Abstract — This paper dissects Kurosawa’s The Bad Sleep Well as a Hamlet offshoot in terms of Shakespeare’s metaphysical concern with what Lewis labels “being dead”. For Nishi is Hamlet’s incarnation as Bloom conceives him, “a walking mousetrap” whose avenging dream of Iwabuchi’s (Claudius’) bureaucratic end transmutes him into what Knight calls Shakespeare’s “ambassador of death”. In fact, Nishi dissolves the zaibatsu, or Japanese realm of corrupt business conglomerates, into a sickening insubstantiality that parallels Hamlet’s vision of Nature as “a foul and pestilential contagion of vapours”. Shades of Hamlet, the “chameleon” thriving on stale courtly air, permeate Nishi’s noirish fate — for what Nishi shares with almost all the rest is a cigarette addiction that distils their soul to dissipating smoke. The result is Shakespearean spectral noir. Significantly, when Nishi emerges, wraithlike from the volcanic mist, he embroils the ‘ghost’ of the presumed suicide Wada (Rosencrantz) in his murdered father’s revenge tragedy, thereby transforming him into a phantom of his own phantom-being. For only by appropriating Hamlet’s “antic disposition”, through his exchange of identity with Itakura (Horatio), does Nishi marry Iwabuchi’s daughter Keiko (Ophelia). But Nishi’s is a mousetrap marriage whereby Ophelia, Laertes’ cankered rosebud, manifests in terms of Keiko as a rose of death adorning the ‘murder’ window of her building-shaped wedding cake. Iwabuchi still sleeps well, yet as Richie contends, “the dead sleep best” — for they are spectres of Hamlet’s profound dread: “To die, to sleep; /To sleep, perchance to dream”. Thus the dead Nishi’s dream resurges in Iwabuchi’s grief. Kurosawa’s revisioning of Hamlet corroborates Derrida’s intuition that “a masterpiece moves, by definition, in the manner of a ghost”. For what haunts The Bad Sleep Well is Hamlet’s dreaming dead.

**Keywords:** Adaptation, Hybridity, Noirism, Fragmentation, Spectrality, Nihilism