



## Derry Backstory

**Species:** Lop-eared big-horned Rammit

**Sex:** ♂

**Age:** 19

**Height:** 4ft 3in

**Weight:** 54lbs

**Siblings:** Doesn't know, doesn't care

### Trust & Confidence

*(newborn)*

Derry never knew his mother. Whether she was unprepared for motherhood, or whether Derry himself was unusually difficult, will perhaps never be known. What we do know is that soon after he was born, she upped and left.

From a psychological perspective it's pretty clear that their relationship was fraught from the moment he was born (if not sooner, and that matters because mothers who feel too stressed during pregnancy expose their babies to higher cortisol levels in the womb. When that happens, the baby is prone to higher sensitivity to cortisol, so if they get stressed, they remain on high alert and can't calm down). In other words, Derry knew something was up from before he was born, his mum confirmed it by doing a midnight flit, and he felt he was on his own with nobody to trust but himself.

As an adult, he has a great deal of self-trust, and very little trust indeed for anybody else.

### Freedom & Self-Determination

*(toddlerhood)*

Derry was taken into an orphanage run by a church, just like many abandoned babies in his world. But he was so determined to only trust the one person he knew he could rely on (the one person who couldn't abandon him: himself) that he refused the care as much as a toddler could.

This is a problem in particular because children in Derry's position need special care that needs years of patience and an iron will. To give you an idea of how much special care he needed, there's a little-known parenting technique called "therapeutic parenting". It's worth reading about, so run a Google search if you're interested. He was only going to get that if he was adopted, and parents prepared to take on that amount of work are few and far between.

Anyway, back to Derry. Toddlers are known for going their own way and doing their own thing, but Derry did it so vehemently that the orphanage couldn't cope and passed him on. And then the next orphanage had the same experience and responded the same way, as did the next, and the next...

The orphanages he stayed in weren't plush or well-funded places. Derry grew up in squalid conditions, so it made sense for him to hold on to everything he could get,

especially with so many other orphans around. It's easy to go hungry if you don't.

On the surface of it, current-day Derry has a strong tendency to hold onto most things but in particular, grudges. He's as angry as they come and if you piss him off, he will let you know about it and he doesn't have an off switch for that.

But this doesn't quite fit when it comes to people, because if he wants to hold onto people, why push them away with anger?

Anger is our mechanism for fighting to keep a hold on something we want to keep. If you get angry at someone, it's usually because you want something to change but you don't want to lose anything. Anger also usually has an end point, so long as it's healthy anger. You get angry - the person you're angry at changes something about what they're doing - you ease up.

That doesn't happen with Derry. Once he's angry at you, he stays angry. In other words, once he's angry with you there's no point where he is no longer angry. The conflict continues, and therefore so does the relationship.

He's still keeping the relationship active with you because if he dismissed you, he'd lose you. It's a power play, and he does it with everyone - even strangers.

As Derry has grown up, he's lost any sense of doubt. After all, doubt leads to hesitation and hesitating when you're among other hungry, angry orphans doesn't get you what you need. He learned in very early childhood to be quick in grabbing what he needed and by the time he grew to full size, he'd gotten fantastic at it. He will fight for what he wants until he can't fight any more, and he's persistent. It helps that he's not really into details – after all, details have a way of slowing people down and if Derry's nothing else, he's quick.

## **Ambition**

*(young childhood)*

Derry was an energetic child. After all, he'd had to fight his corner for a long time and that takes energy, so by the time he'd grown into a small child he had all the energy he needed to do what he needed to get what he needed. That got him into a lot of trouble, especially as quite often, he had to steal to get his portion.

As a small child he was taught that stealing is bad, and he duly felt bad about stealing. It's just that he didn't have the luxury of being good, so that shame and guilt about stealing didn't last very long. Not much point in being good if you go hungry. So at first he felt bad about stealing, but that rarely if ever ended with him getting the food or whatever else he needed, so he learned not to feel guilty instead.

In fact, he started to revel in theft! It didn't take too long for him to start acting up to his role as 'the bad kid' just for the fun of it. It got a rise out of the people who could have made sure he got what he needed (but didn't), so - why not? It was a way of rebalancing power.

Along with all of that energy, Derry doesn't cooperate with others very well. He'd much rather go solo, and there needs to be something in it for him if he's going to work together.

## **Productivity**

*(older childhood)*

This life stage is all about contributing to society. Since Derry's had to fight even if it's just to get food in his stomach, let's look at how much he feels like giving back.

Yeah, you guessed it. He doesn't feel like he's ever been freely given anything in his life, and it looks like he's not far wrong. As a result, he doesn't want to give anything back, not unless he knows what he's going to get for his efforts. And as a part of that, he's pretty set on the idea that other people rarely contribute anything of real value anyway.

As a child, at first he figured that the rich were the ones responsible for his troubles and went through a stage of wanting to make something about life better. Being a thief and a fighter, he went through a Robin Hood phase. Then he learned that the poor were just as likely to take advantage as the rich were, and changed his mind. Now he waits for a person to be generous to him before he'll be generous back.

And he really doesn't believe anyone's likely to do that.

But that leaves one stone unturned. This stage is all about becoming productive. Who said you had to give in order to be productive? Derry was a thief, so he turned that from a label to the beginnings of a profession.

## **Adult Selfhood**

*(adolescence)*

By the time Derry became a teenager he was pretty good at stealing, to the point that his "thief" label really wasn't going anywhere.

He was a very practical teenager, after all, he needed to be. His situation was only as good as his latest haul. He had picked up a very small number of friends or allies during his adventures, but his connections with others remained quite weak. He didn't have any role models (but a lot of adversaries), he never went close to the whole girlfriends or boyfriends thing, and he was so widely known as a thief, it made sense to be suspicious of anybody who tried to get close.

He had developed one friendship, though, and that was with a goat shaman called Key. That probably wouldn't have happened if Key hadn't already done Derry a good deed by the time they actually met.

On the day before they met, Derry had initiated a street chase by a couple of Royal Guards, which he'd initiated with taunts and personal insults. They caught him and beat him unconscious, and Key had taken him in to heal him. Key was out of the house when Derry woke up, replenishing supplies from healing Derry, but was on his way home and entered his house just as Derry was leaving – with an armful of Key's possessions plus food.

And then Key did something that Derry didn't expect: without sarcasm, he asked if Derry had enough and whether he wanted to take anything else, which Key explicitly said Derry was more than welcome to. That stuck with Derry and, although he took nothing else on that day, he came back from time to time to eat and as he did, they built a friendship. It

didn't represent a change of heart for Derry – he still remains a thief to this day – but it did show him that some people will give willingly without taking, and he couldn't really ignore that.

### **Closeness in Relationships**

*(young adulthood)*

Derry's 19 at the time I'm writing this so he hasn't reached adulthood, but he's got a thick shell by this point, so it's going to take unusual or extreme circumstances to break through his shell.

As far as work goes, Derry is a thief, and doesn't realistically see himself doing anything else that more closely resembles work - especially working for someone else.

Aside from this, Derry has the notion that more traditional work is silent, stealthy, nimble and slow. Most of that doesn't really work for him – he likes the quick pay-off of theft, and he likes seeing peoples' reactions to him stealing from right under their noses (or making them angry).

Derry's circumstances mean that he's pretty much set on a path at this point. Therapists and other supportive resources are hard to come by in Dungeons & Dragons worlds, and even if they did, Derry's just the kind of person who could easily slip through the net, even more so because he knows how to support himself. Maybe there'll be a change in the future (after all, Key's a shaman and maybe Derry will take an interest in that at some point) but for now, nothing about Derry's life is applying the right kind of pressure to make him want to change. So instead, let's just enjoy his adventures.

### **Credits**

Derry is © [Deroki](#)

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Dungeons and Dragons created by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson

*Based on theory by:*

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

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Want to organise your updates and talk with me about integrating them into your character? Email me on [thecharacterconsultancy@gmail.com](mailto:thecharacterconsultancy@gmail.com) and I will be happy to help you!

~Hayley, The Character Consultancy