

MAYOI WELCOME  
まよいうエルカム

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Somehow or other, it seemed I'd died again.

This time, I'd died from a violent impact, having messed up my landing—a majestic crash landing from tens of thousands of meters up in the air was quite befitting of me. Well, maybe tens of thousands of meters was an exaggeration. Nevertheless, that falling death was not something I considered part of my failure. After all, as an immortal monster, I hadn't lost anything. For me, the death-prepared, death-inevitable, death-certain vampire, Deathtopia Virtuoso Suicidemaster, dying was the same as breathing in the first place. If I died as easily as inhaling, I'd revive just as easily as exhaling. I've spent tens of thousands of years living like that. Well, maybe tens of thousands of years was an exaggeration.

However, in this case, this falling death was something I could have avoided if I had wanted to. If anything, that avoidance was what brought about my falling death. I wasn't just acting tough (not that I needed to act tough, because I *was* tough).

It was rather unfortunate that I, who'd been gliding very stylishly through the air, found the coordinates of my landing point already occupied by someone else—it turned out that the peak of the tiny mountain I thought I'd use as a heliport was actually the residence of one of this country's gods. Like that "Corpse Castle" of mine. I'd been planning on landing with full force without decelerating and smashing that small

mountain into smithereens, but not even I wanted to suddenly bring harm to a god of this country—I consider myself to be someone of courtesy. So, it ended up being my body that ate the impact that otherwise would have blown away the mountain. Eating may be a hobby of mine, but I never thought I would end up eating an impact.

“Are you all right, foreign visitor? Dying abroad is much too spectacular, you know.”

As I followed the usual regeneration process, the one who spoke to me was a little girl of a tender age, two tails of hair tied up to the left and right—it was to be expected, but she was in quite an established style of Japanese clothing.

Aha. From what I could see, she was the local god that governed this entire area. A snake? No, a snail—I see. Having escargot in front of me stimulated my appetite for something full-bodied, but I’d have to let it go. If I wanted to eat her, that meant killing her... Killing and eating was my way of doing things, but if I were to take a life I just saved and put it into my mouth in the same breath, it wouldn’t be very consistent of me.

It wasn’t good to have my character waver.

So, instead of eating her, I asked a question.

“Hey, god. Do you know anything about a golden-haired vampire named Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade around these parts?”

“Oh my. As I suspected, you were someone involved with her... Yes, that was something I could figure out with a glance, sharp as I am.”

It seemed she was quite sharp. Though she didn't look that way.

Come to think of it, was such a little girl even fit to be a god? What a weird country.

“I can't really say I want to hear anything about my appearance from you... shouldn't you have a look in the mirror?”

“Unfortunately, I'm a vampire. I won't show up in mirrors.”

“My, my.”

What was she talking about? Slighting my captivating, gender-transcending allure meant that this girl didn't even fear gods—though she herself was a god.

“So? Where's Kisshot?”

I prompted from the sharp god—if she knew, then I wanted her to tell me already. My lifespan may be long, but my temper was short. I'll kill and eat you, okay? But the twintailed girl folded her arms in a very pompous manner, obviously putting on airs.

“...If I had to guess, you're here to meet an old friend of yours? Though I was sure the only ones who referred to her as 'Kisshot' were her two servants.”

“Her two servants? Hmph. Considering I was the one who gave her that name, I can call her whatever I want, wouldn't you say?”

“I see. So you were the one who named her... I apologize if this is too forward of me, but what business do you have with her?”

What a nosy little god. I suppose this was part of the local color. When in Rome, do

as the Romans do—when following your destiny, do as destiny says. Although, as a vampire since birth, it was pretty rare for me to follow something that wasn't my appetite.

“Well. As I'm sure you're aware, vampires these days are an endangered species. So before we all go extinct, I figured I'd rekindle an old friendship with a thrall of mine after six hundred years. And I'd like to see how fair a lady that vampire I created, that princess, has become.”

“...That's not really something I would recommend.”

Having given a clear reply to her immigration check, I was met with a dispiriting response from the twintailed god.

“Wouldn't you be better off leaving those 'good old days' as memories? If you haven't seen someone in six hundred years, they'd surely be a completely different person.”

“People, yes. But we're demons.”

“...For example, what if you're all excited to see 'how fair a lady' that thrall of yours has become, but she ended up becoming a fair young girl, around eight years of age, kept in a human's shadow?”

A fair young girl? What the heck is that.

“I'd kill them. And eat them up. The young girl and the human.”

“Of course you would. ...You see, my parents are divorced.”

The god switched subjects all of a sudden. Parents? Divorced? What kind of a god was this? A former human?

“Towards the end, it had gotten so bad that I almost wanted to interject and ask why they’d even gotten married to begin with—I’d been the first to say that this marriage had been a mistake. We argued about it. But, was that really the case? When they’d first gotten married, that should have been the correct choice.”

“.....”

“Something that was right becomes wrong with the passage of time—it’s awful, isn’t it? Recently, they seem to be removing the concept of ‘locking the country’, *sakoku*, from textbooks, too. If we’ve been taught something, then get told we were wrong all this time, what are we supposed to do? It’s not as if they uncovered some new facts—we’d been taught properly that trade still occurred on Dejima—the actual events haven’t changed, but as generations change, so too, it seems, will our truths.”

Hm. What a foolish sentiment. Had she only just become a god? So she really was a former human? As a vampire who lived for eternity, such sentiments were completely foreign to me.

“But aren’t such sentiments what drove vampires into becoming an endangered species?”

That was a sore spot. A sharp god indeed.

My stomach churned with anger, but more than that, my stomach churned with hunger.

At this rate, I was likely to give into my rage and swallow up this escargot, rationality be damned—I had to exhibit a surprising amount of self-restraint to keep my character from wavering.

“I think it’s fine if you waver, though. If truths can change, so can your character. That’s proof that you’re alive—remaining unchanging means you’re as good as dead.”

“Putting aside truths and traits, you’re pretty reckless to bring up the topic of life and death in front of a vampire. Whatever, I’ll even accept this as mere cultural differences. Just answer my question already, you foreign god—is there a golden-haired vampire named Kisshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade around these parts?”

“If you promise me that, even when you reunite with her, even as your fantasies are shattered, you won’t reject the memories of your past, then I’ll tell you.”

I’ll be considerate to my dear guest from abroad, because even if the concept of “locking the country” has been removed, at least the concept of “opening the country” remains—spoke the god, as if with some hidden implication.

“If you are going to reject the idea that ‘the past was good’, then please also reject the idea that ‘the past was lame’.”

“All right. I don’t really get it, but fine. I’ll promise you. No matter how boring a lady

Title: まよいウエルカム  
Mayoi Welcome

Kissshot has become, no matter how much she disappoints the one who named her, I'll make sure not to be disappointed by her past as a princess—because I won't have lost anything, anyway.”

I'll make sure those beautiful memories are beautifully preserved.

No matter how unsightly a present I'll have to face.

“Then, apologies for my late introduction. I am Hachikuji Mayoi. My name is Hachikuji Mayoi. As the grand existence that governs this modest town—I welcome you, the death-prepared, death-inevitable, death-certain vampire, Deathtopia Virtuoso Suicide-master. You were asking for the vampire named Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade, correct?”

“Yeah, that's right.”

“She's not here. Not any more.”

Said the twintailed god, an enigmatic smile on her face.

(To be continued in *Shinobumonogatari*...)

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

## NOTE ON *SAKOKU*

*Sakoku* (lit. “locking the country”) was an isolationist policy enacted between the seventeenth and mid-nineteenth centuries by the Tokugawa Shogunate, which restricted foreign trade and activity to select ports, primarily in Dejima, Nagasaki. The policy was forcibly ended in 1854 following the United States’ Perry Expedition, an example of gunboat diplomacy.

While *sakoku* is the established term, scholars have questioned since the 1980s whether “locking the country” accurately conveys the extent of foreign trade and influence then—under the shogunate’s policies, trade continued with China, Korea, the Netherlands, and semi-independent Ezo (today Hokkaido) and Ryukyu. Notably, Dutch imports resulted in the proliferation of *rangaku* (“Dutch studies”), allowing Japan to keep abreast of European scientific developments throughout the period. Historians have since called for further study into the term “*sakoku*”, its contrast with “*kai-koku*” (“opening the country”), how the terms are historicized, and their relationship with Japanese historical identity.

In February 2017, the Japanese government proposed replacing “*sakoku*” with “foreign policy of the shogunate” in elementary, middle, and high school textbooks by 2020. Public opposition resulted in the proposal being reworded into “foreign policies of the shogunate, such as *sakoku*” as of March 2017.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

## ABOUT THIS SHORT STORY

*“I see, I see. So that ancient vampire had already come to this town one week ago. Breaking through the barrier... Hmm.”*

*Gaen-san spoke as if slowly digesting Hachikuji’s words.*

*“Yes. For more details, please read the short story ‘Mayoi Welcome’. It’s a story that’s particularly difficult to obtain, but I believe the short stories will be collected in a book in seventeen years, so please wait warmly.”*



*“I can’t wait that long!”*

*—Shinobumonogatari 024*

Then let’s settle this today, shall we.

As it turns out, “particularly difficult to obtain” is quite a playful understatement coming from Mayoi. “Mayoi Welcome” was the prize for solving “Nisio Isin’s Challenge”, held on March 26, 2017 during that year’s AnimeJapan event. Contestants were limited to the 240 A-prize winners of the Nisio Isin Festival 2016, and were given two hours to solve a series of ciphers.

Given its unconventional distribution, the story remained shrouded in mystery in the years that followed, with collectors either sharing it privately or—very rarely—auctioning it off, with asking prices as high as ¥200,000 (US\$1,700).

This translation was made possible by maxdefolsch and Valan, whose first attempt to buy it, on May 23, 2020, ended in a very near miss (). The next opportunity didn’t present itself until two years later—and here we are today ().

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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Smashed the translation into smithereens: Polaris

Restored “*sakoku*” and made the story show up in mirrors: »sawa«

Beautifully preserved those beautiful memories: ricmanrt

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NISI?IZIN  
西尾維新の挑戦状