

Ijona Hykok

Backstory

Species: Drake

Sex: ♀

Age: 43

Height: 6ft 3in

Weight: 175lbs

Siblings: 1 sister 2 years older than her, and a brother 7 years older.

Relation to other characters: Ijona is Igrotzny's cousin, once or twice removed.

Cultural Notes

For much of the history of Ijona's timeline, scaled folk like herself have been largely ignored. This includes in media where they have been portrayed as monsters eating screaming women, the soldier who gets shot, minor roles such as servers or extras, or if they were lucky, a superhero's sidekick. It was only since around the turn of the century that scaled folks began to see themselves represented as politically or financially successful in media.

Draconids have an interesting relationship with caffeine. To most, it is a mild stimulant, but to drakes and other draconids, it is much more potent, on a level with high-proof alcoholic spirits or heroin, and highly addictive. It can also function as a potent painkiller. As a result, draconids have government-issued punch cards limiting them to three cups of coffee or regular size chocolate bars per month. As a result, there is a thriving black market for these products.

Many vendors of products containing caffeine in the current day use thumbprint ID as part of customers' purchasing process. Despite the ability of some draconids to shape-shift the majority of their bodies, they can't change their thumb and finger prints, so this makes an effective barrier. There are also drugs that can cause severe nausea or diarrhoea in draconids who have taken caffeine, and some therapists use this as part of their treatment, with draconid clients routinely injected before a session. If they complete a session then a low-caffeine or completely decaffeinated drink is offered at the end of the session.

There is also suspicion among draconids that they are often passed over for housing, loans, and being hired for jobs. While such discrimination is illegal in Ijona's country, scaled folk can seldom prove that it's happened to them.

Draconids are also inherently eager collectors.

There is also no universal health care in the culture in which Ijona lives.

Draconids also have to be careful when buying clothes due to their scales catching on fabrics and damaging or tearing them. As a result, many stores have an if-you-break-it-you-buy-it policy.

In addition to this, draconids shed their skins. Shedding can leave them itchy and miserable, and their vision can temporarily become cloudy. Their skins come off in patches which can get messy. Even after this is over, freshly-revealed skin can be over-sensitive. Overall, most draconids find the whole experience awkward and uncomfortable. Many

draconids happen to shed on their birthdays, so typically they move their birthday celebrations either forward or backwards to avoid them coinciding with the shed.

Early skin sheddings were often kept as a memento of childhood by parents.

Ijona is an original character existing in an alternative version of modern America where the population includes draconids and other species. She was born into a family of pub owners and grew up to be a warm, friendly and excitable drake.

Trust & Confidence

(newborn)

Ijona was born in a town called White Bear Lake, St. Paul, and raised by both of her parents. Her instinctive feeling as an infant was that her mother had the resources to look after her so she grew up with a basic feeling of trust in the love and support of those around her.

Her family ran a pub.

She has been told that she was a very quiet baby, although she did experience colic as an infant.

Freedom & Self-Determination

(toddlerhood)

Ijona's mother continued to look after her well while she was a toddler, and Ijona grew into a very kind child, including to small animals and insects. Whenever a spider, mouse, or other similar creature was found in her house, her parents would scoop it up and deposit it outside. Ijona developed the same habit.

Ijona had a sister who was 4 while Ijona was a toddler. Ijona was besotted with her and as soon as she became able to start following her sister around, she did. Her older sister hated this and would normally try to stop her by saying, "stop following me!", calling for their mum to intervene, or moving away faster or over terrain that Ijona couldn't manage.

As she started going to kindergarten she became aware that she had an older brother at home in addition to a sister. She was slower to notice him because he spent so much time keeping out her way or out of the house, and she had been so focused on either her parents, her sister or her toys, that she hadn't truly noticed him until her social 'net' expanded to manage the fact that she now had other children to build relationships with in kindergarten.

She has always liked having choices. To her, they present new and promising things, so Ijona was delighted when she developed muscular control and a more intuitive mind, and eagerly used both of these to explore her environment to see what she could find. However, she has always felt a strong pull to follow the crowd, so for example, if she wants to order pistachio ice cream and everybody else in her group orders strawberry, she will likely switch and order strawberry as well. Swimming against the tide can leave her feeling awkward and out of place.

She had little sense of danger as a small child and has a few stories to tell on that front, including about the time she found a young coral snake on her arm during a holiday in California and nearly put it in her mouth (this was during her toddler stage). As an older child she also played with lawn darts, climbed on unsafe playground equipment, drank from the hose, rode her bike without a helmet, and played in a park that later turned out to be a favourite haunt of sexual predators (although she herself was never targeted).

Ijona's parents guided her well through her early experiences, particularly with new things that were potentially more scary or dangerous, and taught her either not to fear them, or to have a healthy respect or sensible attitude towards them. Thanks to this early parenting technique she is good at being rational and measured, and is good at delaying gratification or the resolution of discomfort.

However, despite this empowered approach towards risk and danger, she is still detail-orientated. This is mostly due to her appetite for life and desire never to miss any of it, although she can also become anxious over work projects where she feels that she must not miss any details.

Ijona is cooperative by nature and always has been, but while she is not wilful, she possesses a certain stubbornness. This has more to do with protecting herself under harsh conditions than with getting her own way.

She doesn't believe she is particularly expressive and feels a certain disdain for girls who "scream at every little thing", however she does in fact have her fangirl moments.

Ijona has a trait common to most draconids, and that is a desire to hold onto her possessions. As a toddler, one of Ijona's most treasured possessions was a lion blanket that she couldn't bear to be separated from. If she ever was, she would have a tantrum. This family story is occasionally re-told even in the present day.

Ijona liked playing with toys as a toddler, and particularly loved her My Little Ponies, Smurfs, Gem and the Holograms, Pound Puppies, She-Ra, and Scooby Doo toys.

Her dad would sometimes take her out for rides on his bike, which had a baby seat. Later, she got a tricycle which she adored riding, to the point that she kept riding that for longer than her parents might have expected.

She met Xania, a lynx, in kindergarten, and they became best friends.

Starting in kindergarten, Ijona and her classmates got to enjoy a twice a week story-time. This continued all the way through until sixth grade.

When she was very small she used to be bathed in the kitchen sink. This was because the sink was conveniently baby-sized and at a height that her mother found easy to work with.

Her family had a motor home that they used to go on vacation, and in later years they traded this in for a van.

Ambition

(young childhood)

Ijona gradually became more aware of the pub in which her family worked. Her father ran the bar, her mother the kitchen, and Ijona and her siblings helped out in the kitchen with their mother.

The pub had a stage. On Friday and Saturday nights they hosted local bands, usually rock or blues. They tried to get bands who played original music wherever they could, but failing this, they hired bands who played covers. During St. Pats and Mardi Gras they hosted Celtic groups and jazz bands respectively, and on the 3rd Sunday of the month the stage would be reserved for small chamber music ensembles or local theatre. These were ticket-only events and Ijona's mother made a point of cooking specifically to please the crowd for these latter events, elevating the quality of her dishes from traditional pub fare to Michelin-level quality dishes.

As Ijona began to meet other children on a more regular or sustained basis, she demonstrated her kind-hearted nature enough that she became known for it. In fact, she had such a kind reputation that some children saw an opportunity to take advantage of it, and over the coming years she was occasionally exploited for this. However, this wasn't enough to prompt her to become less kind, and she continued to be pleasant and gentle with others regardless.

As she became more socially active at school with the other small children, she found that some, from richer families, treated her badly because her family had a smaller income. They tended to pick on her for either failing, or for the possibility that she might fail, in the future. This upset her more than she let on.

She and her classmates were still getting their regular, twice a week story-time from their teachers. While she was in fifth grade, Ijona's teacher read the class *A Wrinkle In Time*. The imagery (individuals being turned into mindless automatons with no creativity or individuality) gave her nightmares for a long time. That remained a fear for her, and she hated the Borg from Star Trek and techno music for the same reason.

Many children that Ijona grew up with learned to ride a bike quite early in life, but Ijona took a while to learn the skill. The truth was that she loved her three-wheeler and worried that if she learned to ride a bike, her dad would take her 3-wheeler away. She finally chose to graduate when she realised how awkward she looked on the 3-wheeler compared to on a bike.

She loved being active and loved biking, golf, cross country, and any other activity she was invited to take part in. Among her less-active pursuits she liked playing with plushies and making up stories.

She developed a particular dislike towards grey or rainy skies. There was plenty for her to do indoors, so this had more to do with disliking the gloomy, grey light of a rainy day. She may have had Seasonal Affective Disorder or had a vitamin D deficiency.

Ijona likes to celebrate her own achievements, but doesn't like to go over-board with this as it makes her feel self-conscious.

Ijona's ambitions were never particularly grand. Mainly she wanted to have enough money to be comfortable, to love and be loved by her family, and to be respected in the work she did. Despite this, she can be competitive, and if she does get into a spirit of competition

she will focus on that to the exclusion of all else. She has injured other people in her determination to succeed. When this happened in the past and she realised what she had done, she felt mortified.

Ijona tended to berate herself if she made mistakes, partly because her outlook was so positive and bright much of the time that she didn't expect herself to fail. When she did, she got frustrated with herself. She quickly learned to take a deep breath and try again, but she didn't tolerate repeated failures in herself, not even when she grew older. If she did happen to fail several times in a row she would get angry, sometimes bursting into tears of frustration. Quite often when this happened she would feel out of sorts for a couple of days afterwards, to the point of feeling guilty, embarrassed and nauseous.

Productivity

(older childhood)

When Ijona was old enough she switched duties in the pub, helping out in front of house with their dad instead of cooking with her mum.

This was the age where many children – Ijona included – are encouraged to be more productive and to take tasks and the first stages of their professional development more seriously. Ijona, as a drake who liked to live in the moment, resented this, as it felt to her as if seriousness was intruding on a life that had so far seemed like good fun. She made the best of it in any way she could, such as putting on music and dancing while she vacuumed. However, this meant she often didn't do a thorough job to please her parents and she would be yelled at to do it again.

Because of this switching from easy-going labour to working with a view to being productive and aware of the quality of her output, she came to lack confidence in her ability to contribute and often tried to shrink away from serious tasks. If she prepared herself properly for a task, she could contribute well, but the satisfaction of a job well done was not compelling enough to her to over-ride her resentment of having to adjust to the seriousness of the world of school or work.

Ijona had mixed feelings about teamwork. If others were on the team but didn't contribute she would feel irritated at them., and she particularly disliked it when team members talked over others. Her negative feelings about task management led her to shy away from positions of leadership as she did not want to be responsible for the failure of a task, preferring instead to play the part of an assistant, 'traffic warden' for the co-ordination of the team's workload, or diplomat instead. These kinds of roles suited her better than directly contributing to the core task.

However, she did have some positive feelings towards teamwork, since having other people to work with her on a task often made it more bearable.

She had negative feelings overall about school due to the amount of teamwork she had to take part in, and the standard of work her teachers expected of her. However she rallied when she noticed that Xania felt just as apprehensive as she did. As soon as they both realised that the other felt the same way, they smiled at each other and went through it together.

Ijona had some ideas about what she wanted to be when she grew up. Ideas included

being a veterinarian, travel guide on TV, actress, chef, zoo staff, or member of a rock band. She was also not averse to the idea of simply becoming filthy rich.

Child to Adult Transition (*adolescence*)

Despite Ijona's warmth towards other people she did not find herself in the popular group in high school. She didn't like the feeling of snobbery that came with being in a clique, and instead much preferred to hang out with the theatrical and odd crowds. Overall, she enjoyed spending time with the inclusive kids rather than the ones who tried to look cool by putting others down.

Ijona was never adversarial by nature and didn't really have anyone whom she made an enemy of. She simply chose to spend her time with the people who brought her the most joy.

She was good at cultivating friendships that brought her a strong sense of security, so she had a secure and strong network of friends. Despite her love of her friends she was good at being close without being clingy or possessive. She enjoyed having her friends visit her at home. Aside from this she enjoyed alone time and liked to read and listen to music, practice with her instruments, and to go for a stroll - sometimes to the park.

There were a few other draconids in her school but there wasn't much to encourage them to form a distinct subgroup aside from their species, so that particular subgroup remained loose and gave Ijona little to keep coming back for.

Ijona had several role models including Hathor and Ubasti, (two deities from Ancient Egypt), Aunt Daunna, Aunt Carille, and her older sister.

Ijona was part of a band in high school, playing keyboard. She also played piano for the school choir, cello in the symphonic band, and the theatre. All of this was on an informal level for her – she never took an interest in competition and simply did it for fun.

She did not practice the cello very much due to time constraints so she wasn't that good at it, and usually barely qualified for last chair. During high school theatre she normally had bit parts and walk-on roles, if any.

The band broke up after she graduated high school, and after that she found she had nowhere to play for a while. Her college already had someone to play piano for the choir so her services were not needed there. Instead, she increased her theatre involvement in college, and improved her skill with the cello. By the time she entered the college theatre she was able to take on more secondary theatrical roles with a few scenes and short paragraphs of dialogue.

Ijona had two relationships during her teens, the first when she was 15 with Topher, a raven who had moved into St. Paul that summer. He moved away a couple of years later. When she was 18 she dated Yorik, a stallion, who was an exchange student from Norway. This was not a long relationship, as he simply stood in as her prom date for the second half of the prom (her band played during the first half).

By the time Ijona was 17 she took a EE bra size. This, as well as her unusually great

height, left her feeling self-conscious about her body. As a result, she found it difficult to source clothing that fit both her chest and her height (as well as being of a material that wouldn't not quickly be damaged by her draconid scales). Usually, the best clothing she could find looked uninspiring and utilitarian to her, and she longed to be able to wear the cuter clothing made for women of 5ft 8in or smaller. She hated shopping because of this. However she didn't mind shopping so much as part of a day out with her friends.

She sometimes found that, due to her chest size, she was looked at either with disgust or lust. Since this wasn't something she could easily change, she made her peace with it by showing her dislike of anybody who thought less of her for her assets. However, this didn't stop her from feeling self-conscious anyway, and this expressed itself by Ijona feeling guilty about eating but this never developed to the point of an eating disorder.

Ijona's family had a caffeine license at the pub. When she was 16 she became curious about caffeine and tried a sample without her parents' knowledge. It didn't take much: Ijona only put a pinch of it in her mouth but that was enough to leave her buzzing. When her dad saw her, he understood very quickly what had happened since Ijona was shaking and sweating, and licking her teeth a lot, her pupils were tiny, and she was trying to act natural (which she didn't do very well at). He acted decisively to discourage her from ever doing this again: he fired her, and Ijona was stripped of her privileges at home for a month and had to write him a letter of explanation and apology to get her job back.

Closeness in Relationships *(young adulthood)*

Ijona, as previously stated, is co-operative and friendly by nature so affiliates well with others. However, others find her more effective as a team player than a leader, so she does not have the charisma to have people flocking to her.

Ijona went on a gap year at age 20 and during this, visited England where she had a relationship with a Great Dane named Daniel. She lost her virginity to him.

Two years later, when she was 22 and was attending college in Minnesota, she met Ivan, a red dragon. He manipulated her, guilted her into sex, initiated a series of chocolate box benders, became possessive of her, and unbeknownst to her, had plans of trafficking her. She didn't recognise this at first for what it was, but with the support of her friends eventually saw it for what it was. She escaped within a year and vowed never to get into that kind of situation again. However, she sometimes finds herself being used by people posing as friends and can unwittingly become an enabler to certain behaviour.

At age 23 she reconnected with Topher. They didn't realise that they had been attending the same college, and they dated on and off for a few years.

Eventually, they got married and had four children: Ijona's first two children were Rose and Tristan who arrived when she was 28, followed by Kenneth when she was 35, and finally Harriet when she was 38.

In the current day they live in Burlington, Vermont.

Given Ijona's friendliness, she has made a lot of friends over the years. She would feel overwhelmed if she kept track of them all, so over time she felt forced to pare down the

number of friendships she actively maintains to a manageable number – namely those who are local and who share her values.

For a while, she had a VW Golf and sometimes drives recklessly (including doing Scandinavian flicks), and has gotten into trouble for this.

Aside from her car, Ijona doesn't particularly like technology. She has plenty of patience with people, but she finds technology frustrating and annoying. She improved as she aged and learned how to take time out before trying again, but she is fairly tech-unsavvy and having to work with technology does still sometimes leave her in tears and pleading with the machinery to work.

Ijona dislikes Mondays and tends to work more slowly during these days, but does pick up speed from Tuesdays onwards. If she can, she will make work feel more like play but this can be difficult depending on the particular job she has to do at any given time.

As an adult, Ijona is still every bit as much an habitual hoarder as any other drake, and hates even the mere suggestion of her having a garage sale.

She retained a lax attitude towards risk, and was more often than not swayed by the attraction of living in the moment. With this in mind, while she was in college she had a few “chocolate box benders”. Although Ivan encouraged her to have them, her personality was such that she was often inclined to say yes. These binges led her to have a severe caffeine crash for the following two days.

Ijona is not – and has never been – interested in conspiracy theories.

Passing on Responsibilities

(older adulthood)

In the longer term, Ijona's main area of expertise was as a cicerone (a beer sommelier), and she moonlighted as a fantasy writer. As time went on these roles reversed and she became a full-time writer and part-time cicerone.

Ijona feels a greater sense of achievement from her fantasy writing than she does with her daytime career, and hopes that her stories will be remembered.

Her children are her pride and joy. She loves all of them and tries to divide her attention equally as much as she can, and takes a lot of photographs (to the point that her family occasionally finds this annoying).

When Rose grew up she became a scientist and the wealthy co-owner of a poultry health research firm. She never married, and Ijona supported her in this, despite the fact that she had initially assumed that her daughter would marry one day. She is quietly proud of Rose's drive, intelligence and wealth, but is also ashamed that her daughter is involved with animal testing. Rose tends to let the bottom line and her gains in any negotiation or trade rule her decision-making, over and above emotional decisions.

Tristan became an author. However, unlike his mother he became a writer of technical manuals for airport control towers. He married but divorced, and has a daughter from that relationship to whom he does not have visiting rights, and struggles to keep up with his

child support payments. He tends to need more reminders that he is loved, and Ijona feels that his ex-wife robbed him of his enthusiasm for life. Tristan's ex-wife is the nearest Ijona has to an enemy.

Kenneth became a commercial artist and logo designer, and is doing quite well for himself with this. He has a new man in his life every few months, and Ijona worries about this, feeling that he would look after himself better if he settled with just one partner (or stayed single for a while).

Harriet runs a business with her partner, making and selling pioneer period clothing and home décor for use in historical recreations, which she sells in a craft goods store. She and her partner have three children, and despite being under some financial strain due to this, leads a happy life. She is in the most frequent contact with Ijona out of all of the siblings.

Whenever there are family gatherings, Ijona flits around doing things enough that her family admonish her to sit down and join them.

End of Life

(old age)

Ijona expects to live a long life because the females in her family routinely reach 100 years with all of their faculties intact. Her mother died of heart failure in her sleep, so Ijona assumes that the same fate will befall her.

However, she seems to have inherited her mother's intolerance to certain foods and expects this situation to deteriorate, and does not look forward to a blander and blander diet as she ages.

Credits

Based on theory by:

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

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~Hayley, The Character Consultancy