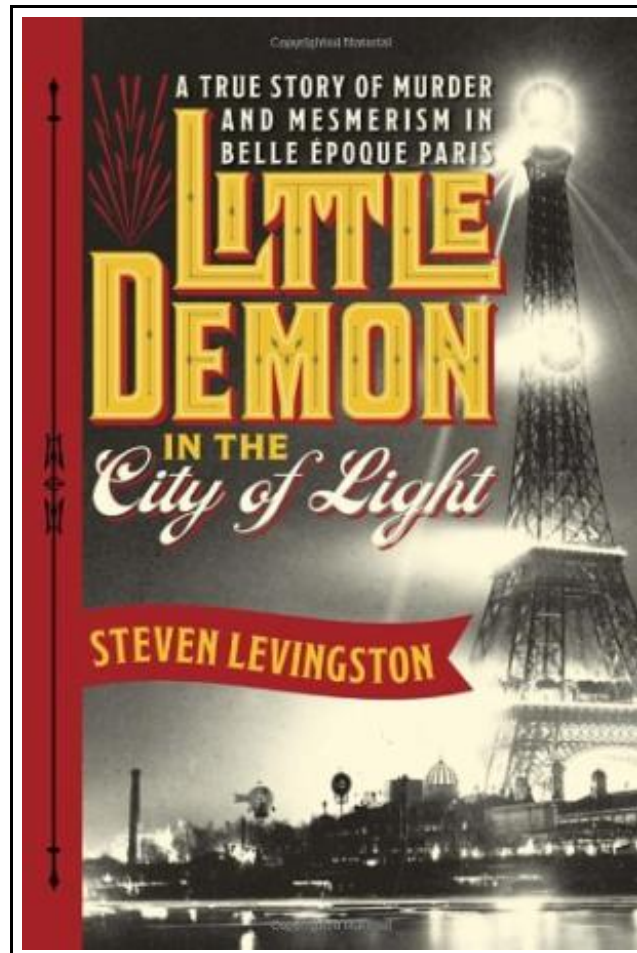


Little Demon in the City of Light: A True Story of Murder and Mesmerism in Belle



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Reviews

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LITTLE DEMON IN THE CITY OF LIGHT: A TRUE STORY OF MURDER AND MESMERISM IN BELLE



Doubleday. 1 Cloth(s), 2014. hard. Book Condition: New. A veteran international journalist and now the nonfiction book editor of the Washington Post, Steven Levingston here gives us a delicious account of a murder most Gallic, whose lurid combination of sex, brutality, forensics, and hypnotism riveted fin-de-siècle France and then the world. When Toussaint-Augustin Gouffé entered 3, rue Tronson du Coudray, he expected nothing but a delightful assignation with the comely young Gabrielle Bompard; instead, he was murdered by her and her companion Michel Eyraud. During her sensational trial, the most respected minds in France debated whether Bompard, dubbed the "Little Demon," was hypnotized by her lover or simply a coldly calculating murderess. "Levingston has unearthed a whopper of a story, and lovingly crafted a dense, lyrical yarn that hits the true-crime trifecta of setting, story and so-what. Such books remind us that times may change, but the human animal does not."NYTimes" In belle époque Paris, mesmerism, the ability to hypnotize others to do one's will, was quite the rage, and it wound up being quite the defense for one of the two accused of robbing and strangling wealthy widower Toussaint-Augustin Gouffé. Was the petite demon (little devil) Gabrielle Bompard, a good girl turned good-time girl, in thrall to bamboozling raconteur Michel Eyraud? Certainly, it made a great story then, one that the tabloids worldwide emblazoned in lurid headlines for months, and one that Levingston tells here, filled with clever and determined detectives (quotes from Sûreté chief Marie-François Goron's own memoir are included), theories about criminology, opinionizing by such luminaries as writer Émile Zola, and the ambience of an era that arguably can't be matched for its guilelessness. Levingston's smartly chipper prose and fine attention to detail down to the otter trim on Gabrielle's hat add an entertaining and authentic sensibility to this re-creation...



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