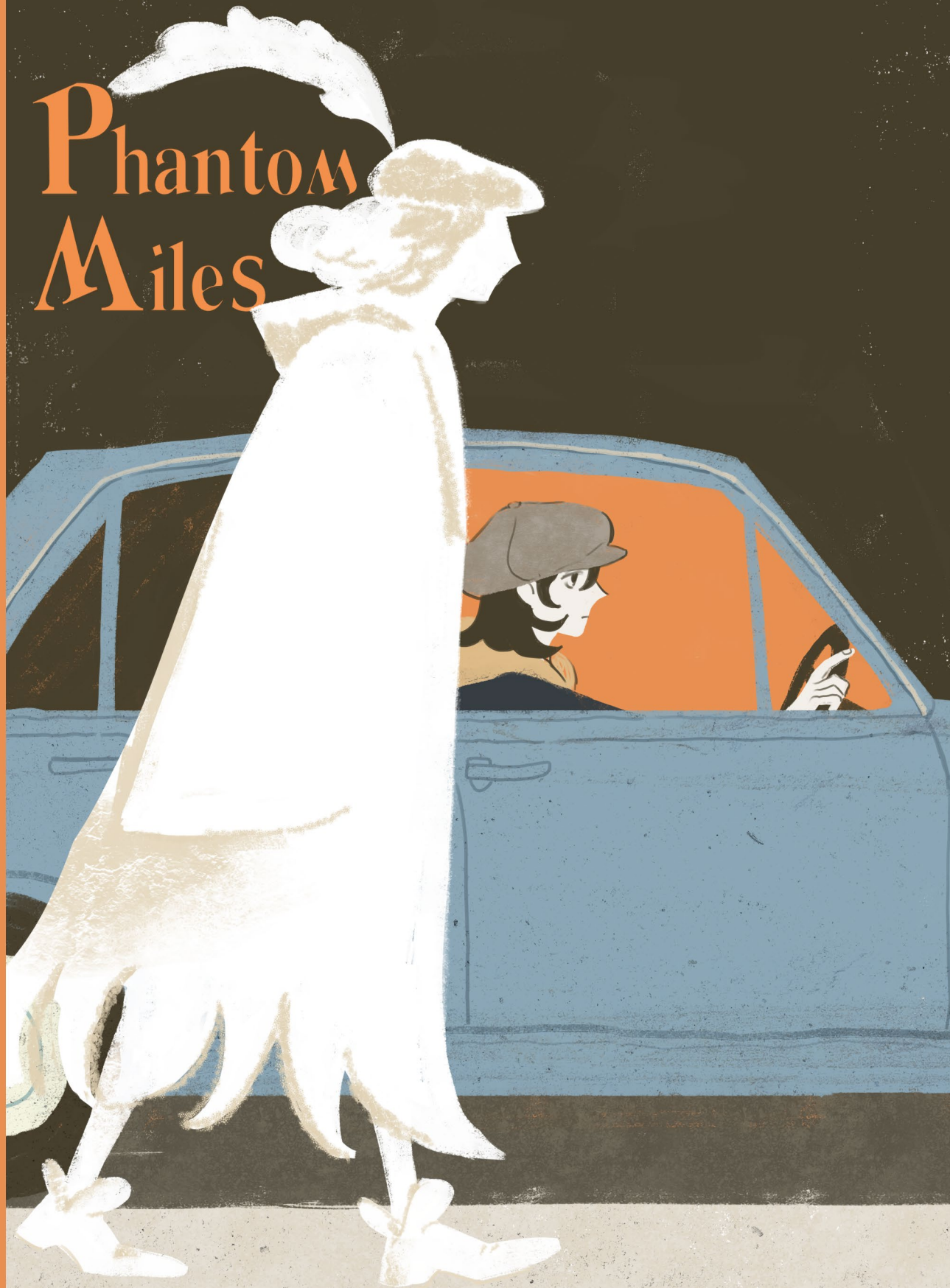
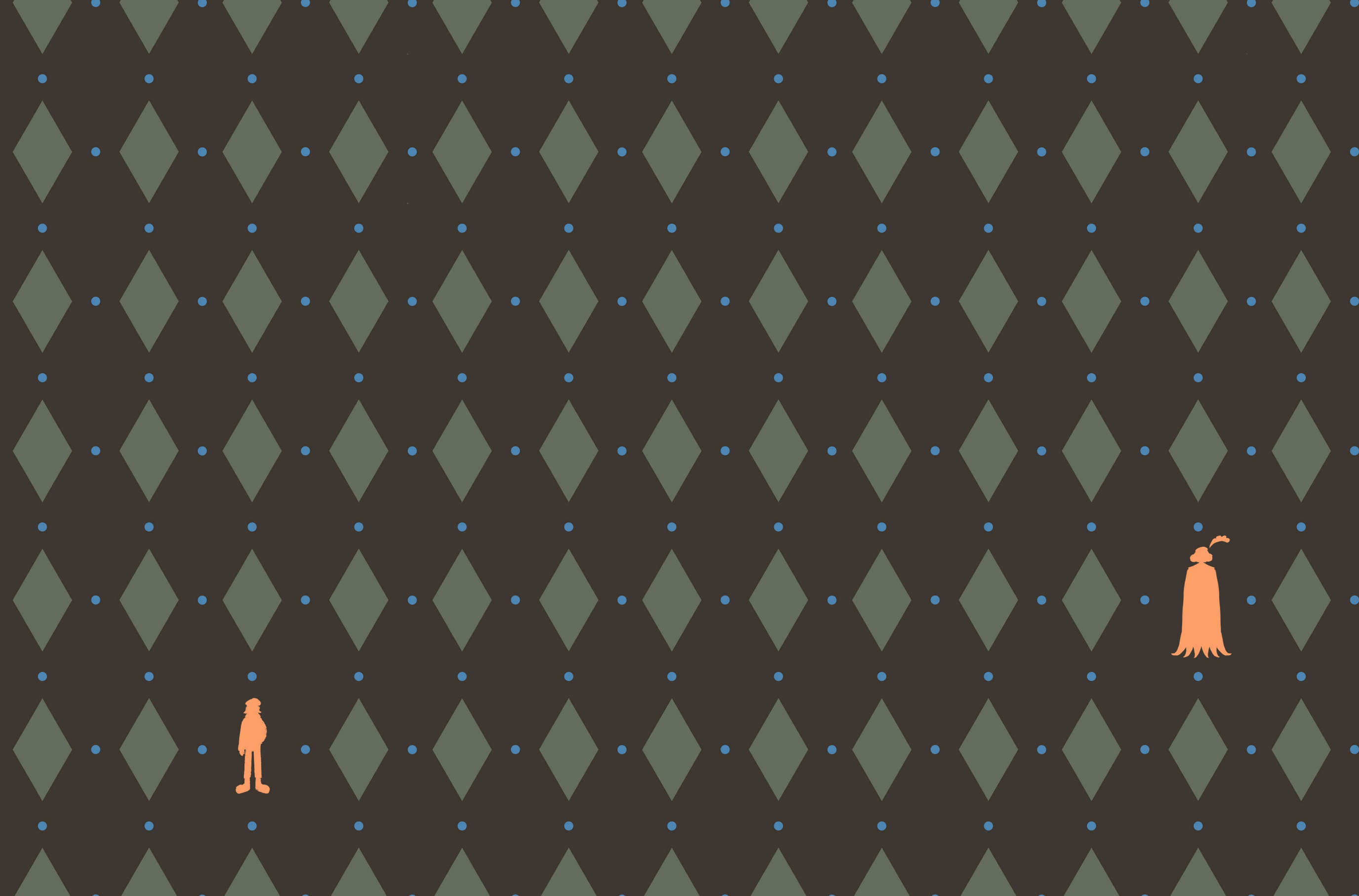


Phantom Miles





Phantom Miles



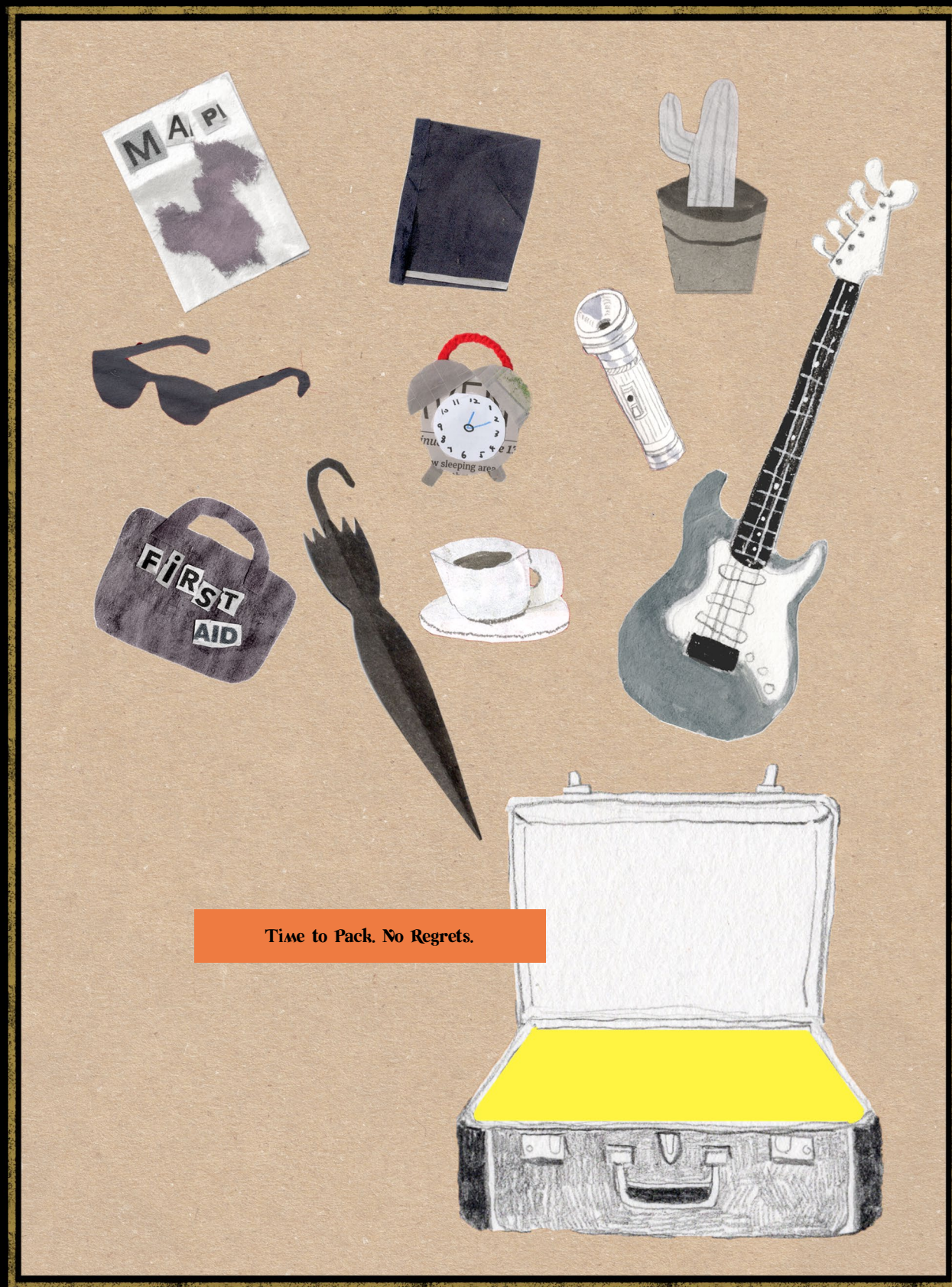
Drawn by Rui | ruiel@gmail.com
Translated by Cole



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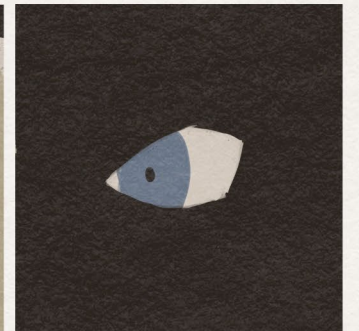
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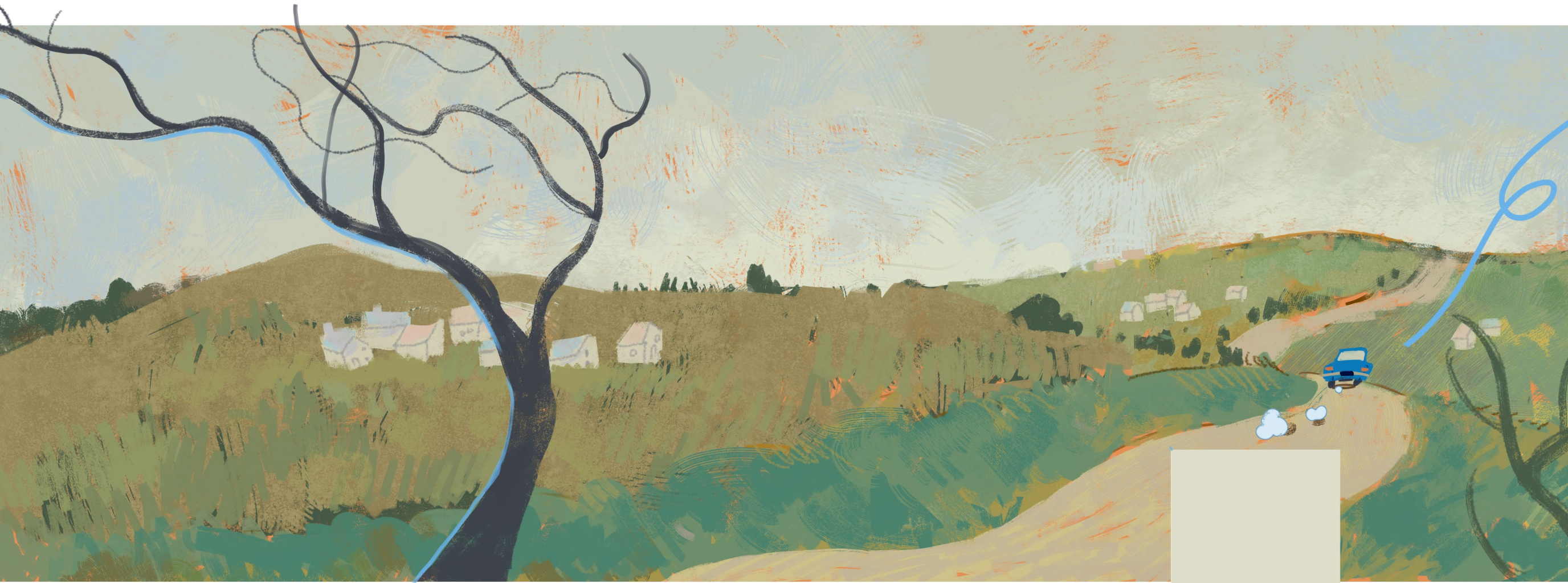
Journey Begin



Are You Ready?

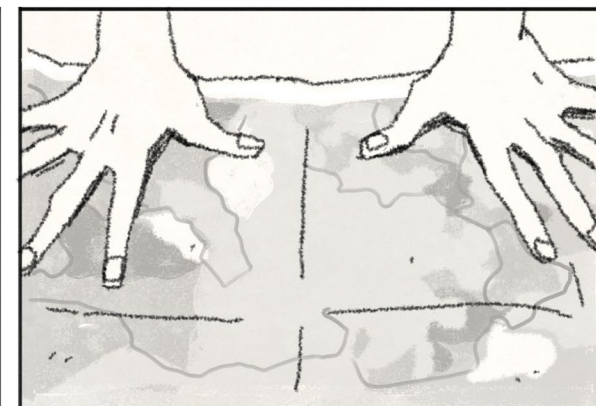
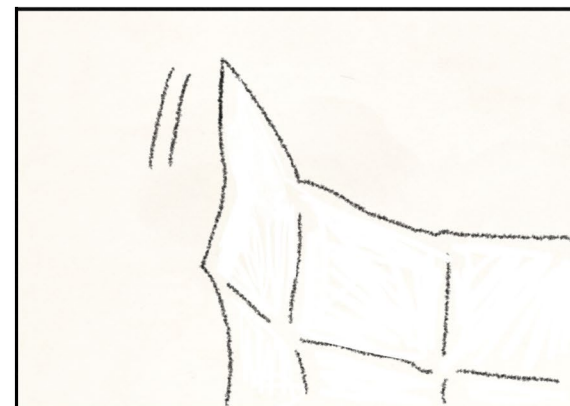


Chapter 1. Starting Point





May he rest in peace and rise in glory.



I got a bit from his will. Maybe it's time to leave this grey little town.

But where? Doubt the world out there's kinder.



... Perhaps go see Gran



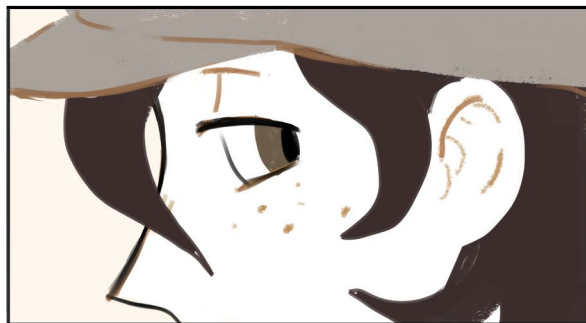
Tilda,

you look a bit peaky, love.
Knuckles white as bone on that wheel.

Well, obviously.

Never stepped foot beyond
the parish line before, have I?

Honestly, I thought I'd just...fade into the wallpaper of this place. Become another dusty relic propping up the bar and now...

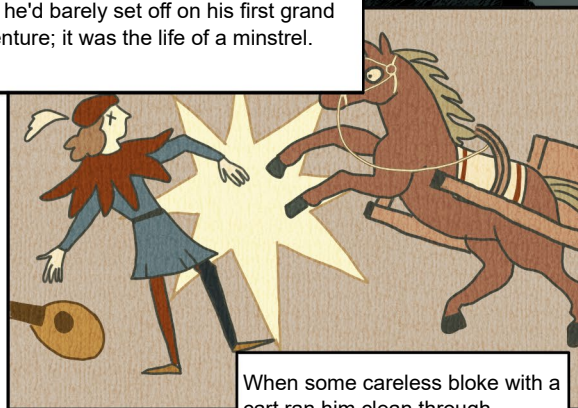


Oh. That's Oswald, by the way. Claims he's medieval. A ghost. Bit hard to swallow, I know.



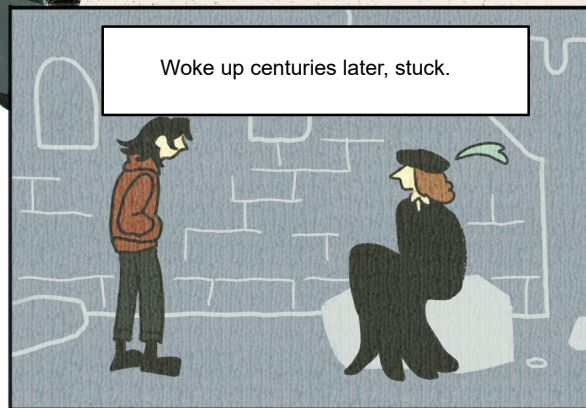
He turned up the very day I decided to bolt. I found him haunting that old mill ruin out by field.

Said he'd barely set off on his first grand adventure; it was the life of a minstrel.



When some careless bloke with a cart ran him clean through.

Woke up centuries later, stuck.



A travelling companion... Well, it's something. Even if said companion isn't 'precisely' human. Strange, really. He puts me mind of those crumbling chap books Gran used to read me. *'All gilt edges and woodcut dragons'* *'Those pages smelled of damp attics and ginger biscuits'*. They were...an escape. When this town felt too small to breathe in.



Do I feel 'closeness'? ...I'm not sure, that's the word. But there's a familiarity there. Gran's stories are mostly shadows now, but I miss her, terribly. And the high, moors round her peace. Like an old tune half-remembered.

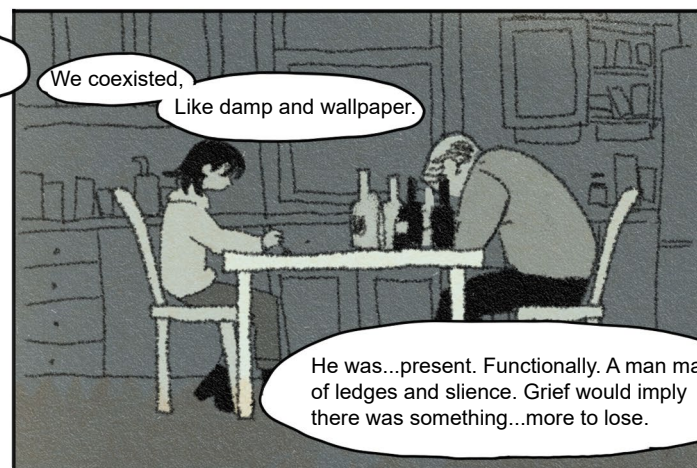
Which is also the destination of my journey.



Your father's passing...that must have left a hollow place, Tilda.



... Not especially.



We coexisted,
Like damp and wallpaper.

He was...present. Functionally. A man made of ledges and silence. Grief would imply there was something...more to lose.

How about your family?



BUT THIS!

Hmmm. My kind. Aye, shadows mostly. Sleep's long tide washed the faces clean away. Too many dawns missed, too many hearths gone cold.

This marvellous iron wain! Does it run on captured lightning? breath in tubes?

'Petrol', you say... sounds like a chemist's jargon. Not dragon's blood? Not the squeezed ichor of earth-demons?

You claim it flies swifter than King Arthur's swiftest stallion - yet needs neither oats nor sweet hay?

Witchcraft! Teach me its mastery, Tilda! I swear by Saint Cecilia's lute, I'll not dash it against yonder oak! ...Probably.

Ah! But canst thou verse, stern lady? If thy tongue's rusty as a monk's penknife, fear not! I, Oswald the Melodious, late of Chester's fairest taverns, shall school thee in metre sweet! For lo! A humble bard graces thy... rumbling chariot!



Lord. I need whisky. A large one. Or an exorcist. Whichever's cheaper at the next services.



Tilda

Feeling lost in life, she decides to leave the small town she's lived in all her life after her father's passing.

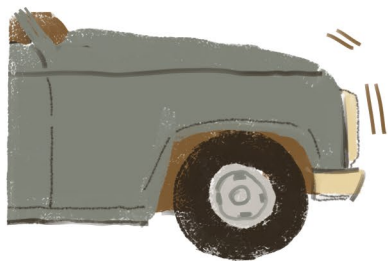
Oswald

A ghost from the medieval era who claims to have been a bard — though he was run over by a cart on the very first day of his journey.

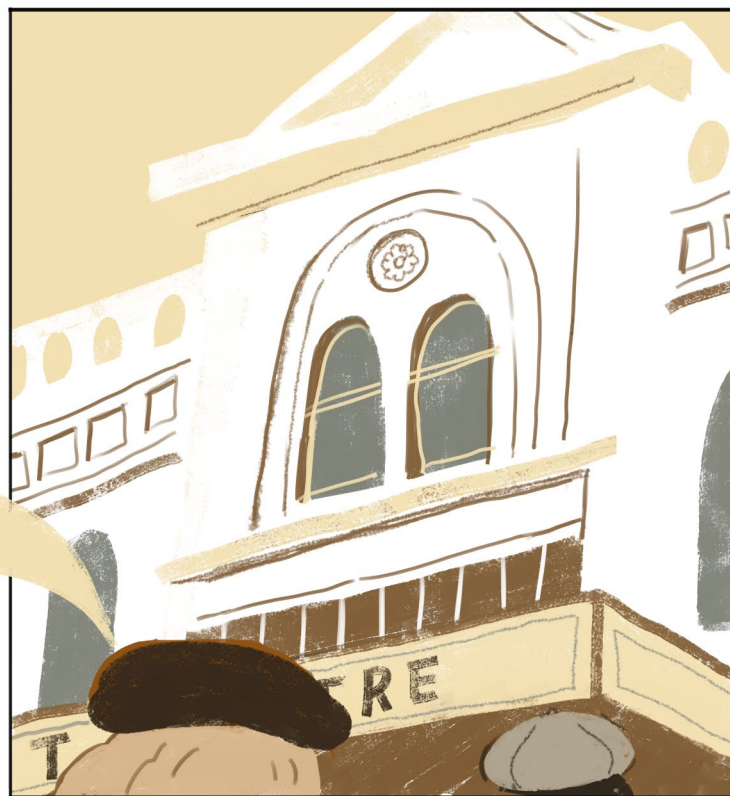
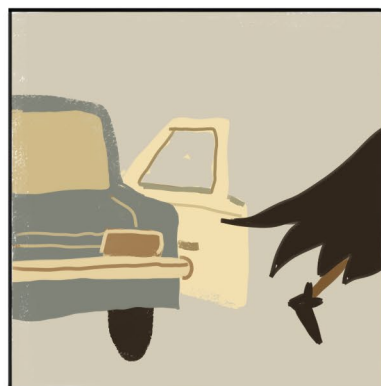
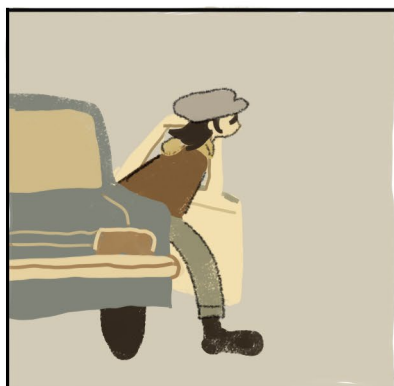


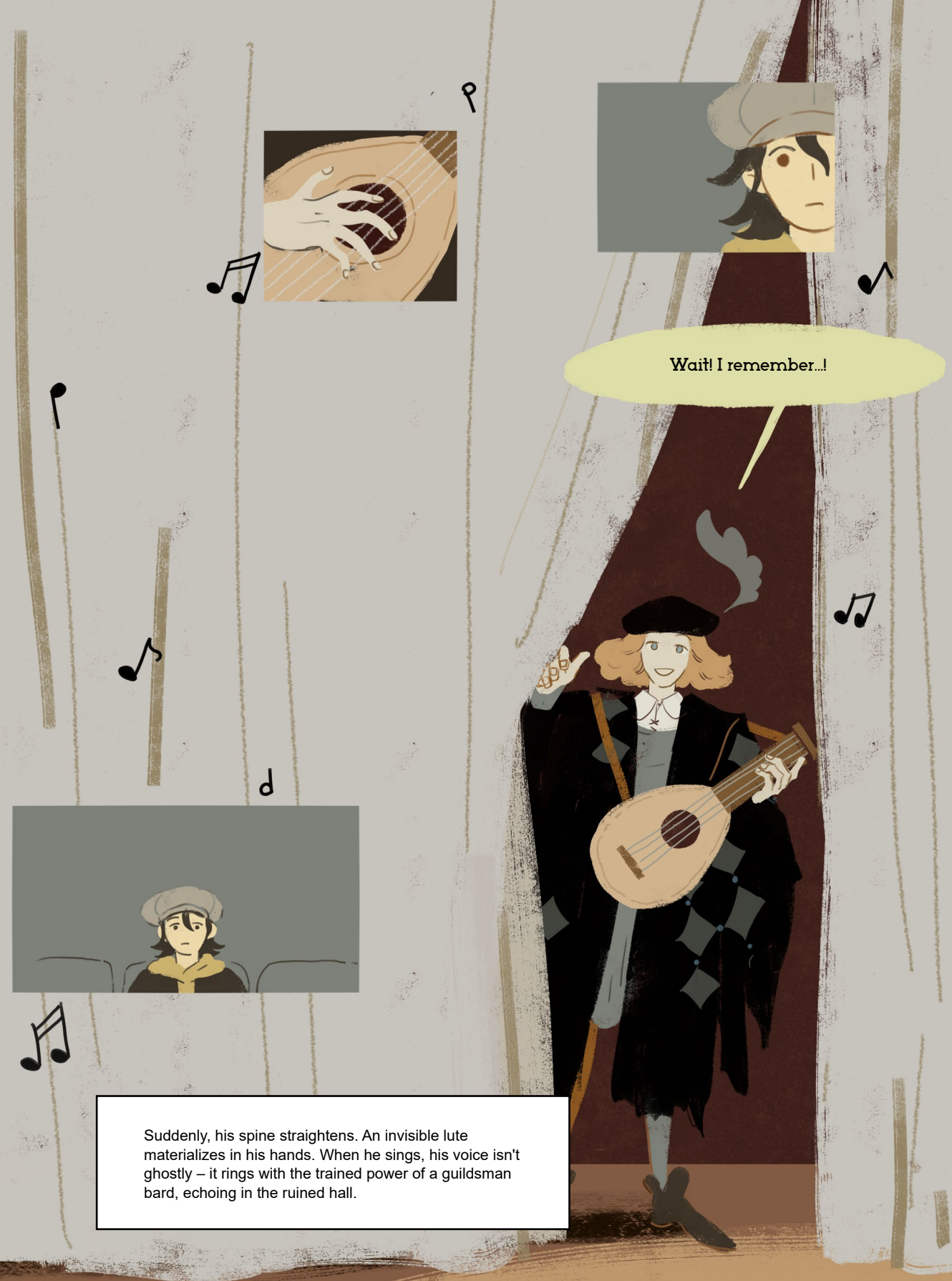
Chapter 2. Theatre






Theatre...?






Suddenly, his spine straightens. An invisible lute materializes in his hands. When he sings, his voice isn't ghostly – it rings with the trained power of a guildsman bard, echoing in the ruined hall.



A mountain wreathed in cloud-wool, white and high,
Where winds like starving wolves
'round summits cry—
A peak this earthbound ghost could never spy...
Oh journeys stalled! Dreams shattered 'neath this sky!
Still, cold stars hold this restless minstrel's eye...



By steed I swore to cross the wilds so wide,
To seek that sea where endless waters ride,
Beneath the lighthouse, steadfast, burning guide!

Yet Fate's blind cart did rend my dream aside-
Now dead air hears the songs I can't abide...



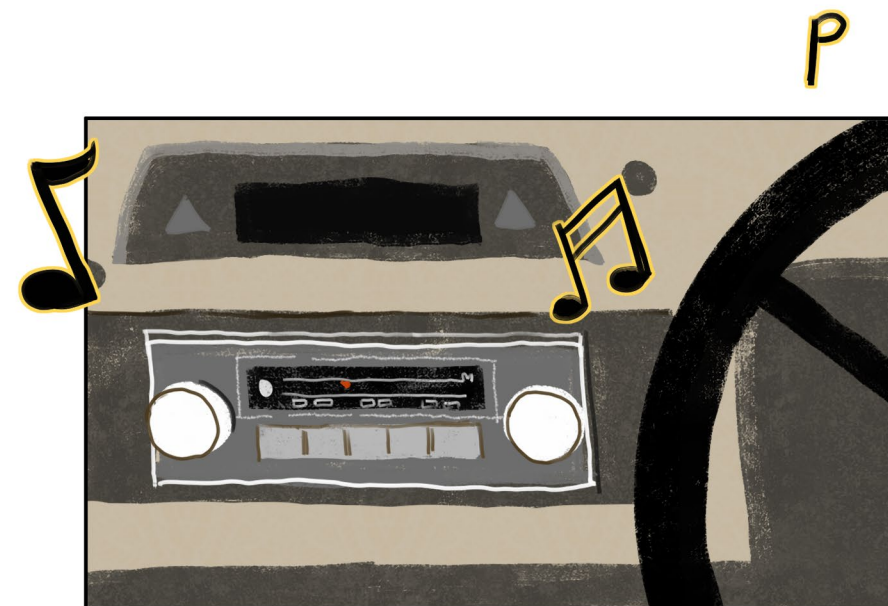
In this grey ruin lost, where memories cling,
A ghost of song, of roads I couldn't wring...
Perhaps... beyond the veil where phantoms sing?
I'll ride anew-no spectre, bard, nor thing-
Just wind and road... and freedom on the wing.



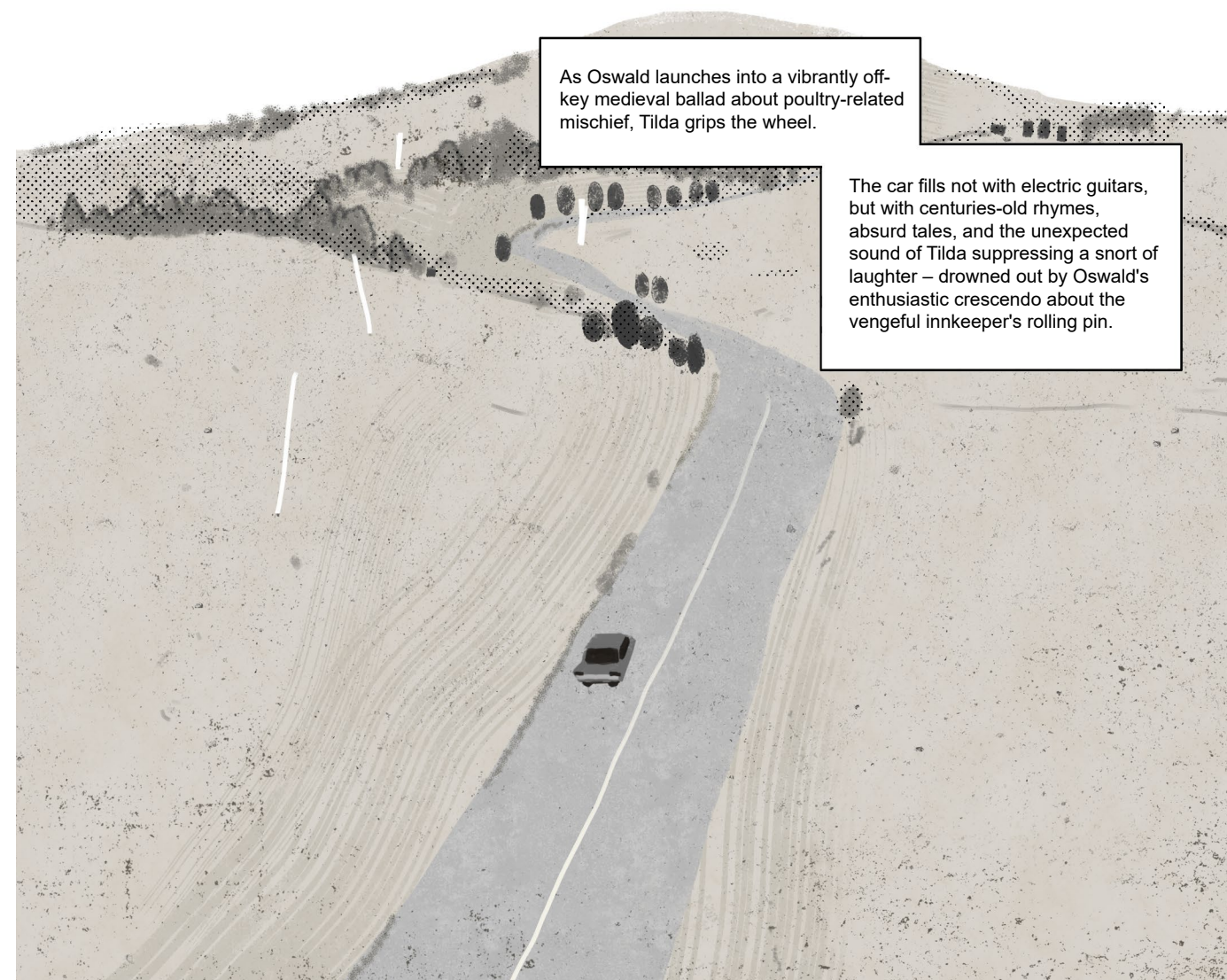
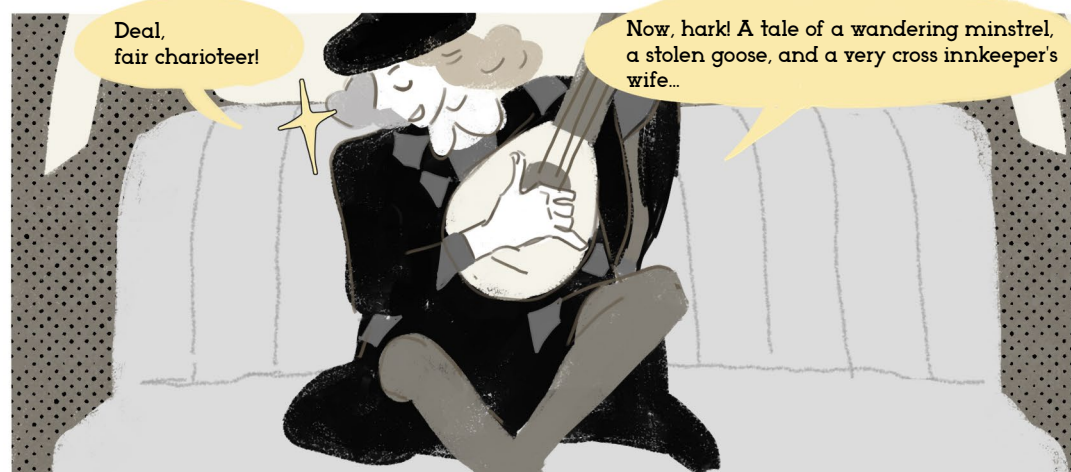
Chapter 3. Music



The last note hangs. Dust motes dance in slanted light. Oswald lowers his head, the phantom lute fading.







Chapter 4. Petrol Station

So... this petrol... Mankind delves deep now, does it? Like miners after glittering rock, but for this... black, sluggish dragon's blood? Dragged up from the belly of the earth? Astonishing alchemy.

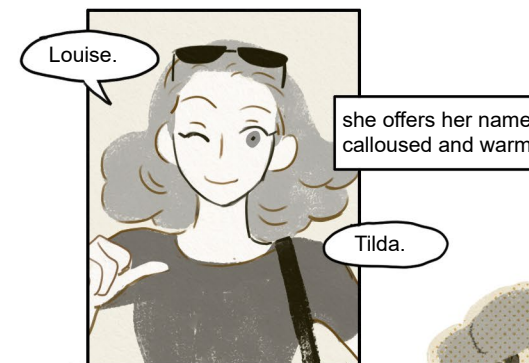
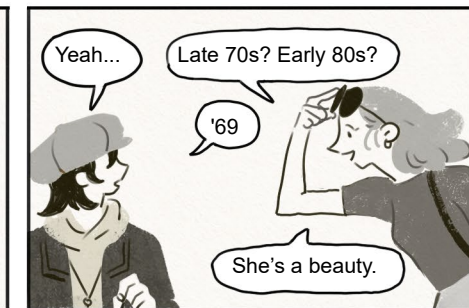
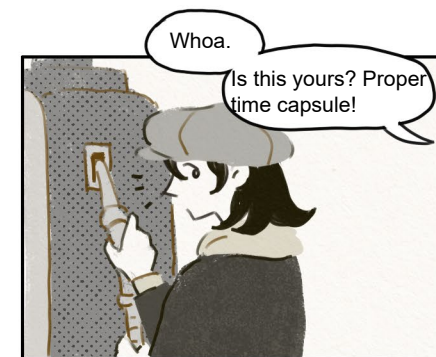
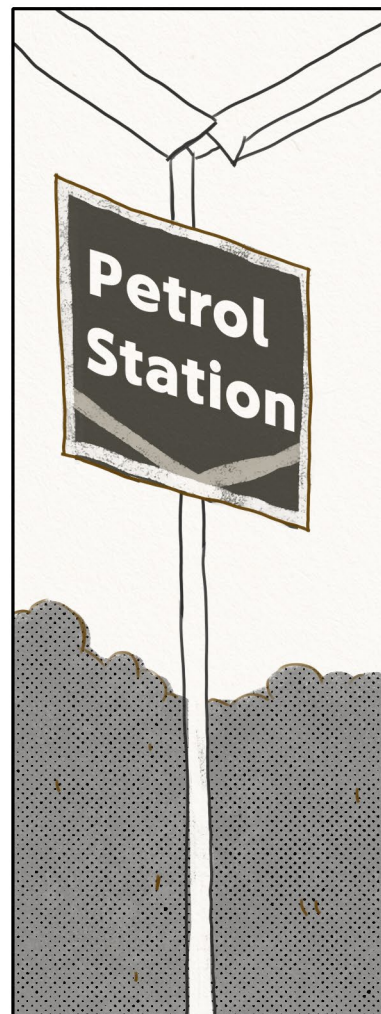
Makes a corpse ponder... if some poor sod dug up my resting spot, might they find my old leathern purse? Had three whole pennies and a rather fine brass button in it. Lost investment, that...

Ah! You spoke of a petrol station! Is that our destination? The fabled magic fountain of your modern age? Where this earthly ichor flows like wine?

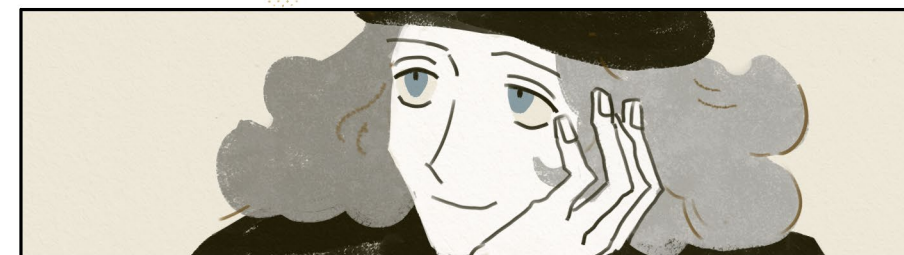
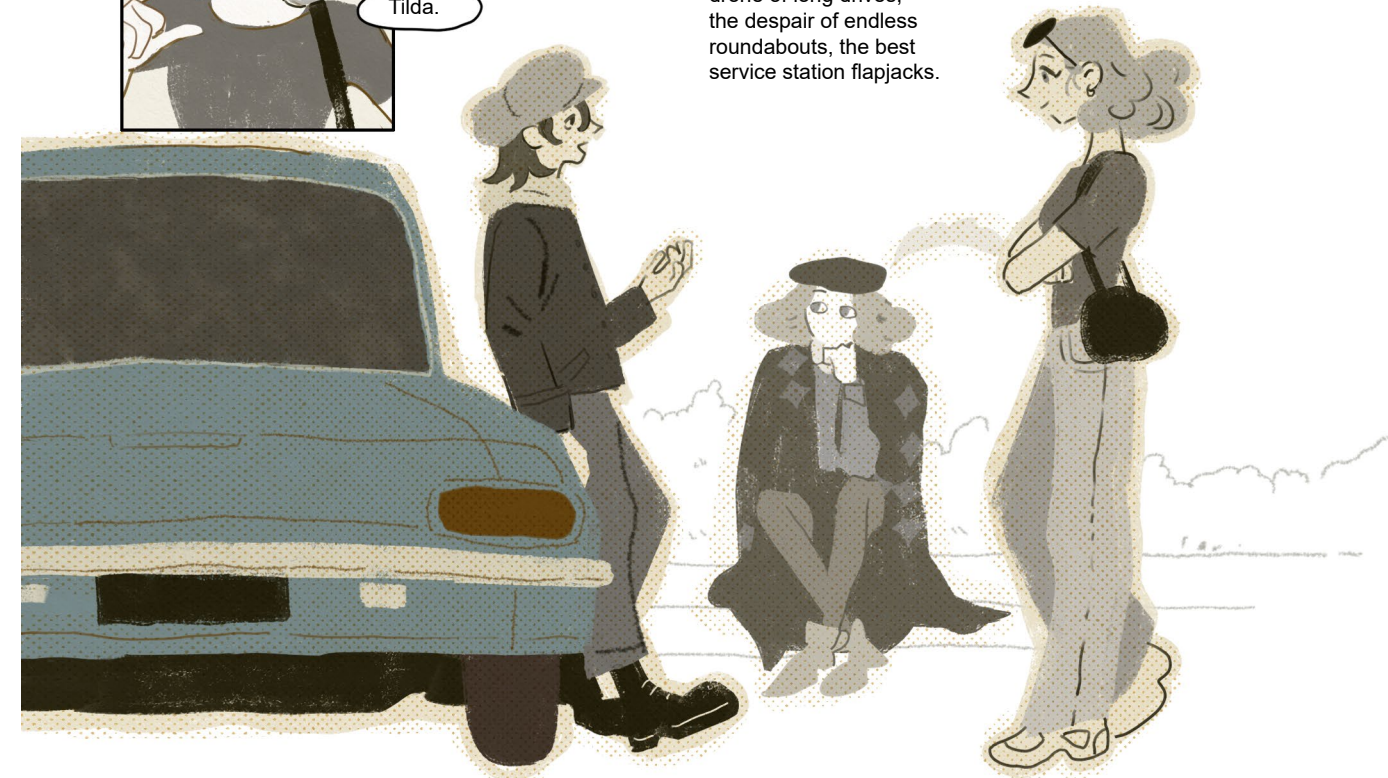


Tell me truly, Tilda... the noble steed. Is it truly vanquished? Banished wholly from your roads? Not a single destrier clattering on cobbles? How then do your knights errant fare? Do they duel within these... cars? Joust by ramming bumpers?

...Right. Bigger the cost. Next exorcist who pops up at the Spar counter asking if we want a loyalty card... we're taking him. Deal.



We fall into easy conversation – the hypnotic drone of long drives, the despair of endless roundabouts, the best service station flapjacks.





Chapter 5. Journey



25th August

Bloody dismal.
That bone-deep, clinging damp they call weather here.
Utterly predictable.
Not that Oswald noticed. The daft sod took it as a
personal invitation. Perched on the roof like a drowned
crow, belting out sea shanties and something about a
lovelorn turnip for a solid two hours. The sheer, sod-
den racket. Nearly drove off just to escape the din.



26th August

Relentless. Sheets of grey water turning the lanes
into rivers.
Got stuck near Keswick behind an endless tide of
sheep. Poor, drenched things. Looked like walking
weights, their fleeces black and heavy.
Sat there, wipers thrashing, idling engine, wonder-
ing if they ever truly get dry in this perpetual wet. A
grim, practical thought for a grim, wet day.



28th August

Blessed cessation. The downpour stopped, though the sky remained a low, oppressive blanket. Drove through Whitby. Saw the North Sea. A vast, churning expanse of pewter, blurring seamlessly into the heavy clouds. Wind sharp with salt, whipping spray. Oddly... cleansing. Like a fog lifted inside my own head. A rare quiet.

Oswald was silent. Just stood by the railings, watching the waves crash. Hands clasped behind his back like some ancient mariner surveying a lost fleet. Didn't utter a word. Strange. Almost unnerving, this stillness from him. Yet... watching the grey sea meet the grey sky, the wind tugging uselessly at his form... felt a peculiar sense of... shared weight? Shared quiet?





30th August

Major provisioning. Sundale in Scarborough. Tinned soup, beans, digestives, cheap bread, bottled water, dubious oranges... and an entire crate of that sickly sweet strawberry juice Oswald adores.

And the honey cake. He insisted. Said the scent took him straight back to his childhood hearth – beeswax, woodsmoke. He spoke with such quiet intensity, a stark contrast to his usual bluster. Looked... vulnerable. So I put it in the trolley. Didn't say anything. Just... put it in. Felt like the smallest, necessary kindness.

Now the car reeks faintly of stale bread crusts, citrus peel, and Oswald's cloying cake. We've piled it all haphazardly in the back. Looks less like a holiday, more like... well, like we are. Two mismatched souls rattling around together. Oswald hums tunelessly over his prize. The scent of orange and imagined hearth smoke mixes oddly. Perhaps this is how we live now. On the road. With the rain, the absurdity, the silence by the sea... and the honey cake.



Sundale Local Co-op

Save time. Travel happy

(01484) 226-881
MANAGER: MARGARET L.
14 FOXGLOVE WAY
SUNDALE, DEVON EX4 7QP

| | | |
|---------------------|--------------|--------|
| WHITE BREAD | 000001004173 | 1.15 X |
| BISCUITS MIX | 000001004382 | 1.85 X |
| BOTTLED WATER 2L | 000001004498 | 0.95 X |
| TIN BEANS *2 | 000001004771 | 2.00 X |
| TIN PEACHES *2 | 000001004801 | 2.40 X |
| ORANGES (BAG) | 000001005166 | 2.75 X |
| STRAWBERRY JUICE CR | 000001005571 | 6.00 X |
| TRAVEL WET WIPES | 000001006022 | 1.25 X |
| MINI TORCH (PINK) | 000001006244 | 3.50 X |
| COZY SOCKS (1 PAIR) | 000001006 | 2.00 X |
| STICKER BOOK (CATS) | 000001006773 | 1.75 X |
| CO-OP SHORTBREAD | 000001007101 | 1.80 X |

| | |
|----------|-------|
| SUBTOTAL | 27.40 |
| TAX 1 | 0.00 |
| TOTAL | 27.40 |
| VAT | 27.40 |

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REF # 710002541341
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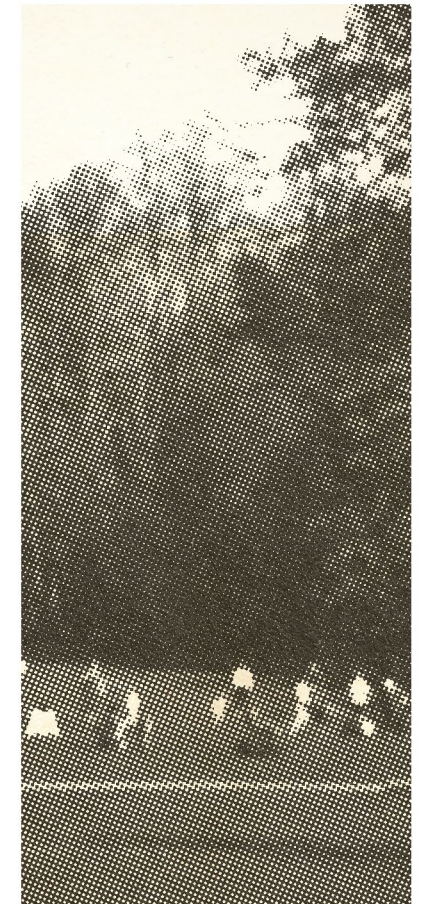


The road is long – pack snacks.

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Chapter 6. Drift

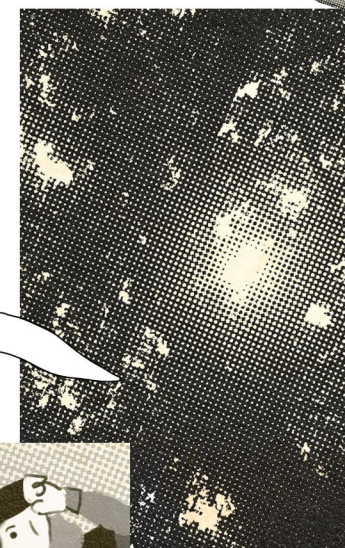
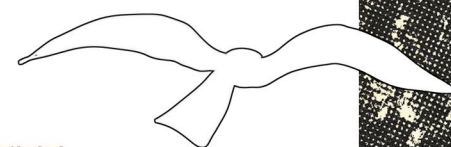
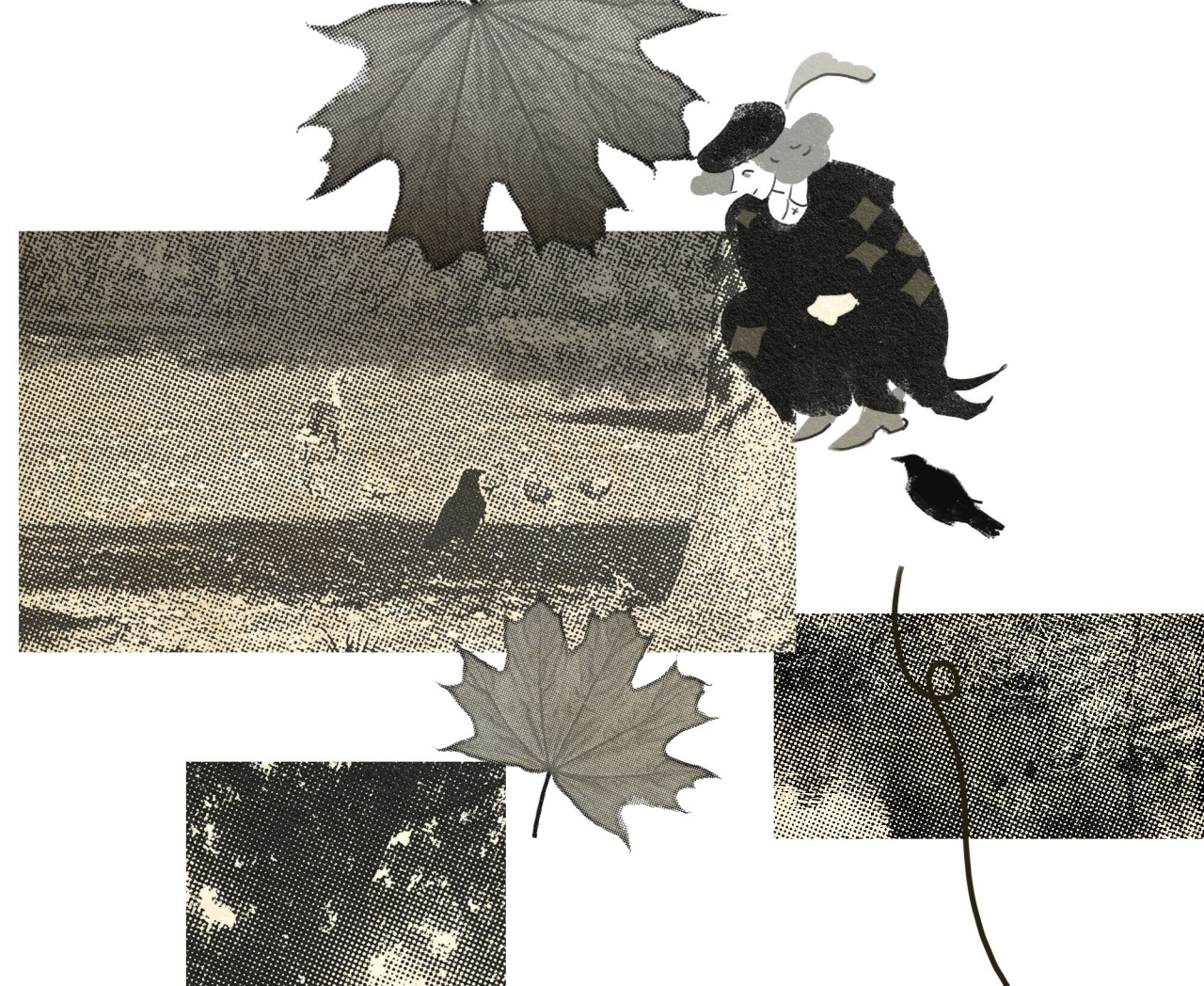
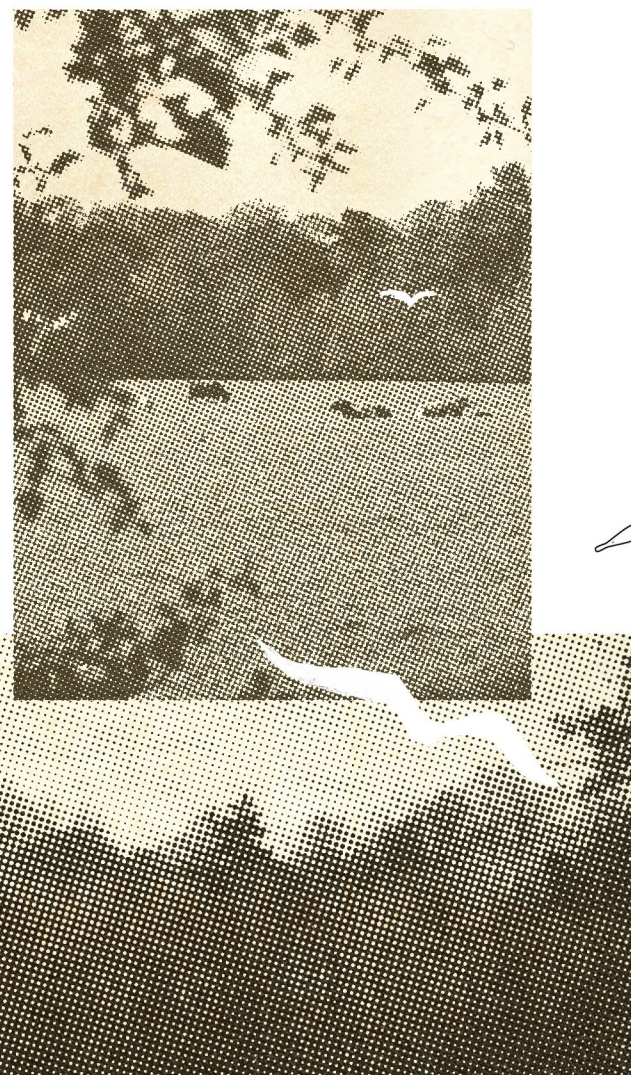


In my time...

if a soul lay thus upon the street, still as
stone... twas like as not starved near to the
crossing point. Or robbed.

Or Dead.



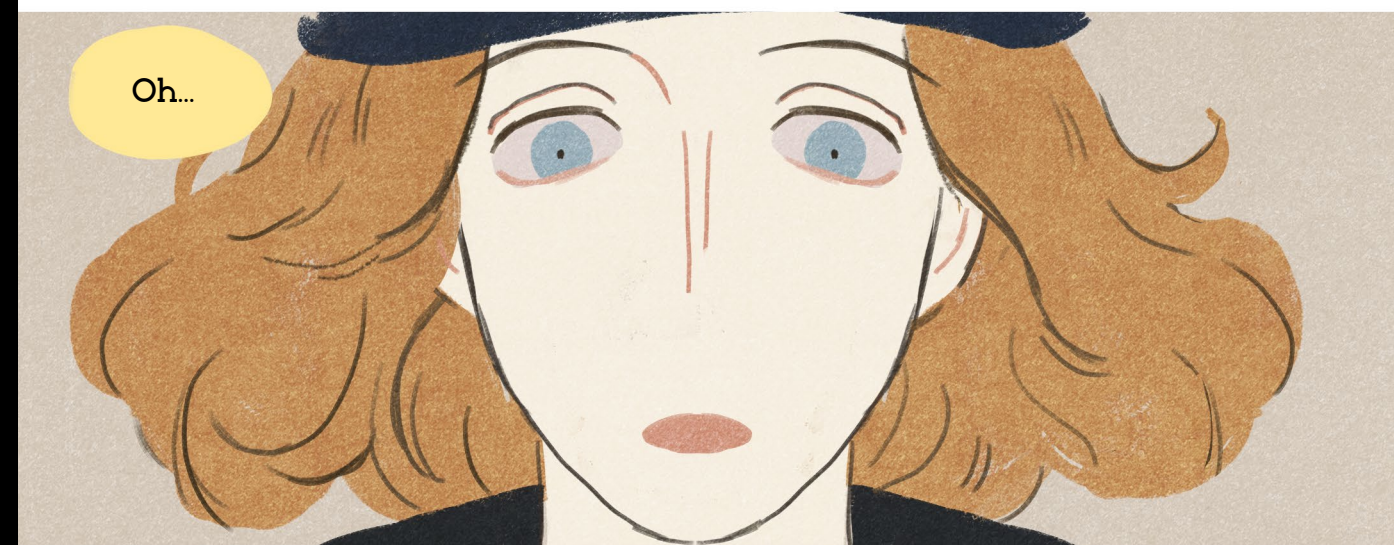




Hello



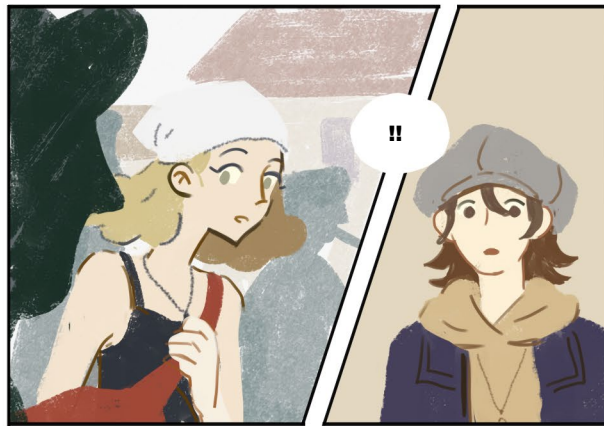
Chapter 7. Wayfarer's Night





By all the saints..... Feels... like stepping into a dream.

Though, the leather's suspiciously unscuffed, and I swear that wench's kirtle is made of... plastic? A far cry from honest grime and lanolin.



Louise!



Tilda! You mad, wonderful thing, you came!

Right! Costume emporium awaits!

Louise, I really think I'll—!...Pass?

Don't look so terrified — we're just playing dress-up for the ghosts! Come on!



What is this place? Truly?

This is Wayfarer's Night? Exactly what it says on the tin, love!



A homecoming for the lost. Legend whispers...of a wanderer, long ago. Swore he'd find the Lighthouse at World's End. He found it, alright. But the road back? Too long. Too late. An old man by the sea. So he poured his story into a bottle, cast it on the tide... a plea for someone to carry his 'home' back. This is the answer to that plea. For two nights, everyone comes home.

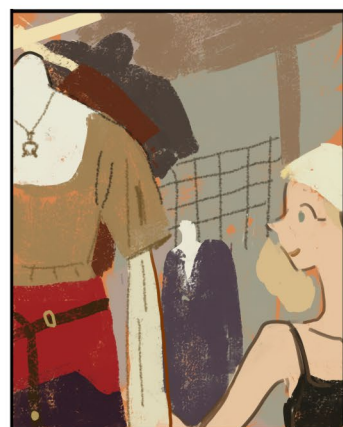
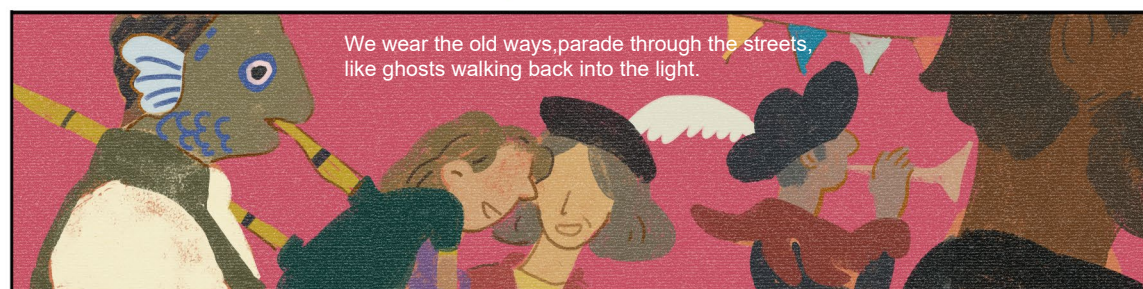


The living travellers,

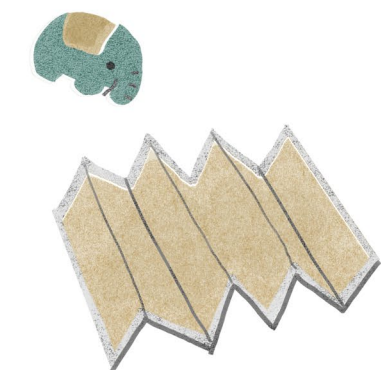
the echoes of those gone,

the memories we carry,

all wanderers, returning.

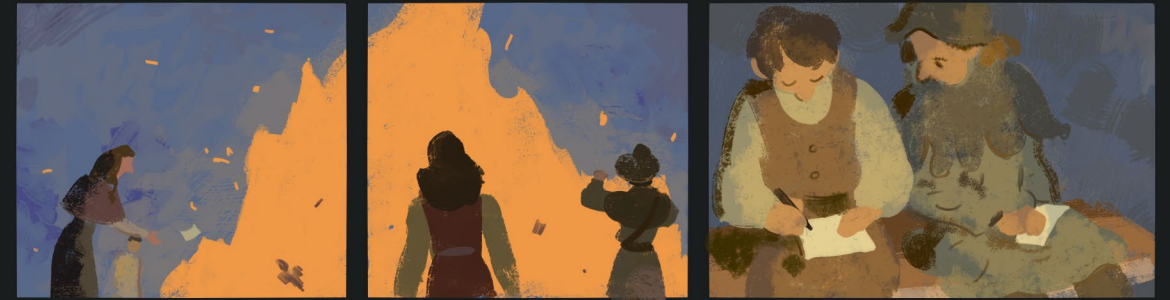
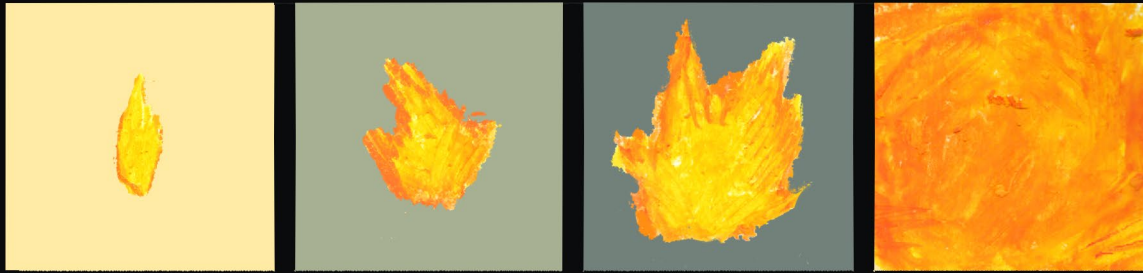


Tonight? The Bonfire. Burn what binds you – old sorrows, regrets, scribbled wishes – watch it turn to ash and starlight.

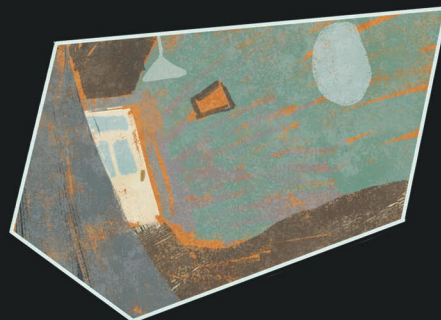


Tomorrow? The market.





Trapped in that grey little town... days like dust settling.

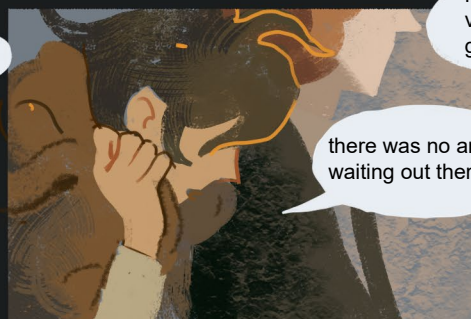


Safe. Predictable. Choking. I'd seen... glimpses. Through books. Through Gran's stories. Enough to know the world was vast...

and that part of me ached for it. To escape the suffocating familiar.



But I knew...



there was no answer waiting out there.

Not really. Not in Gran's empty village. Not anywhere. She was gone. The hearth was cold.



I lied to myself. Made her memory my excuse.



The flimsy courage I needed... just to leave.

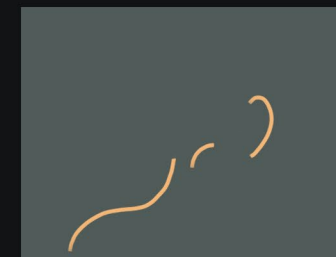
All this way... hunting an 'answer'.

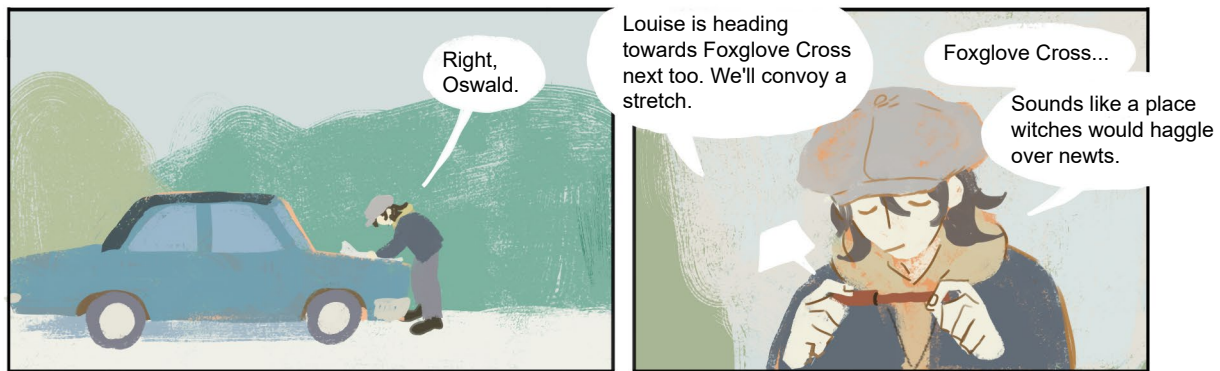


But... maybe the answer isn't a place. Or a thing.



Maybe it's the road itself.





Oswald?