

The Master Key (Togawa novel)

The Master Key (大いなる幻影, *Ōinaru gen'ei*) is a 1962 novel by the Japanese novelist Masako Togawa which received the Edogawa Rampo Prize upon publication^[1]. The English translation by Simon Grove was first published by Dodd, Mead & Co in 1985.^[2]

It is a mystery story set in the 1950's postwar Ikebukuro, Japan with the setting of K Apartment for Ladies, reserved only for women. Many of the aging residents have their own secrets bound to the master key, which opens all of the 150 rooms in the K Apartment^[3]. All the secrets start to unravel when the building is slated for construction work to be moved four meters with the residents inside.

Characters

Major Characters:

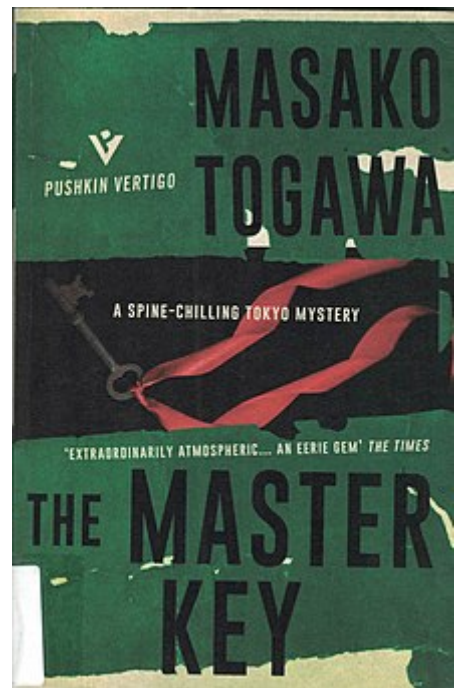
- **Katsuko Tojo/Haru Santo** - older receptionist with a limp/white haired mysterious resident.
- **Kaneko Tamura** - younger receptionist.
- **Chikako Ueda** - previous school teacher who waits for her dead husband.
- **Toyoto Munekata** - professor guarding her dead husband's manuscripts.
- **Noriko Ishiyama** - eccentric woman known to other residents as Ms. Bladderwrack who forages for fishbones at night.
- **Suwa Yatabe** - violinist who previously stole a Guarnerius violin from her teacher.
- **Yoneko Kimura** - retired school teacher who writes letters to her previous students.

Minor Characters:

- **Yasuyo Aoki** - mysterious guest of Chikako Ueda.
- **Keiko Kawauchi (Mrs. Kraft)** - divorced from Major Kraft after disappearance of their son.
- **Major D. Kraft** - U.S. Army major who returned to the U.S. after divorce from Keiko Kawauchi.
- **George Kraft** - son of Major Kraft, reported kidnapped and missing.
- **Priest** - leader of the Three Spirit Faith cult, performs seemingly miraculous revelations.
- **Thumbelina the Vestal** - small statured woman who is the medium of the séance.

Translation

- Togawa, Masako. *The Master Key*. Translated by Grove, Simon. Dodd, Mead & Co. ISBN 9781782273639



publ. Pushkin Vertigo

References

1. *The Master Key by Masako Togawa - Ebook | Scribd* (<https://www.scribd.com/book/378626564/The-Master-Key-the-fiendishly-creepy-Japanese-locked-room-mystery>).
2. Austlit. "Ōinaru gen'ei | AustLit: Discover Australian Stories" (<https://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/11615665>). *www.austlit.edu.au*. Retrieved 2022-02-12.
3. Noble, Barnes &. "The Master Key|Paperback" (<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/master-key-masako-togawa/1005884763>). *Barnes & Noble*. Retrieved 2022-02-16.

Category:Japanese novels

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