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## Angelu Demonai

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# **Angelu Demonai**

by Caitlin Leigh Halvorson

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing

Linfield College

May 2011

Approved by  *Signature redacted*

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## **With Gratitude**

*To my family. You have inspired me more than you know.*

*To my friends. You helped keep me sane...or out of a straitjacket, at least.*

*To my professors. Your guidance has been indispensable.*

“Sometimes you wake up. Sometimes the fall kills you. And sometimes,  
when you fall,  
**you fly.**”

from Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman, Fables and Reflections*: “Fear of Falling”

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## Foreword

This project has been a long time in the making. The concept originated several years ago, and what was once just the shadow of a character has morphed into the story you see today - the makings of a graphic novel about one rock musician's quest to discover herself, and save the worlds in the process.

Of course, you will only see a small part of the story. What is included in this thesis project is only the first volume of several (four, I expect). And while the journey is not yet completed, the ride has been thrilling so far. I look forward to seeing it through to the end.

In the meantime, you have this paper to peruse. It is divided into two parts. The first is my honors thesis, entitled "Comics and the Quest: The form and content of Angelu Demonai." It includes an overview of the history of the comics and how they are commonly perceived in our culture, an examination of the Hero's Journey, and a discussion of how my project fits into both of these ideas. There you will also find more information about how the idea for Angelu Demonai was born, some of the ideals that I based the tale upon, and other literary works that had a direct impact on this project. The honors thesis is followed by the creative thesis, "Angelu Demonai Volume 1: The Over World," which contains the prose draft of the contents of the first volume of the work. It also has panel sketches so you can get a feel for how the story will be laid out graphically, and several pieces of concept art from the series.

I am pleased to have you along for this journey, and I hope you enjoy what you find. You can also view this project on the web at [www.clh-art.com/angeluDemonai](http://www.clh-art.com/angeluDemonai).

*Caithlin Leigh Halverson*

**Comics and the Quest:**  
*The form and content of Angelu Demonai*



## **Introduction**

When I came to Linfield, I knew exactly what I wanted to get out of my education. I wanted to learn the skills necessary to turn my passion for stories from a hobby to a lifestyle, to join the ranks of the artists whose business is bringing stories to life. Thus, my choice of Creative Writing and Electronic Arts majors. These two majors focus on distinct artistic mediums – the former of words, the latter of digital media – which allow me to explore the story-creating process from vastly different angles. It was only fitting that at the end of my undergraduate career, I find a way to combine literary and visual techniques to tell a story. My quest to create a graphic novel was born.

Every storyteller must make two equally important decisions – how to tell a story, and what story to tell. My story, *Angelu Demonai*, is a graphic novel about a young woman on a quest to learn who and what she is, to grow from rock musician into warrior, and hopefully save the worlds in the process. But why a graphic novel? What is a graphic novel anyway? Why this quest? What does it draw from similar stories, and what was the inspiration for the tale? This paper represents my attempt to understand the place of my project in the history of stories. Let us begin by looking into the first aspect of any story, the format. Let us explore the world of graphic novels.

## About the Format – the Comic

My first real experience with graphic novels was collections of Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes*. At the time, the idea that these books were somehow trivial because they told stories with images as well as words never occurred to me. I adored the characters and the series as much as I did any of my favorite prose novels. But after this first introduction, I had little interaction with graphic novels. It was not until I came to college that I finally started to explore the format more, starting with *The Sandman* series by the much-acclaimed author Neil Gaiman. My love affair with comics was renewed.

My encounters with graphic novels were much like those I had with prose novels. Some were wonderful. Others were rather awful. I never blamed the awfulness on the fact that I was reading a graphic novel – but at the same time I remember being almost astonished by how engaging the stories could be. Even though my experience with comics was very limited, I still had an idea of the way they were generally viewed – as a somewhat childish genre of stories that kids read but eventually grow out of.

The more graphic novels I read, the less I believed that myself. But as I moved forward with my thesis plans, I knew that dealing with this assumption could be a challenge. After all, “graphic novel” is just a glorified term for “comic book,” which generally has some very puerile connotations even though they are, in fact, the same thing. Neil Gaiman once remarked that being called a graphic novelist as opposed to a comic book writer made him “feel like someone who’d been informed that she wasn’t actually a hooker; that in fact she was a lady of the evening” (Bender 4). They mean the same thing – one just sounds more dignified.

Many people in the critical world regard comic books as little more than “subliterate adolescent fantasies” (Witek 5). But why are comics regarded so poorly? Simply put, it is because denigrators of comic books have not learned to separate the content from the format (*see Fig. 1*). The comics format is a way to tell a story, not any

type of story itself; comics can be used to tell any number of stories, in any genre, to any audience. While many comics tell very juvenile stories, so too do many novels. And just as the novel format (or poetic format, or script format) can be used to tell childish stories just like comics, they can also be used to tell inspiring tales of incredible depth – just like comics. Whether you call them comics or graphic novels, they refer to the same thing – a way to tell a story. Nothing more, nothing less.

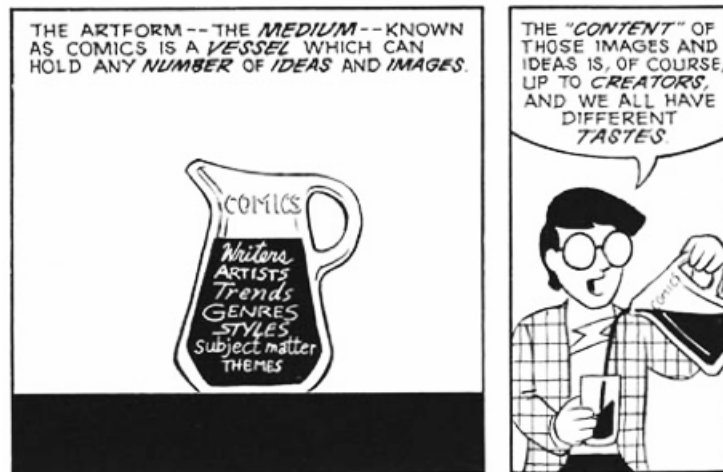


Fig. 1. Panels 1- 2 from page 6 of Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*.

Ever since I discovered comics I understood the power and delight that this storytelling medium evokes. Now in adulthood, I wish to try my hand at harnessing the unique power of words and images in combination to tell a story in a way that neither words nor images could do on their own. So in the interest of defending comics as a noteworthy form of artistic expression, I would like to look into this concept further by answering these questions:

- 1) What are comics?
- 2) Where did the medium first appear, and how has it evolved through history?
- 3) How is its reputation changing from a genre of stories meant for children to a legitimate storytelling medium worthy of "serious critical analysis" (Witek 3)?

## History of comics

When did comic books first start appearing in the world? Well, the answer to that question largely depends upon your definition of what a comic is. There are some who identify comics as “one of the few native American art forms” (Inge xv). If this is true, then Richard Outcault’s “Yellow Boy” comics, first appearing in 1895, were the earliest to be published (Ross). But are comics really a strictly American medium? Many disagree, and some sites mention “The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck,” published by Rudolphe Töpffer in 1837, as “the earliest known comic book” (Bellis). In either case, the comics format would only be considered a couple hundred years old. However, neither of these examples offers us a definition of what a comic actually is, and it is not until such a definition is reached that we can determine how long comics have been around.

In his book *Understanding Comics*, comics writer and scholar Scott McCloud articulates and explores this need. He reveals that “master comics artist Will Eisner uses the term sequential art” to describe comic books, and uses this as the launching point in his attempt to specify “a proper dictionary-style definition” (5; 7). What McCloud comes up with is this: “Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (see Fig. 2) (*Understanding Comics* 9). This broad definition clearly differentiates comics from other forms of artistic expression (prose, animation, music) and McCloud takes care to point out that it is “strictly neutral on matters of style, quality, or subject matter” (*Understanding Comics* 5).

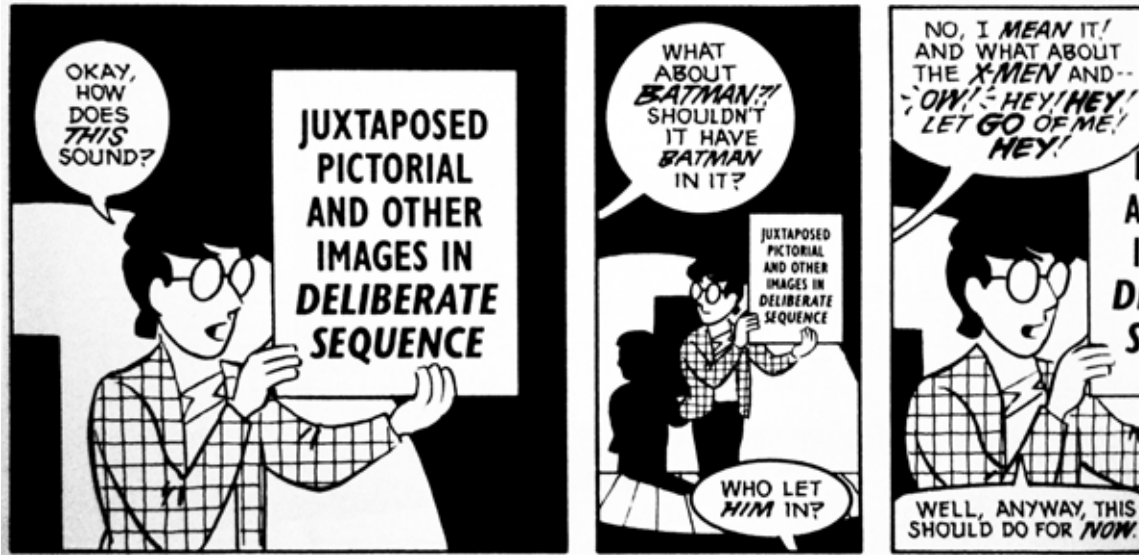


Fig. 2. Panels 1-3 from page 9 of Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*.

Using this definition of comics broadens our historical scope considerably. To illustrate this, let me reference three examples:

- *A Rake's Progress* by William Hogarth: this series of eight engravings tells the story of the downfall of a young man who winds up in bedlam after squandering his inherited fortune on prostitutes, gambling, and similar activities. It was first published in 1735 ("William Hogarth").
- The Bayeux Tapestry: a 70 meter tapestry embroidered with captioned scenes depicting the conquering of England. Although its origins remain unknown, the tapestry "was probably commissioned in the 1070s" (*Britain's Bayeux Tapestry*).
- The Trajan Column: located in Trajan's Forum in Rome, this column is decorated with 155 scenes "depicting the campaigns of Trajan in Dacia in AD 101-102 and AD 105-106" (Grout). It was dedicated to the emperor Trajan on the eighteenth of May, 113 AD ("Trajan's Column").

These are all examples of artwork I studied in one of my Linfield courses, *Introduction to Visual Culture*. While we reviewed these images, I couldn't help thinking they were quite similar to the comics of today. In fact, according to McCloud, these examples all are comics. McCloud cites several examples of ancient art that fit his definition perfectly, including the three I've mentioned, and several others – even one from Egypt dating back to approximately 1300 BC (McCloud *Understanding Comics* 14). If we accept McCloud's definition, comics are one of the oldest forms of artistic expression.

Of course, there are some who will contend that “a prerequisite for inclusion in the category [of comics] is a mixture of words...and pictures” (Witek 6). However, in McCloud's definition, “it doesn't have to contain words to be a comic,” a sentiment I agree with fully (*Understanding Comics* 8). I have seen several examples (*see Fig. 3*), from simple 4-panel strips to full 24-page comics such as “Cat” by Paul Winkler (found in Scott McCloud's anthology *24 Hour Comics*), that tell their story eloquently without the use of words at all.

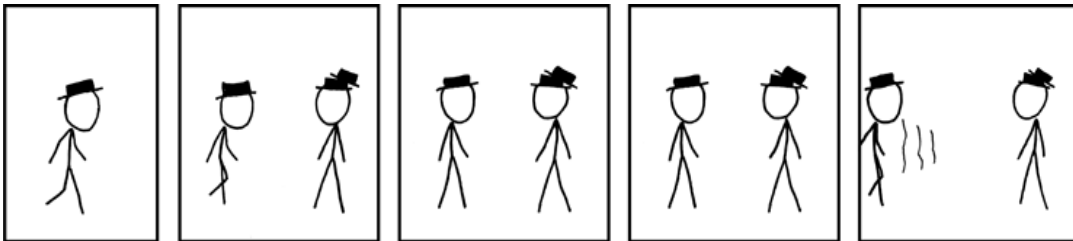


Fig. 3. “Hats,” from xkcd.

Thanks to this definition, we see that the art of comics is one that stretches back into ancient history, a potent and content-neutral storytelling medium that can tap both into the visual impact of images and the descriptive power of words, creating an effect that neither words nor images could convey on their own. As Leonardo da Vinci said, “And you who wish to represent by words the form of man and all the aspects of his membrification, relinquish the idea. For the more minutely you describe the more you

will confine the mind of the reader, and the more you will keep him from the knowledge of the thing described. And so it is necessary to draw and to describe” (qtd. in Inge 132). So why, then, is the comic form in contemporary American society so often associated with cheap superhero “power fantasies” and described as a form not worthy of serious consideration (Witek 7)? To understand this, let us consider the development of comics in America.

- 1895 – “Yellow Kid” debuted in the *New York World* (Ross). This very popular comic was the first of many such “funnies,” comic strips printed in newspapers and magazines. These were limited by their nature as “supplementary features” in several ways; they had to “be brief enough to fit the space requirements... [and] general (and genteel) enough to appeal to a broad audience” (Witek 6). These simple gag strips were distributed in periodicals, and such publications “have traditionally carried with them the connotation of disposability” (McCloud *Reinventing Comics* 29).
- 1938 – *Action Comics* comes into being “and features the first superhero ever: Superman” (see Fig. 4) (Ross). This spawned “what collectors today term the Golden Age of comic books,” generally said to last until the late 1940s or early 1950s, and it was this era that “helped define the super-hero archetype” (“Golden Age Comics”; Shipway “Gold and Silver”).

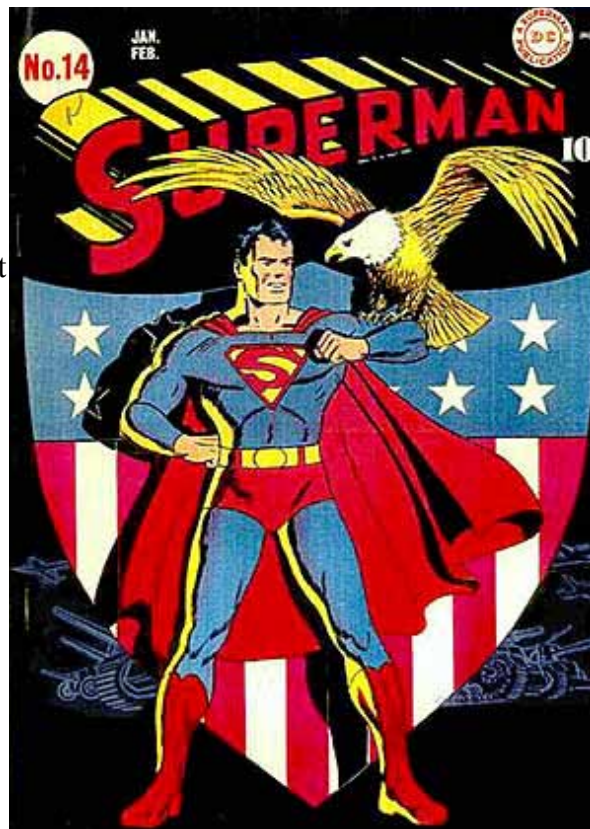


Fig. 4. Fred Ray’s cover, Superman #14

- mid-1940s – E.C. Comics, which “originally stood for ‘Educational Comics,’” was created” (Witek 15). At the time, these and other “preachies” were marketed as good-for-you comics that told stories from “the Bible, American history, world history, and science” (Witek 13; Witek 15). These “rather dry informational comics” were not particularly popular (Witek 14).
- 1947 – M.C. Gaines, founder of E.C. Comics, died and his son took over the company. E.C. Comics “came to mean ‘Entertaining Comics,’” and explored “beautifully crafted and gleefully perverse” stories of “horror, science fiction, crime, and war” (Witek 15).
- mid-1950s – psychiatrist Fredric Wertham, author of *Seduction of the Innocent*, “implicated comics in everything from juvenile delinquency to sexual ‘perversions’ to race hatred” and “helped trigger a firestorm of anti-comics hysteria” (McCloud *Reinventing Comics* 86). This led to a “congressional investigation and the threat of federal anticomic legislation,” which prompted the comic-book industry to take matters into its own hands (Witek 15).
- 1954 – the Comics Code Authority was established by the comic-book industry. It was self-described as the “most stringent code in existence for any communications media,” and would approve no comic that contained “depictions of gore, sex, or sadistic behavior...challenges to established authority...unique details of any crime...condoning of divorce...references to physical afflictions or deformities...[or] any allusions to ‘sexual perversions’ of any kind” (Witek 48; McCloud *Reinventing Comics* 87). Few comics distributors stocked comics that were not approved by the Code. In a way, the comic-book industry dealt itself the biggest blow. The Comics Code “efficiently squelched the few...comic books that were groping toward a sophisticated audience, and in effect it decreed that all comic books would become the ill-crafted pap toward which most American comics tended anyway” (Witek 48-49).



- 1956 – the beginning of the Silver Age of comics (see Fig. 5). Lasting until about 1970, this period saw the return of many of the superheroes first introduced in the Golden Age (Shipway “Gold and Silver”). This was largely thanks to the Comics Code Authority, as “[s]ubmission to the authority requires a medium mainly irrelevant to reality; thus characters escape into a world... dominated by super-heroes... which both might and right are on the side of morality” (Inge xiv).



Fig. 5. Jack Kirby’s cover of *Fantastic Four* vol. 1, 1.

- late 1960s, early 1970s – underground comic books, or “comix,” thrive as “outlets for the graphic fantasies and social protests of the youth counterculture” (Witek 51). These comix creators deliberately worked against the “American standard of good taste” by making comix that directly violated the Comics Code (Witek 51). However, when the “drug paraphernalia shops” which were the main distributors of such comics began to be shut down in the mid-1970s, the rebellious underground comix movement began to die (Witek 51). Though short-lived, the period had its purpose. The comix creators, having “systematically flung down and danced upon [common American standards of acceptability,] created works in the sequential art medium of unparalleled vigor, virtuosity, and spontaneity – after the underground comix, the Comics Code would never be the same” (Witek 51).

- 1970 – the Bronze Age of comics began. This period closely resembles the Silver Age, but “got real with darker story lines [and] shady elements...as heroes fought less against aliens and more against drugs, racism, and death” (Shipway “Bronze and Dark”). The end of this era is debatable, but the mid-80s are a good general reference for the period’s end (Shipway “Bronze and Dark”).
- mid-1980s – the beginning of the Modern Age (alternatively called the “Copper Age... Iron Age... and, more commonly, the Dark Age”) of comic books (*see Fig. 5*) (“Modern Age of Comic Books”). Extending into present time, this period is particularly marked by its exploration of “darker and more psychologically complex” characters and stories (Shipway “Bronze and Dark”; “Modern Age of Comic Books”).
- 1986 – Art Spiegelman’s comic *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* was published. This comic book was nominated in 1987 by the National Book Critics Circle “for its annual award in biography” and “quickly drew worldwide attention” as an example of an extremely sophisticated comic book telling a harrowing historical and biographical tale (Witek 96). Other titles, such as Alan Moore’s *Watchmen* (1986-87), Neil Gaiman’s *The Sandman* (1989 – 1996), and Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* (2000) were also the recipients of critical acclaim and various awards. Finally, it was being demonstrated that the comic book format could be critically analyzed and accepted as a viable literary form.

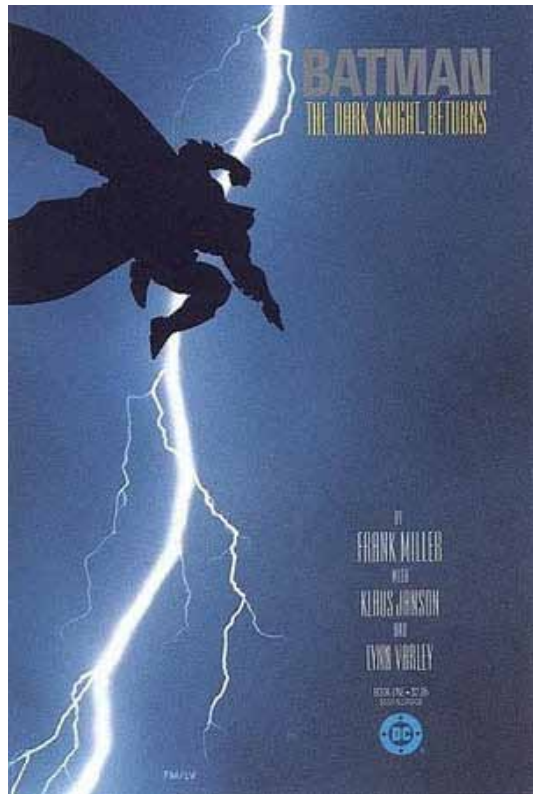


Fig. 6. “Modern Age of Comic Books.”

- late 80s, early 90s – “teh internetz” is born (*see Fig. 7*). The advent of the internet and technical advances in screen resolution, computing power, and bandwidth brought with them the possibility of web comics and the freedom of independent web distribution for comic writers and artists. As the technology matured, comics creators could finally begin to take hold of the advantages of a “digital canvas... a malleable world with limitless opportunities for revision and expansion”

(McCloud *Reinventing Comics* 148).



Fig. 7. “Teh Internetz – LolCats.”

- 2011 – DC Comics, one of the last in a long line of comics publishers, announced that its titles “[would] no longer carry the Comics Code Authority Seal of Approval” (Lee). The Comics Code Authority was now, effectively, dead.

The history of comics I’ve presented here is of course incomplete. A more complete list would include European comics such as *The Adventures of Tintin* by Hergé, or Japanese comics like Hiromu Arakawa’s *Fullmetal Alchemist*. It would also have examined the roles of such comics personalities as Jack Kirby, “widely recognized as one of the most influential and prolific artists in comics,” or Osamu Tezuka, “Japan’s ‘god of manga’” (Jack Kirby Museum; McCloud *Making Comics* 218).

But my aim here was not to create an expansive history of all comics known to man – a task which would take volumes. Rather, I only hoped to illustrate the nature of comics as a *form*, not a *genre*; to use historical examples of comics to demonstrate how their unique storytelling potential was used even in ancient times; to provide a historical basis for understanding why comics are often snubbed in common American culture; and to show that present-day comics are slowly overcoming that prejudice to show their versatility as an art form (*see Fig. 8*).



Fig. 8. Characters Calvin and Hobbes from Bill Watterson's comic. Found on Andrew Hainen's blog post "My Love/Hate Relation With Comics."

## About the Content – the Quest

The format, however effective, is only one part of what makes a story. The rest is, of course, the content itself, and one of the things I've long found fascinating about stories is how similar that content tends to be. Two stories that seem vastly dissimilar on the surface may, upon closer inspection, yield surprising parallels. By examining the plots of stories through the ages, "we may discern that there are certain continually recurring general shapes to stories," and furthermore, that "the essence of the message they are putting across is always the same" (Booker 19; Booker 543). This is, to me, an awe-inspiring idea. If we can recognize and understand the general shapes that our own stories are built upon and how they relate to stories of the past, how much richer will our own work become?

The largest such recurring shape is what is known as the Hero's Journey. Also called the monomyth, the Hero's Journey is defined as "a pattern of narrative...[that] describes the typical adventure of the archetype known as The Hero" ("Hero's Journey"). It can be seen in "all stories, from the crudest jokes to the highest flights of literature... occurring [sic] in every culture, in every time," whether incidentally or consciously on the part of the teller ("Hero's Journey"). The Journey includes many stages, any or all of which may appear in the course of a story, and describes the Hero's path from the start of the quest to the end (*see Fig. 9*). Mythologist Joseph Campbell identified this pattern, the various stages in the journey, and the common archetypes that are found within the monomyth. The Journey has been applied to "drama, storytelling, myth, religious ritual, and psychological development" and often parallels the work of Carl Jung, who theorized about the collective unconscious, "the reservoir of our experiences as a species," and archetypes, "an unlearned tendency to experience things in a certain way" ("Hero's Journey"; Boeree).

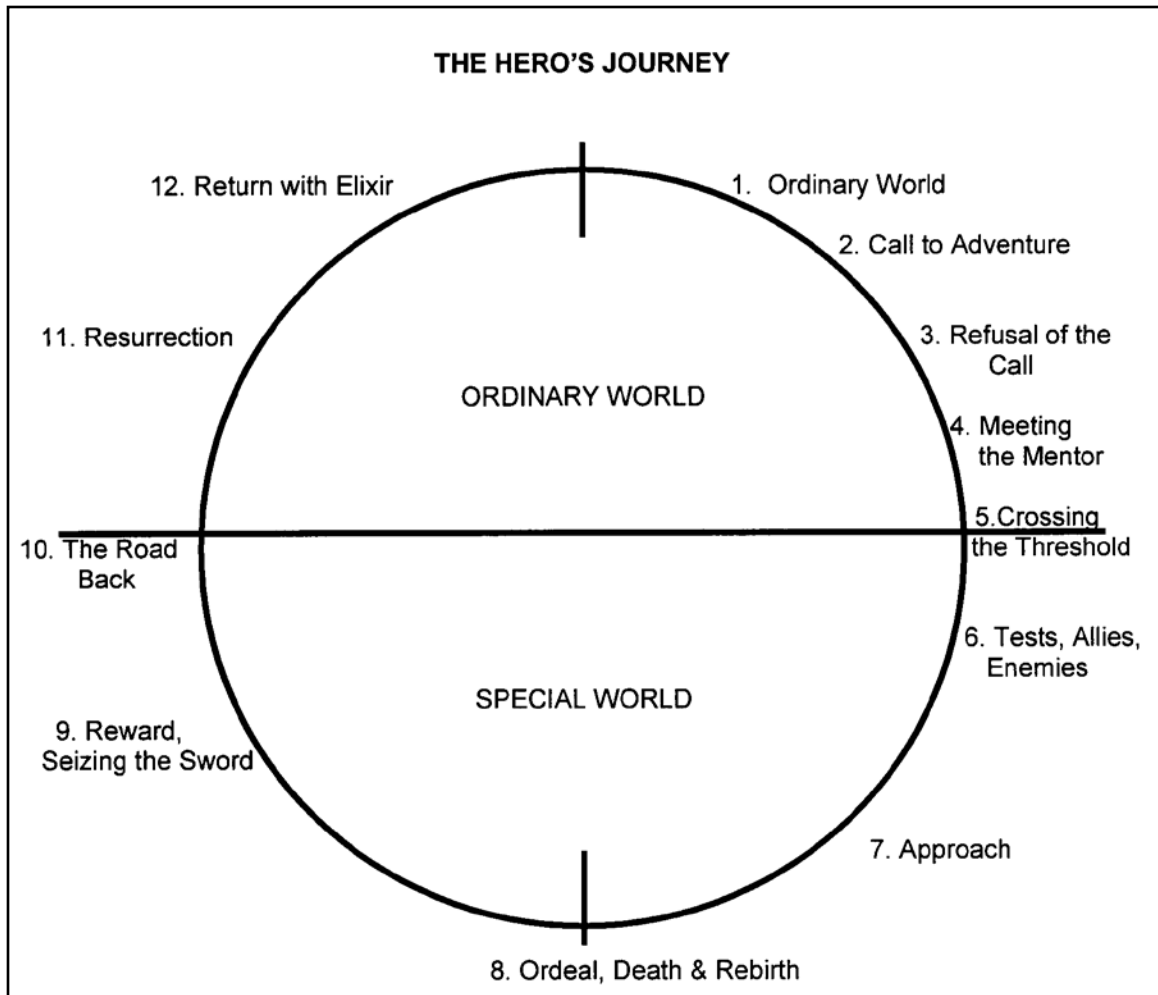


Fig. 9. "Hero's Journey."

In the spring of 2008, I took a literature topics class that focused on the Hero's Journey. I remain fascinated by its constant presence, by its inescapable nature in the realm of storytelling, and about what that inescapability means in regards to stories in general. I find myself drawing upon the cycle, often deliberately, but just as often quite by accident, whenever I write. My current project is no different. I can easily trace the progression of my story through the many stages of the Journey – the call to adventure and refusal of the call, the crossing of the threshold from the ordinary to the special world (or worlds, in my case), the road of trials, apotheosis, and the boon at the end of the quest. My tale also includes several of the key archetypes – the mother and father, the persona (public image), shapeshifters, heralds and mentors.

There are of course more stages than this in the Journey, and other archetypes. And it should not be surprising that they may be found within my story. After all, it wouldn't be called monomyth if the Journey could not be applied universally. But consciousness of the Hero's Journey and how it works within my comic – whether I intended it or not – have aligned the story very closely with myths and similarly quest-driven tales, and I do believe that an awareness of the Journey and the archetypes can open not just the characters, but also the readers, to the incredible legacy of storytelling and storytellers throughout history.

But the Hero's Journey itself is not the only recognizable story structure. According to Christopher Booker, the stories of the world can be broken down into “only a handful of basic plots” (5). The stories based on these plots are of course infinitely varied. They do not each “[fit] neatly and with mechanical regularity into one or another category,” and in fact they often overlap dramatically (Booker 5). But these basic plots, of which Booker counts seven, all recur in some form or another in virtually every story known to man. After looking over the proposed plots, I realize that my story fits most seamlessly into the plot of the Quest.

While all of the basic plots are ultimately rooted in the Hero's Journey, the Quest seems to me the one that most neatly follows the Journey, and Booker himself says, “No type of story is more instantly recognisable [sic] to us than a Quest” (69). The premise of the Quest is simple enough – the hero has something that must be found or accomplished. For whatever reason they are given a task, and “the story remains unresolved until the objective has been finally, triumphantly secured” (Booker 69).

The Quest plot has been of particular importance to me for as long as I remember, long before I had any concept of the monomyth or the seven basic plots. The very idea of a character, driven for whatever reason to complete some arduous goal, seemed natural, seemed *right*, when it came to stories. Everyone is on a quest in some way. All of us want something, everyone has some sort of consuming passion, and the potential to

make possible what hasn't been possible before. To me, the Quest is the quintessential expression of human desire, whether selfish or sacrificial, trivial or tremendous, and in the end no Quest is ever easy. But they are no less worthwhile because of it. Perhaps that struggle is the heart of my love of the Quest. The difficulties can never be more important than the thing being sought.

Of course, the thing being sought is not always obvious. Such is the case in my tale. The main character has been called upon to train, to search, and to fight, in order to save the worlds from the threat of war and domination. But the thing that she really is after is far more nebulous than simply to restore external order. Her Quest is as much internal as it is external, and has more to do with family, freedom, individuality and the sense of home than it does with skill, fate, or her role as savior. This capacity for multi-dimensionality, a quest within a quest – much like the Quest is just one aspect of the Hero's Journey – is part of what gives stories the capacity for such “vast range” even as all stories “are ultimately rooted in a level of the unconscious which is collective to all humanity” (Booker 19; Booker 543).

Finally, even within these overarching plots, we may find smaller distinctive classes of stories. My story, *Angelu Demonai*, falls into one such class, called the Bildungsroman, the “novel of formation” (Abrams 132). This type of novel chronicles the “development of the protagonist's mind and character...into maturity and the recognition of his or her identity and role in the world” (Abrams 132). My protagonist begins the story rather certain of her small and comfortable role in her world, but a part of her feels as though she does not belong, that something is missing. Her Quest is to discover what that missing thing is, and the story tracks her formation from lost musician into proud hero. And while she does not at first accept the call to become that hero, through her arduous training, the long journey, and the “perils and diversions” she must overcome, she grows into the role and accepts her place in the oncoming battle – but on her own terms, as every hero must (Booker 69).



One can find many such similarities when one studies the content of stories that have been told throughout our history. This in itself is perhaps less remarkable than the fact that we never grow tired of the stories that are told, regardless of how much they share with or draw from others before. The underlying structure of the stories, whether on the grand scale of the monomyth, the slightly more specific shapes of the plots, or the many far narrower classifications, is part of what guarantees our satisfaction with the tales that are told. The diversity of the stories within those structures ensures our delight. An understanding of both the wide and the narrow, as readers and as writers, can lead to an incredibly rich story experience, connecting us to the ancient tradition of storytelling across the entire scope of place and time.

## “*Angelu Demonai*”

The story I aim to tell in my graphic novel revolves around a young woman who goes by the name *Angelu Demonai*. That is her stage name, not her given name, which she refuses to use. She is a rock musician with an unusual history – her parents were each from one of two other, alternate worlds to the one in which she grew up. They left her with a guardian when she was a baby, offered no explanation as to why they were deserting her on a different world, and disappeared. *Angelu* has grown up with a sense of abandonment and displacement and turned to music for solace; it is not until members of the other worlds start to search for her that she reluctantly begins to learn the motivations of her parents, her intended role in the future of all the worlds, and where she truly belongs.

Oddly enough, the original inspiration behind this story was related to comics themselves. More specifically, it had to do with musings about a convention for Japanese comics and animation (also called manga and anime, respectively). I was preparing to attend Kumoricon, a major manga and anime conference in Portland, and considering the possibility of *cosplaying*. Cosplay is short for costume play, and a great part of the fun of conventions where cosplay is a common practice comes from recognizing all your favorite characters around you, or dressing up as one yourself. I was lamenting the fact that there were very few characters I could think of that I could successfully cosplay, because how many six-foot-tall pale blond chicks does one encounter in Japanese culture? My solution to this problem was to make up my own character.

Thus *Angelu Demonai* began as an experiment in character creation. I knew I wanted a character that looked like me in the most basic sense. I also wanted her to have wings, because I constantly dream of having wings, and if I can't have them then by god my character certainly can. What else would be cool? Fang would be cool. So would her being a musician.

There. I had a character. But that wasn't enough. She had to have a name, she had to have a story. So I started thinking. Before I knew it, the idea that is now my thesis had taken hold.

The crystallization of this story from its genesis as an off-hand desire for a comics look-alike to the outline for a full-fledged multi-volume graphic novel was slow, several years in the making. But there are several key themes that are repeated in various forms throughout the story. Perhaps the most integral of these ideas is that which is represented by the name of both the story and the title character, *Angelu Demonai*. That idea is of moral dichotomy - angels and demons, heaven and hell – ultimately good and evil. The character chooses her name when she realizes that she does not have just good impulses and innocence within her – there is a dark side as well, alienation and bitterness. She feels both the angel and demon within, and her way of coping with this duality is to claim them both as her own. The name is a reflection of one of my own beliefs – that pure black and white are hard to come by, that the idea of strict duality (particularly in the realm of morality) is inherently flawed. This concept is also revealed in the name of the four worlds of the story:

- Ceila, the over world – from the Spanish word “cielo,” meaning sky or heaven
- Tehra, the middle world – from the Latin word “terra,” for earth
- Hayda, the under world –from Hades, the Greek underworld
- Gehna, the outer world – from Gehenna, destination of the wicked in Jewish lore

Each of these worlds carries with it a sort of moral profile – but in the story, Ceila is not as heavenly as it might seem on the surface. In the same way, Hayda and Gehna, though both named after places that eventually came to mean “hell,” are not so easily marked. Are any of these worlds inherently good or evil? The names may seem to make that claim, but the truth is hardly that simple.

The existence of multiple worlds creates another struggle for Angelu. Her mother is from Hayda, her father from Ceila. She is a bi-racial character, and must cope with the pull of these two very different worlds, both vying for her loyalty. Angelu spent her entire life on Tehra, knowing how different she was from its inhabitants, feeling as though she didn't belong – but the two worlds from which she came do not feel any more like home. This struggle over heritage is one I'm sure many people can empathize with. For me, it speaks directly towards my mixed European and American Indian lineages. How does one reconcile within themselves the fact that they are the child of two cultures so seemingly opposed to one another? To whom do you give your loyalty? These are the questions Angelu must answer.

Finally, there are two motifs within the story that are important to distinguish: wings and keys. These, to me, speak of both captivity and freedom. Wings are symbolic of flight, an archetype for liberation and escape. Angelu grows up on a wingless world; once upon a time all the worlds' peoples had wings, but the Tehrans suffered a sort of cultural amnesia and lost theirs long before Angelu was born. Her wings brand her as different, and she tends to hide them from the rest of the world – but they also mark her as special, as a person with a unique role in the scheme of things. Similarly, the keys are integral to Angelu's role as champion. Her personal talisman is a key, and the keys she must find in the course of her quest are the only way to retrieve the tools that will allow her to fulfill her purpose as hero (*see Fig. 10*).

Keys can both shut away and reveal. Wings can carry you aloft, but they can also be clipped and bound. Both keys and wings are symbols of freedom and entrapment alike, and Angelu must overcome her own bonds if she is to complete her quest and become the hero she must be.

All of these concepts evolved over time, and what started as a desire for a cosplay at a comics convention became the impetus behind the creation of a comic of my own. When I first conceived of the character, I didn't think her story would grow as it did.

However, when I saw how deep I could go into the mythology of the worlds, and as I got to know Angelu better, I realized that it was a story I wanted to tell. This was back in my junior year, and at the time I was searching for a thesis idea. *Angelu Demonai* was precisely what I was looking for.



Fig. 10. Angelu Demonai's logo.

And of course, it had to be written as a comic. This was partially out of pure practicality – I needed to do two thesis projects, one had to be written and one had to be visual. Why not a graphic novel? Another factor was sheer curiosity. I loved reading graphic novels, and I wanted to see if I could write and draw one myself. It would be a way for me to explore the format from the creator's side instead of the reader's, and that promised to be a fascinating journey. But even without these two reasons, it just seemed right that this particular story be told as a comic. Perhaps because it was inspired by comics in the first place. The visual image of the character was the first aspect of the story to form concretely in my mind, and I want to see that image come to life. I want to see Angelu – on stage and in battle, flying through the air with wings outstretched, standing before the tomb of her forebear preparing for her journey. *Angelu Demonai* exists in my head as an extremely visual tale. It would have felt wrong to tell it solely with prose, even though that is the medium I am by far most comfortable using.

I intend to release my graphic novel both as a printed book and as web comic. It will be published periodically on the website I have designed for it, but I also aim to collect the novel into a print version. Because of my intention to utilize both print and digital distribution methods, my design is geared towards printed page layout. Scott McCloud makes the interesting observation that with the rise of web-based comics, creators will finally be able to “stretch their limbs and start to explore the design opportunities of an infinite canvas,” rather than be bound by the necessary limitations of the page in a printed book form (*see Fig. 11*) (*Reinventing Comics* 222). This is a fascinating idea, and one I hope to explore more fully in the future. But for my current project, based as it is in the idea of becoming a printed graphic novel, I must postpone that exploration for the moment and stick to the more conventional page format.

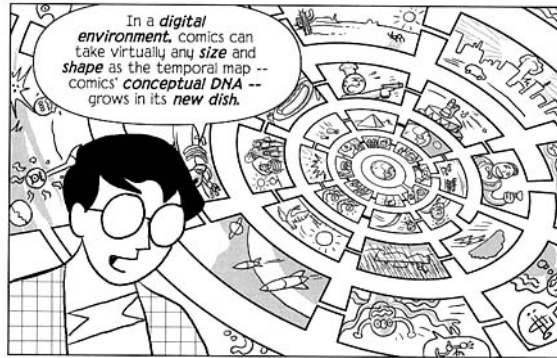


Fig. 11. Panel 5 from page 233 of Scott McCloud's *Reinventing Comics*.

### *Inspirations*

My project is inspired and influenced, both in form and content, by a wide variety of writing in prose and graphic formats. However, three particular works stand out as major influences. The first, the web comic *Looking for Group*, I include mainly for its format. The second, *The Darkangel* trilogy of novels, is an example of a brilliantly told quest-driven fantasy. My final inspiration is the graphic novel series *The Sandman*, both for its stunning visual layout and the mythological story it tells. I will discuss all three of these works, and how they have influenced my project, below.

### Looking for Group

*Looking for Group* is “a fantasy-themed Canadian webcomic” (“About LFG”). It was launched in 2006 by writer Ryan Sohmer and artist Lar DeSouza, and while it is primarily a comedic story that parodies common role-playing games, fantasy stories, and pop culture, there are elements of drama and suspense as well. *Looking for Group* (LFG) was one of the first web comics I began to follow, and it has been among my favorites ever since.

The reason I look to LFG for inspiration in my own comic project is largely because of its form. Although it is, like my story, based in fantasy, it is on the whole more geared towards comedy than I intend mine to be. While I enjoy the frequent amusing references to cultural phenomena like the multiplayer online game World of Warcraft, J. R. R. Tolkien’s fantasy epic *Lord of the Rings*, and singer-songwriter Rick Astley (*see Fig. 12*) that are found in LFG, they’re not the sort of things I prefer to write about.

But in terms of form, LFG is exactly what I aim to accomplish. It is primarily released as a web comic, but with printed book in mind; each page is designed according to its printed layout. These pages are gathered and offered for sale in book format through the website, along with other merchandise.

This is the exactly what I want to emulate. I plan on designing my pages with an eye towards the print page, releasing them digitally according to a regular schedule, and offering print versions of the graphic novel for sale on my website, should enough people become interested in the story. Because of this, LFG has been a useful reference for my project in bridging the gap between print and web publication.



Fig. 12. Page 144 of Ryan Sohmer and Lar Desouza's *Looking for Group*



### The Darkangel Trilogy

This trilogy of fantasy novels was written by Meredith Ann Pierce and published from 1982 and 1990 (see Fig. 13). It tells the story of a young slave Aeriël, whose mistress is stolen by the vampyre Irrylath to be his bride. Though she first seeks revenge, Aeriël soon learns that far more is at stake, and during the course of the trilogy she must enter a quest to save her mistress' soul, that of the vampyre who stole her (who Aeriël eventually comes to love), and even the soul of the world itself.

Aeriël is a hero who rises from humble origins. She began a slave, but over the course of her quests she becomes far more. She trains, explores, and fights against the evil forces arrayed against her. Her compassion guides her, and she grows into a woman of incredible strength, resolve, and self-sacrifice.

This story is written in such a way that the nature of the world and its inhabitants are only gradually revealed over the course of the trilogy. Pierce does not sit down with her readers at the beginning of the novel to explain everything about the setting – she lets them discover it as they go along, dropping details along the way, but always in a fashion that seems natural, observations of the world rather than explanations of it.

*The Darkangel* trilogy is told in a manner reminiscent of mythology. Like my story, it features a quest, and a young woman who must overcome great obstacles to achieve her goal and bring salvation to her world. It is also a Bildungsroman, as the

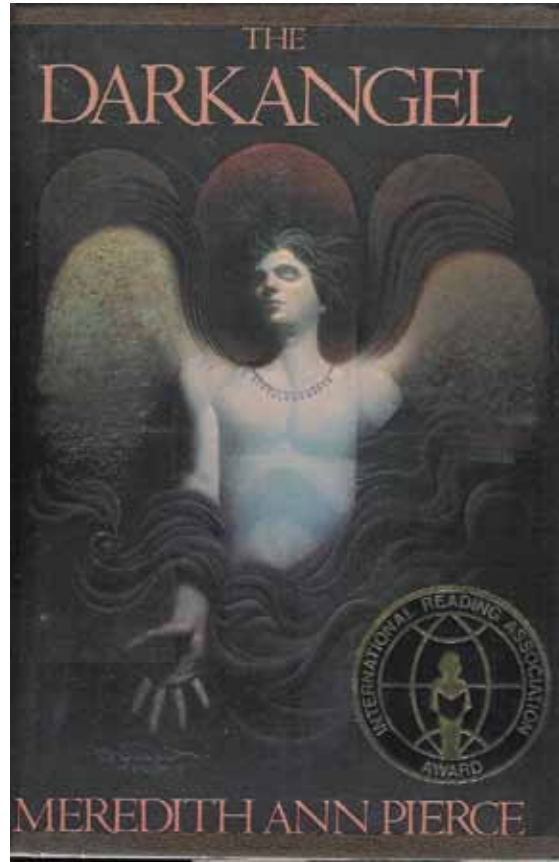


Fig. 13. "Gallery of Cover Art."

entire trilogy watches Ariel grow from slave to warrior to general and finally to savior. She becomes the one who must take the weight of the world on her shoulders for it to have any chance of survival – and in so doing, leave her soulmate behind. I don't intend for my story to be a tragedy. There is no romantic interest for Angelu, and she wouldn't want one anyway. But the haunting delicacy of the storytelling, vividness of the world, growth of the hero, and quest for the world's salvation, are all elements of Pierce's grand tale that I hope to emulate in my story.

### The Sandman

Neil Gaiman's 11 volume series *The Sandman* is “the most acclaimed and award-winning comics series of the 1990s” (see Fig. 14) (back cover). It was first published serially, only later gathered into the graphic novel format offered today, and weaves



Fig. 14. “The Sandman (Vertigo).”

an epic and towering tale combining elements of many genres – fantasy, horror, history, and mythology, among others. Powerful and evocative, I fell in love with *The Sandman* with the very first volume.

Visually, it is incredibly varied, as the artistic team changes for each issue. I cannot match such diversity in my own project, but there are elements of the artwork that I plan to use. One of these is some degree of variation – the characters in my story will travel between four distinct worlds, and each of these will have a slightly different visual style associated with it, namely with the uses of

color. Another artistic takeaway from *The Sandman* series is the panel layout, which is, like the artwork, exceptionally diverse. Panels of various shapes and sizes are used, and sometimes images meld together without much in the way of panels at all. The visual effect of such expressive use of panels is one I hope to tap into with my own project.

But the main reason *The Sandman* series is inspiring to me is because of its thematic elements. This is a fantasy of incredible scope, and the story does not limit itself to one place or time, or even one world. Elements of the modern world are present, but there are other worlds distinct from the “normal” world of the narrative. The story pulls from history, from fairy tales, from myth and urban legend; it boldly crosses traditional genres and uses the old to create something new. It is not my intention to create anything so epic or ambitious as *The Sandman* with *Angelu Demonai*. The scope of my project is much narrower. Still, the representation of multiple worlds, the pull from legend and mythology, and the surreal fantasy setting, are all elements of my fable as well. If I can incorporate them into my story with a fraction of the skill and effectiveness that Gaiman demonstrates, I will be well pleased.

## Conclusion

To hear one story is, in some ways, to hear any of them. The hero is introduced. The hero is called to adventure. The hero faces many hardships before overcoming the trial, and at the conclusion of the adventure, the hero's efforts are rewarded. This is the basic narrative structure of a story, and though parts of the cycle may be altered or omitted depending upon the story, the main arc remains.

Why is it, then, that stories continue to hold such sway over us? Humans are storytelling creatures, and even though we tell what is essentially the same story, over and over, we never seem to lose interest. Why is this? I think it is more than sheer narcissism. After all, everything is the same when viewed in the most general sense. All people are essentially identical – eyes, brain, limbs, animated and compelled by myriad electric impulses. Every tree has trunk, root, branches; every body of water is just hydrogen and oxygen. It is only in the details of the thing that its uniqueness is revealed.

This is the same for stories. Whether that uniqueness stems from the setting, the personalities of the characters, or what they strive for, these details set the story apart from all other stories. Yet each tale remains in good company; each remembers its roots and eventually hearkens back to the Hero's Journey, the monomyth that ties it to the rest of humanity.

I said at the beginning of this paper that my love, my passion, is the creation of stories. Understanding the nature of stories – both as iterations of the monomyth and unique entities all their own – is integral to me in understanding my own drive to write. The idea that the details of a thing are what separate it as distinct from all the other similar “things” is one of my most basic guiding truths. Now I ask you – what is the format of a story except another detail, in this case a detail about delivery? Any story can be told in myriad ways – prose, verse, song – and it is the way in which a story is presented, as much as the story itself, that make it distinctive.

Comics are one of the oldest art forms. Their legacy continues because of their inherent power, the ability to both show and describe. The language of comics has evolved, and continues to evolve in the present day. My own project stands on the brink of another stage in the history of the comics – the crossing from print to digital distribution, and the bridging of the gap between the two. Yet the story itself, influenced as it is by the monomyth, is unequivocally tied to the entire history of stories themselves. The world and its characters, though drawing upon archetypes and the examples of other writers, are separated by their details and delivery to create a tale entirely new, drawing both upon the wisdom of storytellers throughout the ages and the language of one of the oldest forms of communication – the juxtaposition of words and images (*see Fig. 15*).



Fig. 15. Panel 9 from page 13 of Neil Gaiman's "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

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**Angelu Demonai**  
*Volume 1: The Over World*



## **Introduction**

When I set out to create this graphic novel, I did so with the intention of it being entirely my work; that is, I would be the sole producer of both the writing and the art. I am not collaborating with anyone - and this is evident in the style of the writing. The script often ignores things like capitalization and punctuation, descriptions are minimalistic, fragments are rampant, and in general it reads like I am talking to myself... which of course I am. However unconventional the format, the story itself remains the focus.

For the first quarter or so of the written script, I sketched out the panel layouts I imagined for those pages. These are included here alongside the text they represent. At the moment, these sketches focus solely on basic visual layout. There is no dialogue, no color, and the figures themselves are more often stick figures than not. But however simple these depictions may be, they will give you an idea of how I envision the graphic novel evolving as I continue to work on the project.

Following the script are several other key pieces of the thesis - the full lyrics to Angelu Demonai's song from the concert scene, and some examples of concept art that I have completed for the project.

## **The Characters**

Angelu Demonai – given name Meallá – our protagonist. Vocalist/many instruments.  
The champion.

Nana – Angelu’s Tehran guardian

Ethan – guitarist and occasionally male vocals

Jed – the bassist

Aida – keyboards/soprano

Lucy – drums/occasionally yowler if the occasion calls for it

the Protector – leader of the Ceilan capital palace guard

Drausus – son of the Protector, commander of the reserve guard, and Angelu’s trainer in the martial arts

Louwan – Angelu’s tutor in the ways of the worlds

Luned – the guide and guardian assigned to Angelu

Senka – Haydan informer who comes for a midnight chat



In Ceila. Drausus and men gearing in Tehran clothes. Hidden weapons. The Protector watches.

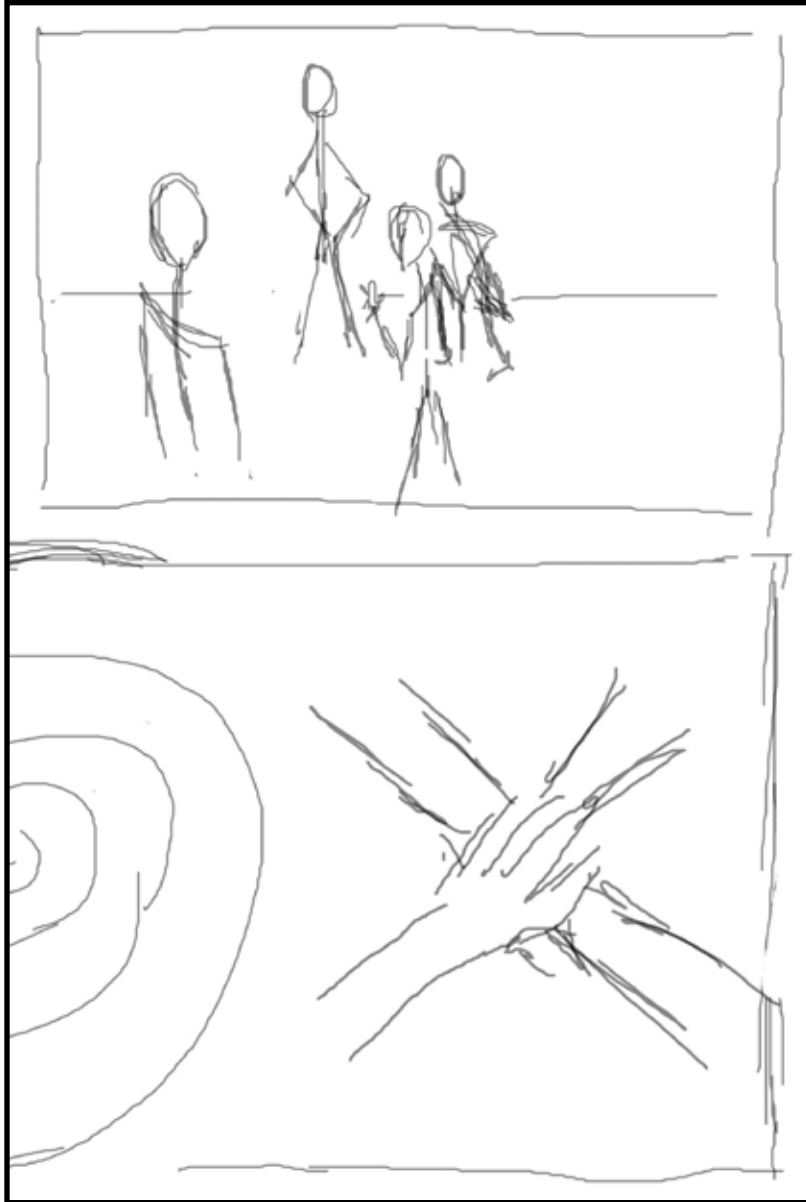
“You understand your mission?”

“Apprehend the girl and bring her to Ceila. With as little fuss as possible, of course.”

“Of course.”

“What if she resists?”

“That hardly matters.”



In Gehna. Circled together, the Gehnan assailants. Not Tehran costume, not bothering to go in disguise. Very prickly-looking devices in hand.

“Is everyone ready?”

They nod or reply in assent. Hands together – “To victory!”



Both groups are shown leaving that area, traveling in Tehra. As the bus containing one group passes by a sidewalk with our hooded figure (Senka), we see a sign with the band's logo, large advertisement. Perhaps the band members' photos superimposed over the logo in a large sign kind of thing.



Transition through this to Ange, sitting in a backstage room. She's looking at her own reflection in the large mirror. The counter is strewn with paper, makeup, flowers, miscellaneous items.

Ethan, off screen, from the door. "Hey, Ange?"

She turns to look at him. Him, Lucy, Aida, Jed at the door. Jed, kinda staring into space.

Lucy/Aida, characteristically close together. Ethan, uber casual.

Ethan "We're heading upstairs, are you ready?"

Ange "Yeah, I'll be up in a bit."

He nods, the girls wave, all leave.



She looks back at the mirror. One hand idly holds on to her key (which is not in the reflection) and the other, fiddling with the paper in her hand.

*I get a lot of mail.*

Closer look at the counter, with the overflowing box losing its contents all over the place.

*Fan mail. Hate mail.*

*"Inappropriate" mail.*

Closer, at the letter in her hand.

*But nothing quite like this.*

Frowning, holds it up, reading it again.

"A lute with no strings is not complete. A rolling stone is never home.

Beware – your homes are coming to claim you."

Frown increases. Hint of anger.

She crumples up the letter.

*What "homes"?*



She throws it across the room, visibly upset.  
*And I don't need one.*

Stony face, neatening the counter, putting the letters back in the box. It should be labeled, Fan Mail, or something similar, unobtrusively.  
*I have my music.*

Last minute look in mirror, putting on

jacket-type thing (slits or openings in back for wings, though they aren't out yet). I'm imagining more of a long vest-like item. Final preparations for show. Still stony, drawn up, chin high.

*That's all I need.*

She goes to leave. But at door, she pauses. One hand on doorframe, one holding her key again, she looks back at the crumpled note. Looks a little uncertain.

*Everything I need.*

She turns her back, leaves the room.



Concert hall. Outside.  
 Sign above door  
 advertises “Angelu  
 Demonai Plays Tonight!”  
 People crowding inside.  
 Thoom of bass.  
 Inside, at ticket stand,  
 two folks going in, boy  
 and girl, handing in their  
 tickets.

boy “How much did we  
 miss?”  
 ticket guy “They’re on  
 their third song.”  
 boy “Shit, we missed the  
 opening!”

girl “It’s okay, at least  
 we didn’t blow the whole  
 thing.”

They’re walking down  
 the hall. A group (three)  
 of beautiful, shady  
 characters at stand,  
 Drausus included. He’s  
 handing over his ticket.  
 girl, as they walk away

“I think I would have  
 cried.”

We follow them inside the concert hall. They’re at the back, and we see the crowd of people in front of the far lit stage.

girl points “There they are!”

lyrics, small – You left me and I don’t feel a thing  
 zoom closer, stage fills, crowd in front, we see the band  
 back to our two late-comers

girl “I love this song!”

boy “Come on, let’s get closer”





More shady characters,  
sneaking in the back  
door.

They start pushing  
through the crowd, we  
see beautiful shady  
characters behind them.  
Drausus inclines his  
head to stage.

They start pushing their  
way through. Lyrics  
continue throughout  
(maybe in gutters?)

Her face, as she sings,  
looking over the crowd  
*Most people think this*

*song is about a partner – another of those jilted lover songs. Woe to my broken heart.*

People continuing to press closer. At the stage. We see Drausus and co making their way forward, and past them (unobtrusive) someone leaning, a hood over their face.

Other shady characters approaching backstage, someone slumped on floor behind them.

Back to her and stage.

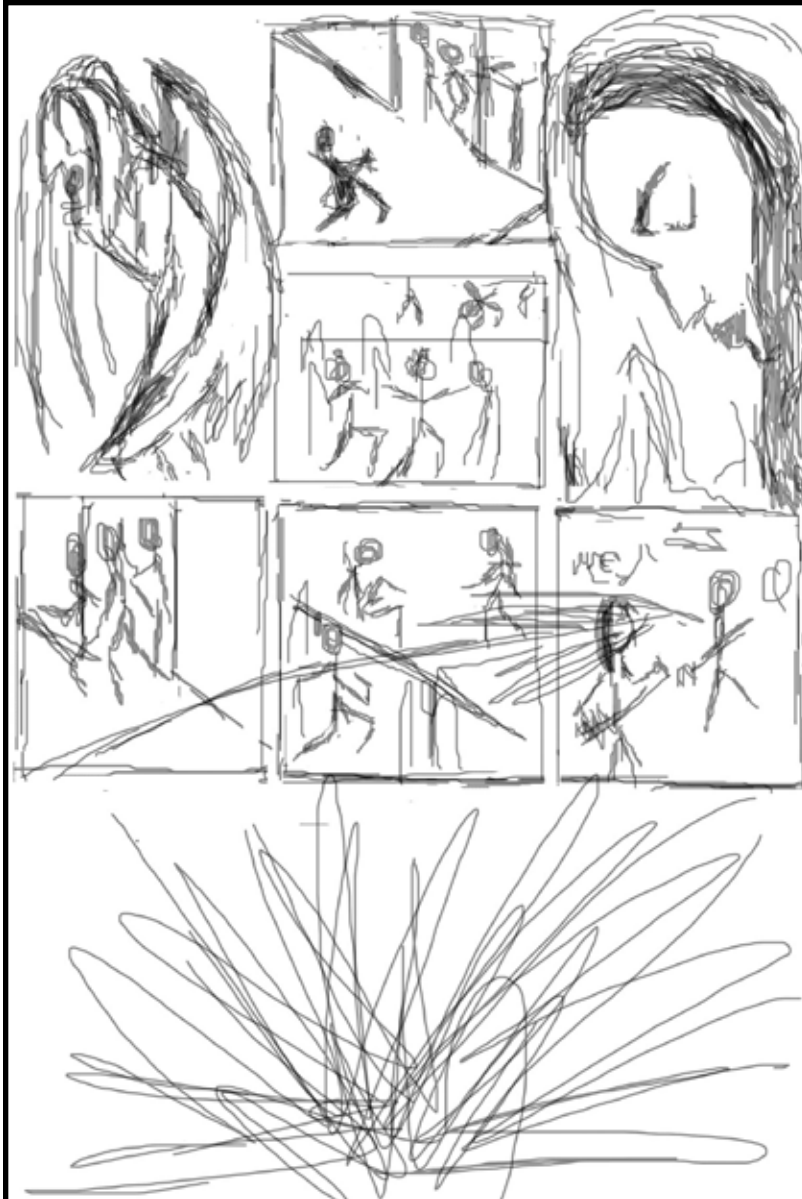
*Shows you how much most people know. After all*



Faces of excited concert  
goers, alarmed trainer  
boy and co, and ones  
backstage grinning

From front, she has wings extended, hands raised in the air, head back as she sings  
lyrics: sustained go  
*most people think these are fake.*

crowd going wild. shady bunch at side of stage in shadows. Trainer boy notices them,  
points them out. One has his hand on something at his hip. Hooded character in  
background, looking in same place, where everyone else stares at the stage.



Back to stage, her wings  
down, her posture  
constricted  
lyrics: no longer am I  
beholden to your

shady bunch starts to  
move

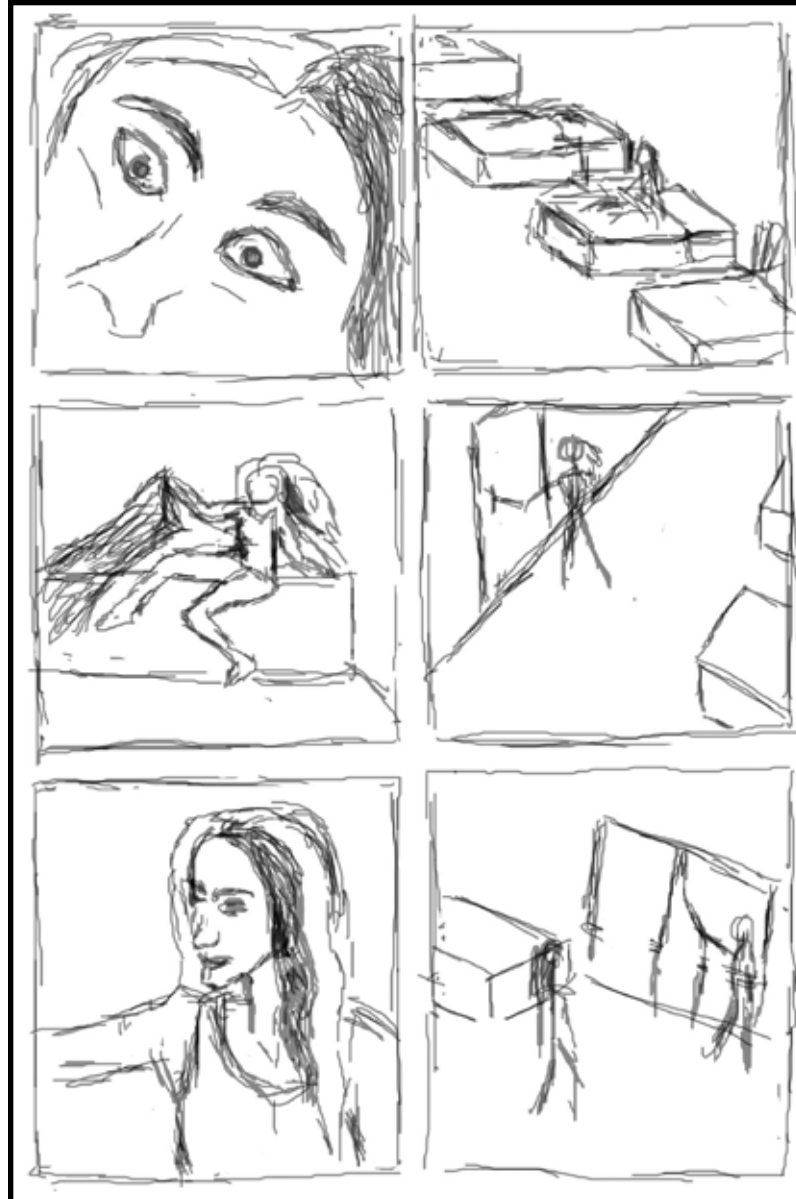
trainer boy and his  
group tense

her face, close, eyes closed  
lyrics: memory

shady bunch springs forward  
trainer boy and co leap up  
she and band turn, alarmed  
dark shape moving past  
explosion.

Ange open eyes.

Sits up, she's in a large room. lots of pale wood and light. dressed in light, cottony sorts of things. Her bandmates are there as well. occasionally bandaged. Ethan has a leg injury, and is currently on crutches. Jed, perhaps, arm or torso. I think Lucy and Aida are pretty much okay – they'll be positioned on the other end of the stage, so we'll put Ethan closest to the side the attack comes from, Jed fairly close. One of the girls may have a head injury, but minor.



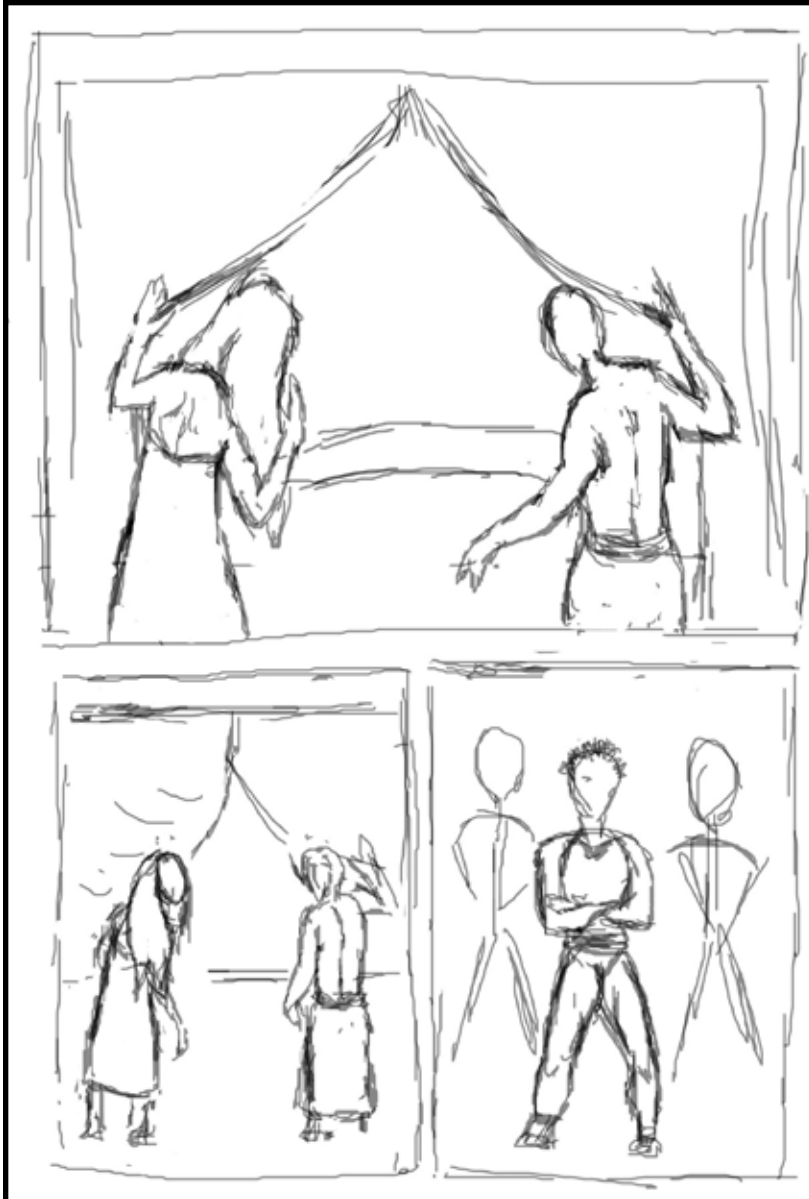
Girls are sleeping, Ethan is sleeping. Jed standing by the window, looking out through curtains. She checks on everyone, then goes to door, can't open it.

Jed "I tried that."

Ange "Well, I tried it again."

Crosses to him.

Ange "Where are we?"



he shrugs, steps  
aside, motions the  
window. She looks  
outside. A beautiful,  
unearthly vista. Not  
like their home. Ange's  
awestruck face

Ange "Where the fuck are we?"

Drausus walks in door, along with his two assistants. She and bassist turn, her surprised,  
he stoic

Drausus "You are in Ceila."

He stops, crossed arms, assistants behind him. Smirk.

"Not that I expect you know where that is."

Close on her eyes,  
confusion.

*Ceila*

She turns back to the  
window. Drausus is  
watching her.  
Ethan wakes up, in the  
background he sits up in  
his bed.

“What the f-” Ethan  
*I’ve heard that name  
before. Nana used to tell  
me...*

She whirls around.  
Ethan, in the bed still.  
“My leg?!”  
Aida and Lucy may be  
awake at this time, or  
waking up. Or we may  
not be able to see them.  
“Show me your wings.”

Drausus quirks an eyebrow. She strides to him.  
“Show me your wings!”

Drausus takes a step forward, hands held palm up, and extends his wings a little. Ange stops and stares.

Anyone we can see (mostly, Ethan) is paying attention to this exchange, gaping.

“oh god oh god oh god...”





Drausus stands,  
fingertips tenting  
together.  
“Are you satisfied?”  
“Of course I’ve already  
seen yours. At your  
show. What a useful  
gimmick.”

Ange “The show!”  
Her turn to be angry.  
“What the hell did you do?!”

Drausus, sneering.  
Drausus “We saved your lives. You’d probably all be dead now if it weren’t for us.”  
Ethan “The men backstage...”  
Ange “Why would anyone be trying to kill us?”  
Drausus “Because you are the champion.”





Silent panel. Ange and Ethan stare blankly at Drausus, he looks very serious.

They look at each other,  
their expressions changing to incredulity.  
They start laughing.

The ones with Drausus exchange raised-eyebrow glances, and Drausus looks annoyed.  
“You are the champion! I can prove it to you – ”

He steps forward, his hand reaching for her shirtfront

She backhands him.



He staggers back and stares at her, angry eyes, hand on his face. She points her finger at him. “Don’t touch me. Until I know who you are, how we got here, and what’s going on, you don’t get to think about touching me.”

He straightens up. Angry face.

“Fine.”

He nods to his men, who head outside.

Drausus points behind him.

“There are robes on the table there. Make yourselves presentable. My people will wait outside to lead you to refreshment and explanations.”

He leaves in a huff.

Ange and Ethan exchange looks. He looks extremely unsure now. Hobbles over to her.

Ethan “What the hell is going on here?”

She shakes her head.

“Ange, please, I’m freaking out here. We wake up in the weirdest hospital I’ve ever seen, I’m on crutches, this guy comes in talking about worlds and wings and –” chuckle, but not straight-up mirth – incredulous, fearful, nervous sort of laugh – “goes on about you being some kind of fucking hero and –”  
 “Being champion is no laughing matter.” one of girls

They’re on the same bed now, holding on to each other, looking up.

Ange “When did you wake up?”

other girl “Was he pointing at your birthmark?”

Ange looks down, pulling her clothes back a little to reveal a key-shaped birthmark over her left breast.

“I dunno. Maybe.”

The girls look at each other.

“We should follow him and find out.”

“Let’s get dressed.”





They swing out of bed at the same time and walk to the table, with five piles of folded garments (probably something more akin to robes. Kimono-esque). The others follow. The girls hand out the robes and pull theirs on. Ethan struggles into his, trying to juggle crutches and keep weight off leg. "...god damn funny ties... don't belong here... should be on a bus right now ..." etc, mumbling to himself Ange, having tied her robes on (inside ties on either side keep it closed like karate uniform, wide sash ties around waist) goes to help him. He mumbles a thank you. She is deep in thought.

*He has wings. I never thought I'd meet anyone else. Nana said they'd find me someday but I didn't think it would happen like this.*

She's finished Ethan's ties and stands up straight. Irritated face.

*Way to ruin the concert, assholes.*

She looks around. Her people are decked in the robes. Everything is open in the back/shoulder area, if we can see that. She heads for the door.

*Let's get to the bottom of this.*

silent panel, men leading her and her group down a hallway.

They enter a room,  
 long table. A man (the  
 Protector) is at far end,  
 older, short neat beard,  
 Drausus behind him.  
 Drausus is bending  
 down as if they had been  
 talking, but upon opening  
 the door they are silent.  
 Man stands, extends his  
 hands over the table.  
 Side view, table, him and  
 Drausus on left, her and  
 co on right.  
 Protector “Meallá. I  
 am the Protector of  
 the capital palace.  
 You’ve met my son,  
 Drausus, commander  
 of the reserve guard.”  
 Gestures, hands wide.  
 “Welcome home.”  
 “I go by Angelu. And  
 this is not my home.”  
 Man smiles, contempt,  
 thinly veiled.



“Angelu is your stage  
 name, your Tehran name. Meallá is the name your father gave you, and this is your  
 father’s world.”

Ange looks down

“That doesn’t make it my home.”

Ethan points, shaking. Trying to be chill. “Yeah. And we’d like to get back to our home  
 as soon as possible, if you kidnapers don’t mind. You can’t just – ”

“Do you have wings too?”

To the girls, back and forth

“Why was he trying to touch Ange’s chest?”



“What is she champion of?”

“What is Ceila?”

“What is Tehran?”

“Are we in another world?”

“Why?”

Back to man

“What’s this? You have not told your companions about your heritage? About the world you come from, and what you were born to be?”

“Okay first off – I am from the middle world. Just because my parents were from the other two doesn’t mean I belong to them. *They* abandoned *me*. Second, I wasn’t born for anything except my music. I don’t know why we were attacked at

the concert, or what you people want with me. I am not a champion.”

Incredulity gives way to irritation.

“You mean to say you know nothing of the war of the siblings?”

“No...”

“The threat of the fourth world?”

“The fourth...wait, what?”

“The reason your father hid you on Tehra?”

“No!”

Man, face in hand.  
 “Ugh...I can’t believe  
 how ignorant...fine.  
 I’ll give you a history  
 lesson.”

The following will  
 switch back and forth  
 as appropriate between  
 speakers and listeners,  
 expressions and  
 reactions.

“You seem to know,  
 at least, that there are  
 multiple planes of  
 existence – parallel  
 worlds. There is our  
 world, the overworld of  
 your father – Ceila. The  
 middle world, where  
 you grew up, Tehra.  
 The underworld of your  
 mother, Hayda...and  
 also a fourth world, the  
 outside world. Gehna.”  
 “I was never told of  
 that...”

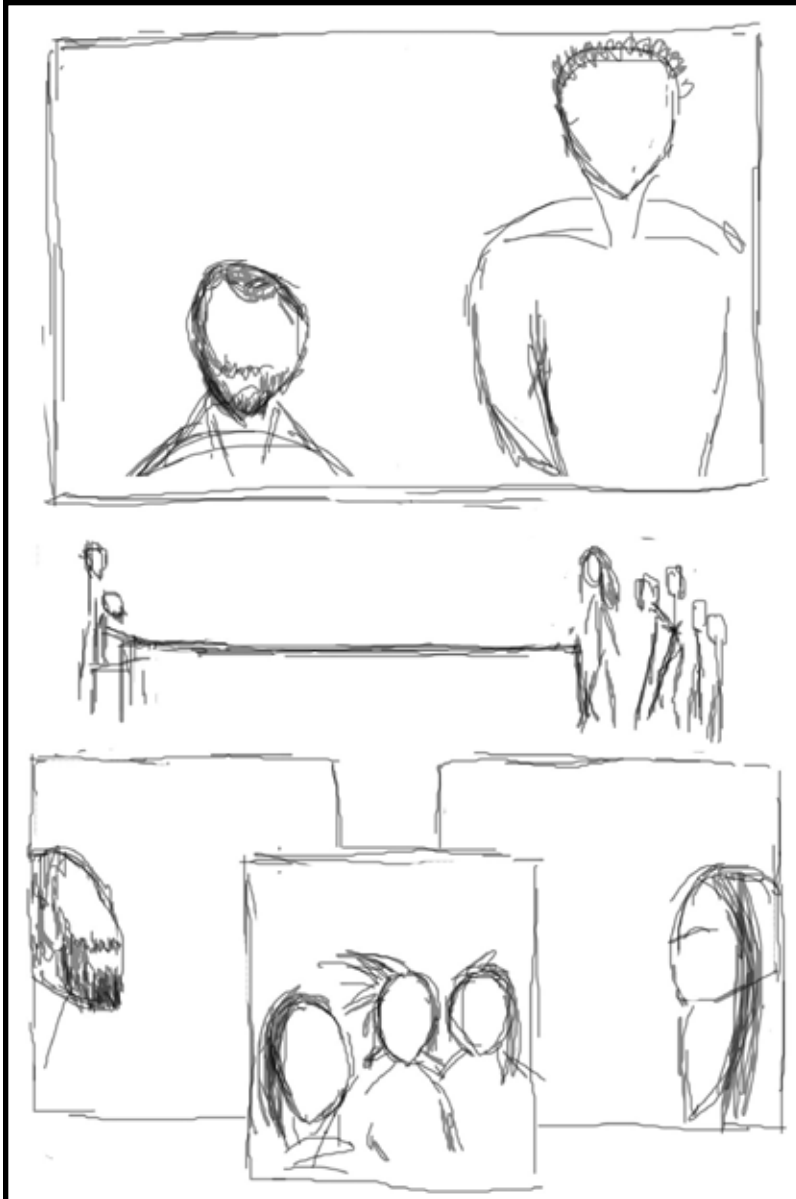


Protector “Once upon a time – since you Tehrans are so fond of that phrase – there were four siblings. Each created a world to rule – ”

Ethan “The ones you were just talking about – Terra, and...Seela, or whatever...”

Protector “– and it was fine for a while . Until one sibling decided that it was the better ruler. It tried to invade its siblings, but was repelled by a champion of powerful magic. This champion, the First, sealed the fourth world away. The other three realms were safe...for a while.”

Drausus “The First warned that the seal would not last forever. Eventually it would break, and the fourth world would be free to invade again. But he prophesied – ”



Protector “The first champion foretold that another champion would rise from one of the three worlds, when the time was right, to reseal the gate for a while longer. Twice since then a champion has been born to ensure the safety of the three worlds.

Now the seal is about to break once more – ”

Drausus “ – and this time you’re the one who’ll fix it.”

Ange “How do you know I’m the champion? There’s got to be a lot of better options out there.”

Protector “Yes, but you have the mark. The key-shaped birthmark over your heart – that’s the sign of the champion. It always has been.”

Ange “...Right. And how exactly does one seal an entire world?”

Drausus “Next summer, the seal will break completely. You must defeat Gehna’s champion before that time, or its denizens will be free to invade.”

Aida “You mean war?”

Lucy “How do you know how long we have?”

Ethan “Whoa wait what, defeat their champion!?”

Ange “If I’m so important, why did I get dumped on Tehra?”

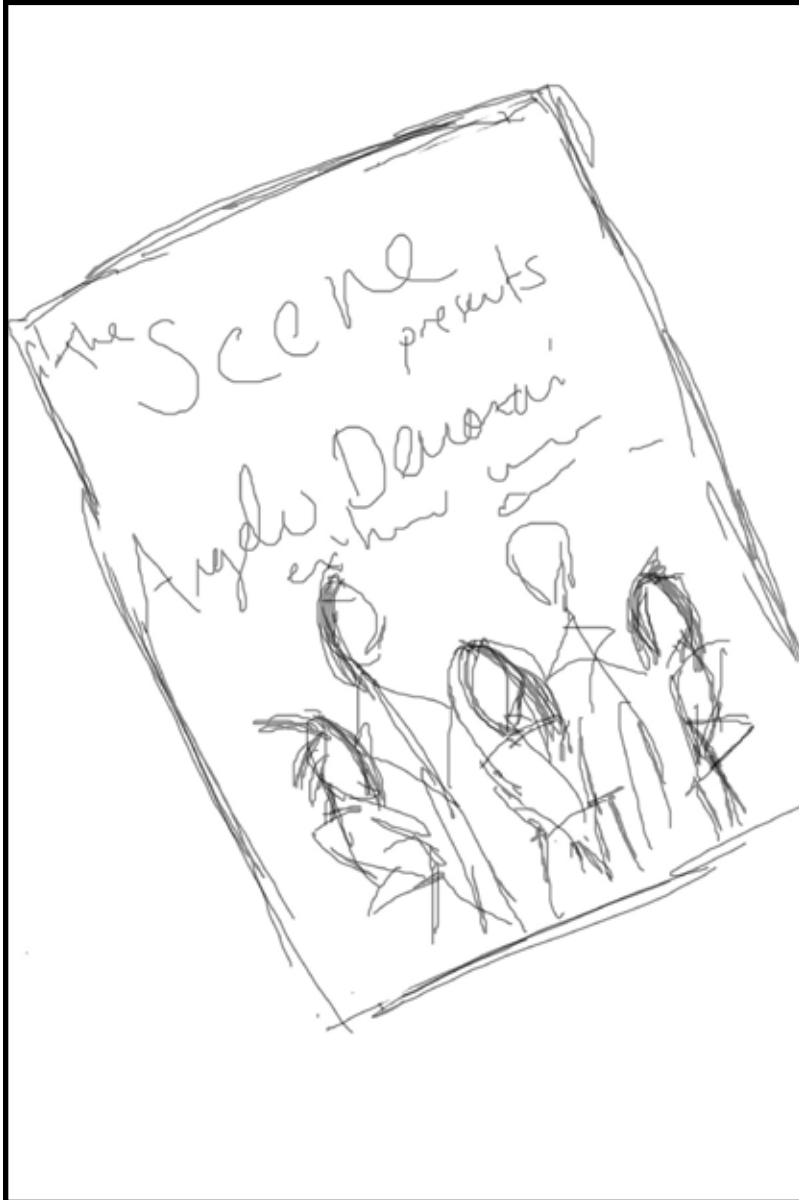


Protector “The seal is already weak – Gehna’s forces have been slipping through since before you were born. They wanted to kill you before you got the chance to stand against them.” Lip curled, angry face. “Your father didn’t trust his own people to keep you safe, so he and your mother hid you. They had three worlds to pick from, and they covered their tracks well. It’s taken us twenty years to find you again.”



Ange “So why did you ruin our concert? You couldn’t have waited till after the show... they found us too, didn’t they?” Protector nods. “How? Why now?”

Protector slides a magazine down the table.



On the cover is the band – her birthmark is clearly visible.

“Anyone who was looking could find you after that.”

He stands.  
 “We have less than a year before the seal breaks completely, and you must defeat Gehna’s champion before then. But it’s not that easy. There are certain things you need. And let’s face it – you’re a musician, not a warrior. We don’t have long to change that.”

man starts to leave.

Drausus:

“You start training tomorrow. We’re just lucky you weren’t injured in that explosion.”

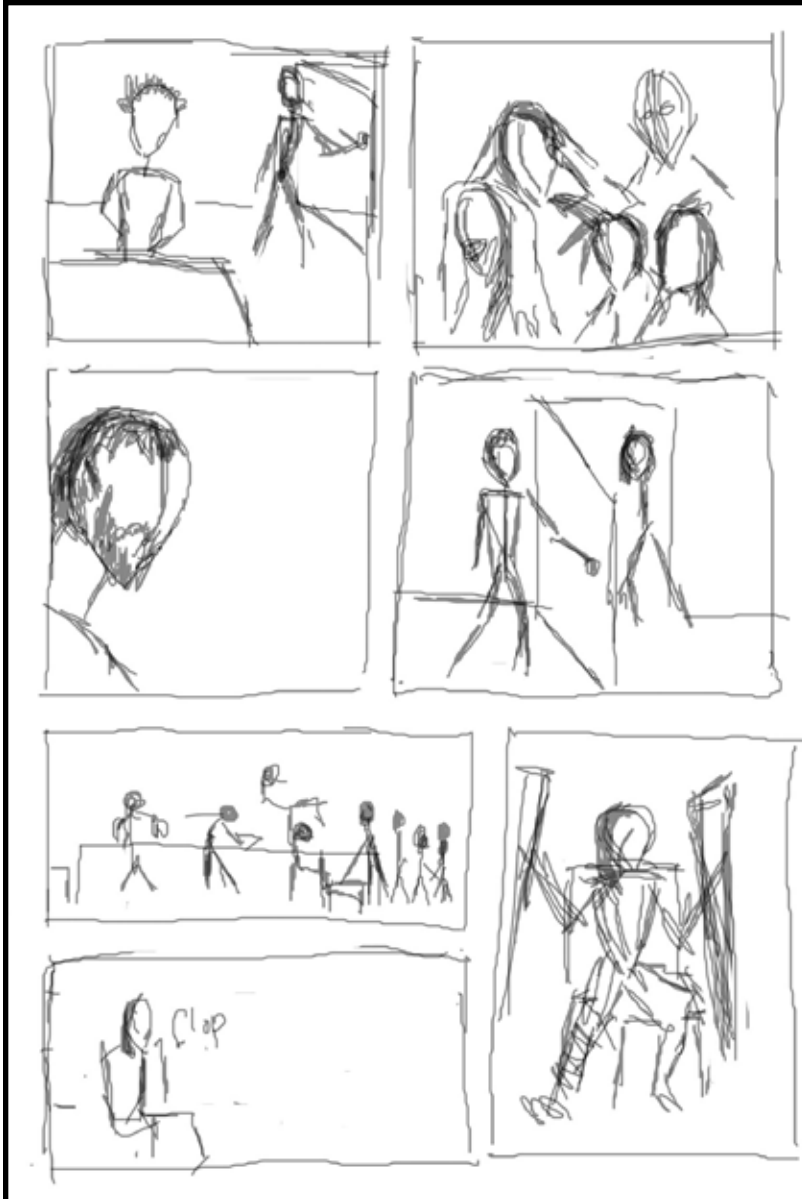
Ethan

“Wait – she hasn’t even said she’d help you yet!”

Man, pauses in the process of leaving

“You think we’d bother giving her a choice? The fate of Ceila – of the three worlds – depends on the success of our champion. But fine. If you want a choice – don’t cooperate with us. Waste what time we have left. When the seal breaks, your world will be overrun. You Tehrans lost your wings and your gift – you would be the first to fall.





Drausus “Dinner will be brought in for you. Then I suggest you rest. This will be your home until the crisis is passed – till then you may as well be comfortable.”

Ange “Wait a minute – what if we want to go home? We’re in the middle of a tour, we have family, fans! We can’t stay here till next summer! “

Protector “If you go back you will be hunted down and killed – all of you. We can keep you safe here. And Meallá – ”

“Angelu! ”

“– can hardly train at ‘home.’

Snide look on Protector’s face. “This is your home now – whether anyone likes it or not.”

He leaves. Drausus lingers at door, then follows. The all look a little shell-shocked. Food is brought in, and they are left alone. They turn to her – Ethan collapses in a chair. “Well, Ange – care to enlighten?”



Ange sits on the balcony.  
 Inside the room, her  
 bandmates are sleeping.  
 The girls are sharing a  
 bed. Ethan's crutches  
 are beside his bed.

*I can't believe this.*  
 She looks inside at  
 sleeping comrades.

*They're finally asleep.*  
*They asked a lot of*  
*questions after the old coot left. Before tonight they never would have bothered – I*  
*started the band with a strict "no questions" policy and no one ever minded before*  
*tonight. We all have secrets.*

*But their secrets didn't get us blown up, did they?*

*There's only so much I can answer, though. My parents didn't exactly leave me much*  
*to go on. Only what they told Nana when they left me behind. She told me the story so*  
*many times...*



At this point we're switching into memory mode. A knock in the night on the door of Nana's cottage. The parents on the doorstep, child in arms.

*One night, Nana opens the door for two strangers – a dark haired woman and a white-haired man. Awesome, knowing my dad was a cradle-robbing old man.*

They come inside, talking. Different images for each?

*They tell her about the other worlds. The over world, Ceila, world of beauty. The under world Hayda, world of secrets. The middle world, Tehra. World of invention.*

Nana, wonder and some fear on her face, shadow of wings on the wall behind.  
*They show her their wings.*

Again, more images for each.

*They tell her about the gifts of each world. How Ceilans can read – and tamper with – the emotions of others.*

*How Haydians can taste truth and lies in others' blood.*

*How once, Tehrans could hear the thoughts of those around them.*

Nana's face, extremely disappointed.  
*Before the Tehrans forgot their gift, and their wings.*

Handing over the child  
*They told her my name. Told her I would be 'important.'*

Hand over a key  
*They gave her the key then too.*

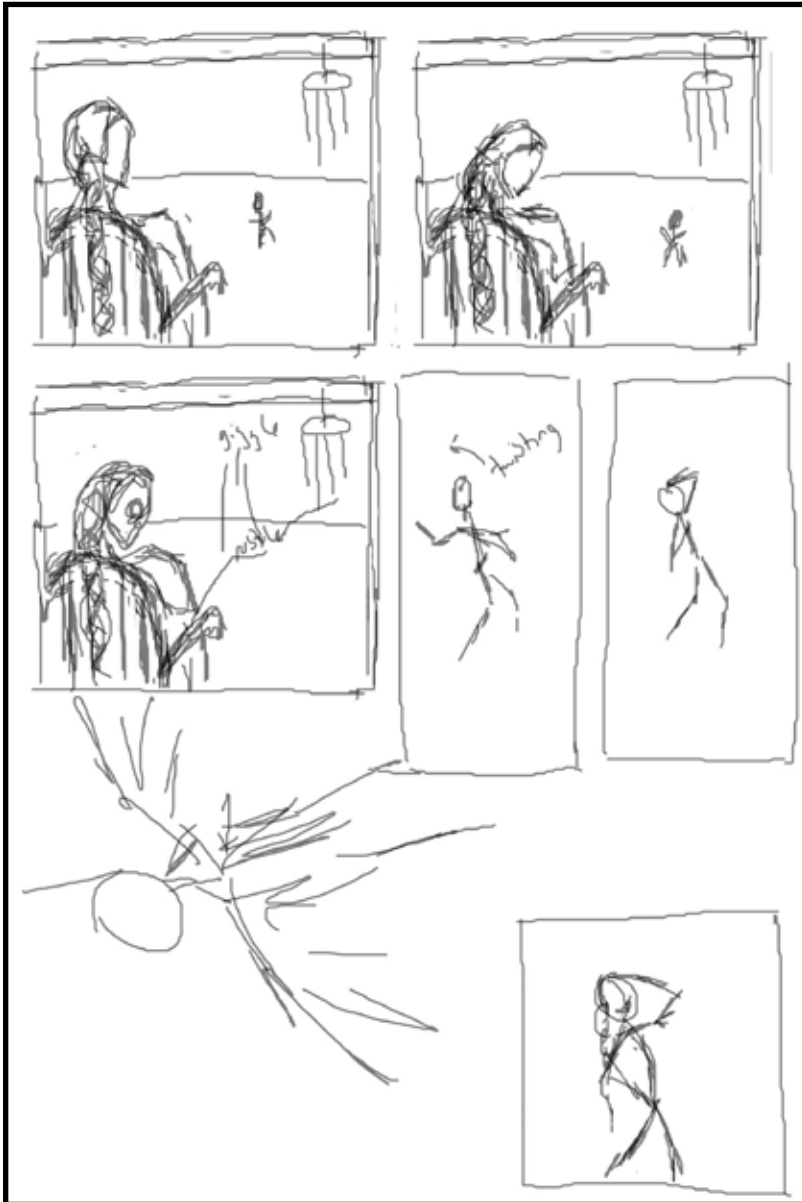
Her grasping the key in her hand, on the balcony.  
*Said that it too was precious, that I must keep it with me always.*

The magazine cover.  
*My very own ninja key. I never take it off, but no one notices it, and it's never in pictures. I probably should ask about it, but...Nana's forgotten about the key, and she never forgets anything.*

Back to her, I think.  
*Somehow it always felt like something I should keep just to myself. If Nana forgot it, even...I miss Nana. I wonder how she's doing.*

*Well, if these pretentious dicks don't let me send her a letter there'll be hell to pay.*





Now to more memory. No narration for a while.

Nana watches Ange, a little blond girl in a sundress, run around outside through the window.

She hears a rustling sound, and a giggle, and Ange has disappeared. Nana runs outside, looks around, looks up.

There's Ange, wings spread, flying, against the sky.

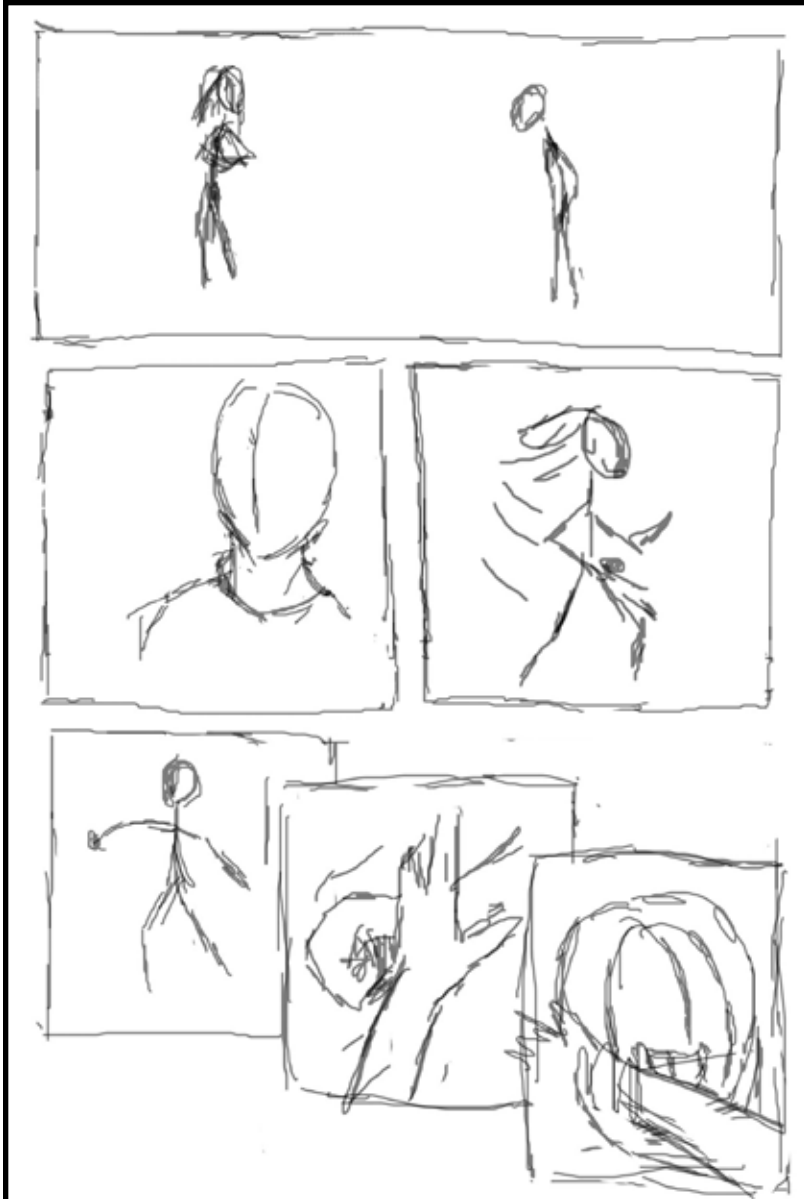
Nana smiles, "Angelu."





Laughs. Steps into the yard, arms up. “Come down, my little angelu.”  
Ange dives down into a hug.

Later, she’s practicing signing her name – Angelu. Different ways of writing it.



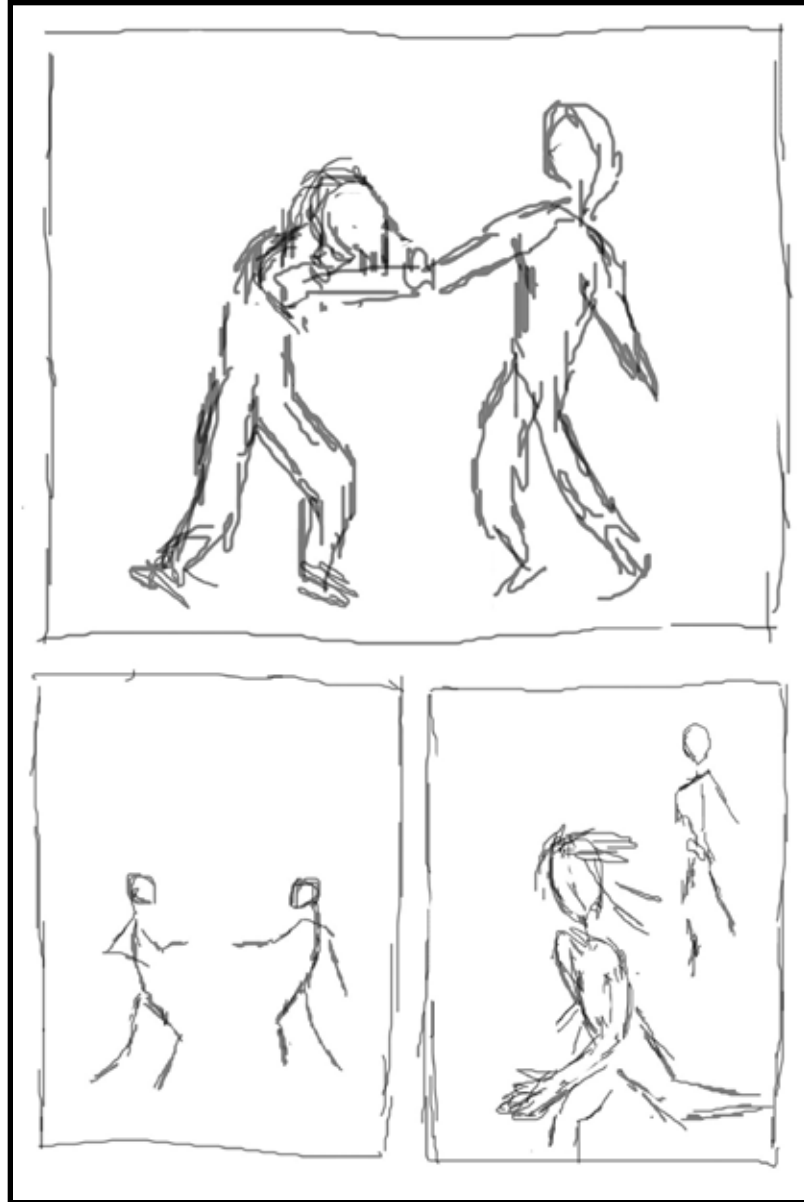
Later, she's older. Young teen, confronting boy her own age on empty country road.

"It's true! Everyone thinks so."

"It is not. My friends wouldn't say that about me and Nana."

"Your friends? Hah! They're only nice to you cuz their parents make them! You're a freak, you don't belong here, and everyone knows it!"

She moves in, face twisted in anger. He thinks she's going to attack – he swings at her first. She grabs his arm and bites his wrist.



The two of them, side view, her biting, eyes meeting. She backs away, he looks dazed.

“You’re telling the truth.” She runs. He’s still standing there, vacant look.



She storms into her house, past mystified Nana, to her room. Rips the paper of signatures off the wall, and scribbles them all out. Nana comes in, holds her while she cries.

Later, she looks at the paper again. We see her writing something down. When we see, she has written her new signature – Angelu Demonai – and circled it.

We need to see musical instruments in her room and around the house. It needs to be obvious – or at least, implied – that this was an interest of hers from the get-go.



Further ahead in time. She's older, 18-ish. Backpack, violin, guitar. Maybe a cool drum strapped to her backpack. She hugs Nana goodbye, then walks. We see her in a bus, the city through the window. We see someone showing her into a dingy apartment. We see her walk into a tattoo parlor. Through the window

"I need a job."

Tattoo artist laughs. Large woman, cool punkish/goth haircut. "Well you're in luck. My sweeper just quit."



We see her washing windows inside the parlor. A sign on the door says “Band Members Wanted – Inquire Within.” Ethan walks in, they shake hands.

We see an ad in the newspaper – Band Members Wanted – Lucy and Aida point at it, look at each other, nod.

Later, we see them all jamming together in Ange’s apartment. It’s pretty much a one-room flat – we might see a bedroll in the back and some counters in a kitchen, and most of the space is devoted to their instruments.

A knock on the door. Jed is there, with a bass guitar – in his hand he has their ad for a bassist.



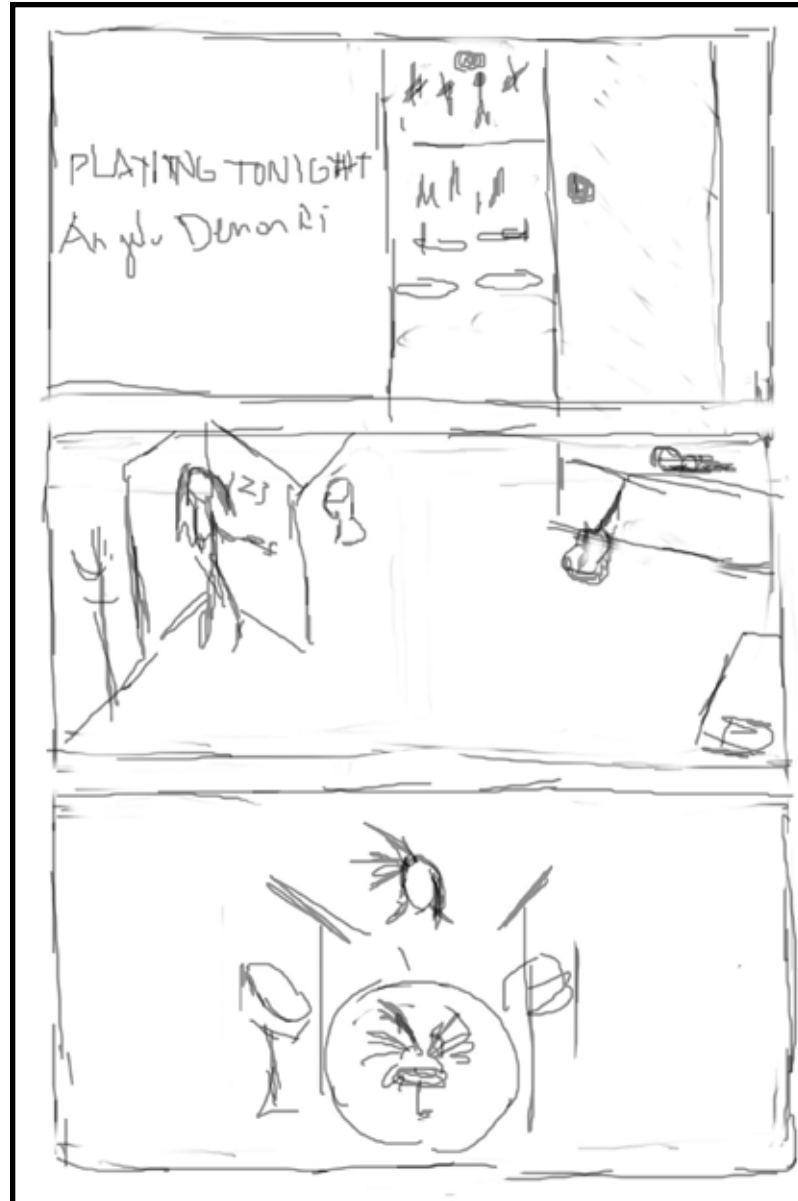
At some point through this we see a red streak in her otherwise blond hair.

A couple scenes of them playing at small bars and clubs. Sometimes she just sings, sometimes she's playing violin.

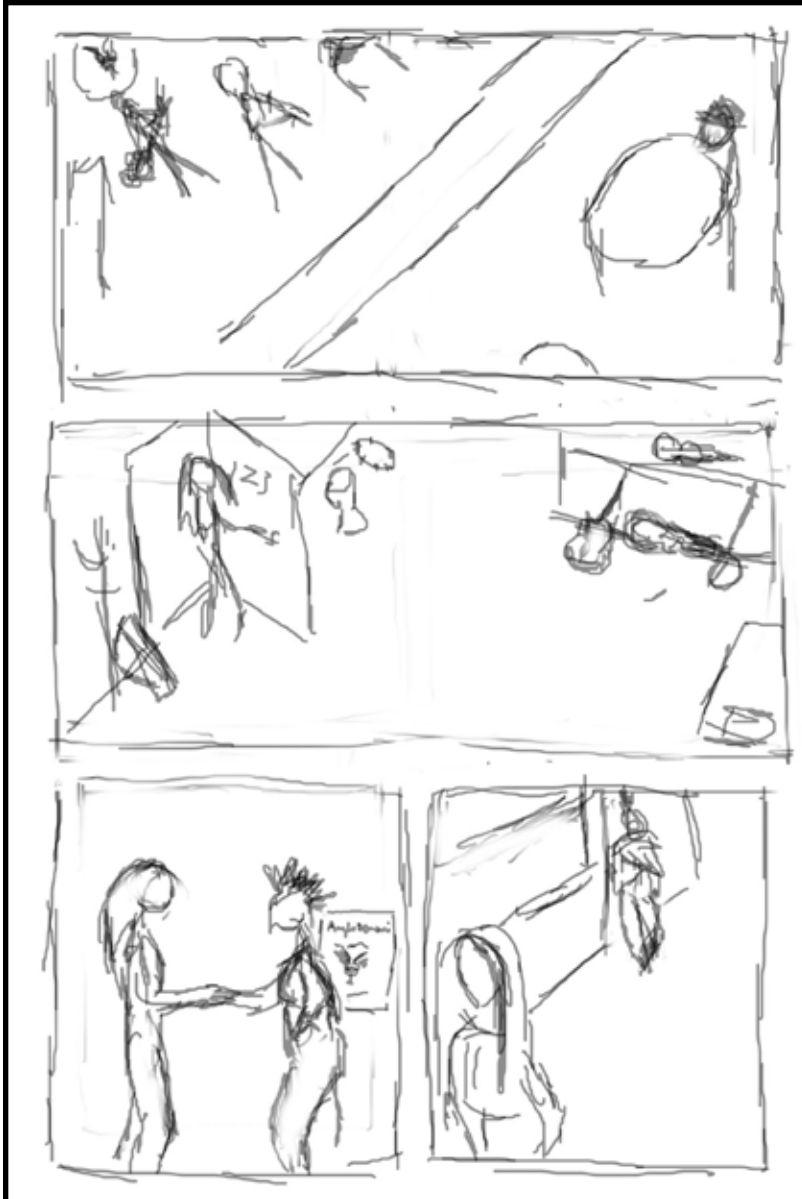


At work, she's sweeping – the tattoo lady shows her the logo.  
“I altered your original key design a little bit, but it seemed appropriate.  
Ange stares down at it. One hand grasps her own key. “It's perfect.”





More scenes of them playing. Bigger venues. Bigger crowds. The logo appears on the bass drum. Her room is increasingly crowded with instruments that we see her play.



The tattoo parlor is displaying a poster advertising one of the band's next shows. Inside, they're shaking hands.

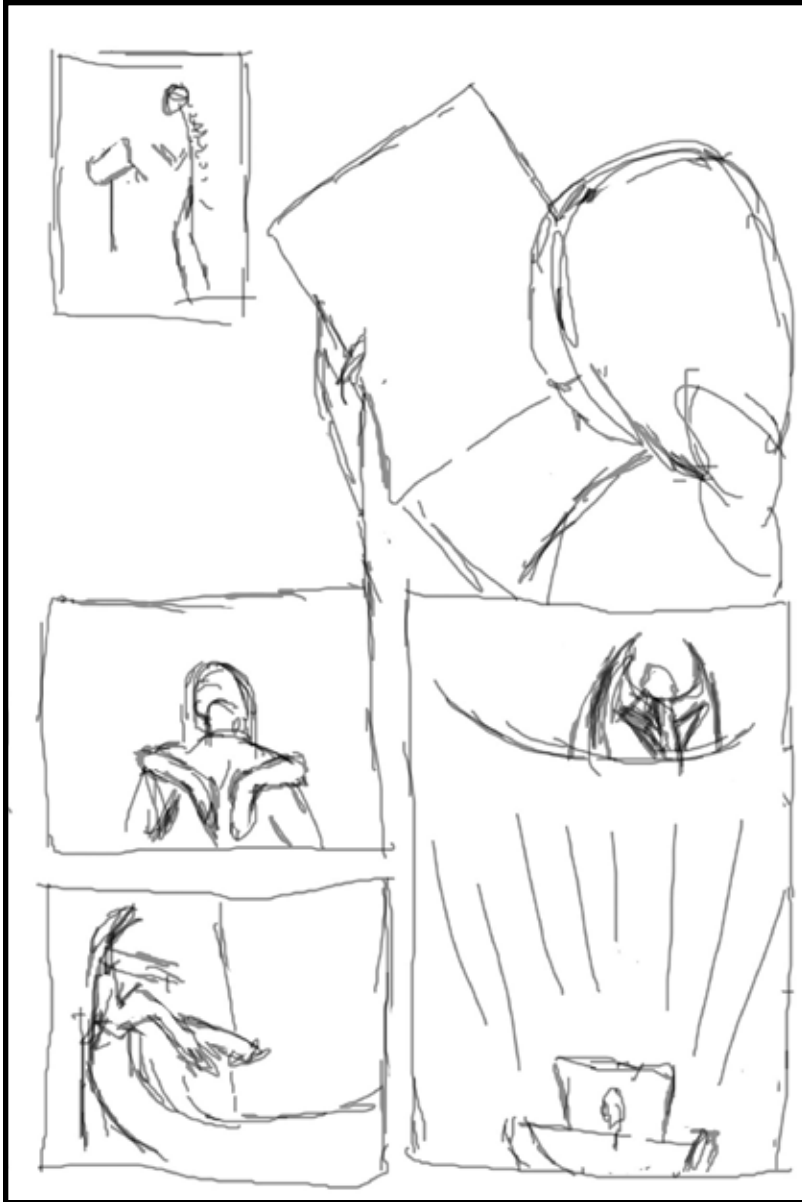
"I'm sorry to see you go. You keep in touch."

"Thanks for everything."

Ange is walking away, tattoo lady leans against the doorframe. "Fly high, kid," she calls out.



More images – performances, signs, posters, magazine covers – debut album – Dive? possible name – goes platinum, world tour scheduled, etc.



And then, a quiet image – Nana stands by her mailbox, holding a letter sent by Ange. We see the envelope, and part of the letter. She’s talking about her bandmates. Jed is our bassist – doesn’t say much. Ethan – kind of a flake, but a fantastic guitarist, and a good voice when we want male vocals. Aida, the keyboardist – resident soprano. Lucy the drummer – our little yowler. They’re either sisters or lovers, we’re not sure which. A little bit more chit-chatedness. Introduction without being shoved down throats. Nana is reading and smiling.

Back to Ange on her balcony. She looks like she’s dozing.

*Ah, Nana. I’ll visit you when all this is over.*

*Well, no sense sleeping on a ledge.*

She swings off the ledge, passes at the door to inside.

*I’m sure tomorrow’s gonna be a great day.*

She goes inside. In the shadows, clinging to the building above, a hooded figure – the one from the concert, is watching.

Ange in her bed, sleeping. A knock on the door wakes her up.

Two servants walk in – one is Luned.

“Excuse me, Miss Meallá, sirs, ladies. We’ve come to take you to your permanent quarters.”

“Permanent quarters?” Ange asks, rubbing eyes. Others are waking slowly.

“Of course. This room is one we use for temporary guests. For long-term guests of your stature, we provide much more comfortable lodging.”

Ethan.

“Well isn’t that nice. At least we’ll be *comfortable* prisoners.”

Ange rolls eyes.

They’re back in the robes from before and following the servants down the hallways.

Lead servant leads them into a hallway.

“We’ve prepared these five rooms for you, so you can be close to one another. Miss Meallá, this one is yours.” Luned opens the door for her.

“You know, I really prefer to be called Angelu.”

Ethan pokes his head in.

“Not too shabby.”

“Please follow me, sir. Miss Me – Angelu has to get to training. You may see her later this evening.”

One servant stays with Ange while the others are taken the short distance away.

Ange stares at him. “What are you waiting for?”

“I have been assigned as your guard and guide. Shall we go in, Miss?”

Ange sighs and they go in.

The servant points out some clothes on a table and a tray with a very meager breakfast.

“This is your training uniform. Please eat and dress quickly. I will wait outside to lead you to the training field.”

Ange looks at the table and sighs again.

“Fine.”

Later, she’s adjusting the belt on her uniform – fairly plain, long tunic, legging, boots, long gloves. She’s braided her hair. She opens the door and the servant is waiting. She steps outside, tugging on the gloves as she goes.

“Ready?”

She nods.

“Follow me.”

The servant leads her down hallways, out a set of doors overlooking a large training field. There are running tracks, obstacle courses, people practicing something like tai-chi, ranges, etc. etc.

“These are the training grounds. Master Drausus is waiting for you in the western sword ring.”

Servant leads her on. Eventually they get to the top of a slight grassy hill. The top is fenced off, full of sand or dirt. There’s a long shed on the other side, outside of the fence. Drausus is standing in the center of the ring. His dress is similar, though a different color probably. The servant points his head, bows (she bows very slightly in return) and then she goes to Drausus.

“Good morning.” Drausus. Sneery smile.

“Morning.” Ange. Terse.

“This is the western sword ring. I have reserved it for our use in your training. You will meet me here promptly, every morning. We will train until the midday repast, at which point you will be released to your tutor, Master Louwan –”

“I have a tutor?”

“ – with whom you will spend the afternoon. Then, you will return to me for an evening training session, after which you will be free to enjoy your evening meal and rest for the night.”

“Sounds like a load of fun.”

Irritated glance. “We have much to teach you and a very limited timespan. We must use every hour we have.”

“Whatever. Where do we start?”

“Come with me.”

He hops on top of the fence, spreads out his wings, and glances back at her. “Unless you can’t even fly yet.”

Dirty look, she climbs up and spreads her own wings.

He nods, jumps, and glides up through the air. She follows, not quite so easily, and pulls up next to him. They’re drifting over the training field below – not too high though. He points down to a group, practicing sword drills.

“Many of these are normally my students. I have ceased instructing them in order to devote my attention to you.”

“Lucky them.” He does not appear to hear.

They are approaching a large, rather pretty building. They land in front and he leads them inside. There is an indoor arena here, empty, with stands for spectators and a raised platform at the end. “In this room we conduct graduate testing and ceremonies for our students aspiring to higher ranks.” He leads them through a side door, down a hallway, into a smaller room. A cabinet at the end. He opens the double doors. Inside is a set of armor – not full plate, mostly leather and chainmail – a basket-hilted saber, and a long dagger.

“These are replicas of the weapons and armor of the champion, recreated from historical accounts of the last three risings. These are in perfect working order – they lack only the magic of the true tools of the First. Using these will, ultimately, be the focus of your training.”

“Replicas? You don’t have the real ones?”

“The true champion’s tools are locked within the tomb of the very first champion. They can only be retrieved by the champion with the keys that the First left behind.

She grasps the key around her neck. “I see. And where are these keys?”

“Hidden. Our first task after your training will be to retrieve them.” He turns, respectfully retrieves the sword, and extends its hilt to her. “Take it. Carefully.”

She takes hold of the hilt and pulls. It doesn’t come out right away, of course, so she yanks. It slides out of the sheath, and she must take a step back. Drausus winces. After getting it out of the sheath, though, she’s very careful with it. She extends it, holds it up, gives a few experimental (and rather sloppy) swings.

“It’s so light.”

“Two and a half pounds, blade length 33 inches. Standard for such a weapon.

Eventually, that will feel like an extension of your own body.”

He offers the sheath again, and she slides it back in. It clicks into place.

“But before that can happen, you must be trained.”

Training montage, I think. He continues in voiceover as we see images of them training. Everything she does, he is doing with her. Pushups, side profile, him facing her, urging her to work harder. Twisty sit-ups, foot-to-foot. Squats, jumprope, whatever. Be creative. Look to bodyrock for some inspiration if needed.

“We will do conditioning, running, swimming, climbing. Everything about you must be improved – your agility, your strength – speed, flexibility, endurance, everything. I will teach you combat – hand to hand, with weapons, on foot, in the air. By the time I am through with you, you will be able to turn anything into a weapon, because you will be a weapon. This is a task that normally takes years. We barely have a few months. But I promise you that at the end of those months, you will hardly recognize yourself. If you don’t die during training, anyway.”

By the time the “If you don’t die during training” bit rolls around, they have been jogging. She is sweat-soaked and in obvious pain. He runs with her as if this entire morning has been effortless. It may well have been.

She clutches her side, and stops, doubled over, gasping.



He walks back to her.

“Did I give you permission to rest?”

“I don’t give... a fuck... if you gave me ...permission.”

He grabs her shirtfront and pulls her close. I actually think she may be a tiny bit taller than him.

“You are my student. You will do exactly what I say, and you will give me the respect due me as your instructor – starting by addressing me as Master Drausus.”

She glares at him, twists off his hand, and shoves him off. He is shocked and angered. She staggers back a bit, and hunched a bit, says, “I will do no such thing.”

She draws herself up to full height. Her breathing is a bit more under control now.

“I don’t care how you treat your other students. But you remember this – you may be my teacher, but you’re only teaching me because I’m here to save your ass, and I will respect you if I feel you’ve earned my respect. I will do my best to learn from you –I know what’s at stake. But don’t you ever think, for even a moment, that you are my better.”

They have a bit of a stare-down. Then,

“I’m ready. Let’s keep going.”

She jogs past him, hand already going to her side. He stares after her, slight frown on his face.

It is noon now. She looks exhausted. They've been working on drills. The servant from that morning is waiting outside the ring. He calls for them to halt.

“That’s it for this morning. Luned here will take you to wash up. You will lunch with Master Louwan. I will see you again after your lessons with him.”

She just nods and follows the servant.

A bit later. She has changed clothes and is shown into a room. Master Louwan is seated at a large table with a lunch and water carafes laid out. He stands when she enters.

“Greetings, Miss Meallá.”

“Angelu.”

He blinks, then nods.

“Miss Angelu. Please, be seated. I’m sure you must be famished after this morning’s training.”

They sit and begin eating. “So how was it this morning? I imagine it must have been exhausting. I never did have the stomach for all that physical work – rather more of a scholar myself, as I’m sure you’ve guessed.”

“Well, it’s not exactly my forte either.” Grumpy.

He ignores her attitude. “I see. What is your forte, if I may ask?”

Her tone is not so angry now. “Music.”

“Ah, I heard you were a musician! We have some lovely instruments here in Ceila – I shall have to bring you some so you can practice in your spare time.”

Snorts. “Doesn’t sound like I’ll be having much of that.”

“Oh, there must always be breaks, even once in a while. It wouldn’t do anyone any good to run you to the ground before you complete your task. Speaking of which, I’m sure you must wonder what you’ll be learning from me.”

She nods and continues eating.

He retrieves a list from a desk, returns to the table, and puts on a pair of reading glasses. “We have much to discuss over the next few months. We will look at the history in brief of the three worlds, their internal relations and politics, etiquette. We must cover the basics of the geographies of the worlds, the locks through which one travels between them. Flora and fauna, field medicine, outdoor survival skills. Oh, and of course, the basics of the Ceilan and Haydan languages.”

Her eyes grow wider as he continues to list these items.

“Geography? Etiquette? Languages? Aren’t you people supposed to help me out here?”

He looks at her sternly over the tops of his glasses. “Of course we are going to help you out. But that’s no reason for you not to learn.”

“Look, I’m just a musician! I’m not a scholar, I’m not a good student, I never was and I never cared to be! You’ve already got me killing myself twice a day with conditioning and combat practice and whatever – now you want to make me study all this useless bullsh-”

“None of this is useless, young lady.”

“No? Because the world will end if I don’t know how to do a proper Ceilan curtsy? Because I won’t always have people around to translate other languages that I’ll never be able to pick up in a few months anyway? I mean, I realize that knowing all the different types of geranium may be hugely important to you people, but to me – ”

She stood up at some point through all this and is really into her current angry rant. He stands up to confront her. He’s actually fairly tall and thin, so he towers over her when they both stand – not something she’s used to.

“Do you know which herbs to use to create a poultice that, when spread on a wound, will cut its healing time in half?”

“No...”

“Did you know that to break eye contact with some Haydan tribes while you are first being introduced is a sign of disrespect and hostility worthy of immediate death?”

“No...”

“If you were separated from your guards in any of the cities, would you have any idea of how to ask for aid, shelter, or directions?”

“...”

“Do you even know how to build a fire without a match?”

She looks away.

“You can become the best fighter in the world, Angelu, but if you don’t know the rules of the worlds in which you are operating, you cannot hope to survive on your own. If you are content to be completely dependent on everyone else who guides you through your journey, then go ahead and leave, you foolish child. But I suggest you stay, and learn what you can.”

He sits down. “You can never be the true champion until you can take care of yourself.” And extends a hand towards her seat.

She is still not looking at him. She closes her eyes, takes a deep breath, and takes her seat.

In the room, later afternoon. Ange sits with her head on a hand, frowning. There are some maps on the table. Louwan is standing, leaning on the table, pointing something out. A knock comes, and the servant (Luned) enters.

Louwan

“Oh dear, is it that time already?”

Servant nods.

“Ah. Well.” To Ange – “We didn’t get as far as I’d hoped we’d get today, but we made a start. I will see you tomorrow.”

Ange nods, gets up, wincing, and follows the servant away.

At the western sword ring. Drausus is waiting.

“Ready for your evening lesson?”

Later. Evening. It’s dark outside. In her room, her training uniform is scattered on the floor. A door is barely cracked, light and steam coming through. Inside, she’s in the shower. We just see her, shoulders up, water streaming over her, leaning forehead against the wall, completely exhausted.

She’s then seated at a little table in her apartment, eating dinner alone. There’s a crystal light glowing above her, the rest is dark. Same robish business as at the beginning of the day. She pushes the dishes away and rests her head in her hands. We can, as she thinks to herself, have her getting up, putting dishes away, picking up her clothes, etc. Tidying.

*God, what a day.*

*And I have another one just like it tomorrow. Who.*

*No, not just like it. Tomorrow I’ll barely be able to move. Even better.*

She goes into the hallway and knocks on the first door. Ethan opens in a towel.

“Oh! Hey there.”

“Hey.”

“How are you? You wanna come in?”

“No, I’m going to sleep soon, I just wanted to check on everyone.”

“Yeah, you look exhausted – what did they make you do?”

“Several hours of running, conditioning, and footwork drills, and a few more studying

maps.”

Ethan looks disgusted. “God.”

“Pretty much. What did they do with you guys?”

“Oh, nothing much. They didn’t let me move around much, because of these. Showed us around the city a bit, told us where to go if we wanted anything, promised guides if we want to go out again. I don’t know what the hell I’m going to do with myself till next summer.”

“Yeah. I’m sorry you guys had to get involved in this.”

“Hey, it’s not your fault. Oh – one of them gave me this.”

He hands her a magazine. Wreckage of the stage on the cover photo, headline: Angelu Demonai recuperates after explosion – or something like that.

“They’ve spread the word that a freak equipment malfunction caused the explosion, and that we’re all okay but thanks to injuries and things, we had to cancel the rest of the tour. Which isn’t far from the truth, I suppose.”

“Yeah, well. If you want to tell a convincing lie there has to be some truth to it.”

“I suppose.”

“All right. I’m glad you’re okay. I’ll let you be now.”

“Yeah. Get some rest, it sounds like you’ll need it.”

She snorts and moves on.

She knocks on next door.

“Yeah.” She opens it a bit. Jed is sitting at his table, eating.

“Hey. How are you doing?”

“Fine.”

“Good. Have a good night.”

He nods back as she closes the door.

She goes to the last door and knocks.

“Coming!”

The door opens. Aida and Lucy launch themselves at Ange.

“Angelu!”

“How are you?”

“How was training?”

“Was it really hard?”

“You look awful!”

“Girls, please.” Ange staggers under them. “It’s been a long day.”

They release her and stand back, staring at her like kittens.

“Have you been working all day?”

“Pretty much. I wanted to check on you two before going to bed, is everything going okay?” She looks inside – both sets of clothes/shoes/etc are inside.

Grinning. “I thought they were going to put you in separate rooms?”

“We told them it wasn’t necessary.”

“They resisted at first – ”

“ – but we convinced them in the end.”

“Well, good. They give you any trouble you send them to talk to me, okay?”

“Of course, Ange.”

“Now, you go get some rest.”

“You really do look awful.”

“Thanks, girls.” Rolling eyes.

Ange goes back to her own room. Turning a knob on the wall to make the crystal overhead dim, she crawls into bed and closes her eyes.

Another montage sequence - her early training days. More of her and Drausus training together – he is always doing the exercises with her. They do conditioning, swimming, flying, drills, bouts with wasters, staff, hand to hand, whatever. We see her nursing bruises after a hit, we see her falling off a climbing wall. With Louwan, there are maps, books, her mispronunciations of things. Confused looks, rubbing her temples, Louwan trying to explain things. We see images of her barely able to get out of bed in the morning when she gets her wake-up knock from the servant – we see welts as she showers and ice packs as she dines. Sometime she stares out of her balcony, but we do not see her venture outside.

These are all images of frustration and difficulty.

One night, she's leaning against the wall, staring outside. A knock on the door.

"Come in."

Ethan comes in, just one crutch now.

"Hey. I haven't seen you in a while – thought I'd come and say hi."

She turns, but we can't see her face too well in the shadows. There's the hint of a smile there. "Thanks."

"They must be keeping you busy." He sits at the table.

"Pretty much."

"How is it going? The training, I mean?"

She signs. "Frustrating." She comes and joins him at the table. She's holding an ice pack to her face.

"What happened there?"

"Drausus and me were sparring today. He doesn't believe in a lot of safety equipment."

"Let me see." Ethan moves the pack off her face – we see a black eye/bruised cheekbone. "Wow. That looks nasty."

"It shouldn't last too long. My tutor gave me some ointment that's supposed to help it heal faster.

Ethan looks incredibly disturbed. "I can't believe they're doing this to you. I can't believe you're letting them do this to you!"

She shakes her head. "It's nothing I haven't felt before." She smiles at him. "I was a bit rowdy as a kid."

"Yeah, I bet you were. Still, there's got to be a better way."

"Maybe, but there isn't a faster way, apparently. Of course, it would help if I didn't suck."



Him, playing astonished. “You? Sucking at anything? That’s simply not possible.”  
“Oh, come on, Ethan.” She gets up and paces. “I’m nothing special. Except when it comes to music, I’ve never been good at learning this kind of thing. I can brawl, sure, but this whole sword-fighting thing is just...I can’t get the hang of it, it’s no good! And all this stuff I’m supposed to learn...the languages, and the maps...I can’t do this, I can’t do any of it!”

Ethan gets up, and puts a hand on her shoulder.

“You’re selling yourself short, kiddo.”

She turns away, looking like she’s about to break down. She goes back out to the balcony instead.

Ethan looks down, frowning. Then he follows her, and stands next to her.

“Maybe you’re thinking about this all the wrong way.”

“Yeah? How do you mean?”

“Well, you keep telling yourself that you can’t do this. You’re convincing yourself that you can’t learn, and therefore, you’re not learning. I think you need to give yourself a chance.”

“I never wanted to learn any of this anyway!”

“Sure, but now you have to. So you may as well give it a go and see what happens.”

She turns on him. “What do you think I’ve been doing all this time!?”

“But see, you’re thinking about this stuff as bad things that are too much for you. Now, hear me out,” she’s walking away, angry face.

“You’re a great musician – one of the best I’ve seen, definitely the best I’ve ever met.

There’s never been an instrument you couldn’t teach yourself to play.”

“So?”

“So – think of this stuff like music.”

Quizzical look from her.

“I mean, the sword is just another instrument, right? It just sings a different kind of song.”

She frowns, looks like she’s about to speak, and then stops and looks at her hands. She wipes an eye – crying a little bit still. Ethan looks around.

“So, uh – have you figured these crystal things yet? I mean, how they glow and stuff? I’ve never seen any power cords or generators or whatever so it can’t be electricity.”

“Louwan said that the Haydans figured out a way to harvest the natural energy of crystals, and the Ceilans got a hold of it somehow. That’s how everything is powered here.”

“Oh. That’s pretty cool.” Slaps her on the shoulder. “See, you’re learning stuff after all!”

She smiles. “I suppose.”

He stands up. “Well, uh...I suppose I shouldn’t keep you up any longer. Have a good night, all right?”

“Yeah. Night, Ethan.”

He pauses at the door. “You think about what I said, ‘kay?”

“Sure thing, Ethan.”

He leaves. She leans back in the table, arms crossed across her chest, frowning, thinking. She gets up, turns off the crystal, flops in bed. Tosses and turns, lays on her back, stares at the ceiling.

The image of the note flashes in her mind.

*What if...this...is...*

Finally, she throws the blanket off herself, and swings out of bed.

She’s dressed, standing on the edge of the balcony. Her wings are spread out. She closes her eyes, jumps. Soars. She’s flying through the night, over the training grounds. She breaths deep, closes her eyes, and smiles.

Ange lands in front of the building from before – with the competition floor and the replicas. She goes inside, past the competition floor, down the hallway, into the room. She stands in front of the cabinet. Moonlight streams in the window. She opens the cabinet, takes out the sword, and sits in the middle of the floor, meditative posture. She looks at the sword, examines every bit of its hilt and sheath. She draws it as she sits, listens to the sound, examines the blade. She stands, goes in to stance. Swings it, slowly, with control. Swings it again, hears the sound of it. She goes through a drill, for the first time allowing herself to feel the sword, the motion, to listen to it and her own body. She ends in a perfect lunge, breathing hard. Slowly, relaxes. Puts the sword back in its sheath. Places it back in the cabinet. Stands before the open doors.

“You are my new instruments.”

Another montage sequence, much like the one before. This time, however, we focus on her improvement. Her conditioning and exercises with Drausus are going easier – she’s able to do better, less pain, more determination. The bruises are fading, and there are few new ones. Her pronunciation and language improves, and both Drausus and Louwan seem pleased. She’s doing studying on her own. We see her flying over the city, returning from visits to land on her balcony, walking the streets with her bandmates (Luned is always hovering in the background), interacting with people, trying her hand at some street musician’s instruments. Now when the knock comes, she’s already awake and dressed.

One afternoon, she’s waiting for Louwan in their usual room. He comes in bearing a package.

“Good afternoon, Miss Angelu.”

“Good afternoon. What have you got there?”

“I’ll show you in a moment. First, I have something I’d like to say.”

They sit down at their places – normally he’s at the head of the table and she’s along the side – they’re close but not right side by side. He puts the package on the table in front of himself, a little aside.

“Angelu, I must say I am very impressed with the progress you’ve made so far. When you came here that first day I was a little disheartened, and those first few weeks almost made me give up on you. But you seem to have pushed back whatever was blocking you.”

“It was...difficult to adjust.”

“Yes, I realize. You had a great deal thrust upon you, and I was nearly certain you’d buckle. But you brought yourself back up, and we are right where I’d hoped we’d be right now as far as your tutoring goes.”

“That’s good to hear.”

“I’ve noticed you wandering the city sometimes. Have our language lessons come in handy?”

Shrug, smile. “People seem to appreciate the effort.”

He laughs. “Of course they do. That’s all very good.”

He stands, sobers, goes to look out the window. “At this point, the things we discuss will get a bit trickier. We, too, will start taking excursions out into the city, into the rest of Ceila, into Hayda and Tehra in a limited fashion. You must learn what it is like to travel between worlds via the locks, and learn to use them yourself. I will show you more of the world, and the people, and how the worlds interact.”

“Politics?” she asks distastefully.

“Among other things.”

“Can we see Nana?”

“No. Again, I tell you, no. The Protector wouldn’t even allow your letter to be sent – visits are out of the question.” Ange is disappointed, frustrated.

He sighs. “In any case, I want you to know you’ve done well. For someone who claims to be a poor student, you’ve somehow managed to keep up with me. You should feel proud.” He walks back to the table. “I encourage you to keep up with your excursions into the city. Keep talking to people. You are always guarded, after all – you have nothing to fear.”

“No, but the constant tail is a little irritating.”

“You are our most important asset right now – we can’t risk you any harm. Now – about this package.”

He slides it across the table.

“It’s for you. Go ahead.”

She gives him a quizzical half-smile and opens it up, smiles, and pulls out an erhu-like

instrument.

“It’s called an xiqin. One of our musicians introduced it to Tehra something over a thousand years ago. I thought you might like to have a chance to practice on an instrument of your own again.”

Ange smiles at him.

“Thank you, Louwan. It’s beautiful.”

“Of course it is.” He goes to the desk, pulls out a large book, and puts it in front of her.

“Now, let’s start with some language review. Describe this image in Ceilan first, then in Haydan.”

Morning. Ange arrives at the western sword ring. Drausus is waiting on the roof of the shed, wings extended.

“We’re moving on to something new today.”

“Oh? And what is that?”

“I start all my students with a strict focus of on-the-ground training. Now, however, you’ve reached the point where we need to introduce a new level of complexity.”

He jumps off the roof, using his wings to slow his fall. “Wings. You must learn to use them for more than transportation. You must be able to fight with them as well – both on the ground and in the air.”

“In the air?”

“Yes. Aerial combat is a beautiful and dangerous thing, but you must be introduced to its complexities if you are to be properly prepared for all that may await you.”

She grins. “Let’s start.”

Oh, so very many montage sequences. Montage is just a fancy word for a succession of related images, anyway. So we have more training, all with wings out. Jogging. The climbing wall. The weapons drills. Using the wing as another way to attack. Finally, a sequence in the air – strikes, dives, free falls, somersaults, etc, until he calls out, “Well done!”

It is noon, her servant (Luned) waits below. They touch down in the sword ring.

“You picked that up very quickly.”

“Flying has always come naturally.”

“That is surprising. We’ve a ways to go yet.” Direct, intense look. “But you’re coming along beautifully.”

She frowns, draws back. “Thank you.” Turns to leave.

As she’s walking away, he calls after her, “I’ll see you this afternoon.” He has an odd smile – that look. You know that look. She looks very uncomfortable.

One afternoon, she and Louwan are flying above the city.

“The Haydan approach to the justice system, of course, differs radically from that of the Ceilans, most radically from the Tehrans. Where the middle world has been forced to develop an elaborate system of checks and balances to argue out who is right or wrong, the Haydans, of course, can know with hardly an effort who is telling the truth in any given scenario.”

It is difficult to tell how much attention she is paying him, as her eye has been caught by a family in the park below. The father is bouncing the toddler girl up and down while she flaps her little wings, and the mother, seated in the grass nearby, watches. They are all smiling.

“What happened to my parents, Louwan?”

He glances over at her. “What do you mean?”

Irritable. “What do you think I mean, Louwan?”

He sighs, and spirals down to land. She follows.

The land in a secluded area of the park, next to a little pond, and sits down in the grass.

“You have to understand that although the Ceilans and Haydans do have certain relations as a people, they do tend to avoid one another’s worlds if they can help it. Loyalty to one’s own kind is an integral part of both our world views. Personal relationships across the worlds, such as your mother and father had, are very rare.”

“But not outlawed.”

“No, of course not.”

“So what’s the deal?”

“You are a half-breed, Angelu. A child of both worlds. Who are you loyal to? Well, that depends entirely upon you, of course, and both worlds would be glad to take you

in, whichever you chose to accept as your home. But your parents' homes were already clear. Your father was Ceilan, your mother Haydan. Most people – on both worlds – believe their loyalty should have been, first and foremost, to their own people.”

“I’m not following you.”

Louwan sighs. “When your parents took you to Tehra, they forsook their own worlds. Hiding you there was seen as an act of betrayal, for both of them. In the Ceilan view, your father should have brought you back to Ceila to protect you. In the Haydan view, your mother should have made sure you were guarded in Hayda. Because they did not, they are each viewed as traitors.”

Ange scoffs. “That doesn’t make sense. They couldn’t take me to two places at once, they had to compromise somehow.”

“Perhaps.”

She shoots him a dark look, then looks away. “So where are they now?”

“Imprisoned. Your father here, your mother in Hayda, for their perceived treachery.”

“Still? After 22 years?”

“In the course of your journey, you may see them again. Your father had some interesting things to say about the keys at one time.”

“What – ”

Louwan looks across the pond. “Ah! How fortuitous of us to land here.”

“Louwan, what did you – ”

“You see this yellow flower here? The petals are quite bitter, but the pollen and bulb, which crushed together, create quite a potent stimulant which may be used...”



That evening. Ange is returning to her room, but there is a note on her door. “We cooked dinner, come join us! – Aida/Lucy”

She opens the door to their room, and the rest of the band is seated inside.

Ethan “Ah, there you are.”

Aida/Lucy “Ange!”

Jed nods to her and continues eating.

Ange, taking a seat. “It smells great in here.”

“We’ve been taking lessons from the cooks downstairs.”

“They’re very nice.”

“It’s been so long since we had to cook for ourselves, they bring us everything here, but”

“we wanted to give it a try.”

They bring Ange a plate and they return to theirs. Eating in silence for a bit, Ange seems downcast.

“Ange, what’s wrong?”

“You seem sad.”

Ange sighs. “I dunno, not sad exactly.”

Ethan “Down in the dumps?”

Lucy “Under the weather?”

Aida “Wrong side of the bed?”

Jed “What’s up?”

“I asked Louwan – my tutor – about my parents today. He said they’re both imprisoned by their own people. Because they hid me on Tehra, instead of bringing me to their own worlds. It’s been more than twenty years.”

“Oh.”

“I’m sorry, Ange.”

Ethan “But you shouldn’t feel bad, I mean, it’s not your fault.”

“Yeah. I don’t feel guilty about it, it just...I don’t know. I always kind of hated them for leaving me like they did, and that hasn’t...entirely changed. But it just seems like such a

stupid thing to be imprisoned for – lack of loyalty, or whatever.”

Jed “Loyalty is an important thing.”

“Yeah, but does it warrant a life sentence?”

Aida “Maybe someday you can help release them.”

Ange “I’m still not sure I want to see them. They’ve never been a part of my life. But...I don’t see how they deserve that...I don’t know. I doubt seeing them now would make them feel any less absent.”

Lucy “I suppose, in the end, we’re all orphans here.”

Later, in Ange’s room. She’s changed to her nightclothes, is tidying things up.  
*Those two are good cooks. Not always the easiest people to have a conversation with.  
But Lucy has a point.  
I’m not an orphan. But I feel like one, and I always have. Perhaps I always will.*

A knock on the door. Ethan pokes his head in.

“Mind if I come in?”

“I’m going to sleep in a minute.”

“Well, that’s one minute I can bug you, then.” He comes in. He’s only using a cane at this point.

He looks a little awkward. “So more training tomorrow, then?”

“Of course.”

“What are you doing now?”

“Aerial stuff. Getting used to using my wings and fighting at the same time.”

“That’s pretty awesome.”

She gives him a funny, “What’s up with you?” sort of look, and continues folding. He approaches her.

“So it’s going better now? It seems like you’ve been really learning a lot.”

“Yeah, I just had to get over myself.” She looks at him and smiles. “Just another song, after all.”

He grins back. “See, I am useful some of the time.”

“Occasionally, yes.”

She’s smiling as she continues her work. Then her expression changes – he’s come up behind her and is massaging her shoulders. Confusion, some anxiety. He’s a bit taller than her.

“Well, I’m glad I was able to help you.” He’s standing very close behind her. “I’m a bit worried about you, kiddo. I know how you get sometimes.” His mouth is very close to her ear. “If there’s ever anything I can do, just let me know.”

She is obviously very uncomfortable now, and she slips away with a pile of folded clothes. “Thanks, Ethan. I’m fine, though. I just wasn’t sure what to think about a few things.”

He looks a little disappointed. “But you’re sure now?”

“No. But at least – ”

“ – at least you keep on learning.”

Ange drops the clothes and settles into a defensive posture, moving in front of Ethan. By the balcony, the shadowed figure from earlier (the concert, the first balcony scene) leans against the wall. She drops her hood to reveal her face. “It’s better to be conflicted than ignorant.”

“Well, I feel pretty ignorant right now. Who are you?”

“My name is Senka. I am from Hayda. I’d like to talk to you, if you don’t mind.”

“How’d you get in here? I know there’s always someone guarding me.”

Senka smiles. “I have my ways. If you know anything about my people, you know that’s about as much as you’re likely to learn.”

Ethan, leaning close to Ange. “I should call the guard.”

“There’s really no need. I am not here to harm you, Angelu. I just think there are some things you ought to know.”

“Some things, huh? What things?”

“I don’t trust these walls, Angelu.”

Ange laughs. “So what, are you suggesting a midnight fly?”

“That’s exactly what I’m suggesting.”

Ethan “This is ridiculous! There’s no way we can trust you!”

Senka looks at Ange. “Now, that’s not true, is it?” Slowly she extends a hand, wrist up, to Ange. “I am not here to harm you. If something should happen, I will do everything in my power, including give my own life, to ensure your safety. Now tell us, Angelu – am I telling the truth?”

They stare at each other for a moment. Then Ange, very swiftly, takes Senka’s hand and bites her wrist. Ethan’s reaction is, understandably, one of confusion, shock, and some fear. But when Ange releases Senka a moment later, she straightens up, not relaxed but no longer on guard. “All right. Let me change.”

Ethan “What are you, some kind of vampire too!?”

Ange rolls her eyes, and Senka laughs.

Ange “It’s the Haydan gift, remember? Tasting truth?”

Senka waits, silently watching them, somewhat amused. Ange is preparing to go. He does not relax. “Ah. Right. So she’s telling the truth.”

“She is.”

“So you’re just going to go with her?”

“Yup.”

“Ange, I don’t think that’s a great idea.”

“It’s not really your concern. You heard her. If she’s able to sneak in here she’s bound to be as good a bodyguard as anyone.”

“I don’t think the one follows the other.” he mutters

“Listen – you want to help me? Then don’t worry about this, and don’t let anyone know where I went. Okay?”

Ethan looks very displeased. “Fine. Just come back in one piece.”

“Don’t I always?”

“No,” as Senka and Ange prepare to leap off the balcony.

Senka “Fly where I tell you. I will stay close, so you will appear alone to anyone who isn’t right next to us.” Senka flies underneath Ange, and very close to her. They’re practically pressed together, but Ange says nothing and they continue on. Ethan watches, worried, from the balcony.

They fly through the night, and touch down in a little garden. “I’ve taken careful measures with this place,” Senka explains, turning up the glow on a crystal in the middle. “No one can find us here. Not unless they’re smarter than me and know what they’re looking for.”

“We’re not even outside the city.”

“You’d be surprised where Haydams can show up.”

“So what exactly did you want to tell me?”

“I’ve been observing you for a while, Angelu. I know that they’ve told you some details of the role you have to play – but they’ve left out one very important part. Please, sit down. I’ll start from the beginning. I apologize for what you’ve already heard.”

We switch into past mode – images from the story itself, not of the two of them in the garden.

“The four worlds were created at the beginning of time as we know it by four siblings, beings of great power. I suppose you’d think of them as deities, or great spirits. One infused its world with beauty, and the desire to create beauty in all things. One imbued the world with the desire for knowledge, growth, and exploration. One taught its people to seek out, cherish, and protect the hidden secrets of the worlds. The last gave its world the spirit of competition, ambition, and the drive to overcome all obstacles.

“The rivalry that developed between the worlds was probably inevitable. But what the first three worlds did not expect – though perhaps they should have – was that the nature of the fourth world is such that it cannot be satisfied until it has established its dominion over the others. Encouraged by its creator, the denizens of the outer world – Gehna – sought to invade the other three.

“Now, the creators of the worlds were limited by their own rules as to how much direct influence they had. But the three perceived the danger, and inspired a champion to rise. The champion was a master of old magics – the kind of power that has mostly been lost over the millennia. She used them to construct a set of tools – ”

“She?”

“So I’ve heard. She created weapons and armor that would help her seal off the fourth world from the rest, to protect them all from each other, so that all could continue to live as they chose.

“She succeeded. Using her own blood, and the magic imbued in her tools, she was able to halt the advance of the Gehnans and lock them away. She nearly died in the process, but she did not sacrifice all of her life’s blood – only enough to do the job for a few thousand years.”

“The champion seals the fourth world with her own blood?”

“Yes. It is rumored that the champion who gives all her blood to create the seal will lock the fourth world away forever. But no one has tried it yet.

“Now, the champion warned the remaining three worlds that the seal was not permanent, that in time it would fail. She assured them another champion would rise in her stead, and use her own tools – impervious by their magic to the effects of time – to do her work again. She was right, and the next time the seal was breached, a young Haydan was born with the sign of the key over his heart. He, too, stopped the rise of the fourth world with the tools of the First. But something happened – after his success, the Haydans discovered how to harness the power of crystals, and use the gems as the source of various types of energy.”

“Like the crystals in the palace.”

“Indeed – the secret was guarded by the Haydans for a very long time, but eventually the Ceilan’s stole it and adapted it for their use.

“But back to the story. This time the seal did not last so long as before – a few hundred years, and a new champion from Tehra was born. He, too, completed his mission – and then, the technology of the Tehrans exploded, rushed ahead in leaps and bounds. Suddenly there was nothing that the Tehrans could not achieve, or dream of achieving, thanks to their scientific achievements.”

“My Nana says it’s technology that distracted the middle world from its heritage and made them forget.”

“Your Nana is wise, and quite possibly correct. Their involvement with Ceila and Hayda declined dramatically after that. Still, it was an enormous shock to us when we learned the extent of their amnesia.”

“But back to your story.”

“Indeed. Now you must see the connection I am implying here – the Haydan champion is followed by the secret of the crystals. The Tehran champion precedes the advent of technology in the middle world. Do you know what caused these things to happen?”

“No one ever taught me this.”

“When a champion successfully sacrifices their own blood to seal off the danger of the fourth world, the spirits of Ceila, Tehra, and Hayda bestowed a boon upon that champion’s people. They asked the champion to name a gift to thank them for sealing their sibling away once again.”

Back to the two of them, in the garden.

Angelu sits on her bench, eyes wide. Senka kneels before her.

“*This* is what I wanted to tell you tonight. *This* is what the Ceilans never bothered to share. When you defeat Gehna’s champion, you too will be offered a boon, and *you* must decide which world will reap the benefits. There is much at stake for both Hayda and

Ceila, and it all rests upon you.”

Senka “Now the question is, Angelu Demonai – to what world do you belong?”

Close on Ange’s face. *Of course.*

Senka stands up and looks at the sky. “We’ve been gone long enough. This is the story I wanted to share with you. I thought you ought to know what the Ceilans would be content to hide from you, until they were sure of where you stand.”

Senka’s eyes. Violet.

“Where do you stand, Angelu?”

Ange shakes her head. “I really don’t know.”

Senka smiles. “Happily, you don’t have to make the decision now. But if you ever wish to speak to me again – or come away from the Ceilan’s grip – simply ask for me. I am always around.”

“That’s a little creepy.”

Senka laughs again. “Many people think that about us Haydans. We are the inspiration for so many Tehran demons and ghouls, it is not hard to see why.”

Ange stands up. “I appreciate your honesty, Senka.”

“I have one more thing to tell you.” Senka stands by the crystal in the center of the garden, and Ange turns to look at her.

“It is rumored that the First chose not one world, but all three, as her home. That is how we came to have our particular powers – tasting truth, seeing emotion, hearing thoughts. Or, so some believe.”

Ange stares at her. “Did my parents believe it?”

Senka smiles. “Let’s get you back.” She turns off the light.



Later, they're flying through the night, Senka again tucked right up under Ange as they fly.

Senka "I will turn from you in a moment. You can find your way back from here?"

"Yes. You're the only one who hasn't tried to call me Meallá since I got here."

Senka, smiling. "I pay attention."

Senka dips and peels away from Angelu, disappearing into the night.

Angelu looks after her for a moment, but continues on. Her balcony is in sight.

*Is it better to be conflicted than ignorant? I hope you're right, Senka, because I sure got a lot of conflict right now.*

She lands on the balcony. Ethan is sitting at her table, looking anxious.

"Ange!" he calls as she steps in.

Drausus steps up from behind her, putting one arm around her shoulders and a knife to her throat.

Drausus "This is what happens when you go anywhere without your guard."

"You are my guard – where were you?"

He's talking right into her ear, holding on to her pretty tightly.

"We can't protect you if you sneak away from us! What are you playing at!?"

"Let go of me, Drausus."

After a moment, he does. He points the knife at her, obviously angry.

"If you want to stretch your wings in the middle of the night, that's fine. But don't you dare think that you can go out alone!"

"I just did go out alone. Nothing bad happened till I got back here."

"You insolent little –"

"Dude, don't you think you should chill out a little? You've been training her to take care of herself – don't you trust your own work?"

"If she could take care of herself I wouldn't have been able to do what I just did, would

I?”

“You people have been telling me all along that I was safe inside this palace. Why would I expect anyone to attack me from inside it?”

“You must always expect an attack!”

“Well, I guess you should have taught me that.”

He gets right up in her face.

“Consider yourself learned.”

“What are you doing here, anyway?”

“I came to tell you that you won’t be training with me tomorrow. Louwan’s lesson will take up the full day. You should report directly to him.”

“Sounds like a good day for you, Ange!”

Drausus turns, face twisted in anger, walks towards the kitchen. Ethan stands up, not looking particularly afraid, grinning the sort of grin that has nothing to do with humor. Drausus pauses in front of Ethan, and the two face off for a moment, before Drausus steps around Ethan to the door.

“I will see you the morning after tomorrow, and you’d better not keep me waiting.”

Slams the door behind him.

Ethan stares after him, that same expression still lingering on his face. “Has a bit of a control problem, doesn’t he?”

“What did you tell him about where I went?”

Ethan shrugged. “ ‘It’s a mystery, Drausus, she was gone when I came in here. I just wanted to have a chat before bed.’ ”

“And you insisted on staying till I got back.”

Ethan, eyes wide, mock innocence. “Of course! Once I saw how worried he was I had to

wait and see you get back safe.”

Ange laughs. “Well, thanks for that. I think you’d better head back to your room, though.”

Disappointed. “You’re not going to tell me what happened?”

She smiles and shrugs. “It’s already past my bedtime.”

He sighs, and approaches, puts a hand on her arm. “Okay, but if you want to talk about it later you know where I’m at, okay?”

“I know.”

He looks as if he’s going to go in for a kiss, but she leans back. He sighs and turns away. “Good night, kiddo.”

“Night.”

When he leaves, she gets an exasperated look on her face.

*Men!*

Morning. She lets herself in to their study room and Louwan is already there.

“Good morning, my young pupil!”

“Morning, Louwan,” she says, yawning.

“You seem a bit tired.”

“Late night. Couldn’t sleep.”

“I see. Well, I trust your fatigue won’t impede our lesson today.”

“I can’t promise anything without knowing what that lesson is.”

“The locks, Angelu! Today we’re going to teach you how to move through the locks!”

They’re flying over the city. “Tell me about the locks, Angelu.”

“The locks are scattered all over the worlds. That’s how you travel between them. You can’t travel to the other worlds outside of a lock.”

More in the country-ish area now.

“Excellent. And where do the locks take you?”

“Depends on the lock. Some will take you anywhere, in any of the three worlds. Some are limited to locations within one world, and some only travel to a particular location.”

Landing on a grassy hill in front of a taller, rocky hill.

“Excellent again. And how does one find the locks?”

“If you train you can learn to sense the location of the locks. Otherwise, you have to know where they are and where they lead.”

“Truer words were never spoken. Now –” waves his hand to indicate the area. “I bet you can surmise where we are.”

She thinks about it – look of concentration. “We’re at a lock. One that goes between all three worlds.”

He gives her a mildly bemused smile. “Indeed. Your memory for our lock location studies has served you well.”

She shrugs, smiles back. “I have been training.”

“Yes, right. Now, I have taken you through locks before. Today I want you to take me.”

“Is this why you wanted a full-day lesson? So we can go world-hopping all day?”

“That’s exactly right. Now, close your eyes. Focus on what you feel. The feel of a being inside a lock is much like – ”

Ange, eyes closed “Static.”

“Yes, a faint electric current against your skin. Now what you need to do is fit yourself into that current. Imagine yourself as the key. Hold the destination in your mind, feel the lock around you, and turn yourself between them. It’s difficult to explain. I don’t expect you to master it right away, but – ”

“No, I got it. Where do you want us to go?”

“Well, I – you pick a location. One of the places I’ve taken you before should suffice. We’ll visit many places before the day is out.”

She’s standing with her eyes closed. He approaches a bit, trying to reassure. “Now, just relax. Breathe, and concentrate. Try whenever you’re – ”

She looks right in his eyes – the next moment the world is turning around them, a moment later they’re in a bright woods.

He staggers a bit. “Goodness! I was not expecting you to catch on so quickly.” He looks around, suddenly a bit alarmed. “Where are we? Where did you take us?”

Ange is moving through the trees. “The woods overlooking Nana’s house.”

Louwan, alarmed “What! You took us to your home!” Ange, he catches up and grabs her arm. “I’ve told you repeatedly we are not to contact anyone from your old life. Come, we must get away from here.”

She shakes him off. “No. I’m not leaving. I didn’t bring us here to talk to her – I’m not an idiot. I just want to check she’s okay. She won’t even see us.” Ange continues walking. “Just calm down, man.”

The woods thin out, and the ground drops off ahead, a mini cliff. Ange drops down and crawls towards the edge. Louwan follows, muttering about dirt and hard-headed students.

Ange gets to the edge. Down below we see Nana's tidy little cottage with a garden in the back. Nana is back there, in the same meditative pose we've seen Ange in, eyes closed.

"Is that her?"

Ange nods.

"Well, she seems to be doing fine. She has a lovely home."

"She does."

Louwan gives her a sidelong look. "We really should leave, Angelu."

"Just give me a minute, would you?"

Ange continues to look over the edge. One hand grasps her key.

Successively closer shots of Nana in her garden – from Ange's view, then midway, then fairly close.

*Oh Nana. You and your meditating. You've been trying so long to get back in touch with your forgotten self – came in handy for you whenever I got into trouble, didn't it? You always had a way of knowing...well, here goes.*

*I don't know if you can hear me right now, but I want you to know I'm okay. They found me, just like you said, and I guess I'm important after all. I have a task I have to do, but as soon as I can I'll come and tell you everything. Until then, don't worry too much – I'll be fine.*

*I love you, Nana.*

In the garden, right up in Nana's face now, she opens her eyes and stares up into the woods. We see what she sees – which is nothing in particular, Ange and Louwan are well hidden and it's fairly far away. But Ange gasps, eye wide, and she sees Nana smile

through a tear and put a hand over her own heart.

After that, Ange smiles too, and starts inching back. Louwan follows suit and eventually they stand and walk back through the woods.

“Well, I hope you’re satisfied now.”

“Not entirely, but it’ll do.”

He looks at her sternly. “At least tell me you won’t pull a stunt like that again.”

“Don’t worry, Louwan. Strictly business from here on out.”

He harrumphs and nods. “Good. Because now we have to find our way to the nearest lock, and you never know how far apart they can be scattered in Tehra.”

Ange closes her eyes, lifts and turns her head a bit. “There’s one not too far away. Thataway.” She points.

Louwan turns, incredibly shocked. He concentrates and looks that way, and slowly looks back to her. “You’re right – not even two miles away. How did you –”

“I told you. I’ve been training.”

“I haven’t taught you how to sense locks yet, I didn’t think we’d have time –”

She shrugs and starts walking. “I figured it out.”

He stares, mouth vaguely open. Then slight smile, shakes head, follows.

Ange walks forward, head high, determined expression.

*You people want to use me? Fine. I’ll use you right back.*

Western training ring. Later in time. Afternoon. We'll try to use foliage and things to indicate time passing. Not that it's a significant amount of time since the last seen, at least a few weeks I think.

Drausus and Ange are in the ring. Training equipment – armor, wasters for sword and dagger. Their wings are out, and they're bouting. Cool action sequence whooo

They exchange blows – circling, feinting, dodging, parrying and riposting. He makes an attack – she sidesteps, feints, somersaults over his head with simultaneous attack, possibly with her wings though the physics might be wrong for that. When he whirls, using his own wings to attack, she's still in the air – dodges above. Drops in close. Parries attacks with wings/sword. Gets her dagger against his throat.

Both still, heavy breathing – they do have masks on so you can't really see their faces, just the pose. Finally Drausus relaxes, steps back, Ange follows suit. Salute, remove masks.

Drausus "You beat me."

"I did."

He smiles – since he usually doesn't smile much (sincere, not mocking smiles) this should be a fairly big moment. "Well done, Angelu." Extends hand to shake. She takes it. They shake.

She goes to step back, but he steps in closer. Still holding her hand. "I've never had a student accomplish what you have done in this short a time."

"Well, you've probably never just taught one student for eight hours every day before, either." She head is pointing down though she's still looking at him (sideways look), still drawn back, tense.

"True. But I can't take all the credit." Steps just a little closer, squeezes her hand. "I am truly impressed." Finally lets go, brushes a hair out of her face. She steps back, swipes her hair back herself.

"Shall we go again?"



He considers her, slight frown. “No. We’ll end early today.”

She bows slightly and puts her equipment away. He watches her. Finished, she starts to leave.

“You should be proud, Angelu.”

She looks back. He is smiling slightly, she slightly troubled still. “Thanks.” She flies away.

Evening. She and her bandmates are gathered in her room, chatting. She's playing her xiqin, not saying much. Actually, I think the other four are playing a game around the table, she's sitting with them but not playing with them, just practicing.

Knock on the door. The Protector, Drausus, and Louwan come in. Guards hover outside.

Louwan. "Oh dear. Sorry to interrupt, everyone."

Protector "I'm not. Meallá, get yourself ready. We're taking bit of a journey."

She stands. "What's going on?"

Protector "These two tell me your training is coming along faster than expected. We're moving ahead of schedule."

"Thanks so much for answering my question."

Protector, angry face. Louwan cuts in, worried face. "We're taking advantage of the extra time your progress has brought us. Tomorrow we will commence the search for the keys – but tonight, we'll show you the tomb of the First, so that you know how to get there and what to do when the time comes."

Drausus moves in and hands her a bundle. "This is your equipment. Live steel – no more practice weapons. Get yourself ready. We will wait for you outside."

She stares at them, then looks at her friends. "I guess you'd better go." They gather up their game and head out – Jed holding the game, stoic, nods to her. The girls, eyes wide. "Take care, Ange." Ethan puts a hand on her shoulder. "You be careful."

"Always." He gives her a lingering look and canes his way out. The Protector and Drausus follow – Louwan gives her a smile and pulls the door shut behind her.

She stares at the bundle in her arms. Deep breath. *Okay.*

She opens the door, armor on, sword and dagger buckled on.

“I’m ready.”

Protector, Louwan, guards pass, then Drausus. She asks him “This is the equipment from the cabinet. The replicas of the tools of the First.”

He nods. “You will use them until we retrieve the true tools.”

“Come along, you two!” Protector, off screen

The others are waiting on or around the balcony. Protector “Meallá, you will follow right behind me. Drausus and Louwan flank you. The remaining guards will give us a perimeter. Now come.”

The Protector spreads his wings and takes off – the others follow quickly. They fly off through the night.

Louwan “There are only three locks in existence that lead to the tomb of the First. We have guards posted at the Haydan and Tehran locks – we are heading to the Ceilan lock now.”

Protector “Quiet back there! Save your energy for the flight.” Mountains in the distance ahead.

They land on a rocky ledge. The city glimmers in the distance – the moon rises overhead. There is a fissure in the rock. Louwan points. “The lock is in there.”

“I can feel it.” Ange replies.

The Protector waves at the guards – they hide their wings and go inside. A moment later, one comes out again, gives a thumbs-up. The Protector gestures to Ange. “You next, girl.”

Ange ducks into the fissure and emerges in fair-sized cave, no other entrances of any kind. A crystal overhead casts faint light. She looks a bit awed, rubbing her arm with one hand while the other grasps her key. The others follow behind, Protector bringing up the rear.

“All right, let’s get going.”

Louwan – “Protector – might I suggest we let Angelu try?”

The others look at him strangely. “What? She’s never been to the tomb before.”

“Even so, I think we should let her try.”

The Protector glares, then shrugs. “This is a waste of time, Louwan.”

“Go ahead, Angelu.”

She gives him a pursed-lip, vaguely uncertain look, then stands up straighter and drops her hands to her side. Closes her eyes, and a moment later they are standing on a platform, pearly gray fog surrounding. A path leads off into the mist.

“Spirits above!” Protector, exclamation. The others give her wide-eyed/unsettled looks, but Angelu pays them no mind. Her eyes are focused on the path leading away, and she walks towards it.

The Protector grabs her arm as she goes by. “Let the guards go first.” She glares at him as the guards set down the path.

“All clear!” comes their call in a moment.

Ange immediately sets off down the path. There’s only mist on either side of this fairly narrow path for a moment, then it opens up, and you see a wall. Grey, tall, the sides disappear in mist. A few semi-circled steps lead up to the wall. Two columns support a bit of a roof – it’s a portico. A design on the wall, overlapping, marking out different sized doors. Three keyholes, one on top of the other, in the middle of this design.

Louwan comes up behind. She is standing before it, staring up. “The tomb of the First.”

Ange climbs the steps, slowly. Louwan, staying down, continues. “Of course, no one really knows if the First was truly laid to rest here. But he left this behind – created this space outside of all the other worlds, created the locks that led to it, created the platform

and the path and the doors that you see. I can't imagine such power in one person."

Ange has reached the wall, stands before the doors, and is tracing her fingers over the keyholes. She lingers over the smallest one, and her other hand grasps her key.

The Protector "Well, now you've seen it. We will cover tomorrow the locations of the Haydan and Tehran locks, and decide how best to recover the keys. We'll start early – let's go."

"Wait – um..." The others turn to watch her. She hasn't moved from in front of the door. "I would like to have a moment alone here, actually. Could you wait for me in the cave?"

Protector "Out of the question. It's far too dangerous –"

"Why?" She looks over her shoulder at him. "You have your guards posted at every lock – no one can get in here."

Louwan "She has a point."

Protector turns on him, angry face. Louwan "This is as safe a place as any. The other locks are very well guarded."

"I don't want much time – I just – I feel very close to this place, and I'd like to have a few minutes."

Protector, face twisted. Considers. "Fine! If you're not back in the cave in five minutes I'm coming back in to get you, and I will not be pleased if that happens." He stalks off. The rest follow. Louwan gives her a warning look. She waits a moment, walks back along the path to make sure they're gone. Then she runs back to the door.

She slips the key off her neck and places it in the smallest keyhole. Turns it – clicks open. She smiles, and pulls – the littlest door swings open. Inside the compartment lies a dagger in its sheath. Reverently, she pulls it out, examines it, closes her eyes and goes through a few motions.

*It's like it's singing in my hands.*

She snaps it back in its sheath and tucks the sheath into her boot, closes the door, locks it back, and puts the key around her neck.

The Protector, Louwan, and Drausus appear on the platform. “I told that girl five minutes!”

They see her seated in meditative pose on the top step, in front of the door, facing out.

“Meallá. MEALLÁ!”

She appears to start and opens her eyes. “Has it been five minutes?”

“It’s been twice that – get up, we’re leaving.” The Protector looks incredibly pissed as he stalks away. Drausus’ face is stoic, but he gives her a lingering look before following his father. Louwan frowns at her. “Hurry now, he’s in a mood.”

She stands and serenely follows, a slight smile on her face.

**Abandoned**

*lyrics to Angelu Demonai's song at the concert*

There is no room for you anymore  
We have no room for you anymore  
Not here

What happened?  
You woke up one day and decided  
I don't need you anymore?  
What happened?  
Was I not good enough for you?  
Did I not deserve your love?

You left me and I don't feel a thing  
anymore

Go  
I don't need you anymore  
Go  
Get out of my heart  
Leave me what's left.  
Go  
But you already have

Now I am  
By myself, I'm alone, and I'm  
trying to make myself see  
no longer  
am I beholden to your  
memory, your memory

Go  
I don't need you anymore  
Go  
Get out of my heart  
Leave me what's left.  
Go  
But you already have

One morning I'll wake up and that day I'll realize that  
I don't need you anymore  
One morning I'll wake up and leave you behind the way  
you left me  
But I'm still waiting for you to turn back and  
remember me

Go

You left me and I don't feel a thing  
anymore

There is no room for you anymore  
We have no room for you anymore  
Not here

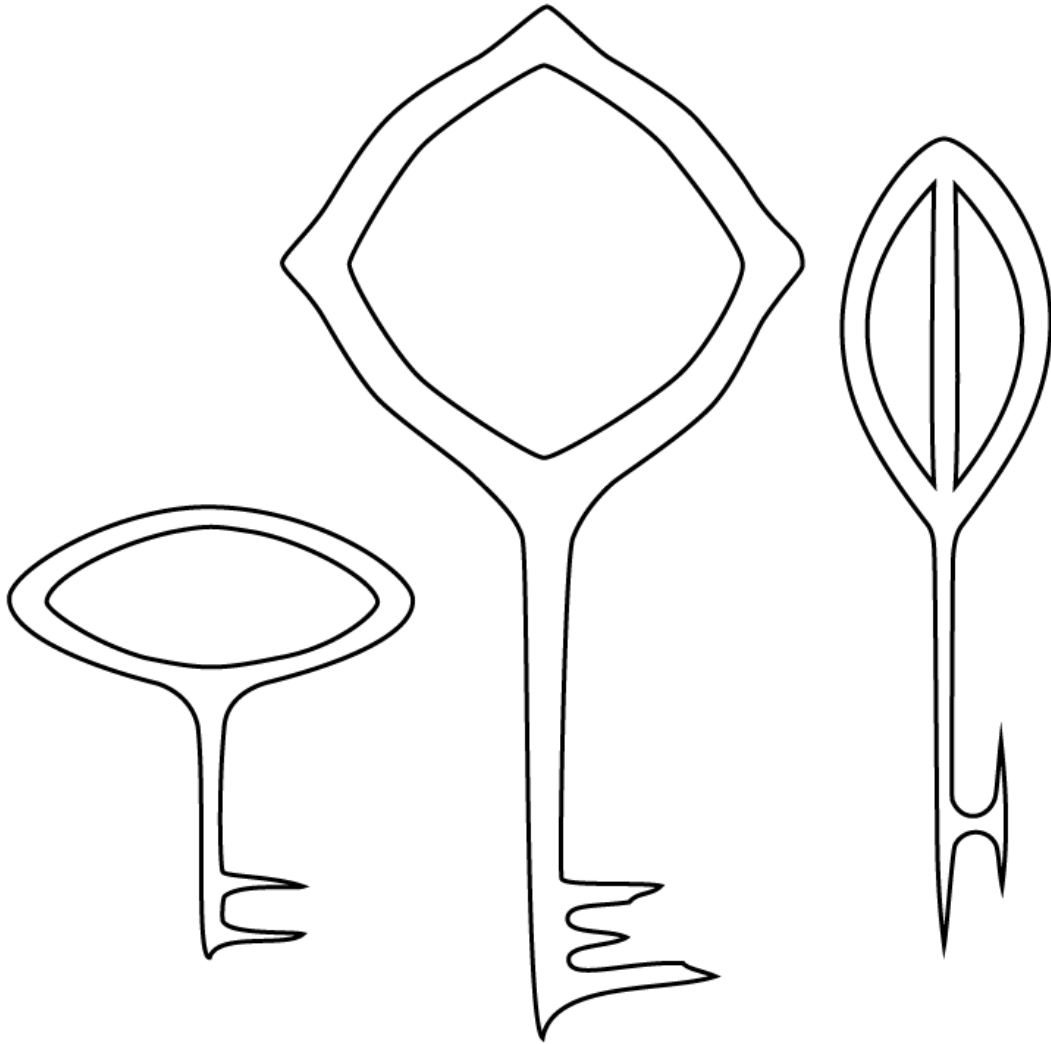
no longer am I beholden to your memory



**Concept Art  
for**

# Angelu Demonai









# Angelu Demonai

## The Band



Angelu  
Founder  
Lead Vocals  
Additional Instruments



Ethan  
Guitar  
Male Vocals



Lucy  
Drums  
Backup Vocals



Aida  
Key board  
Backup Vocals



Sed  
Bass

