

Devorak **Backstory**

Species: Lizardfolk, a la *Dungeons & Dragons*

Sex: ♂

Age: 25

Height: 6ft 6in

Weight: 220lbs

Description: Yellow eyes, blue dorsal fins, orange skin

Siblings: 2 brothers who hatched during the previous season.

Profession: Druid. Can speak to/command animals, shape-shift, perform spells, and fight

Worldbuilding Notes

Lizardfolk highly value the reproduction of their species. As a result of this, almost all new lizardfolk babies are wanted and eagerly anticipated by their parents. Lizardfolk celebrate the laying and hatching of eggs, and their culture implicitly places a high value on the mothers of unhatched or young lizards. They and their offspring are given priority in being protected by the group.

Breeding among the lizardfolk happens in seasons, and as a result, so does hatching. Often, around 50 eggs are ready to hatch at the same time. When a mass-hatching is scheduled, all the females of the tribe gather in a private, heavily-protected space to prepare for the hatching.

Pairing for the sake of reproduction happens in two different ways, and lizardfolk couples don't generally stay together for very long before deciding which they want to do. If they wish to do neither, they part ways. One is marriage, in which two lizardfolk (traditionally one male and one female) team up so that the male supports the female and the female produces a hatchling. Then there is mating, where the two lizardfolk mate to produce a hatchling but are both free to support, or receive support from, other lizardfolk. Mated pairs may trade their children with other mated couples, so it is not unusual for a hatchling to be raised by lizardfolk other than its biological parents.

All of this produces an optimal system in which to allocate resources to raising offspring. Female lizardfolk are expected to help with child-rearing on a full-time basis, whether they have children of their own or not. Infant lizardfolk can be challenging to manage, so the more hands and eyes are available to watch over them and keep them from straying into danger, the better!

The lizardfolk have a god named Semuanya. Semuanya is either defined as male or female, depending on why he or she is being invoked. During peaceful times she is seen as female and is gives the lizardfolk the desire to mate and the strength to raise their children. During wartime, he is considered the "Watcher and Seeker" who bestowed superior hunting and fighting skills on the people.

Male lizardfolk don't generally live as long as the females, partly on account of their role of protecting the rest of the tribe. Given the lizardfolk's culture of 'one for all,' males often try to die close to the tribe so that the tribespeople can eat their bodies, thereby providing them with a meal. This ritual also emphasizes their philosophy of living on in every surviving member of the tribe.

Overall, the lizardfolk have a conservative outlook on life, which helps them to maintain groupthink and to work together as a cohesive team, and are prone to consider themselves as superior to other species.

Devorak's tribe in particular lives in a swamp. Despite them having settled in one area they are not farmers, but hunter-gatherers.

Devorak is an original character based on the lizardfolk from *Dungeons & Dragons*. He had more difficulty than most of his tribesmates in accepting tribal life, and wanted, from a young age, to travel beyond his swamp. He achieved this and led an adventurous life. He also grew up to become a Druid so developed an affinity for the flora and fauna around him.

Trust & Confidence

(newborn)

Like most lizardfolk, Devorak's parents were delighted to discover that they were expecting a baby, and he (while still in the egg) and his mother enjoyed a time in which her tribe prioritized her and her egg's protection above all else. She and Devorak's father were both nervous about the arrival of their hatchling.

Devorak's mother, like almost all lizardfolk females, was already an experienced baby-wrangler by the time her son was born, so she was able to take his earliest activities in stride.

Of course, Devorak himself was unaware of this while still inside his egg, but when he hatched, he did so into a cultural atmosphere that allowed him to feel confident that he was safe from danger.

Like most lizardfolk hatchlings, he could walk almost from the moment he hatched, and gained the ability to run soon after. He was also hand-fed during his infancy, as was usual for lizardfolk hatchlings, to ensure that he didn't chew too much and choke on his food.

Freedom & Self-Determination

(toddlerhood)

Devorak quickly developed into a headstrong young lizard, eager to explore the world and all it had to offer. In response, his mother and the other females of the tribe worked together to manage him.

This had a stimulating effect on his development. Toddlerhood is a time of discovery when even a small world can seem boundless. And yet, it is also a time when a little one must learn of the dangers of the world and is as naive as could be. This tension between the desire to explore an exciting world and the risks of the said exciting world mean that a toddler can sometimes be restricted from exploring and not truly understand why.

With so many females playing a part in guiding Devorak in this way, he initially saw an opportunity. If one female refused to let him do something, he could always go to another female and say that the first female had permitted him to do what he wanted.

The lizardfolk women were already used to being played off against one another in this way and had wised up to it long before Devorak came along. As a result, he learned that he couldn't get whatever he wanted that way. However, that wasn't to say that playing this game was entirely fruitless. The women were so used to this game that they found it amusing and would good-naturedly tease him about it. Devorak learned to enjoy this as a game in its own right.

Efforts to slip away and wander off to explore the world beyond the lizardfolk's camp after the females had joked about it also failed to get him what he wanted. They were too experienced to be misdirected like this, and sometimes this resulted in Devorak having to be disciplined. Ultimately, he learned that there were ways in which he had to fit in with the wishes of the tribe. He was, as yet, too young to recognize that they were doing so for his safety, but that discovery would come in time.

Devorak found that his parents were similarly strict about him maintaining his safety by living by the wishes of the females that he remains in their sight. However, they were also very nurturing of him, and during his more obedient times, he felt very much loved.

The adults around him also implicitly taught him that his actions - and those of everyone else - were never forgotten. This was not to say that a person who did something bad would be condemned as unable to change, but only that their deeds would be remembered. A person who did something that harmed the group would be graced with others remembering that they had done good deeds in the past, but their misdeed would also be remembered.

Devorak recognized the significance of this and remembered it for life, not least because he saw evidence of the same cultural belief many times throughout his childhood.

Part of the lizardfolk's culture of compliance with the needs of the group was that a lizard would be expected to either keep hold of, or relinquish, depending on what would suit the tribe best. As a result, Devorak learned the lesson that it was not appropriate for him to be possessive nor dismissive.

Ambition

(young childhood)

As Devorak moved on from toddlerhood, he became uneasy about the world beyond the borders of his home. To him, the world beyond was unfamiliar and hid all sorts of dangers. With that said, he was an energetic child and loved to investigate things within the confines of the tribe. He learned to use his wit and manners to get what he wanted from his tribemates. He also learned to manage his emotions better. He learned to overcome disappointments quickly and to work out what he could do in a given situation rather than what he couldn't. He learned to take on new information quickly so that he could start to use it sooner. As he was still very young, this often meant that he used intuitive knowledge rather than rational, objective knowledge, but it worked often enough.

He did learn, however, that he often had to think and act faster than felt natural for him. There were many youngsters for the tribeswomen to look after, and as the little ones became more demanding of their time, they became less able to indulge the slower or more day-dreamy youngsters and had to get them to hurry up.

This became a point of discomfort for Devorak. He liked to be thorough - perhaps because he wanted to explore the wider world but couldn't as a toddler, and as a small child no longer dared, so decided instead to be more thorough in his exploration of the land on which his tribe lived. He liked to explore everything and take the time to consider what he had found, so being hurried along left him tense.

There was little he could do to resist being hurried, so instead, he found another way: by making up little projects of his own - art, perhaps, or feats of writing or math - and keeping them to himself until he felt ready to show them off. Sometimes he would never do so, but if nothing else, this allowed him to regain his autonomy in working at his own pace.

Devorak picked up on a culture of competition within his tribe. Survival had a competitive element in and of itself, so as such was encouraged among the young lizards. As a result, Devorak hated losing in games with other youngsters. By contrast, he loved to win and was encouraged to celebrate his victories.

Productivity

(older childhood)

Occasionally Devorak would see warriors visiting from nearby towns. He was impressed with their power, demeanor, and their ability to travel beyond their own tribes, and he developed a habit for playing "warrior," either alone or with other children.

And yet, he already found that he had less time for play. As Devorak grew older, he was given responsibilities that would allow him to contribute to the well-being of the tribe. One of these was hunting. During an early hunting trip, his hunting party went in search of rabbits. They found a burrow of them, began the hunt, and isolated one for Devorak to try hunting by himself.

They instructed him to spear it, so he did.

The death of that rabbit had a powerful impact on Devorak. At that moment, he became acutely aware that he had the power to take life away from another creature or allow it to live. He was horrified by this, all the more so for the fact that he could not simply choose to opt-out of future hunting trips.

He continued to hunt but felt monstrous for doing so.

His desire to be able to allow the creatures he hunted to live was not only borne of horror at the act of killing. Devorak began to notice an affinity with animals, and as he was bid to continue learning to hunt, he began to wish that he could escape the situation. In particular, he began to fantasize about turning invisible. This would allow him to go unnoticed by the tribesmen who demanded that he kill animals, and would also make it easier for him to get closer to those animals and enjoy their presence.

Among his other tasks was the making of weapons for hunting. Perhaps another child would have disliked having to make more weapons to kill animals, and perhaps Devorak himself did. However, he coped with this by using them as toys. After making such a weapon, he would play warrior with it for a while before handing it over to an older member of the tribe.

One day he asked his mother for more information about the visiting warriors. He was fascinated with the idea that they left their tribe and did important things - brave things! - away from their homes. She told him that they were strong men who protected the queen and princess in the nearby city and that they were strong enough to visit Devorak's home and protect the lizardfolk there too.

From then on, Devorak dreamed of being one of those strong men who protected princesses and the people he loved in the swamp and went all over the world. But this was not a dream that most of the other lizardfolk in his tribe had any interest in. They preferred to keep to themselves and on their own land.

By the time he reached puberty, he had already begun to hate the experience of living in such a conservative, controlling, and isolationist culture.

That is not to say, however, that Devorak didn't like to cooperate, or had a problem with doing so. Cooperation was essential in his culture, and overly controlling day-to-day routines aside, the idea of working together towards a common goal sat well with Devorak. At this age, it was common for parents and tribe elders to send children on errands by themselves, and this allowed Devorak to learn to cooperate with other children without feeling too controlled. Without the grown-ups looking over his shoulder, this became a way for him to make his peace with the idea of cooperation and the delay of gratification.

He also found other ways to cooperate without feeling overly controlled. He loved fishing, crafting, and foraging, so he did as much of these things as he could, and as little as possible of the hunting. He also made the best use he could of his hunting training to hone the kinds of skills he imagined warriors to have.

Devorak listened to the conversations and gossip of the other lizardfolk and learned that there were others in his tribe who felt a similar wanderlust to him. As he listened more, he learned that they were allowed to leave if only they returned with knowledge or goods for the leader. Devorak wanted to meet with these lizards. With the culture of his tribe being what it was, he understood that he would have to prove himself to them, and this fed his desire to be an exceptional member of the tribe to the point that it became an obsession.

Child to Adult Transition *(adolescence)*

As puberty set in for Devorak, and his body and mind started to streamline into one, more cohesive whole, he came to realize that his hunting and foraging sessions brought up a new emotion from deep within. He discovered a resurgence of his childhood disdain of killing, a feeling that he had hoped had been nothing more than naivete that he had been able to overcome.

For a while, he thought he was losing his mind. Whenever he became tired, he would become aware of dozens of conversations happening inside his head, and he found this unsettling too. He attempted to overcome this by joking to himself that it was just the mice talking.

Ultimately, he was unable to ignore these feelings and confided in his parents. Then they did something he didn't expect: their eyes lit up, they praised Semuanya and embraced him! They explained that he was showing signs of becoming a Druid. This was major news

for him: Druids were seen as symbols of lizardfolk spirituality and could become leaders.

Devorak had already been respected by others of his age group, as he was hard-working and skilled, but this news that he was turning into a Druid led them to respect him all the more. It also drew the interest of older Druids of the tribe.

His budding identity as a Druid, along with the advent of puberty, made Devorak's life at this time quite turbulent, so at this time he focused on other truths to center himself: namely that all of the other young lizards of his age were also discovering their blessings, and that no matter what anyone lizard's blessing was, they were expected to work in harmony for the benefit of the tribe. Whenever he felt as if his new, emerging self was running away with him, he would remember this and feel calm again.

As a lizardfolk, Devorak's in-group dynamics were somewhat alien to those of a human. Despite the insular nature of his tribe's society, his community was very much that: one, big community. There were too many lizardfolk to all know one another personally. Still, it was accepted that one would invite others, including strangers, to take part in recreational activities, or to cook and dine together. The fluidity of this dynamic meant that Devorak considered almost every other lizard in his community a friend of sorts. Although, of course, it was not impossible for any lizard to have an agenda, and Devorak's was to become close with the tribe's travelers.

He continued to put in an effort to fulfill this agenda.

Devorak's role models were Semuanya and the king of his tribe.

Regarding romantic and sexual relationships, Devorak recognized that his desire to wander would make him a poor father, so at this age, he decided to seek an attractive female to mate with before he departed.

Closeness in Relationships

(young adulthood)

Devorak did indeed go on his travels. Despite his misgivings about the restrictive nature of his tribe's culture, he remained loyal to them and returned from time to time.

His mate was a female from his training class. They had spent a lot of time together, and she had been attracted to his skill in hunting. In turn, he appreciated how well trained she was, and felt that she was capable of keeping their hatchling alive while he was absent. She duly produced a hatchling and found other lizardfolk to support her as she raised her and Devorak's hatchling. The well-being of his family was crucial to Devorak, and he was pleased to see his child grow up. For him, having another lizardfolk raise his child was no intrusion, as that is the way the lizardfolk behave as a tribe.

Other lizardfolk of his tribe expressed concern that Devorak would forget his cultural roots and find somewhere more comfortable to settle down, but he didn't. Wherever he went, Devorak represented the lizardfolk's culture to the best of his ability.

He met many "softskins" (non-lizardfolk) during his travels but didn't tend to affiliate with them as well as he did with others of his own kind. Over the years, he learned how to develop companionships with non-lizardfolk, but always preferred the company of animals

or other lizards.

Devorak loved to work! For him, work meant proving his worthiness to the other lizardfolk and helping them to survive. He also enjoyed scavenging, hunting, and roaming - all things that helped him to provide for himself, wherever he went. Aside from the validation of knowing that he had helped his tribe, he also enjoyed direct rewards: food, small treasures, and other useful resources.

Devorak is currently in the earlier part of this life stage. He is content with his life for now but likes the idea of returning to his tribe one day, marrying, and settling down. Until then, while he is mostly absent, he has decided against having any more hatchlings, as this would burden the tribe.

Passing on Responsibilities

(older adulthood)

Devorak cannot guarantee that he will survive long enough to become an elder, but that is what he would like to do if he does survive. What he would most like to do is to return to his tribe in a few years (or perhaps decades) time with a wealth of knowledge, wisdom, and other resources to ensure the survival of the tribe. Further than that, he hopes to improve the next generation of lizardfolk.

He doesn't have any specific plans for his offspring, although he cares for them deeply. In lizardfolk culture, the children are everyone's responsibility, so as such, he believes that if he provides something of value to all of the children of his tribe, then his will also benefit. In the meantime, they are well taken care of by the present tribespeople.

End of Life

(old age)

Many male lizardfolk die protecting their tribe or children, and Devorak is aware that this may be his fate too. He has a similar approach to his death as he has to many areas of his life, and that is that he intends to die near to his tribe so that his body can be eaten by them.

Credits

Based on theory by:

Erikson, E., (1951) 'Childhood and Society', W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. chapter 7.

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~Hayley, The Character Consultancy