

Hook

In 1984, there was an unknown entity tormenting various Japanese confectionary companies. Police failed to capture whoever committed this crime spree and citizens feared they would strike again. Today, we're going to outline everything we know about the enigma that called themselves "The Monster With 21 Faces".

This is Red Web

Death note + zodiac killer + willy wonka

Timeline

Glico

- On **March 18th, 1984**, around **9pm**, two masked and armed intruders entered the home of **Katsuhisa Ezaki** in **Osaka, Japan**
- Ezaki was the son of the founder of **Ezaki-Glico** and was the company's president as of 1982
 - Better known as **Glico**, the company sells snacks and confectioneries
 - They are best known for **Pocky**
- Despite the home's security system, the intruders were able to enter Ezaki's home quietly
- They had broken into his mother's home and stolen the spare key Ezaki gave her
- While Ezaki was taking a bath with one of his children, his wife, Mikioko, and their older daughter were bound
- After hearing this, Ezaki stayed quiet in the bathroom with their other 2 children, but the intruders eventually found them
- They took Polaroid photos of Ezaki naked and then dressed him in an overcoat and ski hat before handcuffing and abducting him
- Once the family escaped from their bindings, they called the police
- The same night at **1:15 am**, the Glico director of human resources, **Fujie Hirotake**, received a call in their home
 - The caller told Hirotake to go to a specific telephone booth
 - At the booth, there would be a ransom note with this to say:
 - "I am holding a hostage. Prepare **1 billion yen** in cash and **100 kilograms** of gold."
 - They asked Hirotake to leave the money in a car in front of his house, but he did not comply
- The police quickly called for a media blackout, but word and panic still spread
- **March 19**, there was a phone call with a recording of Ezaki giving instructions for Glico to deliver the ransom to a restaurant

- Police showed up at the restaurant with Glico employees, but received no further instructions
- On **March 21** around **2pm**, Ezaki called the police because he was able to escape from his captors
 - He revealed that he was kept in an abandoned warehouse in **Ibaraki, Osaka**
 - For unknown reasons, the previous evening the captors allowed him to get dressed, replaced the handcuffs with ropes, and left Ezaki without supervision
 - He recalled that his captors did not tie the ropes very tightly
- Ezaki seemed shaken up by the experience and didn't want to talk much to the media about it
- While Ezaki was ultimately freed, his captors were not done yet
- **April 2nd** a letter was sent to Ezaki's home
 - "How dare you break our promise and run away from us. I'm giving you one more chance"
 - The letter asked for 10 million yen for each person in his family: 60 million yen total
- On **April 10th**, a fire started in the prototype section of Glico Headquarters
 - 20 minutes after this, 3 cars at the Glico Nutrition HQ parking lot also burst into flames
 - These were widely-believed to be arson with both fires being caused by gasoline
- **April 16th**, a letter and a bottle of hydrochloric acid were found inside a Glico building
- Police decided to follow through with the ransom, but no one came to collect
- On **April 22nd**, the captors sent another letter to **Kiriko Fujisawa**, the Corporate Auditor of Glico, with instructions to meet at a restaurant in **Toyonaka City**
- For the first time this letter was signed by "**The Monster with 21 Faces**"
 - The name they used was likely was inspired by the novel series **The Boys Detective Club** by **Edogawa Rampo**
 - The main character **Kogoro Akechi** is a private detective and draws heavy inspiration from **Sherlock Holmes**
 - Akechi's main adversary is called **The Fiend** (sometimes translated as Monster) **with 20 Faces**
 - The Fiend is a master of disguise
 - In one letter the Monster With 21 Faces wrote:
 - ""Who are we? Sometimes a policeman, sometimes a violent gang...Sometimes a factory hand, sometimes a kidnapper... but our true identity is... The Mystery Man with the 21 Faces!"
 - The Fiend prefers not to use violence
 - And he steals to show off his skill and intelligence, rather than having the goal of becoming wealthy
- On **May 10th**, more letters were sent to newspapers
 - "To the poor policemen
 - "Glico is annoying so I injected 2 products with 0.05 grams of sodium cyanide in the stores in the area between Nagoya and Okayama."

- "It's not enough to kill but the target will be hospitalized. After eating Glico let's go to the hospital."
- "Let's eat Glico and go to the graveyard"
- Grocery and convenience stores were forced to remove their entire stock of Glico products from their shelves
- Mass panic ensued from those who had already purchased Glico products
- Glico had to recall about **\$21 million** worth of their products
- Glico's stock dropped and they were forced to lay off **450** employees
- Despite all of that, no poison was ever detected in Glico's products
- This was still extremely shocking to many Japanese people, who believed that this was the type of crime that only happened in the West
- People who gave chocolates to friends had to assure them that the chocolates were not Glico
- Glico's partners began getting threats as well
 - On **May 20th**, **Nagaoka Perfumery** received a letter telling them to send an included letter to Glico or else they would "make [their] company vanish just by using 100 sticks of dynamite."
- More letters were sent to Glico and newspapers, primarily attacking the police for not being able to catch the Monster
 - The Monster even included some hints in these letters to help the police catch them, like the color and type of car the Monster drove
- Glico asked that stores start selling their products again
- On **June 22**, a ransom note was sent to **Takashi Haga**, the president of **Marudai Food**
 - "It's super easy to put potassium cyanide in things, just get a syringe and we can put it in ham, sausage, and anything else. "
- Then on **June 26**, the Monster sent a letter to newspapers claiming that they were done with Glico and would be leaving Japan
 - "Japan has gotten terribly hot and humid. So when our 'work' is done, we want to go to Europe - Geneva, Paris, London - we'll be in one of those places... Let's bring Pocky - the traveler's friend! Delicious Glico products - we're eating them too! See you in January of next year!"
- This was the last letter from the Monster that mentioned Glico. They then seemingly shifted their focus to Marudai Food

Post-Glico

- On **June 28th** police received instructions for the Marudai ransom exchange
- On the train bound for **Kyoto** from Osaka, someone would wave a white flag as a signal for the ransom to be dropped out the window
- An undercover police officer went to exchange the ransom but noticed a man that seemed to be following him
 - The man had permed hair, and thin lips and eyebrows, wore a suit and thin rimmed glasses
 - He is quoted to have "eyes like those of a fox."

- The officer never saw the white flag
- They rode the train all the way to Kyoto only to get on the first train going back the other way to Osaka
 - So did the man following him
- The officer was ultimately unable to arrest this man, so as to not draw attention and to not mistakenly miss the Monster, the officer and the **"Fox Eyed Man"** followed each other on a few trains before the officer lost sight of him
- The money was never exchanged and the Monster moved onto another food company, **Morinaga**
 - This company makes **Hi-Chew**, a chewy, fruity candy
- **September 12, 1984** Morinaga received a letter from the Monster along with **30 grams** of sodium hypochlorite and 3 Morinaga foods that were poisoned
 - "You probably know my name. Your company is doing well because of Glico's loss, so if you feel bad about it give us 100 million yen."
 - The Monster threatened to poison their food if Morinaga didn't pay the ransom
- Morinaga attempted to pay the ransom but no one ever came for it
- However, this time on **October 7th**, odd labels were found on Morinaga's Choco Balls and Angel Pies in stores ranging from Osaka to Kyoto to Nagoya
 - "This has poison in it. If you eat it you will die."
 - Monster with 21 faces."
- These labeled snacks actually contained cyanide
- The next day, a letter was sent to newspapers addressing the mothers of Japan
 - "In Autumn appetite is huge. Candy is great. When you think sweets - no matter what you say - it's Morinaga right?. We added some special flavor to it. The flavor of Potassium Cyanide is a little bitter. Tell children not to get cavities and buy it for them."
- About **40,000** police were sent to watch over stores across Japan to prevent any further poisoned snacks
- They found a suspect via CCTV footage as well as an abandoned van with odd items (vacuum, hat, wire cutters)
- A still from the security footage was made public to ask for any knowledge of the "Videotaped Man" but the leads they received went nowhere
- This made the Monster taunt police even more, writing to newspapers:
 - Nov 1: "Isn't the man in the video a splendid chap?"
 - "you won't be able to trace us from anything we leave behind."
- In **November 1984**, the Monster sent a batch of poisoned curry to **House Foods** also asking for ransom money
- House Foods decided to go through with the ransom, and went to the meetup spot in **Shiga Prefecture** with police officers on **November 28th**
- The officers were looking out for the Fox Eyed Man, their only suspect, and saw him waiting at a rest stop
- Again, the man was able to evade police officers and no one ever came to collect the money

- By **August 1985**, after almost 50 letters were sent taunting the companies and police, and more ransoms sent to other food companies, the Glico Morinaga Case still had very few leads
- That same month, after continually struggling with the pressure of the case, the head of the **Shiga Prefecture** police **Shoji Yamamoto** ended his life
- Upon receiving this news, the Monster sent a final letter to newspapers claiming that their crimes would stop there
 - "No-career Yamamoto died like a man. So we decided to give our condolences. We decided to forget about torturing food-making companies. If anyone blackmails any of the food-making companies, it's not us but someone copying us. We are bad guys. That means we've got more to do other than bullying companies. It's fun to lead a bad man's life. Monster with 21 Faces."
- This time the Monster With 21 Faces kept their word and no longer extorted any companies
- Things gradually went back to normal in Japan
- Police investigated about **125,000** people and followed tens of thousands of leads, but never caught the Monster

The Fox Eyed Man

- The person that became known "The Fox Eyed Man" is one of only 2 suspects ever seen through the Glico-Morinaga Case
 - When following the police officer on the train, he kept a watchful eye while maintaining a serious, expressionless face
- The other suspect was known as "**The Videotaped Man**"
- The day the Morinaga products were poisoned, CCTV footage of a convenience store caught a man placing something on one of the shelves
October 7
- After picking up a magazine, he walked over to the aisle with confectionaries and placed something on the shelf
- Then he purchased the magazine and left
- This man had curly hair, wore glasses, a suit, and a Yomiuri Giants baseball cap
- Although unconfirmed, it is believed by some that the Videotaped Man and the Fox Eyed Man are the same person

Manabu Miyazaki

- During the course of the Glico-Morinaga Case, there was one main suspect, **Manabu Miyazaki**
 - Nicknamed M by the police and media to protect his identity
- M was of interest to the police because he whistleblaw the fact that Ezaki Glico was illegally dumping waste into local rivers from **1977 - 1978**
- Had a known grudge against Glico
- He looked very similar to the composite sketch of the Fox Eyed Man, and sported the same perm and thin rimmed glasses
- By his own admission, M had ties to **Yakuza**. Even his father was a Yakuza boss

- The Monster required a lot of resources, like poison and firearms, that someone tied to the Yakuza could have
- But he denied being involved with the Monster
 - On **June 28** and **November 28**, the days when the Fox Eyed Man was seen, M claimed he was in Tokyo at a labor union meeting
 - This seemed to be corroborated
- In 1990, the police stopped pursuing Miyazaki, unable to disprove his alibis and confirm that he was the Fox Eyed Man
- It is theorized that M teamed up with other wronged employees
- M also participated in a workers' union whose video of demands strongly resembled the demands of the Monster
- In 2005, Miyazaki's book Toppamono describes his experience in crime and being the main suspect in the Glico Morinaga Case

Theories

Former Employee

- The first place police looked for the Monster was Ezaki Glico
- Maybe a wronged employee had a vendetta out for the company, especially since they did not seem to have financial gains in mind as they never came to collect the ransom money
- Ezaki Glico had many employees who were either fired or promised a full job and retirement that was taken away, and police had to interview them all
- The Monster seemed to have a lot of knowledge about the President of Glico's home
 - Knew there were two keys and one belonged to Ezaki's mother
 - Knew the home had a security system
 - Knew the layout of the house
 - Knew the home phone number
- They also knew the location and phone number of the head of HR
- They were able to easily access and light fire to parts of Glico headquarters
- The letters were also written in the Osaka/Kansai dialect, the local dialect to the Glico HQ - this was noticeable through word choice and grammar.
 - Someone could do this on purpose to make police think the suspect was from Osaka
- There's a question here though: Why would a former Glico employee attack other companies as well? It's clear that the Monster was extremely well-connected and perhaps they had a grudge against the entire industry.
- That became more obvious when their letters directly addressed mothers of Japan, they seemed to really want to ruin the reputation of these companies and their products
- Lastly, they didn't seem to have as much knowledge about the other companies, such as Morinaga. And that's why a lot of people tend to think that it's a group of disgruntled, former employees.

Political Motive

- Japanese police theorized that there may have been a political motive to the case and investigated both left and right wing extremist groups
- The Monster attacked large corporations with strong influence in Japan
 - They even seemed to have a dislike for sweets and possibly the effect they have on health since the Monster directly addressed mothers
- However, the Monster seemed to have a lot more to do with bringing attention to the inadequacy of Japanese police system in Japan
 - Even with multiple crimes across multiple cities, police could barely get one major suspect
 - Most of the letters commented on the police investigations, calling them stupid
 - The Monster included hints about their car, how they entered the Glico headquarters, even what typewriters they used
 - Adding credence to this piece, many people in Japan see the police in the very same light.
 - Ultimately, because of this potential messaging and the fact that they got away so seemingly easy, people were worried about "copycat crimes".
- So to wrap up this theory: it's theorized the Monster targeted large corporations to have negative impact on the Japanese economy and to highlight policing inadequacies so that Japanese people might lose trust in their government
- Some even theorized that the Monster With 21 Faces was orchestrated by the North Korean government

Yakuza

- **The Tokyo Metropolitan Police** believe that the case was likely perpetrated by various Yakuza gangs
- The **Yama-Ichi War** began in the middle of the Glico-Morinaga Case
- However, this seems unlikely as the Monster stopped terrorizing these food companies as soon as someone died
- It's possible that the Yakuza was involved with the wronged employees
- Some have theorized that because of the abrupt end of the crimes, Glico and Morinaga might have paid off the Monster/Yakuza in private
 - These folks tend to think that the final letter to Glico, complimenting them, was a part of the deal and helped save the reputation of the company
- Even in 1984, Japanese people theorized that Glico wasn't giving the public the full story as a result of some agreement
 - Seiichi Tagawa, a politician, told the newspaper Mainichi "Right from the beginning we haven't been getting much help from the Glico president"

Questions

Why did the Monster never collect any of the money? What did they seek to accomplish? What did they accomplish? Why target food companies specifically? Was it one person or a group of people?

Were they just pretending to be cool criminals, so they stopped when someone actually got hurt?

Closing

Japanese citizens had endless theories about who might have done this or why, but almost 40 years later there are still no leads for this unprecedented crime spree.

Links

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Monster_with_21_Faces
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glico_Morinaga_case
- <https://www.themonsterwith21faces.com/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezaki_Glico
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morinaga_%26_Company
- <https://youtu.be/09qAoR7RgMc>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kogoro_Akechi
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fiend_with_Twenty_Faces
- <https://www.themonsterwith21faces.com/who-was-the-foxy-eyed-man>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yama%E2%80%93Ichi_War
- https://www.reddit.com/r/UnresolvedMysteries/comments/9sex56/the_monster_with_21_faces_unsolved_case_of_almost/
- <https://unresolved.me/the-monster-with-21-faces>
- <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-1980s-crime-ring-that-poisoned-japans-candy-and-never-got-caught>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/07/02/world/the-great-candy-caper-leaves-all-japan-atwitter.html>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seiichi_Tagawa
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manabu_Miyazaki
- <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%AE%AE%E5%B4%8E%E5%AD%A6>
- https://web.archive.org/web/20100605103800/http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0XPQ/is_2000_Feb_14/ai_60053559/