

ODAYLA

☪ ⚔ God of Rain ☪ ⚔

Odayla is the Deep Hunter, a son of Orlanth by the Lady of the Wild, raised by his mother. He wrestled the Great Bear and took its shape and power.

MYTHOS AND HISTORY

A. BEFORE TIME

When Orlanth left Dini, the land of his birth at the skirts of the Great Mountain, he went into Esjenen—the surrounding lands—and called himself Varanorlanth. There he saw the Lady of the Wild, a creature wondrous to behold. Wild Orlanth sought her, but the Five Majestic Beasts stood in his way. Orlanth the Hunter outran Fa the Earth Deer, wrestled Grar the Green Rock Lion, killed Dursela the Stinging Bear, flipped Rurudram the Great Horned Beetle on its back, and brought down Iti the Variegated Eagle. But the Lady of the Wild only hid deeper. So Orlanth determined to catch Sashaka the Devil Fish, who could swim through earth, water, sky, and fire. He used Fa's sinews for a line, Grar's heart for a plumb, Dursela's stinger for a hook, Rurudram's carapace for a boat, and Iti's feather for a lure. So he caught the Devil Fish, hauled it in, cut off its head, and sent its flesh and roe back to Dini for his family.

But for all that, Orlanth did not catch the Lady of the Wild. But when he gave up, she stalked him instead, and he could not avoid her. She told him her name was Velhara, and the two denned together for a time. Some myths say they did so until she gave birth to a litter, and Orlanth took one back with him to Dini—Odayla. Other stories say she had twins, and Orlanth took one to raise—called Ormalaya—and Velhara kept the other to raise—called Odayla. Regardless, Odayla came to live with his father as one of the Thunder Brothers, yet he was always more of the wild than of hearth and home, or even the battlefield.

Odayla was often in the wild, and learned its ways. His greatest prey was the Great Bear, which was invisible. Odayla learned to read every sign of it, including ones not made yet, and so tracked it. He came to know doubt, and then fear, and finally he surrendered, and by surrendering he found the bear. The two wrestled. In Dragon Pass, people say that Odayla won and killed the bear. In Sylila, where they worship bears, people say that the bear won.

Only initiates know the truth.

In the Lesser Darkness, Odayla visited his kin often, and showed them how to feed themselves when food was scarce. In the Great Darkness, he slept more and more as food became scarce, and eventually he slept into the Underworld. There he showed his father Orlanth how to wake back up, helping him succeed in his quest. When the quest was done, Odayla slept back to life.

B. SINCE TIME BEGAN

In many parts of the world—in Sylila, in Ralios, in southern Peloria, and in Maniria—people who had followed Odayla's way had survived the Great Darkness and awakened in the Silver Age, or at the Dawn. His cult was popular early on, and often connected disparate peoples, but over time it receded as more and more people settled down to farm the land. But Odayla's cult was kept alive in the wilds.

C. DEATH & OTHERWORLD

Odaylans who are killed are usually given a customary Orlanthi cremation. However, many Odaylans, sensing their death is coming, go into the wild, find a den, and crawl into it to sleep. Some of them eventually wake up—perhaps after years— hale and well, but most sleep into the afterlife.

Odayla's Camp in the Storm Realm is hidden in the Forest of the Winds, where the Lady of the Wild and Yinkin live, at the base of Bear Mountain. His worshippers range the forest participating in the Eternal Hunt, and seek the best place to be reborn. Living worshippers can leave into the Storm Age, or into the Sky Realm—which borders the far side of the forest. Worshippers who hibernate there can also leave into the Great Darkness.

D. RUNIC ASSOCIATIONS

Odayla's special rune is the Bear rune (⚔), a variation of the Beast rune (⚔). This is his unique, secret power. As the son of Orlanth, he is also connected to the Storm rune (☪).

As a hunting god, Odayla has minor association with the runes of Death (†) and Harmony (III), and they are not uncommon third runes for worshippers. Motion (⚔) is also common, as Odayla is a son of Orlanth. Odayla's mother, Velhara, is a spirit, and the cult has a connection to the Spirit

rune (⚡).

NATURE OF THE CULT

Odayla's cult is a remnant of an old way, kept up by those who prefer the wilderness to the hearth and the tula. Odaylans are loners, hunters, trackers, and frontiersmen and -women. They do not live entirely apart from other people: though they may return home rarely, they do so in times of need to bring food to their kin and clan.

A. PARTICULAR LIKES AND DISLIKES

Odayla is a wild, reclusive god, but he is one of the Thunder Brothers, and took part in many of their great deeds—including the Plundering of Aron. He has a small rivalry with Barntar, who would cut down the forests to plow them into fields. Odayla is particularly close with his brother Ormalaya and his uncle Yinkin. Yinkin's son, Gavren, is Odayla's half-brother—but as hunting gods, Odayla, Yinkin, and Ormalaya regularly compete for the greatest catch.

Odayla hates Chaos, and also dislikes the bears of Rathorela and the black bears of Peloria. Wolves are also Odayla's enemies and competitors. Sartarite Odaylans in particular have a hatred of the Telmori wolf-men.

Odaylans tend to dislike people, or at least concentrations of people. They are uncomfortable in towns and cities, and most do not even like villages, steads, or even cleared land. They prefer the lonesome wilderness.

B. HOLY DAYS

Odayla's seasonal holy days are the rare times when his worshippers gather together. In Sylila, people engage in communal worship, but among Heortlings, most people do not. Most Odaylans do not participate in communal worship of Orlanth and Ernalda, and suffer no ill effect—they provide for themselves. Sometimes, worshippers of Ormalaya and Yinkin join these rites.

There is great regional variance in Odayla's holy days, determined by the rhythms and patterns of local weather and animals. The following is accurate for Dragon Pass and most of Maniria.

In northern Sartar, Odayla's Wild Day holy days are much more dangerous, for the Telmori are also out hunting on those nights. Most Odaylans get an early start on their hunting on these days.

Spring Morn (Freeze/Disorder/Sea) celebrates the return of life and spring. Odaylans make small

sacrifices of beer and strings of colorful ribbons or small beads.

Fish Festival (Water/Fertility/Sea) is a day for fishing contests and fish tales, competing both for the biggest catch and the most outrageous story. All the better if it is true.

Berry Festival (Fire/Harmony/Fire) celebrates Indeg, daughter of Ernalda and wife of Ormalaya, who found berries to eat. Worshippers gather berries—leaving some on the bush for the Great Bear—and take them as a gift to the nearest community.

Fox Rite (Wild/Illusion/Fire) is a day for hunting without tools or weapons. It is also the day of initiations, as initiates are tested on their skill, cunning, and ability to survive.

On Stag Day (Wild/Disorder/Earth), Odaylans bring their catch—a stag is most propitious—to a community, whether their family, their clan, or their hunting band. Most start their hunt a week or two before, to ensure they have the best possible catch to share. The heart and liver of the animal are burnt so that the scent may please Odayla and grant favor in winter.

Wild's Feast (Wild/Mobility/Earth) is a dangerous day. The hunt often experiences a ritual reversal, where the hunter becomes the hunted. Odaylans do not fear this challenge. Old hunters often choose to test themselves on this day, and if they fail to return from the hunt, the others know they are with Odayla. Would-be devotees in particular must take part in this hunt.

The Wolf Hunt (Freeze/Disorder/Dark) is a day when Odaylans leave for the wild to hunt wolves, renewing their old enmity. Killing a wolf on this day is considered lucky, although it can be dangerous when Telmori live nearby.

Furring Day (Clay/Death/Dark) is a day for tanning hides and pelts taken and cured over the year. Worshippers pray for Odayla's blessing, then head back to civilization to trade their pelts for what they need. One pelt is always gifted to the local Earth priestess, to symbolically warm Ernalda. Reclusive hunters may leave the gift at a holy site in the wilderness instead.

Flint Blessing Day (Wild/Harmony/Storm) is spent taking care of hunting tools and weapons, and preparing for Gifting Day.

Gifting Day (Gods/Harmony/Storm) honors Velhara, the Lady of the Wild. Worshippers leave

their gift—prey, a bow, or a bone carving—at a sacred place, or deep in the wilderness. Some never return from this trip. Others glimpse the Lady herself. Special ceremonies follow, which lead into the Great Hunt, and non-Odaylan hunters often participate, or hold their own concurrent ceremonies.

The Great Hunt (Gods/Harmony through Gods/Death/Storm) is Odayla's High Holy Day. In Heortland, where Odaylans are few, it only lasts for a day and a night (Wild/Death to Gods/Death). At dusk on Gifting Day, worshippers go into the wild, seeking the best catch they can to bring back. At the end of the Great Hunt, the Master Hunters cast divinations to determine who has made the best catch. The winner's prey is sacrificed to Odayla, and they are named a Master Hunter.

Bear Day (Variable/Storm) occurs sometime in Storm Season, when the Great Bear begins to wake from its hibernation. Odaylans celebrate the first spoor, and omens on this day are of great importance.

C. DEPICTION

Odayla is depicted either as a great brown bear, or as a wild man wearing a bearskin and carrying hunting tools, such as a bow and arrows. His Bear rune is his symbol.

Odayla is associated with the constellation called the Hunter. Sylilans call Orlanth's Ring the Sky Bear, and worship it in place of Orlanth.

D. NAMES & EPITHETS

Deep Hunter, God of Bears, Great Bear, Sky Bear, Wild Storm.

E. CULT METAL

As a Storm god, Odayla is associated with bronze, but his worshippers are happy to make their tools and weapons from flint and other stone. There is no prejudice or proscription against using metal, however.

CULT ORGANIZATION

Odaylans have little by way of organization. Each hunter takes care of their own rituals if need be. Sometimes, they gather into small hunting bands, hunting alone but living and worshipping together in the wild. A few move permanently into unclaimed wilderness, sometimes with their family—this is particularly the case when two Odaylans marry. Many Odaylans winter among their kin, but

others do so in the wild. The most devout actually hibernate like bears.

A. PRIESTS

Odayla has no priests; when Odaylans gather, the eldest, wisest, or most powerful presides.

B. HOLY PLACES

Odayla has no temples, and his shrines are crude things: a tree at the edge of settled land will suffice, but places deep in the wilderness are better. Some make shrines in caves, painting images of hunts on the walls. Sometimes, such caves and cave-paintings are found that seem to date back to ancient times, and they are considered very holy—and usually kept very secret, even from other Odaylans.

C. SACRIFICES

Odayla is always given part of each prey animal killed. The Peaceful Cut butchery method is a sacred act, which assures the return of the spirit or soul of the dead animal, and its eventual rebirth. Chants and songs are sung. Often, part of the fresh-cut liver is eaten.

MEMBERSHIP

Odaylans are usually solitary. Those who come out of their adulthood initiation with the Bear rune (C) may not even need instruction, being able to undertake their initiation on instinct, but most would-be members seek out an older hunter for guidance. Afterwards, they may go off on their own.

Odaylans who wear a bearskin are called Bearwalkers, but the term is often applied to Odaylans as a whole.

A. CULT SKILLS

Climb, Dodge, Jump, Swim, Intimidate, Animal Lore, Cult Lore (Odayla), Peaceful Cut, Survival, Spirit Combat, Spirit Face, Worship (Odayla), Listen, Scan, Track, Hide, Move Quietly, Bow, Unarmed.

B. CULT PASSIONS

Devotion (Odayla), Hate (civilization), Love (wilderness).

C. CULT WEAPONS

Bow, claws. Other hunting weapons (slings, javelins, spears) are also popular, but not as iconic.

D. INITIATION

Initiation is usually conducted on the day of the Fox Rite (Wild/Illusion/Fire). Candidates are sent out into the wild without tools or weapons, and must bring back a catch. They experience doubt, fear, and hunger. At some point, they enter the Otherworld, where they are alternately the hunter and the hunted—and at last they come face to face with the Great Bear. Wrestling the bear, the initiand comes to understand that they are the bear—neither Odayla nor the Great Bear won, because they were always one and the same. They cannot kill the man or the bear, and instead integrate the two halves into one being, completing their soul. The initiand returns to the Middle World, catches their prey, and returns.

Some initiations are solitary affairs: no priest or god-talker instructs or inducts such initiands, who simply follow their Bear soul (C) and have the above experience.

COMMUNAL WORSHIPPERS

Odayla receives little communal worship among Heortlings, but sometimes hunters join Odaylan hunting bands without initiating into Odayla's cult. Pelorian and Sylilan worship of Odayla is a much more social matter, and communal worship is much more common there.

Requirements: Standard.

Duties: Standard.

Restrictions: Standard. Must use Peaceful Cut butchery.

Benefits: Standard.

INITIATES

Initiates of Odayla are hunters, more comfortable in the wild than among people. Initiates are sometimes called Bearwalkers.

Requirements: Standard. Must succeed at the initiation hunt, and must have or awaken the Bear (⚔) or Beast (♣) rune.

Duties: Standard.

Restrictions: Standard.

Benefits: Standard.

DEEP HUNTERS (DEVOTEES)

Deep Hunters must choose one of two paths: the Bearwalker's Path or the Champion's Path. They

may change paths as they wish. Bearwalkers must live in the wilderness, away from people, often in the shape of a bear. Champions take service with a king or chieftain who must honor them with a champion's place and a champion's portion—the Champion will not demand them, but if they are not given, he will leave. This patron will also support them when they indulge their violent, wild nature.

Requirements: Standard; the candidate must undergo the Wild's Feast hunt (Wild/Mobility/Earth) where they become the prey, survive being hunted, and catch or slay the predator or their original prey. In most cases, they hunt for a bear, which in turn hunts them.

Duties: Standard. Bearwalkers must spend time given to the cult in the wilderness, away from settled land; Champions must spend this time serving a king or chieftain, either hunting to provide for the community, or fighting for them.

Restrictions: Standard. Must always wear their bearskin.

Benefits: Standard.

MASTER HUNTERS (RUNE LORDS)

Master Hunters have proven themselves extraordinary hunters, and most are fearsome figures, almost feral. Many live as bears more than men.

Requirements: Standard; the candidate must win the Great Hunt.

Duties: Standard. Must follow the Bearwalker's Path or the Champion's Path, as Deep Hunters.

Restrictions: Standard.

Benefits: Standard.

CULT MAGIC

A. BATTLE MAGIC

Clear Path, Control (various prey animals), Coordination, Detect (various prey animals), Detect Trap, Fanaticism, Farsee, Ironhand, Mobility, Multimissile, Protection, Slow, Speedart, Spirit Screen, Visibility.

B. RUNE MAGIC

Common Rune Spells: All.

Special Rune Spells: Bear's Skin ♣, Bear's Strength ♣, Beastmaster ♣, Claws ♣, Draw Beast ♣, Hibernate ♣, Identify Scent ♣, Manifest Bear ♣

Soul ▼, No Scent ▼, Run Over Snow 𐀀 𐀁, Sureshot 𐀁, Track Over Anything ▼, Transform Self ▼, Walk Among Prey ▼ 𐀀.

C. ASPECTS

Local Odaylan traditions acknowledge local heroes, Master Hunters who excelled above all others in some great skill. Remote shrines allow worshippers to learn their magic.

Kudran Golden Feather: Kudran was a hunter in northern Sartar who discovered an old hunting path that led into Umath's Age. He brought down several great birds of the Sky and returned with their feathers, with which he fletched arrows that flew farther than anyone else's.

- **Requirements:** Followers must find and follow Kudran's path and bring down a Golden Age bird of prey (a heroquest).
- **Rune Magic:** Longfaring Arrow 𐀀 𐀁.

Mabar the Fisherman: Mabar was a master fisherman of Aggar who could swim up rivers and track fish from the shore.

- **Requirements:** Followers cannot hunt, only fish, during Fertility Week.
- **Benefits:** Followers can smell things that are underwater.

Ranoo Longlegs: Ranoo Longlegs was a Sylilan hunter who could chase down and exhaust any prey to catch it.

- **Requirements:** Followers can never ride in a chariot, wagon, or other man-made vehicle.
- **Rune Magic:** Run Without Tiring 𐀀 𐀁.

D. BEAST CHARMS ▼

Odayla's mother, the Lady of the Wild, is a spirit, and Odaylans have a connection to the Spirit World. Odayla's cult is akin to a spirit society in some ways, and his worshippers are able to make use of animal spirits by turning them into Beast Charms. Odaylans have no shamans, but Kolating shamans—sezings—will help them in this.

Odaylans can undertake ritualized hunting quests—minor heroquests that take place in the Middle World. The hunter seeks a specific kind of prey, experiencing a specific kind of challenge to overcome it. At the end, the hunter catches the prey, and as they kill it, they breathe in its last breath—and its spirit. They return to a Kolating

sezings, who places the spirit in a charm or a fetish for the Odaylan. Because the Odaylan has defeated it fairly, the spirit is considered friendly, and grants a special magic or ability. However, Beast Charms also impart part of the animal's personality on the Odaylan, slowly changing them.

The charm takes the form of a medicine pouch, necklace, bracelet, or the like made with the skin, sinews, teeth, claws, or feathers of the animal, or tattoos or ritual scarring (particularly from wounds received on the hunt). Each Beast Charm has a POW of 3D6. If any tests are necessary to use the beast charm's ability (or the personality trait it inflicts), use a rating of POW×5%.

Badger: The hunter must out-stubborn the badger to catch it. The beast charm grants the owner the ability to dig through the earth, but may make the owner grumpy.

Deer: The hunter must shoot the deer to bring it down. The beast charm improves the owner's Listen and Spot skills by POW×5%, but may make the owner jumpy and easily spooked.

Eagle: The hunter must climb a cliff or tree to catch the eagle. The beast charm improves the owner's eyesight, raising the Search and Spot skills by POW×5%, but may make the owner excessively prideful.

Rabbit: The hunter must stealthily stalk the rabbit to catch it. The beast charm improves the owner's Listen and Spot skills by POW×5%, but also increases the Lust passion by POW×5%.

Thrush: The hunter must hide, silent and motionless, to catch the thrush landing nearby. The beast charm improves the owner's Sing skill by POW×5%, but also increases the Vanity passion by POW×5%.

Waterfowl: The hunter must sneak up on the waterfowl to catch it. The beast charm allows the user to feed by sifting through mud at the bottom of a lake or stream, but the owner may become noisy.

Wild Cattle: The hunter must seize the cattle by the horns and wrestle it to the ground. The beast charm functions as the Bear's Strength spell, but the owner may become slow-witted.

Wild Pig: The hunter must run down the pig. The beast charm allows the owner to

smell out food, but the owner may become short-tempered.

Wild Sheep: The hunter must leap from rock to rock to catch the sheep. The beast charm functions as the Predict Weather spell, but the owner may become stubborn.

DAIMONES

Odayla commands bear daimones, and also as connections with wild spirits and animal spirits.

DIVINE COMPANIONS

Odayla sometimes grants divine companions that inhabit bows or other hunting equipment, but in most cases, the worshipper's ritual bearskin is awakened by a bear soul. Rarely, Odayla sends a great brown bear, but these beings are reclusive and willful: they may go off on their own for long times, and will almost never follow their master out of the wilderness and into civilization.

ALLIED CULTS

Orlanth: Wind Warp ⑥ .

Yinkin: Catseye ▼ .

DIVINE RETRIBUTION

A. AGENTS OF REPRISAL

Odayla curses apostates and desecrators with the Curse of Odayla: the victim's scent will frighten off prey and attract predators, and they are more likely

to fumble (always fumble on 96–00) when hunting (including when using bows or in combat with prey). The spirits of the Lady of the Wild are always hostile to them.

To atone, apostates must go into the wild alone, without weapons or tools, giving up their beast charms. They must undertake a quest to hunt and slay an animal, and if they succeed and repent their offenses, the Curse of Odayla is lifted.

B. DIVINE WRATH

Odayla's wrath drives away all prey from a community's hunters. Sometimes, it even manifests as bear attacks—although it is possible these are actually Odaylans in bear form come to exact vengeance.

NOTES

A. SLEEP TO LIFE

Some Odaylans heroquest to learn Odayla's greatest secret, how to sleep back to life. If they are killed but their body is left alone, they can eventually heal it and return their soul into it. This usually takes a year or more, and hardly ever less than a season. This method can also be used to initiate heroquests, sleeping into the Otherworld, then sleeping back into the Middle World.

Sources: *The Book of Heortling Mythology*, *Sartar Companion*, *Storm Tribe*.

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