



Shadows of ICELAND

the
World of Darkness



Chapter Three: Isolated in the Ice

Iceland is a land of extremes. From the vast glacial expanses of the interior tundra, to the pools of mineral water and hot springs from the volcanic lakes and baths; from the urban environs of Reykjavik, to the secluded farmlands; from the fertile fishing waters surrounding the island's peninsula, to the desolate stretches of rock, crag and shard; from the seemingly everlasting darkness of winter, to the midnight sun in mid-summer. The island's inhabitants know and recognize the limits, paradoxes and boundaries innate to their homeland. Living on this island is not easy, nor is it for everyone: Iceland's population of barely 300,000 can attest to that fact. Yet experiencing the radical fluctuations inherent in the landscape breeds a certain type of culture, a certain of person and a certain type of monster. Iceland is not for everyone; but everyone living in Iceland is a product of the land.

Darkness on the Island

The World of Darkness does not belong to the monsters. Sure, monsters roam the land in the most obscure recesses. In many ways they seem to own it, their political machinations and supernatural soirees continually forming the foundation of the human world. But, in the end, it is still the *human* world – the mortals are the focus and driving force throughout the lands, and they are the ones who influence the shape of society and culture throughout. Monsters come from humans and are judged in relation to these humans, despite the monsters' best efforts to argue to the contrary.

With this in mind, Iceland contains a unique population of supernatural creatures within its shores. This is due to a number of factors. First, with such a small population, most supernatural creatures cannot exist in large numbers without drawing attention to themselves. This fact particularly rankles some denizens of the World of Darkness; despite their magnificent works and grand schemes, if too many humans know it will only lead to the monster's destruction. Second, the supernatural have their own unique form of natural selection, an evolution that denies them access to certain geographical areas for the plain truth that a given destination could kill them outright: a vampire cannot live in the barren desert, for example. Third, some places are just too damn weird for anybody but the incredibly odd. Iceland is one of those places; it has a strange culture that is, if not outright supportive, at least more open to the notion of the "others."

Unlike the deeply entrenched supernatural societies of North America and Europe, Iceland's supernatural citizenry is composed of a freer, more independent group. Or at least that's the impression they like to give. In reality, Iceland's supernatural population is different from other Western societies because only a few types of monsters really want to live there, whether because of the climate, the land or the people.

Vampires

To put it bluntly, a vampire would not be found (un)dead in Iceland, at least not as a permanent resident. The main reason for this is simple: The chatel's herd is much too shallow and spread out. While it may be possible to find a Kindred or two in Reykjavik, which harbors the vast majority of the island's

If you are ever lost in an Icelandic forest, just stand up.

- Magnus Magnusson

population, you will not find any vampire outside of those city limits. There is a more subtle reason for the lack of the Damned in Iceland: It is absolutely no fun to Dance with yourself. A truly enterprising vampire may rejoice at a country completely bereft of competing Kindred interests and establish her powerbase in the outskirts of Reykjavik. But without others of her kind to interact with, she will likely do as so many settlers to Iceland have done before: pack up and leave, damning the land as she goes.

There are some tales and legends of a small coterie of vampires living in the Settlement era of Iceland back around the eleventh century, just after the rise of Christianity in the island. Born into slavery on a farmstead of a local chieftain, their vampire lineage is said to derive from a demon that visited the farm's outhouse. While a group of them cleaned up after a winter festival, the demon cursed the lot, claiming that the only way to rid the land of rival pagan forces was to spread his own brand of evil throughout the land. Thus, as the story goes, the first vampires in Iceland were created. An obscure saga, the Saga of Hilmar Pétursson, details a brief encounter with the Kindred, but any written record of vampire activity was lost soon after. Today, there is no trace of this lost clan, except an inverted stone cross at the edge of a glacier said to mark the place of the farmstead's outhouse.



Eternal Days, Eternal Nights

Another explanation for the dearth of Kindred activity is the geography of Iceland. There are essentially two seasons in Iceland: summer and winter. (Although a native Icelander might describe the seasons as "cold" and "colder".) Vampires absolutely do not travel to Iceland during the summertime: It is practically suicide to live where the sun is out nearly twenty hours a day, which is the case during the height of summer in Iceland. But, while summer brings eternal sunshine to the island's shores, winter brings a vampire's natural habitat: eternal night. Where humans might travel to the Caribbean islands or some other tropical paradise in the middle of winter, vampires take their vacations in Reykjavik and the rest of Iceland around the time of the Winter Solstice, when the nights are at their longest. These are not long visits; the Kindred often leave the country after a week or two, the long nights generally wearing them out from the extended activity. For vampires, a trip to Iceland is like Carnival, except with cold weather, snow and sparsely populated cities. No matter – the streets of Reykjavik hold more than enough human chattel for a vampire to be able to drink his fill, especially during the Saturday drinking marathons that Reykjavik is known for.

Werewolves

The Tribes of the Moon are not unknown throughout the glacial plains of Iceland. The weather is not detrimental to their nature, nor is the population density a drawback for them. In fact, the Tribes can be partial to Iceland's vastness and bleakness, especially in the central and eastern parts where rugged farmsteads and fishing villagers are more the norm than in the peninsula around Reykjavik. The Uratha are not particularly discouraged by the cold, either.

No, there are different reasons for werewolves to avoid Iceland: bad spirits. The island is full of nasty spirits, and it's not entirely clear why. Some say it's a reflection of the violence inherent in the early settlers. Others theorize that, much like the various Diasporas in the physical world over the centuries, the Spirit Realm surrounding Iceland have been a generous host to all the disaffected spirits, both good and bad, from the warring bands in the Otherworld. Like the United States was for immigrants during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, so too was Iceland for the emigrating spirits. One final postulate is that this land has always been home to a high density of spiritual beings, especially in the millennia before Iceland's settlement; thus, humanity was only able to colonize the island during a particularly weak time for the spirits.

Regardless of *how* the spirits got here, the fact remains that Iceland has a remarkably high proportion of spirits and spirit-dwellers within both the physical and Shadow realms. Most of Iceland's human population actively believes in the spirit realm, despite the



culture's relative unfavorable position towards organized religion. Christianity, and its subsequent belief in the preternatural, might have a tentative hold on the populace of Iceland, but belief in spirits and ghosts is beyond rampant.

As a result, only the most ambitious (and generally, younger) Uratha tribes venture into the wilds of Iceland for any extended period of time. Some Tribes of the Moon have hunting grounds in the Reykjavik area (particularly the Storm Lords), but the rest of the island is viewed as more of a dangerous wilderness than a feasible stretch for keeping one's domain. For young werewolves, this spells adventure. For those who survive in these lands, it means a place to never visit again.

The Shadow Realm of Iceland and its relation to the Tribes of the Moon is explained in more detail in Chapter 4: The Land of Ice and Snow.

Mages

For mages, Iceland is either a lost paradise or the Abyss itself. The island can be a blessing in snowy disguise to orders and cabals wishing to test their Art in the pervasive wonders of the land. But it can also be a harsh environment for the Awakened, as reality is already in an odd state of flux in this island, and magical Paradoxes are more common (and more nefarious) than anywhere else in the physical world.

Mage scholars have for years been studying Iceland for the sake of learning the secrets of its mystical energies. Alas, for centuries, these scholars have remained baffled. They know that magical power persists throughout the land in ways unheard of throughout the known world, but any effort to control or understand that power is mostly lost to them or, worse, muddled even further.

Compounding these studies are the persistent rumors and legends that pop up every few centuries from rogue scholars claiming that Iceland is one part of the former island of Atlantis. In the fourth century B.C., the Greek explorer Pytheas first mentioned a land beyond the British Isles that had eternal sunshine in the summer months (some claiming this to be a metaphor for Atlantis). This area, known as Ultima Thule, has been of interest to all sorts of occult worshippers and mystical researchers throughout human history. The Guardians of the Veil were particularly invested in the island during World War II, often clashing with German spies searching for Atlantis as a part of the ongoing Nazi interest in occult matters. Legends of a mighty battle between a cabal of Banishers and an elite cabal of Guardians are still whispered about in mage society (although the Guardians will dismiss these stories without hesitation once asked). Still, the search continues for Iceland's connection to the Atlantean tradition. Despite the hope of discovering the glorious birthplace of the Awakened, Iceland remains a land mostly devoid of all but the most obsessed mages.

More information on the Atlantean connection to Iceland can be found in Chapter 4: Land of Ice and Snow.

The Rest

What about the other denizens of the World of Darkness? Surely a land with as much myth, legend and mystery as Iceland contains a sizeable portion of supernatural citizens. And it does, albeit in its own peculiar way. Since the island is not particularly favorable for vampires, werewolves and mages, other supernatural creatures have made their mark on Iceland's landscape, namely the Lost and the Created.

The Land of Dreamers: Changelings in Iceland

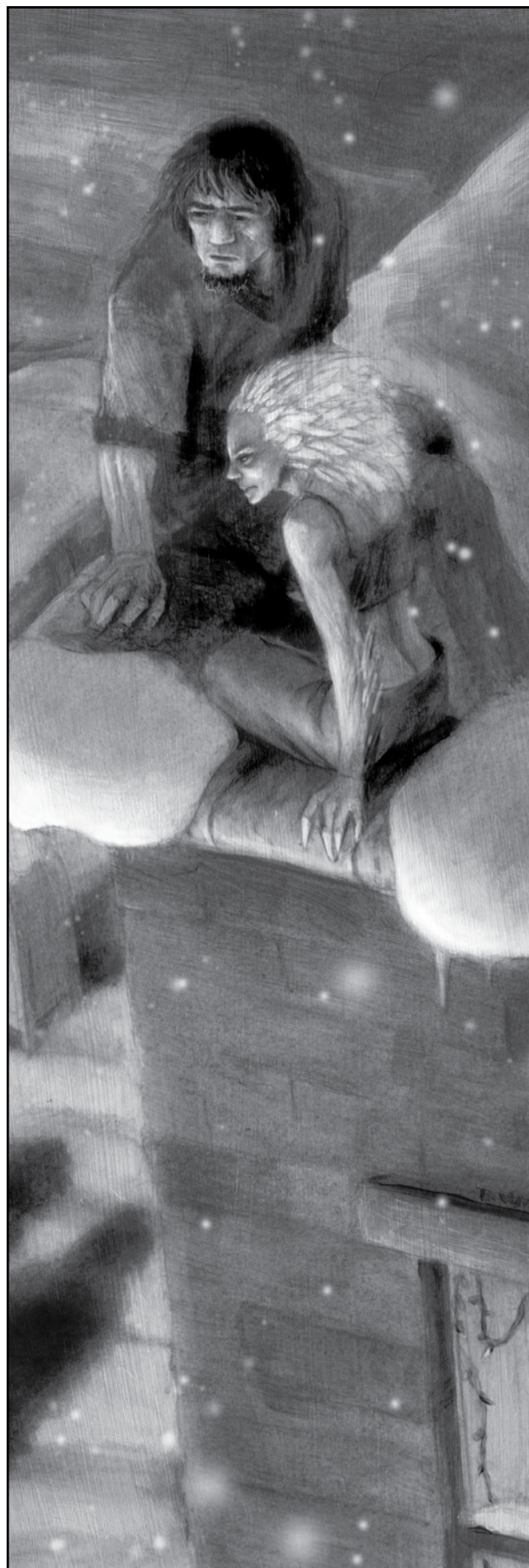
Every Mind.

a Dream Found Twice

Changelings in the modern era have taken a particularly strong liking to the freehold of Iceland. While other supernatural creatures are relatively rare, due in part to their tendency to prey upon humans to some degree, changelings have a much different role in Icelandic society. The Lost are not exactly free to unmask themselves to humans in the interest of full disclosure; humans are still mortals without access to the Wyld, after all. Instead, the odd customs and mannerisms that make changelings stand out from mortal society are tolerated more in Iceland than elsewhere in the world.

There are a variety of reasons for Icelanders relatively open-mindedness in regards to changelings. A surprising majority of Icelanders hold a firm belief in the supernatural, particularly in their cultural mythology of ghosts and faeries. Ghosts are explained in Chapter 4; faeries, on the other hand, are a little more nuanced in terms of their cultural definition (see below). Also, the Lost's continuum between beauty and madness is in full effect through the whole of Iceland. An island full of beautiful geographic fixtures such as glacial peaks, volcanic rocks, geothermal springs and glorious landscapes is balanced by the equally maddening harsh climates, everlasting darkness, desolate stretches and overall gloom. A city like Reykjavik, surrounded as it is on three sides by water, gets its name from the steam rising in the distant waters (its name translating loosely into "Bay of Smoke"), an image that perfectly encapsulates the splendor of its surroundings with its exasperating real-world interpretation. The citizens of Iceland are inundated from within and without by the sheer spectacle of their surroundings and the disturbing obstacles to their inner sanity; in every tranquil scene rests an undercurrent of madness ready to tear everything apart.

Finally, Iceland's inhabitants are better suited for changeling society because of their trust and belief in dreams. In some ways, Iceland is a dreamscape trapped in the real world, a picturesque island where the physical world is subject to the whims and abstractions of its inhabitants. Part of this perception might come from the complete deforestation of the island. Without the forests to break up the scenery, the crevices and crags of volcanic mountains and glacial plains can seem warped to ordinary observers. But the emphasis on dreams for the Icelandic people might come from something else, something they share fully with changelings: isolation. With a culture so readily removed from Western society for so long (as shown in the few variances between the medieval Icelandic language and the modern one), dreams and the sharing of them were a way for Icelandic society to remain connected to the each



The Lost Colony of Leif Erikson

After Leif's father, Erik the Red, pulled off the greatest cartographical marketing scheme in the history of humanity (Greenland isn't nearly as green as its name implies), Leif decided to follow his father's example and set out for even more undiscovered territory. Also like his father, he struck out across the ocean with a small band of tribesmen and founded a colony on an entirely new land. Somewhere in North America around A.D. 1000, Leif Erikson founded the first European settlement on that continent. From that point, however, the story gets strange.

Shortly after the settlement, the Vikings were thrust out of the land, the native peoples – described as a horrific and unnatural group by the Icelanders – attacked the colony and stole away individual Vikings. Despite the natural beauty of the land and the weird fruits available to the colonists, they left the area in a hurry, returning to Greenland and Iceland and warning others of the dangerous mysteries of that odd continent. Their colony was never discovered again.

What did the Vikings name this strange new land? Vinland, the “land of vines.” Some kith have read into this saga as a warning against the ubiquitous dangers of the Fae and the lengths they go to in order to catch their prey. Others view Leif Erikson as a legacy of the Lost, proof of one of the earlier origins of changelings and of the long tradition of kith in Iceland.

other. If part of culture is the examination of who you are and the direction you are heading, this isolation allowed Icelanders to define their lives not with other societies and their respective cultural flows, but with each other and the things they imagined.

In other words, Iceland is the mortal equivalent of a freehold: a collective of lonely souls removed from the outer society, desperately clinging together to avoid the ravages of madness inherent in their condition. Just like a motley looks after the dreams of the individual Lost, so does the citizens of Iceland use their dreams to protect themselves. Before an extended and dangerous fishing trip, an Icelandic fisherman will consult his dreams of the night before to determine the events to unfold in the near future. A farmer's wife in a farmstead near the northern coast will determine how best to plant her crops based on the auspices determined in her dreams for the past month. Children in Reykjavik spend their free time huddled in groups to discuss the wild creatures encountered in recent nightmares, determining the course of action in defeating them in the coming nights.

Faeries By Another Name

So what does an Icelander mean when she talks about faeries? Are they the pixied sprites of mischief and wonder that haunt the pastoral lands of rural beauty? Do they mean “faerie” in the same manner as changelings understand the term? Are they referring to the True Fae? Is Iceland connected to Arcadia?

The simple answer to all these questions is: Yes, yes, yes and yes. The original understanding of faeries, for the Western world, comes in part from the Norse mythology that was the basis for much of Icelandic tradition. Along with elves and dwarves, the faeries were beings to aid the gods, known as the Aesir. When Christianity came to the island, so did the established belief in the faeries. But it never died out completely; instead, a great folk tradition of faeries and elves persisted to modern times.

The longer answer, especially in regards to the latter questions, is a little more nuanced. While the faeries is Norse legend in some ways resemble the Fae of Arcadia, the similarities are only skin-deep: beauty, magic, nature, etc. While some of the True Fae might be winged sprites (albeit incredibly warped and twisted ones), the common Icelander will make no distinction between the two: To them, a faerie is either “good” or “bad.”





Thorns without Vines

What about the Icelandic understanding of Arcadia? Is Iceland in some way connected to the land of the Gentry? Where is the Hedge in a land without a forest?

Obviously, the average Icelandic citizen would have no understanding of Arcadia or the Hedge (unless they were ensorcelled or, worse, enslaved). The “faeries” that they recognize are the ones roaming free on the land, using magic and altering reality in ways not known to the physical world and existing in the beautiful landscapes of the wilds. They would have no concept of the True Fae, their twisted world or the plight of the changelings. An Icелander would also have no idea about the Hedge, either.

There are some gateways into the Hedge, however, that are more commonly known by mortals. Icelanders know these places as being particularly inculcated with “faerie magic,” and thus, if encountered, may lead the Icелander to a particularly odd place (known to Icelanders simply as “Fairyland.”)

Some common gateways (keys) to the Hedge are:

Egilsstadir: The ancient farmstead referenced in the Hrafnkel Saga. The gateway known here is a patch of fencing used to demarcate the sheep pasture.

Heimay: An island off the southwestern coast. The inhabitants of this island had to be evacuated in the 1970s due to recent volcanic activity, and it took weeks of constant prevention and surveillance to thwart its efforts of engulfing the nearby town. The gateway is located in the volcanic shelf on the island on a strip of white and blue rock amidst the black surroundings. The story goes that if you close your eyes, cover the strip of rock with your shadow and fall to the ground, you can find yourself in a strange land with lots of trees, a wonder completely different from the barren landscape of Heimay.

Sirkus: A dingy bar in Reykjavik, it is said that one of the stalls in women’s bathroom can lead a person directly away from the bar’s grime. If you know the proper knock, that is.

Dimmuborgir: A collection of lava towers in the northeastern section of the country. When the sun is just right in the sky, a small white hole opens up in the ground, just about wide enough for a person to step into. Of course, this only exists in the presence of cacophonous birds.

Brennevin: Known as the “black death,” this is the only spirit brewed in Iceland. While it is claimed that the drink is made from fermented potato pulp and caraway seeds, any connoisseur of the beverage will swear it’s made of fruits unknown to this world.

dusk court

(THE STAGGERING DOE, THE INDIGO COURT, COURT OF CONFUSION)

I can tell you this much: The only thing weirder than those fiends in Faerie is this world out here, the world we came back to.

The entire time we were in service to the Others, we pined for home; not just pined for it, but agonized about it, coveting our former homes, our former lives like they were trinkets handed out by the Jolasveinar. We acted like spoiled children on Christmas morning, unhappy that those bastard elves filled our shoes with silver when we needed gold.

Have you seen the gifts we have now? The beauty, the majesty bestowed upon us. Where the fuck is beauty here in this dingy mudtrap, huh? Where the hell is the magic and splendor of Arcadia? I tell you, Faerie wasn't the place where monsters dwelled. This world contains the true monsters, the true humans, dirty apes they are, who are ignorant of what real beauty is. We are beautiful. Time to pull the blanket out beneath them and show them where the beauty truly resides.

The True Fae are evil. Changelings hate them for what they are and what they did to the Lost: Kidnapped them, destroyed their lives, took them from their home, stole their very essence and filled them with that...stuff. Of course, this is all predicated on the belief that "home" is where the kith want to be and belong. Sure, it's a struggle to fit into the human world again, to piece together your former life and make nice with the hand you're dealt. And there's always the nagging threat of the Gentry around every corner, and the humans who you hide from because they'll kill you if they find out exactly what you are. Not to mention the complete lack of aesthetics among the uninspired masses of the world.

So why do we want to be back home again?

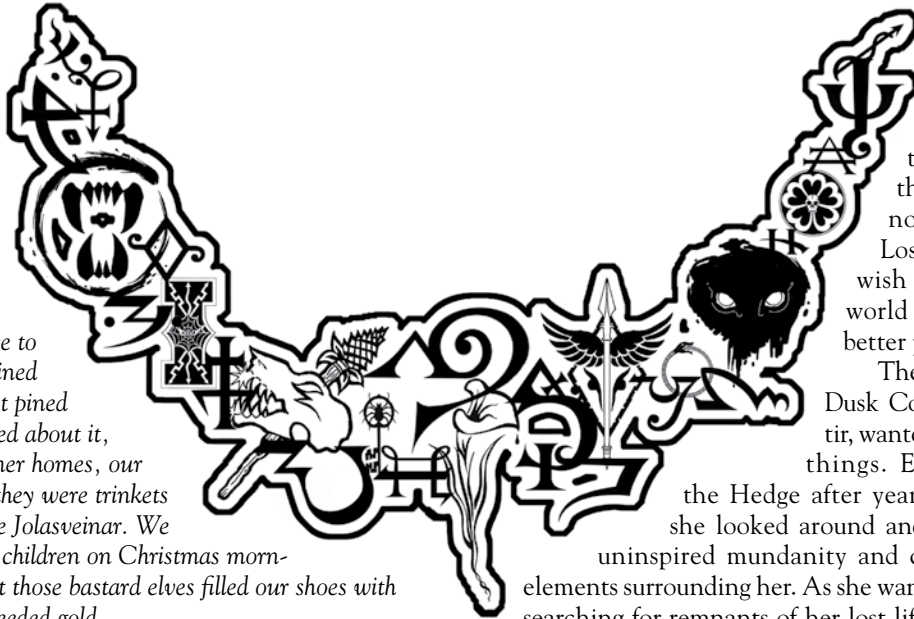
Every changeling fights their way from Faerie to their former home, escaping the True Fae in the hopes of regaining the lives stolen from them. It is as much an obsession for them as it is for the Gentry to keep them in Arcadia. Fulfilling this mania can go a number of ways once the changeling returns home (or at least as close to home as they'll get). Some kith embrace their return to the world with open arms, experiencing the wonders of the mortal realm as much as possible. Some opt to remain hidden from everything,

content to live their life in solitude, removed from the humans and the Gentry (but not their fellow Lost). Still others wish to change the world and make it a better place.

The founder of the Dusk Court, Norksdottir, wanted none of these things. Emerging from the Hedge after years in servitude, she looked around and saw only the uninspired mundanity and crass bourgeois elements surrounding her. As she wandered the land, searching for remnants of her lost life, one emotion overwhelmed her more than anything: confusion. Was this really the place she had hoped for? Where was the beauty, the splendor and the richness that she envisioned? Sure, Arcadia was no picnic, and Norksdottir had no inclination to return for good. But the place she escaped to was, well, boring.

Disappointed, she turned around, hoping to return to Arcadia through the Hedge, but stopped. Staring at her through the gateway was her captor, Jumbler, grinning and rubbing his crooked walking stick. Before he stepped through the gateway, Norksdottir mustered her Wyld, enacting a latent clause. The land around her was littered with images of changelings just like her. Jumbler stopped, confounded, and grabbed at the nearest being. No luck; his arms went straight through Norksdottir's image. He grabbed again, with the same result. Confused, he turned and walked away, closing the gateway behind him. Norkdottir had escaped her captor again.

In the world, the only inspiration that Norksdottir found was in the emerging nighttime allure of her surroundings; the glaciers of Iceland was the only thing that moved her and made her remember the reason for her return. After some time alone on the glaciers, Dusk visited Norksdottir. At this point she was incredibly lonely and wished to form a Court of likeminded kith. Dusk was unrelenting in his challenge to this, but as he was also incredibly lonely, he stayed and conversed with Norksdottir. She was a very cunning orator, and he was impressed with her speeches. By dawn, he was reluctant to leave, wishing to hear more of Norksdottir's stories. The changeling had other ideas, and instead convinced Dusk that he was actually his brother



Dawn. Dusk acquiesced, knowing that it was Dusk's turn to share the sky. Norksdottir took this opportunity to start the Dusk Court, known throughout Iceland as the Court of Confusion.

Bewilderment and puzzlement is the basis of the Dusk Court, using their obfuscation to the dark to befuddle and confuse the True Fae as they encroach upon kith society. While the Courts of the rest of the world might resort to taking up arms or outright hiding from the Gentry, the Indigo Court would rather use their skills to return the favor to the True Fae; contort their reality, twist their mind, shatter what they know. In other words, just as changelings re-entered the world in confusion, so might the True Fae.

Of course, the root of all this confusion comes from the basic disillusionment that the Staggering Does feel towards the world they once knew. They know that they cannot return to Arcadia, but in some way they prefer the world of the Gentry to that of their own. At least true beauty existed there, they argue, as opposed to the dirt and grime found everywhere else. Why should the Fae have all the good stuff?

COURTIERS

The other Courts view the members of the Dusk Court as...well, weird, if not outright blasphemous. To say the least, they do not trust them, thinking that their affiliation with Arcadia makes them all spies for the Gentry. This cannot be further from the truth. The Indigo Court hates the Gentry just as much as any other Court, if not more: After all, it was the Gentry that cursed them with the sweet tastes of heaven while torturing them in the same instant. If this world wasn't the safer place, the Dusk Court simply wouldn't be here. Alas, despite their preferences, they are stuck in this miserable dump and must make do as best they can.

While other Courts shy away from the Hedge or view it as a necessary evil to combat the Gentry, the Dusk Court views the Hedge as their primary territory. Especially for the changelings based in Iceland, the Hedge is an area where they may still taste the beauty they found in Arcadia without actually endangering their lives in the land of the True Fae. Indigo courtiers spend inordinate amounts of time in the Hedge and are more likely to have a hovel than any other Court. For them, the return to the real world (especially Iceland) is a necessity to keep from going mad altogether, a purgatory of sorts to lay low when the Hedge's thorns start to creep too closely.

Of course, staving off madness is common for changelings. But the Dusk Court has an especially difficult struggle: Some of them are already mad, or at least they're toeing the precipice. Perhaps this is the reason for their natural jadedness, as only a lunatic or a fool would prefer the wicked glades of Arcadia. But perhaps the Dusk Court just attracts the odd, the strange and the weird. Some changelings are just born fools.

Members of the Dusk Court are pernicious folk: often arrogant, certainly jaded, perplexing in the utmost. They

are not secretive by nature, but few seem to understand their motives. This is not a surprise: Often, the Indigo courtiers don't understand their intentions, either. Their confusion not only infects others, but it invades their entire worldview. Thus, they are perfect distractions in any sort of conflict. The opinion of a Dusk Court member can shed irrational insight into a dispute, or it can completely redraw the boundaries of the argument. Thus, these kith are not great leaders or negotiators, but they do indulge in those practices as much as possible. The chaos they incur is the only beautiful thing they encounter outside of the supernatural realms, and they make sure to create such havoc when they can.

Most changelings prefer to join the Dusk Court after a long dalliance with the other kith Courts. Whether they are tired of the constant politicking among the seasonal Courts (as well as any other ones around the world), they grow bored of human society altogether or their Clarity has reached dangerously low levels, the various kith that comprise the Dusk Court are there to experience the wonder and joy of the supernatural world, escaping from it and its daily struggles in order to achieve that which is truly beautiful. Very few kith actually join fresh from the Hedge; those that do are generally the ones that give the impression that this Court consists entirely of lunatics and freaks (although the queen of the Iceland freehold, Queen Madda Morphos, fits this description perfectly).

RITUALS

The Dusk Court does not prefer the normal structures of kith society. They have a leadership framework, but the line between ruler and subject is blurry at best. The average Staggering Doe *might* know who their Queen is and what the basic tenets of their Court are, but soon the changeling to turn away, bored and distracted. Needless to say, the Dusk Court does not have a wide array of organized rituals established within their confines.

There is one ritual that the Dusk Court is known for, however: the Solstice Scrum. Not so much a ritual as it is a calling, an urging for every member of the Court to celebrate the one day out of the year when the darkness – the only truly beautiful thing in this realm – is around the longest. Members of the kith Courts from around the world are welcome to attend, although only naïve changelings or non-Dusk Court denizens ever attend more than once or twice. For the Staggering Does, however, this is *the* event of the year.

Gathering at dusk on the glacial plains at the outskirts of Grimsstadir – Iceland's town without citizens – the attendees of the Solstice Scrum dress in their most garish outfits, usually a hodge-podge of dresses, suits, masks, shoes and accessories from the other balls and masquerades throughout the year. Once the sun's rays are completely removed from the sky, the revelry begins.

Even by Lost standards, the Solstice Scrum is beyond odd, bordering on the violent. Some have described the Scrum as little more than an awkward rave or a Victorian-era ball without significance, or the Running of the Bulls

with more ass-gouging. Generally, all these descriptions fit the event, at least in some way. However, the Scrum tends to change dramatically with each year, thus resisting easy classification.

Some details can be gleaned about the Scrum. For one, this ritual is a dance in some shape or form. A band of kith with homemade instruments, many of electronic and Wyrld-infused design, plays through the extended night, never reaching a melody or a consistent rhythm. Revelers dance, albeit in pockets and not in step with one another. Very rarely does the entire gathering move together; instead, the flow is that of a synchronized swim team performing a routine with only one third of their members. And much like most synchronized swim meets, fights break out sporadically throughout the crowd.

Another common aspect of the Solstice Scrum is the ingestion of tordilum, a rare goblin fruit usually harvested only for this event. There are no medicinal or other benefits of this fruit, and its taste is downright disgusting. But to the Dusk Court members, this fruit is a delicacy and is devoured with gusto. Described as “an acquired taste,” the flavor of the tordilum is akin to hakari (shark fermented

in ammonia), an Icelandic delicacy. Of course, it isn’t the flavor that attracts kith to this fruit. If a changeling eats enough tordilum, she is likely to “see beauty in everything,” codespeak among changelings for the psychotropic effects of tordilum. This goblin fruit eclipses the effects of Ecstasy, combining the sensory overload of that drug with the Wyrld-inspired visions of perfect splendor. It’s a trip beyond the scope of mortal ken, but this practice is only indulged during the Scrum. Kith coming down from this high have a tendency towards violent outbursts of affection, which in their preternaturally confused perspectives is no different from disaffected bursts of violence.

HERALDRY

The Dusk Court has an altogether different set of aesthetics than the other Courts. Their members do not mean to show off, but they just can’t help their inner nature. The courtly colors are...well, anything, really. The members of the Dusk Court very rarely wear matching colors or even analogous ones, and they offer sneers of contempt for any kith that does not “get” their fashion statements. Symbols commonly associated with the Indigo Court are a four color rectangle, a three-legged deer, a sideways question mark and two guns pointing their barrels at each other.

MANTLE

The Dusk Court does not have a Mantle. As a relatively new Court, its founder was denied the original mantle by Dusk, who either gave the

Mantle to somebody else as a mistake or simply refused to dignify the Court with one. By all accounts, the representatives of the Dusk Court have been working diligently to accrue some aspect of the Wyrld in order to grant their Court with some special powers. Of course, a gathering of the Dusk Court very rarely accomplishes anything in the first place, and thus the process has been long in the making. While their leaders attempt to fashion a Mantle for the Court, the rest feel like it is a waste of time; they don’t want one anyway.

CONFUSION

The Dusk Court, more than any other Court, excel at one thing: the spread of their associated emotion wherever they go. For them, confusion is not just a simple



emotive feeling, but a way of life. Chaos and confoundment are two of the best ingredients for revelry, and the Dusk Court members embody this spirit wholeheartedly. While other Courts tend to shy away from their primary emotion (such as the Winter Court, who hides from the sorrow they engender), the Dusk Court bandies about befuddlement in doses large enough to fill the whole of Iceland.

Bringing confusion to others – and enjoying the benefits thereof – is a matter of pride for the Staggering Does. Their very essence is that of puzzlement and turbulence; if they must feel it, so must others. To some degree, the Dusk Court doles out their emotion with a patina of malice and an underlying layer of frustration. While the emotion itself is rather mild and harmless, the Indigo Court's enjoyment of it is a little disconcerting. Nobody ever got hurt out of being confused, but too much of it can demoralize a person.

The elderly are a particularly favored target for this Court, especially ones nearing the initial stages of Alzheimer's. It is not uncommon for these changelings to volunteer at retirement communities and assisted-living homes in order to feed upon the scattered thoughts of

those afflicted with that disorder. Many kith combine their visits, which often consists of influencing others via oneiromancy with stories of childhood that never occurred, shaping the already muffled dreams into pastiches of falsehoods and whimsy, and drawing upon the ensuing chaos of the waking confused. Oftentimes, the retirement communities have another favorite target of the Dusk Court: recently graduated college students volunteering their time and good services while they "find themselves." The post-adolescent malaise is especially nourishing for the Court of Confusion.

STEREOTYPES

Spring Court: It's cute that they hold on to the dream, even though they don't pursue it.

Summer Court: Assholes.

Autumn Court: They work with powerful stuff. I like that. If only they didn't try too hard.

Winter Court: Finally! Someone who sees this place as it is: drab, depressing and bad. But c'mon, get over yourself and at least try.

