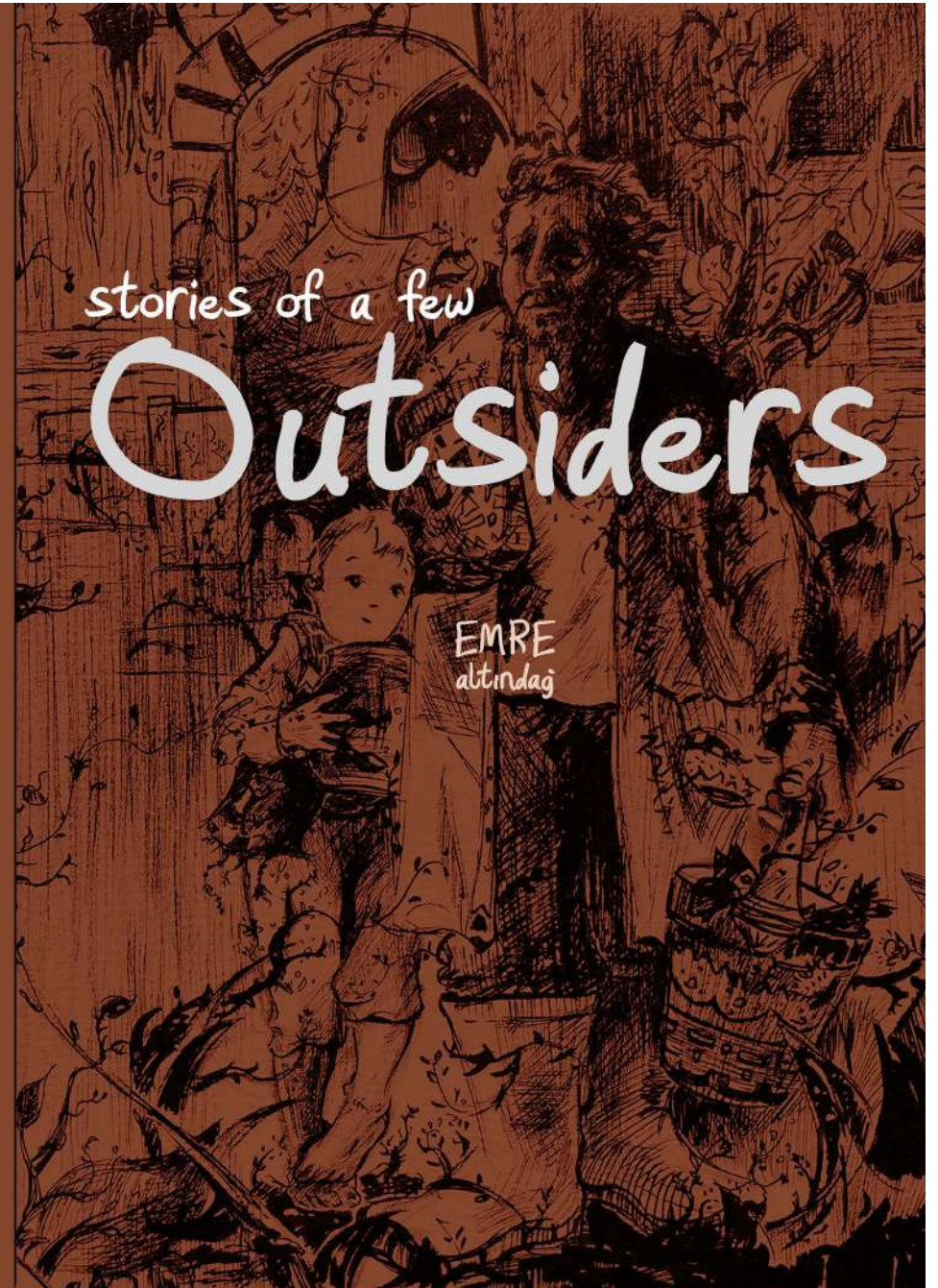


stories of a few

Outsiders

EMRE
altındag



An aerial photograph showing a dense network of small, winding streams and rivers flowing through a lush green forest. The water bodies are light blue and white, contrasting with the surrounding greenery. The streams flow in various directions, creating a complex web of waterways.

The Source of a River



THE INSURGENT FORCES OF THE ATASHYER REGION WERE ALMOST GONE NOW. IT IS KNOWN THAT THE REGIONAL HEAD OF STATE IS MISSING.

INVADING FORCES CLAIMED TO HAVE CAPTURED AND KILLED HIM. HOWEVER, THIS WAS THOUGHT TO BE A LIE, AS THERE WERE NO BODIES AROUND.

THOSE VILLAGERS IN KOEY BELIEVED THAT WHATEVER THEIR PRESIDENT'S SITUATION, THEY NOW HAD TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES. FOR THIS REASON, THEY STARTED TO ESTABLISH GUERRILLA FORCES THAT THEY CALLED THE RAIDERS AMONG THEMSELVES.

THEIR AIM WAS TO MAKE OCCASIONAL NIGHT RAIDS ON THE INVADING FORCES, CAUSING PARTIAL LOSSES AND SMUGGLING THEIR SUPPLIES AND WEAPONS. IT WAS UNCERTAIN HOW LONG THE WAR WOULD LAST, AND SINCE IT WAS UNCLEAR WHETHER THERE WAS EVEN A HEAD OF STATE AT THEIR HEAD, THEY STARTED TO FORM THESE TEAMS AMONG THEMSELVES, AND THIS NEWS WAS SECRETLY SPREADING AMONG THE VILLAGERS. THOSE WISHING TO PARTICIPATE SHOULD CONTACT THEM IMMEDIATELY.

BUT AFTER A WHILE, NO ONE HEARD FROM THOSE WHO JOINED THOSE TEAMS AGAIN.

THE POPULATION OF THE CITY HAD DWINDLED BY MORE THAN HALF IN THE LAST CENTURY.

THE REMAINING PEOPLE, OF COURSE, SUFFERED FROM HUNGER AND POVERTY DUE TO THE SIEGE. EVEN IN KOEY, WHICH IS FAMOUS FOR ITS LAKES DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGES, DROUGHT WAS MANIFESTING ITSELF SEVERELY WITH EACH PASSING DAY.

NOW EVEN THE FAMOUS KOEY LAKES HAD COME TO THE POINT OF COMPLETELY DRYING UP.

ALTHOUGH KOEY DID NOT HAVE A LARGE FISHING MARKET, AT LEAST THE LOCALS WERE ONCE ABLE TO FISH ADEQUATELY FOR THEMSELVES. HOWEVER, THIS SITUATION WAS NOW AT A CRITICAL POINT. EVERYTHING WAS MIXED UP. THE QUESTIONS OF WHO IS GOOD AND WHO IS BAD HAVE LONG SINCE BEEN FORGOTTEN, PEOPLE WERE ONLY CONCERNED WITH PROTECTING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THEMSELVES AND THEIR LOVED ONES.

NO ONE CARED WHO WAS IN CHARGE, AND IT DIDN'T MATTER. BOTH THEIR COUNTRY AND THE LAND THEY LIVED IN, THE TREES, THEIR FRUITS AND WATERS WERE ROTTING AWAY WITH THEM.



ONE DAY, A CALM BUT COOL WIND WAS BLOWING
IN THE VILLAGE...

ALTHOUGH THE INVADING FORCES HAD NOT YET REACHED THE INSIDE OF THE KOEY AREA, THERE WAS DANGER AT ANY MOMENT, THE PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE WERE CONSTANTLY ON THE ALERT.



INSIDE THE OLD WOODEN HOUSE, KAGU WAS
WAITING, SOMEWHAT UNEASY,

FOR HIS GRANDFATHER TO RETURN
FROM A MEETING WITH ONE OF HIS
OLD FRIENDS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.



SPENDING TIME HERE WAS ALWAYS MORE ENJOYABLE FOR HIM THAN OUTSIDE. THE HOUSE HAD NINE ROOMS, THEY WERE COVERED WITH WOODEN WALLS AND MUD BRICKS. EACH OF THEM SEEMED LIKE A UNIQUE PLANET TO HIM SINCE CHILDHOOD. ACCORDING TO HIS GRANDFATHER, IN THE PAST CENTURIES, EACH ROOM HERE WAS A SEPARATE HOUSE USED BY HIS RELATIVES. INDEED, AT THAT TIME, EVERYONE CALLED THE ROOM THAT BELONGED TO THEIR FAMILY AS "HOME".

IT WAS IN THIS OLD WOODEN HOUSE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS THAT KAGU AND HIS RELATIVES HAD A HISTORY. IT HAD BEEN THEIR FAMILY'S REFUGE AND LIVING SPACE FOR NEARLY FIVE GENERATIONS. HOWEVER, ONLY KAGU AND REVASIM REMAINED LIVING IN THIS OLD WOODEN HOUSE. WHILE HE WAS WAITING FOR HIM, HE REMEMBERED, FAINTLY, WHEN HIS GRANDFATHER HAD TAKEN HIM TO THE FOREST OF BEREK IN HIS CHILDHOOD.

IT HADN'T OCCURRED TO HIM FOR A LONG TIME...



THERE, REVÂSIM MUST HAVE TOLD HIM ABOUT
THE GARDENERS...

HE TALKED AT LENGTH ABOUT HOW THEY
WERE ABLE TO PICK PEARS OR BANANAS
FROM AN APPLE TREE DEEP IN THE
FOREST,

AND HOW THEY COULD MAKE HONEY FROM ANY FLOWER IN
THEIR OWN FAMILY IN THE TIME OF HIS GRANDMOTHER.

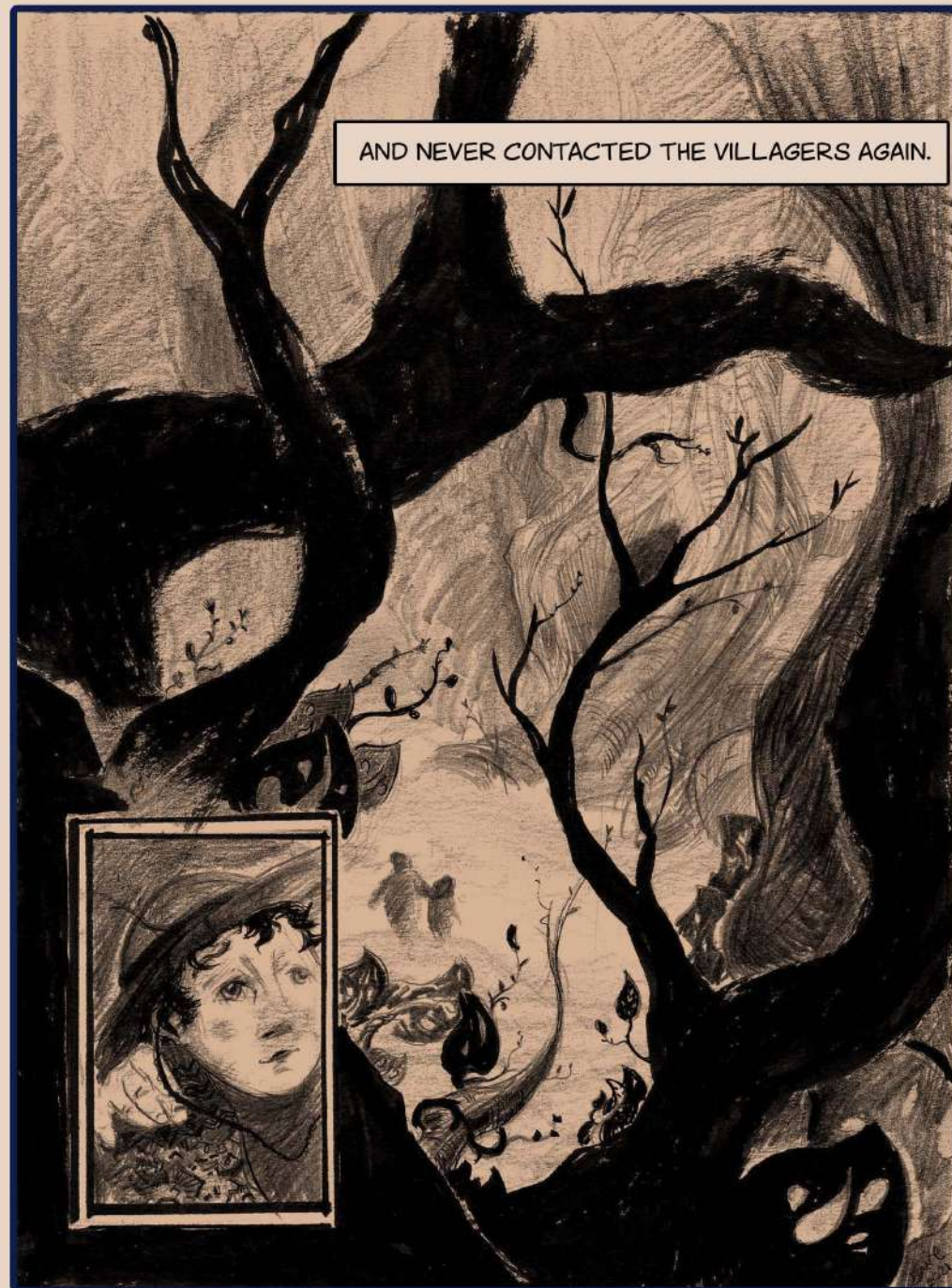


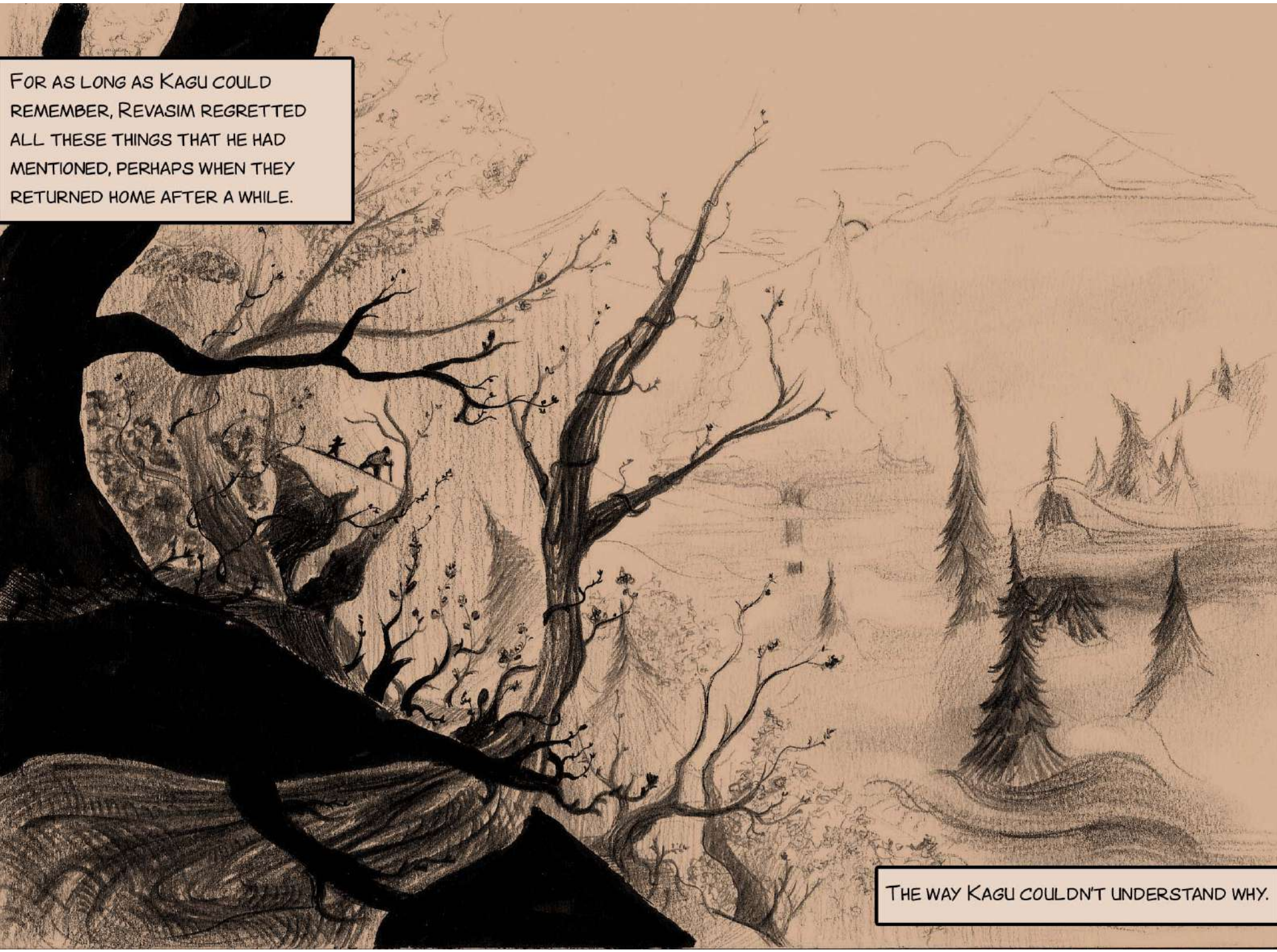
THEN, AFTER A BLOODY AND
TOUGH WAR AT THAT TIME,
THE NAME OF WHICH HE
CANNOT REMEMBER,
HE TOLD THAT THESE
GARDENERS RETREATED
FURTHER INTO THE FOREST...



...DEEPER INTO THE FOREST FROM KOEY,

AND NEVER CONTACTED THE VILLAGERS AGAIN.





FOR AS LONG AS KAGU COULD
REMEMBER, REVASIM REGRETTED
ALL THESE THINGS THAT HE HAD
MENTIONED, PERHAPS WHEN THEY
RETURNED HOME AFTER A WHILE.

THE WAY KAGU COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY.

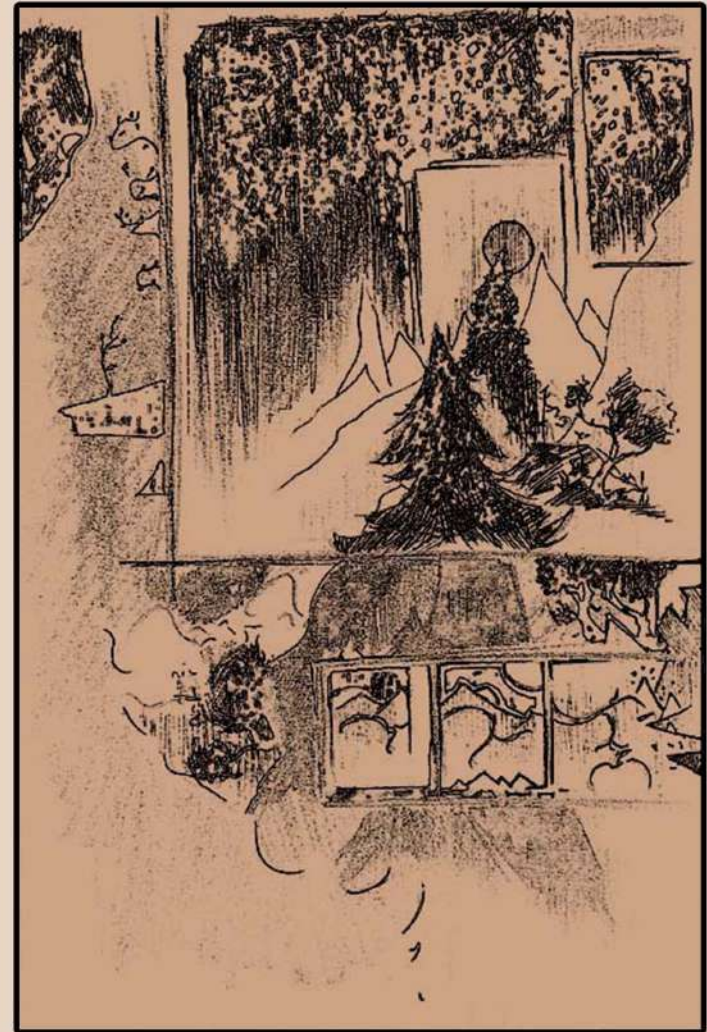
HE APOLOGIZED TO KAGU, EXPLAINING
THAT HE MIGHT HAVE READ THESE
STORIES FROM SOMEWHERE,



THAT HE HAD TO FORGET THEM, THAT HE DID NOT
KNOW WHY HE TOLD THEM TO KAGU.

ALTHOUGH KAGU TRIED TO MAKE SENSE OF THIS
STRANGE SITUATION FOR A WHILE,

AS TIME PASSED,
THIS MEMORY FADED FROM HIS MEMORY.





Barely Alive

JUST BEFORE THE GREAT SIEGE AND HEAVY SHELLING BEGAN, A MAN FROM A COUNTRY OUTSIDE OF ATASHYER HAD ARRIVED IN THE CITY.

THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN TENSION BETWEEN THE INVADING COUNTRY AND ATASHYER FOR CENTURIES. BUT NO ONE COULD HAVE IMAGINED THAT THE INVADERS WOULD SUDDENLY LAUNCH SUCH A FIERCE AND BRUTAL ATTACK ON ATASHYER.



THE MAN FELL TO HIS KNEES BEFORE THE SIGHT HE SAW. HE BLAMED HIMSELF FOR BELIEVING HE COULD START A NEW LIFE HERE. HOW QUICKLY, HOW SUDDENLY EVERYTHING HAD COME TO THIS. FOR A LONG TIME, THE MAN'S MIND COULD NOT ACCEPT HOW THE CITY, WHICH WAS BUILT WITH SO MUCH EFFORT OVER THE AGES, COULD BECOME LIKE THIS IN A FEW DAYS. "ARE THERE ANY SURVIVORS? EVERYWHERE IS DESERTED, MAYBE I CAN FIND SOMEONE WHO SURVIVED. CAN I AT LEAST HAVE SOME INFORMATION? AS IF WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WHEN I HAD KNOWLEDGE..." HE SAID TO HIMSELF.

FOR A LONG TIME HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. HE HIMSELF WAS WANTED FOR SMUGGLING IN THE AREA HE CAME FROM, HE THOUGHT HE WOULD BE SAFE IN THIS CITY.

THEN HE ASKED HIMSELF IF HE HAD ANYWHERE ELSE TO GO. HE EVEN WONDERED IF HE SHOULD SURRENDER TO THE INVADERS ARMY. AFTER ALL, HE WASN'T FROM HERE. MAYBE HE COULD SAVE HIMSELF.

ATASHYER WAS VERY FAMOUS FOR HAVING MANY ETHNIC GROUPS IN IT. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT KNOW THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF NEITHER THEIRS NOR THE INVADERS. AFTER ALL, THOSE FROM THE RELIGION OF THE INVADERS LIVING HERE COULD BE SPARED, THEY SHOULD BE SAFE.

AS HE KNOWS, IT WAS ALWAYS LIKE THIS IN WARS. HE WAS ENRAGED AT HIS OWN IGNORANCE. HE STARTED TO SMELL VERY STRANGE SMELLS THAT HE HAD NEVER SMELLED BEFORE.

INTENSE AND BURNING SCENTS.





THEN THE APPLE SUDDENLY
APPEARED BEFORE HIS EYES
AS A TINY KOEY APPLE.
HE ATE IT IN A FEW BITES.

AT THIS TIME, HE HAD COME
QUITE CLOSE TO THE THRES-
HOLD OF THE INN DOOR, AND
HAD ALREADY ENTERED
WITHOUT REALIZING IT.
IT WAS AS IF HE HAD HEARD
WHISPERS AROUND, HE COULD
HAVE SWORN TO HIMSELF.

BUT HE COULDN'T SEE
ANYONE.

CONTINUING TO WALK SLOWLY, THE MAN
MOVED FROM AREAS OF DERELICT
LITTLE BUILDINGS TO AREAS OF VAST
MEANINGLESS CLEARINGS. HE HAD ARRIV-
ED IN FRONT OF WHAT LOOKED LIKE AN
OLD WIDE INN GATE. FOR A MOMENT HE
THOUGHT HE HEARD CHILDREN'S VOICES.

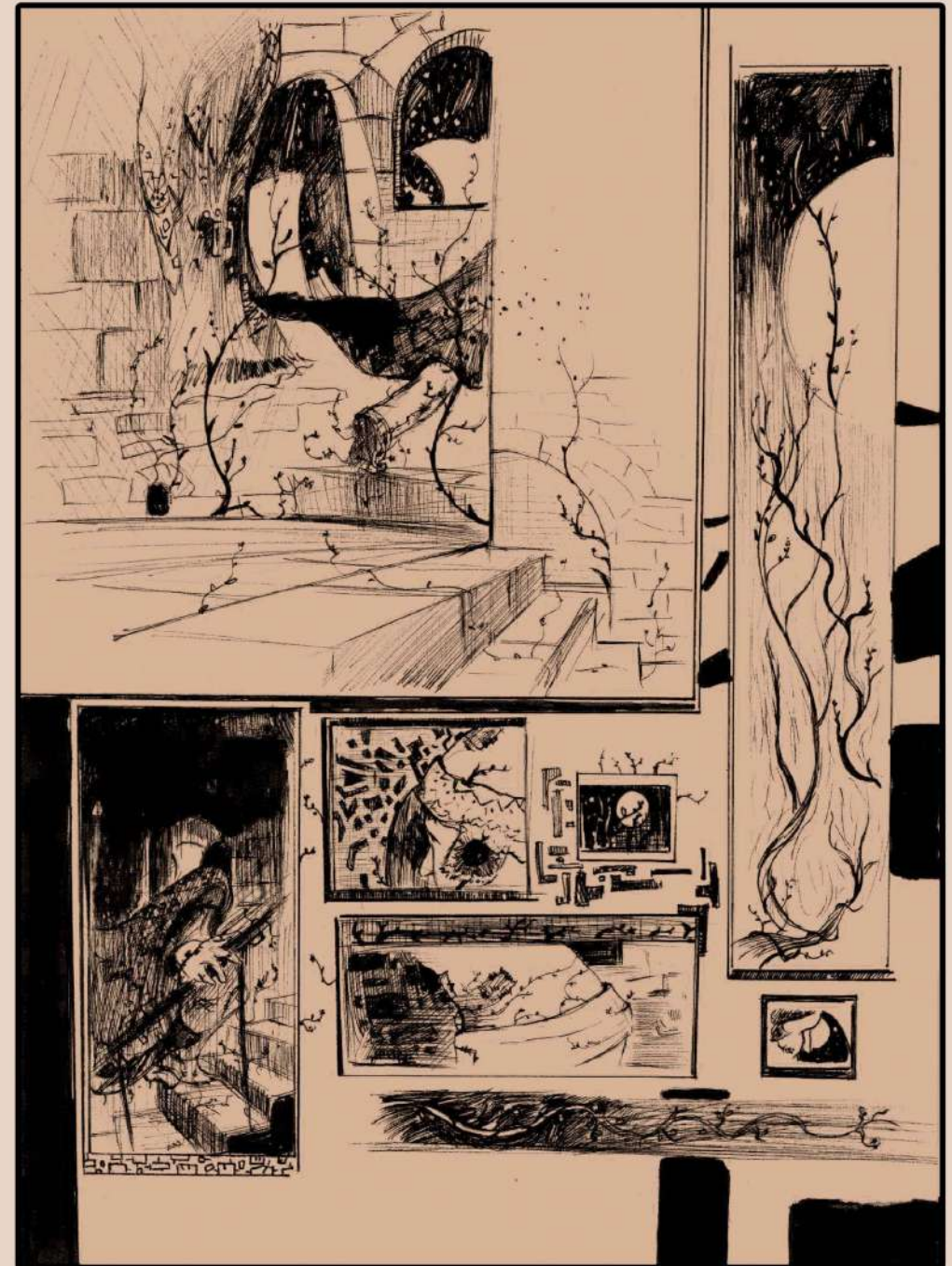
HE SPED UP A LITTLE MOMENT, BUT HIS
STRENGTH DIDN'T GIVE IT MUCH HAND. HE
REMEMBERED THAT HE HAD AN APPLE
LEFT FROM HIS VILLAGE IN HIS POCKET
AND TOOK IT OUT. HE LOOKED AT IT FOR A
WHILE.

WHAT WOULD HIS NEXT MEAL BE?

THE MAN WALKED INTO A RECENTLY HEAVILY BOMBARDED TOWER (ALTHOUGH IT FELT AS IF IT WERE A LONG TIME AGO) THAT WAS ALMOST ON THE VERGE OF COLLAPSE. THE SALTY SMELL OF SEA WATER BEGAN TO COME TO HIS NOSE WITH A STRONG WIND. HE THOUGHT IT WAS COMING FROM UPSTAIRS WINDOWS. CURRENT TIME SEEMS TO HAVE LEFT THIS PLACE. HE THOUGHT ABOUT HIS CITY FOR A MOMENT.

THE GRANDEUR OF THIS CITY, WHICH DATES BACK THOUSANDS OF YEARS, EVEN IF IT WAS IN RUINS, MADE HIM DIZZY. THE STONES ON WHICH HE WALKED AND TOUCHED WERE VERY OLD. HE FELT HIMSELF ENTERING A WORLD OF INTENSE SENSATION. HE DECIDED TO GO UP TO THE TOP OF THE TOWER. HE THOUGHT THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO SEE THE CITY BETTER IN THIS WAY.

THE SMELL OF THE SEA MADE HIS HEAD SPIN AGAIN FOR A MOMENT, BUT NOT IN A WAY THAT BOTHERED HIM. HE FELT A STRANGE VIBRATION INSIDE HIM, AND THEN A FEELING THAT TURNED INTO EXCITEMENT. HE CONTINUED TO ASCEND, ACCELERATING HIS STEPS.



THE MAN REALIZED THAT HE WAS BEGINNING TO SENSELESSLY RETURN TO THE FEELINGS OF HIS CHILDHOOD. HE REACHED THE TOP OF THE TOWER, ACCOMPANIED BY STRANGE FEELINGS TO HIMSELF.

FIRST HE SAW THE ENDLESS SEA VIEW AND THEN THE TREES AROUND THE TOWER. SOME OF THEM HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN BURNED IN A RECENT FIRE. HE BECAME MORE AWARE OF THE DESTRUCTION BETWEEN THE SEA (OR A BIG LAKE, HE WASN'T QUITE SURE AT THAT MOMENT) AND THE TOWER HE WAS IN.

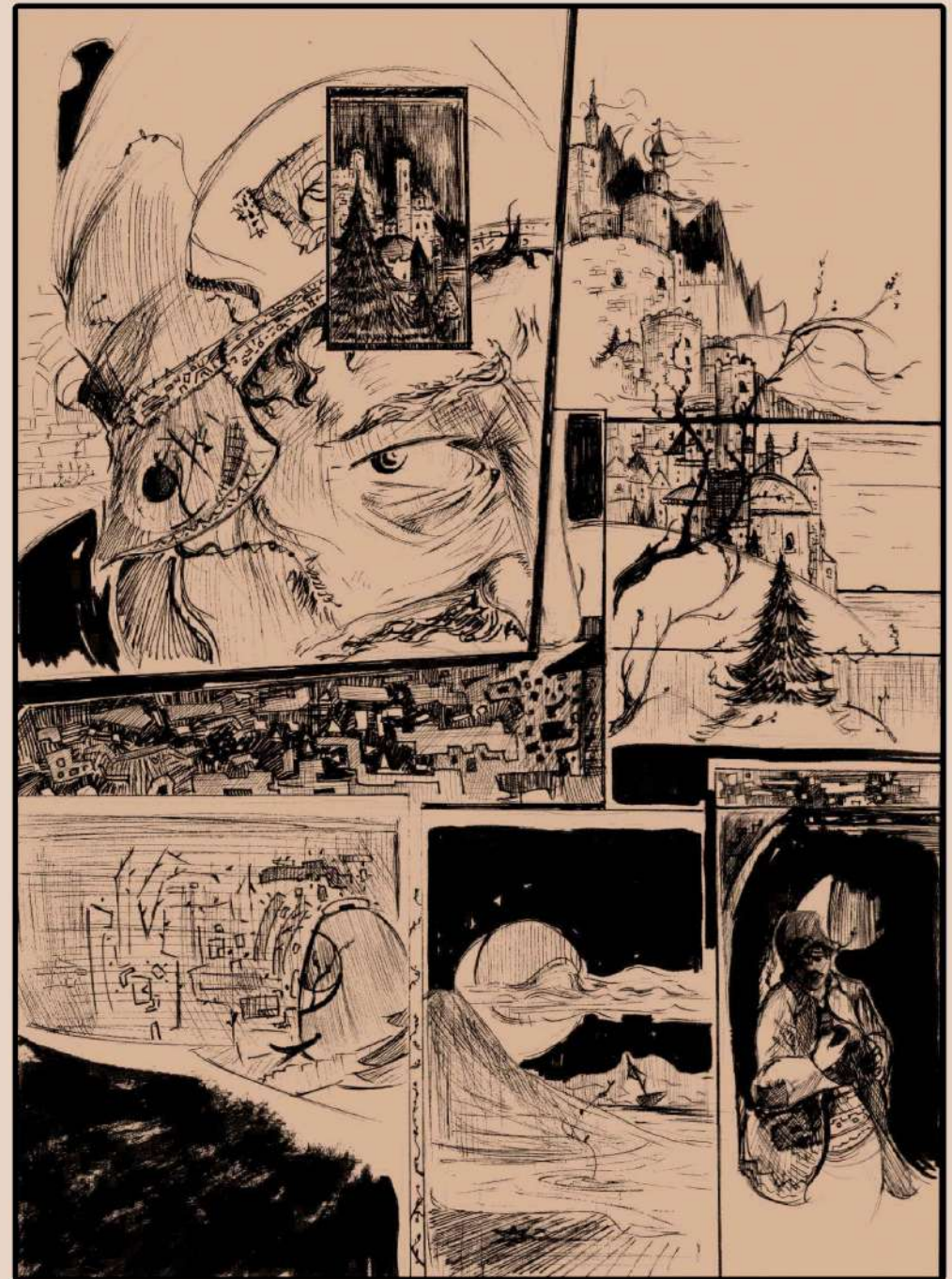
FOR A TIME, HE CONTINUED TO WATCH HIS SURROUNDINGS AS IF HE HAD TRULY LOST HIMSELF.



HE SUDDENLY THOUGHT TO HIMSELF AS IF HE HEARD WHISPERINGS AROUND AGAIN. BUT THEN IT WAS CUT OFF.

THEN FOR A MOMENT HE WAS SURE HE HEARD SMALL FOOTSTEPS, BUT LIKE A SINGLE PERSON.

YES, SOMEONE WAS FAST APPROACHING HIM. HE WAS SURE OF IT. HE TOOK OUT A FEW SMALL STONES LEFT FROM HIS JOURNEY IN HIS POCKET, WHICH HE USED ONLY TO MAKE A CAMP FIRE. HE HOPED THEY WOULD AT LEAST GIVE HIM A LITTLE CONFIDENCE.



HE QUICKLY WAITED ON THE ALERT, BUT PERHAPS DUE TO THE STRUCTURE OF THE TOWER, IT WAS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE SOUND WAS COMING FROM BELOW OR WHERE.

HOWEVER, THE UNCERTAINTIES WERE OVER WHEN HE SAW A SILHOUETTE LEAPING TOWARDS HIM.

HE REALIZED THAT SOMEONE WAS SWINGING A KNIFE AT HIM, JUMPING ON HIM... IT WAS A GIRL OF SIXTEEN OR SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD. THE MAN CAUGHT HIM IN MIDAIR. THE GIRL DROPPED THE KNIFE IN HER HAND.



THE MAN QUICKLY TOOK THE KNIFE FROM THE FLOOR HIMSELF, PUT IT IN HIS POCKET, AND ASKED THE GIRL IF SHE HAD ANYTHING TO EAT. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT RECEIVE AN ANSWER. THEN HE ASKED HER NAME. THE GIRL CONTINUED TO STARE AT HIM WITH HATEFUL EYES FOR A WHILE.

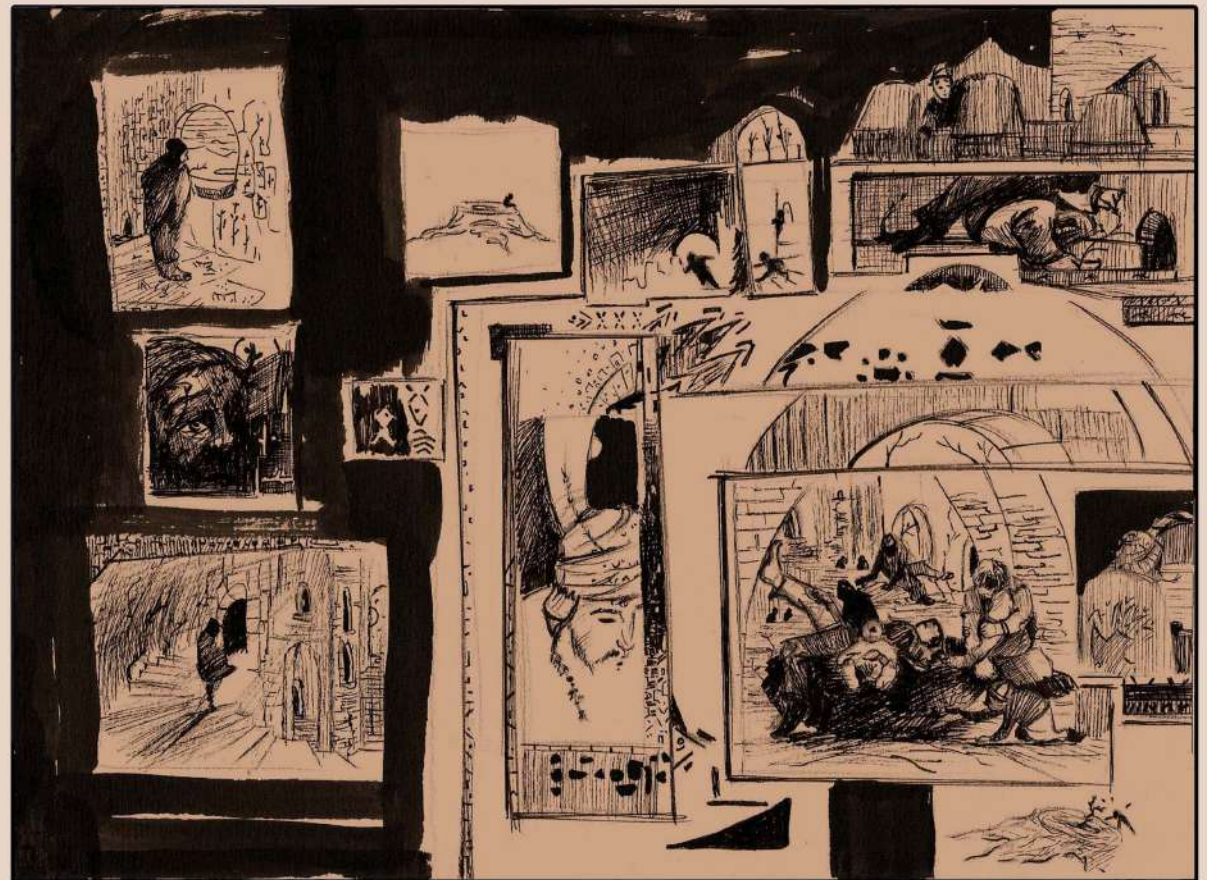
"THE SOLDIERS MUST BE PATROLLING AROUND... EVEN THOUGH I HAVEN'T SEEN THEM YET, YOU HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR-SELF," THE MAN SAYS. THE GIRL INDIFFERENTLY TURNED HER HEAD AWAY AND SAID WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE MAN, "YOU HAVE NOTHING TO EAT?" SHE ASKED. THE MAN ALSO FELL SADLY SILENT.

THE MAN ASKED THE GIRL WHEN THE CITY BECAME LIKE THIS. THE GIRL, INTIMIDATED, SAID, "LIKE EVERYTHING, IT HAPPENED STEP BY STEP, YES, THE CITY COLLAPSED IN AN INSTANT, BUT BEFORE THAT WE HAD ALREADY COLLAPSED FROM THE INSIDE. IN THE CITY, NEPOTISM, MURDER, RAPE, SMUGGLING, THEFT WERE AT AN UNCONTROLLABLE POINT. WITH THE COLLAPSED ECONOMY, HUNGER, UNEMPLOYMENT AND DESPAIR, PEOPLE LOST THEIR VALUES. OUR CULTURE AND HUMANITY HAVE LONG SINCE BECOME TOOLS THAT THOSE WITH POWER AND MONEY USE ONLY FOR THEIR OWN ADVERTISING AND INTERESTS.

OUR CULTURE, OUR ESSENCE, OUR INTERIORITY WAS ALREADY GONE, THEN OUR SECURITY WAS COMPROMISED, AND THEN WHEN THE INVADERS CAME FROM ACROSS THE BORDER, WE HAD ALREADY NOTHING LEFT. THE CITY WAS UNDER SIEGE FOR A LONG TIME, WHICH IT STILL IS. THEY BOMBARDED THE WHOLE CITY AS IF IT WAS A SPORT. WE ARE STILL BOMBARDED FROM TIME TO TIME. FOR THEM, THE CURRENT SITUATION IS LIKE KICKING A DEAD BODY."

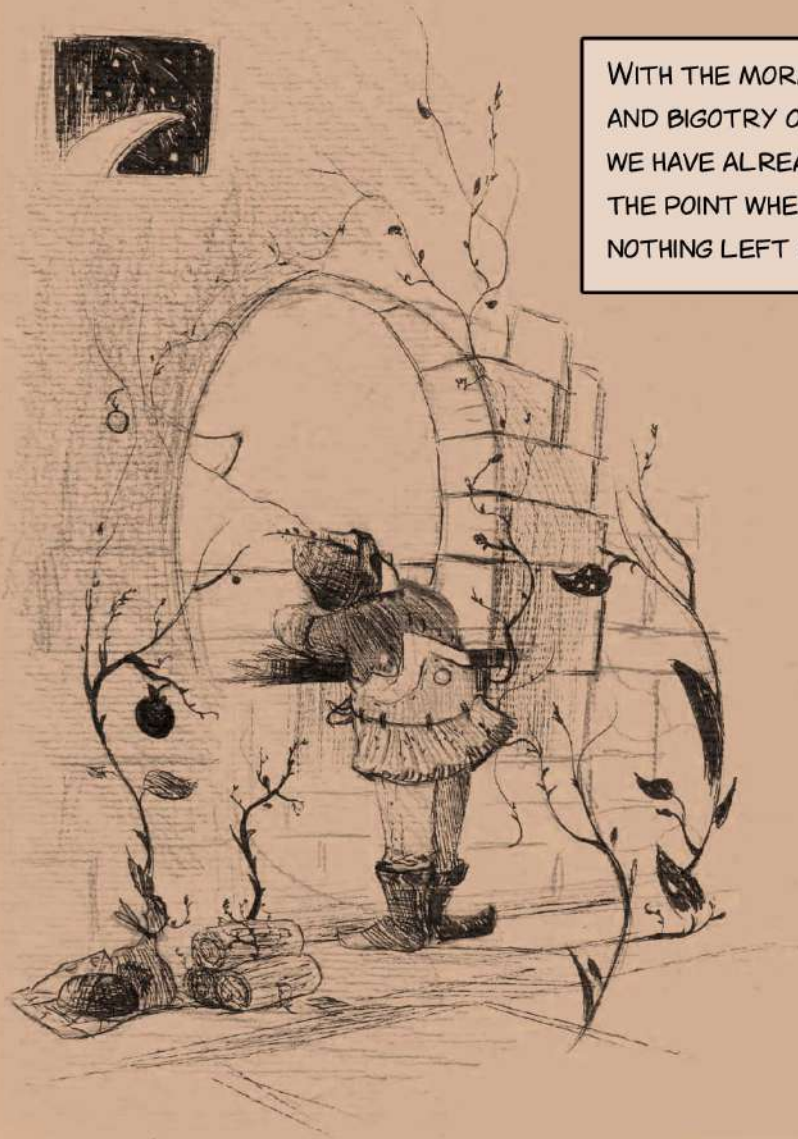
"THERE ARE ORPHANED CHILDREN IN THE ABANDONED BUILDINGS, WHOSE PARENTS WERE MISSING, KIDNAPPED OR SHATTERED INTO PIECES BEFORE THEIR EYES. WE ARE TRYING TO SURVIVE SOMEHOW, BUT NOW THE FOOD AND CLEAN WATER IN THE CITY ARE ON THE VERGE OF RUNNING OUT. YOU CAN EXPECT ANYTHING FROM PEOPLE WHOSE VALUES HAVE BEEN TAKEN AWAY OR LOST BECAUSE OF THEIR OWN IGNORANCE, YOU CAN MAKE THEM BELIEVE ANYTHING..."

EVEN THOUGH THOSE IN CONTROL OF THE CITY HELPED US A WHILE BY PROVIDING FOOD AID, AFTER A POINT, OF COURSE, THE THINGS THEY HAD RAN OUT... AT THE LAST POINT, WE WERE STUCK IN THE MIDDLE OF INSUFFICIENT FOOD AND SAFETY MEASURES. MANY PEOPLE LOST THEIR CONSCIENCE. WE WERE SURROUNDED FROM EVERYWHERE, INSIDE AND OUT, AND WE ENDED UP BEING BOMBED.



I HAVEN'T BEEN OUT OF THIS CITY SINCE I WAS VERY LITTLE.
THE SOIL WAS ALWAYS FERTILE, WE HAD A BOUNTIFUL HARVEST.

WITH THE MORAL COLLAPSE
AND BIGOTRY OF PEOPLE,
WE HAVE ALREADY COME TO
THE POINT WHERE WE HAVE
NOTHING LEFT IN OUR HANDS.



THINGS THAT USED TO BE EASY FOR EVERYONE WERE BEING TAKEN AWAY FROM US.

YOU KNOW, OUR BRIDGES ARE FAMOUS...

BECAUSE WE ARE IN AN AREA
OF DANGEROUS CLIFFS.

MY FATHER WAS ALSO ONE OF THE HUMBLE PEOPLE
WHO WORKED TO TAKE CARE OF THEM...



AS THE GIRL WAS SPEAKING, THEY HEARD A VOICE. IT WAS LIKE A RINGING OR RADAR SOUND. EVERYTHING AROUND, WHICH WAS ALREADY SO QUIET AND PALE, SEEMED TO HAVE BECOME EVEN QUIETER AND FADED. THE GIRL SUDDENLY STARTED SCREAMING TO THE FULLEST. "IT WILL BE BOMBING AGAIN! THEY MUST HAVE REALISED THAT THERE ARE SURVIVORS.... I'M GOING BACK TO OUR CHILDREN! THERE IS NO HOPE FOR US NOW! I'M SICK AND TIRED OF EVERYONE, POWER, OR THOSE OBSCURE BEINGS CALLED GARDENERS! I'M GOING TO DIE WITH THE CHILDREN. WITH THEM I WILL DIE AS THE OUTCASTS! DO WHATEVER YOU DO..." SHE SAID, DISAPPEARING INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE TOWER STAIRS.

CLINKS WERE HEARD IN ATASHYER. THEN THE DISTANT SOUNDS OF EXPLOSIONS APPROACHED THE MAN'S EAR. WHEN HE WENT DOWNSTAIRS, HE SAW NEITHER THE GIRL NOR ANYONE ELSE. AN OLD WOMAN'S SCREAM AND A BABY'S CRY SEEMED TO MIX WITH THE RINGING IN HER EAR. HE SAW A WOMAN ENTER A BUILDING OPPOSITE HIM WITH A BABY IN HER ARMS. WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE? SHOULD HE BE INSIDE OR OUTSIDE? WAS IT SAFER OUTSIDE OR INSIDE?

THEN A BOMB HIT THE OLD STONE-CLAD BUILDING THAT THE WOMAN AND HER BABY HAD JUST ENTERED. SINCE THE STRUCTURE IS SOLID AND OLD, IT DID NOT FALL APART IN AN INSTANT. HOWEVER, THE BUILDING, WHICH WAS ALREADY IN RUINS BEFORE THE BOMB FELL, COULD NO LONGER STAND WITH THIS BLOW. IT BEGAN TO SLOWLY COLLAPSE INTO IT.

"MAYBE THEY WERE SAVED..." THE MAN STEPPED FORWARD. HALF LIMPING, HE ENTERED THE DOORWAY WHERE THE WOMAN AND THE BABY HAD JUST ENTERED. HE PASSED FROM AN AREA WHERE EVERYTHING IS IN SHAMBLES. HE SAW THE WOMAN. SHE HAD THE BABY IN HER ARMS, LYING ON HER SIDE. FOR A MOMENT, THE MAN WAS HAPPY AND THOUGHT THAT HER BABY WAS SAVED. HOWEVER, WHEN HE APPROACHED AND LOOKED AT HER, HE ONLY COVERED HER FACE WITH A DUSTY CLOTH.

"I SHOULD FIND THE GIRL AND THE CHILDREN SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT", HE THOUGHT, MAYBE JUST TO GET RID OF HIS DESOLATION.

HE HEARD A SOLDIER SHOUT, "THERE WILL BE NO ONE ALIVE!". HE LOOKED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SOUND AND SAW THAT A SOLDIER WAS ABOUT TO THROW THE BOMB IN HIS OWN SPOT. HOWEVER, HE MUST NOT HAVE SEEN HIMSELF, IT WAS FOR THE WOMAN AND HER BABY.

HE'D BE SEEN IF HE RAN BY THE DOOR, HE THOUGHT, QUICKLY RUNNING AWAY FROM THE BUILDING. HE HAD TO GO UPSTAIRS AND REACH A ROOM. HE JUMPED OUT OF A GLASSLESS WINDOW AND FELL HARD ONTO THE EARTHEN FLOOR. BEHIND HIM, HE HEARD AN EXPLOSION THAT SOUNDED LIKE A BLAST IN HIS EARS.



HE FELT THE STONES HIT HIS HANDS AND NECK FIRST. THEN, SUDDENLY, HE FELT HIS BODY WEAKENING, AND HE FELL FACE-DOWN ON THE GROUND, HIS EYES DARKENED.

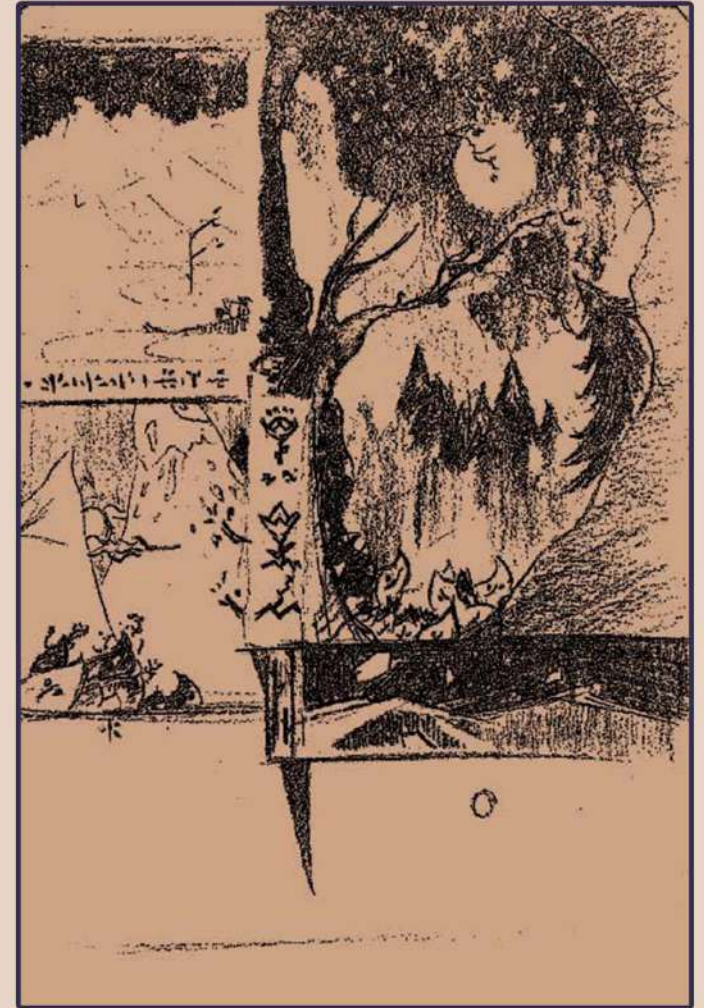
HE BARELY HEARD THE INVADING SOLDIER SAY, "NO ONE ALIVE HERE!"

AFTER A WHILE, THE MAN STOOD UP. HE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO GET HIMSELF OUT OF THIS RECENTLY BOMBED AREA OF THE CITY. HOWEVER, THE MAN HAD REACHED THE POINT WHERE HE COULD NOT TAKE A SINGLE STEP FURTHER FROM HUNGER. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTINUE. A RATHER NARROW STREAM APPEARED BEFORE HIS EYES. HE APPROACHED THE WATER, SAYING THAT "I WOULD AT LEAST QUENCH MY THIRST..." HE SAW VERY BIG AND SMALL FISHES IN THE WATER. "HOW CAN THESE GIANT FISHES LIVE IN THIS NARROW RIVER," HE MUTTERED, ASTONISHED TO HIMSELF.

THEY CAN LIVE... A VOICE PASSED THROUGH HIM.

AN ARC OF WATER BROKE OUT FROM THE THIN STREAM TOWARDS HIS FEET.





The background is a dark, almost black, surface with a mottled, textured appearance. There are several diagonal streaks of a reddish-brown or terracotta color running across the frame. A light-colored, rectangular box is positioned on the right side, containing the text.

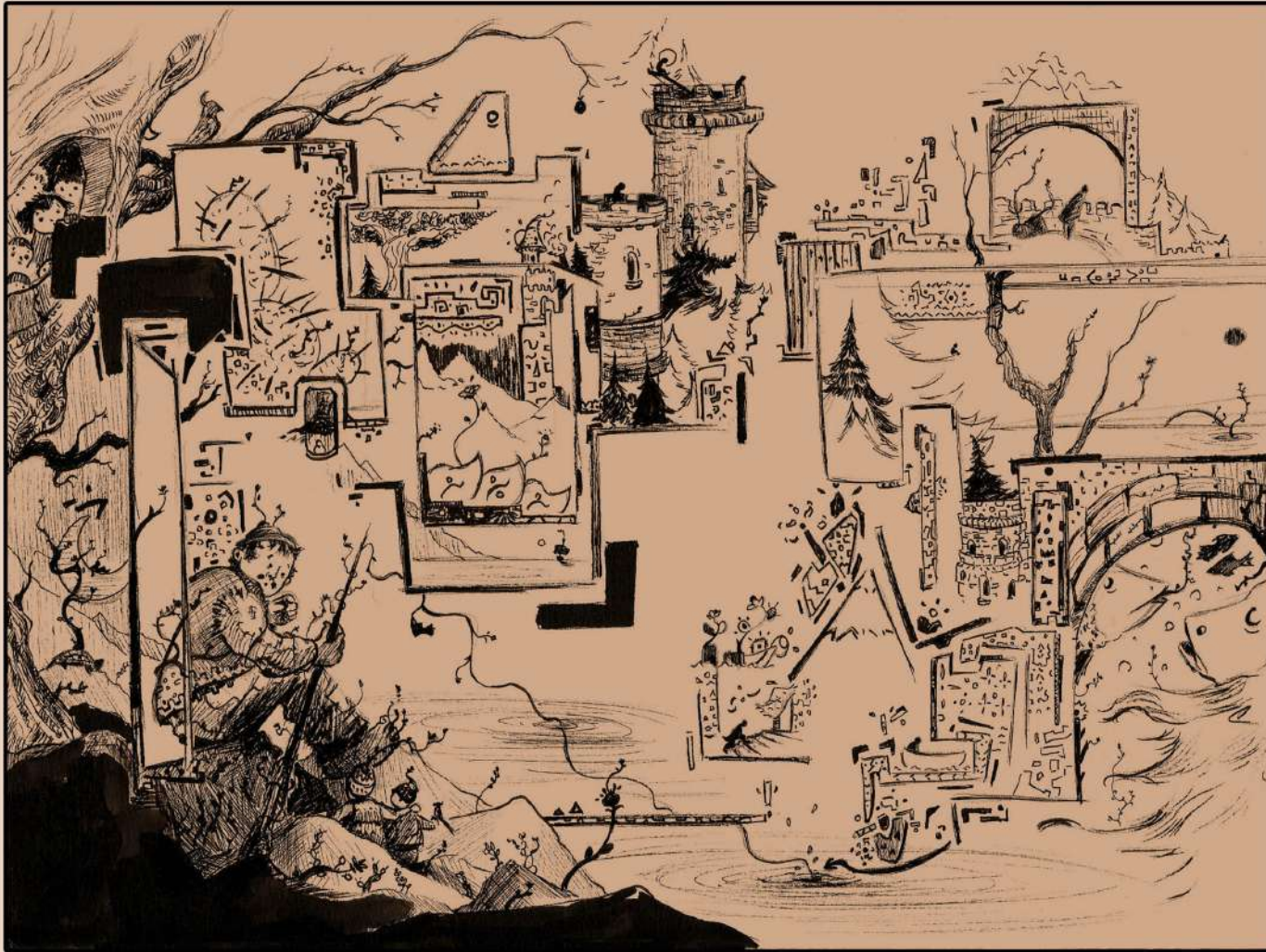
Intriguing
of
Intimate Hassle

A STRONG STORM HAD SUDDENLY BEGUN IN ATASHYER'S
BEREK FOREST. IT WAS FOLLOWED BY A SUDDEN HEAVY RAIN.

A RIVER HAD BEGUN TO BOIL AMONG THE MOUNTAINS,
TURNING INTO A FLOOD SO SEVERE...

THAT A FEW TREES WERE UPROOTED.





THE MAN WAS DESPERATELY TRYING TO FISH WITH A TWIG AND A PIECE OF STRING THAT HE HAD TORN FROM HIS CLOTHES.

HIS HUNGER WAS NOW AT A VERY SERIOUS LEVEL. THEN HE SAW A FEW SMALL CHILDREN NEXT TO HIM. HE THOUGHT THEY WERE ORPHANS ESCAPING ATASHYER. BUT A VOICE INSIDE HIM WHISPERED THAT THEY WERE SOMETHING VERY DIFFERENT.

HE THOUGHT THAT HIS HUNGER WAS INDEED ON A VERY CRITICAL THRESHOLD.

OTHER CHILDREN'S WHISPERS BEGAN TO COME AROUND. AND ALL OF A SUDDEN, THOSE CHILDREN IN UNISON, IN A VERY STRONG VOICE THAT WOULD NEVER BE EXPECTED FROM THEM:

"KEEP WALKING!" THEY SHOUTED HARSHLY.

FOR A MOMENT, THE MAN'S HEART BEAT AS IF IT SHATTERED HIS CHEST.

THEN HE HEARD THE VOICE OF AN OLD WOMAN, VERY SWEET, FLUFFY, LIKE A MARSHMALLOW BUT AS IF COMING FROM A VERY OLD, CENTURIES-OLD TREE:

"YOU HAVE TO MOVE ON..."

THERE WAS A FEELING OF SOFTENING IN HIM. HE DROPPED HIS FISHING ROD INTO THE RIVER. THE FISH WERE STARTING TO FOLLOW THE ROUTE THAT WOULD TAKE THEM FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA.



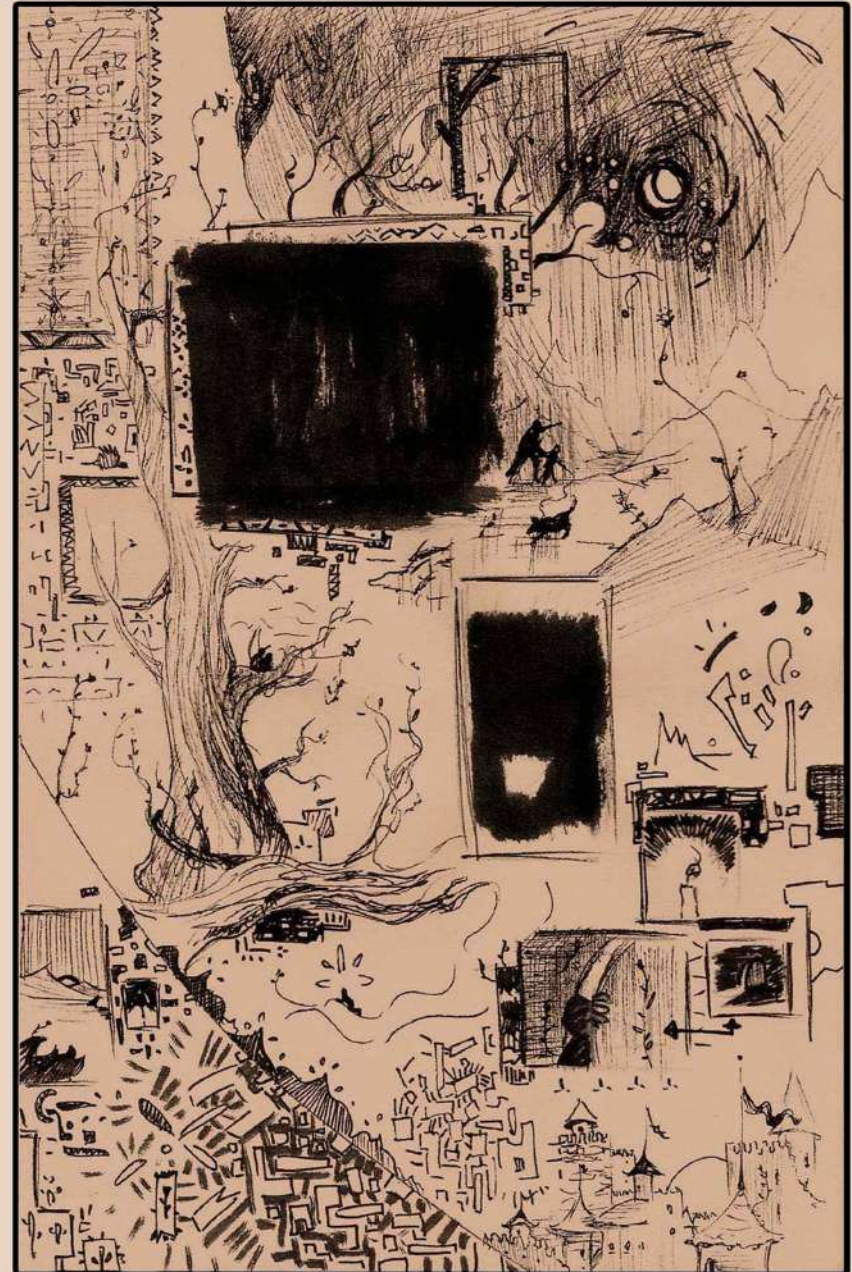


The Share of Someone

A COAST OF THE SEA CALLED NINE CAN BE REACHED FROM
A VERY SMALL AREA IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF KOEY.

THIS WAS PERHAPS THE SMALLEST BEACH IN THE
WORLD, AS WELL AS A COAST THAT OPENED UP TO
THE NINE SEA, WHICH WAS INDEPENDENT IN ITS OWN
WAY, COMPLETELY BELONGING TO NO COUNTRY.

NO SHIP HAD EVER BEEN SEEN PASSING THROUGH IT
THROUGHOUT THE AGES.

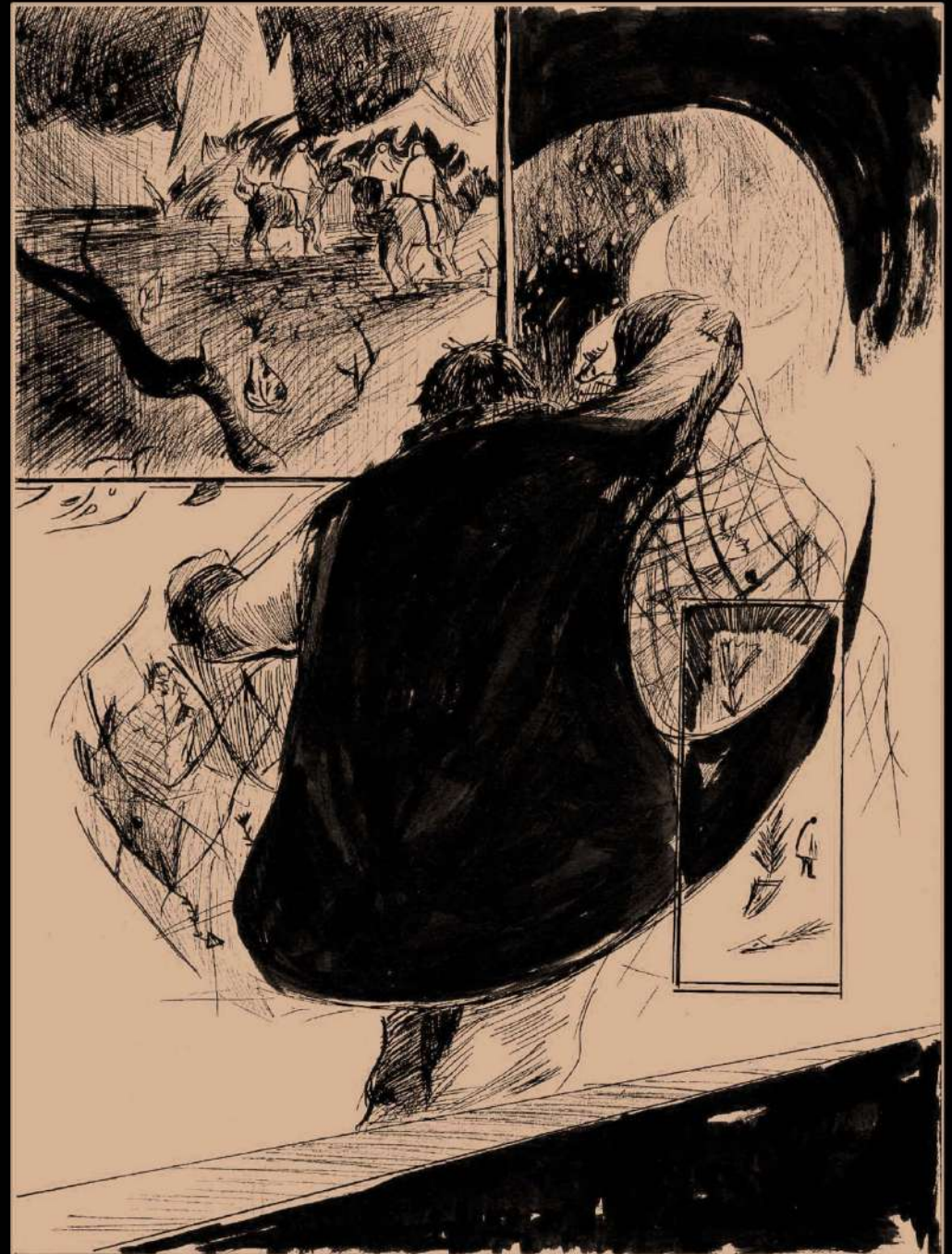


THE INCONSISTENCY, DISORDER
AND DETERIORATION IN THE CLI-
MATE ALSO AFFECTED THIS
REGION DEEPLY, AND THE
PALLOR OF LIFE WAS FELT
MORE OBVIOUS.

NEAR THIS TINY COAST LIVED A
FISHERMAN WHO COULD NOT
BEHAVE IN THE USUAL WAY
SINCE CHILDHOOD,

AND LIVED IN HIS OWN WORLD

IN HIS OWN WAY.



IN FACT, HE USED TO CALL HIMSELF A FISHERMAN. THAT WOULD MAKE FUN OF ALL KOEY PEOPLE, TOO.

ACCORDING TO THEM, THE REASON WAS THAT THE AREA WAS NEVER SUITABLE FOR REGULAR FISHING AND IT WAS NOT THE WORK OF A SMART PERSON TO DEFINE HIMSELF AS A FISHERMAN THERE.

ALTHOUGH THE VILLAGERS OF KOEY MADE FUN OF HIM, THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMEONE WHO BROUGHT HIS DAILY FOOD WITH A HORSE OR DONKEY, LEFT IT AT HIS DOOR.

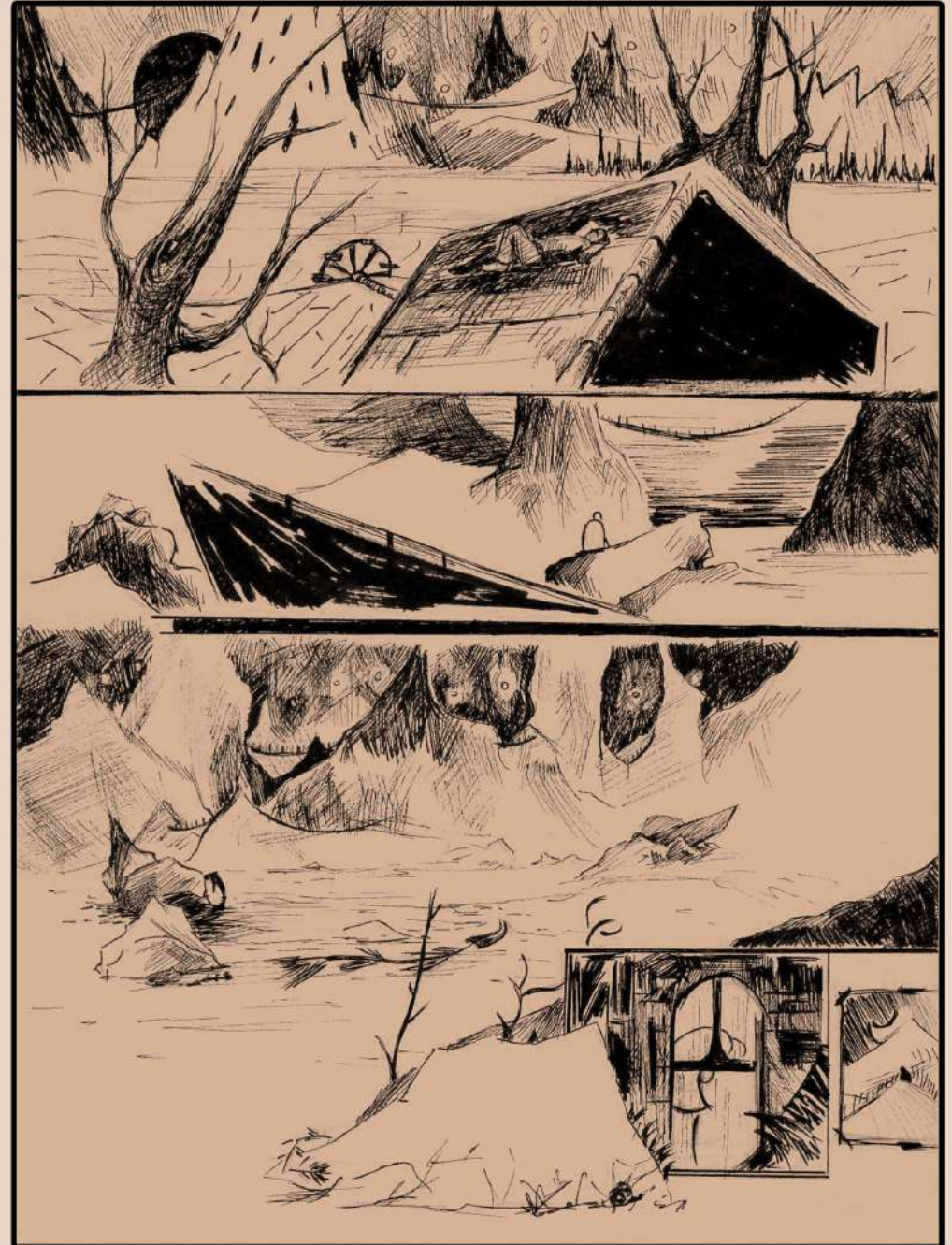
HOWEVER, THE RECENT SIEGE HAD UNFORTUNATELY CAUSED THE PEOPLE TO FORGET HIM.



OVER THE YEARS, THIS MAN HAD BUILT HIMSELF A TINY COTTAGE HERE, WHAT HE CALLED HIS FISHERMAN'S HUT.



HE HAD EVEN BUILT A WOODEN WATER WHEEL ON THE RIVER THAT ONCE FLOWED VERY STRONGLY NEAR IT.



BUT HE FELT DIFFERENT NOW, TOO.

EVERYTHING WAS DIFFERENT.

WHAT WAS HAPPENING AROUND AND IN HIS BODY

WAS NO LONGER

THE USUAL SIMILAR CHANGES.



HE WAS SUFFERING FROM MALNUTRITION TO
THE POINT THAT IT CAUSED VERY STRANGE
PAINS IN HIS BODY.

HE COULD BARELY SURVIVE NOW.



HE WAS ALWAYS AWARE THAT THE PUBLIC WAS MAKING FUN OF HIM. IN RETURN FOR THE FOOD THEY HAD BROUGHT HIM, HE HAD BUILT A BRIDGE BY HIMSELF NEAR HIS HUT, AS IN ATASHYER, WHICH WAS FAMOUS FOR ITS BRIDGES.

HOWEVER, IT WAS A BRIDGE THAT WAS OF NO USE TO ANYONE FROM KOEY, IN A PLACE WHERE THERE WAS NO NEED TO CROSS IT.

HE HAD BUILT THIS BRIDGE WITH YEARS OF FEVERISH STRUGGLE UNDER VERY DIFFICULT CONDITIONS.
OVER THE YEARS, HE HAS ALWAYS CARRIED OUT REGULAR MAINTENANCE OF THE BRIDGE AND ENSURED THAT IT REMAINS INTACT.

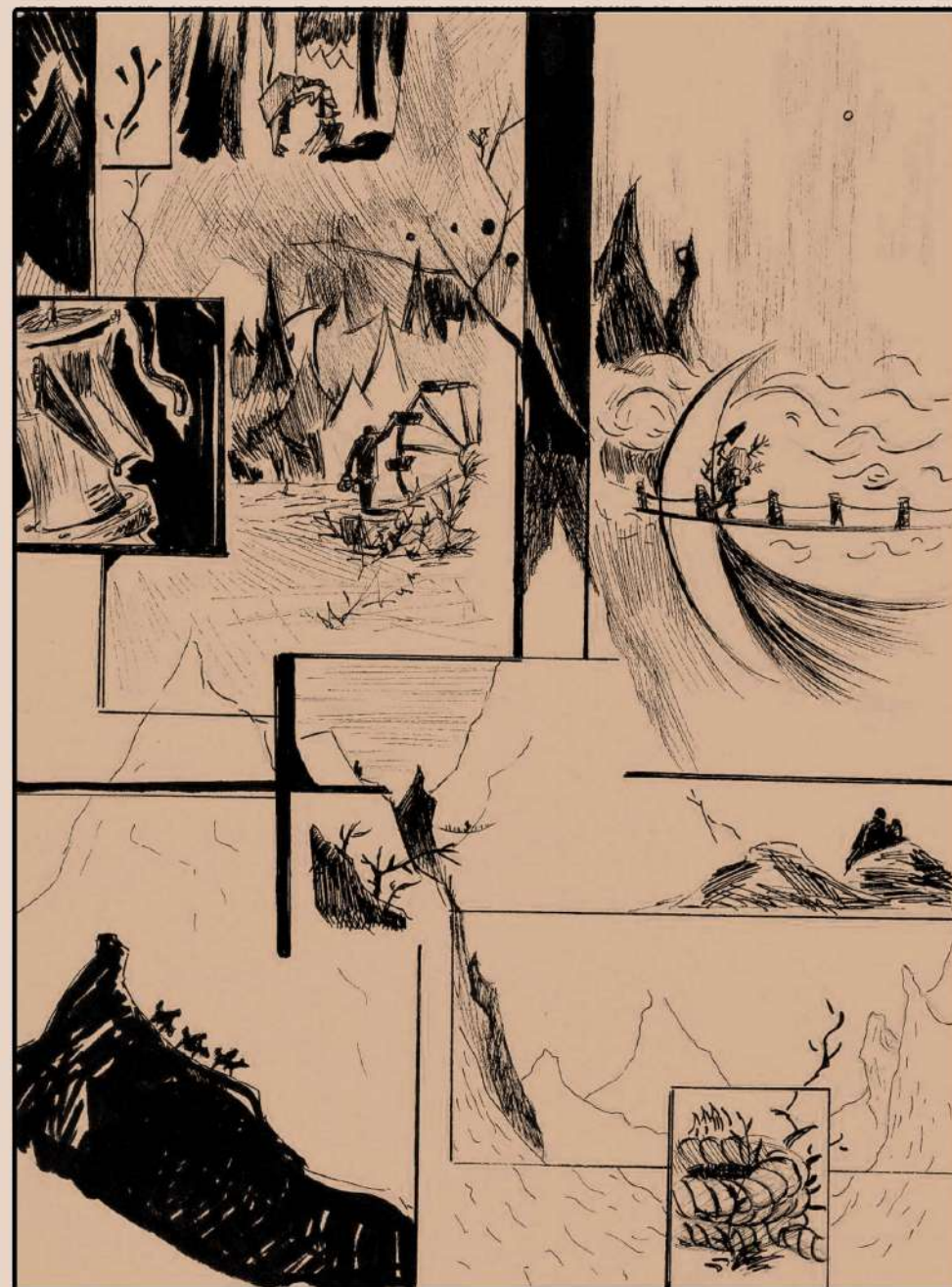


THE REASON WHY HE BUILT THIS BRIDGE, IN HIS OWN OPINION, WAS THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THERE WERE DERELICT BEINGS LIVING IN THE BEREK FOREST, THE OTHER SIDE OF WHICH WAS THE BORDER TO ATASHYER. HE WAS MEANT TO BRING THEM FOOD, IN HIS OWN WAY.

HE HAD GROWN UP WITH STORIES ABOUT THEM. IN THE BACK OF HIS MIND, HE WOULD REMEMBER THEM FROM TIME TO TIME.

STORIES ABOUT HOW THEY BUILT THEIR UNIQUE CITY, OR THEIR VERY STRANGE BUT ACTUALLY WELL-INTENTIONED BEHAVIOURS, REMAINED VIVID IN HIS MEMORY.

ACCORDING TO THE BELIEF IN KOEY, THESE BEINGS WERE DESTROYED AGES AGO. THE MIND OF THIS MAN, WHO COULD NOT REMEMBER HIS PARENTS OR HIS PAST VERY CLEARLY, WAS STUCK WITH ONLY THOSE STORIES FOR MANY YEARS AND CONTINUED TO SURVIVE WITH THEM.

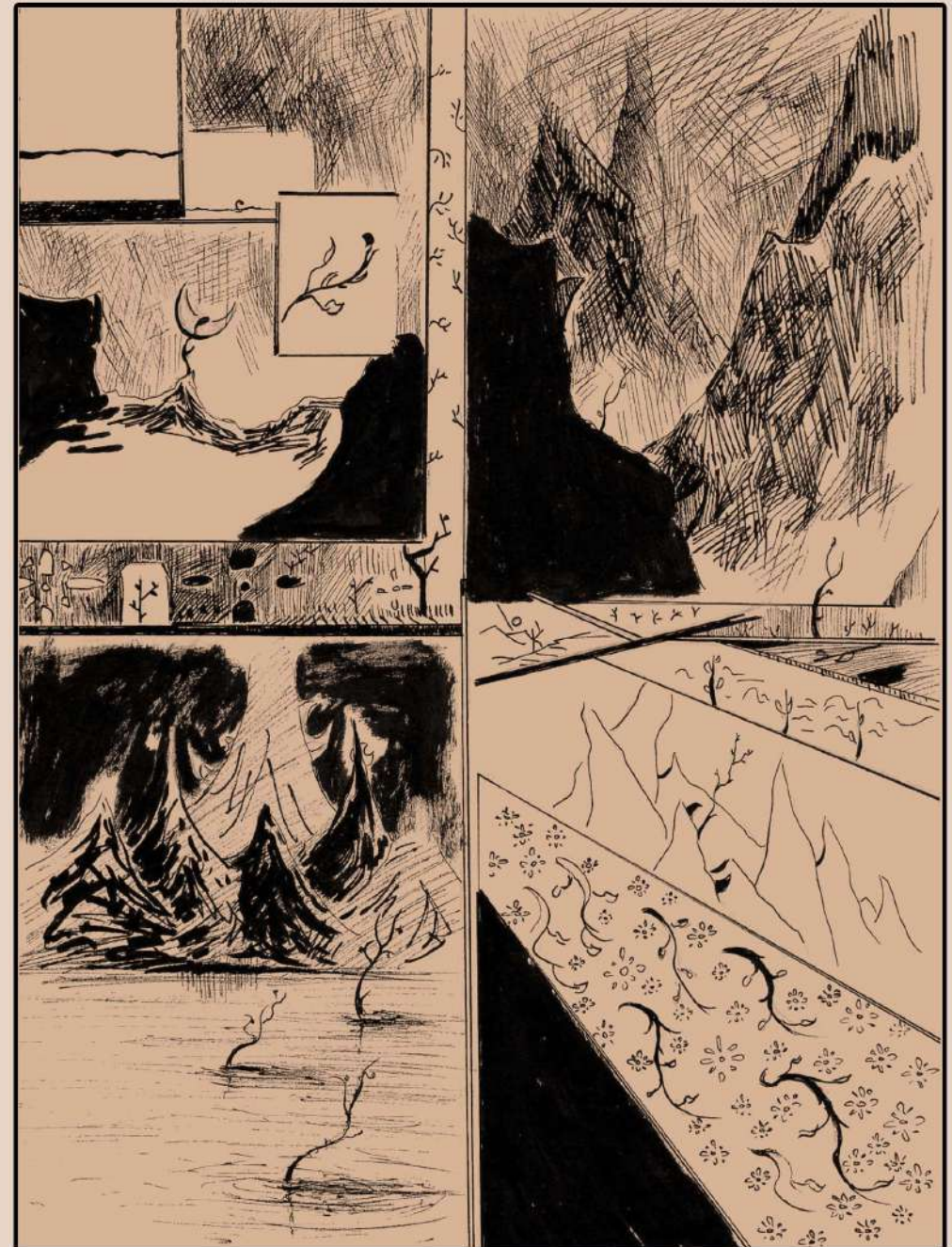


IN A STORY ABOUT THOSE BEINGS,
THEY WERE MENTIONED AS FOLLOWS:

"ONCE UPON A TIME, THEY COULD MAKE HONEY FROM
EVERY SINGLE FLOWER. NO MATTER THEIR KINDS,
NAMES NOR THE PLACES WHERE THEY GROW..."

"THEY WERE ONCE REALLY GOOD AT FARMING, TENDING
ORCHARDS, AND SHAPING GARDENS. THEY COULD HAVE
EASILY GOTTEN A VERY JUICY APPLE FROM A PEAR OR
EVEN MANDARIN TREE. EVEN IF THEY CLIMBED ON AN
OLIVE TREE, IT WAS NOT VERY HARD FOR THEM TO FIND
SOME COCONUTS THERE..."

HE WAS MURMURING THESE KINDS OF REMEMBERINGS
MANY TIME OF THE DAY.



ONCE AGAIN, HE COMMISSIONED HIMSELF TO TAKE CARE OF THAT BRIDGE AND TO TAKE THE FISH HE HAD COLLECTED FROM THE SEA (EVEN IF THEY WERE ROTTEN) TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BRIDGE AND LEAVE THEM TO THE FOREST BORDER.

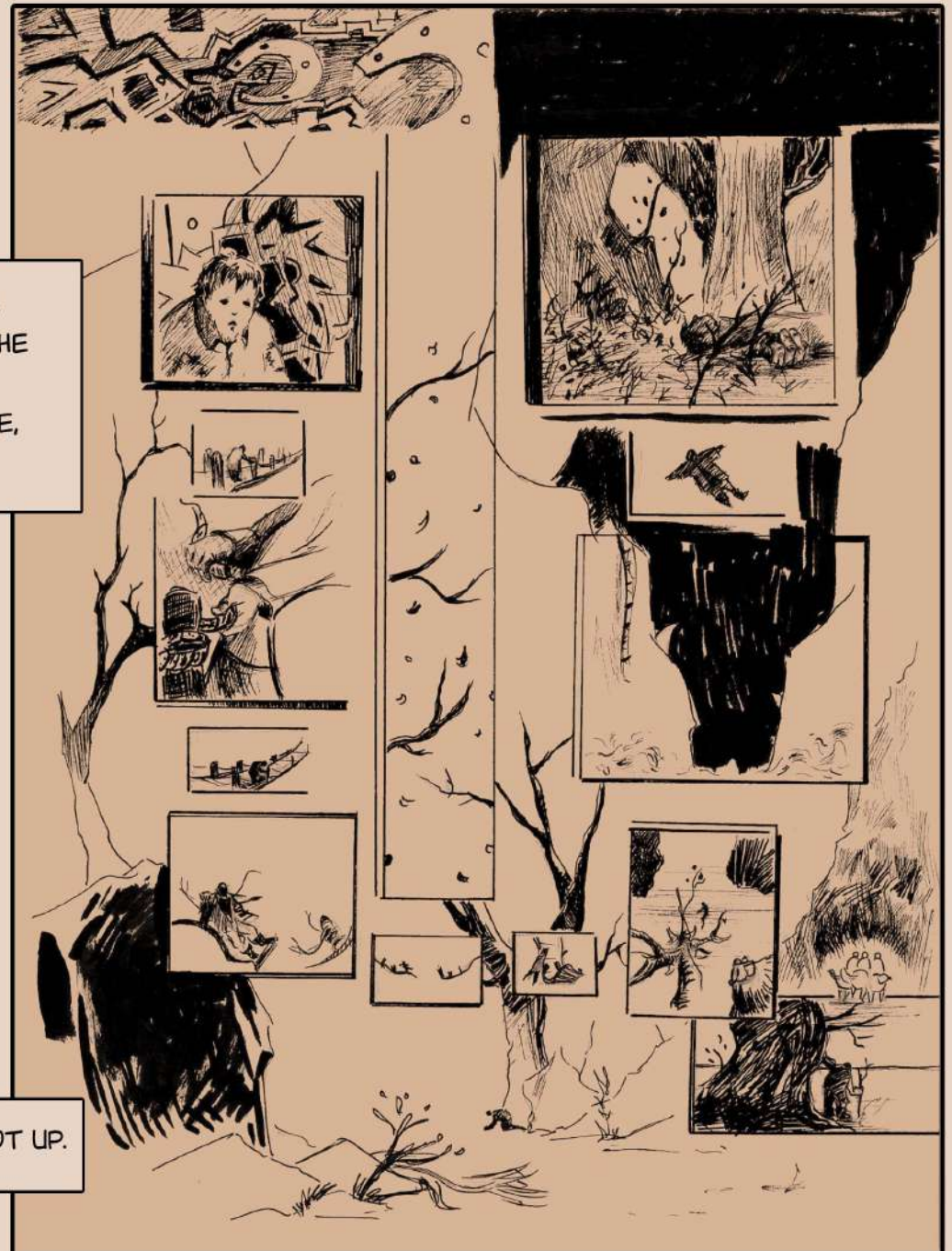
HOWEVER, HIS BODY WAS NO LONGER AS VIGOROUS AS BEFORE. HE HAD NOT ALWAYS BEEN A VERY STRONG PERSON, BUT NOW HE OFTEN SUFFERED FROM PROLONGED DIZZINESS OR FAINTING. HE HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO MAINTAIN THE ROPES OF THE BRIDGE, WHICH HE NEVER DELAYED, FOR A LONG TIME.

ONE DAY, THE ROPES BECAME TOO WEAK, BUT HIS BODY DID NOT HAVE THE STRENGTH TO REPAIR THEM.

WITH THE LAST OF HIS STRENGTH, HE PICKED UP HIS SADDLEBAG OF FISHBONES AND ANYTHING EDIBLE, AND DECIDED TO AT LEAST PASS THEM ON TO THE OTHER SIDE.

WHILE ON THE BRIDGE, THE ROPES COULD NO LONGER BEAR HIS WEIGHT, AND THE MAN FELL. IT JUST STAYED THERE FOR A WHILE.

BUT AFTER A WHILE, IT WAS SEEN BY SOME THAT HE SOMEHOW GOT UP.



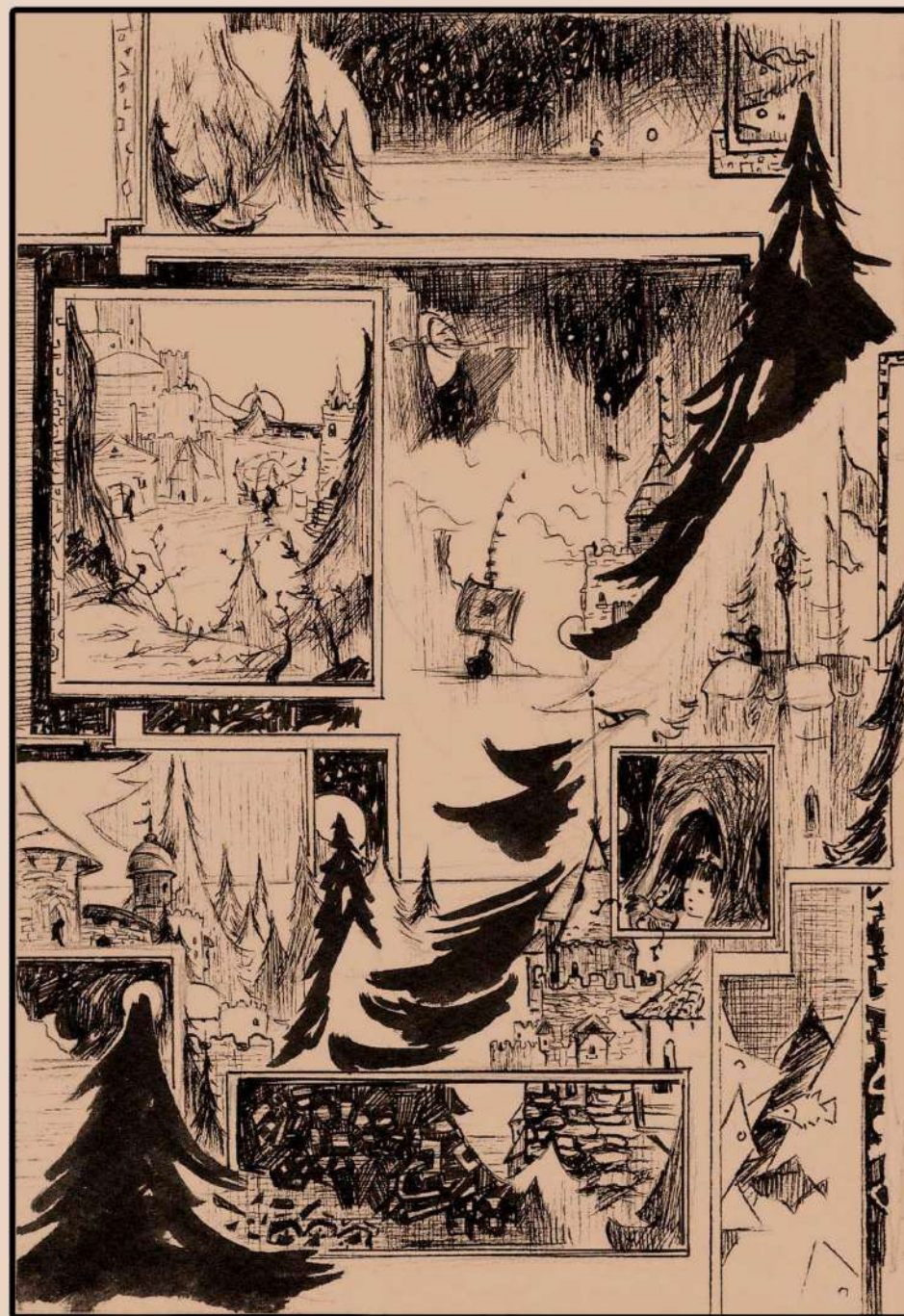
The background of the image is a dark, almost black, surface with a complex, organic texture. It features numerous diagonal, wavy lines and patches of a reddish-brown or terracotta color, giving it the appearance of aged wood or perhaps a microscopic view of a mineral surface. The lighting is uneven, with some areas appearing slightly brighter than others, enhancing the texture. In the center-right portion of the image, there is a solid, light beige rectangular box. Inside this box, the text "A Few Dews on Wood" is written in a simple, dark, monospace-style font. The text is centered within the box and is the only legible content on the page.

A Few Dews on Wood

IT WAS A LONG AND TIRING CRUISE...

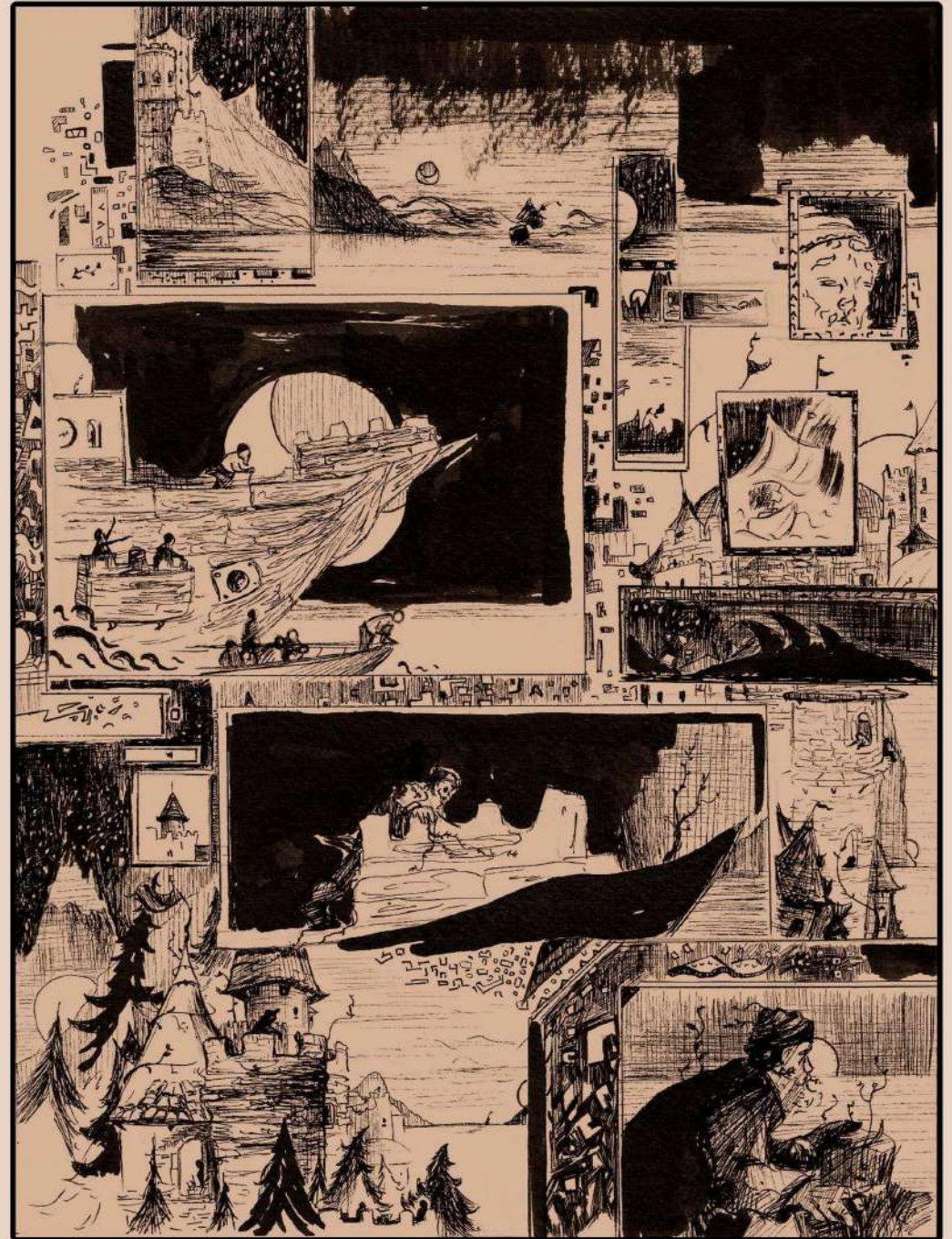
NO ONE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT THEIR SHIPS COULD
SAIL AT SEA FOR THIS LONG.

FORTUNATELY, THEY WERE ABOUT TO LAND NOW...

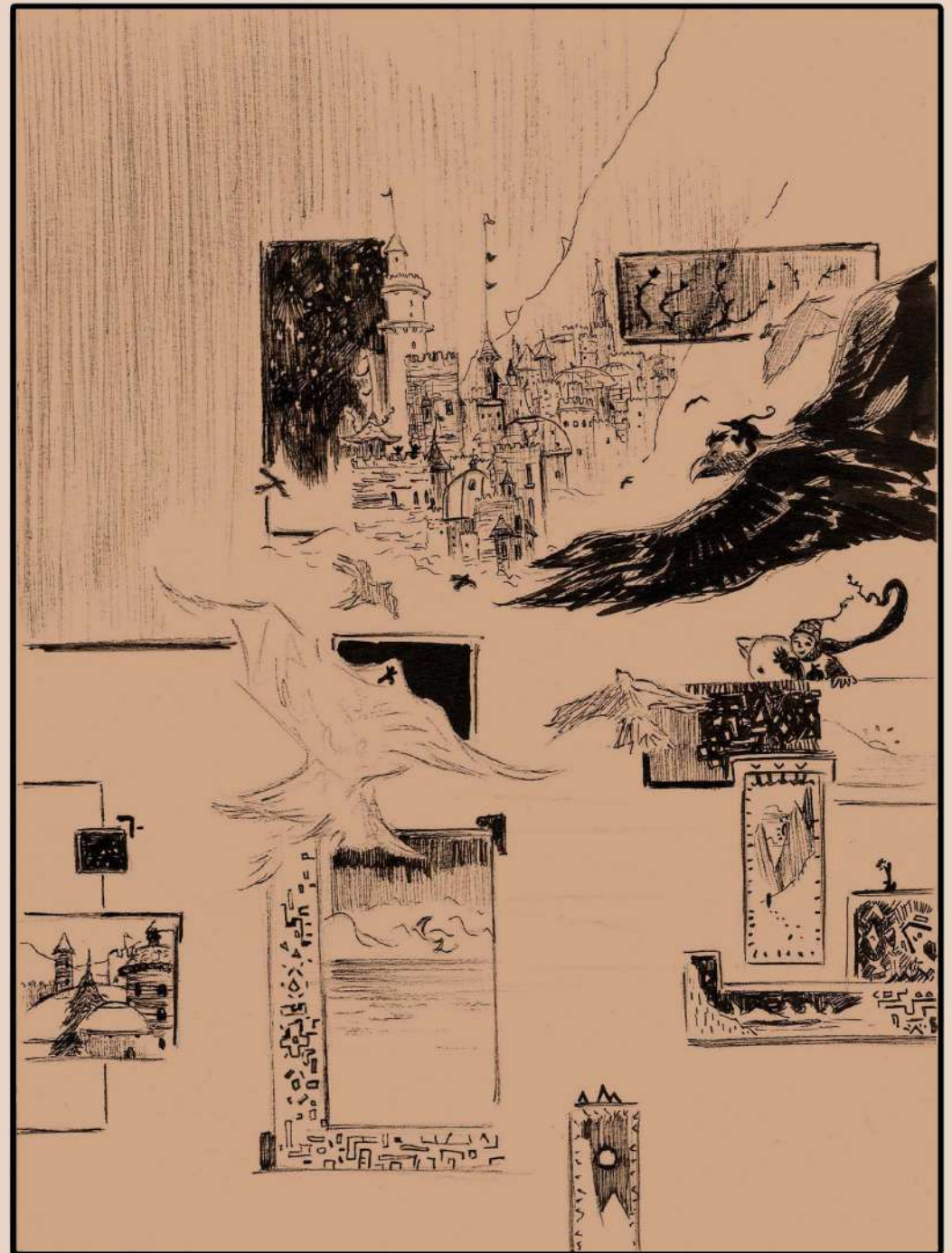


THE SPEED OF THE SHIP WAS GRADUALLY SLOWING
DOWN AND APPROACHING THE SHORE.

THE EXCITEMENT OF THE INSIDERS COULD BE SEEN
ON ALL THEIR FACES. THEY WERE ARRIVING NOW.



A FEW OF THE PASSENGERS ON THE SHIP SAW IN
THEIR DREAMS THAT THEY HAD ARRIVED IN A CITY,
RIDING ON LARGE BIRDS, VERY SIMILAR
TO EACH OTHER.



ATASHYER, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS BOMBED LESS FREQUENTLY NOW, BUT DUE TO THE SURROUNDING SIEGE, NO ONE COULD GET INFORMATION FROM OUTSIDE.

UNCERTAIN NUMBERS OF PEOPLE TRAPPED INSIDE CONTINUED THEIR STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL ON THEIR OWN.

THOSE WHO SEE THIS CITY, WHICH HAS A PAST OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS AND IS NOW ALMOST COMPLETELY DESTROYED, COULD BE FILLED WITH A STRANGE SADNESS. IN THIS PLACE, WHICH IS FAMOUS FOR BUILDING PASSAGES AND BRIDGES, BIRD OF PREY TRAINING HAD ALSO REACHED A VERY ADVANCED LEVEL.



ALTHOUGH THE SIEGE AND BOMBINGS THAT LASTED FOR YEARS BROUGHT THE CULTURE OF THE CITY TO THE POINT OF DESTRUCTION, AND PEOPLE WERE ON THE VERGE OF MORAL COLLAPSE, ESPECIALLY TRAINED MERLINS COULD BE FOUND FROM TIME TO TIME.

THEY WERE MOSTLY STRAY HUNTING. THEY WERE TRYING TO MAKE DO WITH WHAT THEY COULD FIND. FAMINE AND THE SURROUNDING DROUGHT HAD REACHED A DEADLY LEVEL FOR THEM AS WELL.

ONLY A MAN, A FORMER SWORDSMAN, WAS ABLE TO MEET THE SHIP, WHICH HAD NOW NEARLY REACHED THE SHORE. HIS FAMILY HAD EXCELLED IN SWORD MAKING THROUGHOUT THE AGES.

WITH THE CHANGING CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE, THEIR PROFESSION WAS NO LONGER JUST A DECORATION.

THIS MAN, WHO WAS THE LAST MEMBER OF HIS FAMILY, WAS ABOUT TO LOSE HIMSELF COMPLETELY UNDER THE PROBLEMS SUCH AS THE INTENSE PRESSURE OF CLIMATE CHANGES, SIEGE, POVERTY, HUNGER AND THIRST IN THE LAST PERIOD OF ATASHYER.



HE HAD LEFT THE SMALL SHOP WHERE HE LIVED AND BEGAN TO COUNT THE DAYS WHEN HE WOULD DIE BY RETREATING TO A CORNER WITH HIMSELF AMONG THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SEPARATED FROM EACH OTHER.

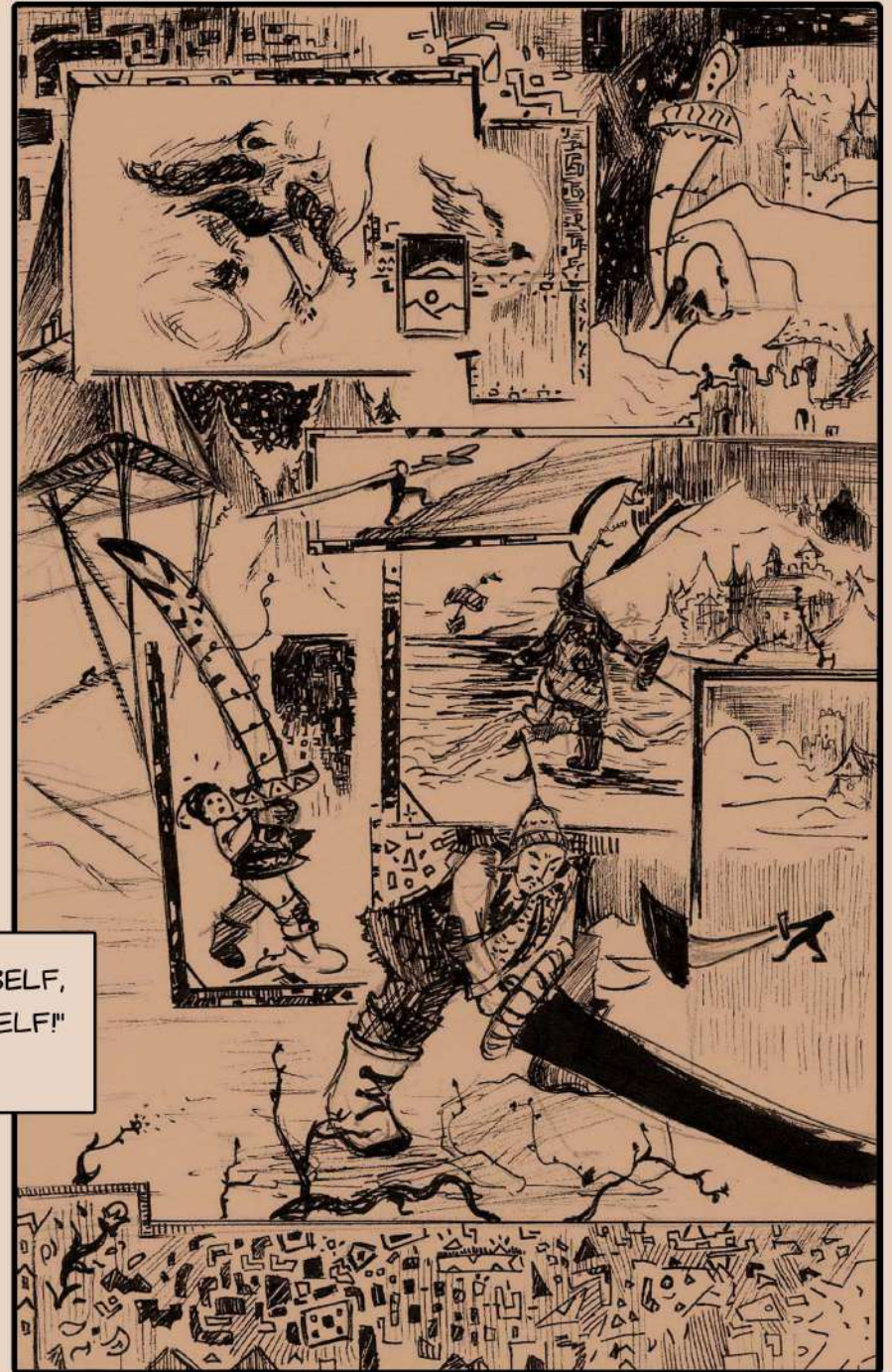
THE HARSH CONDITIONS HE WAS IN HAD ALSO CREATED STRANGENESS IN HIS ACTIONS AND THINKING.

THIS MAN LAST REMEMBERED HIMSELF AS A
SWORDSMAN.

HE HAD MADE SEVERAL SWORDS FOR HIMSELF USING
THE LAST MATERIALS LEFT IN HIS SHOP. HOWEVER,
THESE SWORDS WERE TOO BIG AND HEAVY FOR HIM TO
CARRY.

THAT'S WHY HE WAS CARRYING SOME OF THEM FROM ONE
PLACE TO ANOTHER JUST BY DRAGGING THEM. NO ONE HAD ANY
IDEA WHY HE WAS MAKING THEM.

HE COULD BE HEARD SHOUTING TO HIMSELF,
"I MUST PROTECT ATASHYER BEFORE MYSELF!"
OR "I MUST PROTECT HUMANITY!"



THIS WAS THE FIRST MAN TO SEE THE SHIP
APPROACHING THE SHORE, THE STRANGE-LOOKING
MAN WHO WOULD PERHAPS BE THE LAST
SWORDSMAN IN HISTORY...





Sparkle from a Weirdo

IN ATASHYER, WHICH WAS ONCE FAMOUS FOR ITS BRIDGES AND BIRD OF PREY TRAINING, WATCHTOWERS WERE ALSO BUILT ESPECIALLY ON THE KOEY BORDER.

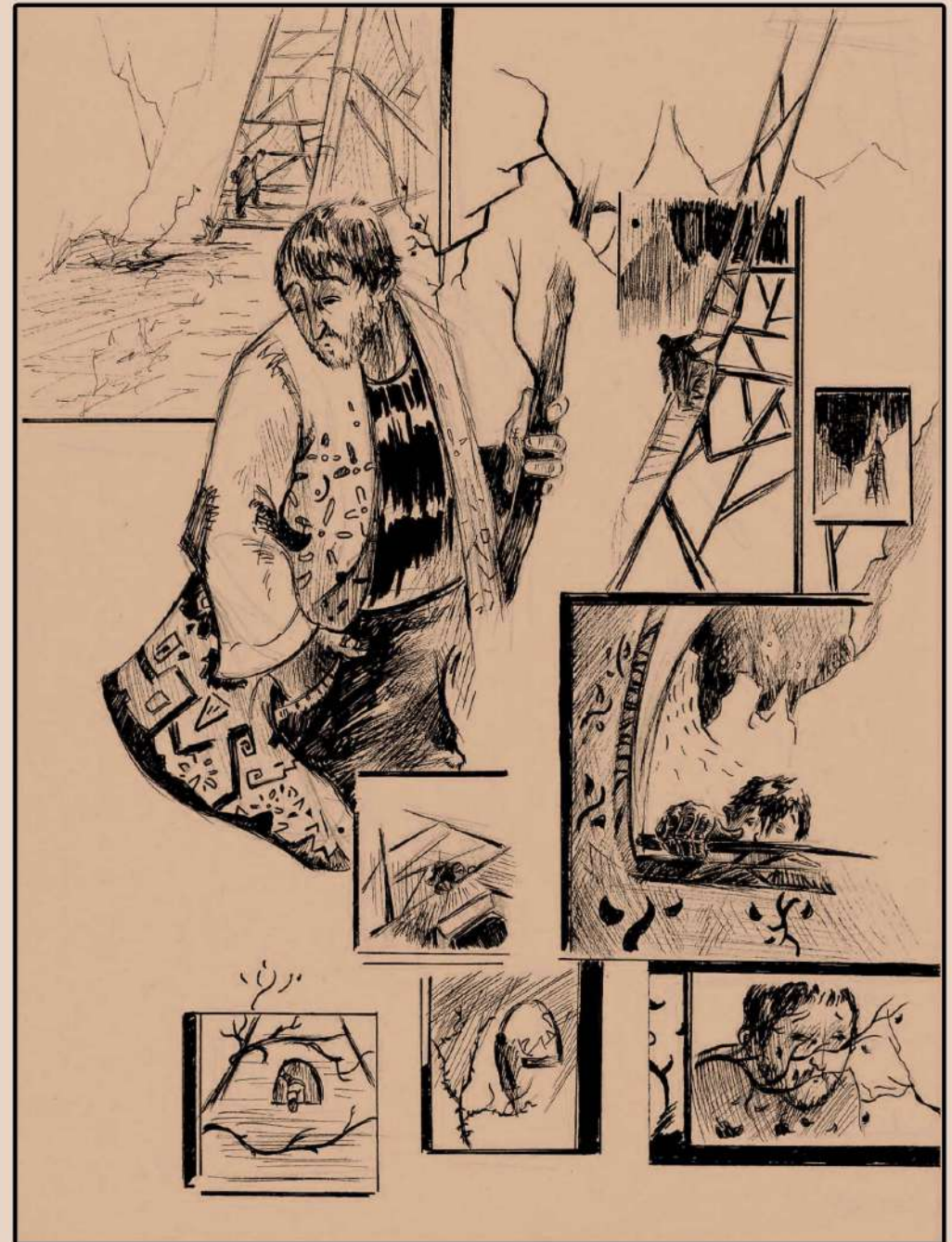
THESE TOWERS WERE OFTEN USED FOR FIRE SURVEILLANCE, SECURITY AND WEATHER FORECASTING.



ONE DAY, A MAN IN CHARGE OF WORKING ON THESE TOWERS HAD ALREADY SENSED THAT SOMETHING WAS APPROACHING DUE TO THE SUDDEN CHANGES IN THE SOIL, WATER AND WEATHER. BECAUSE THAT WAS HIS JOB. FIRST TO SENSE, THEN TO GUESS, THEN TO INFORM ALL THE PEOPLE OF ATASHYER.

BUT THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY POINT IN INTUITION, GUESSING, OR INFORMING ANYONE.

EVERYTHING HAD HAPPENED.
EVERYTHING WAS LOST. THE SIEGE
CONTINUED. HUNGER ALSO ENGULFED
ALL LIVING THINGS. AFTER THE
GREAT FLOOD, MANY WATCHTOWERS
HAD ALREADY BEEN DESTROYED, AND
THEY WERE NO LONGER OF ANY USE.



BUT THIS MAN CONTINUED TO DEVOTE HIMSELF
TO THIS TASK THAT WOULD NOW BE CALLED
POINTLESS.

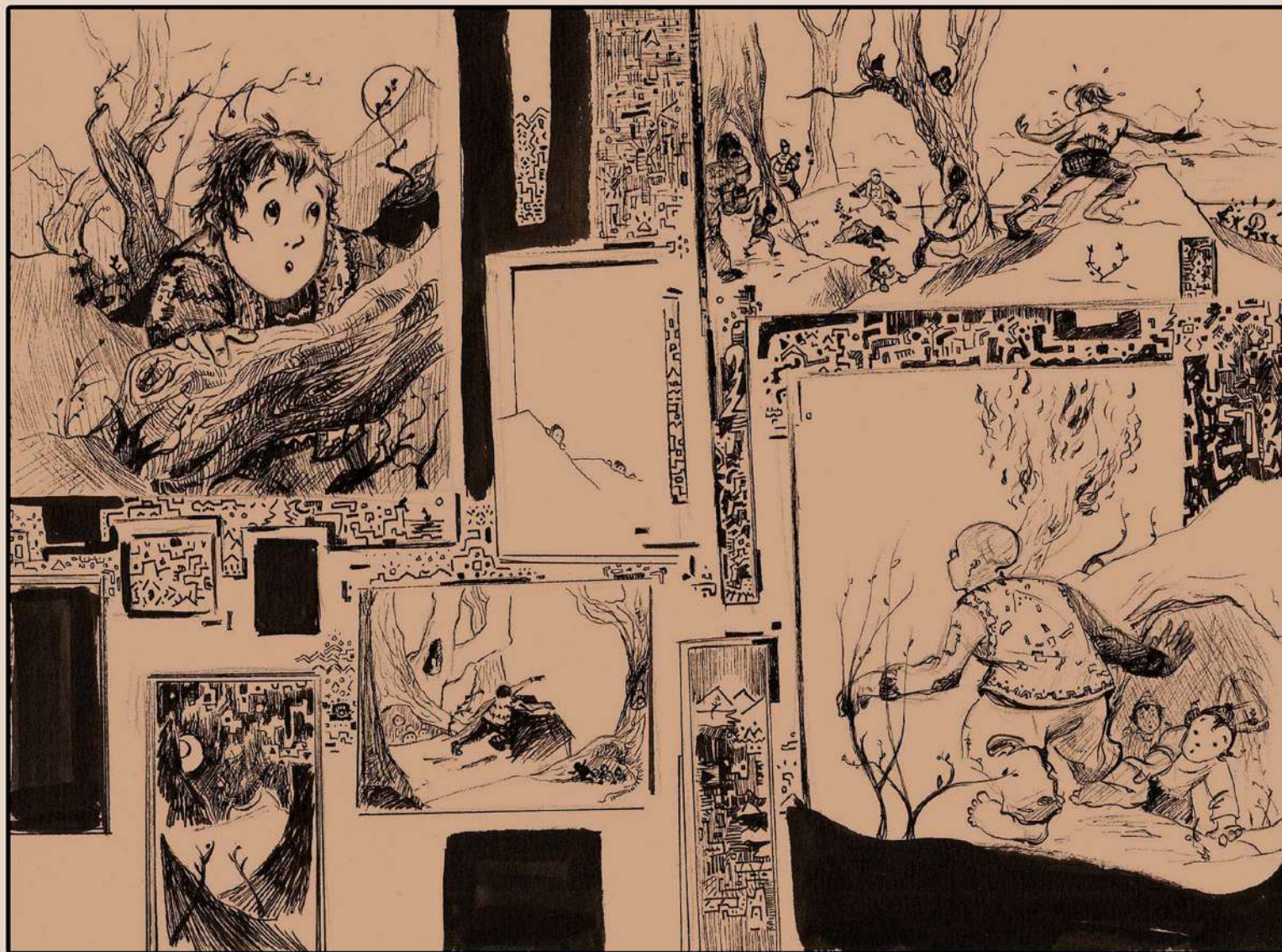
BESIDES, HE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A STATE LEFT TO
PAY HIM FOR THIS JOB.

HE WAS ALONE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SIEGE,
ALONG WITH ALL OTHER HUMANITY.



ONE NIGHT, HE DREAMED
OF ORPHANED CHILDREN
IN THE CITY.

THE MAN, WHO
SPENT THE TIME
OF THE DAY TO
HIMSELF, HAD
BEEN AWAY
FROM THE INNER
CITY FOR A LONG
TIME.



BUT THE LAST THING HE REMEMBERED WAS THAT MANY ORPHANS
WERE STAYING IN THE CITY.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME
SINCE HE'S SEEN THE
CITY CENTER, HE SAID TO
HIMSELF IN HIS DREAM.

AFTER THE SIEGE, THEIR
CONDITION HAD DWINDLED
TO EVEN MORE DEADLY
LEVELS. EVERYTHING WAS
AS HE HAD LEFT IT.

MAYBE THERE WERE ONLY
MORE RUINED BUILDINGS.

AND PERHAPS TREES
THAT SURVIVED THE
BOMBARDMENT HAD
BECOME MORE EVIDENT.



THEN HE SAW HIMSELF AMONG THEM...

HE WAS CARRYING A HUGE DRUM
IN HIS HAND. HE WAS A LITTLE
MORE WELL-GROOMED AND MORE
ROBUST THAN HE IS NOW...



ALL OF A SUDDEN,
HE BEGAN TO FEEL INTENSE-
LY, WITH A VERY STRANGE
FEELING, EVERY BEAT OF THE
DRUM'S MALLET.

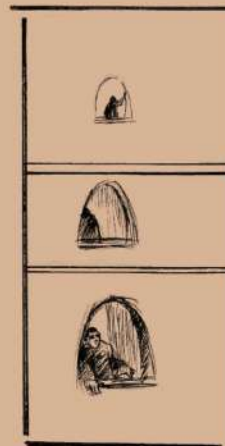
BESIDES, HE REALIZED
THAT THERE WERE PEOPLE
LIKE HIMSELF, WHO LOOKED
MORE ADULT THAN CHIL-
DREN, AND WERE QUITE
STRANGE LOOKING.

SOME OF THEM WERE
PLAYING DIFFERENT INS-
TRUMENTS WITH HIM.
THE WHOLE ROAD THEY
WALKED HAD TURNED
INTO A BIG UPROAR.

THE NIGHT WAS ABOUT TO ARRIVE IN THE MORNING.



A TINY PLANT SPROUTED IN FRONT OF THE GLASSLESS WINDOW
OF THE WATCHTOWER...





Now, It is Time

DENE WAS A YOUNG GIRL WHO LIVED BY HERSELF WITH KAGU IN A STRANGE TWO-STORY CHALET.

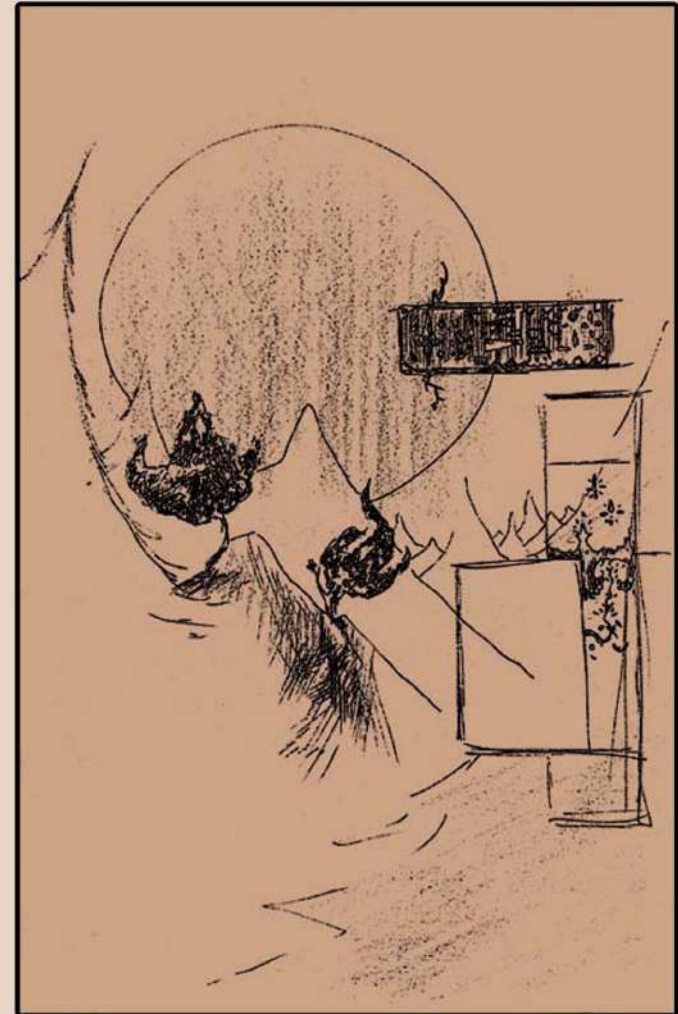
THEY HAD THEIR OWN ENTERTAINMENT, WAY OF THINKING, PRODUCTION METHODS.

THE THINGS THEY PRODUCED WERE USUALLY THE VEGETABLES AND FRUITS IN THEIR GARDEN, BUT MOSTLY RED KOEY APPLES. HER PARTNER, KAGU, WITH WHOM SHE SHARED THIS HOUSE, WAS NOT AN EXPERT IN BLACKSMITHING AND CARPENTRY, BUT WAS AT A CERTAIN LEVEL.



ALTHOUGH HE OFTEN MADE TRADITIONAL WAR TOOLS SUCH AS SWORDS AND DAGGERS IN HIS BLACKSMITHING BUSINESS, HE WAS PROUDLY SAYING THAT THESE WERE ONLY CULTURAL ITEMS THAT REFLECT HIS ARTISTIC SKILL. THEY HAD NO LONGER ANY USE IN THE CURRENT WAR ANYWAY.

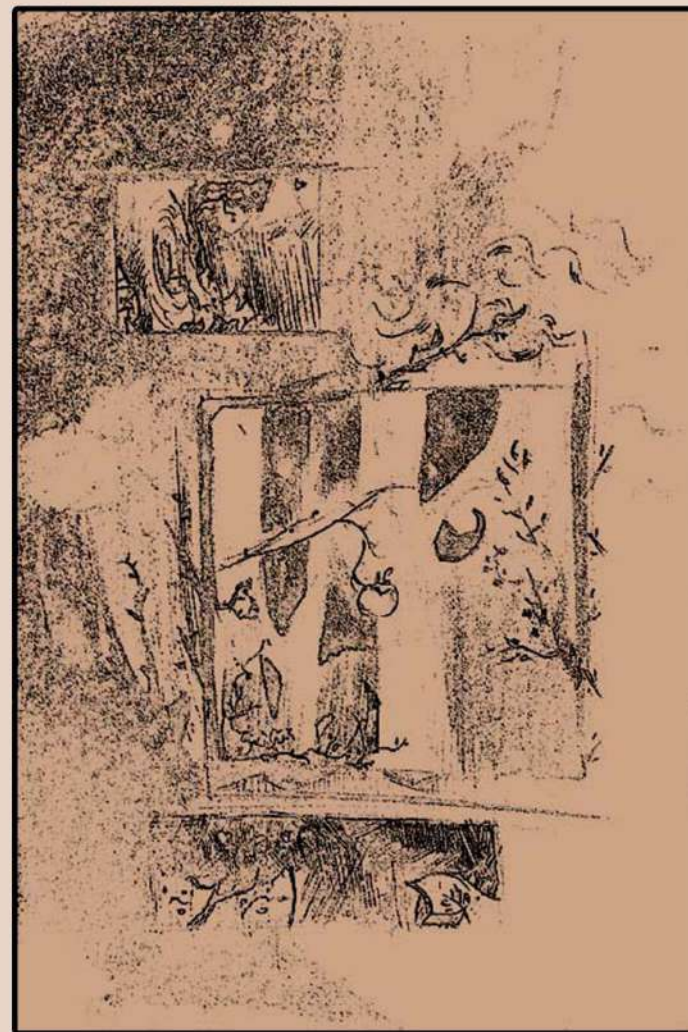
THEY HAD ALREADY MOVED FROM THE CENTER OF KOEY A LONG TIME AGO, ACTUALLY EMIGRATED, TO THE MOUNTAINS OF DOGANS. KAGU, WHO OCCASIONALLY LANDED AT KOEY WITH DENE, WOULD TRY TO SELL THE SWORDS AND DAGGERS HE MADE THERE AS DECORATIVE ITEMS. THEY RARELY WENT TO ATASHYER, MAYBE ONCE A YEAR. THEY COULD ONLY MEET THEIR OWN NEEDS FROM THE VEGETABLES AND FRUITS DENE PRODUCED. ALSO, KAGU EVEN HAD A SMALL SHOW WITH KNIVES OF HIS OWN DESIGN AT BOTH KOEY AND ATASHYER. THESE WERE PRETTY HARMLESS HIT-LIKE ACTIVITIES. ALTHOUGH DENE AND KAGU HAD BEEN TOGETHER FOR MANY YEARS, THEY BOTH HAD THEIR OWN LITTLE PRIVATE GARDEN (KAGU WAS ALSO FOND OF CALLING HIS BLACKSMITH'S WORKSHOP A GARDEN).



IN FACT, THEY HAD BEEN MARRIED A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME AGO.

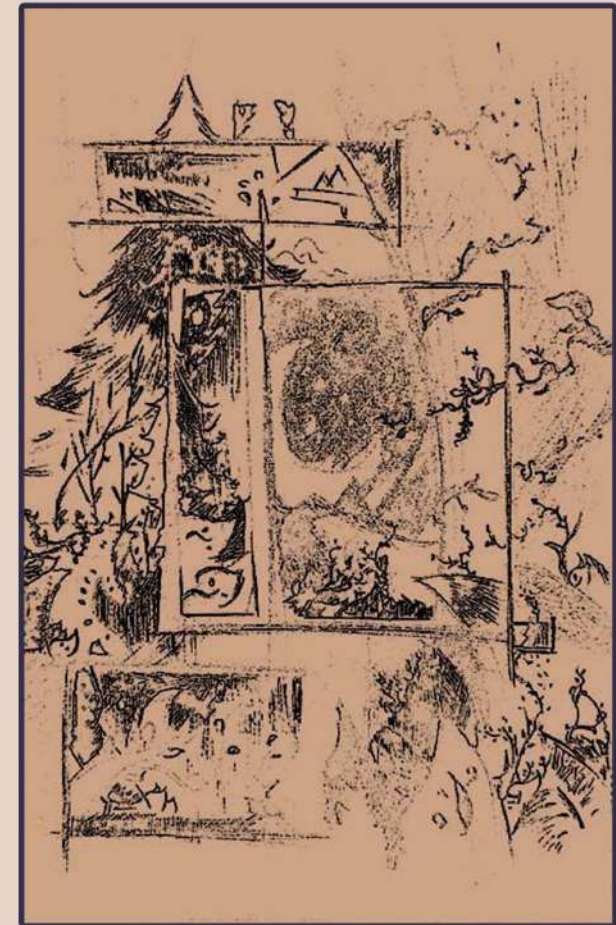
DEDE REVÂSIM FROM KOEY, WHOM BOTH OF THEM KNEW AND LOVED SINCE THEIR CHILDHOOD, HAD PERFORMED THEIR WEDDING CEREMONY. HE HAD BEEN VERY HELPFUL IN BUILDING THE GARDENS AND CHALET HERE TOO. HOWEVER, THIS REVÂSIM SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH REVÂSIM OF THE SAME NAME, KAGU'S GRANDFATHER.

IN KOEY, ESPECIALLY THE OLDER GENERATION'S NAMES WERE USUALLY REVÂSIM, REGARDLESS OF FEMALE OR MALE. THERE WOULD BE NO CONFUSION AT ALL, AND PEOPLE COULD EASILY UNDERSTAND WHO WAS TALKING ABOUT WHICH REVÂSIM. A YOUTH WHO HAD STUDIED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ATASHYER AND RETURNED TO KOEY HAD TOLD THEM IT WAS "THE WAY OF INTUITIVENESS". BUT TO THE KOEY PEOPLE, THIS SITUATION HAD NEVER SEEMED SO ASTONISHING OR STRANGE ANYWAY.



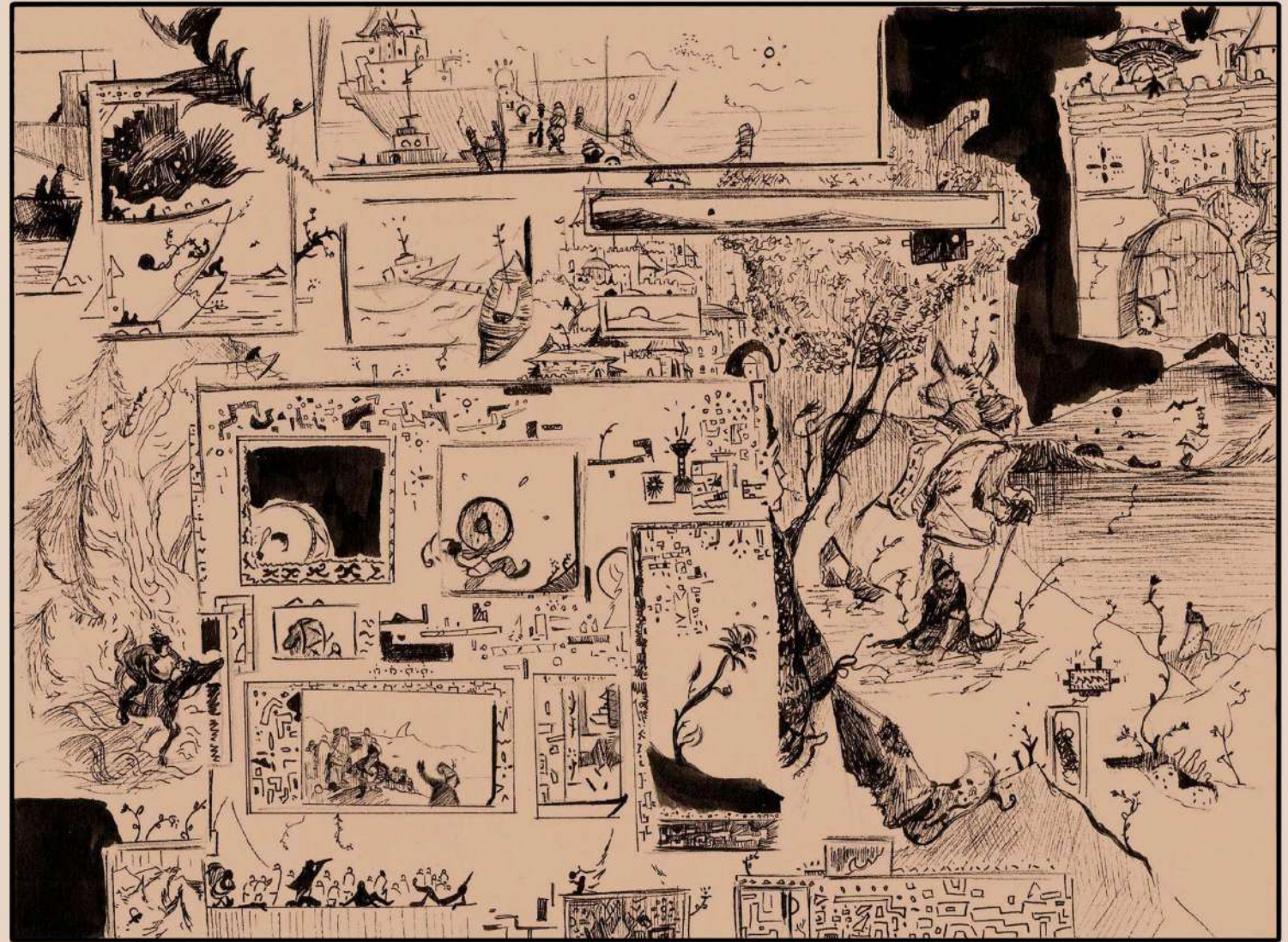
LIVES OF DENE AND KAGU WERE NOT DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE SIEGE, BUT OF COURSE, THEY FELT DISTRESSED SOMEHOW. THERE WAS A FAMOUS REGION EVEN MORE THAN ATASHYER IN THE MOUNTAINS OF DOGANS WHERE THEY LIVED. THE PLACE WHERE THE HIGHEST WATER FLOW IN THE WORLD OCCURRED WAS IN THE REGION WHERE THEY LIVED. THEY COULD HAVE EASILY REACHED THIS AREA WITH THEIR HORSE OR DONKEY FOR THEIR WATER NEEDS.

BY THE WAY, THEY HAD A HORSE AND A DONKEY. BEFORE THE SIEGE, DENE WOULD USUALLY RIDE THEIR HORSE REVREV AND GO DOWN TO KOEY, WHERE SHE WOULD TEACH THE ORPHANS ABOUT GARDENING AND AGRICULTURE. KAGU, ON THE OTHER HAND, LOVED TO TAKE THEIR DONKEY NAMED DEHDEH WHEN HE HAD A BUSINESS IN THE VILLAGE OR IN THE CITY. HE ACCEPTED AND RECOGNIZED HIM AS HIS ASSISTANT IN ORDER TO SUPPLY THE NECESSITIES FOR HIS PRODUCTION FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE FOREST OR MOUNTAIN.



EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE UNDER SIEGE, AWAY FROM THE SOUND OF BOMBS AND THE THREAT OF INVADING SOLDIERS, ONE DAY KAGU HAD GONE TO PROCURE STONES AND DRIED LOGS FROM THE FOREST TO PRODUCE A FEW TOOLS THAT HE INTENDED TO USE FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THEIR HOUSE AND HE WAS COMING BACK...

HE ALSO PICKED UP A FEW MUSHROOMS AND WILD BERRIES HE FOUND ON HIS WAY. ON THE WAY HOME, HE SAW AN UNEXPECTED EVENT THAT DAY. AT FIRST HE HEARD VOICES, AS IF THERE WAS A FEAST NEARBY. BIG DRUMS, BRASS, SHOUTS... THERE WERE AROUND TEN MUSICIANS IN THE AREA JUST BELOW WHERE HE WAS.



THESE PEOPLE WERE MAKING THIS UPROAR. HE WATCHED THEM WITH ALL THEIR JOY, HUSTLE AND BUSTLE IN AMAZEMENT, SAYING TO HIMSELF, "FANCY THAT! THERE ARE NO PEOPLE IN THESE MOUNTAINS BUT ME AND DENER?"

FOR A MOMENT, HE HEARD THE WHISPERS OF CHILDREN COMING FROM THE TIP OF HIS FEET, BEHIND HIM, AND AS IF FROM INSIDE THE TREE TRUNKS OR UNDER THE STONES, AND HE FELT THEIR PRESENCE. THEN, IN A MUCH MORE STRANGE WAY, HE SAW A HUGE CRUISE SHIP APPROACHING TOWARDS THIS REGION WHERE THEY LIVED, WHERE THERE COULD NEVER BE SUCH A LARGE SHORE AND SEA. HE REALIZED WITH A STRANGE FEELING THAT WHERE HE WAS NOW WAS AN ISLAND.

THEN HE SAW HIMSELF. IN FACT, HE WAS APPROACHING HIMSELF FROM BEHIND. AT THE SAME TIME, HE FELT HIMSELF APPROACHING, AND HIMSELF BEING APPROACHED.

THESE "TWO THEMSELVES" ALSO LOOKED AT THE SKY AT ONCE. THEY REALIZED THAT THEY WERE CARRYING WOODEN SWORDS ON THEIR BACKS, MANY TIMES THEIR SIZE. STRANGE BIRDS WERE FLYING IN THE SKY, AND THEN THEY LOOKED AT THE SEA AND SAW GIANT FISHES, VERY STRANGE LOOKING, AND ABOVE EACH OF THEM SEEMED TO BE VERY SMALL PEOPLE RIDING THEM.

A MOMENT LATER, THE "TWO SELVES" SUDDENLY BECAME ONE PERSON. THERE WAS NO DEHDEH OR THE SUPPLIES AND FOOD HE HAD GATHERED AROUND. SOMEHOW HE WAS BACK IN THE FOREST. THEN HE SAW A BIG MAN APPROACHING HIM. HE WAS CARRYING A CHILD ON HIS SHOULDER. HE WAS APPROACHING TOWARDS THE PLACE WHERE KAGU WAS, WITH HEAVY STEPS, AS IF THE GAIT OF A GIANT.

KAGU IMMEDIATELY THREW HIMSELF BEHIND A STONE AND TRIED TO HIDE. AT THAT MOMENT, KAGU REALIZED THAT HE HAD A BUCKET OF FRESHLY CAUGHT FISH WITH HIM. HE TRIED TO HIDE HIMSELF FROM THOSE WHO CAME, WITH THE BEWILDERMENT AND FEAR HE FELL INTO. THE MAN CAME TO THE STONE WHERE KAGU WAS HIDING, THE BOY ON HIS SHOULDER SMILING AND POINTING HIMSELF WITH HIS FINGER.



KAGU FELT VERY OLD FOR A MOMENT.

IT WAS AS IF HE HAD GROWN TEN OR FIFTEEN YEARS
OLDER THAN HIMSELF, BUT AFTER A WHILE THAT
FEELING DISAPPEARED.

HE FELT AS IF HIS BODY WAS CONTRACTING, BUT FOR A
VERY BRIEF MOMENT.

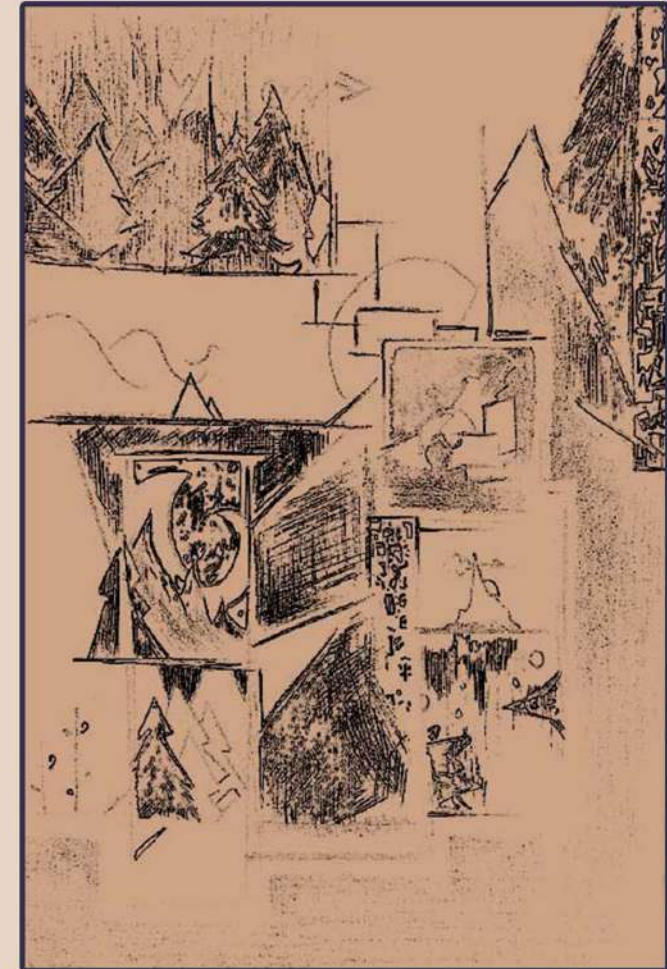
THEN FOR A MOMENT HE SHUDDERED.



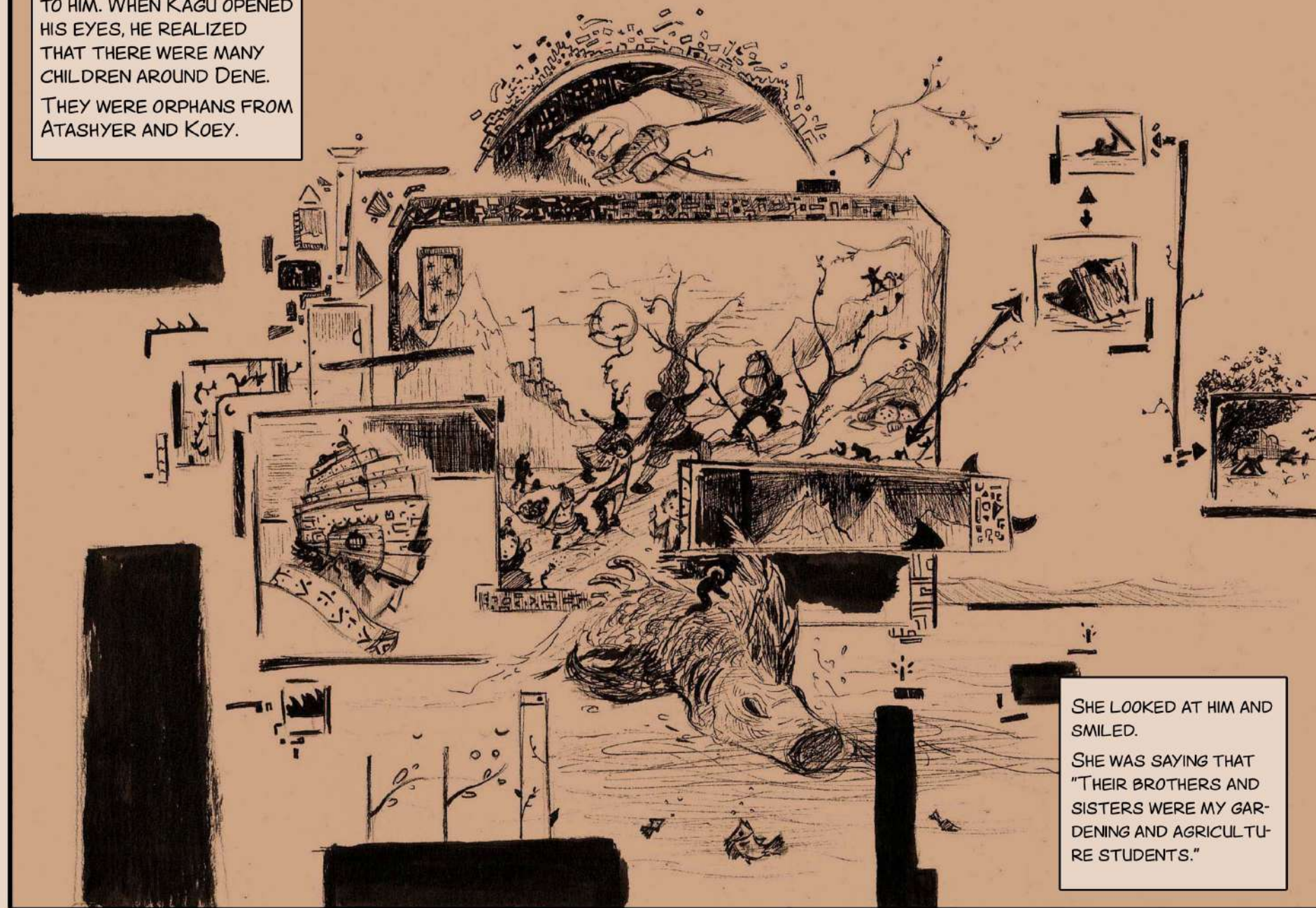
IMAGES STARTED FLASHING BEFORE HIS EYES.

AT FIRST, THESE WERE IMAGES THAT WERE INTRICATELY
INTERTWINED, OVERLAPPING, ARRANGED SIDE BY SIDE IN A
CONFUSED MANNER, AS IF THEY HAD NO MEANING OR RELATION
TO EACH OTHER.

HE FELT HIS BODY, ESPECIALLY HIS PALMS, GETTING
VERY HOT, PERHAPS FOR A FEW SECONDS.



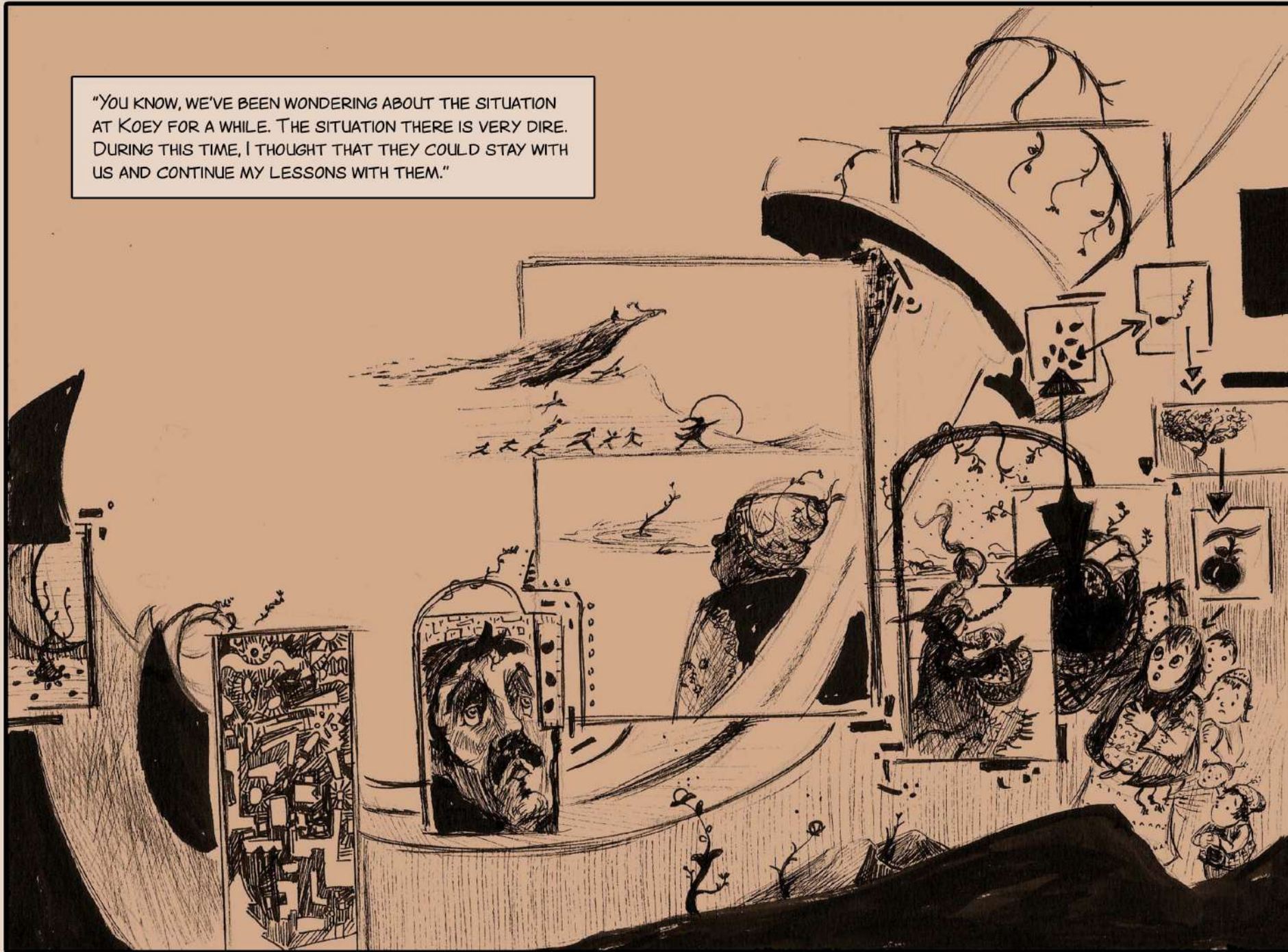
SUDDENLY HE HEARD
DENE'S VOICE CALLING OUT
TO HIM. WHEN KAGU OPENED
HIS EYES, HE REALIZED
THAT THERE WERE MANY
CHILDREN AROUND DENE.
THEY WERE ORPHANS FROM
ATASHYER AND KOEY.



SHE LOOKED AT HIM AND
SMILED.

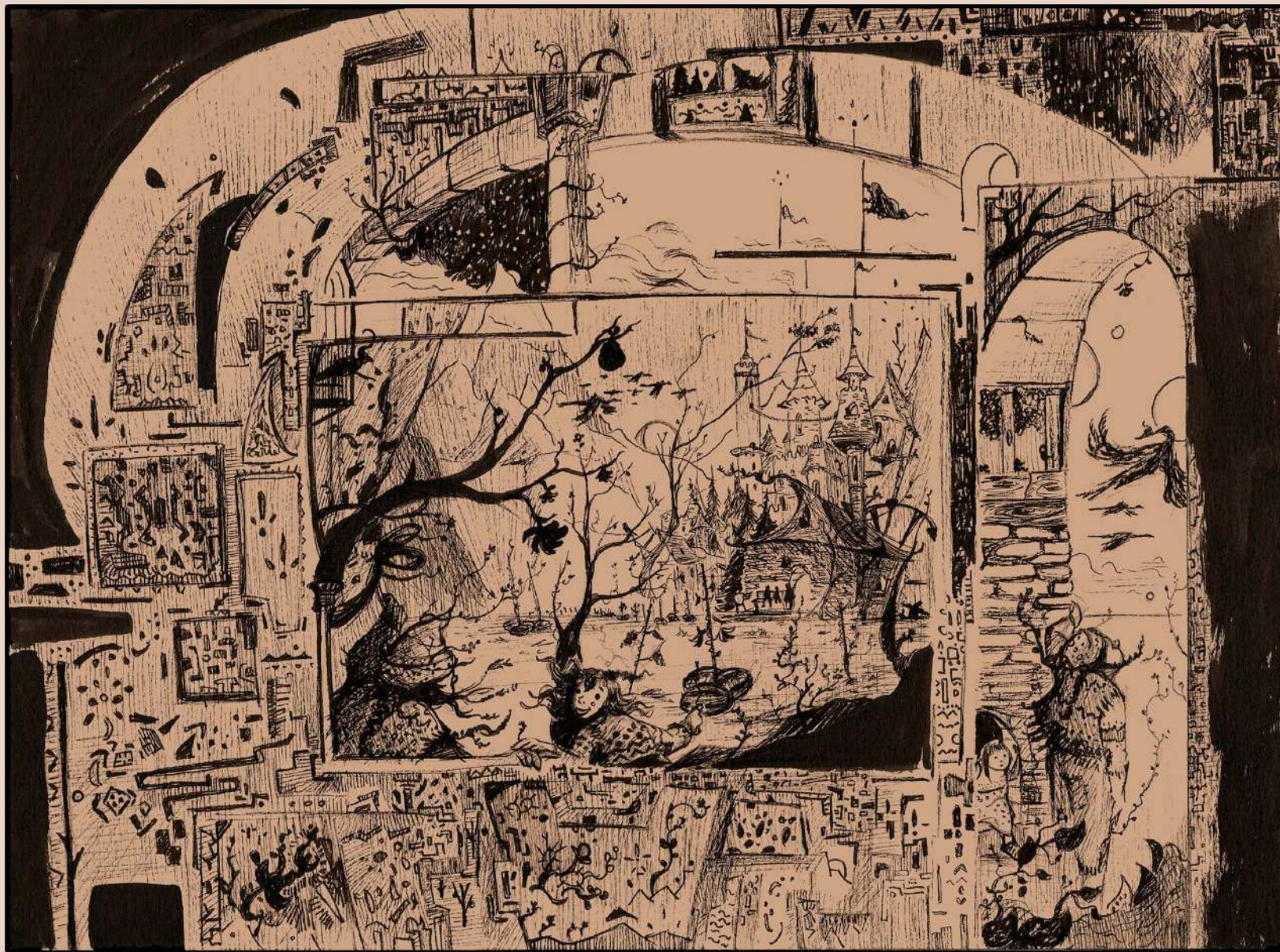
SHE WAS SAYING THAT
"THEIR BROTHERS AND
SISTERS WERE MY GAR-
DENING AND AGRICULTU-
RE STUDENTS."

"YOU KNOW, WE'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT THE SITUATION AT KOEY FOR A WHILE. THE SITUATION THERE IS VERY DIRE. DURING THIS TIME, I THOUGHT THAT THEY COULD STAY WITH US AND CONTINUE MY LESSONS WITH THEM."



DENE CONTINUED TO
SPEAK, BUT KAGU
WAS STILL UNABLE
TO RECOVER FROM
WHAT HE HAD JUST
SEEN.

HE COULDN'T MAKE
UP HIS MIND. IMAGES
WERE STILL MOVING
IN SHAPES, AS IF
SMALL AND LARGE
PIECES OF GLASS, IN
FRONT OF HIS EYES,
AND THEIR PLACES
AND SEQUENCES...



... WERE CONSTANTLY CHANGING WITH EACH OTHER.

IT'S LIKE A MOSAIC STAINED GLASS,
BUT EVERY PART OF IT SEEMED TO MOVE.

HOWEVER, THIS DID NOT MAKE HIM DIZZY OR CAUSE ANY DISCOMFORT. THESE IMAGES WERE NOT BEFORE HIS EYES. THE VOICES HE HEARD WERE NOT IN HIS EARS. EVERYTHING WAS IN HIS HEART.

HE REALIZED THAT HE WAS **LISTENING** TO A STORY IN HIS HEART. DENE'S VOICE WAS ALSO INVOLVED IN THIS STORY.

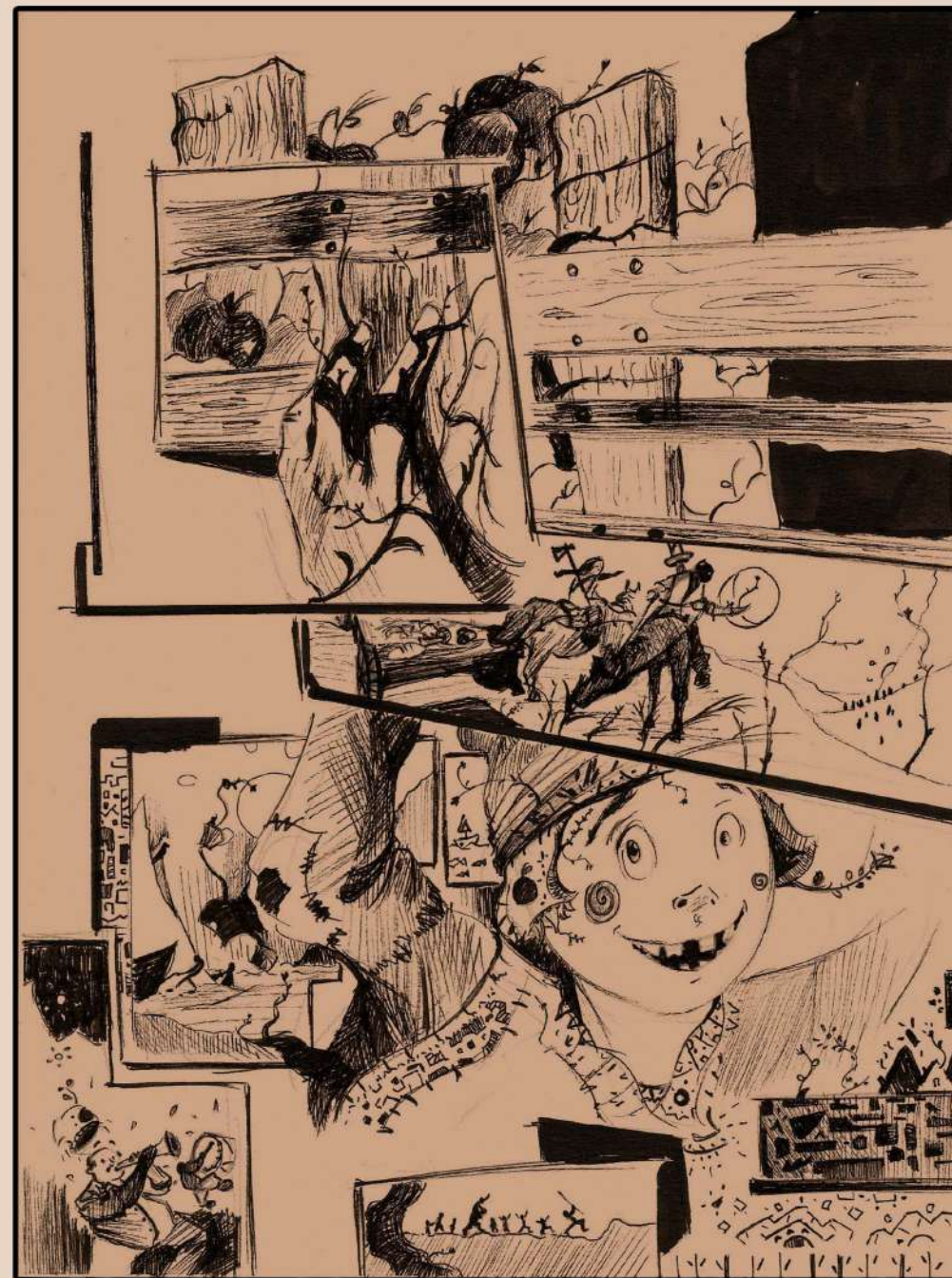
SOMETIMES IT WAS LIKE A STORY DENE TOLD, SOMETIMES HE FOUND HIMSELF LIVING WITH DENE IN THE STORY. ONE MOMENT HE WAS IN THE STORY, THE NEXT HE WAS OUTSIDE. FOR A MOMENT HE WAS IN DENE'S WORDS. THEN ANOTHER FAMILIAR VOICE, BUT COULDN'T TELL WHO IT WAS.



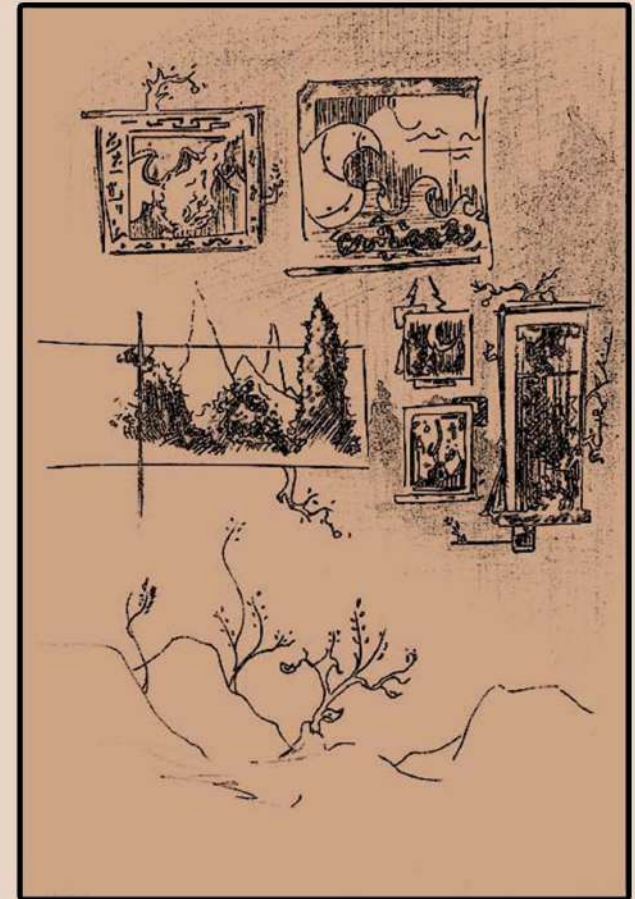
WITHIN THIS INTERWOVEN SENSE OF INTIMATENESS,
HE DISTINGUISHED DENE'S VOICE AGAIN...

"WE ARE THINKING OF MAKING A
SMALL BOAT FROM MATERIALS WE
CAN FIND WITH THE CHILDREN. MAYBE
WE CAN SAIL FROM THE LITTLE
BEACH IN KOEY FROM TIME TO TIME.
PERHAPS WE HAVE OUR SHARE AND
WE CAN EVEN CATCH SOME SMALL
FISHES."

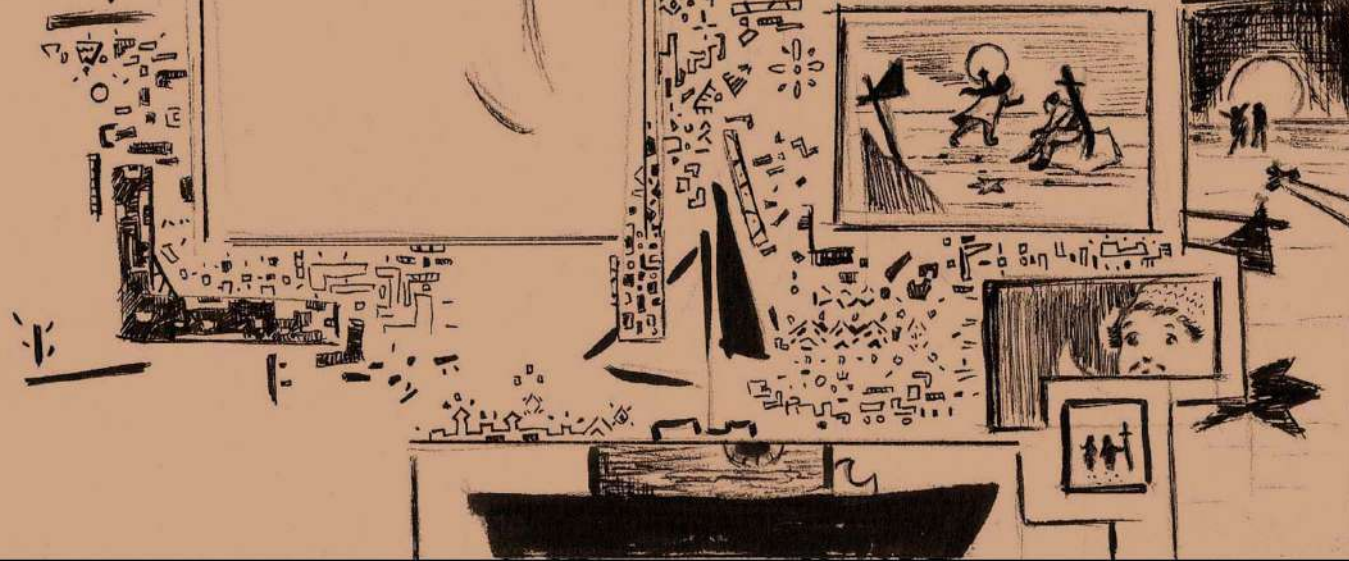
EACH WORD SEEMED TO HANG IN TIME, AT THAT
MOMENT, AND BEFORE AND AFTER COULD NOT
BE FELT. THE SENTENCES WERE NOT FINISHED.
THEY WERE ENDLESS. HE FELT AS IF HE WAS
READING A PIECE OF TEXT THAT HAD LOST ITS
DOTS IN A CONTINUOUS LOOP. HE WAS ALWAYS
GOING BACK TO THE BEGINNING, BUT HE ALWAYS
UNDERSTOOD THINGS IN A DIFFERENT WAY.
IT WAS AS IF NEW WORDS WERE MIXING IN BE-
TWEEN, AND NEW EVENTS WERE OCCURRING IN
THE FLOW OF THE STORY. THAT'S WHY HE WAS
NEVER BORED.



HE LET HIMSELF LISTEN...



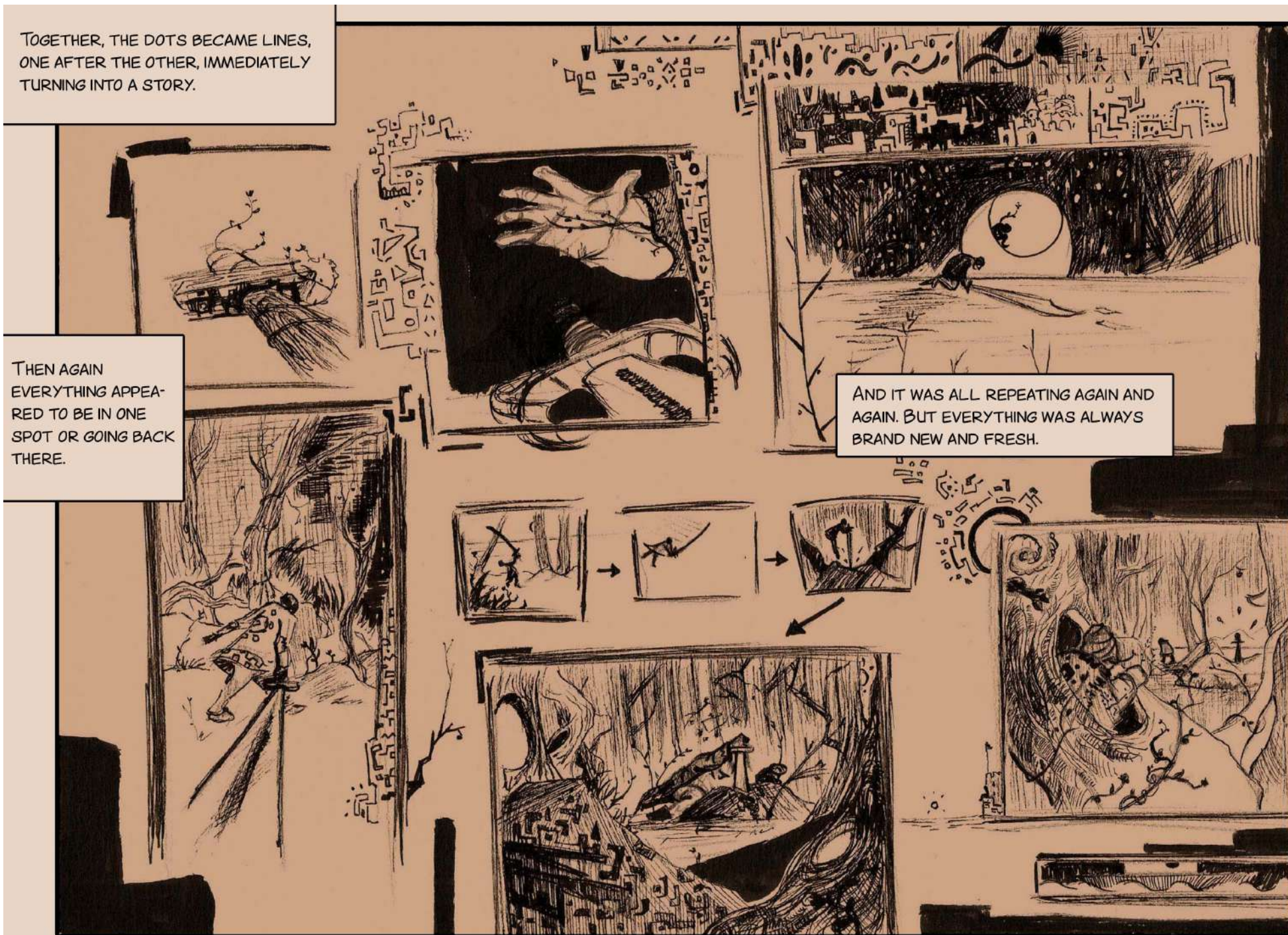
THE LIPS OF THE PERSON SPEAKING IN
THAT PLACE DID NOT MOVE.
BUT EVERYTHING; **EACH POINT** HE SAW,
WATCHED AND LISTENED TO
WAS **TELLING** HIM SOMETHING.

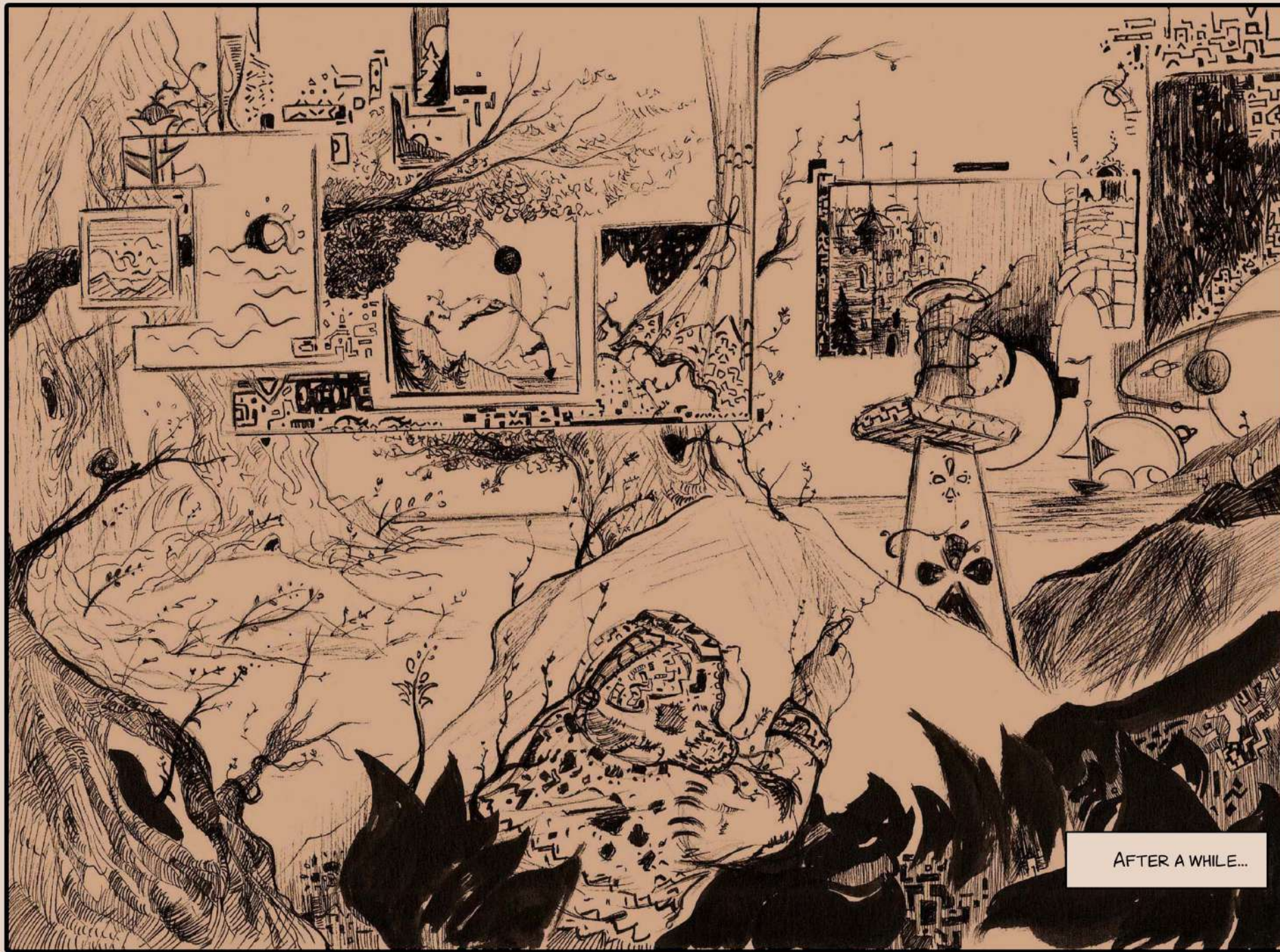


TOGETHER, THE DOTS BECAME LINES,
ONE AFTER THE OTHER, IMMEDIATELY
TURNING INTO A STORY.

THEN AGAIN
EVERYTHING APPEA-
RED TO BE IN ONE
SPOT OR GOING BACK
THERE.

AND IT WAS ALL REPEATING AGAIN AND
AGAIN. BUT EVERYTHING WAS ALWAYS
BRAND NEW AND FRESH.

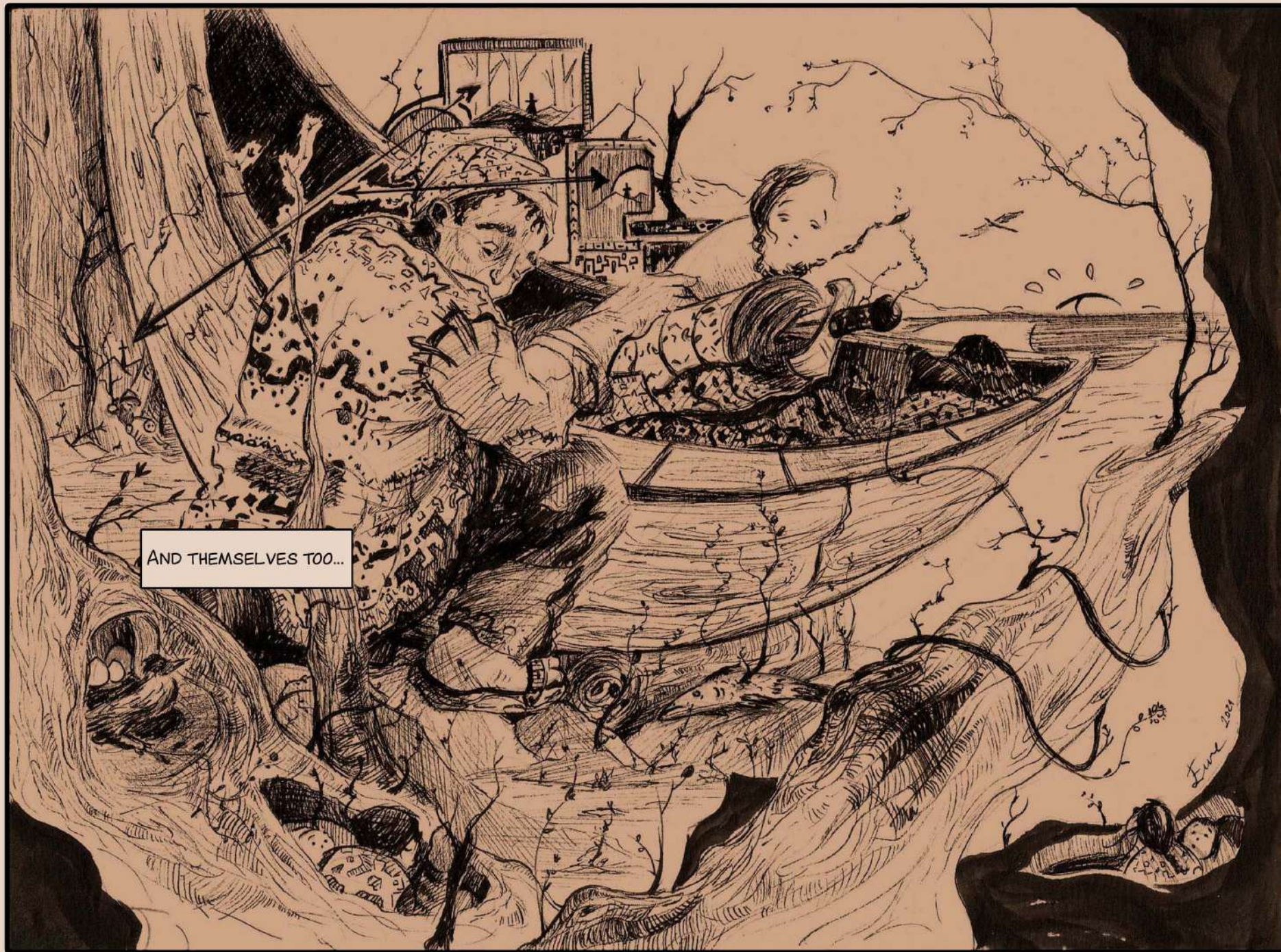




AFTER A WHILE...

HE SAW THE CHILDREN AROUND DENE
GROWING RAPIDLY...





AND THEMSELVES TOO...

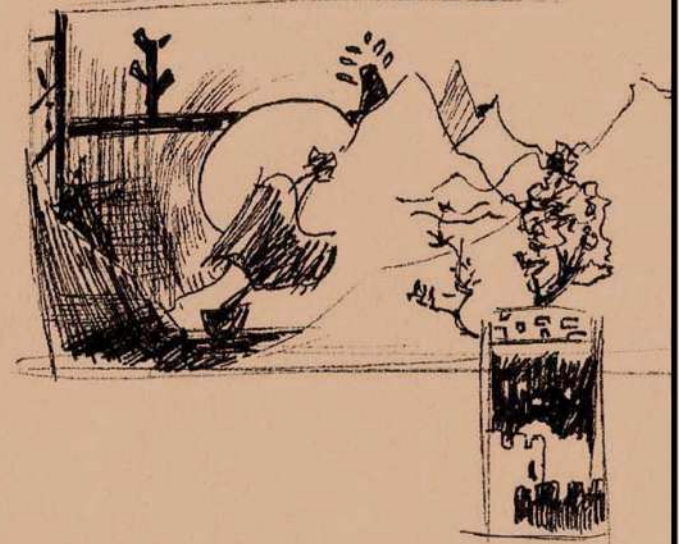
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AFTER SOME TIME,

ANOTHER COMPLETION

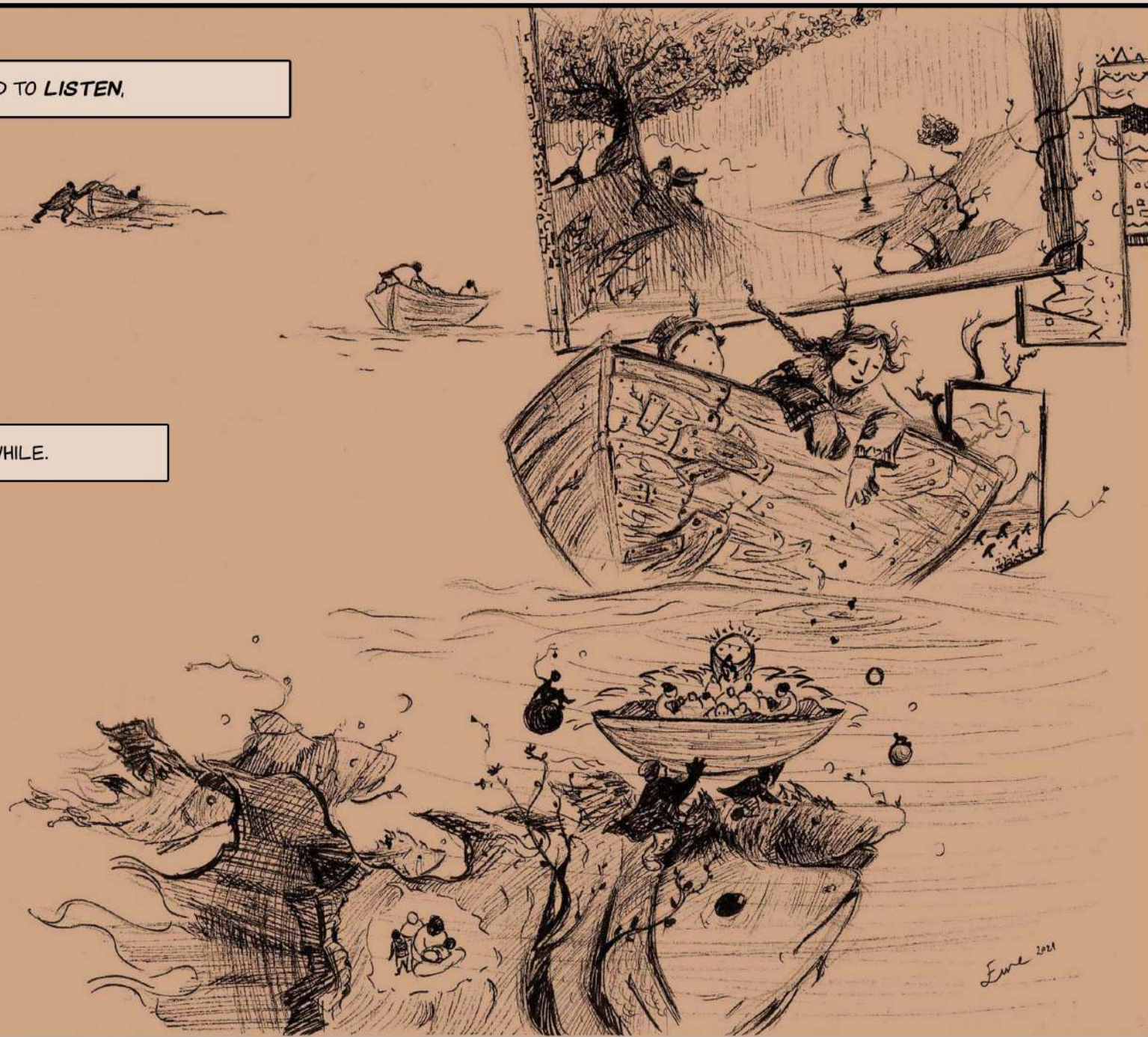
TOOK PLACE...



EVERYTHING WAS COMPLETED AGAIN BEFORE HIS EYES,
THEN DECOMPOSED ONCE MORE...

HE CONTINUED TO *LISTEN*,

FIRST, TO HIMSELF FOR A WHILE.

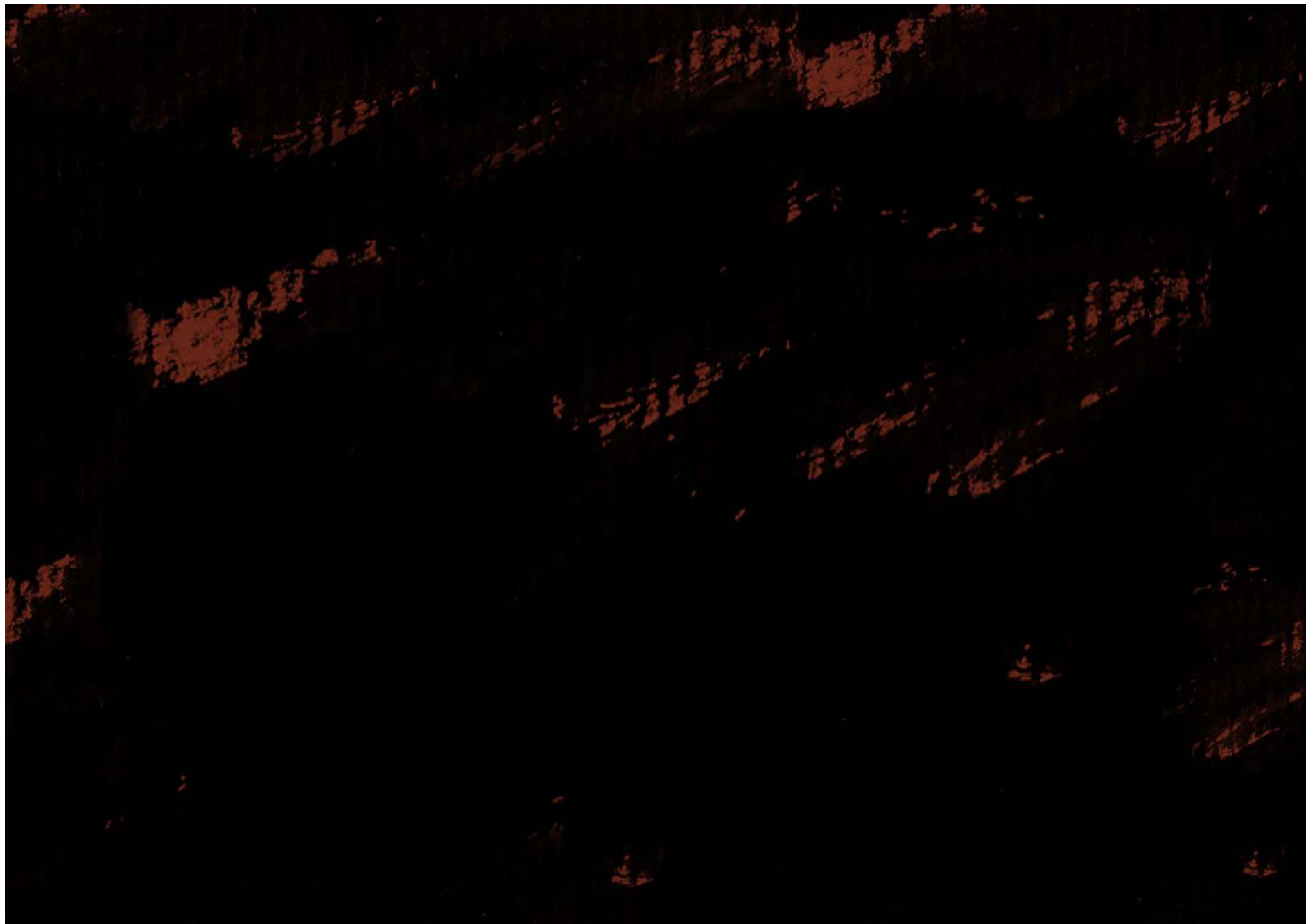




THEN WITH ALL THE KINDRED SPIRITS LEFT OUT

WITH THEIR PRETTY WEIRD STORIES...





stories of a few

Outsiders

EMRE
altındag

