

The Art of **PALETERO**

by
Efrain Gomez

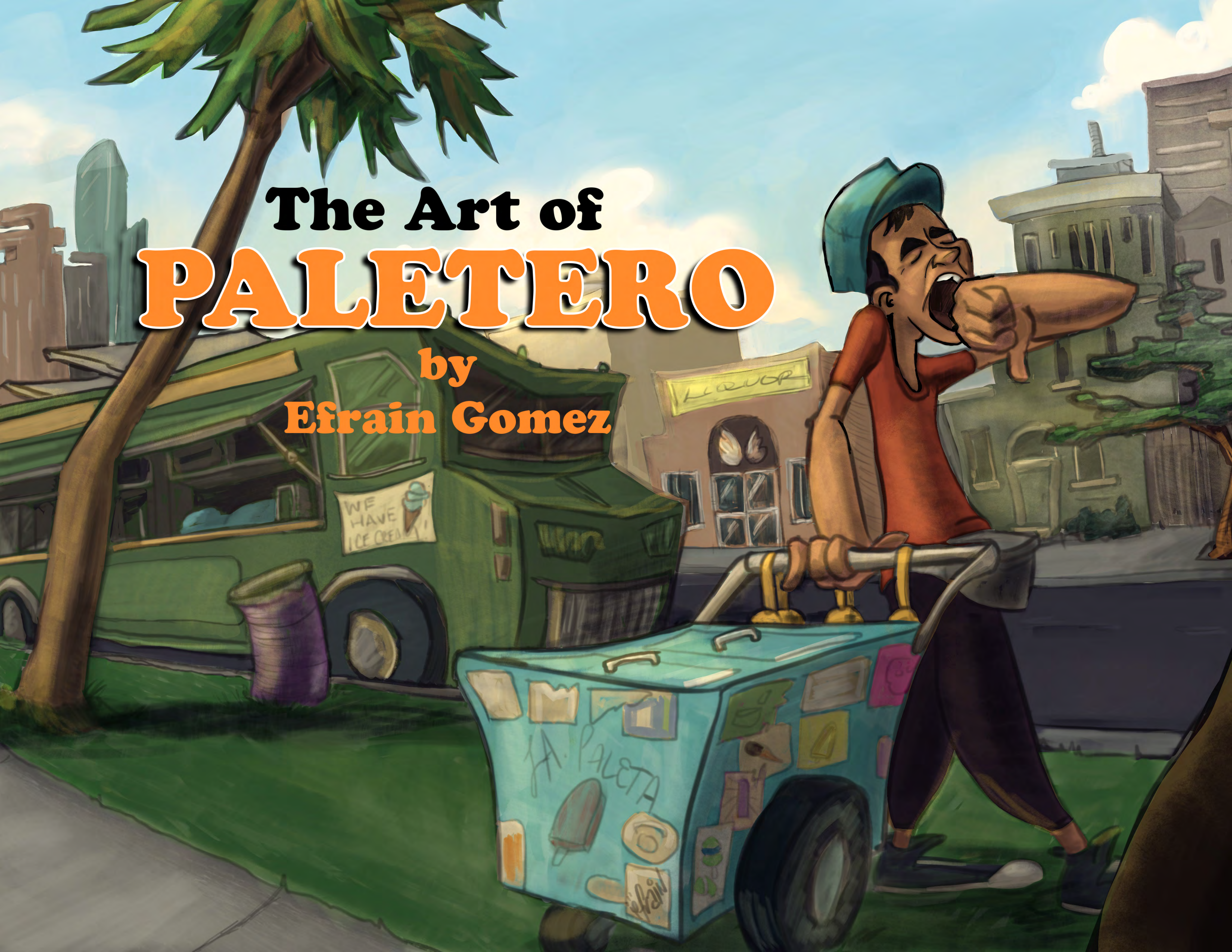




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Efrain Gomez

From his aspirational finger paintings as early as 2 years old, to his clay figures and Bob Ross-inspired teen paintings to make extra money for his family, **Efrain Gomez** is a life-long artist. Saturday morning cartoons and comic strips like Bill Watterson's Calvin & Hobbes inspired much of his childhood drawing as well as his affinity for 2D design and animation. Born and raised in California, he finds inspiration and influence in many visual media, including: street artists like Shepard Fairey; illustrators like Quentin Blake; master painters like Caravaggio; animation like Coco, The Iron Giant, The Triplets of Belleville, and Nickelodeon series Gumball and Clarence; film and TV greats like Hitchcock, Iñárritu, and Mad Men.

He studied art in junior college, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in filmmaking from CSU Monterey Bay while working as a graphic designer, and freelancing on the side. He went into business with a relative, designing and printing t-shirts, and eventually worked at other companies as a webmaster and graphic artist. After a ten-year 'creative lull' and lay-off from a Silicon Valley internet security software company, he decided to seriously pursue his interests as a creative artist. Since he always wanted to develop his visual art skills in a more formal setting, he enrolled in the Visual Development program at Academy of Art University and earned his MFA in Visual Development, developing and gaining new skills in character and story design. Although he primarily wanted to enrich his creative life through the Academy of Art University education, he would like to create and develop stories and characters for animation and film. He'd like to work in character design, story development, and perhaps directing his own stories as well as those of others.

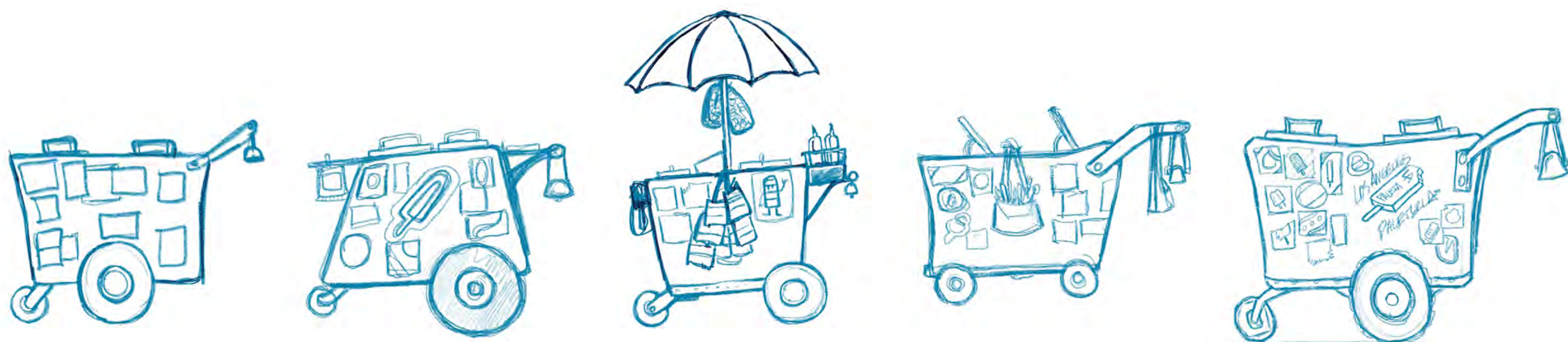
Efrain works as an actor, and his artistic goals include personal exploratory artwork in illustration, cartooning, and cultural pride, as well as creating animated and live-action movies. He lives with his wife in Los Angeles.

The Art of “Paletero” is intended for a 2D animated story, set in contemporary Los Angeles; the illustration style is cartoonish and exaggerated for characters and setting.

Story

A bitter *paletero* (pushcart ice cream vendor) is tired of the monotony of his job, and jealous of others' success. When he makes a sudden bad decision one night, he's met by a few special characters from the L.A. streets that teach him that life can have a bright side.

Thematically inspired by film classics like *Macario* (1960) and *The Seventh Seal* (1957), and fueled by contemporary visual art like murals by Sainer Etam, and narrative media like *The Triplets of Belleville*, *The Get Down*, and *Lowriders*, **Paletero** is a story about an average guy embittered by his lot in life, living in a big city that barely knows he's there. He learns a life lesson in gratitude and dreams after the 'fates'—God, the Devil, and La Muerte (Death)—mess with him, and remind him that there's always hope for a brighter future.



Many people know the excitement of hearing the ice cream truck's song, or the ringing bell of a **paletero** (pushcart ice cream man) in your neighborhood. A *paletero* is common in not only Latino neighborhoods, but also in many American neighborhoods, yet they seem to blend into the background. I wanted to explore that idea and tell a grounded story with a bit of magical realism, from the perspective of an embittered paletero living in a large city that barely knows he's there.

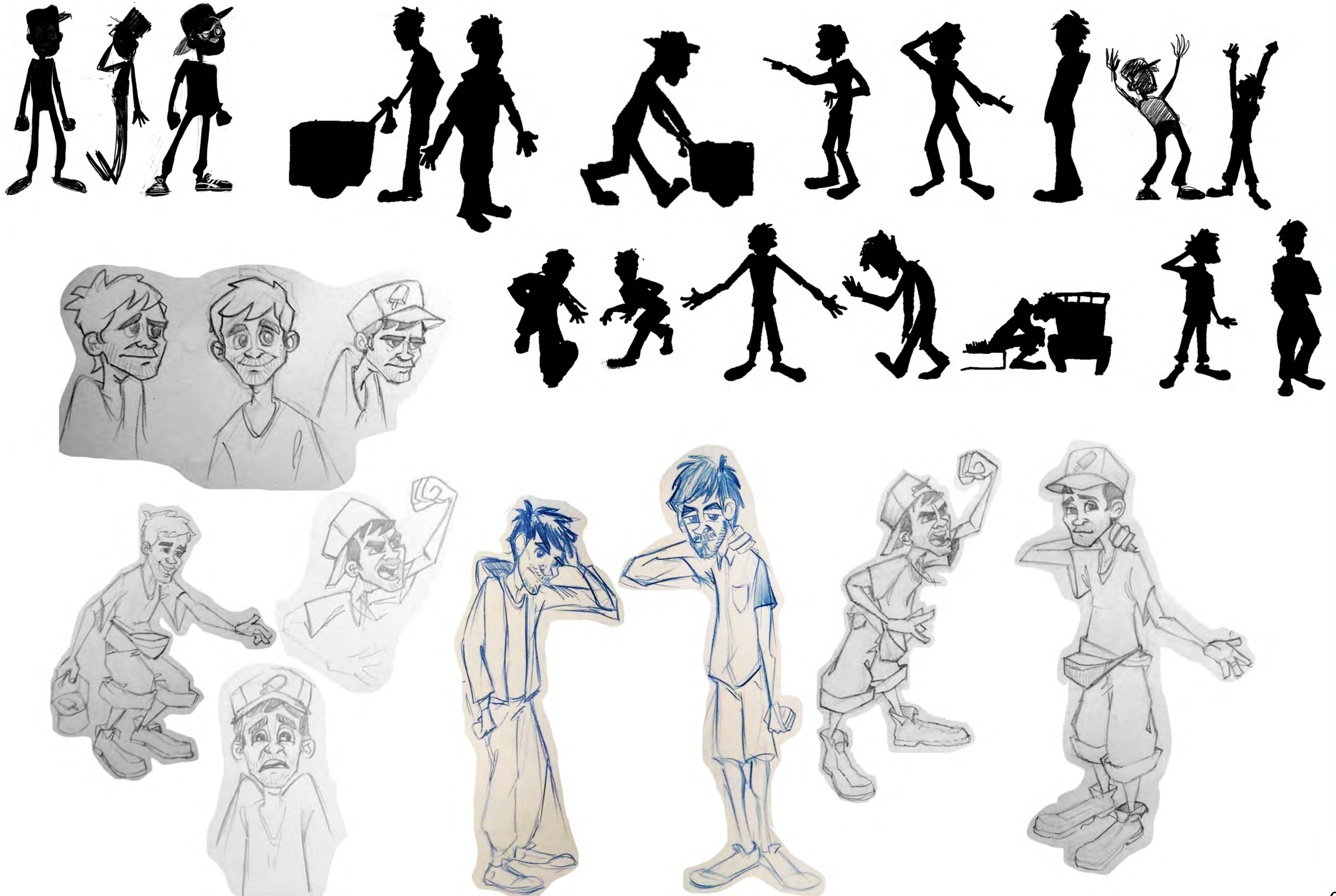
I learned that many of the pushcart ice cream vendors were day laborers that only keep a portion of the sales they made each day. I grew to appreciate the paleteros, wondering about their stories and how they supported their families. I grew up in Salinas, California, a big part of the agricultural industry in America, and a big portion of the population was farm laborers as well as service industry professionals. My estranged father was also a farm laborer when I was young and he told me a joke that inspired this thesis project. The joke was based on a traditional Mexican (and Latin American) view of Death as something to be embraced not feared, and the story was actually a part of B. Traven's book and later movie, *Macario* (1960). It involved a poor hungry man who believes life is unfair, represented by Jesus and the Devil; only Death, who comes to all, was fair.

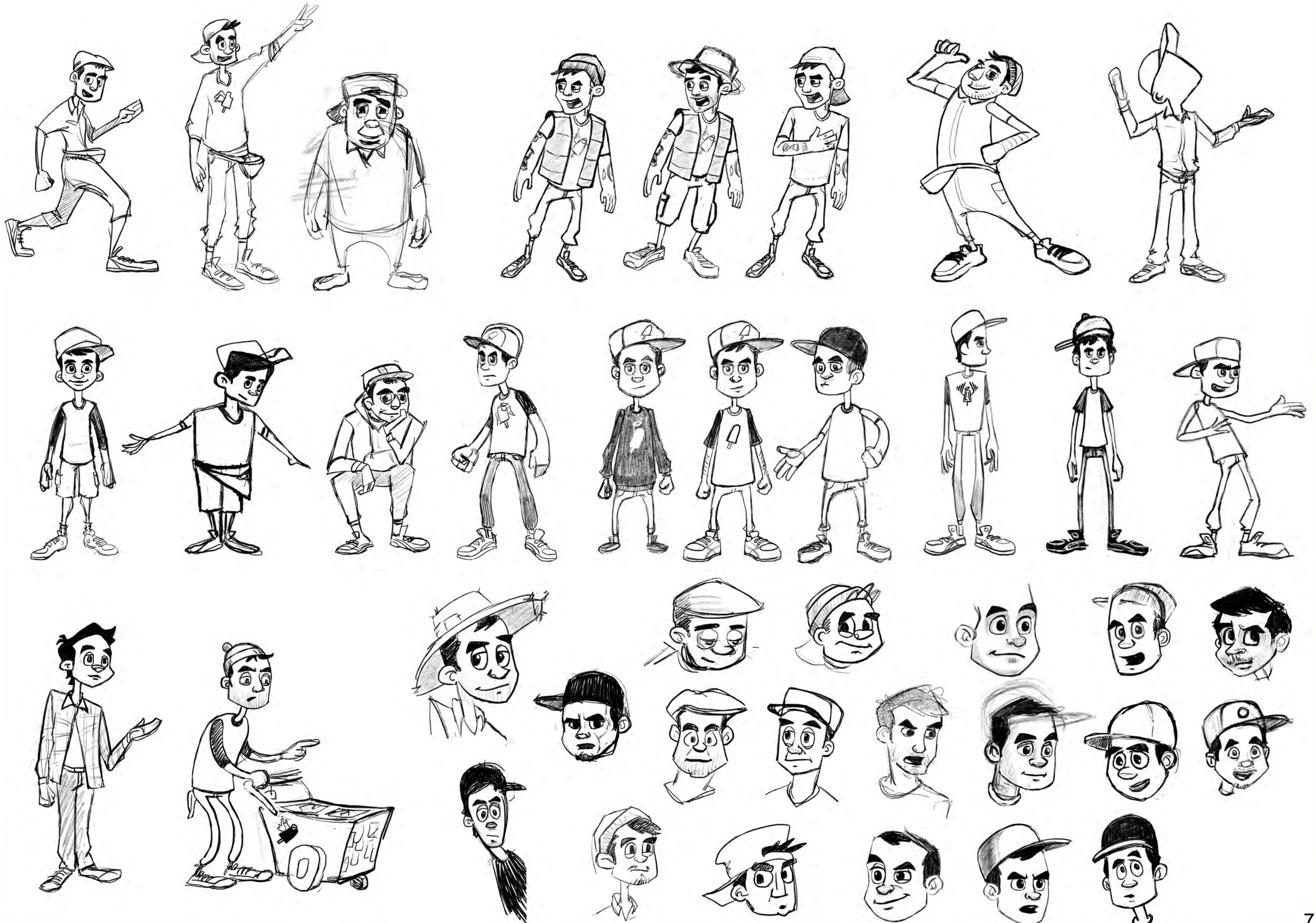
My project is loosely based on *Macario's* idea and a wink at the Biblical story of *Job*. It's a culmination of many experiences: from a brief but lasting memory with my father, to my hometown, to a cultural icon that goes largely ignored. Paletero is a personal, small story set in a big city, with a familiar character from a unique perspective. I want to share this story in a visual medium, presenting themes of life, death, bitterness, change, and hope.

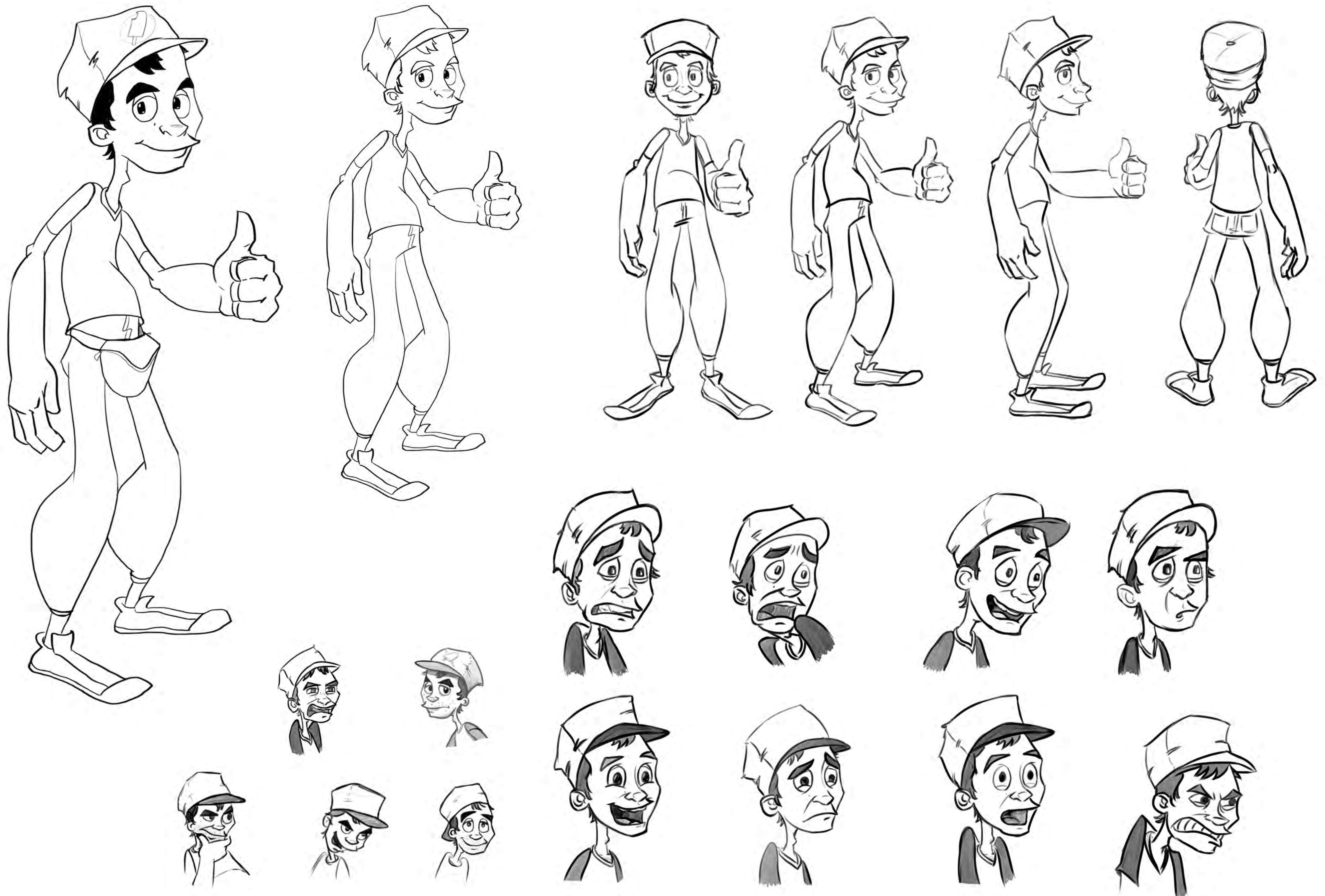
And maybe you'll share a smile or an ice cream the next time you see a **Paletero** on the street.

Character Design

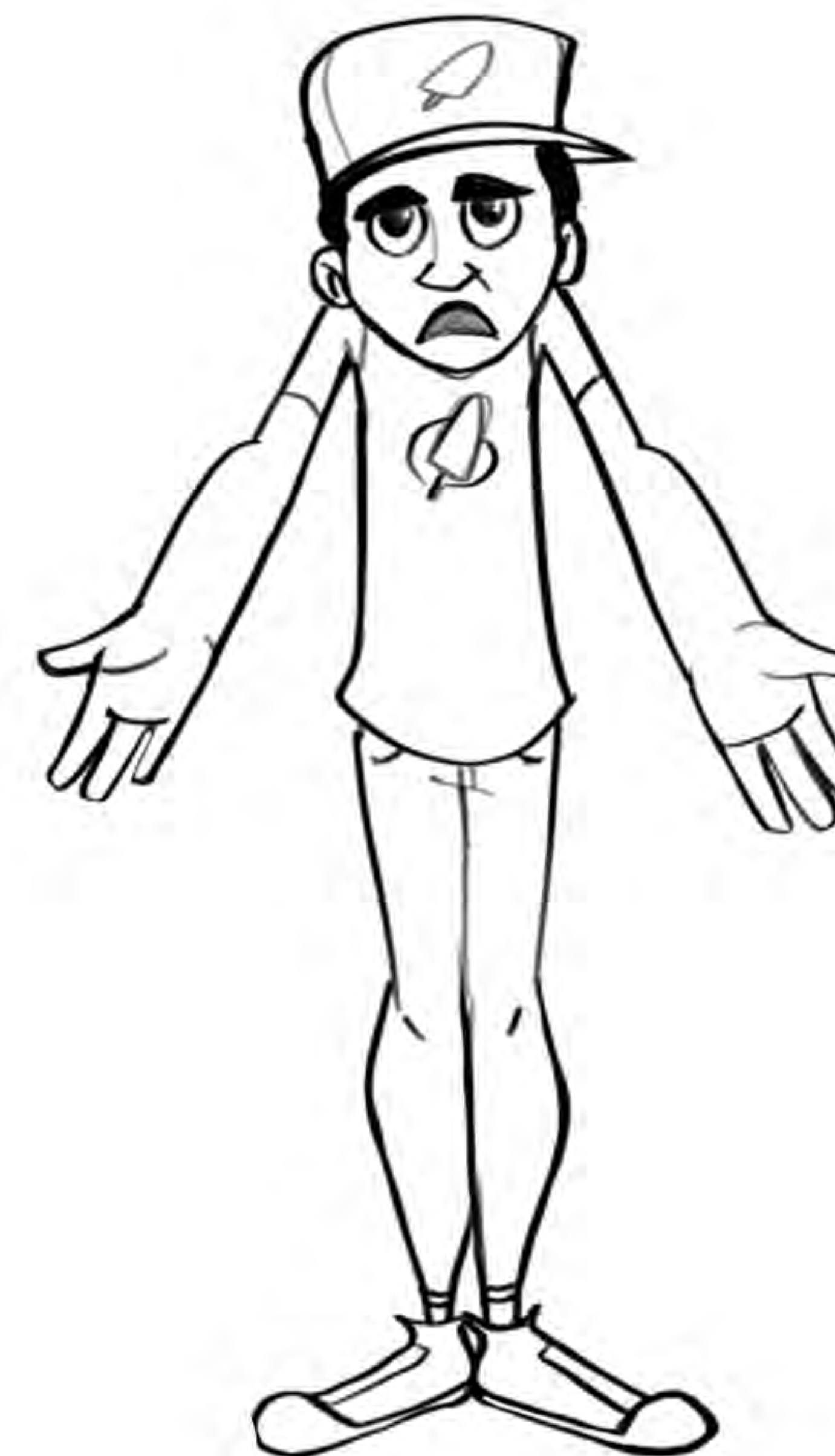
The Art of Palettero







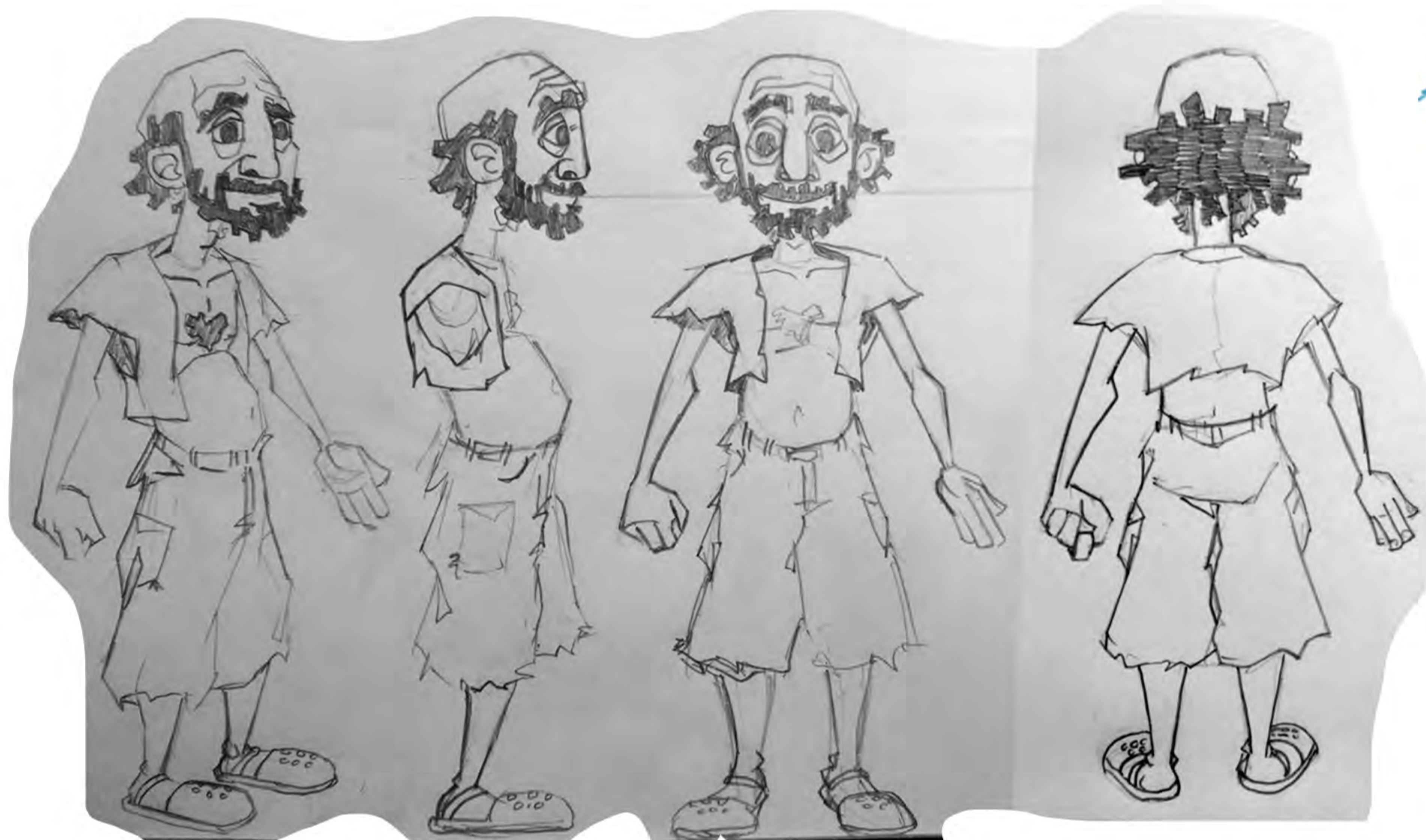


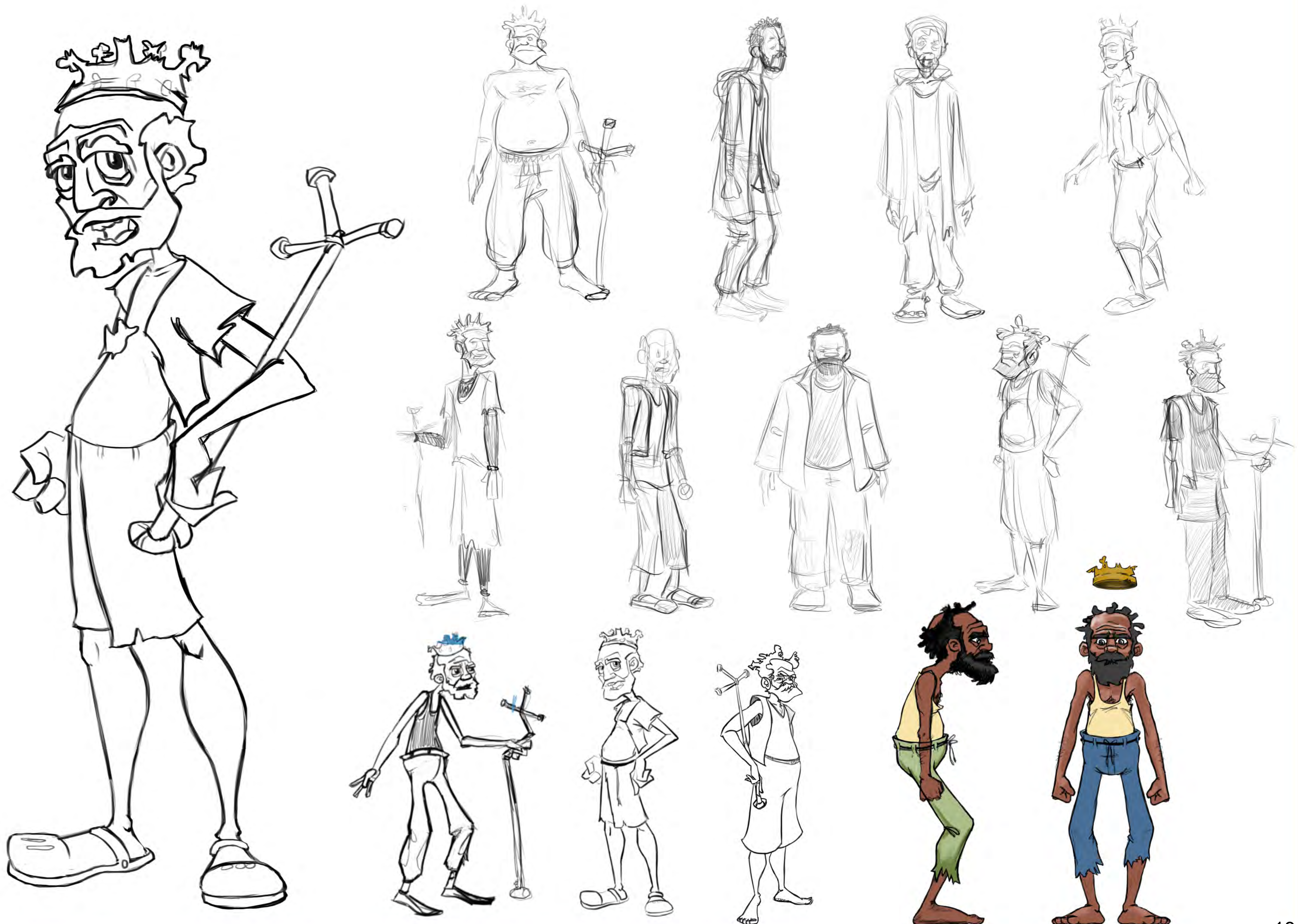


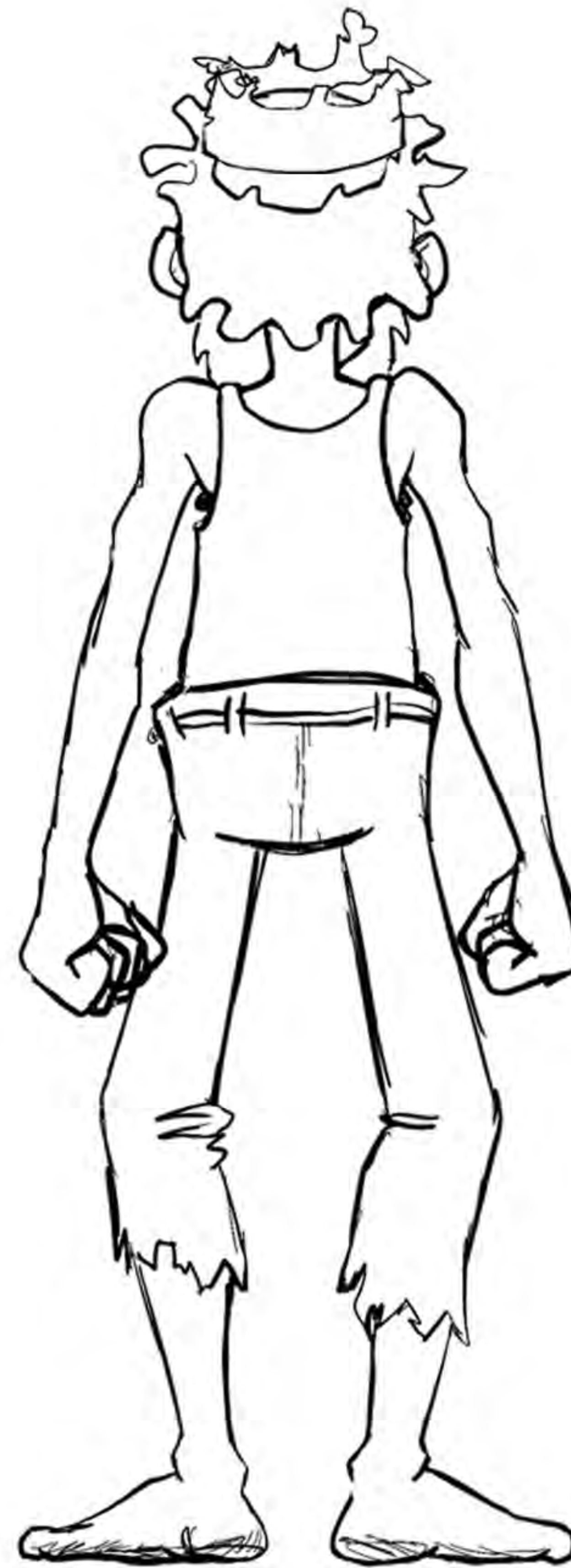


Paletero

This guy made some life choices that caused him not to pursue his dream of opening up an ice cream shop. He found some joy in his marriage and son, but he might have let resentment and ungratefulness grow bigger in his life.





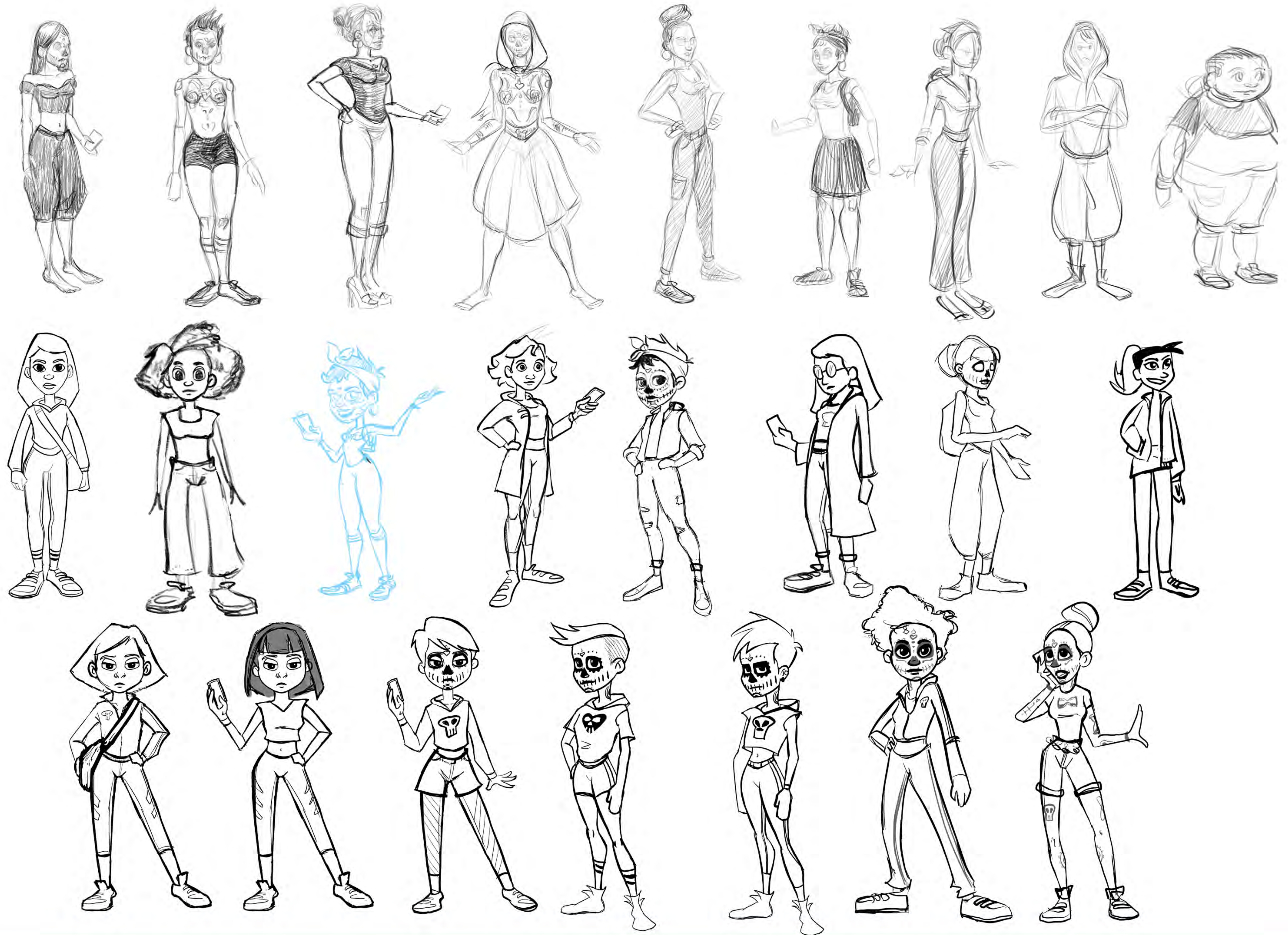




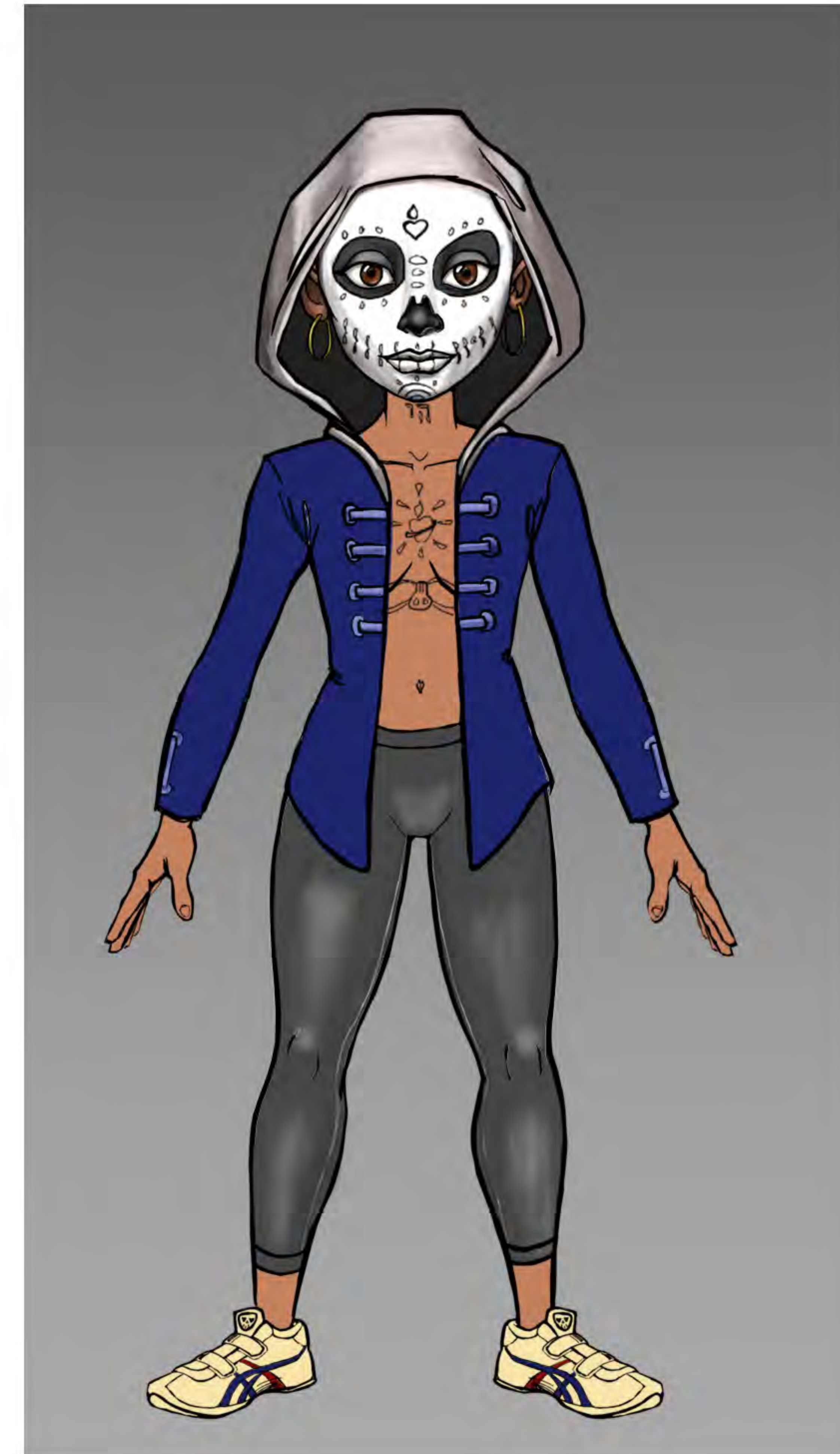
Street King

God is disguised as a 'man on the street' wandering around downtown as a weird homeless guy. He's basically a whimsical figure that would fit well in the skid row landscape of Downtown Los Angeles. He's got his eye on the streets, and he looks out for Paletero.









Messenger

This Messenger is another 'fate' that tests Paletero. She mainly acts as an emissary in the game that God and the Devil seem to be playing. She's a bit self-absorbed and vain, but she is great at her job.







Wall Street

This is also a character that fits well in the financial district of Downtown Los Angeles. He's a bit shady, however, as he's the Devil in disguise. He's mainly a self-serving character that entices Paletero with a fast-track to wealth.

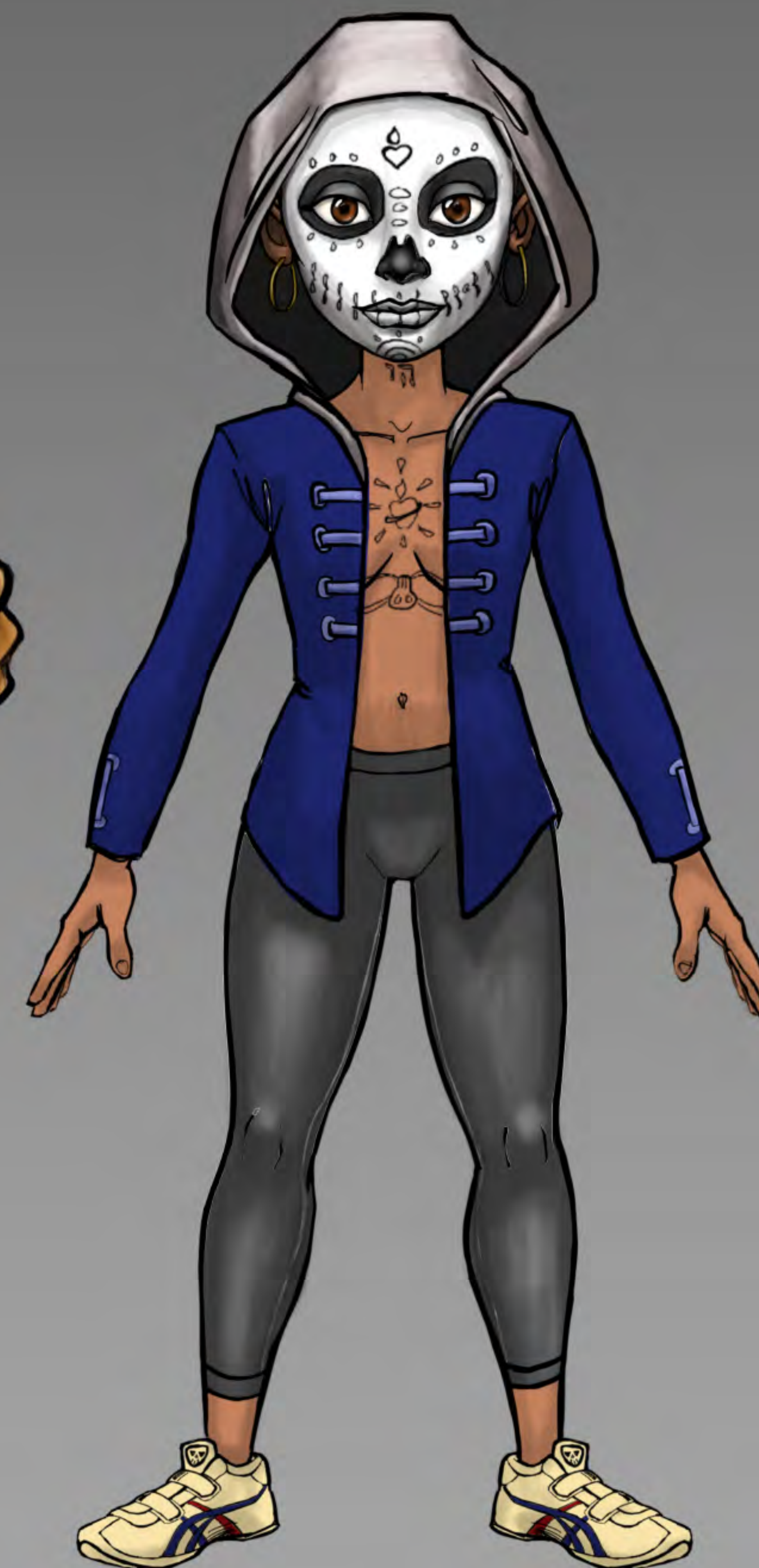




Wall Street



Paletero



Messenger



Street King



Wall Street



Paletero



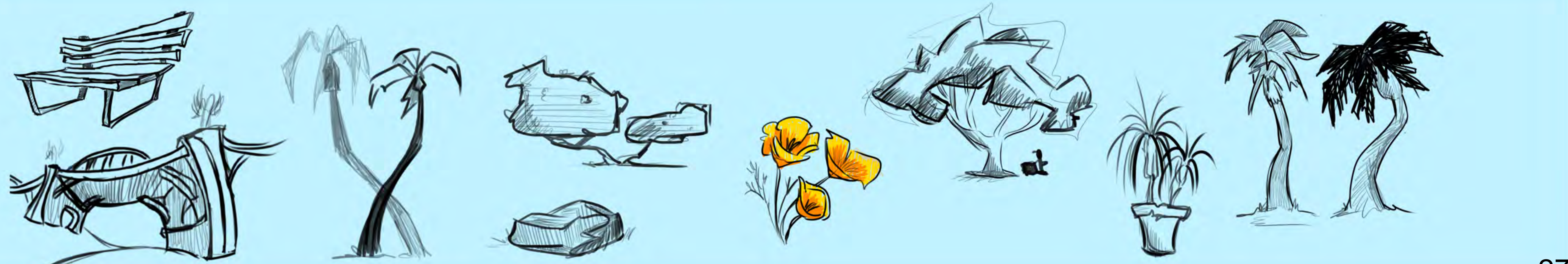
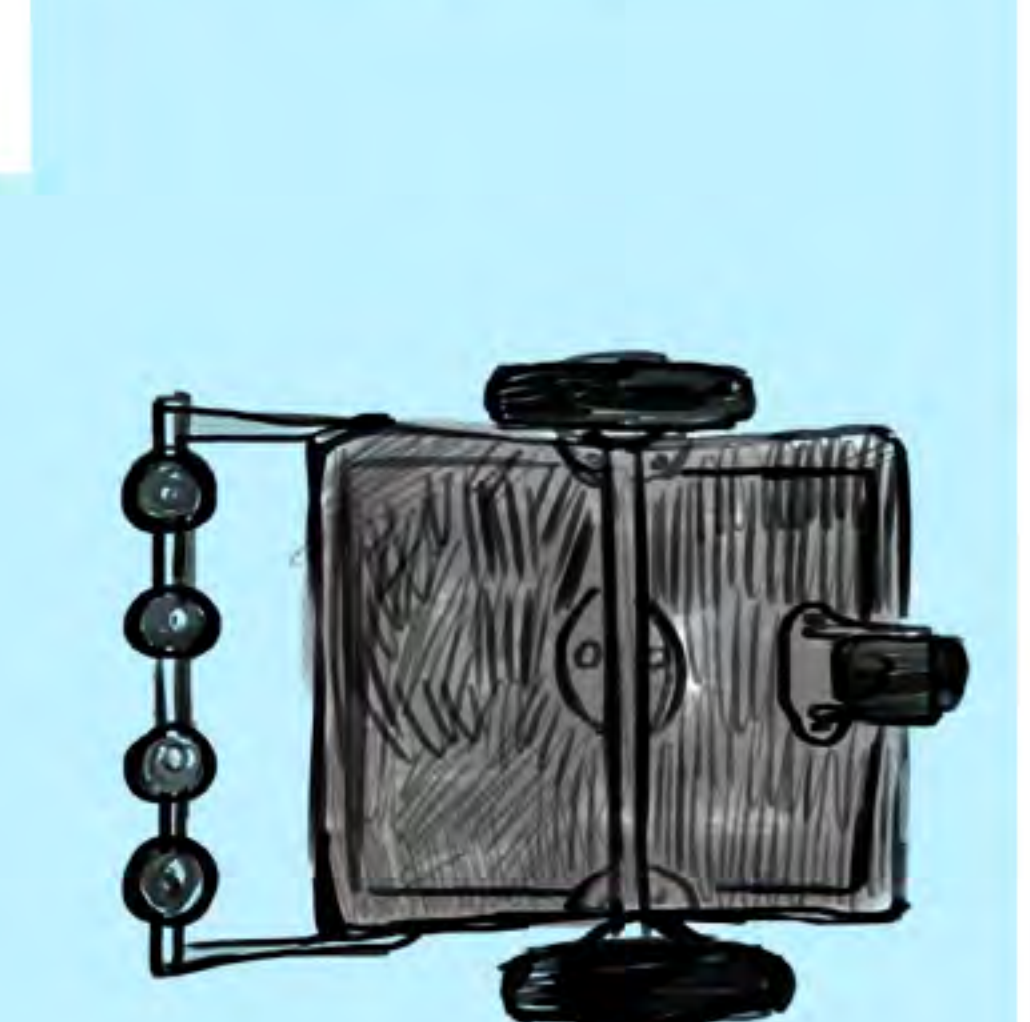
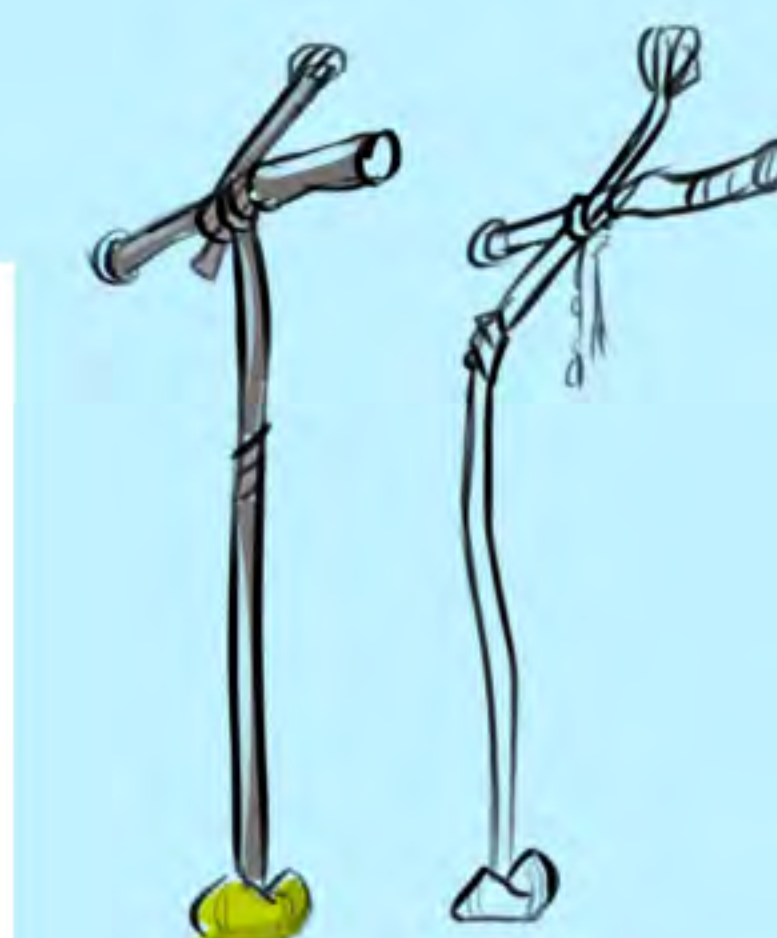
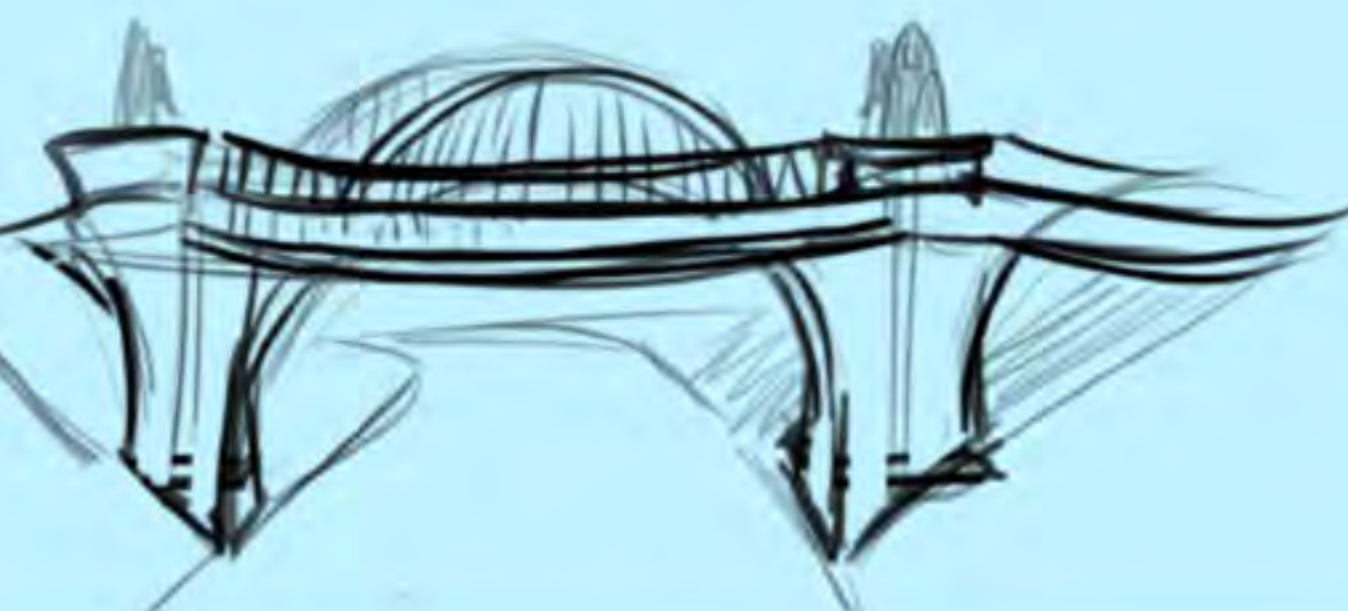
Messenger

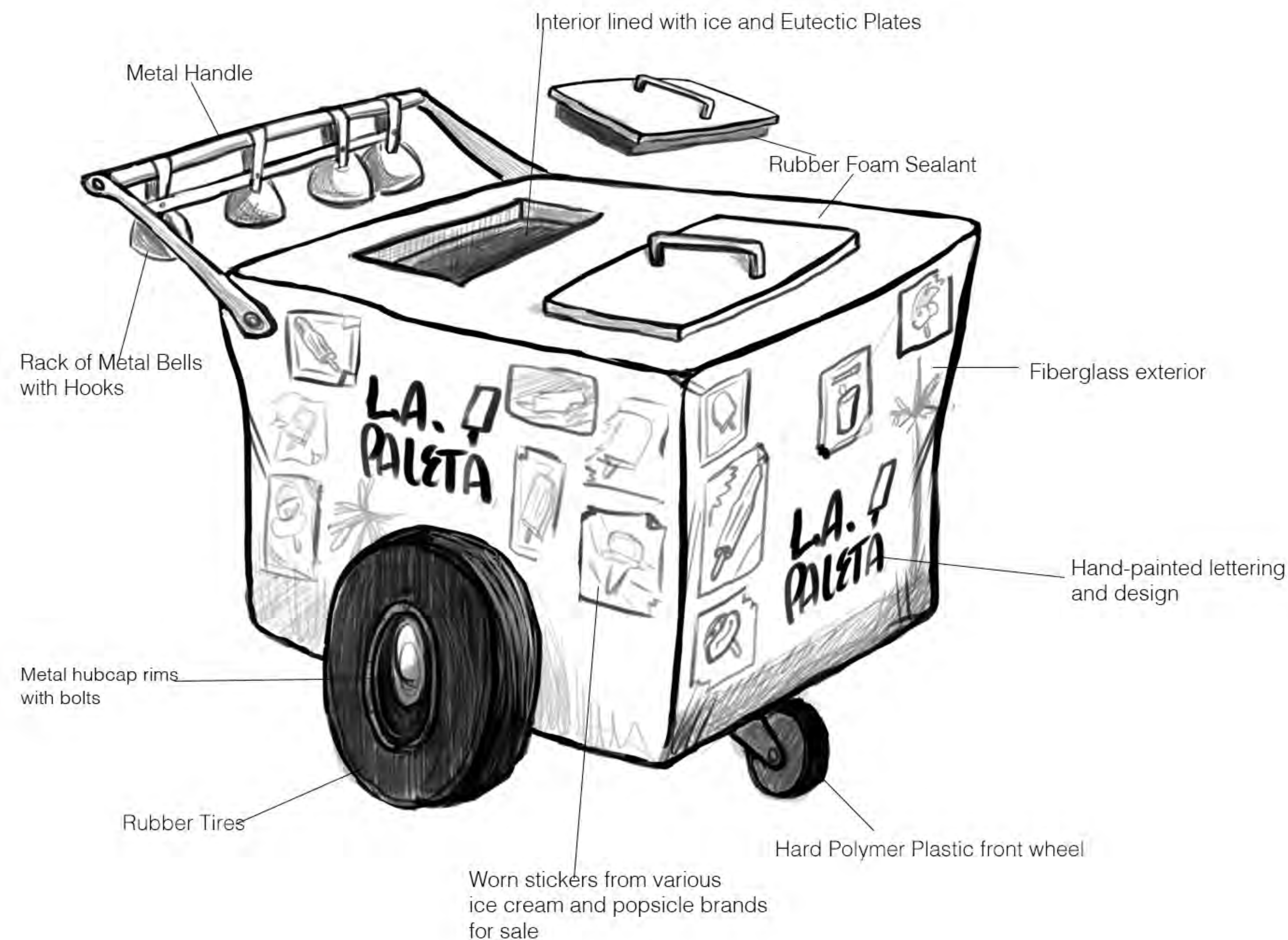


Street King

Prop Design

The Art of Palettero





Paleta / Ice Cream Cart

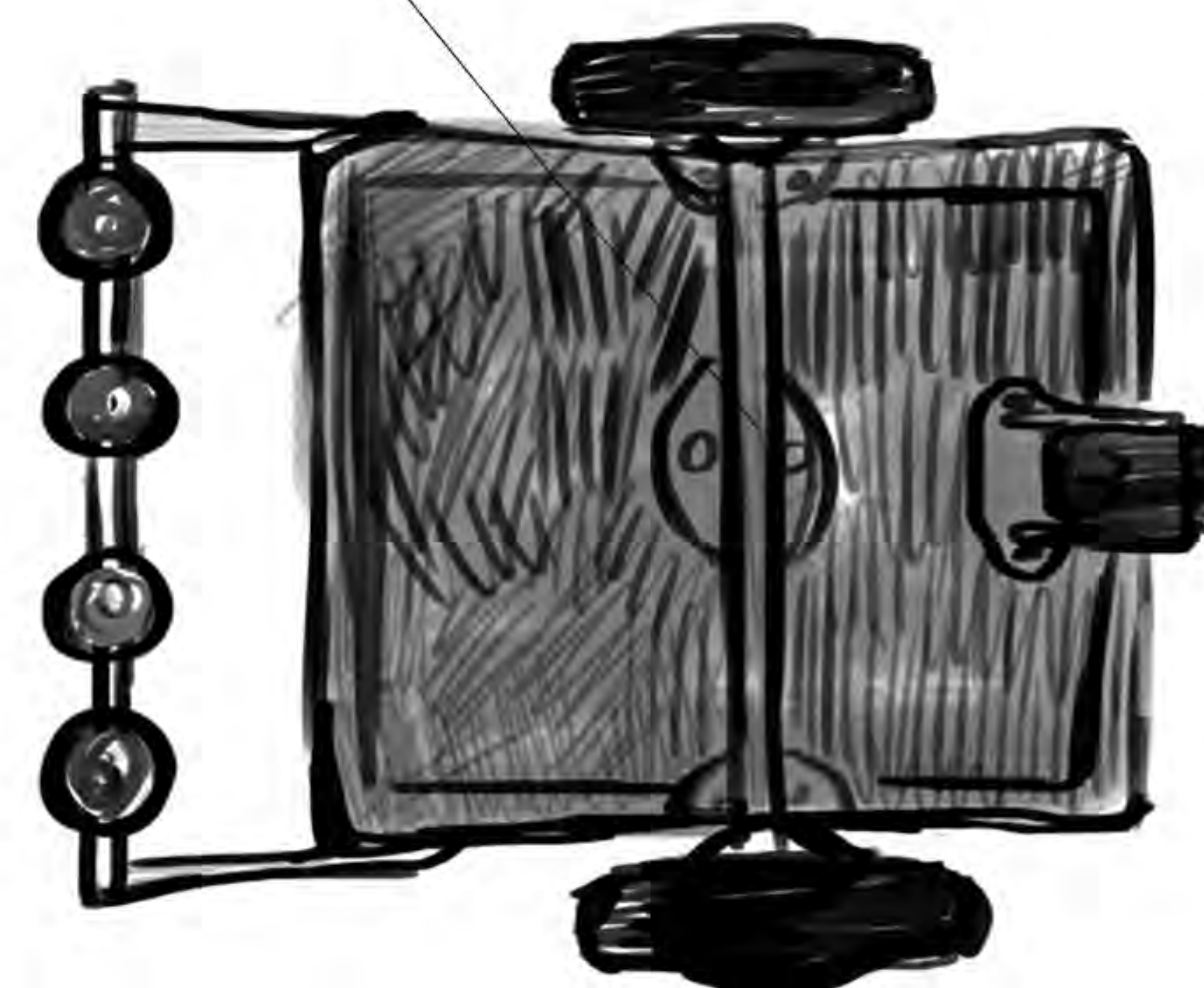
Our hero is a paletero, and this is his cart.



NOTES:

The Ice Cream Cart should be worn, roughed up a bit from the daily grind. Everything should be drawn in a more 'cartoon' style with wonky shapes. Straight lines and sharp angles are discouraged. Keep in mind the styles of graffiti and street art.

Metal axel rod bolted to the bottom of cart for the two main wheels

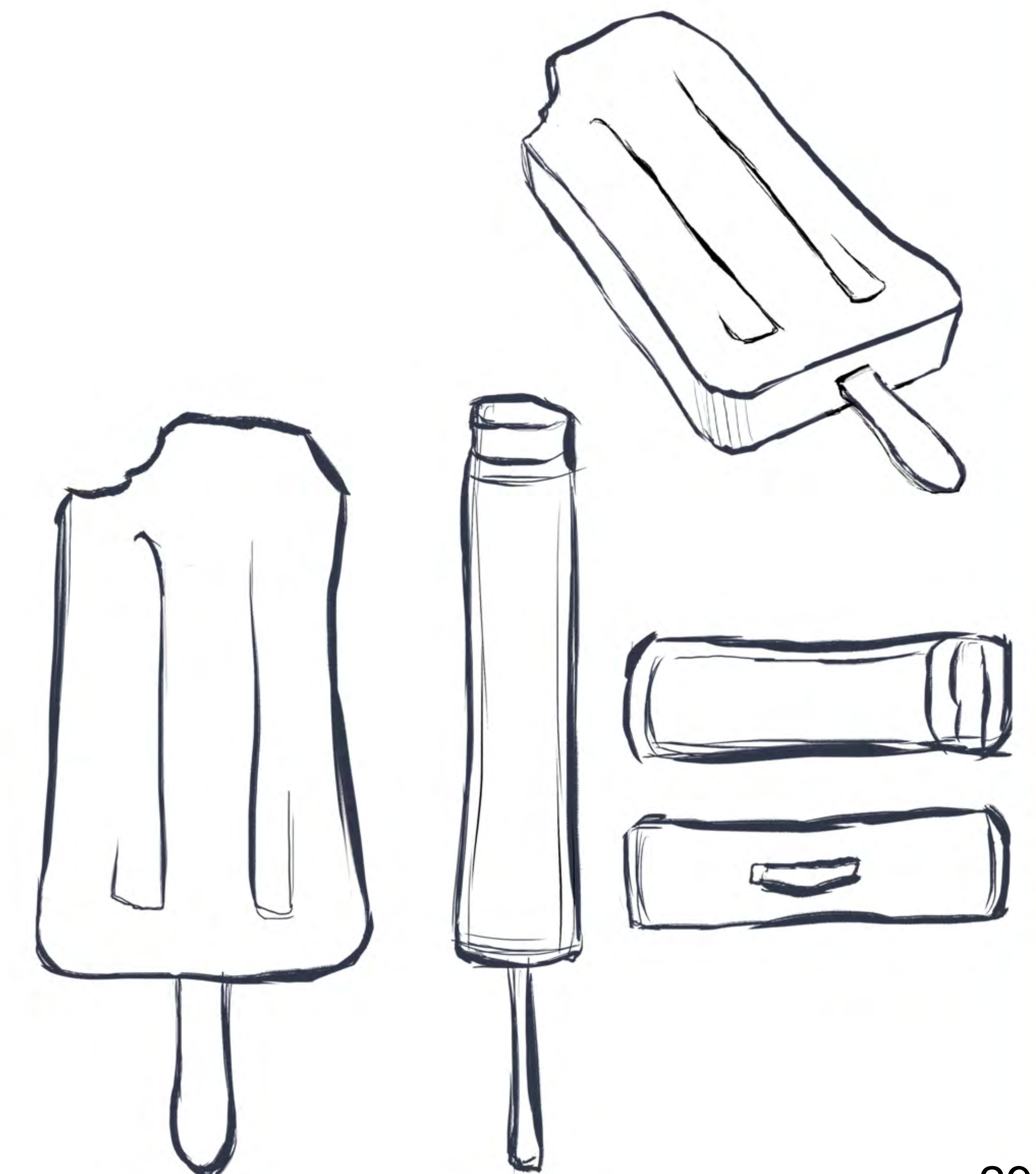


BOTTOM

Housing unit for front wheel



FRONT



Environment Design

The Art of Palettero





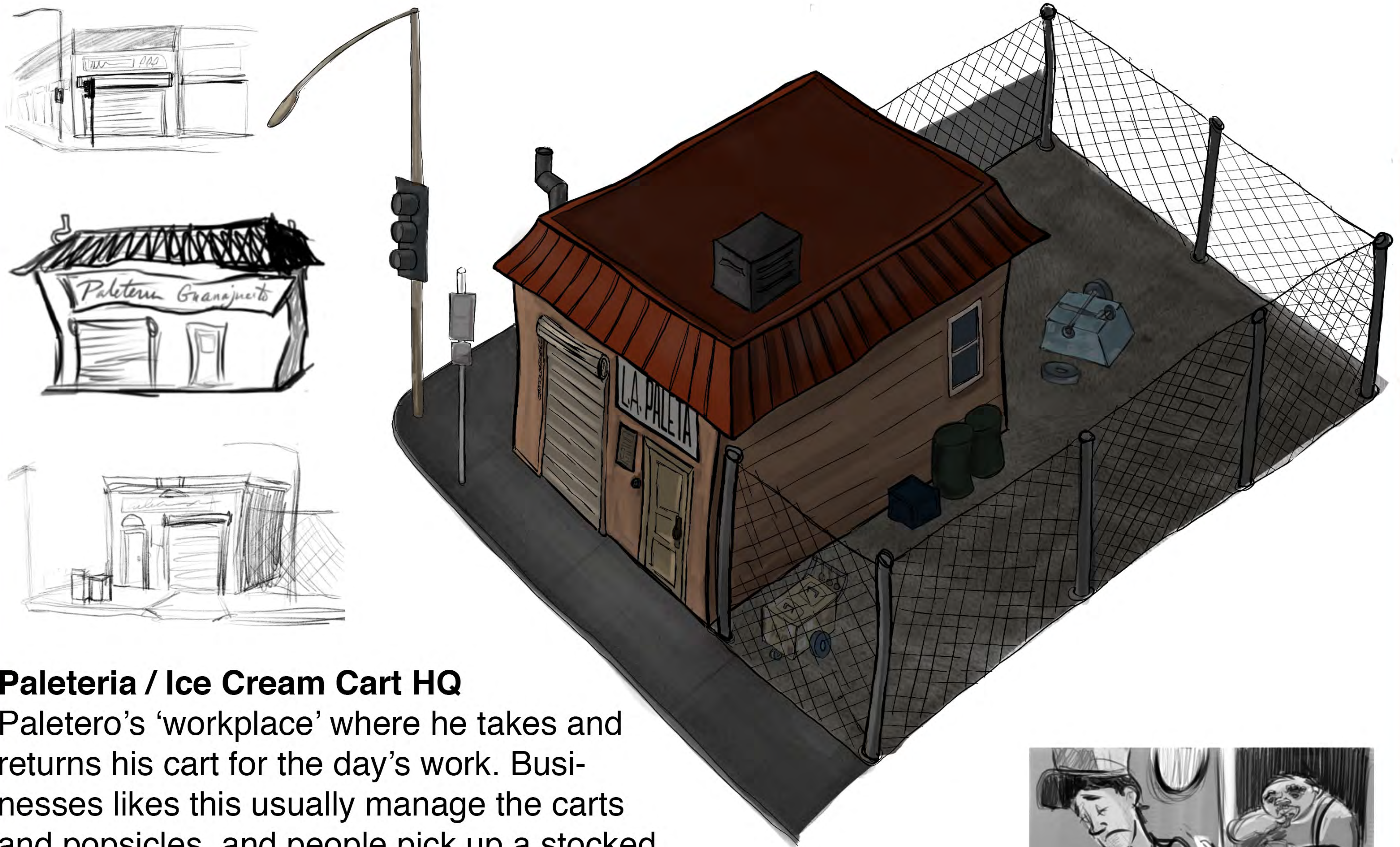
Echo Park with Food Vendors

Echo Park Lake is major part of Paletero's ice cream route in Los Angeles. As with the entire story, the visual style should be cartoony with a bit of a gritty Los Angeles vibe.



Echo Park Lake

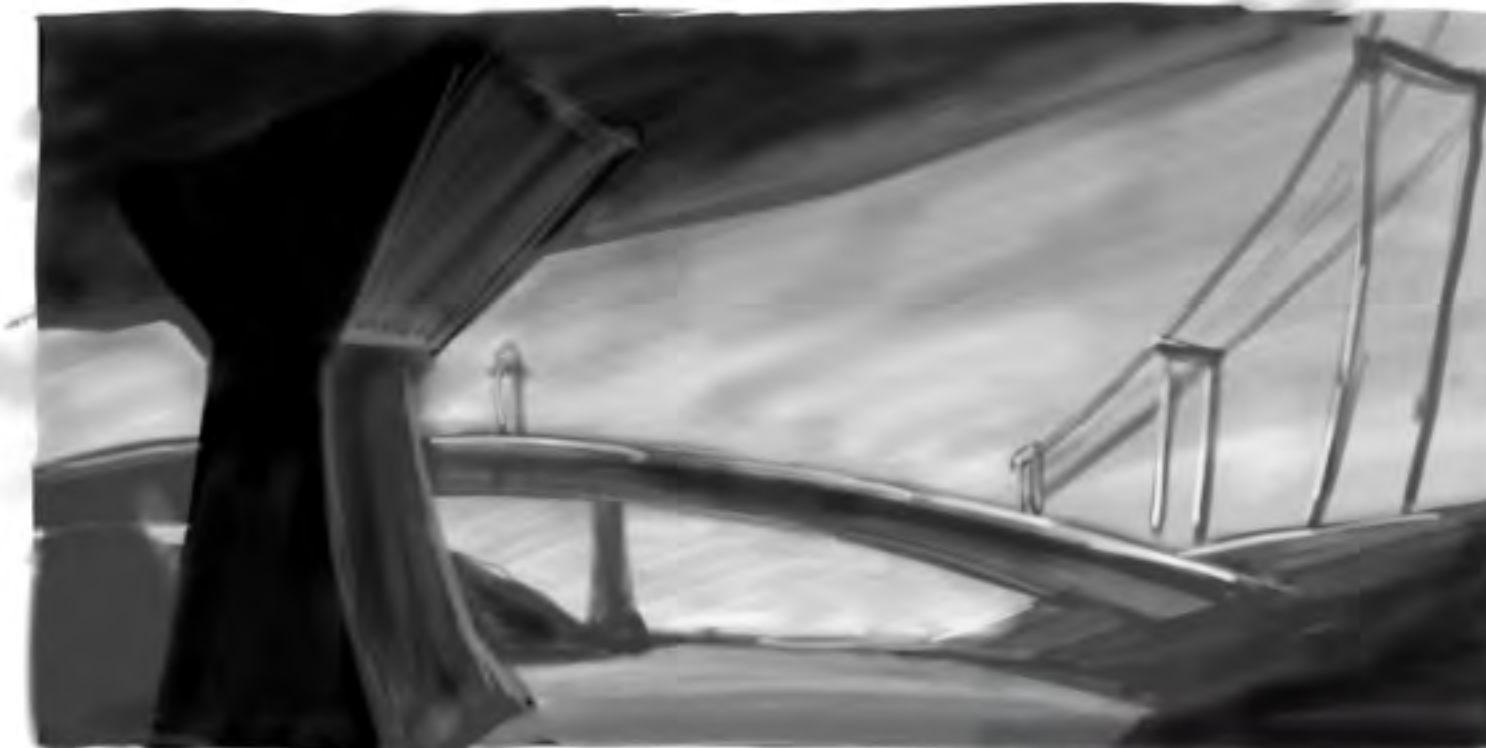
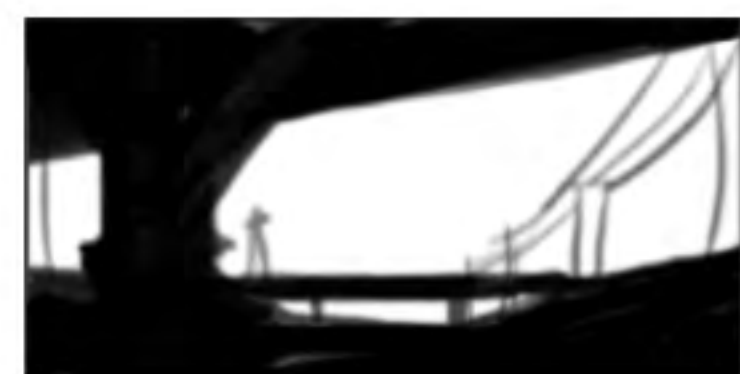
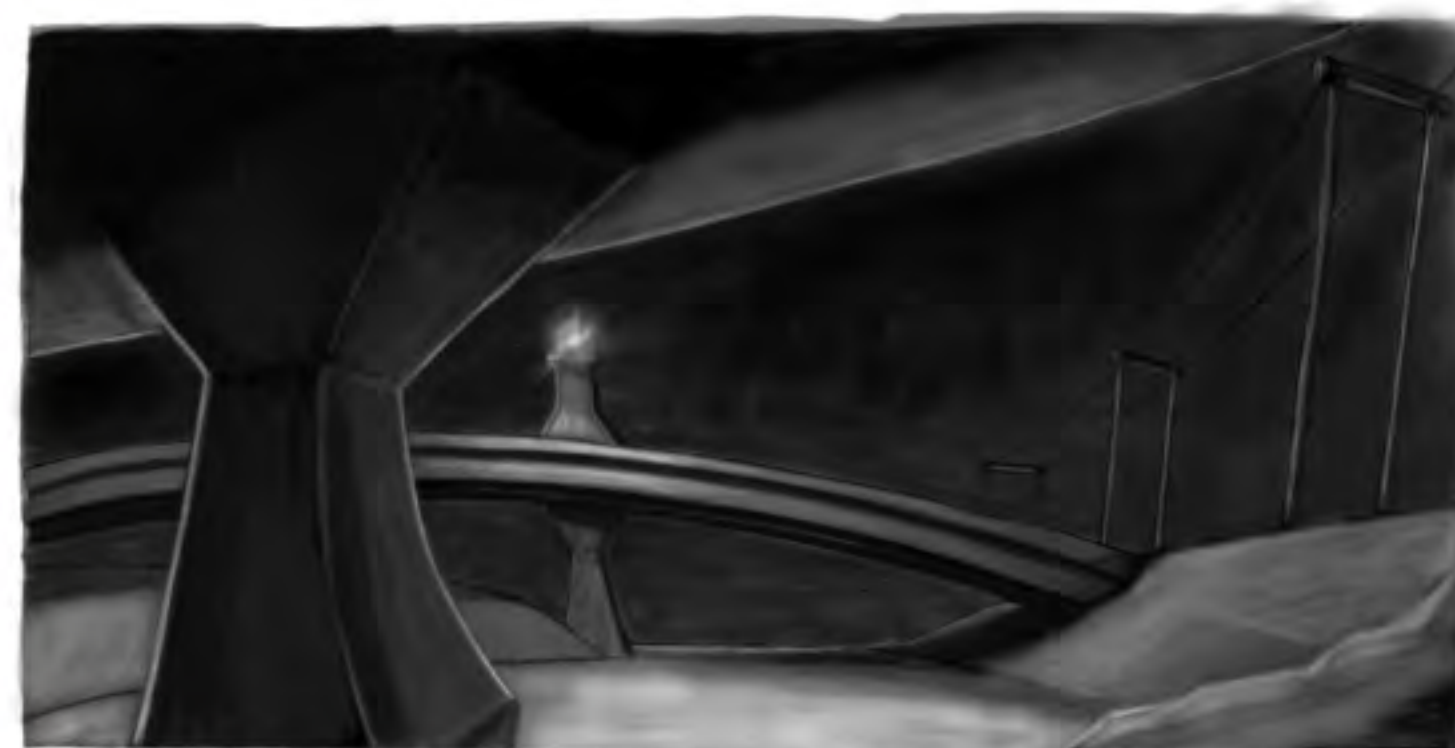
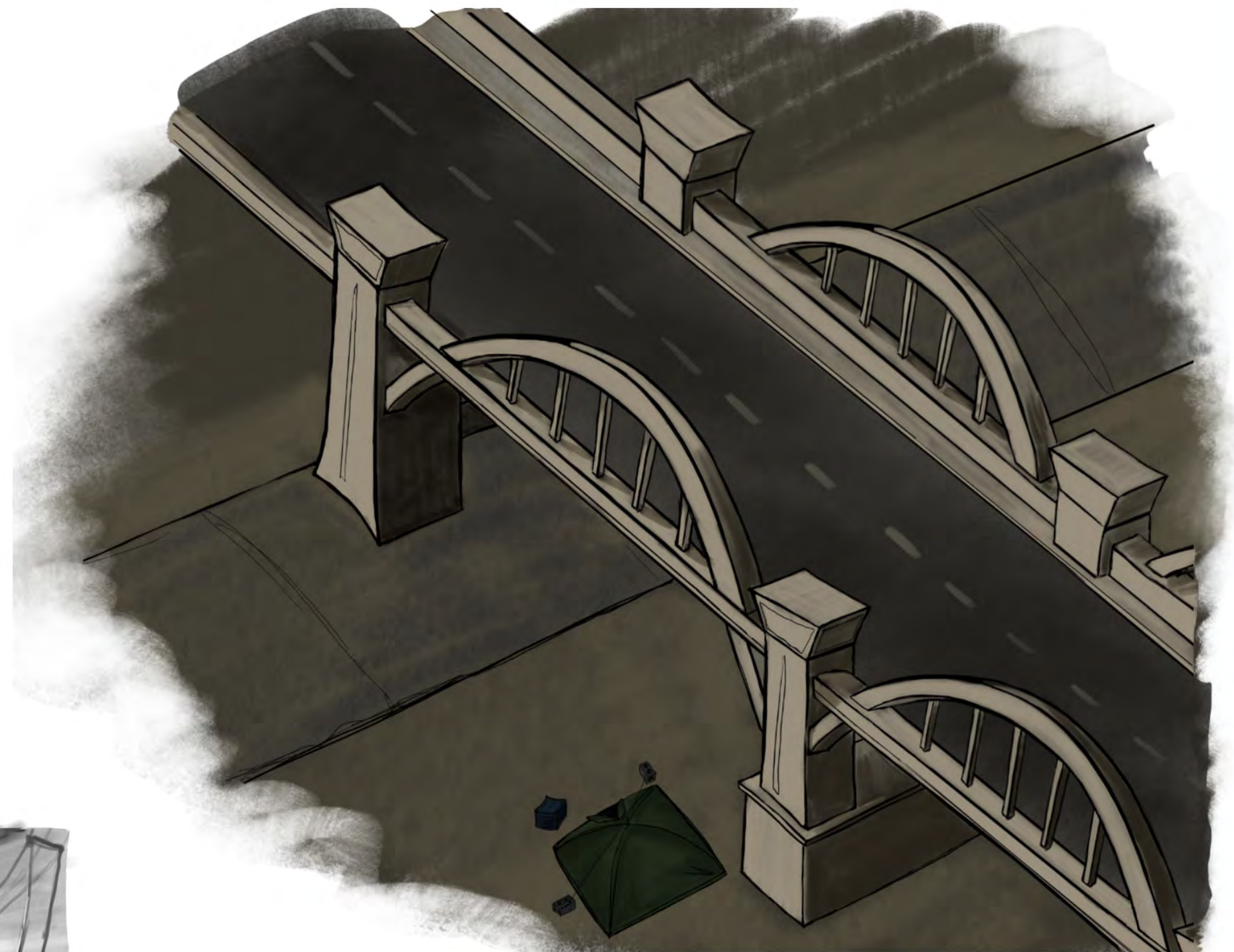
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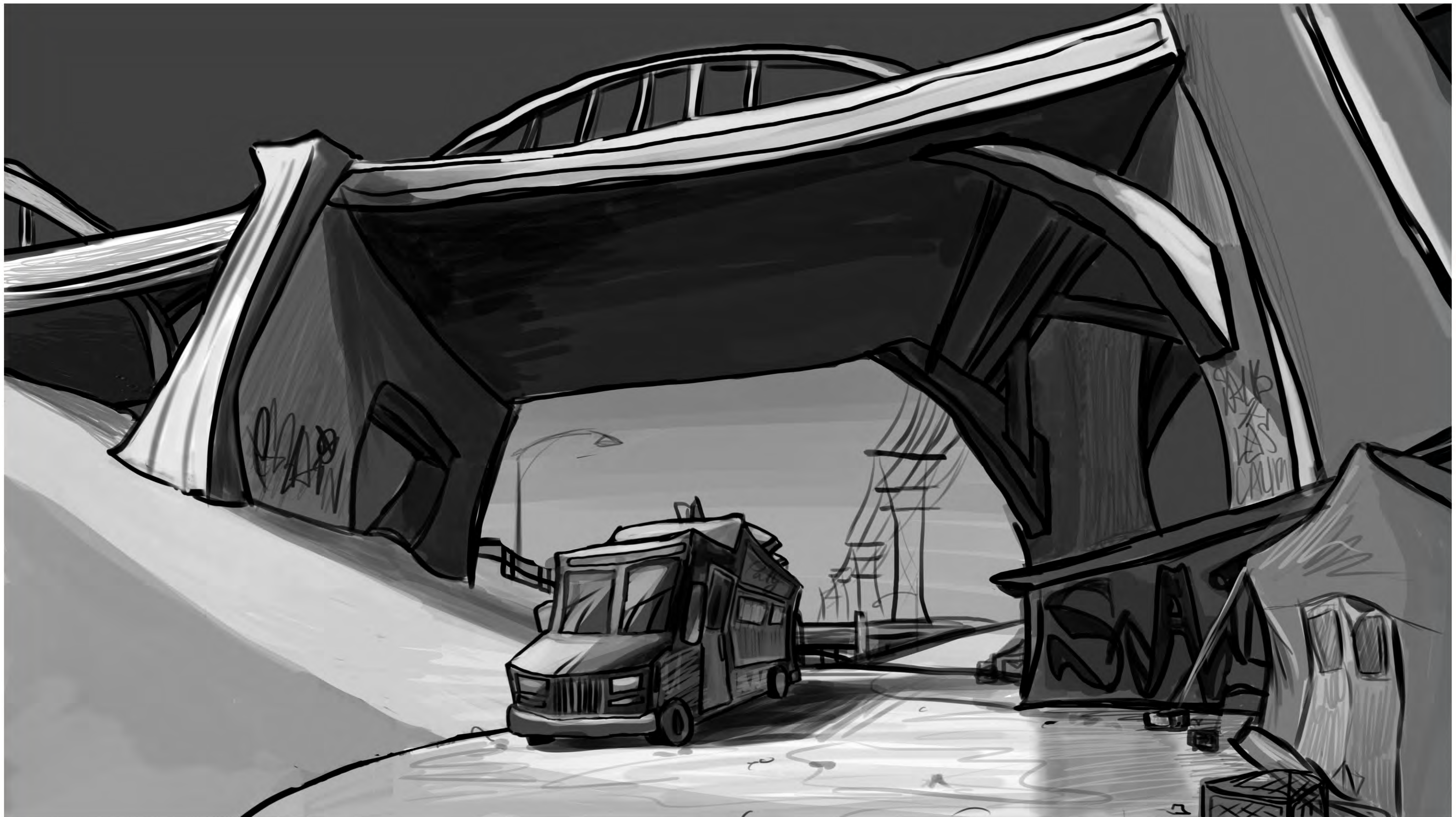


Paleteria / Ice Cream Cart HQ

Paletero's 'workplace' where he takes and returns his cart for the day's work. Businesses like this usually manage the carts and popsicles, and people pick up a stocked cart for the day, returning the cart and sometimes half their daily wages.







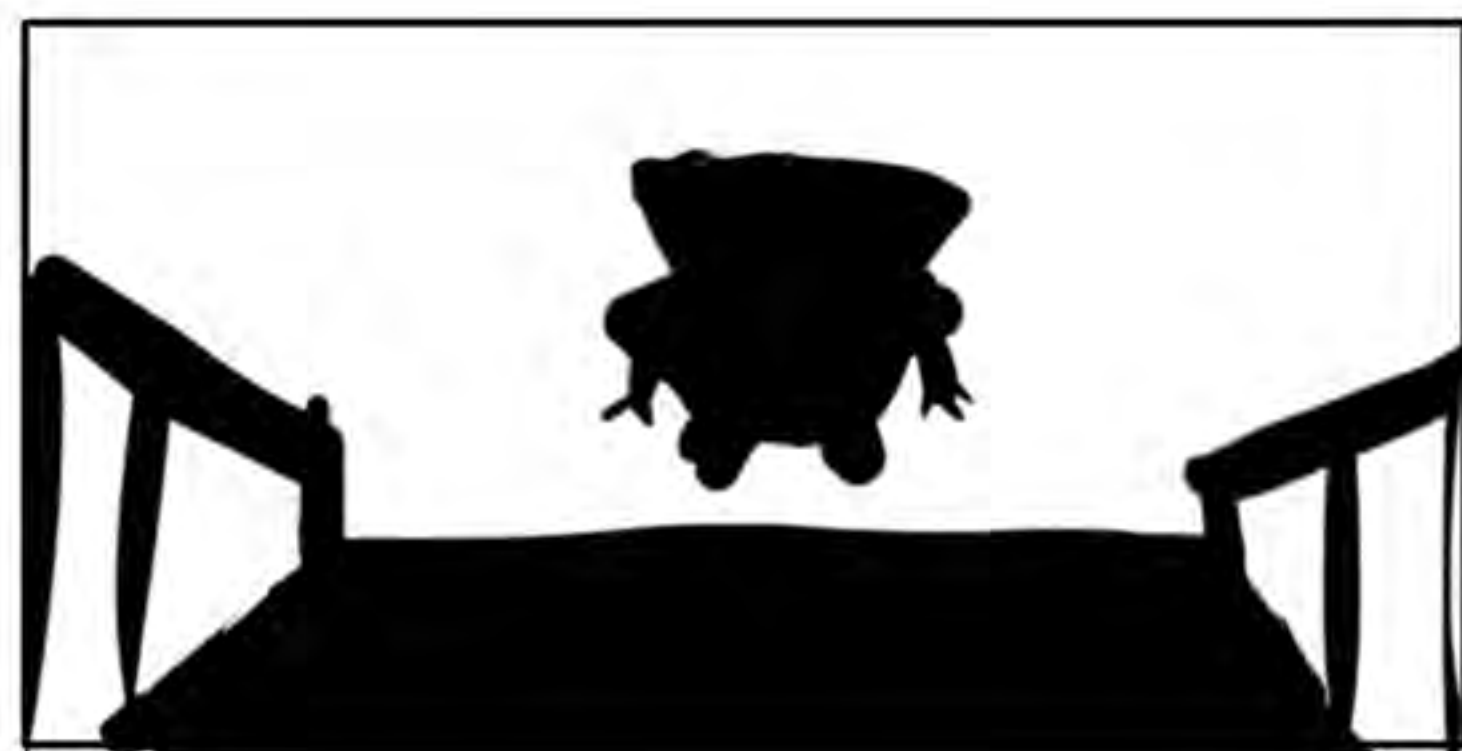
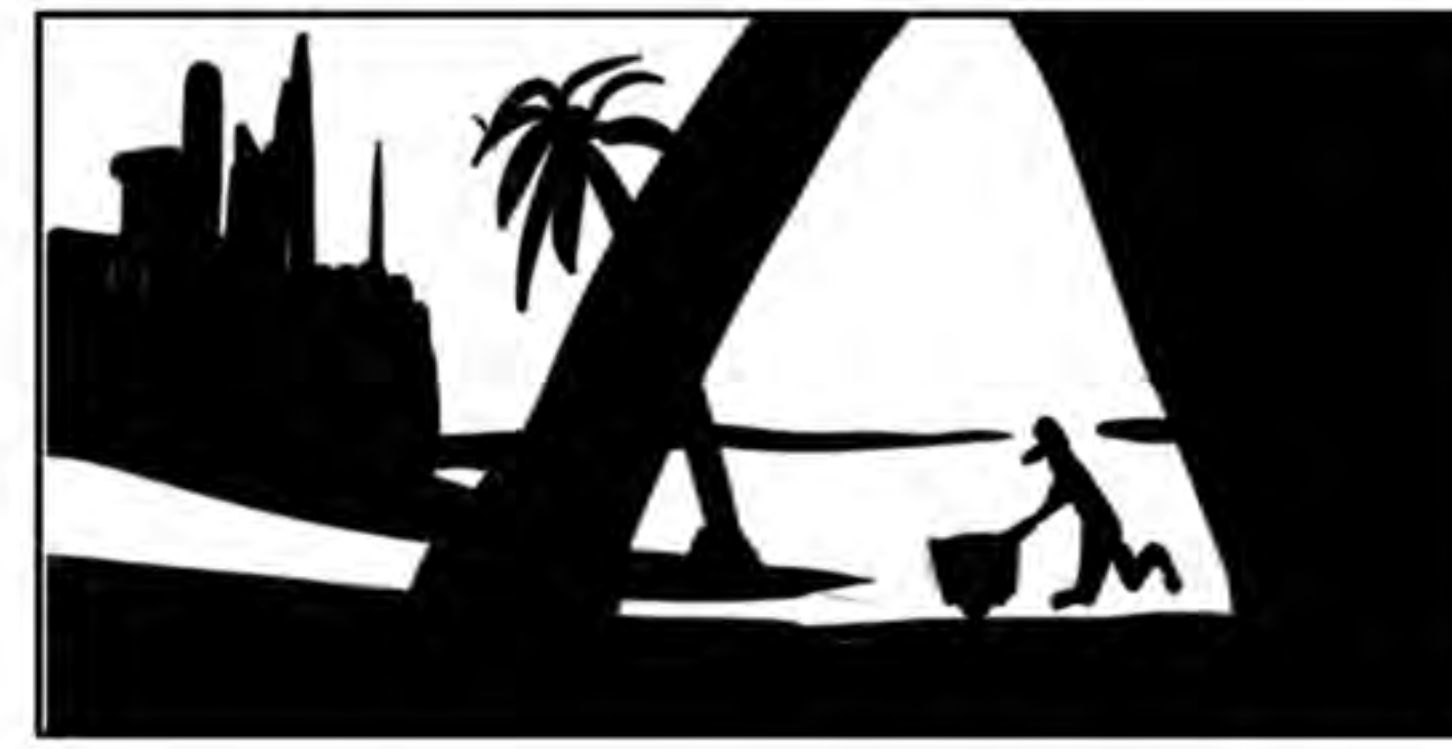
Under the Bridge / Barren L.A. River

Paletero drives and hides here after stealing a food truck. He meets the other characters again here. This is like many bridges in downtown/east Los Angeles connection.



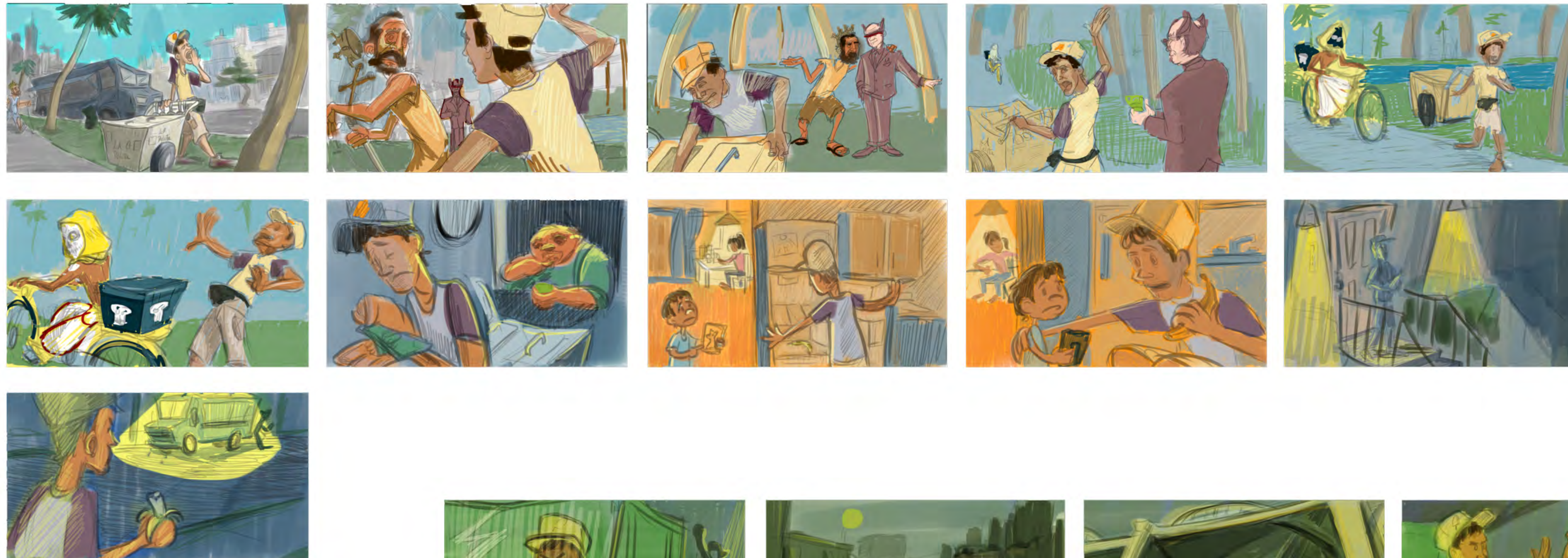
Story Design

The Art of Palettero

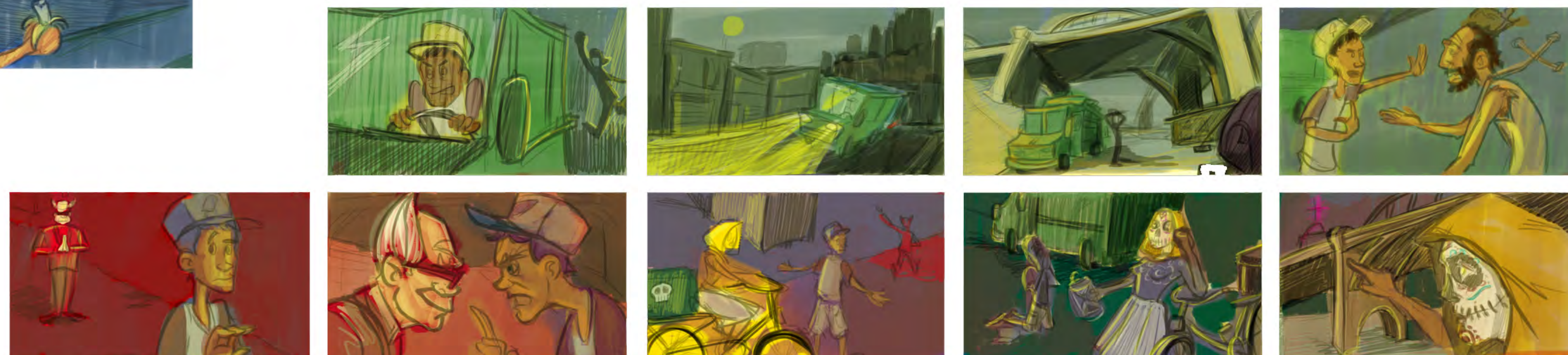




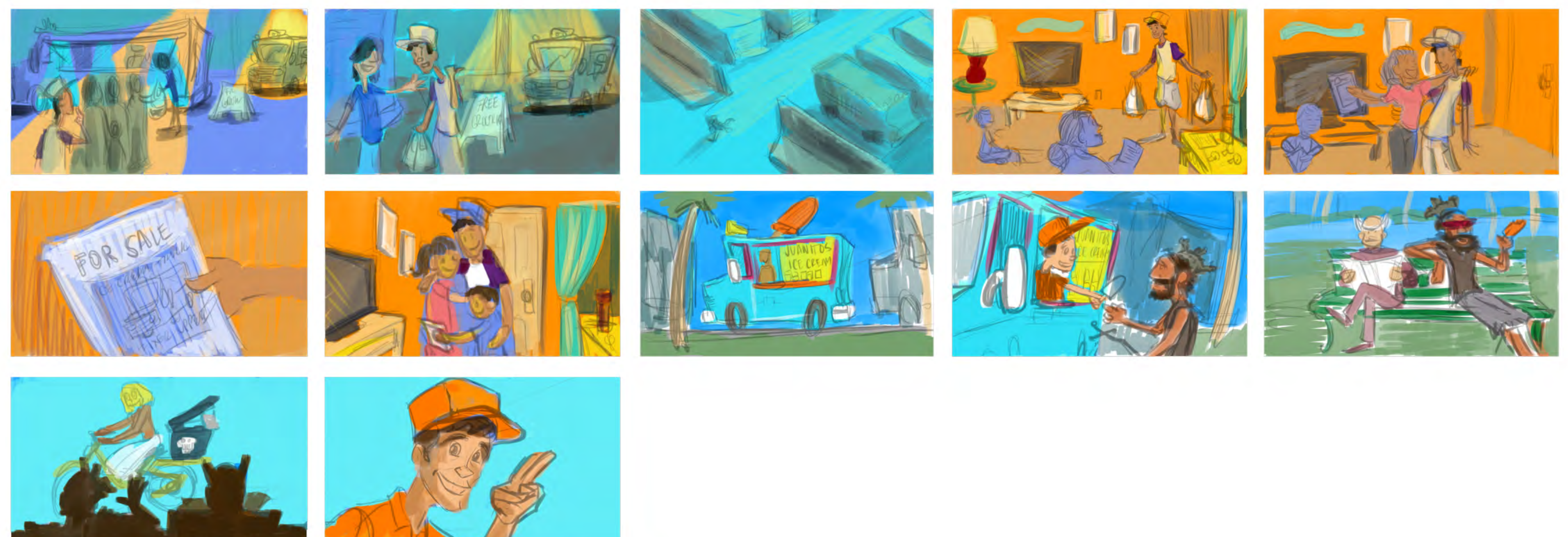
ACT 1



ACT 2



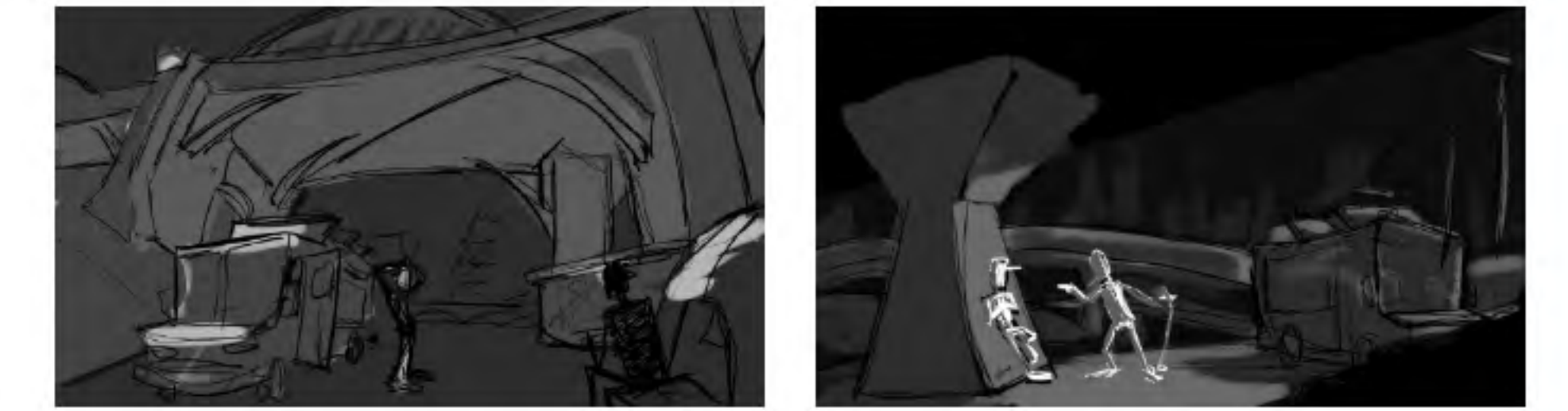
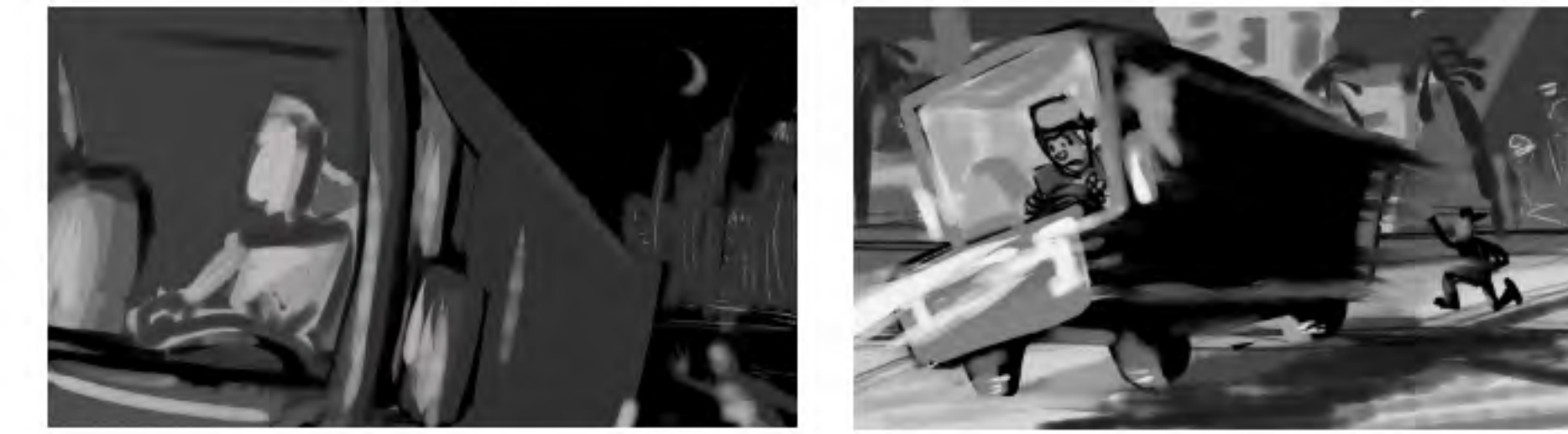
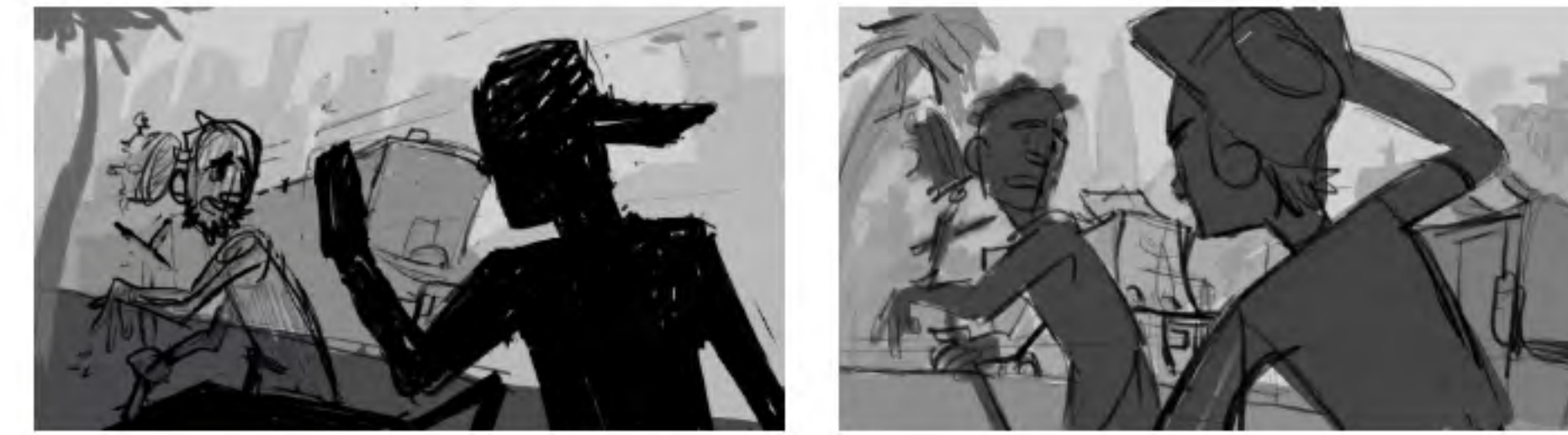
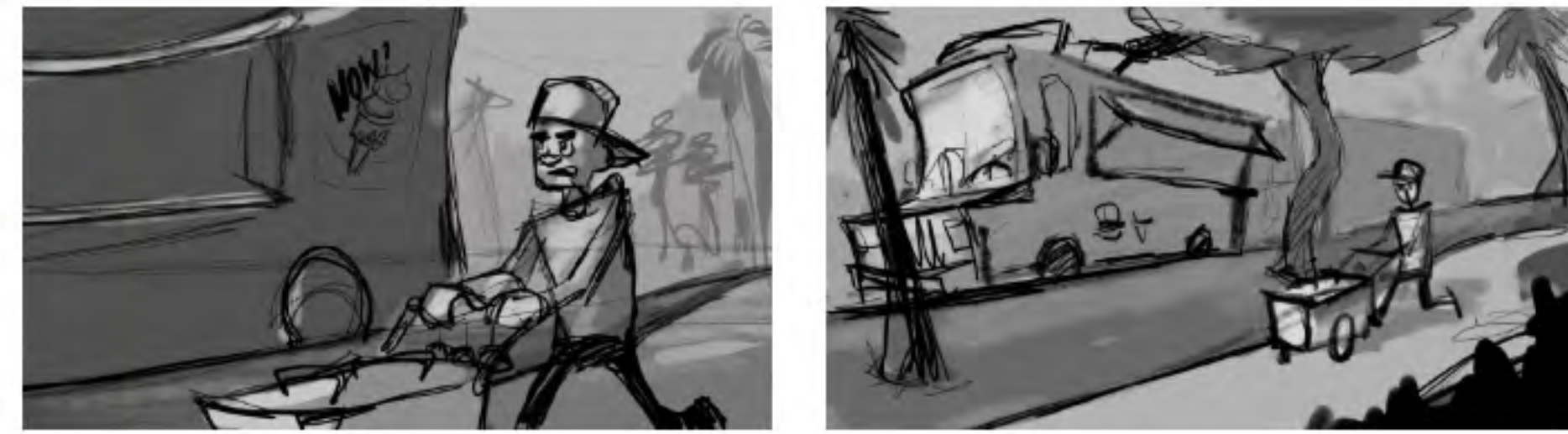
ACT 3



Story Design

Development

PALETERO



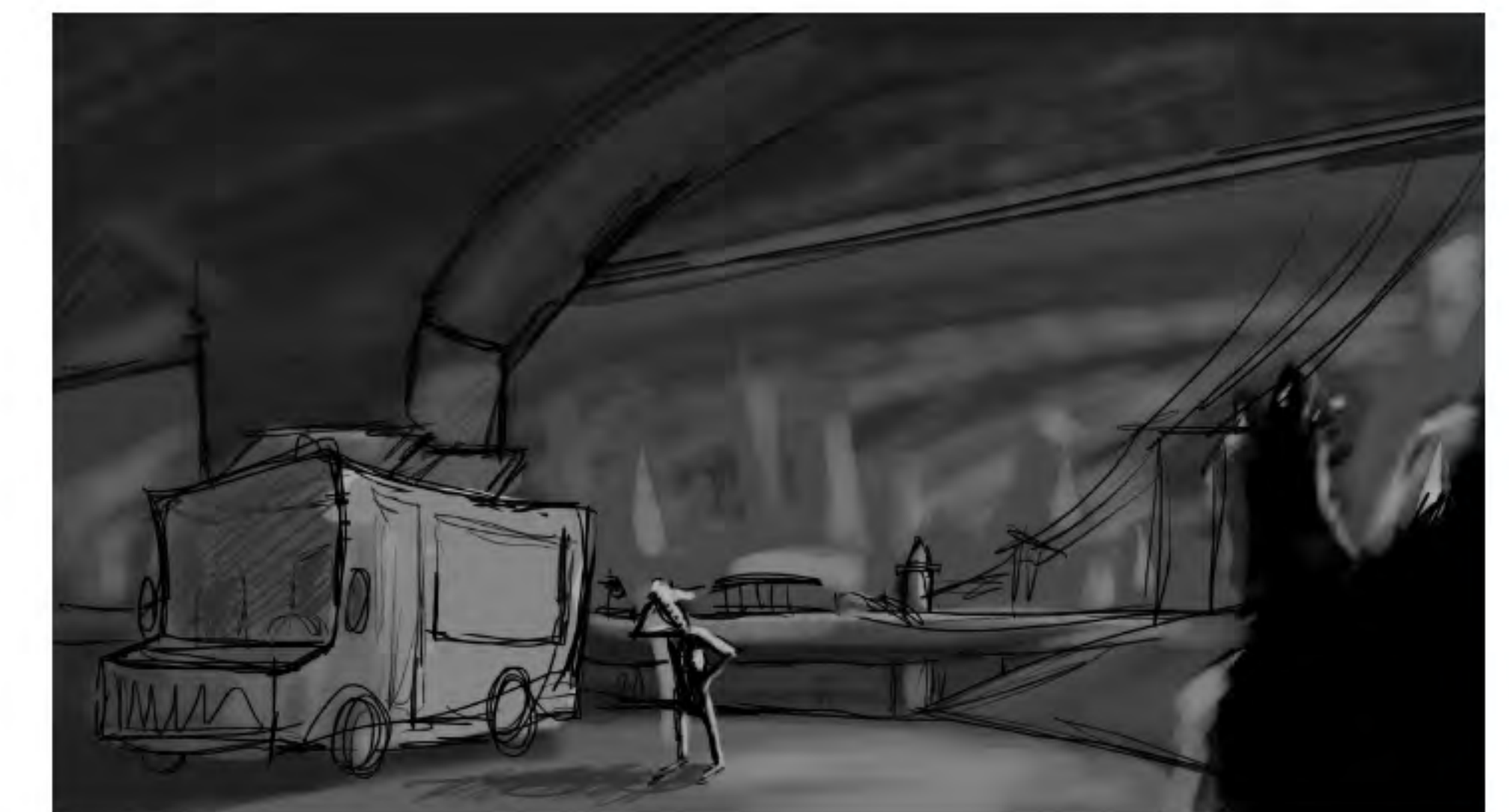
Paletero begrudgingly passes the bigger food trucks at the park, noticing that some are also selling ice cream. Early in the day: Lunchtime. Sunny.



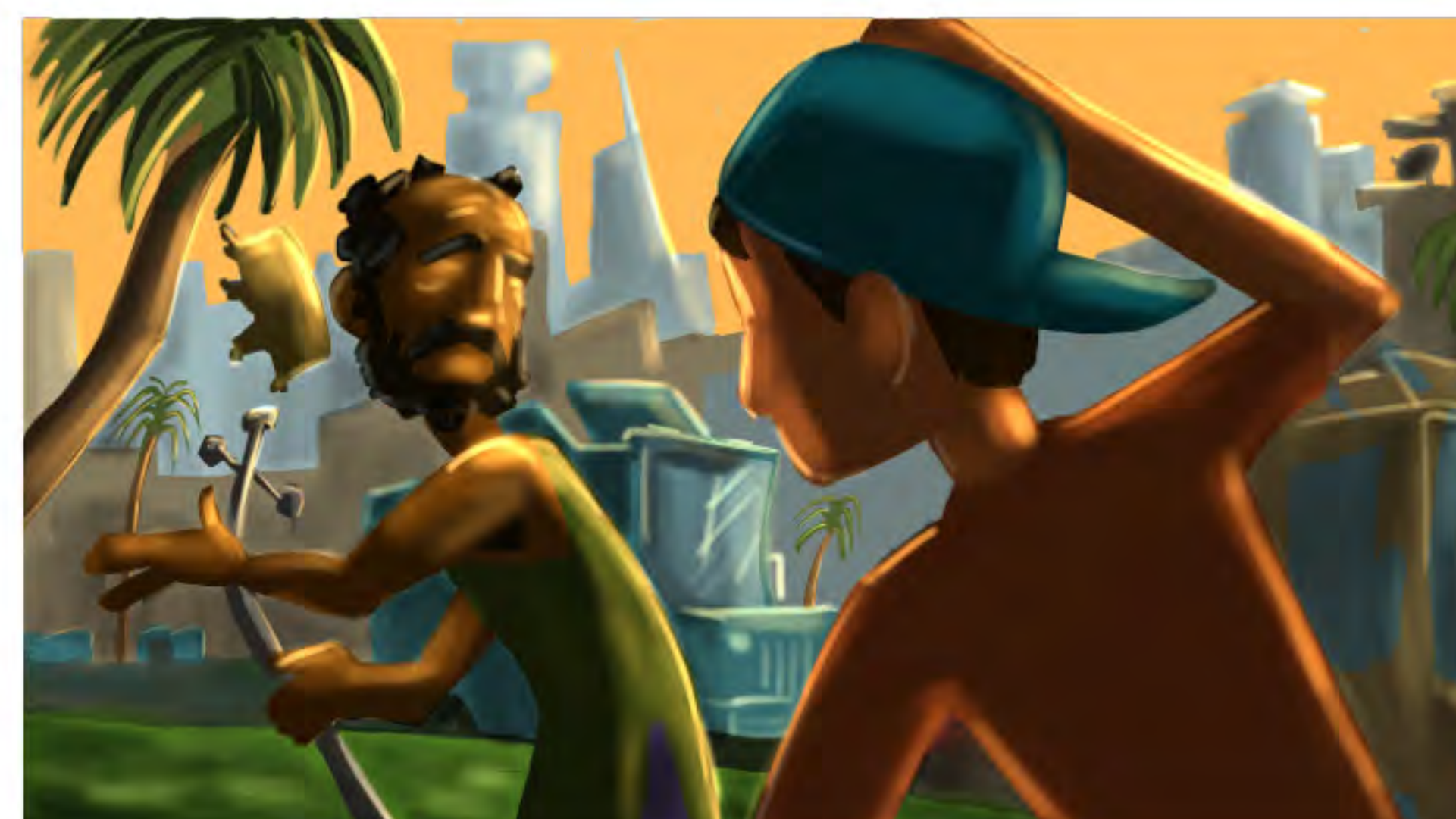
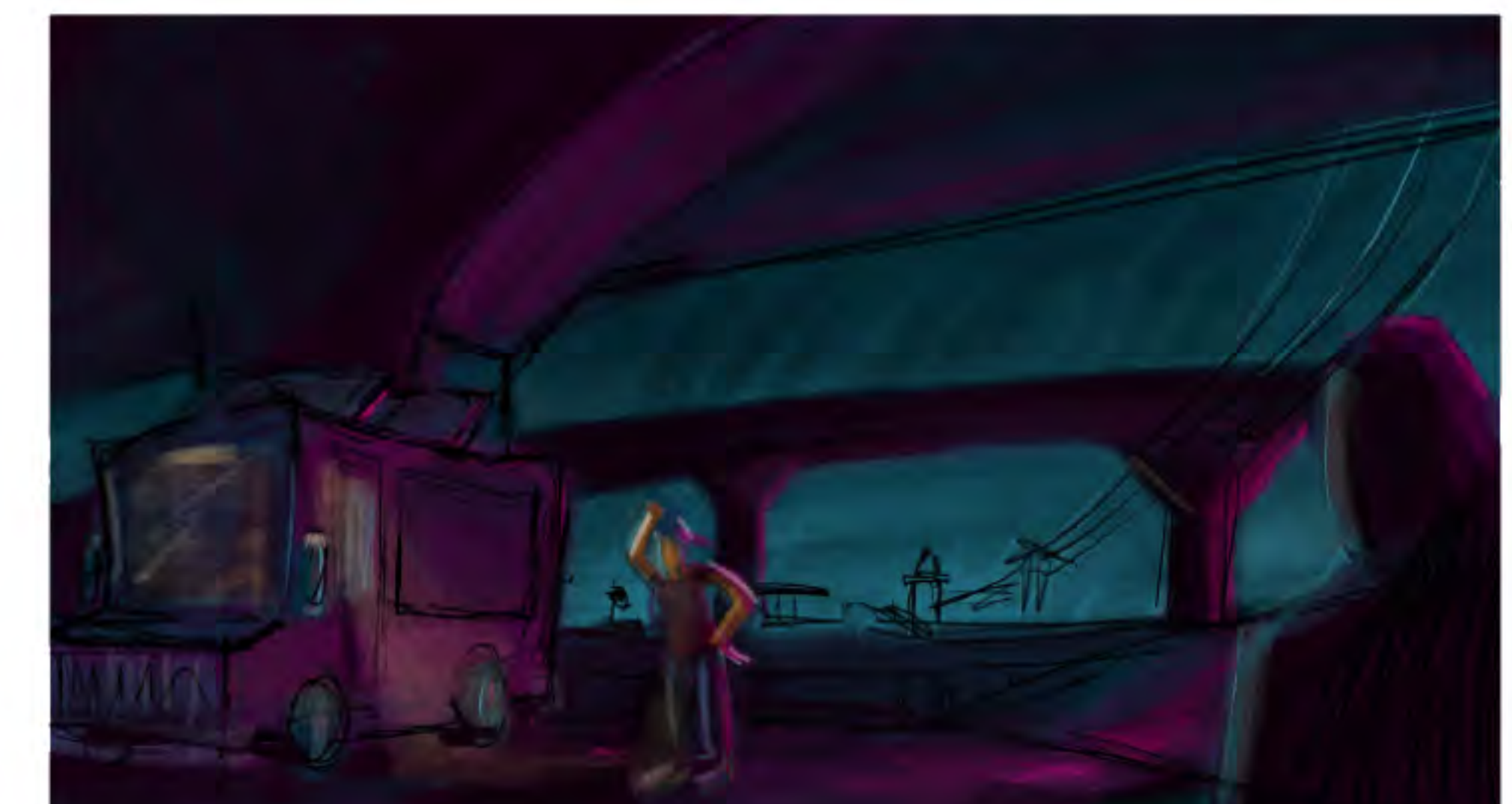
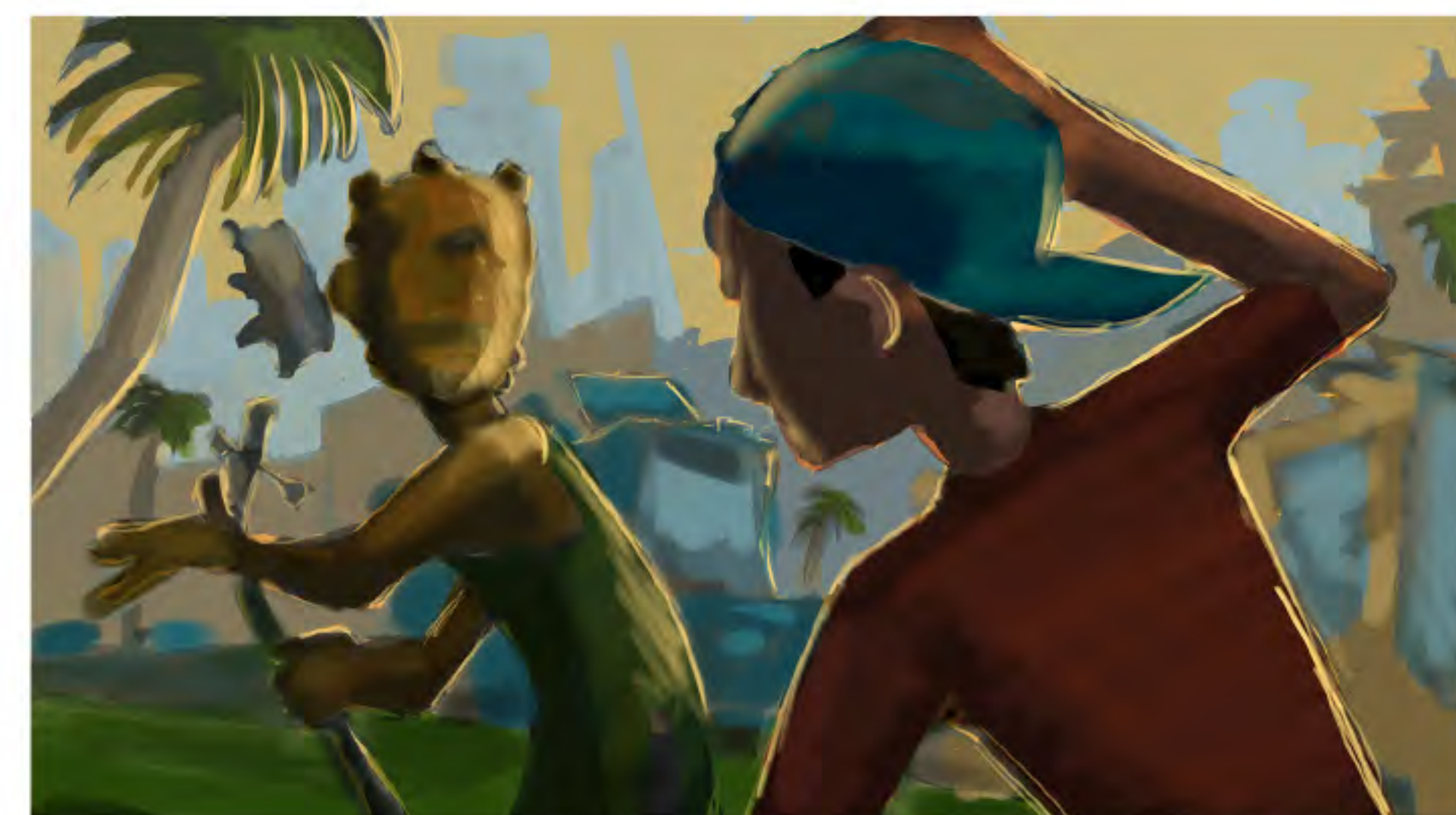
Paletero shoos away Street King after his routine request: "What can I get for fifty cents!?" Also mid-day, sunny.



Paletero steals a food truck in a moment of thoughtless angst. He's driving quickly although he's not being chased. I'm not sure if this is late evening or night time yet. I drew it as night.



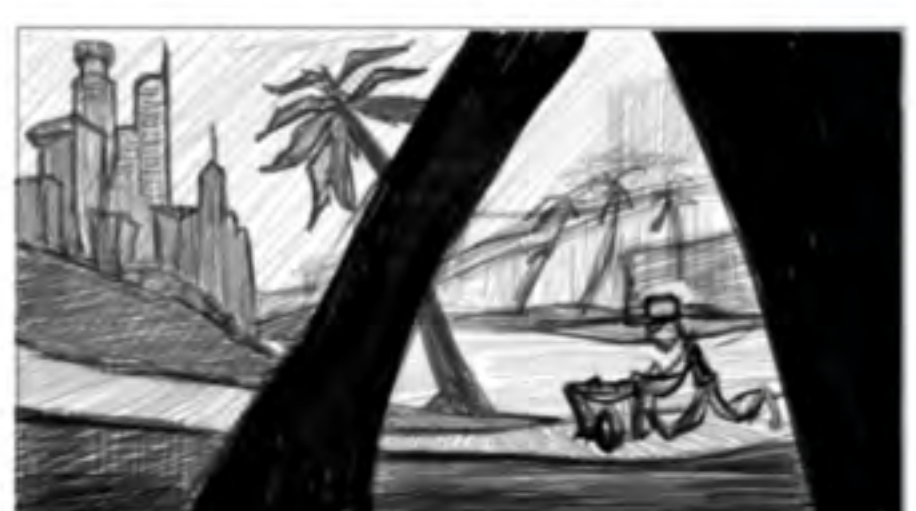
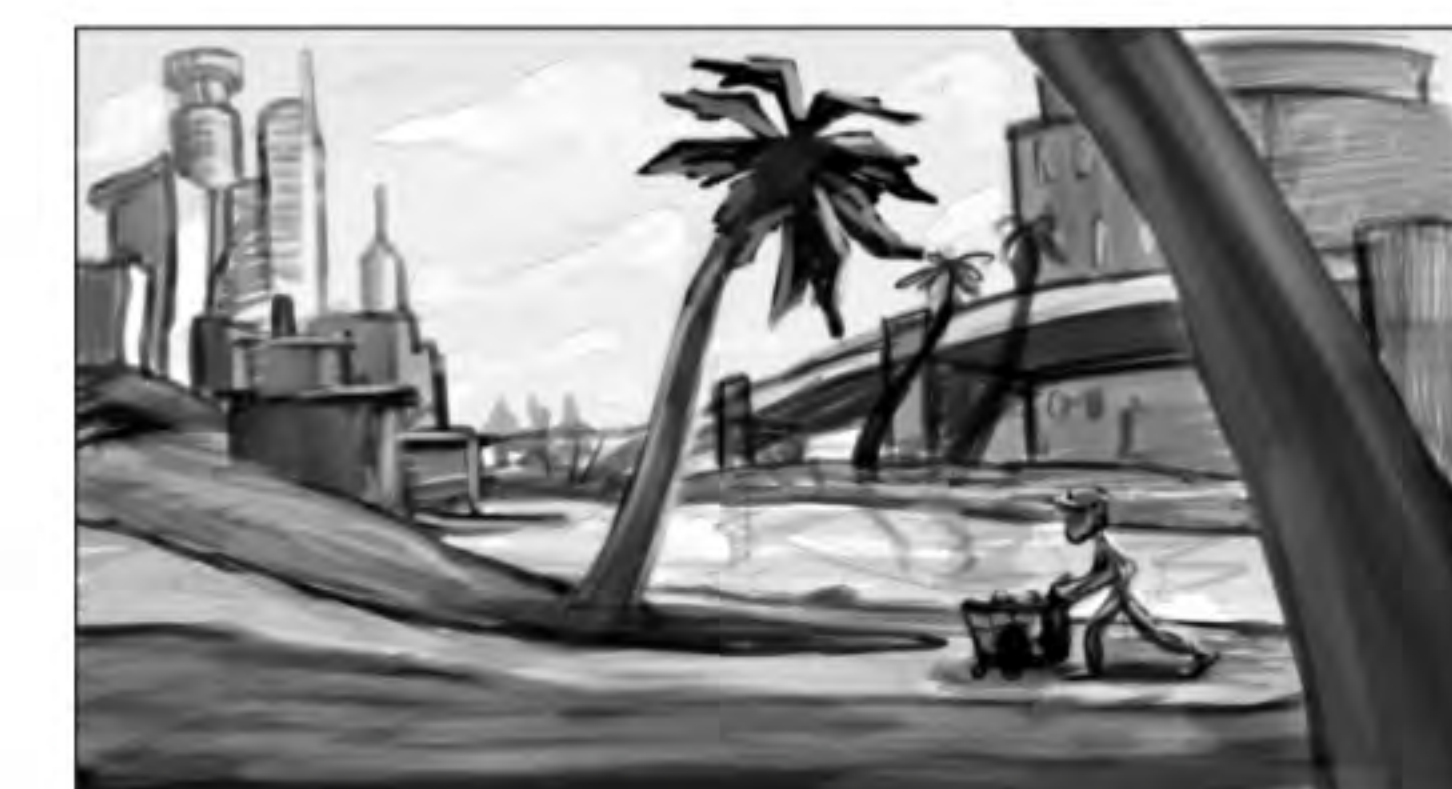
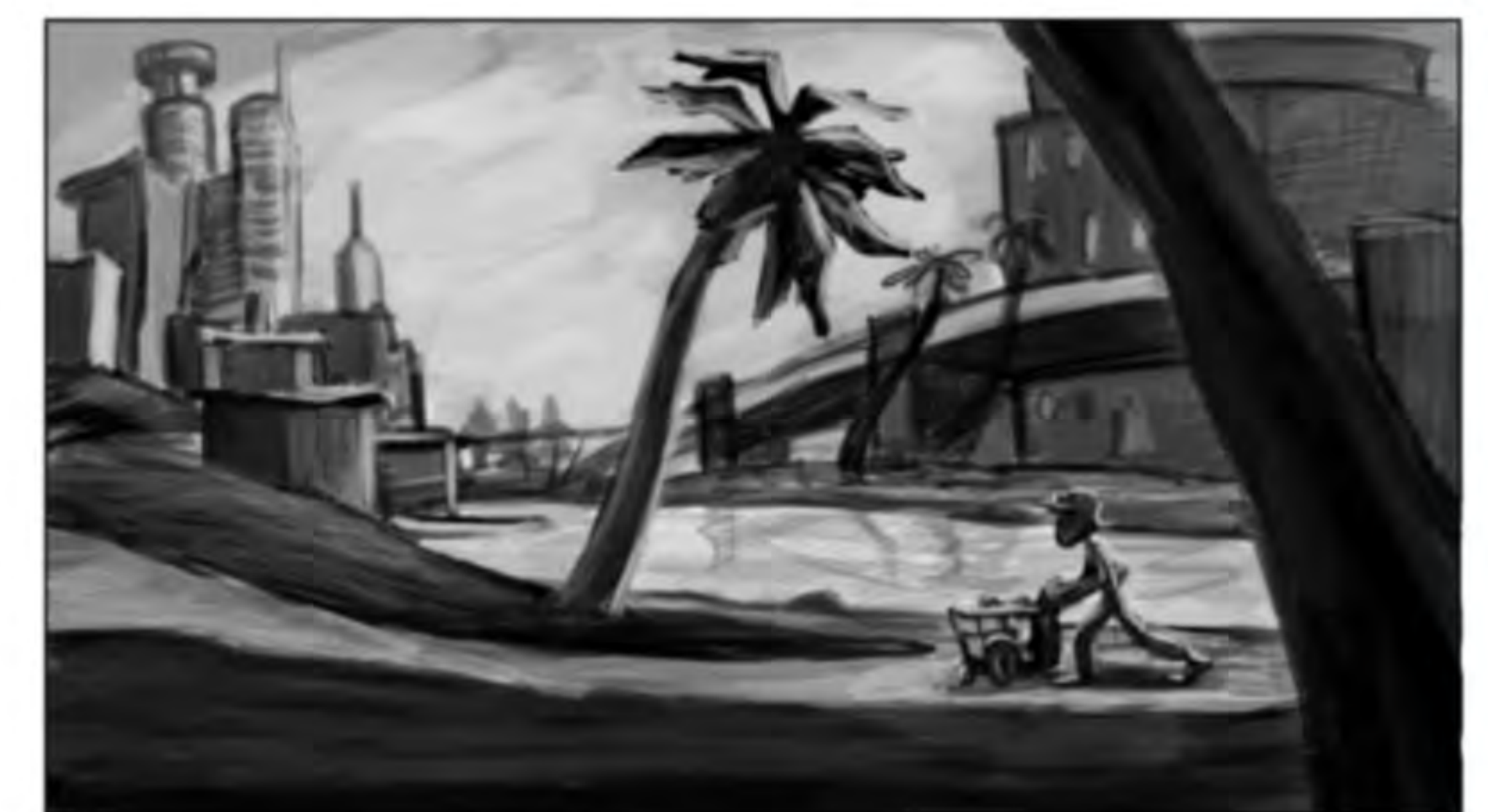
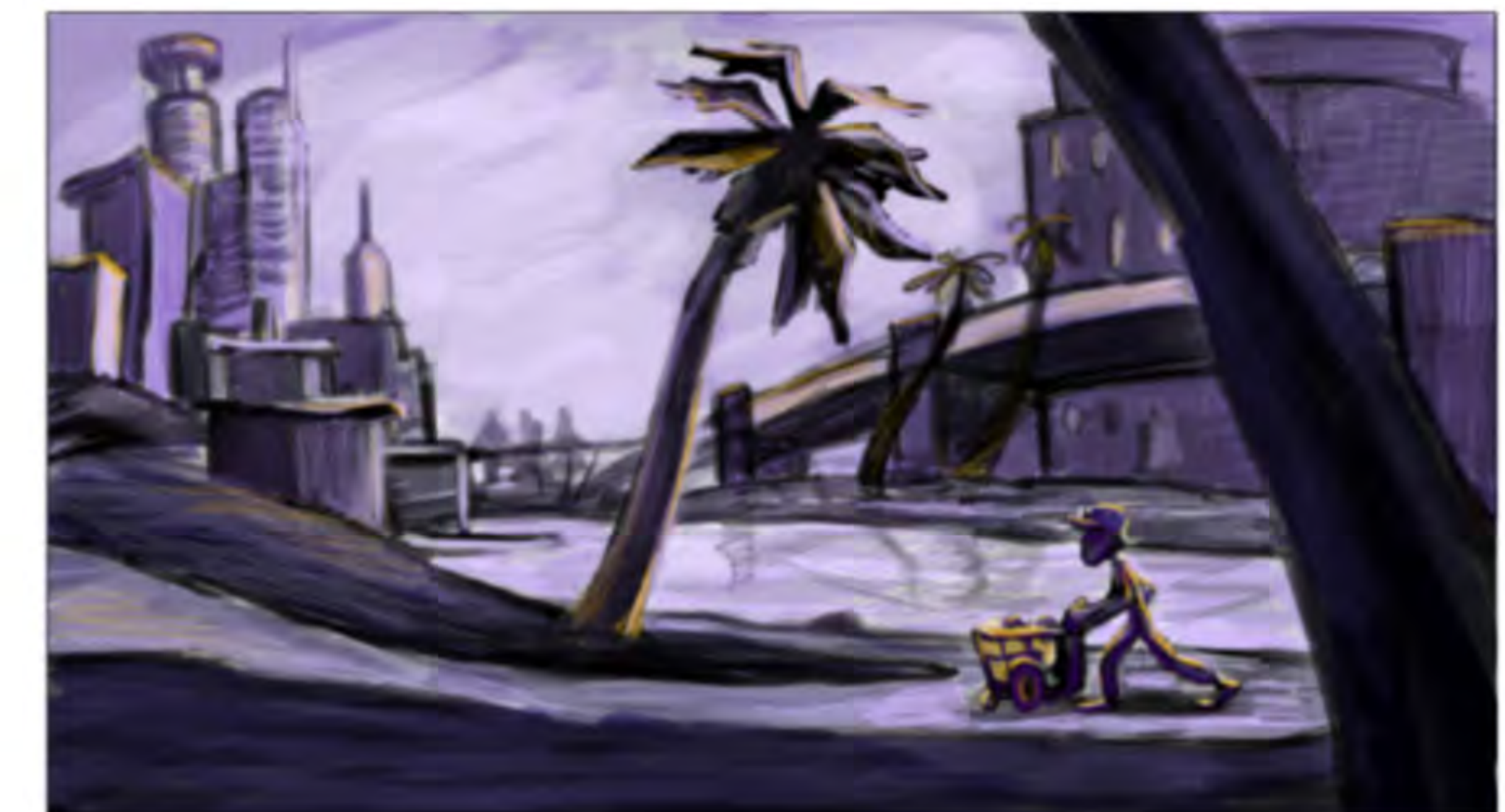
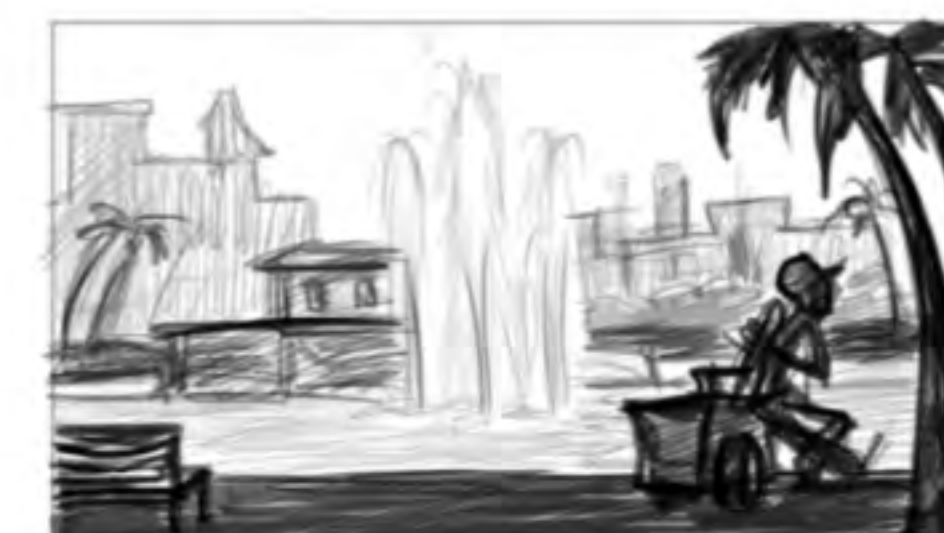
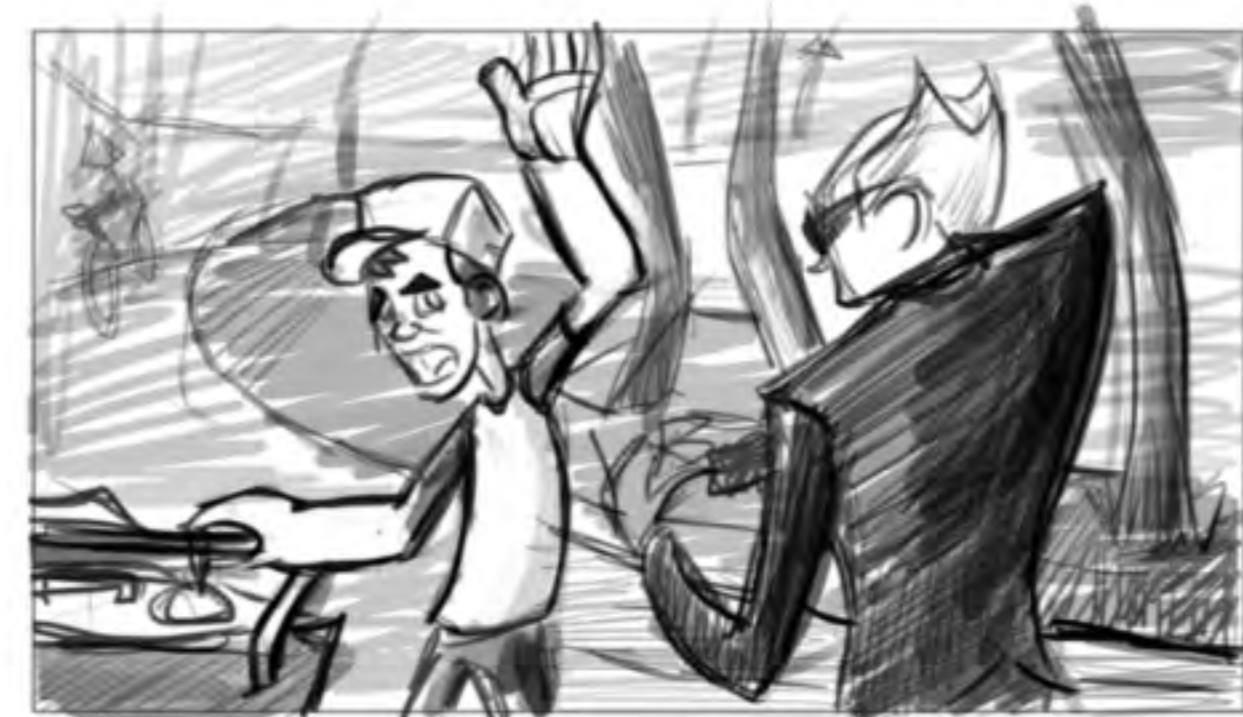
Paletero drives under a bridge, hiding. He's now wondering why he did it and what he's going to do. He'll meet with the three other characters here. Night.

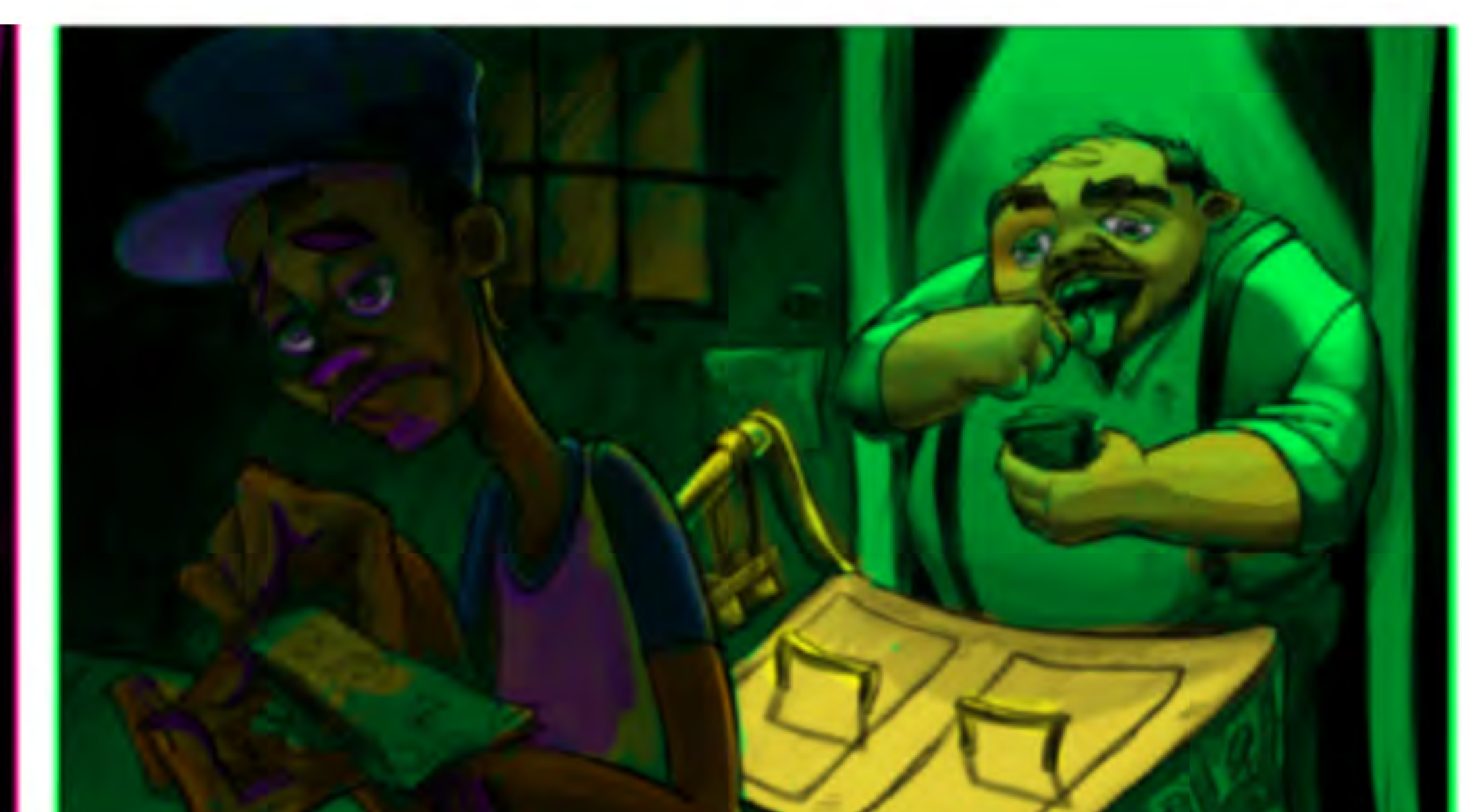
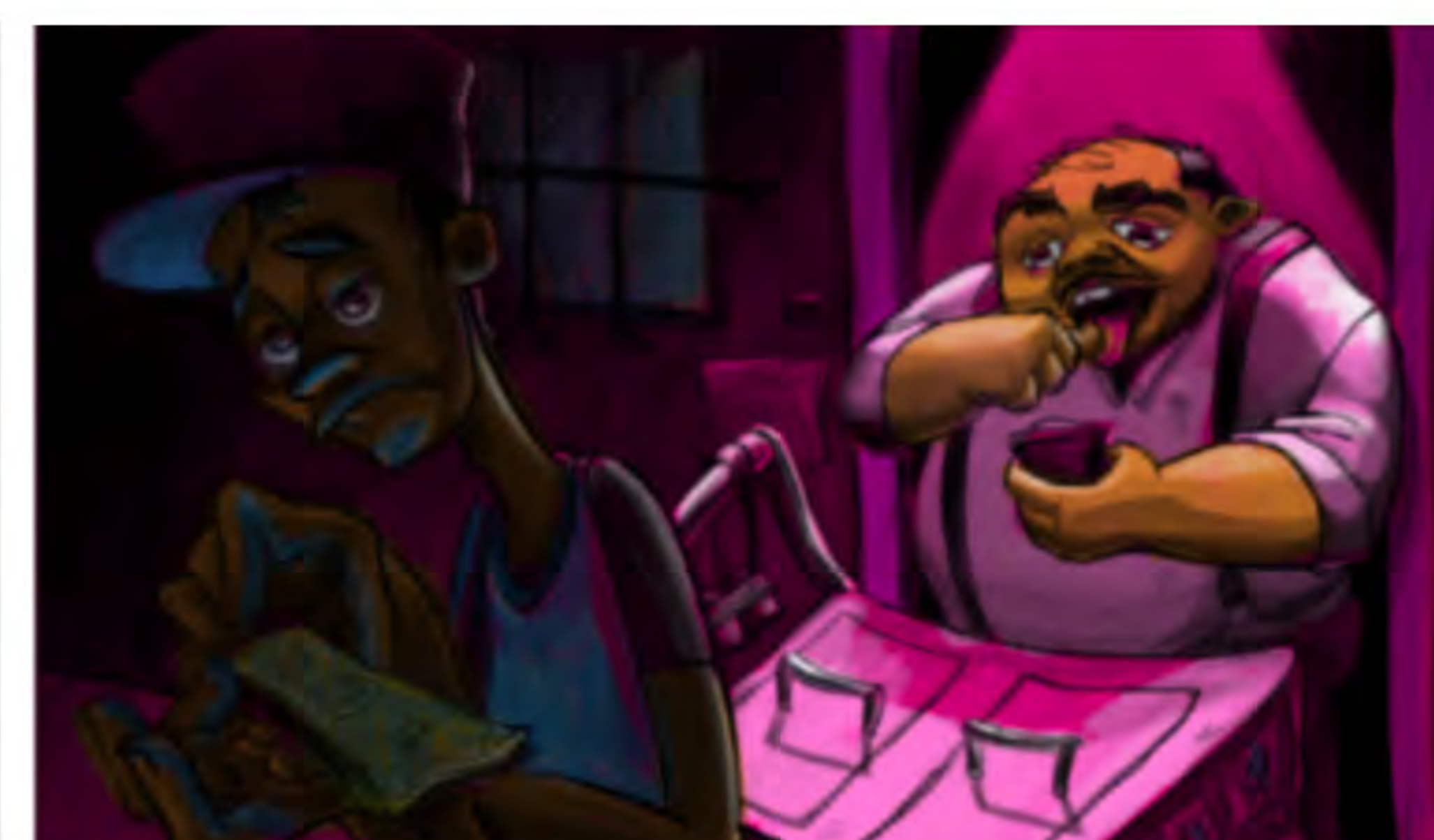
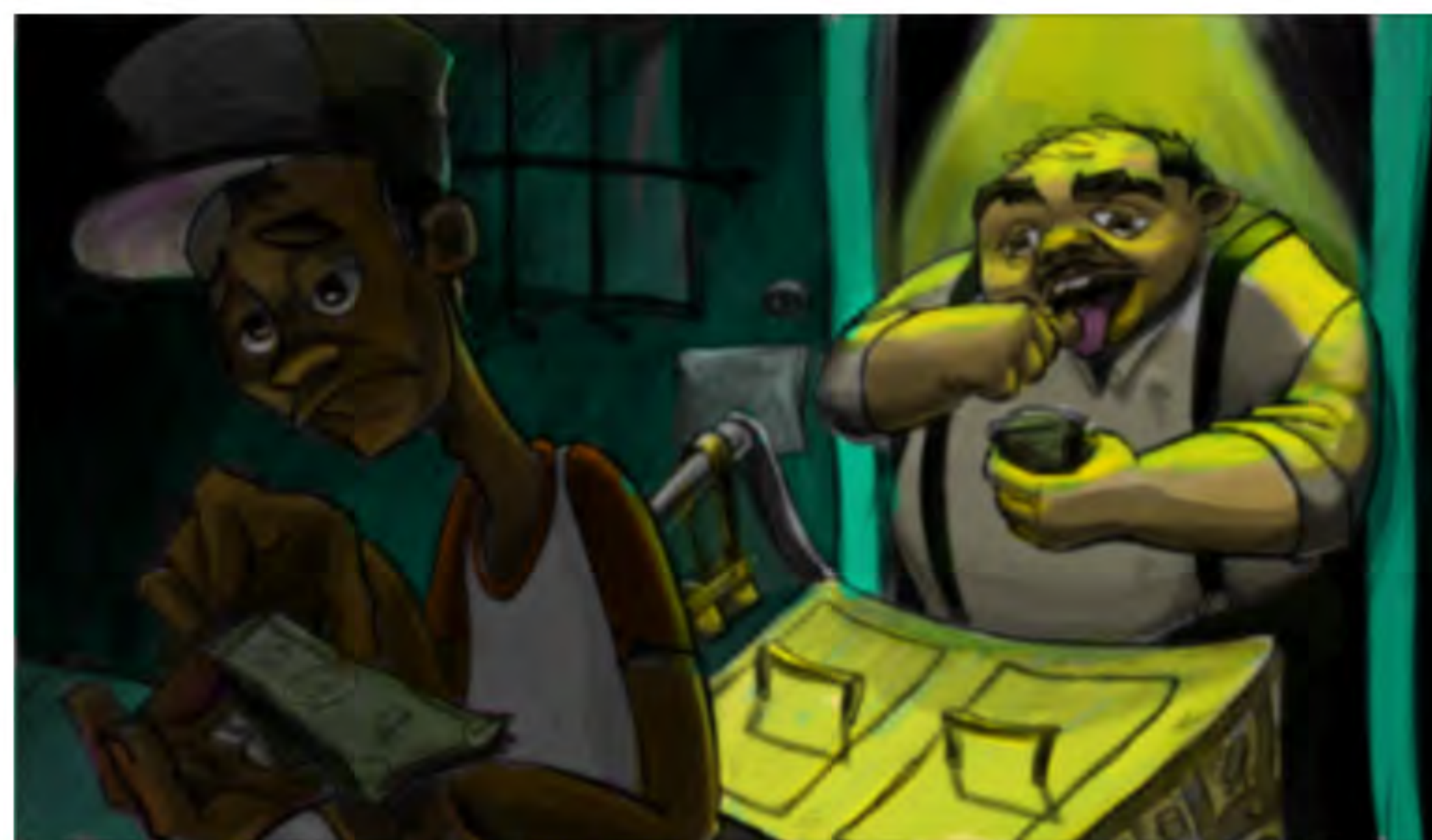


Story Design

Development

PALETERO





Cinematic Moments

The Art of Palettero



Paletero at Echo Park

Paletero looks bored amongst the other food truck vendors.



Paletero at Echo Park

Paletero begrudgingly passes the bigger food trucks at the park, noticing that some are also selling ice cream.



Paletero at Echo Park

Paletero shoos away Street King after his routine request: “What can I get for fifty cents!?”



Paletero at Echo Park

Wall Street offering a job in a shady business, the park and lake in the background.



Paletero at Echo Park

Messenger hurrying down the sidewalk, annoying Paletero and getting in his way.



Paletero at Echo Park

A moment of reflection, considering his lot in life by Echo Park Lake.



Greedy Boss

Paletero's Boss pays him his daily wages; it isn't much.



Stealing a Food Truck

Overcome with bitterness, Paletero steals a food truck in a moment of thoughtless angst. He's driving quickly through the city although he's not being chased.



Under the Bridge

Paletero drives and parks the truck under a bridge, hiding, from no one really. He's now wondering why he did it and what he's going to do. He'll again meet the three 'fate' characters here.



Street King Talks to Paletero

Referring to the stolen truck, Street King asks Paletero what he can get for fifty cents. It's not a coincidence that Street King happens to be there.



Face off with Wall Street

Wall Street shows up with a final offer in his shady deal, and Paletero angrily confronts the trickster.



Messenger receives a message

As Paletero realizes these visitors are way more than they seem, Messenger mysteriously shows up on a mission.



Messenger Delivers a Message

Paletero realizes Messenger is there for a much scarier reason, and he pleads for another chance.



Paletero Gets the Message

He goes where the Messenger tells him to... and finds an old food truck in need of repair.



Paletero is Happy

Paletero happily serves ice cream out of his own truck. Street King (God) is first in line asking again, “what can I get for fifty cents!?” Paletero responds with, “For you, no charge,” with a wink. Messenger is also nearby, with Wall Street possibly in the background.



Thank You!

The Art of Paletero