



## AVELON

KENT READE

A collection of illustrated short stories

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## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kent is a visual development artist. He has long been fascinated by the elegance of nature growing up in rural Southern Oregon. Living in the shadows of the redwoods, and the chiseled mountain sides left a lot of room to dream. He strives to fill that space with unique characters and stories of his own making. This sparked a fascination with armor, history, and a uniquely considered approach to the construction of characters and environments.

# THESIS ABSTRACT

## About:

Avelon is a collection of short stories, or perhaps more aptly, short chapters, accompanied by illustrations. The project is in part meant to mimic how concept artist and visual developers put together their images. I write a short story, which is analogous to a prompt someone might receive, which is then translated into an image. Aside from trying to bridge that headspace, it's about me trying to give life to a world written and visual. The narrative itself takes place in a world where magic exists, can be stored, manipulated, and even imbue objects with life. However, using magic comes at a grave price. Magic in the world of Avelon, comes from life itself. This can come in many forms, from plants, to animals, to people. Due to this price, magic creates both miracles, and myriad of horrors. When magic is extracted, the vessel from which it is drawn turn to little more than a withered husk. A fate no amount of magic can reverse. The story follows two characters: Avara and Charadin. Each character experiences great loss, and spend much of their journey figuring out how to reconcile their grief.

## Audience:

The target audience for Avelon is for people in their late teens to adulthood. Although the content is probably not directed towards people younger than their teens because of the prevalence of death as a topic. I certainly wouldn't say it excludes them. The audience is really anyone that will listen. The book is tail ended by some development work that might be more interested to those of us that perform in those spaces, but are again not exclusionary. If there was a perfect audience however, it'd likely be other creatives.

## Methods and Materials:

The production of this project, with the exception of some sketching, is all done digitally. The main tools for this project are Photoshop for illustrations and InDesign for type and page formatting. The final product is a printed 8" x 10" hardcover book produced through the company Blurb.

## Comparative Media:

Some examples of similar work are Swedish artist Simon Stalenhag's *The Electric State*, and *Tales from the Loop*. Both books feature short passages of narrative distinctly separate from the imagery. The two complement each other but do not interact in the way type interacts in a traditional picture book. The text and illustration instead compliment each other adding color the visuals created by the writing.

## Marketplace Applications:

Looking ahead, the book with it current six chapters is only a portion of a much larger narrative. With that in mind this work could be published as the first of many installments. I'd like to illustrate the rest of the story, perhaps one day publishing it as a complete anthology.

# INITIAL WRITTEN PROPOSAL

Page #1

Once a great tide flooded our world and as it crashed upon our shores our desolate rock grew alive. The rocks crackled and bellowed with life, rising from the land to create its mountains and valleys. They fought, embraced, lived, died and returned to the dirt their conflicted existence shaping our world. The waters bellowed and howled until they carved our shores. When the lands settled and life's gifts were expended there twinkled our little lives. From the rubble of the great creation the grasses and trees sprung forth carving their own place amongst the dirt and dither. As they settled their roots so too did we elves of the wood. We grew like moss among the trees, and we'd come to call our world: Avelon.

My thesis project Avelon, is designed to be an exploration of the full range of the visual development process for a new film or television series. In this case, in order to have a jumping off point for the visuals of my thesis, there will be a written outline for each character as well as the larger narrative that will take the form of a short novel. In this way, the process is quite organic as it relates to how those working in this field would typically receive information to develop the visuals of a story. This not only helps me better understand that field of art by replicating its process, but also shows any future employers how I handle that process. Ultimately what I would like to create at minimum is a library of images that encompass the main components of the story. The real bones of it. This will be sheets for the main cast of eight to ten characters; the main locations where large or important parts of the narrative take place; a few of the assets in regards to creatures and other elements that would populate this world; and some narrative illustrations that serve as key images of main events. Due to the length of what would environ the whole of the story, these elements will be limited to the first few chapters of the narrative work. These first few chapters may be included as accompaniment to the visual work.

In our world, the only real magic or miracle is that of existence itself. It's what has inspired our desire to understand the world, the sciences, and for us to look further beyond our planet off into the unending void of space as if to simply ask: are we the only ones? When formulating my narrative I considered that idea as a literal interpretation: life is magic. In Avelon, the world is indeed full of magic, because magic, or essence, is life itself. In most narratives with mystical creatures or magical systems magic often lacks economy, that is to say it lacks a price for its use. In J.R.R Tolkien's, Lord of the Rings, and The Hobbit, magic is present throughout the story. However, its costs and limits are never truly explored. In certain instances Gandalf may struggle to simply cast light with his magic, but he vanquishes the bulrag, even returns from the dead using the same power. It isn't

quantified, and is used strictly to serve the narrative, not the other way around. In J.K Rowling's, Harry Potter, magic power seems to be limited by your bloodline and will-power in combination with your wands magical disposition. However, again the scale of the magic is simply dictated by narrative need or innate power. This isn't to say that there are popular narratives that's magic usage is not without limit or consequence for its usage, but an immediate price is uncommon. In the same way that you need steel to forge a sword, or lead for munitions, there isn't a precedence for that sort of pricing of magic in popular literature. I found this would be an interesting space to devise narrative that is, to my knowledge, relatively unexplored.

If the cost of magic was indeed life itself, what could be given, what could be taken for the sake of magical power? It could be industrious, or renewable. Taking life from the forest, but reseeding it every season. It could be used to cure wounds, or wage battle. It brings up the questions of if you could do just about anything for a price what would you do? Is an entire forest worth the life of a dying friend? Would you truly give your own life for your child? In a world filled with immortal creatures how much is life truly worth versus the health of their planet?

The story primarily follows the journeys of two protagonists, an elven woman named Avara, and a man named Charadin. Avara is a diplomat that while away from her village loses everyone and everything she has ever known. Lifetimes of memories that only cut deeper when it's all uprooted so abruptly. Though kind, she becomes bitter, suspicious, even hateful setting out to avenge her people. Along the way she struggles with how her fate relates to that of her people. Does she honor their name by leaving as much kindness in the world as she can. Or does she spend her days embittered seeking a renege that may never come? Justice for her people, or honor their memory? Charadin has also experienced great loss and is burdened by the thought of failing those that gave their lives for him. The choices and outcomes of the story are designed not to simply be black or white, good or bad, heroic, or villainous. There isn't always a right choice, but perhaps there's a moral one. Perhaps one person is saved, but at great cost to the world. And sometimes, doing what's best for everyone, may even mean playing the villain.

Avara and Charadin struggle greatly with their own emotional quandaries. They constantly falter, they act rashly and yet have moments of absolute clarity. In Avatar: The Last Airbender, which is one of my favorite shows from my childhood, the story focuses primarily on Aang, and Zuko. Aang is originally the protagonist, and Zuko the antagonist and we move back and forth between seeing their sides of the story. We see their

# WRITTEN PROPOSAL

Page #2

struggles and how they change over the course of the story. We see their similarities and their differences. They both are seeking to make up for time they have lost. We see how certain convictions are strengthened and others fall away. It's distilled into what really has meaning to them in their lives. They're forced to ask, what the price of maintaining those ideals means for them and the world at large. Despite the scale of the story being a very typical "the world is at stake" sort of scenario, that becomes unimportant it's not what made it an effective story. It's these two characters' personal struggles and how their perspective are shaped by one another that makes it such a divisive story. Zuko learns that the thing he always wanted back, ultimately meant nothing to him. That his uncle was more like a father to him than his own ever was. That joining sides with his long time enemy is ultimately the way towards achieving the sort of world he wished to live in. Aang has to overcome his suspicions, and constantly grapple with his pacifism while simultaneously spearheading a war. I want to capture that essence of duality, compromise, and consequence that I think is so strongly presented in having two characters ultimately working towards similar goals from very different backgrounds. The irony of learning to love your enemy may just be the thing that saves the world. It's certainly something that even our world at large could learn from.

My visual style is primarily realistic and pulls greatly from historical reference from across the globe from medieval Europe, Edo period Japan, to the Mongolian empire, ancient Greece and many more. I've looked extensively at the history of armament and the utilitarian aspects of armor and weapon designs. How they were intended to function as well as how available materials contribute to their use and form. I use all this to inform pragmatic designs with a edge of fantastical flare. This makes my work suited perfectly for film or television designs as all the attire, structures, and objects used by the humanoid characters are something that can be created, worn, and used, in our reality with few needs for CGI.

Ultimately, what I'm trying to create is a world that could almost exist within our own if it was nudged ever so slightly into the realm of the fantastical. It has its elements of fantasy, but has designs and struggles shaped by our reality. Enough of the bizarre and abnormal to spark intrigue, with enough of reality to ground the characters' struggles in our own lives. It's an examination of what the world is, and what it could be. What greed means for us. What it means for the environment. How hatred brings out the worst in man. How the only foil to hatred is kindness and acceptance. The world becomes what we put into it, and what we take in return.

## Relics of Old Magic

~ within the world exist things with seemingly boundless essence. Beings that have existed since the start of their recorded time. An entire mountain given life. A sea that speaks. And other varied magical creatures of legend.

### Common Magics

- common magics or 'gifts' are often mending and healing based magics. This constitutes sealing a wound or gap, mending broken tools or weapons, small gaps in physical structures, but does not in most cases extend to reconnecting wholly broken or severed objects. That would require a low-level use of a grand magic.

The essence of life was once an abundant ether that spread across a barren world. The ground took life growing into grasses, trees, & flowers, the very stones took life & shaped the world's great mountains. Yet some remain, relics of a time long thought past. A mountain's anger erupting into an inferno that consumed it's life and many others.

- Essence could be used not just to aid in bodily replacement/healing, but also in enhancement. Instead of replacing an arm, adding one. Extra eyes, limbs, wings and so on. Though some of these practices could be lost to time or an explanation for the existence of races like Satirix who attached butterfly wings to themselves.

## Avalon

transforming vs transferring essence.

### Magic System

- operates on the exchange of essence.

- A limb lost can't simply be replaced by trading (life) essence. However, objects can be imbued with the essence of life. A piece of wood carved into a jointed articulate hand - you may trade essence - or even your own life's essence to imbue the hand or object w/ life. This is imbuing magic.

- There are common magics basic "magical" abilities that some races are capable of casting without the use of essence.

- There are also "grand magics" which utilize a large amount of magical essence in order to perform great magic abilities. This covers everything from literally giving sentience to an object such as a golem. Erecting powerful magical barriers or even in rare cases - resurrecting the dead. However as it is a taboo practice, & not much is known of it (particularly because it's substantial cost) it's been established that though the bodily vessel may be restored and a soul imbued - their soul may not be. Once passed, no soul can be returned to the mortal realm.

- Magic can be stored in "imbued" vessels.

- Fire, has a unique interaction within the magical system. It breaks the bonds between essence & vessels. Fire is a consuming element. When fire destroys something it "passes" the essence. The essence departs from our realm of tangibility. Essence becomes the soul of the fire - not the vessel?

- Sufficient amounts of essence can be used to create something out of nothing. Magic is typically a 'motivator' it can move, displace or consume the essence of other objects. The amount of essence required is directly proportionate to the scale of displacement.

- But what is the cost to imbue a soul? Does a small golem cost a barrel of slavers, a field? Does something of a more substantial stature cost a field, a forest, the lives of an entire village?

## Visuals

- visuals of where conflict has occurred & what the price of using magic is. Grand battle fields become browned & barren nestled against the lush greens of life.

- Similarly the visual cost of characters use of magic becomes very immediate, devastating even. Sure, you saved that person or object but here you sit in the barren lands of your own creation.

Make the Audience work for their meal. Don't give them 4, give them 2+2, make them curious. It gives them a place to engage w/ the story.



- change is fundamental in storytelling.



- Maintain interest w/ change. What happens next? not simply how does it end.

↳ create & maintain these character investments.

- Game Pitch vs Screenplay?  
- Can you invoke wonder?  
- Capture a truth from your experience.

As a resolution to being able to display magic powers, Perhaps the range of magic could be in part dictated by the cumulative power/soul-essence of the user.  
Some basic elemental/Arcane magics can be used uninhibited. However, grand magics have physical consequences. I.E. The trees to mend a grave wound, or create new sentient life.

**Villain**  
**Understanding**  
Perhaps strong magical creatures can feel the power/presence/scale of magical auras. This could resolve the 'villians' ~~inability~~ ~~to~~ reason for knowing they don't have the power to take on this "supreme presence".

**Elementals:** Beings who have given up their physical bodies entirely? Some became avarana, others have come to inhabit another vessel.



Time, Place, Genre, Technology, magic, transportation, Communication, access to information.

↓  
These are the rules, the laws of the world physically & socially. Allow these to shape your character & elements of the narrative.

↳ Consider the social structures

- Races
- Kingdoms
- Empires
- Dictatorships

↳ How is this power divided?

- Religious
- Social
- Spiritual
- Democratic
- Oligarchic

"They give me so much, but their gifts were also my greatest burden"

- how does he know what kind of power he possesses w/o using it? And should he use it, wouldn't it be gone?

Waves in the storm of life crashed upon our shores imbuing us with life.



Once a great tide flooded our world & as it crashed upon our shores our desolate rock grew alive. The rocks crackled and hollowed with life rising from the land to create its mountains and valleys. They sought, lived, died and returned to the dirt their conflicted existence shaping our world.

The tides roared & sculpted the shores and seas. When the lands settled and life's gifts were expended there twinkled our tiny lives. From the rubble of the great creation the grasses & trees sprang forth carving their own place on this rock. And as they settled their roots so did we elves of the wood. And we'd come to call this world

Avelon

## The introduction:

- what kind of problems arise in this world.  
↳ How does your character approach them?

- A powerful first line, that can set the tone/universe of the story.  
Orwell wrote, "it was a cold rainy spring morning & the clocks struck 13" implying the finite strangeness of the world & the fact that something is odd, as clocks do not strike 13.

- The introduction should & in essence be a 3 part narrative that tells us something about our character(s), how they solve problems (strength, wit, magic, conning, manipulation etc), & what their strengths & weaknesses may be by extension.

↳ In Avatar we see Aang is carefree & sunny & unknowing of the world's problems, but when the Fire nation attacks rather than engaging in combat he surrenders himself showing his resolve, pacifism, & goodwill towards others. We also see Soka & Katara's character in their willingness to persevere Aang (as well as Katara's Waterbending motivations).

- imagery is important if it establishes the visual & narrative tone of the story.

- The Hook  
- An Inciting incident (optional)



## Foreshadowing

- The Prescene: When a much smaller version of a much more important moment happens early on.

Ex: The Stag Killing the direwolves  
At the Start of *Game of Thrones*.

- The Hounds burns his Scar of Sire.

Chekov's Gun: "If in Act I you have a gun on the wall, then it must fire in the Last Act".

"A cup of coffee is not important enough to describe, unless there's poison in it."

- Implication: Typically in Act II or III such as in the *Dark Knight* Harvey Dent says, "You either die a hero or live long enough to see yourself become the villain."

- it shows the "shape" of what's to come, not exactly what will come. Which builds tension.

"Foreshadowing is Needed to Make Unexpected Events Believable."

Signature mirroring in statements or events.

## The Grand Adversary.

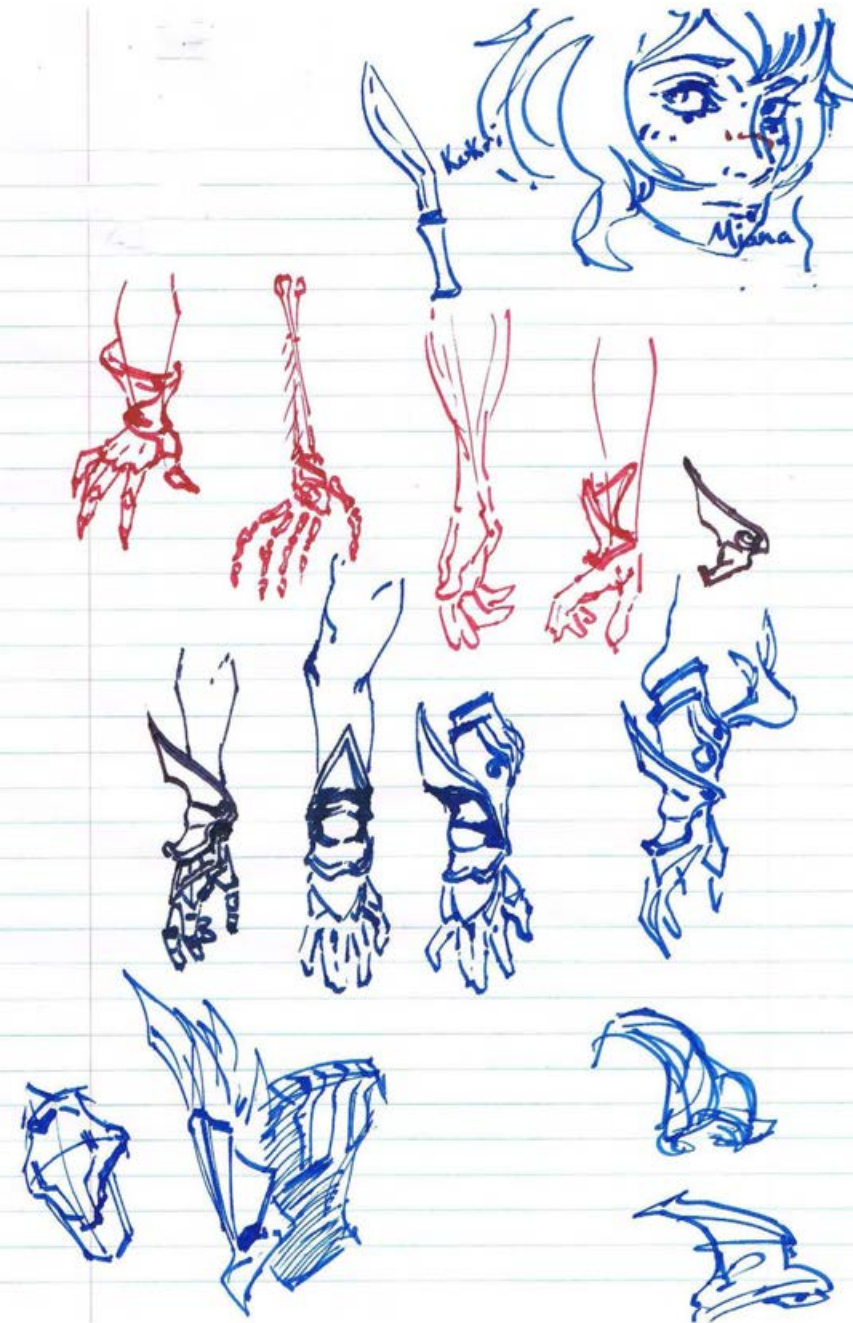
- Corruption of essence.
- Some ethereal being that is warping the fabric of the world's life essence turning them into Seral bestial versions of themselves. It doesn't change life, so much as it twists the very soul of their creation. Everything becoming warped monstrosities that actively seek to consume & corrupt all the other essence of the world.

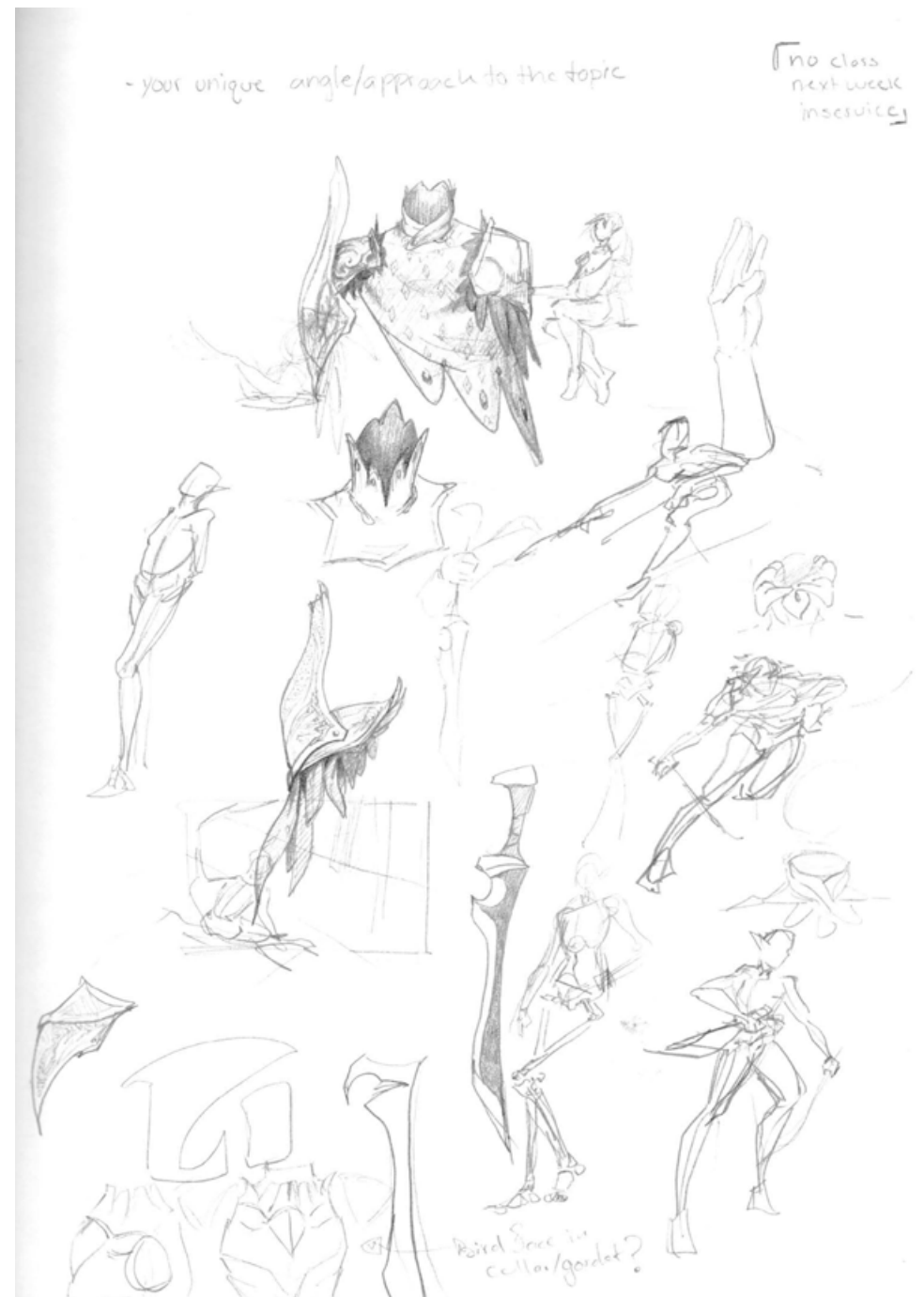


? to drain something's essence you must?  
have a greater amount?

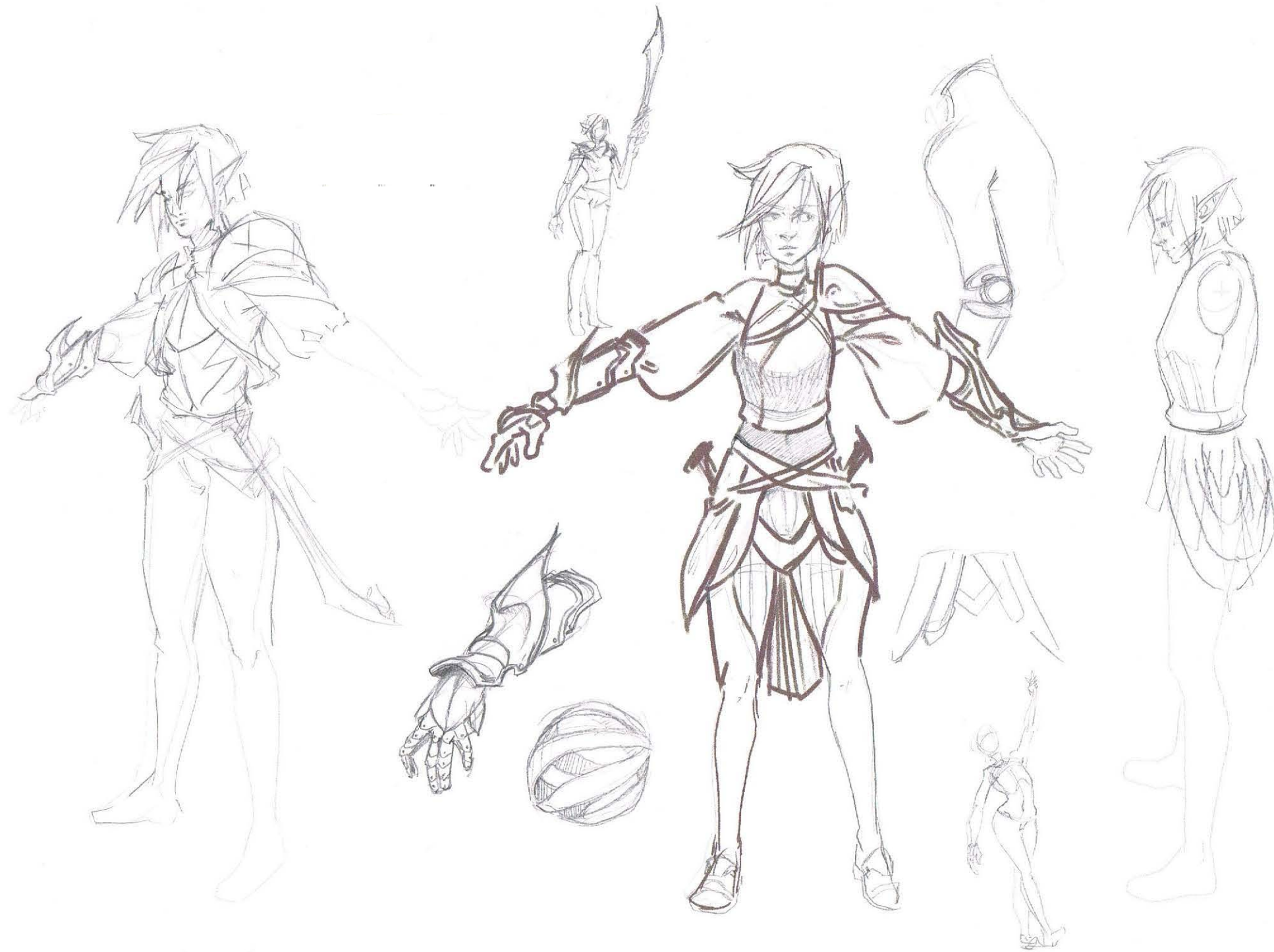
Perhaps the antagonist is also of a rare (maybe looked down upon) race. She assumes the worst of their character & their actions. It could appear as innate racism when she accuses or almost kills someone of the same race on an assumption.

- Unreliable vs Reliable Narrator. Hero vs Antihero. Huh, the single defining feature of the 'villain' from the main character/audience. For example an insignia emblazoned on an undershirt or tattoo, but then after following them on one side of the story it is simultaneously revealed to the audience & main character. This would be where the two stories collide & the realization of the villain not being all-bad & ultimately that they may have to accept that and work with them for the betterment of everyone & for the honor of the souls that have since departed for this task.



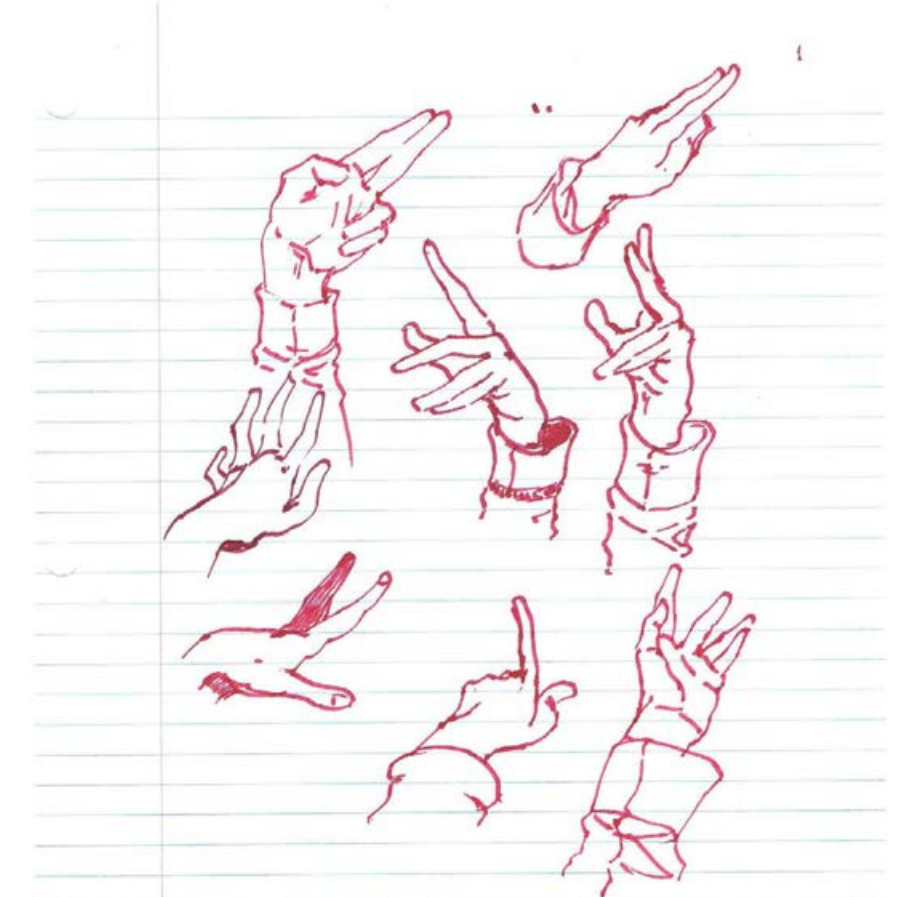


Some initial sketches of Avara..

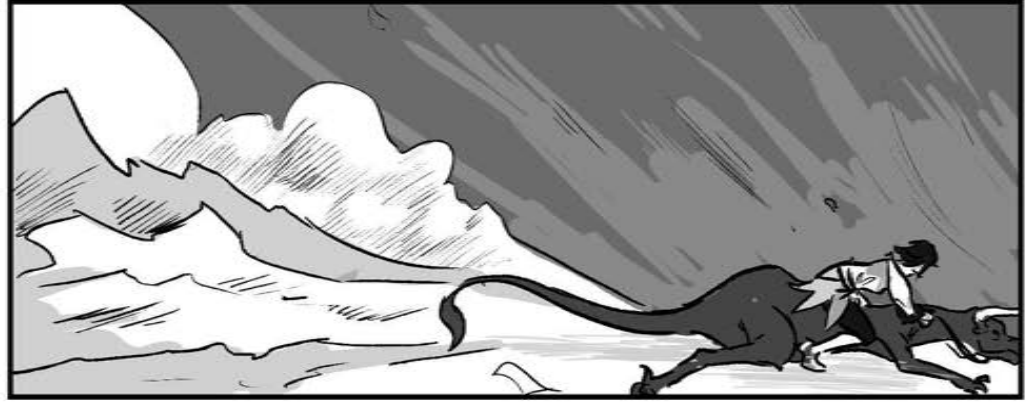
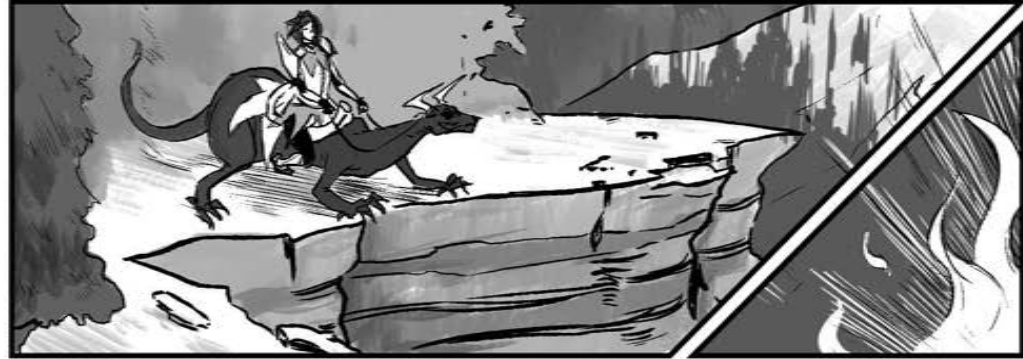


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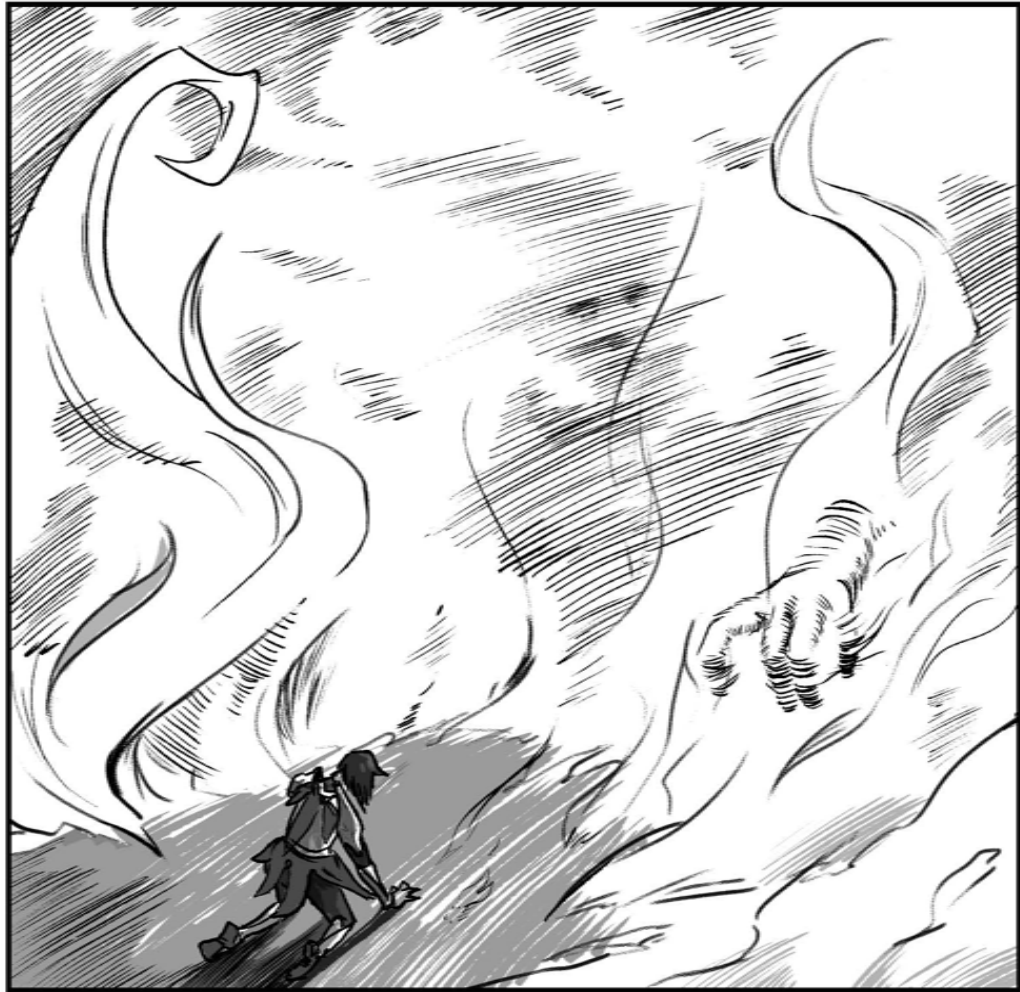
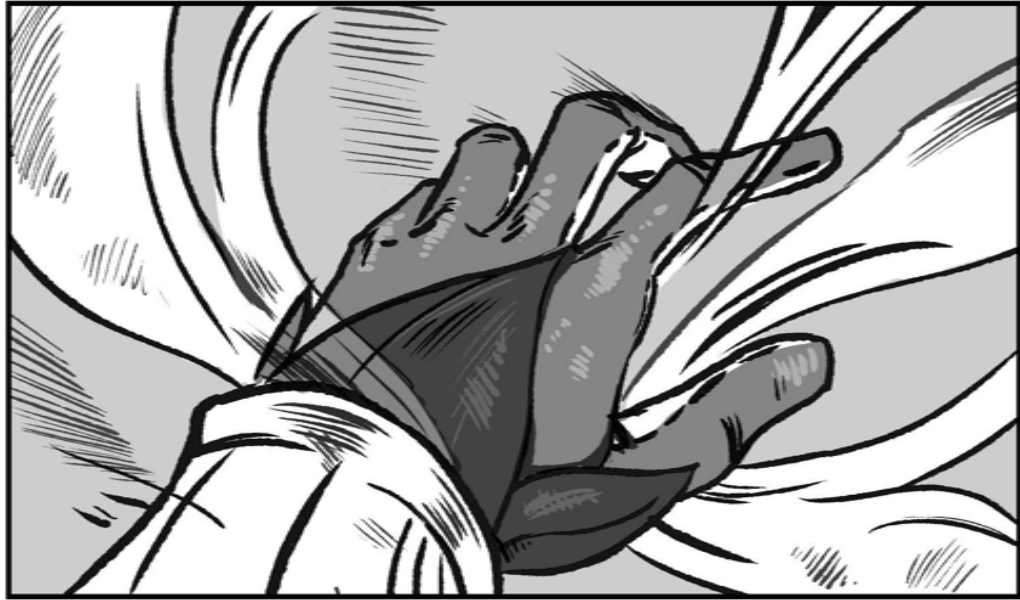


Thinking about magic..



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Greetings!

When I embarked on this journey, I had very different ideas in my head of what I wanted from this project. My book *Avelon* is only one part of a much larger narrative- and I think there will be more to come in that regard, but first I'll tell you the story of the book itself. It began with the rumination on the phrase, "life is magic," I thought about it figuratively, and literally. Where I ended up was thinking what if life was magic, or rather it's price. Would you use it? What is worth a life-- of a person, a tree, a field of flowers? Would crops be used and harvested not for food or product, but as a source of magic? What would happen if you drained the "life essence" from something? Can you bring something dead back to life?

These were some of the foundational questions I started to ask myself when formulating my narrative. Pages of scribbles and brainstorming later, I had settled on a story centered around two protagonists, Avara, and Charadin. Avara, is a "young" elven woman, that is to say a bit over a century in age, who at the onset of the story is working for the Telari (her elven people) as an emissary. She wears a half suit of armor which was typical of mounted cavalry in medieval times, which is roughly the technological age of this world. Often traveling with only her draconic steed, Daru; and quite able with her paired sword; Avara, believes herself to be very independent, but at the threshold of a great loss realized that being independent doesn't mean conquering life alone. Avara can be stern, stubborn, but not unreasonable. When able, she is a well of kindness, but the events of the story leaves her skeptical of others. She deals with an array of emotions coping with loss.

Charadin is a half elf several hundred years of age. Half elves were unusual in this world. The elves, such as Charadins family, did not often marry outside of Elven culture. Not because it was taboo, or it was forbidden, but because it came at a great emotional price. An elf that took a human partner would always live long enough to see them die. It was as if entering an inevitable contract of sadness. Even the children may live hundreds of years taking after their elven parent, while other children may wither with age as humans do. There was a great emotional cost they had to be willing to pay. Children would often watch their parents and siblings pass away. In our own culture it's often tragic when parents outlive their children, and for an elf that loved a human, this was certain fate. Made worse, when you've learned to love them for not just decades, but centuries. But

that's enough extra, on the characters for now, now I'm going to talk a bit about this books journey.

By the time I pitched my initial proposal I had made around 50 pages of loose manuscript with an outline for a decent part of the preceding narrative. After the advice of my first panel, I had the first major changes in my project. When I proposed this project, what I had in mind was a novel accompanied by illustrations rather than one cohesive package. In order for the project to be much more immediate and tangible to an audience such as yourself; I restructured this concept with the advice of my panel. Using my original narrative as the basis, I broke down key points into one to two page short stories which would instead be accompanied by an illustration. Not a traditional picture book, perhaps a little bit closer to a "making of book" I thought. I looked into projects that may fell into a similar structure. With some advice from Zac, I found some inspiration both in the work, and construction of the books, *Into the Loop*, and *The Electric State*, created by Simon Stålenhag. Stalenhag, is an impressive concept artists, and an able writer. The rights to *The Electric State*, for film were purchased by the Russo Brothers- the ones that just made that big block buster, you know with the big purple guy-- the one that beats the snot out of the Hulk? It seemed a more than respectable place to start. In their publication, text often fell in a band on ½ of a page, and the other portion of a spread was an illustration. In other instances, the text occupied one page, and the illustration the next in a spread. They even incorporated sequential spreads of images with no text. Taking an approach similar to that of Stalenhag, I felt made the project a lot more tangible. It's much easier to read a page of text and react to a corresponding image rather than try and skim a novel and try to recall what an image might be correlated to. This change posed the first of my projects hurdles.

This sort of format felt a lot more like an exercise in visual development with a relatively short prompt that an image could then constructed from. Following this sort of methodology is a lot more in line with the sort of work I want to do professionally moving forward. So taking on this new format made a lot of sense. However, the deconstruction and foreshortening of my narrative did come with some distinct drawbacks. The most obvious victim is the larger narrative. The six short stories I tell in this book really only summarize what was essentially the prolog to a much longer story. They establish some of the background of the world and what will be the main issues for the characters going forward, but doesn't offer a lot of resolution.



## Section Headers

Instead this book is more of a pilot to a greater story rather than the novel I had initially imagined. I think it ends on a note that functions well for a pilot to a series where you get to understand a bit of what the universe is about, but cuts the reader off just as things are heating up. If you've read that far, I apologize for the pun. However, due to this foreshortening of the narrative a lot of the sorts of social, and psychological issues the narrative was meant to explore are really only set up. The first story for example wasn't originally at the start of the story, in fact it wasn't present at all, but I felt there was a need for some exposition about the world of Avelon, rather than in novel format where I had the advantage of slowly trickling in this information.

Even after I had taken my initial script and reformatted them into these short stories, I had to once again revise and prune the content so that it would create a workable format for the book. Very early on, knowing that I wanted to make prints through the company Blurb, I had to format my book to suit their print sizes. I chose an 8 by 10 inch landscape format simply because it seemed the most workable, and I prefer landscape format. I also had to choose the font size and typeface pretty early as well. Originally I toyed with three typefaces, Monarcha, Kinesis, and eventually Cronos. Monarcha and Kinesis had a loosely black letter esque feel to them, but felt somewhat handwritten. They worked well with the fantasy feel of my book, however, their readability as body text wasn't the most desirable. Cronos, the type I'd ultimately decide to use fit somewhere in between. It's has a little flourish, but nothing overbearing, with a hint of appearing handwritten, while retaining legibility as body text.

With the sizing of the type and format decided next came revising. The stories that were already around one page were the easiest to revise. Condense a sentence or two, remove a little bit of superfluous language here or there ect. What was harder was figuring out what to do with text that was a page and a change or two pages- perhaps with excess, and I really had to just take an entire passage and distill it into the most succinct and direct writing possible. I found myself rereading Heminways, The Old Man and the Sea, recalling his very masterful, but ultimately simple use of language. After all the writing was packaged into these manageable blocks I could finally lay the whole book out in InDesign. All the while I was feverishly trying to hash out what these places and characters looked like once they became illustrations.

Avara's design was pretty locked in before my proposal, and a helmeted version of chardin- and those can be seen at the back of the book. However there was still one important character that would be in these short stories that need to be articulated. This character was Daru. Inventing your own critter, isn't easy. The character had three main requirements: he had to be large enough for Avara to ride, he had to resemble a dragon, but he couldn't look too intimidating. Daru, though not a speaking character, is intelligent enough to understand language and people. Enough so to even bear their teeth in a sarcastic bid at a guard. So how do you design a rideable giant lizard? It's simple you just- no, that's not right at all! You go looking for reference because you're not a lizard drawing expert. First you realize most lizards, have legs that are really splayed out and their bodies often rest on the ground. Not exactly ideal for a 6ft tall elf to ride. Okay, so they needed some longer legs. Long enough to keep the knee to the foot of an elf off the ground at least. Okay, so try and think of some lizards that probably have some longer legs, obvious choices: komodo dragons, the Jesus lizard- that's actually their name-- they run on water, the water Monitor lizard- because they prowl around ponds, again I can't make this up. Sorry Jesus, you weren't any help here. The komodo dragon certainly looked sturdy enough to try and extract some visuals from. Yet visually they look rather slow and weighty. Although their legs lift their body well off the ground, it was still far too short to model Daru after. The monitor lizard, though quite similar to the komodo dragon, has a bit of a thinner more streamlined look to it. In creating Daru I tried to mimic some of these body lines. However, I still had unresolved issues with finding something with legs I could model Daru's after. After perusing the interwebs for quite some time looking for the right lizard I found the Zebra-Tailed Lizard. Yes, another very original name. Actually quite a small lizard- about the side of your palm (tail withstanding) the zebra lizard moves with its legs fully extended, and relative to its body, quite far off the ground. Maybe not quite far enough relative to daru, but I could use that. Initial sketches still proved that any one to one translation wasn't really going to work. I still wanted that speedy look, but didn't want Daru to look like their legs would break the second they moved. To resolve this I beefed up their upper arms and legs, leaving the lower portions thin giving him a tapered more streamlined feel. At this point I had some good base forms and references to refer to, to try and construct daru. I borrowed from Avara's color palette but offset it with some flairs of red throughout. In the end, I made their head a somewhat similar shape to that of a monitor lizard as well. I even borrowed the stripped element from the zebra-tail lizard. The real departure from any of this reference was the extension of his neck to be more similar to that of a horse allowing

them to look you straight in the eyes. I think this choice made them feel a little more mammalian and a bit more like the depictions of most dragons. He may not fly, or breathe fire, but he can run up a vertical wall.. So he's pretty cool.

Not too long after I had drafted some initial black and white sketches of the varied scenes as well as mostly polished off a piece or two we had our midterm review. For those unfamiliar, this is when we have a panel of practicing artists come and review our work thus far and give advice. Their first bit of advice was they believed the book read better illustration first, followed by type. My format was originally the inverse. That was an easy enough alteration and after they elaborated some I agreed with their sentiment. Beyond that most of what they wanted to see was the type and illustrations interacting more using more half pages ect. However, that wasn't something I could simply change. If you're unfamiliar with creating a book, page can only be added in multiples of 4. So adding one page, really means adding 3 after that. With the assistance of Rob, I patched together a couple of new formatting options with some more spot illustrations and a little less development work at the tail end. Prior to making this book, I had made two other hard cover books by hand, so I had some idea of what I was getting into. However, those books were more like photo books with no real type or elaborate considerations for formatting necessary. As someone who is not a graphic designer, it was certainly a learning experience.

Another area that I felt was really informative for me making a ton of environments, whether that be sketches, thumbnails, color studies or the finished pieces here, I found the process rather freeing. Typically my work is very constructed, and can sometimes become a bit stiff because of it. However, with environments apart from some of architecture, was really quite liberating. Unlike a person who when drawn wrong or posed oddly is typically obvious even to those untrained as artists, environments don't have a set form. They have tendencies, patterns, and textures that make them what they are, but the shapes can really be whatever you want. Out in the world there are very few environmental artists in comparison to character artists, and so really finding that freedom and enjoyment in it may open some doors for me in the future.

However, not every environment was fun from start to finish. The final image of the burning elven city was challenging in a lot of ways. Initially the image focused on a small moment between Daru and Avara as he gently prods her with his tail as if to say, we've

got to go now. Nothing can be done. It's a great moment, but not the best on a two page spread. Cropped in it's a little awkward and far too stretched. From afar, where they took up most of one page, still posed a lot of issues because there wasn't a great solution to showing what the city looked like. At least in my mind, there wasn't at the time. With that in mind I tried to hone in more on trying to show the sort of scale and hint at the visuals of the city. This also wasn't easy. Not just in putting the imagery together, but the real problem is that it's all on fire. Their city was built like Petra if instead of stone it was carved into trees of mammoth proportions. However, a bunch of giant trees on fire amounts to a bunch of wide cylindrical silhouette when portrayed in this wide lens. So rather than looking at Avara and Daru, or looking out at this city from a distance I chose to make it more from a perspective of them looking up as though seeing this world crumble around them. Finding a balance of showing form and the silhouetting caused by flames was still a balancing act, but I think I found a good medium with this approach.

Creating this book had a lot of challenges, and I got a lot out of creating it, but why did I make it? Why a book; and who is this for? I made a book because it's accessible, because it structured and because it was something I had a tangible amount of experience with. It allowed me to explore, have fun, and it gave me an excuse to write. Although the content is probably not directed towards people younger than their teens because of the prevalence of death as a topic. I certainly wouldn't say it excludes them. The audience is really anyone that will listen. The book is tail ended by some development work that might be more interested to those of us that perform in those spaces, but are again not exclusionary.

Moving forward beyond this presentation, I'd like to continue this story. It may end up being something that ultimately is a novel rather than an illustrated book. It's just as likely it may also continue in a format like this on my website with periodical additions of chapters. I'm not entirely sure yet. Perhaps if people are absolutely enamored today, I may try and print it, but as it sits, it'll be a passion project moving forward. A vehicle to continually push my portfolio to new places and tell new stories. In one of my favorite books *A River Runs Through it*, by Norman Maclean, he writes, "One of life's quiet excitements is to stand somewhat apart from yourself and watch yourself softly becoming the author of something beautiful even if it is only a floating ash." I don't know where this will be tomorrow, or in two years, but today, this is my story and it too ends in ashe. I'd like to thank you all for attending. To my parents, thank you for making this journey possible; to my siblings, thanks for always motivating me; to my teachers that have paved this path, thank you; to my mentor Rob for helping me put this all together, and thank you to all my friends for making this a journey worth undertaking, it wouldn't be the same without you. I'll now open up for questions.