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THE LEGEND OF KORRA™

BOOK ONE: AIR

THE ART OF THE ANIMATED SERIES

Michael Dante DiMartino *Bryan Konietzko* *Joaquim Dos Santos*

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nickelodeon™

THE LEGEND OF KORRA™

The Art of the Animated Series

Book One: Air

Bryan Konietzko
Michael Dante DiMartino
with Joaquim Dos Santos

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THE LEGEND OF KORRA: THE ART OF THE ANIMATED SERIES—BOOK ONE: AIR
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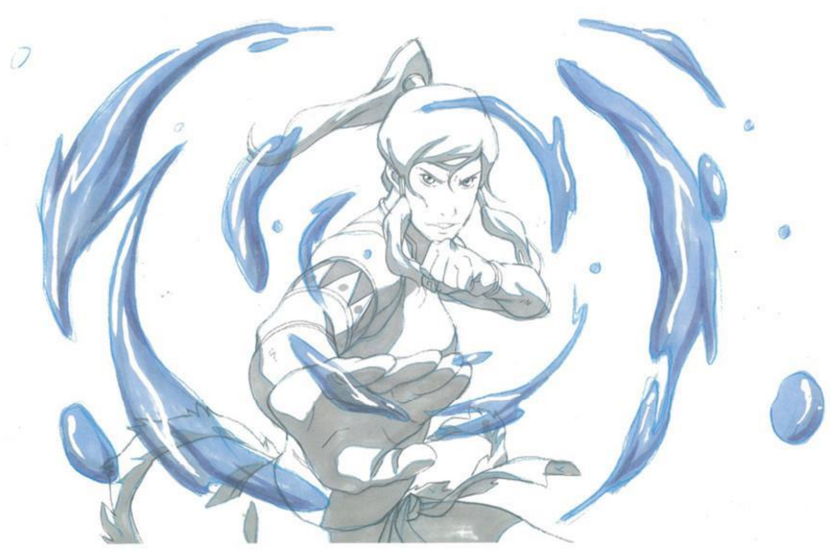

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Dedicated to all the extraordinary artists at Nickelodeon and Studio Mir who helped bring Korra and her world to life.

Introductions

I've started this intro a dozen times now, not sure exactly what to say. So I'll tell you how I feel.

Grateful.

Grateful to Joaquim Dos Santos and Ki-Hyun Ryu, for sharing their astounding artistic gifts with us, and for being two great guys.

Grateful to all the artists and crew we worked with at Nickelodeon, for their talent and dedication.

Grateful to a network that took a chance on a girl action hero and gave The Legend of Korra *a home.*

Grateful to Studio Mir, a group of amazing artists and animators, whose work is showcased in this book.

Grateful to Dark Horse for publishing a classy art book about the show.

Grateful to Bryan, my creative partner for over ten years now. I couldn't ask for a better friend and collaborator with whom to spend my time in the animation trenches.

And grateful to you, the fans who watch the show, draw incredible fan art, and cosplay our characters. I hope the work you see here ignites your imagination and continues to inspire you.

Michael Dante DiMartino
March 27, 2013

The experience of being a show runner is a difficult thing for me to summarize with any brevity. When I am asked to describe it to people outside of the industry, I usually say, "I have every job I've ever wanted; unfortunately, I have them all at the same time." It may be hard for fans of Avatar: The Last Airbender *to understand, but once we made it to the end of that six-year production, I was so drained that I not only needed a break from the* Avatar *universe we had created, I wasn't even sure I wanted to work in TV animation again. It is a wonderful and rarified thing to be able to crack open an imaginary world, populate it with characters, and weave them through epic stories, but to do so with any modicum of quality exacts a heavy toll. It is an all-consuming undertaking, especially when you are a slow-working artist such as myself.*

After taking that much-needed break and delving into some other writing projects, Mike and I got the opportunity to make an art book with Dark Horse for Avatar, *something we had hoped to do for many years. While combing through all of the artwork generated for that series, I found myself getting reinvigorated to dive into this crazy process again. I had learned and grown so much as an artist during* Avatar *that I started to feel the itch to try to apply that newfound knowledge to another series.*

A few months later, after that book had been released, Nickelodeon approached Mike and me about doing a new series, practically giving us creative carte blanche. The timing was right: our batteries were recharged. It was hard to say no, especially when Avatar *vets Joaquim Dos Santos and Ki-Hyun Ryu agreed to help us run the show. And that is how* The Legend of Korra *came to be. When describing that experience, I often say, "It is like I escaped from a burning building, caught my breath, and then ran back in for some unknown reason."*

Fast-forward to over three years later, and we are still deep in the burning building! And just like I had hoped, the undertaking of a new animated series has given us an opportunity to achieve new art direction goals, and for me to once again grow as an artist. This volume showcases art from the development period of Korra *through the finale of book 1 (the first twelve-episode installment of the series). I am incredibly honored and humbled to get to work with such a talented and dedicated crew capable of producing artwork this beautiful. It is a real treat as an art director to be able to share the fruits of our labor in a quality book like this. And thanks to the fans, who keep the* Avatar *universe expanding every day.*

Now, this slow-working artist has to get back to making Korra *books 2, 3, and 4 . . .*

Bryan Konietzko
March 27, 2013

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

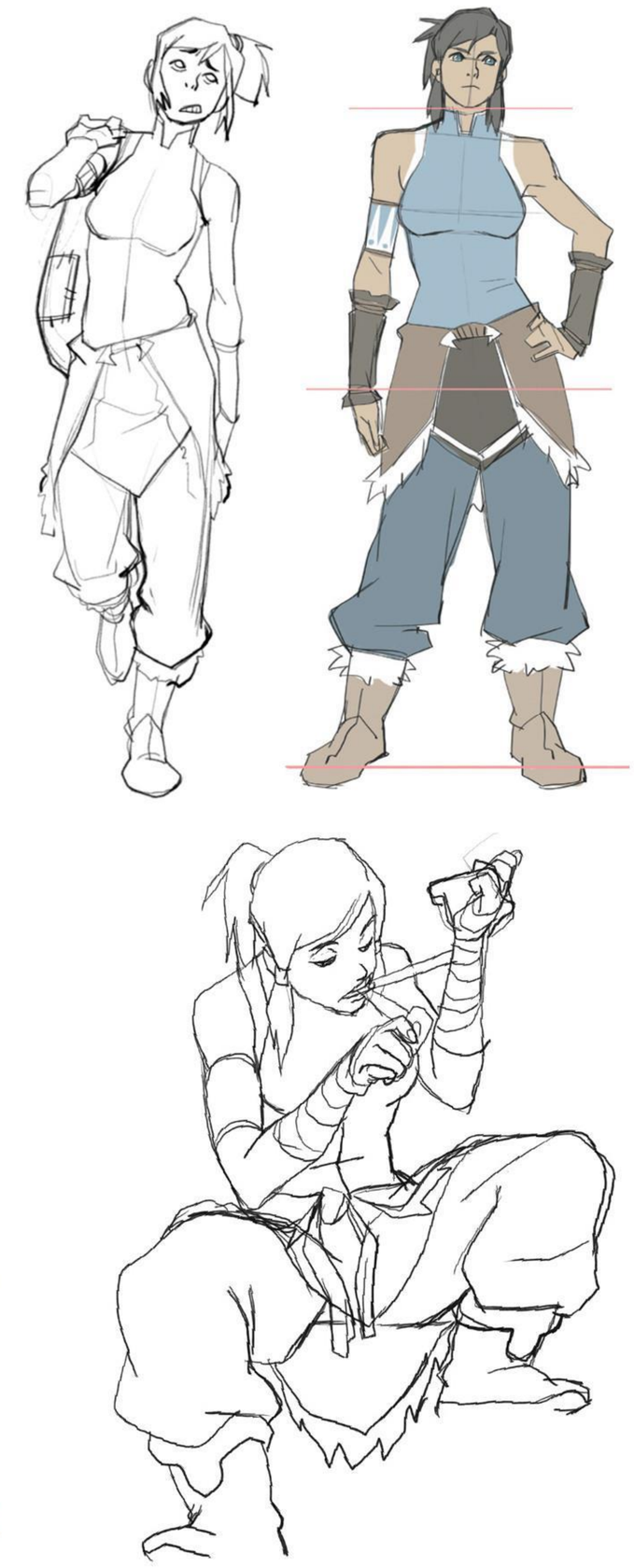
BK: I was hoping to find a background painter who had his or her own distinct style that we could adopt for the look of the new series, and got lucky when we were given Fred Stewart's portfolio while he was finishing his last year in college. This concept of Republic City at night from Fred's background test is the earliest example of what evolved into the Korra painting style. Background design by Ki-Tak Moon. Painting by Frederic Stewart. (Preceding spread)

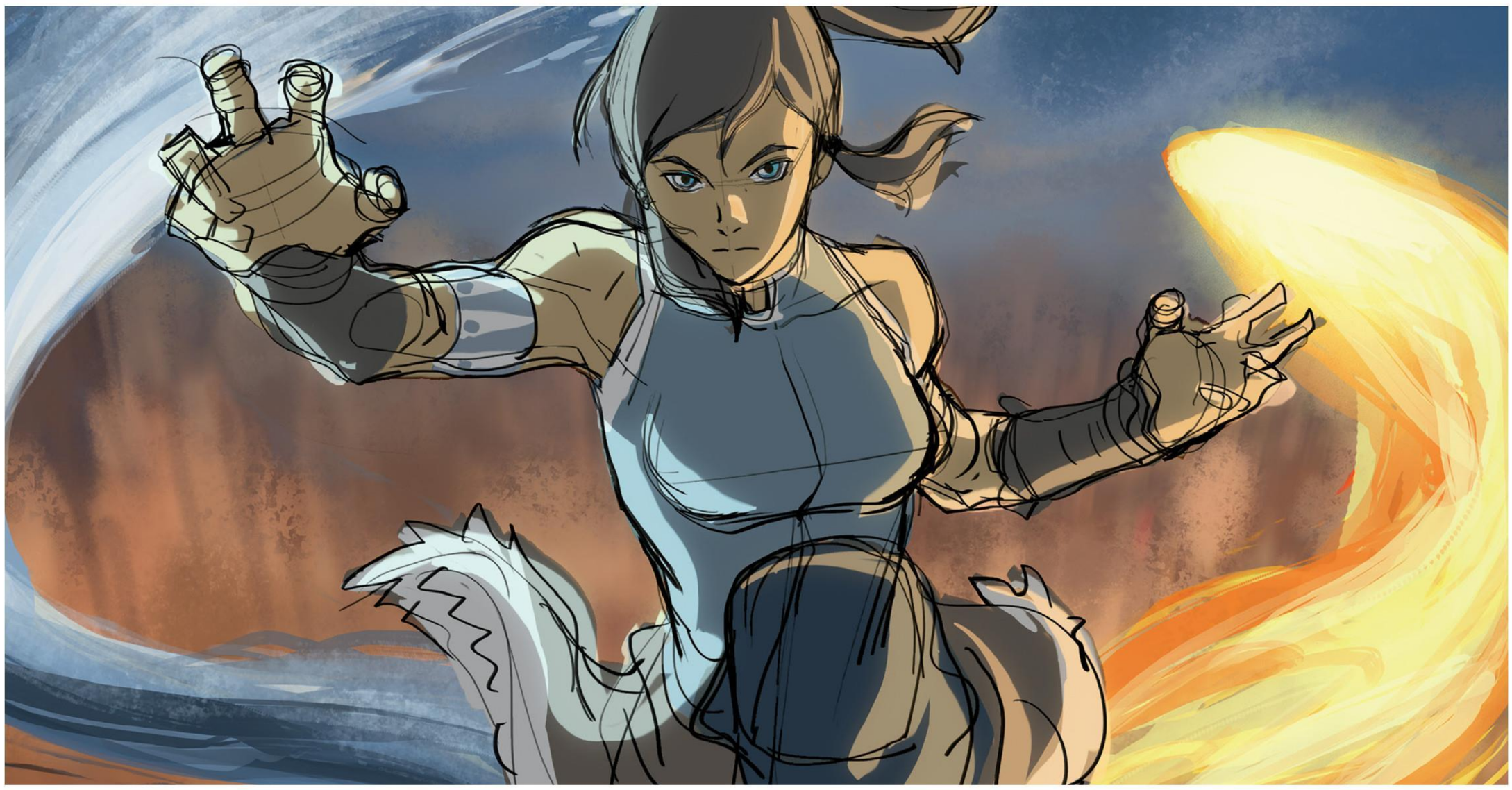
BK: Mike and I had the idea for Korra's character, but we really wanted Joaquim to be in on the ground floor when it came to her design. We had a phone call with him where we described her as being a Water Tribe version of a snowboarder or an MMA fighter. Joaquim went right to work and about an hour later, he e-mailed us the drawing on the upper left, which is very close to how Korra ended up looking. Korra concepts by Joaquim Dos Santos and Ki-Hyun Ryu.

KORRA

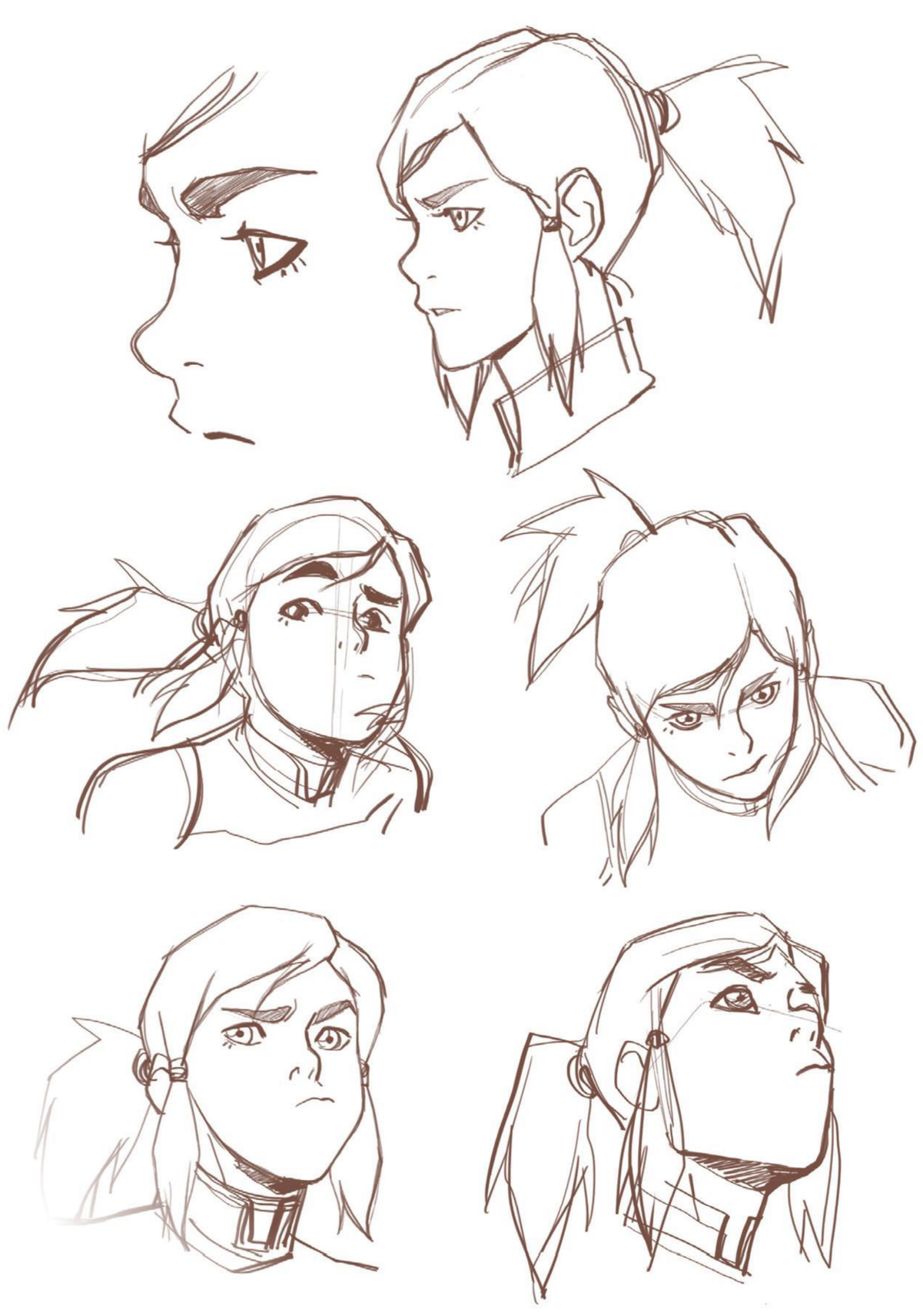
MD: Following in Avatar Aang's footsteps is a hard act to follow, but as soon as we started talking about ideas for Korra's character, we knew she would be a worthy successor. We wanted her to be headstrong and aggressive, someone who would never back away from a fight. But we gave her a vulnerable side too. Early on, we hit upon the idea that Korra had been sequestered away in the South Pole, which is why she didn't grow up with any close friends and hadn't seen much of the outside world. She spent her childhood mastering water-, earth-, and firebending. But she had never been able to airbend, due to her lack of a spiritual connection.

JDS: The drawings to the upper left are actually my first and second attempts at designing Korra. Although the style of the show shifted somewhat, I think the essence of her character came across in these early passes and helped inform her evolution. Her athleticism and physicality were something that we discussed thoroughly before we even began drawing.





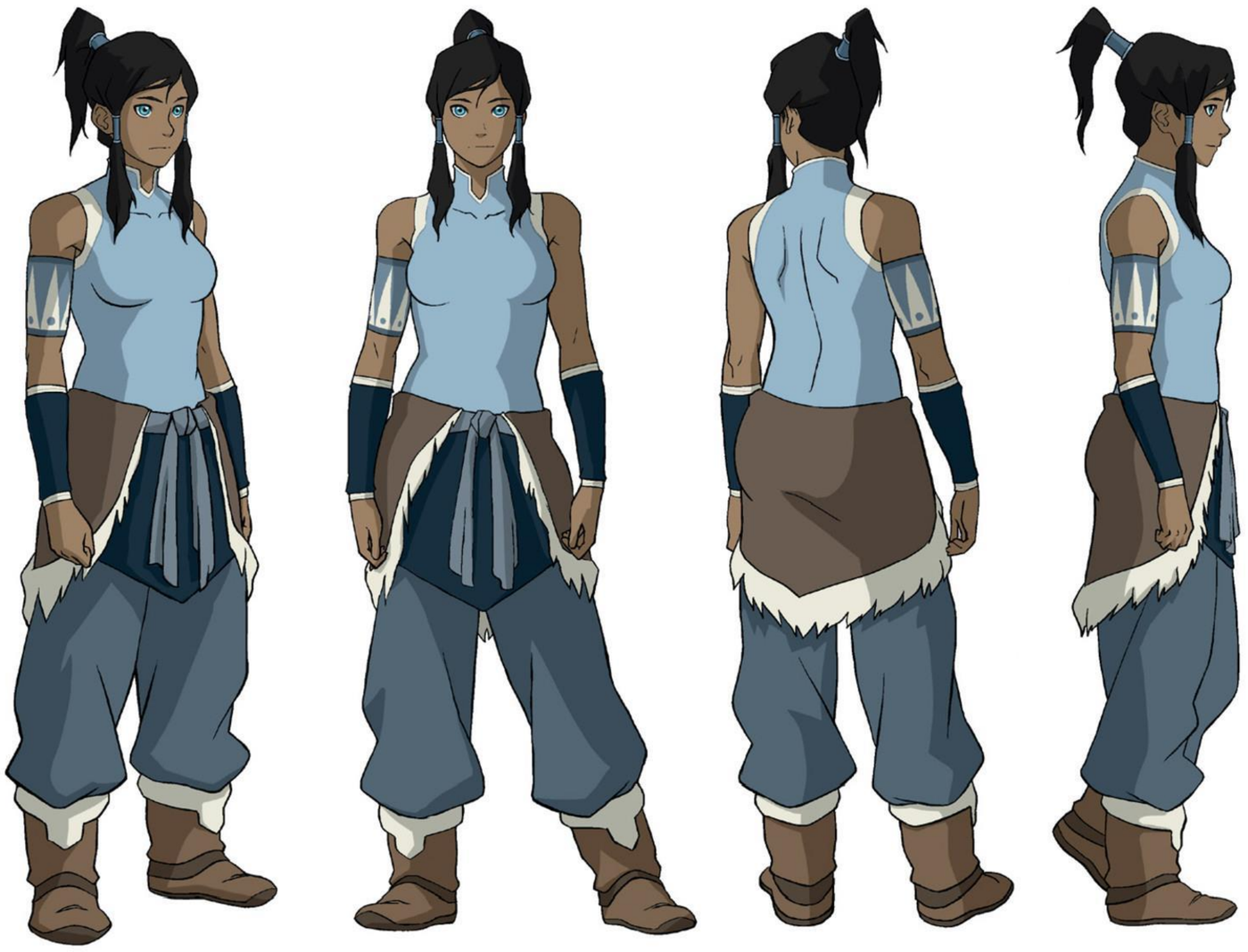
BK: Even though Joaquim figured out the general look for Korra within a very short time, it still took him, Ryu, and me several months to successfully combine our efforts and finalize her design. We would each take turns drawing over each other's concepts, in a sort of "two steps forward, one step back" pattern. The concept above is a revision Ryu did to one of my attempts, and it definitely helped inch us closer to the finish line. Concept by Ki-Hyun Ryu and Bryan Konietzko.



BK: Ryu may have some wacky ideas for character designs from time to time, but once a character's look is established, there is no one better on the Korra *crew at doing expression sheets. His drawings always leap off of the page, full of life and personality. Korra expressions by Ki-Hyun Ryu.*

MD: Korra versus the Metalbender cops. Bryan and Ryu collaborated on this illustration as part of a presentation to show the Nickelodeon executives how the action sequences in Korra *could also have an element of fun. This piece inspired the sequence where the cops pursue Korra in the first episode.*

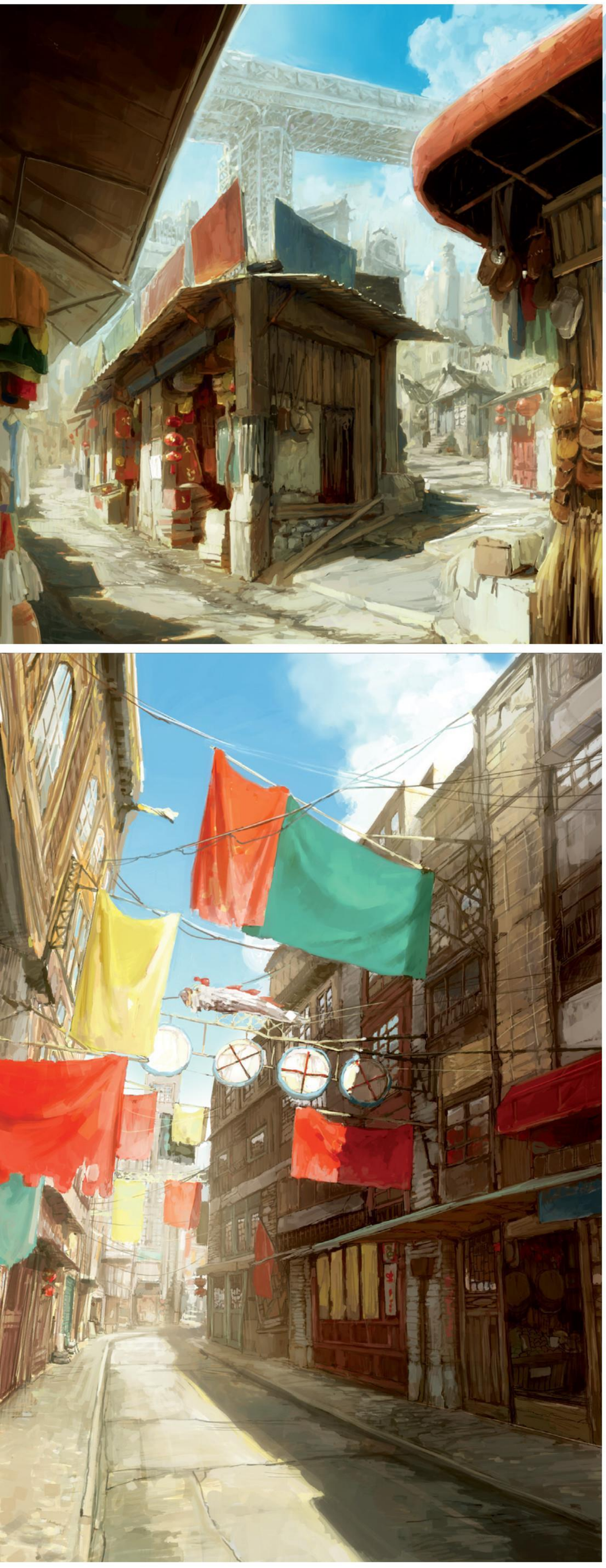
JDS: In my opinion, one of the coolest aspects of the art direction in Korra *is the hybrid nature through which some of these early designs were finalized.*
BK: For Korra's final design recipe, Joaquim provided the majority of the ingredients, Ryu added the spice, and I merely baked it all together. Korra design by Joaquim Dos Santos, Ki-Hyun Ryu, and Bryan Konietzko. Color by Bryan Konietzko.



glove detail

BK: It was fun to play with the familiar motifs of Water Tribe costumes by giving Korra a more fitted, three-quarter-sleeve parka, as well as clashing her blue outfit with firebending gear when we first meet her as a teenager, both things we didn't really see in Avatar. *Designs by Il-Kwang Kim and Bryan Konietzko. Color by Bryan Konietzko and Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.*

MD: "I'm the Avatar. You gotta deal with it!" Ryu wrote a version of this dialogue on one of his early sketches of young Korra. We loved how perfectly it summed up her attitude and personality and incorporated it into the first episode. Four-year-old Korra design by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Cleanup by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

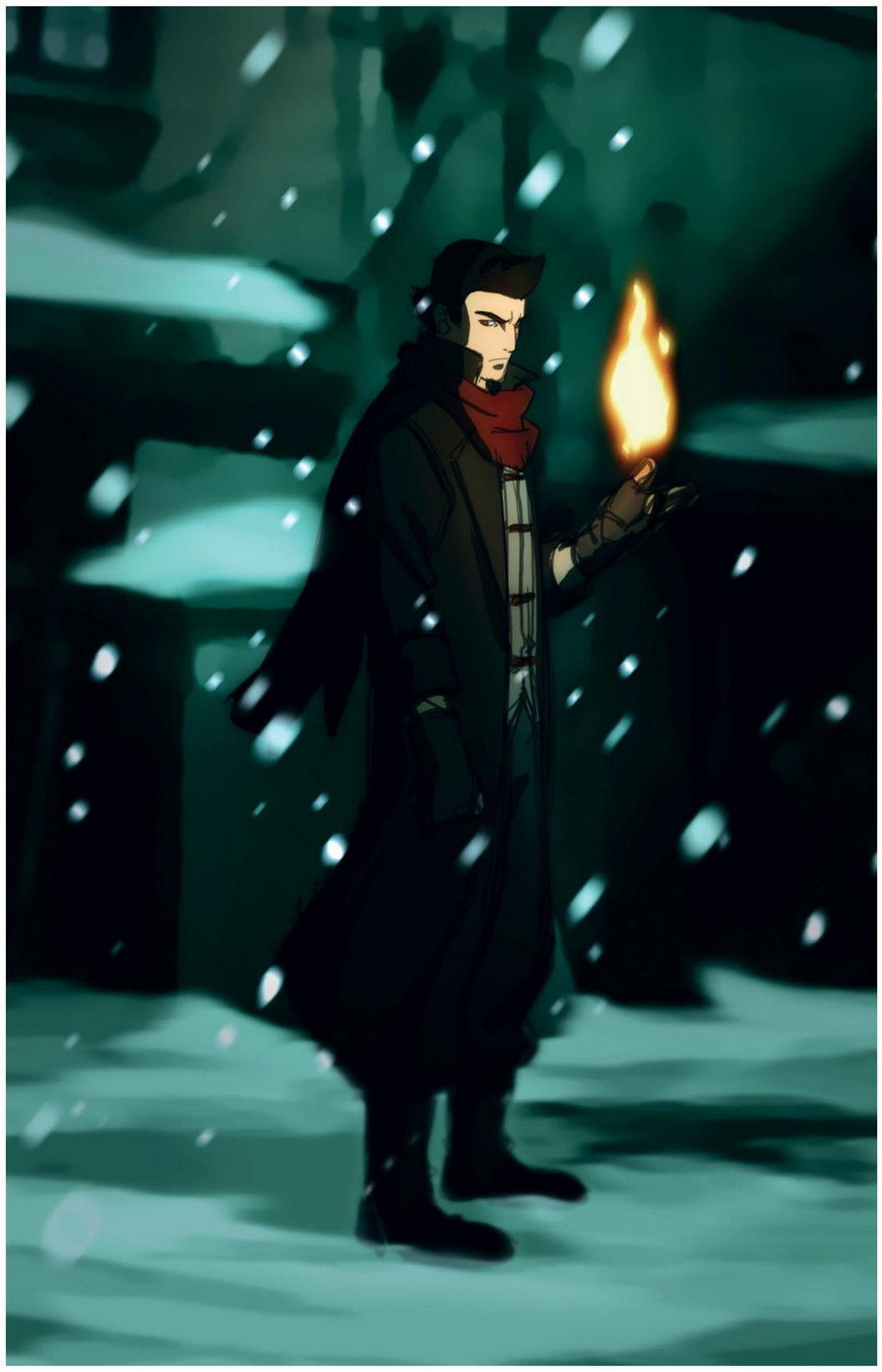


MD: Mako and Bolin spent much of their youth running small-time scams in the mean streets of Republic City (above). Background designs by Eun-Sang Yang. Paintings by Frederic Stewart. Right: Ki-Hyun Ryu's wacky concepts of a version of Bolin that never came to be. JDS: You've got to love Ryu . . . Only he could envision one of the lead characters as a bowl-cut-wearing rodeo clown. Bolin concepts by Ki-Hyun Ryu.

MAKO AND BOLIN

MD: We wanted to include a story about brothers in *Korra*, which is where the idea for Mako and Bolin came from. They also illustrate how family and culture had become more mixed, seventy years after the original series. Mako and Bolin's mother came from the Fire Nation and their father hailed from the Earth Kingdom, but they both were killed when Mako and Bolin were young. Forced to grow up too soon, Mako protected and shielded Bolin from the darker side of the world. This is why Mako grew to become the more cynical and serious of the two, while Bolin still remained childlike and naive.

JDS: This is a pretty early pass I did on the brothers. It's kind of strange to look back at these now, as I think our initial instinct was to make Bolin a little pudgy. Still, you can see some of the DNA for the characters creeping in. I can remember struggling to find the impact that progress and industry would have on fashion in the Avatar *universe. Mako and Bolin concepts by Joaquin Dos Santos.*



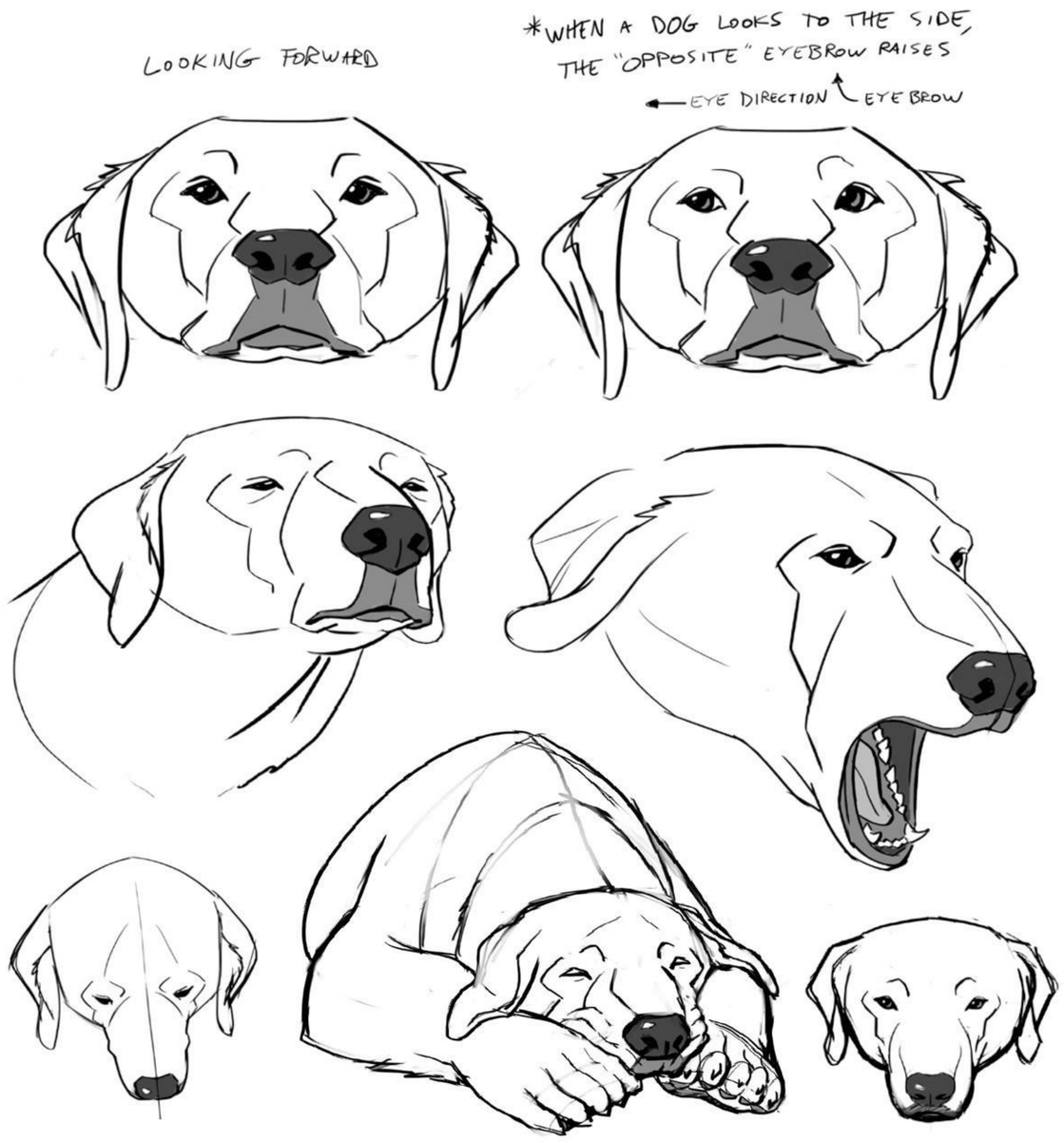
JDS: Mako keeps himself warm during a cold, snowy night in Republic City. This concept was done to help get the tone of the character across. BK: Joaquim really had an Industrial Age/Dickensian take on the Korra *world, especially in his explorations of the brothers. Mako concept by Joaquim Dos Santos.*

BK: Once we reined in Ryu's outlandish takes on the brothers, he swept in and did a fantastic job finalizing both of their designs, all the way down to Bolin's skivvies. Mako and Bolin designs by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Color by Bryan Konietzko and Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

MD: Bolin and Mako expression sheets by Ki-Hyun Ryu. These types of model sheets help the storyboard artists and animators better understand the personalities of the characters. JDS: I can remember really pushing for strong noses on both brothers, as you can see in the top row of Bolin's expressions drawn by Ryu. Ultimately, it was decided not to do this, and looking back now, I think that was a good choice.

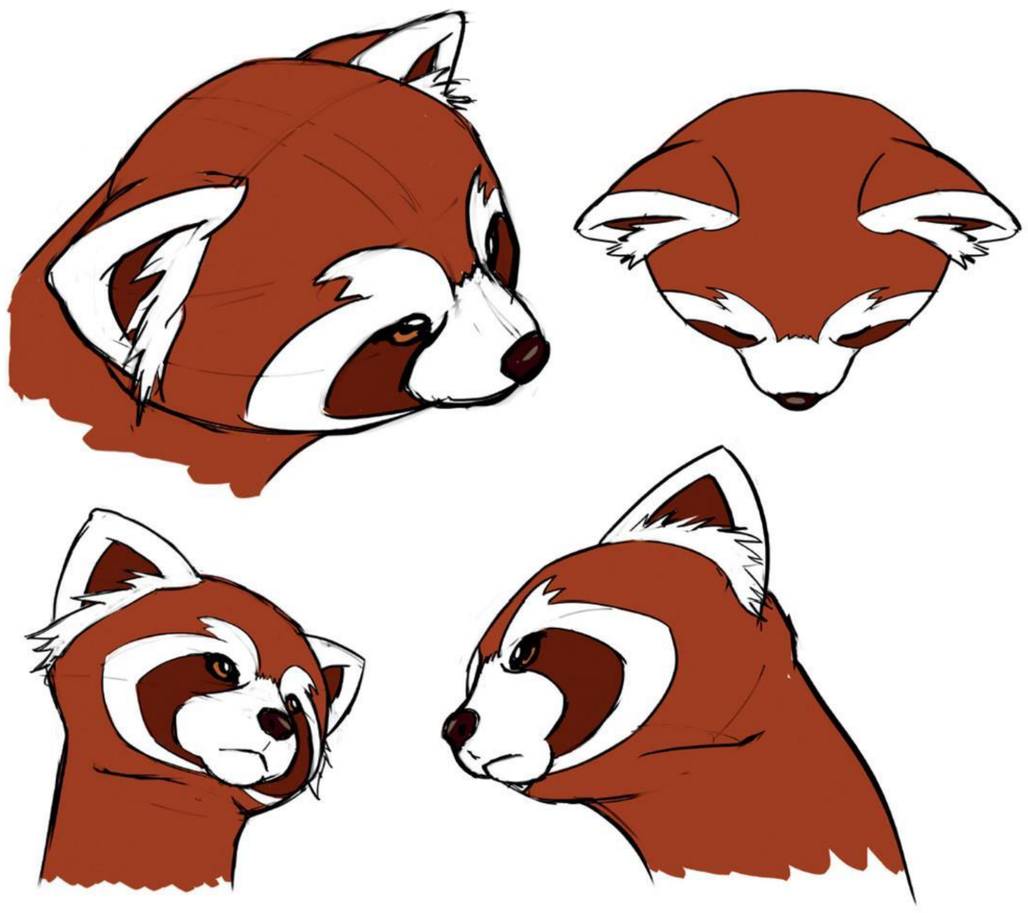
NAGA

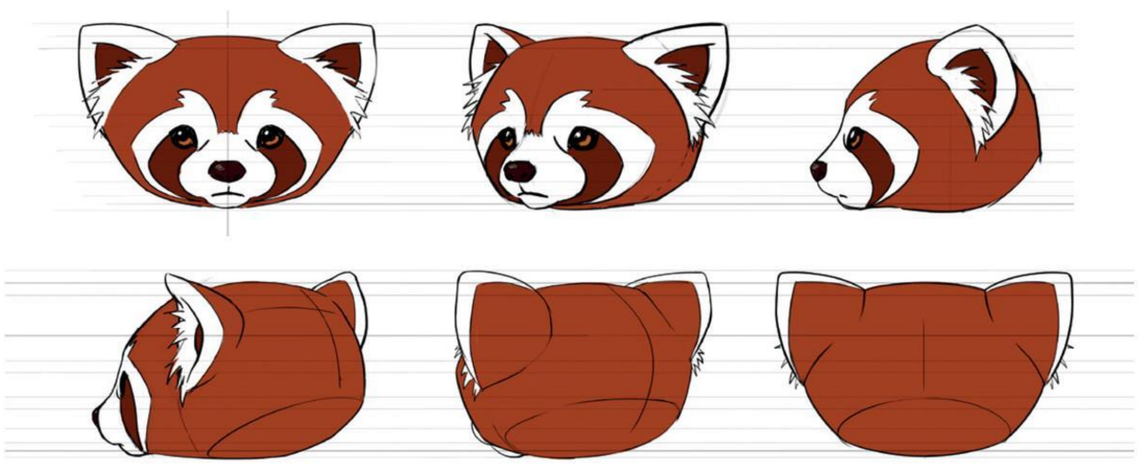
MD: The origin of Naga can be traced back over ten years, to the development art for *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. When Bryan was drawing the earliest versions of Aang and Momo, he also drew a polar bear dog standing next to them. We always loved the character, but never found a place in the show for her. When we came up with Korra's character, we were thinking of what her animal companion would be like. We remembered Bryan's old sketch and realized Naga would be a perfect companion for our new hero. We came up with the backstory that people in the Southern Water Tribe usually feared polar bear dogs, but when Korra was a kid, she courageously befriended a pup that was lost in the tundra and named her Naga.

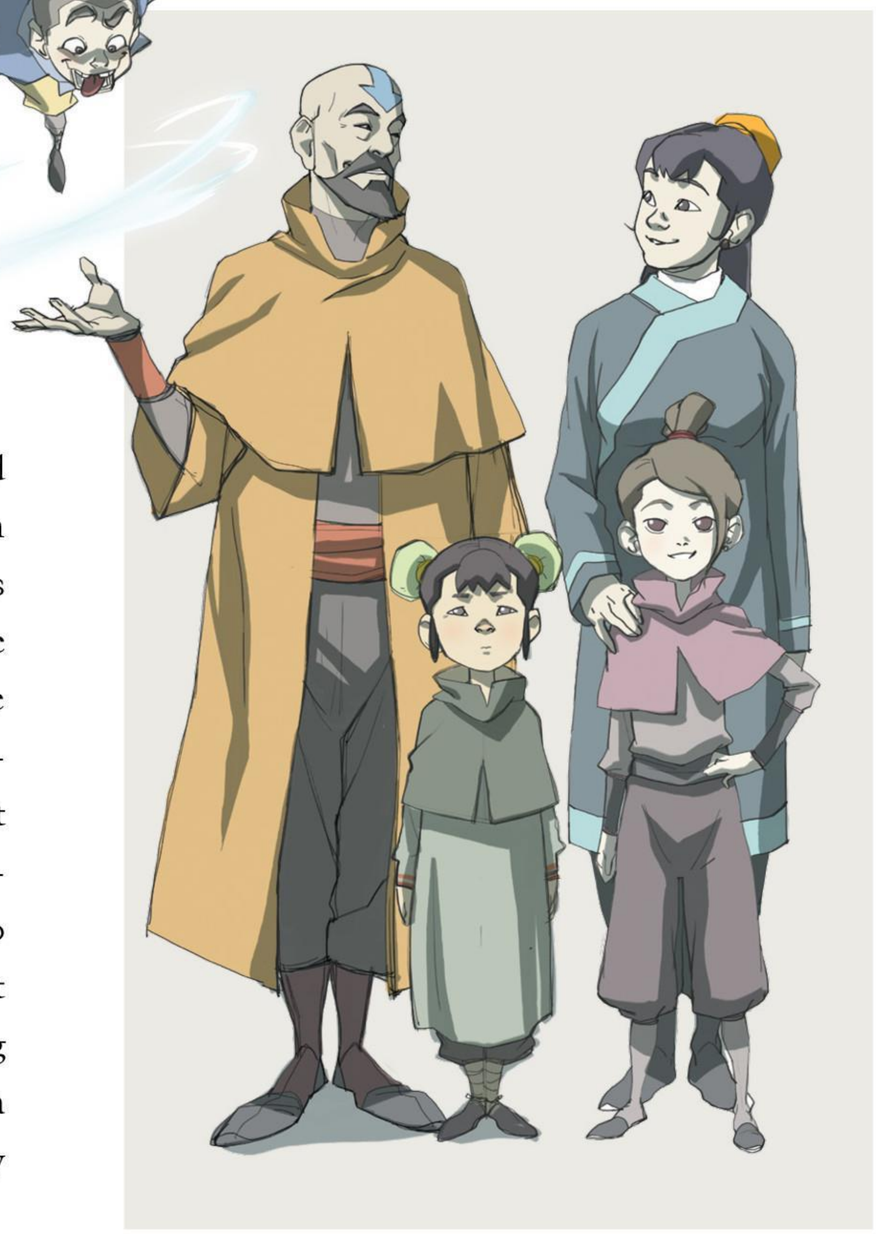


MD: Naga is a polar bear and dog hybrid. Bryan based her look on our dogs, Truman and Gunther, who are brothers. BK: The animal characters are always my favorite to design and draw. I feel much more comfortable drawing animals than humans. Naga concepts and expressions by Bryan Konietzko.

MD: Pabu is a red panda and black-footed ferret hybrid. We had always wanted to use a cute version of a red panda somewhere in the Avatar *universe and found a perfect place for one as Bolin's companion. When Bolin was fourteen, he rescued Pabu from a nasty pet store, and they've been inseparable ever since. Pabu concepts and designs by Bryan Konietzko.*



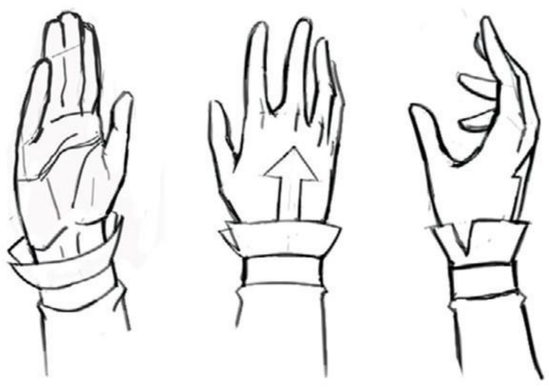


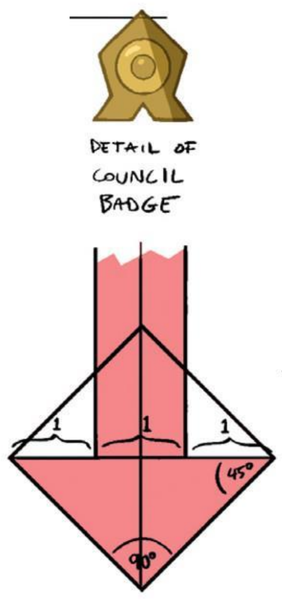


TENZIN

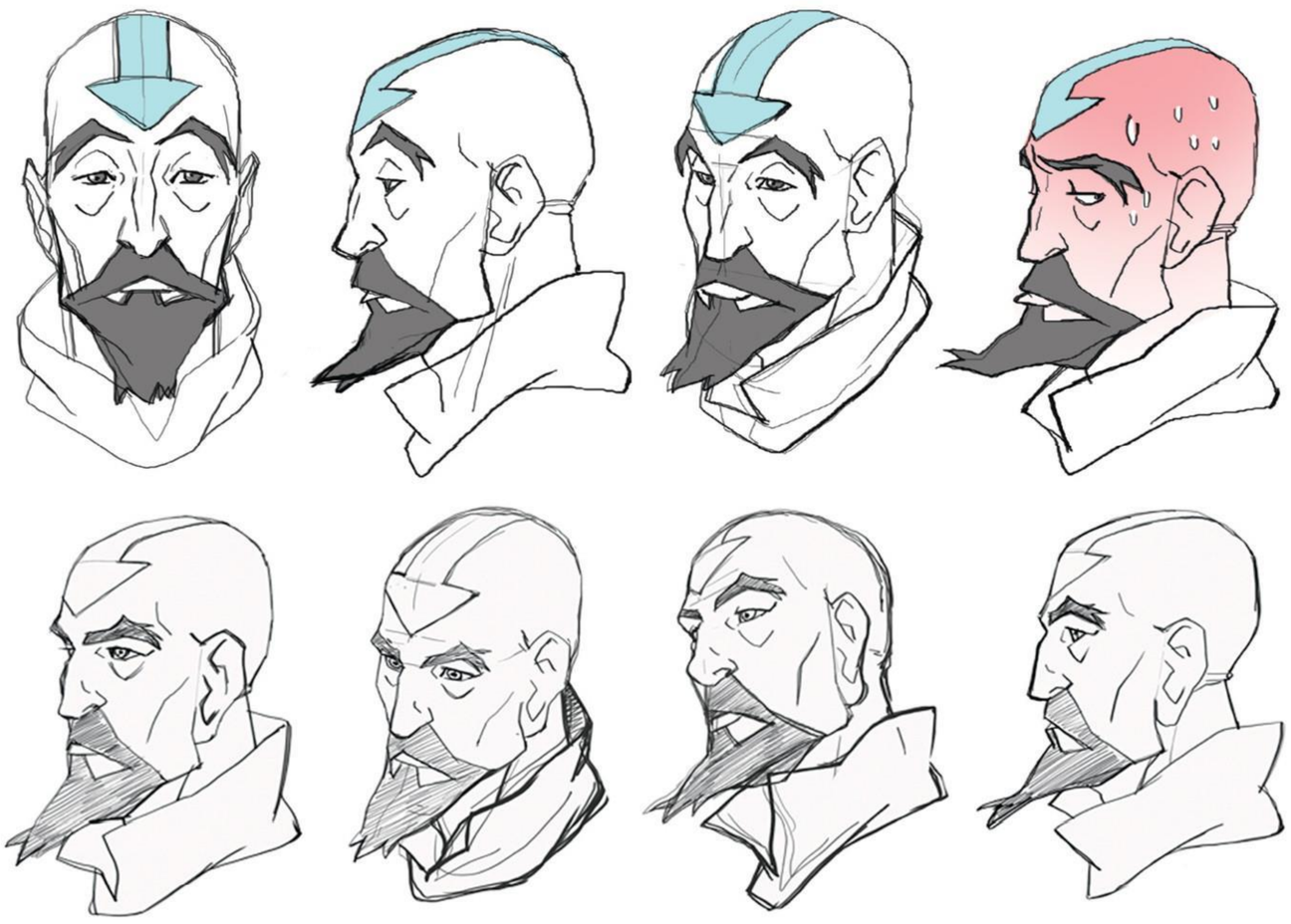
MD: The biggest link to Aang and the original series comes through the character of Tenzin. He was probably the second character we came up with after Korra. Since Korra would have to learn airbending, who would be better to teach it to her than Aang's son? His peaceful, traditionalist personality also provided a good source of conflict for the hotheaded, modern-thinking Korra. Tenzin always tries to be a Zen master, but with three crazy kids, he finds it difficult at times.

An early concept of Tenzin and his family by Ki-Hyun Ryu.
Right: Tenzin concept by Bryan Konietzko.
Below: Tattoo and badge concepts by Bryan Konietzko.



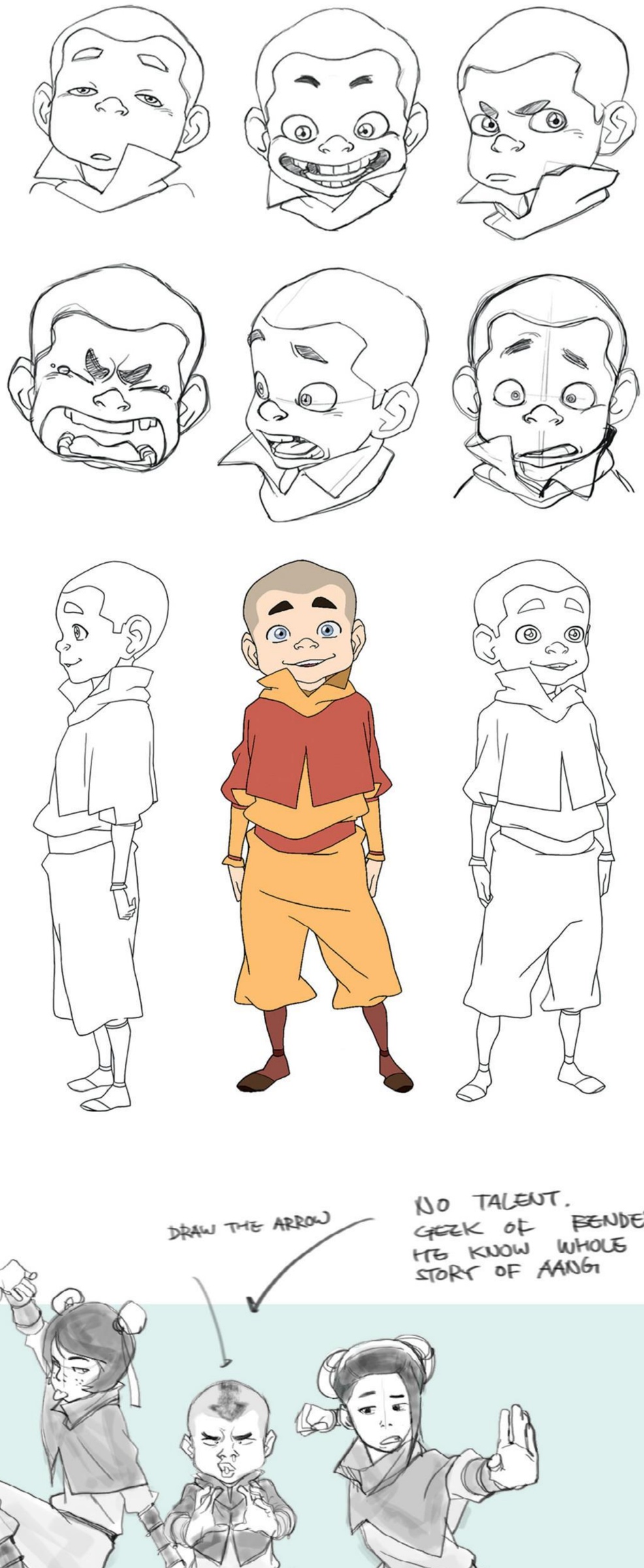


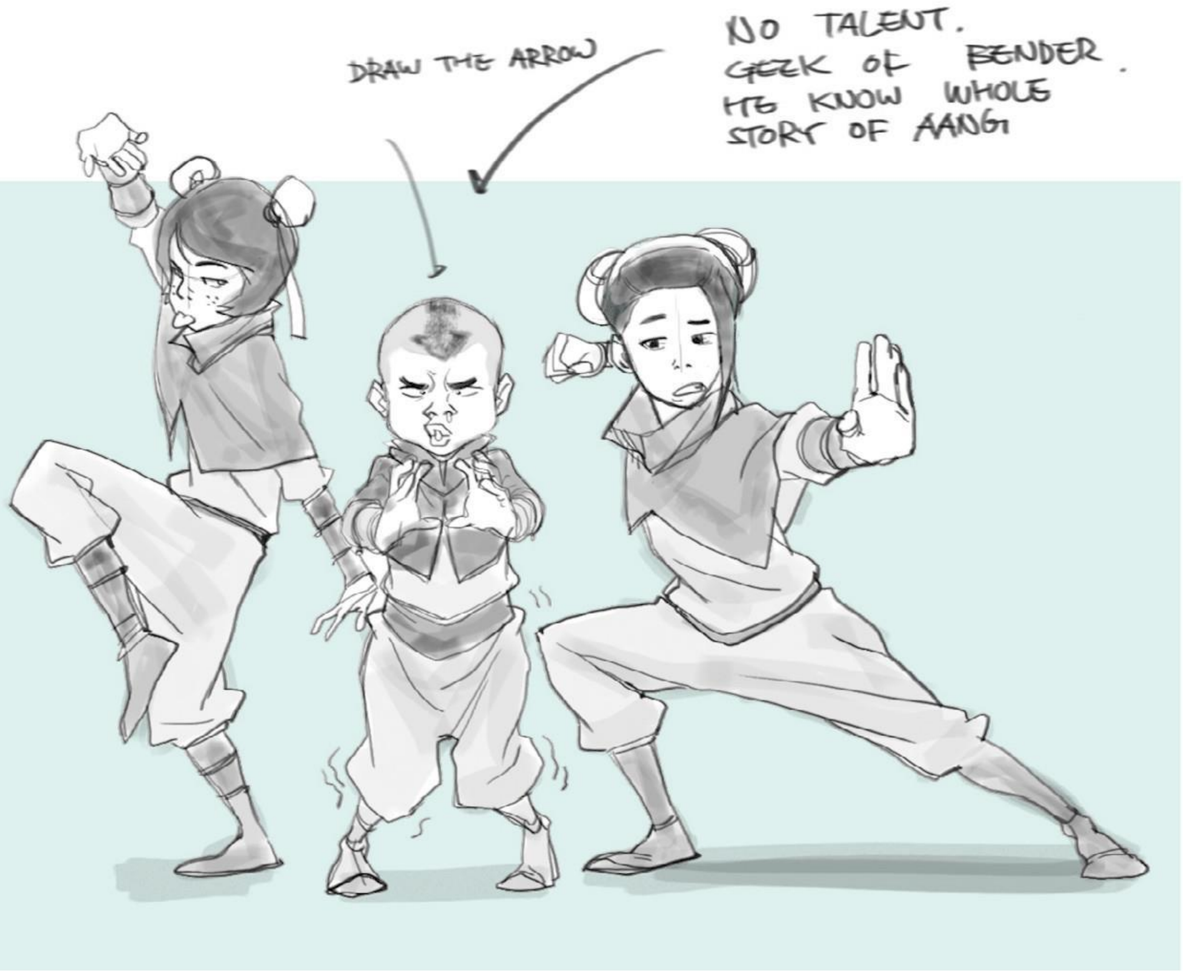
THE ARROW RULES:
- ISOSCELES RIGHT TRIANGLE
- WIDTH OF BAND IS 1/3 WIDTH OF TRIANGLE
- SAME PROPORTIONS ON HEAD AND HAND TATTOOS
- ON HEAD: BOTTOM TIP OF TRIANGLE IS JUST BETWEEN EYEBROWS — NOT TOO HIGH ON FOREHEAD
- ON HAND: CENTER OF TRIANGLE POINTS AT MIDDLE FINGER



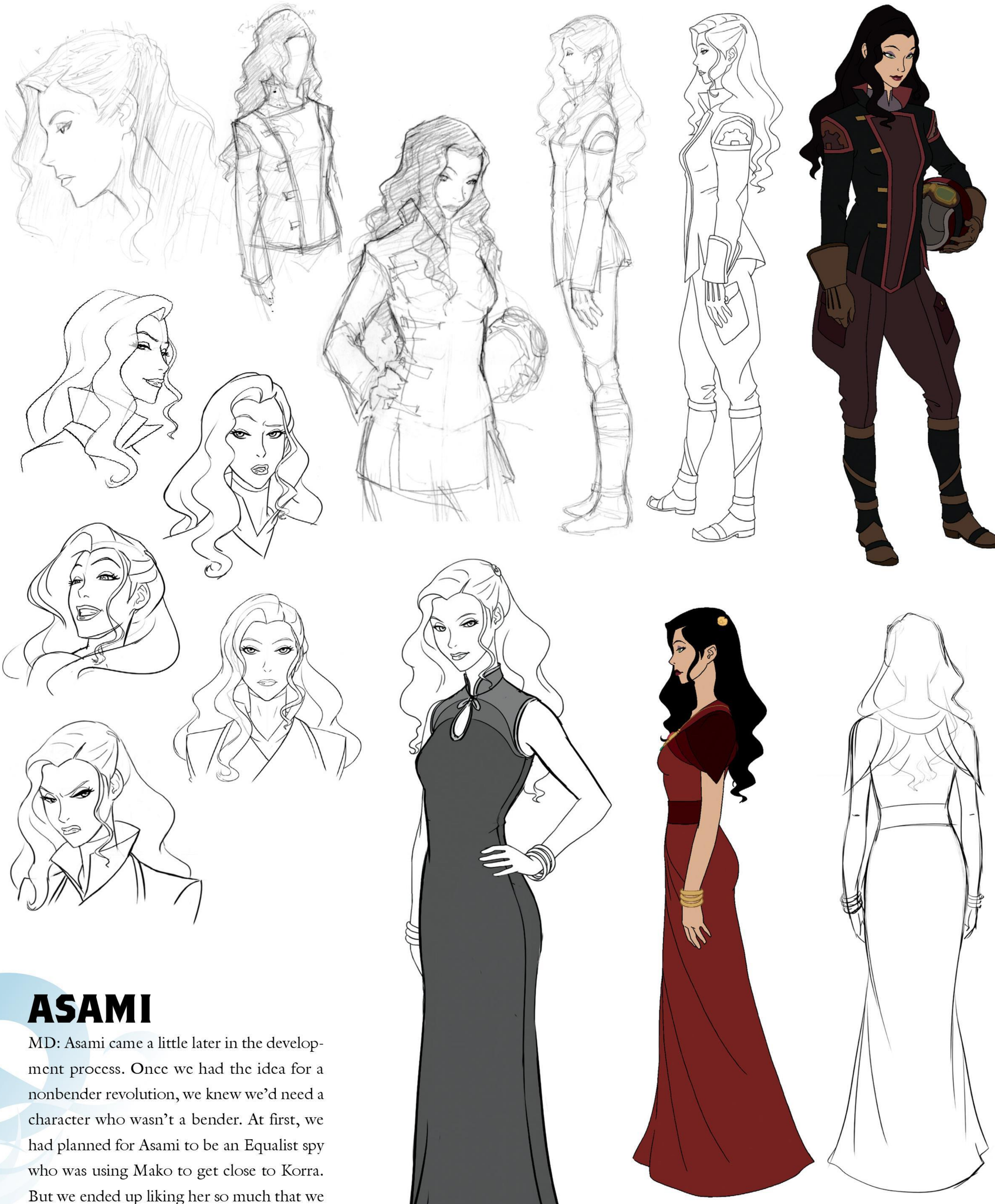
BK: Ryu's realistic final design of Tenzin has proven to be one of the most difficult for the majority of the animators to replicate. I made some feeble attempts to simplify his design, especially his nose, but it is hard to revise Ryu's exquisite drawings without marring them completely, so I gave up. It turns out our production manager, Benjamin Kaltenecker, has the exact same nose as Ryu's design of Tenzin, which Ryu is pretty obsessed with drawing during meetings.

Meelo and many of his antics were directly inspired by my friend and former professor's son Milo, whom Mike and I met in Amsterdam in 2008. Milo was such a force of nature that Mike and I knew we had to base a character on him.





MD: The next generation of airbenders—Meelo, Ikki, and Jinora. Ryu really wanted Meelo to be an ugly kid, but Bryan and I eventually convinced Ryu to make him a little cuter. Meelo, Ikki, and Jinora concepts, designs, and expressions by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



ASAMI

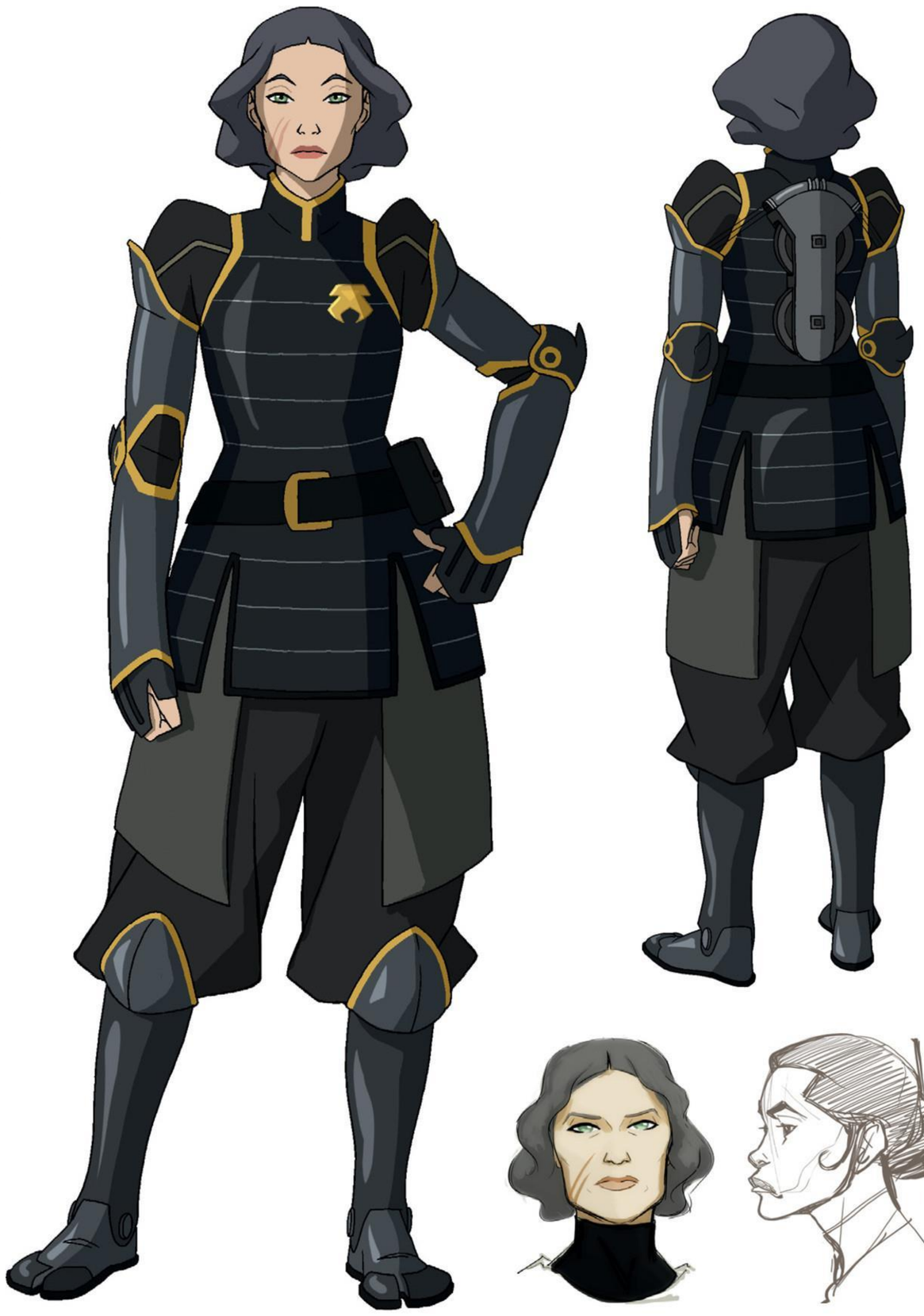
MD: Asami came a little later in the development process. Once we had the idea for a nonbender revolution, we knew we'd need a character who wasn't a bender. At first, we had planned for Asami to be an Equalist spy who was using Mako to get close to Korra. But we ended up liking her so much that we thought it was better to keep her on the good guys' side. The development process was so important for *Korra*, because it allowed us to play with various story and visual concepts before the full production started.

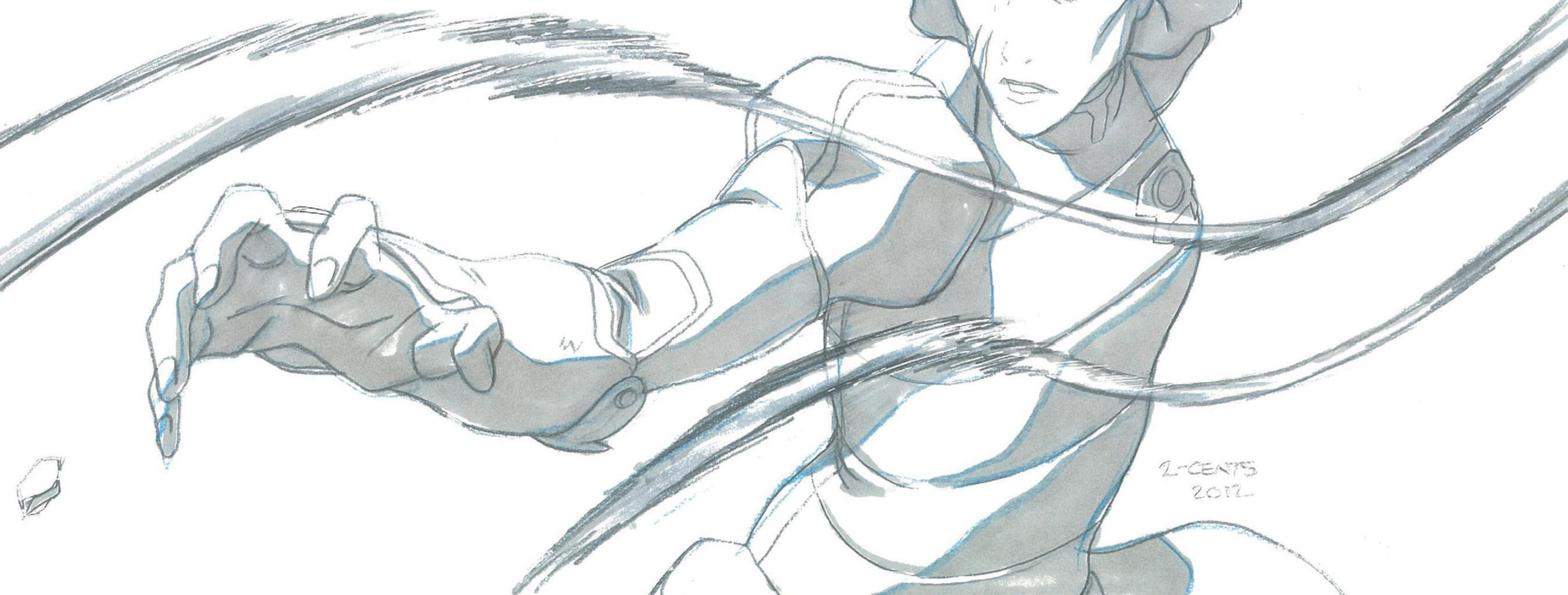
BK: As a self-deprecating artist, I am particularly critical of my lack of abilities when it comes to drawing women. But I wanted to challenge myself and handle Asami's design alone. I wanted her to have some old Hollywood glamour, while also having some killer racing outfits in her wardrobe. Asami concepts by Bryan Konietzko. Expressions and cleanup by Il-Kwang Kim and Bryan Konietzko. Color by Bryan Konietzko and Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

LIN BEIFONG

MD: Lin Beifong, Toph's daughter, followed in her mother's footsteps by becoming Republic City's chief of police. She was really fun to write for and gave us a good excuse to use slang like "diddly-squat." BK: While Asami's design was inspired in part by Rita Hayworth, Lin's old-Hollywood influence came from the harder-edged Marlene Dietrich. We wanted her to have a tough and natural beauty. Joaquim and I collaborated on her design, which was a fun process.

Top right: Lin design by Joaquim Dos Santos and Bryan Konietzko. Cleanup by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Bryan Konietzko and Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. Middle left and bottom: Concepts by Joaquim Dos Santos. Middle right: Head concepts by Bryan Konietzko and Ki-Hyun Ryu.





JDS: Some early concepts for Toza, Mako and Bolin's trainer. He's an old, retired fighter who competed in the early days of pro-bending, back when they didn't have to use padding or headgear! Design by Joaquim Dos Santos.

JDS: Below is an early concept for the bending arena gear. You'll notice that the chest padding has an extra flap on top that was removed in favor of the face shield for the final design. Concept and design by Joaquim Dos Santos.

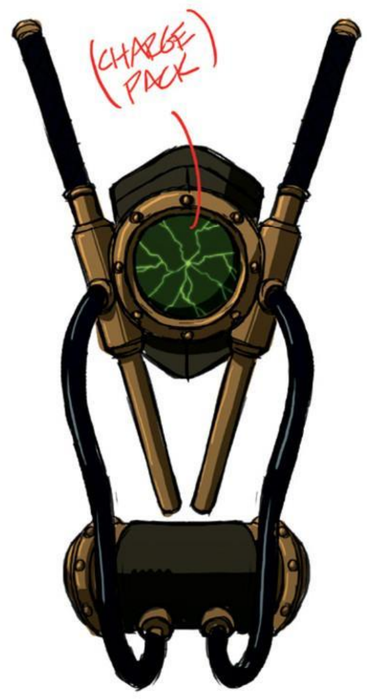
BK: Joaquim's illustration of the brothers training in the Pro-bending gym (top) showcases his stellar action posing on Mako and hilarious comedic touch on Toza berating an earlier and portlier version of Bolin. My favorite part of this piece has always been the tiny Pabu atop Bolin's slabs of rock. JDS: The bottom image was an early concept for the arena and Pro-bending. We created these images as an internal pitch package to help sell the execs on the new concepts that were being introduced in Korra. *At this point no rules had been established for Pro-bending, so these images depict a bit of a free-for-all type of competition. Illustrations by Joaquim Dos Santos. Following spread illustrated by Joaquim Dos Santos.*

AMON

MD: The story for *Korra* really came together once we found our main villain, the revolutionary leader Amon. As someone who could take a bender's powers away permanently, he was the perfect foil for Korra and her love of all things bending. And we always love a bad guy with a mask to provide a sense of mystery and intrigue!

BK: Amon's design was another fun collaboration between Joaquim and me, where he handled the body and costume and I did the mask. I deeply admire Chinese and Korean masks and face paint, so the pattern of Amon's mask references those traditions while remaining simple enough for the animators to draw and iconic enough to be a symbol of the Equalist revolution.

Amon designs by Bryan Konietzko and Joaquim Dos Santos. Cleanup by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Bryan Konietzko. Below: Early concept illustrations of Amon by Bryan Konietzko.



JDS: The Lieutenant is one of the more steampunk-inspired designs we have in the show. Bryan's initial Sharpie sketch really helped inform the design choices. The idea for the pack on his back was that it could act as a battery to charge up his kali sticks. Lieutenant designs by Joaquim Dos Santos. Cleanup by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Bryan Konietzko, Joaquim Dos Santos, and Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

JDS: Some designs come easy. Others . . . not so much. You can see some alternate takes by Ryu above which were awesome but felt like they were channeling a bit too much Gatchaman. *Between us, we probably had twenty to thirty takes on these guys. I can remember the sense of relief I felt when this design was approved. Chi-blocker designs by Joaquim Dos Santos and Bryan Konietzko. Cleanup by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Bryan Konietzko and Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. Chi-blocker concepts by Ki-Hyun Ryu.*

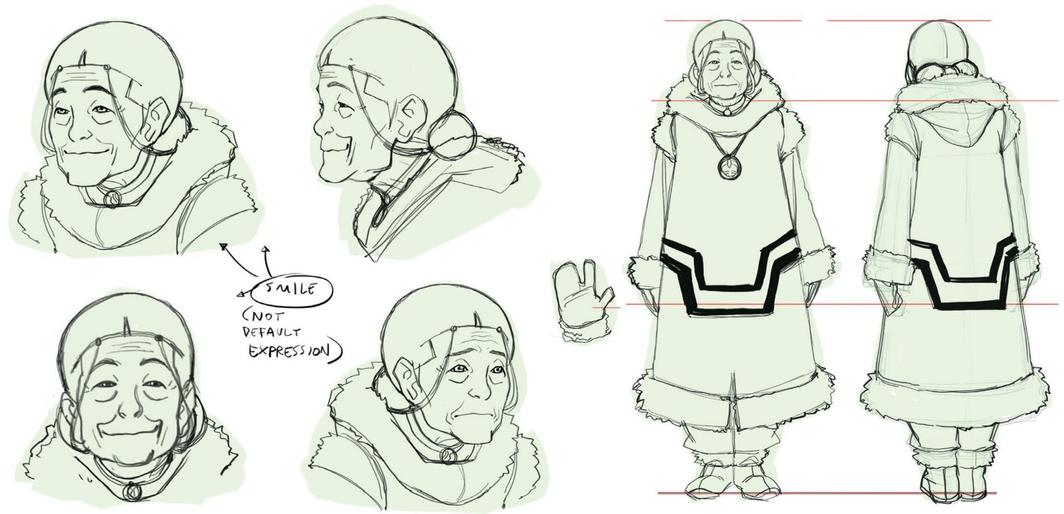
CHAPTER TWO
WELCOME TO REPUBLIC CITY

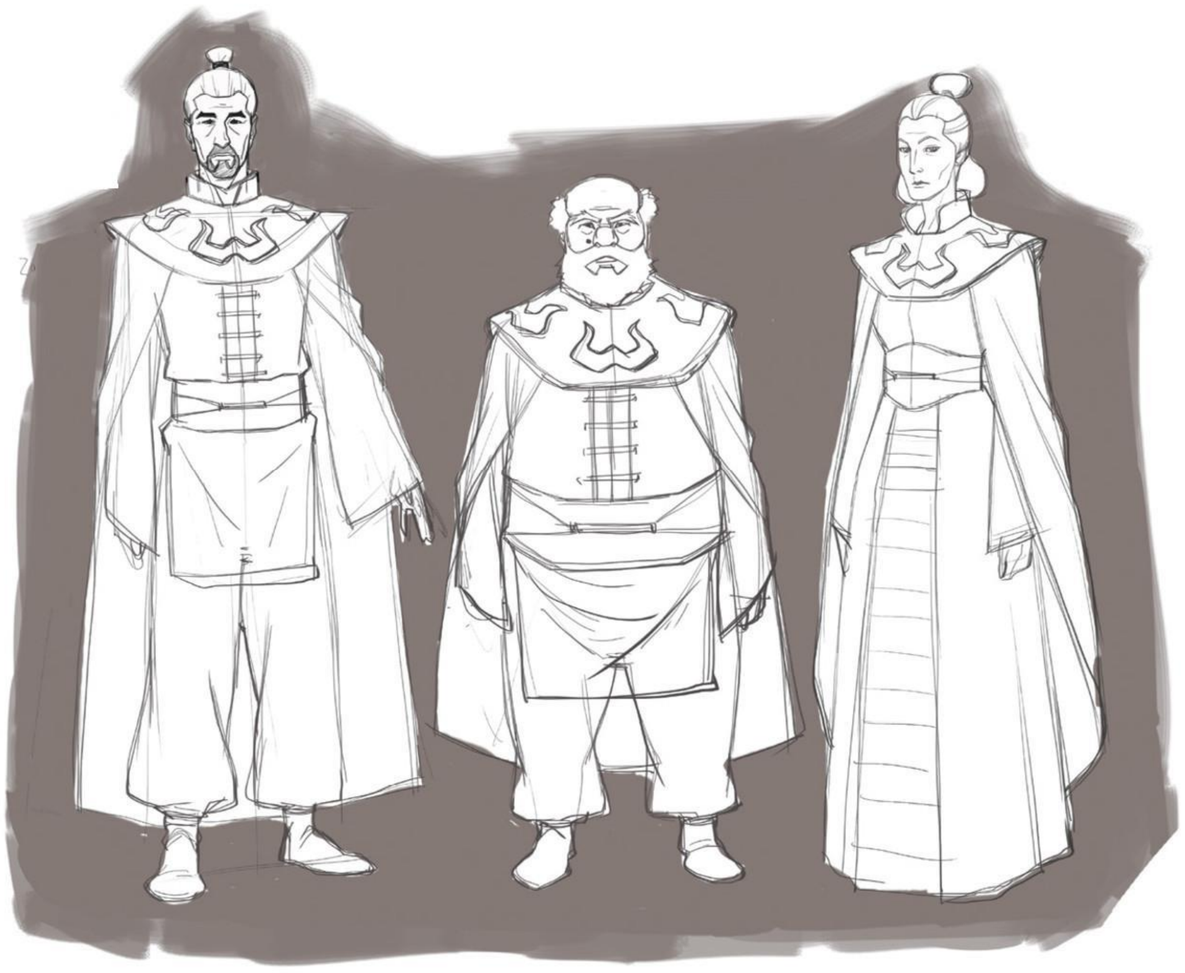
MD: Korra arrives in Republic City. This early concept illustration was a collaboration by Bryan, Joaquim, and Fred, with the goal of exhibiting our new background-painting style and the 1920s-influenced update to the Avatar *world. Korra's pose as she gazes over the city was meant to mirror Aang looking over the mountains in the opening title of* Avatar: The Last Airbender. *(Preceding spread)*

KATARA

MD: Eighty-seven-year-old Katara provided a strong link between *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and *Legend of Korra*. The scene when Katara catches Korra running away, but gives Korra her blessing to seek out her own path, was one of our favorites to write. In a way, it mirrored our journey to bring *Korra* to life. We wanted to respect the old characters and the original series, but also forge a new trail with Korra's story.

Katara designs by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Cleanup by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. Below: Background design by Jevon Bue. Painting by Frederic Stewart..





White Lotus elders concept by Ki-Hyun Ryu. White Lotus sentries design by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. Below: Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Painting by Emily Tetri.

THE WHITE LOTUS

MD: Following the Hundred Year War, the White Lotus Society came out of hiding and began to openly serve the Avatar and the other nations. Above: These White Lotus members searched the Northern and Southern Water Tribes in hopes of finding Aang's reincarnation. Right: Two of Korra's White Lotus guardians.

MD: The snow-covered land of the Southern Water Tribe is home to many waterbenders, including Avatar Korra and her family. Korra lives in a training compound outside of the capital (top), where she grew up studying bending from her masters and learning healing from Katara. BK: In the top image you can see the work of Emily Tetri, who joined the team as our second background painter and quickly adapted to the modified version of Fred's painting style we were developing for Korra, *as well as adding to it with her own great artistry. Background designs by Eun-Sang Yang. Paintings by Emily Tetri (top) and Frederic Stewart (bottom).*

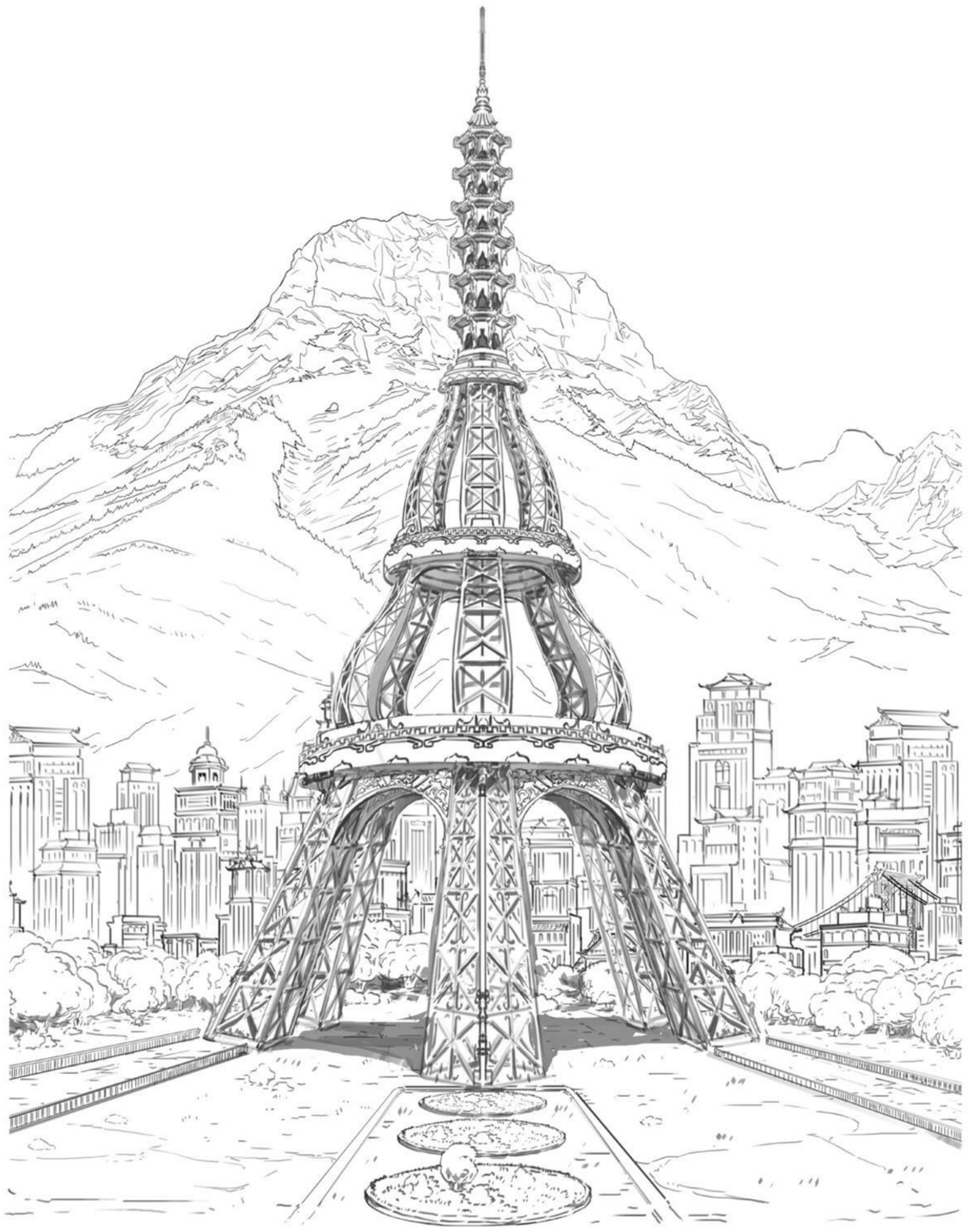
MD: Air Temple Island and the Avatar Aang statue are iconic sites in Republic City. The Avatar Aang statue stands as a symbol of peace and goodwill. A museum containing many historical Avatar relics is located in the base of the statue. Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Statue design by Joaquim Dos Santos and Bryan Konietzko. Painting by Frederic Stewart.

MD: Built by Aang, Air Temple Island is home to Tenzin and his family, as well as numerous Air Acolytes. The island contains living quarters and school buildings, along with temples, a library, a dining hall, a meditation gazebo, living space for sky bison and winged lemurs, and the iconic Air Temple Tower. Walkway design by Jung-Su Lee. Painting by Frederic Stewart.

MD: Tenzin and Pema's middle child, Ikki, is the most bouncy and talkative of them all. Key animation by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Right: As a young Air Acolyte, Pema fell in love with Tenzin. Pema design by Ki-Hyun Ryu and Bryan Konietzko. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

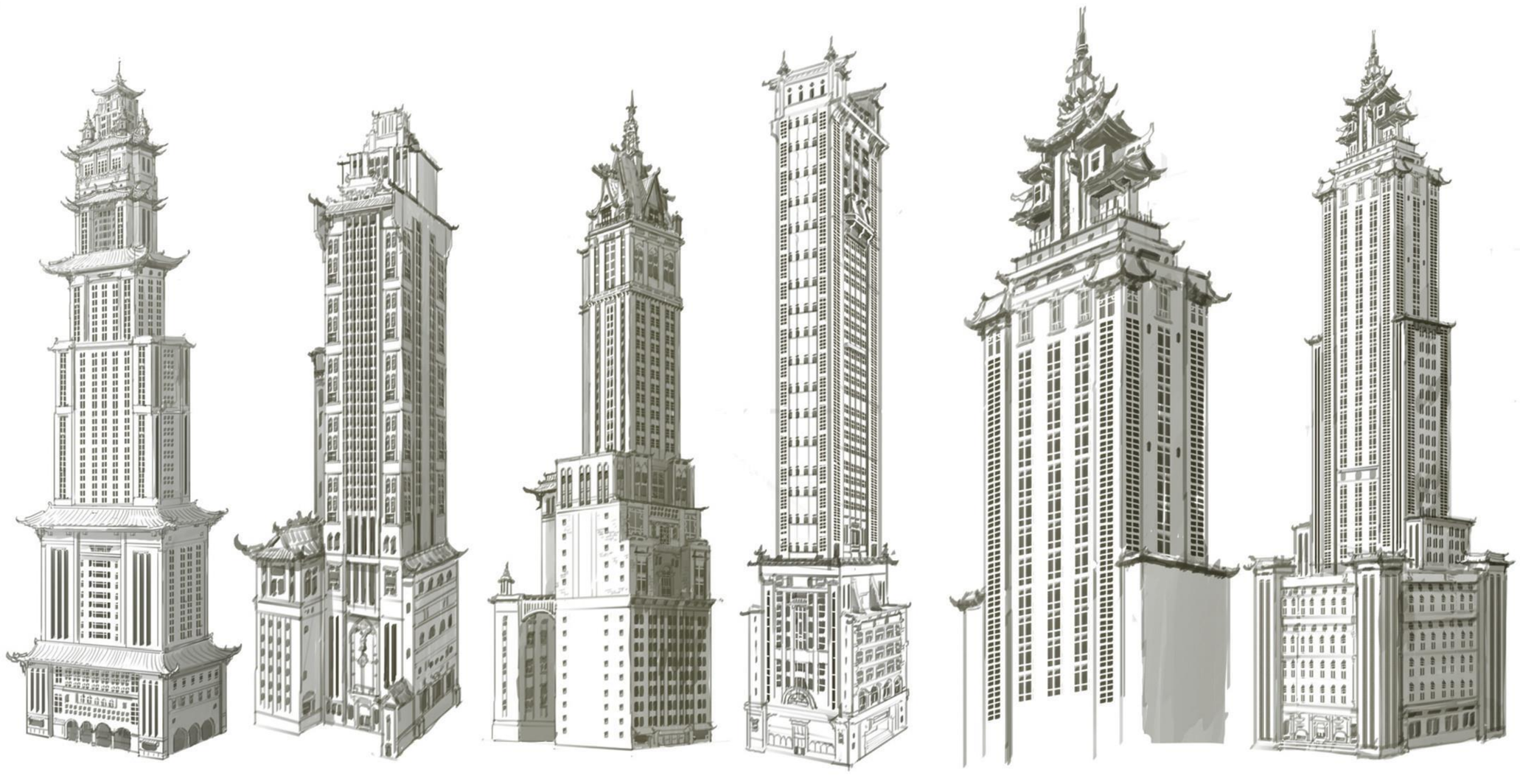
MD: Gommu, the charismatic hobo Korra meets in the park, would later become a valuable ally to the Avatar. Gommu design by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

MD: Republic City Park, below, is the Avatar *version of Central Park in New York. Design by Jonard Soriano. Painting by Frederic Stewart.*



REPUBLIC CITY

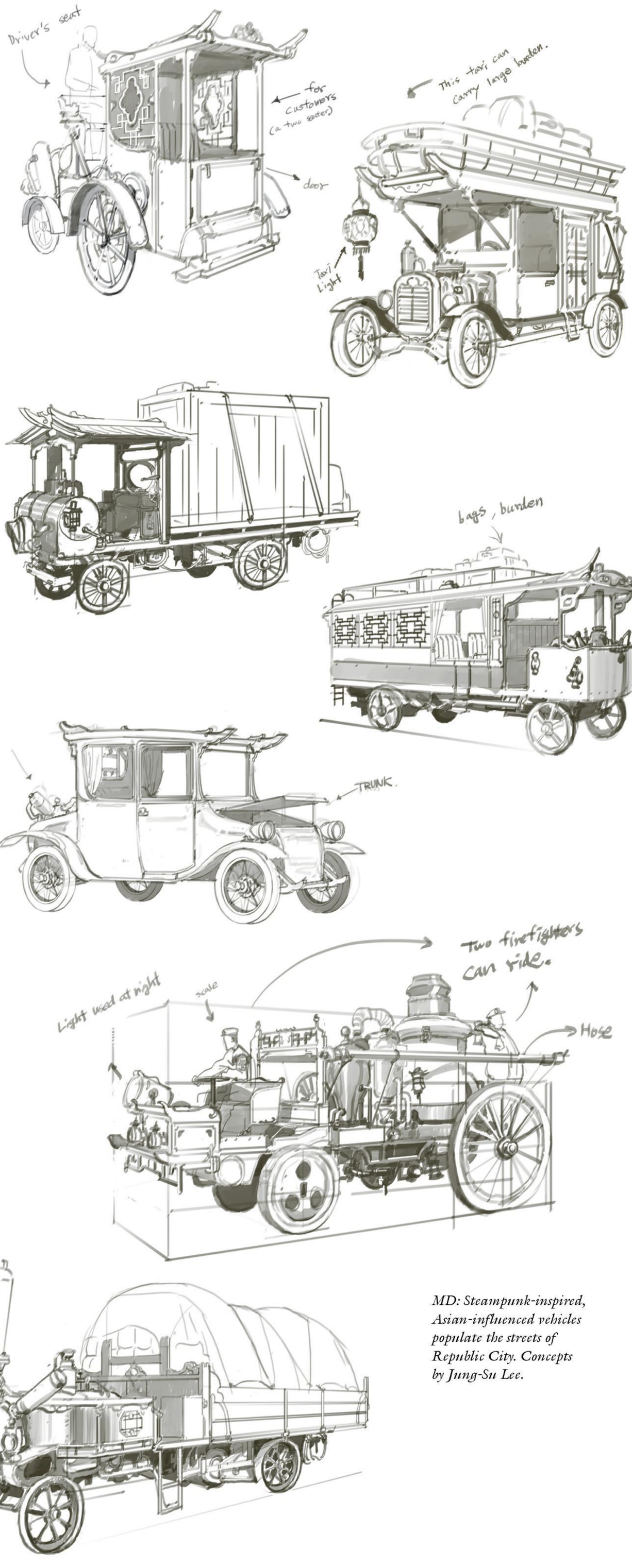
MD: Surrounded by majestic mountains in the northwest coast of the Earth Kingdom, Republic City is the largest and most modern city in the United Republic of Nations. Following the Hundred Year War, there was much debate about what to do with the Fire Nation colonies in the Earth Kingdom. Rather than send the Fire Nation citizens home, Aang and Zuko established the United Republic of Nations—an area of the world where people from all nations could live and prosper. Republic City became its capital. To Korra, the city symbolizes freedom and a chance to start a new life.



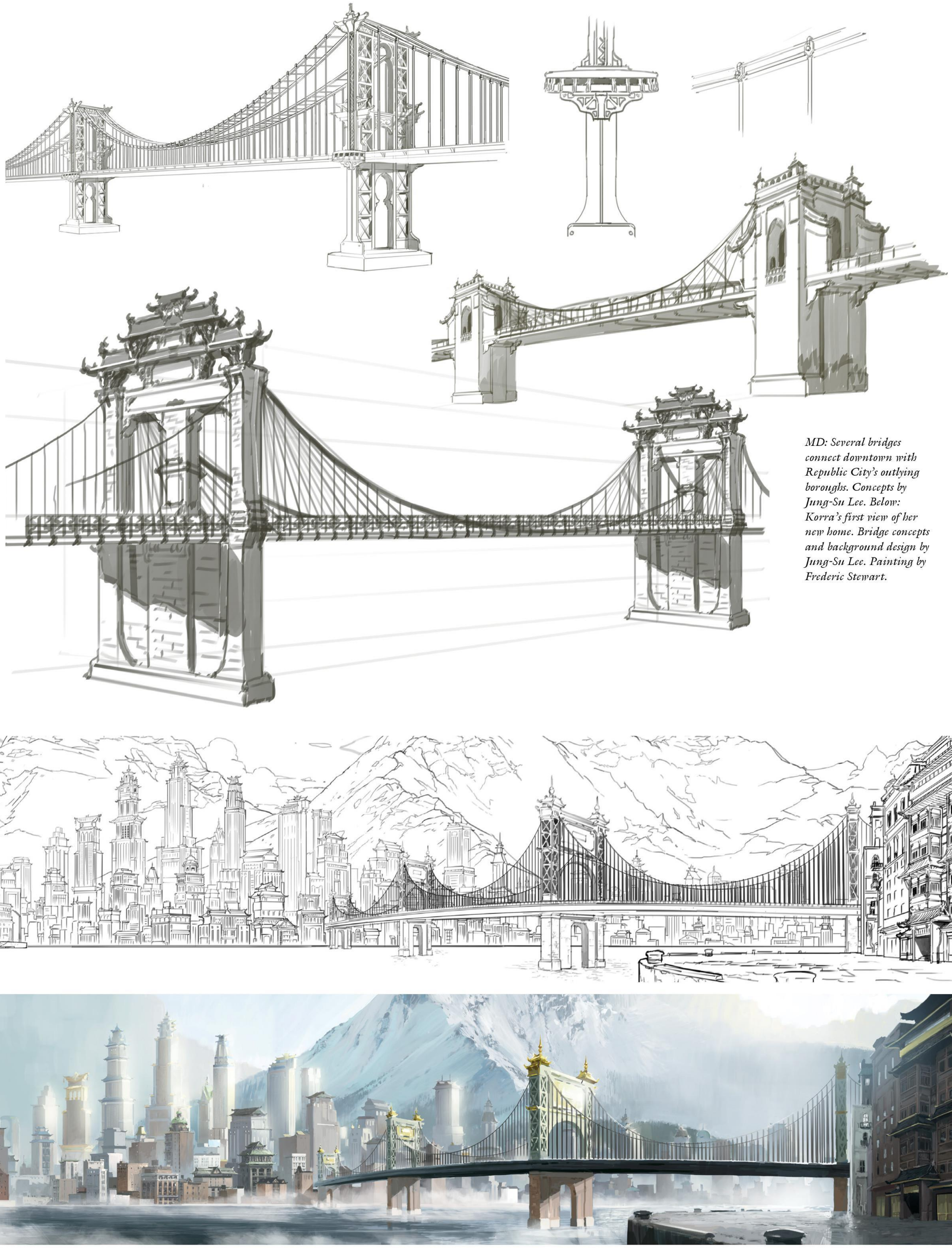
MD: We were inspired by Hong Kong, Shanghai, and New York in the early 1900s, and we wanted Republic City to look like a bustling, Industrial Age, Asian steampunk city. Building designs by Jung-Su Lee. Top left: Design by Eun-Sang Kang. Painting by Frederic Stewart. Top right: Harmony Tower design by Jung-Su Lee.

BK: I took the awesome skyscraper and bridge designs done by Jung-Su Lee (whom we appropriately dubbed "Awesome Guy") and reworked them into what would become the iconic skyline view of Republic City from Yue Bay, the kind of thing you would see on postcards from the city. For the mountains, I drew from photos I took on a workshop with Mike in the Canadian Rockies, right before Korra *development began. Fred put some extra time into painting these "master shots" of the city, as we knew pretty early on we wanted to incorporate them into the opening title sequence of the first episode.*

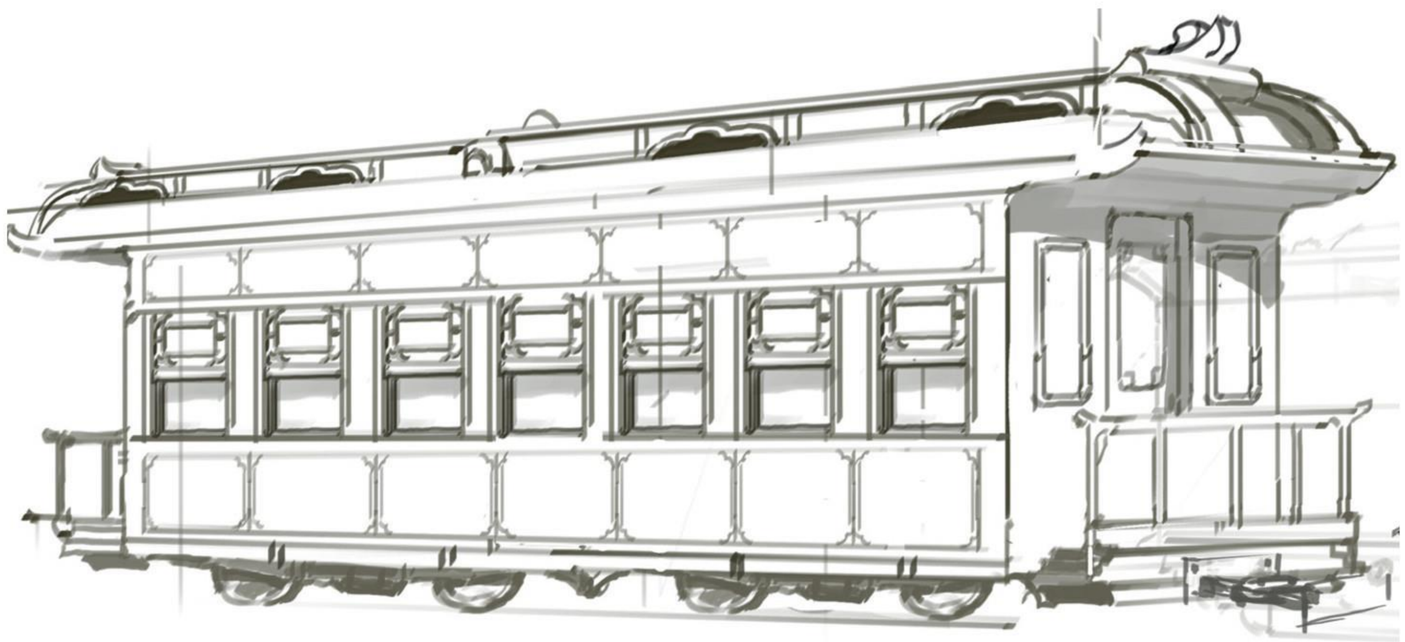
MD: Kwong's Cuisine and the phonograph store. Kwong's is the top-rated restaurant in Republic City, home to the world's greatest chefs and its snobbiest patrons. Kwong's specializes in small portions and gourmet fare. Designs by Eun-Sang Yang. Paintings by Emily Tetri (top) and Frederic Stewart (bottom). Below: The nervous shopkeeper who tries to give Korra directions to Air Temple Island. Design by Il-Kwang Kim.

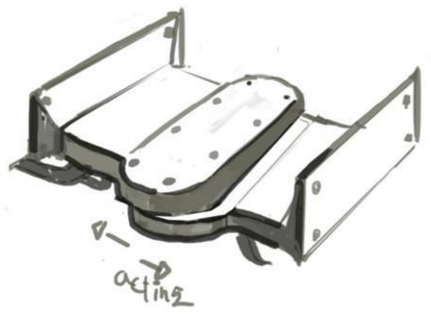


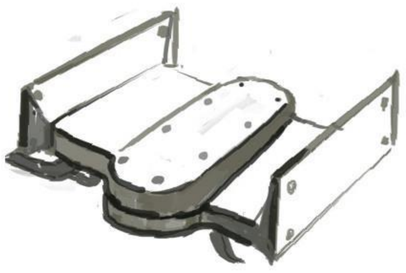
MD: Steampunk-inspired, Asian-influenced vehicles populate the streets of Republic City. Concepts by Jung-Su Lee.

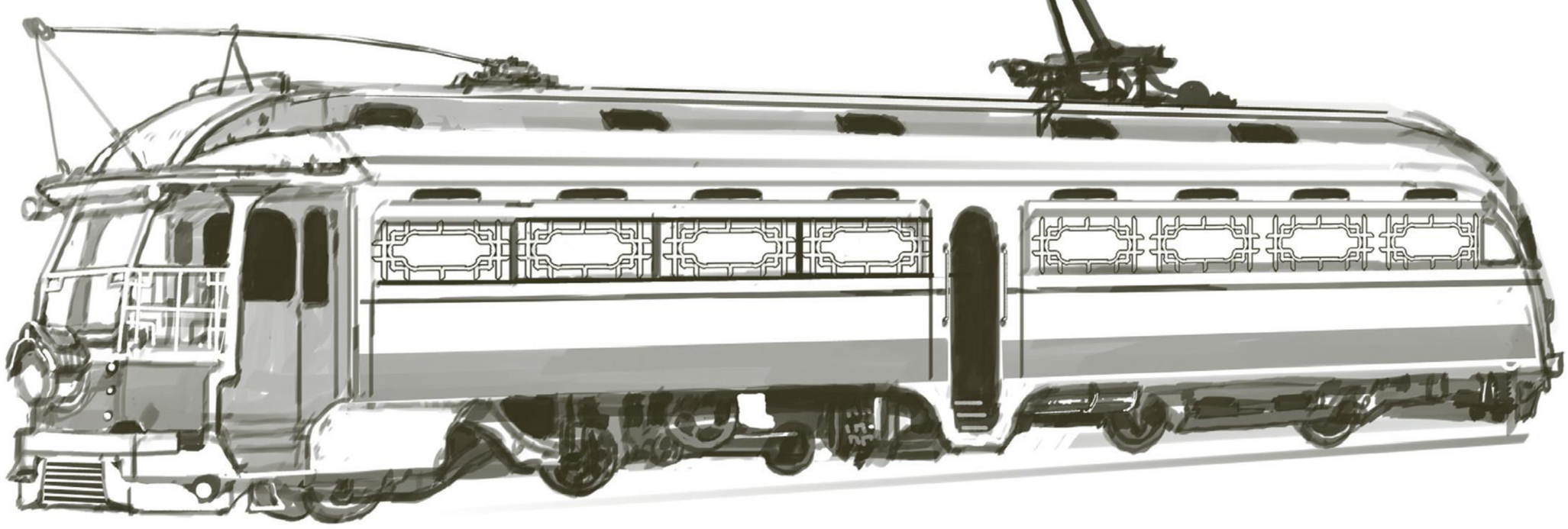


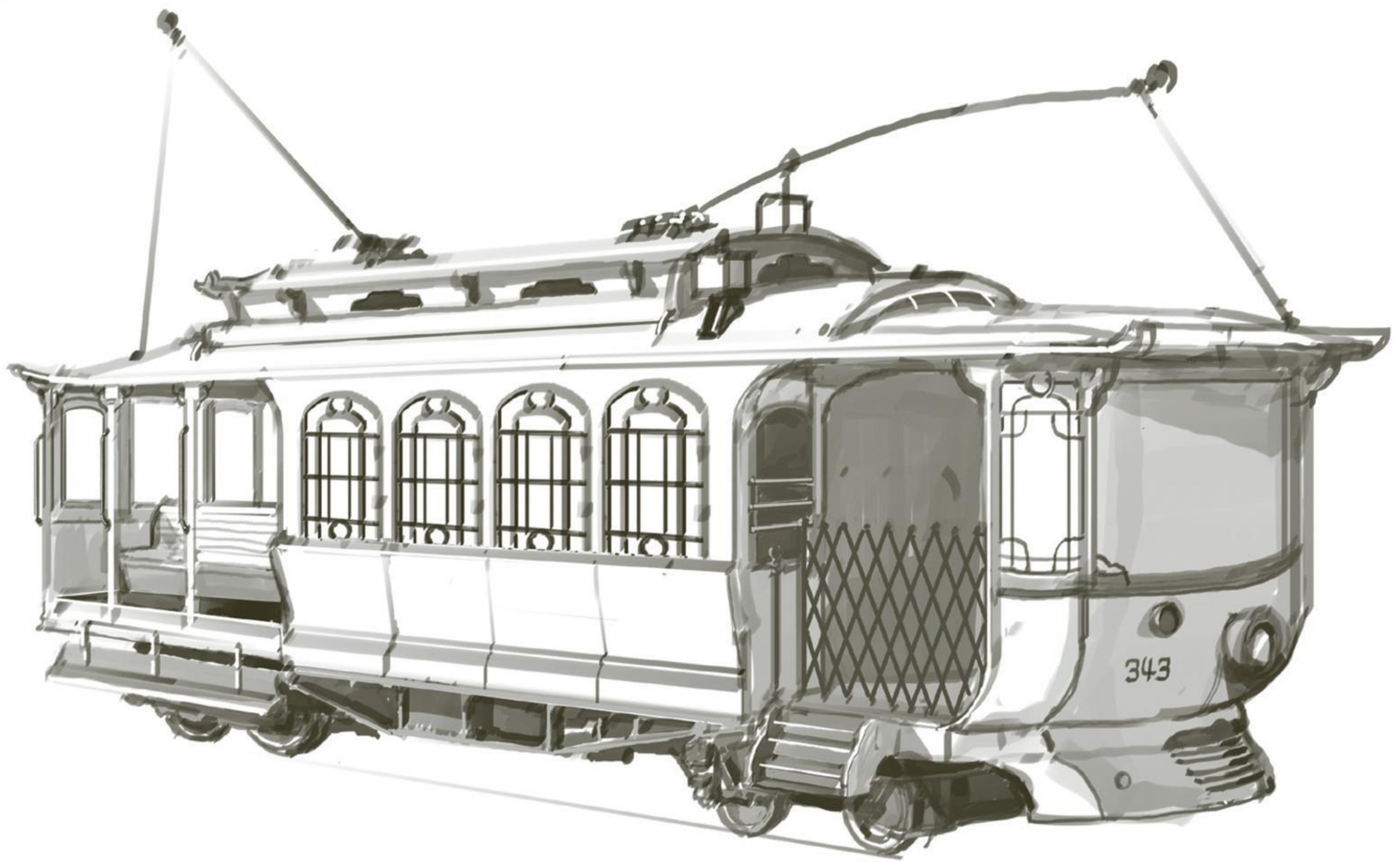
MD: Several bridges connect downtown with Republic City's outlying boroughs. Concepts by Jung-Su Lee. Below: Korra's first view of her new home. Bridge concepts and background design by Jung-Su Lee. Painting by Frederic Stewart.





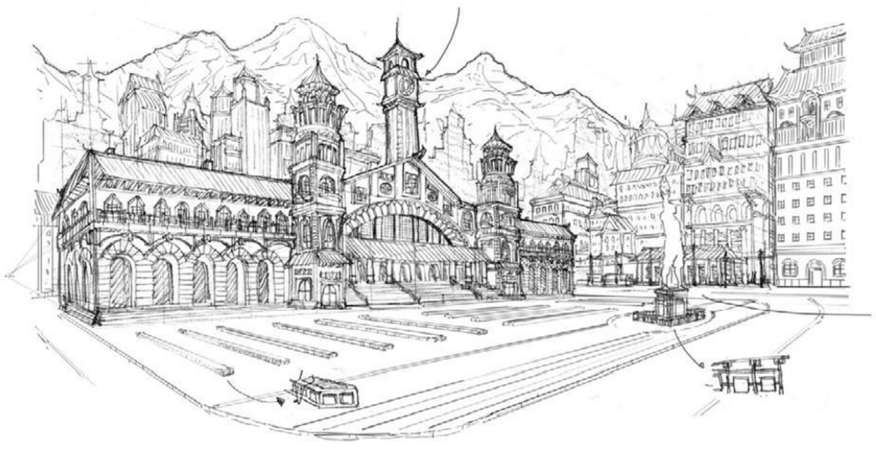






BK: Jung-Su Lee, a.k.a. Awesome Guy, did such a seemingly effortless job creating believable vehicles that fit right at home in our 1920s-influenced Avatar *world. Train and trolley car concepts by Jung-Su Lee.*

*BK: This is another painting from Fred's background test that exhibits a sort of proto-*Korra *painting style. We all loved the loose, painterly brushwork in these early paintings, but we had to rein it in a bit in order to function more seamlessly with our animation. Design by Eun-Sang Yang. Painting by Frederic Stewart.*

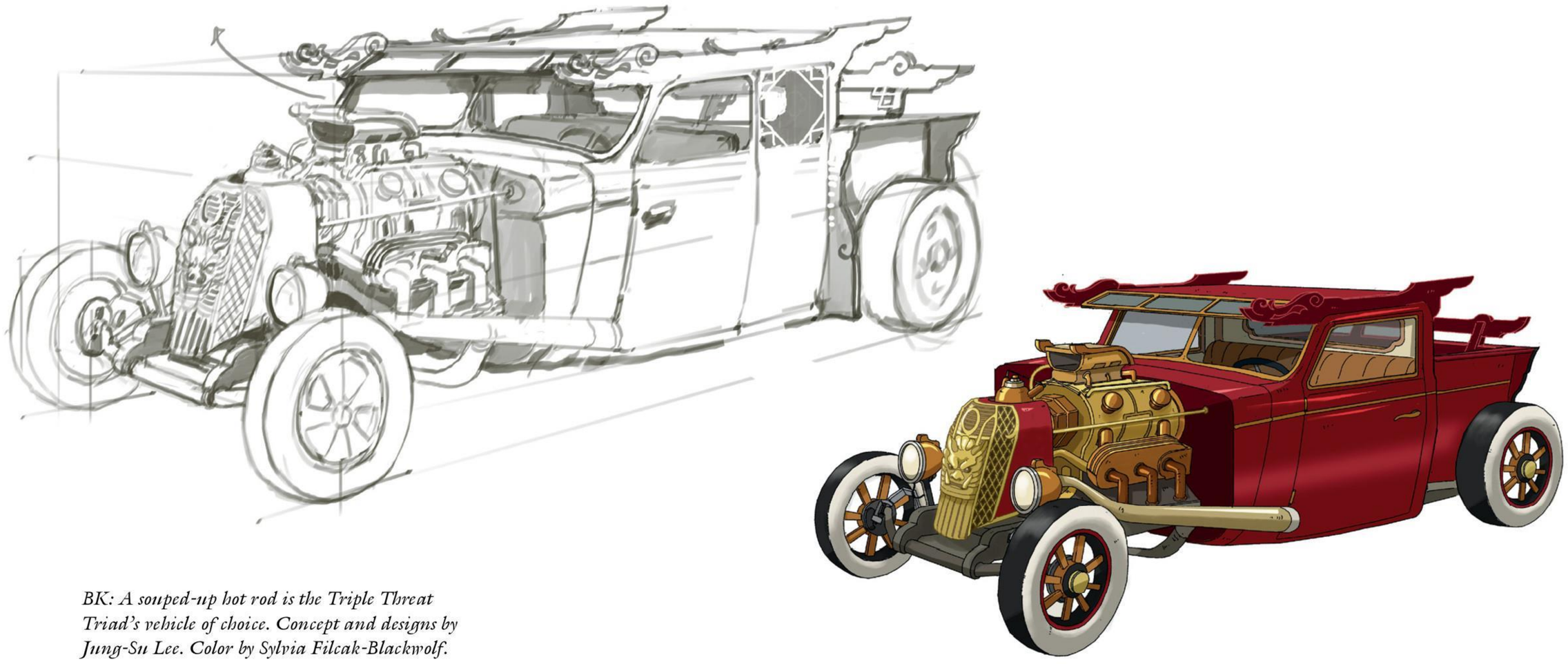


MD: Central City Station is a popular hangout with kids and one of Bolin's favorite spots. Design by Eun-Sang Yang. Left: Some early costume concepts for Republic City's citizens. We wanted the outfits to mix a traditional look with a slightly more modern aesthetic. Concepts by Ki-Hyun Ryu.

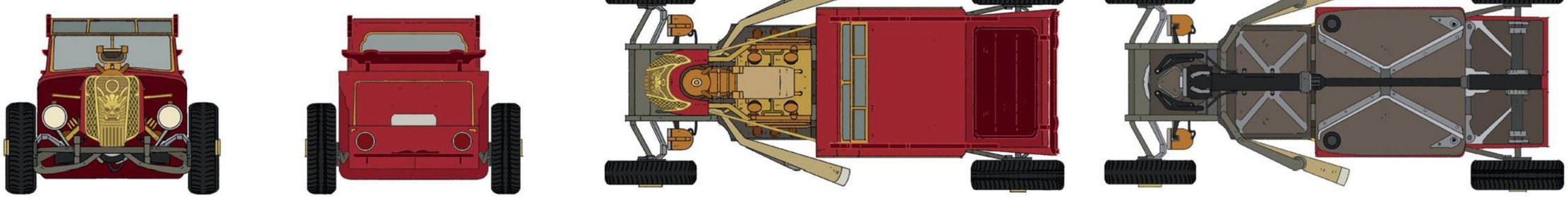
BK: Ryu and I collaborated on this illustration of Korra chasing some triad members through the city, which used a reworked version of Fred's test painting as the background. It was fun to introduce antique cars to the Avatar *universe, and equally fun to set up this urban 1920s metropolis and have a "country" girl from the Water Tribe romp through the streets on a giant polar bear dog.*

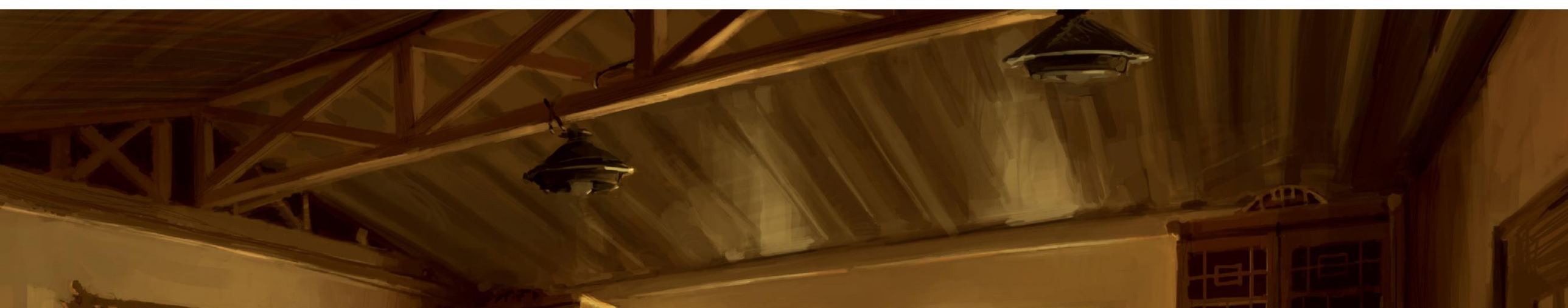
MD: Many of the backgrounds are painted to show different times of day, depending on the needs of the script. Design by Eun-Sang Yang. Paintings by Frederic Stewart (left) and Emily Tetri (right).

MD: Korra encounters these Triple Threat Triad members on her first day in the city. Many of the triads recruit only one type of bender, such as the Agni Kais (Firebenders) and Red Monsoons (Waterbenders), fueling rivalries between different types of benders. A notable exception is the notorious Triple Threat Triad, made up of Earth-, Water-, and Firebenders. Mako and Bolin used to run numbers for them when they were younger. Concepts and designs by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Cleanup by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

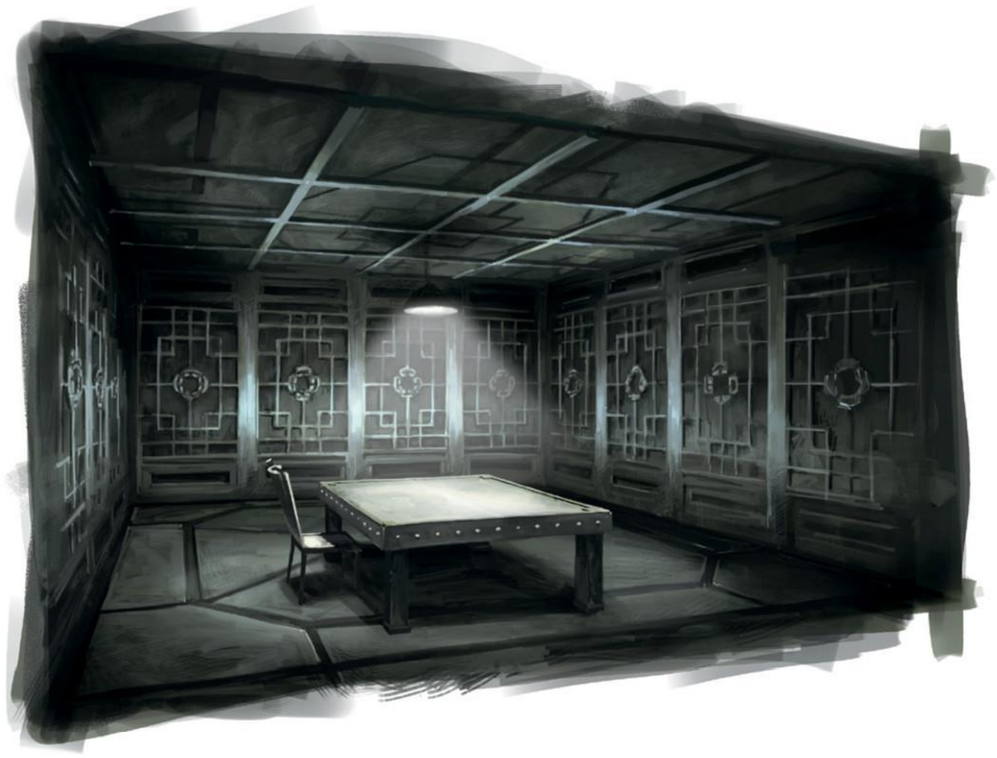


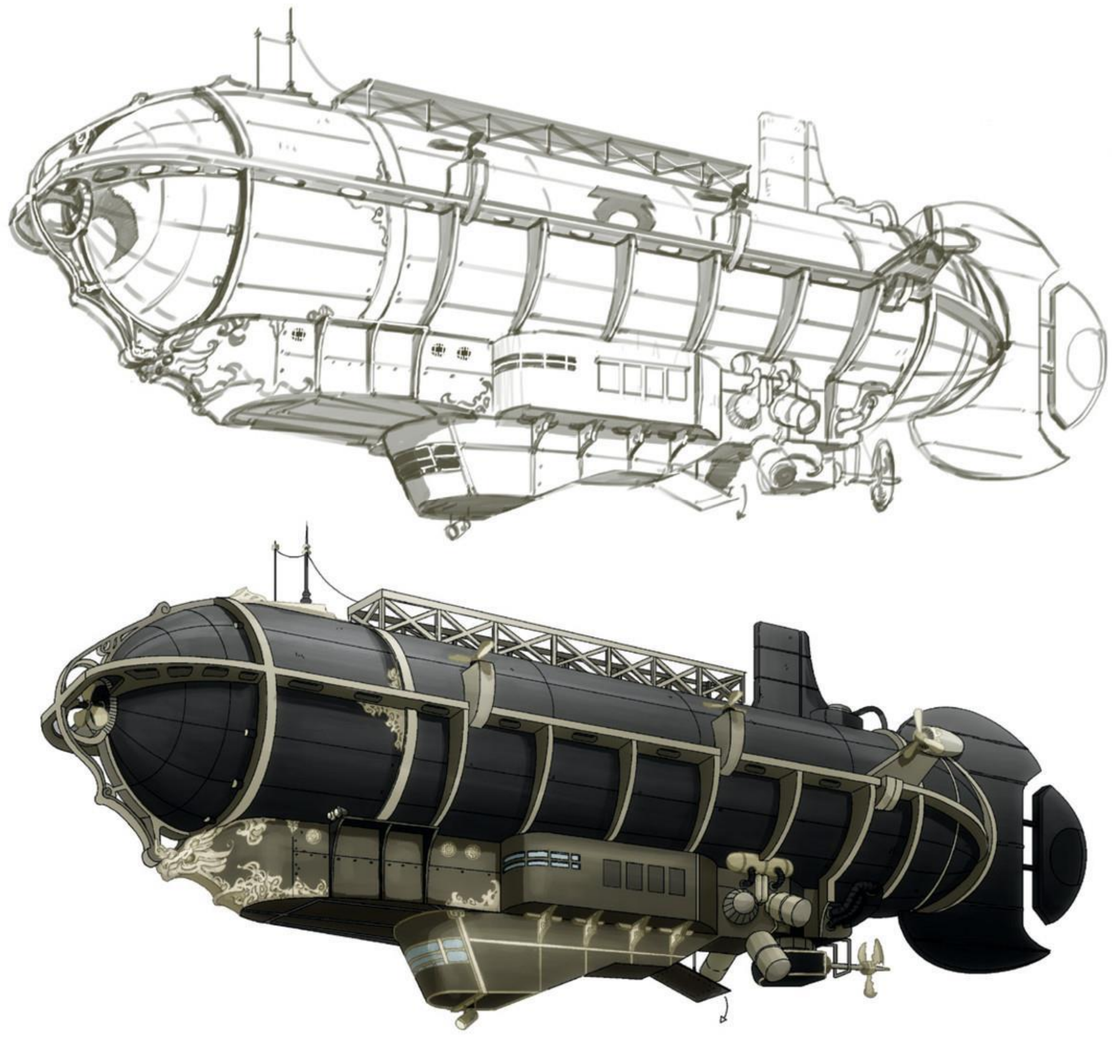
BK: A souped-up hot rod is the Triple Threat Triad's vehicle of choice. Concept and designs by Jung-Su Lee. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



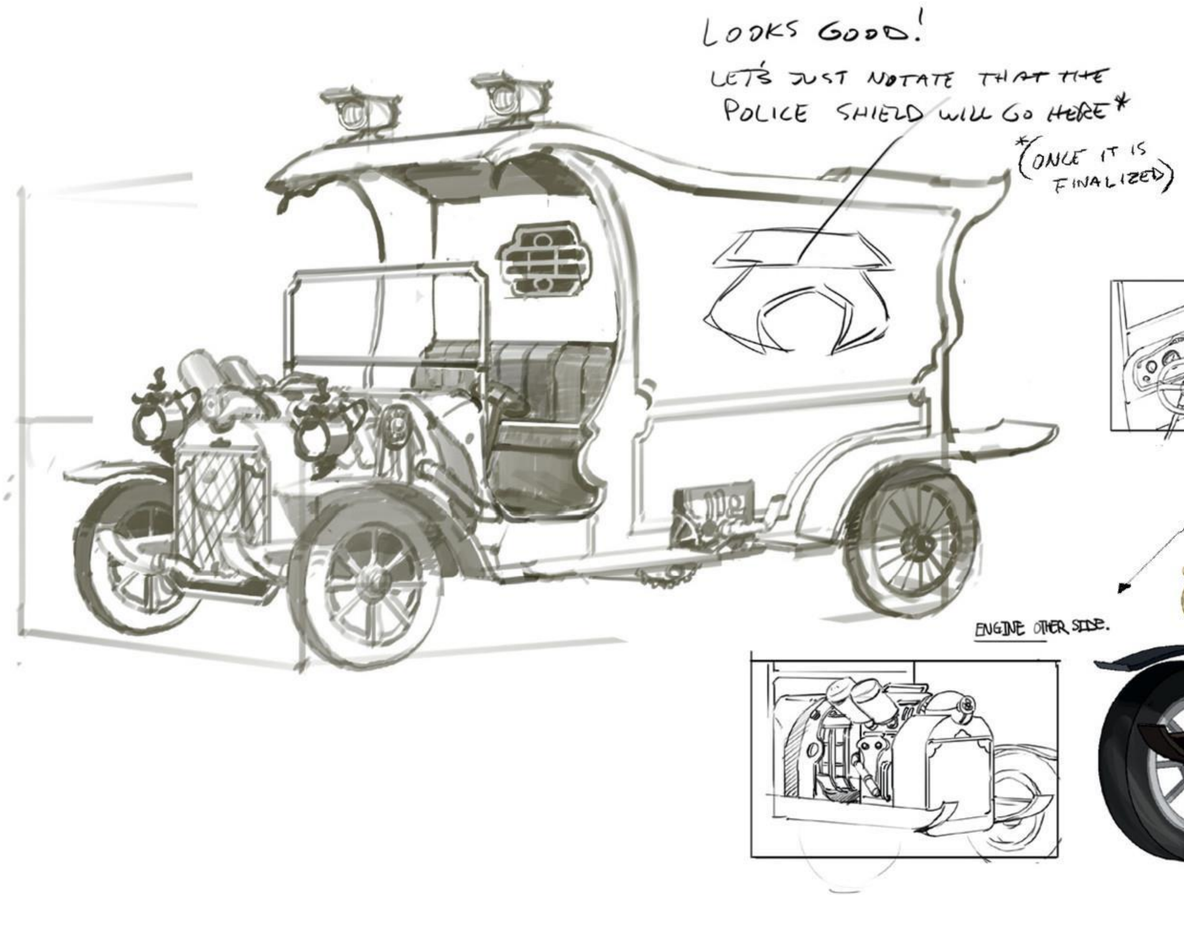


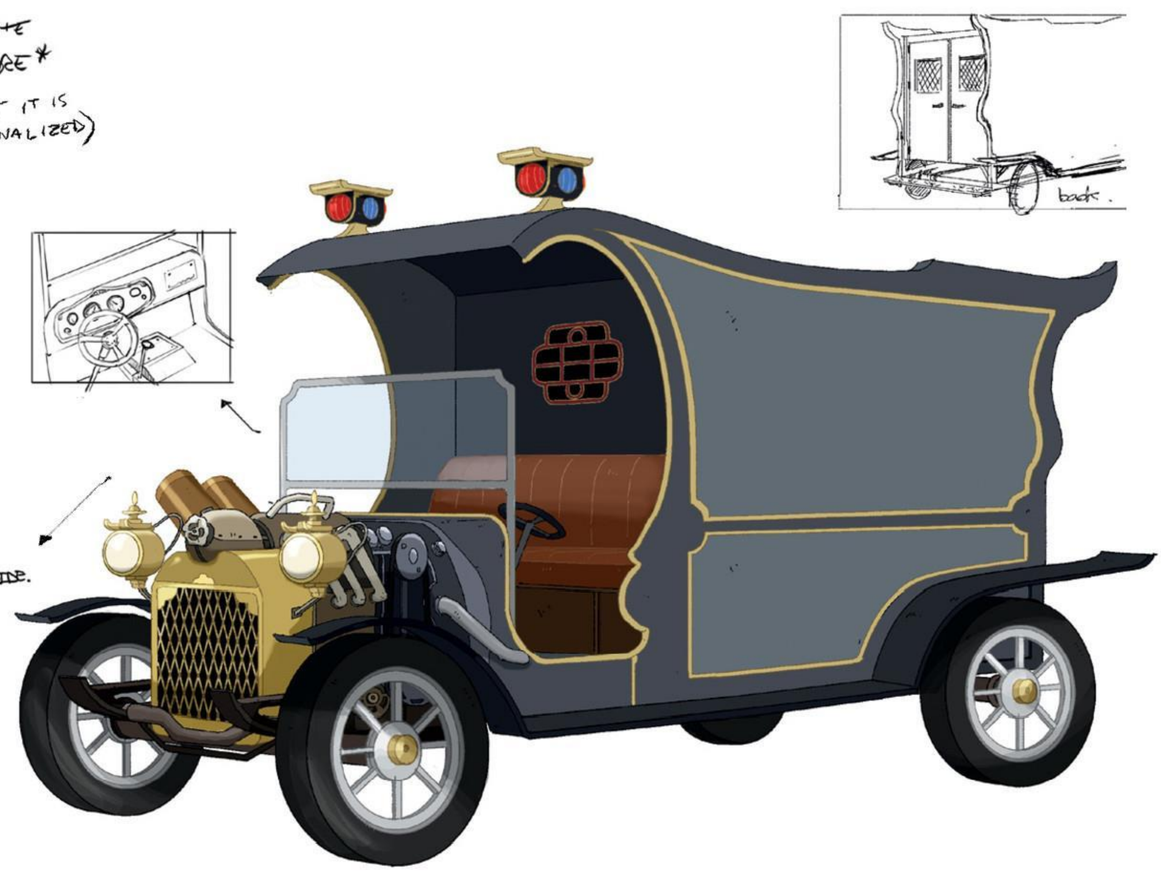
MD: In the masterful hands of painter Fred Stewart, this ordinary animal-control office was transformed into a beautiful space. In the show, this angle only appears in one shot! Design by Eun-Sang Yang. Painting by Frederic Stewart.



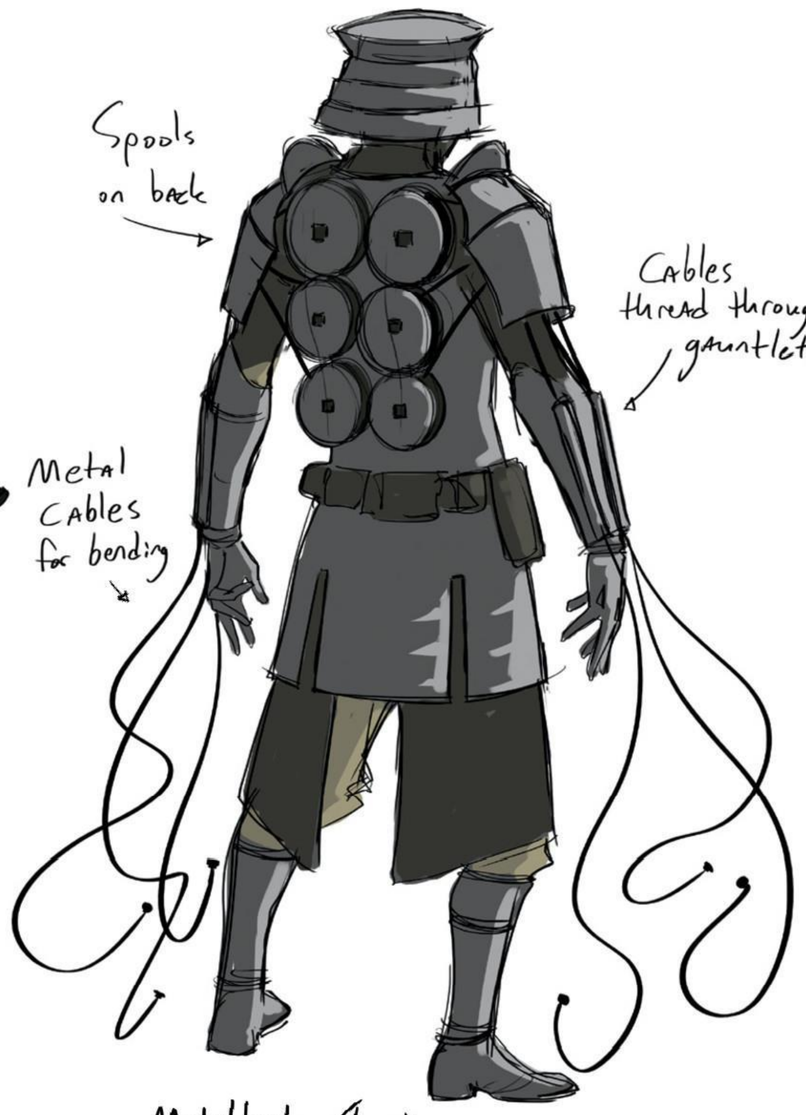


BK: Korra first met Chief Beifong in this moody metal interrogation room, which was painted in record time by Emily, easily one of the fastest artists we have ever worked with. Design by Ki-Hyun Ryu and Ki-Tak Moon. Painting by Emily Tetri. Right: Police airship and police car. Designs by Jung-Su Lee. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

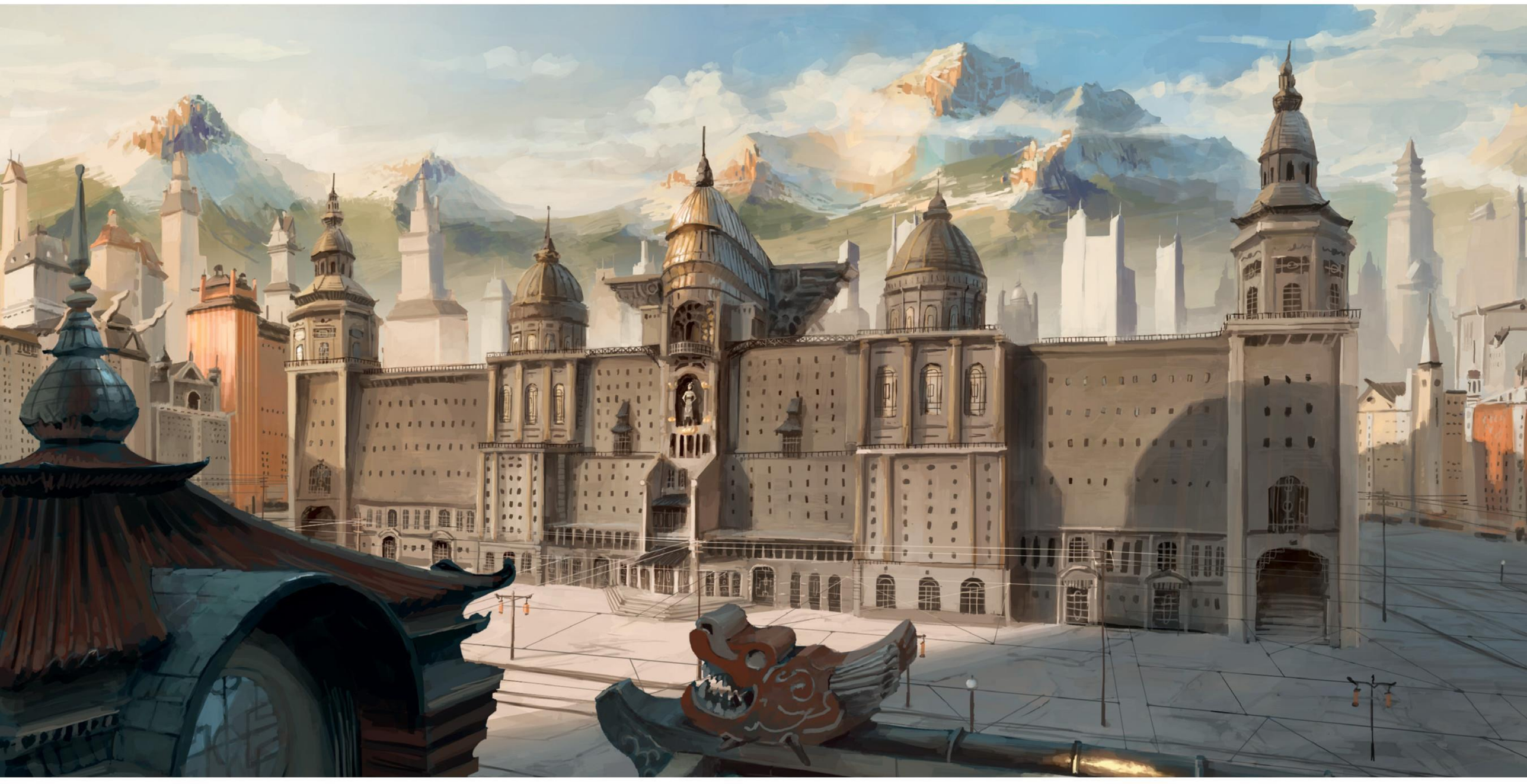




MD: City Hall is the center of politics in the city. Seventy years ago, in order to keep balance and ensure no single nation could take control of the Republic, Avatar Aang established the United Republic Council. There are five members total, representing the Fire Nation, Earth Kingdom, Northern Water Tribe, Southern Water Tribe, and Air Nation. Design by Eun-Sang Yang. Cleanup by Sang-Hyuck Bang. Painting by Frederic Stewart.



MD: The elite law enforcement in Republic City is made up of Metalbenders. Their primary weapons are spools of cables they carry on their backs. BK: I wanted the look of the Metalbender cops to hark back to traditional samurai armor, blended with the military-style uniforms of New York City cops in the 1920s. Above left: Metalbender concepts by Joaquin Dos Santos. Above: Metalbender concepts by Bryan Konietzko. Left: Chief Saikhan design by Joaquin Dos Santos. Metalbender designs by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



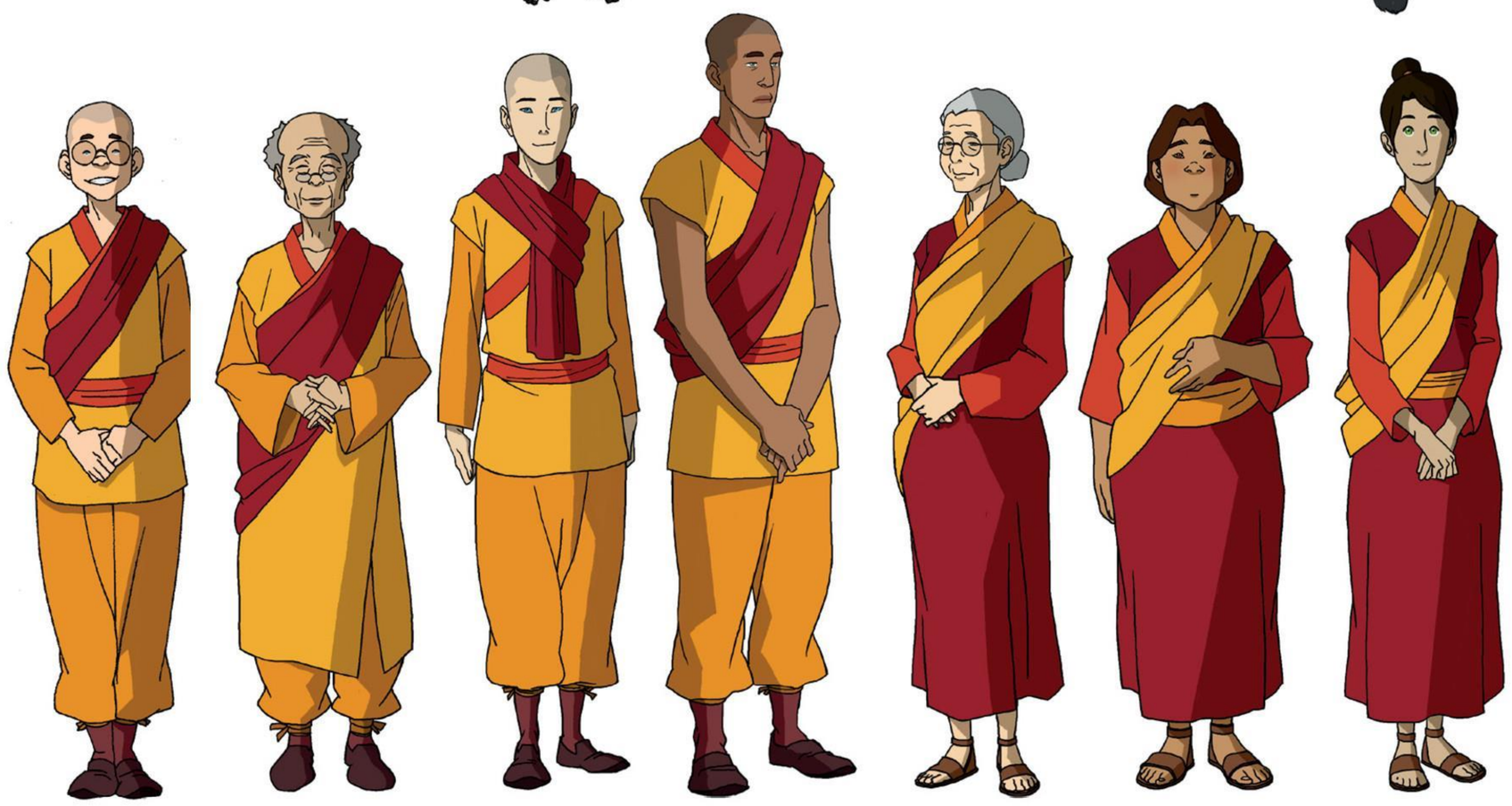
The Republic City Police Department is a huge metal structure and the base of operation for all law enforcement in the city. A statue of Toph, the first metalbender and the first chief of police, stands in the center of the structure. Design by Eun-Sang Yang. Painting by Emily Tetri.

CHAPTER THREE

A LEAF IN THE WIND

Preceding spread: Air Temple Island at dusk. Design by Jevon Bue. Painting by Frederic Stewart.

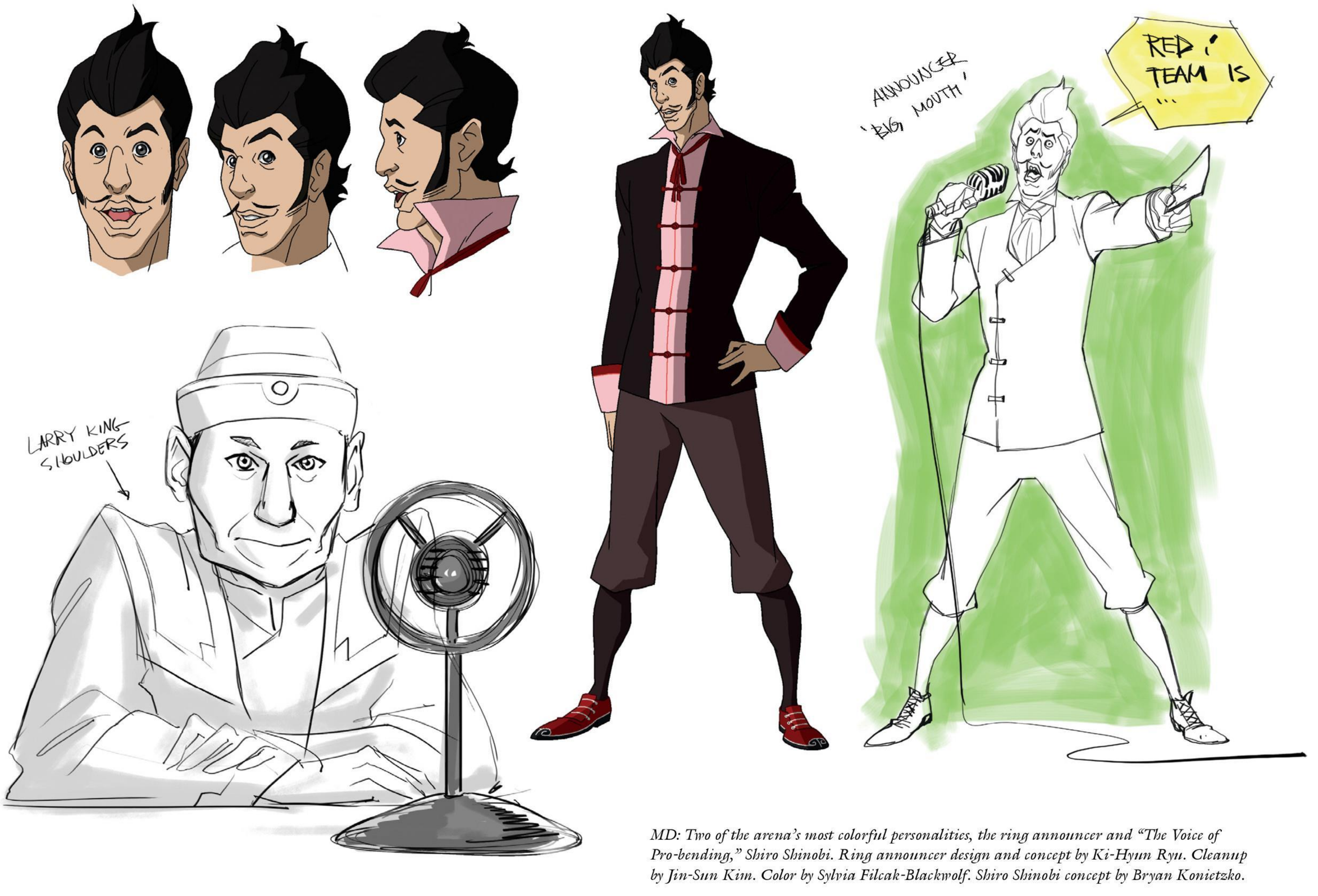
BK: As much as I love Momo, it was fun to design a different species of winged lemur to populate Air Temple Island, this time based on the ring-tailed lemur. We imagined that in the seventy years since the end of the war, more species were discovered. Ring-tailed winged lemur designs by Bryan Konietzko.



MD: Although the members of the Air Acolytes are not Airbenders, they are committed to keeping the traditions and culture of the Air Nation alive. They wear traditional dress, practice nonviolence, and promote peace and harmony throughout the world. Many of them live on Air Temple Island, where they study under Master Tenzin. Designs by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Cleanup by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

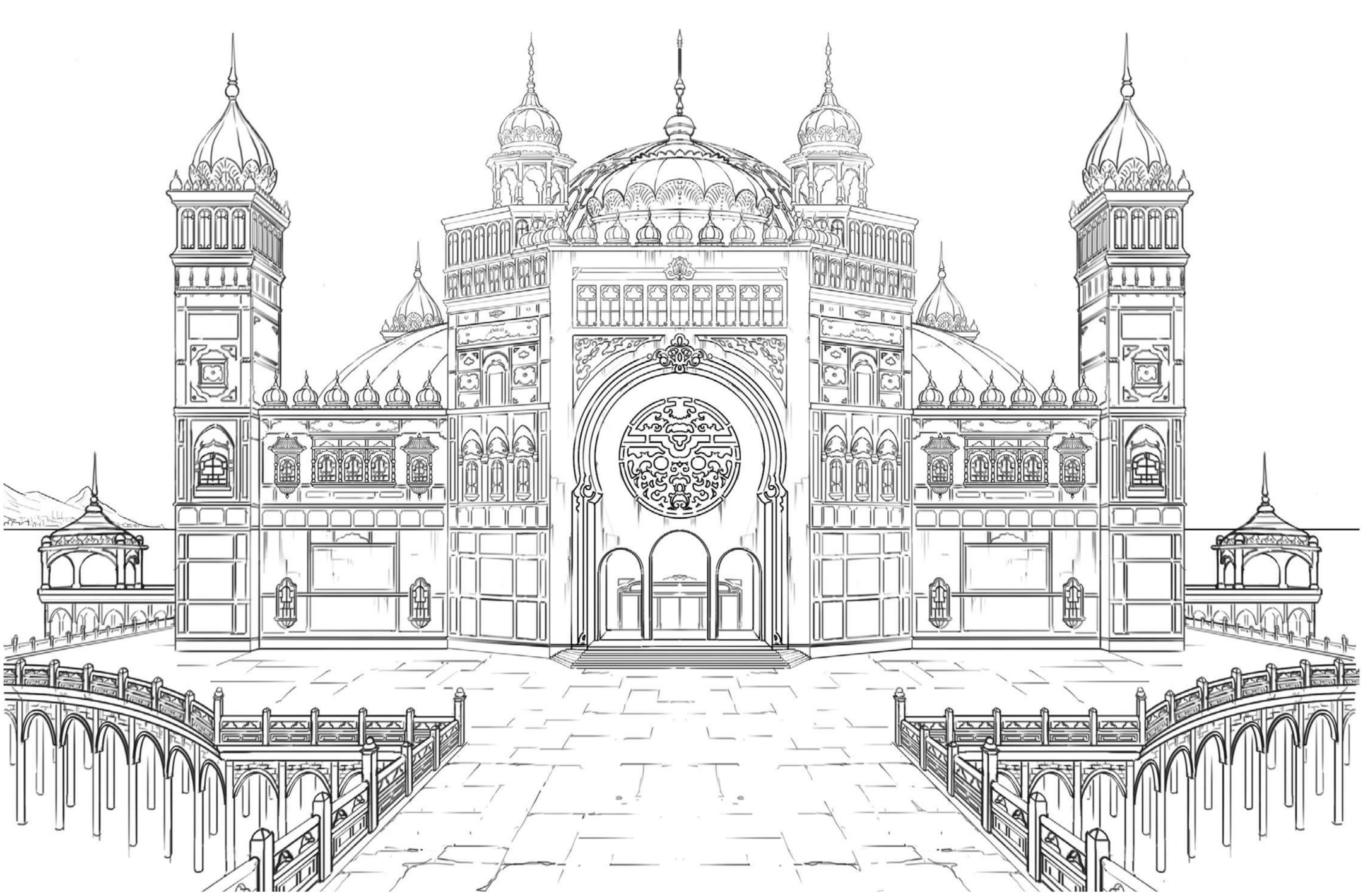
MD: Below is the bagua circle, where Korra practices her airbending forms. Design by Jevon Bue. Painting by Emily Tetri. Inset: Tenzin's family dining room. Design by Eun-Sang Yang. Painting by Emily Tetri.

MD: Although the Airbender kids didn't get a lot of screen time in book 1, their appearances were all really funny and memorable. Here, Ikki asks for lychee juice and Meelo falls asleep during a meditation session. Key animation by Ki-Hyun Ryu.

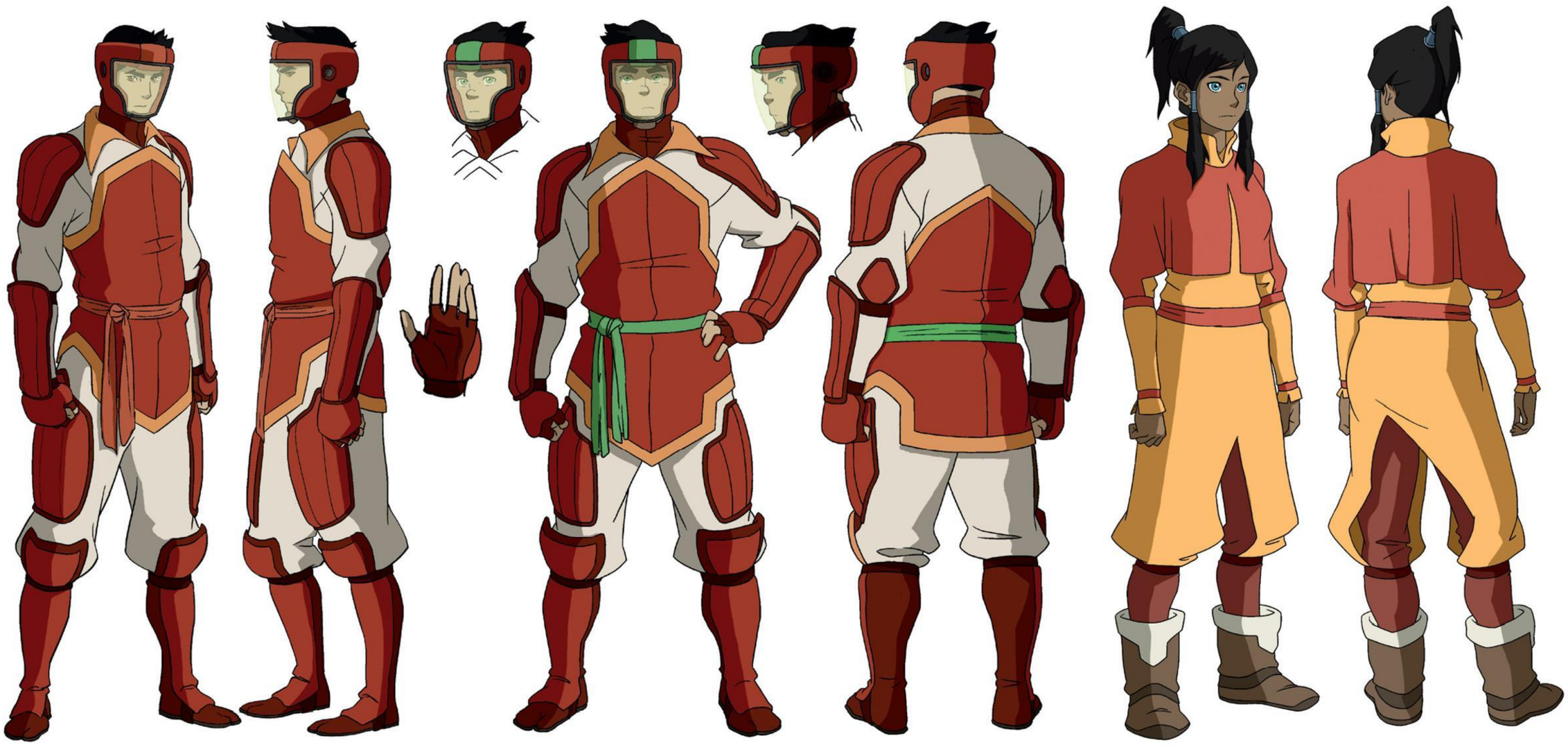


MD: Two of the arena's most colorful personalities, the ring announcer and "The Voice of Pro-bending," Shiro Shinobi. Ring announcer design and concept by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Cleanup by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. Shiro Shinobi concept by Bryan Konietzko.

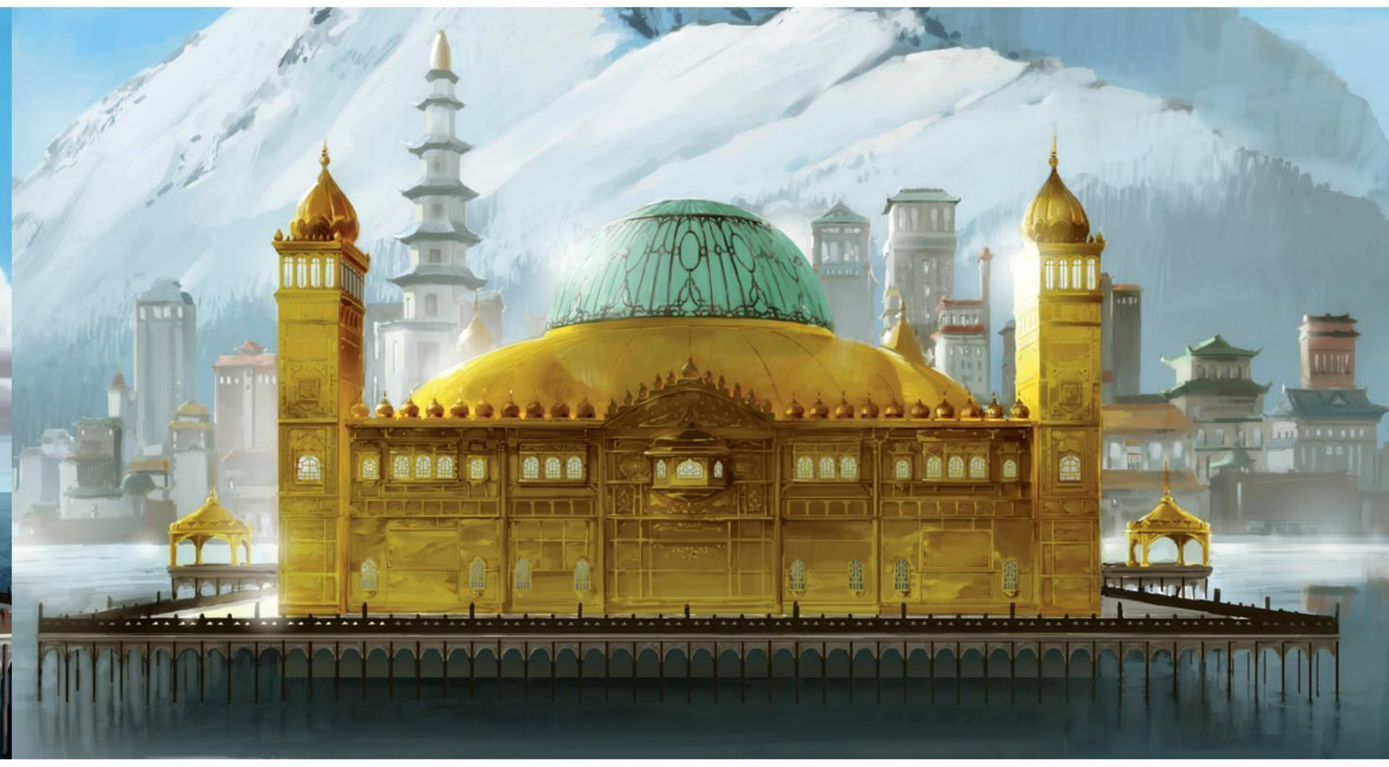
BK: Ryu's storyboard drawings often end up doubling as expression sheets for the model packs, providing invaluable examples of how good the characters could look if we could all draw like Ryu. Mako storyboard poses by Ki-Hyun Ryu.

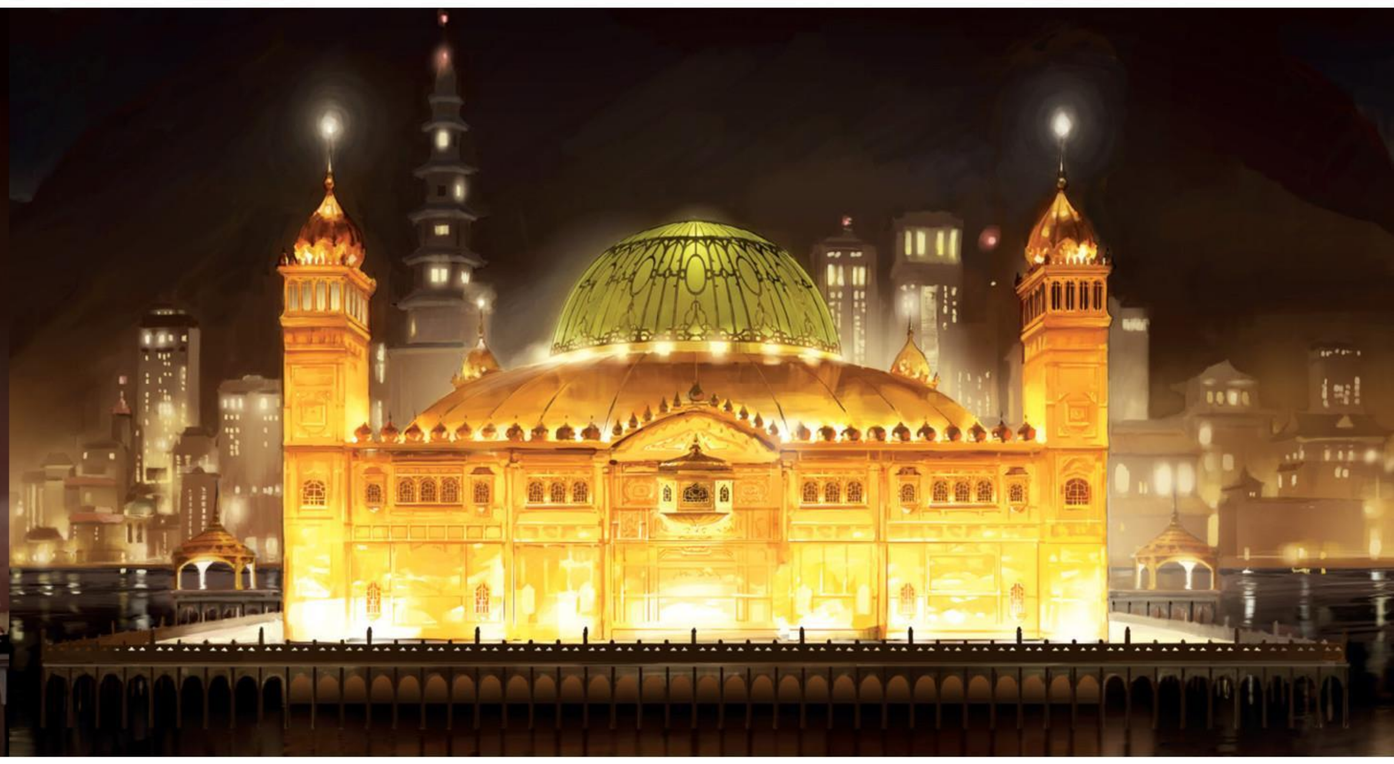


MD: Pro-bending matches take place in one of Republic City's architectural jewels—a gilded, glass-domed arena which sits at the end of a long pier in Yue Bay. Watching and listening to Pro-bending matches is a popular pastime for benders and nonbenders alike. Every year, the best sixteen teams in the league compete for the championship in the elimination-style Pro-bending Tournament. Design by Jung-Su Lee. Cleanup by Yong-Ik Noh



JDS: Part of the inspiration for Pro-bending was the "leatherhead" era of American football. We were going for something with the aesthetic of that time: Not too bulky but also not completely streamlined. This was another design that Ryu, Bryan, and I ping-ponged back and forth for a while. The different belt colors delineating which element each player controlled was something Bryan added. Can you imagine how hard it would have been to keep track of the players had he not made that decision? Designs by Jin-Sun Kim and Joaquin Dos Santos. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

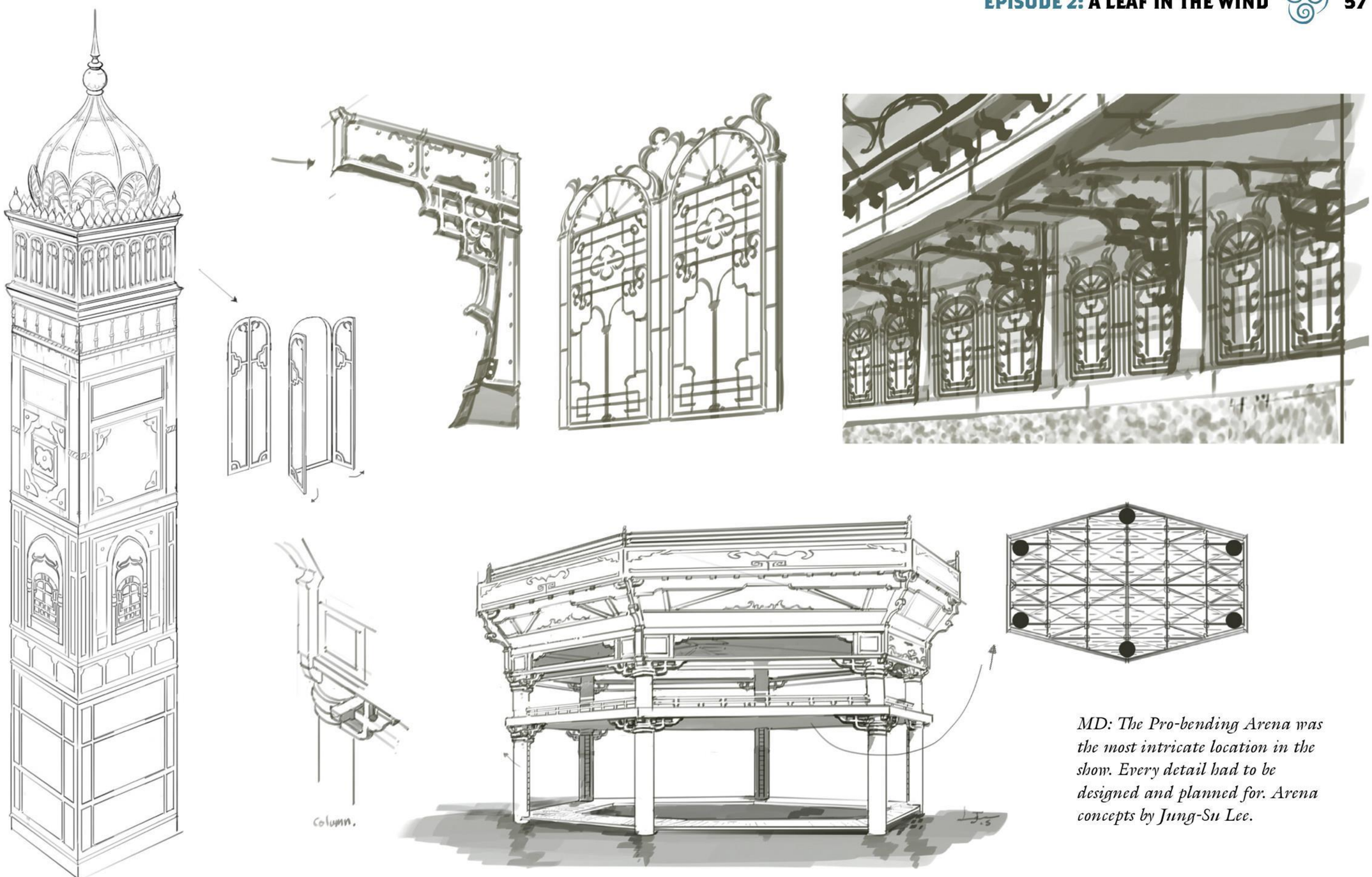




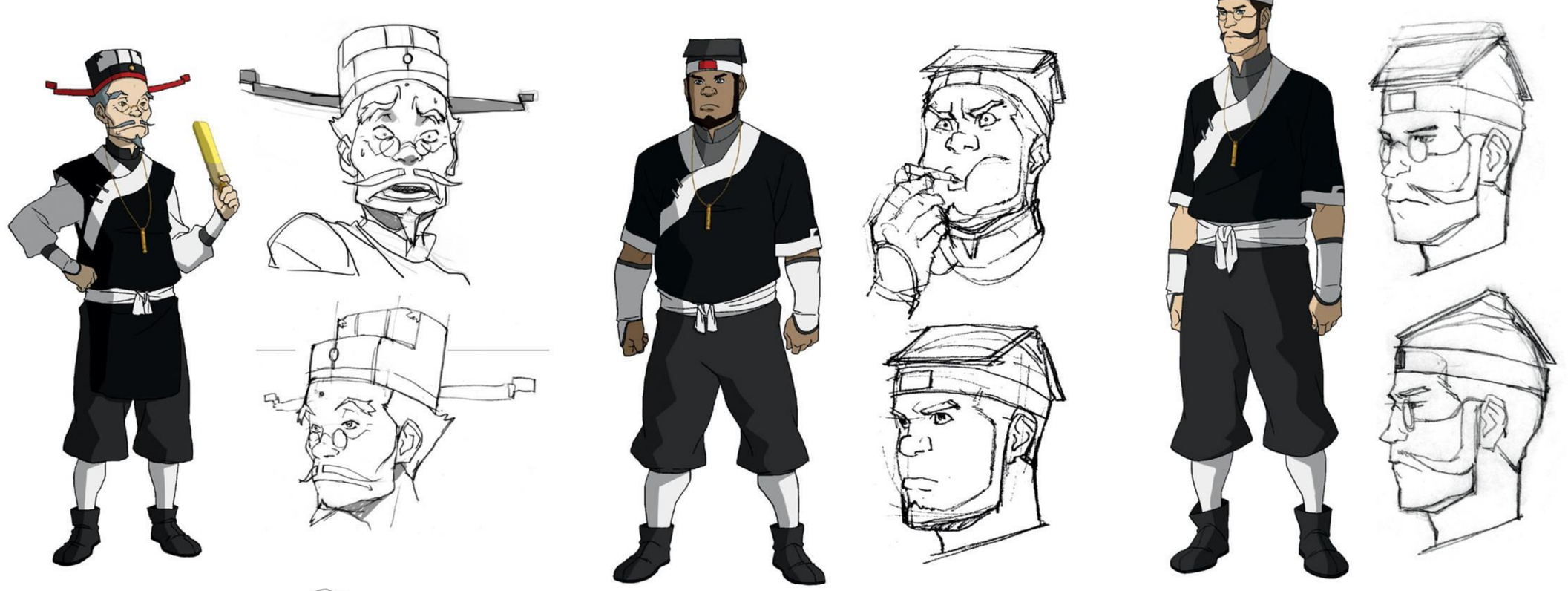
BK: The Pro-bending Arena was largely based on the Harmandir Sahib (the "Golden Palace") in Amritsar, India, and the Saltair Pavilion on the Great Salt Lake from the late 1800s. Fred went to town rendering the gilded surface in both day and night lighting. Designs by Jung-Su Lee. Paintings by Frederic Stewart.

MD: Mako and Bolin's modest apartment, which is in one of the spires of the Pro-bending Arena. Designs by Jung-Su Lee. Paintings by Emily Tetri.

BK: The look of the Pro-bending Arena interior was inspired by cast-iron architecture of the early twentieth century, particularly that of France. This was the first location we built entirely as a computer-generated model, and frankly it was a nightmare. But I'm happy that at least in some shots, it looks pretty cool. Design by Jung-Su Lee. CG model by Technicolor India and Joe Alessandra. Painting by Frederic Stewart.



MD: The Pro-bending Arena was the most intricate location in the show. Every detail had to be designed and planned for. Arena concepts by Jung-Su Lee.



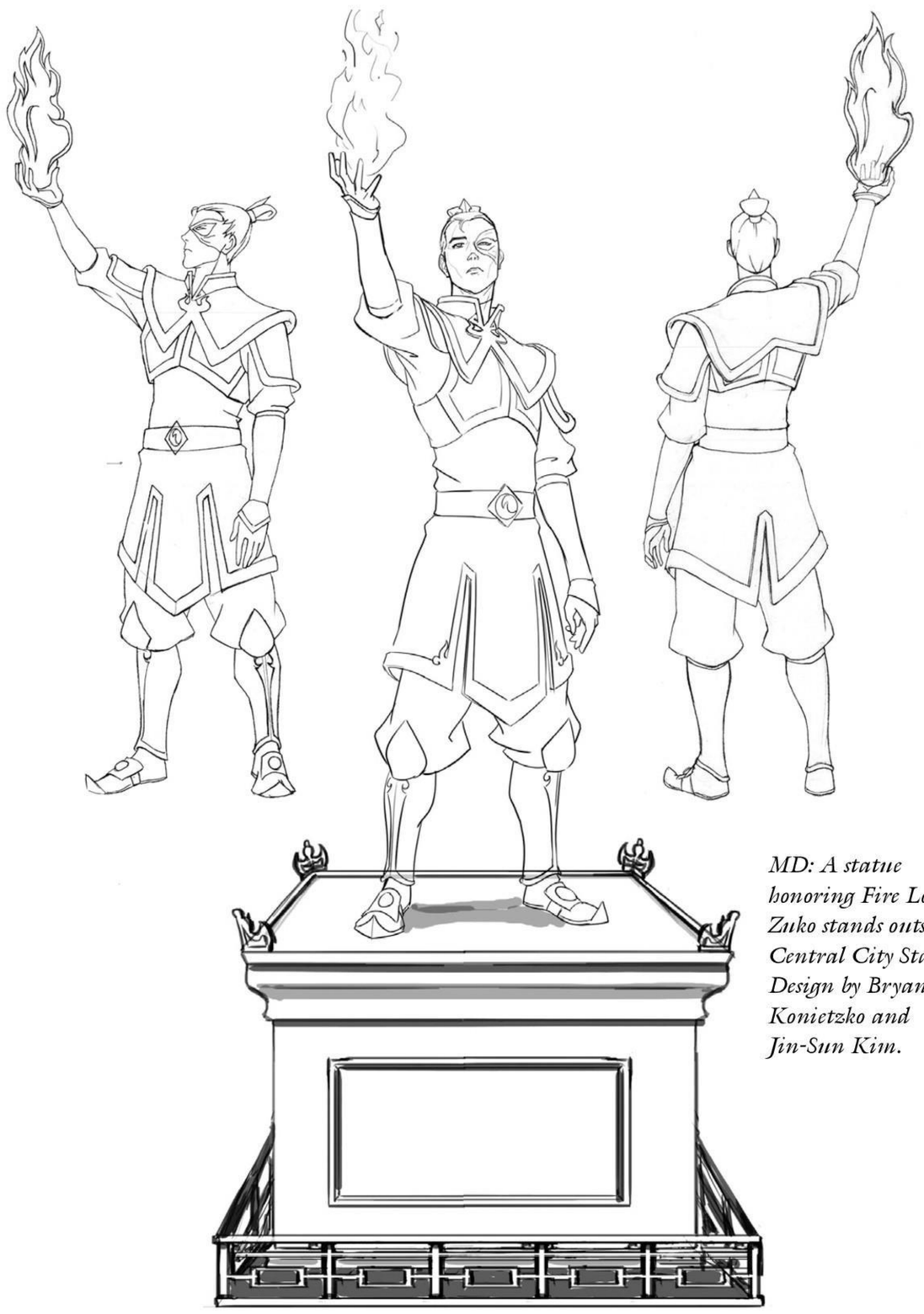
BK: While vacationing in Japan I watched a number of sumo wrestling matches on TV, and I became fascinated by the referees, which directly influenced our Pro-bending referees. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. MD: The Golden Temple Tigerdillos and some rowdy fans (bottom). Designs by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE REVELATION

(Preceding spread) MD: "The Revelation" was one of my favorite episodes because of its moody atmosphere. The streets and alleys of Republic City really came alive in the art direction and background paintings, which mirrored the psychology of the characters. Mako revealed his dark past and Korra delved deeper into the city's seedy underbelly. Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Cleanup by Sang-Wan Park. Painting by Frederic Stewart.

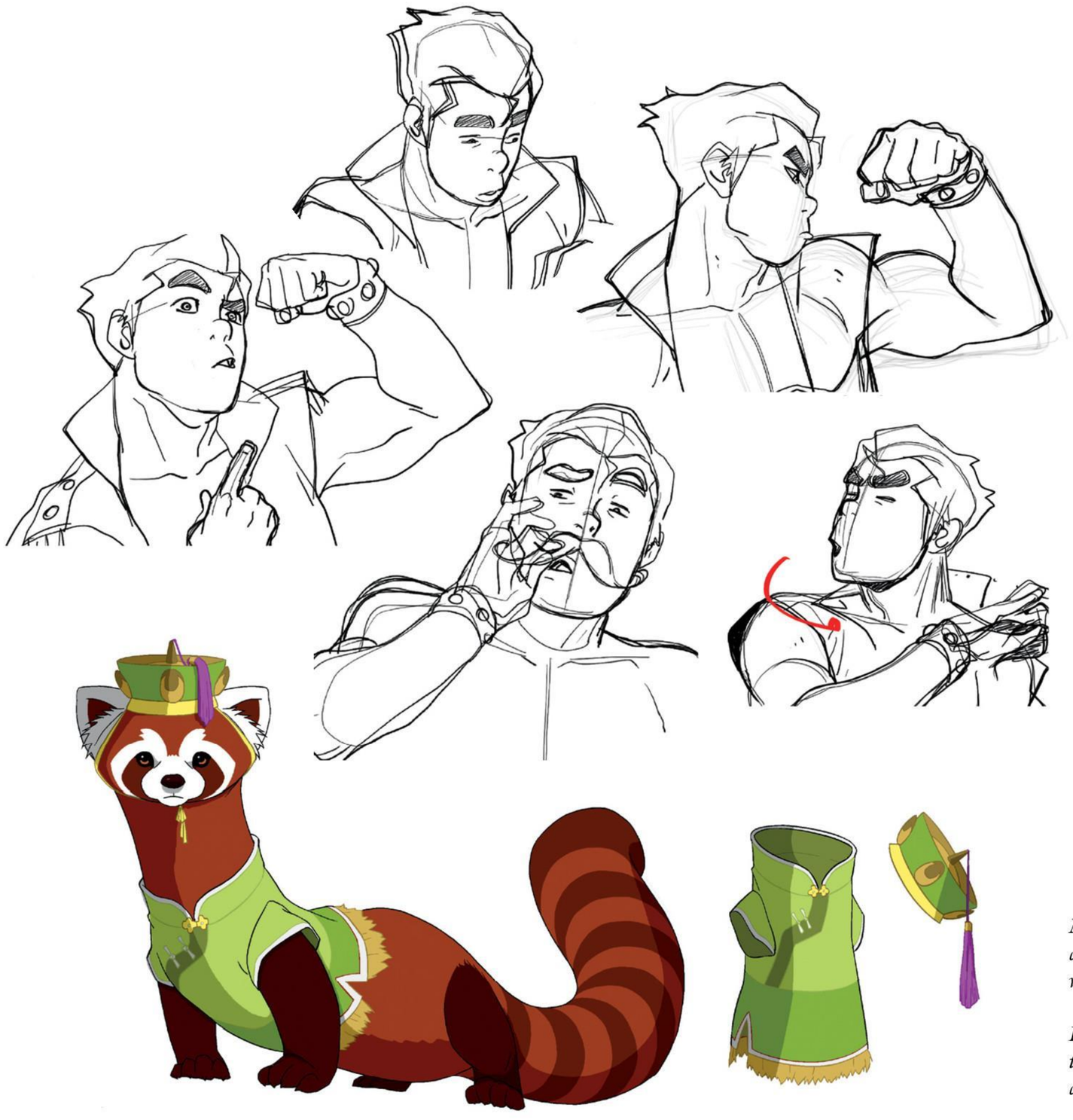
MD: We needed a new kind of currency for Republic City, and thus our version of the Chinese yuan was born. And who better to put on the yuan than Aang? Yuan prop design by Bryan Konietzko. Calligraphy by S. L. Lee, PhD.



MD: A statue honoring Fire Lord Zuko stands outside Central City Station. Design by Bryan Konietzko and Jin-Sun Kim.

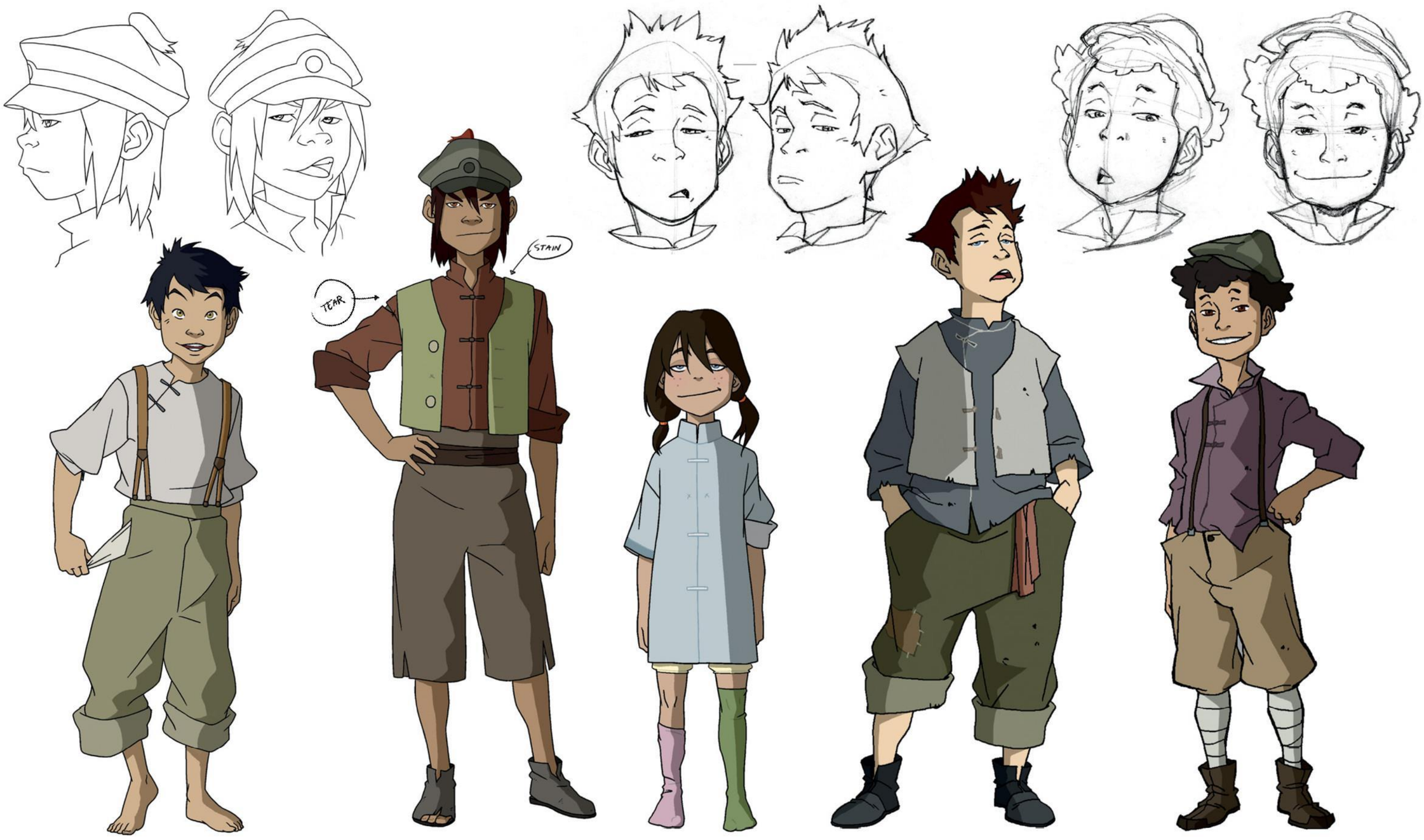
BK: The wide boulevard and elevated train tracks in this view always reminded me of Chicago, another city whose architectural history influenced the look of Republic City. Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Cleanup by Sang-Hyuck Bang. Painting by Frederic Stewart.

MD: Coming up with ideas for Republic City's gangsters was really fun, as they can inspire all kinds of colorful characters and names. But Shady Shin didn't become fully alive until Ryu designed him. I love how much personality and "shadiness" Ryu worked into Shin's model. Cleanup by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



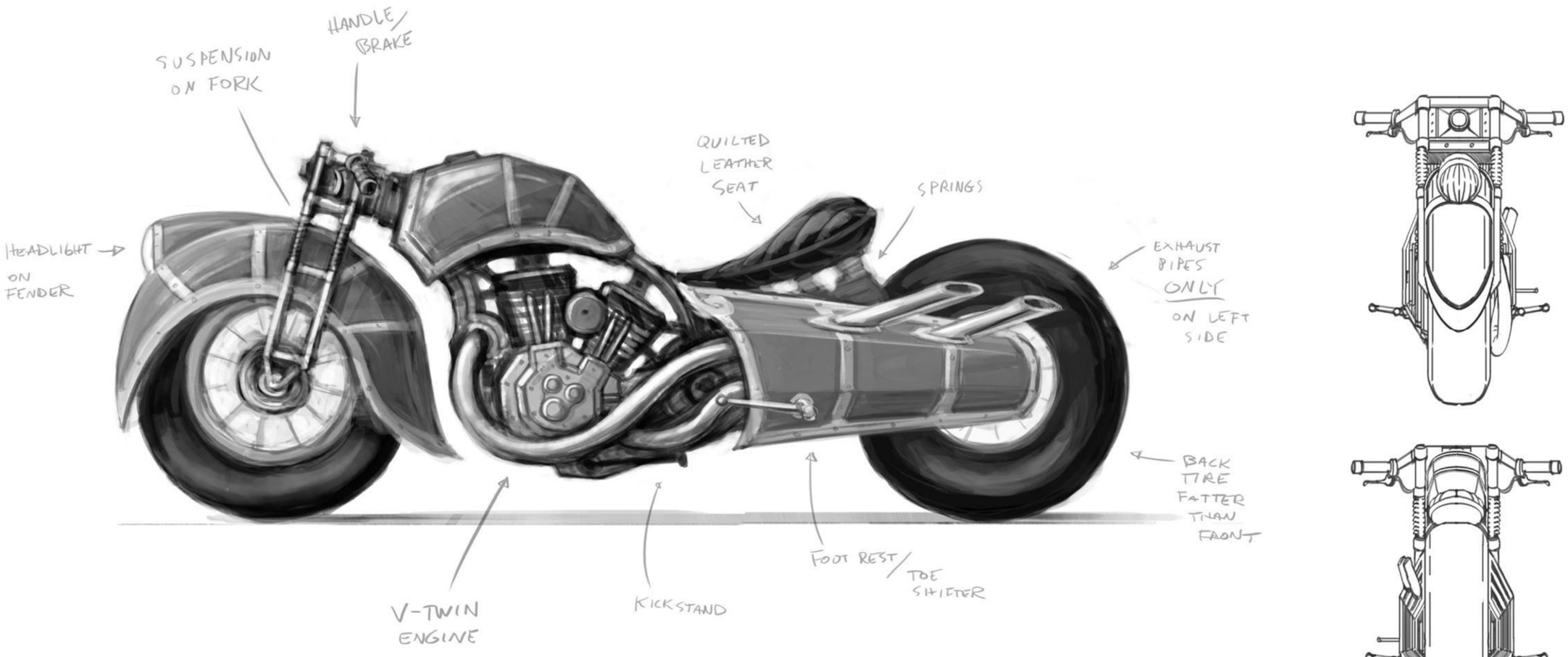
MD: Bryan and I seem to have an Avatar *tradition of dressing our characters in ridiculous costumes and giving them fake facial hair, like we did for Bolin in his street performer costume.*

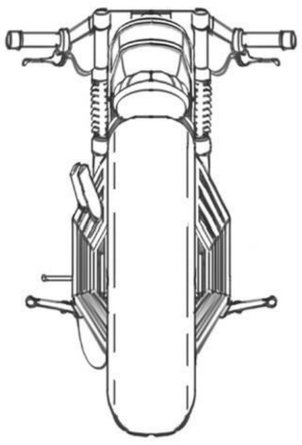
BK: I think this is my favorite of Pabu's many costumes. Something about the lime green next to his red fur is really appealing. Bolin and Pabu costume designs by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



BK: One of the biggest sources of reference and inspiration for book 1 of Korra *was a historical photo blog called Shorpy.com, a personal favorite of mine. Some of the most striking images to me are those of the children who lived in the cities and worked in factories in the latter half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. They inspired our "street urchins," like Skoochy and his friends, who in turn gave us a glimpse into Mako and Bolin's life on the streets as young boys. Designs by Jin-Sun Kim and Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.*

BK: I'm a sucker for misty photographs and paintings, and this rendition of Republic City Park during a foggy dawn is one of my favorites. After Korra and Mako spent the night wandering through creepy, seedy streets, the mood in this painting provided a great backdrop for them to let their guards down a bit and start to form a personal connection. Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Painting by Frederic Stewart.

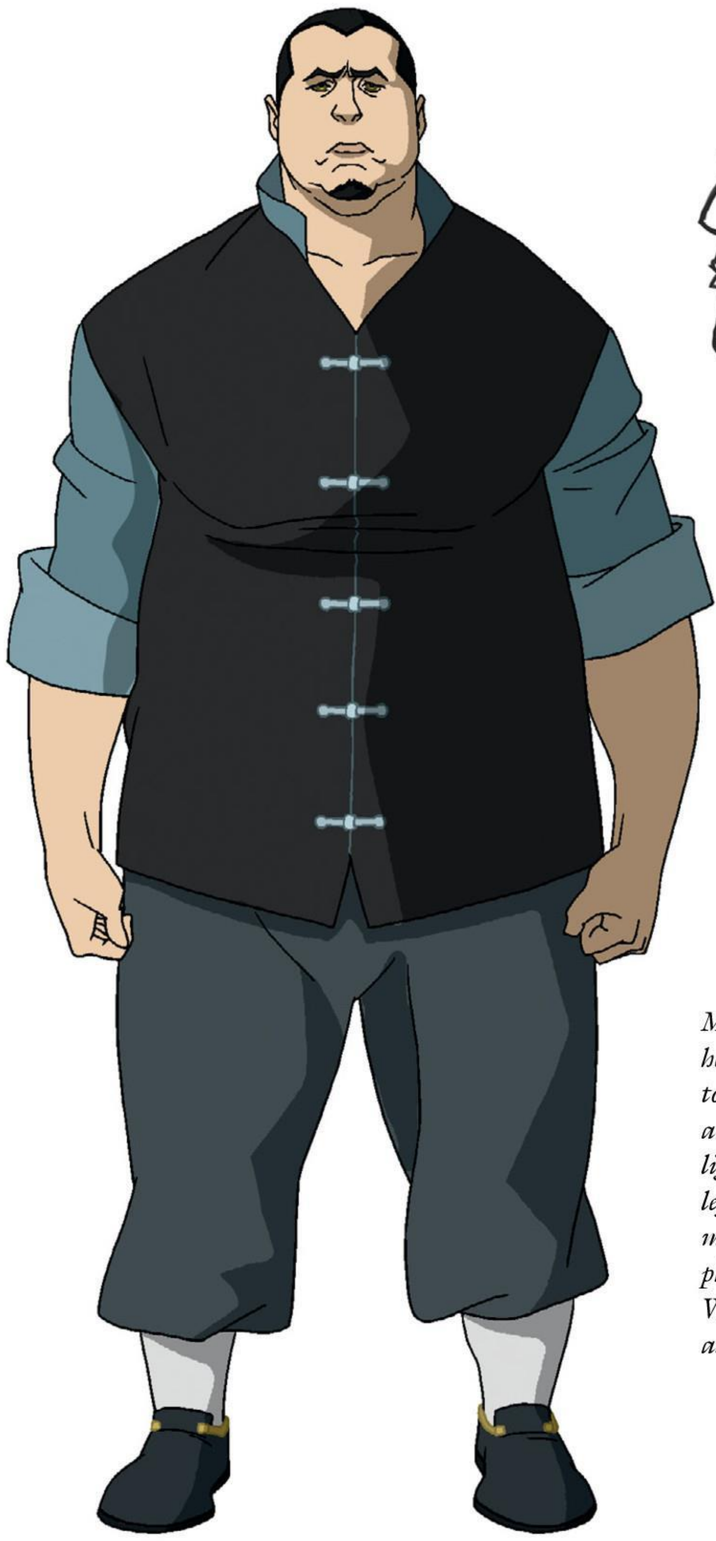




BK: The chi-blocker motorcycle was a difficult design to finalize. We wanted something that looked slightly steampunk yet plausible, vintage yet somewhat sleek and aggressive. My best friend, Jeff Berry, is a motorcycle aficionado, so I picked his brain and bounced sketches off of him, revising the design multiple times, even through the CG-modeling stage. Thanks to him the finished bike has its most stylish feature, an asymmetrical swing arm. Motorcycle concept by Bryan Konietzko. Cleanup by Yong-Ik Noh.

BK: These four beautiful paintings by Emily and Fred are some highlights from an impressive collection of moody, urban nocturnes produced for this episode. This was the style and subject matter I preferred to paint while I was a student at the Rhode Island School of Design, although I was nowhere near as good as these guys are. Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Cleanup by Ki-Tak Moon, Sang-Wan Park, and Yong-Ik Noh. Top paintings by Frederic Stewart. Bottom painting by Emily Tetri.

BK: I had a lot of fun creating all of the Equalists' propaganda imagery. Now that the four main cultures in the Avatar *world have blended, some color combinations opened up to us that we previously avoided in the original series. Red hues were usually reserved for the Fire Nation, and greens represented the Earth Kingdom. Mike and I didn't want the nonbending revolution to be associated with any one culture, since the benders defined those. So I used a green-red combo to identify them as a new movement in the world. Posters by Bryan Konietzko. Calligraphy by S. L. Lee, PhD.*



MD: Lightning Bolt Zolt (far left) is the head of the Triple Threat Triad and the first to have his bending taken by Amon. Bryan and I think that Mako probably learned his lightning skills from his former boss. Near left: The doorman at the Equalist rally was modeled after our martial arts videographer, William Rinaldi. Ryu would draw William in the production meetings and he asked if we could make him a character.

MD: These designs are from a gag idea that never made it. This rabid fan girl at Amon's rally paid homage to the foaming-mouth guy from the original series. But when we saw her in the animatic, we realized the comedy undermined the creepiness of the rally, so we cut it. BK: Maybe we can find a place to include her in the series, even though it will be long after Amon's demise. She's the real deal, not a fair-weather fan. All designs on this page by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Cleanup by Il-Kwang Kim and Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE VOICE IN THE NIGHT

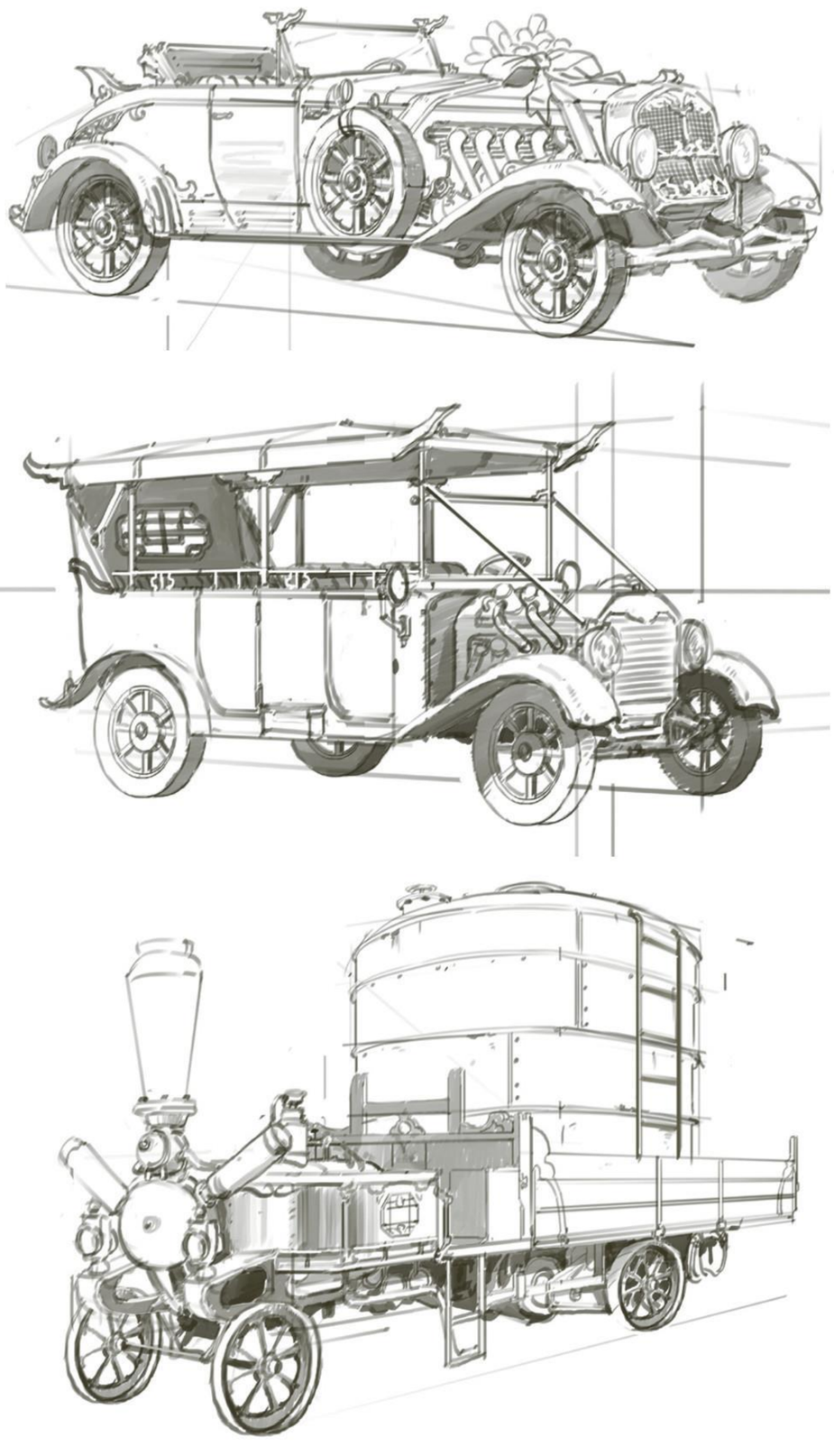
(Preceding spread) MD: Often, when we come up with ideas for action set pieces, we try to set them in interesting or symbolic locations. We wanted Korra's encounter with Amon to take place somewhere significant. We hadn't done much with the Aang statue as a location yet, so we decided it would be a great place for a showdown. Being isolated also made it more dangerous for Korra. Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Cleanup by Yong-Ik Noh. Painting by Frederic Stewart.

Top: The United Council meets and debates in City Hall. Bottom: City Hall's grand entrance, where Tarrlok threw a gala in Korra's honor. Bottom inset: City Hall's press room. Background design by Jun-Su Lee. Painting by Emily Tetri.

JDS: Shown here is some early concept work for Tarrlok, as well as his final model. Tarrlok was an incredibly complex character who could be both charismatic and conniving. One of the early mandates from Mike and Bryan was that he should not come off as overtly evil . . . Well, at least initially. Bryan's early concept (far left) really captured Tarrlok as an aspirational politician. My design (top center, right) was a bit too rugged, but his basic facial structure became the template for Yakone and Amon/Noatak. The expression sheet below beautifully illustrates Tarrlok's arrogance. Designs by Bryan Konietzko, Joaquim Dos Santos, and Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

BK: During Aang and Zuko's heyday, the ability to bend lightning was an incredibly rare skill usually reserved for the inner circles of Fire Nation royalty and high-ranking military officers. Now, in the thick of the Avatar *world's own Industrial Age, we see that this skill is, while not widespread, common enough that it is practiced by blue-collar workers charging up massive batteries in the city's power plants. This kind of work is incredibly taxing on a person's chi reserves; that's why the plant bosses tend to get desperate, strapping young men like Mako to sign up for the grueling task. Mako designs by Jin-Sun Kim and Ki-Hyun Ryu. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.*

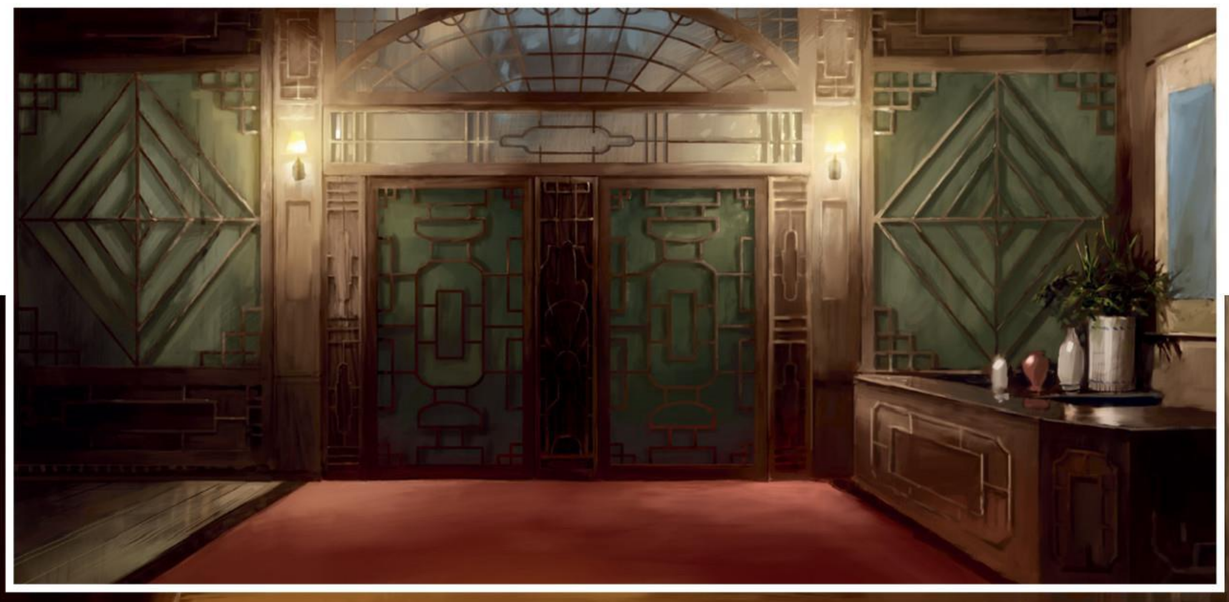
MD: It's a shame we didn't show Emily's fantastic painting of the power plant in the final show. It really gives a great sense of scale and lighting. Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Cleanup by Sang-Wan Park. Painting by Emily Tetri.



MD: Some of Hiroshi's vehicles include a luxury version of the Satomobile, a car for the common man, and a water tanker, used by fire departments and Tarrlok's task force. Designs by Jung-Su Lee.

BK: Many fans correctly noted that Theodore Roosevelt inspired Hiroshi's design, but a lesser-known fact is that he was also modeled after Keita Gotō, a Japanese industrialist.

MD: Industrialist Hiroshi Sato was the creator of the mass-produced Satomobile, popularizing the car for everyone. He was voiced by Daniel Dae Kim, whom we loved on Lost, *and who also voiced General Fong in* Avatar: The Last Airbender. *Designs by Bryan Konietzko and Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwoof.*



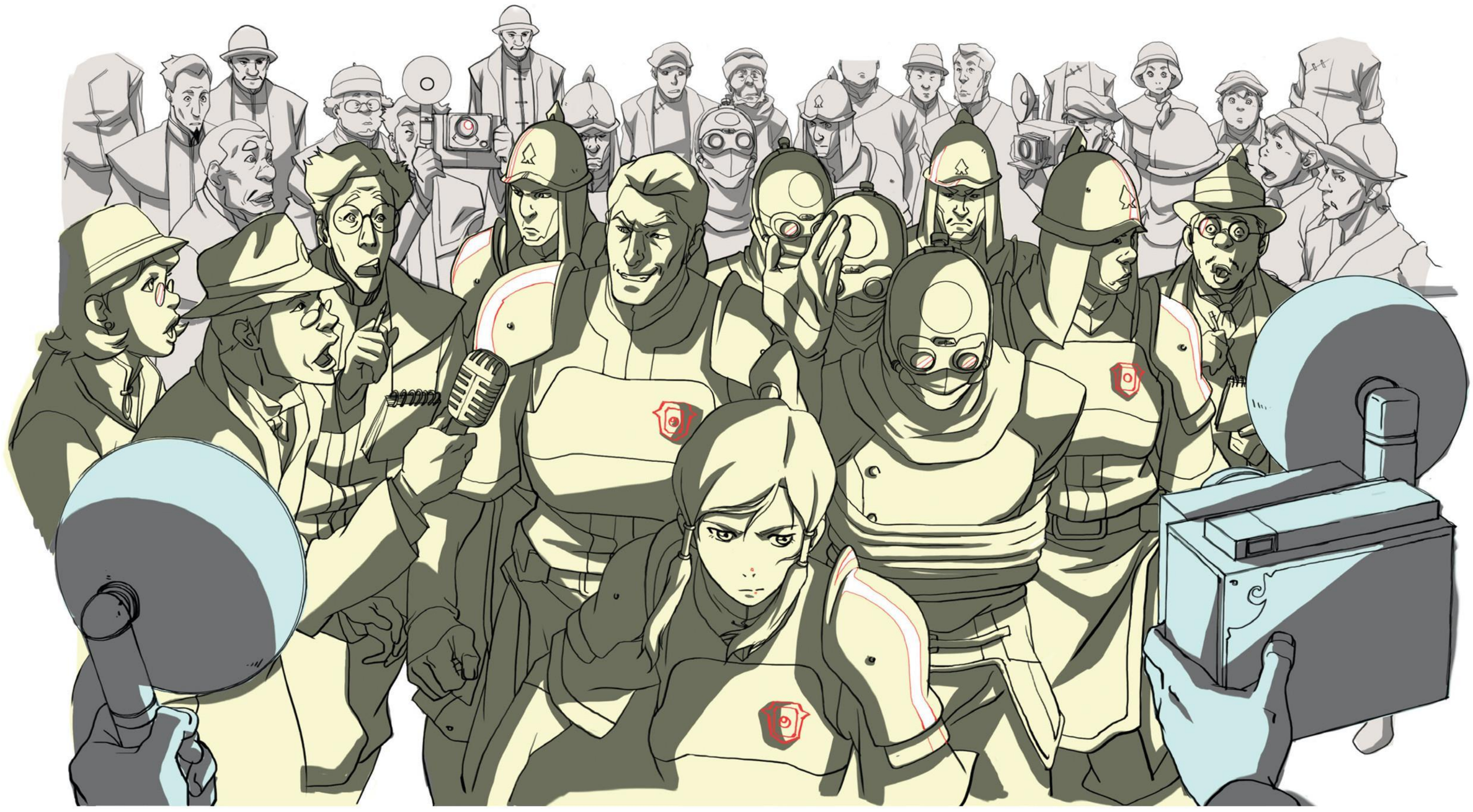
BK: Based on the interior design and lighting, I would love to get a reservation at Kwong's Cuisine . . . although I doubt they would have any vegan dishes for me. I think I'll go eat at the cafeteria on Air Temple Island instead. Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Painting by Frederic Stewart.

MD: When Bryan and I were pitching out the story for this episode, I remember we knew the beginning and the end, but we weren't sure how Korra would transition from her reluctance to join Tarrlok to challenging Amon to a showdown. Then we came up with the idea of Tarrlok throwing a party in Korra's honor as his way to put her on the spot and force her onto his task force. We even wrote that Tarrlok gave her a fancy dress as a way to make her feel self-conscious and uncomfortable, but in the end, we dropped the dress idea and put Korra in some fancy Water Tribe clothes. She still looks pretty uncomfortable. Fancy Bolin design by Il-Kwang Kim. Fancy Mako, Hiroshi, and Korra designs by Jin-Sun Kim. Asami dresses designed by Bryan Konietzko. Cleanup by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf and Bryan Konietzko.

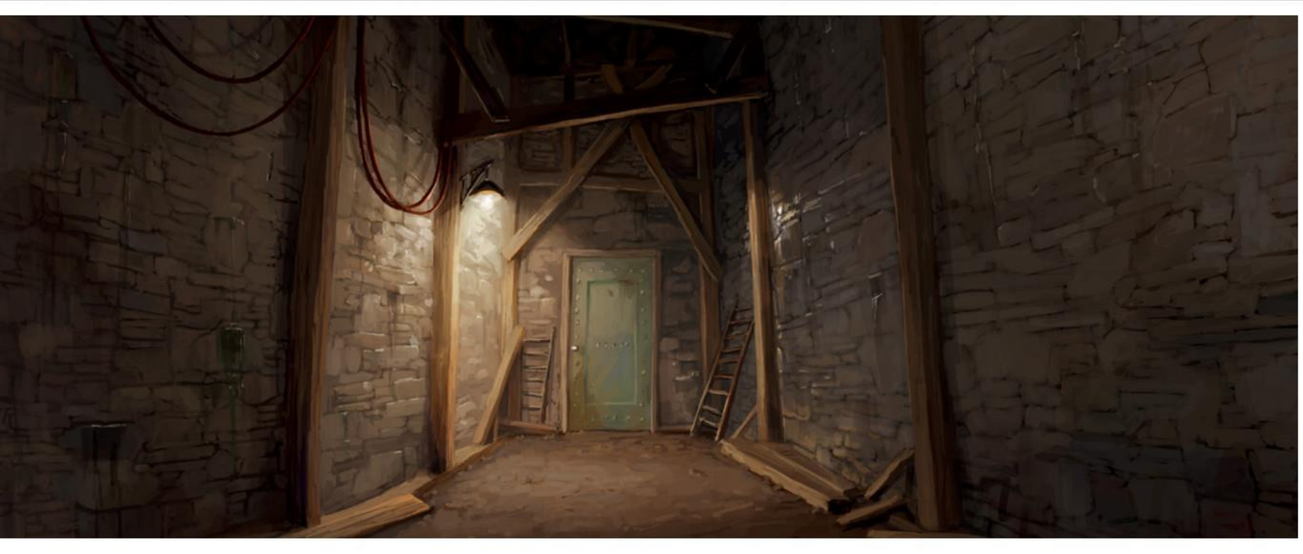
BK: Amon's visage haunts Korra, exposing her insecurities. The Chinese text reads, "Amon is the Answer." For the gala banner, I figured Tarrlok hired an artist to make an image that portrayed Korra as a tough, no-nonsense fighter, just as she sees herself. Luckily, I found a piece of early concept art on the server late one night that Ryu had drawn months earlier that did the trick, and combined it with the original calligraphy from the Avatar *logo. Poster designs by Bryan Konietzko and Ki-Hyun Ryu. Calligraphy by S. L. Lee, PhD.*

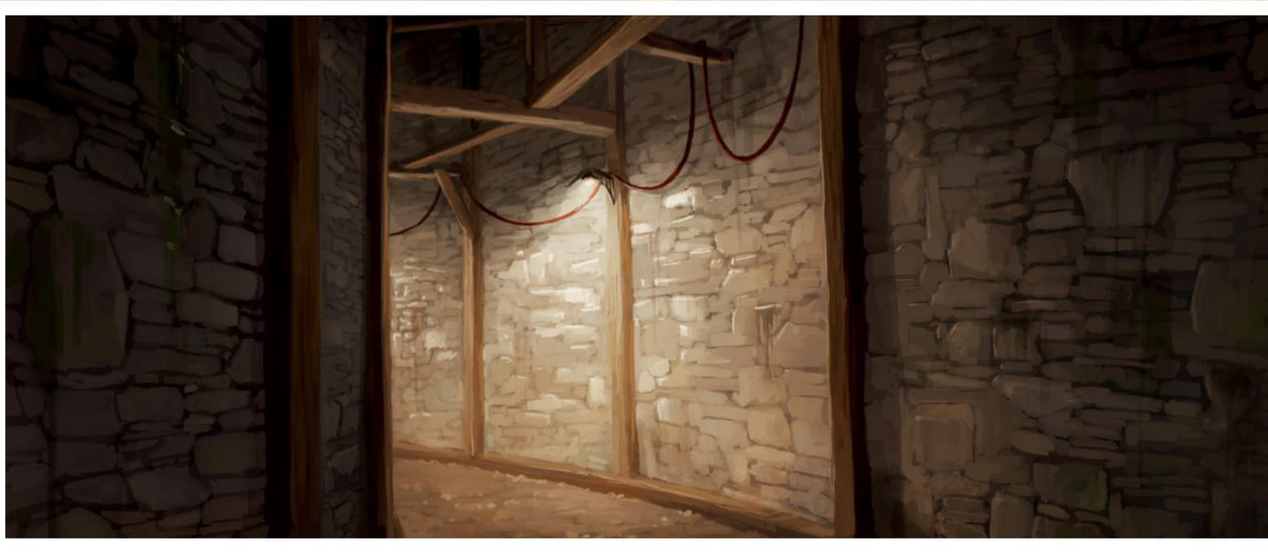
Task force deputy designs by Il-Kwang Kim. Cleanup by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

BK: I really enjoyed Korra and Tarrlok in their task force uniforms and wished we could have seen them dressed like this more in the show, but we had a lot of story to tell in just twelve episodes. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim and Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



MD: Korra and Tarrlok's successful team-up is captured in this illustration by Ryu, which was used as a newspaper photo in the final show.





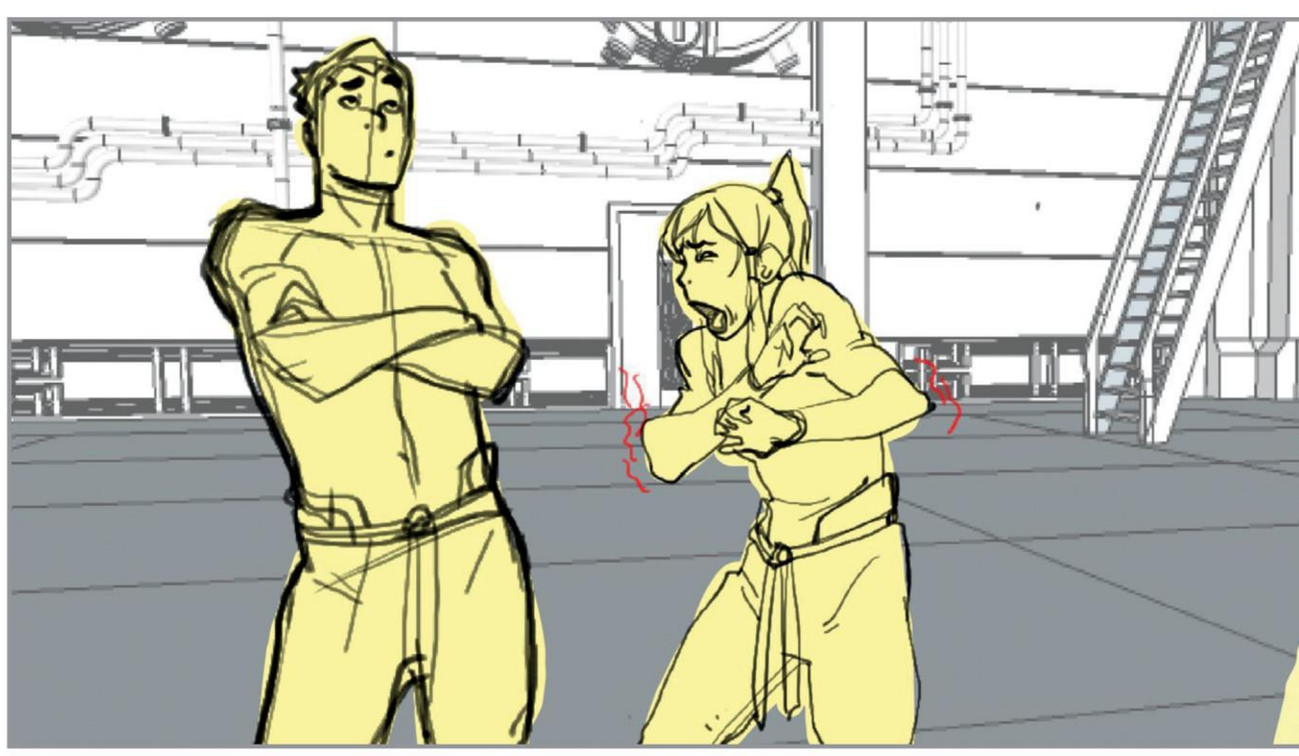
Top: Avatar Aang Memorial Island Museum. Middle: A foggy night in Republic City. Paintings by Frederic Stewart. Bottom: An Equalist secret passage. Paintings by Emily Tetri. Background designs by Yong-Ik Noh, Jung-Su Lee, and Eun-Sang Yang.

CHAPTER SIX

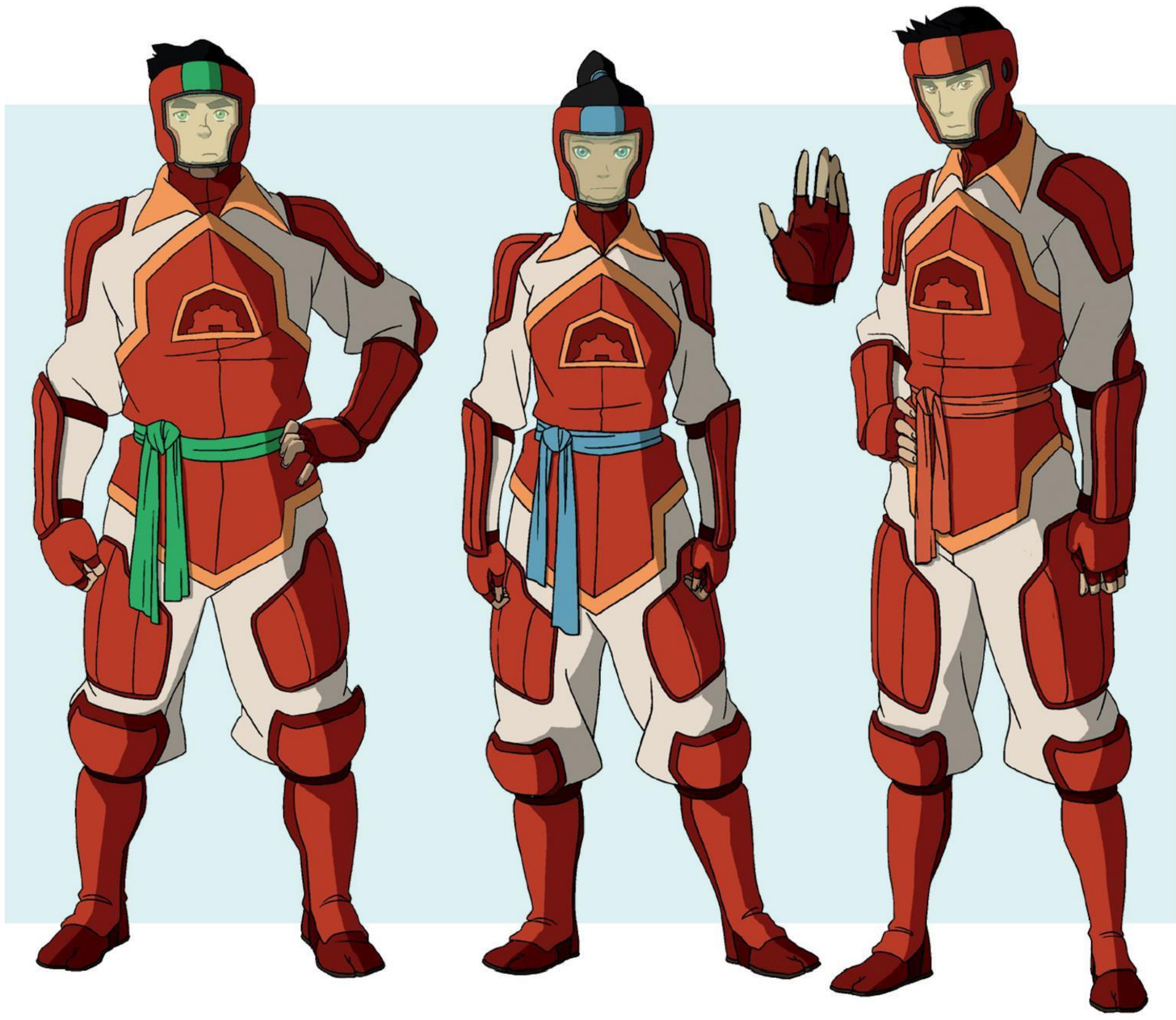
THE SPIRIT OF COMPETITION AND THE WINNER IS...

BK: (Preceding Spread) Narook's Seaweed Noodlery, in the heart of the Little Water Tribe neighborhood in Republic City. Background design by Jung-Su Lee. Painting by Emily Tetri.

MD: In the opening scene, Mako, Bolin, and Korra practiced pro-bending in a triangle formation, which foreshadowed their love triangle. Storyboard panels by Ki-Hyun Ryu. SketchUp model by Jonard Soriano.

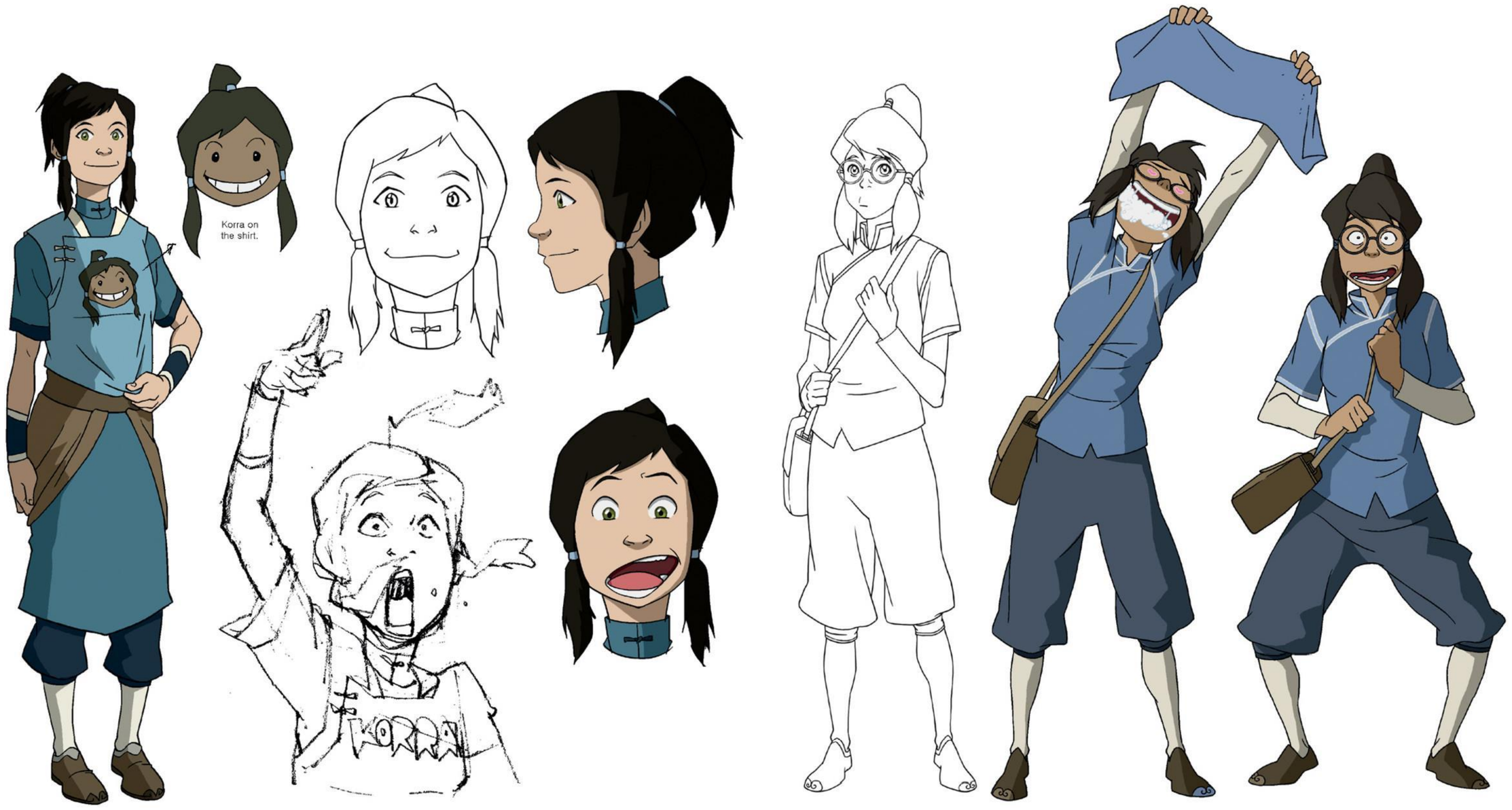


BK: This is one of my favorite paintings by Emily, in which she deftly captured the gloaming light on the back side of Air Temple Island, a perfect setting for a chat about romance. Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Cleanup by Yong-Ik Noh. Painting by Emily Tetri.

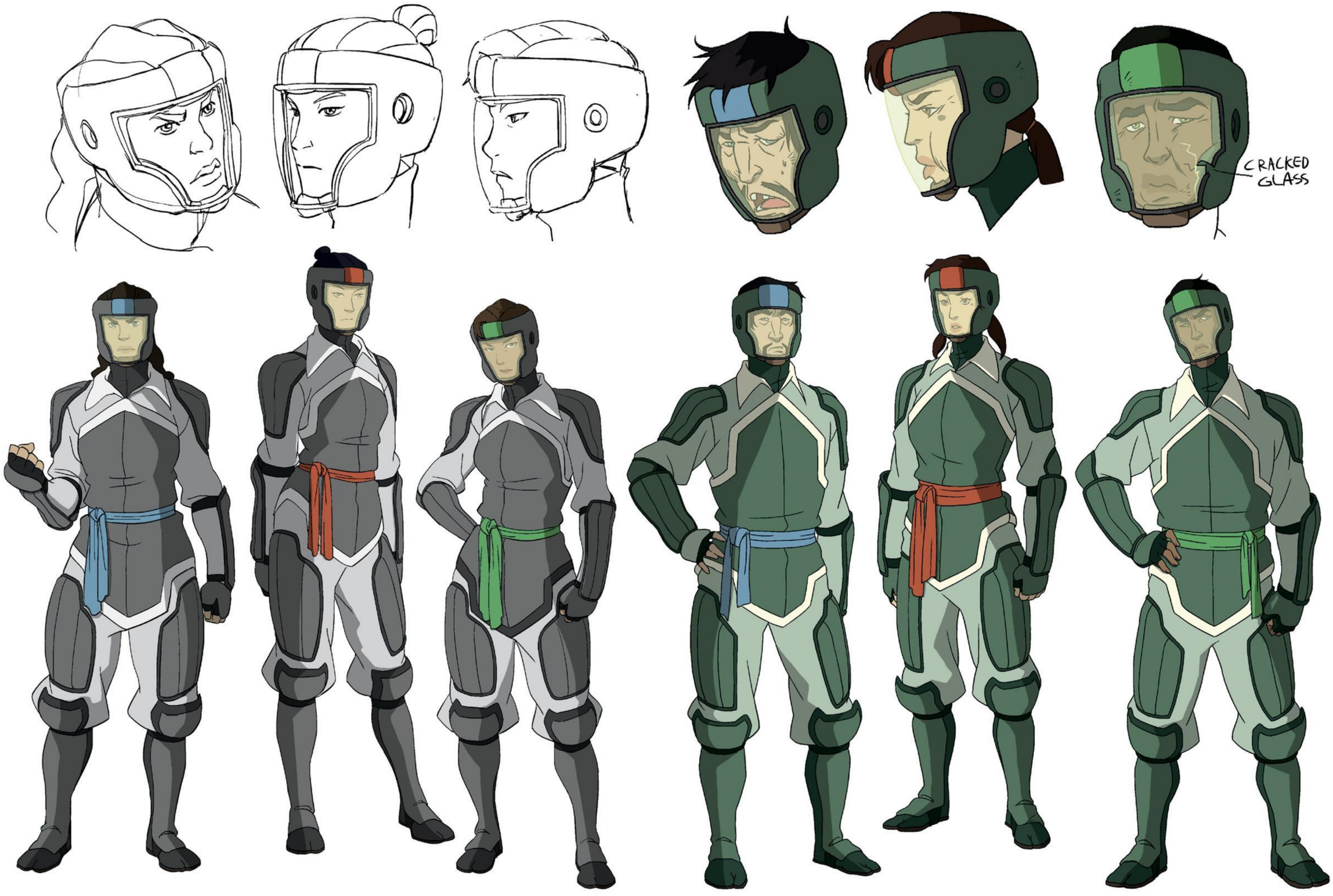


MD: The Fire Ferrets got new, fancy uniforms and became the Future Industries Fire Ferrets after Hiroshi Sato sponsored their team to be in the Pro-bending Championship. Even Pabu got his own uniform. Designs by Joaquim Dos Santos and Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

JDS: Ryu captured Pro-bending's frenetic energy in a single image! One of the toughest hurdles for the storyboard artist to overcome when staging an action sequence is the balance between chaos and clarity. This balance is made even more important when staging a pro-bending match! Not only do you have to keep the action moving fast between six players, but you also have to keep track of the rules and make sure the audience is able to clearly understand who is winning and who is losing.



MD: Korra, Mako, and Bolin's fans were inspired by Avatar: The Last Airbender*'s amazing, supportive, and enthusiastic cosplayer fans. And Amon's rabid fan girl found a new life as Korra's Pro-bending fan! So many drawings and designs go into these episodes that we always try to reuse designs when it makes sense. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim, Jin-Sun Kim, and Ki-Hyun Ryu. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.*

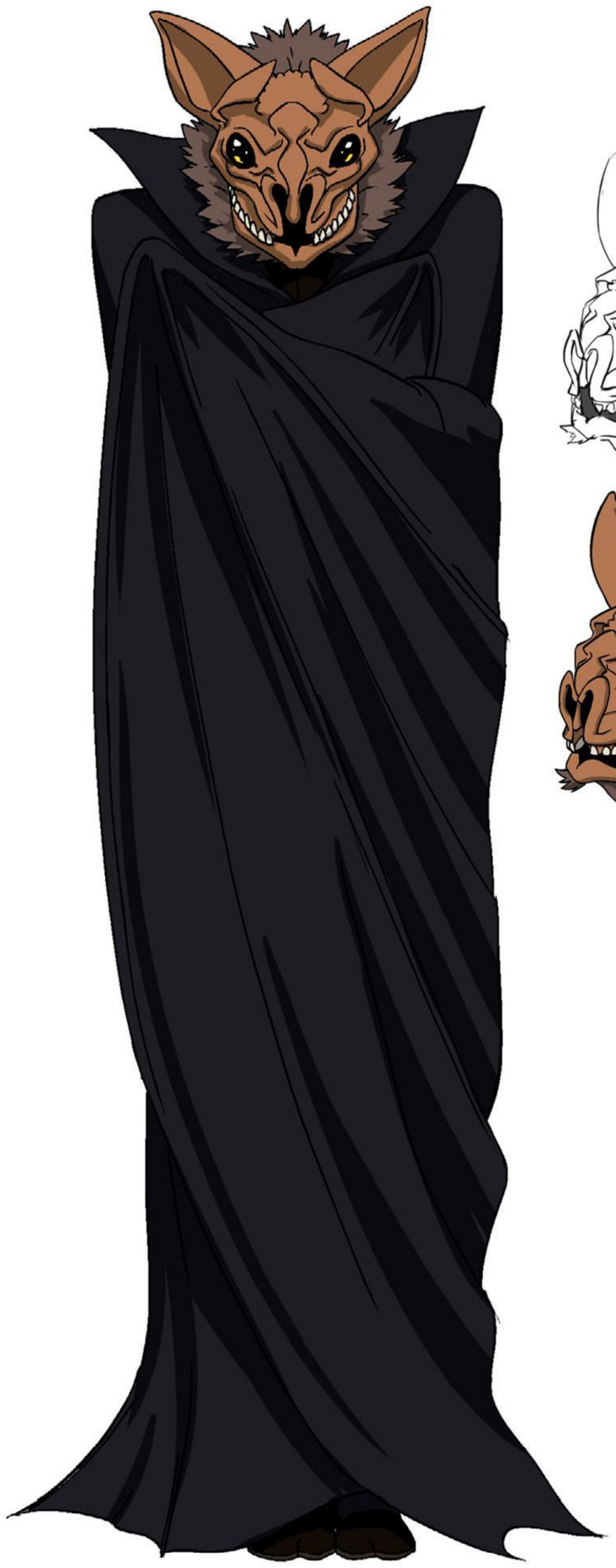


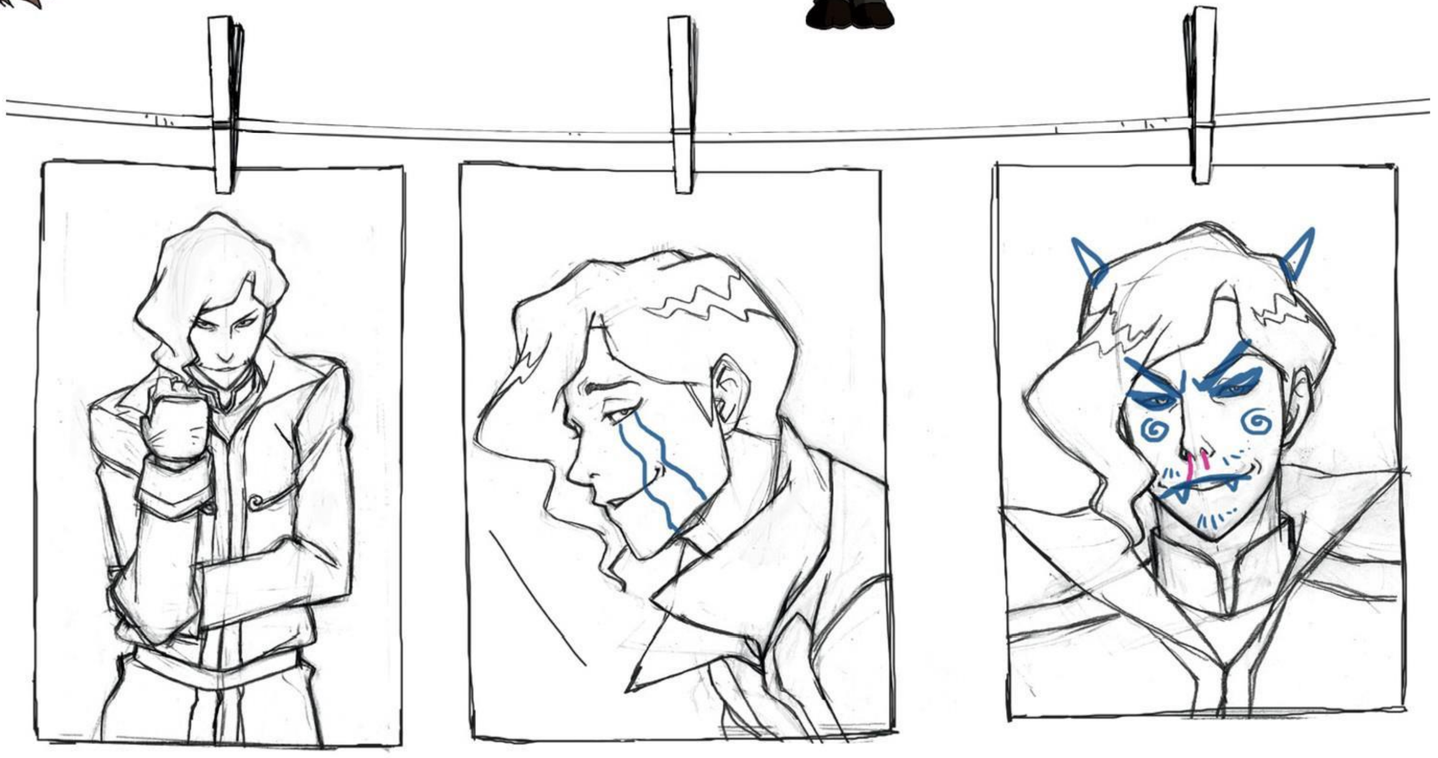
MD: When we were coming up with names for all the Pro-bending teams, it didn't take long to realize we should name them all after some of our favorite Avatar *hybrid animals. Left to right: The all-female Red Sands Rabaroos and the Ember Island Eel Hounds. Designs by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.*

BK: I love that this guy on the left painted his potbelly with Korra's tribal armband pattern, which was character designer Il-Kwang's idea. And the "Hey Makoooo-oh!" guy was dubbed MOF (Mako's Only Fan) online, but don't forget about this cosplay kid in the middle! Designs by Il-Kwang Kim and Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

JDS: Korra single-handedly defeated the Bau Ling Buzzard Wasps (left) to get the Fire Ferrets into the finals. The Black Quarry Boar-q-pines (right) were inspired by our favorite legendary, old-school MMA fighters. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

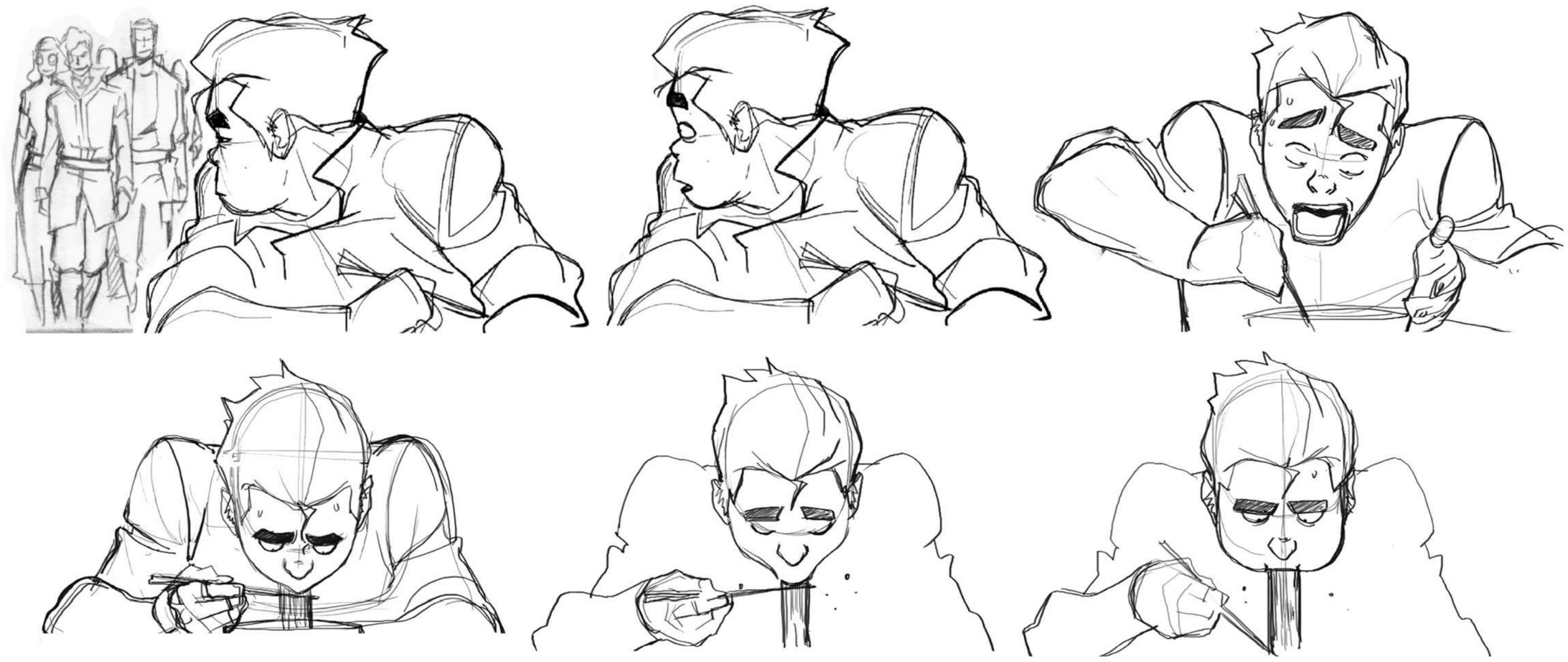
BK: Professional wrestling has a long tradition of flamboyant heels, or villains. Tahno, Pro-bending's biggest heel, was inspired by a professional kickboxer I saw who looked like he was in a boy band and had his cornerman fix his hair in a mirror between rounds. If there is one thing Ryu loves, it is a flamboyant character! He took my little concept of Tahno and ran with it, whipping up his full character design. When my wife saw the episode, she said that Tahno reminded her of me. I don't know what to say about that. Concept by Bryan Konietzko. Designs by Jin-Sun Kim and Ki-Hyun Ryu. Cleanup by Il-Kwang Kim and Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



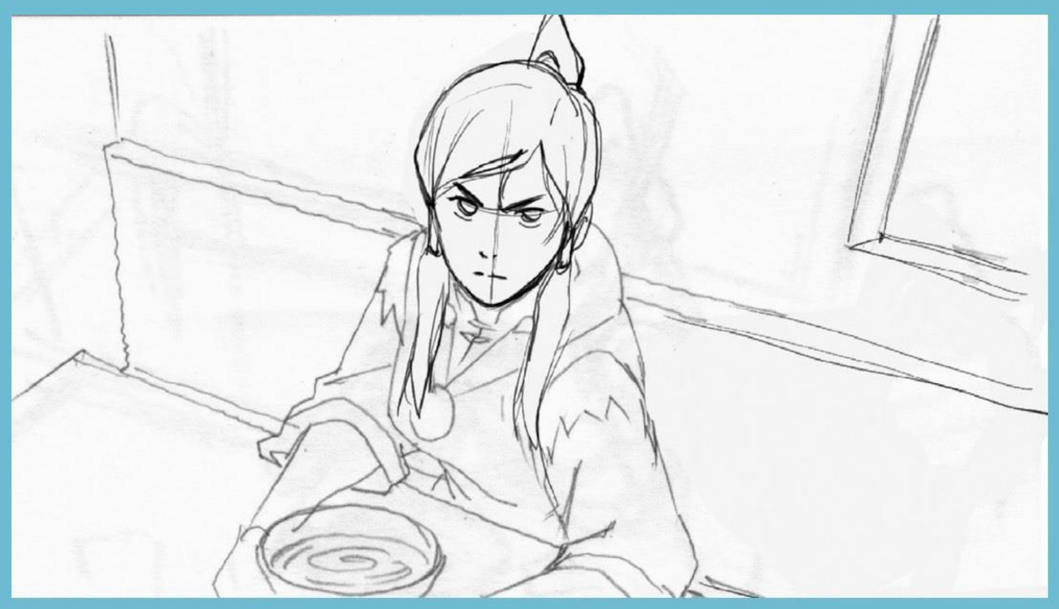


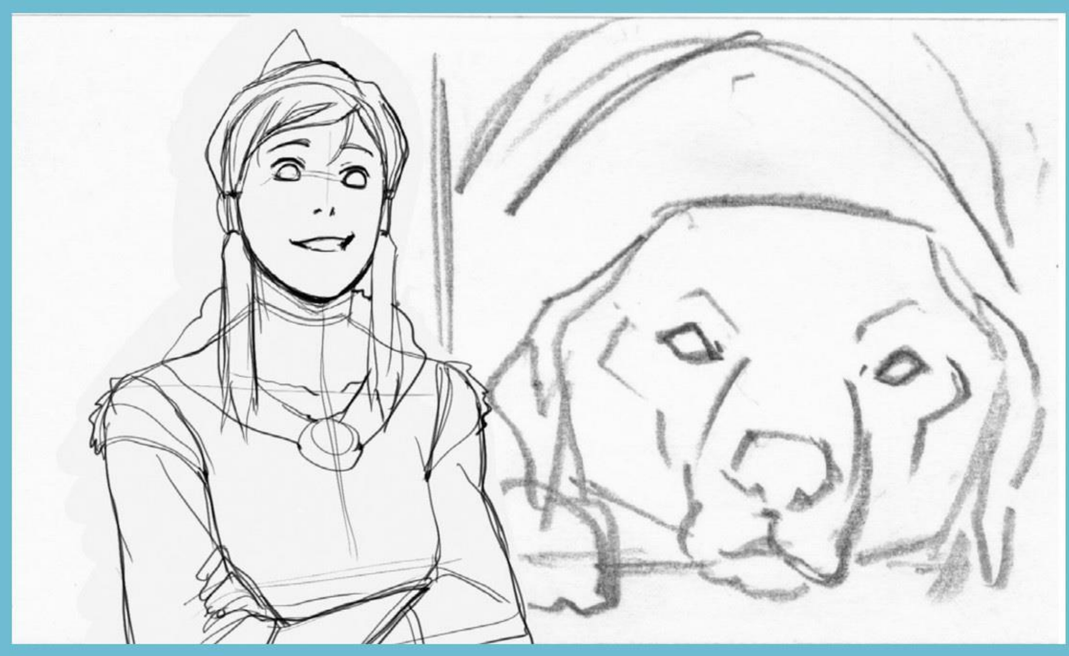
BK: What's a heel without an over-the-top ring entrance? Tahno and the Wolfbats go all out with Nosferatu-inspired capes, creepy wrinkle-faced bat masks, and plenty of pyrotechnics. The ever-vain Tahno leaves a surplus of headshots around town, some of which Korra gets ahold of to decorate and use as target practice in the gym. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

BK: The Wolfbats' goth-inspired, 1920s-esque fan girls are a surly bunch. You get the feeling you're in for a rough night if you insult their favorite Pro-bending team. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim and Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

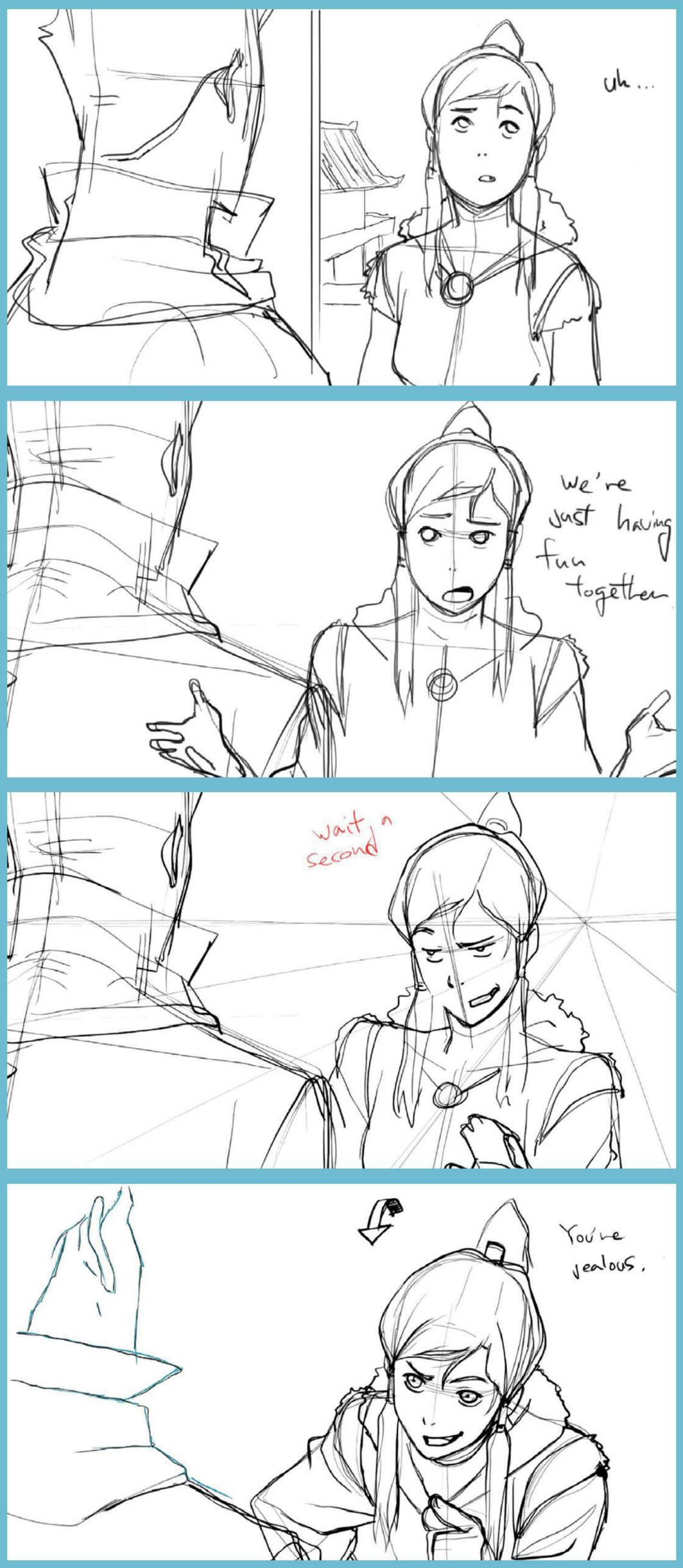


MD: This episode was full of a ton of funny Bolin moments, like this hilarious noodle eating (bottom). Storyboard by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Top: Located in the Little Water Tribe section of Republic City, Narook's Seaweed Noodlery serves up authentic Water Tribe cuisine and is a popular hangout with the teens. Middle left: The view from Harmony Tower. Middle right: The local soda fountain, where Bolin and Korra have a burping contest. Top background designs by Yong-Ik Noh, Jung-Su Lee, and Eun-Sang Yang. Cleanup by Sang-Hyuck Bang. Top and middle-right paintings by Emily Tetri. Middle-left painting by Frederic Stewart.



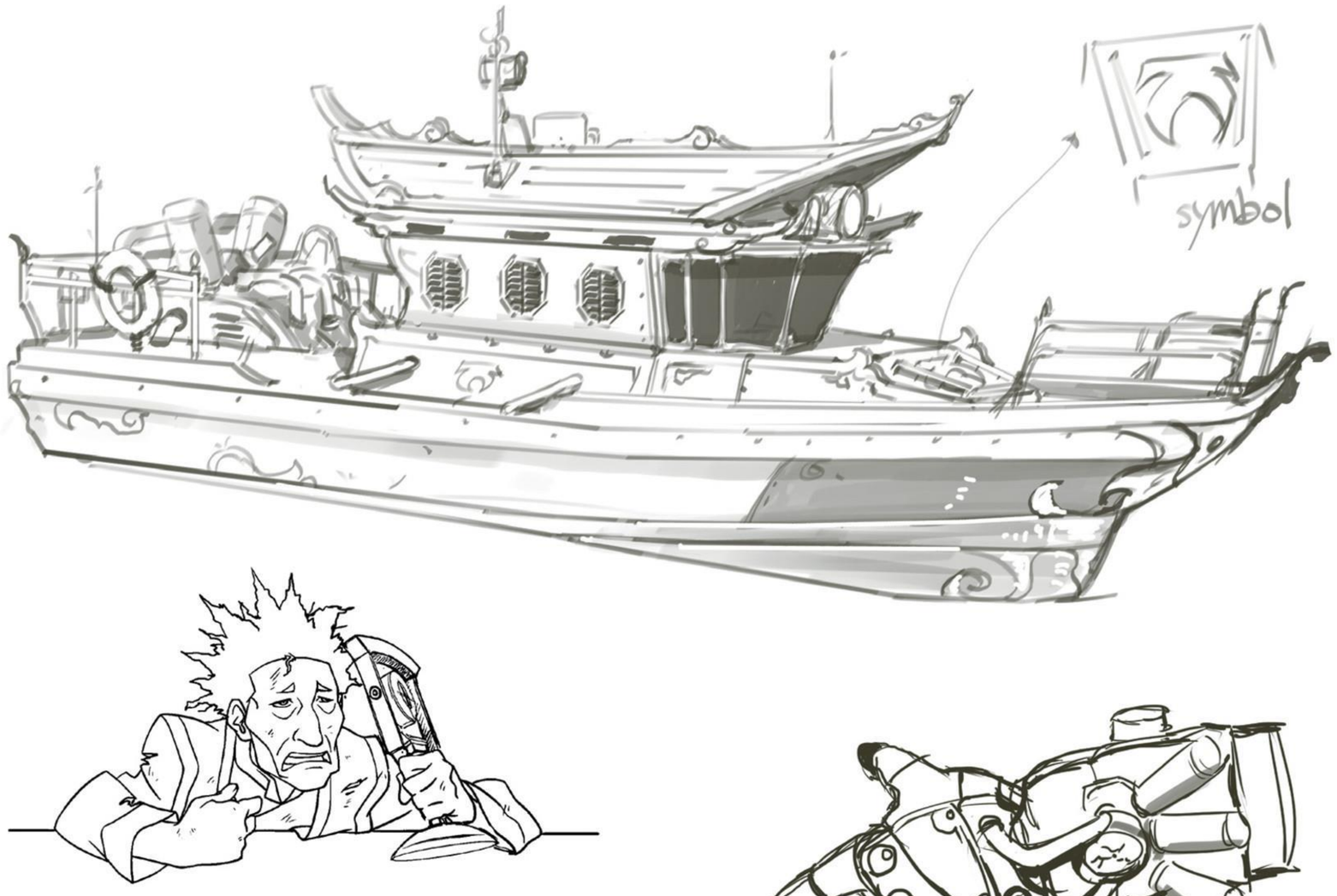


MD: During development, Bryan and I had an idea for a scene in which Korra was missing her native food and found her way to a Water Tribe restaurant and had an altercation with a bully. We kept trying to find an organic way to put a scene like that into the show and it worked perfectly to make it the site of Bolin and Korra's date and her near-fight with Tahno. Storyboards by Ki-Hyun Ryu and Sung-Dae Kang.

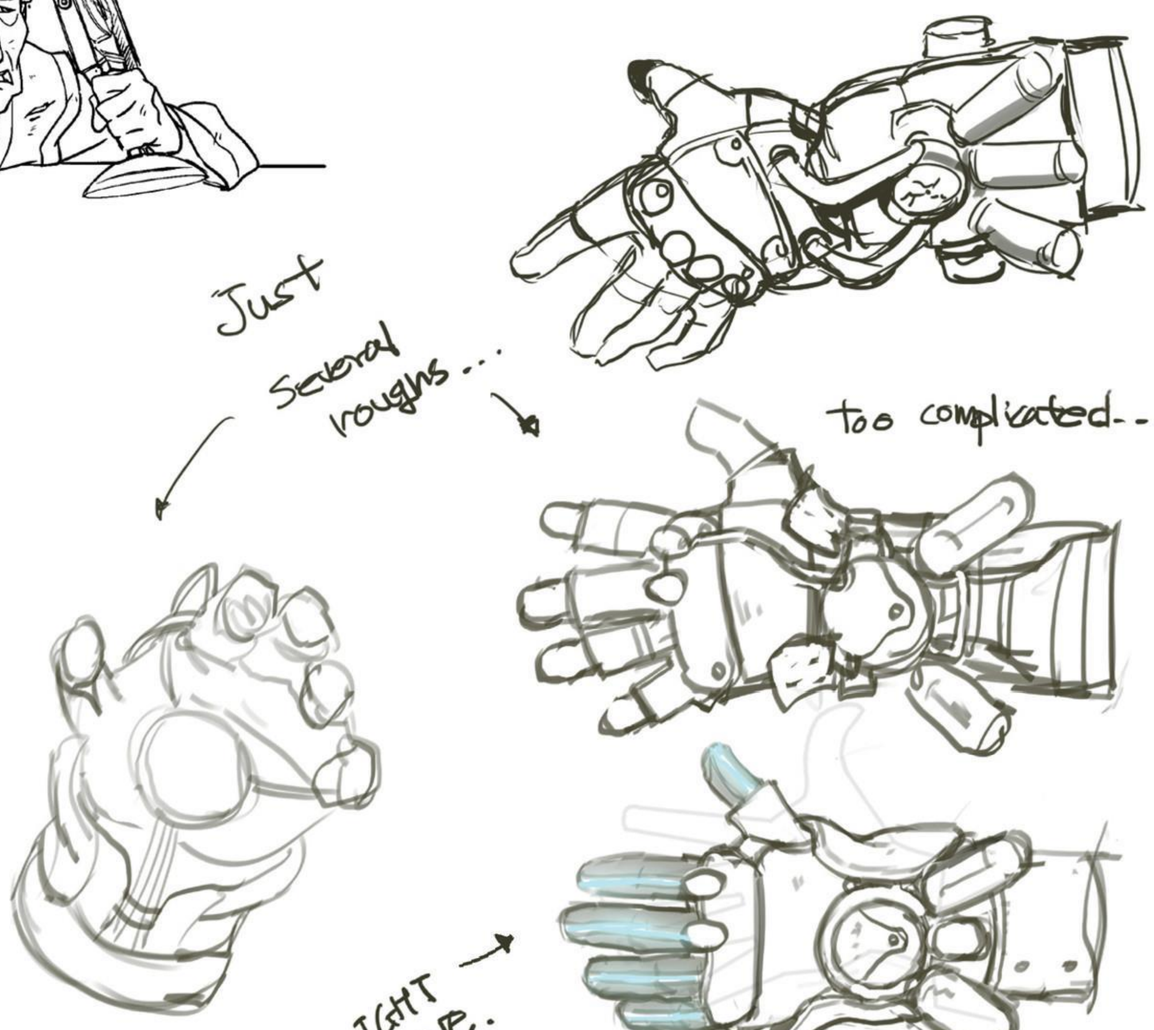


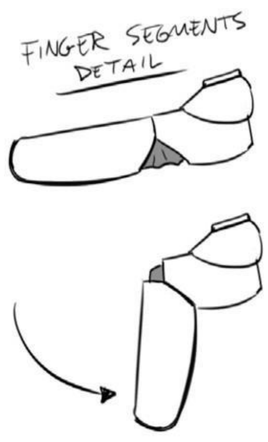
BK: I get the feeling that when Korra was a little girl, if she liked a boy she probably marched up to him on the playground and punched him. And when young Mako liked a girl, he probably acted like he didn't know she existed. Korra and Mako's tumultuous, teenage love-hate relationship finally results in an ill-timed kiss. Storyboards by Ki-Hyun Ryu.

MD: Bolin's descent into despair was fun to write, but heartbreaking to watch. We had him really hit rock bottom by putting that noodle up his nose. Storyboards and expression sheet by Jin-Sun Kim and Ki-Hyun Ryu.

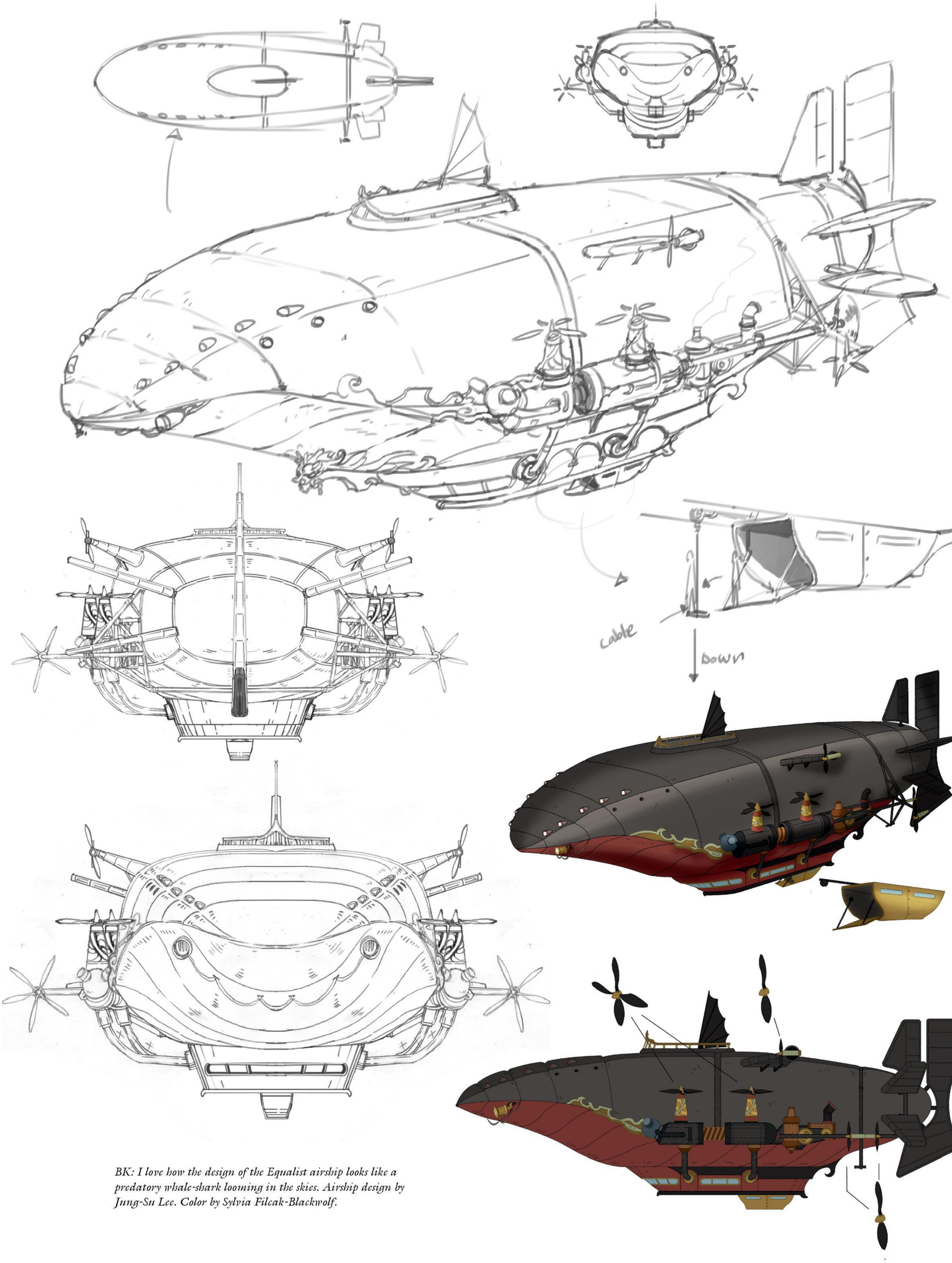


MD: At the end of "And the Winner Is . . ." we wrote a short scene where Shiro Shinobi recovers from his electrocution to finish his announcer duties. It was even storyboarded and animated, but due to running-time limitations, we weren't able to keep it in. Design by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.





JDS: The Equalist glove is the revolution's answer to benders. Its tech resembles the Lieutenant's battery backpack and kali sticks. We were really excited by the asymmetrical silhouette it created on characters. Especially Asami! Glove concepts by Jung-Su Lee. Cleanup by Seong-Min Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

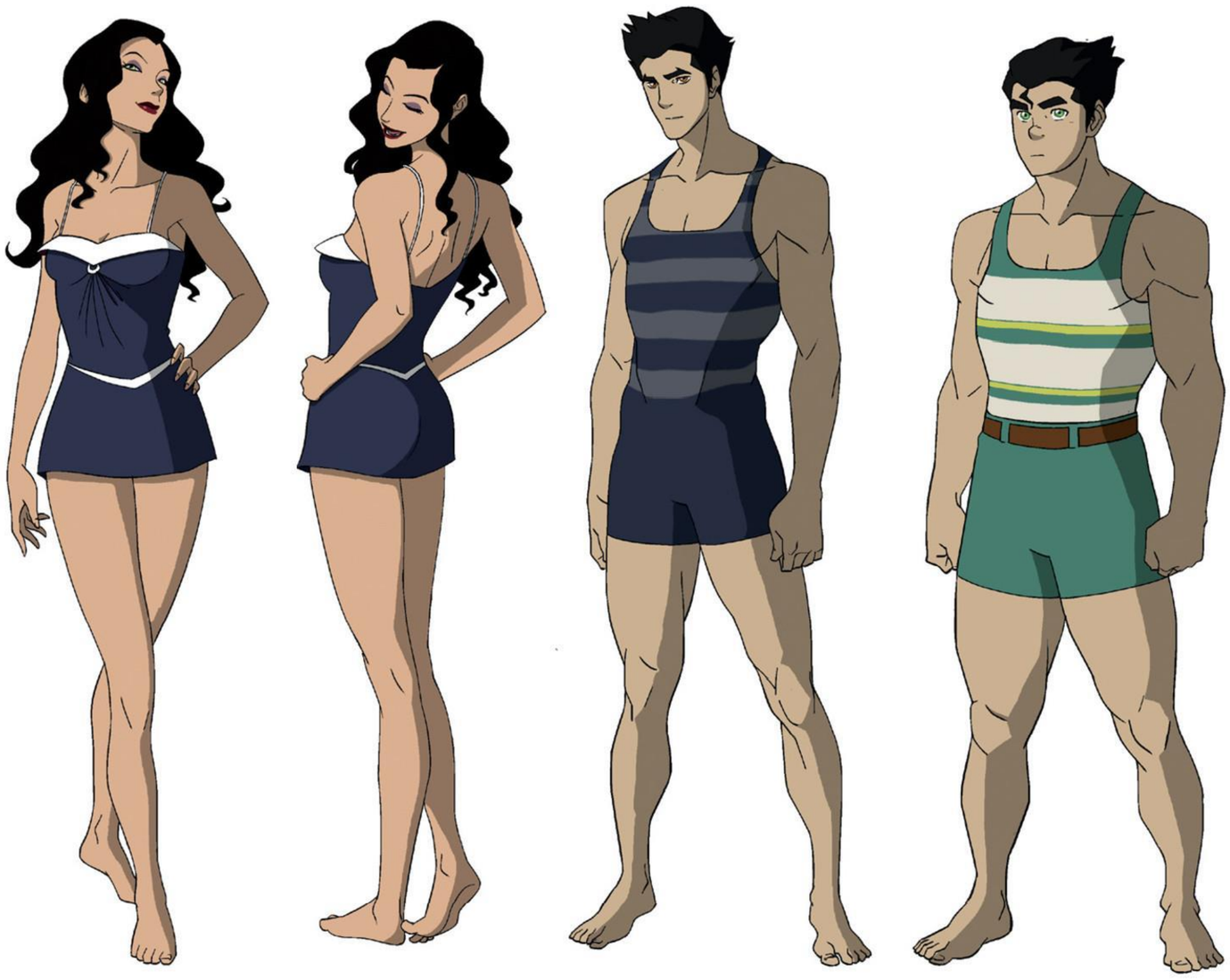


BK: I love how the design of the Equalist airship looks like a predatory whale-shark looming in the skies. Airship design by Jung-Su Lee. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE AFTERMATH

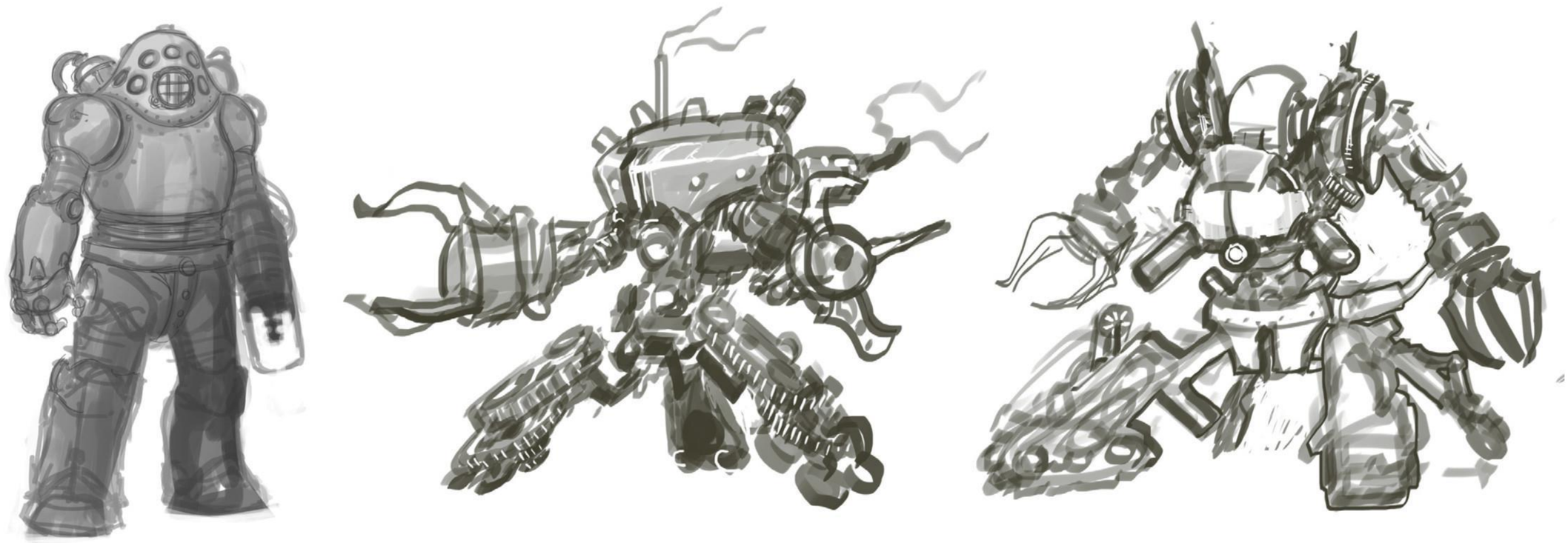
MD: (Preceding spread) When we wrote "The Voice in the Night," Bryan and I had included a scene that revealed Hiroshi was working with the Equalists. But when we were coming up with ideas for "The Aftermath," it became clear to us that if the audience already knew Hiroshi was working with Amon, it took away the dramatic tension. So we cut the earlier scene and let the audience discover the truth along with Korra. Concept by Eun-Sang Yang. Painting by Frederic Stewart.



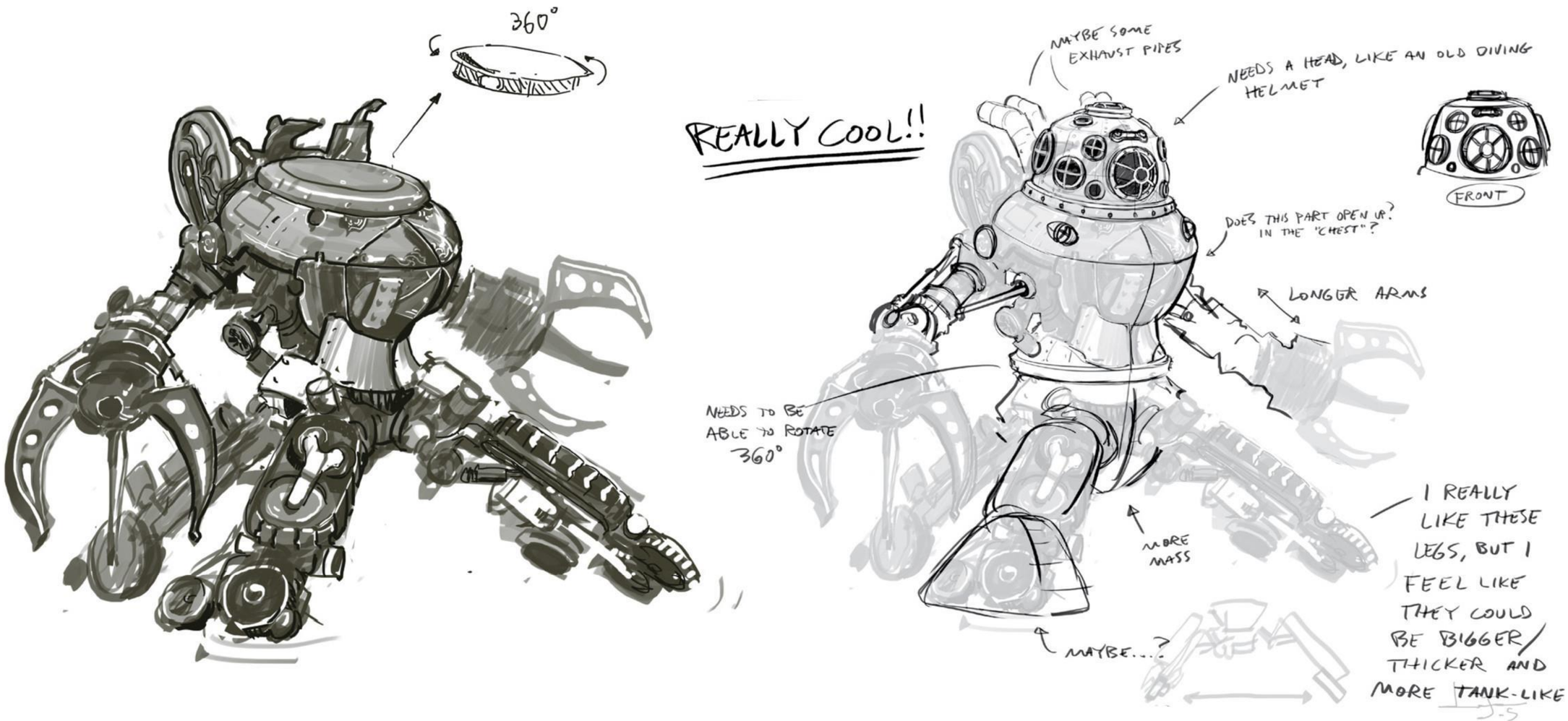
BK: I was reminded of working on "The Beach" from the original series as we designed the bathing suits for this episode. This time around, it was fun to come up with some old-timey-looking swimwear. Asami swimwear design by Bryan Konietzko. Mako and Bolin swimwear designs by Il-Kwang Kim. Poof-ball Pabu by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

MD: Since the Cabbage Merchant from Avatar: The Last Airbender *was so popular with the fans, we wanted to find a way to honor his legacy. Bryan and I even came up with an elaborate backstory about how this lowly vendor of cabbages worked tirelessly to create Cabbage Corp. In the first draft of the script, we wrote in some news reports that explained how Lau Gan-Lan and his father, the Cabbage Merchant, had a long history of disputes with Avatar Aang and discrimination against benders. Above: This statue commemorates the Cabbage Merchant's first cabbage stand in Republic City. Right: Cabbage Corp's headquarters. Background designs by Jung-Su Lee and Yong-Ik Noh. Painting by Frederic Stewart.*

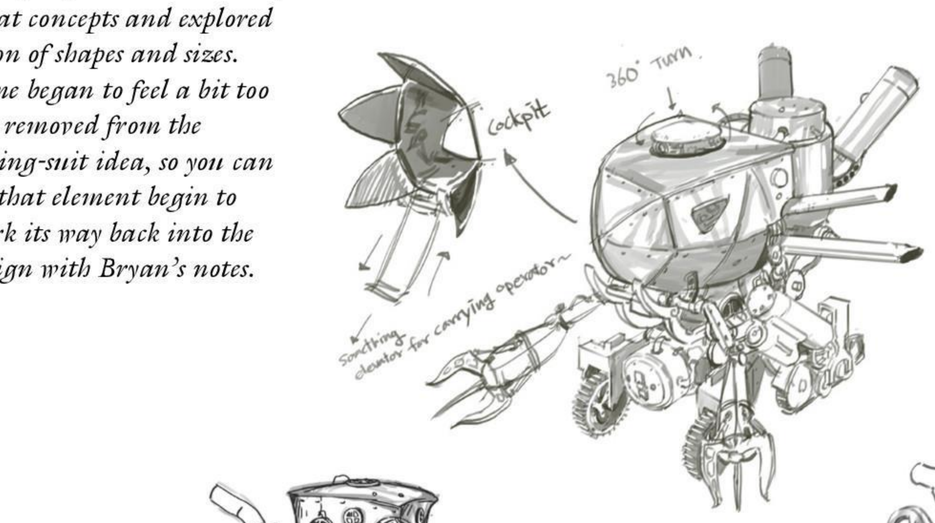
Top left: Inside the police airship. Top right: Underneath the Silk Road Bridge. Middle: The lobby of Republic City Police Headquarters. Bottom left: What would Avatar *be without a secret tunnel? Bottom right: One of Future Industries' many warehouses. Background designs by Jung-Su Lee, Jonard Soriano, and Eun-Sang Yang. Cleanup by Yong-Ik Noh and Sang-Hyuck Bang. All paintings on this page by Frederic Stewart, except the top-right image, which is by Emily Tetri.*

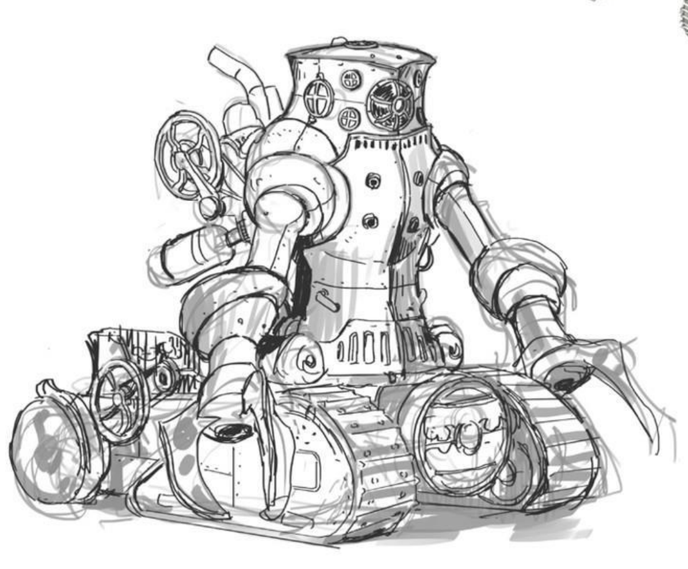


JDS: The image on the left was Bryan's initial concept for the mecha tank. He was really inspired by the look of old, turn-of-the-century diving suits. At that time, the idea of them being tanklike hadn't been decided, so the more humanoid shape made total sense. At some point the name "mecha tank" became official and we needed to really play up the tank part if the name was to make any sense at all. Concepts by Jung-Su Lee and Bryan Konietzko.

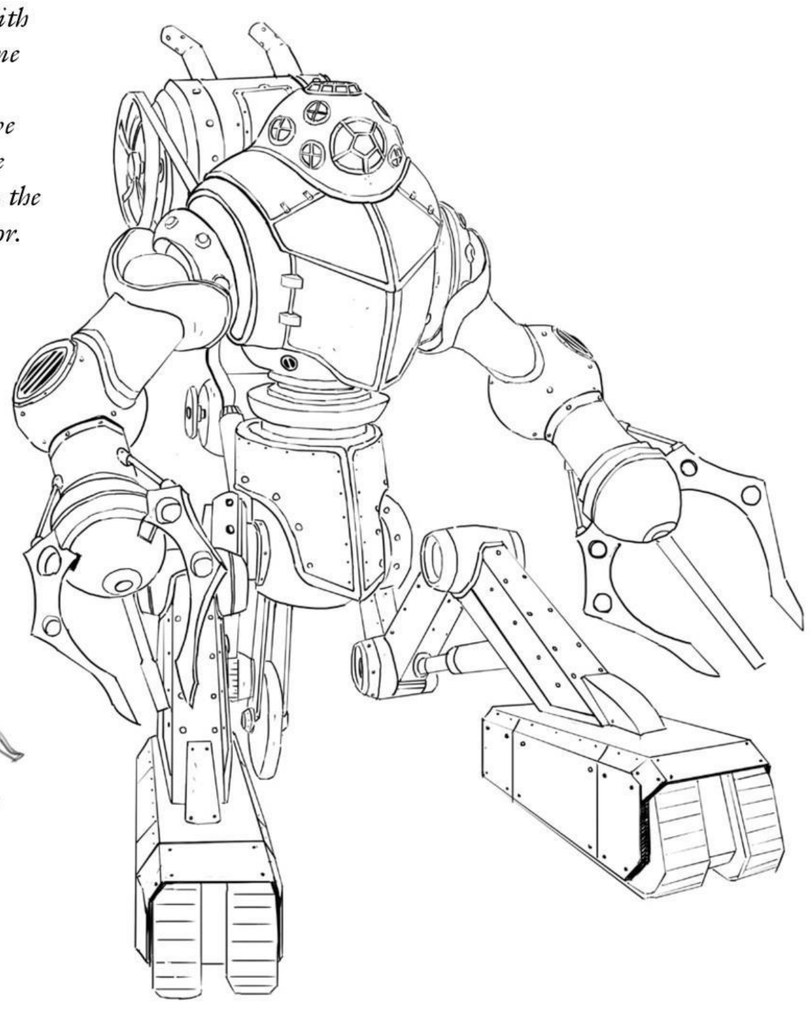


JDS: Jung-su did some really great concepts and explored a ton of shapes and sizes. Some began to feel a bit too far removed from the diving-suit idea, so you can see that element begin to work its way back into the design with Bryan's notes.

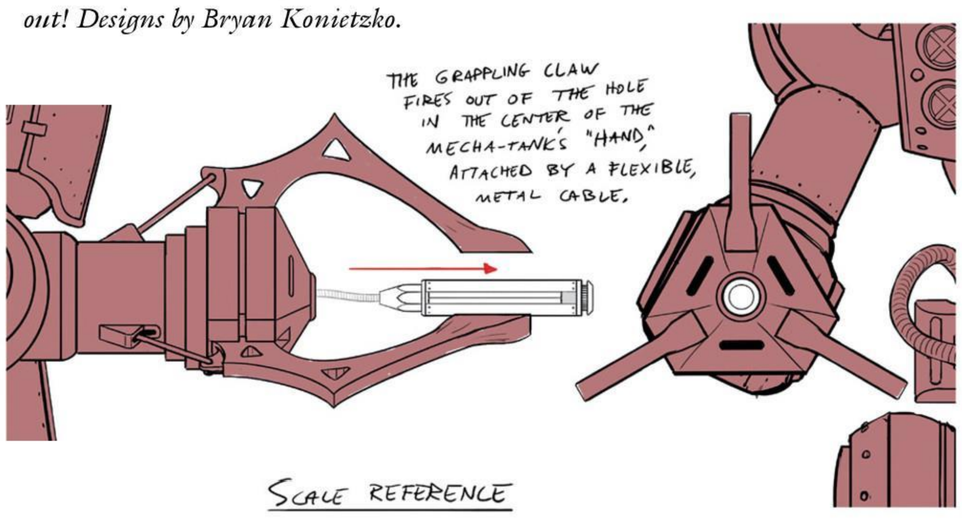


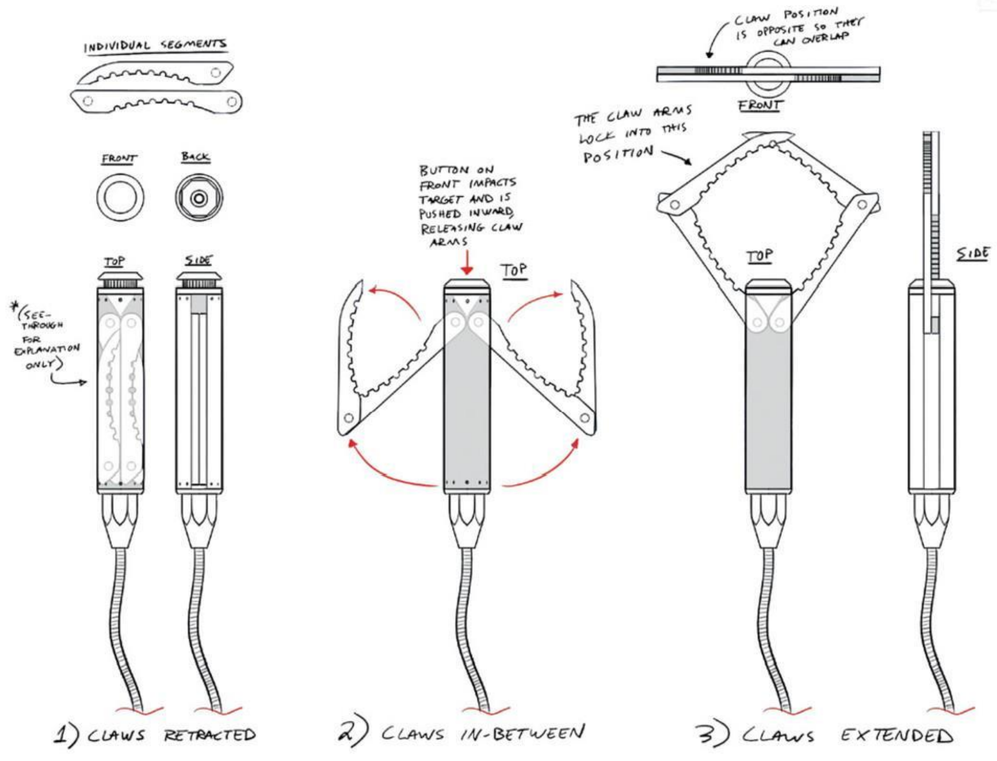


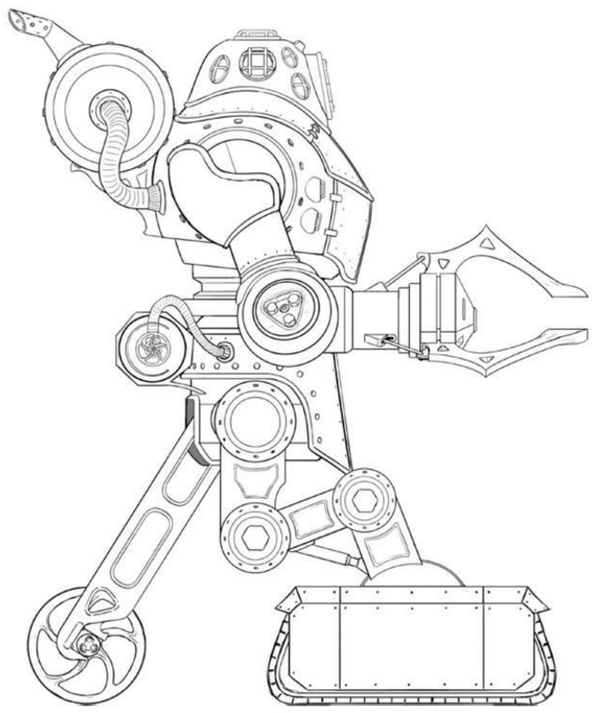
JDS: My contribution (bottom right) was really just playing with the proportions a bit. By this time I believe we had already begun roughing out storyboards and we needed the tank to be a bit more nimble and maneuverable than the previous concepts would allow for.

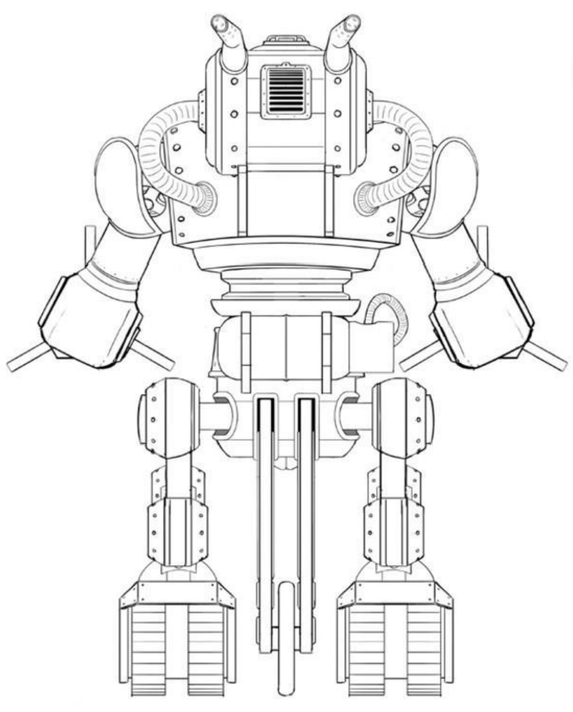


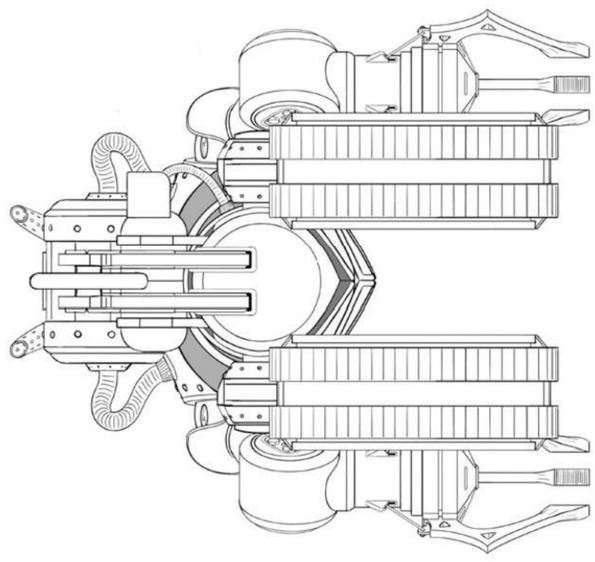
BK: The mecha tank's grabby claw. Look out! Designs by Bryan Konietzko.

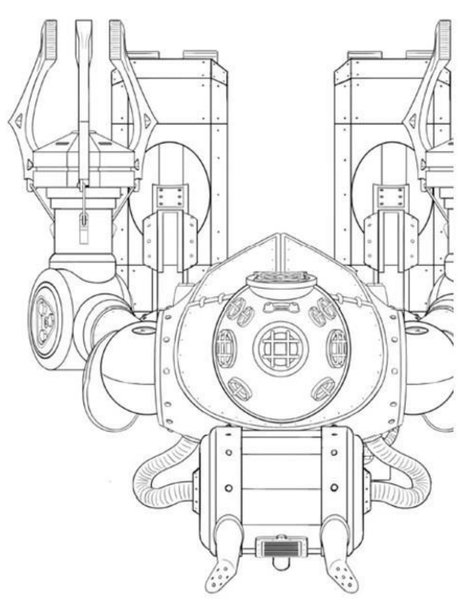


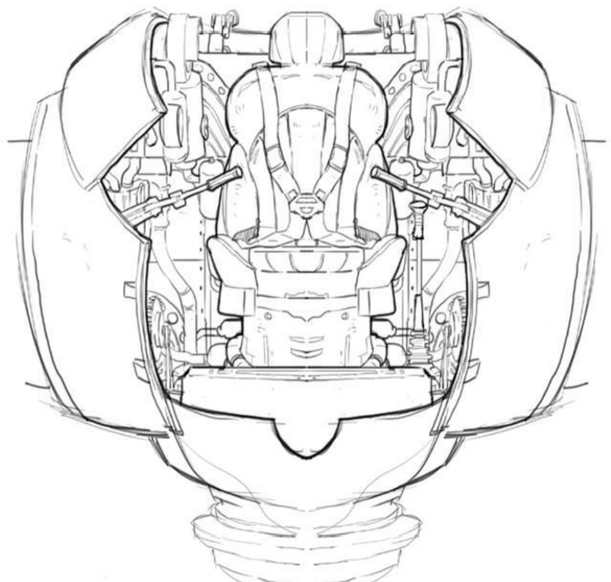




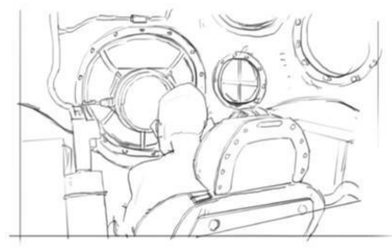








BK: While the outside of the mecha tank was modeled in CG, we covered the inside of it in 2-D. It was such a complex and cramped space; it would have been nice to build a model of the interior too, but we had to pick and choose what we could make in CG in order to stay on schedule and on budget. That said, I'm not claiming we stayed on schedule or budget. But we tried! Designs by Jung-Su Lee.

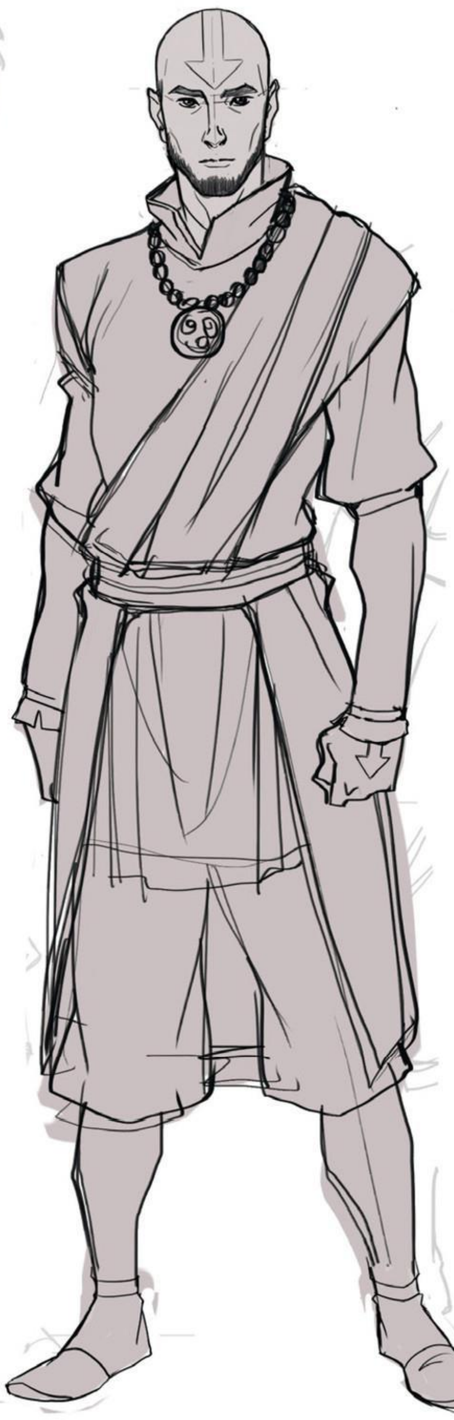


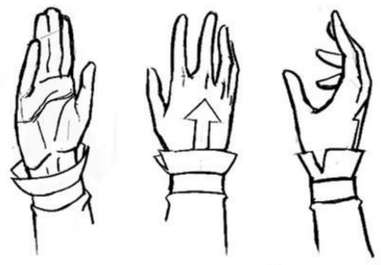
BK: Jung-Su and Joaquim did an awesome job on the concepts of the mecha tank, but the task fell to me to work out all the orthographic projections of the final design so the CG modelers could make sense of it. I meticulously worked out each view in sliced, overlapping layers. It took me an exorbitant length of time, but the final model came out virtually identical to the orthos, which was certainly satisfying. Mecha tank orthos and color by Bryan Konietzko.

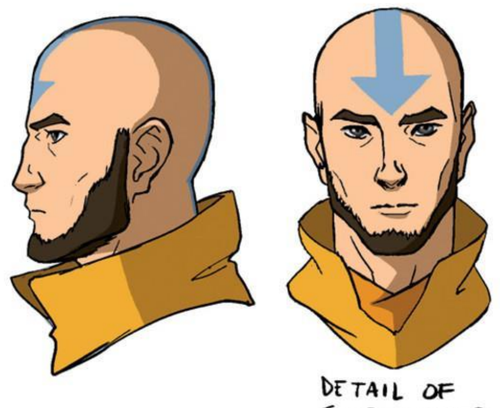
CHAPTER EIGHT

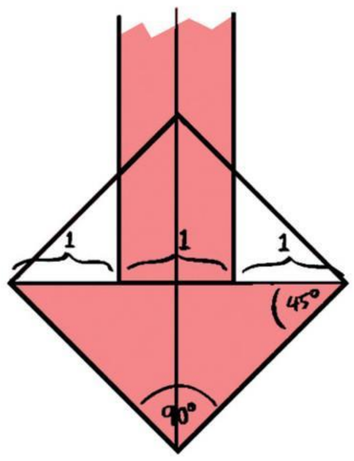
WHEN EXTREMES MEET

OUT OF THE PAST









THE ARROW RULES:

- ISOSCELES RIGHT TRIANGLE
- WIDTH OF BAND IS 1/3 WIDTH OF TRIANGLE
- SAME PROPORTIONS ON HEAD AND HAND TATTOOS
- ON HEAD: BOTTOM TIP OF TRIANGLE IS JUST BETWEEN EYEBROWS—NOT TOO HIGH ON FOREHEAD
- ON HAND: CENTER OF TRIANGLE POINTS AT MIDDLE FINGER

NOTE: No COUNCIL BADGE!

Preceding spread: Background design by Yong-Ik Noh. Painting by Matthew Friedlander and Frederic Stewart.

MD: It was fun, and also a little surreal, to imagine the characters from the old series all grown up. Everyone always assumes my bald head was the inspiration for young Aang, so when it came time to draw forty-year-old Aang, Bryan took one look at my beard and worked it into the design. Maybe someday I'll look as tall and buff as Aang. Design by Ki-Hyun Ryu and Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

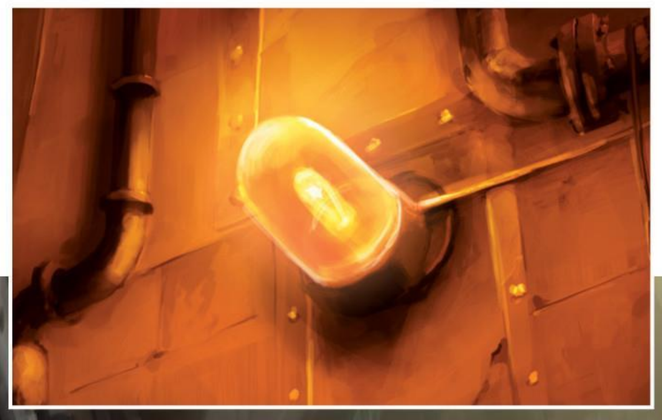
JDS: Sokka and Toph were my absolute two favorite characters in the Avatar *universe, and while I had nothing to do with their older redesigns, as a fan I was super excited to see what Il-Kwang and Jin-Sun came up with. You'll notice Toph wearing the early version of the Metalbenders' cable harness. I think the designers really knocked it out of the park. How cool was it to see all these characters you know and love as adults?! Designs by Jin-Sun Kim and Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.*

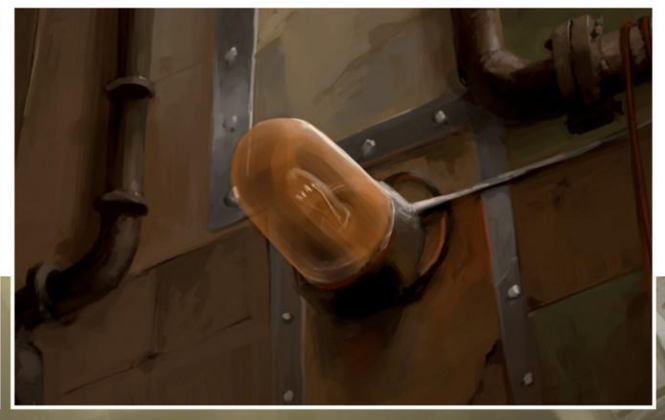
JDS: Pre–plastic surgery Yakone was a bit of a challenge. I tried to capture some of the elements of both Noatak and Tarrlok in his face. His clothing needed to have a Godfather *type of vibe. He ran Republic City's underbelly, so he needed to dress the part. Luckily, Jin-Sun cleaned up my rough concept. Design by Joaquim Dos Santos, Bryan Konietzko, and Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.*

MD: Through Korra's visions, we got a glimpse of Republic City in its earlier days (top). Inset: Yakone eats lunch at Kwong's Cuisine, the same restaurant where Mako and Asami would have their first date. Bottom: Avatar Aang Memorial Island at dusk. Fred did such an incredible job on this painting that we based the opening title sequence on it. Background designs by Eun-Sang Yang. Flashback paintings aged by Bryan Konietzko. Bottom painting by Frederic Stewart.

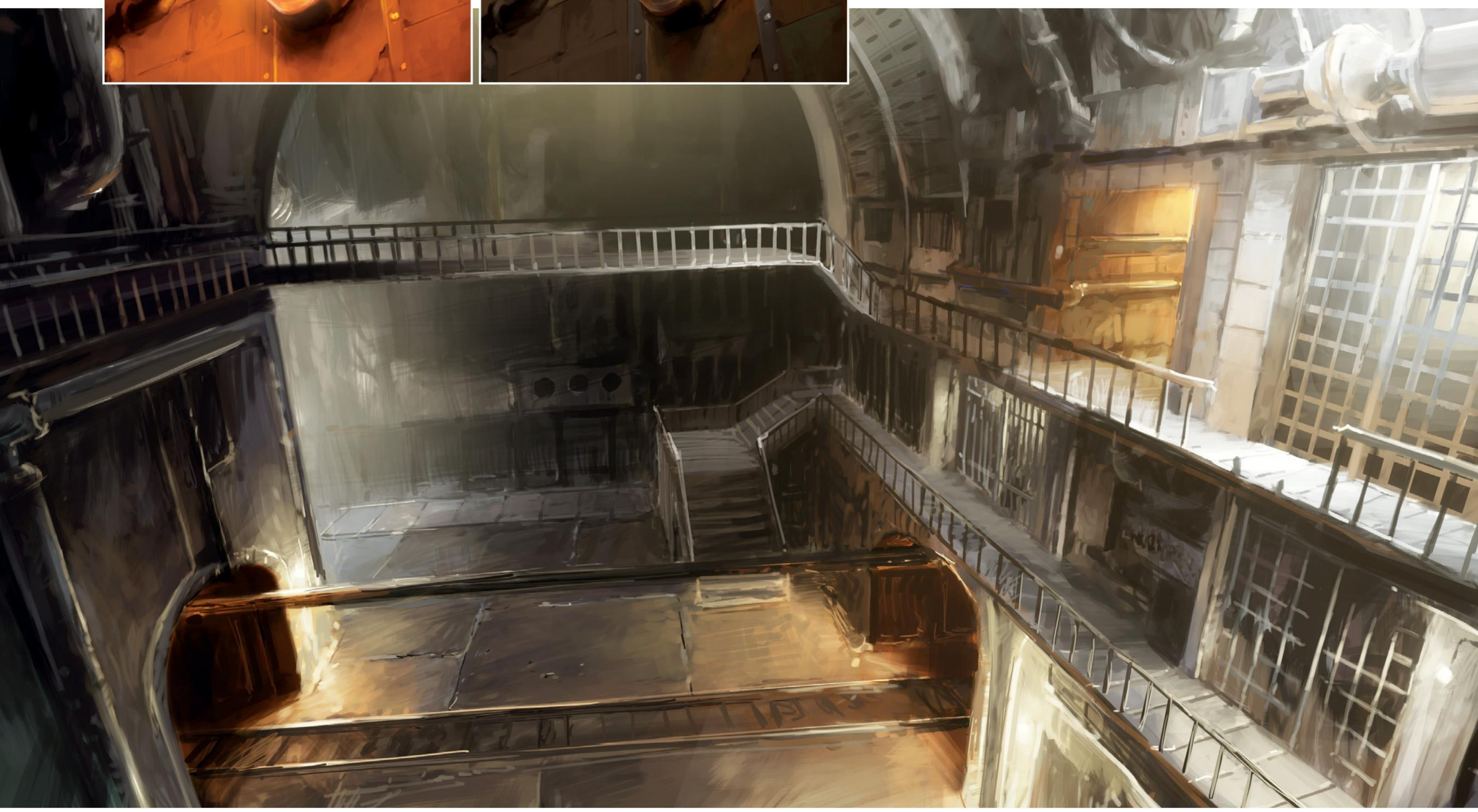
BK: Since the Avatar *world is a pretty naturalistic one (as far as cartoon shows go), and Korra's saga is mostly set in and around Republic City, we often get the opportunity to show the same locations in different lighting and weather situations. Emily Tetri did an amazing job imbuing a heavy mood into this wet, snowy nocturne of City Hall. Air Temple Island design by Yong-Ik Noh. Painting by Frederic Stewart. City Hall design by Eun-Sang Yang. Cleanup by Sang-Hyuck Bang. Painting by Emily Tetri.*

MD: Ki-Hyun Ryu captured the many emotions of Korra in these storyboard panels. A lot can be said about a character with just the right expression. Here, we see Korra's toughness, frustration, vulnerability, and sass.

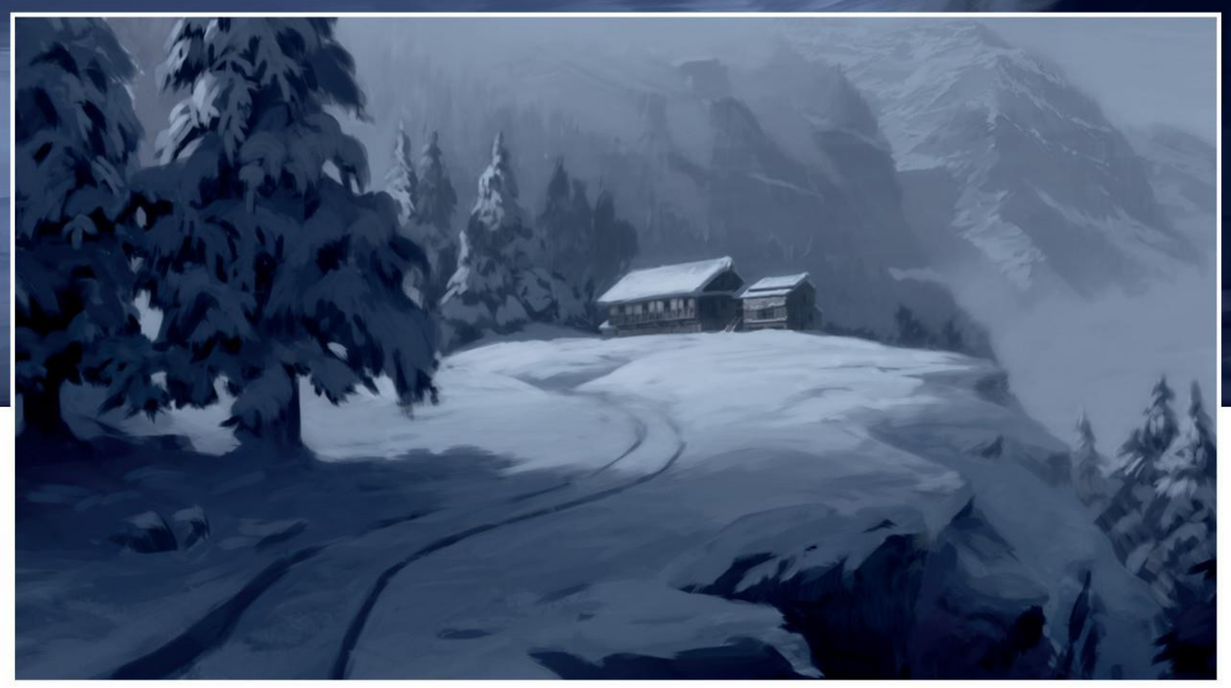




BK: An Equalist prison, hidden in the maze of tunnels (undoubtedly and ironically dug by earthbenders) under Republic City (middle). Bottom: Tenzin's office in City Hall features a more reserved decor than Tarrlok's ostentatious office across the way. Background designs by Jung-Su Lee. Cleanup by Sang-Hyuck Bang. Paintings by Emily Tetri (top), Frederic Stewart (middle), and Paul Nguyen (bottom).



BK: A common device in film noir seems to be a cabin tucked away deep in the mountains where city people hide their secrets. Tarrlok, a shady politician through and through, kidnaps and hides Korra in his own spooky cabin, high in the mountains outside of Republic City. Background designs by Jung-Su Lee and Sang-Hyuck Bang. Paintings by Frederic Stewart and Matthew Friedlander.

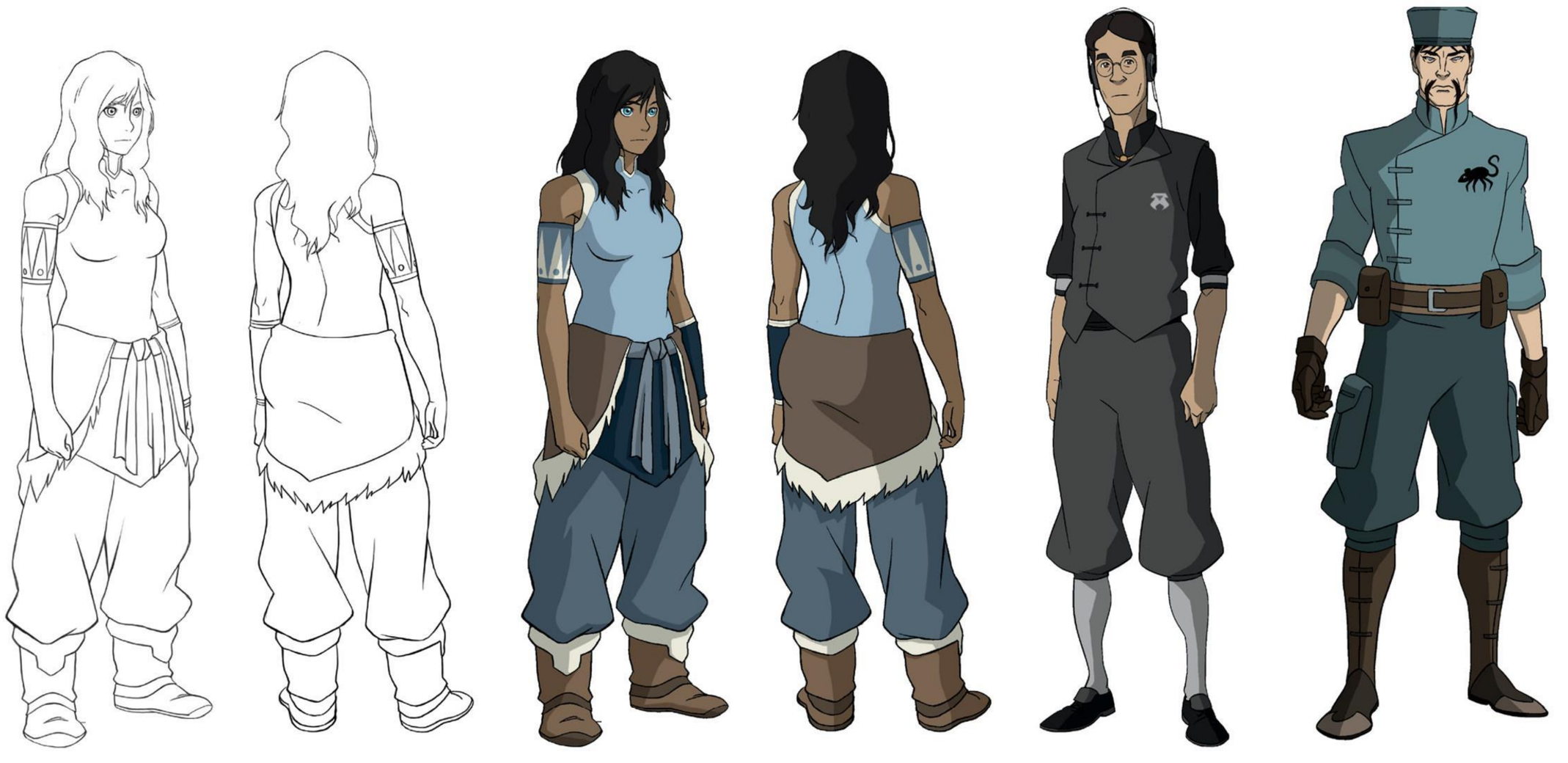


CHAPTER NINE

TURNING THE TIDES

Preceding spread: Republic City docks. Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Painting by Frederic Stewart.

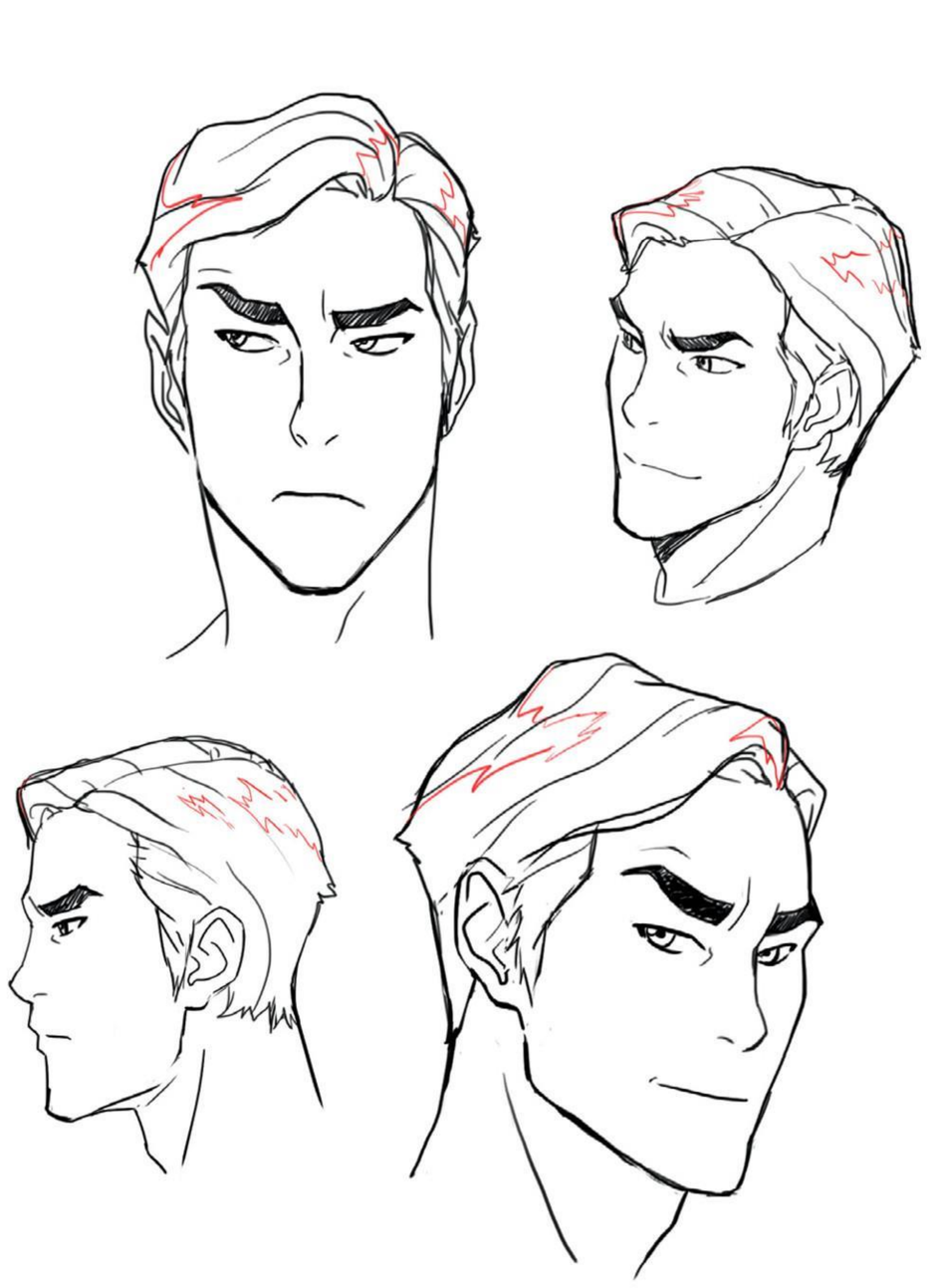
MD: It was always tricky when Team Avatar tried to all fit on Naga's saddle, but during the invasion of Air Temple Island, they had no other choice. This design shows Naga swimming underwater. In the final animation, Korra created a big air bubble around everyone's heads so they could breathe. Concept by Il-Kwang Kim.



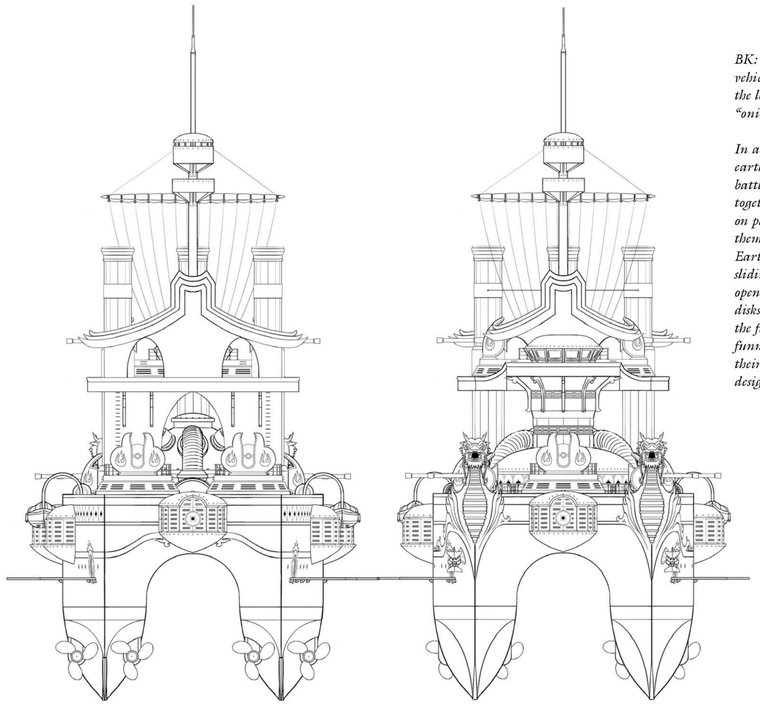
MD: If Korra's hair is down, you know something bad has happened. Next to her is a lowly telegraph operator who was captured in the Equalist attack on city hall. At the end is the Lieutenant, posing as an exterminator to take out the Fire Nation councilwoman. I love the detail of the spider-rat on his shirt. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

Top: Tenzin's home on Air Temple Island. Bottom: A view of Air Temple Island from a drainage pipe. Team Avatar sought refuge underground after the Equalists took over the island. Background designs by Yong-Ik Noh. Painting by Frederic Stewart.

Top: The bridge of an Equalist airship. Background design by Yong-Ik Noh. Painting by Frederic Stewart. Bottom: The command center inside police headquarters. Background design by Jung-Su Lee. Painting by Emily Tetri.

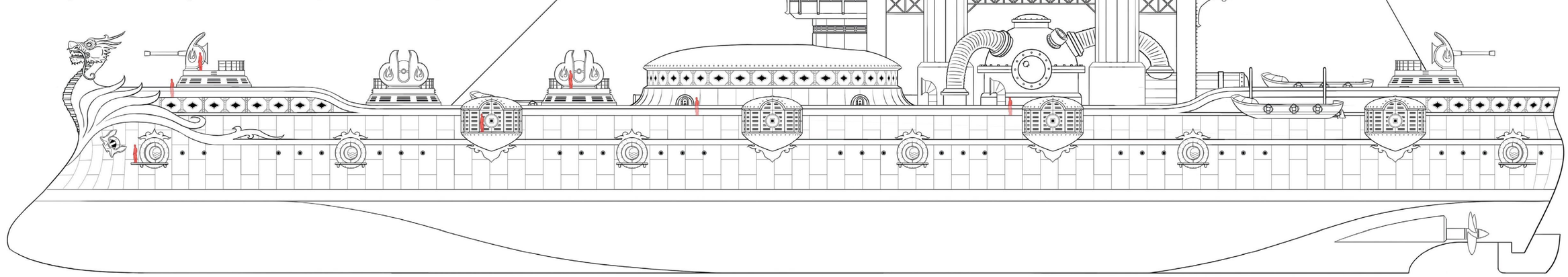


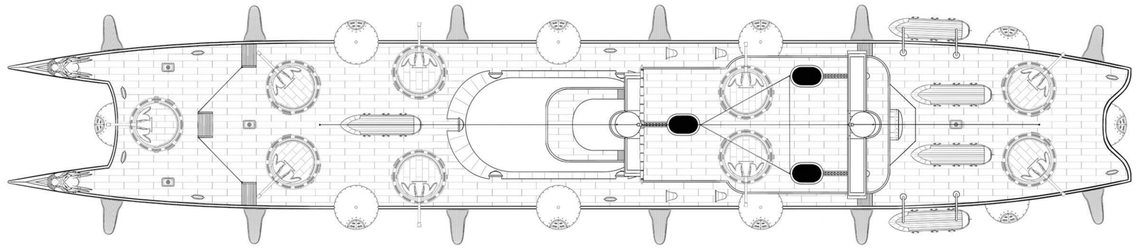
MD: The flatulence-obsessed Ryu always draws the coolest and craziest drawings of Meelo (top). Bottom: We conceived General Iroh as a young, swashbuckling hero. He is the youngest general in United Forces history and is very close with his grandfather, Lord Zuko. As a way to honor that family history, we asked Dante Basco, the actor who played Zuko, to voice the role. Concepts by Il-Kwang Kim.

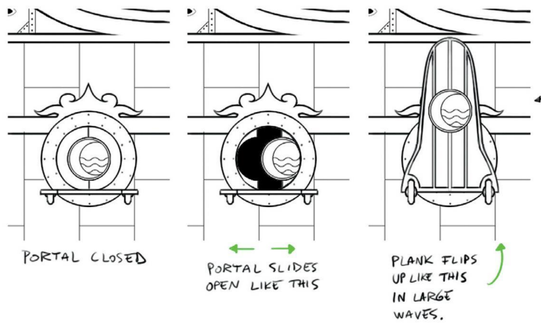


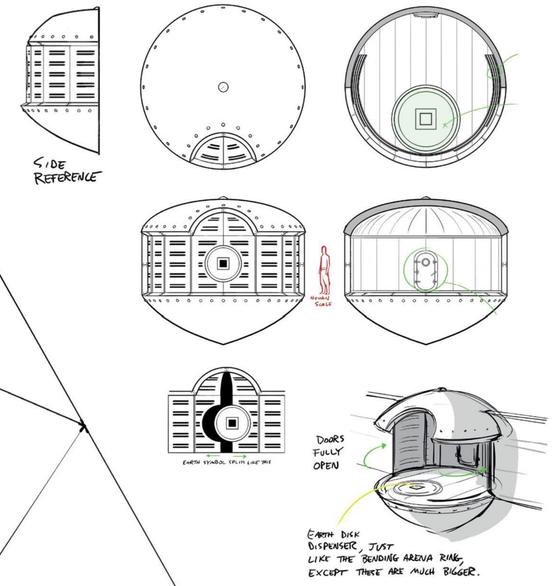
BK: The United Forces battleship was the biggest CG vehicle we built for Korra, *and it probably took me the longest to design, once again doing plenty of "onion skin" layers in Photoshop.*

In a similar way that Pro-bending combines water-, earth-, and firebending all on the same team, the battleship is designed for those three elements to work together in a military capacity: Waterbenders stand on planks just above the ocean surface to give themselves plenty of ammunition to attack or defend; Earthbenders are posted in metal turrets with slotted, sliding walls which they can quickly close to defend or open to launch large, fortified versions of the earth disks from the Pro-bending ring that dispense out of the floor; and Firebenders shoot in unison into funnel-shaped, pivoting cannons that concentrate their attacks for greater range and power. Battleship design by Bryan Konietzko.



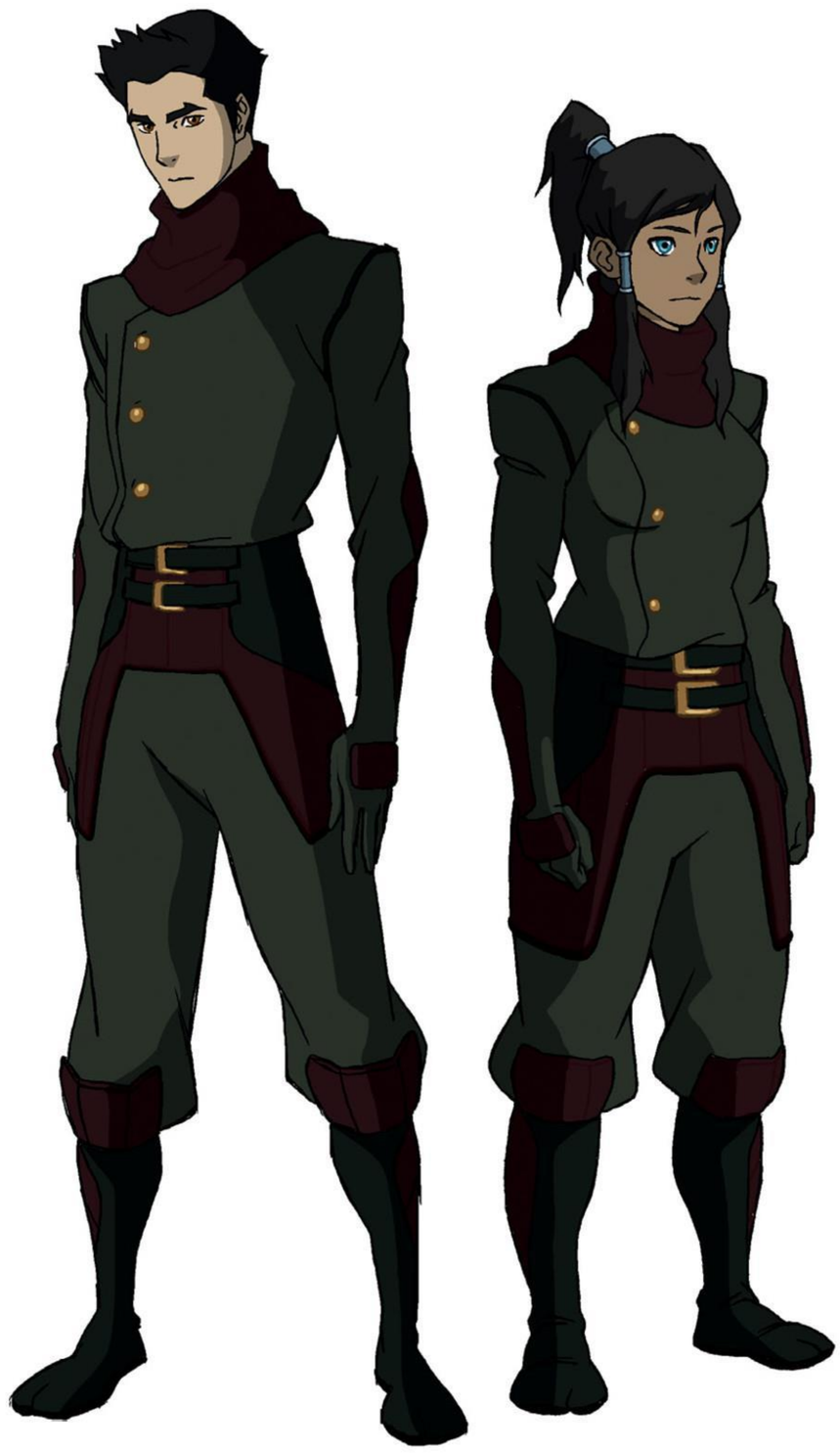






CHAPTER TEN

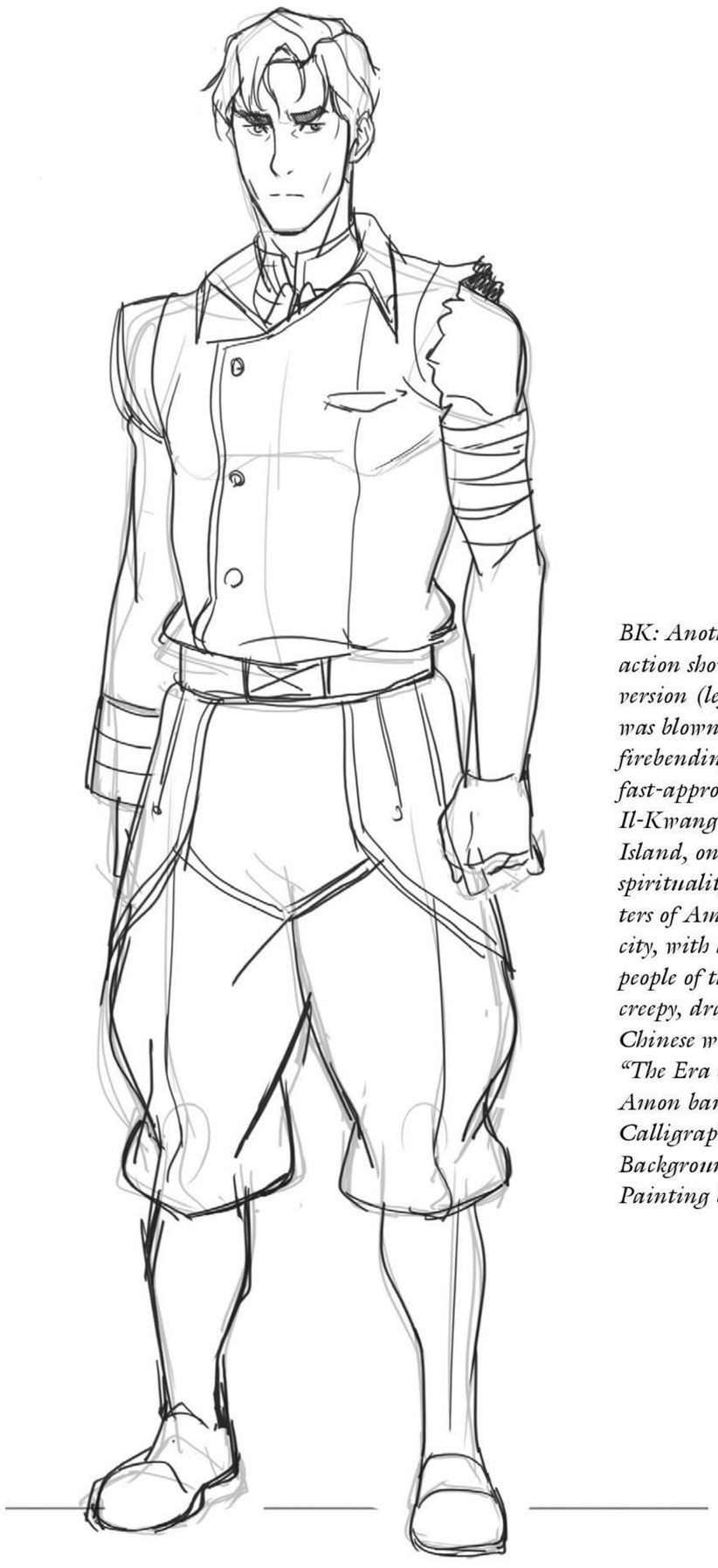
SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET



BK: Maybe it started with Han and Luke disguised as stormtroopers in Star Wars, *but I've always enjoyed seeing our good guys wearing bad guy clothes minus the headgear. We did it plenty on* Avatar, *and the trend continues here with Mako and Korra in chi-blocker uniforms. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim and Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.*

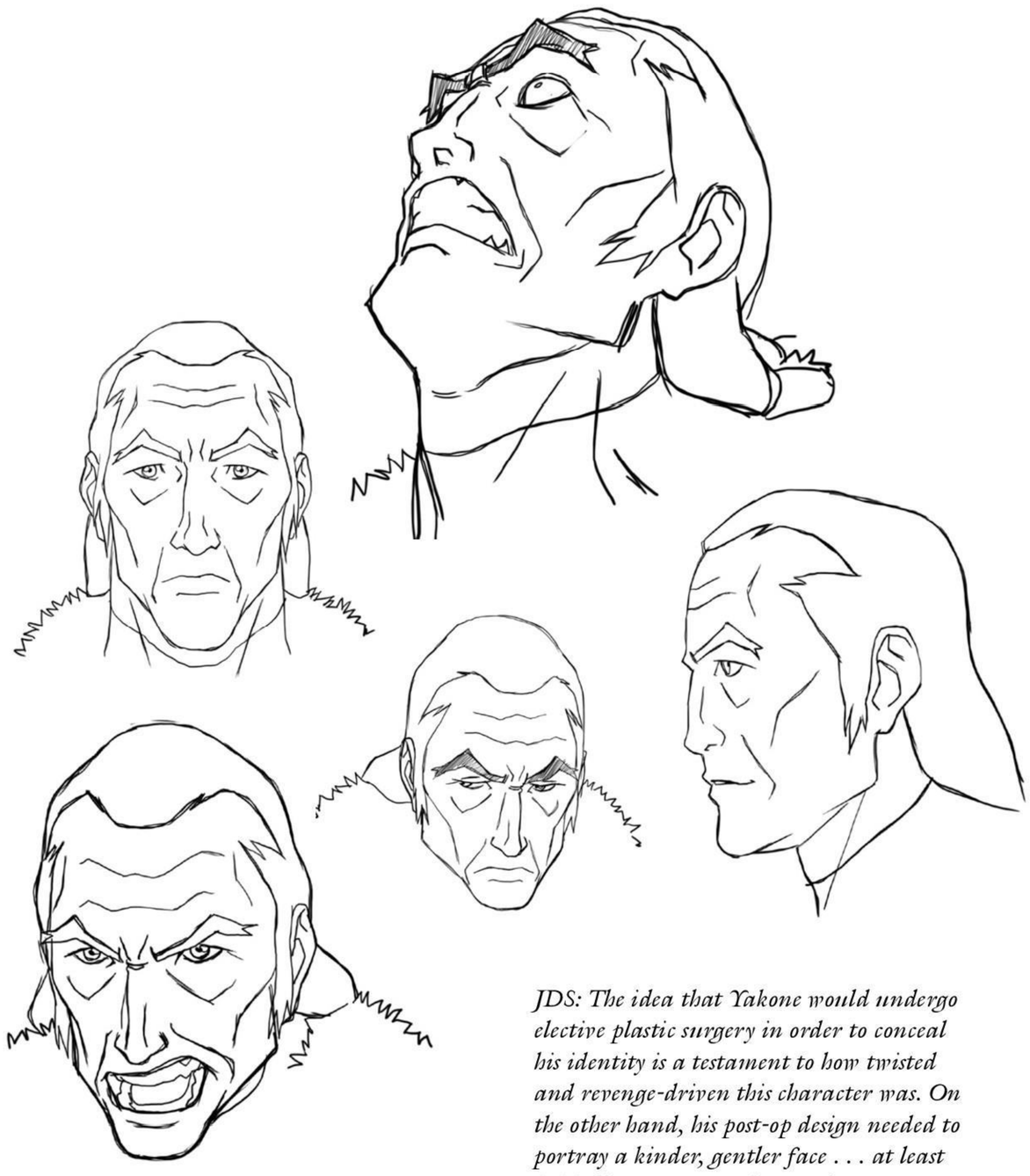
Preceding spread: A misty view of Republic City at dawn. Background design by Eun-Sang Yang. Painting by Frederic Stewart and Emily Tetri.

MD: This motley crew of hoboes is amazing. They have so much personality, and I can imagine a backstory for each one. It's too bad they only showed up in a couple of shots in the final show. The guy with the toy pig (opposite page) is incredible. He should have his own spinoff series! Designs by Il-Kwang Kim. Cleanup by Dusty Abell. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

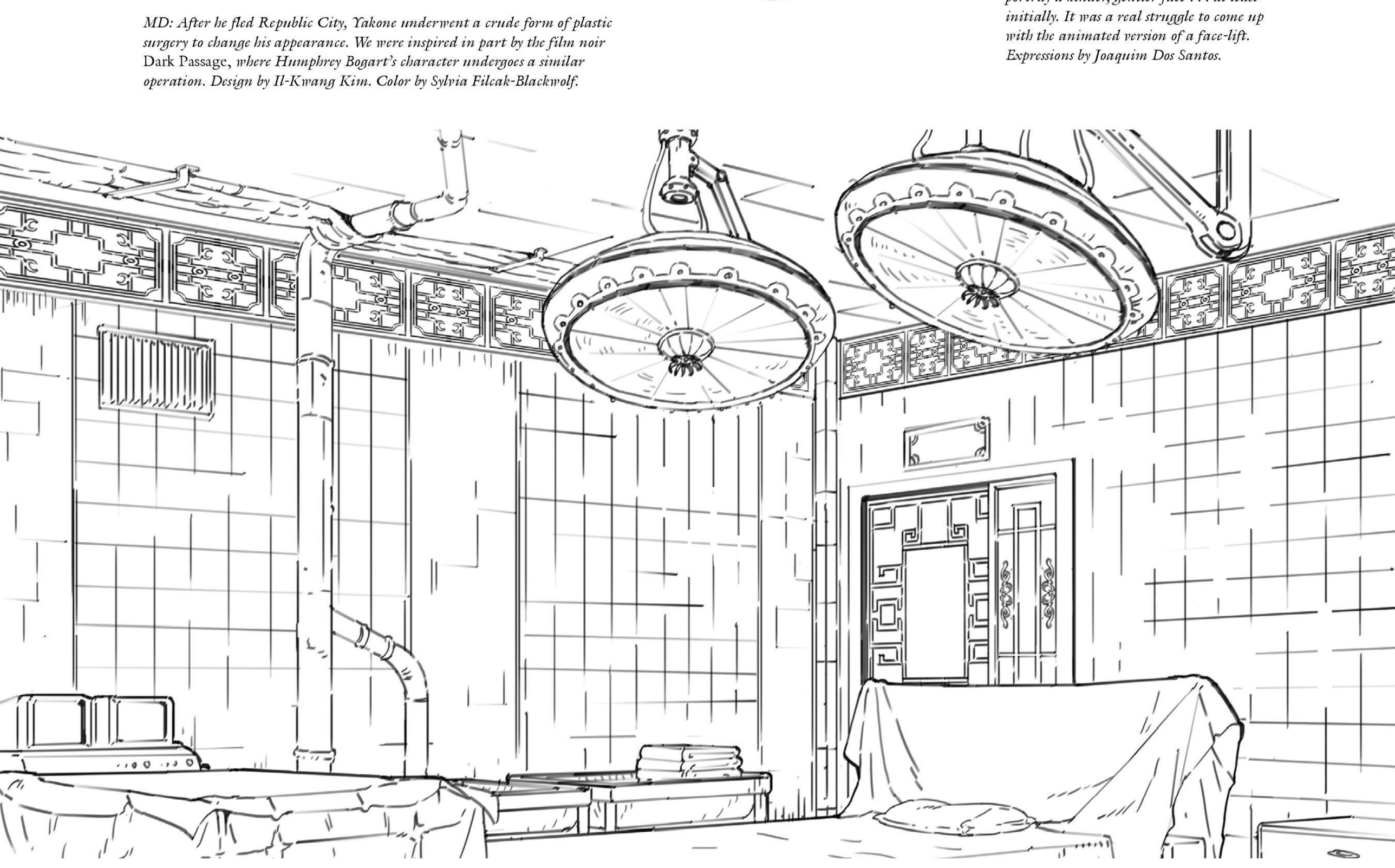


BK: Another common design on an action show is the "battle damage" version (left). General Iroh's sleeve was blown off entirely from his heroic firebending punch that stopped a fast-approaching bomb. Design by Il-Kwang Kim. Right: Air Temple Island, once a haven for peace and spirituality, becomes the headquarters of Amon's stranglehold over the city, with a stage for him to deprive people of their bending abilities in creepy, dramatic fashion. The Chinese writing on the banner reads, "The Era of Amon Begins Now." Amon banner by Bryan Konietzko. Calligraphy by S. L. Lee, PhD. Background design by Yong-Ik Noh. Painting by Elizabeth Kresin.

MD: After he fled Republic City, Yakone underwent a crude form of plastic surgery to change his appearance. We were inspired in part by the film noir Dark Passage, *where Humphrey Bogart's character undergoes a similar operation. Design by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.*



JDS: The idea that Yakone would undergo elective plastic surgery in order to conceal his identity is a testament to how twisted and revenge-driven this character was. On the other hand, his post-op design needed to portray a kinder, gentler face . . . at least initially. It was a real struggle to come up with the animated version of a face-lift. Expressions by Joaquim Dos Santos.



BK: Yakone's surgery room, down some dark alley in the underbelly of Republic City, serviced triad members in need of a new identity. Background design by Yong-Ik Noh.

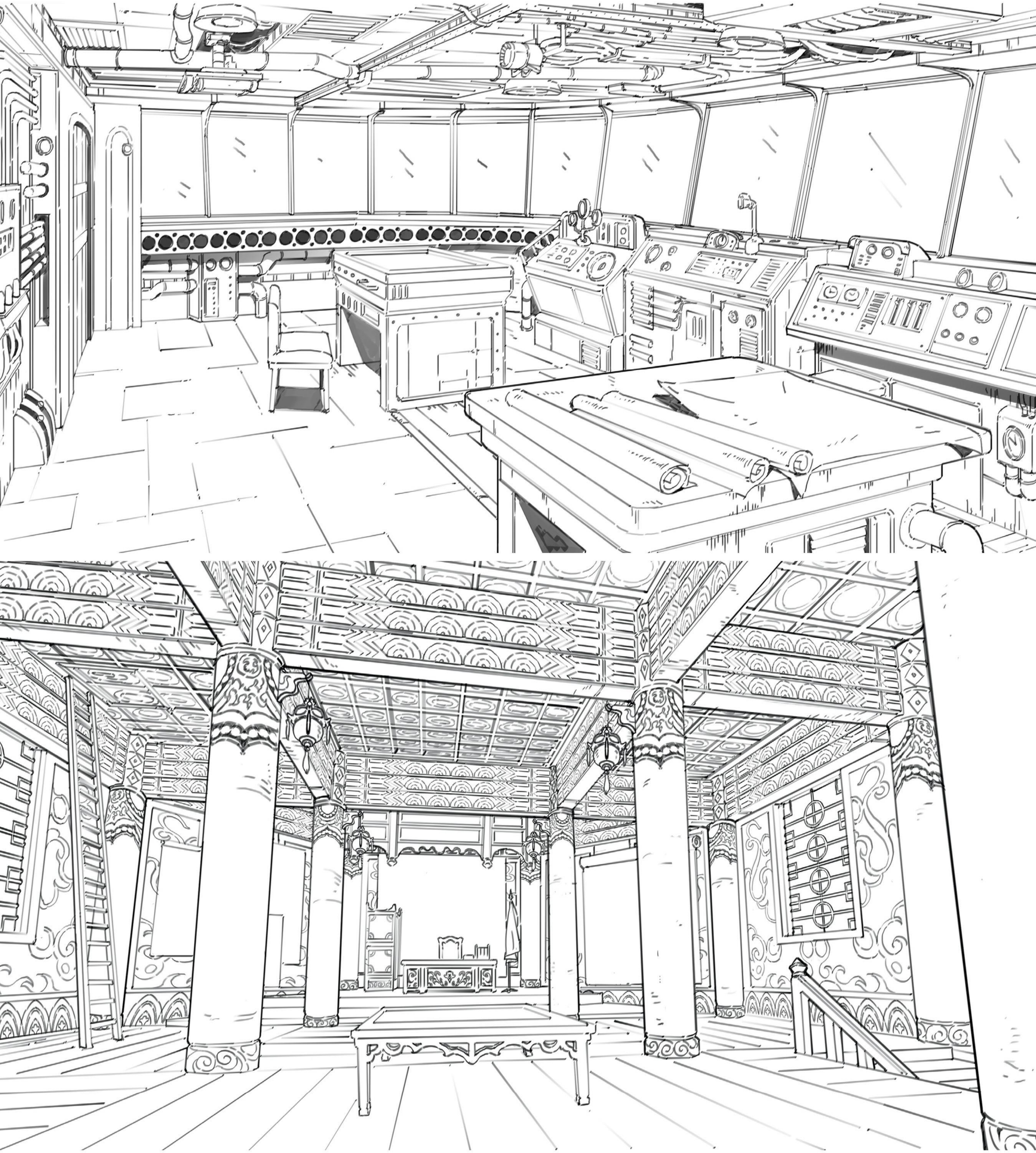
MD: Part of the Avatar *tradition is to use flashback stories within the main story. We did it with Aang's backstory in "The Storm," Zuko's backstory in "Zuko Alone," and Roku's backstory in "The Avatar and the Fire Lord." In order for this type of story to be successful, it needs to not only reveal new information about the character, but also drive the present-day story forward. And the flashback must be an interesting story in and of itself. Tarrlok and Amon's backstory was one of the highlights for me of book 1, as it shows why our two main villains turned out the way they did. As Korra says, "That's one of the saddest stories I ever heard." And I tend to agree with her. Top: The Northern Water Tribe hut where Tarrlok and Noatak grew up. Bottom: The northern lights shine over Tarrlok's village. Background designs by Yong-Ik Noh. Cleanup by Seong-Min Kim. Paintings by Frederic Stewart and Emily Tetri.*

MD: Bloodbending, which we introduced in the original series, is a rare variation of waterbending. Yakone further developed the ability, learning how to psychically bloodbend another person. He passed this skill on to his son, Noatak, who figured out how to use bloodbending to disrupt a bender's chi, making it impossible for them to bend. Expressions by Ki-Hyun Ryu and Il-Kwang Kim.

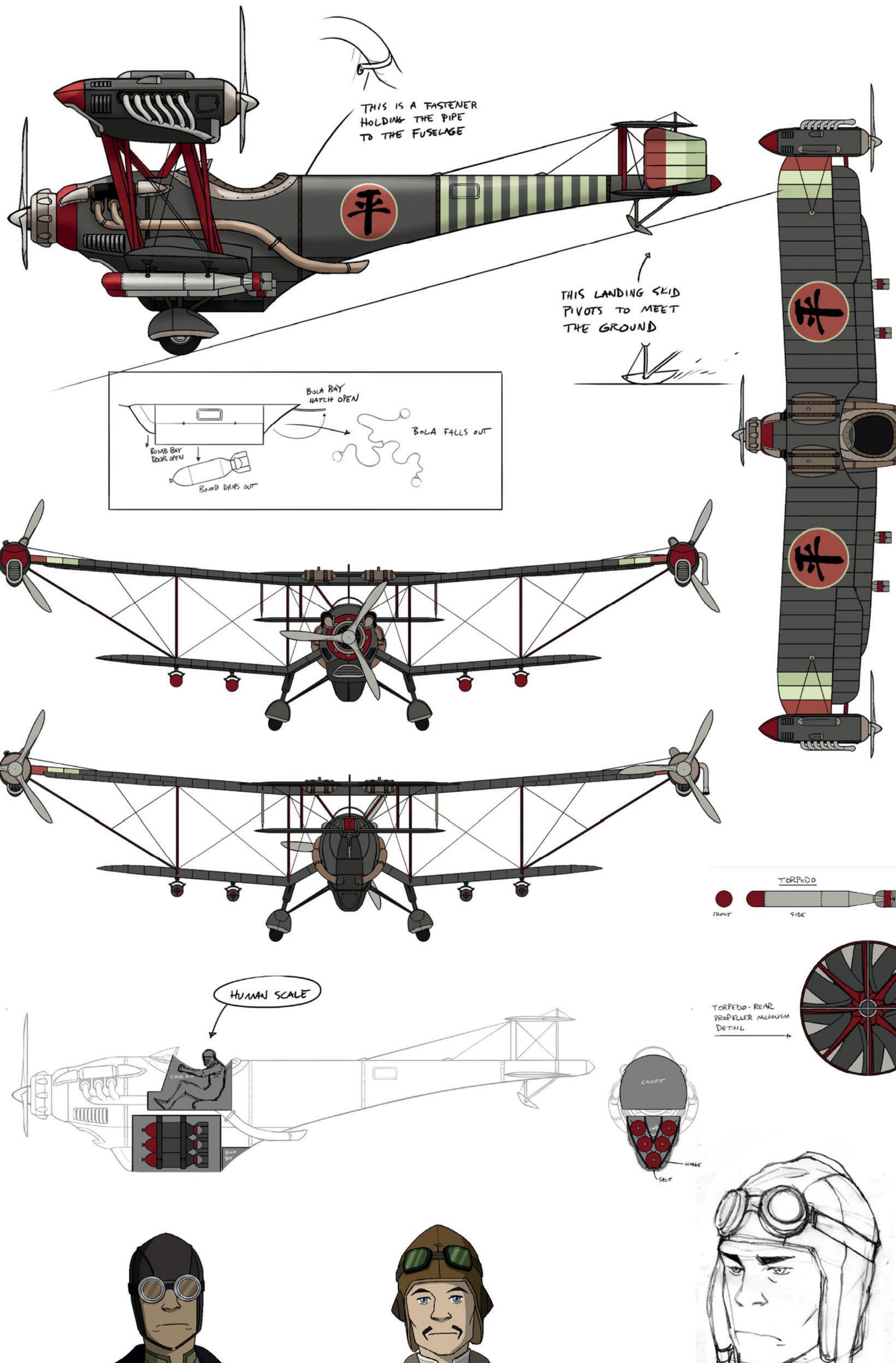
BK: Noatak at age six, eight, ten, and fourteen. I was expecting the task of designing young Noatak at all of these ages to be a real challenge, but Il-Kwang and Jin-Sun hit the nail on the head from the get-go. I was so relieved that I happily approved the designs and moved on to the next task, never noticing until the animation came back that he had the exact same hairstyle as our hero, Korra! At first I wished we could go back and change it (which we couldn't at this stage, as it would have required modifying a thousand or more inked and painted drawings). Then I decided it was a kind of interesting and unexpected connection between Korra and Noatak/Amon, showing that despite how different they are in the present, they come from very similar cultural backgrounds. Sometimes you have to come up with ideas like these to accept things you can't change. Designs by Jin-Sun Kim and Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

JDS: Despite already knowing how the story was going to turn out, I was still taken aback by how emotionally affected I was by the scene in which Tarrlok and Yakone return without Noatak. As a viewer you really begin to hope that the stability of a family unit will help to rehabilitate Yakone. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim and Joaquim Dos Santos. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

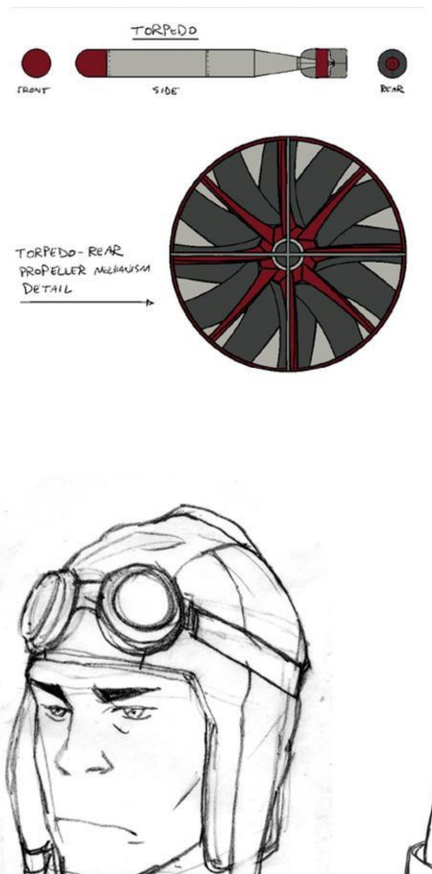
BK: Tarrlok at age three, five, seven, and eleven. Tarrlok apparently sprouted an additional ponytail every few years. Expressions by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



MD: After a rough concept is approved, the background designs are cleaned up, then painted, adding lighting, color, and texture, as you can see in these side-by-side comparisons. Top: The bridge of General Iroh's battleship. Bottom: A meditation room at the top of the Air Temple. Background designs by Yong-Ik Noh. Paintings by Emily Tetri.



BK: The Equalist airplane was the last of the CG models I designed for book 1. In doing research on historic military airplanes, my old college buddy Shanth Enjeti turned me on to the "pusher configuration," in which the propeller faces the rear of the plane. I wanted something that felt like a World War I plane with a unique twist, so I combined two pusher engines on the wingtips with a single puller engine on the fuselage. I have no idea if this would actually work, but it looks cool.



BK: Two fighter pilots and their boss, Hiroshi, all learned to fly in secret, tucked away in hidden canyons on thousands of acres of private Sato land. Designs by Jin-Sun Kim and Il-Kwang Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

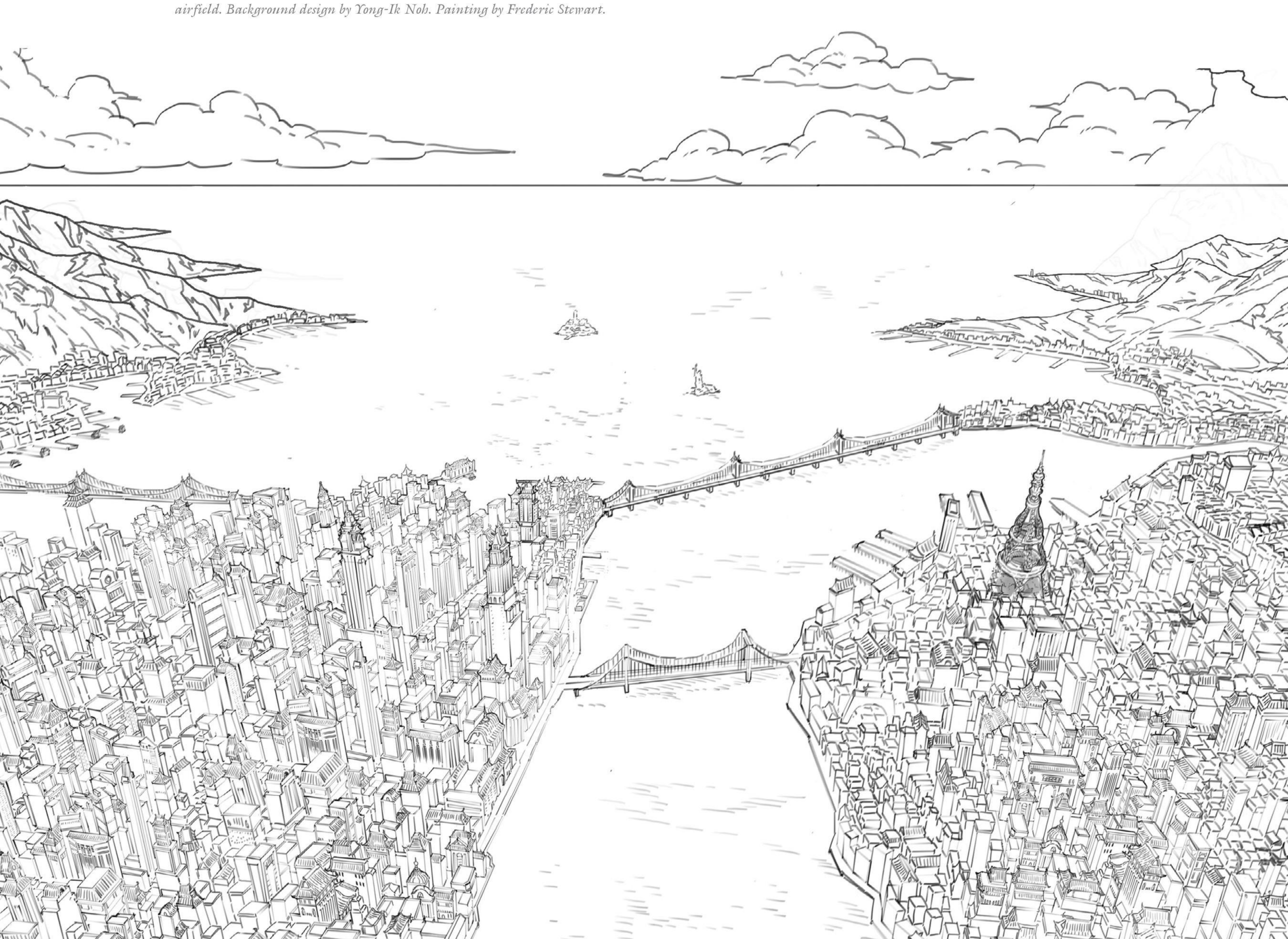
BK: I'm sure I have probably written "this is one of my favorite paintings by Fred" multiple times already in this book, but honestly, these are two of my favorite paintings by Fred. They have such a dramatic mood and sense of scale, which deepen the emotional impact of the backstory. Enclave design by Eun-Sang Yang. Cleanup by Seong-Min Kim. Cliff design by Sang-Hyuck Bang. Paintings by Frederic Stewart.

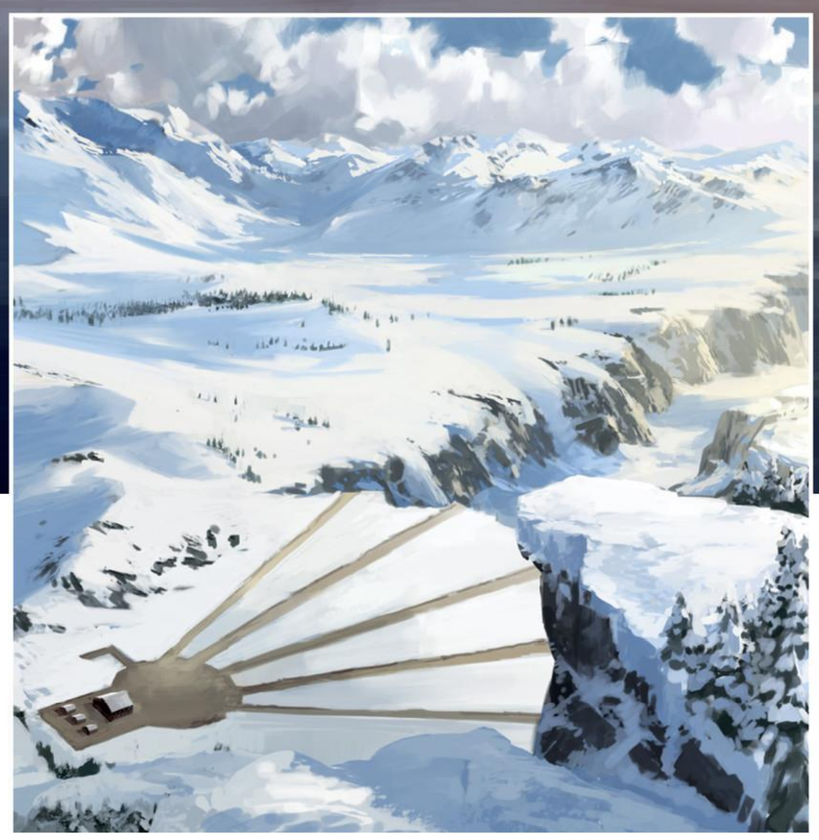
CHAPTER ELEVEN

ENDGAME

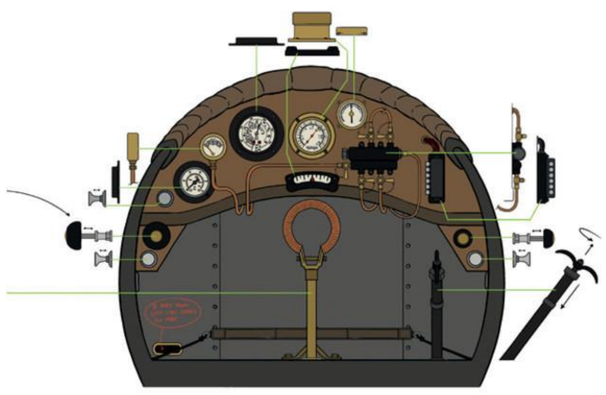
MD: There are a lot of great moments in the finale, but I really loved the confrontation between the Lieutenant and Amon. When the Lieutenant witnessed Amon bloodbending Korra, he realized the guy he'd been working for was a complete fraud and felt totally betrayed. I kind of felt bad for the guy at the end. BK: General Iroh got a nice view of Republic City and Yue Bay (below) as he plummeted along with the wreckage of his commandeered plane. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim and Joaquin Dos Santos. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

MD: (Preceding spread) Asami, Bolin, and General Iroh got quite a surprise when they unwittingly walked into Hiroshi's electric fence on the outskirts of his airfield. Background design by Yong-Ik Noh. Painting by Frederic Stewart.

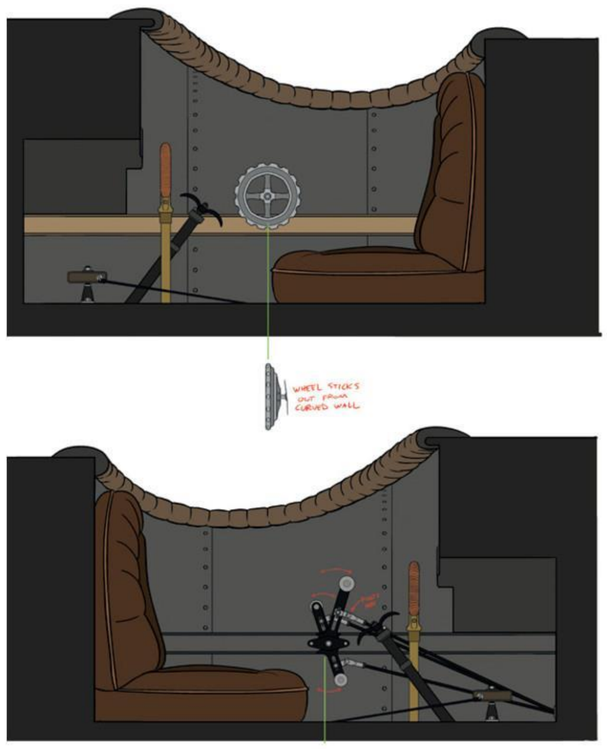


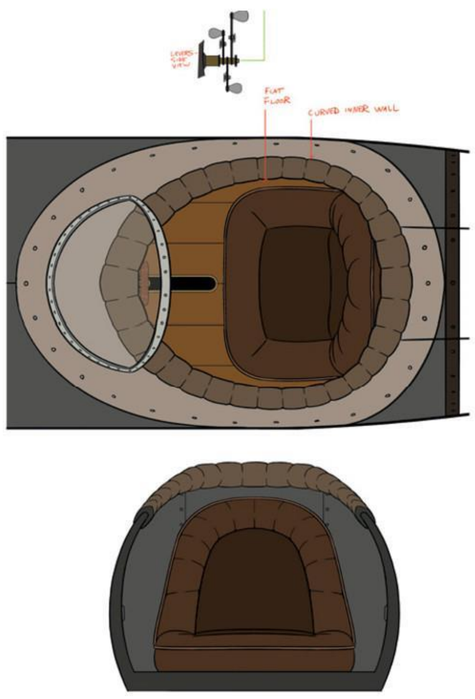


BK: The sun rises on Republic City, its Equalist nightmare already fading into memory. Inset: Hiroshi's hidden air base, tucked in a private valley. Air base design by Yong-Ik Noh. Paintings by Frederic Stewart.

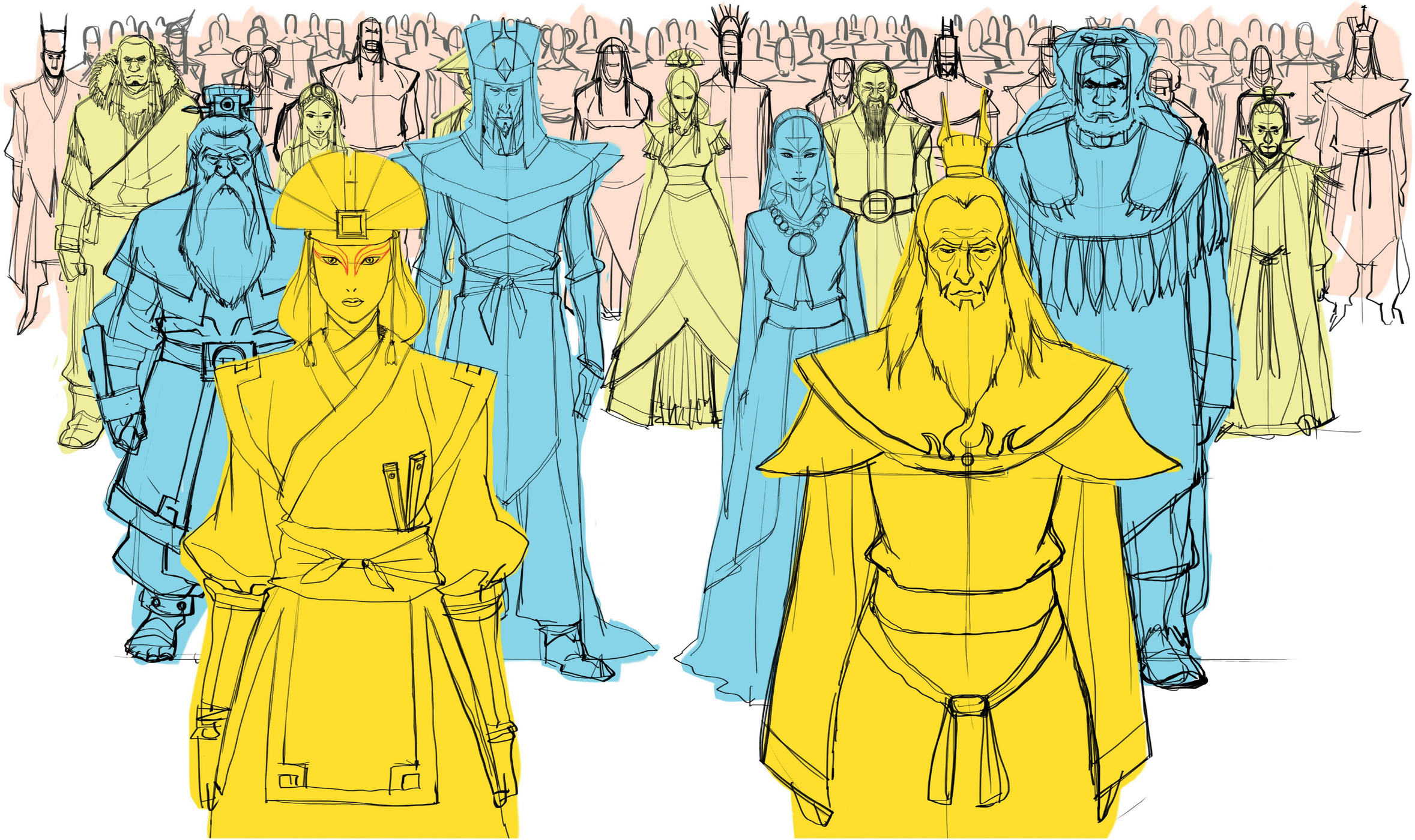


BK: I designed the interior of the cockpit, but it looks about as foreign to me as it must have to General Iroh the first time he sat in it, while in flight.





MD: Tenzin's older brother, Commander Bumi, made a brief appearance at the end of book 1. When we developed Korra, *we knew Bumi and his sister, Kya, would later become major characters, so we had Katara mention them in the first episode. You can look forward to seeing a lot more of Bumi and Kya in book 2. Concepts by Il-Kwang Kim.*



MD: Storyboarding the last act of the finale was one of the highlights for me, artistically. Korra's emotional breakdown and subsequent connection to her past lives was a part of her story that was really important to me, and I had great fun drawing again, which I don't get to do much these days. But don't be fooled; this drawing was by Ryu, working off my rough.

Top: Katara's healing hut. Background design by Yong-Ik Noh. Painting by Frederic Stewart. Bottom: The ice cliffs where Korra connects with Aang and her past lives. Background design by Yong-Ik Noh. Painting by Emily Tetri.

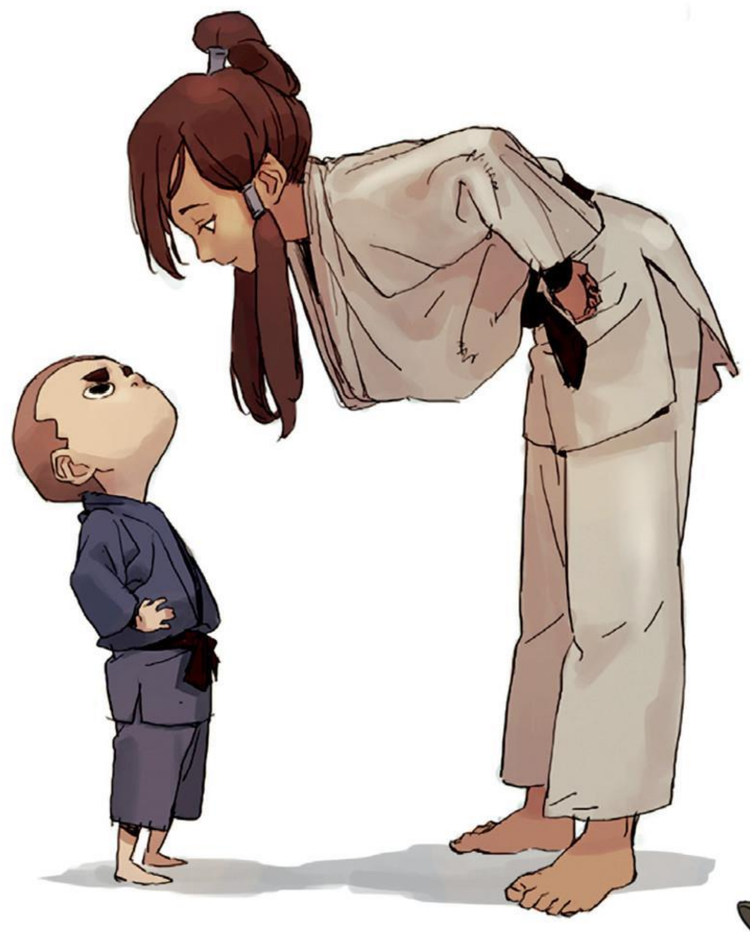
MD: For the final scene of the episode, I wanted the location to feel sacred and special. I was inspired by the stupas in Bhutan, a country I visited a few years ago. And for the large rock formations, I looked at photos of the Carnac stones in western France. Background design by Yong-Ik Noh. Paintings by Frederic Stewart.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ANCILLARY ART

BK: Ryu drew the characters for the book 1 DVD cover. I opened the file to color it and laughed out loud when I found he organized the characters into separate layer groups with the following titles: Good, Bad, and Old. The drawings were, typically, awesome, but as a composition, it was too jumbled. So I moved the Bad and Old groups to the back cover. Ultimately, the packaging designer needed more room on the back for type and graphics, so the Old group was moved to an insert card, but this is how I intended it to look. Character drawings by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Color by Bryan Konietzko. Chinese calligraphy by S. L. Lee, PhD.

Preceding spread: Air Temple Island design by Jevon Bue. Painting by Frederic Stewart.



BK: Il-Kwang Kim, one of the character designers working at Studio Mir in Seoul, drew this adorable stare-down between Meelo and Korra, looking like they are about to determine just who is the student and who is the master with a judo match.

BK: Sung-Hoon Kim, a storyboard artist and animation director at Studio Mir, drew this illustration of Korra and Naga looking hilariously grumpy.

BK: We had the pleasure of working with Evon Freeman, who was part of Nickelodeon's artist fellowship program. She did some great concept design work for us, and did this gouache-like digital painting of Korra and Pabu in her charming style. I have a framed copy of it on my desk.

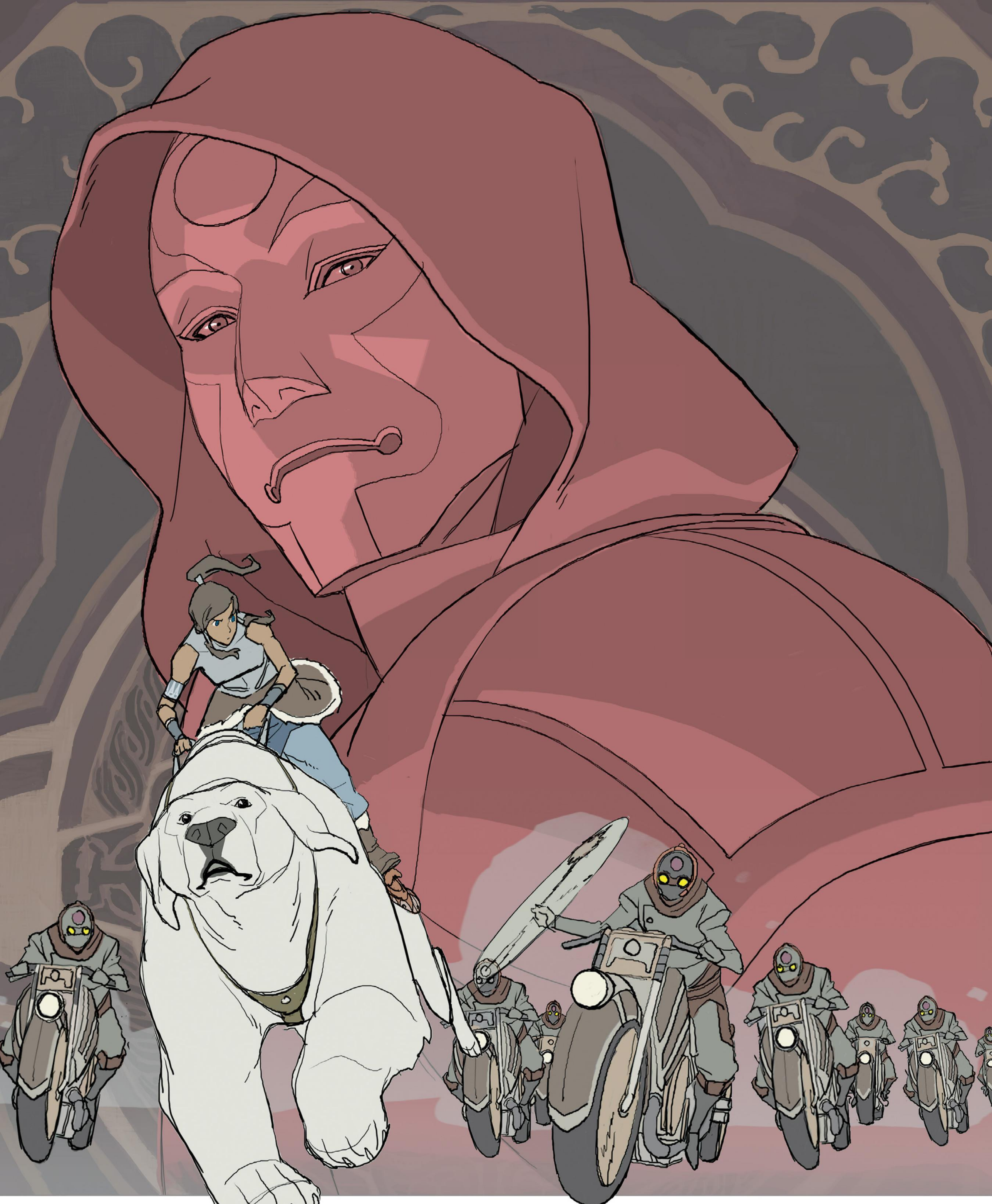
BK: I did a chibi *design of Korra riding Naga for a San Diego Comic-Con T-shirt. I got a new digital brush one day, so I messed around painting this pose with it, just for fun.*

BK: Colin Heck, a storyboard revisionist on book 1 and director on book 2, did this cool pixel-art Korra for his blog.

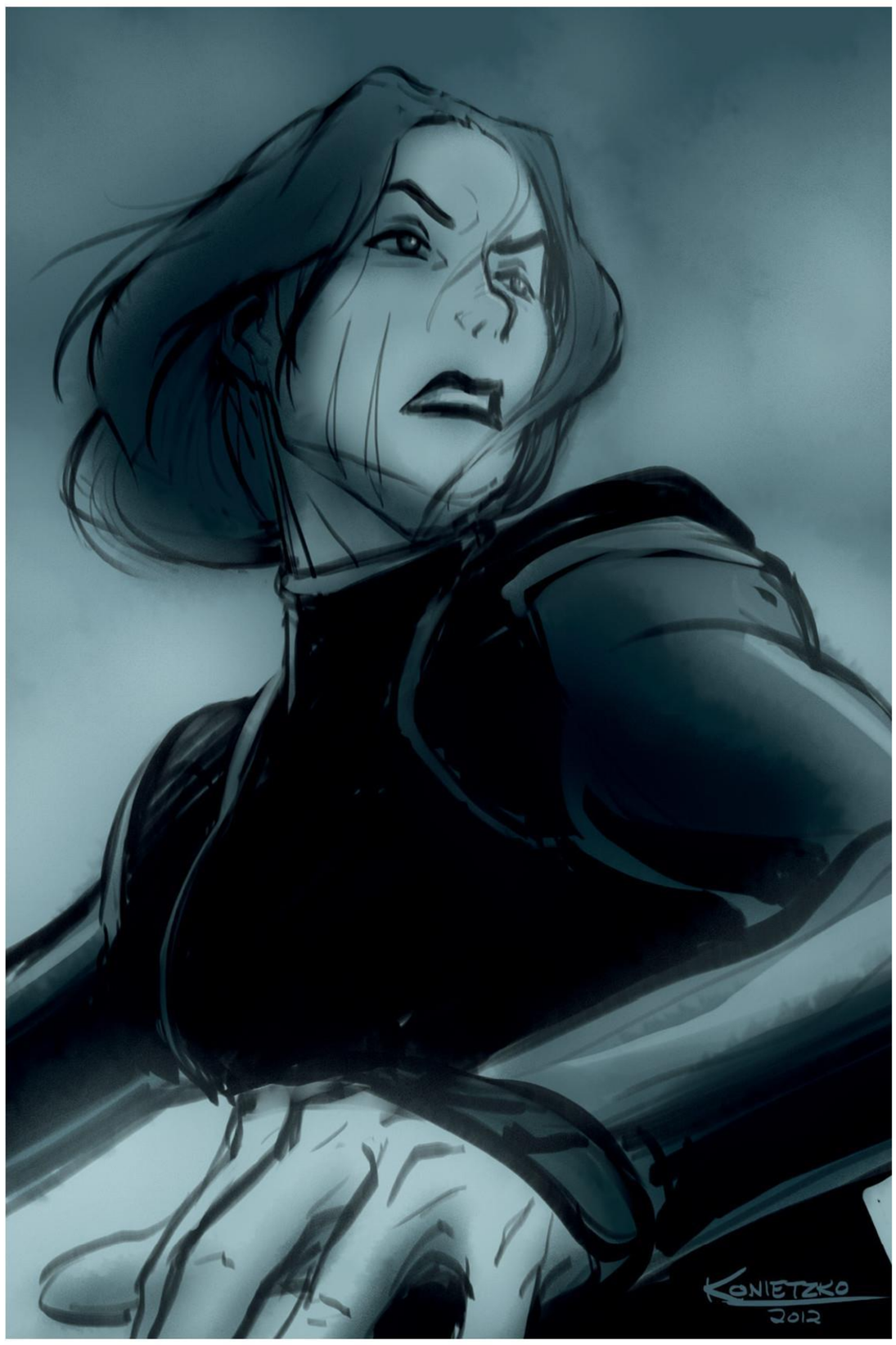
JDS: It's always fun to take a little break and do some blog sketching! Korra instructs the fans to watch episode 4, with attitude.

JDS: I had initially had the idea of doing a new Korra*-related blog drawing for the release of every episode. That idea quickly faded as deadlines loomed. To the left are two of my personal faves!*

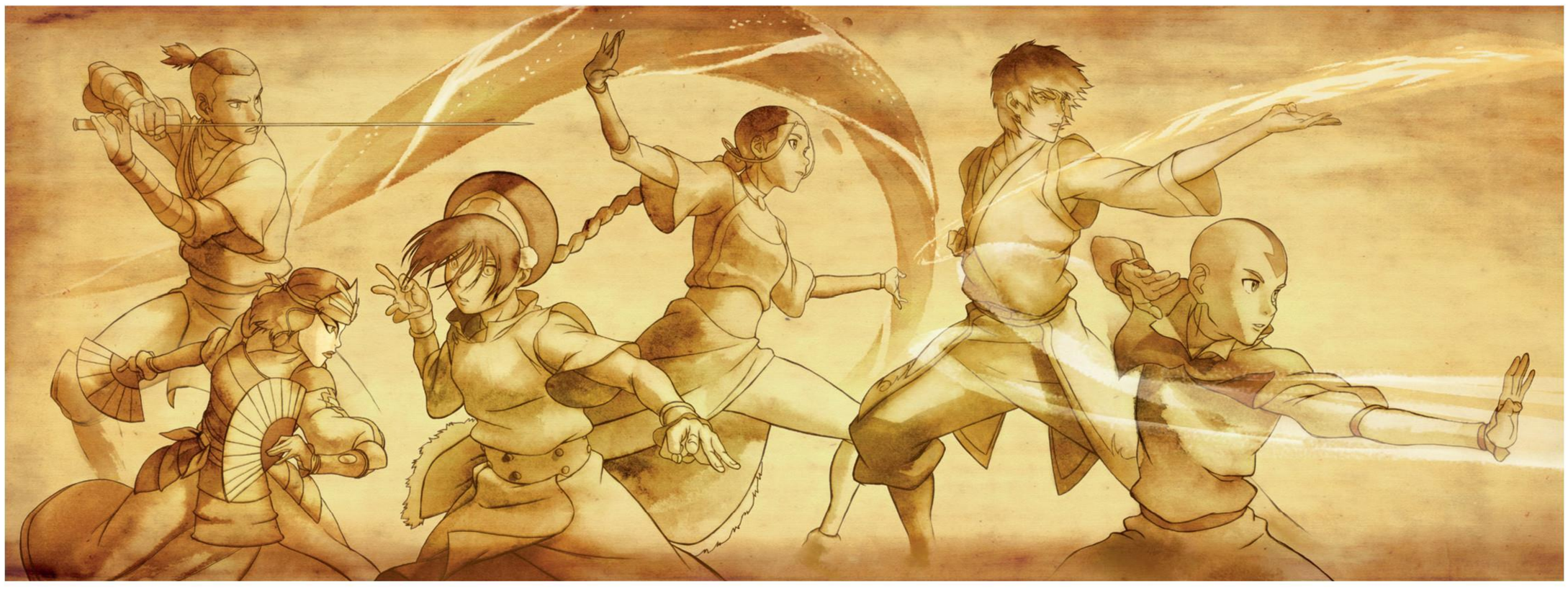
BK: Creating little sketches and illustrations whenever I find a few minutes to steal at the end of a long day has actually helped me grow as an artist faster than my "work" work. Digital painting was something I struggled with for years with little or no progress until I started messing around with it for pieces to post on my Tumblr blog. While I still have a long way to go, the Naga piece below marked a milestone in my journey to become the digital painter I hope to be one day.



BK: Dae-Woo Lee, a layout director and storyboard artist at Studio Mir, did this cool illustration of the chi blockers in pursuit of Korra and Naga while Amon looms eerily, as he is prone to do. I love the vintage, washed-out color scheme on this one.



BK: To the left is an illustration I did for my blog when episode 10 aired, representing the sacrifice Lin Beifong made for her old flame Tenzin and his family, one of the pinnacles of book 1 for me. Right: I cranked out this Korra *action illustration for two reasons: to practice action posing more in the style of Joaquim and Ryu, and to create a piece of art to print as a prize for PixelDrip Gallery's* Korra *fan art show.*



JDS: I won't lie; I jumped at the chance to draw the original Team Avatar for the extended opening to the series. The concept was to have an ancient scroll come to life. A few people had their hands in this one piece of art: I provided the line art and basic shadow guide; Joshua Middleton provided the tones; and Matt Gadbois brought all the elements together in After Effects for what you see on screen!

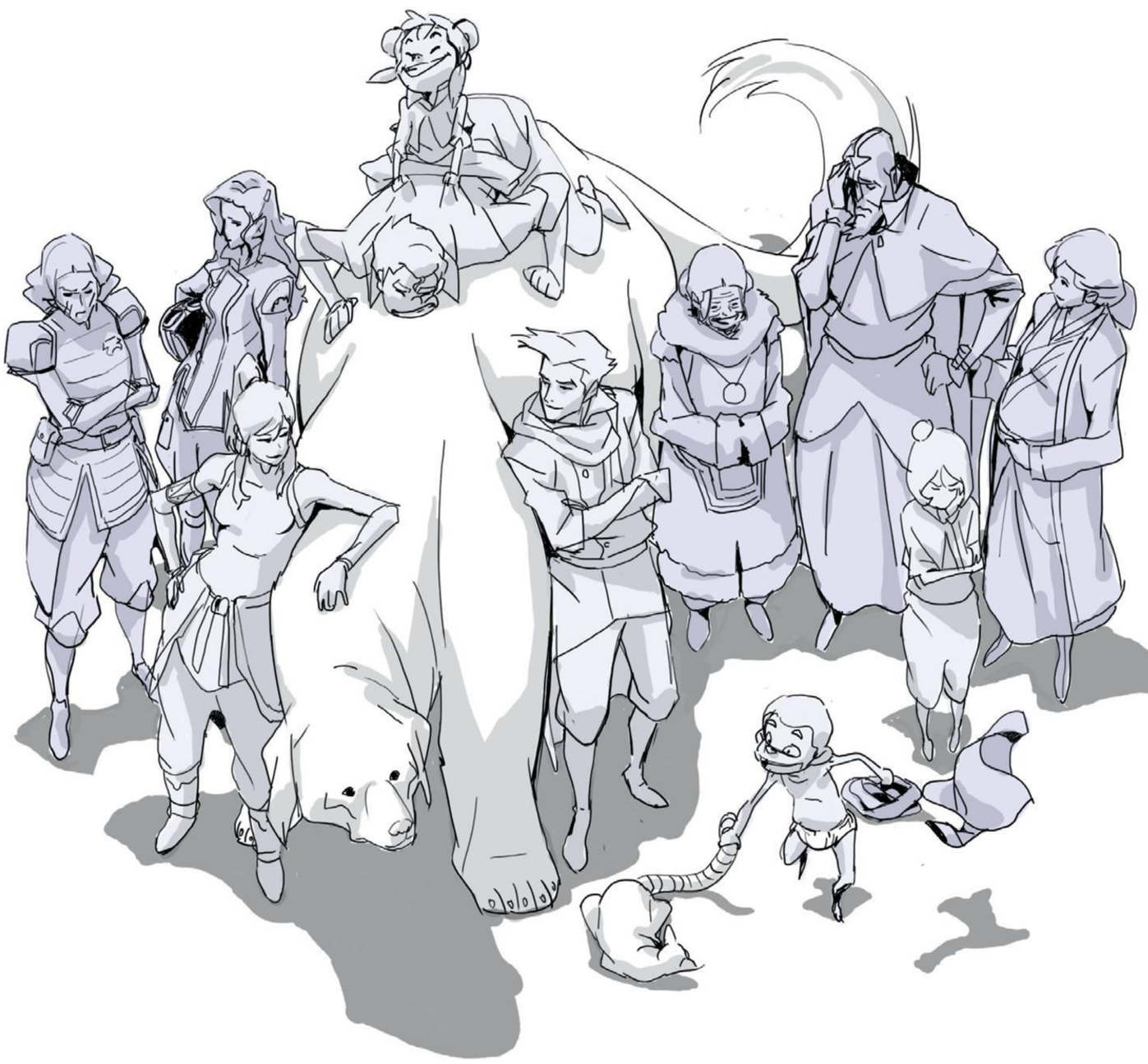
BK: Jin-Sun Kim, the other character designer at Studio Mir, and Seong-Min Kim, a background painter at Studio Mir, collaborated for this stylish illustration of Asami and Korra being BFFs in the pink glow of a summer afternoon.

BK: This is the sketch and the finished version of the press art I made for the book 1 finale. There are some things I would do differently in hindsight, but that's the story of 99 percent of the art I create. At least the lighting on Amon's mask came out pretty cool. Opposite: Ryu designed this killer poster for San Diego Comic-Con. I did the color on top of a portion of one of Frederic Stewart's background paintings from the series.

BK: Emily Tetri, one of our great background painters, showed off her stylish illustration skills with this piece for her blog to celebrate the airing of the book 1 finale.

BK: Jeong-Hoon Kim did prop design and animation cleanup at Studio Mir, as well as this spirited, clever, Olympics-themed illustration.

JDS: These two posters were given away at San Diego Comic-Con. I cannot tell you how geeked I was to draw the classic Avatar *characters in their adult forms. These are not the middle-aged versions as we see them in the flashbacks; rather, I imagined these to be the characters in their mid to late twenties. BK: Ki-Yong Bae, a storyboard artist and animation director at Studio Mir, drew the charming shot on the next page of our big, happy family of new heroes in the* Avatar *world.*



"I'm the Avatar. You gotta deal with it!"

Go behind the scenes of the animated series *The Legend of Korra*, created by Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko—the smash-hit sequel to their blockbuster show *Avatar: The Last Airbender*.

Inside you will find hundreds of pieces of never-before-seen artwork created during the development of the first season of the show. With captions from Mike and Bryan throughout, along with co-executive producer Joaquim Dos Santos, this is an intimate look at the creative process that brought a new generation of heroes and villains to life.

"The smartest cartoon on TV."
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"Korra *is striking. It's full of little tricks and nuances that only true fans will notice and savor, but nothing prevents civilians from enjoying it as well."*
—New York Daily News

"One of the most riveting animated series we've ever seen."
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"The Legend of Korra *promises to be a great show, possibly better than* The Last Airbender. *The art and music in this show have matured but it's the same style and the creators have managed to capture the same magic that its predecessor gave us."*
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