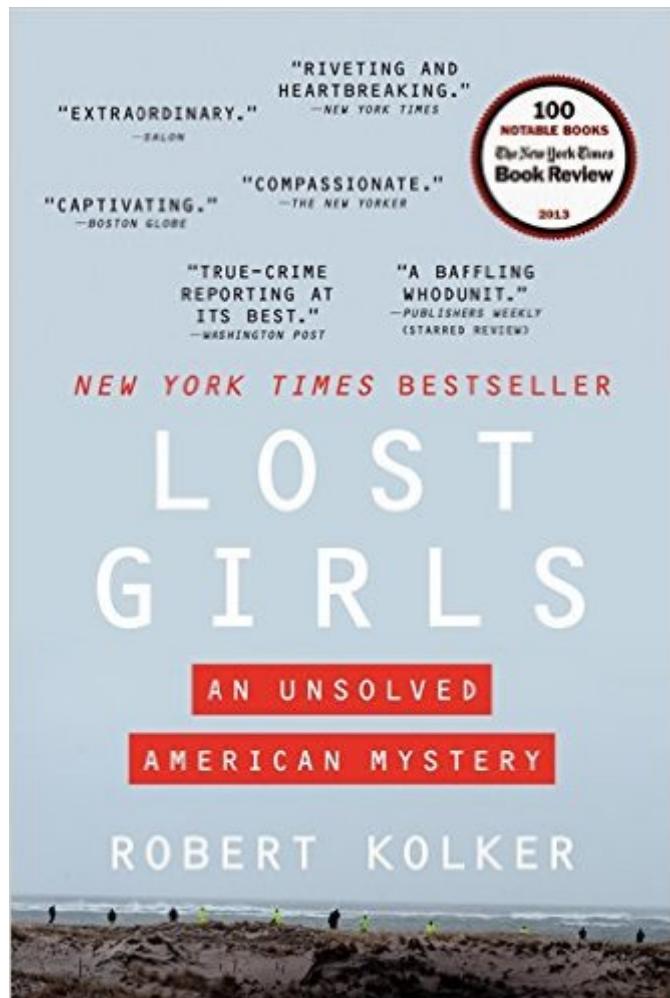


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# Lost Girls: An Unsolved American Mystery



## **Synopsis**

A Publishers Weekly Top Ten Book of 2013 Award-winning investigative reporter Robert Kolker delivers a humanizing account of the true-life search for a serial killer still at large on Long Island, and presents the first detailed look at the shadow world of online escorts, where making a living is easier than ever and the dangers remain all too real. A triumph of reporting, a riveting narrative, and "a lashing critique of how society and the police let five young women down" (Dwight Garner, New York Times), *Lost Girls* is a portrait of unsolved murders in an idyllic part of America, of the underside of the Internet, and of the secrets we keep without admitting to ourselves that we keep them.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

In December 2010, the remains of four young women were found buried in Oak Beach, a community in one of New York's barrier islands. The women all worked as escorts, as did a fifth woman whose body was discovered later. They all disappeared between 2007 and 2010. Arguing that these lost girls do not deserve to be stereotyped and forgotten simply because they engaged in prostitution, Robert Kolker brings them back to life in a book that is dedicated to telling their stories, if not to solving the mystery of their killer(s). A pregnant high school dropout at sixteen, Maureen went through a series of dead-end jobs and failed relationships. A hair stylist in training who did well in high school, Melissa saw a path out of Buffalo when a man (who turned out to be a pimp) offered her a job cutting hair in a New York barbershop. Rebellious, impossible to control, and marked as white trash, Megan was impregnated by a thirty-two year old when she was seventeen. Sexually

abused as a child, Amber eventually joined her sister at an escort service because the workers provided her with a sense of family. All of the women advertised on Craigslist and disappeared after making appointments with unidentified clients. Raised in a series of foster homes, Shannon worked for an escort agency that catered to high-end clients before the police put it out of business. She also turned to Craigslist. Her last appointment was in Oak Beach. Unlike the other lost girls, Shannon made quite a scene before she disappeared, running around Oak Beach screaming and banging on doors, perhaps frightened by something, perhaps suffering from cocaine psychosis. She called 911 but got no help from the police. Her client that night was Joe Brewer.

I read Robert Kolker's "Lost Girls" in one sitting, so immersed was I with this "unsolved American mystery." I would urge you to read it as soon as you can, but first let me give you a few reasons why you should. Without trying to give too much away, let me describe you (partially) the main narrative of Kolker's story. Almost the first half of the book is concerned with the story of four young women: one chapter narrating their personal histories (with their actual names) and the other recounting their descent into prostitution (with their respective pseudonyms). Briefly, these are their stories:- Maureen/Marie: A telemarketer who wishes to be a poet, or a song composer for rap artists. Unable to launch her career, she is astonished by the amount of money that escorts (working for certain agencies) can actually make. Maureen sees Craigslist as an opportunity to make money without having to pay escort services.- Melissa/Chloe: A girl whose dream is to open a hair-salon, she grows up in Buffalo, NY, in a neighborhood where hers is one of the only white families. "The race thing was a peculiar subject for all of them." Melissa feels like she was born on the wrong body since she wants to be black. That is why she finds herself a black boyfriend, a boy involved in drug dealing, and moves to NYC.- Shannan/Angelina: Diagnosed as bipolar, and described by her mother as "independent-minded," Shannan decides to grow up in a series of foster homes rather than with her mother. Seeking to have "the best of everything," Shannan wants to pursue a singing career and also moves to NYC.- Megan/Lexi: As a child, growing up in Portland, ME, Megan becomes the perfect example of misbehavior.

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