



Spice and Wolf, Vol. 1

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The life of a traveling merchant is a lonely one, a fact with which Kraft Lawrence is well acquainted. Wandering from town to town with just his horse, cart, and whatever wares have come his way, the peddler has pretty well settled into his routine—that is, until the night Lawrence finds a wolf goddess asleep in his cart. Taking the form of a fetching girl with wolf ears and a tail, Holo has wearied of tending to harvests in the countryside and strikes up a bargain with the merchant to lend him the cunning of "Holo the Wisewolf" to increase his profits in exchange for taking her along on his travels. What kind of businessman could turn down such an offer? Lawrence soon learns, though, that having an ancient goddess as a traveling companion can be a bit of a mixed blessing. Will this wolf girl turn out to be too wild to tame?

Spice and Wolf, Vol. 1 Details

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Author : Isuna Hasekura

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From Reader Review Spice and Wolf, Vol. 1 for online ebook

Sarah Hayes says

Review originally posted at Dangerously Cold Tea

As someone who loves the anime Spice and Wolf - so much that it was on my top ten list of anime from the past decade - I had high expectations for the source material. I was also very curious to see if there were any major changes from the transition from the written word to animation cel. What I found was a book that was complimented greatly by its anime version but also rose above it with its surprising moments of depth and detail.

The story centers around Lawrence Kraft the merchant and his companion Horo the Wise Wolf of the North. Their first book of travels has them locking horns with a merchant company looking to con the naive Lawrence out of a profit with promises of a moneymaking scheme surrounding a drop in silver purity in Trenni coins. When Lawrence realizes the thing is a scam, he reaches out to another company for help, but in the process Horo is kidnapped and held as ransom because of her being the goddess of the harvest and therefore an abomination against the Holy Church. Storywise, where can you go wrong? You've got elements of supernatural and dramatic action, not to mention a very interesting lesson on macro and microeconomics.

Lawrence is the audience's guide to the world within the series, a clearly old time European-based society in which the Church's word is law and merchants can make or break the market. His lectures to Horo on things like silver purity in coins and bartering with a company that is situated in multiple towns is not only educational for her but for the audience. It is understanding these lectures that will make the story more enjoyable for the audience; you can't understand what is going on unless you understand how the coin system works. Lawrence is also the straight man to Horo's magnificently magical self; his reactions to her hijinks and wolf tendencies reflect the audience's reactions to seeing Horo do what she does. Lawrence is the Everyman who never expected to be paired up with a harvest god, someone who would never expect to be swindled until it almost happens. He's not naive so much as he is rather easy to trust, experienced but wanting to believe that all people are inherently good despite the efforts of those like Zheren to teach him otherwise.

And then there is the character of Horo, parts haughty and demanding, lonely and afraid, feral and angry. As the self-proclaimed Wise Wolf of the series, she often spouts off little wise sayings at Lawrence, using her clever ways learned from living hundreds of years around merchants and farmers to help Lawrence in his trade - there is no better example than the scene in which Horo's crafty methods help to sell some furs at a higher price than Lawrence thought he'd sell for. But she is also vulnerable despite the front she puts up at times: she is enraged that Lawrence does not personally lead the charge to save her and feels embarrassed. Horo is not ashamed of her wolf nature, but when she transforms, she often asks Lawrence to look away: she wants Lawrence to see her as a human not an animal; she does not want Lawrence to be afraid of her and run away like so many other humans did before.

That is what's so interesting about the relationship between Lawrence and Horo: they both depend on each other, even if they'd be loathe to admit it aloud. Lawrence depends on Horo for her quick thinking and to keep him company during his travel - not to mention the contract between them that he take Horo to her homelands in the north. Horo depends on Lawrence for keeping her grounded and amusing her, as well as being her transport, buying her food and clothes (there's a running tab, though) and keeping her around with

the pouch of grain. There is also an undeniable attraction between the two of them; they dance around it with their actions and words, but for better or for worse Holo and Lawrence are connected by this attraction, wherever it may take them. Remember, Horo is a demon and a sinful thing in the eyes of the Church, whose influence could very well see to it that Lawrence loses his job due to his connections with the wolf girl. The fact that he puts his own life on the line for someone he barely knows and takes up space in his wagon says that he cares for her, despite their occasional back and forth sniping on the most trivial things like apples and wine.

Comparing the light novel to the anime, some changes and irregularities do pop up. Yarei, for example, is a character in the novel who is from Pasloe Village and is a good friend of Lawrence through his comings and goings through the small town. He is replaced in the anime by Chloe, a young woman who sees Lawrence as her mentor and has a crush on him. The anime added an unnecessary romantic subplot for some reason; I would not be surprised if the herder later on in the anime does not exist in the novel or her attraction to Lawrence not as prominent in the original text. There is also the fact that actually taking the time to sit down and read the material makes Lawrence's lessons on microeconomics make more sense; in fact, a lot of things that happen in the anime are explained a lot better in the novel, especially the end of the silver purity arc. That's not to say the light novel is anyway superior to the anime; they both have ways in which they are better than the other, but one version does not completely overshadow the other. People interested in the story should check both of them out as they greatly compliment each other - in fact, I would say that seeing the anime beforehand greatly enhanced my enjoyment of the original novel.

All in all, this is a great introduction to the world of Horo and Lawrence and an entertaining mix of humor and excitement not to mention some great pages of art that highlight the more important scenes in the story. Spice and Wolf is the kind of light novel if you are just getting interested in the world of anime and manga and need a sort of stepping stone between reading prose and reading manga. I'd also recommend it to any fan of fantasy books that are both fun and educational.

Selena says

I have to say, this was an amazing book. I'd heard that the book was better than the anime and manga renditions, so rather than check those out, I read this instead. Let me tell you, it was worth it.

The book's a light novel that follows the story of Lawrence and Holo. Simple as that.

Holo is epic, my favorite character. She's tough, clever, and strong. Lawrence was pretty good too, but I definitely like the "Wolf" in Spice and Wolf.

It was neither too long nor too short, the perfect length.

Mary says

"Though he might travel the world and amass a great fortune, the one thing Lawrence could never have was right here."

Light novels sold in the US are predominately cheap, smutty fanfiction filled with underage girls sold to a predominately male audience. As such, it's very difficult for myself to care for them when I honestly want something with more substance.

Thankfully, Spice & Wolf caters beautifully to readers who want more than your average "fanservice" big boobed anime girls and tsundere lolis. Which is huge, considering I really want more light novels for women published here.

Spice & Wolf is the story about Lawrence who is a lonely merchant trying to get rich and open his own shop. His only companion is his deprecating thoughts and his horse, until he comes across the fabled Wolf Goddess of the Harvest.

Her name is Holo and she's grown tired of remaining in the wheat fields and longs to return home. More than anything, she's lonely and wants a friend. The two immediately prove wit and sharp tongues upon meeting and soon revel in each others company.

The book is heavy on economics which thankfully wasn't overdone. Like in the anime, the romance between Lawrence and Holo is a slow burn starting from friendship to admiration, to love and respect.

Lawrence doesn't fit the mold for most light novel heroes. He's not afraid to mention he admires Holo's beauty, but it's not done in an objectifying or disgusting manner like most do. He respects her and admires her intelligence just as equally as her beauty and their banter is entertaining and reveals personality for the both of them.

Holo herself is a great character, being intelligent, cunning, and quick to use her situations to her advantage. She's lonely and one of the few of her kind and fears those who bow to her simply for being a god. For being one requires respect and distance and she longs for a true companion.

I really enjoyed this volume and if you too are sick and tired of those cheap light novels, Spice & Wolf is certainly one you should pick up. The manga unfortunately objectifies Holo to a sickening degree but the anime and light novel are very tasteful in its romance and doesn't rely on cheap fanservice.

Yenprss, I really want more light novels for women. There are only 2 that I know of, one for Vampire Knight and one for Alice in the Country of Hearts series. I have both, but we as women deserve more books to read. We would love to read more! As such, I'd appreciate it if you would consider more carefully some titles for us, such as Sugar Apple Fairy Tale or something along those lines.

Melanie says

"I'll always remember that you chose me."

Lawrence is a traveling merchant that is very trusted throughout the land, even though that land is very heavily controlled by the church, who will do anything to make sure the gods from the past are no longer worshiped. This doesn't affect Lawrence what-so-ever, until he finds one of these old gods sleeping in his wagon cart after a Pagan harvest festival.

The adorable god he finds is Horo, a wolf god! She can shift between forms, even though it's not the most convenient of ways, but in human form she is still left with cute little wolf ears and a tail. Her life depends on a sheaf of wheat that Lawrence has in his cart.

Obviously, Lawrence's new travel friend would cause a problem if anyone found out that she's really a Pagan god, so Horo is constantly hiding her "special additions". Lawrence agrees to help Horo get north, while Horo promises to help his sales to earn her keep.

This book heavily focuses on economics, but it isn't overwhelming. The main sub-plot surrounds the coin system and silver purity. Lawrence and Horo get wrapped up with two companies, with very similar names might I add, that have much more power than they do. This will not be the last time we see these two companies or the church, I'm sure.

This is a romance, but it's the definition of slow-burn romance. Lawrence and Horo are both such lonely creatures that truly do not deserve to be. I think I want to continue on with this series mostly just to see their happy ending (they better get a happy ending).

This book was much longer and much more thought provoking than I thought it would be. When I saw it only had a prologue, six chapters and then an epilogue, I thought it would only take me about an hour to read. Boy was I wrong. This was actually very meaty, and took me two nights to read. There was a lot to the story and plot, and the character development (as slow as it might be) was also exceptional.

This story read very beautifully, and I feel like it was translated well. I think fantasy lovers would really enjoy this, and it would be a nice place to start if you want to get into light-novels and manga.

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Megan Lavey-Heaton says

Who would think that a series centered around economics would be appealing? Craft Lawrence is a traveling merchant in the Middle Ages in a land that is controlled by the Church and has done its best to squelch the pagan gods that were once worshipped. However, Lawrence comes face-to-face with one of these gods in the form of Horo - a wolf-god who just wants to return to her true home. The series features a fantastic chemistry between its leads and is very intelligent. It's not a quick read despite the fact that it's a light novel. You get the crash course in economics that many probably slept through in high school. It's a fun series, and the anime series is a great supplement to the novels. The first six episodes of the anime are adapted from this novel.

Mike says

Kraft Lawrence is a clever traveling merchant traveling a medieval countryside hoping to earn enough to realize his dream of owning his own shop. His life gets significantly more complicated when he inadvertently gives a wolf goddess a lift away from the village she's been watching over for centuries. Wanting to go back to the land of her birth, Holo vows to help Lawrence in his trades in exchange for traveling with him.

At the center of Spice and Wolf is a well developed journey with compelling lead characters. The trading and economic aspects give it a unique feel and atmosphere. I had watched the anime before reading this and loved it.

Unfortunately I feel the anime adaptation (surprisingly) surpassed the source material in this case. The economic background can be dense and slow at times to the point of being a chore to read. The anime made a couple changes that added intensity to the story and took full advantage of music, visuals, etc to make the slower parts more compelling.

But the core of the story is the same and despite those minor criticisms, this really is a great read overall. Holo and Lawrence wonderful characters to travel along with.

Caprice Rose says

Picked this up from the shelf at Dymocks with a vague interest. It completely blew my mind - I am in love

Rebecca McNutt says

This wasn't the best graphic novel I've ever read, but the way it frames a fantasy story using anime art is one that really makes the book stand out.

Ulagon says

Amazing what happens when you're flipping through channels looking for something to watch and your significant other says, "Stop!" So, I stopped and saw this woman with animal ears and rolled my eyes. "It's a catgirl. Please, let me find something else." And after being shushed I listened to the dialogue and sat through the remainder of the episode in pure disbelief. The first chance I had I bought the first season. We watched through all thirteen episodes in two days. "Then" I discover it's based on a series of popular novels.

Spice and Wolf, while there seems to be some controversy over the English translation of the title, is very unique in its presentation of a classic "slow build" love story. Isuna has created two very intelligent and crafty characters that seem to have Murphy's Law following them at every turn. Everytime the reader is given just a little glimpse at the love growing between Lawrence and Holo the two seem forced to take three

steps back.

If you are looking for a great love story with outstanding dialogue do not fail to become a fan of this series. My one complaint, the books are being released once every six months and the first volume is still fresh on the shelves. That slow pacing is going to drive the love of my life crazy. She's even started howling at the moon and eating apples by the bushels. Come to think of it there seems to be an aweful lot of wheat on the floor... Hmm... Must be my imagination.

Marty Preslar says

A well written story with compelling characters. I would also suggest the anime version, which is very true to the book, with the exception of one character that is changed (for the better, in my opinion...)

The real strength of this story is the realistic development of the relationship between the two protagonists, despite the fact that one of them is a "harvest goddess" with ears and a tail. This isn't one of your standard "magical girlfriend" stories where the characters are in love from the start. Instead the relationship builds slowly and naturally over the course of the novels (or episodes in the anime). It takes until the third novel (2nd season of the anime) for Lawrence to realize that his feelings for Holo have gone beyond that of a traveling companion and business partner, and even then he is unsure of how to deal with it.

The world building is done with great skill, showing a world very similar to our own in the late middle ages/early Renaissance, with a powerful, but corrupt, church and a complex economy where various kingdoms compete for prominence in the markets as well as battlefields. (The battlefield aspect is only mentioned in passing, not shown. It is not a sword and sorcery adventure.)

Jonas says

Holo is one of my all time favourite characters from anime (I saw both season from this series long before reading the light novel). Still, reading it instead of seeing the two main characters interact, made it much more repetitive. There is very little character development. Their banter is always the same: Holo oscillates between meek and bold, Lawrence acts accordingly. I'm not sure if the anime did this better, or if my expectations are higher in this regard for written works. The writing style in itself is quite unspectacular but that may be normal for a light novel, I have no experience there.

I'll certainly continue with the other volumes, if only to get to the non-anime content, but I wouldn't otherwise recommend it to anyone.

Mandy says

Spice & Wolf is the story of Lawrence a merchant heading through town during a wheat festival that picks up a stranger along the way with wolf ears and tail. She says that she is the ancient wheat goddess who's decided that she wants to travel up north. Falling for her charm Lawrence agrees's to let her tag along little did he know that the wolf girl is more than she appears and may just be assets if she doesn't get him in trouble.

I like Lawrence he's a good guy who quickly accepts that Horo happens to be a wolf god who's just wanting to go home. I like Horo she's an interesting character a girl with wolf ears and tail that is connected to wheat. I also really liked how the two just get along so well they seem to complement each other personality wise.

I actually watched a few episodes of the anime several years ago so I thought it might be worth checking into the manga. The first installment is just enough to give you a basic idea of the story and enough action to get you hooked on the story. I felt I was able to connect with both characters easily. I loved the artwork it's beautifully done and I was impressed by the detail of each page. I actually enjoyed the concept for this one a wolf goddess who's ties are to wheat who just wants to go home what's not to love. I'm curious to dive into the next one. Beautiful artwork with a unique story a must for Manga fans.

Steven Phan says

Characters: 5/5

I really enjoy the characters of Spice and Wolf, especially because of the small cast. You have a merchant, his apprentice, and a WOLF GODDESS. The cast seems to be fairly realistic, but corny at times with it's clever antics and wordplay. This is due to the old wording style of the novel with lines such as, "All, be they human or animal, look on my form and give way with awe, and treat me as special. I have tired of this treatment"(Hasekura 29). The characters grew on me staying themselves no matter the situation. Lawrence, the merchant, acts like his usual self saying things such as, "How... how much do you think the clothes you destroyed cost?...I don't care if you're a god or not...I'll see you pay me back!"(Hasekura 214) throughout the novel. There are strong leads, male and female.

Setting: 4/5

The story is reliant upon the particular setting, taking place in the time period where merchants still rode around from town to town in wagons. The author does not make very many time skips and proceeds to give the plot a smooth direction. Being the setting that it is, it limits the unexpected possibilities of things that may happen throughout. The end of one chapter will be continued in the next chapter, so nothing will happen to change where the character is or what they're doing. "I imagine the the farmers you watched over for so many centuries were mindful of time"(Hasekura 65). Though it has similar settings compared to others that could fit, the fact that there is a wolf goddess makes this particular setting unique.

Plot: 5/5

Being the first novel of Hasekura's series, it spends a lot of the novel introducing and showing off the characters instead of the immediate plot. Though it starts off later in the chapters, by using the characters as a build up the plot, it was that much more enjoyable for the surprising end. The plot in a nutshell is that the merchant, Lawrence, comes across a wolf goddess, Holo, who convinces him to allow her to follow him in his adventures. "She sounded like an old friend asking a simple favor"(Hasekura 38). This is so she can reach her hometown that she has not been to in centuries (literally). It follows a plot line that goes until the end of the first volume, and then ties it up with an epilogue.

Theme: 4/5

The title is a reference to goods, merchant's goods. Though it has it's plot and settings, this book really focuses on two things, Lawrence and Holo. Their relationship grows after the main plot kicks into gear. Hasekura sends a message that tells us that we can find or lose relationships in unexpected places. "Hey, you there. What are you playing at, sleeping in someone's cart?"(Hasekura 19). This is how Lawrence meets

Holo; she was sleeping in his cart.

My Opinion: Overall a 4.5/5

Personally, I really enjoyed this book. It has a relaxing tone in the text and makes me not care about anything else when I do read it. It has an odd mix of genres that Hasekura combines amazingly. You don't usually find a book that combines romance with heavy economics and politics. I would recommend this to a friend that is patient and won't be scared when given a little about politics and economics. It can be a little confusing, but to get more enjoyment out of this book, you'll need to understand at least a little bit of the contents to know what is going on.

Chibineko says

I've been hearing a lot about this series, mostly from people who are saying that the series deserves more attention than it is currently getting. After reading through the first light novel, I can agree that Spice & Wolf deserves more attention than it currently gets & is sure to become very popular. I also want to let people know that even though this is NOT a manga, it is worth purchasing.

This first volume of Spice & Wolf begins with the traveling merchant Lawrence slowly approaching a small town rumored to worship pagan gods- if the local churches are to be believed. Once there, Lawrence is quickly sent on his way after he secures a bundle of wheat for sale. The town is in the middle of a festival where they worship their local deity (Holo the wolf god) in hopes of securing a good harvest next season- outsiders aren't welcome during this time. Stopping to rest for the night, Lawrence discovers a beautiful young girl resting in his cart- a girl with wolf ears & a tail to match, a girl who calls herself Holo!

While this is a very cute & interesting story, I do have to say that the translation of the source material felt a little flat. This can sometimes happen when something is directly translated & not slightly adapted for the different slang/speech of other cultures. It is a better translation than some of the other books out there, so readers shouldn't be too disappointed.

Possibly as a result of the translation, the story was a little slow to capture me entirely but as the story progressed & I saw more of the interactions between Holo & Lawrence & got hooked. An interesting point of interest to the story is that while the story is entertaining, it is pretty informative when it comes to trading & bargaining. Much of the story's plot surrounds Lawrence attempting to perform his chosen profession & Holo assisting him with the wisdom she's gained through living such a long life. To some this might sound dull & to some it will be a little dull, but the relationship between Holo & Lawrence as well as the beautiful illustrations will keep them entertained enough to keep reading.

I also have to give credit to the writers that he didn't turn Holo into an idiot, brat, weepy girl, or fanservice character. She's a bit arrogant, but that should be expected with a supernatural creature like her. She's not only intelligent, but she is realistic. I've heard that her personality here is slightly different from the manga, so if you are someone that has read the manga & gotten irritated at her portrayal, you'll like this book.

Would I recommend this to anyone interested in the series? I would- it is an interesting read & I'm intrigued to see what will come next in the series.

Negar says

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