

## ★ **Goodnight Tokyo**

**Atsuhiko Yoshida**

**Haydn Trowel**

Europa Editions (Jul 9, 2024)

Softcover \$18.00 (176pp)

979-888966027-9

Atsuhiko Yoshida's novel *Goodnight Tokyo* delves into the nighttime activities of a disparate group of Tokyoites.

For her latest assignment as a prop procurer for film sets, Mitsuki must secure loquats off-season. Enlisting Matsui's late-night taxi services, she meets a once-a-year loquat thief, Kanako, who is otherwise on the night shift of a phone consultation service. From here, *Goodnight Tokyo* expands to cover the trio's overlapping associates, a diverse ensemble cast in which everyone is searching for something.

*Goodnight Tokyo* balances mundane and unique details. Beyond the banality of jobs and vocations, characters reveal their idiosyncrasies and desires as they chase after particular items, lost loved ones, missing romantic connections, or livelihoods. For example, behind one of the recurring settings, a dilapidated, overlooked-in-the-daytime antique shop that's open only at night, is Ibaragi, an eccentric incapable of staying awake beneath the noontime sun who has amassed a "house of curiosities" of renamed junk, based on the rationale that "Whenever something created for a specific purpose wore down ... it was liberated from its human-imposed application. Only then was it set free."

In its focus on the subtle and invisible intimacies among strangers in late-night Tokyo, the novel is restrained. It explores the private losses that motivate people's seeking. When an aspiring actress, Eiko, recalls her grandmother's last words ("How I wish I had a cola") and her mother's brief rejoinder ("Was cola always such a dark color?") the economy of the language invests ordinary, repeating objects with poignancy and special emotion. Everyday materiality and detritus become anchors amid amorphous hidden but shared feelings.

A quiet slice-of-night-life novel, *Goodnight Tokyo* explores the hushed surprises and understated mysteries enmeshed in daily human connectivity.

ISABELLA ZHOU (July / August 2024)

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