



# OUGI ROAD MOVIE

*MIJIKANAMONOGATARI*  
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*TRANSLATION: POLARIS TRANSLATIONS*

To celebrate my entrance into university, on a certain Sunday during the preparatory period leading up to the start of the university year, my enigmatic junior named Oshino Ougi invited me to hang out with her. While I, Araragi Koyomi, was an agreeable young man who eagerly agreed to any invite from her no matter what, I figured just in case that I would ask for our destination in advance. Even I had had enough of Ougi-chan's surprises.

"I wasn't going to frighten you or anything. I just thought we could go see a movie together."

"A movie?"

"That's right. Our beloved Araragi-senpai may be living quite the dramatic life, but how about getting to admire the stories of others, for a change?"

I see.

Indeed, it was quite the pertinent suggestion. Up until now, I had been entirely focused on my own life, entrance exams included. Even when I fell

to hell, all I saw were my own retrospections—not that that was a bad thing, but now that I was about to depart for a new world, it would be rather irresponsible of me to continue thinking of nothing but myself.

She likely also meant for me to widen my field of vision by looking at the large screen of a movie—dear me, Ougi-chan, you really were the niece of that Oshino Meme.

“All right, that’s fine with me. I’ll let you pick the genre. However, if you’re thinking about trying to scare me with a horror movie, I’ll have to kindly inform you that such a scheme will end fruitlessly. After having experienced true fear, there’s no way I’ll be shaking at some imitation vampire. Unfortunately.”

“Understood, Araragi-senpai. Allow me to escort you to the theater of fear. Rather, the movie theater.”

“?”

Her phrasing made it sound like she was trying to show off her taste through her choice of movie theater, even before giving away the movie title. Was she about to bring me to some fancy place like an arthouse theater?

To be honest, I didn’t have such highbrow tastes myself... Even if I wanted to look good in front of my junior, I didn’t have it in me to discuss the minor independent films made by great directors in the past, okay?

I wasn’t Hanekawa, after all.

However, this concern was unfounded.

The movie theater wasn’t some secret microcinema known to a select few, run in some alleyway I’d never gone down before, but a multiplex owned by a major company in a shopping center—but our seating was a little peculiar.

It was a couple seat.

“Ougi-chan—”

“What seems to be the matter, Araragi-senpai? After all that big talk, are you getting cold feet? How foolish you are—for just seats like these.”

These were the only seats available, said Ougi-chan in an unconcerned voice—I couldn’t help but feel that she was showing no sign of remorse

toward all those incidents she had stirred up, but if there really were no other empty seats, then there was nothing we could do.

As far as I could see, it looked like the theater was basically empty, but it would probably turn out completely packed in a bit.

“It may be called a ‘couple seat’, but they can also be used by parent and child or by friends, you know. Araragi-senpai, as the paragon of rationality, surely there’s no way you would ever do anything improper with me, right? Or have you actually been looking at me in *that* kind of way? How surprising, to think that Araragi-senpai, known for being such an upstanding guy, would treat me as a woman.”

When she said that while looking at me with those dark eyes of hers, it was hard for me to object. I was even thinking to myself that I was being talked into this so easily, but it was already inevitable that I could be talked into anything by Ougi-chan.

I sat down in the couple seat.

Though it was called a seat, it basically looked like a double bed—at this rate, weren’t they practically telling us to go to sleep in the middle of the movie?

“Senpai. Please put your arm to the side.”

“My arm to the side?”

When I moved my arm up to my side as I was told...

“And here we go.”

Ougi-chan lay down with her head on that arm—in other words, an arm pillow.

“Um, Ougi-chan?”

Moreover, she’d placed her head on my upper arm. I’d said that it looked like a double bed, but with how close we were, we would easily be able to fit on a single bed, too.

“Ha ha. I may have been scheming up a lot of things by myself, but maybe all I really wanted was to be spoiled by you, senpai.”

“That’s not it.”

“Next year, I guess I’ll just have to be spoiled like this by Kanbaru-senpai instead.”

“Don’t cause trouble for Kanbaru. Just do it to me instead.”

However... I’d known about deluxe seats, but I guess there really were lots of different types of movie theaters. Couple seats and beds... Wasn’t there also something like *bakuon* screenings?<sup>283</sup>

“Yes. There are also cheer screenings,<sup>284</sup> as well as sing-along screenings that let you sing together with the characters... We’re in an era with a variety of ways to watch movies.”

“Now that you say that, I’d really like to try that one thing. Watching a movie outdoors. At a park, or something. You see it sometimes in foreign dramas... It’s like they’re on a picnic, with a rush mat laid out.”

“If it was a foreign drama, they wouldn’t be sitting on rush mats.”

“Also, this would be outdoors, too, but I’d like to go watch a movie from inside a car. And you can listen to the audio by tuning in with your car radio... A drive-in theater, I think it was called?”

“That sounds nice. When you do go, please let me ride in the passenger seat. If we’re inside a car, we’ll be able to watch the movie while chatting, right?”

For Ougi-chan, who was quite the talkative girl, a movie theater in which you had to spend around two hours without saying a word might actually be an uncomfortable space for her—but one way or another, it had to be true that she’d planned all this for my sake.

How sweet of her.

“It’s something I’d absolutely like to experience in the future, once I learn how to drive a car, but are they still holding those kinds of screenings somewhere in Japan?”

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<sup>283</sup> 爆音上映 (*bakuon jouei*, “explosive sound screening”) is an experimental way of screening films that uses an audio system usually used for live concerts, for louder and more dynamic sound. It appears to have originated in Japan with no equivalent term in English.

<sup>284</sup> 応援上映 (*ouen jouei*, “cheer screening”) is another type of film screening originating in Japan, encouraging audience participation through cheering and other reactions toward the film.

I'd described it as something to "experience" as if it were normal, but perhaps in the past, movies really were something to "experience", rather than something to "appreciate".

"That's true even now, isn't it? There's 3D, IMAX, 4DX... Even cases where the actors come up on stage to greet the audience. Well, we live in a world where you can binge an entire season of the latest drama, all on your smartphone. We'll come to a point where we only go to the movie theater to partake in the unique charms of the movie theater."

"If we're going to partake in something, maybe we should've bought some popcorn and cola."

"Ah, you'll have to take care not to make any noise while eating or drinking, or people will disapprove."

"I feel like people will disapprove of how we look right now—but I suppose even manners are changing. There's a rule that says not to turn on your smartphone while the credits are rolling, but there was no such rule back when smartphones didn't even exist."

"Don't people come to watch movies because they want to escape from their cell phone for a bit?"

I wasn't too sure about that. I felt like there would eventually be movie screenings that would allow you to freely use your phone, or something like that. To look up the meaning of a word used in the movie, or to share your thoughts with the other viewers in real time. Wasn't there something for *Noh* or *kabuki* theater that let you follow along while listening to commentary on a device?

"Manners have their own regional differences, too. Overseas, there's a practice of giving a big round of applause once the credits start rolling. Apparently, they'll have loud reactions in response to good scenes."

"I guess that would be a similar feeling to watching a stage play? In Japan, it feels tough to even laugh at a joke in a movie theater."

Because we were talking about manners, and because we were talking about different cultures, I needed to be extremely careful, or I could end up accidentally saying something incredibly rude.

And this wasn't just limited to movies.

I didn't know what was correct and what was the right thing to do, and I didn't know what I needed to prioritize and what I needed to avoid getting wrong—and for me, who was about to depart for that new world, perhaps this was a fitting send-off date.

“Now. The movie is about to start. Please zip your mouth shut.”

The talkative girl whispered that into my ear—and at the same time, even the emergency lights turned off, plunging the theater into darkness. During the rest of the screening, Ougi-chan remained in strict adherence to manners, and because there was hardly any weight on my upper arm, it was almost as though I had come to watch the movie on my own.

She'd gotten pretty good at following the rules.

Maybe she really, truly just wanted to come watch a movie—but as for her innermost thoughts, concealed in darkness as though wrapped up in a blanket, I had no way of knowing them.

The only one who knew them was Ougi-chan herself.