

# KORD

Series Bible

Written by

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Kord is a low fantasy action-adventure series set in the equivalent of our Upper Paleolithic Age. Kord includes familiar races such as elves, dwarves, and ogres, but at pre-historic levels of technology. What makes an elf and elf before the bow was invented? What makes a dwarf a dwarf before steel? Through four compact 8-episode seasons, the audience will see well-known fantasy tropes emerge organically from the characters' adventures.

Many fantasy tropes center around humans, elves, and dwarves, and the series will be told from their point of view. Their primary rivals throughout the series are bugbears, gremlins, and ogres. Later, the allied races must confront a large dragon.

The first section will describe the recurring characters who will breathe life into the story.

The second section will outline the episodes for the first season and the story threads for the series.

## Recurring Characters

Each of the allied races has four primary recurring characters: a warrior-type, a scout-type, a sage-type, and a young adult trying to bring about some kind of social change.

### Humans

Humans are the largest of the allied races with men standing about 5'10" and women about 5'6". Those who live in the focal village of Arwom have brown eyes, black hair, and a skin tone in about the middle of the human range.

How and when a human comes of age depends on his craft, but most go through their rite at age 17 or 18, after which they are permitted to wear around the neck a cord specific to their craft. Humans have begun to domesticate animals (sheep and dogs) and to ply the sea with primitive boats.

Humans as a race are stereotypically political. They present a public face to keep up appearances and do everything possible to hide any sign of weakness. They feel awkward when forced to take an unequivocal stand, mostly because this can reveal too much about what information the human has (and in so doing perhaps reveal a weakness) and limit future attempts to keep up appearances.



*The warriors: Donagh, Emmigina, and Cret*

### Donagh the Warrior

25 years old and heavily muscled, Donagh (rhymes with "Arizona") relishes the opportunity to be the first human to slay and ogre. He is perfectly fine with other warriors showing martial prowess, but he gets very defensive and critical of any non-warrior infringing on his role (including Addahsurri and Seath). He is merciless on himself for any perceived failure in his area of responsibility, though he shrugs off any problems his actions might cause for non-warriors.

Donagh is missing the fourth and fifth fingers from his left hand.

## **Seath the Beastmaster**

41 years old, the stoic Seath (rhymes with “teeth”) is the most respected among the few female Beastmasters. She is very good at hiding or faking her emotions, which she claims helps her work with animals. She considers emotional displays a sign of unseriousness, particularly among Beastmasters, and has no tolerance for it among female Beastmasters.

There are two main kinds of Beastmaster. Seath is the kind who can form a deep empathic connection with a few animals (such as her wolf-dogs). An obstacle to climbing higher in the hierarchy is that the head Beastmaster, Greer, is the *other* kind who lack the deep connection but can train and handle large numbers of animals (such as flocks of sheep).

Seath has multiple dog-bite scars on both forearms as well as two albino splotches on her left arm.

## **Taggart the Wise**

43 years old, Taggart stands more erect than most humans and combs his hair. He is knowledgeable about history and mythology (which are considered a single subject), and knows as much as any human about elves and dwarves. He sees value in learning about humanity’s enemies.

The Wise come in two kinds. Taggart is a Sage, among those who have a primitive understanding of healing arts, weather, and astrology. The other kind is a Priest, those who have a primitive understanding of psychology and divination. Sages make “prophesies” about weather and astronomical conjunctions; Priests make prophesies about people.

While not old, Taggart is by far the least physically fit of the main characters and has trouble at times keeping up with his allies.

## **Katell the Beastmaster**

We first see the 18-year-old Katell on the day before her coming-of-age trial. While she is incapable of the traditional “show no fear” method of handling her dogs, and seems to be the personification of Seath’s pet peeves, Katell finds a way to do everything asked of her. Over the course of the first season, her unorthodox approach reveals that the magical talents used by various crafts have a lot in common.

The social change that Katell seeks is to recognize magic use as a craft unto itself. This prompts a “Who do you think you are?” reaction from senior Beastmasters and outright hostility from the Wise.

Katell starts off with one small dog bite scar, but by the end of Episode 2 her appearance is more distinctive: she has deep scars on her left arm and right ankle, plus her left ear is shorn off. She prefers to use her hair to hide the damage to her ear... except when dealing with dwarves because they respect battle scars.

## **Elves**

Elves are slender with pointed ears; they also have toes spaced to assist with moving through the trees. The average male stands 5’2” tall, and the average female 4’9”. The elves in the focal forest tribe of Havenglade have pale skin, blond hair, and green eyes.

Elves apply streaks of white body paint at age 100 to mark the beginning of adolescence, then colors of their own choosing upon reaching adulthood, traditionally at age 150. Any adult elf looks adolescent to a human. Elves have expertise with herbal remedies and primitive ranged attacks using stone-throwing slings and dart-throwing atlatls.

Elves as a race are stereotypically feminine. They are emotional and sociable, tending to over-share and under-assert in most situations. Elves offer help to one another freely and without being asked. On the other hand, they feel awkward telling other elves what to do. It's not because of some aversion to exercising power, it's because if the elf was any good at communicating then everyone would already know the seriousness of the issue and what to do without being asked.

### **Emmigina**

395-year-old warrior who is tall at 4'11", but her nervous demeanor makes it obvious that she lacks self-confidence. The rest of Havenglade is convinced that she is one of the elves' cleverest warriors. Her proficiency with bugbear-snaring tricks and traps has won her the gratitude of many of her neighbors, and her fellow warriors respect that she is level-headed during battle (which is to say the same level of nervousness that she normally has).

Easily startled, she does not fit the human or dwarven stereotype of a warrior. Although she picks up that the foreign warriors do not respect her, she doesn't do anything about it. Eventually, her prowess in actual combat will change their opinion of her.

Emmigina's body paint is brown and black.

### **Addahsurri**

441-year-old adult male hunter and scout who is muscular... for an elf. His habitual way of being "helpful for social reasons" is to offer assistance when strength is needed. He is keenly aware that he is scrawny compared to a human or dwarf, and feels quite intimidated by them. He's relieved that dwarves don't offer assistance unless asked.

Addahsurri's primary defense mechanism is wise-cracking humor, and he's flirty at inappropriate moments. He has friendzoned Emmigina because his image of her is stuck at when he became an adult while she was a young adolescent... and if that doesn't work, he has a healthy fear of Emmigina's mother. For her part, Emmigina doesn't know why Addahsurri shows no interest in her yet flirts (quite unsuccessfully) with Oowalvia.

Addahsurri's body paint is blue and yellow. Many of the culture clash encounters parallel a "battle of the sexes" with the male Addahsurri playing the "female" side.

### **Oowalvia**

This 370-year-old adult female is a healer, cook, and all-around plant expert. Her know-it-all attitude grates on the expedition's other sage-types, Irn and Taggart, while their stingy communication styles grate on her. She has tremendous patience for explaining what she is doing and why things work (in her pseudo-scientific understanding), but gets very defensive if her motives are questioned.

Oowalvia's body paint is light green and dark green. She has better hygiene than anyone else on the expedition, though her fingers are usually stained from the various herbal preparations she makes.

### **Aurantalla**

This 139-year-old female is introduced as a moody and snarky "teen." She sulks alone in the treetops, a behavior that shocks the highly sociable elves. Her self-imposed status as an outsider lets her see that Havenglade's leader, Matron Ithazanna, is an autarchic dictator.

The social change that Aurantalla seeks is a code of laws, but she quickly learns that even obvious social norms don't lend themselves to a simple set of rules. Her task is complicated further by needing her

proto-laws to be easily explainable by rhyme or reason because writing hasn't been invented yet. The guiding principle of Aurantalla's proto-laws is fairness (as opposed to, say, a concept of natural rights).

At first, Aurantalla's body paint is white and she lets her very long hair hang in front of her face. When she goes through her rite of passage into adulthood, she chooses the colors gray and lilac while tying her hair back.

## **Dwarves**

Dwarves are stocky and sturdy. Both sexes stand about 4' tall and grow full beards, and in fact it is difficult for non-dwarves to tell the sexes apart. Dwarven beards are tied into elaborate braids and knots to denote their station and accomplishments. Dwarves in the focal mountainhome of Throntesh have ruddy skin, brown hair, and gray eyes.

Dwarves are born into a particular guild and earn the title Apprentice when adolescence starts at age 40. Dwarves take a test for guild membership (*i.e.*, adulthood) between their 60<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> birthdays. Dwarves are the only race to use copper, and primitive farming gives them some knowledge of brewing.

Dwarves as a race are stereotypically masculine. They communicate minimally, appeal to logic (even when their reasoning is flawed), and prefer an unambiguous social order. Asking someone for help honors that person, while offering unsolicited help offends that person. They feel awkward when deciding to help someone who can't communicate if they need it or not. Healers, parents of small children, *etc.* are respected for their ability to deal with this awkwardness on a routine basis.

## **Cret Warden**

61 years old (*i.e.*, barely an adult), Cret was among the first squad of Wardens to engage bugbears in battle. Of all the crazy ideas attempted trying to harm the bugbears, Cret's use of fire was one of the few that worked. In the past, Cret had a bad experience with equipment sabotaged by gremlins. To this day, Cret is neurotic about checking critical items in the morning and before a major task.

Despite being the youngest dwarf on the multi-race expedition, as a Warden Cret is nominally in charge of Irn and Sib. Cret has no leadership experience whatsoever, and is getting by with imitation of senior Wardens. Over the course of Season 1, Cret and Irn bond over their tendency to over-prepare.

Cret has two small burn marks under the chin, brands given as punishment for minor crimes as a youth. These marks are not normally visible, which is by design (they are to remind one of their juvenile offenses, not shame them into adulthood). In Episode 2, it is revealed that Cret is a female. Many of the culture clash encounters parallel a "battle of the sexes" with the female Cret playing the "male" side.

## **Sib Miner**

This 88-year-old Miner is what passes for a jokester among the dwarves. Sib is as on-guard as everyone else when the expedition starts, but eventually loosens up and tries to enlist Addahsurri in pranks to lighten the mood. Unfortunately, this doesn't work out because Addahsurri's humor doesn't go any further than wise cracks.

Sib's normal role is as a team leader of Miners, which has two immediate impacts. One is that Sib has unrealistic expectations of Cret's leadership ability, and the other is that Sib is accustomed to having underlings do tedious work.

## **Irn Farmer**

85 years old, Irn is described by other dwarves as “the most careful preparer in Throntesh.” It’s more accurate to say that Irn is on the spectrum. Complaints about others’ preparation are usually restricted to glares and sighs, but it takes a lot less to move Irn into vocal disagreement than it would to move other dwarves.

Irn’s hands bear the callouses and minor scars typical of a farmer using primitive tools.

## **Sef Smith**

60-year-old apprentice Smith who dreams of going on an expedition. Sef is a faithful follower of the dwarven polytheistic religion, but also a believer in just about every superstition and conspiracy theory. Often, Sef needs to bend and twist newfound information to make it consistent with prior beliefs. An outright contradiction will drive Sef to discover which explanation is “true,” but otherwise this Smith has little difficulty entertaining ideas that others thought were mutually exclusive.

The social change that Sef seeks is more information and cultural exchange between guilds and between races. Grand Master Farmer is sympathetic to this cause, but doesn’t have enough pull with other Grand Masters to make anything actually happen. Grand Master Farmer sponsors the idea of making Sef an “explorer” which means interacting with multiple guilds and races.

# **Season One Episodes**

## **S1E1: Encounters (Pilot)**

Humans are attacked by ogres for the first time, and find out that elves and dwarves are likewise facing new enemies. An expedition is arranged to find out why ogres, gremlins, and bugbears are suddenly working together. Less than a day into the field, the expedition suffers from culture clash, a run-in with young dragons, and ends on a cliffhanger encounter with an ogre.

## **S1E2: Threshold**

Expedition battles the ogre the “dwarven way” and more culture clash ensues. Katell prepares for and then begins her coming-of-age trial. The Wise begin contingency plans in case interaction with nonhumans upsets their grasp on the village. The expedition captures a bugbear.

## **S1E3: Adversity**

Seath’s interrogation of the bugbear is interrupted. Katell doesn’t like her new responsibilities as an adult, and her first date is an unmitigated disaster. She volunteers to be one of two Beastmasters sent to Throntesh to help them with bugbears. Human Warriors also go to Havenglade to help them with gremlins. Ogres return near Arwom before any dwarves or elves arrive to help. Gremlins rescue the captured bugbear from the expedition, and prank Seath for good measure.

## **S1E4: Friction**

The expedition ambushes an ogre the “elven way” with even more culture clash. Katell has a hard time adjusting to life in Throntesh. Aurantalla helps the human Warriors get the cooperation of elven civilians for gremlin-preparedness. The expedition spots a bugbear settlement.

## **S1E5: Interactions**

Aurantalla undergoes her coming-of-age rite. The expedition returns and reports its findings. Katell and Tiergan (the other Beastmaster) teach dwarves about bugbears then engage bugbears in battle during a raid. Arwom, Havenglade, and Throntesh launch an ill-planned assault on the bugbear settlement. Katell and Tiergan have a post-battle-adrenalin-fueled intimate encounter. Cliffhanger as the assault force attempts a retreat-under-fire from the bugbear settlement.

## **S1E6: Recrimination**

Retreat succeeds, but leads to much finger-pointing. Katell and Tiergan discover that their animal-telepathy abilities now work on *each other*, and neither is ready for that level of honesty. Addahsurri works out a plan to attack the bugbears, but fails to stand up for it. Sef begins the Smith's long coming-of-age trial. Tiergan articulates Katell's goals for social change, which she hadn't even realized she had.

## **S1E7: Learning**

Katell and Tiergan rotate home. Katell tells Seath about the new power, and while the expedition taught Seath to be a better listener, she still doesn't like Katell's ideas. The Wise arrange an elaborate ceremony to protect the humans as they migrate to their rainy-season home. Sef passes the trial and becomes an explorer. Katell finds a mate she finds suitable and doesn't give him time to look for anyone else. Addahsurri finally asserts himself, and a better-thought-out assault is launched. Cliffhanger as a bugbear patrol ambushes the attackers.

## **S1E8: Posterity**

Skirmish with the bugbears is nearly disastrous, but Taggart's new acceptance that his knowledge has gaps (seeds of the scientific method) and Cret's ability to deal with imperfection allow the assault group to incrementally improve their tactics. With these new tactics, Addahsurri's plan succeeds culminating in routing the bugbears at their own settlement. Dwarves, elves, and humans reach an armistice of sorts with the bugbears, but they have dire warnings about how gremlins will react.

# **Story Threads**

Three long, intertwining story arcs span the four seasons.

## **Joining Forces**

The bugbears, gremlins, and ogres have started working together. It's not a wide alliance between them, more of a fourth nation made from outcasts of the other three, but at first the dwarves, elves, and humans don't know that.

While cooperation between the dwarves, elves, and humans does improve over time, it never seems to be as good as what the other side accomplishes.

Through Season 1, most engagements are with bugbears. Season 2 starts with a series of atrocities perpetrated by gremlins that leads to all-out war. During Season 3, ogres occupy Arwom and it takes the combined forces of dwarves, elves, and humans to dislodge them. In Season 4, it becomes clear that the outcasts are acting at the behest of a leader who doesn't actually care about them. That leader turns out to be a large dragon.

## **Foundations of Fantasy**

The series provides origin stories for many popular tropes in fantasy literature: animosity between elves and dwarves, wizard using a staff, “getting around” prophecies, opposition between religion and magic, etc.

In Season 1, most of the magic is very subtle and at first there seem to be scientific explanations (maybe the calming spell is hypnosis?), but things turn decidedly magical when human-to-human telepathy is discovered. Culture clash, particularly between elves and dwarves, also features prominently in the first Season.

In Season 2, the Wise see Katell’s attempt to form magic as its own “craft” as a threat. Additional magical abilities from far-away human tribes are introduced, as are the first hints that non-humans are capable of magic as humans would practice it.

In Season 3, someone mis-uses their magic leading to a multi-episode murder mystery, culminating in Katell leading the magic-users in an exodus to Arwom’s rainy-season home. They are allowed to return when they fight alongside the dwarves and elves to dislodge the ogres.

In Season 4, magicians are largely driven from normal society. Magicians help normal humans fight their enemies, but their acceptance of elves and later ogres cements their outsider status in human society. Contact with other realms ties together some of the world’s metaphysics.

## **Generational Change**

Katell’s quest to unify all the crafts’ magic-users overlaps strongly with the Foundations of Fantasy thread. Aurantalla’s quest to bring a semblance of lawfulness to Havenlade pits her against Matron Ithazanna who has a lot more cunning, experience, and social capital. Sef’s quest to get dwarven guilds to share ideas, and ultimately for dwarves to interact more with other races, runs headlong into the established Order of Things in the mountainhome.

While the three change agents have wildly different goals, they often find that their skills or immediate needs are complementary to one another. Culture clash prevents them from forming any long-term alliance, but they do repeatedly come to one another’s aid.

The stories in this thread are slower, multi-episode affairs that often appear to be background story until they cross paths with another thread.