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Foreword Review MYSTERY

## Murder in the Crooked House

**Soji Shimada**
**Louise Heal Kawai, Translator**
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Soji Shimada's *Murder in the Crooked House* is a terrifying, grisly locked-room mystery. Famed detective Kiyoshi Mitarai investigates a murder that transpired in impossible circumstances, and the mind-bending puzzle reveals a trail of horror that is both satisfying and entertaining.

Kozaburo Hamamoto lives in an unusual house: a "twisted home" made of tinted glass with a leaning tower that overlooks the sea. One of the rooms is filled with Hamamoto's collection of eerie mechanical dolls, demon masks, and a life-sized golem.

On the night of a snowstorm, guests arrive for a Christmas party. They are an eclectic group, each with their own shortcomings and secret motivations. Soon, the party is disturbed by a lurking figure, a missing doll's head, and strange sounds that suggest that there's more happening in the crooked house than meets the eye. Their terror heightens when one of the guests is found in a locked room, suspended by the wrists and with a knife in their chest. Who is the killer, and how did they commit the crime without being detected?

Mitarai's investigation is described in detailed diagrams throughout the novel. It's a clever and engaging mystery whose clues are revealed at a satisfying pace. The novel is translated with clarity and humor, and wordplay hints at the mystery's solution. Each scenario is delivered in exacting detail, down to the angle of the victim's legs and the orientation of the furniture. Descriptions of the house and its location are particular and help to set scenes: "a raging blizzard had left behind a gentle coating of snow, with the dry brown grass sleeping peacefully underneath."

As Mitarai collects clues, the Christmas party is revealed to be more than what it seems. Hamamoto's house is a deadly, entrancing puzzle box with new scares behind each door.

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