

Graphic Growth

Creating a Comic for Young Adults

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Abstract

I have created a fantasy, young adult, graphic novel for my thesis. The story explores the themes of self-discovery, expression, and improvement through the emotional journeys of the protagonists. Before working on the novel, I researched the genres and formats detailed at the beginning through various academic and informational books and essays. Now finished, a third of the book's script has been written, along with half of those pages laid out. I have included a reflective essay on developing the novel, as well as the various artistic sources from which I drew inspiration. The goal was to create a story that teenagers can use to process thoughts and emotions they may be dealing with, as well as provide myself with a portfolio item that directly relates to my expected career.

Expository Section

A. I have wanted to write this book for a long time. The initial idea came to me in middle school, at the height of my fantasy phase. Do not worry, this was not an excuse to fulfill a childhood dream (okay, maybe a little); I believe I have a good story to tell. The plot also provides much of the world-building for the larger universe my brother and I created together. It was somewhat problematic, though, as this story was the least developed portion, which is another reason to write it now. My love for art and storytelling comes from the plots my brother and I created together when we were little. We have always been close and loved playing outside with each other. During those times outside, we would make up stories and characters about whatever we were into, whether that be Star Wars, superheroes, or something else. Our plots were silly and never very deep when we were little, but as we matured, so did our fun. Our characters became more developed, and our stories challenged them. We enjoyed continuous stories that allowed for multiple entry points, similar to how the three trilogies of Star Wars or the multiple number one issues of comics built on previous storylines. We emulated those formats, and while we sometimes had to restart to improve the story, we stuck to roughly the same set of characters. While I care about the characters we created and developed, I will not let them get in the way of writing this story. This will

be the most official depiction of that world, and quality should not be sacrificed for unrealized ideas.

I want to illustrate comics in the future. I am trying to learn as much as I can now to hit the ground running when I graduate. Writing a book was good practice for my future career and gave me a portfolio credit directly tied to my dream job. Once I get to a point where I can write and draw what I want instead of relying on other companies and characters to tell stories that bring a reliable income, I want to adapt the stories that my brother and I created together. I will need help from other creatives to make this possible, as later tales can be very expansive. This book will establish the lore that could be expanded upon in future stories I intend to write. I understand that if I hit that level of success, I will likely need to rewrite my graphic novel, as only some people will have read the edition I am writing now. However, that does not bother me, as the rewrite will probably be better. My thesis will set me on a path to achieve my life goals better than any project I have yet undertaken.

B. I began by studying the format and genres I have selected through academic and informative works. Examining both gave me an understanding of the various tropes and messages common within fantasy and comics, so I could better utilize and subvert them. I chose fantasy as the protagonists in the genre are commonly average, contrasting with the fantastical world around them. I have been drawn to characters who do not

stand apart from the crowd my whole life, and writing one helped me engage with my story. Young adult literature ties into the median protagonist idea well. The genre is often invested in the main character's self-discovery. I developed many of those themes on my own, so the inclusion was both natural and necessary. Writing a graphic novel played to my strengths as an artist. I trusted myself to express the nuances of my characters visually more than in detailed sentences.

After my research, I began writing the script for my graphic novel. Comics are written like plays or movies. A script will have specific dialogue for the characters and stage directions for the setting, positions, actions, and expressions that the writer wants. I needed scenes written before I could create art for the story. I started at the beginning, as most of my writing is done linearly. This allows me to mark the progression of the characters and adjust later plot points to match their growth. Anytime I got stuck on writing, I would shift my focus to a different part of the thesis. I would have a solution to progress when I came back, or at least the will to. I now have a third of the script written. Writing a book can be time-consuming, and since I am still fairly new to the ordeal, I did not want to hold myself to the expectation that it must be finished.

The other major portion of my thesis was the page layout. Page layout is the ordering of panels and art on the page. Designing the page layout provided the visual component of my project. I did my art in the

digital drawing program Procreate. It is a tool I have grown very comfortable with, and when I eventually do the finished art, I can draw over top of the layouts. Comics generally have a team of people doing the art. You can have someone doing the layout, an inker, a colorist, and a letterer. Layouts have rough sketches of the art so I can see how the story is coming along, but still adjust as time passes. I only planned so far as layouts because if the script still needs to be finished, I should avoid fully developing the art in case I need to adjust panels for greater impact elsewhere. I did my best to maintain a 1:2 ratio between layouts and script. I apologize for making you read “layout” so many times.

C. Most of my sources were compiled during the early research phase of my thesis. I tended to keep referencing my creative sources throughout for visual inspiration. My fantasy, writing, and scholarly sources were all used for background and development. They are still fundamental parts of my framework, but less necessary for constant reference.

One source that I used for creative inspiration was the artist Christian Pearson. He is a digital art [YouTuber](#) specializing in character design. His content primarily consists of fusions of popular culture characters, though he has produced more original work lately. There are also some videos of him critiquing comic artists’ work or giving advice with an original piece designed to communicate the lesson. Pearson’s main

videos are formatted with a lore and design notes section during the speed drawing of each character.

In the early stages of my thesis, I referred back to his tutorial playlist. I wanted to take notes on what he said so I would not need to dig up the videos at a later date, especially if the advice I was looking for did not end up applying to my current project like, “Keep drawing that one thing you think you need to improve at,” (Pearson). Others were drawing tips that I had yet to incorporate into my work, such as “Add a layer of grain underneath your lighting and shadow layers” (Pearson). Throughout my thesis, I kept up to date on his artwork and analyzed it, compiling a personal library of pieces to take inspiration from.

I was initially drawn to Pearson’s work because of his cartoony and comic style. It is in the same vein that I want my art to look like. Most of what I try to learn from his art is rendering. I find his balance between hard and soft edge shading and lighting to be very unique. I already have an affinity for cell shading, but his technique manages to round the form without losing the blocky characterization better than other artists I have seen. I also admire his texturing, but that is lower on my list of incorporation.

One creative source I was hesitant to include at first was *Avatar: The Last Airbender, The Art of the Animated Series*. The book is a collection of process artwork with notes on development by the show’s creators. There

are behind-the-scenes references, concept pieces, unrefined sketches, and a plethora of unused designs. The chapters are divided by the three books (or seasons) of the series, tracking the show from initial concept to post-finale promotional material.

The reason I had leaned away from referencing *Avatar* was that the series revolves around fantasy elemental nations in conflict with one another. Before watching the show, I had written an elemental conquest as part of the world-building, and since then, other people have drawn connections between my story and *Avatar*. The similarities were already there, so I did not want to risk plagiarizing them by copying too many elements. I could not help myself, though, when it came time to design the ice soldiers.

Once the Mainland guards were written into scenes, I figured I should design the ice soldiers too, that way I could contrast their elements by defining where they stood morally in the world. I tried multiple variations for each, and while the Mainland guards came together fairly quickly, the ice soldiers continued to be lacking. I was not landing the balance of cold weather, battle-ready, and evil that I wanted. Eventually, I turned to *Avatar*. In blending several elements from various Fire Nation and Water Tribe designs, I was able to settle on something that had enough movement for combat while keeping the wearer warm, in addition to looking intimidating. For example, part of the Fire Nation's fear factor is

the spiked armor the soldiers wear. It coils up toward the end to mimic the weaves of a flame. Since icicles are created by water runoff freezing, I had the shoulder plating bend downward, keeping what makes the outfit scary, but adapting it to my antagonists. The trick was not to avoid *Avatar* completely, but to selectively pull out why choices were made for that series and apply similar thinking to the world-building in my designs.

Like most anyone writing fantasy, I was inspired by J.R.R. Tolkien. His writings and later adaptations have defined the genre since the initial release of *The Hobbit* in 1937 (known then as *There and Back Again*). I decided to read *The Silmarillion* in preparation for my thesis. The book was initially designed to be a compendium of in-universe sources from a variety of styles strung together to create a historical narrative. The plethora of writings was trimmed out and edited after Tolkien died in 1973. This was to create linear transitions between the stories, but the text maintains the fictional history book feeling that drew me to it.

I read *The Silmarillion* to get a sense of how good fantasy world-building should be done. Tolkien went deep when creating Middle-earth. He invented a language, drew detailed maps, and laid out genealogical trees for centuries of characters. I knew that my world would not be as impressive at this stage, but it gave me notes on where I could include historic details to push the story forward.

One thing I noticed was how most of the stories were adjacent to what would be the main conflict of Middle-earth. Everybody knows Sauron, but he is actually the second in command to Morgoth. Another story about Túrin Turambar tracks his journey largely away from that conflict with Morgoth. It adds to this iceberg storytelling technique used in another one of my favorite fandoms, Star Wars. Hinting at elements of the larger mythology allows the reader to flesh out the world themselves and engage with the content more. This directly impacted the flow of information I gave audiences early on in my script.

Archetypes and Motifs by Jane Garry was my primary fantasy resource. The handbook briefly recounts various recurring themes and imagery persistent in fantasy literature. Explanations for their meanings in various cultures are provided if appropriate. Their origins are touched on if known, but many are so widespread that they are difficult to narrow down. Some stories are summarized to contextualize the trope, but most are listed as references at the end of the chapter.

Having such a comprehensive book of motifs and symbols for my genre was very useful for my world-building. I refined many character details and plot points with information from the book. For example, I made a minor antagonist left-handed after reading that, "The power of the left hand is always somewhat occult and illegitimate; it inspires terror and revulsion" (page 144). This fear is based on old beliefs about demons before

it was learned that left-handedness was a recessive gene. Still, it provides a subtle hint to the audience about his mystical abilities and evil background.

My primary writing source was *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. It is a well-known work by Joseph Campbell that details the various stages and tropes of the hero's journey. Campbell largely refers to myths and religious tales for his examples, but the hero's journey can be found across most forms of storytelling. His book aimed to define the lessons of the past to improve the human state of being in the present.

Before beginning the thesis project, I had already begun to play with elements of the hero's journey in my story. The formula already centers around betterment of the self, and subverting tropes allowed the narrative to feel less derivative. To best understand them, though, I had to read Campbell's full work. Learning about the tropes helped me to develop areas in the story where it was more appropriate to adhere to the formula or break it based on the needs of the characters.

Having become so familiar with the hero's journey in other narratives, it was a refreshing change of pace to see the structure applied to myths. It also added to the reliability of Campbell's points, as many of the myths were, or are, considered true. One aspect that detracts from his arguments, however, was the heavy reliance on Freud's psychoanalysis. At the time, Freud was a renowned psychologist, and while his work is still very important to the community, less and less credence is being given to

his heavy focus on sexual desire. It is a small point that was positive when written, but times change, and texts do not. Campbell's writings remain invaluable to the development of my thesis.

I could not look only at prose writers since I was writing a graphic novel. I referred to Scott McCloud's *Making Comics* for more specialized advice. *Making Comics* is the third entry in McCloud's series of books, breaking down how the format works. This entry goes into the various narrative techniques exclusive to comic communication. Practice exercises are included at the end of each chapter so readers can test the tools they learned about. The series as a whole is regarded as essential reading for anyone interested in sequential art.

Testing the practice exercises was part of the research stage of my thesis. I needed to familiarize myself with the tools and tricks of the format. Not every chapter in the book was about writing, some were focused on the art or combining the two. I did an exercise from each chapter to round out my learning. Some depended on having more than one artist contributing, so they were less easy to work with. Showing the results to friends and asking for their critiques exposed flaws in my learning that improved my pace beyond just doing the work.

Had I not been doing other class work at the same time as my thesis, I would have preferred to do more exercises from *Making Comics*. I learn best from tasks, and these practices were fun and well-tailored to the

concepts. Unfortunately, there is only so much time in a day. I had to shift my attention to directly thesis-oriented tasks instead of thesis-adjacent tasks like the practice exercises, as my homework piled up. My layouts were improved by the time I spent with McCloud's book. I look forward to seeing how the finished product turns out after I spend more time on the practice exercises.

My research was essential to flesh out the world I was creating. My motifs would have been hollow if not for the work of Campbell and Garry, the visual language would be sterile without Pearson and Tolkien, and it would not exploit the communication between words and pictures if I had not read McCloud's book. I could not lean on any too heavily, or my story would have been derivative. Finding the balance for myself of applying the lessons and trusting my gut allowed me to write the best possible story for young adults.

Body**I'm Not the Hero**

Script by Aidan VanDyke

Page 1**Prologue**

Panel One: *SETTING - UNRIET MOUNTAIN, WHERE THE ICE LORD'S CASTLE IS LOCATED. THE CASTLE IS CARVED INTO A MASS OF FROZEN WATERFALLS. A HARSH WIND WHIPS UP FLAKES FROM THE GROUND, BUT IT IS NOT SNOWING. FILLIGON'S PARENTS ARE HIKING UP THE SIDE.*

MRS. HARDAWAY: How much farther until we reach the camp?

Panel Two: *WE CAN SEE FILLIGON'S PARENTS NOW.*

MR. HARDAWAY: It shouldn't be much farther.

MRS. H.: You said that thirty minutes ago.

Panel Three:

MR. H.: I could've sworn it was then. You don't think they moved up, did they?

Page 2**Panel One:**

MRS. H.: If they're nervous enough to request a refurbishment on a mountain before an assault, I don't see why they'd get closer.

Panel Two:

MR. H.: I don't know why they even asked us to come. It's not like we can bring any of our good equipment with us. We can't do much more than sharpen the weapons they have.

Panel Three:

MR. H.: What's with the army bringing dull weapons to a siege anyway? If I were them, I would've checked my equipment before leaving the island.

MRS. H.: Maybe they ran into some ice soldiers along the way and just wanted to be safe.

Panel Four:

MR. H.: Wouldn't we have seen the results of a fight on our way up, though? Besides, who pays thirty gold for a safety check?

MRS. H.: I don't know. But I'm not the one who accepted the offer before talking to my wife.

Panel Five:

MR. H.: I deserve that, but come on! Thirty gold coins! With that, we could improve the shop and the house and still tuck some away for when Filligon's older.

Panel Six:

MRS. H.: *SHE LOOKS BEHIND THEM.* I hope he's okay.

Page 3**Panel One:**

MR. H.: He'll be fine until we get back. *PLAYFULLY*. Besides, if a thief does show up, he can pull the stone blade off the wall and fight them off!

MRS. H.: *SHE SMILES AT HIS TEASING BUT REMAINS CONCERNED*.

Stop that! You know I get worried sick whenever you go out to train him.

Panel Two:

MR. H.: Hey, he's learning!

MRS. H.: He's just so young...

Panel Three:

MR. H.: *PULLS HER IN FOR A HUG*. You know I'm worried about him, too.

MRS. H.: *RETURNS THE EMBRACE*. I do.

Panel Four: *THE TWO HUG IN SILENCE*.

Page 4

Panel One: *THEY RELEASE THEIR EMBRACE.*

MRS. H.: Not much farther right?

MR. H.: Yeah.

Panel Two: *THEY START HIKING AGAIN WHEN A TREMOR OCCURS.*

MR. H.: What was that?

Panel Three:

MRS. H.: Look! *POINTING UP, THERE IS AN AVALANCHE STARTING TOWARD THEM.*

Panel Four:

MR. H.: Oh no! Move!

Page 5

Panel One: *THEY TRY TO TURN BACK, BUT ANOTHER TREMOR BURIES THE PATH THEY CAME FROM.*

Panel Two:

MR. H.: *REPEATS “No”* Filligon! We have to get to Filligon! *HE TRIES TO CLEAR AWAY THE SNOW BY HAND.*

MRS. H.: *SHE HAS ALREADY ACCEPTED THE REALITY OF THEIR SITUATION.* We can't.

Panel Three:

MR. H.: But he's- he'll- *HE CAN'T FINISH ANY OF THE SENTENCES COMING TO MIND.*

Panel Four:

MRS. H.: He'll be fine. We have to hope he'll be fine.

Panel Five: *TEARS WELL UP IN BOTH THEIR EYES AS HE PULLS HER IN FOR ANOTHER TIGHTER EMBRACE. MR. H. IS MORE AFRAID FOR FILLIGON STILL.*

Panel Six: *THE SNOW ENVELOPES THEM IN THIS FINAL LINE.*

MRS. H.: I love yo-

Page 6**Chapter One**

Panel One: *SETTING - FILLIGON'S ROOM, YEARS LATER. IT IS VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING. THE LIGHT IS STILL YELLOW. FILLIGON IS STARTLED AWAKE BY HIS NIGHTMARE. HE IS IN BED AND WEARING A NIGHTSHIRT. IT IS NOT THE FIRST TIME ONE LIKE THIS HAS OCCURRED.*

Panel Two: *HE RUBS HIS FACE. THE SHOT IS ANGLED FROM WHERE THE STONE BLADE IS.*

Panel Three: *HE GLANCES AT THE STONE BLADE ON THE WALL NEXT TO HIM. IT IS AN OLD FAMILY HEIRLOOM, EVEN IN THIS FANTASY WORLD. THERE ARE CRACKS ALONG THE BLADE, AND PARTS OF THE HILT ARE TIED TOGETHER. IT IS HELD BY A WOODEN MOUNT THAT IS IN FAR WORSE SHAPE THAN THE SWORD, DESPITE BEING MADE YEARS LATER.*

Panel Four: *FILLIGON TURNS AWAY FROM THE WEAPON AND THROWS THE COVERS OFF HIMSELF. THERE IS A MIX OF PAIN AND ANGER ON HIS FACE. WE CAN SEE IN THIS SHOT THAT THERE IS NOT MUCH ELSE IN THE ROOM OTHER THAN THE BED AND THE SWORD. IF YOU DESIGNATE THINGS LIKE CHAPTERS AND LOCATIONS, THE CHAPTER MARKER WILL BE IN THIS PANEL.*

Page 7

Panel One: *SETTING - MAIN ROOM OF FILLIGON'S HOUSE. TWO EGGS SIZZLE IN A PAN OVER A FIRE.*

Panel Two: *FILLIGON SOLEMNLY COOKS THEM WHILE SITTING ON THE FLOOR. HE HAS THE SHIRT AND PANTS OF HIS MAIN OUTFIT ON.*

Panel Three: *WIDE SHOT, THIS TIME FROM ABOVE, SHOWING THE BARRENNESS OF THIS ROOM THAT FUNCTIONS AS BOTH KITCHEN AND LIVING SPACE.*

Panels to Fill Page: *SETTING - FILLIGON'S ROOM. FILLIGON PUTS ON HIS JACKET AND GRABS A BAG, ALONG WITH A HANDFUL OF OTHER ITEMS, BEFORE LEAVING HIS ROOM. THE STONE BLADE IS BEHIND HIM IN AT LEAST ONE OF THESE SHOTS.*

Page 8

Panel One: *SETTING - FILLIGON'S WORKSHOP. FILLIGON COMES DOWNSTAIRS AND MAKES HIS WAY OVER TO A TABLE THAT HAS A QUIVER FILLED WITH ARROWS ON IT.*

Panel Two: *HE PULLS A FEW OUT AND INSPECTS THEM.*

Panel Three: *HE SHARPENS ONE AGAINST A STONE.*

Panel Four: *HE FLUFFS UP THE FEATHERS ON ANOTHER.*

Panel Five: *HE PUTS THE ARROWS BACK IN THE QUIVER.*

Panel Six: *FILLIGON SLINGS THE QUIVER OVER HIS SHOULDER AND HEADS OUTSIDE.*

Page 9

Panel One: *SETTING - FILLIGON'S WORKSHOP, OUTSIDE. SOME BLUE IS IN THE SKY NOW, BUT IT IS STILL EARLY. THERE IS A SEMI-DILAPIDATED SIGN ON THE FRONT OF THE BUILDING WRITTEN IN THE FAKE ALPHABET READING, "STONE BLADE SMITHS: WEAPONS, HORSESHOES, COOKWARE, AND MORE!" FILLIGON CLOSSES THE FRONT DOOR BEHIND HIM.*

Panel Two: *HE MOVES THROUGH THE MOSTLY EMPTY STREET. MOST OF THE BUILDINGS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD LOOK DATED. ONCE IT WAS A VERY NICE PART OF TOWN, BUT THE REST OF THE CITY MOVED ON. FILLIGON PASSES OTHER RESIDENTS, BUT HE DOES NOT ACKNOWLEDGE THEM, AND THEY DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE HIM.*

Panel Three: *THE HOUSES BECOME LESS DENSELY PACKED AS FILLIGON MOVES CLOSER TO THE EDGE OF THE VILLAGE AND THE BORDERING FOREST. THE HOUSES ARE MORE RUSTIC OUT HERE, BUT ARE LARGELY KEPT IN BETTER CONDITION.*

Panel Four: *SETTING - H.M.'S HOUSE, ON THE BORDER OF THE FOREST. IT IS AN OUTWARDLY APPEALING, ALBEIT SMALL, PIECE OF FARMLAND. THE OUTDOOR SPACE HAS BEEN REDONE TO BECOME MORE OF A LARGE GARDEN. VIRA'S FAMILY GROWS*

*COOKING ESSENTIALS. VIRA'S BROTHER ARUT IS CURRENTLY
TENDING TO THE GARDEN.*

Page 10

Panel One: *ARUT NOTICES FILLIGON AND WAVES.*

ARUT: Howdy Filligon!

Panel Two: *FILLIGON RETURNS THE WAVE BUT CONTINUES WALKING TOWARD THE FRONT DOOR.*

FILLIGON: Hi, Arut!

Panel Three: *FILLIGON PAUSES BEFORE KNOCKING.*

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: (hoh) *Why am I nervous? It's not like I haven't done this a hundred times.*

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: *Doesn't mean you're not happy to see her. Shut up.*

FILLIGON KNOCKS ON THE DOOR.

Panel Six: *VIRA ANSWERS, BUT THE DOOR ONLY OPENS A CRACK. SHE IS NOT INTO HIM ROMANTICALLY, BUT HE IS TOO ENAMORED WITH HER TO CATCH THAT TRULY.*

Vira: Hey! How are you?

Page 11**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: Hey Vira! I'm doing alright. I brought some more arrows.
Hope they'll do. *Come on, man, at least have confidence in your work.*

Panel Two: *VIRA SLIDES OUT THE DOOR AND CLOSES IT BEHIND HER. SHE TAKES THE QUIVER AND GLANCES AT THE ARROWS. IT IS MOSTLY TO QUELL HIS FEARS AS SHE ALREADY TRUSTS HIS WORK.*

VIRA: Amazing, as usual.

Panel Three: *VIRA SLINGS THE QUIVER OVER HER SHOULDER.*

FILLIGON: *Oh, thank goodness.*

Panel Four:

VIRA: Well, whatever you need from the garden is yours. *SHE GESTURES TO THE GARDEN.*

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: Thank you. *HE BACKS OFF THE PORCH AND MOVES TO THE GARDEN.*

Panel Six: *ARUT AND FILLIGON GIVE EACH OTHER ACKNOWLEDGING NODS AS HE ENTERS THE GARDEN. FILLIGON STARTS PICKING FOODS.*

FILLIGON: *Say something.* So, you two bring anything interesting in yesterday?

ARUT: No, just some ducks.

Panel Seven:

VIRA: I saw a deer but missed.

FILLIGON: I'm sorry.

Page 12**Panel One:**

VIRA: What did you do? *SHE LOOKS CURIOUSLY AT THE GARDEN TO SEE IF HE DAMAGED IT IN SOME WAY.*

FILLIGON: No- just, for the deer.

Panel Two:

VIRA: Oh, it's fine. We might have to do some fishing, though.

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: Not enough ducks for the family?

ARUT: You'd be surprised how fast duck goes.

Panel Four: *FILLIGON REACHES FOR A TOMATO, BUT ARUT MOVES HIS HAND DOWN.*

ARUT: Woah, not that one. It's not ripe yet. Here. *HE PULLS A BETTER-LOOKING ONE OFF ANOTHER VINE.*

Panel Five: *ARUT PLACES THE TOMATO IN FILLIGON'S HAND. FILLIGON LOOKS AT HIM QUIZZICALLY BECAUSE HE CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO.*

ARUT: That'll do ya' much better.

FILLIGON: Alright.

Page 13

Panel One: *FILLIGON PULLS TWO ONIONS FROM THE GROUND AND PUTS THEM IN HIS BAG.*

FILLIGON: Didn't know you were such a tomato connoisseur.

ARUT: Well, it's just-

Panel Two: *FILLIGON BEGINS TO WALK AWAY FROM THE ONION PLOT.*

VIRA: That's all the onions you want?

Panel Three: *FILLIGON LOOKS BACK AT THE PLOT.*

FILLIGON: Oh. Yeah, I don't like them very much.

Panel Four:

ARUT: Onions are in everything, man. You're gonna want more than two.

FILLIGON: Sure, but this way I eat less of a food I don't like.

Panel Five:

VIRA: If you need to come back for more early, I'm not gonna give them to you for free.

Panel Six: *FILLIGON TILTS HIS HEAD BACK IN MOCK FRUSTRATION.*

FILLIGON: *I wouldn't mind coming back. But you would mind paying, and you're gonna have to anyway. Fine.*

Panel Seven: *FILLIGON PULLS ONE MORE ONION UP AND SHOWS IT TO VIRA.*

FILLIGON: Happy?

Panel Eight: *VIRA GIVES A LIGHT LAUGH.*

Page 14

Panel One: *FILLIGON MOVES BACK TO THE PORCH AND HOLDS UP A FULL FOOD SACK.*

FILLIGON: Thank you again.

Panel Two:

VIRA: Of course!

Panel Three: *THEY STAND IN SILENCE FOR A SECOND.*

Panel Four:

VIRA: So... don't you have customers you need to open up for soon?

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: Yes! Yes, I should go. I'll leave you to your things. Good luck not starving! *What are you saying?*

Panel Six: *ARUT IS SHAKEN BY FILLIGON'S LINE, AND VIRA SHIFTS UNCOMFORTABLY. SHE DOES NOT WANT TO TELL HIM DIRECTLY ABOUT HER FAMILY'S TROUBLES, BUT WANTS HIM TO KNOW SO SHE HAS A FRIEND OUTSIDE OF IT SHE CAN LEAN ON. FILLIGON MISSES THE HURT.*

Panel Seven:

FILLIGON: See ya!

VIRA: Have a good day!

SHE GOES INSIDE, ARUT GOES INTO THE GARDEN AGAIN, AND FILLIGON STARTS WALKING BACK TO HIS SHOP.

Page 15**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: *That wasn't awkward at all at the end. It's fine. She just thinks that's part of your personality.*

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: *Isn't it if I do it whenever I'm around her? You should tell her how you feel.*

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: *No! Bad idea! Just open the shop and get through the day.*

Panel Four: *SETTING - FILLIGON'S SHOP. HE UNLOCKS THE DOOR AND GOES INSIDE.*

Panel Five: *HE BEGINS BY UNCOVERING THE DISPLAYS. THERE ARE NOT MANY. WHAT ONES DO EXIST ARE MAINLY ORDERS THAT HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND WILL NEED TO BE REPLACED WITH NEW ONES WHEN THE BUYERS COME TO RETRIEVE THEIR STUFF. THERE IS A DEDICATED SPACE FOR WORK TO BE PICKED UP, BUT FILLIGON HAS HAD TO SELL THE DISPLAYS TO KEEP THE SHOP AFLOAT.*

Panel Six: *HE OPENS THE FRONT CURTAINS.*

Panel Seven: *FILLIGON PROPS AN "OPEN" SIGN IN THE WINDOW.*

Page 16

Panel One: *HE MOVES BEHIND THE FRONT COUNTER.*

FILLIGON: *And now we wait.*

SEVERAL PANELS GO BY OF FILLIGON WAITING FOR CUSTOMERS.

HE DOES SOME LIGHT CLEANING, EATS LUNCH, AND DOES OTHER

THINGS TO PASS THE TIME. PREFERABLY, THESE ARE ALL THE

SAME SHOT WITH CHANGES IN LIGHTING AND FILLIGON'S

POSITION TO COMMUNICATE THE PASSAGE OF TIME. IT IS NOW

EARLY EVENING.

Page 17

Panel One: *FILLIGON IS HEAVILY LEANING BACK IN THE CHAIR, REPEATING “Bored” WHEN THE DOOR OPENS.*

Panel Two: *AQUARIUS ENTERS, SHUTTING IT BEHIND HIM.*

AQUARIUS: Are you the proprietor of this shop?

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: Gyah! Yes, what do yo- how can I- do you ne- smith?

Panel Four:

AQUARIUS: *PULLS HIS BROADSWORD OFF HIS BELT AND DROPS IT ON THE COUNTER. THE HILT IS WRAPPED TO COVER THE ICE*

LORD’S LOGO. I need this sharpened and the cracks mended by tomorrow morning.

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: *Rude.* I’d be happy to work on this, sir, but I’m afraid I’ll need more time.

Panel Six:

AQUARIUS: What I asked for shouldn’t take more than your evening.

FILLIGON: *Does he not realize what time it is?* Yeah, but that’s just it. It is evening now. I was about to close up shop.

Page 18**Panel One:**

AQUARIUS: Lots of people work beyond the workday.

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: Your order isn't the most important thing on my plate.

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: *LOOKS AROUND THE SHOP.* Yes, you seem quite overwhelmed at the moment.

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: *That's low.* I have a life, man.

AQUARIUS: As do I...

Panel Five: *AQUARIUS LEANS IN CLOSE TO FILLIGON TO
INTIMIDATE HIM.*

AQUARIUS: ...and mine requires that sword be ready by morning. Do we have a deal?

Page 19**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: *THINKS* Fine, but I'm charging you extra for the night hours.

Panel Two: *AQUARIUS LEERS. HE WAS NOT EXPECTING PUSHBACK FROM FILLIGON.*

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: I need something, man.

Panel Four:

AQUARIUS: *HE LEANS BACK, PONDERING THE COUNTER OFFER.*

Deal.

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: *Now we're getting somewhere.* Can I get a name for the order?

AQUARIUS: No name.

Panel Six:

FILLIGON: *Oh, come on!* I gotta put something down for the forms.

Panel Seven:

AQUARIUS: I don't do names. I'll be back in the morning. Don't remove the wrapping. *HE LEAVES.*

Page 20

Panel One: *FILLIGON THROWS HIS HANDS UP IN EXHAUSTION.*

Panel Two: *HE GRABS HIS WRITING UTENSIL AND SCRIBBLES
SOMETHING ON THE FORM.*

Panel Three: *HE GRABS AQUARIUS' BROADSWORD AND INSPECTS
THE WRAPPING.*

Panel Four: *FILLIGON PLACES IT ON THE SHELF BEHIND HIM,
HONORING HIS INTEGRITY.*

Panel Five: *HE COVERS THE DISPLAYS.*

Panel Six: *FILLIGON REMOVES THE OPEN SIGN AND CLOSES THE
CURTAINS.*

Panel Seven: *FILLIGON LOCKS THE DOOR.*

Page 21

Panels to Fill Page: *IN THE BACK, HE BEGINS TO WORK ON AQUARIUS' BROADSWORD, BEING VERY CAREFUL NOT TO DAMAGE THE WRAPPING. EACH PANEL SHOWS THE PROGRESSION OF NIGHTFALL. HE LEAVES IT ON A TABLE AFTER FINISHING AND GOES UPSTAIRS, EXHAUSTED.*

Page 22**Chapter Two**

Panel One: *SETTING - MAIN ROOM OF FILLIGON'S HOUSE, THE NEXT MORNING. FILLIGON COOKS EGGS AGAIN. SHOULD BE THE SAME AS PANEL ONE ON PAGE 6.*

Panel Two: *FILLIGON LOOKS MORE GROGGY THAN THE PREVIOUS MORNING.*

Panel Three: *HE GOES DOWNSTAIRS TO THE WORKSHOP.*

Panel Four: *FILLIGON SHOVES AQUARIUS' BROADSWORD IN ITS SCABBARD WITHOUT FURTHER INSPECTION.*

Panel Five: *HE CARRIES IT TO THE DISPLAY.*

Panel Six: *FILLIGON UNCOVERS THEM AND ADDS IT TO THE SET. HE DOES NOT DO THE REST OF THE OPENING PROCEDURE.*

Page 23**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: *You got some time before you need to open. What do you wanna do? Go see Vira.*

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: *No! It's weird to show up this early for a casual visit. Well, what else, then?*

Panel Three: *FILLIGON LOOKS TO THE DISPLAYS.*

FILLIGON: *Some people didn't pick up their orders yesterday. You could send reminder letters?*

Panel Four: *FILLIGON DIGS IN A DRAWER FOR PAPERS AND GRABS A PENCIL.*

Panels to Fill Page: *HE BEGINS TO WRITE OUT REMINDERS. IT IS APPROXIMATELY THE SAME MESSAGE FOR EACH. HE FOLDS EACH LETTER, THEN FOLDS ENVELOPES, AND STUFFS THEM INSIDE.*

Page 24

Panel One: *HE OPENS ANOTHER DRAWER, BUT THIS ONE IS EMPTY.*

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: *Right, no postage. Guess I'm making deliveries today.*

Panel Three: *FILLIGON SCOOPS UP THE LETTERS AS HE MOVES TO THE BACK ROOM.*

Panel Four: *HE PUTS THE LETTERS IN HIS BAG.*

Panel Five: *HE LOCKS THE FRONT DOOR BEHIND HIM AS HE EXITS.*

Page 25

Panels Dependent on the Number of Display Items: *FILLIGON STOPS AT VARIOUS HOUSES, OPENS THE MAILBOX OR SLOT, AND DROPS A REMINDER IN, CLOSING IT AFTERWARD. AS MORE LETTERS GET DROPPED OFF, YOU CAN SHORTEN THE VISUAL INFORMATION TO CLOSING THE MAILBOX. A MORE AMBIGUOUS READING LINE WILL BE MORE EFFECTIVE. TAKE INSPIRATION FROM KLAUS.*

Page 26

Panel One: *SETTING - CITY CENTER. THE BUILDINGS HERE ARE MADE OF STONE INSTEAD OF WOOD. THE NICER THE ESTABLISHMENT, THE LESS WOOD ON ITS EXTERIOR. FILLIGON SLAMS THE DOOR CLOSED ON ANOTHER MAILBOX.*

Panel Two: *HE NOTICES LUN RENACCA, THE KING'S FORTUNE TELLER AND ADVISOR, IN THE DISTANCE, CUTTING THROUGH A CROWD AT THE CASTLE'S BASE. NO BUILDING COMPARES TO THE MAJESTY OF THE CASTLE. IT STANDS ABOVE EVERY BUILDING ON THE ISLAND, BUT NOT WITH ARROGANCE. THE KING IS NOT EVIL, AND HIS CASTLE SHOULD NOT EXUDE GREED. IT IS A CONSTRUCTION THAT DEMONSTRATES HIS POWER AND AUTHORITY, YET MAINTAINS ITS COMPOSER AND HAS NOT GROWN BEYOND ITS CONFINES. AT THIS TIME, NO ONE ON THE ISLAND IS AWARE THAT LUN IS AN ECLIPSE FOLLOWER. HE HAS USED HIS ABILITIES, GRANTED TO HIM BY ECLIPSE, TO ADVANCE TO A POSITION OF POWER SO HE MAY MORE EASILY BRING ABOUT HIS MASTER'S RETURN. HE ALSO IS THE ONE WHO OFFERED FILLIGON'S PARENTS A LARGE SUM OF MONEY TO "REPAIR THE ARMY'S WEAPONS FOR THE SIEGE," WHEN IT WAS A PLOY TO KILL THE TWO AND LEAVE FILLIGON FOR DEAD. HE HAS BEEN THE MASTERMIND BEHIND ECLIPSE'S CONQUEST FOR CENTURIES.*

Panel Three: *LUN IS SHAKING HANDS WITH PEOPLE CLAMORING FOR HIM TO TELL THEIR FORTUNES. THERE IS A GUARD BEHIND HIM, BUT THIS IS A COMMON OCCURRENCE, AND LUN HAS NOT BEEN IN DANGER BEFORE.*

Panel Four: *LUN NOTICES FILLIGON WAVING IN THE DISTANCE.*

LUN: Filligon!

Panel Five:

LUN: I apologize, dear people, but I must get going.

LUN MOVES HIS WAY OUT OF THE CROWD. SOME OF THE CITIZENS ARE UNDERSTANDING AND OTHERS TRY TO KEEP HIS ATTENTION.

Page 27**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: You didn't have to leave the crowd for me, you know.

LUN: Nonsense! It has been far too long since you entered the main city.

Panel Two: *FILLIGON AND LUN BEGIN WALKING THROUGH TOWN.*

THE GUARD FOLLOWS CLOSE BEHIND THEM.

LUN: Besides, the morning rabble is an exhausting way to start a day.

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: Oof! Don't let your fans hear that. *He doesn't mean anything by that.*

LUN: I suppose so. You may fall back, Goarwiz.

GUARD: Of course, sir.

Panel Four:

LUN: What brings you out here, my boy? Do you not have orders to complete?

FILLIGON: That's actually why I'm here. Someone in the neighborhood has one I finished, but didn't pick it up.

Panel Five:

LUN: Ian Thesp? Did he finally come to fix his chair like I told him?

Page 28**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: No, it was some big-shot landlord who needed nails for some new houses.

LUN: I am sorry, Filligon. Next time I see him, I will send him your way if his chair still needs repair.

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: *Not again.* You don't need to do that, Mr. Renacca...

Panel Three:

LUN: What do you mean?

FILLIGON: Trying to give me jobs! I can get work well enough on my own.
No, you can't.

Panel Four:

LUN: Really?

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: Yeah.

FILLIGON'S FACE BETRAYS THE REALITY OF HIS SITUATION.

Page 29**Panel One:**

LUN: Very well. I have said it before and will say it now: you are the best blacksmith I have ever known, and I wish the rest of the Bunch would catch on to that fact.

FILLIGON: *That's too much.* I don't know about that.

Panel Two:

LUN: It is true. Your parents would be proud.

Panel Three: *THAT COMMENT HURTS FILLIGON MORE THAN IT HELPS.*

FILLIGON: Yeah.

Panel Four:

LUN: I apologize, dear boy. You know, I feel responsible for their deaths.

FILLIGON: You shouldn't.

Panel Five:

LUN: But I do. I hired them to refurbish the soldiers' weapons. They would not have been there if it were not for me.

FILLIGON: Come on. You can't control what you see. There's no way you could've known what happened. *Except that he sees the future.*

Page 30**Panel One:**

LUN: There are many who would disagree with you.

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: They don't know you like I do.

Panel Three:

LUN: Heh. I will repeat it, your parents would be proud.

FILLIGON: Thanks. I hope so.

*THE COMMENT DOES NOT HURT THIS TIME BECAUSE IT IS ABOUT
HIS CHARACTER AND NOT A LIE ABOUT HIS BUSINESS.*

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: I should get back. I got another customer who said they'd be by in the morning to pick up their order.

Panel Five:

LUN: I will not keep you longer then. I hope you receive your earnings.

Panel Six:

FILLIGON: You'd know, wouldn't you? See you, Mr. Renacca. See you, Goarwiz!

Page 31

Panel One: *LUN TURNS BACK TO THE GUARD, AND FILLIGON KEEPS GOING IN THE DIRECTION HE WAS WALKING IN BEFORE.*

Panel Two: *SETTING - OUTSIDE FILLIGON'S SHOP, LATE MORNING. HE WALKS TOWARD THE DOOR.*

Panel Three: *FILLIGON ENTERS AND CLOSES THE DOOR.*

Panel Four: *AQUARIUS IS BEHIND FILLIGON, SEEMINGLY OUT OF NOWHERE.*

AQUARIUS: You're late.

FILLIGON: OH MY GODS!

Panel Five:

AQUARIUS: I told you I would be by in the morning, and according to the sign out front, you should've opened two hours ago.

Panel Six:

FILLIGON: What in the Chaos, man! Did you break in? *I'm gonna have to check my windows now.*

Page 32**Panel One:**

AQUARIUS: I couldn't very well stand in the open.

FILLIGON: Yes, you could've! That's what any reasonable person would do! *Is this guy a criminal?*

Panel Two:

AQUARIUS: Is my sword finished?

FILLIGON: Oh man...

AQUARIUS: I'm aware that my order time was unorthodox, but I agreed to your terms and expect it to be finished.

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: *I am so tired.* Yeah, it's done. It's on the display stand. Lemme' grab it without you giving me another heart attack.

Panel Four: *FILLIGON MOVES OVER TO THE DISPLAYS. AQUARIUS PRESENTS FRUSTRATION, BUT INSIDE HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS WEAPON BEING PUT OUT IN THE OPEN.*

AQUARIUS: Why is it on display? I didn't say you could put it there.

FILLIGON: I gotta have work out to attract customers.

Panel Five: *FILLIGON HAS THE BROADSWORD IN HAND.*

AQUARIUS: You should've told me.

FILLIGON: *Chill out. It's not like it was for sale.* Sorry. Here's your sword.

Page 33

Panel One: *AQUARIUS BEGINS UNSHEATHING THE BLADE TO INSPECT IT.*

AQUARIUS: I don't know about your usual clientele, but I'd rather my items not be in the public eye. If I ever come back, I-

Panel Two: *AQUARIUS LOOKS AT HIS SWORD IN STUNNED SILENCE. IT IS PRISTINE.*

Panel Three: *HE UNSHEATHES IT THE REST OF THE WAY AND HOLDS IT IN THE AIR.*

Panel Four:

AQUARIUS: You do this yourself?

FILLIGON: *What's happening?* Yeah.

AQUARIUS: No boss or parent was coaching you?

FILLIGON: No.

Panel Five:

AQUARIUS: I'm not sure if it looked this good even when I first received it.

Page 34

Panel One: *FILLIGON IS TAKEN ABACK BY THE COMPLIMENT AFTER BEING BERATED.*

FILLIGON: Thank you.

Panel Two:

AQUARIUS: *MOSTLY TO HIMSELF.* Impressive. *NOW TO FILLIGON.*

You did excellent work.

FILLIGON: Just my job. *He's being nice. I don't know what to do with myself.*

Panel Three: *AQUARIUS SHEATHS HIS BROADSWORD.*

AQUARIUS: No. This goes beyond the usual level of repair. I'd like to speak with your boss or parents so I can compliment them on your skills.

Panel Four: *FILLIGON IS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE TOPIC SHIFT BUT DOES NOT WANT TO WRECK THE NEW DYNAMIC WITH AQUARIUS.*

FILLIGON: *Again?* It's just me, actually.

Panel Five:

AQUARIUS: You run this shop on your own?

FILLIGON: Yep.

AQUARIUS: But surely your parents live somewhere near-

FILLIGON: It's just me, man.

Page 35**Panel One:**

AQUARIUS: Oh.

Panel Two:

AQUARIUS: Was it the war?

FILLIGON: You could say that. *Don't ask. Don't ask. Don't ask.*

AQUARIUS: How'd it happen?

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: *Crud.* They were climbing Unriet Mountain just before the Ice Lord's conquest ended. They were hired to do some last-minute repairs before our soldiers launched a siege on the castle.

FILLIGON: An avalanche fell and wiped them and the camp out. We were just lucky that the Ice Lord stopped pushing forward after that.

Panel Five:

AQUARIUS: That can't be right.

Panel Six:

FILLIGON: Excuse me?

Page 36**Panel One:**

AQUARIUS: There was no siege on the Ice Lord's castle at the end of the war.

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: *Well, I'm the guy with the dead parents, so maybe I know what happened! Don't say that, Filligon.* And how would you know?

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: I was a soldier.

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: Really? *Hold on.*

AQUARIUS: Yes, I was.

FILLIGON: *This guy might know what he's talking about.* There was no siege?

AQUARIUS: No.

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: Then why were they sent up there? *What is happening right now?*

AQUARIUS: Some kind of trap, I imagine.

Panel Six:

FILLIGON: *You've known him for less than a day. Why should you believe him?* But why my parents? What did they do?

Page 37**Panel One:**

AQUARIUS: I don't know, but avalanches don't just happen on Unriet.

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: This doesn't make any sense. The king's advisor hired us. Why wouldn't there be a siege? *Does Mr. Renacca know something?*

AQUARIUS: I can't answer these questions. I believe you're going to have to talk to the advisor. Here.

AQUARIUS PLACES A BAG OF COINS ON THE COUNTERTOP.

Panel Three: FILLIGON CHECKS THE BAG.

FILLIGON: *So much money!* Wait, this is too much.

Panel Four:

AQUARIUS: Consider it a tip.

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: *Wait, don't leave yet!* Are you gonna be around town for a while? I might have more questions for you later.

Page 38

Panel One: *AQUARIUS PAUSES.*

AQUARIUS: I try not to be, but I'll be around the Grimalkin Inn through at least tomorrow. I can't make promises after that.

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: *That place is sketchy!* That's fine. Thank you.

AQUARIUS: Of course. Good luck.

AQUARIUS LEAVES.

Panel Three: *FILLIGON PACES ACROSS THE STORE.*

FILLIGON: *What was that? You don't believe him, do you? He seemed like he knew what he was talking about. Besides, what does lying gain him?*

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: *You gotta figure this out. You gotta get your head straight. You should talk to Vira. How's she gonna help? It might help you to get it off your chest.*

FILLIGON SPOTS HIS BAG.

Panel Five: *HE GRABS IT WITH DETERMINATION.*

FILLIGON: *No. There's nothing for sure yet, so she doesn't need her day interrupted. She'd probably listen to this.*

Panel Six:

FILLIGON: *I have to talk to Mr. Renacca.*

Page 39**Chapter Three**

Panel One: *SETTING - CITY CENTER. FILLIGON HAS RETURNED TO THE CASTLE.*

Panel Two: *HE BEGINS TO CLIMB THE STAIRS.*

FILLIGON: *What are you doing? They'll never let you in. I gotta try.*

Panel Three: *THE GUARDS MOVE THEIR HALBERDS ACROSS THE DOOR.*

GUARD 1: Halt!

FILLIGON: *See.*

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: Please? I know this is your job, but I need to speak with Lun Renacca.

Panel Five:

GUARD 2: No one is allowed to enter the castle without prior authorization.

Panel Six:

FILLIGON: I don't have authorization. Please? This is urgent!

Page 40**Panel One:**

GUARD 1: Are you dying?

FILLIGON: *Oh, please don't play the "dead or dying problems only" card right now. You don't know how this affects me!* No.

GUARD 1: Is someone else dying?

FILLIGON: No!

Panel Two:

GUARD 1: Good. That's not our responsibility anyway. Now, please back away from the door.

FILLIGON: *I don't like you.*

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: Can you at least tell him I stopped by? I want to ask him about... about the final siege on the Ice Lord.

Panel Four:

GUARD 1: We're not go-

GUARD 2: I'll see about passing your message along.

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: *You're alright.* Thank you.

HE TURNS AROUND AND GOES DOWN THE STEPS.

Panel Six:

GUARD 1: Why'd you throw him that bone?

GUARD 2: What does it harm us?

Page 41**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: Go see Vira now? Sure.

Panel Two: *SETTING - VIRA'S HOUSE. FILLIGON IS ALREADY ON THE PORCH.*

Panel Three: *FILLIGON HESITATES BEFORE KNOCKING AGAIN.*

FILLIGON: *Do we really need to bother her with this? I want to tell her.*
HE KNOCKS.

Panel Four: *ARUT OPENS THE DOOR. HE FILLS THE DOOR FRAME SIGNIFICANTLY MORE THAN VIRA.*

ARUT: Hey, Filligon! You ain't back for more groceries already, are ya'?

FILLIGON: *Oh, it's Arut!*

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: *This isn't bad, right?* Hey Arut. Is Vira here? I'd rather talk to her.

Panel Six:

ARUT: No, she left to sell our stock a little while ago. It'll probably be a minute 'fore she gets back. What's up?

FILLIGON: *You can trust him.* I kinda want to talk to her first.

ARUT: You sure?

FILLIGON: Yeah, it's pretty personal. *You're not shutting him out completely.*

Page 42**Panel One:**

ARUT: Hm, okay.

A PLATE BREAKS IN ANOTHER ROOM.

Panel Two:

ARUT: Ah, shoot. That was probably Mom. Don't worry, Ma! I'm coming!

Panel Three:

ARUT: Hey, was that all? I need to take care of that.

FILLIGON: Yeah, I'm good. Do you want a hand?

Panel Four:

ARUT: No, no, no. You take care of yourself, all right?

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: Okay. I'll try to stop by - *THE DOOR CLOSSES IN FRONT OF HIM* - later.

Panel Six:

FILLIGON: *I guess it's back to work then. Can't believe I'm looking forward to Grimalkin later.*

Page 43

Panel One: *SETTING - GRIMALKIN INN. THE INN LIES BETWEEN FILLIGON AND VIRA'S HOMES, THOUGH CLOSER TO THE CITY'S EDGE. IT IS A SMALL BUSINESS THAT DOES NOT HAVE THE BUDGET FOR ANY FANCY ADVERTISEMENTS BEYOND A PAINTED SIGN HANGING ON THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING. THE BUILDING ITSELF APPEARS TO BE A LARGE HOUSE THAT WAS CONVERTED INTO AN INN RATHER THAN DESIGNED TO BE ONE. A FEW PATRONS ARE DRINKING OUTSIDE.*

Panel Two: *FILLIGON SIGHS.*

FILLIGON: *Okay, done looking forward to this.*

Panel Three: *FILLIGON ENTERS THE INN.*

Panel Four: *IT IS FILLED WITH BOISTEROUS AND INTOXICATED CUSTOMERS. NO ONE TAKES NOTE OF FILLIGON.*

Panel Five: *FILLIGON STANDS IN THE ENTRYWAY UNCOMFORTABLY.*

FILLIGON: *Yay...*

Page 44

Panel One: *FILLIGON SPOTS AQUARIUS SITTING AT THE BAR ACROSS FROM THE ENTRYWAY.*

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: *There he is!*

Panel Three: *FILLIGON WEAVES THROUGH THE CROWD. A FEW TAKE NOTE OF HIS PRESENCE, BUT NONE ARE IMPRESSED. USE BODIES AS PANEL DIVIDERS BETWEEN EACH SENTENCE.*

FILLIGON: Excuse me. 'Scuse me. Comin' through. Sorry.

Panel Four: *AQUARIUS SIPS HIS DRINK AS FILLIGON APPROACHES.*

FILLIGON: Pardon me. Just gotta squeeze through here.

Panel Five: *AQUARIUS PUTS DOWN HIS DRINK WITHOUT TURNING TO FACE FILLIGON. HE DID NOT EXPECT OR WANT FILLIGON TO SHOW UP TONIGHT. FILLIGON STOPS IN HIS TRACKS WHEN AQUARIUS SPEAKS.*

AQUARIUS: Hello, Hardaway.

Page 45**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: How'd you know it was me? *He couldn't've heard me over this racket.*

AQUARIUS: I could hear you squirming your way here from the door.

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: *Never mind.* I didn't realize I was being so loud.

AQUARIUS: Read the room. No one here says "sorry" or "pardon." Talk like that makes you stand out.

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: *It's not like I'm on a spy mission.* Great. Um, can I talk to you about, uh, what we were discussing earlier?

Panel Four:

AQUARIUS: The death of your parents?

FILLIGON: Yeah. Well, I-

AQUARIUS: Did you speak to the advisor?

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: No, he was out. But the guar-

AQUARIUS: So, why are we talking?

Page 46**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: *No, no, no. What?* You said I could come here for your help over the next couple days.

AQUARIUS: No, I said you could come here to ask me more questions. That's different.

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: How is that different?

AQUARIUS: You haven't spoken to the advisor, which means you have no more information now than when we last spoke.

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: As such, no new questions.

FILLIGON: I could've thought of something myself.

Panel Four:

AQUARIUS: "Could've" means you didn't.

FILLIGON OPENS HIS MOUTH TO PROTEST.

Panel Five: *FILLIGON CHILDISHLY PUTS HIS HEAD IN HIS ARMS, WHICH ARE CROSSED ON THE TABLE. AQUARIUS SIPS HIS DRINK.*

Page 47**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: So what? I just have to hope I hear back from Mr. Renacca tomorrow, and that you haven't left before you do anything?

AQUARIUS: Mr. Renacca?

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: I can't do nothing! This is important to me!

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: The way I see it, you're going to have to wait for a little while. Like it or not, the royal party doesn't feel the same about this matter as you do. And no effort from you will make any reasonable difference.

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: I don't want to wait on this!

AQUARIUS: Relax. A response might come sooner than you think.

Panel Five: *TWO GUARDS BURST THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR, CARRYING SPEARS. FILLIGON WHIPS HIS HEAD AROUND WHEN THEY SHOUT. AQUARIUS TAKES ANOTHER SIP.*

GUARD 3: FILLIGON HARDAWAY!

AQUARIUS: That sounds like one.

Page 48**Panel One:**

GUARD 3: You are under arrest for illegal deliveries without postage!

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: WHAT?!

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: You didn't know that was a crime?

FILLIGON: No! I thought it was like a service fee!

Panel Four:

GUARD 4: You're coming with us.

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: Hold on. I'm supposed to speak with Lun Renacca.

GUARD 3: He ordered your arrest.

Panel Six:

FILLIGON: What?

Page 49

Panel One: *AQUARIUS SMILES AND STANDS UP.*

AQUARIUS: All right.

GUARD 4: Please remain seated, sir.

FILLIGON: Wait!

AQUARIUS: Don't worry. I'm just getting out of your way.

Panel Two: *AQUARIUS SPINS AROUND, SLAMMING THE STOOL HE WAS ON INTO THE TWO GUARDS, TOPPLING THEM OVER.*

Panel Three: *FILLIGON STARES AT THE DAZED SOLDIERS IN SHOCK WHILE AQUARIUS DRAWS HIS BROADSWORD, STILL HOLDING THE SEAT OF THE STOOL.*

AQUARIUS: Run.

Page 50

Panel One: *AQUARIUS LEAPS OVER THE BAR INTO THE KITCHEN,
AND FILLIGON HURRIEDLY RUNS AROUND IT.*

Panel Two: *AQUARIUS PUSHES A COOK OUT OF HIS WAY AND
FILLIGON DODGES THE DROPPED FOOD.*

Panel Three: *AQUARIUS NOTICES FILLIGON BEHIND HIM.*

AQUARIUS: What are you doing?

FILLIGON: You said run!

Panel Four:

AQUARIUS: Not after me!

FILLIGON: How was I supposed to know that?!

Panel Five: *THEY EXIT THROUGH THE BACK DOOR INTO AN
ALLEYWAY. THERE IS A GUARD AT THE FAR END.*

AQUARIUS: We need to split up to fan out the guards!

FILLIGON: Well, I'm sorry! I've never been on the run before!

GUARD 5: Halt!

Page 51

Panel One: *AQUARIUS THROWS THE SEAT, HITTING THE GUARD IN THE HELMET.*

Panel Two:

AQUARIUS: I can't protect you right now! My stuff is inside, and I need to double back for it once they've been drawn away.

Panel Three: *GUARDS 3 AND 4 EXIT THROUGH THE BACK DOOR.*

GUARD 3: Stop!

Panel Four: *AQUARIUS FIGHTS GUARD 3 AND GUARD 4 APPROACHES FILLIGON, WHO CLUMSILY DRAWS HIS SWORD.*

FILLIGON: Uh oh!

Panel Five: *FILLIGON BARELY MANAGES TO PARRY A JAB TO HIS LEFT SIDE.*

Panel Six: *HE POORLY PARRIES ANOTHER TO THE RIGHT OF HIS HEAD.*

Page 52

Panel One: *AQUARIUS SLAMS GUARD 3'S HEAD INTO THE WALL, KNOCKING THEM OUT. FILLIGON DODGES ANOTHER ATTACK.*

Panel Two: *AQUARIUS GRABS THE END OF GUARD 4'S HALBERD AND KNOCKS THEM OUT WITH A PUNCH TO THE FACE.*

FILLIGON: *Oh, thank goodness!*

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: You're terrible with that thing.

FILLIGON: I'm a little more out of practice than I realized.

Panel Four:

GUARD 5: Freeze!

AQUARIUS: Come on!

FILLIGON: Now I can run with you?

THEY RUN OVER THE KNOCKED-OUT GUARDS AWAY FROM GUARD 5.

Panel Five: *THEY TURN BETWEEN TWO BUILDINGS AND CROSS A STREET. TWO MORE GUARDS ON HORSES SPOT THEM.*

AQUARIUS: Don't get smart with me.

FILLIGON: I'm just sayin'.

GUARD 6: Hey!

Page 53**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: Crap!

Panel Two: *THE TWO RUN DOWN ANOTHER ALLEYWAY, AND THE GUARDS DISMOUNT TO FOLLOW THEM.*

Panel Three: *THIS ALLEYWAY IS MUCH TIGHTER THAN THE LAST ONE.*

FILLIGON: I can't believe I'm on the run for something as silly as postage!

AQUARIUS: It's not usually something they could arrest you for.

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: What?

Panel Five:

AQUARIUS: Mailing without postage should only result in a fine for each offense.

Panel Six:

FILLIGON: So why am I about to be arrested?!

AQUARIUS: My guess: you asked the wrong questions.

Page 54

Panel One: *GUARD 5 HAS CAUGHT UP FROM A DIFFERENT DIRECTION.*

GUARD 5: I said stop!

Panel Two: *AQUARIUS AND FILLIGON MAKE A SHARP TURN DOWN ANOTHER ALLEY, CAUSING GUARD 5 TO CRASH INTO 6 AND 7.*

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: I don't know about you, but I can't do this forever!

Panel Four:

GUARD 7: Freeze!

AQUARIUS: Fine.

Page 55

Full bleed: *AQUARIUS MAKES AN ICE WALL BETWEEN THE GUARDS AND THEM. FILLIGON IS IN SHOCK.*

Page 56**Panel One:**

GUARD 7: He's an ice soldier!

GUARD 5: Go around and try to cut them off!

AQUARIUS: That won't hold them for long.

FILLIGON: You're an elemental...

Panel Two:

AQUARIUS: Hey! I'm going to help you get answers, but we need to keep moving.

FILLIGON: I'm on the run with an Elemental.

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: I know a lot is going through your head, but you must stay focused. Understand?

Panel Four: *FILLIGON NODS LIGHTLY.*

Panel Five:

GUARD 6: I see them!

Page 57

Panel One: *AQUARIUS PULLS FILLIGON DOWN ANOTHER ALLEY AND MAKES ANOTHER ICE WALL.*

Panel Two:

AQUARIUS: I'll hold them off while you escape. If you want my help, meet me in the clearing to the east of the bridge to the Earth Island tomorrow evening.

Panel Three:

GUARD 7: There!

AQUARIUS: Go!

AQUARIUS PUSHES FILLIGON OUT OF THE ALLEY.

Panel Four: *AN ICE WALL FORMS BEHIND FILLIGON.*

Panel Five: *FILLIGON RUNS INTO THE WOODS.*

Page 58**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: *Oh gods, oh gods, oh gods, oh gods!*

Panel Two: *FILLIGON STOPS RUNNING AND STANDS BEHIND A TREE.*

FILLIGON: *What just happened? You're on the run! I know! With an ice elemental! I KNOW!*

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: *Do I still meet up with him? He's an ice elemental! Of course not! But he said he would help.*

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: *The Ice Lord nearly conquered the whole Bunch. You can't trust his soldiers. But he's not one anymore, right?*

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: *He could be lying! He's certainly trying to keep a low enough profile.*

Panel Six: *FILLIGON LOOKS DOWN AT THE STONE BLADE.*

FILLIGON: *But his reaction when he saw his sword seemed genuine. He can be impressed with your work and still want to kill you.*

Page 59**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: *But why would the Ice Lord want me dead? Why does Mr. Renacca want me dead?!*

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: *He doesn't want you dead. He just wants to arrest you. That's still not good! It's better than dead.*

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: *Still, it doesn't make sense! Why up the sentence so much? He knows me!*

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: *This is too much. I can't handle this all at once. Well, this is what's happening, so you're gonna have to. Shut up.*

Panel Five: *A RUSTLING SOUND COMES FROM BEHIND HIM.*

FILLIGON: *What was that? Was it the guards? Could be an animal.*

Panel Six: *FILLIGON STARTS TO RUN AGAIN.*

FILLIGON: *Even if it is an animal, that could still be bad. What am I gonna do? Where am I gonna go?!*

Page 60**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: *I can't do this myself. I need to talk to someone.*

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: *You're not seriously gonna see Vira now?! When else?*

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: *Oh dear...*

Panel Four: *SETTING - VIRA'S HOUSE. FILLIGON IS CROUCHED
LOW IN THE GARDEN.*

Page 61

Panel One: *VIRA BURSTS OUT THE FRONT DOOR, BOW DRAWN.
SHE IS IN A NIGHTGOWN.*

VIRA: Freeze with your hands up, or I will shoot this arrow through your skull!

Panel Two: *FILLIGON'S HANDS ROCKET INTO THE AIR, BUT THE
REST OF HIS BODY STAYS BELOW THE PLANTS.*

FILLIGON: Oh gods, don't shoot! It's me!

Panel Three: *VIRA LOWERS HER BOW.*

VIRA: Filligon?

Panel Four: *FILLIGON DOES NOT MOVE.*

FILLIGON: Hi.

Panel Five: *VIRA IS RELIEVED BUT EXHAUSTED.*

VIRA: You can get your head out of the plants now.

Panel Six: *FILLIGON RAISES HIS HEAD AND LOWERS HIS ARMS A
LITTLE. HE HAS A NERVOUS GRIN ON.*

Panel Seven:

VIRA: What are you doing here?

Page 62**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: I'm really sorry but I was telling this guy I did a job for what happened to my parents and he said they didn't die by accident so I went to talk to Mr. Renacca about it but he wasn't there and this didn't happen after but it's important to know for later, I had made deliveries without postage because I had none and I went to the Grimalkin Inn to talk to the guy this evening because he said I could and then some guards showed up because they wanted to arrest me for that postage thing but the catch is they shouldn't be able to but they had orders from Mr. Renacca to do that anyways and then the other guy fought them off and we got chased through the streets so now I'm a fugitive, I'm hanging out with an elemental, and my parents might have been murdered!

Panel Two:

VIRA: Woah, okay. Slow down. That's a lot for me to take in this late.

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: Sorry. I just really needed to talk to you.

VIRA: Yeah, I can see that.

Page 63**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: Can I borrow your brother?

VIRA: What?

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: I'm gonna be on the run and don't know how to hunt. I figured he could teach me.

VIRA: Uh- No. I'll go with you.

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: But you've said he's the better-

Panel Four:

VIRA: I know. Trust me. I'm going. Just give me some time to prepare.

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: I'm supposed to meet the guy tomorrow evening in a clearing by the Earth bridge.

Panel Six:

VIRA: That's fine. Can I get some sleep? I have a lot to do tomorrow now.

Page 64**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: Yeah, sorry.

Panel Two:

VIRA: You're okay. This was important.

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: Thank you.

Panel Four:

VIRA: Of course.

Panel Five: *VIRA CLOSES THE DOOR.*

Panel Six: *FILLIGON TURNS TO LEAVE.*

Panel Seven: *HE LOOKS BACK AT THE DOOR.*

Panel Eight: *HE LEAVES.*

Page 65**Chapter Four**

Panel One: *SETTING - FILLIGON'S HOUSE. FILLIGON LOOKS AT IT FROM ACROSS THE STREET. THREE GUARDS ARE LEAVING ON HORSEBACK, BUT ONE IS STATIONED TO WATCH THE SHOP OUT FRONT.*

Panel Two: *FILLIGON CLIMBS IN THROUGH A BACK WINDOW. IF YOU CAN SHOW BOTH SIDES OF THE HOUSE AND STILL HAVE IT CLEAR WHO IS WHO, DO THAT.*

Panel Three: *FILLIGON QUICKLY AND QUIETLY PACKS A MUCH LARGER BAG IN HIS ROOM.*

Panel Four: *FILLIGON CAREFULLY PICKS UP THE DISPLAY STAND.*

Panel Five: *FILLIGON AIMS A ROCK AT SOME TOOLS OUTSIDE.*

Page 66

Panel One: *THE GUARD HEARS THE CLATTER FROM THE FRONT.*

Panel Two: *AS THE GUARD MOVES AROUND THE SIDE, FILLIGON EXITS FROM THE FRONT DOOR AND SETS THE DISPLAY STAND DOWN.*

Panel Three: *FILLIGON SCRIBBLES SOMETHING FRANTICALLY ON A PIECE OF PAPER.*

Panel Four: *THE GUARD COMES BACK TO SEE THE COVERED DISPLAY STAND AND NO FILLIGON. THE NOTE ON THE DISPLAY STAND IN THE FAKE ALPHABET READS, "COMPLETED ORDERS. DO NOT STEAL!"*

Panel Five: *FILLIGON SNEAKS AROUND THE BACKS OF SOME BUILDINGS. THERE ARE NO GUARDS IN THE STREET. THIS IS NOT BY HIS HOUSE.*

Panel Six: *FILLIGON DASHES INTO THE WOODS. THERE ARE SOME GUARDS IN THE DISTANCE POSTED AT THE EARTH BRIDGE.*

Page 67

Panel One: *FILLIGON ARRIVES AT A SMALL MEADOW.*

FILLIGON: *Is this it? How should I know? I'm so tired.*

Panel Two: *HE SLIDES DOWN AGAINST A TREE.*

FILLIGON: *It's a clear spot. I think this is east. It must be.*

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: *Am I doing the right thing? You're asking now?*

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: *Maybe I should turn myself in? You can't do that. You're just tired.*

Panel Five: *HE ROLLS OVER ON THE GRASS, USING HIS BAG AS A PILLOW.*

FILLIGON: *Just a quick nap, then. You can't be out too long.*

Panel Six:

FILLIGON: *Just... a quick...*

"FADE" TO BLACK.

Page 68

Panel One: *VIRA NUDGES FILLIGON WITH HER BOOT. THE BOOT IS WELL WORN. WE SEE FILLIGON HERE AND NOT VIRA.*

VIRA: Hey, wake up!

Panel Two: *VIRA STANDS WITH THE SUN BEHIND HER HEAD AND HER BOW AND QUIVER SLUNG OVER HER SHOULDER. SHE HAS A SMALL BAG TIED AROUND HER WAIST, A FAR CRY FROM FILLIGON'S BAG.*

VIRA: Evening, sleepyhead.

Panel Three: *THAT WAKES FILLIGON UP MORE. VIRA OFFERS HIM HER HAND.*

FILLIGON: Oh no! Is it evening already?

VIRA: Early evening. I wouldn't panic yet.

Panel Four: *VIRA PULLS FILLIGON UP, AND HE LOOKS AROUND.*

FILLIGON: Oh, good. Guess we still beat him anyway.

VIRA: Excuse me?

Panel Five: *FILLIGON GESTURES AROUND THEM.*

FILLIGON: Does this not seem like the clearing he told me to meet him at?

Panel Six:

VIRA: Ha!

FILLIGON: What?

Page 69**Panel One:**

VIRA: You don't come out to the woods often, do you?

Panel Two: *FILLIGON IS VERY UNCOMFORTABLE. HE DOES NOT WANT TO SAY HE HAS NOT BECAUSE HE KNOWS SHE LIKES IT, BUT HE DOES NOT WANT TO LIE.*

FILLIGON: What makes you say that?

Panel Three:

VIRA: Your bag and the fact that you think this tiny space is a clearing.

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: What's wrong with my bag?

Panel Five: *VIRA CHUCKLES.*

VIRA: Nothing. I'm sure you packed a lot of useful stuff.

Page 70

Panel One: *VIRA LOOKS UP AT THE TREES AROUND THEM.*

VIRA: You should try to come out here more, though. It's beautiful.

Panel Two: *FILLIGON LOOKS AT VIRA.*

FILLIGON: Yeah.

Panel Three: *VIRA LOOKS OVER HER SHOULDER TO FILLIGON AND THINKS ABOUT ACKNOWLEDGING HIS LOOK.*

VIRA: So, you wanna explain slower what's happening?

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: Yeah. What do you want me to go over?

THE TWO START WALKING.

Page 71**Panel One:** *THEY STOP WALKING.*

VIRA: So let me get this straight. We're going to meet a stranger in the woods to do something he hasn't told you about?

FILLIGON: Okay, that sounds really bad that way.

Panel Two:

VIRA: Well... do you trust him?

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: I guess so.

VIRA: All right.

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: Anything else?

VIRA: Not from you. I'm going to think of some questions for your stranger, though.

Panel Five:

FILLIGON: Thanks... for coming.

VIRA: Of course!

Page 72

Panel One: *FILLIGON AND VIRA COME TO A CLEARING AT THE EDGE OF THE ISLAND. CLOSER TO THE RIM, AQUARIUS STANDS WITH ARIES, A FIRE ELEMENTAL, NEXT TO A HOT AIR BALLOON EQUIVALENT.*

Panel Two:

VIRA: That's the guy?

FILLIGON: Yep.

Panel Three: *AQUARIUS OVERHEARS AND TURNS TO THEM.*

AQUARIUS: Who's this?

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: Well, this-

VIRA: I could ask you the same question.

Panel Five:

ARIES: Damn.

AQUARIUS: Excuse me?

Page 73**Panel One:**

VIRA: You told my friend to meet you here with no information on your plan or even a name?

FILLIGON: *What is happening right now?*

Panel Two:

AQUARIUS: I also didn't tell him to bring a friend! So what are you doing here?

Panel Three:

VIRA: Name first.

VIRA AND AQUARIUS STARE DAGGERS AT EACH OTHER. THOUGH AQUARIUS HAS A HEIGHT ADVANTAGE, VIRA MANAGES TO BE JUST AS, IF NOT MORE, INTIMIDATING. FILLIGON IS SHOCKED. HE HAS NEVER SEEN VIRA'S DEFIANT SIDE BEFORE. ARIES IS EATING THIS SCENE UP.

Page 74**Panel One:**

AQUARIUS: Aquarius.

Panel Two: *VIRA RELAXES.*

VIRA: Thank you. I'm Vira. Now, what's your plan?

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: I figured since your friend can't look for answers here, the next best place would be the Ice Island. Didn't have time to explain then, so I just hoped he'd trust me.

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: And you are?

HE IS TALKING TO ARIES.

Panel Five:

ARIES: Aries. Aquarius kicked my butt back in the war, but we're on good terms now.

Page 75**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: That's... cool.

VIRA: So, how are we getting to the Ice Island?

Panel Two:

AQUARIUS: Aries's balloon.

Panel Three:

FILLIGON: Wait, seriously?

VIRA: No way. The guards would shoot us down.

Panel Four:

AQUARIUS: By the time they spot us, we'll be at too far a range for the arrows to reach us.

Panel Five:

AQUARIUS: This was how people traveled between islands before the bridges were made. I've done it plenty of times. So long as we move quickly, the soldiers will arrive well after Aries has already left, if any are sent at all.

Page 76**Panel One:**

VIRA: He's talked you into this before?

ARIES: It's basically the reason we're friends.

Panel Two:

AQUARIUS: That's not helpful.

FILLIGON: Is this really the best way?

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: Unless you want to try climbing the bridge's underside, yes.

Panel Four: *FILLIGON LOOKS AT VIRA TO ASK WHAT SHE THINKS.*

Panel Five: *VIRA LOOKS AT FILLIGON TO SAY IT IS HIS CALL.*

Panel Six: *FILLIGON SHUGS UNCONFIDENTLY BUT ACCEPTS THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION.*

Page 77

Panel One: *VIRA SHAKES HER HEAD BUT KNOWS FILLIGON IS RIGHT.*

VIRA: Okay. I guess we're in.

Panel Two:

ARIES: Alright! Let's get this boat in the air!

Panel Three: *AQUARIUS PUTS HIS HAND ON FILLIGON'S SHOULDER.*

AQUARIUS: I know you're probably pretty tense right now, but I believe this is the best way for you to get answers.

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: Yeah, I... hope so, too.

Panel Five: *ARIES READIES A FLAME OVER HER HEAD ONCE EVERYBODY IS INSIDE THE BALLOON.*

ARIES: I wouldn't recommend dangling anything over the side once we're in the air unless you're okay with losin' it.

Page 78

Panel One: *THE HEAT FROM ARIES'S FIRE BEGINS TO EXPAND THE BALLOON.*

Panel Two: *FILLIGON AND VIRA LOOK AROUND WITH A MIX OF CURIOSITY AND ANXIETY.*

Panel Three: *THE BALLOON EXPANDS TO ITS FULL HEIGHT.*

Panel Four: *INSIDE PANEL THREE. THE ROPE CONNECTING THE BALLOON AND THE BOAT BECOMES TAUT.*

Panel Five: *INSIDE PANEL THREE. THE BOAT BEGINS TO LIFT OFF THE GROUND*

Page 79

Panel One: *AQUARIUS CASUALLY HOLDS ONTO THE SIDE WHILE FILLIGON AND VIRA ARE JOSTLED BY THE MOVEMENT.*

ARIES IS STANDING FREELY WHILE SUPPORTING THE FIRE.

Panel Two: *THE BOAT IS LIFTED OFF THE GROUND AND FLOATS TOWARD THE READER. THIS PANEL SHOULD BE THE LARGEST ON THE PAGE.*

Panel Three: *FILLIGON AND VIRA TURN THEIR HEADS TO LOOK OUT THE FRONT OF THE BOAT. THEIR EXPRESSIONS LEAN MORE TOWARD ANXIETY NOW.*

Pages 80 and 81

Double Page Full Bleed: *WIDE AERIAL SHOT OF THE BALLOON.*

*THE MAINLAND AND BRIDGE ARE VISIBLE, AS IS THE EARTH
THROUGH THE CLOUDS BELOW. MAYBE INCLUDE THE EARTH
ISLAND IF YOU HAVE SPACE TO FILL.*

Page 82

Panel One: *VIRA IS IN AWE OF THE SIGHT BEFORE HER AND LETS OUT A LIGHT CHUCKLE.*

Panel Two: *FILLIGON LOOKS AT HER WITH AN EQUALLY BIG SMILE.*

Panel Three:

ARIES: Not quite like takin' the bridge, huh?

SHE IS HOLDING THE FLAME WITH ONE ARM NOW. FILLIGON AND VIRA HAVE TURNED TO FACE HER. THIS IS VIEWED FROM OVER THEIR SHOULDERS.

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: I wouldn't know! People always traveled like this?

ARIES: Yep!

Page 83

Panel One: *FILLIGON TURNS BACK TO FACE THE FRONT.*

FILLIGON: I can't believe we ever stopped.

Panel Two: *THE BALLOON FLOATS THROUGH THE AIR.*

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: Yes, it's very impressive, but now we need to discuss what we're going to do when we land on the Earth Island.

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: Wait, wait, Earth Island? I thought we were going to the Ice Island.

Panel Five:

AQUARIUS: We are, but we're disembarking Aries's balloon on the Earth Island.

Page 84**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: Why?

AQUARIUS: So we don't get shot down by guards while flying over the island.

Panel Two:

VIRA: Wasn't the whole point of us taking the balloon to avoid being shot down?

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: Sure, in the initial flight, but do you see how slow we're moving now? If we fly over the island and they do send guards, we'll be caught up to in no time, and then we'll all go to jail.

Panel Four:

FILLIGON: So fly around!

Panel Five:

ARIES: Only if you want to extend this trip by a few days with no food.

Page 85

Panel One: *FILLIGON LOOKS DEFEATED.*

VIRA: You should've told us that was your plan.

Panel Two:

AQUARIUS: I thought it was obvious.

Panel Three:

VIRA: I think it's clear that none of this is obvious to us.

Panel Four:

AQUARIUS: It is now.

ARIES: Come on, Aquarius...

Panel Five:

AQUARIUS: What?

ARIES: They're just kids. Cut 'em a little slack.

Page 86

CENTRALIZE ALL PANELS ON THIS PAGE AROUND FILLIGON'S FACE. HIS EYES ARE SHUT TIGHT, AND HIS EXPRESSION IS TENSE FROM ANXIETY. THE BICKERING IS TOO MUCH ON TOP OF THE REST OF HIS DAY. THE SPEECH BALLOONS AND THOUGHT BOXES SHOULD OVERLAP THE PANELS.

Panel One:

VIRA: We are not just kids!

Panel Two:

ARIES: Yeah, you are.

FILLIGON: *What were you thinking?*

Panel Three:

AQUARIUS: Slack won't help them on the run.

FILLIGON: *I had to do this.*

Panel Four:

VIRA: That doesn't change anything!

FILLIGON: *What'll you eat?*

Panel Five:

AQUARIUS: Get used to that!

FILLIGON: *We'll figure it out.*

Panel Six:

VIRA: Your plan means you're responsible!

FILLIGON: *You're gonna get yourself killed.*

Panel Seven:

AQUARIUS: I am not your babysitter!

FILLIGON: *Probably.*

Panel Eight:

ARIES: This isn't fun anymore.

FILLIGON: *Why did you bring Vira into this?*

Panel Nine:

VIRA: You should've told us!

FILLIGON: *She said she wanted to come.*

Panel Ten:

AQUARIUS: You should've known!

FILLIGON: *You're gonna get her killed.*

Page 87**Panel One:**

FILLIGON: STOP!

EVERYONE FREEZES. VIRA IS CONCERNED, ARIES IS REMORSEFUL, AND AQUARIUS IS ANNOYED.

Panel Two:

FILLIGON: *What're you gonna say now?* It's too late to argue about the plan.

Panel Three: *HE IS TALKING MORE TO VIRA BUT DOES NOT HAVE THE ENERGY TO LOOK HER IN THE EYE.*

FILLIGON: We're just gonna have to figure stuff out when we land.

Panel Four: *NOW HE IS TALKING TO AQUARIUS AND CAN MEET HIS GAZE.*

FILLIGON: But from now on, you tell us the whole plan before we start following it.

Panel Five: *SOME OF THE ANNOYANCE ON AQUARIUS'S FACE HAS WORN OFF.*

FILLIGON: Deal?

Page 88

Panel One: *HE FEELS A TWINGE OF GUILT FOR HOW FILLIGON FEELS.*

AQUARIUS: Deal.

Panel Two:

ARIES: You guys should grab your stuff. I'm gonna start lowering the balloon.

Panel Three: *THE HOT AIR BALLOON APPROACHES THE EARTH ISLAND. THE GRASS IS A DEEP GREEN, AND UNUSUAL ROCK FORMATIONS DOT THE LANDSCAPE.*

Reflection

Creating this graphic novel has been an incredibly rewarding experience for me. That is not to say it was always easy. There is a reason it is called artwork. I was not as productive as I had planned to be in my proposal. Life happens, and writing a book takes time. However, I have maintained the balance between scripted pages and layouts I outlined earlier. It was not a constant ratio, as each one presented unique challenges. I focused on one until I reached a good stopping point, then shifted to the other. I believe that combined with the quality of work is satisfactory.

The script was arguably the most essential element to my thesis. It contains the heart of my work, as the art is unfinished. I am not saying the art is not important, it simply cannot pull the same weight as it is incomplete. The script can and should continue to be reworked, but words on a page are a little more definitive.

After outlining the rough plot points and character arcs, I began writing linearly. Going straight through gave me a direction and prevented me from having a bunch of haphazard scenes I would then be forced to string together. I would be concerned that the story felt disjointed and crammed into the shape I wanted rather than naturally evolving. Sometimes I would not know how to continue a scene, but in those

moments, I shifted to layouts. Stepping back and sometimes reexamining the scene from a new layer allowed me to find the solution.

Occasionally, I also wrote down every possibility of how the scene could go and evaluated my choices from there. I did that for Fortune Teller's introduction on page twenty-six and when Filligon visits Arut on page forty-one. There were a lot of directions I could have taken in each of those scenes. Lun Renacca is a minor antagonist in this book, but continues appearing in subsequent stories in an overtly evil mode. I had to align that with some sort of dynamic with Filligon so he could be brought into the book. I did consider not having Filligon know who Lun was since they are from opposite ends of the class spectrum. I decided against that, however, as Lun had some important exposition and forced Filligon to leave the Mainland by calling for his arrest.

Arut's scene started as a scene with Vira. I knew Filligon would want to talk to Vira at this point, but not enough had happened in the plot to move the story forward with a scene between her and Filligon. After figuring out what each of them would want in a scene at that point, I tried to think of what would happen if Vira were not at the house. I settled on this version with Arut because it hinted at just enough of Vira's home life to be interesting, while revealing enough of Filligon's character to push the story forward. It is supplemental material; everything in the scene is

explored in some fashion elsewhere, but I believe the timing of it is believable for the story.

The silliest bout of writer's block I had was on page thirteen. There was no dialogue in the first panel for months! I needed the panel before to be about Arut passing Filligon the tomato to show his character, and I needed the panel afterward to call attention to Filligon rejecting onions, but I did not have anything while he picked the onion. It sat there with a comment reading, "Someone needs to say something here. The onions are not important enough to warrant silence," for months while I worked on everything around it. Eventually, I had Filligon call attention to Arut's gardening knowledge before Vira cut him off in the next panel. It more openly highlights Arut and Vira's roles in their family, but not in a manner that feels out of character for anyone in the scene.

One problem that I ran into early on was formatting. I had been writing the script with no indication of pages or panels. I figured I was going to be doing the art myself, I could trust myself to draw what I wanted. When my advisor pointed out that it is not how comics are done and that it may be more beneficial when I start the art to have some guidance on how to arrange things, I reformatted the document. I am grateful that he did ask me to do that, as many headaches were avoided thanks to the structure. I realized how long my script was becoming thanks

to the page indications, and layouts became more impactful thinking about them ahead of time. It took a lot of work, but it was well worth it in the end. Layouts were also reworked to be more impactful at later stages of the thesis. One thing I had in mind early on was to have the prologue end on a right-facing page so the transition to Filligon's introduction would be more jarring. Comics start on a right-facing page generally, so that determined the first layout. However, I originally had the prologue on four pages, leading it to end on a left-facing page. I spent a long time trying to think of ways I could add information to the dialogue to stretch the scene out, but I did not want to give too much away either. Eventually, I restructured the layouts for the whole prologue to fit on five pages. It broke up scenes in ways I had not originally intended, but I was able to keep the bigger moments and overall impact I had wanted.

I need to go back through the layouts at some point and find some appropriate panels to remove the panels from. Opening up the panels allows the art to breathe a little more, but as a beginner, I also need the structure. I do not want to overdo it, especially in the expository section, as that is when Filligon is trapped in his cycle, but a little more could allow readers not to feel so constrained. They need to feel Filligon's monotony, but also enjoy the book.

I found drawing the layouts to be more intensive than writing the script. With the script, I have the cadence of the characters to push me

forward, and when the scene ends, I can choose whether or not I want to keep going. With layouts, I have to think of an average of six art pieces, how to arrange them on a page for appropriate dominance, space for text, eye lines, and how it compares to nearby layouts. It takes a lot of forethought. I am not sure I ever did more than three at a time because my brain would be so exhausted after that, I would not complete anything well or in a reasonable amount of time. I had expected sketches to keep things lighter for me, but I had underestimated how much went into layouts. It was a very good learning experience to have at this stage of my career.

One especially challenging layout was on page twenty-five. Filligon has to deliver letters for an unknown number of clients. I had scripted that to be dealt with later as the details are unimportant to the overall plot, but when I got to the layout of that page, I had no direction. I left it blank for a while, but eventually accepted that I could not have a hole in the middle of my script. Rather than come up with specific jobs and clients that would have hired Filligon, I decided to emphasize the monotony of his task. I drew the action-to-action sequence of Filligon delivering the first letter, so readers could understand what was happening in the smallest structure I could use while adhering to the thirds grid structure. Then I drew those same actions at different locations to communicate the number of times he had to deliver letters. Finally, I drew Filligon closing mailboxes to fill the rest of the page and hammer home how repetitive this was for him. There

may be stronger methods of communicating all of these ideas, but I did not want to belabor this scene, and the point of layouts is to frame the story. I do not need to hold onto these sketches religiously, some still have notes I left for myself, they exist to track the visual storytelling.

I am grateful to the honors committee for allowing me to write this graphic novel for my thesis. The experience has been very valuable to me academically, professionally, and personally. I learned a lot about my career, some things I am shocked I did not know before. This book will be very valuable to me in the future, and I hope that in the far future it will be valuable to readers as well.

Figure 2 - Early Training Sketch

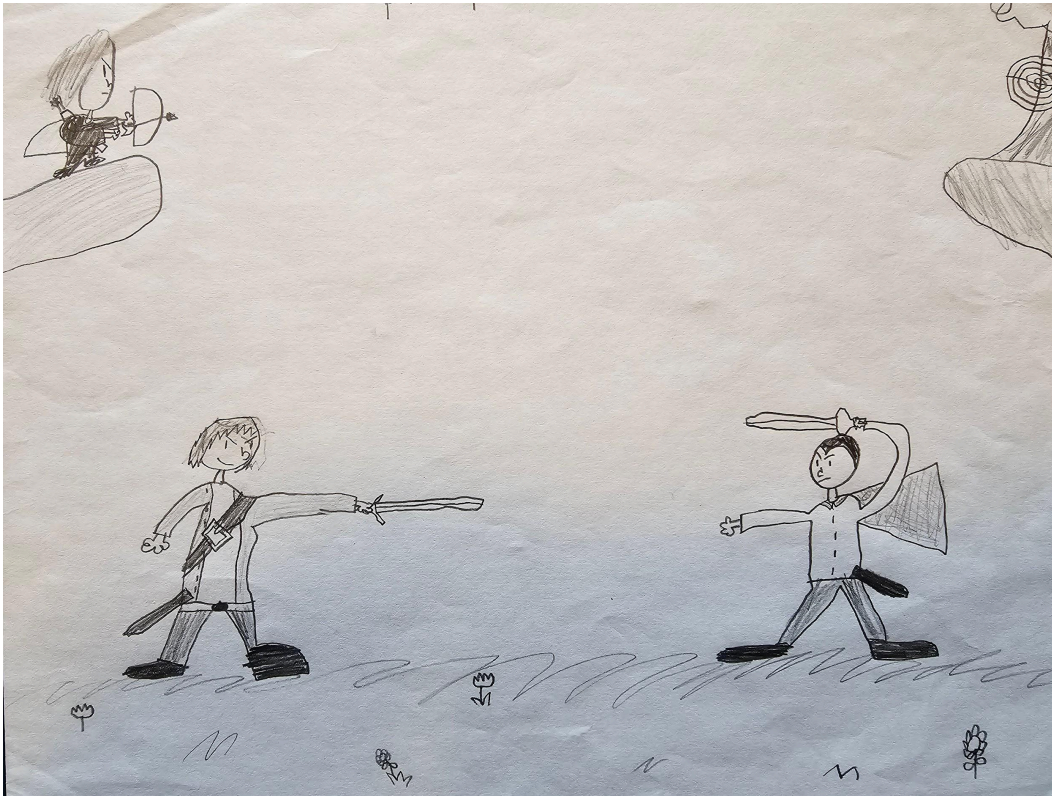


Figure 3 - Filligon Head Sketches

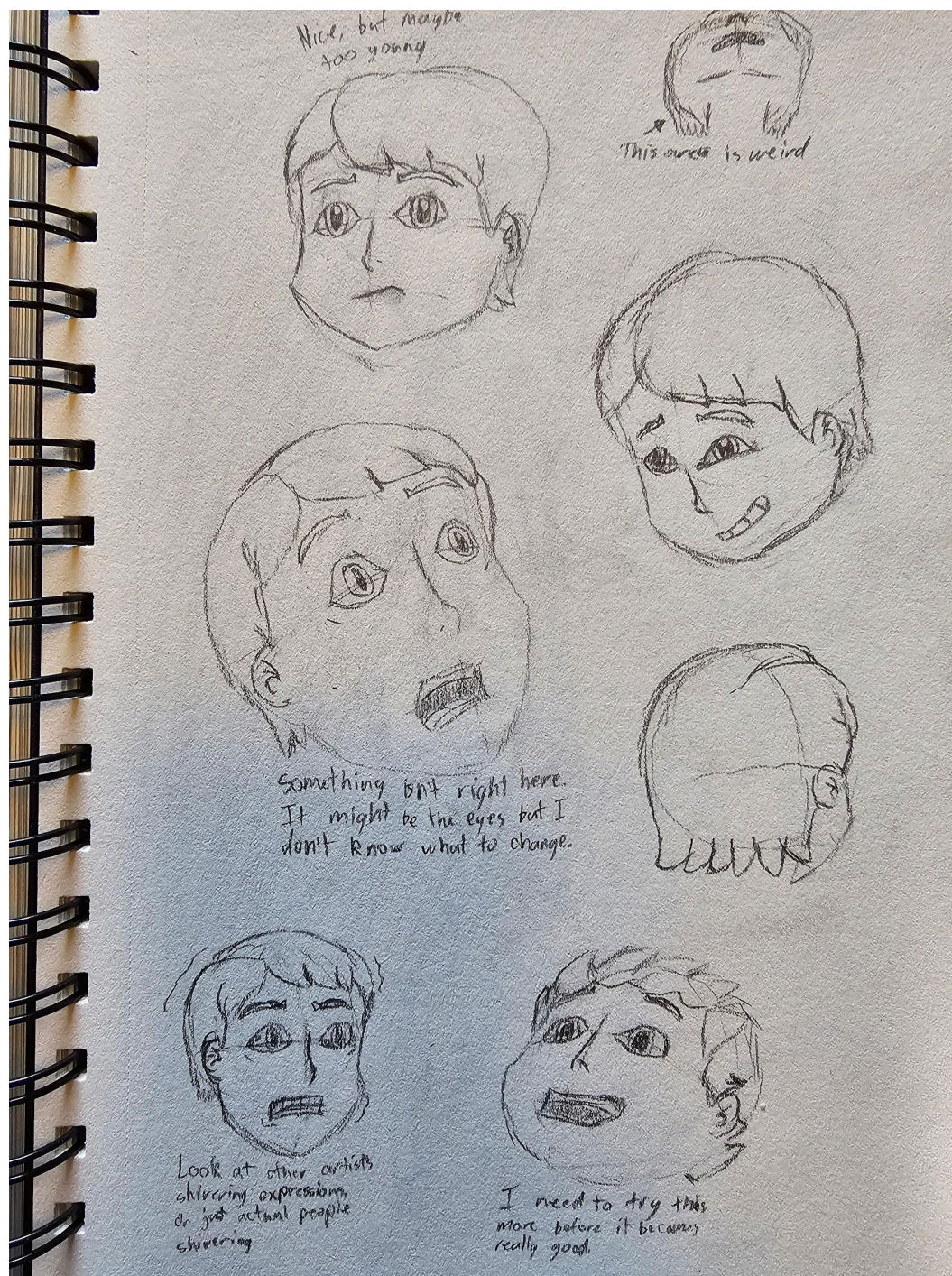


Figure 4 - Aquarius Head Sketches

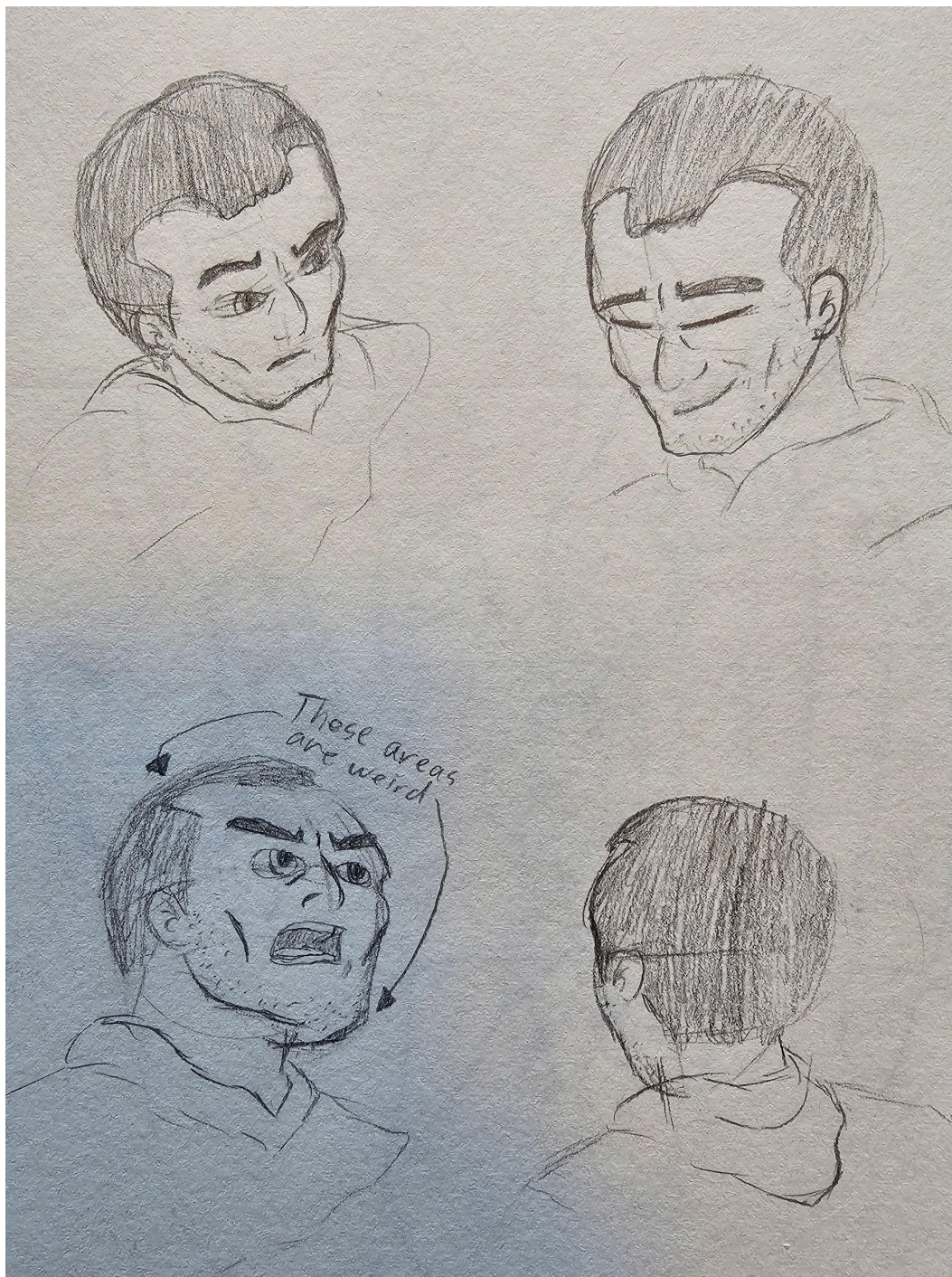


Figure 5 - Hardaway Alphabet Translator

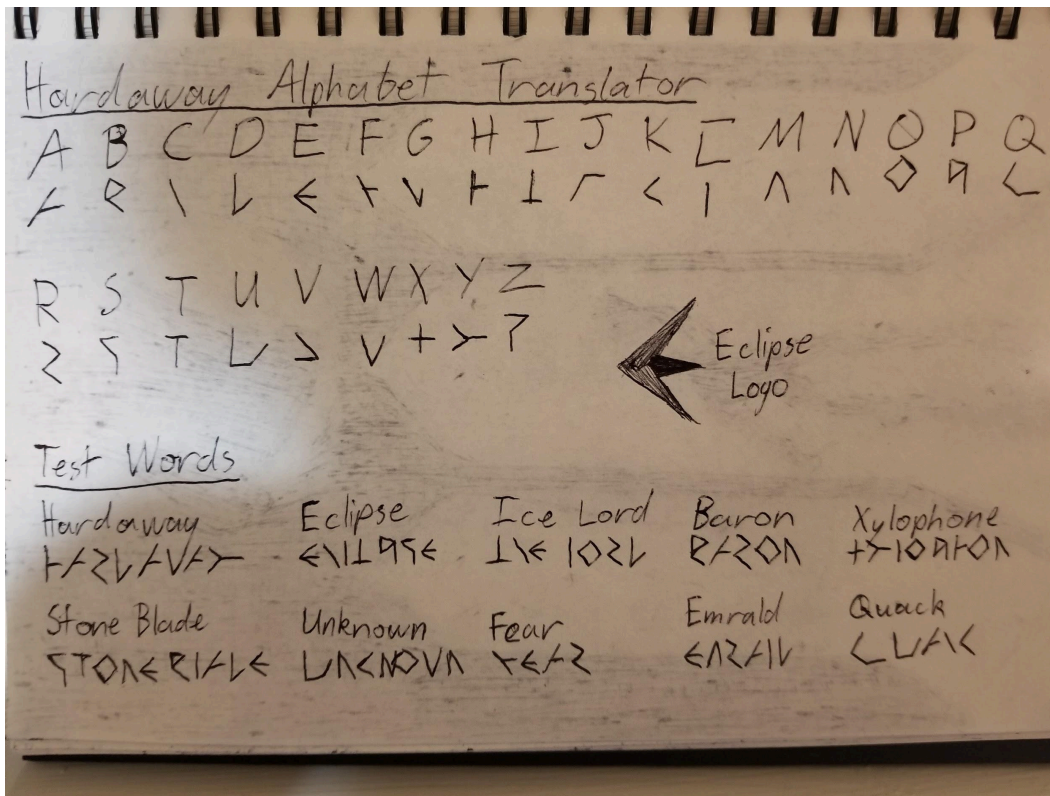


Figure 6 - Filligon Derrick Hardaway design

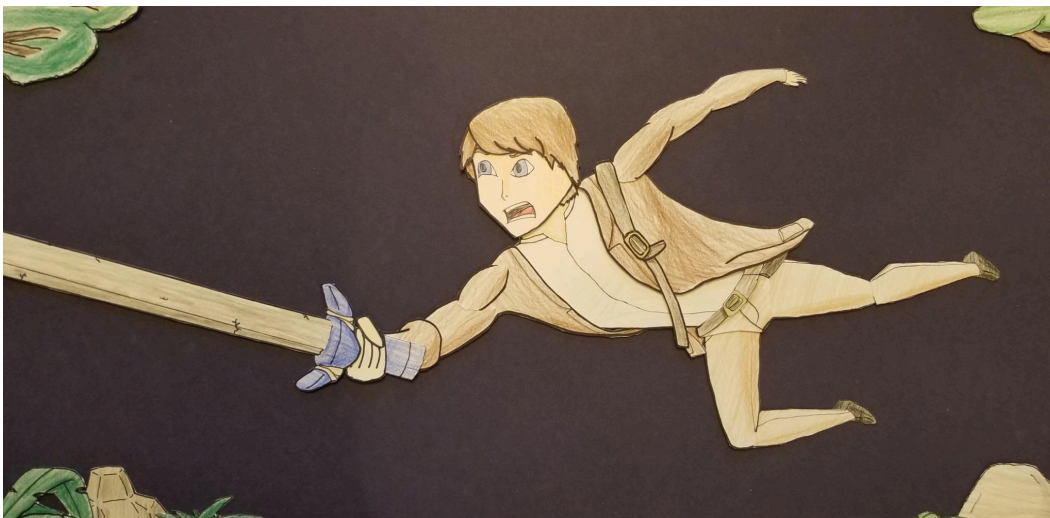


Figure 7 - Vira Goans design



Figure 8 - Aquarius design

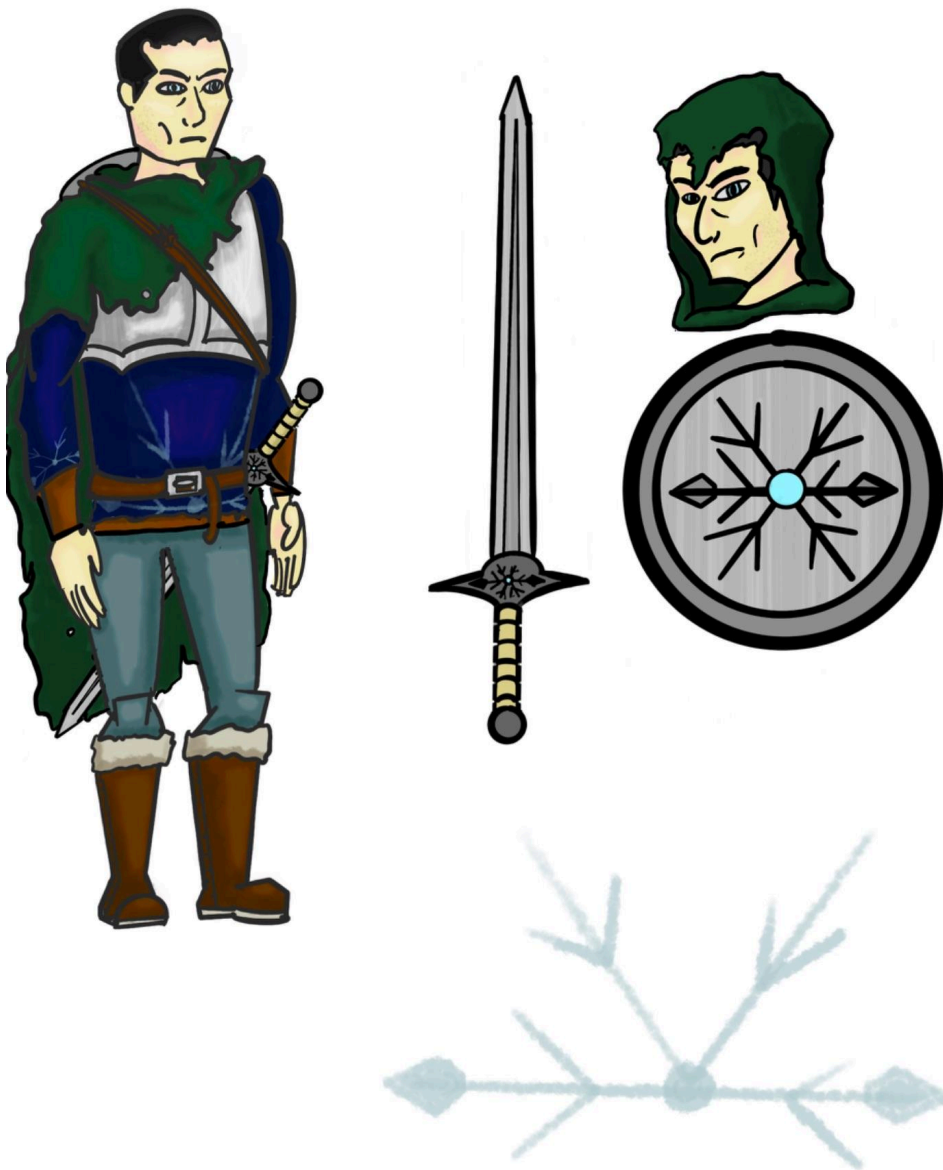


Figure 9 - Shorter Than Expected (The Dragon design)

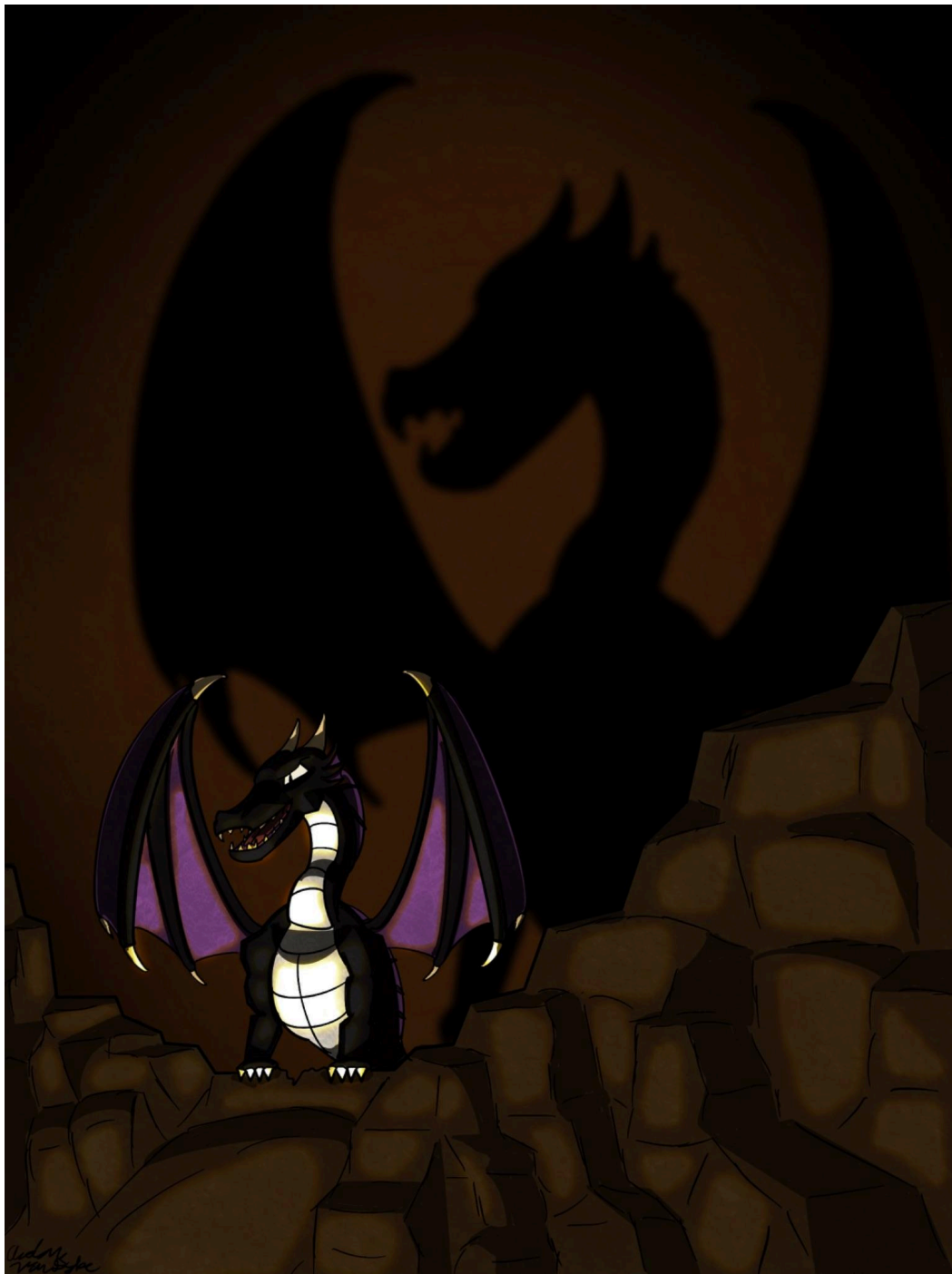


Figure 10 - Aquarius and Eclipse Sketches

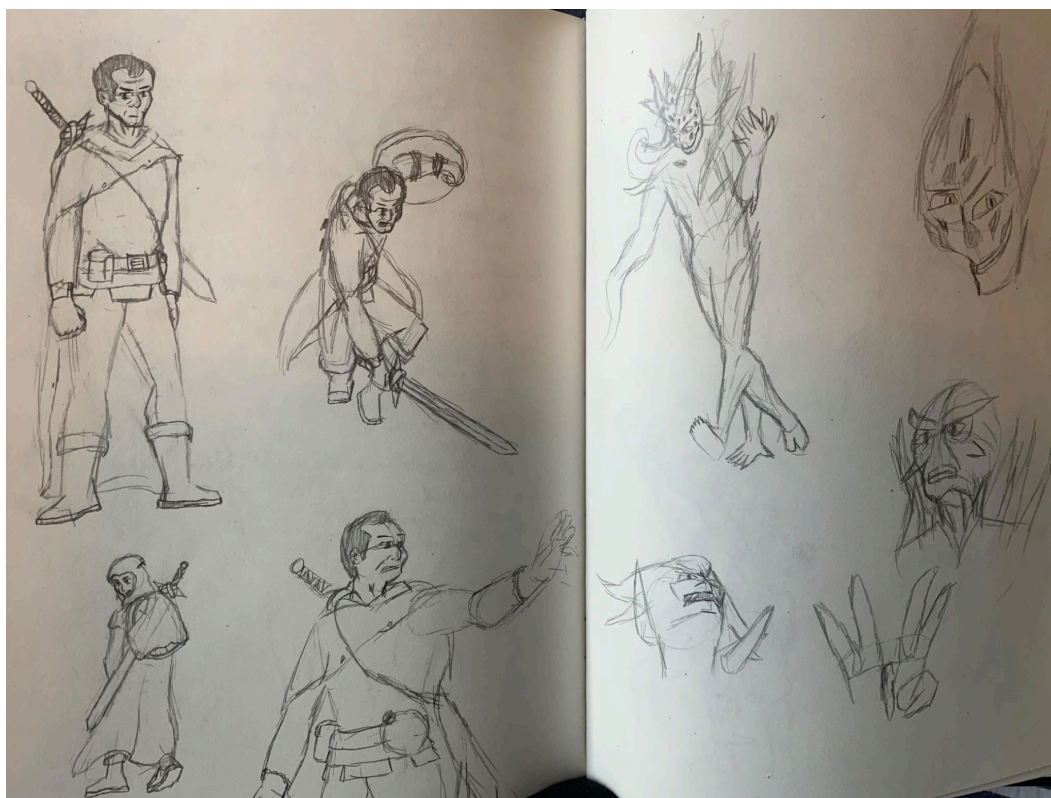


Figure 11 - Eclipse and Armor Sketches

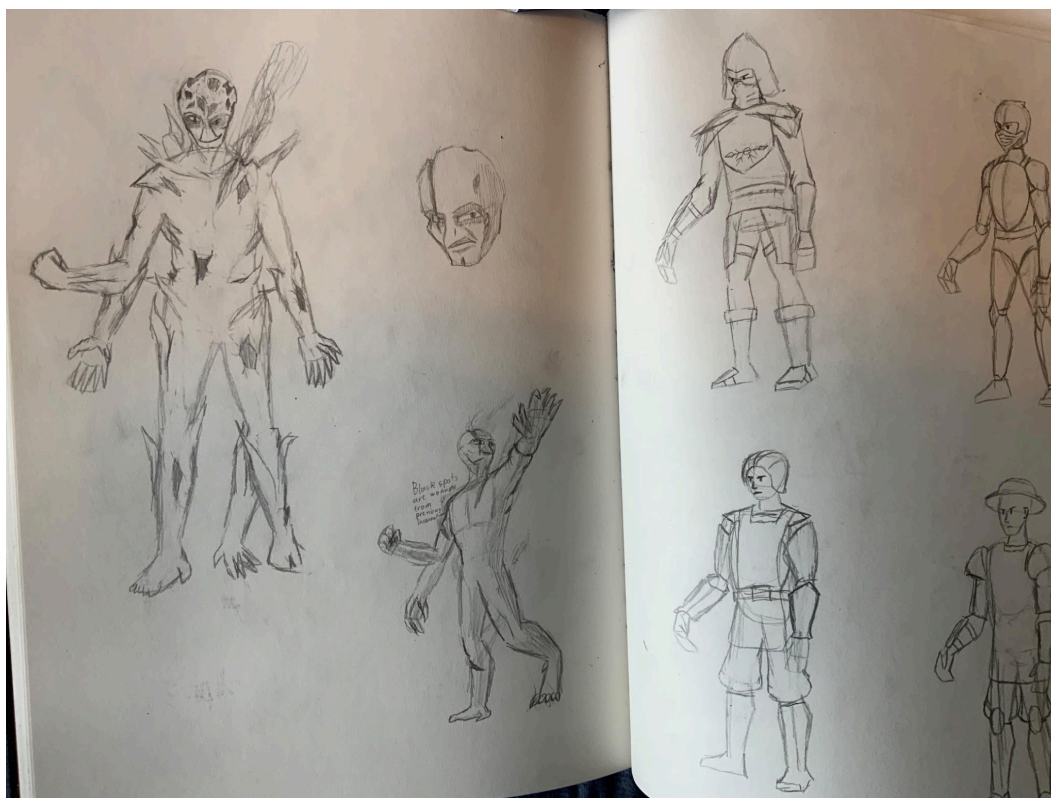


Figure 12 - Armor Sketches

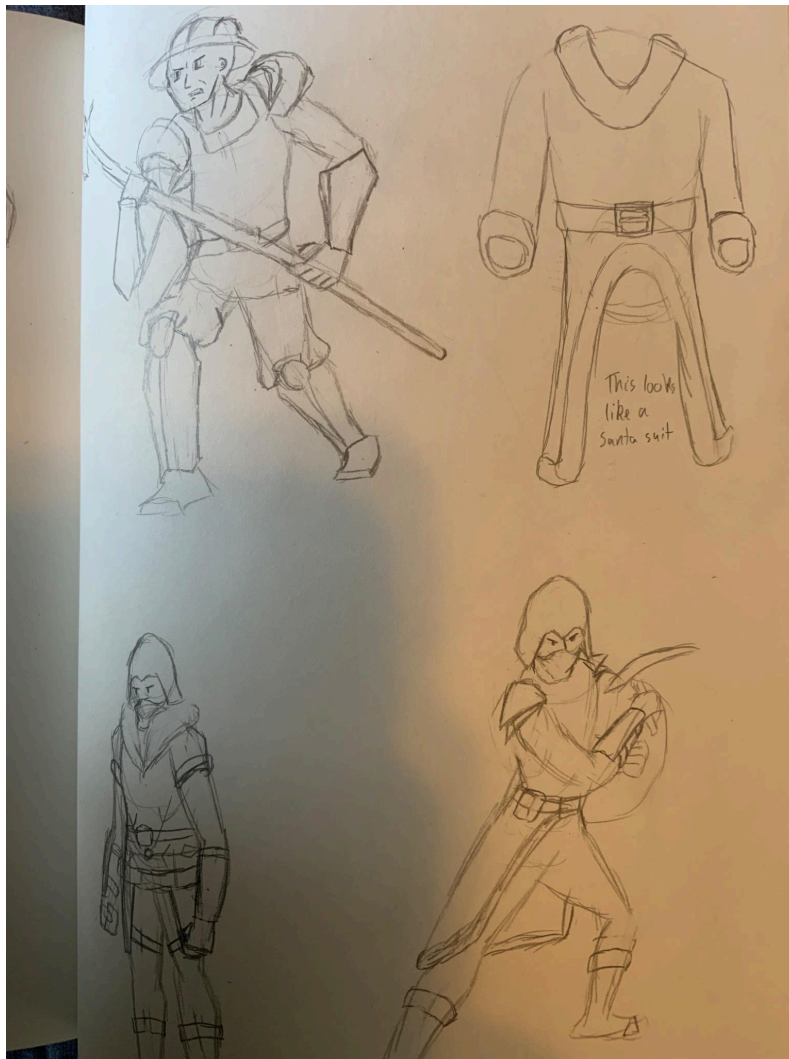


Figure 13 - Armor and Fortune Teller Sketches

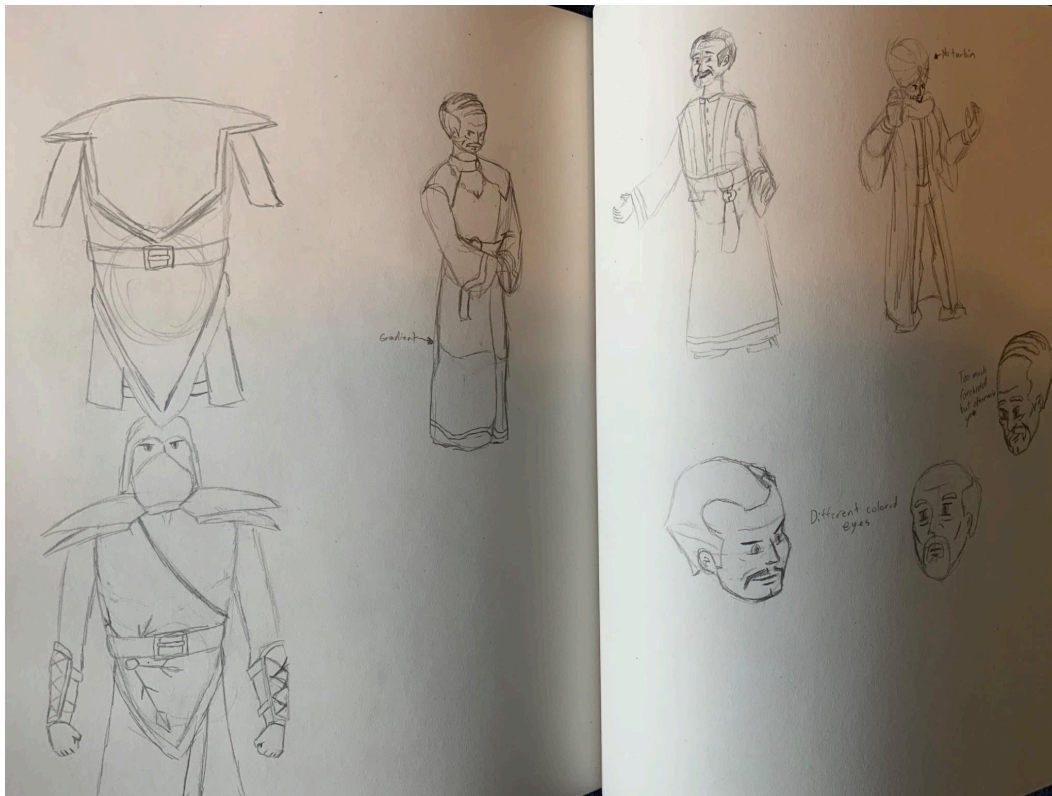


Figure 14 - Ice Lord and Mt. Unriet Sketches

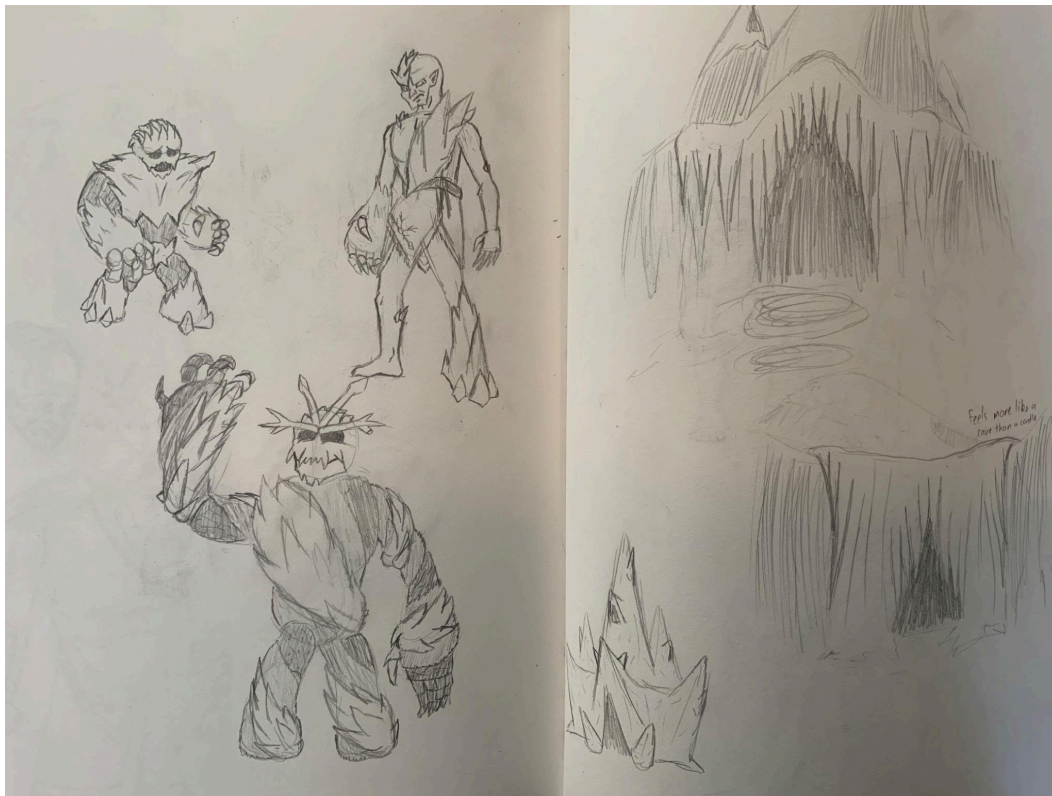


Figure 15 - Ice Lord Sketches



Figure 16 - Eclipse design



Page Layouts

Figure 17 - Page 1

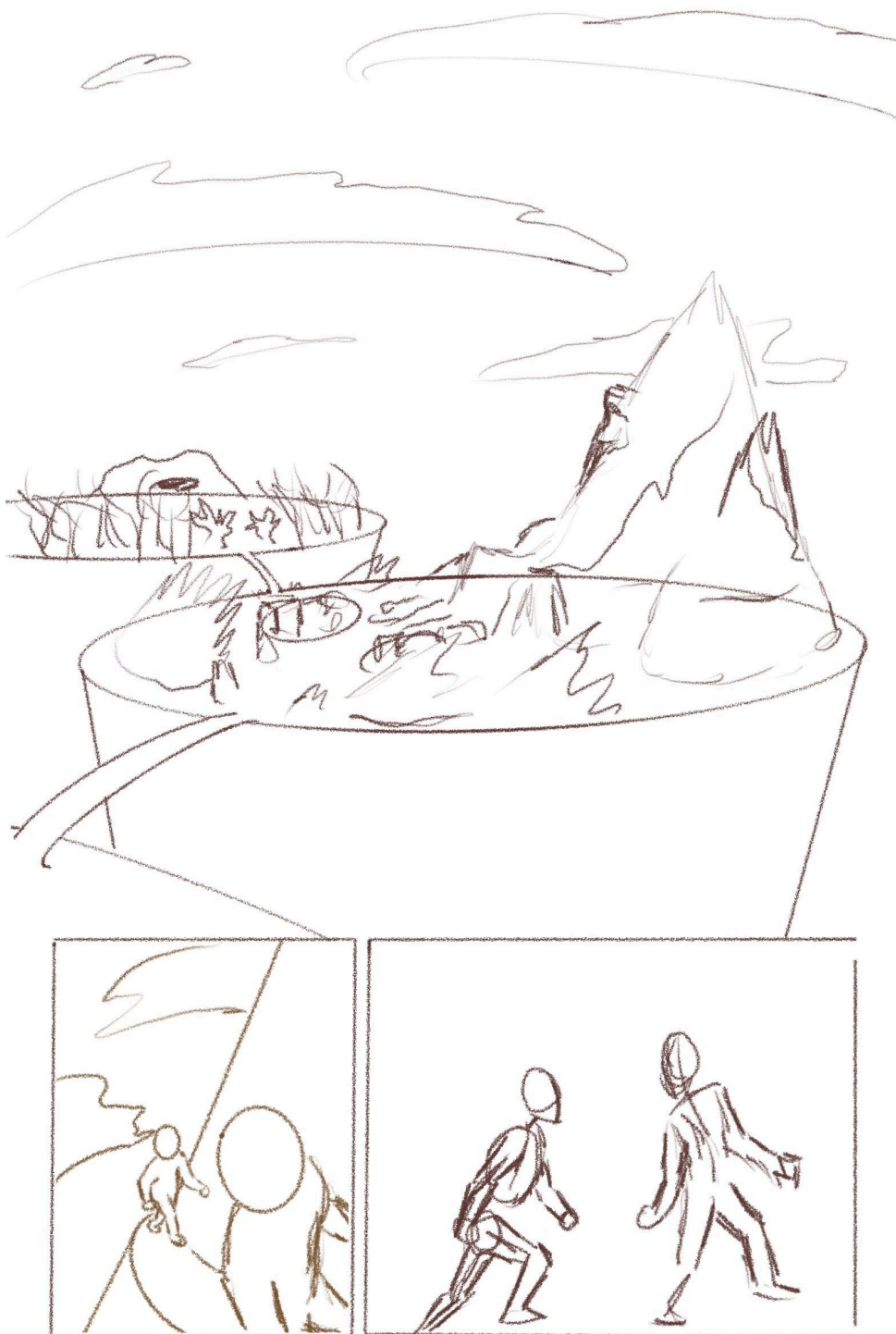


Figure 18 - Page 2



Figure 19 - Page 3

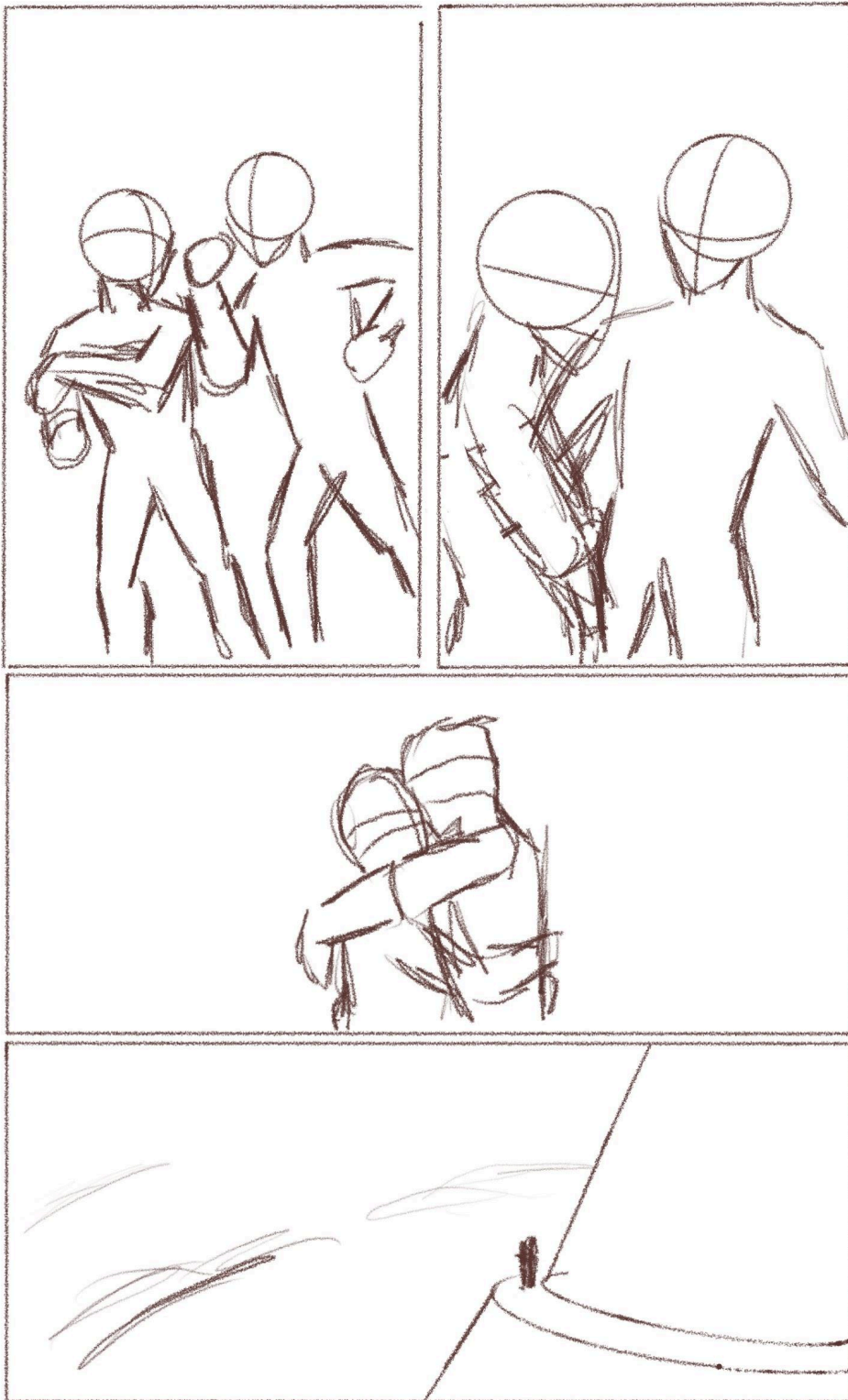


Figure 20 - Page 4



Figure 21 - Page 5



Figure 22 - Page 6

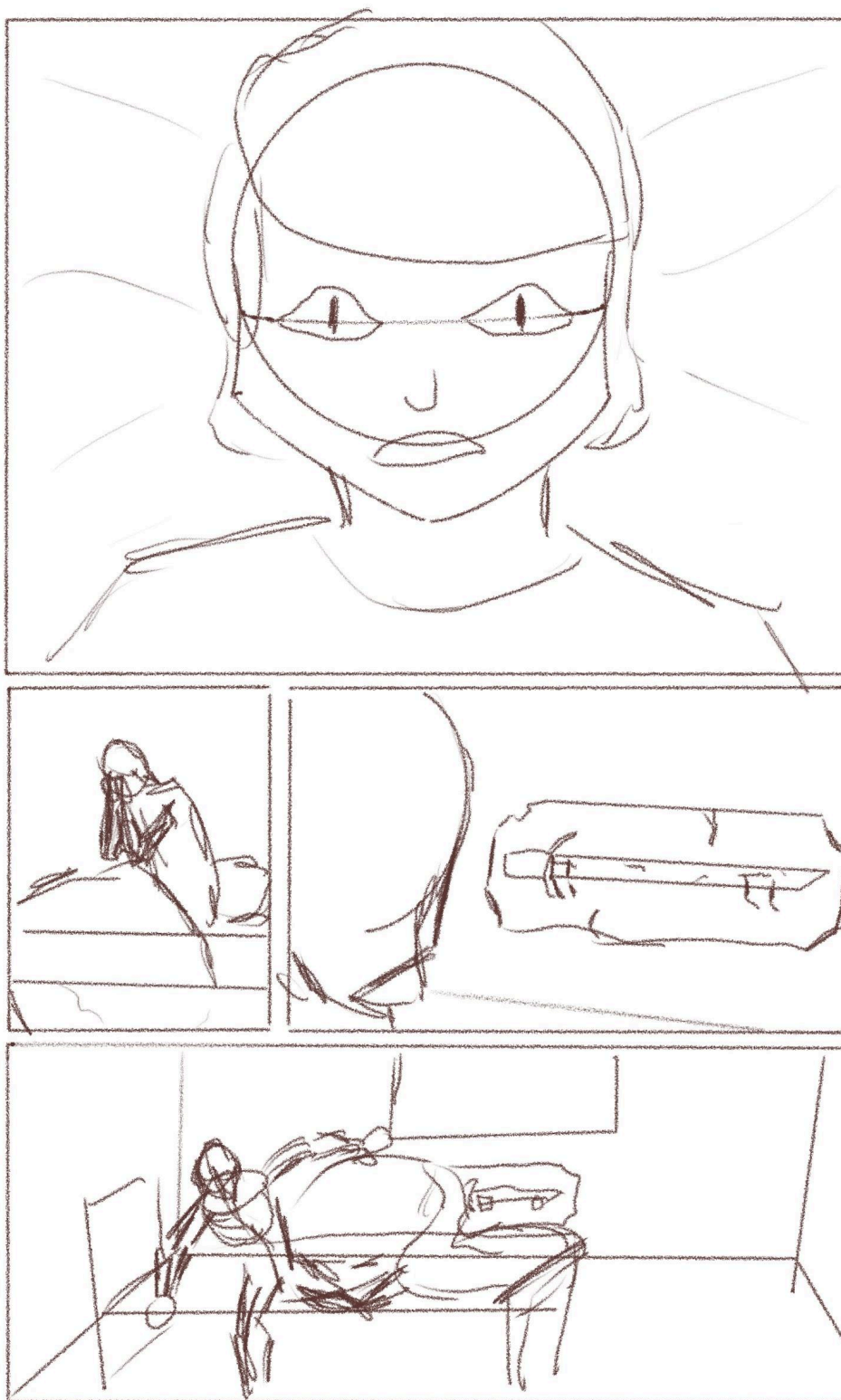


Figure 23 - Page 7

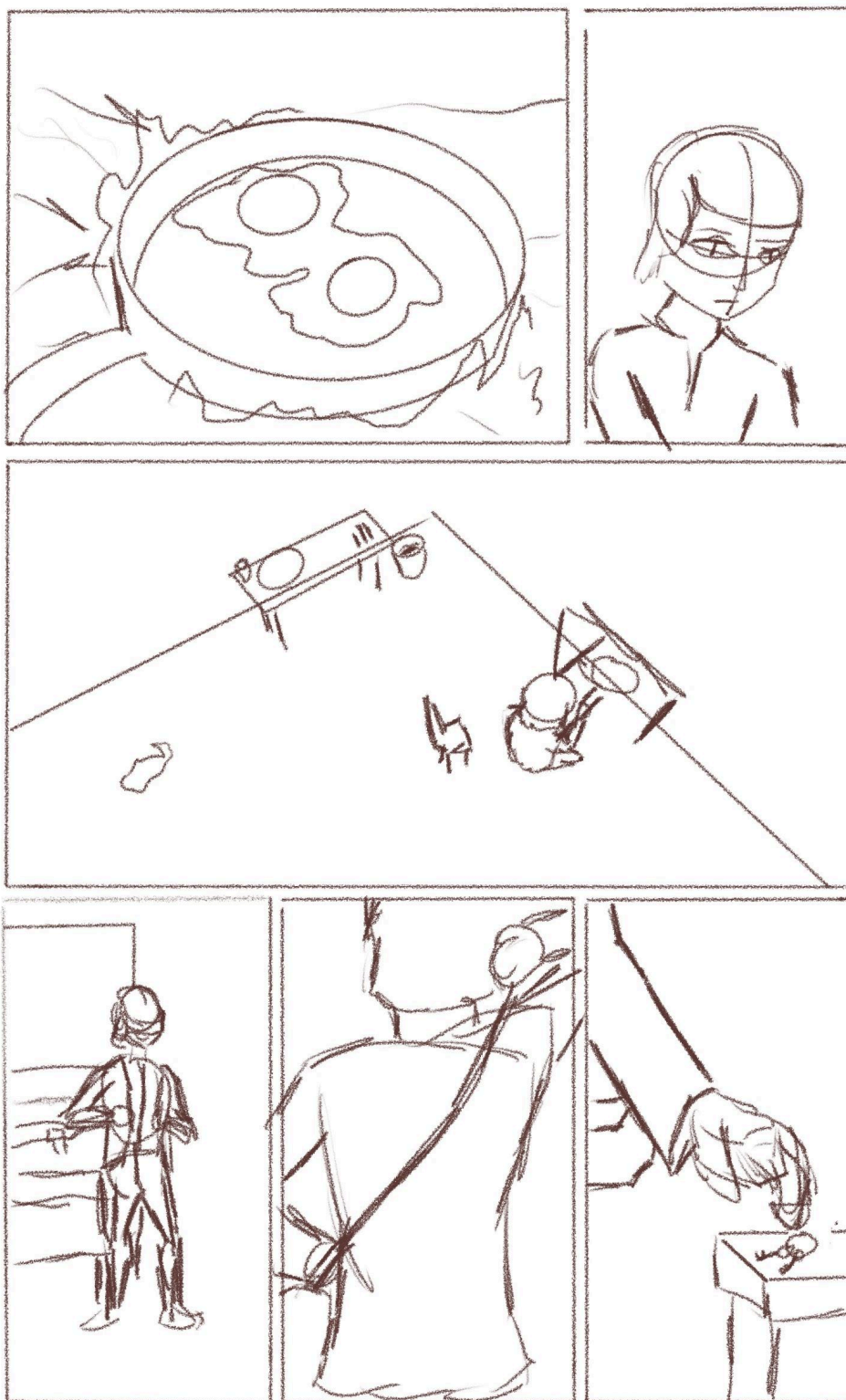


Figure 24 - Page 8

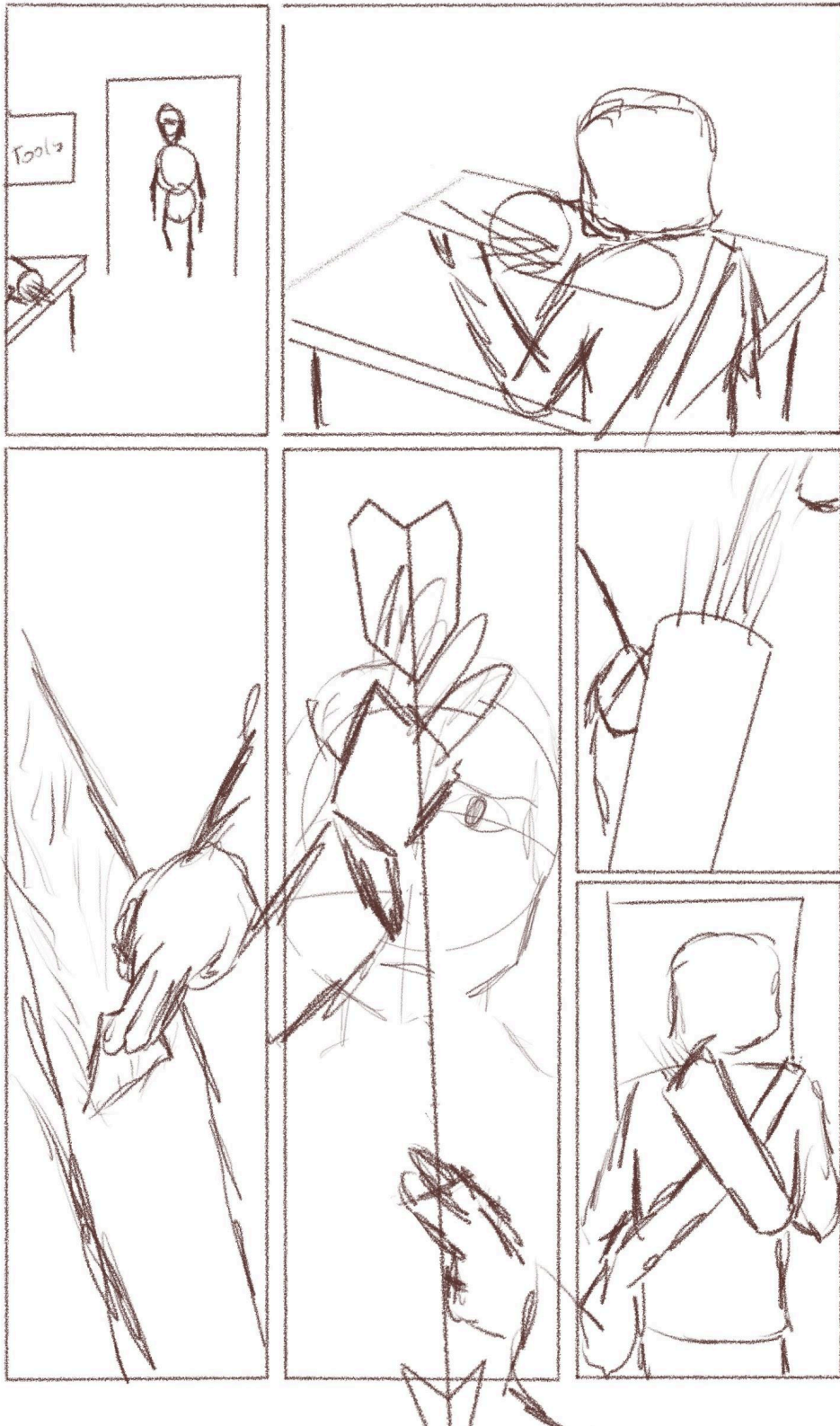


Figure 25 - Page 9

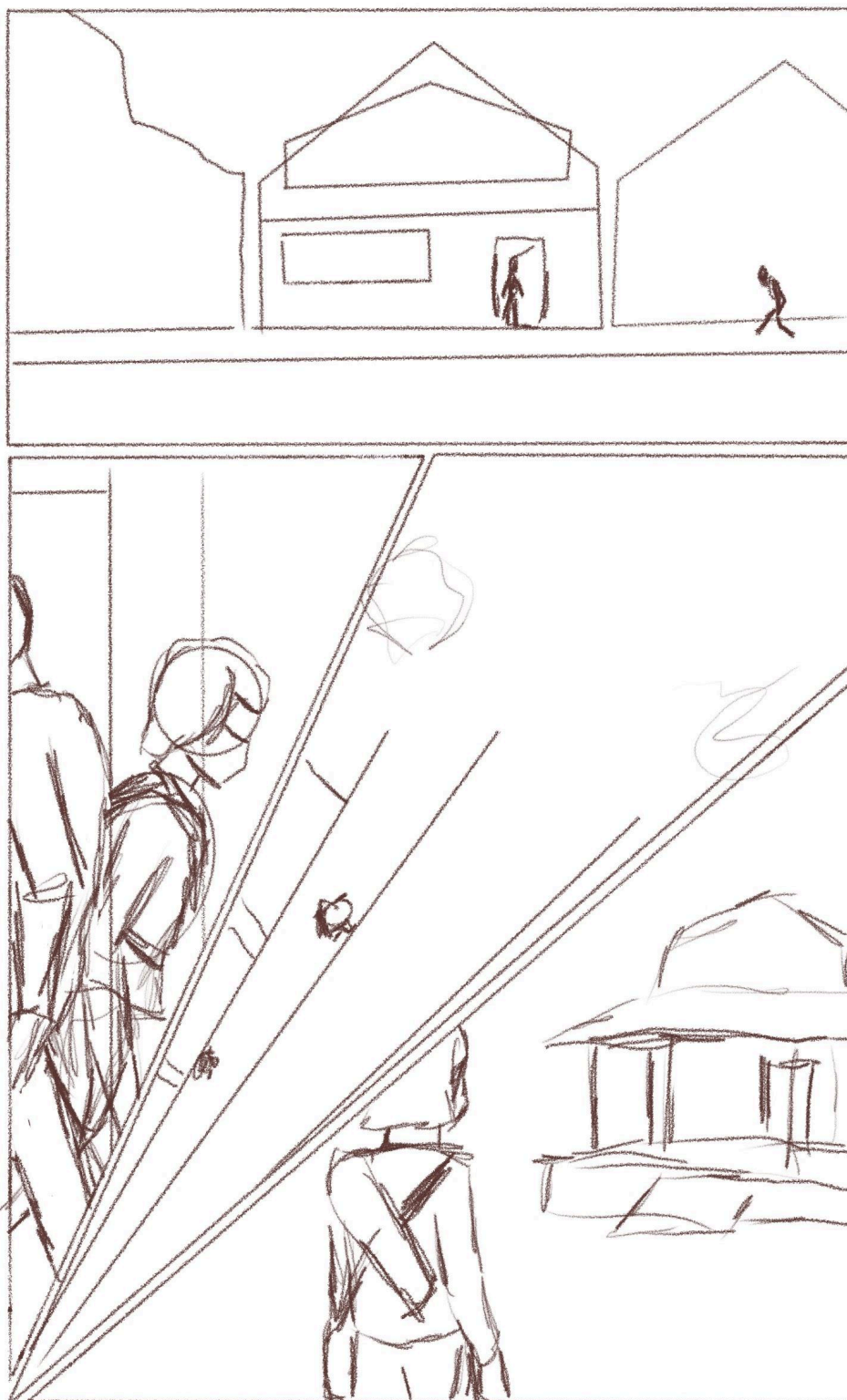


Figure 26 - Page 10

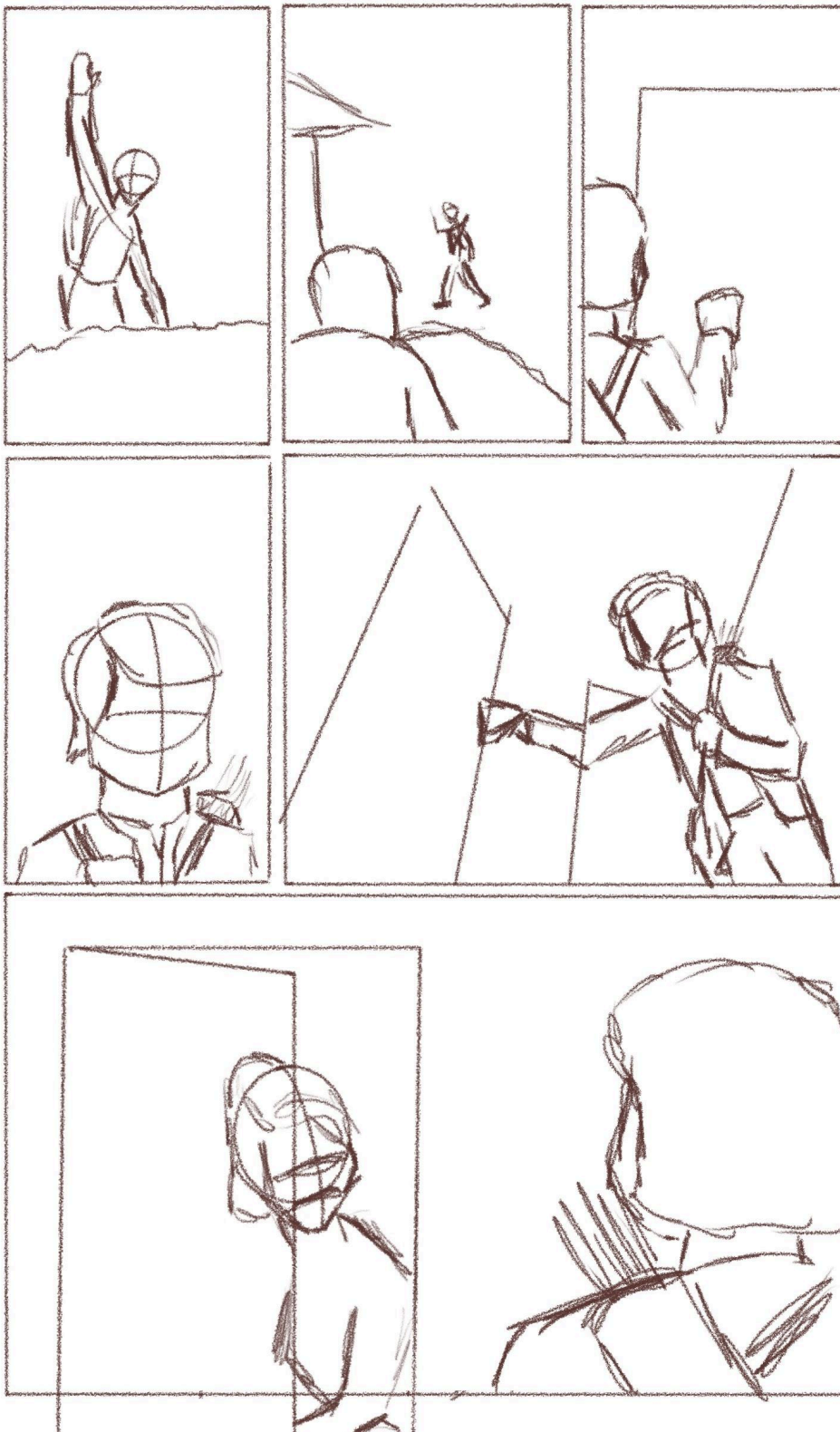


Figure 27 - Page 11



Figure 28 - Page 12



Figure 29 - Page 13



Figure 30 - Page 14



Figure 31 - Page 15



Figure 32 - Page 16

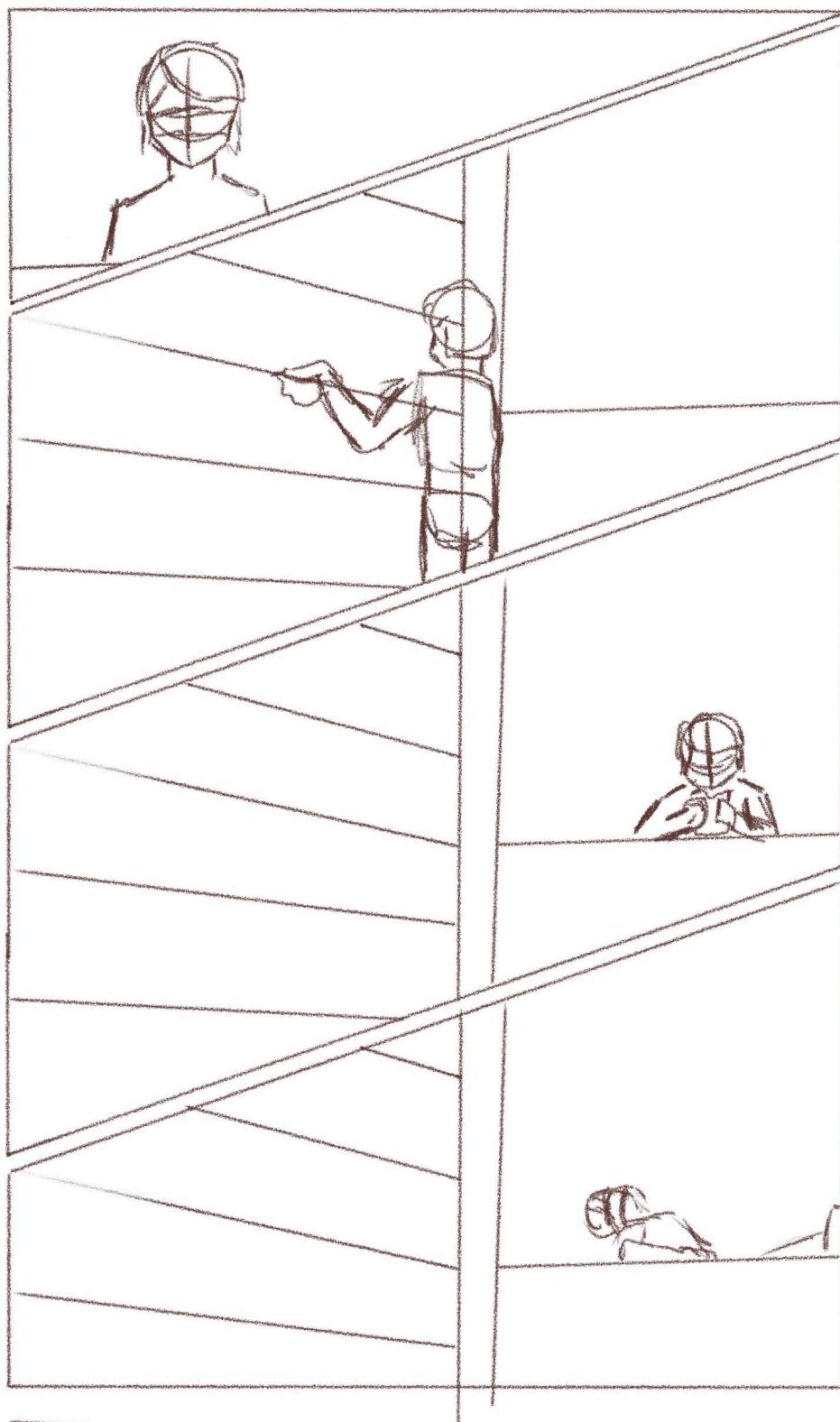


Figure 33 - Page 17



Figure 34 - Page 18



Figure 35 - Page 19



Figure 36 - Page 20

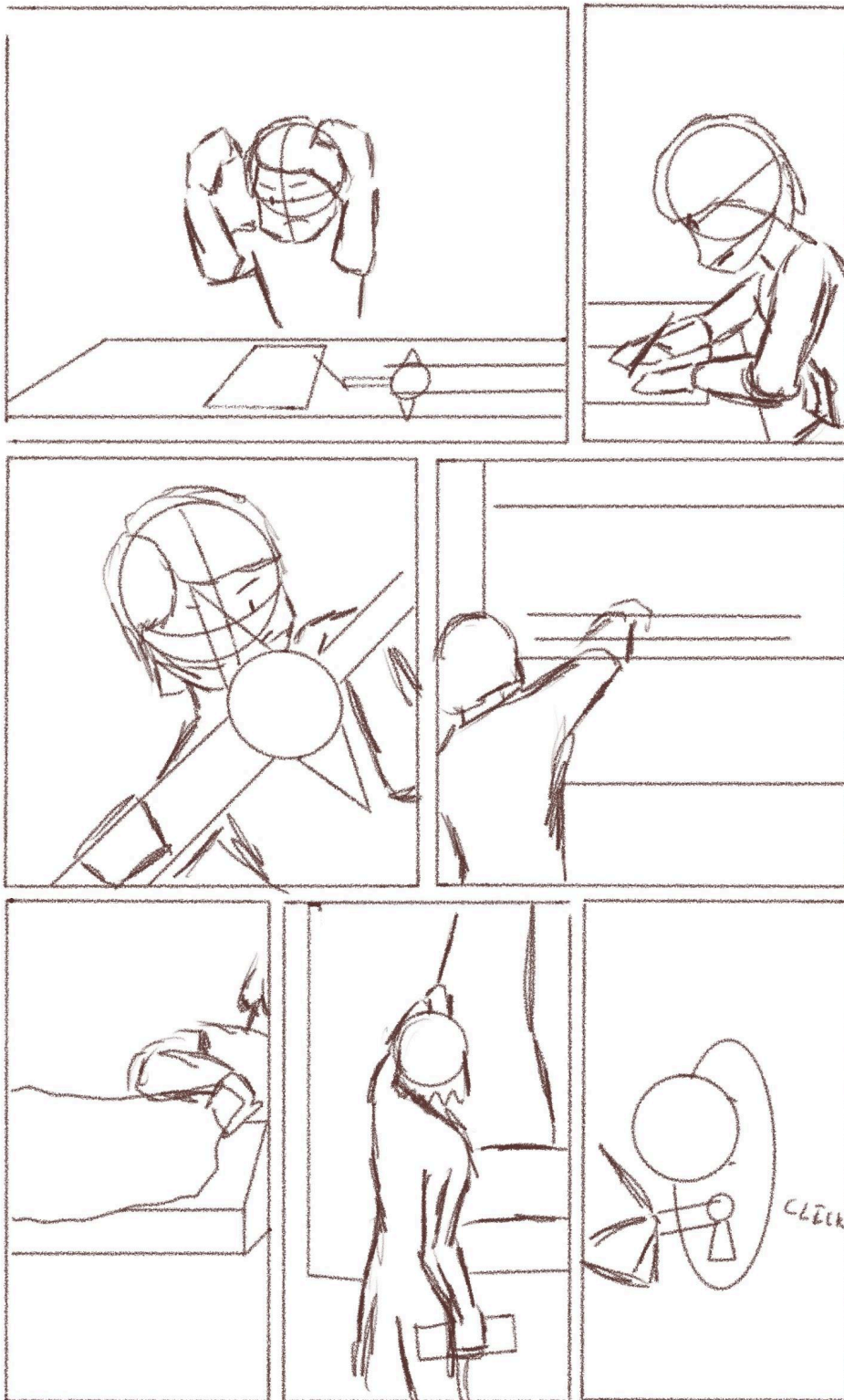


Figure 37 - Page 21



Figure 38 - Page 22



Figure 39 - Page 23

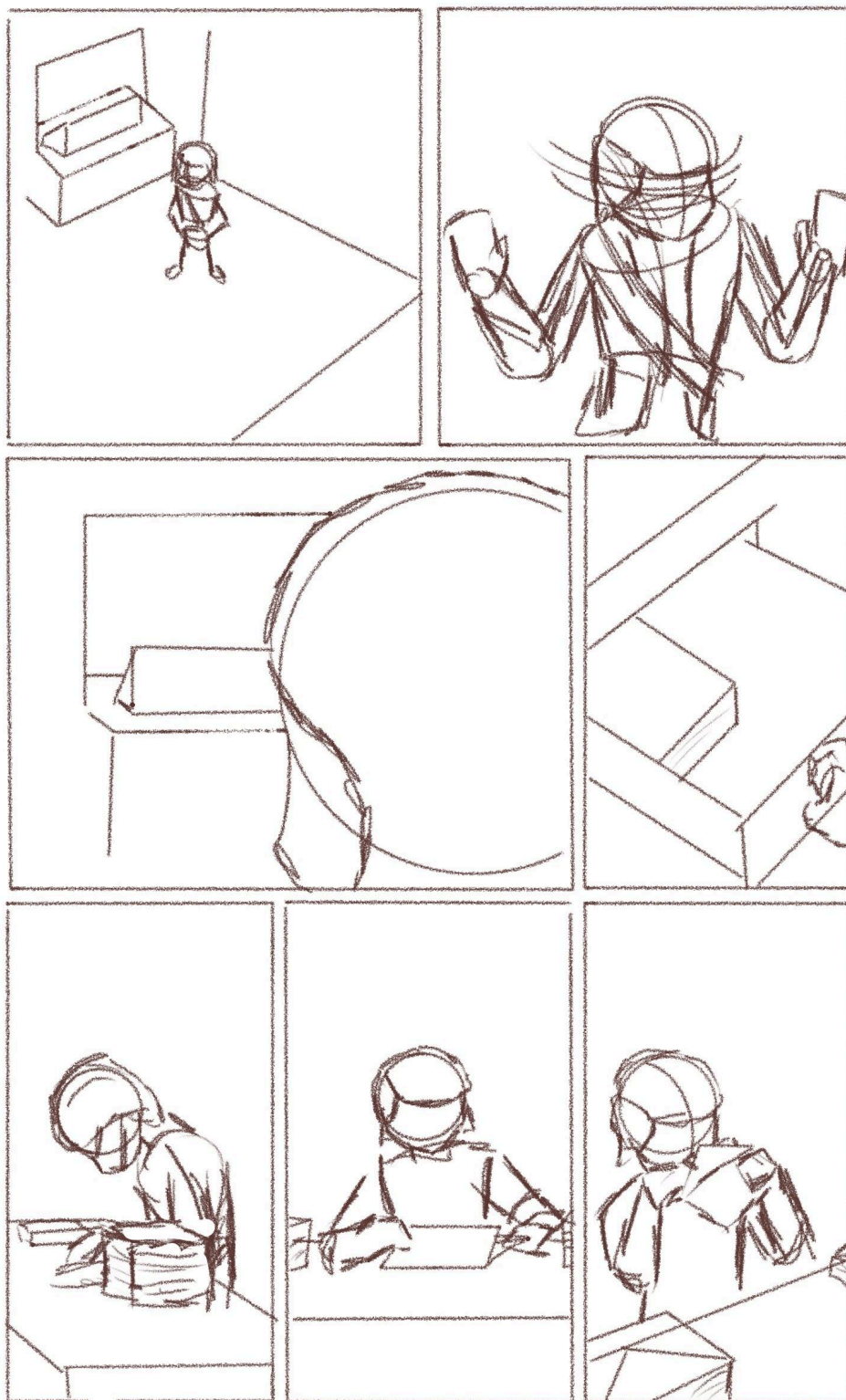


Figure 40 - Page 24

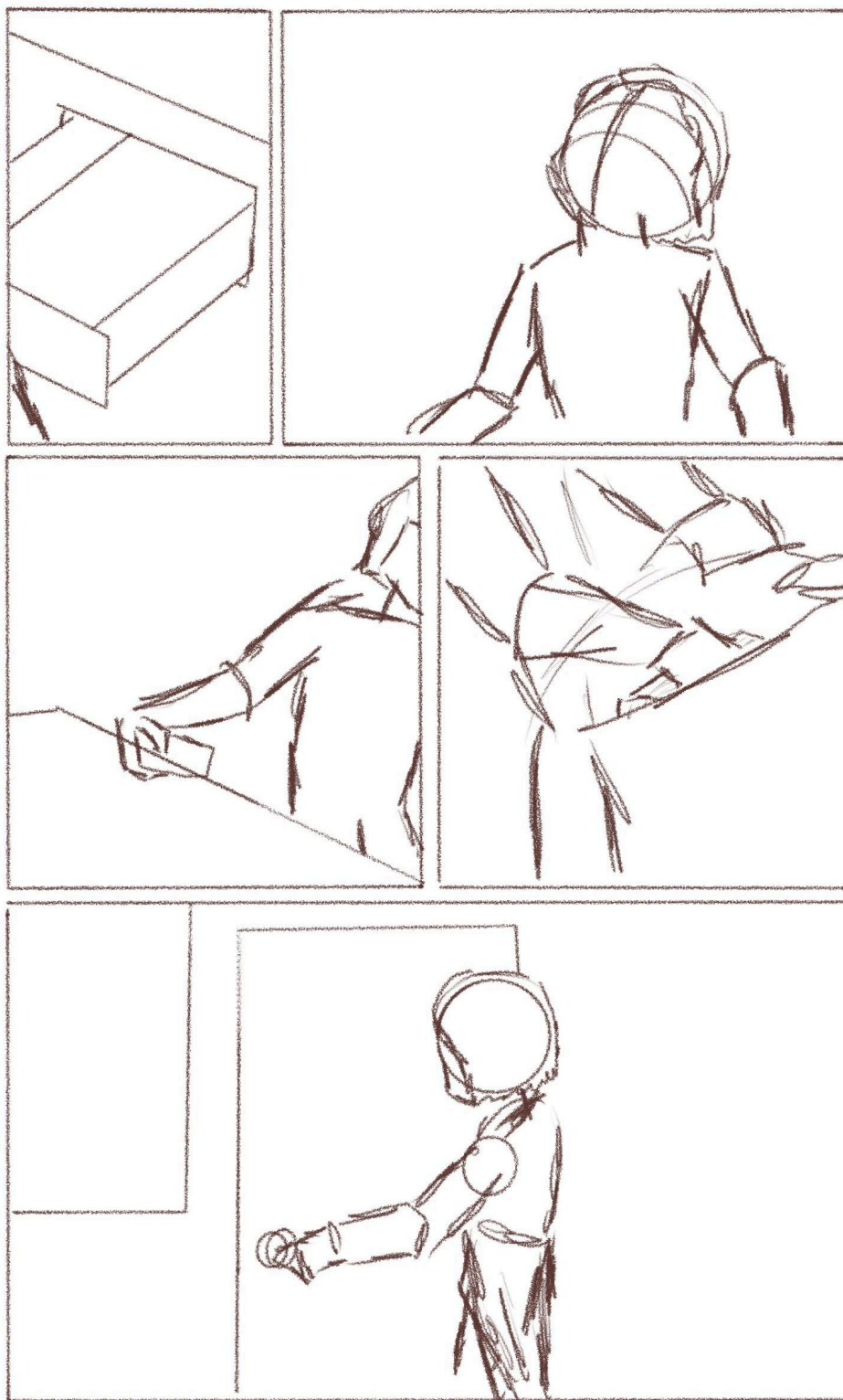


Figure 41 - Page 25



Figure 42 - Page 26

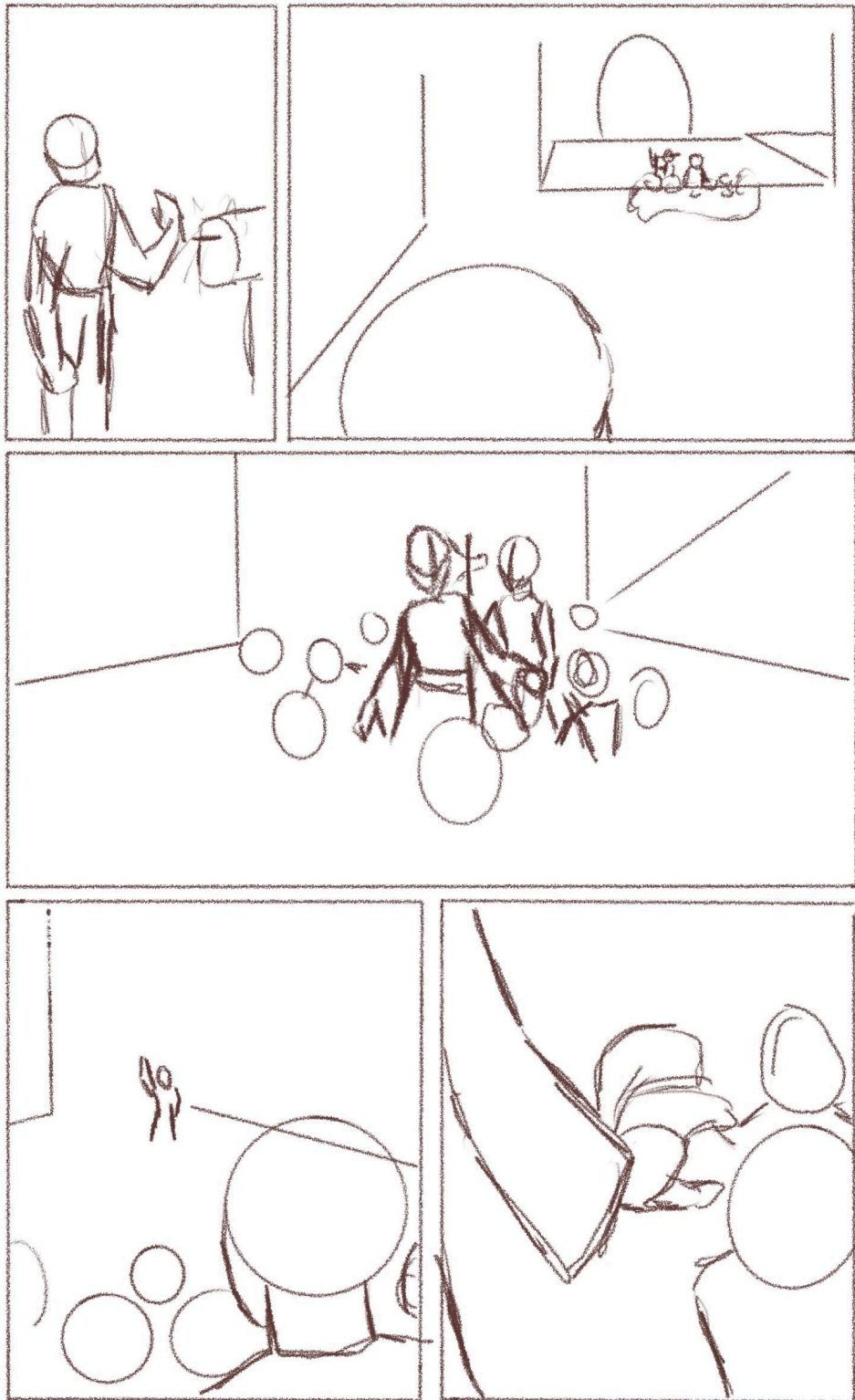


Figure 43 - Page 27



Figure 44 - Page 28



Figure 45 - Page 29

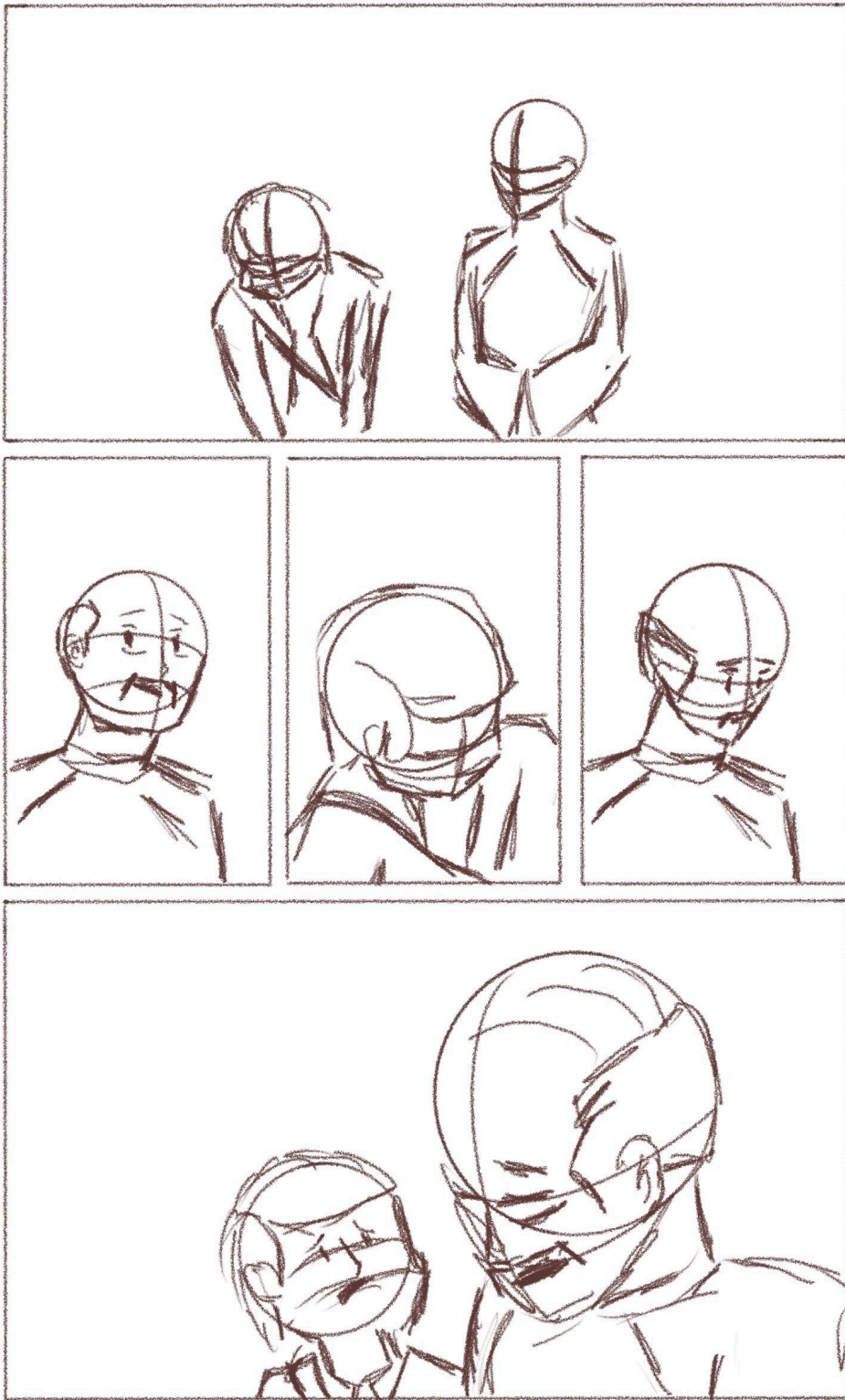


Figure 46 - Page 30

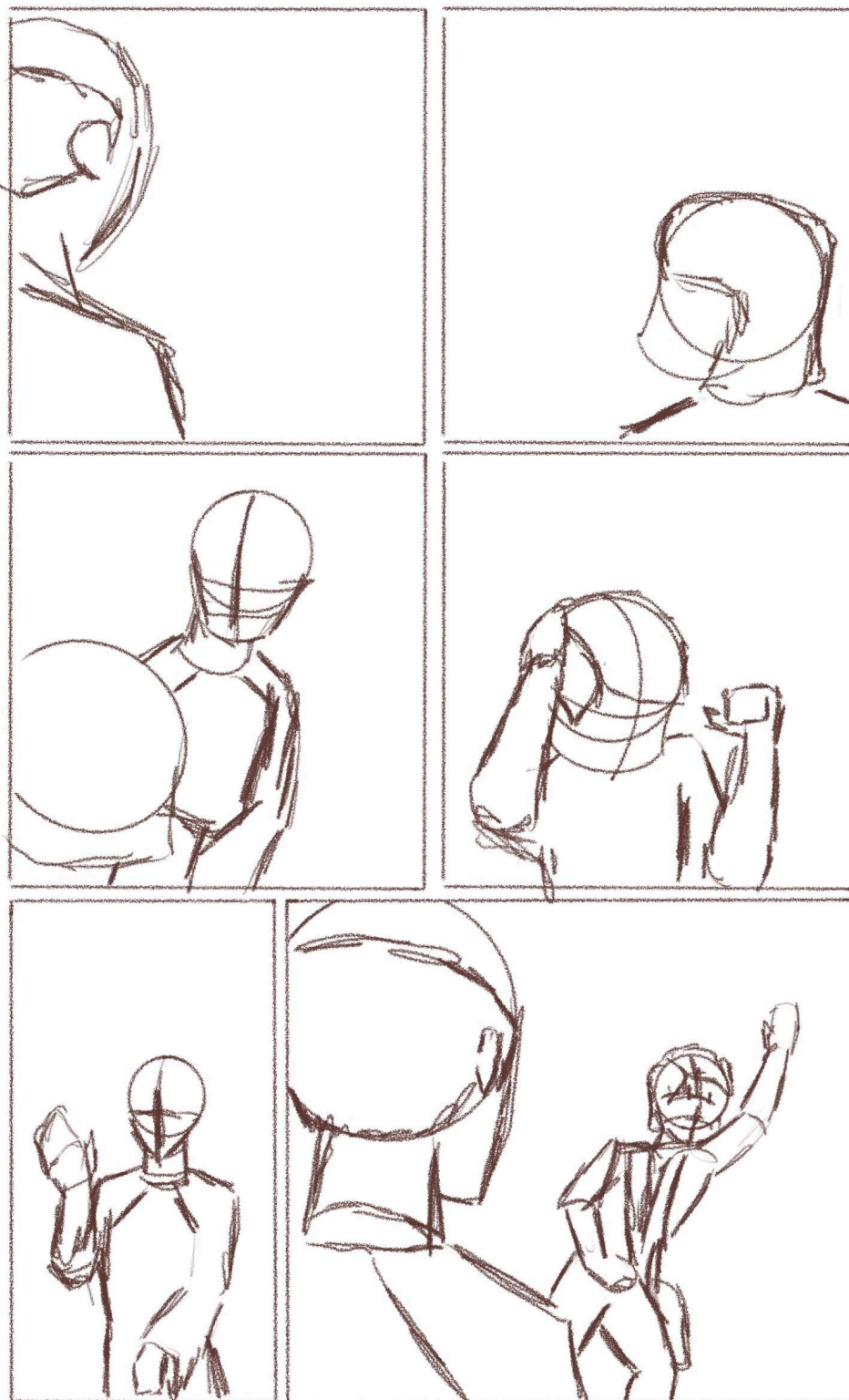


Figure 47 - Page 31



Figure 48 - Page 32



Figure 49 - Page 33



Figure 50 - Page 34



Figure 51 - Page 35



Figure 52 - Page 36



Figure 53 - Page 37

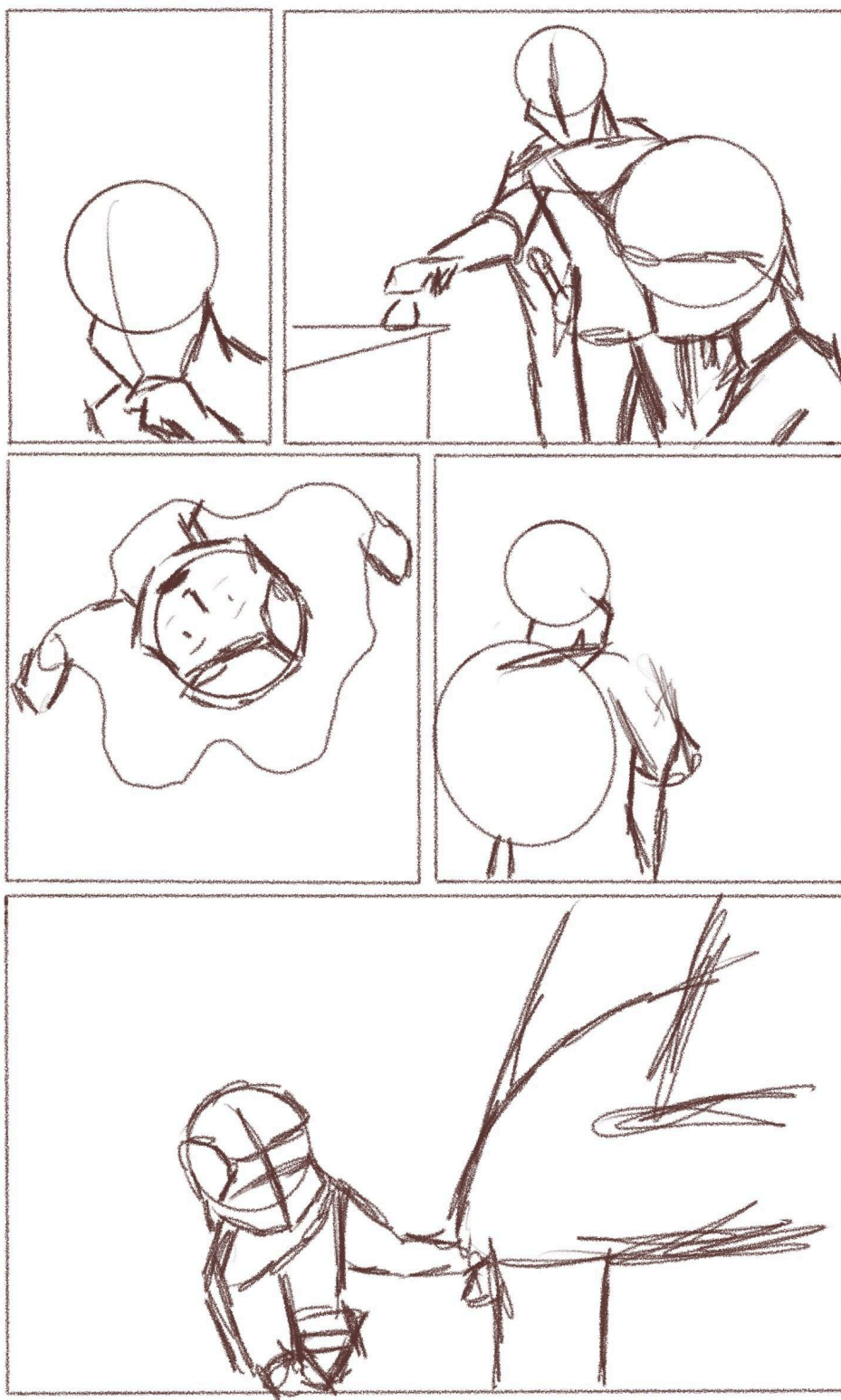


Figure 54 - Page 38

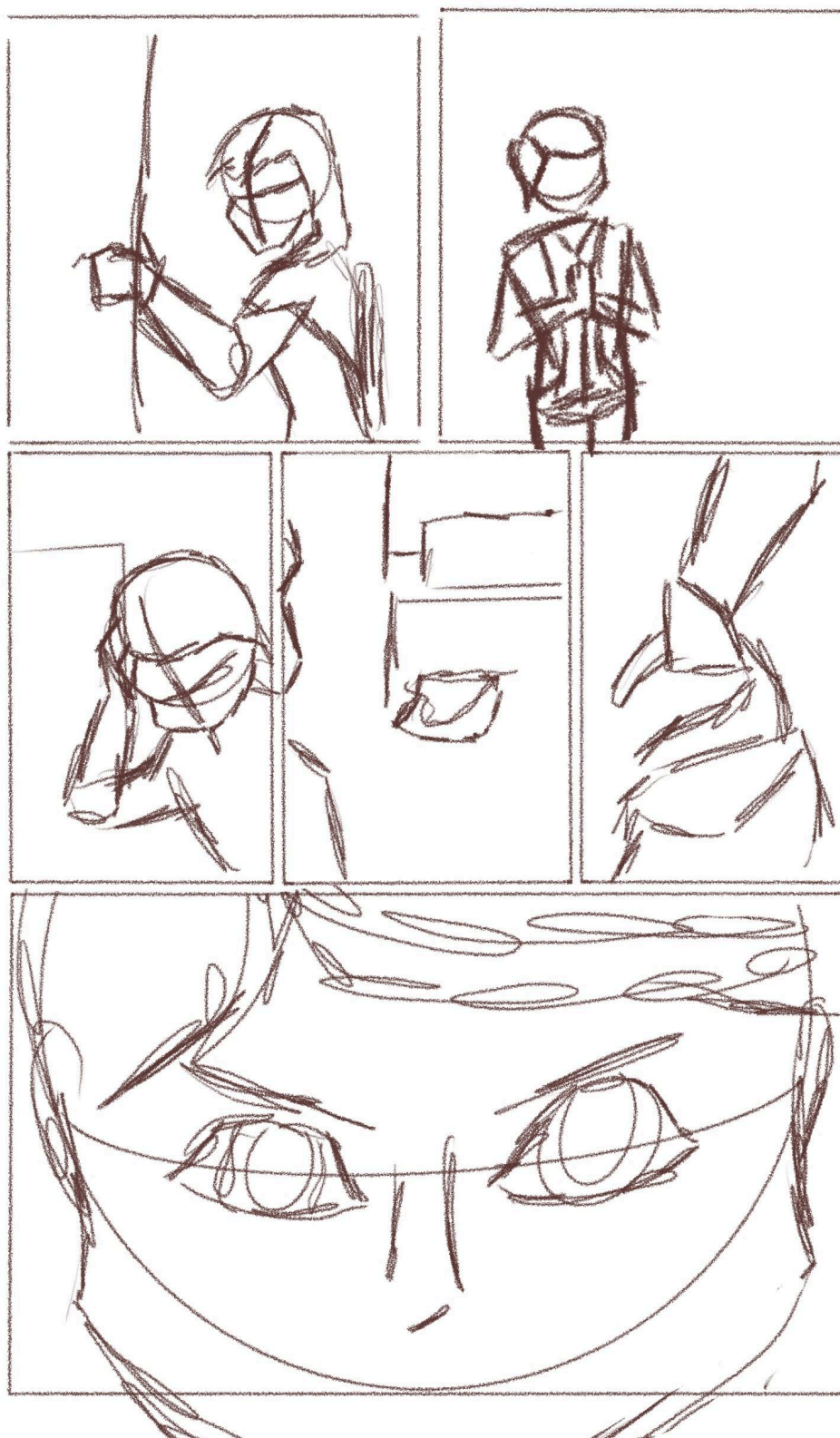


Figure 55 - Page 39



Figure 56 - Page 40



Figure 57 - Page 41



Figure 58 - Page 42



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