

Spirit Sword Chapter 1

Chapter 1. Retirement

TL: Warriormonk

Editor: adkji, emptycube, Obelisk

A worn-out armor hung on the hanger. It showed dents and signs of polish that were sure signs of long-time use.

I've gone through hell and back with this armor.

A young man seemingly in his early twenties with a fair face smiled bitterly as he looked away from the armor. The armor had protected him for five years, but he no longer needed it.

I should donate it to the fort, following the tradition.

Luke, a young man with sandy brown hair and eyes, silently recalled the events that had occurred five years ago.

When Luke had been stationed in Fort Potellan on the Eastern borders of Hansel Kingdom, he was a 17-year-old greenhorn. The armor on the hanger had also been brand-new from a smithy, gleaming in the light.

Five years later, present day, the situation had been turned around entirely. He was a veteran officer of the battlefield, and his worn out armor could only be used in the training field.

I guess I can finally say goodbye to the battlefield. I will no longer be a soldier after the retirement ceremony tomorrow.

Luke once again recalled his memories, this time, of the enemies he had fought for the past five years.

Orcs, a long-time enemy of the human race. They were the opponents the garrison of Fort Potellan had been fighting and defending the kingdom from.

Large scale tribes of Orcs had once roamed the Hansel Kingdom of old, but the King and Noble Lords had fought long and hard to drive them out of the kingdom.

The surviving Orcs were forced to retreat into the unforgiving mountain ranges of the East. However, the survivors were the elites amongst elites. The remaining Orcs used advanced guerilla tactics to dance around the army and pillage territories.

The Hansel Kingdom had blocked off any escape routes for the Orcs by overwhelming them with soldiers. The Orcs hiding out in the mountain range numbered five hundred, whereas the troops that were placed strategically in a defensive manner around Potellan numbered three thousand.

A scowl appeared on Luke's face as he pictured the Orcs.

Cursed Orcs, seems like only the strongest and the most tenacious ones survived.

The defending troops of Potellan had paid an enormous price to keep the Orcs trapped, and a supply unit or a small scouting unit getting wiped out was commonplace. It was not uncommon for the Orcs to be seen right below the fort wall either, keeping the soldiers on their toes.

At least I won't have to look at their ugly faces anymore.

Luke stood up silently. He had received the paperwork for retirement and only needed to turn them into the Fort to return to being a normal citizen.

It's a shame I'll be leaving behind this armor.

Luke reluctantly placed his hand on the armor before leaving the room and heading for the Logistics Department.

Retiring veterans left the Potellan fort for a rear fort on a supply carriage, but outside of the Logistics Department, Luke only saw a single supply carriage and scowled.

Only a single carriage?

Only about four escorting soldiers guarded the carriage. An extremely weak force considering they were crossing roads that were haunted by Orcs. Luke calmed himself by recalling the fact that three thousand troops had entered the fort just yesterday, hopefully restricting the Orcs' movements.

However, when he opened the door of the carriage, Luke couldn't stop from showing his disappointment. There was only a single soldier in the carriage.

The soldier had broad shoulders, a ruddy face, and gave off a vulgar impression.

Only one other retiree? Why am I so unlucky?

Luke had no other choice but to step quietly into the carriage. Tomorrow afternoon was the day that three thousand troops, in addition to the defensive troops, would carry out a massive, final push to exterminate the last of the Orcs. It was better to leave before things became messy.

After the four guards and the coachman arrived, it was finally time to say goodbye to Fort Potellan.

The soldier, who was already in the carriage, was eyeing Luke. Because Luke wasn't wearing his uniform, the soldier seemed to mistake him for an ordinary soldier.

Seems like we're retiring together, it's nice to meet you. Let me introduce myself. I'm Hal from the Wolf Fang squadron. I hail from Habest City.

Luke scowled at the name Wolf Fang squadron. This was because Wolf Fang squadron was made up of prisoners and criminals who had been drafted into the war.

The squadron had high death rates as they had a tendency to be sent to the most dangerous battlefields but also had a matching high battle prowess due to their makeup of rough prisoners and criminals.

Hal began to glare when Luke did not reply.

This bastard is ignoring me? He looks young and unscarred, he's probably just an administrative worker!

Hal tensed up and began to crack his neck side to side.
Ahh! Why is it so hot? Is it the lingering heat of the battlefield?
Hals loosened shirt moved to expose his chest, full of crisscrossing scars. Hal felt Lukes gaze and smiled.
This is the result of slaughtering the damn Orcs on the battlefield. Most of the Wolf Fang squadron has these scars, and we carry them like medallions!
Luke smiled coldly.
I wonder how bored you must have been to have done nothing.
Wh-What?
Seems like you sewed up small scratches made by a small knife Why didnt you take it easy?
What? You Bastard!
Hal screamed as he jumped up from his seat.
These scars are my medallions from battling the Orcs valiantly..
Are you trying to joke with me? Do you know what kind of scars an Orc gives you?
Luke silently pulled up his sleeve. On his arm was a single, massive scar, that looked like the trail of a large worm. It was completely different from the crisscross of much smaller scars on Hals chest.
Hal immediately stepped backwards, cowed.
Scars from Orcs are usually like this. You know why?
Wh- Why?
The weapons of Orc are crusted with old, rotting blood. Theres no way that those simple morons take care of their weapons.
Hal nodded unconsciously.
If youre injured by an Orcs weapon, you have to cauterize it with red hot iron. To avoid infection.
Luke shoved the scar into Hals face.
The scar itself was not deep, but the aura it gave off was unmistakable, ugly and painful.
.
Hal couldnt say anything and avoided eye contact with Luke, who covered up his arm once again.
I am Centurion Luke. Retiring after five years on the field.
Hal stiffened up immediately as he saluted Luke. Centurions were officers who commanded a hundred soldiers.
Ap- Apologies! I did not recognize you, Officer!
I am not wearing my uniform. It is understandable. How long have you been in service?
A- A year and six months, sir.
Hal became a dog with his tail tucked between his legs the second he found out Luke was a veteran officer of five years. Although Luke had a fair and young face, he was not someone Hal could treat lightly at all.
Damn, of course, he doesnt have any scars on his face. Hes wearing a full helmet every time hes on the battlefield.
An awkward silence reigned the carriage.
Thankfully, the coachman and four guards arrived soon after the confrontation.
Sorry for the wait.
A guard looked over Hal and Lukes paperwork, then sent the carriage off.
Kererereung.
The castle door opened, and the carriage began to speed off into the dark. The carriage was pulled by four horses and was able to proceed at a decent speed.
Dududududu.
The guards and coachman sat outside of the carriage, leaving Luke and Hal in awkward silence inside the carriage.
Hal picked his nose absentmindedly and asked.
Are you returning to your House?
Yes.
My apologies, but could I ask of which House you hail from?
Luke had nothing to hide and so responded honestly.
I am of Count Estebans House, from the center of the Kingdom.
Wahh, even a country hick like myself has heard of the famous House. No wonder your words and posture are so elegant I suppose people from a prestigious House are definitely different.
Luke frowned slightly at Hals continuous compliments.
From the sly look Hal had on his face, Luke suspected Hal was after something.
I have heard Esteban Earldom is a wonderful place to live! I have always wanted to visit it.
Luke gave a cold snort after realizing what Hal was after.
Seems like you are reluctant to return home because of your crimes? Sorry to say but people of the Esteban Earldom do not like outsiders. Its a characteristic of Earldoms with long histories.
Hal couldnt help but sweat at Lukes sharp words.
What crime did you commit anyway, to be drafted into the Wolf Fang squadron?
Hal hesitated for a while, before replying.
I-I beat a person in a drunken stupor

You wouldnt get drafted for something like that?
 The person died while I was beating him
 A murderer. Sorry, but the people of Esteban Earldom would not welcome a murderer. Even one whose crimes have been pardoned by military service.
 Hals face stiffened up at Lukes clear rejection.
 A cold mood took over the carriage once again.
 Luke had met many different types of people on the frontlines and did not look kindly upon people like Hal.
 People like him are the type to always nag for favors. To take him back to the Earldom would do no good at all.
 This was the reason Luke had been so cold to Hal.
 Dagadak. Dagak.
 Luke and Hal remained silent, listening to the rythmic sounds of the carriage.
 Luke was thinking of his fiance, whom he had not met for five years.
 Wait for me, Isabelle. I could only talk to you through letters for the past five years, but I am finally on my way to see you.
 It was common for Noble Houses to set up arranged marriages between couples who had never seen each others faces before.
 But Luke was different. He had met Isabelle at the Noble Academy and had given her his love. He had successfully proposed to her. He went through many difficulties and obstacles before receiving approval from Isabelles House and holding an engagement ceremony.
 After returning to his House, they would have a marriage ceremony and become husband and wife.
 However, his sweet dreams were broken by a shout from the coachman above.
 The road is blocked!
 Lukes complexion changed immediately. Blocking roads by felling logs and other obstacles to stop carriages or patrols and then ambushing them, was one of the most common tactics used by the Orcs.
 Its the Orcs! An ambush! Keuk-!
 A pained scream came from the coachman, and both Luke and Hal scowled. An ambush on the day they retired.
 I should have worn my armor
 Luke grit his teeth and unsheathed his sword by his pack. Hal also armed himself hastily.
 Hal seemed too nervous and jumpy for a soldier who had been in the army for a year and a half. Luke kicked opened the carriage door and ran outside, carefully scanning his surroundings.
 How many?
 As he counted the shadows he could make out in the dark, his complexion darkened even further. At least twenty Orcs.
 Luke gripped his sword tightly, despair on his face.
 Im sorry my love. I dont think I will be keeping my promise.
 Luke pictured Isabelles face one last time before howling out a battle cry and launching himself towards the Orcs.

Spirit Sword Chapter 2

Chapter 2. Kidnapped -1-

TL: Warriormonk

Editors : Obelisk

Ggeeuuk.

Luke woke up with a soft groan.

My head

Luke tried to cradle his head in response to the pulsing headache, but his body refused to even budge. After waking himself up further, Luke began to scan his surroundings.

Whats going on? I dont remember anything after being hit in the back of the head while fighting the Orcs

Luke tried to remember what had happened before he got knocked out.

Twenty to thirty Orcs had ambushed the carriage, and Luke had joined the guards in trying to fight them off.

The Orcs had them outnumbered. The guards fell one by one against the Orcs formation, and Luke was eventually left alone.

Luke clenched his teeth when he suddenly remembered something.

Hal, the goddamn bastard

Right at the start of the fight, Hal had started shivering uncontrollably and crawled under the carriage to hide.

I-I am just a cook! Ive never fought an Orc.

Luke didnt even have the chance to shout at Hal. An Orc warrior, extremely skilled with his battle axe, clashed weapons with Luke and oppressed him with an overwhelming pressure.

Even Luke, who had been trained in the sword since childhood, had a hard time dealing with the Orc warrior.

Luke scowled.

I was only able to barely wound his arm after being pressured for a while.

That was about the extent of Lukes resistance. Soon after he wounded the Orcs arm, he had received a hit to the back of the head by gods knows what, and passed out.

I wonder why they kept me alive

Luke squirmed and examined his body. He was securely tied down to a shoddy wooden chair, made with simple techniques of braiding branches.

This seems to be a log cabin The Orcs hideout?

Lukes face paled. He remembered that the troops had been gathering for the final assault just the day after to exterminate the last of the Orcs.

Fuck The Orcs must have moved in order to secure information.

Luke sighed in a resigned manner when he realized the reason behind the Orcs ambush. He was sure to be crudely tortured by the primitive methods of the Orcs.

Luke shook his head, sure that he would draw his last breath as a mangled corpse.

Who knew Id end my life like this

An abrupt end to his dream of starting a family with Isabelle

Lukes eyes sparked with pride as he bit his lips.

Let them try to make me talk. I will defend my honor as a Centurion of the Hansel Kingdom until my last breath!

Luke tried to steel himself, but he couldnt stop the pangs of pain in his heart when he pictured Isabelle. He wished to see her more than life, to whom he had sent monthly letters to for the past five years.

I wont be able to close my eyes even in death if I leave her behind

It was then that a low voice vibrated from outside the door of the cabin.

Kuueeeekk. Why cant you close your eyes, human?

The door opened with a creak, and a sturdily built Orc walked in.

A head shorter than most humans, but its muscled shoulders put most humans to shame. A deformed race. Luke felt repulsed by the wide open nostril nose and yellow eyes, characteristics unique to the Orc race.

Orcs truly have fearsome hearing. I must be careful.

The Orc scowled as Luke closed his eyes firmly as though there were no further conversation to be had.

I have something to ask you. Open your eyes, human.

The Orcs Common Tongue was surprisingly fluent.

With his eyes closed, it was almost impossible to differentiate his voice from a humans. The situation, however, was not relaxed enough for him to pay attention to the fluency of the Orc.

I will not answer no matter what you ask me. Dont waste your time and just kill me.

..

The Orc silently stared at Luke, and then nodded his head.

I will not ask you anything. Open your eyes. Kuueeeekk.

Luke opened his eyes carefully at the unexpected words.

The Orc seemed to have spoken the truth, as his hands did not carry any weapons or instruments of torture. Luke couldnt help but be puzzled.

Why did you capture me if you were not going to torture me?

I will explain. Kueeeekkk.

Luke scowled. The characteristic snuffling of the Orcs was very unpleasant to the ears. Sounds like a pig squealing when its being slaughtered.

Luke held his tongue; a prisoner was not in a position to show discontent.

Kueeek. I am Kurotan, Great Warrior of the honorable Latilla Tribe.

Although this was his first exchange of greetings with an Orc ever since he had grown hair, Luke remained calm.

I am Luke, a soldier of Fort Potellan. Before I was captured by you I-

Luke was wearing casual clothing that hid his status as an officer. Kurotan was not fooled.

As Ive been told, humans lie too well. I know exactly who you are. Kueeek.

What are you saying? Why would I lie?

Luke was about to continue his retort when he stopped cold at Kurotans next words.

Centurion Luke Estaban, from the Estaban Earldom of the central Kingdom. You are retiring after serving five years at Fort Potellan. Kueeek. Did I miss anything?

Lukes face contorted with ferocity.

Damn It looks like Hal couldnt keep a quiet mouth.

Kueeek, correct. He was cooperative when we dragged him out from under the carriage. We didnt even have to hit him once.

Stupid fool, did he think that Orcs would keep him alive if he cooperated?

Luke stared coldly at Kurotan.

He is probably a cold corpse by now. Orcs dont keep useless prisoners.

Orcs were not even entertained by the concept of prisoners. The most being a blacksmith to maintain their rusty weapons, but they killed almost everybody else. Kurotan scowled and answered.

The human remains alive.

It cant possibly be because you value him as a cook?

I will tell you of his uses later. Kueeek. But first, I will tell you something.

Luke calmed his rapidly beating heart.

What Kurotan said next, however, Luke could not have guessed at all.

The Latilla Tribe faces extermination.

Luke had not even known that the Orcs hiding out in the Eastern mountain ranges were called the Latilla Tribe. Why would an Orc reveal the perils of his Tribe to a human centurion? Luke couldnt hide his surprise when he asked,

Wh-Why are you telling me that?

Kueeek. Be quiet and listen. The reason my tribe faces extermination is because we worship Maal, the god of war and battle.

Maal was the god of war and battle. Although not common, there were some worshipers even amongst the humans. However, Luke was puzzled due to this information being different from common knowledge.

It is common knowledge that Orcs worship Katia, the goddess of revenge.

Most Orcs worship Katia. Only our Latilla amongst the Orcs know of the greatness of Maal. We are chosen amongst Orcs

Luke cut Kurotan off with a snort.

I dont care what kind of god you worship. Be it Katia or Maal, it makes no difference to me.

He couldnt completely smother his curiosity though, and asked.

Why do you say that your tribe is in danger of extermination?

Kurotans explanation was simple.

When the Latilla Tribe had been forcibly pushed back to the Eastern mountain ranges by the forces of the Hansell Kingdom, the tribe had evacuated their females and young.

Orcs are smarter than I thought. Evacuation of the females and young, huh?

Luke said, smirking. Kurotans eyes lit up violently.

Kueeek, Human, I warn you not to push me. I am using an enormous amount of patience to converse with you.

Luke quieted down, aware that Kurotans behavior had been unbelievably civil for an Orc.

Our tribe sent our females and young to the territories of the Pushan Tribe, along with a large amount of supplies that they had demanded.

Afterwards, only the elite warriors of the Latilla Tribe escaped to the Eastern mountain ranges.

I see. That was why you Orcs have been so persistent and dangerous.

The reason we have been pillaging your Earldoms was to secure enough supplies to send to the Pushan Tribe.

Luke remained still at the truth, which, most likely, not even the King of Hansel Kingdom knew. Orcs did not reveal anything when tortured.

Orcs dont respond to torture. Even the most brutal of tortures dont illicit a twitch of an eyebrow from their entire race.

The only way to open an Orcs mouth was through the utilization of the magic of a High Circle. It was easier said than done.

A mage was expensive to hire as it is, but even more difficult to capture a high ranking Orc that could speak the

tongue of Humans.

Orcs even have high immunity to poisons. They have always been hard to capture alive.

Luke stared at Kurotan. It was hard to guess what Kurotans intentions were by kidnapping Luke and revealing tribal secrets.

Why is your tribe in danger of extermination if you had evacuated the females and young?

Kurotans eyes lit aflame with rage.

The despicable Pushan Tribe betrayed us.

Betrayed?

Betrayal is your specialty! Luke barely held back from shouting out loud.

All right. Kurotan, how did the Pushan Tribe betray you?

They raised an army of warriors to ambush the Orcs we evacuated. They massacred the future of our tribe, our females and young.

Luke tilted his head in puzzlement.

From the perspective of Hansel Kingdom, Orcs battling Orcs was a welcome prospect. He just didnt understand why the Pushan Tribe did so.

Its my understanding that even amongst tribal warfare, the females and young are left alone.

It has been that way, yes. That is why the Pushan Tribes betrayal is so despicable.

Perhaps it was because they worshiped Maal, the god of battle, that the warriors of the Latilla Tribe were especially valiant, even amongst the warrior like race of Orcs.

The Orc warriors of Latilla had been able to pillage enormous amounts of crops and foods from Hansel Kingdom territories to send to their females and young.

This was viewed with hatred by the Pushan Tribe, who had always suffered from a lack of food supplies due to their extremely high birth rates.

The food supplies that the Latilla Tribe had supplied the Pushan Tribe with had not been enough to satiate their hunger.

Luke clicked his tongue in disbelief.

Jealousy is not unique to humans.

Kueeek, honorable warriors do not break their promises. It was wrong of us in the first place to place our trust in the Pushan who worship an evil god like Katia.

Regardless if it was Latilla or Pushan, Luke did not see any difference but he held his tongue.

Its a critical chance to find out about the secrets of the Orcs. Perhaps I could escape with their secrets, so I should listen while he is telling me willingly.

Spirit Sword Chapter 3

Chapter 3. Kidnapped -2-

TL: Warriormonk

Editor: Obelisk

Kurotan, oblivious to Lukes plan, continued to spew out tribal secrets.

Kueeek, the Pushan eventually betrayed us. Countless Pushan warriors ambushed and massacred the females and young.

Rage lit up a light in Kurotans eyes.

They used the fact that we worship different gods as an excuse.

Religious differences exist even amongst the Orcs?

Luke smiled bitterly. The history of humanity was fraught with wars and crusades fought over the worshipping of different gods. He did not know that it was that way even for the Orcs.

How did you find out though? You said that the Pushan annihilated everyone.

Kueeek, one of the warriors we assigned to the females and young for security was barely able to escape. Only then did we find out about the Pushan Tribes despicable act.

Luke couldnt help from showing interest.

I am probably the only human to ever hear so closely about the relations between Orc tribes.

Luke still did not know why Kurotan was telling him all of this, but since the knowledge was not something easily gained, Luke constantly encouraged Kurotan to continue speaking.

Ok, Kurotan. The bastards of Pushan massacred your female and young. Why does that put your tribe in danger of extermination?

Kurotan stared blankly at him.

I just told you. All the females and young have been killed. All that is left of the Latilla Tribe are the warriors left here. All males.

Luke frowned. The danger faced by the Latilla Tribe was not a problem from the perspective a human.

I dont understand. Why do you not just kidnap some female Orcs from a different Tribe?

Kidnap females?

Yes. Kidnap some female Orcs to carry on the Latilla Tribe.

Kueeek. Impossible. Latilla Tribe members do not have relationships with anyone that does not worship Maal. Furthermore, the females that worship Katia would never choose us as mates.

Luke turned stupid for a moment.

So, the choice of mating is up to the females, not the males?

Yes. Amongst Orc Tribes, only the females get to choose their mating partners. A healthy female can even take many male partners.

Luke couldnt stop his mouth from dropping. The Orcs practiced polygamy?

I have heard that its the opposite for humans. In our Orc society, however, all the power lies in the hands of the females. The positions of Tribal Chief and Priest are all held by the females. Only the position of Great Warrior, who commands soldiers, is allowed to males.

Kurotan explained that for every five males, there was only one female. This perhaps necessitated the polygamy system used by the Orcs.

How surprising, I might turn into a scholar specializing in Orcs if this continues.

Kurotans explanation, however, raised another question for Luke.

If there are so few females, how can Orcs reproduce so fast?

The answer was simple.

Females usually give birth to between nine to twelve young at a time.

Luke could not close his mouth, which had opened in surprise.

Its not like youre livestock but I suppose that explains the polygamy system. And also why females are so valued

That is why the Latilla Tribe faces extermination. Only our males are left.

Luke asked with shining eyes.

So just tell me why you are telling me your tribal secrets then.

Kurotans story finally entered its main point.

The Latilla Tribe wishes to exact vengeance upon the Pushan Tribe.

The Orcs could be said to be at the epitome when it came to battle and vengeance, so Luke simply nodded his head. We have not been able to break through the formation of the humans. Additionally, the Pushan Tribe remains too strong for us to exact vengeance. Their warriors number in the several thousands.

Luke understood from Kurotans explanations that the Pushan Tribe was most likely the largest tribe that lived in the dead lands of the neighboring Tranbel Kingdom.

Again, Luke was most likely the only human to be aware of the Tribal name of the Pushan Tribe. Luke retorted.

It was merely our duty to prevent the Orcs from escaping the mountain range.

I understand. When it comes down to it, we were only doing our duty as well, pillaging to feed our tribe members.

So the reason youre telling me all this?

I will speak now.

Kurotan stared at Luke with shining eyes.

A couple days ago, I received a divine message.

Di-divine message?

Divine messages usually came in the form of the worshipped god appearing in dreams or as a sign, delivering messages of their will.

Even amongst humans, only priests or nuns with deep divine power were able to receive divine messages. Luke had a hard time believing that the simple and almost stupid Orc, Kurotan, had received a divine message.

A divine message from the god of battle, Maal?

Yes. Maal appeared to me because he pitied our Tribe. He personally delivered his message to me, as undeserving as I am.

And what was Maals message?

Lord Maal views us with favor, as we are the only Orc Tribe to worship him.

Luke nodded his head.

That seems reasonable. Humans also worship Maal, but Maal would definitely view the simple and honest Orcs with favor compared to humans.

Somehow that seems like an insult, Kueeek. But Ill ignore it. The great Maal pitied us enough to gift us with a divine object, imbued with his authority.

Divine object? What artifact is that?

Kurotan frowned, seemingly new to the word artifact.

Artifact? What is that word? The cursed human tongue is difficult.

Divine object, artifact, they are the same thing. Dont think about it too hard.

Maal told us to become humans in order to continue our faith. The divine object turns us into humans.

Kurotans secret struck Luke like lightning.

O-Orcs into humans?

Yes. This is the artifact.

Kurotan revealed an old-fashioned sword. It only had a handle, without a blade, seemingly broken through long use.

Luke looked at it with skeptical eyes.

How the hell would an Orc turn into a human?

Luke shook off his surprise and asked.

How does this divine object turn Orcs into humans, Kurotan?

Simple.

Kurotan gripped the broken sword in his right hand and screamed.

Kueeek, come in!

A little while later, three well-muscled Orcs entered the cabin.

Damn, the smell.

The Orcs were a race that distanced themselves from bathing. The smell was unimaginable, and Luke couldnt help but frown.

Kurotan ignored him and spoke to one of the Orcs that had entered.

Have you prepared yourself, Kalgor?

Kooooeek, I have. By the will of Maal.

So be it. I will commence the ritual.

Kurotan gripped the sword, and from the broken remainder of the sword a blade of white light suddenly sprouted.

Paaahht.

The gleaming light of the transparent blade was hypnotic.

The next moment, Luke couldnt help but gasp in surprise.

Kehup! What have you done?

It was because Kurotan had stabbed the Orc called Kalgor with the blade. It was the left chest, exactly where the heart was.

Poook.

The blade was sure to have penetrated his heart, but not a drop of blood fell.

Kalgors eyes went dark, and the Orc dropped on the spot.

Luke could not believe his eyes. Kurotan had retrieved the blade, but Kalgors chest did not have any sort of wound.

H-He died.

With the wave of his hand, Kurotan dismissed the remaining two Orcs, who dragged out Kalgors corpse.

Wh-Why did you just kill your subordinate in front of me?

Kill? Its because you dont see yet. Look carefully.

Kurotan shoved the shining blade in front of Lukes face. Luke could see a small spot of light within the shining blade.

It is the soul of Kalgor that I just took. The divine object removed his soul from his body.

T-took out the soul?

Yes. Kalgors body will rot away without the soul. However, Kalgor is not dead. The power of Maal keeps his soul

safe in the divine object and will revive him.

Luke shivered at the unbelievable truth.

How will you revive Kalgor?

Simple. I will pick a human, and then stab the divine object into his heart. Kalgors soul will then enter the body and be revived.

Lukes pale face turned even whiter.

Spirit Sword Chapter 4
Chapter 4. Kidnapped -3-
TL: Warriormonk
Editor: Obelisk

You will be swapping the souls?

Yes. Maal explained to me that the soul of the human, whose heart I stab, will ascend to the heavens. The soul of the Orc in the divine object will be able to take control of the body of the human.

A cold drop of sweat dripped down from Lukes brow.

Truly How does a god gift an Orc with such a cursed sword?

Lukes face turned cold.

I dont know why you have told me this secret, but you will suffer for it. If I escape, and Ill try by all means, I will tell the world of your secrets.

Even if you take over a human body, you think you could fit into the world of humans? Impossible.

Surprisingly, Kurotan seemed to agree with Luke.

Your words ring true. We, who have lived as Orcs, will not be able to live as humans just because we are in a human body.

Then give up. It is a useless effort.

Luke tried to continue talking, but Kurotans next words shut him up.

That is why we kidnapped you.

Th-thats why I was kidnapped?!

Kueeek, correct. After long deliberation, we decided that to live as humans, we would need the help of a human.

Luke smiled condescendingly at Kurotan.

The help of a human You think a human exists that would help you?

If you kidnapped me for such a reason, you have made a big error.

Luke steeled himself and opened up his chest.

I will not help you. Even if you kill me.

Kurotan stared hard at Luke and asked.

Why do you hate us so much?

Why, you ask? How many soldiers under my direct command died to your hands? Even the guards that you massacred when you kidnapped me all had lives.

Kueeek, our warriors have also died at the hands of humans.

A single human and a single orc stared each other down.

Luke was the first to turn away.

Truthfully, it was the Hansel Kingdom that had first started pushing out the Latilla Tribe, who were originally peaceful towards the Kingdom.

Ok, Kurotan. It is of no help to anyone to play the blame game at this moment. But why me?

What do you mean? Kueeek.

There are many humans out there. What made you sure that I would help you?

We were not.

Then why did you choose me? From the look of things, it seemed you first confirmed that it was me who left the fort before setting up the ambush?

You are correct. We had elite scouts watching your movements.

Kurotan took a deep breath before explaining.

To tell you the truth, we have been watching you for a long time.

Lukes face contorted in confusion. Even as a commander, he was not that special.

From our perspective, you were truly a magnificent commander.

Kurotans words left him even more puzzled. At one point, Luke had even thought that he was not cut out for the position of a commander.

Me, a magnificent commander? Are you sure you have the right person?

Yes.

Kurotan pointed his finger at Lukes eyes and hair.

We remember your face. Not just me, but most of the warriors of our tribe admit the superiority of your prowess.

Kurotan, I dont know what youre thinking but you have the wrong person.

Luke calmed himself down and stared Kurotan in the eyes.

If you are a commander, you are not supposed to blink at the mere death of your subordinate. Charge, break and annihilate the enemy. That is what makes you a good commander. From that perspective, I am not a good commander.

Luke strongly rebuked Kurotans view of him.

For Luke, who had been forced upon the position of commander unwillingly, his biggest priority was to return safely without any injuries.

Whether by coincidence or not, all the soldiers under his command had been drafted unwillingly as well. Unlike the elite troops that received wages or the mercenaries to whom pillaging was allowed, drafted soldiers only wished to return home safely.

Because they understood each other, Luke and his troops had set survival as their top priority.

If possible, they would not undertake any dangerous missions, and Luke, rather than looking to perform merits, would pour all his efforts into ensuring the survival of his soldiers. Luke did not care whether or not his superiors viewed him with favor.

Lukes hundred man army had the least casualty rates out of all the defending troops of Fort Potellan. Not that it was honorable.

In other words, you guys messed up.

The capacity of a commander is most well judged by the enemy. The area defended by your troops were truly impenetrable.

Your troops never once fell for our battle tactics of retreat and surround.

Those were battle tactics?

Luke clicked his tongue in disbelief.

Chasing down and exterminating the small groups of Orcs that would assault the wooden defense lines could render merits. Other commanders salivated at such a thought, but Luke had never once participated. Rather than merits, the lives of his soldiers were more valuable to him.

Thats because Merits hold no value to

Kueeek, the commanders you describe as good Those kinds of commanders are too common amongst Orcs. In fact, those are the only kind we have.

The valiant nature of Orcs was already well known amongst the defensive troops of Potellan. The heroic deaths of Orcs that charged in the face of overwhelming enemy numbers had given Luke many chills.

Persistent bastards..

The images of valiant Orcs charging without hesitation into impenetrable defense lines was still clear in Lukes mind.

Ok, I do see where you are coming from. I still think it is a bit of a stretch to call me a magnificent commander though.

Kurotan swallowed, and looked pitifully at Luke before replying.

Take us in.

Help us adjust as humans.

I have already refused! Why would I help you when I dont know what youre plotting for after you become humans?

Orcs do not plot. We merely wish to follow Maals will, and carry on our worship after we become humans.

How the hell could I possibly believe you? You could be lying just to maintain your lives!

We are not afraid of death. Kueeek.

Kurotan snorted with derision.

Kueeek, it is an honor to return to the arms of the great Maal.

Luke nodded his head slowly. That mindset would explain the valiant nature of Orcs.

You Orcs really live your lives without planning.

Out of nowhere, you kidnap an enemy commander and ask him to help Orcs to adjust to human life? You thought he would agree, just like that?

We will pay a price for your help.

Luke snorted coldly.

What price? The food supplies you guys have pillaged until now? Treasures?

We do not have food supplies. The last of it was sent to the Pushan Tribe before we found out about the massacre.

Then what price will you pay for my help?

For the rest of our lives, our axes will be yours.

Lukes eyes opened wide with disbelief.

Yo-you will pledge fealty to me?

Yes. Our lives will be yours should you help us become humans. Your orders shall be followed.

Luke remained silent for a long time, before snapping to and glaring at Kurotan.

So thats why you chose me. Why you guys think of me as a magnificent commander.

Luke continued to stare Kurotan down.

You guys do not trust humans. How will you swear fealty to me when you do not trust me?

Humans are too familiar with lying. It is hard for us to trust such beings.

I cannot deny that. Although humans that do not lie exist.

Kueeek. We simply have no other choice. We have decided to choose a single human, and follow him until the end.

And that chosen human is me?

Correct.

Luke stared at Kurotan with almost pity. He had known that Orcs were simple and slow, but not that they would be simple to the extent of creating such a situation.

I almost have no words to respond with

It was also true, however, that Luke couldnt help but be attracted to the option.

Orcs were a race that followed a commanders order to the letter, even if it was to charge into the enemy lines alone.

Born warriors that did not even have the concept of disobeying an order.

I did wish for at least a couple of soldiers that took after the Orcs during my time as a Centurion

Kurotan fidgeted nervously while waiting for Lukes answer.

Why not Hal, whom you captured as well? He seemed to be a part of a crime syndicate. He would have accepted your offer without a second thought.

We cannot trust him.

And you can trust me?

Kurotan stared Luke dead in the eyes.

One thing is for certain. Should we follow you, we will not die a dogs death in meaningless battles.

.

That is the reason why we have chosen to trust and swear fealty to you.

Kurotans eyes turned even more sincere.

We have no other plots. Please, trust us.

Ha It is unlikely for your simple brains to come up with multiple plots but isnt there anything else you wish for? Like enacting vengeance upon the Pushan Tribe that drove the Latillas into extermination?

Of course we wish for vengeance! If possible, we hope you will give us the chance to enact it.

Luke pondered furiously for a while before looking back at Kurotan.

It is not a problem I can answer easily. Can I have some time to think?

Kueeek, how much time?

I will give you my answer tomorrow morning.

Tomorrow afternoon is the time when the humans launch their final push.

You will have your answer before then.

Kurotan nodded silently.

As you wish. I will wait until tomorrow.

Good. I will see you tomorrow, Kurotan.

Spirit Sword Chapter 5

Chapter 5. Rescue

TL: Warriormonk

Editor: Obelisk

Ch. 5 Rescue

Luke continued to ponder after Kurotan left the cabin. He could not have imagined in a thousand years that he would receive such an offer from Orcs.

What should I do?

Luke pondered until his hair fell out, but an answer did not come so easily.

Should he accept Kurotans offer, he could return safely to his House. Marry his fiancée Isabelle, and start a happy family.

Of course, he would have to help the Orcs, in the shape of humans, adjust to the world of humans should he accept.

Luke frowned.

I probably won't be alive to worry about this should I refuse his offer.

He did not know where to start. Should he attempt to educate the Orcs to fit in when the Orcs had a completely different mentality?

Orcs also had a tradition of eating humans. Should there be food shortages, they would consume the corpses of dead soldiers.

They would also not be knowledgeable about anything that passed as commonsense to humans.

What should I do?

Luke seriously pondered for the entire night, however, he did not get the chance to make a final decision.

What's that noise?

Luke frowned at the sound of weapons clashing and screaming. He could also hear the characteristic snuffling screams of Orcs. Luke's face paled.

The assault must have been pulled ahead of schedule.

It must have been his kidnapping that forced the top brass of the army to pull the assault ahead of schedule.

Now that it's like this, I won't have to stress about making a decision.

Luke took a couple of deep breaths and relaxed. All he had to do now was wait.

If the figures that entered the cabin next were Orcs, his life would end. If the figures were human, he could return to his House alive.

While Luke grimaced and waited, the footsteps gradually approached the cabin. Luke held his breath.

Search along this area. There might be survivors.

A voice that was sure to be human rang through the cabin, and Luke held back his tears. The goddess of good fortune had finally grabbed his hand.

A few moments later, three soldiers kicked open the door and entered.

There's someone here, sir! It's not an Orc, but a human.

Report your affiliation, soldier!

I am Centurion Luke Estaban of Fort Potellan. As for class, I am Third class.

The leader of the soldiers flinched at Luke's words, and became more courteous. It seemed as though his rank was lower than Luke's.

Ah, sir! The commander that was kidnapped last night. How wonderful that you are safe.

However, the soldier's gaze towards Luke was not entirely friendly. It was due to Luke's kidnapping that they had been hounded so much by their superiors to lead an assault in the middle of the night.

I have been lucky enough to avoid torture until now. Of course, I would not have told them the time of the final assault until the end.

Of course, sir!

The commander that had been smiling at Luke motioned to the soldiers.

Release Centurion Luke!

Luke staggered up after the ropes binding him were cut. The lack of blood flow to his feet made him unsteady. The commander immediately supported Luke before he fell.

I will escort you to the headquarters, sir. The General has ordered for you to be escorted there should you be discovered alive.

Let's go.

Luke nodded, kneading his sore arms and legs.

Luke was escorted to the headquarters, but unlike his expectations, the commander of the extermination army was not Count Pilona, who was affiliated with Fort Potellan.

A young general in his early thirties, dressed in uniform with many medallions, was the one to greet Luke. A general at such a young age was sure to have many connections.

Welcome, Centurion Luke. I am class three thousand-man commander Viscount Max.

Luke saluted.

Many thanks for the timely rescue, Viscount Max.

Going by your state, it seems you have not been tortured yet.
It was my good fortune.
I have something to ask you first.
What would that be, Viscount?
Max frowned slightly.
Was there anything extraordinary that you noticed within the Orc hideout? Or anything you may have heard?
Viscount Max gazed intently at Lukes face after he asked his question, analyzing his facial expressions.
However, Luke had experienced many things as a member of a Noble House, and his face remained calm and unrevealing.
What could I have seen? I was merely knocked out and awoke in a cabin. I was tied to a chair and unable to move, and did not see or hear anything.
Is that so?
It seems that the Orcs tortured the other prisoner first. It was my good fortune but his bad fortune.
That is good to hear.
Luke decided to ask Viscount Max a question.
Has something happened? The soldiers seem to be on guard as well and in disarray.
Viscount glanced at Luke, before opening his mouth.
To tell you the truth, something unusual has happened.
Something unusual?
Luke had an idea, but he feigned innocence and waited for the viscount to finish his explanation.
Most of the Orcs at the hideout were discovered as corpses.
Luke feigned a surprised expression at Viscount Maxs words.
Is that so?
Something even more unusual was the fact that the corpses did not have any wounds. And all of their chests were bared.
Viscount Maxs face contorted in confusion.
To both Orcs and humans, the chest was a critical area to protect. A sturdy chest plate was a necessity for all soldiers.
The discovered Orc corpses had all been bare-chested and unarmored.
Orcs usually liked to wear the armor that they pillaged from human soldiers, forcing prisoner blacksmiths to modify them.
There were only about fifty Orcs alive that resisted. All of them were fully armored. Of course, my subordinates exterminated them.
Luke frowned slightly.
Looks like their souls were taken into the spirit sword. The Orcs were unlucky They would have had time to put their souls into human bodies had the assault time not been pulled ahead.
The chances that Kurotan had survived the assault seemed low.
Were there any survivors amongst the resisting Orcs?
You think thats possible? Orcs are a race that do not surrender under any circumstances.
You killed them all then.
Of course.
Viscount Max still looked uncomfortable. The plan had succeeded, as they had captured the Orc hideout, but the fact that most of the Orcs were already corpses was sure to bring about problems.
He and his subordinates had only killed a mere fifty Orcs.
Anyways, thank you for saving me. I would have died in there otherwise.
You were lucky. I have heard that you are retiring. Build towards a brighter future, and forget about the tragedy here.
Exchanging soulless remarks, they were about to leave when a soldier came into the headquarters.
We think he is too suspicious, sir. I think we may need to put him under torture.
Is that so? Bring him here.
Luke had been about to leave the building when he heard these words and hesitated.
What is it, commander?
Viscount answered with a smile.
We were able to rescue one other prisoner besides you. He was a soldier serving as a draftee, but his behavior was reportedly very suspicious.
Suspicious?
We put him through some simple questioning, but his story was a bit all over the place. He also seemed to be avoiding my soldiers. He will be here soon, you can see for yourself if you are familiar with him.
Lukes face paled.
No It cant possibly be?
A possibility rose to Luke, but with a bit of effort he ignored it.
A little while later, the prisoner was dragged into the headquarters by soldiers. It was Hal, the cook who had been

ambushed along with Luke.

Lukes mind fell into confusion the second he saw Hals eyes.

Fuck its just as I worried!

Hals appearance had remained the same as when they were in the carriage. The look in his eyes, however, had definitely changed.

The sly, despicable eyes of Hal that Luke remembered were gone.

The eyes that Luke now saw in Hal, being fierce and wild but also somehow simple, were most definitely the eyes of the Orc Great Warrior, Kurotan.

No doubt about it. Kurotan has taken over Hals body using the divine artifact.

Hal seemed to be in a state of full panic. He thrashed around endlessly in an effort to escape, causing the soldiers to sweat profusely in an effort to restrain him.

Hey bastard! Just come along quietly.

Why are you trying to run away?

Hals eyes found Lukes. Hal immediately became still and relaxed.

Hal gazed into Lukes eyes, seemingly trying to say with his eager eyes that he was asking for an answer.

Im going to go crazy. Looks like I have to make a decision after all!

Luke swallowed. He did not know which decision to make.

Viscount Max observed the strange interaction between Luke and Hal and seemed intrigued.

Do you know him?

Luke had fallen deep into his thoughts and did not seem to hear him. Viscount Max frowned and approached Hal.

What is your name?

Hal could not answer the question. Hals squirming movements were identical to that of a criminal, and Viscount Maxs eyes narrowed.

Looks like we will be needing the torture specialist after all. You will be tortured until you tell us the truth.

Spirit Sword Chapter 6

Chapter 6. Rescue -2-

TL: Warriormonk

Editor: Obelisk

It was right then that Luke made his decision.

His name is Hal.

Hal?

He was the cook of a squadron, and has never even fought an Orc before.

Viscount Max seemed to have been taken off guard by the remark.

A cook?

Hes a weak hearted man, unlike his rough looks. He is probably just traumatized from the torture he received from the Orcs.

Is that so?

Many feelings flashed through Luke as he walked forward.

This is a gamble. Since the Orcs trusted me as a superb commander, I will trust them once as well.

As he seemed to have realized Lukes intentions from his gaze, Kurotan settled down immediately.

From my opinion, sir, I do not think we need to call in a torture specialist.

But my soldiers have reported that his actions have been highly suspicious.

Luke smiled and looked at Viscount Max.

To tell you the truth, I know Hals poor situation better than anyone.

What kind of situation does he have?

Not long ago, his wife eloped with another man. He came to me in the middle of the night, crying, to lament to me about it.

It was clich, but to Viscount Max, a soldier, it worked like a charm. His wife eloping was the biggest worry that a soldier stationed away from his home had.

I completely understand now.

Viscount Max silently nodded his head and then turned to look at Luke,

Do you have any relations with this soldier?

Luke nodded without hesitation.

Yes, sir. I was going to take him under my personal command and bring him into my lands.

Viscount Max looked surprised at Lukes words.

What use could you possibly have for him? Do you not know why he is in the army?

Viscount Maxs question was expected. Hals character was questionable on paper, as he was a prisoner, and did not seem have any skills.

Luke smiled and made up another story.

He may look like a bandit, but his cooking skills are quiet decent.

Viscount Max nodded once again.

Then I suppose there is no need to torture him. I trust you will take responsibility for him?

Luke pretended to mull it over for a bit before answering. This was a question that could not be answered immediately without buying some suspicion.

Yes, I will take responsibility.

Good. Release him

Viscount Max motioned towards the soldiers.

This bastard, wont he thrash around again?

The soldiers reluctantly released Hals bindings. Unlike their expectations, Hal did not begin to get violent. Hal walked quietly to stand next to Luke, who nodded.

I have already promised you to take you in under both my wing and the Esteban Earldoms. No need to worry.

Luke patted Hal on the shoulder as though no answer was needed, and left the headquarters. Hal followed behind with a relieved expression. Like a baby duckling following his mother.

Hal, no, Kurotan expressed his thanks the second they left the headquarters.

Keung, I thank you for taking me in.

Luke took a finger and put it to his lips, indicating silence.

Not another word until we leave the base.

O-Ok. Keung.

No need to even answer, just nod. If you buy yourself suspicion again, I wont be able to help you.

Kurotan nodded silently.

Just to make sure, youareKurotan right?

Kurotan once again nodded silently. Luke made a calm face. He had never thought in his life that he would see an Orc wearing the figure of a human.

Lets get our luggage and leave this place. The first thing we need to do is get somewhere without people.

Kurotan whispered silently.

Keung. They took away the divine sword. We must recover it at all costs.
It was probably confiscated because it was a weapon. All right, I will get it back for you.
Kurotan looked expectantly at Luke with hopeful eyes.
I will trust you.
Luke looked for the quarter master when he arrived at the building where captured supplies were kept.
What is your business here?
I am the commander that was captured by the Orcs. I am here to reclaim my belongings that were taken by the Orcs.
The quartermaster immediately escorted Luke to the pile of supplies once he had confirmed Lukes status.
Luke reclaimed his bags first, and then carefully asked the quartermaster.
Have you seen an old sword with a broken blade by chance?
A sword with a broken blade?
Luke pointed to Kurotan, disguised as Hal.
It is his fathers heirloom.
I think I may have seen it somewhere.
The quartermaster did not take long before he found the divine artifact. He did not seem to view it with much importance, as the divine artifact truly looked no different from an old sword.
Here it is.
Luke hesitated for a little bit before receiving the divine artifact, which held several hundreds of Orcs souls. He wondered briefly if this was still a good idea, but the water had already been spilled.
Take care that you do not lose it.
Kurotans body shivered in excitement when Luke handed him the sword. Thankfully, he had not forgotten Lukes advice and remained silent, simply nodding.
Many thanks, quartermaster. Please let me know when you visit Esteban Earldom.
Ah, I am thankful for your words.
Good day then
Luke left without hesitation, all his baggage in tow. He was stopped several times along the way for examinations, but he was able to smoothly talk over all of them.
Luke heaved a deep sigh when he looked at Kurotan, who had been following along like a duckling without saying a single word.
Damn, cursed fate. Why do the heavens test me so?
It was only when they had embarked on their way and when no other people were in vicinity that Kurotan spoke.
Keung. I thank you for listening to my request. I will not forget the favor.
Luke frowned slightly.
The keung keung noises are really bothersome. Your body has changed, and even your snuffling sound seems to have changed as well?
I dont know. Keung
Luke looked seriously at Kurotan.
All right, Kurotan. Just as you have deemed me a good commander, I have decided to give you my trust this once.
But remember
What?
You are no longer an Orc, but a human. Your soul may be that of an Orcs, but from now on you must think and act as a human.
I already know. That was the plan.
Good. To become human, you must listen to my every command. And we need to fix the way you talk.
Keung. The way I talk?
Yes.
Lukes face turned even stricter as he continued to glare at Kurotan.
From now on, you are my subordinate and servant.
Se-Servant?
A master-servant relationship makes the most sense when you consider Hals status, which belongs to you now, and my status.
Unexpectedly, Kurotan tried to deny it fiercely.
I cannot accept it. How can an honorable warrior become a servant?
You are no longer the Great Warrior of Orcs, but a retired army cook. You must also get used to your new name.
My mother gave me my name. I cannot change it.
It is a must for you to adjust to the human world!
Still, somethings are just impossible.
Luke sighed in frustration.
Youre stubborn as an Ogre.
Luke did not know where to start with the Orc wearing a human mask.
I think I may have bitten a bit more than I can chew.

Luke regretted having made the decision so spontaneously, but once again the water had already been spilled. Luke took Kurotan towards the rear of the headquarters. They took a carriage carrying wounded soldiers and reached Lactel City, which also served as a supply base, in three hours.

They were unable to converse at all due to the presence of soldiers that had been wounded in the final assault. Of course, the moaning of the wounded made for a mood that was not meant for conversing.

The military carriage did not need any identification at the city wall. Luke and Kurotan were able to enter the city without problems, and got off the carriage at the central square.

Thanks for the ride.

Luke turned around once out the carriage. He looked back at Kurotan, and frowned with curiosity.

Are you all right?

Kurotan had completely frozen. He was standing absolutely still and moving only his eyes back and forth.

Do you feel sick from the carriage ride?

Hu-Humans

What about humans?

There are t-too many humans.

Luke smiled at Kurotans words. Lactel City was a decently developed city, and the central square had a lot of human traffic. It was not strange for Kurotan, a former Orc, to feel so out of place and amazed.

I suppose Orcs dont get to see the booming civilian life of humans.

Luke smirked and pulled on Kurotans arm.

Not one word, Kurotan. Just follow me.

It was in no way easy to move around with an Orc in the form of a human.

Luke entered a restaurant in order to appease their hunger. Kurotan entered somewhat normally, thanks to Lukes advice.

However, a problem occurred when their ordered dish arrived.

Kurotan took one look at the bread that Luke had ordered and frowned fiercely.

Keung. We do not eat these things.

Then what do you eat.

Meat, intestines, fat! Give me something like that!

That was when you were an Orc, and since youre no longer an Orc

I still refuse to eat weird things like this.

Kurotan, in a tantrum, threw the bread on the ground, and Luke had no choice but to order a meat stew.

Heres your dish.

When the meat stew arrived, Kurotans eyes seemed to shine with light. The next moment, the eyes of the people all came to rest on one spot.

Oh my goodness, how hungry must he have been.

How long has he been starving?

The pieces of meat in the stew were being grabbed by the grubby hands of Kurotan and being devoured without being chewed more than once or twice.

Kurotan proceeded to slam his face into the dish and began to drink the rest of the soup with his tongue, like a dog. He was doing so without a care in the world, not caring whether or not the people stared.

Luke grabbed the back of his neck in an attempt to fend off the on-coming headache.

What should I do with you?

Oblivious to Luke clicking his tongue, Kurotan finished the remaining meat stew in the blink of an eye.

That wasnt enough. Kurotan wants to eat more.

You bastard, you know how much that was? Its at least three times more expensive than bread!

Kurotan does not know of those things.

Luke, looking as if he was about to cry, shoved the rest of the bread hed been eating into his mouth.

Lets talk later.

But Im hungry.

Luke glanced to the side, and Kurotans face stiffened when he followed Lukes gaze. Everyone in the restaurant was staring at him.

Wh-Why are they looking at me? Do you think theyve found out about my identity?

Luke quickly swallowed the last of his bread and stood up.

Shut your mouth and just follow me outside.

Luke hurriedly paid for their meal and took Kurotan outside.

Spirit Sword Chapter 7

Chapter 7. The Orc in Human Guise

TL: Warriormonk

Editor: Obelisk

Luke sighed deeply after entering an alleyway without any signs of people.

I wonder whether I may have made a mistake or not.

What mistake?

Are you asking because you don't know?

Kurotan doesn't know.

Luke sighed once again when he saw Kurotan who was looking around furiously.

Why did you ignore me like that? You said you would follow my every order!

I promised you my axe. I didn't say I would become your servant.

Kurotan puffed out his chest.

I was a Great Warrior, and all the warriors of the Latilla Tribe were under my command. Treat me as an honorable warrior.

You can go freeze your ass off with your honor

Luke glared at Kurotan.

Did you even listen to the orders of your Chieftain?

Kurotan snapped at Luke's words.

What are you saying? The words of the Chieftain are law. All warriors must follow her words to the letter.

Ah, right. The Chieftain is a female. Right.

Luke pondered for another moment before speaking to Kurotan.

If you were the Great Warrior, were you the strongest warrior of the Latilla Tribe?

Yes. I beat the previous Great Warrior to the ground and proudly took his place.

But even you must have had a time when you were a green horn?

Why do you ask?

Did you follow the orders of the Great Warrior when you were a green horn?

Kurotan nodded without hesitation.

Yes.

Really?

I'd have died from being beaten if I hadn't.

This was the moment that Luke realized another trait of Orc Warriors.

I see. Orcs are races that follow the law of the survival of the fittest. This bastard must be looking down on me for sure. That's why he's ignoring me.

He had heard during his time as an officer that an Orc at the commander level was hard to deal with, even for three or four Knights at once.

All right. Kurotan, do you see me as a strong warrior?

Kurotan answered without hesitation.

I have not once thought of you as strong.

Why? You have never even fought me.

Do you remember the warrior with the axe during the ambush?

Luke frowned at the memory.

He was rather skilled with an axe for an Orc. I did successfully wound his arm despite being pressured. I would have won if someone hadn't hit me in the back of the head.

I hit the back of your head.

It was you?

Luke stared at Kurotan with wide eyes, who merely shrugged.

It couldn't be helped, as we had to capture you. The warrior with the axe is named Mabal, and I am much stronger than he is.

Luke was shocked. He didn't know that Kurotan would be as skilled as he was claiming. To be truthful, he had a high probability of losing to Mabal should they fight again.

However, Kurotan's body had changed. And the body of an Orc and a human were different on fundamental levels.

Luke's eyes narrowed.

His body is barely trained. And Kurotan hasn't had the time to get used to his new body.

Orcs had longer arms than humans, but shorter legs with slightly bent backs. Kurotan's current walking posture was extremely awkward.

If I don't teach him a lesson with this chance, he'll constantly give me trouble.

Luke made up his mind and began to poke at Kurotan's pride.

You say you are that skilled?

Yes.

You've just swapped bodies! How would you properly show your skills?

As expected, Kurotan grew angry.
 Even with swapped bodies, I am strong. Ive battled countless times in order to secure the title of Great Warrior.
 Ehh I dont trust you.
 Kurotan gripped his fists tightly.
 If you want, I can prove my strength to you.
 A smile spread across Lukes face at the expected answer.
 Good. Lets see the skills of the Great Warrior of the Latilla Tribe.
 As an Orc that liked fighting more than eating his meals, Kurotan smiled brightly.
 Dont regret it.
 Of course.
 I need a weapon.
 I can buy you a weapon.
 Luke immediately took Kurotan to a nearby arms shop. Kurotan picked up a heavy battle axe.
 Look, you should weigh the weapon first.
 We know nothing about such things. A weapon is good if gripping the handle feels good.
 The battleaxe seemed far too heavy for Hals body no matter what way one looked at it, and Luke narrowed his eyes slightly.
 Perhaps because he didnt go through physical training, Hals arms seemed fragile in comparison to Hals general stature.
 I guess well find out if we just fight?
 Luke took Kurotan to an isolated corner of the city. Kurotan kept caressing the battleaxe Luke had bought him, as though he liked it a lot.
 I have never held such a clean and undamaged axe.
 Yes, I suppose thats because you guys use the weapons that you loot.
 Luke took a couple of deep breaths, and unsheathed the longsword hanging from his belt.
 Good. Lets see the strength of the Latilla Tribes Great Warrior.
 Kurotan let out a roar and charged once Luke took a stance. He was swinging the battleaxe wildly.
 Luke tensed up, slightly nervous, when Kurotan charged at him.
 The next moment, however, saw something ridiculous.
 The charging Kurotan had fallen face first when his legs had gotten tangled.
 Th-That was a mistake. Let us start again.
 Kurotan charged again. The pressure he gave off, however, was far from reaching Lukes expectations.
 Luke side stepped lightly and tripped Kurotan, who ended up rolling on the ground.
 I suppose the instructors were right when they said practical battle skills came from a trained physique.
 Luke smiled a little bitterly at his memories and sheathed his sword. Kurotans eyes ignited at the sight.
 Its not over yet.
 Well, I wasnt planning on finishing yet either.
 Luke gripped his sword again, however, this time it was sheathed and tied up securely, preventing accidental unsheathing.
 Come at me. Youll be bruised but you wont bleed.
 Kurotan roared in rage and jumped towards Luke once again.
 Hals body was too weak for the Great Warrior Orc to display his skills.
 Pukang!
 The vertical axe strike was blocked by the sheathed sword in Lukes hands. Kurotan attempted to use brute strength to push down, but the sheathed sword refused to budge even a bit.
 Keuuuwak!
 Kurotan mustered up even the strength that he had used to suckle from his mother; Luke rotated the sheathed sword slightly and threw off the axe.
 Kurotan nose planted into the ground as a result of the skilled counter.
 I dont think theres a need to fight anymore.
 Its not over yet!
 His body had changed, but the fighting will of an Orc remained.
 Kurotan snorted with a bloody face -from a nosebleed-, and charged. Luke effortlessly blocked Kurotans attacks.
 Puk. Puuhk.
 Because the sheathed sword dug into every gap in his defenses, Kurotan soon became a lump of bruises.
 As expected, you cant display your battle prowess with a changed body.
 No matter how experienced, a knight with no experience fighting an Orc was bound to lose. An Orcs arms were much longer than a humans.
 The difference in arm length was a difficult obstacle that every knight stationed at Fort Potellan had to overcome, and it was no different for Luke.
 The characteristic flexibility and explosiveness of Orcs are completely gone.
 Thankfully, the battle honed reflexes and a sense for danger seemed to remain. Kurotan instinctively twisted his body

to avoid critical strikes whenever Lukes sheathed sword swung past his defenses.
All in all, however, his new body was much too fragile. Kurotan eventually fell as a bloody, bruised heap of flesh.
Chulkuk.
Luke stared down at Kurotan after securing the sheath to his belt. Kurotan was heaving deeply, seemingly in disbelief.
Th-This is impossible
Looks like I have no use for your axe.
Luke stared at Kurotan with cold eyes. Kurotans face turned nervous at the sight.
Orcs did not take useless prisoners. Kurotan couldnt help but anxiously ask.
You have no use for me. Are you going to kill me?
Im thinking right now.
Luke clicked his tongue after staring at Kurotan who was stretched out on the ground.
Youre very lucky.
What do you mean?
Because even amongst humans, I value my promises very much
Luke smiled and extended his hand. Kurotan reached up to grab it and unsteadily pulled himself up.
I have already promised to take you under my wing, and I will keep that promise. It doesnt matter whether you are useful to me or not
Kurotans face brightened up immediately.
Th-Thank you.
But! The hierarchy of this relationship should be cleared up?
Lukes smile turned even wider as he looked at Kurotan.
Do you admit that I am stronger than you now?
Kurotan swallowed loudly. Should he once again have the body of an Orc Great Warrior, Luke would not last a second.
But he was currently in a fragile human body. The body of the Orc Great Warrior was probably rotting away by now.
I admit it. You are much stronger than the current me.
Good. So according to Orc laws, you will follow my orders to the letter from now on?
As you wish. I shall follow your orders to the letter.
Then here is my first order.
Luke once again extended his hand towards Kurotan.
I shall take care of the divine object from now on. Give it here.
Kurotan immediately stepped backwards, shaking his head furiously.
I cant do that. The divine object houses the souls of hundreds of my tribes warriors. It must be taken care of carefully.
I will take care of it carefully.
It will be safer for me to
Kurotan didnt finish his sentence. He realized that Luke was stronger than the current him.
Even though he realized this, Kurotan continued to hesitate. It was still hard for him to trust a human with the divine object carrying the souls of his fellow warriors. Lukes face turned serious.
To be honest, I will not let you use the divine object as you wish anyways.
Luke pointed to Kurotan.
Even Hals body which you took over has bothered me until now. Hal has a family to go back to, but you stole his body and his soul has ascended. How resentful must he feel?
It is the law of Orcs to kill and take.
Those are the laws you followed when you were an Orc, but you are a human now. You must follow the laws of humans from now on.
Luke made a compromising gesture.
From now on, you can only use the divine object with my permission.
Permission?
Yes. From my perspective, that of a human, I cannot allow you to pillage human bodies as you please.
Th-Then, what should I do with all the souls of the warrior?
I shall choose the bodies that the Latilla Tribe warriors will inherit from now on.
..
I will only allow you to take the bodies of criminals that will only harm society by living.
Kurotan continued to hesitate despite Lukes explanations. Lukes eyes became fierce at Kurotans continued attitude.
Did you not say that you would follow me to the end? Was it all just a lie?
Kurotan finally seemed to come to a decision at those words, and he offered up the divine object.
I will follow you to the end. We do not lie.
Good.
Luke looked at the divine object in his hands. On the outside, it was an old, broken sword, but it held the sleeping souls of hundreds of Orc warriors inside.
No one would believe this story.
Luke glanced at Kurotan after he tucked away the sword into his bosom.

The word divine object may cause problems should other people overhear us, so lets call this Spirit Sword from now on.

Spirit Sword?

Since it carries souls, it makes sense.

All right.

Good. Lets finish the rest of my errands in the city and then leave for my Houses Earldom. Dont say anything until we finish, and follow me.

As you wish.

If someone tries to talk to you, do this.

Luke rolled his hand into a fist and put it in front of his mouth. The gesture was used by vassals or apprentice knights carrying out a period of silent training. Kurotan followed the gesture and nodded.

Luke finished up the paperwork for official retirement. Signed by the commander of Fort Potellan, Luke turned in the last paper that would officially turn him from a soldier to a regular citizen.

All the while, Kurotan had been following him around like a duckling.

Thats a lot of weight off my shoulder, finally.

Luke left the office and headed towards the market. Esteban Earldom, his hometown, would take two months of travel to reach. Ample preparation was needed for the travel.

Luke glanced at Kurotan.

This bastard has complicated things.

His original plan had been to hire mercenaries or join a caravan going to Esteban Earldom to return home.

Taking Kurotan, an Orc in the guise of a human, to join a caravan would be too risky. Even the mercenaries would be suspicious.

I have a lot to teach Kurotan, so we should travel by ourselves.

Luke wandered around the market, one by one buying the travel supplies needed.

Theres a lot of baggage, so youll be holding some.

Kurotan seemed to have decided to follow the Orc law and obey. He wordlessly took up the two bags handed over to him by Luke. After buying all the dried foods and clothes needed for travel, Luke went over to an armory.

If Id known this was going to happen, I wouldnt have donated my armor to the fort

Luke grudgingly complained, but what could he do over spilled water?

Luke purchased two sets of sturdy chain armor. One was for Kurotan and the other one was for himself.

The armors were brand new, and their shine set a smile on Kurotans face.

Chain armors were favorites amongst the Orcs.

Why? Does a new armor make you that happy?

Yes. Ive never worn an armor that didnt have holes or rust.

Kurotans large smile made Luke smile bitterly.

Such a simple guy.

Luke also purchased a horse. It was well tamed, and went along whenever Luke pulled on the reigns.

You dont know how to ride a horse, do you?

Kurotan shook his head.

Ive eaten a lot of them, but never ridden one.

I suppose no horse would be dull enough to let an Orc mount it.

Luke hung the bags of supplies on the saddle.

Kurotan handed Luke the bags he had been carrying and proceeded to do something out of place. Kurotan took off the battleaxe he had been carrying around on his back, and began swinging wildly. They were in the middle of a market place that was bustling with people.

Hals untrained arm, however, was far from being able to handle the weight of the battle axe.

Boooooong.

The axe left Kurotans hand and hurtled through the air, startling and scaring the people around him.

Ehuuk!

What the hell are you doing?

Luke frowned as he held his hand to his face.

Kurotan, what are you doing right now?

Kurotan had, in turn, been surprised by the peoples reaction, and was standing there stupidly when he answered.

I am trying to train.

In a place with so many people?

I cant?

Of course not. Lets get out of the market first.

Luke, with hurried steps, left the market with Kurotan in tow.

Its not just a thing or two I have to teach you.

..

Lets start by organizing our points. Kurotan, you wish to recover the strength you had in the past right?

Of course. I will train this weaklings body and become strong without a doubt. Just like it was before.

Luke stood there in near amazement.

I guess youre an Orc after all, being so simple

What are you saying?

All right. Kurotan, Im sure your body training methods are made for Orcs?

Yes.

And how do Orcs train their body?

Kurotan gripped his hands into tight fists.
Simple. You swing your weapons until you cant. If you do that, muscles will grow on your arms naturally. And then, you just fight everyone.
Youre going to become bedridden before then.
..
As you know, a humans body is much more fragile than an orcs. You think it could endure the merciless training methods of Orcs?
Kurotan realized the seriousness of the problem and looked distraught.
I didnt think about that part.
Luke looked into Kurotans eyes seriously.
Your stomach hurt after the meal this morning, right?
Kurotans face paled as he recalled the memories. Because he swallowed such large pieces of meat without even chewing, Kurotans stomach had been in pain for most of the day.
I-Ive never experienced such a thing.
Listen well. Orcs can pretty much pick up and eat most things off the ground, but humans will become sick if they do that. And unlike Orcs, humans cant live off a meat-only diet.
.
You need to eat things like bread for nutritional balance.
Kurotan frowned at Lukes words.
The human body is so weak!
I admit to your point. But for you to survive as a human, you must listen to all of the things I tell you.
Luke motioned at Kurotans axe, and Kurotan slung his axe onto his back.
Just like Orcs have their training methods, humans also have training methods that are right for them. Only by following them can we avoid troublesome complications.
Kurotan silently listened, before asking Luke.
Then can you teach me the training methods of humans?
Startled, Luke looked at Kurotan.
Teach you the training methods?
Yes. For me to swing my axe for you, shouldnt I first train this fragile body?
Lukes smile turned hard to describe.
Will you be able to follow my training methods and orders?
Yes.
No talking back even when they dont make sense to you?
Of course.
All right. I will teach you the body training methods of humans. Although its still not guaranteed that you will recover your former strength as the Great Warrior.
Kurotan, who had been getting more and more excited by Lukes words, tried to pull out his axe once again. Luke quickly waved his hand to calm him down.
Theres no need to take out the axe.
How can I train without a weapon?
The training you will do from now on is running.
Kurotan asked back with a stupid face.
R-Running?
Yes. A sturdy lower body is the foundation of physical training. Youll only be doing running until you build up some strength.
Ho-How is that training?
To a human, it truly is a marvelous training method. We can start as soon as we get out of Lactel City.
Luke and Kurotan soon left Lactel City, with all their traveling supplies hanging in the bags that were tied to the saddle.
After leaving the castle door and reaching an area of the road that had very little people, Luke began to train Kurotan seriously.
Luke tied a rope that hed prepared around Kurotans waist. The other end of the rope was tied to the reigns of the horse.
Kurotan frowned as he raised the rope tied around his waist.
What is this?
Luke mounted the horse and explained with patience.
Listen. Youre going to train your lower body by running till you get exhausted.
Luke raised a finger and pointed to the road, disappearing into the horizon.
Run along this trail from now on, until I say stop.
Kurotan seemed puzzled and scratched his head, but he none- the- less began to run when Luke gave the word. Due to this, the reigns of the horse were pulled, and the horse began trotting along behind Kurotan.

Your upper body is hunched. Straighten up your back.

Luke pointed out the errors in his posture, and Kurotan followed Lukes orders to fix them. Of course, it wasnt easy to fix a lifetime of Orc posture just because you had a human body.

Straighten out the angle of your arm and swing it with more strength.

I got it.

On a road where no other human presence was, there truly was a sight to behold. A tough, bandit looking man with a rope tied around his waist sprinting, and a rider and horse trotting behind.

Luke sat relaxed in the saddle and enjoyed the view.

When I first came here to enlist, I didnt even dream of enjoying the view in such a relaxed manner.

Huk, Huk.

Judging by how rough the breathing had already gotten, Hals body really was in shit shape before. If it was Hals soul instead of Kurotans, Hal would have long since fallen while making sick noises.

However, the new soul inside Hals body only focused more on running, without any complaints.

Your posture is slightly off! I told you to straighten your back.

Though he had been consistently fixing Kurotans posture, Luke began to doze off while on the horse. He had ridden horses since he was young, and was rather familiar with horse riding. This coupled with the current situation weighing down on him, stressing him out, he began to doze off. Luke had fallen completely asleep on the back of the horse.

Spirit Sword Chapter 9

Ch. 9 The Beginning of Kurotans Training

Shit, how long was I asleep?

Luke stretched after waking up.

His face paled the moment he saw Kurotan.

Sh-Shit.

Kurotan was still running. But it seemed that Luke had been asleep for quite a while.

Heeuu, Huuhh.

Kurotans complexion was as pale as a white piece of paper and the sound of his breathing almost sounded like moans of the dying.

His legs were spasming, likely from cramping.

Though, Kurotan did not stop running even now.

Luke hurriedly hopped off the horse.

Hey, Kurotan. You all right?

Kurotan glanced at Luke with pale, out of focus eyes.

To-Too hard to keep running. C-Can I stop now?

Stop running and walk slowly. Itll be better in your current state.

All right.

Kurotan stopped running and began walking. Luke walked over to Kurotan with a flask of water, untying the rope from the reins on the horse.

White traces of salt that were formed from a massive amount of dried sweat covered Kurotans face.

Drink only a bit, youll get sick if you chug down a lot of water at once.

Kurotan followed Lukes advice after refraining himself from pouring the whole flask down his throat.

Kurotans face showed signs of recovery after he drank a bit of water.

Enough. You can sit and rest.

With Lukes permission, Kurotan collapsed his ass onto the floor.

Keuu, the training methods of humans are pretty damn painful as well. I wasnt aware that running could be this painful when I was an Orc.

Luke made an apologetic expression at Kurotans complaint. If Luke hadnt fallen asleep, he would have stopped Kurotan from running a long time ago. Judging by the position of the sun, Kurotan had probably been running for two hours.

I have to give it to him, hes got both stubbornness and perseverance.

Luke clucked his tongue and headed towards the supply bag on the horses saddle.

Its time for a meal, are you hungry?

As soon as the words left Lukes mouth, Kurotans stomach rumbled as if to agree.

Kurotan, hungry.

All right, just give me a minute.

Luke had taken out some dried jerky and bread. Kurotans eyes shone as soon as he saw the jerky. However, when he reached for it, Luke didnt give it to him that easily.

You remember having a stomachache after the last meal?

I-I remember.

If you dont want another one, chew well.

Ok.

Kurotan took the jerky and followed Lukes orders to chew thoroughly. After Kurotan had finished a piece of jerky, Luke held out the bread.

You have to get used to bread from now on. Just bear it and eat.

Kurotan looked as if he was about to cry as he took the bread. His complexion turned brighter immediately after he took a bite.

Its better than I thought. Tastes sweet.

Is that so?

When I tried bread as an Orc, it tasted disgusting. Why does it taste better now?

Its probably because you are a human now, I guess your sense of taste has changed as well.

Kurotan finished off the rest of the jerky and bread in the blink of an eye.

Even after he had finished, Kurotan turned to stare at the piece of bread that Luke was eating. Luke smiled and handed him another piece of bread.

The human body will get sick if you eat too much. I will give you another piece because you trained hard today.

Thank you.

Luke watched as Kurotan proceeded to take large bites out of the bread and asked.

Do all Orcs eat as fast as you do?

If you dont eat fast, others will take.

Luke clucked his tongue in disbelief.

Im just warning you now, do not steal food from other people. That is not a humane behavior.
Humane behavior?
Yes, people will definitely swear at you. Call you an Orc-like bastard.
Kurotan was puzzled.
What about that is swearing?
I suppose that wouldnt be that insulting from your perspective.
After they had digested their meal, Luke grabbed his sword and stood up.
For exercise, I will teach you swordsmanship.
Kurotan did not seem very enthusiastic.
I use the axe. I do not wish to hold such a weak weapon in my hand.
Listen well. The sword is the foundation of all weapons. With a sword, you can chop, stab, or smash. Axemanship can be considered an extension of swordsmanship.
Luke pointed at Kurotans arms.
Surely youve experienced that your arms cant bear the weight of a battleaxe?
That is true.
Then stop complaining and learn the sword from me.
I understand.
Luke handed a spare sword to Kurotan, who stood up as well. Luke taught Kurotan a proper grip first.
Grip the handle tightly. Dont let go even when the skin of your hand gets ripped from the shock of a clash.
Luke started teaching Kurotan basic sword skills. Using his own sword, he demonstrated vertical, horizontal, and diagonal slashes as well as stabbing stances, which Kurotan tried to follow.
The stance is the most important. Only a solid and efficient stance that is ingrained into the body can bring out the true power of swordsmanship.
The swordsmanship Luke was teaching Kurotan was the sword art unique to his House, Esteban swordsmanship.
Although it was forbidden to teach to outsiders, Luke was teaching only the basics that would serve as a foundation of swordsmanship.
Boong. Boooooong.
Kurotan continued to swing his sword in silence while Luke corrected his stance periodically. Kurotans awkward stance continued to improve bit by bit under Lukes guidance.
I was wondering, if Orcs passed down weapon arts amongst themselves. A way of handling the axe, for example?
We do not have such things.
Kurotans answer surprised Luke.
If this was true, how is it possible to explain the knights who have died in the hands of an Orc? The memory of the axe using Orc warrior Mabals overwhelming pressure was still clear in Lukes mind.
That is hard to believe. Then Orcs only learn to use their weapons through life and death battles?
Yes. Old warriors do sometimes pass on their techniques, but it takes a long time to make the techniques your own.
It is faster to find your own techniques.
Luke felt a chill run up his spine.
If Kurotans words were true, an Orcs talent and affinity for weapons truly surpassed human imagination.
Should the knights that have died in the hands of Orcs find out about this truth? I wonder how they will react. Would they cry?
Luke silently praised the humans that had pushed back the Orcs, a race with a genius affinity for weaponry.
Kurotan continued swinging for a long while before breaking off from training to drink some water. Judging by the small sips he was taking, he was able to remember a lesson that he had been taught once.
Humans have such large differences in their strength. Most humans are weak and fragile, but strong humans are very, very strong.
Of course. A drafted farmer and a knight who has been officially trained in the sword are as different as the heaven and earth. Isnt it the same for Orcs?
No. Weak Orcs die, strong Orcs live. The warriors hiding out in the mountain ranges were all similarly skilled.
Damn, just hearing that gives me chills. I also feel a little bit of pity for you Orcs
Kurotan and Luke continued to converse for a while when Kurotan suddenly lamented.
Damn. If only I could make use of Maals blessing
Maals blessing? What is that?
You dont know? There are quite a few who use it even amongst humans Of course, the blessings are probably not from Maal.
Luke let the puzzlement show on his face.
What does the blessing do?
If you fight and fight, Mother Natures Mana changes into Maals blessing. If you are blessed by Maal, you can see better, and feel better. If you pass these stages, your strength increases as well.
Luke couldnt help but shiver once again.
Could it be that Maals blessing refers to Aura?

Aura. Only experienced knights were able to turn mana into Aura. Aura heightened the senses, and also let the user surpass his body's limits at high levels. Kurotan glanced at Luke.

As I said, there are quite a few amongst humans that use the blessing. Even you, although your level is a bit basic. Luke couldn't help but shake his head in disbelief.

Maal's blessing does refer to Aura. I can't believe it.

The fact that the simple race of Orcs could use Aura came across as a surprising fact to Luke.

I thought Aura was unique to the humans?

It seems you humans refer to Maal's blessing as Aura. Anyways, once you can use Maal's blessing, your strength increases explosively.

Kurotan gripped his fists tightly.

Even amongst the valiant Orc warriors, only a small number are blessed by Maal. I as well only gained my strength after receiving Maal's blessing.

As it should be. Only the most talented of humans can awaken themselves to Aura. I understand now. It's no wonder that High Knights can also die at the hands of Orcs. Orcs can also use Aura.

Those that had awakened to Aura could be divided into three levels. Those in the first level could feel their Aura, albeit through a blurred sense, and use it crudely.

After passing this first step, the next level one was called Aura User, and could use Aura to sharpen their senses. This was the level that Luke was at, but he was not a particularly accomplished Aura User.

Those that could control their Aura a bit more fluently and use it to increase their physical capabilities were called Aura Experts.

Most Knights famous throughout the land had reached the level of Aura Experts. There were most likely differences in their levels, but Aura Experts could increase their explosiveness and strength by many times by controlling their Aura.

The next level involved being able to completely control Aura and sending it outside of the body, the level of a Master. Masters had completely broken past the limits of the human body and were called superhuman. Their ability to expel Aura from their bodies and control it was especially frightening. Pouring Aura into a blade created Aura blades that could cut through anything. Pouring Aura into an armor created an impenetrable defense. The soldiers and knights that had reached the level of Aura Master were treated as top secret weapons of the kingdom and were strictly veiled in secrecy. Since Aura Masters could also be thought of as a legion unto themselves, they were treated extravagantly well by their kingdoms.

Luke said with a faraway look on his face.

I have heard that our Hansel Kingdom rewards every new Aura Master with the title of an Earl and a fitting territory. The King also marries them to a royal princess and takes them in as members of the royal family.

Aura Master? What is that?

Luke snapped out of his thoughts and looked at Kurotan.

To what level have you trained your Aura, no, Maal's blessing?

I don't know what you are talking about.

You said you got stronger by using Maal's blessing? Did you use it to sharpen your senses? Or amplify your physical capabilities as well?

Kurotan puffed out his chest and answered.

With Maal's blessing, my strength and explosiveness increased many times over.

Luke once again was wrapped up in shock. Kurotan had achieved the level of an Aura Expert as an Orc.

That's impossible! You were an Aura Expert?

I have met a few humans at the same level as me. They all died at my hands.

Lukes complexion paled. He did not remember exactly how many, but he had seen reports of the death of multiple Aura Experts among the knights that had been sent to fight the Orcs in the Eastern mountain ranges.

How shocking to think of an Aura Expert among the Orcs. I wonder whether the commanders were aware of this?

Luke frowned as if he had a headache. Up until the level of Aura Expert, it was impossible to tell a persons achievement in Aura. Only the visible Aura being expelled by an Aura Master made it clear.

Are there any Aura Masters among the Orcs?

Master?

Any Orcs that could use Maals blessing through weapons or armor.

Kurotan slowly shook his head.

I have never seen any such warriors.

It seems that Aura Expert is the limit for Orcs. Of course, the Orcs that dont even have sword arts wouldnt have any Aura cultivation techniques. And their lifespans are shorter than a humans

Luke looked at Kurotan with a new light in his eyes. It was true that Luke had achieved the level of an Aura User, but that was because he was born in a prestigious House. The Esteban House had its own unique Aura cultivation technique, the most valuable heirloom of the House.

The Aura cultivation technique of the Esteban House was a high level method that had given birth to many Aura Experts. Kurotan, however, had reached the level of Aura Expert with effort and perseverance alone.

Luke looked at Kurotan with conflicting feelings.

What would happen If I taught this bastard an Aura cultivation technique?

Luke smiled bitterly after pondering for a while. Not even branch families of the House would be taught the Aura cultivation technique, so it was impossible to teach it to Kurotan.

Its a shame, but nothing I can do about it. I am still curious though, as to the level Kurotan could achieve if he had a proper Aura cultivation technique.

The longer Luke thought, he couldnt help but get a bit jealous as well. Luke had trained extremely hard in order to reach the level of Aura Expert, but had yet to reach the level of controlling his Aura.

My talent is inferior to an Orcs

Luke suddenly stopped thinking and stood up.

Lets get started on our way. Youll be running like before.

Kurotan stopped swinging his sword and put on his chain mail.

Then lets start.

Kurotan began running again after tying the rope to his waist himself.

Luke followed in a relaxed manner on horseback.

Your posture has improved, but its still awkward. Your back is still hunched, straighten up.

Lukes guidance did not stop, and Kurotan ran and ran following Lukes orders.

Because Kurotan continued to run without rest, they were able to arrive at a village ahead of schedule.

This is Holden Village. Im glad we dont have to sleep outdoors.

Luke glanced up at the quickly darkening sky. Kurotan was heaving heavy breaths besides the horse.

Luke untied Kurotan and rented a room in the village inn. The scale of the village was small, and there was only one inn in the village.

Luke nodded silently as he ate the dishes he had ordered.

Kurotan has improved a lot.

Kurotan was dining on his meal like a human. He was using a fork and knife to cut his bread and meat, as Luke had trained him to do. It was a surprising change from the disturbance they had caused in Lactel City.

Theres still a lot to teach him.

Luke frowned when he entered the room with Kurotan. It was because of the stench emanating from Kurotans body.

Damn. Looks like youll have to wash up before we sleep.

Kurotans face turned ugly.

What do you mean wash up.

Listen well. The human body needs to be washed for it to not get sick.

No. It will feel weird if I wash up.

Luke frowned as he recalled the stench of the Orc hideout.

Of course, Luke had a surefire way of convincing Kurotan.

You want to wash up after I beat you up? Or just wash up.

Keuuu

Kurotans face turned even uglier. His choice was obvious.

I will just wash up. I do not want to get hit.

Lets go together. Ive gotten dusty after a day of riding.

Luke grabbed Kurotans arm and dragged him to a nearby well.

Luke hadnt actually sweated that much, but he didnt want to leave Kurotan to wash by himself.

I have to make sure he washes up properly.

The rest of their travel was fairly smooth. The public peace was highly maintained as they approached the center of Hansel Kingdom. They were examined at the borderlines of all territories, but Lukes status as a retiring officer ensured quick passage.

Kurotan was also able to get by thanks to Lukes efficient business skills.

Kurotan couldnt stop from exclaiming in amazement.

Humans are very strict about enforcing their borders. I would never have made it this far alone.

Forget this far. You wouldnt even have made it out of the Orc hideout.

I agree. Its thanks to you that I can now put up a decent front as a human.

Kurotan looked down at his hands. Hardened flesh studded the once soft palms.

It was a change caused by the fact that he had taken to swinging around his sword every chance he got.

His stamina had also increased vigorously thanks to running everyday as well. He had barely lasted thirty minutes during the first few days, but Kurotan could keep up a decent pace without much effort now.

All of this was possible due to Lukes guidance. Luke had accurately calculated the limits of Kurotans current body and had trained it right to the limits.

Now that I think about it, Ive trained Kurotan in everything that I learned as an apprentice knight.

Luke stared at Kurotan, who was taking bites out of a piece of bread while sitting down. They had gotten fairly close during their journey.

Never in my life would I have imagined I would become this friendly with an Orc.

On the outside, Kurotan appeared no different from a regular human. He was definitely different from one. He retained his almost stupid simplicity and honesty, and never doubted Luke.

No matter what Luke said, Kurotan would always take it at face value and believe it fully.

To be honest, its easier to deal with him than other humans. No need for me to calculate this or that.

The thought startled Luke out of his amusements, and he vigorously shook his head.

It was a thought that he shouldnt have, as a human.

Your running training has pulled us ahead of the schedule. We should be able to reach the borders of the territory by tomorrow.

Do you mean Esteban Earldom?

Yes. A convoy sent by the House will be waiting for us.

Luke turned serious as he said to Kurotan.

From there on, we must be especially careful of other peoples eyes.

How so?

When its just the two of us, we can talk comfortably. You must absolutely refrain from talking in such a way in front of others.

Kurotan frowned slightly.

Its hard to speak politely.

Then dont speak at all. You remember the gesture I taught you?

Kurotan took his fist to his mouth.

You mean this?

Yes. Use the gesture when other people try to talk to you. They will understand if I tell them you are undergoing silent training. And additionally

Luke continued to stare at Kurotan for a while before speaking.

I will introduce you as an apprentice knight I have taken under my wing. I was officially knighted five years ago when I was stationed at Fort Potellan, so there should be no problems.

All right.

Kurotan nodded without second thought, but Luke still felt conflicted. He had not known that his first apprentice knight would be an Orc in human guise.

I suppose its my fault that I took him in in the first place.

Luke smiled bitterly and shook his head.

Just as Luke had predicted, there were many people gathered on the borders of the Earldom that had come to greet him.

Lukes face brightened when he saw the aged knight standing in the front of the crowd.

Sir Benjamin.

A vassal of the Esteban Earldom, Sir Benjamin had taken care of Luke as a child. It had not been an unusual sight to see Luke clambering on to his back.

It has been too long.

Young master. I almost didnt recognize you.

Benjamins wrinkled eyes trembled. Benjamin smiled brightly and wrapped up Luke in a bear hug.

Si-Sir Benjamin, there are a lot of people around us.

As a startled Luke squirmed in his arms, Benjamin released him with a smile.

Im sure it has been hard, serving for five years. You are a man now.

I have grown a bit. Haha.

We should have gone to Potellan City to greet you, but the situation in the Earldom It is good that you have made it back safely.

It wasnt a big problem The center of the Kingdom is well maintained.

Yes, young master. Who is?

Benjamin laid his eyes on Kurotan. When he had seen the convoy of people waiting, Luke had stopped Kurotans training and handed him the reins.

Hes an apprentice knight I took at Fort Potellan.

You took in an apprentice knight at Fort Potellan?

Benjamins eyes widened. This was because apprentice knights were usually chosen from young boys of Noble Houses. Their ages were around thirteen to eighteen.

Boys of Noble Houses that wished to become knights became servants to skilled Knights. They took care of the Knights equipment, groomed their horses, and ran errands. They learned of chivalry and etiquette, and advanced on to official apprentice knights to begin learning swordsmanship.

Luke had also gone through this process until he had been officially knighted.

Benjamin couldnt help but be surprised by the commoner that seemed to be older than Luke, and seemed somewhat delinquent.

Did you receive a lot of payment?

It was common practice for apprentice knights to pay a fee as a show of sincerity to the knights they had been apprenticed under. Luke smiled and shook his head.

Who do you take me for?

Th-Then why?

I just took a liking to him. It was just a light decision, so please understand.

Y-Yes, young master.

Benjamin looked away from Kurotan.