

A lifetime of adventure - starring the one and only ninja orange

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A lifetime of adventure - starring the one and only ninja orange

by [Efervescent](#)

Summary

Reborn into a twisted version of the Naruto universe, the impending manifestation of her daemon weighs on Shikako more than the potential end of the world- because one might happen in a distant future and one is supposed to come about any day now.

As it turns out, she was worried for the wrong reasons. In her defense, she hadn't realized things going wrong in this particular fashion was even a possibility.

Notes

Notes: The premise here is different from Pullman's- the daemons don't really change once they appear.

The grand debut

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's not that she doesn't notice them, because she does; quickly, even. But when compared to all that this new world forces her to confront, the house pets seem utterly insignificant. Until they're suddenly not.

She's three when she finds out the reason behind the weasel curling around her father's shoulders and the cat that follows her mother. Even then, she's only told because it is expected to happen to her within the year; the subject is otherwise almost taboo. It becomes obvious why when she hears that they are the external manifestation of a person's soul, a part of their essence walking around, vulnerable to the influence of the outside world. Shikaku says it only happens when the appropriate degree of spiritual maturity has been attained, which should be between the ages of three and four, but she isn't sure if she wants it to be a lie or not.

If it is only related to spiritual growth, then hers would have already appeared. In a place where only the dead lack a companion, she would stand out not like a sore thumb, but rather a gangrenous one.

But if it is, in fact, also a question of physical development, it's almost worse, because she can expect to develop one shortly. If her soul has no natural outside presence, will a piece of it be forcibly torn to manifest her demon? Can that happen? Would it leave her insane, or cause memory lapses, or slowly eat away at her temper and intelligence the way making Horcruxes had with Voldemort? She had no way of knowing and felt all the worse for it. How do you split a soul that was made to be indivisible?

In retrospective, the answer is obvious. You don't.

The moment comes when Shikako Nara's body reaches the state needed to develop a daemon. There is a hole meant to be filled, but her soul has no innate instinct demanding it separate into two pieces. So the void pulls and pulls, until it manages to steal something big enough to fill itself. It may not be the spirit fragment that is expected, but if the fabric of reality itself has incorporated the exchange, who would be able to tell, anyway?

There were a few uncontested rules regarding the existence of daemons. The first was that there had to be some degree of similarity between the human and the animal. This translated into all daemons being vertebrates, and the great majority of them mammals. Their conditions reflected that of their owners from a spiritual point of view: a loss of purpose might mean shedding, a change of religion could be reflected in a change of species; even an epiphany would show, as demonstrated by Uchiha Itachi's rabbit, which had gotten spots the night his brother had been born. But now Shikaku was beginning to doubt those age-old

pieces of wisdom. Given the sight laid out in front of him, they clearly had no idea what they were on about.

His daughter had been asleep when he had happened to catch a glimpse of the glow that announced the imminent arrival of a new member of their family. He had watched spellbound as tiny particles of golden light seemingly lifted off her skin and coalesced into a rounded shape, hidden from his sight by his daughter's body. He had hesitated, wondering if it would be unfair to Shikako to see her daemon before her, but he could feel Kana tapping on his shoulder. A whisper of 'I want to meet him already!' later, he had circled around his daughter's prone body.

Only to freeze as he came to face an orange. Did this mean that humans weren't nearly so limited as it was commonly thought? Perhaps children unconsciously acknowledged mammals as the only possible shape for a daemon to take because it was what they were surrounded with. If the characteristic disquiet that came with the presence of another's daemon was only associated with certain species, could a child's spirit be prompted towards a specific shape? It would explain the similarities between all the daemons in a clan. Perhaps, once upon a time, daemons were much more diverse, only for certain shapes to be slowly phased out of existence. But why would Shikako be the exception?

Thinking back, however, he realised what had been missing. Unlike her brother, she had never shown the slightest fascination with the two daemons in the house. None of the constant glares and abrupt changes in attitude towards something she should have perceived as otherworldly and out of place in a material world. To his daughter, Kana and Ichigo had been the family pets: nice, but not particularly compelling.

There was, of course, the other option. That his precious little girl was the only odd one out, the anomaly that some would doubtlessly view as inhuman for her differences.

The last thought must have made his chakra spike, because his child stirred. When she awoke, she would meet her daemon (given the feeling he got when he looked at it, there was nothing else it could have been, which put an end to that avenue of thought. He couldn't have known that any being whose presence belonged primarily on another plane of existence would have a similarly unnerving feel to it.) and he would ensure they would never be parted. She would catch a nasty cold, forbidding any visitors or outings, while he would head out to investigate past occurrences of non-mammalian daemons, the closer to plant life the better, for his long-standing hobby of historical daemonology. Anybody previously unaware of this interest had obviously not been paying close enough attention to him.

It was, of course, time for fate to throw another stick in his wheels. Because as his daughter let out an adorable yawn, her orange did the same, revealing a gaping maw filled with yellow teeth. Did that mean it wasn't actually an orange, but rather some exotic animal whose shape was meant to disguise him as an orange? If so, it had a remarkably human set of teeth.

He enhanced his senses and was disappointed to prove his theory incorrect. There was no heartbeat, breath or other bodily function that could be heard from the fruit. For all intents and purposes, it was just an orange. So much so that for a second he doubted what he had

seen, wondering if it had been the work of stress and fear for his daughter's future. A second yawn was just in time to remove that misconception. Never before had he been so glad daemons did no need to consume food. A fruit would usually get by on photosynthesis, but the orange had no leaves. Instead it had teeth, which seriously complicated the issue of what does it eat?

He shook his head; it was really not the time to let himself be carried away by silly inquiries. He needed to get Shikako out of the living room, where any number of passing relatives might make an appearance. Having grabbed a plate from the kitchen, he used it to gently roll away the orange; immediately, Shikako's hand reached out to grasp it. Bingo. Touching another's daemon was unthinkable, but even asleep one would feel the strain of distance and fight against it.

He locked Shikako in his own bedroom, still asleep and curled around the orange. It made for a heart-warming picture, one he would fight to keep in his life. But for now, it was time to uncover and delve deep into an old and previously (non-existent) little known hobby.

Yoshino first hears about the orange in silent whispers in an alley, a forewarning from Shikaku before she reaches home. She wishes she could think it a joke for at least a moment, but her husband's grim face only leaves place for the choking grip of anxiety. Her baby, the one she has fought so hard to keep and who has honoured her efforts by fighting harder still to live on, might be stolen by the cold hands of unforgiving strangers. Made into an experiment to satisfy their curiosity because of her differences. Shikaku's eyes burn even as the corners of his mouth sag, and she knows that if she has to fight the world for the right to keep her daughter, she will not be fighting alone. She agrees to pick up some medicine on the way home, and presents the perfect picture of the anxious, but not yet truly worried mother to the pharmacist; Ichigo keeps bumping into her leg in a mix of attempted comfort and impatience.

She arrives home to an empty house; Shikaku had been on his way to drop Shikamaru at Choza's ("can't risk him getting sick as well") so she allows herself a moment to fall apart. Face against the wall, she gives a shuddering sigh and holds her breath, hoping the silence would reveal a solution to this new conundrum that, if improperly handled, could take Shikako away. It's only because of the silence that she hears it: the echo of a giggle, rebounding through the house.

It obviously belongs to her daughter, who must have woken in the meanwhile and, by the sound of it, found no fault in a daemon she wouldn't be able to play with, unlike most other children in a similar position. She begins heading towards her bedroom but stops right outside the door. Shikako's stream of warble is cut off by garish laughter. She cracks the door open and her suspicions are confirmed: the orange is indeed the source. It's much louder than most daemons (as a child, she'd heard someone say that it was because their presence was meant to be a caress, to soothe the hurts of the world, but never a touch firm enough to mould, because this was not their world). It starts ... speaking? If the succession of noises can be called speaking. Shikaku had told her about the mouth, but how could it speak without

airways? Well, she was used to a world that wasn't always consistent (the world only made sense to those who didn't know how to look). Shikako laughs again, the sound bright and heartfelt and Yoshino's chest is filled with warmth; for all the trouble the orange has brought, it is also clearly good for Shikako. The sentiment is very hard to hold on to once she actually looks at it.

She forces herself not to flinch back, because this is her baby girl's soul she's looking at. But she can't help the unease at the sight of the leering, too-wide blue eyes, crooked yellow teeth and mocking twist of the mouth. They match the voice, a traitorous thought fleets through her head. But Shikako turns towards her and the sight of her worried face gives her the strength she needs to smile pleasantly when the fruit meets her eyes. Its (his, as a new member of her family she should refer to him as she would any other daemon) smile widens and he shouts out what might be a greeting. She steps closer and Ichigo jumps on the bed, getting a closer look at the fruit (daemon, she should call it a daemon from now on) in anticipation for the process he knows is about to happen.

'Ichigo wasn't always Ichigo, you know. My neighbour was a terribly pretty girl with whom I had playdates quite often and, as luck would have it, her daemon developed first. She was constantly bragging about her beautiful white wolf and every night I told myself that I would get an even lovelier white wolf daemon and upstage her once and for all. Imagine how I felt when I saw my Dust become a kitten. A cute one, but still, a kitten. For the first three months, I refused to call him anything but Wolf. It took a while for me to accept that my father's daemon suggestion, Peaches, suited him better. And then, after a while, I started getting frustrated with the name. I knew it was close, but didn't quite fit. So I cycled through Cherries, and Apricots, and Pineapple, and, when I was getting particularly antsy, Fruit Salad. Until one day it hit me: he was the colour in my life, the love and the blood, the sweet and the sour. He was strawberry, so he was Ichigo. Now, the question is, what will you call yours? It doesn't have to be right, it just needs to be something. Ichigo can help if you can't decide.'

Shikako turned to her daemon and made a questioning noise. The answer was a mispronounced version of Orenji and Ichigo's solemn nod sealed the knowledge that she couldn't even pretend anymore. Shikako's daemon knew his own true name, apparently spoke another language which her daughter seemed to grasp intuitively and looked like the failed result of a human-orange breeding experiment. Regular rules had obviously stopped applying quite some time ago. But as long as the game continued, she could learn to live with it. For now, she could only hope Shikaku's efforts bore fruit.

It took Shikaku two days to find records of a legendary princess with a plant daemon. It took him hours to find confirmation of the myth within other clans' records. It took him seconds to thank Kami that it had been a princess who had found herself in a similar situation to Shikako and not a peasant whose story would have disappeared within a few generations. But for now it seemed like the crisis had been avoided. The skies were clear, Shikamaru was quietly thrilled to be able to see his twin again and Yoshino had said that the orange, while still alarming, was filling their house with laughter. A perfect morning to remember. Which is

why, when a golden glow enveloped Shikamaru just as he was put down, Shikaku took a moment to breathe in the balmy air and bask in the pleasant atmosphere before it all went to hell in a hand basket all over again. The Dust became a perfectly regular baby mongoose, curled in his son's palm. By now Shikaku knew better than to take such things at face value, but he still felt grateful for the appearance of normality. After all, if it doesn't seem broken, no one will push and nag for you to fix it.

It was expected that twins would get their daemons in short succession, but after Shikako's surprise meeting Yuzurin had been ... anticlimactic. The name wasn't right, not really, not yet, but it was close enough for now. Kana and Ichigo would offer their wisdom when it became ill-fitting. The siblings' reunion had to be postponed; Shikamaru had gotten some alone time with his daemon, as per tradition: he should know first just which parts of him the mongoose would expose. But things stayed on track, even if Kana and Ichigo apparently felt no need to get better acquainted with Orenji, who had remained the same happy, if noisy, piece of fruit.

Dinnertime rolled around. Yuzurin had started nosing around, getting closer and hiding from her spiritual parents in turn. In time, she would learn that most daemons didn't quite care for contact, but for now she enjoyed the constant discovery that accompanied her every action in this new life. The twins celebrated their reunion with a hug, but eventually had to be peeled apart to eat. And then along came the trouble. Yuzurin had loved Shikako from the second they had met. So it made sense that she would try to make a connection, namely by getting better acquainted with Orenji (the name carried a weight her own lacked. She was the only daemon in the house whose true name remained a mystery, but she wasn't jealous- she knew she wouldn't have to wait for long). Moving in loose circles, she got closer to him as dinner progressed. Until finally, she had reached her goal. A careless flick of her tail almost gave the game away, but she twisted quietly, finally planting her nose on the waxy, dimpled peel, just between the eyes.

Shikaku smiled under his breath as he took note of Yuzurin's game. A witty comment from his wife distracted him, however, and he would pay for it. As he soon discovered, his son's daemon lacked the implicit understanding that daemons were not casually supposed to touch. He caught a flash of motion from the corner of his eye, but it was too late to act: the mongoose's little nose was firmly planted on the orange. Orenji started screaming, Shikako started sobbing, and Shikamaru looked cornered between confusion and panic. No doubt tears would follow once he figured out the source of his sister's distress and guilt worked its way into the mix. Of course, the situation begged further development, which Orenji proceeded to gleefully offer. A stream of orange seeds hit Yuzurin's snout; she moved back in confusion, only to get drenched in orange juice. More juice than one orange could possibly contain, but apparently the laws of physics were on an extended vacation, one that seemed unlikely to end anytime soon. Yoshino would return from the bathroom in a few moments, only to find both of her children crying after being left alone with him for only a minute. He might as well finish his soup before it ends up on his head.

The princess is Kaguya-people assumed the tree was her daemon and not the alien source of her power

Stranger things

Chapter Summary

There's more people to a village than just your allies and family. The best way to deal with them is obviously to make them into your friends and family.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Kakashi doesn't really want a genin team but is also aware that he doesn't really have much of a say in whether he takes one on. So when he hears the last Uchiha is graduating, he starts taking a more active interest in the proceedings-namely by breaking into the Academy after hours to figure out the make-up of the team he can't fail.

Sensei's son is definitely also going to be under him, so that just leaves one slot. Nara Shikako is top kunoichi and doesn't seem to be too keen on giving up her rank anytime soon, so that makes three.

He knew about the orange-a lot of ninja low-key stalked outdoors Academy sessions after news broke that the commander's kid had an *interesting* daemon. Admittedly, it was pretty entertaining to watch the contrast between the shy and withdrawn human and the orange on a warpath (he was quite fond of the 'spit one seed really hard at the back of Mizuki-sensei's head then pretend nothing happened' phase). None of the other daemons quite sure of where it fit in their hierarchy or how to treat it, especially when it was so much more active and outspoken than most.

Once the kids are in team 7 and there to stay, there's an expectation of some daemon bonding coming up. A little conversation, some play- enough to get a taste for each other. Daemons and ninja didn't really mix that well. Two daemons touching was unpleasant for both corresponding humans, even if they had some measure of mental barriers built and could distance themselves from the sensation. It made most daemons liabilities: shared pain, no ability to use high-level techniques and required closeness. So they learned to track, or do surveillance, or found some other way to be useful (Minato-sensei's Hina had taken advantage of the dexterity of spider monkey fingers and learnt how to write seals).

Sakuke's Yuuna was a falcon and like most bird daemons could stand to be a considerable distance away from her human. It was an easy enough step to start planning lessons on surveillance grids and aerial attacks that required little chakra, maybe some poison expertise and a couple of Wind jutsu if there's the slightest inclination.

As a fox, Tihi would be taught how to track-though she'd rarely get the opportunity to exercise the skill on missions with this team formation. Ironically, Kakashi's nose is still the

best on the team (before he summons his pack, that is), since fine chakra control allows him to refine his sense of smell to an absurd degree and daemons aren't really like actual animals. Close enough, but the particularities and different evolutionary advantages of actual species weren't accurately replicated, more like a reconstitution from hearsay than a clone.

Orenji, though, was the one that posed real questions. He was conspicuous and liked attention (who would want to expose the essence of what they truly are so brazenly? Flaunt their vulnerable insides like there was no tomorrow). He also had no reticence in engaging with humans, and the antics that had been amusing when practiced on academy teachers would be decidedly less so when he was the victim. Shikako kept him stuck to her body with chakra when they fought, a good choice given that he had very limited mobility otherwise. The interesting part, though, were the warnings. He spoke to her in code, so the actual content was indiscernible, but Kakashi would swear he was predicting his blows out loud. Including the one that was meant to be a surprise attack, using his speed to truly pound in the difference in their levels of competence. Now that could be very worthwhile talent. Daemons weren't really animals, but they did mimic their characteristics. Yuuna had excellent motion vision, despite not needing to hunt her food. His own Rumi's pelt was shaded for camouflage. The real question was how would something like Orenji survive in the wild? Social but deliberately provocative, very limited range of motion and defence, all of it short-range. But if it was able to predict attacks before they were even fully imagined, let alone put into practice, like some sort of plant-based Sharingan...now that might just explain how such a species could develop and thrive.

Chapter End Notes

Plants in Naruto can use chakra in cannon in pretty weird ways: eg this one plant that could basically read minds and replicate the behaviour of someone you feared to get you to leave that essentially turned into a pollen copy of Gaara. Makes it easy enough to draw the wrong conclusions.

Tasty tangents

Chapter Summary

You can solve the crisis readily enough but just beware: the consequences have only barely started.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's been two days since Shikako left on her C-rank and Shikamaru is all worn out from training in the typical Konoha heat, making the road home seem interminable. The house is too silent without Orenji's frequent and boisterous contributions. He'd gradually learnt Japanese, but refused to even attempt a disjointed conversation with an outsider- apparently, it contributes to his 'mystique'. But Orenji does occasionally speak with the rest of them.

It's clear that his mom likes it: having pun-filled conversations while she's making dinner and Shikamaru's working on homework. Shikamaru remembers seeing her twirling a plate through the air, Orenji screaming and whooping with excitement as he flew through the air-it made her feel better to see him enjoying himself so much when there was nothing she could do about Shikako burning up in her bed.

She won't look him or dad in the eye as she digs into another segment of deliciously fresh and fragrant orange. He always feels guilty indulging. But oranges are just amazing-all sweet and crisp and refreshing, juicy and tart, sometimes he just can't help himself. Shikako left on her C-rank two days ago and he's returned from a long day of training to find his parents seated at the kitchen table in front of a bounty of orange varieties. He slips into his own seat and starts peeling.

They all know that they're pigging out now, right after Shikako set out, so that by the time she's back the guilt would have somewhat faded (the first time Orenji saw someone eating an orange, he yelled and cringed. Because Orenji can feel pain. He tries to cast it out of his mind and just enjoy the moment, but it'll come right back the second he sees his sister again).

You don't eat stuff that matches the shape your soul takes: it's one of the taboos that a society where people were so closely associated with specific animals developed. The first time he'd seen his parents eat an orange he'd been horrified and judged them harshly, if silently. He'd refused the offered slice and distanced himself mentally. The notion of eating something so similar in appearance to his twin's soul had been repulsive. Except he'd had a glass of orange juice at Choji's house a couple of months later-just gulped it down, without knowing what was in it, and the taste had hit him like a punch. Even finding out the main ingredient hadn't been enough to put him off. The next time his sister was at a sleepover he joined his parents in what had by this point become a ritual.

Fruit is... complicated, in their home.

Orenji is quite unlike other daemons. Most blatant is the fact that he doesn't match Shikako's development-because of differences in length of childhood across species, it was expected that the daemon adapt to the state of the human-so a kitten would not grow into a cat until their human reached adolescence. Orenji came into the world perfectly ripe and remained frozen in time. The language thing was a little more worrying if you actually stopped to think about it. Because it seemed to suggest that Orenji came from somewhere else, that he had an independent existence before becoming a daemon, and that was pretty uncomfortable philosophical territory.

It took years for the orange to stop addressing other pieces of fruit and expect an answer. It made for a pretty heart-breaking picture-him calling out, getting offended and then worried when they didn't respond and finally rolling up to them only to discover that they were entirely inanimate, Shikako's face scrunching up as she picked him up to soothe him. It was one of the few things that could get the otherwise inexhaustible orange down and what had prompted a young Shikamaru to glue googly eyes and draw a smile on a pear (Orenji's favourite audience) and gift it to his sister. Now older, he could see how easily that gesture could have gone wrong, but it had worked. Well enough that their parents had taken to replacing the pear (that stayed on the nightstand, next to Orenji's little pillow), making it look like the same one had stayed fresh.

Shikamaru knows his father has taken to documenting his sister's situation. He doesn't think she's aware of it and being asked to contribute and betray her trust in even this roundabout way feels wrong. But he still does it, because he understands the necessity of it. Shikako's case is not entirely unique, if the records his father has found are to be believed: if they can count the peach tree princess and Shikako as two documented cases, there have probably been a considerable number of others who were lost to time(1). And since daemon types are linked quite strongly to family, there's a fair chance someone in the clan would at one point find themselves in a very similar situation. So Shikaku is doing his best to give the future members of the clan the knowledge their family had lacked and had to struggle to learn: that there was historical precedent, no need to cart this one off to the labs; that Orenji could sometimes change location if no one was looking at him (and hadn't that been a doozy to try to prove), that you had to consider what fruit and vegetables made it to the table if you didn't want your sister to have nightmares about the knife that cut her to pieces, just like it had done to all her friends beforehand.

Shikako is leery of anyone looking too closely into her relationship with Orenji: it's understandable, given the scrutiny she's under-the hundreds of curious eyes that follow her wherever she goes sometimes make him want to shrug off his skin, and she has to deal with it constantly. Doubtlessly her own account would add a lot to the research (more of a guide, really) they've been compiling, but she would either refuse or, if she felt she would be pressured into doing it either way, do a half-assed job to protect her privacy-a big concern

with all daemon relationships (the rapport between you and your soul is not one people are keen to expose), but with her special situation, it's obvious there are layers everyone is missing. A false or misleading account would do more harm than good. And Shikamaru can almost see the little kid that's going to need this someday. He can extend them the same sort of empathy that went out to all of his clan members, even the ones he didn't know personally. There's kinship to be gained from their circumstances and this little future Nara (or maybe Akimichi or Yamanaka or even one of the other clans if Konoha kept getting closer) might not have the benefit of a wonderful support system that he and Shikako were lucky enough to be born into. They might have to figure things out for themselves under the laser gaze of the public, so a head-start is the least he can give them.

Chapter End Notes

(1) Shika, your reasoning is sound, but in this case, nope, it just so happens that they are the only ones ever and also both aliens ￣_('▽)_／

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