

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

DRAGONS

OF D&D



50TM

JOHN GRELO

FOREWORD

WHEN WE FIRST TALKED about refreshing dragons for the revised DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rulebooks, I was incredibly excited and absolutely terrified. What an enormous challenge!

D&D art has evolved many times over the years, but changing dragons means something more. I mean, they're literally in the name of the game.

How do you refresh such an amazing set of designs that have inspired millions of tales told across countless tables and screens big and small? Some of these designs have lasted for multiple editions and helped cement what a D&D dragon looks like. They're what you see in your mind when you close your eyes.

The designs in this book took particular inspiration from Todd Lockwood's creations for the third edition of the game, as well as all of the dragons of other editions. We saw this as an opportunity to honor the artists who've contributed to these amazing creatures throughout the years, and we've tried to create new designs that combine the best parts of all of them.

I hope you enjoy what you see here. We had a lot of fun exploring different things along the way. We tried new approaches, and we explored them from a place of genuine interest and curiosity. We care deeply about this game and its art, and I hope that shines through.

This book would not be possible without the artists. Each of them brought something new not only in the incredible art they created but also with their thought process and ideas.

SPECIAL THANKS

Thanks to our artists: Alexander Ostrowski, Simon Lee, Bryan Wynia, Alex Konstad, Carlo Arellano, Jax Jocson, Matt Millard, Justin Sweet, Michael Broussard, John Grello, Andrew Baker, Aaron Riley, Katerina Ladon, April Prime, Terryl Witlatch, Antonio Manzanedo, Jason Rainville, Anna Podedworna, Campbell White, and Chase Stone.



Josh Herman
D&D Head of Art

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SECTION 1:

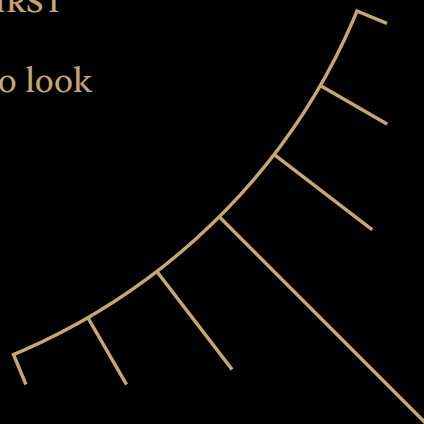
PROCESS

FROM CLAY SCULPTURES TO 3D MODELS TO 2D
SKETCHES TO ILLUSTRATIONS, WE EXPLORED
SEVERAL WAYS TO LOOK AT THE DRAGONS. WE'LL
SHOW YOU SOME OF THE UNSEEN WORK THAT LED
UP TO THE AMAZING ILLUSTRATIONS THAT GRACE
BOTH THIS BOOK AND D&D BOOKS TO COME.



CLAY

THIS MIGHT SOUND STRANGE, BUT THE FIRST person we began working with wasn't an illustrator; it was a sculptor. We wanted to look at dragons from a different perspective.



IN THIS FIRST SCULPTURE OF A GOLD DRAGON, WE EXPLORED A SERPENTINE DESIGN WITHOUT TRADITIONAL WINGS.

SIMON LEE HAD THE IDEA THAT INSTEAD OF THEIR WINGS GETTING BIGGER AS THEY AGED, GOLD DRAGONS WOULD GROW MORE SHORT WINGS ALONG THEIR SIDES.



Simon Lee is an amazing sculptor who has worked in movies for years, making monsters you've probably seen on the big screen. His work is stunning, and despite it often being the size of your hand, you're able to see not just a character but the way a character would move or pose. He has the ability to create such a clear personality in his work that it almost feels alive.

Working in clay also removed the distraction of color. We were forced to see the dragons as little clay creatures that would be on our tables. We were able to ask questions we wouldn't normally ask—like "How would a green dragon move through the forest?"—and focus on just that element.

The clay sculptures showed us that we should create unique body and wing shapes so different kinds of dragons could be easily recognized.

In these small, and sometimes large, sculptures, we saw that there was a lot of room to experiment while still being authentic to what has come before. Now, we just needed to focus on how to express the dragons' personalities and figure out what the best choice for each dragon would be.

CLAY SCULPTURES



SIMON'S SCULPT OF A DRAGON BREATHING
FIRE GAVE US AN EXCELLENT WAY TO SEE
WHAT "CAMERA ANGLES" WE COULD EXPLORE
IN AN ACTION SCENE.



CLAY TURNAROUNDS



WE EXPLORED WHAT A WHITE
DRAGON WOULD LOOK LIKE IF IT HAD
A WYVERN-STYLE BODY (ABOVE).

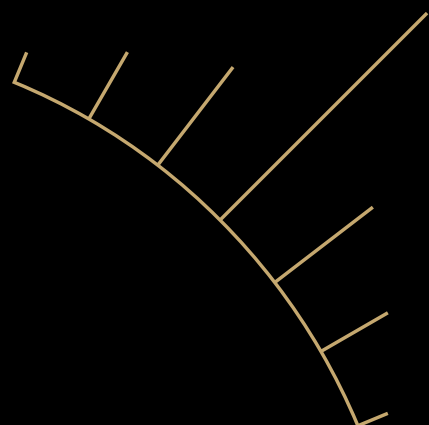
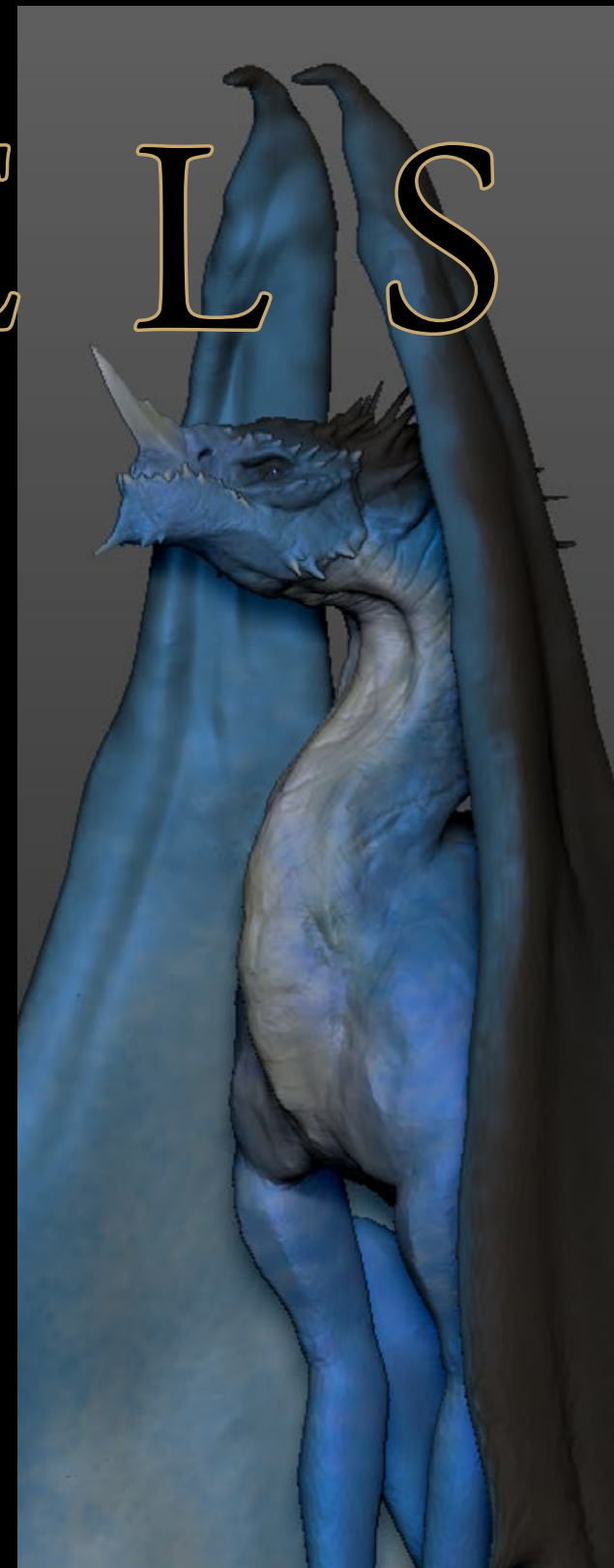
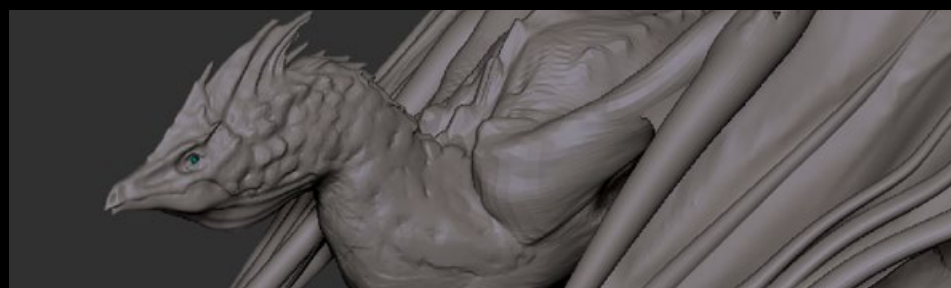
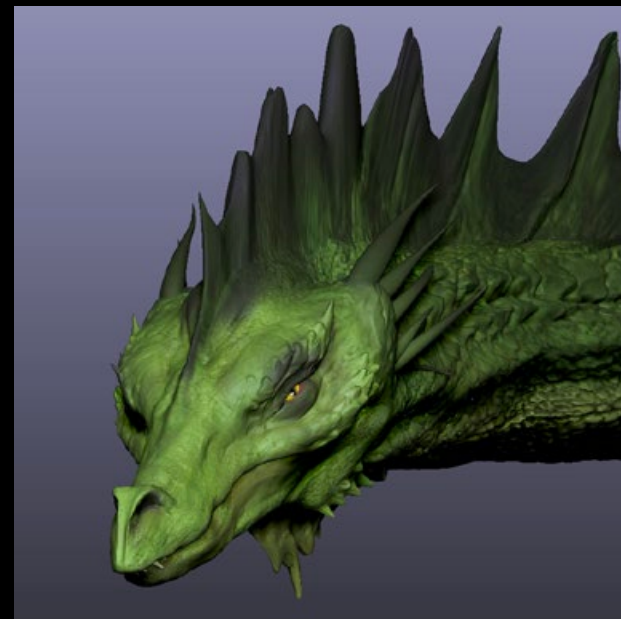




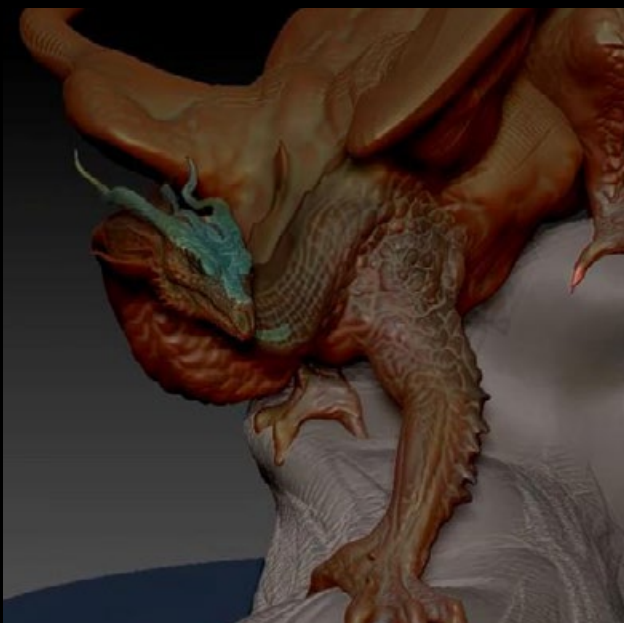
3 D MODELS

3 D MODELING IS ESSENTIALLY DIGITAL sculpture. Using digital “clay” affords multiple benefits, such as being able to create sculptures free of the constraints of gravity and undo changes quickly. After exploring initial ideas in clay, Josh Herman, Andrew Baker, Bryan Wynia, and Matt Millard began working alongside Simon Lee in 3D. Together they built on the designs Simon had started and ideated on specific dragons.

THESE 3D MODELS BY
JOSH HERMAN CONTINUED
TO EXPLORE SIMON LEE’S
DRAGON DESIGNS.



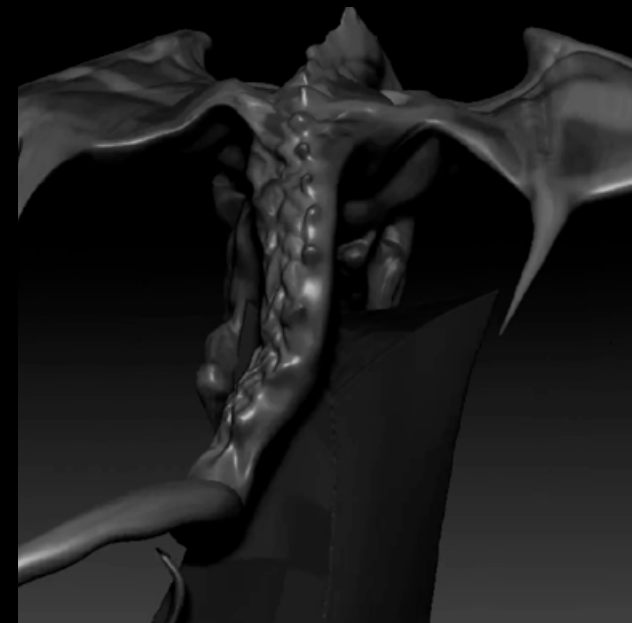
3D MODELING



SIMON LEE'S DIGITAL SCULPTURES OF
GREEN, BLUE, BLACK, SILVER, GREEN,
AND COPPER DRAGONS



3D TURNAROUNDS



SIMON'S EXPLORATIONS OF BLACK DRAGONS
(ABOVE) AND OF BRONZE, COPPER, AND
BRASS DRAGONS AS A TRIO (BELOW)

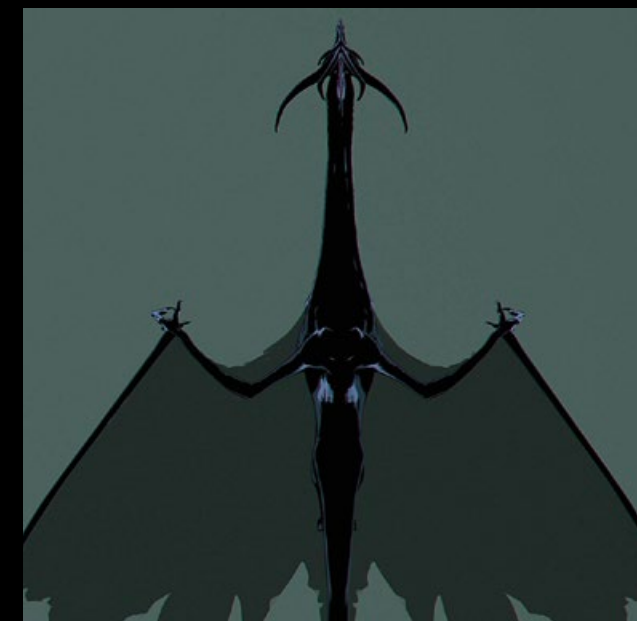




ANDREW BAKER'S BRONZE DRAGON CONCEPT WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND, WITH A SHINY METALLIC TEXTURE PAINTED DIRECTLY ON THE MODEL. THIS CONCEPT BROUGHT A SLEEK AND LOW-PROFILED BODY THAT WORKS WELL FOR AN AQUATIC DRAGON.



3D SILHOUETTES



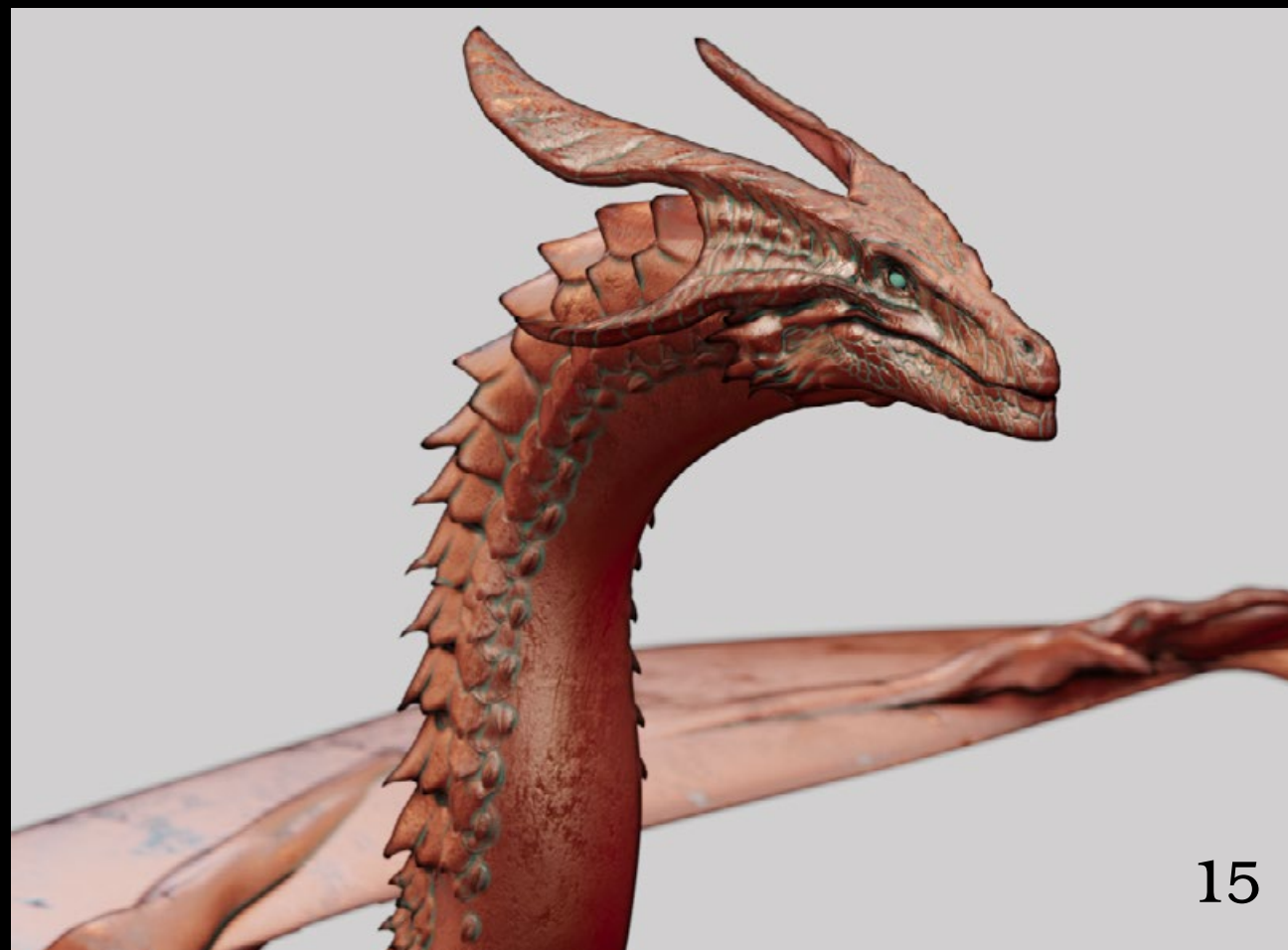
BRYAN WYNIA'S WORK EXPLORED THE
DRAGONS SOLELY IN SILHOUETTE.



3D REALISM & DETAIL



MATT MILLARD'S WORK MADE THE
DRAGONS FULLY DETAILED AND
BROUGHT A SENSE OF REALISM.



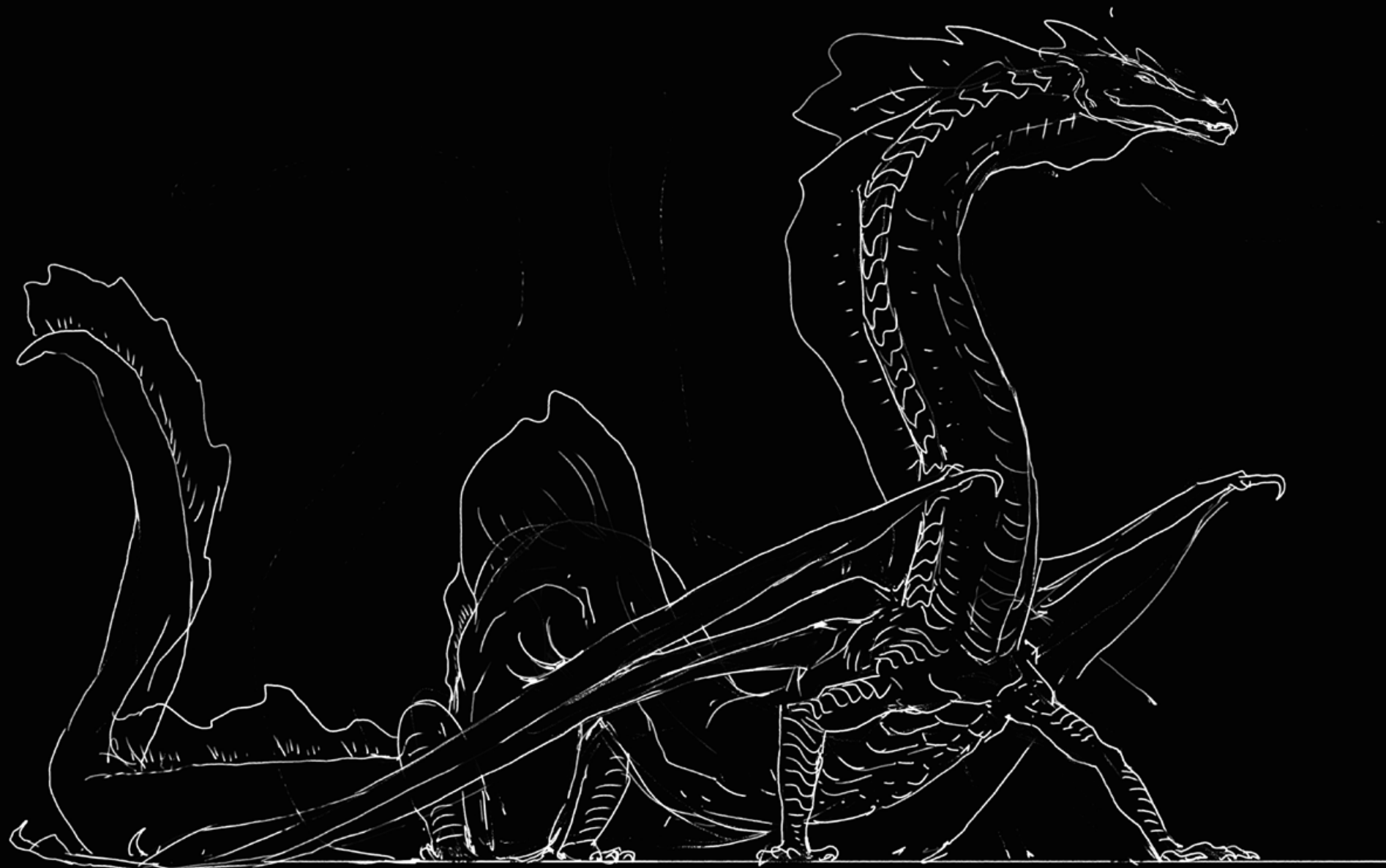
SKETCHES

2D CONCEPTS ARE PERFECT FOR SEEING A LOT of options quickly. We were fortunate to work with Alex Konstad, who provided tons of line drawings based on the sculptures and design briefs. We've included comments from Josh Herman on Alex's sketches so you can see our thought process.

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This sketch from Alex had all the elements we wanted for the green dragon: long and snaky with a face that felt intelligent and dangerous. It also showed us that we needed to be careful with a small wing shape and long serpentine body, because we had a similar plan for the gold dragon.

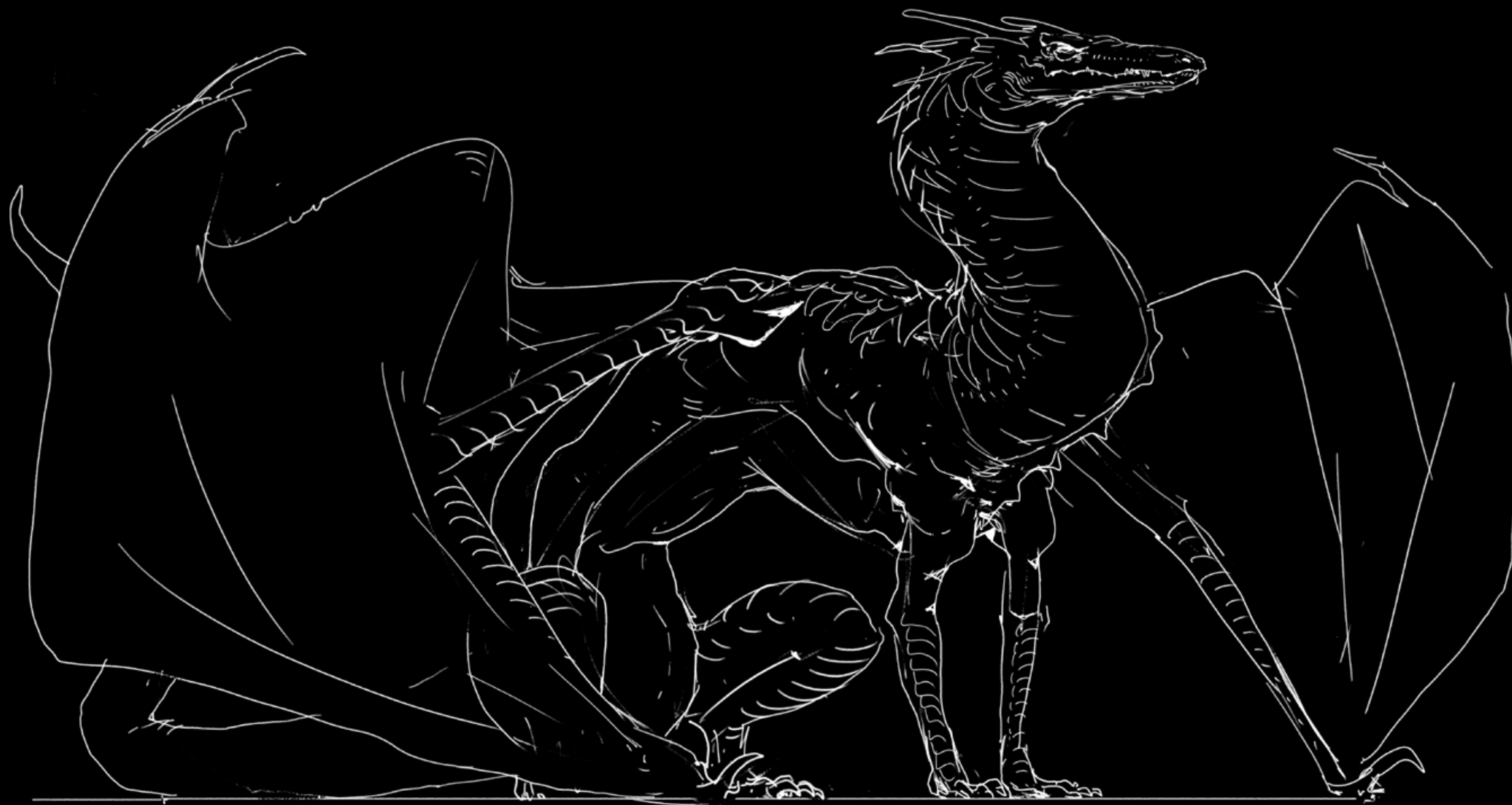
THIS IS GREAT FOR A GREEN. THE EEL VIBE PLUS THE WINGS IS FANTASTIC. WE WILL NEED TO BE CAUTIOUS TO KEEP IT UNIQUE FROM THE GOLD. —JH



.....

A pose can tell you a lot—the way someone holds their head can speak to their character. Think of your favorite villain. Do they hold their head or body in a unique way? This sketch was helpful because it showed us that with some longer necks, we could explore different postures and moods for the dragons.

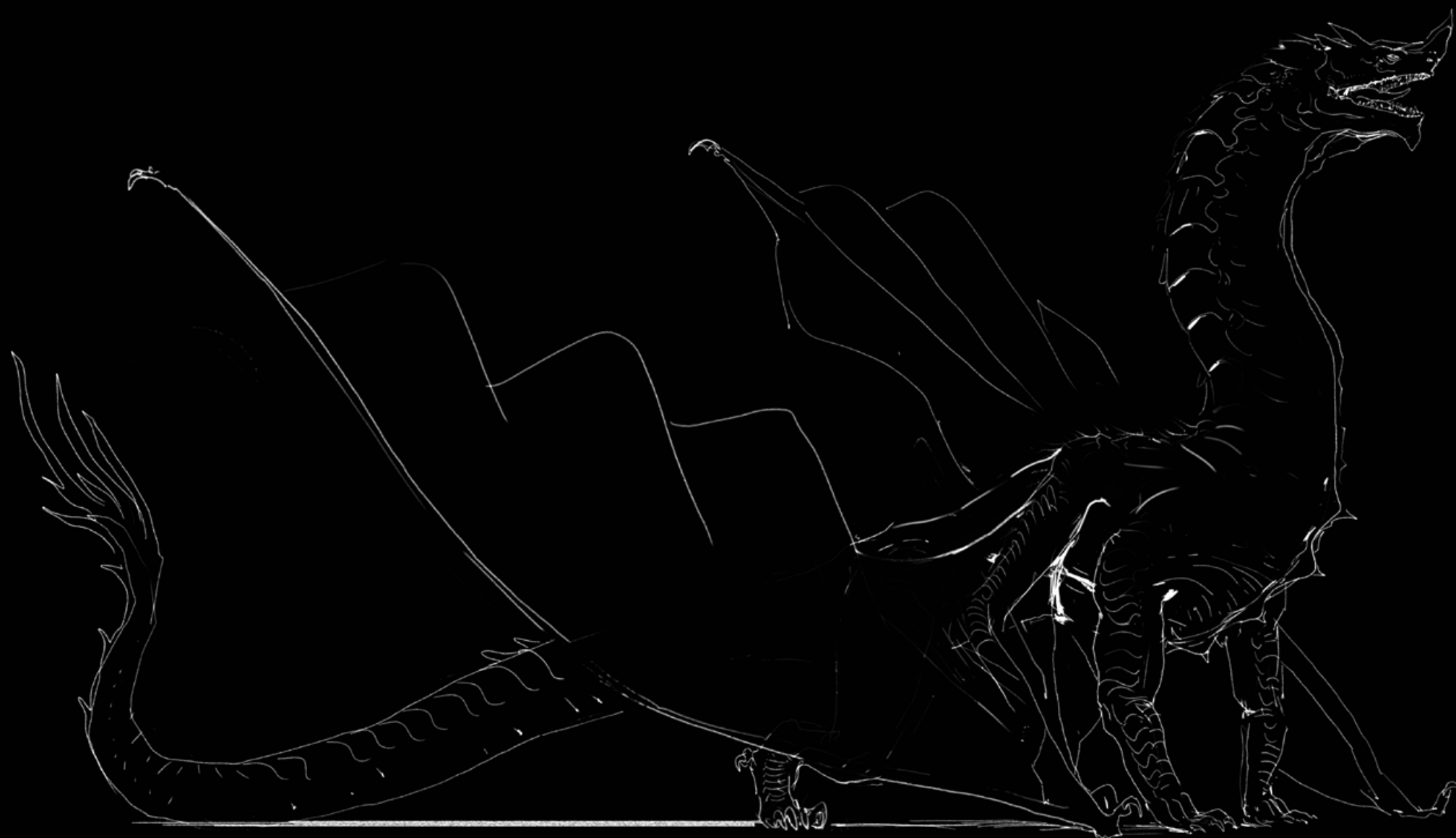
THERE'S SOMETHING REGAL ABOUT THIS HEAD SHAPE THAT I'M ENJOYING. MAYBE A COPPER OR BRONZE? HOW COULD THIS FEEL WELCOMING AND FRIENDLY? —JH



.....

We liked the idea of the blue dragon having the largest wings of all the dragons and of reframing it as the ultimate flier. This piece gave us the idea that the blue could also be somewhat beautiful and sleek.

POSSIBLE START FOR A BLUE. WHAT
IF BLUES WERE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL
DRAGONS THAT EVER EXISTED? — JH



COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

JOSH'S 3D
MODEL



SIMON'S CLAY
SCULPTURE



ALL EDITED TOGETHER

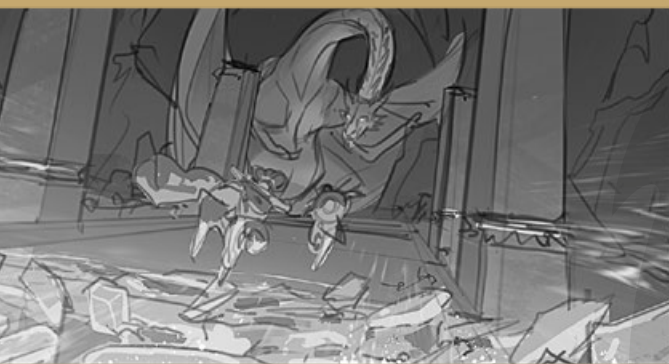
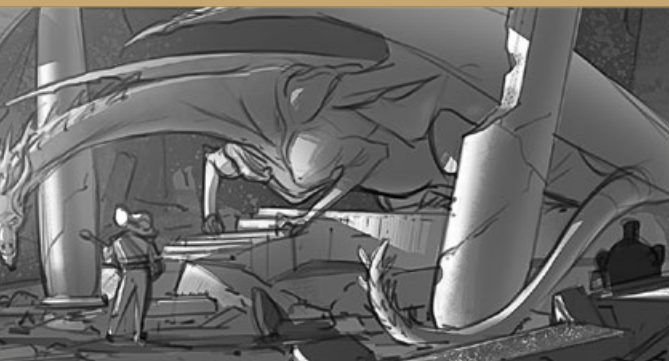
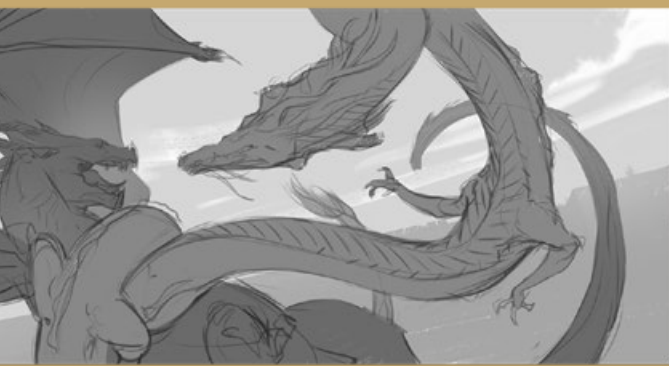


CARLO'S PAINTOVER



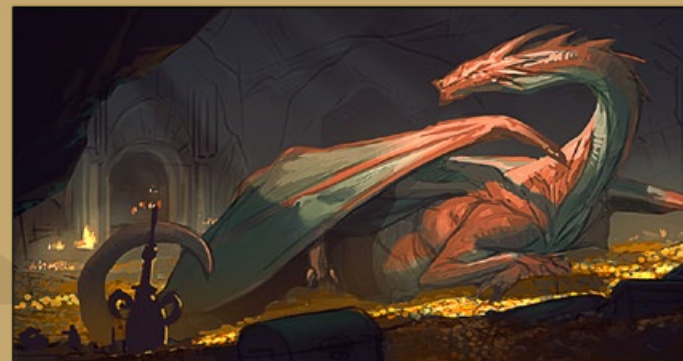
HERE, JOSH CREATED A GREEN DRAGON 3D MODEL THAT WAS PAINTED OVER BY CARLO ARELLANO AND THEN EDITED ONTO A GREEN DRAGON CLAY SCULPTURE BY SIMON LEE.





SECTION 2:

EXPLORATION

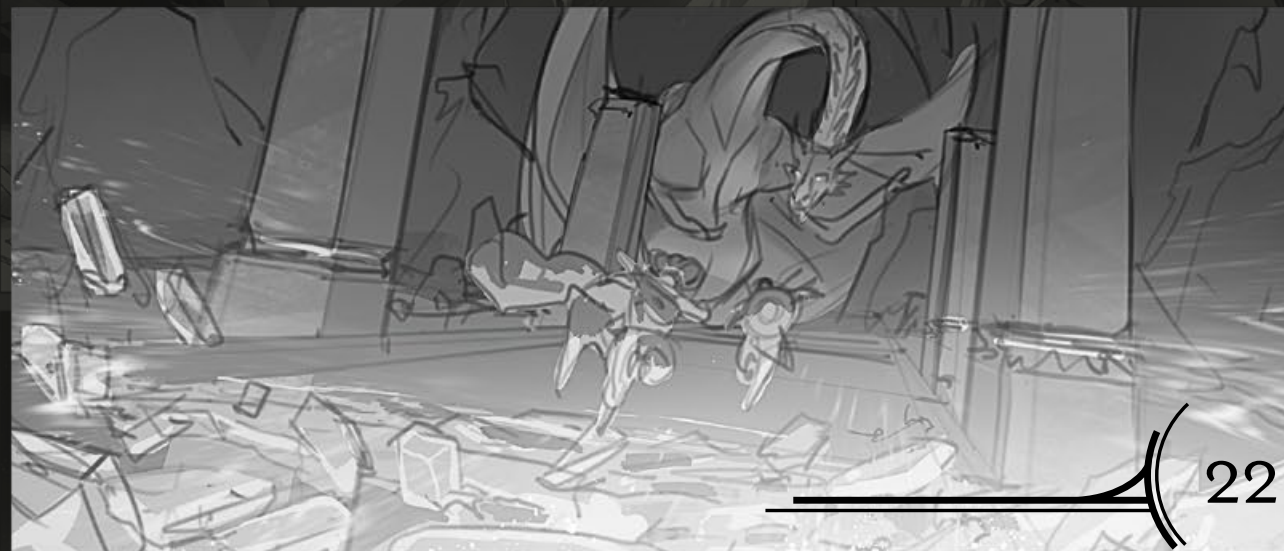
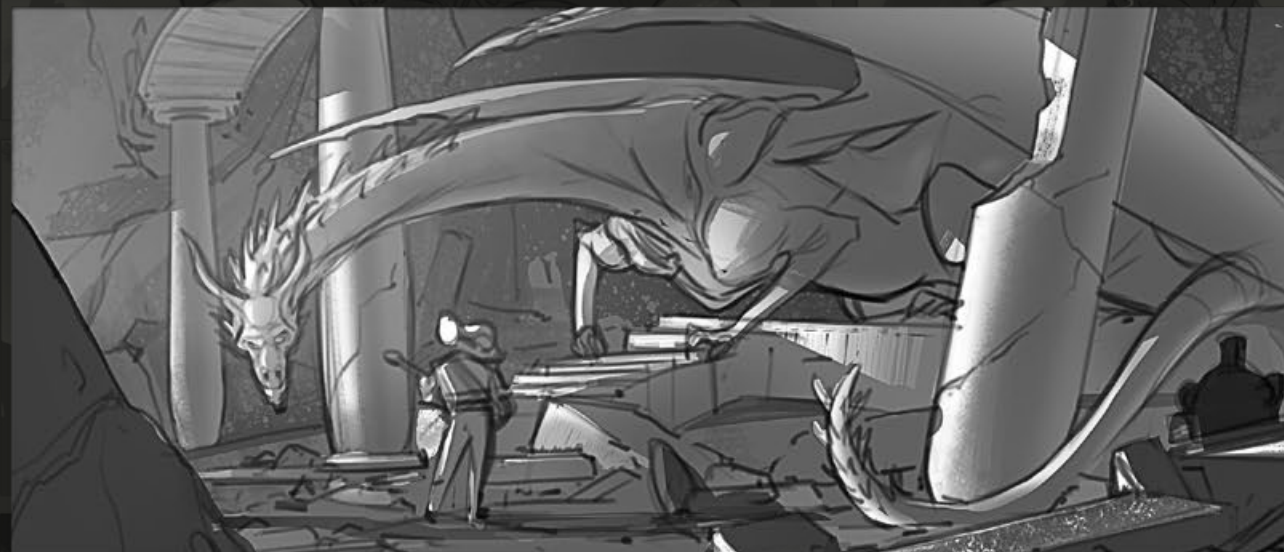
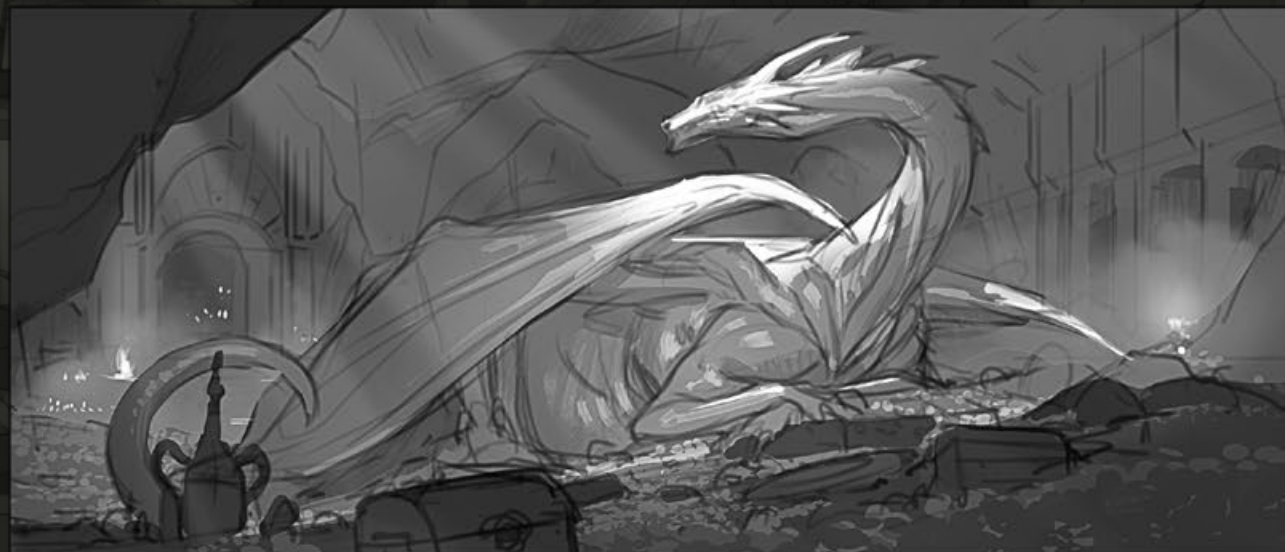


COMPOSITION

AFTER GOING THROUGH A WIDE RANGE OF exploration in clay, 3D models, and sketches, we dove into illustrations to see what some of these ideas would look like if we combined different elements.

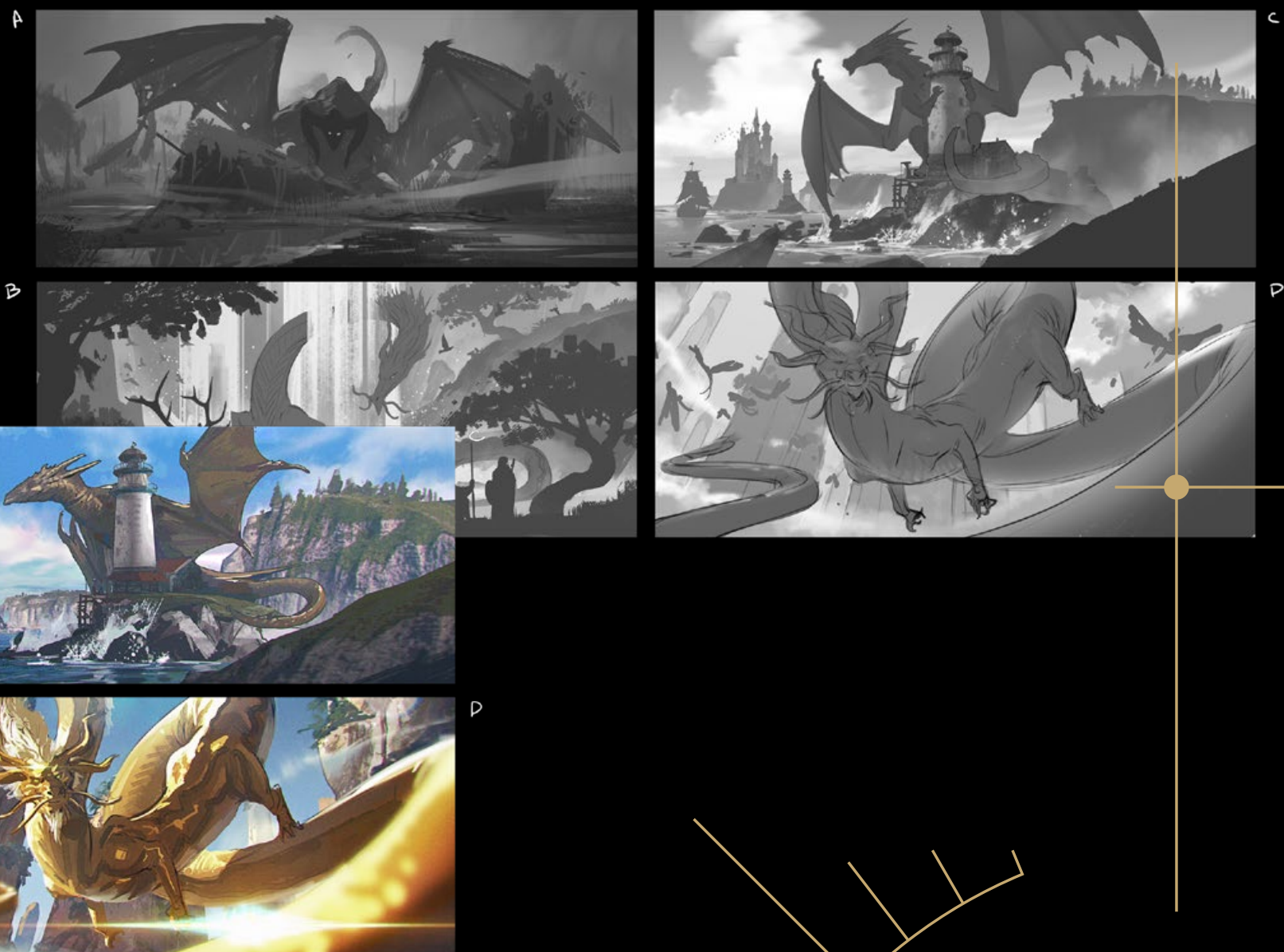
It was important that we worked only with values at the beginning to develop the shape and personality of each dragon. Just like clay, this allowed us to focus on the elements we liked and the areas we needed to improve.

JOHN GRELO was the first person TO COMPOSE ILLUSTRATIONS FOR THE DRAGONS. HERE YOU CAN SEE SOME OF HIS EARLY EXPLORATIONS FOR COPPER DRAGONS.

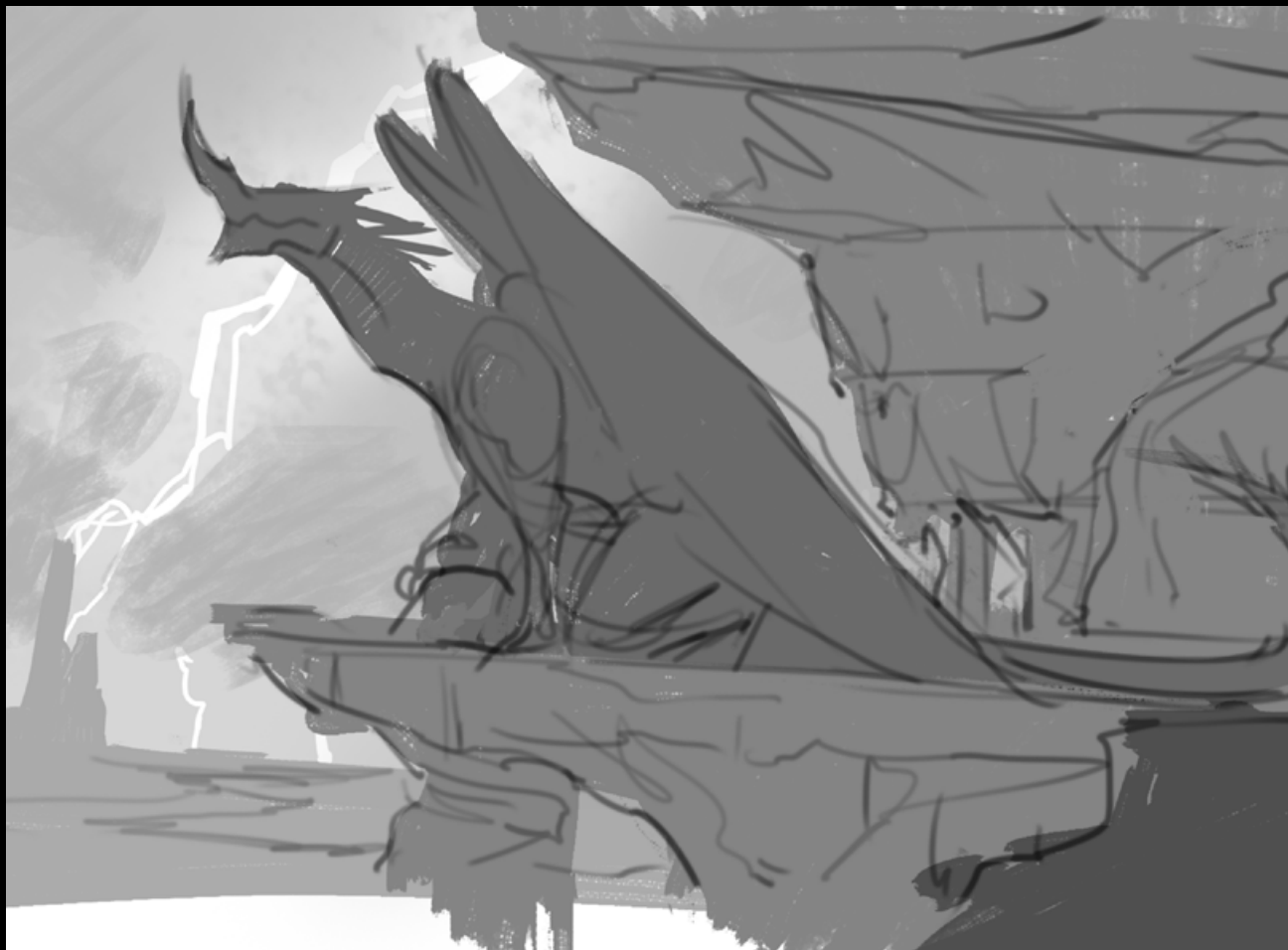
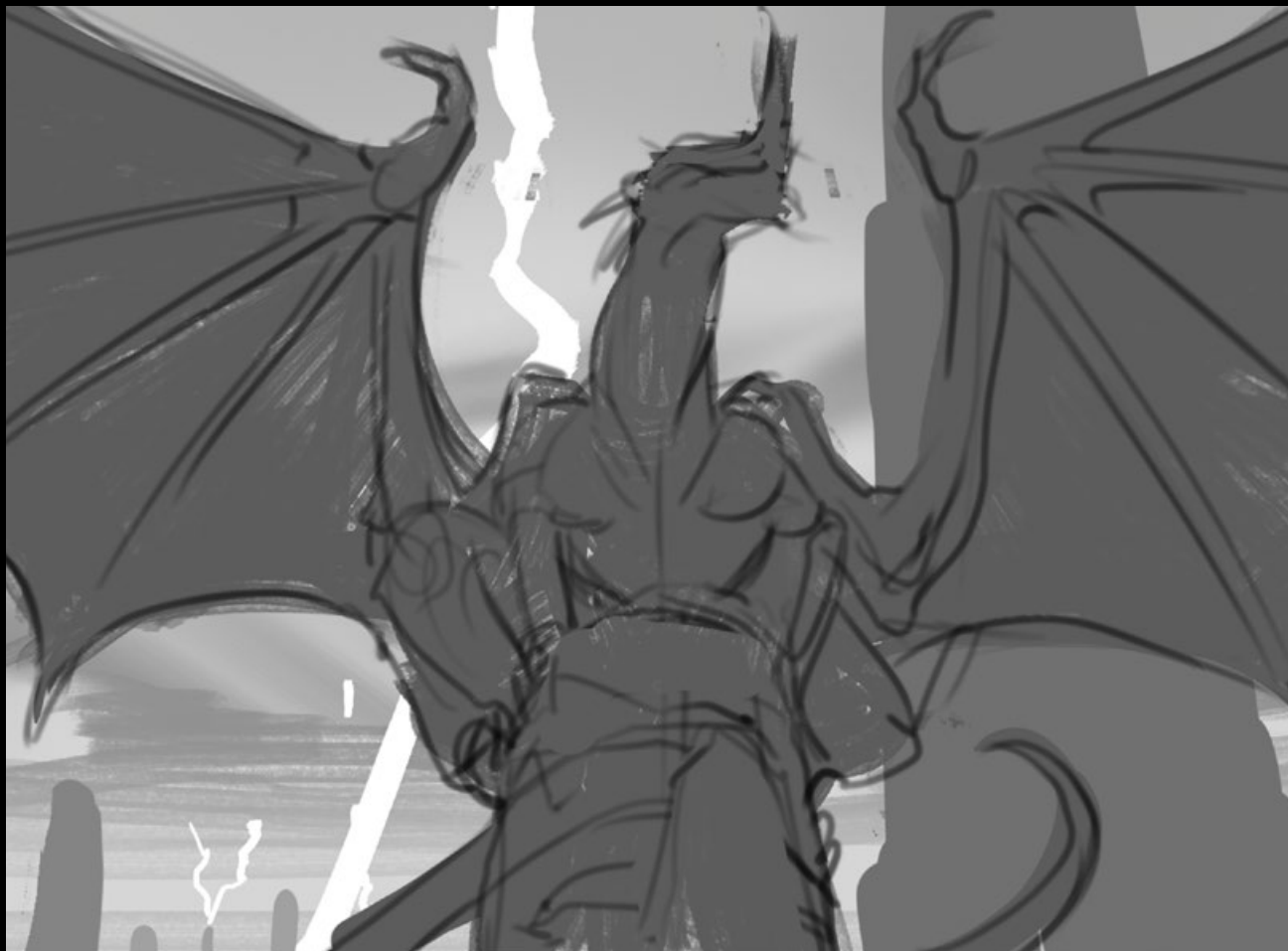


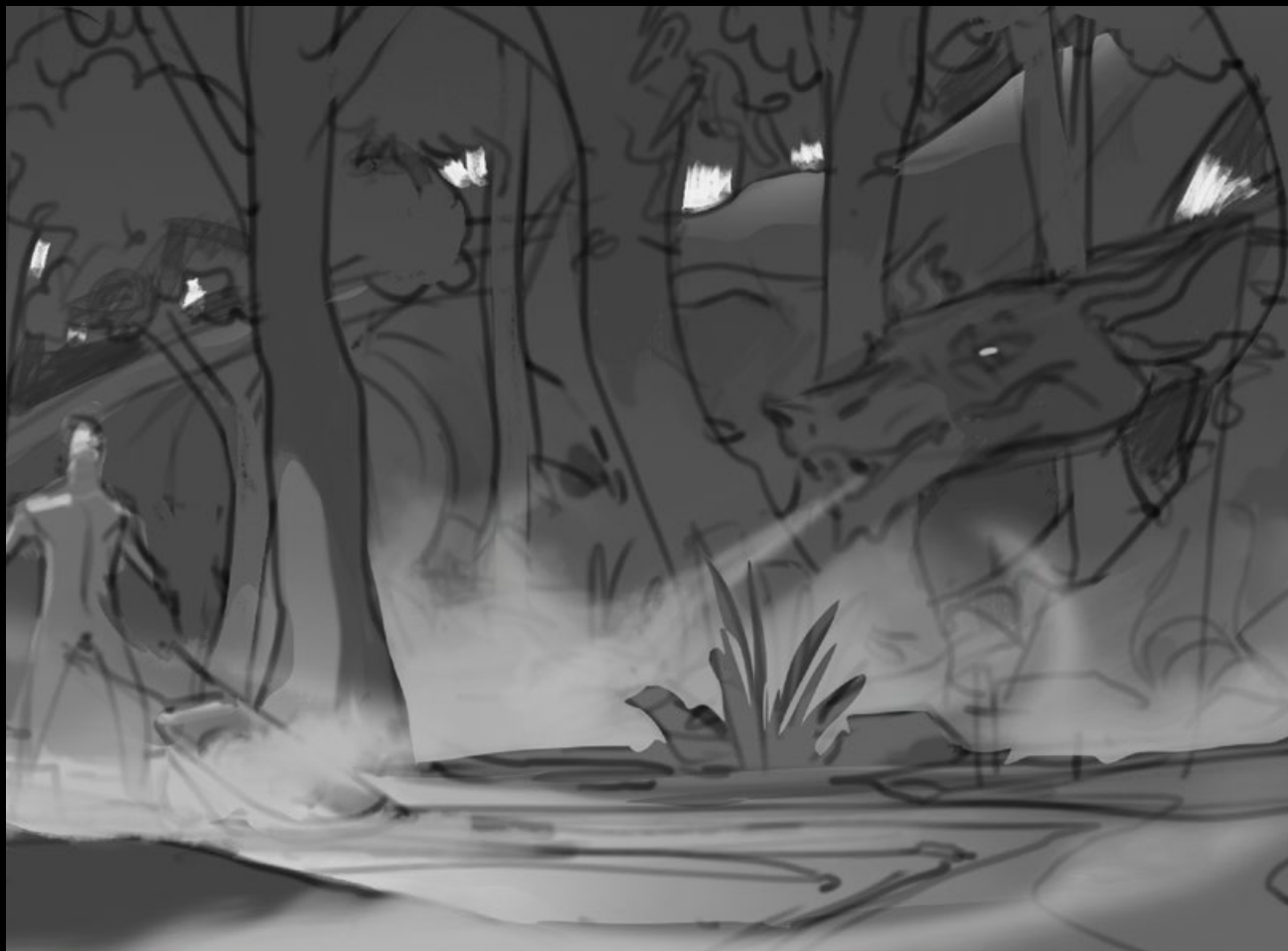
ADDING COLOR

After exploring values, we moved on to color to reveal what the final scene and mood would be.











MICHAEL BROUSSARD DID A SERIES
OF EXPLORATIONS FOR HOW A GREEN
DRAGON MIGHT LURE CREATURES INTO
ITS FOREST AND CONTROL THEM.





JUSTIN SWEET'S INCREDIBLE PAINTINGS CAPTURED
THE ESSENCES OF MANY OF THE DRAGONS AND WERE
USED AS KEY REFERENCES FOR THE FINAL PASS.





KATERINA LADON'S AMAZING SET OF PAINTINGS
EXPLORED SCENES FOR BLUE, GREEN, GOLD, AND
BRONZE DRAGONS.



STRIKING CONCEPTS FROM AARON MILLER AND
CARLO ARELLANO GAVE A GREAT SENSE OF THE
PERSONALITY OF EACH DRAGON.



SECTION 3:

ANATOMY

ALEXANDER OSTROWSKI



ANATOMY

AFTER ALL OF THE IDEAS, CONCEPTS, AND explorations, we needed someone to close out the project and create the final design sheets. We also needed someone who understood these dragons both as characters and as creatures.

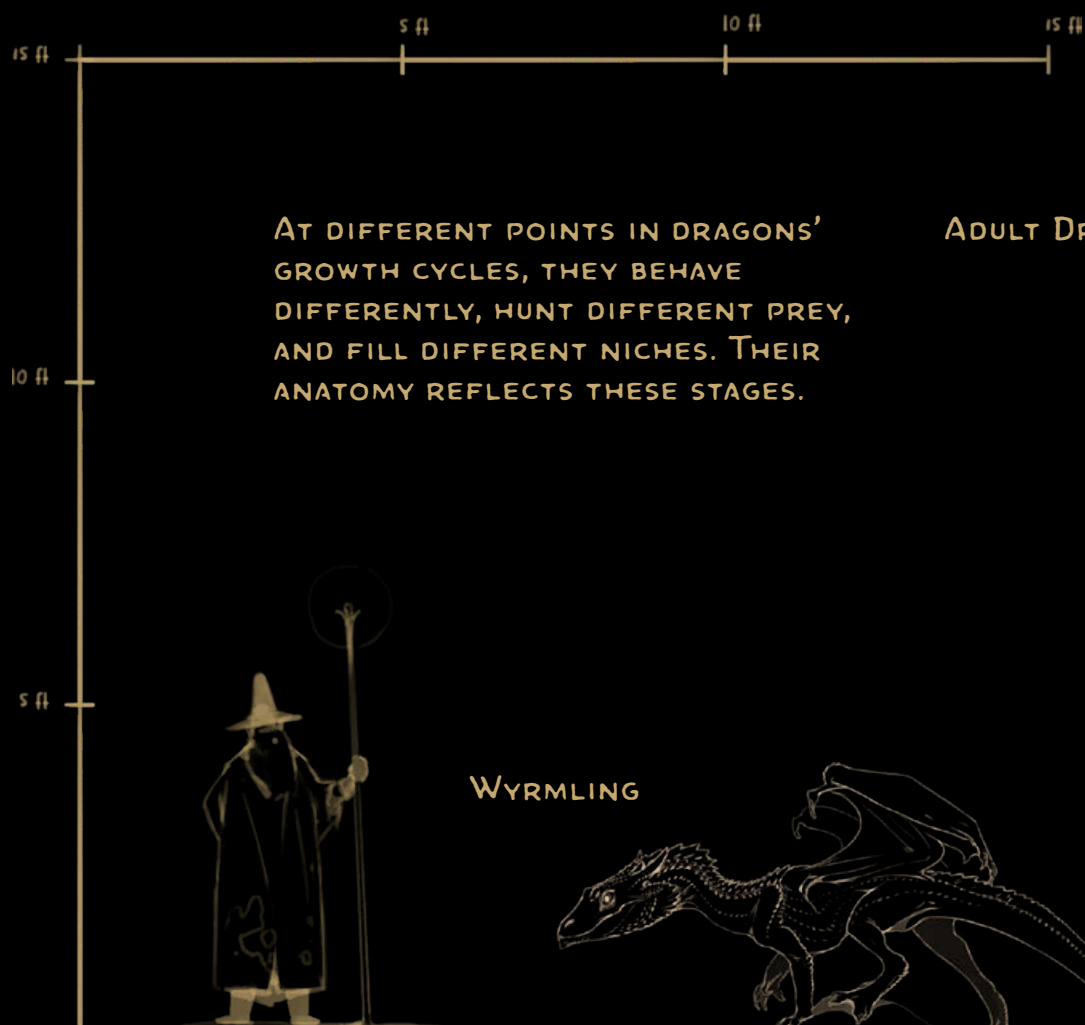
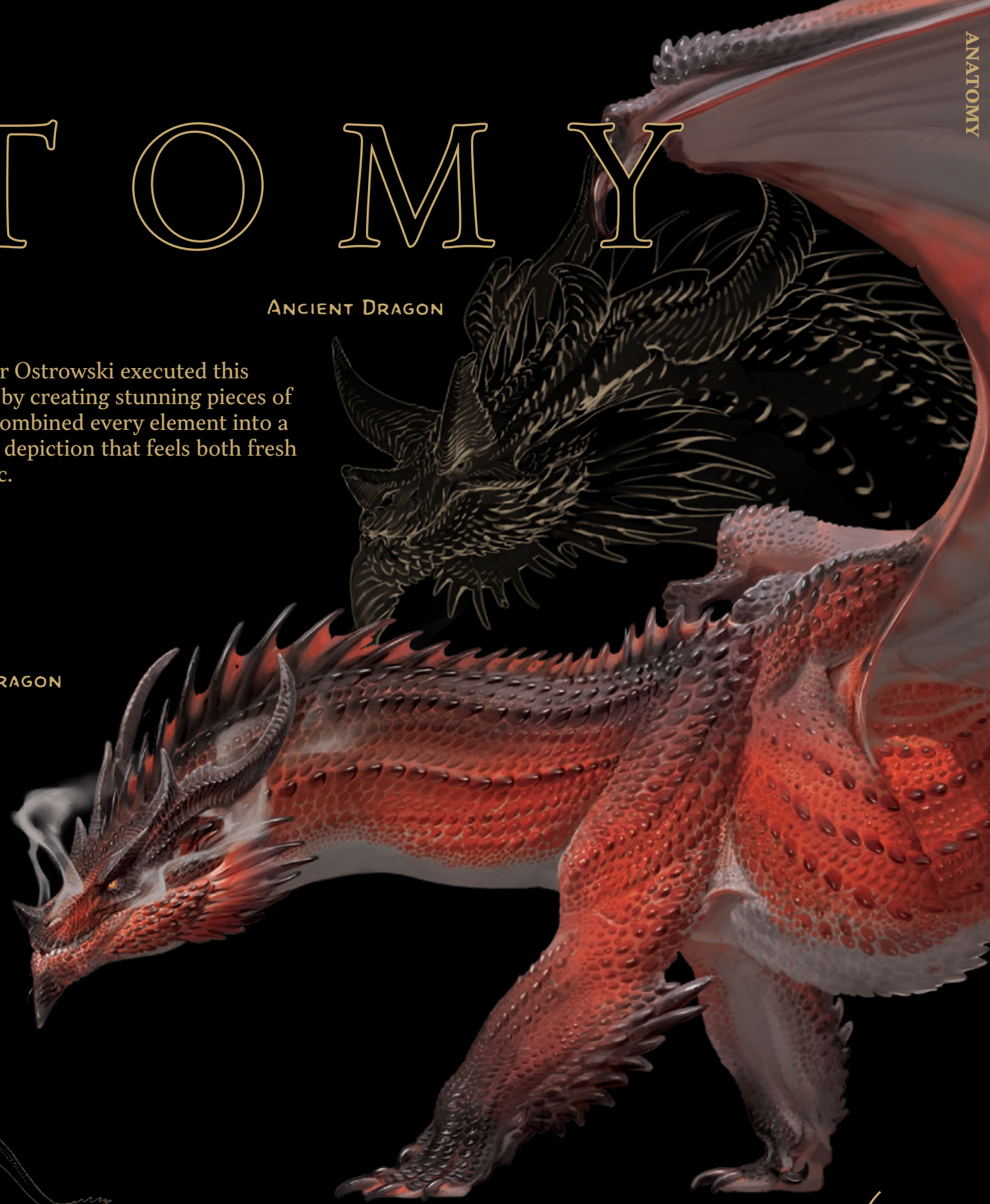
Alexander Ostrowski executed this perfectly by creating stunning pieces of art that combined every element into a gorgeous depiction that feels both fresh yet classic.

ANCIENT DRAGON

ADULT DRAGON

WYRMLING

AT DIFFERENT POINTS IN DRAGONS' GROWTH CYCLES, THEY BEHAVE DIFFERENTLY, HUNT DIFFERENT PREY, AND FILL DIFFERENT NICHES. THEIR ANATOMY REFLECTS THESE STAGES.



RED DRAGON



WYRMLING



THE EGGS OF RED DRAGONS GLOW WITH AN INNER FIRE. ADULTS INCUBATE THEIR EGGS IN A NEST OF MOLTEN STONE OR LAVA, SO THESE EGGS ARE OFTEN ENCRUSTED WITH HARDENED LAVA.



YOUNG DRAGON

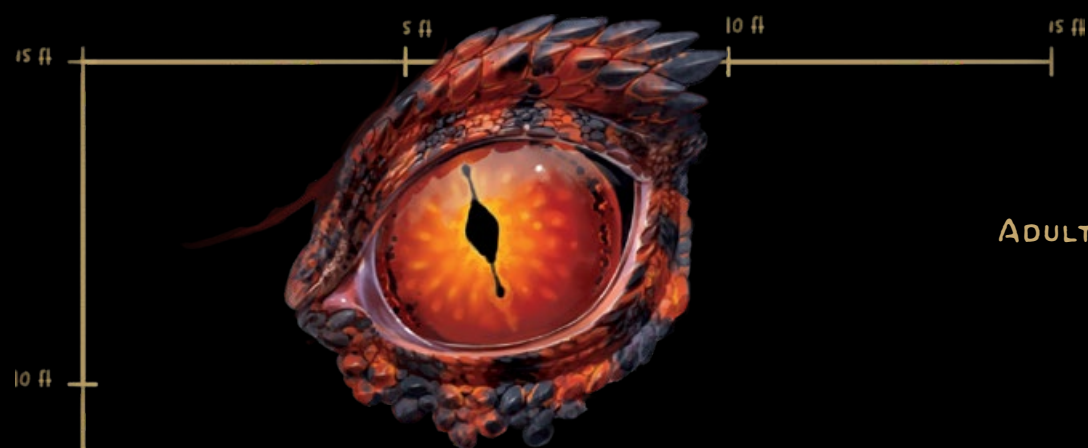
IN THEIR EARLY LIFE, RED DRAGONS HUNT MUCH SMALLER PREY AND ARE THEREFORE BUILT LIGHTER AND NIMBLER.



A RED DRAGON'S FIERY BREATH SEEMS TO BUILD UP INSIDE, WITH ITS EYES AND THROAT STARTING TO GLOW BEFORE STREAMS OF FIRE ESCAPE THE TWO GLANDS UNDERNEATH THE TONGUE.

THE FIRE THEN FANS OUT INTO A ROARING CONE, HOT ENOUGH TO MELT STONE.

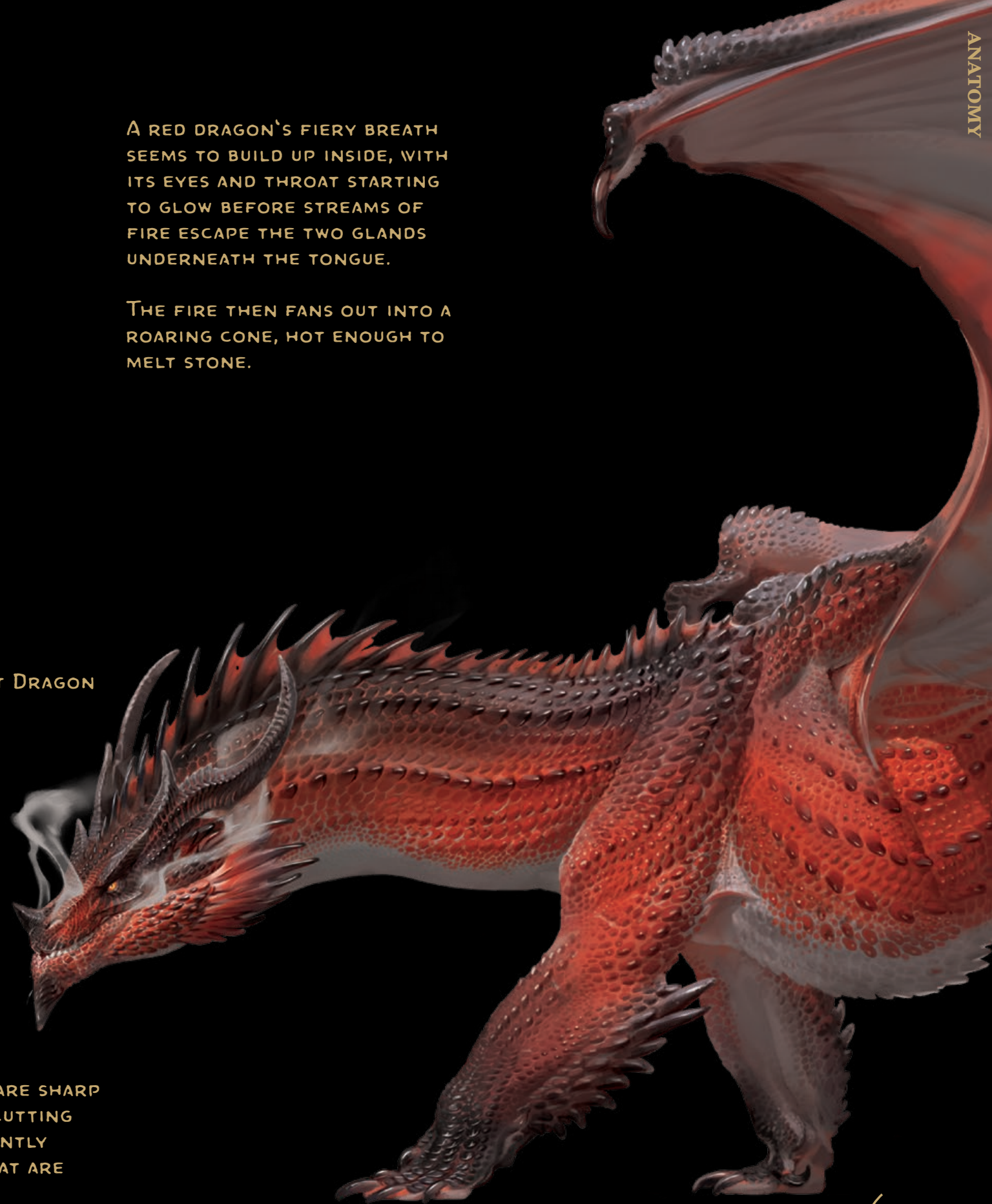
ALEXANDER OSTROWSKI



ADULT DRAGON

A VERY TOUGH NICITATING MEMBRANE PROTECTS THE EYE DURING FLIGHT OR WHEN THE DRAGON BREATHES FIRE.

THE TEETH OF A RED DRAGON ARE SHARP AND SERRATED, PERFECT FOR CUTTING INTO PREY. THEY ALSO CONSTANTLY REGROW, REPLACING THOSE THAT ARE DAMAGED OR LOST.





BLUE DRAGON



THE EGGS OF BLUE DRAGONS
LOOK LIKE DESERT STONES AT
FIRST GLANCE.

A CLOSER LOOK, HOWEVER,
REVEALS THE HARD CRYSTALLINE
SHELL AND THE LINES OF
PULSING LIGHT WITHIN.

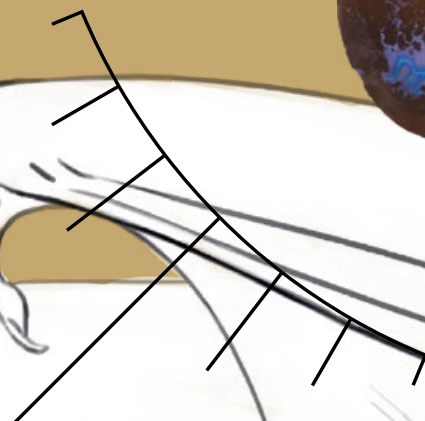
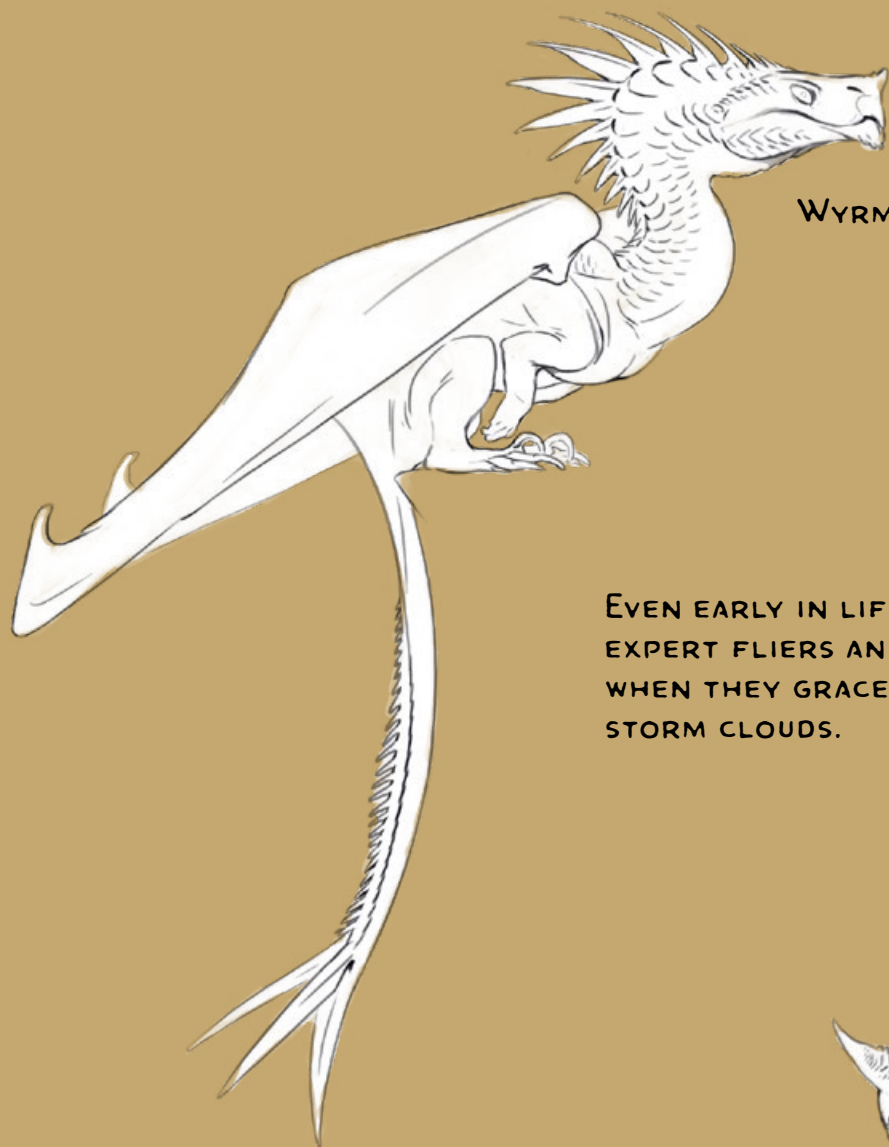


WYRMLING

EVEN EARLY IN LIFE, BLUE DRAGONS ARE
EXPERT FLIERS AND A SIGHT TO BEHOLD
WHEN THEY GRACEFULLY SOAR THROUGH
STORM CLOUDS.

YOUNG DRAGON

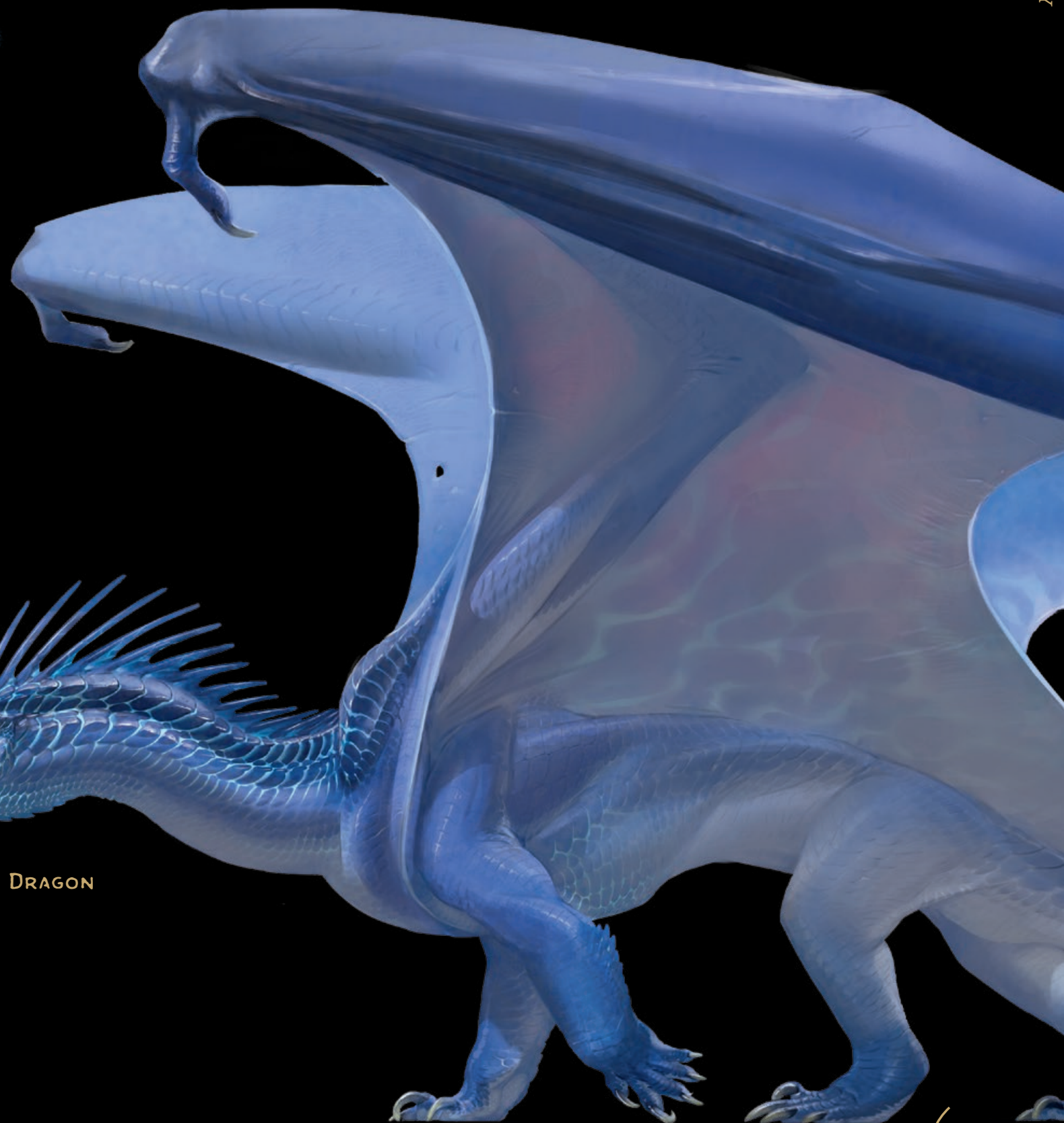
THEY HAVE PROPORTIONALLY LARGE WINGS EARLY
ON, BUT THE ICONIC HORN STARTS GROWING
PROPERLY ONLY IN YOUNG DRAGONS, FULLY
FORMING WHEN THEY ARE ADULTS.



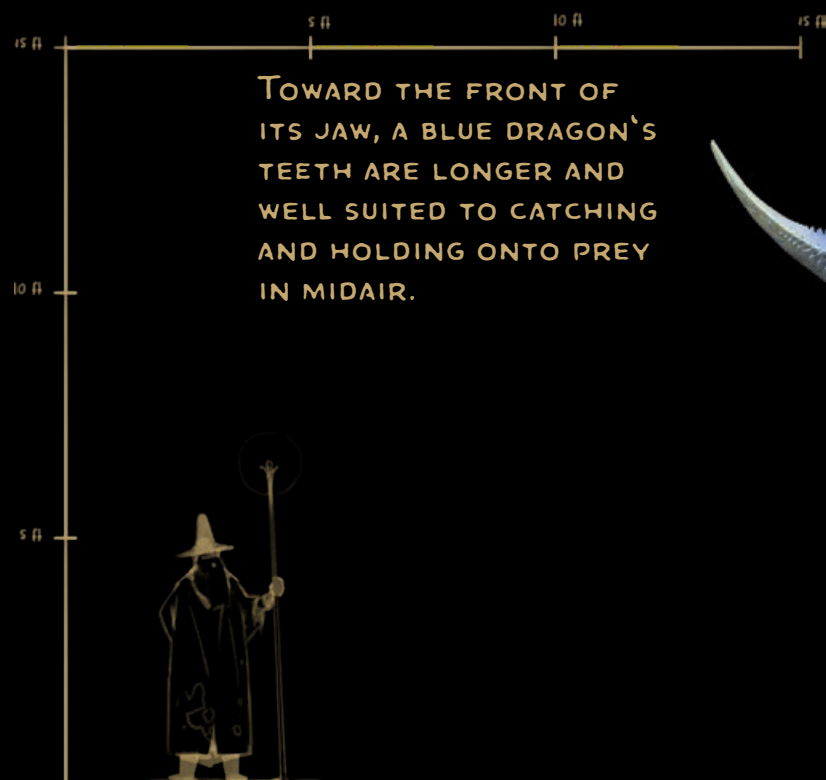


THE BLUE DRAGON SIZZLES WITH ELECTRICITY WHEN CHARGING UP ITS LIGHTNING BREATH.

BLUE LIGHT GLOWS BETWEEN THE DRAGON'S SMOOTH SCALES WHILE THE LITTLE BOLTS OF LIGHTNING COMBINE INTO A POWERFUL AND BARELY CONTAINED BEAM OF ELECTRIC DESTRUCTION.



ADULT DRAGON





GREEN DRAGON

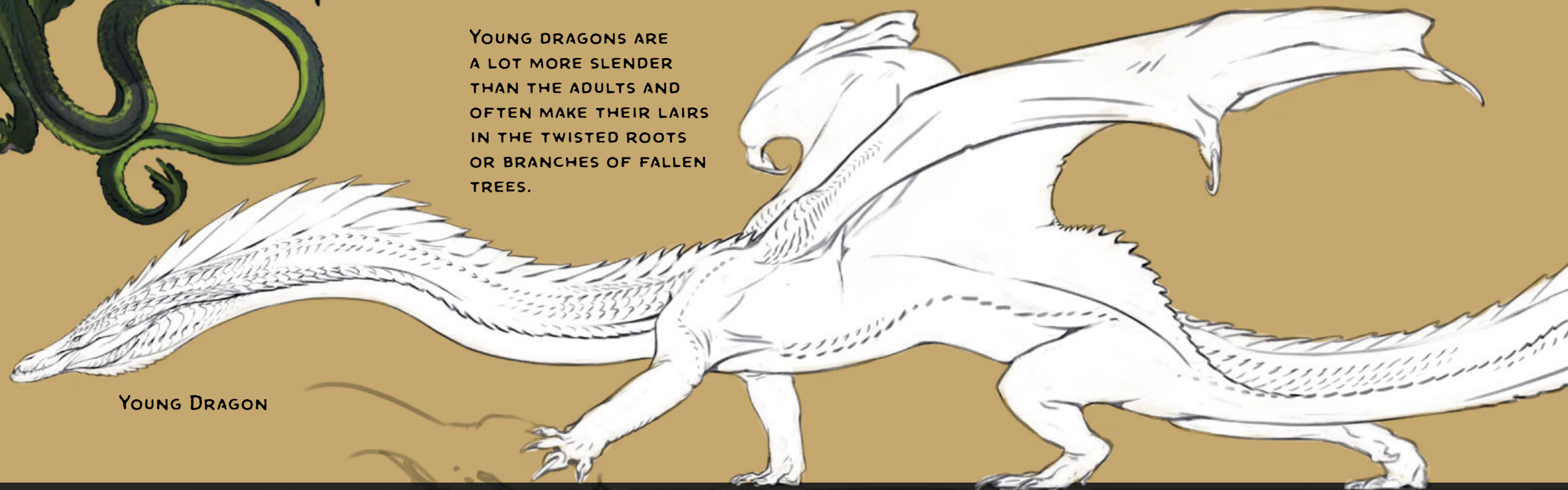
GREEN DRAGON WYRMLINGS ARE VERY DARK IN COLOR BUT SHOW BRIGHT GREEN STRIPES AS A FORM OF APOSEMATISM, SIGNALING TO PREDATORS THAT THEY ARE HIGHLY POISONOUS.

WYRMLING



YOUNG DRAGONS ARE A LOT MORE SLENDER THAN THE ADULTS AND OFTEN MAKE THEIR LAIRS IN THE TWISTED ROOTS OR BRANCHES OF FALLEN TREES.

YOUNG DRAGON



THE SHELL OF A GREEN DRAGON'S EGG IS LEATHERY, LIKE THAT OF A SNAKE EGG.

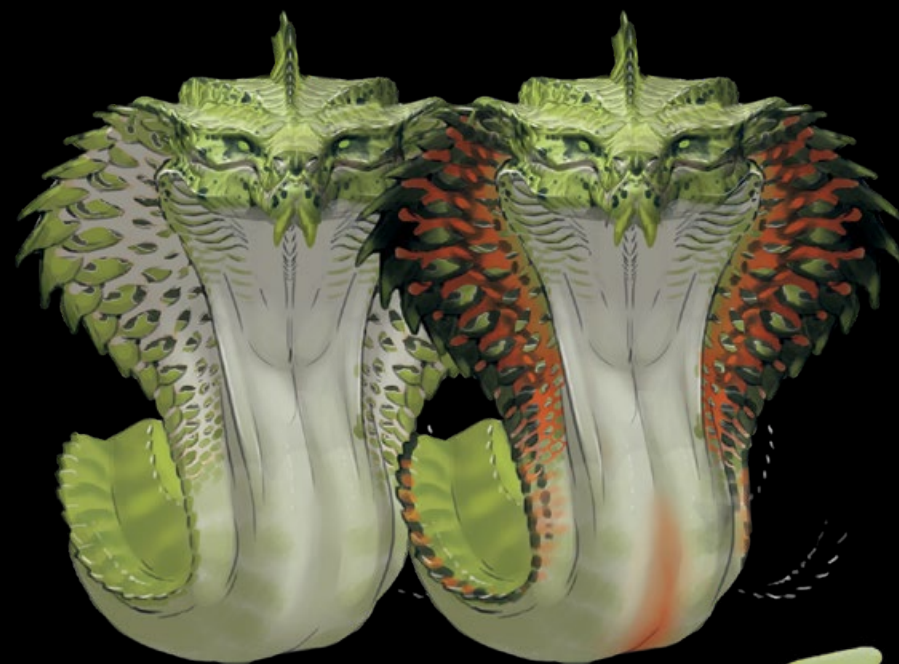
GREEN DRAGONS LAY HUGE CLUTCHES WITH DOZENS OF EGGS, BUT ONLY A FEW HATCHLINGS SURVIVE PAST THE WYRMLING STAGE.



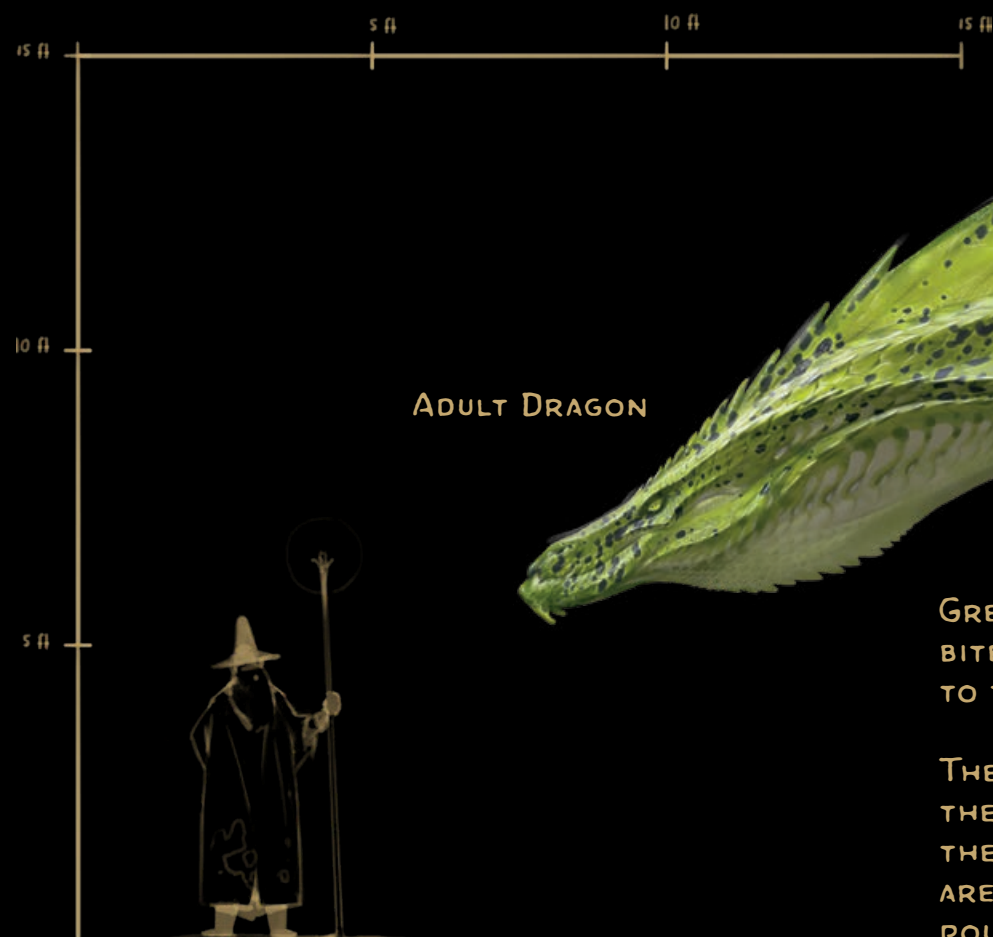


GREEN DRAGONS BREATHE A SUBTLY GLOWING POISONOUS GAS THAT SEEMS TO HAVE A MIND OF ITS OWN. IT CAN POISON WATERWAYS AND WHOLE AREAS IN A FOREST.

GREEN DRAGONS HAVE CHROMATOPHORES IN THEIR SKIN AND SO CAN CHANGE COLOR IN AN INSTANT IN CERTAIN AREAS OF THEIR BODIES.



ALEXANDER OSTROWSKI



GREEN DRAGONS HAVE THE WEAKEST BITE OF ALL DRAGONS IN COMPARISON TO THEIR BODY SIZE.

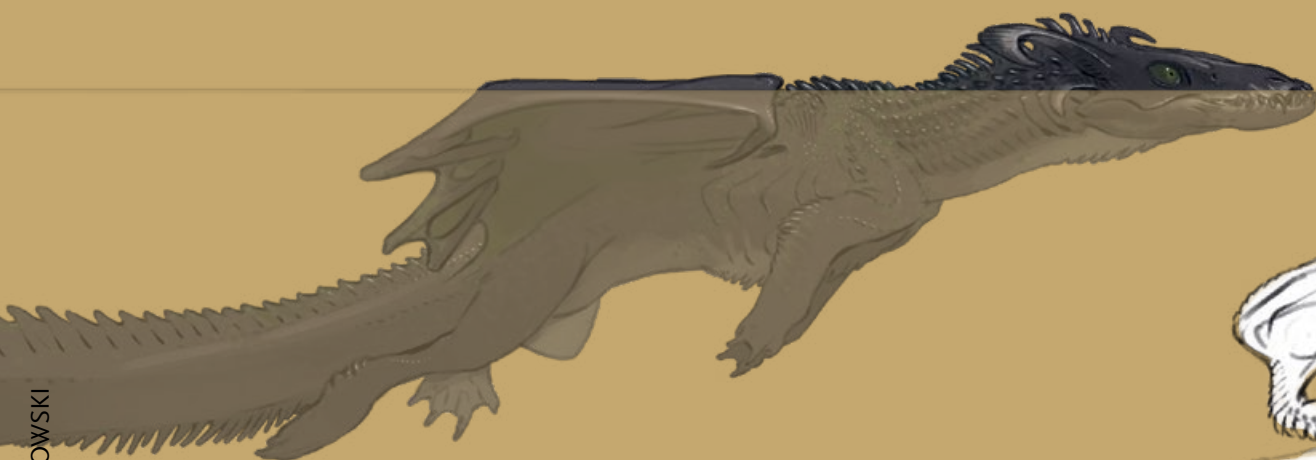
THEY MORE THAN MAKE UP FOR IT WITH THEIR SHARP, RETRACTABLE TEETH AND THEIR HIGHLY VENOMOUS FANGS, WHICH ARE USUALLY TUCKED INTO SPECIAL POUCHES IN THE MOUTH.





BLACK DRAGON

WYRMLING



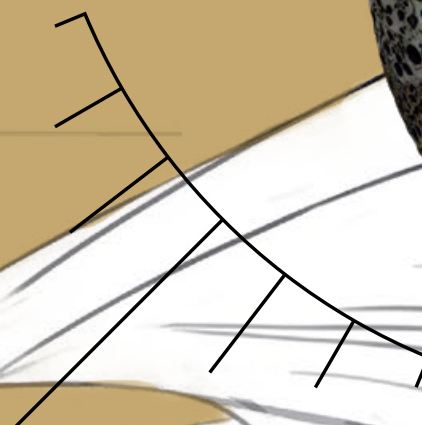
BLACK DRAGON WYRMLINGS SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME IN FOUL SWAMP WATERS AS AQUATIC AMBUSH PREDATORS. ANY ANIMAL THAT COMES TOO CLOSE TO THE WATER GETS DRAGGED IN.

YOUNG DRAGON

AS THEY AGE, THEY BULK UP AND THEIR FACES BEGIN TO TURN WHITE, RESULTING IN A PATCHY BLACK AND WHITE FACE IN YOUNG BLACK DRAGONS.



BLACK DRAGON EGGS HAVE A THICK SHELL THAT CAN TOLERATE A LOT OF MOISTURE, AS THESE DRAGONS TEND TO INCUBATE THEIR EGGS IN PILES OF ROTTING VEGETATION AND SOMETIMES DEAD BODIES.



BLACK DRAGONS
BREATHE A
POWERFUL JET OF
ACIDIC FLUID THAT
DISSOLVES ALMOST
ANY MATERIAL.

A BLACK DRAGON'S ACID HISSES AND
SMOKES DANGEROUSLY AS IT COMES
INTO CONTACT WITH PRETTY MUCH
ANYTHING, AND ACIDIC VAPOR ESCAPES
THE DRAGON'S GILLS WHENEVER THE
DRAGON USES ITS BREATH WEAPON.

ADULT DRAGON

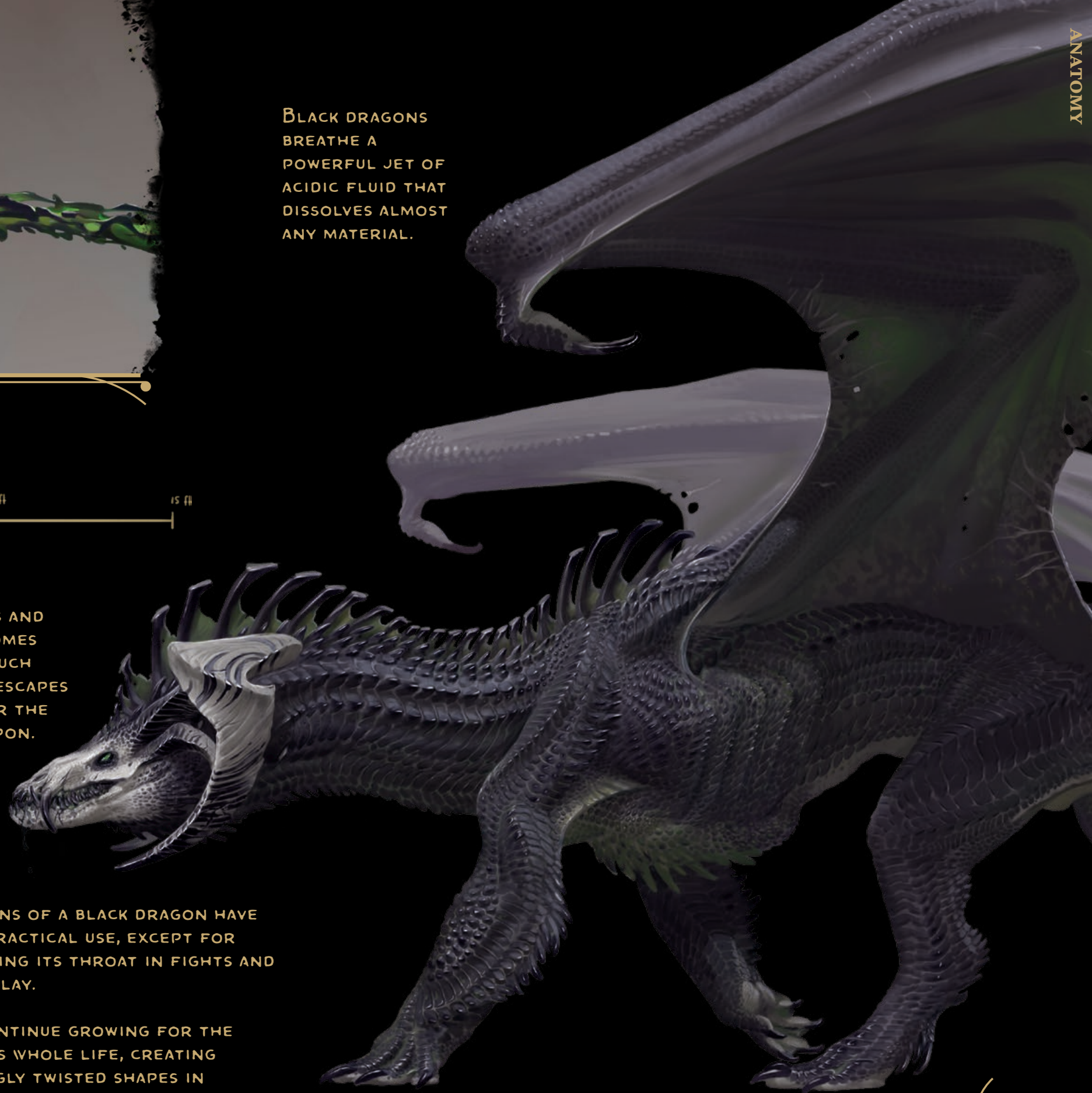
THE HORNS OF A BLACK DRAGON HAVE
LITTLE PRACTICAL USE, EXCEPT FOR
PROTECTING ITS THROAT IN FIGHTS AND
FOR DISPLAY.

THEY CONTINUE GROWING FOR THE
DRAGON'S WHOLE LIFE, CREATING
IMPOSINGLY TWISTED SHAPES IN
ANCIENT DRAGONS.

15 ft 5 ft 10 ft 15 ft

10 ft

5 ft





WHITE DRAGON

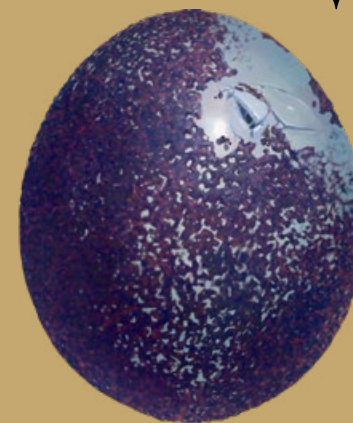
WYRMLING



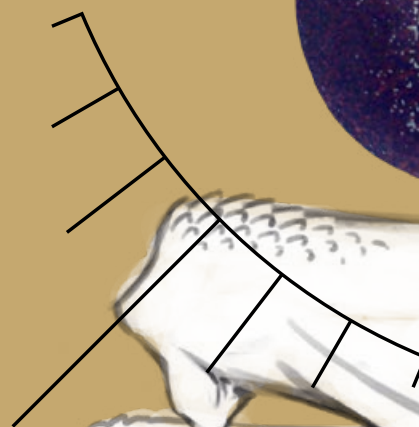
WYRMLINGS ARE ALMOST PERFECTLY WHITE AND OFTEN FORM SMALL PACKS TO HUNT ON THE FROZEN TUNDRA TOGETHER.

IN LATER LIFE, THEY GO THEIR SEPARATE WAYS AND PREFER A SOLITARY EXISTENCE.

YOUNG DRAGON



WHITE DRAGON EGGS HAVE A DARK LAYER COATING THE TRUE SHELL, WHICH HELPS THE EGG TO ABSORB MORE WARMTH FROM THE SUN TO QUICKEN INCUBATION.





A WHITE DRAGON'S ICE BREATH IS SO COLD THE AIR IT PASSES THROUGH FREEZES, RESULTING IN HUNDREDS OF LITTLE ICE SHARDS BEING HURLED AT THE TARGET.



THE LONG KEELS OF WHITE DRAGONS' SCALES ARE HOLLOW TO KEEP THEM WARM IN THE COLD REGIONS OF THE WORLD. THEIR CRESTS AND "MANES" MAKE THEM INSTANTLY RECOGNIZABLE.

ADULT DRAGON



GOLD DRAGON

WHEN YOUNG, GOLD DRAGONS ARE DARKER IN COLOR, WITH THE GOLDEN SHEEN COMING THOUGH AS THEY GROW.

WYRMLING

YOUNG DRAGON

GOLD DRAGONS DEFY THE LAWS OF PHYSICS AND STAY AFLOAT BECAUSE OF THE AMOUNT OF MAGIC COURSEING THROUGH THEIR BODIES.

THEY ARE CONSTANTLY MOVING, LIKE RESTLESS RIBBONS IN WATER.

◆◆ GOLD DRAGON EGGS LOOK LIKE PRECIOUS STONES SHOT THROUGH WITH STREAKS OF PURE GOLD. EVEN PIECES OF THE SHELL ARE VALUABLE.





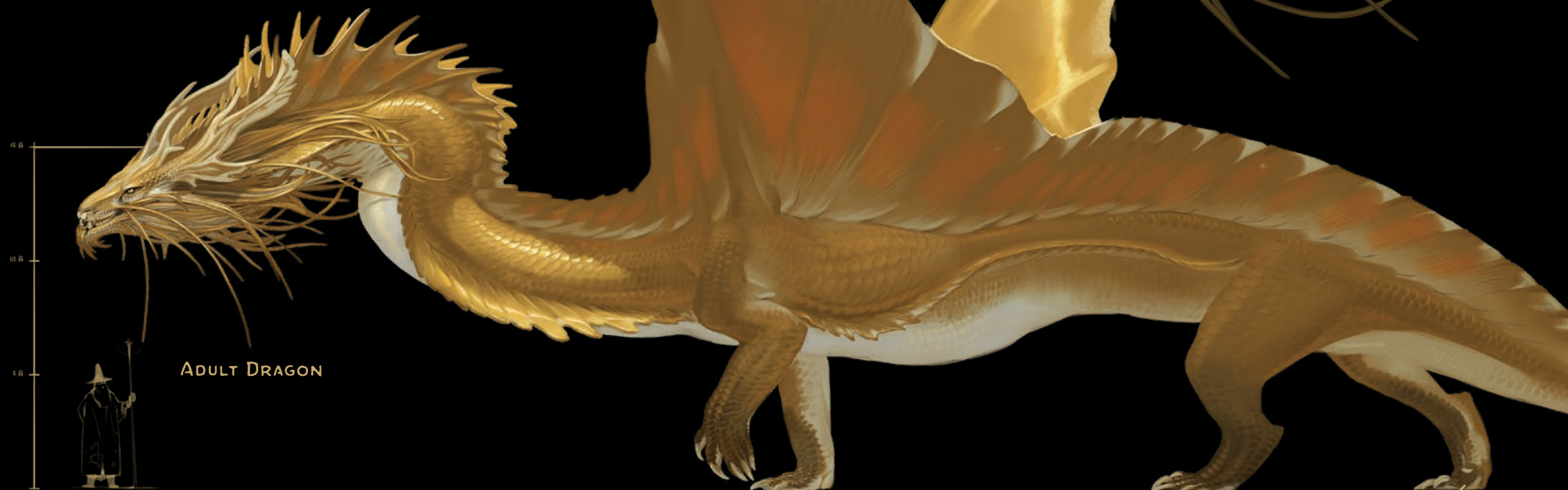
DARK PATCHES AROUND AND BENEATH THE EYES HELP THE GOLD DRAGON SEE, SINCE THEY REDUCE THE GLARE COMING OFF OF THE DRAGON'S SHINY BODY.

THE ANTLER-LIKE HORNS NEVER STOP GROWING AND REACH AN IMPOSING, ALMOST CROWN-LIKE QUALITY IN ANCIENT DRAGONS.

GOLD DRAGONS BREATHE THE MAGICAL ESSENCE OF FIRE—PURE, GOLDEN, BLINDINGLY BRIGHT, AND HOTTER THAN ANY ORDINARY FIRE.

WHEN DOING SO, THEIR HORNS AND EYES GLOW WITH MAGICAL ENERGY.

GOLD DRAGONS CAN EAT ALMOST ANYTHING, AND THEIR TEETH CAN CRUSH THE HARDEST JEWELS.

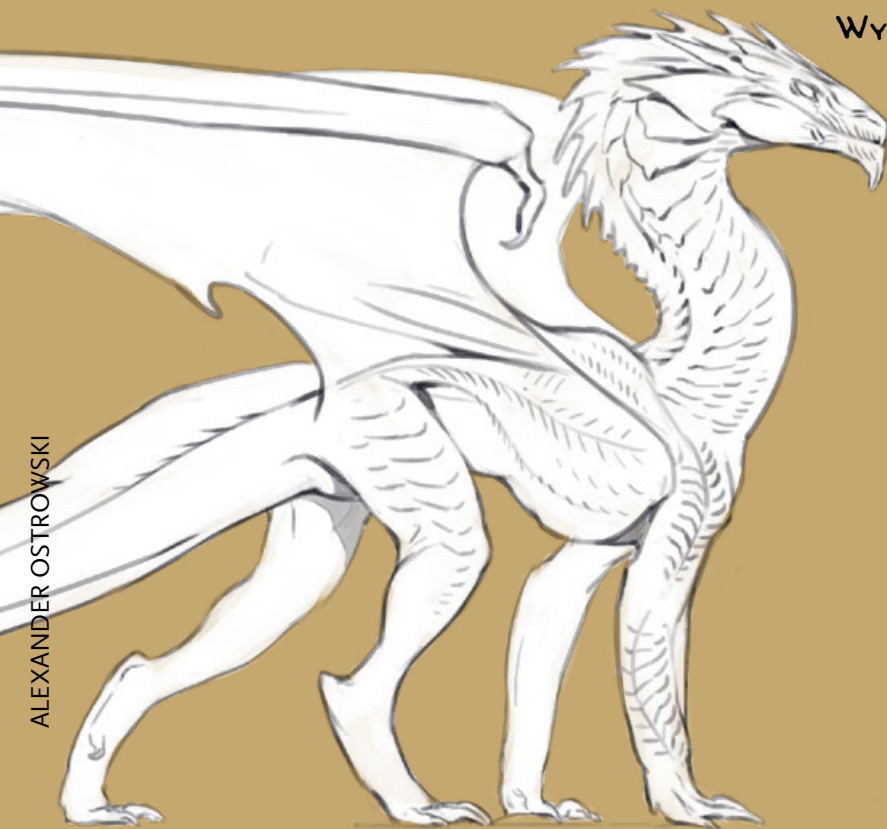


ADULT DRAGON

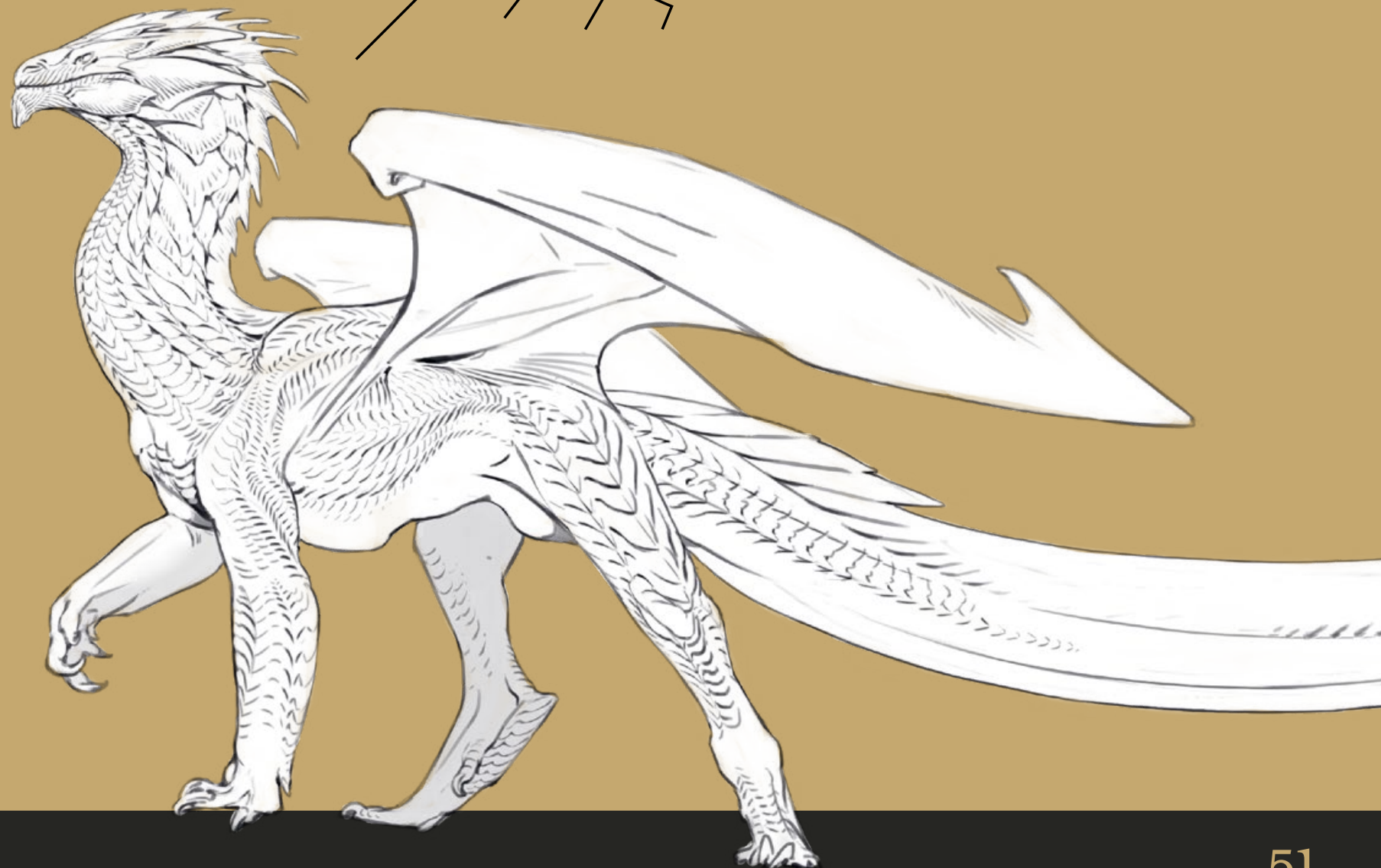


SILVER DRAGON

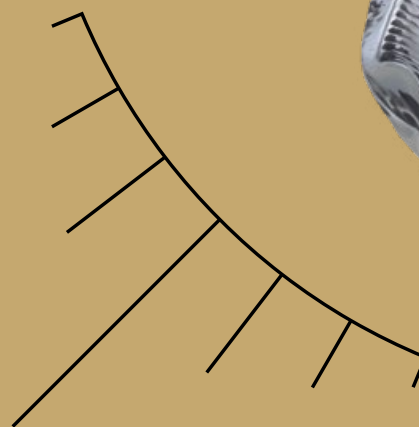
WYRMLING



YOUNG DRAGON



✦
✦
SILVER DRAGON EGGS ARE ATTACHED ABOVE GROUND, WITH THE WYRMLING LYING UPSIDE DOWN IN THE EGG, HATCHING LIKE A BUTTERFLY.



WYRMLINGS AND YOUNG DRAGONS ARE VERY SLENDER AND GRACEFUL.

WITH THEIR LONG LEGS, THEY ARE ABLE TO REACH HIGH SPEEDS WHEN RUNNING.



ADULT DRAGON

SILVER DRAGONS BREATHE A CONE OF PURPLE, GLOWING ICE MADE OF FREEZING COLD VAPOR CARRYING SHARDS OF ICE.

15 ft 5 ft 10 ft 15 ft

10 ft

5 ft





BRONZE DRAGON

BRONZE DRAGON WYRMLINGS SPEND MUCH OF THEIR TIME IN THE WATER AND ARE THUS EVEN BETTER ADAPTED TO AN AQUATIC LIFESTYLE THAN THE ADULTS.

BRONZE DRAGONS LAY THEIR EGGS UNDERWATER, ATTACHING THEM TO STRANDS OF KELP OR LARGE ROCKS.

THE SHELL IS HARDER THAN IT LOOKS, BUT THE DRAGON WILL PROTECT ITS CLUTCH FIERCELY NONETHELESS.



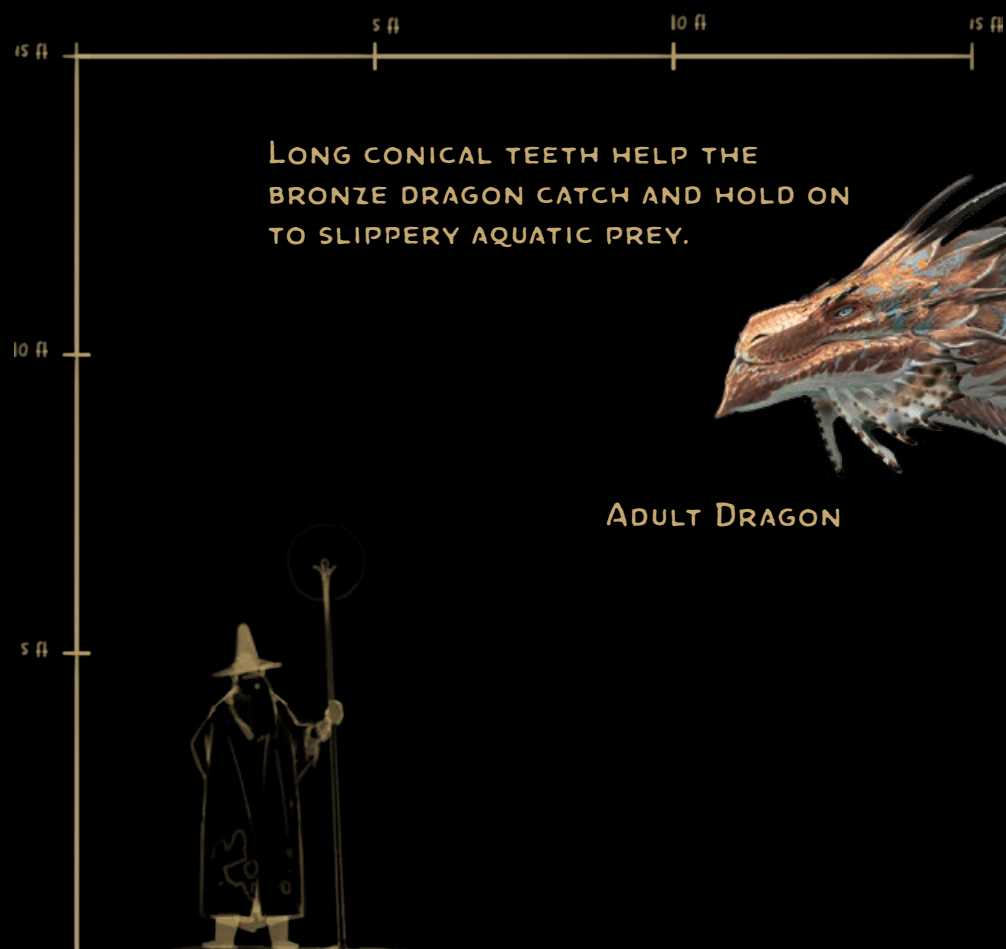
WYRMLING

AS WYRMLINGS, THEY ARE BRIGHTER IN COLOR. THEY DARKEN AS THEY AGE AND THE AMOUNT OF BLUE PATINA INCREASES.

YOUNG DRAGON



IN CONTRAST TO THE BLUE DRAGON'S LIGHTNING BREATH, THAT OF THE BRONZE DRAGON EXHIBITS MORE FLOWING LINES.



LONG CONICAL TEETH HELP THE BRONZE DRAGON CATCH AND HOLD ON TO SLIPPERY AQUATIC PREY.

ADULT DRAGON

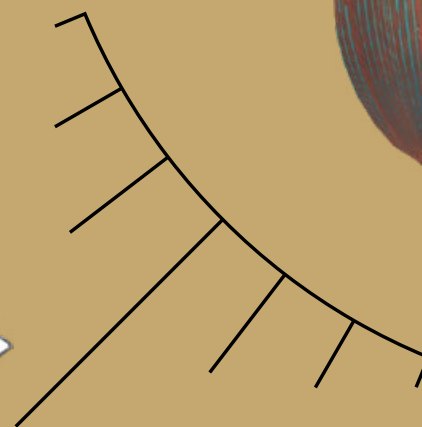
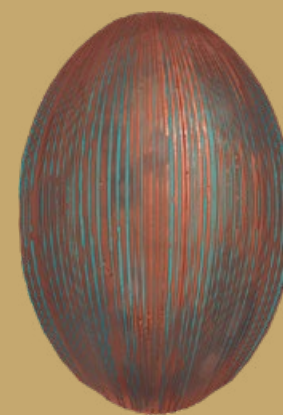




COPPER DRAGON



COPPER DRAGON EGGS ARE COVERED IN DEEP GROOVES, MAKING THEM APPEAR ALMOST LIKE STRANGE ARTIFACTS OF EONS LONG PASSED.

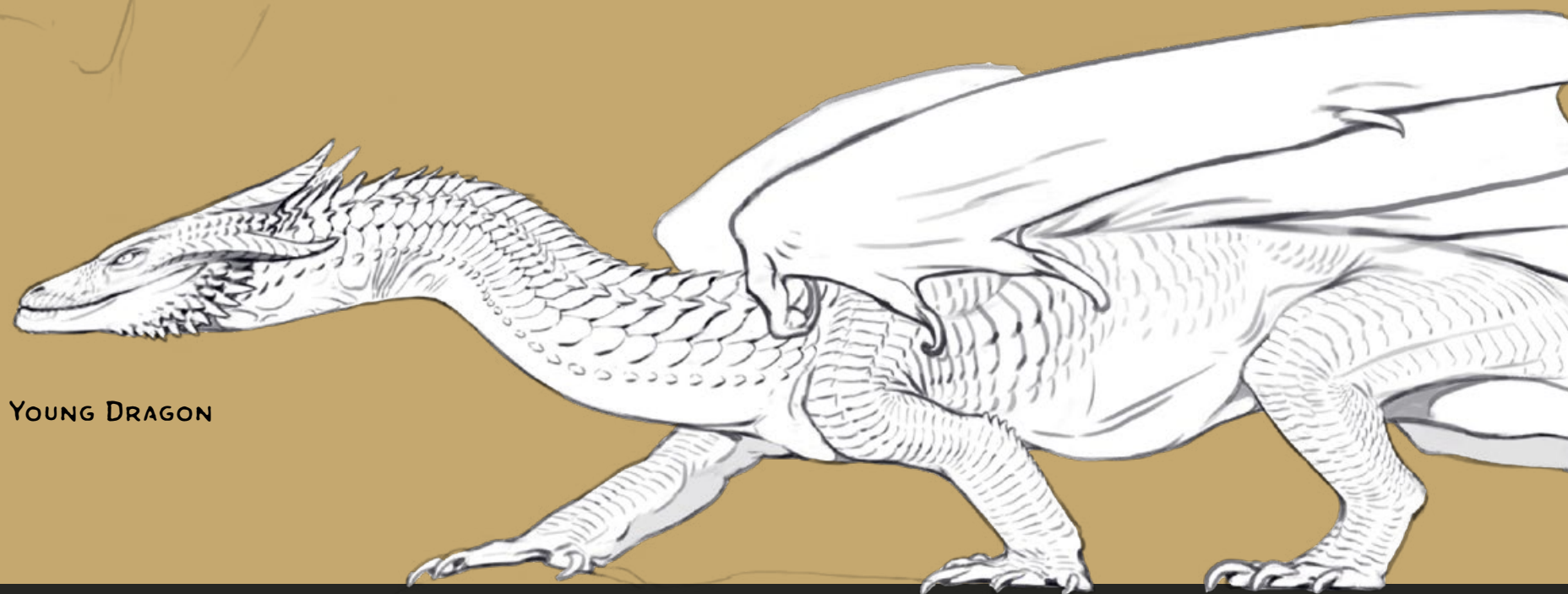


WYRMLING

COPPER DRAGON WYRMLINGS ARE QUITE FLAT AND WIDE, WHICH MAKES THEM EXTREMELY GOOD AT CLIMBING STEEP ROCKY CLIFFS AND WALLS.

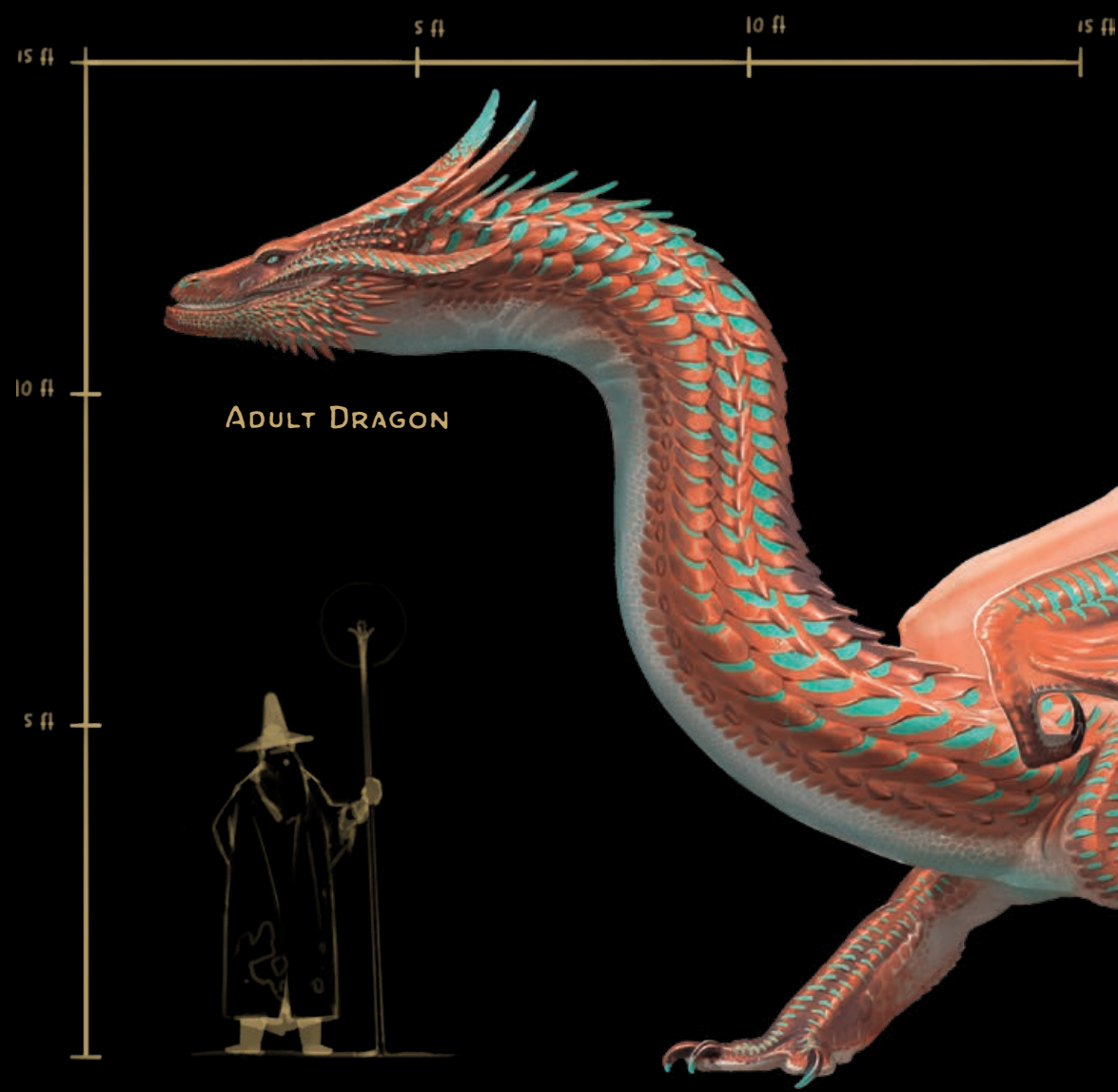
THEY ARE ALSO ABLE TO SQUEEZE INTO CREVICES TO REACH PREY. THEIR COLORATION IS DARKER AND DULLER THAN THAT OF ADULTS.

YOUNG DRAGON



THE ACID BREATH OF THE COPPER DRAGON GLOWS AND SMOKES IN THE SAME COLOR AS NITRIC ACID REACTING WITH COPPER.

IT STARTS AS A THICK LIQUID, THEN SPRAYS OUT IN FINER DROPLETS WHILE STILL FORMING A POWERFUL JET.





BRASS DRAGON

BRASS DRAGON EGGS HAVE LAYERS AND LAYERS ON TOP OF THE BRASS-LIKE SHELL THAT GET BRITTLE WHILE THE EGGS LIE IN THE FULL LIGHT OF THE DESERT SUN.



BIT BY BIT, THESE LAYERS CRACK FROM EXPOSURE AND PEEL OFF LIKE OLD PAINT, REVEALING THE SHINY EGG AND MAKING IT EASIER FOR THE WYRMLING TO HATCH WHEN THE TIME COMES.

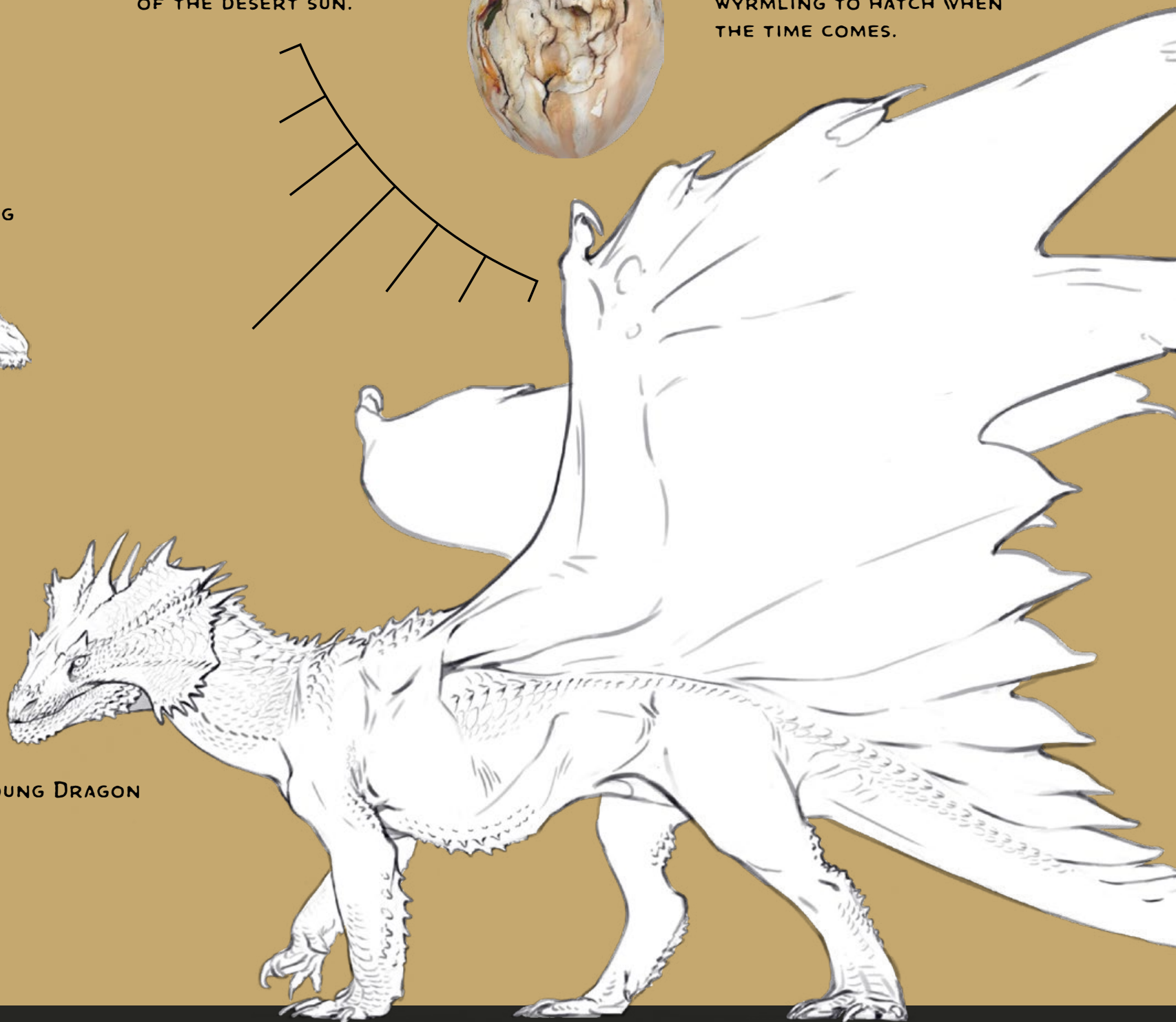
WYRMLING



WHEN BRASS DRAGONS HATCH, THEY ARE DULL BROWN IN COLOR WITH A MOTTLED PATTERN OF OCHRE. THE SCALES GET MORE SHINY AND BRASSY WITH AGE.

THEY ARE VERY SPIKY, WHICH PROTECTS THE VULNERABLE HATCHLINGS FROM PREDATORS.

YOUNG DRAGON





A BRASS DRAGON'S FIRE BREATH IS TRULY BEAUTIFUL. THE COLOR OF THE FLAMES IS BLUE NEAR THE BASE AND THEN TURNS INTO A BRIGHT ORANGE. IT IS A VERY DANGEROUS WEAPON TO ENCOUNTER.



AS DESERT DWELLERS, BRASS DRAGONS ARE ABLE TO EAT ALMOST ANY PART OF A CARCASS. RESOURCES ARE SPARSE, AND THEY MAKE DO WITH WHAT THEY CAN GET.

ADULT DRAGON



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