

THE LIFE
AND SUFFERING
OF SIR BRANTE



CHILDHOOD



The foundation for *The Life and Suffering of Sir Brante* was first laid in the fall of 2018, when the game designer and educator Fyodor Slusarchuk came up with the plan to transform the real-life role-playing production, set in the realm of the Blessed Arknian Empire, into a full-fledged video game.

The project would grow into a lifelong story that narrates the path of a single man born in a ruthless and unjust world. Following their alter ego from birth until true death, the player would grow up, make life-altering choices, experience exhilarating highs as well as terrifying lows, and endure social upheavals together with their character.

The sheer scale of the game's core ideas dictated the choice of genre. Such a variety of events, heroes, and branching pathways for the player to take could only be brought to life in the form of a text-based, narrative-driven RPG.

BRANTE ESTATE

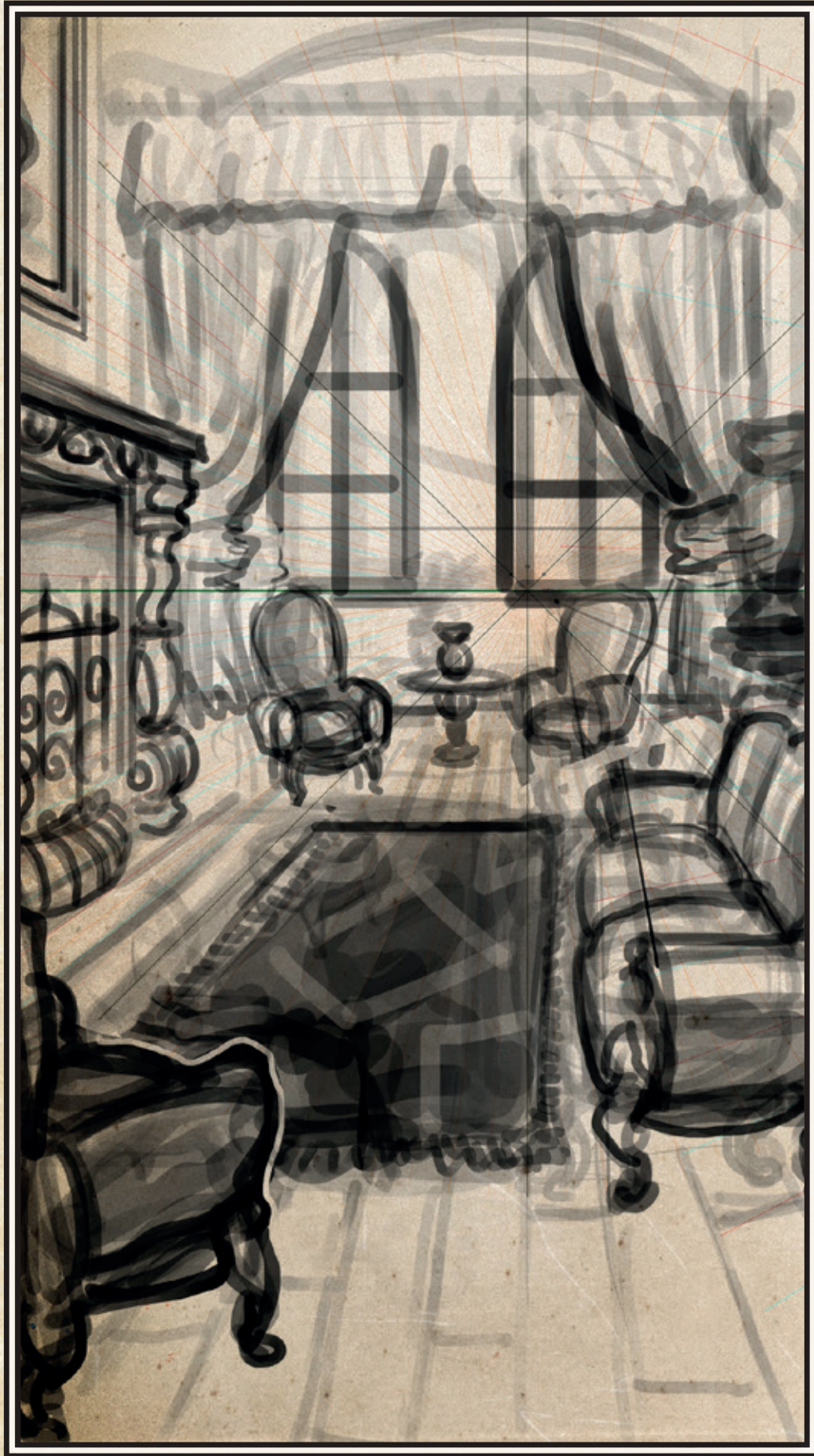
In the first iteration of the script, the Brante family home was located beyond the walls of Anizotte. It quickly became apparent that the characters should always remain in the thick of the city life, nor would their finances allow the Brantes to enjoy the country life.

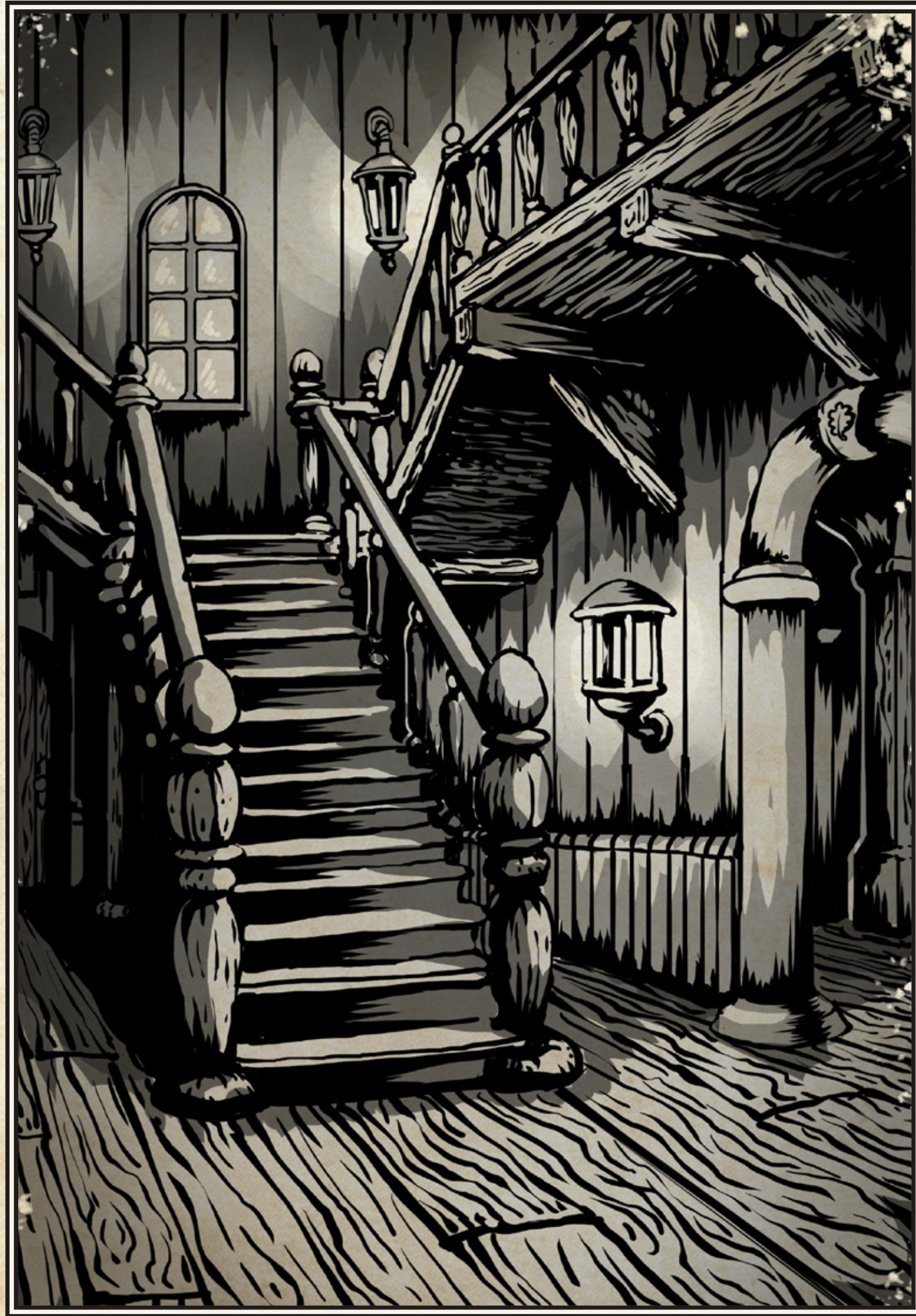


This is how the Brante household moved into a modest mansion within city limits.



LIVING ROOM







Fyodor Slusarchuk,
author of the original Concept
and Setting:

*«How does an ordinary person
become a historical figure? What
path does one take to gain the
power to reshape the entire world
around them? These are the
questions we wanted to pose to
our audience.»*

Guided by this idea, Fyodor
turned to his old friends at Sever
Studio, who at the time were
primarily working on educational
and business-oriented software.

Together they began the development of a
brand-new indie game under the working title
of «Project Talisman.»



GREGOR BRANTE

The portrait initially depicted Robert Brante. However, while reworking the script, the writers have greatly altered the role the protagonist's father would play in the story, so the portrait was instead redesigned to fit Gregor Brante, the formidable patriarch of the Brante family.



LYDIA BRANTE

The image of Lydia, the humble and pious mother of the family, was among the first drawn for the story and did not change much compared to its prototype.





ADOLESCENCE

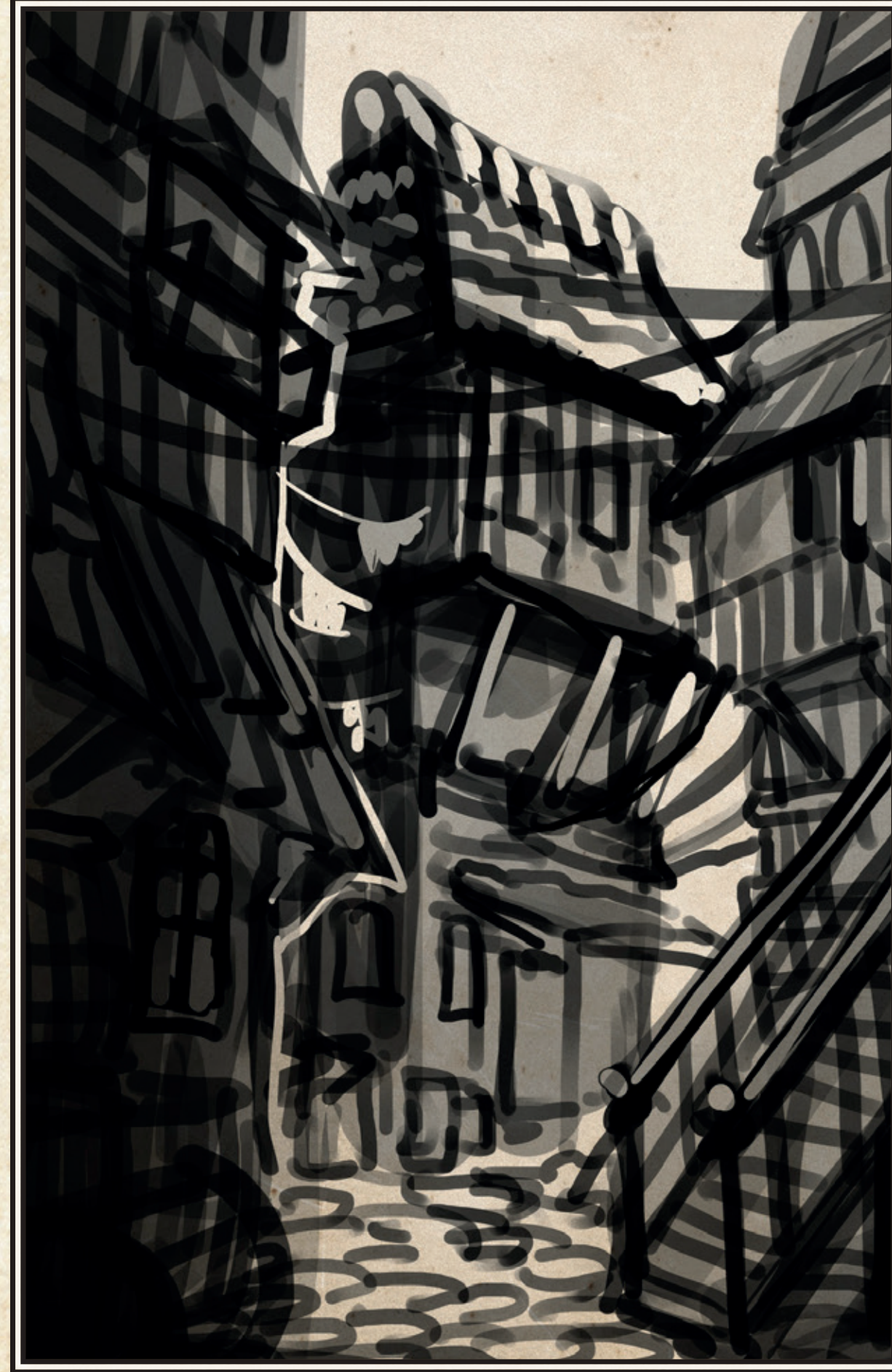
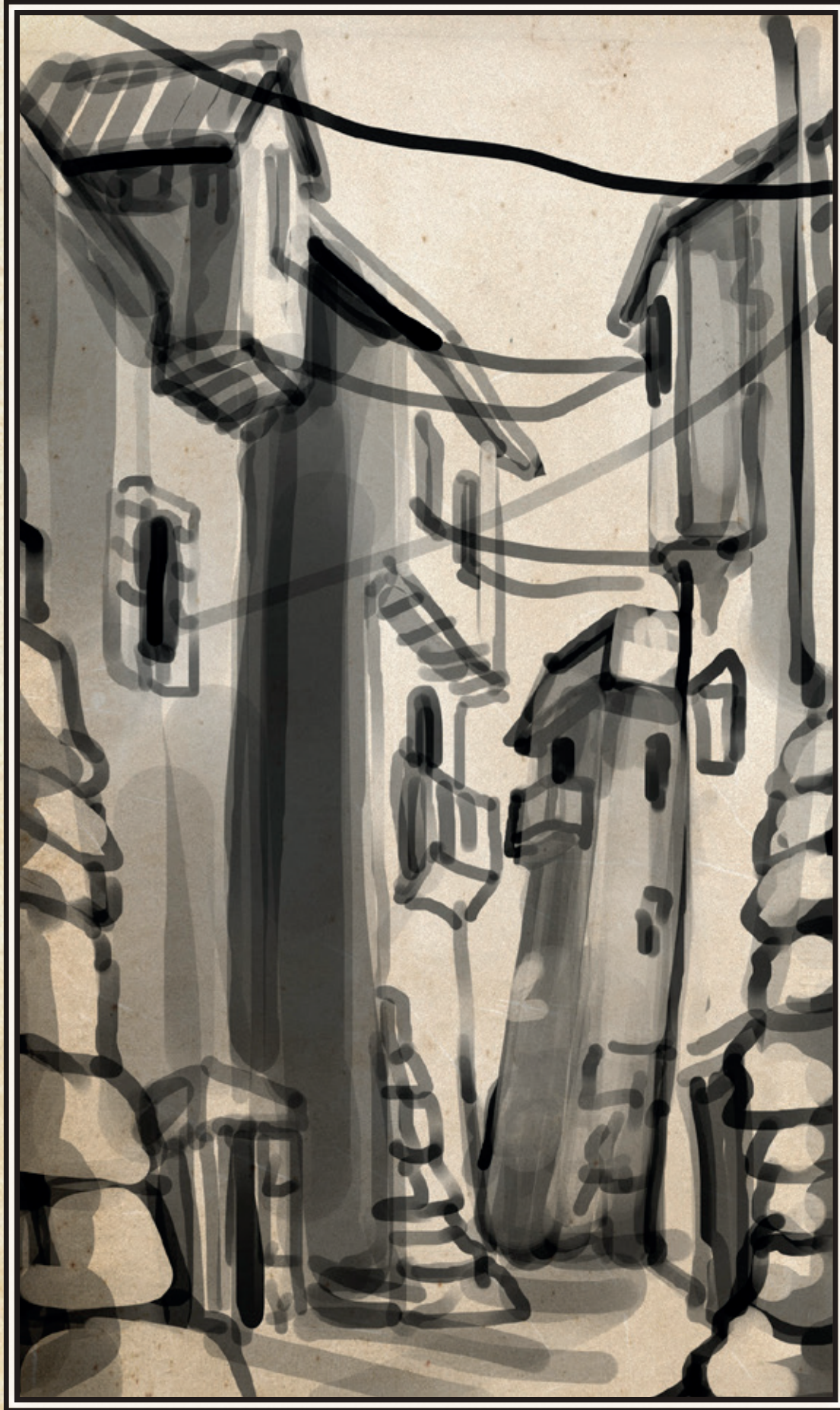


Allowing every player to imagine their own Sir Brante with a unique destiny and one-of-a-kind life path would require an extensive and truly nonlinear plotline.

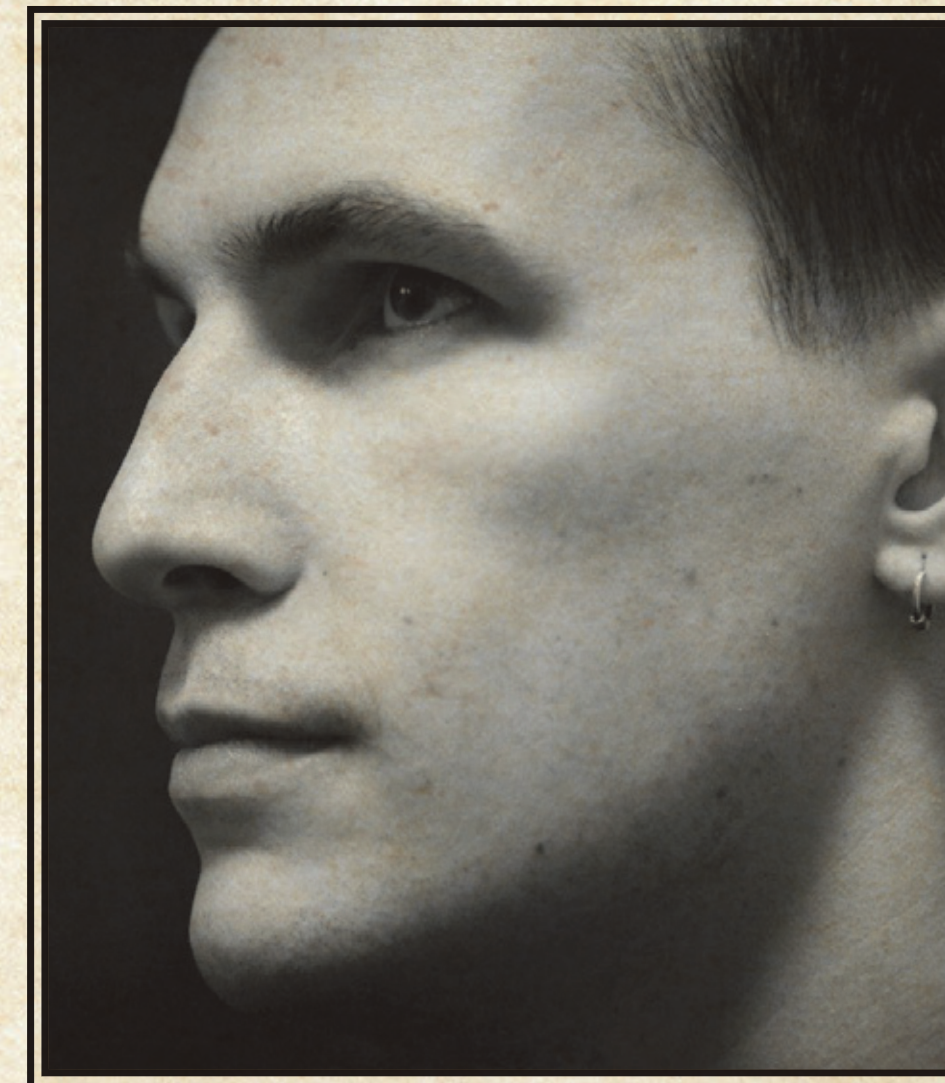
After all, the same hero could earn a noble title, become a priest, remain a commoner their whole life, and more — this one choice would already radically alter the entire narration!

The script had gone through innumerable drafts with 8 people working on it at the same time — while some were engaged in writing out the general structure of the game's story, others composed individual scenes, and still others labored over the various choices players could make as well as their manifold consequences.

ANIZOTTE SLUMS



GOLDEN SQUARE



Sergey «Chip» Aksenov,
Lead Game Designer:

«We were constantly engaged in a strenuous balancing act. On one hand, we wanted to grant the player as much freedom as possible. On the other, we had to ensure that every decision would add up in the end, forming a coherent narrative.»



Silver Tree



The hardest part was, of course, avoiding plot holes and logical contradictions. The team later began to describe the process with a humorous Russian idiom of «pulling an owl over a globe,» which aptly described the necessity to organically merge the character's deeds with the rest of the story, at the same time making sure that

every minor change was properly communicated through the game's RPG system.

We dare say that the developers had succeeded in the main task of breathing life into the game's world where every player can now write the story of their own Sir Brante!



STEPHAN BRANTE

Sir Brante's older brother grows and changes together with the player, highlighting their shared history as well as the passage of time.



GLORIA

The fate of the protagonist's sister is an especially difficult one. Your choices will greatly affect her appearance by the end of the story.





YOUTH



The universe that Sir Brante inhabits had been invented before the work on the project even began. The Blessed Arknian Empire served as the setting for an entire series of real-life and tabletop RPGs. Its culture, religion, and history now found a new incarnation in the world of video games.

This strange and ruthless realm shall become the stage on which the tragic fate of Sir Brante will unfold.

«Your marriage to that lowborn wench cut us off from ever becoming nobles of the Sword. My progeny could have been born bearing noble blood!»

Gregor Brante, the protagonist's grandfather





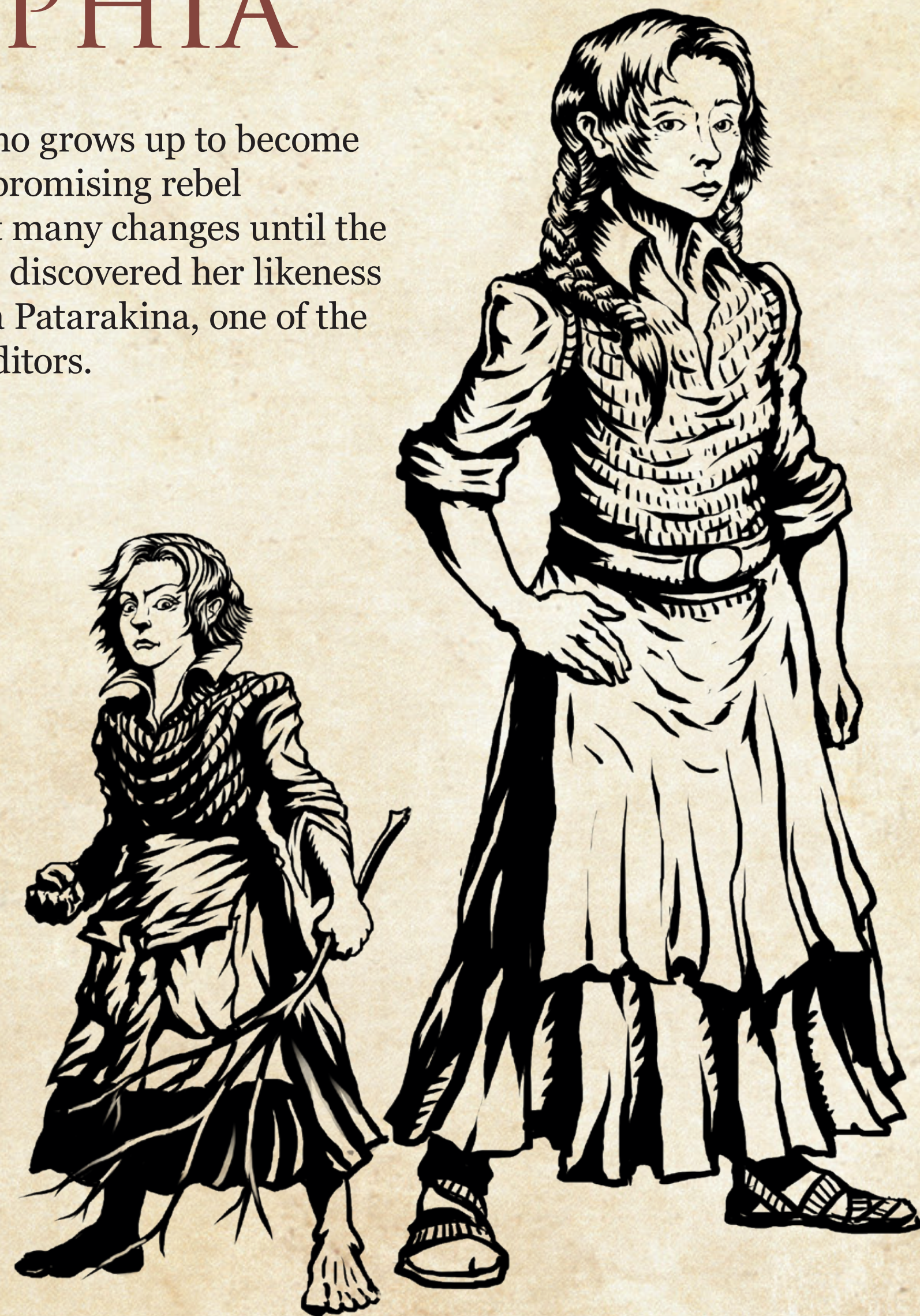
This is a society where absolutism has reached its peak: the will of the ruling Gods is unquestionable, and a commoner's Lot is to toil away and suffer. Any transgression against the divine Law entails a cruel punishment, both in life and after death.

Yet even such a world cannot escape change, and the old era is poised on the verge of collapse.

Growing up, your hero will inevitably play a part in these monumental events.

SOPHIA

The girl who grows up to become an uncompromising rebel underwent many changes until the developers discovered her likeness in Evgenya Patarakina, one of the project's editors.



By the by, the heroine shares her name with Sophia Perovskaya, a revolutionary behind the assassination of the Russian Emperor Alexander II.



TOMMAS GUERRO



Quite often, the most organic prototypes for in-game characters can be found in real life.

Roman Sedykh, a longtime participant of the Blessed Arknian Empire games, gifted his likeness to the grown-up version of Tommas.





PEACE TIME



Although the game belongs to the genre of text-based RPGs, the search for a visual style that would integrate with the narrative and facilitate immersion had started at the moment of the project's inception.

The developers experimented with different ideas, such as church-like stained-glass designs.

Soon a more fitting approach emerged, transforming the game into a journal chronicling the protagonist's life. From that moment, everything fell into place: players would flip through various scenes described on individual pages and decorated in a classic «scholarly» style.

It was decided that the book itself should respond to player choice — its corners would tear whenever there was conflict, and blood could spill on the pristine sheets of paper, symbolizing a character's death.

The inspiration for in-game illustrations came from many sources: starting with old-timey portraits by Rembrandt or Velazquez and ending with the faces of the developers and their friends, who have kindly agreed to lend their likeness to some of the characters.

ON DUTY

Depending on his life choices, Sir Brante may find himself occupying radically different posts: serving at the Prefecture, the Inquisition Ward, or housing an underground society in his own workshop.





Peaceful life in
Anizotte



AUGUSTIN EL BORNE



The supreme judge of Magra was the first character drawn by the illustrator Anton Kolomiets. It was then that the team began to develop a unified style for all their heroes.

Although, as time passed, El Borne's features softened, giving him a less stern appearance.



SISTER JEANNE

As Inquisitor Brante's loyal companion, she was originally depicted wearing a headscarf, which later caused many heated debates among the developers regarding Jeanne's hair color.



The scriptwriter Sonya Dolgikh put a stop to these squabbles by describing the character as having blonde hair.



OCTAVIA MILANIDAS

As was the case with Tommas and Sophia, the appearance of this powerful Arknian noblewoman underwent many changes until Julia Ogurtsova, one of the project managers, volunteered for this role.



Just like in the real world, Octavia may experience a number of transformations at the whim of the plot.





THE REVOLT



The game has been in development for two and a half years — much longer than was anticipated. The team originally envisioned their project as a small game with only a handful of scenes.

However, the ambition behind «The Life and Suffering» game continued to grow. Soon it became apparent that the initial concept would sprout into a complete interactive novel, rivaling Leo Tolstoy's «War and Peace» in volume.

Managing a project of such scope was not easy. The ever-expanding plot branched into a web of interconnected storylines, demanding that an increasing number of the hero's choices was taken into account, and the game's RPG mechanics followed suit. The scriptwriters would sometimes complain that they felt like a spider entangled in its own web.

Nonetheless, the developers felt determined to see the game through to the end. This persistence paid off as they first ran a successful crowdfunding campaign then found a publisher soon after. This, in turn, allowed the project to soar to a completely new level.

The fact that other people started to believe in Sir Brante's success served to convince the team that their efforts would bear fruit.







FATHER LENNART

Known as Father Martin in the original script, the character was later renamed as this reference to Lutheranism seemed too direct to fit with the game's tone.

Nonetheless, there is perhaps a strong resemblance between Lennart and the real-world 16th-century priest Martin Luther.



DORIUS OTTON

A son to the provincial commander in an earlier draft, Dorius had taken his father's post in the finalized version of the script.



Commander Otton's appearance was based on another veteran of the live-action Blessed Arknian Empire RPGs, Ilya Karev.



GAIUS TEMPEST



Cornelius Tempest was initially planned to play a much larger role in the plot than his brother Gaius Tempest.

At the end of the day, Cornelius's tragic transformation into the executioner of the entire Empire was largely left behind the scenes of Sir Brante's personal journey.



As these lines are written, the excited anticipation of the game's imminent release looms in the air. Players met the demos for The Life and Suffering with warmth and much enthusiasm.

Will the full version of Sir Brante's story live up to their expectations? Shall it leave a mark on their hearts and souls? This is, after all, an epic tale of defeat, difficult choices, sacrifice, and overcoming disappointment...

«Too bad it took me so long to figure out what you really are, Brante. Too bad...»

Sophia

Still, it is certain that the project excels at evoking strong emotions and inspiring its audience to think about some of the most important questions in life. That, if nothing else, assures us that Sir Brante did not live nor suffer in vain.

