

Rusalki

"Two people making love, she once said, are like one drowned person resuscitating the other."

Kafka Was the Rage: A Greenwich Village Memoir— *Anatole Broyard*

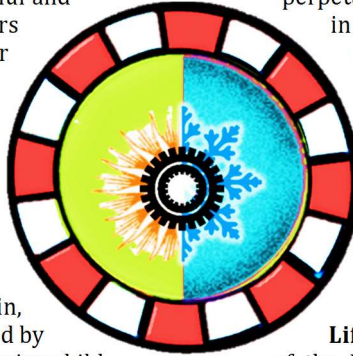
Quote: (*Winter*) "Hey there, pretty boy! Come give us a kiss! I promise you won't regret it as long as you live!"

(*Summer*) "Hail mortal, I thank you for the bread and milk, and pray your fields are as full as a Goddesses' bosom.

To some mortals, the Rusalki were beautiful and benevolent goddesses of the primeval waters who irrigated the summer crops with their magic. Ancient daughters of rivers and lakes, they would bless good farmers and sometimes even take them as husbands. To other mortals, the Rusalki were jealous virgin ghosts hellbent on coaxing young men into their icy rivers and dragging them down, down, down to the dark depths. These Rusalki were considered old ghosts of young women. They were bitter at having died a virgin, or having died unbaptized, or being slaughtered by a weak-willed lover after discovery of her carrying child. Each scenario is as bitter and dark as the last, but the angry revenant spirit to come back is lusty and vengeful and murderous in a way they never were in life.

In many ways, both were right. The Rusalki are an all-female Plemya (Kith) of beautiful water-maidens. Not quite ghosts, and not quite Goddesses, the misinterpretation is due to their fickle season-based Natures. During the Summer Months, the Rusalki are Leto (Seelie) – warm and benevolent, with a disposition as sunny as the warm skies above. These were the interpretations of crop goddesses that mortals celebrated. Yet during the winter months, the Rusalki are Zima (Unseelie) in the worst sense, cold and callous and hungry with lusty murderous intent. Their smiles and hearts are icy hard, and they do absolutely drag mortals down into the cold depths of their waters.

Appearance: In all their guises, the Rusalki are exotically beautiful in a way that can only be described as "Other." Their Okovy Lik (Mortal Mien) has tiny delicate features, small almond-shaped eyes, a thin small smile, and a slender face. Her limbs are just as slender with long thin fingers. Her Karlik Lik (Fae Mien) merely accentuates these delicate features, where she looks as if she were made of fine china and might break at any moment. There is a



perpetual dampness about her, as if she had just stepped in from a mist, and her long hair always looks as if it had just been washed. Aside from the wetness, her hair has one more feature- an indication of the Rusalki's current nature. If the hair is blonde, then it is summer, and she is in her Leto legacies. If her hair is red, then it is Winter, and her Zima legacies are to emerge. Sometimes, during the Midseasons, her hair may take on a greenish tint (especially when she is casting a cantrip).

Lifestyles: As stated before, the lives and legacies of the Rusalki are based on the seasons; Leto in the Summer, and Zima in the Winter. During the Summer months they are gregarious, helping both their mortal community and their fellow Plemya. During the Winter, they leave it all behind and take to the frozen waterways, becoming unsavory and lustful monsters. This may make it confusing for their mortal constituents, who may not quite understand how the same wonderful girl of Spring and Summer can grow so strange during the Autumn and Winter (if she even stays behind at all, some leave altogether and disappear into the wilderness). These seasonal shifts are especially trying during the few days between Winter and Spring, and Summer and Autumn, these few days sees the Rusalki completely bound to the water, unable to venture on land for more than a few hours...

Zuitbotschnick Rusalki have the worst time of their condition, but quickly learn why they must go away for Christmas.

Zverinyy Rusalki are naïve enough to want more from life, but not yet seasoned enough to know what that is- hopefully, they have a decent enough grasp of their predicament by this point. If not, things can get ugly for them and theirs.

Zerebro Rusalki are tired of running back and forth and are thinking of simply heading out into the wilds full-time. It would doubtless save them plenty of misunderstandings.



Glamour Ways: The means in which a Rusalki regains their Zhivost' is based on season. In the summer it comes from good interactions with the mortals, where gifts and greetings are exchanged- not just for the old blessings of the crops (as in centuries past) but for simply goodwill. In the Winter such comes from a mortal's fear. Being dragged down into the icy depths works on some mortals. Hunting a pretty boy through the tundra while eerily catcalling and whistling works good too.

Unleashing: Cantrips Rusalki cast in the summer months are accompanied by splashes of white light, like the sun rippling off small waves, a soft, cool breeze and the rich aroma of a dark forest. Cantrips Rusalki cast in the Winter months are accompanied by the darkening of the scene, the sound of cracking unseen ice, and the unsettling sensation of being pulled under something. Pulled under what exactly, onlookers can't say... but they know that they don't like it.

Affinity: Actor

Birthrights:

Dual Natures (*Dvoystvennaya Priroda*): More than the personality changes during the Seasons. Rusalka during the Summer gain a +1 to Charisma and +2 to Empathy. This changes in the Winter when they get +1 to Manipulation and +2 to Subterfuge. During the few days between seasons, they get nothing.

Water-Beauties (*Vodnyye Krasavitsy*): While they aren't mermaids in any sense, the Rusalki do share certain traits with. At character creation, each Rusalki begins with 2 free dots to Appearance, even if this takes them above 5. In addition, each Rusalki can breathe underwater indefinitely, can see perfectly well deep down in the dark waters, and is immune to the cold of icy waters.

Frailties:

Dual Natures (*Dvoystvennaya Priroda*): The nigh-maniacal nature of the Rusalki's seasonal dependance is harder today that it was in ages past. Most mortals don't quite know how to gauge these attractive, yet contrary, maidens. Even the other Plemya who know of the Rusalka's particular Frailty find it better to maintain a safe distance. While there isn't any hard rules for this, it should definitely be understood and played up.

Mid-seasons (*Seredina Sezona*): This Seasonal shift has an even more adverse effect between seasons. During the few days between the end of summer and the beginning of autumn, as well as the few days between the end of winter and the beginning of spring, the Rusalki is bound to the water and cannot leave their rivers for more than stamina hours. To do so means a temporary point of Okovy (Banality) per hour until they can get back in. Worse still, during these liminal times, their Dual Nature Birthright is doubled- leaving them down at least a few dice on Social rolls...

Nastia Ruzha is happy for now, but the nights are getting longer and her hair darker. Perhaps this is the best time to get her opinions?

Dvoverie: Maddingly unhappy despite their smiles. I fear that in their current state, the whole of the Karlik may be witnessed. It is sad to think about, let alone watch unfold.

Kikkimora: Poor little chicken head. It was never their fault, you see.

Leshiye: Our territories sometimes cross over into each other's, and such boundaries are difficult to maintain. With all of that, however, if you do not give an inch and maintain even composure, they will relent. I can respect that much.

Likho: It is important to know that even if you are considered a Goddess, there is a higher-ranking deity above you, simply waiting to rain some heavy judgement down on your haughty brow.

Morozko: I would prefer not to speak of these ones, thank you.

Korhorushy: Sometimes the thought of them around scares me. They are ever so mysterious; how would you know if they were even about?

Polevik: Wonderful boys, the avatars of Jarilo, you know.

Poludnica: There is room enough for many of us to be Summer-Children. But they are very jealous, and I do not think they like sharing.

Rarash: I once thought them figments of a particularly fevered dream, but now I wonder.

Ved: Wonderful friends, with all the grace of mind the Gods gave a rock. They can be counted on to not ask questions.

Vily: Sometimes we are best friends. Sometimes we are great enemies. They can be depended on to be one or the other. It is nice to have something consistent.

Vodyanoi: History tells of how we and they were once great lovers. History lies.

Zmei: I thought I saw one once. The next day he was a different person. I'm not sure what happened. But I know not to press too hard. Secrets are only secrets when only known to a few.

Boginki: So many outsiders confuse our two families. I will help to show the difference. We are the sexy ones.