

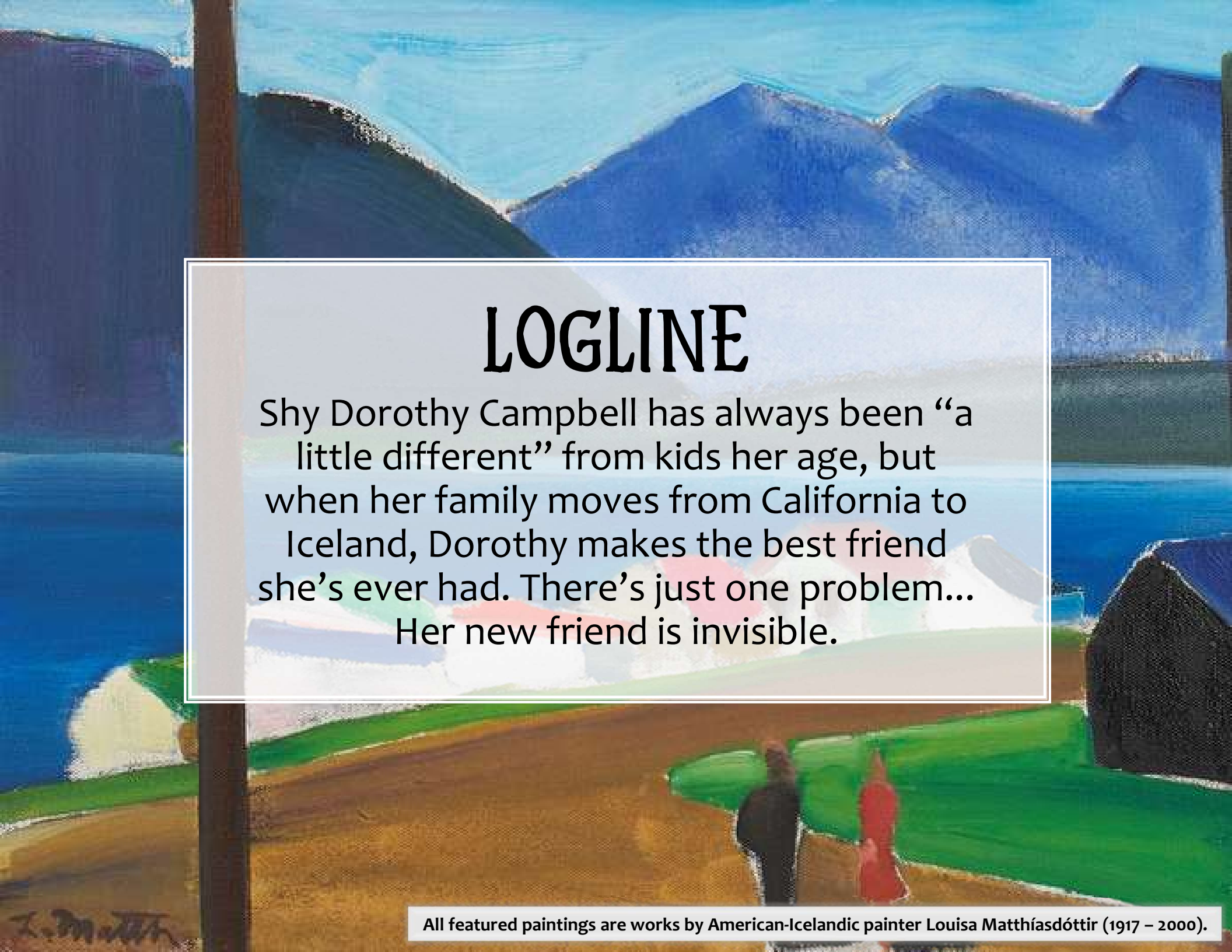
HALLÓ*

A CHILDREN'S ANIMATED SERIES



My brothers, my granddad, and me outside an Icelandic turf home in 2002.

*Halló is Icelandic for “hello” although it is more common for Icelanders to say “góðan daginn” or “good morning” (pronounced roughly goh-den dy-yin). Icelanders say góðan daginn until about 6:00 at night then they switch to gott kvöld (good evening). It’s really hard to pronounce though, and you’ll probably never need to say it anyway. A very nice Reykjavík taxi driver with a thick accent told me that.

The background of the slide is a painting by Louisa Matthíasdóttir. It depicts a landscape with a body of water in the foreground, a path leading towards a distant shore, and mountains in the background. Two figures, one in a dark coat and one in a red coat, are walking away from the viewer on the path. The painting has a soft, painterly style with visible brushstrokes.

LOGLINE

Shy Dorothy Campbell has always been “a little different” from kids her age, but when her family moves from California to Iceland, Dorothy makes the best friend she’s ever had. There’s just one problem... Her new friend is invisible.



INTRODUCTION

Imagine if your childhood imaginary friends were real. Would you have felt less lonely? More secure? When I was 5 years old, my family moved from the Mojave Desert in California to an American Air-Navy base in Iceland. Despite my large family, I spent a lot of time alone. As a shy kid, I didn't make friends very easily. I spent my recesses playing with my imaginary friend "Smiley the Smiling Mouse" – a small, purple mouse that would sit on my shoulder all day. What if Smiley wasn't imaginary though? What if he was one of the allusive "Hidden People" or "elves" that roam Iceland? What would have happened then?

A CRASH COURSE IN ELVES

AKA “THE HIDDEN PEOPLE”

If you are one of the many Americans fascinated by Icelandic culture, you’ve probably heard of their relationship with elves. The terms elf and “Hidden People” are used interchangeably in Iceland. They are magical beings, invisible to the human eye, that live their lives alongside Icelanders. The Hidden People – or “Huldufólk” in Icelandic – look identical to Icelanders except for their pointy ears. They have careers like Icelanders. They fish. They farm. They have families. They are basically average citizens... except they’re not.

They live in an idealistic parallel world where everyone is better looking. Elves’ houses are nicer. They don’t have to worry about how to provide for their children. Occasionally, elves cross into the human world where they stir up trouble or bring blessings based on how you treat them. In the human world, you can only see a Hidden Person if they want to be seen, but there are some exceptions.

Children who are more connected to nature can sometimes see elves. People who are not baptized properly are also said to maintain their psychic ability. Still, the most beautiful thing about elves is that everyone is allowed their own interpretation of them. Some people say they are tall. Some say they could fit in the palm of your hand. As long as you believe in the Hidden People, that’s what matters.



Many rocks in Iceland are believed to be portals into the world of elves.



Some Icelanders build miniature turf homes for the elves called “álphól.”



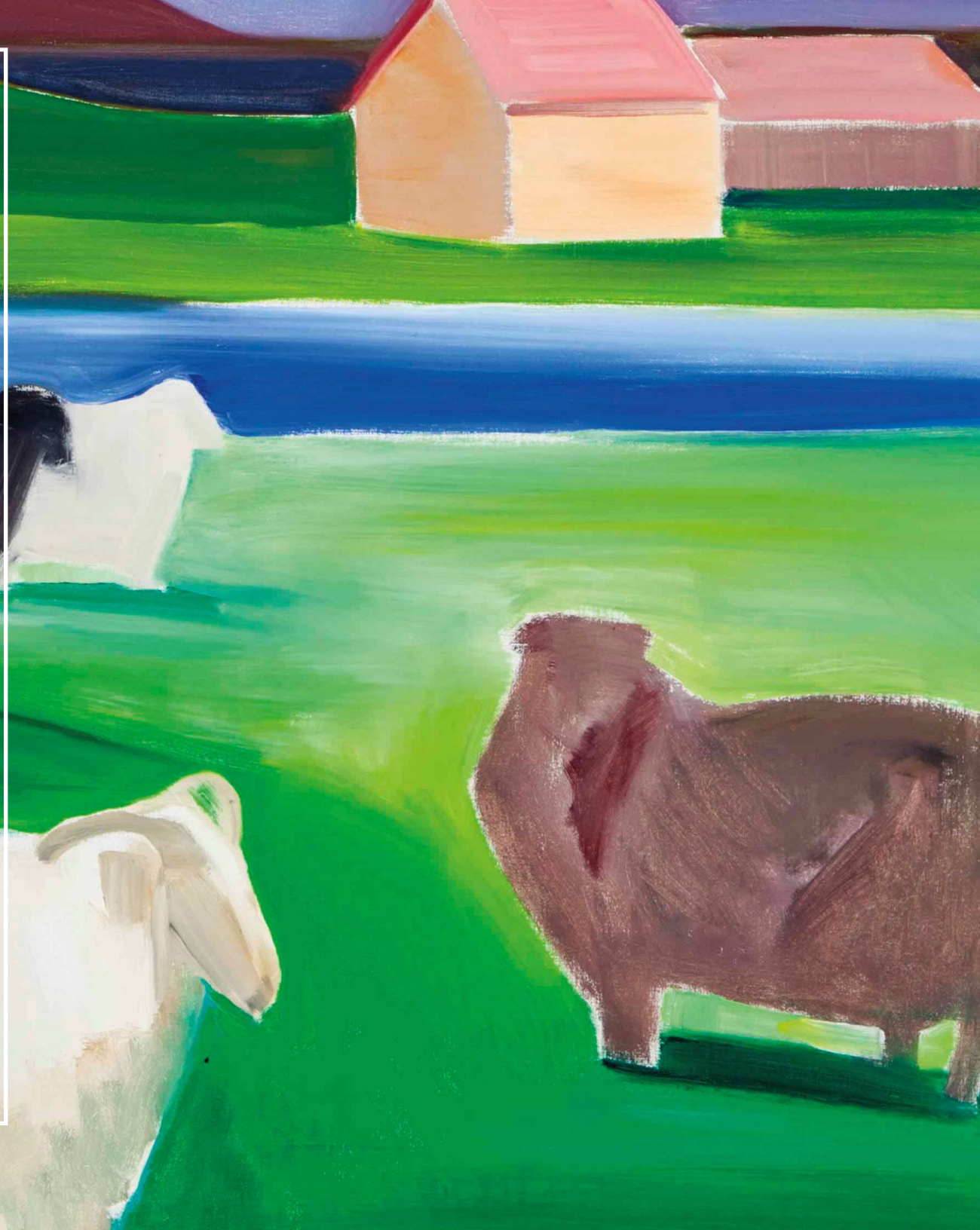
If you need help picturing the elves, J.R.R. Tolkien’s representation of elves in “Lord of the Rings” was heavily based on Icelandic culture.

SETTING THE STAGE

When most people think of Iceland, they think of the “land of fire and ice.” A place where man meets nature. Glaciers. Volcanoes. The northern lights. Puffins. And sometimes, elves. All these things do exist in Iceland (the elves debatably), but the country is so much richer and more complex than that. In medieval times, Icelanders used tales of elves to escape from their difficult lives braving Icelandic winters.

Because Iceland remained predominantly isolated until WWII, Icelanders have relied on folktales for relief longer than many other cultures have. In 1941, the U.S. set up an Air-Navy base in Keflavík, Iceland. America built roads and improved transportation in an agreement with the Icelandic government, and Iceland’s days of isolation slowly came to an end. The Air-Navy base was operational off & on until it officially closed in 2006 (shortly after my family moved back to the U.S.).

This series takes you back to 2002 when my family lived in Iceland. Americans and Icelanders lived peacefully together. Icelanders found a way to preserve their culture despite an outside country’s new influence on their home. Elf homes still stood in the countryside. The Yule Lads still delivered presents over the 14 days before Christmas. The Northern lights still lit up the night sky. I, as a young girl, got to see it all... and it was magical.



THE STORY

When the Campbell family moves to Keflavík, their 5-year-old daughter Dorothy struggles to fit in. Despite living in a loud family with 3 brothers, she spends a lot of time alone. None of her brothers are close to her age, and she doesn't make friends easily in their new town. That is, until Dorothy meets Sunna the elf.

Sunna, like Dorothy, doesn't quite fit into her world. She doesn't have a special talent like her 5 sisters, and her parents don't think Sunna will be able to find her talent in the elves' Hidden World. To make matters worse, elves who don't discover their special by their 7th birthday become **permanently hidden** to humans **and elves!** When Dorothy makes friends with Sunna, it's a no-brainer. They need to explore Iceland together.

Along the way, Sunna and Dorothy discover that family isn't the people you are born with. Family is the people you choose to love. Dorothy grows closer to her parents and brothers, and Sunna comes closer to understanding her place in the world. This is a story about growth, self-love, purpose, friendship, and family. It's about finding yourself in the unlikeliest of places with the unlikeliest of friends... and having some fun too.



MY FAMILY, CHRISTMAS 2002

THE CHARACTERS



My Oma when
she came to visit

THE CAMPBELL FAMILY

Henry (father), May (mother), Henry Jr. (11), Link (9), Dorothy (5), and Walker (1 ½)

The Campbells are loosely based on my own family. They move to Iceland from Edwards Air Force. Edwards is smack dab in the middle of the Mojave desert, and it's the exact opposite of living in Iceland. The family sees that as part of the fun though!

The Campbells all have different personalities, and they tend to clash over small things like who left the toilet seat up or whether to order a pepperoni or a cheese pizza. At the end of the day, they have a lot of love for each other. They laugh, and they're silly together. They enjoy going on trips together even if they fight over who has to sleep on the hotel couch. They're a good family if a bit complicated.



DOROTHY

- Role: The loner who's finding her place in the world
- Age: 5, going on 6
- Good Traits: Creative, imaginative, resourceful, enjoys her own company, kind, friendly, emotionally in-tune to the people she cares about
- Bad Traits: Shy, can get lost in her own head, sensitive, can't always relate to other kids her age, isn't always good at expressing her emotions

Dorothy is what you would call "a little different." She has an overactive imagination, and she can get lost in her own head for hours. She writes songs and performs them for her family. Dorothy's greatest hit debuted just before they sang "Happy Birthday" to her brother Henry last year. Over lit candles, she sang about how "fire came down and it burned up the whole town." It was a little unsettling, but cute. Henry got to eat his cake regardless.

Still, Dorothy's shyness makes it hard for her to connect with children her age. Her quirky, fun side only comes out around friends and family. When Dorothy does talk to kids her age, she doesn't know what to say. It's not that she doesn't understand other kids. She does. Dorothy is a naturally empathetic kid. If she saw a classmate crying, she would hug them until they're okay.

So much of Dorothy's world exists in her mind though. She has very complex emotions that she doesn't know how to express. Most of the time, she cries. Then her classmates or her brothers make fun of her for crying. She just really needs a friend to help her out of her shell. It's hard for Dorothy to be confident on her own.

LINK

- Role: The Arlecchino (acrobatic jokester)
- Age: 9, going on 10
- Good Traits: makes friends easily, always has something he's excited about, brings joy to every situation, laughs a lot, brave, daring, energetic
- Bad Traits: doesn't always think before he acts, gets distracted easily, easily influenced, people pleaser, isn't always good at reading other's emotions

Link is Dorothy's second oldest brother, and (secretly) her favorite brother. He is the most energetic out of the Campbell kids. Link's always climbing on the playground set or scaling their apartment's wall like Spiderman.

Like Dorothy, Link is kind and imaginative. Dorothy relates to him the most out of her brothers. They share a mutual love for all types of animals: lions, tigers, and bears, oh my! Dorothy and Link often pretend to be animals together. They crawl around like tigers, and they defend their imaginary jungle from evildoers. If it were up to Dorothy, she'd spend every day with Link.

Link is much more outgoing than his sister though, and he quickly makes friends with the other neighborhood kids. Pretty soon, Link is playing with his new friends instead of Dorothy. He also relates to their older brother Henry better than Dorothy, and sometimes, he spends time with Henry instead of Dorothy. When Henry picks on Dorothy, Link joins in. He wants to please both Henry and Dorothy, but Link isn't good at telling when he's hurt Dorothy's feelings.





HENRY JR.

- Role: The stoic older brother
- Age: 11, going on 12
- Good Traits: a child genius, loves his younger siblings, wants to be close with his family
- Bad Traits: internalizes his emotions, can get angry easily, picks on Dorothy the most, gets jealous of the attention his younger siblings get

Henry is Dorothy's oldest brother. She relates to him the least, and it doesn't help that Henry often picks on Dorothy. He gets jealous of the attention that Dorothy gets, and he believes that she's their parents' favorite child.

As the oldest kid, Henry feels a deep need to please his parents. He tries to be perfect, but it never seems like enough. When Henry was 10, he built a "time machine" that caused their house's power to shut off. Henry got banned from building time machines in their house, and his parents never told him how cool his time machine was.

Unlike his younger siblings, Henry also remembers when his parents almost got divorced 5 years ago. He internalizes his anger, and he doesn't express his feelings. Instead, Henry spends a lot of time playing video games.

He and Link enjoy the same video games, and they often compete against each other on Super Smash Bros. Sometimes Dorothy tries to play, but she's really bad at it. Despite how much Henry picks on her, he really wants to be a good older brother to Dorothy. There is nothing he wants more than to have a happy family.



WALKER

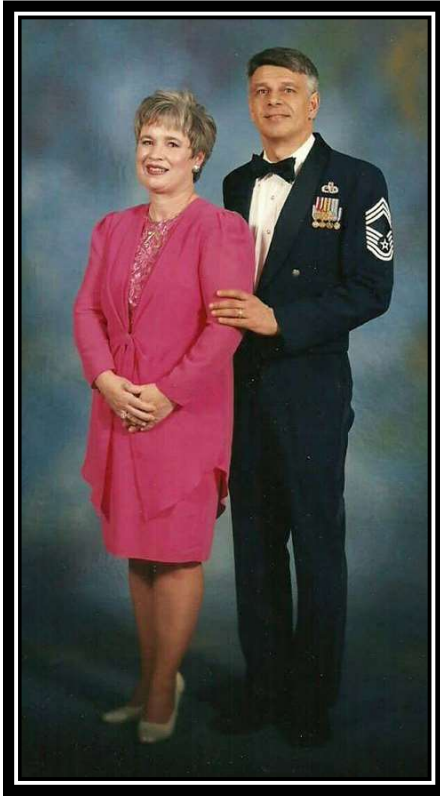
- Role: The local celebrity
- Age: 1 ½, going on 2 ½
- Good Traits: irresistably cute, happy, goofy, has all his sibling's best traits
- Bad Traits: addicted to cheese puffs, has tantrums (especially when he runs out of cheese puffs)

Walker may be the cutest baby in Iceland. His giant blue eyes could melt any heart. When Mrs. Campbell takes the kids to the park, all the local girls want to play with Walker. When Icelanders see Walker, they say “oh look, it’s little Stúfur.” (Stúfur, the shortest of the Icelandic Yule Lads, is known for his stubby legs.) Pretty much everyone who’s anyone knows who Walker is.

Walker’s a happy kid who laughs a lot. He enjoys making silly faces with his siblings. Dorothy can sometimes get jealous of Walker. She has to share a bedroom with him, and Dorothy feels like her mom spends more time with Walker than her.

Walker also naturally gets attention from anyone they meet. That being said, it’s pretty hard to hate a face that cute. Walker’s only real vice is his love for cheese puffs. If he doesn’t have a cheese puff on hand at all times, Hell will break loose.





HENRY AND MAY CAMPBELL

Henry and May met in their late 20s in a college astronomy class. They got assigned to be lab partners, and the rest is history. Henry and May love each other passionately, but sometimes that passion turns into anger. Then, they fight. They almost got a divorce 5 years ago, but they went to marriage counseling. Their love for their children kept them together though they often butt heads over how to raise their kids.

Henry believes in strict discipline and military ethics. May believes in flexible discipline, and she wants to teach their children to form their own ethics. In many ways, Henry and May prove that opposites attract. Henry is gruff and tough. May is sweet and nurturing. She brings out Henry's softer side.

With his kids, Henry loves to goof around. He convinces them that aliens live on the hill across the street. He makes funny voices to get them to laugh. As a stay-at-home mom, May creates a home for their children. She gives them somewhere they feel safe and loved. May and Henry aren't perfect, but they are wonderful parents to Dorthy, Link, Henry Jr., and Walker.

Henry

Role:	The kindhearted authoritarian
Age:	Early 40s
Good Traits:	Goofy, has a childlike side, protects his family, has a good sense of humor, believes in the importance of ethics
Bad Traits:	Strong disciplinarian, work-a-holic, fixates on small details, doesn't easily admit when he's wrong

May

Role:	The nurturing homemaker
Age:	Late 30s
Good Traits:	A naturally maternal person, would do anything for her children, forgiving, charitable
Bad Traits:	Insecure, easily hurt, becomes too focused on being a good mother, struggles to voice her opinion



SUNNA ' S FAMILY

THE FRIÐRIKSSON

Friðrik (father), Lilja (mother), Tekla (17), Sigríður (15), Bryndís (15), Ingibjörg (12), Halldóra (10), and Sunna (6)

Sunna's family is nauseatingly perfect.

Her 5 sisters and gorgeous mother embody the perfect Icelandic woman: **strong, mystical, bold, breathtaking, and determined.** Her dad is your average Icelandic man: **commanding but kind.** They dress in traditional Icelandic clothing but with an Elvish flair (silver jewelry, sparkling cloths, earthy touches). Most importantly, every member of the Friðriksson family has a special talent.

Tekla plays the Langspil; **Sigríður** is an expert fisherman like her father; **Bryndís** is gifted with a sword and archery; **Ingibjörg** is a natural teacher; **Halldóra** is a skilled shepherd; **Lilja** is a brilliant cook; and then there's **Sunna...**



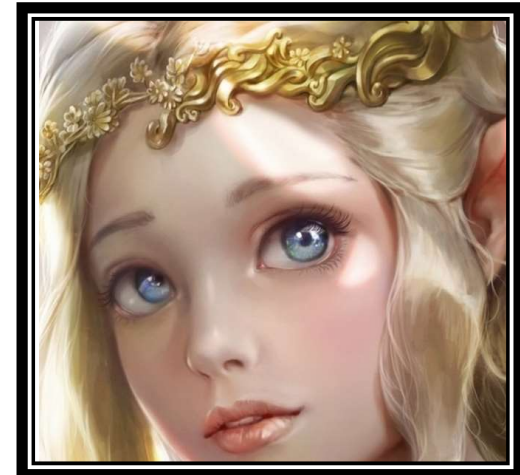
SUNNA

- Role: The courageous friend
- Age: 6, going on 7
- Good Traits: Determined, adventurous, willing to try new things, reassuring friend, projects confidence
- Bad Traits: secretly insecure, hard-headed, self-preoccupied, thinks inside the box

Like Dorothy, Sunna struggles to stand out in her family. She has five sisters who all have special talents, but she hasn't discovered her own talent yet. If Sunna doesn't discover her talent by her 7th birthday, she will become permanently invisible in both the human world and the Hidden World!

With Dorothy's help, she tries out some unique new talents like eyebrow dancing, singing with her mouth closed, and sleeping with her eyes open. Dorothy's creativity brings out the best in Sunna, and Sunna's confidence brings out the best in Dorothy.

At times, Sunna can be overconfident. She really shouldn't try jumping 20ft over a ravine on horseback if she's never ridden a horse before. Just don't try telling Sunna that. With her hard-headedness, she'll try to jump 30ft instead. It's hard to imagine that Sunna is insecure about anything, but she does really want a special talent. She'd just never tell you that.



PILOT EPISODE

The Campbell Family arrives in Iceland. While they ride in the airport shuttle to their new apartment, the kids dream of what their lives will be like in Iceland. Henry Jr. is going to be the mightiest warrior in his Viking clan. Link is going to live in an igloo with a pet polar bear. Walker is going to eat lots and lots of cheese puffs. Dorothy just wants to do all those things with her family: climb a volcano together while eating cheese puffs, go sledding as with their family's pet polar bear, and fight off an enemy Viking clan together. Moving to Iceland is a dream for them... until they get to Keflavik.

The town is bland, cloudy, and completely different from what the kids imagined. Their apartment is a boring beige color, but they do think it's cool that they live on the 3rd floor (literally anything is better than the Mojave Desert). The next day, the kids go to their first day at school. Dorothy doesn't have a lot of luck making friends. At recess, she can't get the other kids to talk to her, so she imagines the playground as a giant jungle instead. While she swings through the trees and talks to monkeys, it looks like Dorothy is just talking to herself on the swing set. This definitely doesn't help her street cred.

When the Campbell kids get home, Dorothy goes to play with Link on the crescent-shaped hill outside their house. Link's new friends want to play with him, and he doesn't want to disappoint them; so, he leaves to go to the playground. Dorothy is left alone in a new place that she knows nothing about. That's when she hears Sunna laughing. Dorothy follows the sound of Sunna's voice to an elf house that appears on a nearby rock. Dorothy crosses through the front door, and into Sunna's home in the Hidden World of the Elves. Dorothy has dinner with Sunna's family, and she learns that Sunna is the only one of her sisters that hasn't discovered her special talent yet. If that's not enough pressure, Sunna must discover her talent by her 7th birthday, or she'll become fully invisible!

Dorothy doesn't want to lose her new friend, so she agrees to help Sunna search for her talent in the human world. The two girls leave the Hidden World together, and the real adventure begins...





SEASON ONE

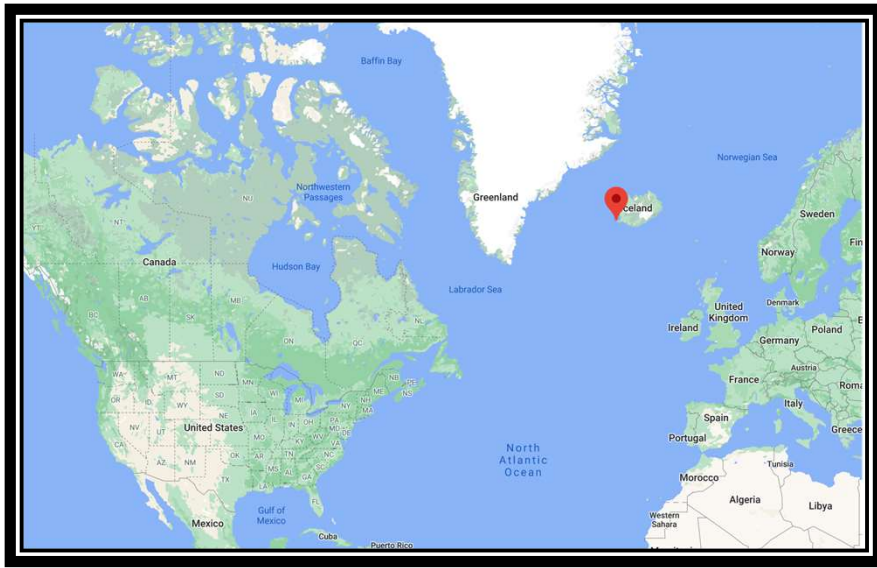
The first season focuses on Sunna and Dorothy exploring Iceland together. While Sunna sometimes takes Dorothy into the Hidden World of the Elves, they spend most of their time in the human world. Sunna experiences American holidays with Dorothy. Dorothy learns more about Icelandic culture with Sunna. The two of them are getting to know each other.

The season culminates in Dorothy going to therapy after her family is concerned that she's not adjusting well to life in Iceland. She's talking to her "imaginary friend," and she won't hang out with kids her age. Once Sunna appears to Dorothy's therapist, however, the Campbell family realizes Sunna is Dorothy's best chance at adjusting.

EPISODE IDEAS

- The Campbell family visits the Húsavík Whale Museum. The museum is closed for the off-season, but the owner gives the Campbell family a key to explore the museum anyway. Mr. Campbell insists that he knows the most about whales, but Sunna begs to differ.
- The Campbell family takes a trip to the Westmann Islands where Link gets lost scaling the island's puffin-filled cliffs. While Mr. and Mrs. Campbell look for Link, Dorothy and Sunna sneak away to meet an elf who has become permanently hidden.
- Mr. Campbell invites Dorothy to a daddy daughter dance on the same night that Dorothy told Sunna she'd go to a school dance in the Hidden World. Dorothy must decide which dance is more important to her.
- Dorothy invites Sunna's family to a joint Thanksgiving with the Campbell family. Mr. & Mrs. Campbell grow concerned when they set up a table for Dorothy's invisible friends.
- It's Christmas in Iceland, and the Yule Lads are playing tricks on the Campbell family. Dorothy and Sunna stay up all night to catch a Yule Lad in the act. When they finally do, they must convince the Yule Lads to stop pranking the Campbells.
- While learning to ride Icelandic horses with her mother, Dorothy goes completely off course. She crosses through a portal to the Hidden World, and her family struggles to find her. Meanwhile, Dorothy and Sunna have fun exploring the Hidden World on horseback.
- Dorothy is invited to celebrate Iceland's independence day in the Hidden World. At the elves' parade, Dorothy is crowned the annual "Lady of the Mountain" (or "Fjallakona" in Icelandic), but she takes her new "royal responsibilities" a little too seriously.





LOCATIONS

ICELAND

Once upon a time, the Vikings discovered Iceland, and they saw that it was good and green. Greenland, on the other hand, was icy and cold. So, the Vikings named the green land “Iceland” in order to trick other settlers into moving to Greenland. I don’t know if this story is true. It might just be another story that tourists tell, but Iceland is green in the summer. In the fall, it’s grey and rainy. In the winter, it’s cold and brutal. Year-round, winds can get up to 40mph. The sand is black. The houses are colorful. The people are friendly. Geysers burst from the Earth. Any day a volcano could erupt. Every day, Iceland is beautiful.





KEFLAVÍK (THE AMERICAN AIR-NAVY BASE)

Unlike the rest of Iceland, Keflavík is quite bland. The town was built out of necessity for American Air-Navy troops, and the only thing remotely fun about the architecture is the apartments' colorful roofs. All the residents are American although some Icelanders work in the town. If it weren't for the Nordic terrain, you could mistake Keflavík for an average American town on a bay. The only thing exciting about Keflavík is that it's in Iceland.

THE CAMPBELL FAMILY APARTMENT

Located in Keflavík, The Campbells' home is as basic as it can get it. The walls are beige. Décor is minimal. The furniture is brown. This is a short-term home in a not special, military apartment. The Campbell family is each other's home though. They give the apartment life.



PICTURES FROM OUR BORING BEIGE APARTMENT





THE HIDDEN WORLD OF THE ELVES

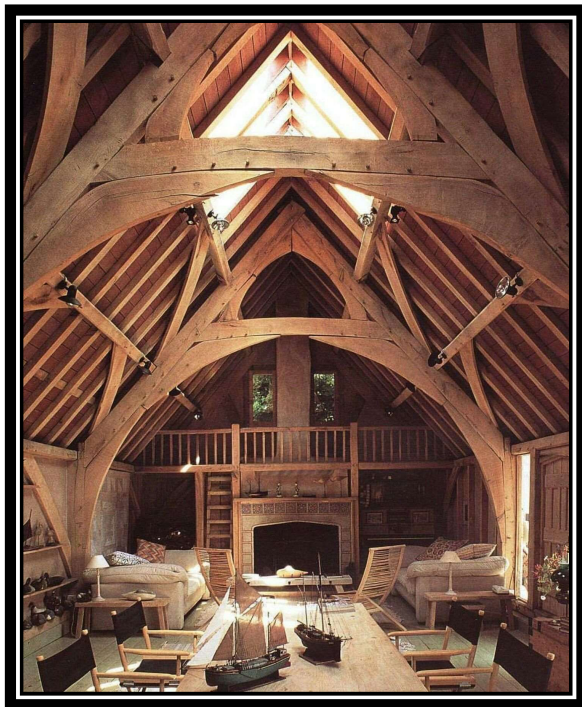
The elves' world is an Iceland tourist's dream. It's green year-round, and it represents all the best Iceland has to offer. Whales fill every harbor. Puffins nest on cliffs year-round. It's a utopia where everyone contributes. Everyone has something to eat. Elves dance in the fields. They sing. They laugh. Their houses are bright colors. Neighborhoods line rock hills like Boulogne in France. The elves are happy. All is well.

BOULOGNE-SUR-MER, FRANCE



THE FRIÐRIKSSON FAMILY HOME

On the outside, Sunna's house looks like a miniature elf home; but once Dorothy steps through the front door, she enters the Hidden World of the Elves. Everything is bigger and grander. The old meets the new. Think of Sunna's home as a modernized version of a traditional Icelandic turf home. It has high-beamed ceilings. The walls are made entirely of exposed wood, and the furniture is made from materials found in nature like animal hides and antlers. Unlike an old-school turf home, there are multiple rooms in the house, and the elves have all the modern-day amenities we enjoy – plumbing, electricity, heating, etc. It's a dream home for any Icelandic.



Modernized Viking Home

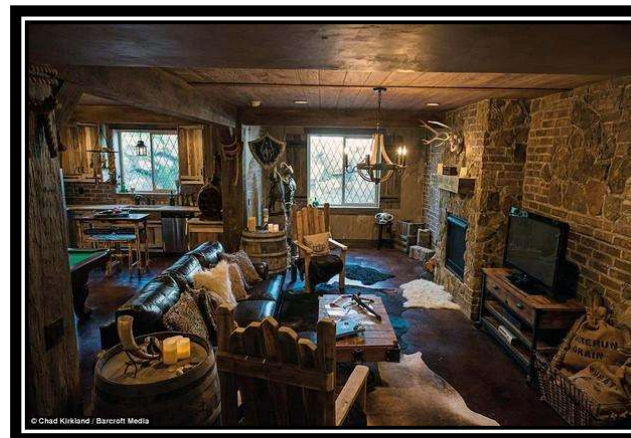


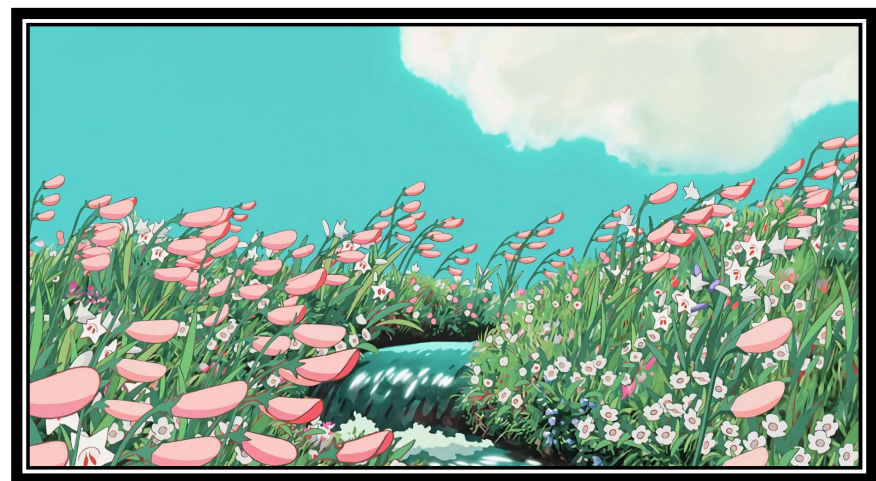
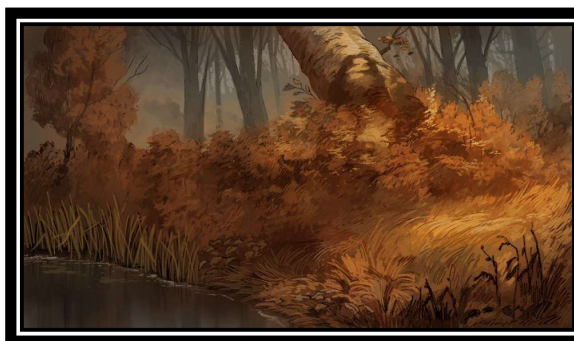
Inside a traditional turf home



Outside a typical elf home

VIKING INSPIRED DECOR





BACKGROUND ART STYLE

Landscapes will be high in detail to emphasize the beauty of Iceland's nature. Painting with watercolor will hint at the freeness of the environment. Good references are *Over the Garden Wall* and Studio Ghibli's films (both pictured above).

tone

Vibrant buildings and costume pieces stand out against dreary backgrounds and vice versa. This is a high-contrast world where the highs are high, and the lows are low. Hope can be found even in the darkest of places. In the brightest of places, nothing is quite perfect. Everything is imperfectly good.



SO, IN SUMMARY...

This isn't just a children's series. This is a series for the child in you. It's a series for the child in me. It's a hug for a young girl who had moved to a new, scary place. A young girl who was different like so many of us are. Dorothy learns that her differences aren't a weakness. They're a strength. Sunna learns that she doesn't need a special talent to be special.

Looking back, that's what I wish I could have told myself. It's okay not to be okay. It's okay to go to therapy if that's what you need. In fact, I go to therapy twice a week now. Iceland has become one of my happy places. If I need to ground myself, I picture Lake Tjörnin in Reykjavík where my kindergarten class used to feed the swans. I want to share that happy place with kids today. Iceland is beautiful and complicated like so many people. I hope that Halló is that hug that everyone needs.



Lake Tjörnin when I visited in 2016

