation, and the even longer trial. Over ten years, he earned the trust of her family and friends, won unique access to the Japanese detectives and Japan's convoluted legal system, and delved deep into the mind of the man accused of the crime, Joji Obara, described by the judge as "unprecedented and extremely evil." The result is a book at once thrilling and revelatory, "In Cold Blood for our times" (Chris Cleave, author of *Incendiary* and *Little Bee*). *The People Who Eat Darkness* is one of Publishers Weekly's Top 10 Best Books of 2012

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Customer Reviews

This book is by far, the best book I've read this year. I can't stop talking about- it was so fascinating, so intriguing, I didn't want it to end, which seems like a somewhat unsavory statement to make about a book that's focus is a young woman's disappearance and death, but this book is so much more. It's a study of culture, Eastern vs. Western, it's a story about a family, about how people react to death, view sex, and the effects of unchecked mental illness and loneliness. I read it this weekend and felt like I was plugged into something-and now that I've finished it, I feel stripped and a bit depressed, knowing that books as good as this one only come around once and awhile.

How could it happen, in one of the "safest" cities in the world, Tokyo, that 21 year old former flight attendant could end up dismembered and disposed of in plastic bags? And this is not a tale of the early 1900's--it happened right after the turn of the new millenium. The author takes us on a tour of the underbelly of Tokyo in the Roppongi district, where businessmen hook up with club "hostesses" for drinking and dates (not necessarily sex, says the author.) And this is an area where foreigners and Japanese mix, foreign girls as exotic hostesses to Japanese men, or foreign businessmen out on an adventure, off the leash in Asia. Lucie Blackman ends up in Roppongi, to work off large debts she incurred, probably having heard that pretty foreign women, especially blondes, can make big money in Tokyo from their exotic "Western" appeal. However, the Japanese police seem to miss a lot of criminal activity that is happening here and in areas like Roppongi. So how can it happen for example, that an healthy, young Australian woman, Carita Ridgeway, dies of liver failure after being dropped off in a state of unconsciousness by some unknown guy at a hospital? She was drugged with chloroform, an easy way to adminster a "mickey" but one that can cause the liver to shut down. And how can it happen that Lucie Blackman also disappears? The story follows each shocking trail including a foray into the Japanese justice system, which for a law-abiding land with severe penalties for criminal acts, seems astonishingly unable to deal with what is clearly a predator of women, if not a serial killer. If you like real crime stories, this one will really set your hair on edge.

The dark side of the land of the rising sun is pitch black. I differ slightly with the author on how well or how enthusiastically the police investigated the case, once they sensed that things had gone wrong. However, it is clear that Mr. Obara, the anti-hero of this moving and incredibly researched book, was allowed to harm many women for a very long time and that he exploited flaws in the Japanese justice system brilliantly. There is no happy ending to this story and no clear lesson to be learned. It is a haunting meditation on family ties, conflict, grief, regret, and the nature of evil that transcends cultural boundaries.[...]

So what sparked my interest in PEOPLE WHO EAT DARKNESS, the true crime account of the disappearance of British Lucie Blackman in Tokyo during the summer of 2000? The back blurb promised cultural and psychological insight on the level of Truman Capote's IN COLD BLOOD. It touched on one of my academic interests, East Asian culture, and one of my favorite books. The comparison to IN COLD BLOOD on the back does PEOPLE WHO EAT DARKNESS no favors. Richard Lloyd Parry's lengthy and detailed account of the Lucie case lacks the transgressive power of Capote's masterpiece. Capote offered no pretense of objectivity, instead showing great feeling for

a man who committed a brutal multiple murder. Parry's book is drier and attempts for an objective tone, but there is never a sense that he sees shades of grey in Joji Obara. There is no strange, compelling beauty. There is only a sad, friendless, bizarre man who committed at least nine and possibly hundreds of rapes over the course of thirty years, resulting in at least two deaths. The transgressive, enigmatic figure in *PEOPLE WHO EAT DARKNESS* is Lucie's father, Tim. He skillfully used the media to create enough interest in her case to force the Japanese police to treat her disappearance seriously, but took a payment from her killer to sign a document casting doubt on evidence from the police. Parry does do a good job of creating a complex portrait of Japan. He cogently explains the water trade, the jobs perceived as forms of sex work, and the history of the Zainichi, Japanese of Korean descent. They're difficult subjects to address in a chapter or less, but Parry manages to do it in a way that should express them accurately to an unfamiliar audience. The economics of the yen versus Western forms of money during the long time period covered by *PEOPLE WHO EAT DARKNESS* are mentioned but less fleshed out. Interested readers can seek out more detail in R. Taggart Murphy's seminal work *THE WEIGHT OF THE YEN*. (Although it should be noted that Murphy's work is preoccupied with Japan-U.S. relations rather than Japan-UK.) For all the lurid nature of Obara's crimes, *PEOPLE WHO EAT DARKNESS* is not a lurid book. I appreciated the respect shown for the women Obara violated. But with only a few brief statements from a minority of survivors and no personal interview with Obara, there's a certain lack of drama. The book veers closest to tedium when discussing the investigation and criminal proceedings. There are two strains of drama that enliven the proceedings. Grief, guilt, and blame tear the Blackman family apart in the wake of Lucie's death. The ill feelings between her divorced parents escalate into a war over the narrative of her life and her legacy. Tim administers the Lucie Blackman Trust, a non-profit selling items like kits to test drinks for drugs and offering services to families whose loved ones went missing abroad. Jane resents his use of their daughter's name. The second gripping narrative is the creation of a system of racism and misogyny that allowed a rapist to freely commit his crimes for three decades. He had been accused of rape as early as 1997 and a suspicious character in a woman's death in 1992, but never investigated. But while Parry is critical of the police's methods, he never questions reported crime rates. It strikes me as odd that Parry questions so much in *PEOPLE WHO EAT DARKNESS* but never discusses the possibility of unreported crimes when throwing out statistics about Japan's safety. His credulity is especially impressive when discussing a man who describes raping hundreds of women in his private papers, of whom less than ten have ever made an accusation. *PEOPLE WHO EAT DARKNESS* is an intriguing work, a thorough investigation of a crime that can offer no answer to its questions. There

are tedious stretches, but it's a compelling story.

Richard Lloyd Parry delivers a true crime story that is disturbing, chilling, and compelling. It was in 2000 when a young woman stepped out into the streets of Tokyo, never to be seen again. The remains of her body was found that winter in a seaside cave. A Massive search was enforced, along with an investigation, and the man accused was identified. The judge described the murderer a man of evil. The author takes the reader behind the scenes from searching for a Missing woman to all the facts and findings, and through the trial. Lucie Blackman lost her life at age twenty-one, was justice served? Could anything have been better to not only prevent such crimes, but to enforce new laws within the Japanese justice system? Richard Lloyd Parry introduces us also to a different culture, and the trials-and-tribulations of different laws. I highly recommend this intriguing book to all thriller lovers. A thought-provoking read from beginning to end that will send chills up your spine!

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