

"A feast for the eyes sure to fill your heart with light even in times of shadowy darkness."

—JOHNNIE CHRISTMAS, *New York Times* bestselling and award-winning creator

BOOK THREE

# LIGHTFEALL



THE DARK TIMES



TIM PROBERT

### Praise for the Lightfall series

★ “An invigorating, original fantasy that’s entertaining and reflective in equal measure.”  
—*KIRKUS REVIEWS* (starred review)

★ “A fresh fantasy.”  
—*THE BULLETIN OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN’S BOOKS* (starred review)

“Beautifully drawn. A world readers will want to visit.”  
—KAZU KIBUISHI, author of *AMULET*

“Gorgeous artwork and a lovable heroine make Lightfall the series I wish I’d had as a kid.”  
—FAITH ERIN HICKS,  
*New York Times* bestselling author



BOOK THREE

# LIGHTFALL



THE DARK TIMES

The southwest of the Sea of Light  
Drawn by Beatrice  
copied from the Algorn Atlas  
found in the ruins of Rinn





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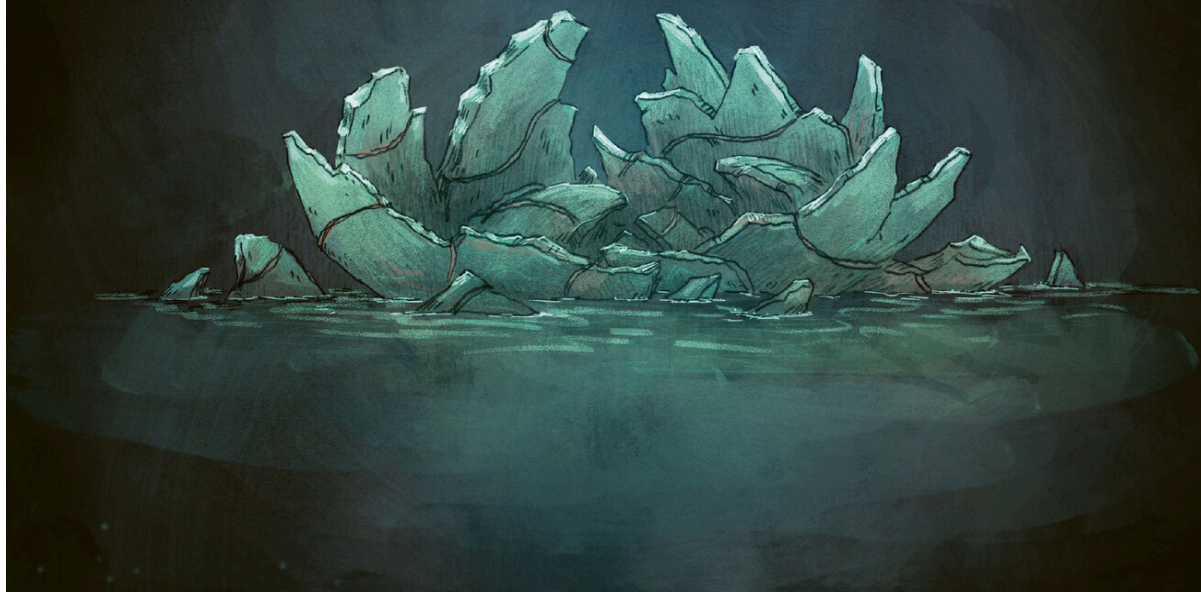




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In the dark times  
Will there be singing?  
There will be singing.  
Of the dark times.

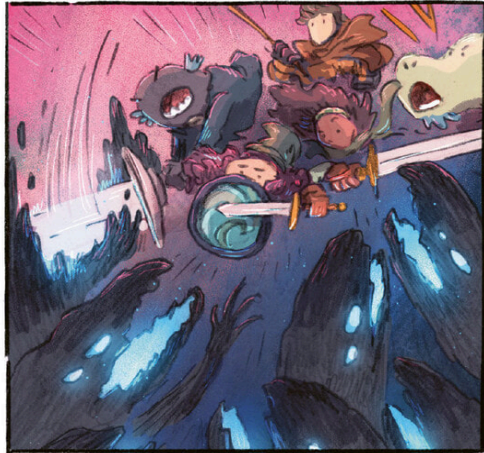
—Bertolt Brecht

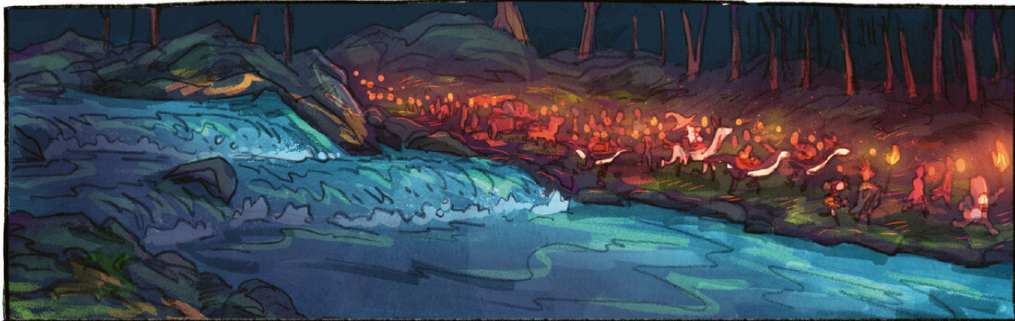


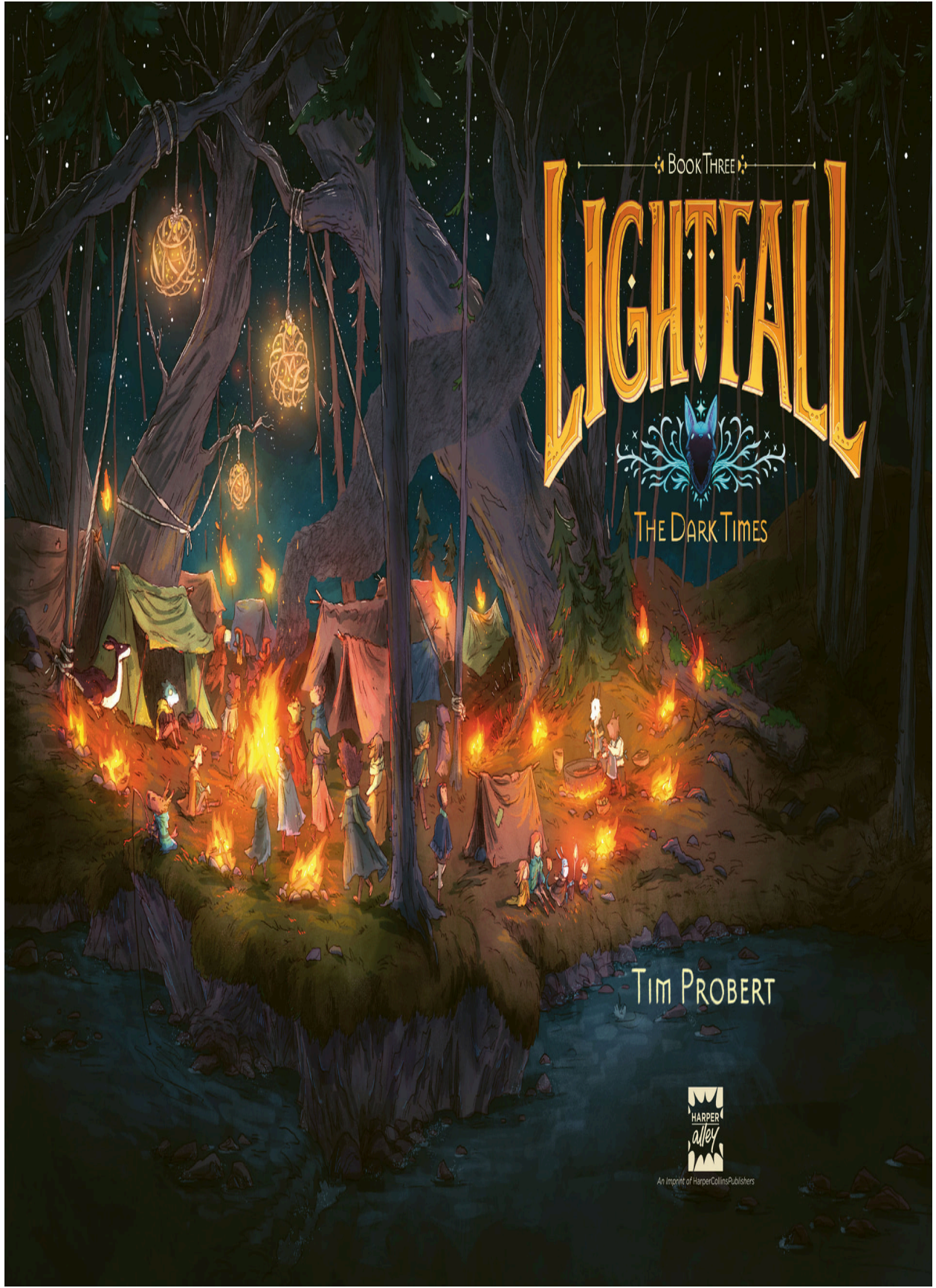












BOOK THREE

# LIGHTFALL



THE DARK TIMES

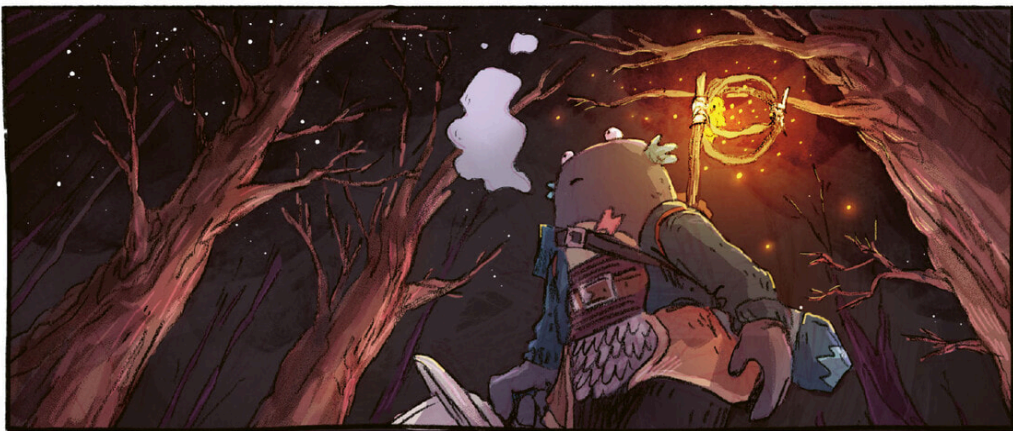
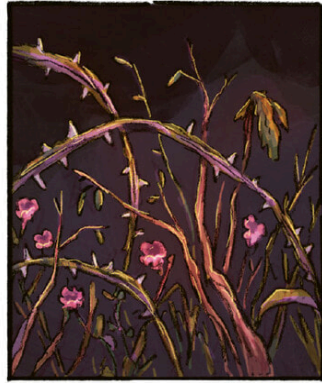
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\* The Lights used to rotate in place, with one rotation signifying a day. Without the Lights, days are counted every time one sleeps.







Fillog said the split in the river is only a few more marches away.



Everyone else will continue east to Baihle and we'll go southwest.

Mhmm.



You don't like the plan?

Leaving the group and sneaking off to a library?



It's not just any library—it's the **Citadel of Knowledge!** Our quest for the sun is at a dead end and there's nothing for us to learn in Baihle.



Sure.  
The plan's  
fine.

Fine?!



That's it?!  
We might finally  
translate your  
Galdurian  
scrolls!

Maybe.



Or get a real  
lead on the sun.

That would  
be helpful.

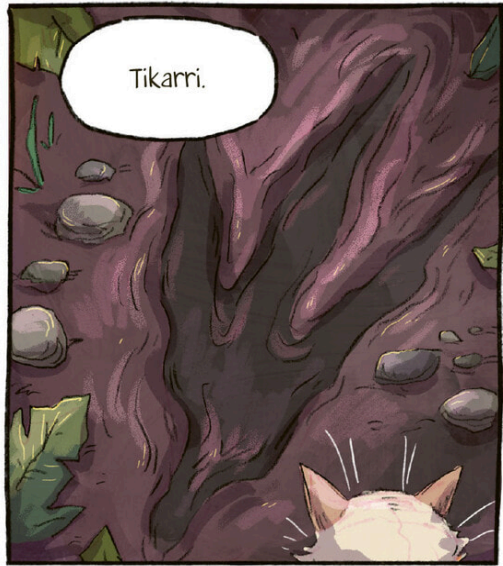


Or learn about  
the Star Spirit I saw.  
Or about how Kest...  
you know.



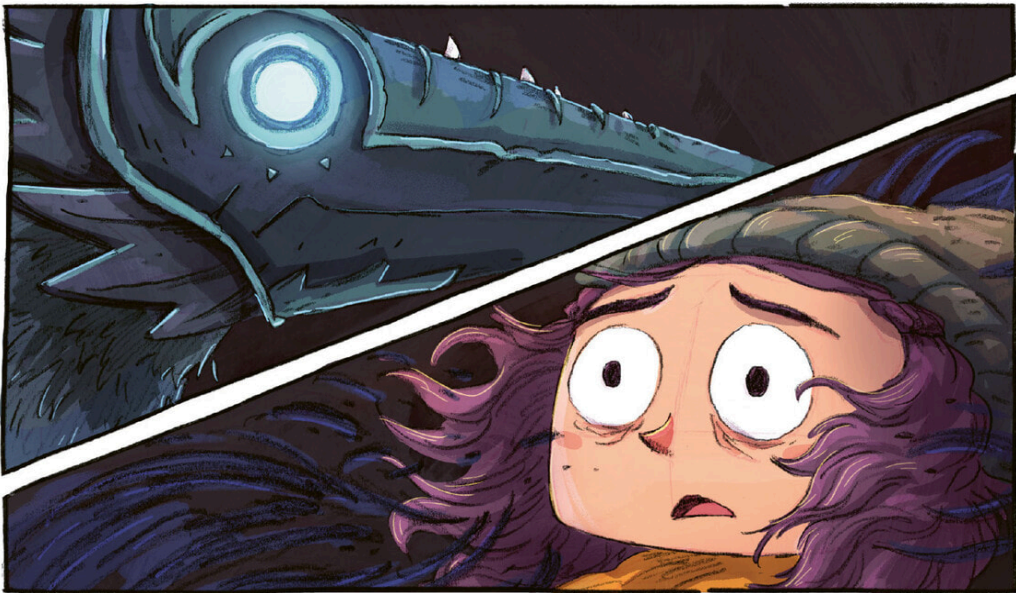
So why haven't  
you told Karru that  
we're leaving?

I will! I just  
haven't... yet.



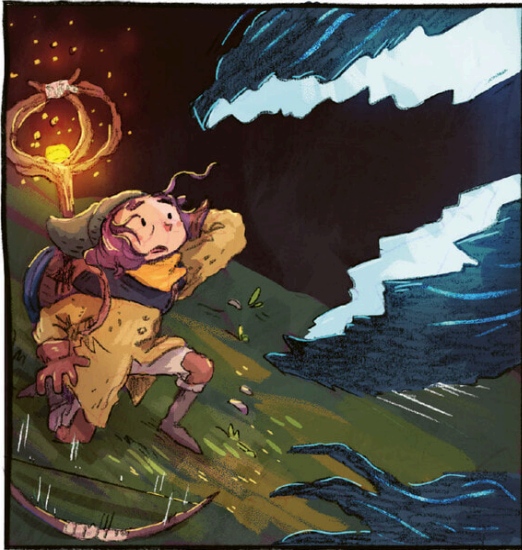




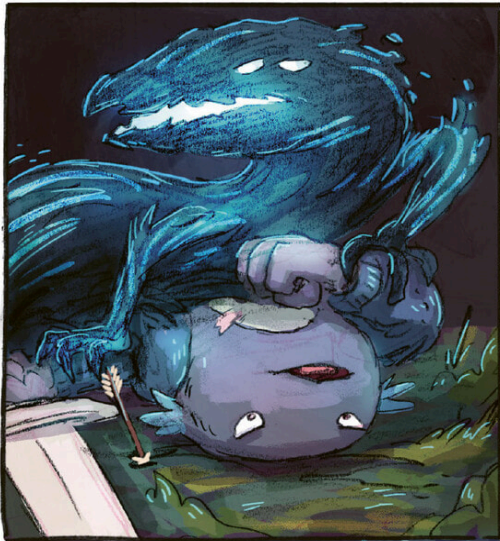
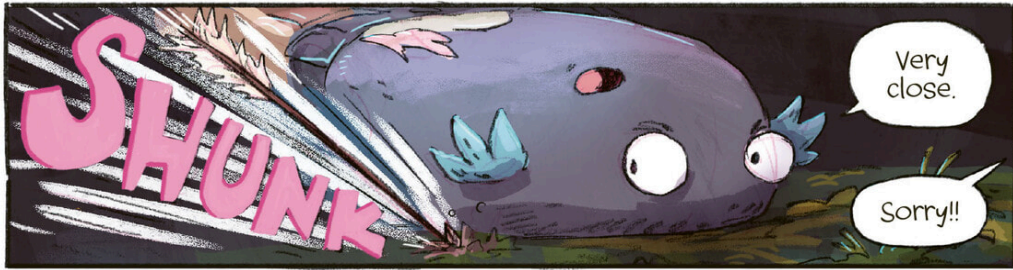














Mushrooms are almost all we've been eating lately, so I thought I'd find us some variety.



That's, um, very sweet...



But?



Well... These are all poisonous.



Poisonous?



Of course they're poisonous. I try to do something helpful and almost make the whole camp sick.

Don't worry, I bet Gramps can find something to do with them.





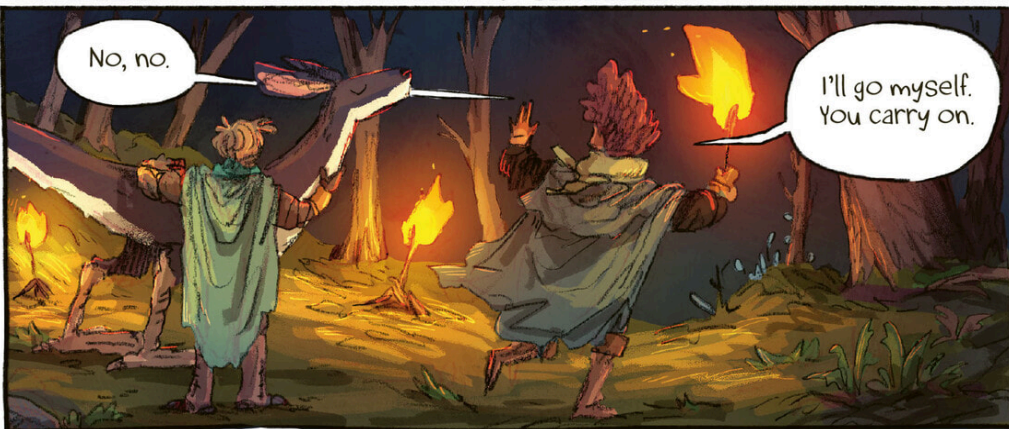
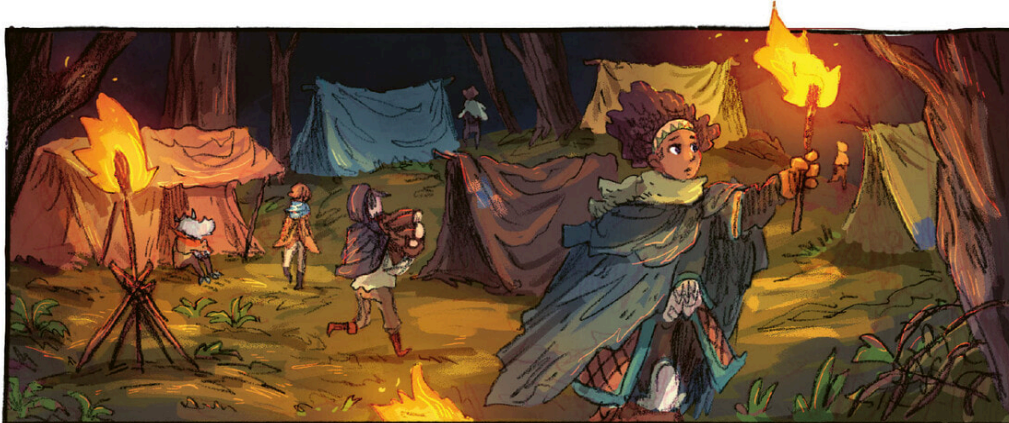
Thank ye, Mara.

Of course.



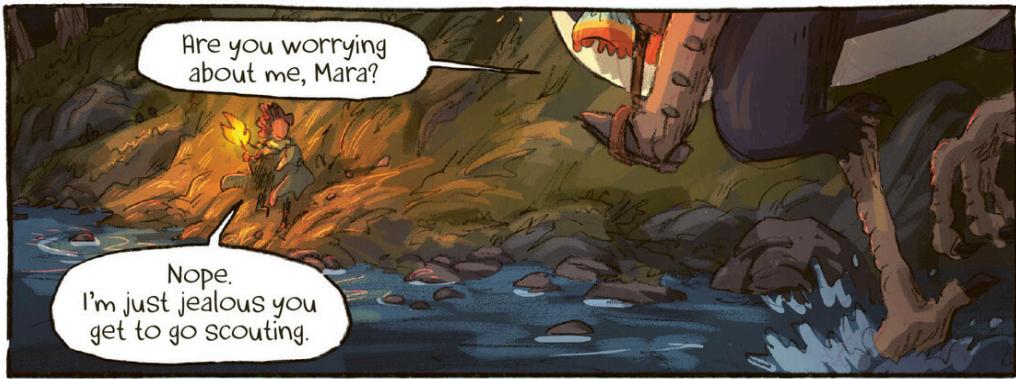
My bones are too old to be settin' tents up so often!

Tell me about it. My knees are killing me.



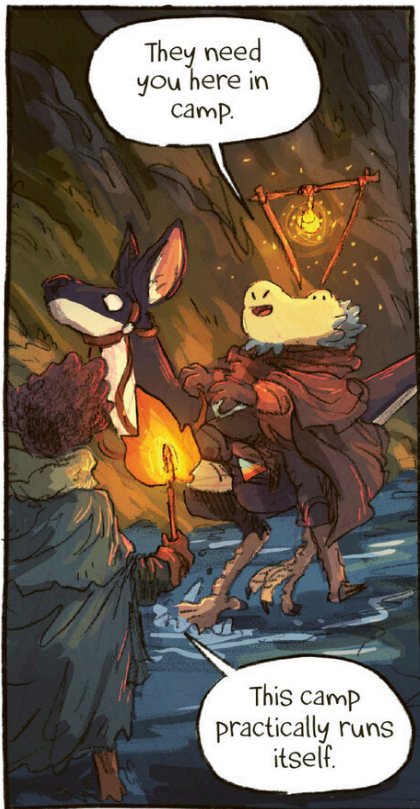


Taking your sweet time now, aren't you?



Are you worrying about me, Mara?

Nope. I'm just jealous you get to go scouting.



They need you here in camp.

This camp practically runs itself.



How's it looking?

It's only a few more marches to the Falls of Urros. The way ahead seems clear.



Well, at least you brought good news.





We've gotta tell them about the Tikarri.

Sure, let's add another existential threat to the list.



Seems like a good time to tell Karru about our plan too.

Now? No, it's not the right time. That's too much at once.



Just the Tikarri. We'll tell them that we're leaving later.



If you say so. Anyway, let's eat. I'm starving.



Did you think all this was free?! I am tracking everyone's costs, and you can all pay us back when money exists again.



The world is in crisis and you're trying to make money?



Yes.



What?



But Boisenberry, they saved us from those shadow things in Rinn.

It's your fault we were left behind! We'd have made it to an escape ship if you hadn't broken our cart.









Hey, Alf!

Would you mind fixing my honey lamp?



Certainly, Wally.

I could use a break from knitting this hat for Fillog.



This shape is proving to be a considerable challenge.

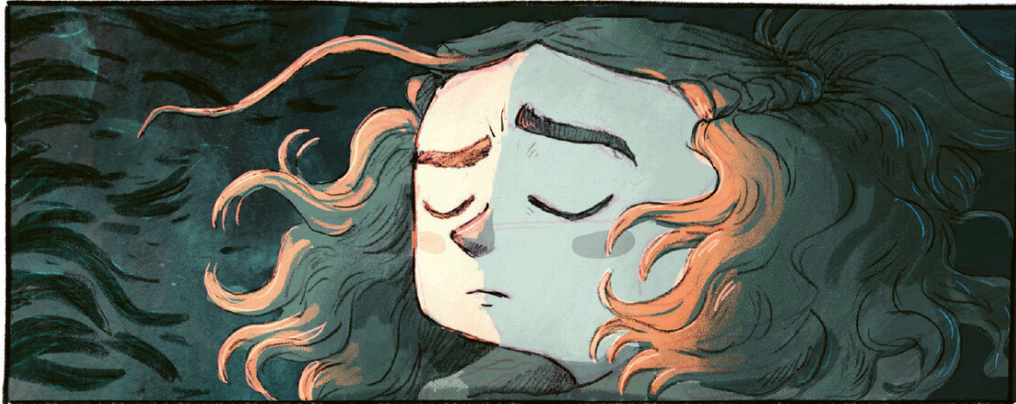
What isn't recently?

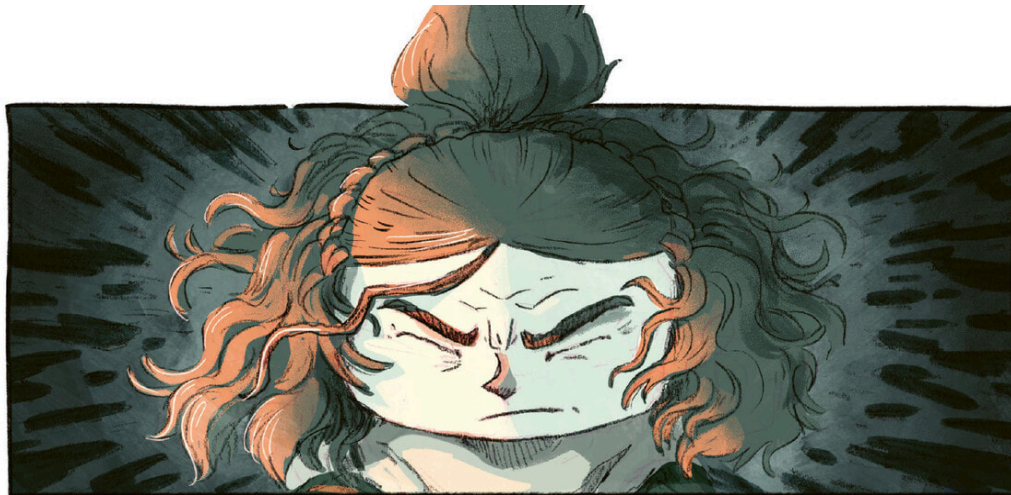
Looks like you were working on my scrolls again. Any luck with the translation?



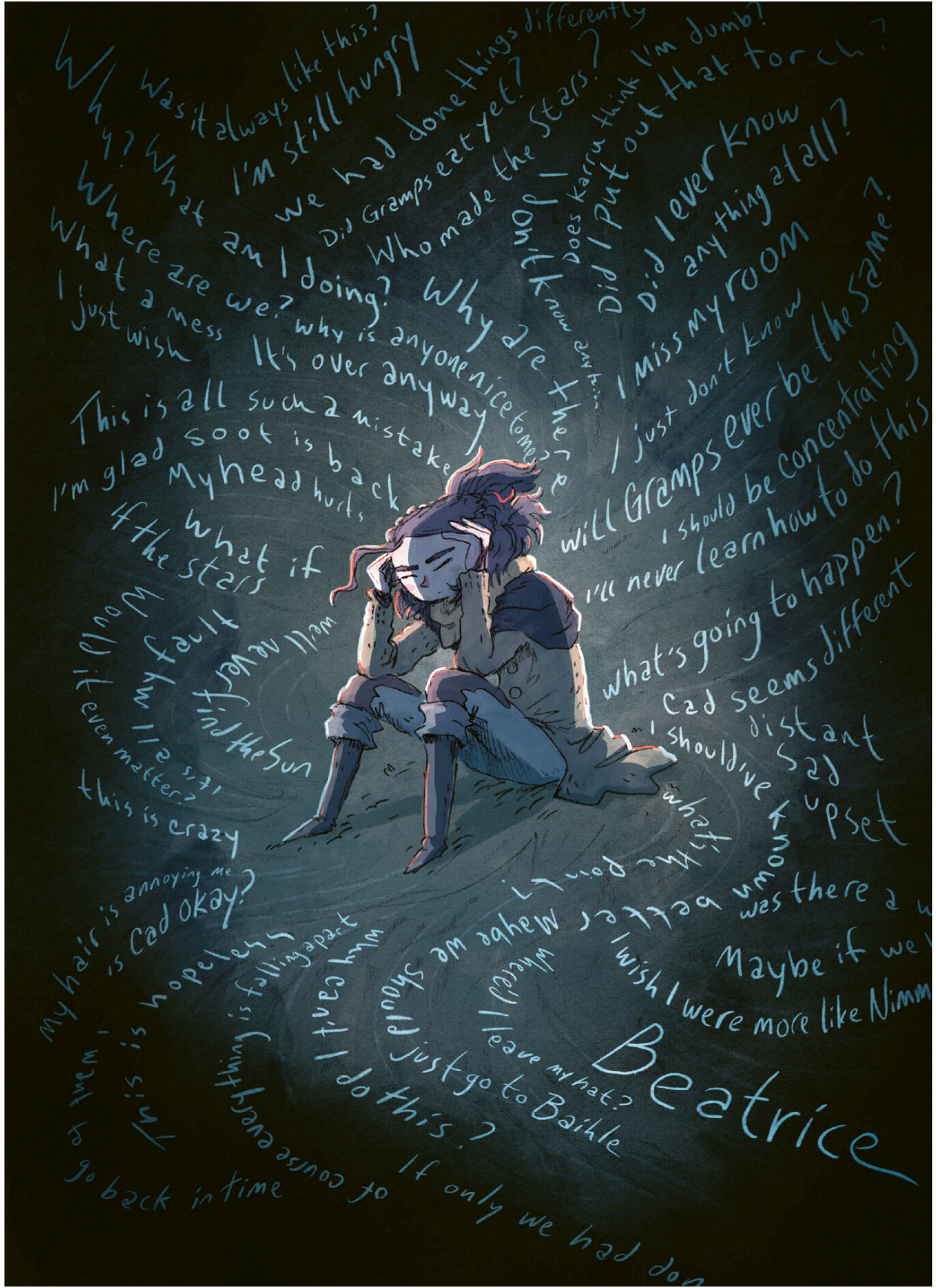












Why? What I'm still hungry  
 Was it always like this?  
 Where are we? Who made the stars?  
 Did Gramps eat yet?  
 What a mess I just wish  
 Why are the stars?  
 I miss my room  
 Did I ever know anything at all?  
 This is all such a mistake  
 It's over anyway  
 I just don't know  
 I miss my room  
 I should be concentrating  
 I'll never learn how to do this  
 what's going to happen?  
 Cad seems different  
 I should be distant  
 I should be upset  
 This is crazy  
 I don't even matter?  
 My hair is annoying me  
 Is Cad okay?  
 This is hopeless  
 Why can't I do this?  
 Maybe we should just go to Baikle  
 I wish I were more like Nimm  
 Maybe if we  
 Beatrice  
 of course everything is falling apart  
 why can't I do this?  
 I wish I were more like Nimm  
 Maybe if we  
 Beatrice  
 If only we had done  
 I wish I were more like Nimm  
 Maybe if we  
 Beatrice  
 I wish I were more like Nimm  
 Maybe if we  
 Beatrice



... Hello?

Stars...  
You...

Who  
are-

**GYAH!**



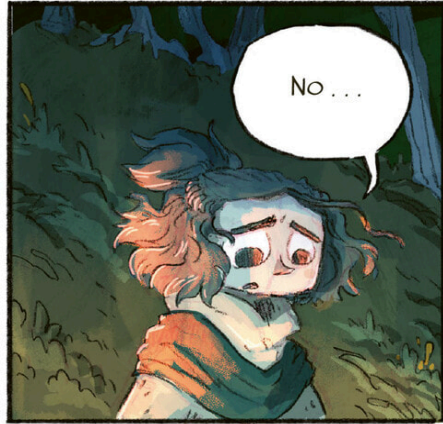
I—I can't sit still anymore. I need to walk. Let's walk. Can we walk?

Can we?

Um, yes?

This was a joke.

Glad I'm not the only one struggling with new things.





You two learning magic tricks again?

SCRUB!!  
SCRUB!!  
SCRUB!!



Not tricks.

Right.  
Please, will you enlighten a complete novice?



She will teach.

Me?  
I can't teach,  
I barely know anything!



Okay...  
Everything on  
Irpa has a soul.  
And a voice.



Ooh, I'm already  
intrigued.

Don't  
interrupt.



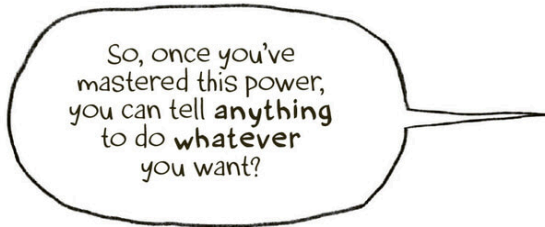
Rocks,  
grass, trees,  
water, wind—  
all of it. And if you can  
clear your mind and learn  
to listen properly, you  
can hear them.



And with practice,  
you can communicate  
with them. Ask questions.  
Or even ask for help.



And that's magic, as far as I understand it.



So, once you've mastered this power, you can tell **anything** to do **whatever** you want?



Not tell. Can ask for help.

I'm sure a charming rogue like yourself would have a much easier time with this than me.



No. They see through falseness.



Falseness?! I am deeply hurt. I thought we were friends.

Wait, there's more!

Irpa itself is alive!  
The planet lives and  
breathes, grows and  
changes. The warmth from  
the heart of Irpa is what's  
still keeping us all warm  
without the Lights.



"Warm" might be  
an overstatement,  
but okay.



And the Arsai  
can even talk to Irpa,  
through its bones!  
Wild, right?



Can  
no longer  
communicate.  
Irpa's heart  
is fading.  
And all will  
freeze.



What about that all-  
important world-saving  
staff I risked my  
hide for?

Is important.  
Somehow.



So we're all just gonna freeze to death, then?

Perhaps.

Probably.

Hmph.



I don't know if I can take any more of this **positivity**! I'm going to go find anything else to do. Farewell!



He's right. I haven't exactly been a barrel of joy recently.

Barrel is bad place for feelings.



Why isn't Irpa speaking anymore?

Do not know.





I keep seeing Kest ... in my dreams or when I try to concentrate. But earlier, I saw the **other** Spirit.

The one who made the stars.

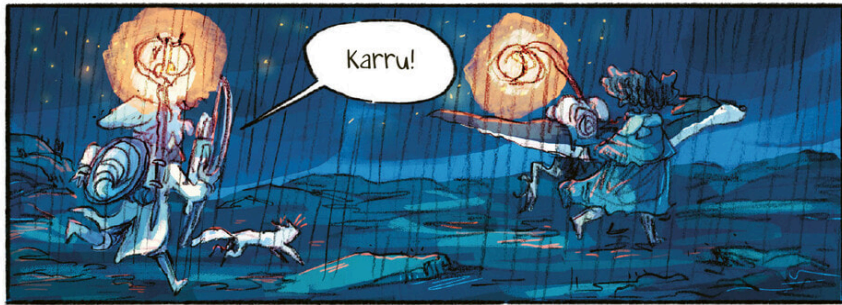
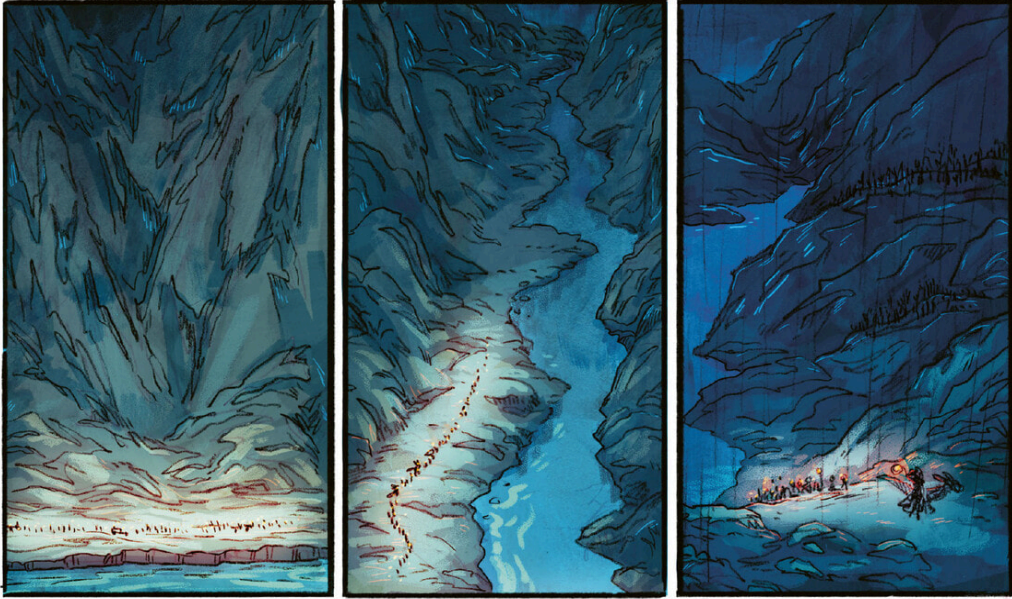
You don't know who she is? Irpa never told you?

Never asked.

>Sigh< It just feels like things keep getting worse.

Yes.

For now.





I just wanted to return the bow I borrowed.

You can keep it.



Actually, I almost put an arrow in Cad, like, three times. I'm going to stick with my sword.



Fair enough. I tried to take up the lute once and it just didn't stick.



Oh, uh, that's neat . . .

So, Fillog said we're going to reach the Falls of Urros on this march.



Yes, if all goes well. Ever been?



Me?! No, never. I only know that it's an ancient crossroads.



Aye, it's where  
three roads  
meet.



We've been on  
the road from  
Rinn, following  
the Kilyaa River.



At the Falls  
it splits. There are  
switchbacks down  
the cliffs that lead  
to the road south-  
west to Ciereg.



And the easier  
slope east we're  
taking leads to the  
Tall Plains and  
then Baihle.



Assuming Baihle is the safe haven  
we hope it is, the road from Urros  
to there should be protected.



Assuming?!  
I thought Baihle **was**  
a safe haven.

I **hope** it is.  
It **should** be.  
But we won't  
know until we  
get there.

But we're going there anyway?

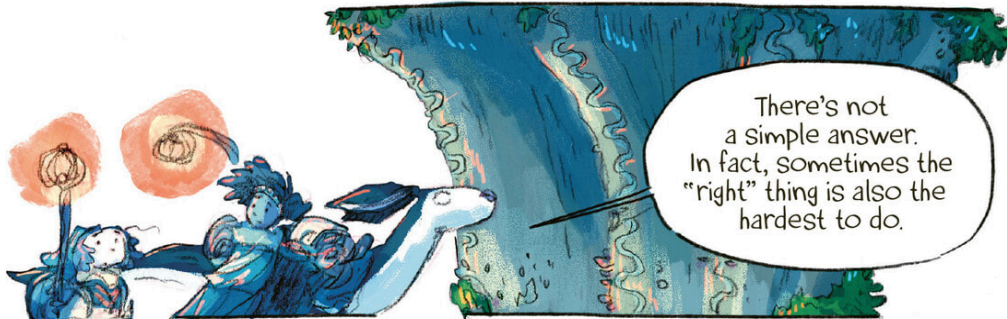
It's our best bet.

And I sent my whole city there. If it's not safe, me and my scouts owe it to them to help. They are my responsibility.

Something on your mind?



How do you know you're doing the right thing? All these people are looking to you, relying on you, but you seem so confident.



There's not a simple answer. In fact, sometimes the "right" thing is also the hardest to do.



I sent my city to Baihle on boats. I took their only protection to intercept an army of darkness and buy time. Were those the right choices? I think so.

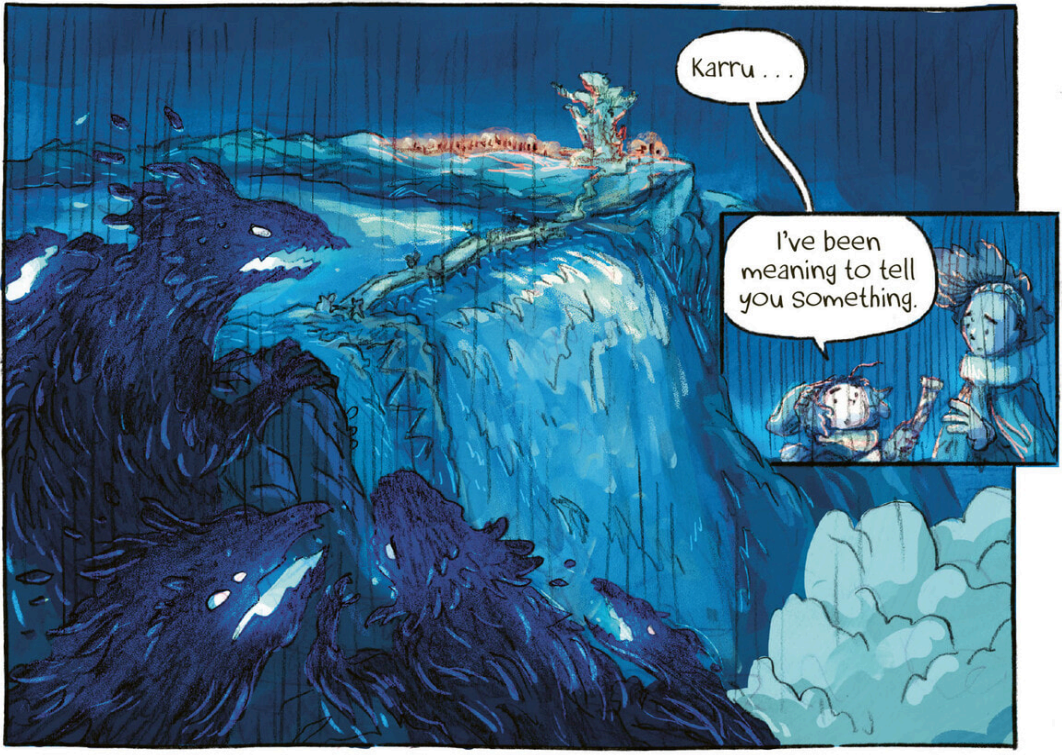
You have to make the choice you believe in. And then you just hope for the best.



Take this and have a look.

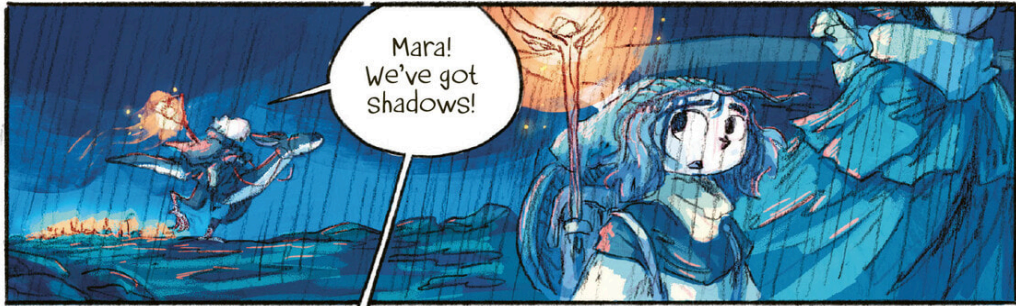


Baihle ...



Karru ...

I've been meaning to tell you something.





We're going to the Citadel of Knowledge. I've been meaning to tell you—

What did I just tell you?



It's all about choices, Bea. Good luck with yours.



Thank you, Karru.

Go on! We'll take care of these shadows.



Actually, I think I can slow them down. Just get everyone away safely!



Goodbye! I hope we see each other again!



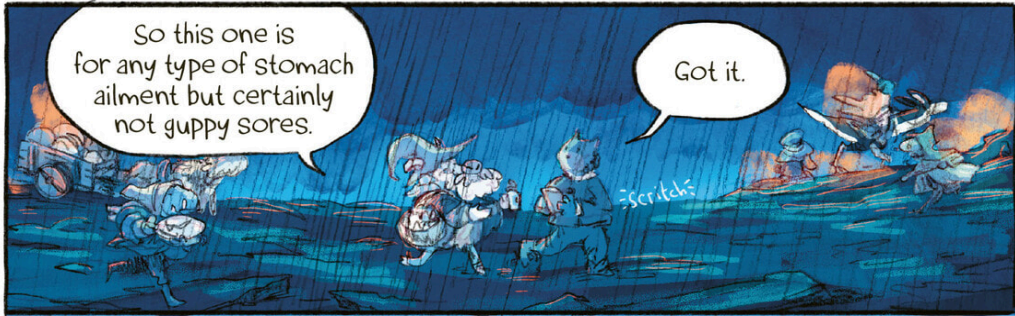
I'm going to miss her.

Yeah, I hope they don't die.



That's dark.

You know me.





There you are!  
Hurry, we're about to  
get swarmed!



Time to split.

Go,  
I'll meet  
you at the  
bottom.



I've got a plan to  
help the others.



C'mon,  
Sparky,  
we gotta  
find Kipp.



The rotten  
Rat Thief?!  
Why—

Wally—look out!! More  
shadows coming  
over the bridge!!



Not if we  
can help it!!  
Hang on  
tight!



Here they come!



There's too many for us, Wally!



Bah! You're right.

To the sky, Soot!





Kipp!

Ugh.



There are shadows coming!

I'm well aware, hence the running.

The smoke bombs you made with Gramps—I need them!



They're yours. For a price.

Oh, get off it, Kipp. Hand 'em over.



Why should I?

Because I'm going to save you too!



>Sigh<



Here's half.



Thanks, Kipp.



Can't wait to get away from all these do-gooders.





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Oh ho!! The smoke bombs! Of course, very clever, Beatrice. Very clever.



Yeah, looks like they worked all right. But where is Bea?

Not to worry, she'll be here.



Hm, that is a lot of smoke. Too much coalroot, perhaps. Or maybe ...



I'm going back—

Look!



There she is!



You're okay!

Oh ho ho ho! Well done!

I'm fine. Did everyone get away??



Yep. And that smoke should cover their trail.

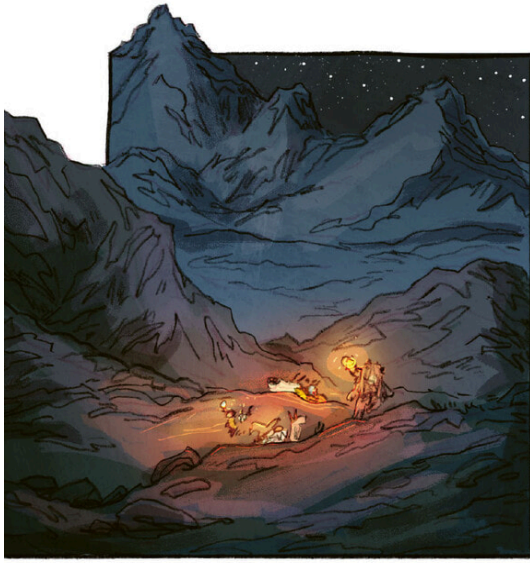
I was scared out of my mind.

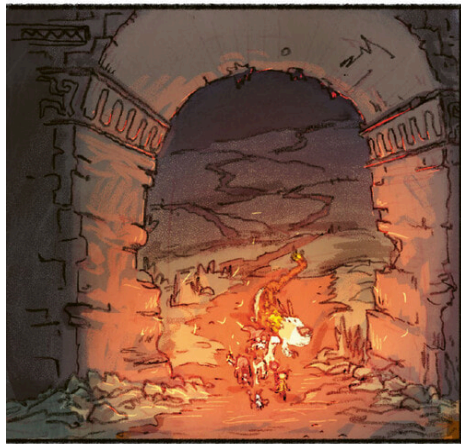
You didn't look it.



I didn't really stop to think about it.

Ah, the tried and true Cadwallader method. Keep it up. We're on our own again now.















It is a whole city.



We are all that remains of Cierég.  
We are on our way to Baihle.



What happened?



First the Light went dark.



Then the shadowy creatures attacked.



But it was the Mire that finally forced us to leave.



The Mire?

Yes.  
A dark, burning poison.  
It comes up from the ground,  
like water from a well.  
It swallows all in its path and can't be stopped.



You'd do best to avoid it.

Say, I haven't had a crandolin cake in ages. You wouldn't happen to have any of that Ciereg delicacy to spare?

No. Farewell and fair winds.

The Mire . . . That's gotta be the same stuff we saw in the Lost River, right?

But it's up here now?!

That can't be good.

Along the Gwillen River, some rests later . . .





What do you hear?

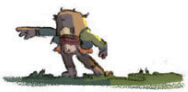
GAH!!



Nothing. I'm terrible at this.



Just not very good yet.



Well, I'm not any better than when I started practicing.

Perhaps.

Perhaps not.



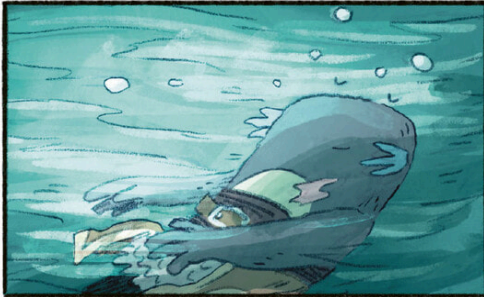
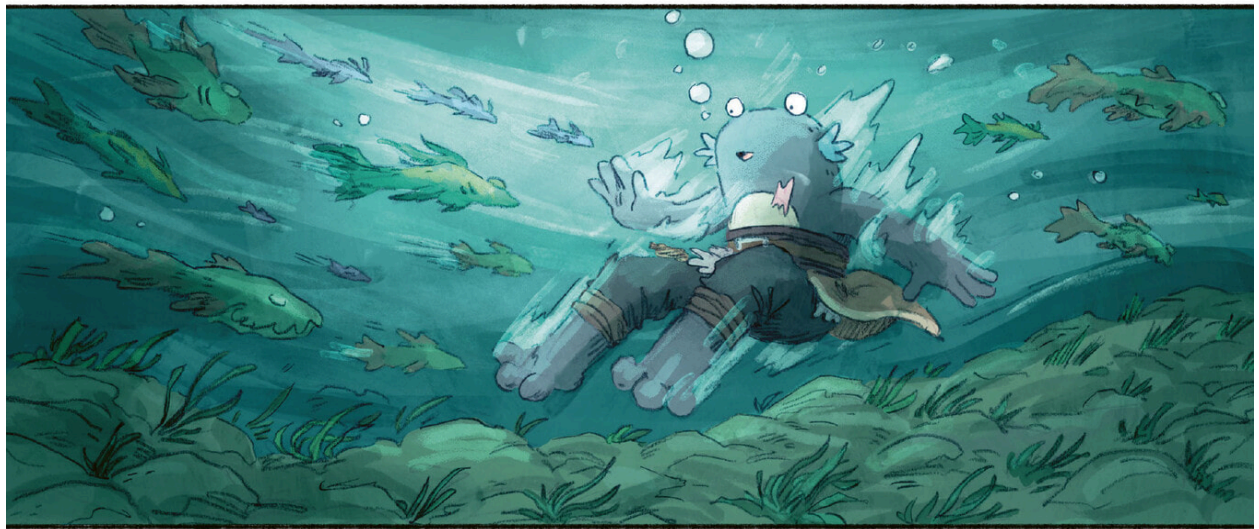
>Sigh<

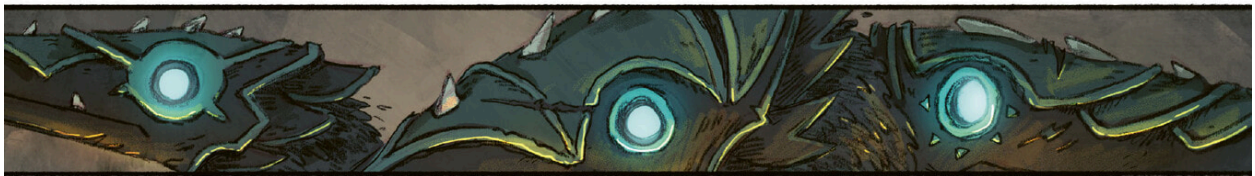
I dunno.





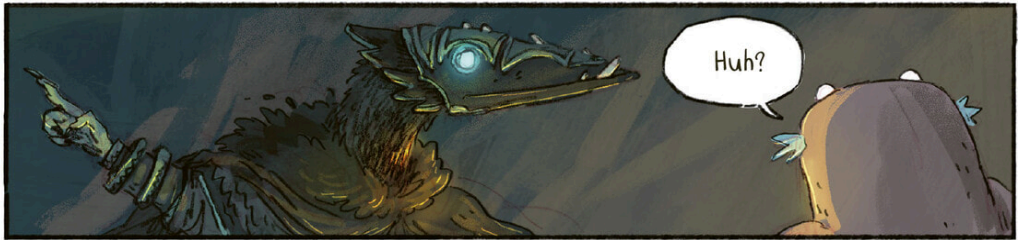
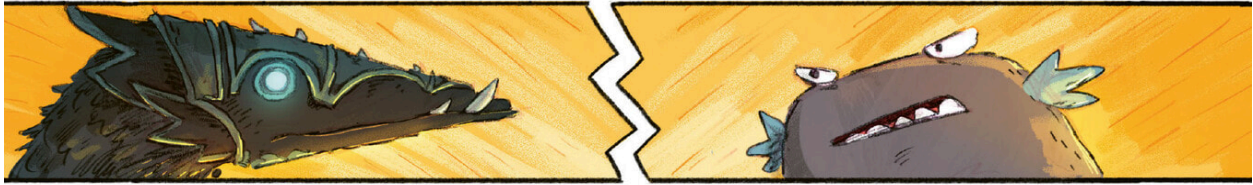




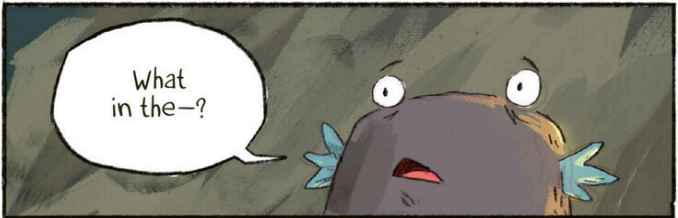




Not another step, fiends!



Huh?

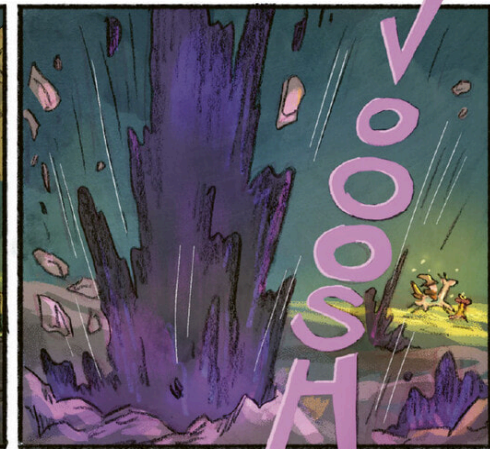


What in the-?



Hold up! Where are you going?

A R O O ?

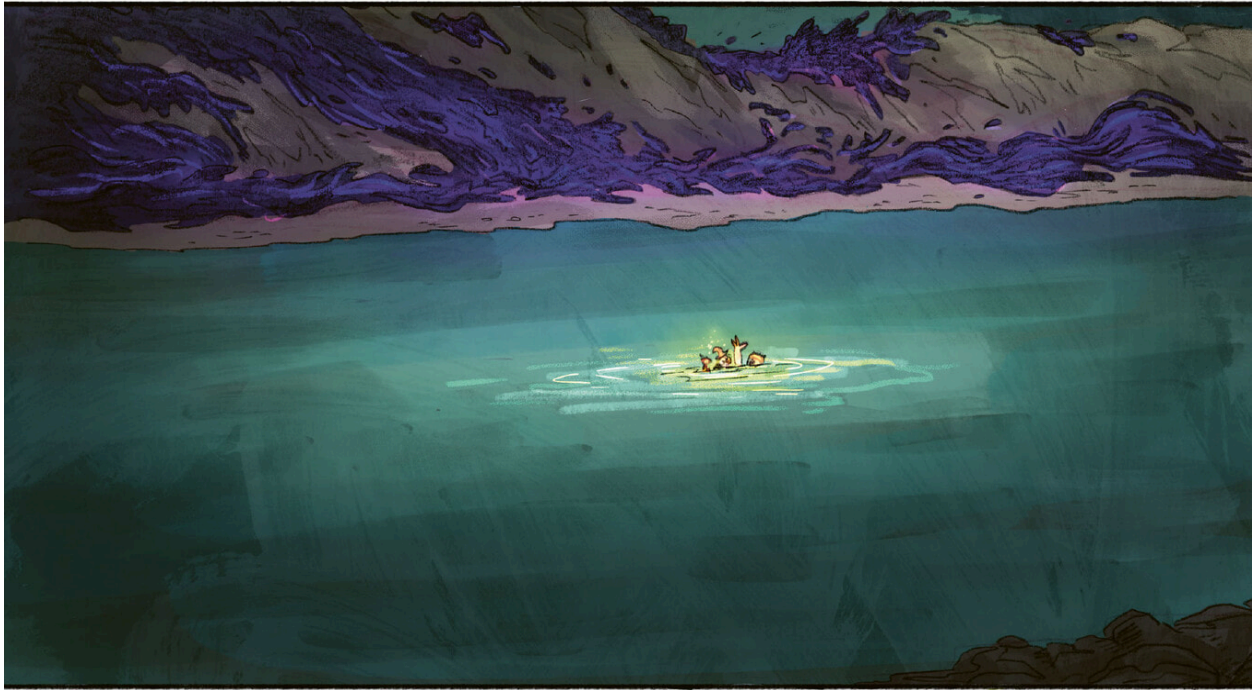
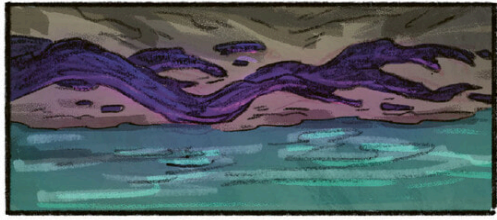
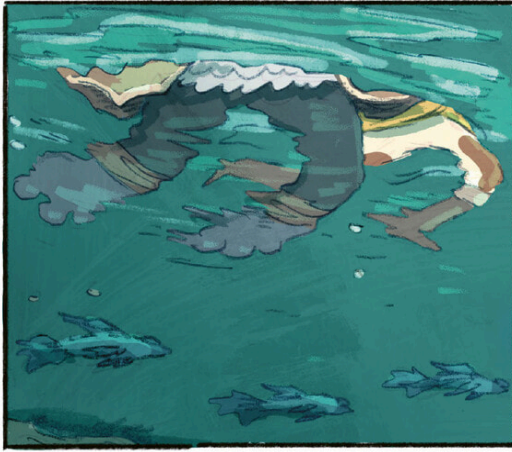












The river is tired.

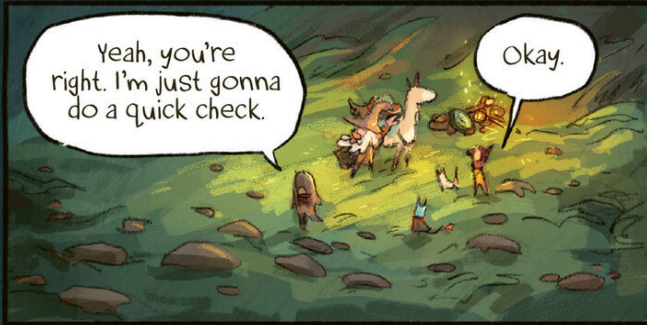




We should find them, before they kill us in our sleep.

Before we do anything, we need a fire.

If we don't dry out, we're gonna freeze to death.



Yeah, you're right. I'm just gonna do a quick check.

Okay.



It feels like everything is closing in on me.

Here, let me be useful. You rest; I'll make the fire.

Now, where do we keep the wood?



Ongkor the Clever



Silin the Prudent



Leas the Astute



Otheo the Short





But it looks like the Mire passed through here too. The whole place is in shambles.



After coming all this way.

Yup.



Giving up so easily? That's not like the two of you at all!



Knowledge awaits!!



He's got a point. We may as well take a look.





It really is a lot of books.

Oh ho ho, of course! Did you think I was pulling your leg?



I wonder if that wonderful librarian is still here.



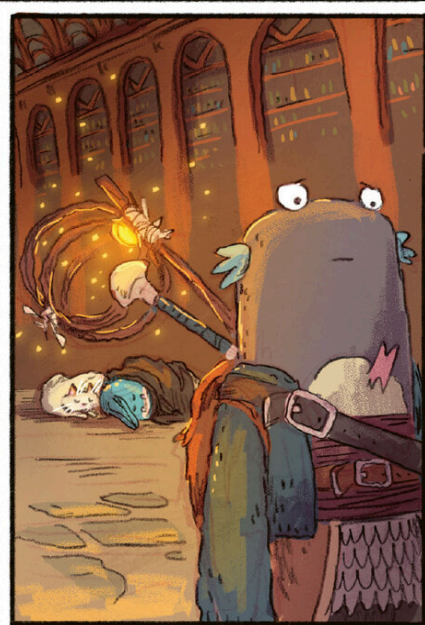
Umm... I think we're on our own, Gramps.



No matter. What're we looking for again?

Anything related to the sun.









Hey there.



Whatcha reading?

This? I barely know anymore.



THE COASTWARS  
A HISTORY OF PELLYDIR'S  
AGGRESSION & DESTRUCTION  
OF THE LIGHT OF TARIAN



Sounds cheery.

How's it going with all this?



Terrible.

We've been at this for over a week.

I've read so many books.

But we've gotten nowhere.



All the histories are variations of the same story.

The sun was there, things were good. Kest appeared out of nowhere and ruined everything. The Seated King killed him and saved the world.

Only one book even mentioned the Galdurians.

I know it was a long time ago, but we existed.

Still exist.



Irpa would be a much worse place if it weren't for the Galdurians.

Yeah.



There's still so many books. We could be here forever.

It's starting to feel hopeless.

Maybe it is.



"Maybe it is"?!  
What happened to "there's no such thing as hopeless"?

Hm?

What's this?



No way!

A book of constellations.

Right...  
What are those again?

They're sorta like pictures in the stars.

The way some stars are arranged in the sky makes them look like things— an animal or plant or something.

You could imagine these pictures in the sky and the elders would tell tales about them.



Like this one, Orlof the Eager. He was a beaver that built a dam so big it created the Rua Sea!



I couldn't make out the images usually. The stars were just pretty glowing dots.



The Spirit that made the stars, do you think they made these constellations too?

The one that Kest showed you?



You still don't believe me?



It's not that I don't believe you, it's more that I don't trust Kest.

Why would he show me made-up things?

Wait—



This is her.

# Seren Børé

Perhaps the most enigmatic  
of all the mythic beings,  
a creature of the night  
who brought forth  
the stars.



Little is known  
about Seren's existence,  
but the old legends say  
she disappeared upon  
the appearance of Vest.





A cookbook?

A rare and legendary book of the most splendid recipes. I never thought I'd lay eyes on an actual copy.



I don't think we're going to be cooking gourmet meals anytime soon, Gramps.

Oh ho, but these are simple, hearty dishes from all over Irpa. Some of these recipes date back to the sun times.

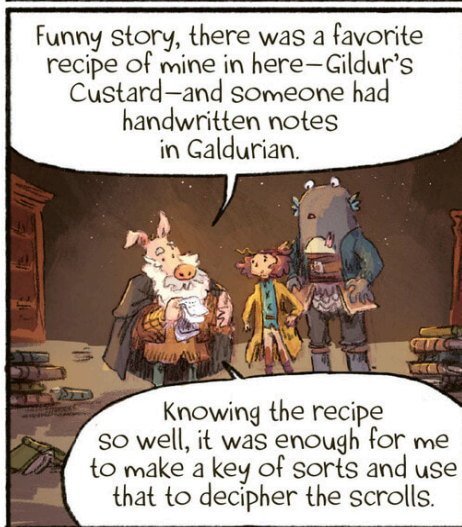


Also, I've translated your scrolls, Wally.



WHAT?!

How?!



Funny story, there was a favorite recipe of mine in here—Gildur's Custard—and someone had handwritten notes in Galdurian.

Knowing the recipe so well, it was enough for me to make a key of sorts and use that to decipher the scrolls.



They are the account of a traveler named Cowslip. Come and see.

I have been abroad for many <sup>turns</sup> of the stars.  
 I am not feeling <sup>well</sup> so I am leaving my discoveries  
 here for the next to pass through the rumor was true  
 Galduria has been destroyed and sits upon the  
 edge of the world the chasm is unfathomably deep  
 beyond measure but visible there is a soft ~~light~~ Light  
 and awar<sup>m</sup>th there is something down there I suspect  
 it is what remains of the <sup>SUN</sup> but I was unable to ascend  
 there is no rope long enough for such depths

☺  
☺  
☺

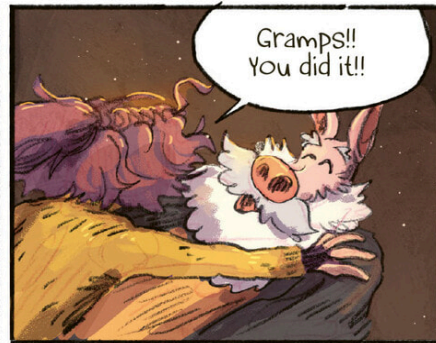
☺☺☺☺ → Sun

2 eggs  
4 spoon flour

the journey back was eventful to say the least  
 my boat crashed upon the rocks of Craibol and I crossed the  
 plains of akasha on foot I found passage to Pellidyr  
 always a favorite place of mine but there were rumblings of war  
 I passed through the coastal villages of the Sea of Longing  
 but haven't seen a single Galdurian <sup>there</sup> are few left but  
 I do not know where they went I will continue to look so long  
 as these tired legs will take methough I hope to rest soon.  
 fare winds to the fellow traveler that finds this.

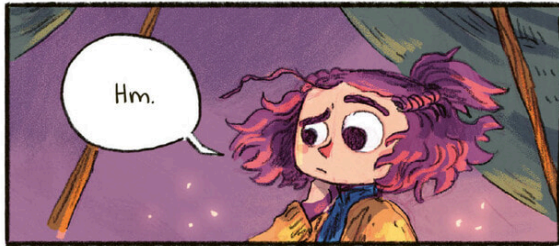
onward,  
 Cowslip  
 Cowslip  
 Cowslip







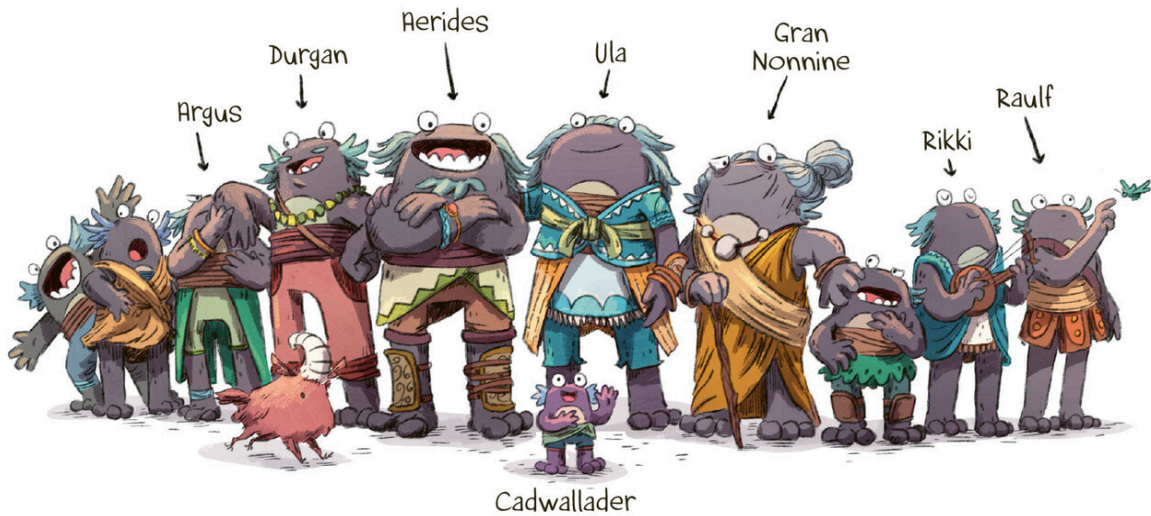








There were my parents, Aerides and Ula.  
 Durgan, Argus, Raulf, and Rikki, my siblings.  
 Gran Nonnine, of course.  
 Then all my cousins...  
 I was the youngest.





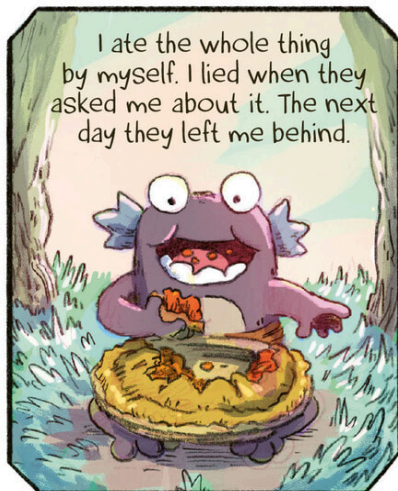
That's a big family. It must've been nice.

I remember the last night.

The councils from the nearest villages were coming for some big meeting. My mom was helping cook the feast. There was a persimmon pie she was making for dessert.

It was my favorite.

While it was cooling, I stole it.



I ate the whole thing by myself. I lied when they asked me about it. The next day they left me behind.



Left you behind? That's what you think?

Yeah.



Because you took a pie? Cad, that can't be true. You were a little kid!

They were protecting you.



My parents did the same with me—hid me in the crook of a tree before whatever killed them got me.

That's where Gramps found me.



No, it's different.



How?



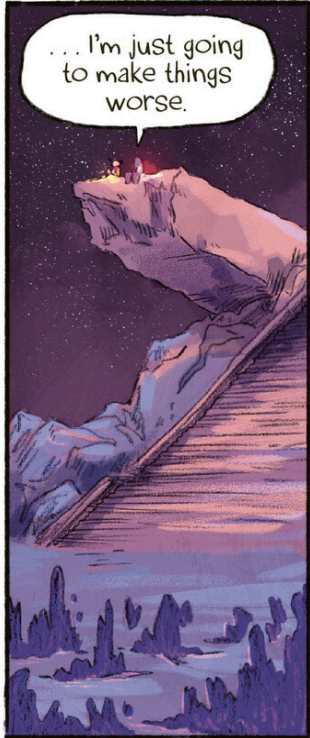
I wake up, Kest wakes up. I go to Resnie village, a horde of glorbats show up and destroy all their crops. I find the Glass Crown of Glory, it shatters.

I defeat Kest, the whole world goes dark. I wanted to be a hero, but I'm cursed. I'm the problem.



Cad, you can't believe all that. You're making connections that aren't there.

If I keep going with you guys...



... I'm just going to make things worse.



You're not. And even if that **were** true, I don't care.

I want you to come with us. If you want to.

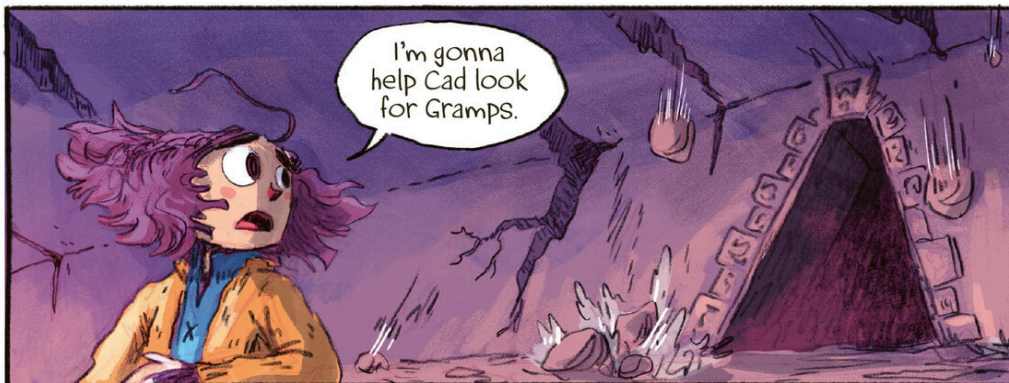


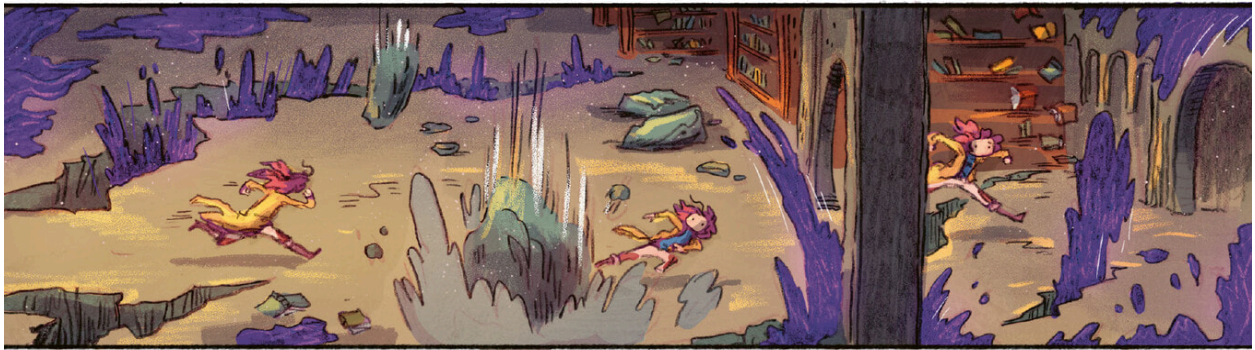
I... I don't know what I want to do.

Think about it. Take some ti-













He's really stuck. What're we gonna—

Just get ready to pull him out.



GUAANNN!









The bones in his leg are shattered. I can't fix it with herbs.



We'll get him on Sparky. We have to keep moving. That sludge won't stop.



The books ... are gone ... oh ... ho ...



Where's the Arsai?

He was on Sparky.













I'm trying to keep an infection at bay, but the bones aren't healing. The herbs aren't enough, and it's only getting worse.



Okay, my turn. There's a swarm of shadow creatures coming toward us. Some are bigger than normal. And some were flying.



WHAT?!

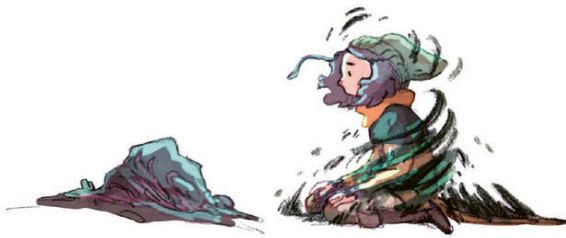


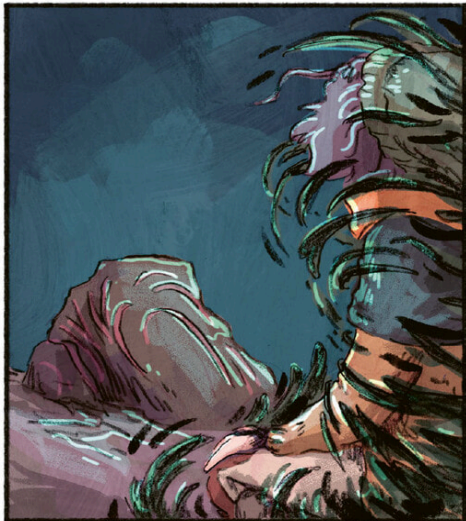
What are we gonna do?! We're surrounded and don't know where we're going!!

All true. But I have an idea.

OH HO!









I heard you!!  
You heard me!!



Okay,  
okay, okay.  
Deep breath, Bea.  
Focus. Here  
we go.



We're looking  
for an Arsai. He's  
short, about this tall.  
Blue, with long ears  
and a tail. Have you  
seen him pass by?



cannot see



am rock



Oh, right.  
Duh.  
Maybe you  
felt something  
go by recently?





Over there—  
a glow!



Brilliant!!



Also where the  
shadows are.



We'll just have  
to bust through.



I don't know  
if I can. I don't ...  
I don't feel  
quite right.  
I can't ...

Of course  
you can.

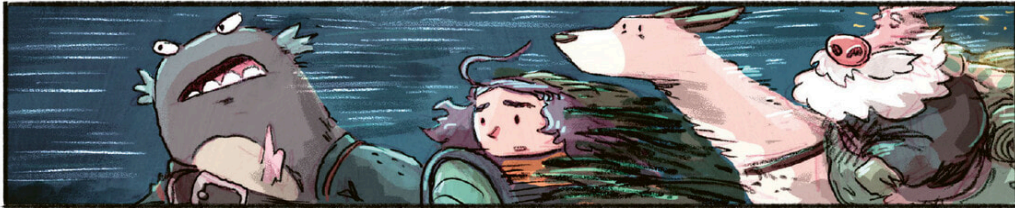
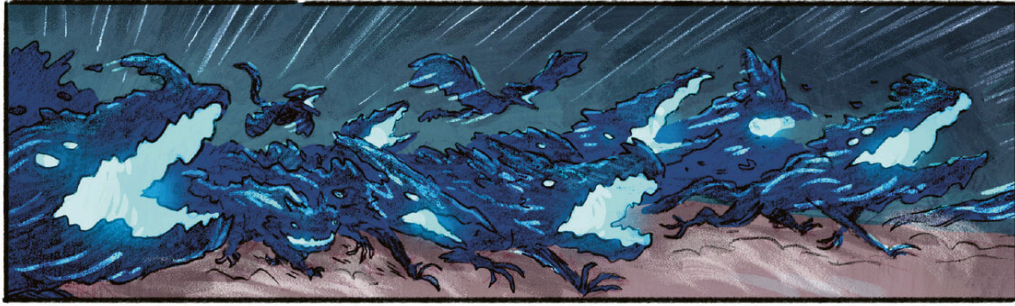


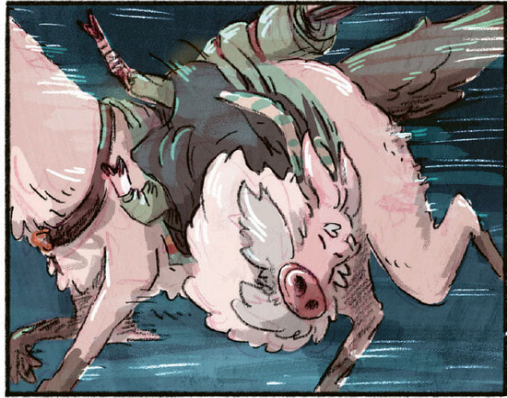
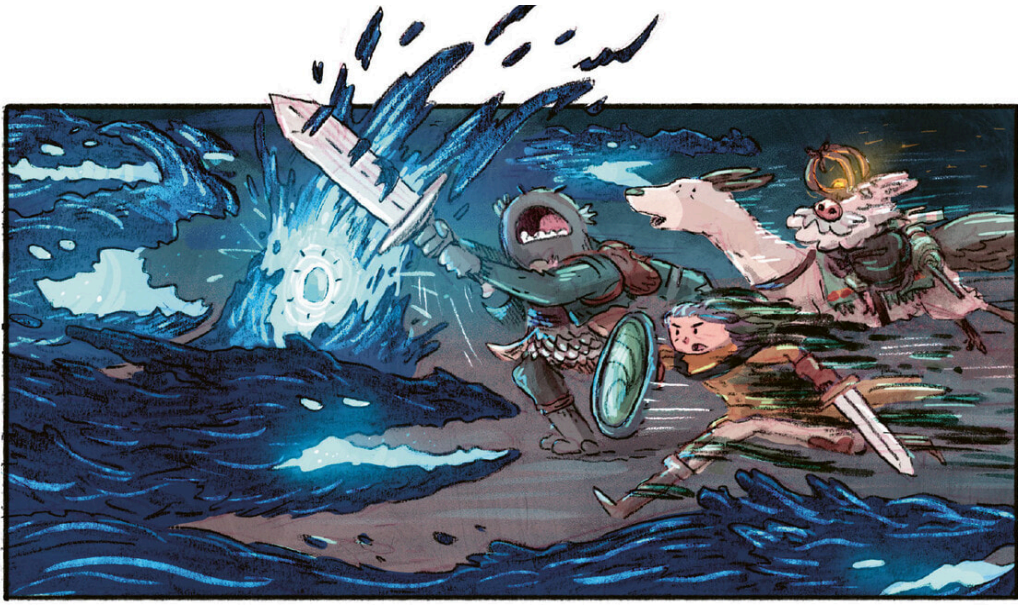
I've seen you make  
it through much  
worse.

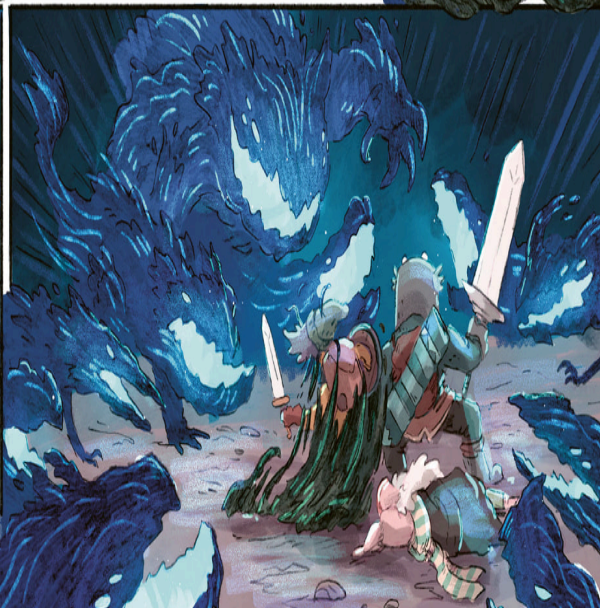
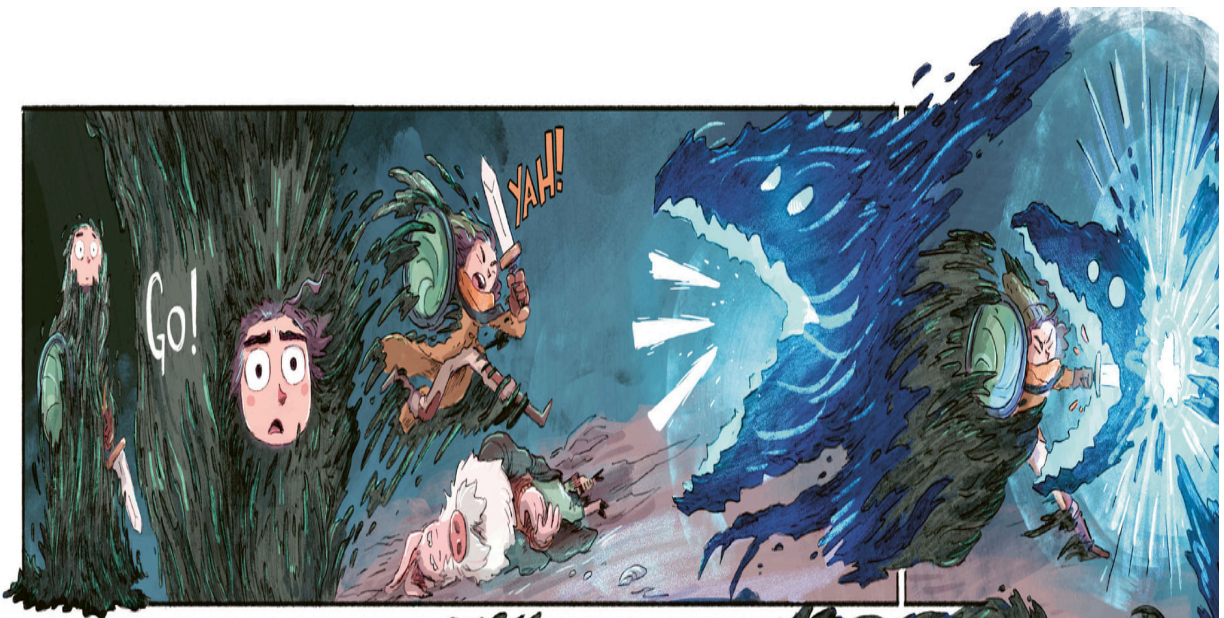


Just don't  
think about it.  
And don't  
stop moving.

Okay.

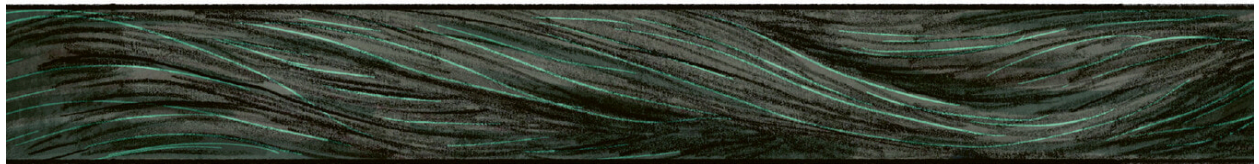
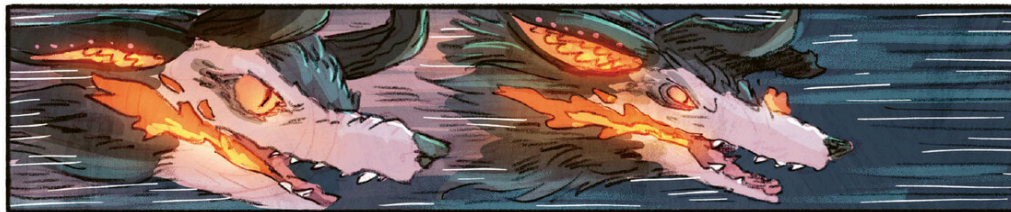
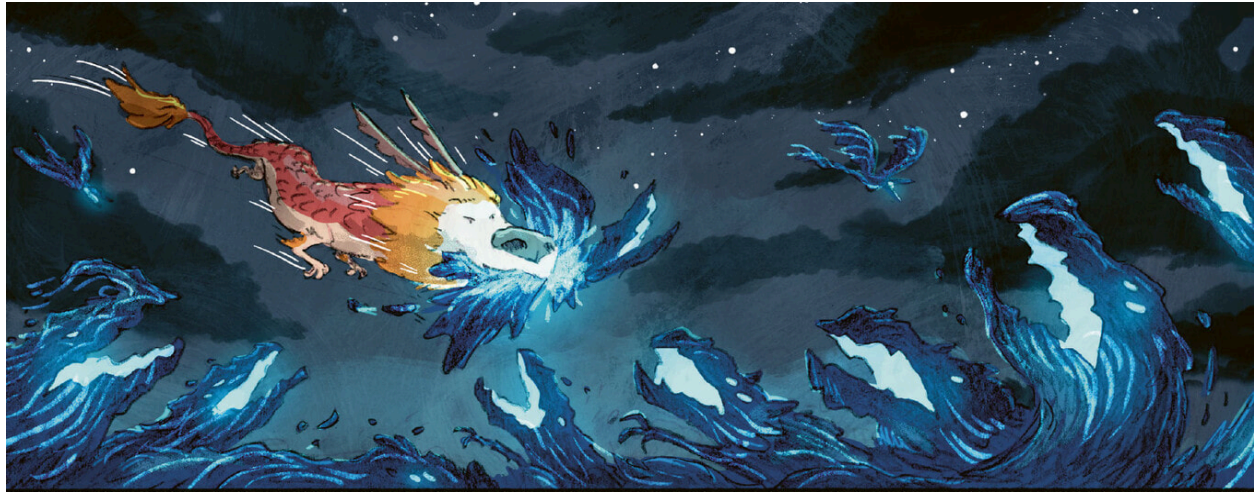


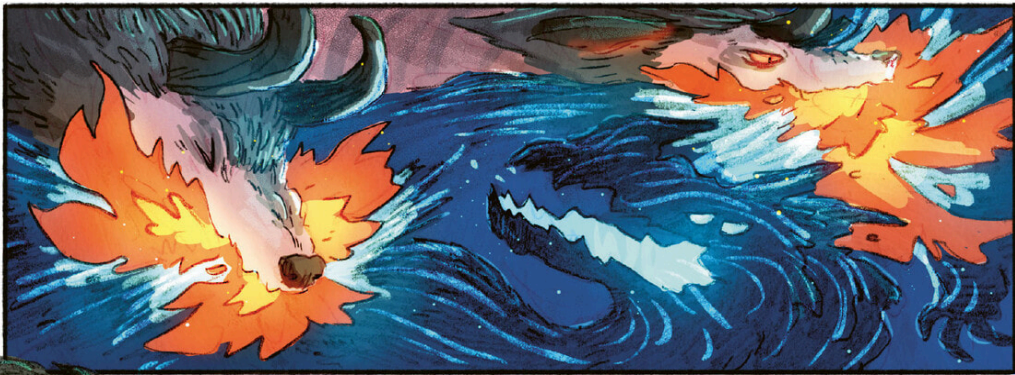






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I know this place.

This was my home.



Incredible.

Ah jeez, how'd this busted leg not kill him?

Move along now. Gotta be quicklike.

Name's Mallore...

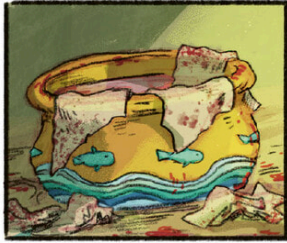
Your dragon friend here sensed you and flew off...

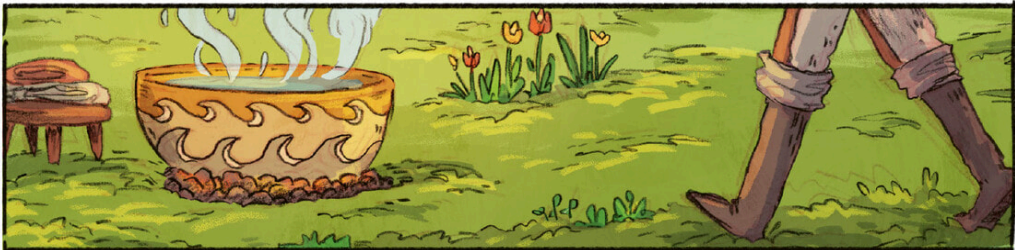
Here, hold him still as ya can...

And best look away...

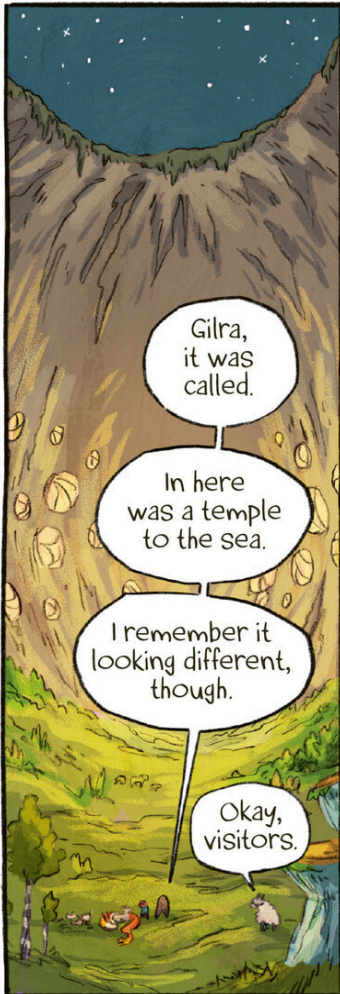
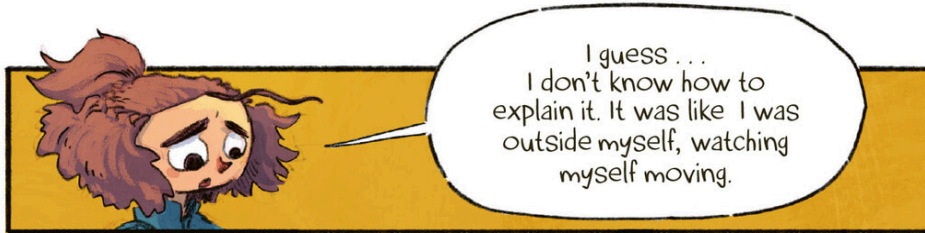


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Go on.  
Food's not gonna  
eat itself.



Wow.  
I forgot food  
could taste  
so good.



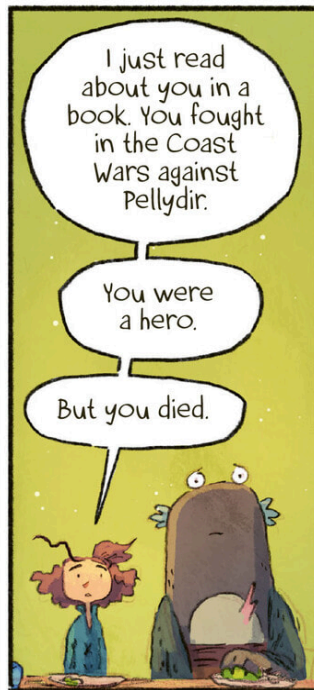
So, you got to Rinn,  
but the Bird had already  
destroyed the Light.  
What happened  
next?



We  
fought him.

I killed him.

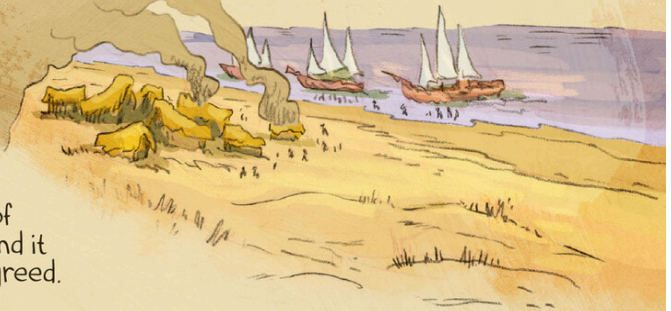
And all the  
Lights faded  
away.



The Coast Wars with Pellydir started before I was born. Baihle, the capital city and protector of the Sea of Light. Pellydir, the troublesome neighbor that refused to join the kingdom. I was a soldier and eventually the captain of the Grey Knights. I served Baihle and the king.



Pellydir raided the southeastern shore constantly. But they started to come inland as far as the city of Tarian. We fought them all along the coast, but it was like plugging holes in a dam. As soon as we went to one place, they appeared in another.



Many of my knights lost their lives. I lost my leg. The war showed no sign of stopping, but I came up with a plan to end it once and for all. The king and council agreed.



We would feign retreat and lure the Pellydir raiders into Tarian. Then we would trigger the siege lance-bows loaded with explosives and—boom. The Light crashed down on them.



It seemed a small price to pay. They deserved it; had brought it on themselves. And it worked. The raiders were destroyed and with the Light gone, Pellydir was isolated on its island, cut off from the rest of the Sea of Light. The war was over.

What I had done changed me. In my haste to save my people, I caused greater suffering than I could have ever imagined. I walked through the destruction I wrought, and I knew I could never go back to Baihle.



I wandered, far and wide, for a long time. I guess they said I was dead back home. After a while, I found this place.



I fixed up the glass globes above and made little lights of my own.



Things started to grow. And then the animals started showing up.



The animals wouldn't leave, so I started taking care of them. And tending the gardens. And so it went.



It's a sanctuary of sorts here. Creatures seem to sense it. That's how your dragon friend ended up here.



So Pellydir didn't destroy that Light, like all the books say. It was actually Baihle?



'Fraid so.



And then you just exiled yourself?

The world's better off. It's harder to ruin things all alone and far away.



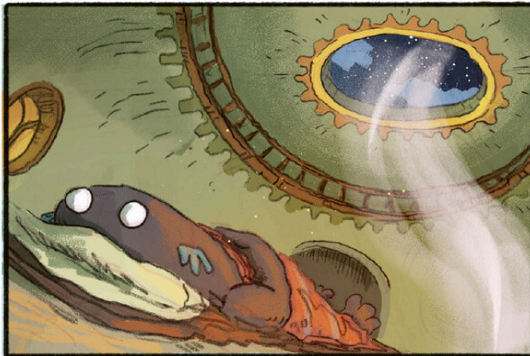
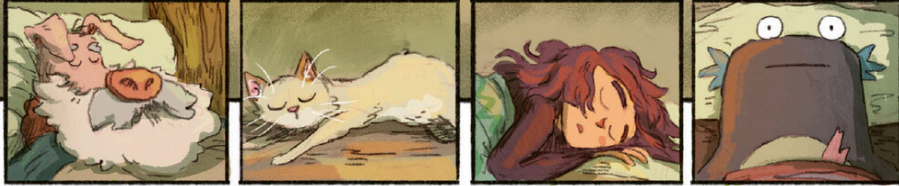
What are you two going to do, fellow misfits?

First we're going to rescue our friend.

Then we're going to find the sun.









Hey, Bea,  
you awake?



Bea.

HRMPH



YAH!!

Shhh!  
You'll wake  
everyone up.



Is everything  
okay?!

Yeah.  
Do you wanna  
go for a walk?

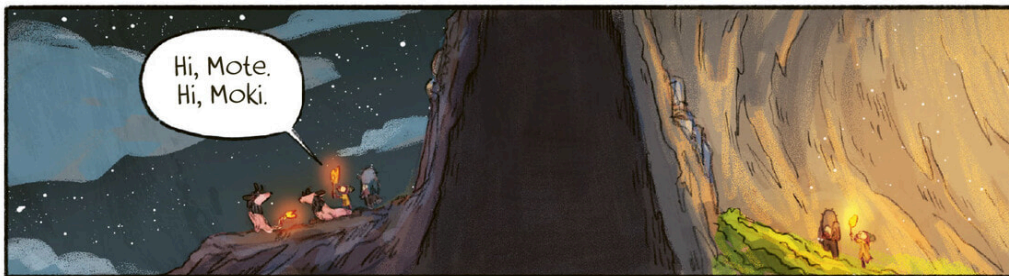


Now?

I just wanted to go  
down to the village  
before we left ...

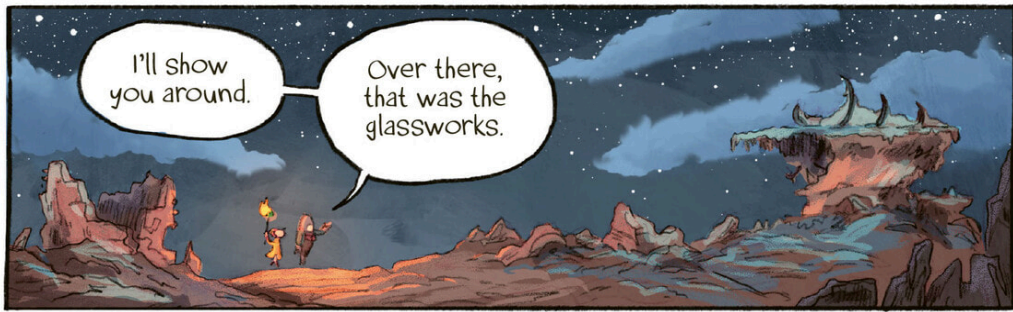


Of course.  
Thanks for  
asking.





I didn't  
get a good  
look on the  
way in.



I'll show  
you around.

Over there,  
that was the  
glassworks.



This was the  
forge. We made  
frames for the  
Lights here.



Back that way  
was the village  
elder's house.  
It was very  
fancy.



This was  
the village center.  
It was brighter, of course.  
Lots of colored fabrics, glass,  
and metal. And the sound  
of the sea gulls and  
the ocean.





I haven't been back to this place since I woke up.



I left. And I never intended to come back.



But I'm kinda glad we ended up here.



I felt like giving up after everything that happened.

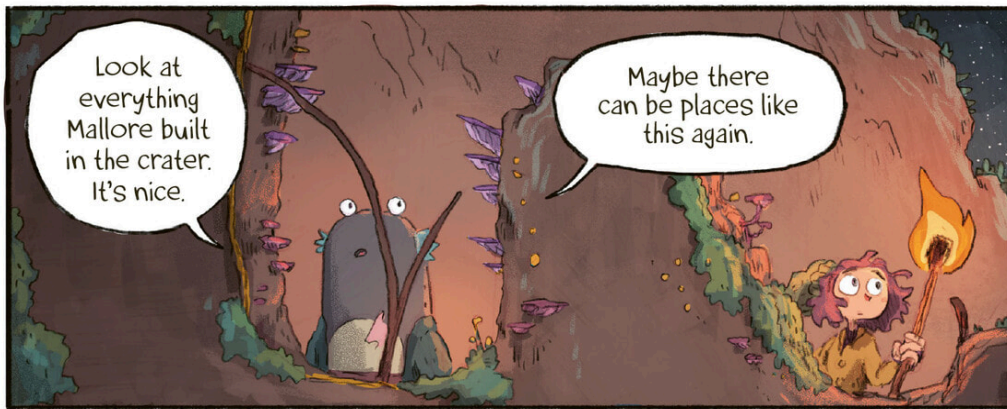
Trying to do the right thing, but making everything worse.

It all felt hopeless.

I was hopeless.



This place makes me sad, but I'm starting to feel optimistic again.



Look at everything Mallore built in the crater. It's nice.

Maybe there can be places like this again.



I don't know if I really even like Mallore. He ran away. He gave up. He hid from his mistakes and left problems for others to deal with.

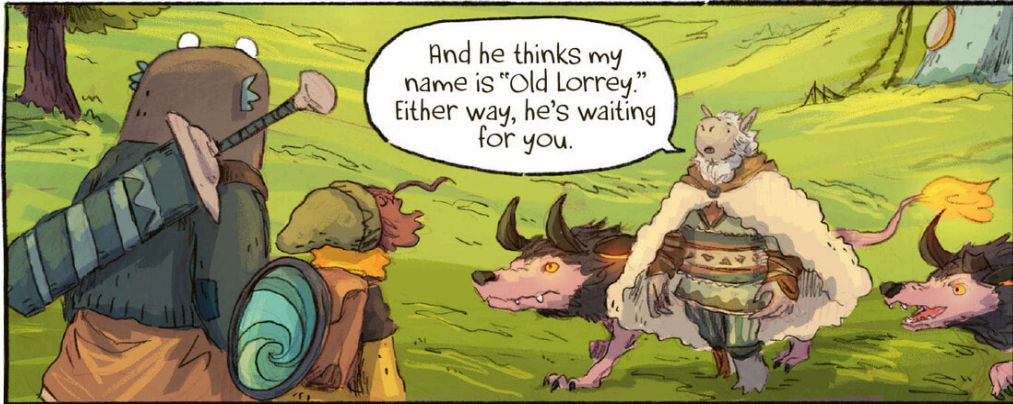


But ... I get it. I mean, I want to do the same thing.



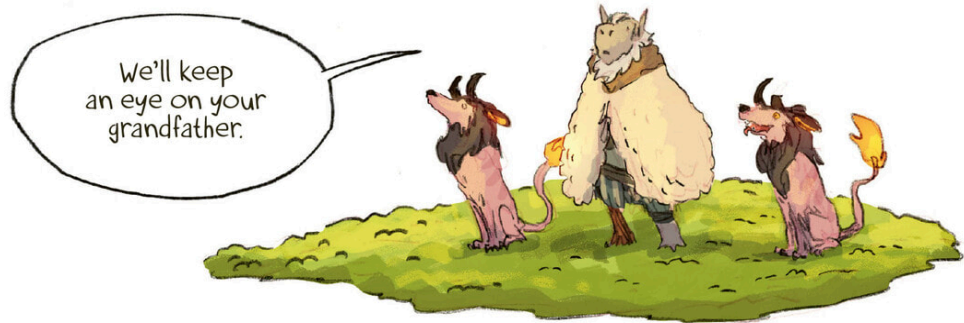


















Cad, look!  
It's the end of  
the coastline.



Easy now,  
Soot.



There could be  
Tikarri lurking!



Or maybe not.  
Nothing but sand and sea  
as far as the eye can—

Over here!



Hello.





You're okay!!



You are cold.



I have to say, it was surprisingly easy to find you.



Too easy? Is this some sort of Tikarri trap?!

Not a trap.



Went with the feathered ones.

You what?!



Yes. Wanted to know purpose of the staff.





Feathered ones  
went there.



They just walked  
into the ocean?

I can barely  
make it out. Do you  
know what that  
place is?

No.



We've gotta  
follow them!

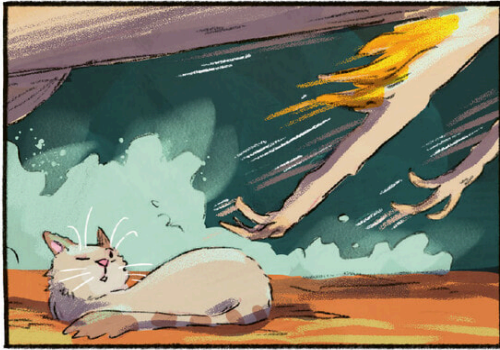
And find out what  
they're up to.

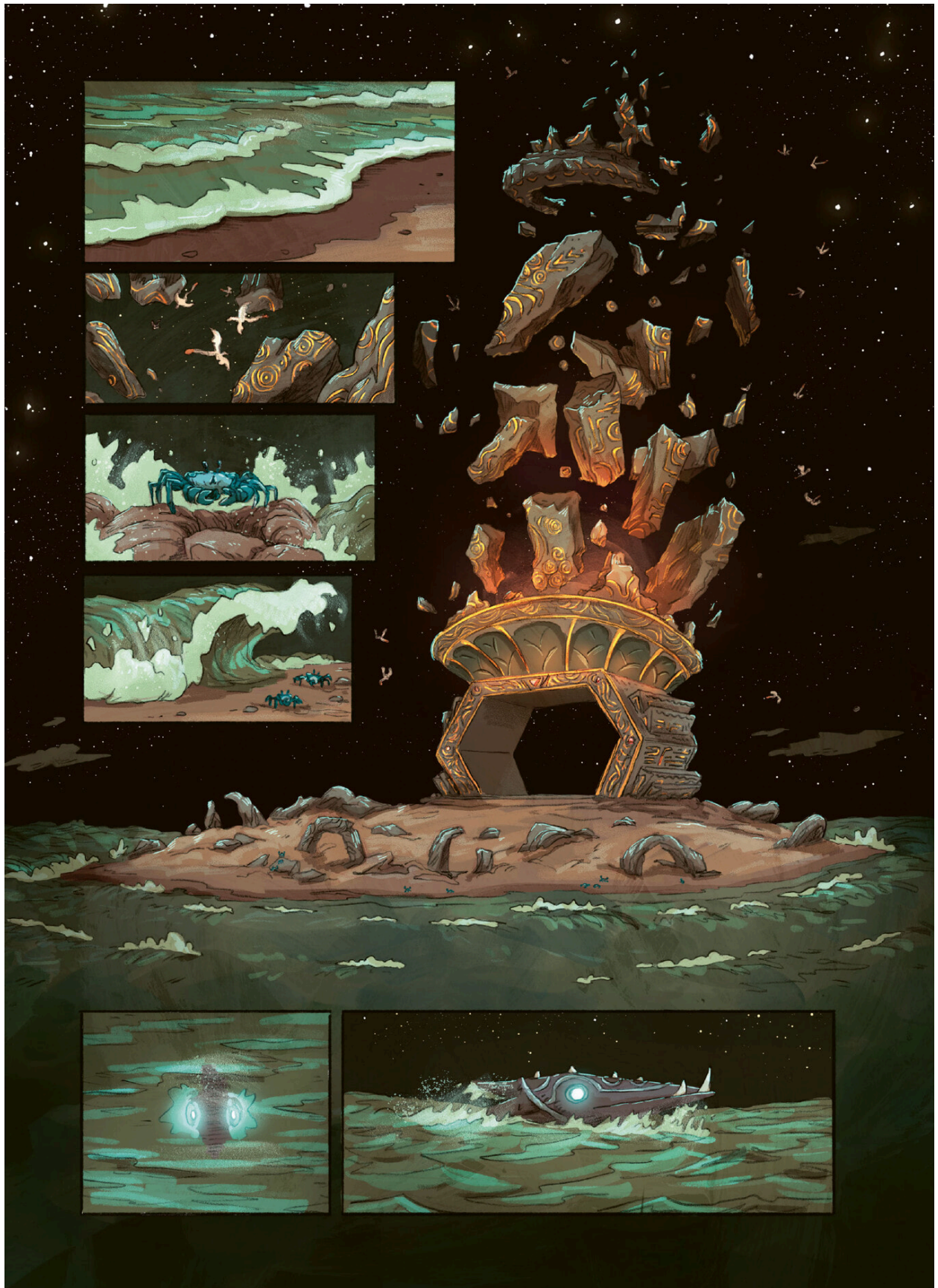


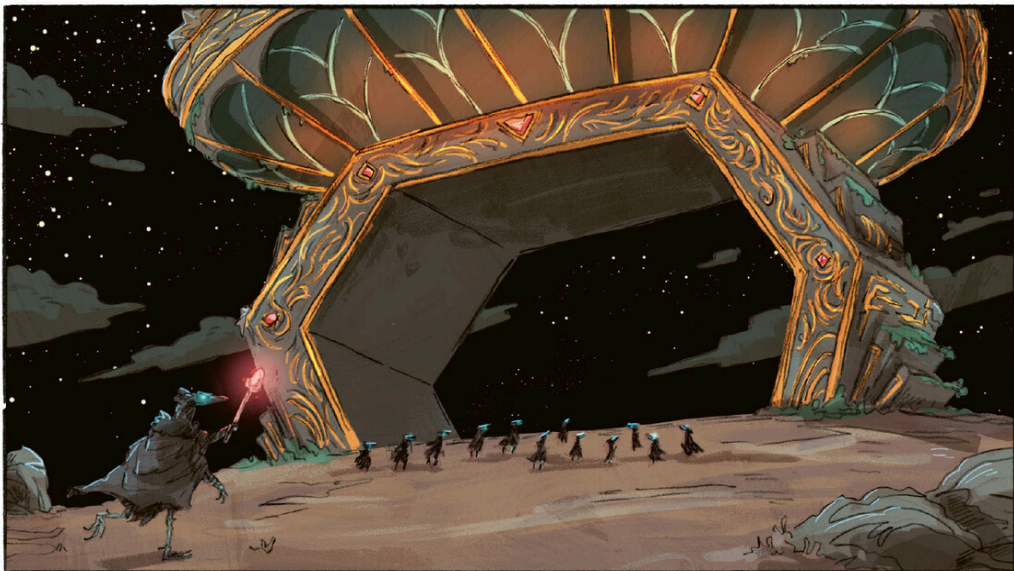
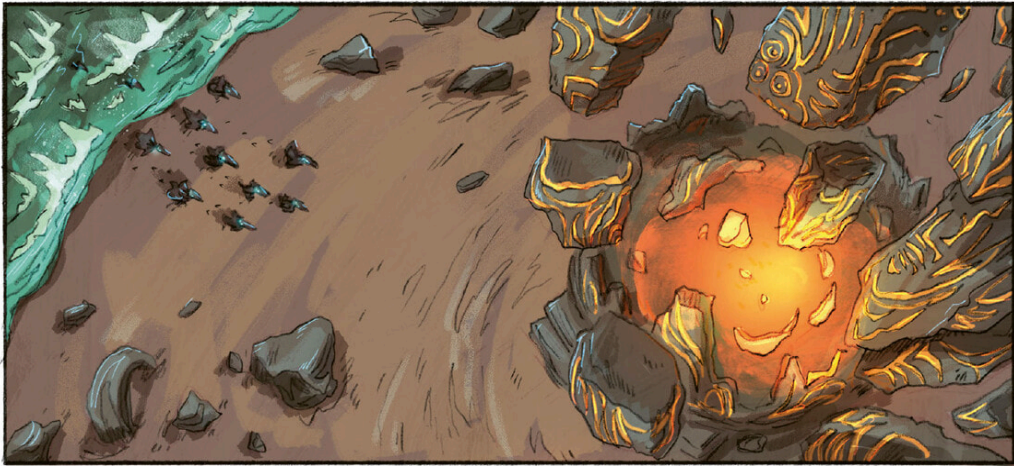
They might be  
raising an army or  
something even more  
nefarious!

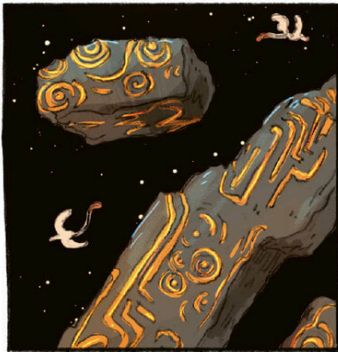
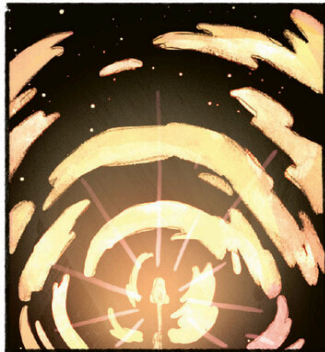
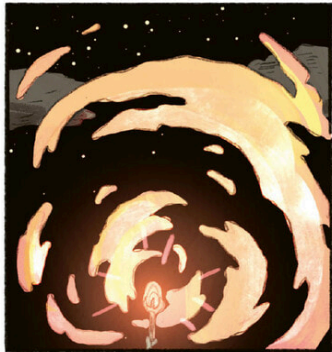
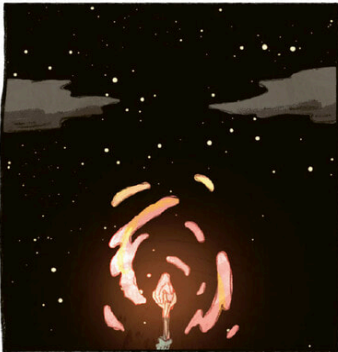
SNORT



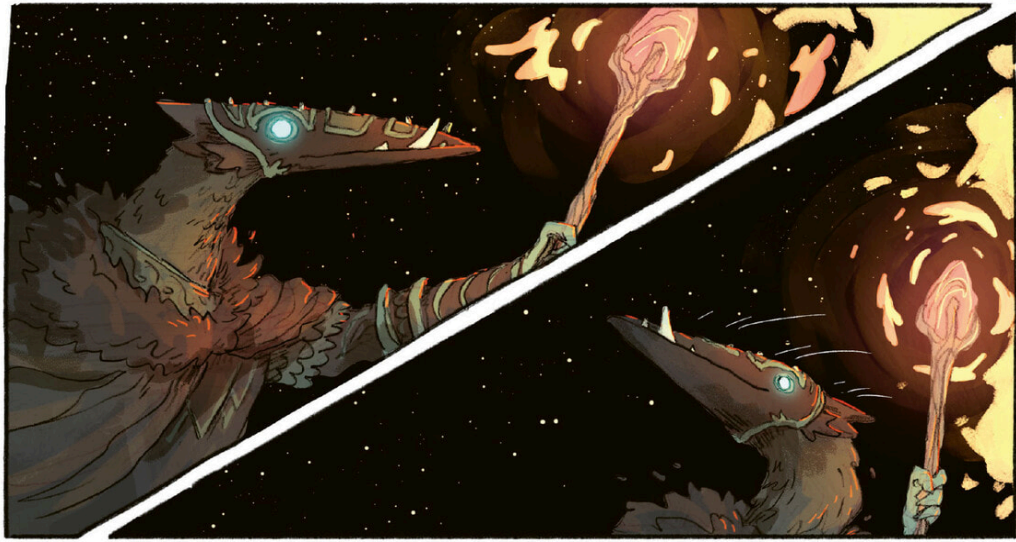
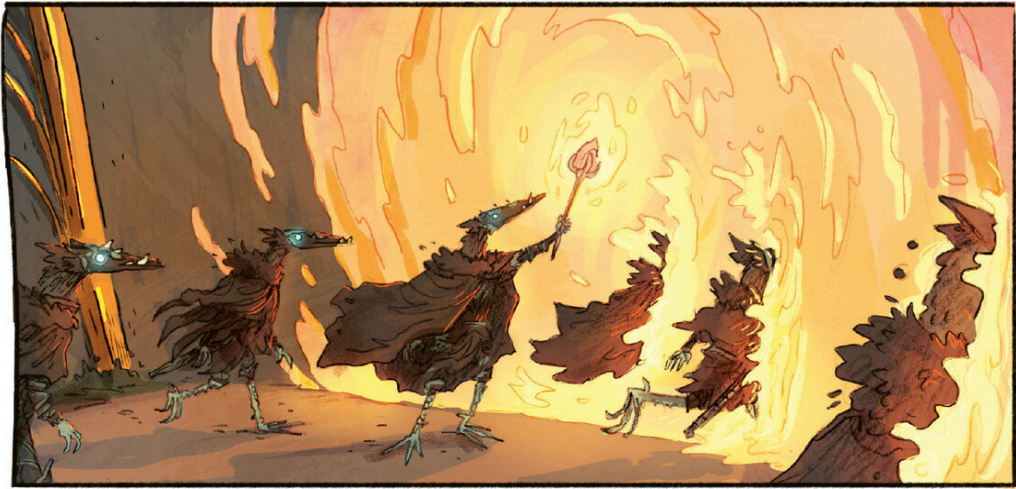






















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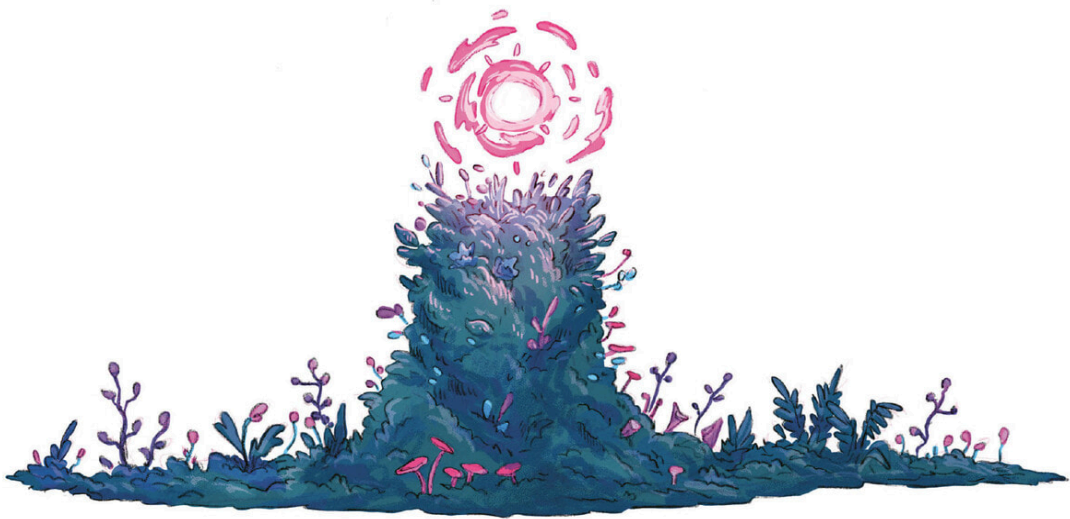
What're they doing?

Beats me.

Mrowr

Mrowwrrr  
Nimm, quiet.

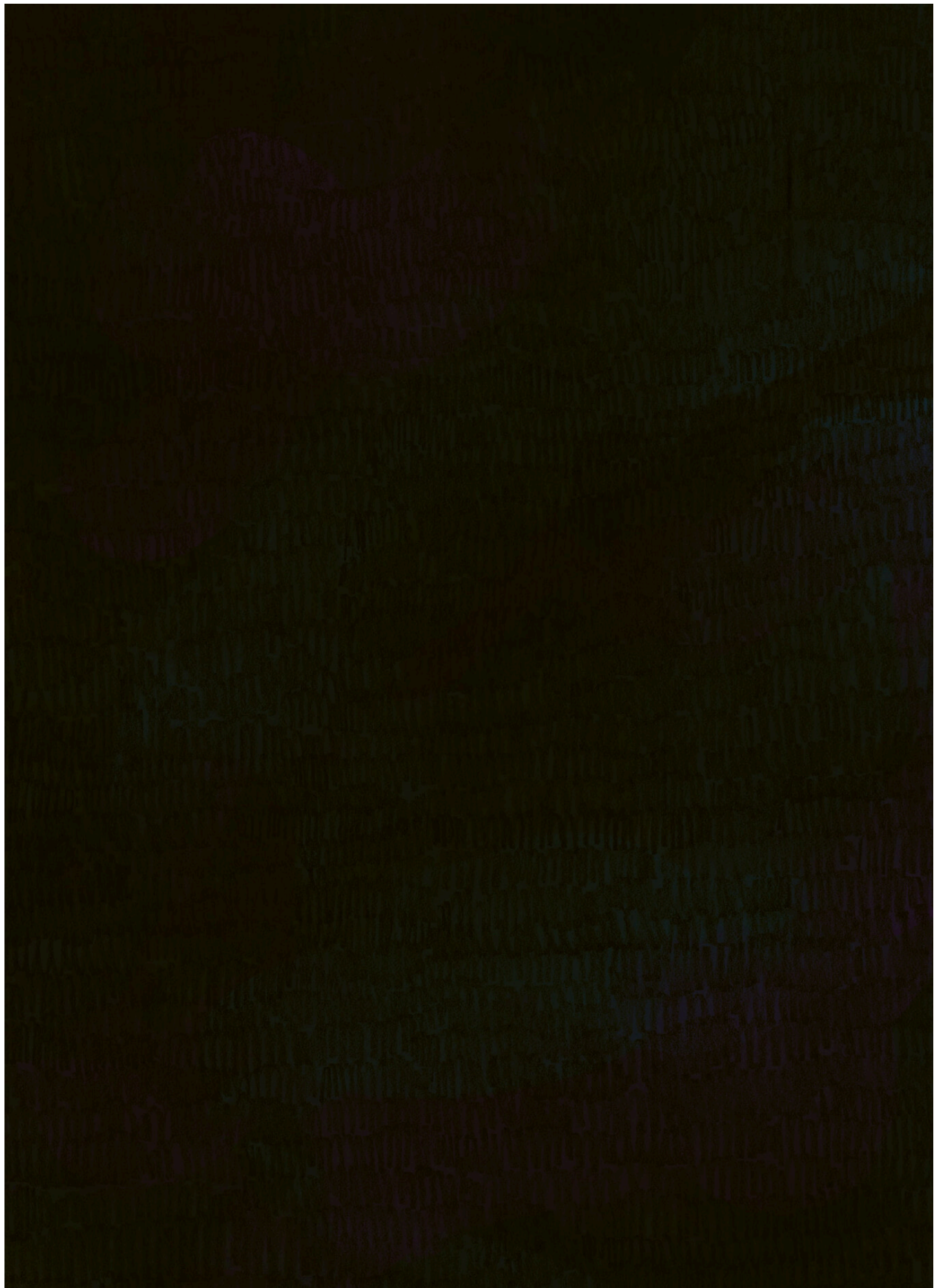








See things as they were...

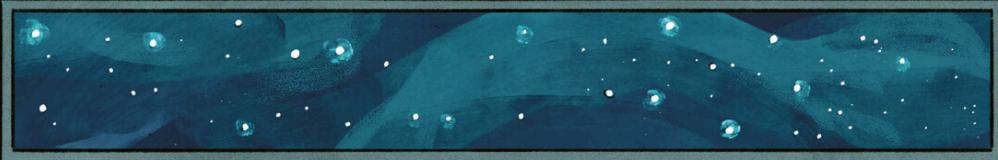


I awoke.

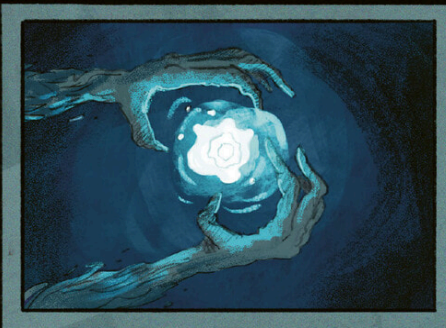


It was dark.

I walked through this strange new land,  
but was alone. I created small lights  
that floated skyward. I called them stars.  
I used them to tell stories, for myself.



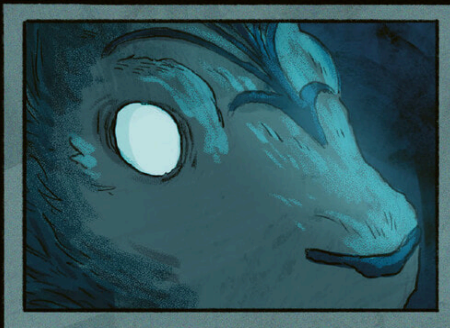
But my isolation was not  
to last forever.



I saw another. A sight to behold,  
glowing with a white-hot flame, bathing  
everything around in a warm light.  
Our gazes met of a moment,  
an eternity.



Then he turned and continued on his way.  
And I on mine.



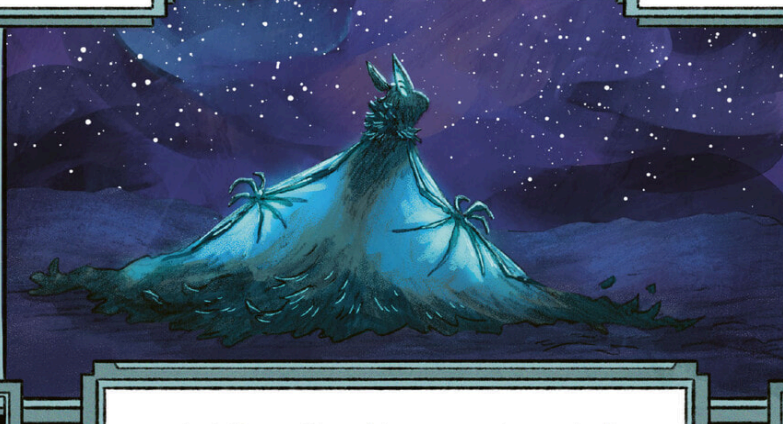
My journey continued.  
I made more stars, told myself  
more stories. I missed the warmth  
of that glow, but other thoughts  
occupied my mind.



What is this place?

Why am I here?

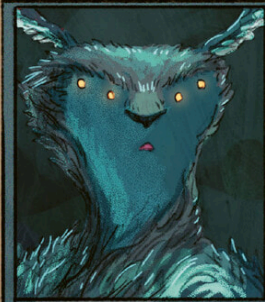
Where am I going?



But these thoughts were interrupted  
when I met the others.



First, I found water.  
A fluid and malleable substance, truly wondrous.  
And swimming in it in the most beautiful way was another  
being. Lorgon, he called himself, a funny sort. Chatty where the  
feathered one was silent. He had seen others, and I met them.



Together, we created a place. And once this place was complete, we heard a voice in all of us.



"Go forth," it said.



We did not know who it was, but it felt familiar. So go forth we did. And together we shaped this world, a place we called Irpa.

Long was our labor,  
but satisfying. We could not only  
look upon our craft, but live in it.  
And that we did for some time.

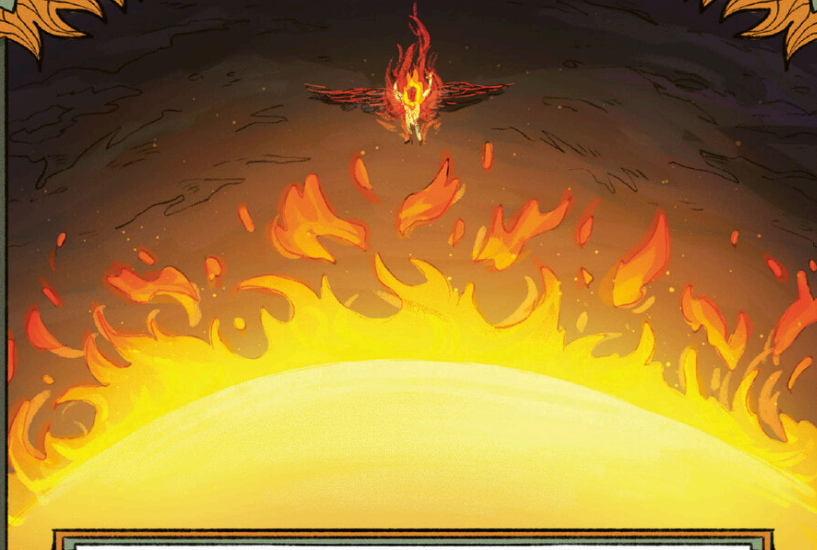
Ready to rest, I looked and saw  
a glow upon the horizon.  
He had returned.  
And I was glad.



Where he had been, I couldn't say.  
None of us had seen him during our many works.  
But here he was once again. Kest Ke Belenus, he  
called himself, and bright burned his soul.

He had his own gift to offer the world.





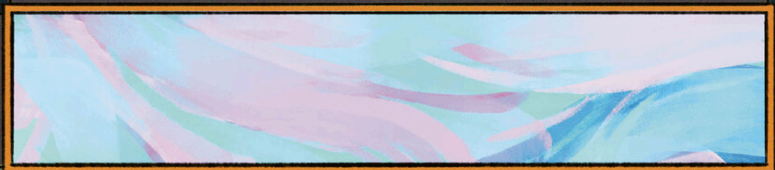
A great light, hot with energy, near blinding upon our eyes, unfathomable in its beauty. It rose, above our heads, into the firmament.

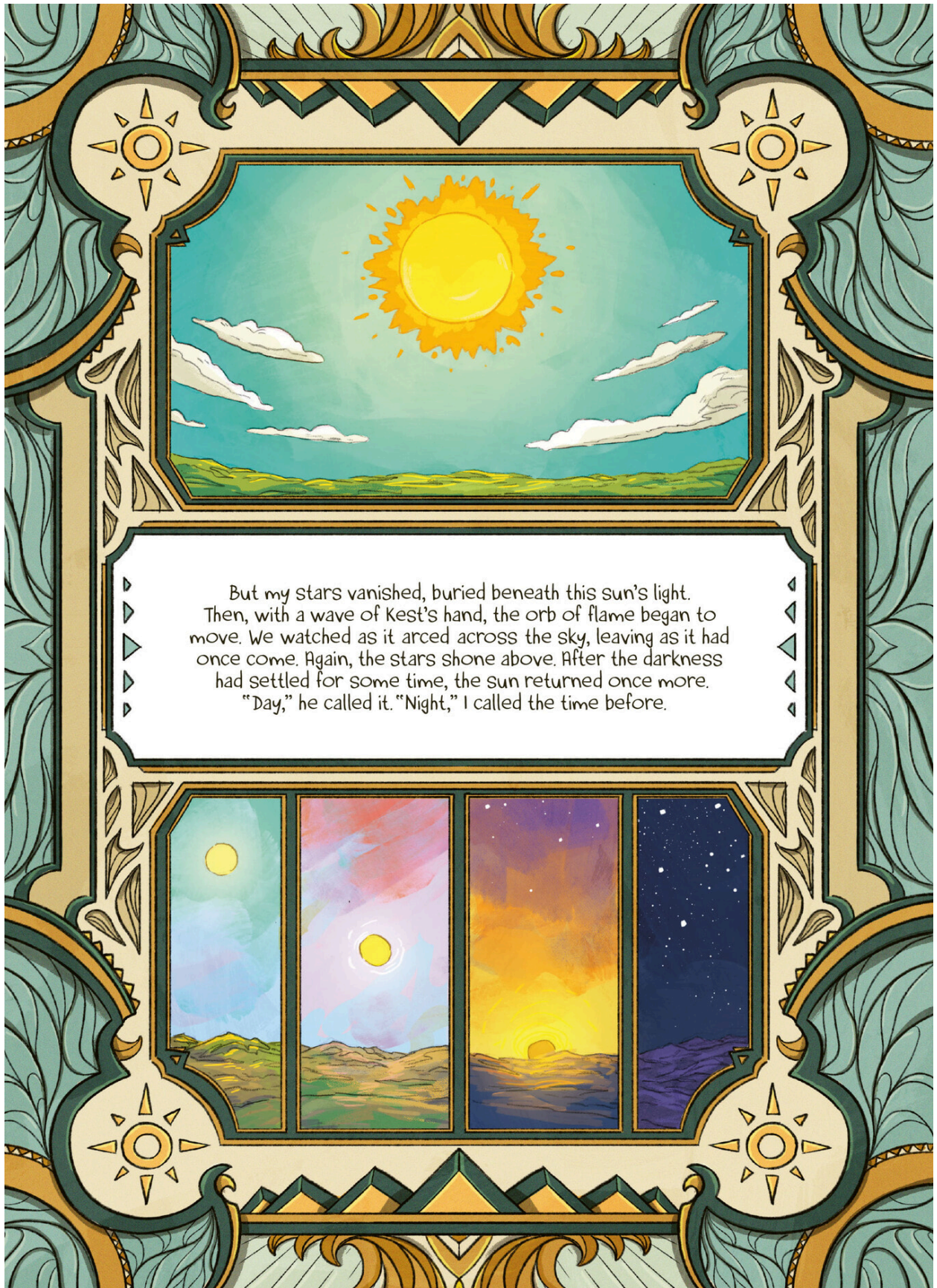


And the colors of everything changed as it did.



Colors I had never before seen.

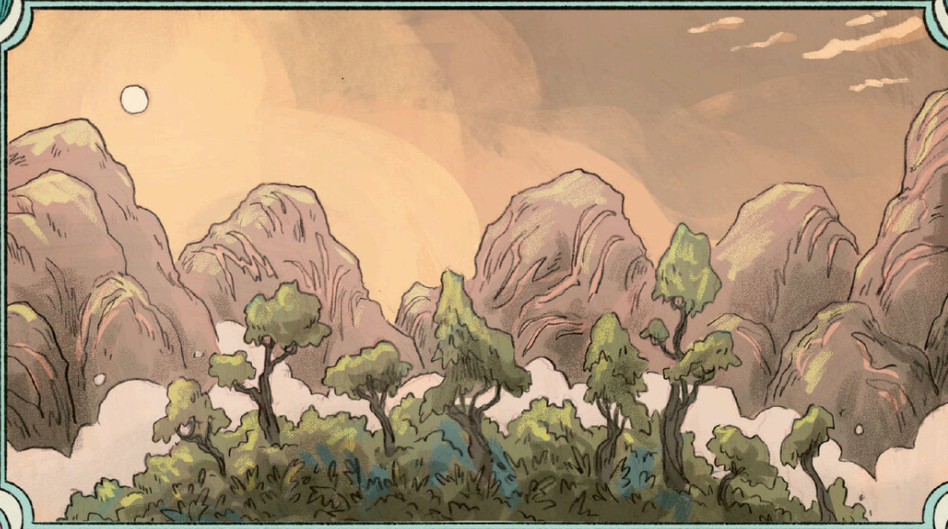




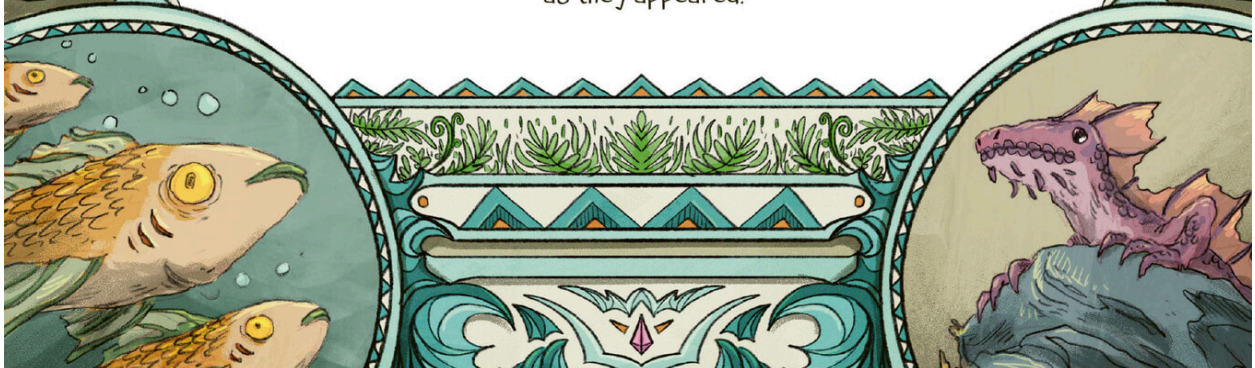
But my stars vanished, buried beneath this sun's light.  
Then, with a wave of Kest's hand, the orb of flame began to  
move. We watched as it arced across the sky, leaving as it had  
once come. Again, the stars shone above. After the darkness  
had settled for some time, the sun returned once more.  
"Day," he called it. "Night," I called the time before.



Day and Night continued, taking each their turn. Thousands upon thousands of them. The plants grew and changed, lush fields and forests, deserts and oceans blanketing much of the planet. The waters circulated Irpa, falling as rain, before misting back up as clouds, every droplet living in every place at some point. Then something funny happened.

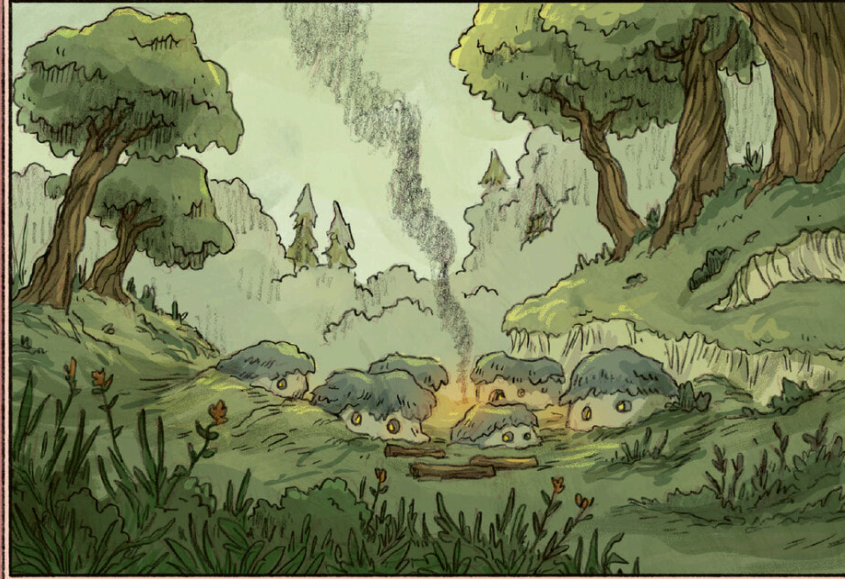


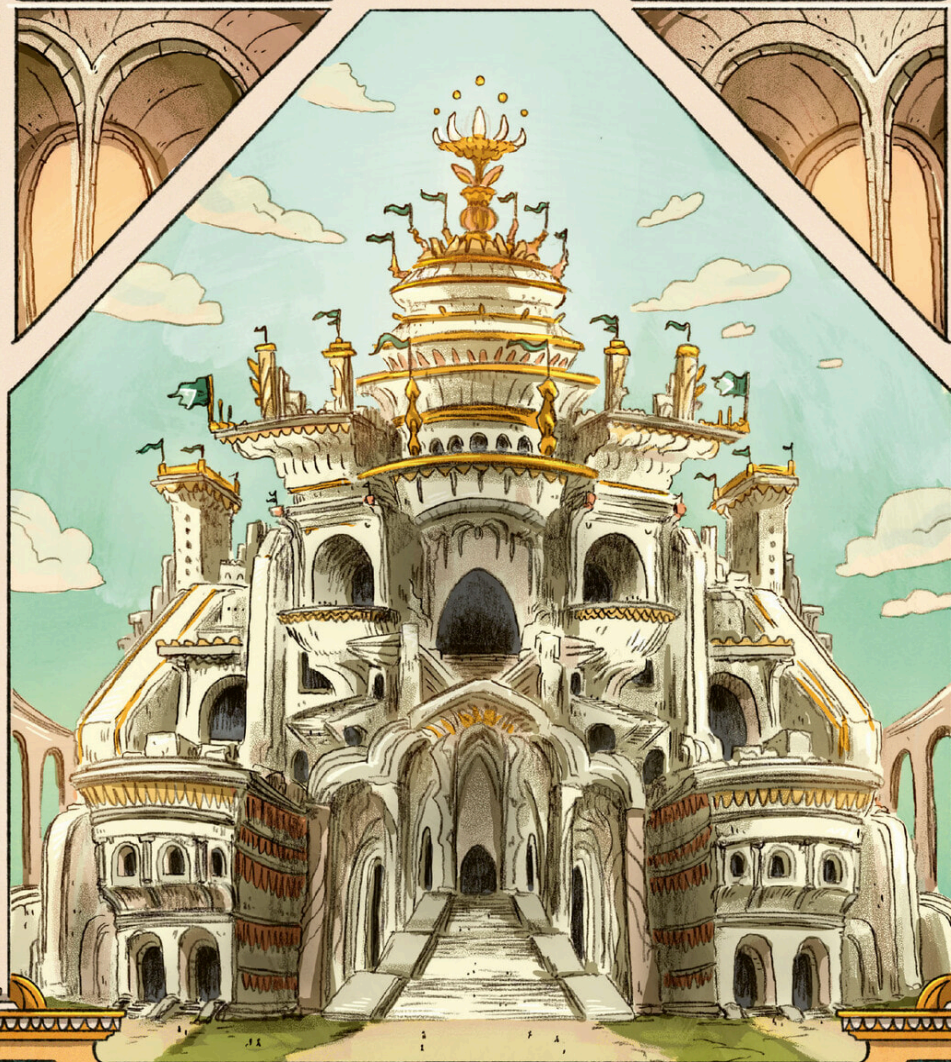
Creatures began to emerge. From the waters and dirt and trees. These we did not make, but watched with wonder as they appeared.





And as things do, these too grew and changed. They advanced, and developed their own forms of communicating. And they built dwellings. We watched and observed. Some of us with interest, but none more fascinated than Kest.





We began to live among them. And as we built, they followed. Their creations were marvels, things we would never have dreamt to make. Cities and great structures. Roads connecting disparate places. Plants and beasts they corralled to their will, keeping and harvesting for their needs. They took what we had created and made something more with it. And we let them, of course— what else had it been for if not this?





Lovely though it was, it was sometimes too much for me. I stole away, and made a place for myself. A garden like the times when I first woke. It wasn't better, but it was what I needed. Kest grew more and more involved with building grand cities and great towers, while I began to withdraw, disappearing into a relic of the past.

Unrest began to seep into the peaceful kingdoms. Irpa's bounty was there for all, but some wanted it for themselves; others wanted what they didn't have; others, I do not know what they sought, but seek it they did.

We did not involve ourselves in these conflicts. We did not understand them, nor did we want to. All of us but Kest.

"This is not the way," he would tell me.

And though I agreed, I knew not what to do. Wandering, creating, helping for so long, I had grown tired. I did not know how to solve problems I could not understand.



We were in Baihle, the central city of a grand civilization. Its name meant "Sun Place" in their tongue. Baihle was special to Kest as a "near-perfect summation of everything that was and can be," he called it. Their king approached us. A human. Proud, tall, strong for his kind. But we had seen hundreds of kings come and go in our time. Nonetheless, he considered himself a great man.



And so he approached with a request. Eternal Day. No more Night, no more darkness. "Just think," he said, "the crops we could grow and the things we could build! We could harvest the power of the sun without the dangers of night," he proclaimed.

This enraged Kest.  
"Night is not to be feared, but loved," he said.  
"There is no Day without Night." I listened as they argued, but  
felt only sadness. These people didn't understand. They didn't  
care for us or what we had built or for Irpa at all.



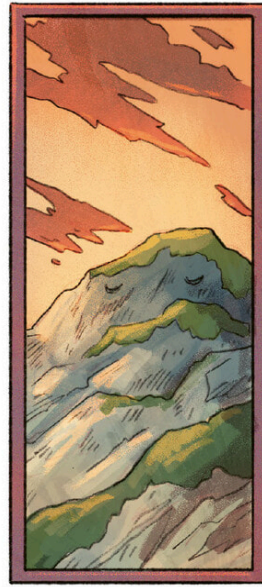
Kest sent the king from our chamber,  
saying to never speak of this madness again.  
But the king seethed, and I saw in his eyes  
a malice I had never witnessed before.





We spoke with our brethren  
and came to learn that we were not the first to  
be asked to alter the world for their petty gain.  
“They demanded I calm the seas!” stormed Lorgon.  
“Grow the wheat taller, but destroy the creeping vine—a plant as  
worthy as the wheat,” lamented Lumme.  
“Destroy this mountain for our road,” raged Motu.

We were no longer welcome in this world.  
This place we had helped flourish.



So we left.  
Lorgon to a realm underground, tending his waters. Lumme into a forest  
so deep they could never be found. Motu went to sleep, becoming a mountain.  
Kest turned to me. "Where will we go?" he asked.  
I took his hand and led him to my garden. He stared in wonder.  
"It's like it was before I came," he said. I handed him a key—a star inside a jewel.  
"Let them have their wars," he said.  
And there we lived.



And we did—for a while, at least.  
The troubles of Irpa still weighed on Kest.  
He would secret away to a workshop, tinkering on something.  
When he showed me, I could not believe my eyes. Creatures.  
He made creatures. Feathered, armored soldiers.  
Their eyes alight with a familiar glow.



"How?" I asked.  
"Some of your stars, with  
a little of my fire," he replied.  
"Why?" I asked.  
"To keep you safe," he replied.  
I felt it then—he had poured all his feelings  
toward me into making these poor creatures.  
They were twisted creations of  
love, fear, sadness, worry.  
And they were linked to us both.

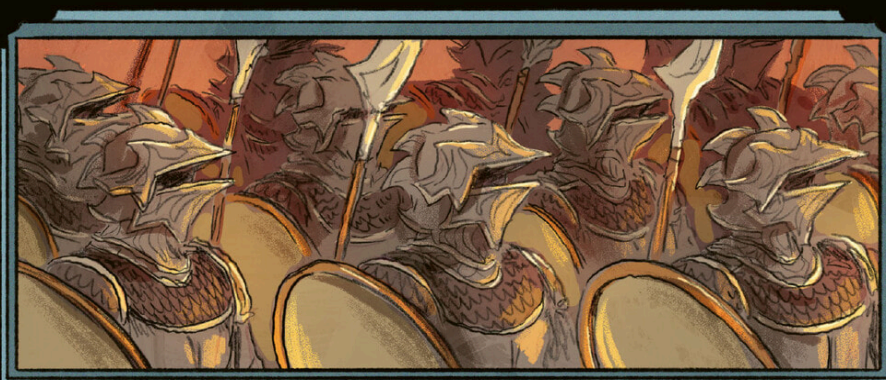
Kest became more and more isolated,  
wishing to stay in our little realm forever.  
I didn't miss its troubles, but I still held a special place in my  
heart for Irpa. The trees, waters, sunsets. I no longer wanted  
to live there, but desired to see it from time to time.  
Kest was reluctant about my journeys to and from  
his once-beloved world.

So I would venture out alone.

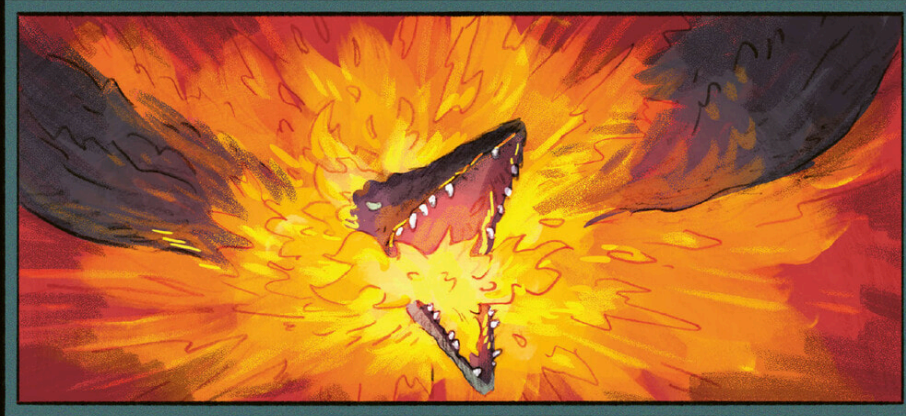




And one Day, as I walked along the promenade I frequented, watching the Day change to Night, the king of Baihle approached. It may have been the same one we last spoke to or a descendant—I don't know how much time had passed—but he wanted the same thing. And had the same malice in his eyes. It happened so quickly. In mere moments, his soldiers swarmed, and I was trapped.



I saw Kest coming to help.

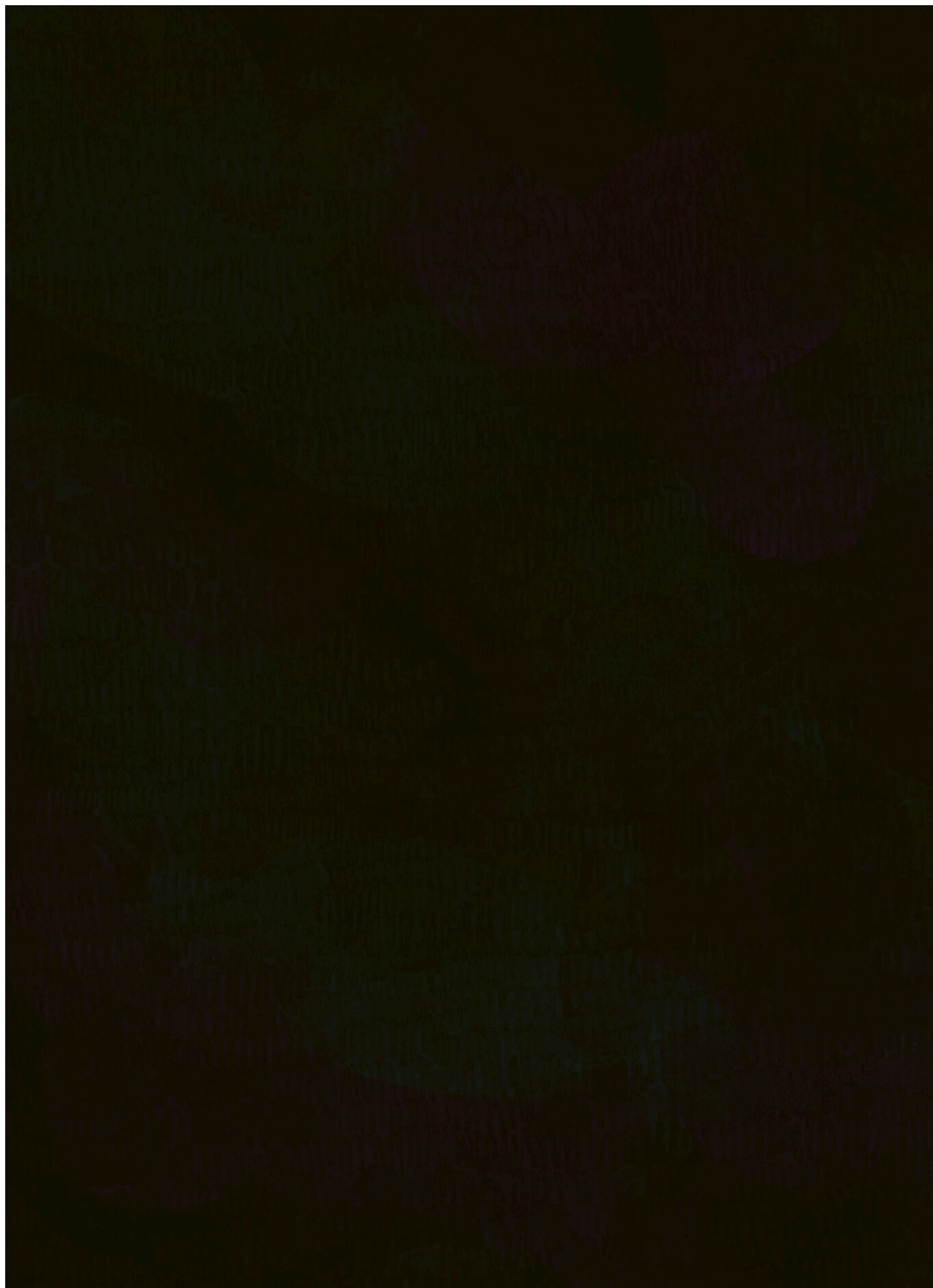


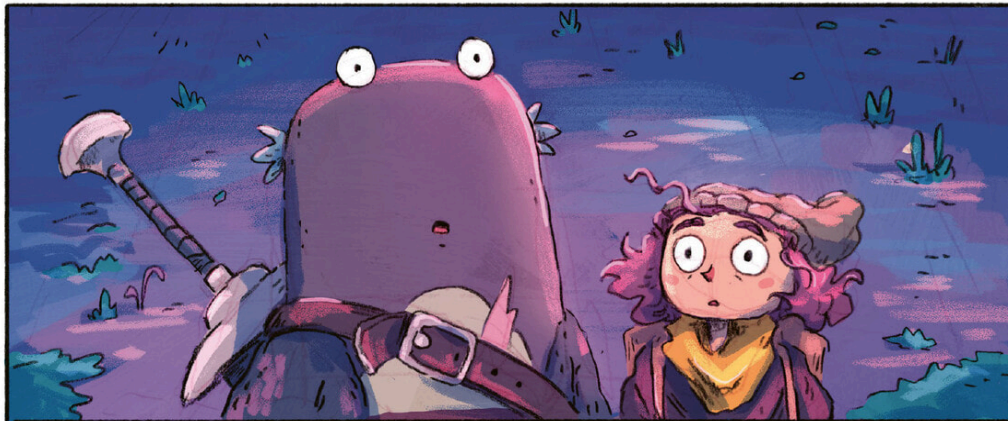
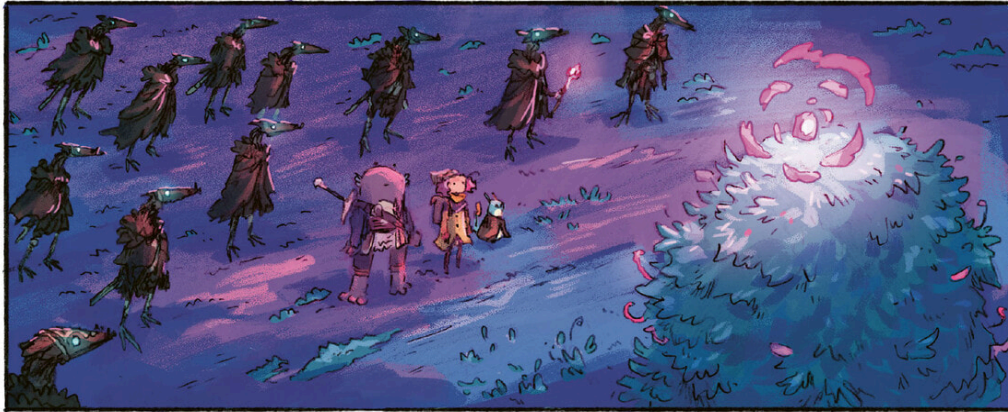
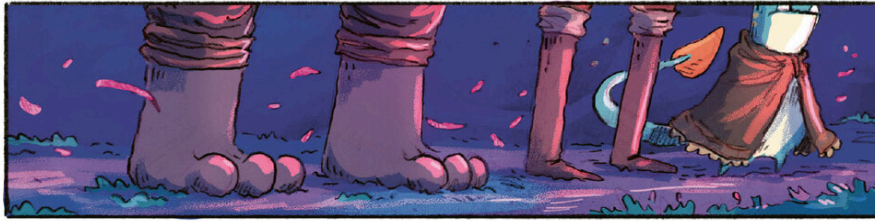
But it was too late.

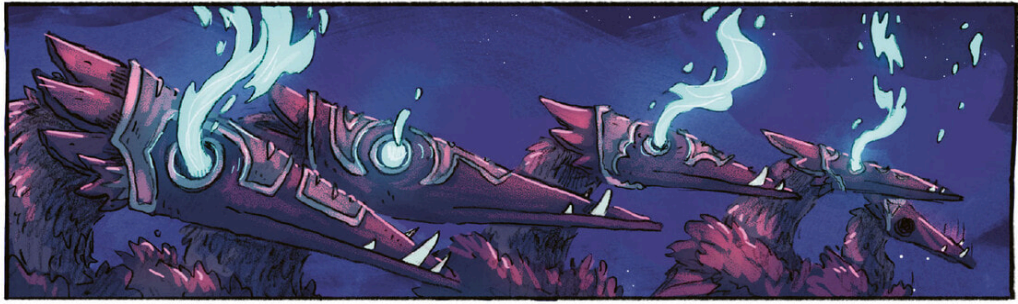
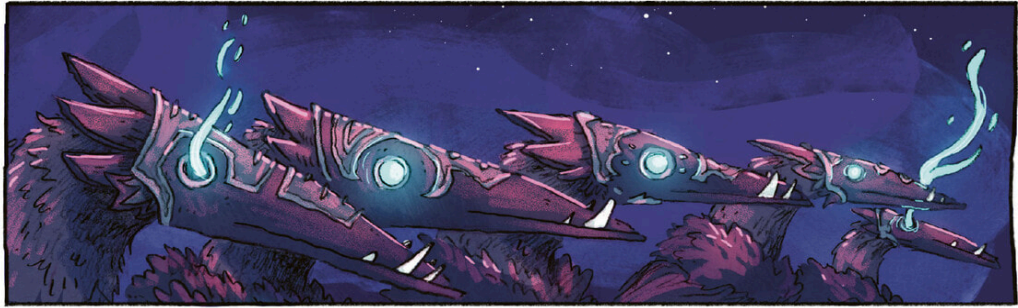


It was too late for too many things.

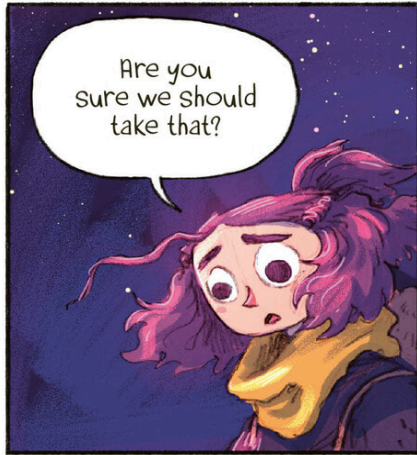
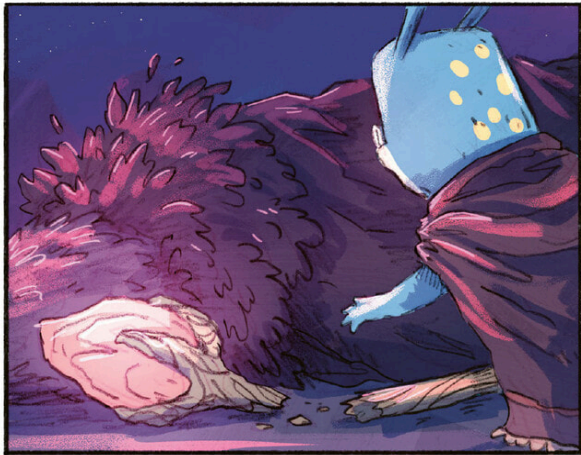


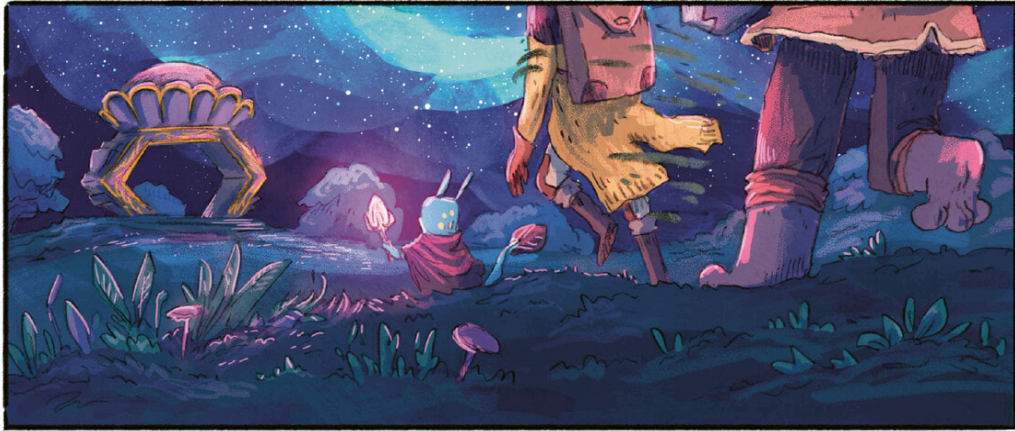












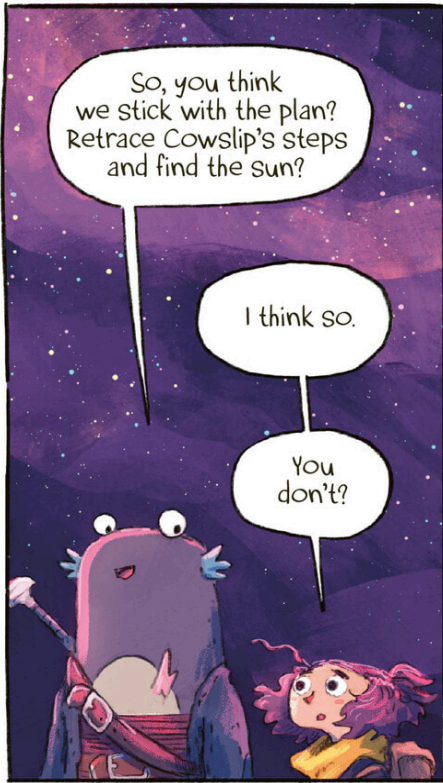
How about all that stuff, huh? I can't believe what we just saw.

Me neither. It's a lot to think about. Just everything that's happened. How we ended up here . . .



And how everything we've read is wrong!

Heh. That too.



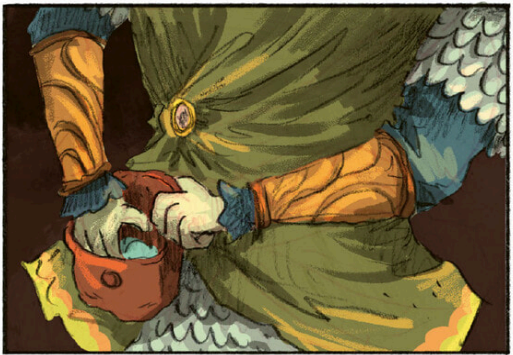
You are right—our ancestors blew it last time. And we might never find the sun, might not be able to revive it, or we might do it and then ruin everything all over again . . . But I think this is a chance to **try again** and **do better**.






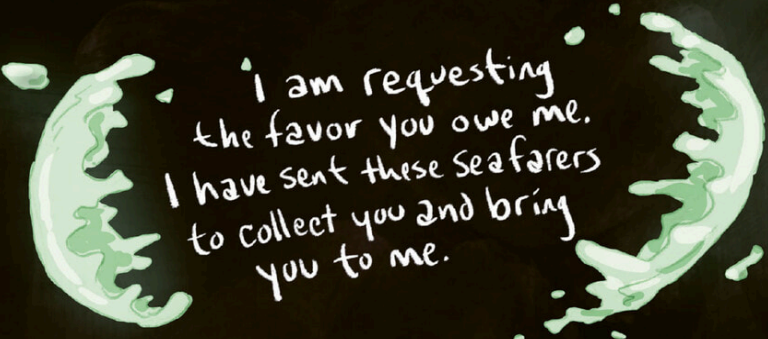




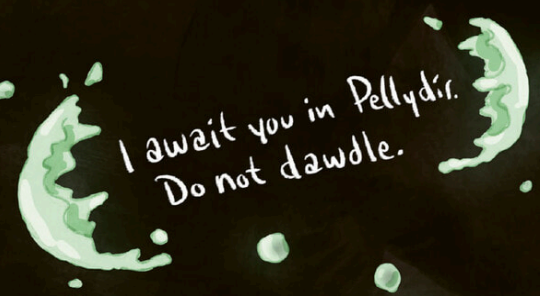




Greetings,  
you foolhardy pair.  
It rather tickles my gills  
that you are not dead yet.  
Well done.



I am requesting  
the favor you owe me.  
I have sent these seafarers  
to collect you and bring  
you to me.



I await you in Pellydir.  
Do not dawdle.









At least he's excited again.









Give it a chance, Bea!  
Just feel the roll of the waves  
beneath your feet!

Cad—  
please stop  
talking about  
the waves.



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*For Grams*

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Lightfall: The Dark Times  
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Bob Probert

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**T**HE LIGHTS HAVE GONE OUT in the land of Irpa. While survivors from the battle at Rinn begin their long trek to the city of Baihle in hope of shelter, Bea and Cad have devised their own plan. Accompanied by the Pig Wizard and their Ar sai friend, the small fellowship sets out for the Citadel of Knowledge in pursuit of answers to their world's deepest and darkest secrets.

Their journey uncovers more questions than answers as dangerous threats continue to emerge from the shadows, along with a treacherous ooze known only as the Mire. But the arrival of an unexpected ally reveals a clue to a mystery from long ago . . . and a beacon of hope for the future.

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