

DWARFKIN – DWARVES AND GNOMES IN THE UNION PLAYER’S HANDOUT

JERRY ACORD

1 AUGUST 1998

1 Introduction

There are three major dwarven kingdoms in the known lands of Feorha: the Kingdoms in Exile of Arvad, Huzoth, and Ukharit. One gnomish country exists — the Kadesh Commonality — along with the Ligden Hush, an autonomous gnomish province in the Union of Fenwyck and Waer.

2 In the beginning...

Gnomes and dwarves (*dwarfkin*) share the common belief that both races (viewed by one another as “cousins”) were forged by their creator god, Ghodesh (literally “the forger”). Also referred to as the Great Maker, Ghodesh crafted runes and gave the gift of language to the dwarfkin. The runic alphabet and ancient holy tongue are sacred, and are considered to be what sets the dwarfkin apart from the base animals (some hold the parochial view that this makes humans, goblins, and all other non-dwarfkin no better than dogs — but they are typically outvoiced by those who point out that non-dwarfkin, too, possess language and letters, even if they’re different). Although worship centers on the Great Maker, dwarfkin also pay homage to Kur Suda, who is frequently equated with Feorha, a mother goddess or nature spirit.

Ghodesh is benevolent, stern, and just, the creator of the runes and language, supreme crafter and great maker. Kur Suda reigns over life and death, the plants and animals on land, in the sea, and in the air. Together they represent order and law, both in the sense of “civilization” and nature. Opposing them is Kurgaan, the agent of chaos, the corruptor. Kurgaan’s purpose is interference in the law and order of Ghodesh and Kur Suda: death without rebirth, creation without destruction, stagnation.

3 Great Delvings

As the creation tale goes, long ago the Great Maker, with the permission of Kur Suda, molded from the earth the forefathers of the dwarfkin, and breathed the fire of life into them. They were made lords over the land and its creatures, yet subject to the natural laws of the world. Kurgaan, in his jealousy and hatred, meddled with various creatures until he produced the *odak*, a violent, bloodthirsty race. Where the dwarfkin created and built, the odak destroyed and razed.

The dwarfkin lived as best they could under the circumstances, constantly wary of the odak, sometimes surviving in harsh conditions. The dwarfkin became a hardy race, and slowly prospered. Kurgaan conspired with firey demons to rain destruction down upon

the dwarfkin, and the sun grew blisteringly hot, blighting the land. But the dwarves and gnomes moved underground, into great natural and artificial caverns, grand kingdoms under the mountains. The odak, perishing by the thousands under the rain of fire, fought their way into the dwarfkin's underground strongholds.

A great slaughter of dwarves, gnomes, and odak ensued, and the slow-reproducing dwarfkin seemed doomed by the apparently endless deluge of odak pressing into their tunnels. But there was hope: explorers had found deep natural passages leading to distant lands — far away, *hospitable* lands where the sun shone but did not burn. The Great Delvings were constructed, and the host of dwarfkin made the arduous journey to their new homes. They found the lands already partially occupied by a new race, humans, and sent emissaries. They also warned of the odak threat — indeed, although they sealed the Delvings against the hordes, one Delving was lost to them, and the odak arrived to despoil the new found lands of what the humans called Feorha. These black-hearted creatures of depravity were named “orcs” by the humans.

4 Gnomish diaspora

After the arrival of the dwarfkin on Feorha, the gnomes in the Kingdoms in Exile existed as a minority amongst their more numerous dwarven cousins. In the wake of the fall of the Minrosi Empire at the end of the Third Lunarum and the rise of new countries from its ashes, a movement was started amongst the gnomish diaspora to found their own homeland, a movement which was strengthened by the peculiar psyche of the gnomish race.

Soon the gnomish diaspora began to converge upon the hilly country between the Sea of Dreams and the Rodor. They called their new home Kadesh, from the gnomish word meaning “wrought anew.” In III 130 the Kadesh Commonality was declared, and at last the gnomes had their own country, more than one thousand years after the Great Delvings were closed. Like the dwarven kingdoms, Kadesh has a king; he is, however, chosen by consensus of clan leaders.

5 The Orkwar

In III 350, a war of extermination was declared against the entire orc race, after the brother of the King of Ukharit and the Patriarch of Kadesh were killed by orkish forces. Over the next fifty years, every dwarf and gnome on Feorha was on the constant lookout for orcs, and the entire armies of the dwarven and gnomish lands were mobilized first to rout the orkish armies, then hunt the survivors down to extinction. The final battles were fought on the Anvil Isthmus, where the orcs retreated into the hills and mountains.

In the aftermath of the war, a horrible plague swept through Feorha, originating in the Anvil Isthmus, and carried home by returning soldiers. Some say this was the result of a powerful curse cast upon the dwarfkin by the last dying orc on Feorha. By III 400, the Anvil Isthmus was almost completely deserted, and within a decade the populations of all the lands around the Sea of Dreams were cut in half or worse — with the strange exception of the goblins and hobgoblins.

6 Union — The New Commonality

After the Orkwar, life gradually returned to the Anvil Isthmus. The remnants of the Feowher tribes on the isthmus, calling themselves the Frowen, slowly recovered. Gnomish military outposts in the Ligden Hush turned into havens which became prosperous towns. Watland and the Zootenrijk colonized the isthmus around III 700, and with them their inherited Minrosi culture finally returned to the Anvil.

The Ligden Hush, while nominally allied with the Kadesh Commonality, was separated from Kadesh physically by the goblin kingdom of Adzeka'adzek and socially by centuries of post-orkwar history. They had close ties to the Frowen and the colonists, and were on good terms with the Adzeku — in short, they had no need for Kadesh.

When the two human colonies seceded from their royal masters and war was once more brought to the Anvil, the gnomes of the Ligden Hush made a decision which would have far-reaching consequences: they sided with and aided the colonists, whom they had grown to respect and even accept as part of an extended family. The concept of the Union of Fenwyck and Waer, incorporating the two human colonies, and the Ligden Hush and goblin Smoke Wood as autonomous provinces, gave rise to a movement among the gnomes known as the New Commonality: a nation of different races and cultures who nonetheless can live and work together cooperatively, resulting in a collective far superior to the mere sum of its parts.

7 Psychology

Gnomes and dwarves share many common traits, including a proclivity for craft skills; but they also have unique strengths and weaknesses. Whereas dwarves are physically stronger, gnomes are slightly more adept at craftwork. Gnomes are a very friendly and hospitable race, who love nothing more than to get together with scores of friends and relatives to eat, drink, and be merry, and they tend to become agitated and restless when left alone. They have a strong group work ethic. Dwarves tend to be both miserly and greedy. They are hard workers and have a strong sense of order and honor, but they also know how to have a good time. They view their gnomish cousins as a little too frivolous (but family nonetheless).

8 Languages

Three languages and two alphabets are native to the dwarfkin. The ancient runic alphabet and holy tongue are studied by priests and scholars; nearly every dwarfkin who is literate will have at least a basic knowledge of the religious tongue and runes. The other alphabet is used for writing the dwarven tongue. The dwarven tongue is *Ukhar*, and the gnomish tongue is *Ghadaez* (which most humans mistakenly call “Kadesh” after the country). The two tongues are related; but Ghadaez also shares many traits with the human tongue Wattish. During the time of the diaspora, many gnomes spoke the tongue of their more numerous dwarven and human hosts. Over the centuries after the founding of the Kadesh Commonality, the gnomes gradually developed their own dialect, which they called simply Ghadaez (“the tongue”). Gnomes use the common human alphabet when writing, although some older texts can be found written in the common dwarven script.

In the Ligden Hush, the autonomous gnomish province in the Union of Fenwyck and Waer, all gnomes speak Ghadaez, and quite a few speak Wattish (a human tongue). There are a few dwarven communities in the Hush; most dwarves will speak a dialect of Ukhar and either Ghadaez or Wattish (or a smattering of both), depending upon their neighbors.

Gnomish names are a bit more diverse than dwarven names, drawing not only from the shared heritage of the dwarfkin, but also from their human neighbors. Frequently, dwarves and gnomes will choose a second name to use among humans, one either easier to pronounce, or which is a translation from their native tongue, or which is derived from their occupation. When choosing a traditional dwarfkin name for a player character, think of an ancient Semitic or Sumerian or Assyrian root name or word, and if desired metamorphose it with some twists and turns. Some examples: Barabat, Heliat, Kozan, Nefud, and Teshuva. Look also to dwarfkin place names for direction: Arvad, Huzoth, Ukharit, Kadesh, Gozan Kozd, Ibze Kopan.

9 Religious practice & culture

The runic alphabet, the numbers associated with the runes, the ancient holy tongue and texts constitute an area of reverential study. This study is thought to reveal ancient secrets, answer mysteries, provide guidance and wisdom, and show the true nature of Ghodesh.

Gnomish and dwarven priests (*khabalot*, singular *khabalar*, literally “cabbalists”) have the responsibility of studying the runes and texts, and to guide the community based on the knowledge and wisdom they glean. Dwarfkin priests come from all walks of life. The highest gnomish religious figure is the Patriarch of Kadesh, and indeed he is even respected and revered by the dwarves (who themselves have no religious figurehead). Priests differ from other citizens only in their devotion to religious enlightenment and scholarly study, and are respected for their efforts.

Craftwork figures highly in dwarfkin culture and religion, and craftsmen are always respected and well-trained. It is common for those capable of spell-casting to be recruited into a craft in order to use their gift for enchantments. Indeed, because of the intimate connection between craftwork and creation, nearly every *khabalot* is a master craftsman of some sort who seeks perfection of form and function in his work.

The role of women in dwarfkin society is largely limited to the home and family life, although this is changing somewhat, especially among the gnomes of the Union.

Upon death, a dwarf or gnome must be buried in the earth or (preferably) under stone. “From earth they were wrought, and to it shall they return.” At the end of days, there will be a final battle, and all the dead shall awaken and join Ghodesh in glorious triumph over all the enemies of the dwarfkin.

All dwarfkin practice what is essentially the same religion; it also does not accept converts, and is therefore not evangelical. Dwarfkin make no claim that Ghodesh and Kur Suda are the only gods or great spirits or what have you; surely others exist, and they have their own chosen peoples and followers and religions. This is the nature of things, and should be at least tolerated. Some gnomes, being more open-minded than their dwarven cousins (dwarves would claim to be more steadfast in their convictions), have started religious movements in the Union which seek some kind of common ground between the various sentient races.

10 Racial templates

Dwarf racial template

ST+2 (20 pts), Fatigue +2 (6 pts), Natural DR 1 (3 pts), Extra Encumbrance (5 pts), Longevity (5 pts), Hard to Kill +1 (5), Greedy (-15), Miserly (-10), Reduced Move -1 (-5), racially learned skill Axe/Mace at DX+1 (4pts), Merchant at IQ (2), +2 to all Craft skills (12 pts), -2 w/ all missile weapons (0), suspicious of Goblins (-1), never shave beards (-1), never forget a favor or an injury (-1).

Total: 29 pts.

Standard GURPS package: replace favor/injury quirk with “hate orcs”, add Extended Lifespan, boost Craft Skill bonus to +3, and the total cost is 40 points.

Gnome racial template

Natural DR 1 (3), Extra Encumbrance (5), Fatigue +1 (3), Hard to Kill +1 (5), Longevity (5), Reduced Move -1 (-5), don't like to live underground (-1), never forget a favor or injury (-1), trim beards close (-1), +3 to all Craft skills (18), Gluttonous (-5), Chummy (-5).

Total: 21 pts.

Standard GURPS package: remove Gluttonous and Chummy; replace +3 to all Craft skills w/ +4 to all Craft skills not involving metalworking or engineering; total cost 25.