

THE ZEIT GIST

## Reported stalking cases likely just tip of iceberg

### Teacher's murder shines light on ordeal faced by thousands of women in Japan

By THOMASINA LARKIN

Staff writer

The day started like any other. The alarm clock rang at 7 a.m. and Laura Fitch, a Canadian then 28 years old, made her sleepy-eyed way to the shower to freshen up before brewing her first coffee of the day.

About 10 minutes later, as soon as she turned off the water, the phone in her Tokyo apartment started ringing -- a sound that she would soon become all too familiar with.



Fitch had only given her land-line number to family members and close friends overseas, so she quickly dried herself off and rushed to catch the call.

THOMASINA LARKIN PHOTO

"A whiny male voice asked me in Japanese if I was Laura," Fitch recalls of the morning two years ago. "I was tired, I wasn't thinking about who he could be, and I answered yes.

"Then he said, 'Is this the Laura that lives at such and such an address?' and I said yes again. Then he said, 'You just got out of the shower, right?'" Fitch explains, adding that she had a small window in her bathroom that looked out to the front of her building. "At that point I clued in and freaked out. I hung up immediately, checked my locks and called my friend who lived next door."

From that day, every day until Fitch left Japan 10 months later,

she was bombarded with phone calls. Her privacy was invaded and she feared for her safety. She was being stalked.

Fitch didn't get her normal life back until she left Japan. And hearing two weeks ago about the murder of 22-year-old English teacher Lindsay Ann Hawker -- allegedly by a man who had stalked her -- sent a chill down Fitch's spine and reopened mental scars.

Last year, 12,501 stalking incidents were reported in Japan -- 90.4 percent of the victims were women, with 67.7 percent being between 20 and 39 years old, and the stalker was male in 89.7 of cases, according to Tokyo Metropolitan Police records. The number was a 2.3 percent increase compared with 12,220 reported cases in 2005.

Those numbers likely don't even scratch the surface.

Eighty-three percent of stalking incidents in the U.S. are not reported to the police or other officials, according to a survey conducted in 2000 by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) of 4,446 female students at 223 colleges and universities.

Of the 83 percent of victims who did not make a report, 72 percent didn't think the incident was serious enough to report, 44.6 percent didn't know it was a crime and 33.6 percent didn't believe the police would take it seriously.

After receiving her first freaky phone call, Fitch went straight to the police, who she says were "not too

### **The Last Word: The Hawker Case**

**Love u lots dont worry abt the gut (guy) who chased me home, its jus crazy Japan. miss u xxx.**

*An e-mail message sent by English teacher Lindsay Ann Hawker to her boyfriend, Ryan Garside, in the U.K. before her murder in Ichikawa, Chiba Prefecture (BBC)*

**My daughter loved this country. She loved meeting Japanese people and thought of Japan as an honorable society. . . . My daughter's killer has now brought shame on your country. He must be caught.**

*British Ambassador to Japan Graham Fry reads a statement on behalf of William Hawker, the father of Lindsay (The Associated Press)*

**We are all very upset. Not just for Lindsay, but for Lucie. It brings it all back hugely. I just know how devastated these people are and what a terrible problem it is going to be for them. It's just a great shame that the (suspect in the Hawker case) got out the back door.**

*Tim Blackman, the father of slain British hostess Lucie Blackman, discusses the Hawker case (Kyodo)*

**There is absolutely no way nine well-placed police (officers) would fail to catch one guy. There are huge**

concerned" and told her they couldn't do anything because her stalker was "only phoning" her. She said the police patrolled her area a few times in the beginning, but that was about it.

"There was a definite 'boys' club' feeling about the whole thing," Fitch says. "I was told that he was just a boy having fun, that I should change my number and forget about it. When the calls kept coming, they refused to do anything more to help me and started getting obstinate."

So Fitch, an English teacher at the time, was left to cope on her own in a situation she was powerless to control -- a situation that can leave victims in a state of near-constant paranoia.

Fitch says she was always on the lookout for strange behavior. She carried a Taser with her everywhere, she never listened to music while she was walking, she always tried to take different routes to and from work, and she alerted her colleagues and friends to the situation.

"The first few days I was f---ing terrified," says Fitch. "I was constantly checking my lock and looking over my shoulder."

**catch one guy. . . . There are huge contradictions in the police explanation.**

*Akio Kuroki, former Metropolitan Police Department detective, wonders how prime suspect Tatsuya Ichihashi managed to outwit Chiba's finest (The Japan Times)*

**I can easily picture her, finishing her coffee with the polite, sweet, shy young man with whom she had just spent an undemanding hour. Perhaps he explains to her that he has forgotten his wallet with the money he owes her. Would she mind coming to his place? He is sorry, but it's only round the corner. How harmless such a suggestion might have seemed. And then the walk back, and the door closing behind her, and the sudden change in him, and the unspeakable aftermath.**

**Many young women would have done such a thing in similar circumstances. Many more will in the future, and only the minutest fraction of them will ever come to grief. This, I suspect, is the sad and mundane truth about the death of Lindsay Hawker: not that she was rash or idiotic, but that -- in a safe, but complex, society - she was very, very unlucky.**

*Richard Lloyd Parry writes from Tokyo (The Times)*

**There is something old-fashioned in the media's handling of the tragic death of Lindsay Ann Hawker. The reports have shown a cynical, almost gleeful, devotion to the details of the end of young life, an approach almost understandable since the facts of the case make for such good copy; the exotic foreign land, the young girl, the horrific death, possibly by a young man twisted by a culture unknown to the west.**

*Columnist Alistair Harper blasts the British media's coverage of the affair (Guardian Unlimited's Comment Is Free)*

**She found Japanese men weird. Some made inappropriate gestures and sexual remarks.**

*A friend of Hawker speaks to "the soar-away Sun" tabloid (The Sun)*

**The Japanese man suspected of**

"He would call all night, all day," she says. "I once took the phone off the hook for a whole two weeks, but it started ringing again within an hour after I replaced it."

Stalking is an extreme symptom of obsessive-compulsive disorder, a recognized mental illness, according to Dr. Chie Okuda, a Tokyo-based clinical psychologist.

"People who are obsessive can't stop what they're doing," says Okuda. "It's also a sexual and hormonal issue that becomes a compulsion -- a driven state -- that affects their reasoning and can't be controlled. It's like a state of hunger."

"Sexual or romantic attachment is a strong force in people's basic needs," says Okuda. "Needs for attachment are very basic. You crave things like food and sex. That's a basic driving force and can become heightened when you don't feel close to anyone."

"People have to balance and inhibit their impulses all the time, but some people don't learn how to deal with frustrations in life," says Okuda. "Once they find something that catches their attention, and then add to that the stress level that they may feel at a particular time, that person may act upon it."

Such may have been the case when 28-year-old Tatsuya Ichihashi, who remains at large, allegedly stalked and killed Hawker, a British Nova teacher, leaving her body in a bathtub of sand on his balcony in Ichikawa, Chiba Prefecture.

In the five years that records of stalking cases have been kept in

**murdering Lindsay Hawker stalked another British woman teacher last year, scaring her so much she fled the country.**

**The young woman left her job in Japan and returned to the U.K. fearing for her safety after horticultural student Tatsuya Ichihashi followed her after apparently asking her to help him with his English.**

**Police and officials of the Nova Intercultural Institute, which employed Miss Hawker, refused to name the woman, who returned to Britain in September.**

*(thisislondon.co.uk)*

**Blogs and bulletin boards for foreigners in Japan are filled with complaints by disaffected Nova teachers. One, an American called Rebecca, suggests that it uses attractive young teachers as a bait for students. "For the trial lesson, almost always a female teacher is assigned to a male class, and a male to a female class," she writes. "The female teachers work later, because male students come later in the evening. It is an irregular kind of blind date."**

*Richard Lloyd Parry explains the teaching industry in Japan to British readers (The Times)*

Japan, 48 of the victims were murdered.

The unpredictable nature of stalkers makes them especially threatening. Victims can never be certain when or how they will next encounter their stalker.

The Journal of Forensic Sciences 2006 found that two-thirds of stalkers in cases across North America used more than one method of approaching or pursuing their victim daily or at least once a week.

Seventy-seven percent of victims in the U.S. are telephoned, 47.9 percent are waited for, 44.6 percent are watched from afar and 42 percent are followed, according to the NIJ/BJIS survey of post-secondary students.

A Tokyo police report shows that last year in Japan, 54 percent of stalkers waited for and followed their victims, 53 percent pressured their victims to meet them and get to know them, and 31 percent called their victims on the telephone but did not say anything.

The report states that the motive for 65 percent of stalkers was emotional attachment to the victim and 33 percent did it because of unreciprocated love, which means 98 percent of all reported cases were driven by feelings of desire.

After a case is reported, police judge whether it is serious enough to warrant legal action.

"It's a very sensitive issue," says Yasuo Sato, director of the Victim Support Center of Tokyo. "How much legal action is taken in each situation is left to the discretion of each individual police officer.

"Usually, first police give the stalker a warning," says Sato, who is a former police officer. "In my experience, 90 percent of stalkers stop after a warning."

Japan's Antistalking Law was enacted in 2000.

According to the law, after the stalker carries out one of eight actions, such as following the victim home or calling the victim, the victim should file a report asking for the police to give a warning. After the warning, if the stalking continues, the chief of police at headquarters will give a final warning. If the stalker still doesn't stop, the Public Safety Commission examines the case. The PSC can then order prohibition of the stalker's

actions. Finally, if the stalker fails to cease and is arrested, he or she could face up to a year in prison or a 1 million yen fine.

In the early stages of a stalking incident, much of the onus is on the victim to prove the seriousness of the crime.

"In the case of continual phone calls, the victim should record everything," says Sato. "They should tell the stalker that if they keep doing it, they'll call the police."

Fitch did exactly that on the advice of a student who had read what to do on a Japanese antistalking Web site.

"I got an extension to my tape recorder that allowed me to tape the telephone conversations," Fitch says. "Once I had it set up, I talked to him a bit to get something to take to the police.

"I could hear him jacking off on the phone and he asked me if I had ever seen a Japanese penis and then he would proceed to blow his load," says Fitch. "I only stuck on the phone to give the cops more evidence, which they asked for. They said it's not a crime unless it's sexual.

"However, that still wasn't enough for the police and they said that he had to want to date me," she says. "When I pressed them to open my phone records, which according to NTT they could do with a police or judge's warrant, they became less helpful and for some reason were really against doing it."

Sato says if Fitch had gone to another police station, her request might have been granted.

"The police should have taken action and I feel sorry for her because maybe the person in charge didn't do the right thing," says Sato. "Her stalker masturbated on the phone and I think maybe he was a little bit crazy. The police could have traced the call.

"Victims should not hesitate to call our center because there is a lot we can do to help," says Sato. "If someone reports the incident to a police officer who doesn't take action, we can refer the victim to a good officer. We have a strong relationship with the police force and we also have interpretation services."

Fitch was just one thousands in Japan last year who reported the often-faceless crime that can leave its victims feeling helpless and traumatized.

In her case, leaving the country has helped put the painful experience behind her. The Antistalking Law in Japan is still relatively new, and perhaps many remain unaware of how dangerous stalkers can be.

Hawker's murder was a brutal reminder of the seriousness of the issue -- and a wakeup call for the countless victims of stalkers who are suffering in silence.

*The telephone number for the Victim Support Center in Tokyo is (03) 5287-3338 Send your comments on this issue to: [community@japantimes.co.jp](mailto:community@japantimes.co.jp)*

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