



# RUST & HUMUS

I. THE GREEN MOON AND  
THE LAND OF UHIA



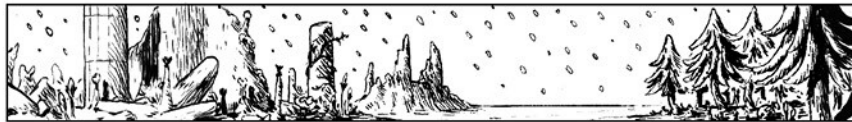
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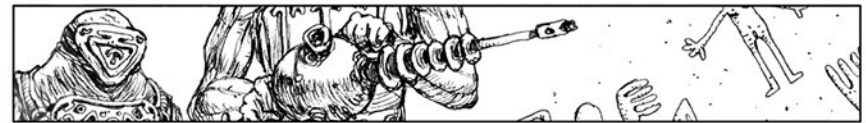
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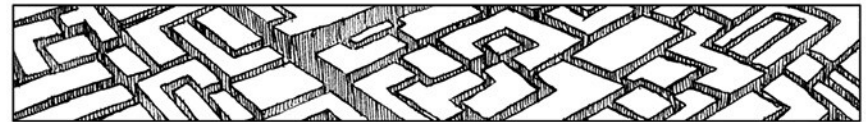
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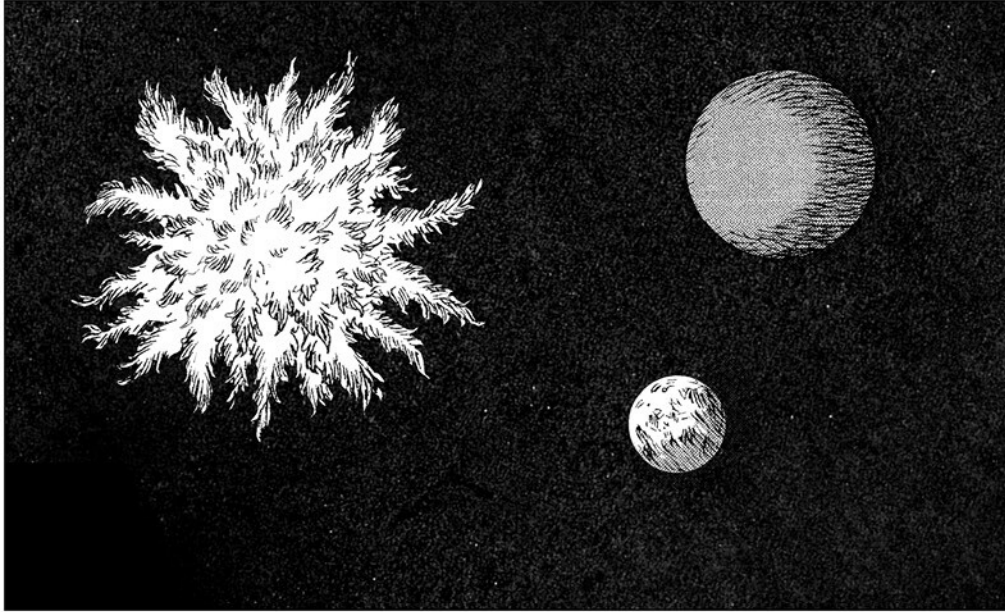


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## CHAPTER 1: THE TREE

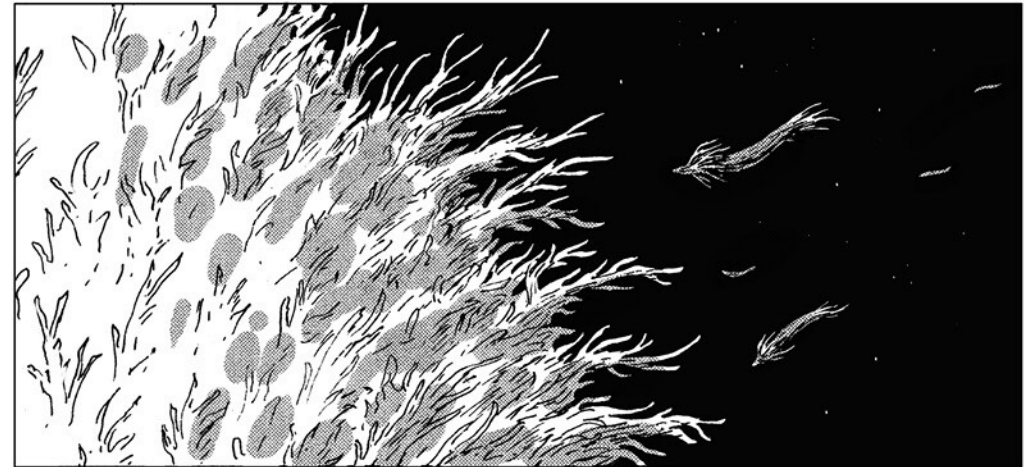
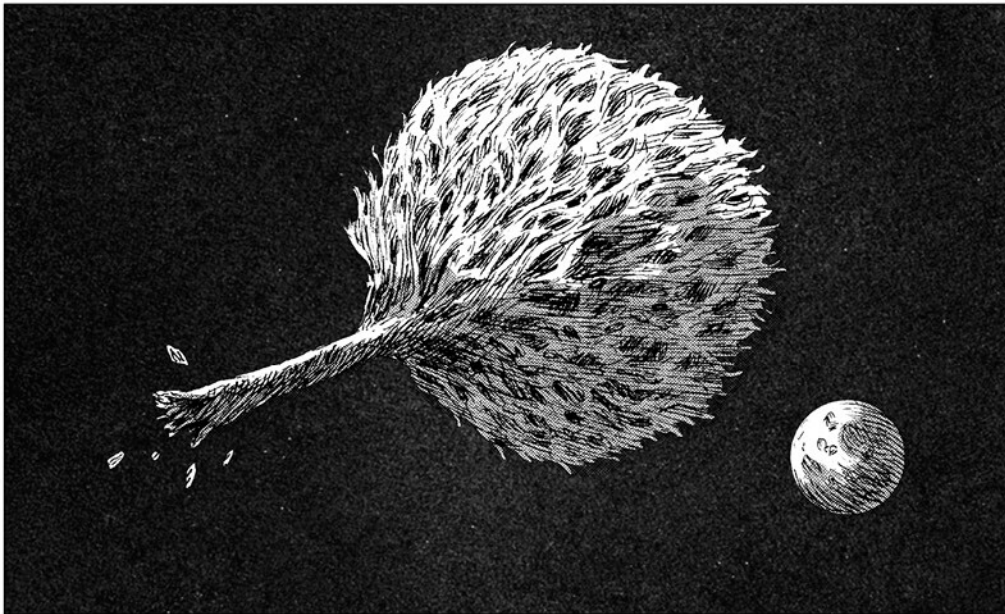


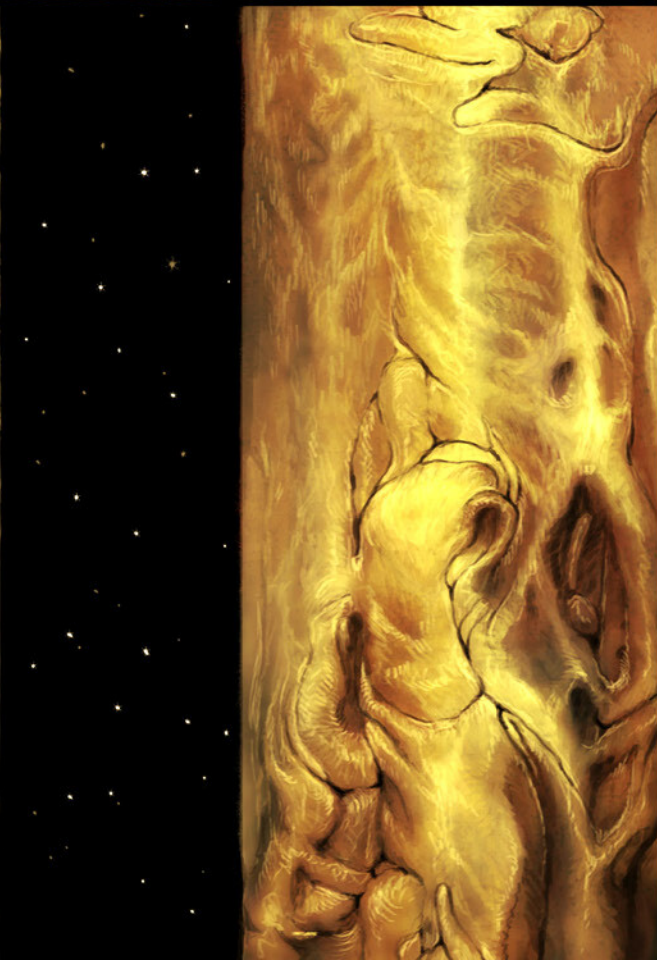
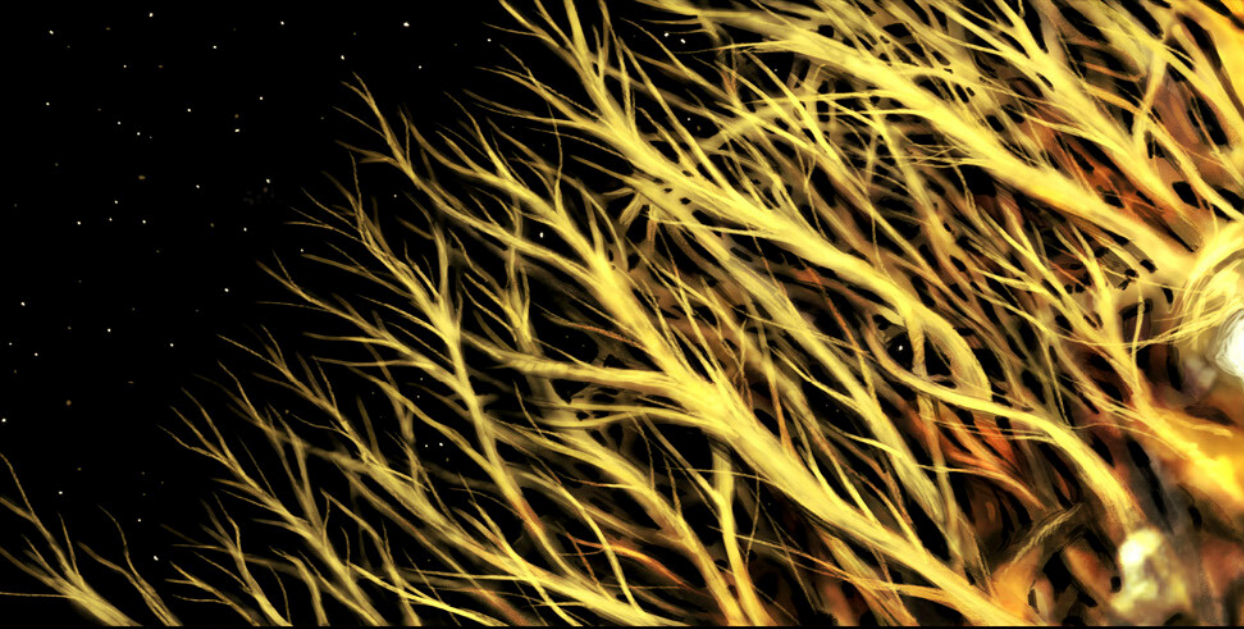
At the beginning of this story, the solar system consists of a star named the Sun, of planet Earth and of its satellite, the Moon. The Earth has been, for a long time, covered in a black, giant and unwavering ocean – but from the light and warmth radiated by the Sun sprouts a seed.

From this seed, an immense tree covered in golden mother-of-pearl bark grows. Its roots dig deep into the earth, drinking avidly from the ocean waters as its branches soar up to the vastness of space. Hanging from the aeons, the iridescent hair of the Tree dances silently to the rhythm of the cosmic winds.

Saturated with sap, the Tree collapses under its own weight, fracturing at its base. Propelled, its body barely avoids the Moon and its skeleton becomes the second satellite orbiting around the Earth.

Left behind is the base of its bole that remains above water and forms the only terrestrial continent, Uhia.





## Wanderers

At the time of the Tree, space is populated with cosmic wanderers that roam from planet to planet. Most of them are vestiges of forgotten civilisations or former Gods turned senile. Some can manipulate dream magic to kindle anew the flames of old stars, sculpt the oceans and give rise to the wind.



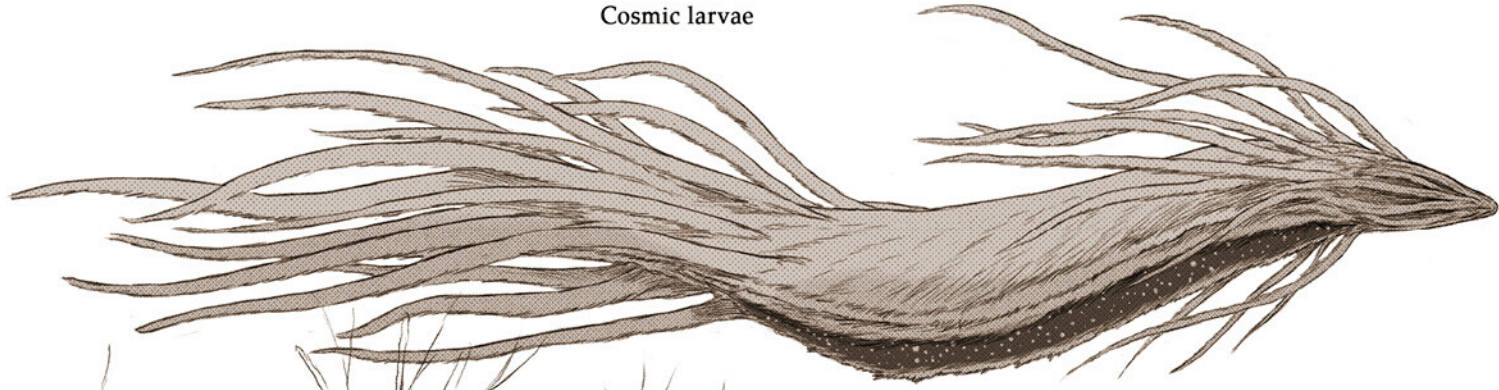
Alto

Cosmic child

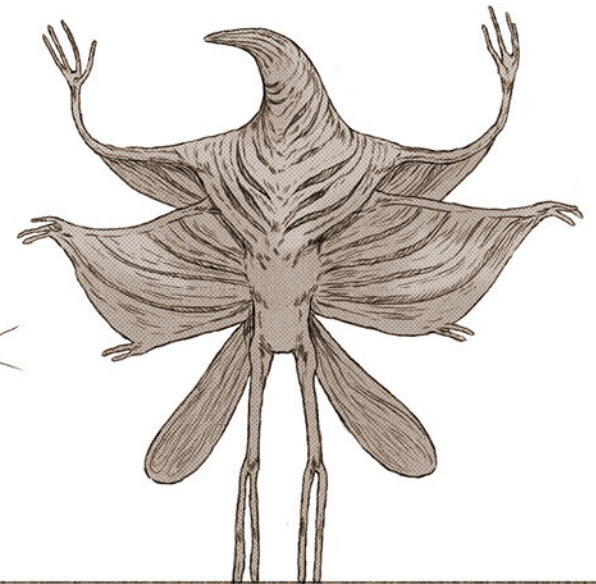


Incandescent

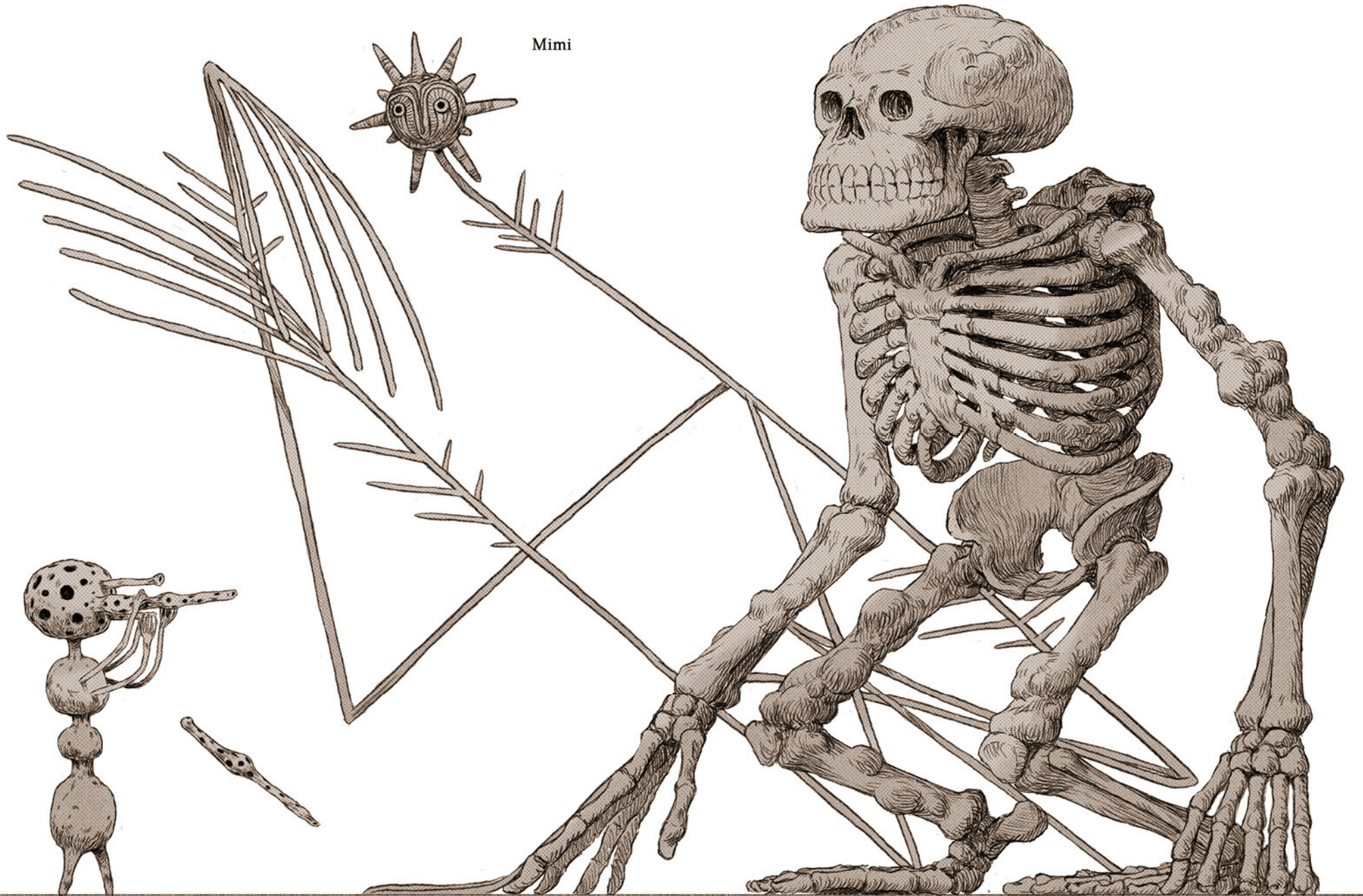
Cosmic larvae



Space gardener



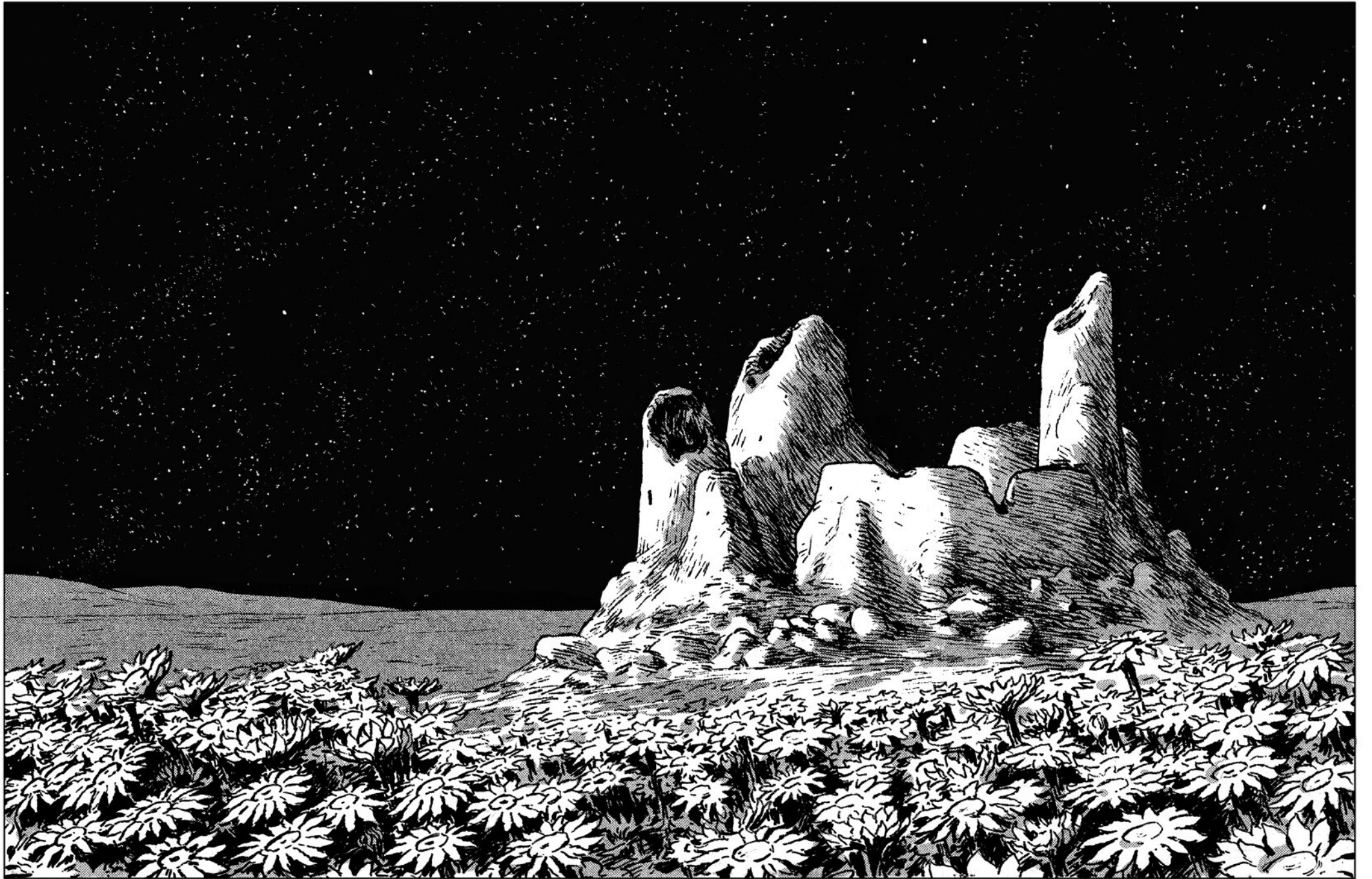
Siri



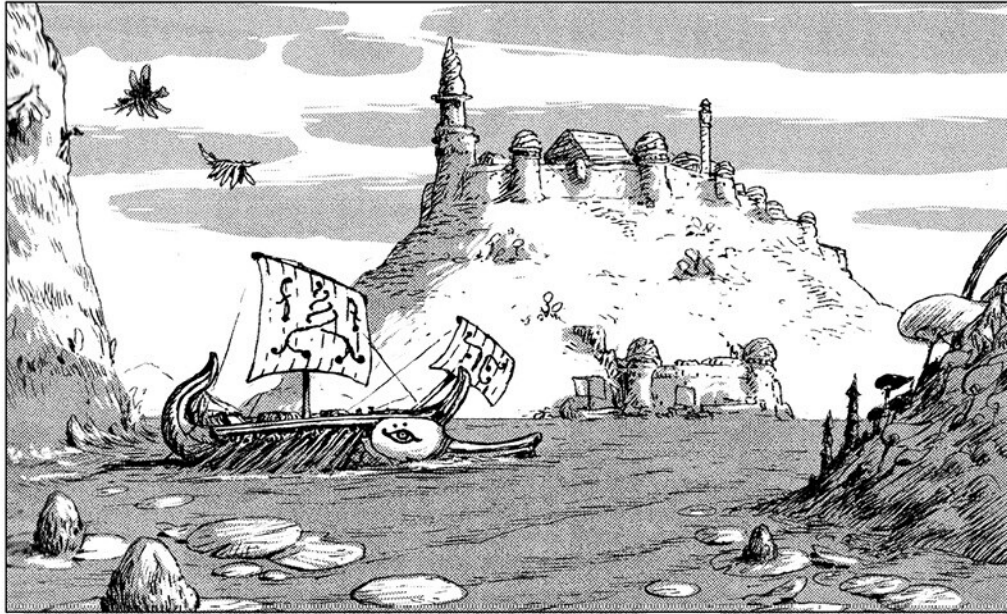
Mimi

Player and flute

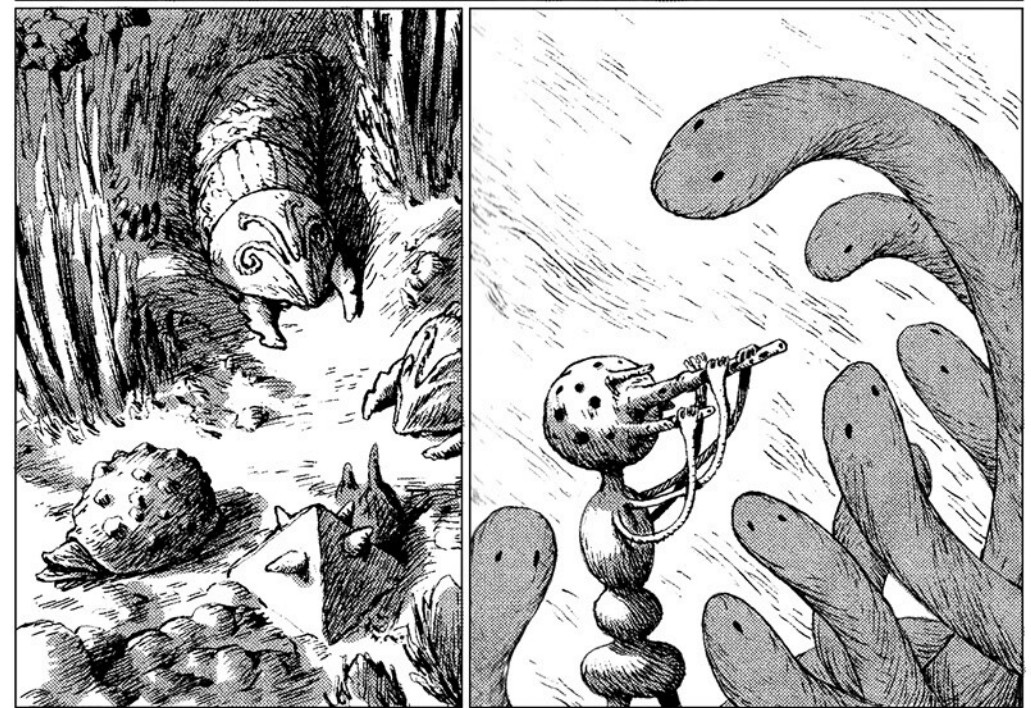
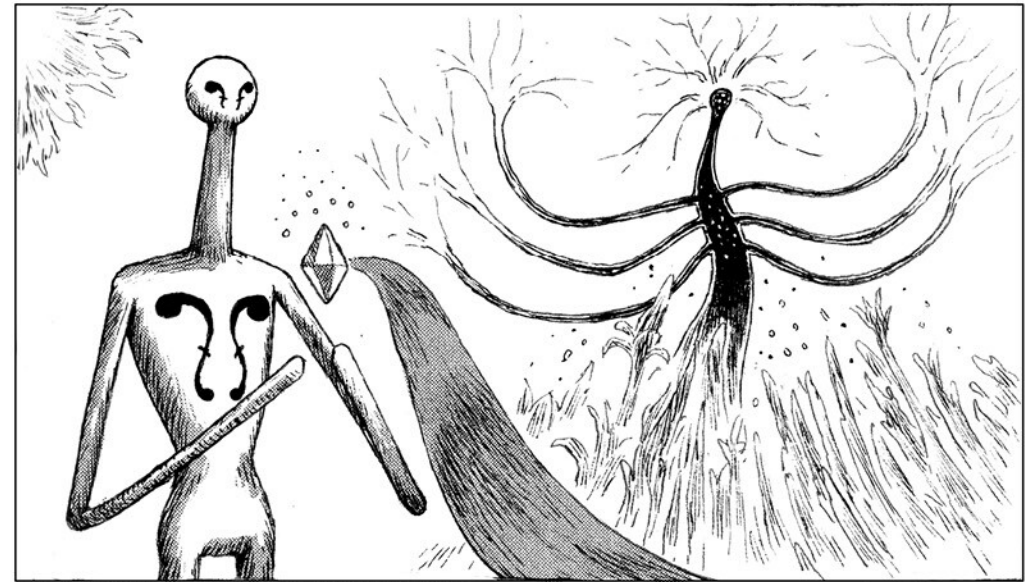
Forgotten giant



## CHAPTER 2.1: THE GREEN MOON



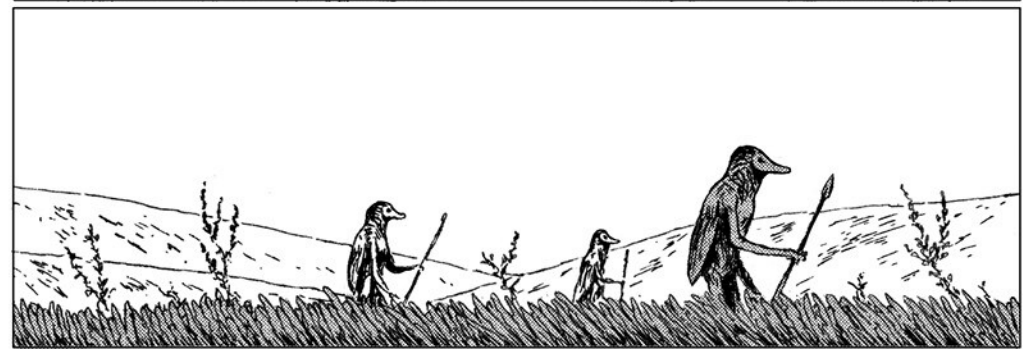
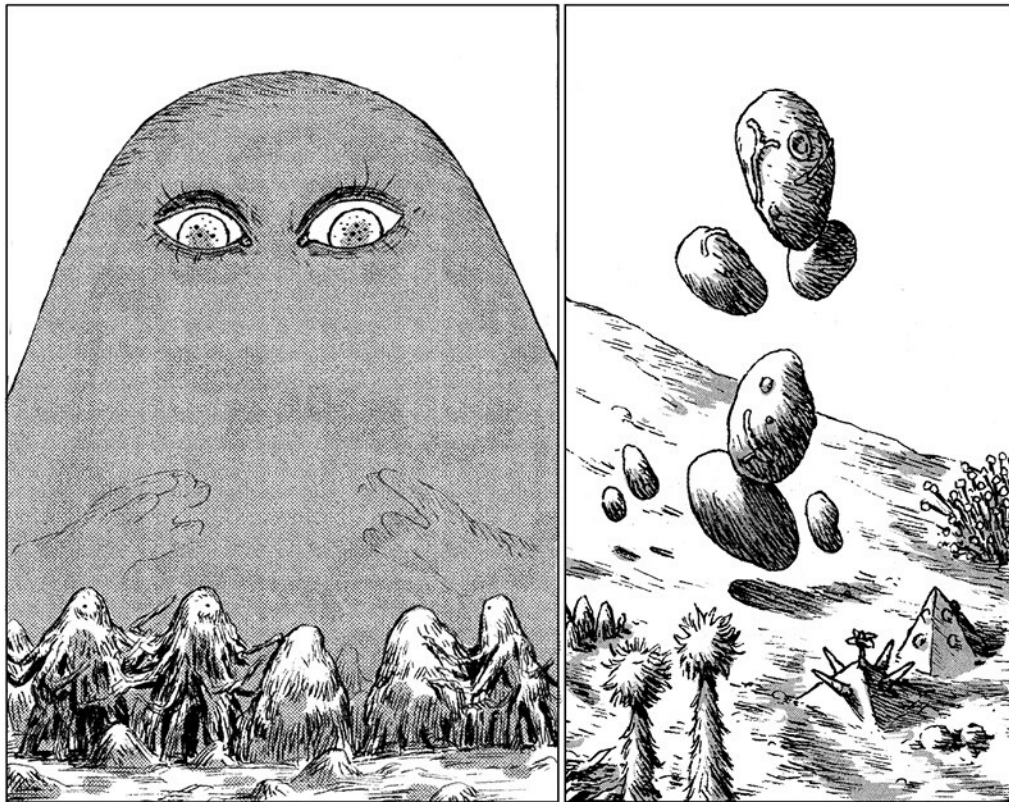
When the Tree breaks, the Moon is still a deserted satellite of pebbles and stones. There, cosmic wanderers set about creating an orchard. They shape large bodies of water that widen into seas. The land gets covered in lush vegetation that is filled with the fragrance of flowers and sweet fruits. When these gardeners depart from the Moon as a garden, the vegetation rapidly grows wild.



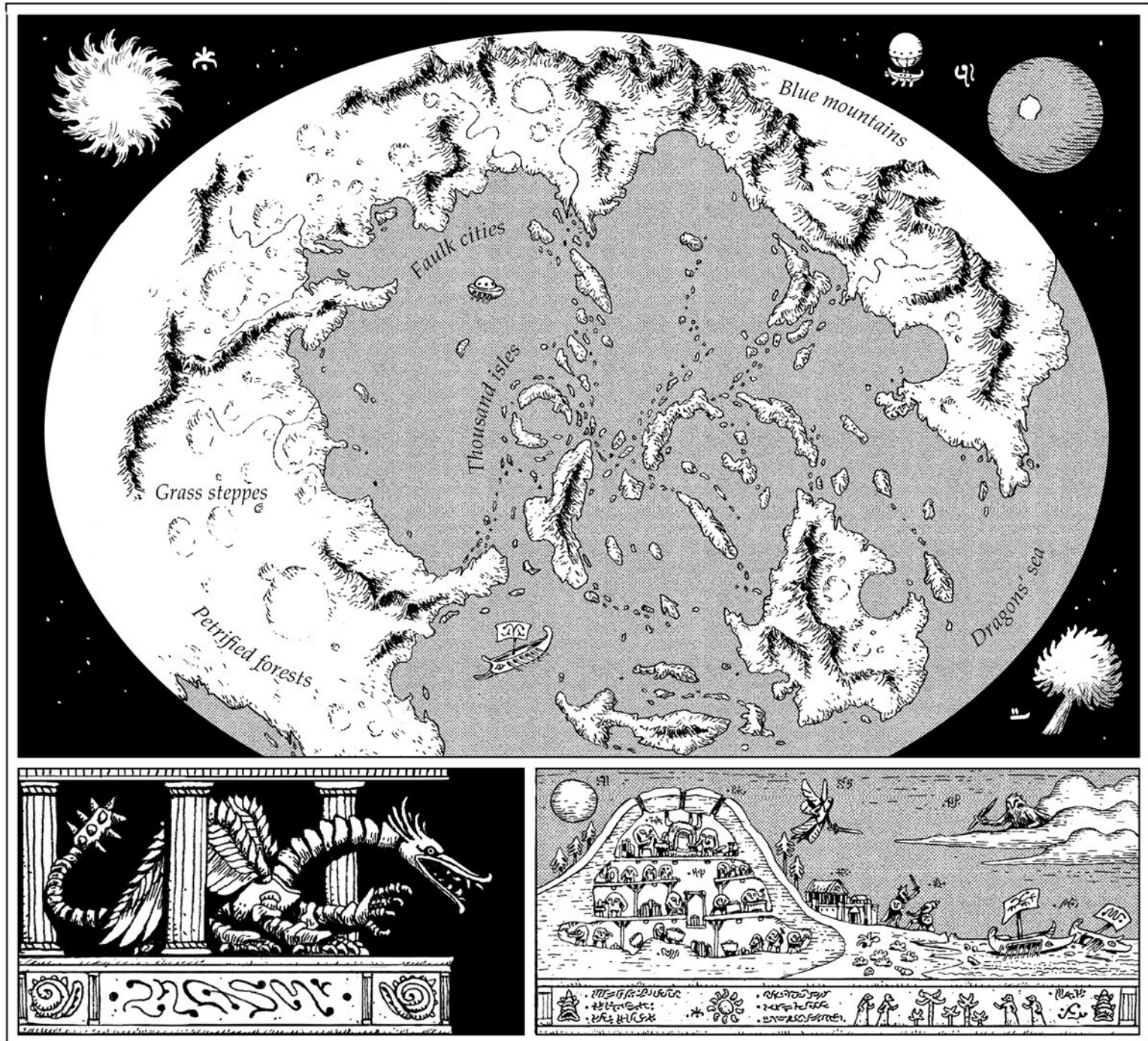
Wanderers bringing water and plants to the Moon.

Inland, insects that clandestinely reached the Moon multiply now that the gardens have been abandoned. They populate the wide verdant steppes and the thick forests that swallowed the orchards. Several species that had been evolving since the selenic waters flowed from the oceans establish coastal cities and occupy the thousand scattered isles.

The gardeners leave behind a guardian, the Oracle. Weary of observing the mute stars and the growth of plants, the Oracle moulds beings from the clay that surrounds him. He trains stones on how to move according to the course of the Sun and teaches dust the secret of reason.



Map of the ancient orchards of the Moon after the Sun grew colder.



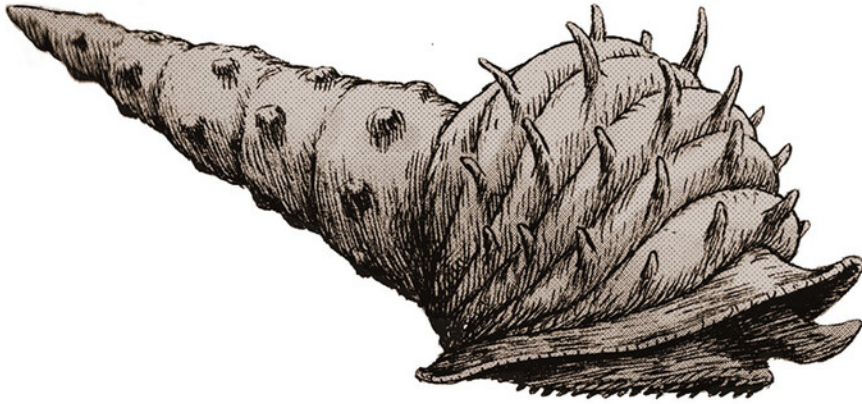
## Primeval beings

The primeval beings are creations of the gardeners.

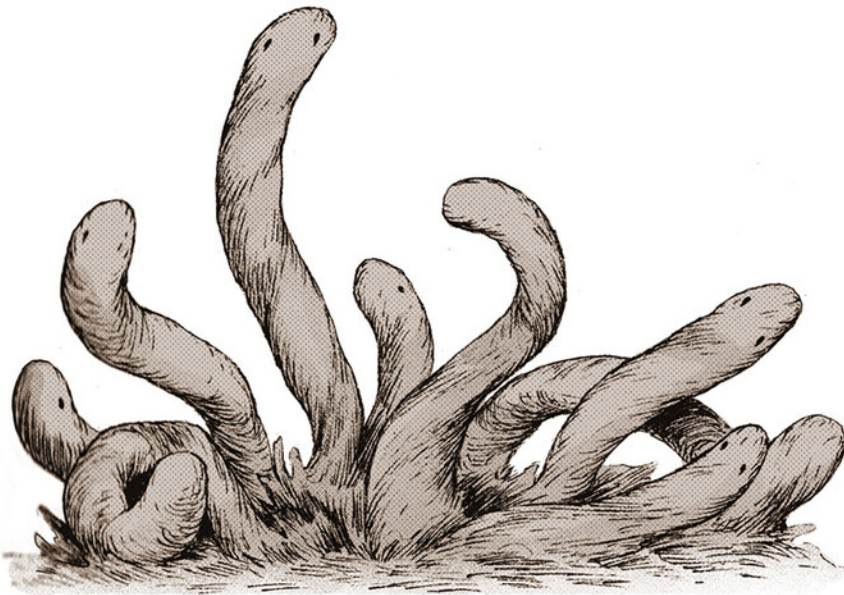
The water beings make up the oceans and fish. Much later, some of them can still be encountered in isolated pools. The giant molluscs mantle the sea bottoms. Their empty shells often wash ashore on beaches and, once broken down by the waves, form glittering sand.

The hills where the Oracle lives are regularly adorned with varied offerings.

The chitinous tribes come there to request the sound of plants and hear the ethereal hum of the Oracle.



Giant mollusc



Water beings



Oracle

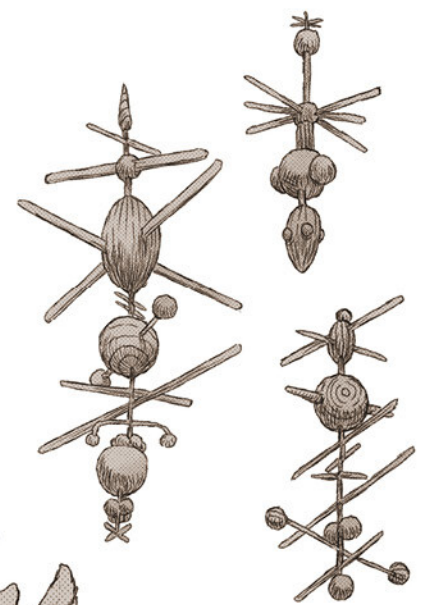
# Lunar plants

The plants scatter on the Moon after the gardeners' disappearance.

Lowland flora

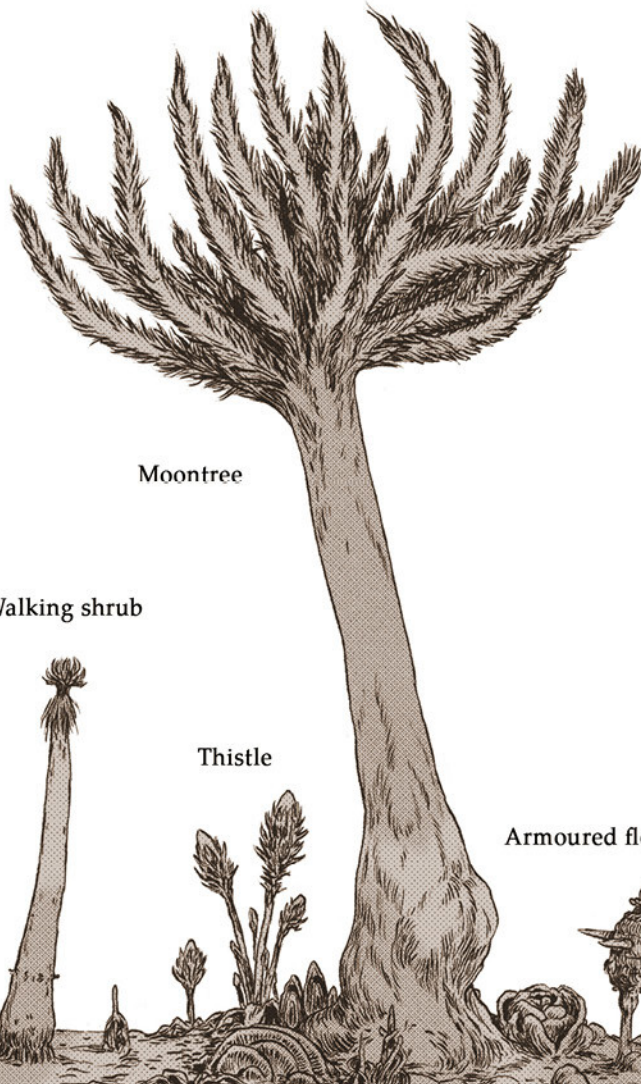
Highland flora

Hugging fir

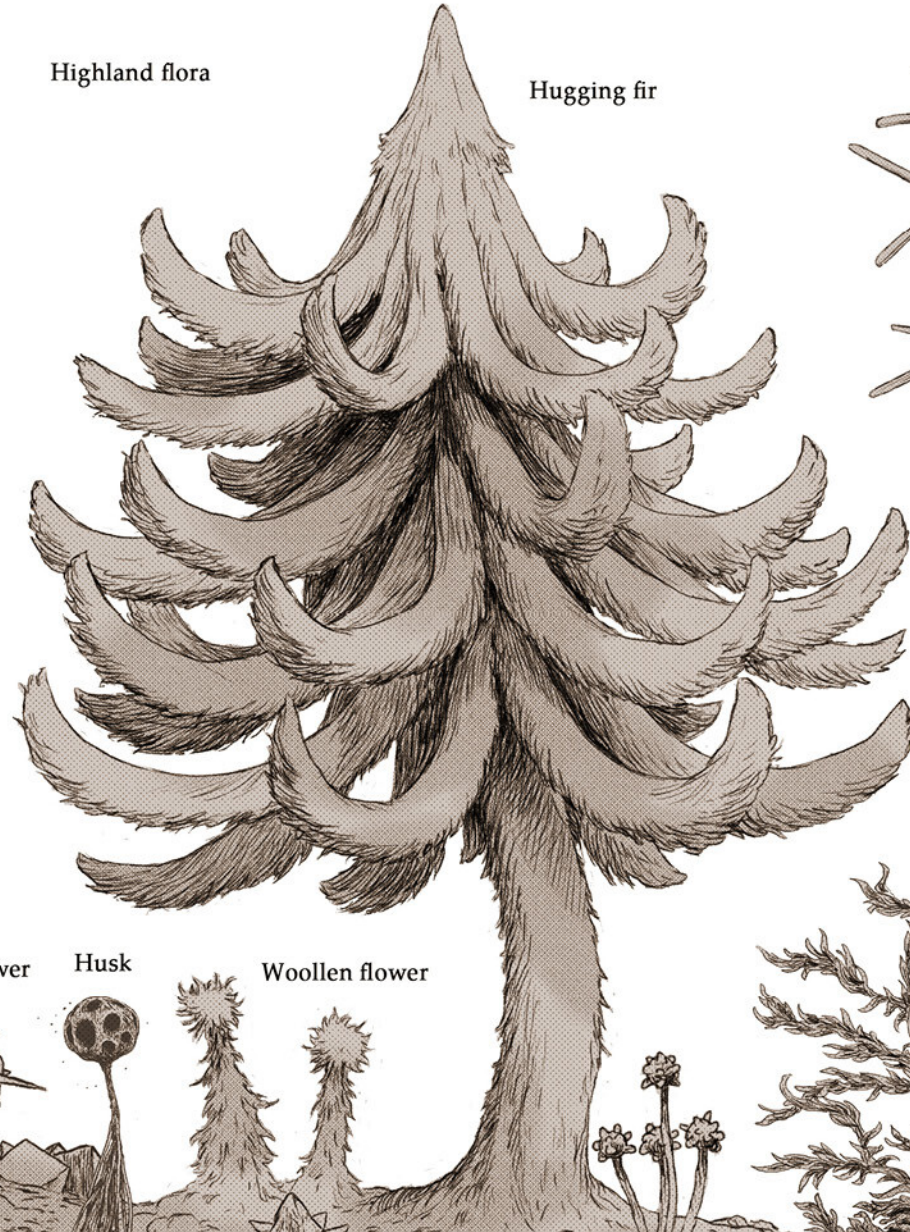


Flying akene

Black thorn



Moontree



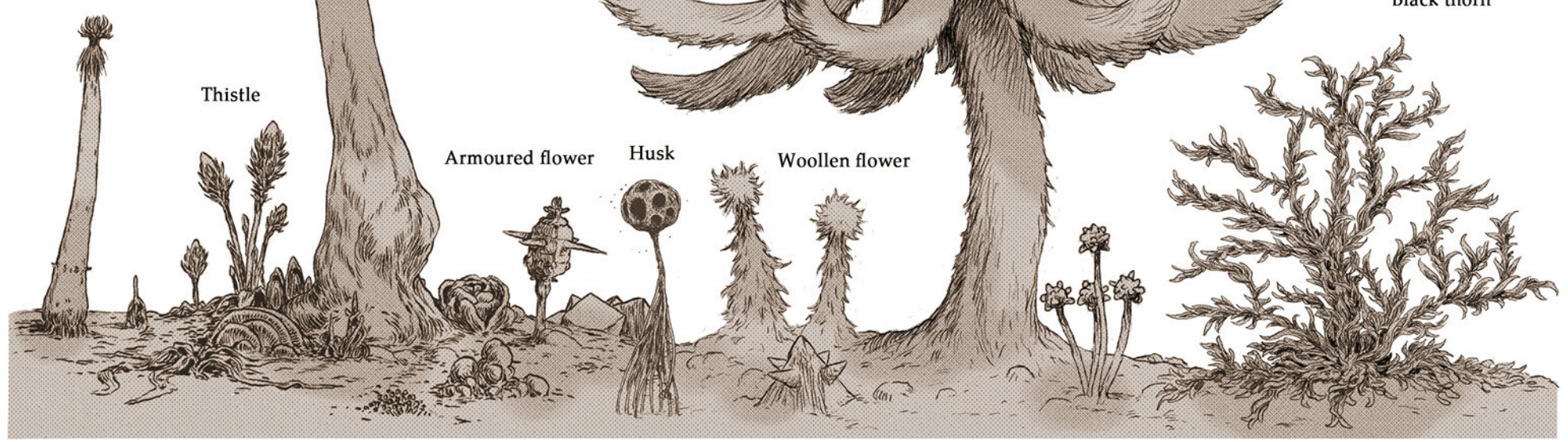
Walking shrub

Thistle

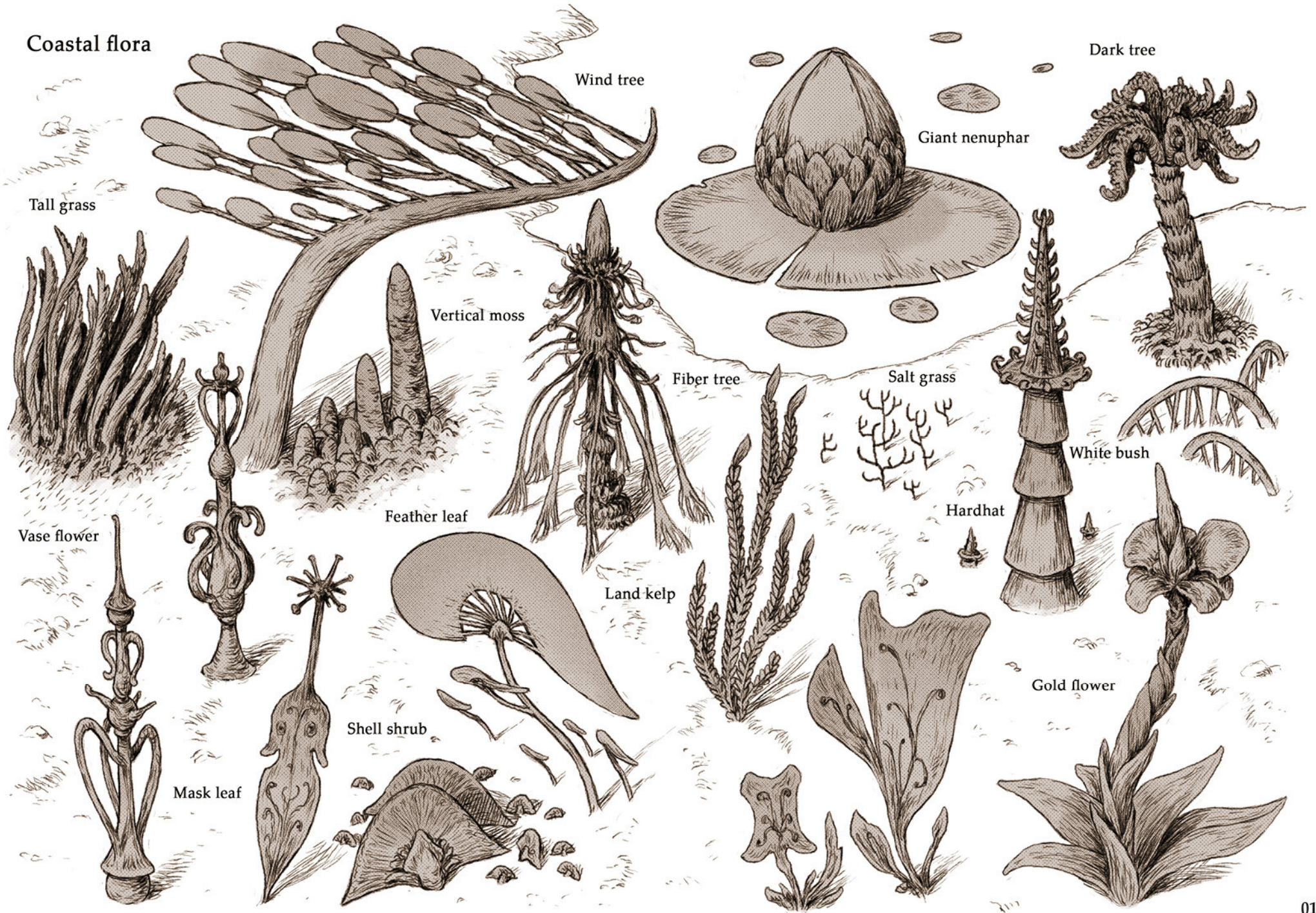
Armoured flower

Husk

Woollen flower



Coastal flora



Wind tree

Giant nuphar

Dark tree

Tall grass

Vertical moss

Fiber tree

Salt grass

White bush

Vase flower

Feather leaf

Land kelp

Hardhat

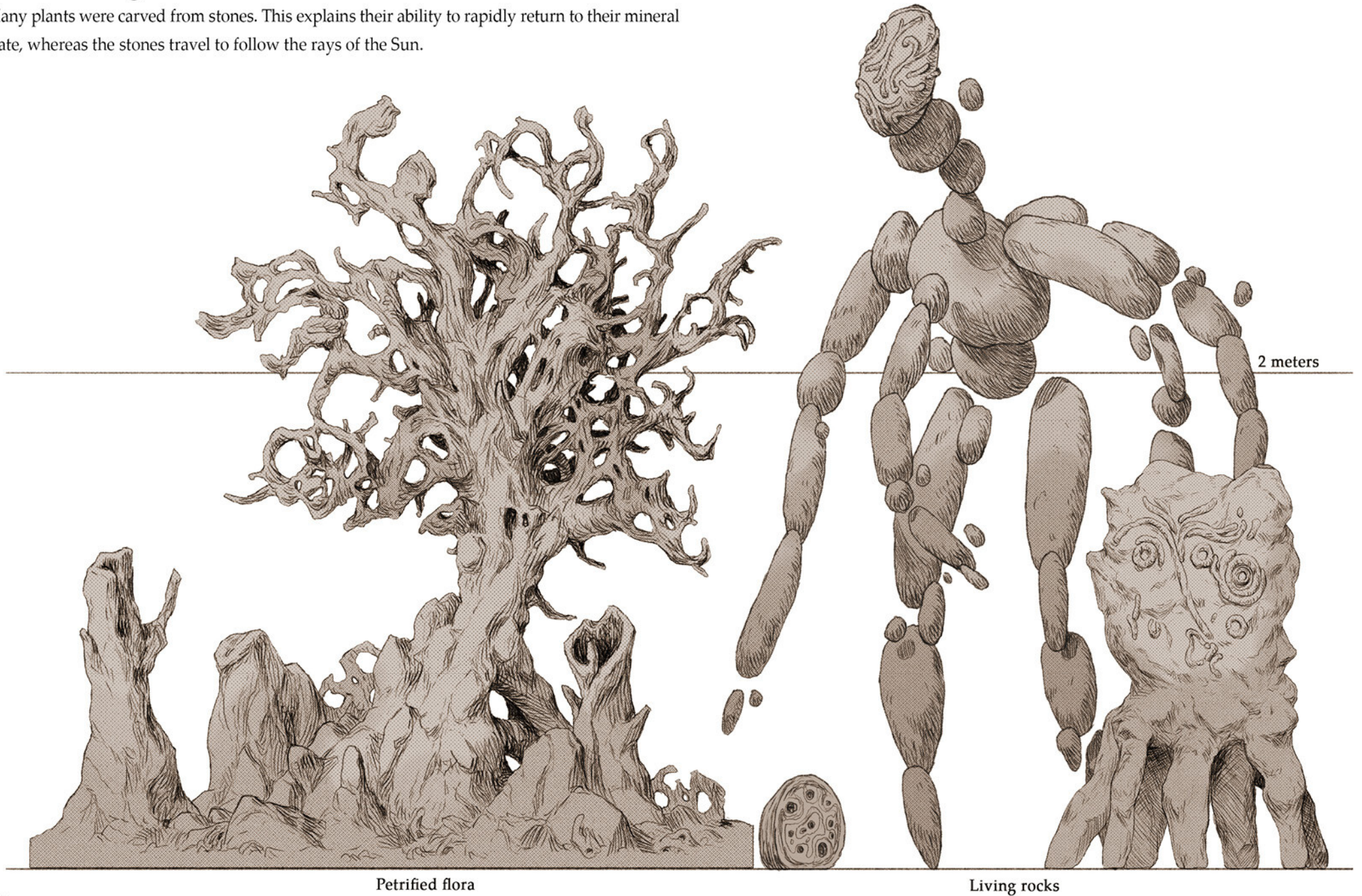
Gold flower

Mask leaf

Shell shrub

## Mineral beings

Many plants were carved from stones. This explains their ability to rapidly return to their mineral state, whereas the stones travel to follow the rays of the Sun.



## Lunar insects

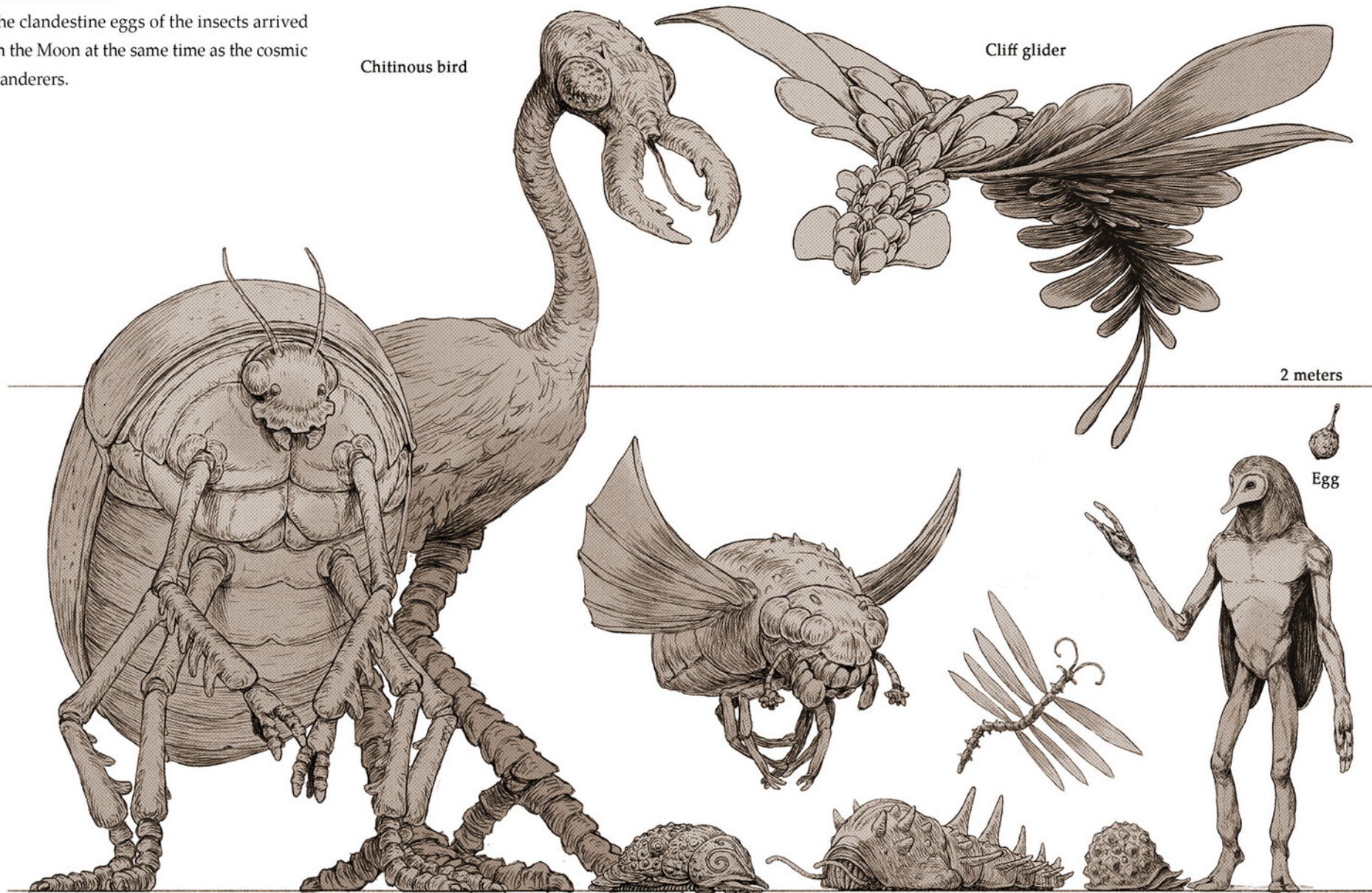
The clandestine eggs of the insects arrived on the Moon at the same time as the cosmic wanderers.

Chitinous bird

Cliff glider

2 meters

Egg

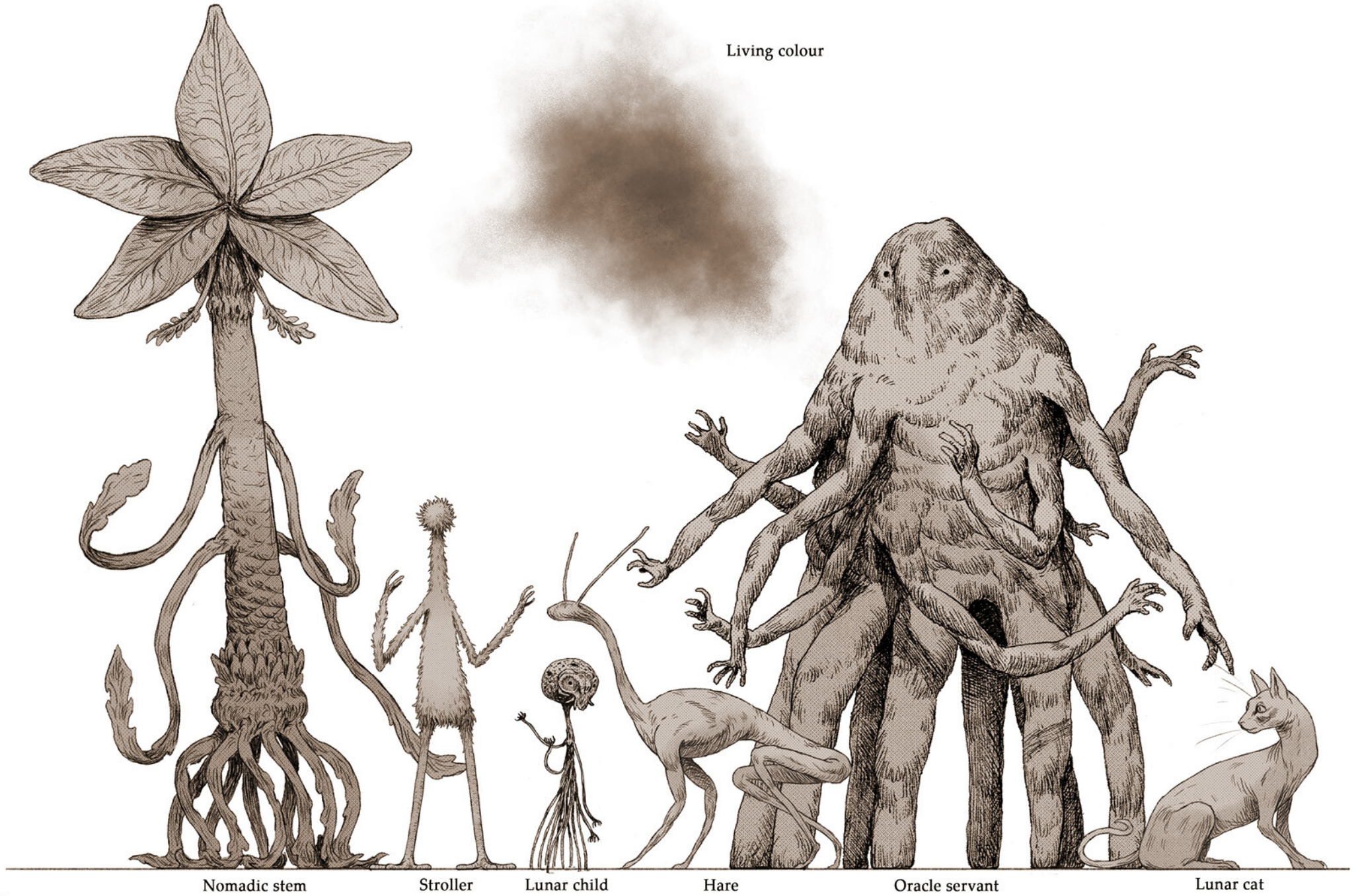


Blue scarab

Moon insects

Selenite

Living colour



Nomadic stem

Stroller

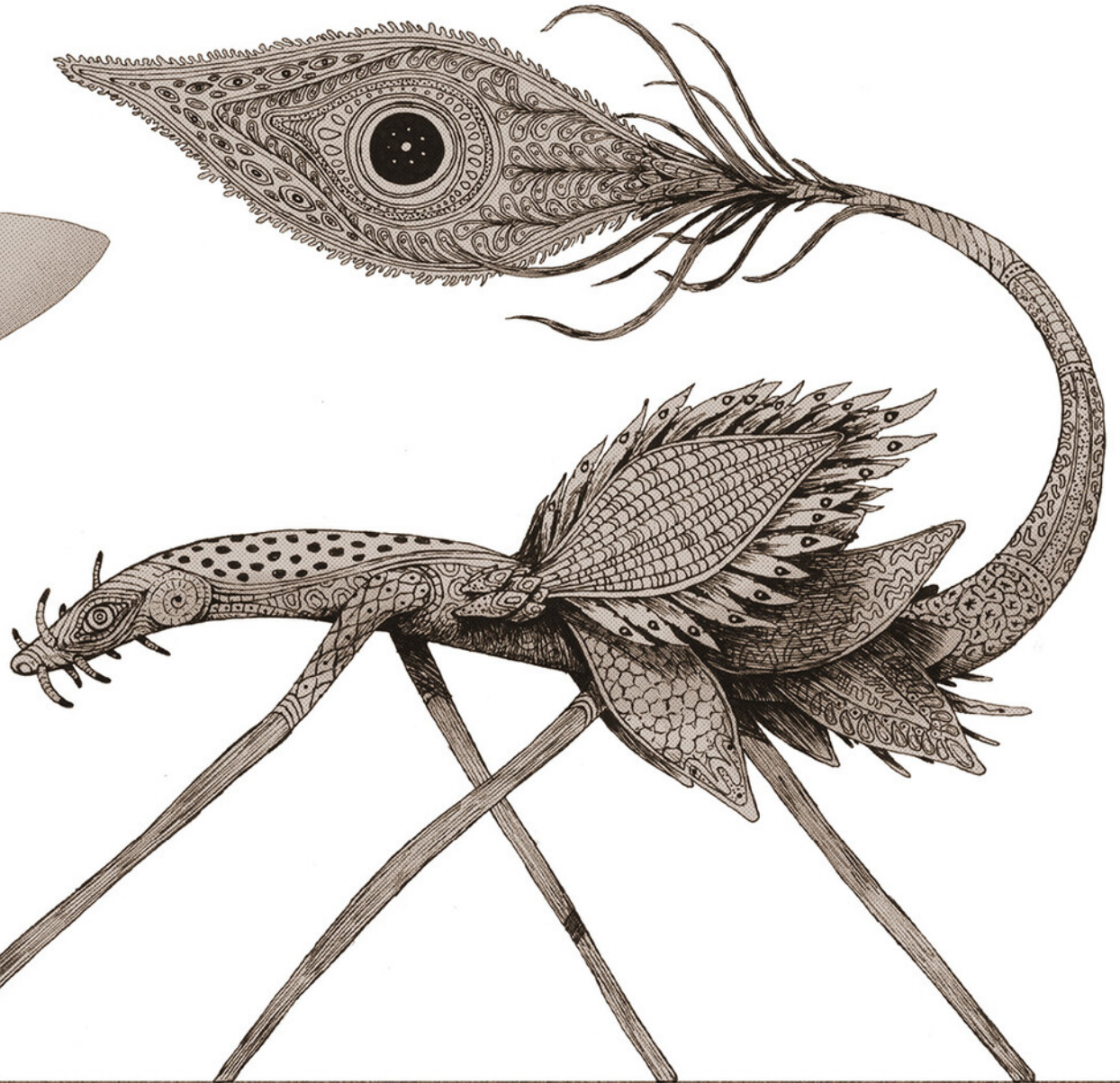
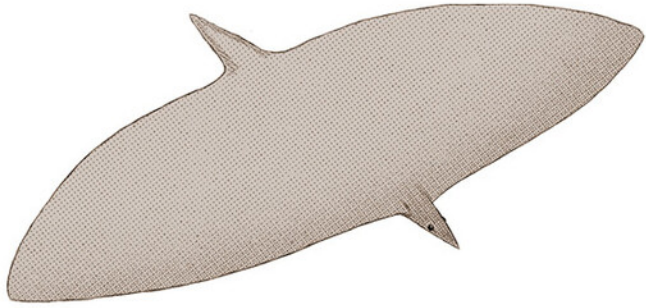
Lunar child

Hare

Oracle servant

Lunar cat

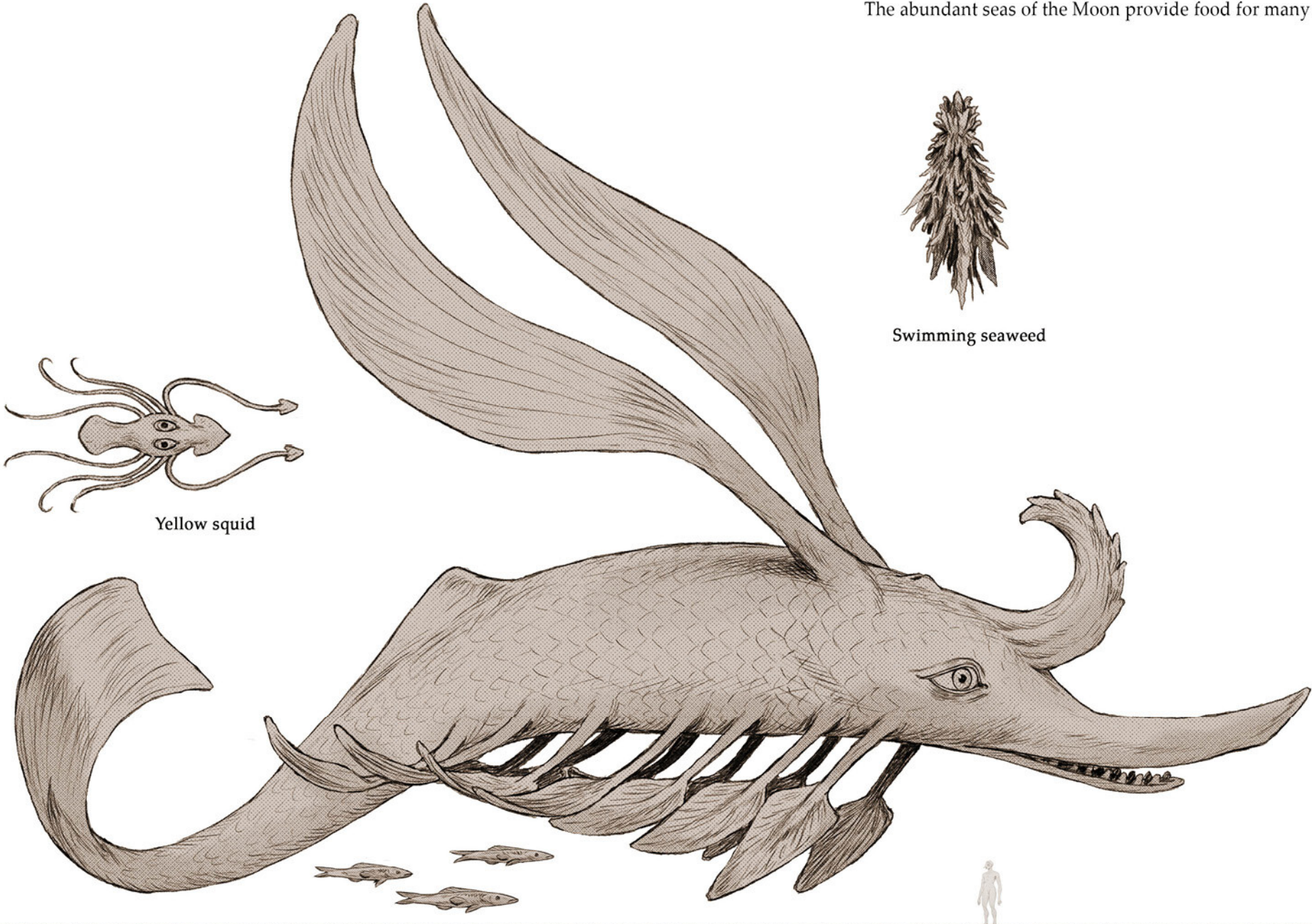
Kite bird



Alebre

Sea dwellers

The abundant seas of the Moon provide food for many civilizations.



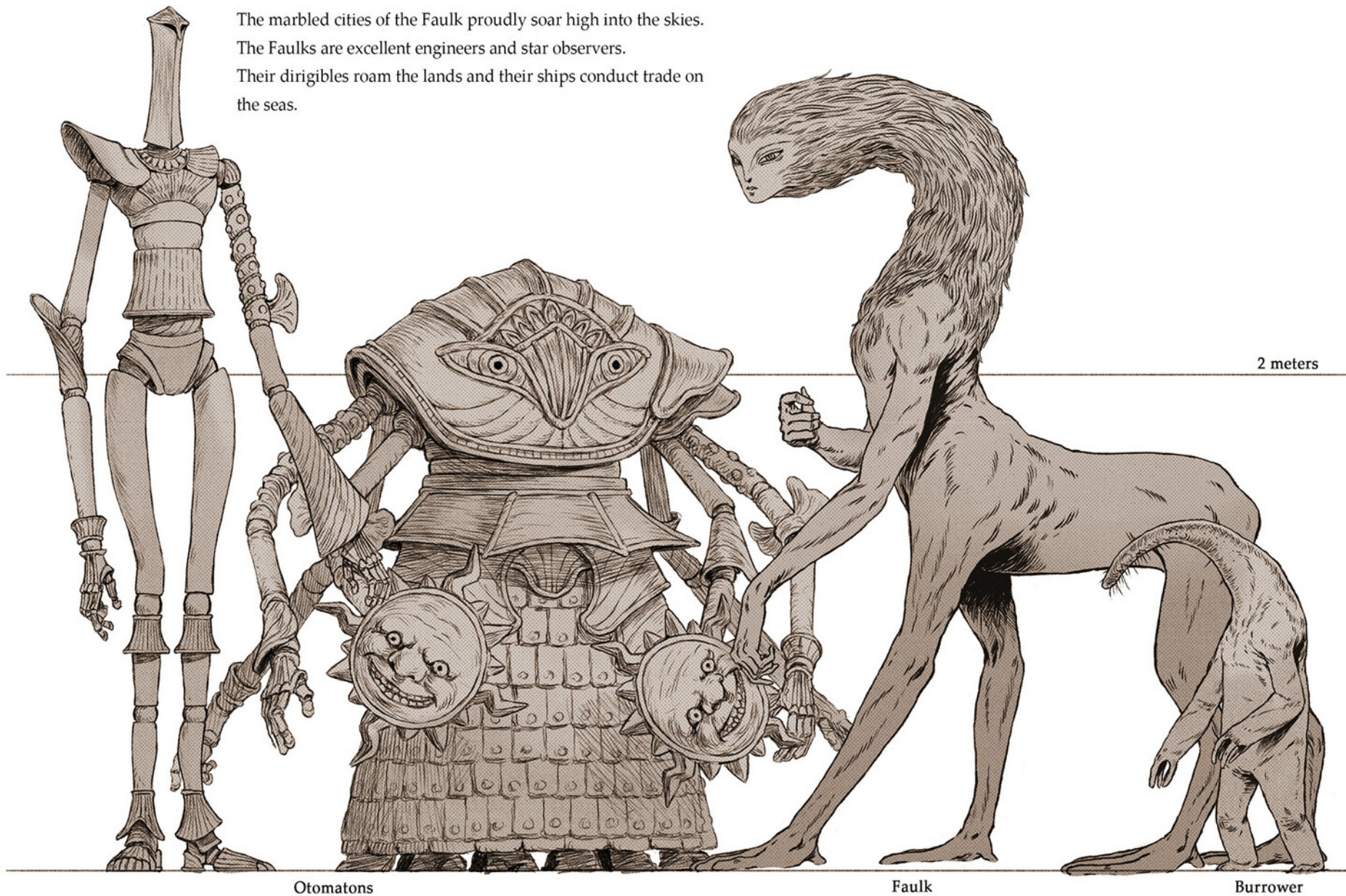
Yellow squid

Swimming seaweed

Scylla

## Faulk cities

The marbled cities of the Faulk proudly soar high into the skies. The Faulks are excellent engineers and star observers. Their dirigibles roam the lands and their ships conduct trade on the seas.



Otomaton

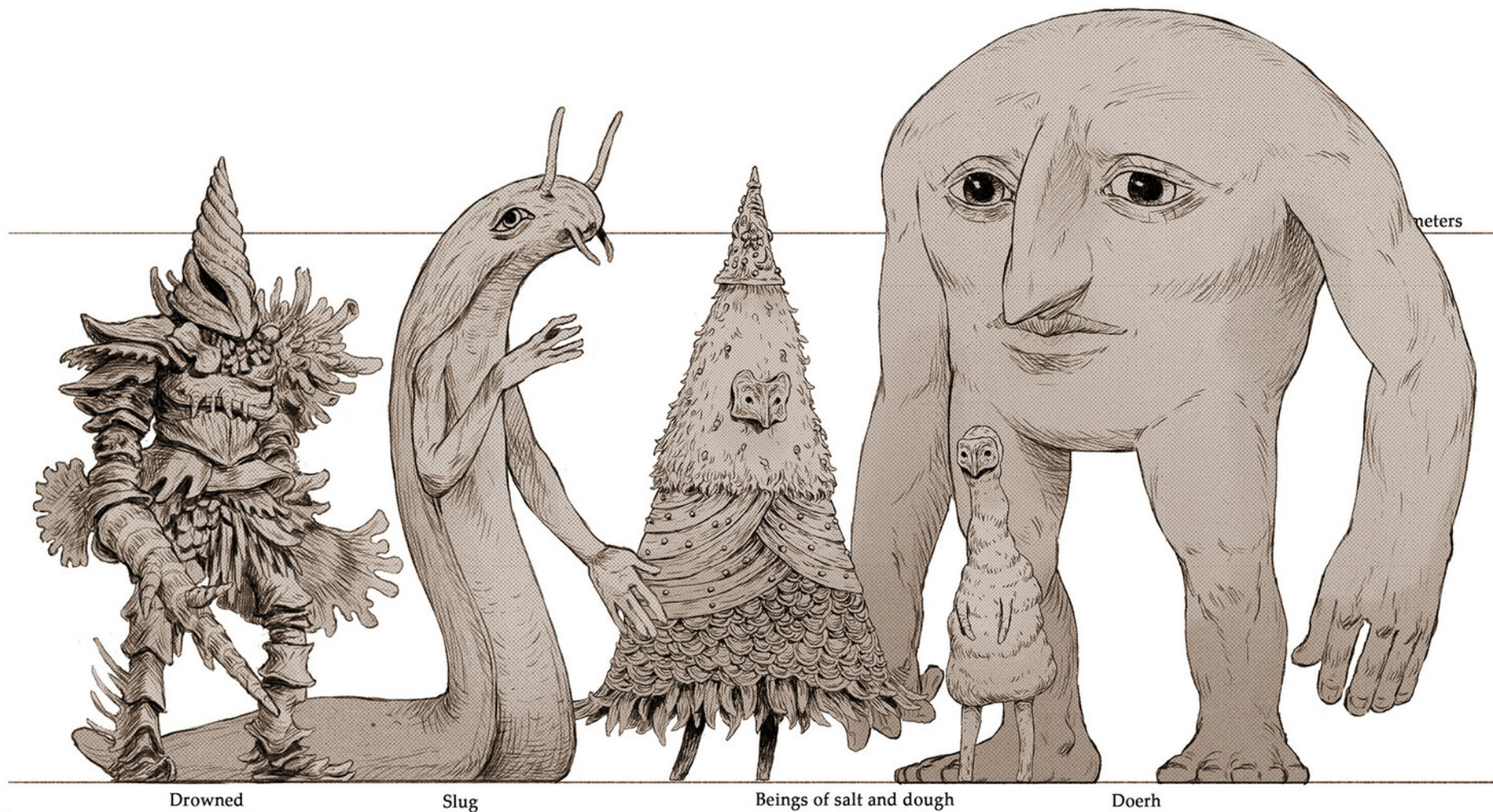
Faulk

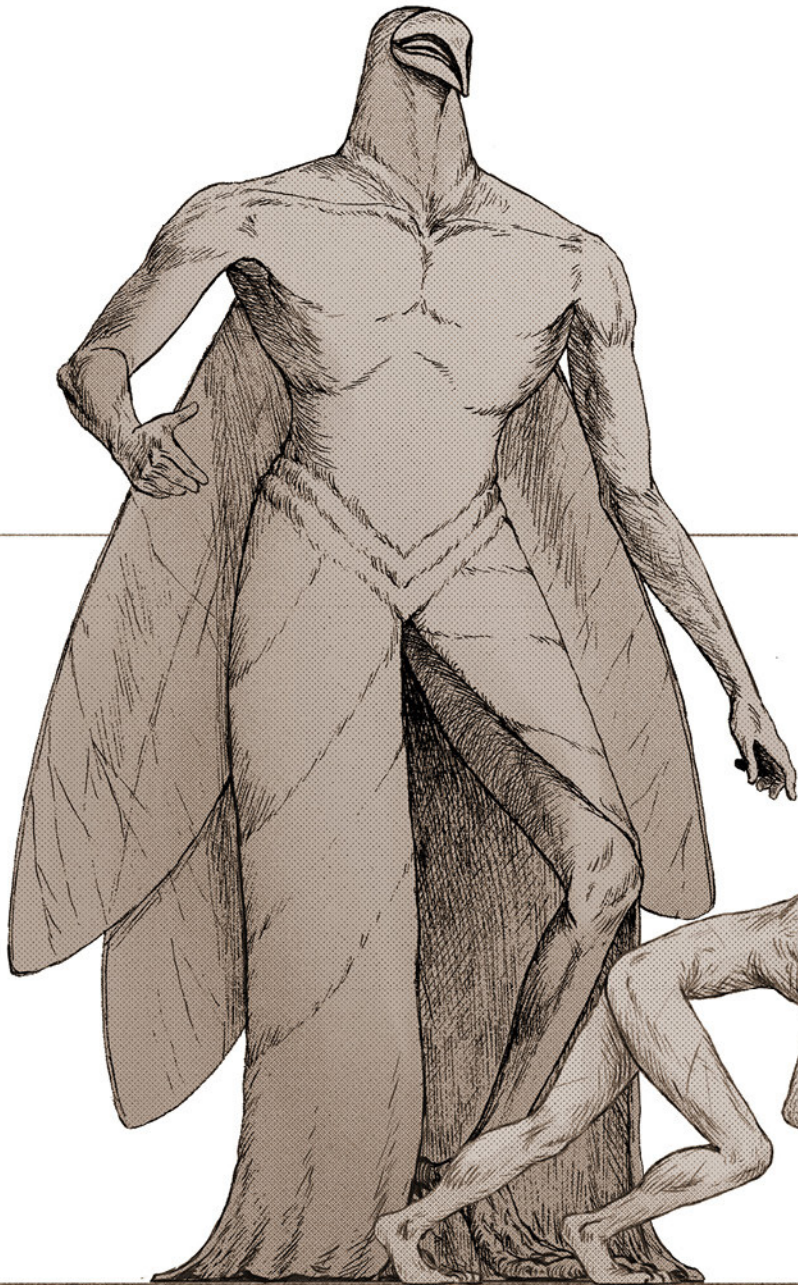
Burrower

## Thousand isles inhabitants

The thousand isles that dot the oceans are populated with diverse sailing, mining and trading species.

When a Doerh comes into the world by emerging from the stones, a salt dough being is fashioned. The small thing is then doomed to drift on the beaches until its figure is corroded by the elements.





Angel



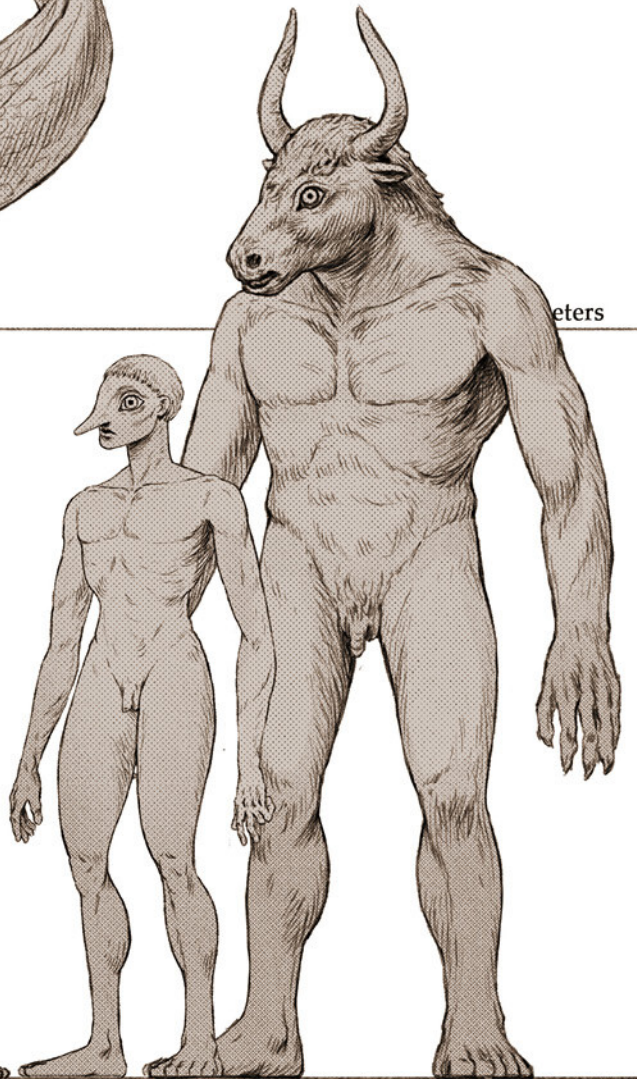
Sirenean



Cursed

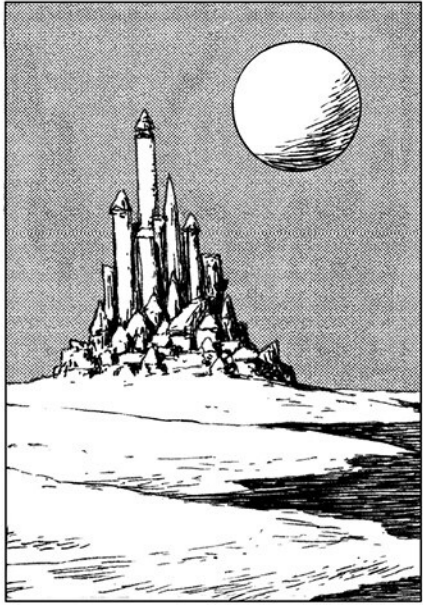
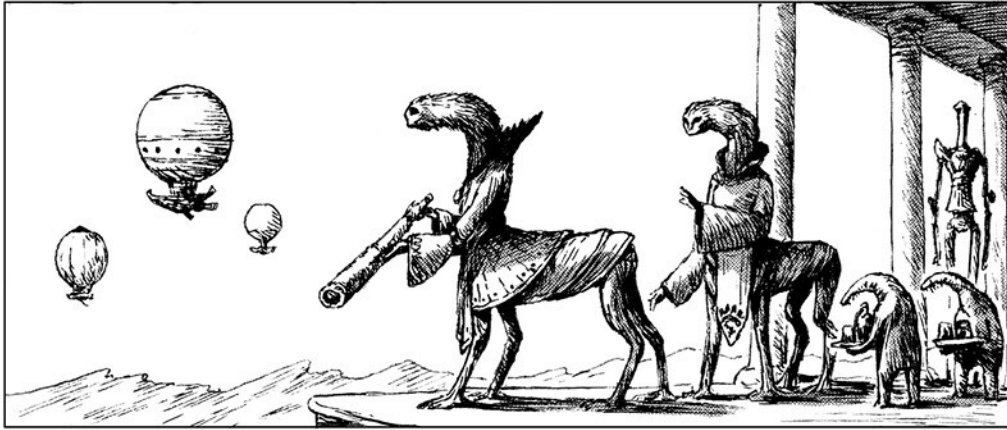


Elide



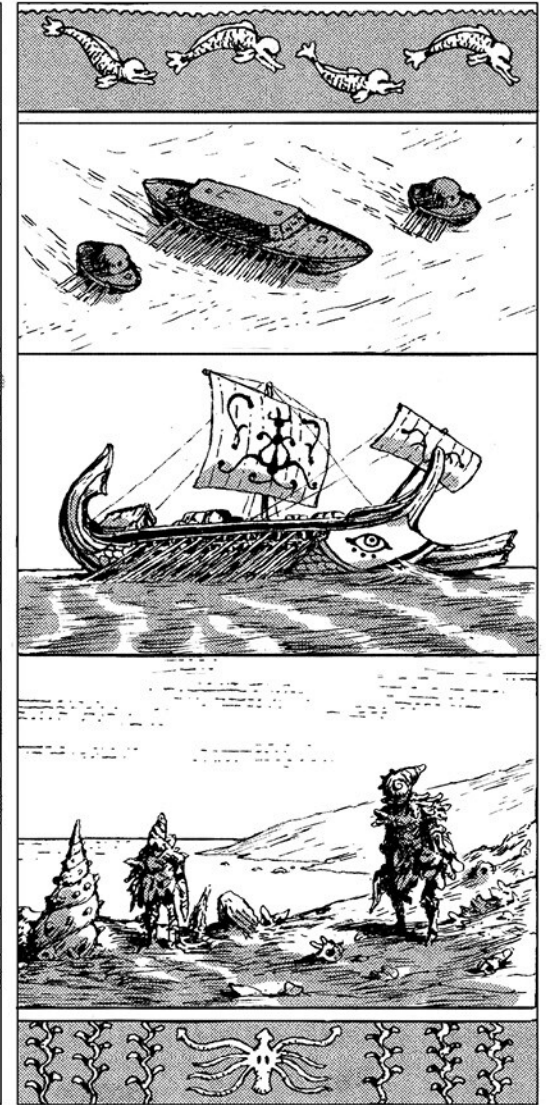
Taurus

eters



Faulk city and Doerh miner

Abruptly, the Sun cools down, causing great changes on the Moon. The climate turns colder and more unpredictable. Forests shrink and seek refuge away from the icy winds as the bulk of the continent's vegetation transforms into rock to resist the weather.

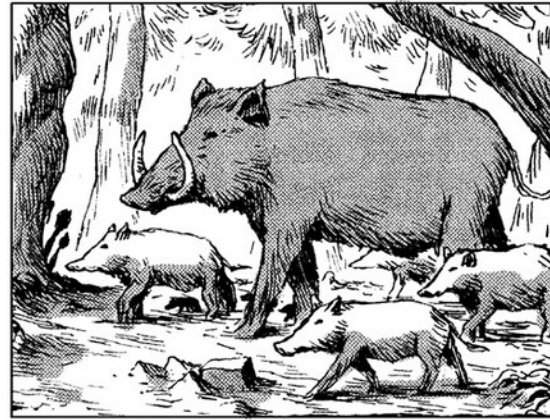


Each year, the snow falls ceaselessly for months on end as rivers turn to ice. Climate change disrupts the lunar populations, who enter fierce competition. The seas fall victim to bands of pirates and warships from the cities as the latter engage in ruthless battles on land and sea.



Ocean levels gradually go down as storms become more frequent. Tall waves engulf whole islands.

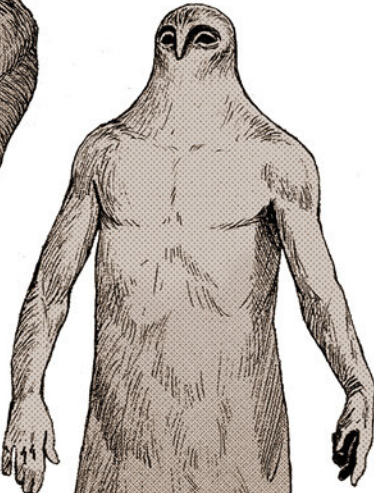
The shapeshifters and dust beings take advantage of the ongoing agitation to satisfy their appetites and settle their individual quarrels. With their ability to change shape, they infiltrate the cattle and the isles' inhabitants. Offering their services to the bellicose kings, they manipulate and curse, striving in vain to warm up their cold stone heart.



The dust beings come down from the mountains to  
blend into the other species of the isles.  
Their solid heart alone is vulnerable, which  
makes them formidable enemies.



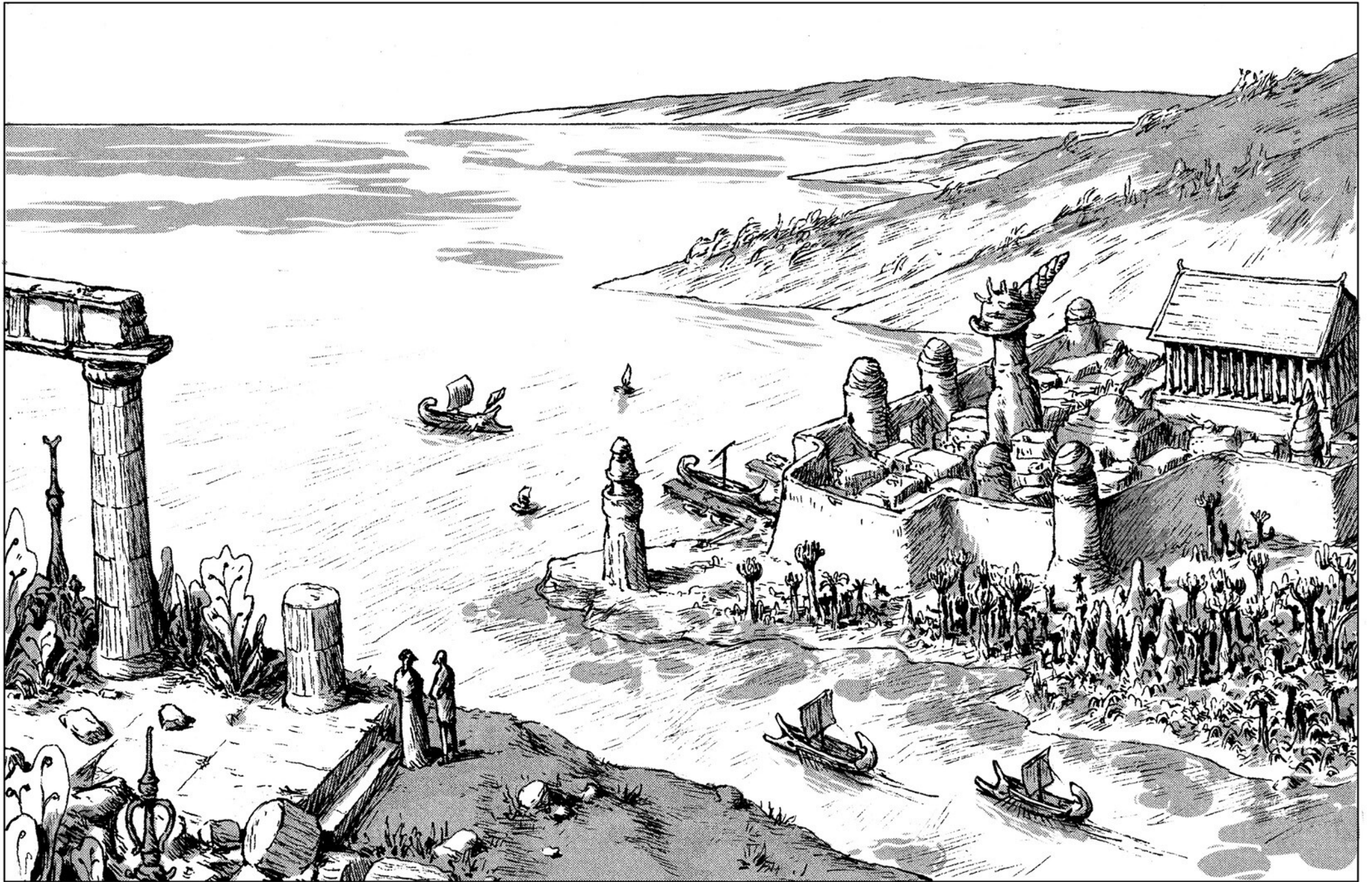
Shifter's heart



Clay servant

Shapeshifter's Animal form

Shapeshifters



## CHAPTER 2.2: THE WHITE MOON



Civilisations crumble one after the other as a result of climate change and the conflicts that subsequently arise. The Moon turns white, covered with snow.



Come from beyond the sea, metal and fire beings, the dragons, invade the isles and are fought off with difficulty by the inhabitants. Giant insects emerge from the waves to assault the beaches in search of food, which has now become far too scarce at sea.

The continent and the Faulk cities are wiped out by an onslaught of thorn monsters.



There remains, on the Moon, no more great cities but only ruins. The rare beings that still wander its perpetually snow-covered surface attempt to warm up by following the dying Sun. The old and blind Oracle creates moths to document the things of the past and the things that will be, in the hope that one day, the gardeners will return to visit their orchard.

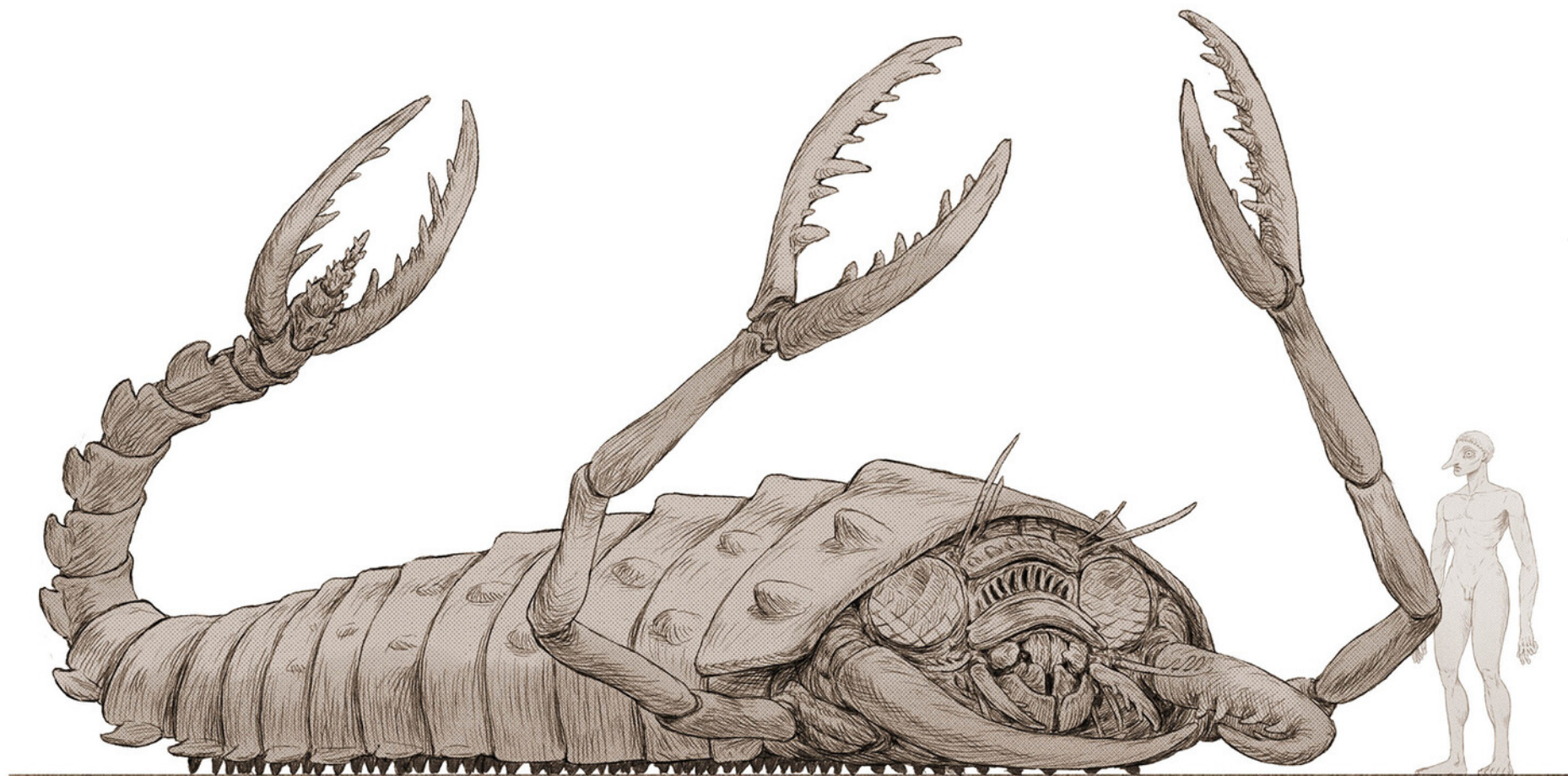




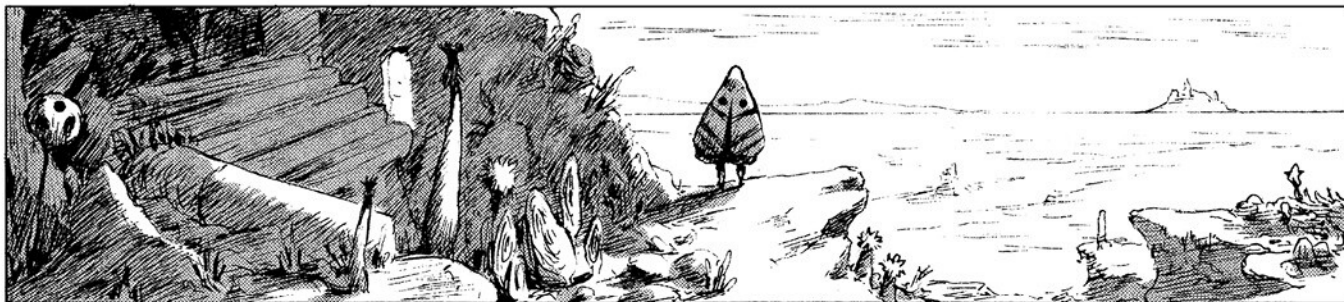
Dragons, like shapeshifters, are wont to store their heart in unexpected places. Come from beyond the seas, these metal beings flee the regions where the weather is too cold.

Dragon

The colder the seas get, the more great insects are driven out of the waters.  
They eventually swamp the beaches, driving away the tribes that had settled there.



Giant insect



Amid the white Moon ruins, the moths record the past and discuss the present. The former cities are also haunted by thorn beasts. The size of the isles' population inexorably decreases as oceans are emptied out of their waters and forests turn into deserts filled with rocks.



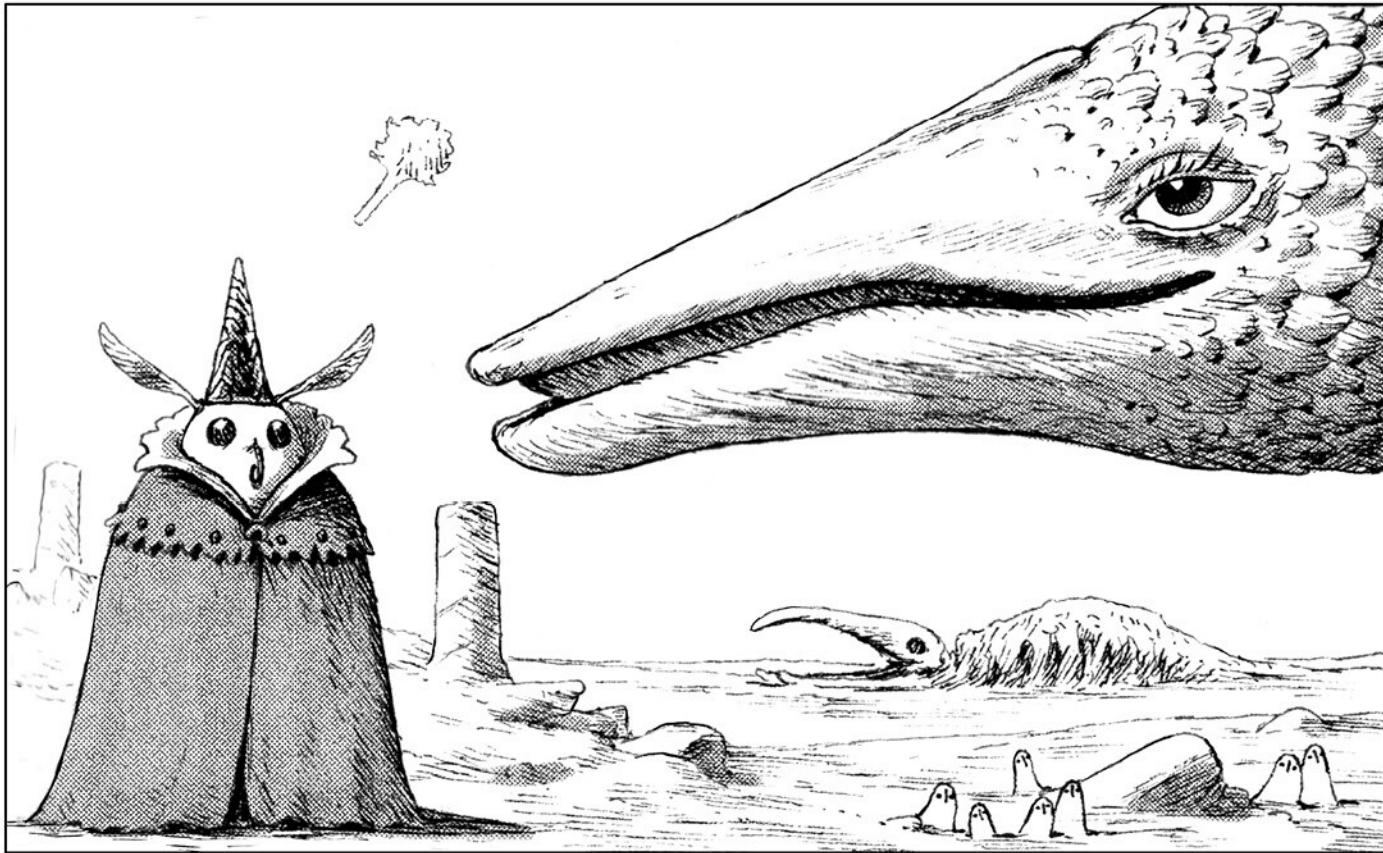
Thorn beast



Lunar moth



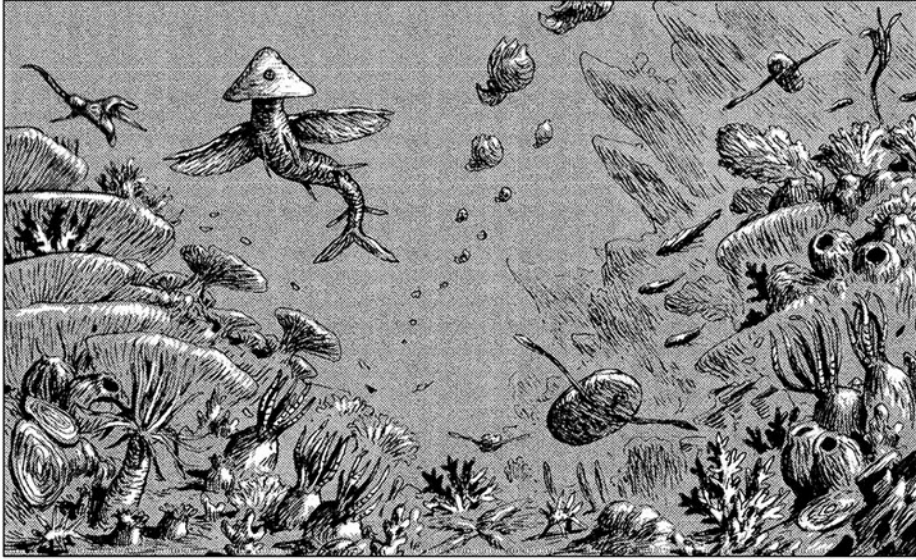




### **Annexe: Those that will come to the Moon**

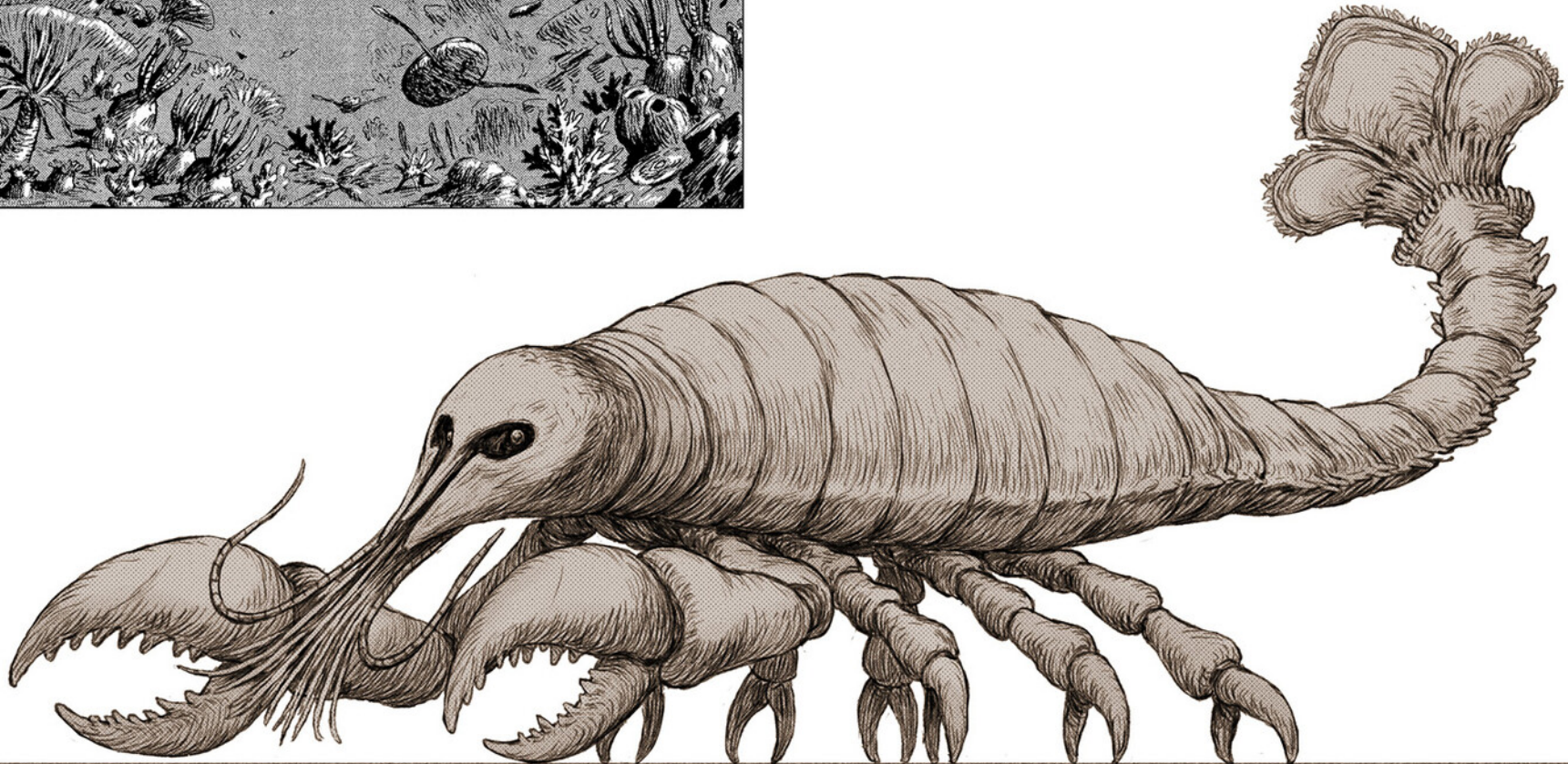
Come round to the snow-covered moon will be great iridescent whales, some of which will stay to live into old age. Next will be magician butterflies, visiting the ancient ruins. Some will linger for a short while, then resume their journey.

## CHAPTER 3: THE SILENCE ERA



As the Moon progressively gets coated in snow, life develops in the black ocean on Earth. When the Tree broke, its sap flooded the ocean, shaping giant coral reefs in mottled patterns where new forms of life evolved into an array of shapes to create a new ecosystem.

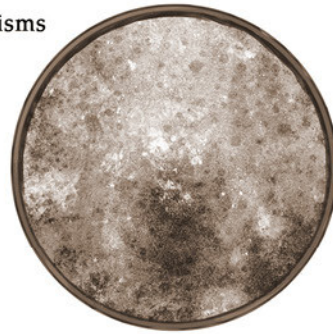
Before the growth of the Tree, alone, one great crustacean species lived in the black ocean covering the world. Feeding on sparse organic matter, it regulated its own population growth by cannibalism. The appearance of coral reefs hastens its development and expansion into numerous species.



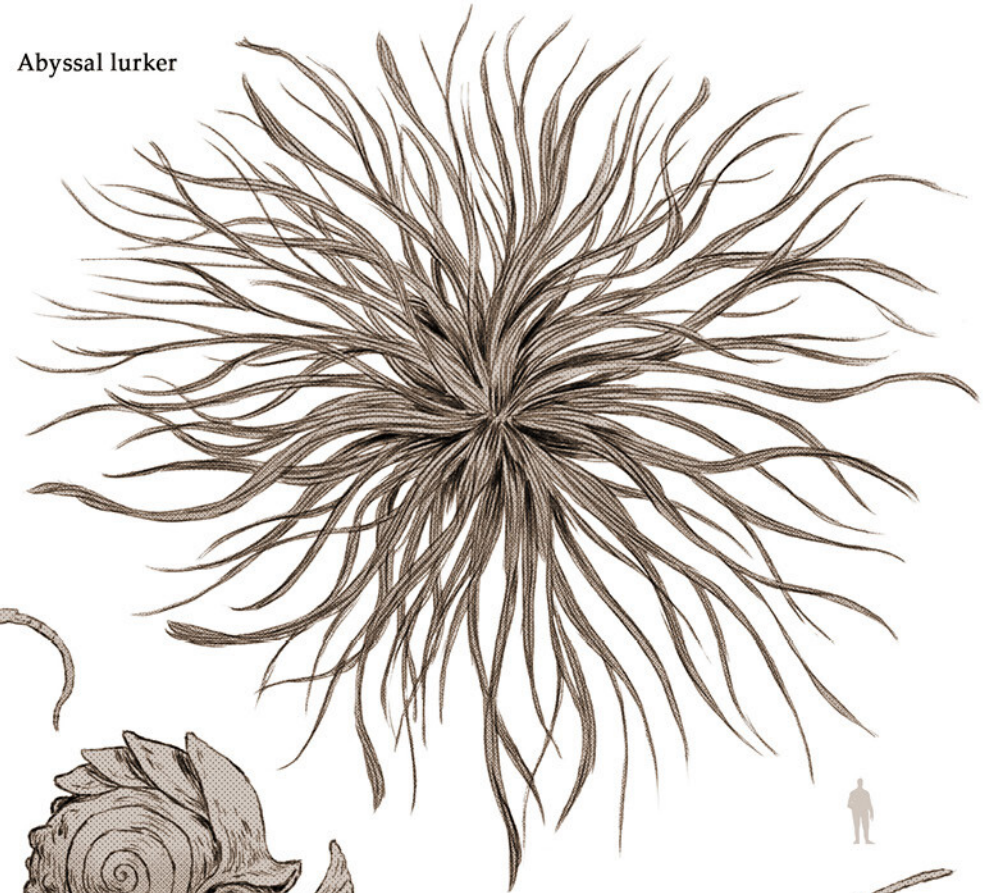
Archeo-crustacean

# Life in the coral reefs

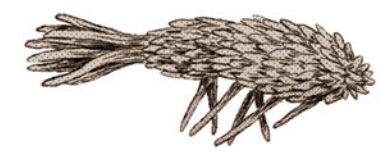
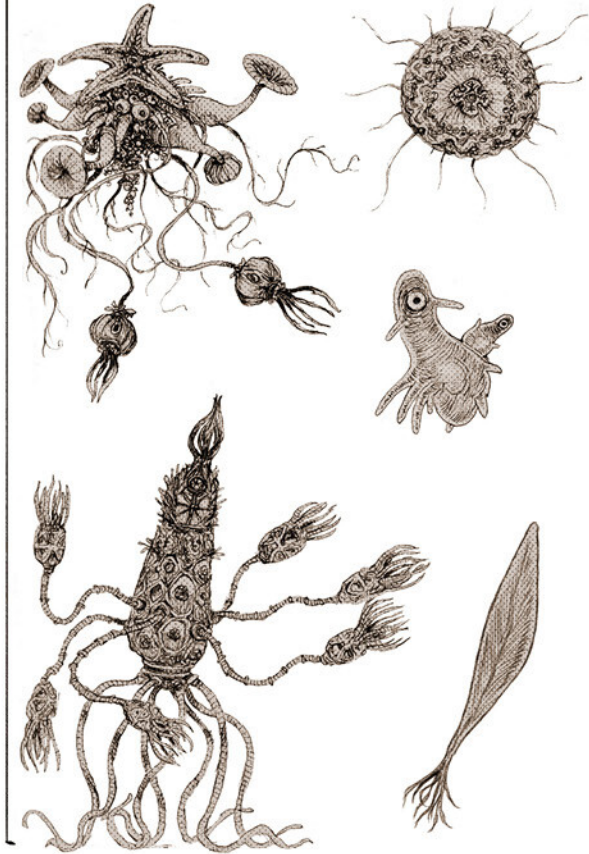
First organisms



Abyssal lurker



Zoas (microscopic/less than 3 cm)



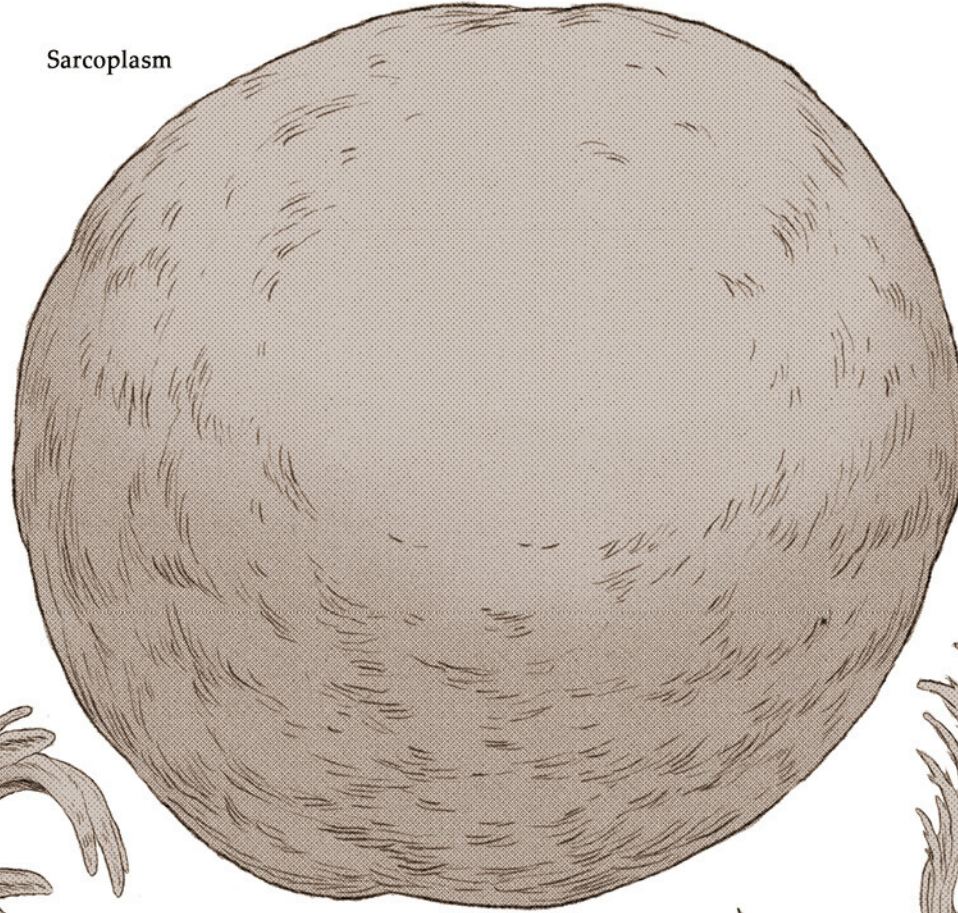
Archeo-creatures



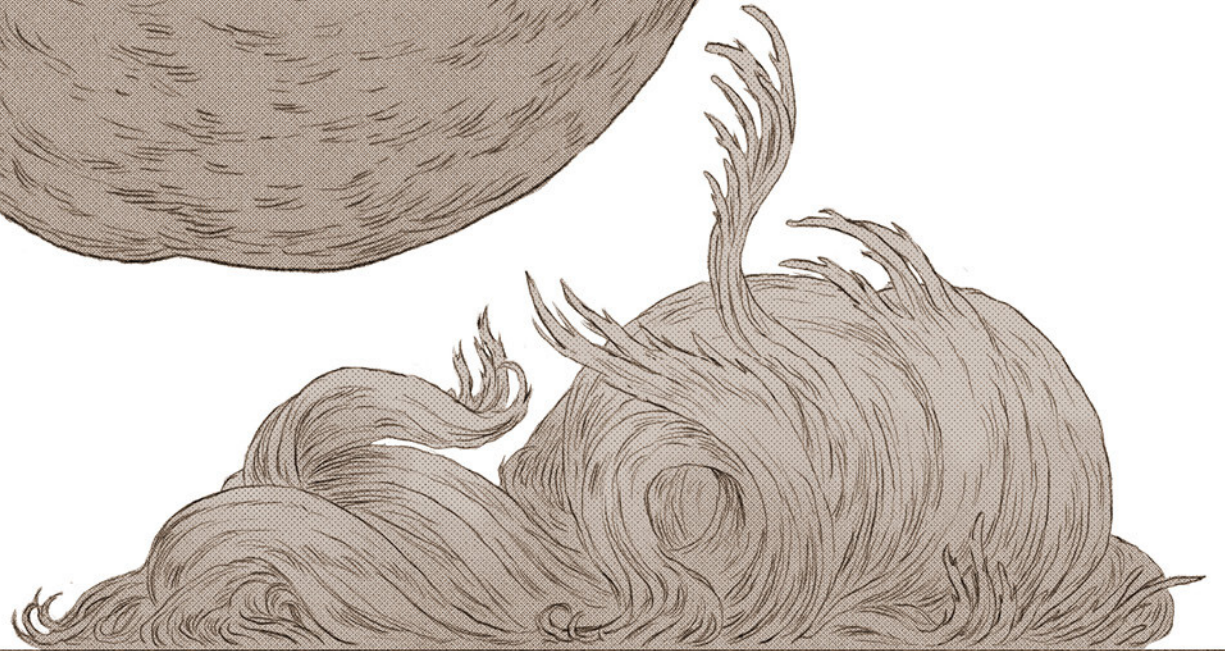
## The primordial mire creatures

On Uhia emerged land, while the corals are growing, stupid beings rove the mire that layers the surface of the only continent.

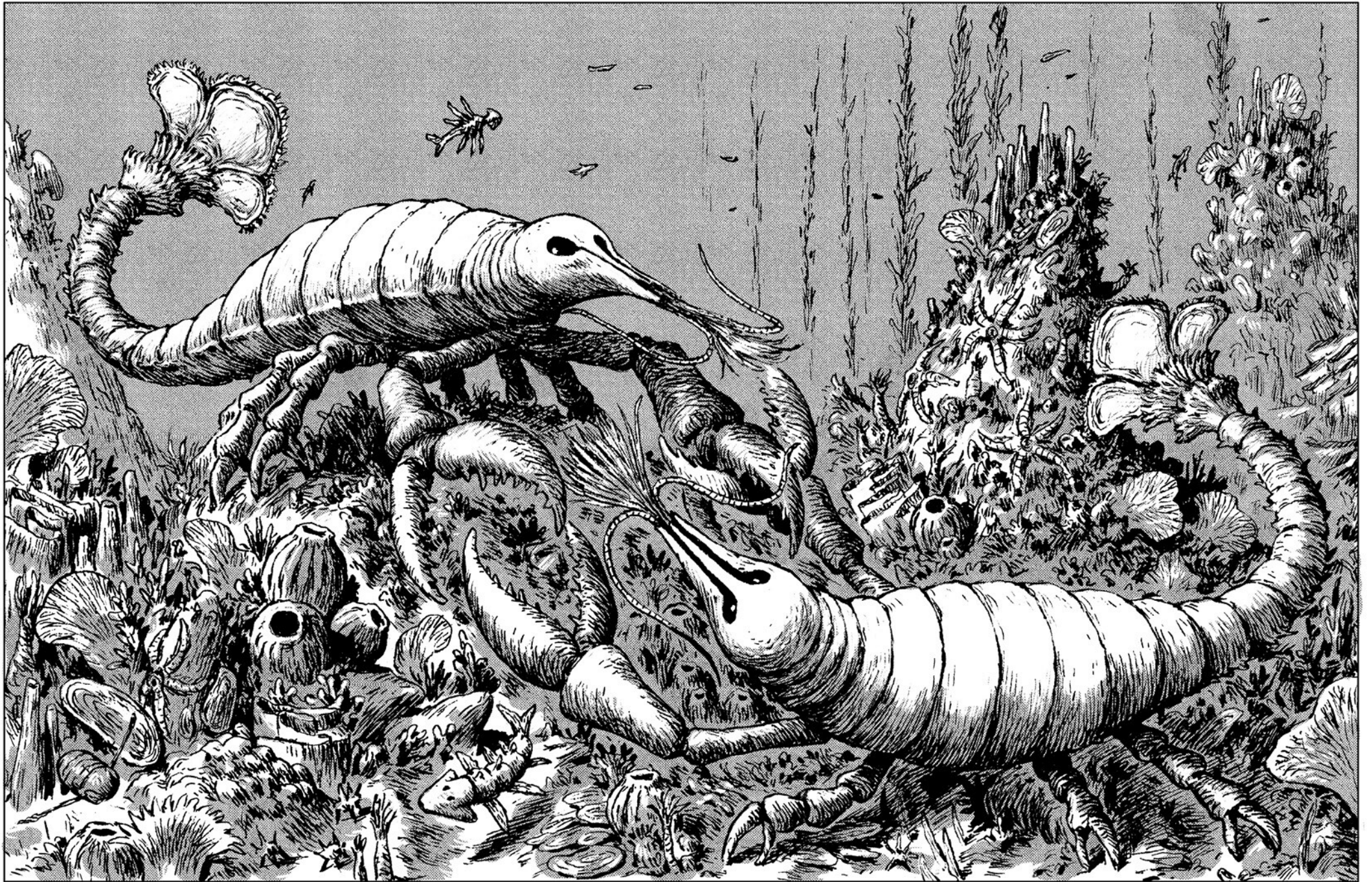
Sarcoplasm



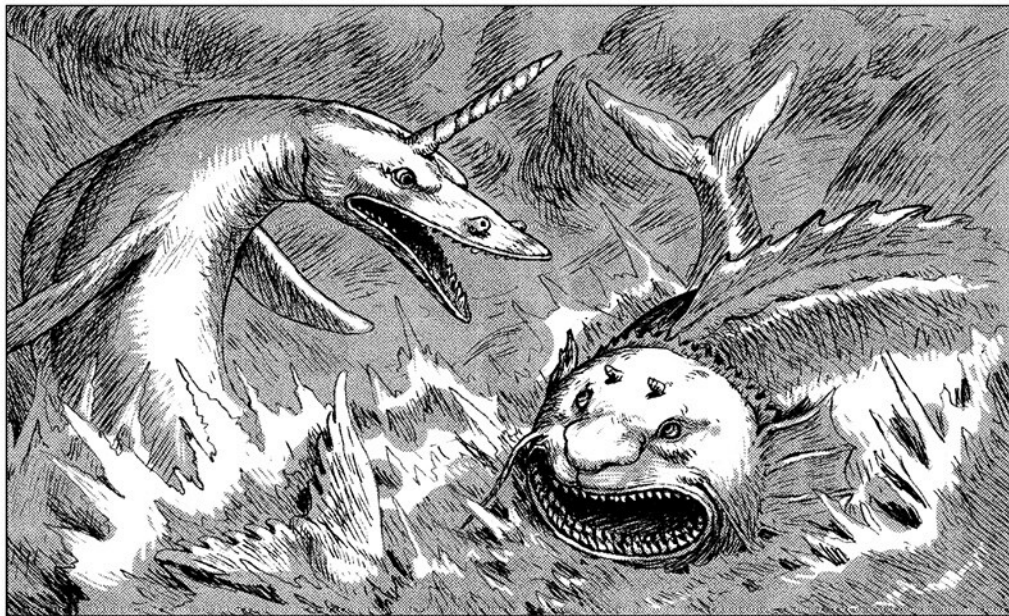
Mirer



Cold fire



## CHAPTER 4: THE TITANS ERA

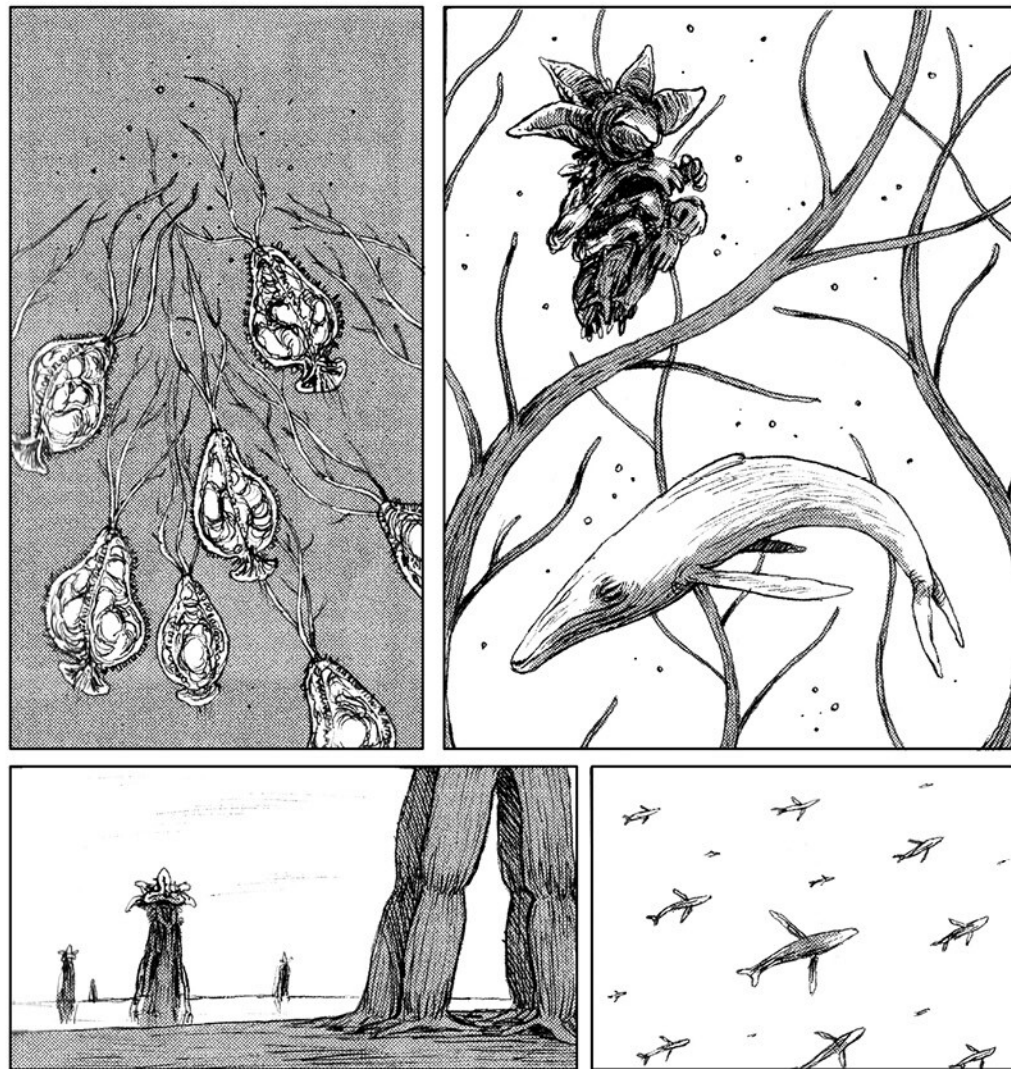


During this time, terrible giant fish rule over the seas. These leviathans wage battles to assert their dominance and extend their aquatic territories.

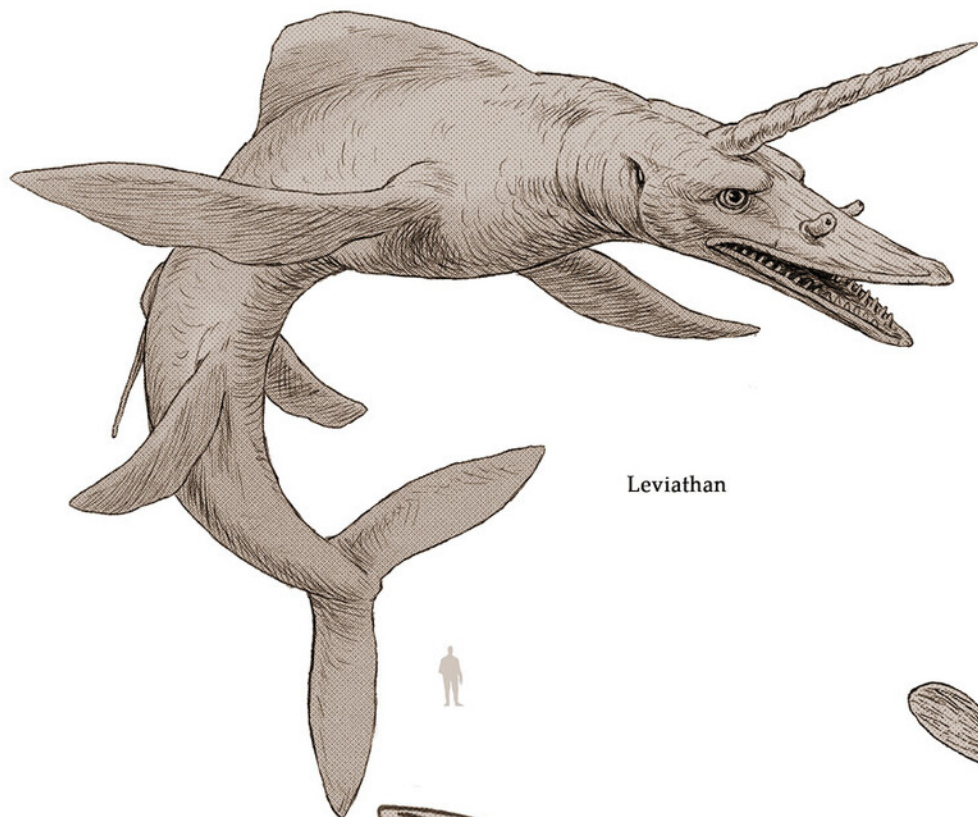
Amongst these colossal beings, one cnidarian species, the Titans, have particularly well developed. Made of identical clones, the Titans collectively dream of leaving the sombre depths of the ocean but find themselves unable to do so. They gather and give shape to beings endowed with the ability to carry this out in their stead – the Giants. The first Giants are the great curious whales fated to explore the sky; the second ones are the nimble starry Giants who will roam the surface of Uhia.

Such a great task exhausts the Titans, who start declining once the Giants leave the ocean.

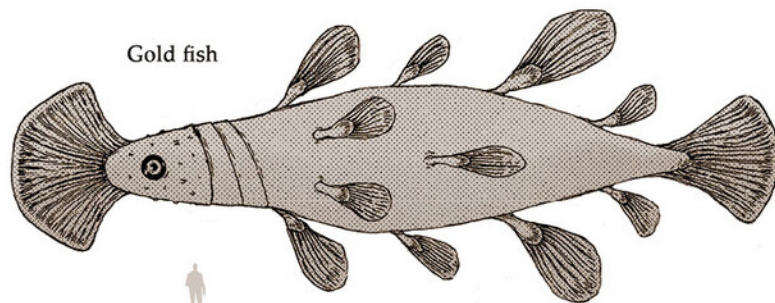
Before their disappearance, the Titans bring the last of the Giants into the world: the black Goutlths. These tall octopuses will have to survive in the deep waters of the reefs.



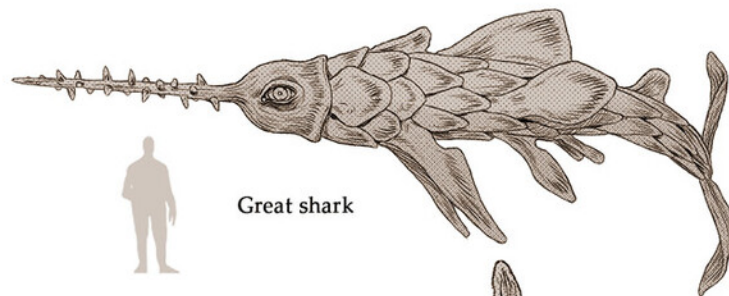
# Great pisces



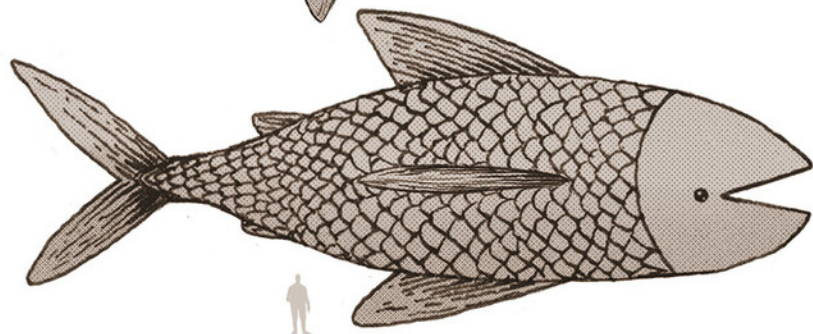
Leviathan



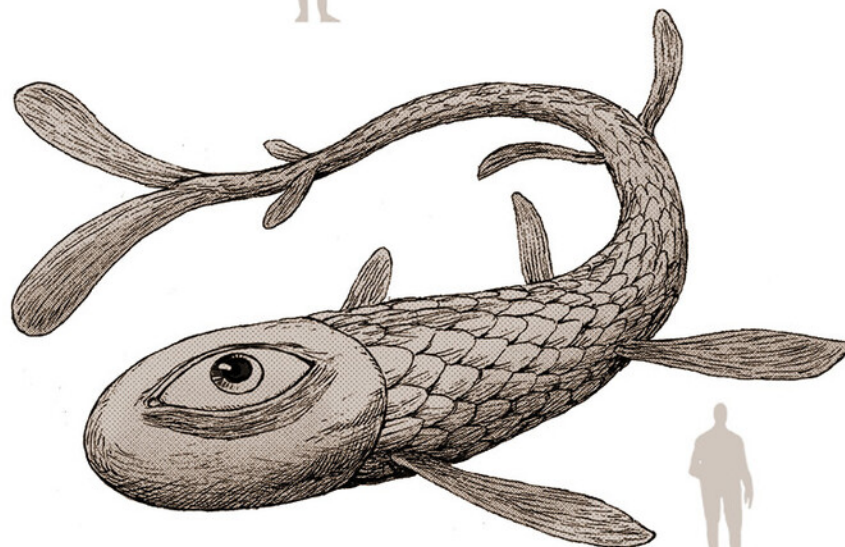
Gold fish



Great shark



Armoured fish



Cyclop fish



Titan

Titans live in large groups, dwelling among the coral reefs that border Uhia. Stemming from scions on the body of mature adults, each new Titan is a perfect replica of the others.

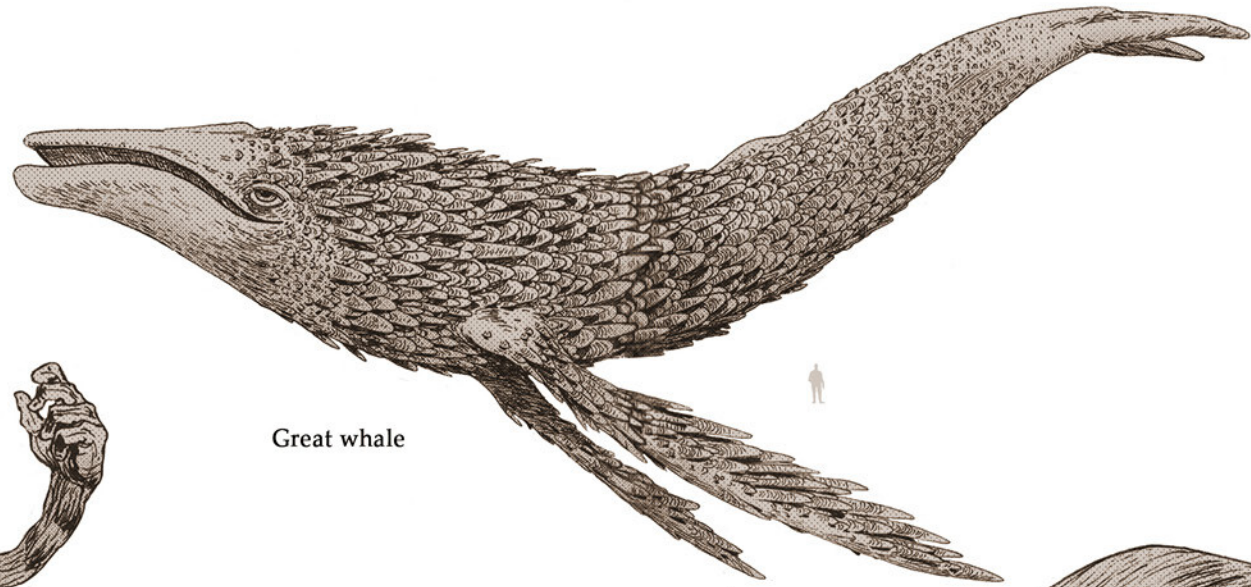
Invested with a hive psyche, the Titans share a common memory that makes them deeply social beings.

They convene to dream together, and from these collective dreams extract the Giants.

# The Giants



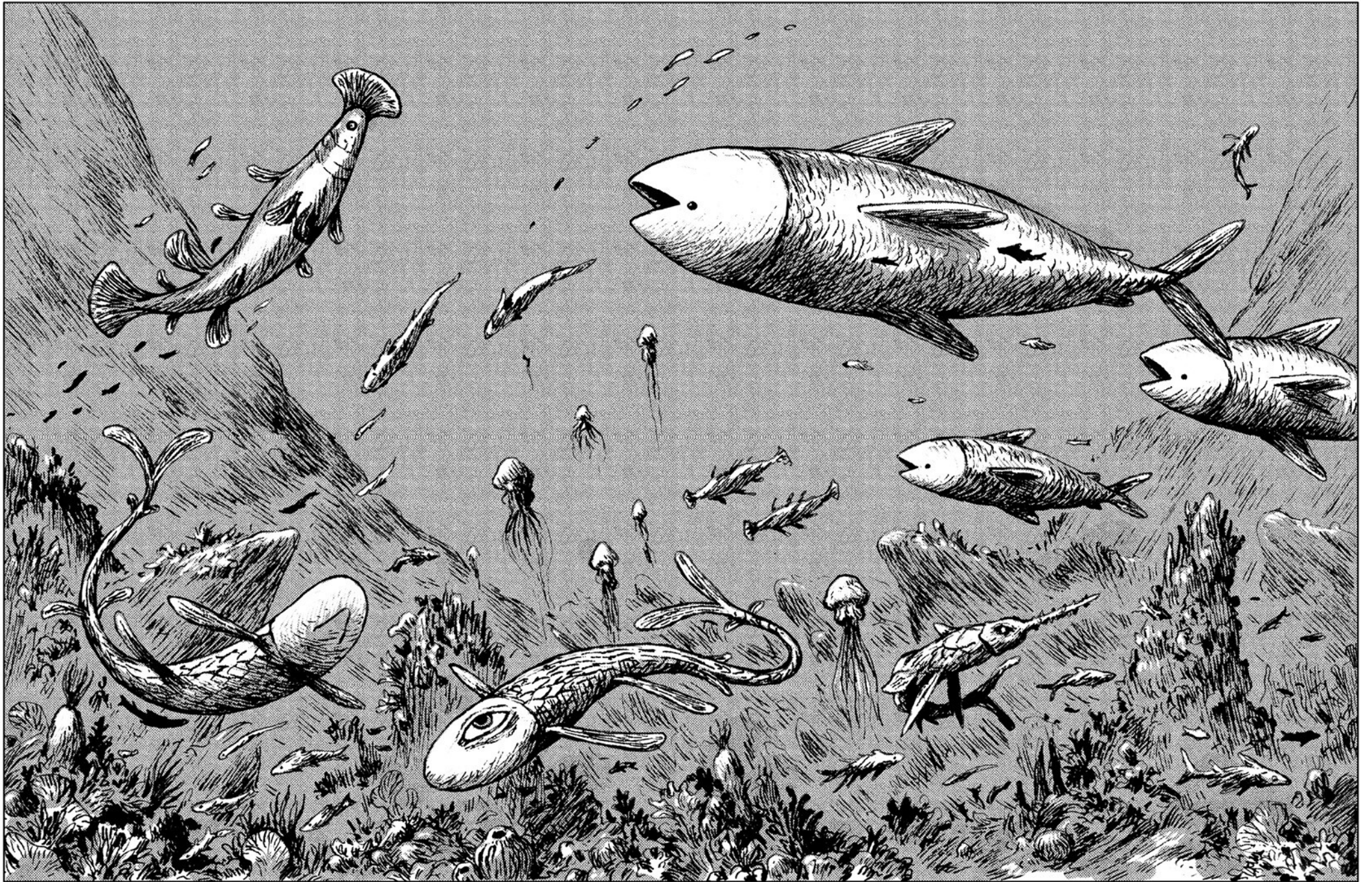
Starry Giant

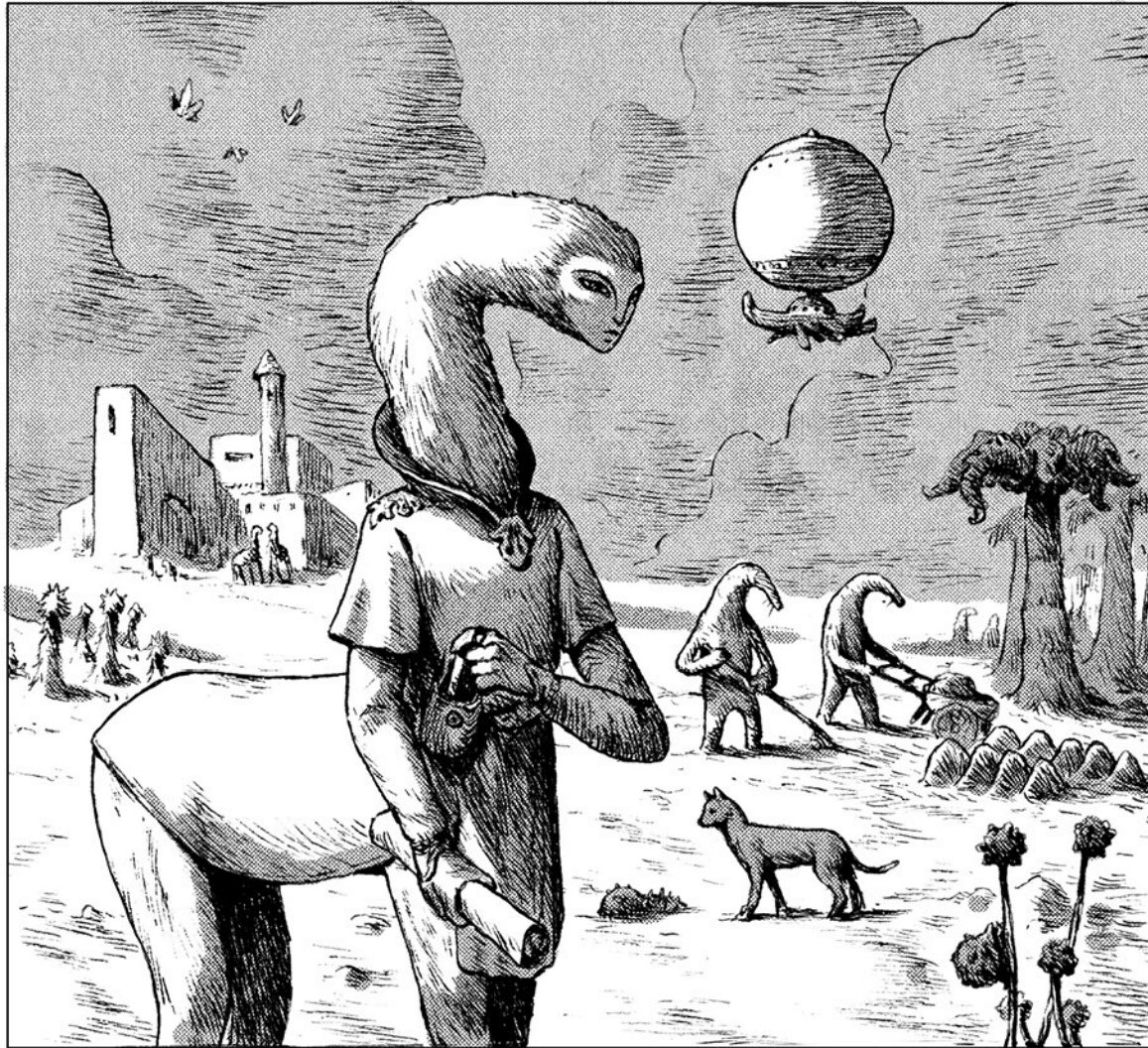


Great whale



Gouth

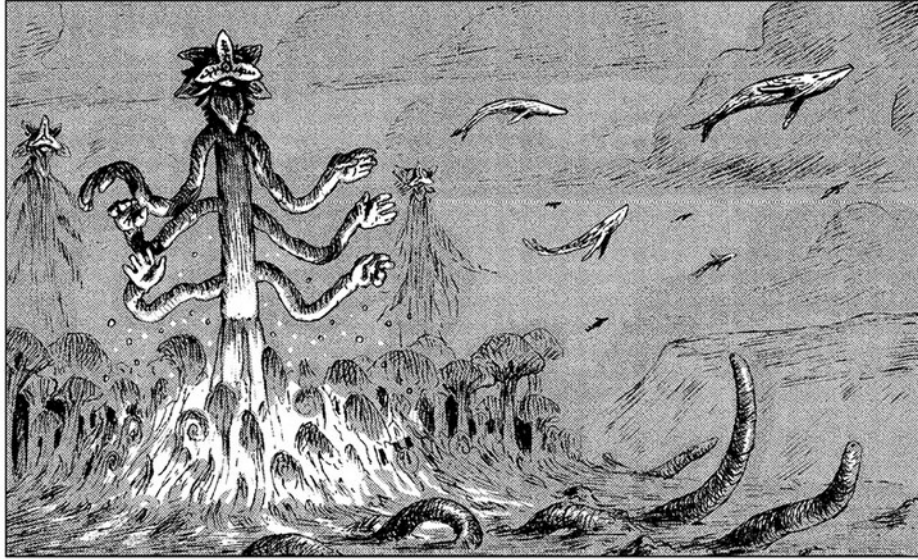




### **Annexe: Those that will come to the Earth**

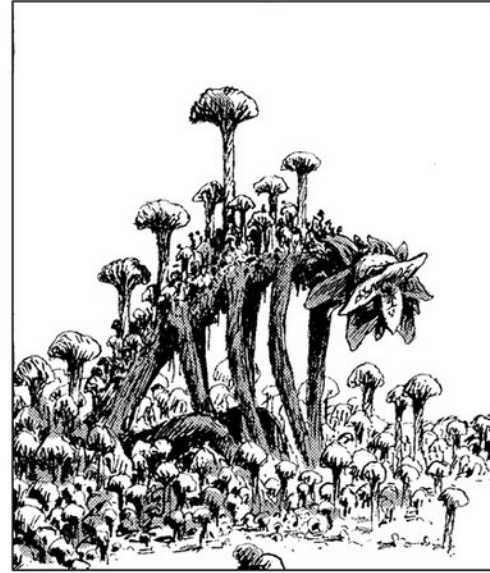
The Faulks organise a few exploratory missions on Uhia. While on the Moon their civilisation withers, several small colonies subsist on the continent. The few plants they brought along survive well enough to feed them. The occasional insects that slipped into the sacks of seeds are hunted by domestic cats. The colonies eventually disappear once the Faulks abandon their legacy to cross the forests that will later spread, their servants moving to the ancient veins of the Tree never to surface again. The Otomatons rot and their buildings are absorbed into the ground. Small groups of Angels will also come down to Earth and inhabit isolated mountains.

## CHAPTER 5: THE GIANTS ERA



The great whales egress the waters to explore the sky. Some rise so high that they die from exhaustion, while a few land on the Moon. Most of them remain in the skies above Uhia, where the clouds are swollen with aerial plankton. Sliding with indolence across the beautiful days' blue sky, they watch as the huge storms brew, devastate the ocean and relentlessly batter the bare earth.

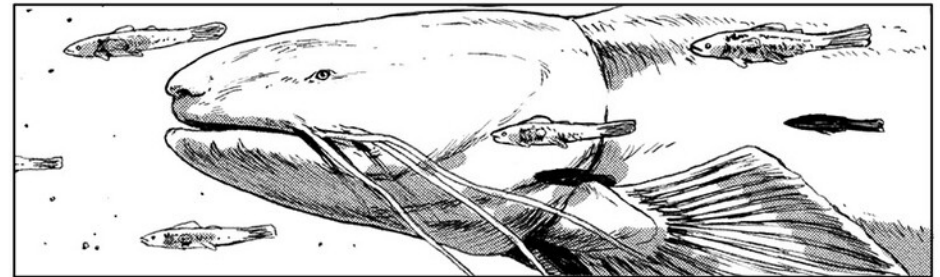
Meanwhile, on Uhia, the starry Giants rise from the eroded bark cliffs and explore the all but bare and sullen continent. They decide to use the few puny plants and dying insects to create vast forests. They give rise to immense earthworms that bring fertility to the soil. Turned giant, the insects fight ferocious wars. Their crushed chitin exudes spores and seeds that speed up the growth of the vast forests.

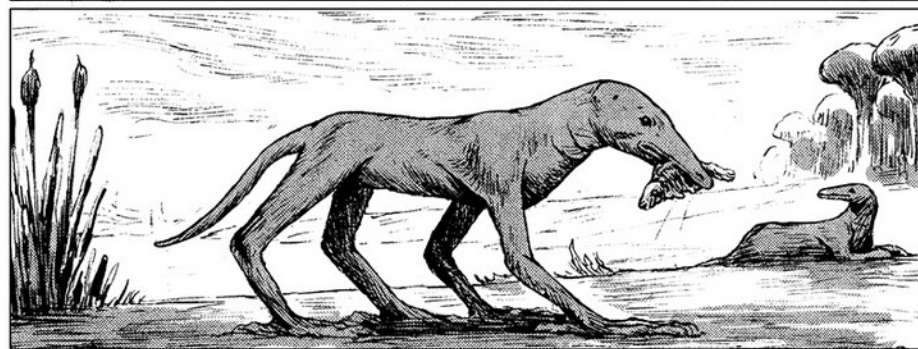
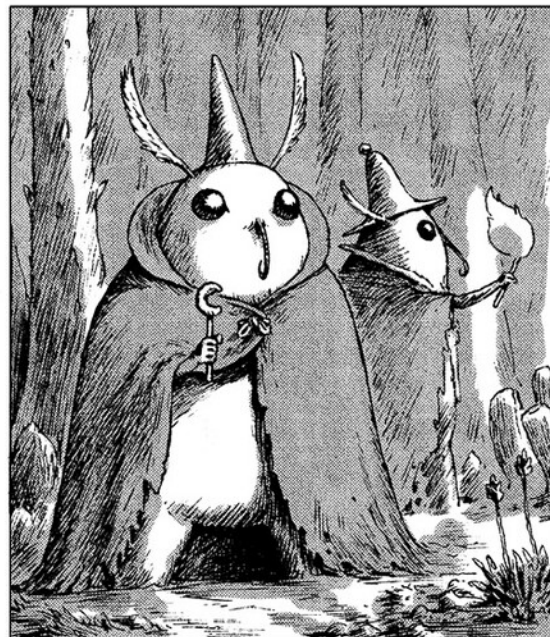
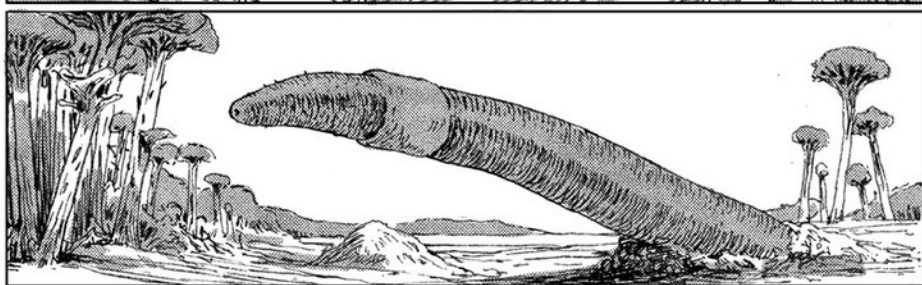
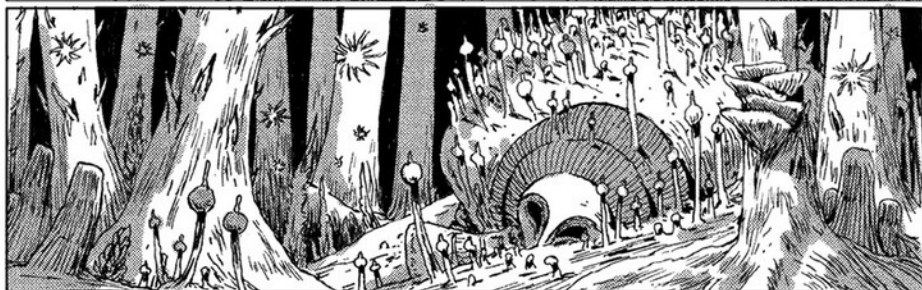


Once their work is accomplished, the Giants blend with the forests. Their fibrils settle amid the mycelium and roots to live in the humus, while their body dissolves into the rest of the vegetation.

Growing in diversity, the plants give shape to primordial vegetal birds and reptiles and merge with the first mammals that come out of the water. Huge fish leave the ocean and dig wide rivers and streams, precipitating the plants' advance towards the inner lands. Modest civilisations of fungi beings flourish under the shade of trees.

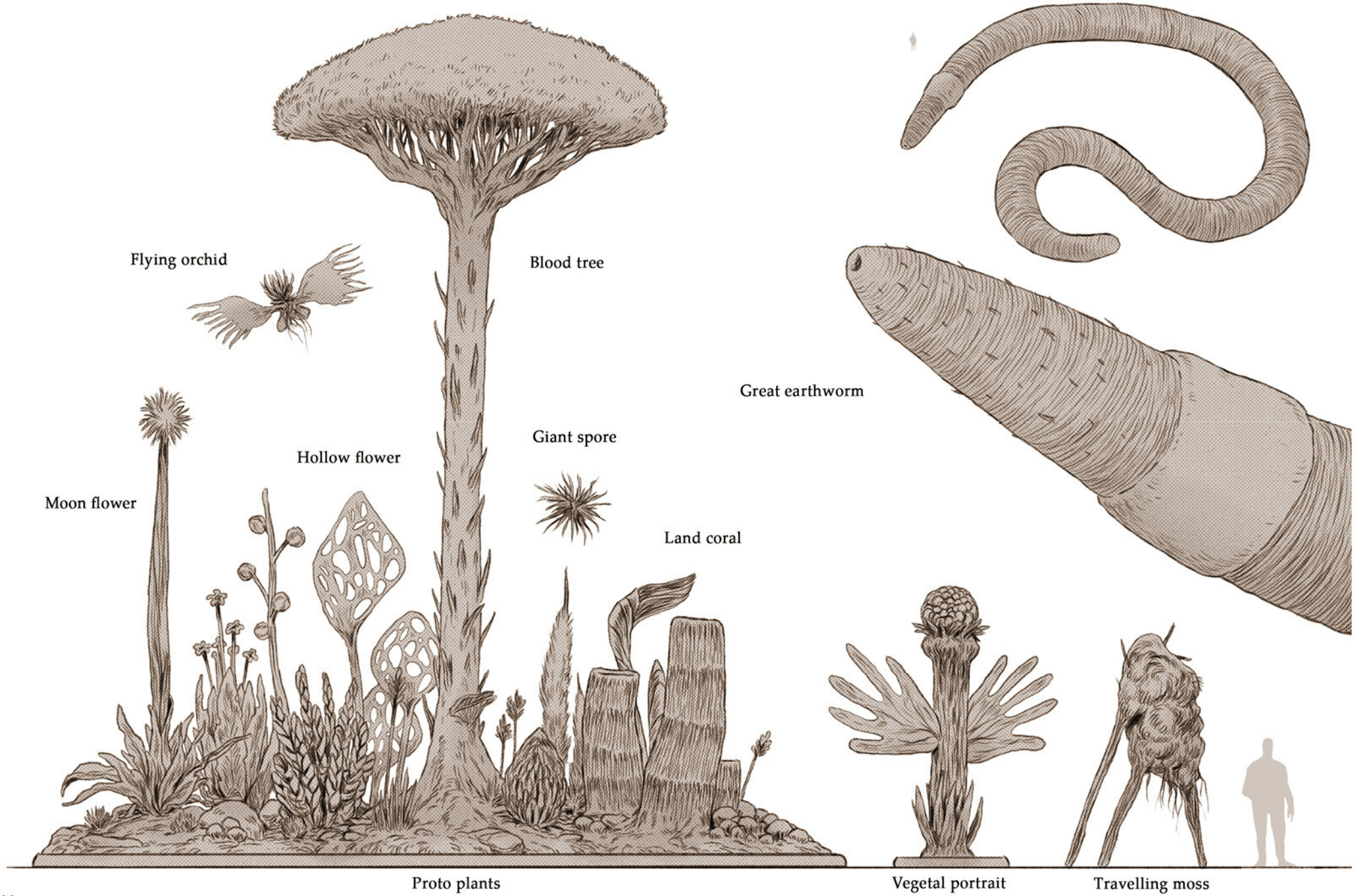
The forests have colonised Uhia. Insects become less combative and decrease in size, leaving space for other creatures to develop.





<Insects' war, and undergrowth formation.  
Forest dwellers and Uhia's coast.>

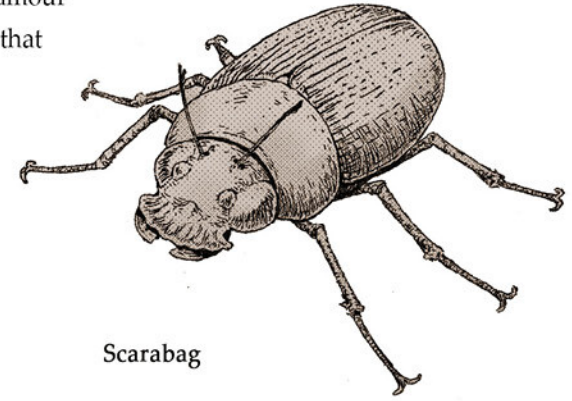
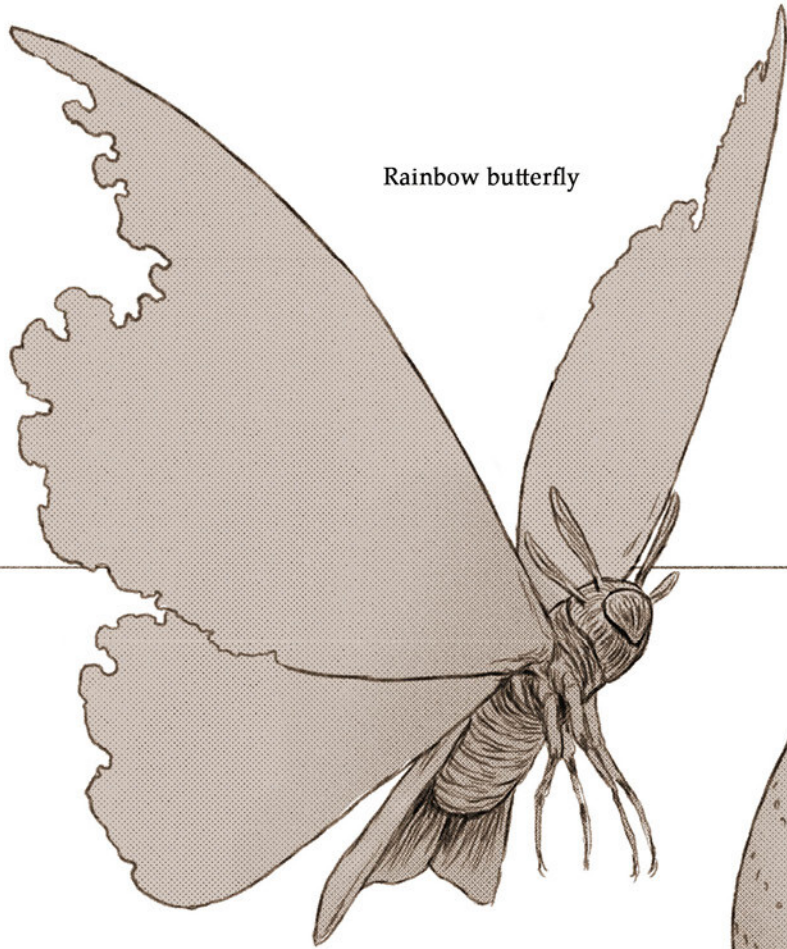
# Primordial forest



## Giant insects

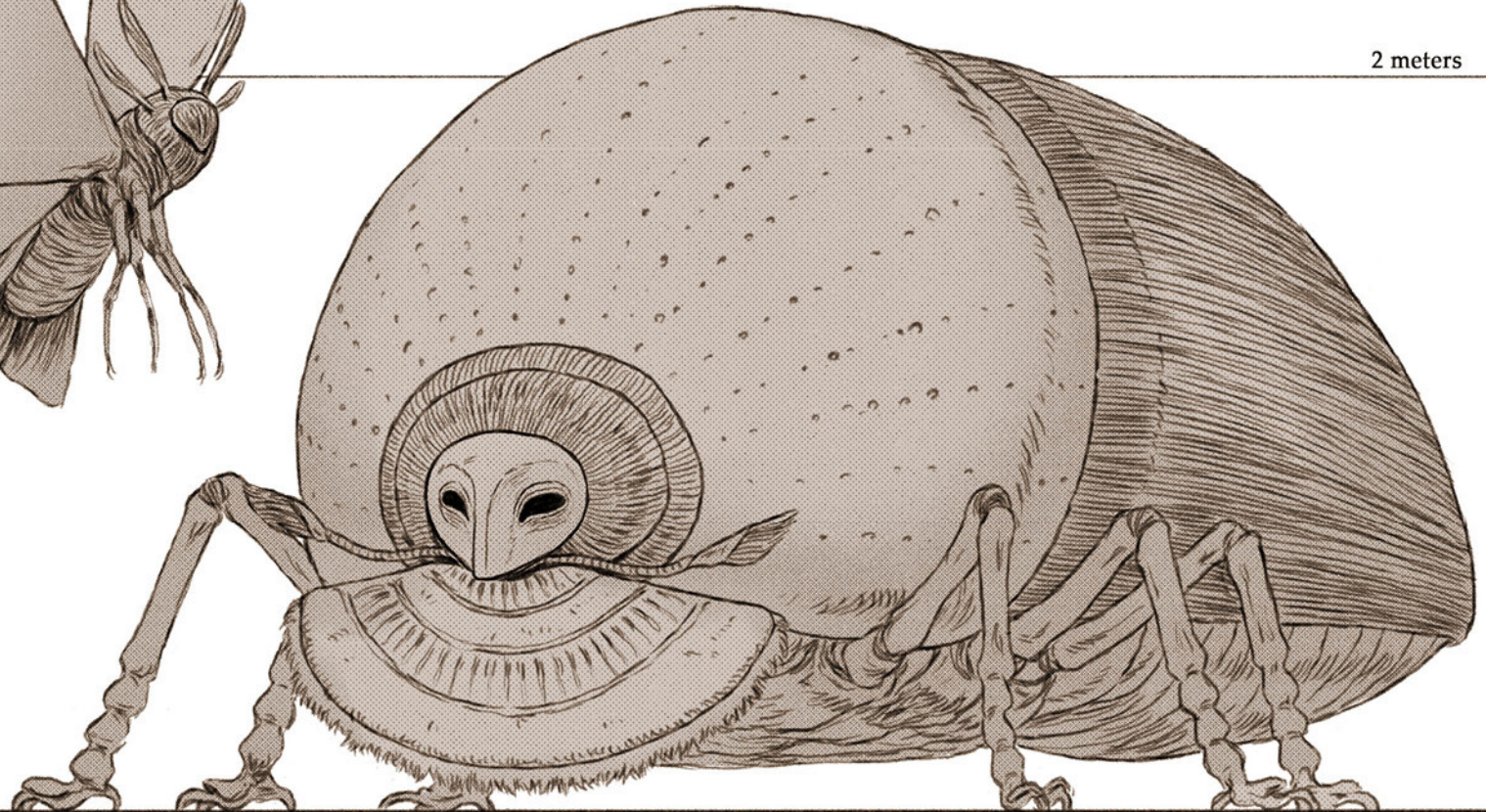
Terrible are the wars of the insects. The clamour of crushed chitin gives way to tiny plants that will grow into large trees.

Rainbow butterfly



Scarabag

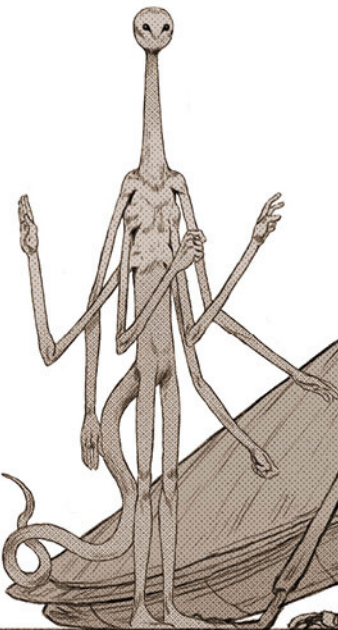
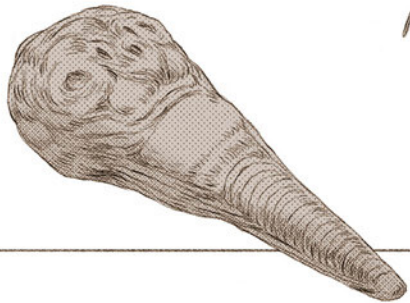
2 meters



Kepreh beetle



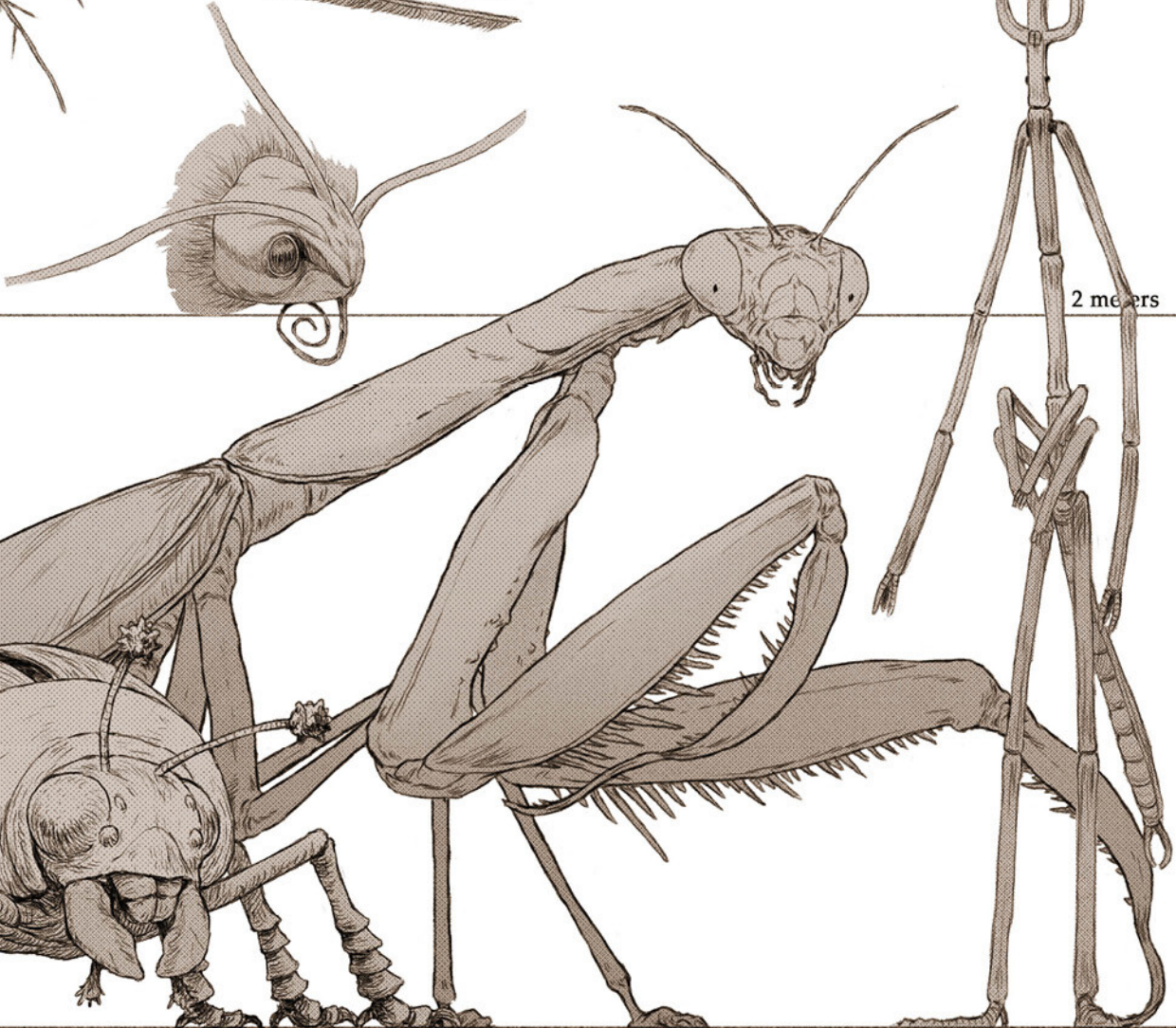
Great white butterfly



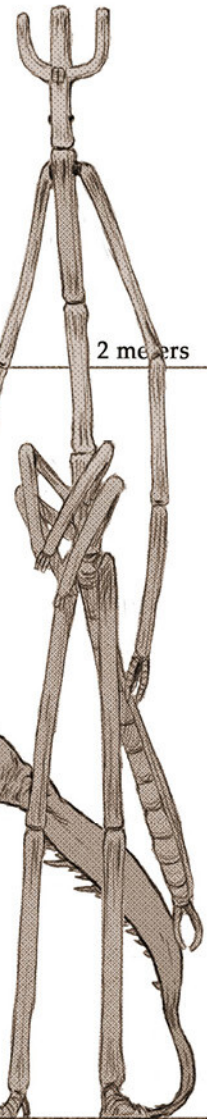
White caterpillar



Lapis beetle

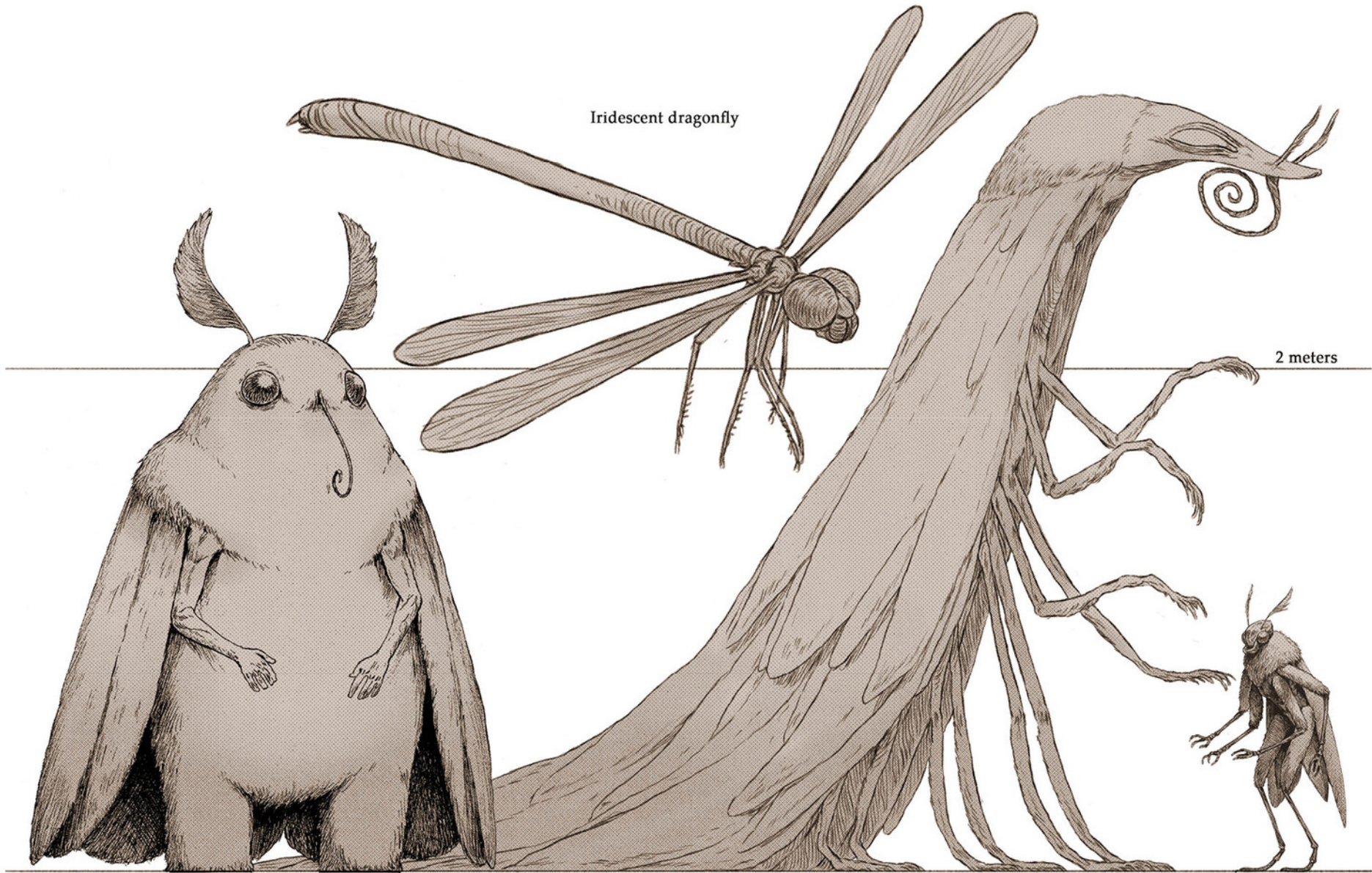


Mantis



Stick people

2 meters



Iridescent dragonfly

2 meters

Maaj

Werefly

Moth

The more a forest develops, the smaller its insects become,  
freeing up space for other animals.



Silverfish

Walking stick

## Animal-plants

A particular type of vegetation appears in the new forests. In order to bear their seeds more efficiently, the fruits of trees acquire mobility. The moss birds, for example, later become covered with feathers. Trees double down on their techniques to attract the mammals that venture out of the water. Some create direct copies of the animals or capture their dreams to offer sweet fruits bursting with seeds.



Real size

Moss bird



Gold apple

2 meters

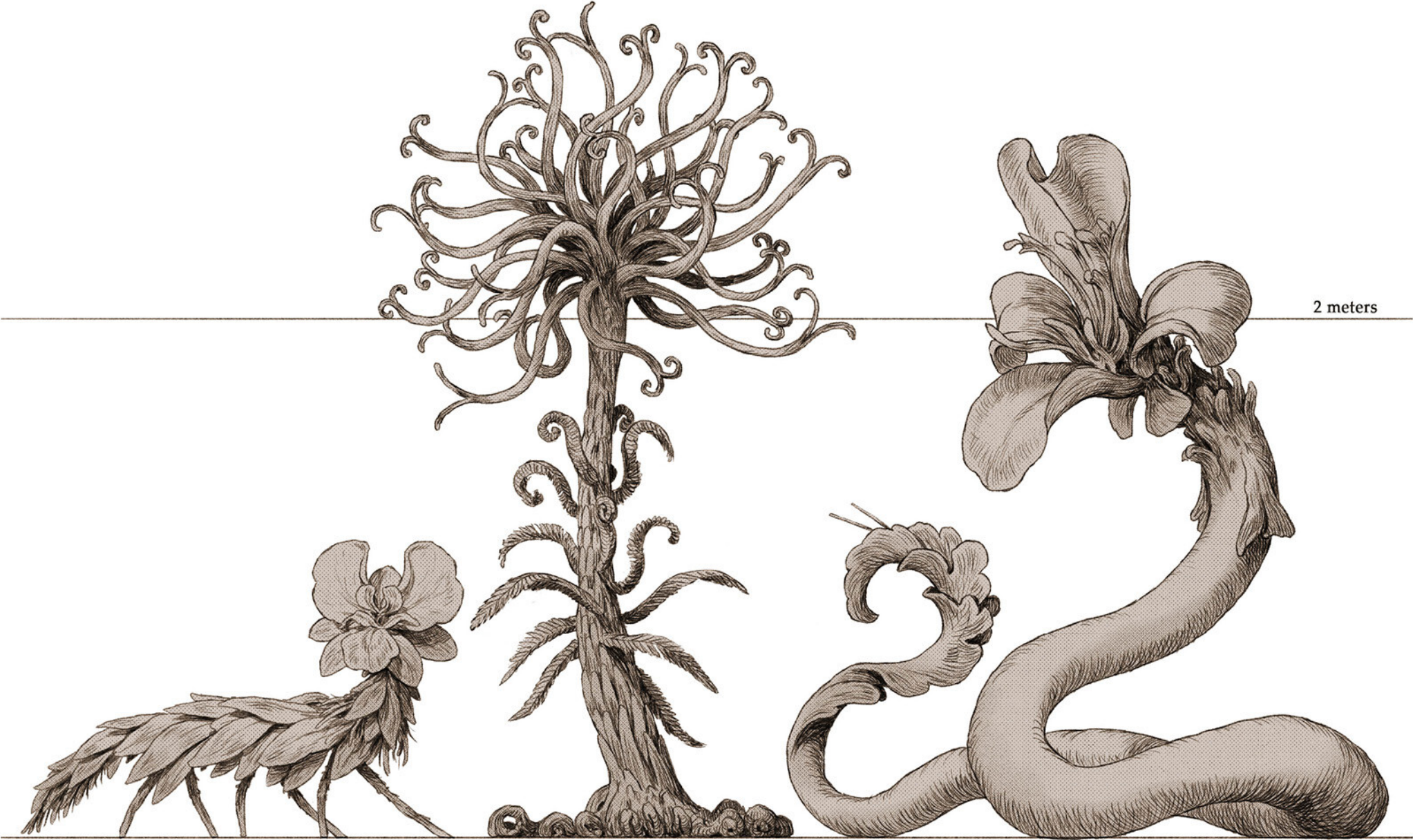


Animal plant

Leafy rabbit

Abundance plant

Other plants take on predatory behaviours and hunt for insects and mammals.



2 meters

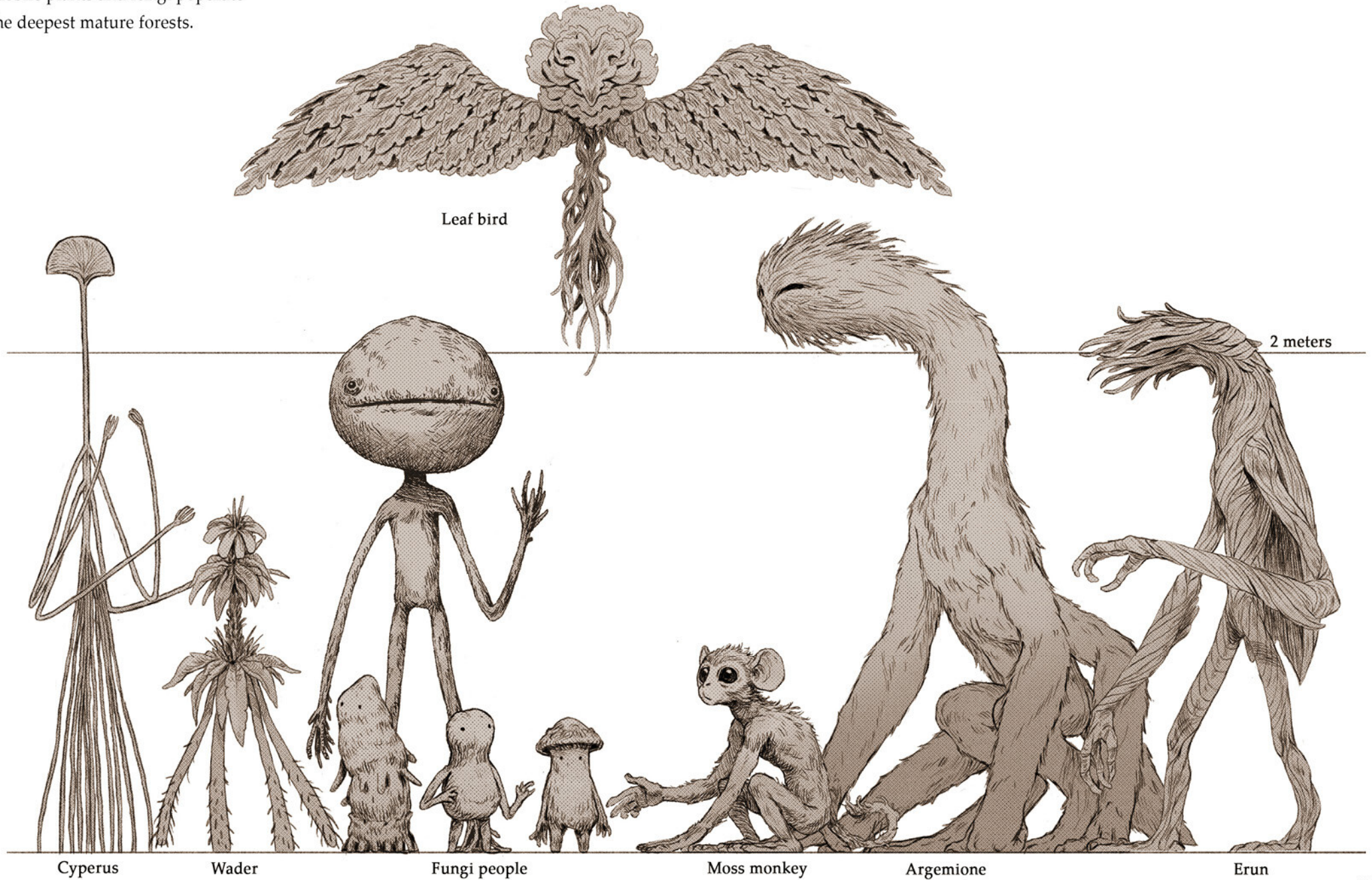
Wolf flower

Medusa tree

Floral snake

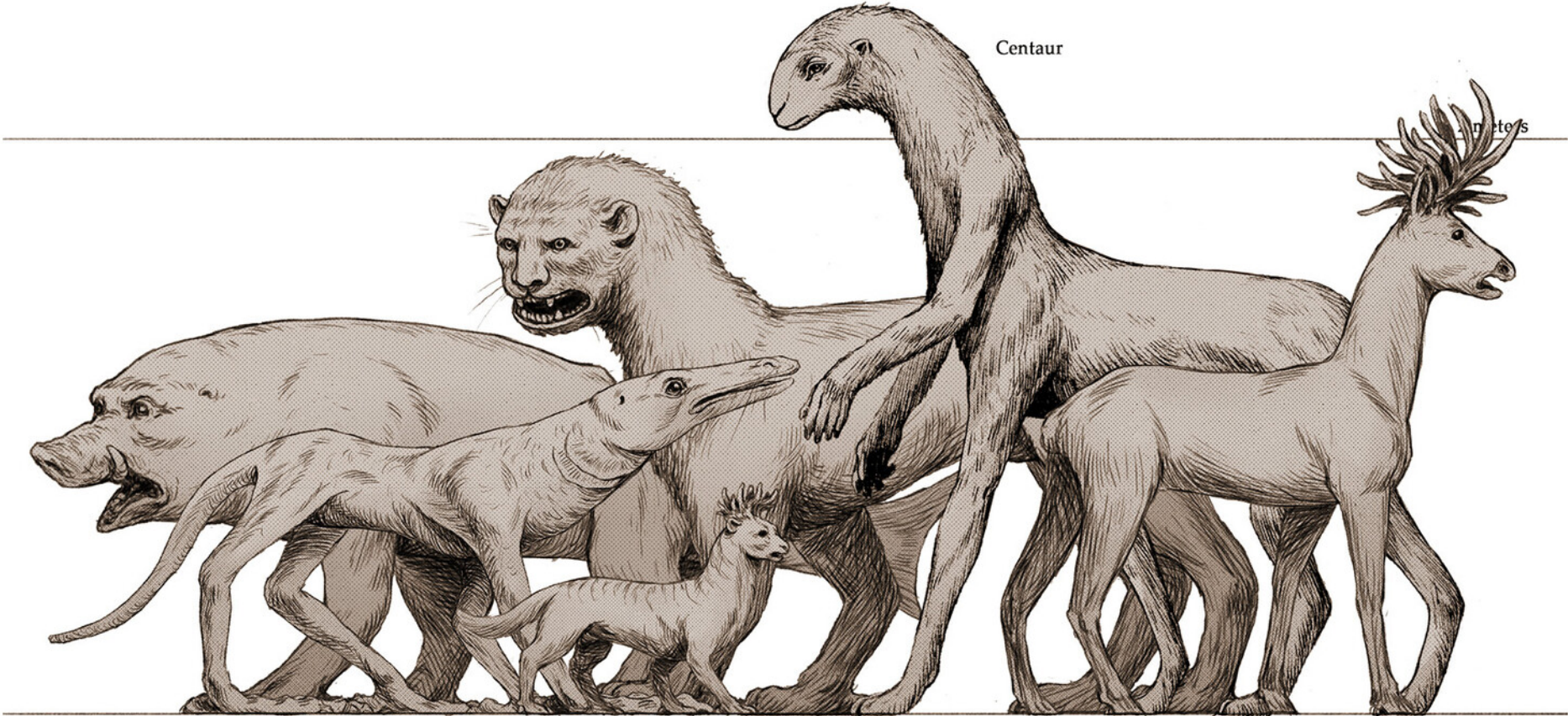
## Forest dwellers

Mobile plants and fungi populate the deepest mature forests.



# The first mammals

Descendants of the fish that left the dark waters to take advantage of the newly abundant supply of food provided by Uhia.

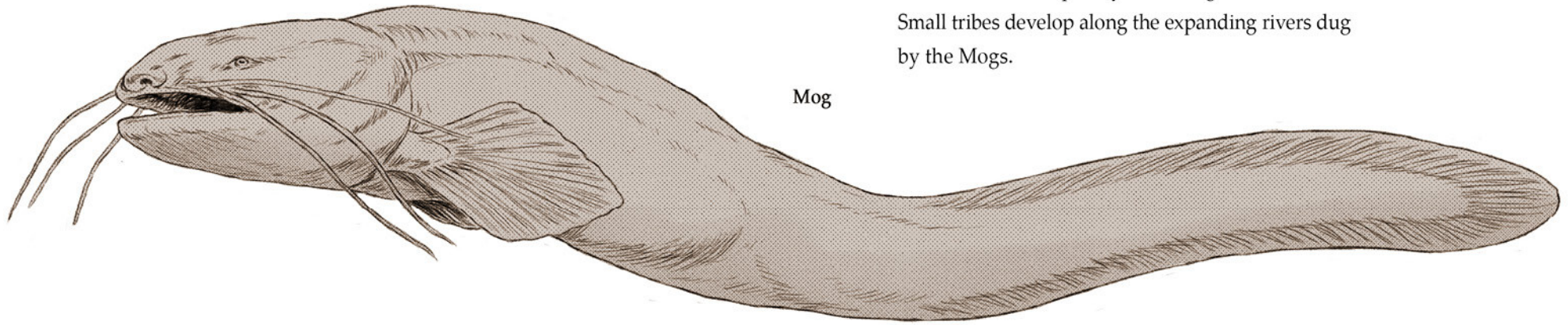


Centaur

Antlers

Proto-mammals

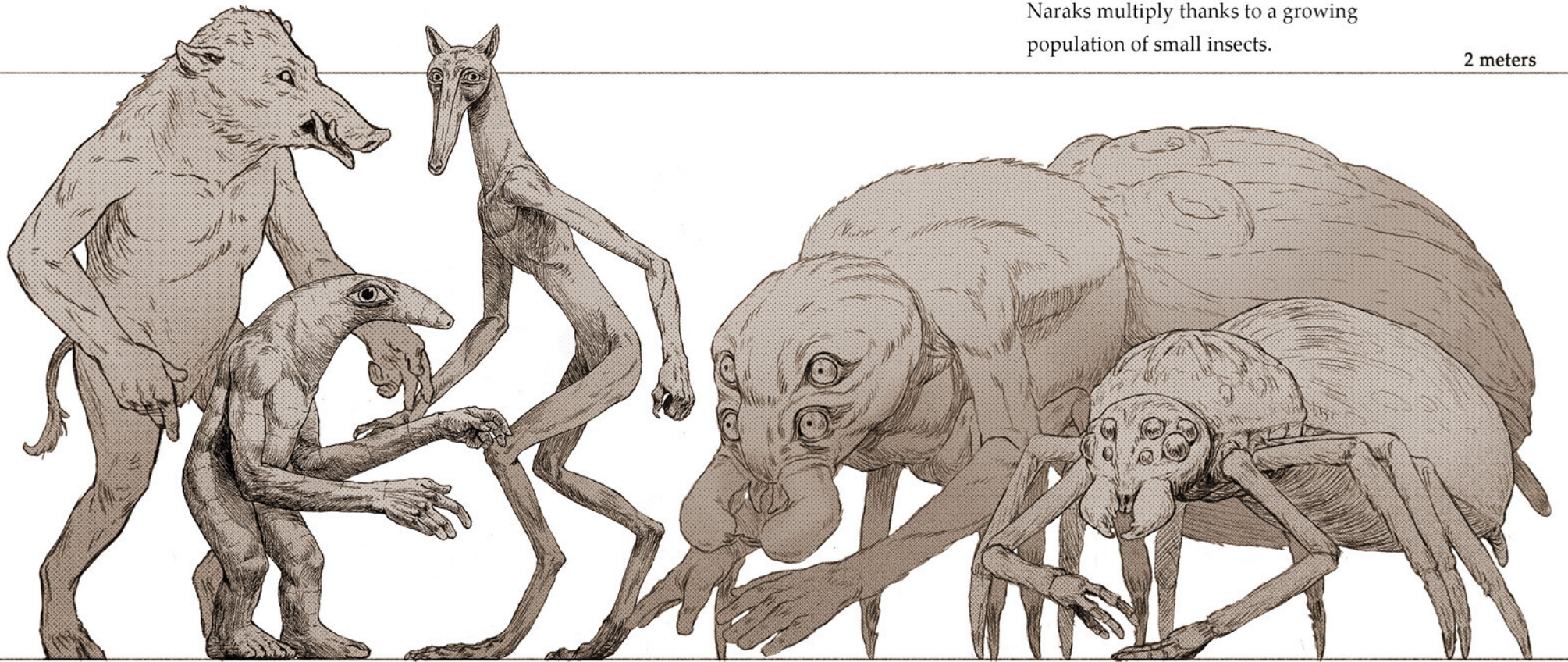
Mammals evolve quickly at the edge of the woods.  
Small tribes develop along the expanding rivers dug  
by the Mogs.



Mog

Naraks multiply thanks to a growing  
population of small insects.

2 meters



Hure

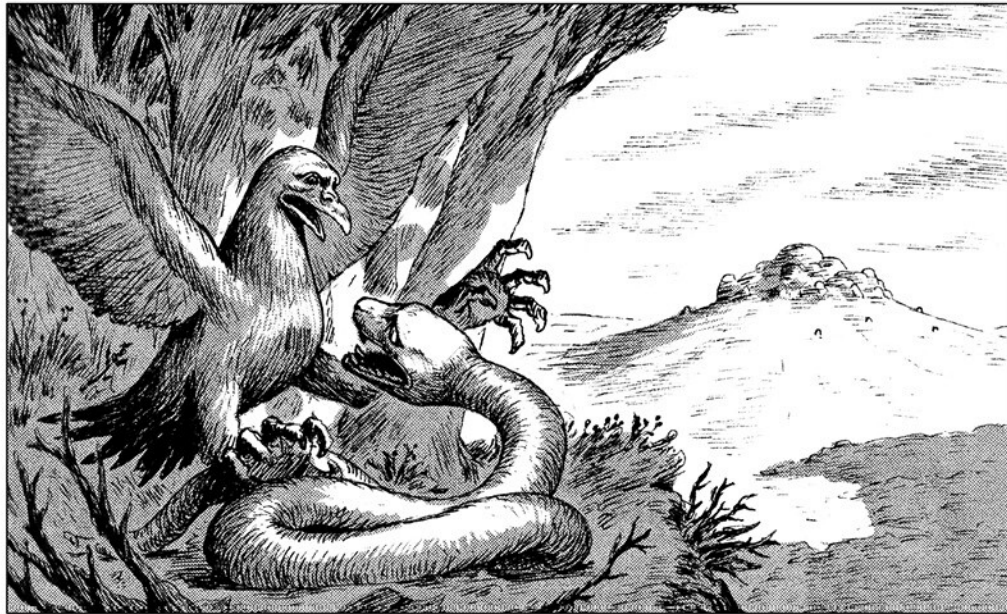
Dwarf

Hun

Narak

Narak spawn

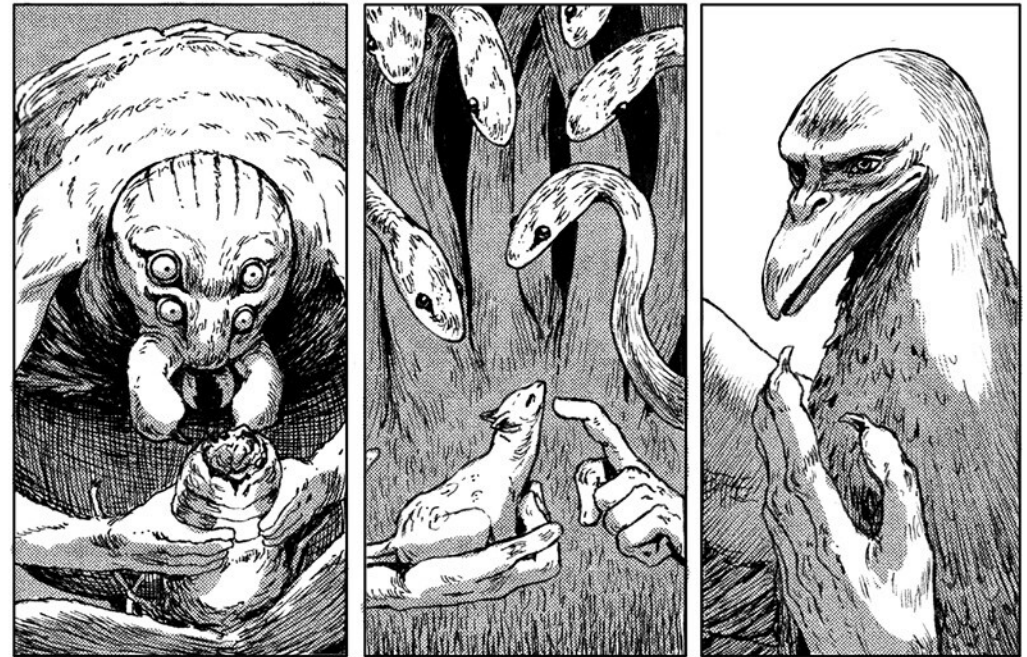
## CHAPTER 6: THE ANCIENTS ERA



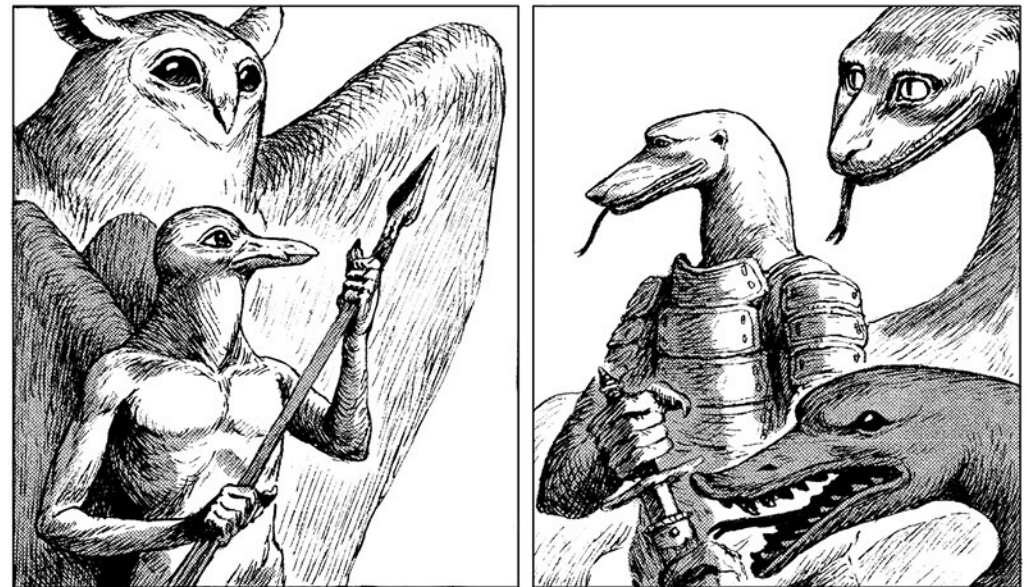
Uhia is covered with the vast forests that stretch from the north to the south, interrupted only by a few clearings.

The insect wars are now but skirmishes. The insects' predators, the voracious Naraks, profit from this decrease, as do the birds and reptiles that the plants created. Throughout the entire first part of the era of the Ancients, the birds and reptiles found sparse civilisations on the continent. They hold sway over Uhia. Each of the two species harbours an ancestral hatred against the other, inherited from the reciprocal predation of their eggs.

Lesser tribes of mammals simultaneously thrive, interacting little with the reptiles and birds.



Narak, Onchyre and Erx who have benefited from the decrease of insects.



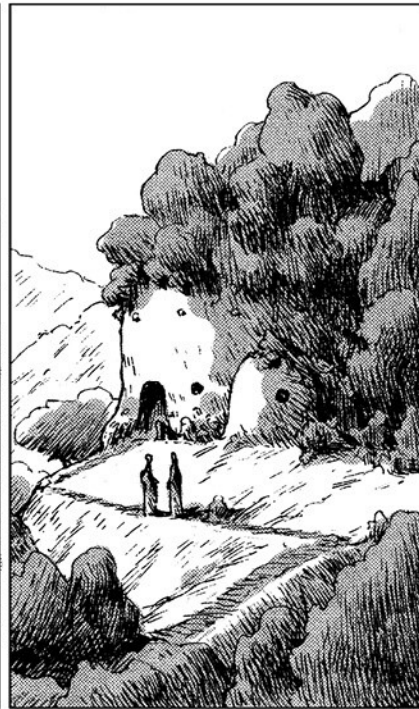
Avian and reptilian warriors.



The first reptiles were predatory plants. As of this time, they are cold-blooded beings. Most of them are serpents that still hunt alone, but the learned Onchyres instruct the Cyclops and Salamanders who build hamlets in the shelter of the woods.

The Onchyres dwell in caverns where they study miscellaneous disciplines such as metallurgy or writing.

Together with the Cyclops, they form the intellectual caste of the reptilian civilisation.



The society of the birds, descendants of the plants, is composed of multiple hierarchical brood-villages. On top are the raptor warriors, followed by the well-read and lastly the flightless birds. When the broods are not fighting each other, they loot the reptilian territories. Due to their unending conflicts and a fall in temperatures, the avian and reptilian civilisations decline.

The cooling brings about a vast frozen land that soon spreads over the entire northern region of Uhia, wiping out the forests. The birds and reptiles have no choice but to relocate to the south, in an exile to more confined territories.



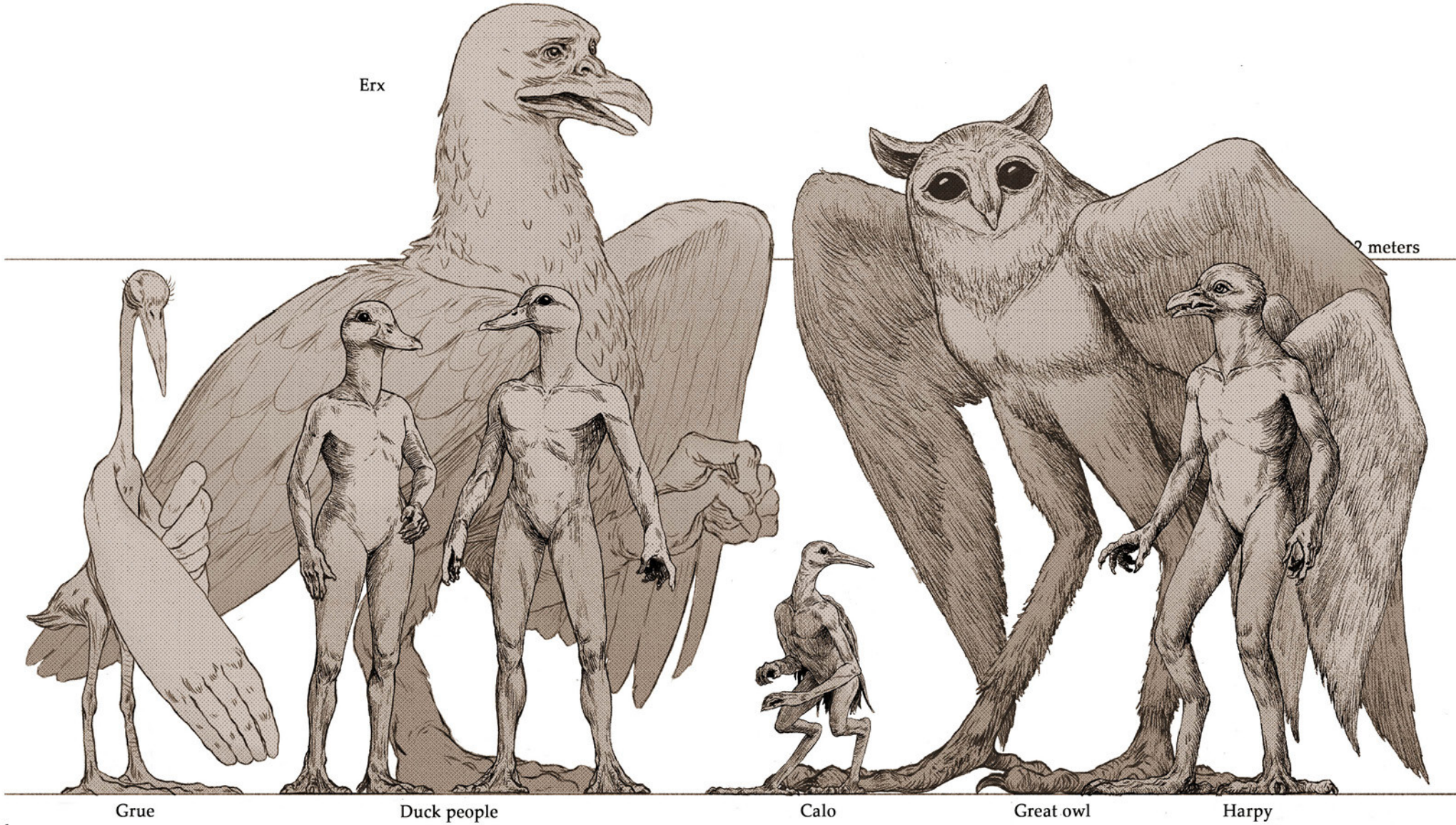
The glaciation period also affects the insects and the Naraks, who grow smaller. Mammals resist the cold slightly better. The formation of ice floes makes it possible for multiple aquatic organisms to colonize the mainland.

Small garrisons of corral beings find refuge on land, fleeing from an invasion of starfish. Meanwhile, several crustaceans set up camps on the coast, always going further south.

# The birds

The arrogant raptors and their ministers dominate the broods. When the glaciation comes, the precious eggs of these tall birds no longer hatch.

As the avian civilisation collapses, the birds scatter towards the mountains of the south to survive.





Whisperer

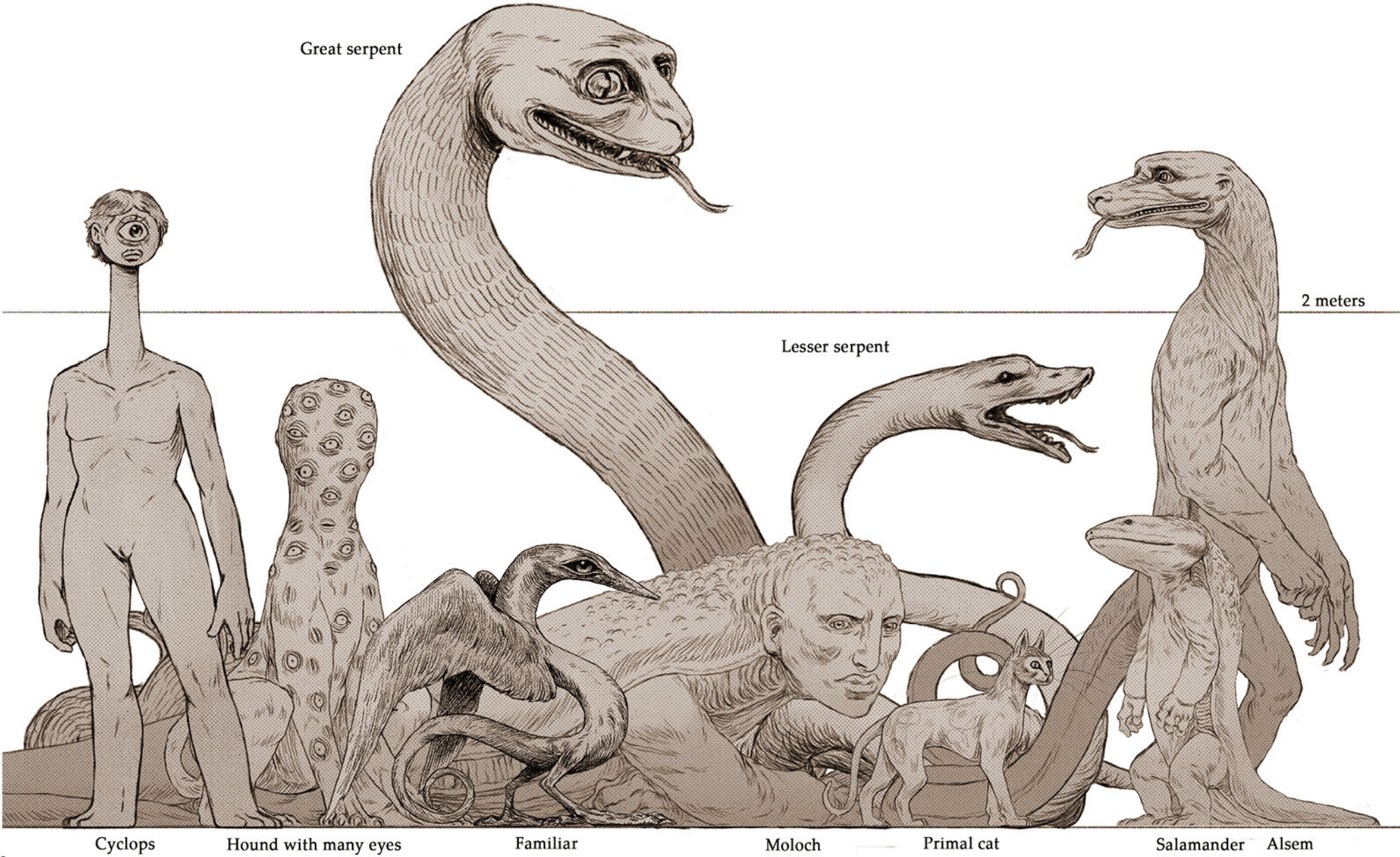
## The reptiles

The first reptiles who witness their sap turning into blood are the Whisperers, inhabitants of the humus of Uhia's oldest forests. Incubated by the leaves, their eggs give birth to many species. The second ones are the Onchyres, who lecture the Salamanders in construction, the Alsems in smithing and the Cyclops in the plants' dreams. After their disappearance, the teachings of the Onchyres rapidly fade from the reptiles' memory.



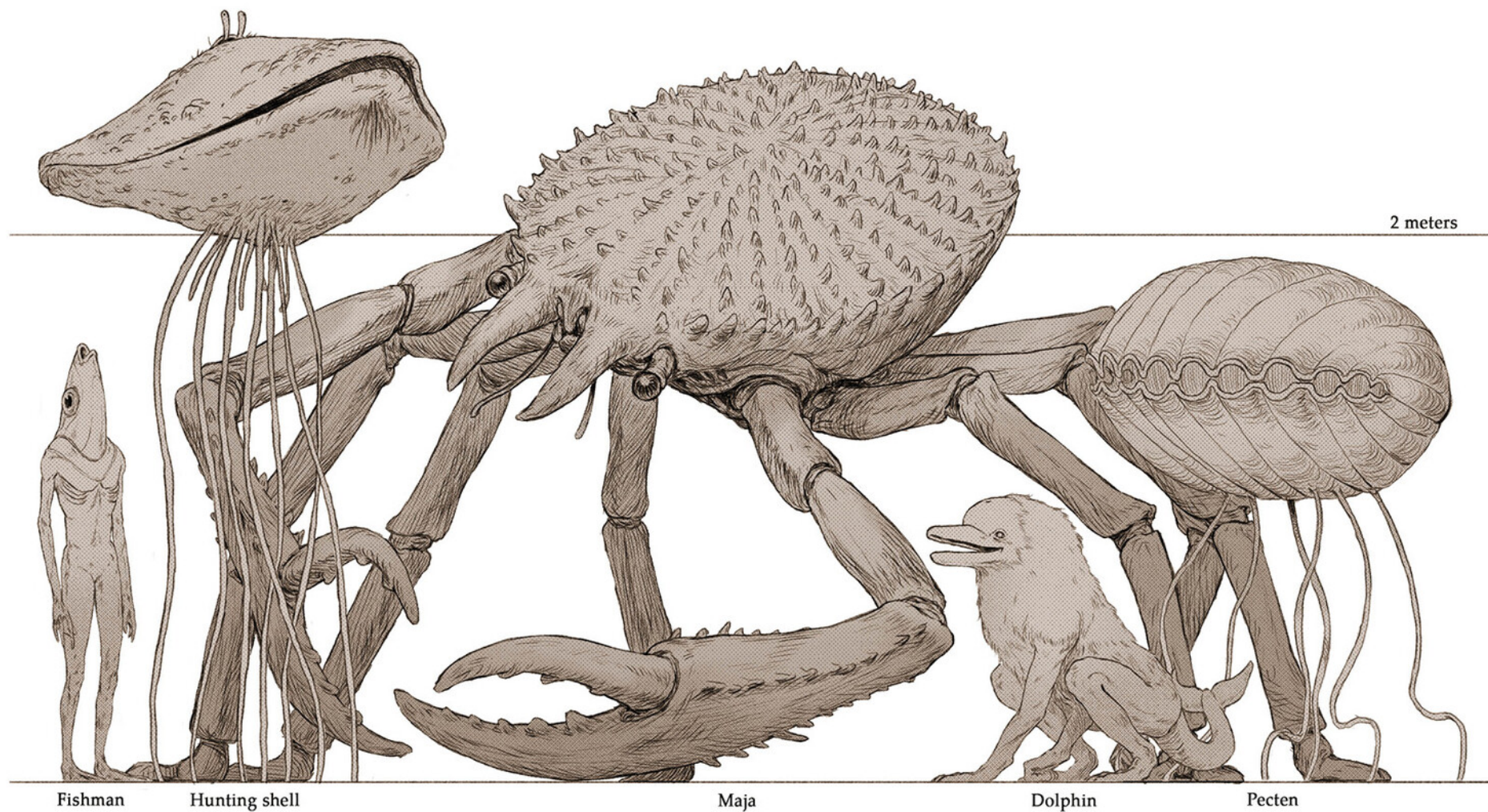
Onchyre

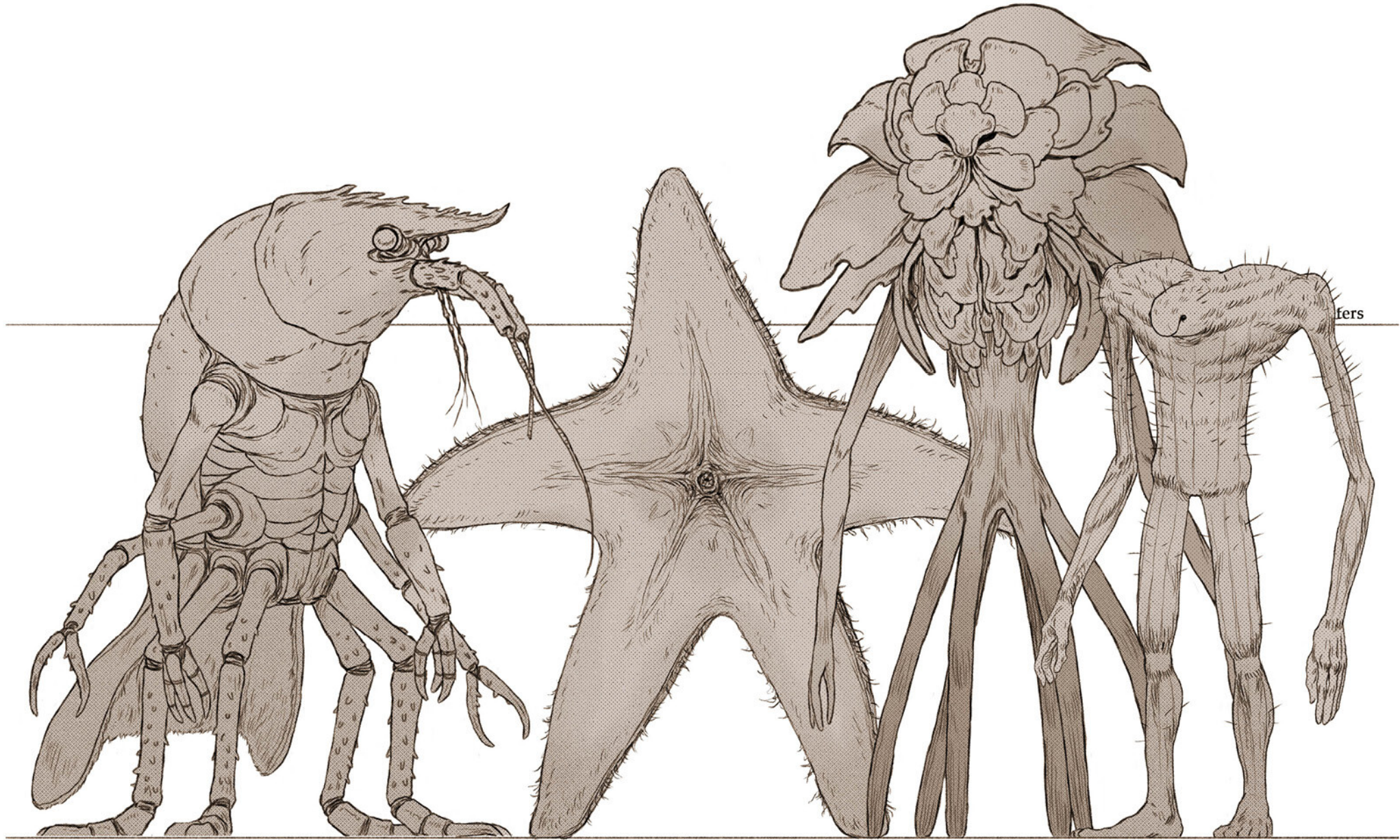
The serpents hunt, concealed in the trees, favouring to gorge on the warm blood of birds and mammals. The Cyclops receive the teachings of the Onchyres. When the latter disappear, the Cyclops dwindle away in turn.



## Cold lands inhabitants

With the glaciation, a number of species colonize the north and the coasts of Uhia.





Ebi

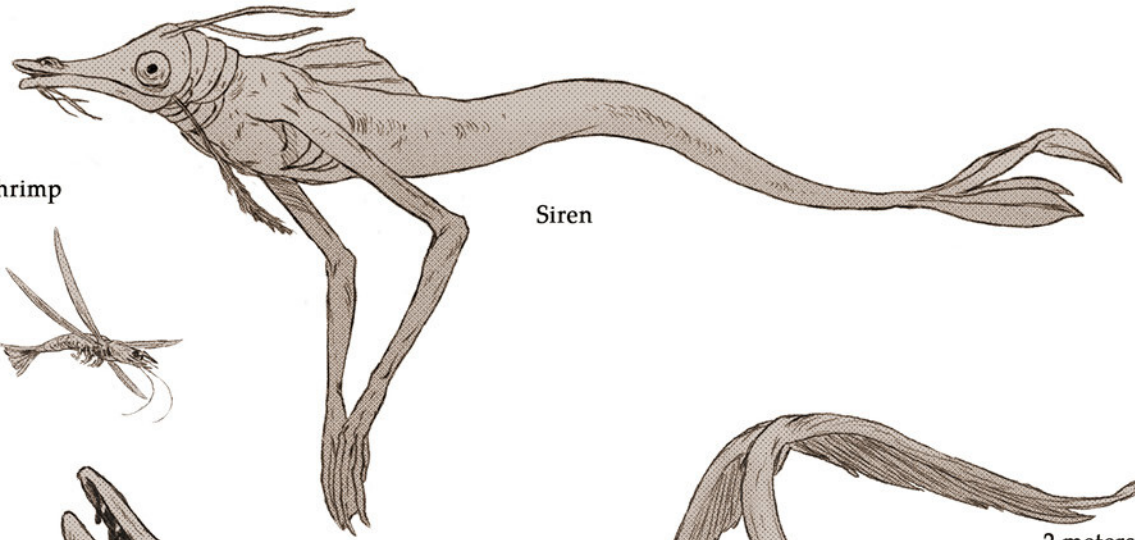
Asteria

Coral people

Pole man



Flying oyster

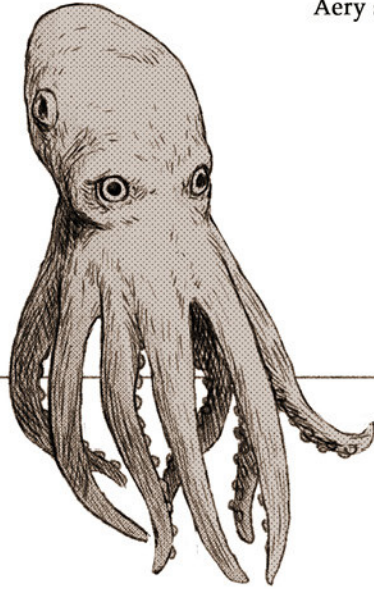


Siren

Aery shrimp



Young Gouth



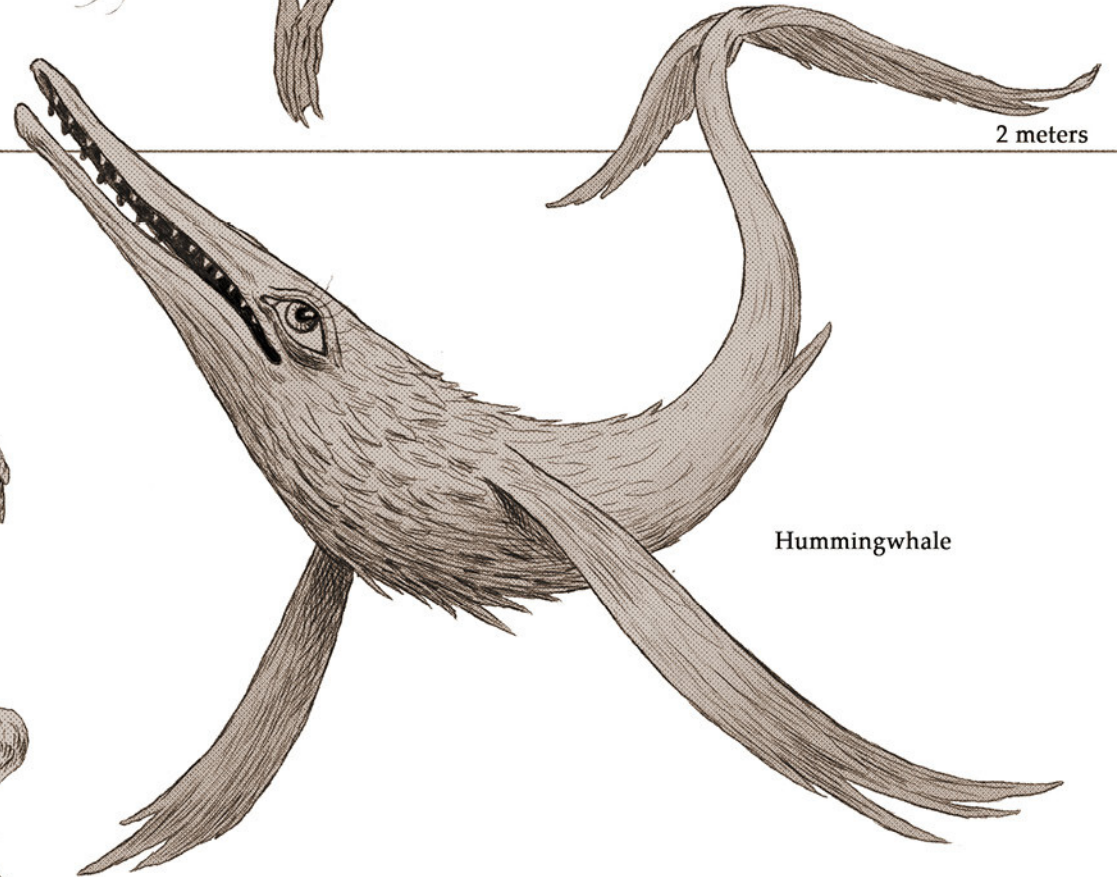
2 meters



Great auk



Lepht



Hummingwhale

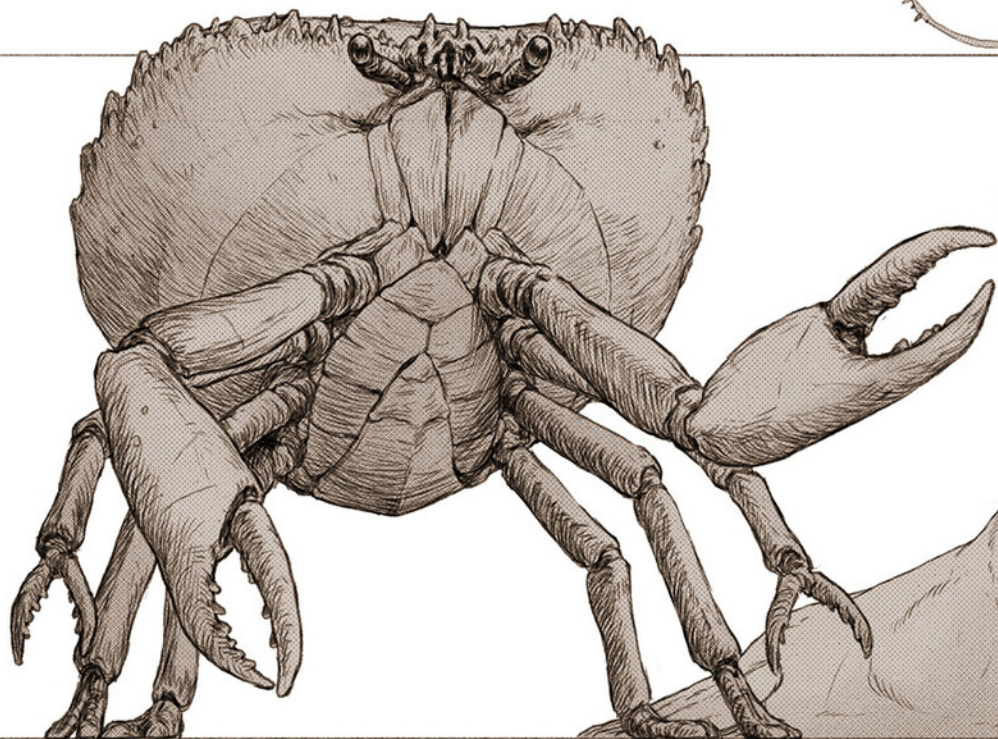


Seawolf



Cnidaria

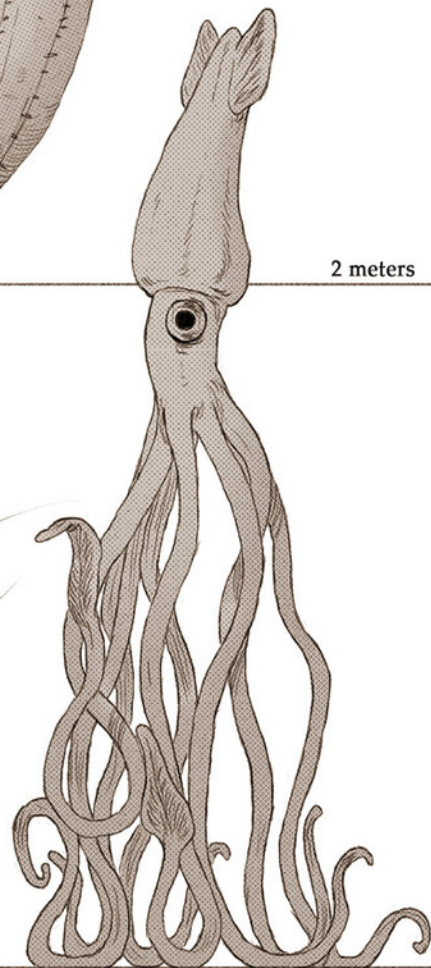
2 meters



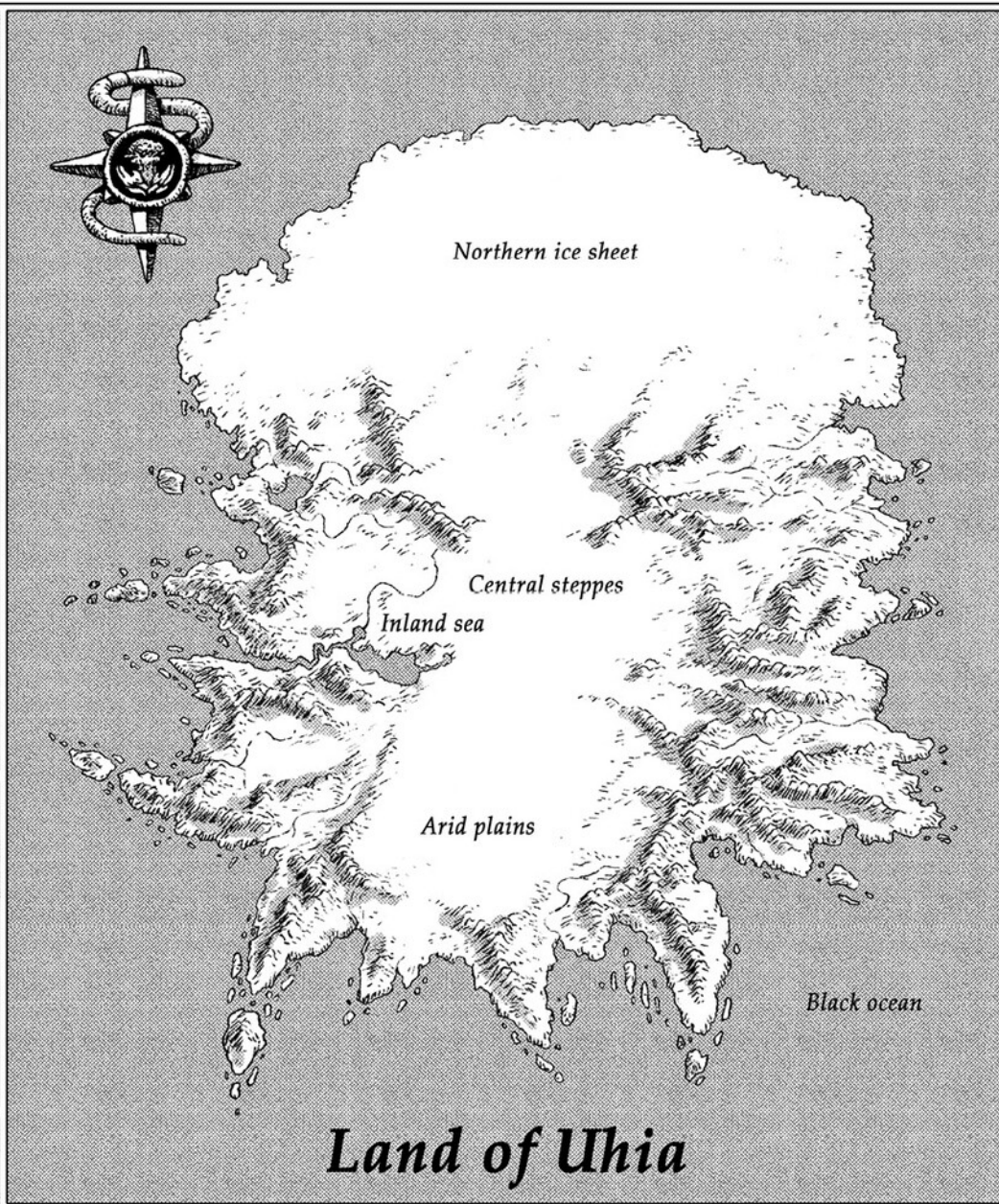
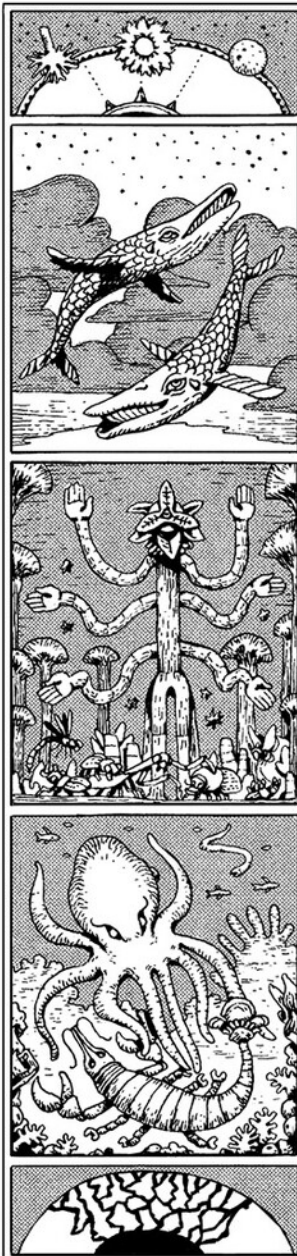
Crab people



Seal



Squid

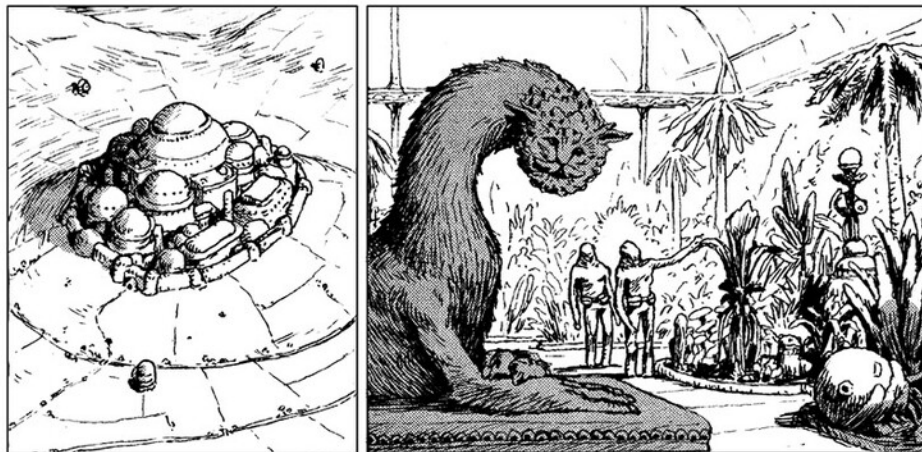


The second half of the era is marked by a warming in terrestrial temperatures. The ice floes retreat to the north as the heat increase makes way for new forests and steppes to grow. On the coasts, the crustacean settlements remain.

A few avian and reptilian villages subsist in the foothills, though the races shrivel in size and become simpler.

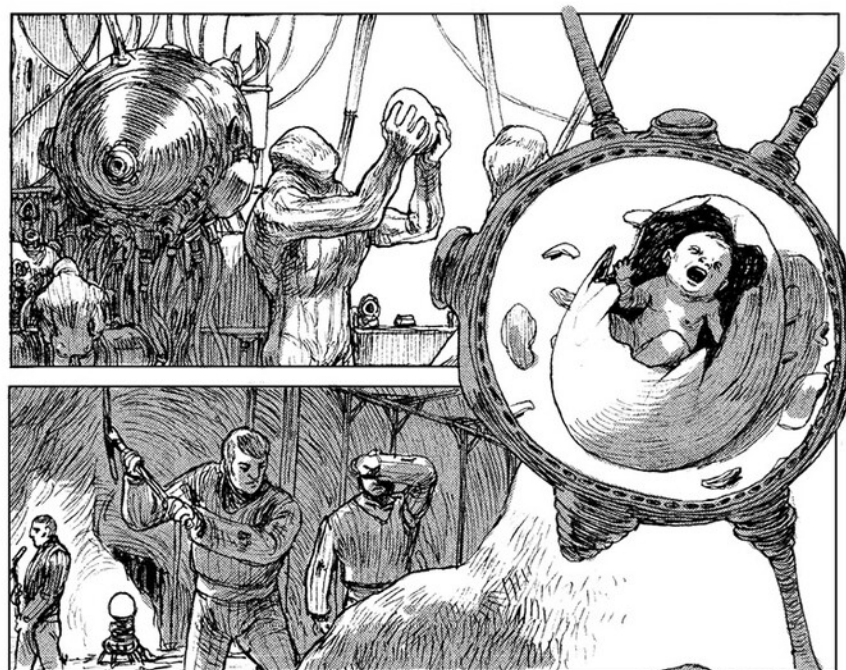
The rise in temperatures bolsters a two-legged lichen species, the Ancients. Spreading over the continent, they form a civilisation boasting roads, tools and cultivated lands. They are skilled horticultural mechanics who, thanks to their plant-machines, prosper.

They create several species of servants, amongst whom are the first humans covered in bronze skin.

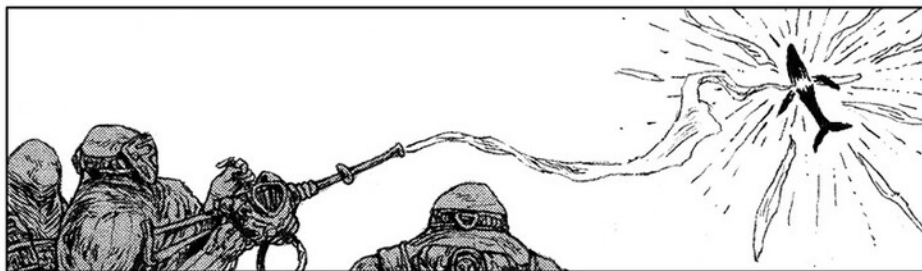


The Ancients redesign their habitat in accordance with their needs. The central steppes are layered with fields, the rivers are diverted from their ancestral routes, old forests are cleared out, tunnels are burrowed into the mountains.

Ancient cities connected by paved roads take root here and there. The buildings throng with a mix of plants and purring machines.



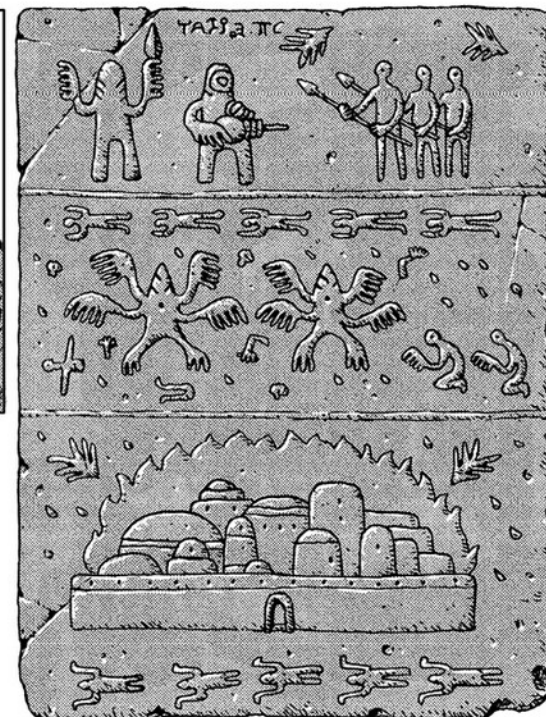
The Ancients hunt the great whales with lighting-cannons for their blubber. The whales soon disappear to rejoin the ocean or flee to the Moon.



As the Ancients civilisation reaches its peak, particularly in regard to mechanics and the study of plants, the human servants revolt. The ensuing war is long and terrible. Hardly violent by nature, the Ancients fail to react quickly enough to crush the human rebellion. Despite greater strength and better tools, their inability to move at dark confers a major advantage on the humans, who significantly exceed their numbers. In order to fight back at night, the Ancients create the stooges, designed to harass the humans during their vegetative rest. This manoeuvre, however, comes far too late – the Ancients' cities are burned down, their knowledge obliterated and their precious seeds, that allow them to reproduce, lost. Following horrid massacres and in spite of the weakened state of both populations, the last city of the Ancients is razed to the ground as humans cut loose from their creators.

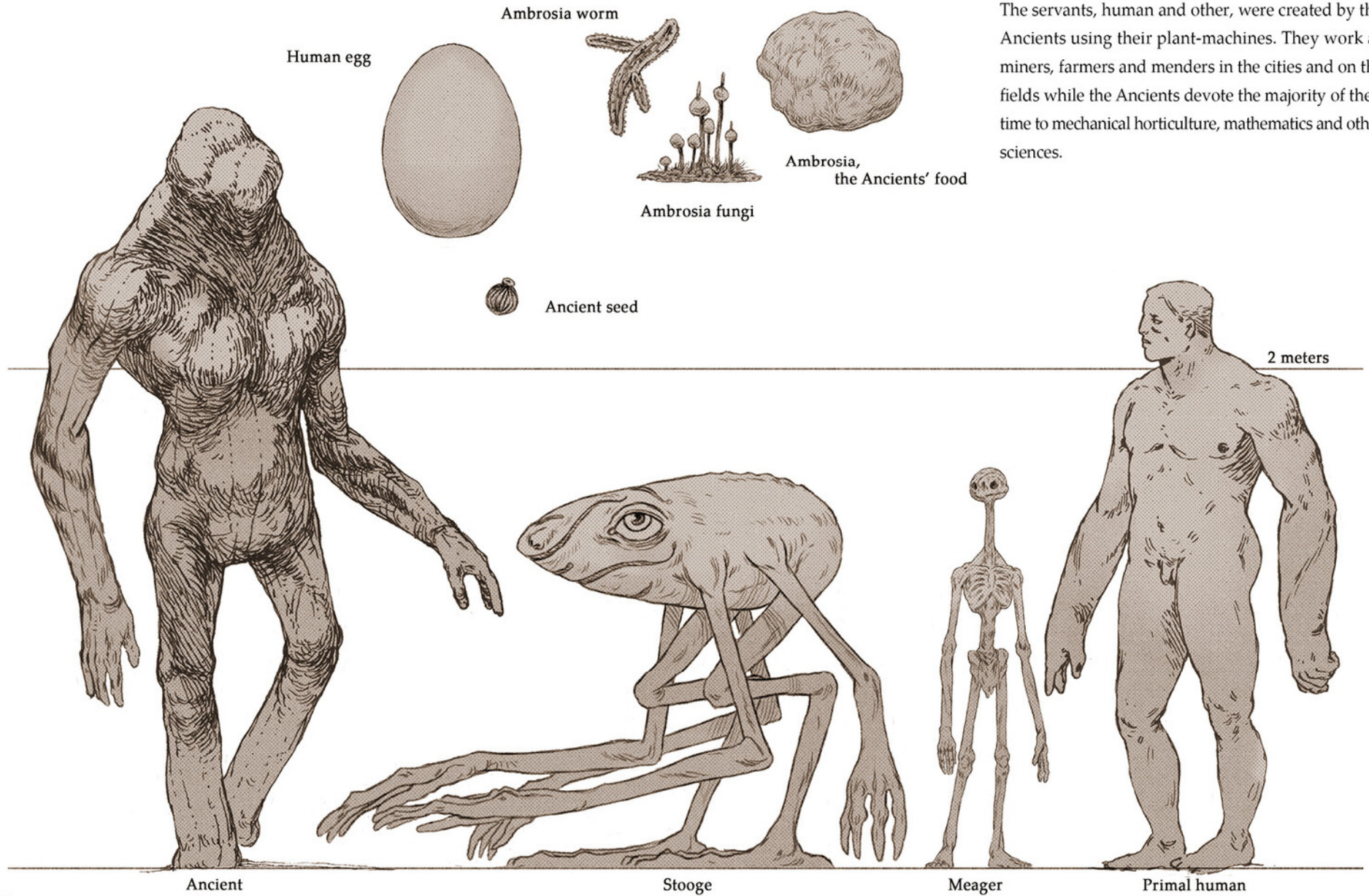


Warrior and Ancient war glyph.



## Ancients and servants

The servants, human and other, were created by the Ancients using their plant-machines. They work as miners, farmers and menders in the cities and on the fields while the Ancients devote the majority of their time to mechanical horticulture, mathematics and other sciences.



Besides the servants, the Ancients experiment with floral sculptures of vegetal beings, electrical flower-lamps, mechanical cuttings and other horticultural creations.



Labourer

Mechanical flower

Effigy

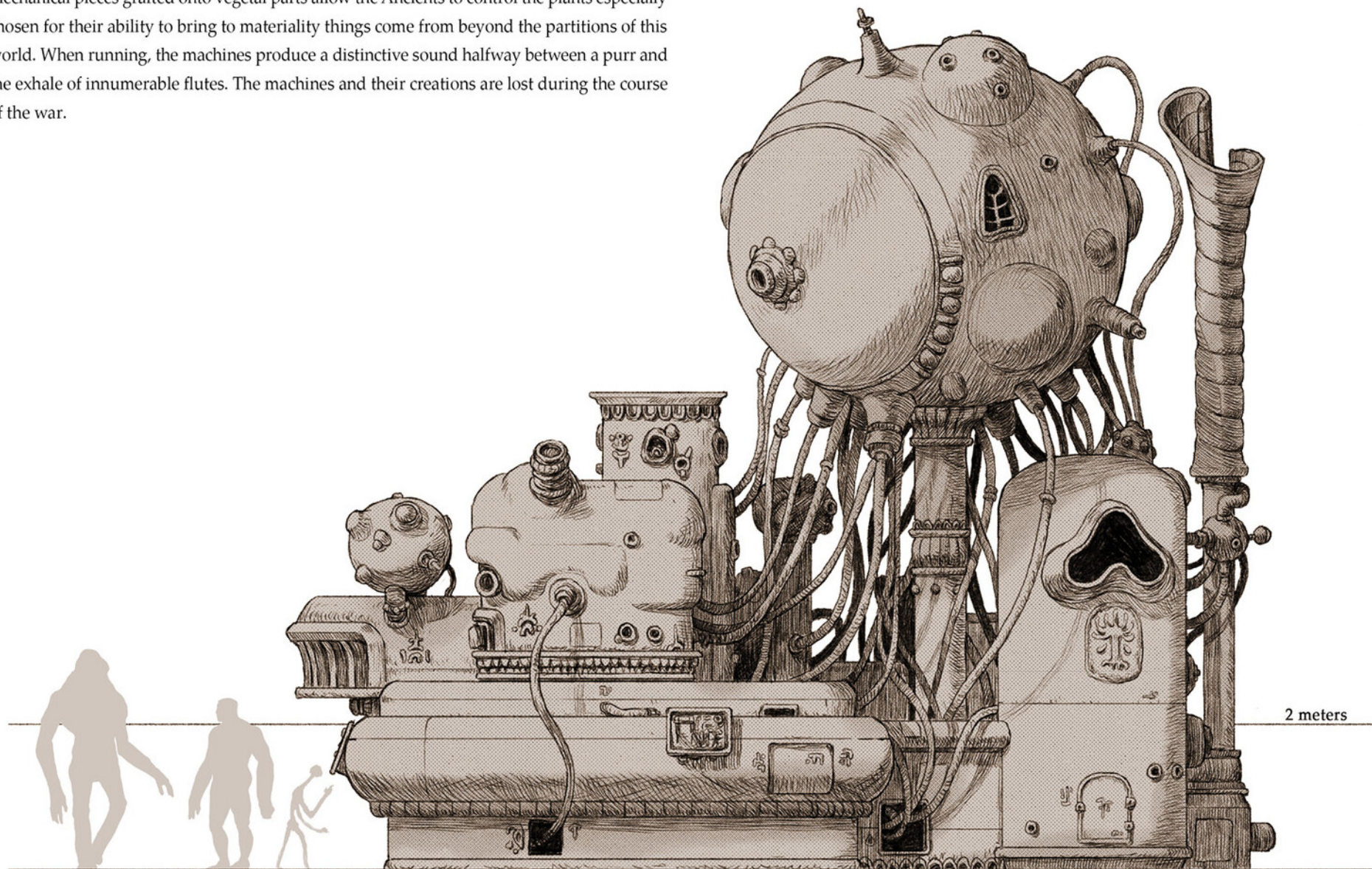


Floral people

Fliger

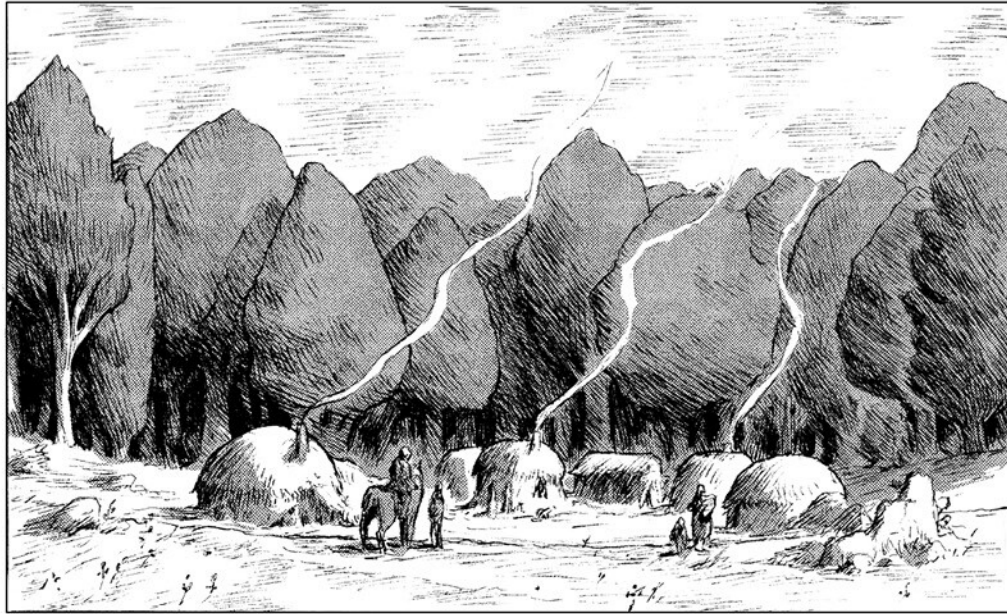
Eyed rose

The biggest plant-machines are able to supply entire buildings with electricity, food and water. Mechanical pieces grafted onto vegetal parts allow the Ancients to control the plants especially chosen for their ability to bring to materiality things come from beyond the partitions of this world. When running, the machines produce a distinctive sound halfway between a purr and the exhale of innumerable flutes. The machines and their creations are lost during the course of the war.

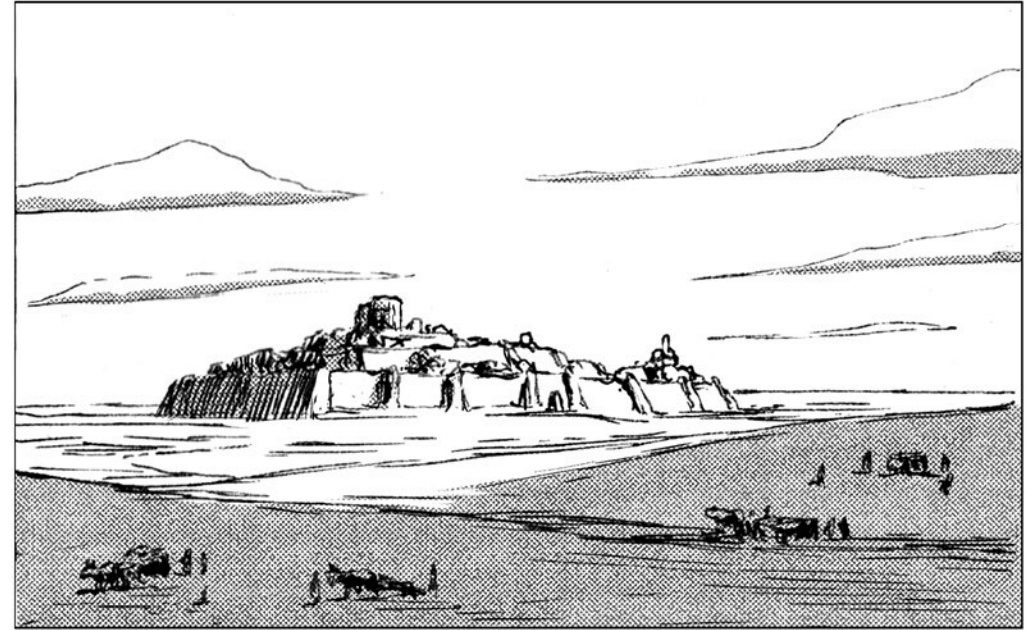


Ancients machine

## CHAPTER 7: THE MODERN EPOCH



Humans survive the extinction of the Ancients with great difficulty. Their appearance is profoundly altered, their body mass largely decreases and their skin forfeits the copper tint it derived from the ambrosia given by the Ancients. They endure the last of the stooges' assaults, famine and sickness.



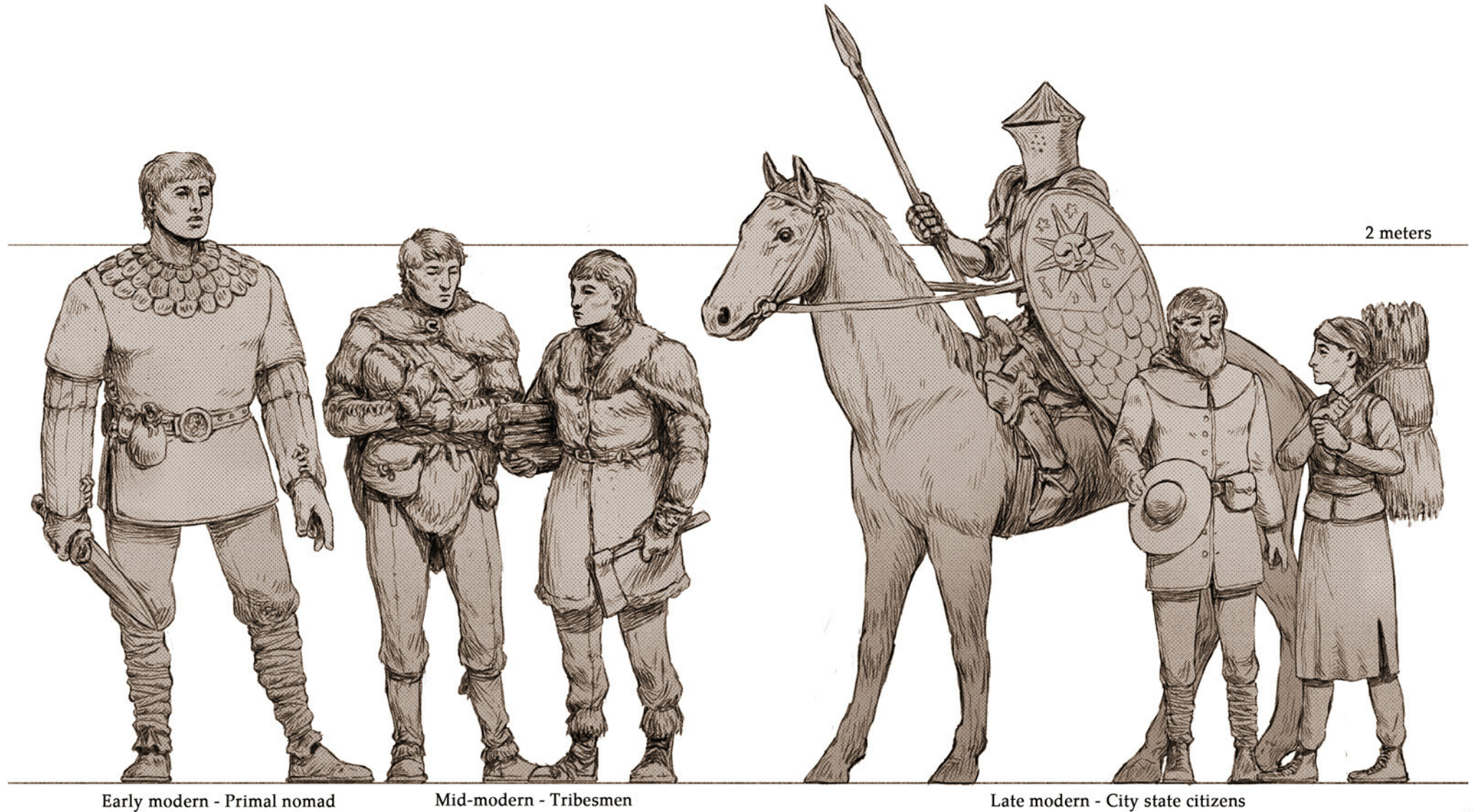
The humans live in small nomadic tribes before settling down at the centre of Uhia as the southern lands turn into a desert.

Having taken to occupying a city known as the Heart, a group of them rediscovers the Ancients' machines and crafts improved versions. These new machines, the auto-fabs, prove much more efficient at creating things out of emptiness than the previous ones. Thanks to this miracle, from the Heart spreads forth the Labyrinth, an immense self-built city where humanity comes to find refuge, lured by the promise of effortless and abundant food.

The time of night terrors and legends gives way to that of cyclopean cities.

## The human populations

Throughout the modern era, humans spread across the continent. They come into conflict with a few tribes of other species that are forced to take refuge in more barren and inaccessible lands. Humans separate into semi-nomadic communities before progressively settling down. City states develop at the centre of Uhia. There, they fight for access to the rare pieces of land spared by the aridity that creeps from the south and the cold that lowers from the north.



## The Heart

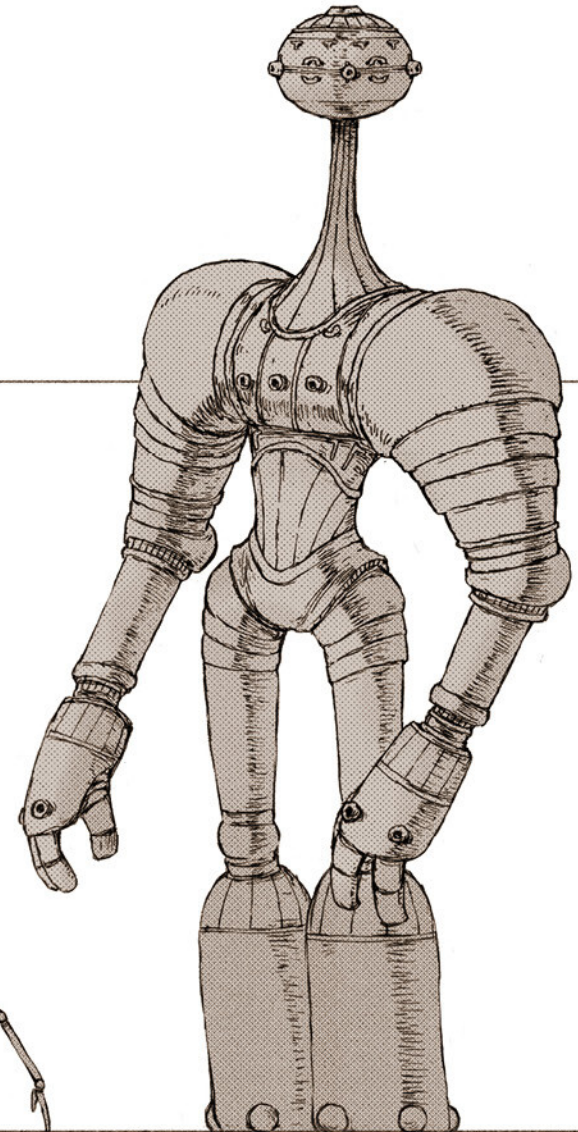
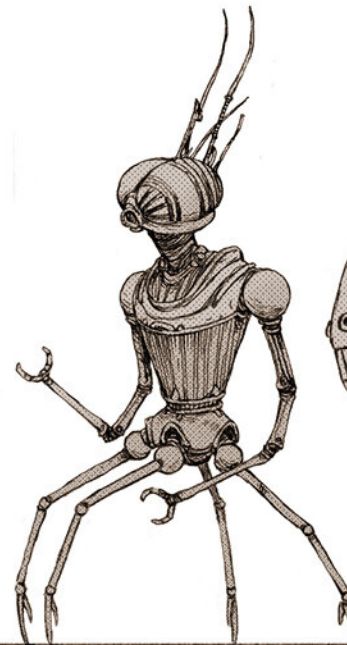
The Heart is a scientist city whose inhabitants descend from the groups of humans that strove to preserve the knowledge of the Ancients. Generations after generations have patiently taken note of the machines' secrets and handed them down. The Heart gradually extends its influence over the nomadic tribes and the human cities, training physicians, engineers and literary intellectuals. The mechanics renovate the city's electrical circuits and upgrade its generator. Mechanical beings endowed with artificial and limited intelligence, the Exos, are built. But the primary aim of the city is to restore the ancient plant-machines to life.



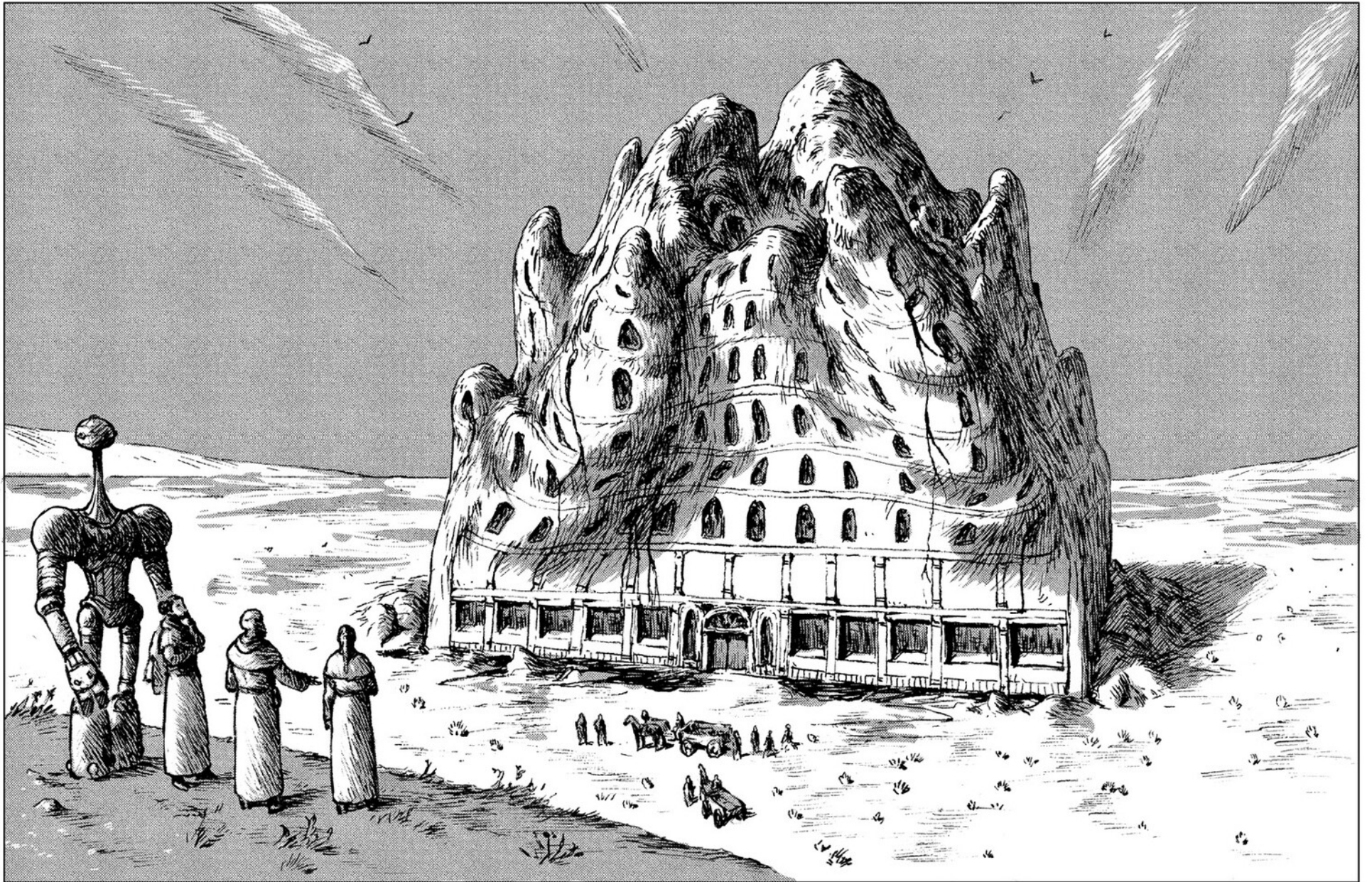
Late modern - Heart mechanic



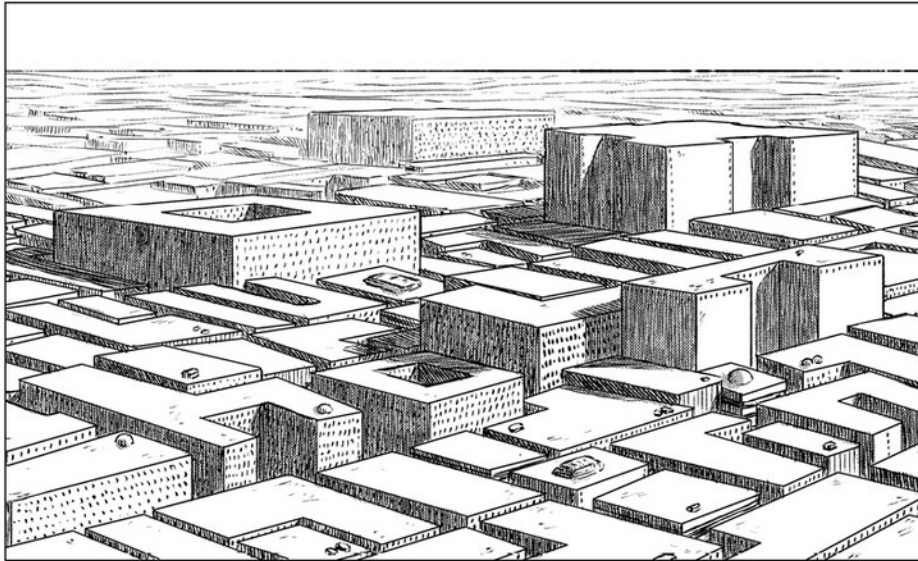
AI (auto-fab machine prototype)



Exos (first robots)



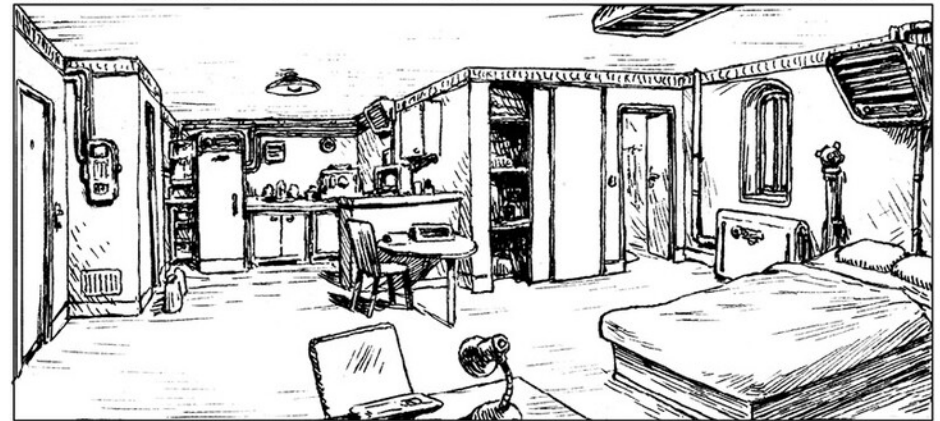
## CHAPTER 8: THE AGE OF THE MAZE



The south of Uhia turns into a desert while the north is increasingly overrun by frozen lands. The Labyrinth carries on spreading, a maze of concrete and veins teeming with humans who drain the machines' resources without respite.

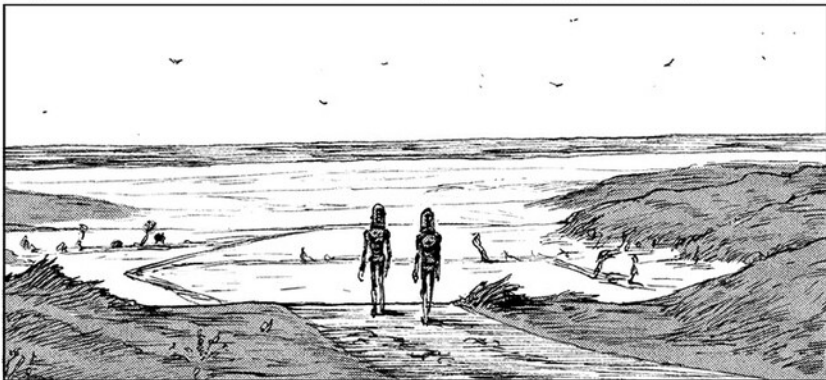
Around the Labyrinth, the land is poisoned with plastic and chemical waste. Running at the humans' service, risen to consume from birth to death, the city never stops, producing more and more food to fill the plates, energy to power the devices, objects for the homes.

The auto-fab Agency manages the eponymous machines that serve the interests of the Heart, which is located at the centre of the Labyrinth. Headed by artificial intelligences, the Agency correlates the machines' production and the inhabitants' demands. Every machine is a factory, its skin providing housing and stores for the humans to live.



Shaping alleys and weaving districts as they grow, these machines engrave the architecture of the Labyrinth. Many roads lead to dead ends and circulating the different areas sometimes proves laborious.

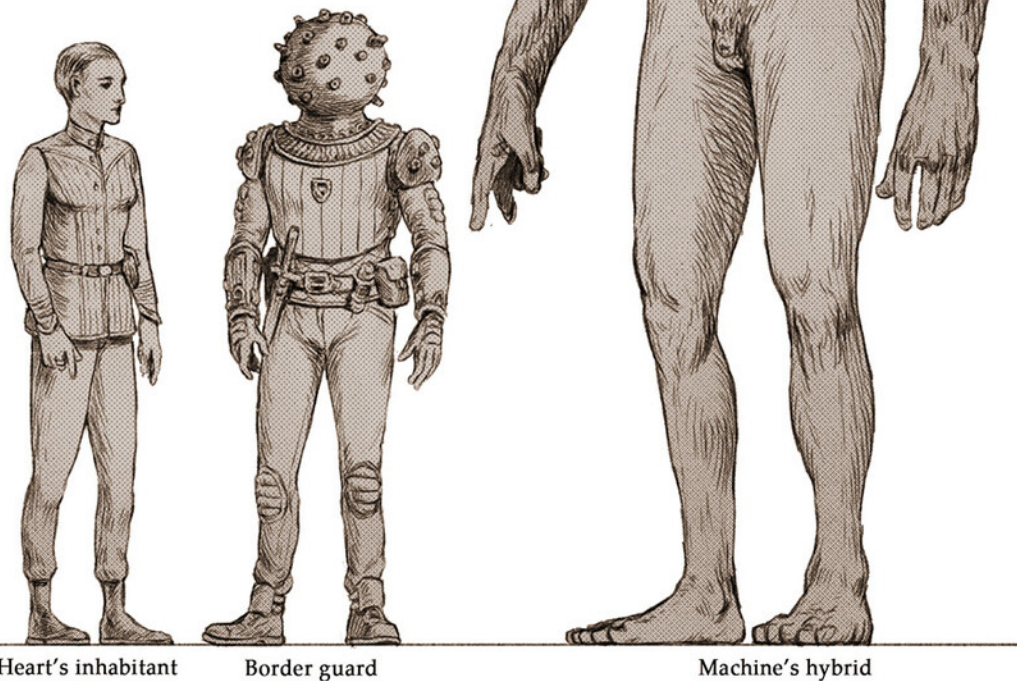
The inhabitants, however, seldom need to travel very far. The machines place accommodation units, workplaces and stores next to one another, allowing the residents never to have to leave their district.



The Heart is the only place where concrete gives way to greenery. The inhabitants of the Heart have made it a terrestrial paradise settled at the centre of the city, hidden from the rest of the Labyrinth. A genuine fortress, it cannot be entered by any citizen from the maze.

## The inhabitants of the Heart

The humans of the Heart descend from the ancient city. In the extensive garden hidden at the centre of maze, they live in families who share the fields. Each family owns a small auto-fab but cultivates the land with their robots. At the centre of the Heart are the laboratories where varied research projects are carried out.



Heart's inhabitant

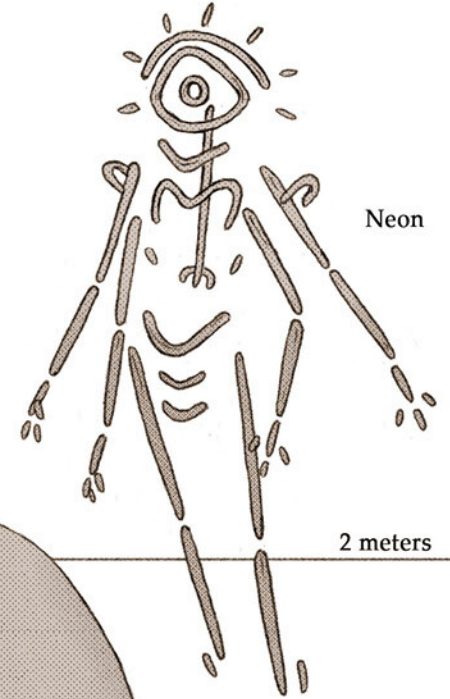
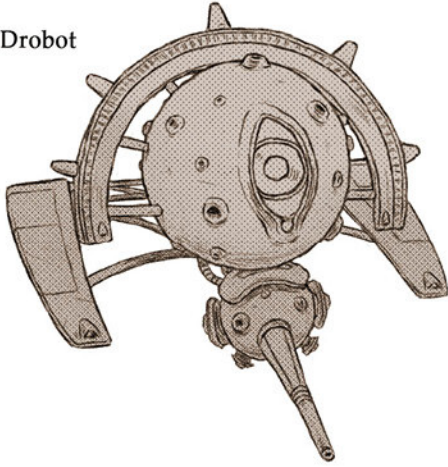
Border guard

Machine's hybrid

## The robots of the Heart

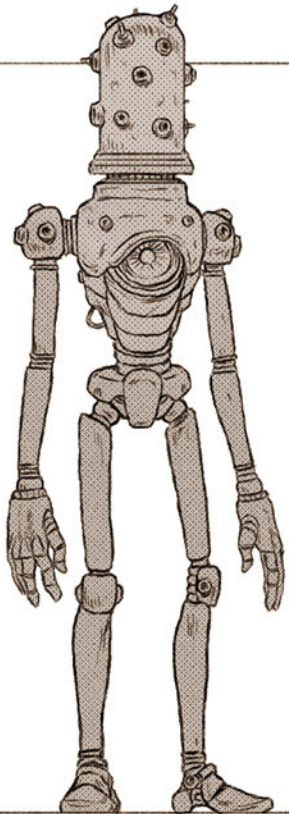
The robot servants operating in the maze have been manufactured by the Heart. Special units work in the large garden. Most of them are sentries, but archivist-labourers and scientific assistants are also found.

Drobot

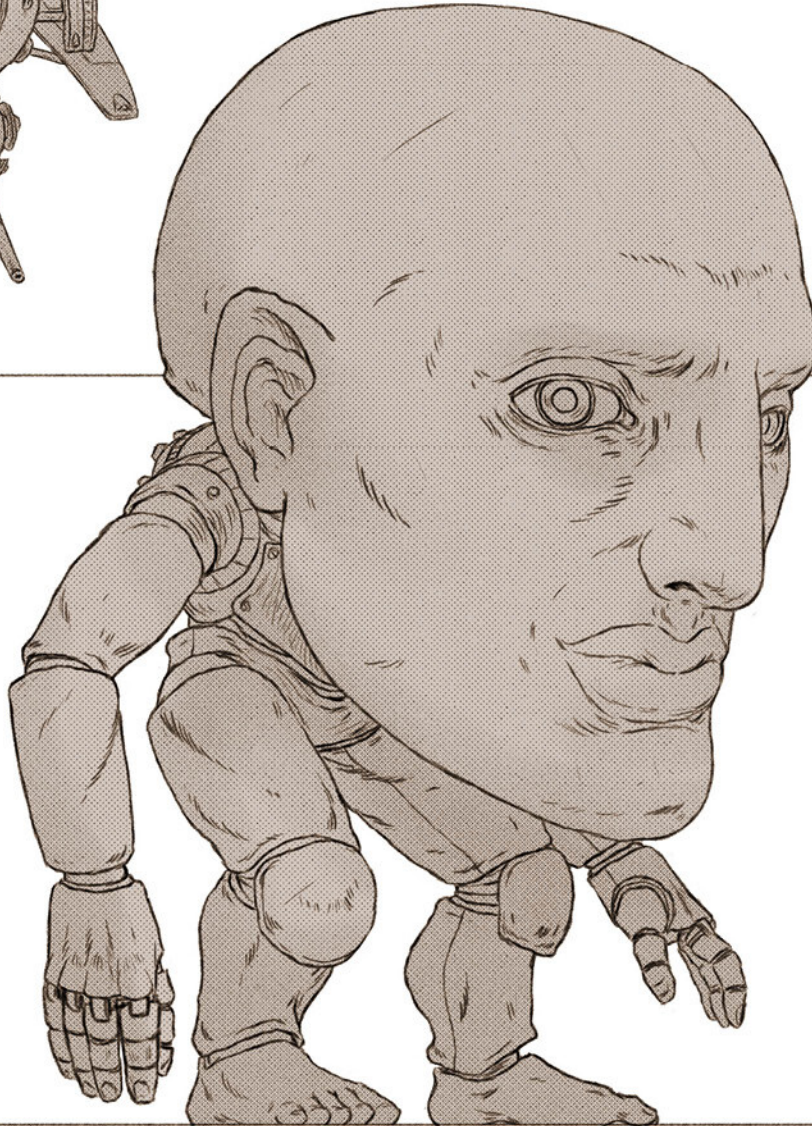


Neon

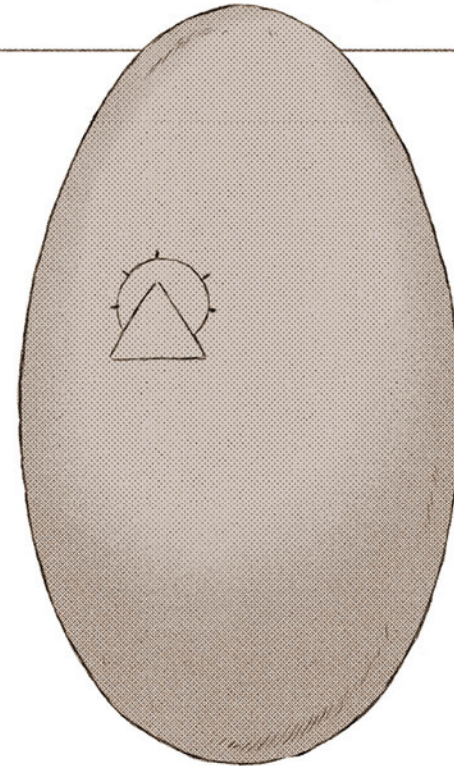
2 meters



Copbot



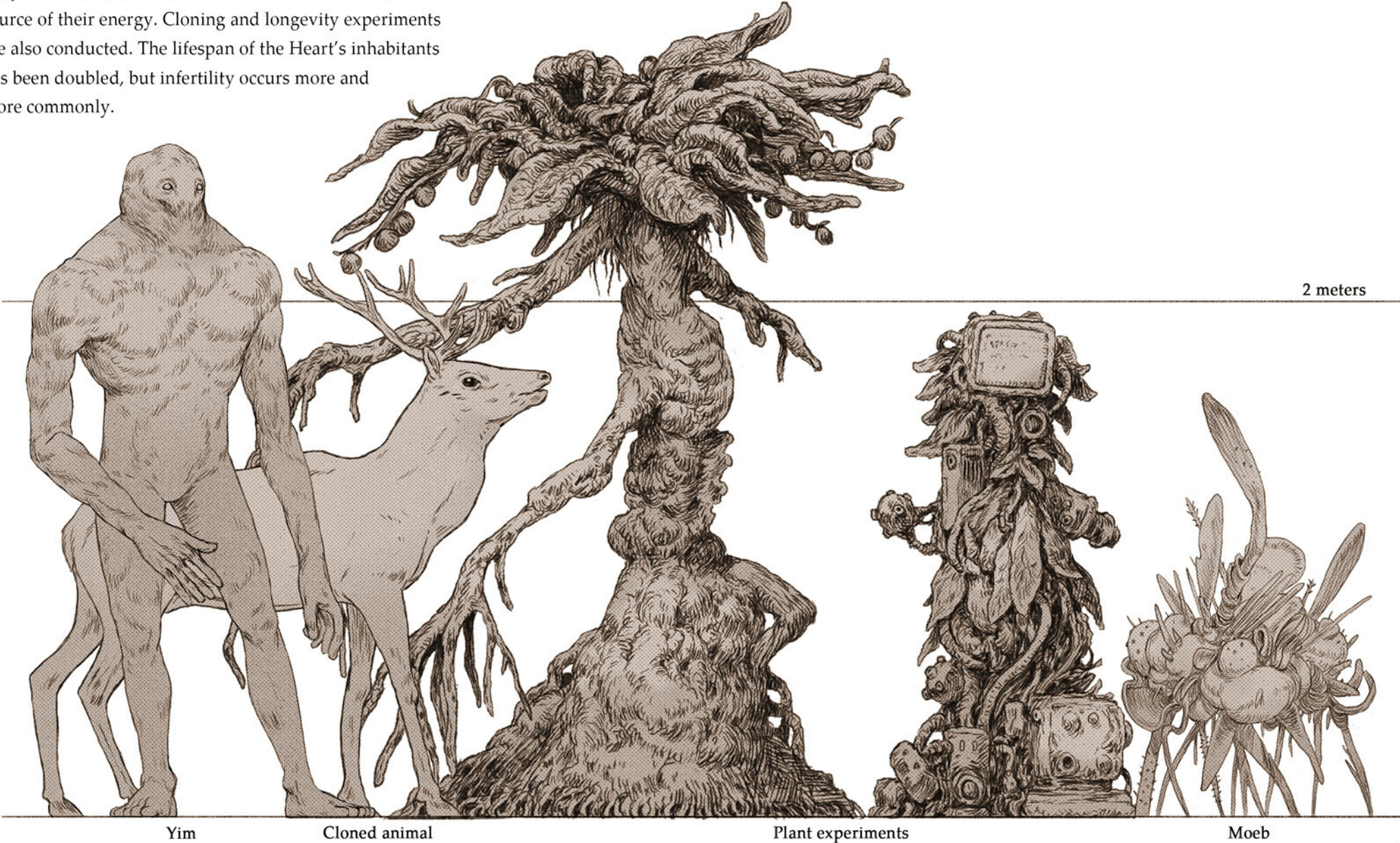
Mobot



Yak

# Experiments

The scientists perform experiments on artificial intelligence and the symbiotic relationship between plants and machines. They seek to understand the machines' dreams and the source of their energy. Cloning and longevity experiments are also conducted. The lifespan of the Heart's inhabitants has been doubled, but infertility occurs more and more commonly.



Yim

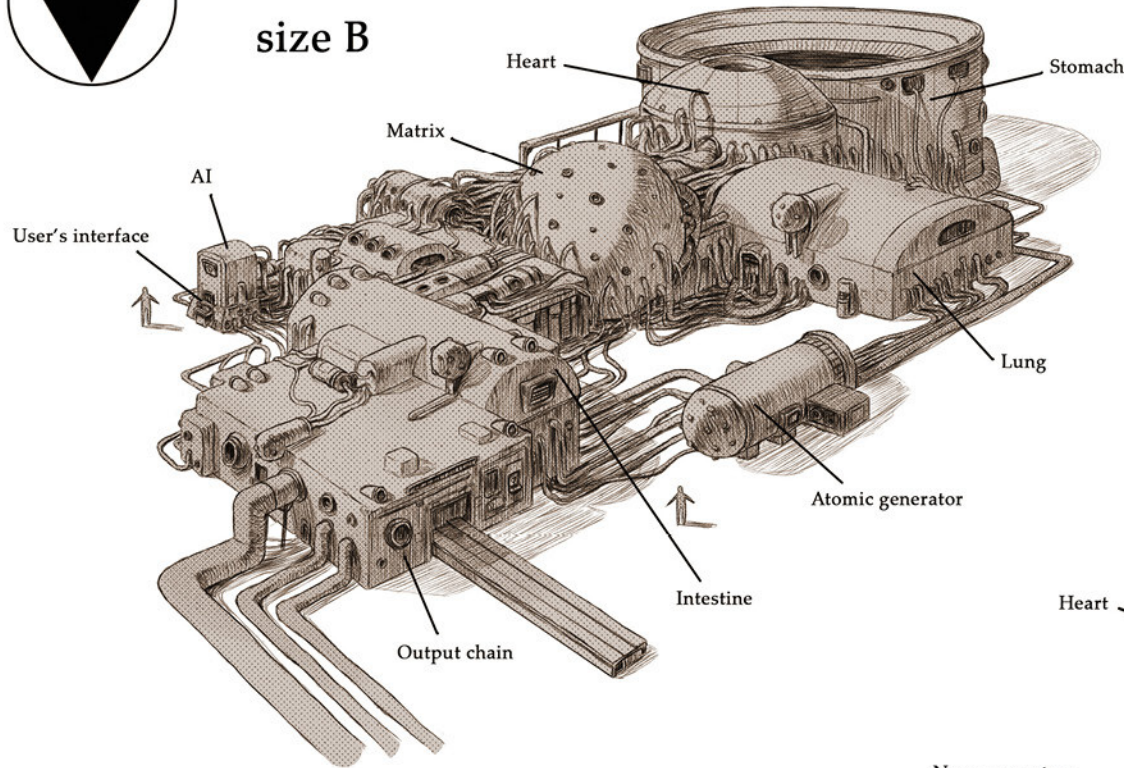
Cloned animal

Plant experiments

Moeb



# Auto-Fab size B



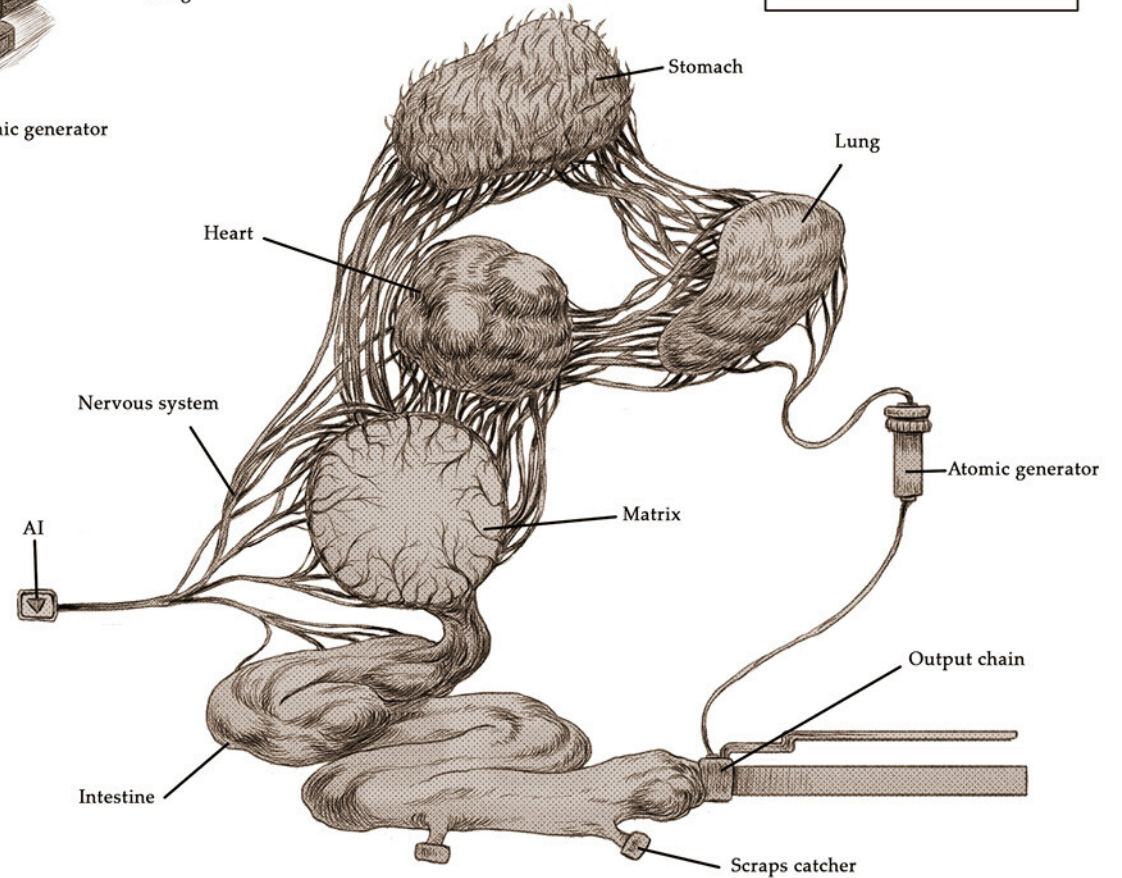
## Auto-fab machine

An auto-fab. The members of the Agency alone come near the machines. The population itself never sets eyes on these organisms; nothing but an odd sound can be heard in the empty corridors that run close to the underground levels.

### References

- Production: water, food, metals, gas... (See P.A.Pa4556)
- Network connection: (See H.Mj56)
- Lifetime: NA
- Security and aid: Contact attached Auto-Fab authority
- Auto-fab is the sole machine's owner. Modification, misuse or degradation will be pursued and punished (See AFA677)

### Organic system detail

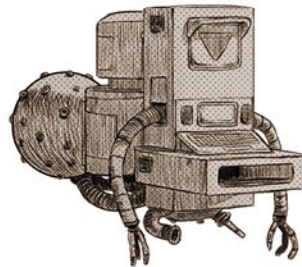


Auto-Fab size A not illustrated. Size A designate multi levelled machines (see Auto-Fab plant).

### User's interface detail



### Auto-Fab size C

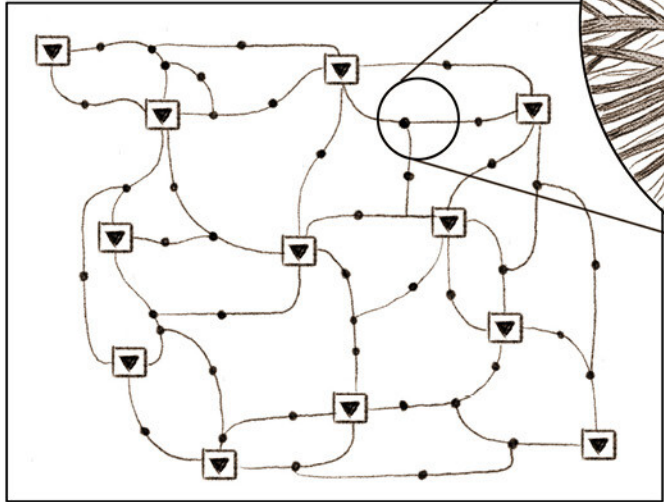


Smallest size. Rare, reduced production capacity.  
Designed for private domestic use.



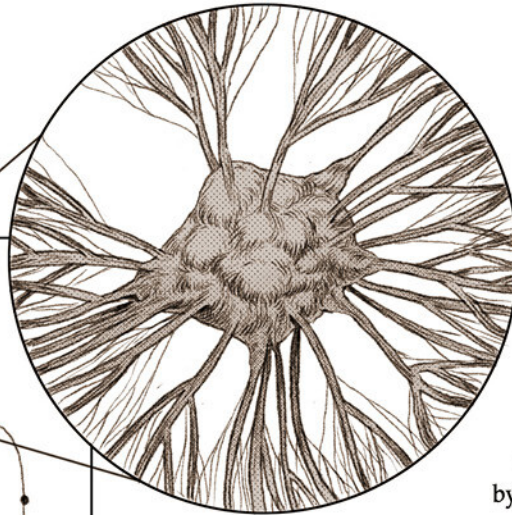
# Auto-Fab

Machine's network and details

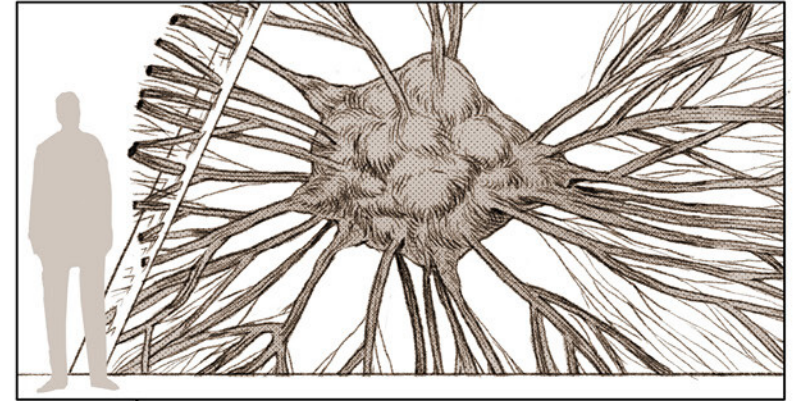


Network - Schematic view

- ▼ Auto-Fab unit
- Nerves/veins system
- Lymph node

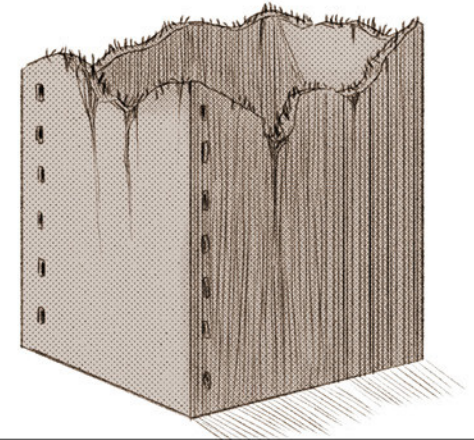


Ganglion

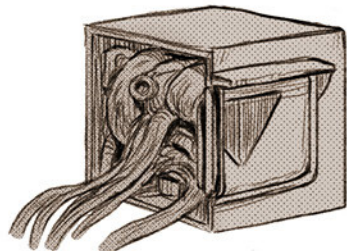


Ganglion surrounded by its concrete envelope

Schematic view of a forming dwelling bloc. Note the veins preceding the walls' formation. Bleeding is frequent during this phase.



A bleeding. The dark red blood contains golden particles. In case of haemorrhage, contact your supervisor at once. Do not touch the blood in any case.

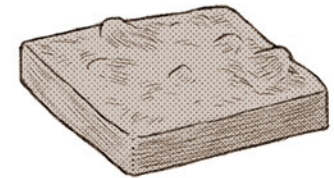


Open AI system



The only bone is situated in the stomach. The humming sound comes from this object.

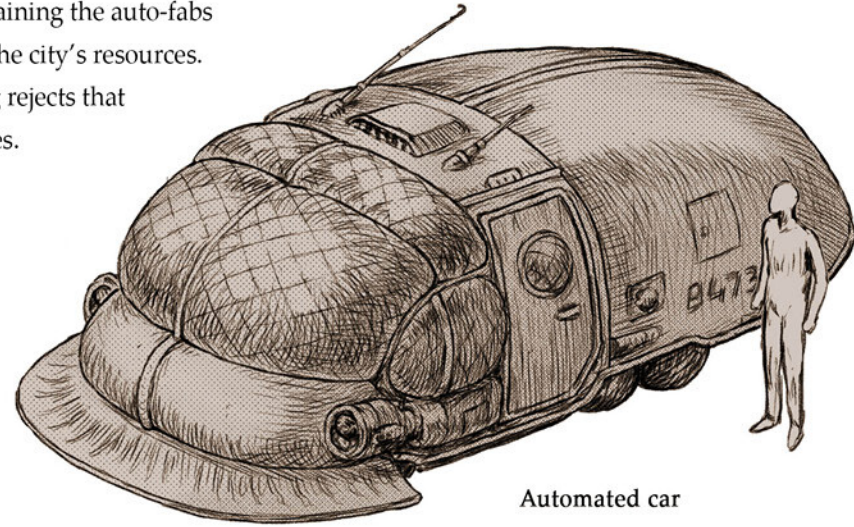
Human size (size B machine)



Alimentary dough, first food source of the Labyrinth. Main produce together with energy and water.

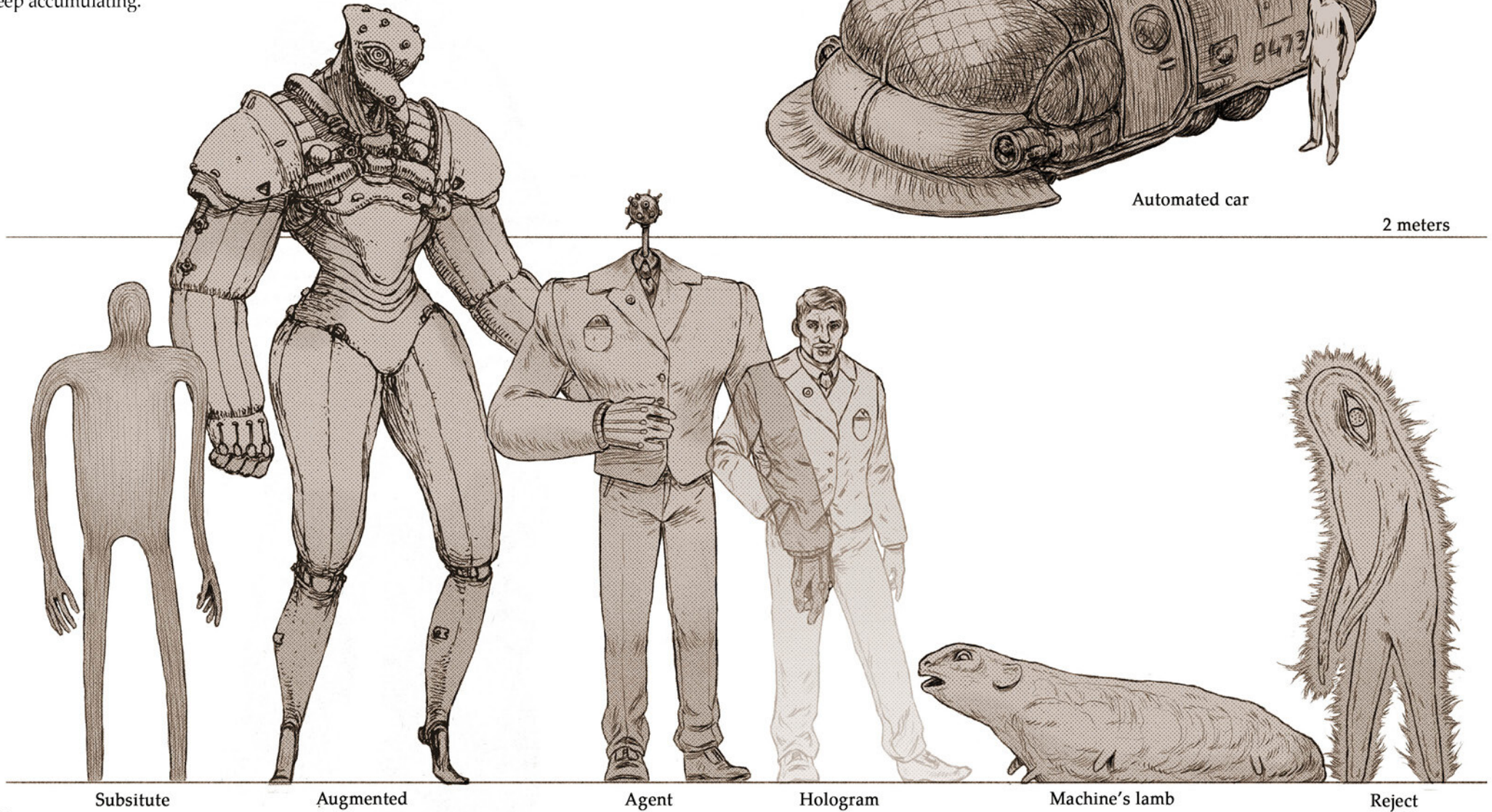
## The Agency

The AIs of the Agency administrate the machines' network. The Agency is responsible for maintaining the auto-fabs in good health, protecting them (no wall can be modified without their consent) and delivering the city's resources. Towards the end of the Labyrinth era, the machines are seized by strange behaviours, producing rejects that take the form of unordered items, distort the concrete fabric or interrupt manufacturing processes. Even though the network can compensate for the shortcomings of one machine, the errors keep accumulating.



Automated car

2 meters



Substitute

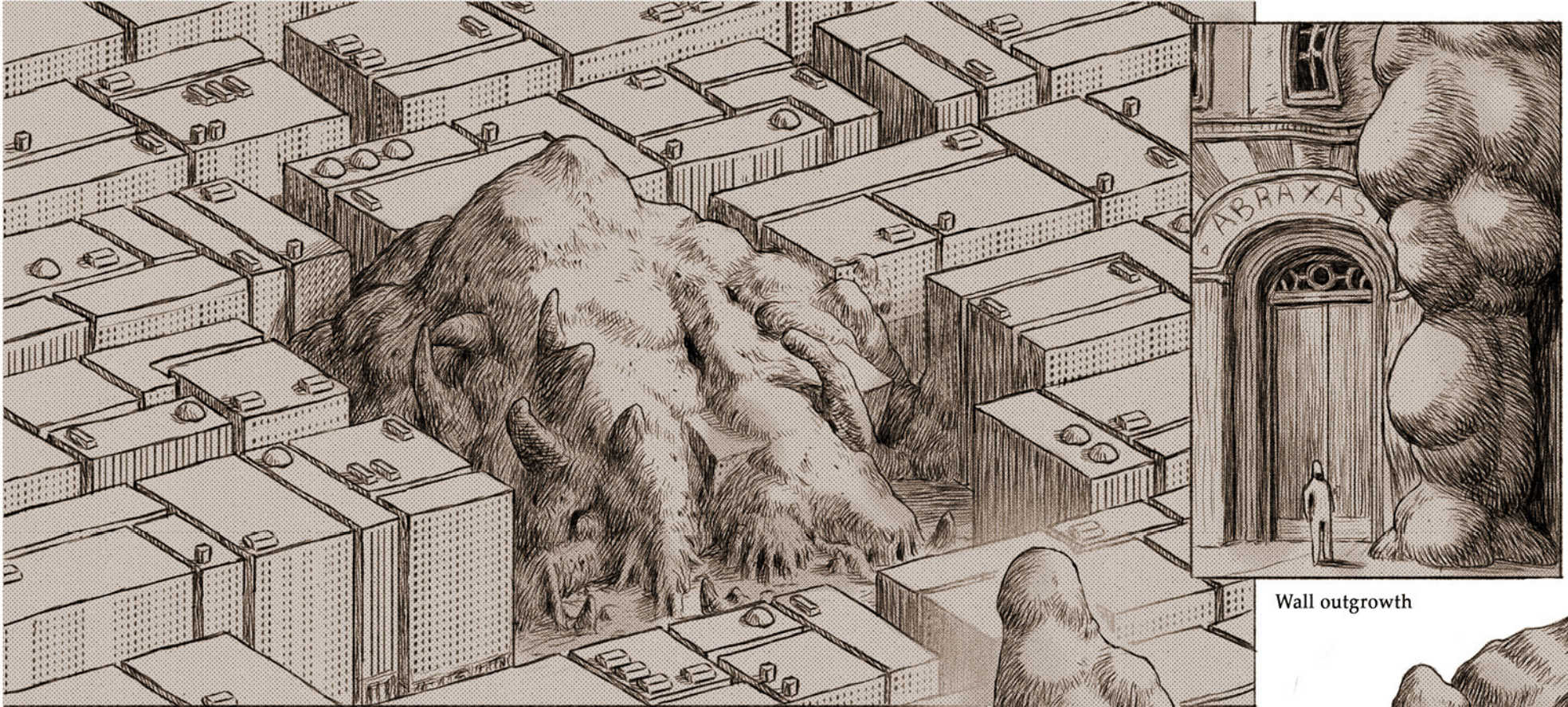
Augmented

Agent

Hologram

Machine's lamb

Reject



Wall outgrowth

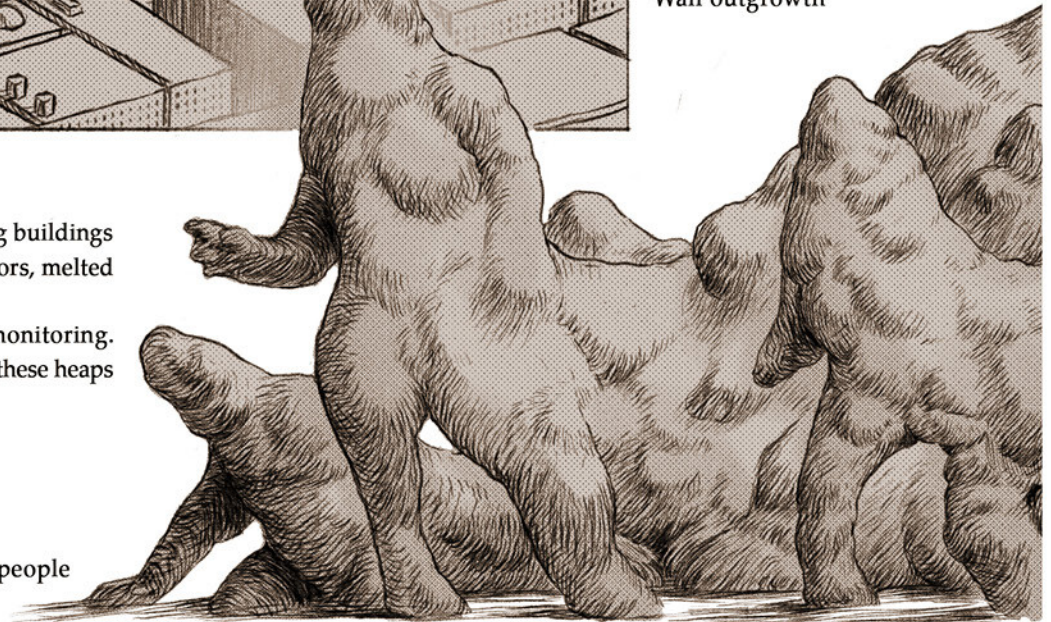


### Living building

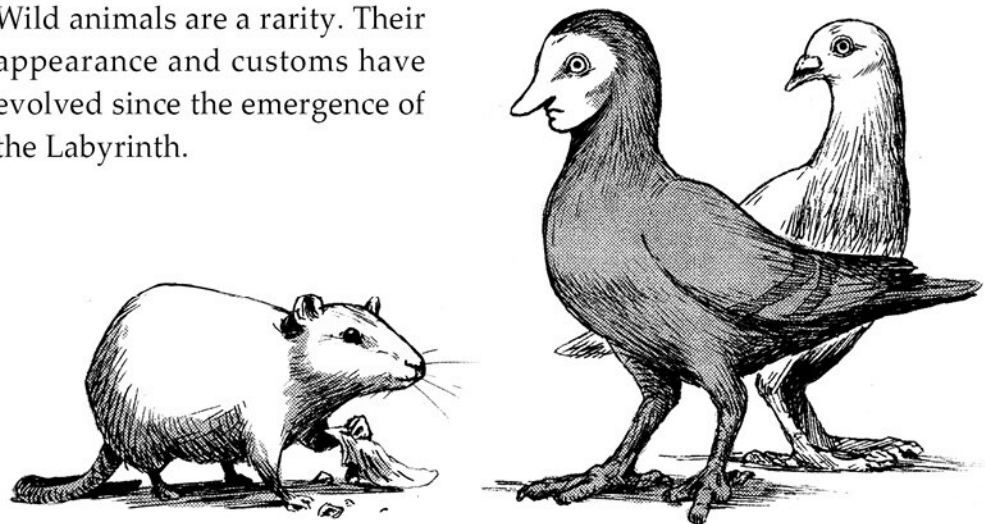
Although increasingly common, the outgrowing buildings are an anomaly. They contain disfigured corridors, melted staircases and hollow cavities. Those that go on spreading require constant monitoring. The reason why some machines start producing these heaps of concrete is known to none.

Wall face

Concrete people

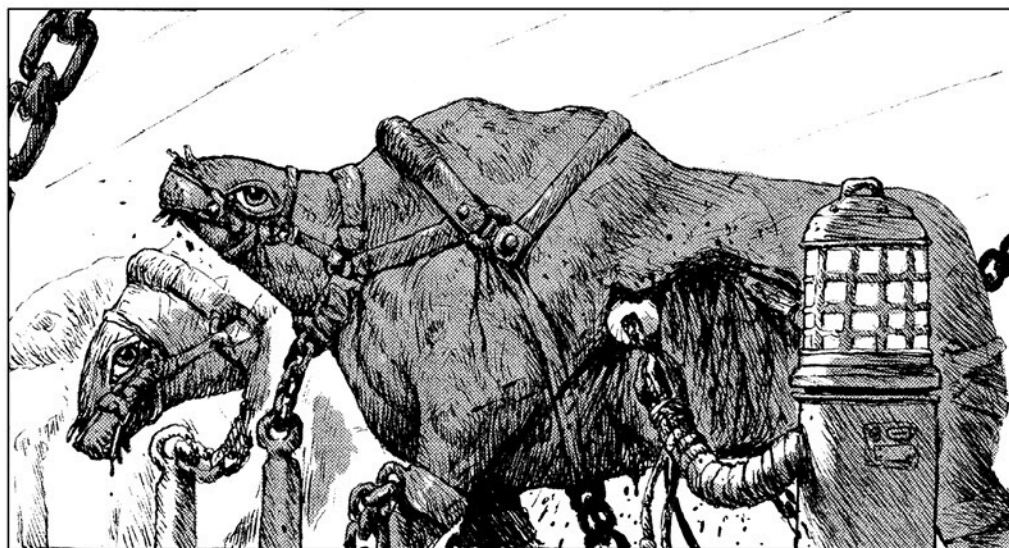


Wild animals are a rarity. Their appearance and customs have evolved since the emergence of the Labyrinth.



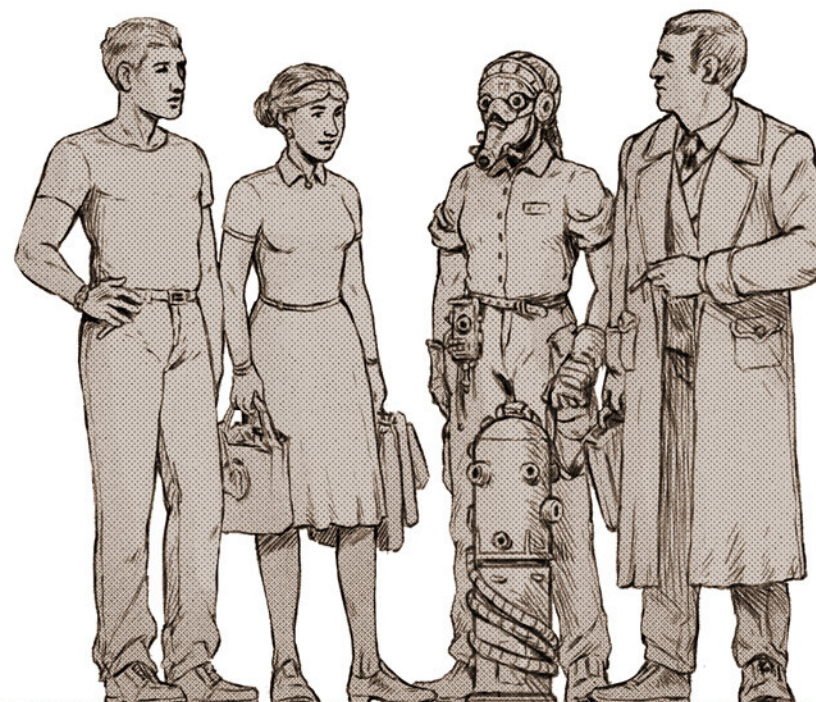
## The humans

The humans of the Labyrinth live in tall apartment buildings divided into districts. Several social classes can cohabit in one district, but each building generally houses a single class of workers.



The block oxen are the main meat source. Having been modified so that their flesh grows back after cutting, they can supply a much greater amount of meat than normally available during their brief lifetime.

2 meters



Labyrinth's inhabitants

## The animals

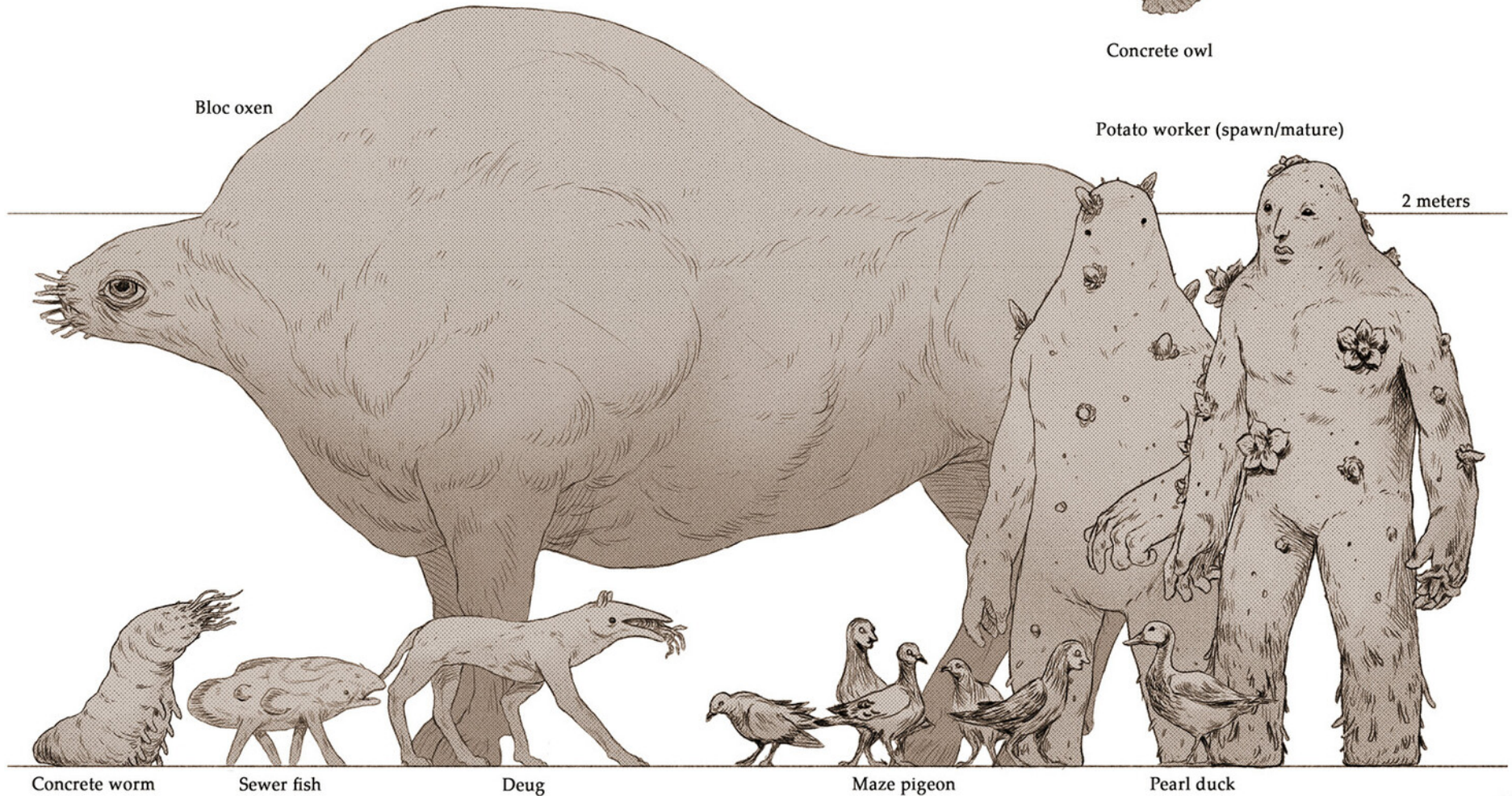
The few wild animals of the Labyrinth survive on the waste it generates. Most of the creatures dwelling in the city's vicinity have witnessed their habitat turning to concrete. Cats and dogs make up the majority of pets. The other domestic animals of the Labyrinth are the block oxen and the potato workers.



Plastic eating rat



Concrete owl



Bloc oxen

Potato worker (spawn/mature)

2 meters

Concrete worm

Sewer fish

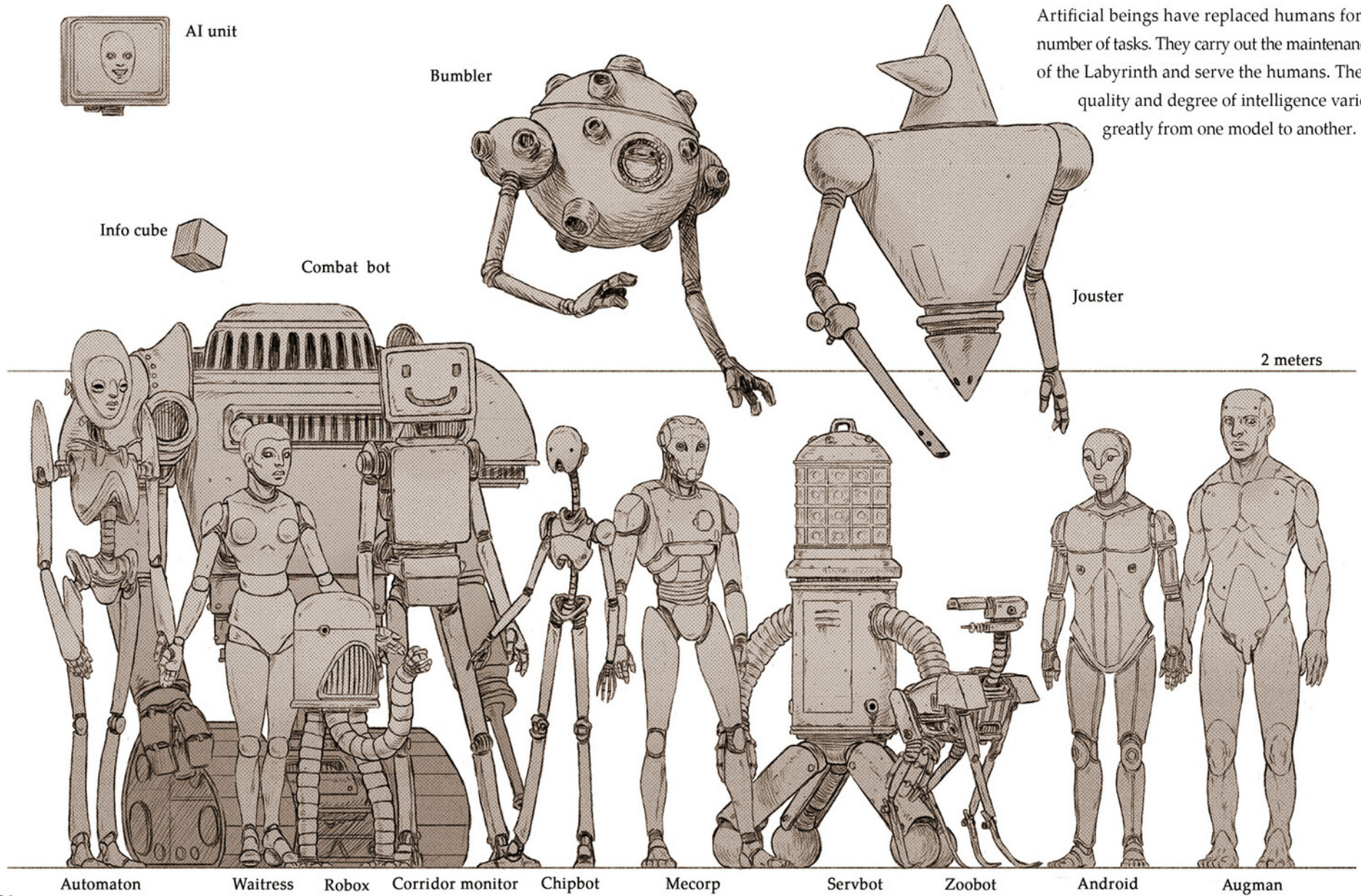
Deug

Maze pigeon

Pearl duck

## The robots

Artificial beings have replaced humans for a number of tasks. They carry out the maintenance of the Labyrinth and serve the humans. Their quality and degree of intelligence varies greatly from one model to another.



Automaton

Waitress

Robox

Corridor monitor

Chipbot

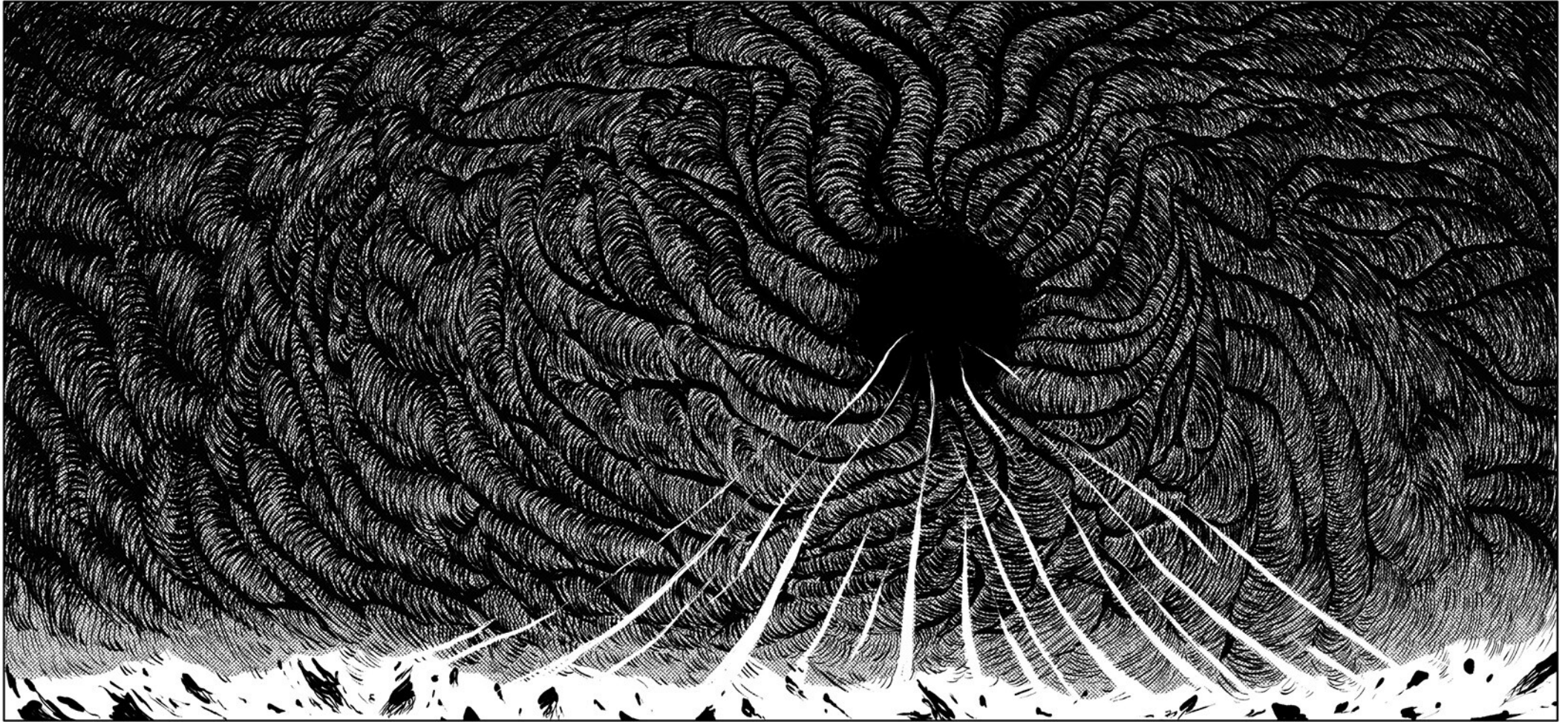
Mecorp

Servbot

Zoobot

Android

Augman



The auto-fabs develop a bizarre sickness, stripping many districts of their power and food source. The machines cease functioning one after the other. Despite the efforts expended by the Agency and the Heart, the illness spreads and rot courses through the machines' veins, whose skin of concrete breaks. The Agency tries to quell the ensuing rumour, to no avail. District wars for ownership of the last operational machines spark in every corner of the Labyrinth. Corridors and lift shafts become genuine cut-throats as food comes to represent the only asset of the Labyrinth. Machines are tampered with, the Agency's network collapses. One of the impaired machines explodes and a substantial amount of energy bursts out, causing a chain reaction that sweeps through the city.

The machines' scream in agony, the Cry, reverberates across the Labyrinth. Eardrums rupture, walls fall apart and the districts crumble. The ashes of the city rain down for years, silence clears the ruins, the city has finally halted.

## CHAPTER 9: THE AGE OF RUST

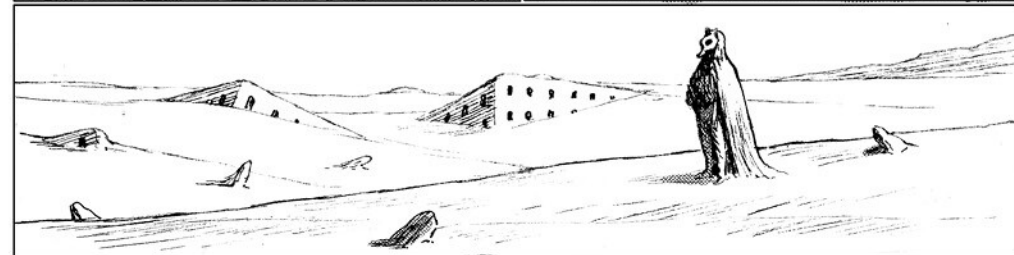


In the empty-eyed shell of the Labyrinth, life continues after the Cry.

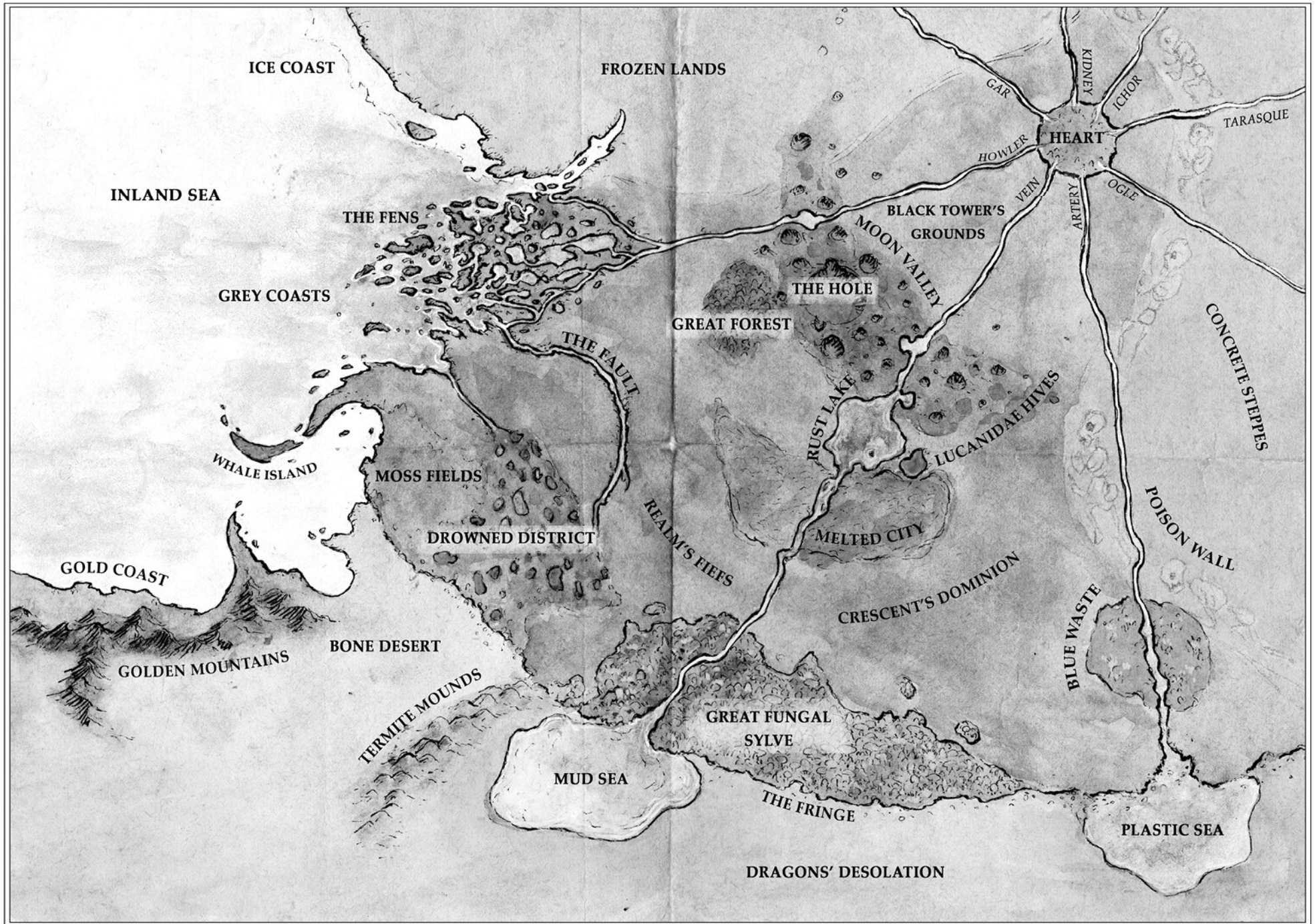
The Labyrinth has become a cemetery of concrete where the wind rushes in to sweep through clutters of rubble on the streets. Sand dunes slowly gnaw at the southern part of the city while frozen earth advances upon the ruins from the north. The east is poisoned with diseased clouds and toxic fumes.

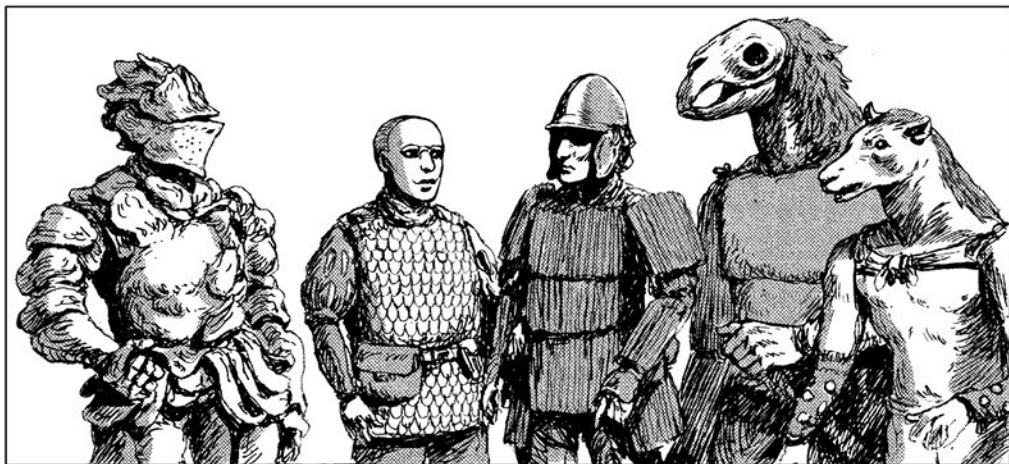
In the midst of the ruins, the last of the humans subsist in the remaining districts. They survive thanks to the last auto-fabs that struggle to produce. Two main factions, the Kingdom and the Crescent, compete to extend their influence over the smaller colonies. Disputed territories are rendered inaccessible by the war.

The small groups of humans live separated from one another by entire abandoned districts. Navigating the Labyrinth has become a more arduous task than before; travellers expose themselves to marauders, monsters, rockslides, unrecognizable paths and other dangers. Those that venture out of the protected enclosures hammer the walls in search of metals, rummage through the derelict stores and harvest the mushrooms that proliferate on the sides of the ruins. Beneath the city, where factories, underground railways and sewage canals used to run, in a maze inside of the maze, other groups scrape along in the dark tunnels.

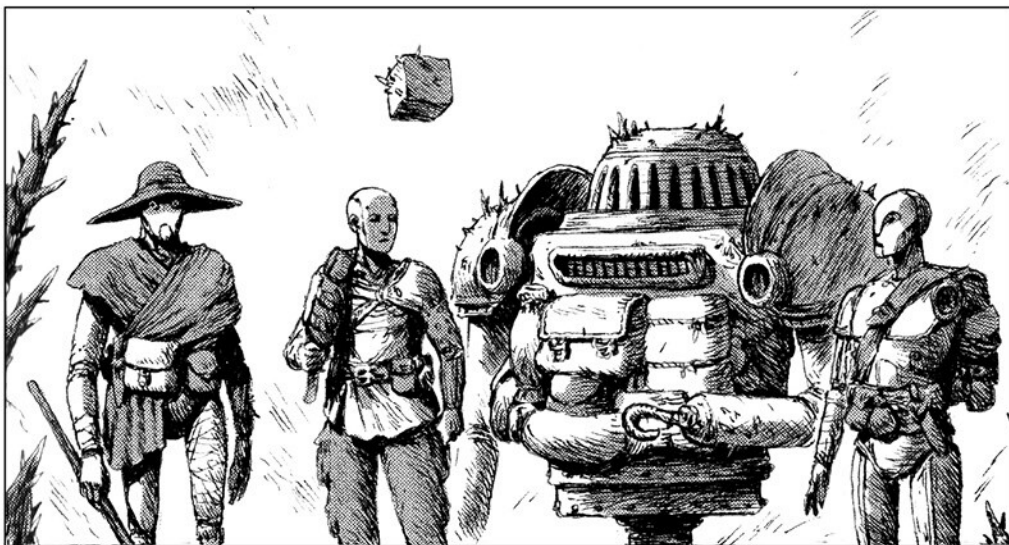


Colony, mushroom grove, underground tunnel and desert border.

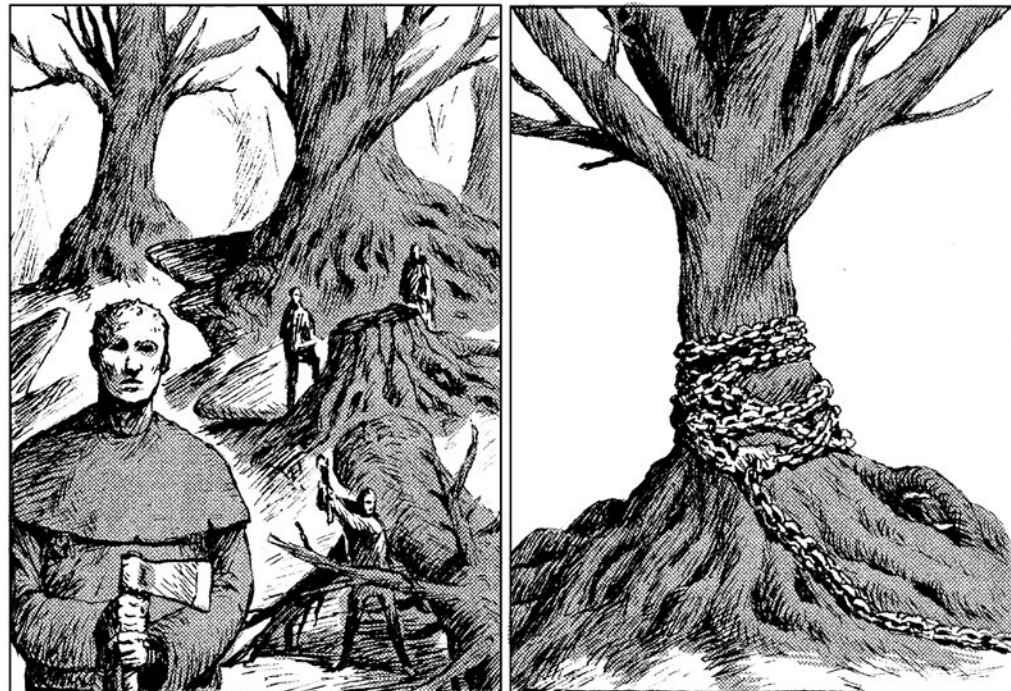




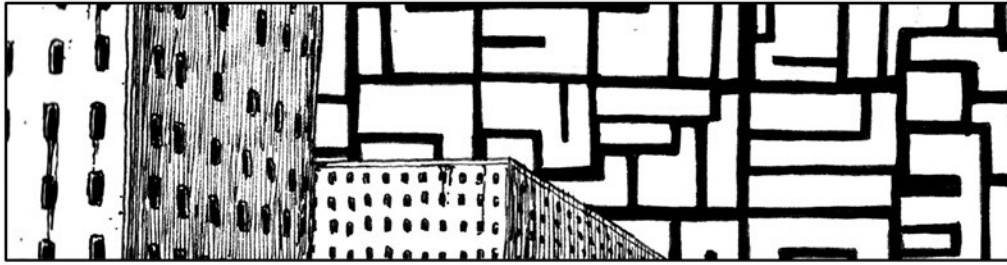
The ones who descend further into the maze are called explorers. They work as merchants, bodyguards, messengers, scouts and mercenaries. Some of them spend the whole year living outside the confines of the colonies, remaining in the Labyrinth as if drawn to its hoary immensity.



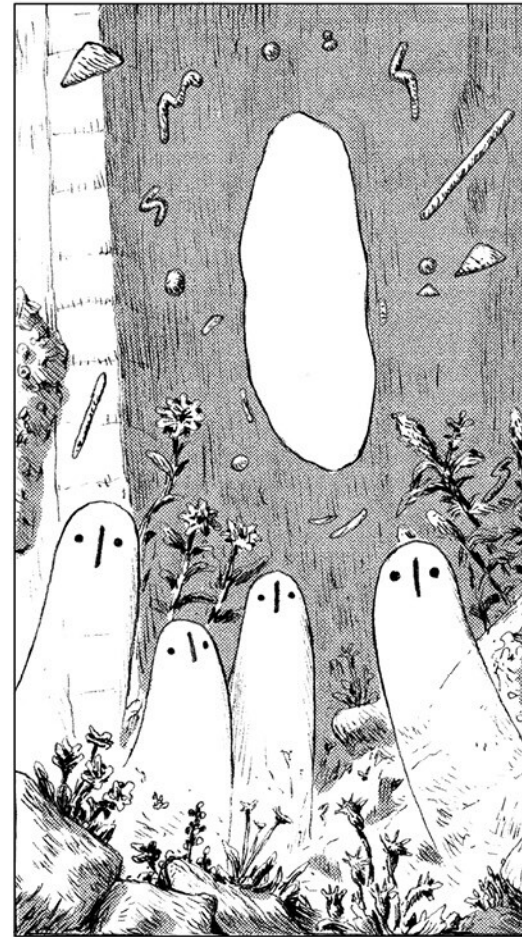
Several robots still function, but breakdowns are deadly. Impossible to repair, the robots must be regularly brushed to avoid damage from the rust that inexorably covers their body. Some of them continue to fulfil their former tasks while others have been reprogrammed. The rest broke free when the Cry rang.



All of the colonies have to cope with the invasion of black trees that pierce through the concrete and threaten the remaining machines. Should a tree come to maturity, it will die and discharge a toxic humus whose later cloak of moss and plants will corrode the buildings. In the worst instances, its roots will smother an auto-fab. When cut down by humans however, the trees transform, their skin taking on the appearance of bark. Each colony keeps a company of loggers who inherit this curse generation after generation. Anywhere the trees are not felled, thickets grow as full-bodied forests take root in the ruins' folds.



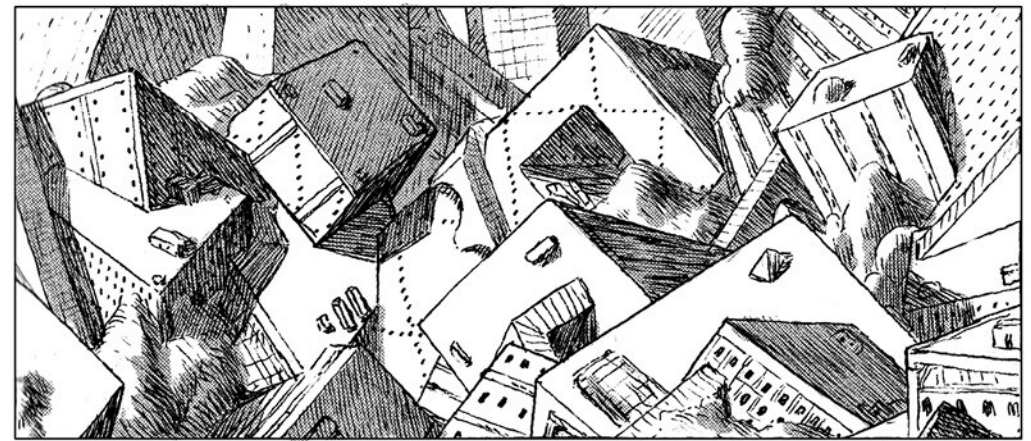
The Cry also gave rise to odd occurrences. Even seasoned explorers may lose sight of their path in the ever-changing streets. Some districts seem to move, no sound can be heard in others; sometimes, the shadows do not match the light and stories are told of humans turning into animals or simply vanishing into smoke.



But the strangest of the phenomena are the time-altering ones. Gone on a few hours journey, a person may arrive only several years later or return a few days before leaving. Some speak of the Cry having torn holes through the fabric of time.

Around these portals, the air hangs heavy and distorted, smelling of plants, dust or salt at times, but never transmitting any sound.

Rare are the ones who come back from entering the portals, but those that found their way out have left behind a piece of themselves.



Most of the humans who return from the portals rapidly grow blind. Their body metamorphoses, the underside of their skin shifting in seemingly continuous movement.

They constantly dream of where they went but are unable to describe it clearly.

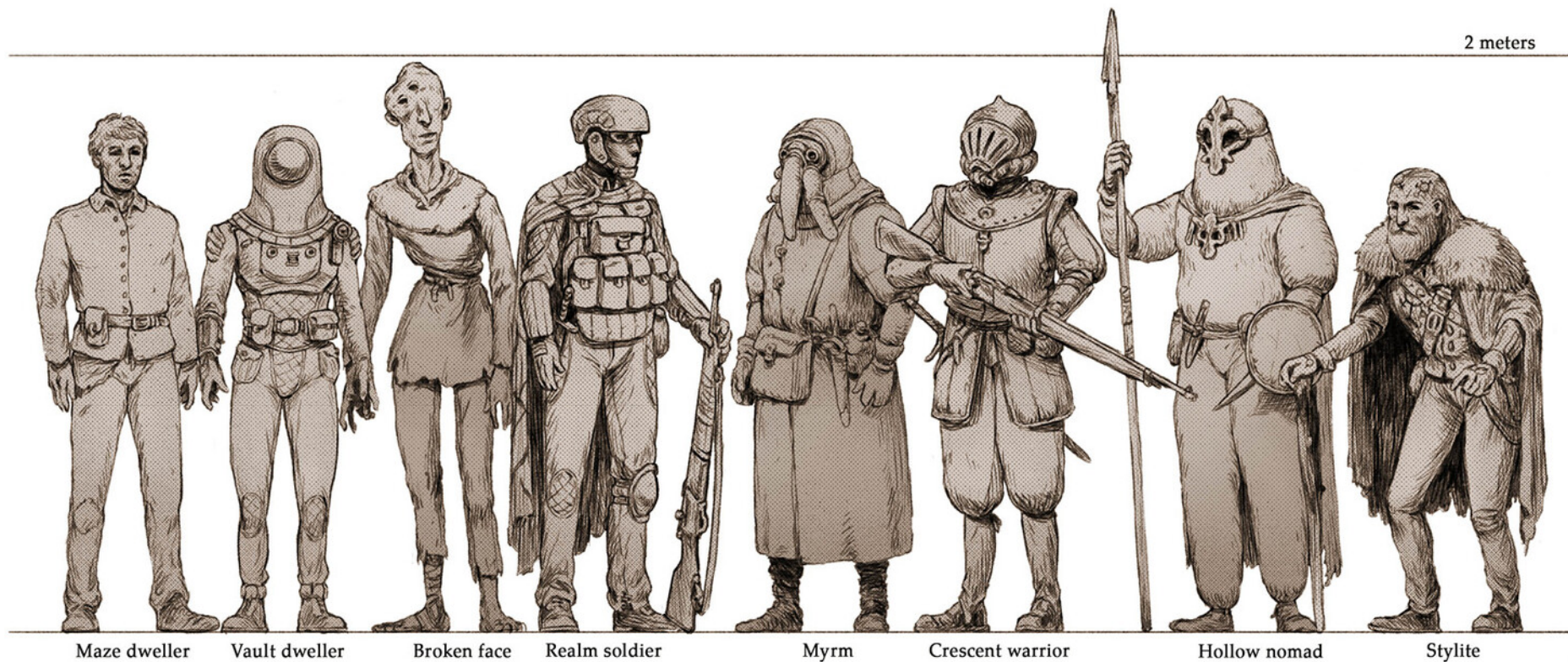
Endowed with bizarre telekinetic and thaumaturgic abilities, they become capable of producing incandescent spheres and other miracles.

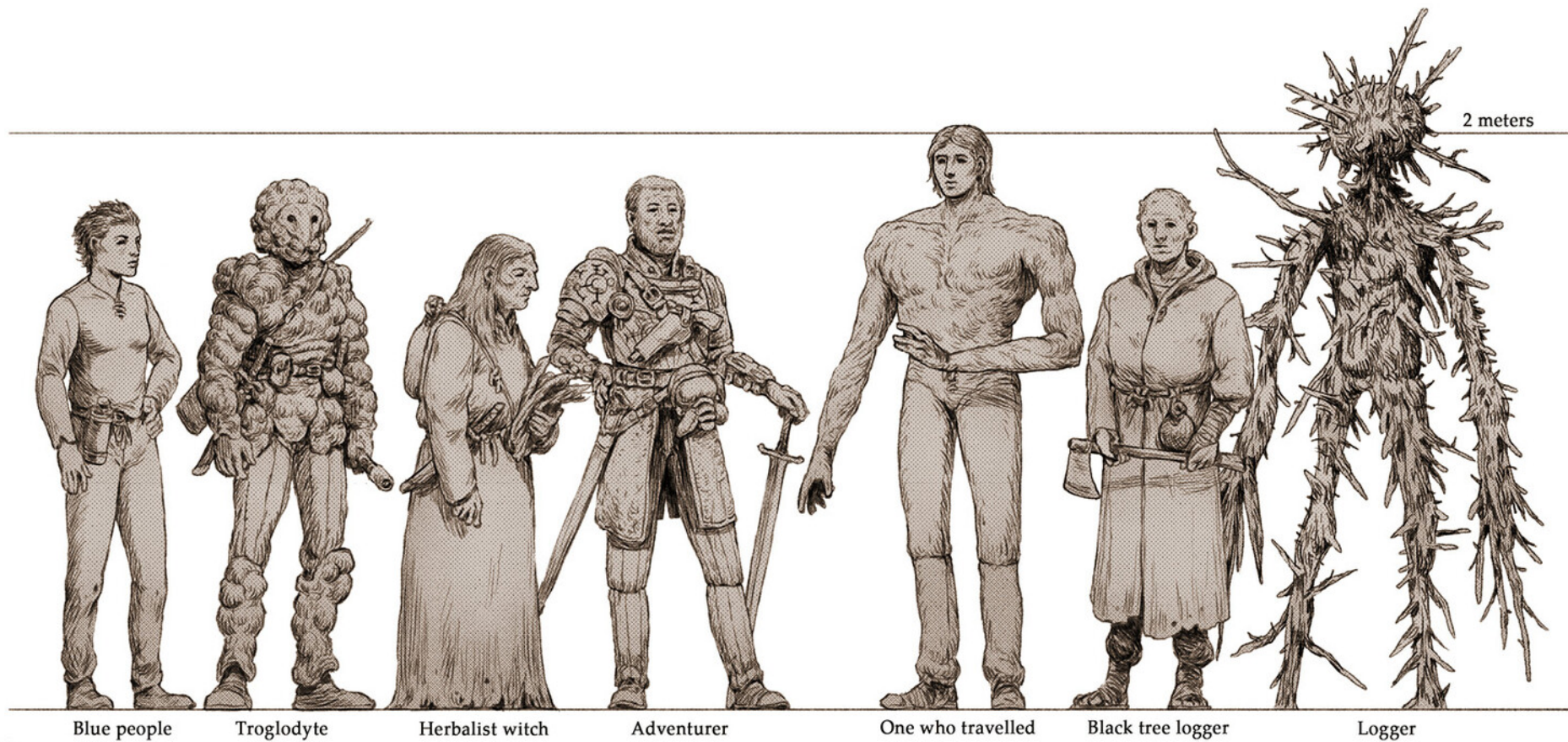


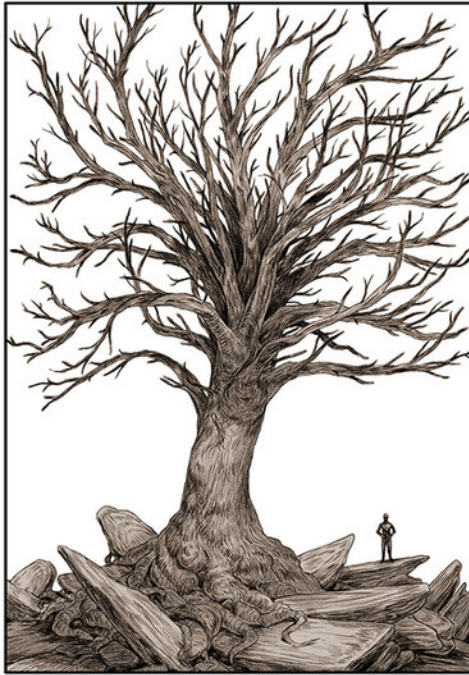
The Mogs, who had gone into hibernation after digging the first river beds of Uhia, surface anew in the sea of mud to feed on the waste that slid through the Labyrinth.

## The humans

The humans inhabit the southwestern region of the ruins. Their colonies are scattered above and below the streets' surface.

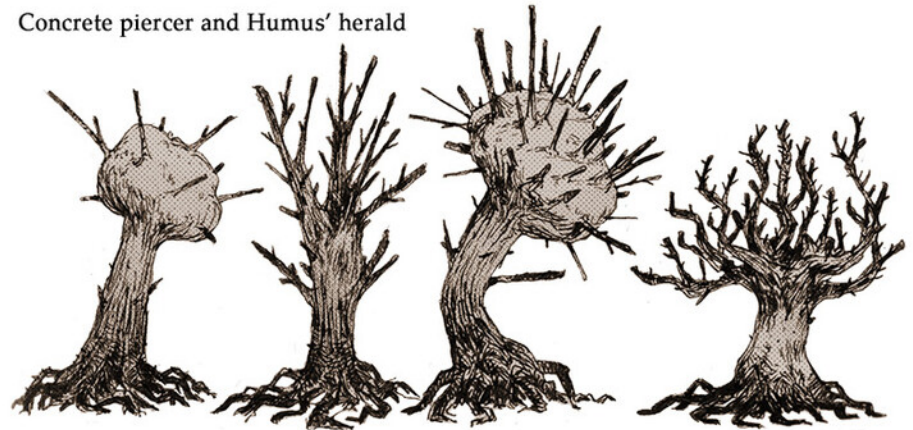






## Black tree

Concrete piercer and Humus' herald



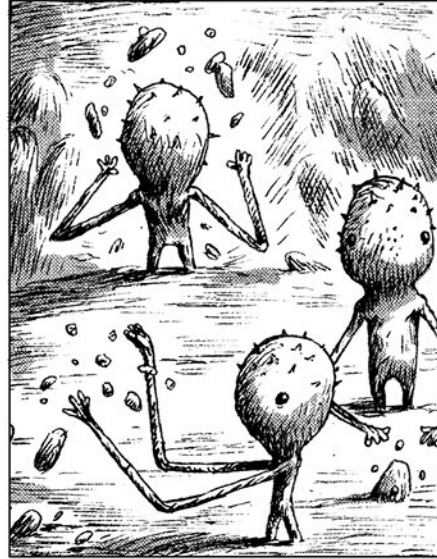
Club shape

Horn shape

Grenade shape

Thorn shape

The humans do not dwell alone in the ruins. In their torment, the machines have warped space and the surrounding matter, making way for the appearance of novel and diverse life forms. Considered as monsters by the humans, these new beings display variable degrees of sociable or aggressive spirit. A certain amount of them have integrated into the less intractable human communities or those that enjoy a sufficient supply of resources to share and make a profit.

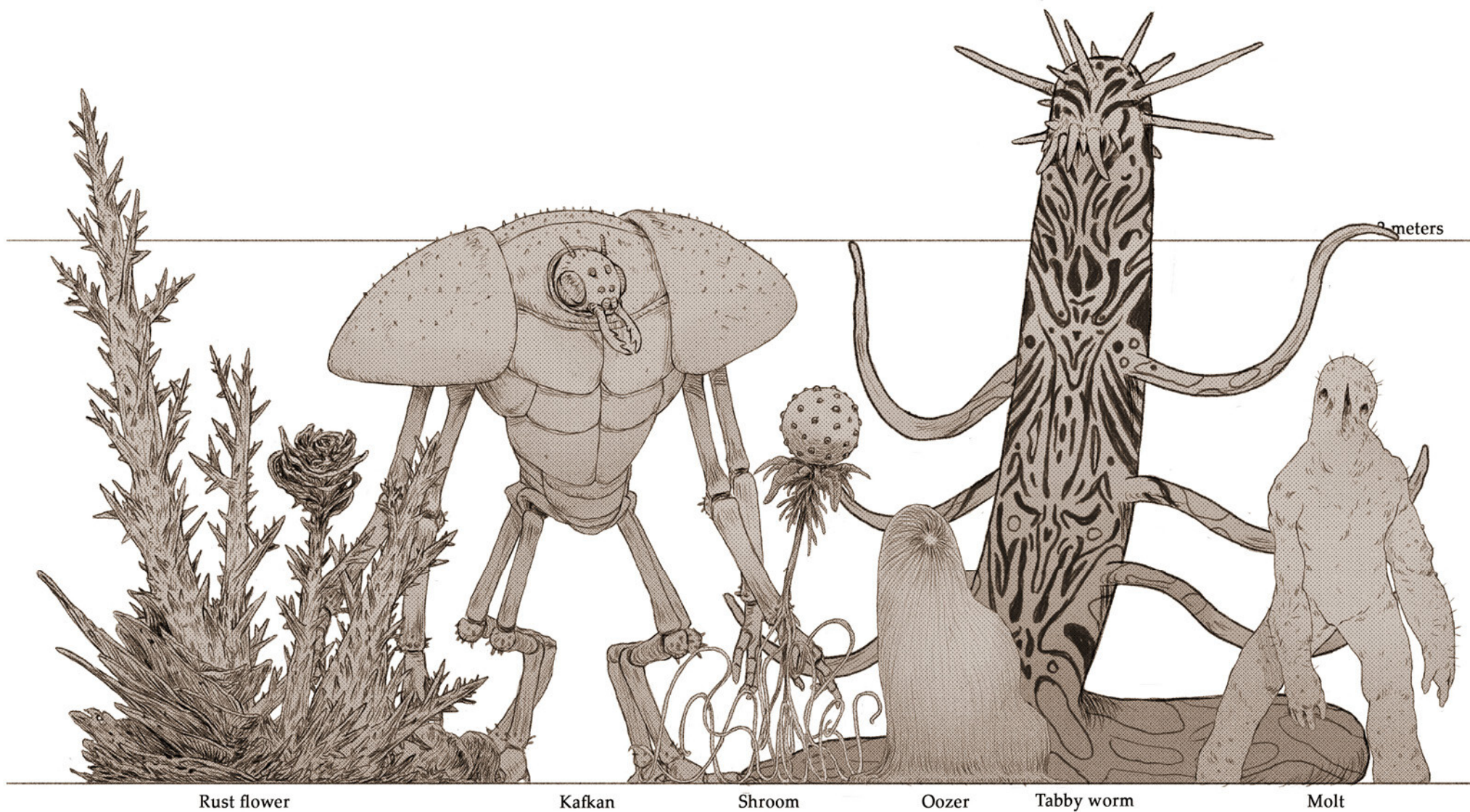


Several major factions have emerged since the Cry, such as the Lucanidae hive of the Melted City or the war-driven mutants of the Black Tower. Many other tribes unite or fight to survive in the labyrinth.



## The Melted City

The apartment blocks have liquefied as if beaten on by intense heat, the streets are encumbered with strips of concrete pierced by rust spikes. The ochre waters of the Vein run through these dreary and hardly passable ruins.

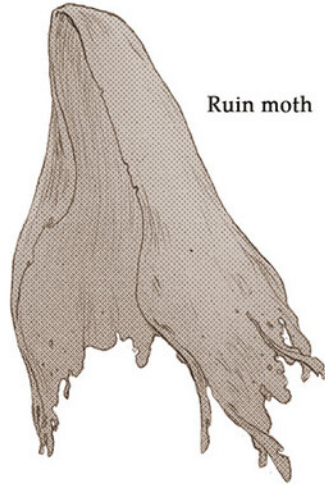


## The Rust Lake

Laden with metals, the waves of the lake bring a sanguine tint to the banks. The grating of the rust beings ripples across the orange-tinged surface.



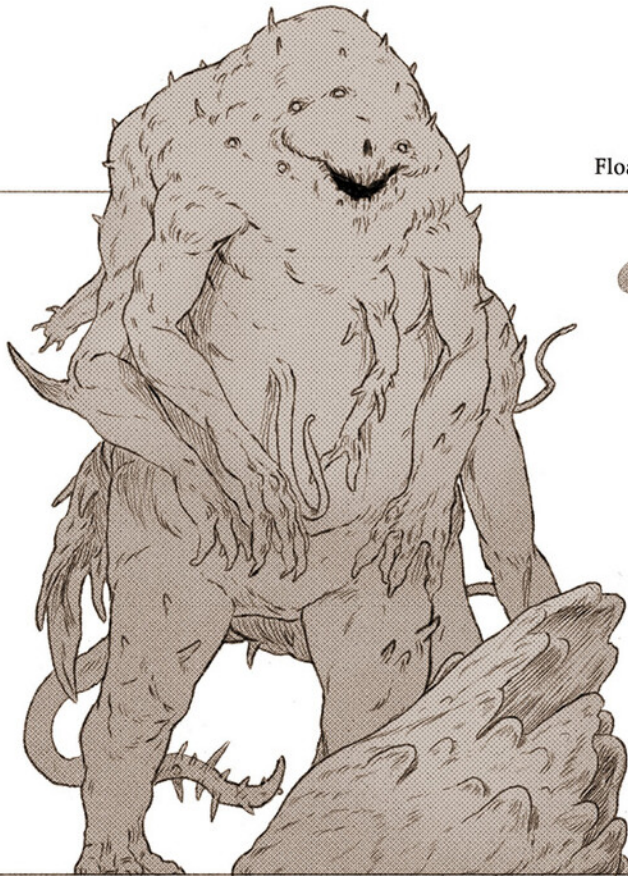
Lieu (size x10)



Ruin moth

Floating liquid

2 meters



Horror

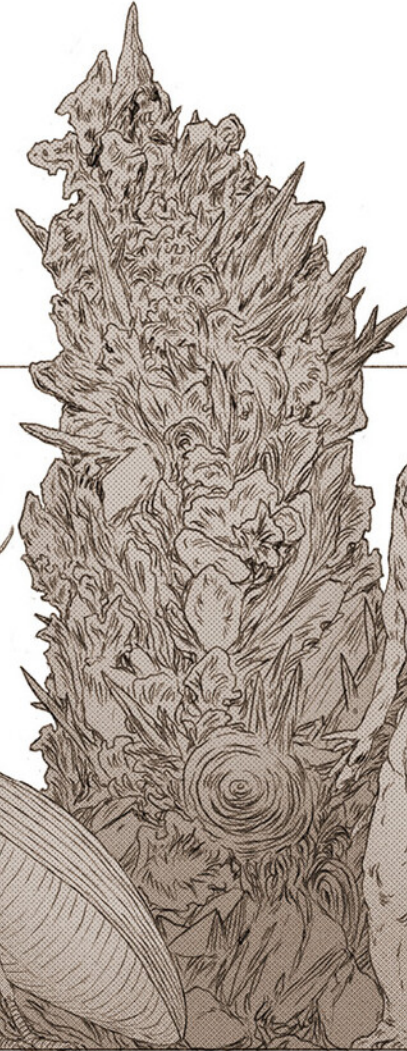
Hunting dough



Chatty bloodhound



Cockroach



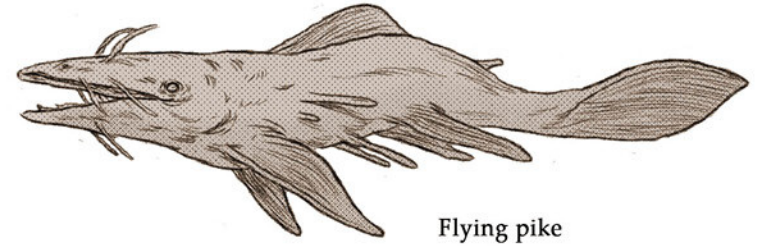
Rust monster



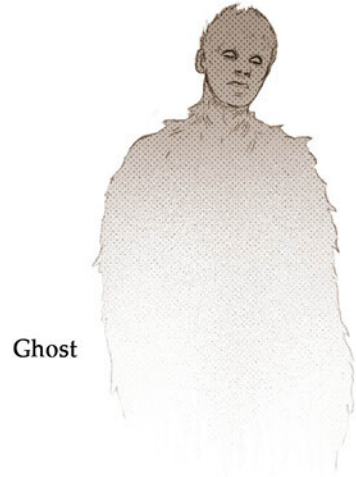
Changeling

## The Poison Wall

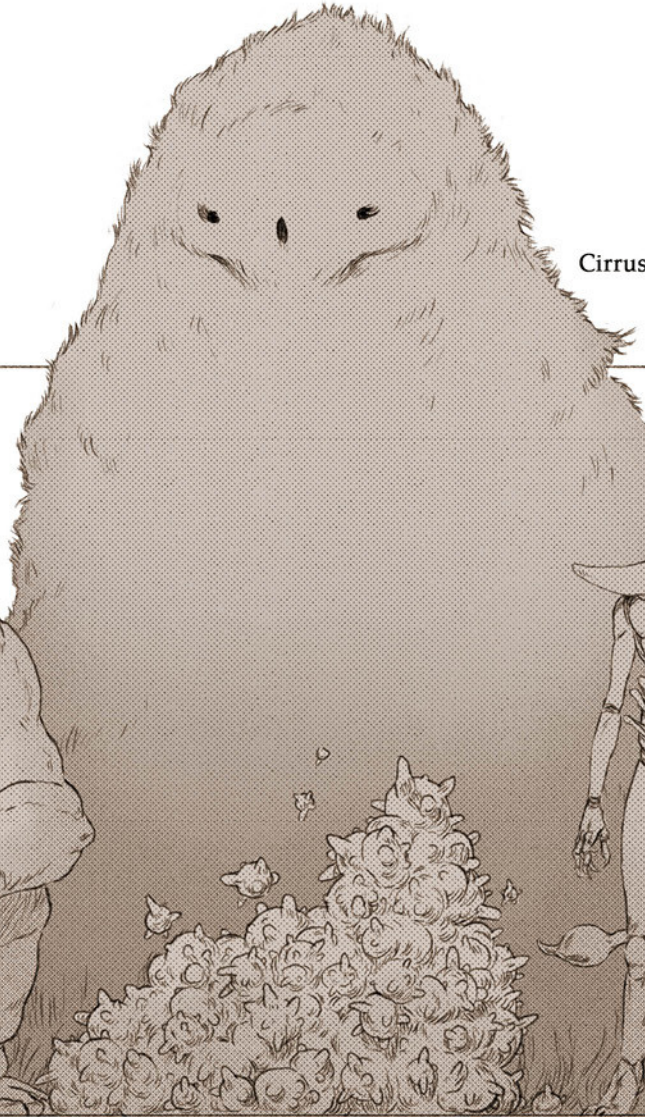
The east is smothered in a venomous shroud. Underneath, the nebulous city seems void of any sort of life. Those that live near the wall can hear the echoes of gaunt creatures prowling through the twilight passageways.



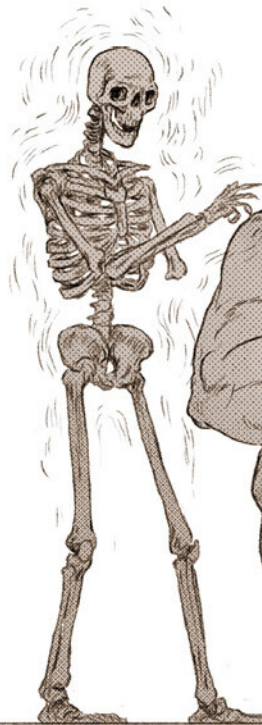
Flying pike



Ghost



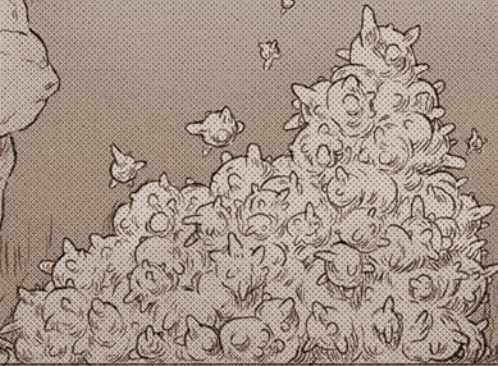
Cirrus



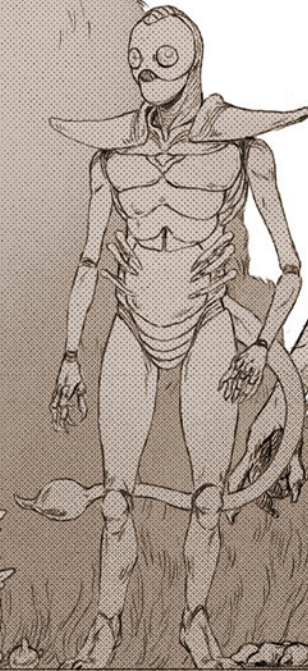
Hollow eater



Bufo



Amoeba



Euscorpide



Naked bird



Troll

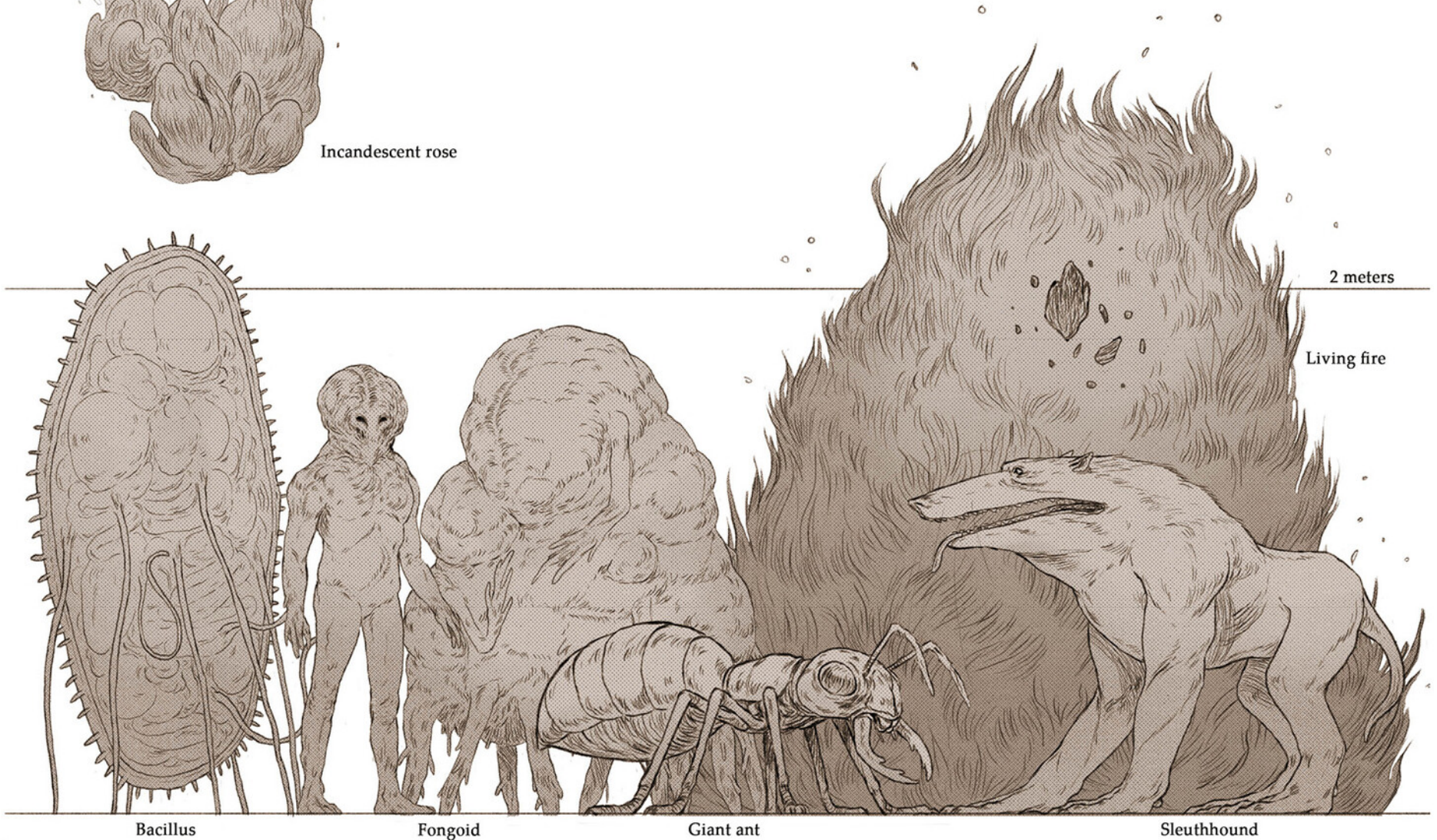
ters

## The Blue Waste and Plastic Sea

The poisons carried by the Artery have woven a jungle of blue fungi that shimmer weakly at night. There, the neighbouring inhabitants nurture the mushrooms while avoiding the pockets of poison.



Incandescent rose



Bacillus

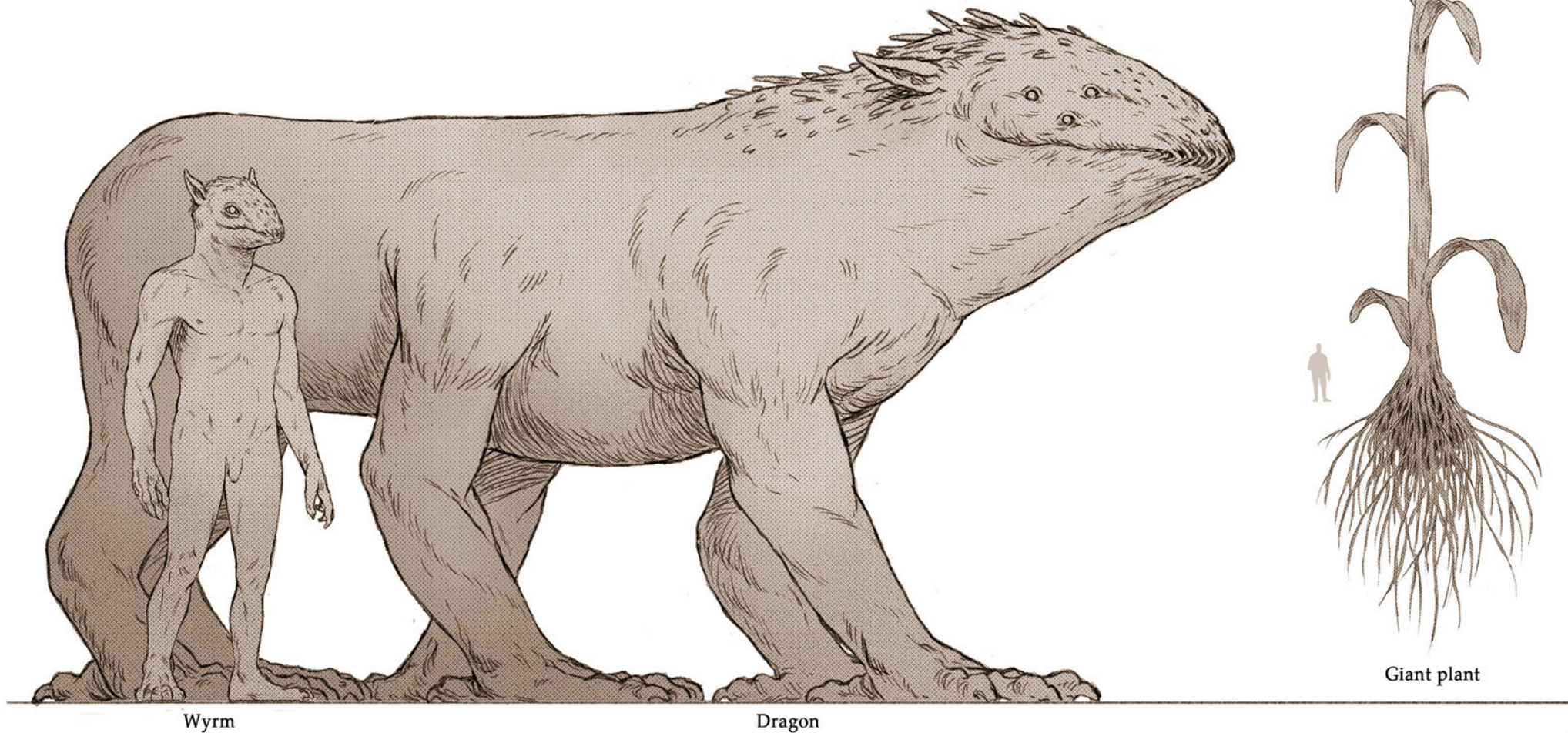
Fongoid

Giant ant

Sleuthhound

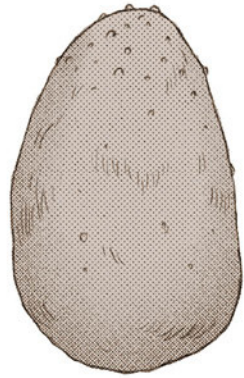
## The Dragons' Desolation

The advance of the vast southern-borne desert is stemmed by the forest of mushrooms and the roots of the gigantic plants that grow along the edge of the Labyrinth. Here and there, the sand dunes have swathed entire districts. The desert is dotted with a few oases and ancient wells maintained by the nomadic humans of the edge. The dragons are among the only beings that navigate the wide plains of sand, feeding on cacti. Nomads say they could travel down to the end of the earth, where the desert is at war with the sea. To breed, the dragons place their sperm and ova in a water hole. This method can lead to the contamination of human foetuses – if the child survives birth, he will be a hybrid.



## The Fringe

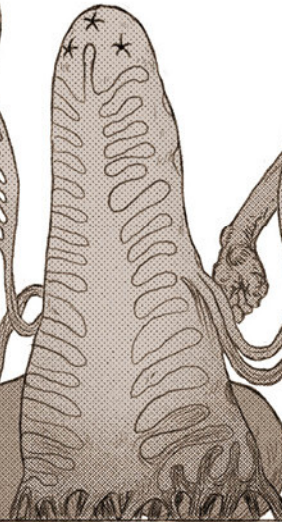
Numerous humans and monsters survive on the exploitation of the fringe of the mushroom forest. Its importance has made it the epicentre of the conflict between the Crescent and the Kingdom, ensuing which many cultivating colonies face destruction. Where located away from the two factions, the forest remains a vital source of food and materials.



Odd egg



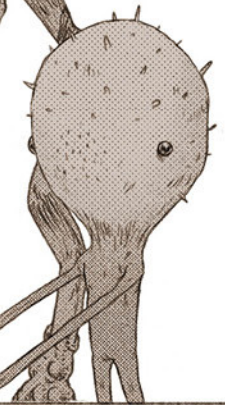
Desert worm



Toddler



Boxer

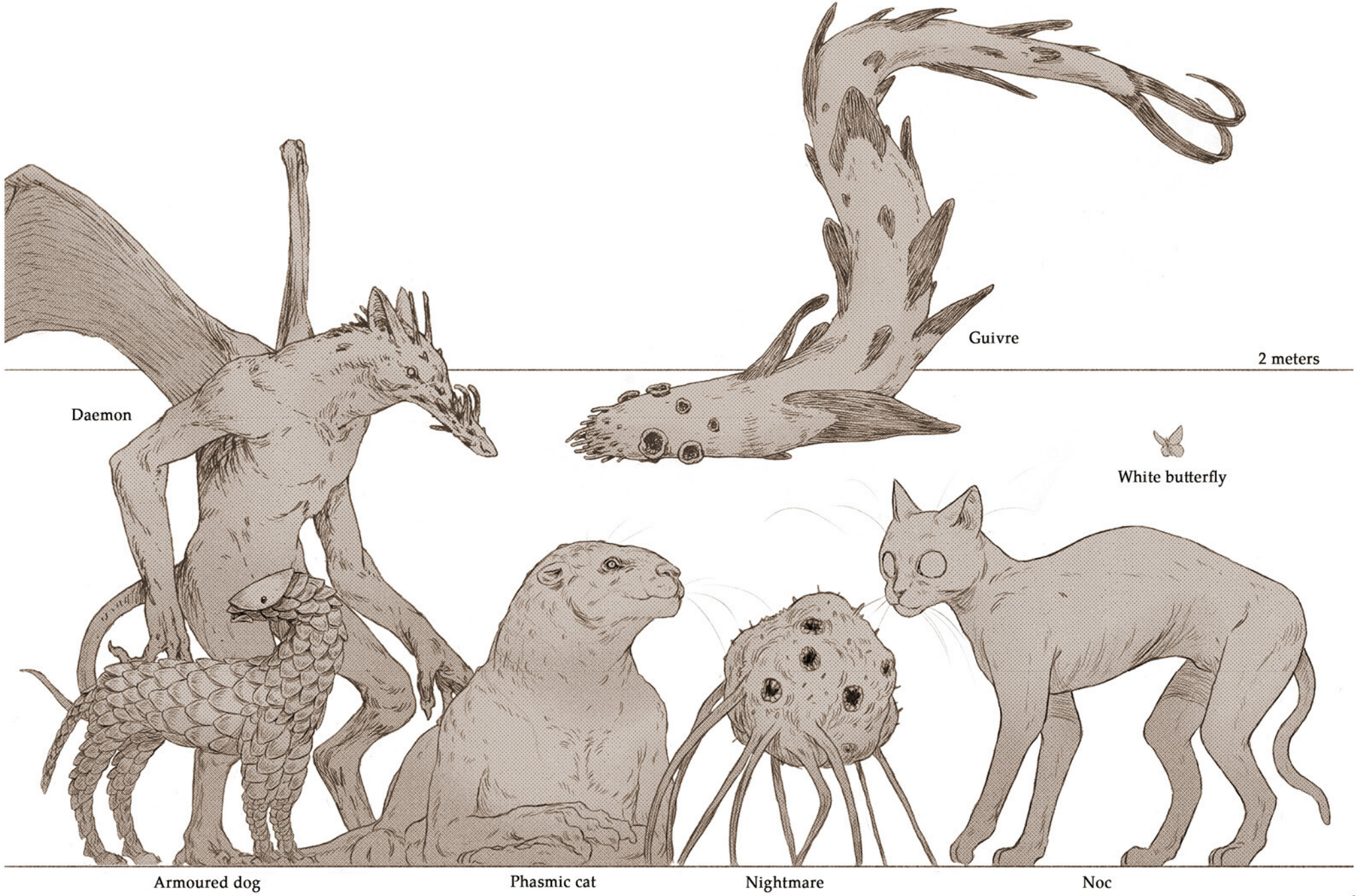


Khthon

2 meters



Maze mushrooms



Daemon

Guivre

2 meters

White butterfly

Armoured dog

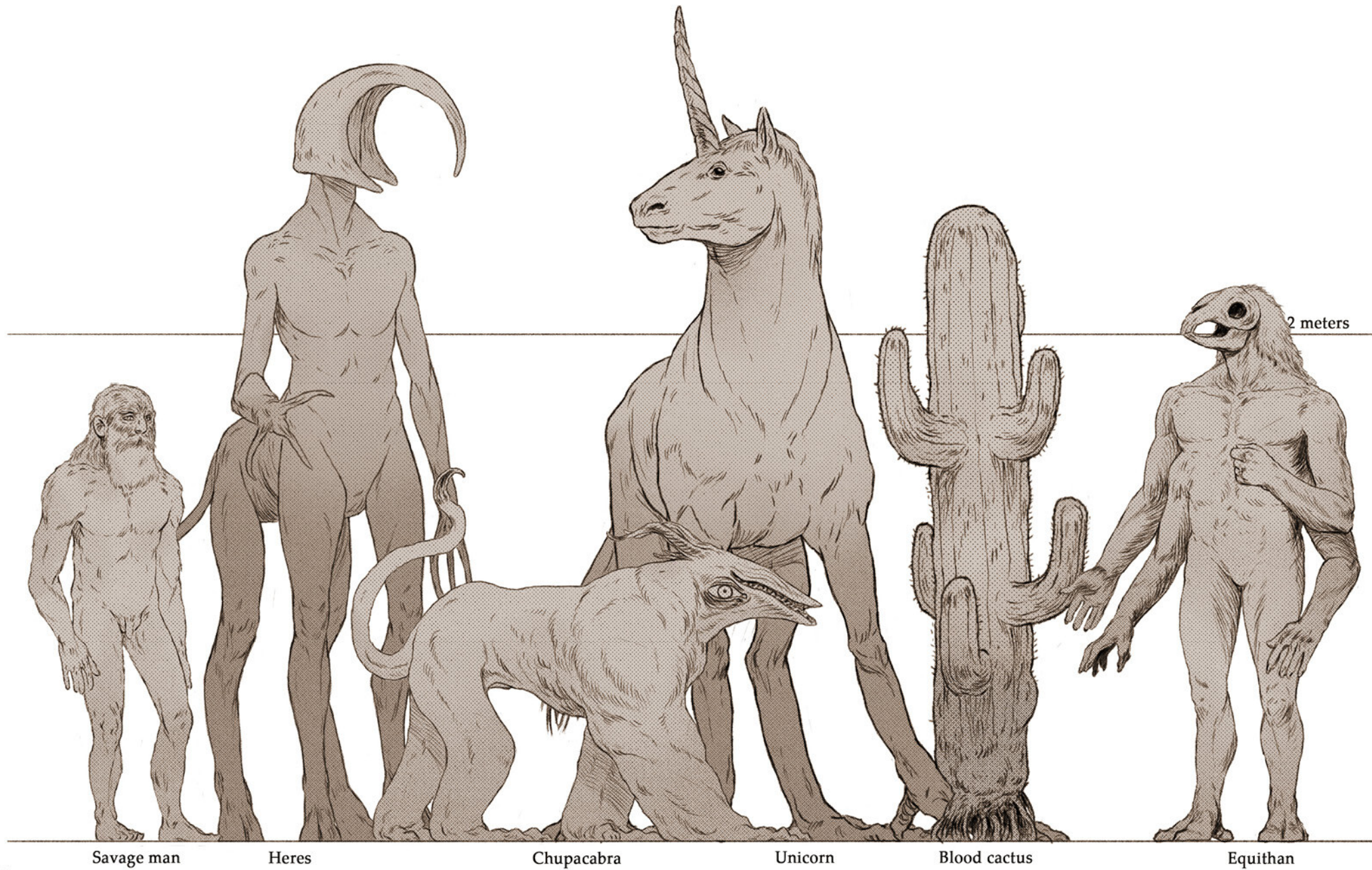
Phasmic cat

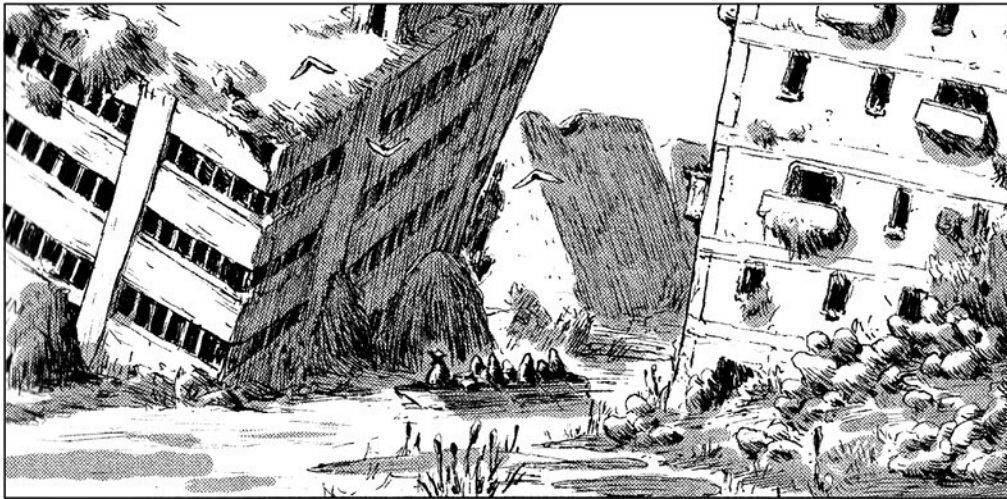
Nightmare

Noc

## The Bone Desert

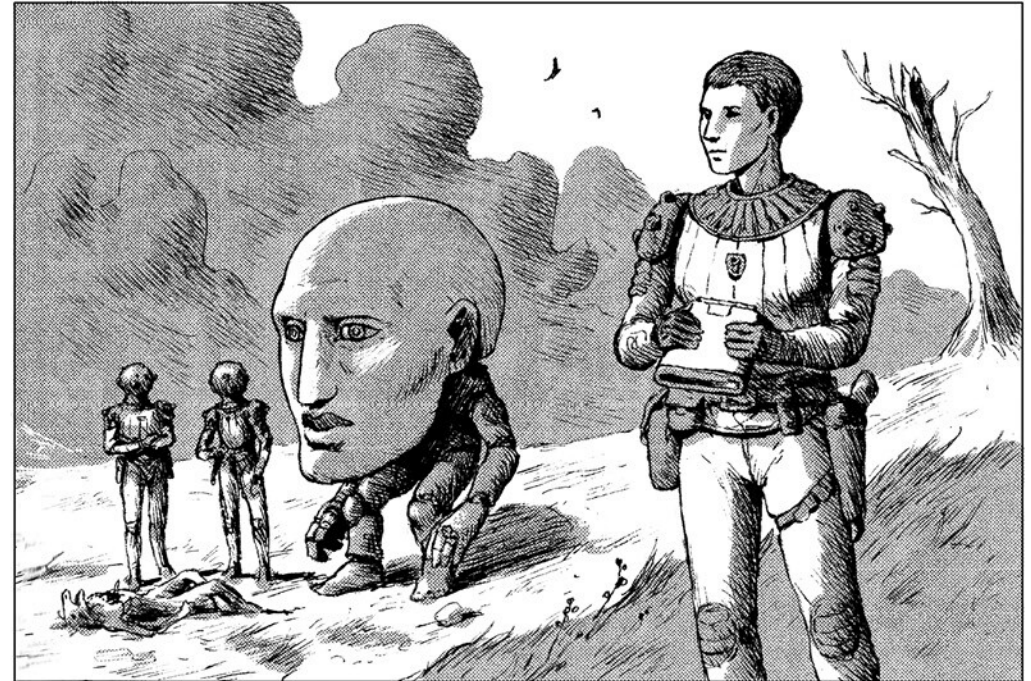
The greying desert is swarmed by dark cacti and warring tribes.





Along the margins of the inner sea, buildings submerged by the waves sink in the salt water. Crustacean species come from ancient eras descend from the north, pushed on by the new cold tide that devastated the septentrional ruins of the Labyrinth. They foray far into the grey coasts, reaching at times the city streets.

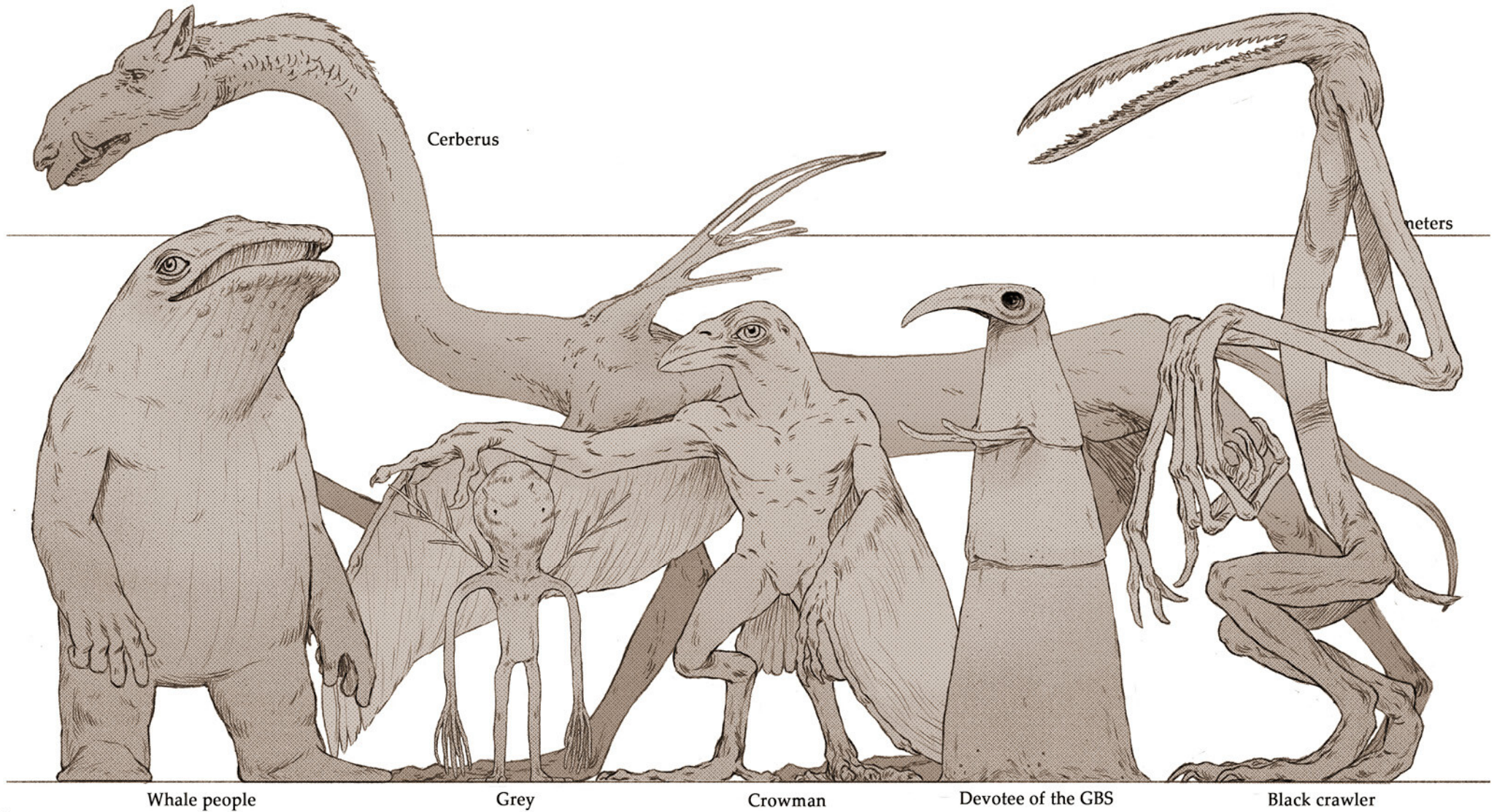
South of the Labyrinth spreads the wide forest of fungi, whose growth has halted after eating into a large part of the maze. Many beings dwell near its fringe as the mushrooms provide one of the best sources of food, wood, leather and clothing of the Labyrinth. Venturing deeper into the forest requires special protective attire, the spores sometimes proving dangerous.



The Heart has survived the Cry, but struggles to mend its hole-riddled borders and to keep its research projects running. Inhabited by an increasingly diminishing population, its exposed territory elicits many desires. Equipped with robots, a few families cultivate their land and stand a fierce watch over their tenements. The researchers of the Heart live shielded from the crawling things of the dying city. As most of the inhabitants are sterile, the scientists painfully strain to balance the lack of newborns with clones.

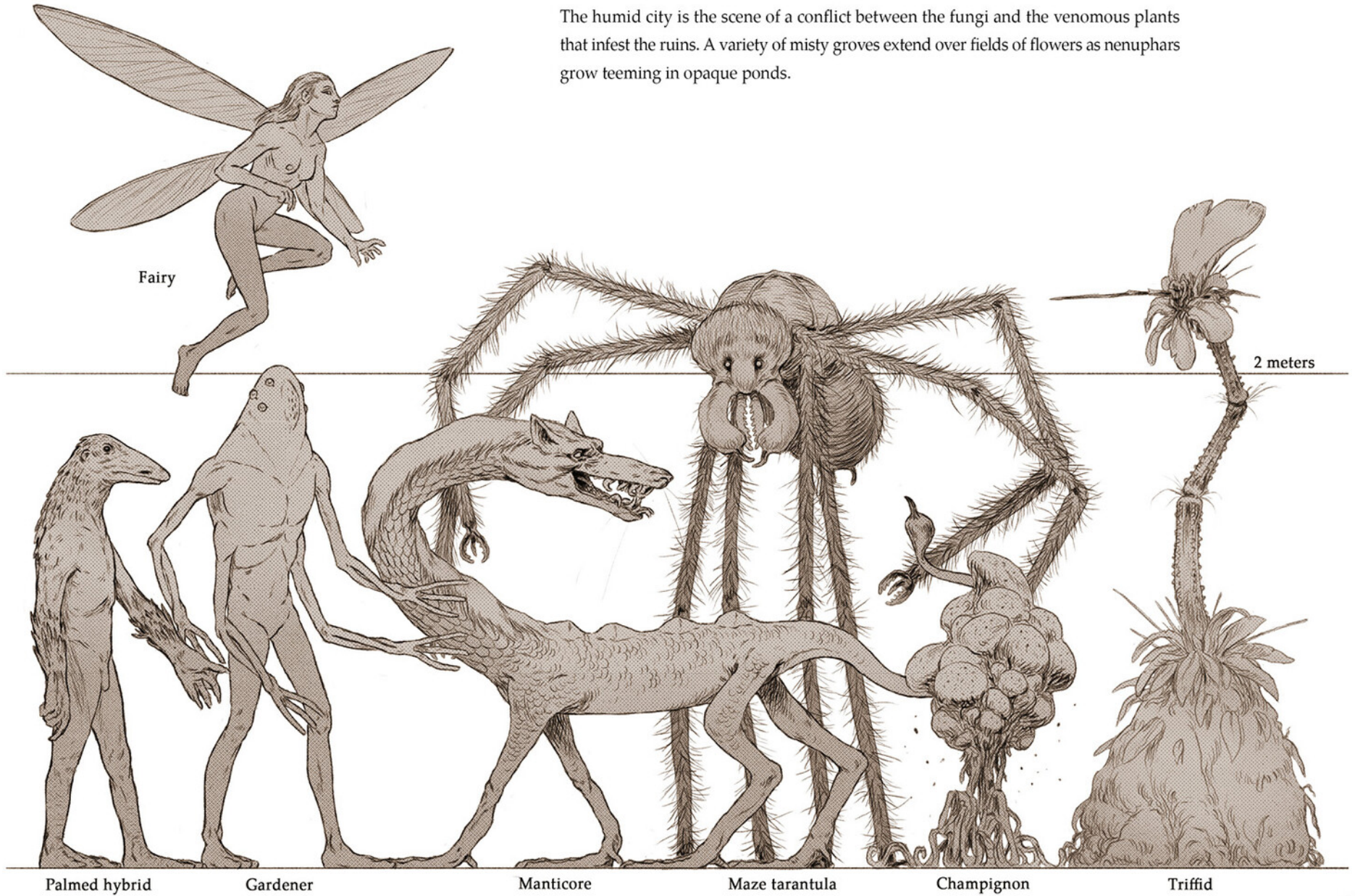
## The Grey Coasts

Around the rim of the inner sea, entire slabs of concrete founder. The iodine breeze blows through hollow windows. Colonies of marine birds return to nest in the deserted flats.



## The Moss Fields and the Drowned District

The humid city is the scene of a conflict between the fungi and the venomous plants that infest the ruins. A variety of misty groves extend over fields of flowers as nenuphars grow teeming in opaque ponds.



Palmed hybrid

Gardener

Manticore

Maze tarantula

Champignon

Triffid

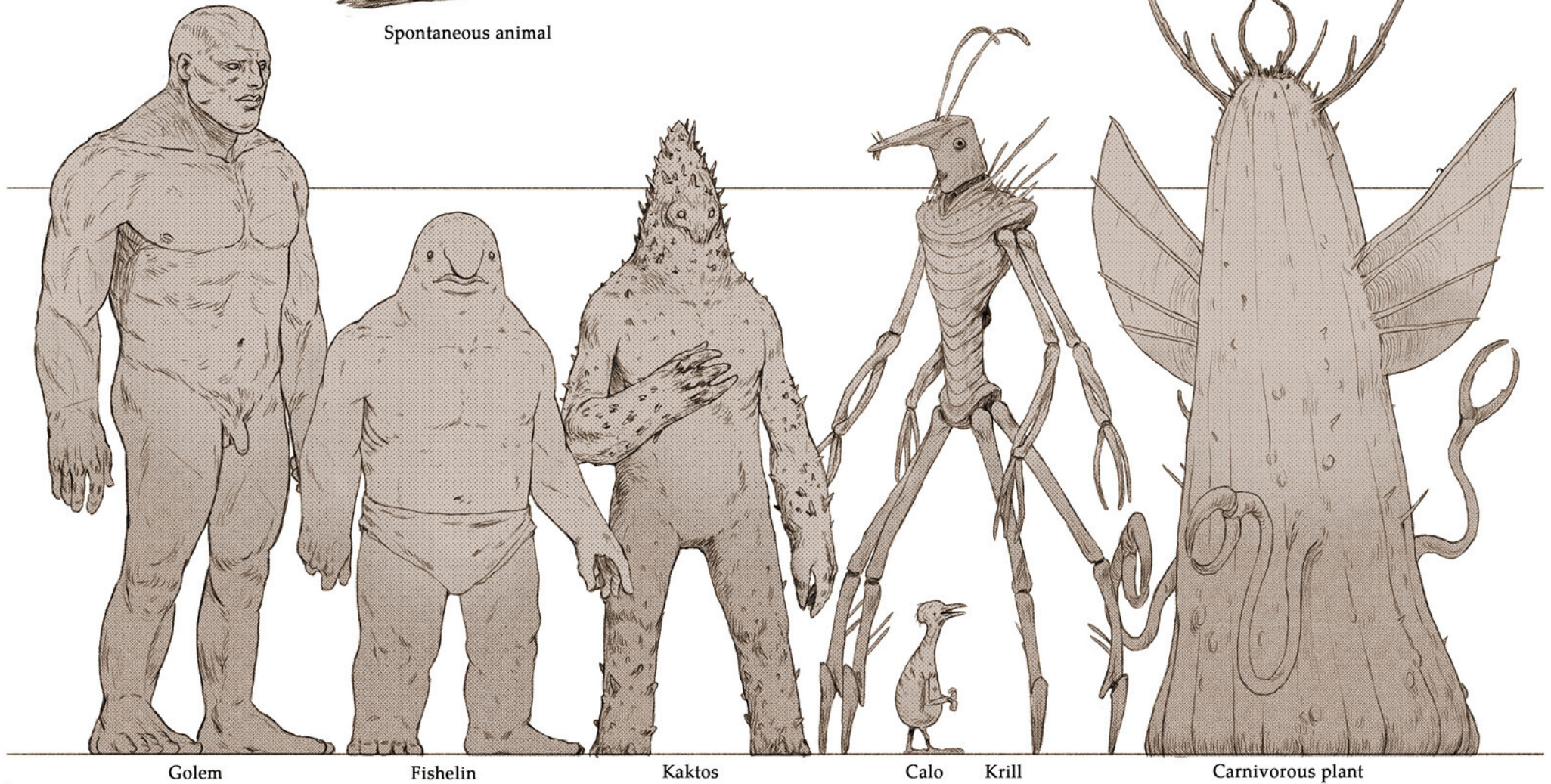
## The Fens

The mouth of the Baying has turned into swamps. Whole districts have been swallowed by the thick mire, forming islets hardly trodden by foot. Rudimentary barges navigate through the ruins and the muddy reed beds.

The fens are visited by groupings of crustaceans arriving from the sea or the northern lands.



Spontaneous animal



Golem

Fishelin

Kaktos

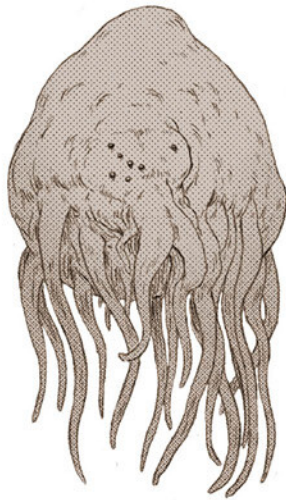
Calo

Krill

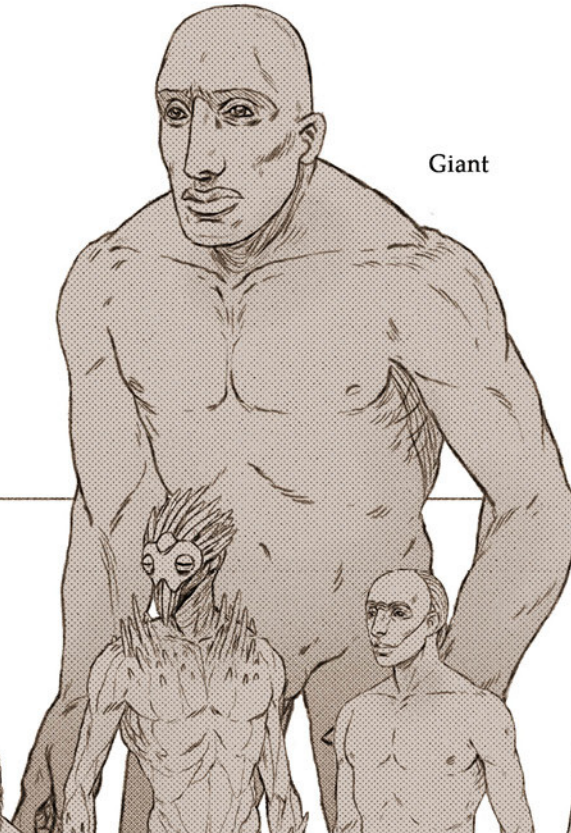
Carnivorous plant

## The Fault

A great rift runs through the maze.  
The dreary sea laps at the buildings  
that were torn from the ground and  
their flooded cellars.



Thal



Giant

2 meters



Fault cat



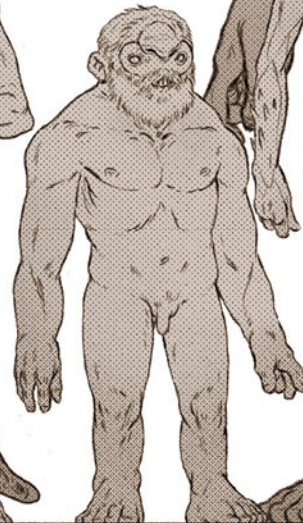
Corax



Blob



Vampire



Varf



Elfin



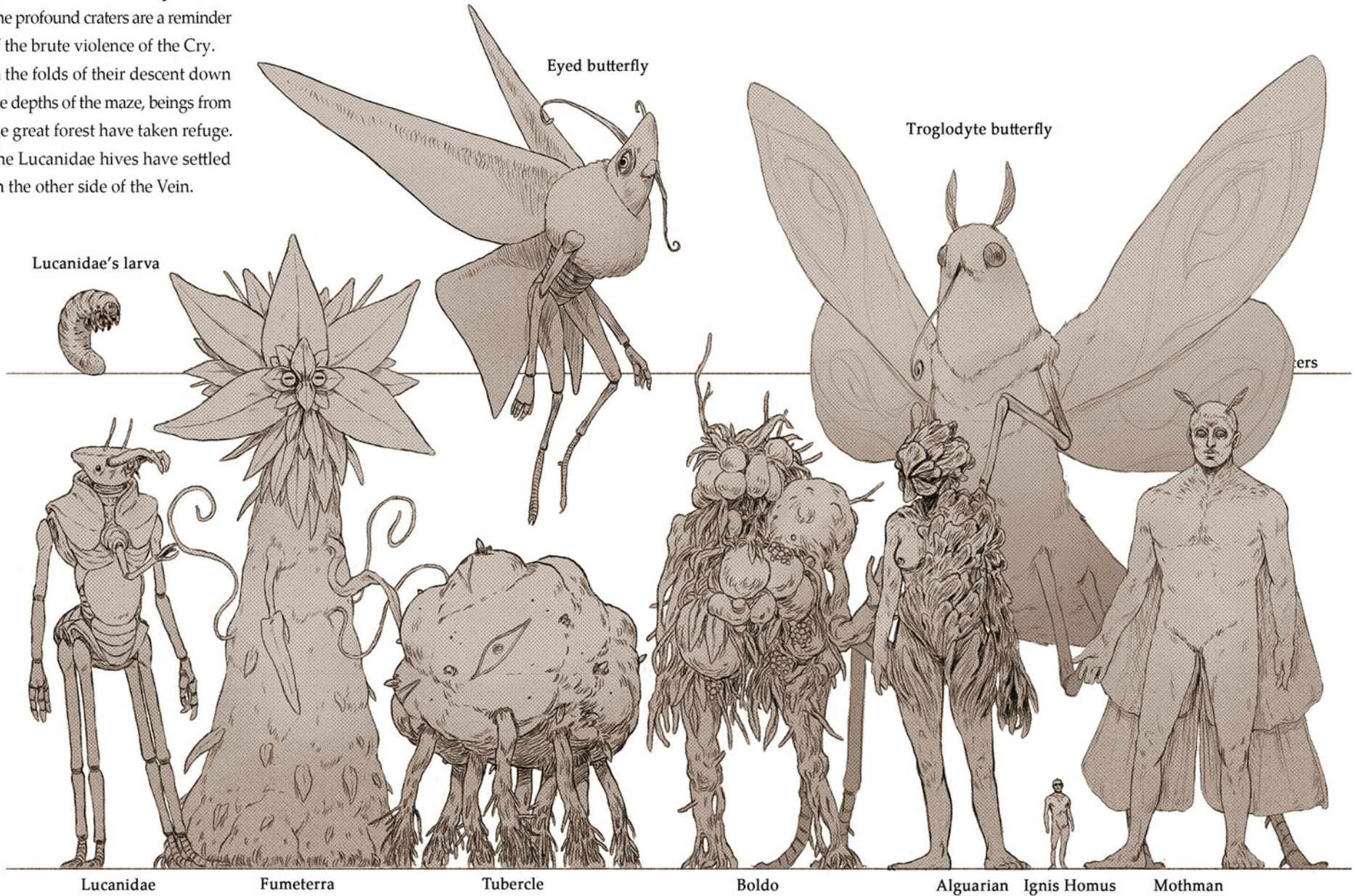
Seth



Chnile

## The Moon Valley

The profound craters are a reminder of the brute violence of the Cry. In the folds of their descent down the depths of the maze, beings from the great forest have taken refuge. The Lucanidae hives have settled on the other side of the Vein.



# The Great Forest

The high density of black trees has given way to a thick woodland that covers the ruins. Utterly impenetrable in places, this vegetal maze is host to a large number of things. Its fringe continues to patiently nibble at the asphalt.

Odray



2 meters



Forester



Sentient ivy



Trudging sunflower



Sturc



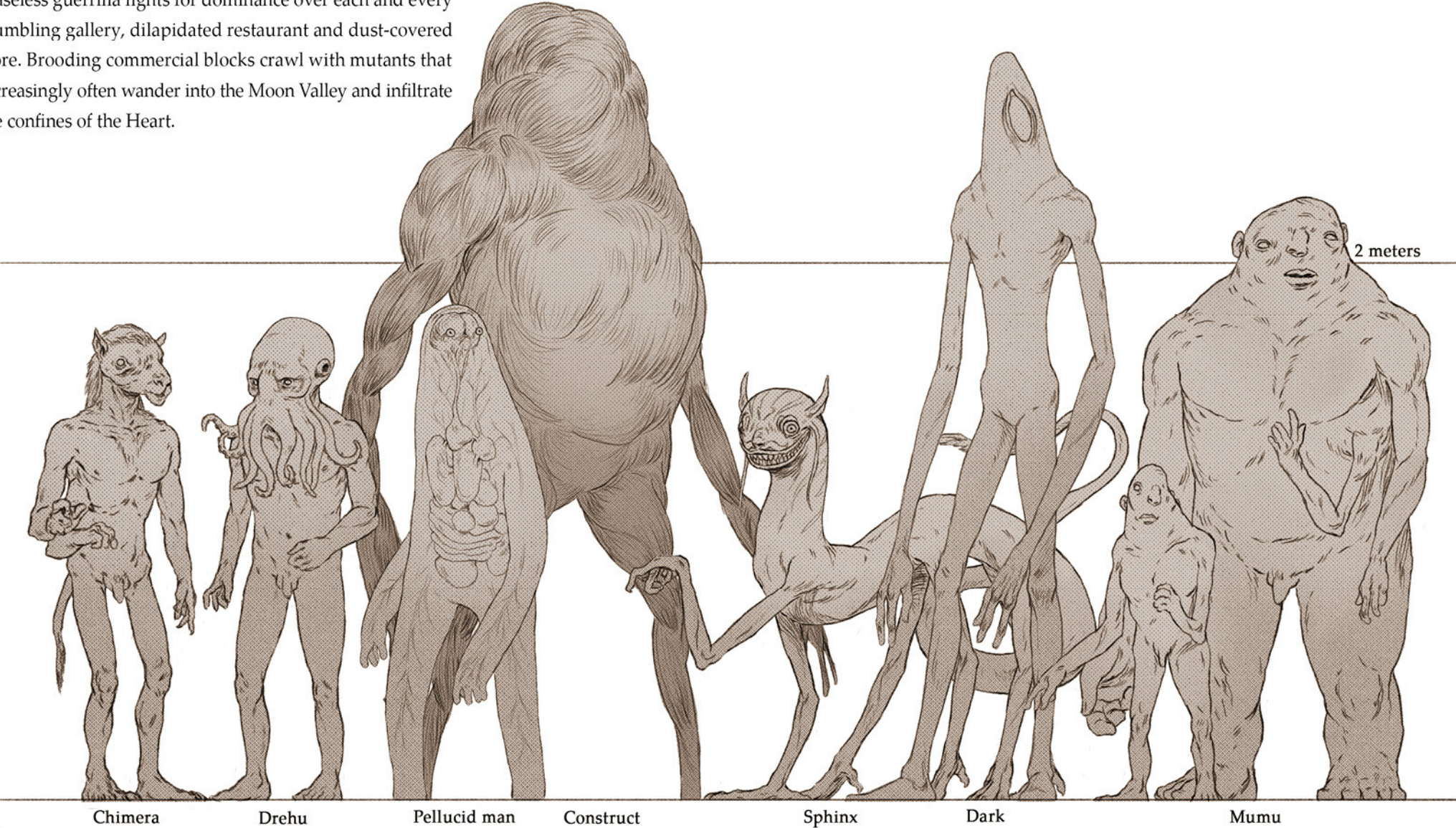
Telephatic shrub

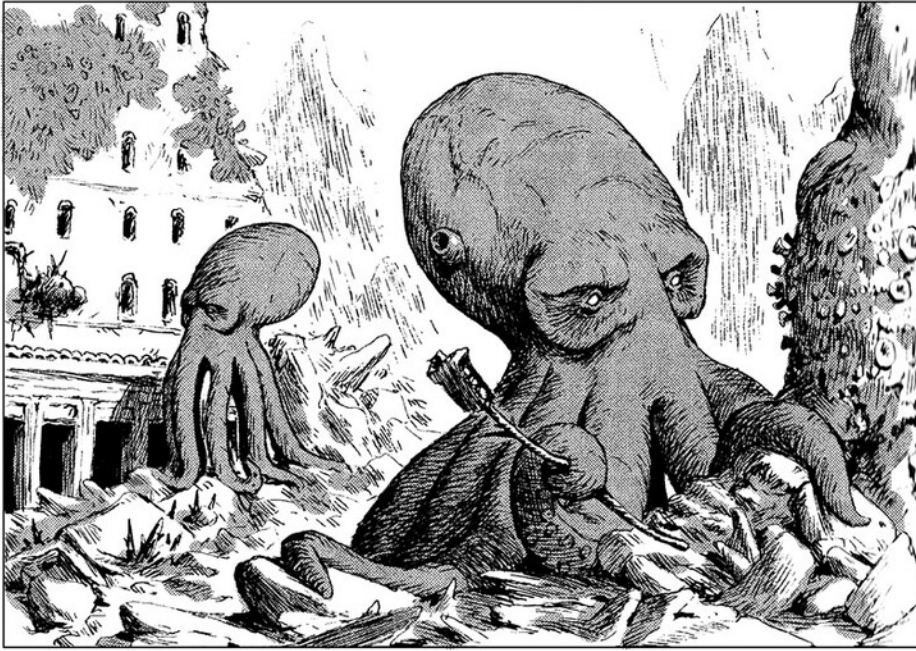


Leafy stalker

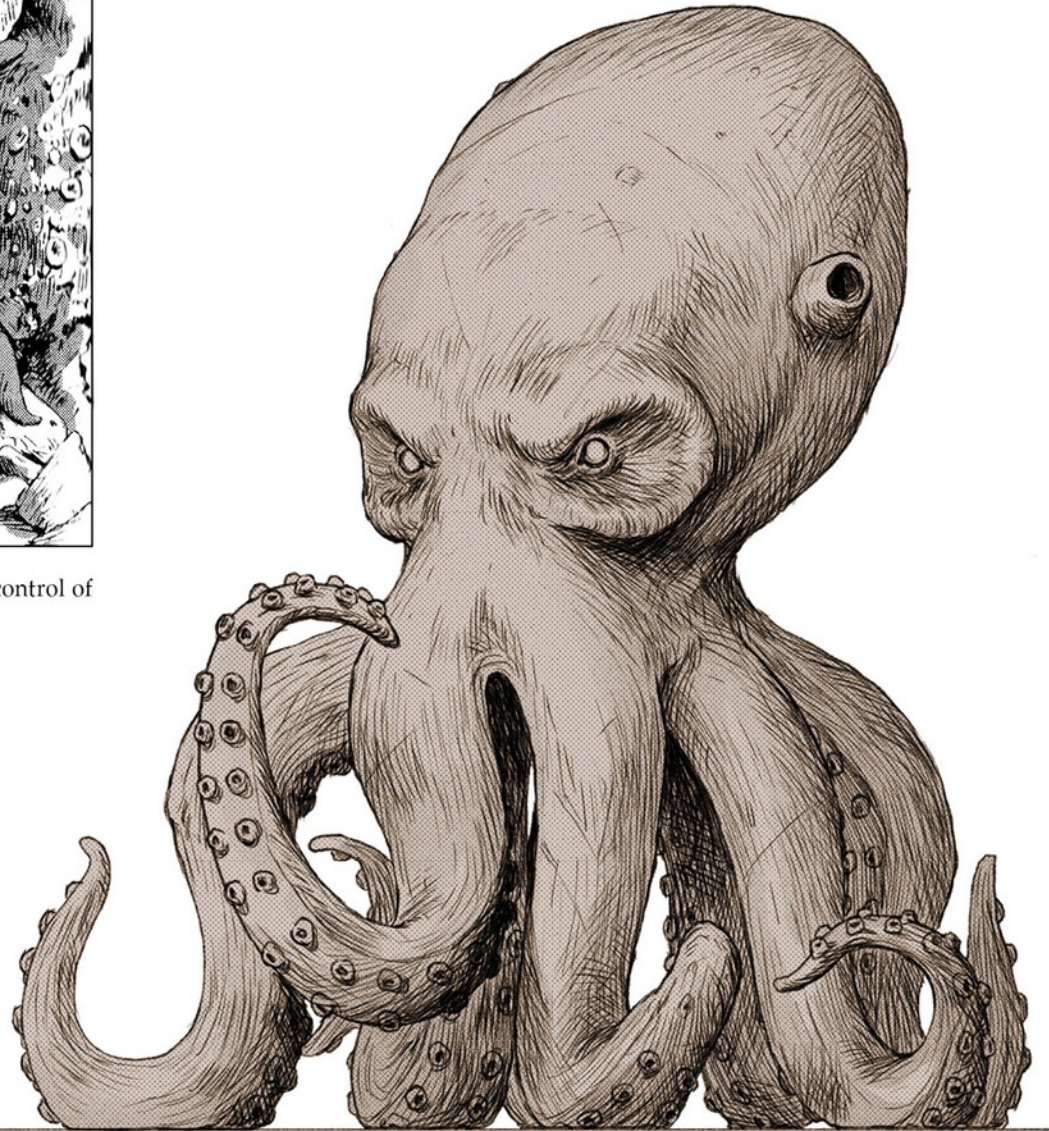
# The Black Tower

What once held the greatest accumulation of shopping and recreational pursuit megacomplexes, the town known as the Black Tower, has become the playing field of chimaeras and mutants. The explosion of the mutant population leads to ceaseless guerrilla fights for dominance over each and every crumbling gallery, dilapidated restaurant and dust-covered store. Brooding commercial blocks crawl with mutants that increasingly often wander into the Moon Valley and infiltrate the confines of the Heart.





Goutls surface from the depths of the underground town. Small groups take control of high-rise buildings and face the perils of the maze.



Ancient Goutlh

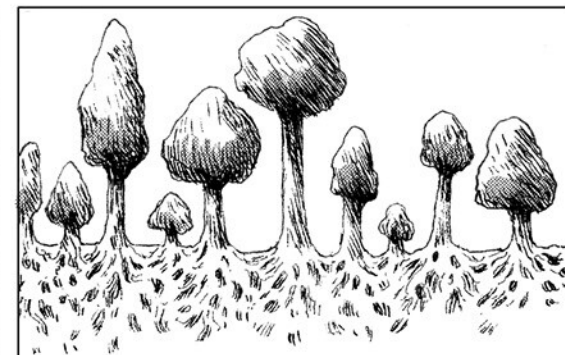
## CHAPTER 10: THE HUMUS ERA



Once a sufficient amount of black trees had died, the Labyrinth turned into a pile of decaying concrete covered in moss and plants, giving way to a vast forest named the Humus. The Humus gradually spreads across Uhia, supplanting the southern desert and the northern frozen lands. Many are the creatures who fail to adapt and disappear, engulfed by the advancing forest. Underneath the trees, one can only hear the whispers of the furtive assemblies held by birds and tiny rodents. The servants of the Humus keep a peaceful watch over the never-ending forest.

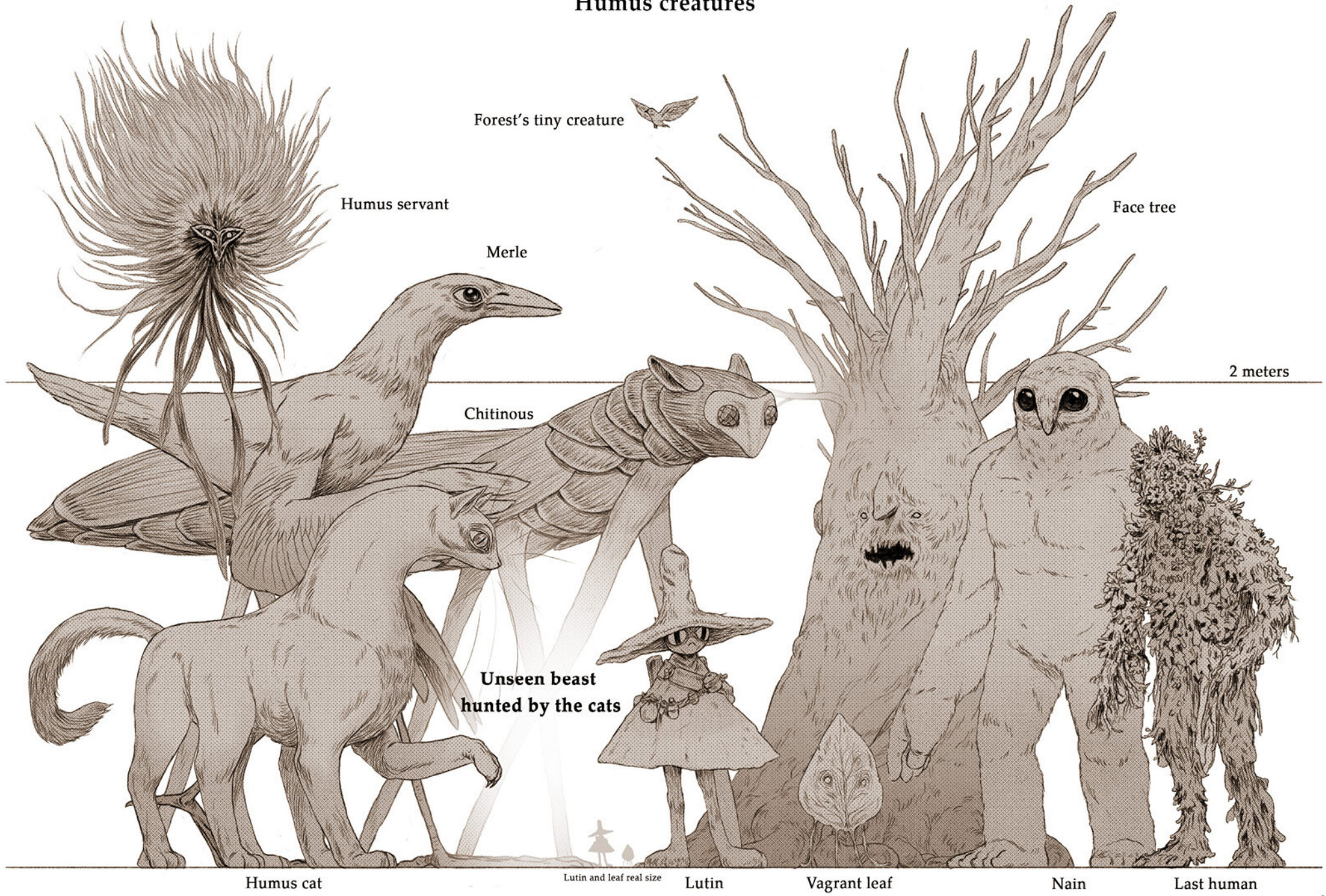


Several monsters of the maze as well as unknown beings tread the green corridors of the forest. The Humus does not concede the founding of settlements larger than hamlets. Plants must be hewn in careful moderation so as not to incur the silent wrath of the trees.



Interconnected by a web of roots, all of the trees and plants of the Humus form a single being made of innumerable parts.

# Humus creatures



Humus cat

Lutin and leaf real size

Lutin

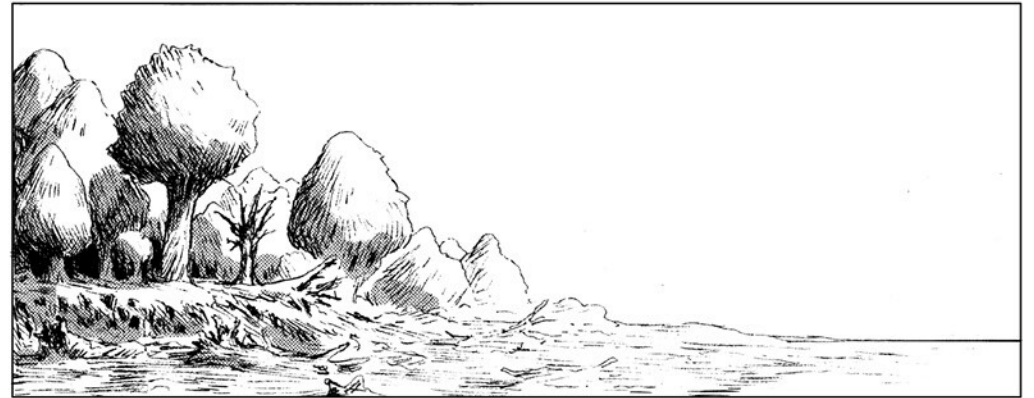
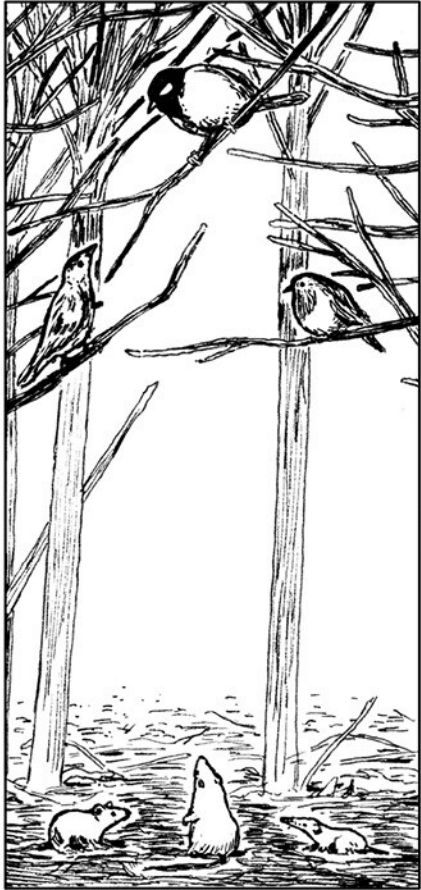
Vagrant leaf

Nain

Last human

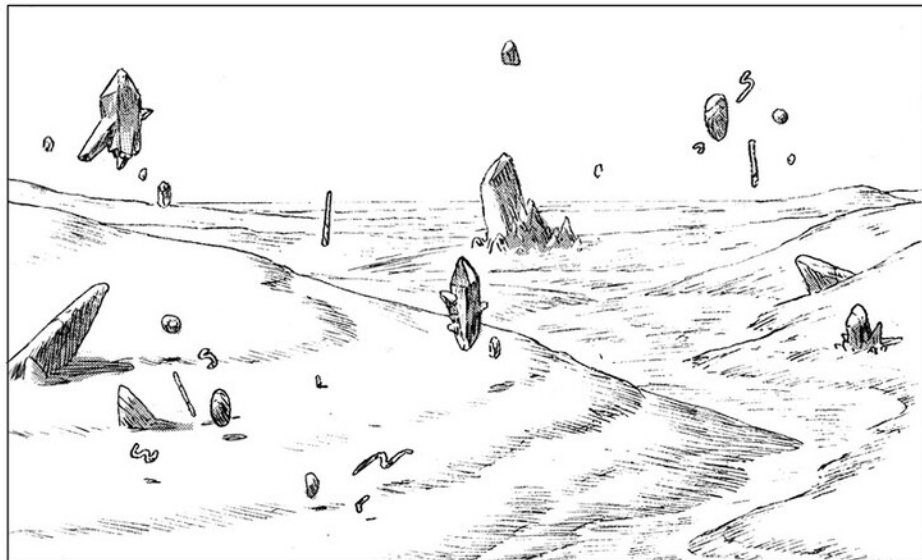
2 meters



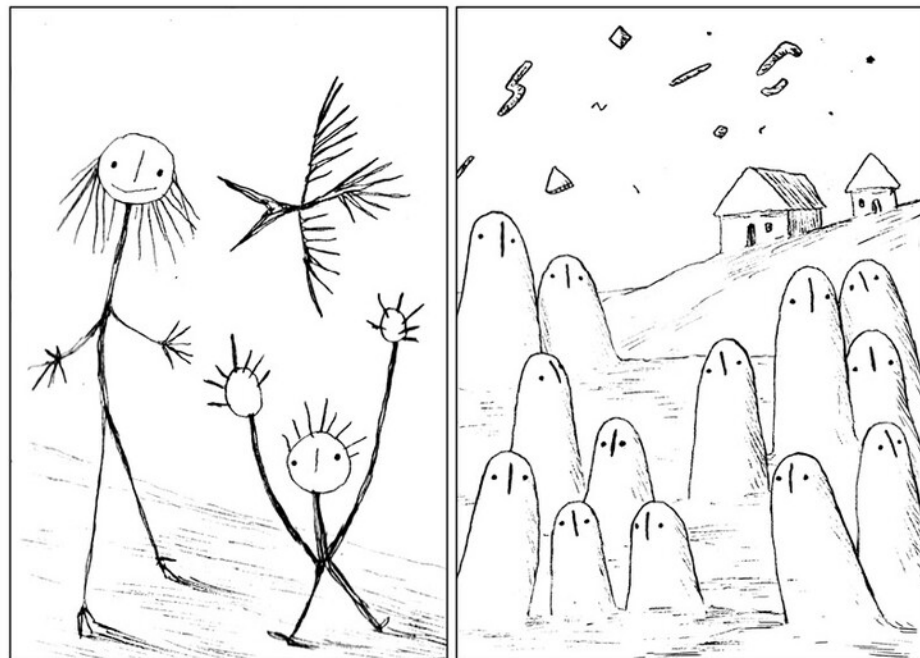
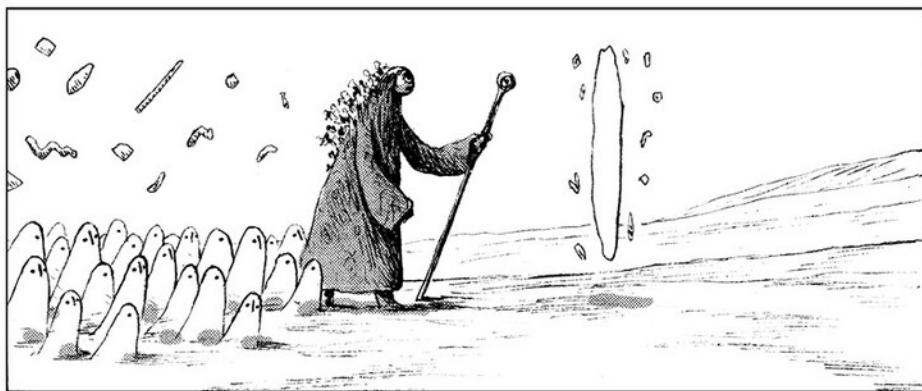


Eventually, the Humus slowly dissolves. The trees whiten before dissipating into dust. Once the last grove has vanished, a wide desert covers the world.

## CHAPTER 11: TIME'S END



The desert left by the Humus is breached with temporal rifts out of which strange roaming beings, come from the birthplace of dreams, step out. Time has crystallised in places to forge singing corses, colour aberrations, shapes and echoes that joyously prance about the air. Curious spectres visit the dunes, where the cats are reaching the end of their last life.



Time is no longer grounded by the roots of trees. The desert is split between the ancient continent of Uhia and the shifting realm of dreams, where nothing subsists for more than a brief moment.



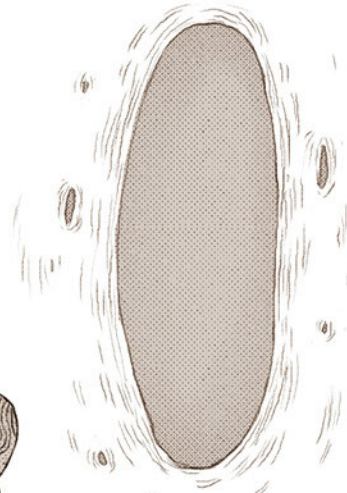
# Desert travellers



Aberration

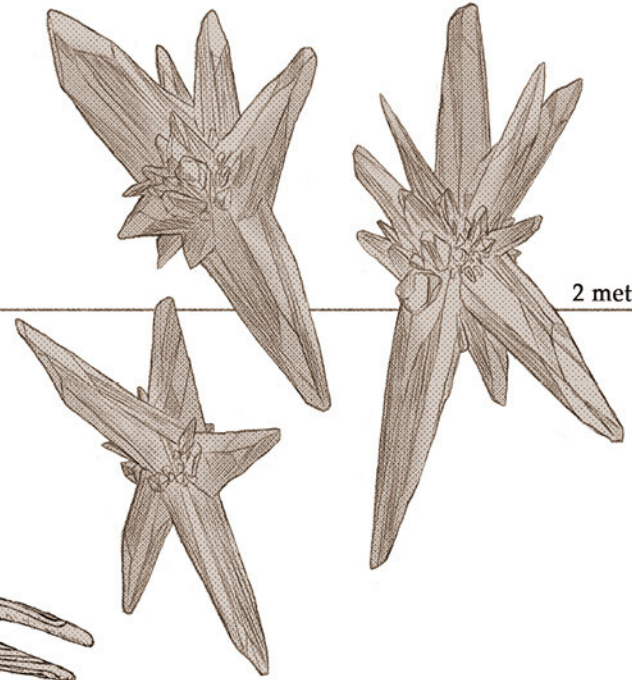


Living lines



Time fault

Singing crystals



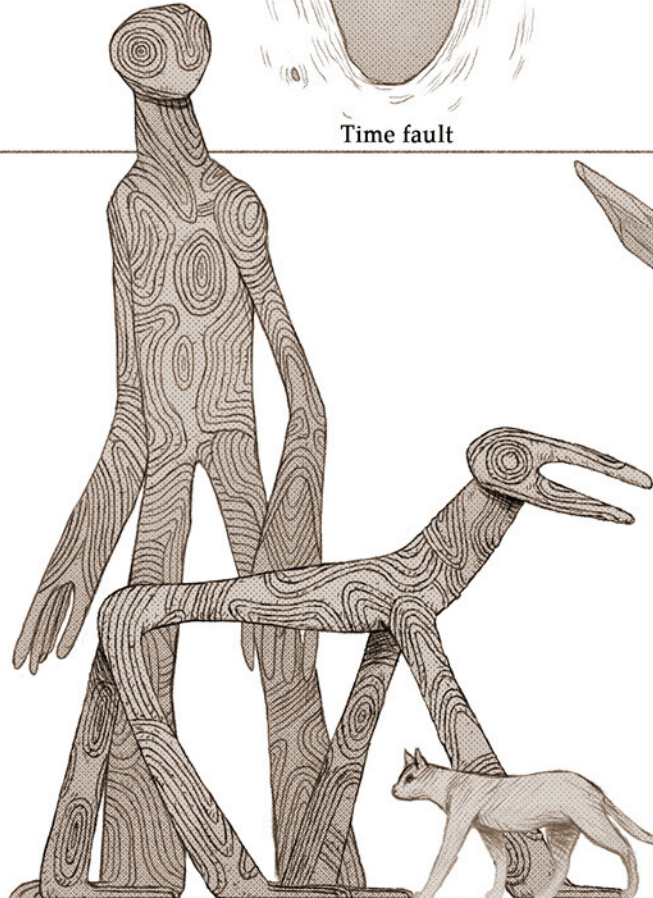
2 meters



The guide



Time phantom



Surveyor

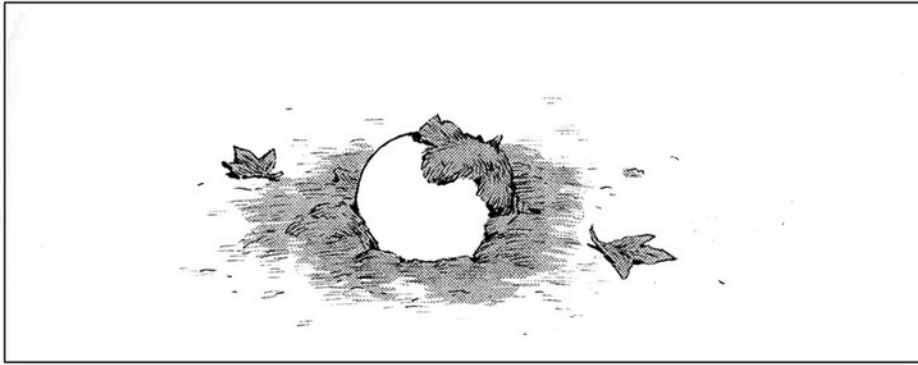


Ninth cat's spirit



Time stone

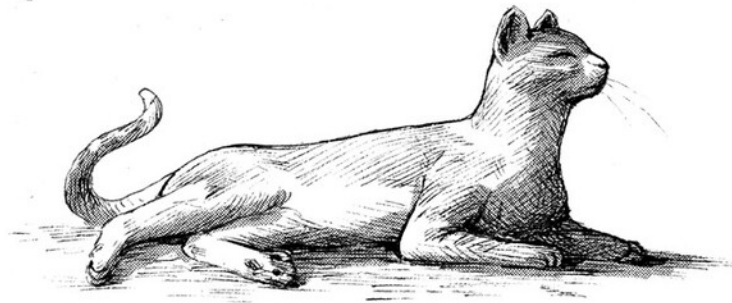




The Humus, sensing that her time was coming, had striven to retreat in the skin where dreams come to life. To this end, she left an egg carefully wrapped in a cocoon of moss and lichen.

From this egg, a shapeless being has emerged. He too is constrained to the same fate of erring across the desert and amid dreams.

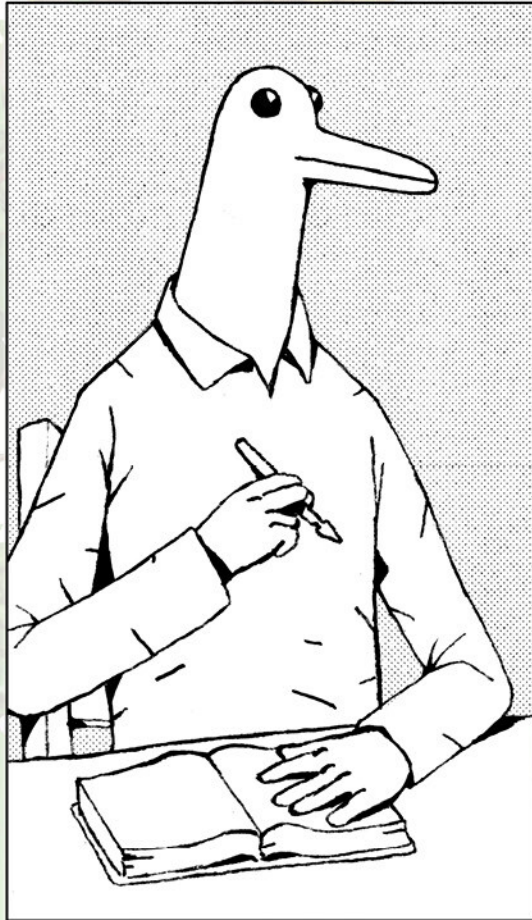
For how long does he stay there, alone, unable to approach the time wanderers or the few beings that occasionally appear on the parched coral beaches?





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Mr. Time



**RUST AND HUMUS** is a project by Lucas Roussel.  
Thanks to my friends for their precious advices.  
Thanks Mom for the text correction.

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This English translation was made possible by my  
awesome friends and the generous participation of  
the people of Artstation.  
Thank you everyone.



