

**Swint and Snuff's
Creature Compendium
THESIS DEFENSE**

Olive Stephens

Illustration

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ARTIST STATEMENT

Olive Stephens (artist name oswinter) is an illustrator from the Oregon Coast who enjoys dabbling in the slightly spooky and cute. Their work draws from their personal experiences living in the enchanted streets of Portland and wandering the rainy logging roads through the forests surrounding their hometown. Their art is both playful and dark in intervals, and they enjoy playing between two distinct aesthetics to explore different themes and stories.

Olive graduated from Pacific Northwest College of Art in 2021 with their BFA in illustration, and before that completed their associate's degree at Oregon Coast Community College in the small town of South Beach, Oregon.

Recently they have taken an interest in expanding on darker themes in their work and incorporating eerie spaces that serve as a setting for complex emotional expression. They live under the supreme authority of their two cats, Mochi and Potato Bob.



PROPOSAL

Humans have always had an abundance of curiosity and creativity. We see things and we want to learn about them, compile them, expand on them and contextualize them in a way that makes sense to us. It is this same curiosity and creative drive that fueled the first bestiary—a compendium of creatures describing both real and imagined beasts with allegorical significance. For my thesis project, I would like to reimagine the medieval bestiary and recontextualize it for kids. Swint and Snuff's Creature Compendium will be a 32-page illustrated guidebook to a world of magical creatures in urban households and surrounding forests. My hope is to inspire kids from ages 9-12 to be curious about the natural world and to explore their own creative drive.

Story books have been a source of comfort and escape for kids and the artists who make them for as long as they have existed. Stories help us work through our own struggles by allowing us to relate to a character, story, or place in a way that is personal and individual. As someone who has dealt with anxiety, low fantasy stories that bring magic into the everyday have been comforting to me as they allow me to reshape my own reality and imagine it as safer and more approachable. These stories have stayed with me through the years, but with the pressures of adult life I have less time for them. However, I have always loved reading through encyclopedias, guidebooks, and compendiums and as an adult I have found myself flipping through them and picking out interesting facts and stories more than ever. This is how I learned of Medieval bestiaries. Traditionally sources of both information and moral lessons, bestiaries used allegory as a core part of their makeup and some of the myths we take for granted today came from the stories found in them.

I was homeschooled in a Christian community, and I saw a lot of conservative Christian curriculum that put the authority of the bible over anything else and prioritized religious indoctrination over education. One of the most egregious examples was science as it was so heavily politicized; everything that was taught centered around the biblical idea of human stewardship and dominion, rather than interdependent coexistence. This can lead to a superiority complex that is used to justify abuse of the environment in the name of human advancement for the glory of God.



Illustration from the first semester for The MultiCat. medium: Colored Pencil and photoshop.

This twisted version of stewardship as ownership is also present in the allegories of bestiaries, and for my project I would like to reframe this format to promote a mindset that acknowledges and celebrates our connection to nature and each other and emphasizes that nature is inherently valuable. I want this project to encourage children rather than scare or shame them.

In the development of this project, I have drawn both conceptual and aesthetic inspiration from Gravity Falls, Professor Wormbog in Search of the Zipperump-a-zoo, and Hilda. These projects are particularly charming examples of low fantasy stories with cartoony styles and visually compelling worlds. While aimed toward a younger audience, they do not oversimplify their narratives or dumb-down the content. When designing the creatures and the world they live in, I will pull from my personal experiences in Portland and the Oregon flora, fauna, and aesthetics to inform the visuals. The creatures will be inspired heavily by existing creatures and often will take characteristics from several different species to create a compelling creature design.



A Scarlet Zipp, concept work from semester 1.



In developing the style, I hope to relate to a wide audience by exploring expressive stylization and appealing to the base emotions we all feel but don't always have a way of communicating. The journal format is intended to bring these ideas to the surface without explicitly stating them—so that readers can still engage with it and enjoy the world and creatures without it needing a grander meaning. I have expressed my thoughts and feelings through creativity for years and it has always been helpful as an outlet for negative or complex emotions. I would hope that kids and teens alike would read this book and be inspired to draw or create when they need to vent their own emotions.

This project will take form as an 8.5"x11" 32-page illustrated guide book with full bleed illustrations beside informative journal pages. I will use traditional media such as colored pencil, watercolor, and ink to set a mystical but fun tone with bright colors, fluid lines, and ethereal backgrounds. I will be using a few different weathered paper templates for the journal pages, and will create my own font using a generator to make the text look hand-written. The book will be made available online through gumroad or a similar site and have a limited amount of hard cover printed books made through a custom printing company. For thesis proposals and defense, I will be presenting a digital video presentation with slides and an optional pdf for viewing online.

Art has played many roles in my life, as a healing tool, an outlet, and as a hiding place. It has helped me through a lot of dark times, and allowed me to expand on ideas that were difficult to process otherwise. Growing up I loved Dr. Seuss books, whose fun rhymes and fantastical creatures and landscapes were inspiring to me because of the unique sense of place and inner universe they created. He took everyday objects and animals and turned them into fantastical extraordinary creatures and characters that made his books into portals to another world. Books like these later informed my enthusiasm for drawing small silly creatures and finding the fantastical in the mundane.



A frame from Gravity Falls.

When I was eleven years old my parents packed my family up and moved to Honduras for mission work. It was a beautiful experience in some ways—I spent many days in the welcoming branches of an orange or tamarind tree reading books and eating unripe fruit that hung in the canopy around me. The brightly painted buildings fostered a love for bright colors in me, and the lush fog forest that held seemingly infinite numbers of new birds, bugs, and plants continues to be an inspiration to me. These memories have served as anchors for me as I continue to collect new influences such as Sara Hagale, Celia Lowenthal, and especially, my fellow classmates at PNCA that have had a strong impact on how I make and helped me reconnect to the reason I love creating by encouraging me to pursue things that bring me joy.



Standing by a waterfall in Parque Ecologico PANACAM, Honduras, circa 2010.

My work focuses on creating things that encourage laughter and a lighthearted, kind outlook on the world. I have focused a lot of time on understanding what makes me want to be creative, and I have come to know with practice that it is making things that are emotionally significant to me—whether that is positive or negative. Some work that has embodied this understanding was *Where is Your Love?* (2019, ink and digital), a project in which I reached out to the LGBTQIA+ community and asked them to share their experiences, which I then illustrated in a series of vignettes. *Ms. Frog's Day Out* (2020, digital and traditional media) was a series I felt I expressed what I would like to show as an artist to the public: a soft and safe aesthetic with narrative undertones. *Swint and Snuff's Creature Compendium* pulls together my vision for my style and the type of content I want to create as an artist in the future—a fun aesthetic with subtle stories and whimsy characters.

Storybooks, guidebooks, and encyclopedias have been an integral part of my creative development. I loved learning snippets of information about things in the world and would look at the pictures with a silent awe, soaking in each detail, both narrative and visual. I hope to create a book that will provide that same experience for kids and nurture their creative curiosity. It is important now more than ever to promote curiosity and compassion for the natural world, and *Swint and Snuff's Creature Compendium* will offer a celebration of exactly that.



A Petal Nil. Early concept work from semester 1.



ABSTRACT

Swint and Snuff's Creature Compendium is a 40 page illustrated picture book for ages 9-12. The reader is invited to explore the world through a guidebook format written by the two mysterious authors, Lily Swint and Theodora Snuff-- two victorian era naturalists with a penchant for adventure and discovery. Some of the creatures they detail include the Silver Snitch, a rascally little creature that steals and polishes silverware, a Petal Nil, a small petal loving rodent that hides among flowers and leaves, and the deeply mysterious entity, the MultiCat--whose origin and species no one clearly knows.

The creatures draw from my experiences in the pacific northwest woods and Portland, and appeal to themes of nostalgia, magic, and whimsy. I have always taken interest in the small details of life in nature especially, and I strongly believe that seeing things as they really exist without judgement, whether or not they benefit humanity, is the first step to respecting them and protecting them. I hoped to express this ideology by asking the readers to take a look into the details of the lives of the creatures in this book, and to consider how they might intersect with our own lives.

The nonlinear narrative grew from a very small project to something broader than I had ever imagined it being-- It has gone from being a short-term idea into a starting point for a longer, several-book series that I hope to continue after graduation and create a series of book dummies to submit to publishers later. The ideal situation would be to submit this first dummy, and have it be picked up by a publisher to be continued in the series.



Early concept for the Child of the MultiCat. Made originally as a personal piece, and the concept grew into a central part of my book's story.

ORAL

Swint and Snuff's Creature Compendium is a 40 page illustrated picture book for ages 9-12. The reader is cordially invited to explore the world through a guide-book format written by the two mysterious authors, Lily Swint and Theodora Snuff--two victorian era naturalists with a penchant for adventure and discovery. This story grew from a very small project to something broader than I had ever imagined it being-- It has gone from being a short-term idea into a starting point for a longer, several-book series that I hope to continue after graduation.

Now, I will read some excerpts from the book. I have picked 5 creatures, starting with the hearth smoulder, moving on to the Silver Snitch, the Petal Nil, Nestling noll, and finally, we will end with the MultiCat.

[READ EXCERPTS FROM SWINT AND SNUFF'S CREATURE COMPENDIUM]

I hope you enjoyed that little excerpt. now let's talk about why I made this book.

I have always been fascinated by fantasy guidebooks, bestiaries, and the world building they are capable of achieving through exploring the details of an existing universe. I wanted to explore how this function could be a vessel for a secondary narrative threaded through a book. I have always taken interest in the small details of life in nature especially, and I strongly believe that seeing things as they really exist without judgement, whether or not they benefit humanity, is the first step to respecting them and protecting them. For example, a fox brings no benefit to a human when living in the wild—they might at times even cause us inconvenience, whether that is by disrupting a hen coop or digging burrows in our back yards. But they still deserve to be protected and given space to live as they exist; they are inherently valuable simply because they are alive.

I hoped to express this ideology by asking the readers to take a look into the details of the lives of the creatures in this book, and to consider how they intersect with our own lives. Beyond admiring the natural world, I really just enjoy character creation. I put a little part of my childhood into each one of these creatures, combined with the new inspirations of living in Portland for the first time when I was 21.



A fox, in my simpler sillier style emerging amidst the pandemic in 2020.

I grew up for the most part, around forests and green spaces, so many of the creatures exist in familiar places in my mind-- old logging roads, fields of wildflowers, or the seemingly endless high reaching cathedrals of old-growth forests. The MultiCat in particular draws from my experiences in the streets of Portland, and the various neighborhood cats I used to run into late at night on the street corner or behind the bars of an ominous castle-like mansion.



Photos from over the years of my own encounters with small creatures.



The original instagram post by Paula Marilo that inspired me to draw these characters and begin my book.

This project went through a broad series of changes over the course of its execution. It began as a 31 day challenge in October of 2019 as a part of #MariloInktober, which was an alternative prompt list to inktober that centered the challenge around creature design. It was started by illustrator Paula Marilo, whose colorful dragons and creatures inspired me throughout the process. I created close to 30 creature illustrations and descriptions

during that time. From there I decided to create a zine for my Visual Techniques class with Josh Flint featuring 5 of the creatures from the original series, highlighting their environment and expanding on their habits and appearances by framing them in the context of a modern bestiary. I used pencil sketches combined with watercolor textures to illustrate the creatures, but at the time had no idea how to lay out a book. The deadline for the first assignment was too short to complete what I wanted to make, so I ended up tabling the idea for another semester. This project was realized a semester later in my Cultural Marketplace class with Ryan Bubnis in the form of a 16 page zine with the preexisting illustrations, with each creature taking up a full spread each. I had a very positive reception for this project--and one of the defining moments was at a first Thursday event where a young family came to my table and read the book aloud.

Shortly after, Covid hit. I found myself drawing silly, escapist drawings more than ever, and developed a very light-hearted, silly style that focused almost entirely on nature and animals, as they were comforting and allowed me to escape from the stress a little and draw in a less controlled way. I filled sketchbooks full of silly animal sketches, trying to capture the vibe. When it was time to choose a project for my thesis, I was already biased toward pursuing this idea. However, in an attempt to make it more interesting, or more difficult (I will never know which one), I chose to reformat and imagine the concept as a 32 page children's book, with a linear narrative and two human characters as the focus of the story. I had hoped to market the story to a broader audience by neatly categorizing

it into the genre of children's books, and adding interest and a relatable touch point by adding child characters. I pushed at it, attempting to write an entire new manuscript, and investing in new characters, but it just was not coming along. I felt uninspired, tired, and was feeling like thesis was a drudgery. To my dismay, this was the point at which I decided I needed to restart my project at week 10. Regardless of the distress it caused me to change gears so last minute, it had to be done. I changed it back to the original purpose of the project: to be a worldbuilding illustrated guidebook that put the spotlight on the creatures—and finally, felt like I was back on the right track. However, I had also chosen a medium that was highly unsustainable for my wrists and shoulders: Colored pencil. After creating almost a dozen illustrations in this style, I realized there was no way I could keep it up for the entire project, and switched to a less intensive style using colored pencil and watercolor. With this as my proposed goal, I began the next semester with fresh motivation. However, as the project progressed, it became clearer and clearer that I needed more than just the concept of the creatures for this project to be enticing and interesting to my audience, and myself. Again, at about the 8 week point after an enlightening mid-term review with Faith Pray and Margeaux Meganck I decided to shift the project to include a deeper narrative. My panelists suggested putting the story in context, and giving specifics to hook the reader in. This was what I had been trying to find this whole time.



All 31 #MariloInktober pieces from 2019 in one image.

In tandem with this realization, I had started developing an interest in a different style of illustration involving ink and darker themes--specifically revolving around the MultiCat. Pulling from a story I have been developing for quite a while around the MultiCat aesthetic, I wrote the overarching plot for a series of following books, reframing this as the first installment of a series. The story, that leans into the perspective of the authors, Lily Swint and Theodora Snuff, allows the reader to get to know each author by their notes in the margins of the pages, and introduces them in the start of the book. While it is not yet explicitly stated in the first book of the series, Theodora and Lily are lovers. I included this as I am queer, and there is always need for more positive representation of queer relationships-- the history of lesbians in the Victorian era and beyond also fascinates me as it offers a window into the experiences of the LGBTQ community in the past, informing our experiences today. The resilience and courage it took to live as yourself in an era when that could mean social ostracization or death was something that inspired me to be more

open in the present, where strides have been made for LGBTQ rights, but the fight still continues. I think visibility is really important, especially in children's media and entertainment, as it allows kids to interact with different perspectives and explore their own identities in a safe environment. Publishers like HarperCollins, Levine Querido and others are seeking out more diverse voices in the publishing industry.

Lily and Theodora are based on several different women from the early and late Victorian period, as well as some later figures like Gladys Bentley. I started exploring their characters as just placeholder authors, but once I began sketching them, gathering reference, and writing about them, I fell in love with their dynamic and personalities. While their characters are somewhat behind the scenes in this book, they later take center stage in the story, so I wanted to explore their characters in depth for that purpose.




Concept from my first semester slide deck.



Lily Swint

Lily Swint hails from an affluent family of important standing, but chose to leave a life of luxury in favor of pursuing her interest in naturalism. She met Theodora whilst on a walk through a deserted part of town and was intrigued by her high spirits and enthusiasm for adventure.



Theodora Snuff

Theodora Snuff left her life in a lower class newspaper to pursue adventure and the thrill of field naturalism and discovery and help her lower class family. She met Lily whilst searching for an elusive creature on the outskirts of town, and was enthralled by her charm and knowledge.

The authors of the compendium, Lily and Theodora, who are lovers.

Lily Snuff is primarily based on Maude Adams, a lesbian actress active from 1880-1918 with a look of sass and elegance. She was also inspired by Viola Allen, another actress popular in a similar time frame with a tall aloof look to her. As Lily is from an upper-class family, she is typically shown in more expensive, gender-normative clothing that denotes her status and position as a lady of high class. She typically dresses more feminine and prefers less flashy clothing when out on adventures to avoid unwanted attention.



Maude Adams, active 1880-1918.



A very expensive Worth dress from around 1880-90.



Viola Allen, actress active in 1890s



A Victorian dress from around 1890-93



A very expensive Worth dress from around 1880-90.



Sleeve fashions through the 1890s pulled from various historical fashion archives.

As Lily keeps with the fashions of the era, the rapid change in sleeve size serves as a chronological guide as the series progresses through the 1890's. Contrary to Theodora's family situation, Lily is still active in her parent's circle, however, upon meeting Theodora they make plans to live together as soon as possible. She is very calculating and suave, and though she may not seem it, highly capable of defending herself and Theodora.

I drew inspiration for Theodora Snuff from several male impersonators and performers from the late 19th and early 20th century, including lesbian male impersonator, Ella Wesner who married a woman, iconic lesbian performer Gladys Bentley who made the ladies in the audience swoon, and actress Lily Elsie, whose picture with Adrienne Aguarde is widely misconstrued as a couple portrait despite neither woman being openly lesbian in their lifetimes. Theodora thinks she is tough, and able to take care of herself, but often gets herself in situations where she is in over her head, and Lily has to intervene. I wanted to show this innocent toughness in her character, and interestingly enough was drawn to Maude Adams again, whom I had used as a reference for Lily, this

time shown in menswear. I spent a considerable time looking through references, and only after I had put the photos side by side, did I realize I had been looking at the same person. Theodora, much to her family's discomfort, refuses to adhere to the social expectations of the time and chooses to wear men's clothing as she feels they are more practical and suited to her identity and profession. As she grew up in a lower working class family, she left at a young age to pursue a career in adventuring and discovery to help her family. Never understanding the appeal of men, she did everything in her power to avoid marriage, despite her mother's constant urge for her to do so. She sometimes goes by Teddy by her closest friends.



Maude Adams



Lily Elsie and Adrienne Aguarde



Gladys Bentley



Ella Wesner



Sarah Orne Jewett and Annie Adams Fields.

Shall I ever tire of your kisses?
I asked myself today:
When your arms had been around me
And you had gone away

Will the pine-tree tire of the wind that blows
Through its branches from the sea
And stirs within it its bravest life
As you do mine in me?

Will the flower that the storm has beaten
Be tired of the summer sun
That shines out clear and bright and warm
After the rain is done?

Oh, no, my love, my darling
You always grow more dear
Our hearts are one heart always now
And I need never fear

Because I am your lover
I kissed you lovingly. --

And no one knew I kissed you
But the white gulls and the sea.

Oh come again my true love
Nor wander far from me
I never loved another girl
As I do love thee

-Poems from Sarah Orne Jewett to Annie Fields and Kate Birckhead.

Lily and Theodora's relationship is based on several female relationships in the early to late Victorian period, sometimes categorized as "Boston marriages" and regarded socially as platonic unions, for financial or social reasons between two women. Many Boston marriages were romantic friendships, and some were lesbian relationships. Lesbianism in the Victorian era was not readily accepted but intense emotional and romantic feelings and expression was not uncommon in female relationships, especially in girl's schools like Smith's College. Some couples of the era and preceding times were the Ladies of Llangollen a one Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby who lived together as one

of the earliest Boston marriages in the early Victorian period, actress Charlotte Cushman and Matilda Hays, who lived together for ten years and were known publicly in Europe as a lesbian couple, Mary Rozet Smith and Jane Addams, suffragists and activists, and Sarah Orne Jewett and Annie Adams Fields, who wrote beautiful letters to each other detailing their love. Many other women in theater and other professions were in intense 'romantic friendships', and others were open about their love and attraction to women. For Theodora and Lily, their relationship is somewhat complicated by way of Lily's family and class as it draws the public eye, but they nonetheless eventually live together under the pretense of furthering their careers.

Now for the creatures.

Hearth Smoulder

This was a creature inspired by my family's wood fire stove that we use to heat our house, and several cabins we stayed at in Colorado that required that you tended to them carefully so as to stay warm. They are a very familiar aspect of a home for me, and I wanted to create a magical creature that embodied the warmth of a wood stove.

Wool Worms

Largely inspired by the prompt 'wool', these critters were also inspired by clothing moths in concept. They were also influenced by that feeling of your clothing slowly getting smaller or bigger, and reference the intricate embroidery of Victorian era dresses and clothing.

Silver Snitches

Silver Snitches were inspired by two things-- an old ceramic statue I bought from a thrift store and named Spoons, and the phenomenon of silverware slowly disappearing from the silver drawers with seemingly no explanation as to where it went. They are one of my favorite characters.



Hearth Smoulder



Mosscelot (cut from final book).



Petal Nil



Spark Snuffler



Toadsteals

Glimmermice

Glimmermice were inspired by the prompt "crystal"--I had fallen in love with small bats at the time, and wanted to draw something that was cute and feisty based off of them. They are also based on the mysterious disappearance of small shiny things, and their desire for them is much like magpies or crows.

Petal Nil

Petal Nils were originally going to be flower shop critters that would curiously and mischievously gather fallen petals and sometimes fresh petals from the florists pickings. Sometime around then I was made aware of Pikas, and decided it was a good fit to base their character more closely around these small but fierce critters, and other mice and squirrel-like creatures.

Spark Snufflers

Spark Snufflers were largely inspired by the prompt 'light', but more so on the concept of those mysterious light fixtures that always seem to have a lightbulb missing, on chandeliers, sconces, and lamp-posts. They were also sparked from my love of Possums.

Nestling Nolls

Nestling Nolls were inspired heavily by the logging roads around my house. There are these abandoned nests that are always visible in the winter and spring where birds made a home during the summer, but with the cold weather the leaves camouflaging it wear away and the moss takes over, creating a little soft pocket. I suspect that birds often return to these nests year 'round as the indent stays intact, and it came into my head that they would make very cute hat for a wandering creature in need of camouflage.

Toadsteals

Toadsteals were based on my own and my sister's love for mycology. The forest pops with giant red toadstools every fall, and despite being so potent and toxic to humans, they always seem to have countless holes in them from bugs and little critters. The idea of a creature that ate solely toadstools came to mind, and from there they evolved into Toadsteals.

Scarlet Zipps

I picture Scarlet Zipps in the vast and deep corners of old growth forests, zooming around and making the trails we often mistake for deer or bunny trails. As they are so fast I pictured them being able to stay out of sight if they want to, much like cougars and other big predators in the woods surrounding my family's house. They embody, I think, a little bit as well my own desire to be able to run through the woods as quickly as a deer or mountain lion.



The MultiCat



A Glimmermouse



Silver Snitch



Scarlet Zipp

The MultiCat

The MultiCat is a project I took interest in the summer of 2020. It started as a simple colored pencil drawing and evolved into an entire story based on my experience with a cat in Portland named Oliver who passed away shortly after I met him. I found the concept very intriguing, and found myself drawing concept art and even full illustrations based on it in my personal time outside of classes and working it into many assignments. While working on my thesis, I would find I wanted to focus in on the concept of it for the overarching plot, and it drew me toward a darker, eerier art style that I was then drawn to for later portions of the story in the series. As you can see, it was a struggle for me to not let this concept completely overwhelm my thesis project.



Book map from the beginning of the second semester.

My broader inspirations for this project were heavily influenced by Alex Hirsche's Gravity Falls Journals, Holly Black's Spiderwick guidebooks, dragonology, and Luke Pearson's Hilda, and Studio Ghibli's background art, particularly from Arrietty. Other inspirations that appeared later and fueled the style shift were old silvertone photographs, old cemetery statues, music by The Oh Hello's and Lord Huron, as well as shows like Over the Garden Wall. When I originally proposed this project, I wanted to make a physical, leather bound book. Printing and scanning limitations due to Covid prevented this from being a realistic goal, but I am still hopeful that I will be able to print it in the future. Given that my core purpose to this project changed midway through each semester, my goals have shifted for the purpose of this project as well. I hope to continue this project and create a series of book dummies to submit to publishers later.

The ideal situation would be to submit this first dummy, and have it be picked up by a publisher to be continued in the series. For now, I am incredibly excited that the majority of my idea and concept is a reality, and pursuing the rest of it does not seem like a herculean challenge anymore.

I am so immensely grateful for the support from my family in this endeavor, and my loving partner's encouragement and kindness through this whole process, my mentor's enthusiastic support and edifying critique, my mentor's enthusiastic support and edifying critique, and all those who inspired me and built me up at my time here at PNCA and in the broader art community.

With all that I am, Thank you.
I will be taking pictures now.

CREATIVE BRIEF

Project Vision

Inspired by the quirky and mystical streets of Portland, Oregon, Swint and Snuff's Creature Compendium is a whimsical take on the medieval Bestiary that explores magic and mystery in a modern suburban context. For ages 9-12, approximately 3,180 words, 40 pages, self-ended.

Audience

This project is geared toward middle schoolers but with the hope of appealing to an older audience as well with story elements and some light academic language. I hope to pique my audience's creative curiosity and give them a conduit to imagine magic in every life while still keeping it a little silly.

Methods & Materials

I work traditionally with some digital elements brought in if necessary, as well as formatting and texturing. Watercolor and colored pencil are the materials I chose for this project as they are quick and accessible, while also being two of my favorite mediums.



A Petal Nil in one of the five finished illustrations for the final book.



A promo piece featuring the MultiCat for this project, to be sent out as a postcard.

Comparative Media

This project was inspired heavily by Arthur Spiderwick's guide to the fantastical world around you and the Gravity Falls Journal 3, two exceptional examples of what I would call domestic fantasy, in which the reader is invited to imagine the creatures in that world in their own home and lives. Swint and Snuff's Creature Compendium draws on similar themes of creative and imaginative invitation and low fantasy, but draws specifically on the aesthetics of my own personal experience living in Portland. In my research for this process, I also pulled a lot of inspiration from ancient bestiaries and fantasy creature guidebooks like Dragonology and DnD guide books.

The allegorical element of bestiaries fascinated me and in October of 2019, I set was inspired by an prompt list by Paula Marilo called "Beastober" to make illustrations of creatures based on real animals that had a narrative caption for each creature. Shortly after, I decided to expand on that project and make a zine called "Swint and Snuff's Modern Guide to Magical Creatures". I attempted the zine in two separate assignments, but it proved to be too big a project to be satisfactorily finished with a 3-4 week deadline. When first putting together my thesis, I had originally planned to make this a narrative children's book with two children as the main characters. I worked on it for 10 weeks and felt very uninspired the whole way, so I switched the project back to a narrative guidebook, shifting the focus from the children onto the creatures. This felt more natural and I was able to start working again.

Marketplace Application

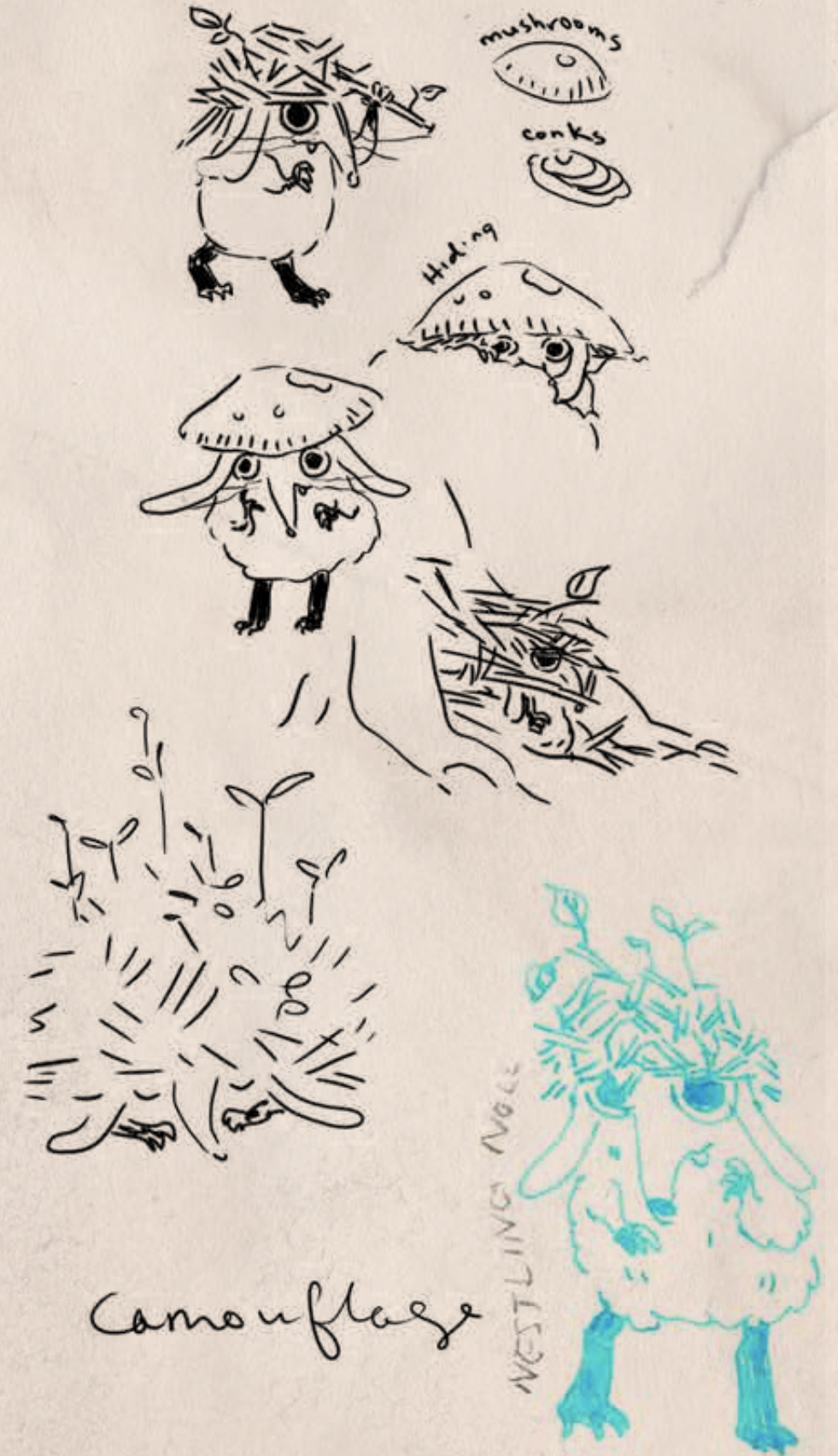
My hopes with this project are to continue to refine it post-graduation into a completed book that I can then publish, whether that is through a publishing company or self published. As it stands currently, it is a solid portfolio piece and could easily be sent to publishers for review. I have had inklings of a desire to rebrand the idea to something targeted toward an older audience; but anything like that would have to be after I graduate, when I can focus entirely on this project. Some publishers I have been considering for publication are Flying Eye Books (cautious of their history), HarperCollins, and of course, Random House.

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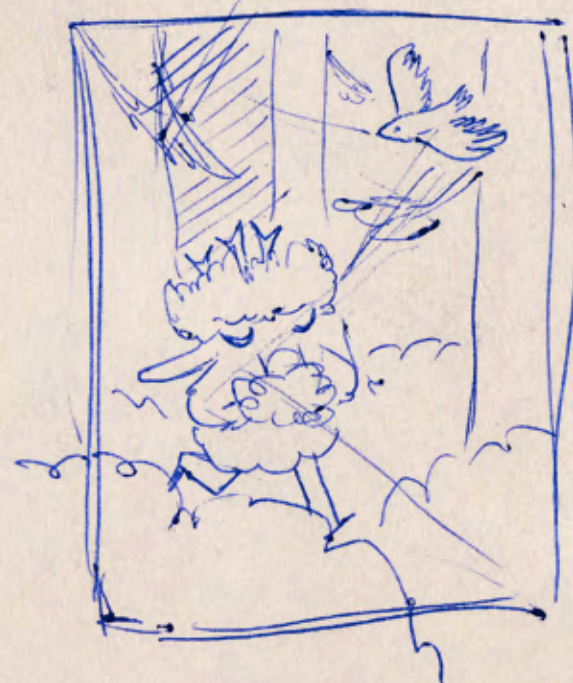
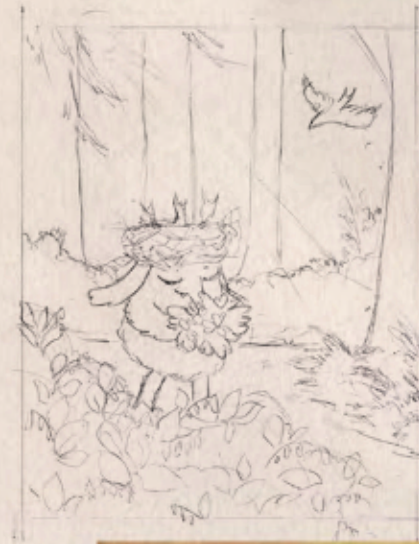
1. Mayer, Mercer. 1976. Professor Wormbog in search for the zipperump-a-zoo. New York: Golden Press.
Relevant to my creative development as a child and later as an illustrator. Mercer Mayer's creative world building and character design have informed this project heavily.
2. Hirsche, Alex, and Jimenez, Sean. Gravity Falls, directed by Alex Hirsche, (2012; Disney Channel), animated tv series.
Addresses low fantasy mythology building and informed my interest in creating a journal. Alex Hirsche's sense of humor and Sean Jimenez's cartoon style were big inspirations for this project.
3. "Hilda". Silvergate Media. 7 January 2017. Retrieved October 5, 2020.
Hilda informed this project ideologically and creatively. Subtle storytelling that very delicately navigates the genre of low fantasy, particularly in an urban setting.
4. "What Does Christianity Teach about the Environment? - Environment - GCSE Religious Studies Revision - BBC Bitesize," oAD. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zr3c7ty/revision/3>.
The doctrine I was taught as a child summarized into simpler terms. Denotes in particular that these beliefs are not inherently harmful to the environment.
5. "Urban Legend." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, November 21, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_legend.
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6. Werner, Carl. Evolution: the Grand Experiment. Green Forest, Arizona: New Leaf Pub. Group in conjunction with Audio Visual Consultants Inc., 2007.
A book I have personal experience with as a Christian homeschooler. A prime example of Christian Science curriculum that subtly promotes indoctrination over education and elevates humans over nature in value.
7. Schingler, Michelle Anne. "What Is Low Fantasy? Your Guide To The Subgenre." BOOK RIOT. Riot New Media Group, November 28, 2018. <https://bookriot.com/what-is-low-fantasy/>.
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8. Nell, Richard. "What Is Low Fantasy? And Ten Examples." Richard Nell. Self Published, September 30, 2017. <http://www.richardnell.com/low-fantasy-ten-examples/>.
Exploration and understanding of the low fantasy genre for the sake of understanding my project better. Details how low fantasy differs from high fantasy.
9. Grout, James. "The Medieval Bestiary." Encyclopaedia Romana, 1997. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/britannia/anglo-saxon/flowers/bestiary.html.
A detailed article on Medieval Bestiaries and what they typically contained and some common allegories and animals contained in them.
10. "Bestiary." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, November 16, 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestiary>.
The original article in which I discovered bestiaries. Details a number of historical bestiaries and how they changed over the centuries. Explains what bestiaries were for and what they contained.
11. "Nelson's Encyclopaedia". 2020. En.Wikipedia.Org. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nelson%27s_Encyclopaedia.
Used in slide presentation. A beautifully illustrated encyclopedia.
12. Seuss, Theodor. 1971. The Lorax. New York: Random House.
A favorite book of mine as a child. Provided a second perspective on heavy handed storytelling versus subtle storytelling.
13. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Ashmole 1511: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/ebo735a3-e8ee-4104-b111-51d18a13b78b>
Digital database of the Ashmole Bestiary. Beautiful illustrations and detail provided by the Bodleian Library.

SKETCHBOOK





Concept art for the Nestling Noll, as well as a Mouse Deer, and an empty nest that inspired this creature.



Concept art for the Nestling Noll, as well as my first attempt at the final illustration. I had to scrap this one.



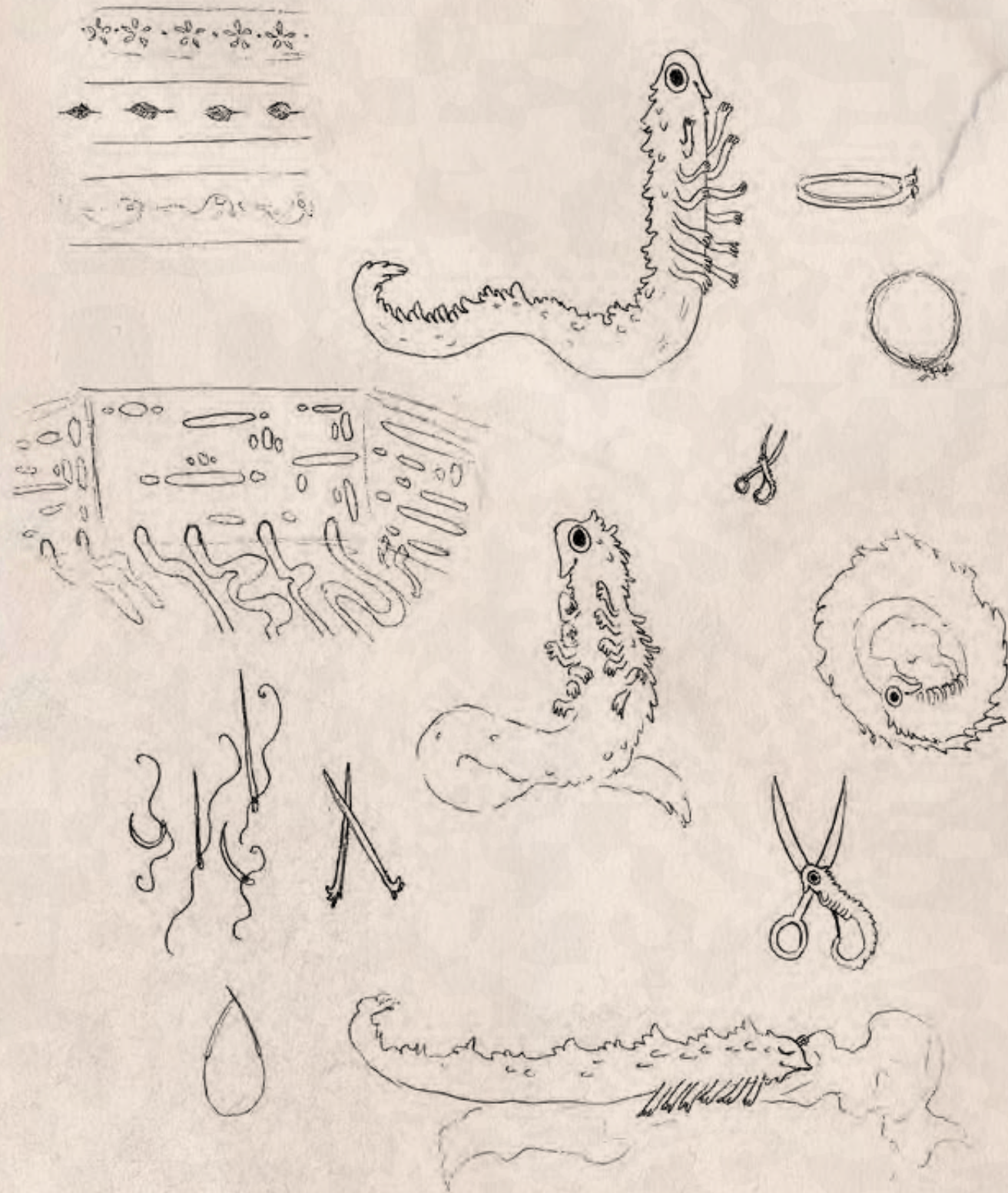
Color studies for the final piece of the Nestling Noll. This piece gave me more trouble than others, and I had to regroup before attempting it again.



Concept sketches for the Hearth Smoulder.



Concept art for Hearth Smoulders, as well as a snapshot of the very wood fire stove that inspired their warmth and playfulness at my family's house with my grandma's dog, Jake.



Concept art for Wool Worms.



Concept work for the Silver Snitch, as well as a snapshot of the ceramic statue that inspired it named Spoons.

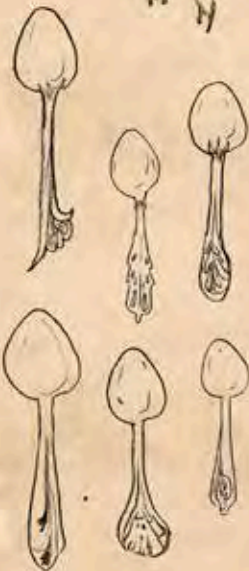


SILVER SNITCH

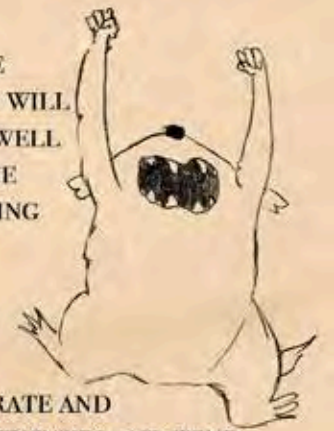


SILVER SNITCHES ARE SMALL MISCHIEVOUS CREATURES IN THE MARMOT FAMILY. SILVER SNITCHES ENJOY COLLECTING SPOONS, FORKS, AND OTHER ASSORTED SILVERWARE OVER THE COURSE OF THEIR LIVES. EACH SNITCH HAS A FAVORITE TYPE OF SILVERWARE—WHETHER IT BE SPOONS, FORKS, OR PIE SERVERS—AND SUBSEQUENTLY, A DISTINCT STYLE OF COLLECTION AND THIEVERY. THEY ARE MYSTERIOUSLY STRONG FOR THEIR SIZE AND CAN OPEN CABINET HANDLES AND HEAVY DRAWERS WITH EASE TO ACQUIRE THEIR CUTLERY OF CHOICE.

GENERALLY, SNITCHES ARE FAIRLY POLITE WHEN SELECTING SILVERWARE FOR THEIR COLLECTIONS, AND IF THE SILVER DRAWERS ARE KEPT TIDY THEY TEND TO ONLY TAKE A SMALL SAMPLE OF UTENSILS FOR THEIR COLLECTION AND POLISH THE REST IN RETURN. SOME SNITCHES TRAVEL FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE IN SEARCH OF SPECIALTY CUTLERY. FOR EXAMPLE, PIE SERVER SNITCHES AND APPLE CARVER SNITCHES ARE PARTICULARLY MOBILE DUE TO THE SCARCITY OF THE UTENSILS THEY PREFER.



SOME, HOWEVER, CHOOSE ONE HOUSE AND STAY THERE. OCCASIONALLY, SNITCHES WILL MAKE A HABIT OF REVISITING PARTICULARLY WELL KEPT SILVERWARE DRAWERS TO ADMIRE THE UTENSILS AND POLISH THEM WITHOUT REMOVING ANYTHING. ON THE OTHER HAND, SOME PARTICULARLY RAMBUNCTIOUS SNITCHES HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO ROAM FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, RAIDING DRAWERS AND



CABINETS AT AN ALARMING RATE AND LEAVING NOTHING BUT OLD TWIST TIES AND WINE CORKS. THIS BEHAVIOUR IS SOMETIMES A RESULT OF THEIR OWN NATURE, BUT MORE COMMONLY IT IS A REACTION TO HUMAN ENCROACHMENT AND DESTRUCTION OF THEIR DENS. MOST SNITCHES RESIDE IN GARAGES, ATTICS, AND IN BETWEEN THE WALLS OF HOUSES. DENS AND COLLECTIONS RANGE IN APPEARANCE FROM TARNISHED HEAPS OF METAL TO IMMACULATELY POLISHED COLLECTIONS.



THEY BEAR LIVE YOUNG AND TEACH THEM TO PROPERLY STEAL AND POLISH CUTLERY. IF YOU ARE KIND ENOUGH TO SET OUT THE OCCASIONAL SPECIAL SPOON OR FORK PICKED UP AT A THRIFT STORE FOR YOUR RESIDENT SNITCH, THEY WILL OFTEN RETURN THE FAVOR BY POLISHING THE REST OF YOUR SILVER. THIS MAY SEEM UNNECESSARY IF YOU OWN STAINLESS STEEL, BUT THEY WILL IN THIS CASE KEEP YOUR UTENSIL DRAWERS ORGANIZED AND TIDY INSTEAD.



Concept work for Silver Snitches, as well as the spread from the 2020 zine.



Concept work for Glimmermice, as well as a snapshot of the bats that inspired them-- Honduran white bats.

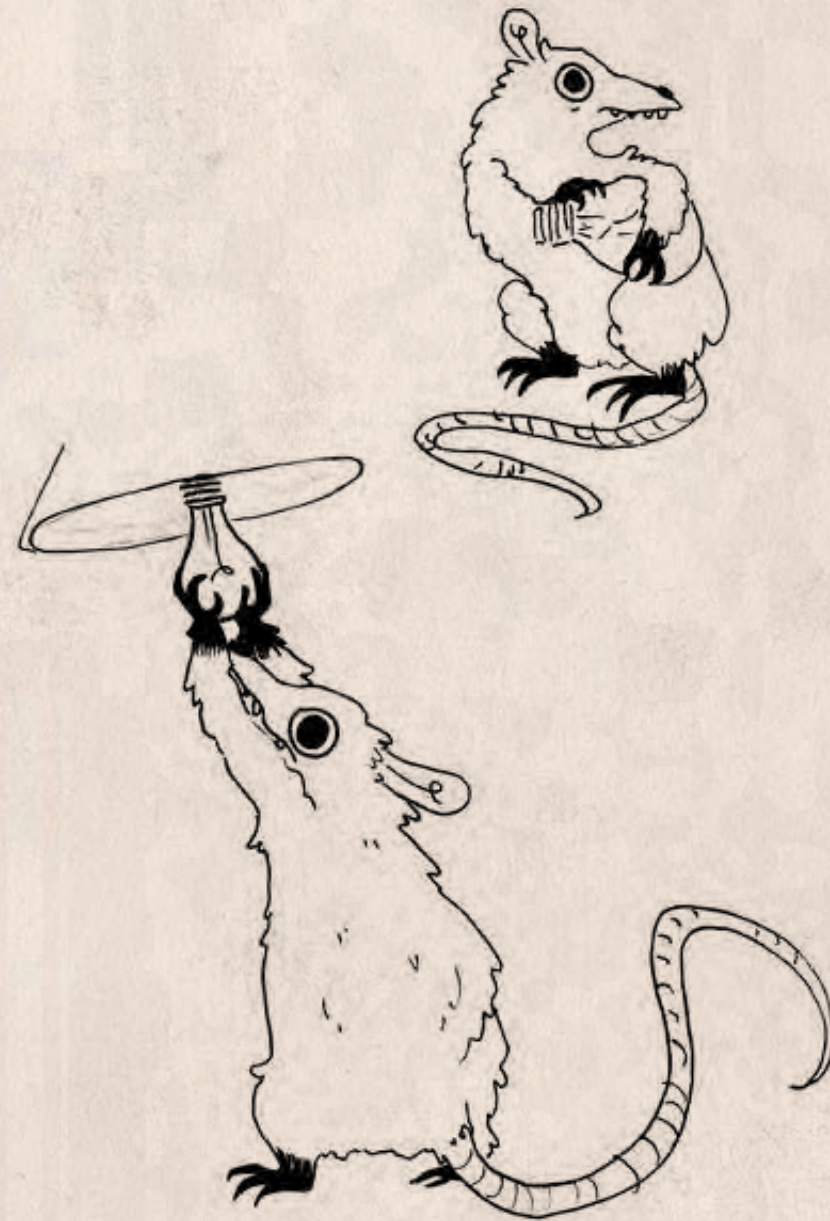
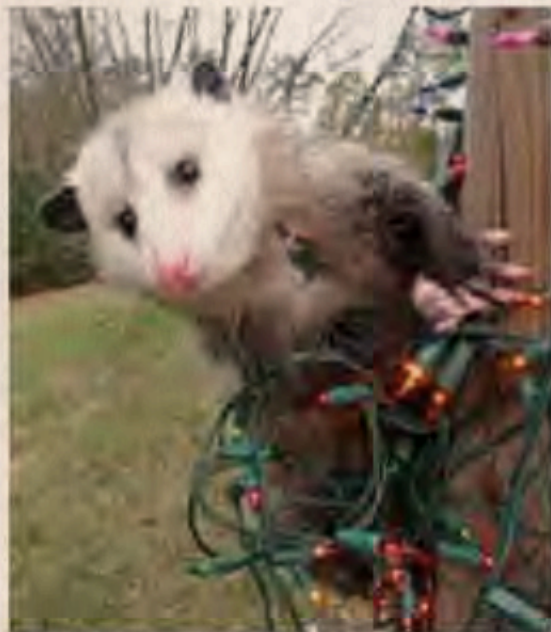


GLIMMERMICE HOARDS CAN BE ANCIENT—AND OFTEN HAVE DIFFERENT “ERAS”, THAT SERVE AS A VISUAL HISTORY AS THEY NEVER THROW ANYTHING OUT AND TEND TO START THEIR NEW HOARDS DIRECTLY NEXT TO THE PREVIOUS INHABITANT’S STASH. THEY ARE VERY PROTECTIVE OF THEIR HOARDS, AND GET QUITE AGGRESSIVE WHEN THEIR TREASURE IS UNDER THREAT OF THEFT. SOME ENJOY “SINGING” IN THEIR HOARDS TO ACTIVATE THE ACOUSTICS OF THEIR GEMS. UNFORTUNATELY, TO HUMAN EARS THE SOUND IS MORE AKIN TO SCREECHING.

SOME GLIMMERMICE ARE EXTREMELY AVERSE TO IMPOSTOR GEMS; MANY MAKE A PRACTICE OF TESTING THEIR FINDINGS BY BITING THEM. OTHER GLIMMERMICE, HOWEVER, CARE LITTLE FOR QUALITY IN THEIR TREASURE TROVES; THEY WILL CRAM ANY SHINY THINGS THEY CAN FIND INTO THEIR HOARD, INCLUDING SEQUINS, CHIP BAGS, BROKEN GLASS, AND ANYTHING ELSE THAT IS VAGUELY BRIGHT AND SHIMMERY.

THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF GLIMMERMICE THAT RESIDE IN REGIONS BASED ON THE TYPE OF GEM THEY PREFER, FOR EXAMPLE THE OBSIDIAN GLIMMERMICE HABITATES AREAS WITH VOLCANIC ACTIVITY WHERE OBSIDIAN TENDS TO ABOUND. IT IS RUMORED THAT IF YOU GIVE A GLIMMERMICE A PIECE OF JEWELRY, THEY WILL GRANT YOU A WISH.

Concept work for Glimmermice, including a page from the 2020 zine.



Concept work for the Spark Snuffler, including a shot of a possum and early sketches.

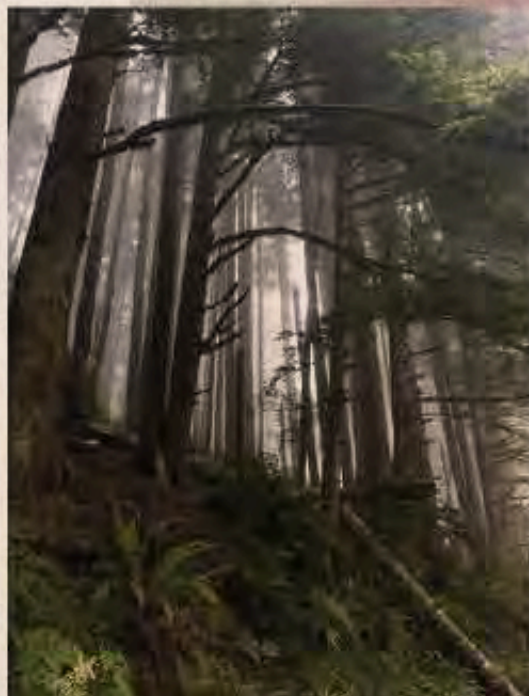


THEIR FUR IS ELECTRICALLY CHARGED, AND AS A RESULT THEY CAN LIGHT UP THEIR COLLECTIONS OF LIGHTS QUITE BRILLIANTLY UPON ENTERING THEIR DENS. AS A RESULT OF THEIR ELECTRIC FUR, SPARK SNUFFLERS HAVE FEW PREDATORS. SADLY, THEIR MAIN PREDATORS ARE HUMANS, AS SNUFFLERS ARE LARGELY REGARDED AS HOUSE PESTS. THEIR YOUNG ARE BORN IN LITTERS AND ARE CALLED SNUFFLINGS. AROUND ADOLESCENCE THEY ACHIEVE CHARGE AND ARE CALLED SPARKLINGS. MUCH LIKE OPOSSUMS, THEY SPEND A LARGE PART OF THEIR YOUTH ON THE BACK OF THEIR MOTHER. THIS IS HOW THEY ACCUMULATE THEIR CHARGE, WHICH IS PASSED DOWN FROM GENERATIONS. AS SUCH, SOME SNUFFLERS HAVE STRONGER CHARGES THAN OTHERS. THEIR DIET CONSISTS MOSTLY OF BUGS, SMALL MICE, AND PLANTS.

THEY HAVE VERY NIMBLE LITTLE HANDS WELL SUITED FOR STEALING BULBS FROM SOCKETS. THEY ARE KNOWN TO HAVE FAVORITE BULBS FROM THEIR COLLECTIONS, AND KEEP THEM IN SPECIAL SPOTS IN THEIR DENS, OFTEN CLOSEST TO WHERE THEY SLEEP.



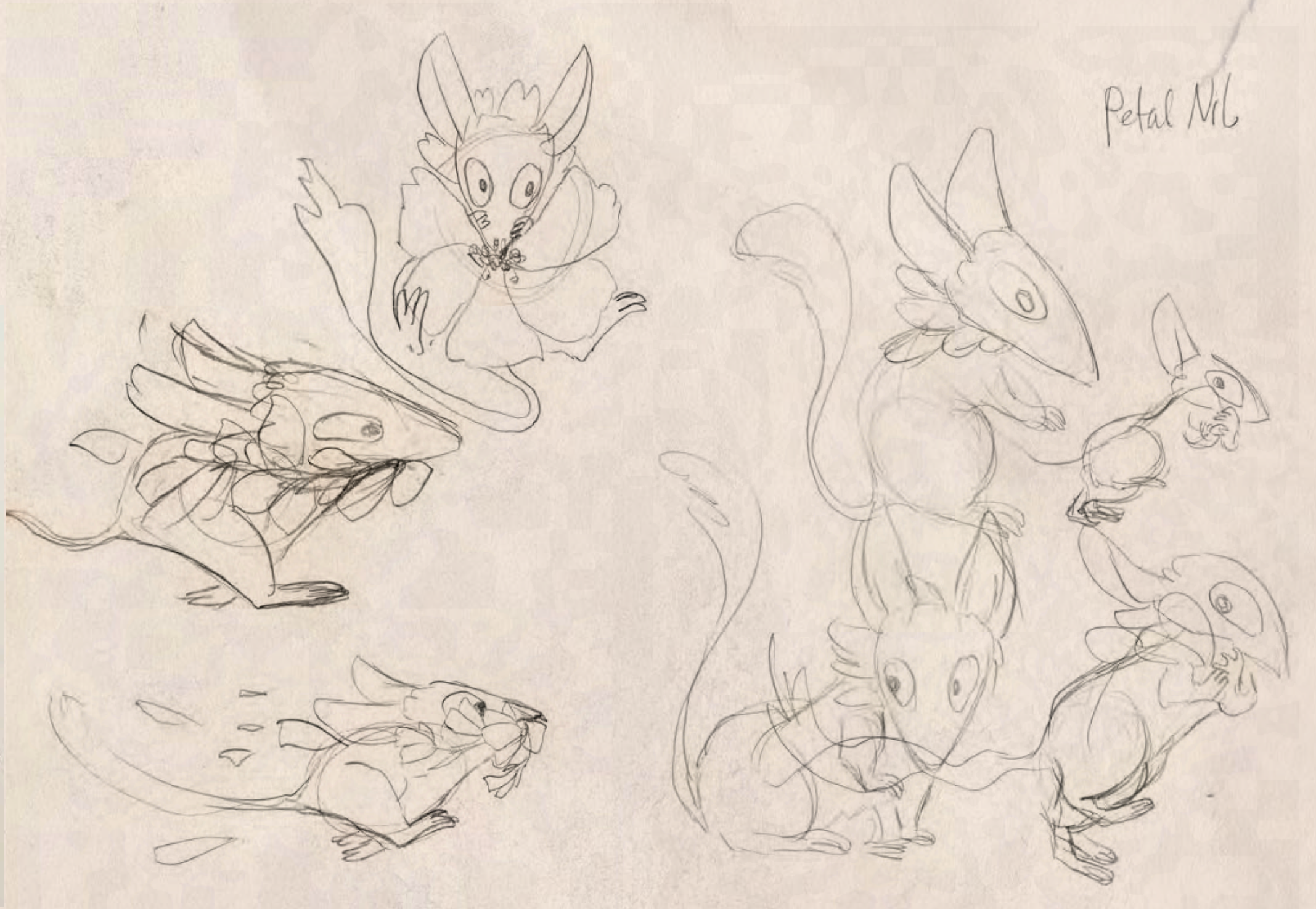
Spark Snuffler concept work including a later iteration in colored pencil, and a page from the 2020 zine.



Concept work for the Scarlet Zipp, including a screenshot of the forest in which I based its habitat.



Early sketches of the Petal Nil.



Petal Nil



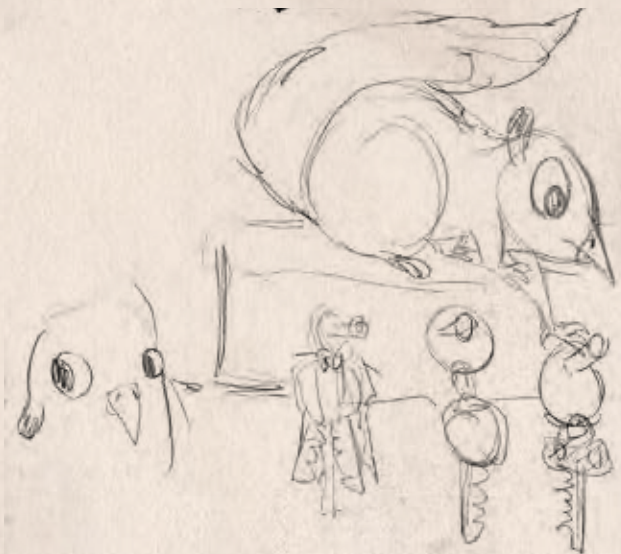
Later drawings of the Petal Nil, including two of the spots for the final book. Petal Nils may be my second favorite creature after the Silver Snitch.



This is a Mosscelot, a character that was ultimately cut from the book. I really want to explore this creature in a later chapter as I love its design and concept. Mosscelots are small herbivorous mammals that resemble felines but are actually in the lemur family. Since industrialization and the popularization of house plants, they have become a common household creature. They reside in houseplants and eat house bugs and pests, often hunting

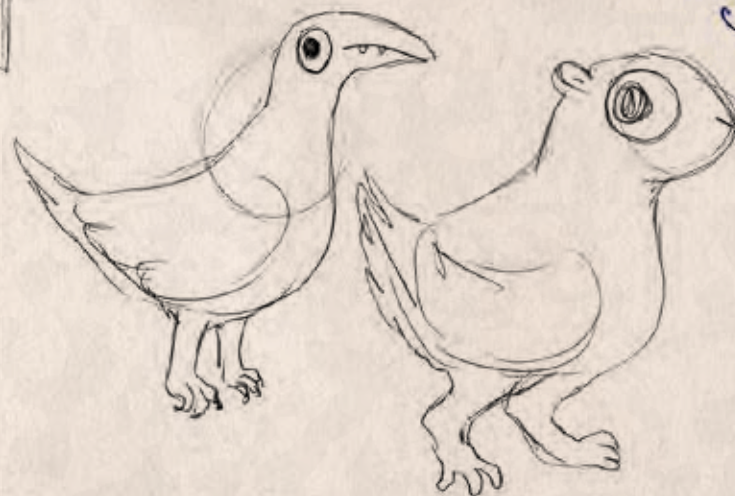
outside of the house when possible for larger bugs to eat. they are fiercely protective of their host plant, and will eat dead leaves and ailed branches and shoots. If you attempt to disturb their plant while they are in it, it can be a very unpleasant experience. However, they are generally friendly if you take good care of your houseplants, and appreciate a good repotting when appropriate.

Locke Thief



something that steals your keys

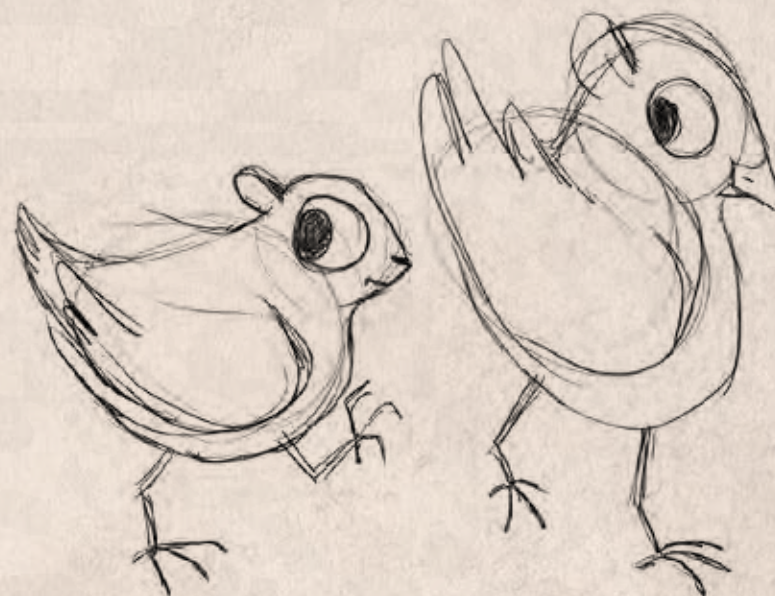
separate creature



Locke Theeph



steals keys



Sketches of an early character design that was ultimately cut from the book. Might eventually make it into a future dummy of this book, or in a later installment. Locke Theifs steal mostly old keys and keychains, but occasionally take something more valuable and tend to cause any household some inconvenience and chaos.



Sketches from my thesis journal. Messing around and having fun with creature design and silliness.



More exploratory sketches from my thesis sketchbook. Drawing animals in a quick, ball point ink style helped me loosen up my movements and trust my handiwork a little more. It also helped me let go of a little bit of perfectionism. I would start one creature and draw it completely in pen without penciling it in first. Some sketches I would set my pen down and trace the whole shape without lifting my pen.

Lily Swint

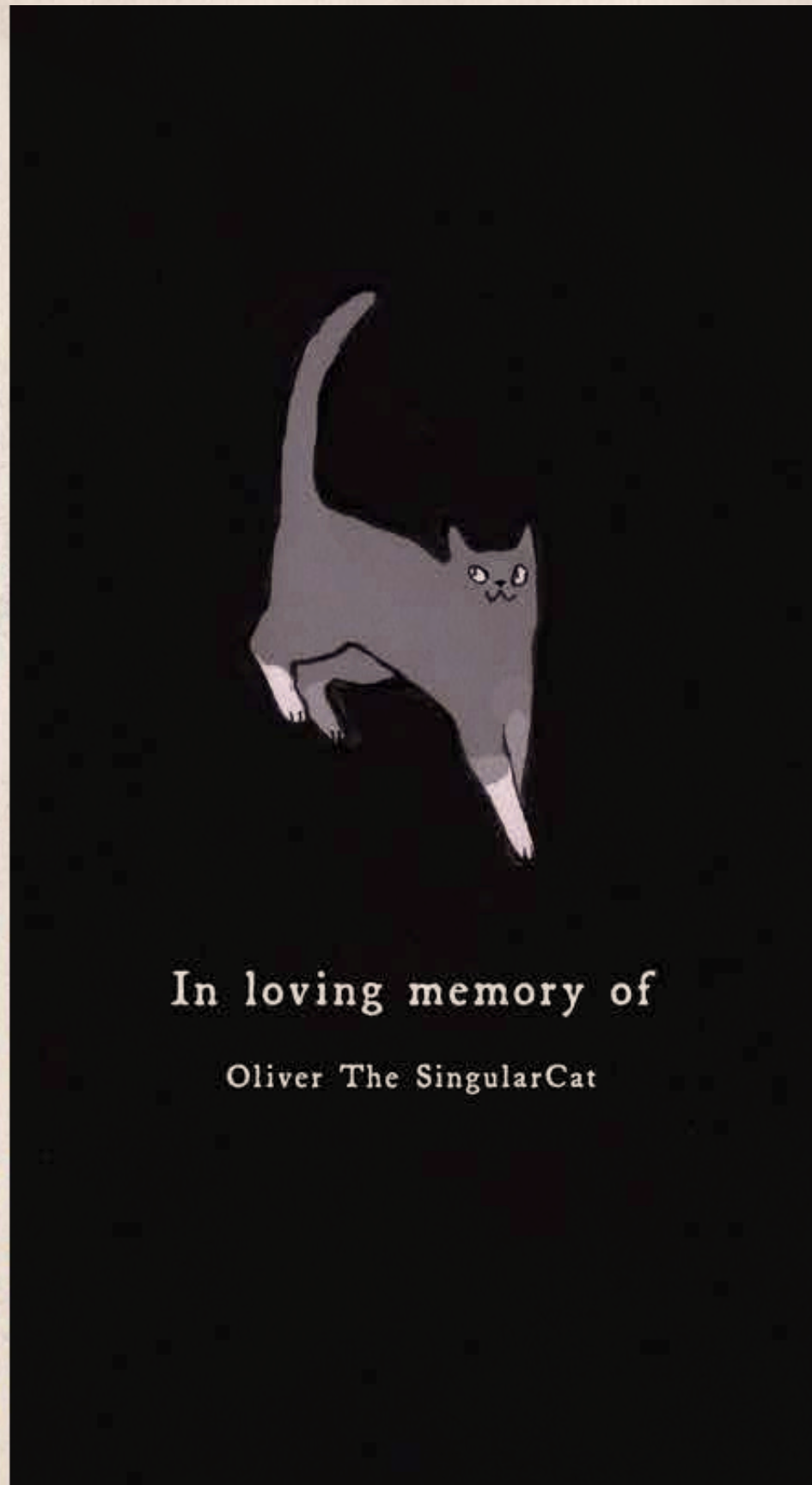
Character development sketches



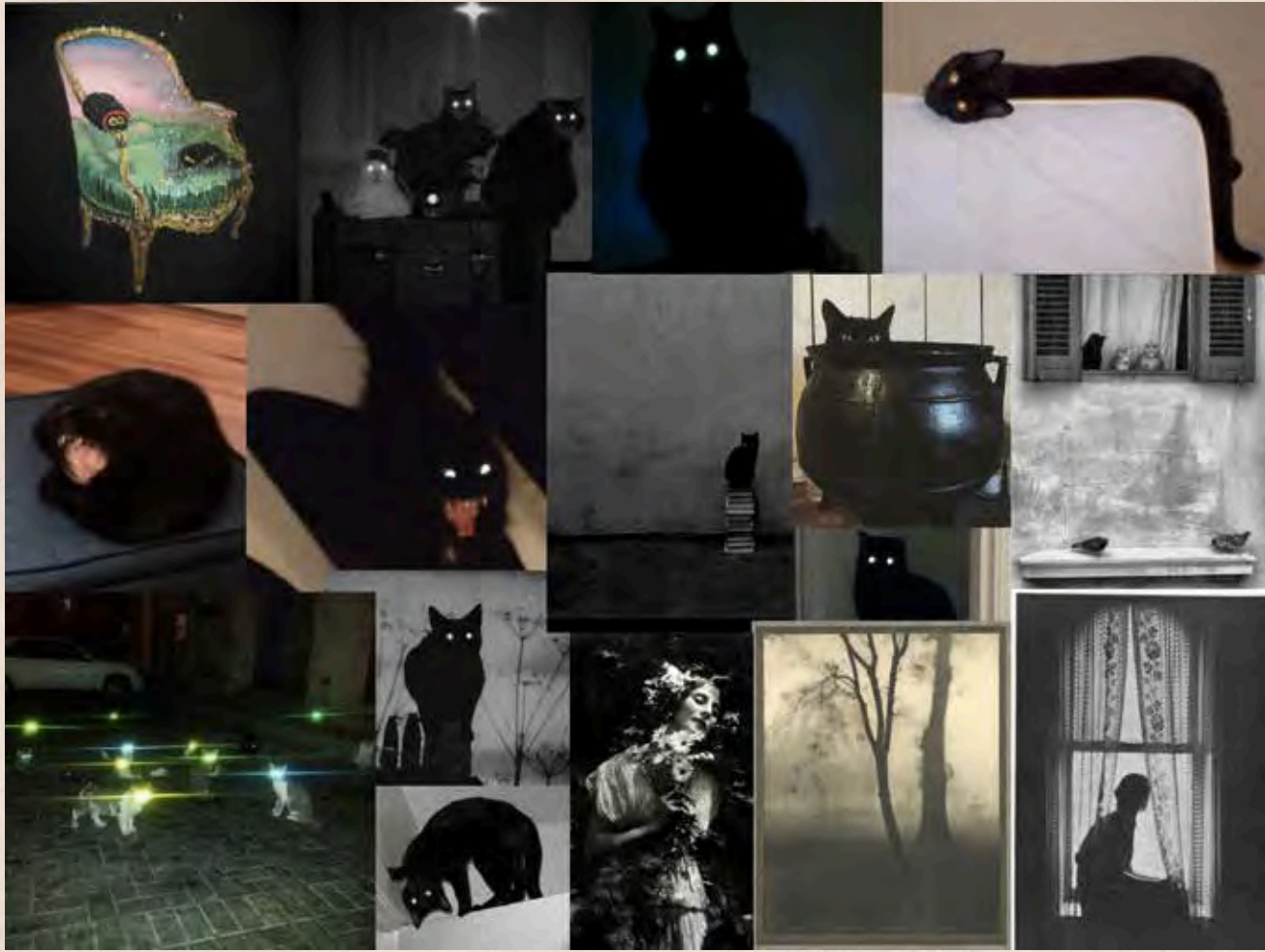
Theodora Snuff

Character development sketches





Development of the MultiCat story. Oliver the Cat, a grey tuxedo cat I met in Portland that passed away shortly after I met him.

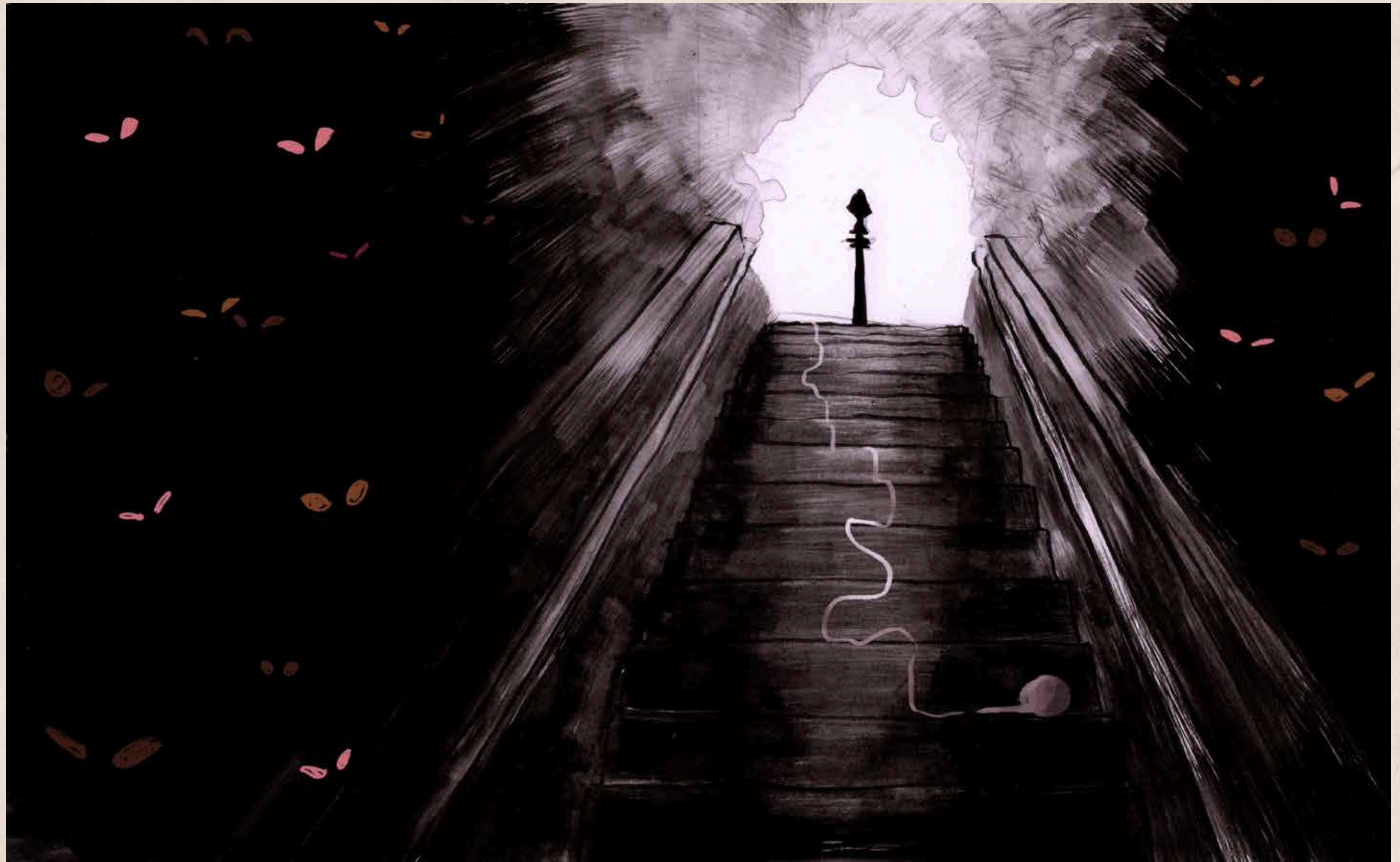


Concept work for the multicat, as well as the original moodboard that really solidified its later aesthetic.



A personal piece that explored the concept of The Child of the MultiCat. Ultimately cut from the first book as this story arc comes in later, and I have to figure out how to tell the story from there.





A spread from The Tome of the MultiCat, a 16 page zine I made Fall 2020 exploring the darker aesthetics of the MultiCat in the specifics of Portland as the setting.



Another spread from the Fall 2020 zine, based on a parkinglot next to my apartment on 19th and Irving.



A final spread from the Fall 2020 zine, this one of the William Temple house, a building I would pass by on my way to get groceries all the time in Portland, and that had a distinctly spooky aesthetic after dark. Oliver the Singular Cat lived next door.



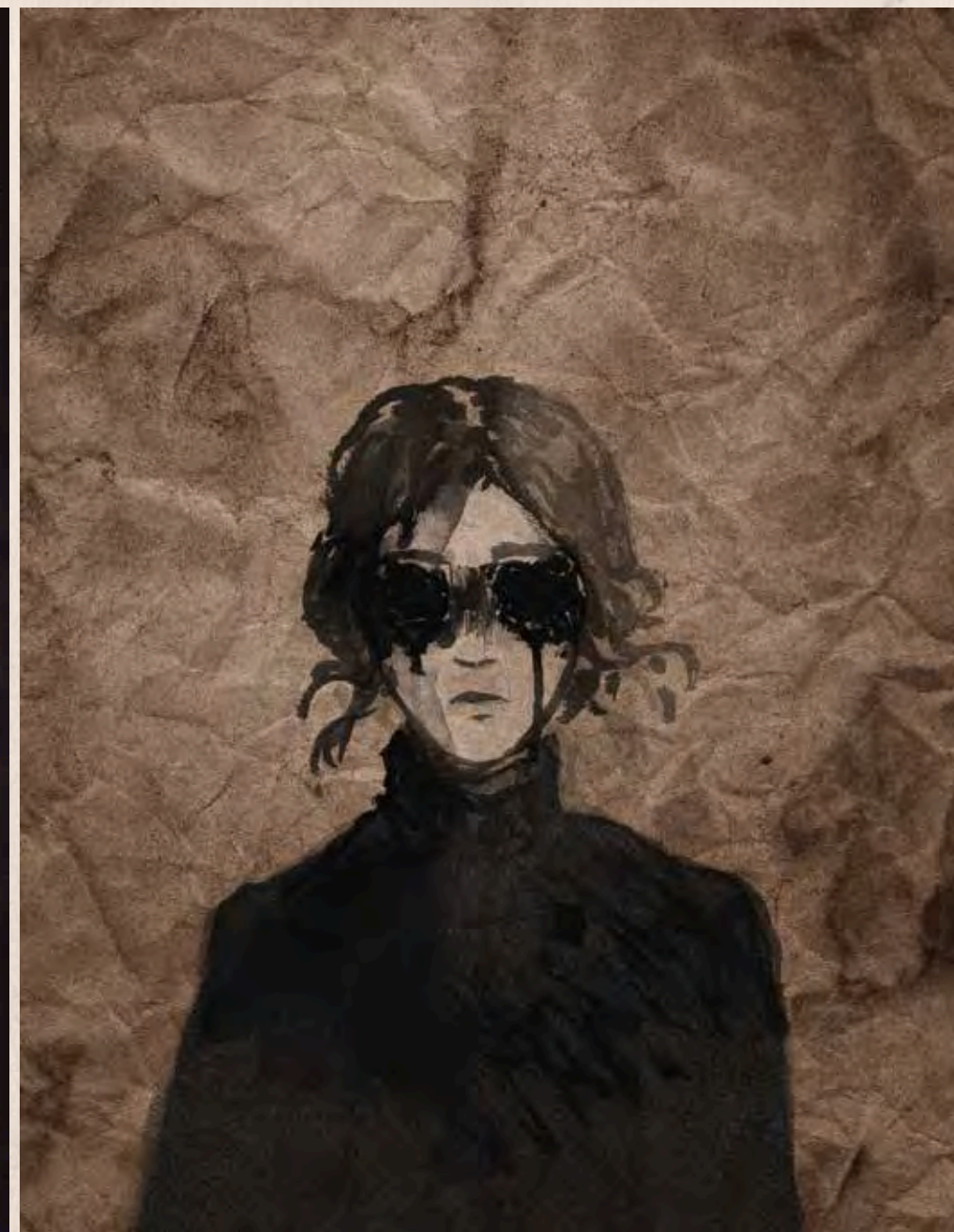
Concept work exploring a darker aesthetic with the MultiCat. It is from this concept work that the later plot of the series draws its inspiration.



Death Harkens, 2021. One of the darker pieces I've made, exploring this new aesthetic that guided the storytelling in Swint and Snuff's Creature Compendium so heavily later on.



Decay, 2021. Another exploration of ink with digital coloring, a method I enjoy exploring and has contributed heavily to the MultiCat's aesthetic.



Blindspot, 2021. Another concept piece for a later arc in the story involving Lily.



Flit of Chest, 2021. Further exploration of mediums and how they relate to movement and mood for the progression of this project.



Raven's Call, 2021. Exploring how paper textures can enhance the mood of a piece and bring in additional texture.

SILVER SNITCH

Final image



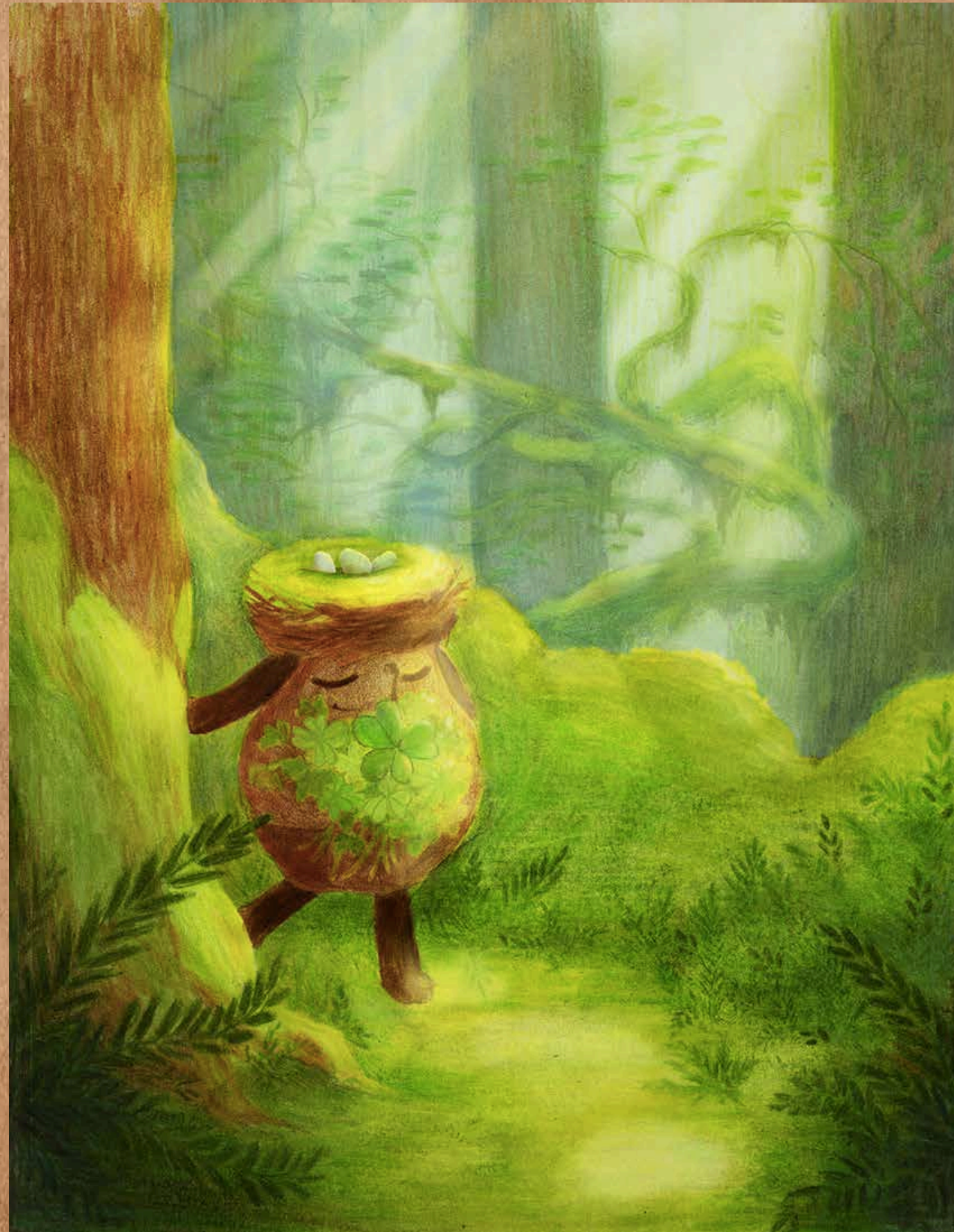
PETAL NIL

Final image



NESTLING NOLL

Final image



HEARTH SMOULDER

Final image



THE MULTICAT

Final image





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WEBSITE: oswinter.com