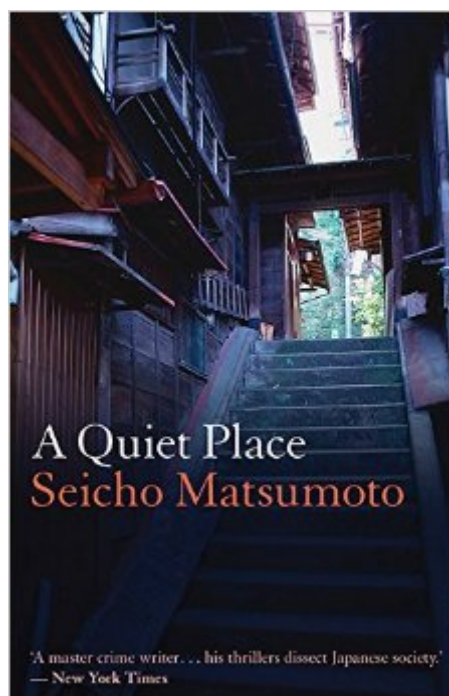


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A Quiet Place



Synopsis

"A master crime writer . . . Seicho Matsumoto's thrillers dissect Japanese society."#151;The New York Times Book Review"A stellar psychological thriller with a surprising and immensely satisfying resolution that flows naturally from the book's complex characterizations. Readers will agree that Matsumoto (1909#150;1992) deserves his reputation as Japan's Georges Simenon.-Publishers WeeklyWhile on a business trip to Kobe, Tsuneo Asai receives the news that his wife Eiko has died of a heart attack. Eiko had a heart condition so the news of her death wasn't totally unexpected. But the circumstances of her demise left Tsuneo, a softly-spoken government bureaucrat, perplexed. How did it come about that his wife#151;who was shy and withdrawn, and only left their house twice a week to go to haiku meetings#151;ended up dead in a small shop in a shady Tokyo neighborhood?When Tsuneo goes to apologize to the boutique owner for the trouble caused by his wife's death he discovers the villa Tachibana near by, a house known to be a meeting place for secret lovers. As he digs deeper into his wife's recent past, he must eventually conclude that she led a double life... Seicho Matsumoto was Japan's most successful thriller writer. His first detective novel, Points and Lines, sold over a million copies in Japan. Vessel of Sand, published in English as Inspector Imanishi Investigates in 1989, sold over four million copies and became a movie box-office hit.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bitter Lemon Press. A Quiet Place by Seicho Matsumoto A twist on the usual mystery detective story. We know who did it and why. But were they justified in their suspicions? Will they be caught?

Can they hold their nerve? For most English-speaking readers, does it matter that the story is set in relatively unknown Japan? As far as the plot is concerned, no. Murder is murder wherever it happens. The delicacy of the writing, and the character of the protagonist are very Japanese. Does that matter? Again, no. Alluring as they are, to appreciate either, again, we need not have lived in Japan. What about the setting, though? The author spends little time on its description. Having lived in Japan myself, I could easily imagine the scenes in the book. But could readers who had never been there? I initially thought not. I realised that I was wrong. The usual brilliant Bitter Lemon cover tells us all we need to know about the story's setting. Dark but attractive, delicate but sinister, it epitomises the small back streets of a Japanese city. And it epitomises the story and the writing.

This compelling mystery comes from another time and place -- Japan in the 1970's -- but the unfamiliar environment adds to the book's power. Mr. Asai, a mid-level bureaucrat, learns that his wife has died of a sudden heart attack. But she died in an unfamiliar neighborhood, under less than clear-cut circumstances. Asai becomes obsessed with the circumstances of her death, starts his own investigation and eventually hires detectives to learn more. In time, he develops a theory of what happened and why, and that is when the real mystery begins. The tone of the book is cool and formal, but Asai is a compelling character, and the suspense grows as the story progresses. Comparisons to Simenon are apt, even though the central character here is not a policeman -- far from it.

Good typical Japanese thriller

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