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THE LEGEND OF KORRA™

BOOK FOUR: BALANCE

THE ART OF THE ANIMATED SERIES

Michael Dante DiMartino *Bryan Konietzko* *Joaquim Dos Santos*





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The Art of the Animated Series

Book Four: Balance

Bryan Konietzko
Michael Dante DiMartino
with Joaquim Dos Santos



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Stephen Reichert

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Chris Horn



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Editor
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THE LEGEND OF KORRA: THE ART OF THE ANIMATED SERIES—BOOK FOUR: BALANCE
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Introductions

We survived. We made it to the end. There were days, weeks, months, and even years when I wasn't so sure we would see the finish line. I never thought anything could be more difficult and stressful than producing Avatar: The Last Airbender, *but* The Legend of Korra *proved me wrong. I often felt like the nerdy equivalent of a professional fighter, dragging my feet to the gym only to get beat up all day long, day after day.*

Of course, Korra *would have been unimaginably more difficult and stressful if we didn't have the most incredible crew backing us, in Burbank and Seoul, fighting the good fight every day to realize this overly ambitious vision. This book is dedicated to every artist and staff member throughout all the studios who worked tirelessly on the production. I am so blown away by what everyone was able to achieve. Thank you to Joaquim for his backbreaking dedication to* Korra *and helping us run this whole shebang.*

The dedication and passion of the Korra *fans pulled us through some dark times, when matters out of our control besieged the show, one after another. The chances we have had to celebrate with the fans in person are memories I will cherish for my whole life. Mike and I are constantly amazed by how deeply and personally people all over the world connect with these characters and stories. Thank you for the heartwarming support through all these years of making animation.*

This creative partnership with my dear friend Mike has been the best thing that has ever happened to me as an artist. The gravity of the Avatar *universe pulled us in for a second spin, and after five amazing, grueling, frustrating, and rewarding years of making* Korra, *we are scattering off to explore other creative endeavors. Who knows if and when or in what shape and form we might get pulled back in for another spin. For now, it is time to take what we learned from this experience and let it carry us to greater heights with our work and lives.*

Bryan Konietzko
February 19, 2015

We've come to a pretty huge milestone: the completion of the Legend of Korra *series and the final art book. Bryan and I have always been focused on making a great show, and we're never too concerned about pushing for the ancillary products that come in the wake of having a show. Often the products are created by third-party licensees who are not intimately involved in the creative vision of the series. But in the early days of* Avatar: The Last Airbender, *one of the few products Bryan and I were passionate about making was an "art of" book that would highlight all the beautiful art from the series. Many times we pitched the idea, and many times we were told that a book like that wouldn't sell. Well, here we are with our fifth* Avatar *art book, so apparently people do want to buy them!*

I really want to thank Dark Horse for approaching us after the original series had ended and asking if we were interested in making an art book. We immediately said, "Absolutely!" and here we are, years later, with a beautiful set of books that chronicle some of the behind-the-scenes creation of both The Last Airbender *and* Korra. *My hope is that these books will be around for years to come, so new fans of the shows, curious about how the series were made, can learn and be inspired by them.*

I also want to thank Bryan for our incredible creative partnership over the years, which began all the way back at the Rhode Island School of Design. When we were painting cels for my senior film, I know neither of us had any idea what the future would bring, but these past thirteen years in the Avatar *universe have been an honor. And another big thank-you to Joaquim for his dedication and unbelievable talent and for adding his perspective to these art books.*

There are too many artists, writers, and production and executive staff to thank individually, but they all played a role in helping us see our vision become reality. As these art books illustrate, the production process can be incredibly inspiring, but also incredibly difficult. Without the support and talents of literally hundreds of people, a show like this would never get off the ground. And I will be eternally grateful to all the fans who stood by Korra*'s side, especially during the last two tumultuous seasons. I really appreciate all the touching fan messages I've received in person and online. It's nice to know something I helped create has meant so much to so many. So please enjoy this final chapter in the art saga of* The Legend of Korra*, and we'll meet again on the next journey.*

Michael Dante DiMartino
February 18, 2015

Attempting to sum up on one page just how much this show, this entire Korra *experience, has meant to me . . . is nearly impossible. So I don't think I will, at least not now, because quite honestly I'm still processing this whole thing. Maybe in time I'll be able to look back and write something that sums it all up in a nice, easy-to-read, poetic way, but until then the best I can do is give a heartfelt thanks to all the amazingly talented people who brought this world and its characters to life. From development, to production, to writing, to design, and on through post, each and every person who had a part in it is an essential component to this giant machine. Television animation at this scale is a huge team effort, and I can say beyond a shadow of a doubt that we had THE BEST TEAM. I'd like to specifically thank Mike and Bryan for creating this whole sandbox and inviting me to come play in it. Their leadership and vision was, is, and will continue to be truly inspiring. I've learned so much under their guidance and will be eternally grateful for the positive impact they've had on my life, both personally and professionally. I'd also like to give a specific shout-out to Lauren and Ryu, who sat with me on "producers' row" and were my personal partners in crime. I don't know how this show would have been made without their involvement. To the amazing staff at Studio Mir, whose talent and dedication to realizing a unified vision will never be forgotten. And last but not least, I'd like to thank my wife, Sharon, who never once questioned the late nights or weekends worked and believed in this show more than anyone I know. Her support pushed me through the tough times and allowed me to finish strong.*

Before I leave, please allow me to offer a small observation: Korra (the character) broke convention. She was rough around the edges, she was stubborn, and she rubbed some people the wrong way. She was also at times reckless and overly confident, and made little to no apologies for her bombastic behavior. Right or wrong, for better or worse, Korra marched to the beat of her own drummer—and for these reasons, she at times had a hard time finding her place in the world. People didn't really know what to make of her. Some feared her outspoken behavior and thought she should do more to fit in. As time passed, Korra evolved. She grew as a person and developed a deeper understanding of tolerance and compassion along the way. Eventually she began to rely on those around her for help and came to understand her own shortcomings, which helped her form into a more well-rounded Avatar. She became comfortable with who she was and how she was perceived by others. In the end, the things that turned so many off to her were the very things that would distinguish her from those who came before. I say this because I feel Korra *(the production) has followed a very similar path. It has survived a uniquely perilous journey as far as cartoons go and never did quite fit in with the things that came before it. And I truly believe that in the end, much like Korra the character, the show will be celebrated for the chances it took and the things it did differently.*

Joaquim Dos Santos
March 3, 2015



CHAPTER ONE

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

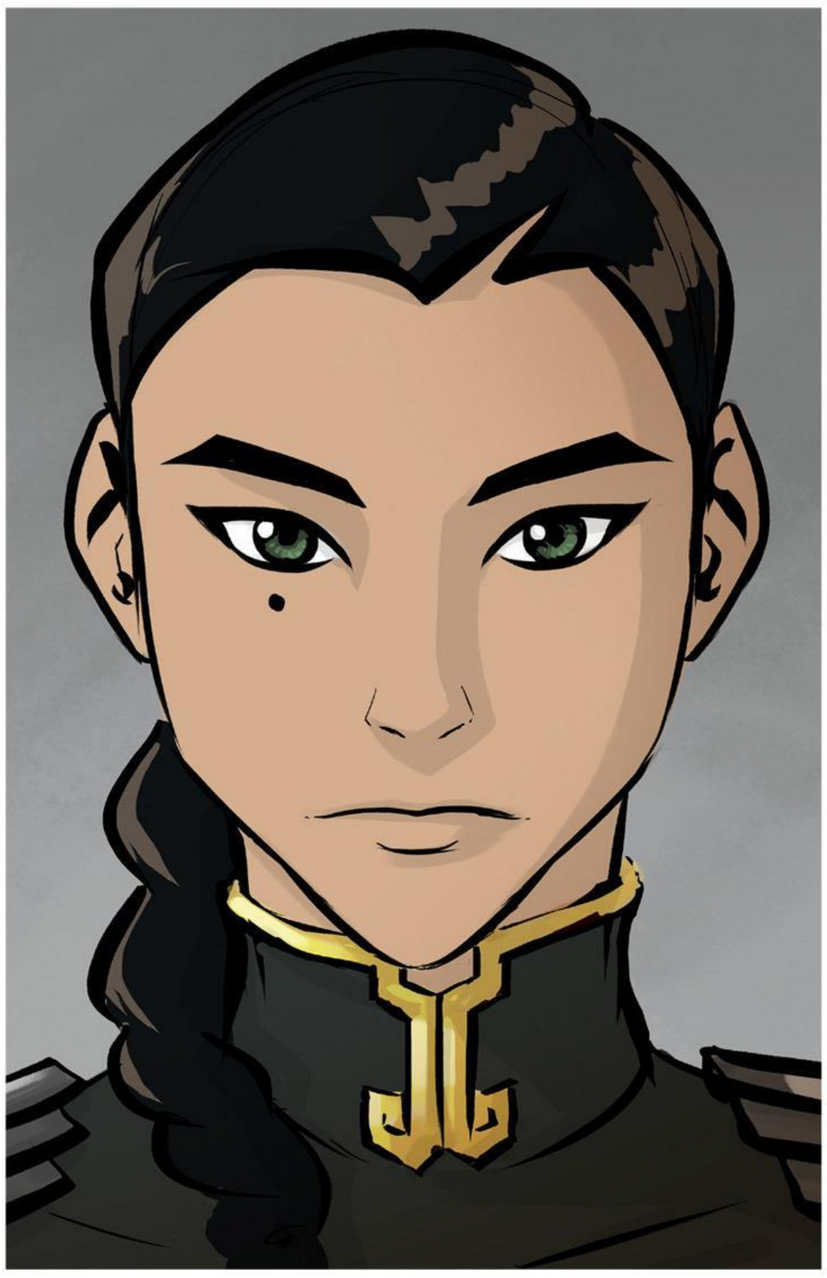
KUVIRA

MD: For our fourth and final antagonist, we were looking to have a female character who was physically similar to Korra. We wanted our hero to have to face the shadow version of herself—a woman who was fierce, uncompromising, and a bending heavyweight. Kuvira brought a lot of new story and character possibilities to the table, and I really enjoyed writing the female hero/villain dynamic.





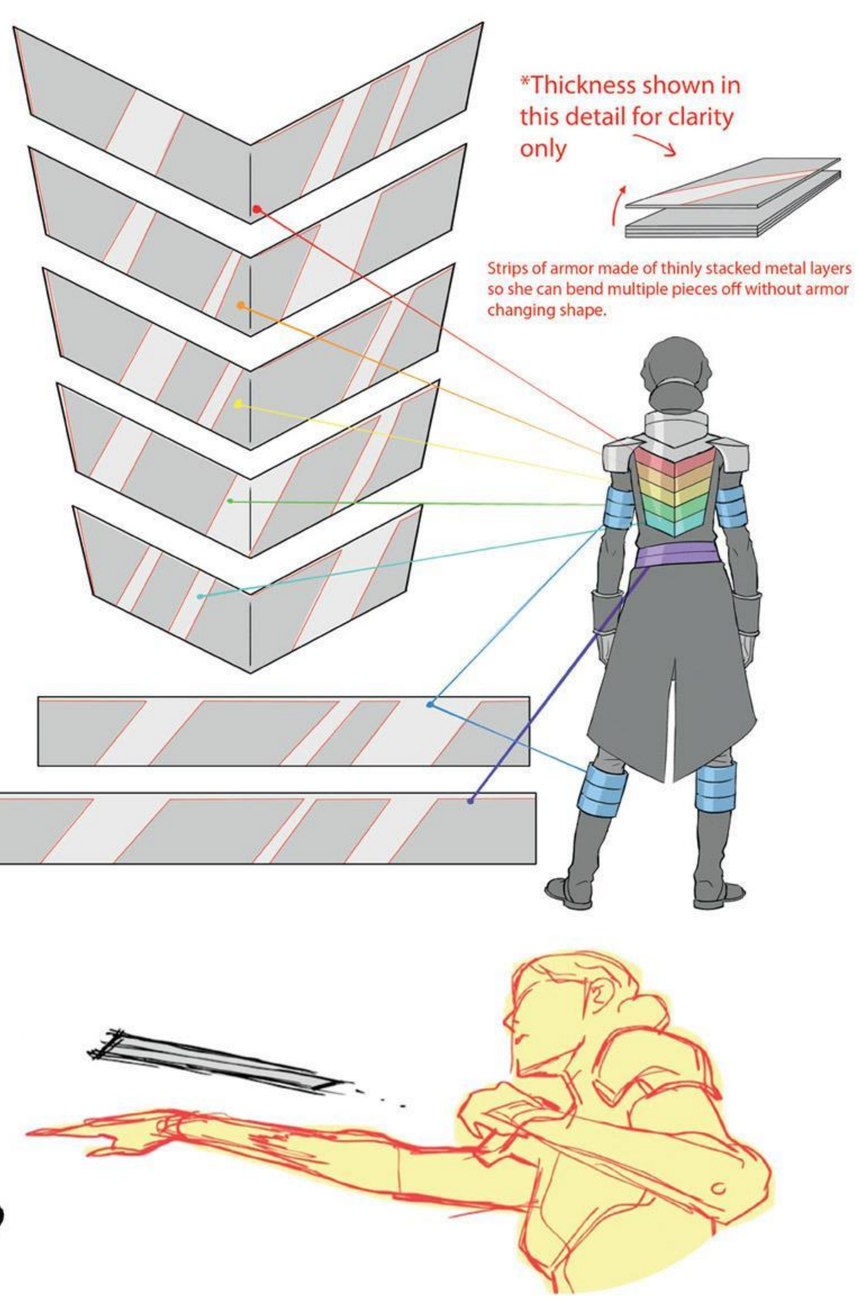
BK: Above is one of the first concepts I did of Kuvira, back during Book Three when we knew we were going to weave her into the story as a background character. I had been wanting to do a military dictator as a villain for a long time, so it was fun to finally play around with what the uniform motifs would be. On the left are the final expressions from her model sheet that I put on model and cleaned up from Ryu's incredible storyboard poses. Kuvira expressions by Ki-Hyun Ryu and Bryan Konietzko. Kuvira concept by Bryan Konietzko. *(Preceding spread) Yi capital background design by Angela Sung. Painting by Frederic Stewart.*



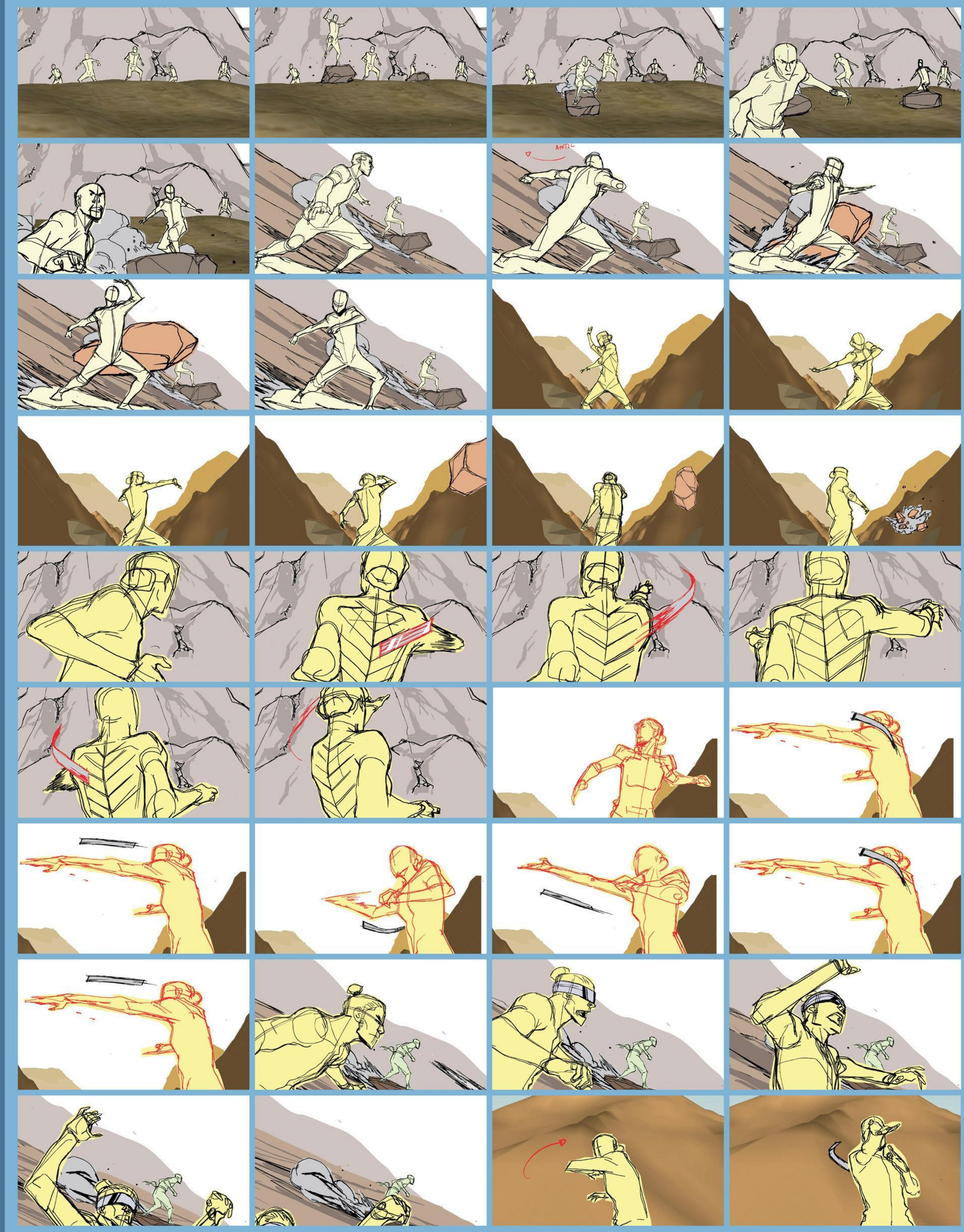


BK: The portrait above is the first drawing I did of Kuvira. I intentionally gave her a somewhat similar vibe to Korra, just a bit more intense. When we were casting the character, we had a couple of pieces of concept art to show the actors. Zelda Williams, who ended up getting the part and played it wonderfully, said, "Hey, she looks like me!" I thought the exact same thing when she walked into the studio. Later she told me her mother even has the same beauty mark under her eye. On the right are some costume explorations by Lauren Montgomery. I liked the long braid and asymmetrical cape, but they would have made Kuvira's animation very difficult, so they didn't make the cut. Kuvira head concept by Bryan Konietzko. Kuvira costume concepts by Lauren Montgomery.

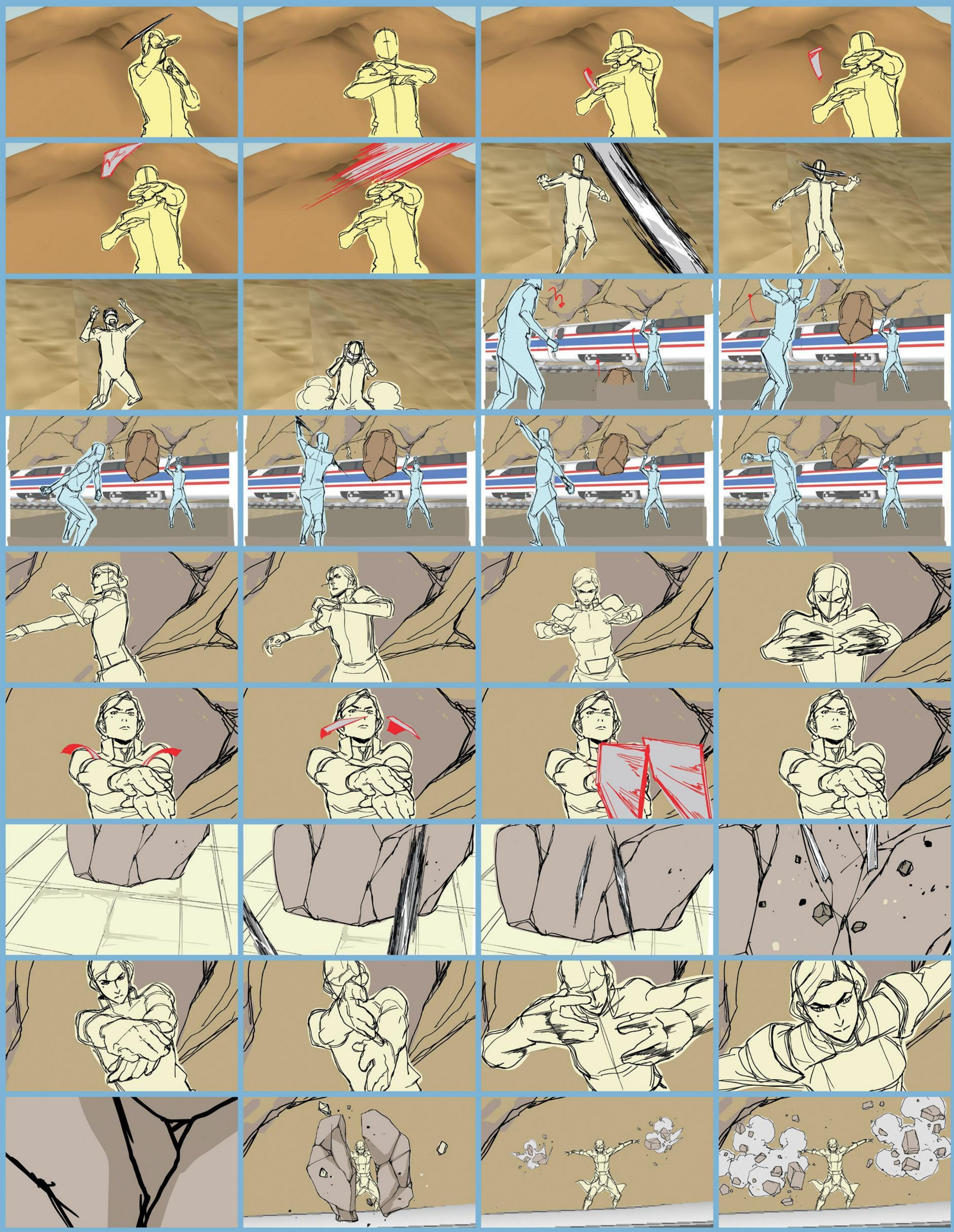




MD: There was a lot of talk in the first storyboard meeting about how Kuvira's metal armor could be used in battle. To give her lots of ammo, we decided she should have thin strips of metal stacked on her back and upper arms. As she bends one piece of metal, another strip is revealed, ready for the next strike. BK: Here is Kuvira's final design and color model, which I did along with some help from Ki-Hyun Ryu, particularly on the chevron-shaped back armor. Kuvira designs by Bryan Konietzko and Ki-Hyun Ryu. Color by Bryan Konietzko.



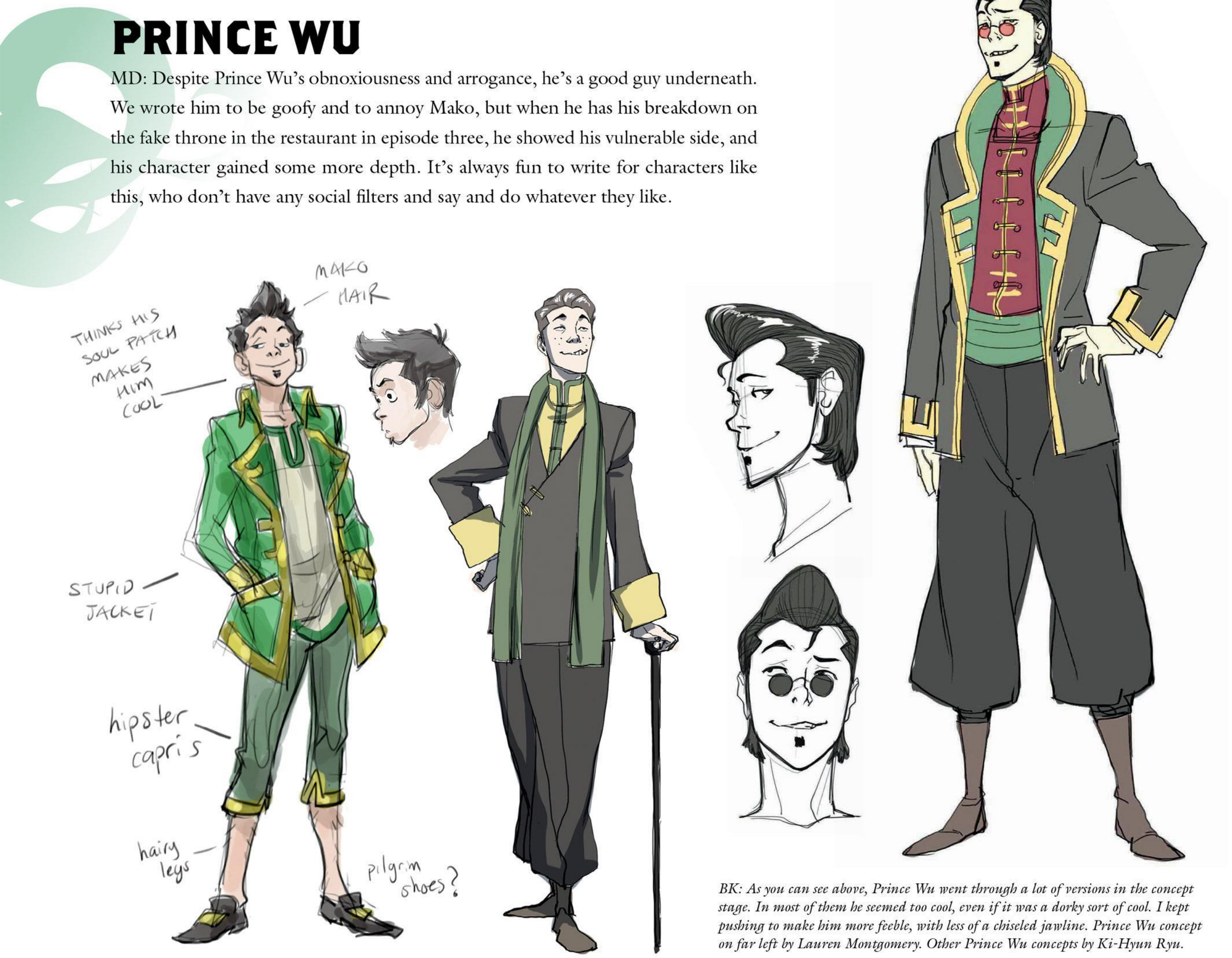
MD: When the writers and I were pitching out the story for the first episode, we made sure Kuvira's introduction showed her taking absolute control of a situation and showcased her formidable metalbending skills. And Ryu did a fantastic job visualizing her dynamic fighting style. Storyboards by Ki-Hyun Ryu.



JDS: Although she was previously introduced in Book Three, this scene (in my opinion) is Kuvira's true introduction. As Mike said on the previous page, Ryu really brought the heat and delivered a visual feast. You can really get a sense of Kuvira's metalbending mastery in this short but very effective sequence. Storyboards by Ki-Hyun Ryu.

PRINCE WU

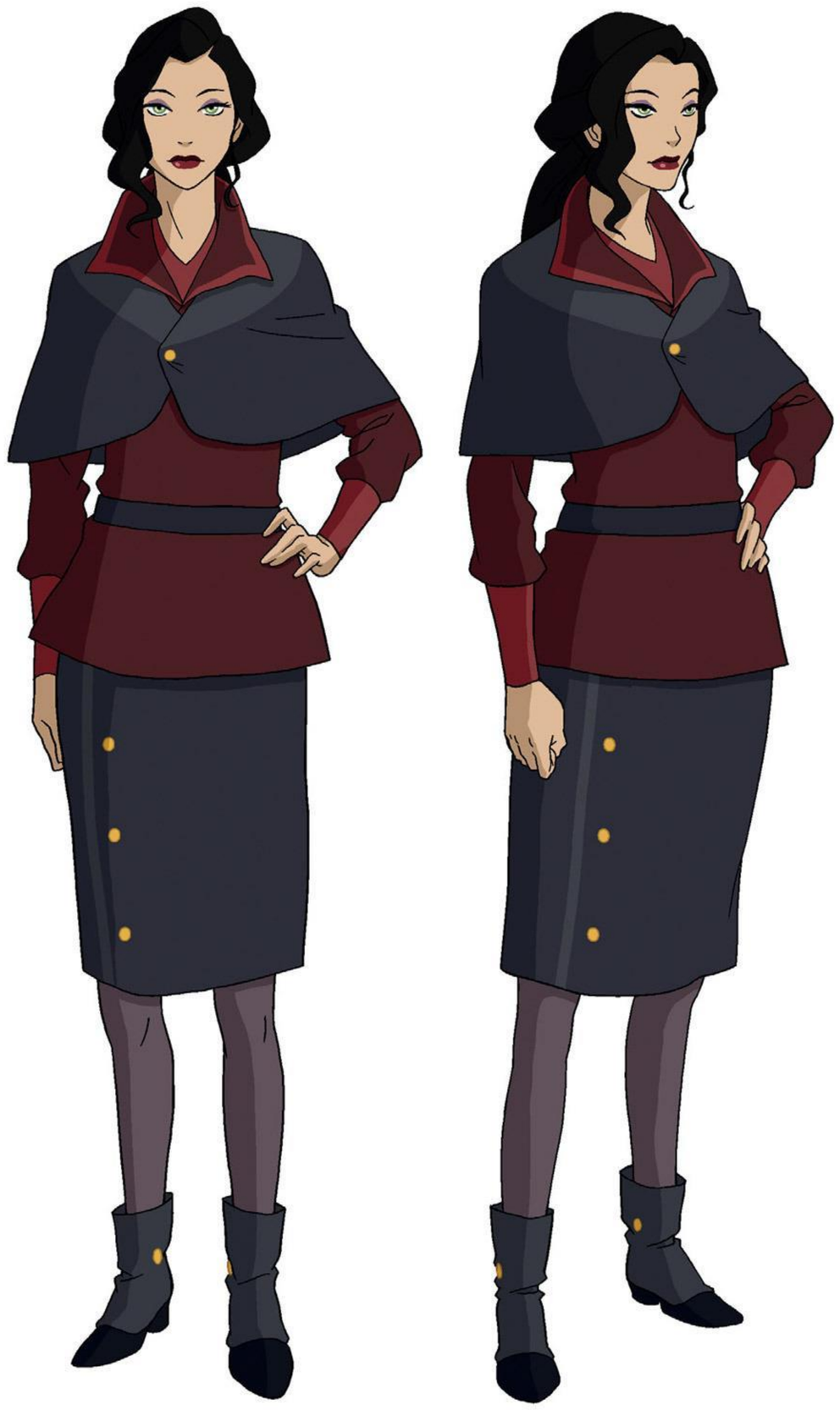
MD: Despite Prince Wu's obnoxiousness and arrogance, he's a good guy underneath. We wrote him to be goofy and to annoy Mako, but when he has his breakdown on the fake throne in the restaurant in episode three, he showed his vulnerable side, and his character gained some more depth. It's always fun to write for characters like this, who don't have any social filters and say and do whatever they like.



BK: As you can see above, Prince Wu went through a lot of versions in the concept stage. In most of them he seemed too cool, even if it was a dorky sort of cool. I kept pushing to make him more feeble, with less of a chiseled jawline. Prince Wu concept on far left by Lauren Montgomery. Other Prince Wu concepts by Ki-Hyun Ryu.

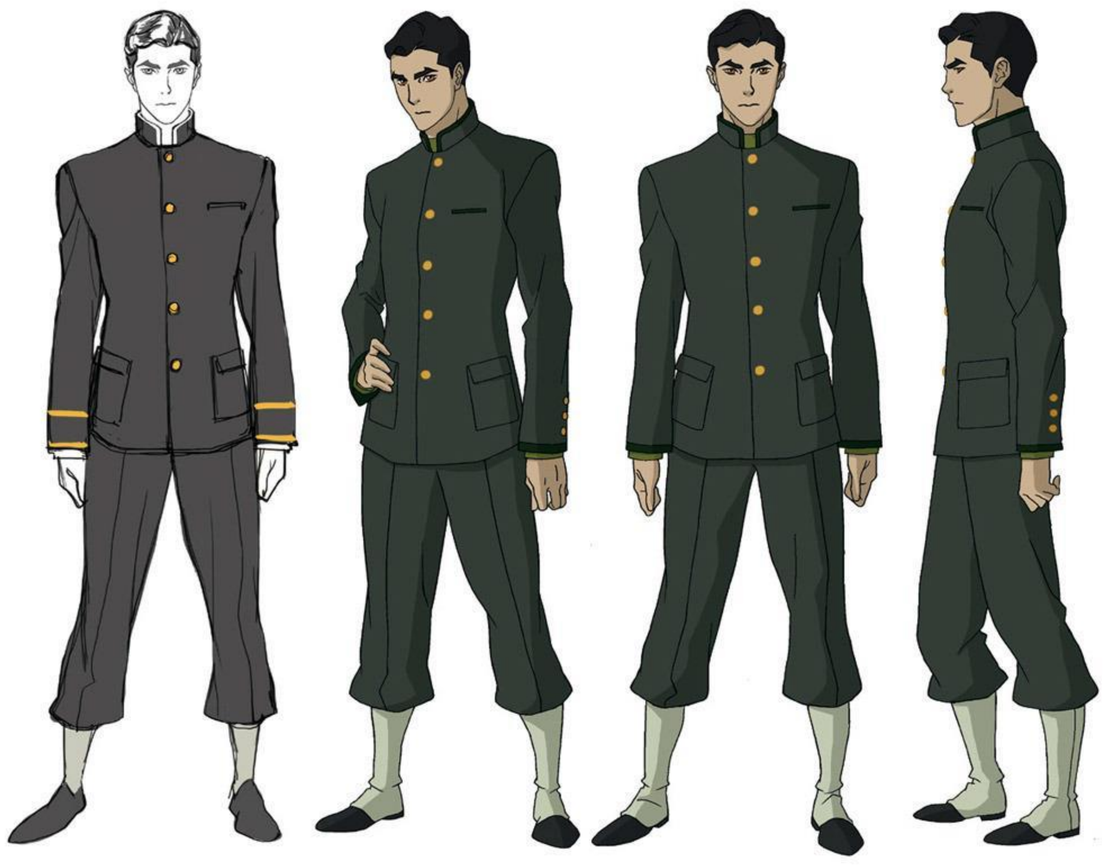


BK: Above is the final version of our fancy-pants gadabout, Prince Wu, built on the bones of Ryu's concept, but with a revised head based on some concepts I did. I am particularly happy with his fabulously coifed bangs. Prince Wu expressions by Christie Tseng, Bryan Konietzko, and Ki-Hyun Ryu. Prince Wu design by Christie Tseng and Bryan Konietzko. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf and Bryan Konietzko.





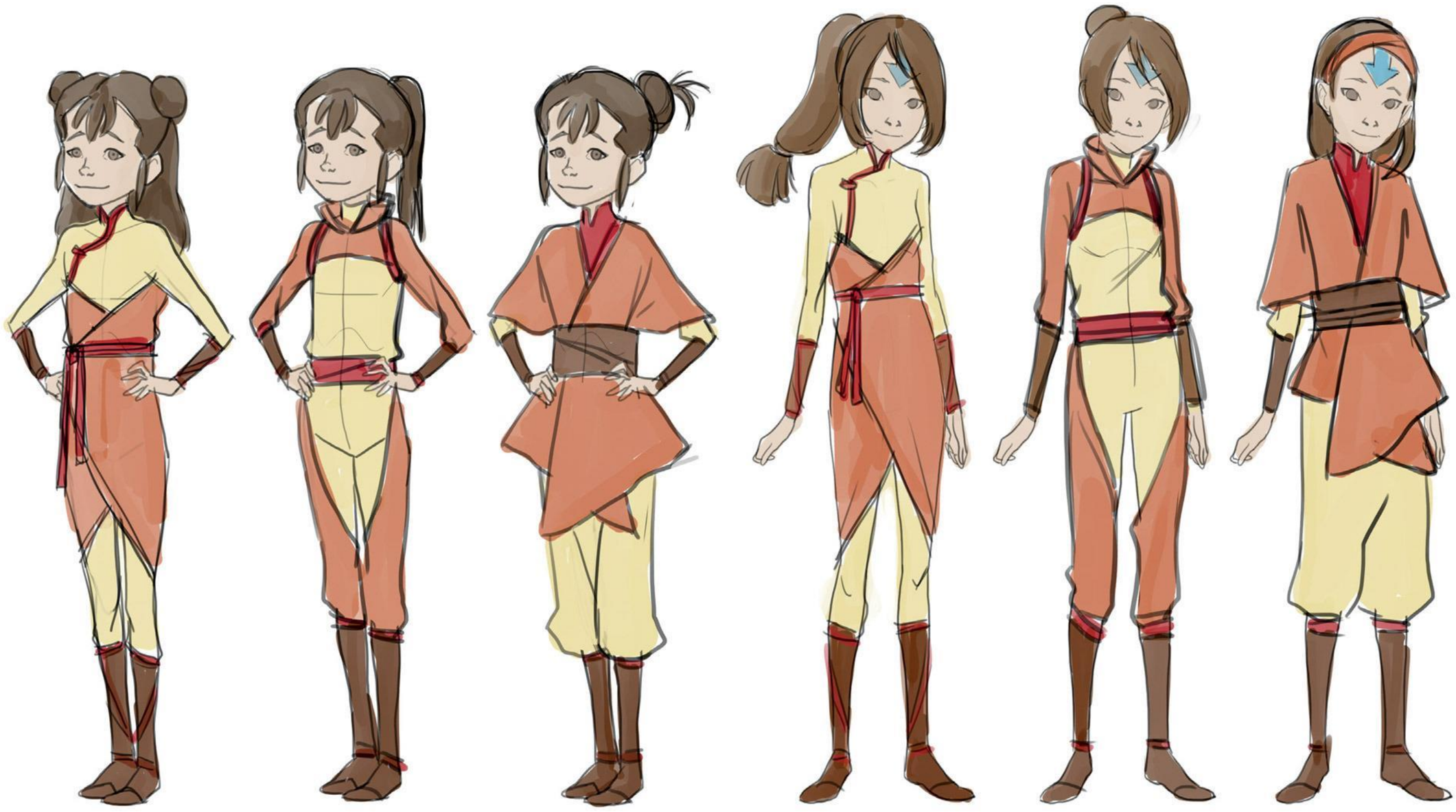
MD: Seeing all these concepts of Asami's outfit together really reminds me how important a character's costume is and how it helps illustrate his or her personality and role in the story. I love the final version, which is a nice balance of formal business attire and fashion-forward elegance. Asami design by Lauren Montgomery, Christie Tseng, and Bryan Konietzko. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf and Bryan Konietzko. Asami concepts by Lauren Montgomery.



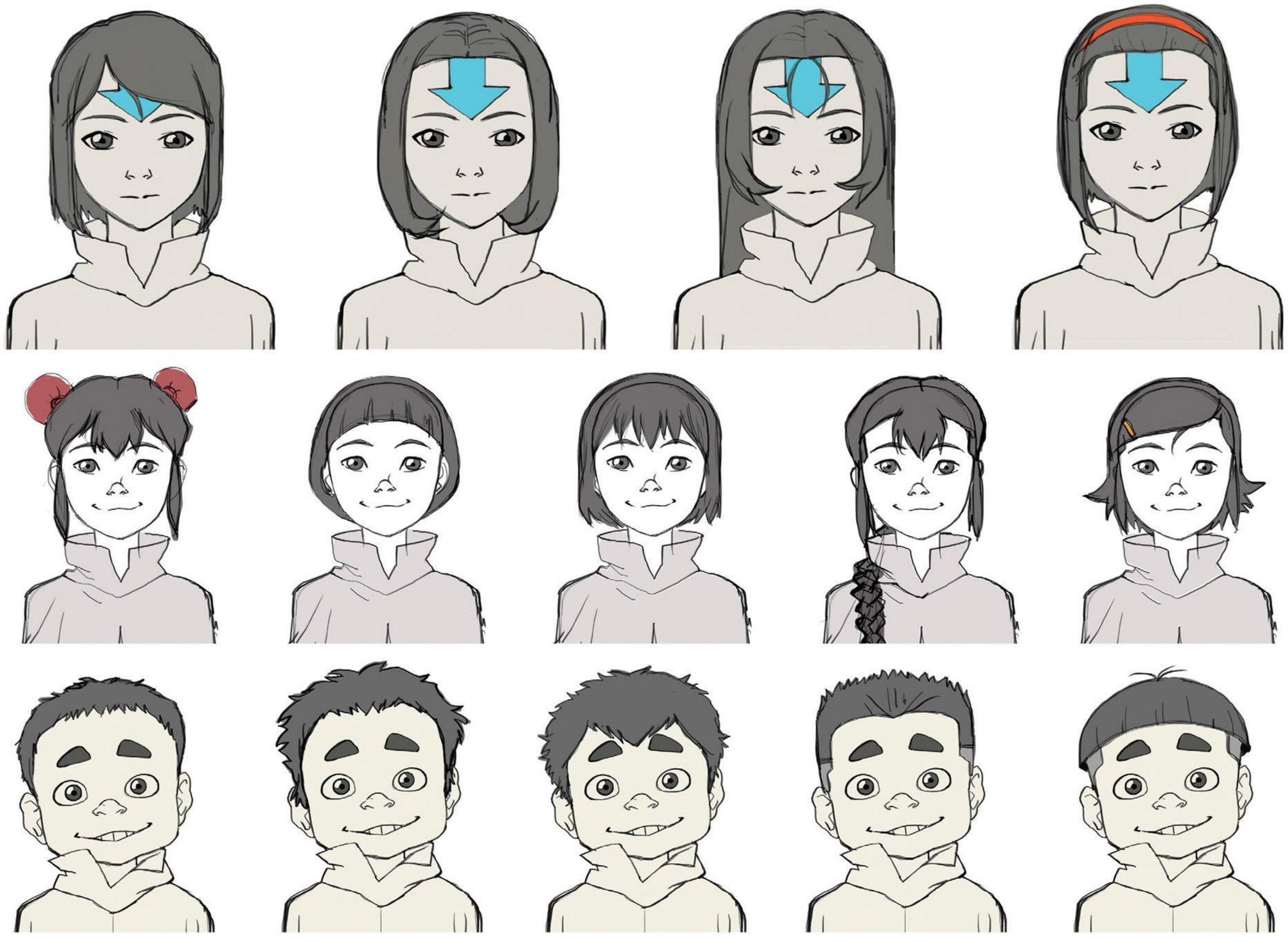
BK: Mako ended up getting the most streamlined costume update for his Earth Kingdom–style bodyguard uniform. I really liked the hairstyle Il-Kwang Kim gave General Iroh in Book One, so I was pleased when Mako adopted it. Mako concept by Ki-Hyun Ryu and Lauren Montgomery. Mako designs by Christie Tseng. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



JDS: Tonraq demonstrating that you should never underestimate "old-man strength." He'll always be one of my personal faves from the series. Tonraq designs by Christie Tseng. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



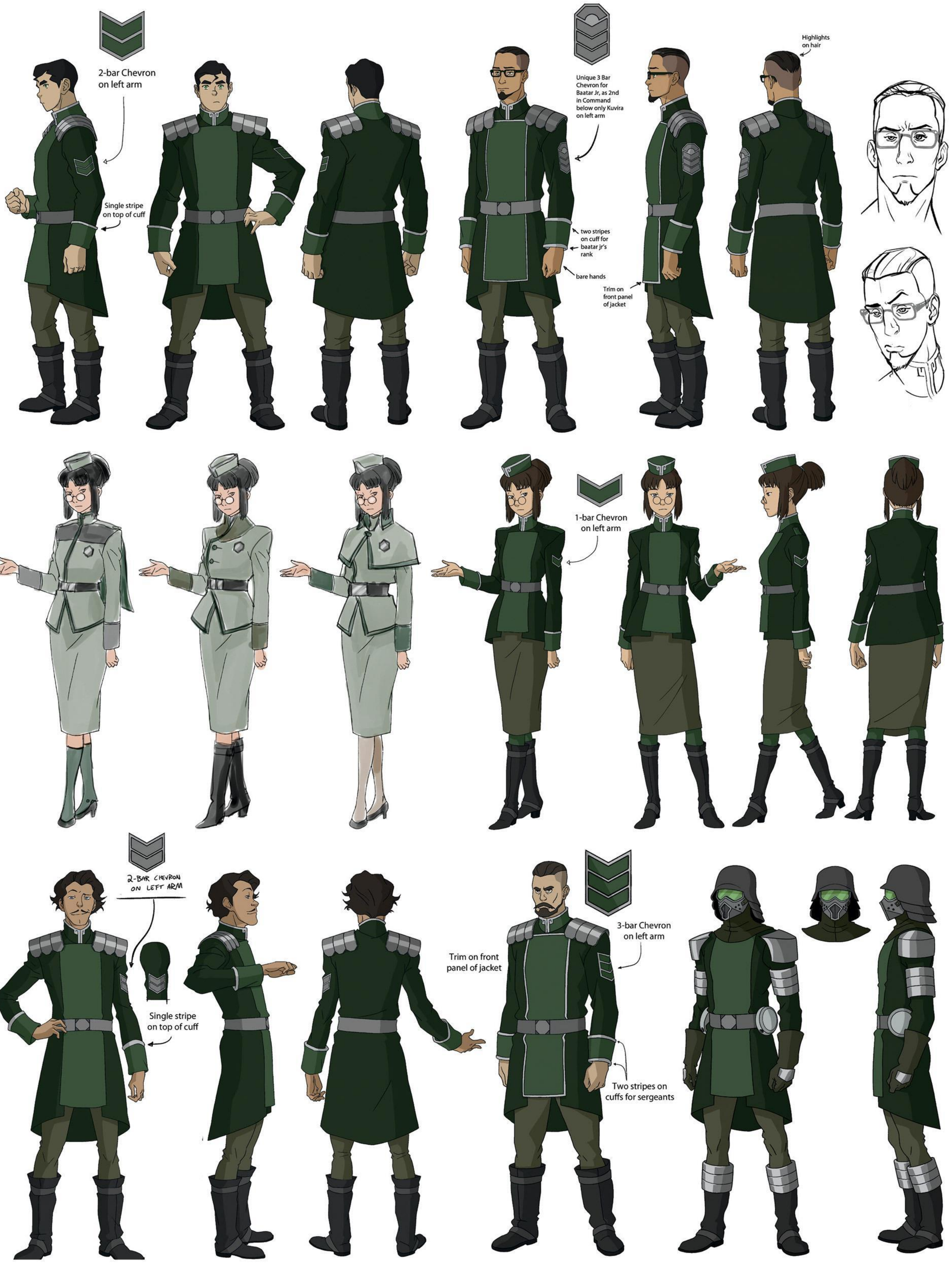
BK: These are some charming Ikki and Jinora concepts by Lauren from very early in the Book Four production, when we were still trying to figure out how these newfangled Airbender wing suits would work and what they would look like—that and what everyone's hair looked like after three years! Ikki and Jinora concepts by Lauren Montgomery.



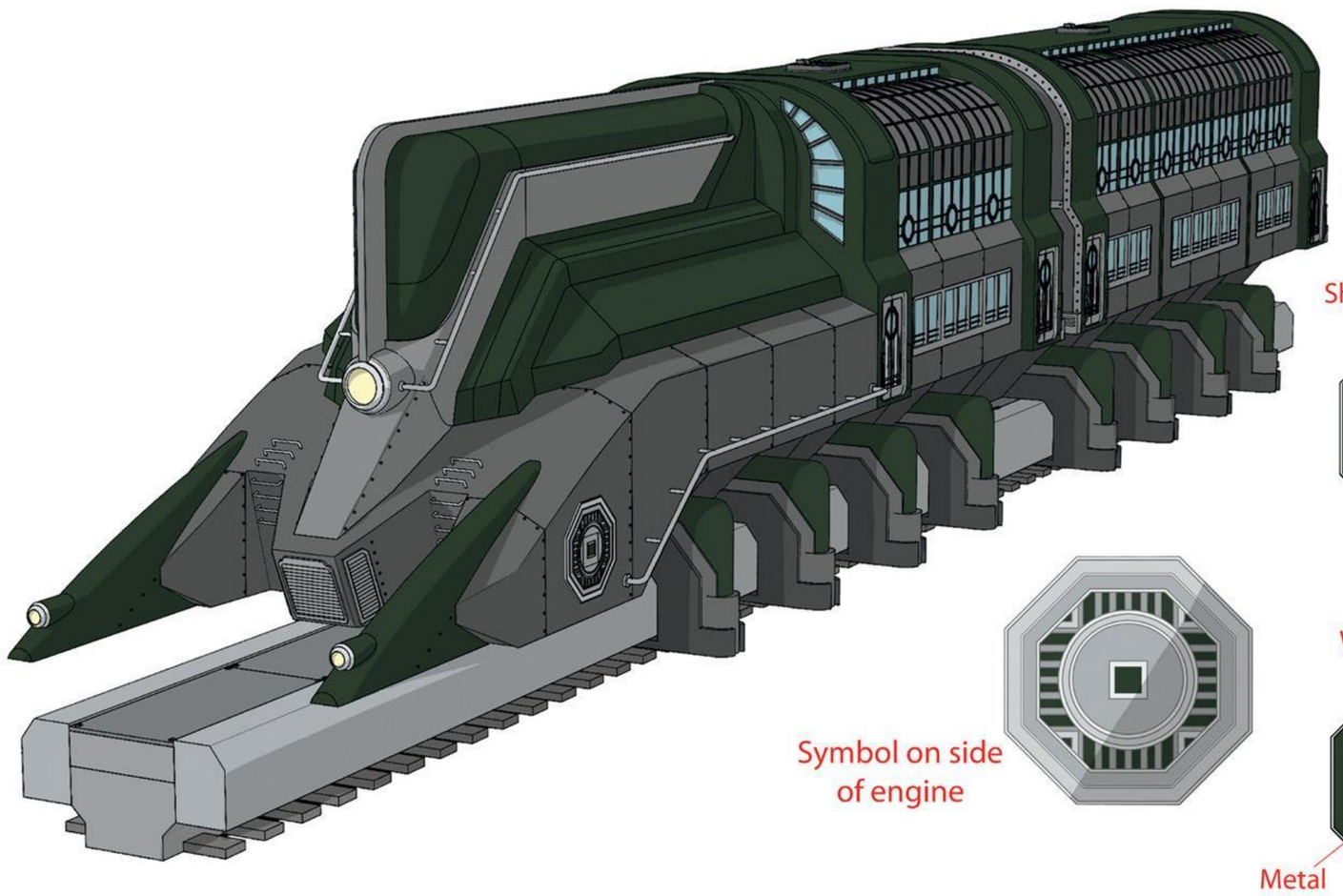
MD: A character's hair can have a personality all its own. The key to updating the Airbender kids' hair was to make sure each style had a similar silhouette to their younger versions. It's amazing how much of a character's identity and recognizability is tied up in his or her hairstyle. Jinora, Ikki, and Meelo concepts by Ki-Hyun Ryu.

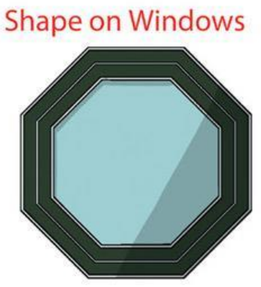


MD: This town in Yi was meant to be representative of the dire situation in the Earth Kingdom prior to Kuvira's unification efforts. Dilapidated towns were being overrun by bandits, and people began to look to Kuvira for a solution to the problem. Design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Frederic Stewart.



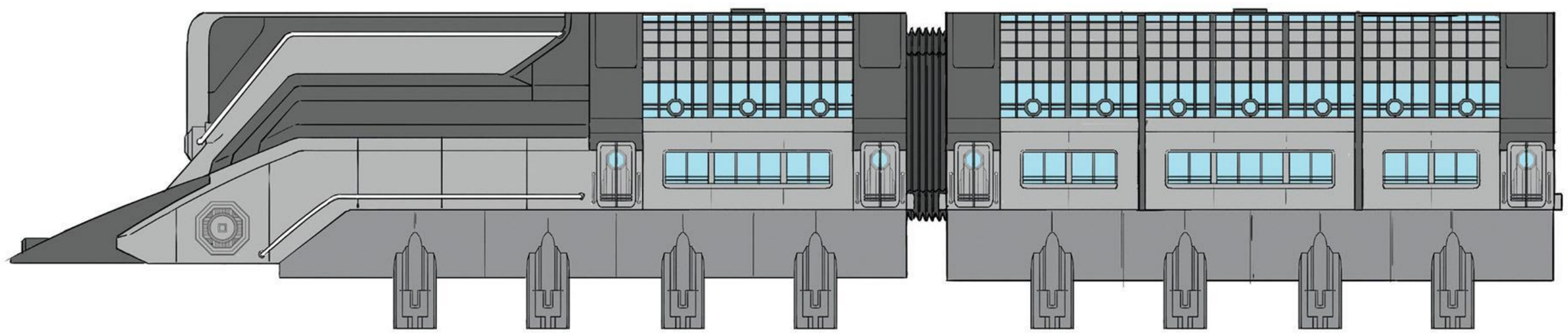
BK: Once we had Kuvira's design finished, we set about basing the rest of her military's uniforms on her costume. I came up with a system of armor, trim, and patches that simplified down the ranks. I particularly enjoyed seeing two of our goofier characters, Bolin and Varrick, looking dashing and serious in their spiffy new uniforms. Baatar Jr. got a pretty major update from the dorky, awkward young engineer he was in Book Three to this harsh, creepy second in command of Kuvira's forces in Book Four. Bolin design by Bryan Konietzko and Christie Tseng. Baatar Jr. design by Bryan Konietzko and Angela Song Mueller. Zhu Li concepts by Lauren Montgomery. Zhu Li design by Christie Tseng and Bryan Konietzko. Varrick, sergeant, and Metalbender designs by Angela Song Mueller and Bryan Konietzko. Private design by Bryan Konietzko and Christie Tseng. Various cleanup by Lane Garrison and Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf and Bryan Konietzko.

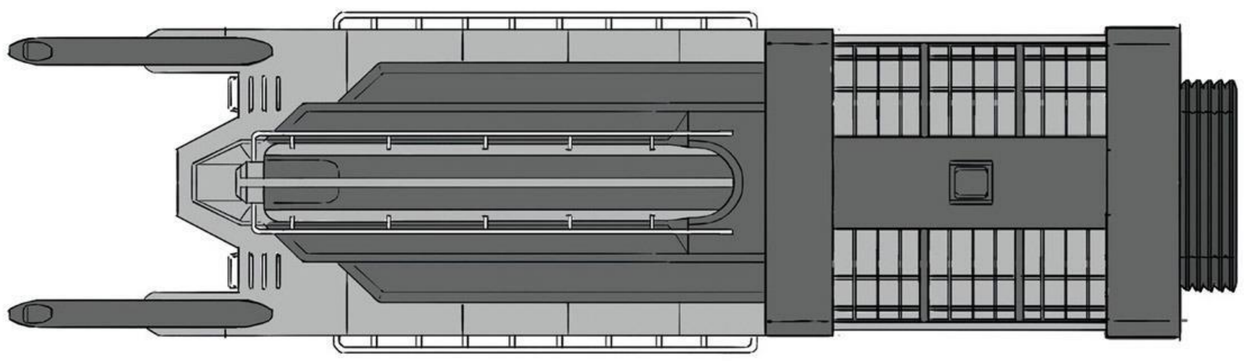


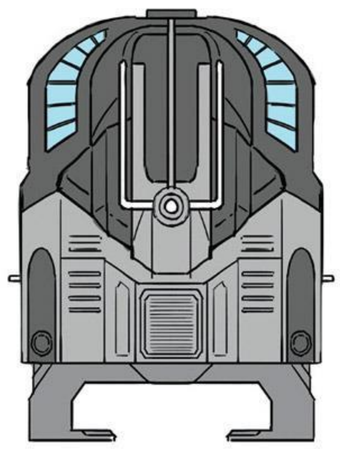


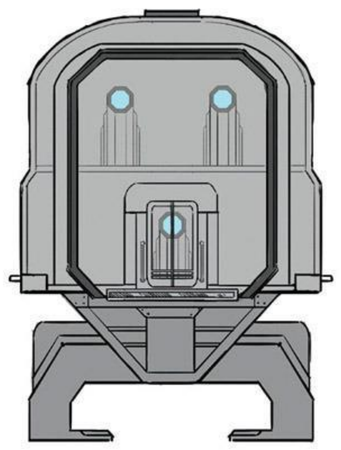
JDS: In Kuvira's mind her maglev train was meant to be seen as a beacon of progress and unity cutting across the Earth Kingdom, but because of her methods, it came to be known as a harbinger of oppression and fear. So the design needed to reference both of these aspects.

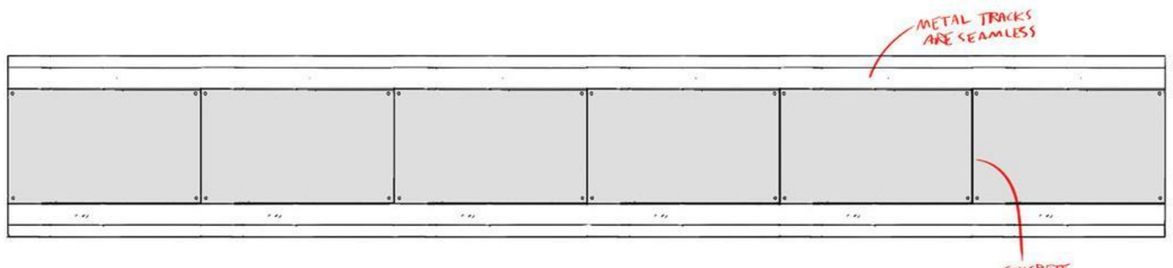
On one hand its impressive, sleek design speaks to a forward-thinking mind, but on the flip side its cold steel frame looks quite intimidating. It always amazes me how much work goes into thinking through a design like this. Maglev train design by Christine Bian and Joaquim Dos Santos. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

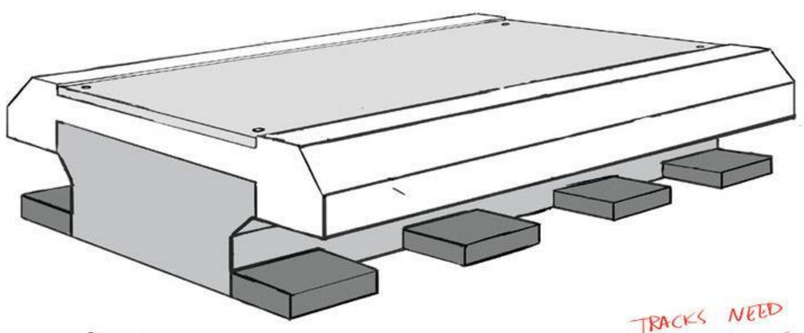


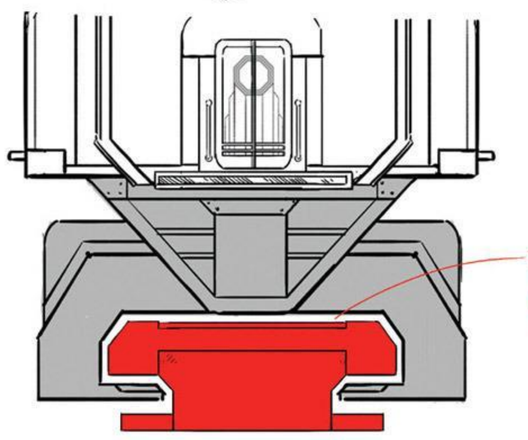


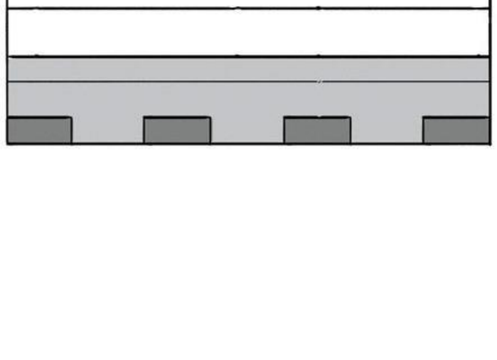


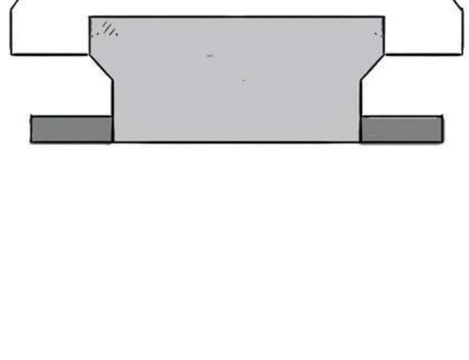


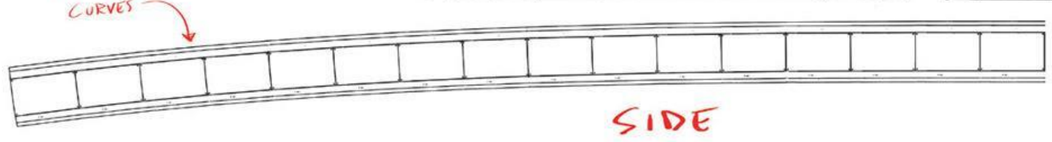




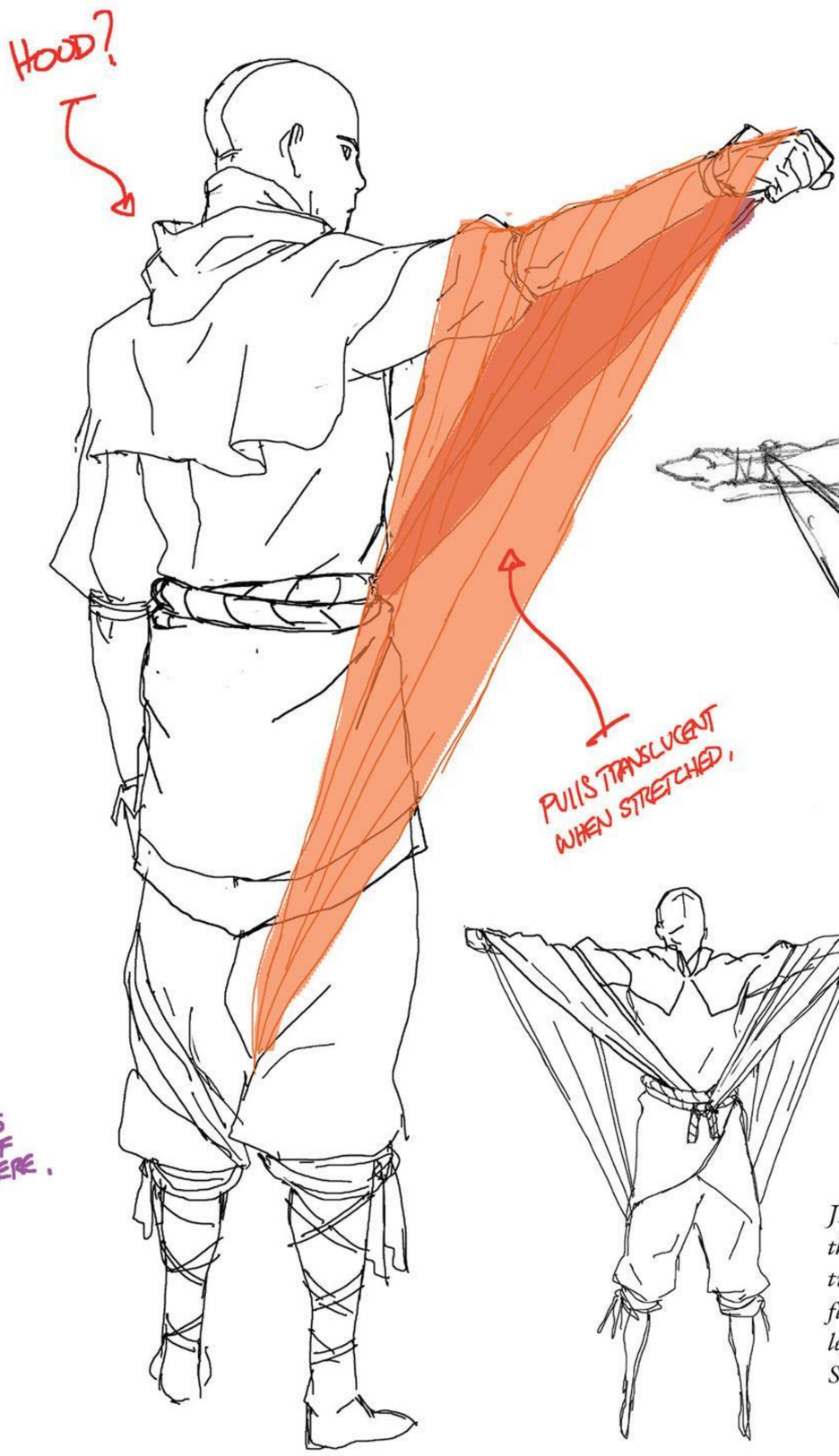


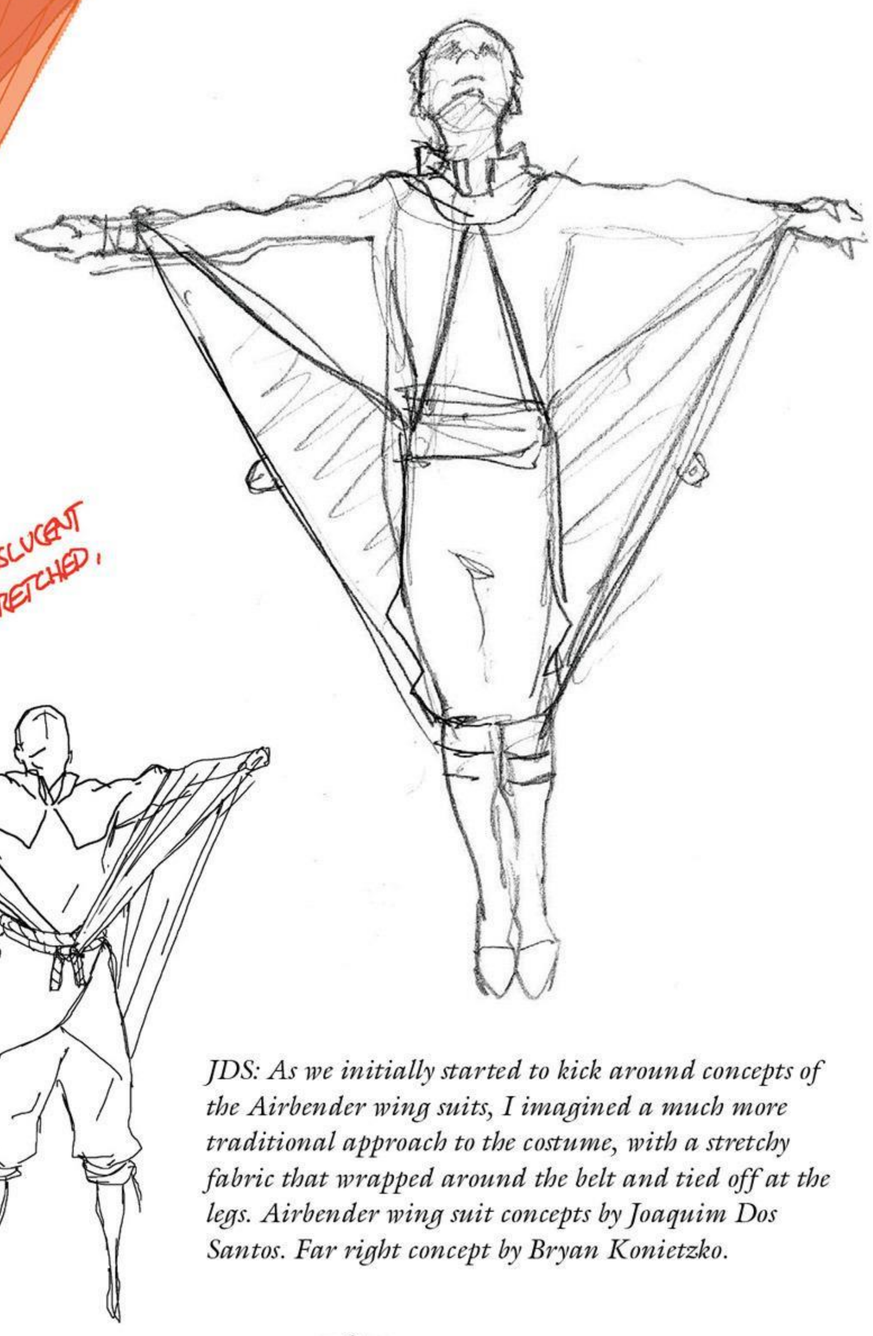


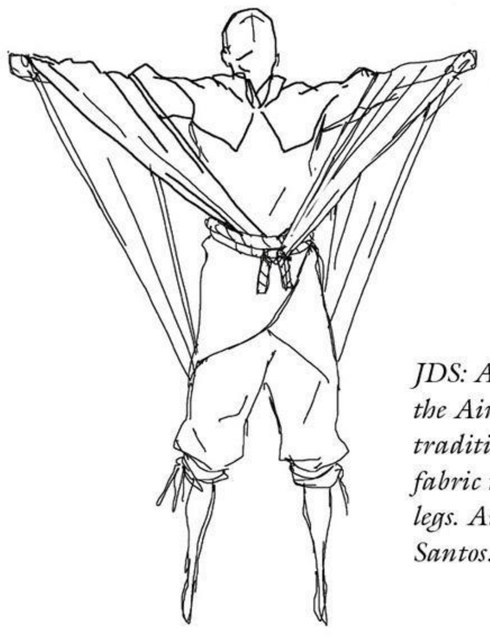








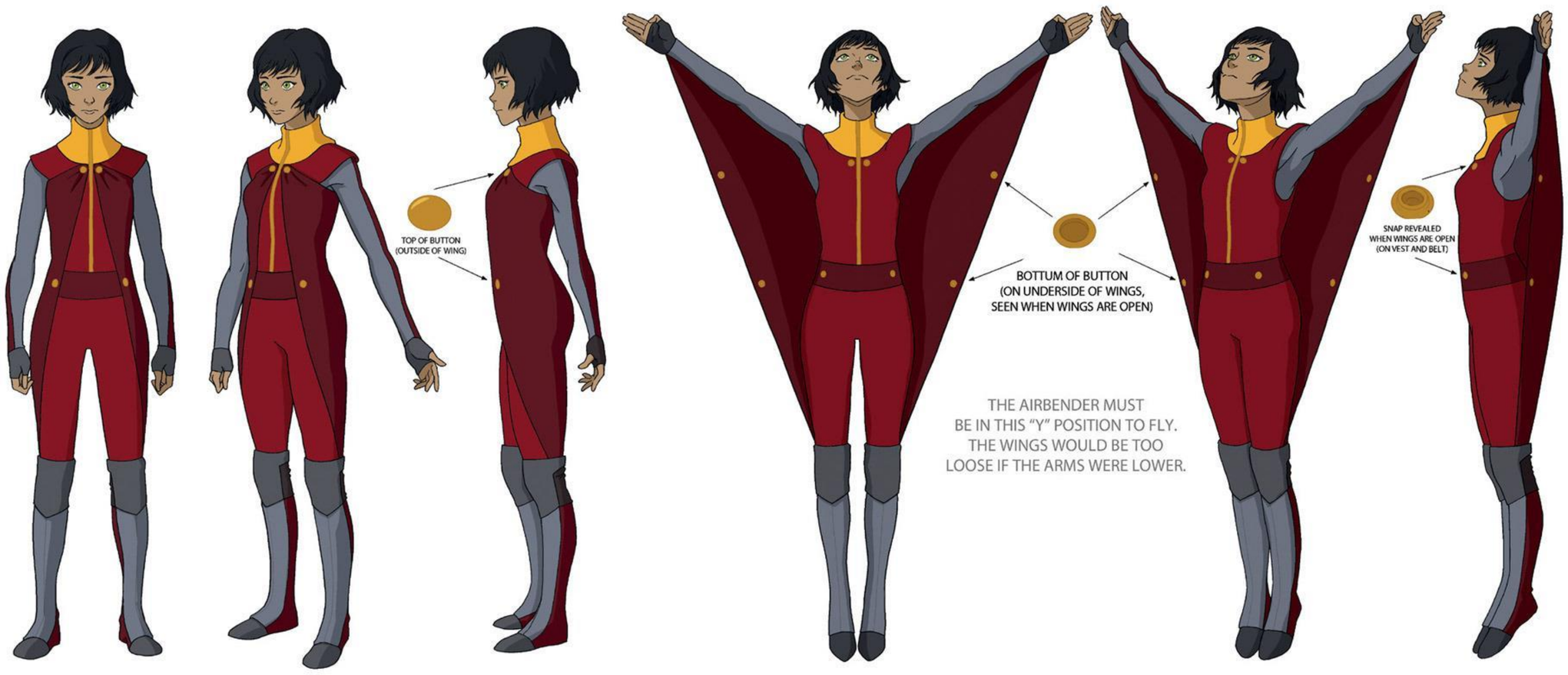




JDS: As we initially started to kick around concepts of the Airbender wing suits, I imagined a much more traditional approach to the costume, with a stretchy fabric that wrapped around the belt and tied off at the legs. Airbender wing suit concepts by Joaquim Dos Santos. Far right concept by Bryan Konietzko.



BK: Joaquim's concept was a cool design, but I wanted to bring the new generation of Airbenders into the modern era. So I continued to develop the wing suit idea into more of a contemporary flight suit. It was tricky figuring out how the wings were going to fold up when not in use. I was getting closer with these sketches, but Mike wasn't crazy about the baggy wings, and I agreed. Airbender wing suit concepts by Bryan Konietzko.



BK: Once I applied Mike's note about not making the wings baggy, the suit finally came together nicely. We never managed to weave the following bit of backstory into the show, but the idea is that Asami designed these modern wing suits for the new Airbenders. Opal designs by Bryan Konietzko. Cleanup by Christie Tseng. Kai designs by Christie Tseng. Tenzin and Bumi designs by Angela Song Mueller. Color by Bryan Konietzko and Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



MD: Because three years have passed since Book Three, all the Airbenders needed to be updated. The kids went through the most obvious growth spurts, but I love the little details, like how Bumi lost his paunch and bulked up, no doubt due to all the training. Airbender designs by Christie Tseng, Angela Song Mueller, and Bryan Konietzko.

Avatar Korra Park design by William Nanqing Niu. Statue design by Joaquim Dos Santos. Painting by Frederic Stewart. Four Elements Hotel lobby design by Christine Bian. Painting by Lauren Zurcher. (Opposite) Top: Design by William Nanqing Niu. Bottom: Design by Angela Sung. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.



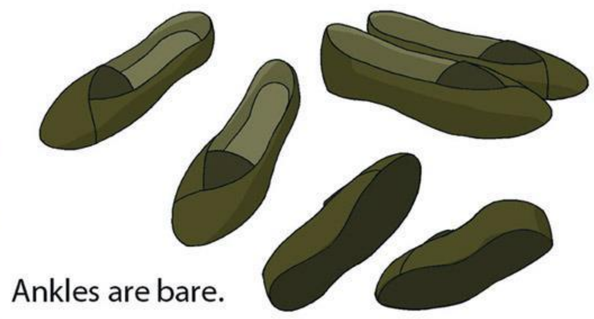
CHAPTER TWO

KORRA ALONE



MD: With shorter hair and a new Earth Kingdom costume, Korra still needed to retain her signature look, especially since this was going to be her main outfit for half the season. The sleeveless shirt and baggy pants mirror her Water Tribe outfit nicely.

BK: It was always fun to put Aang and the gang in clothes from nations other than their own, and it was the same thing with Korra in her Earth Kingdom disguise. I really love the parka Angie designed for Korra and wish we had seen it more in the show. Korra concepts by Lauren Montgomery. Korra designs by Christie Tseng. Korra in parka designs by Angela Song Mueller. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. (Preceding spread) Design by Joaquim Dos Santos. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.



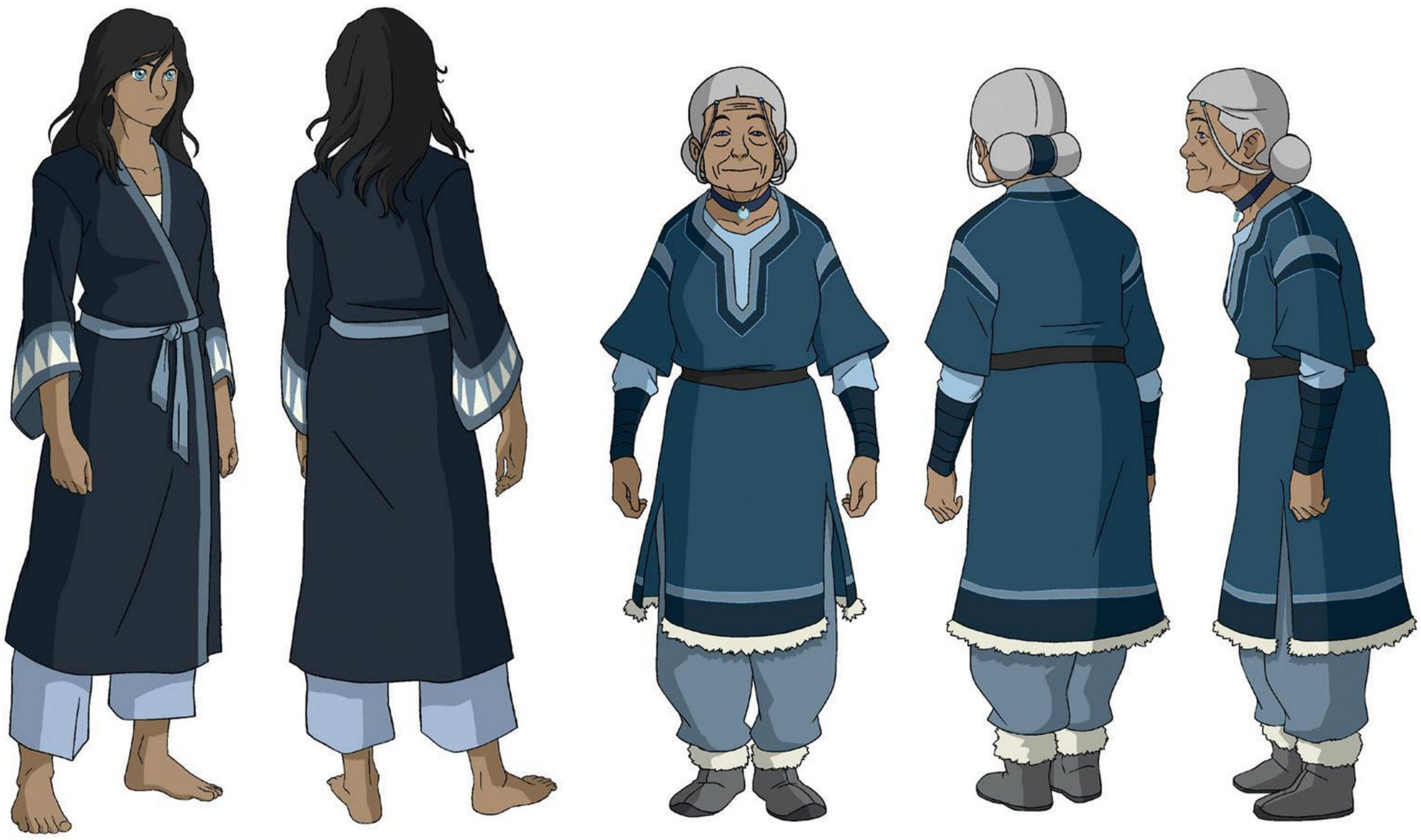




JDS: Two of my favorite things came together (cage fighting and animation) when I was lucky enough to get to stage the fight between Korra and this bruiser. Just next to her is the sleazy promoter who thinks Korra looks familiar. Bathroom guy design by Lane Garrison. Sleazy promoter and fighter designs by Christie Tseng. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

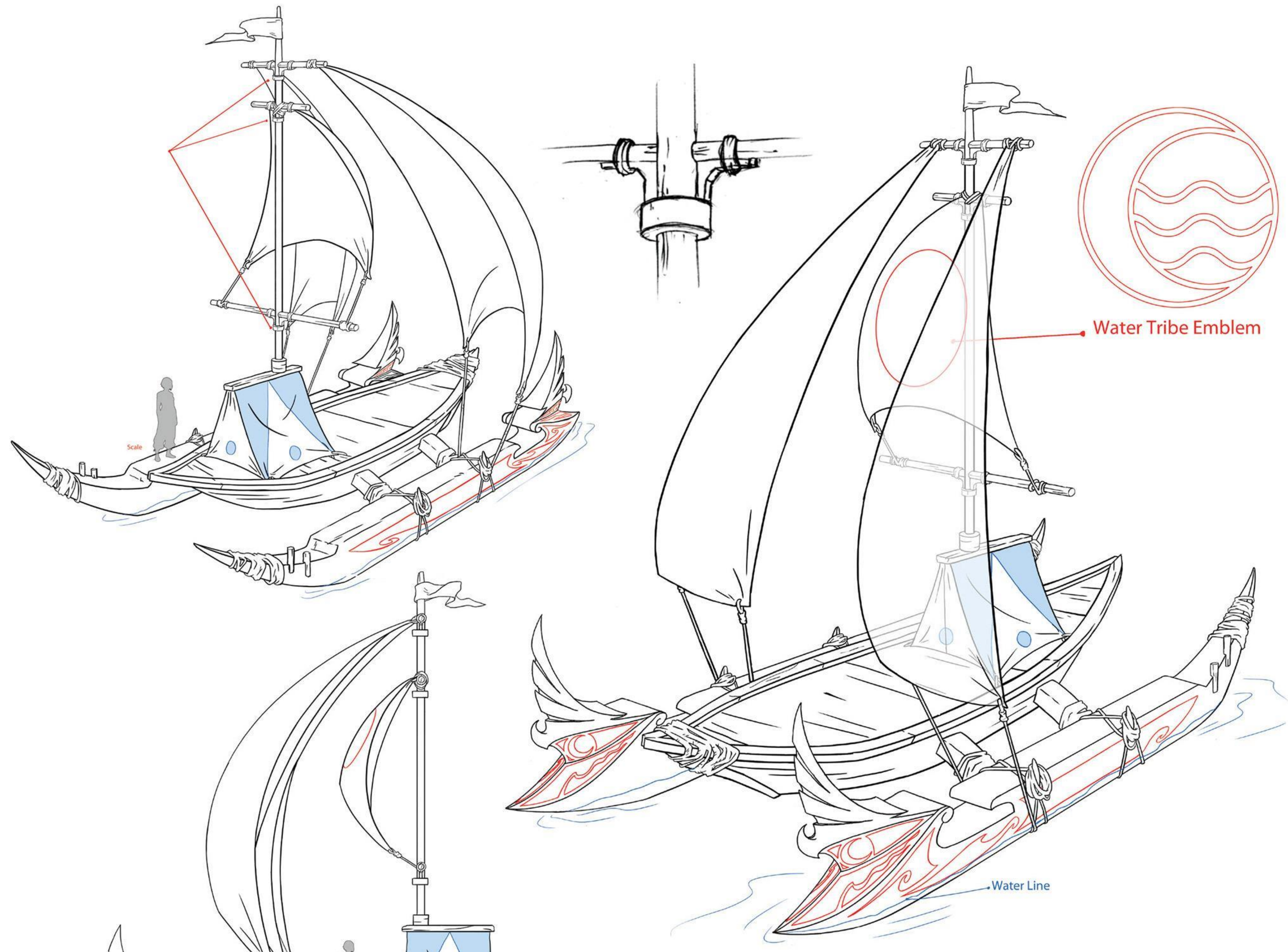


BK: Christine did a fantastic job making this empty village feel like a real, lived-in place, and Fred masterfully made it moody in the moonlight. The gloom and isolation reflect Korra's psychological state perfectly. Designs by Christine Bian. Paintings by Frederic Stewart.



MD: Of all the Korra *episodes, this was my favorite one to write, especially the scenes between Korra and Katara. We didn't want to gloss over Korra's recovery, so in the rehabilitation scenes I wanted to show how frustrated and hopeless she'd become after weeks and weeks of struggling to get better.*

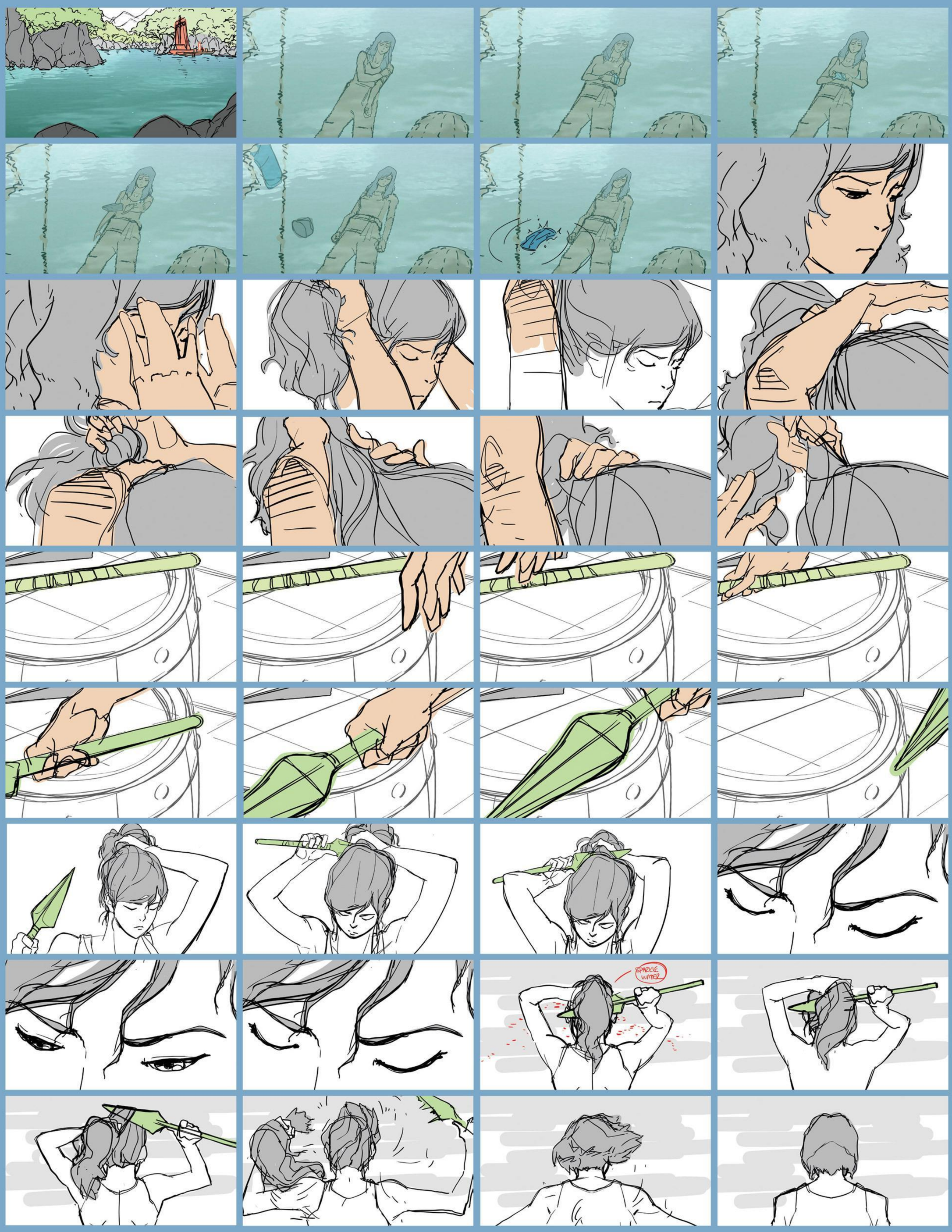
Katara shows an amazing amount of patience with her and finally helps her get back on her feet. Korra in robe and Katara in dress designs by Angela Song Mueller. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



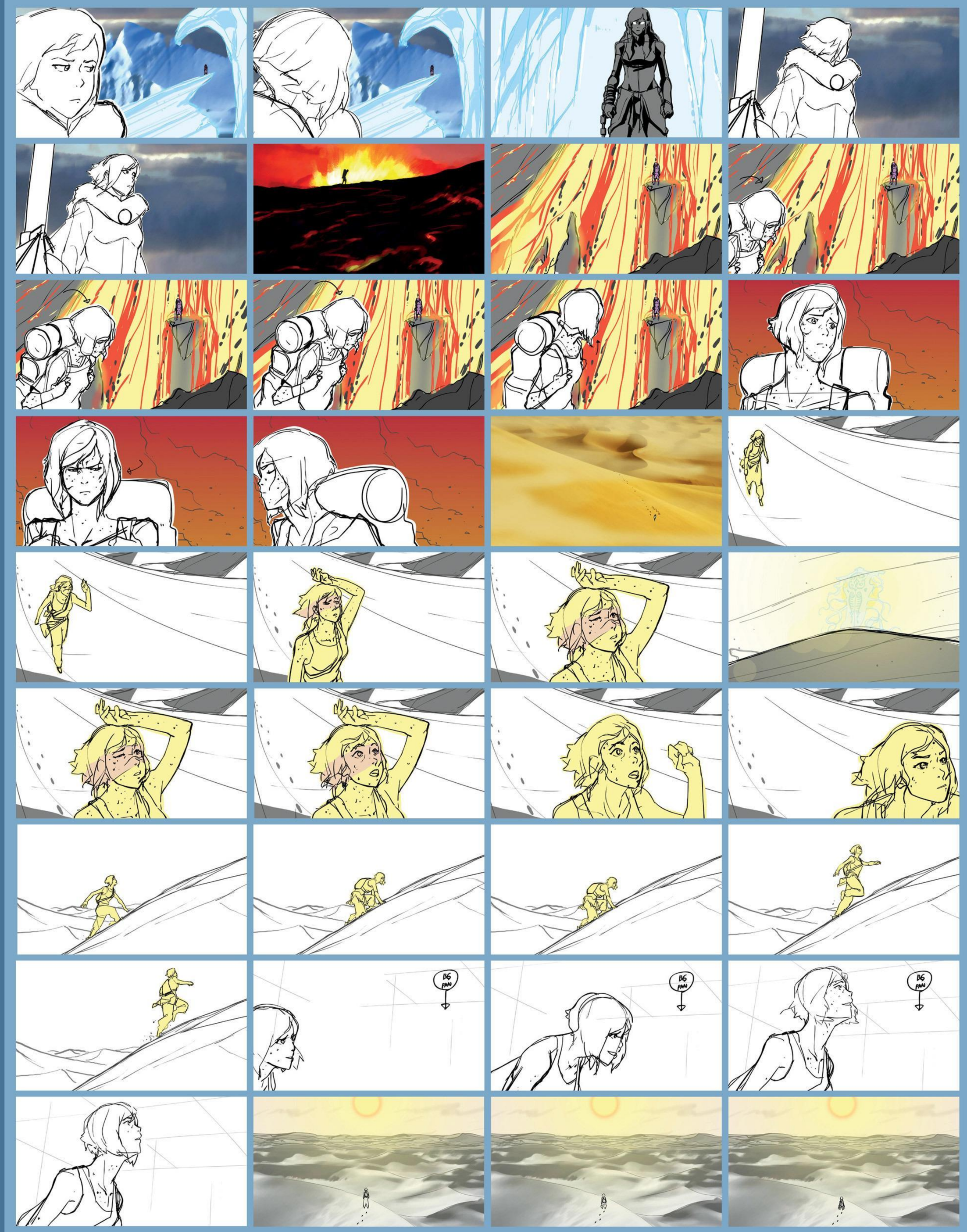
BK: Steve Hirt was doing design cleanup, but he wanted to take a stab at doing some designs too. This catamaran was a good place to start, since it was an update from a design in Book Two of Avatar. *I always liked the original, which we only saw briefly as Pakku dropped off the gang in the Earth Kingdom, so it was nice to dust it off and give it new life in* Korra. *Southern Water Tribe catamaran designs by Steve Hirt.*



MD: Because Tonraq is chief, he and his family have been living in the palace for the past few years, the same place where his brother had once taken up residence. BK: The painting on top was from a scene where Tonraq pushed Korra into the palace in a wheelchair, but it ended up getting cut. It was always a shame when that happened, but knowing we were making these art books was a nice consolation, since we knew we would have somewhere to showcase the gems that hit the cutting-room floor. Foyer design by Christine Bian. Dining room design by Jonard Soriano. Paintings by Frederic Stewart.



JDS: Steve Ahn, who was working at the time as an assistant director under Ian Graham, is also an incredibly talented and versatile storyboard artist. From giant mecha battles to something as personal as Korra cutting her hair and leaving a part of herself behind, Steve can pretty much do it all. Storyboards by Steve Ahn.



MD: As Korra journeys across the world, her dark half is always there, looming and watching. In the desert, Korra thinks she finally has found Raava, but it is just a mirage. Storyboards by Chris Palmer.



BK: This view on the top of the page of towering, ominous icebergs from Korra's worldly wanderings is among my favorites Emily did for the series. On the bottom is another amazing snowscape by Fred, and sadly for us, it is the last one he did for Korra *before moving on to do visual development in feature animation. He not only gave us so many wonderful, iconic paintings, but we based the whole background-painting style of the show on his personal work. We are thankful for our time with Fred, a great guy and an artist of staggering talent. Top: Design by Jonard Soriano. Painting by Emily Tetri. Bottom: Design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Frederic Stewart.*





BK: All the depictions of adult Aang in Korra *thus far had been very serious, so I was looking for an opportunity to show the old fun-loving trickster we know and love. Ryu had done the original key animation of young Aang in this pose, so it was fitting that almost a decade later he drew the adult version too.*

Fishmonger and store owner designs by Christie Tseng. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. Adult Aang photo design by Ki-Hyun Ryu and Angela Song Mueller. Tones by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. Painting by Emily Tetri. Below: Background design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.





MD: It's been fun to revisit locations from the original series through the eyes of Korra and her friends. The swamp was one of the more iconic and memorable locations from the past, and little has changed in this eerie but beautiful part of the world. All designs in this spread by William Nanqing Niu. Bottom painting by Lauren Zurcher. Opposite painting by Craig Elliott.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CORONATION



Desk clerk and bellhop designs by Angela Song Mueller. Teenage Kuvira supporters by Lane Garrison. Cleanup by Angela Song Mueller. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.
(Preceding spread) Design by Christine Bian. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.



BK: The crown jewel atop the Little Ba Sing Se Fashion Mall is a miniature version of the Earth Kingdom's Royal Palace. It looks pretty nice from the outside but houses a tacky family buffet restaurant on the inside. Design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Craig Elliott.



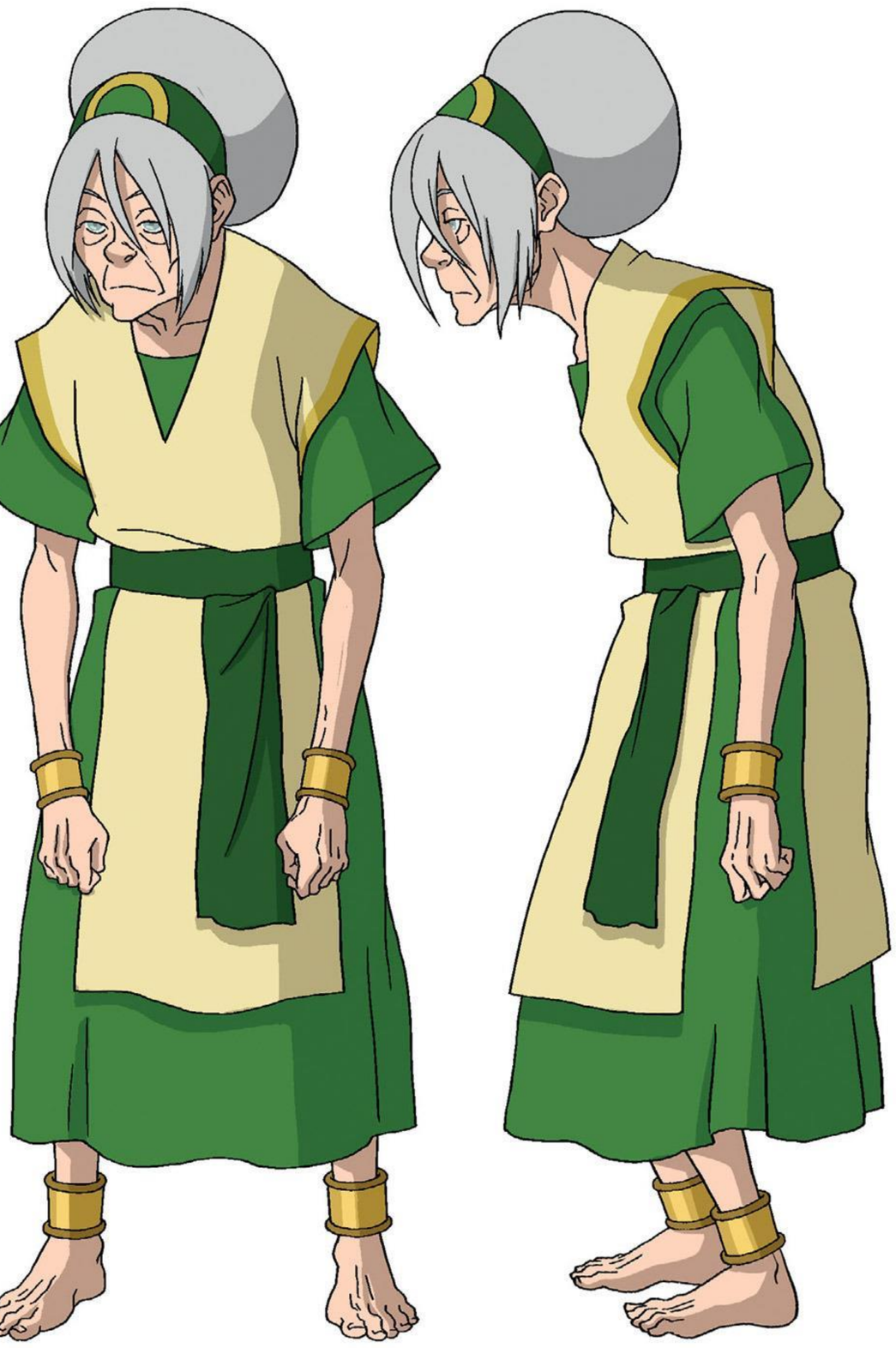


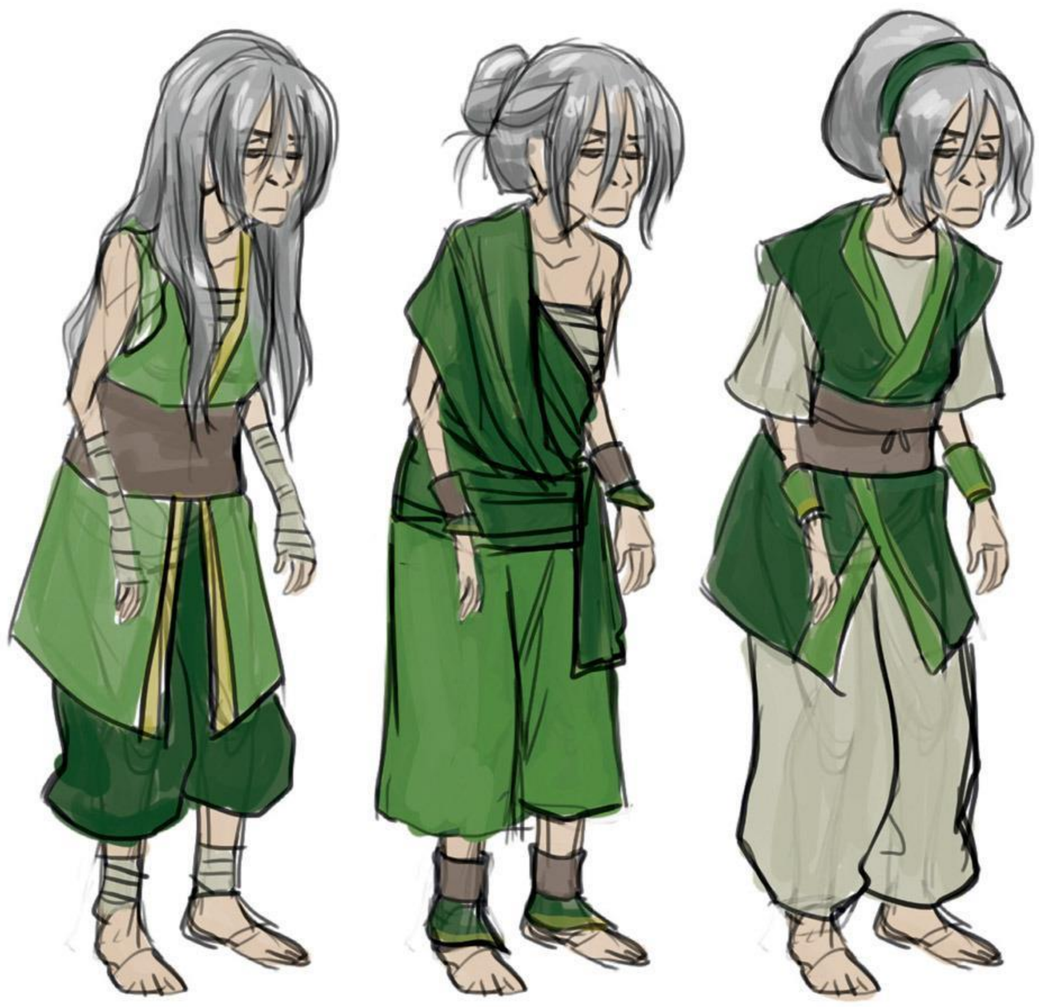


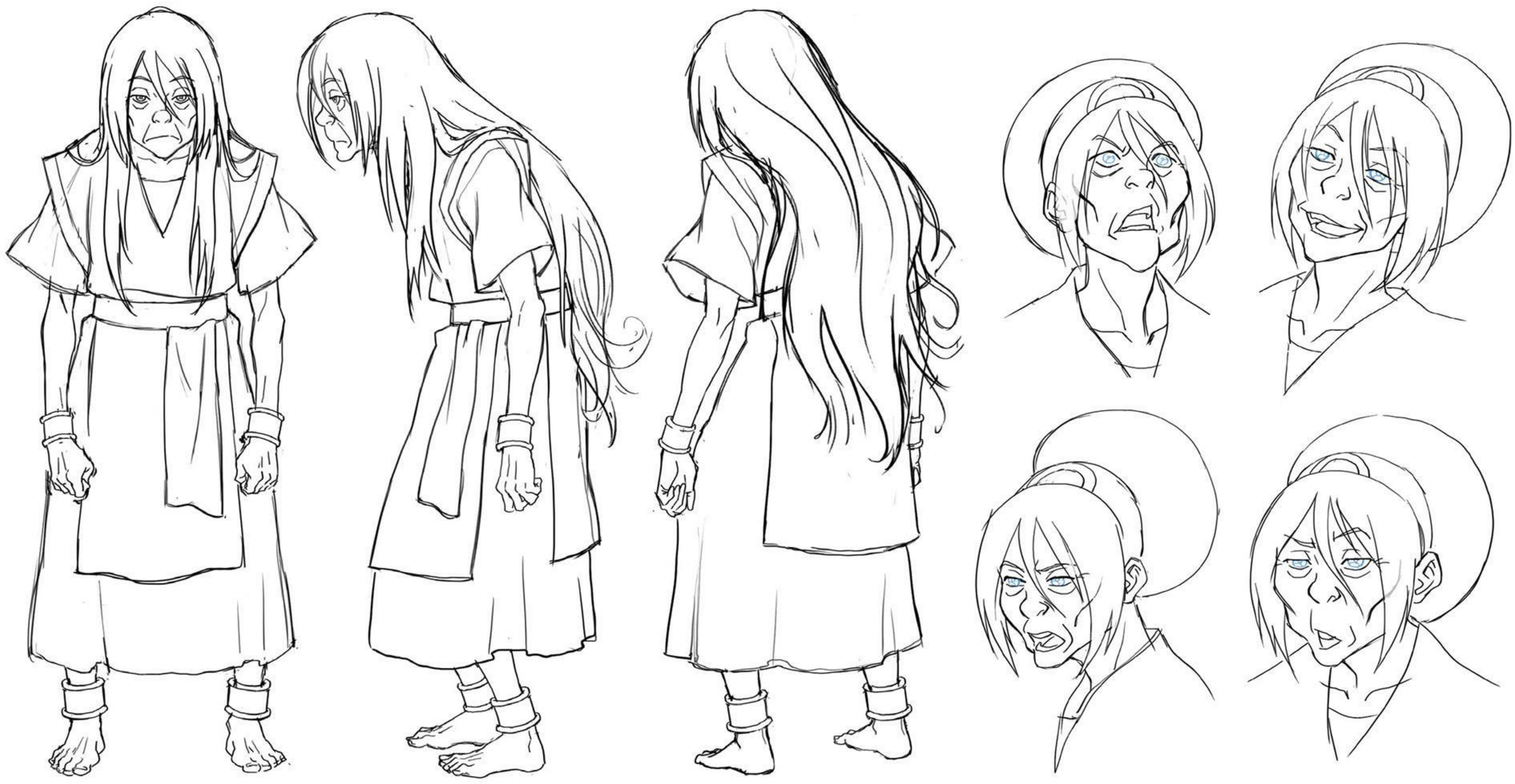
MD: The Republic City Four Elements is the city's poshest hotel and the first choice for discerning travelers and world leaders who appreciate the finest in luxury and service. Prince Wu loves it so much, he's taken up permanent residence. Four Elements Hotel exterior design by Angela Sung. Painting by Emily Tetri. Junior suite design (left) and painting by Lane Garrison. Presidential suite design (right) by Christine Bian. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.

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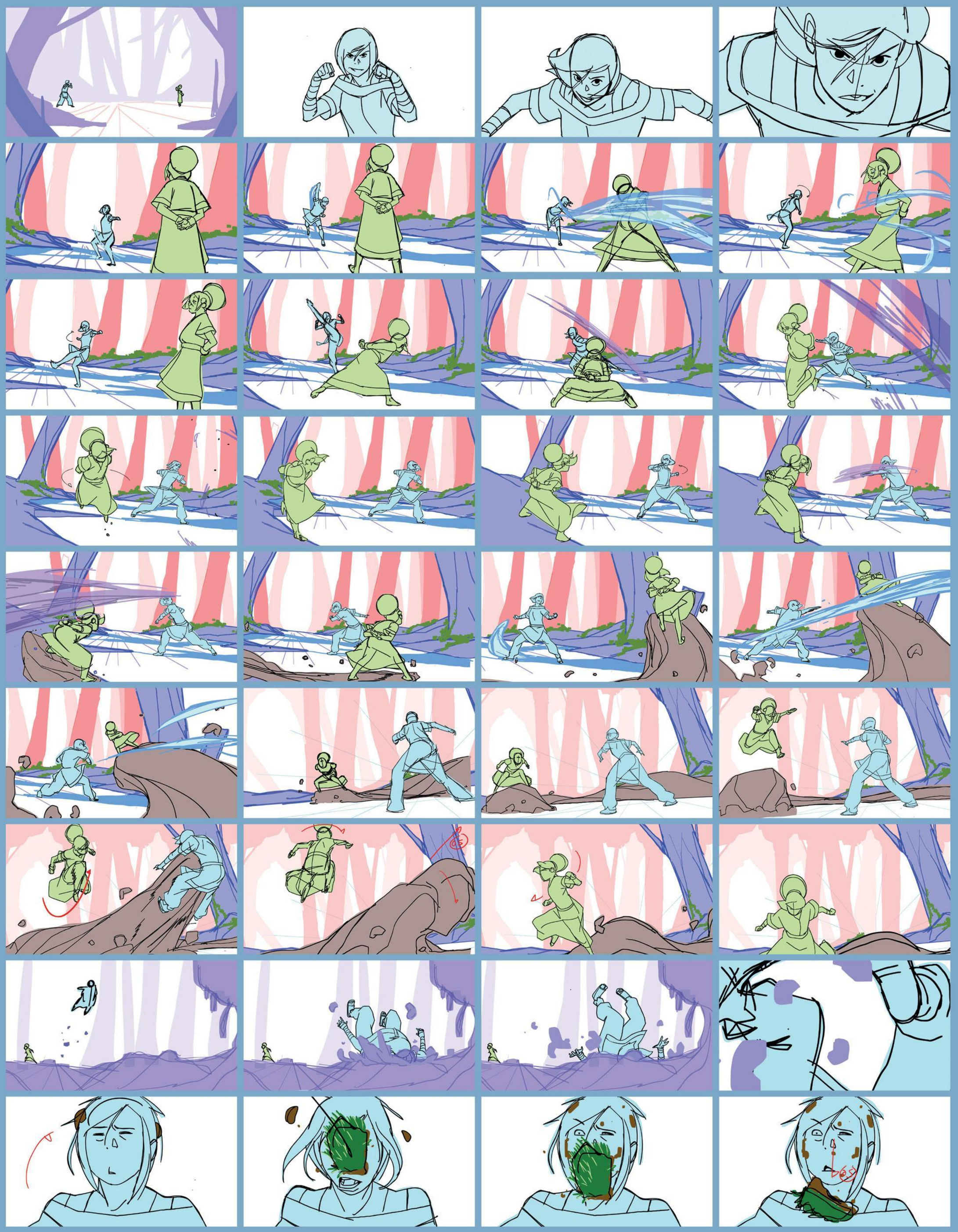
MD: After meeting the elderly Katara and Zuko, we knew we wanted Toph to make an appearance at some point. We first talked about bringing her back during the development of Book Three, but it never quite made sense to take a detour into the swamp, although we did have Aiwei mention her when Team Avatar visited Zaofu. Once we knew Korra needed to wander the world to recover, we thought it would be great for her to run into Toph, whose gruff mentoring style was a great contrast to Katara's more gentle nature.



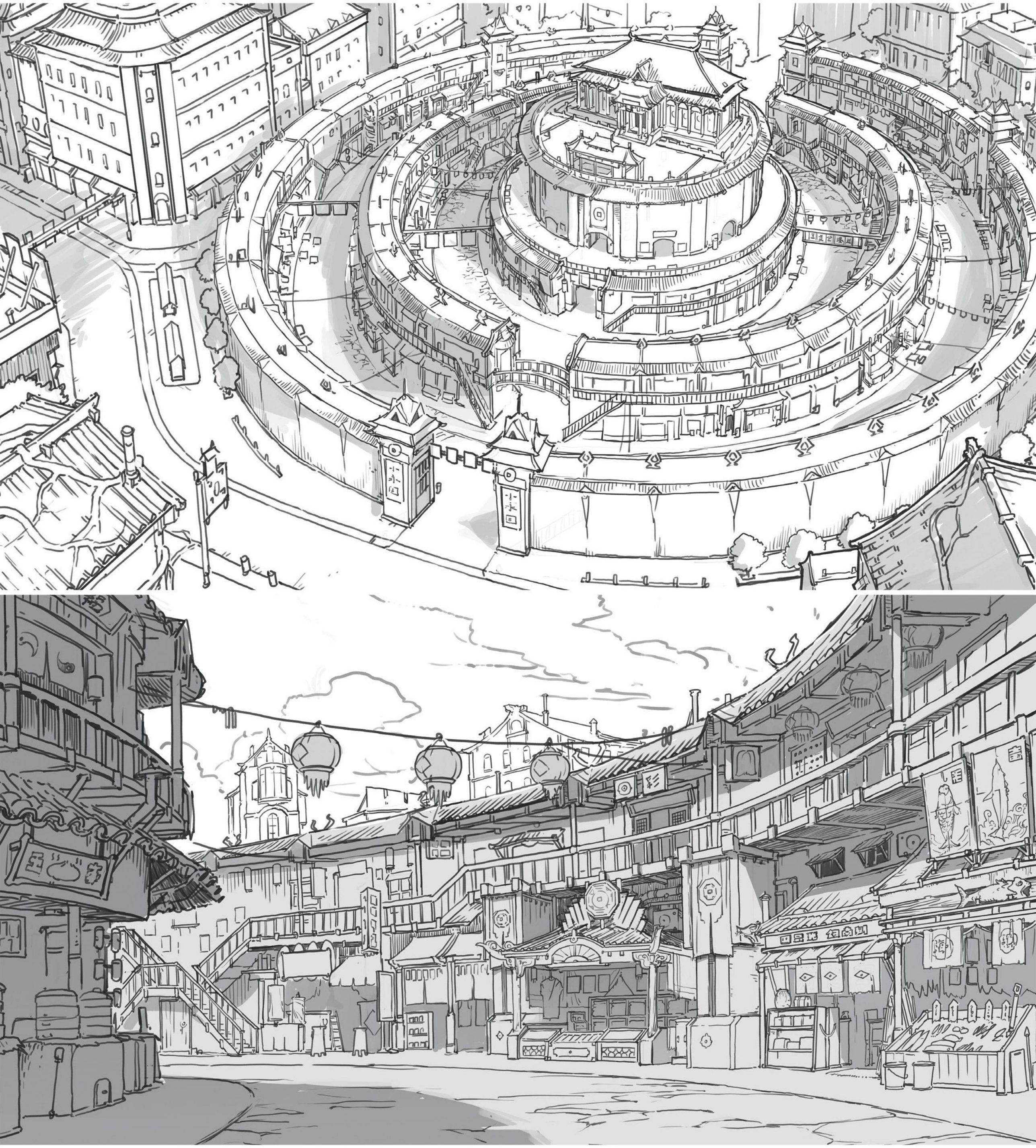




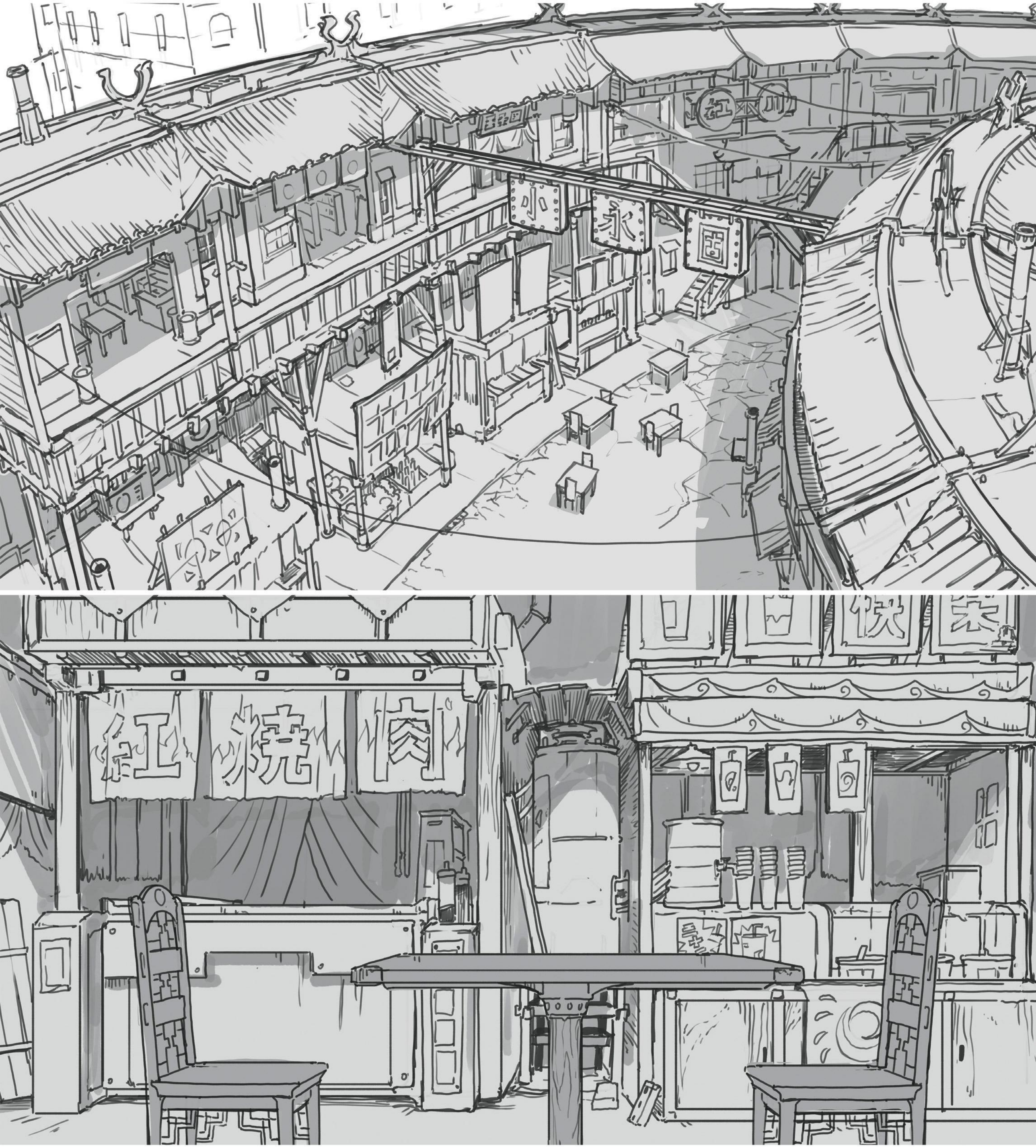
BK: Old Toph's height became a serious issue in the animation production. Although we had seen that Toph had grown to a moderate height as an adult in the Book One flashbacks, everyone on the crew seemed to want her to shrink back down to her twelve-year-old height as an old woman. I was fine with that, but I wanted it mostly to be due to her being hunched over. I thought we made that pretty clear in the model sheets, but her clothes obscured her pose and many of the artists just drew her at the hunched height with straight legs. It led to many retakes! Toph concepts by Lauren Montgomery. Toph designs by Christie Tseng, Owen Sullivan, and Bryan Konietzko. Expressions by Christie Tseng. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



JDS: Owen Sullivan was another of our incredibly talented assistant directors. Here we see a swamp training session between a rehabbing, overmatched Korra and an elderly but still kick-butt Toph. What I really enjoy about Owen's work is his ability to convey movement and action with so few lines. Storyboards by Owen Sullivan.



MD: Sometimes the ideas that seem ridiculous at first end up being just the thing you need for the story. The Little Ba Sing Se Fashion Mall was one of those ideas. At first I thought it might be too over the top, but when combined with Prince Wu's desire for importance and relevance, this microcosm of his kingdom perfectly supported his character arc.



BK: William was a great artist from day one on Korra*, but by the time we got to Book Four he was on fire! His designs of this oddly shaped, incredibly complex location are clear as a bell and easy on the eye. All designs in this spread by William Nanqing Niu.*



BK: Designers Angela Song Mueller and Christine Bian became fast friends when they met on the Korra *production. They schemed to get their likenesses into the show as a pair of Earth Empire fans donning Kuvira T-shirts. Birthday kid designs by Christie Tseng. Kuvira fan designs by Angela Song Mueller. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.*



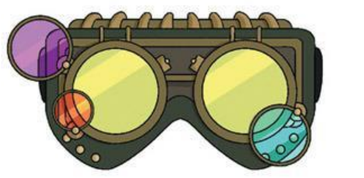
MD: Fire Lord Izumi was a character we wanted to do more with, but the story didn't lend itself to her being involved in the main plot. Prince Wu with kid's crown designs by Christie Tseng. Fire Lord Izumi designs by Bryan Konietzko and Angela Song Mueller. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

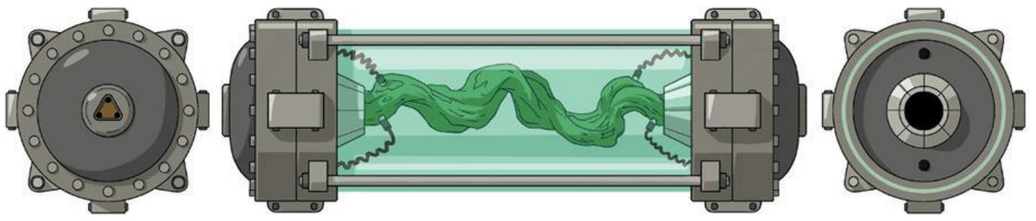


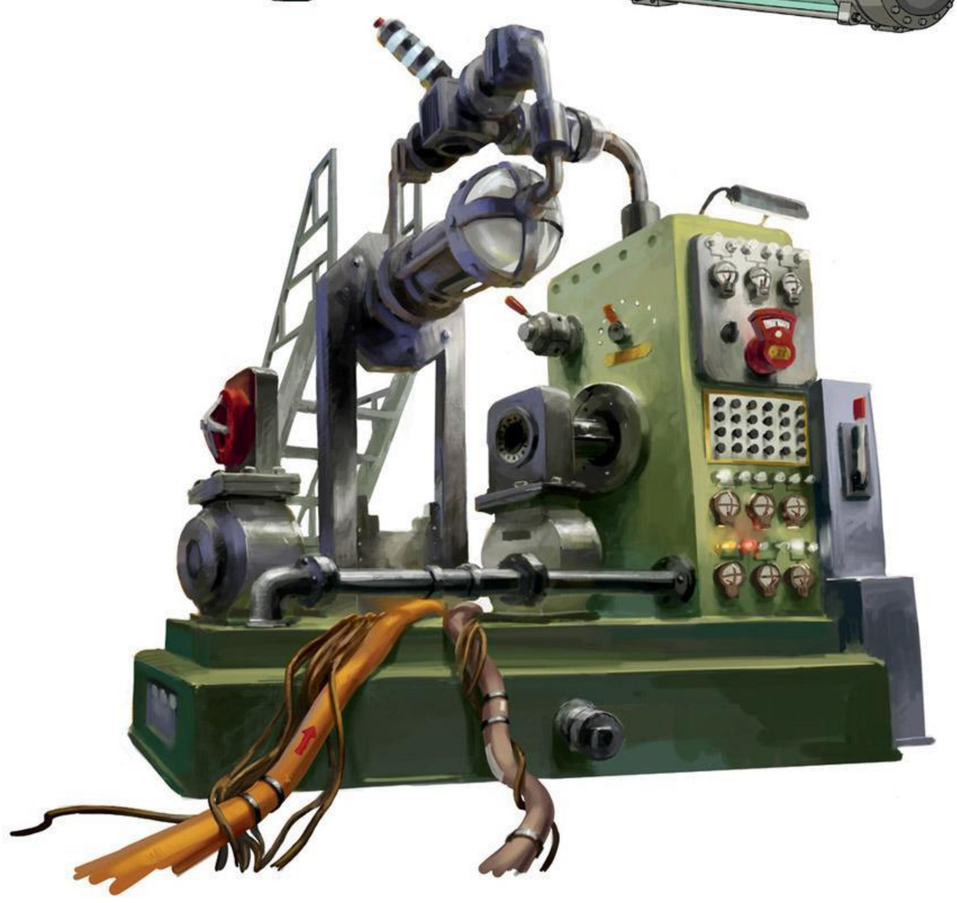


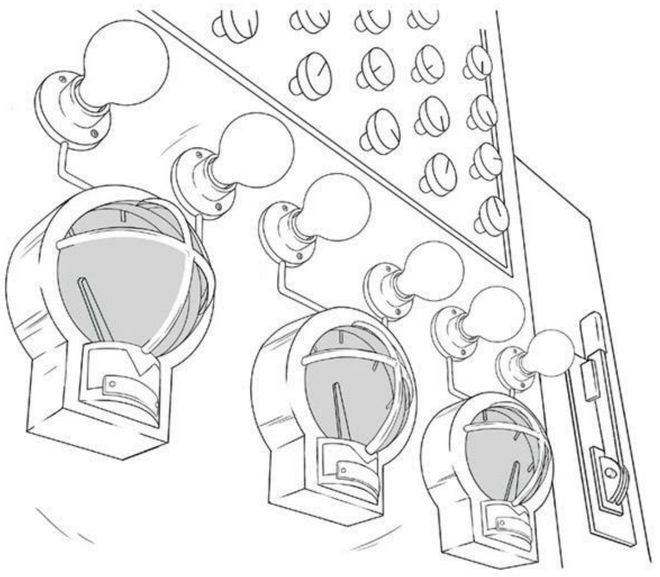
BK: Eska and Desna grew a little taller, grew their hair a little longer, and slightly updated their robes over the last three years. I like the results, but it is a pretty subtle effect. I remember joking about making Eska look like this, but having Desna look like a preppy tennis player. Eska and Desna designs by Christie Tseng. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.











BK: I love Angie's design of Varrick's "science goggles," though I like to imagine they have no practical application and that he just wears them for fashion. Steve stepped up to translate a crude 3-D model from the storyboards into this complex spirit energy contraption.

Varrick goggles design by Angela Song Mueller. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. Stasis tube designs and color by Bryan Konietzko. Spirit energy machine designs by Steve Hirt. Painting by Emily Tetri.

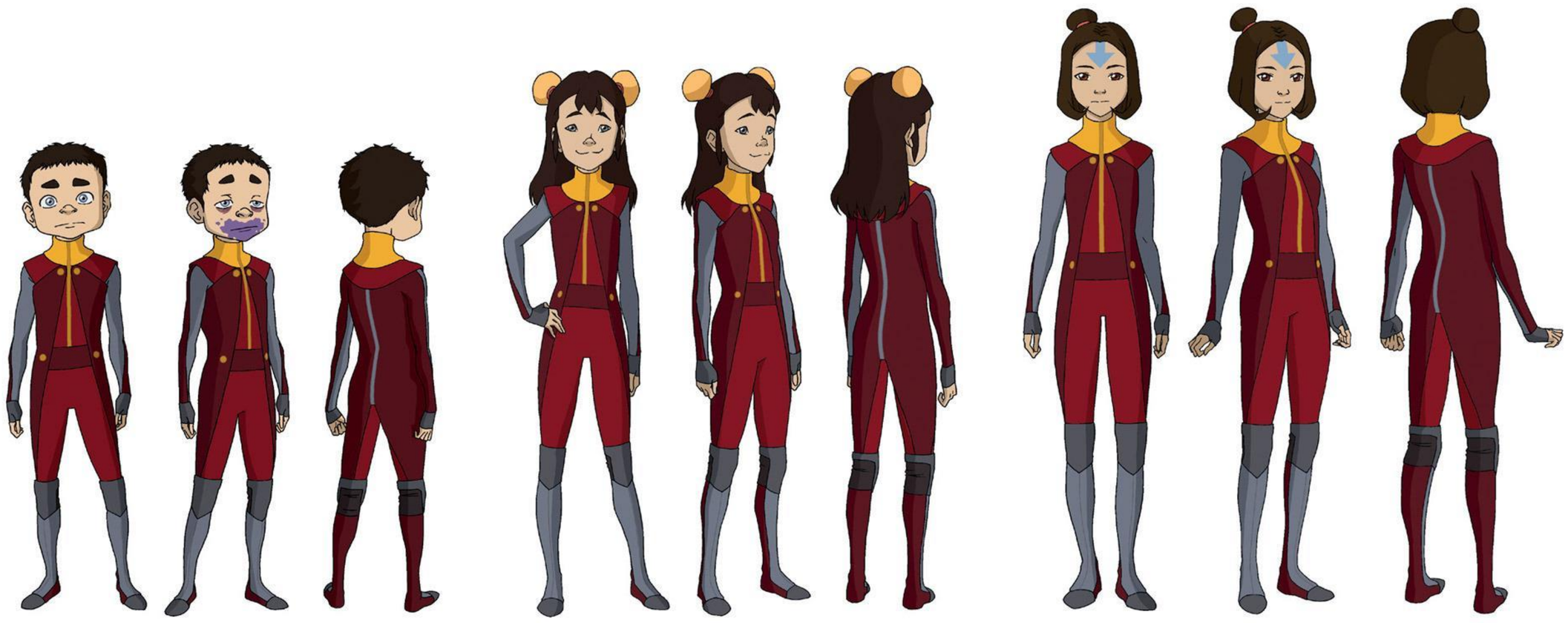


BK: We had the pleasure of working with Lane Garrison, a talented artist from Nickelodeon's fellowship program. During his time on the production I had him take a stab at pretty much every part of the design process, including this landscape painting, inspired by the bizarre rock formations of White Pocket, Arizona. Design by Jonard Soriano and Bryan Konietzko. Painting by Lane Garrison.



CHAPTER FOUR

THE CALLING





Meelo, Ikki, Jinora, and old woman designs by Christie Tseng. Tuyen designs by Angela Song Mueller. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. (Preceding spread) Design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Emily Tetri.





MD: This hilltop with stupas was inspired by similar-looking structures in Bhutan. In our world, stupas are Buddhist shrines. In the Avatar *world, they indicate an area with strong spiritual energy, which is why Jinora chooses to meditate in this spot. Design by Angela Sung. Painting by Lauren Zurcher. (Opposite) Designs by Christine Bian. Paintings by Lauren Zurcher.*


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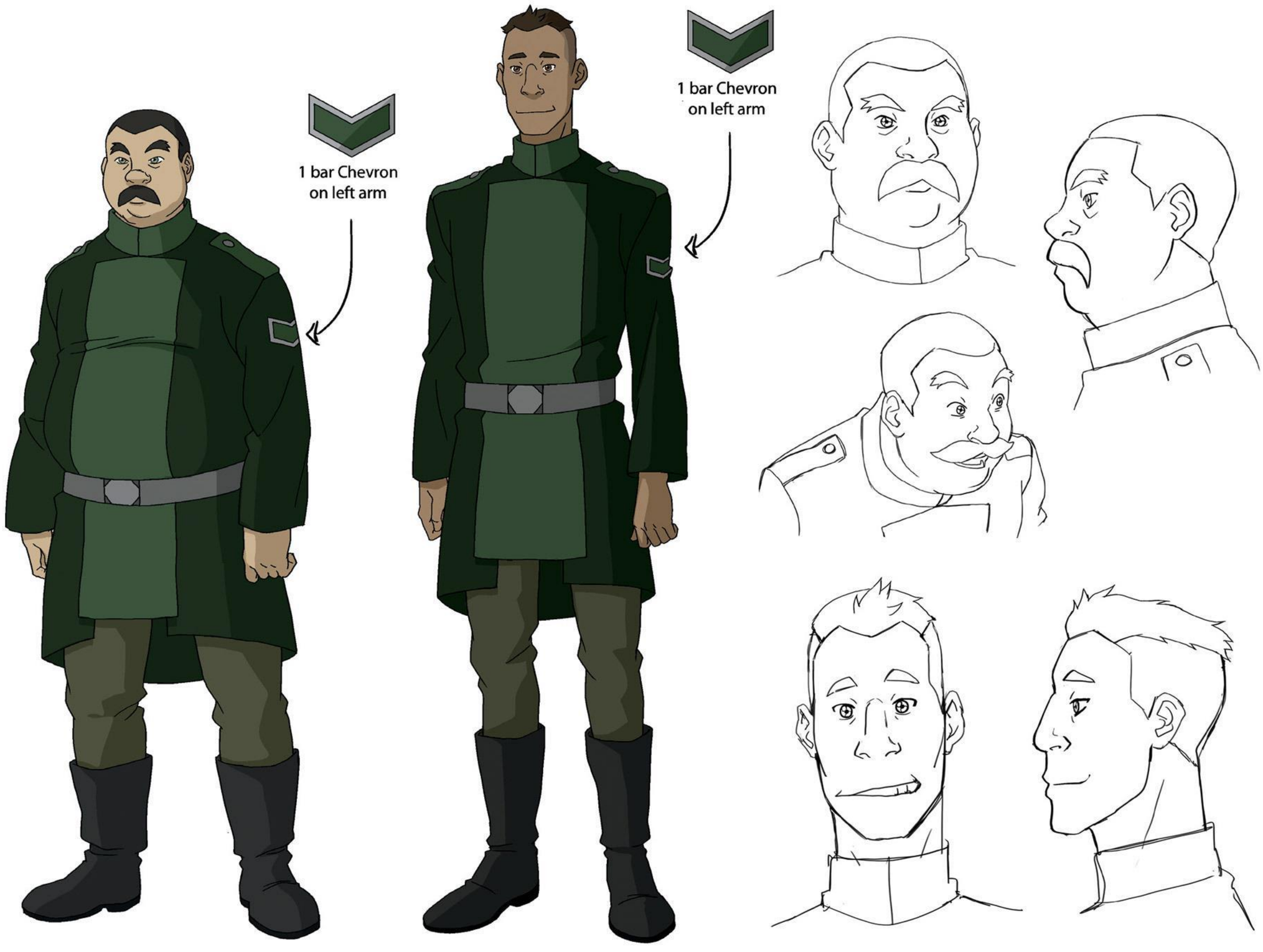


BK: I added this moss-covered monkey-spirit statue to Christine's background to make this meditation spot more memorable, and Craig did a lovely job rendering it. Now I want one of these statues in my backyard. Top design by Christine Bian. Bottom design by Christine Bian and Bryan Konietzko. Painting by Craig Elliott.





BK: Amon's propaganda graphics had the brutal intensity of a revolution, but I wanted Kuvira's to have a more idealistic, optimistic sheen to them, like you see in real-world military dictatorships. I took one of Kuvira's model-sheet poses and slapped it on the Earth Empire symbol, which Kuvira commandeered from Suyin Beifong and the city of Zaofu. I love maps, and I enjoy making them for the show, since we get to composite the finished artwork directly into the final footage. I spent an inordinate amount of time rendering out every nook and cranny of the Earth Kingdom/Empire coastline, translating the stylized mountains from the old Avatar *world map into topographical depictions and plotting out the paths of the military's railroads. Banner and map designs and color by Bryan Konietzko.*



MD: Ikki brings out the softer side of these two Earth Empire soldiers when they take her captive. Soldier designs by Christie Tseng. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.





BK: William did an awesome update to the colossal banyan tree from the Avatar *series. He was a master at rendering vines and roots after all the countless ones he had to draw in Books Two and Three. All designs in this spread by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Craig Elliott.*



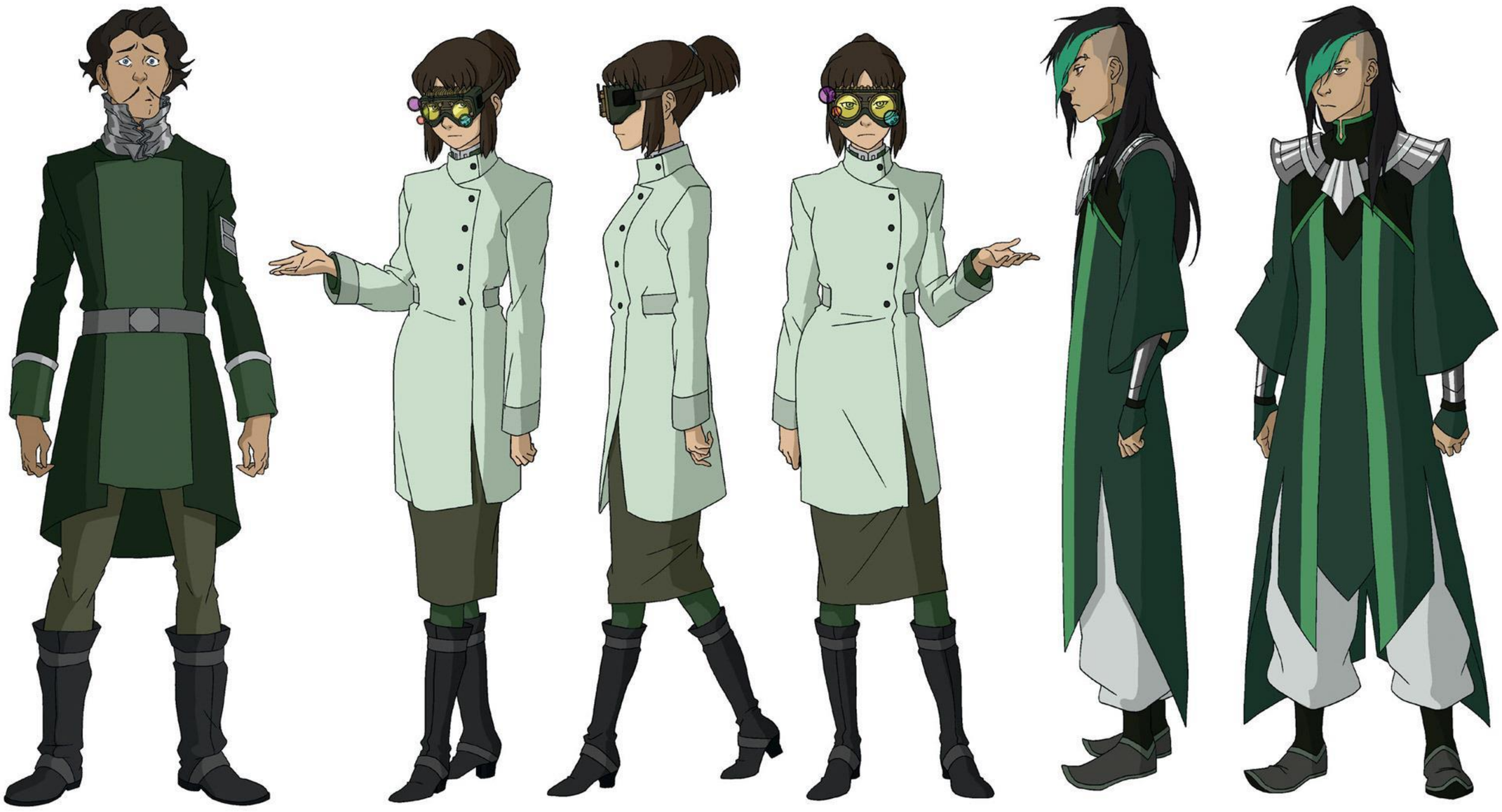


MD: Usually in an episode, there is a dramatic action scene toward the end, but this episode was different. Korra wasn't fighting an external enemy, but the internal blocks preventing her from fully healing. Using slow, graceful movements similar to waterbending, Korra draws out the remaining bits of metal poison stuck in her body and, for the first time in years, reactivates the Avatar state. Storyboards by Eugene Lee. (Preceding page) Swamp designs by William Nanqing Niu.

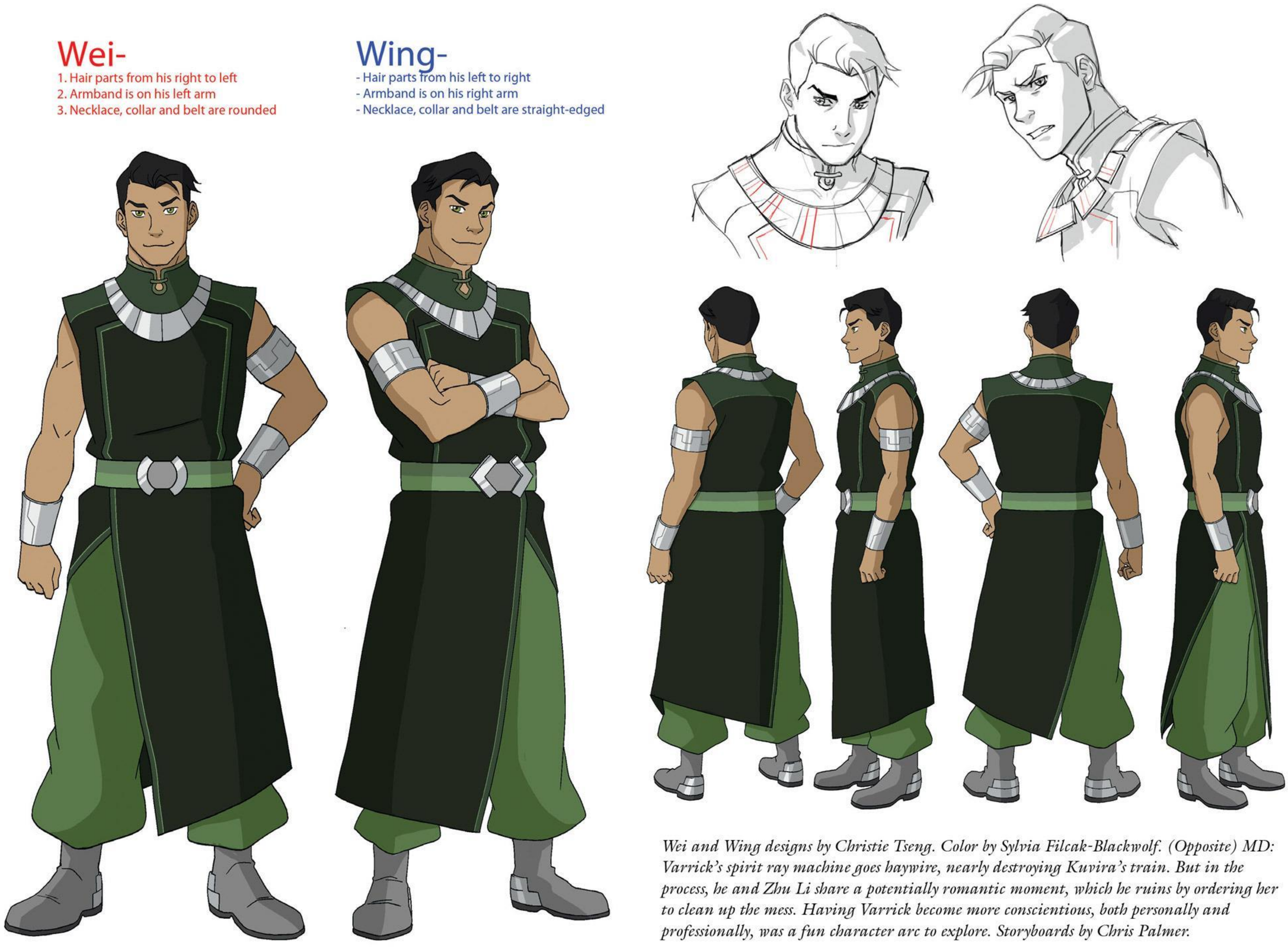


CHAPTER FIVE

ENEMY AT THE GATES

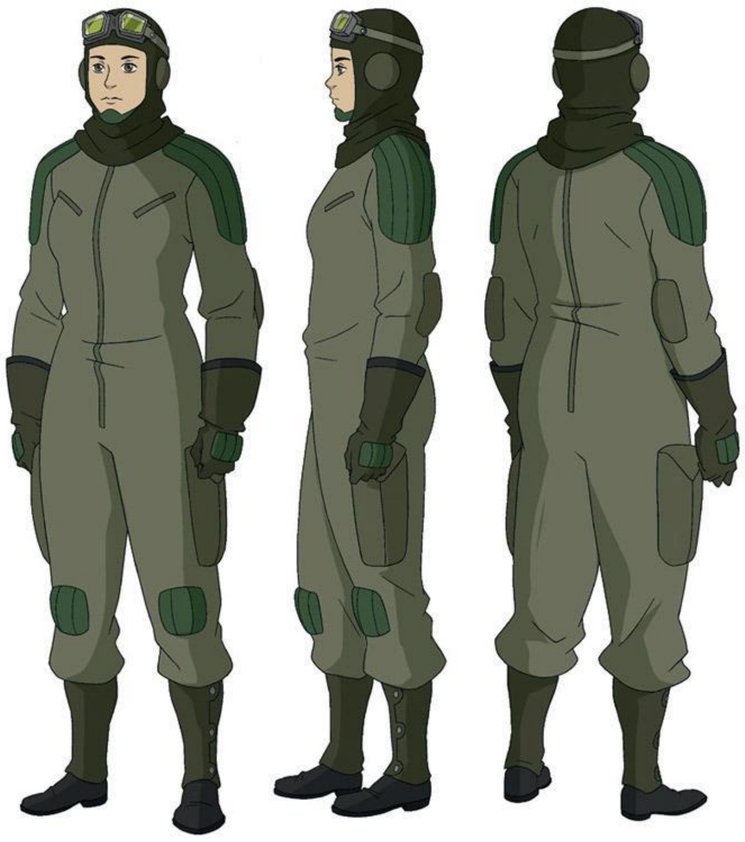


BK: Varrick, Zhu Li, and Huan model some cutting-edge haute couture. Varrick and Zhu Li designs by Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Huan design by Christie Tseng. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. *(Preceding spread) Zaofu Valley design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.*



Wei and Wing designs by Christie Tseng. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. (Opposite) MD: Varrick's spirit ray machine goes haywire, nearly destroying Kuvira's train. But in the process, he and Zhu Li share a potentially romantic moment, which he ruins by ordering her to clean up the mess. Having Varrick become more conscientious, both personally and professionally, was a fun character arc to explore. Storyboards by Chris Palmer.

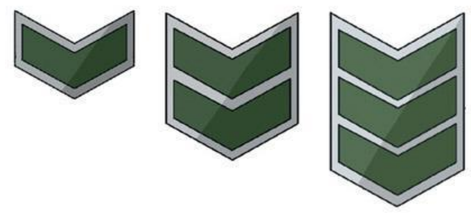

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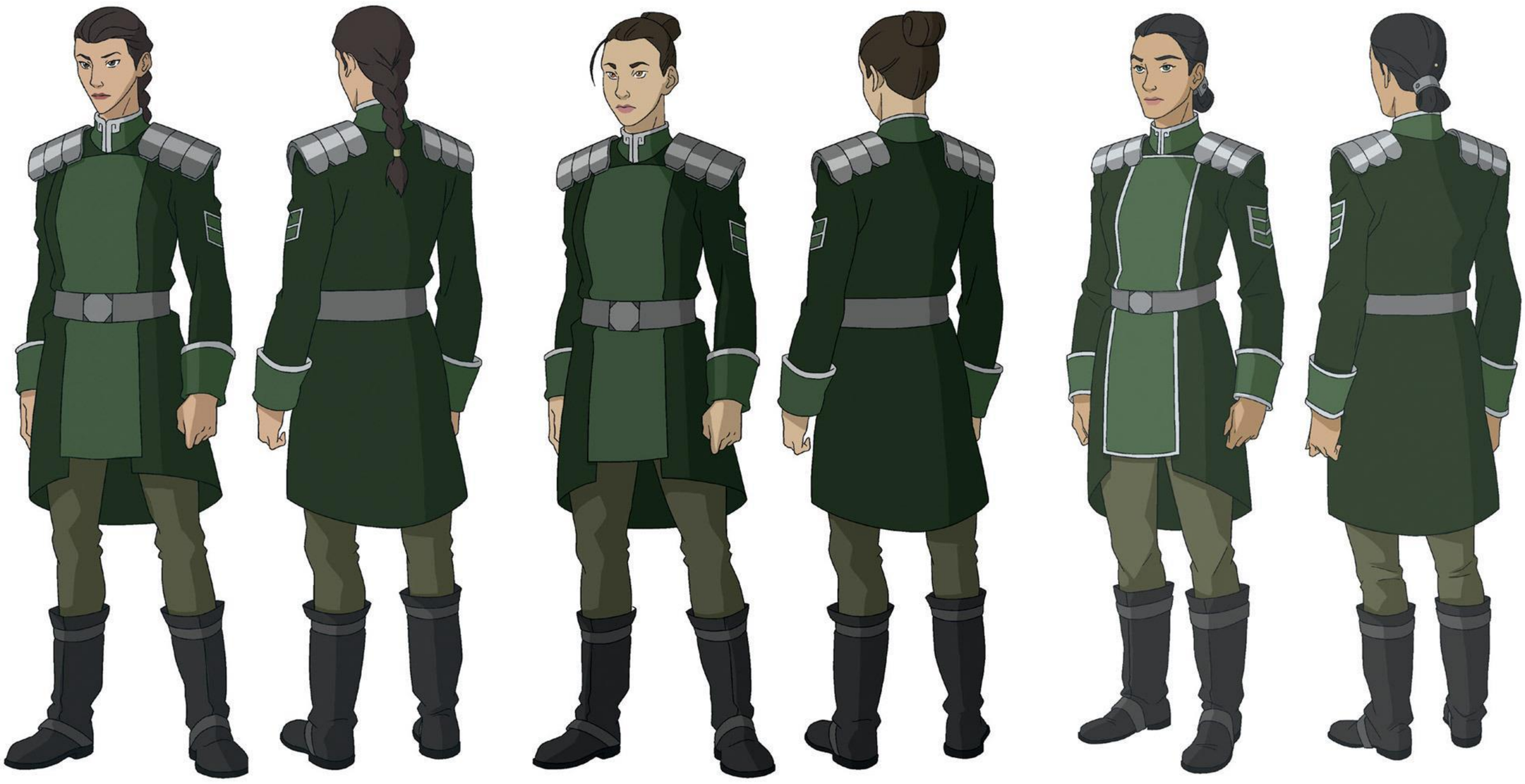


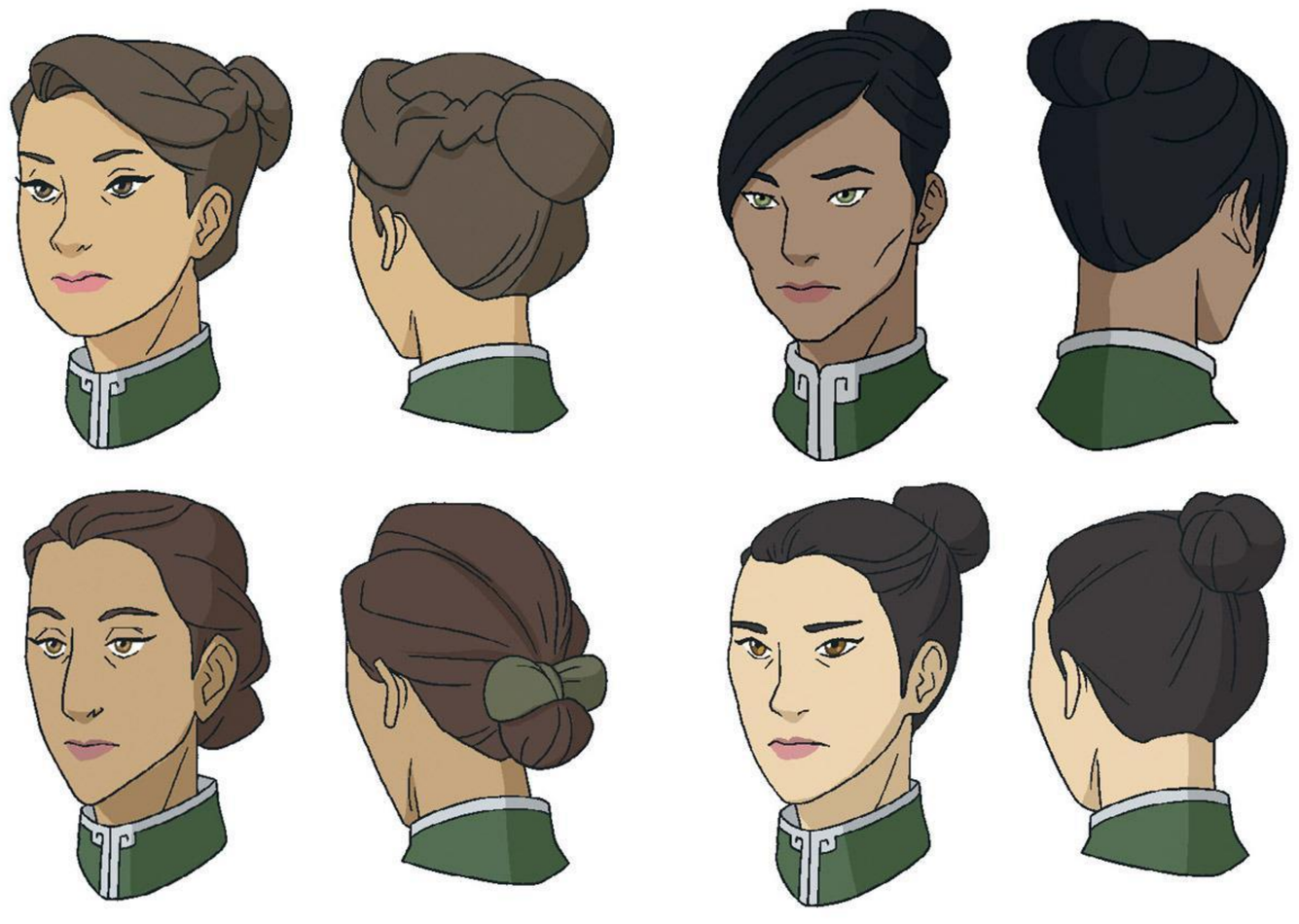


BK: I made a point of having several female officers of all different ranks designed for Kuvira's military. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, they were largely left out of the final animation. I didn't supervise the background character assigning, but as the art director I ultimately have to take the blame.

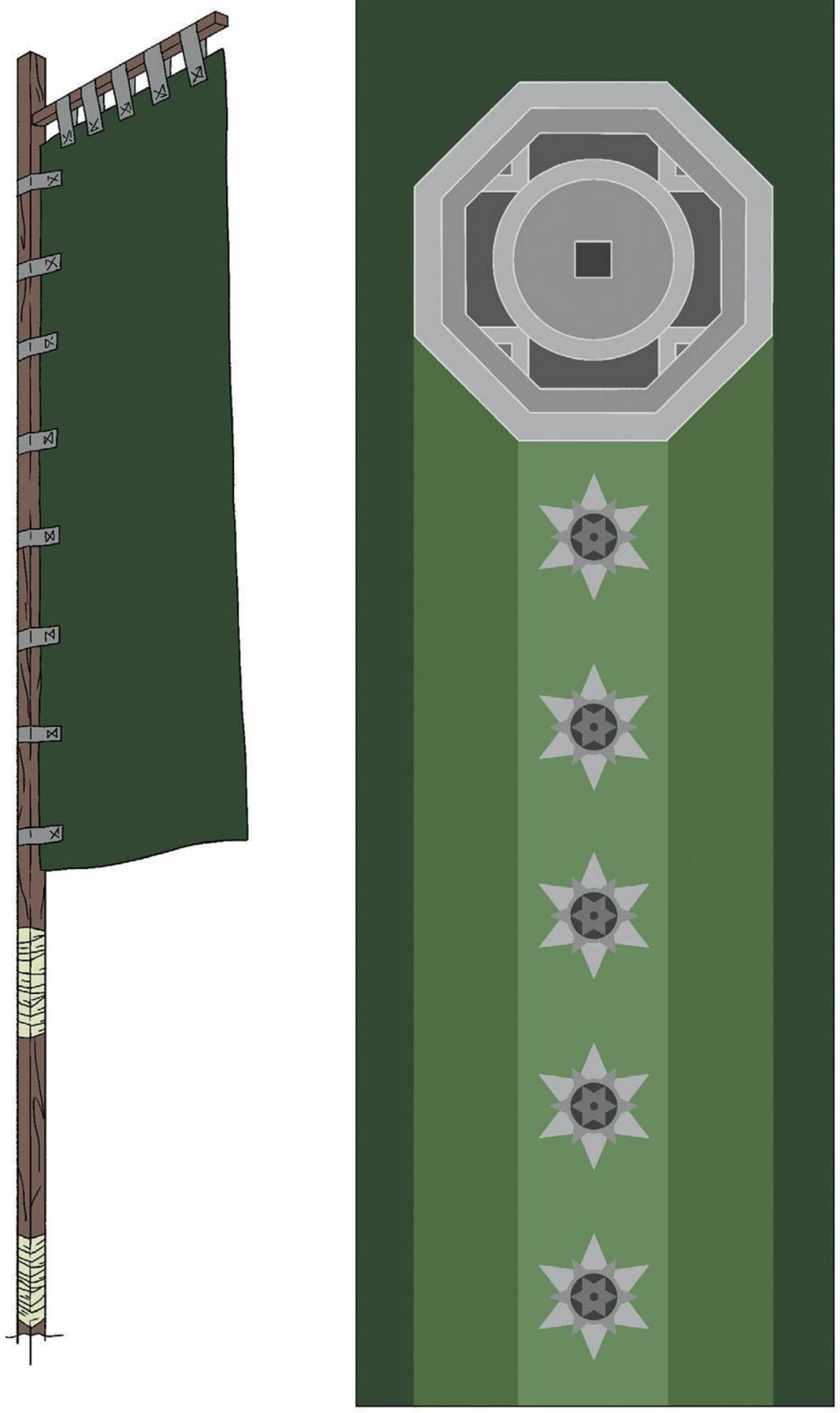
So, I'm sorry! We made them, but you just don't see them enough. Sigh . . .

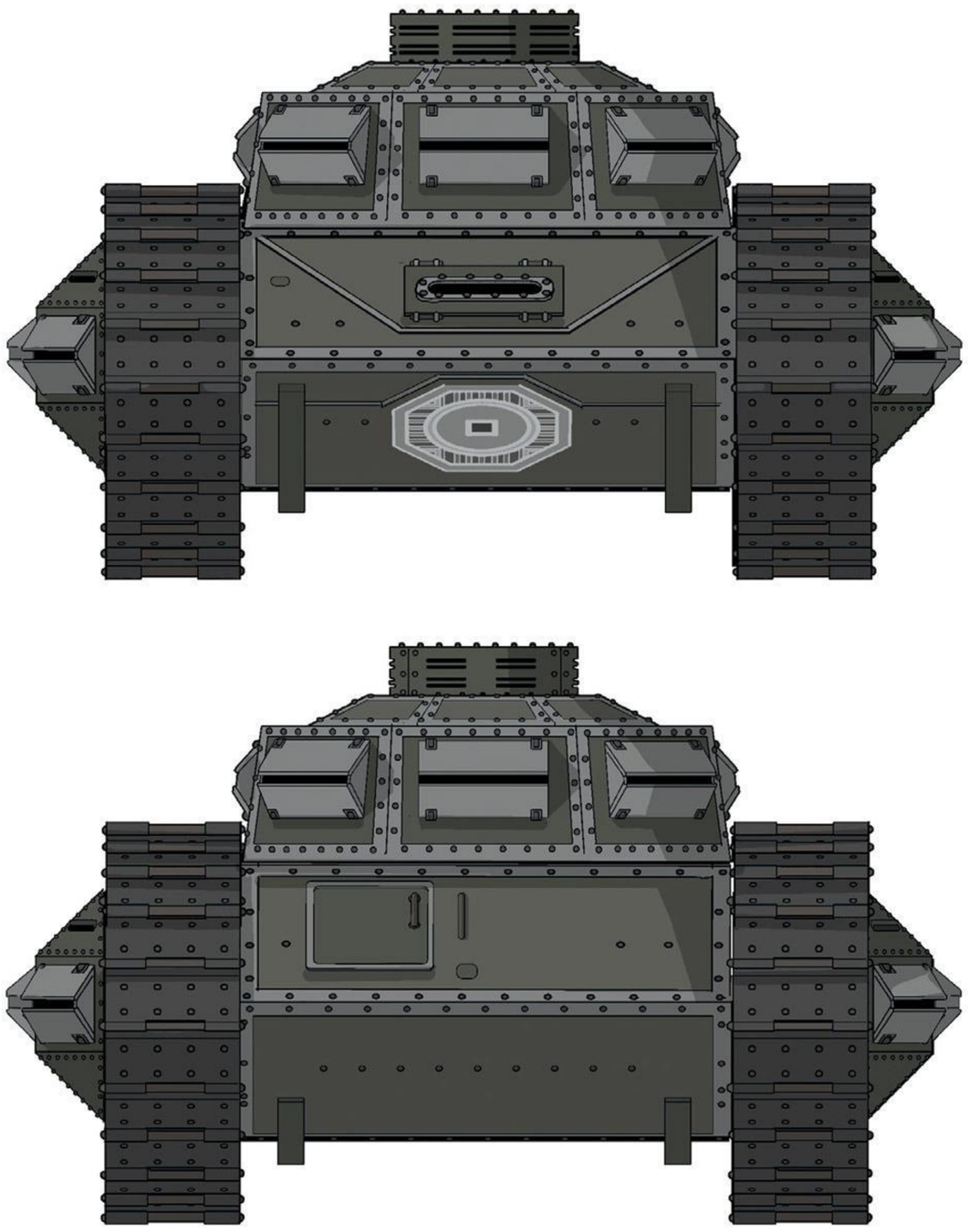


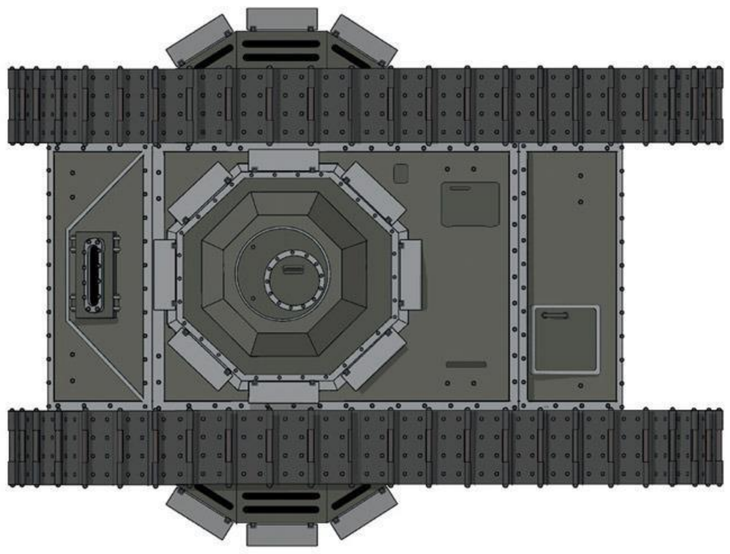


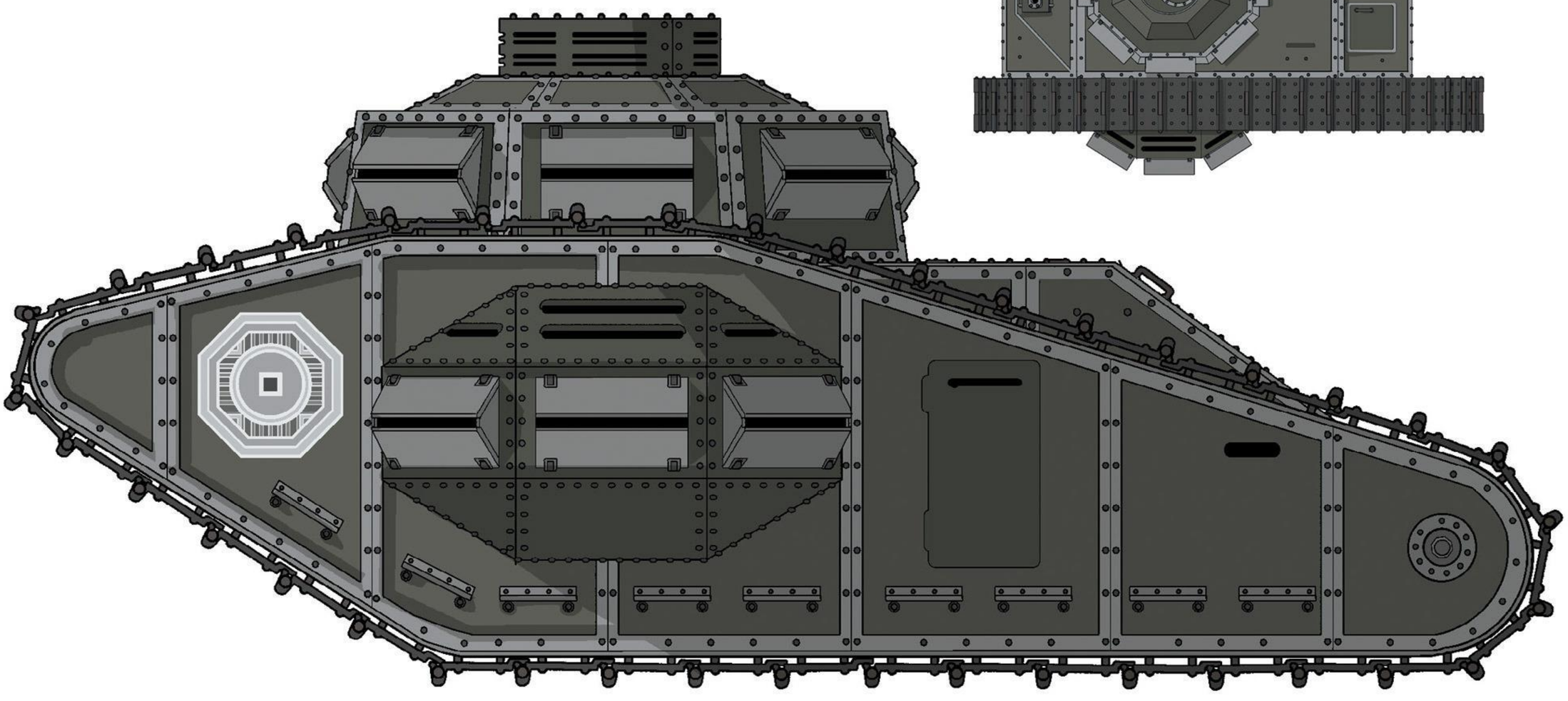


Mecha pilot and corporal designs by Christie Tseng. Metalbender designs by Bryan Konietzko. Private and sergeant designs by Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

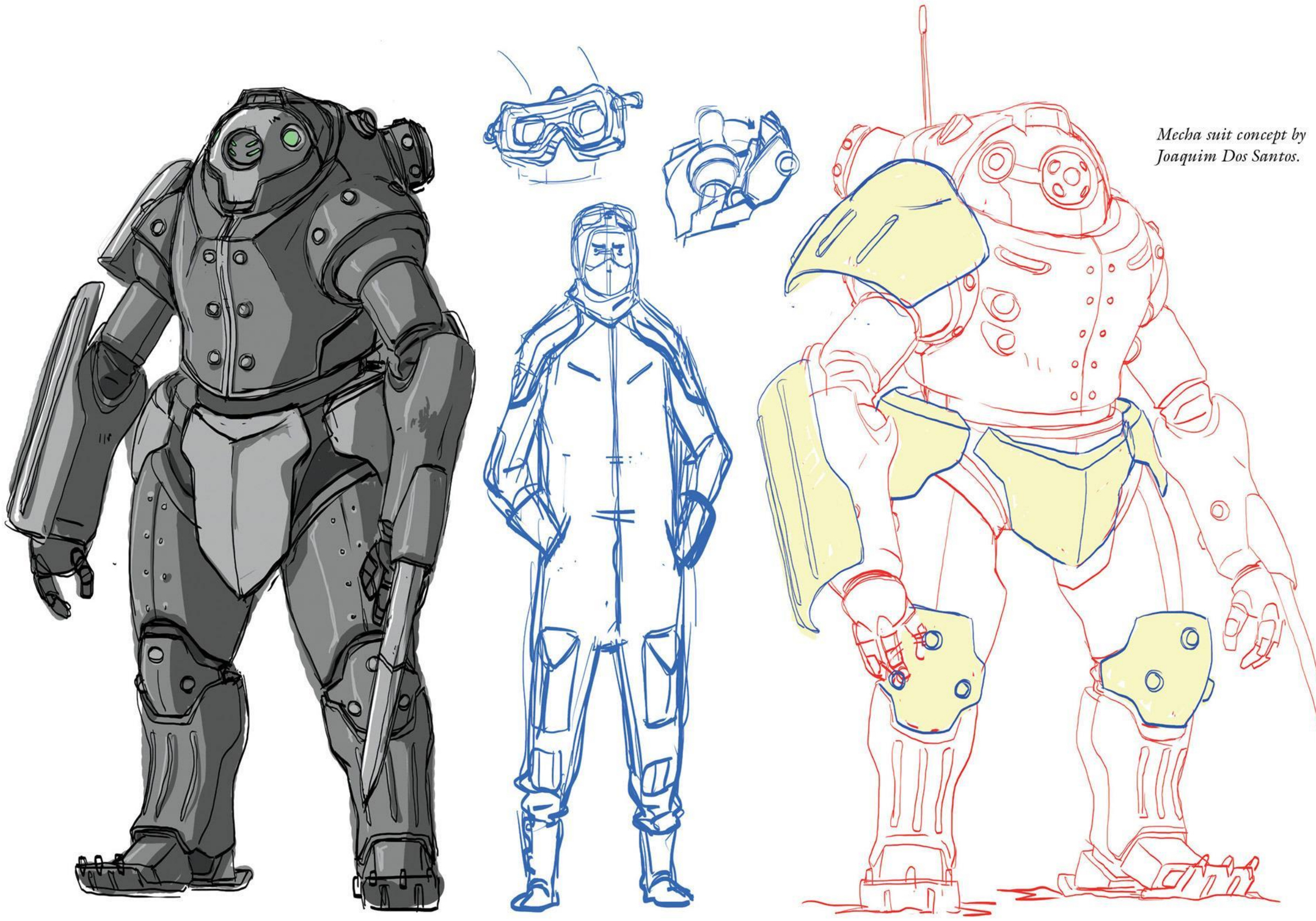






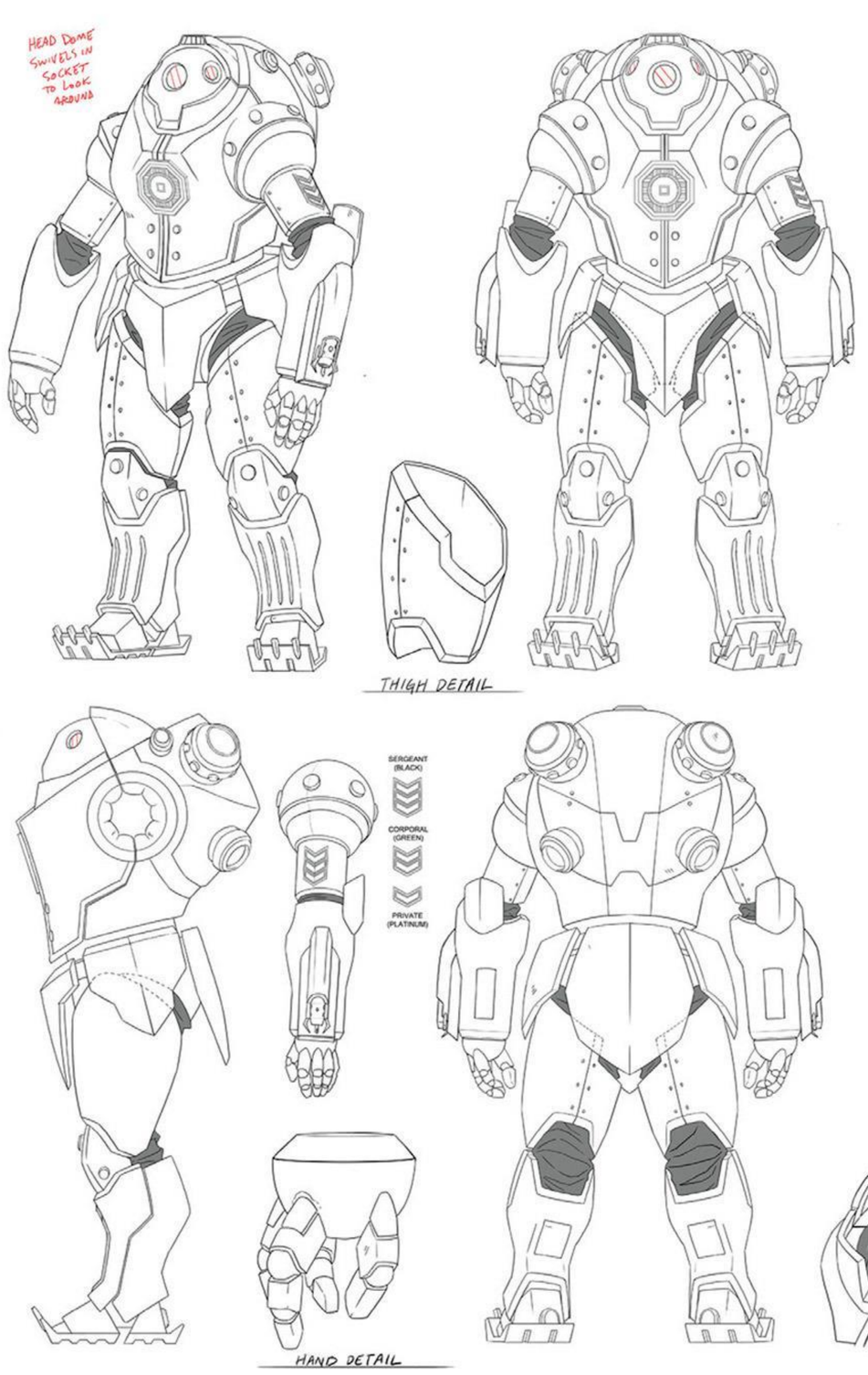


MD: I wish we had featured Kuvira's awesome Earth Empire tanks more. Inspired by World War I tanks, these were added to show Kuvira's military muscle when she threatens Zaofu. Tank designs by Joseph Aguilar. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. Banner designs by Bryan Konietzko and Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



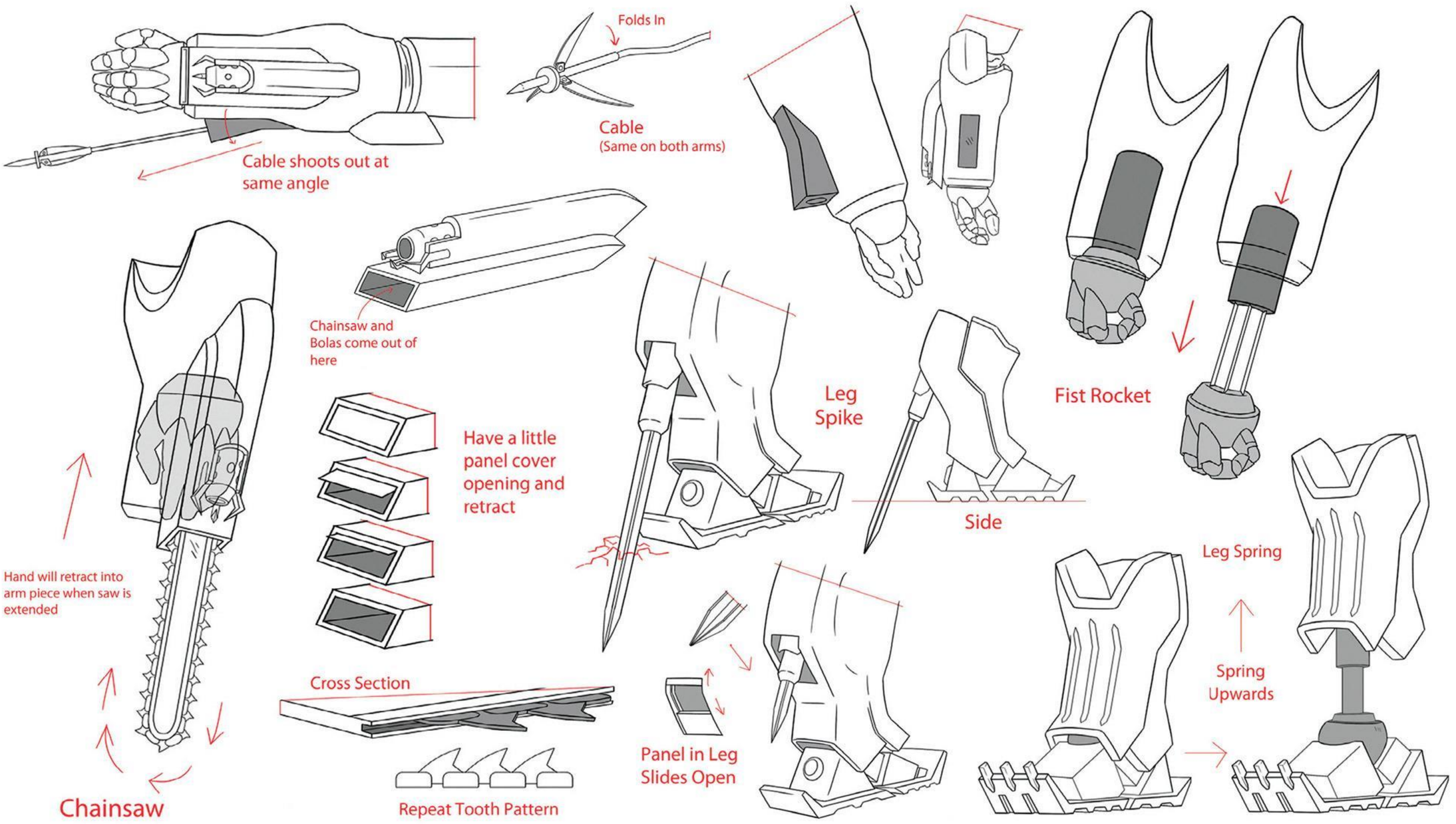
Mecha suit concept by Joaquim Dos Santos.



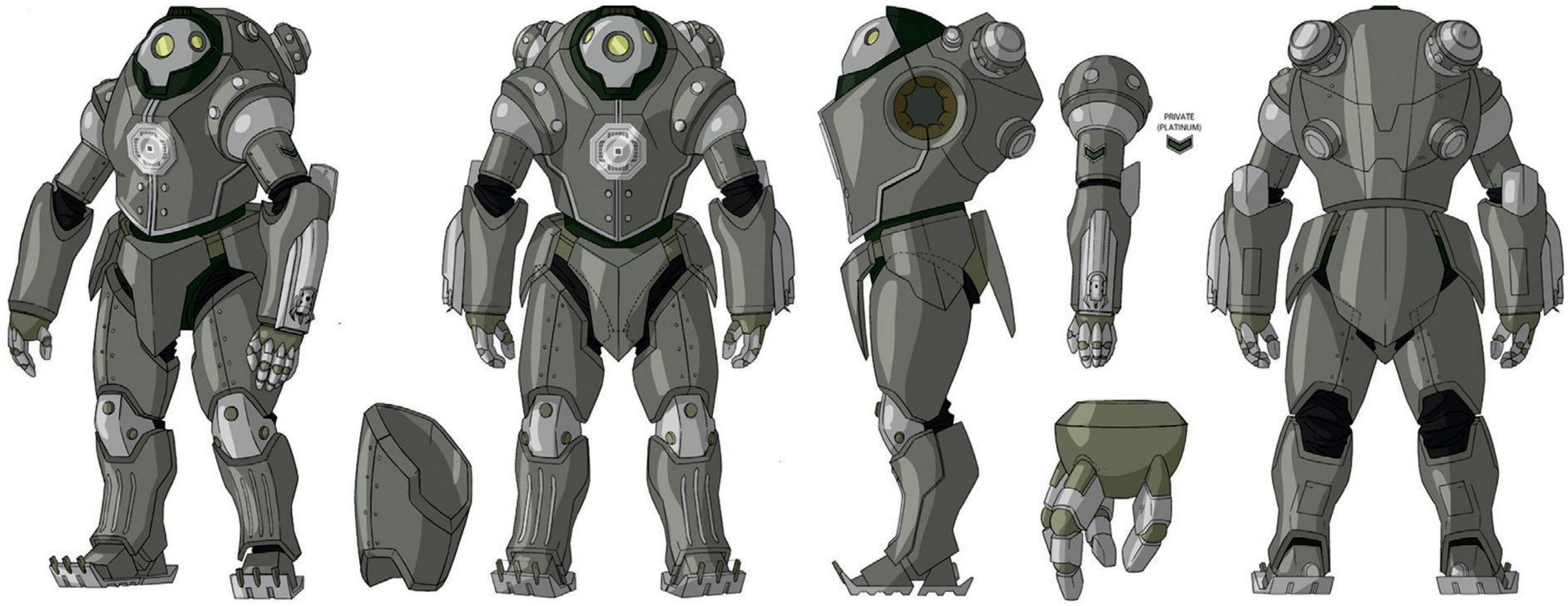


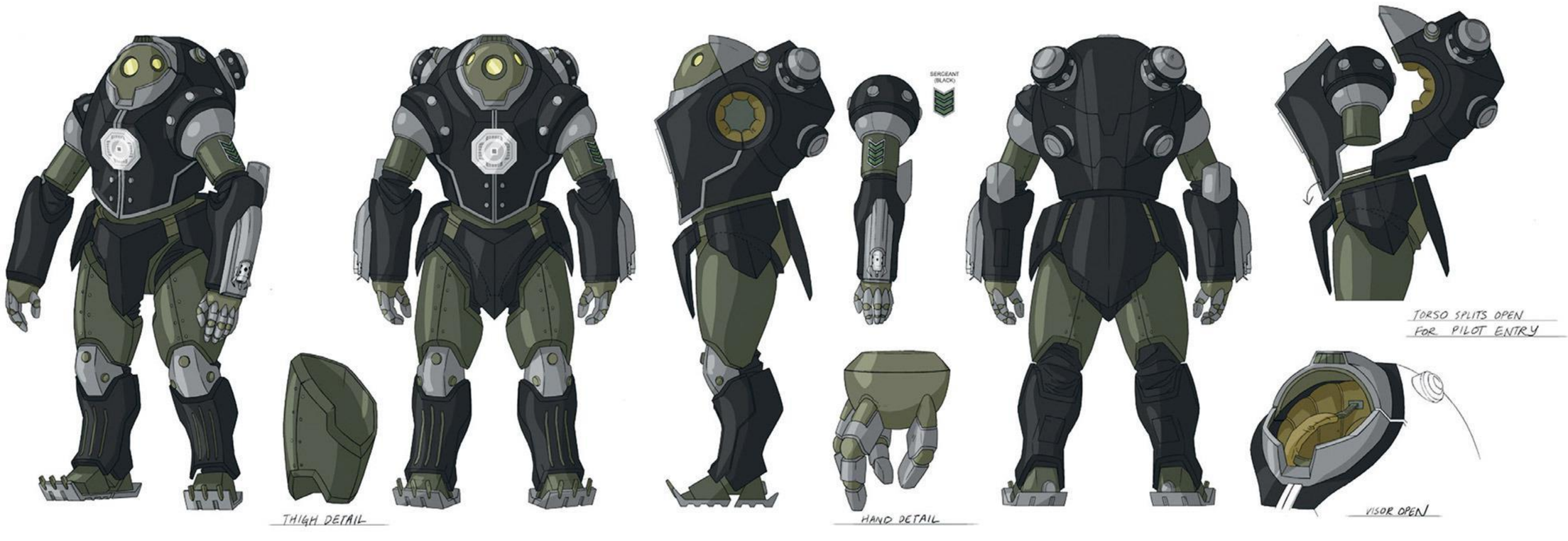
JDS: I am in the lucky position of being able to come up with a concept design and then have someone else do all the heavy lifting to actually figure out how it will all work. In this case, that responsibility fell on the very capable shoulders of Christine Bian.

Christine not only made sense of my scribbles but also elongated the proportions a bit to give the mecha suit an even more humanoid feel. Mecha suit designs by Christine Bian and Joaquim Dos Santos. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf and Bryan Konietzko.



JDS: An amazing assortment of weaponry and gadgets found on or inside the mecha suit. Mecha suit detail designs by Christine Bian. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Mecha suit designs by Christine Bian and Joaquim Dos Santos. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf and Bryan Konietzko.







Design by Christine Bian. Painting by Craig Elliott.



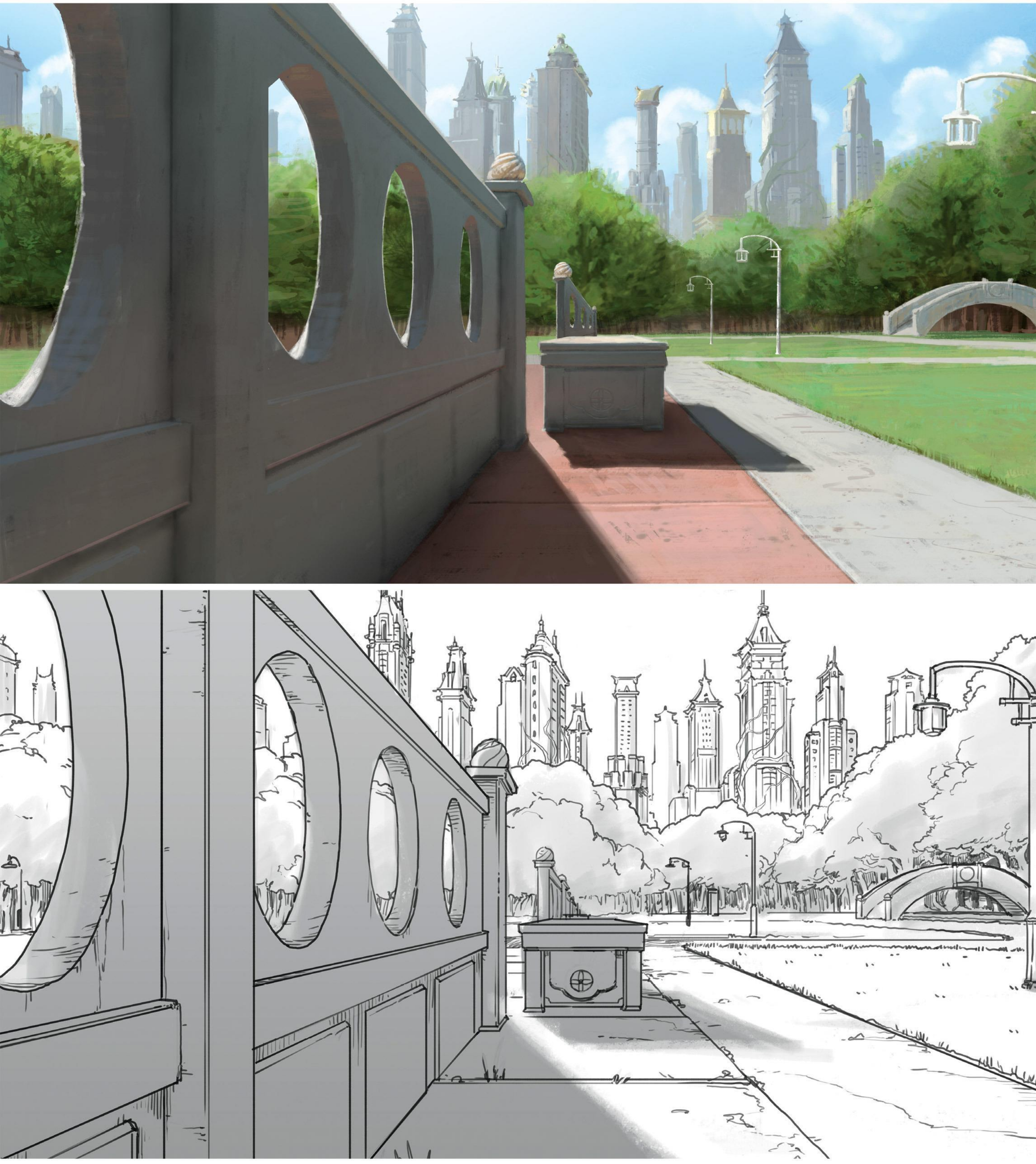
Design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Craig Elliott.



BK: I wanted Hiroshi to look like the years spent in prison mulling over what he had done had aged him drastically. As I recall, Ryu did the storyboards before the design was ready so he sketched his own version of the updated Hiroshi. I liked how he looked and didn't mind the unintentional similarity to Hayao Miyazaki—although I must be clear we didn't intend to imply anything about Miyazaki by making a convicted supervillain look like him! Father, daughter, and Hiroshi designs by Christie Tseng. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



MD: We hadn't mentioned Hiroshi during the previous two seasons, but I always assumed his actions still haunted Asami, so we decided to give them some closure. Here, we discover that Asami hasn't read his letters or ever visited him in prison. When she finally does, she sees her father has become a very different man, mentally and physically. Storyboards by Ki-Hyun Ryu.

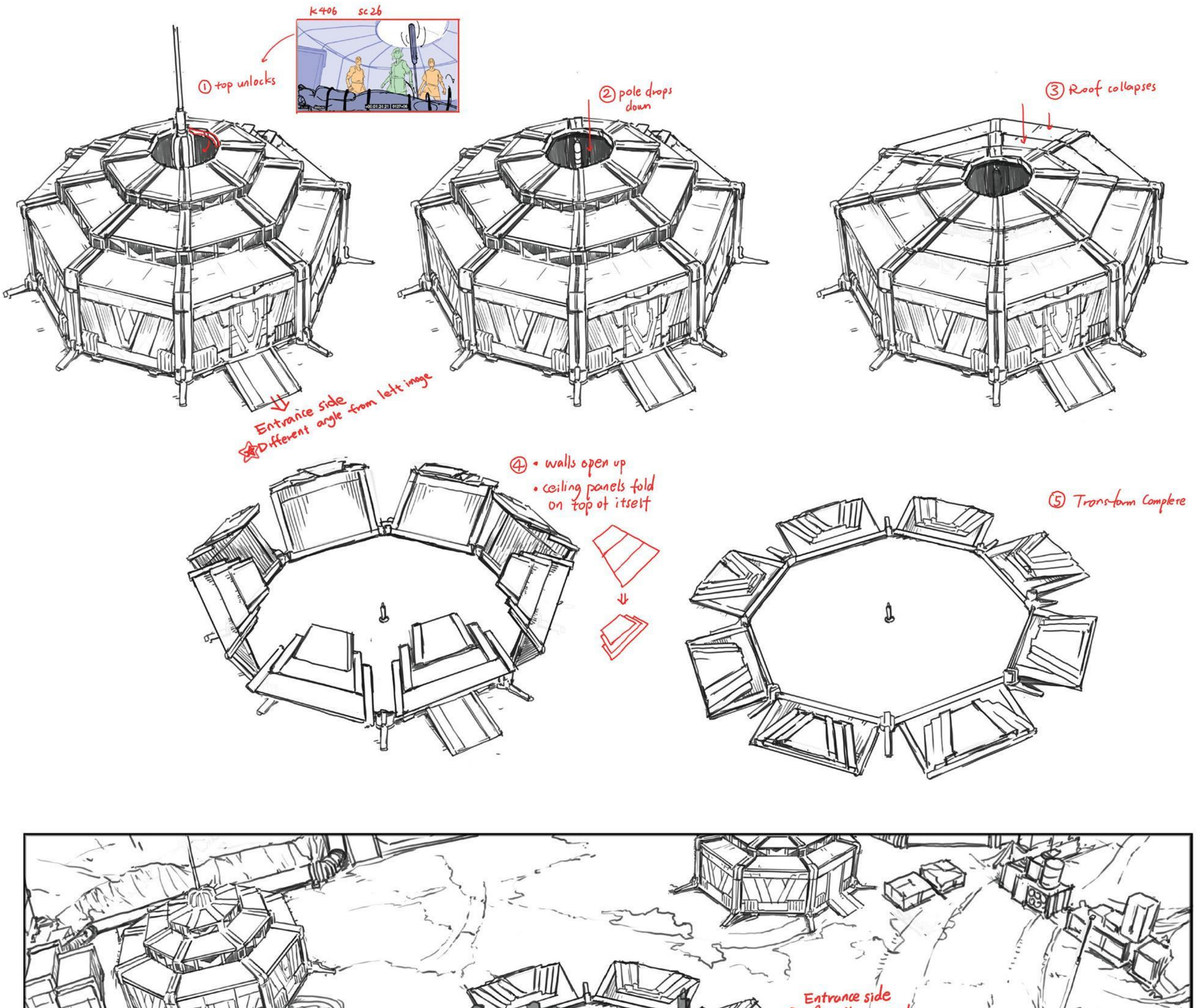


Avatar Korra Park design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Craig Elliott.

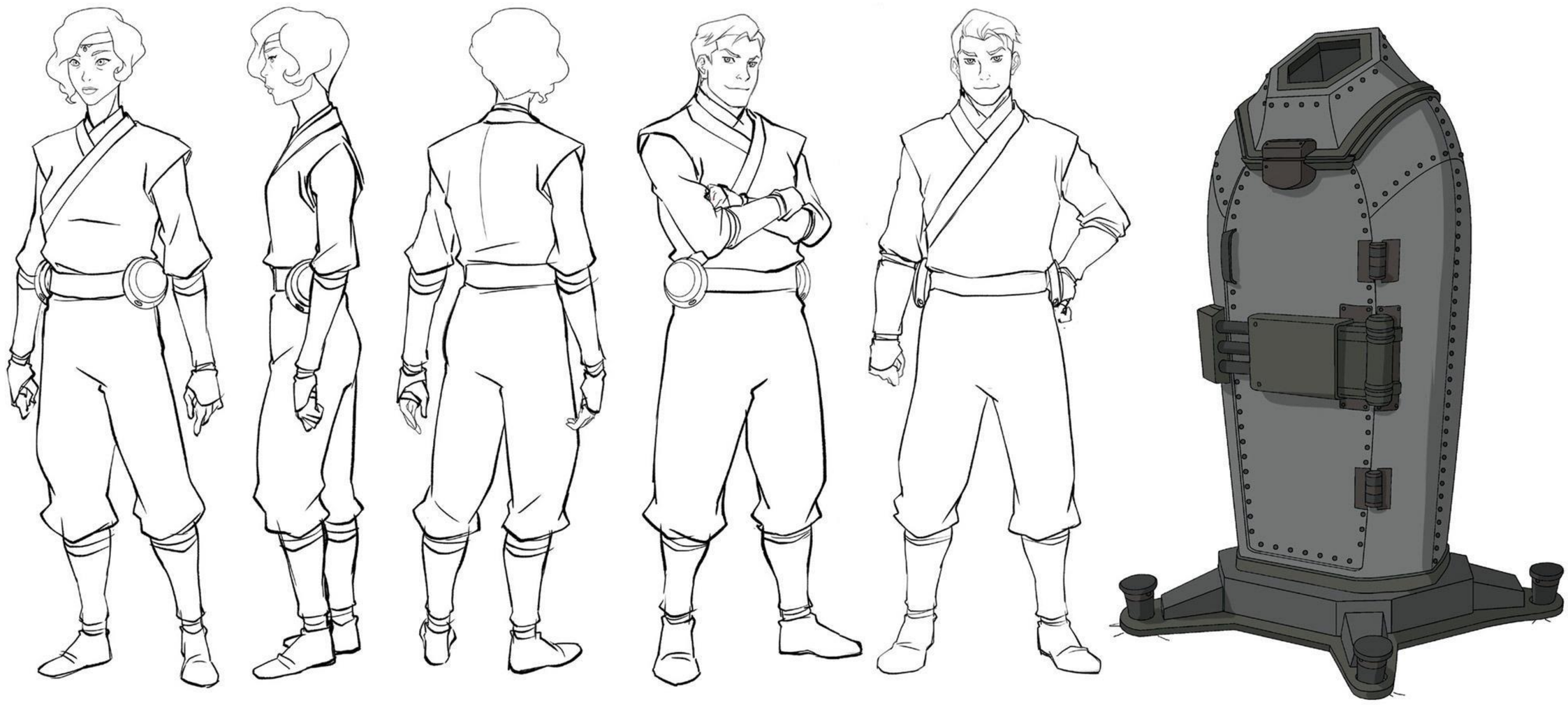
CHAPTER SIX

BATTLE OF ZAOFU

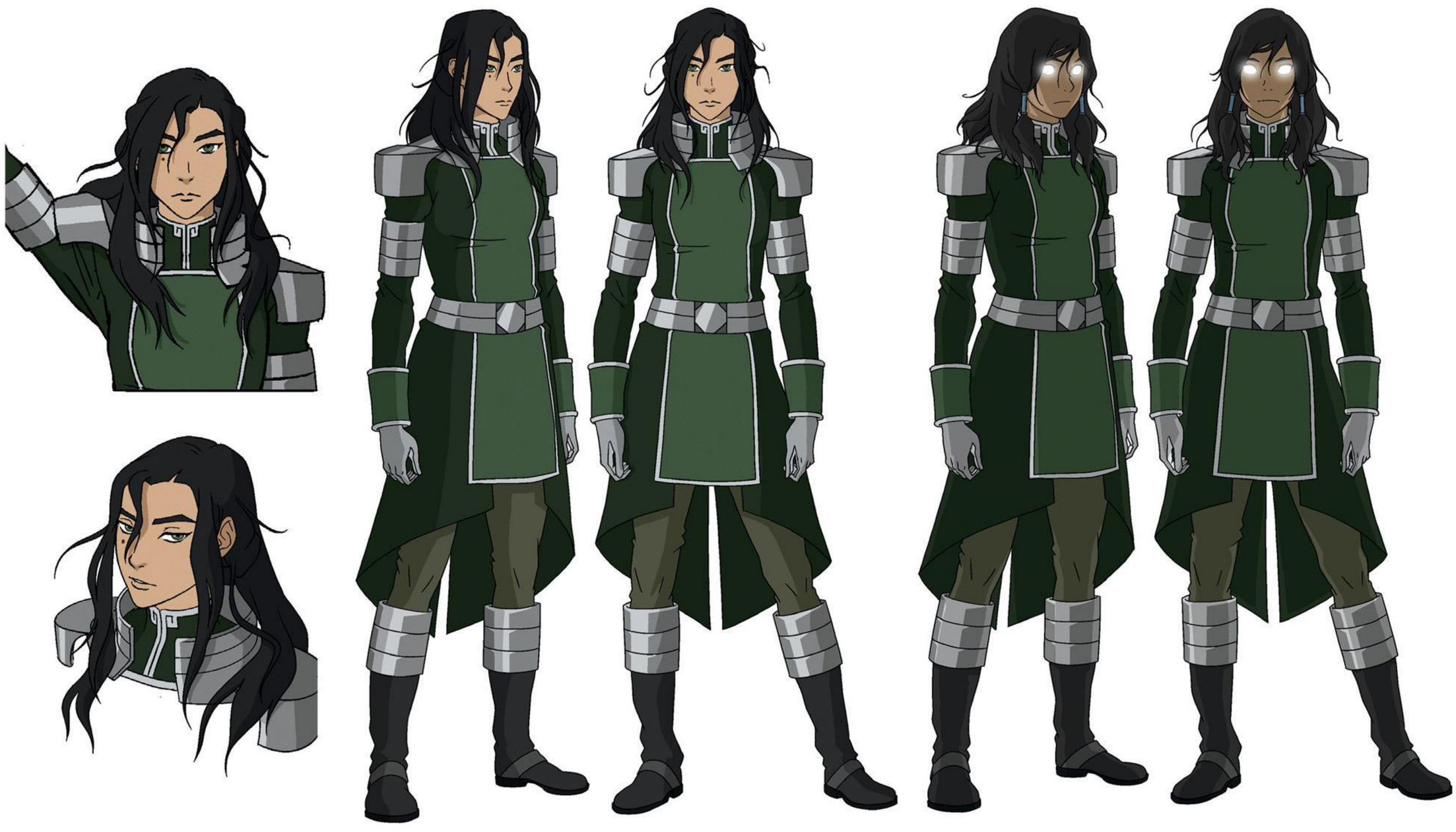
Earth Empire encampment designs by William Nanqing Niu. *(Preceding spread) Beifong Estate mansion design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.*



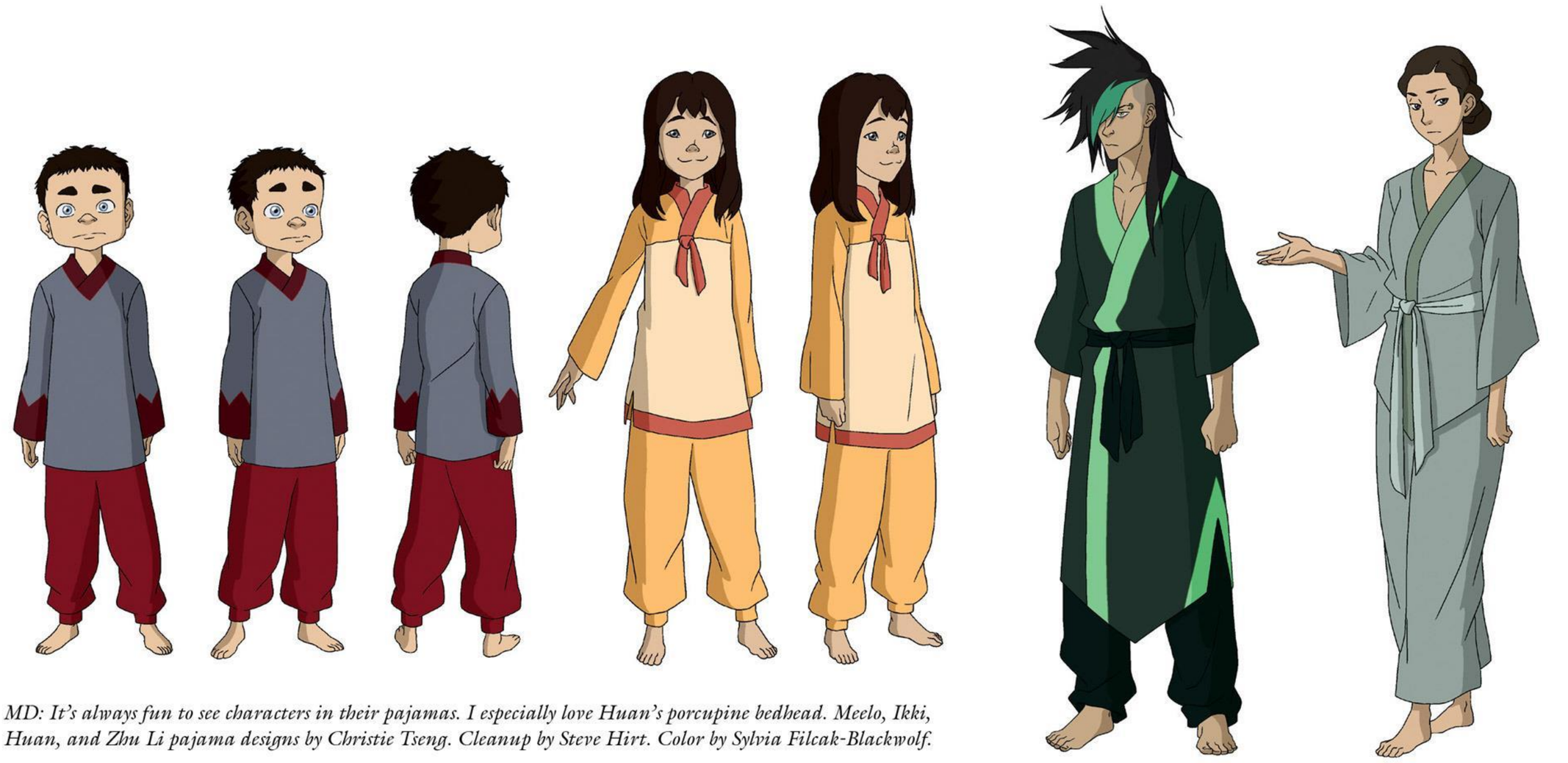
MD: I love the concept and design for Kuvira's retractable metal command center. In the scripts, we called these structures yurts, which usually refers to peaceful, canvas-walled structures you might find in the woods. But here, the yurt takes on a much more ominous appearance. BK: William always went the extra mile when it came to explaining the mechanics of how a design transformed, which always resulted in better animation. Kuvira's yurt background and transformation designs by William Nanqing Niu.



BK: Can you imagine having a parent like Suyin, who makes sure she and her sons have matching ninja outfits ready at a moment's notice? Suyin, Wei, and Wing designs by Angela Song Mueller. Full-body restraint design by Joseph Aguilar. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



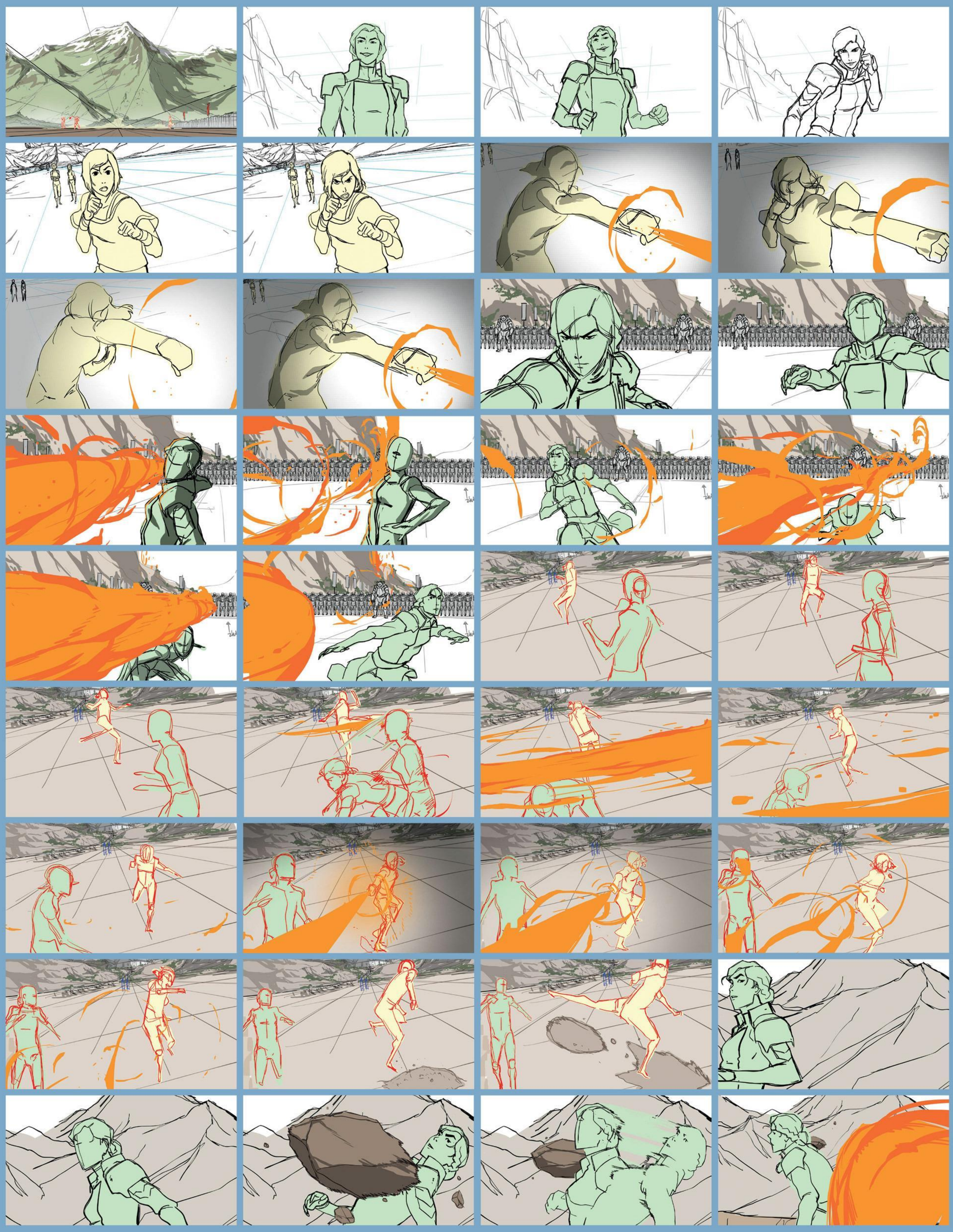
BK: I really like how Kuvira looks with her hair down, and it helped to sell this hallucination where Korra once again sees the "Dark Avatar" version of herself in her opponent. Kuvira and Dark Avatar Korra designs by Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



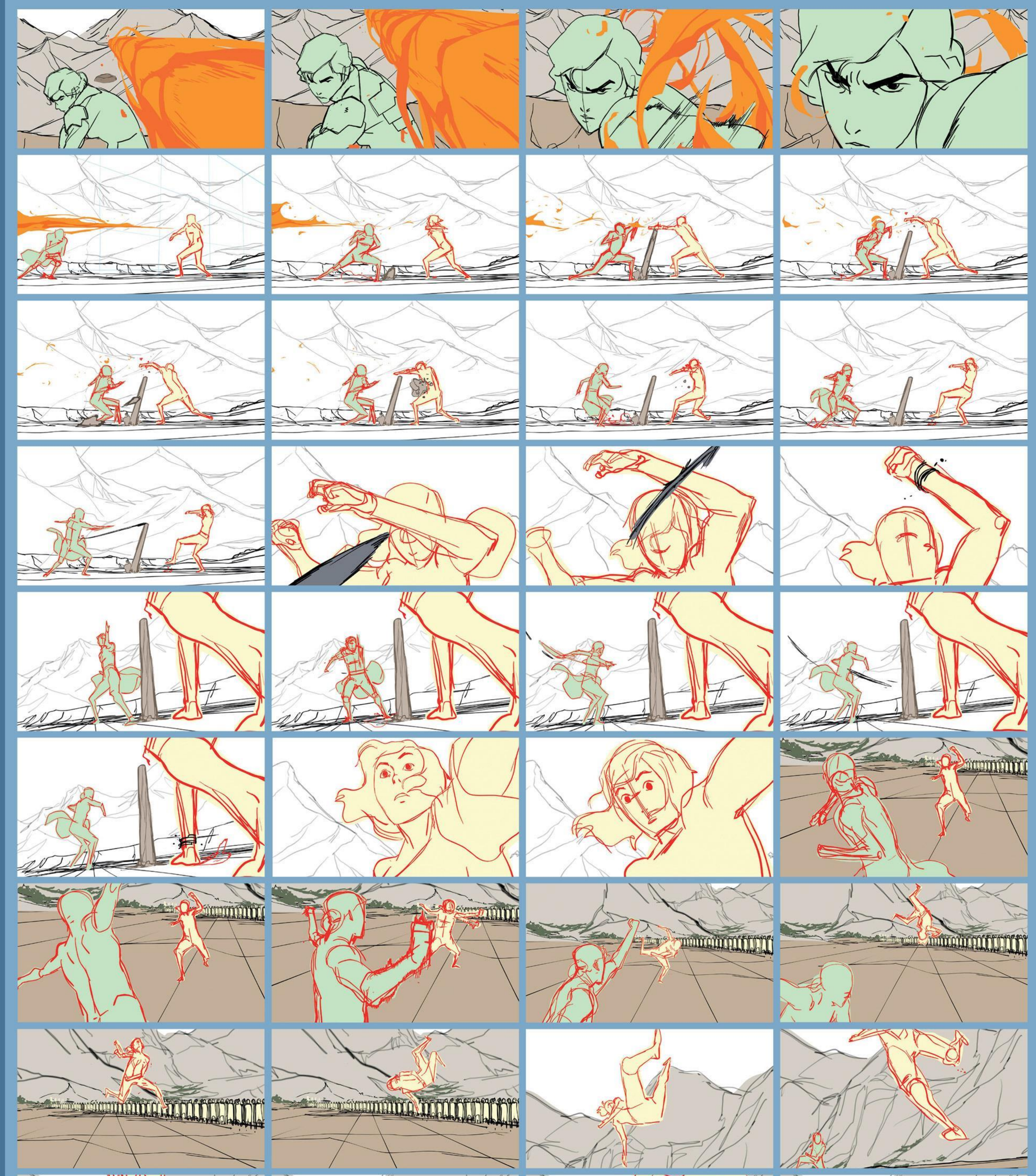
MD: It's always fun to see characters in their pajamas. I especially love Huan's porcupine bedhead. Meelo, Ikki, Huan, and Zhu Li pajama designs by Christie Tseng. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



BK: The scene where Jinora and Meelo are working on self-portraits under the supervision of Huan ended up being a favorite of mine. But man, it went through a lot of revisions to get there! At one point the storyboard artist had Meelo sculpting a clay butt, which was good for a laugh, but it was . . . weird. I had fun painting their respective pieces, with some inspiration from the final storyboard and some help from Joseph. Ikki and Meelo self-portraits by Bryan Konietzko and Joseph Aguilar.



JDS: This is the first time we see Korra face off with Kuvira, and it does not end well. In this scene Kuvira is going out of her way to make an example of Korra. You'll notice her footwork incorporates a lot of Western boxing moves in an effort to make her seem cocky like Muhammad Ali. Storyboards by Joaquim Dos Santos.



JDS: Kuvira is pretty much just toying with Korra at this point, slipping all her strikes and countering with stinging jabs. Kuvira ends this sequence by rag dolling Korra and sending her face first into the dirt. I cannot tell you how fun it was to board this sequence! Storyboards by Joaquim Dos Santos.



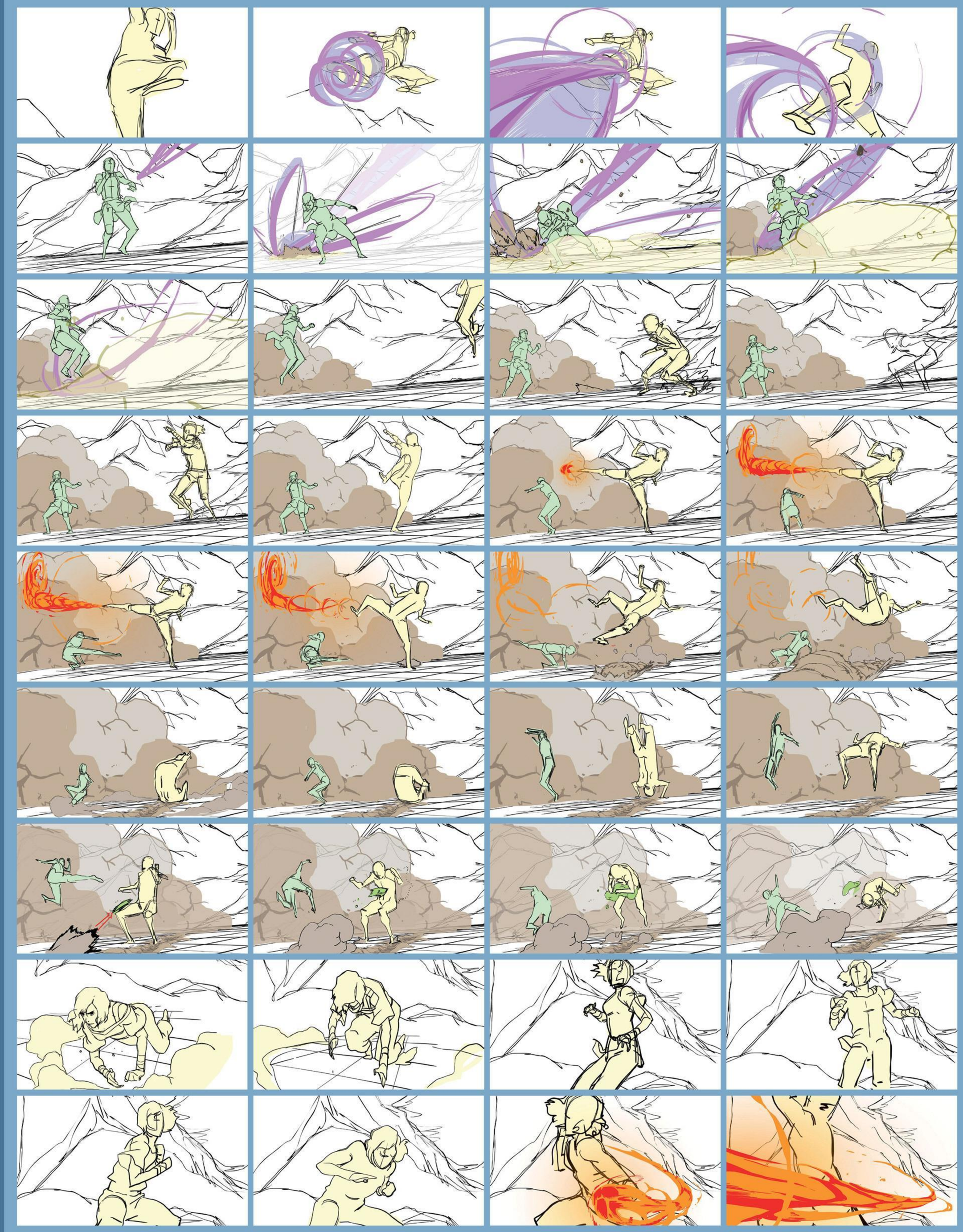
BK: A big part of being a character designer is filling up the background of a scene with animation's version of extras. You often have to extrapolate an established costume motif on a large number of characters. It can be tedious work, but it helps a world to feel like it is populated by real people who make up authentic communities and cultures.



Zaofu citizen designs by Angela Song Mueller and Christie Tseng. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



All designs in this spread by Christine Bian. Paintings by Lauren Zurcher.



JDS: Despite getting her butt kicked and being out of practice, Korra continues to battle back and mounts a pretty strong offense. But overcommitting on her strikes leaves her incredibly vulnerable, and Kuvira is at the top of her game. Storyboards by Joaquim Dos Santos. (Opposite) MD: Zaofu became much more forbidding at night with the addition of the Earth Empire banners which cover Toph's statue. You can bet the self-proclaimed world's greatest Earthbender is not going to be happy about that. Zaofu designs by William Nanqing Niu. Paintings by Emily Tetri. Banner designs by Bryan Konietzko. Chinese translation and type by S. L. Lee, PhD.


古維拉萬歲
古維拉萬歲
士帝國

CHAPTER SEVEN

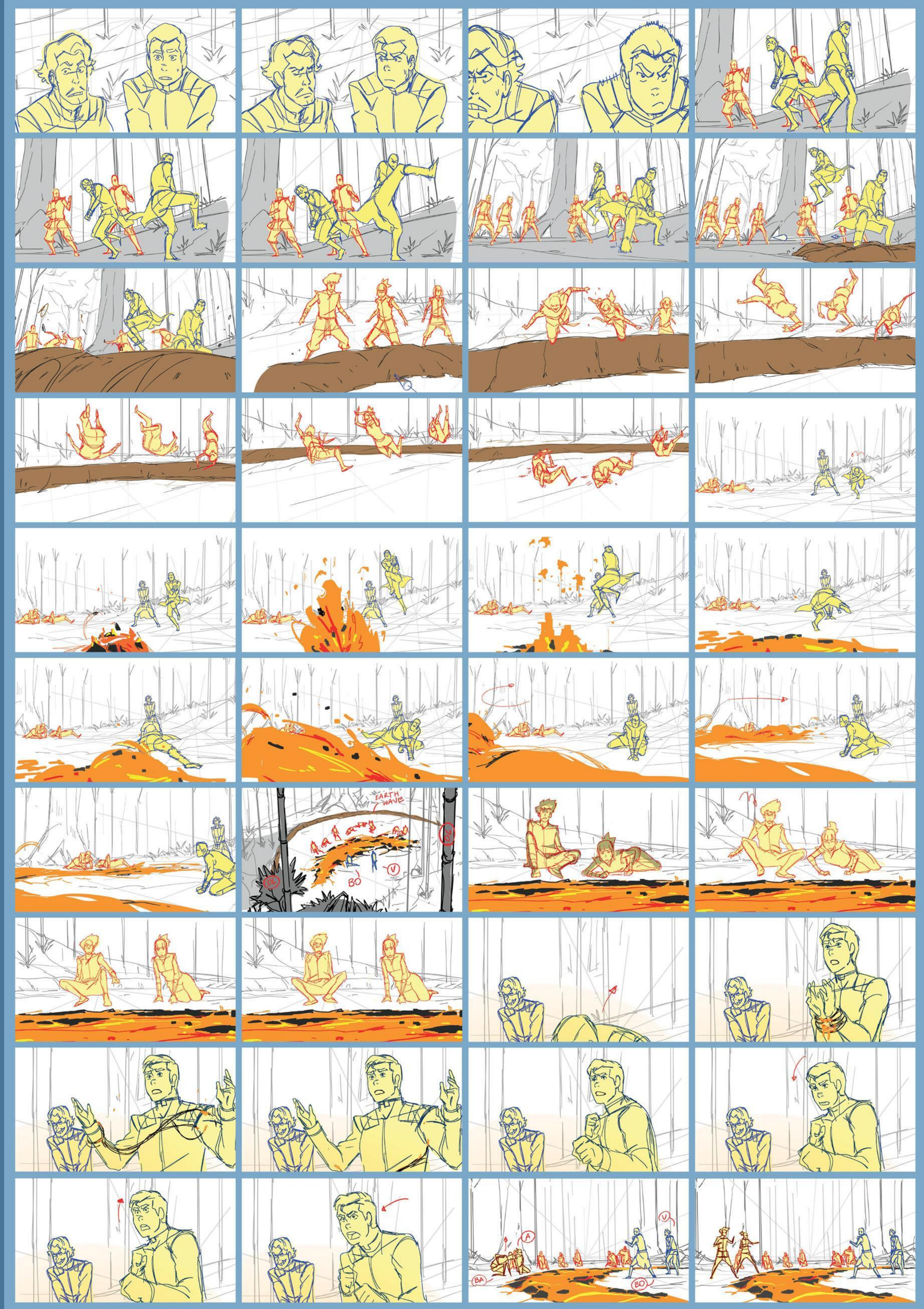
REUNION

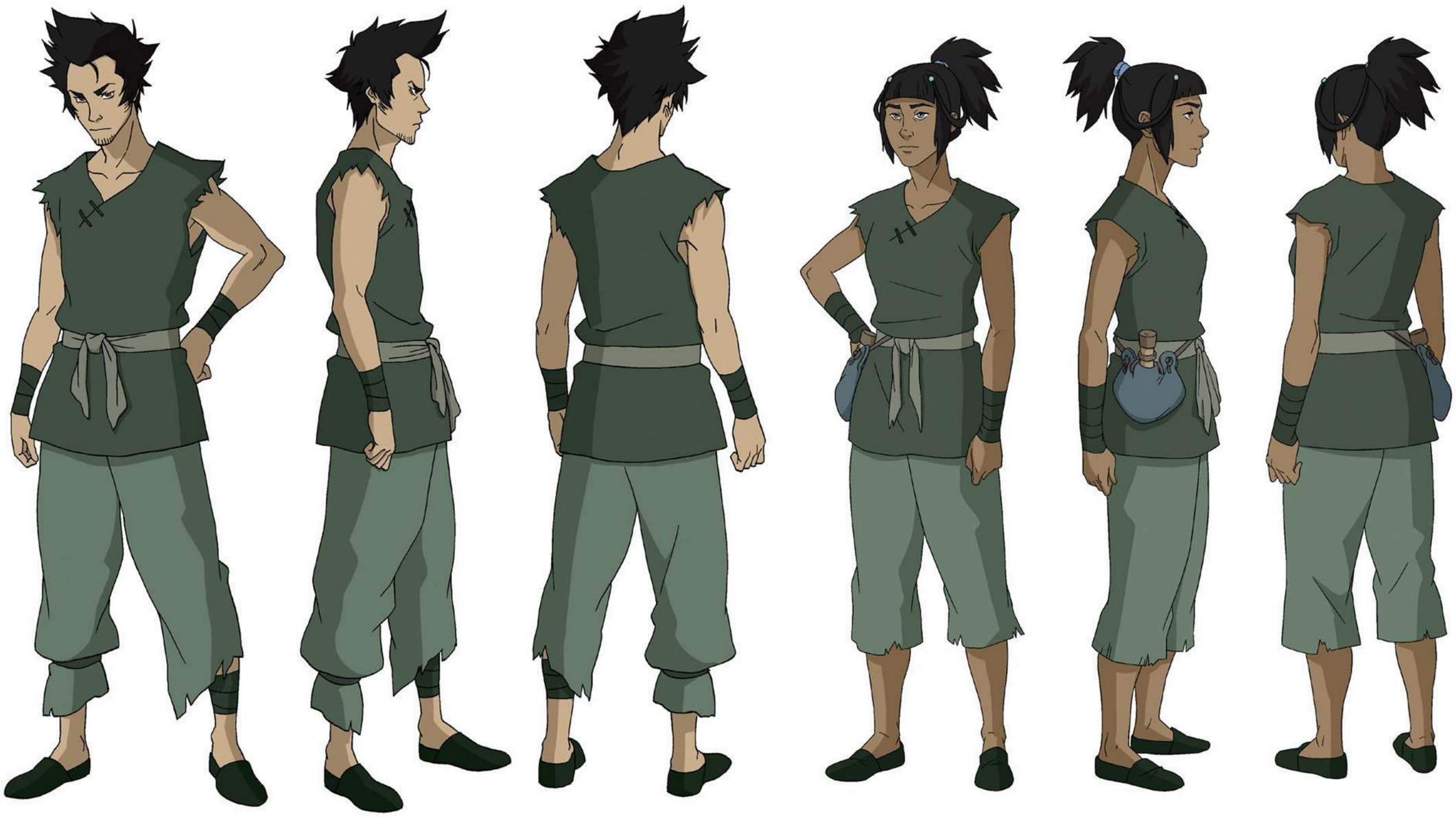


MD: Varrick and Bolin, dirty and on the run. One of the delights of this season was having a lot of scenes with these two comedic characters, who played really well off each other. The recording sessions with John Michael Higgins (Varrick) and P. J. Byrne (Bolin) were always full of laughs and many hilarious, unscripted moments. Bolin and Varrick designs by Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Wanted posters Chinese translation and type by S. L. Lee, PhD. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. *(Preceding spread) Beach design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.*

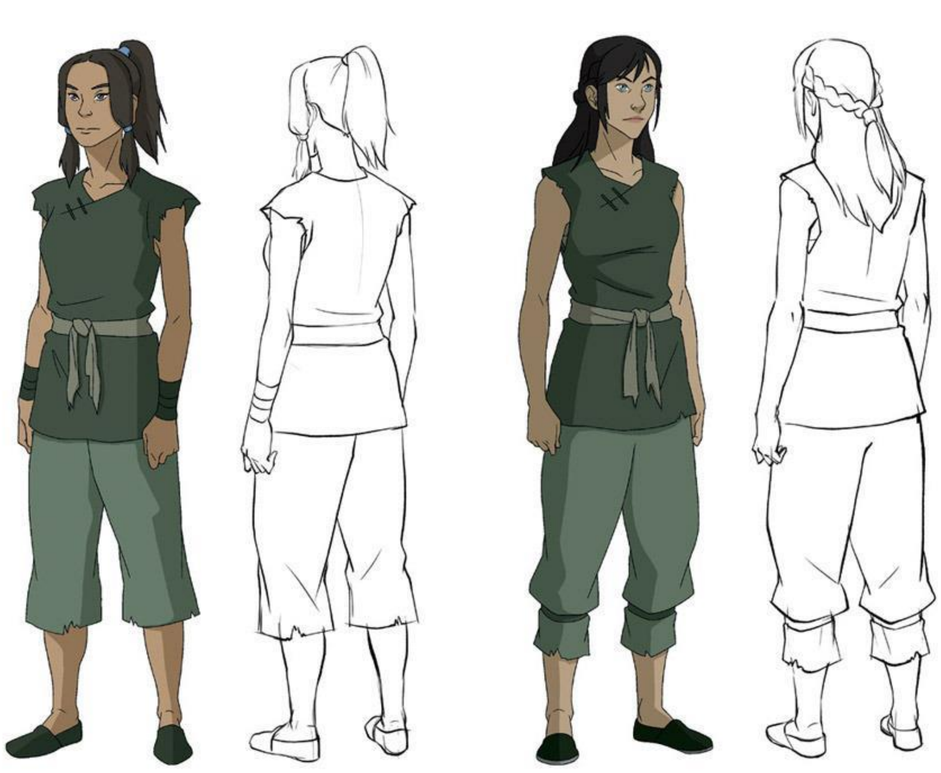


Forest design by Elsa Garagarza. Painting by Craig Elliott and Lauren Zurcher. (Opposite) JDS: Eugene has a knack for staging combat with big groups of people. How he keeps track of it all, I'll never know. Here we see Bolin create a lava moat to separate himself and Varrick from their captors. Storyboards by Eugene Lee and Lauren Montgomery.

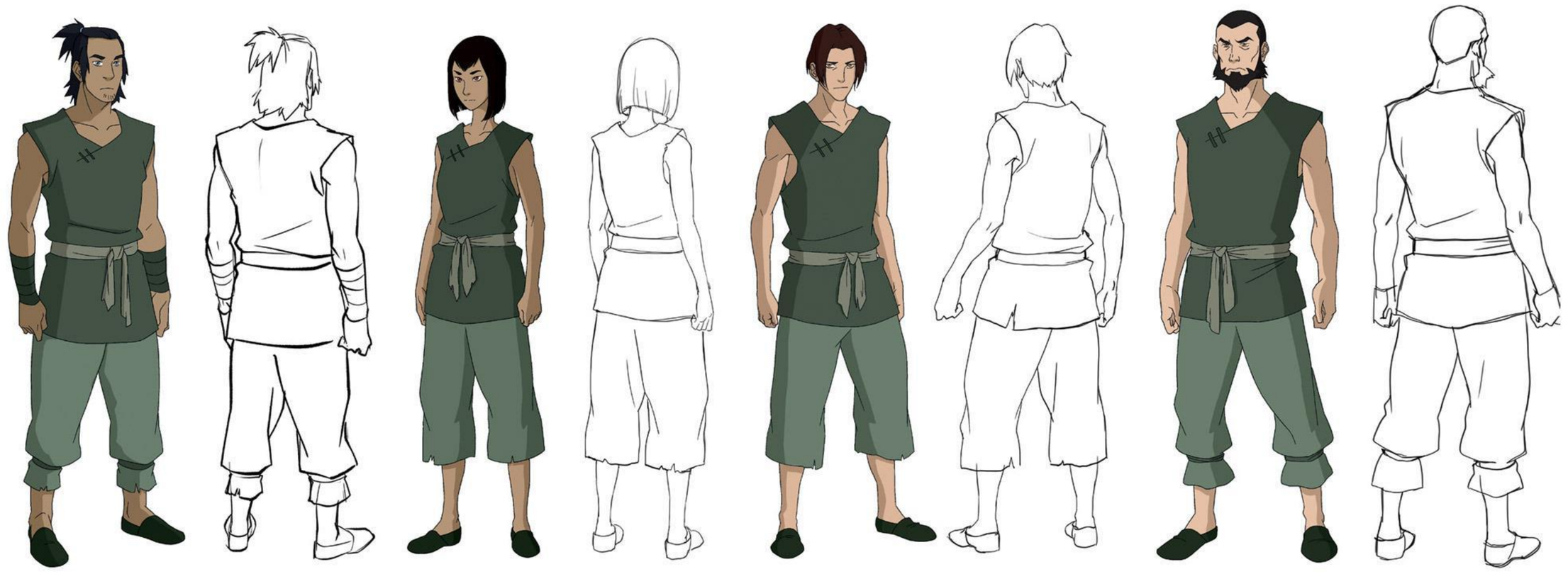

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BK: Steve Blum, the venerable voice actor who previously played Amon, provided the voice for Baraz. We didn't have a design ready when they started the storyboards, so the artist just made him look like another one of Steve's iconic roles, Spike Spiegel from Cowboy Bebop. *The design ended up following suit, but it was a little too on the nose, so I receded his hairline a bit. Baraz designs by Christie Tseng. Ahnah designs by Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.*



MD: The idea of Kuvira purging the Earth Empire of Fire- and Waterbenders was something we talked about during the development of Book Four. These refugees became the illustration of that policy, showing how behind the scenes, Kuvira instituted some hateful and extreme policies under the guise of "uniting" her nation. Escaped prisoner designs by Christie Tseng and Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



BK: Melissa King is a fantastic painter who joined us for Book Four after Fred left the production. She had done some great freelance work for us in the past, including a painting that was featured in the Book One art book—one that I incorrectly credited to Emily Tetri! After the book was printed and I realized my mistake, I felt awful. I think I have since apologized to Melissa about twenty times. Not to detract from my mistake, but it is a real compliment that I mistook a freelancer's painting for one of our staff painters'. She continued to do great work when she joined the crew full time, and we couldn't have gotten through Book Four without her. Earth Empire checkpoint designs by William Nanqing Niu. Paintings by Melissa King.

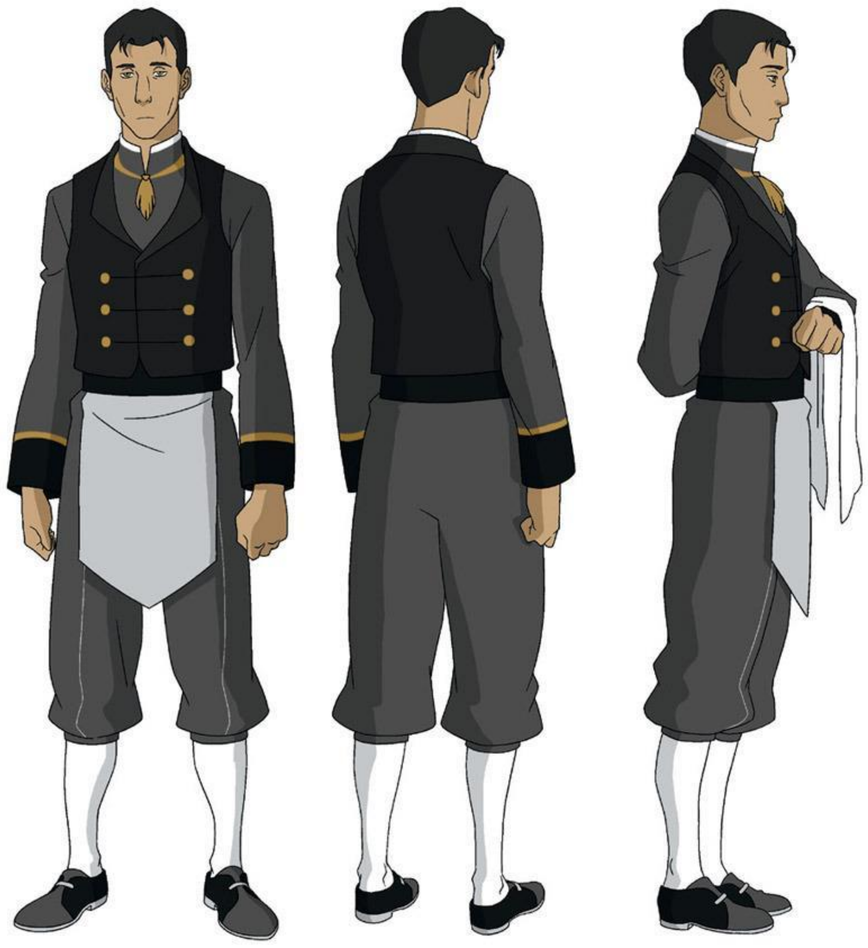


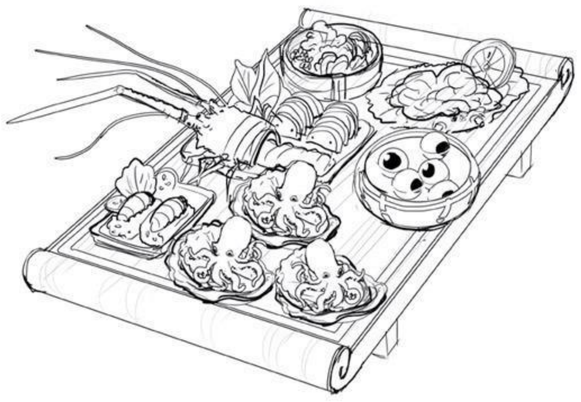
BK: When Christine switched from designing props to backgrounds, she really hit the ground running. All of her work was great, but she particularly shone when doing interiors. I think her time as a prop designer helped her to fill the spaces with solidly drawn, well-researched furniture and architectural accents. The two backgrounds in this spread are prime examples of this great strength of hers. Design by Christine Bian. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.



BK: Lauren has a really bold style of painting that always compliments Christine's well-built interiors. The depth and forms within these paintings are all crystal clear and allow the viewer's eye to move around easily. In the bathroom there is a full-length mirror in the niche. When the animation came back, Wu didn't have a reflection even though he walked in front of it. Rather than call a retake to add the animation, which would have been a lot of hard work, I just painted it to look like a cabinet. Mirrors and 2-D animation don't mix! Design by Christine Bian. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.



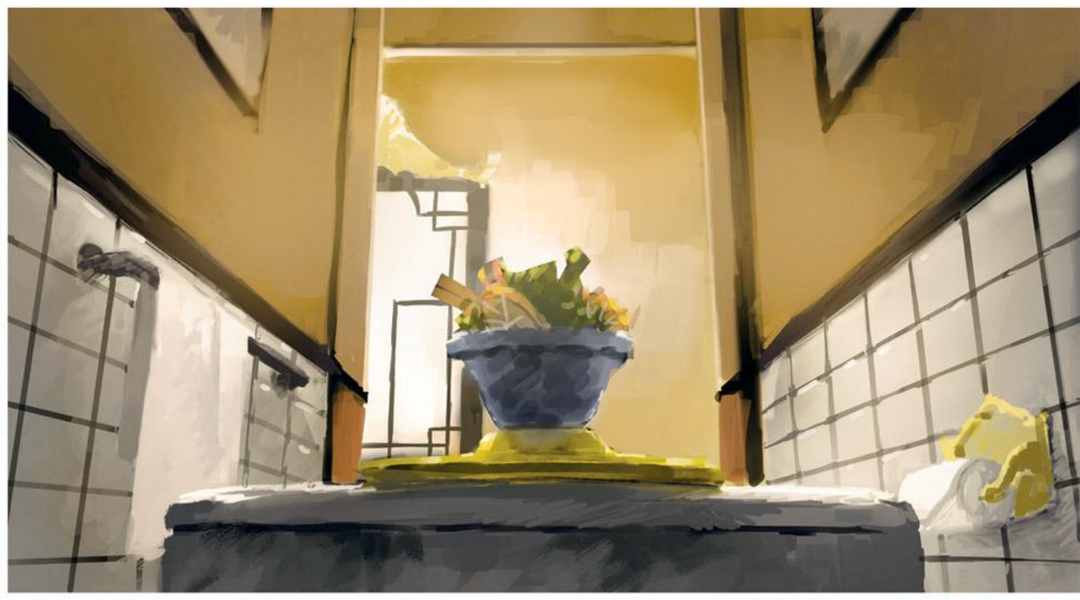






BK: Joseph took over props when Christine moved to backgrounds. He drew food really well, as she did, except here he went out of his way to make it look disgusting—at least for my tastes! Hotel waiter designs by Angela Song Mueller. Bathroom attendant designs by Christie Tseng. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Seafood design by Joseph Aguilar. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.









Bathroom and loading dock designs by Christine Bian. Paintings by Lauren Zurcher.



BK: As adept as William is at drawing organic environments, you can see on this page that he is a beast when it comes to urban settings receding in perspective as well. Designs by William Nanqing Niu.



MD: Grandma Yin and Cousin Tu got modest costume updates for Book Four as well. They've been living in Asami's mansion since fleeing Ba Sing Se and have since acquired some fresh clothes, though Yin still holds on to Mako's scarf for sentimental reasons. Yin designs by Angela Song Mueller. Tu designs by Christie Tseng. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

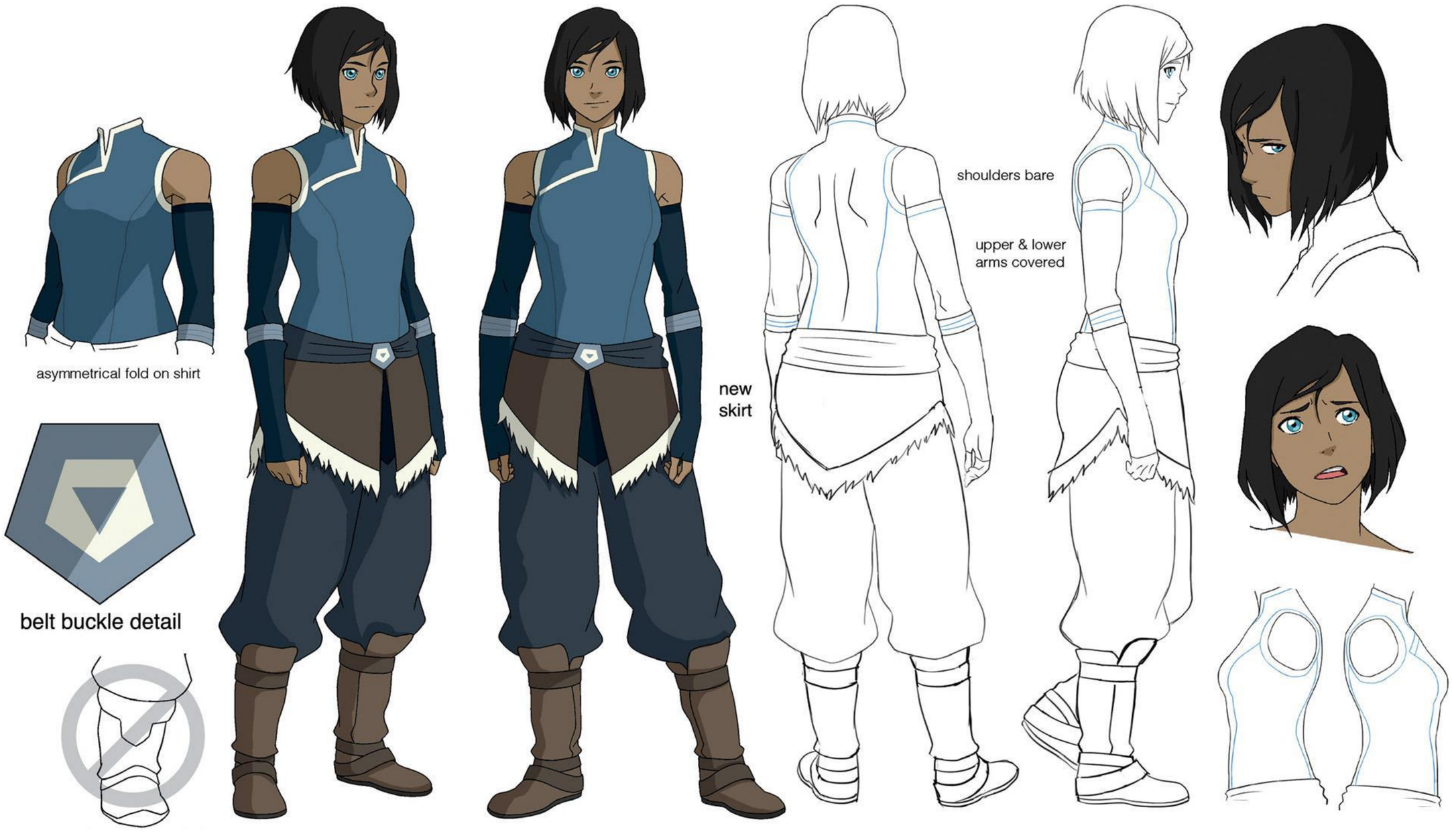




BK: We figured Asami had tinkered with and improved upon her father's original electrocution glove, so we gave her a more streamlined version in Book Four. Glove designs by Bryan Konietzko and Joseph Aguilar. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



BK: Craig joined the crew for a while to help with the huge background-painting workload. This train is one of my favorites among his pieces, showcasing a complex natural and artificial lighting scenario. Design by Angela Sung. Painting by Craig Elliott.



BK: When Korra returned to Republic City and gave up her disguise, I didn't want her to just return to her old outfit without updating it. It was more than just an aesthetic goal; I wanted her signature look to reflect the psychological growth she'd undergone since the end of Book Three. I always loved her long-sleeved costume and wished we had seen more of it in Book Two, so I brought the upper half of that costume back. I streamlined her lower half for a sort of subtle superhero look. I wanted to show she had evolved from the teenage girl from the remote Southern Water Tribe into a full-fledged Avatar. Korra designs by Bryan Konietzko and Christie Tseng. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Bryan Konietzko and Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



Air Temple Island design by Jevon Bue. Painting by Melissa King.



CHAPTER EIGHT

BEYOND THE WILDS



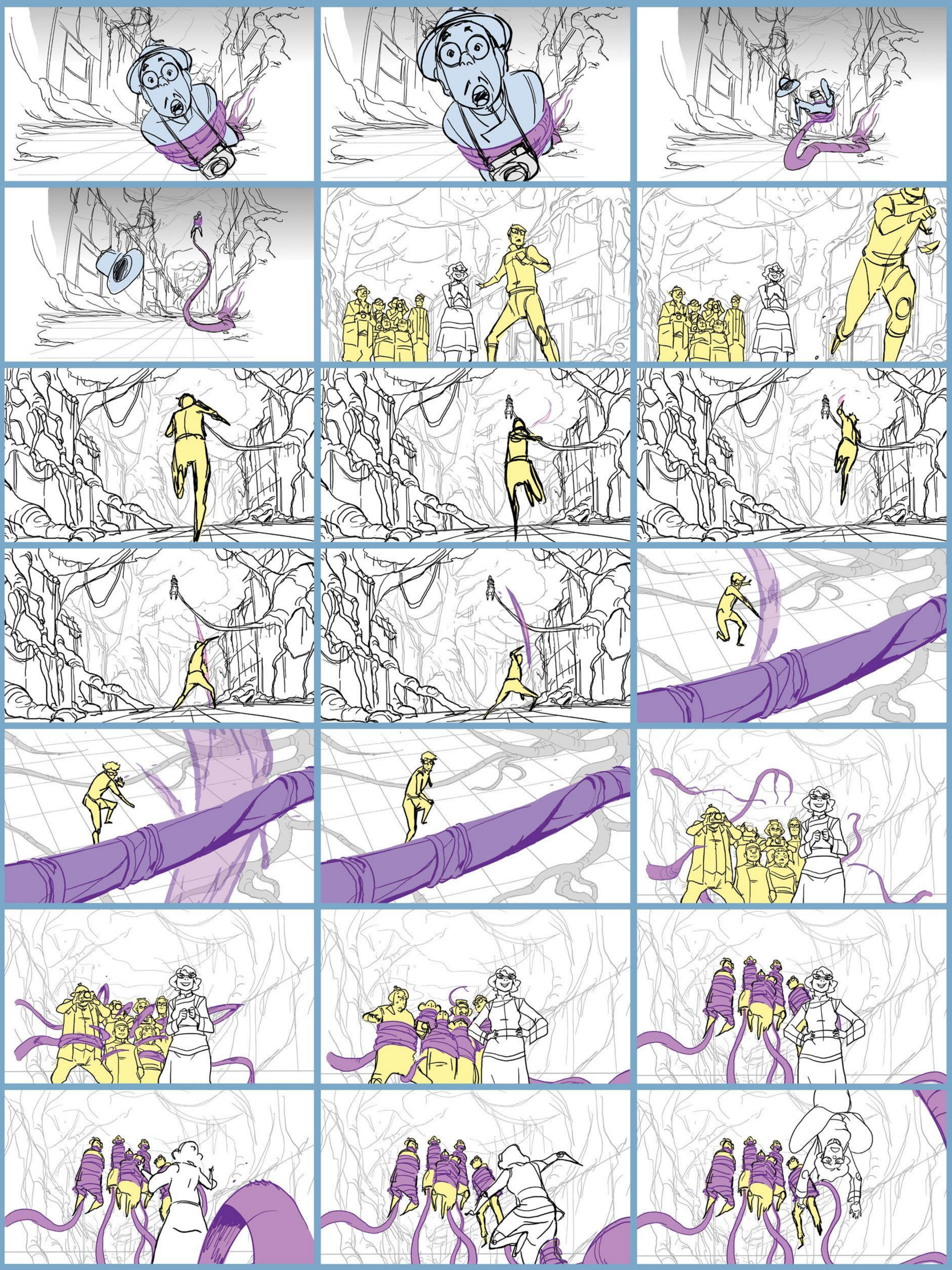


BK: Mike and I really enjoyed having the spirit wilds in Republic City. There was something fun and freeing about drastically changing our central location. Top design by Christine Bian. Bottom design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Melissa King. (Opposite) Designs by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Melissa King. *(Preceding spread) Design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.*

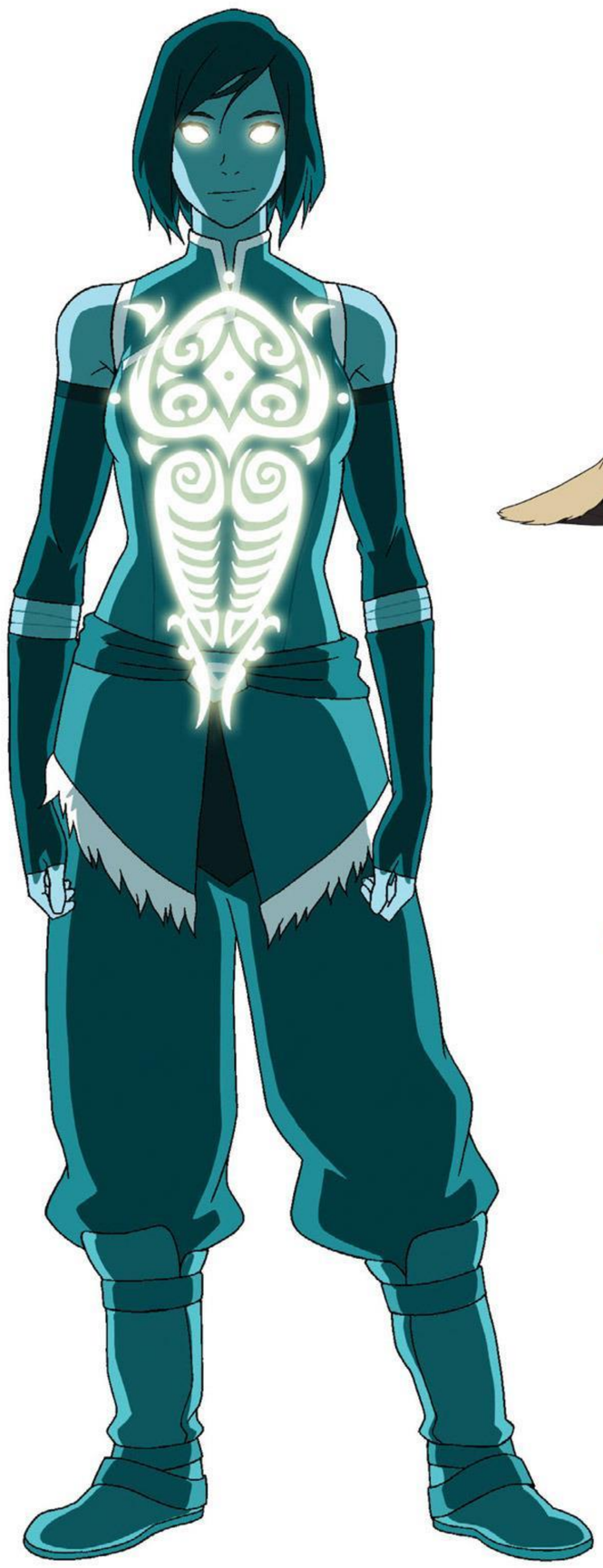




MD: Ryu (the character) makes his triumphant return as a spirit wilds tour guide—though he could do without all the pressure from his mom and dad. I like how seriously Ryu takes his new job. He's really trying to do the best he can! But after being trapped in the spirit world, this tour group will probably want their money back. Storyboards by Chris Palmer.



JDS: Ryu, try as he might, is unable to do much of anything to free the dangling tourist. The last thing you want to do when something is slithering toward you is poke it with a stick. Storyboards by Chris Palmer.





MD: (Far left) Raava's glowing pattern appeared when Korra reconnected with her Avatar spirit. (Left) Most of the air bison are very similar in appearance, but not Juicy! His slobbery, snotty, unkempt appearance, combined with a pungent odor, makes him stand out from the herd. Designs by Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

BK: Varrick and Bolin needed new clothes once they'd returned to Republic City and likely burned their cursed, filthy Earth Empire uniforms. I figured Varrick had some clothes stashed in his penthouse, so he got an updated version of his classic outfit. Bolin let his cowlick be free and picked some nice new duds, including this Rocketeer-inspired leather pilot's jacket. Varrick designs by Christie Tseng. Bolin designs by Bryan Konietzko and Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.





BK: Ah, Steve (the character) . . . When we designed our main batch of Republic City denizens, we colored the majority of them in subdued tones, and as a result, most of them blended nicely into the background. But not Steve! He stuck out everywhere, in every season. At some point I just named him Steve. Ryu's dad, Ryu's mom, and Ryu designs by Christie Tseng. Steve in goo design by Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. (Opposite) MD: Korra and Mako seek refuge from rogue spirit vines in an abandoned building and discover these creepy pods which contain the missing tour group. Background designs by Christine Bian. Paintings by Melissa King.

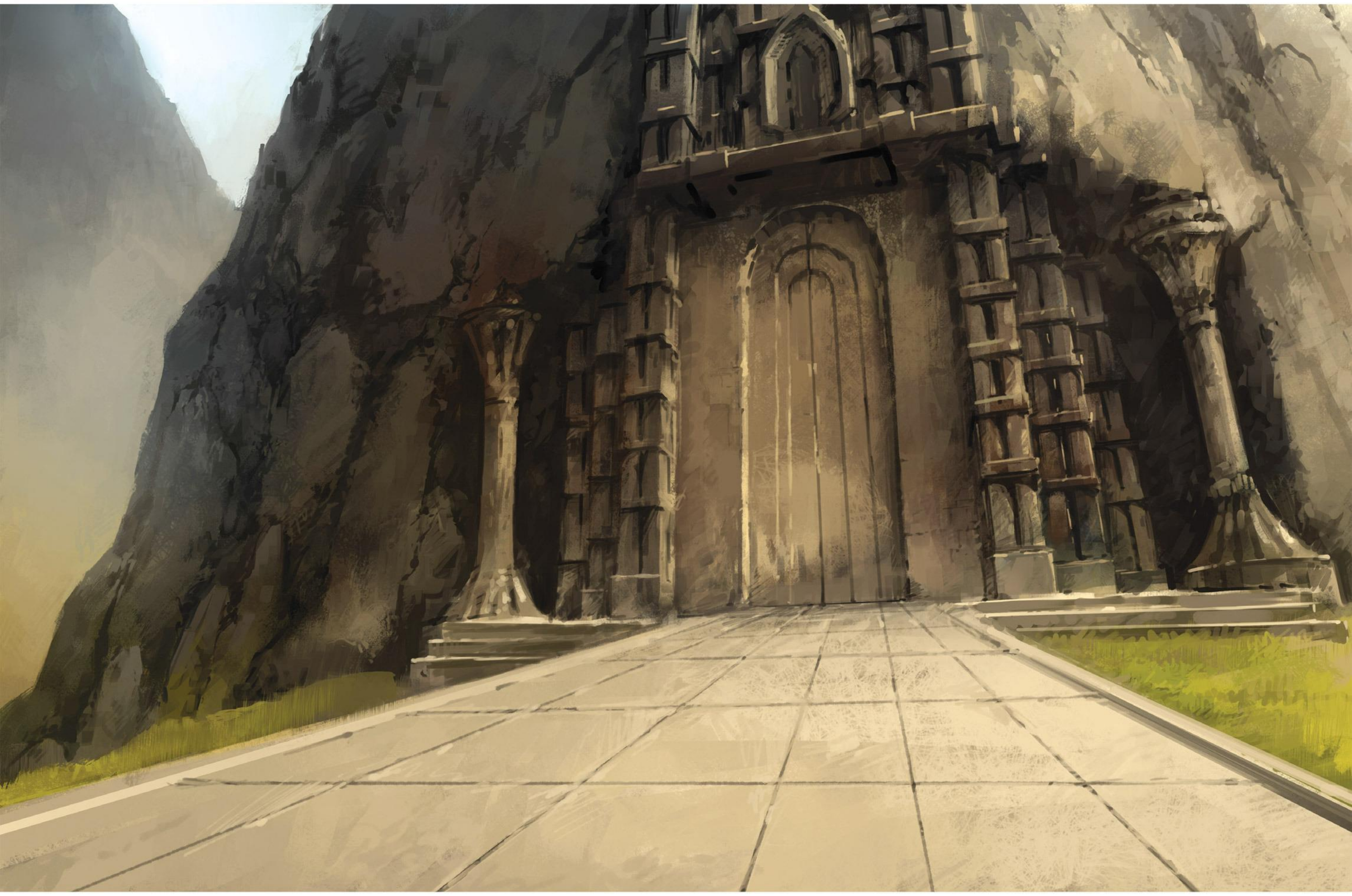




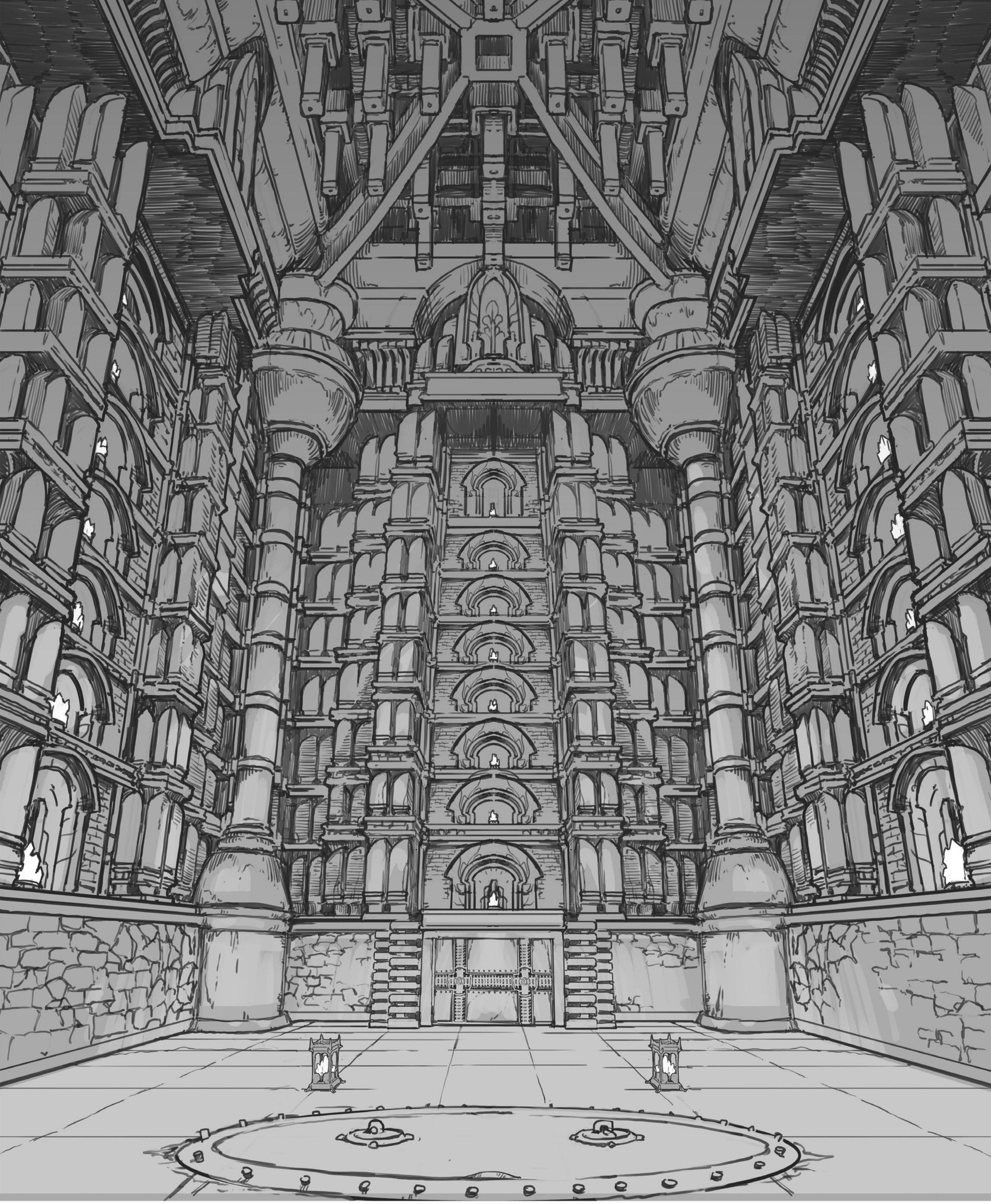
MD: In the writers' room, we had talked about Zaheer's prison being a fortress deep underground. I like the specificity of location and how Republic City's skyline is visible in the distance. Background design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.



MD: Unlike our Books One and Two villains, Zaheer didn't perish at the end of Book Three, so he was able to make an appearance as Korra's unlikely mentor for matters related to the spirit world. Designs by Christie Tseng. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



The imposing entrance to Zaheer's prison. Background design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.



BK: William racked up a huge number of impressive background designs during his tenure on Korra*, but I have to say that this is one of the most impressive. The idea was that the White Lotus repurposed an abandoned subterranean temple for Zaheer's new prison. Zaheer should be happy that he got quite an attractive upgrade from his previous cell! Design by William Nanqing Niu.*



BK: Once again, Lauren's solid painting style shines in an interior that was certainly no picnic to paint! I've always loved the eerie quality of the green, glowing Earth Kingdom crystals, and this is one of the finest renderings of that light source. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.



CHAPTER NINE

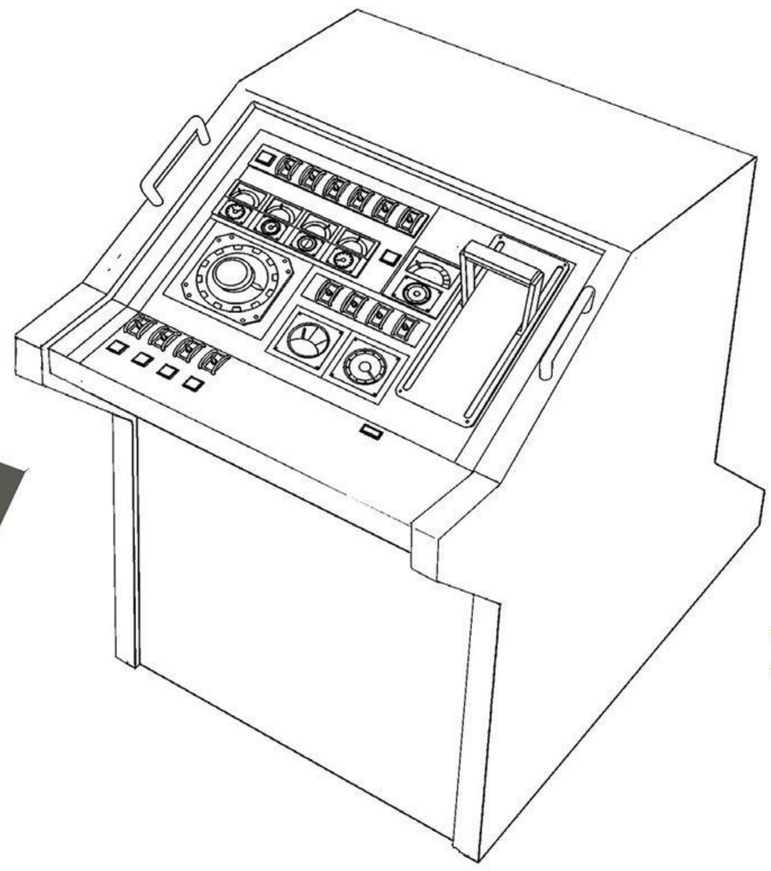
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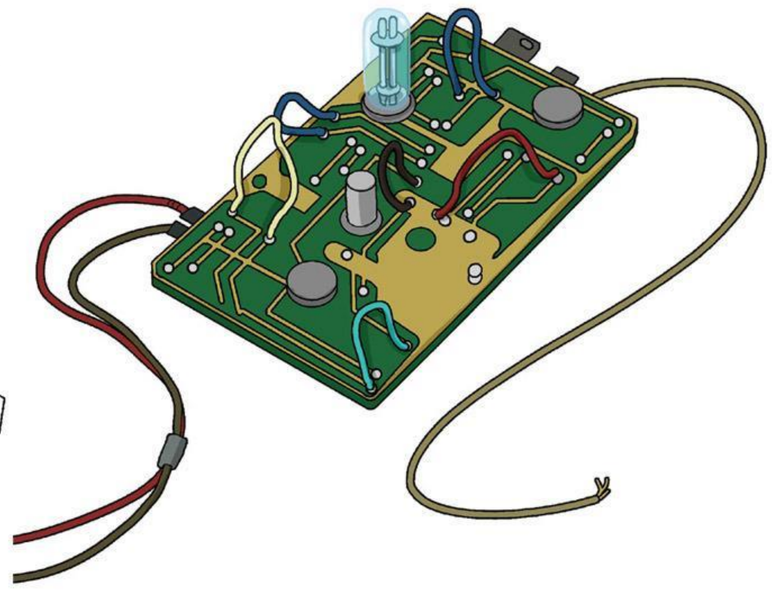




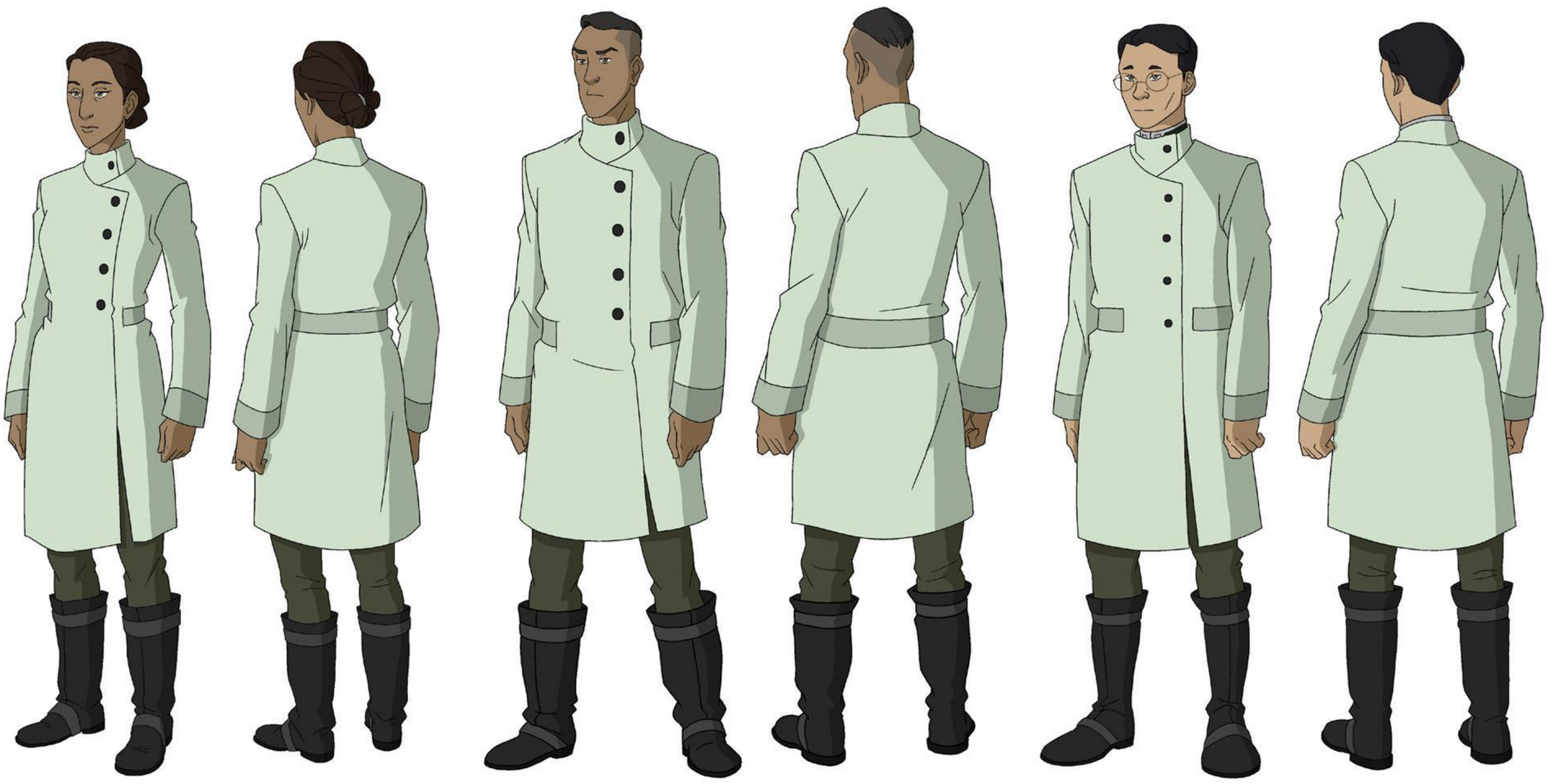
BK: Joseph is great at designing technical props, making all of these pieces look like bona fide World War II items. Designs by Joseph Aguilar. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. *(Preceding spread) Factory design by Christine Bian. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.*



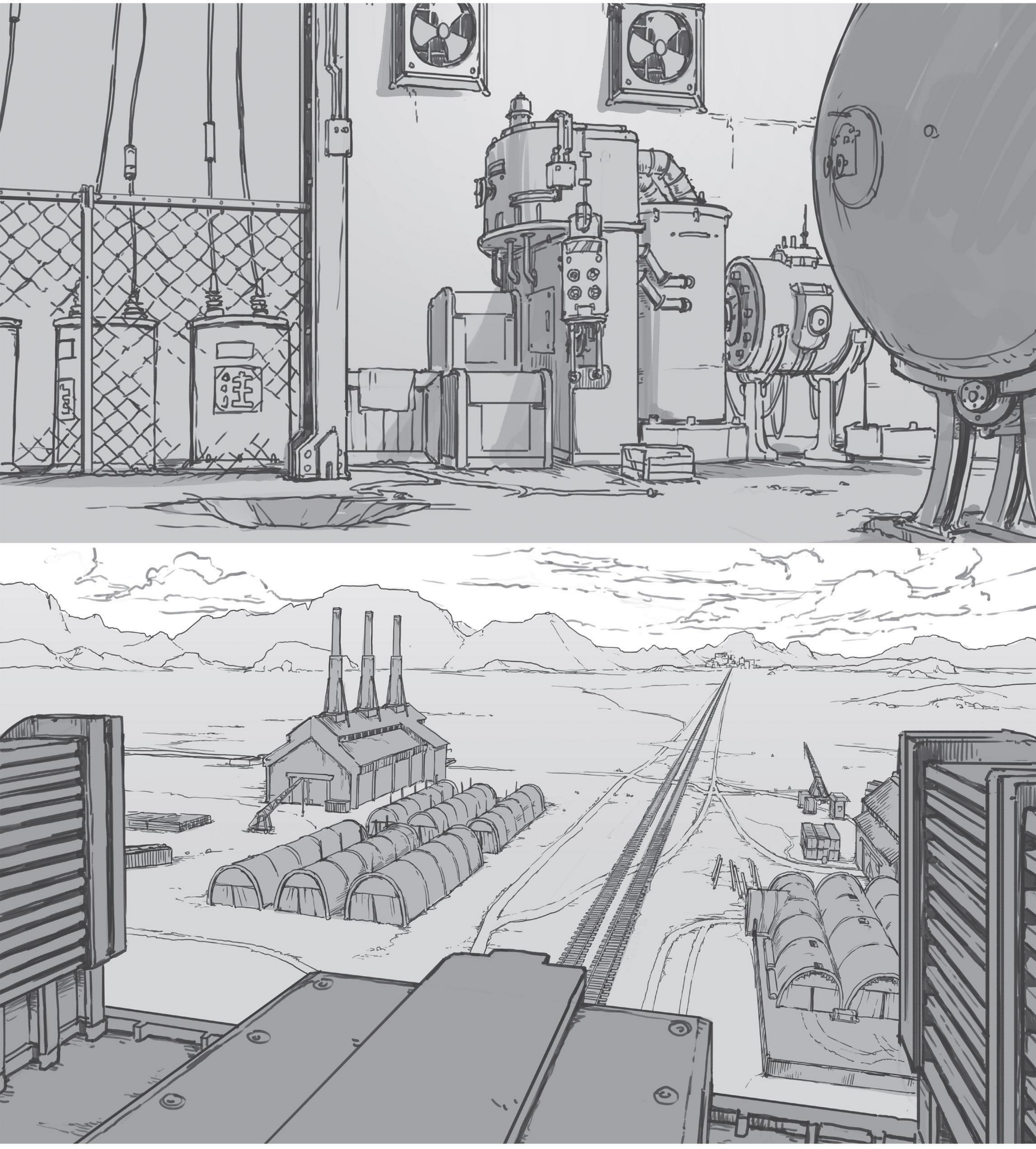




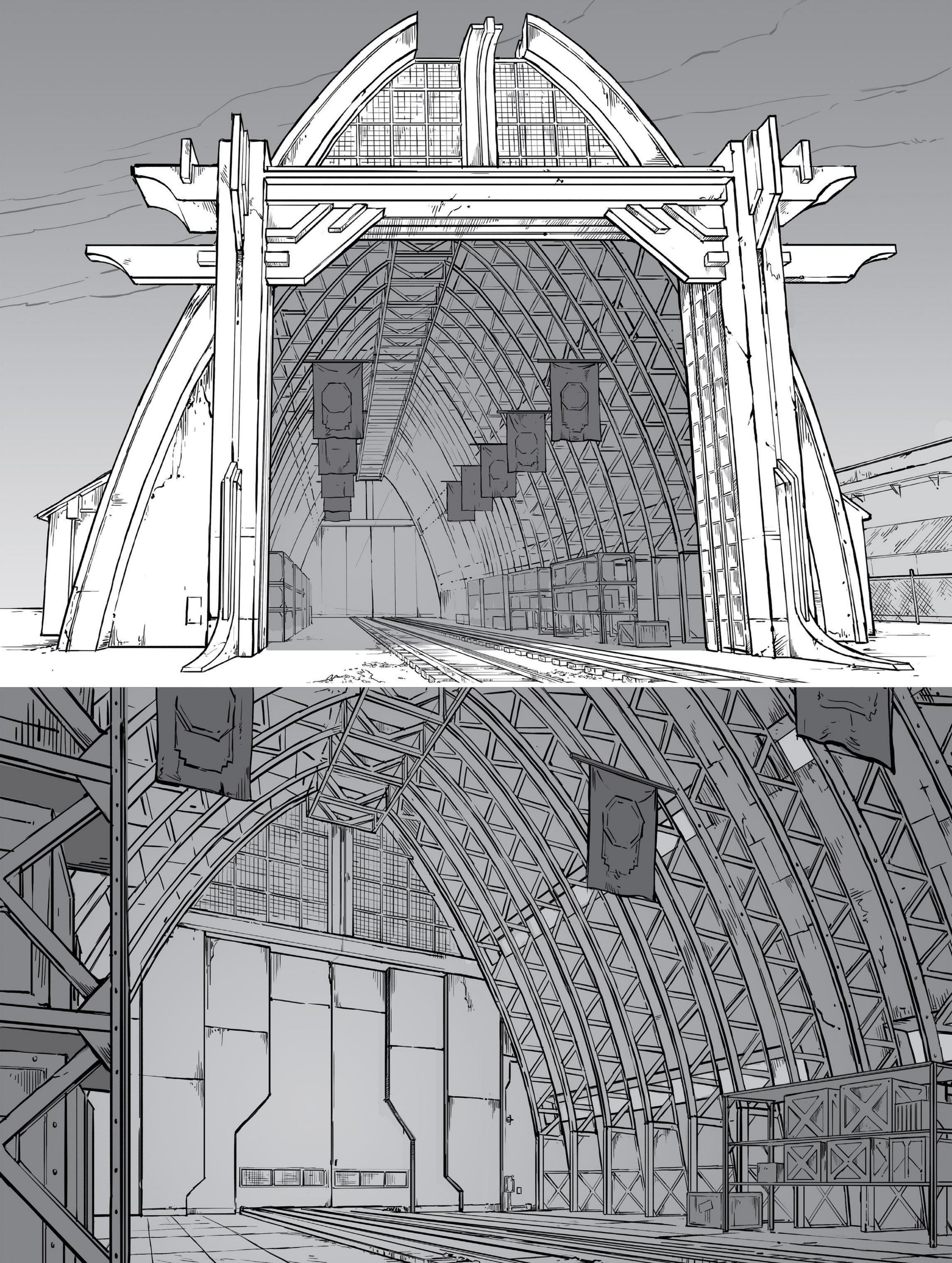
Spirit energy cannon control panel and circuit board by Joseph Aguilar. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

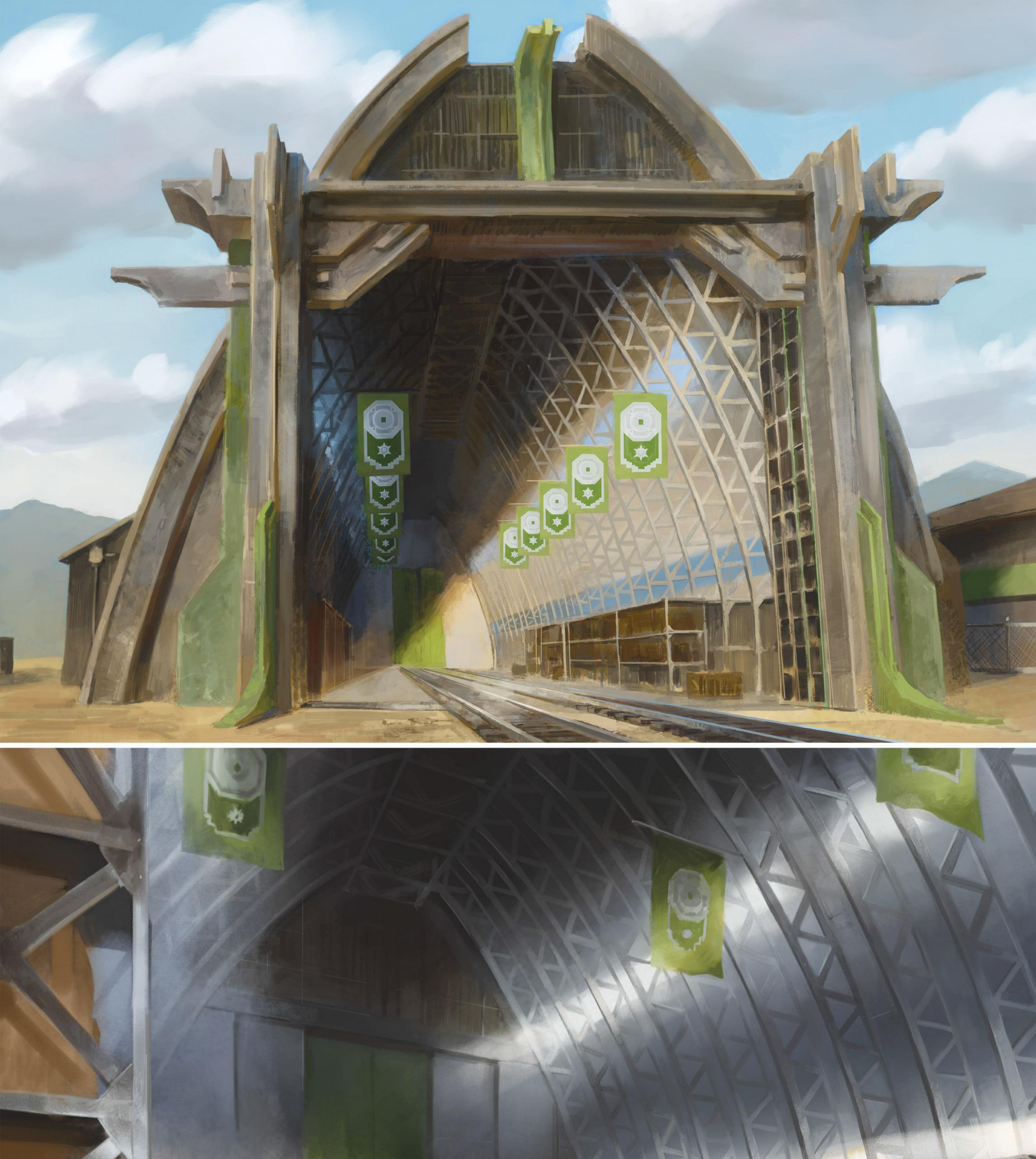


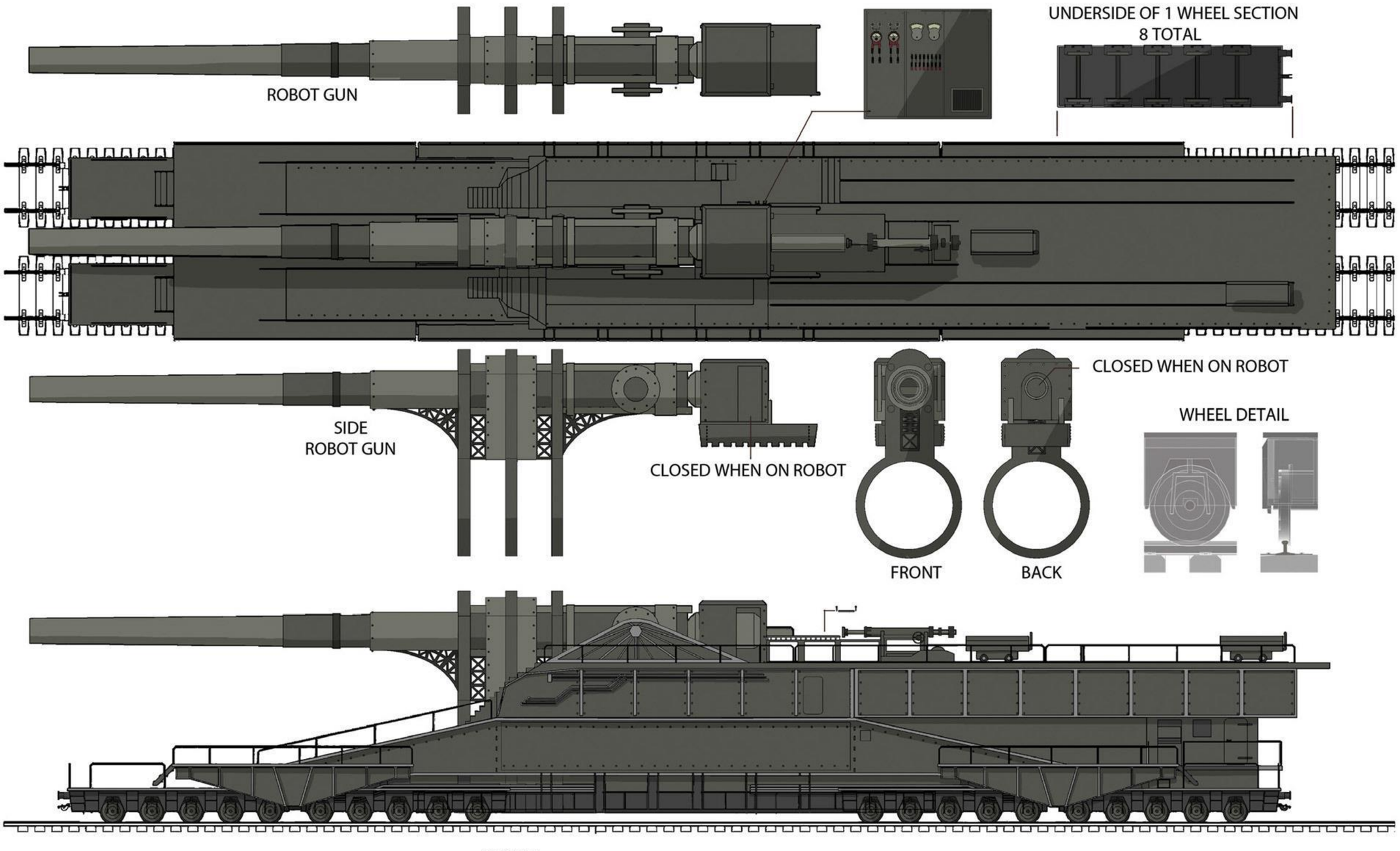
Earth Empire scientist designs by Angela Mueller and Christie Tseng. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

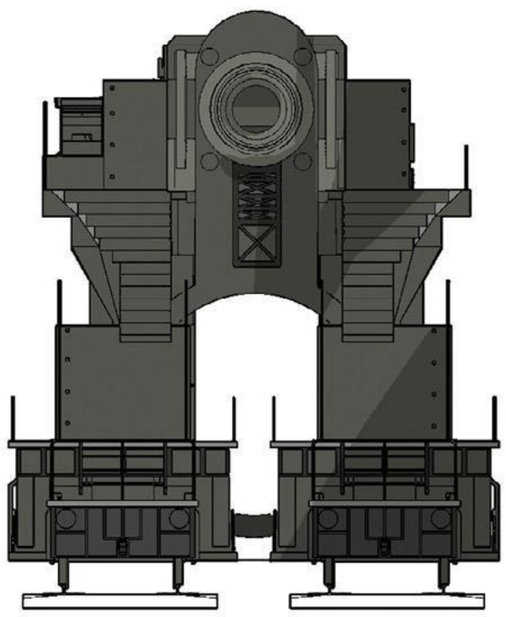


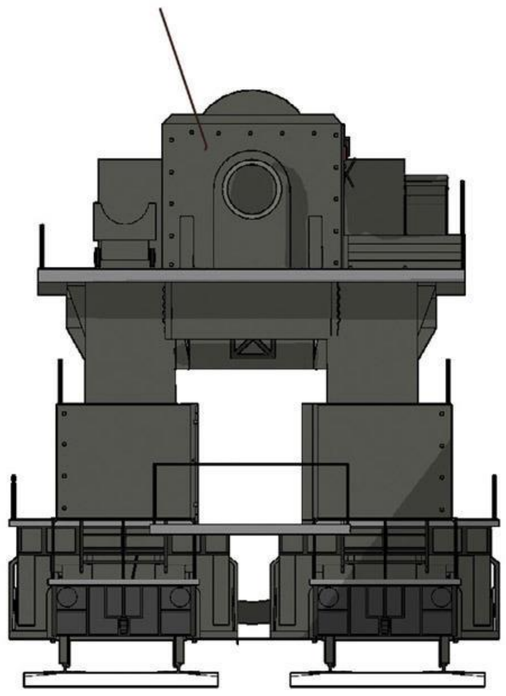
MD: The Earth Empire factory was a huge set piece for this story. It's always challenging when there is an episode that requires all new background designs, as this one did. Background designs by William Nanqing Niu. (Following spread) Earth Empire hangar designs by Christine Bian. Paintings by Emily Tetri.

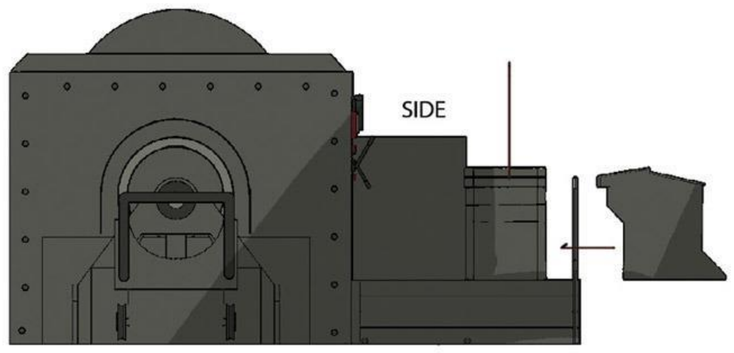




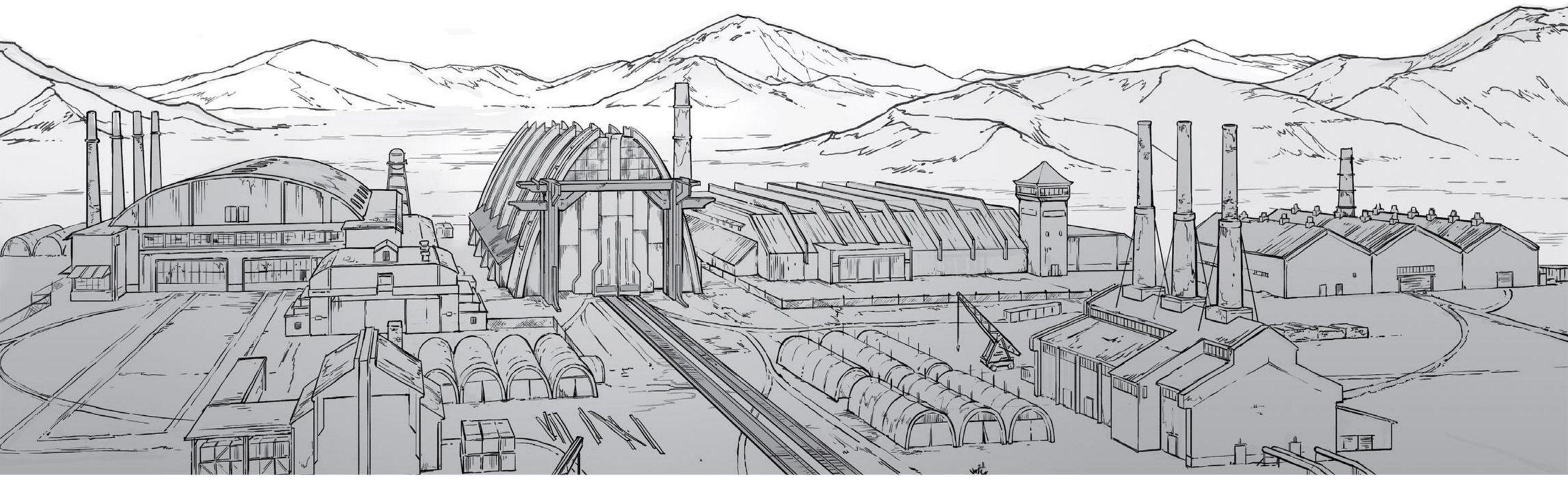








BK: We based Baatar Jr.'s gargantuan spirit energy cannon on a mind-boggling real-world weapon developed by Germany in World War II. Two of them were built (the second one being named, of all things, Dora), though they were hardly used in the war. The influence lent a scary realism to our fictional military dictatorship's fantastical weapon. Design by Joseph Aguilar and Bryan Konietzko. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

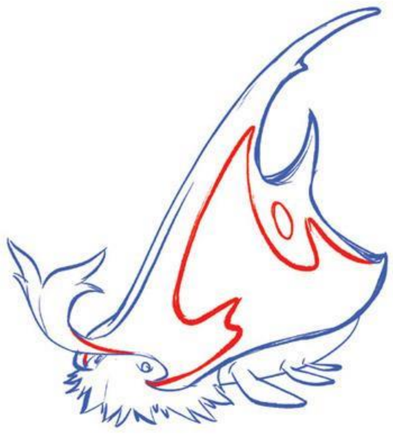


MD: This background design by Christine Bian is a great overview of the entire Earth Empire factory, showing all the main locations where the action takes place.



Top: An abandoned subway entrance in the spirit wilds. Background design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Melissa King. Bottom: Rocky outskirts near the Earth Empire factory. Background design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Lauren Zurcher. Inset: Bamboo forest. Background design by Elsa Garagarza. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.













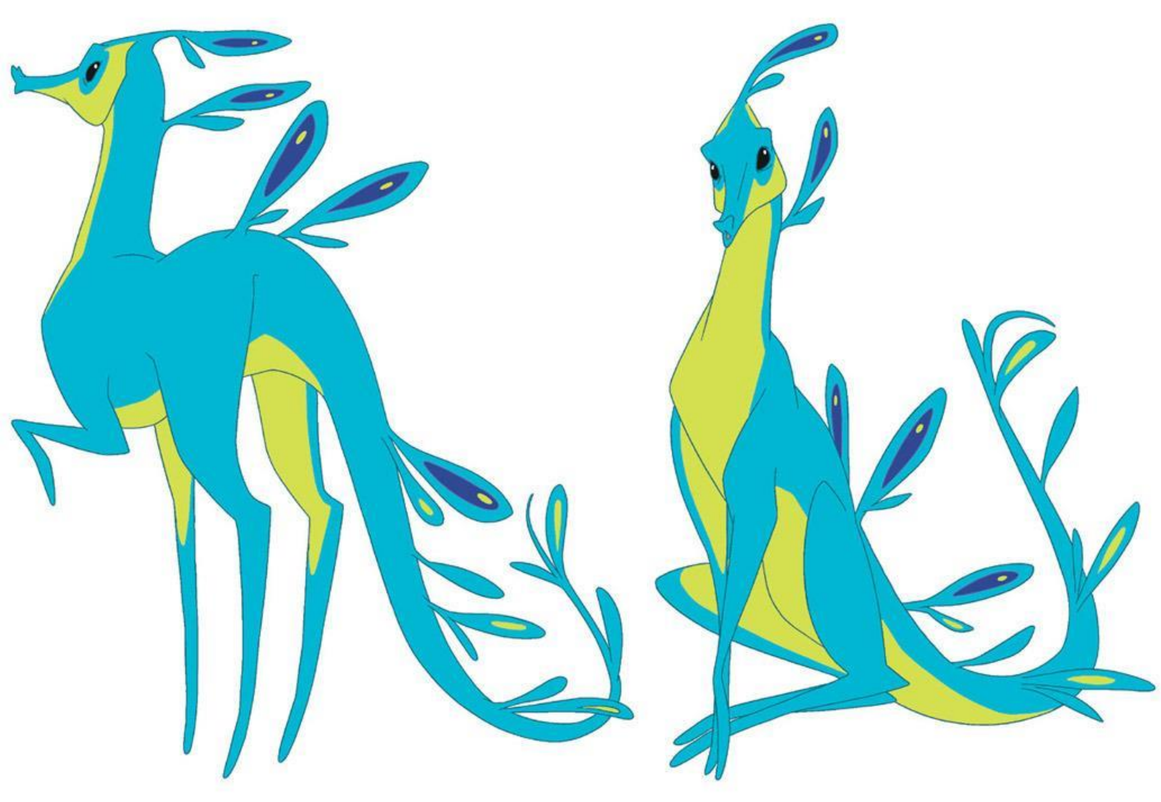


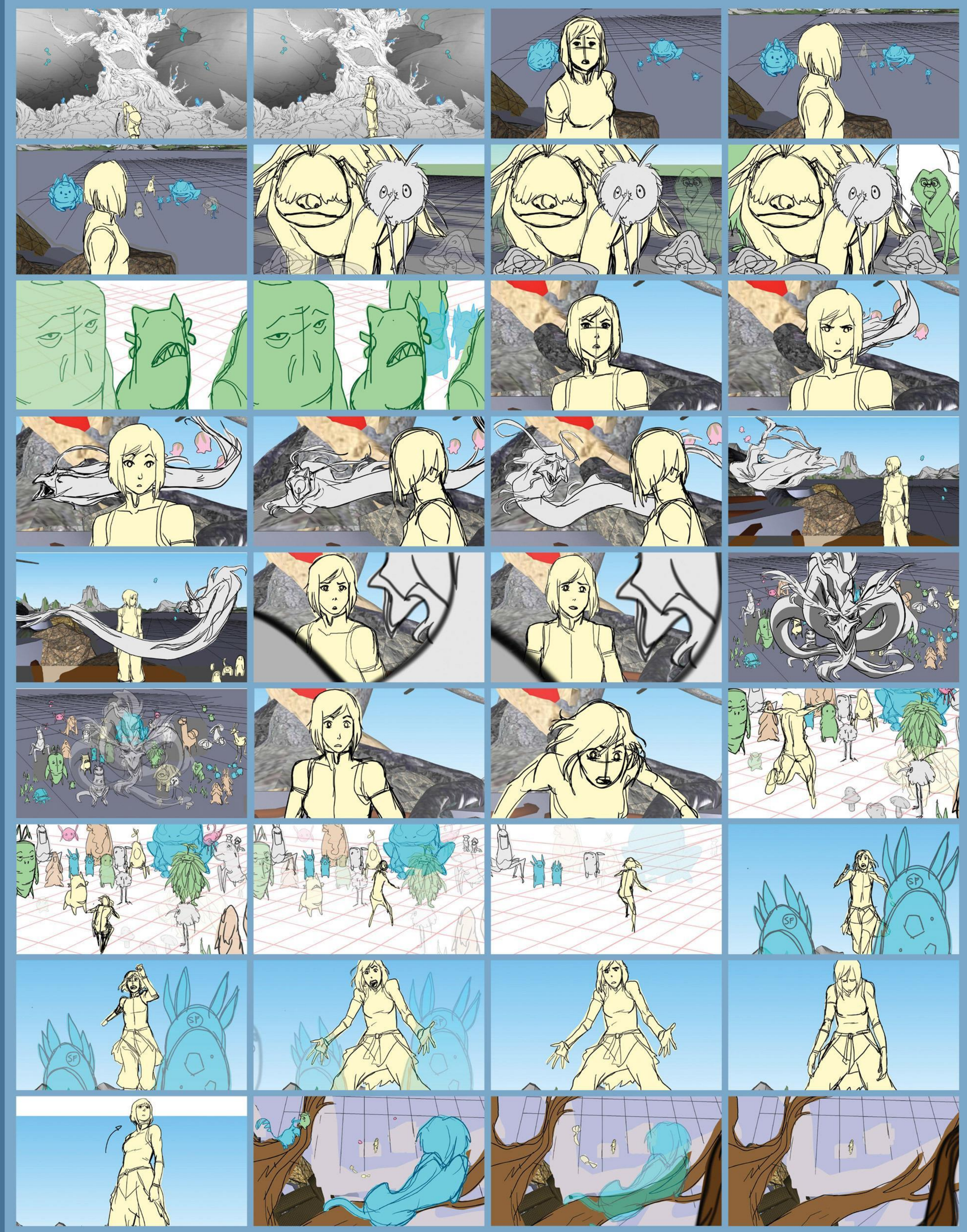




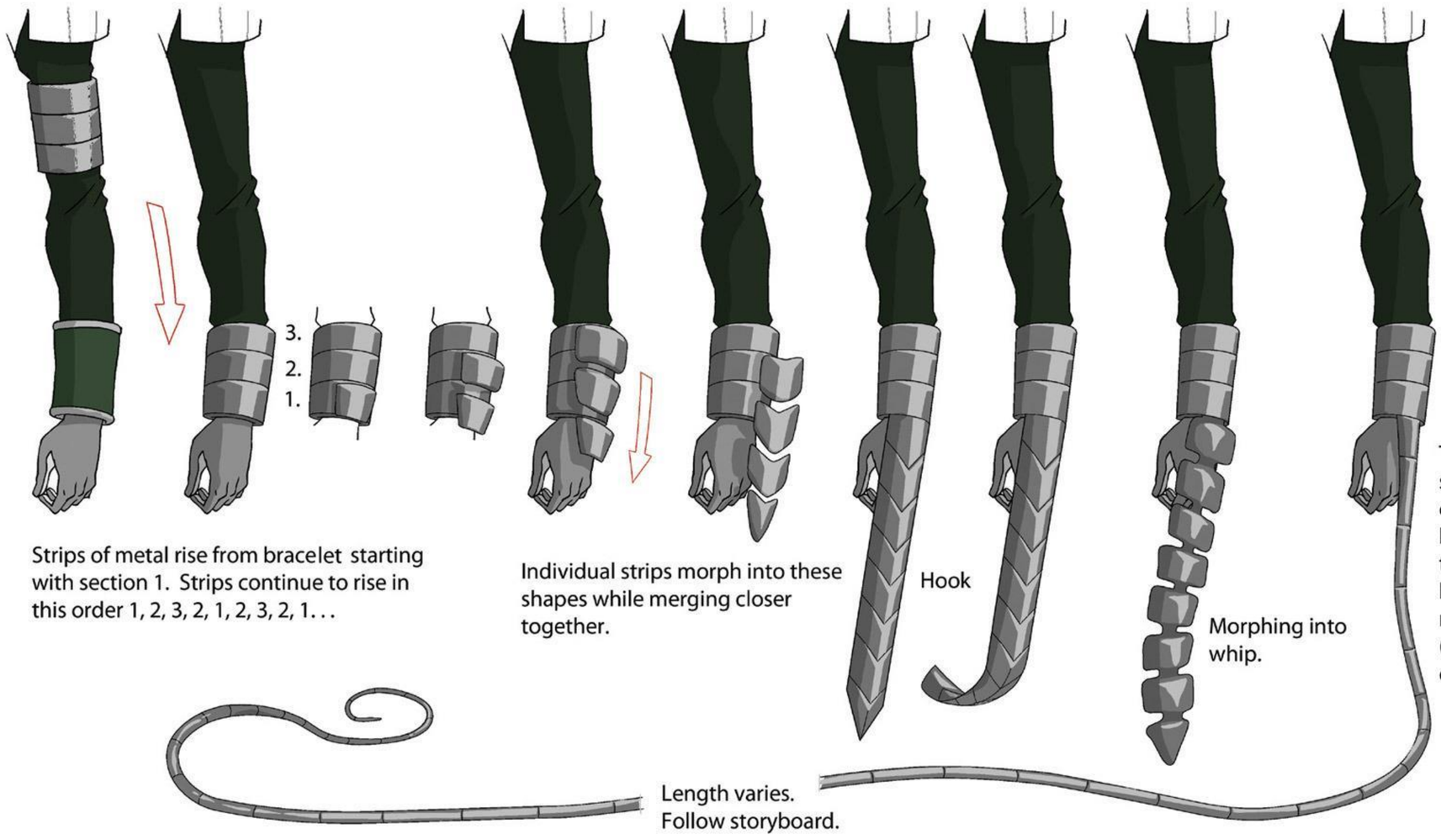
BK: Christie and Angie designed such a delightful array of spirits for Book Four. We could almost do an entire art book on just the spirits designed for Korra*! I think Christie must have drawn at least a hundred. Angie's dragon-eel spirit is a favorite of mine, and I love the color scheme Sylvia did on it.*

Spirit designs by Angela Song Mueller and Christie Tseng. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

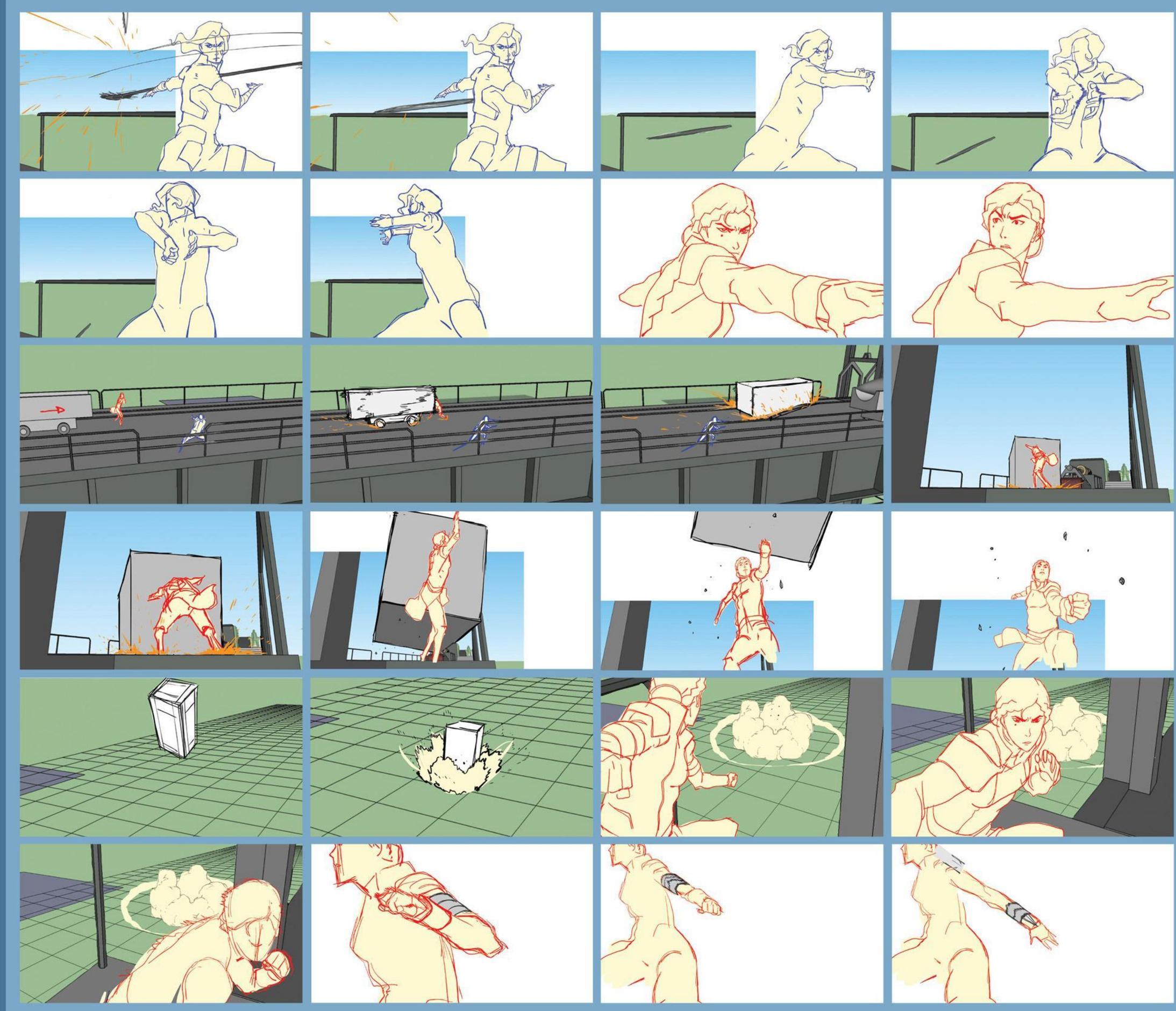


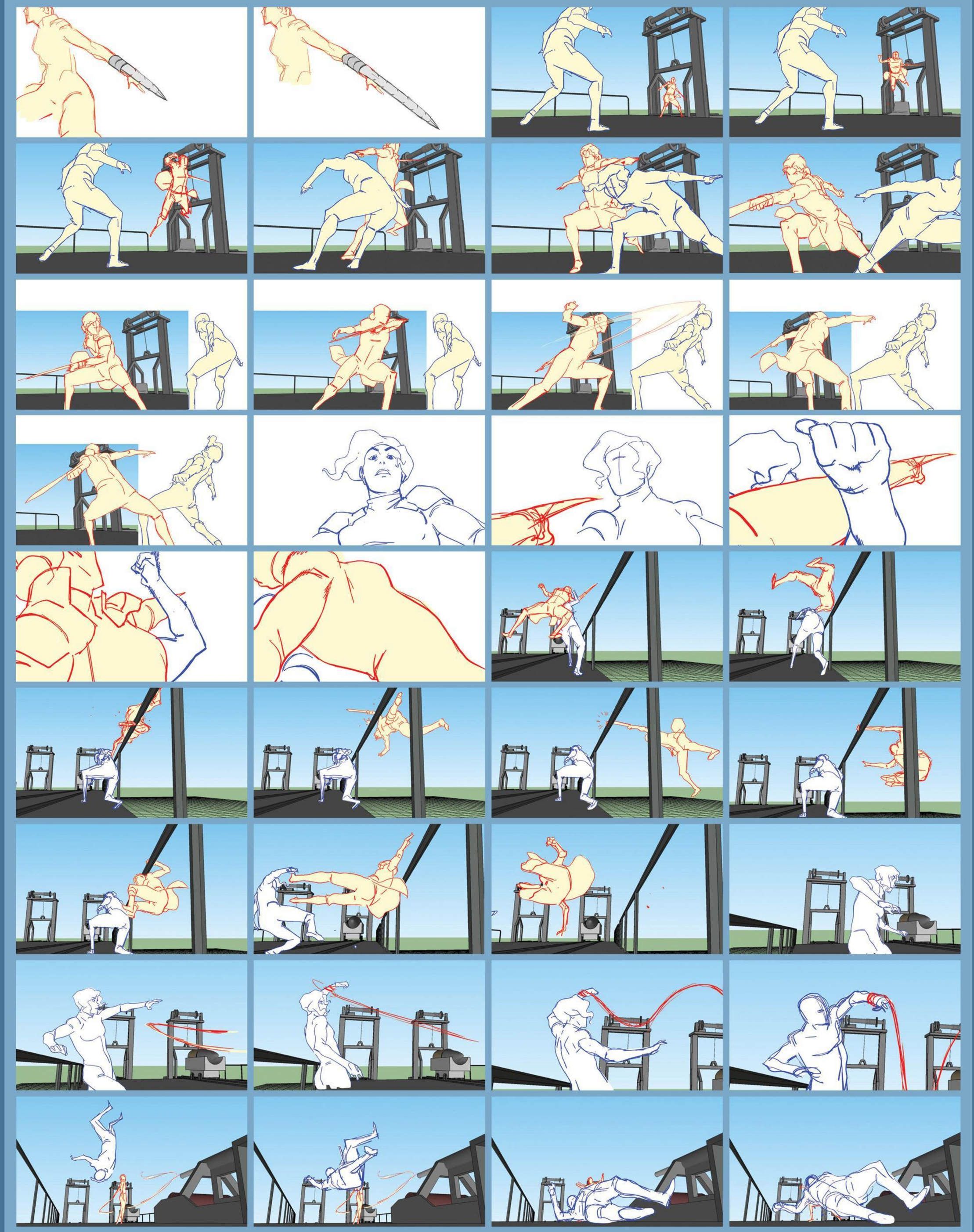


MD: Whenever there is a crucial emotional scene, Lauren can always be counted on to nail the perfect expressions and camera angles. I love how the last wide downshot really shows how alone Korra feels. Storyboards by Lauren Montgomery.



JDS: I cannot remember if it was written into the script, but Kuvira's arm blade and whip seemed to be natural extensions of her impressive ability to manipulate metal. Blade and whip designed by Joseph Aguilar. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

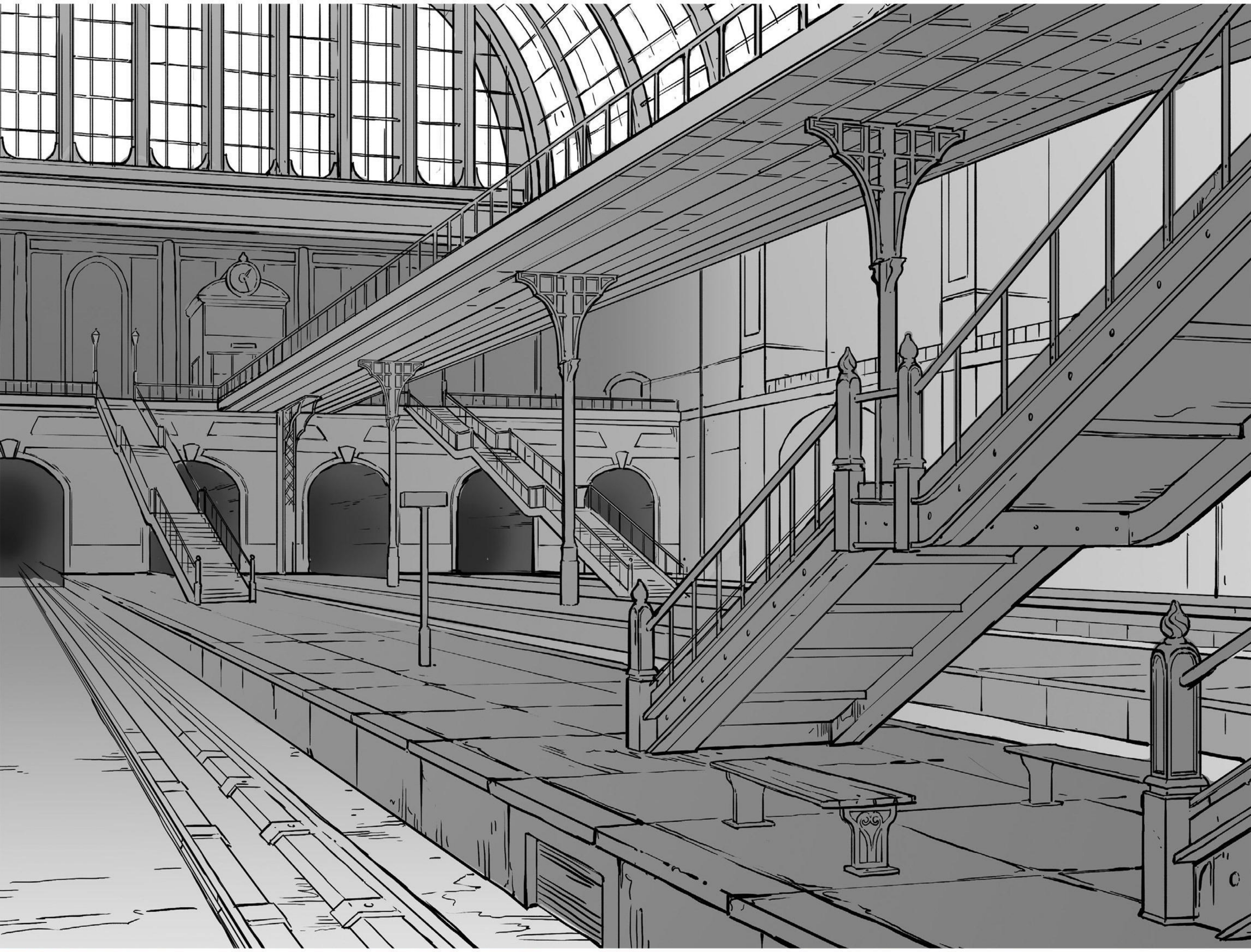


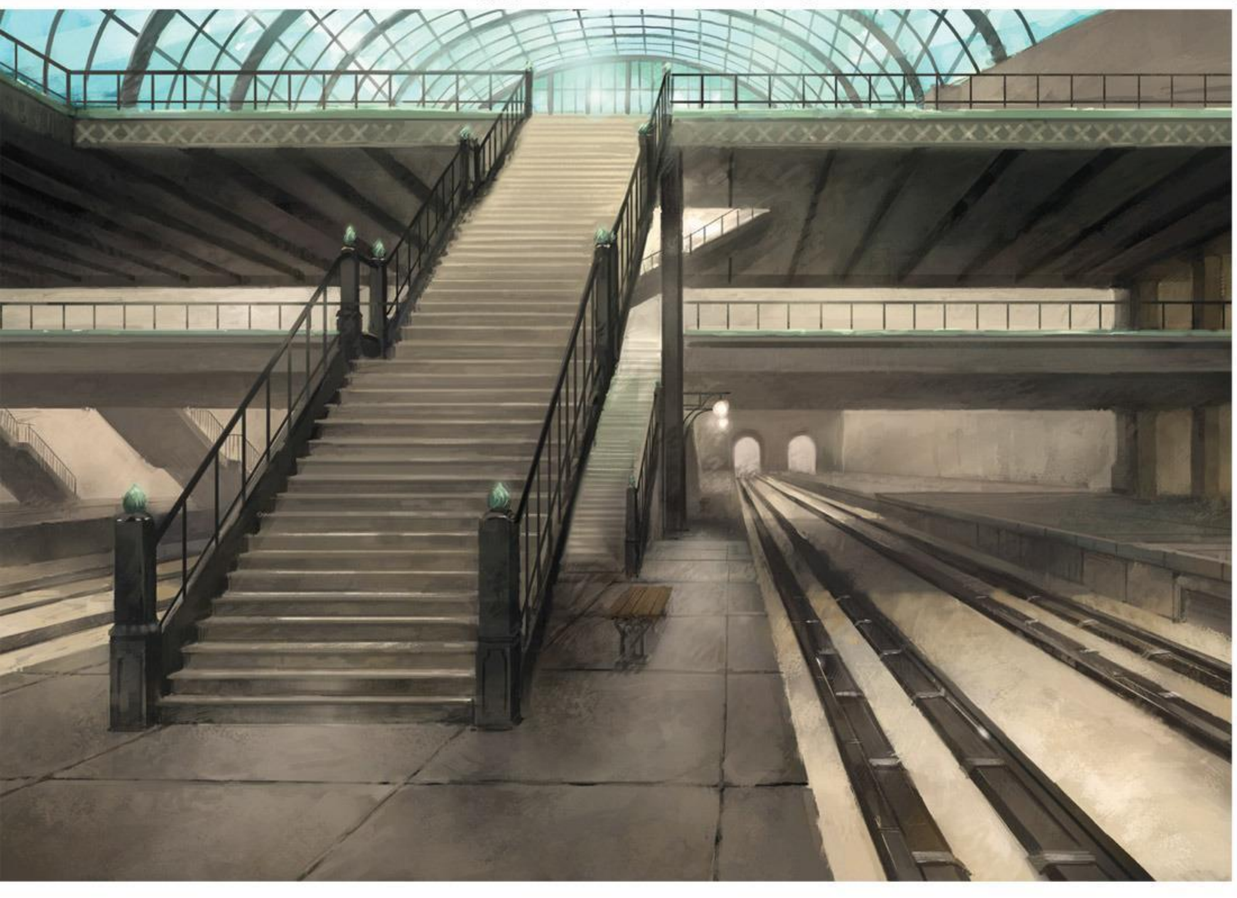


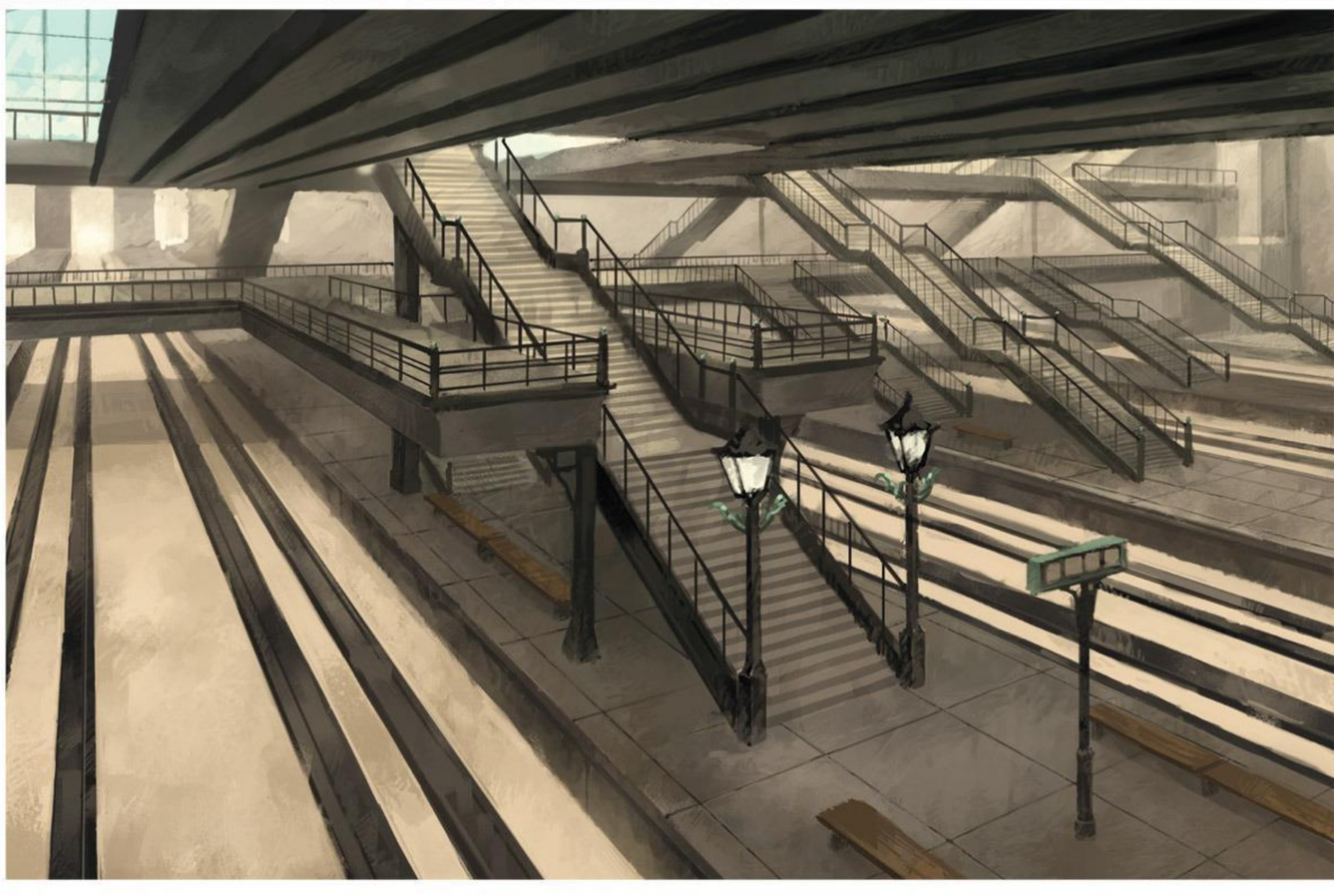
JDS: This fight sits in my top-three list for the most fun I've ever had storyboarding. This showdown was a long time coming and had such a heavy backstory pushing the frenetic pace. What a unique opportunity it was to stage a fight between such high-level Metalbenders. The animation for this sequence from Studio Mir was absolutely breathtaking. Storyboards by Joaquim Dos Santos.

CHAPTER TEN

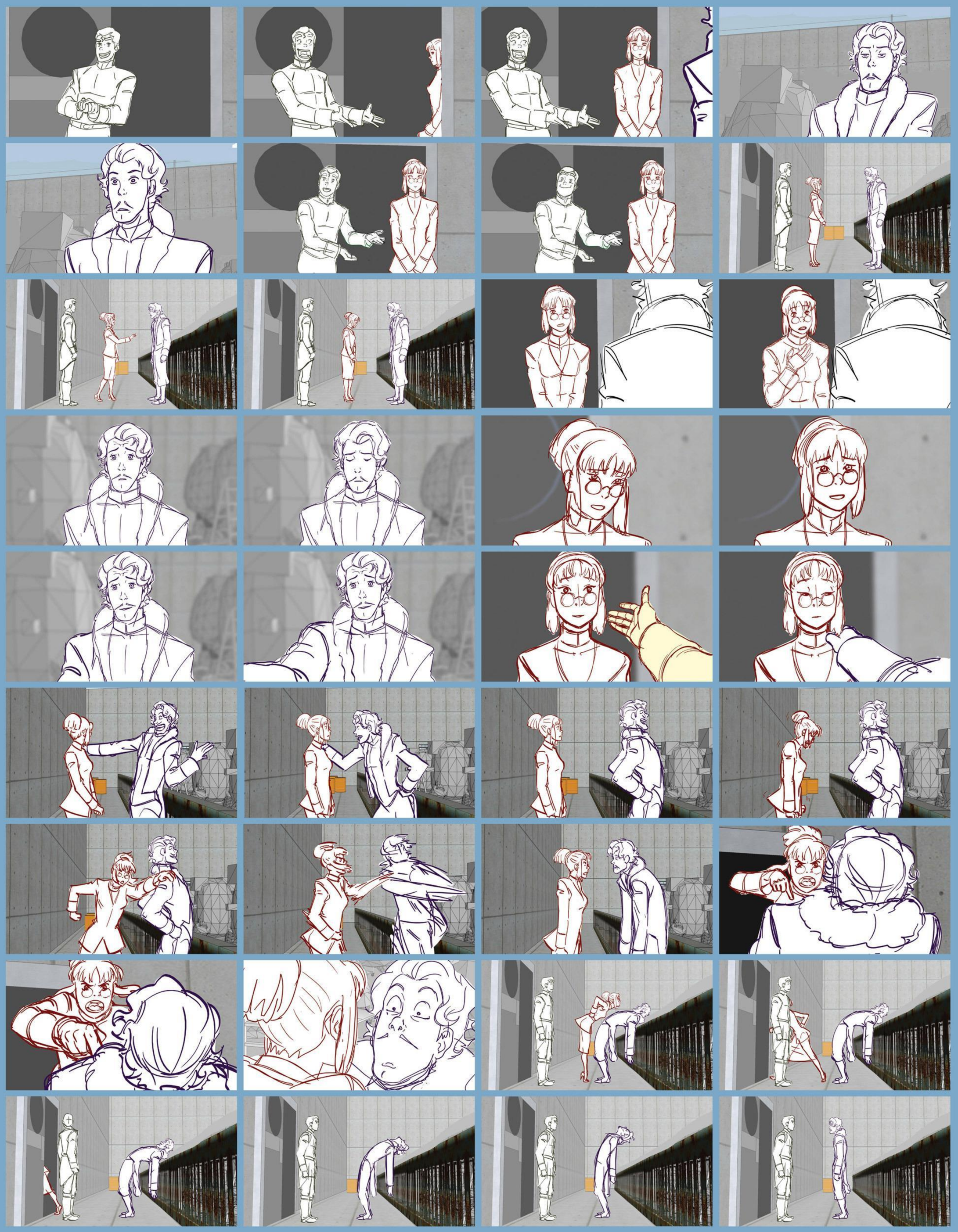
KUVIRA'S GAMBIT







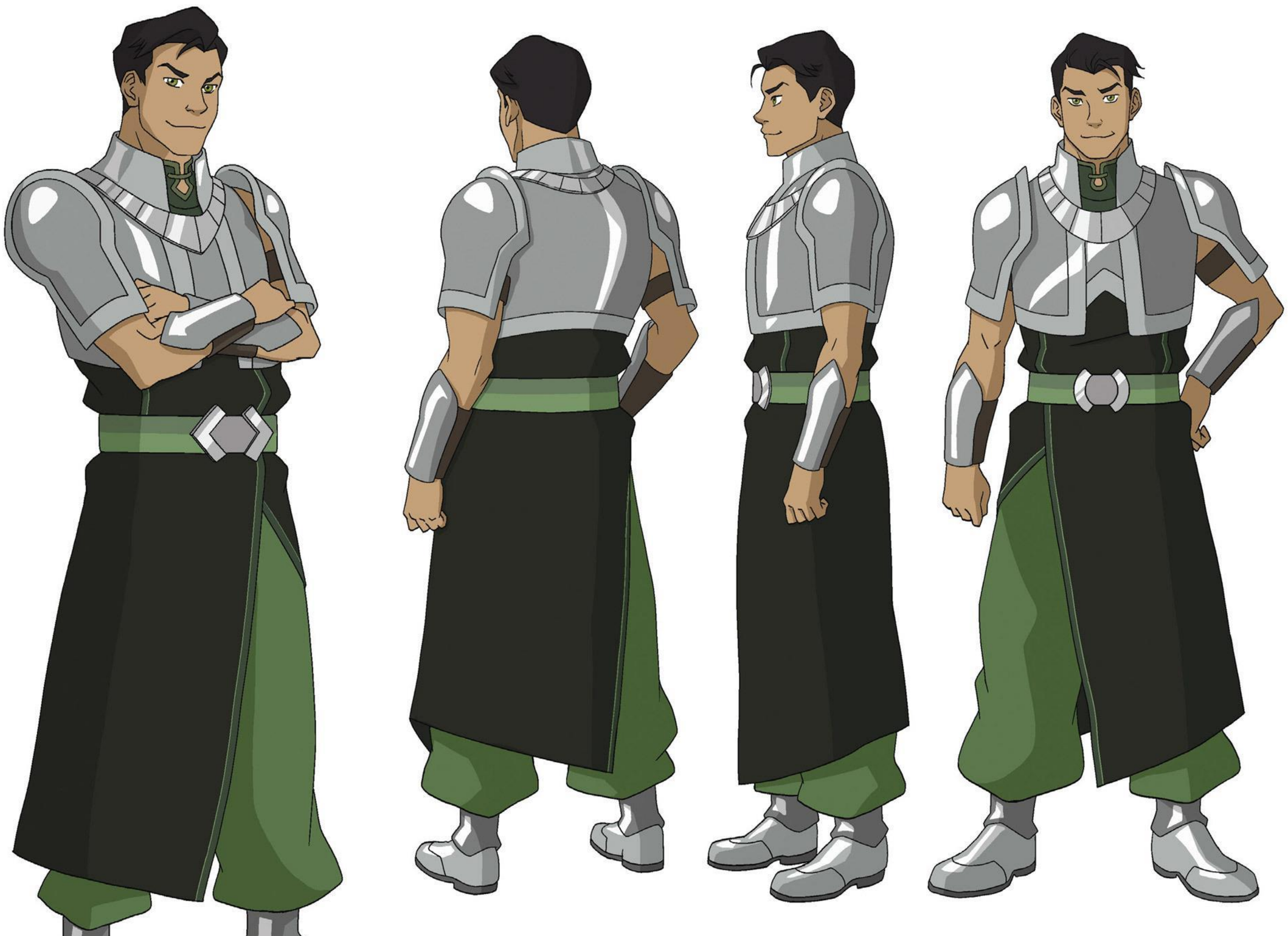
BK: The original version of New York City's Penn Station provided inspiration for the platforms in Republic City's Central Station, which became a recurring location in Book Four. Sadly, the modern Penn Station looks nothing like this. Designs by Christine Bian. Paintings by Lauren Zurcher. *(Preceding spread) Background design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Melissa King.*



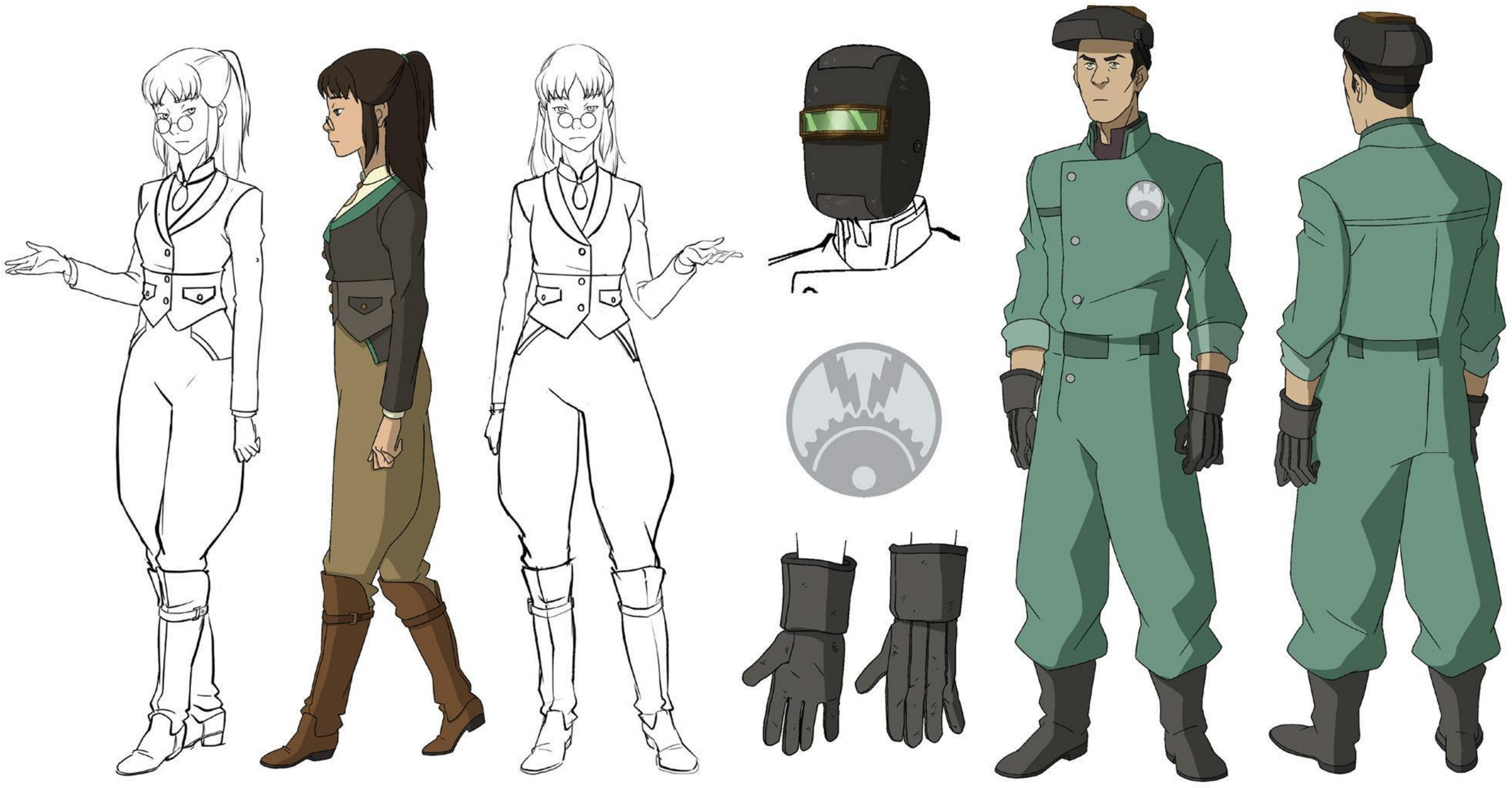
MD: Zhu Li finally stands up to Varrick and tells him to wise up and start treating her better. When Zhu Li first appeared in Book Two, I never imagined she'd become such a pivotal and opinionated character. Natasha Presler-Wicke did a great job with the expressions and posing in this storyboard.



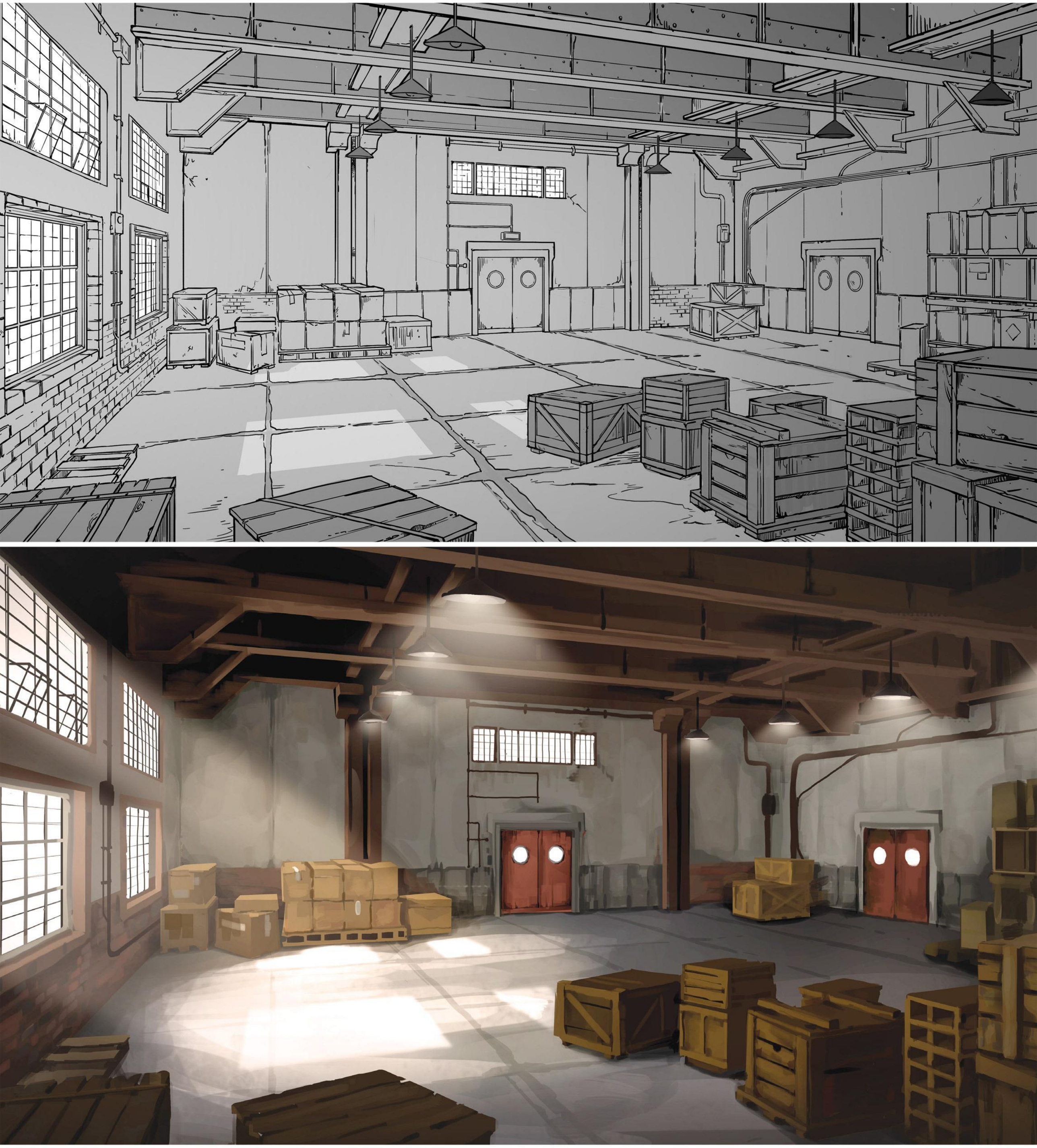
MD: (Top) General Iroh's command tent with beautiful, warm lighting, thanks to Anthony Wu's painting. (Bottom) President Raiko's makeshift command post, in Air Temple Island's tower. Painting by Emily Tetri. Background designs by Christine Bian.



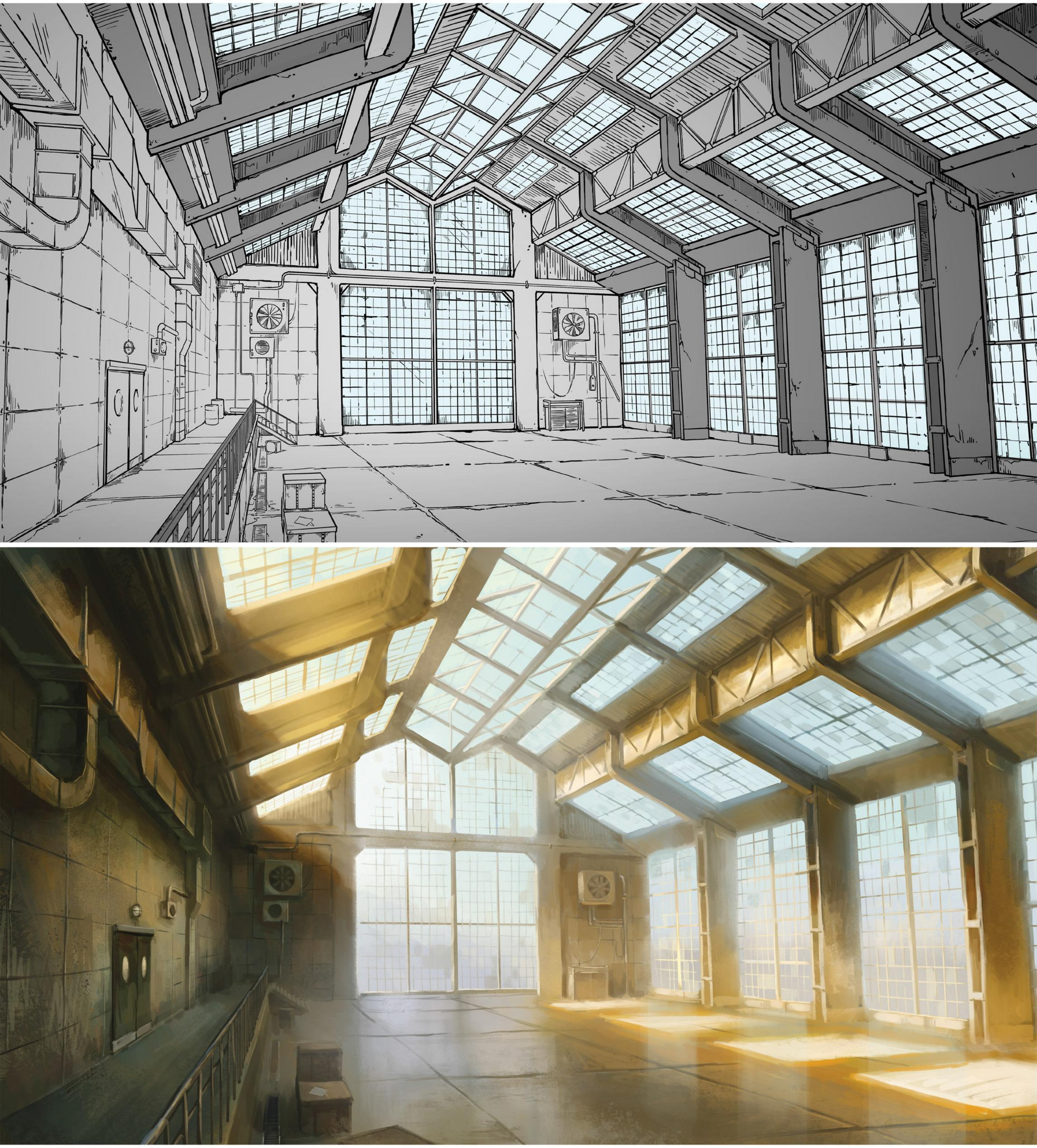
MD: Wing and Wei are ready for battle in armor that is similar to their mother's. Design by Christie Tseng. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



MD: Zhu Li sports a new outfit, inspired by equestrian clothing. Next to her is one of the many Future Industries factory welders. Designs by Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



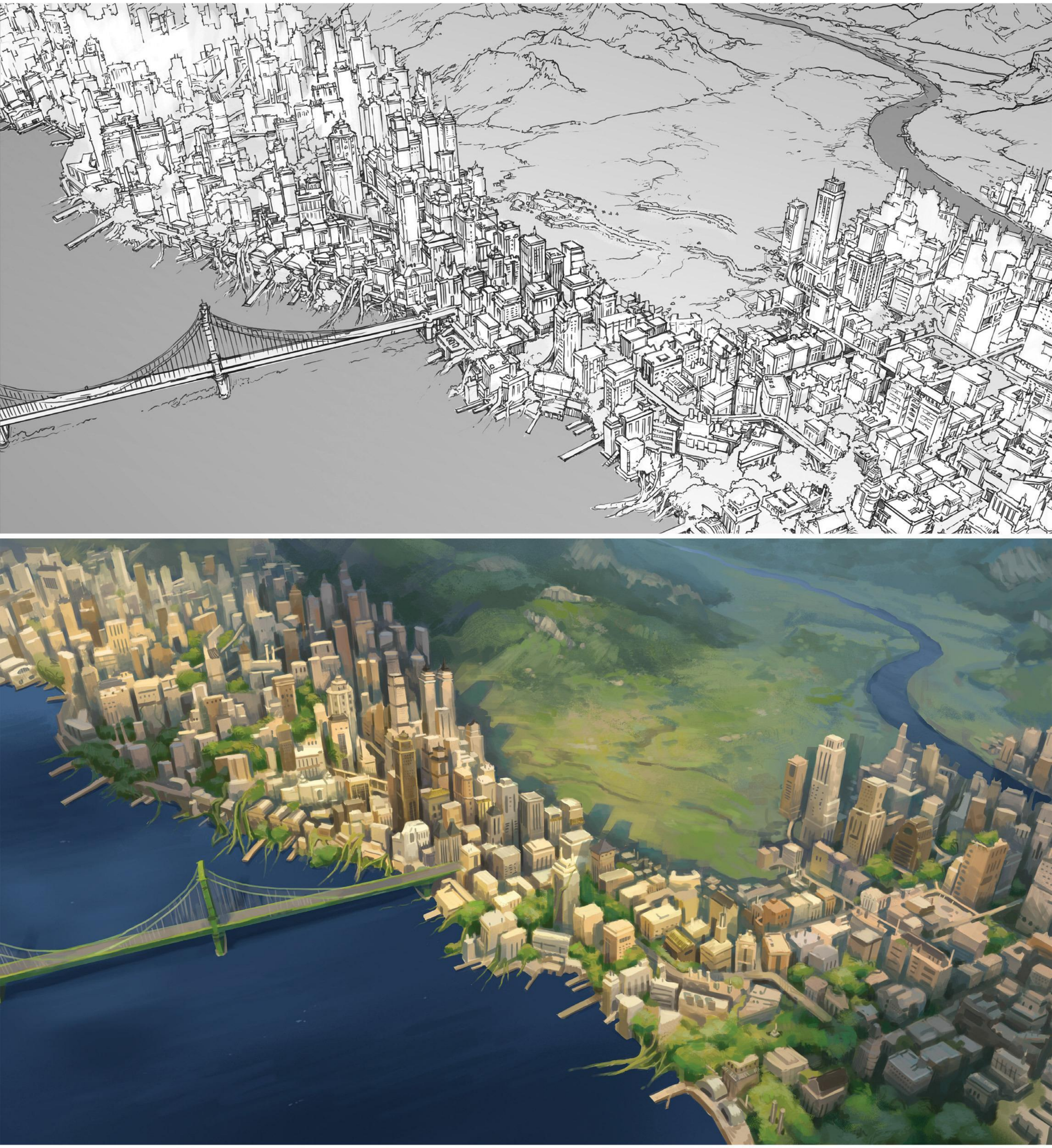
BK: Kristy did some nice freelance for us when we were in the finale crunch. The lighting is strong and dramatic, fitting the interrogation scene nicely. Design by Christine Bian. Painting by Kristy Kay.



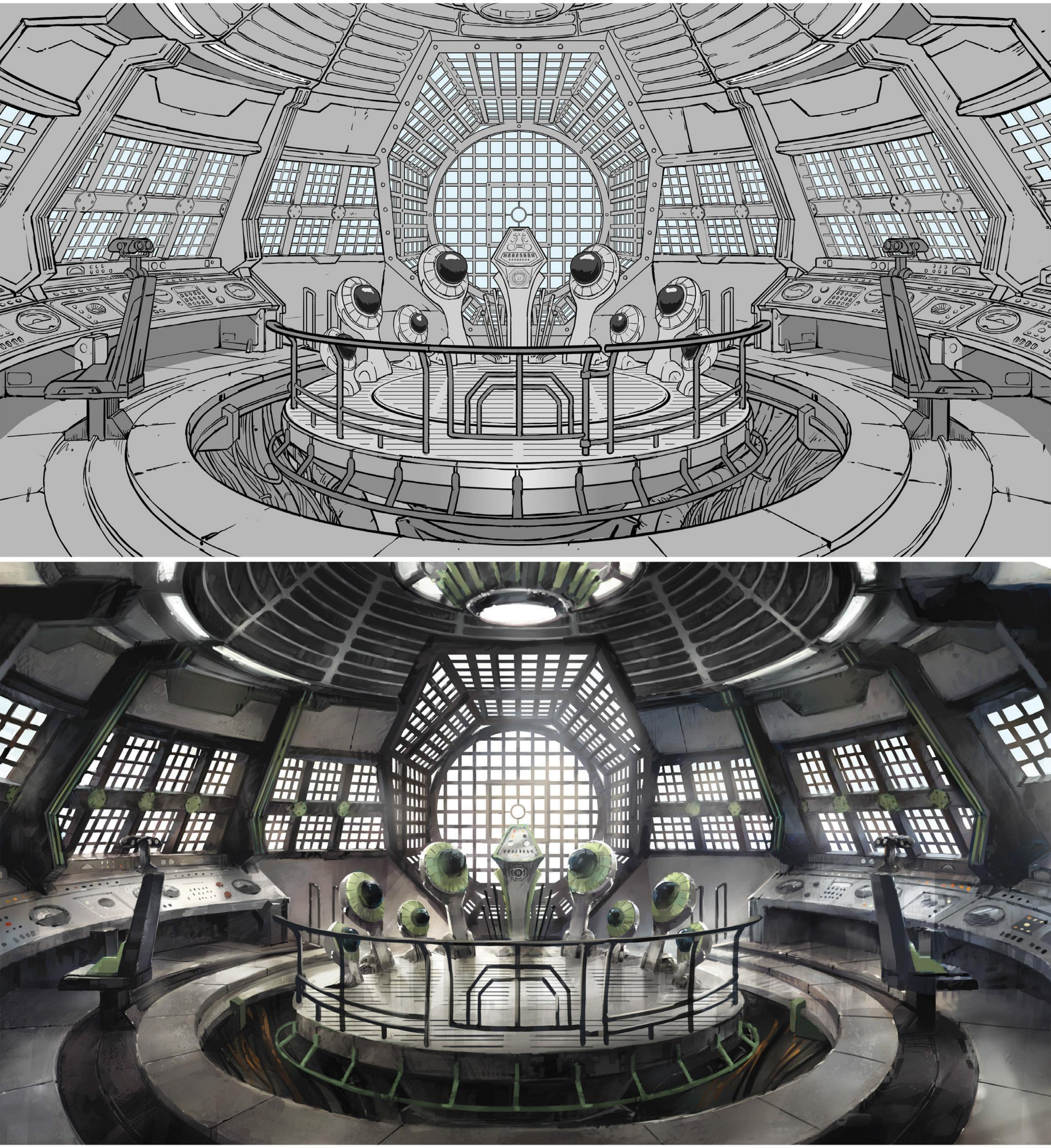
BK: This is one of my favorite paintings of Melissa's. The golden morning light is delicately balanced with the cool reflections of the sky on the floor. The patchwork of windowpanes is a lovely, nuanced touch. Design by Christine Bian. Painting by Melissa King.



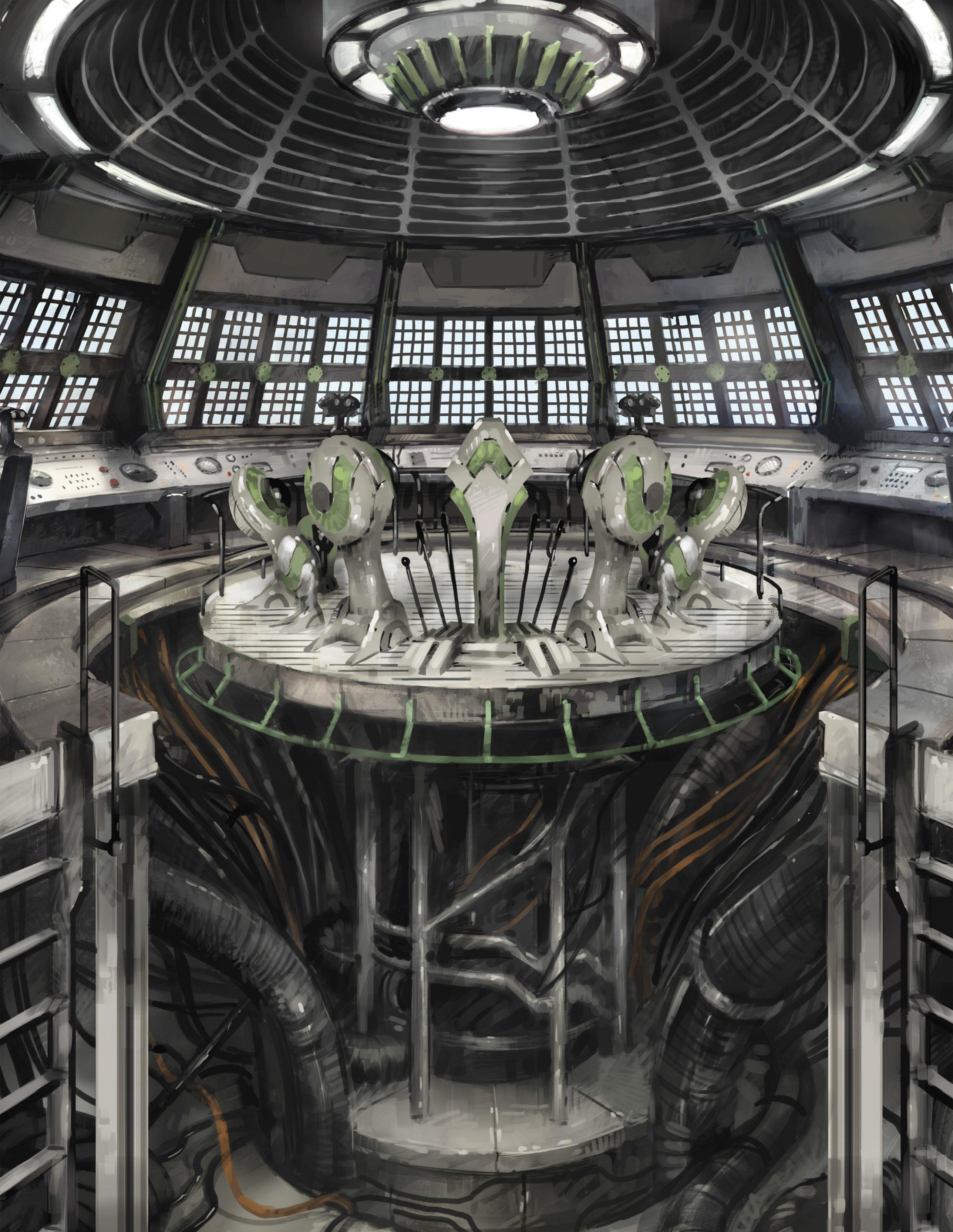
(Top) The southern border of Republic City at sunrise, before the battle. (Bottom) A Republic City street where citizens listen to Prince Wu's passionate speech over the loudspeakers. Background designs by William Nanqing Niu. Top painting by Emily Tetri. Bottom painting by Lauren Zurcher.



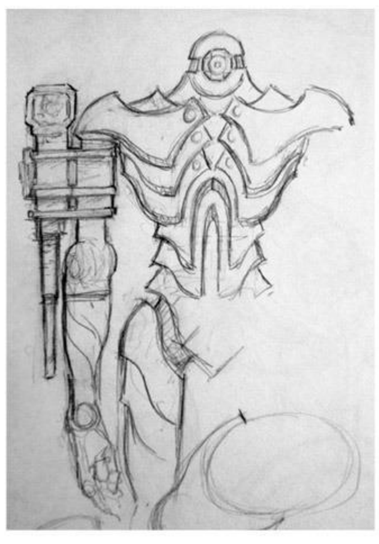
BK: William went into high gear drawing many complex cityscapes for the finale episodes, starting with this one on the top of the page. He posted the following on his blog about this period: "Especially towards the end of production, everyone had so much work to do with so little energy left, that the only thing that kept us going was the love we have for the show and support from each other." Melissa expertly rendered his drawing with this stunning painting on the bottom. Design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Melissa King.



BK: I did a loose concept of the giant mech command center so the storyboard artists had something to work with. Christine drew a lot of amazing backgrounds throughout Book Four, but I think the two final views of this location, shown in this spread, are her crowning achievements on the production. Those ellipses are no joke! She and I redrew that octagonal window cutting into the conical room over and over again. I think we finally got it in the end. Lauren's paintings are no joke either! I'm so proud of this design team. Designs by Christine Bian. Paintings by Lauren Zurcher.





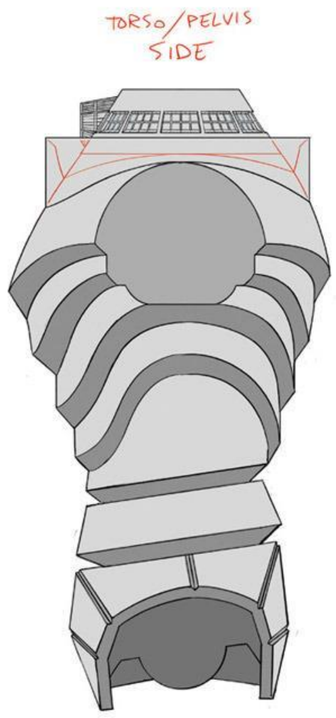


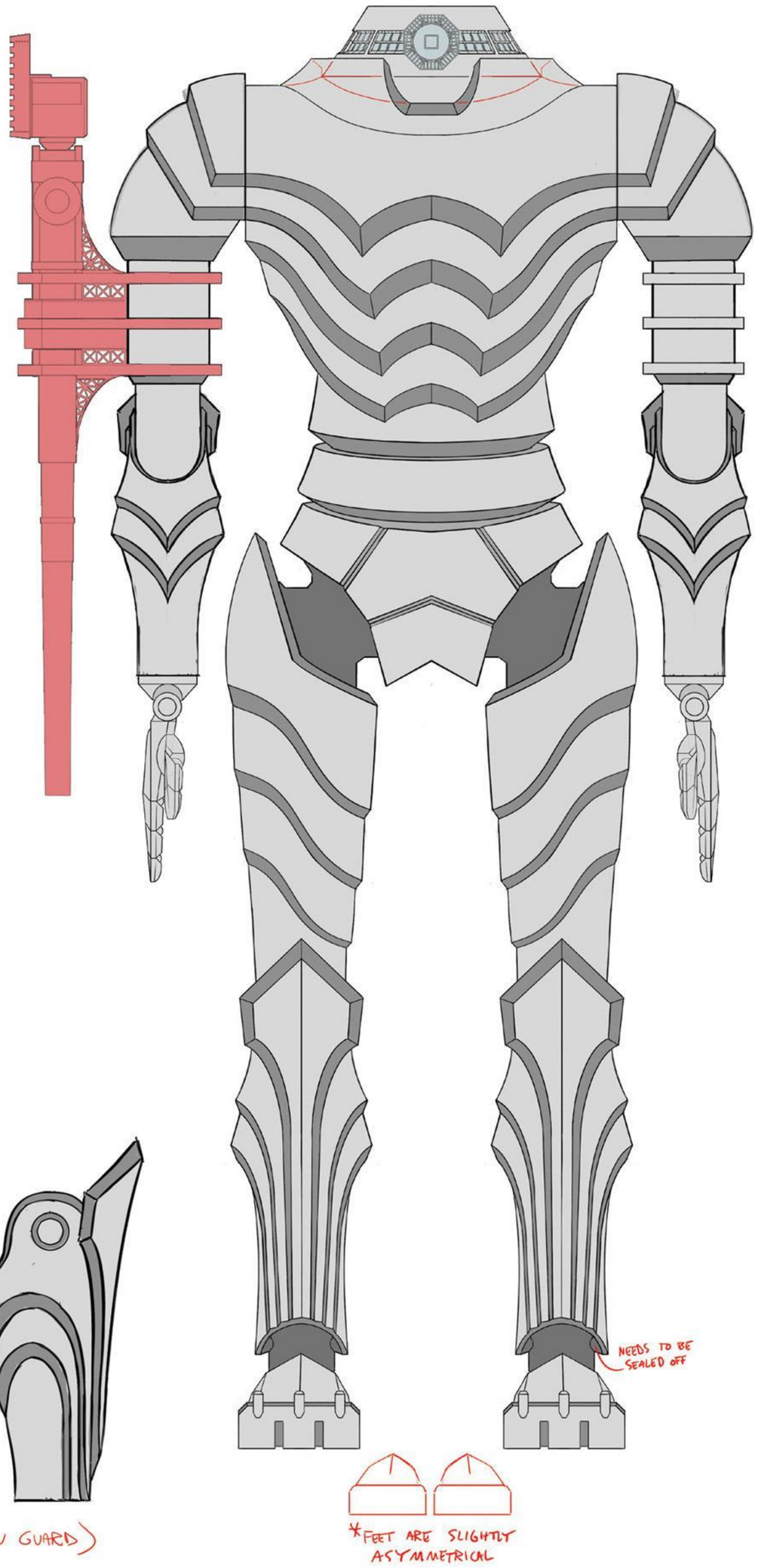


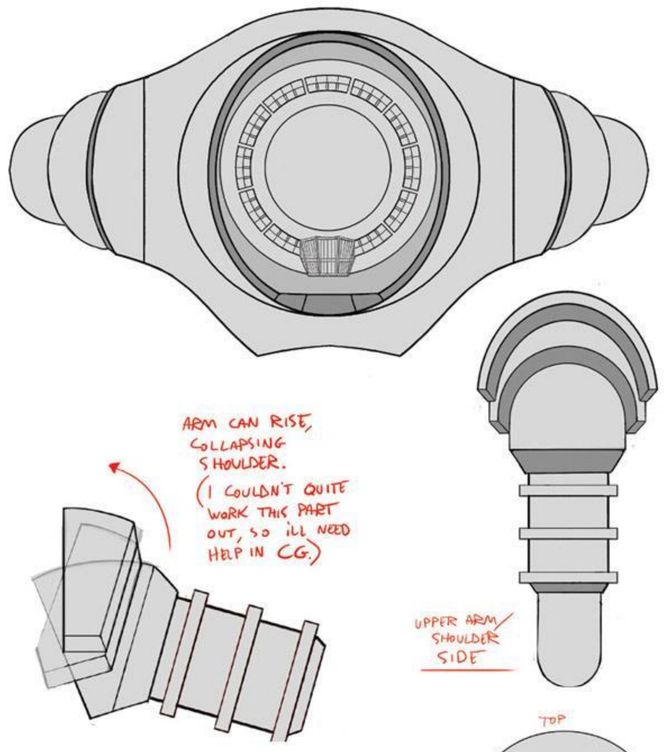


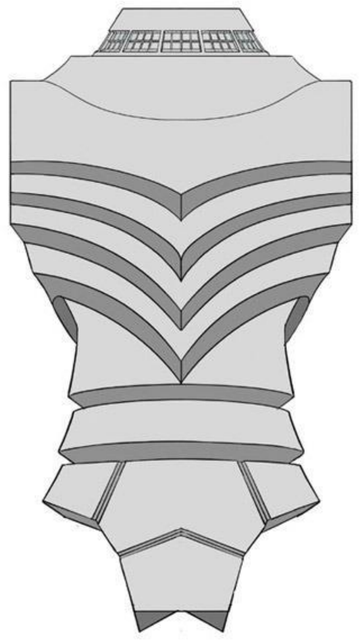
BK: I handled the design of the giant mech from concept to final design, before passing it off to our awesome in-house 3-D modeling team. In the upper left of the page you can see my first concept painting, showing a much squatter silhouette. I was trying to link the look of the giant mech to the smaller, one-person mecha suits, as you can see with the chunky lower legs. The other idea I was trying to weave in there was the dismantled Zaofu dome motif, since that is where Kuvira sourced this massive amount of platinum. You can see evidence of that on the side view in the middle of the page. Next to that is a doodle I did during a meeting where I was exploring a more elongated, skeletal look. I wanted this thing to be creepy, even when it was just standing there.

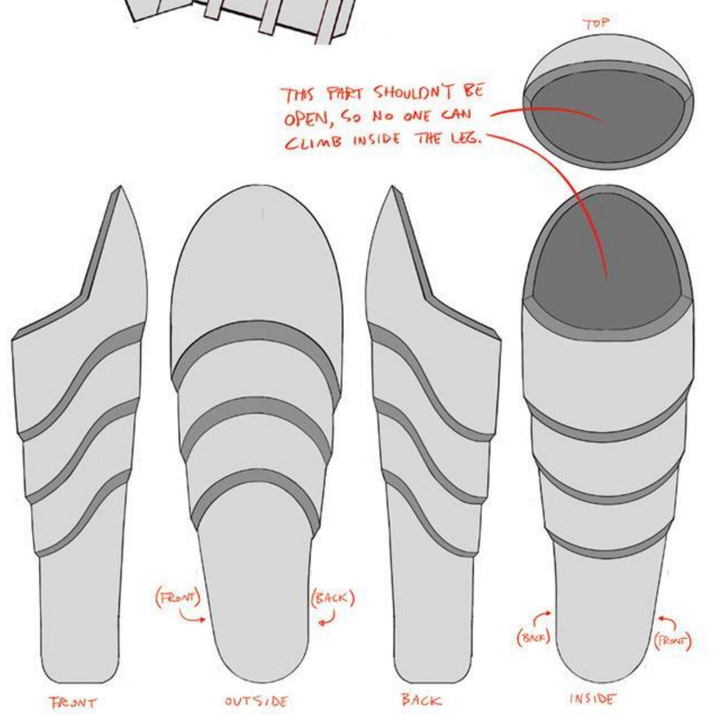
I took inspiration from the robots in those Fleischer cartoons from the forties, Miyazaki's iconic robot from Castle in the Sky, *and Brad Bird's* Iron Giant. *I sent Joaquim the concept painting of this gaunt art deco version on the lower left of the page, and he did the revision pass next to it, where he truncated the head so it was flat on top. I liked how severe and tank-like that looked, so I worked that into the final painted version, the large image on this page. I then did clean-line orthographic views, on the opposite page, for the 3-D modelers. Giant mech concepts and designs by Bryan Konietzko.*

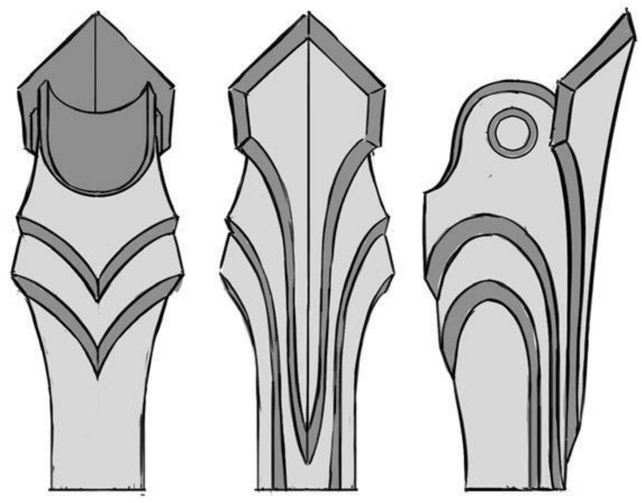

TORSO/PELVIS
SIDE



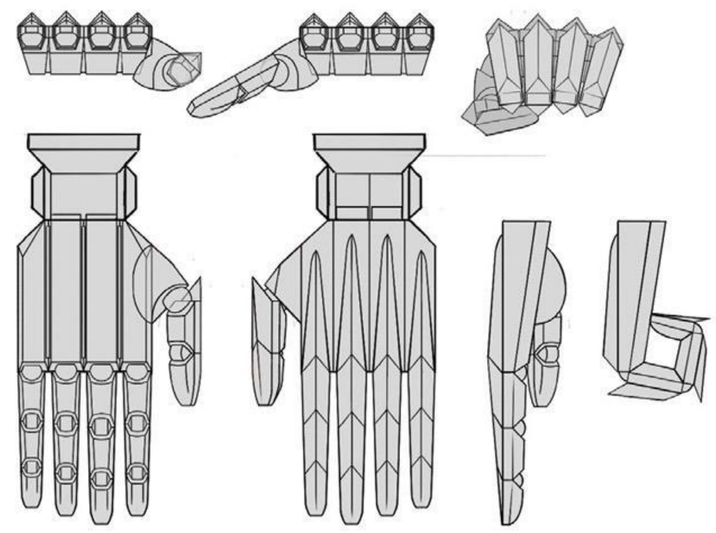

ARM CAN RISE, COLLAPSING SHOULDER.
(I COULDN'T QUITE WORK THIS PART OUT, SO ILL NEED HELP IN CG.)
UPPER ARM SHOULDER SIDE

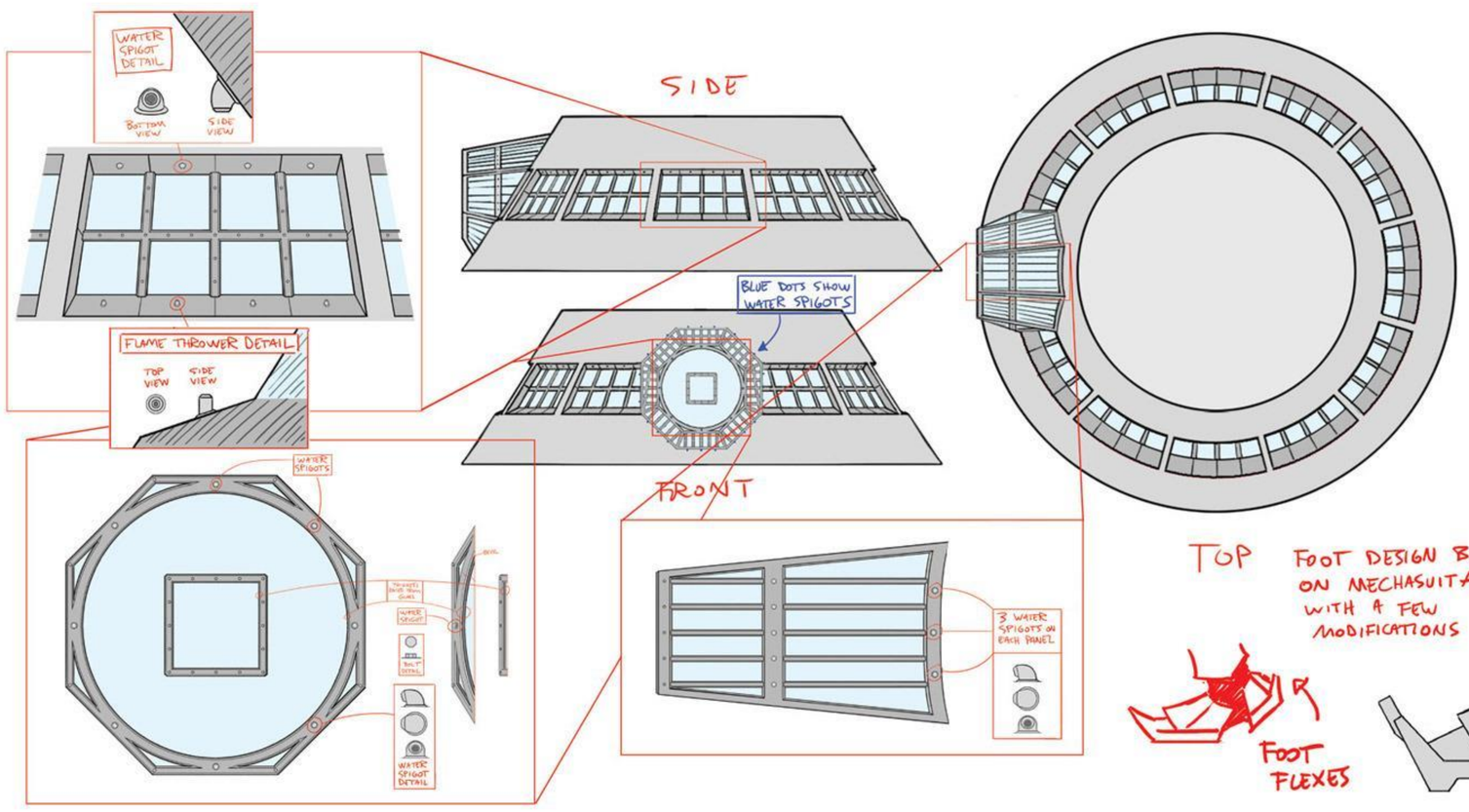

TORSO/PELVIS
BACK

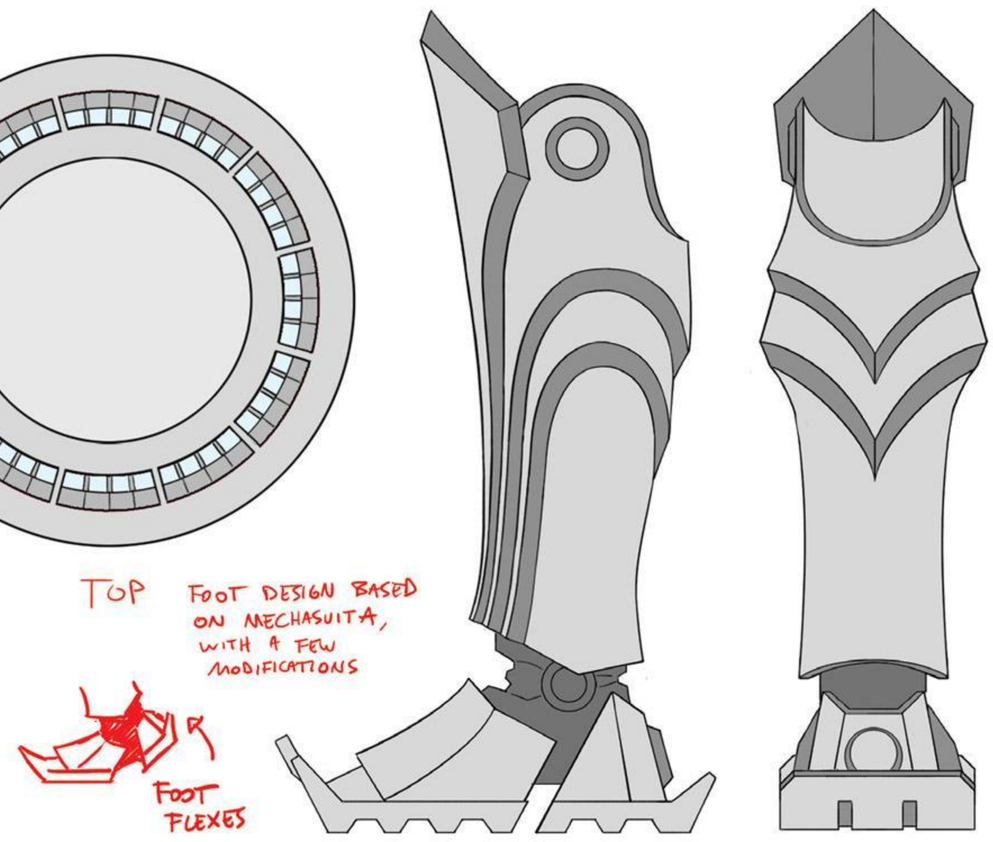

TOP
THIS PART SHOULDN'T BE OPEN, SO NO ONE CAN CLIMB INSIDE THE LEG.
(FRONT)
(BACK)
(BACK)
(FRONT)
FRONT
OUTSIDE
BACK
INSIDE
UPPER LEG


LEFT FOREARM (W/ELBOW GUARD)

NEEDS TO BE SEALED OFF
*FEET ARE SLIGHTLY ASYMMETRICAL




WATER SPIGOT DETAIL
BOTTOM VIEW
SIDE VIEW
FLAME THROWER DETAIL
TOP VIEW
SIDE VIEW
SIDE
BLUE DOTS SHOW WATER SPIGOTS
FRONT
WATER SPIGOTS
3 WATER SPIGOTS ON EACH PANEL
WATER SPIGOT DETAIL


TOP
FOOT DESIGN BASED ON MECHASUITA, WITH A FEW MODIFICATIONS
FOOT FLEXES



CHAPTER ELEVEN

DAY OF THE COLOSSUS

Asami, Hiroshi, Varrick, and Zhu Li in their flight suits. Asami and Varrick designs by Christie Tseng. Hiroshi and Zhu Li designs by Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. *(Preceding spread) Design by Christine Bian. Painting by Melissa King.*



MD: This is what was left of the Future Industries factory after Kuvira's spirit ray destroyed it. It's amazing anyone survived! Background by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Melissa King.



MD: The cityscapes and sense of scale in the final two episodes are really incredible, thanks in part to backgrounds like the top one, which shows the tower atop the Future Industries skyscraper. Background design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Emily Tetri. (Bottom) Future Industries testing area. Background design by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Painting by Melissa King.



BK: These intricate cityscapes took a long time to paint, and there were piles of them to do, so we got some extra freelance help from Anthony, who did a great job picking up the style of the show. Designs by William Nanqing Niu. Paintings by Anthony Wu. (Opposite) Designs by Christine Bian. Paintings by Melissa King.

女士們，我們企業需要你！
你有一份刺激又高薪的職位嗎
來我們的招聘辦事處安排面試吧
我們提供專家和初級職位
不要遲疑　快掌握你的未來







Bumi and Meelo with paint-balloon bandoleers by Christie Tseng. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.

(Preceding spread) MD: These two incredibly detailed city backgrounds by William Nanqing Niu were drawn near the end of an already-grueling production, making their level of technical precision all the more impressive. Paintings by Melissa King.

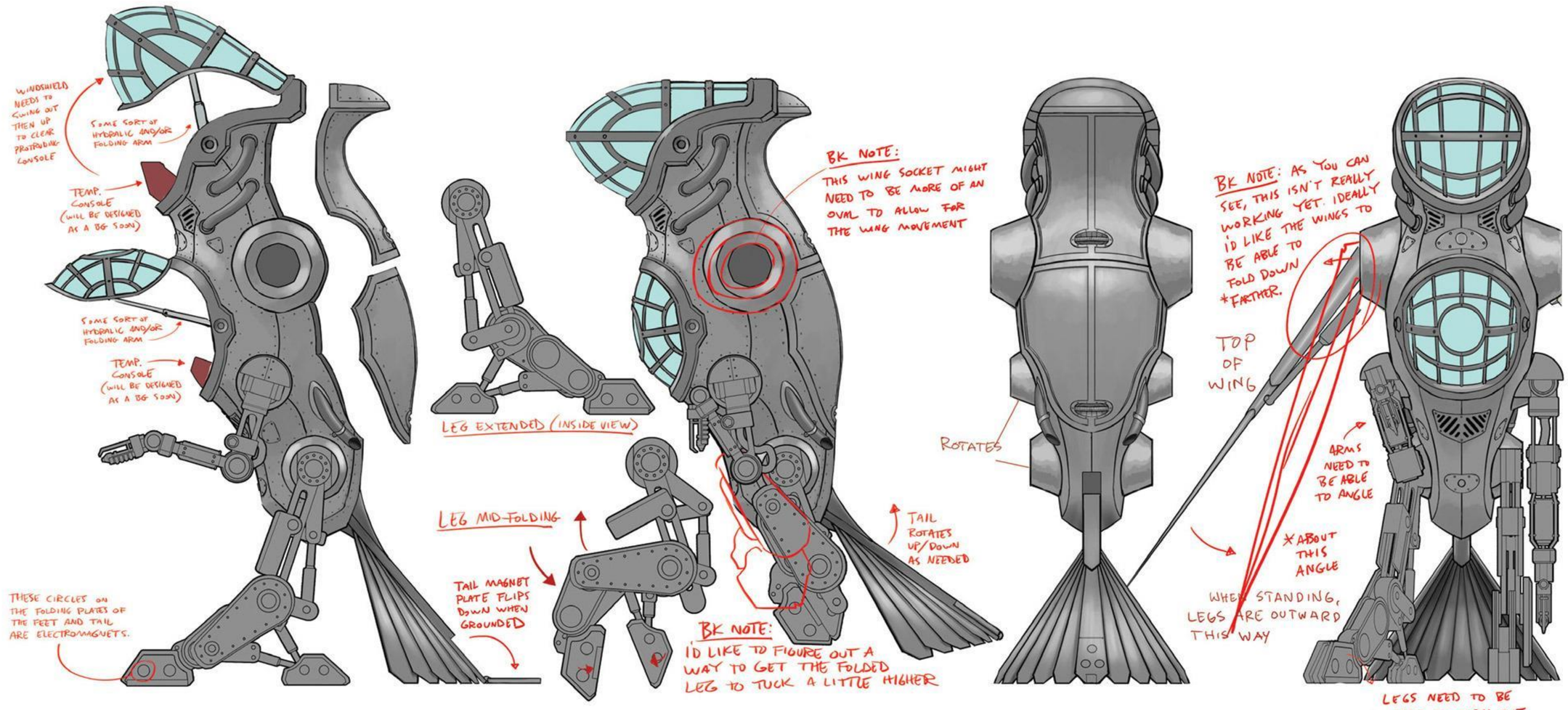


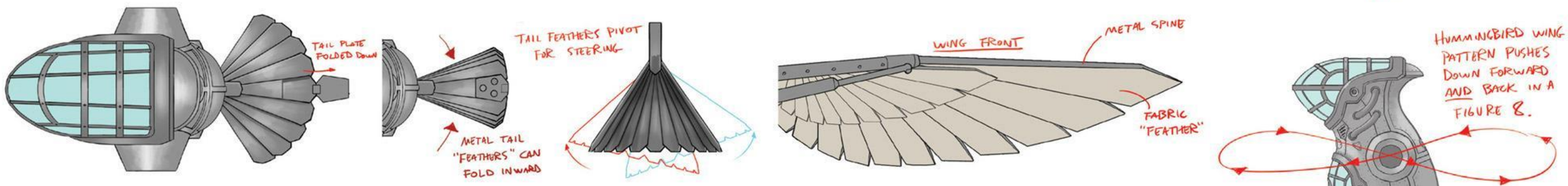


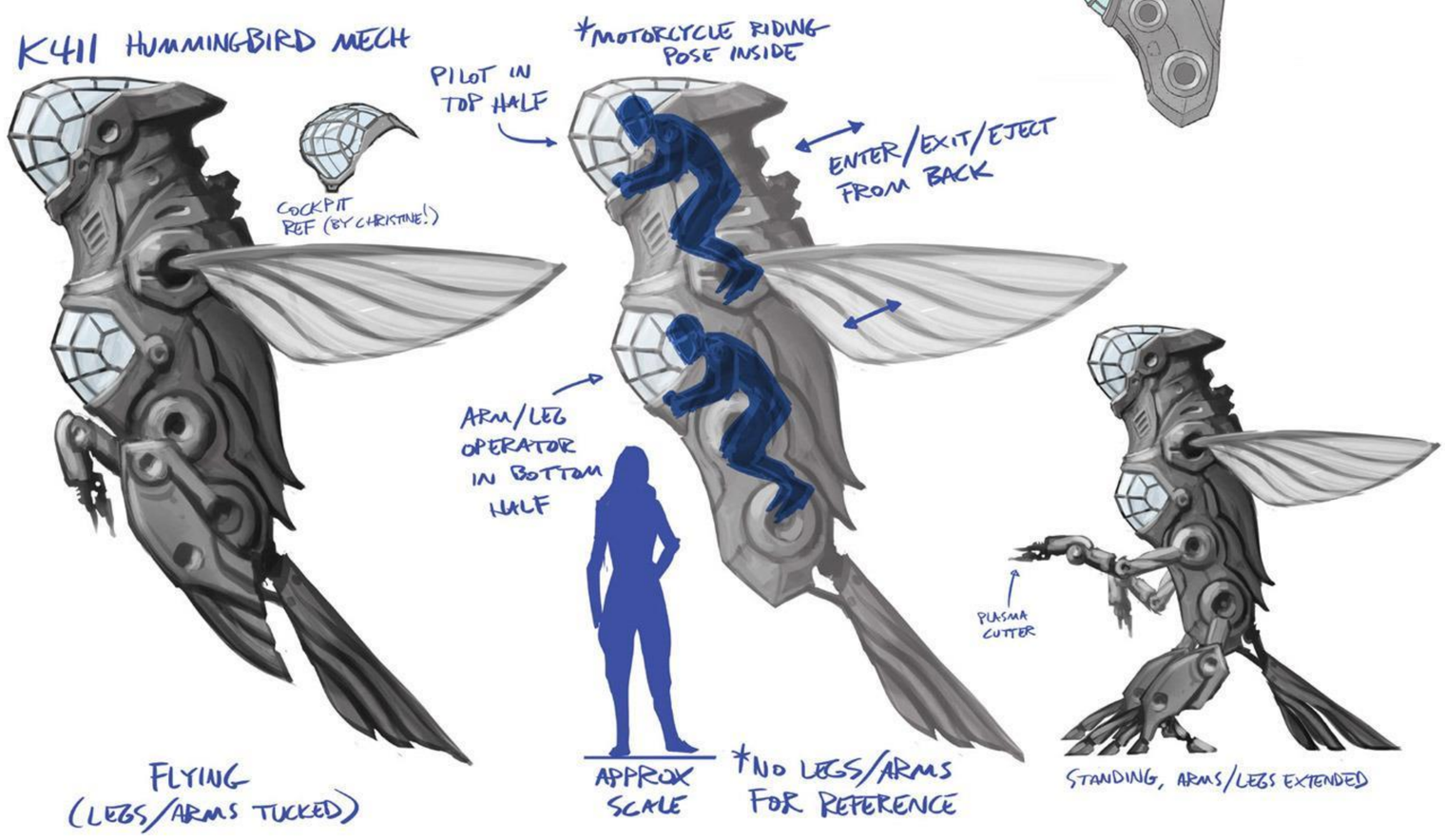


Train conductor design and expressions by Christie Tseng. Evacuee design and expressions by Angela Song Mueller. Cleanup by Steve Hirt. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf. (Opposite) Kuvira fires on the Airbenders. Storyboard by Steve Ahn.


GOAL
JINPEI
KAI
RYU
IKKI
BUMI

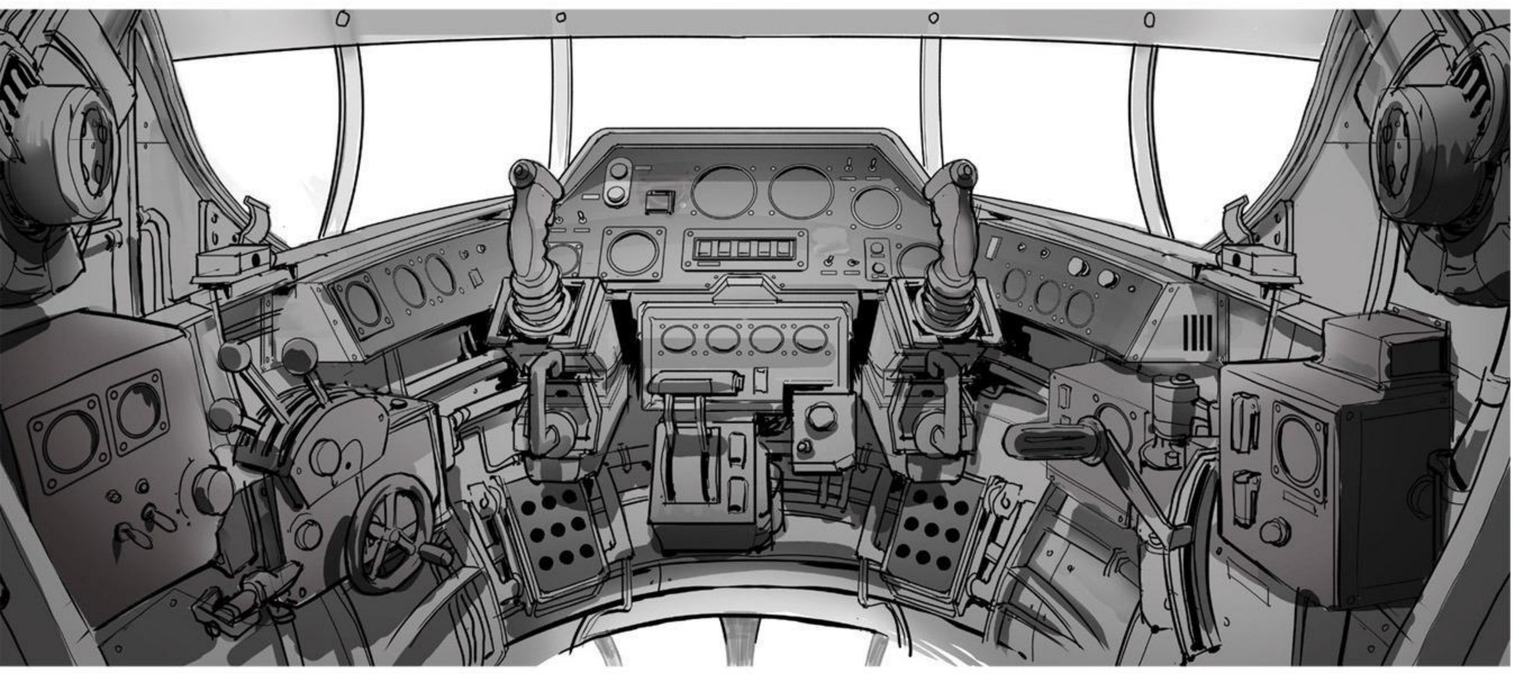


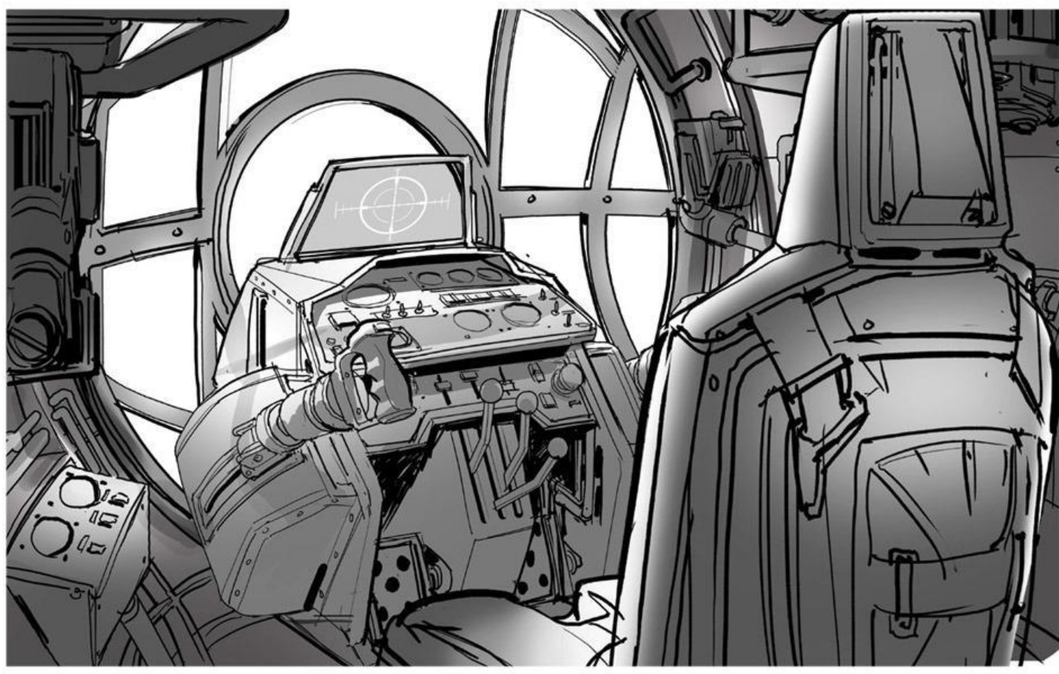




BK: Early in the development of Book Four, I pitched the idea of Asami building two-person winged mecha suits to Mike, Tim, and Josh. The concept became that these were machines developed for Future Industries' construction projects, not for military application. I wasn't sure exactly how we could make these flying suits work with two people in them, but then I saw a nature documentary about hummingbirds. Some engineers developed a miniature robotic hummingbird that mimicked the unique motion of the birds' wings, which allows them to fly like no other creature on Earth.

Hummingbird mechs might not be a typical idea of what is "cool," but maybe that's what is cool about them to me. I did the painted concepts in the middle of the page first, and then Joseph and I split up the task of doing the clean-line orthos. I handled the body and wings, while he tackled the intricate legs and arms. Designs by Bryan Konietzko and Joseph Aguilar. Concepts by Bryan Konietzko. Cockpit interior designs by Joseph Aguilar.





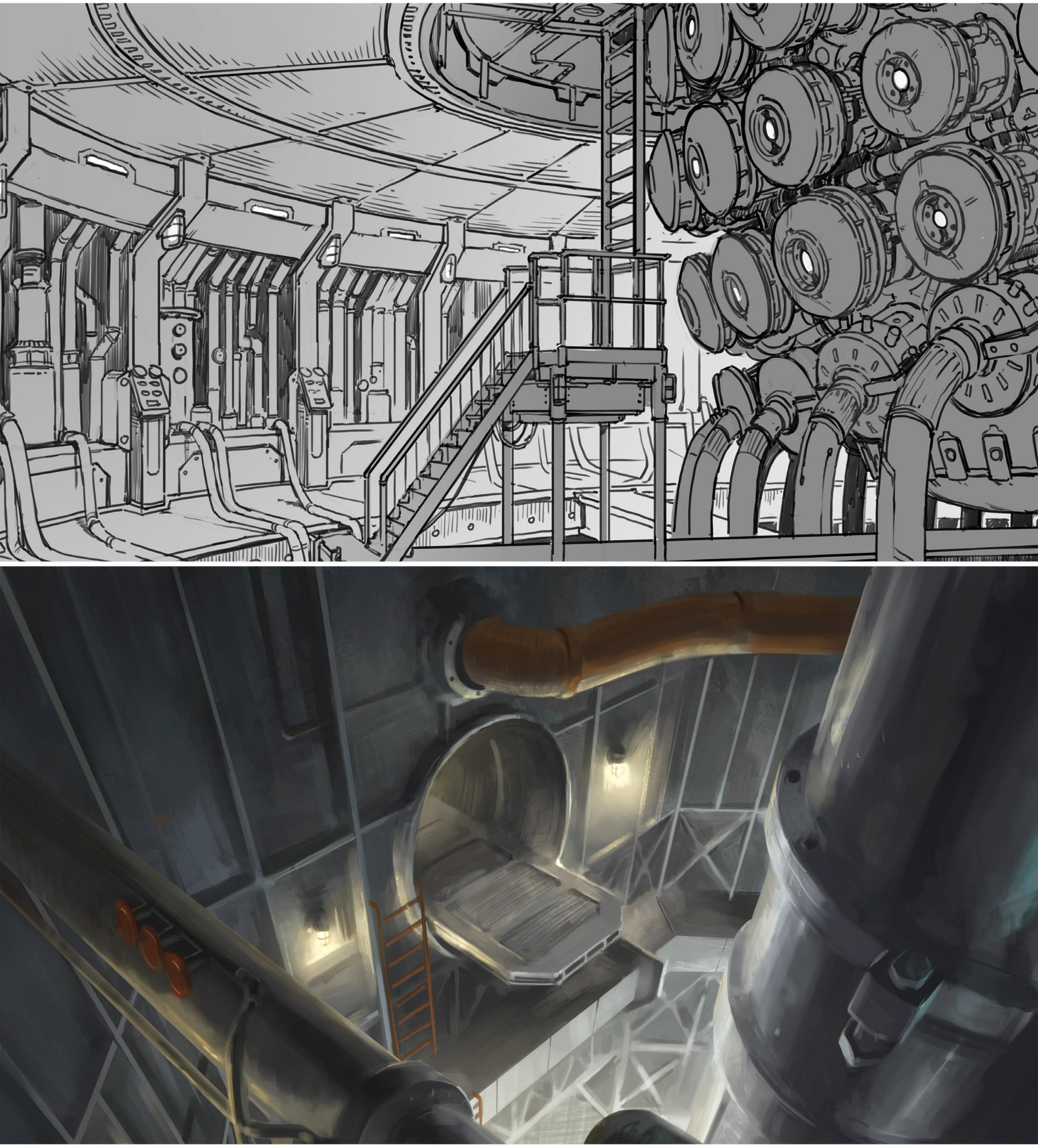
(Opposite) JDS: I can remember sitting with our board crew in a pitch as we all wondered how to stage a sequence in which Korra needed to turn and see a canal behind her so she could use the water to stop the giant mech's progression through Republic City. We all sketched ideas, wondering how to show a canal from the POV of someone at street level. And then it hit us at once: Put Korra on a hill! Storyboard by William Ruzicka.


CAM SHAKE
CAM SHAKE
CAM SHAKE
CAM SHAKE
CAM SHAKE
CAM SHAKE

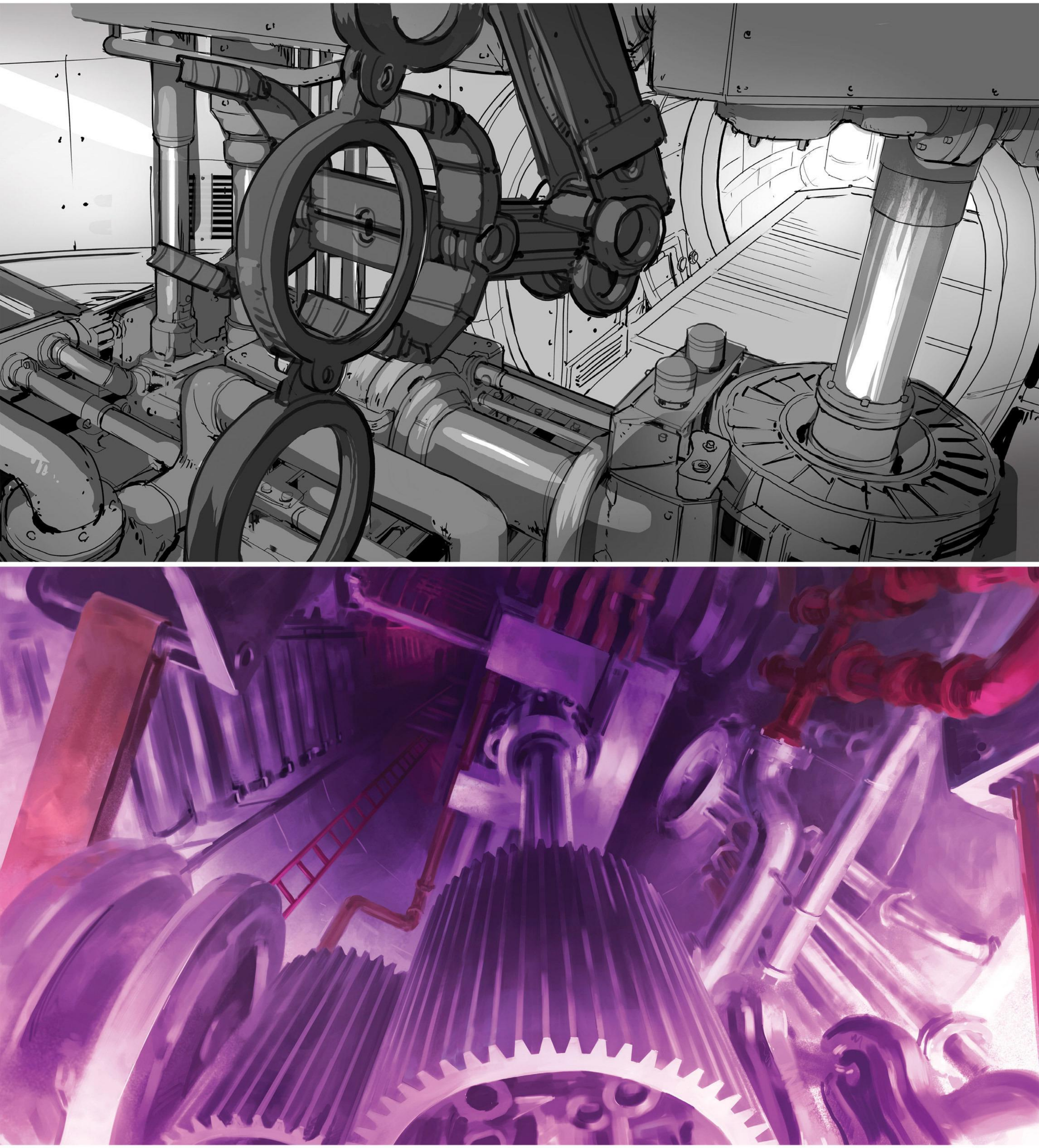


CHAPTER TWELVE

THE LAST STAND



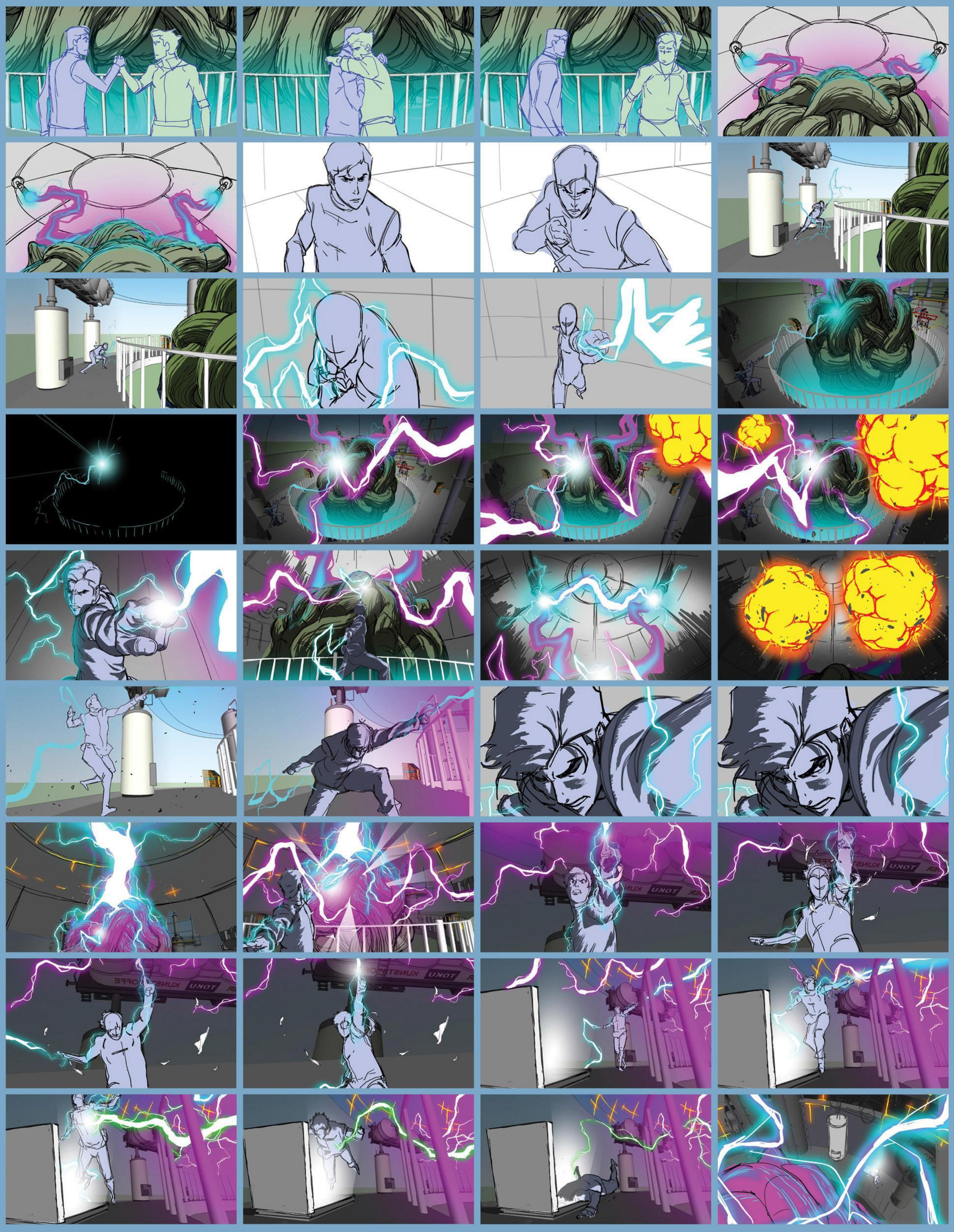
MD: The interior of the giant mech was composed of numerous locations which all had to feel like they would believably fit inside its body, arms, and legs. (Top) Area just outside and below the main engine room. Background design by William Nanqing Niu. (Bottom) Inside the mech's shoulder. Background design by Christine Bian. Painting by Emily Tetri.



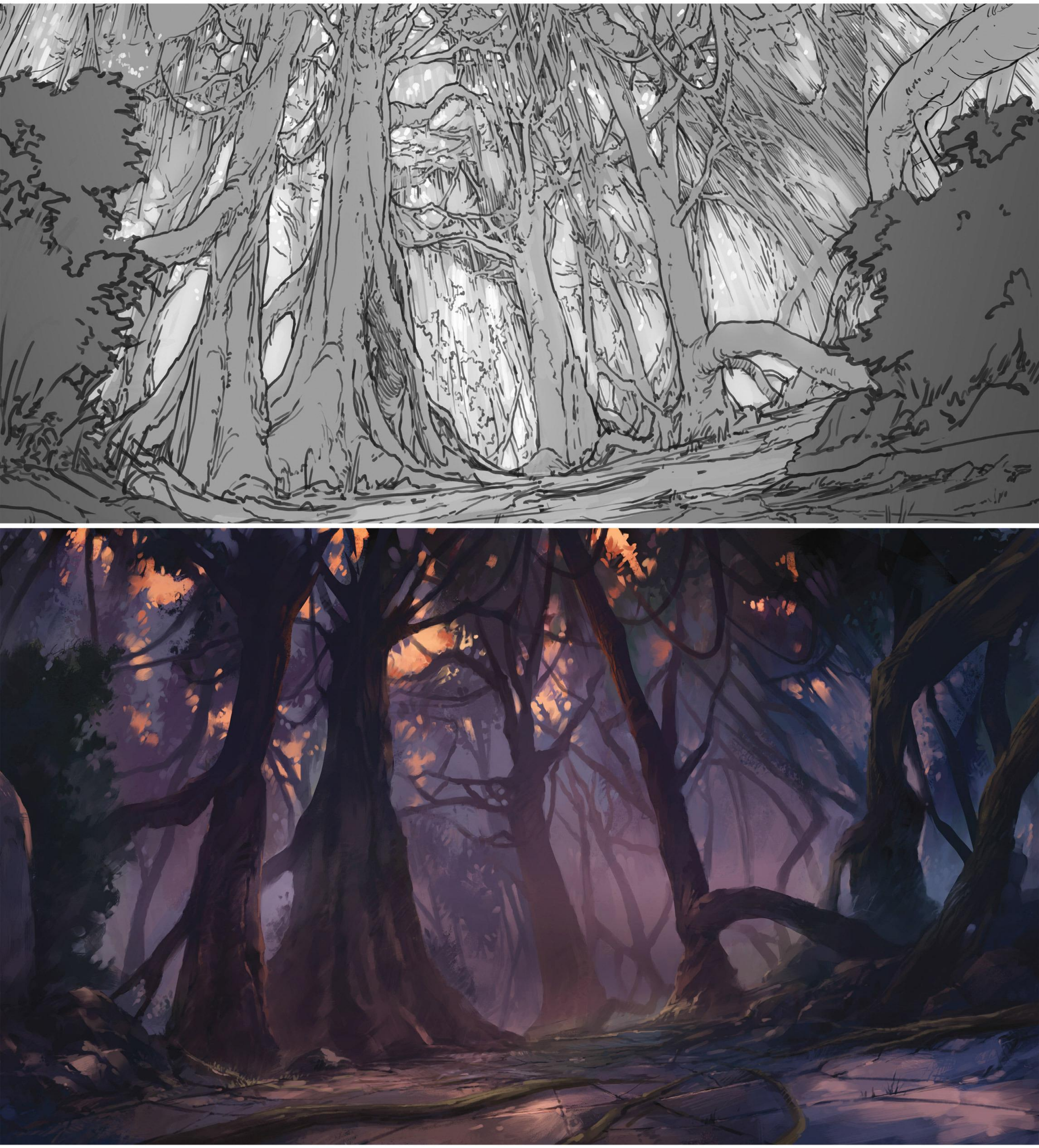
The spirit cannon loading mechanism inside the giant's arm. Background designs by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Emily Tetri. *(Preceding spread) Republic City's new spirit portal. Background design by Bryan Konietzko. Painting by Melissa King and Frederic Stewart.*



BK: Round rooms are always tough to design and storyboard. The giant mech's engine room, which contains the glowing spirit vine burl, the "heart" of the colossus, was no exception. I must have made William redraw the honeycomb dome about five times. Design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.



JDS: Mako sacrifices himself in an attempt to overload the heart of the giant mech. Hopefully this selfless act helped smooth over some of the ill will directed his way by the Korra fandom in response to his relationship skills. Storyboard by Joaquim Dos Santos.

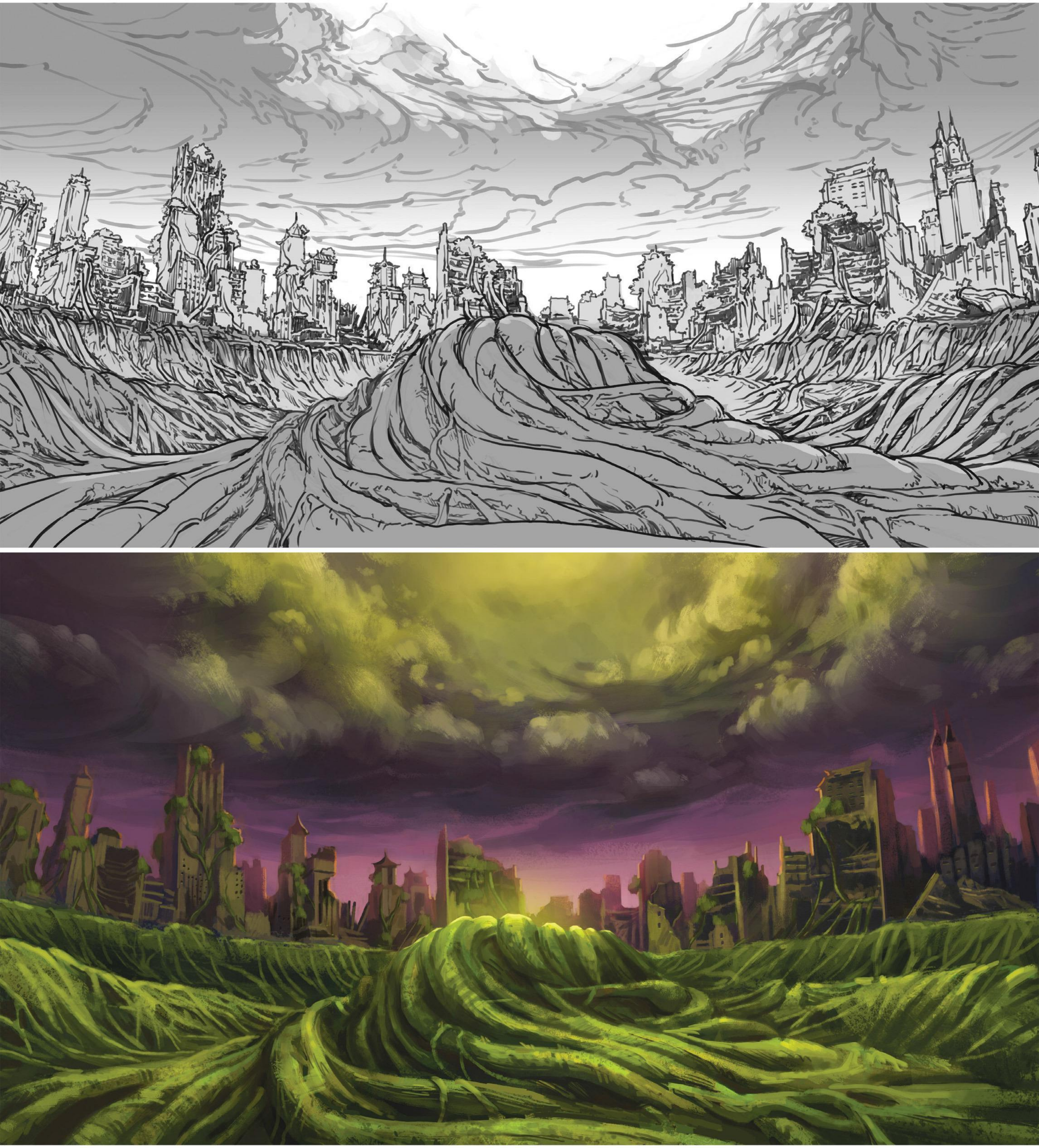


BK: I really love the enchanting "golden hour" lighting Lauren put into these spirit wild backgrounds of William's. It made for a very evocative, mysterious setting for Korra and Kuvira's final showdown. Design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.

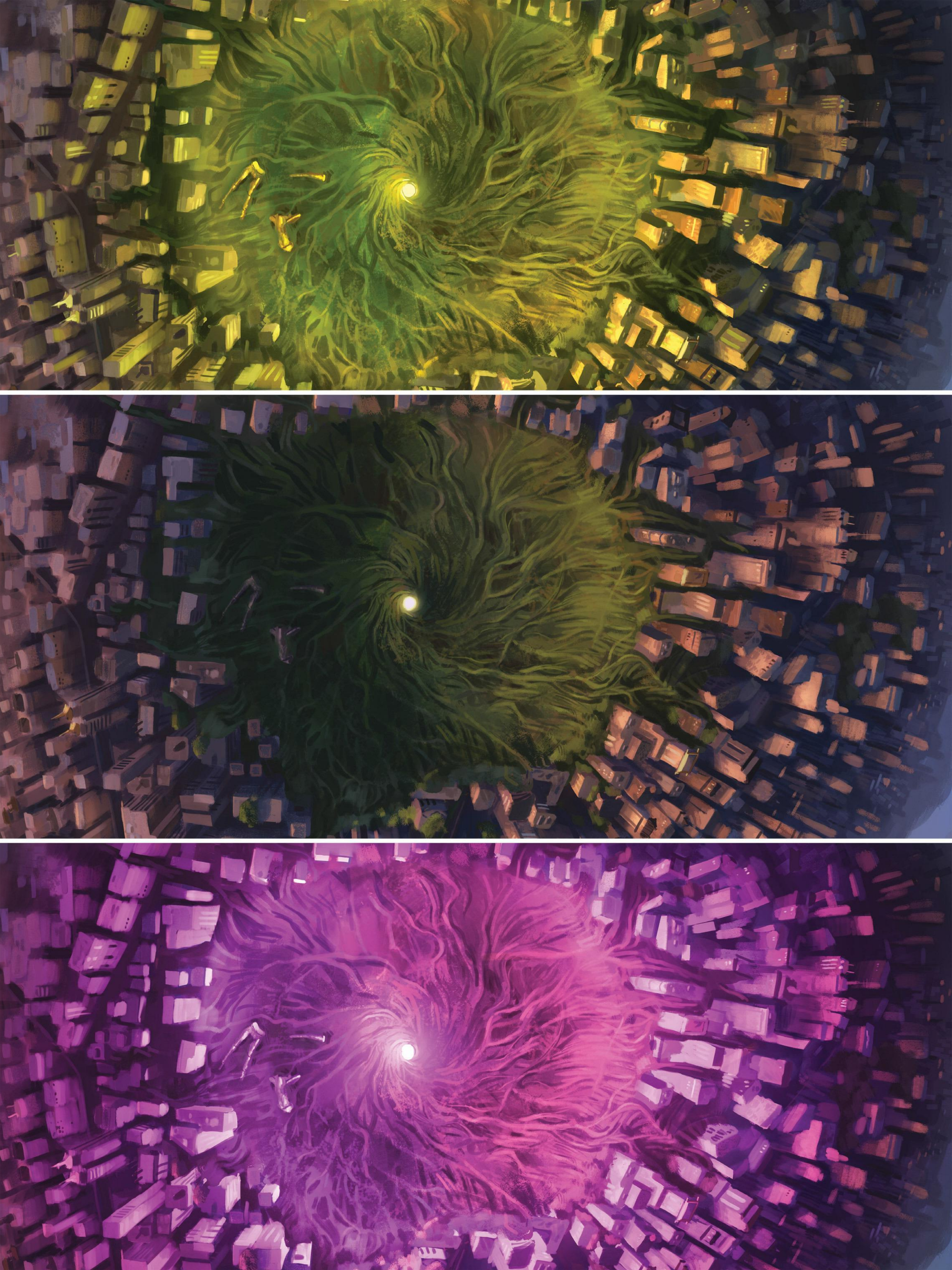


BK: We had to do so many different versions of several background keys since the time of day changed throughout the finale episodes, and the spirit energy was often the dominant light source. It was a lot to keep track of! Designs by William Nanqing Niu. Top painting by Anthony Wu. Bottom painting by Lauren Zurcher. Lighting adjustments by Bryan Konietzko.

BK: I modified this bird's-eye view that Lauren had painted for the spirit energy explosion. Joaquim and Mike liked it so much that we considered making it a pickup shot in the show, but that sequence already had a really nice rhythm to it, so we left it alone and figured we could just share the painting in the art book. Design by Christine Bian. Painting by Lauren Zurcher and Bryan Konietzko.



BK: This spread features some great, final examples of William Nanqing Niu's insanely intricate cityscapes, all painted by Melissa King. On the opposite page you can see how much work went into the three lighting setups that transition in a matter of seconds in a single shot! Animation is no picnic.





MD: Because the finale had some tremendously challenging staging in it, we relied heavily on Ryu, Lauren, and Joaquim to help with the most difficult and important sequences. These panels are primarily Ryu's drawings, with a few panels of Lauren's and Joaquim's interspersed, showing just how collaborative some of these difficult storyboards can be.



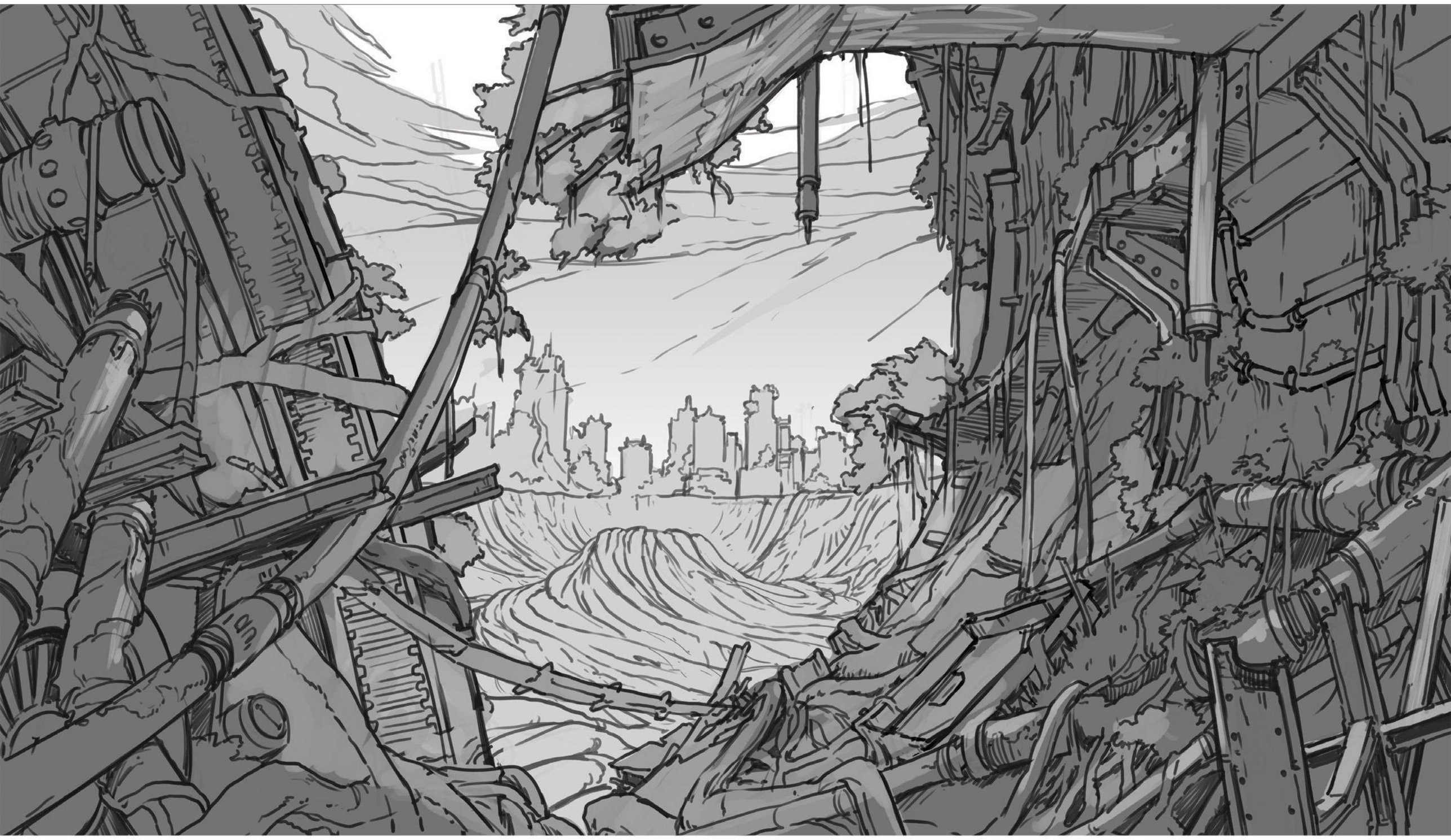
JDS: This sequence was revised a number of times before we got it right. We knew this was it, the big finale, so we wanted to make sure we all did our part and put our best foot—or in this case, feet—forward. Storyboards by Ki-Hyun Ryu, Lauren Montgomery, and Joaquim Dos Santos.



BK: I wanted this new portal to open up to a part of the spirit world we had not seen yet. Christine and I referenced bizarre iceberg formations for the mountains, baobabs for the trees, and aquatic plants for the field of flowers. Lauren and I researched pictures of aquariums lit by black lights for the otherworldly color scheme. It all came together to make a location that was pretty, yet a bit unsettling, which I think is an appropriate vibe for this postbattle conversation. Design by Christine Bian. Painting by Lauren Zurcher.



MD: It wouldn't be a finale without characters getting their hair and clothes messed up. Mako's arm shows the painful electrical burn from taking out the giant mech's engine. Designs by Angela Song Mueller. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



A view from the destroyed giant mech, looking out toward the new portal area. Background design by William Nanqing Niu.



BK: Christine and I researched winter-themed wedding decorations for Zhu Li and Varrick's ceremony and reception. We even included some of the elements my wife had used for our wedding. Christine was planning her own wedding decorations at this time, so she was extra excited to do the research. She is pretty much always excited. Designs by Christine Bian. Paintings by Lauren Zurcher.



MD: I love the detail of the winter backdrops surrounding the wedding area, which were no doubt reused from one of the Nuktuk *movers. Background designs by Christine Bian. Paintings by Lauren Zurcher.*

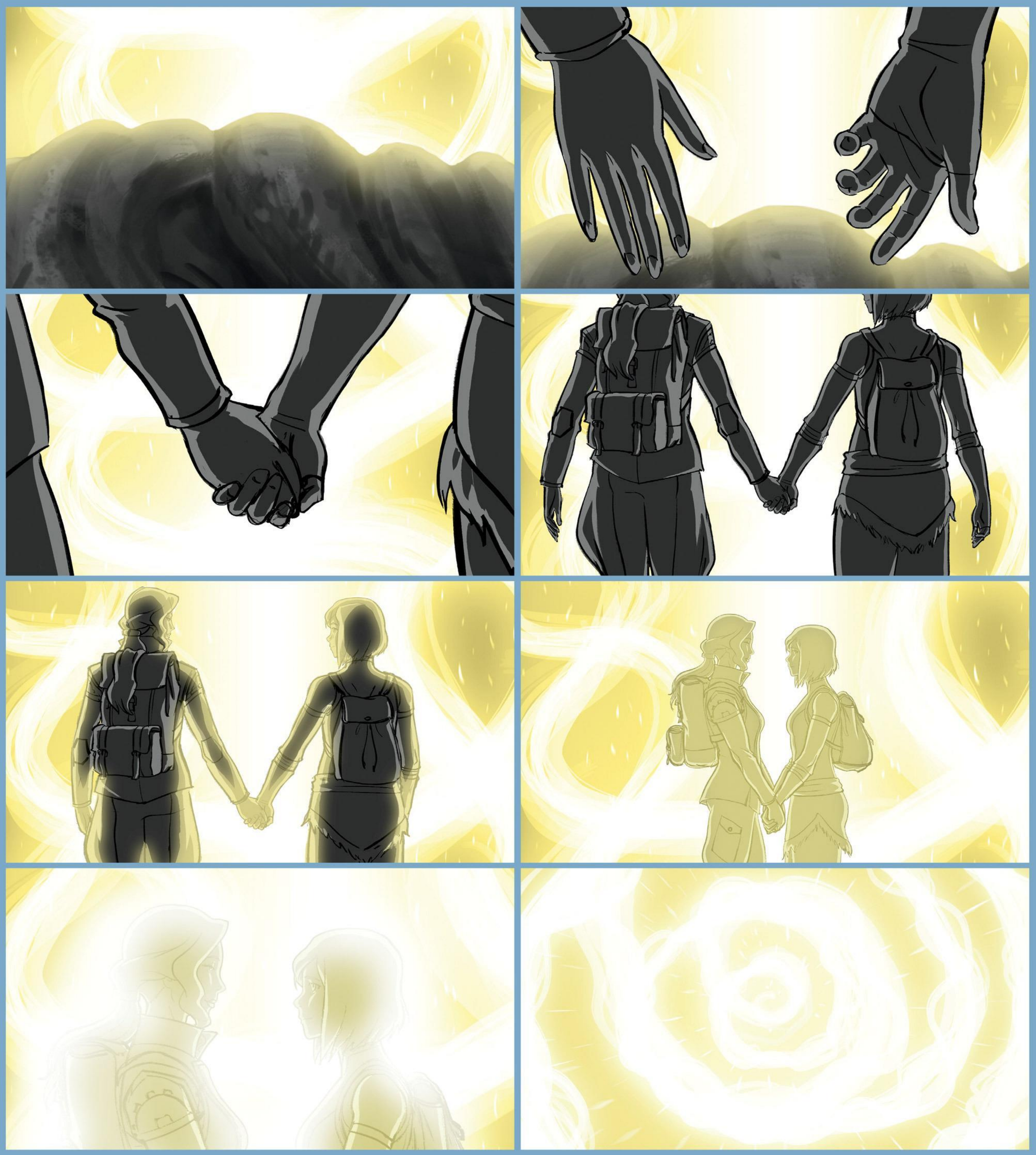


JDS: This production has more costume changes than any other show I've ever worked on! But how fun is it to see the characters we all know and love in their party duds? Varrick and Mako designs by Angela Song Mueller. Korra design by Angela Song Mueller and Bryan Konietzko. Zhu Li and Asami designs by Christie Tseng. Prince Wu design by Christie Tseng and Bryan Konietzko. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf and Bryan Konietzko.

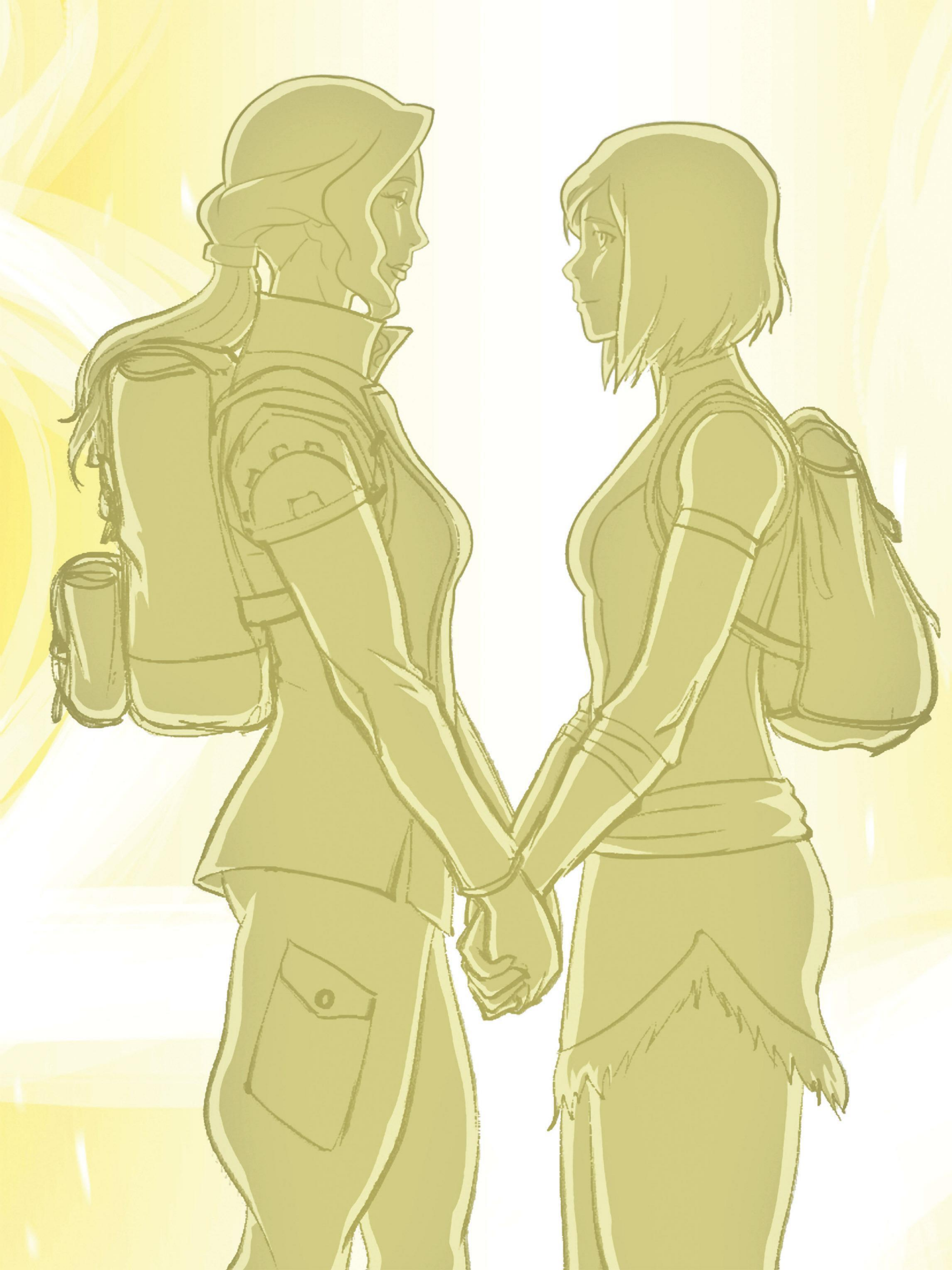


MD: When I was writing this episode, I knew I wanted the score to feature some of composer Jeremy Zuckerman's jazzy tunes, so I asked him what instruments made up his ensemble and called them out in the script. And rather than have the band members be generic musicians, we thought this was a funny way to bring back some of our old characters. It's probably not the most epic return for Tahno, but it turns out he's one heck of a trombonist! Tahno, council page, and Gang designs by Angela Song Mueller. Wolfbats, Hasook, Lu, and wedding server designs by Christie Tseng. Instrument designs by Joseph Aguilar. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.





BK: A lot has been written about the ending of the series, including blog posts by Mike and me. The positive letters and in-person testimonials we have received have been overwhelming. From the outline written over a year earlier, describing Korra and Asami holding hands and walking together into the portal, all the way to the final animation, there was a lot of discussion on how to handle the final shots, and we went back and forth on a few versions. In the end, Mike and I put our heads together and I drew these final storyboards. They still warm my heart every time I see them.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ANCILLARY ART



Book Four characters illustration by William Ruzicka. (Opposite) New York Comic Con poster drawn by Bryan Konietzko and Ki-Hyun Ryu. Color by Bryan Konietzko. *(Preceding spread) "There They Go!" illustration by Emily Tetri.*



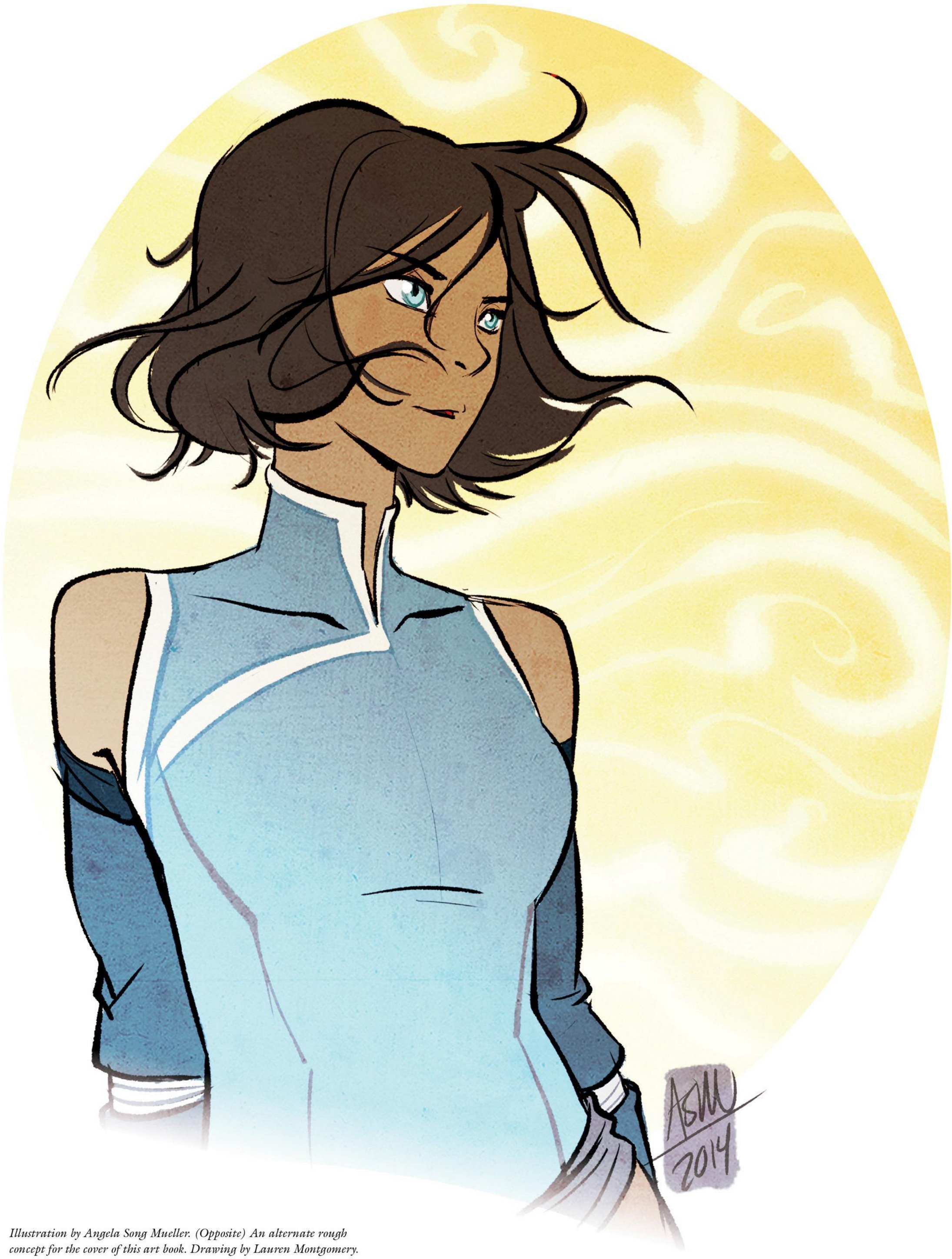
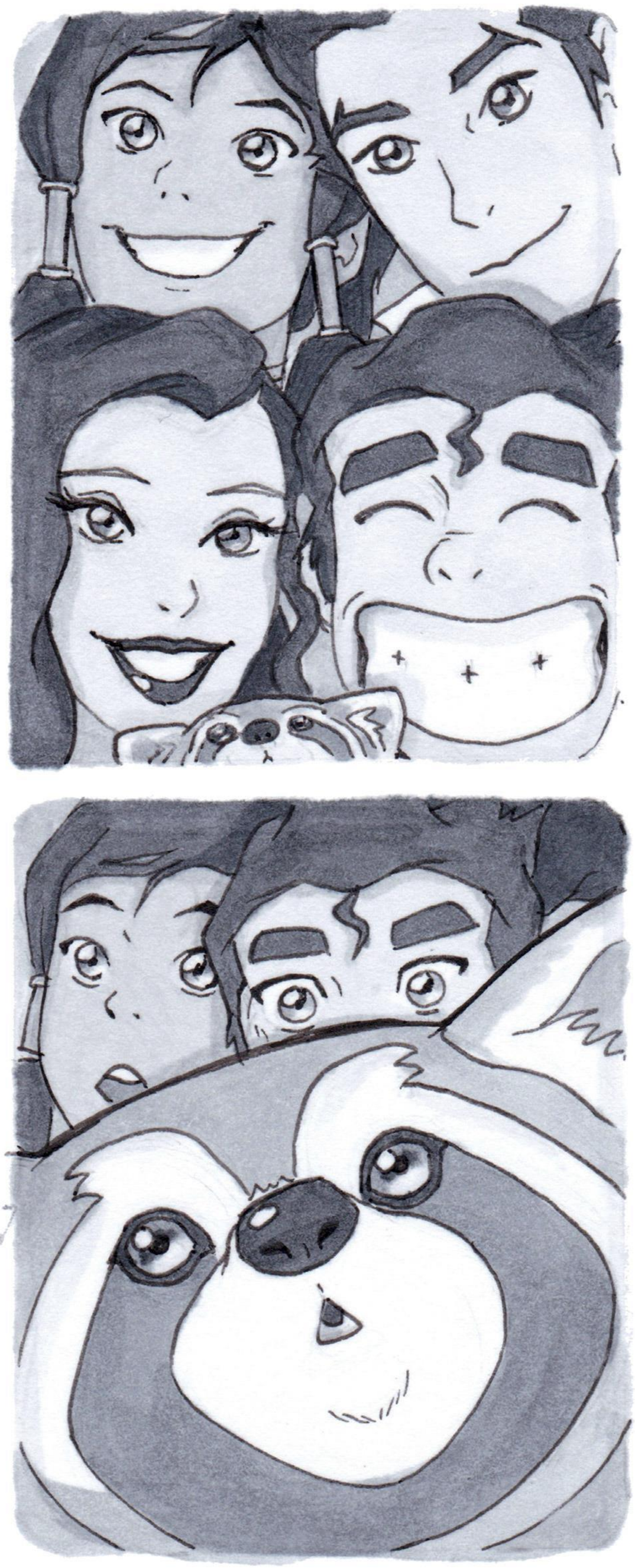


Illustration by Angela Song Mueller. (Opposite) An alternate rough concept for the cover of this art book. Drawing by Lauren Montgomery. Color by Bryan Konietzko.

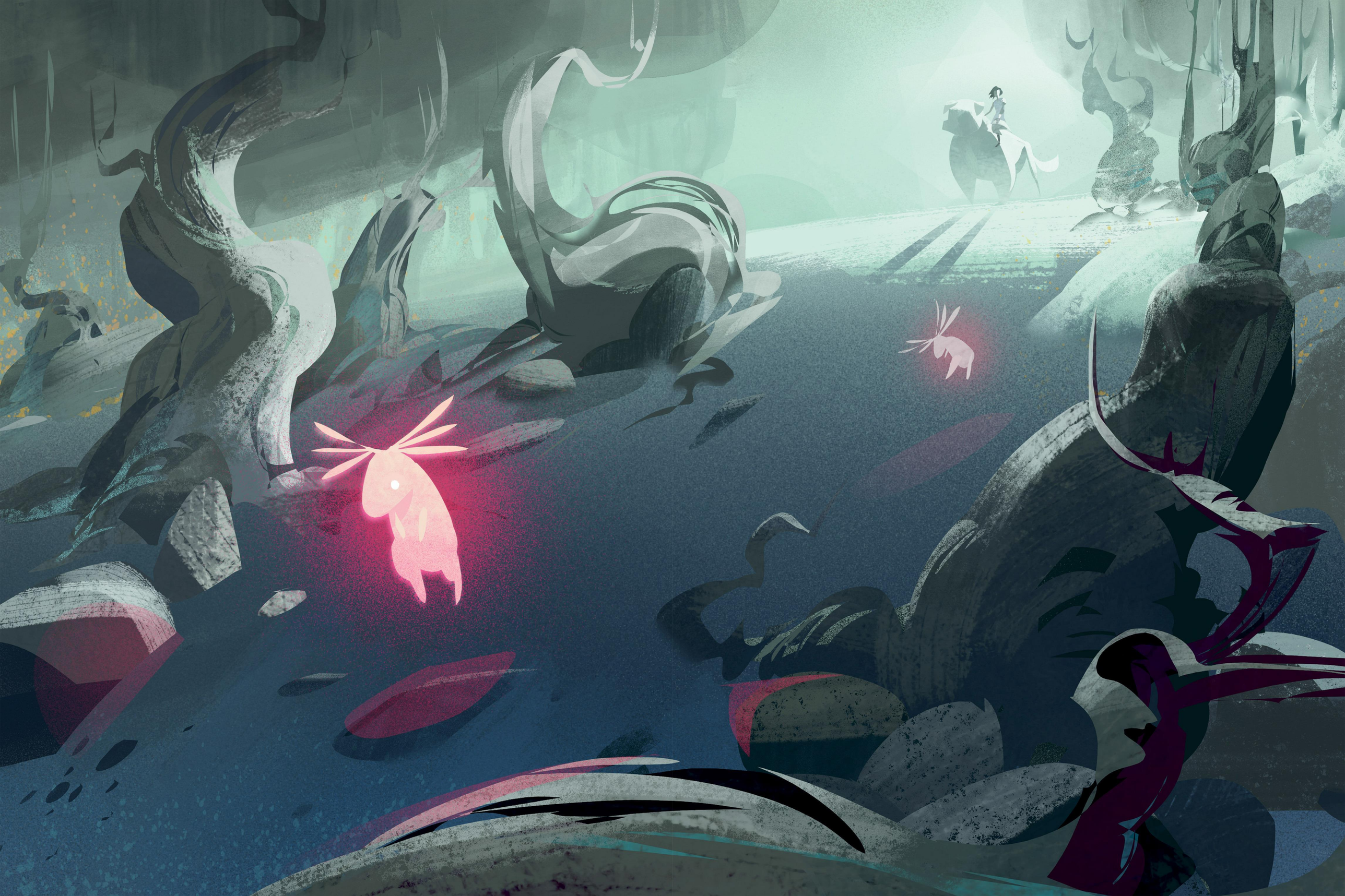






"Friends Forever" Team Avatar photo booth snapshots by Natasha Presler-Wicke. (Opposite) "After the End of All Things" illustration by William Nanqing Niu. (Following spread) Dragonfly-bunny spirits lead the way in this illustration by Emily Tetri.

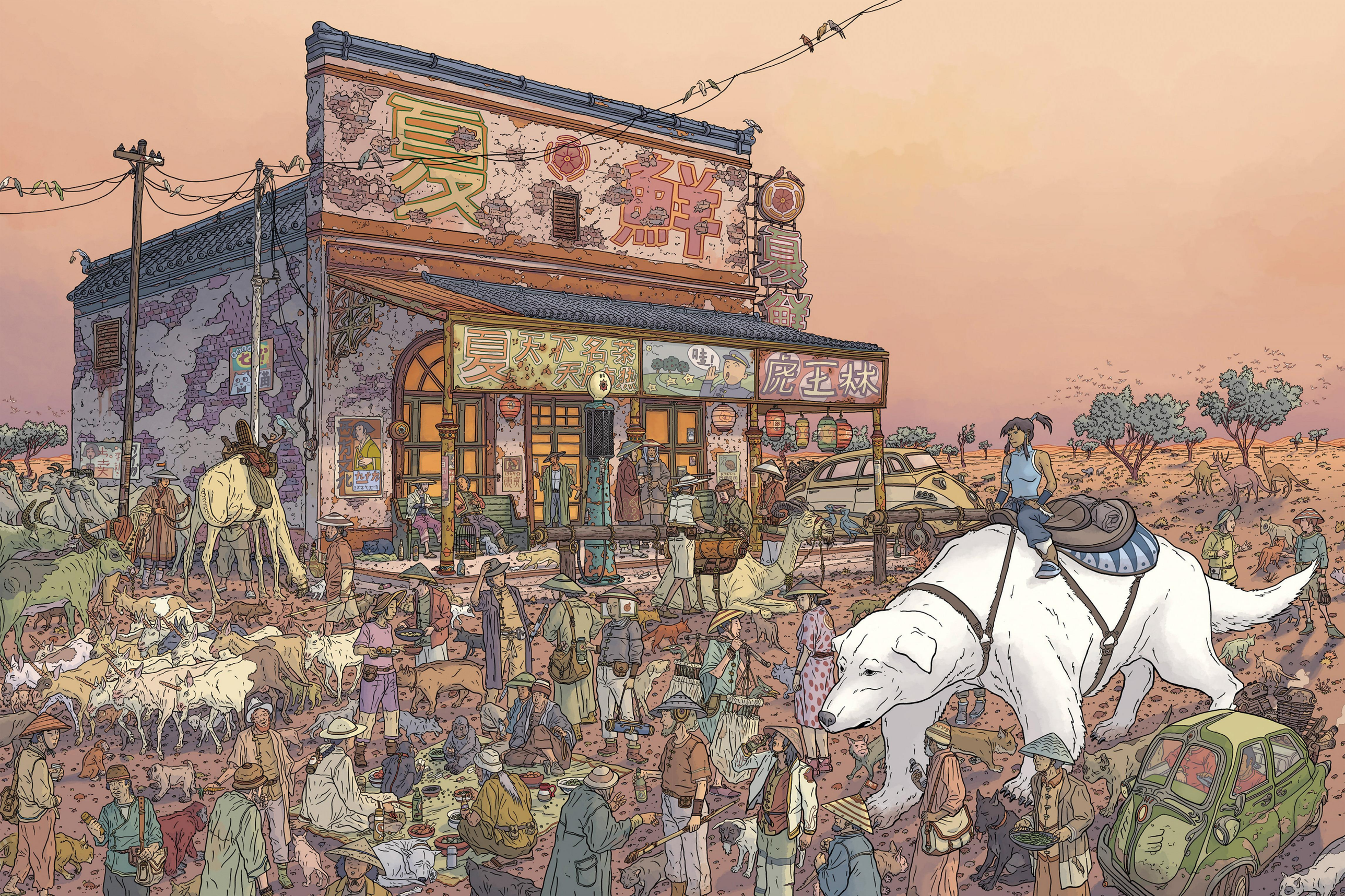








(Opposite) Giant spirit battle illustration by Frederic Stewart. (Top) Book Four promo art by Bryan Konietzko, based on a storyboard drawing by Joaquim Dos Santos. Background design by William Nanqing Niu. Painting by Lauren Zurcher. (Bottom) Book Four finale premiere blog illustration by Bryan Konietzko.


夏天下名茶热
哇!
庞玉琳



(This page) Lin Beifong illustration by Colin Heck. (Opposite) BK: In the episode "Reunion," Asami is seen reading a magazine while waiting for Korra. Originally we made it a fashion magazine, with an ad featuring Ginger wearing a feather boa. We all know Asami likes fashion, and I think we thought the ad would be funny, but when it came time to approve the artwork, I found it vapid. Asami is an industrial magnate—she would have her own ad in the magazine! So I came up with this recruitment ad, using a prop designed by Joseph Aguilar. Angela Song Mueller fleshed out the characters from a sketch I did, and S. L. Lee, PhD, translated the following copy for the ad: "Ladies, Future Industries wants you! Are you interested in an exciting and rewarding career? Come on down to one of our recruitment offices and schedule an interview. We offer expert and entry-level positions. Don't wait; come and seize your future!" (Preceding spread) Limited edition Korra print drawn by Geof Darrow and colored by Dave Stewart, two legends in comics.


女士們，我們企業需要你！
你有一份刺激又高薪的職位嗎
來我們的招聘辦事處安排面試吧
我們提供專家和初級職位
不要遲疑　快掌握你的未來



(Top) Giant mech battle illustration by Owen Sullivan. (Bottom and opposite) BK: I did this "Turtle-Duck Date Night" print for the Gallery Nucleus Avatar: The Last Airbender/The Legend of Korra *tribute art show, which opened just after the ten-year anniversary of the premiere of* Avatar. *I used and modified Emily Tetri's production painting of Harmony Tower (designed by Jung-Su Lee). I based the turtle-duck boats on the charming swan boats I saw while visiting Ueno Park in Tokyo. In honor of "Korrasami" and all the fans out there struggling with their sexual identity, I donated 100 percent of my proceeds from the sale of the print to an LGBTQ suicide-prevention hotline. (Following page) "Over the Threshold" drawing by Natasha Presler-Wicke.*


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2015
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"Tell your world leaders to stay out of Earth Empire business.
We won't accept their handpicked dictator."



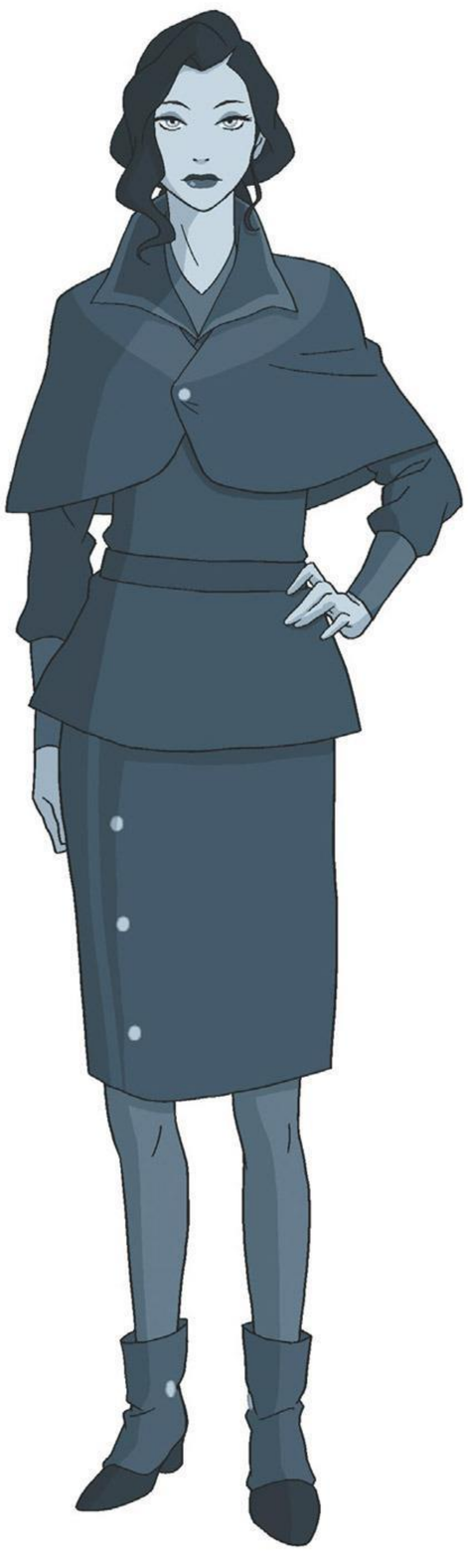
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Packed with stunning, never-before-seen art and insightful creator commentary, this volume takes you behind the scenes and reveals why the final season of this acclaimed television series is so beloved.

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