

## **Grukkal** **Backstory**

**Species:** Dragon. Of mixed parentage between a Western Mountain Dragon Father (Hiryon) and an Eastern Forest Dragon Mother.

**Description:** Lithe, with dark purple scales. Blue eyes. Can shape-shift between a feral and anthro form.

**Sex:** ♂

**Age:** 30

**Height:** 6ft 0in in anthro form but varies

**Weight:** 170lbs but can vary

**Siblings:** None, although he saw the clutch-mates in his nursery as similar to siblings

**Skills:** Minor magic, including the use of pocket dimensions

**Weaknesses:** Finds flight difficult compared to the other dragons

### **Cultural Notes**

Dragons in Grukkal's culture have a legal system and are very hierarchical.

Dragons trade treasure, and keep position. Only stupid or desperate dragons trade position for treasure.

Mountain Dragons are, except amongst themselves, the largest 'predator' around. They live a very very long time, so their opinions tend to be quite deeply set. Not least because when they think deeply on something they can devote their attention to it completely for days, maybe longer. Being effectively cold blooded and very intermittent eaters, breaks for food and sleep are optional. The same with determination. If they set their mind to something, mere obstacles are only temporary. But it takes a lot to get them moving. Perhaps even to the point of being lazy. The older ones are worse. Like all things that have lived a long time, they have seen things panning out over time, So there's no rush to do something today. They can be dismissive of small inconveniences which are serious to others. If something will blow over in a few years why worry about it? That said, they respect consequences. They instinctively understand the principle of compound interest. A little effort repeated over a very long time leads to massive changes. Plant a tree, and they can see its fruit become an orchard.

There is one simple reason why biological time passes so slowly amongst the Mountain dragons; for such a large creature they effectively eat nothing at all. A goodly part of their lives is spent, not asleep, but resting in curious lines on the mountain ridges drawing life directly out of the air around the poldur trees. Although nobody was quite sure if they were drawing sustenance from the tree itself or sharing whatever the trees were drawing their life from, it is one reason that the Mountain dragons are so set on territories, position and prestige. They derive their sustenance from the ambient magic of the mountain areas, and vie

for the rights to live in areas where the magic is denser which are handily marked out by poldur trees.

### **Poldur Trees**

According to the curious mix of folklore and observation the poldur trees were the most ancient, and certainly the most long lived form of life in their known world. They were a mystery to those who pondered on such things. They were unlike any other plant anywhere. They changed little. They never shed a leaf even in the bitterest winters, or the hottest of summers. Perhaps the leaves may vary in colour according to a pattern known only to the tree that bore them, but the trees themselves were more durable than stone. Not by means of having exceptional toughness like the Staffwoods of the East, or the flexibility of the valley trees, but by simply being unchanging. Wherever a poldur tree decided to grow, it would grow to be an unchanging shape. If a branch was broken off, the tree would replace the missing branch with an identical one. Twig for twig, leaf for leaf the new branch would be the exact replacement of the missing limb.

It was as if that on maturity the tree would decide it had reached the ultimate shape and would spend the rest of time maintaining that perfection. Poldur trees are typically to be found growing on small hills or ridges where their branches have prevented weathering of the soil or even stone on which they stand. Occasionally trees where the ground under them has become completely washed away will fall over and the tree will begin the laborious process of growing back into it's true vertical shape. Growing new branches as the old branches crumble swiftly away, until eventually it would be impossible to tell the tree had ever fallen over at all.

Aside from being a mystery, the poldur trees had a great effect on the creatures that lived amongst them. Having grown up amongst them since time immemorial, their bodies seemed to require something from the tree to stay healthy. It would take many years of absence from the mountains and the poldur trees to make the eyes dim and the heart begin to flutter, but the process is inevitable and not entirely reversible in the later stages. It was the limited range of the poldur tree that kept the people that depend on it from spreading across the world. Where there is no poldur tree there could be no Mountain dragons. Other varieties of dragons may run on other sources of energy, but the Mountain dragons need the ambient magic that sustains and is emitted by the poldur trees.

Everything in the Mountain dragons' existence takes place in a scale of time that can barely be comprehended by most of the inhabitants of the valleys below. A dragon egg takes a year to hatch, and maybe another eighty before the dragons will admit the hatchling is no longer simply the child of its parents, but a person in his or her own right. It might be another hundred years before the dragon even begins to take what these dragons consider a serious interest in the opposite sex and, if after a courtship that takes place at approximately the speed of melting

glaciers, it will be decades before fertile eggs are produced and the cycle begins again.

Despite having the longest and slowest of all the animal life cycles in the world, the Mountain dragons are not slow or lumbering creatures. Up in the mountains amongst the poldur trees their processes of thought and even their movement can be startlingly fast to any brave visitor from the valleys below.

Their culture has grown somewhat since they were lizards fighting for places on a mountainside, replacing brute force with legal wrangling for example, but the idea of position above all is woven into their makeup.

One way of securing position is for a mated pair to become an 'Elder Pair'. Such a pair enjoy more political power, can claim better locations where the magic is denser so they may live longer, and are generally considered the aristocracy of the Mountain Dragon Society. However, they must meet certain criteria.

For instance, a dragon who has been a nurse can never be half of an Elder Pair, allegedly for two reasons: firstly, that a case of a nurse Elder many generations ago ate other dragons' hatchlings, and secondly, Nurses have seen the highest of society at their most weak and vulnerable, and are considered unable to give the high and mighty of society their **due respect**. Nurses are secretly held in a mixture of awe and fear - they can make their old proteges feel small with a look and a tone of voice, so couldn't possibly be allowed in the chambers of decision making as they would have 'unearned' authority.

It takes a long time for a dragon egg to hatch, and the very young dragons are quite demanding so the better off dragons can pay someone to do the work for them. Dragons treasure their offspring even if they do not necessarily cherish them. Males can be nurses if they want to be, but the females are larger and more floofy generally. There might be also be some bias towards female nurses to in terms of simple proof - they can start out by raising their own offspring, which adds to their perceived experience. There is prestige amongst different nurses - so the longest time in grade is going to be expensive. A dragon won't pay out much for a nurse that hasn't raised several clutches and proved her trustworthiness and worth.

Dragon hatchlings are very energetic, mobile, and can move fairly fast from the moment they hatch (although they cannot fly until they reach adolescence). They also instinctively hunt; there are no mice in a nest of hatchlings. Despite their predatory side, they also like to hide. Nurse dragons have to be very attentive!

Hatchlings do not imprint like birds do, however most hatchlings' first experience is the sight of a nurse dragon looming over them, and then being picked up and held in the warmth and comfort of their floof. Both of these experiences tend to

leave a lasting impression that can be overlooked, given how common it is, but give dragons a bias towards self-preservation. Some become more individualistic as a result of this out of wariness of the nurse looming over them, while others develop a strong social awareness as they keenly interact with the dragon, so much bigger than them, who has picked them up. This keen social awareness can manifest in all sorts of different ways depending on the hatchling's later experiences.

It is not uncommon for dragons have a talent for magic, but it is not ubiquitous.

Dragons can ask their seniors for apprenticeships. Generally, apprentices are retained until the apprentice reaches maturity, which can be several decades, all the way up to around a century in some cases, so it is not a decision that masters take lightly.

Dragons age at a much slower rate than humans, with their adolescence spanning several decades. For this reason, the adolescence stage of Grukka's development is very long and seems to include information that might otherwise have counted as young adulthood material.

Grukka is a hybrid between two species of dragon, and lives in a society deeply concerned with status, and within which he was almost inevitably destined to struggle. As a result he is independent, has a keen understanding of power dynamics, and has a grumpy temperament but occasionally betrays a grudgingly caring side.

### **Trust & Confidence**

*(newborn)*

Grukka hatched out of an egg and was looked after from the beginning by a nurse dragon, as is traditional in Grukka's society. He was born unusually dark, which showed that he had a disadvantage when it came to absorbing the atmospheric magic of his mountain home. As a result he had to eat more food more often, and was named accordingly: 'Grukka' is draconic for 'He who is hungry'.

He was looked after very well indeed by the nurse dragons so never felt fearful for his well-being.

He was raised by a group of nurse dragons (who were tasked with looking after entire clutches of eggs and hatchlings), so the parenting he received was of high quality from the start.

## **Freedom & Self-Determination**

*(toddlerhood)*

Grukkal's toddlerhood left a huge impression on his approach to life throughout his lifespan. Toddlerhood is about the discovery of one's autonomy, the ability to move under one's own power and to begin to make decisions that may differ from the wishes of other individuals, even if those decisions are, to the grown-ups, minor ones.

Grukkal grew more slowly than most other dragons due to his problems absorbing magic, and that meant that he had to survive on guile whereas his peers could rely on raw power. He learned how to retaliate when his elders were not watching, especially to bite (as a youngster, his teeth were needle-sharp). Over time he became quite adept at this.

Because he had to look out for his own well-being in this way he developed a very strong bias towards looking after his own interests. Later he would find a balance that helped him to function more effectively in society, but at his core, he always retained a strongly-felt need to make sure he was safe, got acknowledged by others, and got whatever he needed to get by. This meant that he didn't always feel that he had a choice over whether to be cruel or not, so there were times when he would tend towards cruelty either out of necessity or from a desire for catharsis, but as we will see, his longer-term story shows him to be capable of being a kinder dragon than this.

One of Grukkal's favourite stories about himself is the story of a time when he was found hanging onto the ear of another hatchling. He had to be bribed to let go by the nurse dragons.

He endeared himself well to his nurses. While it is true that these dragons were inevitably much bigger than him, it wasn't their size that encouraged him to be more pleasant and compliant (which would have gone long way towards helping him to be endearing). It was their affection, attention, and the love they showed towards him. He particularly liked to climb up and perch on his favourite, Nasha, while she went about her work.

He also learned that being determined often helped him outcompete other, larger dragons. This discovery taught him to be very wilful when he needed something and expected or sensed opposition.

Grukkal might have continued on his 'every dragon for themselves' path if one of the wiser nurses had not had the idea of assigning him as a guardian for a bigger, but more uncertain, hatchling. At first Grukkal tried acting according to the life lessons he had learned, but he soon saw that his new charge was often bullied by others, not just by Grukkal himself. When he realised this, Grukkal quickly came to understand the value of empathy and kindness towards others.

As he realised that others could have problems too, he began to develop his skills as a protector.

That is not to say that he gave up on developing his talent for being wily. In fact, it encouraged him to work on it further, but instead of only looking after himself to the exclusion of all others, he protected others too (for which he still needed to punch above his weight). As a dragon, he had a naturally possessive side, particularly for prestige and position, and this translated as seeing his friend as 'his'. If his charge was attacked, he felt it as an attack on something of his.

Needless to say, with all of this going on Grukka had a very active mind, and as he spent longer in the nursery than most other dragons, he mentally outgrew it before he was allowed to leave. Nasha responded to his boredom by smuggling in books for him to read, that would have been too advanced for others in his group who grew at a more normal rate.

### **Ambition**

*(young childhood)*

As stated in the previous section, Grukka remained in the nursery for longer than most dragons, as his graduation from it would depend on his size and ability to understand right from wrong, not his age. This had two implications. The first was boredom. By this time Grukka found his self-taught lessons in getting the upper hand over others entertaining, and as a result worked hard on developing his skills without feeling like it was work.

The other implication was his relative maturity and life experience compared to the other youngsters. His senior position there gave him a sense of ownership of the space and authority, and his better mental agility, that came with his more advanced mental development and longer life experience, meant that he could anticipate the other youngsters' actions and reactions, and influence them to achieve the results he wanted.

It would not have been out of character for him to have unionised the nursery, if there had been more of a point in doing so. With that said, Grukka's ambitions as a young dragon were to develop his particular social skills, to help him to thrive in a world of immature dragons that favoured muscle over mind, and to use this to protect himself and the dragons he cared about. He didn't have a clear ambition to create order in his world by any means, these were half-conceived ambitions as he was more interested in the here and now, but this was the general direction of his aspirations at the time.

Younger initiates to the nursery generally outgrew the nursery and moved on, so when Grukka eventually graduated from the nursery himself, he went to rejoin many of his old acquaintances in the 'older' group. This was where his earlier

lessons in caring came in helpful. Most of the young dragons he had interacted with (and/or 'led'), and whom he rejoined in this older group, had a generally positive impression of him. Although he had been primarily interested in achieving a positive outcome for himself, he had done so with a certain empathy for the well-being of others, and this meant that he was mainly welcomed into the group.

That isn't to say that everybody was happy to see him, but enough of the young dragons regarded him well that grudges were not a serious issue.

Young children, whatever their species, generally learn important lessons at this life stage about cooperation. Grukkaal learned his cooperation skills well enough to become very adept in the protection and leadership of others by charisma, but did not take on board lessons about teamwork or compliance, or otherwise functioning in a group without drawing attention to himself. It was, of course, hard for him to do so with the hand life had dealt him.

It should be said that he was still undersized for his age, so remained one of the smaller dragons in the older group, but this was no longer a serious problem for him. It meant that he kept on learning the skills that came with influencing others to get his needs met, but by now he felt confident in his ability to do this, which only encouraged him to teach himself more.

Grukkaal's father began to teach him the basics of self-defence at this age. Despite his small size, Grukkaal did very well at this on account of his tenacity. Even his size helped, as he was more agile than bigger dragons. Fighting with bigger dragons had its dangers, but Grukkaal was not deterred by high stakes.

One day a much larger dragon attacked one of Grukkaal's old proteges. Grukkaal stepped in to protect him and the big dragon attacked him too. This was the last thing the big dragon did before he was expelled, and stories of the event circulated among the nursery and Grukkaal came to be known as something of a hero for a while.

As he graduated from this stage in his life, dragons started to suggest that Grukkaal's fearlessness, agility, and strong mind would make him a good candidate for a career in draconic law. Further to this, a dragon pointed out to him that he might want to expand his social and acquaintance groups to include non-dragons, as dragons adept in working with dragon vs. non-dragon interactions were sought after.

## **Productivity**

*(older childhood)*

As Grukkaal grew a little bit older he started to notice the more nuanced quality of

the way dragons functioned, and the longer-term consequences of behaving in this or that way. His brain continued to develop so that he could assess all of this new information.

As a result, Grukka became more considered in how he approached his actions. While it may not be correct to say that he mellowed - he was still subject to the pressures that came with being a smaller dragon - he learned how to observe and understand before he acted. This helped him to fine-tune his skills.

The shift from young child to an older one who was beginning to consider his place in society and future marked a shift in Grukka's relationship with his elders. As he, and they, began to consider his position in society more seriously, they became more like authority figures than guardians, to him.

Grukka did not like this one bit. He liked to achieve things and to feel useful, and to get credit wherever he felt he deserved it - in fact, whenever this happened he made sure he got it - but he didn't like to be ordered around. This felt need to assert his own will undermined his learning of the skills of cooperation and teaming up with others to become productive together, so it held him back in some ways that mattered in his society.

His size began to present a different kind of problem to the 'might is right' sensibilities of baby dragons: his capability to contribute was sometimes explicitly, or implicitly, questioned. As he began to enjoy the feeling of being old enough to contribute, he became more conscious of dragons who treated him as if he was younger and less capable than he was. Sometimes he was given tasks to do that would be considered for baby dragons, and woe betide anybody who tried to do that!

His elders found that getting Grukka to do things was something of a balancing act. This included his tutors. He took careful handling, and of course, his elders were not always prepared to indulge this.

Grukka was still ahead in his studies and paid attention to which of his tutors (rightly or wrongly) were on his wavelength. If a lesson didn't engage him he would wander off to see what was happening elsewhere. As a result he would sometimes be disciplined, although this had varying levels of success. His father was one of the more successful disciplinarians when it came to this: Grukka's education was expensive, so his father would lay down the law to ensure that Grukka to the best out of it.

Grukka made his promises to his father to be more diligent in future, but remained unconvinced that the best lessons could always be learned from a book. Nevertheless, he was a good enough student that he was temporarily invited to help teach the younger dragons. However one day, he was caught teaching them insulting poems about a dragon who had once crossed him. It

transpired that this offending dragon was the son of a judge. Grukkaal was taken off teaching assistant duty and had it pointed out to him that dragons could have very long memories and hold on to grudges, and that he needed to be more subtle in future.

Grukkaal's small size and agile body meant that he could move quietly. He started listening, unseen, to conversations between other dragons in the hope of learning secrets, and this is how he learned who his mother was.

He learned that she was Nasha.

It had always been alluded to that his mother was a high society dragon like his father, so the news came as quite a shock. But it also meant that several pieces fell into place for Grukkaal. This was why she had been his favourite, why it had felt so right nestling into her, and why she had noticed his plight enough to bring him books and to do what she could to make sure he did not feel too stifled in the company of younger, simpler dragons.

He confronted his father about it, to ask why his mother was not part of their household. He made it clear that he still cared for Nasha and had claimed to have adopted Grukkaal. He said nothing about Grukkaal's slow development but pointed out that if it was publicly confirmed that Grukkaal was Nasha's son, it would limit his, and her, opportunities, so it was better kept a secret. Dragons were free to suspect all they wanted, but confirmation would deal damage.

This did not sit well with Grukkaal but he promised not to make a big fuss about this until his father had managed to work out something more permanent.

Then Grukkaal went to Nasha. He could not see why Nasha and his father, Hiryon could not become an Elder Pair. She tried to explain to him that the law stated that nurses were unable to hold high positions in society to prevent them from being able to use their positions to eat minor dragons, and due to the lack of respect afforded to dragons who had worked in a caring role. As Nasha had already been a nurse when she had met Hiryon, he was unable to admit her to the ranks of higher society.

This did not sit well with Grukkaal at all, and formed the basis of his decision that tradition and law was ineffective in preserving justice.

Nasha pleaded with Grukkaal not to disrupt her life at the crèche. She professed that she loved her work and certainly wouldn't give it up for higher status. "After all," she explained, "what do rulers have to do but more homework than anyone else?"

Grukkaal relented.

## **Child to Adult Transition**

*(adolescence)*

With adolescence, Grukka finally caught up in physical growth with his contemporaries.

He continued to be well-regarded by most dragons, and as a result was often allowed to include himself in various activities and conversations. This allowed him to develop a large number of alliances, which suited Grukka very well.

His father made sure to tell him that he should always act in a way that he would be happy to put his name to. Grukka's relatively radical approach did not always fit very well into a draconic society that favoured traditional values and hierarchy, so Hiryon was forever facing an uphill struggle convincing Grukka to truly embrace their society - and behave in a way that would encourage the higher-ranking dragons to genuinely welcome him among their ranks.

With this being Grukka's adolescence, he became more aware of his body. He did not like to fly very much. He was not the most athletic dragon despite his ability to fight, and he found flight to be hard work. He felt more comfortable on the ground.

He also became more aware that he was an unusual colour. While this did not subject him to prejudice, it did make him quickly identifiable.

Grukka had grown up into quite a handsome teenager and had a lot of early success with females. As he and his peers became interested in dating he resorted to his usual approach to competition, which did not sit well with some other dragons, particularly with his way of phrasing things. After all, as a youngster, taunts had been one of his weapons.

His peers had become more socially aware too and the purity of his bloodline was questioned. Before long Grukka found himself being excluded from the more "pure blooded" groups, and that that some female dragons who had previously shown an interest declared they preferred instead to be paired with pure blooded mates.

This infuriated Grukka, and he responded by cutting himself off from female company wherever he could, and also eased himself out from the forefront of his classes. He anticipated that there was little point in a half-blood like him striving for academic success, since pure bloods got the best jobs.

This gave Grukka time and energy to spare. He spent time in the dragon libraries and soon took an interest in magic. He started tinkering with it. As part of his experimentation he found that he could change the size of his body slightly.

At first his skills with changing size bore slight results and were unimpressive, but GrukkaI persisted, and began to see results.

He worked on his skill with flight, too, believing that magic and flight gave him the potential for more power.

When GrukkaI had learned all he could on his own, he asked his father for more tuition. His father pointed him towards an old and patient dragon. This tutor greatly improved GrukkaI's knowledge and skill with magic. GrukkaI became all the more enamoured with the power that magical skill offered.

One day he went to his tutor and asked to be his apprentice. The tutor's answer was, "You have the potential, GrukkaI, but it would be a terrible thing for me to take your youth and dry it out in the towers of magecraft. Go and explore the world and if you still fit under my wings in your studies when you return, I will gladly take you in."

GrukkaI brought this news to his father, who was delighted that GrukkaI had found a way to find his place in the world. He suggested that GrukkaI should travel with his mother back to her homeland to see how another society managed their affairs.

Hiryon and Nasha had been rekindling their romance as Hiryon had begun to feel that his relationship with her was worth more than his status. This change of heart came as a result of some unusual politics among the higher status dragons. For the time being at least, the hierarchical nature of their society was buckling.

One of the most fanatical elders had died, leaving his vast estate to a large family of lower-status dragons. This had happened despite apparent efforts to the contrary. At first glance, the money had not come easy to those low-caste dragons, and they had had to engage in years of legal wrangling that had eaten up an appreciable chunk of the assets being fought for, for them to get their share. It later became apparent that the rich patriarch had had an affair with one of the females of this family after he had become a widower.

This cast doubt over the parentage of some of the higher members of society, and this in turn led to a witch-hunt among nurses, who after all were left in sole charge of sometimes very similar eggs for extended periods of time. Ultimately nothing of lasting impact came of this, but it was against the backdrop of this witch-hunt that Hiryon suggested that Nasha and GrukkaI go travelling.

Nasha had come from the heavily forested Myrvall Mountains, and here, in a far more humble society, GrukkaI found that he was considered to have a great deal of prestige. Visits from the offspring of purebloods was a rarity, and GrukkaI's habit of judging people on their merits instead of their bloodlines made him very

popular.

He and Nasha remained there for a few years, and during this time Grukkaal took medical training. This brought him closer to the edges of society and he became more aware of how they lived. This re-taught him the lesson of how even small kindnesses could make a big difference.

One summer he began to fall in love with one of the local girls. His mother warned him that she may not be the ideal mate, but he refused to listen, mistaking her warning as prejudicial. He fell deeper in love with the girl until he spotted the red flags for himself: she began to cut him off from the friends he had made at Myrvall, and to push him to take her with him back to the city. This was when he realised that she was more interested in status than love.

This damaged his confidence in relationships for a while and he had no more of them during his stay in Myrvall. At around the same time he found that he had learned almost everything he could, according to his immature understanding, during this time with his mother and began to feel restless to return to the city.

Unbeknownst to him, the political situation at home was worsening. The power vacuum left behind by the patriarch had not been filled and the more powerful dragons were still vying for the position.

During his time at Myrvall, Grukkaal had continued to hone his magic skills, increasing his range and his capacity to change size. He had also learned, much to his shock, that dragons could be turned black in punishment for dracocide by ancient means. This prompted him to teach himself how to brighten his colour temporarily if desired. However at heart he remains proud of his deep colouration. He feels that it suits him.

Like many dragons he could quickly shift from feral to anthro form and back again, so he felt ready to start interacting with non-dragons.

He returned briefly to the city to find the political situation was worsening, especially for an obvious hybrid, and he asked a favoured tutor for some advice about what to do next. As much as he had enjoyed his time in Myrvall he needed to explore more and, given his tenuous and potentially vulnerable position in the city's political world, to begin securing his future.

He was found a post in amongst the horse/people who existed in one of the more distant Acknowledged Lands. Here, he took the role of a mediator in negotiations to help separate parties compromise and reach agreement. He continued to enjoy meeting new people, and he certainly appreciated seeing another culture and how different people solved the same set of problems. Grukkaal used his shape-shifting size to shrink himself to appear less intimidating, and quickly became the most popular dragon envoy. This suited his colleague, who

considered the posting a little beneath her dignity.

One day, Grukkaal was flying down from his roosting spot high above the horse peoples' territory, when he saw a young man being beset by attackers. He swelled up to his full size and launched himself into the fray to scare them off. He checked that the victim was okay, and the man introduced himself as Haven. Haven expressed concern about the well-being of his attackers so Grukkaal checked on them. They were not badly hurt so he warned them of the dire consequences if Haven were not to reach the town unharmed, and they resentfully returned to their camp. Grukkaal made a final check that Haven was okay and followed the attackers down.

Soon after this, a police party came to Grukkaal to take him in for questioning, saying that he had attacked their citizens while going about their daily business.

Grukkaal stated his case, but was told that the bandits had been legally allowed to attack the man on account of his deformities and lack of a sponsor. In a moment of haste, Grukkaal declared that he would be Haven's sponsor, and asked what deformities they were talking about.

In this land, everybody was understood to have hooves. Haven had feet and toes instead. Although this did not cause Haven any kind of impediment, it marked him as different. His scattered and absent family were all unable to sponsor him so he had been effectively alone.

The magistrate accepted Grukkaal's offer to be Haven's sponsor.

It did not take long for Grukkaal to discover that he had breached the terms and broken some laws of draconic good conduct for an envoy.

He was recalled back to the city and put in the dock. Grukkaal explained his circumstances and the court seemed to find in his favour. They adjourned for an interval, but when Grukkaal returned he found, to his horror, that the judge had been replaced by another, who was an old enemy of his.

He was found innocent of the attack, but was also held to his responsibility as a sponsor to Haven. The judge declared that he found it fitting for a 'lowly' creature like the impure-blooded Grukkaal to look after a deformed non-dragon. The judge ruled that Grukkaal would remain Haven's sponsor until the age of maturity.

This would not ordinarily have been a problem, as Haven was only months away from the age of maturity of his own species. However the judge ruled that he would consider the age of dragon maturity to be the bench mark of maturity for Haven, which would bind Grukkaal as Haven's sponsor until Haven's eightieth year.

Grukkal found himself unable to appeal this.

Grukkal came to have Haven as an assistant. The nature of their arrangement made it impractical for them to remain in the city, and Haven's small stature and inability to travel as fast or far as Grukkal made the Myrvall mountains effectively unreachable for his inexperienced charge. Instead, with Grukkal effectively exiled from the place of his birth, they returned to the horselands.

Despite all of this, Grukkal came to enjoy it there, and to like Haven's company. Haven saw him as something of a hero, and was also obedient, so they fit well together.

### **Closeness in Relationships**

*(young adulthood)*

Grukkal maintains unfulfilled plans of revenge against Haven's attackers and the people who failed him, although has not done so for Haven's sake. He would also especially like to take revenge against the dragon judge, although given his current circumstances this is impractical. Bearing in mind the cost for a pureblood Mountain dragon for long exile, simple survival is one form of his revenge, so thriving where he is can absolutely be considered impudence of the highest degree. However if he ever manages to do so, his revenge will involve putting the judge in his debt. Dragons hate owing other dragons.

For now, Grukkal has no desire to have children but may do so within the next century or so. For the time being he is enjoying teaching Haven all the things he has learned. He has also secretly willed everything he owns to Haven, should the worst happen.

### **Passing on Responsibilities**

*(older adulthood)*

Grukkal has not reached this stage of his life yet. However, he is, at heart, a protector, and likes to teach others what he has learned. Despite his exiled status, he passes on his knowledge where he can. He will likely still hold these values when he reaches the later stages of his adulthood.

### **End of Life**

*(old age)*

Just as with the rest of his life, Grukkal aims to maintain as much control over the end of his life as possible. He understands that, no matter what he does, he will eventually die. He hopes that this will happen in the very distant future, but when

it does happen, he will do his best to make sure it is in a time and place of his own choosing.

He also hopes that the cause of his death will be something other than senescent decay.

On one occasion, Grukkaal tried experimenting with his mortality. He anticipates that his old age will present some unusual struggles, so he attempted to magically trade a period of idle healthy youth for a period of very old age, becoming very old and frail for a period of time. He attempted this during his early adulthood, after he had been living with Haven for some years.

Grukkaal had not considered what Haven might see if he walked in at the wrong time, which Haven did. The sight of Grukkaal appearing to be dying greatly alarmed Haven, and the horse's reaction showed how much he had failed to consider his friend's strong feelings of concern and how he might be missed. He will not try this experiment again, as he realised that he is very much wanted in the here and now, and that what happens in the long distant future is not worth more than what is right in front of him.

### **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