

THE PARENT CURSE

SKETCHBOOK



SKETCHES AND STORYBOARDS FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART
BY ARTIST/WRITER GREGORY CHRISTIAN



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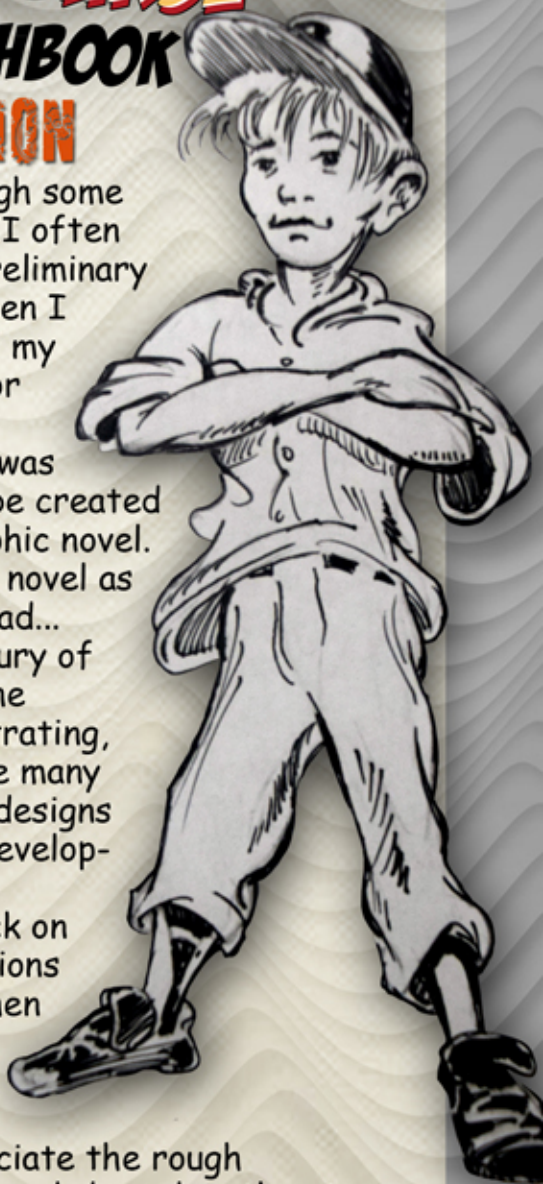
SKETCHBOOK

INTRODUCTION

I was digging through some old notebooks where I often keep sketches and preliminary storyline synopsis when I came across a few of my initial storyboards for a book I wrote...

The Parent Curse was initially intended to be created as an illustrated graphic novel. Instead, I wrote the novel as a literary piece instead... Never having the luxury of time to spend with the arduous task of illustrating, I did, however create many of the rough sketch designs as storyboards for development.

It's fun to look back on those personal ambitions so many years ago when the idea was just an inception of the mind's creative flow. I hope you can appreciate the rough sketches and storyboards based on the story.



Gregory Christian Ballard



SYNOPSIS

The story is a tale about a young boy with a love of baseball and must face responsibility. Feeling unjust punishment from his parents, he begins an adventure that leads him to a world of fantasy. With his dog as a companion, the two head into the Dark Forest to find the witch who can place a curse on his parents. She does indeed, but the consequences from the cursed spell leads to far more compromising effects. His parents suddenly become the boy's children! The curse generates a switch in roles in which the boy **BECOMES** the guardian parent of his own parents! From that point, Ace (the boy) must reverse the curse for life to turn back to normal. Not so easily done as one attempt after another leads to further unexpected consequences. Along the way, Ace and his dog encounter Wizards, Warlocks, Trolls and a catalogue of fantastic creatures in this extreme adventure to return life back to normal. A story for all ages...young and old as the moral is clear with respect to age, growing up and accepting responsibility.

Keep in mind, this is the original rough sketch draft of which was intended to be an illustrated graphic novel format. It has since been written in literature format, but I thought readers would enjoy the visuals I had in mind long ago when the story was first developed. Enjoy!



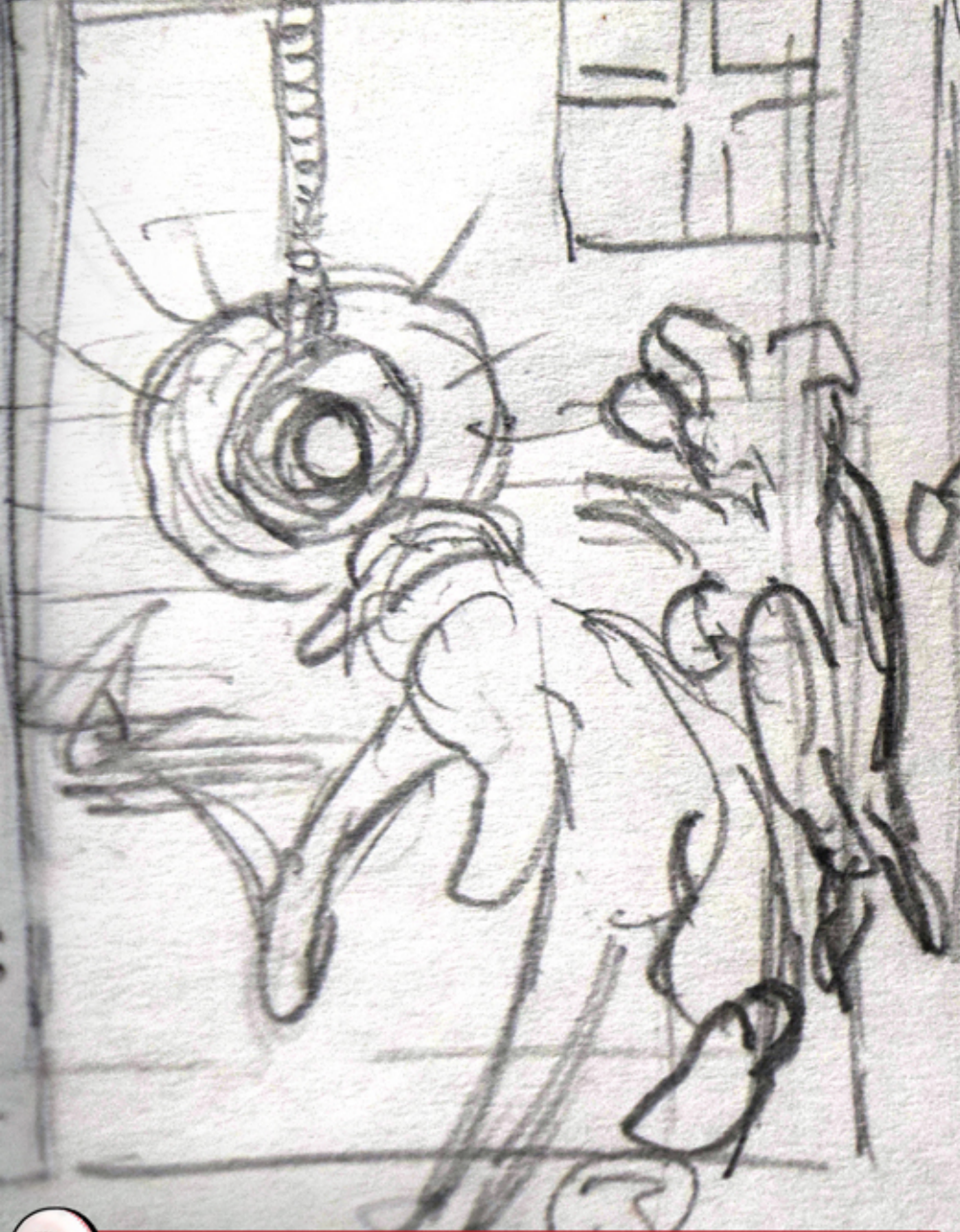






7

Panel 2: Ace begins to deliver the pitch as his dog, Rex jumps with anticipation.



8

Panel 3: Illustration from behind Ace showing his Pitch thrown straight through the middle of a tire. Rex jumps high in the air with excitement. Note the window to the side of the house.

is a window



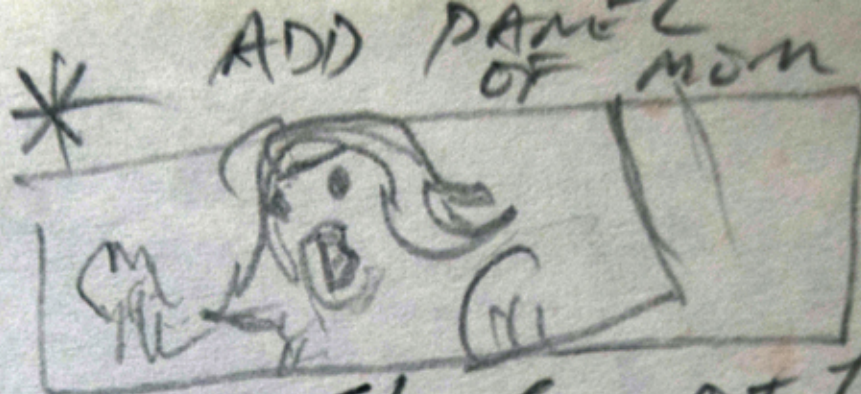
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Panel 4: Both Ace and Rex jump high in the air to celebrate the boy's imagination in saving the game. Note Ace throws his glove into the air as well.



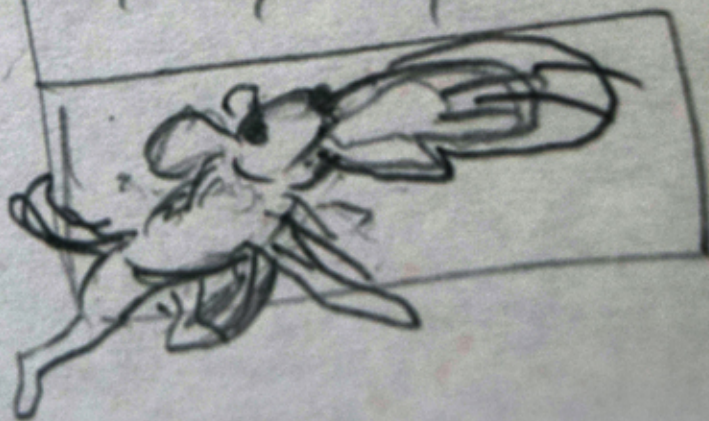
10

Panel 5: Camera angle from inside the house shows the boy's mother looking down from the window to call Ace into the house for dinner.. Rex is seen looming over the boy's glove.



Shouting at the window

* Another panel showing Rex w/ glove





12

Double-spread page revealing Ace now at the dinner table with both his parents. Narration reveals his mother's strict discipline for table manners instructing Ace to remove his baseball cap.

While reading a newspaper, his father joins family discussions where the reader learns he is the coach of Ace's Little League baseball team. An important and critical game is expected to determine the league champions and the father wants Ace to be as mentally prepared for the game. He then asks the boy if he had fed his dog for the evening. "Not yet, but I will as soon as I finish myself."



Ace realizes his dog Rex was still outside in the yard and had chewed his baseball glove into many pieces. The boy realizes he would need to explain the incident to his father, knowing he had really been the one who was irresponsible.





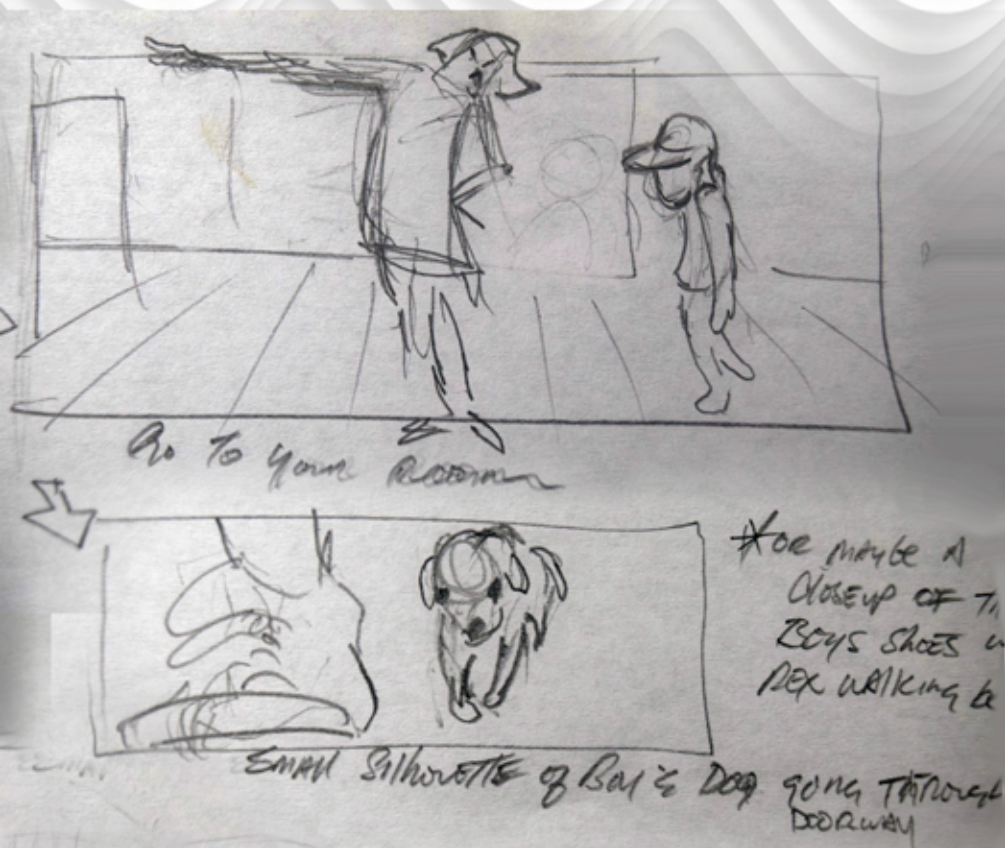
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Ace picks up the shredded remains of his baseball glove to fully assess the damages. Rex lay on the ground understanding how much trouble he had caused the boy.



16

Ace finally gets the courage to show the glove to his father. As expected, the boy was scolded and given another lecture about his lack of responsibility. His father is more than angry and sends his son to his room.



17

Inset panels first showing a medium wide shot of the father pointing for the boy to go to his room. Ace slinks and walks slowly towards his punishment.

Another closeup floor angle showing the shoe as Ace walks along followed by his dog passing along the camera angle.

Another note suggests additional panel showing a silhouette of the two passing through the door, generating a feeling of oppression and dejection.



Ace and Rex lay upon the boy's bed, both feeling a low sense of self worth. Ace ponders the situation carefully as he was not the one who destroyed his baseball glove. It was his dog and the boy feels punishment by his parents is unjust.



19

Ace understands his dog's feelings as well and reaches over, petting Rex upon it's head to comfort him. Ace loves Rex despite the current condition of their predicament.



Ace then has an epiphony. He had heard gossip of an old witch that lived in the Dark Forest that could perform magic spells. Rex's excitement equals the boy's to consider casting a curse for revenge against his parents...after all, it wasn't His Fault!



With this new idea in mind, Ace climbs down from his bedroom window. Rex is only too happy to leap out as well to go on an adventure into the Dark Forest to meet with the witch and cast a curse on the boy's parents.



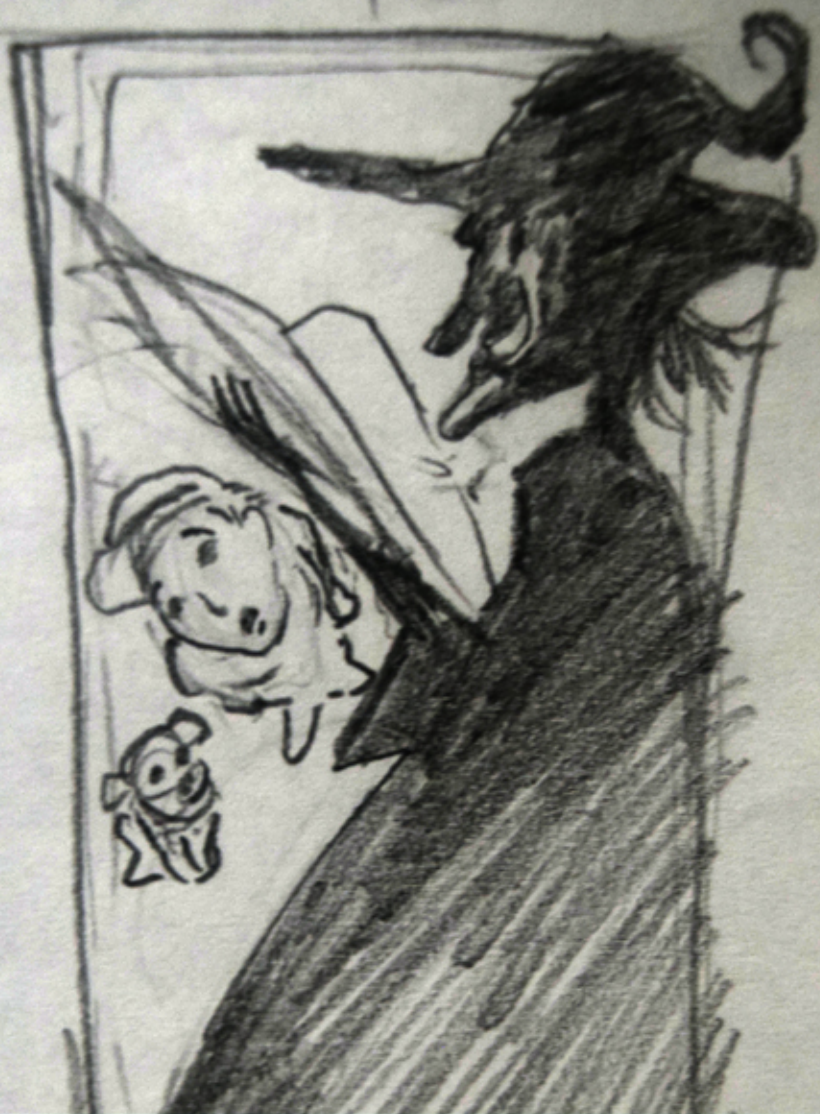
22

The two pass into the Dark Forest. Rex leads the way sniffing for clues that will bring them to the old witch.

Some notes and differences between the original story and the literary version incorporates the trees as spirits of the earth to warn the boy about his intentions. The Forest Trees play a much larger role in the book.

Also note the owl upon one of the tree branches. This is a subtle foreshadow to be more descriptive later in the story to help explain and symbolize loss.





"Trouble with the Elders, eh?" The witch responds. Having a troubled life as well growing up as a child, she sympathizes with the boy and reaches for her very large black book of spells and incantations.



The witch then performs the spell-casting using those vile potions and concoctive ingredients for the parent curse recipe. She lacks a few exact items, however, in which she finds substitute measures. She begins the practical magic with those chants defined within the Book of Magic Spells and Incantations as the cauldron begins to smoke and boil into spitting flames of spiritual black magic.



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Ace and his dog cower as the cauldron builds into an eerie green gas that penetrates the air. The witch continues to chant those chosen words to build the curse into an undeniable current of penetrating forces for the boy's revenge upon his parents unjustified punishment against him.



The witch finishes the spell for the Parent Curse and snickers as if she knows this will have as much or more effect upon the boy as much as his parents. She tells him the deed has been done.



28

Ace feels vindicated and gratified. He thanks the witch for her effort. A reaction image from the boy brings laughter from the witch. She can only contemplate the effects the spell will have and she knows the young boy has no idea what will be in store in the near future. For Black Magic spells, especially curses often yield unexpected consequences.



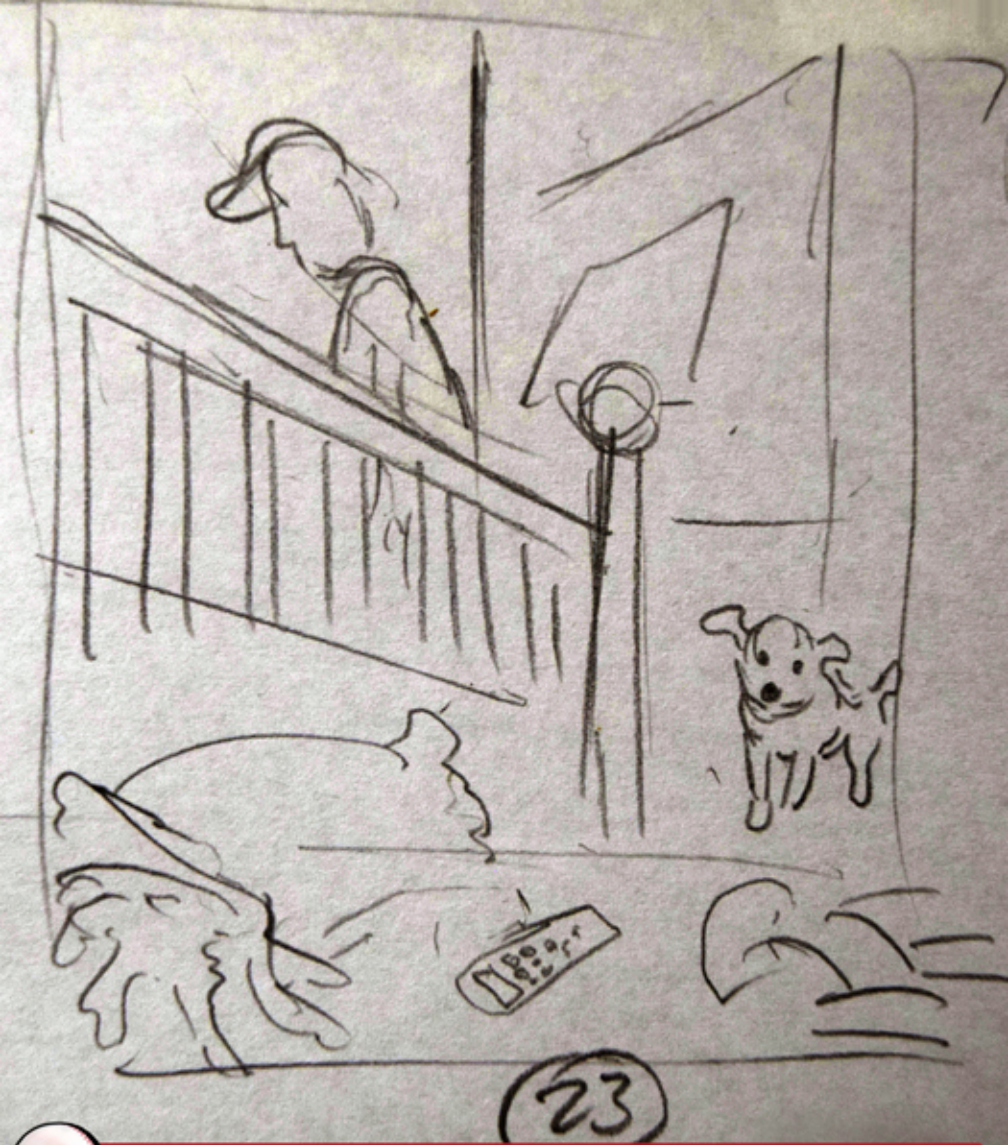
(22)

* NEED TO SHOW LANDSCAPE / SUNRISE
WIDE ANGLE CAMERA SHOT

29

After the long walk back through the forest, Ace and his dog, Rex make their way up the backdoor steps into the house. Both are exhausted after their adventurous journey to see the witch.

As an afterthought rushing through this sketch, I made a notation that I should probably reveal a much wider scenic landscape shot to place more emphasis with mood and location/perspective. A silhouette of the boy and his dog walking vertically upon the stairs against an ominous skyline would work.

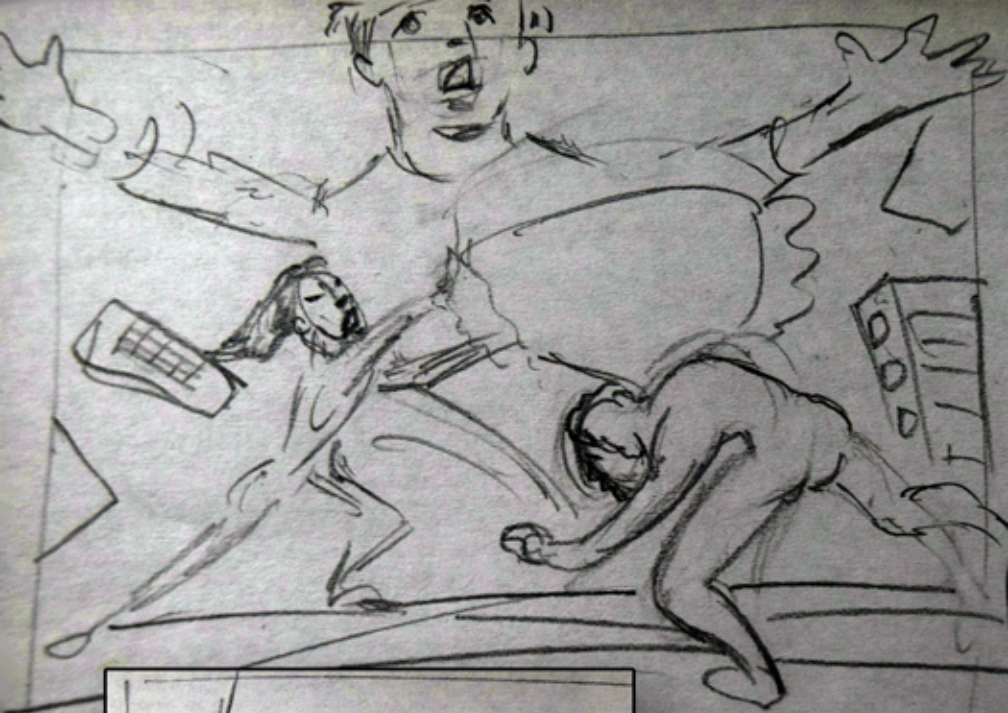


Now inside the home and making their way up the stairs is a continuation of a slow malaise back to the real world. This becomes a juxtaposition in setting up a contrast of momentum. Ace makes his way up the steps while Rex notices foreground elements in disarray. The rough sketch portrays a loose remote control device on a couch with stuffings of pillow feathers all around.



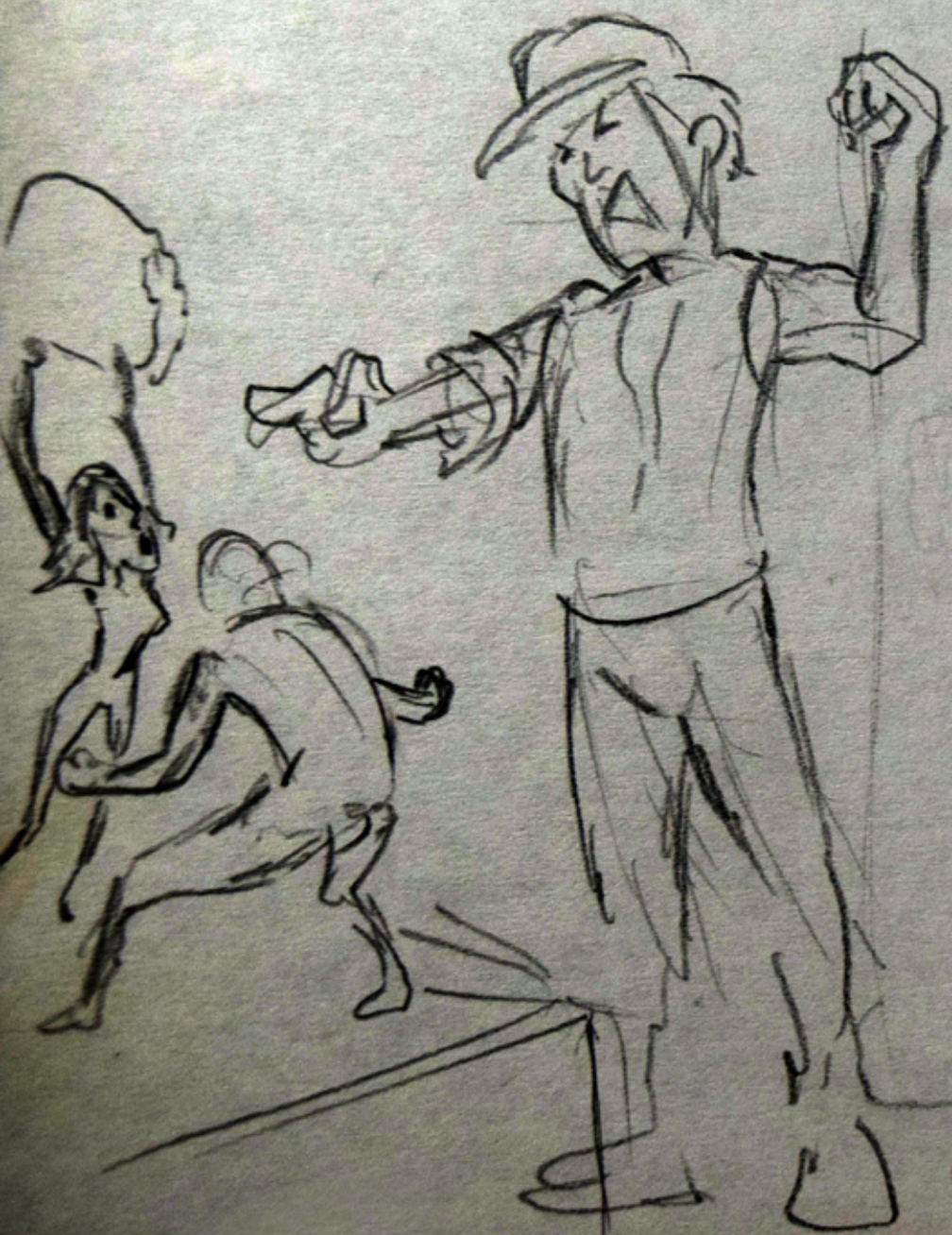
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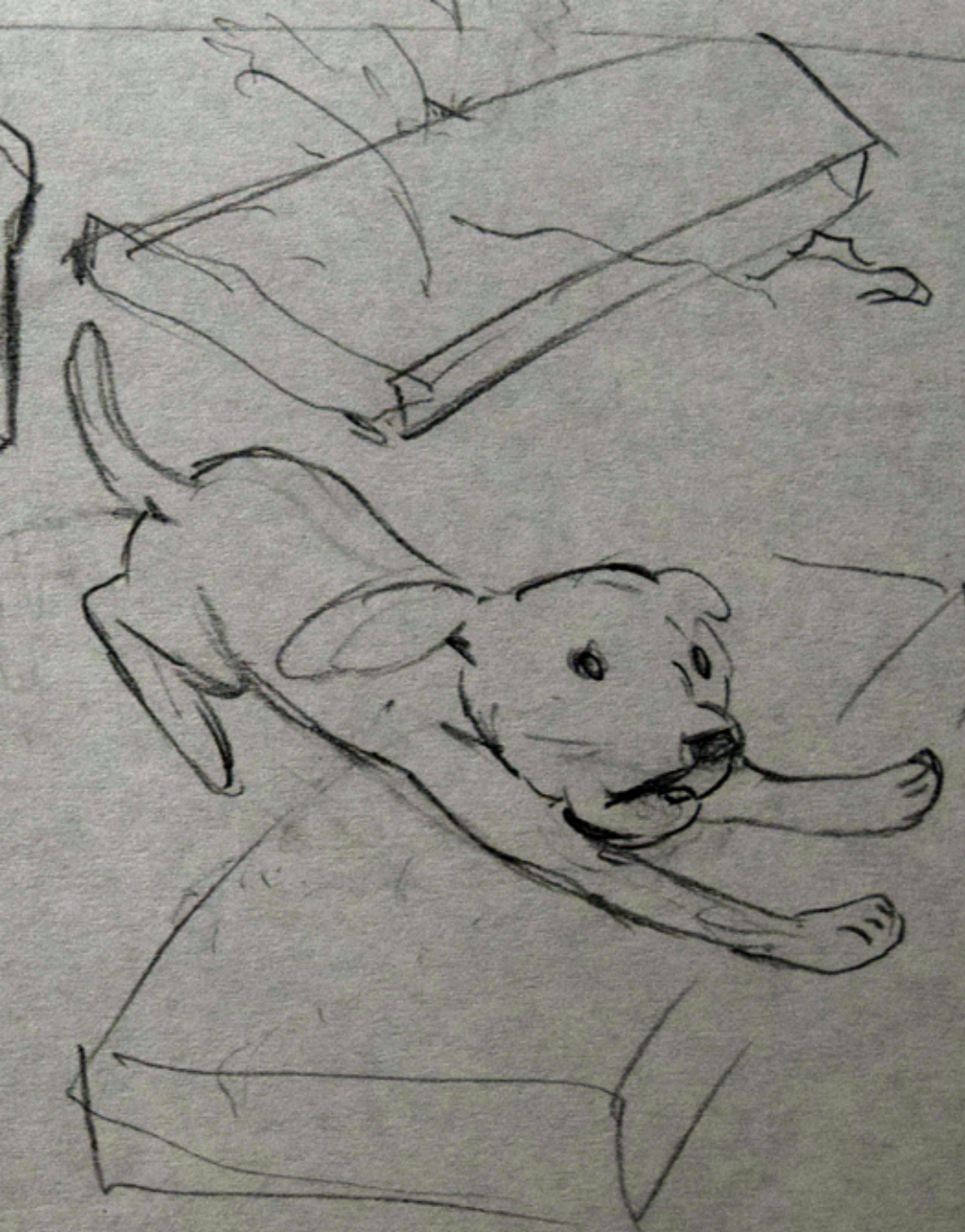
This is the moment the story begins to twist and turn as Ace discovers his parents have shrunk significantly in size and fighting like children... Throwing pillows at each other...fighting over the remote control...calling each other names.



32

The boy's parents continue their childlike antics as Ace discovers he must be the one to control their behavior. He stops their fighting, yet witness the two pointing fingers in defense. Ace now realizes his curse has backfired and he has become the parent.





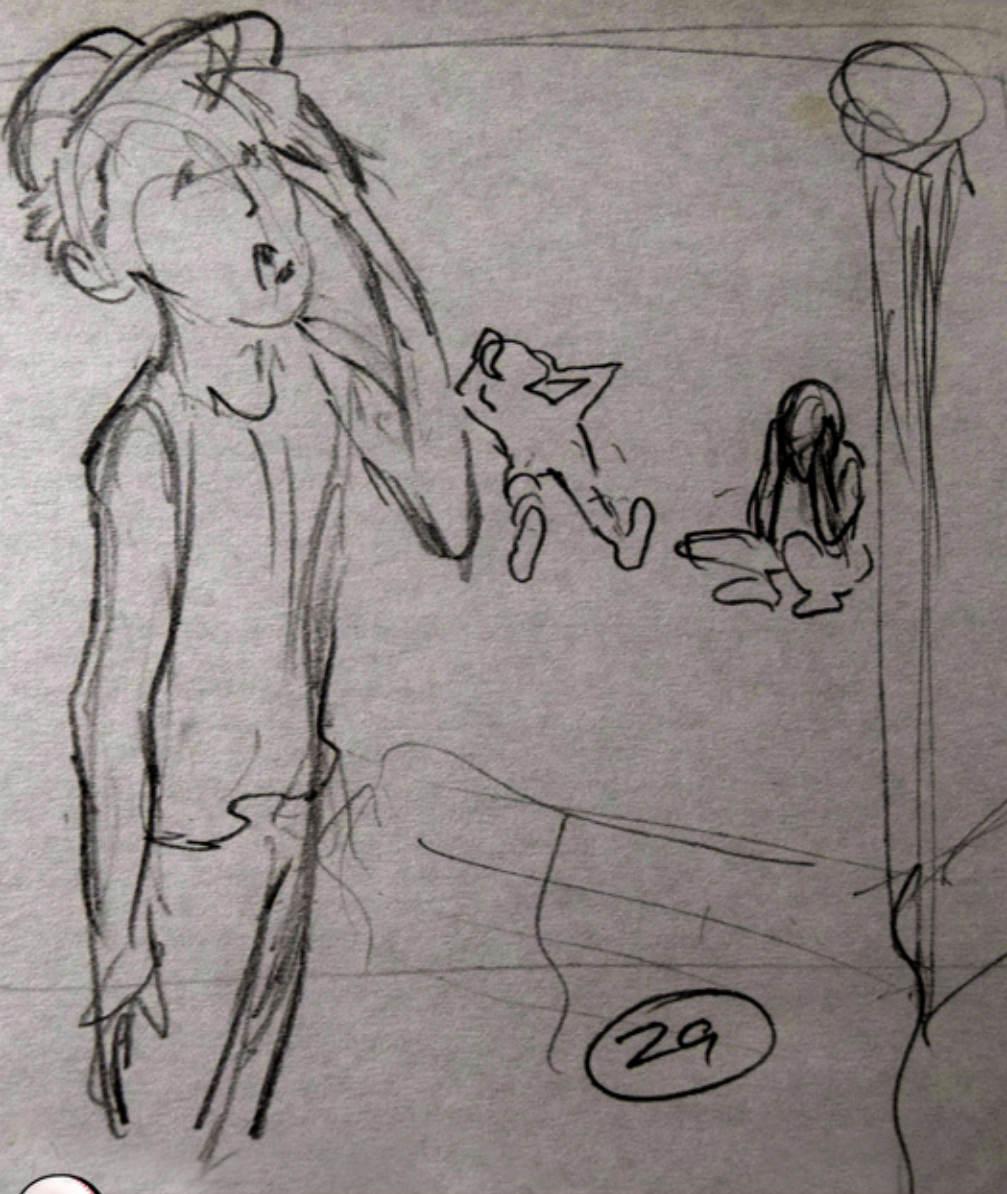
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35

Ace realizes how much more effort it takes to be a parent as he is continuously challenged to control his own predicament with the roles now reversed.





29

36

At the point of frustration and exhaustion, Ace has no other choice than to find a solution to reverse the curse on his parents. He needs to think through the problem at hand and comes to the only conclusion that comes to mind. He must take his parents back through the Dark Forest to see the witch.

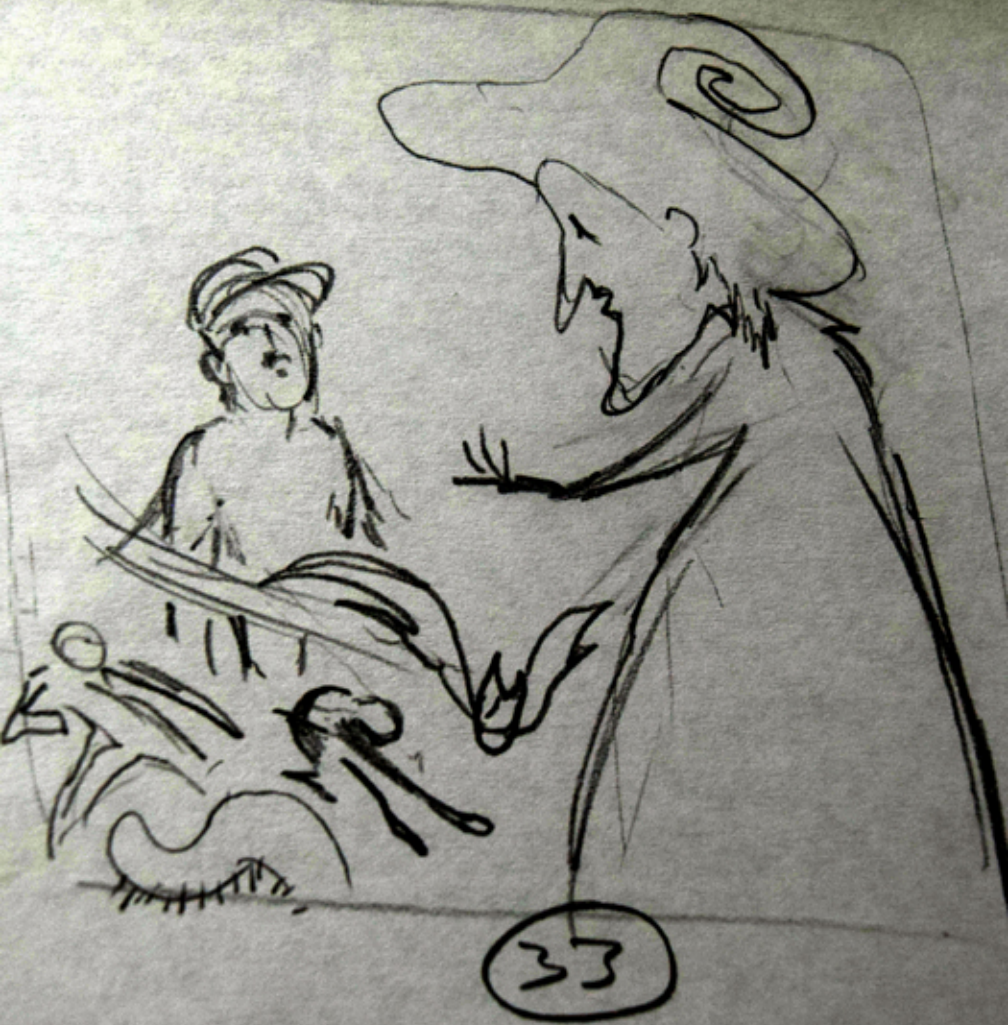


The boy finally convinces his parents to go with him on an adventure. They are unaware of the changes and continue to act like children. Ace takes them through the Dark Forest onwards to see the witch in hopes to reverse the curse.

Scriptive notes reveal this would be a double-page spread for the graphic novel format. The sketch above is the first image which leads to the second in which portrays the Dark Forest.



Ace brings his parents before the witch to show the effects of her dark magic. He demands the witch change his parents back to normal because he feels cheated and doesn't want the responsibility of having to tolerate their childish behavior.



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The witch feels sympathetic, but complains stating "Wish I could hep you, laddie...But I've lost me Book of Potions for Magical Incantations. I've looked everywhere, but it's as if it just disappeared. Without me Book of Magic, I no longer can reverse the curse."

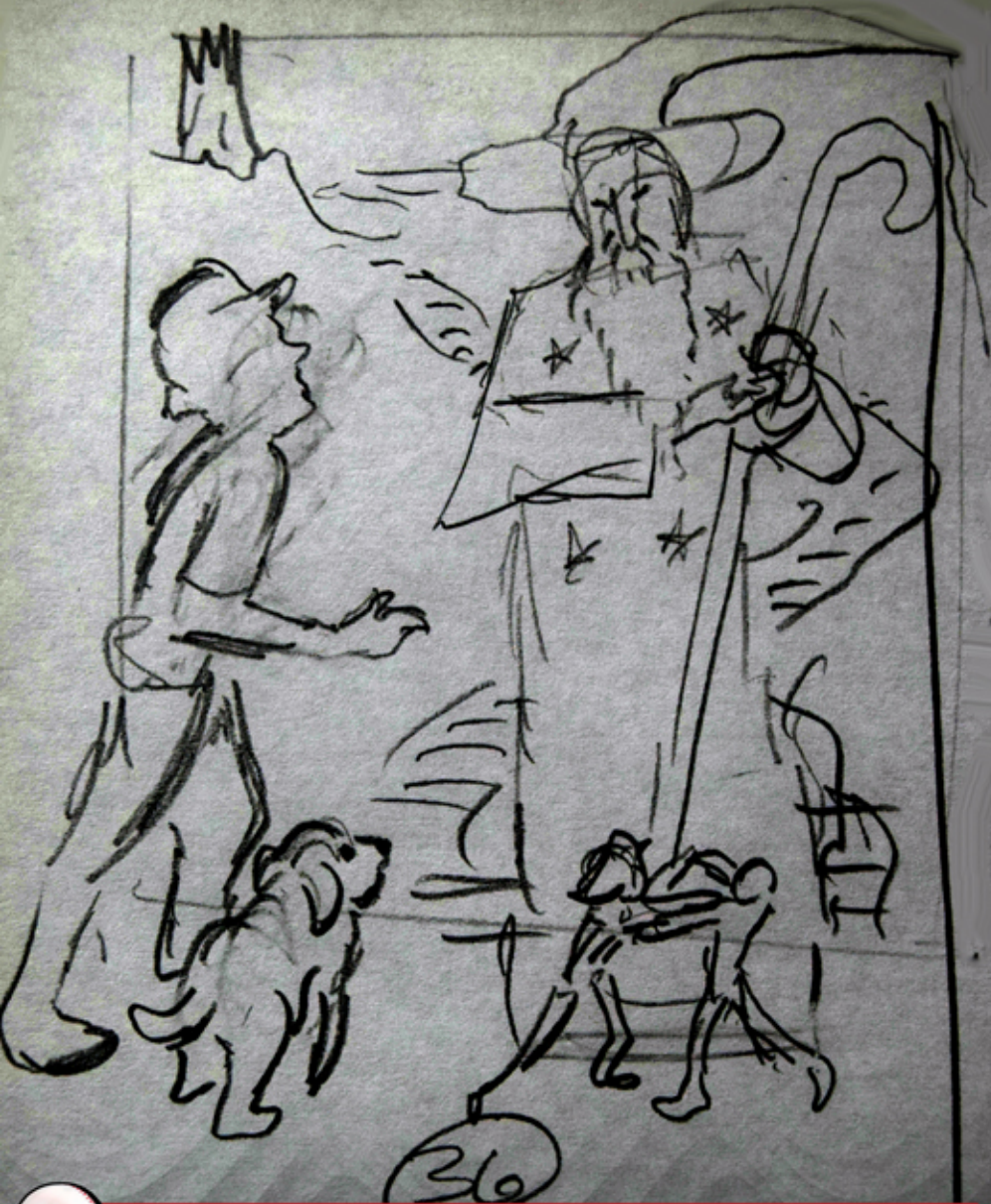
This, of course was unfortunate for Ace. It seems as if he is now stuck with parenting his own parents.



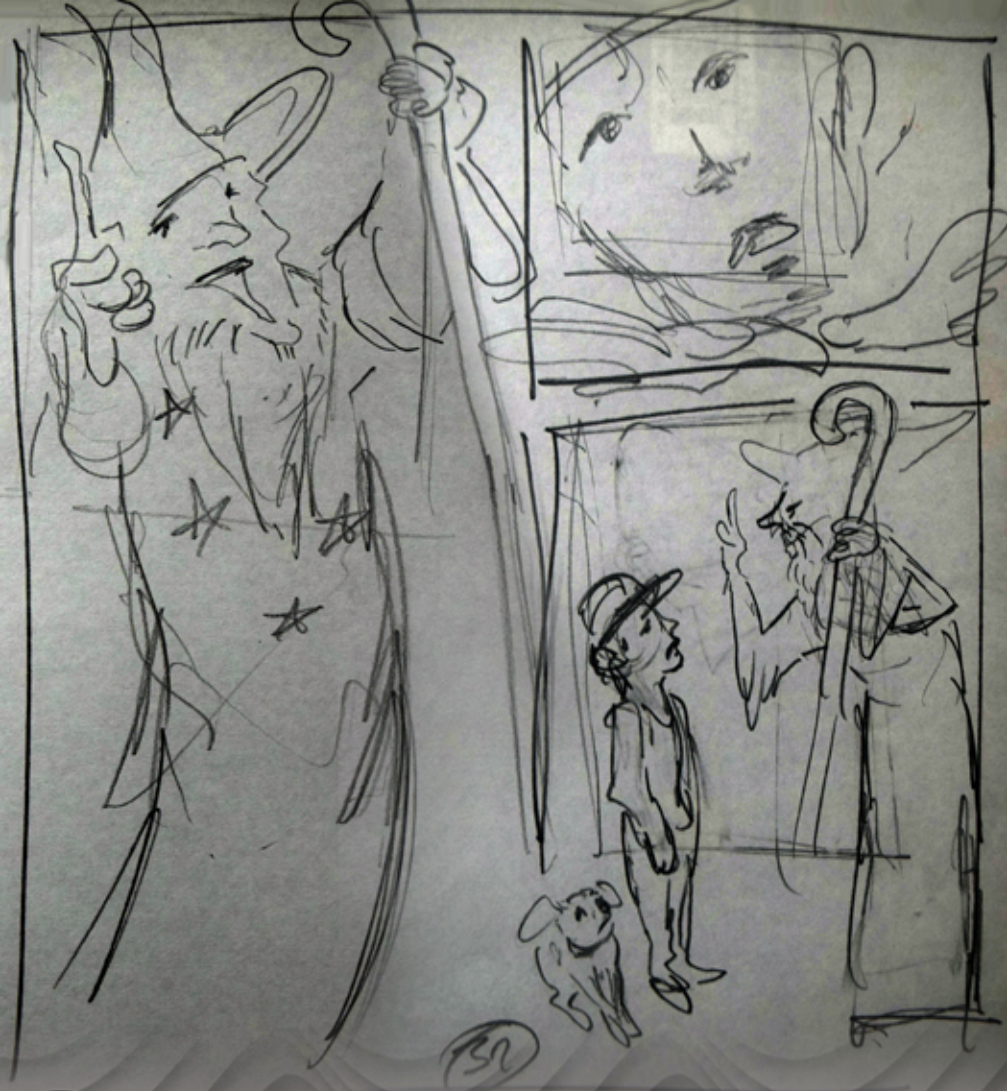
The witch does, however, offer another solution claiming a school for Wizards exists not far away and they may have the ability to perform magic of their own that would bring the boy's parents back to become themselves once again. This was at least another option to consider and until the witch could find her lost book of potions and magical incarnations, it seemed the only course of action.



Ace heads out with Rex and his childish parents towards the wizard school in hopes he will discover the means for a solution. Note the illustration as they leave includes the owl in a tree in the foreground which clasps the lost book of magic in it's talons.



At the base of the steps leading up to the Wizard's castle, Ace and his company meet Virgil, a student Wizard. The boy explains his delimma with his parents and how he is seeking the means to reverse the curse. Virgil listens intently with much interest on the matter.



It just so happened that Virgil needed one final challenge to earn his Five Star Wizard degree to graduate and become an official member of the Grand Society of Wizards. He then suggested he could perform the task himself to reverse the boy's curse to advance his own status. This gave the boy hope, yet he felt somewhat skeptical about having such a serious procedure performed by a student.







After some discussion as Ace finally commits to the Wizard student's wishes. The boy felt it could do no more harm than what had already been done. Still convinced that only magic could turn over black magic, He allowed Virgil to proceed.

Virgil raised his staff and uttered something in a more sophisticated language. Lightning flashed and thunder struck until he finally aimed his staff at the boy's parents. Smoke filled the air.



When the smoke cleared, all looked on in horror. Ace's parents had been turned into toads!

"I Wasn't expecting that," stated Virgil the student Wizard. "I need to brush up on my skills."

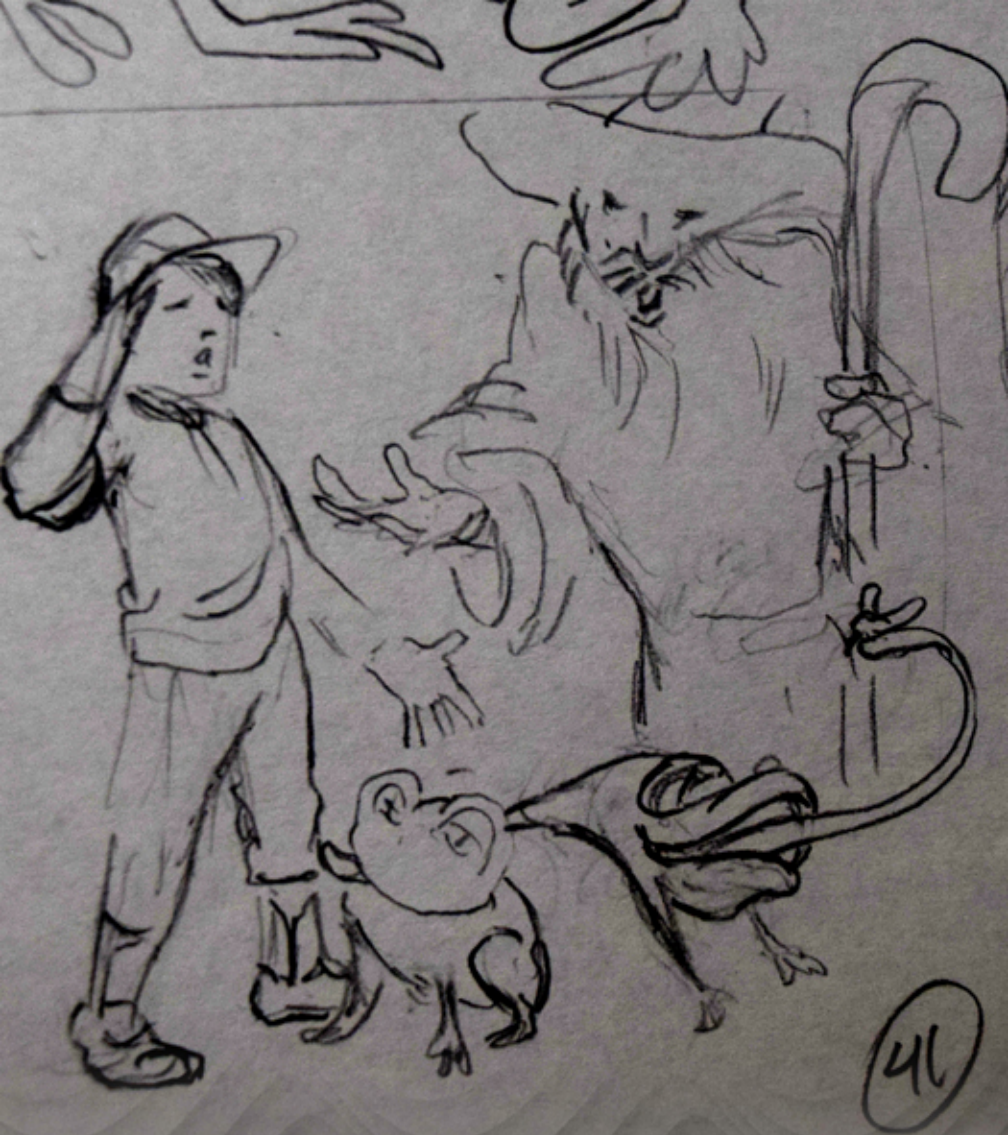
"My parents? They are frogs!" Ace gasped.

"Toads, actually," Virgil corrected the boy. "You see, the difference between the two are..."

"What difference does it make?" Ace complained. "They're no longer human."



Suddenly, one of the toads flicked out its tongue to catch a dragonfly in midair. It was difficult to distinguish between the two which toad was which parent, although Ace presumed the dragonfly eater could only have been his father.

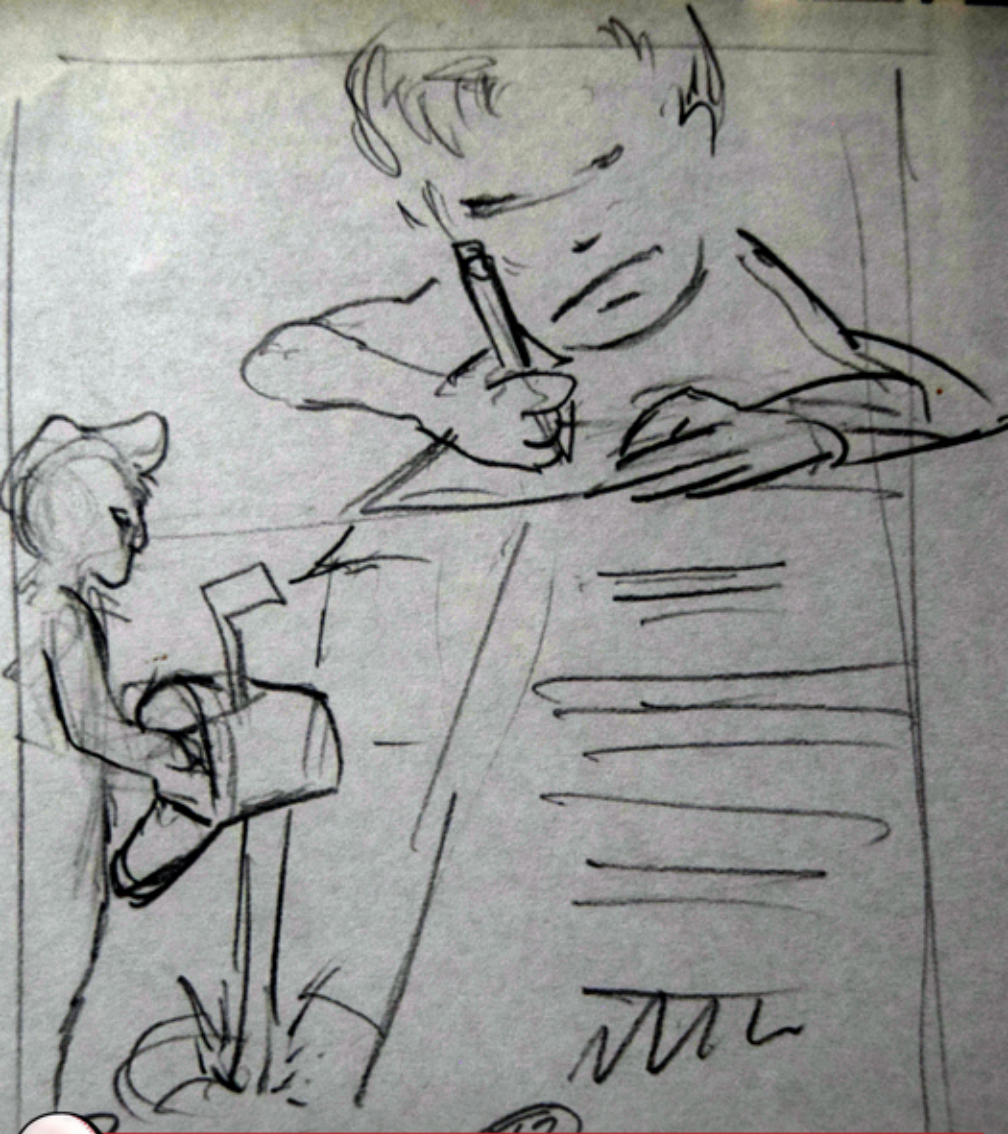


Suddenly the other toad swipes another flying insect from the air which led to much uncertainty. Virgil apologized for his unfulfilled attempt to restore the boy's parents back to normal.



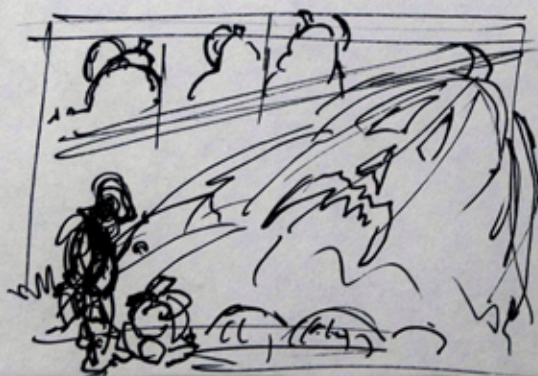
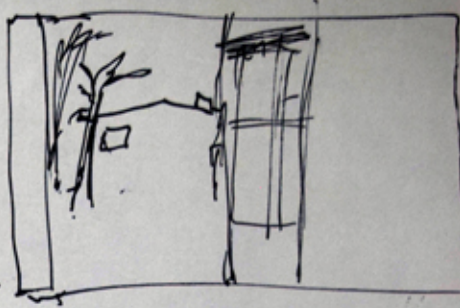
Virgil recommends Ace should visit the Council of Wizards to resolve his predicament. The toads dance and jump about unpredictably as Rex tries to avoid their antics.

Ace feels worse than ever. He has no choice but to follow the steps up towards the school of Wizards and seek help from their Council.



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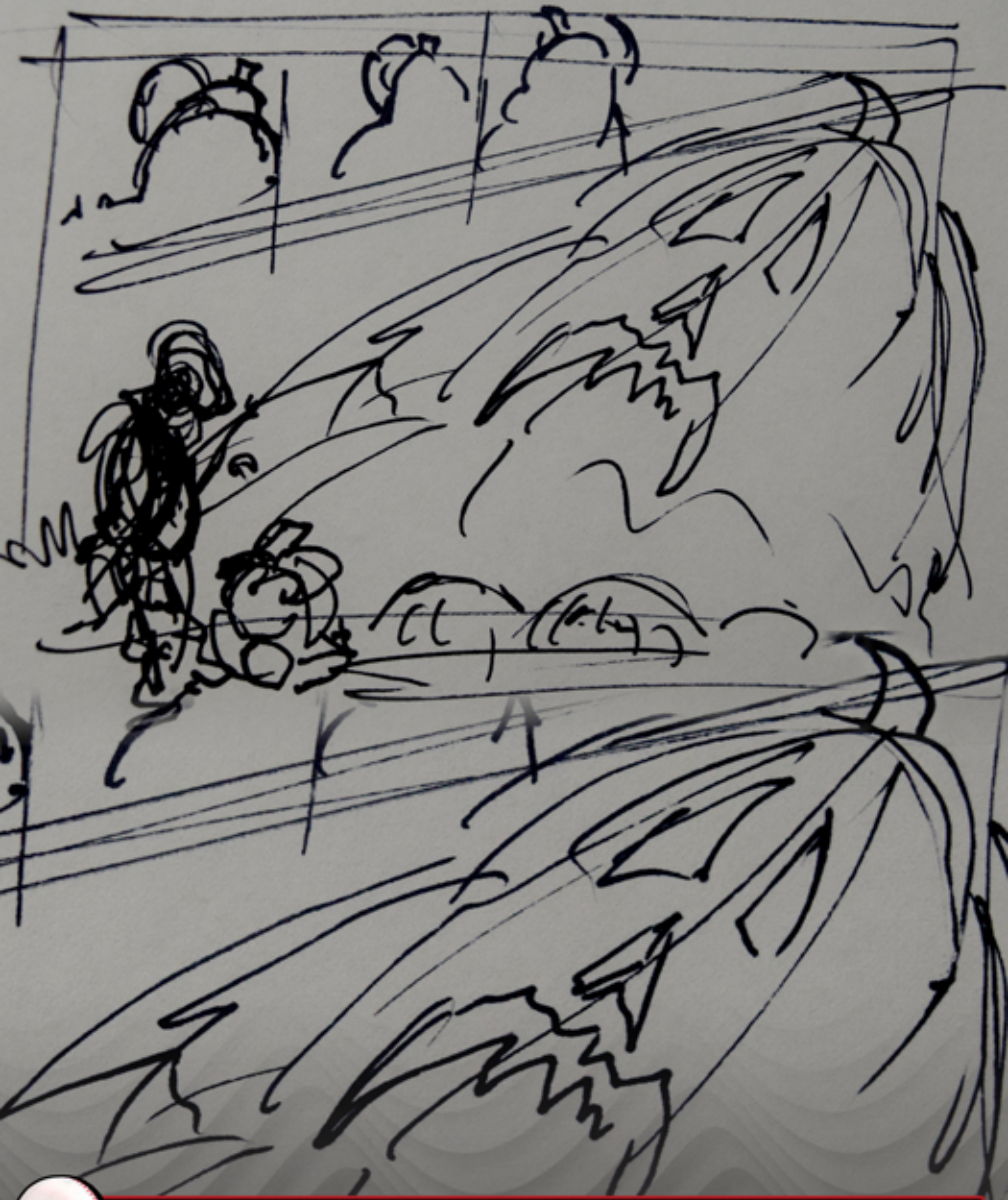
A sketch based on the original story in which I've since changed shows Ace writing a letter to mail to the Council as they requested official documentation on the matter to serve in his best interest. I think this was thinking adult problems often are more legal and require a more official approach. I dropped this portion of the story as it disrupted the flow of the fantasy elements that had become more interesting.







As noted, the original story as an illustrated graphic novel later became more of a literary novel more consistent with words as a vessel of description for readers. Having since written a few novels and short stories, I abandoned the pursuit of a graphic novel as I could embellish and add much more to the story.



The PUMPKIN KING. A sketch showing the huge pumpkin symbolic of nature, growth and imagination. Ace had been led upon a long adventure to ultimately gain wisdom from the most wisest fruit known within the reach of the universe.

CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As an artist, I was thrilled to discover those publications showing pre-production works, step-by-step procedures and anything along the lines of the creative process. One of the several reasons I felt compelled to create this sketchbook. As mentioned, the original intent was to be a graphic novel as illustrations would primarily carry the interest. Not having the luxury of time as I worked for many years in television, the magnitude of such an ambition seemed to fade.

The idea was inspired by one of my favorite graphic novels. "*The Day I Swapped My Dad For Two Goldfish*" by author Neil Gaiman and artist Dave McKean. An incredible collaboration amongst the two was enough to steer me towards that direction in which I felt would challenge my artistic endeavors. As fate would have it, I later found it much easier to turn my attention towards writing. Having a burgeoning career in graphics, illustration, animation and photography was an enhancement from one medium to the next and as I gained more confidence as an author and continued to explore it's potential for myself, I turned *The Parent Curse* into a literary novel.

Another basis for the story is based on truth. Something happened to my baseball glove as a kid growing up and playing in recreational Little League. Undoubtedly, that is where the story begins and I let my imagination go from there.

Much of the original story was extended, altered and changed through the writing process, but this *Sketchbook* makes for an interesting companion to the novel. Writing is painting with words and I am still pushing the narrative to be as descriptive as such to entertain readers as well as I've succeeded as an artist. That is what makes Graphic Novels and Sequential Art in general so interesting to me. Those artists/writers with the capacity, craftsmanship and skills to do both, I have the greatest admiration. They are truly gifted.

I wish to thank those whom supported me in this passion project. I've shared a few pages on social media, so thanks to all my friends for their encouragement. I also would like to extend a very special thanks acknowledging **Lauren Parker**, her son and family as she allowed me a photographic session with her son to build a reference guide based on the many rough sketches as I was still planning the project as an illustrated Graphic Novel.

That was many years ago and unfortunately, the disc drive that contained the images from the photo shoot became corrupt. Another reason I decided to simply write the novel instead.

I hope you enjoyed this companion Sketchbook along with the written novel. It's an adventurous read for all ages, both young and old and one in which I hope to build upon.

Thank You so very much for your interest!



Gregory Christian Ballard



Chris Ballard, known as "**Ace**" amongst close friends earned a Masters Degree in Sequential Art from the Savannah College of Art and Design

His resume includes working as a Freelance Artist on published works such as the Piers Anthony's adaptation for the novel "**On A Pale Horse**," Stephen King's graphic adaptation for the film "**The Lawnmower Man**," as well as Innovation Publishing's comic series "**Quantum Leap**." In addition, Chris has worked in Broadcast Design for Television with **CNN**, **CNN Sports Illustrated**, **CBS Atlanta**, **Turner Studios**, **PlayOn Sports**! and **Georgia Public Broadcasting**.

His work can be found on his website:



graphicsasylum.com