



TSUBASA SONG

BAKEMONOGATARI ANIME COMPLETE GUIDEBOOK

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MIJIKANAMONOGATARI

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TRANSLATION: POLARIS TRANSLATIONS

That Sunday, instead of being woken up by my two little sisters Karen and Tsukihi, I awoke from the ringtone that sounded out when Hanekawa's text message arrived. Usually I would boast of my ability to completely ignore the melody of my cell phone, but there was some merit in waking up at the time, and if I do say so myself I was very shrewd for doing so, because the sender was Hanekawa. Well, as always her message was incredibly formal, and furthermore the length was by no means short, and it needed some time to be deciphered, but if I translated it into a style that anyone could understand,

“Let's go on a date ♥”

was the impression I got.

... No, I'm not kidding.

Don't worry, I haven't gone insane.

So I canceled all the plans I had for that day (this time I'm kidding, since I didn't have any plans anyway) and pedaled my bike toward the designated meeting place.

Hanekawa had, as usual, arrived earlier than I did (and, as usual, was wearing her school uniform. Well, school uniform dates have recently been pretty common).

“He-y! Then, shall we go?”

Like that, with a very comfortable way of smiling, she led the way.

Following along while thinking such thoughts as I wonder where we’re going, it’ll probably end with us at the library again, but wasn’t the library closed on Sundays? But to my surprise, on the way we boarded a train (I left my bicycle at the station), and when we finally arrived, it was a karaoke box that was open in the morning.

“... Karaoke?”

“Yep!”

While I was unable to reply, Hanekawa said “Just the two of us. Three hours, please” and promptly got us through the reception desk. What’s with this coercive skill? Rather than a date, it seemed as if she were following a quite boyish date plan, where the guy would be like “be quiet and just follow me” with a pace that didn’t even ask for confirmation or consent, and the girl would be enchanted. I seriously want to follow her example.

And then there was the singing.

Hanekawa-san sang with enthusiasm.

As embarrassing as it is to say, my experience with regard to karaoke was rather slim, or perhaps I should say my body was resistant to the very act of singing a song in front of Hanekawa, so when she got tired of me fiddling with the remote control, she said,

“Then, I’ll start”,

and took the mic in hand and began to sing. Because I never input my own song due to hesitation and embarrassment,

“Then, I’ll sing again, okay?” “I’ll sing again, okay?” “Again, okay?”

And with that, it was eternally Hanekawa’s turn.

I may as well call it a solo live show.

Though it was a situation that couldn't be helped even if some outsider came and told me "What the hell are you doing?", well, I wanted to hear one more time.

I wanted to hear Hanekawa's singing one more time.

She was so good I thought I would die.

If taking the skill level of singing and adding "I thought I would die" as a modifier doesn't make any sense to you, then let's amend it to "she was so good I thought I would be revived". For me, the vampire who was revived no matter how many times he died, this was certainly the perfect metaphor.

It appears that Hanekawa thought that it was a breach of etiquette to sing songs that other people in the room did not know, because each and every song she sang was a famous pop song that even someone like me would know, even though they were all songs filled with major keys that anyone would get tired of hearing, so I was impressed by Hanekawa's admirable performance.

Therefore, with me listening in ecstasy, there was not a moment for me to even turn the pages of the song book.

I instinctively fixed my posture.

"Thank you very much. Huh? Eh? Araragi-kun, have you still not chosen a song yet? In that case, I'll go again."

"Wait a second wait a second wait a second, Hanekawa-san. Even though it's fantastic that you're in such high spirits, just wait for a second."

I stopped Hanekawa's arm reaching for the remote control. If she sang for me any longer, I would be so moved I might actually cry.

That would be bad, right?

"Intermission. Let's have an intermission. Let's calm down for a moment, let's go back to our initial state of mind."

"? Although I'm fine with that."

At last, she set down the mic and sat down.

She had been standing while singing.

She was the class president who would dance while singing.

“But I’m surprised... I didn’t think karaoke was part of your image, Hanekawa. How many times have you come here, to be able to let out your voice like that?”

“Eh? No, but this is my first time at karaoke.”

“...”

At Hanekawa’s puzzled response, I too became puzzled.

“Your first time? Eh, but it’s like you’re really used to using the remote control, though.”

“For this, you can just figure it out just by looking at it, right?”

Hanekawa said so quite matter-of-factly.

Looking at Hanekawa like this, she was probably the type of person who didn’t read manuals, either.

Or should I say, a person who didn’t even need to read manuals.

“Eeh... But, but, your singing, I thought it was good, but even without something so opinionated, everything on the screen has been 100 points, hasn’t it?”

“I don’t know, even if you say that. Isn’t it made so that it shows 100 points no matter who sings? Like a fortune that only has ‘great luck’ in it.”

“Is that so...?”

I don’t really know about it, but I heard that the grading standard for karaoke had incredibly severe judgement... At any rate, this girl, she can only get 100 points even when it’s not a school test, huh.

That’s unreasonable.

“It’s the first time I’ve sung by myself in front of others since music class in elementary school, so I don’t think I’m singing that well. Really, Araragi-kun, stop flattering me.”

“Like I said, it’s not like that. What kind of person are you, anyway? Just say that you confined yourself in here yesterday for six hours of intensive training for today’s sake and be praised obediently!”

By speaking my mind like this, I was really calming myself down.

Emotion that has gone too far can only come out as fear.

“To begin with, Hanekawa, you weren’t looking at the screen while singing, huh.”

“Hm? Because I had the lyrics memorized.”

“I’m not trying to find fault in you, but why can’t you be normal even at karaoke?”

After I said that, I sighed and fell silent.

Why can’t she be normal.

As a matter of fact, for Hanekawa, that was a serious worry she had, and that’s why, as a result, it was twice that a cat had rampaged—on Golden Week and just a couple of days ago, twice that nothing could be done to stop the story of the cat from occurring. Why did I say something so careless—but, Hanekawa did not even grant me the time to regret like that, saying,

“That’s a good question~”

and nodded normally.

“But I thought hard about what happened recently, and I realized that trying to be normal in itself isn’t really normal, right?”

“...”

“Right. There are no dreams in the objective of trying to become normal.”

And that’s why I ended up seeing nightmares not once but twice—said Hanekawa, as if telling herself that rather than me.

“Also, normal people wish that they weren’t normal, don’t they? I’ve realized now that striving to become normal in itself is something that isn’t normal. And now in that matter I’ve gotten all mixed up. And with that, Araragi-kun, I’m sorry for troubling you with all these things.”

Though she seemed like she was joking, for Hanekawa, it seemed like she truly thought so from the bottom of her heart as well. “Though I don’t think I’ve done anything wrong up until now—but I don’t think that was a good thing. Being nothing but right all the time isn’t really the right thing. I don’t want to shut myself out anymore, and as it is, if I don’t demonstrate more of my individuality, then one day I may fall prey to the cat again.”

“... That’s true.”

Yes, it could happen.

After all—the cat was like another Hanekawa, and to go further the cat was Hanekawa herself, and no matter how many times we borrow Shinobu’s power to repel it—it will never disappear from within Hanekawa.

Oshino had said that twenty years old was the standard—but Hanekawa couldn’t just wait until then.

All the way until then—and all the way after that.

Hanekawa definitely had to face the cat inside of her. Not shutting it out—but accepting it as part of herself.

“So it’s something like that, okay? From now on, instead of storing up all this stress and resentment, I’d like to try various ways of stress relief from time to time. And today’s the first for that.”

“Hm. Ah, that’s why.”

That’s why we came to karaoke.

Singing out in such a loud voice could certainly serve as stress relief.

“What, so it was just that? You should’ve just told me that. I was so sure that this was supposed to be a date, so I was feeling really happy.”

“I never wrote anything like that in the text message, though.”

“Is that so.”

“You were reading too much in between the lines. I wouldn’t do anything like that when you have Senjougahara-san.”

Said Hanekawa, smiling.

“But, you’re right. I probably should have just told you earlier. I mean, I could have just come on my own, but really since it was my first time it was a little scary.”

“Oh, so you do get nervous. So it’s the same for Hanekawa, huh. Well, I get what’s going on now. Whenever you want a distraction for some stress relief, just call me. Like today, I’ll come along any time.”

“Really? Is it okay?”

“Of course. Would I ever turn down a request from Hanekawa?”

“Then, I wonder if I should request something right now?”

And saying that, from a cute pouch (that didn't really match her school uniform) that hung from her shoulders, Hanekawa took out a pair of scissors used to cut hair.

"This has absolutely nothing to do with Araragi-kun, but recently my heart was broken. So in order to get over that,"

She spoke with a smile.

"These braids, could you cut them off in a single stroke for me?"

"..."

It appears that was the main point of today.

Incidentally, you could say that the source of Hanekawa's stress could be me, as well.

For the sake of stress relief you'd need to do some severe action, and I guess this could also be revenge for my harassment, but anyway, the impish, catlike smile that Hanekawa gave as she handed me the scissors seemed, though not completely, just a little bit like she was enjoying herself, and that she was happy.

Because she made me happy as well, I couldn't help it.

Today was, as I thought, the best day.

... By the way, it wasn't just some temporary joke: Hanekawa really had me cut her two braids. She forced me to give her a bob cut. I couldn't believe it. So as to not bother the shop, she had even prepared a hand cleaner in advance, so this was clearly premeditated. Although Hanekawa of course went to a proper hairdresser afterwards to straighten things out.

But those two braids are still in my room now.