

Roidh's Q&A 4

Anonymous asked Rhelki, "How come it bothers you so much that nobody can get your name right? Why do you dislike the nickname "Rel"?"

"Wait! Where's the framing narrative?" Rhelki objected.

"I got lazy and didn't want to write one this time," Roidh, the king cheetah, said from the booth.

"Seriously, it only took you four of these and already ran out of ideas?"

"No, but I must save the ones I have to make sure that I won't actually get to that point. Plus, this is the framing right here."

"The framing is me complaining about there not being any framing?"

"Precisely."

The arctic kitsune groaned and placed her paw against her forehead. "Whatever. Let's just get on with it. Aren't you the one who is going to have to explain this question anyways?"

"You're right." Roidh sighed and got into the booth next to her.

"I see you've still got your collar on." The arctic kitsune grinned.

"Yes, just for you." The cheetah stuck his tongue out at her.

"It suits you." She returned the gesture.

"That's what Celtic says. Anyways, so this is going to get a little technical with language. The basics is that Nhal has these weird things called voiceless sonorants. A sonorant is a nasal sounds like [m] or [n], a semi-vowel like [j] (the sound the letter y makes in English at the beginning of words like "yes") or [w], or a liquid like [l] or [r]. In almost every language these are voiced, meaning you engage your vocal cords to make the sound, but in a few rare languages there are also voiceless ones. Some good examples of languages that has them is Welsh and Icelandic.

"Making one of these sounds might be a bit difficult to wrap your head around since they are rather rare. First, start with the idea of switching back and forth between a voice and voiceless sound. The easiest ones are the sounds [s] and [z]. If you place your fingers on your throat and alternate between the two sounds, you can feel the difference between the two. Now, after doing that let's try and make [ŋ] from [n]. First make the sound [n]. Then try and make an [n] sound without engaging your vocal cords. If you're doing it right, you'll notice you are pretty much blowing air out of your nose without making much of a noise at all. Voiceless sonorants tend to be rather quiet. Now as you transition to the vowel sound, your vocal cords will engage and so the [ŋ] will start sounding more like a [n]. In some ways it sounds like a breathy [h] before the [n]. This is why I've used the letter h to mark these in my romanizations of Nhal words. The reason I placed the h after the letter rather than before it is merely to keep with English convention of using h as a

modifier letter in digraphs like wh, sh, ch, etc. Maybe it would be more helpful to put it before as that's what Old English did and in my notes for the Nhal language, that is how they write it.

"I'm curious what people think because I am tempted to redo a lot of my spelling conventions for fantasy names to try and make things more readable. Some examples, Kajdhyn might become Kaithün, Rhelki could become Hrelki, Manja to Maña, and so on. The other option is to start adding more non-standard characters, like Kajdhyn might become Kaiðün or Kaiðyn. In any case, I think spelling his name Kai rather than Kaj would help people pronouncing it correctly because I'm guessing most people pronounce it like [kaʒ] (rhymes with Raj) rather than [kaj] like I intended.

"Anyways, I'm getting off topic. Back to Rhelki here. Her name starts with a [r̥] which is a voiceless alveolar trill. So, a trilled or rolled r to most people, except also unvoiced. Now the Nhal language does not have a voiced alveolar approximate [r], which is the r sound that we normally have in English and that's the one that particularly annoys Rhelki here. The problem is that Nhal does have the lateral alveolar approximate [l] and to her ears the two sounds sound quite similar. So [r̥l] also sounds like [ll], and what does lel mean?" A knowing grin curled on the cheetah's lips as he stared at the far smaller fox. Her ears folded back and an embarrassed frown hung on her face.

"A turnip," she finally grunted. The cheetah began to giggle uncontrollably. Rhelki gave the cat a soft punch. "It's not funny."

"Oh, it's very funny." The feline grinned.

"Can I go now?" she pouted.

"No, but why don't you tell everyone what your name actually means?" Roidh suggested.

"Fine." She sighed. "Well, 'rhel' is the Nhal word for snow and 'ki' means little. So, it can be translated to little snow. It's also the name of a type of a small white flower the grows near my home. The plant grows in huge dense patches that cover the ground and paint it white making it seems like there's still patches of snow even in summer."

"See, isn't that part sweet." The cheetah pulled the annoyed kitsune in for a hug.

She hesitantly returned the gesture. "Yes, but you still also came up with the turnip part of the whole thing."

"Only because it's funny."

"I really hate you sometimes."

"I know. Anyways, next question is for you as well and I think you'll like it a bit more."

Paula asked Rhelki, "Apologies for the whole dress thing, Kaj told me you would find it funny, do you have any ideas of how we can get our own back on him?"

Rhelki's mood shifted as she read the question. "Glad you asked, Paula. Sorry about the whole ball thing. I know you got tricked as well in that whole exchange. At least the kit had fun.

“Anyways, I have been thinking about this. I figured you didn’t want to be involved in the whole trousers prank I pulled on him as things got rather messy, but…” her voice trailed off. The light reflected on the kitsune’s blue eyes revealing a devious gleam as she licked her chops. “I’ve got a fantastic little idea for us both to get back at that fox. I just wouldn’t want to spoil the readers at home.”

“Can I know?” Roidh inquired. Gesturing for the cheetah to lean down, Rhelki whispered into his ear and a sly grin grew upon his face as she divulged her plans. “That sounds hilarious,” the cat commented. “I’m definitely going to have to draw the outcome of it.”

Rainbow Dash asked Ochil, “UwU I like gryphons! Do you have any preference yourself who you like? And I just have to ask that one too; what are most inconvenient things resulting from having wings? It's probably a small minority that has wings! Would you say that in the end it's amazing to have them, or you would rather prefer not to?”

“Oh, I’m so excited I get to answer a question.” The gryphon bounced up and down before recomposing himself. “Well, Rainbow Dash. Wings are definitely the best. I seriously don’t know how I could live without them. There’s nothing freer than just being able to soar through the air with the wind bristling through your fur and feathers.

“This is of course not without its downsides though. There are just so many rules and regulations that come from having them. I mean when I got to university one of the first things I had to do was get a flying license for the campus. A license? Can you believe it? And now I sometimes get randomly stopped to check that I’m allowed to fly by the campus security. The whole situation is preposterous. Plus, there were all the rules and agreements I had to sign to be able to even get the thing. Like, I can’t do loops and corkscrews. It’s totally uncool. I even swear they put me on the ground floor of my building just to make sure I didn’t use my window as an exit. Completely lame.

“Then there’s the whole problem of fashion. It’s just so hard to find clothes designed for them. I actually taught myself how to sew so I can make my own clothes because all of the options for off the shelf clothing are seriously uncool. I mean, I guess here at Ækerin I could just go nude if I wanted, something I could not do at home, but where’s the fun in that. I feel like clothing can be used to enhance and accentuate the form. Plus, putting everything on display all the time leaves nothing to the imagination. It makes the whole thing less exciting in the long run.

“As for who I like? Well, there’s a lot of guys here on campus I’ve been looking at. Nothing solid has come of my hunt other than a few nights of passion, but I’ll keep trying. I’ve really got my eyes on that enfield hunk, Felix, and his current boyfriend, this white lion who I don’t know his name but is somehow even bigger and hunkier. What I do know though is that he’s a prince. Really, both of them have royal blood and are way out of my league. Plus, they’ve got each other, and I’m not the type of gryphon who is going to try and break them up just to get with one of them, yet.” He chuckled at the thought.

“Before college though, there was Elron. He’s a feathered flying serpent from where I grew up. I can’t remember a time when we weren’t friends. As we got older that friendship just became more intimate. We mutually decided to break off that side of it when we went to college though

since our schools are pretty much on the opposite sides of the world from one another.” Ochil stifled a sniffle. “I still really do miss him.”

Anonymous asked Felix, “Without spoilers, what is it like being an Enfield and how have your classes at the university changed?”

The hybrid stroked his chin thinking. “Where do I even begin?” he muttered. “I mean the weirdest thing isn’t even an enfield thing. It’s just that I enjoy exercise and working out. It probably helps that I’m good at it now. But that actually ties well into my class schedule changes, because they didn’t really change. I’ve still got the same three classes this quarter as I did before, just with the addition of a weapon training program. This is a five-day-a-week class that starts at six AM every morning. It’s a combination of strength training, cardio, and actual fighting. My major has changed since I am now enrolled in the spell-blade program instead of being an engineering student, but the classes I was taking before are still required for the new curriculum.

“I guess you’ve been rejiggering what those classes are?” Felix asked Roidh.

“More just making sure that they are all consistent and make sense,” explained the cheetah. I actually don’t remember if I’m contradicting anything of the older stuff I wrote, but as of right now I’ve got your schedule penned down as Intro to Enchanted Items, Intro to Magic, and a required writing requirement that all incoming students are forced to take. I’ll have to think about it a bit more, but I think that’s going to be it.”

“The writing one is new,” the enfield commented.

“Yeah, I’m still trying to figure out exactly what it’s going to be. When I was at college all freshman were required to take one, but they offered lots of choices for the requirement based on tons of different topics. For example, I took a class on comic books.”

“That sounds fun.”

“It really wasn’t. My professor chose some less than stellar comic reading material for us,” groaned the cat. “Anyways, we’re getting off topic. How’s just being an enfield now in general?”

“Well, I mean my hearing and smell are a bit sharper, but not that much better than a human. That’s rather common in your standard animal-folk. Having a tail and movable ears though is weird. It’s difficult to hide my emotions as they just seem to have a mind of their own.

“Bathing and having to deal with fur and feather care are a much larger pain. Plus, I’m working out now near daily so it isn’t even like I can just go days without a clean like Kaj does. You really don’t know how much easier bare skin is to wash until you’ve experienced the other side. I should really ask Ochil how he does it, but he no longer knows who I am and my one encounter trying to reintroduce myself ended with him aggressively flirting with me. Wait, can I say that? That hasn’t been written yet.”

The cheetah shrugged. “I mean you just did. Plus, it’s a rather expected outcome to the situation.”

“Ugg... I really hate that I-“

“Wait! That part is spoilers,” the cat interrupted him. “All the fun ways that you screwed up the spell will have to wait.”

The enfield groaned. “Can I go now?”

“Yeah, I think we’re done here.” the cheetah shrugged.