



THE OVERLAND

a graphic novel by
BW Bartz



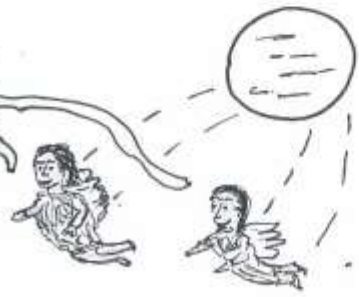
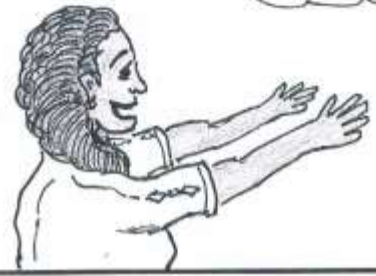
A clan mother, heavy with child, walks on a ridge overlooking Georgian Bay, in the area known then as Neyaashinigming...

And this will be her creation story...

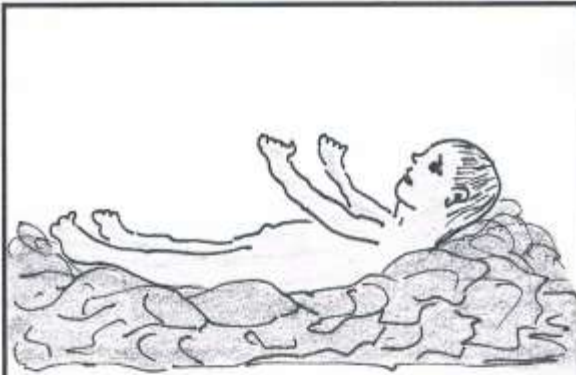


She looks to Mother Moon, at her fullest in the sky, and hears a beautiful whispering...

This will be a very special child, rooted in the power of love.



She then looks to Venus, and feels a message from The Ancestors...



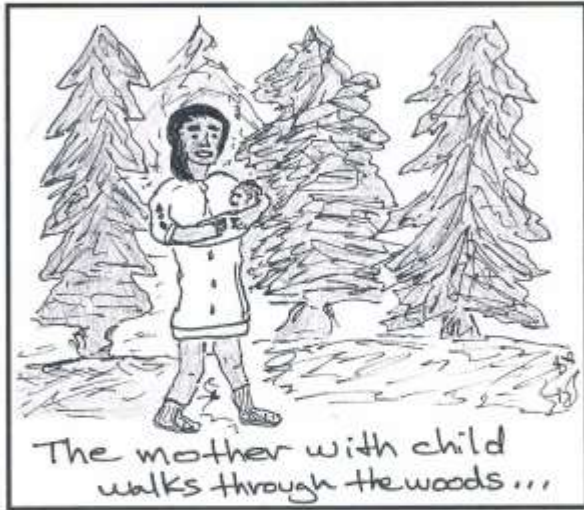
A baby daughter is born,
on a soft bed of leaves...



Then plunged into a
cold, fast-running stream...



And held up to the Moon
and stars...



The mother with child
walks through the woods...



Communing with the
Spirits of the Trees



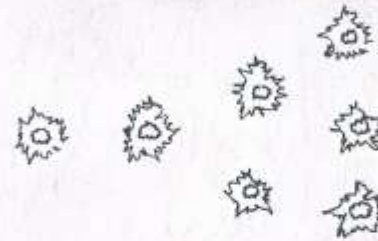
A Spirit-shaman emerges
from the folds of a tree...

The Shaman welcomes the new child...

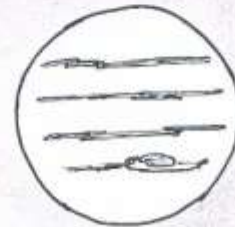


and states that her birth will fulfil an ancient prophecy...

"A great Spirit will come, to protect the lands of her people..."

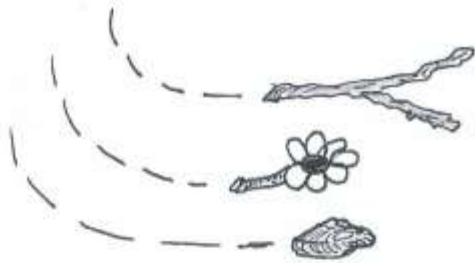


In the full depth of winter, with the Moon at its fullest, the Seven Sisters of the Pleiades burn at their brightest...

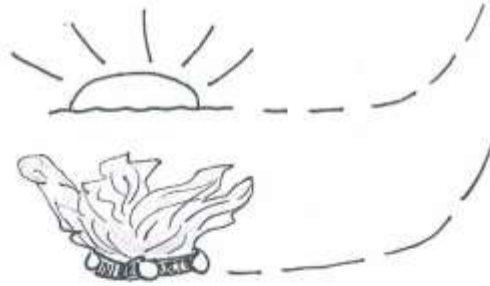


Jupiter and Neptune are at full conjunction, signifying an enormity of spiritual influences...

The Shaman calls out to the Guardians of the Four Directions...

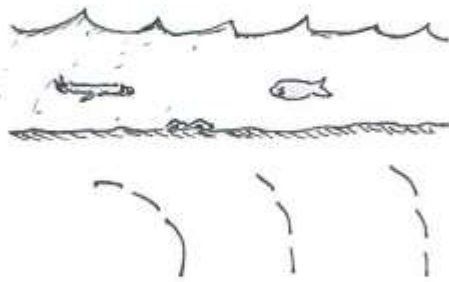


... bringing in elements of Earth From The North ~



... bringing in elements of Fire From The East ~

... bringing elements of Water from The South...

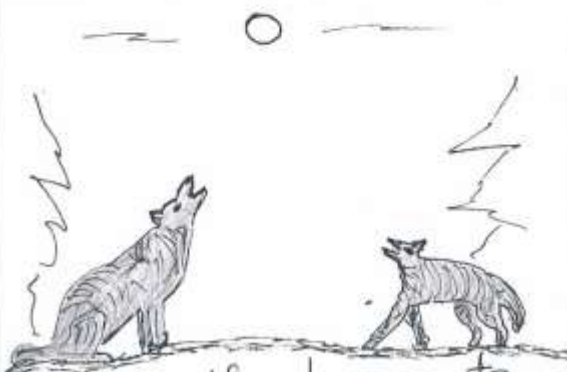


... and bringing in elements of Air from The West...

Suddenly, a bear and a fox appear from separate directions...



And a wolf and a coyote arrive, howling at the full Moon...



Over the next few moments, a weasel and a raccoon and a possum and a beaver and even a moose all arrive to bear witness to the birth of Ived'i ...



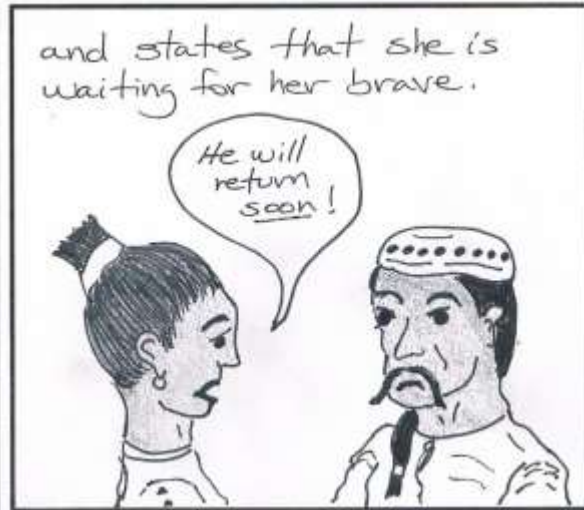
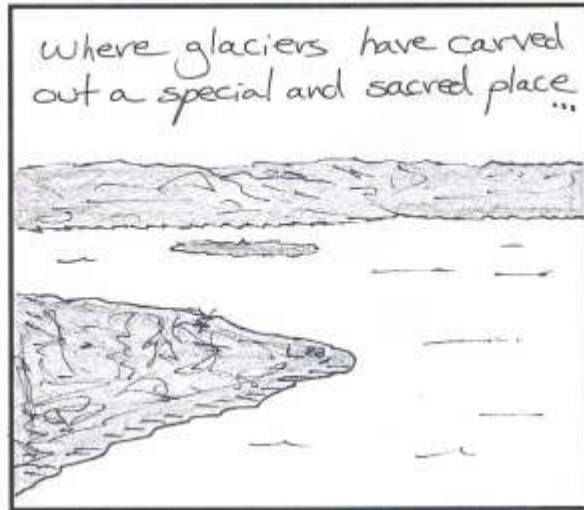
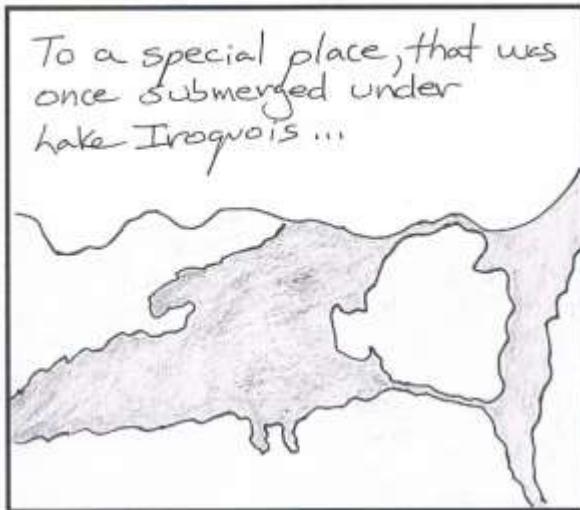
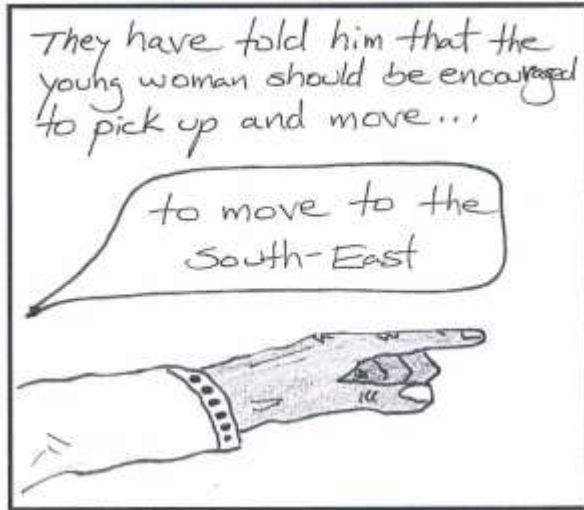
Birds fly into nearby trees, to trill out a chorus of welcome...



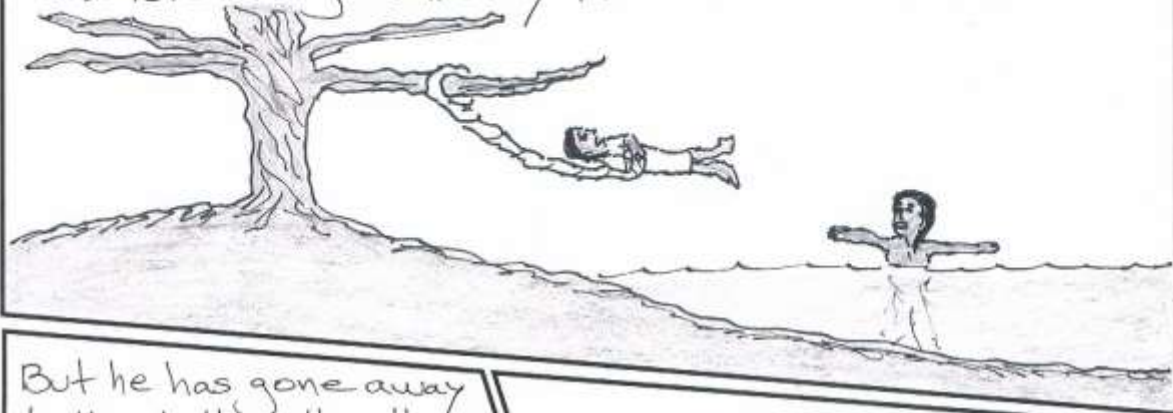
And a snapping turtle and a painted turtle break through the ice on a pond, signalling Ived'i to seek out their wisdom over her life...



★ Twenty Winter Solstices later... the Shaman at her birth calls Ived'i to his shelter in the side of the Escarpment...



They had been close from a very young age, with friendship and love being fuelled by their immersion in nature...



But he has gone away to the North with other warriors, to take back lands that another tribe has encroached upon...

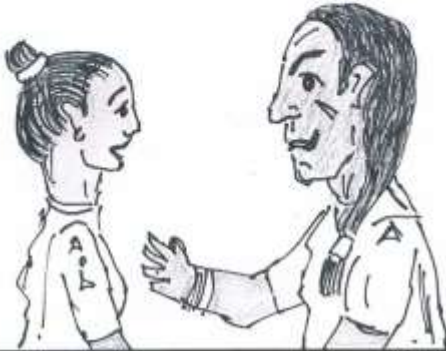


So she waits, and waits, and waits...

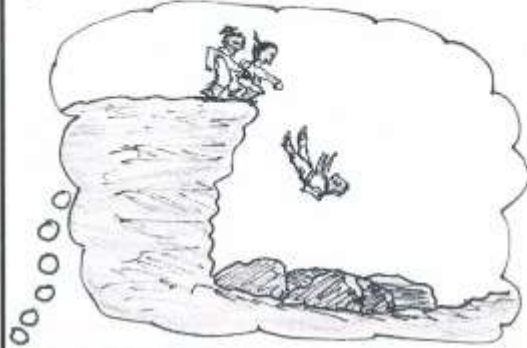


But he does not return with the other warriors...

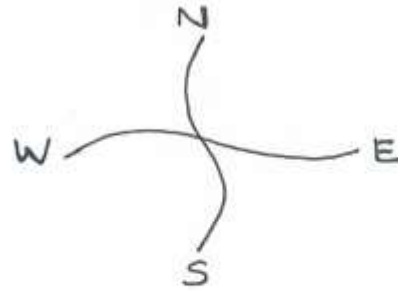
Ived'i goes to meet her brave's father, asking for his advice...



He shares that his heart is broken, as he has been told in a dream that his son will not return...

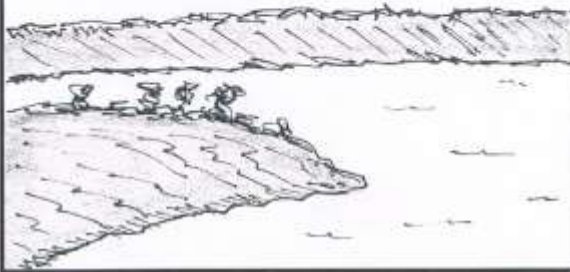


He tells her to follow the ancient practices, asking her elders in Spirit for direction...



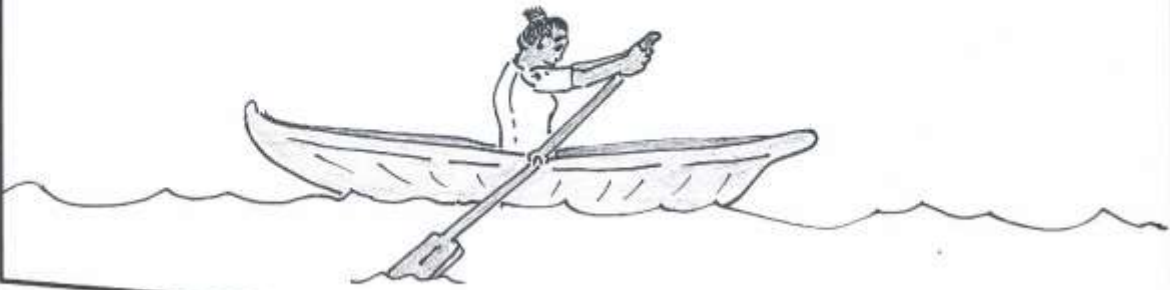
She does this, and is guided to seek advice from the elements in the four directions...

From the North, the Earth element tells her she is needed to protect the land and its people...



From the East, the Fire element of the Sun tells her to burn with a resolute focus...

From the South, the Water element tells her to be fluid and dynamic, never resting...



From the West, the Wind element tells her to be an agent of change...

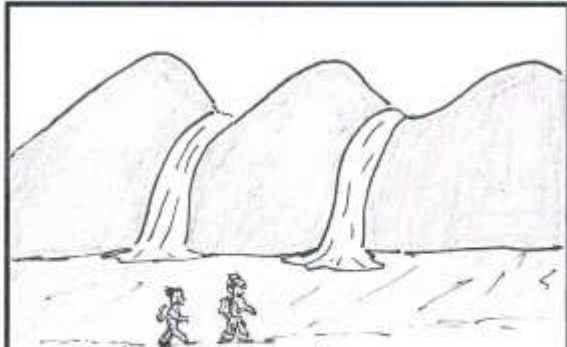
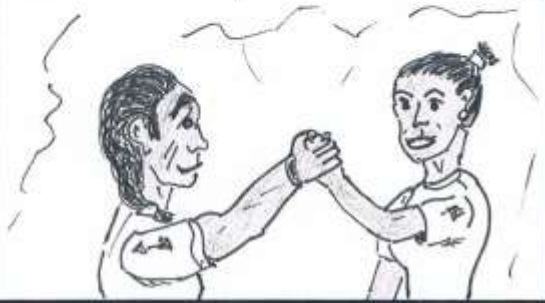


With this elemental knowledge, she goes on an interior journey with her birthing shaman, who speaks an ancient language to guide their steps...



They come across a group around a fire, who invite her into their circle...

These are her ancestors, and they tell her to build upon their collective strength and their desire to keep the tribe strong...

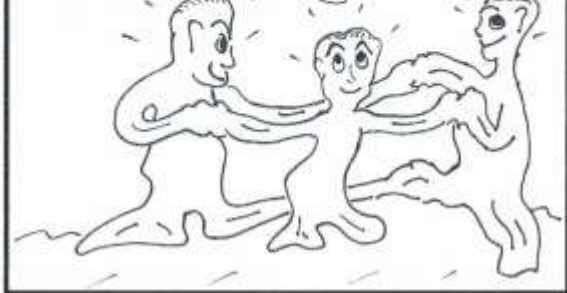


The travellers then cross a vast space, marked by waterfalls and hills ...

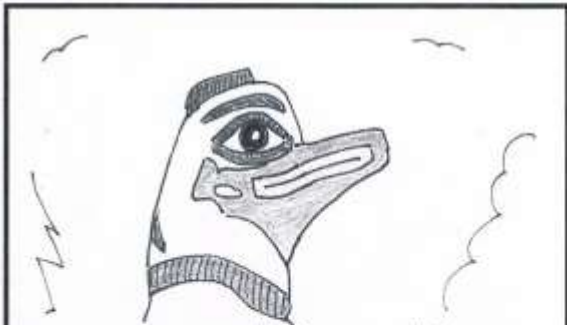
and where they experience bouts of turbulent wind...



They come across a grouping of loosely-formed individuals, who manifest and flow into one another as Beings of Light...



They tell Ived'i that they are her descendants, and have sought her out to pass on subtle messages.

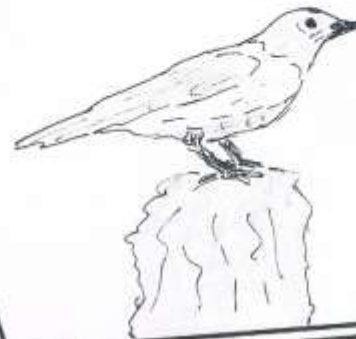


One by one, they unveil her Totem Animals, the archetypal animal energies that will guide her life...

The Beaver, symbolizing hard work...



The Bluebird, symbolizing happiness...



The Moose, symbolizing gravitas and presence...



And The Weasel, symbolizing playfulness and trickery, a reminder not to take herself too seriously...



She comes out of her journeying reverie, spent but thoughtful...



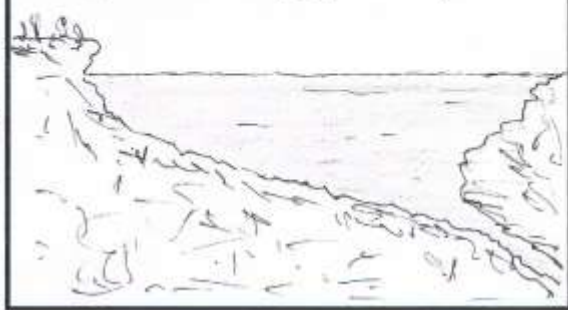
On the shore of the bay, she is visited by the spirit of her young brave...



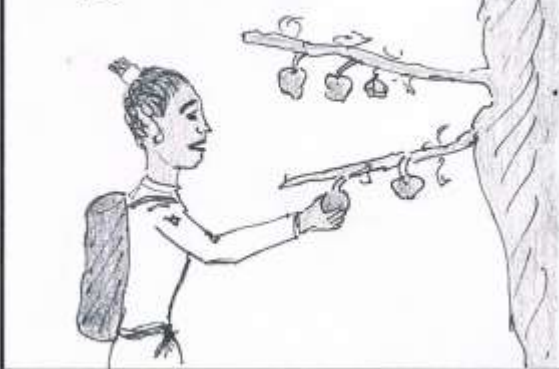
She leaves at dawn, following the escarpment trails...



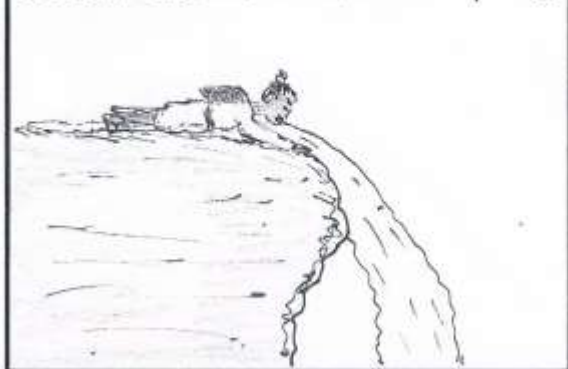
Her guides have told her to keep going until she sees a vista of a great lake, akin to where she has grown up...



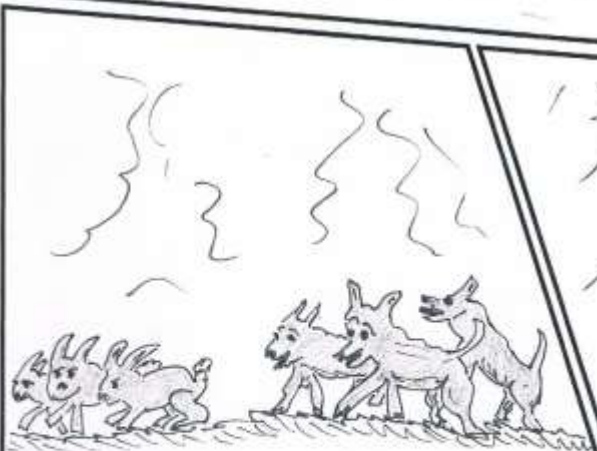
She forages in the forest, living on nuts and fruits...



and she drinks from the rushing waters that fall as cataracts over the escarpment..



I've 'I sees a pack of wolves and hangs back in the forest, and watches the pack take down an old and crippled deer...



The next day she sees a passel of coyotes hunt several rabbits in an open meadow...



She starts to wonder if she needs more food than nuts and berries...

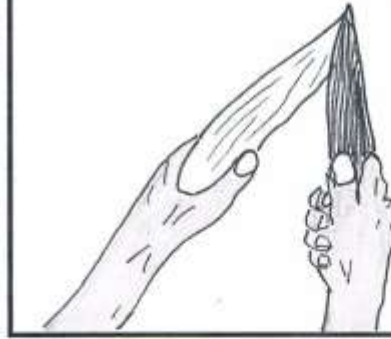


I've 'I comes upon a large pond bordered by wetlands. On one side she sees a raccoon and on the other side a red-tailed fox. As if on cue, they each lunge towards a jumping frog...

She has been taught the ancient ways, so she goes on bended knee to thank the Spirit of the frogs...



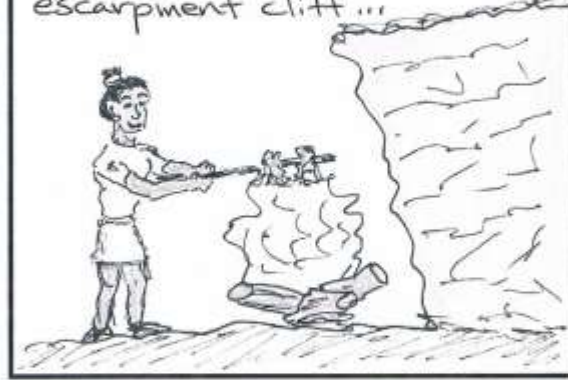
I'ved'I takes a stick and sharpens it to a fine point...



And in a matter of minutes, she has two large frogs impaled for her supper...



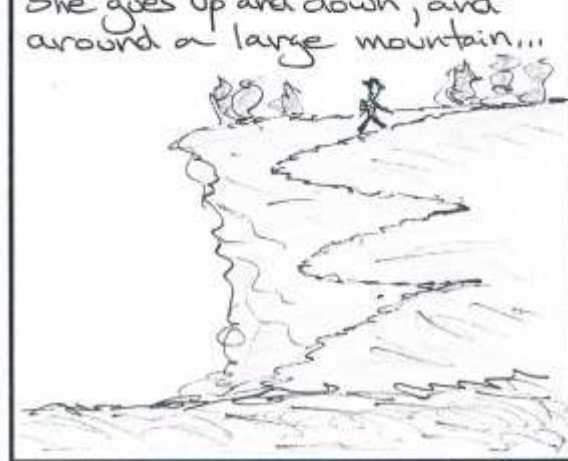
To be roasted over an open fire in the shadow of a steep escarpment cliff...



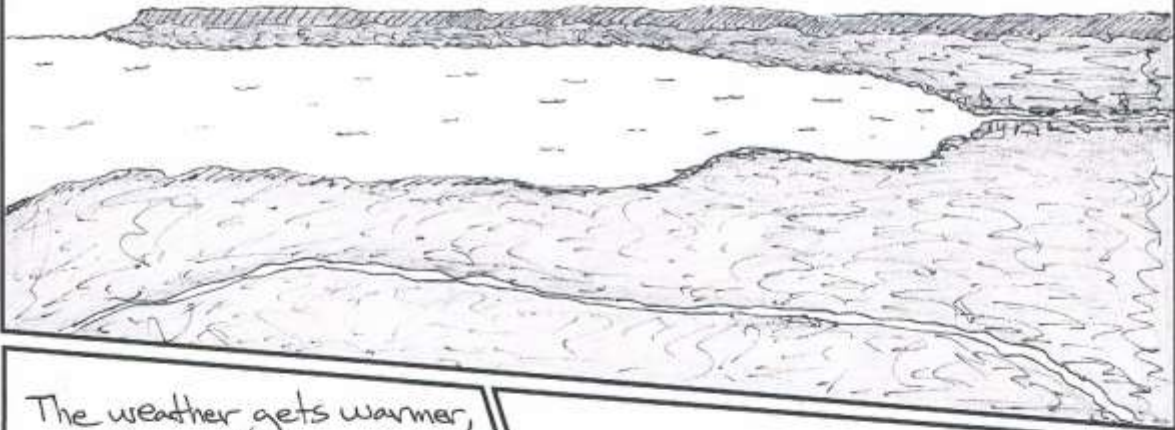
Birds sing her awake, and give her hope that she is on the right path...



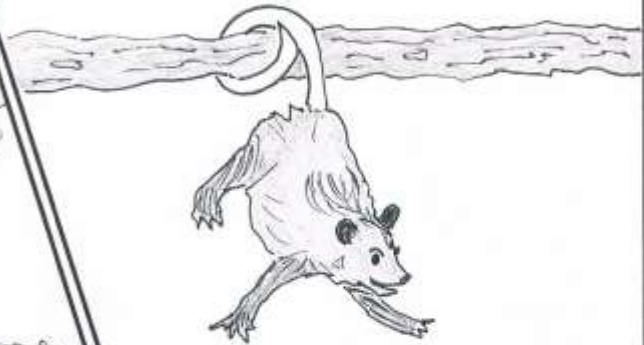
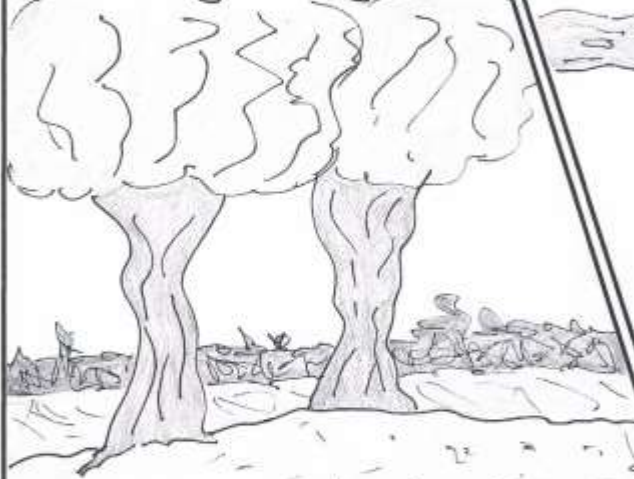
She goes up and down, and around a large mountain...



and starts to see glimpses of a large waterbody in the distance...



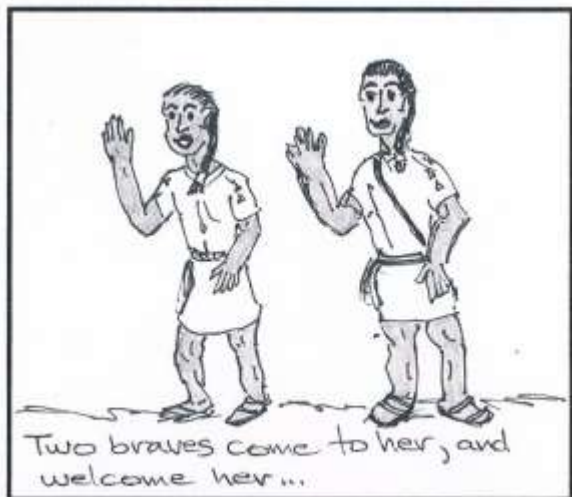
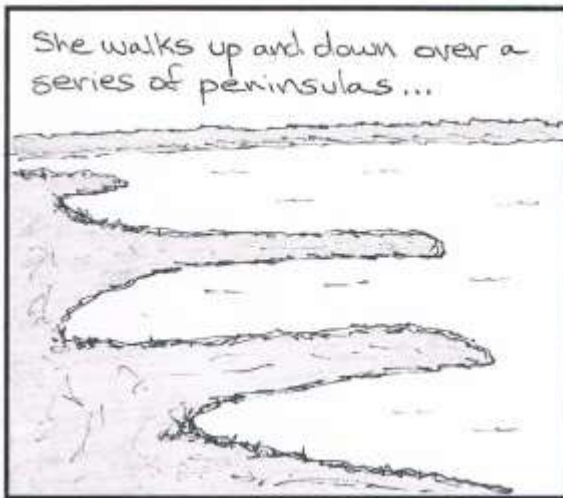
The weather gets warmer,
and the vegetation gets lusher



A possum hangs in a tree,
swinging goofily, and calls out
to her...



The little possum leads the way, almost dancing over a series
of natural steps, and tells her not to go further west, as that
trail leads to Bear Valley, where some danger lurks...



and lead her to the longhouse of the Clan Mother...



Only women are capable of bringing life into this world



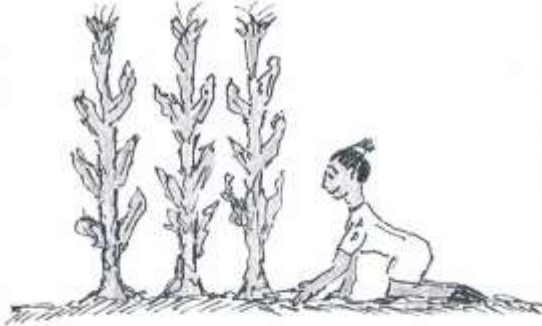
The Clan Mother welcomes her, and tells Ired'i a fundamental truth...

Many turtles live in and near this wetland; the tribe reveres them and calls the people living here a Turtle Clan...



Spirit has told the Clan Mother that a young woman will soon arrive, to protect the land and to connect it more strongly to the ancestors and the descendants...

As Ived'i shifts into her new life,
she immerses into her environment,
in the cultivation of corn...



the making of pottery...

fishing in the nearby waterbody...



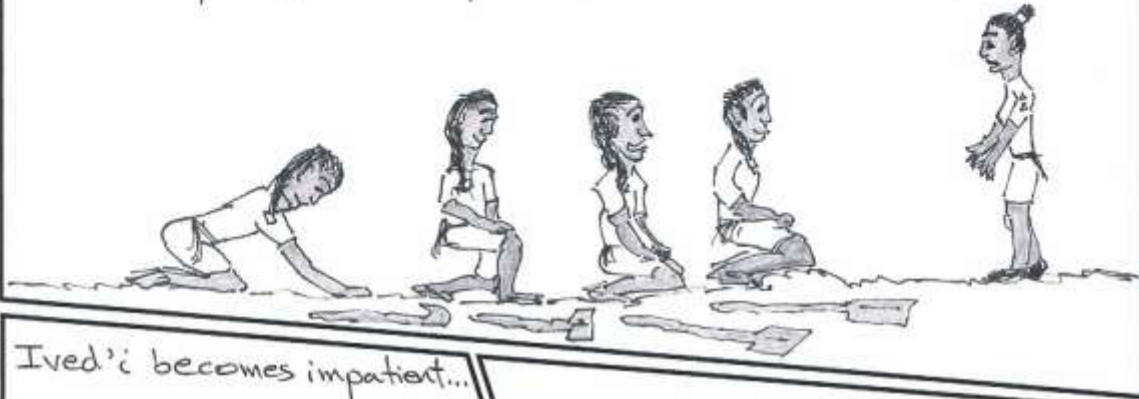
marvelling at the birds...

honouring the turtles...



and the nurturing of seeds
into plants...

One day, she comes across a group of men working, and they immediately drop their implements and kneel down to her ...



Ived'ci becomes impatient...



But I am a simple young woman! How am I to save the land!



It has been prophesied that you are the one to save the land.

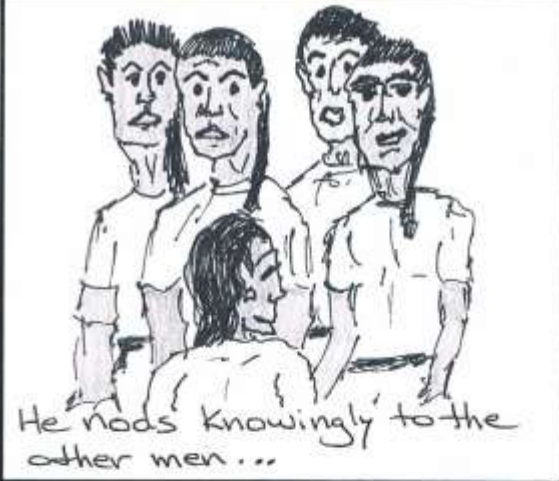


She retorts back ...



The men lead her uphill to a shelter in the trees, from which emerges a wizened shaman who is sight-challenged ...

The shaman feels her face,
slowly and reverentially...



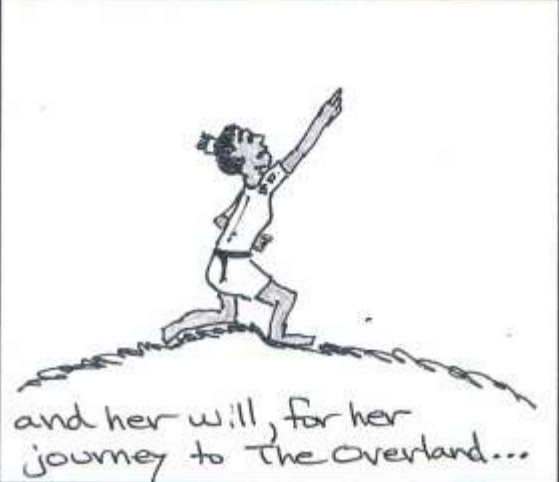
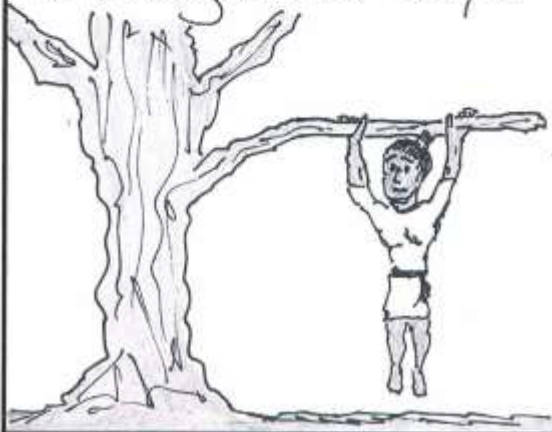
He nods knowingly to the
other men...

and tells the young woman
that to realize her destiny...



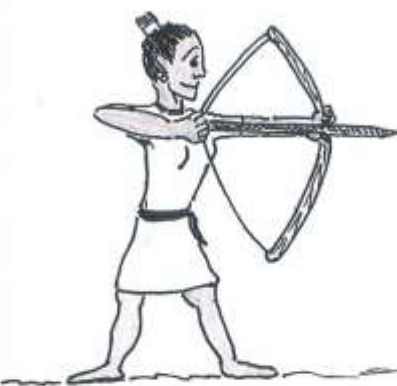
He tells her these preparations
will be demanding and
vigorous...

to strengthen her body...



and her will, for her
journey to the Overland...

With the help of the wizeden shaman, she starts to develop three sets of rituals and knowledge that will prepare her for the ordeals of the journey...



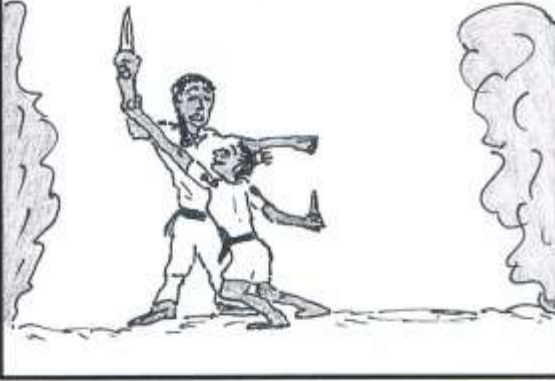
In the physical realm, she will develop strength, balance, flexibility and accuracy with the bow...

In the mental realm, she will develop focus, positivity and a commitment to the collective...

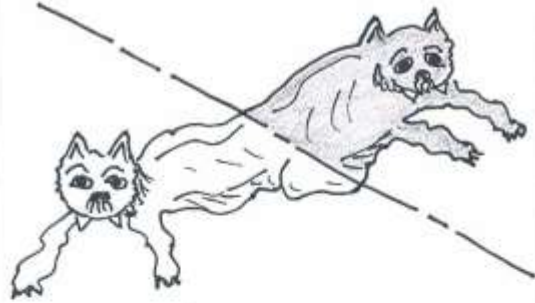


And in the spiritual realm, she will learn that Light dominates shadow, the difference between Power and Force, and how to be still and listen...

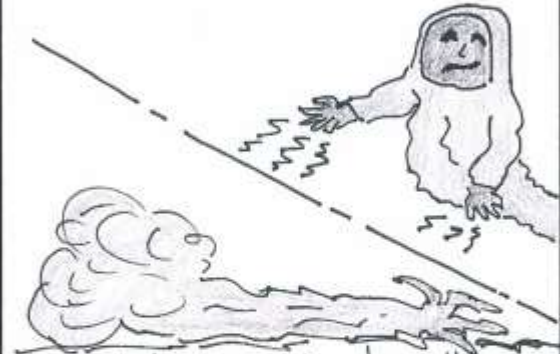
Ived'i trains with physical warriors to be able to conquer foes in spirit...



The shaman tells her that challenges in the physical world are mirrored in some Zones of the spirit world...



He prepares her for forces in The Overland who play with the light...



Using it to their advantage there and to harm nature back in the physical world...

After months of training, she is ready to journey to The Overland with the wizened shaman...



Ived'i says goodbye to her new clan mother, before she girds up for her journey...

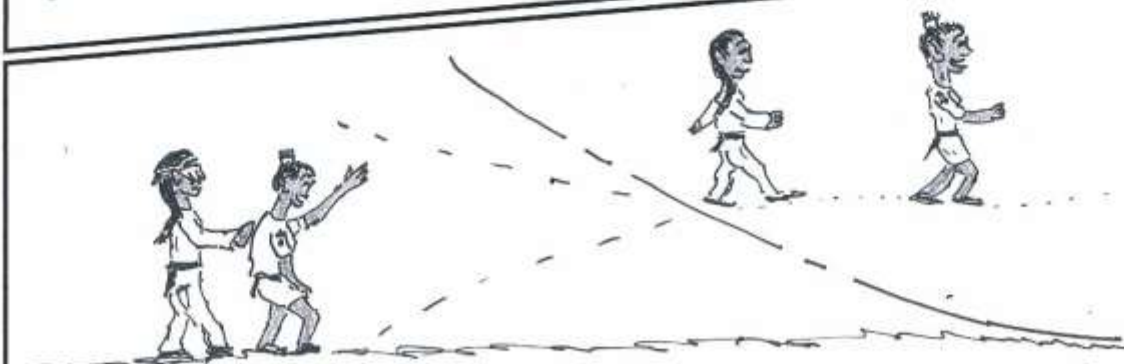
The Circle of Warriors congregates, and chant and sing and drum as Ived'i sits in the middle of the circle...



The wizened shaman comes out of his shelter, beating his drum and speaking in an ancient language...

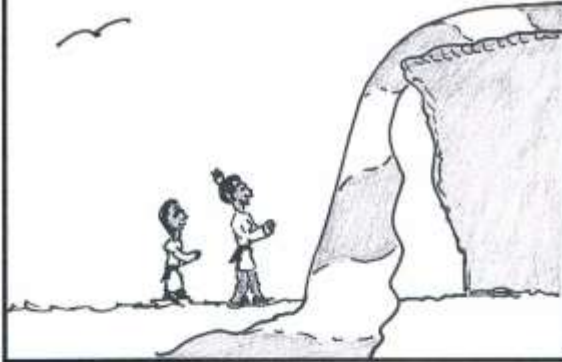


The warriors lay down flowers and burn tobacco as rituals to honour their elder...

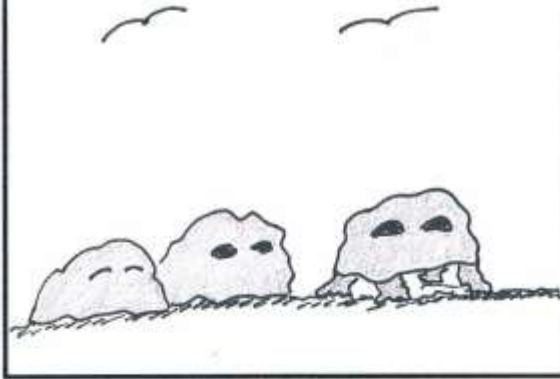


The shaman puts his hand on Ived'i's back, and with the help of more drum beating, they both cross the threshold to The Overland..

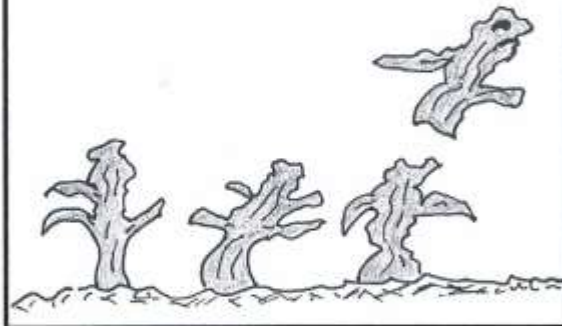
They cross over a strange terrain, with water falls that run hot and then cold...



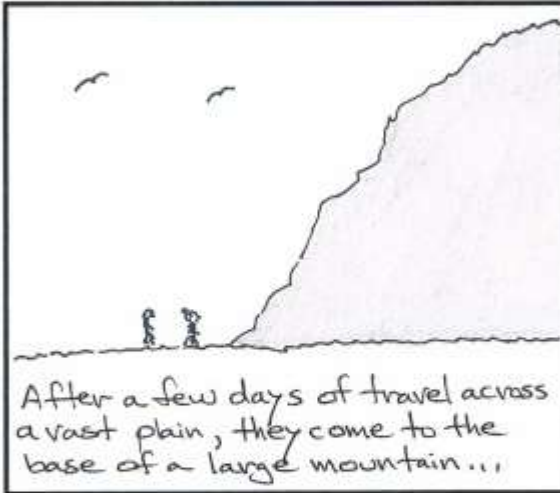
and rocks that turn into animals that shuffle away...



and short trees that sway in the wind and then fly away as great winged birds...



After a few days of travel across a vast plain, they come to the base of a large mountain...



there stands a circle of warriors, painted for battle, and armed with sharpened arrowheads...



the shaman asks their intent, and their leader replies they plan to make an assault on an encampment at the top of the mountain...

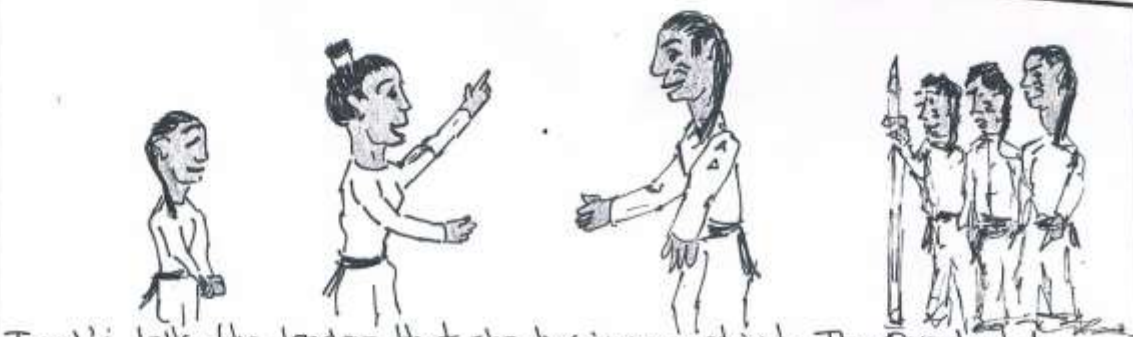
The leader shares that the warriors formerly lived on the land near the lake, and since they have passed into Spirit they now guard the land...



In previous skirmishes, their only weakness has been a portal through their armor at their hearts, that may be vulnerable to an arrow or other weapon...



The upper encampment is made up of large and fierce shadow-warriors, who are reputed to grab their opponents and dash them on the rocks with their bare hands...

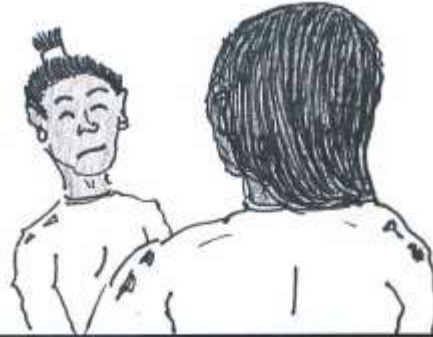


Ired'i tells the leader that she has journeyed into The Overland to obtain the knowledge and wisdom that will allow her to fulfill her destiny...

The leader poses a fundamental question...



But Ived'i falters upon trying to answer...

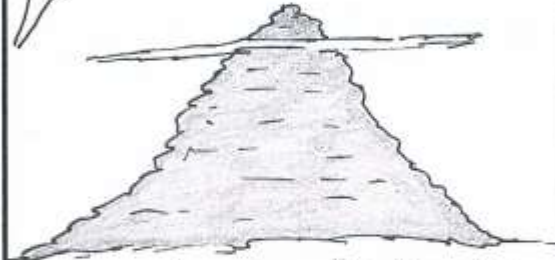


How to become fearless, so that she will be able to protect the land for all of our descendants...



The wizened shaman steps in...

this knowledge resides at the top of the mountain

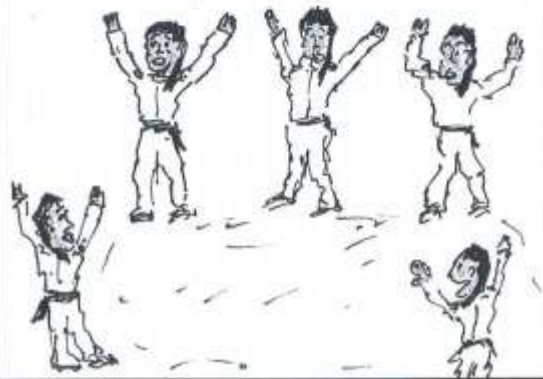


and reveals where this knowledge lies...

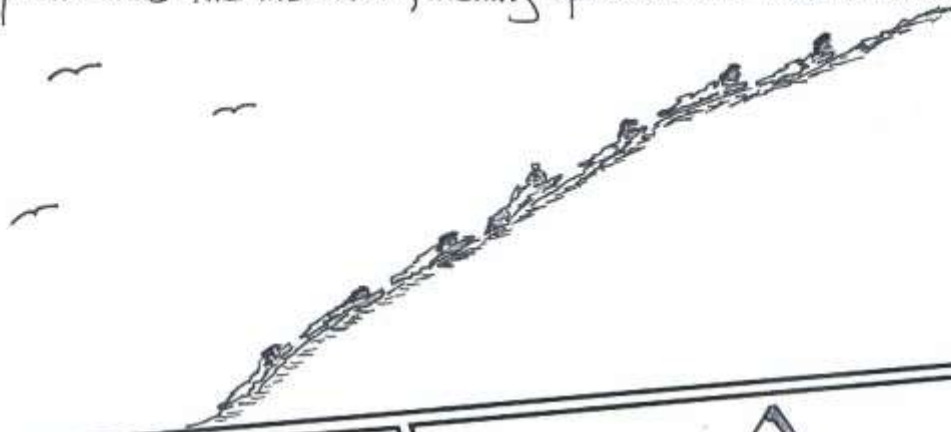
Ived'i regains her confidence...



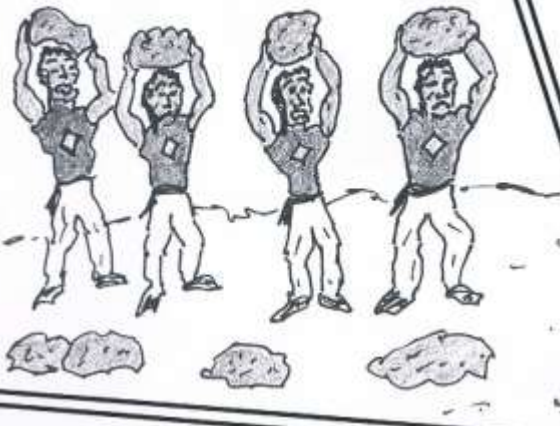
And the circle of warriors let out a lusty cheer...



They all climb the mountain, inching upwards on their bellies...



Suddenly, a raft of immense guards rise up, holding huge rocks above their heads...



Ired'i leans back with her bow...

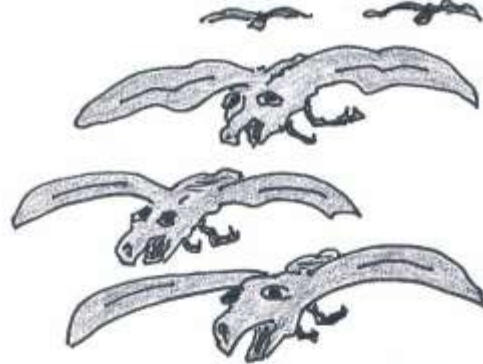


And pierces their inner portal with a well-placed arrow, over and over...

As the dust clears, they appear to be safe...



but then a horde of massive crows streams down the mountain...



These are the totem animals of the malevolent warriors!

The wizened shaman yells out...



that the deaths of the warriors have unleashed the spirits of their guardian animals...



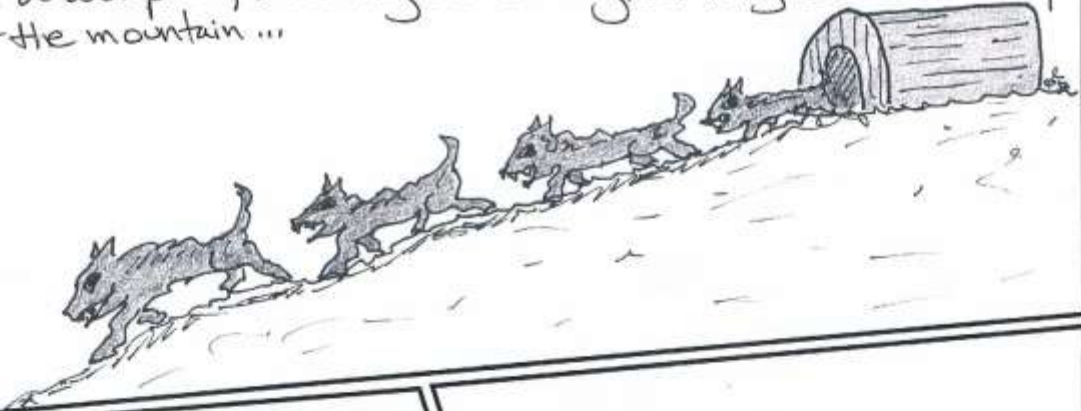
Intent on revenge, the crows attack the shaman...



But Ived'i picks them off one by one, in a flurry of arrows...



Everything goes quiet for a moment, then there is a low rumbling of a wolfpack, streaming out of a great longhouse at the top of the mountain ...



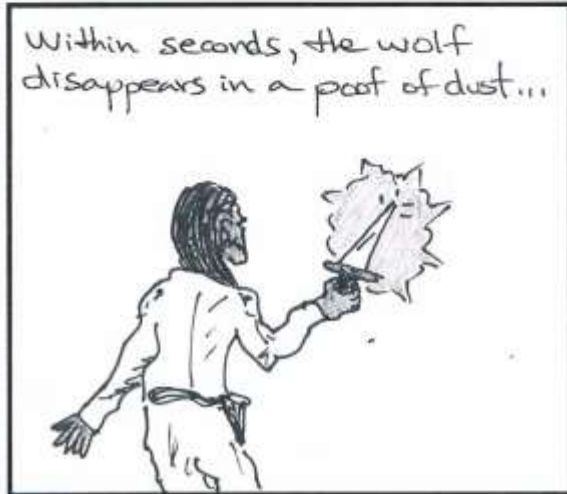
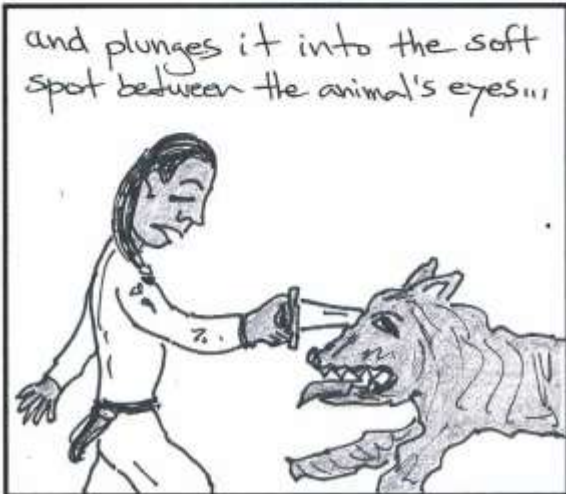
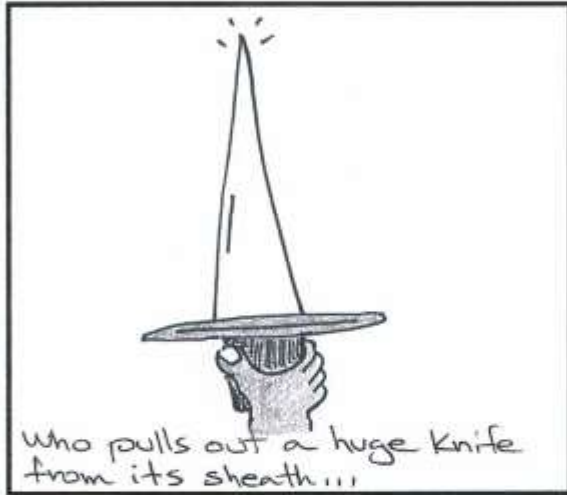
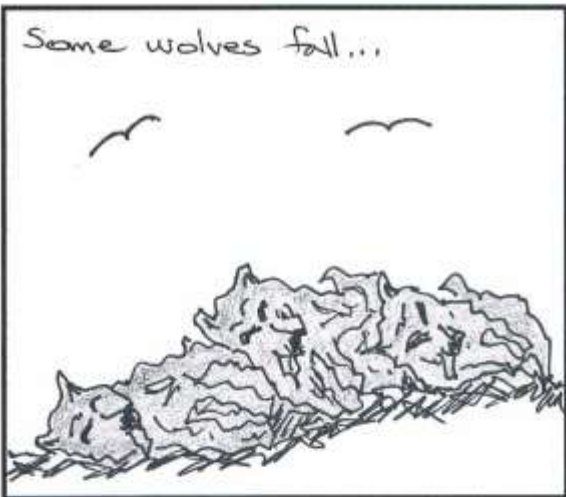
Gnashing their teeth, they bear down on Ired'i and the shaman and the warriors...



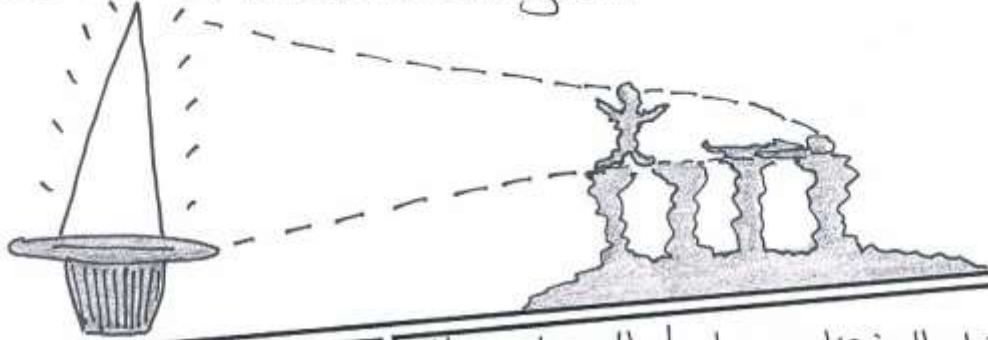
The wizened shaman yells out to form a pack behind him ...



And he leans down and snarls out venom that creates a poisonous fog towards the advancing wolfpack ...



The knife gleams brightly, and the shaman explains to Ived'i that it is made of crystallized Light, and that no evil force rooted in darkness can withstand its strength...



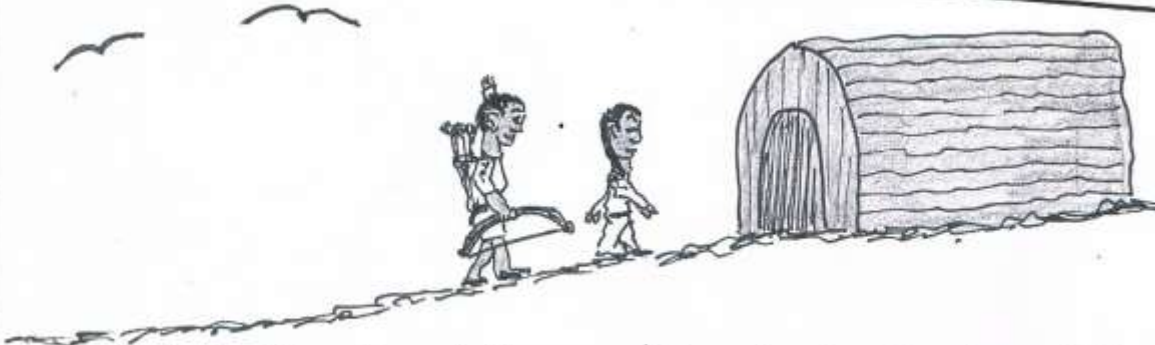
Ived'i asks the shaman if there are more challenges to arise...



We have seen evil crows and raging wolves, what is next?

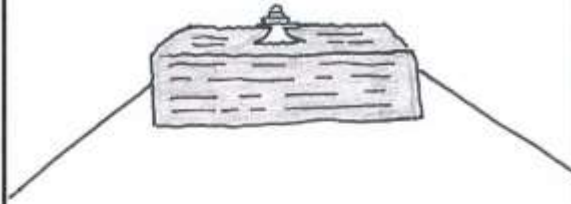
He replies that she works in the Light, and has more totem resources to draw from...

The shadow warriors were rooted in Darkness, and only had two totems from which to draw... you have four totems

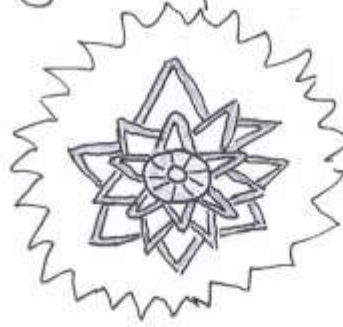


They climb to the top of the mountain and enter the door of the grand longhouse...

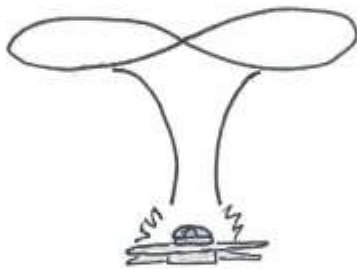
Inside, all is quiet. An altar made of rich, dark wood lies in the centre...



and on it rests a silver amulet, glowing with a supernatural light...

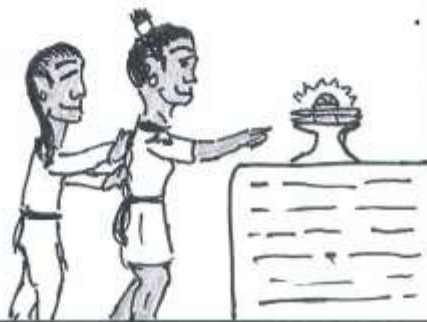


The shaman tells Ived'i that this is the Great Amulet of Universal Power...



and that it was stolen from Manitou by the leader of the Dark Warriors...

He nudges her to pick it up, to seize it as her birthright...

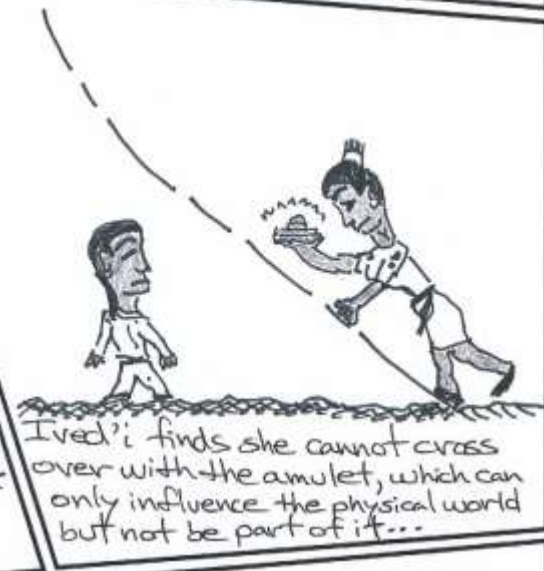


She immediately feels light flooding through her, making her strong body even stronger and celestial in nature...

They journey back down the mountain, weaving around the carcasses of the Dark Warriors and their totem crows and wolves...



They cross the broad plain, and at the interface between The Overland and the physical world, something mysterious arises...

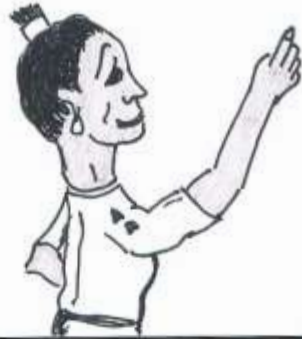


Ived'i finds she cannot cross over with the amulet, which can only influence the physical world but not be part of it...

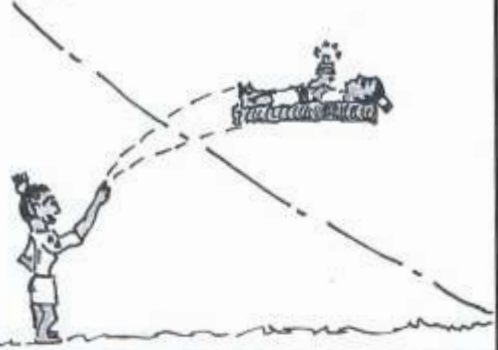


The shaman tells her she must leave part of her Soul to stay and guard the amulet, and the other part can return to the Head of the Lake...

Ived'i finds she has changed,
and has grown wiser....



with a permanent energetic
connection to her soul fragment
resting in The Overland...

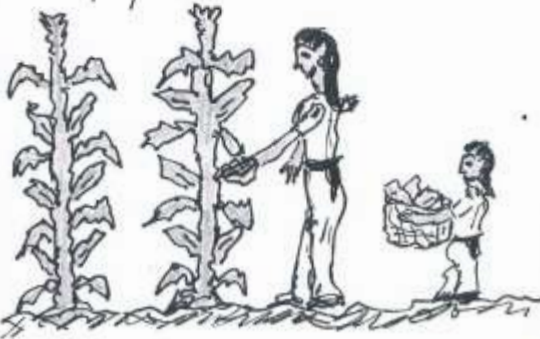


Back home, she shares
knowledge with her tribe...

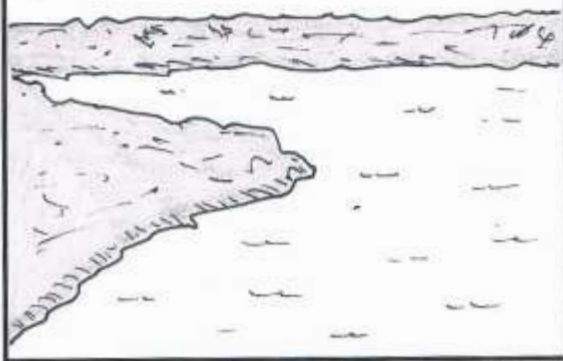


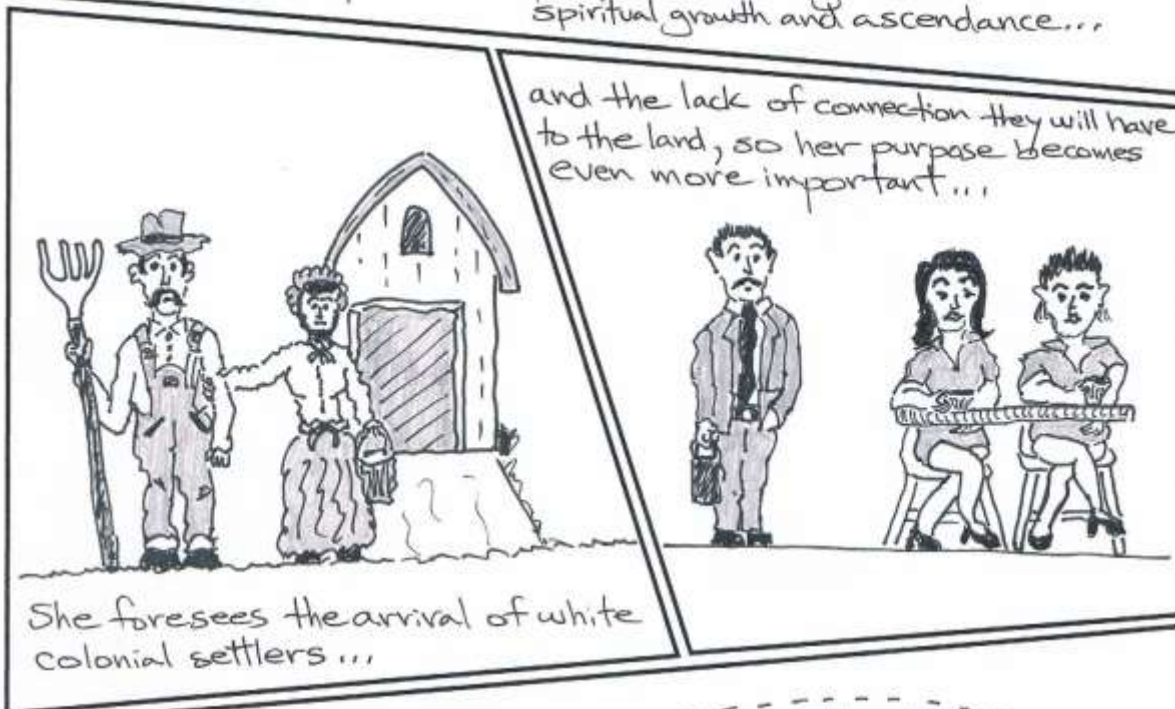
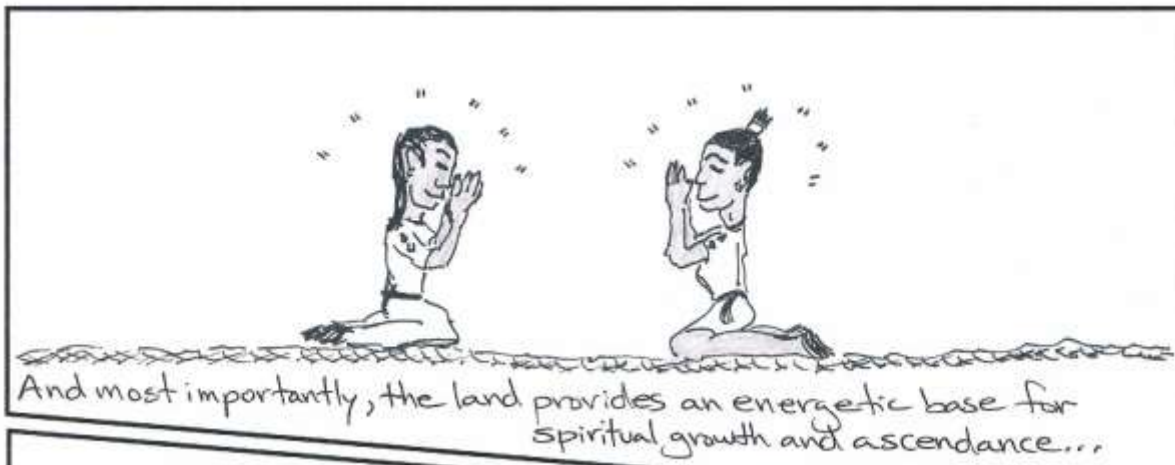
They are meant to live freely
but reverentially on the land...

The land provides food and wood
for physical sustenance...



The land provides beauty and
connection for emotional sustenance...





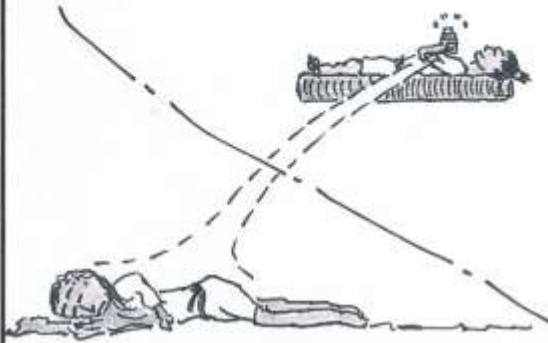
Ived'i lives a full life,
bearing three daughters...



to whom she teaches the
mysteries of the Earth and
The Overland...



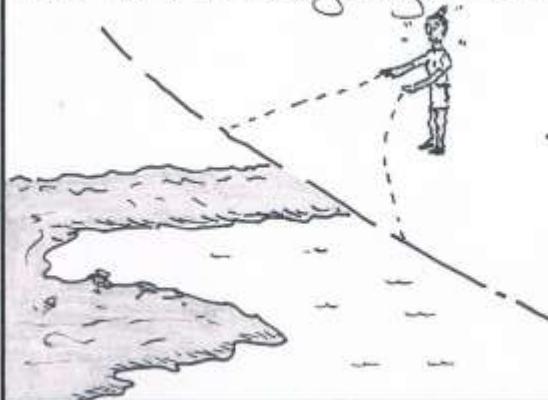
★ On her transition many years
later, she flows back to the
amulet...



And with the amulet at her breast,
she ascends above the Council
of Warriors...



The protection of The Land is
now her eternal guiding mission...



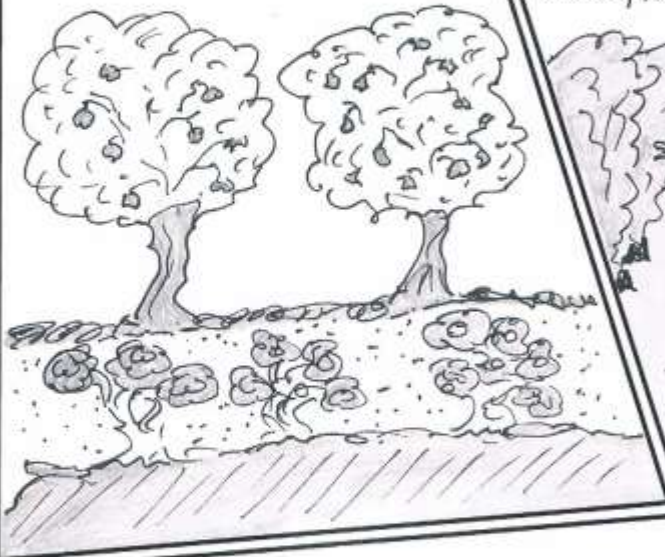
to allow for its re-awakening
and re-birthing...



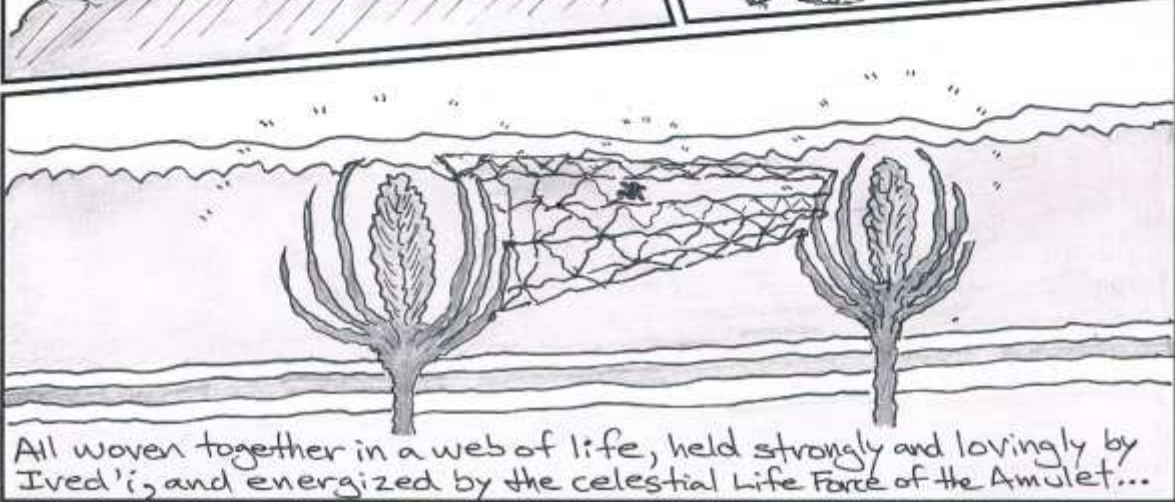
Which in turn allows the spiritual ascension of all peoples living on or near the land, this special land, The Land...



The Land is protected,
bearing fruits and flowers...



and becoming a home for animals,
birds, reptiles, insects and humans...



All woven together in a web of life, held strongly and lovingly by Ived'i, and energized by the celestial Life Force of the Amulet...

~ THE END ~

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