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Lovesick Japan: Sex * Marriage * Romance * Law

Mark D. West

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In *Lovesick Japan*, Mark D. West explores an official vision of love, sex, and marriage in contemporary Japan. A comprehensive body of evidence?2,700 court opinions?describes a society characterized by a presupposed absence of physical and emotional intimacy, affection, and personal connections. In compelling, poignant, and sometimes horrifying court cases, West finds that Japanese judges frequently opine on whether a person is in love, what other emotions a person is feeling, and whether those emotions are appropriate for the situation.

Sometimes judges' views about love, sex, and marriage emerge from their presentation of the facts of cases. Among the recurring elements are abortions forced by men, compensated dating, late-life divorces, termination fees to end affairs, sexless couples, Valentine's Day heartbreak, "soapland" bath-brothels, and home-wrecking hostesses.

Sometimes the judges' analysis, decisions, and commentary are as revealing as the facts. Sex in the cases is a choice among private "normal" sex, which is male-dominated, conservative, dispassionate, or nonexistent; commercial sex, which caters to every fetish but is said to lead to rape, murder, and general social depravity; and a hybrid of the two, which commodifies private sexual relationships. Marriage is contractual; judges express the ideal of love in marriage and proclaim its importance, but virtually no one in the court cases achieves it. Love usually appears as a tragic, overwhelming emotion associated with jealousy, suffering, heartache, and death.

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