

6.7.0 Persona Presentation

Stæina



Name:

Staeina

Today's Date:

Winter of 999

Born:

I was born in the summertime in Nóregi (Norway), at the end of the rule of Hakon the Good. According to my mother, he tried to bring about the new religion, but our traditions and beliefs are strong. This failure was important because my mother, my sisters, and I all practice seið. This has been our way of life and it brings us and the people we encounter, joy, happiness, and strength.

Where I am from:

I am from Bergen in Noregi (Norway). It is a town on the coast. It is where the people come to trade goods from all over. We have access to many things including jewelry, furs, stones/jewels, animal bones and tusks, stockfish, and fine cloth. My father is a merchant in the hird (community) of one of the local chieftains. The chief often has the first pick of the items my father brings back from his travels. The chieftain of our area is a good man. He is well regarded and is indeed good to his householders. The relationship between the chief and his hird was key. The friendships ensured that the householders are protected, and the chief has the support of his people. My parents are often invited to the feasts given by the chief. Not only is my dad a highly regarded merchant, but my mother is also a special guest. My mother is a seið practitioner. She is often called to the chief's home to discuss what the future holds for the chief and the people. Sometimes the chief would ask about specific events. My mother was always very clear that the norns have shown her the path, but each person chooses to follow it or not. One is always able to make a choice. She also helps those in the community in need. Her skill in healing is well known. My mother never made a request of payment for her services because to do so would be rude. However, gifts were given to her that would both bring honor to the giver and provide payment for the service. These gifts

were also a symbol of friendship. My mother, as a healer and speaker to the 'other' worlds, the desire to maintain a good relationship was important to all who knew her.

Where I am now:

I now live in the new lands discovered by Eirik Ruada. It took him 4 summers to plan for people to come and live in the new place. He named this place Greenland. Which is not quite right, the land is covered in ice and is not well suited to a large community. The homes are like those in the homeland. The house is a longhouse, built of turf and stone. It has a central fire pit that is used to keep the home warm but also for cooking. Along the long sides of the house are raised beds for people to sit on while in the home. These are often covered by skins and fur. These long beds will also be used for sleeping. On the far end of the longhouse, there are two divided rooms. The first is used to prepare items for cooking on the open fire. The second is the private bed chamber for the head of the house. In fact, much of what we do is connected to Noregi. I have a small home on Hvalsyfjord. The chieftain is Thorkell, a relation to Eirik Ruada. Eirik is a devout believer in the old ways and needed my services. I came here with my family because it was where I was destined to be. The trip was not an easy one. We left Nóregi in var (spring). We traveled to Islandi and then on to our new home. The winds were high, and the water was very cold. There is no land between Islandi and Greenland. We left with many ships filled with people needing to find new homes due to blood feuds. When a hird loses its chieftain, it is necessary to leave the area and find a new place. Much as Eirik's father had to leave Noregi and Eirik had to leave Islandi. During our trip the weather got bad, and we lost a few ships and the people on board. By the time that we would land in Eiriksfjord we would have 25 ships.

Family:

I am a widow. I have two daughters, one who lives with me and the other who has recently married. My daughters follow in my path of seið practices. We do have a farmhand that helps with the land. My husband was a good man. We had been married for 5 summers. He was a well-respected merchant in our homeland. We lived a good life in Noregi. He would always bring back many beautiful items, such as gold and silver, pottery, fabrics, furs, and beautiful beads. He traveled to Jorvik, Hedeby, and Dublin.

After every trip he would first go to the chieftain's home. The chieftain always had first choice of the items, as he is expected to give the best gifts to his hird. It was a sad day when he did not return from his travels. I found out through a friend that my husband's ship had been caught in a storm and had smashed on the way home. Our daughters were 4 and 1 at the time. As a widow of a prominent member of the community as well as holding a special place in the community, I and my children were well received and taken care of.

Clothing:

Our clothing is the same as what we wore in Noregi. We are simple in style with a linen or wool dress. We use wool to make our outer clothes such as cloaks. My daughters and I are all skilled at creating the fabric for our clothes. We use animal skin/fur to make hoods, shoes and gloves. I adorn myself with gems and beads. I have access to these more luxury items through the gifts provided to me by my chieftain and those who seek my advice and guidance.

Occupation:

My daughters, like myself and my sisters, and my mom and grandmother and all the women of my family, we are seið practitioners. We have learned the ways of Freya and work for the betterment of our community. As seið practitioners we are healers. We know the land and the environment to aid us in healing the sick. We speak with the gods, and other realms to know the future. We are often called upon to bless newborn children and the hunt. Our livelihood is based on the desire to remain faithful to the old ways and the gods.

Important life events:

Eirik Ruada, Eirik the Red, founded this land about 13 summers ago. The blood feuds had gotten out of control, and he had been forced to leave Islandi. Life in Greenland is very different from life in our homelands. First, Greenland is such an odd name for this place. The land is covered in ice and snow, no green anywhere. Second, it is quite remote and close all at the same time. We are separated from our families in our homeland, but because of the environment here, we are physically close together.

Sailing to this land isn't easy. Many people get blown off course and never reach our shores, while others find us accidentally. The landscape is similar to that of home, the Fjords protect us from the harsh winters but also make the summers pleasant. The land is okay, but we have the skill to help make it better. The knowledge to improve barren land helped make areas more beneficial for our growing communities. We used manure and dried soil from the bogs to help improve the land. We also use pastures to grow food and help through the cold months. The land is separated into both common lands, used by all members of the community and private farms or name farms, those owned by a family. Hunting and fishing is open to everyone. There are small grazing areas, sæters, for sheep and cattle. These are used in the warmer months. Every name farm has a home and at least one byre. There are several byre's to house the sheep and cattle during the cold months.

I live in Hvalsyfjord a fjord in the eastern settlement, near Eiriksfjord. The name Hvalsyfjord comes from the animals that were seen in the area. Hvalsy are large sea animals that breathe air. There were many of these animals in the fjord. These animals are useful. The fat can be used to light a room and the meat can be eaten. The best part of the animal is that the bones can be used to make beautiful carvings. I was asked to come to this place because I am seið practitioner. Eirik is a devout pagan and believed in the old ways. For him, it is necessary to have a Seið practitioner nearby. As a practitioner of the pagan faith, it is my job to help in time of need and plenty. I am always nearby when there is a need. I make a yearly circuit to assist in what is happening around the community and I aid in the womanly rites of passage as well as the natural courses of life. This year is no different. I will attend the Jul this winter and answer the question posed by the chief. The Jul is a celebration of the winter season and lasts for several days. There is much joy and happiness, but I know that there is also concern. This winter has been difficult, and the chief will want answers. I will arrive in miðr aptarr (mid-afternoon) on the first day. I will go with my youngest daughter and enjoy the evening festivities. There will be a special feast in my honor as well as much drinking, as is customary for the feast. Being in Greenland having access to the strong water is limited. The items needed to make this drink must come from Norway. The

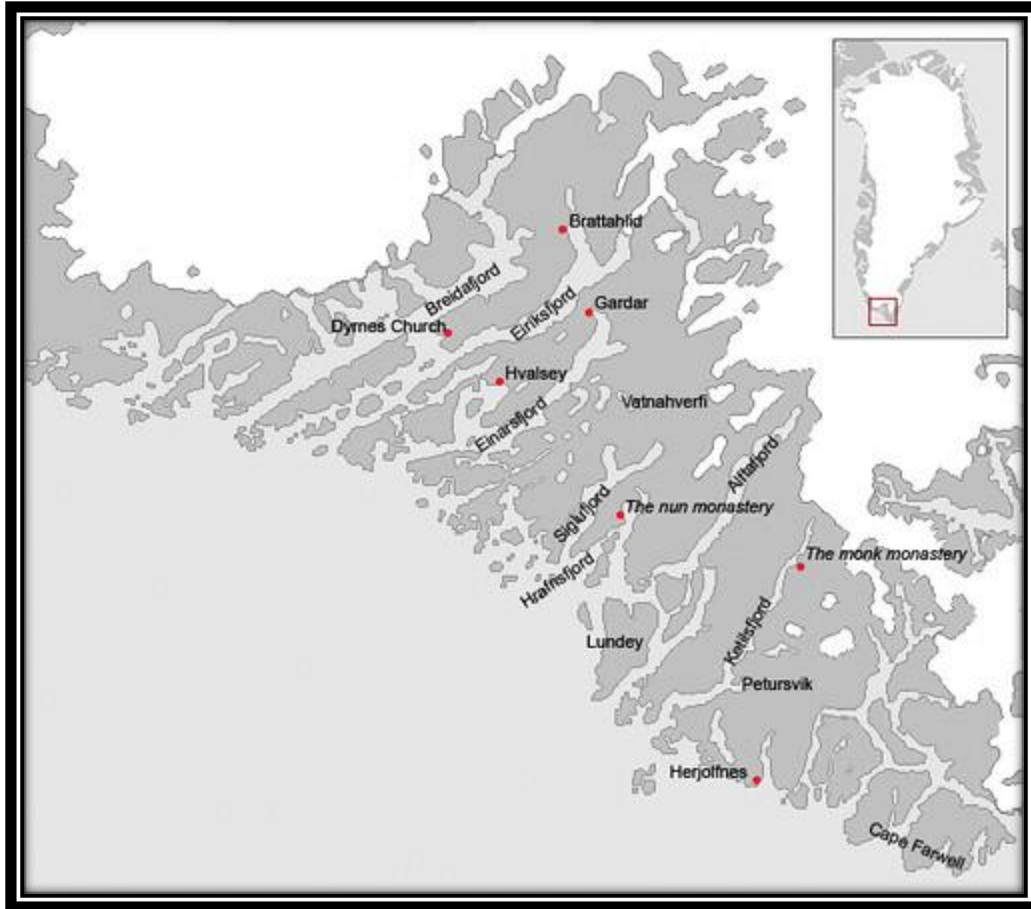
chieftain will want to make sure he has plenty on hand, as is the usual custom. It would be unacceptable to not have enough to last the three days of Jul.

The walk to the chief's farm is always an adventure here. The snow can be as high as roof tops. It is easy to get off track. We will set out before miðr aptarr, as it is only a short walk from our farm to the chieftains. The weather has been harsh this vetr (winter). Thankfully I have suitable clothes to wear. Some were made by my daughters and I, while others are gifts for my services. My dress is a linen and wool herringbone. It took several months to make. First, we had to shear the sheep and clean the wool as well as clean the flax to make the threads. It isn't a difficult process, but it takes time. Then we had to use the grenevev (weighted loom) to make the cloth. Then I would cut the cloth and sew the dress together. My cloak is made from a beautiful wool, dyed blue. It is covered in gemstones and crystals that I have been given as gifts. The gems are carnelian, crystal and garnets. The crystals are often used during rituals but also they are valuable and such a strong sign of gratitude. The gems make the cloak shine. I also have gloves made of cat skin and a hood made of cat and sheep skin. The fur of the cat is very soft. We have many cats that have come over from the homeland. They make great companions especially on the boats. Many times, the cats are needed to rid the boat or farm of rats and mice. You wouldn't think this would be a problem here because of the climate but they come on the merchant boats and the cats help keep them under control. But back to the gloves and hood. These were gifts to me as well. The love that I am shown by the people of this community is awe inspiring. I truly appreciate that the community sees value in my spiritual gifts, and I am honored to complete these services for them. However, these are not mere gifts to me, they also become a gift to the god Viðar. Viðar, son of the All Father, who will avenge the death of Odin will need leather. His shoes hold special powers. They are made from the scraps of leather we use in Midgard. Every leather object we make provides a chance to make an offering to Viðar. These offerings are then used to create the shoes that he will wear when he avenges the death of the All Father. Our connection to the gods is truly a wonder. Now while these items were given to me as gifts or payments for services, the giving and receiving of gifts is very important. We don't use coins to purchase the items

we need; we trade or barter. Everyone has a different skill set. It is easy to work together.

As we walk to the chieftain's farm, I often think of my yearly travels. Each visit is different from the last. While many want to know what the future holds for them, most are in need of care and assistance. In the time after the cold, it is likely that there will be many new little ones joining our community. As the seið practitioner in the area, the women will call for me to come and perform the rituals that help bring the child into the world. My connection to the gods and norns allows me to bring the mother and child through the birth. During the birth, I will write the secret runes on the wrist of the mother. We then will kneel on the bed and I will grasp the mothers wrists. I then pray to Dis, the god of birth. My presence is important because the norns will be there to weave the fabric of the new child's life. As each child is born into this world their fate is made known to me by the norns. Of my travels throughout the year, the birth of a child is my absolute favorite time. It truly allows me to communicate with the spirits but also allows me to connect with my community. The birth of a child is the most precious time. It reminds us that the world is amazing and full of life and wonder. While the birth of a child is the highlight, I am often called to homes to help in relieving pain and suffering. I am not able to heal everyone, and the loss of a soul is probably the hardest part of my travels. As our time in Midgard is limited, I am often called to help relieve the pain for those that suffer. It is important to know about the local herbs and understand how to give different treatments to my community. I always carry henbane with me in my pouch so that I may help. However, it is very important to remember that this is very strong and can kill you if you do not use it the way I tell you. When needed, I boil some water and steep the leaves to make a hot drink. This should be drunk over a few minutes to ensure that you do not get sick to the stomach. It is important to watch how much you drink. Most of the time it is simple aches and pains that I help with but sometimes I am called because it is time to call on the norns and release the soul to either Hel, Valhala, or Folkvanger. The end of a life is hard, but when I can help the soul on their way, it brings them peace.

As we continue our walk, my youngest daughter and our farmhand remind me that this Jul is important. The chieftain will ask questions about the drought and how we will survive the winter. Also, he and others will ask about personal matters. The celebration will take several days. This will be a grand gathering. I have heard that Eirik will be in attendance and that our host, Thorkell has been making beer. There are several things that will happen once we make it to the chieftain's home. The home will be set up with the fire roaring in the center. With long benches along the wall. There will be many furs and blankets as those in attendance will need a place to sleep at the end of each night. At the head of the room will be a special seat for Eirik and Thorkell as well as myself. My seat will have a feather pillow. We will be given food and drinks until we are ready to burst. The first night there will be many questions, but it is not the right time. There are many rituals that must take place. The first will be to enjoy the company of those in our community. As the night progresses, we will eat and drink and tell stories. Before the night is over, Thorkell will ask me about the vetr, and I will tell him it is not time. Eirik has been worried as his son Lief has not yet returned from Noregi. His concern is heartwarming. However, I know that at the end of this Jul, Thorkell and Eirik will have answers that they may not want. Before I can perform my rituals there is an important piece that requires some assistance. It is necessary to have the women in the community brought forth to sing the songs. This has become more difficult as the new ways are becoming more prominent, and many women have forgotten the songs. This is necessary because the songs will attract the spirits and the more pleasing the songs the more receptive, they will be. It is essential because without the spirits willingness to speak with me, the news will not be good. For it is this connection that allows me to speak with them and to find the truths that we in Midgard are looking for.



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