



Bar Flower: My Decadently Destructive Days and Nights as a Tokyo Nightclub Hostess

Lea Jacobson

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During daylight hours, the city of Tokyo is the very image of robotic conformity. At night, however, it transforms into a “floating world” of escapism, as “all-work” salarymen seek a place to play.

Though fascinated by Japanese language and culture, American Lea Jacobson had some difficulty conforming to Japan’s rigidly structured society. After she was fired from her job as an English teacher, Lea found work as a nightclub hostess on Tokyo’s Ginza strip and transformed herself into a doll-like confection whose job it was to flatter, flirt, and engage in mock relationships with her middle-aged clients. Working as a hostess—the occupation a direct descendant of the geisha tradition—quickly became lucrative...and addictive.

Her perceptions distorted by the drinks she was paid to consume, her identity confused by the fake personalities she assumed nightly, Jacobson began to lose herself in this fantasy culture. As she descended into self-abuse and alcoholism, she found that the seductive lifestyle she loved so much seemed impossible to escape.

Jacobson’s searing insights into Japan’s cultural dynamics, erotic fascinations, gender politics, and her own spiral into sensory excess create a haunting and mesmerizing memoir that will leave readers transfixed.

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