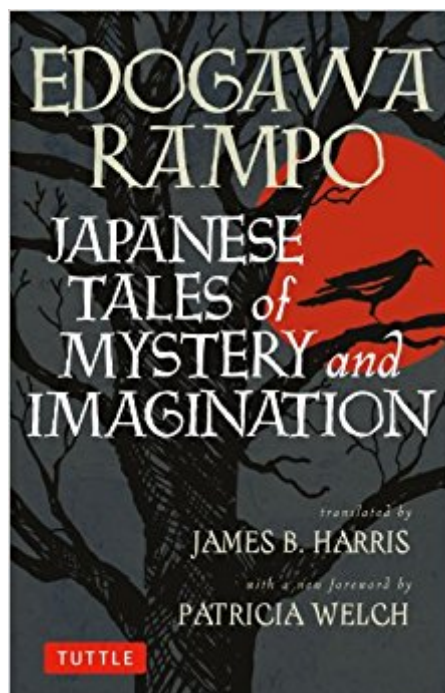


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Japanese Tales Of Mystery And Imagination



Synopsis

This collection of mystery and horror stories is regarded as Japan's answer to Edgar Allan Poe. Japanese Tales of Mystery & Imagination, the first volume of its kind translated into English, is written with the quick tempo of the West but rich with the fantasy of the East. These nine bloodcurdling, chilling tales present a genre of literature largely unknown to readers outside Japan, including the strange story of a quadruple amputee and his perverse wife; the record of a man who creates a mysterious chamber of mirrors and discovers hidden pleasures within; the morbid confession of a maniac who envisions a career of foolproof "psychological" murders; and the bizarre tale of a chair-maker who buries himself inside an armchair and enjoys the sordid "loves" of the women who sit on his handiwork. Lucid and packed with suspense, Edogawa Rampo's stories found in Japanese Tales of Mystery & Imagination have enthralled Japanese readers for over half a century. Mystery stories include: The Human Chair, The Caterpillar, Two Crippled Men, The Traveler with the Pasted Rag Picture.

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Customer Reviews

I can think of few more truly disturbing stories than Edogawa Rampo's "The Chair." A psychologically fable describing in minute detail how a master furniture maker, obsessed with an unachievable woman, creates a chair with himself hidden inside. This chair is given to the woman, and each time she sits in it she nestles unknowingly in his lap, puts her weight onto him, lays her head against his face. The furniture maker silently feels her every night, without her ever knowing.

The atmosphere, the detail of the language, and the sheer nature of the story combine for one of the classics of this genre. "The Chair" is of course included in "Japanese Tales of Mystery & Imagination," a compilation by the father of Japanese mystery writing. Much is made of his adopting the Japanese pronunciation of Edgar Allan Poe as his pen name, but Rampo's style is his own. He favors psychological horror, and there are few elements of the supernatural to be found. Sociopaths and obsessives seem to be his stock in trade, with detailed exercises on how to commit the perfect, untraceable murder. Many of the stories end with some unexpected revelation, although I would not call it a "twist ending." The obsessive nature of the stories renders them all the more disturbing, as almost every story is something that could conceivably happen.

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