

III.

For a while, I forgot all about my story with the wandering outsider, but then things that happened kept bringing me back to it. I was walking home from middle school one day, and I passed this house with a dog that was always tied to a post in the yard. That dog scares the crap out of kids, because it'll be lying next to the house and then come flying down the yard out of nowhere, barking like a crazy thing until it hits the end of its chain just before reaching the sidewalk. Then it runs back and forth, arcing side to side on its hind legs. One day, I was walking by on my way to school, and I knew that dog would come shooting at me so I had moved to the far side of the sidewalk, but then nothing happened. I looked up at the house and saw the dog caught up in its chain. Somehow, he had wrapped himself up around the post so tightly that his head was stuck to the bottom and he couldn't

even stand up. His butt was sticking up, but he couldn't move an inch. I was disturbed by this because I always have loved dogs, but I also kind of thought it was what this dog deserved, and I went on to school.

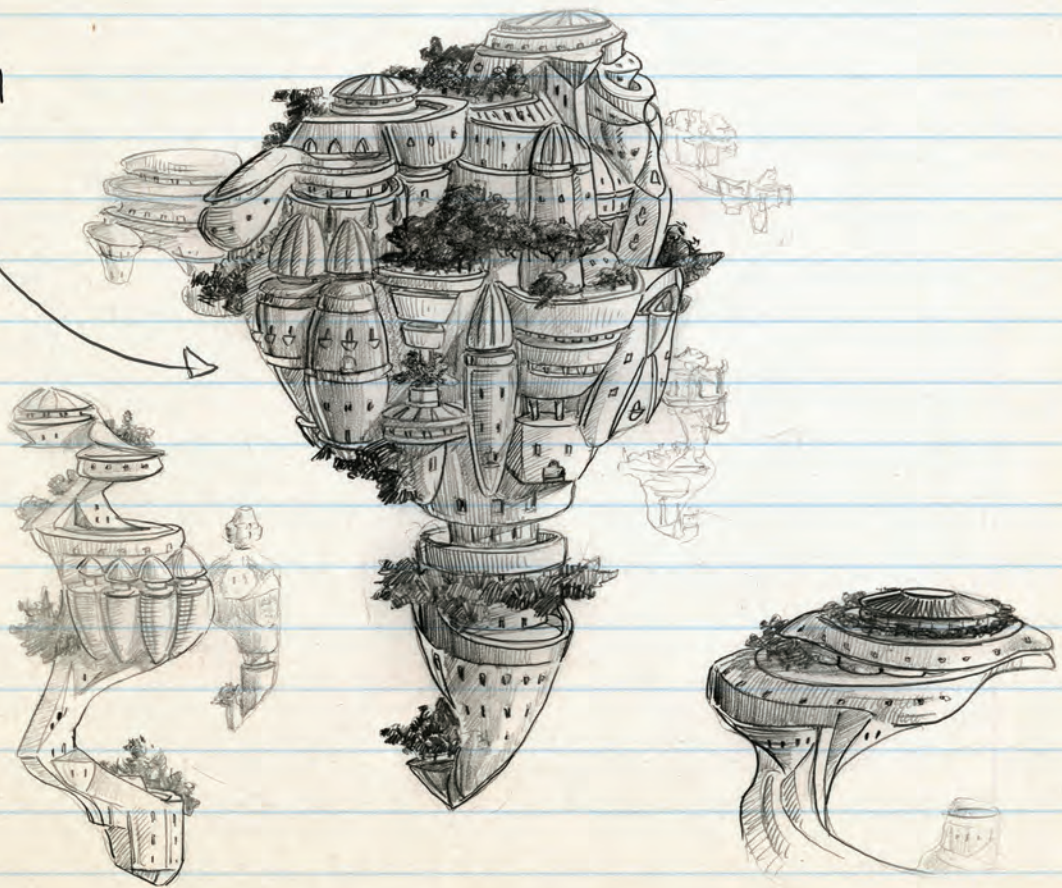
Then on the way home, I saw the dog, still stuck, still standing with his butt in the air. I just felt like it wasn't fair or right so I started to walk over to see if I could untangle the metal cord. As I neared, he whined and then growled and then whined like he couldn't make up his mind whether he wanted help or not. I managed to free him and he started barking at me and scaring the crap out of me again. So I rushed back to the sidewalk, and the silly beast chased me to where the cord ended and we were right back where we started. Except I turned back thinking I might tell this dog he was ungrateful, and there was this big dude who apparently had been sitting on the porch watching me and he says,

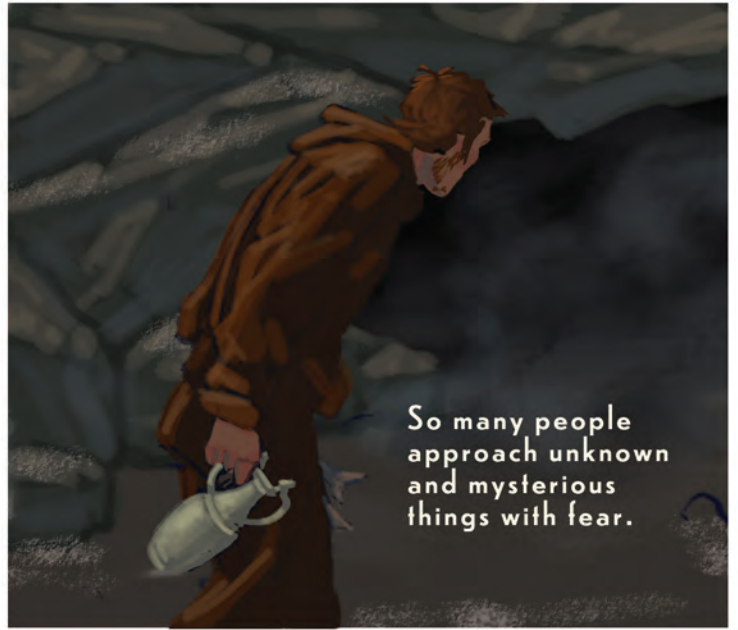
"You best leave my dog alone." I mean, really, what kind of person leaves their dog all strung up like that all day and just sits around letting it be that way?

And it was while this was still fresh in my mind that my class took a field trip to this cool place in the city called the Cloisters. It's a museum with medieval art all over the place and they have some really epic stuff in there. But one thing that is the pride of their collection — it's world renowned and everything — is this tapestry with a unicorn on it. Don't quote me or anything, because I like fantasy as much as the next person, but unicorns are fake. What's weird about it though is in this picture all these people were stabbing and killing the thing. And I thought, WTH? People invent a creature just so they can depict themselves killing it? That's messed up. And then I thought of that dog, and I realized some people just aren't that nice. Which made

me feel maybe I'm not like other people. And that reminded me of this time when I was in fifth grade before I grew tall and these kids beat me up for no reason other than I was reading during recess. They took my issue of Intergalactic Spy and tore it and wrinkled it all up which hurt me more than punching me in the stomach. That brought me back to the story I'd been working on. I started getting more serious about what I wanted to do with it at that point.

not my house





So many people
approach unknown
and mysterious
things with fear.

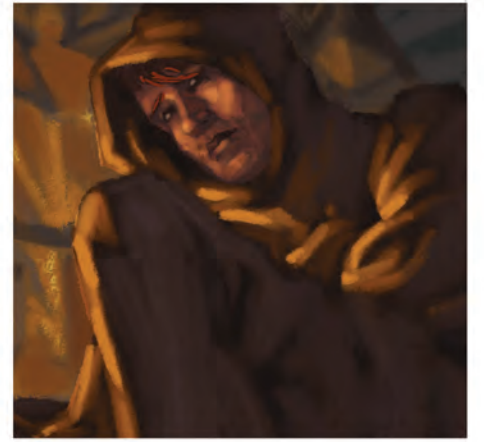
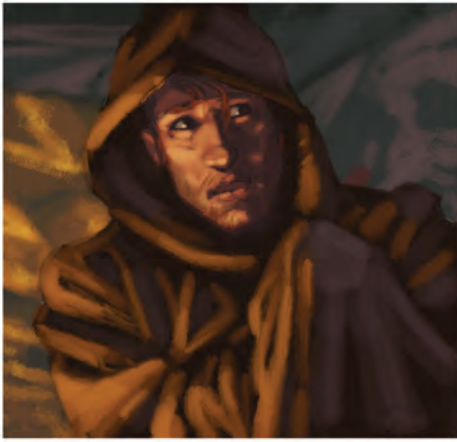


Let me at least try



to be different.



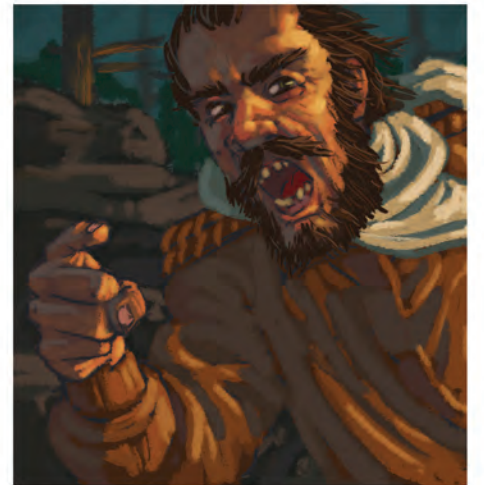
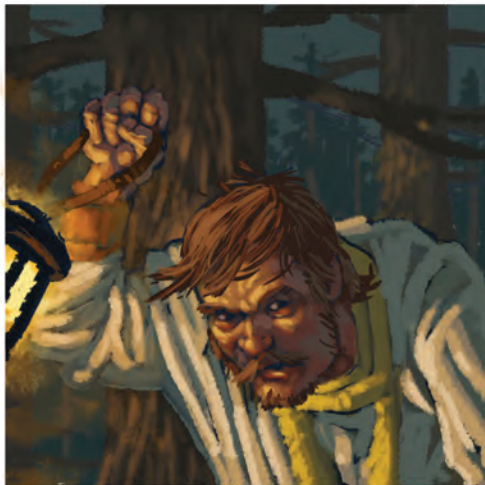


There are so few dragons left.



The soft sting of the smoke in my eyes puts me to sleep.

While I sleep, they come.



They have hunted before and move in a strategic pattern.





Before I can get up, they
spear it twice.

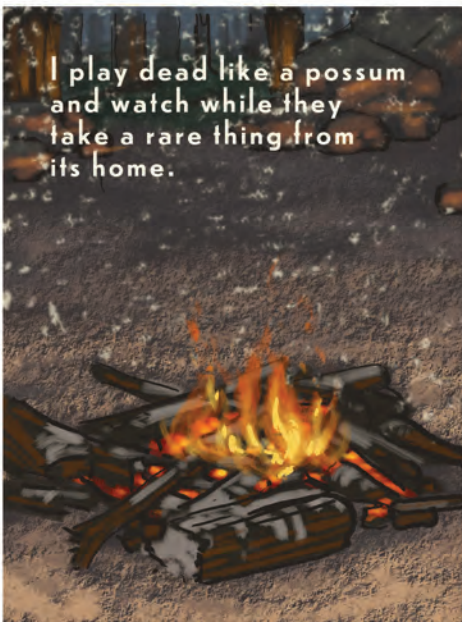
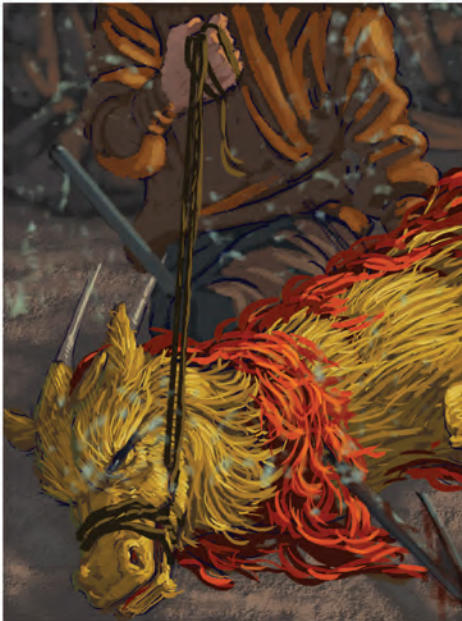


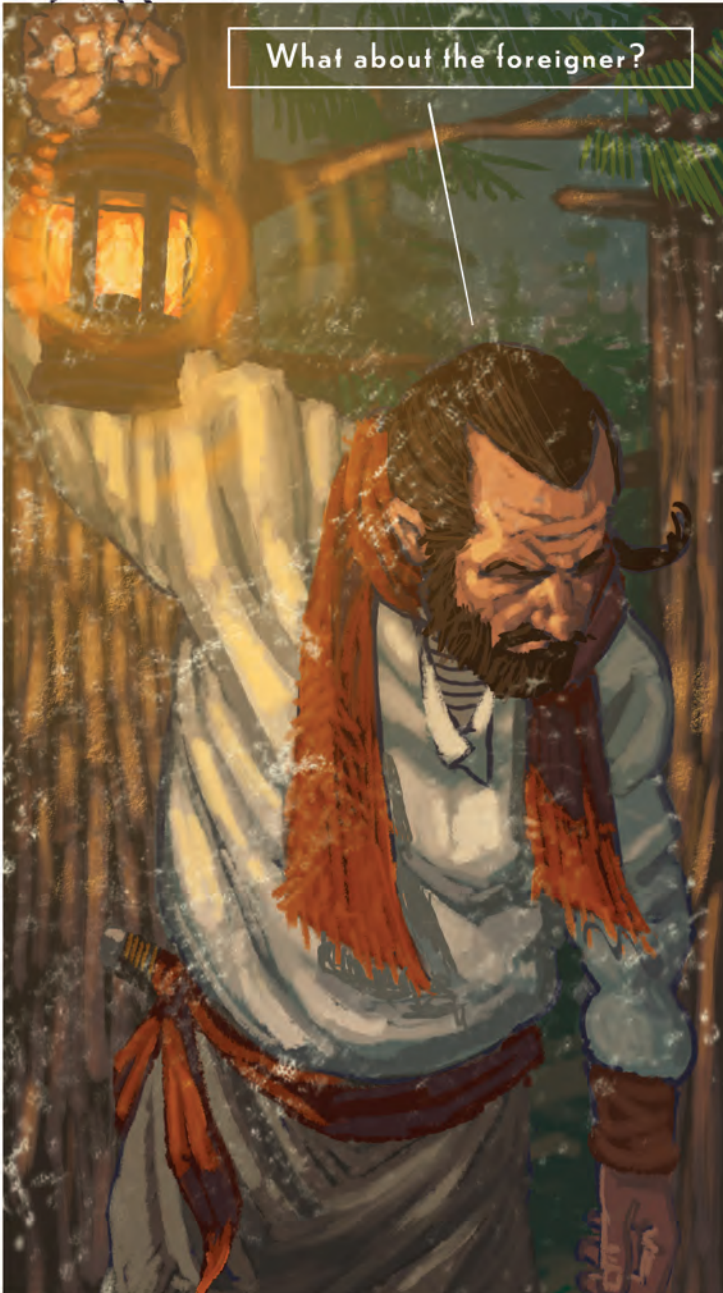
I run to protest and receive a fist to the gut.



Even with the wind knocked
out of me, they keep kicking.







What about the foreigner?



He'll live and can go back to wherever he came from.







