

Khiji-ra Shulvah

Backstory

Name: Khiji-ra Shulvah (real name); Khiji-ra Cimitiere, Zargo-jo Teapond, Adanssi Zahhan, Ab'arr Helir, and Ssajjir Starleaf (all used to avoid debts)

Species: Tabaxi

Sex: ♂

Age: 27

Height: 1.93m

Weight: 83kg

Siblings: No blood siblings but grew up communally with many cousins

Class: Sorcerer of draconic bloodline origin



Cultural Notes

The Tabaxi live in travelling communities.

In Tabaxi caravans, once a child starts to work as a productive member of the community they are given an honorific suffix. Khiji-ra's is -ra, but there are many others.

Most aspects of Tabaxi life is casually managed, with the exception of marriage. Marriages are arranged by a Tabaxi's parents, and partners are chosen from other caravans. This was for the sake of genetic diversity and to continually build alliances between communities. Sex before marriage is strictly forbidden.

Dragons look upon dragons who mingle with mortals too much, unfavourably. For bronze dragons specifically, while they would not turn violent if they found a bronze dragon mingling too much, the matriarch of the group would likely force the prodigal to return to the fold.

Khiji-ra is a *Dungeons and Dragons* character from a campaign based on the *Tyranny of Dragons* book, set in Faerûn. He is outgoing, friendly, and willing to play the clown to maintain a peaceful status quo. However, he also has potent magical powers and can use these if need be.

Trust & Confidence

(newborn)

Khiji-ra is the child of a retired male Tabaxi adventurer named Rhajjin-dar, and a female bronze dragon named Vidori.

The couple had several adventures together, fell in love, and chose to settle in Rhajjin's community of origin, the Bluetops (named for their blue-roofed wagons), in Maztica. Vidori assumed a mortal Tabaxi form and took the name Baisha-Ko. Rhajjin was an outlier and Baisha had ways that the community found quite odd, although the couple always explained this away by describing Baisha as being more accustomed to living in cities.

To clarify further about Rhajjin: the perception of his community of him as an outlier came from his unusual choices as a Tabaxi. His desire (and ultimate choice) to become an adventurer, and even more so the fact that he turned out to be good at it, prompted the other Bluetops to look at him with a curious kind of respect, and slight fear. Indeed, it was this that earned him the rare -Dar suffix. His choice of a city-girl for a wife sealed his reputation.

Baisha experienced a constant low level of concern about the possibility of her origins becoming known, especially to the dragon community. Overall it was unlikely, though not impossible, that her secret would be revealed, as Maztica was mainly populated with dragon species that lacked telepathic abilities, which would otherwise have presented one of the greatest risks to her being outed. Her family knew that she had joined a band of mortals to put an end to an undead scourge, but since she had never returned, nor reached out to them telepathically to let them know she was alive, they assumed her to be dead.

Occasionally during her travels she and another disguised dragon would cross paths. The etiquette in this situation was not to reveal one another's true identities so this presented little risk to Vidori, but it generally reminded her to be careful. In any case, it was rare for such encounters to happen.

Given the rather stubborn sense of morality bronze dragons have, Vidori was mindful of her tongue during her early appearances at Bluetop meetings as Baisha, and only became more vocal as the years went by and she felt confident that her position in the troupe was secure. Some of the elders considered her and Rhajjin-dar to be likely future

candidates for the council, while others felt that she would be too morally inflexible for the job. However, this didn't translate to a loosening of the roots she had developed in the troupe.

They hadn't been sure that they were capable of having children, so Baisha's pregnancy was unexpected. They felt a mix of positive and negative emotions about this – positive because they were excited to have a child on the way, and negative because they were both first-time parents. Baisha had extra reason to be nervous as, given her true origins, the couple couldn't be sure that their baby would be healthy. The fact that she was over 250 years old only added to the couple's anxieties about this. Nevertheless, her overwhelming feeling was of excitement. It helped that Baisha got a lot of support from the older Bluetop women.

Rhajjin felt torn between grief for the end of his adventuring days, and the excitement of becoming a father.

The Bluetops overall were pretty self-sufficient so providing for themselves and their baby was not a concern to them.

Despite their concerns about their child's health, Khiji's birth was without complication, although it was a 10-hour long labour. Baisha was tended well during this time by the other women of the troupe, and as Bluetop culture dictated, Rhajjin had to wait outside of the birth wagon.

Baisha was delighted with Khiji. Her draconic tendency to covet treasure kicked in and he became her greatest one. It took Rhajjin a week to convince Baisha to let him hold Khiji.

Mother and son developed an intense and pleasurable symbiosis in which Khiji felt both that he was Baisha's, and that she absolutely loved him to pieces. He felt deeply secure and grounded in their relationship.

Freedom & Self-Determination

(toddlerhood)

Khiji grew up enough that he could toddle, and he became very keen to move and explore this new world! His parents introduced him to the troupe's other small child of the time, Freego, a boy a couple of years older than Khiji himself. The two got to know

each other and became virtual brothers. He loved to instigate play, and Freego was happy to have this little playmate.

His love of other people didn't stop at a love of play, or of singing and dancing (which he loved to do - with an audience, of course!), but of getting involved with whatever the others were doing. His parents and the rest of the Bluetops noticed how happy he was to help out with chores. As a toddler, the only age-appropriate things he could do were hand clothes-pegs to whoever was pinning up the laundry, or help his or Freego's mother put away toys, but he was more than happy to do it - unless he felt he was being made to, and then he would become stubborn.

As Khiji became more mobile and curious about his world, he unwittingly triggered a point of disagreement between his parents. Baisha, as previously noted, was protective of him, and as he started leaving her lap to explore the troupe's latest camp and Baisha found herself unable to keep her focus on him all the time due to her chores, she became tense about the dilemma this presented.

Rhajjin-dar on the other hand, wanted to encourage and nurture Khiji's curiosity and saw his interest and energy as healthy and to be encouraged. He did so, and Khiji thrived! He came to love hiding and startling the grown-ups, and generally developed a love of good-natured mischief.

He could sometimes be indecisive. For him as a toddler, that was fuelled by the fear of missing out: by choosing one option, the other often became unavailable. One couldn't spend the morning with both mum and dad at the same time! That said, his indecisiveness didn't extend to self-doubt: he was a self-confident kit from the moment he could walk under his own power.

At other times his mother would find him all too decisive. She once saw him trying to touch the stove while it was hot (apparently just to see whether it really was as hot as the grown-ups said it was), and he was often quick to try to dress himself in the mornings, which, for a little boy with a tail and motor skills that had yet to be fully mastered, often ended up in something of a tangle.

The couple had anticipated that they would sometimes disagree about how much free rein to give their child, but had agreed before Khiji was born that they wouldn't argue about it in front of him and instead put up a united front to him. However, despite the best of intentions, sometimes they disagreed regardless and would argue.

Privacy was difficult to get in a Bluetop camp: casual talk during the evenings about the day just gone were natural and common, yet going outdoors after dark was impractical. Discussions would therefore be easy for others to hear, especially given that the nearest to privacy one could get from other people in the same caravan would be to talk at the far end of said caravan – which would still be easily within hearing distance. With all of this in mind, when Baisha and Rhajjin-dar had something to argue about they would resort to Elvish, in the hope that Khiji wouldn't understand.

They never shouted at each other, but their tones could get testy. Khiji may not have understood the words, but he registered their tone and usually understood that they were arguing. When he noticed this he would try to diffuse the argument by seeking attention, saying he couldn't sleep, had had a bad dream, or wanted something to drink. He would seek affection as part of this and hug his parents. It worked well enough that the habit stuck.

Indeed, he learned in a few ways that playing on other peoples' positive emotions could lead to good things. He quickly learned how to point at things he wanted, and that amused many of the older caravan members.

He could be possessive of toys and clutched onto anything that he thought might be taken from him. However he also learned that if he threw a toy that nobody else wanted, in full view of an adult, then they would often return it to him. He amused himself for endless hours playing 'fetch' with the grown-ups.

When Khiji was around a year and a half old, his eyes changed from the soft blue of a regular kitten's to the red eyes of one with arcane powers. The community saw this as a blessing, a gift from Sharess herself to Rhajjin-dar to reward his heroics. Of course, Baisha and Rhajjin-dar knew the truth about why Khiji's eyes were red but happily accepted this misinterpretation as a cover story.

Before Khiji aged into a young child (as opposed to a toddler), another of the Tabaxi women gave birth to a daughter, Zaidee. From then on Khiji was aware of Zaidee's presence - mainly due to her parents' focus on caring for her and her occasional crying - and he resolved that he now had a little sister.

Ambition

(young childhood)

If his parents had thought he was energetic before then they hadn't seen anything yet! As Khiji's motor skills improved he came to enjoy activities all the more. He ran around, sang and danced, climbed on furniture, and made up games (chasing games were among his favourites, and he and Freego took a lot of pleasure in these.) Sometimes the grown-ups would try to curtail this for a little bit of peace and quiet, and they found that the most effective thing was to get him to sit down and do some drawing or colouring. Aside from this, his other favourite quiet activity was to mimic Baisha, who made jewellery and talismans to sell.

Just as Khiji entered this stage of his life at age 3, another kit was born to the Bluetops, to the same set of parents as Zaidee. They bore another girl, named Vansa.

Khiji's father praised him for his achievements, and Khiji continued to feel strongly bonded with his parents and confident of their love and support, just like he had as an infant. With that said, one of the biggest lessons Khiji learned at this time was to adjust how he played or worked with Vansa. In his boundless enthusiasm and eagerness for a new playmate, he sometimes pushed her harder than she could deal with, to be bigger, faster, stronger, and smarter. His dad intervened to remind him, "Being stronger than Vansa is good, but you shouldn't push her but help her. We look after our own."

Khiji took this to heart and learned how to exemplify supportive encouragement. Indeed, he tailored his approach to cooperation based on this. He liked to lead, and to lead sensitively to the needs of his group. Whenever confrontations occurred he became uncomfortable and did the same as he had when his parents had argued: used himself as a distraction, offering something happier or funnier. He started playing the clown to distract from arguments. When he truly felt out of his depth however, he went to an adult for help.

Sometimes, like all small children, he wondered what it would be like to be a grown-up, and what he would do as a grown-up. As it turned out, Rhajjin-dar was an adept singer and lyre-player, and Khiji latched on to this. He copied his dad, joining in with singing, and often singing by himself. He relished it and imagined himself as a musician when he grew up! However, he was a little too young and impatient to sit down and master the lyre or good singing techniques.

Productivity

(older childhood)

Khiji grew a little older and began thinking more about what it would mean to be an adult. To him, it looked like the grown-ups had lots of freedom and he loved the idea of that. To hasten his own maturity, he eagerly learned how to learn the knowledge and skills that the adult members of the troupe taught him.

With that said, he preferred to learn by doing. Lectures bored him, and he often found his mind drifting when he tried to listen to one. With that said, his mother taught him to read and write, and he did his very best to impress her as a student.

He tried a handful of different apprenticeships around the camp with the older Tabaxi. He found this fascinating as he was introduced to facets of life that he had never thought about before. Ultimately he would become a 'jack of all trades and master of none', and that was enough for him, at least for most of the disciplines he was taught.

One of the things that other members of the troupe noticed about Khiji was that he tended to prepare for chores, lessons, and anything else that required forward-planning. It meant that he was often ready for anything planned in advance, and that bolstered his confidence.

His approach towards cooperation matured as he became more learning- and task-orientated. This helped him to fine-tune his conflict-resolution, communication, and leadership skills.

Some may wonder whether he found life in a travelling caravan restrictive. Khiji didn't see it this way. For him, the travelling made the whole experience feel liberating. In fact, he looked at towns and cities and imagined that living there would be restrictive.

He felt resolutely that he had a place in the caravan. He wasn't sure as yet what that place would be, but he felt certain in his heart that he would work something out. As a man he knew that his role would involve defending the caravan from any attacks. To this end his father taught him how to use the whip, a traditional weapon that was always within easy reach, thanks to the caravan being pulled by cattle.

Child to Adult Transition

(adolescence)

When Khiji reached the age of 13 or so, his powers began to manifest. His parents feigned surprise as they had known that this would happen, even if they hadn't necessarily expected it to be so early. Khiji was genuinely surprised that his magic manifested quite so early.

They encouraged him to spend more time with Adainna-dra, the troupe's fortune-teller. She taught him how to control his powers and to use them to make a living as a fortune-teller, himself.

He started using his powers by practising Prestidigitation, at Adainna-dra's suggestion, using it to shuffle cards without touching them and lighting candles just by looking at them, and for a few years, this was the limit of his level of ability.

The other caravanners knew him. They recognised his arcane abilities, of course, but those were obvious to anybody who looked at his eyes; they knew about his liking for exploration and experimentation, and that told them all they needed to know about what Khiji could become, if he chose. If he experimented with his powers then he could become very powerful, but they also knew that he was their friend and unlikely to resort to violence. However, that said nothing of his tendency towards pranks, and his fellow caravanners braced themselves for a slew of supernatural pranks, which of course, were indeed forthcoming.

He used his budding powers to provide a fortune-telling service. His magic gave him an air of wisdom and mysticism, which made him appear a little bit frightening. However, Khiji's biggest strength as a fortune-teller was his tendency to actively listen.

Khiji longed to know about life outside of the caravan, so would ask questions about his patrons and listen raptly to their answers. Being listened to was a great treat for those patrons, so both he and they benefited in their own ways. At first Khiji didn't realise quite how well this reflected on him, so his listening had a genuine air about it which made it all the more attractive to his patrons. However, when he realised what he was doing, he used it as best he could, and did his best to offer advice under the guise of mystical knowledge, such as, "always leave a town better than you found it, even in a small way."

As he had begun to provide for the troupe, he earned his honorific. From here onwards he was known as Khiji-ra. This was also considered the appropriate time for him to be taught about the Tabaxi's religion, so Adainna-dra did this.

She told him about Sharess, the cat-goddess of travellers, trickery, and charm. Khiji-ra was skeptical of this in a literal sense, but then again, he reasoned that he was capable of conjuring flame out of thin air with his hands, so couldn't see much reason to doubt the idea of a goddess who watched over and guided his people. Adainna-dra taught him the formal ways to show respect and worship her, and to practice the appropriate customs.

Despite his parents' backgrounds as adventurers, Khiji-ra didn't feel a desire to leave the Bluetops. His appetite for adventure was satisfied by the fact that the caravan travelled regularly to new locations, which he found quite exciting. He had carved out a people-facing niche for himself, which gave him the outside contact he wanted, and he had a solid family and community around him. That was enough for him.

Outsiders were generally wary of him, but they tended to feel this way about all Tabaxi travellers: they had a reputation for looking out only for themselves and of swindling people. The fact that Khiji-ra managed to build good relationships between himself and individual patrons spoke volumes about his developing people-skills.

Baisha was beginning to find life in the caravan difficult. She had always been very physical in her expression of affection to Khiji-ra, hugging him and ruffling his hair at every opportunity, but suppressing her raw strength and nature as a dragon had always taken work to subdue, and that was becoming too much. One day she caressed Khiji so aggressively and hard that she injured him and knocked him unconscious. After he woke up, bleeding from his muzzle, he found himself confused and unable to remember what had happened. He quickly assembled a story in his head that he had knocked himself out being his usual rambunctious self, and believed this thereafter.

The injury became a scar in the longer-term.

He wasn't the only person who found this incident shocking: Baisha was shaken too and became reluctant to hug him again. Indeed, she saw an easy way out with the fact that Khiji-ra was getting older, and that it was arguably less appropriate for him to still be getting affection from his mother. She leveraged this from a "you don't want to be a mommy's boy, do you?" angle.

This came off as false to Khiji-ra, but he felt uncomfortable confronting her about it, so accepted it.

Despite this unpleasant change in his life, much remained constant in Khiji-ra's life. The Bluetops often spend their evenings gambling, dancing, singing, chatting, making plans, and telling stories away from the prying eyes of city-folk. He enjoyed these evenings – and they remained one of his constants.

He had no true enemies. The nearest he had to that - and it was still far from antagonistic - was a sense of friendly competition with Freego-jo over who won the most dice and card games, with all the banter that that implied.

With Tabaxi traditions around dating and marriage being what they were, this was one of the few areas in which Khiji-ra felt constrained. Knowing that Tabaxi girls were forbidden made them all the more alluring, so he tried to flirt with many of them. He got nothing more than a few stolen kisses: the Bluetop girls rebuked him in order to preserve their honour, and the caravans never stayed in one place for long enough for him to develop a proper relationship with any of their girls.

However, he developed a strong relationship with Zaidee-la. While he saw Vansa-la as a younger sister and nothing else, he felt that he and Zaidee-la were kindred spirits. Most people found him hard to read, but not her. She understood him better than anyone else ever seemed to. He found this fascinating and she seemed to feel the same way about him, but this made it harder for him to approach her. So far his attempts at flirtation felt rather one-size-fits-all and didn't really fit, so he erred on the side of not trying.

Closeness in Relationships

(young adulthood)

Despite the generally socially-accepted rules about intra-troupe marriage, Khiji-ra's parents blessed his and Zaidee-la's relationship, and they married. They mentioned that Vansa-la would become their midwife and/or wet-nurse, which made their desire for grandchildren blatant.

At first the couple felt awkward about making the transition from caravan-mates to a couple, but courting allowed them to ease into their relationship and they found themselves genuinely in love.

One morning, he had a shock. Baisha-ko felt that her son had grown up and integrated fully into the Bluetops, so one night, she disappeared without warning. Khiji-ra found the following morning that she had gone. She left a letter, explaining that she felt she had to leave before the sins of her past ended up hurting those she cared about the most.

Rhajjin-dar was devastated by this and retreated into himself. He made an obvious effort to try and keep up appearances but Khiji-ra could tell that the light inside him had died. This was one of the few times Khiji-ra found himself unable to talk his way to a resolution: when he tried to press his father on why his mother had left, Rhajjin-dar refused to be drawn and retreated further. At their worst times, Khiji-ra and his father argued, but still Rhajjin-dar wouldn't come back to him.

Around six months later Rhajjin-dar left to, leaving nothing but a note to say, "I'm sorry."

Khiji-ra, of course, was distraught. He wanted very much to leave and try to find his parents – and discover why they had left - but he also wanted to stay with Zaidee-la. He tried to reconcile this by reminding himself that he had responsibilities.

Zaidee-la was heartbroken to see him in such distress and told him, "5 years. Go out and look for your answers for 5 years. Then, no matter if you found them or not, come back to me and we'll move on. I'll wait for you." She knew that if she didn't put a cap on the time he could all too easily wander aimlessly forever, so this was her way of making sure he didn't end his days in a fruitless search.

He accepted, and left.

Khiji-ra found himself alone for the first time in his life. Travelling familiar paths with no company felt strange. The people he met generally thought of it as strange too: it was understood that Tabaxi travelled in groups, so for one to be on the road alone raised a red flag for many people.

That prompted Khiji-ra to use his charm to best effect. He worked hard to get into peoples' good graces and made enough money with coin-gambling and fortune-telling to get by. This was when he started changing his name periodically, when his gambling didn't turn out as profitably as he had expected or he was caught cheating, using magic, and debtors would chase him.

Whenever he couldn't charm, gamble, or slip into the night, he would fight, and this was a time when he improved his skill as a fighter. He built upon his existing skill-set and

learned to throw ice spears and use lightning as weapons. His talent with lightning, he combined with his father's whip-training, to create a Lightning Lure.

He became quietly suspicious about how easily this increase in magical power came to him: as he talked to other practitioners on the road, he learned that it generally took them far longer to improve their skills the way he had. His understanding seemed intuitive by comparison.

His search for his parents was mostly fruitless. His mother appeared to have vanished entirely, while the best information he could get about his father was the very occasional glimpse, reported to him by people he met on his travels. He couldn't seem to catch up to his father any more so than this.

Eventually, a good lead brought him to the Sword Coast, where he arranged passage on a merchant vessel. There, he met a Lizardfolk cleric named Naegan.

Naegan was a cleric of Anubis, the god of death, and physically imposing. As the journey began they took to playing games and sharing stories, and the two became casual friends.

When the ship reached its destination they alighted and decided to continue travelling together. For Khiji-ra, having a physical powerhouse around seemed helpful, and Naegan thought the same of a smooth talker like Khiji-ra.

Their first stop was Greenrest, as Naegan had business to attend to there. This is where we leave Khiji-ra's story.

Passing on Responsibilities

(older adulthood)

Khiji-ra has not yet reached middle age. However, by the time he left the Bluetops he had two daughters, whom he left in Zaidee-la and Vansa-la's care. He doesn't like the idea of being away from his children as he doesn't want them to experience being deserted the way he felt he was, so when he returns he will be a very present and devoted father.

End of Life

(old age)

Overall, Khiji-ra does not fear death. He understands that everyone must pass eventually and that he is no exception. However, it was perhaps inevitable that he would discuss death with Neagan, who once told Khiji-ra that Anubis judges people at the moment of death to determine whether they were a good person. Khiji-ra has difficulty making sense of this, and wonders how any entity could make such a simple judgement based on a person's whole life.

Time will tell if Khiji-ra ever finds his parents, but he has a positive and eager mindset that means that he will almost certainly live a life that he can describe as satisfying and full, and regardless of any confusion about his immediate post-death experiences or encounters with Anubis, will die feeling that he has made the very best of it.

Credits

Based on theory by:

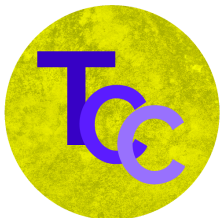
Erikson, E., (1951) 'Childhood and Society', W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. chapter 7.

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~ Hayley, Founder of The Character Consultancy

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