

The Charmingly Good

And
Goodly Charming

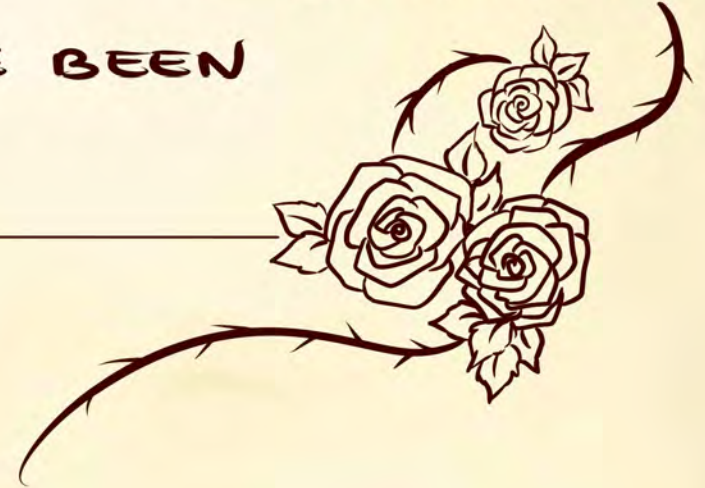
Tales  *Of The*

Thundercloud
Kid

CHAPTER ONE: "AND THEN IT WAS DARK."

THIS IS FOR ALL THE KIDS WHO NEED IT.

THE LIGHT MAY BE DIM, BUT IT'S BRIGHTER
THAN THE DARK WE'VE BEEN
LIVING IN.



ART BY: INÈS NOUIRA aka :





Ine-Z on DEVIANTART

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@IneZEN1 on TWITTER

THIS WAS THE BEST JOB I'VE EVER HAD.
DREAMS DO COME TRUE, THANK YOU.











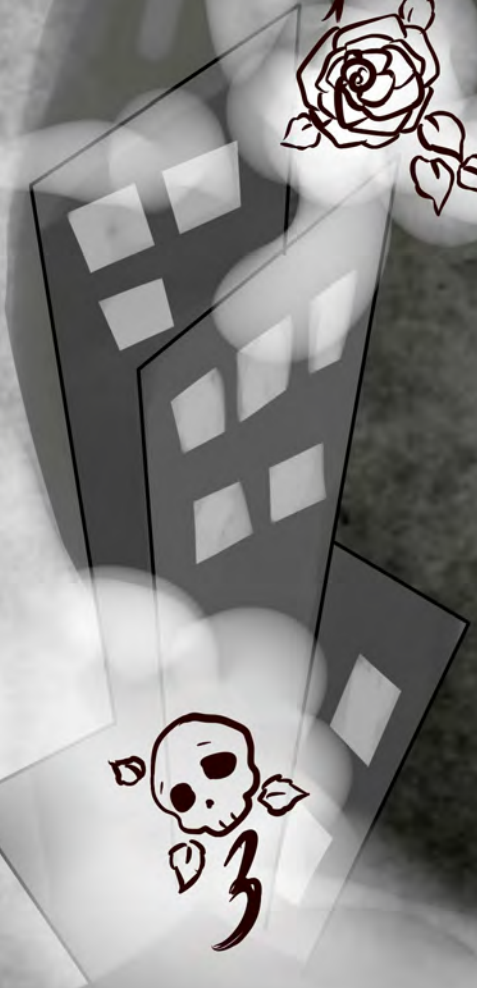





OVERCAST CITY WAS GREY. THE WAVES OF MO(U)RNING
LAKE WERE INK, AND THE MONSTROUS LAKE EFFECT STEEL
BILLOWED PLUTES OF WANING OPTIMISM ONTO ITS BITTER
SHORES.



THIS ROTTING METROPOLIS HAD BECOME THE MUTINY-SUSCEPTIBLE
CAPTAIN OF THE EVER-TENSING COALITION OF MO(U)RNING LAKE, AND THE
STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF ITS WATERS HAD VEERED DECREASINGLY
CORDIAL.

















WINTERS LASTED YEARS, AND WHEN THEY FINALLY DID YIELD,
THEY BROUGHT RELENTLESS RAIN. MEANWHILE, THE BATTERED
CITIZENS, THE OVERCAST HEARTS, HAD NO ILLUSIONS OF
GRANDEUR, YET CLUNG TO THEIR PUTED PRIDE.











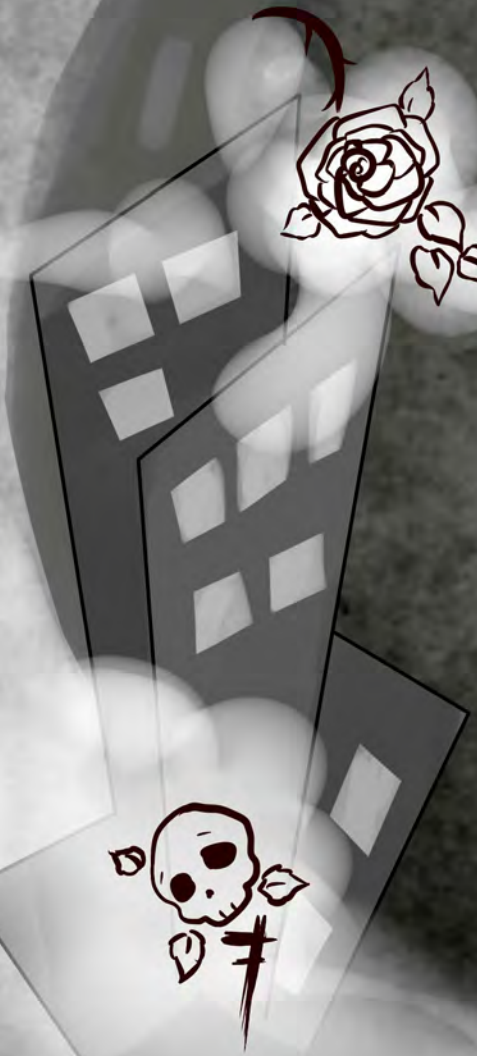




AS THE LAST OF THE OVERCAST HEARTS PUNCHED THE
CLOCK AND DRAGGED THEMSELVES INTO THE DREARY NIGHT TOWARD
THEIR EVEN DREARIER RESIDENCES, **McKINLEY**, THE TITAN OF LAKE
EFFECT, A BARON SANS ROBBER, AND HEARTLESS WITH A HEART OF
GOLD, BLOODED IN THE BOWELS OF HIS EMPIRE.



NO ONE KNEW OF HIS HISTORY, FOR HE HAD NEVER TOLD, BUT THE WAY
HIS SHOULDERS SEEMED TO CARRY SUCH SAVAGE WEIGHT
QUIETLY BETRAYED HIS MORBID SILENCE.

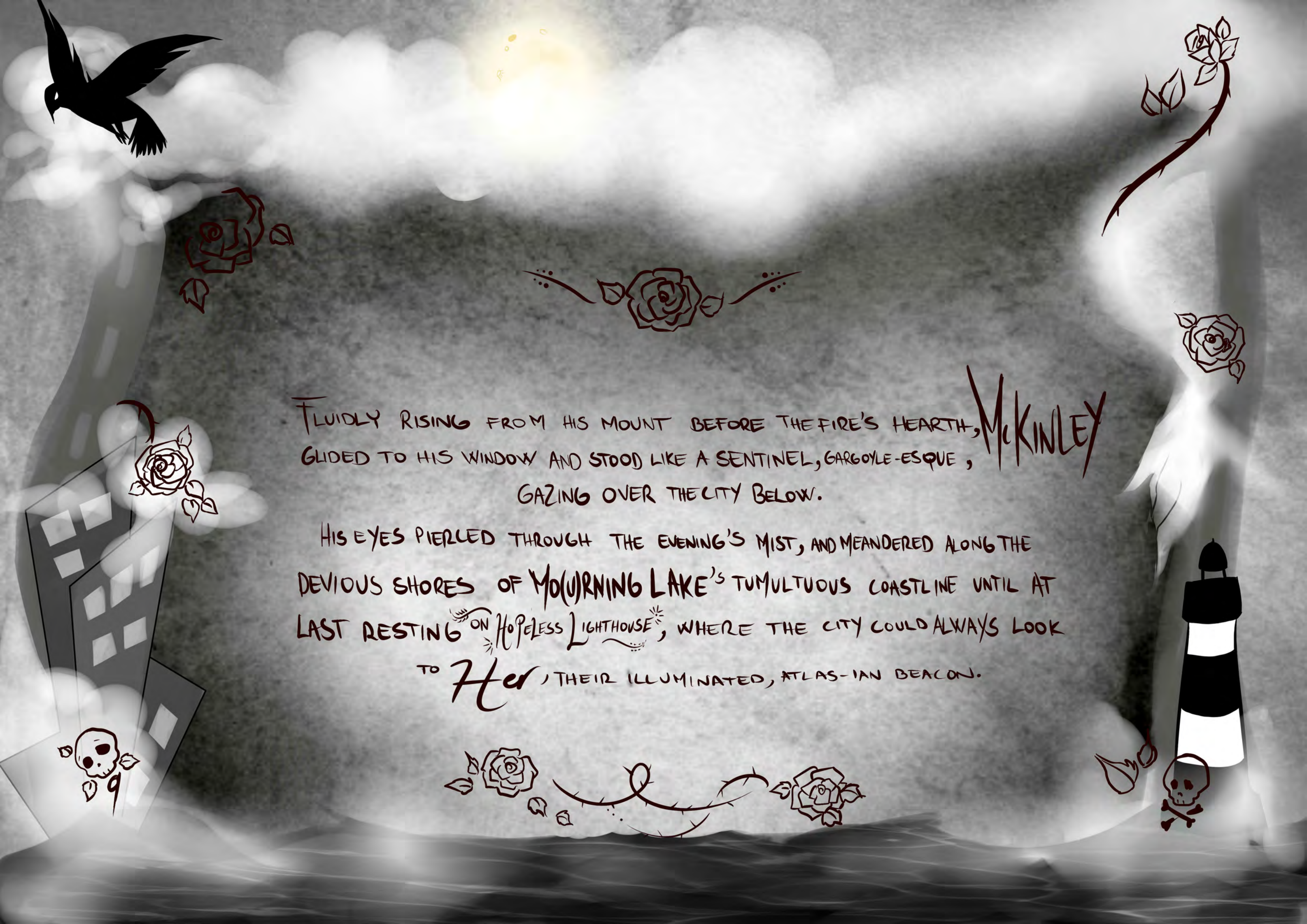






IT HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY, THE STEEL KING THOUGHT TO HIMSELF AS HE WATCHED THE FLAMES DANCE FROM THE FIREPLACE IN HIS QUARTERS ABOVE THE FACTORY FLOOR. THINGS HAVEN'T ALWAYS BEEN THIS BLEAK. MCKINLEY PONDERED, TAPPING HIS FINGERS ON HIS CHAIR. HE NOTED THAT THE GROWLING FIRE, DESPITE PROVIDING LITTLE RELIEF FROM THE RELENTLESS COLD, REMINDED HIM OF OVERCAST CITY'S MORE PROSPEROUS TIMES, WHICH WARMED HIS HAUNTED BONES.



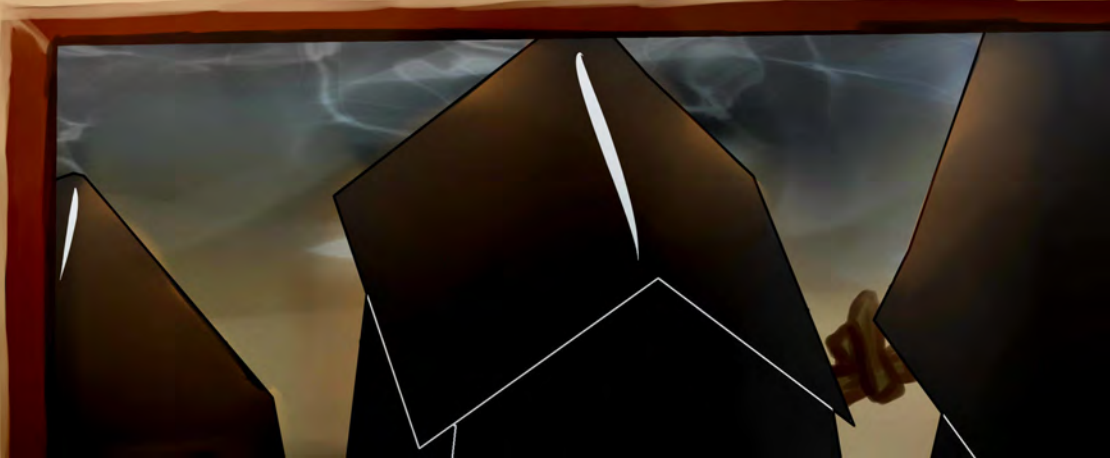
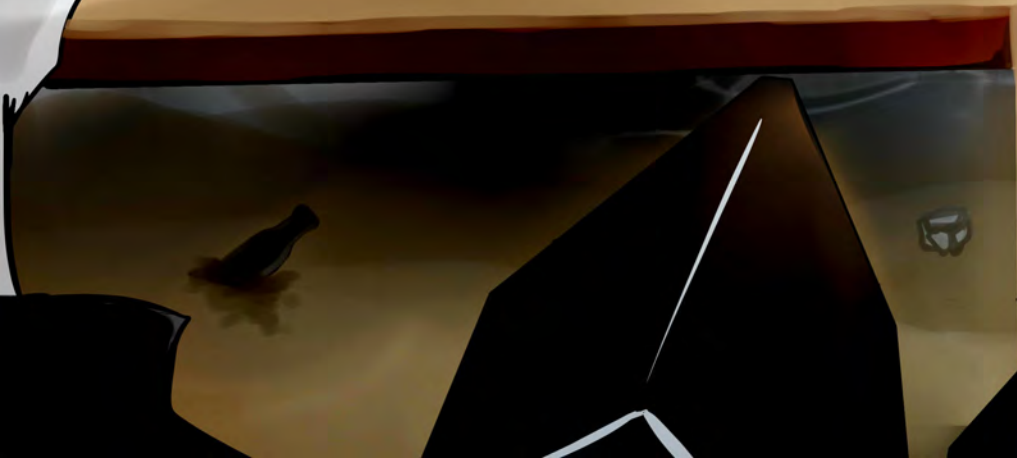


FLUIDLY RISING FROM HIS MOUNT BEFORE THE FIRE'S HEARTH,
GLIDED TO HIS WINDOW AND STOOD LIKE A SENTINEL, GARGOYLE-ESQUE,
GAZING OVER THE CITY BELOW.

MCKINLEY

HIS EYES PIERCED THROUGH THE EVENING'S MIST, AND MEANDERED ALONG THE
DEVIOUS SHORES OF MO(U)RNING LAKE'S TUMULTUOUS COASTLINE UNTIL AT
LAST RESTING ON HOPELESS LIGHTHOUSE, WHERE THE CITY COULD ALWAYS LOOK
TO *Her*, THEIR ILLUMINATED, ATLAS-IAN BEACON.











Her...




HE BELONGED TO HER, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND, YET SHE BELONGED TO ALL OF THEM. HER LIGHT BREATHED LIFE INTO THE MASSES, PROVIDING THE OVERCAST HEARTS WITH FAITH, ENERGY, AND THAT UNQUANTIFIABLE (*though readily familiar*) FORCE THAT KEPT THEM UPRIGHT, LIKE THE SADDEST *Marionettes*.











SHE ETERNALLY WRAPPED THE SKYLINE IN HER GLOW, BUT KEPT HER EYES ON THE HORIZON, AS IF WAITING FOR ANOTHER BOY SHE WISHED SHE'D MEET.






SHE NEVER CHECKED THE CLOCK FOR SHE HAD SIMPLY ALWAYS BEEN,
AND SHE WAS INSPIRED ONLY VICARIOUSLY THROUGH THE INSPIRATION

SHE inspired.




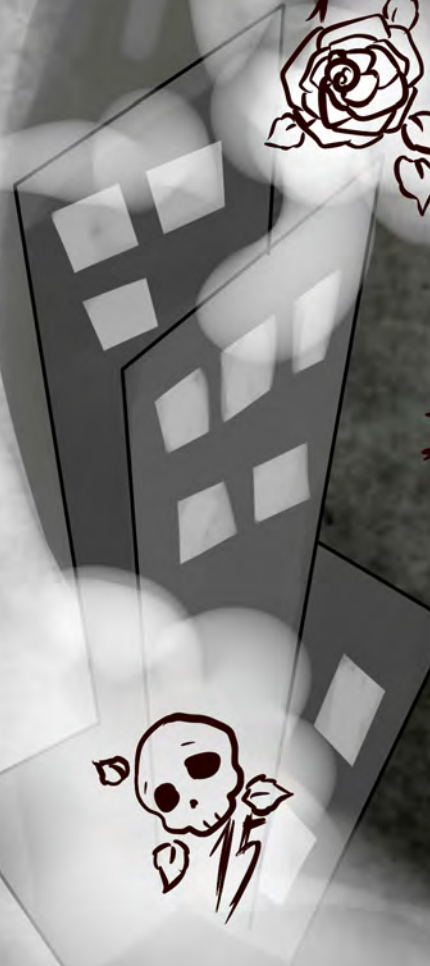






"BELIEVE IN Nothing," SHE WOULD SING TO THE HARBOR, BEFORE YOU BELIEVE IN

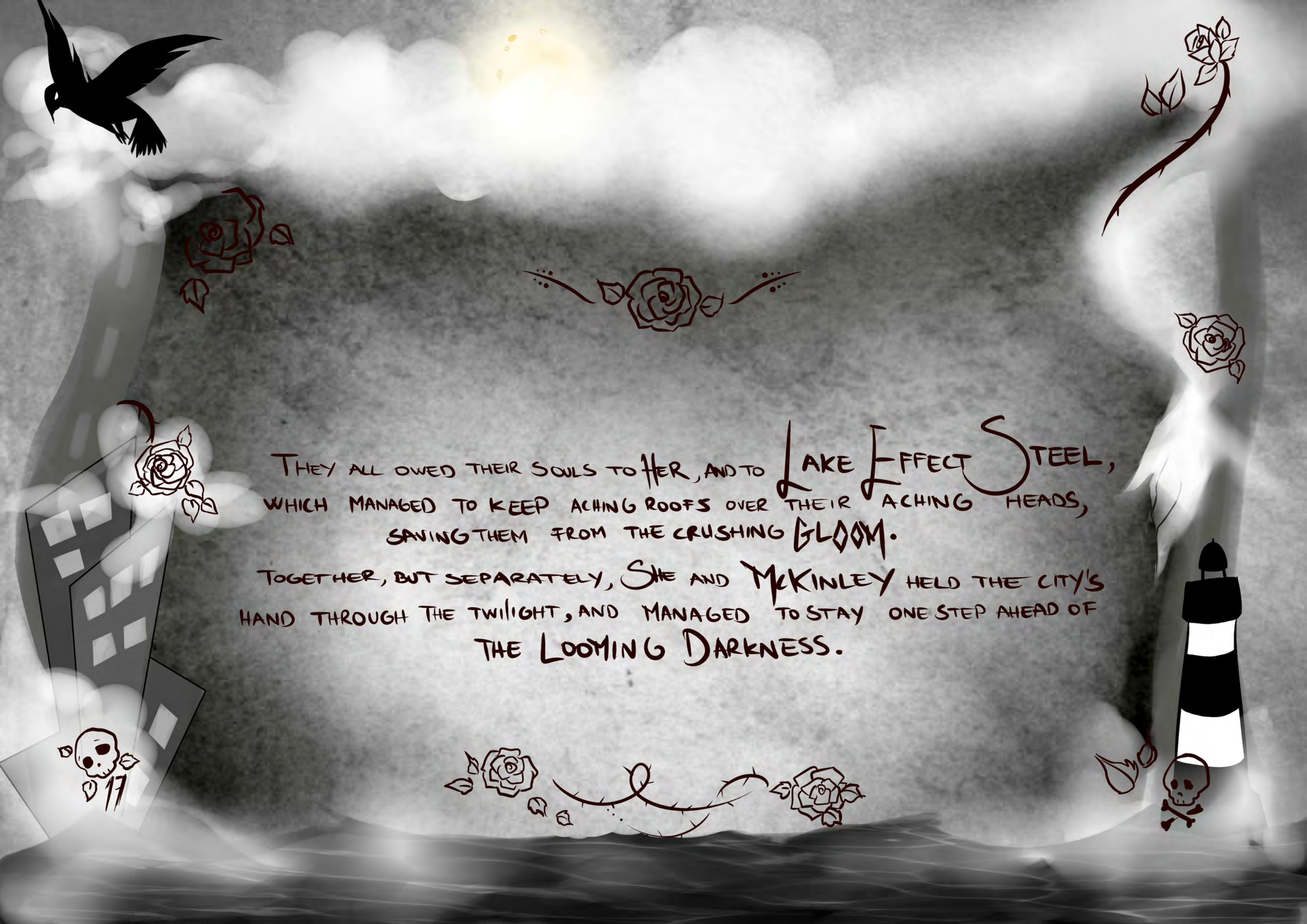
Me"



ALL THE WHILE, MCKINLEY SPENT HIS NIGHTS TRACING HER VEILED
SILHOUETTE ON HIS FROSTED WINDOW, WAITING FOR MORNING'S
ARRIVAL WHEN HIS FACTORY WOULD COME *Roaring* Back to
Life.










THEY ALL OWED THEIR SOULS TO HER, AND TO LAKE EFFECT STEEL,
WHICH MANAGED TO KEEP ACHING ROOFS OVER THEIR ACHING HEADS,
SAVING THEM FROM THE CRUSHING GLOOM.


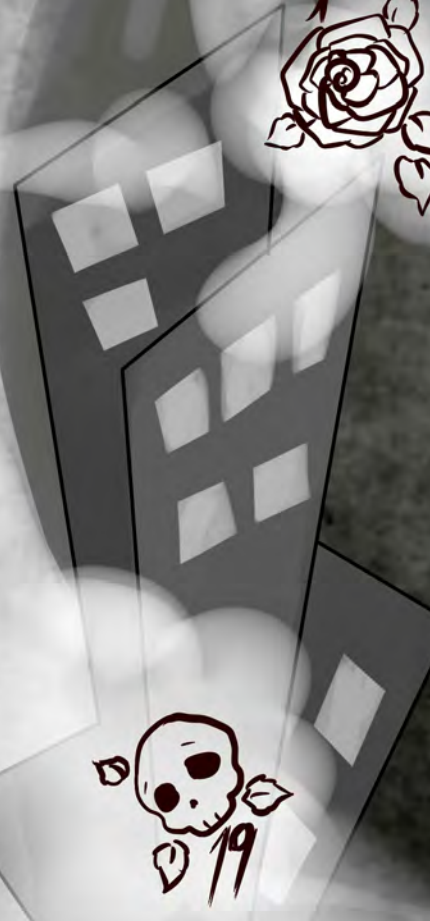
TOGETHER, BUT SEPARATELY, SHE AND MCKINLEY HELD THE CITY'S
HAND THROUGH THE TWILIGHT, AND MANAGED TO STAY ONE STEP AHEAD OF
THE LOOMING DARKNESS.









MCKINLEY, A GENTLEMAN DOWN TO HIS MARROW, COULD ALWAYS FEEL HER BRUSHING THE COBWEBS FROM HIS EYES, BUT EVEN HE, THE THUNDERCLOUD KID, WITH STORMS IN HIS POCKETS AND STARS UNDER HIS UMBRELLA, COULD NOT WRAP HER AROUND HIS BONY FINGER.



NEITHER HIS WEALTH NOR PROPRIETY TURNED HER WEARY HEAD, BUT THEY DID CATCH ANOTHER, MORE SINISTER EYE.




FOR Mayor Hawthorne, MCKINLEY'S PROMINENCE POSED A THREAT TO HIS REPUTATION, AND ALTHOUGH HE DUBBED MCKINLEY "His Young Prince of Industry," ONE COULD NOT HELP BUT NOTICE HOW TOXICALLY IT SLIPPED OUT THE SIDE OF HIS MOUTH.





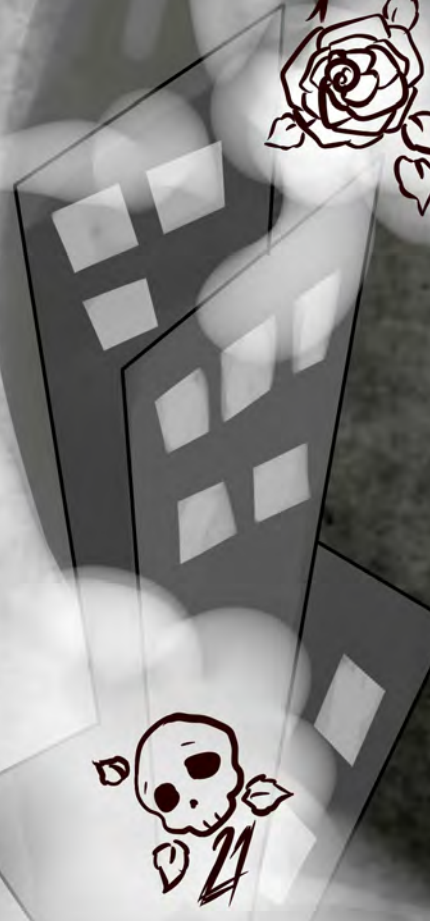


OC

Mayor



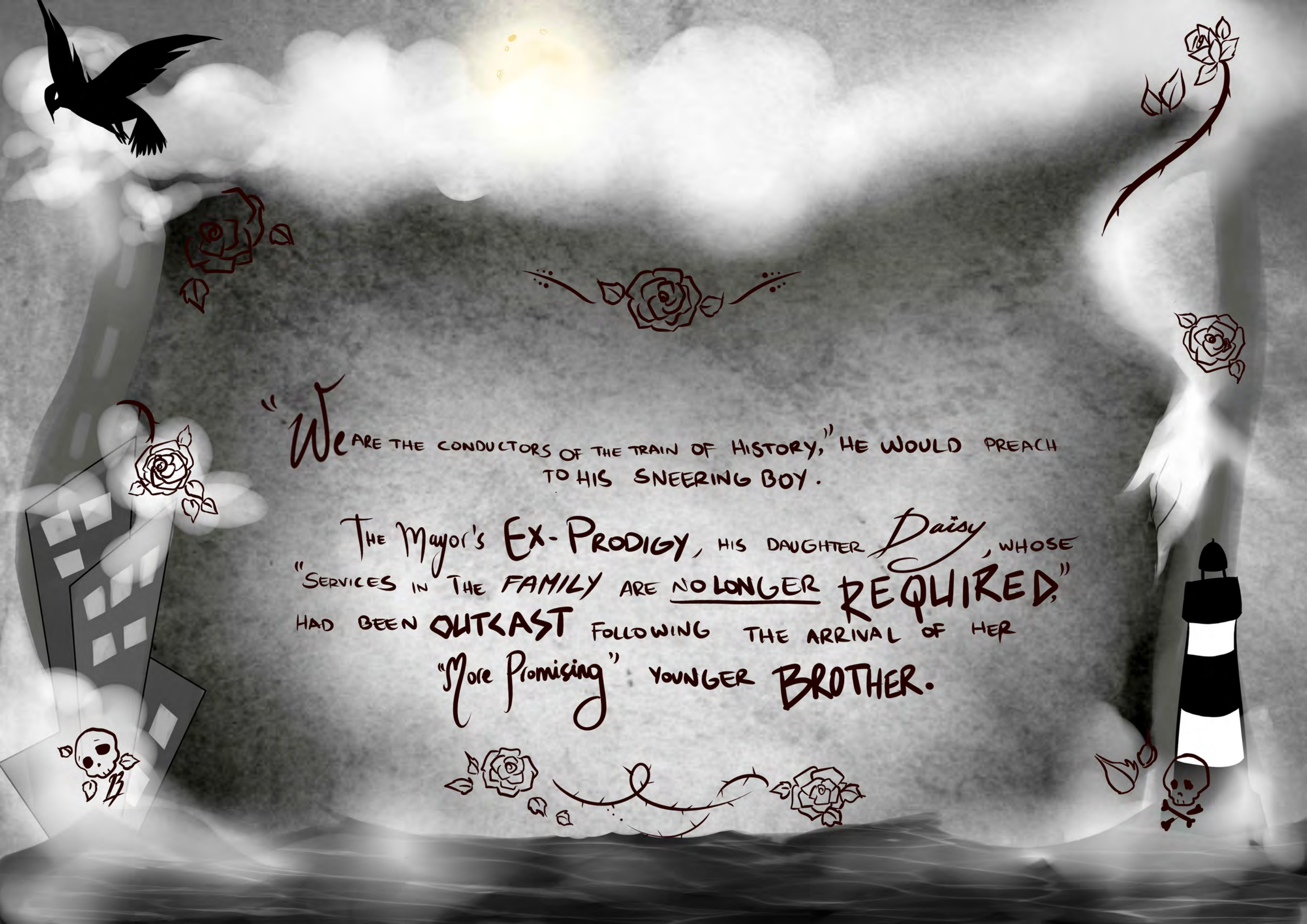
FROM HIS LESS THAN IVORY TOWER WHERE HE VOWED TO RETURN THE CITY TO ITS FORMER GLORY, THE MAYOR VIEWED ITS CITIZENS, EVEN HER, AS COMMODITIES - MERE CHIPS TO BE GAMBLED. BUT HE ALSO KNEW THAT MORE THAN HIS HEAVY HANDED POLITICAL FUTURE DEPENDED ON HER GRACE AND WARMTH.



AS THE CITY'S LONGEST TENURED MAYOR, HAWTHORNE FANCIED HIMSELF THE PATRIARCH OF A POLITICAL DYNASTY FOR THE IMMINENTLY RE-DAWNING WORLD, AND GROOMED HIS SON, PRODIGY, TO CARRY THE FAMILY'S TAINTED TORCH.












"We ARE THE CONDUCTORS OF THE TRAIN OF HISTORY," HE WOULD PREACH TO HIS SNEERING BOY.

THE Mayor's EX-PRODIGY, HIS DAUGHTER *Daisy*, WHOSE "SERVICES IN THE FAMILY ARE NO LONGER REQUIRED," HAD BEEN **OUTCAST** FOLLOWING THE ARRIVAL OF HER "More Promising" YOUNGER BROTHER.


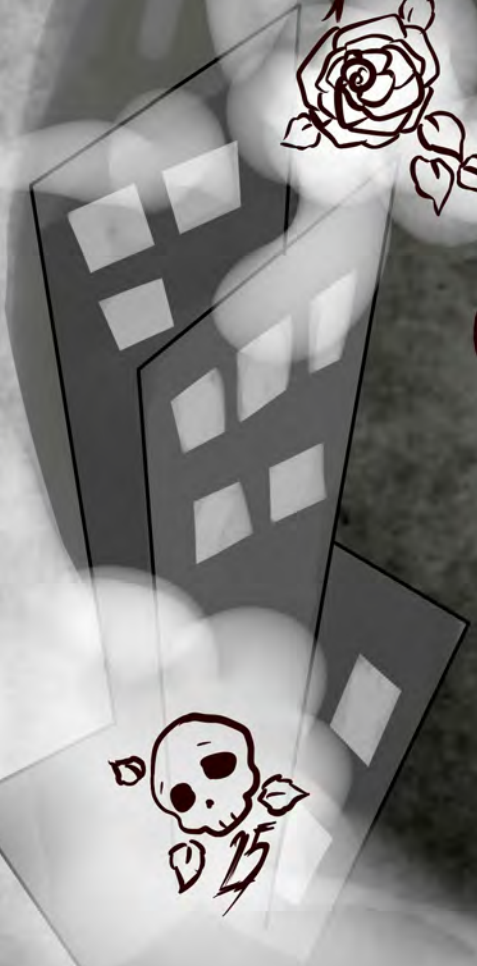




THE DAYS MELTED BY LIKE NIGHTMARES, AND OVERCAST CITY SPUTTERED ONWARD UNDER THE ENCROACHING, RAPACIOUS WATCH OF ITS *Neighbors*. ALL REMAINED STABLY UNSTABLE AND PLEASANTLY UNPLEASANT UNTIL ONE OMINOUS Night.



ONE OMINOUS NIGHT WHEN SOMETHING TRULY WICKED ROLLED ACROSS THE LAKE AND ONTO THE UNSUSPECTING SHORES OF OVERCAST CITY.







LIKE A GHOUL, IT SLUNK THROUGH ALLEYWAYS AND CREPT AROUND STREET CORNERS. IT SCALED BUILDINGS AND HISSED ALONG ROOFTOPS, DEVOURING ONE HOUSE AFTER ANOTHER.

MCKINLEY TREMBLED AS THE VIOLENT FOG OOZED PAST HIS WINDOW AND CLOAKED LAKE EFFECT STEEL UNDER ITS BLANKET OF DARKNESS, AND WATCHED WITH HEIGHTENING HORROR AS IT TIPTOED ITS WAY TO HOPELESS LIGHTHOUSE, WHERE SHE BLAZED IN HER INFINITE GLORY, IGNORANT OF THE IMPENDING



DANGER RAPPING AT THE DOOR.







SILENTLY, IT CLIMBED THE WINDING STAIRCASE TO ITS PINNACLE, WHERE BEFORE THOUSANDS OF PLEADING EYES, IT SWALLOWED HER AND THE FINAL, DESPERATE RAYS OF HER EMANATING GLOW.

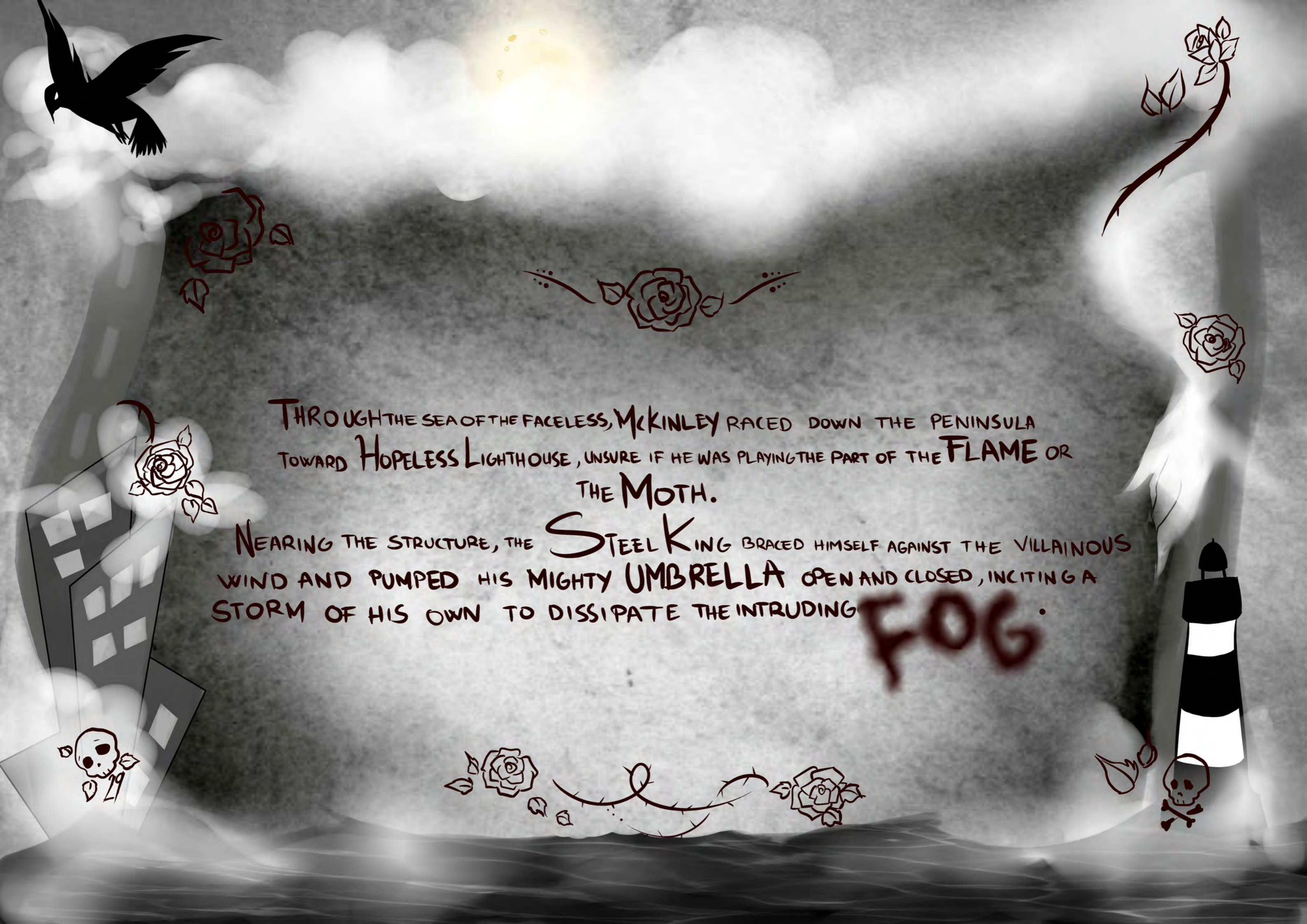


A COLLECTIVE GASP ROSE FROM THE SICKENED CITY, FOR NEVER BEFORE HAD HER LIGHT BEEN EXTINGUISHED. THOUSANDS OF MISERABLE EYES SCoured THE COAST, INCLUDING MCKINLEY'S, WHOSE BONES RATTLED INAUSPICIOUSLY. HE TORE OUT OF LAKE EFFECT STEEL AND ONTO THE CROWDED STREETS.

NO.



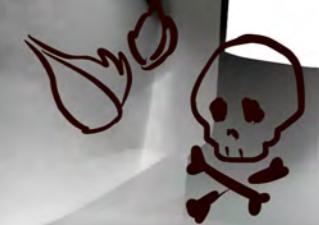
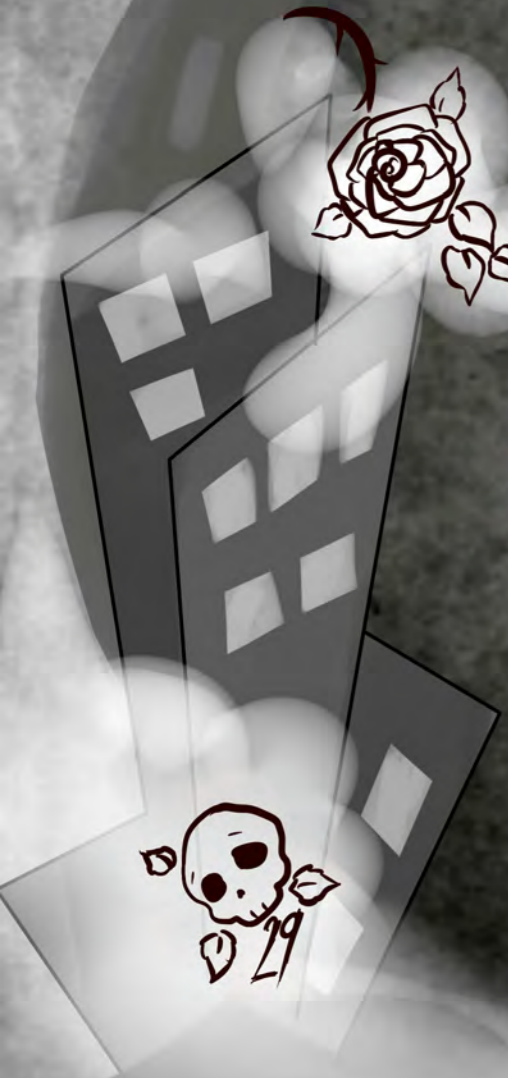






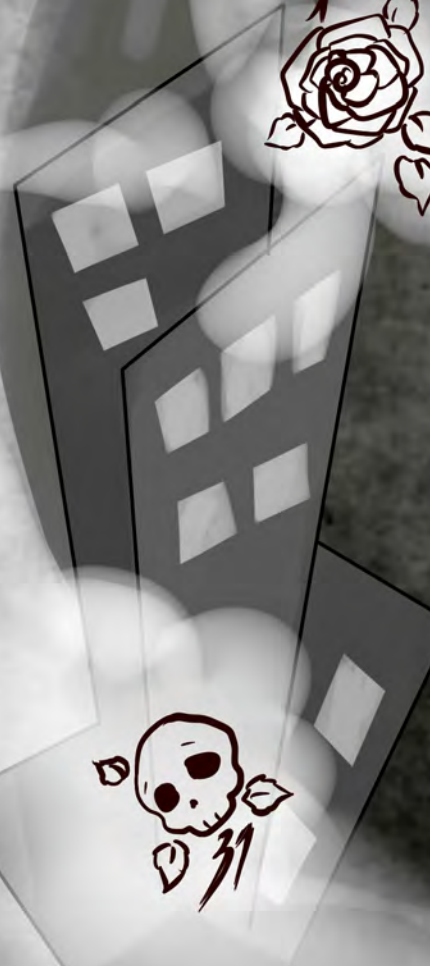



THROUGH THE SEA OF THE FACELESS, MCKINLEY RACED DOWN THE PENINSULA TOWARD HOPELESS LIGHTHOUSE, UNSURE IF HE WAS PLAYING THE PART OF THE **FLAME** OR THE **MOTH**.

NEARING THE STRUCTURE, THE **STEEL KING** BRACED HIMSELF AGAINST THE VILLAINOUS WIND AND PUMPED HIS MIGHTY **UMBRELLA** OPEN AND CLOSED, INCITING A STORM OF HIS OWN TO DISSIPATE THE INTRUDING

FOG.











AFTER MINUTES OF BATED BREATH, MCKINLEY RELEASED HIS UMBRELLA, AND WATCHED WITH THE CITY AS THE BLEAK MOON, PEERING THROUGH A HOLE IN THE CLOUDS, RAISED THE CURTAIN ON THE FORSAKEN LIGHTHOUSE IN AN EXHIBITION OF MISERY.

SHE WAS GONE.


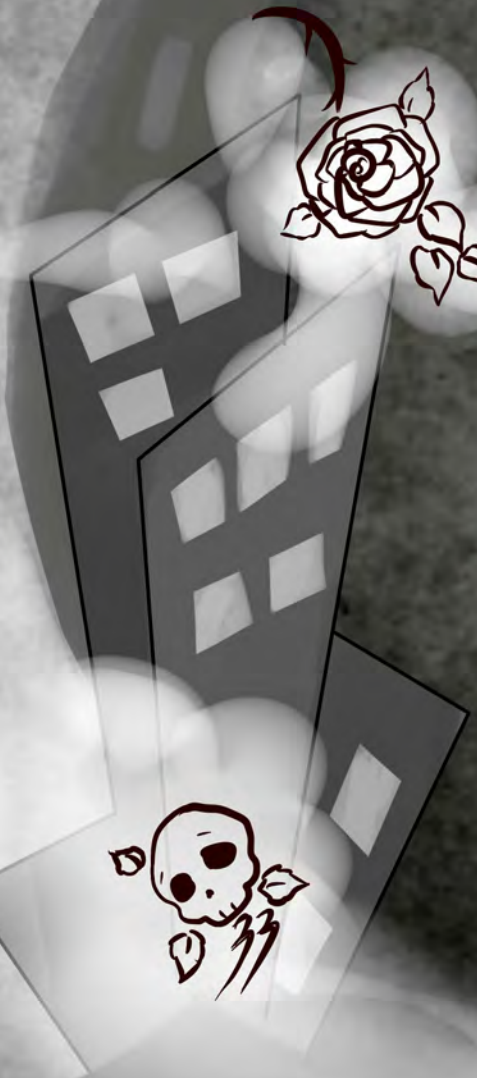
THE CITY, EXHALING IN A COLLECTIVE MOAN, SEEMED TO COLLAPSE IN ON ITSELF UPON REALIZING HER ABSENCE.












MCKINLEY RUBBED HIS EYES AS HE SWORE THAT HE COULD SEE
THE BLOOD OF OVERLAST CITY, NOW DOOMED TO WANDER
INTO OBSCURITY, TRICKLING THROUGH THE GUTTERS.




SCANNING THE WATER, MCKINLEY SENSED THE TRACE OF A BOAT'S WAKE.
Now who left these fleeting footsteps? HE PONDERED AS HE GAZED INTO THE RETREATING FOG,
SEARCHING FOR ANY SIGN OF ITS PERPETRATOR.







AS THE OVERCAST HEARTS WILTED, MCKINLEY FOUND HIMSELF SUDDENLY
AWAKENED. SOMEWHERE FROM WITHIN HIS CHEST, HE COULD FEEL THE COGS TURNING ONCE MORE,
AS IF COAL WERE BEING SHOVELED INTO THE FURNACE AGAIN.


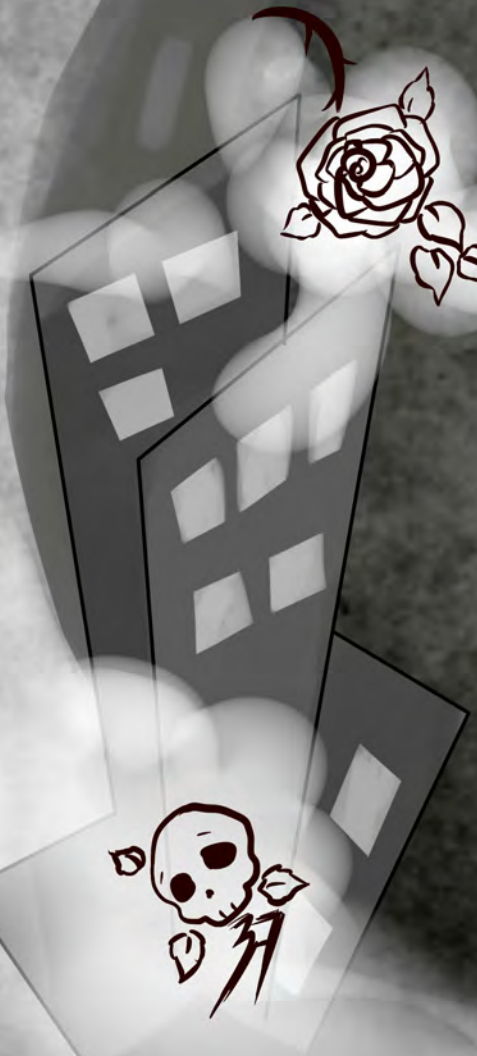





SOMETHING HEROIC AND MANIC PROPELLED HIM TOWARD HIS STILL (THOUGH BARELY) TETHERED
BALLOON, AND POSSESSED HIM TO SLASH THE CRAFT FREE FROM ITS ROPES.

"THE SKY IS A DEATH-WISH, BUT LETTING HER GO IS BEYOND ONE,"
MCKINLEY VOWED AS HE SPRUNG ABOARD THE DEPARTING VESSEL AND
ROSE WITH IT INTO THE SWIRLING ABYSS.








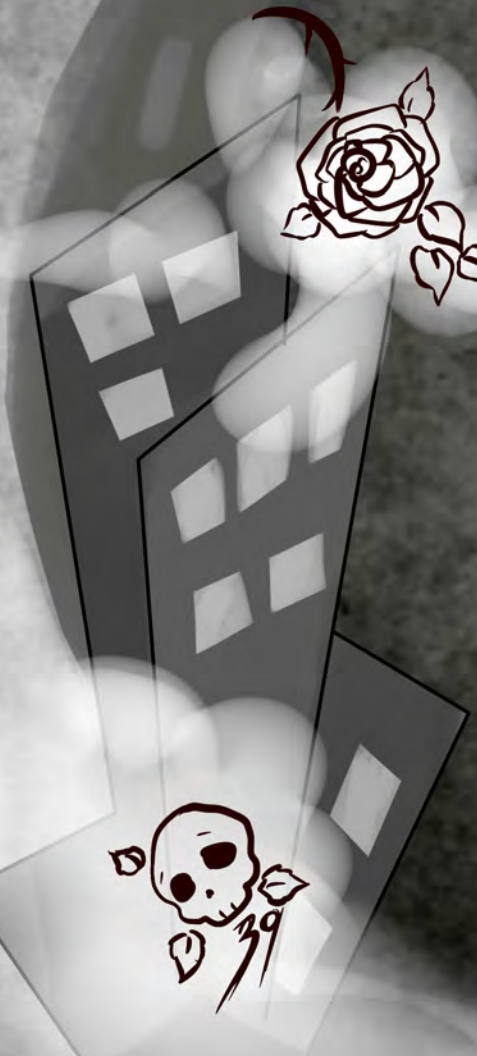





WITH HIS BACK TO THE CITY AND HIS EYES
SET OVER THE LAKE, HE FAILED
TO NOTICE THE LONE RAVEN PERCHED

ATOP

HOPELESS LIGHTHOUSE.










THE BALLOON SOARED, RISING TO STAGGERING HEIGHTS OVER
THE RECEDING CITY BELOW. VIOLENT WINDS THREATENED TO OVERTURN THE
CRAFT, BUT **McKINLEY**, A SEASONED SAILOR OF THE SKIES, MANAGED TO
STEADY THE **VESSEL**.

ONLY THEN DID HE BECOME AWARE OF A **STOWAWAY**.










SWEET DAISY HAWTHORNE, WHO HAD SLIPPED INTO THE BASKET ONLY MOMENTS BEFORE MCKINLEY'S ASCENT, HAD FINALLY FALLEN UNDER HIS SURVEILLANCE. SHE WAS DONNED FROM HEAD TO TOE IN HER USUAL RAIN GEAR, AND ALTHOUGH APPROPRIATE AT THIS PARTICULAR JUNCTURE, SHE WOULD NEVER BE SEEN WITHOUT IT, AS IF ETERNALLY EXPECTING RAIN CLOUDS TO FOLLOW.














UNDER DAISY'S ARM, AS ALWAYS, WAS SMALLS, EMPTY-HEADED BUT FULLY-MOUTHED. MCKINLEY HAD COBBLED SMALLS TOGETHER WITH STRAY BOLTS AND SCRAPS FROM LAKE EFFET STEEL, AND SHEEPISHLY PRESENTED HIM TO DAISY SOME YEARS AGO AS A DIFFIDENT CONSOLATION AFTER HER MOTHER HAD VANISHED.


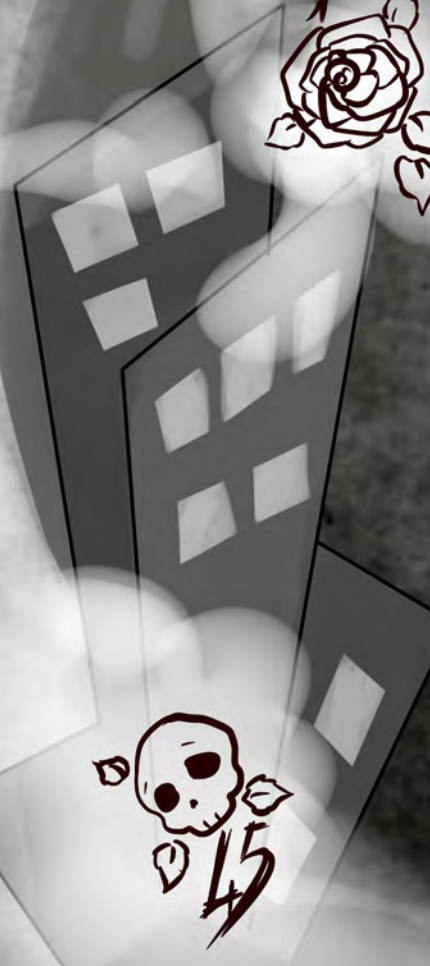
"GOOD TO SEE YOU, POP!" THE BUCKET OF BOLTS EXCLAIMED, INADVERTENTLY CRACKING THE SILENCE.











"I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE ELSE TO GO," DAISY CONFESSED AS SHE STUDIED HER BOOTS. "THE STORM, THE FOG... IT JUST CAME OUT OF NOWHERE. BUT MCKINLEY..." HER EYES ROSE TO MEET HIS, "WHERE IS SHE?"




ALTHOUGH CONCERNED FOR THE SAFETY OF HIS YOUNG FRIEND, MCKINLEY CALCULATED THAT BY NOW, HIGH ABOVE THE CHURNING WATERS OF MO(UR)NING LAKE, THE FURY OF THE ELEMENTS HAD CARRIED THEM FAR TOO FAR TO ORCHESTRATE AN IMPROMPTU LANDING.








"WELL MY DEAR," MCKINLEY SMILED AS HE PATTED DAISY ON THE HEAD, "IT SEEMS AS THOUGH YOU HAVE VOLUNTEERED YOUR SERVICES TO HELP ME SOLVE THIS BEDEVILING RIDDLE."



A HESITANT SMILE CROSSED DAISY'S TYPICALLY FORLORN FACE, AND CLUTCHING SMALLS CLOSELY, SHE SETTLED BY MCKINLEY'S SIDE.



MCKINLEY TURNED BACK TO NAVIGATING, AND DESPITE THE INCESSANT BABBLINGS OF SMALLS, HE THOUGHT HE COULD DISCERN DAISY SINGING TO NO ONE IN PARTICULAR, "THE LIGHT MAY BE DIM, BUT IT'S BRIGHTER THAN THE DARK WE'VE BEEN LIVING IN."







BUFFALO POP PUNK ART.
THIS IS YOUR CUE TO TURN ON YOUR HEEL,
RUN ASFAST AS YOU CAN,
AND NEVER LOOK BACK.
THESE PAGES WILL ONLY BREAK YOUR HEART
AND STEAL THE LIGHT FROM YOUR EYES.
IT'S A KEY AND YOU WONT LIKE WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE
OF THE DOOR.

ELEGANT LIES, BUT LIES ALL THE SAME,
WORDS LIKE A EULOGY, AND HOOKS LIKE CRASHES.
IT'S NOT WORTH ALL THE SIDE EFFECTS
OR THE AMOUNT OF SLEEP YOU'LL LOSE.
SO LEAVE THIS IN YOUR REAR VIEW MIRROR,
AND DON'T TELL YOUR FRIENDS,
AND IT WILL LEAVE YOU IN THE GUTTER.

FOLLOW THUNDERCLOUD KID
AND THEIR MUSIC ON:

