何者

-Who

江戸川乱歩

-Edogawa Ranpo

+目次

-Table of Contents

[#ページの左右中央]

作者の言葉

-Author's Note

犯人は最初から読者の目の前にいながら最後までどれが犯人だか分らない。と云うのが所謂本格探偵小説の一つの条件みたいになっています。なるべくその条件に適わせることを心掛けました。敏感な読者は四五回も読まぬ内に犯人が分ってしまうかも知れません。又探偵小説に不慣れな読者には、最後までそれが分らないかも知れません。丁度その辺の所を狙ってある訳です。知識的遊戯として、謎々を解く気持でお読み下されば結構です。

-From the beginning to the end, the reader will have their eye on the culprit without knowing who it is.

That seems to have become one of the so-called traditional detective novel's requirements. Keep in mind that that condition is applied whenever it is possible. A sensitive reader may figure out the criminal within reading the detective novel four to five times. While when an inexperienced reader reads a detective novel, they may get to the end without figuring it out. From this reasoning, I have decided to aim at the at the place in the middle of the boundary between the two. As an intellectual game, I ask of you to unravel this enigma, and if you do, the feeling will be satisfying.

「時事新報(夕刊)」昭和四年十一月十九日、二十四日

- The Daily News (The Evening Paper)

Showa 4 (1929), November 19th and 24th

[#改ページ]

- 一、奇妙な盗賊
- 1, The Strange Thief

「この話はあなたが小説にお書きなさるのが当然です。是非書いて下さい」

In this book that you are reading, it is only natural to feel inclined to write in it. You are welcome to write in it all you like.

ある人が私にその話をしたあとで、こんなことを云った。四五年以前の出来事だけれど、事件の主人公が現存していたので憚って話さなんだ。その人が最近病死したのだ。ということであった。

Someone told me this story, which after he told me this: 'It happened four or five years ago, but I was hesitant to tell you as the person involved in the incident was still alive. That person had recently died of illness. That's all I'll say.'

私はそれを聞いて、成程当然私が書く材料だと思った。なにが当然だかは、ここに説明せずとも、この小説を終まで読めば自然に分ることである。

As I listened to that, I thought to myself, well, that should naturally be written down. If you make it to the end of this novel, you will automatically understand why this needed to be written down, without me needing to explain it here.

以下「私」とあるのは、この話を私に聞かせてくれた「ある人」を指す訳である。

In the following story, the term "I" refers to the person who told me about this incident.

ある夏のこと、私は甲田伸太郎という友人に誘われて、甲田程は親しくなかったけれど、やはり私の友達である結城弘一の家に、半月ばかり逗留したことがある。その間の出来事なのだ。

One summer, I was invited to stay at Yuuki Koichi's house for about half a month by a friend of mine named Kouda Shintaro even though we weren't particularly close. The incident happened in the span of this half a month.

弘一君は陸軍省軍務局に重要な地位を占めている、結城少将の息子で、父の邸が鎌倉の少し向 うの海近くにあって、夏休みを過すには持って来いの場所だったからである。 Koichi-kun was the son of Major General Yuuki, who held an important position in the Military Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of War. His father's estate was near the sea, just across from Kamakura, so it was a place he thought it best to spend his summer vacation.

三人はその年大学を出たばかりの同窓であった。結城君は英文科、私と甲田君とは経済科であったが、高等学校時代同じ部屋に寝たことがあるので、科は違っても、非常に親しい遊び仲間であった。

The three of us had just graduated from the same university that year. Yuuki-kun was in the English department, and Kouda-kun and I were in the economics department, but back when we were in high school, we had slept in the same room, so even though we were in different departments, we became very close schoolmates.

私達には、愈々呑気な学生生活にお別れの夏であった。甲田君は九月から東京のある商事会社へ勤めることになっていたし、弘一君と私とは兵隊にとられて、年末には入営である。何れにしても、私達は来年からはこんな自由な気持の夏休みを再び味えぬ身の上であった。そこで、この夏こそは心残りのないように、充分遊び暮そうというので、弘一君の誘いに応じたのである。

For us, it was a summer of farewell to our carefree student life. Kouda-kun was going to work at a trading company in Tokyo from September, and Koichi-kun and I were taken by the soldiers and were joining the military at the end of the year. In any case, we would not have been able to enjoy such a carefree summer vacation again next year. So, I accepted Koichi-kun's invitation with the goal to have as much fun as possible this summer without any regrets.

弘一君は一人息子なので、広い邸を我物顔に、贅沢三昧に暮していた。親爺は陸軍少将だけれど、先祖がある大名の重臣だったので、彼の家は却々のお金持ちである。随ってお客様の私達も居心地が悪くなかった。そこへ持って来て、結城家には、私達の遊び友達になってくれる、一人の美しい女性がいた。志摩子さんと云って、弘一君の従妹で、ずっと以前に両親を失ってから、少将邸に引取られて育てられた人だ。女学校をすませて、当時は音楽の稽古に熱中していた。ヴァイオリンは一寸聞ける位弾けた。

Since Koichi-kun was the only son on a spacious estate, he lived a life of luxury. His father was a major general in the army, however his ancestor was a senior vassal of a feudal lord which made his family extremely wealthy. As guests, we also didn't feel uncomfortable. On the estate, there was also a beautiful woman in the Yuuki family that also accompanied us. She was Koichi-kun's cousin named Shimako-san. After she lost her parents a long time ago, she was taken in and raised at the Major General's residence. She had completed a girls' school and was passionate about music lessons at the time. The quality of her violin playing was just starting to shine through.

私達は天気さえよければ海岸で遊んだ。結城邸は由井ヶ浜と片瀬との中間位の所にあったが、私達は多くは、派手な由井ヶ浜を選んだ。海には、私達四人の外に、沢山男女の友達があ

ったので、飽きることがなかった。紅白碁盤縞の並より大きいシーショア・アンブレラの下で、私達は志摩子さんやそのお友達の娘さん達と、真黒な肩を並べてキャッキャッと笑い興じた。

We would go to the beach if the weather was nice. The Yuuki residence was located midway between Yuigahama and Katase, but most of us chose the flashier Yuigahama. In addition to the four of us, we had many male and female friends at the beach, so we never got bored. Under the larger-than-average seashore umbrella with its red and white checkerboard stripes, we had laughed and laughed with Shimako-san and her friend's daughters, who stood shoulder to shoulder in jet black swimsuits.

私達は又、海にあきると、結城邸の池で鯉釣をやった。その大きな池には、少将の道楽で、 釣堀みたいに、沢山鯉が放ってあったので、素人にもよく釣れた。私達は将軍に釣の骨を教わったりした。

When we got tired of the sea, we would also go carp fishing at the pond at Yuuki's residence. The big pond was filled with carp, just like a fishing pond, so even amateurs could catch a lot of carp there. We had learned the basics of fishing from the Major General.

実に自由で、明るくて、のびやかな日々であった。だが不幸という魔物は、どんな明るい所 へでも、明るければ明るい程、それをねたんで、突拍子もなくやって来るものである。

The days were truly free, bright, and comfortable. However, the monster of misfortune suddenly comes to any bright place, the brighter it is, the more envious it is.

ある日少将邸に時ならぬ銃声が響いた。この物語はその銃声を合図に、幕があくのである。

One day, an unexpected gunshot echoed in the Major General's residence. This story opens with the sound of that gunshot.

ある晩、主人の少将の誕生祝だというので、知人を呼んで御馳走があった。甲田君と私もその御相伴をした。

That evening, it was a birthday celebration for the head of the house, the Major General, so he had invited some of his acquaintances over for dinner. Kouda-kun and I accompanied him.

母屋の二階の十五六畳も敷ける、日本間がその席に当てられた。主客一同浴衣がけの気の置けぬ宴会であった。酔った結城氏が柄になく義太夫のさわりを唸ったり、志摩子さんが一同に 懇望されて、ヴァイオリンを弾いたりした。

The Japanese styled room on the second floor of the main building, which can accommodate 15-16 tatami mats, was chosen as the room for the celebration. It was an intimate banquet with all the guests wearing their yukata. Yuuki-shi, who was drunk, was doing things like howling at the Gidayu (puppet theater), and Shimako-san, at the request of the group, played the violin.

宴は別状なく終って、十時頃には客は大抵帰ってしまい、主人側の人達と二三の客が、夏の夜の興を惜んで座に残っていた。結城氏、同夫人、弘一君、志摩子さん、私の外に退役将校の 北川と云う老人、志摩子さんの友達の琴野さんという娘の七人であった。

The banquet ended without incident, and by ten o'clock most of the guests had gone home, leaving the host and a few guests left behind to enjoy the summer evening's entertainment. Yuuki-shi, his wife, Koichi-kun, Shimako-san, me, an old man named Kitagawa who was a retired military officer, and Shimako-san's friend, a girl named Kotono-san made seven of us in total.

主人少将は北川老人と碁を囲み、他の人々は志摩子さんをせびって、又ヴァイオリンを弾かせていた。

The Major General was playing Go with old man Kitagawa, while the others were urging Shimako-san to play the violin again.

「サア、僕は又これから仕事だ」

"I don't know, I still have more things to work on."

ヴァイオリンの切目に、弘一君が私にそう断って座を立った。仕事というのは、当時彼はある地方新聞の小説を引受けていて、毎晩十時になると、それを書く為に、別棟の洋館の父少将の書斎へ籠る例になっていたのだ。彼は在学中は東京に一軒家を借りて住んでいて、中学時代の書斎は、現在では、志摩子さんが使っているのでまだ本宅には書斎がないのである。

At the gap between the sounds of violin, Koichi-kun excused himself and stood up to leave. In terms of work at the time, he was writing novels for a local newspaper and at ten o'clock every night he would retire to his father's study in a separate Western styled building to write them. While he was in school, he lived in a rented house in Tokyo, and the study from his junior high school days was currently being used by Shimako-san, so he still didn't have a study in the main building.

階段をおりて、廊下を通って、弘一君が洋館に着いたと思われる時分、突然何かを叩きつける様な物音が、私達をビクッとさせた。あとで考えると、それが問題のピストルの音だったのである。

After descending the stairs and passing through the hallway, just as we thought Koichi-kun had arrived at the Western styled building, we suddenly heard a banging sound that startled us. In hindsight, that had to have been the sound of the pistol.

「何だろう」

"I wonder what that was?"

と思っている所へ、洋館の方からけたたましい叫声が聞えて来た。

Just as I had this thought, I heard a loud scream coming from the Western styled building.

「誰か来て下さい。大変です。弘一君が大変です」

"Someone please come. It's bad, Koichi-kun is in trouble."

先程から座にいなかった、甲田伸太郎君の声であった。

It was the voice of Kouda Shintaro-kun, who had left us only a short while ago.

その時一座の人々が、誰がどんな表情をしたか記憶がない。一同総立ちになって、梯子段の 所へ殺到した。

I don't remember what the look on everyone's face was at that time. We all stood up and rushed to the staircase.

洋館へ行って見ると、少将の書斎の中に(後に見取図を掲げる)弘一君が血に染って倒れ、 其側に甲田君が青い顔をして立っていた。

When I went to the Western-style building, I found Koichi-kun (I'll show you a floor plan later) lying in the Major General's study, covered in blood, and Kouda-kun standing next to him with a pale face.

「どうしたんだ」

"What happened?!"

父将軍が不必要に大きな、まるで号令をかける様な声で怒鳴った。

His father, the Major General, yelled in an unnecessarily loud voice, as if he were making a command.

「あすこから、あすこから」

"From there, From over there."

甲田君が、激動の為に口も利けないという風で、庭に面した南側のガラス窓を指した。

Kouda-kun, struggling to speak due to shock, pointed to the glass window on the south side facing the garden.

見るとガラス戸は一杯に開かれ、ガラスの一部にポッカリと不規則な円形の穴があいている。何者かが、外部からガラスを切って留め金をはずし、窓をあけて忍び込んだのであろう。 現に絨氈の上に、点々と不気味な泥足の跡がついている。

When I looked, I saw that the glass door was fully opened, and there was an odd circular hole in a part of the glass. Someone must have cut the glass from the outside, removed the clasp, opened the window, and sneaked in. In fact, the carpet was dotted with eerie footprints of muddy feet.

母夫人は倒れている弘一君にはせ寄り、私は開いた窓の所へ駈けつけた。だが、窓の外には 何者の影もなかった。無論曲者がその時分まで、ぐずぐずしている筈はないのだ。 His mother rushed over to the collapsed Koichi-kun, and I ran to the open window. However, there was no sign of anyone outside the window. But of course, there is no way this spectre would be here still.

その同じ瞬間に、父少将は、どうしたかというと、彼は不思議なことに息子の傷を見ようともせず、先ず第一に、部屋の隅にあった小金庫の前へ飛んで行って、文字盤を合わせて、扉を開き、その中を検べたのである。これを見て、私は妙に思った。この家に金庫があるさえ心得ぬに、手負いの息子を放って置いて、先ず財産を検べるなんて、軍人にもあるまじき仕草である。

At that same moment, his father, the Major General, strangely did not even bother to look at his son's wound, but he instead first flew to the small safe in the corner of the room. After aligning the dials, I opened the door and inspected what was inside. When I saw this, I thought it was strange. He didn't even seem aware that there was a safe in this house, and yet he left his injured son alone and inspected his property first, a move unbecoming of a military man.

やがて、少将の云いつけで、書生が警察と病院へ電話をかけた。

Eventually, at the Major General's orders, the houseboy called the police and the hospital.

母夫人は気を失った結城君の身体にすがって、オロオロ声で名を呼んでいた。私はハンケチを出して、出血を止める為に、弘一君の足をしばってやった。弾丸が足首をむごたらしく射抜いていたのだ。志摩子さんは気を利かして、台所からコップに水を入れて持って来た。だが、妙なことには、彼女は夫人の様には悲しんでいない。椿事に驚いているばかりだ。どこやら冷淡な風が見える。彼女はいずれ弘一君と結婚するのだと思い込んでいた私は、それが何となく不思議に思われた。

Yuuki's mother was clinging to his unconscious body and calling out his name in a mumbled voice. I took out a handkerchief and tied up Koichi-kun's leg to stop the bleeding. A bullet had brutally shot through his ankle. Shimako-san wisely brought a glass of water from the kitchen. But strangely, I was surprised by how she didn't seem at all even though they seemed almost like a couple. I was just as astonished at the turn of events. I can see a cold wind somewhere. I thought that she would marry Koichi someday, and all this felt strange to me.

併し不思議と云えば、金庫を検べた少将や、妙に冷淡な志摩子さんより、もっともっと不思 議なことがあった。

As strange as everything was, there were things even more mysterious than the Major General who searched the safe and the strangely cold-hearted Shimako-san.

それは結城家の下男の、常さんという老人のそぶりである。彼も騒ぎを聞いて、我々より少し遅れて書斎へ駈けつけたのだが、這入って来るなり、何を思ったのか、弘一君のまわりを囲んでいた私達のうしろを、例の開いた窓の方へ走って行って、その窓際へペチャンと坐ってし

まった。騒ぎの最中で誰も老僕の挙動など注意していなかったけれど、私はふとそれを見て、 親爺気でも違ったのではないかと驚いた。彼はそうして、一同の立騒ぐのをキョロキョロ見廻 しながら、いつまでも行儀よく坐っていた。まさか腰が抜けた訳でもあるまいに。

It was the demeanor of Jou-san, the old servant of the Yuuki family. He had heard the commotion and hurried to the study shortly after us. Upon entering, for whatever reason, he went past us, who were surrounding Koichi-kun, and headed towards the open window. Ignoring the chaos, he ran towards the window and sat down there. During the commotion, no one paid attention to the old servant's actions, but I was surprised as I happened to glance at him. I wondered if perhaps his demeanor was different, more peculiar. He continued to sit there politely, glancing around at the rest of us in commotion, as though nothing was out of the ordinary. He didn't seem to have lost his composure.

そうこうする内に、医者がやって来る。間もなく鎌倉の警察署から、司法主任の波多野警部が 部下を連れて到着した。

In the meantime, the doctor had come. Not long after, Inspector Hatano, the chief judicial officer, arrived from the Kamakura police station with his subordinates.

弘一君は母夫人と志摩子さんが附添って、担架で鎌倉外科病院へ運ばれた。その時分には意識を取戻していたけれど、気の弱い彼は苦痛と恐怖の為に、赤ん坊みたいに顔をしかめ、ポロポロと涙をこぼして、半狂乱の体で泣きわめいていたので、波多野警部が賊の風体を尋ねても、無論返事なぞ出来なかった。彼の傷は命にかかわる程ではなかったけれど、足首の骨をグチャグチャに砕いた、仲々の重傷であった。

Koichi-kun was taken to Kamakura Surgical Hospital on a stretcher, accompanied by his mother and Shimako-san. By that time, he had regained consciousness, but due to pain and fear, he was wincing his face like a baby and crying frantically, with tears rolling down his face. When I asked him what the thief looked like, he of course couldn't give me an answer. His wounds were not life-threatening, but they were severe enough to shatter his ankle.

取調の結果、この兇行は盗賊の仕業であることが明かになった。賊は裏庭から忍び込んで、品物を盗み集めている所へ、ヒョッコリ弘一君が這入って行ったので(多分賊を追いかけたのであろう。倒れていた位置が入口ではなかった)恐怖の余り所持のピストルを発射したものに相違なかった。

The investigation revealed that this crime was the work of thieves. The thieves had sneaked in from the backyard and were in the midst of stealing items when Koichi-kun suddenly entered (presumably to chase the thieves, given that his position when found was not at the entrance). Overwhelmed by fear, he fired his pistol.

大きな事務デスクの抽斗が残らず引出され、中の書類などが、そこいら一面に散乱していた。だが、少将の言葉によれば、抽斗の中には別段大切なものは入れてなかった。

All the drawers of the large office desk had been pulled out, and the documents inside were scattered around. However, the Major General testified that there was nothing particularly important inside the drawers.

同じデスクの上に、少将の大型の札入れが投出してあった。不思議なことに、中には数枚の 百円紙幣が這入っていたのだが、それには少しも手をつけた跡がない。

On the same desk, the Major General's large wallet was thrown out onto it. Strangely enough, there were several 100-yen bills inside, but there was no sign that they had been touched at all.

では何が盗まれたかというと、実に奇妙な盗賊である。先ずデスクの上に(しかも札入れのすぐ側に)置いてあった、小型の金製置時計、それから同じ机の上の、金の万年ペン、金側懐中時計(金鎖共)一番金目なのは、室の中央の丸テーブルの上にあった、金製の煙草セット(煙草入れと灰皿丈けで、盆は残っていた。盆は赤銅製である)の品々であった。

What was stolen was quite peculiar. First, a small gold-plated desk clock that was on the desk (right next to the wallet). Then, on the same desk, a gold fountain pen, a gold pocket watch (with a gold chain), and most notably, a gold cigarette set that was on the round table in the center of the room (including a cigarette case and an ashtray stand; the tray was left behind. The tray was made of copper). These are the objects that were stolen.

これが盗難品の全部なのだ。いくら検べて見ても、外になくなった品はない。金庫の中も別 状はなかった。

These were all of the stolen objects. No matter how thoroughly I searched, there was nothing else missing. There was also nothing unusual inside the safe.

つまり、此賊は外のものには見向きもせず、書斎にあった悉くの金製品を奪い去ったのである。

Which means that the thief ignored everything else and took any gold items within the study.

「気違いかも知れませんな。黄金蒐集狂とでも云う」

"They might be crazy, whoever did it might be in a gold-collecting frenzy."

波多野警部が妙な顔をして云った。

Inspector Hatano said with a strange look on his face.

二、消えた足跡

2, Erased Footprints

実に変な泥棒であった。数百円在中の札入れをそのままにして置いて、それ程の値打もない 万年筆や懐中時計に執着したという、賊の気持が理解出来なかった。

The thief must be very odd. It was hard to understand why the thief would leave the wallet with a few hundred yen in it, but take the fountain pen and pocket watch, which weren't worth all that much.

警部は少将に、それらの金製品の中、高価という外に、何か特別の値打を持ったものはなかったかと尋ねた。

The inspector asked the Major General if any of the gold items had any special value other than being expensive.

だが、少将は別にそういう心当りもないと答えた。ただ、金製万年筆は、彼がある師団の聯隊長を勤めていた頃、同じ隊に属していられた、高貴のお方から拝領したもので、少将に取っては金銭に替え難い値打ちがあったのと、金製置時計は、二寸四方位の小さなものだけれど、洋行記念に親しく巴里で買って帰ったので、あんな精巧な機械は二度と手に入らぬと、惜まれる位のことであった。両方とも、泥棒にとって、別段の値打ちがあろうとも思われぬ。

However, the Major General replied that he had no such idea. The gold fountain pen was given to him by a nobleman who belonged to the same unit when he was serving as a regimental commander in a certain division, and it is of great value to the Major General. The gold table clock was small, about 2 inches square; he had bought it with a friend in Paris to commemorate his trip overseas, and he regrets that he will never be able to obtain such a sophisticated machine again. But neither would seem particularly valuable to a thief.

さて波多野警部は室内から屋外へと、順序を追って、綿密な現場調査に取りかかった。彼が現場へ来着したのは、ピストルが発射されてから二十分もたっていたので、慌てて賊の跡を追う様な愚はしなかった。

Inspector Hatano then began a thorough investigation of the scene, going from inside to outside. He arrived at the scene twenty minutes after the pistol had been fired, so he did not rush to track down the thief.

あとで分ったことだが、この司法主任は、犯罪捜査学の信者で、科学的綿密ということを最上のモットウとしている、風変りな警官であった。彼がまだ片田舎の平刑事であった時分、地上にこぼれていた一滴の血痕を、検事や上官が来着するまで完全に保存する為に、その上にお

椀をふせて、お椀のまわりの地面を、一晩中棒切れで叩いていた、という一つ話さえあった。 彼はそうして、血痕を蚯蚓がたべてしまうのを防いでいたのである。

As I later learned, the Inspector was an eccentric police officer who believed in criminal investigation and whose highest merit was his scientific precision. When he was still a detective in the countryside, he once placed a bowl on top of a drop of blood that had spilled on the ground to preserve it until prosecutors and his superiors arrived. There was even one story of him hitting the ground with a stick all night to prevent the worms from eating the blood stains.

こんな風な綿密周到によって地位を作った人丈けに、彼の取調べには毛筋程の隙もなく、検 事でも予審判事でも、彼の報告とあれば全然信用がおけるのであった。

As someone who had earned his position through such thoroughness, his investigations were flawless, and his reports could be completely trusted by both the prosecutor and the trial judge.

ところが、その綿密警部の綿密周到な捜査にも拘らず、室内には、一本の毛髪さえも発見されなかった。此上はガラス窓の指紋と、屋外の足跡とが唯一の頼みである。

However, despite the meticulous Inspector's thorough investigation, not even a single hair was found in the room. The only things that could be relied on here were the fingerprints on the glass window and footprints outside.

窓ガラスは最初想像した通り、掛金をはずす為に、賊がガラス切りと吸盤とを使って、丸く切り抜いたものであった。指紋の方はその係りのものが来るのを待つことにして、警部は用意の懐中電燈で窓の外の地面を照して見た。

As I had thought, the thieves had used a glass cutter and a suction cup to cut out a circle in order to remove the latch. Deciding to wait for his superior to take the fingerprints, the Inspector shined his flashlight at the ground outside the window.

幸にも雨上りだったので、窓の外にはハッキリ足跡が残っていた。労働者などの穿く靴足袋の跡で、ゴム裏の模様が型で押した様に浮出している、それが裏の土塀の所まで二列に続いているのは、賊の往復したあとだ。

Fortunately, it had stopped raining, so the footprints could be clearly seen outside the window. These are the marks of shoe tabi worn by workers, and the patterns on the rubber soles stand out as if they were stamped with a mold. It seems the reason why they continue in two rows to the earthen wall at the back is because the thieves have gone back and forth.

「女みたいに内輪に歩く奴だな」警部の独言に気づくと、成程その足跡は皆爪先の方がかかとよりも内輪になっている。ガニ股の男には、こんな内輪の足癖が、よくあるものだ。

"They walk like a woman," muttered the Inspector to himself, noticing that indeed the footprints all seemed to turn slightly inward at the toe rather than the heel. Such an inward gait was common in men who had a bow-legged stance.

そこで、警部は部下に靴を持って来させて、それを穿くと、不作法ながら窓をまたいで外の 地面に降り、懐中電燈をたよりに、靴足袋のあとをたどって行った。

So, the Inspector had his subordinate bring him shoes, and he rudely put them on while he stepped over the window and onto the ground outside, following the shoe-tabi with his flashlight.

それを見ると、人一倍好奇心の強い私は、邪魔になるとは知りながら、もうじっとしてはいられず、いきなり日本座敷の縁側から廻って警部のあとを追ったものである。無論賊の足跡を見る為めだ。

I was more curious than anyone else, so when I saw that, I couldn't stay still any longer, even though I knew I was getting in the way, so I suddenly turned around from the verandah of the Japanese-style room and followed the Inspector. Of course, it was to see the footprints of the thief.

ところが行って見ると足跡検分の邪魔者は私一人でないことが分った。もうちゃんと先客がある。やはり誕生祝に呼ばれていた赤井さんであった。いつの間に出て来たのか実にすばしこい人だ。

However, when I went there, I found out that I was not the only one interfering with the inspection of the footprints. There was already a preceding visitor. Sure enough, it was Akai-san who had been invited to celebrate the Major General's birthday. He must be a nimble person to appear out of nowhere.

赤井さんがどういう素性の人だか、結城家とどんな関係があるのか、私は何も知らなんだ。 弘一君さえハッキリしたことは知らぬらしい。二十七八の、頭の毛をモジャモジャさせた痩せ 方の男で、非常に無口な癖に、いつもニヤニヤと微笑を浮べているえたいの知れぬ人物であっ た。

I don't know anything about Akai-san's background or what kind of relationship he had with the Yuuki family. Even Koichi-kun didn't seem to know much about him. He was a thin, twenty-seven or eight-year-old man with curly hair, very taciturn, but yet with always a grin on his face.

彼はよく結城家へ碁をうちに来た。そして、いつも夜更かしをして、ちょいちょい泊り込んで行くこともあった。少将は彼をある倶楽部で見つけた、碁の方の好敵手だと云っていた。その晩は招かれて宴会の席に列したのだが、事件の起った時には、二階の大広間には見えなんだ。どこか下座敷にでもいたのであろう。

He often came to the Yuuki household to play Go, and he always stayed up late and sometimes stayed over. The Major General said he had found him at a club and that he was a good Go player. That evening

he was invited to attend the banquet, but when the incident occurred, he was nowhere to be seen in the hall on the second floor. He was probably in a lower room somewhere.

だが、私はある偶然のことから、この人が探偵好きであることを知っていた。私が結城家に 泊り込んだ二日目であったか、赤井さんと弘一君とが、今度事件の起った書斎で話している所 へ行合わせた。赤井さんはその少将の書斎に持込んであった、弘一君の本棚を見て何か云って いた。弘一君は大の探偵好きであったから、(それは、この事件で、後に被害者の彼自身が探偵 の役目を勤めた程である)そこには犯罪学や探偵談の書物が沢山並んでいるのだ。

However, I knew by chance that this person liked detectives. On the second day I stayed at the Yuuki house, I saw Akai-san and Koichi-kun talking in the study where the incident had recently occurred. Akai-san looked at Koichi-kun's bookshelf that he had brought into the Major General's study and talked about it. Since Koichi was a big fan of detectives (so much so that he himself later served as the victim himself in this case), there were many books on criminology and detective stories lined up there.

彼等は内外の名探偵について論じあっているらしかった。ヴィドック以来の実際の探偵や、 デュパン以来の小説上の探偵が話題に上った。又弘一君はそこにあった「明智小五郎探偵談」 という書物を指さして、この男はいやに理屈っぽいばかりだとけなした。赤井さんもしきりに 同感していた。彼等はいずれ劣らぬ探偵通で、その方では非常に話が合うらしかった。

They seemed to be discussing famous detectives both domestically and internationally. Actual detectives such as Vidocq and fictional detectives like Dupin were talked about. Also, Koichi-kun pointed to a book called "Akechi Kogoro Detective Story" that was there and belittled the man, saying that he was too logical. Akai-san felt the same way. Both of them were no less expert detectives, and they seemed to be a good match for that reason.

そう云う赤井さんが、この犯罪事件に興味を持ち、私の先を越して、足跡を見に来たのは誠 に無理もないことである。

It's no wonder that Akai-san was interested in this crime and went ahead of me to come see the footprints.

余談はさて置き、波多野司法主任は、

Aside from digressions, Inspector Hatano said,

「足跡を踏まぬ様に気をつけて下さい」

"Be careful to not step on the footprints."

と、二人の邪魔者に注意をしながら、無言で足跡を調べて行った。賊が低い土塀を乗り越えて逃げたらしいことが分ると、土塀の外を調べる前に、一度洋館の方へ引返して、何か邸内の

人に頼んでいる様子だったが、間もなく炊事用の摺鉢を抱えて来て、最もハッキリした一つの 足跡の上にそれをふせた。あとで型をとる時まで原型をくずさぬ用心である。

So, I silently went to investigate the footprints while being careful of the two intruders. When it was discovered that the thieves had apparently escaped by climbing over a low earthen wall, they returned to the Western-style mansion and appeared to be asking someone in the mansion for something before checking outside the earthen wall. He came carrying a mortar and placed it over the single most obvious footprint. Care must be taken not to destroy the original shape until it was time to take the mold.

矢鱈にふせたがる探偵だ。

The detective thoughtlessly laid down.

それから私達三人は裏木戸を開けて、塀の外に廻ったが、その辺一帯誰かの邸跡の空地で、 人通りなぞないものだから、まぎらわしい足跡もなく、賊のそれ丈が、どこまでもハッキリと 分った。

After that, the three of us opened the back door and went around the outside of the wall, but since the area was a vacant lot where someone's residence had been, and there was no foot traffic, there were no confusing footprints, and I found that the thief's trail was clearly visible everywhere.

ところが懐中電燈を振り振り、空地を半丁程も進んだ時である。波多野氏は突然立止って、 当惑した様に叫んだ。

However, as we advanced about fifty yards, waving our flashlights, Inspector Hatano suddenly stopped and shouted, looking bewildered.

「オヤオヤ、犯人は井戸の中へ飛込んだのかしら」

"Oh oh, I wonder if the thief jumped into the well?"

私は警部の突飛な言葉に、あっけにとられたが、よく調べて見ると、成程彼の云うのが尤もであった。足跡は空地の真中の一つの古井戸の側で終っている。出発点もそこだ。いくら電燈で照らして見ても、井戸のまわり五六間の間、外に一つの足跡もない。しかもその辺は、決して足跡のつかぬ様な硬い土ではないのだ。又足跡を隠す程の草も生えてはいない。

I was taken aback by the Inspector's outlandish words, but when I looked into it more closely, I realized that what he had said was actually reasonable. The footprints end next to an old well in the middle of the clearing. That's the starting point. No matter how many electric lights I shined on it, there was not a single footprint outside for 56 meters around the well. Moreover, the ground in that area was not so hard that no footprints could be left on it. There wasn't even enough grass to cover any footprints.

それは、漆喰の丸い井戸側が、殆どかけてしまって、何となく無気味な古井戸であった。電 燈の光で中を覗いて見ると、ひどくひび割れた漆喰が、ずっと下の方まで続いていて、その底 に鈍く光って見えるのは腐り水であろう。ブヨブヨと物の怪でも泳いでいそうな感じがした。

It was an old well with a somewhat eerie appearance, with most of the round, plastered sides of the well covered in paint. When I peered inside by the light of an electric light, I saw that the severely cracked plaster continued all the way to the bottom, and the dull glow at the bottom was probably dirty water. It felt as if something eerie and shapeless might be swimming around there.

賊が井戸から現われて、又井戸の中へ消えたなどとは、如何にも信じがたいことであった。 お菊の幽霊ではあるまいし。だが、彼がそこから風船にでも乗って天上しなかった限り、この 足跡は賊が井戸の中へ這入ったとしか解釈出来ないものである。

It was truly unbelievable that the thief could have appeared from the well and then disappeared back into it. It's not like it was O-Kiku's ghost. However, unless he floated up from there on a balloon or something, these footprints can only be interpreted as the thief crawling into the well.

流石の科学探偵波多野警部もここでハタと行詰った体に見えた。彼は入念にも、部下の刑事に 竹竿を持って来させて、井戸の中をかき廻して見たが、無論何の手答えもなかった。と云っ て、井戸側の漆喰に仕掛けがあって、地下に抜け穴を通じているなどは、余りに荒唐無稽な想 像である。

Even the renowned scientific detective Inspector Hatano seemed to hit a dead end here. He meticulously had his subordinate detectives bring a bamboo pole and stirred the well, but, of course, there was no response whatsoever. To suggest there might be a mechanism hidden in the well's plaster, leading to an underground tunnel, seemed far too absurd and implausible.

「こう暗くては、細いことが分らん。あすの朝もう一度調べて見るとしよう」

"It's hard to see small details in this dark. I'll look into it again tomorrow morning."

波多野氏はブツブツと独り言を云いながら、邸の方へ引返した。

Inspector Hatano muttered to himself as he turned back toward the residence.

それから、裁判所の一行の来着を待つ間に勤勉な波多野氏は、邸内の人々の陳述を聞き取り、現場の見取図を作製した。便宜上見取図の方から説明すると、

Then, while waiting for the court's party to arrive, the diligent Inspector Hatano listened to statements from people inside the residence and drew up a floor plan of the site. For convenience, I will explain from the floor plan.

彼は用意周到にいつも携帯している巻尺を取出して、負傷者の倒れていた地位(それは血痕などで分った)足跡の歩幅、来る時と帰る時の足跡の間隔、洋館の間取、窓の位置、庭の樹木や池や塀の位置などを、不必要だと思われる程入念に計って、手帳にその見取図を書きつけた。

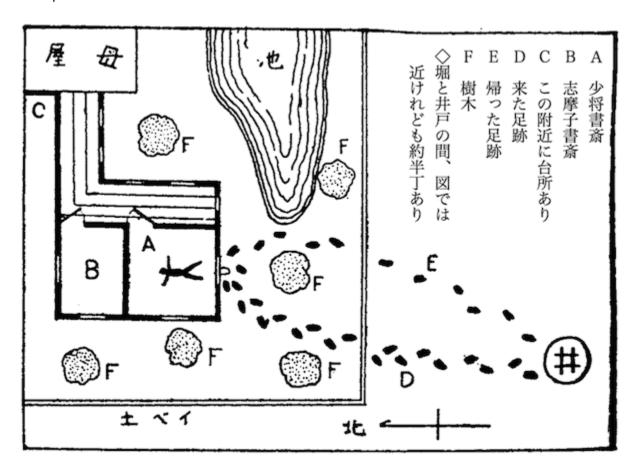
He carefully took out the tape measure he always carries with him, he took note of the position where the injured person had fallen (which could be determined by blood stains, etc.), the stride length of the footprints, the distance between the footprints when they came and left, the floor plan of the Westernstyle building. He carefully measured the locations of the windows, the trees, ponds, and fences in the garden, to the extent that it seemed unnecessary, and drew up a diagram in his notebook.

だが、警部のこの努力は決して無駄ではなかった。素人考えに不必要だと思われたことも、 後には甚だ必要であったことが分った。

However, the Inspector's efforts were not in vain. What I thought to be unnecessary in my amateur thinking later turned out to be extremely necessary.

現場の見取図

Floor plan of the site



当時の警部の見取図を真似て、読者諸君の為にここにこれを掲げて置く。これは事件が解決したあとで、結果から割出して私が作った図であるから警部のほど正確ではないが、その代り、事件解決に重大な関係のあった点は、間違いなく、寧ろ幾分誇張して現わしてある。

I have copied the Inspector's floor plan at the time and have put it up here for the benefit of my readers. This diagram is not as accurate as the inspector's because it is a diagram I created after the case was solved, based on the results, but there is no doubt that it had a significant bearing on solving the case. It is shown in an exaggerated manner.

後に至って分ることだが、この図面は、犯罪事件について、存外色々なことを物語っているのである。ごく卑近な一例を上げると、賊の往復の足跡の図だ。それは彼が女のように内輪であったことを示すばかりではない、Dの方は歩幅が狭く、Eの方はその倍も広くなっているが、これはDは来る時のオズオズした足取を意味し、Eはピストルをうって、一目散に逃去る時のあわただしい足取を現わすものである。つまりDが往、Eが復の足跡であることが分る。(波多野氏はこの両方の歩幅を精密に計り、賊の身長計算の基礎として、その数字を書とめたが、ここでは余り管々しくなるから省いて置く)

It became clear later on that this diagram tells surprisingly various things about the crime. To give a mundane example, it depicts the footprints of the thief's round trip. It not only indicates that he moved inside like a woman—D's footsteps are narrow, while E's are twice as wide—D represents the careful steps he took while coming, whereas E signifies the hurried steps he took when fleeing after firing his pistol. In other words, it is evident that D's footprints are those of arrival and E's are those of departure. (Inspector Hatano precisely measured both footprints and recorded the numbers as a basis for calculating the thief's height, but I will omit those details here to keep it simple.)

だが、これは一例に過ぎないのだ。この足跡の図にはもっと別の意味がある。又負傷者の位置その他二三の点について、後に重大な意味を生じて来る部分がある。私は順序を追って話す為に、ここではその点に言及しないが、読者諸君は、よくよくこの図を記憶に留めて置いて頂き度い。

But this is just one example. This image of footprints has another meaning. There are also a few points that will have important implications later, including the location of the injured. I will not discuss this point here in order to discuss it in order, but I would like readers to keep this diagram in mind.

次に邸内の人々の取調について一言すると、第一に質問を受けたのは、兇行の最初の目撃者 甲田伸太郎君であった。

Next, I would like to say a few words about the interrogation of the people inside the residence. The first person questioned was Shintaro Kouda, who was the first witness to the attack.

彼は弘一君よりも二十分ばかり前に母屋の二階を降りて、階下の手洗所に這入り、用を済ませてからも玄関に出て、酒にほてった頬を冷していたが、もう一度二階の宴席へ戻る為に廊下を引返して来ると、突然の銃声に続いて弘一君のうめき声が聞こえた。

He got off the second floor of the main building about 20 minutes before Koichi-kun, crawled into the bathroom downstairs, and even after finishing his business, he came out to the front door to cool down his cheeks, which were flushed with alcohol. As he walked back down the hallway to go back to the banquet hall on the second floor, he heard a sudden gunshot followed by Koichi-kun's voice.

いきなり洋館にかけつけると、書斎のドアは半開になって、中は電燈もつかず真暗だった。 彼がそこまで陳述して来た時警部は、

When he arrived at the Western-style building, the door to the study was half open and there was no light inside, so it was pitch black. When he made that statement, the Inspector said,

「電燈がついてなかったのですね」

"There wasn't a light on, was there?"

と、何故か念を押して聞返した。

For some reason, he asked again, trying to be sure.

「エエ、弘一君は多分スイッチを押す間がなかったのでしょう」

"Ah, Koichi-kun probably didn't have time to flip the switch."

甲田君が答えた。

Kouda-kun answered.

「私は書斎へ駈つけると、先ず壁のスイッチを押して電燈をつけました。すると、部屋の真中 に弘一君が血に染って気を失って倒れていたのです。私はすぐ母屋の方へ走って行って、大声 で家の人を呼び立てました」

"I rushed to the study and immediately switched on the light by flipping the wall switch. There, in the middle of the room, Koichi-kun was lying unconscious, covered in blood. I ran towards the main house and shouted for help."

「その時君は賊の姿を見なかったのですね」警部が来着と同時に聞き取ったことを、もう一度 尋ねた。

"At that moment, you didn't see the thief, did you?" the Inspector asked, repeating the question as soon as he arrived.

「見ませんでした。もう窓の外へ出てしまっていたのでしょう。窓の外は真暗ですから……」

"No, I didn't. They must have escaped out of the window. It was pitch black outside..."

「その外に何か変ったことはなかったですか。ほんの些細なことでも |

"Was there anything unusual outside? Even the smallest detail?"

「エエ、別に、……アア、そうそう、つまらない事ですけれど、私がかけつけた時、書斎の中から猫が飛び出して来てびっくりしたのを覚えています。久松のやつが鉄砲玉の様に飛び出して来ました」

"Yes, nothing really... Oh, wait. It's a trivial thing, but I remember being startled when I rushed in. A cat jumped out from the study as I entered. That mischievous one, Hisamatsu, leaped out like a cannonball."

「久松って猫の名ですか」

"Is Hisamatsu the cat's name?"

「エエ、ここの家の猫です。志摩子さんの愛猫です」

"Yes, that's right. He's the cat of this house, Shimako-san's beloved pet."

警部はそれを聞いて変な顔をした。ここに暗の中でもハッキリと賊の顔を見たものがあるのだ。だが、猫は物を云うことが出来ない。

The inspector made a strange face when he heard this. Here, even in the darkness, Hisamatsu could clearly see the thief's face. But cats can't talk.

それから結城家の人々(召使も)赤井さん、私、其他来客一同が質問を受けたが、誰も別段変った答えをしなかった。病院へ附添って行って、その場に居合わせなかった夫人と志摩子さんは、翌日取調べを受けたが、その時の志摩子さんの返事が、少し変っていたのをあとで伝聞したので、序にここに記して置く。

"Then, the Yuuki family members, including the servants, Akai-san, myself, and all the other guests, were questioned, but none of us provided any particularly unusual answers. Koichi-san's mother and Shimakosan, who weren't present during the questioning at the hospital, were questioned the next day. I heard later that Shimako-san's response at that time was a bit different, so I will record it here for reference."

警部の「どんな些細なことでも」という例の調子に誘われて、彼女は次の様なことを申述べた。

Lured by the Inspector's "every little thing" tone, she made the following statement.

「私の思違いかも知れませんけれど、私の書斎へも誰か這入った者があるらしいのでございます」図面に記した通り、彼女の書斎は問題の少将の書斎の隣室である。「別になくなったものは ございませんが、私の机の抽斗を誰かあけたものがあるのです。昨日の夕方確にそこへ入れて 置いた私の日記帳が、今朝見ますと机の上に拡げたまま乱暴に投り出してありました。抽斗も 開いたままなんです。家の人は、女中でも誰でも、私の抽斗なんか開ける様なものはございま せんのに、何だか変だと存じましたので。……でもつまらないことですわし

"I might be mistaken, but it seems that someone has entered my study as well," she said. As indicated on the diagram, her study was adjacent to the aforementioned Major General's study. "There isn't anything missing, but someone seems to have opened the drawer of my desk. I had definitely placed my diary there yesterday evening, but this morning, I found it spread out on the desk, tossed there carelessly. The drawer was left open too. No one in the household, not even the maids, has any reason to open my drawer, so I found it rather odd. ...But it's a trivial matter."

警部はこの志摩子さんの話を、其まま聞き流してしまったが、あとで考えると、此日記帳の 一件にも仲々意味があったのである。

The Inspector had let Shimako-san's story pass at that moment, but upon reflection, he realized that there might be significance to this incident with the diary.

話は元に戻る。それから暫くしてやっと裁判所の一行がやって来た。又専門家が来て、指紋を検べたりした。併し、その結果は、波多野警部の検べ上げた以上の収穫は何もなかった。問題の窓ガラスは布で拭きとった形跡があり、指紋は一つも出なかった。窓外の地上に落散っていたガラスの破片にさえ一つの指紋もなかった。この一事を以てしても、賊が並大抵の奴でないことが分るのだ。

Back to the story. After a while, the group from the courthouse finally arrived. Specialists came and examined fingerprints. However, the results yielded no more than what Inspector Hatano had already discovered. There were signs that the window glass in question had been wiped clean with a cloth, and no fingerprints were found. Not a single fingerprint was present even on the glass shards scattered on the ground outside. Based on this fact alone, it was clear that the thief was no ordinary individual.

最後に、警部は部下に命じてさっき摺鉢でふせて置た足跡の型をとらせ、大切相に警察署へ 持帰った。

Finally, the Inspector ordered his subordinates to take a mold of the footprints he had covered with a mortar and took it back to the police station.

騒ぎがすんで、一同兎も角も床についたのは二時頃であった。私は甲田君と床を並べて寝たが、両人とも昂奮の為め寝つかれず、殆ど一晩中寝返りばかりうっていた。その癖、私達は、なぜか事件については一言も話をしなかった。

The commotion finally subsided, and everyone managed to lie down by around two o'clock. I shared a bed with Kouda-kun, but neither of us could sleep due to the excitement; we kept tossing and turning almost the entire night. Strangely, no one spoke a word about the incident.

三、金ピカの赤井さん

3, Akai-san's Sparkle

翌朝、寝坊な私が五時に床を出た。例の不可解な足跡を、朝の光で見直そうというのだ。私も仲々の猟奇者であった。

The next morning, I, the over sleeper, got up at five. I wanted to reexamine those perplexing footprints in the morning light. I was quite the curious person.

甲田君はよく眠っていたので、なるべく音を立てぬ様に、縁側の雨戸をあけ、庭下駄で洋館の外へ廻って行った。

Kouda-kun was sleeping well, so I opened the shutters on the porch and went around the outside of the mansion in my garden geta, trying to make as little noise as possible.

ところが、驚いたことには、又しても私の先客がいる。やっぱり赤井さんである。いつも私の先へ先へと廻る男だ。しかし、彼は足跡を見てはいなかった。何だか知らぬが、もっと他のものを見ている。

However, to my surprise, my previous visitor was there again. It was Akai-san. He's a man who is always ahead of me. However, he didn't see any footprints. I don't know what he saw, but he saw something else.

彼は洋館の南側(足跡のついていた側)の西のはずれに立って、建物に身を隠して、首丈けで西側の北よりの方角を覗いているのだ。そんな所に何があるのだろう。その方角には、洋館のうしろ側に母屋の台所口があって、その前に、常爺さんが慰みに作っている花壇があるばかりだ。別に美しい花が咲いている訳でもない。

He stood on the west edge of the south side of the Western-style house (the side where the footprints were) and, hiding behind the building, peered in the direction north of the west side. I wondered what could be there. In that direction, behind the Western-style house, there is the kitchen entrance of the main house, and in front of it, the only thing there is a flower bed that Jou-jisan tends to, to relax. It wasn't as if there were any particularly beautiful flowers blooming there.

私は先手を打たれて少々小癪に触っていたものだから、一つ驚かせてやろうと思って、足音を忍ばせて彼のうしろに近寄り、出し抜けにポンと肩を叩いたものである。すると相手は予期以上に驚いて、ビクッとして振向いたが、何ぜか馬鹿げて大きな声で、

I, feeling a bit annoyed at being caught off guard, wanted to startle him in return. So, I stealthily approached him from behind, muffling my footsteps, and suddenly tapped him on the shoulder. He was more surprised than I had anticipated, jerked around, and for some reason, let out a foolishly loud cry,

「ヤア、松村さんでしたか」

"Hey, is that you, Matsumura-san?"

と怒鳴った。その声に私の方がどぎもを抜かれた位である。そして、赤井さんは、私を押し返す様にして、つまらない天気の話などを始めるのだ。

He shouted angrily. I was more taken aback by his voice. Then, Akai-san, as if pushing me aside, started talking about mundane weather topics.

こいつ愈々おかしいと思うと、私はもうたまらなくなり、赤井さんの感情を害しても構わぬと思って、邪魔する彼をつきのける様にして、建物のはずれに出て北の方を眺めたが、別に変った物も見えぬ。ただ、早起きの常爺さんが、もう花壇いじりを始めていたばかりだ。赤井さんは一体全体、何をあんなに熱心に覗いていたのだろう。

As I increasingly found him strange, I couldn't take it anymore. Thinking it didn't matter if I upset Akaisan's feelings, I pushed him aside and went to the edge of the building to look north. But there was nothing unusual to see. Only Jou-jisan, the early riser, had already started tending to the flower bed. I wondered, what on earth was Akai-san staring at so intently?

不審に思って赤井さんの顔を眺めると、彼は不得要領にニヤニヤ笑っているばかりだ。

When I looked at Akai-san's face with suspicion, I saw that he was just giving me an ambiguous grin.

「今何を覗いていらっしゃったのです」

"What were you looking at just now?"

私は思切って尋ねて見た。すると彼は、

I took the plunge and asked. Then he said,

「何も覗いてなんかいやしませんよ。それはそうと、あなたは昨夜の足跡を調べに出ていらしったのでしょう。エ、違いますか!

"I'm not going to sneak a peek at anything. By the way, I guess you went out to check on the footprints from last night. Eh, didn't you?"

とまぎらせてしまった。私が仕方なくそうだと答えると、

He confused me. When I reluctantly responded yes, he said,

「じゃ、一緒に見に行きましょう。私も実はこれからそれを見に行こうと思っていた所なんで すよ」

"Well then, let's go see it together. I was actually thinking of going to see it anyways."

と誘いかける。だが、そういう彼の言葉も、嘘っぱちであったことが直き分った。塀の外へ 出ると赤井さんの足跡が四本ついている。つまり二往復の跡だ。一往復は私の先廻りをして今 朝見に行った足跡に相違ない。何が「これから」なものか、もうちゃんと見てしまっているの だ。

He invited me. However, I quickly realized that his words were a lie. When I went outside the wall, I saw four footprints of Akai-san. In other words, it is the trace of two round trips. The one trip back and forth must have been the footprints that I went to see this morning. He's already seen exactly what we were going to see.

井戸の側へ着いて、暫くその辺を検べて見たが、別段昨夜と違った所もなかった。足跡は確に井戸から発し、井戸で終っている。外には、昨夜調べに来た私達三人の足跡と、もっと詳しく云えば、その辺を歩き廻った大きな野良犬の足跡とがある切りだ。

When I got to the well, I inspected the area for a while, but I didn't see anything different from last night. The footprints do indeed originate from and end at the well. Outside, there are the footprints of the three of us who came to investigate last night, and more specifically, the footprints of a large stray dog that roamed the area.

「この犬の足跡が、靴足袋の跡だったらなあ」

"I wish this dog's footprints were the Tabi footprints."

私はふとそんな独言を云った。何ぜと云って、その犬の足跡は、靴足袋とは反対の方角から 井戸の所へ来て、その辺を歩き廻った末、又元の方角へ帰っていたからである。

I suddenly said something like that to myself. The dog's footprints had come from the opposite direction to the well, walked around the area, and then returned to the original direction.

その時私はふと、外国のある犯罪実話を思い出した。古いストランド誌で読んだものだ。

At that moment, I suddenly remembered a true crime story from a foreign country. I read it in an old Strand magazine.

野原の一軒家で人殺しが行われた。被害者は一人住いの独身者だった。犯人は外部から来たものに極っている。ところが、不思議なことに、兇行以前に降りやんだ雪の上に、人間の足跡というものが全然なかった。犯人は人殺しをやって置いて、そのまま天上したとでも考える外はないのだ。

A murder was committed in a house in a field. The victim was a single man who lived alone. The culprits are most likely from outside. However, strangely, there were no human footprints on the snow, which had stopped falling just before the trip. There is no other way to think than that the culprit just killed someone and went to heaven.

だが人間の足跡こそなかったけれど、他の物の足跡はあった。一匹の馬がその家まで来て、 又帰って行った蹄鉄の跡であった。

However, although there were no human footprints, there were footprints of other things. These were the shoe prints of a horse that had come to the house and then gone back again.

そこで、一時は被害者は馬に蹴殺されたのではないかと疑われたが、段々検べて行くと、結局、犯人が足跡を隠す為に、自分の靴の裏に蹄鉄を打ちつけて歩いたことが分った。という話である。

At one point, it was suspected that the victim had been kicked to death by a horse, but upon further examination, it was discovered that the culprit had driven a horseshoe to the sole of his shoe to cover his footprints. That was the story.

私は、この犬の足跡も、若しやそれと同じ性質のものではなかろうかと思ったのだ。

I wondered if this dog's footprints were of the same nature.

却々大きな犬らしい足跡だから、人間が四つん這いになって、犬の足を模した型で、こんな跡をつけたと考えることは不可能ではない。又その跡のついた時間も、土の乾き具合なんかで見ると、丁度靴足袋の男の歩いたのと同時刻らしいのだ。

Since the footprints are reminiscent of a large dog, it is not impossible to imagine that a human being crawled on all fours and made these footprints in the shape of a dog's feet. Judging from the dryness of the soil, the time at which the marks were left appears to have been exactly the same time as the man wearing tabi shoes walked.

私がその考を話すと、赤井さんは何だか皮肉な調子で、

When I told him my thoughts, Akai-san said in a somewhat sarcastic tone,

「あなたは却々名探偵ですね」

"You're a great detective, aren't you?"

と云ったまま、ムッツリと黙り込んでしまった。妙な男だ。

After he said that, I fell silent. He's a strange man.

私は念の為に、犬の足跡を追って荒地の向うの道路まで行って見たが、道路が石ころ道だものだから、それから先は全く不明であった。「犬」はその道路を右へか左へか曲って行ったものに相違ない。

Just to be sure, I followed the dog's footprints to the road on the other side of the wasteland, but since the road was made of stone, it was completely unclear what happened next. The "dog" must have turned either to the right or left on the road.

併し、私は探偵ではないので、足跡が消えると、それから先どうすればよいのか、見当がつかず、折角の思いつきも、そこまでで打切ってしまったが、あとになって、成程本当の探偵というものは、そうしたものかと思い当る所があった。

However, I am not a detective, so once the footprints disappeared, I had no idea what to do next, so I gave up on the idea, but later I realized that it was actually true. I had a feeling that this is what detectives are supposed to be like.

それから一時間もして、約束通り波多野警部が再調べにやって来たが、ここに附加える程 の、別段の発見もなかった様子だ。

An hour later, Inspector Hatano came to investigate again as promised, but he didn't seem to have discovered anything worthy of mentioning here.

朝食後、この騒ぎに逗留でもあるまいというので、甲田君と私は一先ず結城邸にいとまを告げることにした。私は内心事件の成行きに未練があったけれど、一人居残る訳にも行かぬ。いずれ東京から又出掛けて来ればよいことだ。

After breakfast, since we didn't want to stay there due to all the commotion, Kouda-kun and I decided to say our goodbyes to the Yuuki residence for now. In my heart, I had grown invested in how the incident would turn out, but I couldn't afford to stay behind alone. I thought I could return from Tokyo at some point.

帰り途に、弘一君の病院を見舞ったことはいうまでもない。それには、結城少将も、赤井さんも一緒だった。結城夫人と志摩子さんは、病院に泊っていたが、昨夜は一睡もしなかったと云って、真青な顔をしていた。当の弘一君には迚も逢えなかった。父少将丈けが、やっと病室へ這入ることを許された。思ったよりも重態である。

Needless to say, I visited Koichi-kun at the hospital on my way home. Major General Yuuki and Akai-san were also there. Koichi-kun's mother and Shimako-san were staying at the hospital, but they looked pale and said they hadn't slept at all last night. I never got to meet Koichi-kun. His father, the Major General, was finally allowed to enter the hospital room. He is in more serious condition than I thought.

それから中二日置いて三日目に、私は弘一君の見舞旁々其後の様子を見る為めに、鎌倉へ出かけて行った。

Two days later, on the third day, I went to Kamakura to check on Koichi-kun's condition and to see how things had progressed since my last visit.

弘一君は手術後の高熱もとれ、もう危険はないとの事であったが、ひどく衰弱して物を云う 元気もなかった。丁度その日波多野警部が来て、弘一君に犯人の風体を見覚えていないかと尋 ねたところ、同君は、

Although Koichi-kun's high fever had subsided after the surgery and he was no longer in danger, he was extremely weak and did not have the energy to speak. That same day, Inspector Hatano came and asked Koichi-kun if he recognized the appearance of the criminal, to which he replied,

「懐中電燈の光と、黒い影の様な姿の外、何も見覚がない」と答えた由である。それを私は結 城夫人から聞いた。

He replied, "I didn't see anything other than the light of a flashlight and a black shadow-like figure." I had heard that from his mother.

病院を出ると、私は少将に挨拶する為めに一寸結城邸に立寄ったが、その帰途、実に不思議なものを見た。何とも私の力では解釈のつかない出来事である。

After leaving the hospital, I stopped by the Yuuki estate briefly to greet the Major General, and on my way back, I witnessed something truly peculiar. It was an occurrence that I couldn't interpret or make sense of with my own understanding.

結城邸を辞した私は、猟奇者の常として、何となく例の古井戸が気にかかるものだから、そこの空地を通って、存分井戸の側を眺め廻し、それからあの犬の足跡が消えていた小砂利の多い道路に出て、大廻りをして停車場へと向ったのであるが、その途中、空地から一丁とは隔たぬ往来でバッタリと赤井さんに出合った。ヤレヤレ又しても赤井さんである。

After leaving the Yuuki residence, being the curious person I am, I found myself intrigued by the old well. I wandered through that vacant lot, thoroughly observing the area around the well. Then, I emerged onto the gravel path where the dog's footprints had vanished, took a detour, and headed towards the parking lot. Along the way, I unexpectedly bumped into Akai-san on a path not far from the vacant lot. There he was again, Akai-san.

彼は往来に面した、有福らしい一軒のしもた家の格子をあけて出て来たが、遠方に私の姿を 認めると、何ぜか顔をそむけて、逃げる様にスタスタと向うへ歩いて行く。

He emerged from a cozy-looking house facing the path, but upon recognizing me from a distance, he inexplicably averted his face and briskly walked away as if avoiding me.

そうされると、私も意地になって、足を早めて赤井さんの後を追った。彼れの出て来た家の前を通る時、表札を見ると「琴野三右衛門」とあった。私はそれをよく覚えて置いて、なおも 赤井さんの跡を追い、一丁ばかりでとうとう彼に追いついた。 When he did that, I also became determined and quickened my pace to follow Mr. Akai. When I passed the house which he came from, I looked at the nameplate and saw it read "Kotono Sanemon." I kept that fresh in my mind and continued to follow Akai-san's trail until finally catching up to him just about a hundred meters away.

「赤井さんじゃありませんか」

"Akai-san, is that you?"

と、声をかけると、彼は観念したらしく振向いて、

When I called out to him, he seemed to have thought about it and turned around,

「ヤア、あなたもこちらへ御出ででしたか。僕も今日は結城さんをお訪ねしたのですよ」

"Yeah, did you come here too? I also visited Yuuki-san today as well."

と、弁解がましく云った。琴野三右衛門を訪ねたことは云わなかった。

he said defensively. He did not say that he had visited Kotono Sanemon.

ところが、そうしてこちらを向いた赤井さんの姿を見ると、私はビックリしてしまった。彼は錺屋の小僧か表具屋の弟子みたいに、身体中金粉だらけだ。両手から胸膝にかけて、梨地の様に金色の粉がくっついている、それが夏の太陽に照らされて、美しくキラキラ光っているのだ。よく見ると、鼻の頭まで、仏像の様に金色だ。訳を尋ねても、「ナニー寸」と曖昧な返事をしている。

However, when I saw Akai-san turn towards me, I was shocked. He is covered in gold powder all over his body, like a young boy at a carpenter's shop or an apprentice at a mounting shop. From his hands to his chest and knees, there was a golden powder that looked like satin, and it sparkled beautifully in the summer sun. If you look closely, you can see that even the tip of his nose is golden, like a statue of Buddha. When I asked him why, he answered vaguely, "Meh, its nothing."

当時の私達にとって「金」というものは特別の意味を持っていた。弘一君を撃った賊は、金製品に限って盗み去ったのである。彼は波多野氏の所謂「黄金蒐集狂」なのだ。その犯罪当夜結城邸に居合わせたえたいの知れぬ人物赤井さんが、今金ピカの姿をして私の前から逃げ様とした。実に異様な事柄である。まさか赤井さんが犯人ではなかろうが、併し、此間からの不思議な挙動といい、この金ピカ姿と云い、何とも合点の出来ないことだ。

At that time, "gold" held a special significance for us. The thief who shot Koichi-kun had only stolen gold items. He fit the profile of what Inspector Hatano referred to as being a "gold collecting enthusiast." On the night of the crime, Akai-san, a mysterious person present at the Yuuki residence, now appeared before me in shiny gold attire and hastily tried to escape. It was an extremely peculiar occurrence. While

it was unlikely that Akai-san was the culprit, his peculiar behavior and this sudden appearance in gold made the situation utterly baffling.

私達は双方奥歯に物のはさまった形で、言葉少なに停車場へ歩いたが、私は前々から気にかかりながら尋ね兼ねていたことを、思い切って尋ねて見た。

We walked in silence towards the parking lot, each of us seemingly lost in thought. With something on my mind for quite some time, I gathered the courage and decided to ask.

「先夜ピストルの音がした少し前から、あなたは二階の客間にいらっしゃらなかった様ですが、あの時あなたはどこにお出でなすったのですか!

"Since just before the sound of the gunshot last night, it seemed you weren't in the second-floor guest room. Where were you at that time?"

「私は酒に弱いので」赤井さんは待構えていた様に答えた。「少し苦しくなったものですから、 外の空気を吸いたくもあったし、丁度煙草が切れたので、それを自分で買いに出かけていたの ですよ!

"I'm not good with alcohol," Akai-san replied, as if he had been waiting. "I was feeling a bit sick, so I wanted to get some fresh air, and I had just run out of cigarettes, so I went out to buy some for myself."

「そうでしたか。それじゃピストルの音はお聞きなさらなかった訳ですね」

"I see. Then you didn't hear the pistol."

「エエ」

"Yeah."

と、云う様なことで、私達は又プッツリ黙り込んでしまったが、暫く歩くと、今度は赤井さんが妙なことを云い出した。

With that, we fell silent again, but after walking for a while, Akai-san said something strange.

「あの古井戸の向側の空地にね、事件のあった二日前まで、近所の古木屋の古材木が一杯置いてあったのです。若しその材木が売れてしまわなかったら、それが邪魔をしているので、僕達の見た例の犬の足跡なんかもつかなんだ訳です。ね、そうじゃありませんか。僕はそのことを、つい今し方聞いたばかりですが |

"I was at the vacant lot opposite the old well. Until two days before the incident, there was a lot of lumber from the nearby lumberyard stored there. If that lumber hadn't been sold, it would have been in the way and might have obscured the footprints of that dog we saw. Isn't that right? I only just found out about this myself."

赤井さんはつまらないことを、さも意味ありげに云うのだ。

Akai-san says boring things in a way that makes them seem meaningful.

てれ隠しか、そうでなければ、彼はやっぱり利口ぶった薄馬鹿である。なぜと云って、事件の二日前にそこに材木が置いてあろうがなかろうが、事件には何の関係もないことだ。その為に足跡がさまたげられる訳もない。全く無意味なことである。私がそれを云うと、赤井さんは、

Whether he's pretending or not, he seems to be either deliberately elusive or simply playing the clever fool. Because whether there was lumber there two days before the incident or not, it has no relevance to the case. It wouldn't obstruct any footprints. It's entirely irrelevant. When I mentioned this, Akai-san said,

「そう云ってしまえば、それまでですがね」

"If you say so, that's all there is to it."

と、まだ勿体ぶっている。実に変な男だ。

He's still being overly dramatic. He is truly a really strange man.

四、病床の素人探偵

4, Amateur Detective on the Sickbed

その日は、外に別段の出来事もなく帰宅したが、それから又一週間ばかりたって、私は三度 目の鎌倉行きをした。弘一君はまだ入院していたけれど、気分はすっかり恢復したから話に来 いという通知を受取ったからである。その一週間の間に、警察の方の犯人捜査がどんな風にな っていたかは、結城家の人から通知もなく、新聞にも一向記事が出なかったので、私は何も知 る所がなかった。無論まだ犯人は発見されないのであろう。

I returned home that day without any incident, but about a week later, I went to Kamakura for the third time. Koichi-kun was still in the hospital, but he was feeling much better and I received a notice asking me to come talk to him. During that week, I had no knowledge of how the police were investigating the perpetrator, as there was no notification from the Yuuki family, and no articles appeared in the newspapers. Of course, the culprit has probably not been discovered yet.

病室に這入って見ると、弘一君は、まだ青白くはあるが仲々元気な様子で、諸方から送られた花束と、母夫人と、看護婦にとりまかれていた。

When I entered the hospital room, I saw that Koichi-kun was still pale but seemed to be in good spirits, surrounded by bouquets of flowers sent by various people, his mother, and nurses.

「アア、松村君よく来てくれたね」

"Ah, Matsumura-kun, it's good to see you here."

彼は私の顔を見ると、嬉し相に手を差出した。私はそれを握って恢復の喜びを述べた。

When he saw my face, he happily held out his hand. I held it and expressed my joy about his recovery.

「だが、僕は一生びっこは直らないのだよ。醜い片輪者だ」

"But I'm crippled beyond repair. An unsightly imperfect person."

弘一君が黯然として云った。私は答える術を知らなかった。母夫人は傍見をして目をしばた たいていた。

Koichi-kun said calmly. I didn't know how to answer. His mother stood by and blinked her eyes.

暫く雑談を交していると、夫人は外に買物があるからと云って、あとを私に頼んで置いて、 席をはずしてくれた。弘一君は、その上に看護婦も遠ざけてしまったので、私達はもう何を話 しても差支えなかった。そこで、先ず話題に上ったのは事件のことである。 After we chatted for a while, his mother told me she had to go shopping outside, so I asked her to leave me behind and I took her seat. On top of that, Koichi-kun had also pushed the nurse away, so we didn't have any problem talking about anything else. The first thing that came up was the incident.

弘一君の語る所によると、警察では、あれから例の古井戸を浚って見たり、足跡の靴足袋と同じ品を売った店を検べたりしたが、古井戸の底からは何も出ず、靴足袋はごくありふれた品で、どこの足袋屋でも日に何足と売っていることが分った。つまり何の得る所もなかった訳である。

According to Koichi-kun, the police have since dug out the old well and inspected a shop that sold the shoe tabi that were found in the footprints. Nothing has been found at the bottom of the old well, and it turns out that shoe tabi are a very common item, and that any tabi shop sells several pairs a day. In other words, nothing was gained.

波多野警部は、被害者の父が陸軍省の重要な人物なので、土地の有力者として敬意を表し、 度々弘一君の病室を見舞い、弘一君が犯罪捜査に興味を持っていることが分ると、捜査の状況 を逐一話して聞かせてさえくれたのである。

Inspector Hatano, out of respect for the victim's father, an influential figure in the Army Ministry, paid frequent visits to Koichi-kun's hospital room. When he learned of Koichi-kun's interest in criminal investigations, he even shared the ongoing progress of the investigation.

「そういう訳で、警察で知っている丈けのことは僕にも分っているんだが、実に不思議な事件 だね。賊の足跡が広場の真中でポッツリ消えていたなんて、まるで探偵小説みたいだね。それ に金製品に限って盗んだというのもおかしい。君は何か他に聞込んだことはないかね」

"Given that I know what the police know, it's truly a strange case, isn't it? The fact that the thief's footprints abruptly disappeared right in the middle of the square is like something out of a detective novel. Also, the fact that only gold items were stolen is peculiar too. Have you heard anything else in your inquiries?"

弘一君は、当の被害者であった上に、日頃の探偵好きから、この事件に非常に興味を感じている様子だった。

Koichi-kun seemed to be very interested in this case, not only because he was the actual victim, but also because he loves detectives.

そこで私は、彼のまだ知らない事柄、即ち赤井さんの数々の異様な挙動、犬の足跡のこと、 事件当夜常爺さんが、窓際に坐った妙な仕草のことなどを、凡て話して聞かせた。

So, I told him all about things he didn't know yet, such as Akai-san's many strange behaviors, the dog's footprints, and the strange behavior of the old man sitting by the window on the night of the incident.

弘一君は私の話を「フンフン」と肯いて、ひどく緊張して聞いていたが、私が話し終ると、 ひどく考え込んでしまった。身体にさわりはしないかと心配になる程、じっと目をつむって考 え込んでいた。が、やがて目を開くと、非常に真面目な調子で呟いた。

Koichi-kun nodded along with my words, listening intently with a noticeable amount of tension. But when I finished talking, he fell into deep contemplation, closing his eyes tightly as if worrying if something had touched his body. After a while, when he opened his eyes, he muttered with a very serious tone,

「ことによると、これは皆が考えているよりも、ずっと恐ろしい犯罪だよ」

"This is probably a much more horrifying crime than people think."

「恐ろしいと云って、ただの泥棒ではないと云うのかね」

"When you say it's horrifying, do you mean it's not just a thief?"

弘一君の恐怖の表情に打たれて、私は思わず真剣な調子になった。

I was struck by the look of fear on Koichi-kun's face, and I couldn't help but take on a serious tone.

「ウム、僕が今ふと想像したのは非常な事柄だ。泥棒なんて生やさしい犯罪ではない。ゾッと するような陰謀だ。恐ろしいと同時に、唾棄すべき悪魔の所業だ!

"Hmmm, what I just imagined is something extraordinary. Thieving is not an easy crime. It's a chilling conspiracy. This is the work of the devil, which is both horrifying and deplorable."

弘一君の痩せた青ざめた顔が、真っ白なベッドの中に埋まって、天井を凝視しながら、低い 声で謎の様なことを云っている。夏の真昼、蝉の声がバッタリやんで、夢の中の砂漠みたいに 静かである。

Koichi-kun's thin, pale face was buried in the pure white bed, staring at the ceiling, and saying something mysterious in a low voice. At midday in summer, the cicadas' voices have completely died down, and the place is as quiet as the desert in a dream.

「君は一体何を考えているのだ」

"What exactly are you thinking?"

私は少し怖くなって尋ねた。

I asked, getting a little scared.

「いや、それは云えない」弘一君はやっぱり天井を見つめたままで答える。「まだ僕の白昼の夢でしかないからだ。それに、あんまり恐ろしい事柄だ。先ずゆっくり考えて見よう。材料は豊

富に揃っている。この事件には、奇怪な事実が満ち充ちている。が、表面奇怪な丈けに、その 裏にひそんでいる真理は、存外単純かも知れない |

"No, I can't say that" Koichi-kun answered, still staring at the ceiling. "It's still just a daydream of mine. Besides, it's too frightening. Let's think about it slowly first. There's plenty of material available. This case is full of strange facts. But despite its strangeness on the surface, the truth hidden behind it may be surprisingly simple."

弘一君は自分自身に云い聞かせる調子でそこまで喋ると、又目を閉じて黙り込んでしまった。

After Koichi-kun spoke to himself, he closed his eyes again and fell silent.

彼の頭の中で、何事かある恐ろしい真実が、徐々に形作られているのであろう。だが、私は それが何であるか、想像することも出来なかった。

Some terrible truth must be slowly taking shape in his head, but I couldn't even imagine what it was.

「第一の不思議は、古井戸から発して、古井戸で終っている足跡だね」

"The first mystery is the footprints that start from and end at the old well."

弘一君は考え考え喋り始めた。

Koichi-kun started thinking and thinking.

「古井戸というものに何か意味があるのかしら。……イヤイヤ、その考え方がいけないのだ。もっと別の解釈がある筈だ。松村君、君は覚えているかね。僕は此間波多野さんに現場の見取図を見せて貰って、要点だけは記憶している積りだが、あの足跡には変な所があったね。賊が女みたいに内輪に歩く奴だということも一つだが、これも無論非常に大切な点だが、その外に、もっと変な所があった。波多野さんは、僕がそれを注意しても、一向気にも留めなかった様だ。多分君も気づかないでいるだろう。それはね、往きの足跡と帰りの足跡とが、不自然に離れていたことだよ。ああした場合、誰しも一番早い道を選ぶのが自然ではないだろうか。つまり二点間の最短距離を歩く筈ではないだろうか。それが、往きと帰りの足跡が、井戸と洋館の窓とを基点にして外にふくらんだ二つの弧を描いている。その間に大きな樹木がはさまれていた程だ。僕にはこれがひどく変に思われるのだよ」

"It's strange to me, Matsumura-kun. Do you remember? When I looked at the diagram of the crime scene shown by Inspector Hatano earlier, I managed to remember the key points. But there was something odd about those footprints. The fact that the perpetrator walked inward like a woman, which is certainly an important point, but besides that, there was something even stranger. Inspector Hatano didn't seem to care when I mentioned it. Perhaps you haven't noticed it either. It's about the distance between the footprints going and returning, which was unnaturally far apart. In cases like this, wouldn't

it be natural for anyone to take the shortest route, the most direct path? That is, to walk the shortest distance between two points. But in this case, the footprints going and returning seemed to form two arcs that bulged outward from the well and the window of the Western-style house as their starting points. There was a large tree in between. To me, that seems extremely odd."

これが弘一君の物の云い方である。彼は探偵小説が好きな程あって、甚だしく論理の遊戯を 好む男であった。

This is Koichi-kun's way of saying things. He was a man who loved detective novels and was extremely fond of games of logic.

「だって君、あの晩は闇夜だぜ。それに賊は人を撃って慌てているのだ。来た時と違った道を 通る位別に不自然でもないじゃないか」

"You see, it was a dark night. Besides, the thief was in a hurry after shooting someone. Isn't it natural to take a different path on the way back than on the way there?"

私は彼の論理一点張りが不服であった。

I was dissatisfied with his insistence on logic.

「イヤ、闇夜だったからこそ、あんな足跡になったのだ。君は少し見当違いをしているようだが、僕の云う意味はね、ただ通った道が違っていたということではないのだよ。二つの足跡が故意に(確に故意にだ)離してあったということはね、賊が自分の来た時の足跡を踏むまいとしたからではないかと、僕は思うのだ。それには、闇夜だから、用心深く余程離れた所を歩かなくてはならない。ね、そこに意味があるのだよ。念の為に波多野さんに、往き帰りの足跡の重なった所はなかったかと確めて見たが、無論一ヶ所もないということだった。あの闇夜に、同じ二点間を歩いた往き帰りの足跡が、一つも重なっていなかったなんて、偶然にしては少し変だとは思わないかね」

"I wasn't dissatisfied with his insistence on logic, but rather with his insistence on a singular logic." He said, "No, it was precisely because it was a dark night that the footprints appeared that way. Your understanding seems a little off, but my point is not just about the different paths taken. It's that the two footprints were deliberately (definitely deliberately) separated. I believe the thief intentionally avoided stepping on their own earlier footprints. That's because, in the darkness, one must tread cautiously and avoid stepping on the same path as before. You see, there's significance there. Just to be sure, I asked Inspector Hatano if there were any overlapping spots in the footprints, and of course, there weren't any. It's a bit odd that, in that dark night, none of the footsteps overlapped when walking the same route back and forth, isn't it?"

「成程、そう云えば少し変だね。併し何故賊が足跡を重ねまいと、そんな苦労をしなければな らなかったのだね。凡そ意味がないじゃないか | "I see, that does sound a bit peculiar. But why would the thief go to such lengths to avoid overlapping footprints? It seems rather pointless, doesn't it?"

「イヤ、あるんだよ。が、まあその次を考えて見よう」

"No, there is a point. But for now, let's think about the next thing."

弘一君はシャーロック・ホームズみたいに、結論を隠したがる。これも彼の日頃の癖である。

Koichi-kun, like Sherlock Holmes, wants to hide his conclusions. This is also his daily way of thinking.

顔は青ざめ、息使いは荒く、嵩だかく繃帯を巻きつけた患部が、まだ痛むと見えて、時々眉をしかめる様な状態でいて、探偵談となると、弘一君は特殊の情熱を示すのだ。それに今度の事件は彼自身被害者であるばかりか、事件の裏に何かしら恐ろしい陰謀を感じているらしい。彼が真剣なのも無理ではない。

His face was pale, his breathing was heavy, the area wrapped in bulky bandages still seemed to hurt, and he sometimes frowned, and when it came to detective stories, Koichi-kun showed a special passion. is. Moreover, not only is he himself the victim of this incident, but he also seems to feel that there is some kind of terrible conspiracy behind the incident. It's no wonder he's so serious.

「第二の不思議は、盗難品が金製品に限られていた点だ。賊が何ぜ金銭に目をくれなかったかという点だ。それを聞いた時、僕はすぐ思い当った人物がある。この土地でも極く少数の人しか知らない秘密なんだ。現に波多野さんなんかも、その人物には気づかないでいるらしい」

"The second mystery is that the stolen items were limited to gold items. The point is why didn't the thieves pay any attention to money. When I heard that, I immediately thought of someone. It's a secret that very few people here know about. In fact, even Inspector Hatano seems to be unaware of the person."

「僕の知らない人かね」

"Is it someone I don't know?"

「ウ※ [#小書き片仮名ン、41-1]、無論知らないだろう。僕の友達では甲田君が知っている丈けだ。いつか話したことがあるんでね|

"Uh, of course you don't know. Of all my friends, Kouda-kun is the only one you know. We talked about it some time ago."

「一体誰のことだい。そして、その人物が犯人だと云うのかい」

"Who on earth are you talking about? And are you saying that person is the culprit?"

「イヤ、そうじゃないと思うのだ。だから、僕は波多野さんにも其人物のことを話さなんだ。 君にもまるで知らない人のことを話したって仕方がない。一時一寸疑った丈けで、僕の思い違いなんだ。その人だとすると外の点がどうも一致しないからね」

"No, I don't think so. That's why I told Inspector Hatano about this person. There's no point in telling you about someone you don't even know. I doubted you for a moment. Well, I guess I'm wrong. If it's that person, the outside points just don't match up."

そういったまま、彼は又目をつむってしまった。いやに人をじらす男だ。だが、彼はこういう推理事にかけては、確に私より一枚上手なんだから、どうも致し方がない。

Just like that, he closed his eyes again. He is a man who makes people uncomfortable. That said, when it comes to this sort of reasoning, he's certainly a step ahead of me, so there's not much I can do about it. 私は病人のお伽をする積りで、根気よく待っていると、やがて、彼はパッチリと目を開いた。その瞳が喜ばしげな光を放っている。

I was waiting patiently to read a fairy tale for the sick man, but eventually his eyes snapped open. His eyes are emitted a joyful light.

「君、盗まれた金製品の内で一番大きいのは何だと思う。恐らくあの置時計だね。どの位の寸法だったかしら、縦が三寸、幅と奥行が二寸、大体そんなものだね。それから目方だ。三百 匁、そんなものじゃなかろうか |

"What do you think is the largest gold item that was stolen? It's probably that table clock. I wonder how big it was. It's about 3 sun tall and 2 sun wide and deep. Yeah. And the weight. 300 monme, isn't it something like that?"

「僕はそれをよく見覚てはいないけれど、御父さんが話されたのを聞くと、丁度そんなものら しいね。だが、置時計の寸法や目方が、事件とどんな関係があるんだね。君も変なことを云い 出すじゃないか」

"I don't really remember it, but from what I heard your father say, it sounds something like that. However, what does the size and direction of the table clock have to do with the incident? You say strange things, don't you?"

私は弘一君が熱に浮されているのではないかと思って、実際彼の額へ手を持って行きそうに した。だが、顔色を見ると、昂奮こそしているが、別段高熱らしくもない。

I thought Koichi-kun had a fever, so I almost raised my hand to his forehead. However, looking at his complexion, although he was excited, it didn't seem like he had a particularly high fever.

「イヤ、それが一番大切な点だ。僕は今やっとそこへ気がついたのだが、盗難品の大きさなり 目方なりが、非常に重大な意味を持っているのだよ! "No, that's the most important point. I've only just realized this, but the size and size of the stolen items have a very serious meaning."

「賊が持運び出来たかどうかを云っているの?」

"Are you saying whether the thief was able to carry it?"

だが、あとで考えると、何という愚な私の質問であったことか。彼はそれには答えず又しても、突飛なことを口走るのだ。

However, in hindsight, what a stupid question I had asked. He didn't answer, but instead said something outlandish again.

「君、そのうしろの花瓶の花を抜いて、花瓶丈けをね、この窓から外の塀を目がけて力一杯投 げてくれないか」

"Would you please pull out the flowers from the vase behind you and throw them as hard as you can from this window towards the wall outside?"

気違いの沙汰である。弘一君はその病室に飾ってあった花瓶を、窓の外の塀に投げつけよと 云うのだ。花瓶と云うのは高さ五寸程の瀬戸物で、別段変った品ではない。

It's crazy. Koichi-kun told me to throw the vase that was displayed in the hospital room against the wall outside the window. The vase was a piece of chinaware about five sun in height and is not an unusual item.

「何を云っているのだ。そんなことをすれば花瓶が破れるじゃないか。気違いだって云われて も仕方がない」

"What are you saying? If I do that, the vase will break, won't it? Even if I call you crazy, it's no good."

私は本当に弘一君の頭がどうかしたのではないかと思った。

I really thought that something was wrong with Koichi-kun's head.

「いいんだよ、破れたって。それは僕の家から持って来た花瓶なんだから。サア、早く投げて くれ給え」

"It's okay if it gets broken. It's a vase I brought from my house. Now, please throw it quickly."

それでも私が躊躇していると、彼はじれて、ベッドの上に起上り相になる。そんなことされては大変だ。身動きさえ禁じられている身体ではないか。

Still, when I hesitate, he gets irritated and gets up on the bed. It's hard when something like that happens to you. Isn't it hard to have a body where even movement is prohibited?

気違いじみているけれど、病人にさからうでもないと観念して、私はとうとう彼の馬鹿馬鹿 しい頼みを承知した。開いた窓から、その花瓶を、三間ばかり向のコンクリート塀へ、力一杯 投げつけたのだ。花瓶は塀に当って粉々に砕けてしまった。

"Even though it seems crazy, I resigned myself to not opposing the sick person and finally agreed to his foolish request. He threw the vase as hard as he could through the open window onto a concrete wall about three ken away. The vase hit the wall and broke into pieces."

弘一君は首を上げて花瓶の最後を見届けると、やっと安心した体で、グッタリと又元の姿勢 に帰った。

Koichi-kun raised his head to see the vase break, and then, finally feeling relieved, he returned to his original position.

「よし、よし、それでいいんだよ。有難う」呑気な挨拶だ。私は今の物音を聞きつけて、誰か 来やしないかと、ビクビクものでいたのに。

"Okay, okay, that was good. Thank you." It was a carefree greeting. I had heard a noise and was freaking out, wondering if someone was coming.

「ところで、常爺やの妙な挙動だがね」

"By the way, Jou-jisan's behavior is rather peculiar, isn't it?"

弘一君が突然又別のことを云い出した。どうも、彼の思考力は統一を失ってしまっている様だ。私は少々心配になって来た。

Koichi-kun suddenly started saying something else. It seems that his thinking power has lost its unity. I was starting to get a little worried.

「これが今度の犯罪事件の、最も有力な手掛りになるのではないかと思うよ」

"I think this might be the most promising clue in this next crime plot."

彼は私の顔色などには無関心で話しつづける。

He continues talking without paying any attention to my facial expression.

「皆が書斎へかけつけた時、常爺や丈けが窓際へ行って坐りこんでしまった。面白いね。君、 分るかね。それには何か理由がなくてはならない。気違いではあるまいし、理由なしでそんな 馬鹿な真似をする筈はないからね |

"When everyone rushed into the study, only Jou-jisan went to the window side and sat down. It's interesting, isn't it? Do you understand? There must be some reason for that. Unless they're crazy, there shouldn't be any reason for them to make such a foolish gesture without a reason.

「無論理由はあったろうさ。だが、それが分らないから、妙に思うのだ」

"Of course, there must have been a reason. But since I don't understand what that reason was, I just think it's strange."

私は少し癇に触って、荒っぽい口を利いた。

I got a little angry and spoke harshly.

「僕には分る様な気がするんだがね」弘一君はニヤニヤして「ホラ、その翌朝常爺やが何をしていたかということを考えて見給え!

"I feel like I understand." Koichi-kun grinned and said, "Look, just think about what the old man was doing the next morning."

「翌朝? 常爺さんが?」

"The morning? Jou-jisan?

私は彼の意味を悟りかねた。

I couldn't understand what he meant.

「なんだね。君はちゃんと見ていたじゃないか。君はね、赤井さんのことばかり考えているものだから、そこへ気がつかぬのだよ。ホラ、君がさっき話したじゃないか。赤井さんが洋館の向側を覗いていたって」

"What? You were looking properly, weren't you? You didn't notice it because you're always thinking about Akai-san. Actually, you just talked about it. Akai-san was looking into the other side of the Western-style building."

「ウン、それもおかしいのだよ」

"Yeah, that was strange too."

「イヤサ、君は別々に考えるからいけない。赤井さんが覗いていたのは、外のものではない、 常爺やだったとは考えられないかね!

Hey, you shouldn't consider them separately. Isn't it possible to think that what Akai-san was peeking at wasn't something outside, but rather, it was Jou-jisan?

「アア、そうか」

"Ah, is that so?"

そこへ気がつかぬとは、私は何というボンヤリ者であったろう。

That I didn't notice that... What a careless person I must have been.

「爺やは、花壇いじりをしていたんだね。だがあすこには今花なんてないし、種を蒔く時節でもない。花壇いじりじゃ変じゃないか。もっと別のことをしていたと考える方が自然だ!

"That old man was messing around in the flowerbed, wasn't he? But there aren't any flowers there now, and it's not the season for sowing seeds either. Messing around in the flowerbed seems odd, doesn't it? It's more natural to think that he was doing something else.

「別のことと云うと? |

"What do you mean by something else?"

「考えて見給え。あの晩爺やは書斎の中の不自然な場所に暫く坐っていた。その翌早朝花壇いじりだ。この二つを結び合せると、そこから出て来る結論はたった一つしかない。ね、そうだろう。爺やは何か品物を隠したのだ。

"Think about it and you'll see. That night, that old servant sat in an unusual place in the study for a while. Then, early the next morning, he was messing around in the flowerbed. If we connect these two things together, there's only one conclusion that can be drawn. Right? Isn't it? He had hidden something.

何を隠したか、何ぜ隠したか、それは分らない。併し、常爺やが何かを隠さなければならなかったということ丈けは、間違いがないと思う。窓際へ坐ったのは、その品物を膝の下に敷いて隠す為だったに違いない。それから、爺やが何か隠そうとすれば、台所から一番手近で一番自然な場所は、あの花壇だ。花壇いじりと見せかける便宜もあるんだからね。ところで君にお願いだが、これからすぐ僕の家へ行って、ソッとあの花壇を掘返して、その品物を持って来てくれないだろうか。埋めた場所は土の色で直き分る筈だよ」

I don't know what was hidden or why it was hidden. However, I believe that it is without a doubt correct in saying that Jou-jisan had hidden something. Sitting by the window was likely to hide that item by placing it under his knee. Then, if he had something to hide, the most convenient and natural place closest to the kitchen would be that flowerbed. There's also the convenience of making it seem like he was just messing around in the flowerbed. By the way, could I ask you to quietly go to my house now and dig up that flowerbed, then bring me the item? The place where it was buried should be distinguishable by the color of the soil."

私は弘一君の明察に一言もなかった。私が目撃しながら理解し得なかった事柄を、彼は咄嗟の間に解決した。

I didn't say a word about Koichi-kun's investigation. He solved things in an instant that I could not understand even while witnessing them.

「それは行ってもいいがね。君はさっきただの泥棒の仕業ではなくて、悪魔の所業だと云った ね。それには、何か確な根拠があるのかい。もう一つ分らないのは、今の花瓶の一件だ。行く 前にそいつを説明してくれないか」 "You can go for that though. You said earlier that this was not the work of a simple thief, but of the devil. Is there any solid basis for that? Another thing I don't understand is the current vase. Could you please explain that to me before I go?"

「イヤ、凡て僕の想像に過ぎないのだ。それに迂闊に喋れない性質の事柄なんだ。今は聞かないでくれ給え。ただ、僕の想像が間違いでなかったら、この事件は表面に現われているよりも、ずっとずっと恐ろしい犯罪だということを頭に入れて置いてくれ給え。そうでなくて、病人の僕がこんなに騒いだりするものかね」

"No, it's all just my imagination. Besides, the nature of this matter cannot be talked about carelessly. Please don't ask me now. However, please keep in mind that if I'm not mistaken in my imagination, this case is a much more horrifying crime than it appears on the surface. Otherwise, I'm a sick person and I'm making such a fuss."

そこで、私は看護婦にあとを頼んで置いて、一先ず病院を辞したのであるが、私が病室を出ようとした時、弘一君が鼻歌を歌う様な調子で独逸語で「女を捜せ、女を捜せ」と呟いているのを耳に留めた。

So, I asked the nurse to follow me and left the hospital for the time being, but just as I was about to leave the room, I overheard Koichi-kun whispering in German saying, "Look for the woman. Look for the woman."

結城家を訪れたのはもう黄昏時であった。少将は不在だったので、書生に挨拶して置いて隙を見て何気なく庭に出た。そして問題の花壇を掘返した結果を簡単に云えば、弘一君の推察は適中したのだ。そこから妙な品物が出て来たのだ。それは古びた安物のアルミニューム製眼鏡サックで、最近埋めたものに相違なかった。私は常さんに感づかれぬ様、ソッとそのサックを一人の女中に見せて、持主を尋ねて見たところが、意外にもそれは常さん自身の老眼鏡のサックであることが分った。女中は目印があるから間違いはないと云った。

I visited the Yuuki household at dusk. As the young master was absent, I greeted the servant and casually went out into the garden when I found an opportunity. To sum up the result of digging up the flowerbed in question, Koichi-kun's conjecture turned out to be spot on. An odd item emerged from there. It was an old, cheap aluminum eyeglass case that seemed to have been buried recently. To avoid drawing Jousan's attention, I quietly showed the case to one of the maids and asked about the owner. Surprisingly, it turned out to be Jou-san's own eyeglass case. The maid said there was a distinguishing mark, so there was no mistake.

常さんは彼自身の持物を隠したのだ。妙なこともあるものだ。仮令それが犯罪現場に落ちていたにもせよ、常さん自身の持物なれば、何も花壇へ埋めたりしないで、黙って使用していればよいではないか。日常使用していたサックが突然なくなったらその方がよっぽど変ではあるまいか。

Jou-san hid his own belongings. It's quite strange, isn't it? Even if it had accidentally fallen at the crime scene, if it was Jou-san's own possession, wouldn't it have been better to quietly use it without burying it in the flowerbed? Wouldn't it be much more unusual if the everyday-used case suddenly went missing?

いくら考えても、分り相もないので、私はとも角もそれを病院へ持って行くことにして、女中には固く口留めをして置いて、母屋の方へ引返したが、その途中、又しても訳の分らぬ事に ぶつかった。

No matter how much I thought about it, I couldn't figure it out, so I decided to take it to the hospital, kept my mouth shut with the maid, and headed back towards the main building, but on the way, once again, I ran into something that I couldn't understand.

その頃は殆ど日が暮れ切って、足元もおぼつかない程暗くなっていた。母屋の雨戸はすっかり締めてあったし、主人は不在なので、洋館の窓にも明りは見えぬ。その薄暗い庭を、一つの 影法師がこちらへ歩いて来るのだ。

By that time, the sun had almost set, and it was so dark that I felt unsteady under my feet. The shutters of the main house were closed, and the owner was away, so there was no light in the windows of the Western-style building. A shadowy figure walked towards me in the dimly lit garden.

近づいたのを見るとシャツ一枚の赤井さんだ。この人は主人もいない家へ、しかも今時分このなりで、何をしに来たのであろう。

When I approached, I saw Akai-san wearing only a shirt. This man was at a home without its master, and what was he doing here at this hour?

彼は私の姿に気づくと、ギョッとした様に立止まったが、見ると、どうしたというのであろう。シャツ一枚で跣足の上に、腰から下がびっしょり濡れて泥まみれだ。

When he noticed me, he stopped, as if startled, but when he looked at me, I wondered what had happened. He was wearing only a shirt on his legs and was soaked from the waist down and covered in mud.

「どうしたんです」

"What happened?"

と聞くと、彼はきまり悪そうに、

When I asked him, he seemed embarrassed.

「鯉を釣っていて、つい足を辷らしたんです。あの池は泥深くってね」

"I was fishing for carp when I tripped over my leg. That pond is deep and muddy."

と弁解がましく云った。

he said defensively.

五、逮捕された黄金狂

5, The Gold Enthusiast Arrested

間もなく私は、再び弘一君の病室にいた。母夫人は私と行違いに帰邸し、彼の枕下には附添の看護婦が退屈そうにしているばかりだった。私の姿を見ると、弘一君はその看護婦を立去らせた。

Before long, I was once again in Koichi-kun's sickroom. His mother had returned to the mansion when I arrived, and by his bedside, there was only a bored nurse attendant. Upon seeing me, Koichi-kun dismissed the nurse.

「これだ、君の推察通り、花壇にこれが埋めてあった」

"This, as you guessed, was buried in the flowerbed."

私はそう云って、例のサックをベッドの上に置いた。弘一君は一目それを見ると、非常に驚いた様子で、

I said that and put the sack on the bed. When Koichi-kun saw it, he seemed very surprised.

「アア、やっぱり……」と呟いた。

"Ah, I knew it..." He muttered.

「やっぱりって、君はこれが埋めてあることを知っていたのかい。だが、女中に聞いて見ると、常さんの老眼鏡のサックだということだが、常さんが何故自分の持物を埋めなければならなかったのか、僕にはサッパリ分らないのだが」

"Is this what you expected to be buried there? And when I asked the maid about it, she said that it was a bag for Jou-san's reading glasses. Why did Jou-san bury his belongings? I don't really understand why he would do that."

「それは、爺やの持物には相違ないけれど、もっと別の意味があるんだよ。君はあれを知らなかったのかなあ」

"This is indeed the old servant's possession, but there's a deeper meaning to it. Perhaps you weren't aware of that, were you?"

「あれって云うと?」

"What do you mean by that?"

「これでもう疑う余地はなくなった。恐ろしいことだ。……あいつがそんなことを。……」

"This leaves no room for doubt. It's terrifying that... he would do such a thing..."

弘一君は私の問に答えようともせず、ひどく昂奮して独言を云っている。彼は確に犯人を悟ったのだ。「あいつ」とは一体誰のことなんだろう。で、私がそれを聞訊そうとしていた時、ドアにノックの音が聞こえた。

Koichi-kun didn't even bother to answer my questions, instead talking to himself in a state of great excitement. He definitely recognized the culprit. Who exactly is "he"? Just as I was about to ask him about it, I heard a knock on the door.

波多野警部が見舞に来たのだ。入院以来何度目かの御見舞である。彼は結城家に対して職務 以外の好意を持っているのだ。

Inspector Hatano came to visit. This isn't the first time he came to visit Koichi-kun since he was hospitalized. He has feelings for the Yuuki family that go beyond his duties.

「大分元気の様ですね」

"You seem to be doing well."

「エエ、お蔭様で順調に行ってます」

"Well, thanks to you everything is going well."

と、一通りの挨拶がすむと、警部は少し改まって、

After the general greetings were completed, the inspector seemed to change a little.

「夜分やって来たのは、実は急いで御知らせしたいことが起ったものだから」

"The reason why I came this evening is because something happened that I wanted to tell you about as soon as I could."

と、ジロジロ私を見る。

He looked at me intently.

「御存知の松村君です。僕の親しい友人ですからお構いなく」

"This is Matsumura-kun, who you know. He's a close friend of mine, so don't worry about it."

弘一君が促すと、

Koichi-kun assured,

「イヤ、秘密という訳ではないのだから、ではお話しますが。犯人が分ったのです。今日午後 逮捕しました」 "No, it's not a secret, so I'll tell you. I found out who the culprit was. He was arrested this afternoon."

「エ、犯人が捕縛されましたか」

"Eh, the culprit has been arrested?"

弘一君と私とが同時に叫んだ。

Koichi-kun and I both shouted at the same time.

「して、それは何者です」

"So, who was it?!"

「結城さん。あなた琴野三右衛門というあの辺の地主を知っていますか」

Yuuki-san. Do you know a landowner in that area by the name of Sanemon Kotono?

果して、琴野三右衛門に関係があるのだ。

It turns out that it has something to do with Sanemon Kotono.

読者は記憶されるであろう。いつか疑問の男赤井さんが、その三右衛門の家から、金箔だらけになって出て来たことを。

The reader will remember that one day, Akai-san, the mysterious man, came out of Sanemon's house covered in gold powder.

「エエ、知ってます。では……」

"Eh, I know him, but... "

「その息子に光雄っていう気違いがある。一間に檻禁して滅多に外出させないというから、多 分御存知ないでしょう、私も今日やっと知った位です」

"His son is a madman named Mitsuo. He's been kept in a cage for a long time and is rarely let out, so you probably don't know about it, and I only found out about it today."

「イヤ、知ってます。それが犯人だとおっしゃるのですか」

"No, I know. Are you saying that he's the culprit?"

「そうです。已に逮捕して、一応は取調べも済みました。何分気違いのことで、明瞭に自白は していませんけれど。彼は珍しい気違いなんです。黄金狂とでも云いますかね。金色のものに 非常な執着を持っている。私はその男の部屋を見て、びっくりしました。部屋中が仏壇みたい に金ピカなんです。鍍金であろうが、真鍮の粉や箔であろうが、金目には関係なく、兎も角 も、金色をしたものなら、額縁から金紙から鑢屑に至るまで、滅多無性に蒐集しているので す |

"Seems that way. He was immediately arrested and interrogated. I can't say for certain as it concerns insanity, but there hasn't been a clear confession. He's a rare form of a madman. You could say he's a gold fanatic. He has a great obsession with golden things. When I saw the man's room, I was surprised. The whole room is shiny like a Buddhist altar. Whether it's plating, brass powder, or foil, he collects anything that has a golden color, from picture frames to gold paper to scraps, regardless of the gold grain."

「それも聞いています。で、そういう黄金狂だから、私の家の金製品ばかりを盗み出したとおっしゃるのでしょうね」

"I've heard that too. So, since he's such a gold fanatic, you must be saying that he stole all the gold items from my house."

「無論そうです。紙幣入れをそのままにして、金製品ばかりを、しかも大した値打もない万年 筆まで洩れなく集めて行くというのは、常識では判断の出来ないことです。私も最初から、こ の事件には何かしら気違いめいた匂がすると直覚していましたが、果して気違いでした。しか も黄金狂です。ピッタリと当てはまるじゃありませんか」

"Of course, I'm saying that. It would be impossible to judge by common sense if one were to leave the banknote holder as it was and collect only gold items, even fountain pens that were of little value. I knew from the beginning that there was something crazy about this incident, but it turned out to be insanity. Moreover, he is a gold enthusiast. Doesn't it fit perfectly?"

「で、盗難品は出て来たでしょうね」

"So, the stolen goods must have come out of hiding."

どうした訳か、弘一君の言葉には分らぬ程ではあったが、妙に皮肉な調子がこもっていた。

For some reason, Koichi-kun's words had a strangely sarcastic tone to them, although I couldn't understand it.

「イヤ、それはまだです。一応は調べましたが、その男の部屋には無いのです。併し、気違い のことだから、どんな非常識な所へ隠しているか分りませんよ。なお充分調べさせる積りです が」

"No, not yet. I looked into it, but it wasn't in the man's room. However, since he's a madman, I don't know what kind of insane place he's hiding it in. However, we are conducting a thorough investigation."

「それから、あの事件のあった夜、その気違いが部屋を抜け出したという点も確められたので しょうね。家族のものは、それに気づかなんだのですか | "It also seems to confirm that the madman escaped from the room on the night of the incident. Didn't the family members notice this?"

弘一君が根掘り葉掘り聞訊すので、波多野氏はいやな顔をした。

Inspector Hatano made a disgusted face as Koichi-kun questioned him thoroughly.

「家族のものは誰も知らなかった様子です。併し、気違いは裏の離座敷にいたのだから、窓から出て塀をのり越せば、誰にも知られず外に出ることが出来るのですよ!

"No one in the family seemed to know anything about it. However, the madman was in the back parlor, so if he climbed out the window and climbed over the wall, he could get out without anyone knowing."

「成程成程」と、弘一君は益々皮肉である。「ところで、例の足跡ですがね。井戸から発して井戸で終っているのを、何と御解釈になりました。これは非常に大切な事柄だと思うのですが」

"Of course, of course" Koichi-kun said, becoming increasingly sarcastic. "By the way, about the footprints from earlier. How did you interpret the fact that they started from a well and ended at a well? I think this is a very important matter."

「まるで、私が訊問されている様ですね」

"It's like I'm being interrogated."

警部はチラと私の顔を見て、さも磊落に笑って見せたが、その実腹の中ではひどく不快に思っている様子だった。

The inspector took a quick look at my face and smiled casually, but deep inside he seemed extremely uncomfortable.

「何もそんなことを、あなたが御心配なさるには及びませんよ。それにはちゃんと警察なり裁判所なりの機関があるのですから」

"There's no need for you to worry about such things. There are institutions like the police and courts to deal with that."

「イヤ、御立腹なすっちゃ困りますが、僕は当の被害者なんだから、参考までに聞かせて下すってもいいじゃありませんか |

"No, I'm sorry to offend you, but since I'm the actual victim, I don't mind hearing it for reference."

「お聞かせすることが出来ないのです。というのは、あなたはまだ明瞭になっていない点ばかりお尋ねなさるから」警部は仕方なく笑い出して「足跡の方も目下取調中なんですよ」

"There's nothing I can tell you that you haven't heard. That's because you keep asking me things that aren't clear yet." The inspector couldn't help but laugh and said, "We're also currently investigating the footprints."

「すると確な証拠は一つもないことになりますね。ただ黄金狂と金製盗難品の偶然の一致の外には |

"Then there would be no solid evidence. Except for the coincidence of gold mania and gold stolen goods."

弘一君は無遠慮に云ってのける。私は側で聞いていてヒヤヒヤした。

Koichi-kun said this with no hesitation. I was terrified listening from the sidelines.

「偶然の一致ですって」辛抱強い波多野氏もこれには流石にムッとしたらしく「あなたはどうしてそんな物の云い方をするのです。警察が見当違いをやっているとでも云われるのですか」

"It's just a coincidence." Even the usually patient Inspector Hatano seemed annoyed by this. "Why would you say something like that? Are you saying that the police are misguided?"

「そうです」弘一君がズバリととどめをさした。「警察が琴野光雄を逮捕したのは、飛んでもない見当違いです」

"That's right," Koichi-kun said firmly. "The police's arrest of Kotono Mitsuo was completely misguided."

「何ですって」警部はあっけに取られたが、併し聞きずてにならぬと云う調子で「君は証拠で もあって云うのですか。でなければ、迂闊に口にすべき事ではありませんよ」

"What do you mean?" The Inspector was taken aback but then, in a tone that suggested a question he didn't want to ask, he said, "Are you saying there's evidence? If not, you shouldn't speak so carelessly."

「証拠は有り余る程あります」

"There is so much evidence."

弘一君は平然として云った。

Koichi-kun said calmly.

「馬鹿馬鹿しい。事件以来ずっとそこに寝ていた君に、どうして証拠の蒐集が出来ます。あな たはまだ身体が本当でないのだ。妄想ですよ。麻酔の夢ですよ」

"Absurd. How could someone who has been lying there since the incident collect evidence? Your body is still not proper yet. It's a delusion. A dream under anesthesia."

「ハハハハハハ、あなたは怖いのですか。あなたの失策を確められるのが怖いのですか」

"Hahahahahaha, are you scared? Are you afraid that your mistakes will be confirmed?"

弘一君はとうとう波多野氏を怒らせてしまった。そうまで云われては、相手が若年者であろうと、病人であろうと、そのまま引下る訳には行かぬ。警部は顔を筋ばらせて、ガタリと椅子を進めた。

Koichi-kun finally made Inspector Hatano angry. If someone says something like that, no matter if the person is young or sick, there is no way they can just back down. The inspector stiffened his face and shuffled forward in his chair.

「では聞きましょう。君は一体誰が犯人だとおっしゃるのです」

"Let's listen. Who do you say is the culprit?"

波多野警部はえらい見幕でつめよった。だが弘一君は仲々返事をしない。考えを纏める為か 天井を向いて目をふさいでしまった。

Inspector Hatano looked on with great anticipation. However, Koichi-kun did not reply. Perhaps to collect his thoughts, he turned to the ceiling and covered his eyes.

彼はさい前私に、疑われ易いある人物を知っているが、それは真犯人でないと語った。その人物というのが、黄金狂の琴野光雄であったに相違ない。なる程非常に疑われ易い人物だ。で、その琴野光雄が真犯人でないとすると、弘一君は一体全体何者を犯人に擬しているのであろう。外にもう一人黄金狂があるとでも云うのかしら。若しやそれは赤井さんではないか。事件以来赤井さんの挙動はどれもこれも疑わしいことばかりだ。それに、琴野三右衛門の家から、金箔にまみれて出て来たことさえある。彼こそ別の意味の「黄金狂」ではないのか。

He told me the other day that he knew someone who was likely to be suspected, but that he was not the real culprit. That person must have been the gold mad Kotono Mitsuo. He is certainly a very suspicious person. So, if Kotono Mitsuo is not the real culprit, who exactly is Koichi-kun insinuating to be the culprit? Does that mean there's another gold enthusiast out there? Isn't that Akai-san? Since the incident, Akai-san's behavior has always been suspicious. Moreover, he even came out of Kotono Sanemon's house covered in gold powder. Isn't he a "gold fanatic" in another sense?

だが、私が花壇を調べる為結城家へ出かける時、弘一君は妙なことを口走った。「女を探せ」という独逸語の文句だ。此犯罪の裏にも「女」がいるという意味かも知れない。ハテな、女と云えば直ぐ頭に浮ぶのは志摩子さんだが、彼女が何かこの事件に関係を持っているのかしら。オオ、そう云えば賊の足跡は女みたいに内輪だった。それから、ピストルの音のすぐあとで、書斎から「久松」という猫が飛び出して来た。あの「久松」は志摩子さんの愛猫だ。では彼女が? まさか、まさか。

However, when I went to Yuuki's house to inspect the flowerbed, Koichi-kun blurted out something strange. It's a German phrase that says, "Look for the woman." This may mean that there is a "woman" behind this crime. When I think of women, Shimako-san immediately comes to mind, but I wonder if she has something to do with this incident. Oh, now that you mention it, the thief's footprints were similar to a woman's footprints. Then, right after the sound of the pistol, a cat named Hisamatsu jumped out of the study. That "Hisamatsu" is Shimako-san's beloved cat. What about her? No way, it can't be.

その外にもう一人疑わしい人物がいる。老僕常さんだ。彼の眼鏡サックは、確に犯罪現場に落ちていたし、彼はそれを態々花壇へ埋めたではないか。

There is another person who is suspicious. It's the elderly servant, Jou-san. His glasses bag had indeed fallen at the scene of the crime, and he had buried it in the flowerbed.

私がそんなことを考えている内に、やがて弘一君がパッチリと目を開いて、待構えた波多野 氏の方に向直ると、低い声でゆっくりゆっくり喋り始めた。

While I was thinking about this, Koichi-kun suddenly opened his eyes, turned to Inspector Hatano, who was waiting for him, and began speaking slowly and in a low voice.

「琴野の息子は家内のものに知られぬ様に、家を抜け出すことは出来たかも知れません。だが、いくら気違いだからと云って、足跡なしで歩くことは全然不可能です。井戸の所で消えていた足跡を如何に解釈すべきか。これが事件全体を左右する所の、根本的な問題です。これをそのままソッとして置いて犯人を探そうなんて、あんまり虫がいいと云うものです」

"Kotono's son might have been able to sneak out of the house without the family knowing. But no matter how crazy he is, it is impossible for him to walk without footprints. How should we interpret the footprints that disappeared from the well? This is the fundamental issue that affects the entire incident. It's too much of an issue to ignore this and try to find the culprit."

弘一君はそこまで話すと、息を整える為に一寸休んだ。傷が痛むのかひどく眉をしかめている。

After Koichi-kun spoke that much, he took a short break to catch his breath. His eyebrows were frowning as if his wounds were hurting.

警部は彼の喋り方が仲々論理的で、しかも自信に満ちているので、やや圧倒された形で、静かに次の言葉を待っている。

The inspector's way of speaking was both logical and confident, so he looked a little overwhelmed and quietly waited for his next words.

「ここにいる松村君が」と弘一君は又始める。「それについて、実に面白い仮説を組立てました。というのは、御承知かどうか、あの井戸の向側に犬の足跡があった。それが靴足袋のあとを引継いだ形で反対側の道路まで続いていたそうですが、これは、若しや犯人が犬の足跡を模

した型を手足にはめ四ん這いになって歩いたのではないか。という説です。だが、この説は面白いことは面白いけれど、ひどく非実際的だ。なぜって君」と私を見て「犬の足跡というトリックを考えついた犯人なら、なぜ井戸の所まで本当の足跡を残したのか。それじゃ、折角の名案がオジャンになる訳じゃないか。態々半分だけ犬の足跡にしたなんて、仮令気違いの仕業にもしろ、考えられぬことだよ。それに、気違いが、そんな手のこんだトリックを案出出来る筈もないしね。で、遺憾ながらこの仮説は落第だ。とすると、足跡の不思議は依然として残された事になる。ところで、波多野さん、先日見せて下すった、例の現場見取図を書いた手帳をお持ちでしょうか。実はあの中に、この足跡の不思議を解決する鍵が隠されているんじゃないかと思うのですが」

"Here's what Matsumura-kun, who's here, has come up with," Koichi-kun resumed. "It's quite an interesting hypothesis. You see, whether you know it or not, there were dog footprints on the opposite side of the well. They continued to the road on the other side in a pattern that seemed to have taken over the shoe-footprint trail. The theory is that perhaps the culprit, if they had fashioned a mold mimicking dog footprints and walked on all fours wearing them on their hands and feet. But this theory, while intriguing, is highly impractical. Why? Because if, let's say, the culprit devised the trick of dog footprints, why would they leave actual footprints all the way to the well? That would ruin the brilliant plan. It's inconceivable that even if it were the work of a lunatic, they would go to such lengths. Besides, a lunatic couldn't come up with such a sophisticated trick. So, unfortunately, this hypothesis fails. Thus, the mystery of the footprints remains. By the way, Inspector Hatano, do you happen to have the notebook in which you drew the map of the crime scene the other day? I think the key to solving the mystery of these footprints might be hidden in it."

波多野氏は幸い、ポケットの中にその手帳を持っていたので、見取図の所を開いて、弘一君 の枕下に置いた。弘一君は推理を続ける。

Fortunately, Inspector Hatano had the notebook in his pocket, so he opened it to the floor plan and placed it under Koichi-kun's pillow, Koichi-kun continued his reasoning.

「ごらんなさい。さっき松村君にも話したことですが、この往きの足跡と帰りの足跡との間隔が、不自然に開き過ぎている。あなたは、犯罪者が大急ぎで歩く場合に、こんな廻り道をすると御考えですか。もう一つ、往復の足跡が一つも重なっていないのも、非常な不自然です。という僕の意味がお分りになりますか。この二つの不自然はある一つの事柄を語っているのです。つまり、犯人が故意に足跡を重ねまいと綿密な注意を払ったことを語っているのです。ね、闇の中で足跡を重ねない為には、犯人は用心深く、此位離れた所を歩かねばならなかったのですよ」

"Look here. I mentioned this to Matsumura-kun earlier, but the gap between the outgoing and incoming footprints is unnaturally wide. Do you think a criminal in a great hurry would take such a detour? Furthermore, it's extremely unnatural that none of the footprints in the round-trip overlap. Do you

understand my point? These two abnormalities indicate one thing. That is, it tells us that the culprit deliberately avoided overlapping footprints and paid meticulous attention. You see, in the darkness, to avoid overlapping footprints, the culprit had to walk cautiously and take steps far apart."

「成程、足跡の重なっていなかった点は、如何にも不自然ですね。或は御説の通り故意にそう したのかも知れん。だが、それにどういう意味が含まれているのですかね |

"I see, the fact that the footprints did not overlap is quite unnatural. Or maybe he did it intentionally, as you say. But what does that mean?"

波多野警部が愚問を発した。弘一君はもどかし相に、

Inspector Hatano asked a stupid question. Koichi-kun answered frustrated,

「これが分らないなんて。あなたは救い難い心理的錯覚に陥っていらっしゃるのです。つまり ね、歩幅の狭い方が来た跡、広い方が急いで逃げた跡という考、随って足跡は井戸に発し井戸 に終ったという頑固な迷信です」

"You don't understand this, do you? You're caught up in an irresistible psychological delusion. In other words, the belief that the narrower footprints were from someone arriving and the wider ones were from someone hurrying away—thus, the footprints originated at the well and ended at the well—is a stubborn superstition."

「オ、では君は、あの足跡は井戸から井戸へではなくて、反対に書斎から書斎へ帰った跡だと 云うのですか |

"Oh, so you're saying that those footprints didn't go from well to well, but on the contrary, from the study back to the study?"

「そうです。僕は最初からそう思っていたのです」

"That's right. That's what I thought from the beginning."

「イヤ、いけない」警部はやっきとなって「一応は尤もだが、君の説にも非常な欠陥がある。 それ程用意周到な犯人なれば、少しのことで、なぜ向側の道路まで歩かなんだか。中途で足跡 が消えたんでは、折角のトリックが何にもならない。それ程の犯人が、どうしてそんな馬鹿馬 鹿しい手抜かりをやったか。君はこれを何と解釈しますね」

"No, this won't do," the Inspector said in a rush. "Your argument holds some validity, but there are significant flaws in your theory. If the culprit were so meticulously prepared, why would they walk all the way to the opposite side of the road over such a minor detail? If the footprints disappeared midway, the clever trick would amount to nothing. Why would such a perpetrator make such a foolish mistake? How do you interpret that?"

「それはね、ごくつまらない理由なんです」

"Well, that's a very boring reason."

弘一君はスラスラと答える。「あの晩は非常に暗い闇夜だったからです」

Koichi-kun answered smoothly. "That night was a very dark night."

「闇夜? なにも闇夜だからって、井戸まで歩けたものが、それから道路までホンの僅かの距離を歩けなかったという理窟はありますまい!

"Dark night? Just because it was dark night, there is no reason why someone who could walk to the well couldn't walk the short distance from there to the road."

「イヤ、そういう意味じゃないのです。犯人は井戸から向うは足跡をつける必要がないと誤解したのです。滑稽な心理的錯誤ですよ。あなたは御存知ありますまいが、あの事件の二三日前まで、一月余りの間、井戸から向うの空地に、古材木が一杯置き並べてあった。犯人はそれを見慣れていたものだから、つい誤解をしたのです。彼はそれの運び去られたのを知らず、あの晩もそこに材木がある、材木があれば犯人はその上を歩くから足跡はつかない、つけなくてもよい。と考えたのです。つまり闇夜故の飛んだ思い違いなんです。若しかしたら、犯人の足が井戸側の漆喰にぶつかって、それが材木だと思い込んでしまったのかも知れませんよ」

"No, it's not like that. The culprit misunderstood that there was no need to leave footprints beyond the well. It's a ludicrous psychological error. You may not be aware, but until two or three days before the incident, for over a month, there was a pile of old lumber laid out in the open space beyond the well. The culprit was accustomed to seeing it, so they made a mistake. They didn't know it had been removed, and that night, they assumed if there was lumber there, they could walk over it without leaving footprints, so there was no need to leave any. It's simply a mistaken assumption due to the darkness. Perhaps the culprit's foot hit the plaster on the well side, mistaking it for the lumber."

アア、何とあっけない程に簡単明瞭な解釈であろう。私とてもその古材木の山を見たことがある。いや、見たばかりではない。先日赤井さんが意味ありげに古材木の話をしたのを聞いてさえいる。それでいて、病床の弘一君に解釈の出来ることが、私には出来なかったのだ。

Ah, what an incredibly simple and clear interpretation. I have seen that pile of old timber before. No, I didn't just see it. I even heard Akai-san talking meaningfully about old timber the other day. And yet, despite that, Koichi-kun in his sickbed was able to interpret it, something I couldn't do.

「すると君は、あの足跡は犯人が外部から来たと見せかけるトリックに過ぎないと云うのですね。つまり、犯人は結城邸の内部に隠れていたと考えるのですね!

"Then, you're suggesting that those footprints were nothing but a trick to make it appear as if the culprit came from outside. In other words, you believe the culprit was hiding inside the Yuuki residence."

流石の波多野警部も、今は兜を脱いだ形で、弘一君の口から、早く真犯人の名前を聞きたそうに見えた。

Even the experienced Inspector Hatano, now seemingly relaxed, appeared eager to hear the name of the real culprit from Koichi-kun's lips.

六、「算術の問題です」

6, An Arithmetic Problem

「足跡が贋物だとすると、犯人が宙を飛ばなかった限り彼は邸内にいたと考える外はありません」弘一君は推理を進める。「次に、奴は何ぜ金製品ばかりを目がけたか。この点が実に面白いのです。これは一つには、賊が琴野光雄という黄金狂のいることを知っていて、その気違いの仕業らしく装う為だったでしょう。足跡をつけたのも同じ意味です。だが、外に、もう一つ妙な理由があった。それはね、あの金製品類の大きさと目方に関係があるのですよ」

"If the footprints are fake, as long as the culprit didn't fly through the air, there's no other way than to think that he was inside the residence," Koichi-kun continued his theory. "Next, why did he only focus on gold items? This is really interesting. One reason is that the thieves knew that there was a gold enthusiast named Mitsuo Kotono, and that this was the result of his madness." It must have been to look like someone else. The footprints had the same meaning. However, there was another strange reason. You see, it's related to the size and weight of those gold items."

私は二度目だったから左程でないが、波多野氏は、この奇妙な説にあっけにとられたと見え、黙り込んで弘一君の顔を眺めるばかりだ。病床の素人探偵は構わず続ける。

"I wasn't surprised as it was my second time, but it seemed that Inspector Hatano was taken aback by this strange theory. He fell silent, simply gazing at Koichi-kun's face. The amateur detective in the hospital bed continued regardless."

「この見取図が、ちゃんとそれを語っています。波多野さん、あなたは、この洋館の外まで延 びて来ている池の図を、ただ意味もなく書留めて置かれたのですか!

"This floor plan clearly illustrates it. Inspector Hatano, did you merely draw this diagram of the pond extending beyond the mansion's exterior without any particular reason?"

「というと?……アア、君は……」と、警部は非常に驚いた様子であったが、やがて「まさか。そんなことが」と、半信半疑である。

"So, you mean...? Ah, you're..." The Inspector seemed extremely surprised, but then he said, "No way. That can't be true," in a half-doubtful manner.

「高価な金製品なれば賊がそれを目がけたとしても不自然ではありません。と、同時に、皆形が小さく、しかも充分目方があります。賊が盗み去ったと見せかけて、その実池へ投げ込むにはおあつらえ向きじゃありませんか。松村君、さっき君に花瓶を投げて貰ったのはね、あの花瓶が盗まれた置時計と同じ位の重さだと思ったので、どれ程遠くまで投げられるものかためして見たのだよ。つまり、池のどの辺に盗難品が沈んでいるかということをね」

"If the stolen items were valuable gold pieces, it's not unnatural for a thief to target them. Simultaneously, they are all small in size yet weighty enough. Doesn't that make it perfect to feign a theft by tossing them into the pond? Matsumura-kun, earlier when I asked you to throw that vase, I did so because I thought the vase weighed about the same as the stolen mantel clock. I wanted to see how far it could be thrown, that is, to gauge where the stolen items might have been sunken in the pond."

「併し、犯人はなぜそんな手数のかかる真似をしなければならなかったのです。君は盗賊の仕業と見せかける為だと云われますが、それじゃ一体、何を盗賊の仕業と見せかけるのです。金製品の外に、盗まれた品でもあるのですか。全体何が犯人の真の目的だったとおっしゃるのですか」と、警部。

"However, why did the culprit have to go through such trouble? You say it was to make it appear like a thief's work, but then, why exactly would they try to make it seem like a thief did it? Apart from the gold items, were there other stolen goods? What do you suggest was the real purpose of the culprit?" asked the Inspector.

「分り切っているじゃありませんか。この僕を殺すのが、奴の目的だったのです」

"I understand perfectly. His purpose was to kill me."

「エ、あなたを殺す? それは一体誰です。何の理由によってです」

"Eh, kill you? Who on earth would want that. For what reason?"

「マア、待って下さい。僕がなぜそんな風に考えるかと云いますとね、あの場合賊は僕に向って発砲する必要は少しもなかったのです。闇にまぎれて逃げてしまえば充分逃げられたのです。ピストル強盗だって、ピストルはおどかしに使うばかりで、滅多に発射するものではありません。それにたかが金製品位を盗んで、人を殺したり傷つけたりしちゃ、泥棒の方で引合いませんよ。窃盗罪と殺人罪とでは、刑罰が非常な違いですからね。と、考えて見ると、あの発砲は非常に不自然です。ね、そうじゃありませんか。僕の疑いはここから出発しているのですよ。泥棒の方は見せかけで、真の目的は殺人にあったのじゃないかという疑いはね」

"Well, wait a moment. The reason why I think that way is because in that situation, the thief had no need to shoot at me. They could have easily escaped into the darkness. Even in cases of armed robbery, a gun is often used as a threat and rarely fired. Besides, simply stealing a few gold items wouldn't justify killing or hurting someone; it doesn't align with the intentions of a mere thief. The difference in penalties between theft and murder is substantial. So, when you think about it, that gunfire was highly unnatural. See, that's where my suspicion originated. The theft was a facade, and my suspicion is whether the real intention was not theft but rather murder."

「で、君は一体誰を疑っているのです。君を恨んでいた人物でもあるのですか」波多野氏はも どかし相だ。 "So, who exactly are you suspecting? Is he also the one who had a grudge against you?" Inspector Hatano said looking annoyed.

「ごく簡単な算術の問題です。……僕は予め誰も疑っていた訳ではありません。種々の材料の関係を理論的に吟味して、当然の結論に到達したまでです。で、その結論が当っているかどうかは、あなたが実地に調べて下されば分ることです。例えば池の中に盗難品が沈んでいるかどうかという点をですね。……算術の問題というのは、二から一を引くと一残るという、ごく明瞭な事柄です。簡単過ぎる程簡単なことです」

"It's a very simple arithmetic problem. ...It's not like I suspected anyone beforehand. After theoretically examining the relationships between various materials, we arrive at a natural conclusion. Whether or not that conclusion is correct will only be known if you do your own research. For example, whether there are stolen items submerged in the pond. ...The problem of arithmetic is a very clear one: when you subtract one from two, one remains. It's so easy, in fact it's too easy."

弘一君は続ける。

Koichi-kun continued.

「庭の唯一の足跡が贋物だとしたら、賊は廊下伝いに母屋の方へ逃げるしか道はありません。 所がその廊下にはピストル発射の刹那に、甲田君が通りかかっていたのです。御承知の通り洋 館の廊下は一方口だし、電燈もついている。甲田君の目を掠めて逃げることは全く不可能で す。隣室の志摩子さんの部屋もすぐあなた方が検べたのですから、迚も隠れ場所にはならな い。つまり、理論で押して行くと、この事件には犯人の存在する余地が全然ない訳です」

"If the only footprints in the garden are fake, the thief has no choice but to flee along the hallway towards the main house. However, Kouda-kun was passing by in the hallway at the moment the pistol was fired. As you know, the hallway of the Western-style building has one entrance, and the lights are on. It was completely impossible to escape from Kouda-kun's eyes. You were able to search Shimako-san's room next door, so there was no place for her to hide. In other words, if we go by theory, there is absolutely no room for the culprit in this case."

「無論私だってそこへ気のつかぬ筈はない。賊は母屋の方へ逃げることは出来なかった。従って犯人は外部からという結論になった訳ですよ」

"Of course, there's no way I wouldn't notice that. The thieves were unable to escape towards the main building. Therefore, it was concluded that the culprit was from outside."

と、波多野氏がいう。

said Inspector Hatano.

「犯人が外部にも内部にもいなかった。とすると、あとに残るのは被害者の僕と最初の発見者の甲田君の二人です。だが被害者が犯人である筈はない。どこの世界に自分で自分に発砲する馬鹿がありましょう。そこで最後にのこるのは甲田君です。二から一引くという算術の問題はここですよ。二人の内から被害者を引去ればあとに残るのは加害者でなければなりません」

"The culprit was neither outside nor inside. In that case, the only people left behind are me, the victim, and Kouda-kun, the person who first discovered it. However, the victim cannot be the culprit. What idiot in the world would shoot himself? The last person left is Kouda-kun. This is the arithmetic problem of subtracting one from two. If you remove the victim from between the two, what remains is the perpetrator."

「では君は……」警部と私が同時に叫んだ。

"Now you..." the inspector and I shouted at the same time.

「そうです。我々は錯覚に陥っていたのです。一人の人物が我々の盲点に隠れていたのです。彼 は不思議な隠れ簑――被害者の親友で事件の最初の発見者という隠れ簑に隠れていたのです」

"That's right. We were under an illusion. One person was hiding in our blind spot. He was hiding in a mysterious hiding place: he was the victim's best friend and the first to discover the incident."

「じゃ君は、それを初めから知っていたのですか」

"So did you know that from the beginning?"

「イヤ、今日になって分ったのです。あの晩はただ黒い人影を見た丈けです」

"No, I found out today. That night, I just saw a black figure."

「理窟はそうかも知らぬが、まさか、あのおとなしい甲田君が……」私は彼の意外な結論を信じ兼ねて口を挟んだ。

"I don't know if that's the case, but I didn't expect that gentle Kouda-kun..." I interjected, not believing his unexpected conclusion.

「サア、そこだ。僕も友達を罪人にしたくはない。だが、黙っていたら、あの気の毒な狂人が 無実の罪を着なければならないのだ。それに、甲田君は決して僕等が考えていた様な善良な男 でない。今度のやり口を見給え。奸佞邪智の限りを尽しているではないか。常人の考え出せる ことではない。悪魔だ。悪魔の所業だ」

"That's it. I don't want to make my friend a criminal. But if I stay silent, that poor madman will have to bear the punishment to a crime that he didn't commit. Besides, Kouda-kun is not the kind and good man we thought he was. Look at his recent actions. He's employing cunning and deceit to the utmost extent. It's beyond ordinary human thought. Devilish. The work of a devil."

「何か確な証拠でもありますか」警部は流石に実際的である。

"Do you have any solid evidence?" The inspector was as pragmatic as you would expect.

「彼の外に犯罪を行い得る者がなかったから彼だというのです。これが何よりの証拠じゃないでしょうか。併しお望みとあれば外にもないではありません。松村君、君は甲田君の歩き癖が 思い出せるかい |

"If there was no one else who could have committed the crime other than him, then it must be him. Isn't that the most compelling evidence? However, if you wish, it's not impossible for someone else to be involved. Matsumura-kun, can you recall Kouda-kun's walking habits?"

と、聞かれて、私はハッと思い当ることがあった。甲田が犯人だなどとは夢にも思わぬものだから、ついそれを胴忘れしていたが、彼は確に女みたいな内輪の歩き癖だ。

And when asked, I suddenly remembered something. It was unthinkable for Kouda-kun to be the culprit, so I had inadvertently forgotten about it, but he indeed had a distinctive walking habit, almost like a woman's.

「そう云えば、甲田君は内輪だったね」

"That's right, Kouda-kun is a little pigeon-toed."

「それも一つの証拠です。だが、もっと確な物があります」

"That is also one piece of evidence. But there is something more certain."

と、弘一君は例の眼鏡サックをシーツの下から取出して警部に渡し、常爺さんがそれを隠した顛末を語ったのち、

So, Koichi-kun took out the glasses bag from under the bed sheet and handed it to the inspector, and after telling him how Jou-jisan had hidden it,

「このサックは本来爺やの持物です。だが爺やが若し犯人だったと仮定したら、彼は何もこれを花壇に埋る必要はない。そ知らぬ顔をして使用していればよい訳です。誰も現場にサックが落ちていたことは知らないのですからね。つまりサックを隠したのは、彼が犯人でない証拠ですよ。では、なぜ隠したか。訳があるのです。松村君はどうしてあれに気がつかなんだかなあ。毎日一緒に海へ這入っていた癖に」

"This sack is originally owned by the old servant. But if we assume the old man was the culprit, he wouldn't need to bury it in the flowerbed. He could have just used it as if nothing had happened because no one knew the sack was at the scene. Therefore, hiding the sack is evidence that he isn't the culprit. So why did he hide it? There must be a reason. How come you didn't notice it, Matsumura-kun, despite us crawling to the sea together every day?"

と、弘一君が説明した所によると……

According to Koichi-kun's explanation...

甲田伸太郎は近眼鏡をかけていたが、結城家へ来る時サックを用意しなかった。サックというものは常に必要はないが、海水浴などでは、あれがないとはずした眼鏡の置き場に困るものだ。それを見兼ねて常爺さんが自分の老眼鏡のサックを甲田君に貸し与えた。このことは(私は迂闊にも気づかなんだが)弘一君ばかりでなく、志摩子さんも結城家の書生などもよく知っていた。そこで、常さんは現場のサックを見ると、ハッとして、甲田君を庇う為めにそれを隠した次第である。

Shintaro Kouda was wearing glasses for his nearsightedness, but he didn't have a sack ready when he came to the Yuuki house. A sack isn't always necessary, but if you don't have one when you're swimming at the beach, you'll have trouble finding a place to store your glasses. Taking this into consideration, Jousan lent Kouda-kun the bag of his reading glasses. Not only Koichi-kun (although I was careless enough to not realize this), but also Shimako-san and the students of the Yuuki family were well aware of this. When Jou-san saw the sack at the scene, he was shocked and hid it to protect Kouda.

ではなぜ爺さんは甲田君にサックを貸したり、甲田君の罪を隠したりしたかというに、この 常爺さんは、甲田君のお父さんに非常に世話になった男で、結城家に傭われたのも甲田君のお 父さんの紹介であった。随ってその恩人の子の甲田君に並々ならぬ好意を示す訳である。これ らの事情は私も予て知らぬではなかった。

So why did the old man lend the sack to Kouda-kun and cover for him? Well, Jou-jisan owed a lot to Kouda-kun's father and was actually employed at the Yuuki household upon his recommendation. Therefore, he felt a special fondness for Kouda-kun, the son of his benefactor. I was already aware of these circumstances.

「だが、あの爺さんは、ただサックが落ちていたからといって、どうしてそう簡単に甲田を疑ってしまったのでしょう、少し変ですね」

"However, I wonder why that old man was so easily suspicious of Kouda-kun just because the sack had fallen. It seems a little strange, doesn't it?"

波多野氏は流石に急所をつく。

As expected, Inspector Hatano made a crucial point.

「イヤ、それには理由があるのです。その理由をお話すれば、自然甲田君の殺人未遂の動機も明かになる訳ですが」と弘一君は少し云い悪く相に話し始める。

"No, there's a reason for that. If I tell you the reason, the motive behind Kouda-kun's attempted murder will become clear," Koichi-kun began speaking to him, a little insultingly.

それは一口に云えば、弘一君、志摩子さん、甲田君の所謂恋愛三角関係なのだ。ずっと以前から、美しい志摩子さんを対象として、弘一君と甲田君との間に暗黙の闘争が行われていたのである。この物語りの最初にも述べた通り、二人は私などよりも余程親しい間柄だった。それというのが父結城と父甲田とに久しい友人関係が結ばれていたからで、随って彼等両人の心の中の烈しい闘争については私は殆ど無智であった。弘一君と志摩子さんが許嫁であること、その志摩子さんに対して甲田君が決して無関心でないこと位は、私にもおぼろげに分っていたけれど、まさか相手を殺さねばならぬ程のせっぱつまった気持になっていようとは、夢にも知らなんだ。弘一君は云う。

Put simply, it's a so-called love triangle involving Koichi-kun, Shimako-san, and Kouda-kun. There had been an implicit rivalry between Koichi-kun and Kouda-kun for the affections of the beautiful Shimako-san for quite some time. As I mentioned earlier in this story, the two were much closer to each other than I was to either of them. This was due to the long-standing friendship between Koichi-kun's father, Yuuki, and Kouda's father, which left me quite ignorant of the intense struggles within their hearts. I had a vague sense that Koichi-kun and Shimako-san were engaged, and that Kouda-kun was not indifferent to her still. But I never imagined it would lead to someone having to kill the other. Koichi-kun said,

「恥かしい話をすると、僕等は誰も居ない所では、それとは云わず些細なことでよく口論した。いや、子供みたいに取組合いさえやった。そうして泥の上を転がりながら、志摩子さんは俺のものだ俺のものだと、お互の心の中で叫んでいたのだ。一番いけないのは、志摩子さんの態度の曖昧なことだった。僕等のどちらへも失恋を感じる程キッパリした態度を見せなかったことだ。そこで甲田君にすれば、許嫁という非常な強味を持っている僕を、殺してしまえば、という気になったのかも知れませんね。この僕等のいがみ合いを、常爺やはちゃんと知っていたのです。事件のあった日にも、僕等は庭でむきになって口論をした。それも爺やの耳に這入っていたに違いない。そこで、甲田君所持のサックを見ると、忠義な家来の直覚で、爺やは恐ろしい意味を悟ったのでしょう。なぜといって、あの書斎は甲田君など滅多に這入ったことがないのだし、ピストルの音で彼が駈けつけた時には、ただドアを開いて倒れている僕を見ると直ぐ母屋の方へ駈け出した訳ですから、一番奥の窓の側にサックを落す筈がないからです」

"I'm ashamed to say, but when we were alone, we often argued over trivial matters—sometimes even wrestled like children. While rolling around in the mud, Shimako-san was screaming in our hearts, 'I'm his! I'm his!' The worst part was Shimako-san's ambiguous attitude. She never clearly showed enough rejection towards either of us to feel heartbroken. So, Kouda-kun might have felt inclined to eliminate someone with such a strong advantage as me, engaged as I was. The old man knew about our animosity. On the day of the incident, we were fiercely arguing in the garden. He must have overheard. When he saw Kouda-kun's sack, he probably sensed something terrible through his loyal servant's intuition. Why? Because Kouda-kun rarely entered the study, and when he rushed in at the sound of the pistol, he immediately ran towards the main house after seeing me collapsed by the open door. So, there's no reason for the sack to have fallen near the far window."

これで一切が明白になった。弘一君の理路整然たる推理には、流石の波多野警部も異議をさ しはさむ余地がない様に見えた。この上は池の底の盗難品を確めることが残っているばかり だ。

Now everything is clear. As expected from Inspector Hatano, there seemed to be no room for him to object to Koichi-kun's logical reasoning. All that remains is to check for stolen items at the bottom of the pond.

暫くすると、偶然の仕合せにも警察署から波多野警部に電話で吉報を齎した。その夜結城家の池の底の盗難品を警察へ届出たものがあった。池の底には例の金製品の外に、兇器のピストルも、贋の足跡の靴足袋も、ガラス切りの道具まで沈めてあったことが分った。

After a while, by coincidence, I received a phone call from the police station to Inspector Hatano with the good news. That night, there were some stolen items found at the bottom of the Yuuki family's pond that were reported to the police. In addition to the gold items mentioned above, it was discovered that at the bottom of the pond, there was also a pistol, shoes with fake footprints, and glass-cutting tools.

読者も已に想像されたであろう様に、それらの品を池の底から探し出したのは、例の赤井さんであった。彼がその夕方泥まみれになって結城邸の庭をうろついていたのは、池へ落ちたのではなくて、盗難品を取出す為にそこへ這入ったのだ。

As the reader may have guessed, it was Akai-san who found these items from the bottom of the pond. The reason he was wandering around the garden of the Yuuki mansion that evening covered in mud was not because he had fallen into the pond, but because he had crawled into it to retrieve stolen goods.

私は彼を犯人ではないかと疑ったりしたが、飛んだ思い違いで、反対に彼も亦優秀なる一個 の素人探偵だったのだ。

I suspected him of being the culprit, but I was mistaken; on the contrary, he was also an excellent amateur detective.

私がそれを話すと弘一君は、

When I told him that, Koichi-kun said,

「そうとも、僕は最初から気づいていたよ。常爺やがサックを埋める所を覗いていたのも、琴野三右衛門の家から金ピカになって出て来たのも、皆事件を探偵していたのだ。あの人の行動が、僕の推理には非常に参考になった。現にこのサックを発見することが出来たのも、つまり赤井さんのお蔭だからね。さっき君が、赤井さんが池に落ちたと話した時には、サテはもうそこへ気がついたかと、びっくりした程だよ」と語った。

"That's right, I knew it from the beginning. Watching Old Man Jou bury the sack and coming out of Sanemon Kotono's house all shiny and shiny, was all part of solving the case. His actions were

instrumental in my deductions. It was thanks to Akai-san that I was actually able to find this sack. When you mentioned that Akai-san fell into the pond earlier, I was already onto it.

さて、以下の事柄は、直接見聞した訳ではないが、便宜上順序を追って記して置くと、池から出た品物の内、例の靴足袋は、浮上ることを恐れてか、金の灰皿と一緒にハンカチに包んで沈めてあった。それが何と甲田伸太郎のハンカチに相違ないことが分ったのだ。というのは、そのハンカチの端にS・Kと彼の頭字が墨で書き込んであったからだ。彼もまさか池の底の品物が取出され様とは思わず、ハンカチの目印まで注意が行き届かなんだのであろう。

Now, I have not personally seen or heard the following things, but for convenience's sake, I will write them down in order: Among the items that came out of the pond, the particular set of shoe tabi were wrapped in a handkerchief along with a gold ashtray, probably to prevent them from floating. It turns out that it is none other than Shintaro Kouda's handkerchief. This was because his initials, S.K., were written in ink on the edge of the handkerchief. He probably didn't expect that the items at the bottom of the pond would be taken out, so he probably wasn't paying close attention to the markings on the handkerchief.

翌日甲田伸太郎が殺人被疑者として引致されたのは申すまでもない。だが、彼はあんなおとなし相な様子でいて、芯は非常な強情者であった。いかに責められても仲々実を吐かぬのだ。では、事件の直前どこにいたかと問いつめられると、彼は黙り込んで何も云わぬ。つまりピストル発射までのアリバイも成立しないのだ。最初は頬を冷す為に玄関に出ていたなどと申立てたけれど、それは結城家の書生の証言で、忽ち覆えされてしまった。あの晩一人の書生はずっと玄関脇の部屋にいたのだ。赤井さんが煙草を買いに出たのが本当だったことも、その書生の口から分った。併しいくら強情を張った所で、証拠が揃い過ぎているのだから仕方がない。その上アリバイさえ成立たぬのだ。云うまでもなく彼は起訴され、正式の裁判を受けることになった。未決入りである。

The following day, Shintaro Kouda was naturally brought in as a murder suspect. However, he appeared calm and collected outwardly but was stubborn to the core. No matter how much he was pressed, he refused to confess. When questioned about his whereabouts before the incident, he remained silent and said nothing. Therefore, there was no alibi established leading up to the pistol firing. Initially, he claimed he was at the front door to get some fresh air, but this was refuted by a clerk of the Yuuki household who testified that a single clerk had been present in the room beside the front door the entire night. It was confirmed through the clerk's statement that Akai-san had indeed gone out to buy cigarettes. Despite his stubbornness, the evidence against him was overwhelming, and he had no established alibi. Consequently, he was indicted and underwent an official trial. He remains in pre-trial detention.

七、砂丘の蔭

7, Shadow of the Dunes

それから一週間程して私は結城家を訪れた。愈々弘一君が退院したという通知に接したから だ。

About a week later, I visited the Yuuki family. This is because I received a notification that Koichi-kun had been discharged from the hospital.

まだ邸内にしめっぽい空気が漂っていた。無理もない、一人息子の弘一君が、退院したとは 云え、生れもつかぬ片輪者になってしまったのだから。父少将も母夫人も、それぞれの仕方で 私に愚痴を聞かせた。中にも一番つらい立場は志摩子さんである。彼女はせめてもの詫心か、 まるで親切な妻の様に、不自由な弘一君に附き切って世話をしていると、母夫人の話であっ た。

The atmosphere within the mansion still felt heavy. It wasn't surprising; their only son, Koichi-kun, though discharged from the hospital, had become a permanently disabled person. The Major General and his wife, each in their own way, shared their grievances with me. But among them, the most challenging position was held by Shimako-san. According to Koichi-kun's mother, she was caring for the dependent Koichi-kun as though she were a kind-hearted wife, perhaps out of a sense of apology or sympathy.

弘一君は思ったよりも元気で、血腥い事件は忘れてしまったかの様に、小説の腹案などを話して聞かせた。夕方例の赤井さんが訪ねて来た。私はこの人には、飛んだ疑いをかけて済まなく思っていたので、以前よりは親しく話しかけた。弘一君も素人探偵の来訪を喜んでいる様子だった。

Koichi-kun was in better spirits than I expected, and as if he had forgotten about the bloody incident, he talked about his plans for a novel. In the evening, the familiar Akai-san came to visit. I felt I had unjustly suspected this person before, so this time, I engaged in a friendlier conversation. Koichi-kun also appeared delighted by the visit of the amateur detective.

夕食後、私達は志摩子さんを誘って四人連れで海岸へ散歩に出た。

After dinner, we invited Shimako-san and the four of us to go for a walk on the beach.

「松葉杖って、案外便利なものだね。ホラ見給え、こんなに走ることだって出来るから |

"Crutches are surprisingly useful. Look at me, I can run like this."

弘一君は浴衣の裾を飜して、変な格好で飛んで見せた。新しい松葉杖の先が地面につく度に、コトコトと淋しい音を立てる。

Koichi-kun wore the hem of his yukata and flitted around in a strange manner. Every time the tip of his new crutch touched the ground, it made a lonely clacking sound.

「危ないわ、危ないわ」

"That's dangerous, that's dangerous."

志摩子さんは、彼につき纏って走りながら、ハラハラして叫んだ。

Shimako-san ran after him, screaming in the excitement.

「諸君、これから由井ヶ浜の余興を見に行こう」と弘一君が大はしゃぎで動議を出した。

"My friends, let's go see the entertainment at Yuigahama!" Koichi excitedly motioned.

「歩けますか」赤井さんが危ぶむ。

"Can you walk?" Akai-san said worriedly.

「大丈夫、一里だって。余興場は十丁もありゃしない」

"It's okay, it's only one mile. There aren't even ten entertainment halls."

新米の不具者は、歩き始めの子供みたいに、歩くことを享楽している。私達は冗談を投げ合いながら、月夜の田舎道を、涼しい浜風に袂を吹かせて歩いた。

A newly disabled person enjoys walking like a child who is just beginning to walk. We joked with each other as we walked along the country road under the moonlight, the cool beach breeze blowing at our heels.

道のなかば、話が途切れて、四人とも黙り込んで歩いていた時、何を思い出したのか、赤井 さんがクツクツ笑い出した。非常に面白い事らしく、いつまでも笑いが止まらぬ。

Halfway down the road, the conversation stopped and all four of us were walking in silence, when Akaisan suddenly remembered something and started laughing. It must've been so funny that he couldn't stop laughing.

「赤井さん、何をそんなに笑っていらっしゃいますのよ」志摩子さんが耐らなくなって尋ねた。

"Akai-san, why are you laughing so much?" Shimako-san asked, unable to bear it anymore.

「いえね、つまらないことなんですよ」赤井さんはまだ笑い続けながら答える。「あのね、私は 今人間の足って云うものについて、変なことを考えていたんですよ。身体の小さい人の足は身 体に相当して小さい筈だとお思いでしょう。ところがね、身体は小作りな癖に足丈けはひどく大きい人間もあることが分ったのですよ。滑稽じゃありませんか、足丈け大きいのですよ」赤井さんはそう云って又クツクツと笑い出した。志摩子さんは御義理に「マア」と笑って見せたが、無論どこが面白いのだか分らぬ様子だった。赤井さんの云ったりしたりする事は何となく異様である。妙な男だ。

"It's nothing much, really," Akai-san responded while still smiling. "You know, I was thinking about something odd regarding human feet. You'd think that a person with a small body would have correspondingly small feet. But you see, I found out that despite having a petite build, some people have excessively large feet. Isn't that funny, large feet for their size?" Akai-san chuckled again. Shimako-san politely responded with a "Well," and a smile, but she seemed unsure why it was amusing. Akai's remarks were always somewhat peculiar. What a strange man.

夏の夜の由井ヶ浜は、お祭りみたいに明るく賑かであった。浜の舞台ではお神楽めいた余興が始まっていた。黒山の人だかりだ。舞台を囲んで葦簾張りの市街が出来ている。喫茶店、レストラン、雑貨屋、水菓子屋。そして百燭光の電燈と、蓄音器と、白粉の濃い少女達。

Yuigahama on a summer night was bright and lively, like a festival. A kagura-like entertainment had begun on the beach stage. There was a large crowd of people. Surrounding the stage is a city lined with reed curtains. Coffee shop, restaurant, general store, confectionery shop. And a hundred electric lights, a phonograph, and girls covered in white powder.

私達はとある明るい喫茶店に腰をかけて、冷たいものを飲んだが、そこで赤井さんが又礼儀を無視した変な挙動をした。彼は先日池の底を探った時、ガラスのかけらで指を傷つけたと云って、繃帯をしていた。それが喫茶店にいる間にほどけたものだから、口を使って結ぼうとするのだが、仲々結べない。志摩子さんが見兼ねて、

We sat down at a bright cafe and sipped on cold drinks. There, Akai-san displayed another strange behavior, disregarding manners once again. He mentioned that he had cut his finger with a piece of glass while searching at the bottom of the pond the other day, so he had it bandaged. During our time at the cafe, the bandage came undone, and he was trying to tie it using his mouth, but he couldn't quite manage it. Shimako-san looked over and said,

「あたし、結んで上げましょうか」と手を出すと、赤井さんは無作法にも、その申出を無視して、別の側に腰かけていた弘一君の前へ指をつき出し「結城さんすみませんが」ととうとう弘 一君に結ばせてしまった。この男はやっぱり根が非常識なのであろうか、それとも天邪鬼という奴かしら。

"I can help you tie it," offered Shimako-san. However, Akai-san rudely ignored her offer and instead extended his finger towards Koichi-kun, who was sitting on the other side. He said, "Excuse me, Yuuki-san," and finally had Koichi-kun tie it for him. I wonder if this man is just naturally tactless or perhaps a kind of demon.

やがて、主として弘一君と赤井さんの間に探偵談が始まった。両人とも今度の事件では、警察を出し抜いて非常な手柄を立てたのだから、話がはずむのも道理である。話がはずむにつれて、彼等は例によって、内外の、現実の、或は小説上の名探偵達をけなし始めた。弘一君が日頃目のかたきにしている「明智小五郎伝」の主人公が、槍玉に上ったのは申すまでもない。

Soon, an exchange of detective stories between Koichi-kun and Akai-san began in earnest. Both of them had made a significant contribution, outsmarting the police in the recent incident, so it was natural for the conversation to flow. As they continued, they began criticizing various famous detectives, whether real or fictional, domestic, or international, as per their usual discussions. It goes without saying that the protagonist of "Akechi Kogoro Detective Story" whom Koichi-kun usually opposed, was the main target of their critique.

「あの男なんか、まだ本当にかしこい犯人を扱った事がないのですよ。普通あり来りの犯人を捕えて得意になっているんじゃ、名探偵とは云えませんからね」弘一君はそんな風な云い方をした。

"That guy hasn't dealt with really smart criminals yet. He can't be called a great detective if he's only good at catching common criminals." Koichi-kun said.

喫茶店を出てからも、両人の探偵談は仲々尽きぬ。自然私達は二組に分れ、志摩子さんと私 とは、話に夢中の二人を追い越して、ずっと先を歩いていた。

Even after leaving the coffee shop, the two continued to share endless detective stories. Naturally, we split into two groups, and Shimako-san and I walked far ahead of them, passing the two who were engrossed in conversation.

志摩子さんは人なき波打際を、高らかに歌いつつ歩く。私も知っている曲は合唱した。月は 幾億の銀粉と化して波頭に踊り、涼しい浜風が、袂を裾を合唱の声を、遙か彼方の松林へと吹 いて通る。

Shimako-san walks along the empty beach, singing loudly. She sings a song that I know too. The moon turns into millions of silver particles and dances on the crest of the waves, and the cool beach breeze blows the chorus of voices under the skirts into the distant pine forest.

「あの人達、びっくりさせてやりましょうよ」

"Let's give them a surprise."

突然立上った志摩子さんが、茶目らしく私に囁いた。振向くと二人の素人探偵は、まだ熱心 に語らいつつ一丁も遅れて歩いて来る。

Shimako-san suddenly stood up and whispered to me in a playful manner. When I turned around, the two amateur detectives were still talking enthusiastically and were walking a hair behind me.

志摩子さんが、傍の大きな砂丘を指して「ね、ね」としきりに促すものだから、私もついその気になり、隠れん坊の子供みたいに、二人してその砂丘の蔭に身を隠した。

Shimako-san pointed to a large sand dune nearby and kept asking, "Hey, hey," and I couldn't help but feel the same way, so we hid behind the sand dune, like children playing hide-and-seek.

「どこへ行っちまったんだろう」

"I wonder where they went?"

暫くすると、あとの二人の足音が近づき、弘一君のこういう声が聞こえた。彼等は私達の隠れるのを知らないでいたのだ。

After a while, the footsteps of the other two people approached, and I heard Koichi-kun's voice. They didn't know we were hiding.

「まさか迷子にもなりますまい。それよりも私達はここで一休みしようじゃありませんか。砂 地は松葉杖では疲れるでしょう!

"I don't think they got lost, do you? Instead, let's take a break here. The sandy ground will be tiring on crutches."

赤井さんの声が云って、二人はそこへ腰をおろした様子である。偶然にも、砂丘を挟んで、 私達と背中合わせの位置だ。

Akai-san's voice said, and the two sat down. Coincidentally, it was right behind us, across the sand dunes.

「ここなら誰も聞く者はありますまい。実はね、内密であなたにお話ししたいことがあったのですよ」

"No one will listen here. Actually, there is something I would like to tell you in private."

赤井さんの声である。今にも「ワッ」と飛出そうかと身構えしていた私達は、その声に又腰をおちつけた。盗み聞きは悪いとは知りながら、気拙い羽目になって、つい出るにも出られぬ気持だった。

It was Akai-san's voice. We were preparing ourselves as if we were about to jump out at any moment, but when we heard that voice, we calmed down again. Even though I knew it was wrong to eavesdrop, I felt awkward and couldn't come out even if I wanted to.

「あなたは、甲田君が真犯人だと本当に信じていらっしゃるのですか」

"Do you really believe that Kouda-kun is the real culprit?"

赤井さんの沈んだ重々しい声が聞えた。今更変なことを云い出したものである。だが、なぜ か私は、その声にギョッとして聞耳を立てないではいられなかった。

I heard Akai-san's deep, grave voice. He had just said something strange. But for some reason, I couldn't help but listen to that voice in shock.

「信じるも信じないもありません」と弘一君「現場附近に二人の人間しかいなくて、一人が、被害者であったら、他の一人は犯人と答える外ないじゃありませんか。それにハンカチだとかサックだとか、証拠が揃い過ぎているし。併しあなたは、それでもまだ疑わしい点があると御考えなんですか|

There's no believing it or not," said Koichi-kun. "With only two people near the scene, if one is the victim, the other must be the culprit. Moreover, there's overwhelming evidence like the handkerchief and the sack. But do you still think there are suspicious points?

「実はね、甲田君がとうとうアリバイを申立てたのですよ、僕はある事情で係りの予審判事と 懇意でしてね、世間のまだ知らないことを知っているのです。甲田君はピストルの音を聞いた 時、廊下にいたというのも、その前に玄関へ頬を冷しに出たというのも、皆嘘なんだそうで す。なぜそんな嘘をついたかというと、あの時甲田君は、泥棒よりももっと恥しいことを―― 志摩子さんの日記帳を盗み読みしていたからなんです。この申立てはよく辻褄が合っていま す。ピストルの音で驚いて飛出したから日記帳がそのまま机の上に投り出してあったのです。 そうでなければ、日記帳を盗み読んだとすれば、疑われない様に元の抽斗へしまって置くのが 当然ですからね。とすると、甲田君がピストルの音に驚いたのも本当らしい。つまり彼がそれ を発射したのではないことになります」

"Well, actually, Kouda-kun finally presented an alibi. You see, I am acquainted with the presiding judge in charge due to certain circumstances, and I know things the public doesn't know yet. It turns out that Kouda-kun's claim of being in the corridor when he heard the pistol shot, and even going to the entrance earlier to cool off, are all lies. The reason for these lies is that Kouda-kun, at that time, did something more shameful than being a thief—reading Shimako-san's diary. This claim fits well with the facts. He was startled by the pistol shot and dashed out, leaving the diary lying on the desk. Otherwise, if he had read the diary and wanted to avoid suspicion, he should have naturally returned it to its original drawer. This means that Kouda-kun's surprise at the pistol shot seems to be true. In other words, it indicates he didn't fire the shot.

「何の為めに日記帳を読んでいたと云うのでしょう」

"Why was he reading the diary?"

「オヤ、あなたは分りませんか。彼は恋人の志摩子さんの本当の心を判じ兼たのです。日記帳を見たら、若しやそれが分りはしないかと思ったのです。可哀相な甲田君が、どんなにイライラしていたかが分るではありませんか |

"Oh, don't you see? He wanted to discern Shimako-san's true feelings, the girl he loved. He thought if he looked at the diary, perhaps it would give him some clue. Poor Kouda-kun, you can see how frustrated he was, can't you?"

「で、予審判事はその申立を信じたのでしょうか」

"So, did the trial judge believe that motion?"

「イヤ、信じなかったのです。あなたもおっしゃる通り、甲田君に不利な証拠が揃い過ぎていますからね |

"No, they didn't believe it. As you said, there is too much evidence against Kouda-kun."

「そうでしょうとも。そんな薄弱な申立てが何になるものですか」

"That's right. What significance does such a weak claim have?"

「ところが、僕は、甲田君に不利な証拠が揃っている反面には、有利な証拠もいくらかある様な気がするのです。第一に、あなたを殺すのが目的なら、なぜ生死を確めもしないで人を呼んだかという点です。いくら慌てていたからと云って、一方では、前もって偽の足跡をつけて置いたりした周到さに比べて、あんまり辻褄が合わないじゃありませんか。第二には、偽の足跡をつける場合、往復の逆であることを看破されないために、足跡の重なることを避けた程綿密な彼が、自分の足癖をそのまま、内輪につけて置いたというのも信じ難いことです」

"However, while there is evidence that appears to be disadvantageous for Kouda-kun, I also feel that there are some favorable pieces of evidence. Firstly, if the purpose was to kill you, why call someone without even confirming life or death? No matter how hurried the situation was, it doesn't quite fit compared to the meticulousness of setting up fake footprints beforehand. Secondly, when creating false footprints, it's hard to believe that he, who was so careful to avoid overlapping footprints to avoid suspicion, would leave his own footprints as they are, indicating his unique gait."

赤井さんの声が続く。

Akai-san's voice continued.

「簡単に考えれば殺人とはただ人を殺す、ピストルを発射するという一つの行動に過ぎませんけれど、複雑に考えると、幾百幾千という些細な行動の集合から成立っているものです。殊に罪を他に転嫁する為の偽瞞が行われた場合は一層それが甚しい。今度の事件でも、眼鏡サック、靴足袋、偽の足跡、机上に投り出してあった日記帳、池の底の金製品と、ごく大きな要素

を上げただけでも十位はある、その各要素について犯人の一挙手一投足を綿密にたどって行くならば、そこに幾百幾千の特殊なる小行動が存在する訳です。そこで、探偵が活動写真フイルムの一齣一齣を検査する様に、その小さな行動の一々を推理することが出来たならば、どれ程頭脳明晰で用意周到な犯人でも、到底処罰を免れることは出来ない筈です。併しそこまでの推理は残念ながら人間力では不可能ですから、せめて我々は、どんな微細なつまらない点にも、絶えず注意を払って、犯罪フイルムのある重要な一齣にぶつかることを僥倖する外はありません。その意味で僕は、幼児からの幾億回とも知れぬ反覆で、一種の反射運動と化している様な事柄、例えばある人は歩く時右足から始めるか左足から始めるか、手拭をしぼる時右にねじるか左にねじるか、服を着る時右手から通すか、左手から通すかという様な、ごくごく些細な点に、常に注意を払っています。これらの一見つまらない事柄が、犯罪捜査に当って、非常に重大な決定要素となることがないとも限らぬからです。

"Simply put, murder is not just the single action of killing someone or firing a pistol; it is a compilation of hundreds or even thousands of tiny actions when you think about it in depth. Especially when false pretenses are established to shift blame elsewhere, it becomes even more complicated. In this recent case, just listing the glasses, sack, shoe covers, false footprints, the diary left on the desk, and the gold items at the bottom of the pond—this is already ten significant elements. If one were to meticulously trace the perpetrator's every move regarding each of these elements, there would be hundreds or thousands of specific, minor actions. Like examining each frame of a film, if one could deduce each of these small actions, regardless of how intelligent and well-prepared the perpetrator might be, they couldn't possibly escape punishment. Unfortunately, human capability falls short of making such deductions. Hence, at least, we should continuously pay attention to even the most trivial details, for we might serendipitously stumble upon a crucial moment in the criminal film. That's why I, seemingly in an endless cycle since childhood, have developed a kind of reflex, always paying attention to seemingly trivial things. For example, whether someone starts walking with their right foot or left, twists a towel to the right or left, or puts on clothes starting with the right or left hand. These seemingly insignificant details might not be so inconsequential in a criminal investigation.

さて、甲田君にとっての第三の反証ですが、それは例の靴足袋と重りの灰皿とを包んであったハンカチの結び目なのです。私はその結び目をくずさぬ様に中の品を抜出し、ハンカチは結んだまま波多野警部に渡して置きました。非常に大切な証拠品だと思ったからです。ではそれはどんな結び方かと云うと、私共の地方で俗に立て結びという、二つの結び端が結び目の下部と直角をなして十文字に見える様な、つまり子供のよくやる間違った結び方なのです。普通の大人では非常に稀にしかそんな結び方をする人はありません。やろうと思っても出来ないのです。そこで僕は早速甲田君の家を訪問して、お母さんにお願いして、何か甲田君が結んだものがないか探して貰ったところ、幸、甲田君が自分が結んだ帳面の綴糸や、書斎の電燈を吊ってある太い打紐や其他三つも四つも結び癖の分るものが出て来ました。ところがそれが例外な

く、普通の結び方なのです。まさか甲田君があのハンカチの結び方にまで偽瞞をやったとは考えられない。結び目なんかよりもずっと危険な、頭字の入ったハンカチを平気で使った位ですからね。で、それが甲田君に取っては一つの有力な反証になる訳です」

"Now, for the third contradiction regarding Kouda-kun, it relates to the knot tied in the handkerchief that wrapped the aforementioned shoe covers and the weighted ashtray. I carefully removed the contents without undoing the knot and handed the knotted handkerchief to Inspector Hatano. I deemed it an extremely vital piece of evidence. So, what kind of knot was it, you might ask? In our region, it's commonly referred to as a 'square knot,' where the two ends of the knot form a cross at the bottom of the knot, at right angles. In other words, it's the wrong way children often tie knots, a type of knot that very few adults, even if they tried, could replicate. Upon visiting Kouda-kun's house and requesting his mother to look for something tied by Kouda-kun, fortunately, we found threads tied in notebooks by Kouda-kun himself, a thick cord hanging the study lamp, and three or four other items, all displaying a recognizable tying habit. However, without exception, these were all tied in the normal way. It's inconceivable that Kouda-kun would go to the extent of deceiving the knot in that handkerchief. He used a handkerchief with initials, far more dangerous than a mere knot. For Kouda-kun, this becomes a compelling contradiction.

赤井さんの声が一寸切れた。弘一君は何も云わぬ。相手の微細な観察に感じ入っているのであろう。盗み聞く私達も、真剣に聞入っていた。殊に志摩子さんは、息使いも烈しく、身体が小さく震えている。敏感な少女は已にある恐ろしい事実を察していたのであろうか。

Akai-san's voice quivered slightly. There was silence from Koichi-kun. Perhaps he was absorbed in his counterpart's meticulous observations. Even eavesdropping, we were listening intently. Especially Shimako-san, her breaths were intense, and her small frame trembled. Had the perceptive young woman already sensed a dreadful truth?

八、THOU ART THE MAN

8, THOU ART THE MAN

暫くすると、赤井さんがクスクス笑う声が聞えて来た。彼は気味悪くいつまでも笑っていた がやがて始める。

After a while, I heard Akai-san giggling. He continued to chuckle creepily, but then he started to laugh.

「それから、第四のそして最も大切な反証はね、ウフフフフフフフ、実に滑稽なことなんです。それはね、例の靴足袋について、飛んでもない錯誤があったのですよ。池の底から出た靴足袋はなるほど地面の足跡とは一致します。そこまでは申分ないのです。水に濡たとは云え、ゴム底は収縮しませんから、ちゃんと元の形が分ります。僕は試みにその文数を計って見ましたが、十文の足袋と同じ大きさでした。ところがね」

"Then, the fourth and most important counterevidence is, ufufufufu, it's really ridiculous. That is, there was a ridiculous mistake about the shoe tabi. The shoes that came out of the bottom of the pond. I see that the tabi matches the footprints on the ground. So far, it's perfect. Even though it got wet, the rubber sole doesn't shrink, so you can clearly see the original shape. They were the same size as the ten-mon footwear. But..."

と、云って赤井さんは又一寸黙った。次の言葉を出すのが惜い様子である。

With that, Akai-san was silent for a moment again. He seems reluctant to say the next word.

「ところがね」と赤井さんは喉の奥でクスクス笑っている調子で続ける。「滑稽なことには、あの靴足袋は、甲田君の足には小さ過ぎて合わないのですよ。さっきのハンカチの一件で甲田家を訪ねた時お母さんに聞いて見ると、甲田君は去年の冬でさえ已に十一文の足袋を穿いていたじゃありませんか。これ丈で甲田君の無罪は確定的です。なぜと云って、自分の足に合わない靴足袋ならば、決して不利な証拠ではないのです。何を苦んで重りをつけて沈めたりしましょう。

"But" Akai-san continued, a chuckle deep in his throat. "The funny thing is, those shoe tabi are too small for Kouda-kun's feet and don't fit him. When I visited the Kouda family about the handkerchief incident earlier, I asked his mother, and she told me that Kouda-kun, even last winter, he was wearing 11-mon tabi socks. With this length, Kouda-kun's innocence is certain. If the shoe tabi doesn't fit your feet, you'll never be at a disadvantage. It's not proof. I wonder why they went to the trouble of weighting and sinking it.

この滑稽な事実は、警察でも裁判所でもまだ気づいていないらしい。あんまり予想外な馬鹿 馬鹿しい間違いですからね。取調べが進む内に間違いが分るかも知れません。それとも、あの 足袋を嫌疑者にはかせて見る様な機会が起らなかったら、或は誰も気づかぬまま済んでしまうかも知れません。

It seems that neither the police nor the courts are aware of this ridiculous fact. It was a very unexpected and stupid mistake. Mistakes sometimes happen to be discovered as the investigation progresses. Or if the suspect had never had the opportunity to see the tabi, it might have gone unnoticed.

お母さんも云ってましたが、甲田君は身長の割に非常に足が大きいのです。これが間違いの元なんです。想像するに真犯人は甲田君より少し背の高い奴ですね。奴は自分の足袋の文数から考えて、自分より背の低い甲田君がまさかそれより大きい足袋を穿く筈がないと信じ切っていた為に、この滑稽千万な錯誤が生じたのかも知れませんね」

"It was also mentioned by your mother, but Kouda-kun has unusually large feet for his height. That's the source of the mistake. I imagine the real culprit is slightly taller than Kouda. They, considering their own shoe size, might have firmly believed that Kouda-kun, who is shorter than them, couldn't possibly wear shoes larger than theirs. This belief might have led to this ridiculous mistake."

「証拠の羅列はもう沢山です」弘一君が突然、イライラした調子で叫んだ。

"There's already so much evidence," Koichi-kun suddenly shouted in an irritated tone.

「結論を云って下さい。あなたは一体、誰が犯人だとおっしゃるのですか」

"Please tell me your conclusion then. Who on earth do you think is the culprit?"

「それは、あなたです」

"That it's you."

赤井さんの落ちついた声が、真正面から人差指をつきつける様な調子で云った。

"Akai-san spoke in a calm tone, as if pointing his index finger directly ahead."

「アハハ……、おどかしちゃいけません。冗談はよして下さい。どこの世界に、父親の大切に している品物を池に投込んだり、自分で自分に発砲したりする奴がありましょう。びっくりさ せないで下さい|

"Ahaha... Please don't scare me. Let's skip the jokes. In what world would someone throw their father's cherished belongings into a pond or shoot themselves? Please don't surprise me like that."

弘一君が頓狂な声で否定した。

Koichi-kun denied it in a wild voice.

「犯人は、あなたです」

"The culprit, is you."

赤井さんは同じ調子で繰返す。

Akai-san repeated in the same tone.

「あなた本気で云っているのですか。何を証拠に、何の理由で」

"Are you serious? What evidence and why?"

「ごく明白なことです。あなたの云い方を借りると、簡単な算術の問題に過ぎません。二から一引く一。二人の内の甲田君が犯人でなかったら、どんなに不自然に見え様とも、残るあなたが犯人です。あなた御自分の帯の結び目に手をやってごらんなさい。結び端がピョコンと縦になってますよ。あなたは子供の時分の間違った結び癖を大人になっても続けているのです。その点だけは珍しく不器用ですね。併し、帯はうしろで結ぶものですから例外かも知れないと思って、僕はさっきあなたにこの繃帯を結んで貰いました。ごらんなさい。やっぱり十字形の間違った結び方です。これも一つの有力な証拠にはなりませんかね」

"I am making it quite clear. To put it in your terms, it's just a simple arithmetic problem. Subtracting one from two equals one. If Kouda-san among you is not the culprit, no matter how unnatural it may seem, the remaining person - you - is the culprit. Take a look at the knot on your belt. The ends of the knot are sticking out vertically. You've continued the mistaken knotting habit from your childhood into adulthood. That aspect alone is remarkably clumsy. However, because belts are tied at the back, I thought it might be an exception. So, I had you tie this bandage for me just now. Take a look. It's the same wrong cross-shaped knot. Doesn't this also become a strong piece of evidence?"

赤井さんは沈んだ声で、あくまで鄭重な言葉使をする。それが一層不気味な感じを与えた。

Akai-san's voice is somber, and his words are solemn. That gave it an even more eerie feeling.

「だが、僕はなぜ自分自身をうたなければならなかったのです。僕は臆病だし見え坊です。た だ甲田君を陥れる位の為に、痛い思いをしたり、生涯不具者で暮す様な馬鹿な真似はしませ ん。外にいくらだって方法がある筈です!

"But I wonder why I would have had to incriminate myself. I'm timid and cowardly. But doing something as foolish as enduring pain or living as a lifelong invalid just to frame Kouda-kun, I wouldn't do that. There should be countless other ways out there."

弘一君の声には確信がこもっていた。成程成程、如何に甲田君を憎んだからと云って、弘一君自身が命にもかかわる大傷を負ったのでは引合わないはずだ。被害者が、即ち加害者だなんて、そんな馬鹿な話があるものか。赤井さんは、飛んだ思い違いをしているのかも知れない。

Koichi-kun's voice was full of conviction. Of course, no matter how much he hated Kouda-kun, it wouldn't make sense if Koichi-kun himself suffered a serious injury that could threaten his life. Is there

such a ridiculous story that the victim is actually the perpetrator? Akai-san may have made a complete misunderstanding.

「サア、そこです。その信じ難い点に、この犯罪の大きな偽瞞が隠されている。この事件では 凡ての人が催眠術にかかっています。根本的な一大錯誤に陥っています。それは『被害者は同 時に加害者ではあり得ない』という迷信です。それから、この犯罪が単に甲田君を無実の罪に 陥す為に行われたと考えることも、大変な間違いです。そんなことは実に小さな副産物に過ぎ ません」

"It's there. The incredible point hiding the major deception of this crime. Everyone in this case is under a hypnotic trance. They've fallen into a fundamental fallacy: the superstition that 'the victim cannot simultaneously be the perpetrator.' Moreover, considering that this crime was merely committed to ensnare Kouda-kun in an innocent charge is a grave mistake. That's just a very small byproduct."

赤井さんはゆっくりゆっくり鄭重な言葉で続ける。

Akai-san continued slowly with his grave words.

「実に考えた犯罪です。併し本当の悪人の考えではなくて、寧ろ小説家の空想ですね。あなたは一人で被害者と犯人と探偵の一人三役を演じるという着想に有頂天になってしまったのでしょう。甲田君のサックを盗み出して現場に捨てて置いたのもあなたです。金製品を池に投込んだのも、窓ガラスを切ったのも偽の足跡をつけたのも、云うまでもなくあなたです。そうして置いて、隣の志摩子さんの書斎で甲田君が日記帳を読んでいる機会を利用して(この日記帳を読ませたのも、あなたがそれとなく暗示を与えたのではありませんか)煙硝の焼けこげがつかぬ様ピストルの手を高く上げて、一番離れた足首を射ったのです。あなたはちゃんと、その物音で隣室の甲田君が飛んで来ることを予知していた。同時に、恋人の日記の盗み読みという恥しい行為の為、甲田君がアリバイの申立てについて、曖昧な、疑われ易い態度を示すに相違ないと見込んでいたのです。

"I've truly conceived a crime, but it's not the thought process of a real criminal, rather the imagination of a novelist. You were exhilarated by the idea of playing all three roles of victim, perpetrator, and detective. It was you who stole Kouda-kun's sack and left it at the scene. You threw the gold items into the pond, cut the window glass, created false footprints—undeniably, all your doing. And then, taking advantage of an opportunity when Kouda-kun was reading the diary in Shimako-san's adjacent study (which you indirectly suggested he read), you raised the pistol high, aiming at the farthest ankle, to make sure no scorch marks would stick. You anticipated Kouda-kun would rush in at the sound. Simultaneously, you assumed that due to the shameful act of reading the lover's diary, Kouda-kun would show an ambiguous and easily suspicious attitude in his alibi declaration.

射ってしまうと、あなたは傷の痛さをこらえて、最後の証拠品であるピストルを、開いた窓 越しに池の中へ投込みました。あなたの倒れていた足の位置が窓と池との一直線上にあるのが 一つの証拠です。これは波多野氏の見取図にもちゃんと現われています。そして、凡ての仕事が終ると、あなたは気を失って倒れた。或はその体を装ったという方が正しいかも知れません。足首の傷は決して軽いものではなかったけれど、命にかかわる気遣いはない。あなたの目的にとっては丁度過不足のない程度の傷でした」

When you fired the shot, you endured the pain of the wound and then, as the final piece of evidence, threw the pistol, through the open window, into the pond. One piece of evidence supporting this is the position of your fallen legs in line with the window and the pond; this is clearly depicted in Inspector Hatano's diagram. And once all the tasks were completed, you collapsed, either genuinely or in a calculated manner. The ankle injury wasn't trivial, but it wasn't life-threatening. It was just the right amount of injury for your purpose."

「アハハハハハ 。成程成程、一応は筋の通ったお考えですね」と弘一君の声は、気のせいかうわずっていた。「だが、それ丈けの目的を果す為に、生れもつかぬ不具者になるというのは、少し変ですね。どんなに証拠が揃っていても、ただこの一点で僕は無罪放免かも知れませんよ」

"Hahaha... I see, I see. That's quite a logically sound perspective," said Koichi-kun, his voice trembling, perhaps with anticipation. "But, becoming a disabled person against my own nature just to achieve such a purpose seems a bit odd, don't you think? No matter how much evidence there might be, I might just be acquitted based on this single point."

「サアそこです。さっきも云ったではありませんか。甲田君を罪に陥すのも一つの目的には相違なかった。だが、本当の目的はもっと別にあったのです。あなたは御自身で臆病者だとおっしゃった。成程その通りです。自分で自分を射ったのは、あなたが極度の臆病者であったからです。アア、あなたはまだごまかそうとしていますね。僕がそれを知らないとでも思っているのですか。では、云いましょう。あなたは極端な軍隊恐怖病者なのです。あなたは徴兵検査に合格して、年末には入営することになっていた。それをどうかしてまぬがれようとしたのです。私はあなたが学生時代、近眼鏡をかけて目を悪くしようと試みたことを探り出しました。又、あなたの小説を読んで、あなたの意識下に潜んでいる、軍隊恐怖の幽霊を発見しました。殊にあなたは軍人の子です。姑息な手段は却って発覚の虞れがある。そこであなたは内臓を害するとか、指を切るという様な常套手段を排して、思い切った方法を選んだ。しかもそれは一石にして二鳥を墜す名案でもあったのです。……オヤ、どうかしましたか。しっかりなさい。まだお話することがあります。

"I see, that's where it lies. Didn't I say it earlier? Framing Kouda-kun wasn't the only purpose. The real purpose was different. You mentioned being a coward yourself. Yes, that's right. You shot yourself because you were an extreme coward. Ah, you're still trying to cover it up, aren't you? Do you think I don't know about it? Well, let's say it. You suffer from extreme military phobia. You had passed the

military examination and were due to enlist by year's end. You tried to escape from that somehow. I found out about your attempts during your student days to worsen your eyesight by wearing glasses. Also, I discovered the ghost of your military fear lurking in your consciousness through reading your novels. Particularly, being a child from a military family, your cowardly means might have had the risk of being exposed. So, instead of resorting to the usual methods that could risk discovery, you chose a bold method. Moreover, it was a clever solution that would kill two birds with one stone... Oh, are you okay? Pull yourself together. I still have more to say.

気を失うのではないかとびっくりしましたよ。しっかりして下さい。僕は君を警察へつき出す気はありません。ただ僕の推理が正しいかどうかを確めたかったのです。併し、君はまさかこのまま黙っている気ではありますまいね。それに、君はもう君にとって何より恐ろしい処罰を受けてしまったのです。この砂丘のうしろに、君の一番聞かれたくない女性が、今の一伍一什を聞いていたのです。

I'm quite surprised and worried that you might pass out. Please, gather yourself. I don't intend to turn you over to the police. I just wanted to confirm whether my deductions were correct. However, I don't suppose you're planning to stay silent like this. Besides, you've already received the most terrifying punishment for yourself. Behind this dune, the woman you least wanted to hear all of this, just heard every bit of what has transpired here.

では僕はこれでお別れします。君は独りで静かに考える時間が必要です。ただお別れする前に、僕の本名を申上げて置きましょう。僕はね、君が日頃軽蔑していたあの明智小五郎なのです。お父さんの御依頼を受けて陸軍のある秘密な盗難事件を調べる為めに、変名でお宅へ出入りしていたのです。あなたは明智小五郎は理窟っぽいばかりだとおっしゃった。だが、その私でも、小説家の空想よりは実際的だということがお分りになりましたか。……では左様なら」

Then I shall bid you farewell. You need some time alone to ponder quietly. However, before I leave, let me tell you my real name. I am, you see, that famous detective you often disdain, Kogoro Akechi. I was undercover investigating a certain secret theft case for your father. You mentioned that Kogoro Akechi seems merely fictional. But even I, the one you consider merely a creation of novelists, seem more realistic than fiction, don't you think? ...Well then, goodbye."

そして、驚愕と当惑の為に上の空の私の耳へ、赤井さんが砂を踏んで遠ざかる静かな足音が 聞こえて来た。

Then, to my astonishment and bewilderment, I heard the sound of Akai-san's quiet footsteps stepping on the sand in the distance above me.