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WOLF GUY

ウルフガイ 燃えろ狼男
Urufugai: moero okami-otoko

Original release date: 5 April 1975
86 minutes

Directed by **Kazuhiko Yamaguchi**
Screenplay by **Fumio Konami**
Based on an original work by **Kazumasa Hirai**
Produced by **Toru Yoshida**
Director of Photography **Yoshio Nakajima**
Lighting by **Yoshio Kobayashi**
Audio Recording by **Shudo Nagai**
Production Design by **Tadayuki Kuwana**
Music by **Hiroshi Baba**
Edited by **Osamu Tanaka**
Assistant Director **Michio Fukuyu**

Akira Inugami: **Shinichi "Sonny" Chiba**
Miki Ogata: **Etsuko Nami**
Katie: **Kani Kobayashi (aka Kumi Taguchi)**
Taka: **Yayoi Watanabe**
Arai: **Harumi Sone**
Tsukada: **Saburo Date**
Manabe: **Hiroshi Nawa**
Kato: **Kyosuke Machida**
J.C.I.A. Chief: **Hideo Murota**
Fukunaka: **Hiroshi Kondo**
Hunter: **Koji Fujiyama**
Mobs band member: **Rikiya Yasuoka**



FULL MOON CHIBA: THE RESURRECTION OF WOLF GUY

by Patrick Macias

Wolf Guy (*Urufu gai: moero okami-otoko*, aka “Wolf Guy: Enraged Lycanthrope”) is the sort of movie that Famous Monsters of Filmland used to refer to as a “rare treat.” For years, ever since its original theatrical release in 1975, the work you now hold in your hands has been an alarmingly hard-to-see entry in the Toei exploitation films library.

Incredibly, as of this writing, there has never been a home video release of *Wolf Guy* in Japan and, aside from a few TV broadcasts and sporadic revival screenings, the masses have largely been denied what should be everyone’s birthright: being able to watch Shinichi “Sonny” Chiba as an ass-kicking, hell-raising, wolf...*guy*.

It would be nice if we could blame the film’s baddies — the J.C.I.A. or some equally evil organization — for why *Wolf Guy* has been kept locked away in the shadows until now, but it seems merely to be a case of the law of averages at work. After all, when your output as a screen performer reaches into the triple digits, like Sonny Chiba’s now does, some stray gems are bound to get lost in the shuffle.

And while *Wolf Guy* isn’t likely to be given any retroactive awards for Best Picture anytime soon (although we can hope), rest assured that it still a landmark of sorts...if only because there’s nothing else quite like it. Can you name another film that mashes together martial arts, horror flicks, political conspiracy, and hardboiled mystery along with Toei house specialties like “pinky violence,” yakuza potboilers, with hints of superhero TV shows? I didn’t think so. *Wolf Guy* is a film that all but defines Toei’s tornado of outrageous exploitation. But what is the origin story of this wild beast?

The *Wolf Guy* saga began in October 1969 with the publication of the short story *Akutogakuen* (“Vice School”) by author Kazumasa Hirai, which first introduced the character of a middle school student — and troubled lycanthrope — named Akira Inugami (*inugami* are supernatural dog spirits found in Japanese mythology). A month later, Hirai’s novel *Ookami da yo* (“I Am a Wolf”) appeared, which presented a hardboiled, older version of the *Wolf Guy* character. From these seeds sprang two different strains of *Wolf Guy* that

would define the franchise to come. The adventures of teenaged Akira Inugami became known as the *Shonen Wolf Guy* (aka “Young Wolf Guy”) series, while tales of the grown-up incarnation of the character were branded and sold as “Adult Wolf Guy.”

Born in 1938, Kazumasa Hirai wrote numerous *Young Wolf Guy* and *Adult Wolf Guy*-related novels and comic adaptations well into the nineties, allowing others to reboot the series for a new manga run before his death in 2015. Hirai was a best-selling author in Japan, and a crucial link in the development of Japanese science fiction literature and anime/manga storytelling, one who has sadly never really gotten his due outside of his native country. In addition to *Wolf Guy*, Hirai also created the classic cartoon character *8 Man* — one of Japan’s very first cyborg superheroes — and wrote the epic manga series *Genma Taisen*, later animated in 1983 as *Harmagedon*. Another career highlight for Hirai was helping to write the manga version of *Spider-Man* which ran from 1970 to 1971.

Around the same time he was writing spectacularly downbeat Spidey stories, Hirai was also authoring a *Young Wolf Guy* manga for *Weekly Bokura* magazine, drawn by artist Hisashi Sakaguchi. The serial, about Akira Inugami’s school days as a “teen wolf” battling the yakuza and assorted juvenile delinquents, would later form the basis of Hirai’s 1971 prose novelization known as *Crest of the Wolf* (*Okami no monsha*).

This version of *Wolf Guy* made it to the movies first when Toho Studios released their *Crest of the Wolf* feature in 1973; a film that also marked the big screen debut of soon-to-be megastar Yusaku Masuda, who glowered convincingly in the role of Inugami’s main antagonist, Dou Haguro.

History does not record how *Wolf Guy* wound up on the production slate at Toei studio’s Tokyo branch, but 1975 was an interesting time for it to strike. For starters, Toei now had a massive action star on its roster. After toiling away tirelessly on films and TV shows for Toei since the early 1960s, the 35-year-old Shinichi “Sonny” Chiba had finally broken out as an international martial arts sensation thanks to the bloody success of 1974’s *The Street Fighter* (*Gekitotsu! Satsujin ken*), directed by Shigehiro Ozawa.

After Chiba went supernova in *The Street Fighter*, Toei worked overtime to cash in on the martial arts craze. Director Kazuhiko Yamaguchi was called in to oversee the 1974 spin-offs *Sister Street Fighter* (*Onna hissatsu ken*) and *Sister Street Fighter: Hanging by a Thread* (*Onna hissatsu ken: kiki ippatsu*).

Born in Nagasaki Prefecture in 1937, Kazuhiko Yamaguchi had graduated from Tokyo’s prestigious Waseda University and joined Toei for film and television productions during the

mid-1960s. One of his first assignments as assistant director was on the superhero movie *Golden Bat* (*Ogon batto*, 1966), starring none other than Sonny Chiba, setting the stage for many collaborations to come. Yamaguchi made his solo directorial debut in 1970 by helming four separate entries in the *Delinquent Girl Boss* (*Zubeko bancho*) series within a year, before reuniting again with Chiba when the pair worked on 1972’s *Wandering Ginza Butterfly 2: She-Cat Gambler* (*Gincho nagaremono: mesuneko bakuchi*), co-starring Meiko Kaji.

As you might have guessed by now, Yamaguchi specialized in program pictures, exploitation fare meant to thanklessly fill up Toei’s relentless schedule of double bills. He belonged to a class of staff directors expected to grind ‘em out fast and cheap. Within a three-year stretch from 1974 to 1977, he made nine karate films either featuring Sonny Chiba as the main star, or as a featured participant, including globally-distributed films such as *Champion of Death* (*Kenka karate kyokushinken*, 1975), *Return of the Sister Street Fighter* (*Kaettekita onna hissatsu ken*, 1975), *Karate Bear Fighter* (*Kenka karate kyokushin burai ken*, 1975), *Karate Warriors* (*Kozure satsujin ken*, 1976), and *Karate for Life* (*Karate baka ichidai*, 1977). Largely ignored in his own time, cult movie fans in Japan have recently embraced Yamaguchi (who was the subject of a career retrospective in Tokyo in 2015) and singled out his unique gifts for humor, surprise, erotic-grotesque-nonsense, and mixture of genres, attributes all on clear display in *Wolf Guy*.

The other ace the film has to play is, of course, Sonny Chiba. And while he has starred in far glossier productions than *Wolf Guy*, his feral, funky turn as Akira Inugami might rank as my very favorite screen performance of his.

This is daffy material, and Chiba stops at nothing sell it. Highlights include defeating enemies with a toss of a 100 yen coin (a reference to old-time detective fiction hero Zenigata Heiji), running like a mad man after a moving jeep, romancing the ladies — including scandal-prone *talento* Etsuko Nami as Miki and Toei regular Yayoi Watanabe as Taka — in a series of show-stopping sex scenes, and having to act like someone is literally ripping his guts out on an operating table, only to spool them back in himself.

Sure, this film has taken some shots for not showing Chiba going “full werewolf” with the requisite corny fur and fangs, but it helps to remember he’s playing a *Wolf Guy*, not a mere “Wolf Man” from the Larry Talbot School of Lycanthropy. What we get instead is something better: the anti-hero that Japan, circa 1975, deserved.

Like Wolverine from *The X-Men* — another animalistic crimefighter with a quick healing ability — Sonny Chiba seems to come right out of a comic book. And the city he stalks is no gleaming Metropolis, but instead a deadly maze of sleaze and cheap thrills. Many of *Wolf*



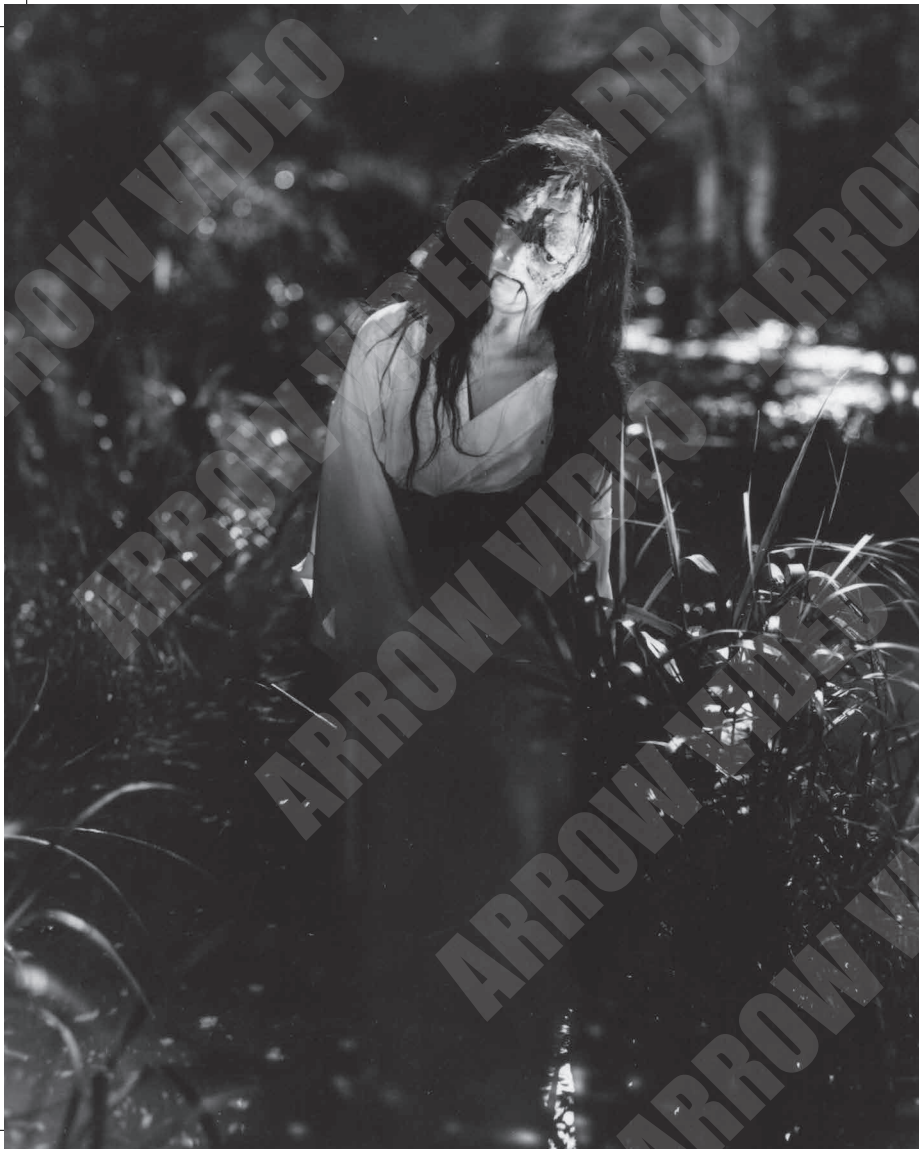
Guy's outdoor locations were shot in Tokyo's Kabuki-cho district; today the haunt of tourists and chain stores, but during the mid-seventies, a hive of grimy arcades, strip shows, and movie theaters filled with feverish visions. One of the joys of *Wolf Guy* lies in not only seeing how this landscape has changed, but also getting a glimpse at how entertainment in Japan itself has evolved with the times.

As Yamaguchi told *Movie Treasures* magazine in 2006, "There were all sorts of riots and demonstrations back then. I wanted to show those people a world that was even more absurd and crazy...I wish there were directors around today who could make films like these." In the meantime, the resurrection of *Wolf Guy* is definitely something worth howling about.

Patrick Macias is the author of TokyoScope: The Japanese Cult Film Companion.







MONSTER MASHUPS, JAPANESE STYLE

by Jasper Sharp

When the pallid, lurching form of Sadako first crept under the skins of viewers across the world in Nakata Hideo's *Ring* (*Ringu*, 1998), it not only unleashed a torrent of similarly-styled spookfests from directors such as Shimizu Takashi, Tsuruta Norio and Miike Takashi that came to be collectively grouped together under the new label of J-horror, but also a deluge of books and articles seeking to trace a lineage between their host country's sleek technological present and folkloric past. Discussions abounded as to how the conventions and imagery of the cycle's more representative offerings were informed by the depictions of *onryo* (vengeful ghosts) found in the Edo-period woodblock prints of Hokusai and Kuniyoshi, and in Kabuki plays such as *Ghost Story of Yotsuya* (*Tokaido Yotsuya kaidan*), given cinematic form throughout the postwar period through such spectral touchstones as Kobayashi Masaki's *Kwaidan* (*Kaidan*, 1964), the films made by Nakagawa Nobuo at Shintoho in the 1950s, and Mizoguchi Kenji's *Ugetsu* (*Ugetsu monogatari*, 1953). Remaining hidden in the margins of such accounts were the vast number of Japanese contributions to the genre that didn't sit so comfortably within J-horror's purportedly purebred aesthetic.

Nakata's open acknowledgement of the influence of *The Haunting* (1963), *Poltergeist* (1982) and *Videodrome* (1983) on his film is a reminder that Japanese cinema has never existed in a void, bound to its own narrative and theatrical traditions and uncontaminated by foreign influences. Horror, in particular, is a genre whose dream-logic appeal to the primordial id is universal. Fittingly, its real arrival as a genre came about largely through the works of the Hollywood studio named Universal, whose panoply of iconic movie monsters from the 1930s such as Dracula, Frankenstein's monster, the mummy and the wolf man et al. became cinematic archetypes embodying universal fears and desires that over the ensuing decades would be appropriated and reformulated by filmmakers across the Americas, Europe and Asia within their own national contexts.

1 - At the author's request, Japanese names in this essay are given in their traditional form, with surname first.

One can find few more dramatic examples of Japan's celebrated facility for transfusion and transformation than *Wolf Guy*, a lunatic Molotov of folk legend, hard-boiled cop action, gnarly yakuza mob drama, softcore sleaze and Grand Guignol gore and grotesquerie, all doled out with a psychedelic panache peculiar to the finest of Toei's exploitation output of the 1970s. As portrayed by Chiba Shinichi (better known outside Japan as "Sonny" Chiba), its lead lycanthrope Inugami Akira might seem a long way removed from a genealogy that can be traced back to Lon Chaney Jr.'s Larry Talbot in the George Waggner-directed *The Wolf Man* (1941), but as one of the closest things Japanese cinema ever got to a genuine werewolf movie, it provides a fascinating starting point from which to explore to what extent the country's genre cinema has been shaped by forces beyond its shores.

Wolf Guy was never made with foreign audiences in mind, but few would claim its feverish coagulation of disparate generic tropes as 100% pure-blooded. In another era, its heady cocktail of domestic and foreign elements would have been labelled *ero guro nansensu* ("erotic grotesque nonsense"), a term first coined to refer to the glut of pulp detective, horror, and mystery fiction that emerged in Japan in the 1920s, which took its cues from the newly-translated works of authors such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and H. G. Wells. The label soon entered common parlance as a disparaging catchall term referring not only to the new breed of writers such as Edogawa Rampo, Umehara Hokumei, Unno Juza and Yumeno Kyusaku, who traded in the irrational and the bizarre, but the new culture from which they drew their inspiration, in which the silver screen provided a conduit to a Western world of permissiveness and frivolity that challenged inherited notions of behavior, morality and taste.

From day one, the possibilities provided by the medium of cinema provided fertile ground for the *fantastique*. In its formative decade, French pioneer Georges Méliès explored the use of superimpositions, close-ups, jump cuts and other techniques of time and space manipulation to present a mysterious mirror-world that subverted the logic of the real in a way that was both fascinating and horrifying. Trick films of just a few minutes in length with titles such as *The Vanishing Lady* (1896), *The Haunted Castle* (1896), *The Gigantic Devil* (1901), *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), *The Monster* (1903) and *The Merry Frolics of Satan* (1906) provided the foundations for the irrational domain that later fantasy filmmakers would inhabit. Though its fundamental technologies of filming and projection were of Western invention, cinema nevertheless arrived in Japan at an early stage, with the first footage shot in the country in 1897 by François-Constant Girel, a representative of the Lumière brothers, shortly after their Cinématographe's public unveiling in Paris in 1895.

With the nascent local industry primarily focused on the production of "actualities" (short visual accounts of daily life) or static unbroken scenes filmed directly from Kabuki

performances, it was not until the release of *The Battle at Honnoji Temple* (*Honnoji gassen*, 1908), the debut of the "Father of Japanese Film" Makino Shozo (1878-1929), that the production of dramatic fictional works became the norm. Japanese audiences, nevertheless, were exposed to the imported works of Méliès, and the similar phantasmagorical trick films of such figures as Segundo de Chomón and Ferdinand Zecca. While virtually nothing survives from the first few decades of domestic production, the titles and catalogue descriptions of a large number of the prolific Makino's works from the 1910s suggest he was already following such figures' leads in experimenting with the intrinsic grammar of film to produce such one-reel proto-horrors as *Yoshiwara Ghost Story: Gestures of the Bonze* (*Yoshiwara kaidan teburi bozu*, 1914), *Broken Dishes at the Haunted Mansion* (*Bancho sarayashiki*, 1914), *A Hundred Ghost Tales of the Muromachi Palace* (*Muromachi gotten hyakkaiden*, 1914) and *Taro of Ban: Tasuke Isshin Exterminates Ghosts* (*Ban no Taro: Isshin Tasuke yokai taji*, 1914).

Still, during the 1910s, Japanese cinema was held back by the hidebound stage conventions of its theatrical antecedents, which even precluded the appearances of women until 1919, and paid scant regard to the expressionistic potential of framing, lighting and editing. With no surviving evidence to the contrary, one can assume that this would have been the case for the earliest adaptations of such supernatural staples as *Tales of the Peony Lantern* (*Botan dorō*), first filmed in 1910, and *The Ghost Story of Yotsuya*, first filmed in 1911 (no director is credited for either work). The local industry's backwardness in the face of the sizeable number of films imported from America and Europe certainly did not go unnoticed by contemporary critics and commentators, one of whom was the novelist Tanizaki Junichiro (1886-1965), later responsible for such esteemed literary landmarks as *The Makioka Sisters* (*Sasameyuki*, serialized between 1943 and 1948).

Tanizaki wrote prodigiously on the cinema during the 1910s. In the book *Shadows on the Screen: Tanizaki Jun'ichiro on Cinema & "Oriental" Aesthetics* (2005), Thomas LaMarre provides a translation of an essay from 1917 entitled "The Present and Future of Moving Pictures" in which Tanizaki writes, "I think some [fantastic] works, impossible on the stage, would make truly compelling pictures," citing the stories of Edgar Allan Poe as examples, and his local equivalent, the relatively little-known trailblazer for the Japanese supernatural gothic, Izumi Kyoka (1873-1939). What Tanizaki's writing makes abundantly clear is that during this period there was already significant exposure to Western literature and film, although the banning of the French detective serial *Zigomar* (Victorin-Hippolyte Jasset, 1911) due to concerns about minors emulating its depictions of criminal demeanors highlights the rising cultural tension within the rapid modernization project the country was then undergoing.

The author's early fiction also played with the imagery of cinema. His short story *The Tumour with the Human Face* (*Jinmenso*, 1918), which appears in translation in LaMarre's book, features an actress just returned to Japan after several years working as a contract player at a Hollywood studio called Globe ("her smooth, ample figure ranked her favorably with American and European actresses, and her lovely face tempered Occidental coquetterie with Oriental modesty"; remember, at this time female roles were still being played by specialist male actors known as *oyama*, or *ornagata* in local productions) to discover that a mysterious movie in which she appears, but has no recollection of making, is doing the rounds in Tokyo. In it, she plays a courtesan who develops a bizarre phantom swelling on her right knee which gradually begins to develop human features and eventually comes alive to taunt her, ultimately driving her to suicide. The actress' investigations into the film's provenance ("a certain Frenchman in Yokohama came and sold it. The Frenchman said he had acquired it along with many other films in Shanghai") hint that it might be a forgery, made by "splicing together sequences from other films or by retouching and double exposures," while rumours abound of viewers who've witnessed its trick effects alone at night going on to suffer from terrifying, feverish dreams.

This central idea of images taking on a life of their own is an intriguing precursor to both Suzuki Koji's 1991 novel of *Ring* and Nakata's 1998 adaptation: the story ends with the haunting prospect of Globe reacquiring the print and making copies of it to circulate more widely. Curiously, given the sizeable number of adaptations of Tanizaki's own literary work (the best-known to horror fans being Masumura Yasuzo's 1966 version of *Irezumi*), only once has *The Tumour with the Human Face* been subjected to cinematic treatment, with the lavish and perturbingly nationalistic softcore spectacle of *Oiran* (1983), directed by Takechi Tetsuji, a dilettante from the field of theatre who established a reputation as a pioneering yet controversial figure in the field of the early pink film. Takechi had previously ransacked Tanizaki's literary reputation with his scandalous *Daydream* (*Hakujitsumu*, 1964), much to the author's disgust, which features a young woman under dental anesthetic fantasizing about being chased around a series of dreamlike locations by her dentist, clad in a Dracula cape. In 1981, he remade it as a hardcore version, and in 1983 directed an X-rated take on Izumi Kyoka's supernatural novella *The Holy Man of Mount Koya* (1910) purely intended for the export market.

Also of significance is the fact that within *The Tumour with the Human Face*, Tanizaki explicitly references two early German progenitors of the horror genre starring and directed by Paul Wegener, *The Student of Prague* (*Der Student von Prag*, 1913), a loose adaptation of Poe's *William Wilson* (1839), and *The Golem* (*Der Golem*, 1915). However, in this early part of his career, he was more than just a commentator on cinema, writing four screenplays across 1920 and 1921 for the short-lived Taikatsu company based in Yokohama. All of these

were directed by Thomas Kurihara (born Kurihara Kisaburo), a man who shared the author's reformist aspirations for Japanese cinema and who had worked in America as an actor for Thomas Ince before returning home in 1918.

At this point, the term "horror" had yet to be used either as a marketing tool or an identifier for a specific genre in Hollywood, let alone Japan. However, there seems little reason why the label couldn't be applied retrospectively to Tanizaki's third script for Kurihara, *The Lust of the White Serpent* (*Jasei no in*, 1921), a supernatural fantasy set in the Heian period that drew its inspiration from Ueda Akinari's ghostly compendium *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, published in 1776, which would later provide the source material for Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu* (1953). Alas, we will never know for sure, as the film has long disappeared, although the screenplay survives alongside a handful of stills demonstrating a haunting regard for light and shadow reminiscent of German cinema of the period, of which many standout titles were shown in Japan.

Nor does *Passion of a Woman Teacher* (*Kyoren no onna shisho*, 1926) still exist, Mizoguchi's early version of the classic ghost story written by Sanyutei Encho, although it is considered one of the earliest Japanese films to play overseas, screening in Paris and a number of other European capitals. Also noteworthy among the many of the earliest works considered lost by this director most commonly associated with the international arthouse is *Blood and Spirit* (*Chi to rei*, 1923), adapted from a story by the German 18th-century fantasy-horror writer E. T. A. Hoffmann; again, surviving stills of its contorted sets, clearly modeled on those of Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (*Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari*, 1920; released in Japan in May 1921), betray the undeniable influence of German Expressionism.

The woefully low survival rates for prewar Japanese cinema make it difficult to get a clear idea as to what extent the local industry embraced fantastical subject matter. However, we can find examples such as *The Dwarf* (*Issunboshi*, 1927), the first cinematic treatment of the *ero-guro* writings of Edogawa Rampo, an author so smitten with Western crime and fantasy literature he took his penname from the Japanese pronunciation of Edgar Allan Poe (his real name was Hirai Taro). Co-directed by Naoki Sanjugo and Shiba Seika, the film was based on the novella of the same name published the prior year, which featured the author's own localized version of Sherlock Holmes, Detective Akechi Kogoro, pitted against a murderous midget first seen scurrying around Asakusa carrying a severed female limb. Alas, it too is lost, so we'll never know if its cinematic influences were as strong as Rampo's literary ones.

Cinematic treatments of the works of Japan's master mystery writer are too legion to detail here, but this was certainly the only Rampo adaptation made before the war. It is also worth



mentioning that The Dwarf showed up in Ishii Teruo's marvelously-titled *Blind Beast vs. Killer Dwarf* (*Moju tai issunboshi*, 2001). In 1969, Ishii made perhaps the most infamous Rambo tribute, *Horrors of Malformed Men* (*Kyofu kikei ningen*), a mish-mash of several of the author's stories, but although the script's through-line stems from his 1926 novella *The Strange Tale of Panorama Island*, the film's depiction of an island populated by a mad scientist and the man-beast mutants he's created seems to draw most heavily from *Island of Lost Souls* (Erle C. Kenton, 1932; released in Japan as *Jujin-shima*, or 'Beast Man Island' in 1933), Paramount's film version of H. G. Wells' 1896 novel *The Island of Dr. Moreau*.

What should be clear from this example is that while little Japanese cinema made it to overseas viewers before the war, the converse was certainly not true. As Hollywood came to dominate in the 1920s, it was Universal Studios that emerged as the largest distributor of foreign films, and hot on the heels of the formative works of Germany's UFA studios came its parade of monster movies that provided the template for the horror genre. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Wallace Worsley, 1923), released as *Notoru damu no semushi otoko* in October 1924, was voted 6th best film of the year by critics for the prestigious film magazine *Kinema Junpo*. *The Phantom of the Opera* (Rupert Julian, 1925) opened under the title of *Opera no kajin* in September 1925, the same month as its New York premier, while both *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931) and *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931) arrived in Japan in the same year as their North American openings, proving just how quickly Hollywood's international distribution machinery worked even in this early period. Other non-Universal horrors such as United Artists' *White Zombie* (Victor Halperin, 1932) also made it to the country, released under the title of *Kyofu-jo* ("Fear Castle") in June 1933.

None of these films exerted any immediate influence on Japanese filmmakers, as the industry cultivated its own strain of domestic chillers, including the *bakeneko* (alternatively read as *kaibyō*) strain of ghostly black cat films, which stretched back to such titles as *Legend of the Ghost Cat of Arima* (*Arima kaibyō-den*, 1914) made in Makino's day, and in the 1930s included *Legend of the Saga Cat Monster* (*Saga kaibyō-den*) and *Ghost Cat of Arima* (*Arima neko*), both directed by Mokuto Shigeru in 1937, and Ushihara Kiyohiko's *The Ghost Cat and the Mysterious Shamisen* (*Kaibyō nazo no shamisen*, 1938). In fact, we might even see shadow of Ishii Teruo's much later crossbreed of ghost cat and gangster, *Blind Woman's Curse* (*Kaidan nobori-ryū*, 1970), looming large behind *Wolf Guy*.

There were exceptions, however. The second installment of the two-part *Shudder of the Strange Electric Death Ray* (*Kai denpa no senritsu*, Yamanouchi Toshihide, 1939), a rare example of prewar Japanese sci-fi, not only features perhaps the country's first screen robot, as testified by a surviving still of a giant, lumbering killer android, but its subtitle *Tomei ningen*, 'Invisible Man' (or more accurately 'Transparent Man') harks back to the

1897 H.G. Wells novel that first appeared in Japanese translation in 1913, with James Whale's 1933 film version released in Japan in March 1934. A director named Adachi Nobuo would later make *The Invisible Man Appears* (*Tomei ningen arawaru*, 1949) for Daiei, Oda Motoyoshi made *The Invisible Man* (*Tomei ningen*, 1954) for Toho, while Daiei released *The Invisible Man vs The Human Fly* (*Tomei ningen to hae otoko*, Murayama Mitsuo) in 1957. The connection with Wells' original conception was thematic only, and with their postwar penchant for depictions of men tinkering around in futuristic-looking laboratories, they fit more comfortably within the science fiction category than the more genuinely horrific original film. Nevertheless, aside from inspiring a catchy hit from perky 70s pop duo Pink Lady, the very nature of the character made it well suited for an industry without the means or abilities to elaborate special effects work, and perhaps inevitably he was a very present absence in a swathe of erotic pink films with such titles as *The Invisible Man Dirty Doctor* (*Tomei ningen ero hakushi*, Seki Koji, 1968) and *Lusty Invisible Man: Woman's Bathhouse Peeping* (*Koshoku tomei ningen: Onna-yu nozoki*, Yamamoto Shinya, 1979).

Much better known, by reputation at least, are the legendary long-lost phantom films based on Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's *King Kong* (1933); Saito Torajiro's silent comedy one-reeler *King Kong, Japanese Style* (*Wasei Kingu Kongu*, 1933) and the more epic period monster movie *King Kong Appears in Edo* (*Edo ni arawareta Kingu Kongu*, Kumaga Soya, 1938). *King Kong* had a more enduring impact following its postwar re-release in 1952, and is cited as a major source of inspiration for Japan's most celebrated movie monster, first seen rising from the murky depths of the Pacific in Honda Ishiro's *Godzilla* (*Gojira*, 1954). The two leviathans would face off against each other to celebrate Toho studio's 30th anniversary in Honda's *King Kong vs. Godzilla* (*Kingu Kongu tai Gojira*, 1962), the first time either appeared in a colour widescreen film, although in all its Japanese incarnations, the giant ape was played by a man in a rubber suit, rather than animated by the pioneering stop-motion effects work of Willis O'Brien. It was a particularly bitter blow to O'Brien, who had struggled to get projects off the ground in his late career and had originally pitched an idea for a film entitled *King Kong vs. Frankenstein* to independent producer John Beck, only to find the script, now developed and retitled *King Kong vs. Prometheus*, flogged off to Toho without his knowledge and with *Godzilla* replacing the giant monster, who in his original treatment had been created by Frankenstein's grandson. He never lived to see the end results anyway, as he passed away in the year of the film's release, nor Honda's later *King Kong Escapes* (*Kingu Kongu no yakushū*, 1967) and his two 'suitmation' takes on Mary Shelley's man-made monster, *Frankenstein Conquers the World* (*Furankenshutain tai chitei kaiju Baragon*, 1965), in which it takes on another giant lizard called Baragon, and *War of the Gargantuas* (*Furankenshutain no kaiju: Sanda tai Gaira*, 1966).

Interestingly, when Universal's *Frankenstein* was released, Shelley's original novel, *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus* (1818), was some years away from a Japanese translation. It was eventually published in 1948 under the title *Kyojin no fukushu: Furankenshutain* ("The Giant's Revenge: Frankenstein"). It was a similar situation for Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and F.W. Murnau's earlier unsanctioned take on the tale, *Nosferatu - Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922), had not been shown in Japan, so what local audiences might have made of its very European brand of Gothic doom, gloom and perfervid sexuality is a mystery. In the same year that Stoker's story was eventually published in Japanese translation came Nakagawa Nobuo's *The Vampire Moth* (*Kyuketsuki-ga*, 1956), if not the country's first vampire film, then the first to draw allusions to the concept of vampirism. Based on a mystery novel by Yokomizo Seishi, serialized in 1955, it was the first in a series of films from Shintoho featuring the author's popular sleuth Kindaichi Kosuke, this time following a trail of beautiful female corpses discovered with perforated necks. Nakagawa was also responsible for Japan's first genuine take on vampire lore, *The Lady Vampire* (*Onna kyuketsuki*, 1959), in which, contrary to the expectations of its gendered title, it was the decade's leading horror actor Amachi Shigeru, kitted out with stylish shades to match his black cloak and Brylcreem-ed coiffure à la Lugosi, who took center stage as a very modern-looking bloodsucker prowling contemporary Tokyo.

Shintoho's attempts to woo local audiences with a steady diet of low-budget crime, sleaze and horror during the late-50s has earned comparisons from Mark Schilling with Roger Corman's American International Pictures, and many of its releases were manic mashups of elements plundered both from its own output and the schlockier end of the foreign releases that began filling screens throughout the 1950s. Take, for example, the brief wave of 'Girl Diver' films, with their rather fanciful portrayals of traditional coastal *ama* communities comprised of women who make their living diving for shellfish and pearls. Magatani Morihei's *Girl Divers at Spook Mansion* (*Ama no bakemono yashiki*, 1959) is a typical example, with the diving girls investigating a series of strange goings-on at a local mansion chockfull of secret panels, sinister servants, black cats springing out of dark corners and a hunchback loitering in the garden, while hushed voices talk of hidden treasure in an underwater cave. The scenes of the semi-clad beauties on their synchronized undersea explorations evidently provided the main attractions for this cycle, and indeed within this bizarre flesh-and-fantasy sub-genre effectively began in 1956 with Shimura Toshio's *Revenge of the Pearl Queen* (*Onna shinju-o no fukushu*), the sporadic flashes of breasts and buttocks from its Amazonian star Maeda Michiko presented the first instances of screen nudity in a Japanese film; ironically, but for these scenes of pearl diving and a blackmail subplot that sees Maeda stranded on the island in the first place, the film is virtually a complete remake of *The Saga of Anatahan* (1953), shot by Josef von Sternberg at the tail end of his career with a Japanese cast and crew.

It was Nakagawa, however, who is seen as Shintoho's most accomplished director, breathing new life into traditional ghost stories in such films as *Black Cat Mansion* (*Borei kaibyō yashiki*, 1958) and *The Ghost of Yotsuya* (*Tokaido yotsuya kaidan*, 1959), and adding the more emphatic chills and blood spills the new postwar generation so craved in a similar vein to what Terence Fisher was doing at Hammer, which during the late 1950s began resurrecting Universal's old movie monsters in garish new colour versions. Questions of Hammer's influence on Nakagawa are difficult to substantiate, as his earlier *kaidan* films *The Ceiling at Utsunomiya* (*Kai Utsunomiya tsuritenjo*, 1956) and *The Ghosts of Kasane Swamp* (*Kaidan kasanegafuchi*, 1957) preceded the Japanese release, in July 1957, of the British studio's first real hit in the Gothic horror genre, *Curse of Frankenstein*. That said, it seems likely that Shintoho's flirtations with vampire lore in both *The Lady Vampire* and Namiki Kyotaro's *Vampire Bride* (*Hanayome kyuketsuma*, 1960) were motivated by Fisher's new version of *Dracula*, released in Japan in August 1958 (shortly after its UK premier in May of that year), even if the hairy, winged demon featured in Namiki's film is far removed from Christopher Lee's suave but cadaverous interpretation of the Count. *Goke, Body Snatcher from Hell* (*Kyuketsuki Gokemidoro*, Sato Hajime, 1968), the next title to contain the word commonly used in Japan for vampires, *kyuketsuki* (literally 'blood-sucking devil'), exists on a different planet entirely from Stoker's creation, with its vampiric invader from space presenting an allegory for the Vietnam War.

In contrast, Yamamoto Michio's narratively-unconnected trilogy of *The Legacy of Dracula* (aka *The Bloodsucking Doll*, *Yurei yashiki no kyofu: Chi o suu ningyo*, 1970), *Lake of Dracula* (*Noroi no yakata: Chi o suu me*, 1971) and *Evil of Dracula* (*Chi o suu bara*, 1974) for Toho were slavish in their attempts at transplanting the iconography of Hammer's films Eastwards, filling the screen with cobwebs, candelabras and in the case of the second entry (which at one point circulated in the West under the title of *Japula*), a Count who speaks Japanese with a cod-Central European accent – it even reprises the finale of Fisher's film, of the vampire crumbling to dust with a stake through his chest. The results are simultaneously familiar yet uniquely otherworldly, although crucially they do retain the key aspect of Stoker's original in locating the source of decadence and decay as of foreign origin.

It should also be mentioned that *Dracula*, Frankenstein's monster, and indeed a werewolf, were also part of the repertoire of overseas and indigenous ghouls, spirits and other supernatural beings collectively known as *yokai* that became cemented in Japan's cultural consciousness through Mizuki Shigeru's *Spooky Kitaro* (*GeGeGe no Kitaro*) manga series, which ran throughout the 1960s. In one particularly revealing story, "The Great Yokai War," the protagonist Kitaro rallies a gang of local monsters to fend off an invasion from these foreign fiends. Mizuki's manga owes much of its popularity in Japan to its TV incarnations,



the first produced by Toei Animation and aired in black-and-white between 1968-69, directed by Takahata Isao long before the days of Studio Ghibli. Perhaps ironic then, that Toei Animation's later feature-length television animation *Frankenstein (Kyofu densetsu kaiki! Furankenshutain)*, 1981, directed by Serikawa Yugo, should prove the country's truest screen translation of Shelley's novel. However, the last words in Japan on both the monster and the Count came in 1991 with the release of both Kawamura Takeshi's post-modern oddity *Last Frankenstein (Rasuto Furankenshutain)*, featuring a mad scientist who strives to create a new emotionless master race in a post-Apocalyptic world ravaged by plague and suicidal despair, and Kaneko Shusuke's horror-comedy *My Soul is Slashed (Kamitsukita)*, in which Dracula arrives in Japan in the form of a vial of blood given as a transfusion to the president of a pharmaceutical company as he lies dying after an assassination attempt.

Karl Freund's *The Mummy* (1932) arrived in Japan in July 1933 under the title *Miira saisei* ("Mummy reincarnation"), although its specifically Egyptian mythology seems to have proven too distant and exotic to be tamed by Japanese filmmakers. Suzuki Seijun did, however, turn to the local equivalent for his characteristically eccentric 40-minute contribution to Fuji TV's *Horror Unbalance Theatre* series, *Miira no koi* (1973), made during the period in which he was blacklisted by the film industry in the fallout of his sacking from Nikkatsu after *Branded to Kill (Koroshi no rakuin)*, 1967. It is unclear whether the pun in the directly-translated title, *A Mummy's Love*, was intentional, as Japan has its own word, *miira*, to refer to preserved corpses, as well as its own traditions, specifically the extreme form of Buddhist asceticism known as *sokushinbutsu*, or self-mummification, as practiced in the dim and distant past by a handful of particularly devout monks in the mountainous north of the country, who fasted and meditated themselves up to and beyond the point of death. Suzuki's tale follows the strange shenanigans that ensue after a desiccated corpse is disinterred from a tomb in the center of a small Edo-period village, which springs back to life and takes up residence in the local temple. Decades later, Kurosawa Kiyoshi's *Loft (Rofuto)*, 2006 featured a talented young novelist who, sent to a deserted house at her editor's request to churn out a more commercial piece of romantic fiction, discovers that a university archeologist is hiding a thousand-year-old corpse dredged up from a local swamp in the attic of a nearby abandoned building.

And that just leaves the werewolf, an archetype largely missing from Japanese cinema due to the fact that its key text, *The Wolf Man* (1941), went on its North American release on 9 December 1941, two days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. A ban was placed on all imported films until the end of the war, apart from those of fellow Axis members Germany and Italy, but by this point the genre as a whole was regarded by the authorities with suspicion and disdain. Though *Ghost of Frankenstein* (Erle C. Kenton, 1942) received a belated release in October 1949, during the Occupation, for some reason *The Wolf Man*

never made it to Japanese cinema screens (years later it was broadcast on television under the title of *Okami otoko no satsujin* or 'The Wolf Man Killer'). Neither did *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (Roy William Neill, 1943) nor *House of Dracula* (Erle C. Kenton, 1942), which assembled Universal's most famous monsters, including Larry Talbot, under one roof. Universal's much earlier *Werewolf of London* (Stuart Walker, 1935) had, however, made it over with the studio's first cycle of horrors, although it was undoubtedly a dim and distant memory by the time the Fisher-directed Hammer film *The Curse of the Werewolf* (1961), starring Oliver Reed, was released in the country. Perhaps this is also the reason why the Spanish-Japanese co-production of *The Beast and the Magic Sword (La Bestia y la Espada Mágica)*, 1983, in which the hairy star and director Paul Naschy voyages to 16th century Japan to solicit a cure for his condition from a sorcerous samurai played by Amachi Shigeru (who also put up the Japanese half of the film's budget), wound up bypassing cinemas and going straight-to-video, under the title of *The Wolf Man and the Samurai (Okami otoko to samurai)*.

That said, the use of lupine terminology to refer to the ruthless feral cunning of the beast within is hardly unique to the West. There are numerous Japanese films whose titles alone spell out the man-wolf metaphor, ranging from Fukasaku Kinji's *Wolves, Pigs and Men (Okami to buta to ningen)*, 1964 through to the *Lone Wolf and Cub* series (*Kozure okami*, 1972-73) and the crime thriller *Resurrection of the Golden Wolf (Yomigaeru Kinro)*, Murakawa Toru, 1979, not to mention countless anime like the Oshii Mamoru-scripted *Jin-Roh: The Wolf Brigade (Jinro)*, Okiura Hiroyuki, 1999) and Hosoda Mamoru's *Wolf Children (Okami kodomo no Ame to Yuki)*, 2012. What is unique to Japan, however, is the mythological concept of the murderous dog spirits known as *inugami*, referenced in the titles of Ichikawa Kon's *The Inugami Family (Inugami-ke no ichizoku)*, 1976, adapted from Yokomizo Seishi's monumental murder mystery (and remade by the director in 2006), and Harada Masato's J-horror contribution *Inugami* (2001).

Inugami Akira is, as mentioned, the name of Chiba's character in *Wolf Guy*, a peculiarly chimeric piece of cinematic exuberance best viewed as the product of all these conglomerate bloodlines. Its most immediate forebear, however, was the manga of the same name written by Hirai Kazumasa and illustrated by Sakaguchi Hisashi, which first introduced the character as a lycanthropic Japanese-American exchange student forced into fending off repeated attacks from a local gang of hoodlums. It was originally serialized between 1970-71, then subsequently novelized by Hirai, who continued to detail Inugami's story and its expanded universe in literary form over a period of several decades. It was the first novel, *Crest of the Wolf (Okami no monsho)*, published in 1971, that provided the source material for Japan's first werewolf movie, produced by Toho and released under the same title in September 1973. It was directed by Matsumoto Masashi (who later made

the 1982 theatrical anime *Techno Police 210*, from a script he adapted alongside Ishimori Fumio and Fukuda Jun, best known for directing *Godzilla vs. the Smog Monster* (*Gojira tai Hedora*, 1971) and the 1977 space opera *The War in Space* (*Wakusei daisenso*). With its bushy-eyebrowed high-schooler played by Shigaki Taro, the film was pitched towards much the same young adult demographic as the recent *Twilight* movies, albeit with the rather franker approach to Freudian subtext typical of 1970s Japanese cinema.

This second film is a different beast entirely. Produced by Toei, its director Yamaguchi Kazuhiko is responsible for such salacious titles as *Sexy Bathhouse Diary* (*Shikijo toruko nikki*, a.k.a. *Oh Wonderful Utamaro!*, 1974) and the sex-horror hybrid *Ghost Cat Secret Bathhouse* (*Bakeneko Toruko buro*, 1975), as well as more distinguished 'Pinky Violence' offerings such as the two 1972 *Wandering Ginza Butterfly* films (*Gincho Wataridori*) starring Kaji Meiko. Yamaguchi also helmed the first three *Sister Street Fighter* (*Onna hissatsu ken*, 1974-75) spin-offs of the *Street Fighter* trilogy that made 'Sonny' Chiba a household name in the West, and directed Chiba in *Karate Bullfighter* (*Kenka karate kyokushinken*) and *Karate Bearfighter* (*Kenka karate kyokushin burai ken*), both released just after *Wolf Guy* in 1975. As with much of Toei's output, it is clear that *Wolf Guy* was aimed at a rather different audience from its predecessor.

But then Hirai's original creation has taken many forms over the years, reworked through numerous manga, spinoff novels and Bandai's six-part Original Animated Video series directed by Yoshinaga Naoyuki (released 1992-93). Few of his exploits have made it to English-language readers or viewers, but essentially, as far as Japanese werewolves go, *Wolf Guy* is top dog.

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ABOUT THE TRANSFER

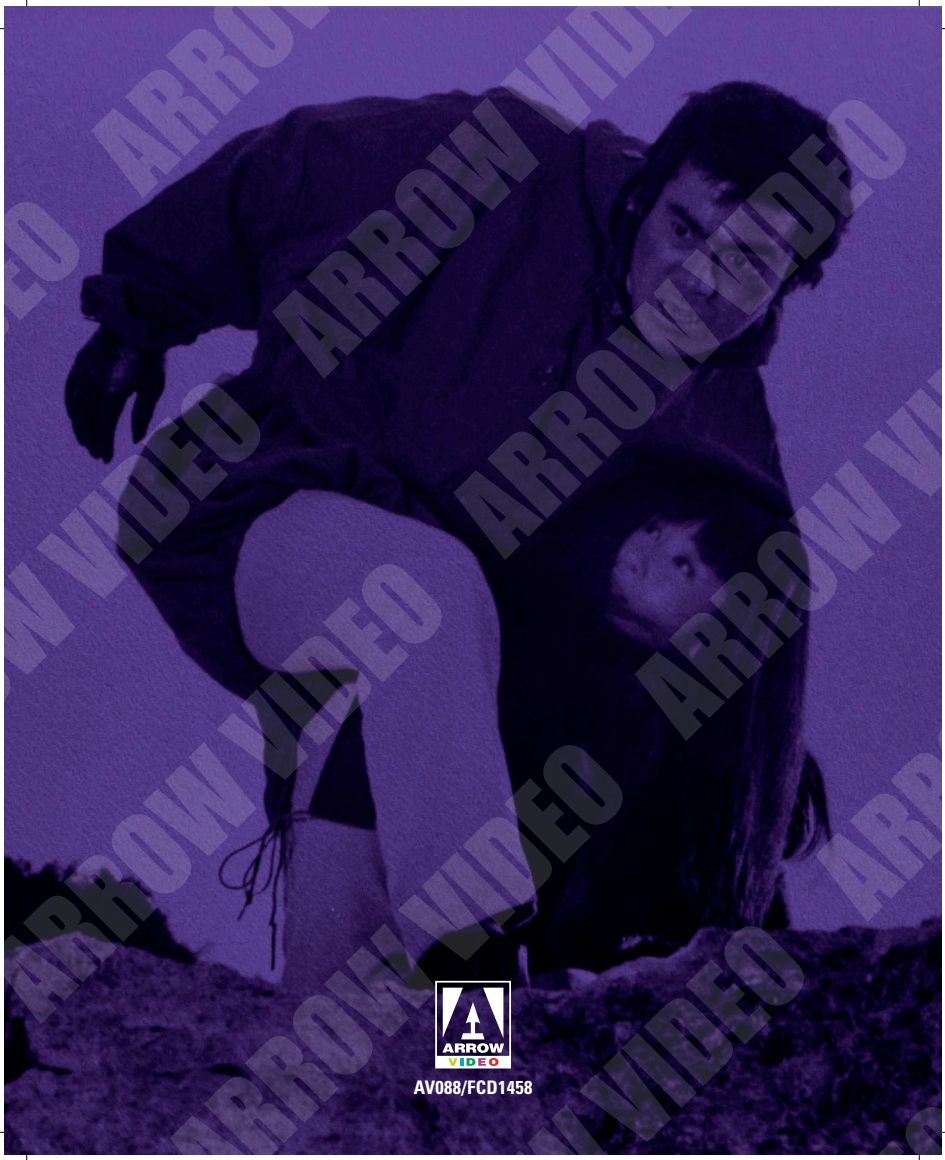
Wolf Guy is presented in its original aspect ratio of 2.35:1 and the original mono sound. The film was remastered in high definition and supplied for this release by Toei Company, Ltd.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and booklet produced by: **Marc Walkow**
Executive Producers: **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer: **James White**
QC and Proofing: **Nora Mehenni, Marc Walkow**
Blu-ray and DVD Mastering: **DCU**
Subtitling: **The Engine House**
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