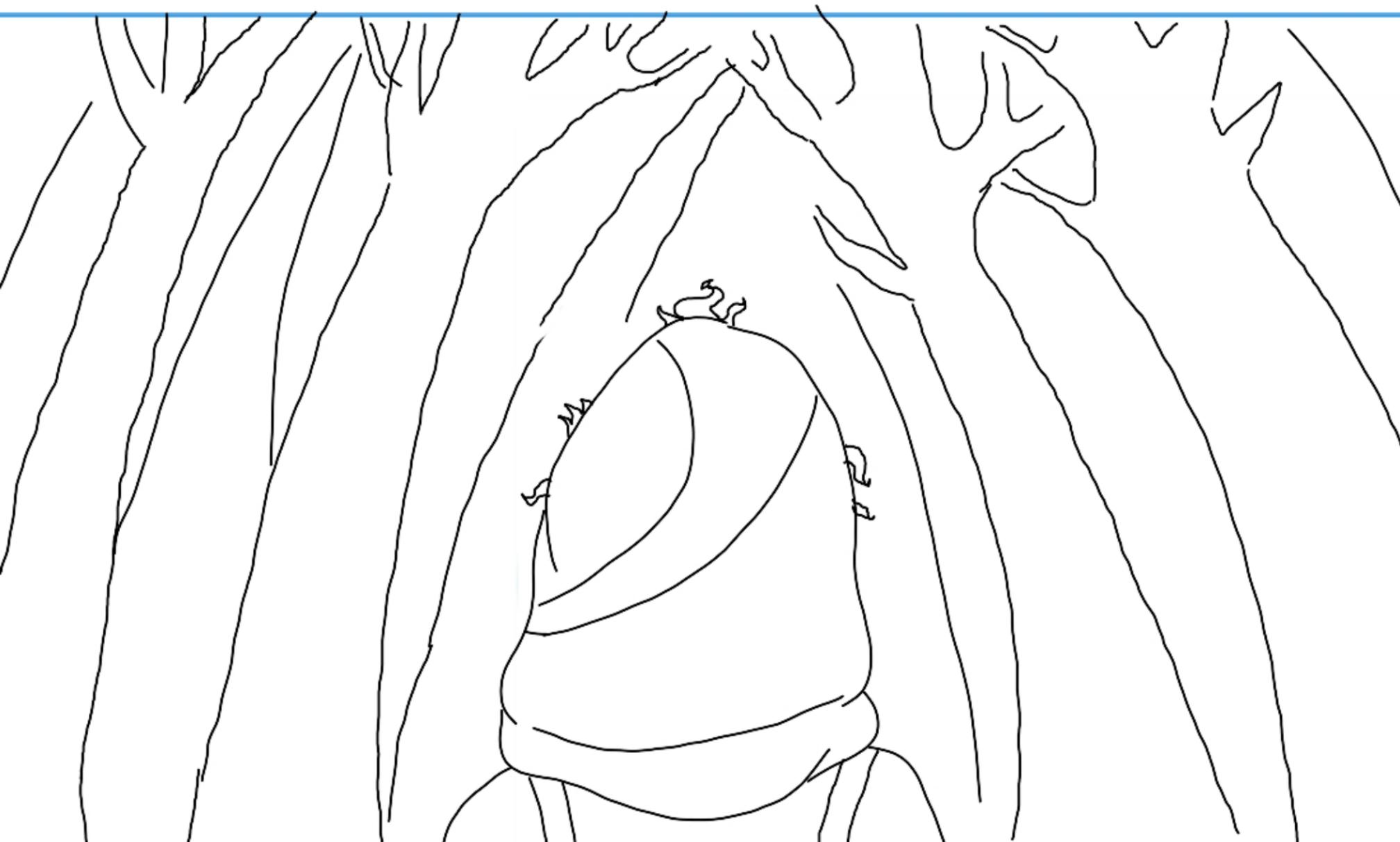
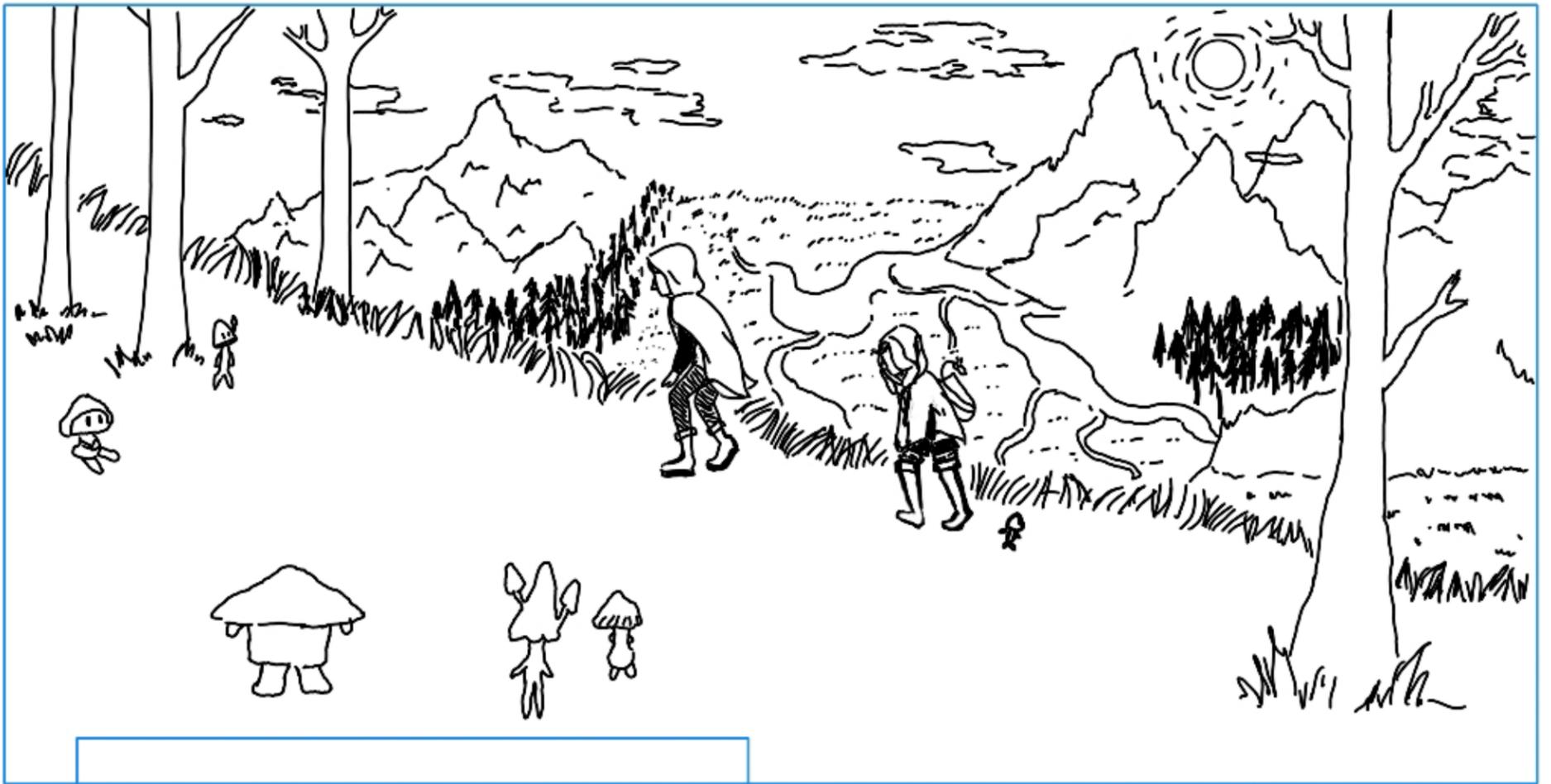
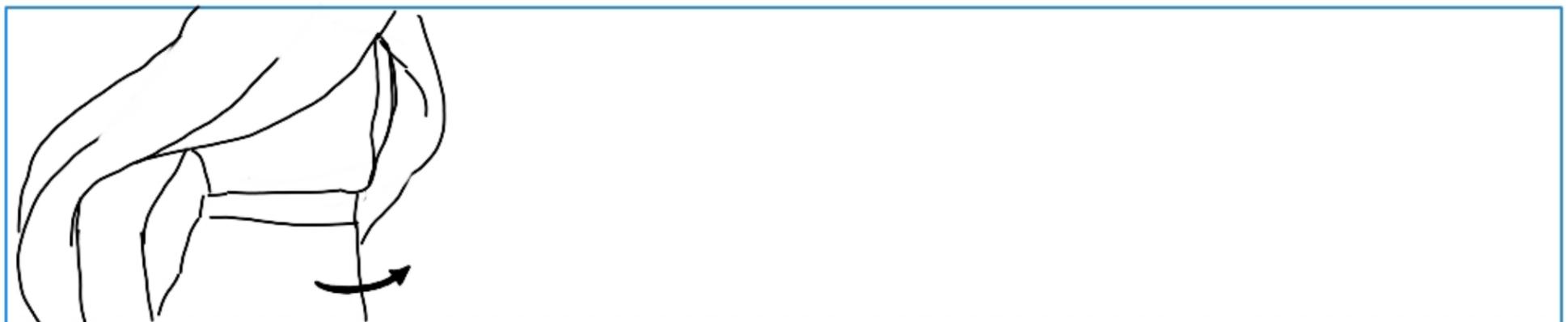
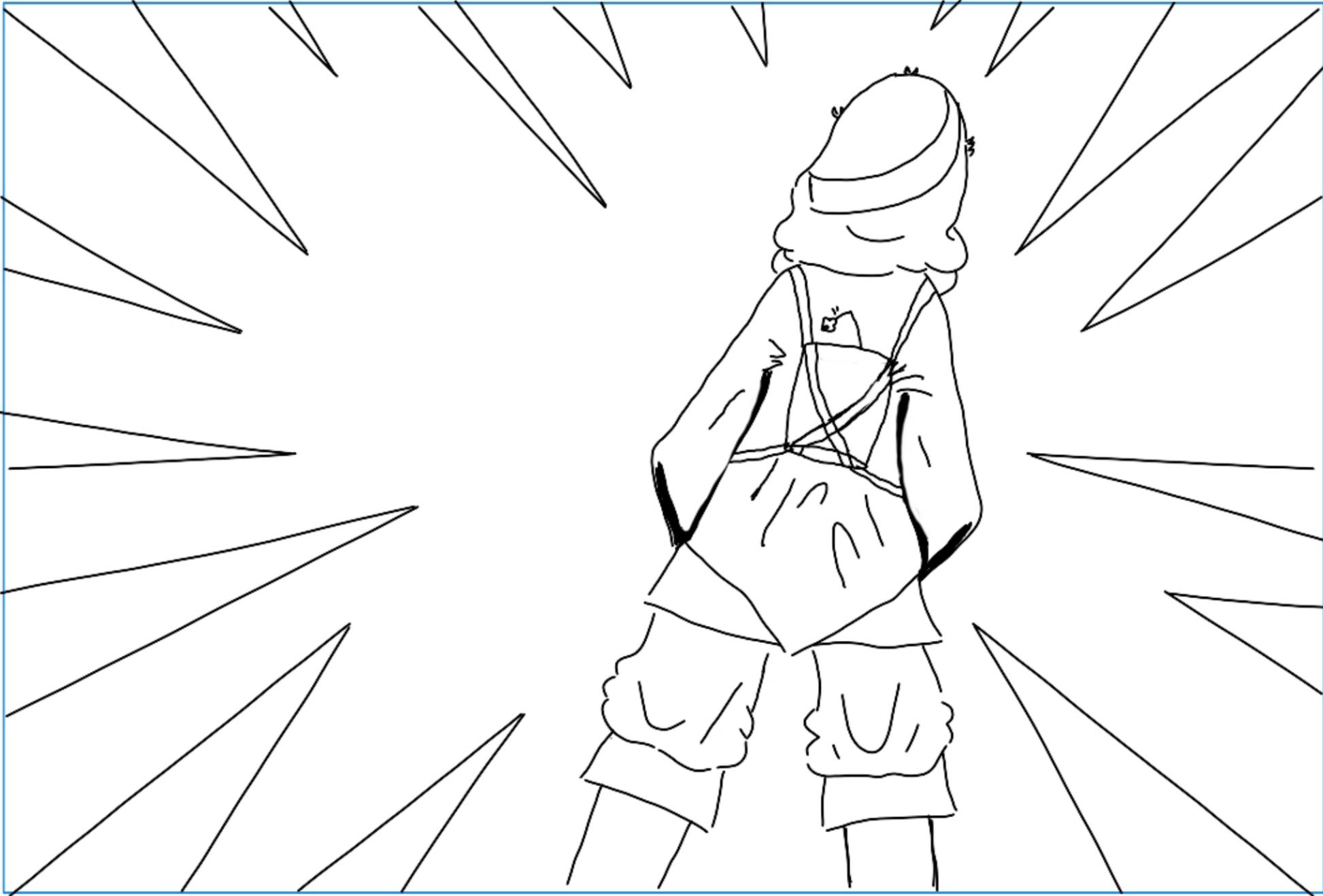


(AN) ENDING

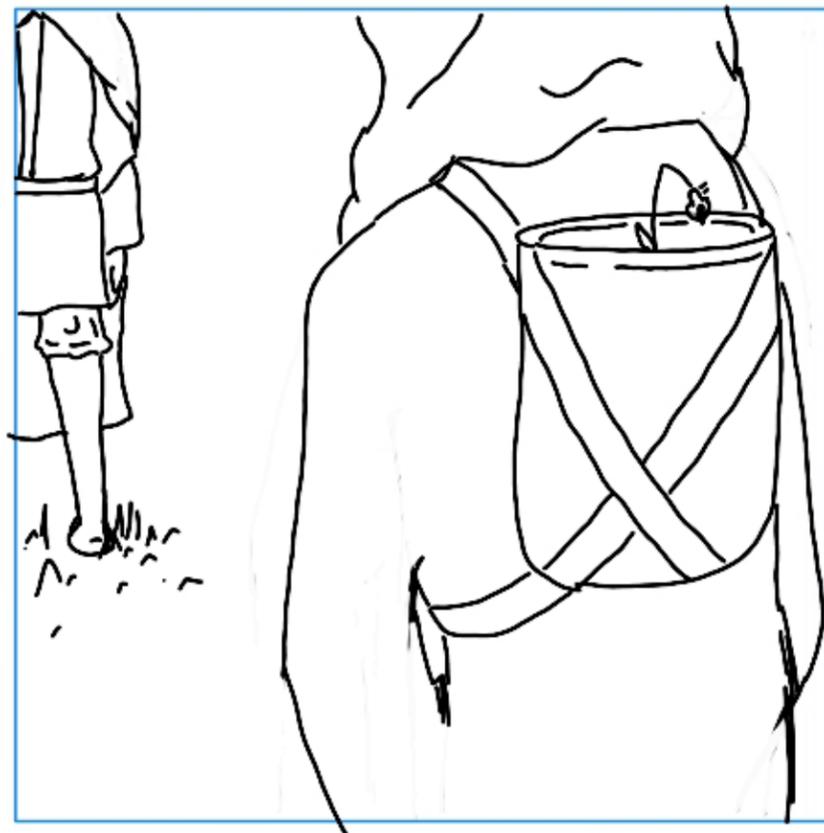


BY LILY PERKINS





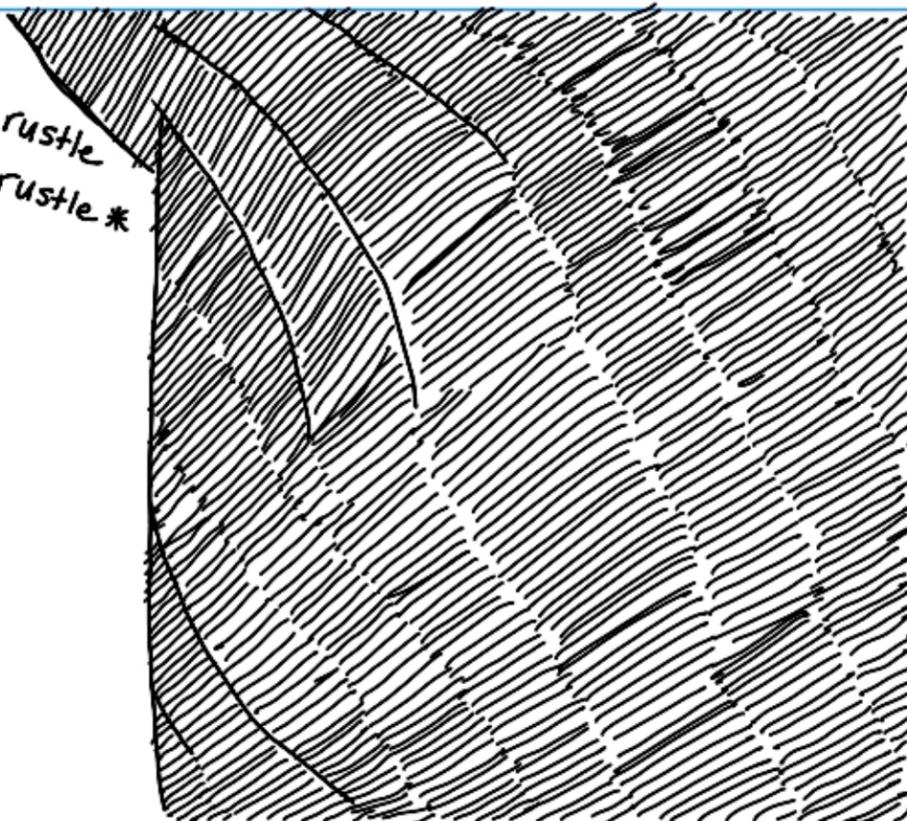
IF YOU'RE
TIRED --



-- I CAN
CARRY
THE ORCHID.



* rustle
rustle *



I'M
NOT TIRED.
I'M JUST...



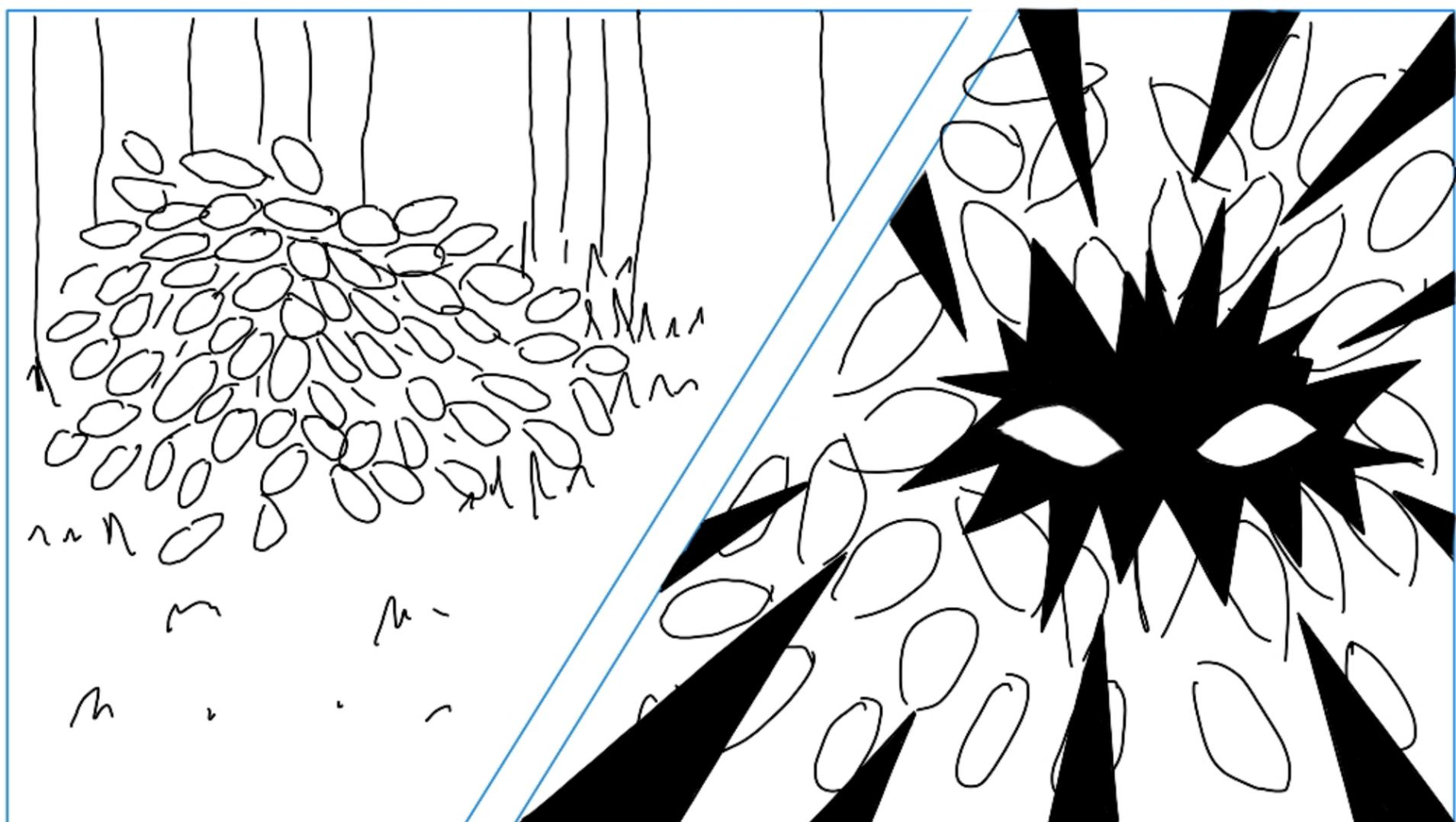
IT'S
NOTHING.
WE SHOULD
KEEP GOING.



WE'RE
ALMOST
THERE
ANYWAY

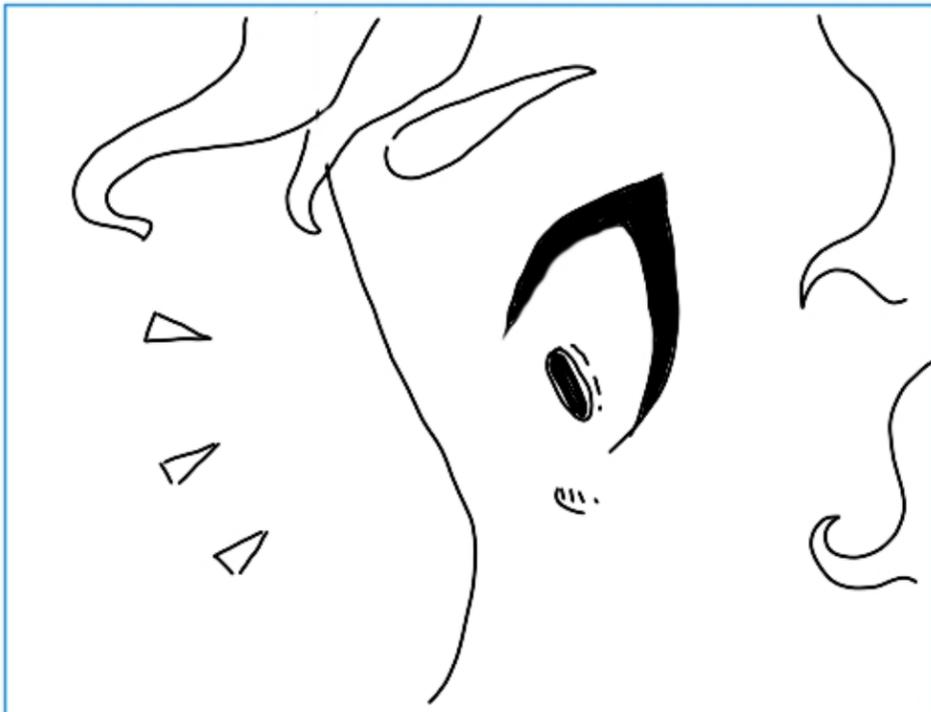


SO THERE'S
NO POINT
IN STOPPING
NOW.





NO!



OLD VANYA
ENTRUSTED
ME WITH
THE
ORCHID



-- YOU'RE HERE
TO HELP ME GET TO
THE CENTER --

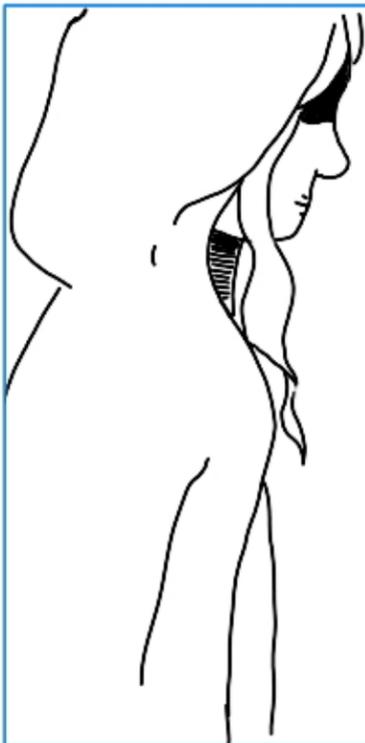


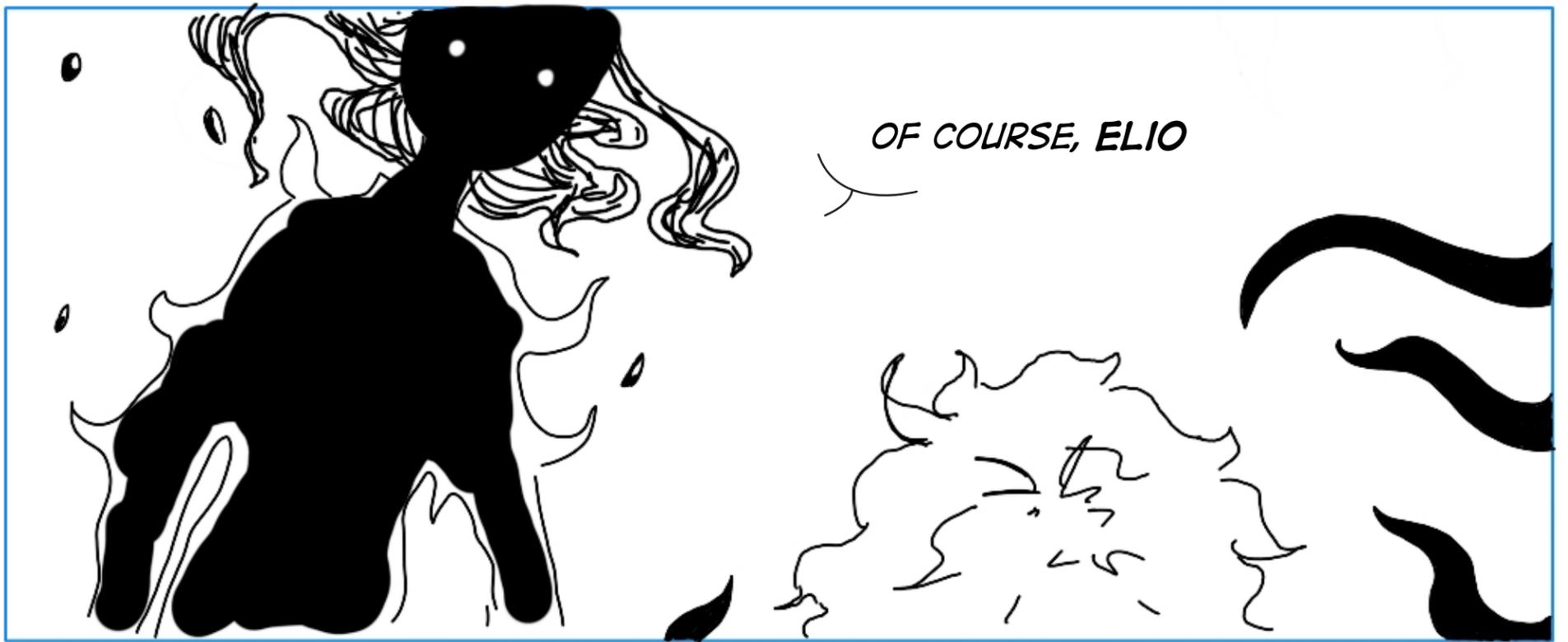
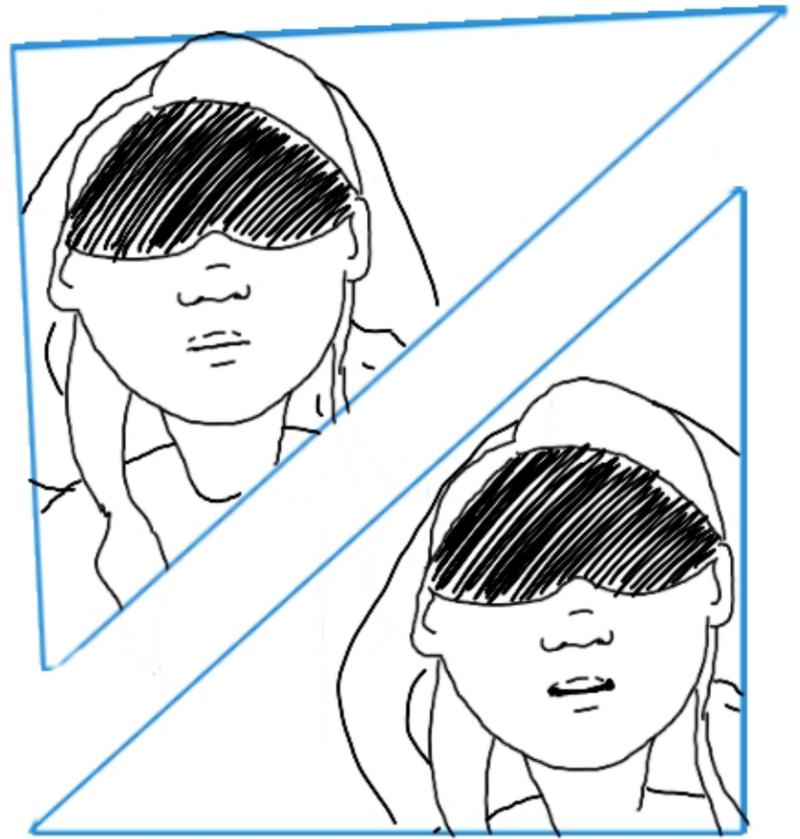
-- BUT THE GHOST ORCHID
IS MY RESPONSIBILITY

IF I CAN'T GET THIS
FLOWER TO THE CENTER,
I'LL HAVE TO STEP DOWN
AS A HANDLER



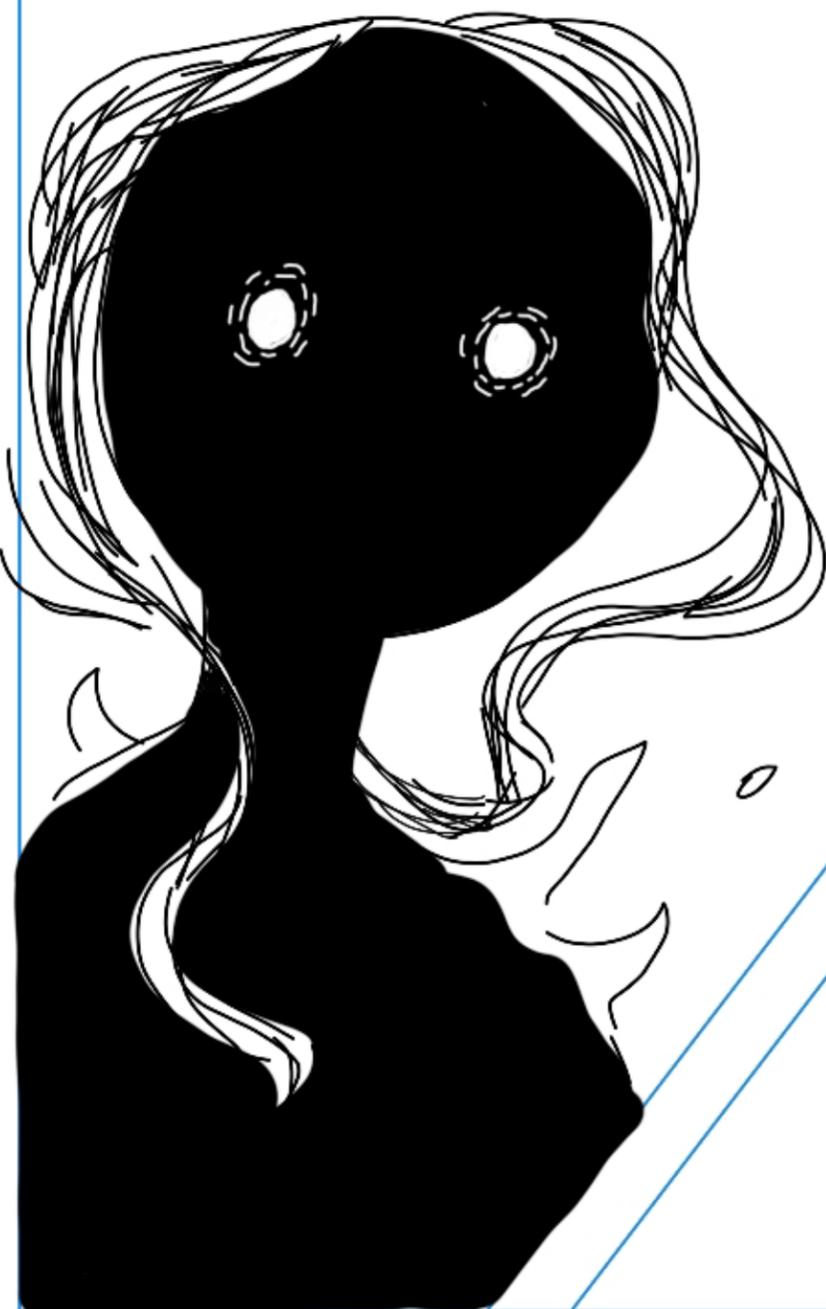
**THIS IS
MY TEST.**





"THERE ARE DARK SPIRITS OF THE FOREST WHO SEEK TO HAVE THESE RARE PLANTS FOR THEMSELVES. THEY WANT THE ENERGY THE PLANTS PROVIDE TO FUEL THEM -- AT THE COST OF THE LIFE OF THE FOREST AND ALL OTHER LIVING THINGS WITHIN IT.

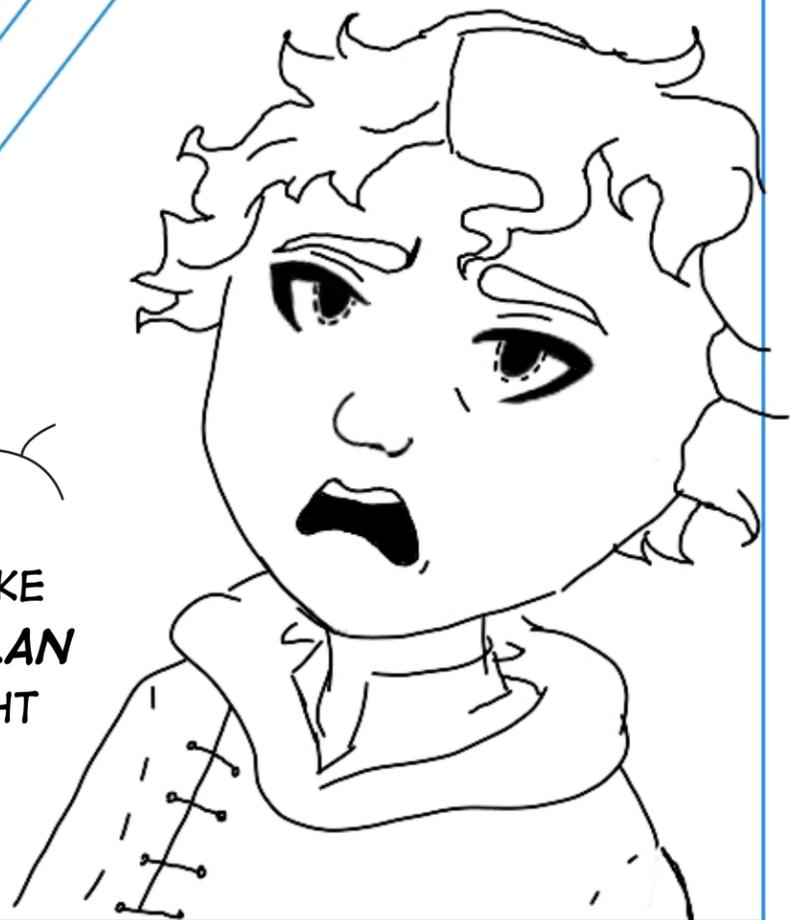
TRAVEL WITH SOMEONE TO DEFEND YOU AGAINST THEM. SOMEONE YOU TRUST. BE CAREFUL. THESE DARK SPIRITS ARE CLEVER AND HAVE HAD A GREAT DEAL MORE PRACTICE WITH GETTING WHAT THEY WANT THAN YOU. KEEP THE GHOST ORCHID CLOSE, ELIO. DON'T LET THEM TOUCH IT."



*ELIO BELLARE,
PLEASE
DON'T DO THAT*

AND
WHY NOT?

RUNNING
SOUNDS LIKE
A **GREAT PLAN**
TO ME RIGHT
NOW



YOU DON'T HAVE TO RUN

JUST STAY WHERE YOU ARE

I'M STILL YOUR FRIEND

*I'M SORRY THAT YOU
FEEL FRIGHTENED*

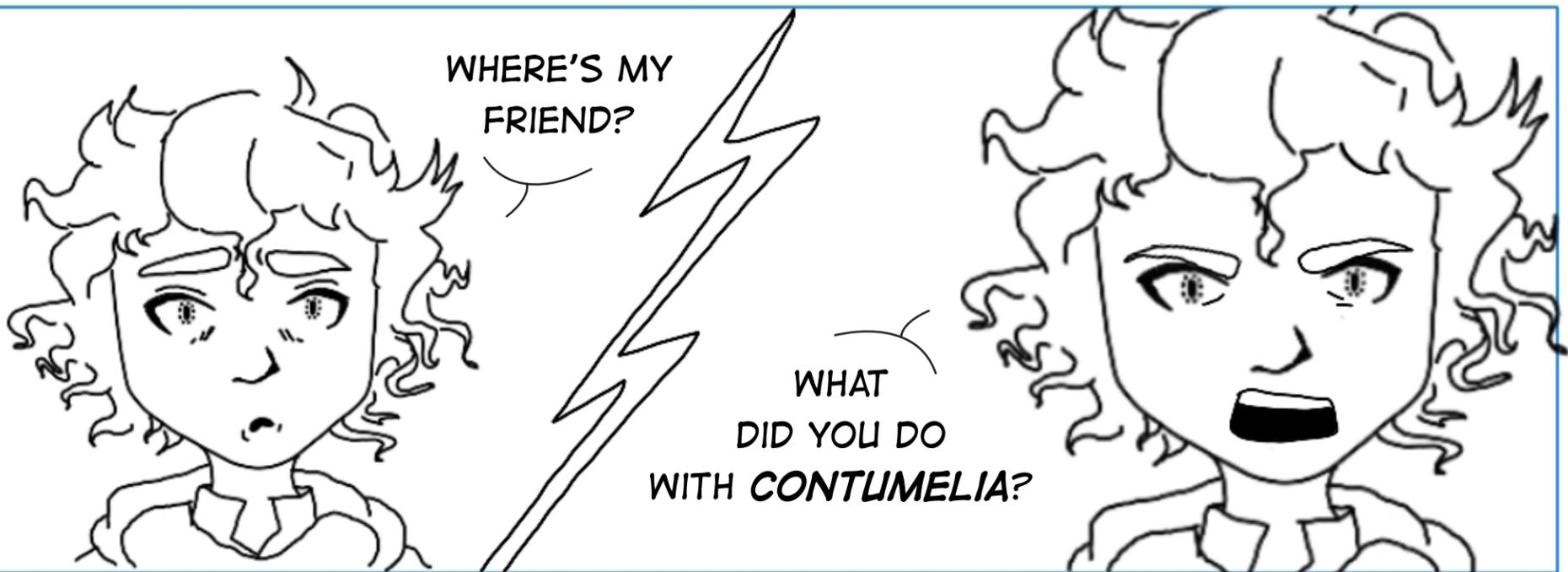
*AND I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE,
REMEMBER?*

*YOU KNOW I
CARE ABOUT
YOU, ELIO*



*WHERE'S MY
FRIEND?*

*WHAT
DID YOU DO
WITH **CONTUMELIA**?*



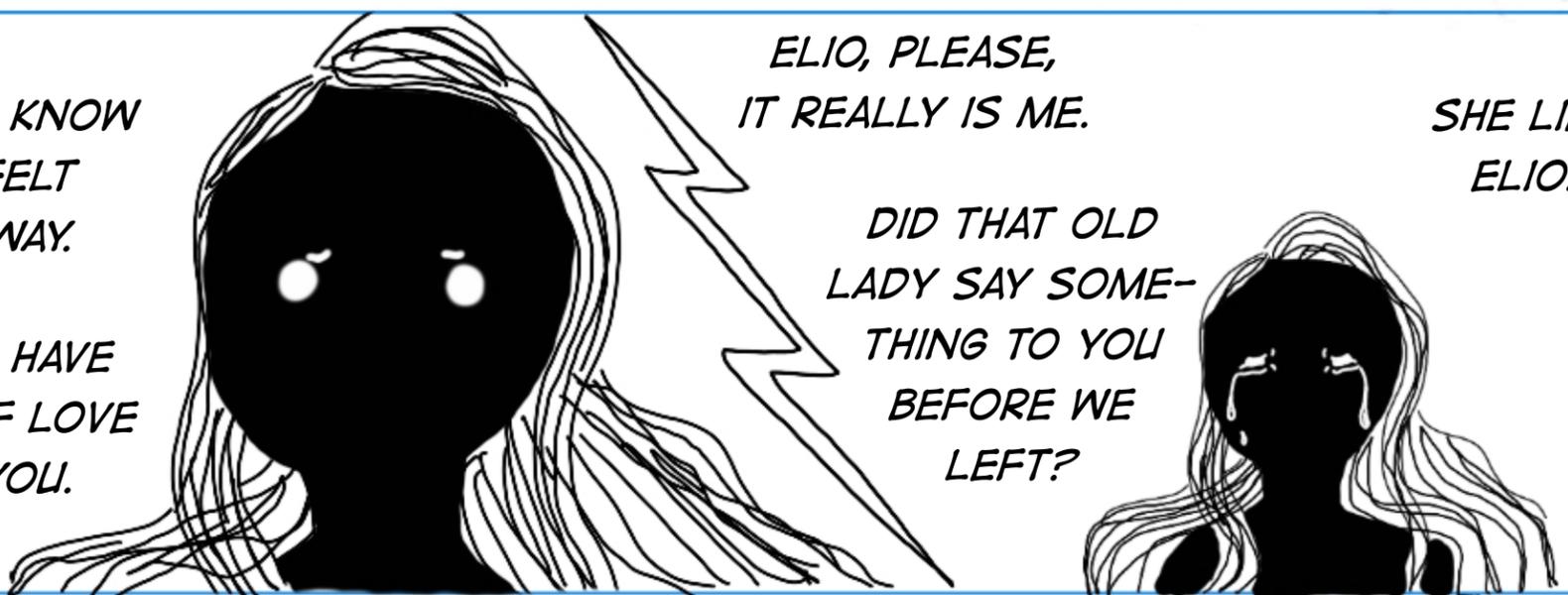
*I DIDN'T KNOW
YOU FELT
THIS WAY.*

*I STILL HAVE
A LOT OF LOVE
FOR YOU.*

*ELIO, PLEASE,
IT REALLY IS ME.*

*DID THAT OLD
LADY SAY SOME-
THING TO YOU
BEFORE WE
LEFT?*

*SHE LIED
ELIO!*



I'M JUST TRYING TO
GET THE ORCHID TO
MY FAMILY.

IT'S A RARE PLANT --
IT BELONGS WITH THE
SPIRITS OF THE FOREST
-- NOT WITH HUMANS



PLEASE, ELIO



I'M JUST TRYING
TO DO THE RIGHT THING!

IS CONTUMELIA TELLING
THE TRUTH?

DID OLD VANYA LIE
TO ME?

IT MAKES SENSE --
PLANTS BELONG IN THE
HANDS OF THE FOREST
SPIRITS.

BUT...

THEN YOU KNOW I'M
TRYING TO DO THE RIGHT
THING TOO

I'M PUTTING THE ORCHID
WHERE IT BELONGS --
AT THE CENTER
OF THE FOREST!

I'M NOT KEEPING IT.
I'M MAKING SURE ALL
THE ENERGY GOES BACK
TO THE FOREST!











HI, FRIEND.
THANK YOU.

COULD YOU
HELP ME?

HELP! :3