



'Japan's
most famous
mystery
story writer'
The New York
Times Book
Review

Edogawa
Rampo
Gold Mask

PENGUIN MODERN CLASSICS: CRIME & ESPIONAGE

1. Davis Grubb: NIGHT OF THE HUNTER
2. Edogawa Rampo: BEAST IN THE SHADOWS
3. Dorothy B. Hughes: IN A LONELY PLACE
4. Josephine Tey: THE FRANCHISE AFFAIR
5. Eric Ambler: JOURNEY INTO FEAR
6. John le Carré: CALL FOR THE DEAD
7. Georges Simenon: MAIGRET AND THE HEADLESS CORPSE
8. Len Deighton: SS-GB
9. Ross Macdonald: THE DROWNING POOL
10. Chester Himes: COTTON COMES TO HARLEM
11. Dick Lochte: SLEEPING DOG
12. Raymond Chandler: THE BIG SLEEP &
FAREWELL, MY LOVELY
13. Anthony Price: OTHER PATHS TO GLORY
14. Edogawa Rampo: THE BLACK LIZARD
15. Michael Gilbert: GAME WITHOUT RULES
16. Georges Simenon: MAIGRET'S REVOLVER
17. C. S. Forester: PAYMENT DEFERRED
18. Eric Ambler: THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS
19. Josephine Tey: BRAT FARRAR
20. John le Carré: TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY
21. Ross Macdonald: THE UNDERGROUND MAN
22. John Franklin: THE DEADLY PERCHERON
23. Robert Van Gulik: THE CHINESE GOLD MURDERS
24. Cornell Woolrich: I MARRIED A DEAD MAN
25. Ian Fleming: FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE
26. Anthony Price: THE LABYRINTH MAKERS
27. John le Carré: THE NIGHT MANAGER
28. Edogawa Rampo: GOLD MASK
29. Georges Simenon: NIGHT AT THE CROSSROADS
30. Shirley Jackson: WE HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN THE CASTLE

Copyrighted Material

Copyrighted Material

EDOGAWA RAMPO

Gold Mask

Translated by William Varteresian



PENGUIN BOOKS

Copyrighted Material

PENGUIN CLASSICS

UK | USA | Canada | Ireland | Australia
India | New Zealand | South Africa

Penguin Classics is part of the Penguin Random House group of companies
whose addresses can be found at global.penguinrandomhouse.com.



Penguin
Random House
UK

First published in *King Magazine* 1930–31

This translation based on the *Complete Works of Edogawa Rampo* published by Kobunsha

Published in Penguin Classics 2024

001

Copyright © Kurodahan Press, 2019

Translation copyright © William Varteresian, 2019

All rights reserved

The moral right of the translator has been asserted

Set in 11.25/14pt Dante MT Std

Typeset by Jouve (UK), Milton Keynes

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

The authorized representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

ISBN: 978-0-241-68736-9

www.greenpenguin.co.uk



Penguin Random House is committed to a sustainable future for our business, our readers and our planet. This book is made from Forest Stewardship Council certified paper.

Copyrighted Material

Contents

Translator's Introduction vii

Author's Commentaries xvii

Gold Mask 1

Copyrighted Material

Translator's Introduction

Note: This introduction reveals details of the plot.

Edogawa Rampo's (1894–1965, *NÉE* Hirai Tarō) engagement with Western mystery fiction is evident from the inception of his literary career. Rampo's debut work, 1923's 'The Two-Sen Copper Coin' (*Nisendōka*),¹ a cryptographic tale Rampo links in several commentaries to the influence of Poe,² was the first story by a Japanese author to be published in the literary magazine *Shin-Seinen* (*New Youth*), which had previously published a number of translations of works by Western mystery authors, including G. K. Chesterton and Maurice Leblanc. *Shin-Seinen's* founder and editor-in-chief, Morishita Uson, opted to play up this fact by billing 'The Two-Sen Copper Coin' as a Japanese work of detective fiction that is not only 'truly a match for foreign works,'³ but also 'in a sense possesses strengths superior even to those of foreign works.' In light of contemporary critical opinions that Japan was incapable of producing detective fiction on par with Europe and America – opinions that had, for a time, lead a young Rampo to despair that there were no opportunities for mystery authors in Japan and even to dream of emigrating to the West to write and publish works in English – these claims sparked passionate debate.⁴

Rampo would tackle this debate more directly in 'The Case of the Murder on D. Hill' (*D zaka no satsujin jiken*),⁵ the first of seven Rampo stories serialized in *Shin-Seinen* in the first half of 1925 and the first appearance of Rampo's most enduring

detective character and the protagonist of this volume, Akechi Kogorō. In 'D. Hill,' Rampo deliberately sets out to answer critics who claimed that it was impossible to stage a locked room mystery of the kind popular in Western detective fiction in a traditional Japanese building by exploiting the openness of Japanese architecture to do just that, arguing persuasively that 'the Japanese people who love the crime dramas of Ō Nanboku and adore Kuroiwa Ruikō's⁶ translated mysteries don't hate detective stories just because they live in houses of paper and bamboo.'⁷

Despite this background, Rampo's approach to Western detective fiction in his fiction and critical writing is generally appreciative rather than adversarial. His pre-World War II fiction, in particular, is often dotted with allusions to works both domestic and foreign – 'D. Hill' alone contains references to a contemporary Japanese mystery by Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, to short stories by Poe and Doyle, and to tales of a 17th-century Japanese magistrate renowned for unraveling difficult cases, as well as quotations from a contemporary American work on forensic psychology. None of Rampo's fiction, however, engages with its Western counterparts quite as blatantly or directly as *Gold Mask* (*Ōgon kamen*), which pits Rampo's great detective Akechi Kogorō against Maurice Leblanc's gentleman burglar Arsène Lupin.

Before examining the implications of this move on Rampo's part, it is worth giving a brief history of the two combatants.

Akechi Kogorō might justifiably be called the Sherlock Holmes of Japan. In addition to twenty-one novels and short stories for adult readers, Rampo featured his detective in a series of twenty-seven children's mystery novels starring Akechi's young assistant Kobayashi Yoshio. The first film adaptation of Rampo's work, 1927's *The Dwarf* (*Issunbōshi*),⁸ is of an Akechi novella. Akechi continues to make regular appearances in film,

television, novels and comic books to this day, most often in adaptations or re-imaginings of the *Boys Detective Club* children's novels, and is even more often referenced or parodied, as in the long-running comic *Detective Conan's* (*Meitantei Conan*, published in English as *Case Closed*) bumbling detective Mōri Kogorō or the 2016 video game *Persona 5's* antagonistic detective Akechi Gorō.

The Akechi Kogorō who makes his debut in 'D. Hill,' however, is hardly recognizable as the figure he would become. The Akechi in 'D. Hill' is a twenty-something 'amateur detective' (*shirōto tantei*) of little means with a shabby kimono, a penchant for running his hands through his shaggy hair while thinking through a problem, and a pronounced resemblance to the professional storyteller Kanda Hakuryū V. Rampo had originally conceived of Akechi as a character who would feature only in this one story, but positive responses from friends and readers prompted him to bring the amateur detective back in another four short stories in his initial *Shin-Seinen* serial— 'The Psychological Test' (*Shinri shiken*), 'The Black Hand Gang' (*Kurote-gu-mi*), 'The Ghost' (*Yūrei*), and 'The Stalker in the Attic' (*Yaneura no sanposha*)^{9, 10} In all four of these latter stories, however, Akechi functions more as a plot device than as a character, appearing toward the conclusion of each to resolve problems with which he has not been personally involved.

Rampo would revive Akechi a year after the initial *Shin-Seinen* serial in *The Dwarf*, a longer novel serialized in the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper. Akechi is said to have spent time in Shanghai, dresses in black Chinese robes, and occupies more spacious and well-appointed lodgings. He has taken to solving crimes for pay as a professional private detective – something he never does in the initial serial – and employs subordinates to assist him in tracking down criminals. Akechi then disappeared for another three years before reemerging in 1929's *The Spider Man*

(*Kumo otoko*), serialized in *Kōdan Club* magazine. This time Akechi has spent his absence in India and resembles 'an English gentleman in the African or Indian colonies, or perhaps an Indian gentleman used to living in Europe.'¹¹ It is also in this work that Akechi is first referred to as a 'great detective' (*meit-antei*), a title he would bear in every subsequent appearance. Akechi would appear in this capacity in five more novels serialized in various magazines and newspapers between 1929 and 1934 – *Who* (*Nanimono*), *The Limits of the Bizarre* (*Ryōki no hate*), *The Magician* (*Majutsushi*), *Gold Mask*, and *The Vampire* (*Kyūketsuki*) – before another three-year absence.

Arsène Lupin, on the other hand, has been called 'The Sherlock Holmes of criminals.'¹² Maurice Leblanc's prototypical gentleman thief made his debut in 1905 with 'The Arrest of Arsène Lupin' (*L'arrestation d'Arsène Lupin*) and had already appeared in thirty-nine short stories and eleven novels by the time Rampo made use of him in 1930. Quick-witted, debonair, and always with a touch of the dramatic, Lupin's adventures almost invariably set him in pursuit of some valuable item – which can be anything from a mansion full of artworks to his own stolen wallet – and frequently also against some antagonist more villainous than he is. Lupin is a master of disguise – he remarks in 'The Arrest of Arsène Lupin' that that he can no longer recognize his own reflection¹³ – and well versed in chemistry, architecture, martial arts, marksmanship, and anything else that could conceivably assist him in relieving the wealthy and powerful of their prized possessions. Elements of his character are reminiscent of a Robin Hood figure – if he does not always help the poor and the innocent, he certainly makes it a point not to harm them – while the manner in which he routinely outwits and makes fools of the French police recalls nothing so much as Sherlock Holmes.

Speaking of Holmes, Lupin was established as a rival to the

famous detective early in his career. The first collection of Lupin stories concludes with 'Sherlock Holmes Arrives Too Late' (*Sherlock Holmes arrive trop tard*), in which Lupin has a close brush with the great English detective created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Although legal objections from Doyle caused the detective's name to be altered to 'Herlock Sholmès' in all subsequent editions and stories, the conflict continued as the focus of the second collection of Lupin novellas, *Arsène Lupin vs. Herlock Sholmès* (*Arsène Lupin contre Herlock Sholmès*), and the English detective would continue to appear as a more-or-less comic rival in several more Lupin novels.

By pitting his own detective character against Lupin in *Gold Mask*, Rampo not only invites the indirect comparison of Akechi to Holmes, the most famous detective of Western fiction – a comparison made explicit when Akechi borrows one of Holmes' tricks to fake his own death – he also emulates the technique Leblanc employed with Holmes – borrowing, without permission, an established but still contemporary character to serve as a measuring stick against which to display the abilities of his own protagonist. Just as Lupin shows himself to be the best of criminals by eluding the acknowledged master of detection, Akechi shows himself to be the best of detectives by foiling the veteran master criminal's plots. In a sense, Lupin in *Gold Mask* can be said to have come full circle.

There is, however, another side to Rampo's borrowing. While Leblanc's depiction of Holmes, in keeping with the light and breezy tone of his Lupin stories, tends toward the comic, playing on stereotypes of the English as stiff and unromantic, Rampo takes Lupin in a darker direction which problematizes racist and Eurocentric elements in Leblanc's works. In casting Lupin as a villain, Rampo invokes Lupin's activities in Morocco – in particular, a scene in the 1921 novel *The Teeth of the Tiger* (*Les Dents du tigre*) in which Lupin, who always makes it a point

never to kill in committing his crimes, guns down three native Moroccans who have him cornered – to imbue the gentleman thief with the qualities of European imperialism. Rampo's Lupin persistently disparages the Japanese – a trait that marks him even in disguise – and dismisses the murder of Japanese people even as he plunders Japanese treasures and takes a Japanese woman as his lover. The objects that Lupin steals in his persona as Gold Mask are each in their own ways emblematically Japanese. The giant pearl called the 'Queen of Shima' is linked by its name to a Japanese location and to the pearl culture of what is now Mie Prefecture; the gilded wooden Buddha statue in the collection of the Marquess Washio is a product of the Heian period (794–1185) valuable for its workmanship rather than its material; the Tamamushi Shrine is a bona fide national treasure.¹⁴ Lupin himself has his foreignness underscored by his identity as the French ambassador, a position he abuses both to gain access to the targets of his crimes and to shield himself from their consequences when he is unmasked. When Akechi finally confronts Lupin in the French embassy, he expresses disappointment in Lupin, charging him with 'the prejudice of the white race' (向色人種の偏見).¹⁵ Lupin's implication in a racist and Eurocentric worldview here robs the gentleman thief of some of his romance.

The challenge that Rampo makes in *Gold Mask*, then, is of a fundamentally different character to that in 'The Case of the Murder on D. Hill.' In that story, Rampo's target is Japanese critics who do not believe that a Japanese author can produce mysteries on par with Western works. *Gold Mask*, in contrast, finds fault with elements of Western mysteries even as it borrows from them. Akechi's victory over Lupin is not only driving the French thief from Japan empty-handed, but also in tricking Lupin into blowing up his own French subordinate along with his hideout – forcing Lupin to accept what he would not admit

after cold-bloodedly shooting his Japanese secretary Urase, that he has shed blood. This violation of Lupin's characteristic chivalrous principles is only possible because he treats the life of a Japanese man as expendable, and it poetically leads to his final undoing.

Rampo's engagement with Leblanc is not, however, the only significant element of *Gold Mask*. Viewed in the context of Rampo's works, the novel represents an important step toward his *Boys Detective Club* (*Shōnen tantei-dan*) series.¹⁶ Although English-language scholarship on Rampo has tended to focus on the erotic and grotesque in his works for adult readers, this series of twenty-seven children's mystery novels are almost certainly Rampo's best-selling works and the source of his most enduring influence. The recurring villain of these novels, the Fiend with Twenty Faces (*Kaijin nijūmensō*) – a mysterious art thief who appears in numerous disguises and sends calling cards in advance of his crimes – is unmistakably prefigured by Rampo's depiction of Lupin in *Gold Mask*, although Twenty Faces always remains consistent in his policy against killing. The comparison is underscored by Rampo's borrowing, almost without alteration, the trick of Leblanc's 'Arsène Lupin in Prison' (*Arsène Lupin en prison*) for Twenty Faces' second caper.

The episodic structure of *Gold Mask* – probably a result of Rampo's admitted lack of advance planning when penning the novel as much as of its serialized publication¹⁷ – likewise foreshadows the series of brief crimes, adventures and vignettes that make up the plot of most *Boys Detective Club* novels and lead some to read more like collections of linked short stories. *Gold Mask* also resembles the *Boys Detective Club* novels in that both share a significantly lighter tone than the majority of Rampo's other work, something that Rampo attributes in the case of *Gold Mask* both to writing for a broader readership and to a conscious attempt to emulate the bright and adventurous

atmosphere of Leblanc's Lupin stories.¹⁸ On a more specific level, both *Gold Mask* and *The Fiend with Twenty Faces* open by introducing rumors about their titular thieves spreading among ordinary people. The similarities are in fact so strong that *Gold Mask* was later rewritten as an entry in the *Boys Detective Club* series, toning down more violent or overtly sexual passages and adding a role for Akechi's boy assistant Kobayashi. Both the original and children's versions of the novel remain in print to this day.

While *Gold Mask* does not rank among the best of Rampo's work either in the estimation of most critics or of its author, it remains a significant step in Rampo's literary career that repays critical examination in addition to being an enjoyable tale of crime, adventure, and detection in its own right. While readers looking for the erotic and grotesque elements that characterize much of Rampo's most famous work for an adult readership are likely to be somewhat disappointed, other of the author's hallmarks – such as the meta-textual engagement shown not just in his use of Lupin, but also in his borrowings from Doyle and Marcel Schwob – are on full display. *Gold Mask* should also be of interest to readers interested in pastiches that play with the characters of classic genre fiction, a genre which has grown in size and popularity as more and more of its subjects enter the public domain.

Copyrighted Material

Notes

- 1 An English translation by Jeffrey Angles can be found in *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan, 1913–1938*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2008.
- 2 Edogawa, Rampo. *Edogawa Rampo Zenshū*. Ed. Shinpo Hirohisa and Yamamae Yuzuru. 30 vols. Tokyo: Kobunsha, 2003–6. Vol. 1, pg. 43–54
- 3 Ibid. Vol. 1, pg. 53–54
- 4 Ibid. Vol. 1, pg. 43–54
- 5 My English translation can be found in *The Early Cases of Akechi Kogorō*. Fukuoka: Kurodahan, 2014.
- 6 Ō Nanboku is another name for Tsuruya Nanboku IV (1755–1826), an Edo-period (1603–1868) playwright. Kuroiwa Ruikō (1862–1920) was a Meiji-period (1868–1912) author, translator, and journalist. Rampo often cited Kuroiwa's adaptations of Western mystery novels as an early inspiration and was always a defender of Kuroiwa's often-dismissed original works in the genre.
- 7 Rampo. *Edogawa Rampo Zenshū*. Vol. 1, pg. 220–21
- 8 My English translation of the novella can be found in *The Early Cases of Akechi Kogorō*.
- 9 An English translation of 'The Psychological Test' by James B. Harris is available in *Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. Singapore: Tuttle, 2012. My English translations of 'The Black Hand Gang' and 'The Ghost' are available in *The Early Cases of Akechi Kogorō*. An English translation of 'The Stalker in the Attic' by Seth Jacobowitz is available in *The Edogawa Rampo Reader*. Fukuoka: Kurodahan, 2008.

Notes

- 10 Rampo. *Edogawa Rampo Zenshū*. Vol. 1, pg. 217
- 11 Ibid. Vol. 5, pg. 329
- 12 Sims, Michael. 'Introduction.' In Leblanc, Maurice. *Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Thief*. New York: Penguin, 2007. Kindle.
- 13 Leblanc, Maurice. *Arsène Lupin, gentleman-cambrioleur*. Paris: Gallimard, 2013. Pg. 22
- 14 Problematically, the novel would seem to add Lupin's lover Fujiko to this list of stolen treasures. Her retrieval by Akechi is consistently presented as an imperative without regard for her own wishes or agency.
- 15 Rampo. *Edogawa Rampo Zenshū*. Vol. 5, pg. 273
- 16 An English translation by Dan Luffey of the first book in the series is available as *The Fiend with Twenty Faces*. Fukuoka: Kurodahan, 2012.
- 17 Rampo. *Edogawa Rampo Zenshū*. Vol. 5, pg. 367
- 18 Ibid. Vol. 5, pg. 369

Author's Commentaries

Note: The following commentaries make the details of the plot explicit.

On the Occasion of the Publication of the Esperanto Translation of Gold Mask

The Japana Esperanto-Instituto,* which has previously published a translation of one of my humble efforts, 'One Ticket,'† is now publishing a translation of *Gold Mask*, which is still being serialized in *King*, in installments. I consider it an honor.

Gold Mask is a far more popular story than my previous work, 'One Ticket.' I wrote it one month at a time, driven by deadlines for the monthly magazine *King*, so it is not as if I prepared any clear plot in advance. As a result, its quality varied month-to-month depending on my mood and upon reading it through as a whole, there is definitely an impression that something is lacking.

I had been thinking of featuring Arsène Lupin in this novel from the very beginning. Just as Maurice Leblanc dragged Doyle's Sherlock Holmes into his novels and set him against

* An organization dedicated to the study and spread of Esperanto, a language created by L. L. Zamenhof in the late 19th century. Zamenhof hoped that Esperanto would serve as a universal second language to foster peaceful international communication. The JEI was founded in 1919 and remains active in the present day.

† '一枚の切符,' originally published in 1923.

Lupin, I wanted to drag France's gentlemen thief Arsène Lupin to Tokyo, Japan and pit him against my Akechi Kogorō.

Summoning Lupin to Japan, however, proved more difficult than summoning Holmes to France. His eyes were the wrong color. It was simplicity itself for Holmes to disguise himself as a Parisian retiree, but it would be virtually impossible for Lupin to pass as a Japanese person. I invented Gold Mask to save myself from this dilemma. The idea for *Gold Mask* comes from Marcel Schwob's short story 'Le Roi au masque d'or.'^{*} I have a boundless love for that wonderful fantasy novel.

Let me take the opportunity to add, for the sake of the Esperanto reader who is encountering detective fiction for the first time, that not all Japanese detective novels are like *Gold Mask*. In fact, *Gold Mask* is merely an outlier; most are more high-brow and intellectual. Please understand that *Gold Mask* was written for *King*, which has more than a million readers, and its main point was therefore to be something that anyone, old or young, man or woman, could read and enjoy.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to Kaji Hirokazu, the president of the Japana Esperanto-Instituto, which published this translation, and to the translator, Shimomura Yoshiji.

July 2, 1931

Note: Originally published in the preface to Ora Masko in August 1931, followed by the Japanese original the following month, and collected in the tenth volume of the Heibonsha edition of Rampo's Complete Works.

* 'The King in the Golden Mask', first published in 1892.

*From the Afterword to the Tōgensha edition of
Edogawa Rampo's Complete Works*

Gold Mask was serialized in *King* from the September 1930 issue to the October 1931 issue. The first novel I wrote for *Kōdan Club*, *The Spider Man*, was well-received, so I began serializing *The Magician* in the same magazine beginning with the January 1930 issue. At the same time, however, I was also approached by *King*, another Kōdansha magazine, and began writing *Gold Mask* that summer. At that time *King* was a major magazine with the highest circulation in Japan – I believe it was more than a million copies. As a result, Kōdansha's requirement that material be suitable for anyone, young or old, man or woman, was particularly strict when it came to this magazine. Consequently, I got into the spirit of things and decided to write something light in the style of *Lupin* and to bring deviant psychology into it. As I wrote in my commentary on another volume, my attitude toward my serials for entertainment magazines with large readerships was to make them a stylistic mix of *Ruikō* and *Lupin*, but in *Gold Mask*, the *Lupin* flavor seems to have come through more strongly. In fact, this novel dares to feature Arsène Lupin himself, with a daring plot that pits him against Akechi Kogorō in single combat. As a result, I think that this work may be the brightest and least morbid of my full-length novels.

Although the title *Gold Mask* served as a precursor to later popular boys' story titles like *Gold Such-and-Such* or *Such-and-Such Mask*, it was 'Le Roi au masque d'or' by the French author Marcel Schwob, of whom I was then an ardent reader, that suggested the title to me.

Copyrighted Material November 1962

Copyrighted Material

Gold Mask

Copyrighted Material

Copyrighted Material

From the author, Mr. Edogawa Rampo:

Lately, I have felt a desire to escape from the ‘short detective fiction’ I have been writing, and expand into the wider stage of ‘long-form detective fiction.’ This work, *Gold Mask*, is my first step in that direction.

The active protagonist of this volume is my old standby, the amateur detective Akechi Kogorō. He is gradually maturing as well and ought to be capable of delivering a worthy performance in this novel. I believe that the fiend in the role of antagonist is a personage of sufficient distinction to surprise the reader, so much so that I mistrust my ability as an author to make proper use of him. That uncertainty, however, only leads me to take a greater interest in the writing of this particular novel . . .

King. Showa 5, August issue

Copyrighted Material

The Golden Terror

In this world, truly extraordinary events, such as cataclysms, great wars, or plagues – events more bizarre than any nightmare, or any novelist’s fantasy – come along only once or twice a century. At such times, I suppose, the massive organism known as human society comes down with an acute case of some rare disease and briefly loses its mind. The outbreak of those weird, outlandish events is that astounding.

So, those preposterous rumors about ‘Gold Mask’ were probably another species of that once-or-twice-a-century societal madness.

It was in the spring of a certain year – the beginning of March, when people had yet to part with their winter overcoats – when rumors of a mysterious person wearing a golden mask sprang up out of nowhere. They traveled from person to person, growing stronger by the day, and at last became such a sensation that they enlivened the local pages of every newspaper.

The rumors were exceptionally diverse, taking after the vague, rambling style of ghost stories, but they all contained a queer, spectral quality that stimulated people’s curiosity. This new-age ghost consequently won an exceptional popularity among the citizens of Tokyo.

A young girl claimed to have seen a man in front of a show window in Ginza. He had been a tall, solitary man who leaned on the brass handrail as he peered through the glass. Because his appearance – a felt hat pulled low over the tip of his nose and the collar of his overcoat raised past his ears so as to neatly conceal his features – had struck her as somewhat unusual, the girl

had craned her neck, pretending to be preoccupied with the goods on display, and chanced to catch a glimpse of the man's face. The thing in the mere inch of space between brim of the hat and the collar of the overcoat had glittered dazzlingly. Taken aback, the girl had gone pale and taken her leave of the man. She said, however, that his face, like that of an old gilt Buddha, had absolutely, positively been wrought of expressionless gold.

She had watched the man from a distance, her heart pounding, but he had hurriedly disappeared into the darkness and the crowd in the opposite direction. It was almost as if he had been carried off by the wind, like a goblin whose true nature had been exposed. The display window the man had been peering into belonged to a certain famous antiques dealer. In its center, it was said, a Nō mask – a suggestive Kantan-otoko* with narrow eyes and its black-toothed mouth half open – glared straight ahead. A number of stories, all of them difficult to believe, were told concerning the resemblance between this ghastly Nō mask and the non-expression of the man's golden countenance.

A middle-aged shopkeeper reported that, one night, as he passed over a railroad crossing on the Tōkaidō line, he had witnessed the tragic corpse of a woman who had been run over. While he was still alone, rubberneckers not having had time to gather, he had seen an odd man in Western clothes loitering beside the corpse. This man also, as one might expect, wore a felt hat low over his eyes, had the collar of his overcoat pulled up, and seemed to be trying to hide his face. The shopkeeper,

* A type of Nō mask originally used for the lead role in the play *Kantan*, in which a traveler dreams that he is a powerful king before waking to find that it was only a vision. The mask has furrowed brows, small moustaches and a half-open mouth with a hint of a smile revealing two rows of teeth. It is also used in several other plays for the roles of commoners and certain vigorous gods.