



# SHINOBU FUTURE

MONOGATARI SERIES WEBSITE

30 June 2024

MIJIKANAMONOGATARI

11 September 2024

TRANSLATION: POLARIS TRANSLATIONS

“I have been getting the feeling that there is no hope for me in the future, even if I am to live any longer. Is it not the case that there will never be any more sparkling and wondrous occasions to occur in my life?”

The former Kissshot Acerolaorion Heartunderblade—the ex-iron-blooded, ex-hot-blooded, ex-cold-blooded ex-vampire, whom oni-no-onii-chan referred to as Oshino Shinobu—expressed her concerns to me as she lay draped across the sofa in a face-down position.

Now hold on, shouldn’t you have gotten over those already?

Those trifling concerns of yours.

“In the first place, it wouldn’t be a ‘life’, would it? Your six hundred years were not spent in life as a human, but in death as a monster.”<sup>266</sup>

“Who are you saying spent six hundred years in death as a monster?”

Well, ‘tis true that I was killed, in a way.

---

<sup>266</sup> The word 人生 (*jinsei*, “life” (more precisely “someone’s lifespan from birth to death”)) is comprised of the kanji 人 (“human”) and 生 (“life” (in this case, the concept of life in relation to death)).

By my master.

That was what the former Heartunderblade said.

In other words, her time spent in death as a monster was what was keeping her alive, which was a little ironic.

“Alas, these sorts of things do require regular therapy sessions, after all. In the end, there is always the chance for rebounding.”

“It seriously feels like I’m listening to the ramblings of an old lady. It’s like something I’d rather listen to while sitting on a porch, not in a therapy room. Well, it’s true that if you’ve lived for six hundred years, you’ve probably experienced most things that can happen to us—”

However, wasn’t the advancement of technology something that was a constant surprise? Light bulbs, television, cell phones—and spaceships.

Same for weapons.

Unbelievable breakthroughs, rendering history up until this point into the mere past, would make their appearance on a regular basis—that was certainly the case for the hundred years I’d been alive (been dead).

A dazzling future.

And a dizzying one.

“Think back, former Heartunderblade. Even if you try to look like you know everything there is to know, you were pretty surprised at the invention of paper, weren’t you?”

“I have not lived that long of a life. However, while you may be but a mere chickling from my point of view, I suppose you are indeed still an immortal aberration. I was right to speak to you about this.”

“If that’s how you’re going to praise me, then I can’t help but think that, yeah, you really have grown old.”

“Oh, quiet, you. But you see, corpse doll. The fact is, I have gotten too used to that production of singularities that occurs on a regular basis. A great new invention that will turn the world on its head? For me, ‘tis but a common occurrence. ‘Tis easy for me to classify it by thinking, ‘ah, yes, so it falls under that pattern.’”

“It’s not like you’re the one making all those great new inventions.”

Perhaps it was like how what was universal was unchangeable.<sup>267</sup>

Turning that around, it could mean that being unable to feel change led to being unable to feel the future. Well, no matter how great an invention was, to her, it might be nothing more than a continuation of the unbroken chain of history. As a matter of fact, it would be impossible to find anything truly new—no matter how much you polished it.

No matter how much it sparkled. Or glittered.

“At the same time, isn’t it not that the future isn’t changing, but you yourself? If you’re as dull as you are, and you don’t try to polish yourself, then of course the future won’t end up polished, either.”

“Indeed!”

Um, it’s a bit bothersome if you were actually convinced by that.

I wasn’t trying to be emotionally moving or anything.

Really, you’ve become cute.

“Living a long life also means learning to avoid friction. But it seems that, as a result, I have forgotten how to file myself down.”

“Well, in the past, it’s more like your existence was the file itself. Also, ‘friction’ and ‘polishing’ use different kanji.”<sup>268</sup>

“You can write them using the same kanji. Unlike you, I have lived a long life, which is why I know this.”<sup>269</sup>

“So much for avoiding friction.”

“Even when I think I have changed, I end up repeating the same things over again, it seems. ‘Tis as they say, the soul of a child of three is the same at six hundred.”<sup>270</sup>

---

<sup>267</sup> Pun between 普遍 (*fuhen*, “universal”) and 不変 (*fuhen*, “unchangeable”).

<sup>268</sup> Yotsugi originally says that the 摩 (*ma*) in 摩擦 (*masatsu*, “friction”) and the 磨 (*ma*) in 研磨 (*kenma*, “polishing”) are different characters.

<sup>269</sup> “Polishing” can be written as 研摩 (*kenma*), which does use the same character as 摩擦 (*masatsu*, “friction”).

<sup>270</sup> A modification of the phrase 三つ子の魂百まで (*mitsugo no tamashii hyaku made*, “the soul of a child of three is the same at one hundred”). It has a similar meaning to the phrase “a leopard cannot change its spots”.

“Rather than regression, a resurgence of the past. After six hundred years, it can be tricky to tell if you’ve gotten used to new stimuli, or if your senses have become dulled to new stimuli. Though I’m sure there are plants that have lived longer than you have. Like thousand-year-old cedars.”

Speaking of which, oni-no-onii-chan, who was a thrall of the former Heartunderblade, had once prattled on about wanting to become a plant. With one’s teenage years being filled with new surprises and discoveries every day, that did sound like something that would be said by a teenager—a teenager, who was forced to undergo change whether they wanted to or not.

It might sound like an enlightened statement, but it could also be seen as a confession of being too delicate to withstand stimuli.

“It’s also possible you’re just afraid of panicking, and so you’re retreating back into your own shell. After all, if you’re set on changing the future, then you’re free to change it as much as you’d like. At the very least, for the worse.”

“What is the use in changing it for the worse?”

“It’s fine even if it’s for the worse.”

Hm?

Hadn’t we reached the same conclusion as with someone else? Even though we should have been talking about something completely different.

“Even for someone like you, who has been worshiped as a god and has lived at the South Pole, there should still be plenty of things you have yet to try. Have you read every book that’s been written in this world?”

“No matter what book it is that I read, ‘tis all the same to me.”

“What a load of shit.”

Well, it was true that when the quantity of books was so vast, that vastness would end up averaging out. If you had a mixture of jewels and stones, the jewels and the regular old stones would be seen as having equal value.

In short, it was because the sample size was so large.

“In that case, and this could be a different argument from the earlier one about new inventions, but if what you see, hear, and taste all seem the

same to you, isn't that ultimately because you don't actually know those things very well? Apparently, for those who specialize in the field, it's possible to differentiate between each and every one of a hundred goldfish."

Youngsters may see all traditional performances as the same, and the elderly may treat all subcultures as similar to one another.

"If you happen to reunite with an old friend after a long time and they say, 'you haven't changed at all', that's not because you really haven't changed. It could just signify a disconnect, where your friend just doesn't know about how much you've changed in the meantime. Well, not that you have any friends."

"Quiet, you. I do have friends."

"Oh? How intriguing."

"That is what you are."

"That future was completely beyond my expectations. Considering you had once come close to killing me."

I certainly never expected that the future would involve a therapy session regarding the worthless concerns of the King of Aberrations, stretched out across a sofa.

As she'd said, I had existed for only one-sixth of the former Heartunderblade's lifespan, but that was still on the longer side—thus, I could guarantee that the future was not certain.

Then again, as a specialist of immortal aberrations, I couldn't deny that it was just a peaceful variation of the way things should be.

It was ultimately just a manner of speaking.

An explanatory consolation.

"Because things continue to undergo refinement,<sup>271</sup> that thought experiment where the future feels more boring than the past could actually come true."

---

<sup>271</sup> The term used here is ソフィスティケート (*sofisutikeeto*, "sophisticate"), which in context is used to mean "refinement" (an example given by the dictionary is "urbanization"). I've decided to translate it as "refinement" (together with the Japanese word 洗練 (*senren*, also "refinement")) because I felt that using

“Mm? What is it that you mean? Are you referring to how something can be polished so much that it cannot be shaved down any further?”

“In terms of books, the books of the past used to be pretty all over the place, right? According to Sengoku Nadeko, that was a good thing, but older books wouldn’t even have proper story composition or development, or even any distinction between genres. Compared to that, present-day books follow a very refined format.”

“Who in the world is Sengoku Nadeko?”

“Sheesh.”

“Should it not be ‘Nadeshiko’?”<sup>272</sup>

“What a fresh reaction. It’s gone all the way around to feeling new.”

“And, the moment a format becomes established, does that not end up fixing the future in place?”

“Like the 5-7-5-7-7 pattern, which is said to be the epitome of refinement? Well, even wars used to be pretty crude in the past. They would wave around blunt weapons while yelling battle cries. These days, you can gracefully control a drone from an air-conditioned room, and attack from complete safety.”

“Tis still rather crude, no? That is what I have been saying. Even if it has been refined, the essence of it has not changed.”

“When something is presumed to be vampirism but actually turns out to be rabies, that’s also a form of refinement, or a soft landing. If you’re aware of the thrilling, heart-pounding era in which the world was filled with evil spirits impossible to understand, the present day dominated by compliance standards seems a lot more worthless, doesn’t it? How pitiful.”

“Do not just say whatever you want, and then show pity however you want. Besides, if you are to bring up compliance standards, then ‘tis not the past or the future that will undergo refinement, but I myself.”

---

the word “sophisticated” would sound odd given its more common definition of “having good taste”.

<sup>272</sup> The usual reading of 撫子 (*nadeko*) is *nadeshiko*.

“In that case, I’m not exactly in the safety zone, either. Since I’m a tween girl corpse doll.”

Before long, monstrous apparitions could end up becoming nothing more than relics of the past—nothing more than corpses of the past.<sup>273</sup>

Well, no, I guess we’ve already become that.

At the very least, in childrens’ illustrations of what things might be like in the future, there’s no more room to depict any monsters.

“Even with your thralls, compared to your first generation that was born four hundred years ago, your second generation from modern times has turned out pretty docile. The second-generation thrall might seem like a reckless fool to those who only know of him, but he’s nothing much compared to how rough-and-tumble the first generation was, right?”

“Oho, I see. When you put it like that, ‘tis hard to simply say that the past was always better.”

Perhaps this peaceful livelihood, without any stimuli, is what is actually stimulating for me right now—said the aberration of legend, with quite the mature remark. Like a plant whose branches and roots would not grow any longer.<sup>274</sup>

But really, neither “life” nor “living” would apply to you.

It should be “death” and “destruction”.<sup>275</sup>

“Well, the reason books of the past used to be all over the place can simply be due to the fact that it was hard to go back and rewrite them if needed. Paper used to be extremely valuable, after all.”

“Ka ka. In that case, I shall be sure to live as long as possible, until the invention of an app that can rewrite my life.”

---

<sup>273</sup> Pun between 遺物 (*ibutsu*, “relic”) and 異物 (*ibutsu*, “strange object” or “corpse”). Both meanings apply in the sense that they’re aberrations and they’re dead, but I opted for the latter meaning.

<sup>274</sup> The word 枯れた (*kareta*) can mean “mature”, but it can also mean “withered” (as a plant).

<sup>275</sup> Yotsugi is pointing out the kanji 生 (“life”) and 活 (“living”), which together make up the word 生活 (*seikatsu*, “livelihood”) as used by Shinobu previously. She then uses 死 (“death”) and 滅 (“destruction”), which together make up the word 死滅 (*shimetsu*, “extinction”).

Though that day might not be very far off.

Even this very conversation we were having could be a past that was carefully rewritten in the future.