Nishio Ishin, stylized NisiOisiN to emphasize the palindrome is the pen name of the writer of Katanagatari. Born in Japan of 1981 Nishio Ishin attended the Ritsumeikan University College of Policy Science to study art to become a mangaka. He would eventually drop out from lack of noticeable improvement in his drawing ability, and he decided to become a novelist instead. Nishio Ishin made his debut with the novel Kubikiri cycle, which got him the 23rd Mephisto Award at the age of twenty. He is most famous for his extremely popular Monogatari, and many of his other works fell into the shadow of his twenty-four book series hit. Katanagatari, was written in 2007 and starting in January came out as a twelve light novel series with one light novel being released each month. The way that the series was released would have some correlation with the story inside the series. The light novels in 2010 would come to be adapted into an anime by White Fox co. The anime was unique in the fact that each episode was fifty minutes long, twice the average length. And in mirroring the light novels would be released one episode per month.

Nisoisin’s *Katanagatari* is what I have come to believe to be the most underrated anime ever. To be able to explain why I need to start with how it is extremely simple yet extraordinarily complex. The simplicity of the story starts with the “romance” of Togame and Schikika. There was no build up, no explicit reasoning, it just happened and both parties agreed to it. Afterwards the story continues with a set pattern, every episode one month passes by and Schikika fights a holder of one of the deviant blades and retrieves it. And the space between fights being filled with witty banter and very long dialogue. The show is designed to be very episodic, each episode starting and finishing a conflict within its fifty-minute period. It gets you into a set state of mind so that the things that you can’t predict stand out. As the show goes on you come to realize that even though you know Schikika is going to win the fight and the blade, you don’t know what challenges he will face, what the blade is going to be like, and who is going to survive in the end.

As the story progresses the deviant blades start to become more and more unpredictable, one blade may be just an extremely durable katana, while another is a suit of armor. The definition of “sword” becomes more and more abstract as the story prepares you for the final episode where things take a turn. Schikika, while winning every fight eventually starts to find himself facing challenges that he, an isolated swordsman who views himself as a weapon, was not prepared for. He slowly starts to become more and more “human” as the episodic series continues. While his willingness to kill never wanes, he begins to understand that he doesn’t always need to. There can be peaceful surrenders and not everything has to be solved with slaying the opposing party. All the while you still have the Maniwa corps and others still dying to keep the audience on their toes about who gets to survive. As the story progresses more and more oddities appear in the still stable episodic style of writing. The sister, after getting attacked by three of the Maniwa Corps, mercilessly kills them off and decides to head back to the mainland as well. And in turn leads to a couple of minor events that snowball into a showdown between Shikika and his sister that no one ever saw coming. You come to learn in the last couple of episodes the creator of the deviant swords, Shikzaki Kiki saw into the future and set these swords to lead to a path that would lead Japan out of a crisis that would soon come their way. All this buildup starts small and gets exponentially bigger with every episode, until lastly the twelfth episode hits.

Next up is the unique “Tell Don’t Show” style of writing. *Katanagatari* is an extremely heavy dialogue story, each of the character’s past experiences are usually told through the mouth of the character and rarely are they shown on screen. There are very few flashbacks, the series opts rather to explain through the mouths, not even the actions of the characters. This plays an extremely important role in how the story is told because of who the characters are that are telling the story. Togame, is the main user of this feature, while Shikika does most of the fighting Togame does most of the talking. And Togame is shown throughout the series to jump around from being clumsy and harmless as a fly, to being extremely cunning willing to do whatever it takes to win. But more importantly *say* whatever she can to make sure she wins, and when all the plot and setting is coming from the mouth of someone like this you begin to question what can and can’t be trusted. This especially rings true when Princess Hite is introduced into the story as what seems to be the main antagonist. She like Togame is very skilled with her words, and what she and Togame say do not always line up. Which leaves you wondering who exactly is the one telling the truth and how much you can truly believe. Even when you finish the final episode and everything is wrapped up near perfectly, you are still left wondering how much of what Togame was saying was true.