

# Future Troll – A Journey into Storytelling



# WPI

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*This report represents work of one or more WPI undergraduate students submitted to the faculty as evidence of a degree requirement. WPI routinely publishes these reports on its web site without editorial or peer review.*

# Abstract

*Future Troll* is a short graphic novel combining science fiction and fantasy genres and sets up its protagonist, Tor for the Call to Adventure from Joseph Campbell's Monomyth. Additional research on storytelling and folklore contributes to the story itself.

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# Executive Summary

The MQP project focuses on creating a graphic novel for the story Future Troll, which takes place in a fictitious future where all forms of mythological creatures are on the verge of extinction. Tor is the last troll who realizes he has a rare ability among them, which is to walk during the day without turning to stone, a power that will help him when confronting humans who are hunting him and other magical creatures. The project establishes the setting and a few characters, including the protagonist Tor and his mother Topaz.

The inspiration for the story comes from various storytelling methods and mythology involving trolls. The paper provides insight into storytelling, and factors that contribute to reader engagement, the significance of the graphic novel medium, the creative process and feedback received during the development of the graphic novel.

## Background

Storytelling was likely developed soon after language itself based on cave drawings dating back at least 30,000 years, likely a form of oral storytelling (Society). Oral storytelling encompasses myths, legends, fables, religion, prayers, proverbs, and instructions (Society). The monomyth, or 'The Hero's Journey,' is a framework built by Joseph Campbell upon the works of many scholars and breaks down common features and elements within memorable stories throughout time (Hobscheid). The stages of the Hero's Journey have the story start and end in the hero's ordinary world, while the quest takes place in a special world. The Hero's Journey has continued importance as a tool for analysis and a guide for creating all kinds of narratives (Hobscheid).

As storytelling evolves with humanity, one aspect that comes from folk tales and poetry is a narrative which unites distinct events by concept, idea, or plot; as well as using a distinct beginning, middle, and end. Four of these story types include linear, non-linear, quest, and viewpoint narrative ("4 Types of Narrative Writing - 2022").

According to Rick Busselle and Helena Bilandzic, the more engagement an audience member has, the more enjoyment they will receive from the storytelling experience (Busselle and Bilandzic). Pete Docter, who won three Oscars, said: “what you’re trying to do really when you tell a story is to get the audience to have the same feeling.” (Majister). According to a theory of narrative empathy, identifying with a character and the perspective conveyed in the narrative are important parts for an empathetic response from a story (Keen).

A screenplay, or script, is a written text providing the basis for a film production (*Screenplay / Filmmaking / Britannica*). A script should detail the entire story from start to finish since it is a blueprint of the plot and character development (“Script Writing”).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a graphic novel is “a full-length (esp. science fiction or fantasy) story published as a book in comic-strip format.” The term ‘graphic novel’ has experienced some debate that has often simplified the distinctions between comics, novels, and graphic novels. (Herron). Graphic novels, either physical or virtual, can reach a wider audience.

## Graphic Novel Building Process

The story for *Future Troll* came from the author’s idea to explore mixing genres like ray-punk science fiction and fantasy, while acknowledging the expectations of both the past and future. One of the themes which involve the separation of families, which involve references to historical atrocities. The author based the characters’ emotional relationships on his own parental relationships and Theodor Kittelsen’s Forest Troll image inspired an association of trolls and humans to climate change. Characteristics for the protagonist were inspired by Kittelsen’s Forest Troll.

The troll protagonist’s abilities and appearance are inspired by Scandinavian, Norse, and Celtic mythology. One of the descriptors mentions that if exposed to sunlight the troll would burst or be turned to stone. (*Märchen / Folk Tale / Britannica*). A possible connection may be that mythical trolls originated in the knowledge and possible memories of Neanderthals. The meaning of the word ‘troll’ is uncertain, but it might have had the original meaning of ‘supernatural’ or ‘magical’ with an overlay of ‘malignant’

and ‘perilous.’ The information from many sources was incorporated in a draft of the Future Troll script to influence the character design of Tor, Topaz, and any other trolls in the final print of the graphic novel (*Troll - New World Encyclopedia*).

Once the script was written, a series of hand-drawn sketches would depict scenes in the first half of the story. The hand-drawn sketches were refined and finalized through Adobe Photoshop and other tools. Dafont.com was used to download text fonts used for the graphic novel’s narration and dialogue. Several fonts were tested. Comfortaa was chosen to appeal to the science fiction aspect and Roboto for convenient reading to the audience. The 6” by 9” page layout was used for the graphic novel. Boynton Printing at WPI was used for printing copies of the script for Alpha-Fest and the graphic novel for Show-Fest.

## Exhibition and Feedback

The script was presented at Alpha Fest with a short video teaser. Pre and Post surveys were taken by 13 participants to see if the participants had already read a graphic novel, and if so, and what aspects made graphic novels appealing to them, and to get feedback about the graphic novel’s general themes, genre(s), and story. Seven of 13 participants were familiar with some form of graphic novel and 42% of post survey readers rated the script an 8 or 9 on a 10-point scale with 10 being highly enjoyable.

What went right was that based on the information gathered from the post-survey, many people seemed intrigued by the idea behind the story and noticed some connections shared with other properties within the science-fiction and fantasy genres. During MQP Presentations, exploring the character through different mediums, particularly in terms of physical arts, seemed to intrigue people’s interest in the project

One of the challenges was the lack of visual material that would attract more people for feedback on the project. The teaser was a great promotional item, but more visuals may have resulted in a better reception.

What I would do differently depends on future projects, if there is insufficient time to produce enough relevant promotional material, relying upon outsourcing to other artists and designers would be a helpful way to create more content with a more limited deadline.

## Conclusion

Future Troll is a science-fiction and fantasy graphic novel. The story leads to the hero's call to adventure. This story, as other narrative stories can teach, warn, and inspire an audience regardless of the medium.

# 1 – Introduction

*Future Troll* is a graphic novel. The plot takes place in a fictitious future where all forms of mythological creatures are on the verge of extinction. The protagonist, Tor, is the last troll who realizes he has a rare ability among them, which is to walk during the day without turning to stone. The story progresses with Tor confronting humans who are hunting him with technological advancements which rival magic, and he witnesses the inhumane treatment of various magical creatures in a predominately human world. The current completed portion of the story establishes the setting and a couple characters, including Tor, before placing him outside of the status quo.

The inspiration for the story comes from various storytelling methods and Norse and Scandinavian mythology involving trolls. This paper provides insight into storytelling itself, factors that contribute to reader engagement in narrative storytelling, the significance of the graphic novel medium used to convey the story, the building process and presentation of the story in the format, as well as the story's analyzed initial feedback and its presentation to other students.

## 2 – Background

### 2.1 – Storytelling and the Significance of Stories:

Storytelling is one of the oldest and pervasive tools that humanity has with its everchanging capabilities to share information. Storytelling is the act of telling or writing narratives for entertainment, informational, and/or educational purposes. This capability was likely developed soon after language itself based on cave drawings in Lascaux and Chavaux, France dating to be at least 30,000 years old. The drawings represent visual stories by depicting animals, humans, and other objects. The scenes on the walls were likely a form of oral storytelling (Society).

Oral storytelling is a tradition of telling a story through voice and gestures, crosses cultures and takes many forms such as epic poems, chants, rhymes, and songs. The tradition also encompasses myths, legends, fables, religion, prayers, proverbs, and instructions. Epic poems like the Greek *The Iliad* and the Sumerian *The Tale of Gilgamesh* were initially passed down orally and were later written down (Society). The act of writing stories has preserved them for future generations to uncover and adapt for modern audiences in various mediums such as novels, plays, comics, movies, and television.

The monomyth is a framework built by Joseph Campbell upon the works of scholars including Otto Rank, Lord Fraiser, and Vladimir Propp, which breaks down common features and elements within memorable stories throughout time. The monomyth, which is usually referred to as ‘The Hero’s Journey,’ examines the stages of the hero who goes on an adventure, confronts a crisis and wins, and then returns victorious. Some examples of the monomyth in myth, folklore, and religion are *The Odyssey*, King Arthur, the Buddha, Sonjata, and Psyche (Hobscheid).

The stages of the Hero’s Journey have the story start and end in the hero’s ordinary world, while the quest takes place in a special world. The stages are outlined below:

- Status Quo (1) – The start of the story.

- Call to Adventure – The hero receives a message, invitation, or challenge moving them from the Status Quo.
- Assistance – The hero needs help, possibly from someone older or wiser.
- Departure – The hero crosses the threshold from their ordinary world into a special world.
- Trials – The hero solves a riddle, slays a monster, or escapes from a trap.
- Approach – The hero faces their biggest ordeal, or worst fear.
- Crisis – The hero's darkest hour, where they may face death or possibly die, but is then reborn.
- Treasure – The hero claims some treasure, special recognition, or power.
- Result – This stage varies between stories, the monsters may bow down before the hero or chase them out of the special world.
- Return – The hero returns to their ordinary world.
- New Life – The quest has changed the hero and they have outgrown their old life.
- Resolution – All of the tangled plotlines are resolved.
- Status Quo (2) – This Status Quo stage places the hero in a better position than before the Call to Adventure stage (TED-Ed).

The Hero's Journey has continued importance as a tool for analysis and a guide for creating all kinds of narratives. The stages are used as a way to investigate what a story lacks and ensures that all important elements are included. The monomyth is currently being used in research, literary analysis, digital game design, advertising, marketing, screenwriting, and by authors (Hobscheid).

As storytelling evolves with humanity, one aspect to come from folk tales and poetry is narrative. It is a way to present connected events to tell a good story regardless of it being an essay, biography, or a novel. Uniting distinct events by concept, idea, or plot, common types of narratives often have a beginning, middle, and end. Four of these types include linear, non-linear, quest, and viewpoint narrative. A linear narrative presents the events of the story in the order in which they occur. This type of writing

employs the effect of immersing the reader in the protagonist's life, such as in Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice*. Non-linear narratives present the events of a story out of order with the use of flashbacks and other literary devices that can shift the story's chronology. A short story may use this technique to emphasize the emotional mindset of a personal narrative to make thematic connections between incongruent events. A quest narrative is a story where the protagonist is determined to complete a specific goal, which may become an all-consuming passion where they must face various obstacles along the way. An example of this narrative is J.R.R. Tolkein's *The Hobbit*, where the protagonist works with a group to reclaim lost gold from a dragon. Also, a viewpoint narrative expresses the points of view, or subjective personal experience of the main character, or other fictional characters in the story. This style often utilizes first-person narration of omniscient third-person narration with changing points of view between multiple characters ("4 Types of Narrative Writing - 2022"). Writers such as Austin and Tolkein have left an astounding impact in their respective literary genres, but storytelling, and the way stories are told, has expanded into other mainstream forms of media such as film.

Another way to think about the narrative when writing, is to consider the level of engagement based on six factors as examined by Rick Busselle and Helena Bilandzic. The first is the mental model the reader constructs to understand and create meaning which they do based on their life experiences, their recollections of stories and specific elements of those stories, and the information provided in the current narrative such as the situation, characters, setting and so on. This model changes as the story progresses with the other five factors they examine contributing to or detracting from comprehension. They state that this applies broadly to stories in all forms of media with differences based on the use or lack of visuals, sound, and the individual's control of the speed of delivery which a reader, versus a viewer, more fully controls. The second is perspective taking and how the viewer locates themselves in the narrative which changes with different characters, times, and places. The more the reader identifies with a character, the less they are an audience member and the more easily they engage from the character's perspective. They refer to this as "cognitive perspective taking" where the reader not only sees events from the character's perspective but understands the motives and how the character interprets their world. This allows the

reader to feel or experience the emotions of the character. Conversely, a reader may know more than a character and be aware of elements to which the character is ignorant so may empathize but not share or experience the same emotions. The third and fourth topics are closely related. They discuss the level of presence or how one feels present in that world. They explain that in some media, using computers for example, there is the generated sensory stimulation but in literature the feeling of being present is more like attributed to “flow.” They state that the level of flow, or how easily immersed in the narrative the reader gets, the more likely they are to be present to the narrative. Being in a state of flow means one solely focuses on a single activity, in this case the narrative, such that they are not aware of their actual surroundings. When in this state, the fictional story and surroundings replace the real world as the reader loses self-awareness. The authors move on to the threats to narrative engagement which are factors that interfere such as inconsistencies, plot flaws, and a behavior that is not congruent with the character. These inconsistencies detract from the reader’s ability to stay engaged. Lastly, the outcomes of the engagement are discussed such that they state the greater the engagement and experienced emotions, the greater the enjoyment for the reader (Busselle and Bilandzic).

The Academy Awards, often known as the Oscars, are awards for artistic and technical merit in the film industry. One of the only people to have won three Oscars for best-animated feature, Pete Docter, has shared some insight into his writing by utilizing his perspective as a writer. When working on the production of Pixar’s *Monsters Inc.*, he transferred his feelings about becoming a father into the production. Docter encourages writers to reflect on moments in their life when they felt big feelings and use them to make the audience experiences them in a similar way. He said: “what you’re trying to do really when you tell a story is to get the audience to have the same feeling.” (Majister). The invitation of empathy is crucial in a story.

According to a theory of narrative empathy, minimal elements of identity, situation, and feeling regardless of complexity or realism, often allows empathy for fictional characters. The audience could identify with characterization aspects like naming, description, implicated traits, reliance on types, depicted actions, roles in a plot, and how their consciousness is represented. Although identifying with a

character is one way to invite empathy from an audience, the perspective conveyed in the narrative also plays a crucial role for an empathetic response. The connection between the author and reader includes the subject of the narration, the narrator's implied location, the narrator's relation to the characters, and the internal or external perspective of the characters (Keen).

## 2.2 - Writing a Script:

A screenplay, or script, is a written text providing the basis for a film production. It usually includes the dialogue spoken by the characters and an outline of the film's action. Screenplays can be adapted from novels, stage plays, or original ideas suggested by screenwriters and/or their collaborators. The script generally goes through multiple revisions where screenwriters are called on to incorporate suggestions from others involved in the filmmaking process. Early drafts often have brief suggestions for planned shots, but by the time of production, a screenplay may have become a shooting script where the actions and gestures are explicitly stated (*Screenplay / Filmmaking / Britannica*).

When writing a script, it should detail character dialogue, scene settings, and actions taking place throughout a film, TV show, or any other visual story. The screenplay should tell the entire story from start to finish since it is a blueprint of the plot and character development. The following steps will help with improving a script:

The first step is to read other scripts to find examples of the well-written dialogue, characters, and storylines that are often sought by producers. As a writer, develop your skills with a few workshops and consider the production probability of selling a script based on the budget for producing the story, as well as the possibility of intellectual property infringement. Additionally, writers should be discouraged from following popularity trends since the trend may not be as popular once the script has been polished, so writers should instead author a story about which they are passionate.

The second step is to build the story's world based on the time period, weather and climate, the story themes, and the location for where the characters are going. Followed by the third step of developing the characters by determining the strengths, flaws, goals, and obstacles of the main character. Then for the other characters, determine how they interact with and help the main character. If the other characters are acting as antagonists keeping the protagonist from their goals, consider how the antagonist(s) is built from their motivations and how they hinder the goals of the protagonist.

The fourth step is to organize the story with a synopsis outlining the order in which the audience will view the story. The stages of the story often include an introduction to the main character and their world, an inciting incident that moves the story forward, an initial turning point presenting the character with a new situation or challenge, a call to action specifying the protagonist's goal, a point of no return where the protagonist risks or loses everything, the 'all is lost' point where the main character faces a danger where they will have to rise to the occasion, a second turning point where the stakes become higher as the character redeems themselves, and finally the climax where the story comes to a resolution.

The fifth step is to write the first draft of the story by writing out the scenes that present the conflicts and challenges to the main character, as well as the scenes showing how they overcome them. Risks are encouraged at this stage so the ideas can be revisited later in the revising process to see if they work with the plot. Also, a one-to-two sentence logline summarizing the plot of the script can convey the main ideas of the story to the audience.

Afterwards, reread the first draft and cut any irrelevant parts to the overall story. Some of these parts may include weak plot points that do not move the story forward or affect how the protagonist achieves their goals, confusing scenes requiring additional clarification, information that needs more research or fact checking, and/or long monologues that can be shortened.

The final step, rewriting the script until it is ready to be sent to a potential buyer, is at the writer's discretion. Continue rewriting until each action pushes the story forward by addressing plot holes, character motivations, as well as adding or cutting scenes ("Script Writing"). Although this process

applies to screenplays, it is also a great way to organize a story, the plot and its characters in other mediums which involve writing.

## 2.3 – The Term ‘Graphic Novel’:

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a graphic novel is “a full-length (esp. science fiction or fantasy) story published as a book in comic-strip format.” The term originated with the publication of Will Eisner’s *A Contract with God: And Other Tenement Stories . . . a graphic novel* (1978). Eisner called the work a graphic novel when seeking a publisher, even though it was a collection of stories, not a novel. Eisner believed that he created the term, and although he later found he was not the first one to use it, it was not until Eisner that the term gained traction. The term ‘graphic novel’ has experienced some debate with Scott McCloud stating in *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, that comics are “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence.” Art Spiegelman, the writer of *Maus*, said it is merely a “big comic book that needed a bookmark.” Comic scholar Robert C. Harvey declared it “speech balloons and narrative breakdown” (Herron). The debate has often simplified the distinctions between comics, novels, and graphic novels.

As the medium of graphic novels continues to change through the decades, the definition itself begins to encapsulate a wider spectrum of the format’s accessibility. The definition for all graphic novel formats was one by Stephen Weiner, the author of *Faster Than a Speeding Bullet: The Rise of the Graphic Novel*, with “book-length comic books that are meant to be read as one story, including collections of stories in genres such as mystery, superhero or supernatural that are meant to be read apart from their corresponding ongoing comic book storyline.” However, a more appropriate definition for the term is in Micheal Schumacher’s Will Eisner biography: “book-length works of sequential art expanded in scope [beyond science fiction and fantasy] to include biography, memoir, history, and other types of

non-fiction” (Herron). Graphic novels, either physical or virtual, can reach to a wider audience as a collection of visual stories.

## 3 – Graphic Novel Building Process

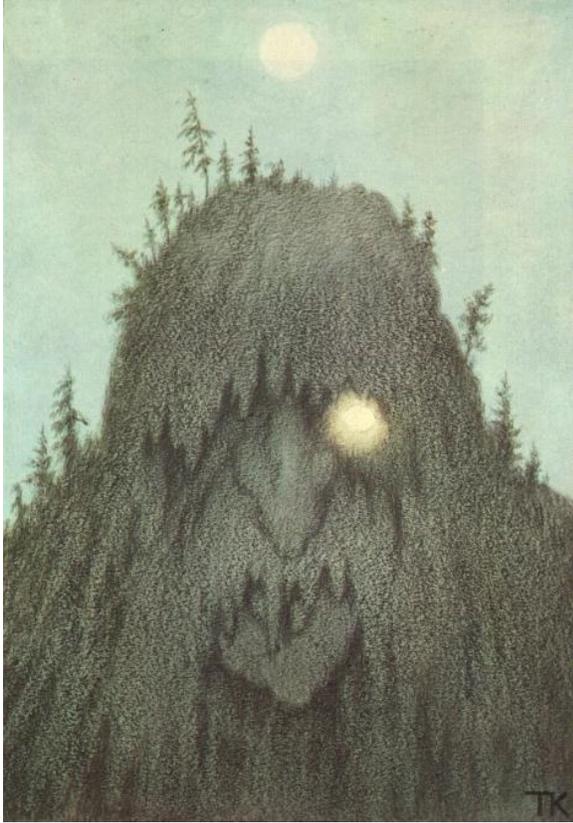
### 3.1 – Coming up with the Story for the Novel:

The story for the graphic novel came from the author's idea to explore mixing genres while acknowledging the expectations of both the past and future. The setting itself is inspired by the ray-punk science fiction genre where humans have convenient access to renewable resources and hover-based technology; as well as modern technological advances such as augmented reality. Some of the themes and influences refer to Japanese Internment camps, the Holocaust, and children being separated from their families when crossing over from Mexico to the United States. The historical atrocities provided depth to the author who wished to utilize a plot point where Tor and his mother, Topaz are separated. The author based the characters' emotional relationships on his own parental relationships. Theodor Kittelsen's *Forest Troll* image inspired an association of trolls and humans to climate change where the trolls represent nature and humans represent technological advancements. Kittelsen's work shows the troll blending and becoming one with nature. Characteristics for the protagonist were inspired by research, like Kittelsen's *Forest Troll*, into the concept of trolls regarding mythology and modern interpretations.

Once the script was written, a series of hand-drawn sketches were done to depict scenes in the first half of the story. The intention was to adapt the entire script, but the project had to be scaled down due to the practicalities of one person drawing, illustrating, and designing all of the story and two advisors supporting with pointers and technique demonstrations. The hand-drawn sketches were refined and finalized through Adobe Photoshop.

## 3.2 – References and Inspiration:

The troll protagonist's abilities and appearance are inspired by Scandinavian, Norse, and Celtic mythology. According to Britannica, a troll is a monstrous being in early Scandinavian folklore that sometimes possesses magic powers. Aside from descriptions that are malicious towards humans, one of the descriptors mentions that if exposed to sunlight the troll would burst or be turned to stone. Later tales of trolls often are equivalent to the size of humans or smaller beings similar to dwarfs and elves. Additional abilities are that they can transform themselves and prophesize (*Märchen / Folk Tale / Britannica*). A possible connection may be that mythical trolls originated in the knowledge and possible memories of Neanderthals. The stereotypical image of a Neanderthal, such as jutting lower jaws and protruding brows are often used as the exaggerated facial structures used to describe trolls. The meaning of the word 'troll' is uncertain, but it might have had the original meaning of 'supernatural' or 'magical' with an overlay of 'malignant' and 'perilous.' *Trolleri*, an old Swedish law, was a particular kind of magic intended to do harm. North Germanic terms like *trolldom* for witchcraft and *trolla* or *tyrlle* for performing magic tricks in modern Scandinavian languages do not imply any connection with the mythical beings. In Norse mythology, 'troll' can signify any uncanny being, including the Norse giants, or *jötnar*. Legends from the Middle Ages usually feature trolls of horrifying and satanic proportions with weaknesses to church bells, crucifixes, and even the name Christ. The tales had a connection between demons by associating tales of trolls living underground to demons in a subterranean hell. In the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, trolls became popular when neo-romanticism in Europe celebrated regional folklore and legend. Those tales and illustrations by artists like John Bauer and Theodor Kittelsen planted the ideas most people have of trolls to this day (*Troll - New World Encyclopedia*). The information from these sources was then incorporated in a draft of the *Future Troll* script to influence the character design of Tor, Topaz, and any other trolls in the final print of the graphic novel.



*Figure 1: Skogtroll (Forest Troll), 1906 - Theodor Kittelsen*

### **3.3 – Adaptation of Script to Graphic Novel:**

Once the script was written, a series of hand-drawn sketches were done to depict scenes in the first half of the story. The intention was to adapt the entire script, but the project had to be scaled down due to the practicalities of one person drawing, illustrating, and designing all of the story and two advisors supporting with pointers and technique demonstrations. The hand-drawn sketches were refined and finalized through Adobe Photoshop.



*Figure 2: Sketch of Tor and Topaz*



*Figure 3: Sketch of the Corridor*

### **3.4 – Art Creation Process:**

Adobe Photoshop was used to adapt thumbnail sketches of the scenes described in the script. The sketches were improved with more details for the characters and environment. A few Photoshop tools like

the Pencil, Eraser, and Move tools were used to make the improved sketches.



Figure 4: Tor and Topaz Sketch

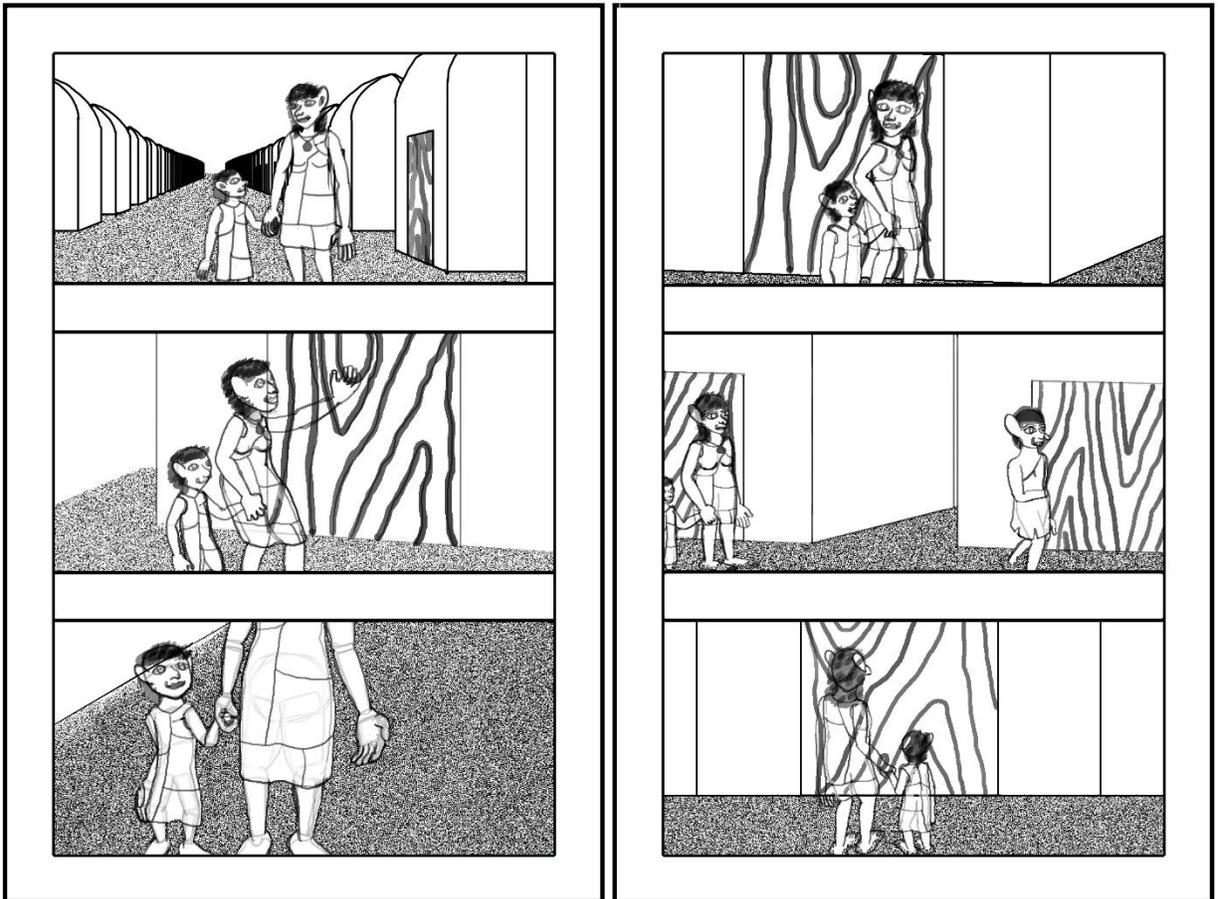


Figure 5: Refined Sketches of Pages 3 and 4

When finalizing the story for printing and distribution, Adobe tools such as Pen Curvature, Lasso, and Paint Bucket were used to create consistent linework and confine specific parts of the scenes for solid colors. In addition to the tools, changes to layers in Photoshop, like opacity and layer type, were used to create gradient and splatter effects.

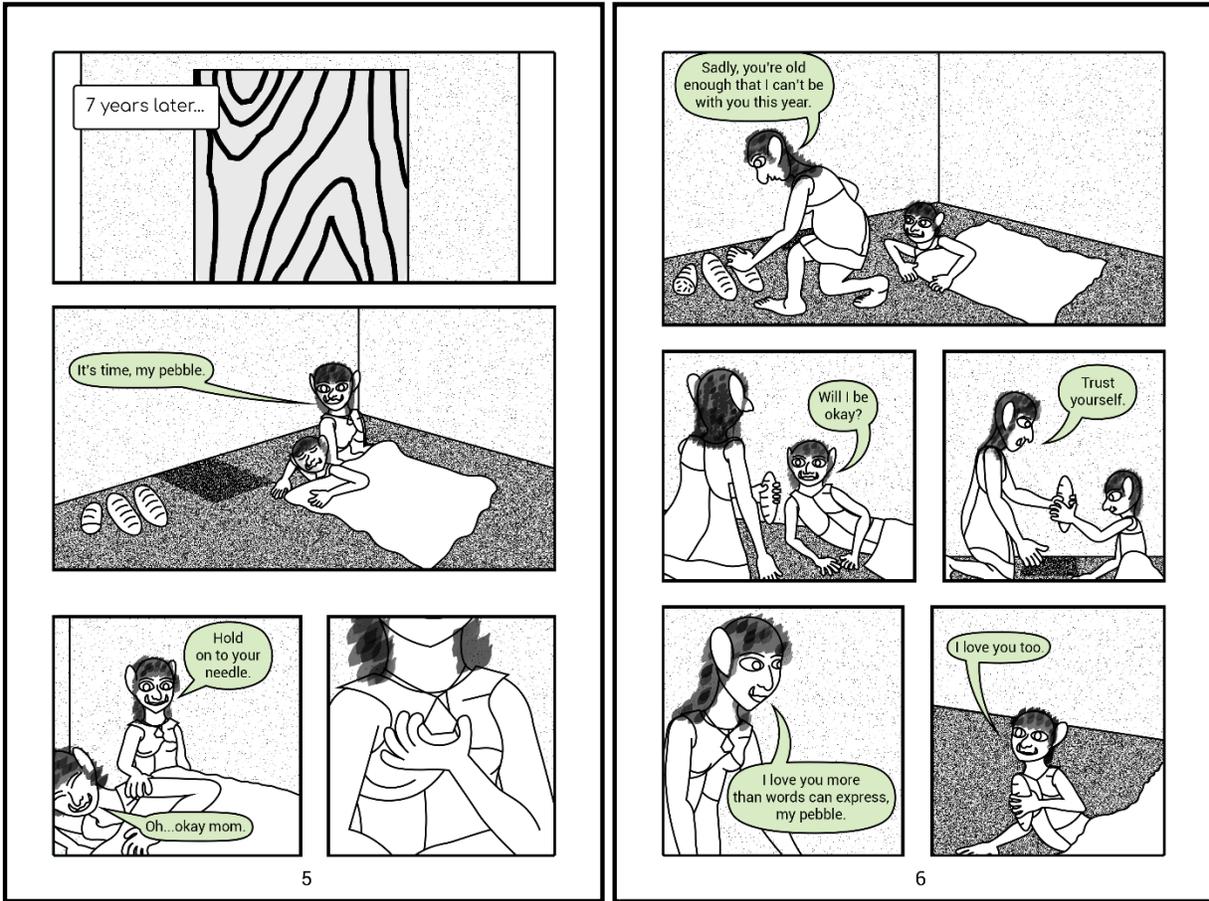


Figure 6: Pages 5 and 6 from *Future Troll*

Dafont.com was used to download text fonts used for the graphic novel's narration and dialogue. Several fonts were tested on the panels but two were chosen as the voice for narration and character dialogue – Comfortaa and Roboto. The narrator and page numbers would use the Comfortaa font to appeal to the science-fiction aspect of the story, while Roboto would be used for the character dialogue and to be easily read by the audience.

### 3.5 – Page Layout:

When designing the graphic novel, the template for the 6” by 9” page layout was used from the website MakingComics.spilttink.org. The layout was edited in Adobe Photoshop, such as changing the initial colors from blue to black, and then reused for multiple pages to organize the sketches for the entire graphic novel. The Adobe Photoshop Shape tool was used to mimic the style from the 6” by 9” page layout to create similar margins in-between sketches. Applying the general page layout and margins aided in additional sketches that would improve the visual storytelling aspect.

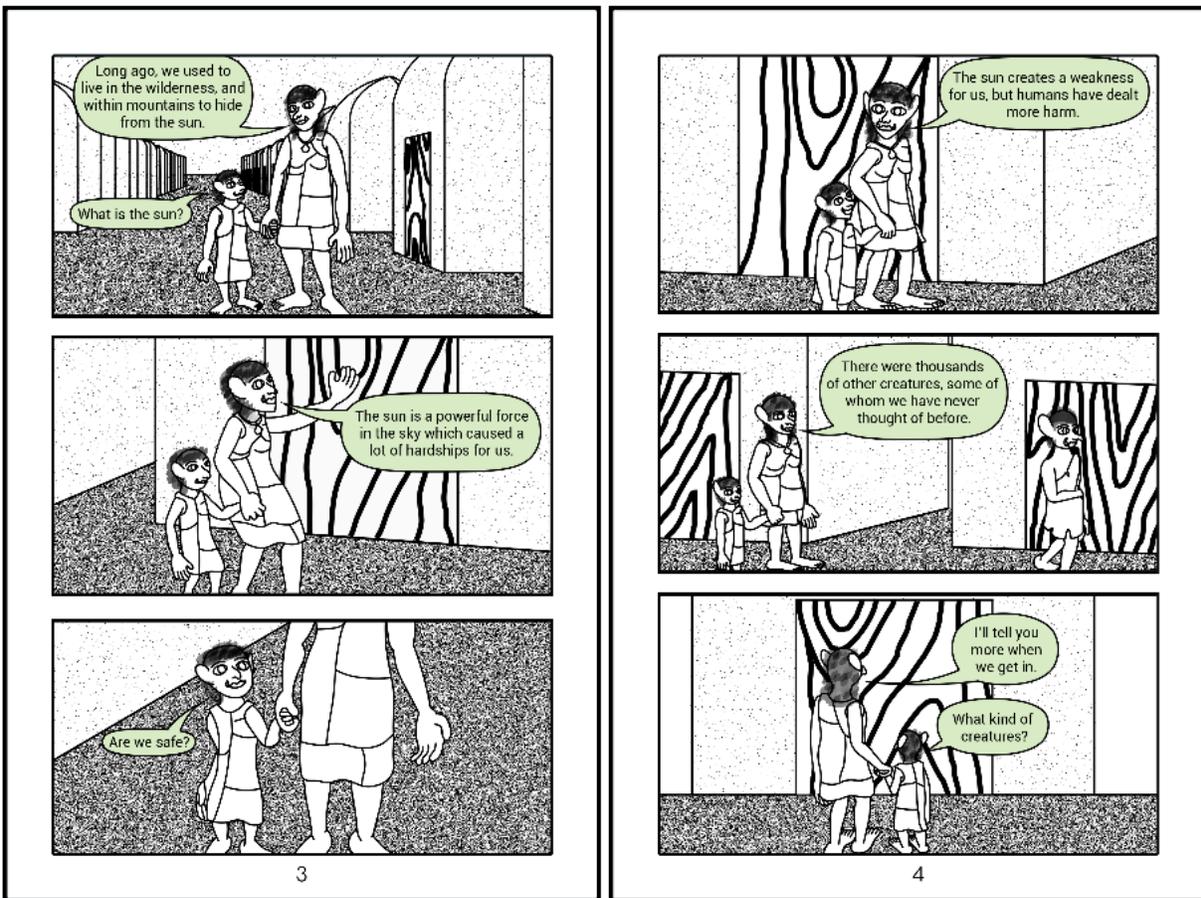


Figure 7: Pages 3 and 4 from Future Troll

### **3.6 – Getting the Graphic Novel Printed:**

Boynton Printing at WPI was used for printing copies of the script for Alpha Fest and for printing copies of the graphic novel for Show Fest. Scheduled meetings and email communications with the faculty at Boynton Printing influenced the constraints of what printing page formats would be optimal for printing the finished graphic novel.

## **4 – Exhibition and Feedback**

### **4.1 – Preparation for the Exhibit at Alpha Fest:**

When presenting the project to Alpha Fest the script was the most complete component during that point in the production pipeline. As a way to attract people’s interest in the project and the storyline, a short teaser was made to introduce aspects of the concept accompanied with music. One survey, a pre-survey was to be taken by the participants before reading the script, and a separate post-survey was to be taken after the participants read the script. The pre-survey questioned the participants to see if they had already read a graphic novel and what aspects made the graphic novel appealing to them. The post-survey investigated whether the characters, especially Tor and his mother Topaz, were relatable to readers. The post-survey sought feedback about the graphic novel’s general themes, genre(s), and story. Both surveys provided feedback and insight from potential readers.

### **4.2 – Survey Results:**

Based on the data used from December 2, 2021, thirteen participants took the pre-survey while twelve took the post-survey. The pre-survey yielded a range of artistic insights from various graphic novel (or comic book) readers.

#### **4.2.1 – Pre-Survey Results:**

Seven of the thirteen participants stated that they were familiar with graphic novels based on a one-to-five scale. Three of the thirteen stated that their favorite graphic novel or comic book was a Marvel or DC Comics property such as Spiderman, Batman, and Watchmen. The other graphic novels or comic books mentioned were Fullmetal Alchemist, The Gods Lie, Bone, and Locke & Key.

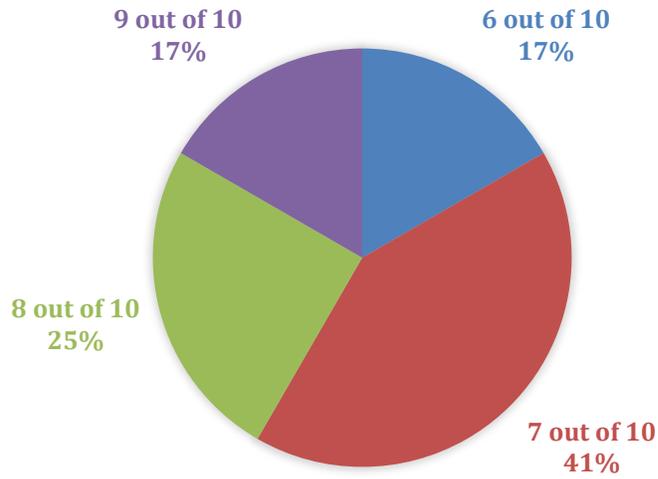
Three art styles were mentioned in the survey: manga, cel shading, and neo-plasticism. Manga is a style of Japanese comic books and graphic novels which are usually aimed at adults and children. Cel shading is a shading technique where simplified colors are used to shade and highlight instead of using subtle gradients (Sawyer). Neo-plasticism is a term adopted by Piet Mondrian, an abstract art pioneer, for his own type of abstract painting which used only horizontal and vertical lines and primary colors (Tate). In addition to those who mentioned certain styles, a few specific artists were also mentioned. Yusuke Murata is a Japanese Manga artist and animator who is best known for illustrating One's *One-Punch Man*. John Romita Jr., son of a John V. Romita, who is also an American comic book artist who is best known for their work for Marvel Comics. Tim Sale is an America Eisner Award-winning comics artist.

#### 4.2.2 – Post-Survey Results:

Four of the twelve participants stated that the story of the *Future Troll* graphic novel does not remind them of any stories or media. Another three mentioned a similarity to other properties such as Disney Pixar's *Onward*, *Divergent*, and *Yu-Gi-Oh! 5D's*. Fortunately, some of the participants noticed connections with themes of dystopian societies and science-fiction metaphors for a struggling class. When the participants were asked as to their favorite and least favorite parts of the script, the feedback varied in terms of writing, symbolism, and communication visual elements to the reader. For example, of the two participants who liked the sewing needle in the story, there were another two who were confused by and disliked it.

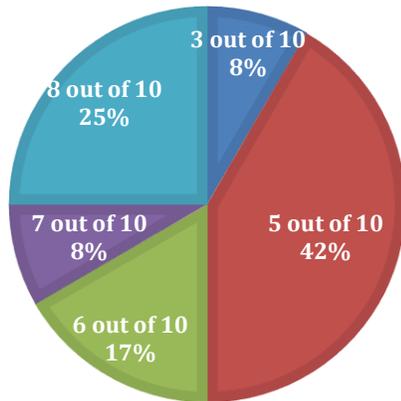
Survey Results of the proposed questions ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 is the least desired outcome and 10 is the most desired outcome.

**DID YOU LIKE THE STORY OF FUTURE TROLL?  
1 = DISLIKE/HATE AND 10 = ENJOY/LIKE**



**DO YOU RELATE WITH ANY OF THE  
CHARACTERS?  
1 = DETACHED AND 10 = RELATABLE**

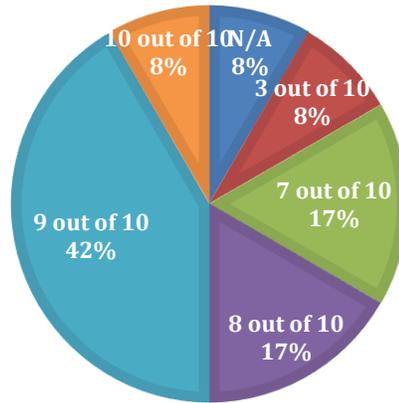
■ 3 out of 10 ■ 5 out of 10 ■ 6 out of 10 ■ 7 out of 10 ■ 8 out of 10



**IS THE STORY INTERESTING ENOUGH TO SEE AS A GRAPHIC NOVEL?**

**1 = NO INTEREST AND 10 = INVESTED**

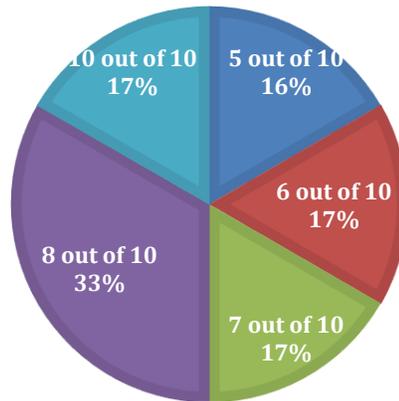
■ N/A ■ 3 out of 10 ■ 7 out of 10 ■ 8 out of 10 ■ 9 out of 10 ■ 10 out of 10



**HOW ORIGINAL DO YOU FIND THE STORY PREMISE TO BE?**

**1 = UNORIGINAL AND 10 = VERY ORIGINAL**

■ 5 out of 10 ■ 6 out of 10 ■ 7 out of 10 ■ 8 out of 10 ■ 10 out of 10



**4.3 – Exhibit Postmortem:**

**What went right**

Based on the information gathered from the post-survey, many people seemed intrigued by the idea behind the story and noticed some connections shared with other properties within the science-fiction and fantasy genres.

During MQP Presentations, exploring the character through different mediums, particularly in terms of physical arts, seemed to intrigue people's interest in the project. Demonstrating a creative design process for the character seems to present an interest and dedication that may be appealing to audiences.

### **Challenges**

One of the challenges was the lack of visual material that would attract more people for feedback on the project. The teaser was a great promotional item, but more visuals may have resulted in a better reception.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

Depending on future projects, if there is insufficient time to produce enough relevant promotional material, relying upon outsourcing to other artists and designers would be a helpful way to create more content with a more limited deadline.

## 5 – Conclusion

Future Troll is a science-fiction and fantasy graphic novel about the last troll realizing that he has a rare ability among other trolls, which is to not turn stone in sunlight. This troll, Tor will confront humans with technology that rivals magic while witnessing the mistreatment of magical creatures in this futuristic world. However, this portion of the story leads to the hero's call to adventure. Along with Campbell's Monomyth, the various writing and storytelling aspects mentioned seem to only encompass a fraction of styles and analyzes of storytelling. Although each audience member is unique, to the extent that an author cannot fully convey specific goals and feelings to an audience, psychology and history demonstrate how people utilize stories as a way of communication. They can teach, warn, and inspire an audience regardless of the medium.

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# Appendix A

*Future Troll* Script by Stanley Cliche:

FADE IN:

OPENING

A bright futuristic city on the seaside. The buildings are smooth with black gridline tips integrated into the structure, and circuit lines flowing energy from them in a downward direction. The city has many futuristic things like flying cars and magnetic trains that are solar powered.

NARRATOR

In the distant future humanity has moved to a precipice of innovation beyond what was perceived a few thousand years ago.

Focus on a giant semi-sphere connected to a much taller building.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

Within the semi-sphere is a makeshift civilization with hundreds of small concrete dwellings built to house the last known trolls in the world. The ground is a mix of pieces of concrete, dirt, and other assorted debris.

NARRATOR

Humanity had centuries to prepare for the supernatural, but in the end the supernatural had to prepare for humanity.

ZOOM IN on two trolls:

The older female troll, like the other trolls, is wearing a tattered uniform which has been sewn back together by her own hands. The troll is wearing a necklace with a topaz gem. She is holding the hand of her son, Tor, who is by her side.

TOPAZ

Long ago, we used to live in the wilderness, and within mountains to hide from the sun.

TOR

What is the sun?

TOPAZ

The sun is a powerful force in the sky which has caused a lot of hardship for us.

TOR

Are we safe from the sun?

TOPAZ

The sun is a challenge, but it is not the only danger in the world.

(Tor looks to Topaz in fear.)

The sun creates a weakness for us, but humans have dealt more harm to us. There were thousands of other creatures, some of whom we have never conceived before.

TOR

What kind of creatures?

TOPAZ

I'll tell you more when we get home.

Topaz and Tor walk into a small concrete cottage with a large loose wooden frame blocking the entrance.

FADE OUT:

## CIRCUMSTANCE

About seven years later, the same concrete cottage seems the same except for the wooden frame which has several doodles on it and a sign with a large rune for home/safety. Both Topaz and Tor live in a minimalist home with a fire pit for cooking and a bed for sleeping. Tor is about twelve years old now. Both he and Topaz are wearing patchworks of clothing, but they both have a dangling sewing needle connected by thread on each of their sleeves. Both are very distraught.

TOPAZ

It's time, my pebble.

TOR

I know mom.

TOPAZ

But now you're old enough that I can't accompany you this year.

TOR

I've been doing this my whole life; I think I can go without you.

(Topaz takes a minute to look at her son.)

TOPAZ

I love you more than words can express, my pebble.

TOR

I love you too.

Topaz and Tor exit their home and join a confluence of trolls, some walking in groups of two, three, four, or alone. All of them show signs of sadness in how they walk, or how their face currently appears.

The trolls walk to a bright hallway with futuristic guards standing with their backs to both sides of the wall. The guards have UV batons which hurt the trolls if they veer off the path they're supposed to go.

Topaz and Tor hold hands as they look to one of the guards.

The hallway splits into a three-way intersection where the older trolls go to the left (unless accompanying a troll 11 years or younger) while younger ones go to the right.

TOPAZ (WHISPERING TO TOR)

I will see you soon.

Tor begins to cry as he walks in the opposite direction of his mother. He holds onto the dangling needle which is part of his clothes.

FADE OUT:

## DISCOVERY

FADE IN:

Tor is at the end of the hallway where one of the trolls is walking from the end of the hallway back to where they started. A guard stands at the end of the hallway.

### GUARD 1

Open door 178.

The end of the hallway turns into a door which leads to a bright room with a futuristic examination table, and a doctor with teal hair wearing advanced augmented reality (AR) gear. Tor walks inside accompanied by the same guard.

The doctor interacts with their AR gear to find Tor's records, but no one else sees that.

### DOCTOR WITH TEAL HAIR

Hello 6204, you seem to have grown recently. Is this correct.

Tor replies to the doctor's questions calmly.

### TOR

Yes.

### DOCTOR WITH TEAL HAIR

Please direct yourself to the table for further examination.

The examination table adjusts its height to accommodate for Tor's size as he gets on it, and then the table returns to its initial height. The doctor goes to another part of the room to retrieve some tools, while a nervous Tor tries to hold onto the sewing needle for comfort. Guard 1 noticing Tor reaching for something, activates her UV baton and directs it at Tor but is surprised by the lack of a reaction from him. The doctor notices this and screams. Tor tries to get off the table.

### GUARD 1 (SCREAMING TO THE DOCTOR)

Doctor! Restrain this troll!

The doctor interacts with the AR gear to have the examination table activate its restraints on Tor. Tor is restrained and Guard 1 moves away from the table. The doctor interacts with their AR gear to open a communication channel.

#### DOCTOR WITH TEAL HAIR

Attention, we have a code Darwin on our hands. I repeat. Code Darwin. Subject TH6204 shows no response to one of three confirmed weaknesses. Consider all TH subjects as a threat.

Tor tries to get out of the restraints, but they tighten to restrain him further.

#### DOCTOR WITH TEAL HAIR (EXCLAIMS TO GUARD 1)

Activate the anesthetic!

Guard 1 interacts with her own AR gear to have the room fill with an airborne anesthetic which knocks out Tor. The anesthetic doesn't affect the doctor and Guard 1 due to both of their futuristic head gear.

FADE OUT:

#### ESCAPE

FADE IN:

Tor awakens in a cramped futuristic cage without his clothes. He looks around to find himself in a room filled with deceased trolls who have been turned to stone, on several examination tables. Tor is aghast trying to get out of the cage but is unable. He looks out and sees a trash receptacle containing his patchwork clothing. He curls into a ball and starts crying.

#### TOR

Oh mom, I miss you.

A colorful aura surrounds the sewing needle, and it flies out of the receptacle toward Tor. Tor looks up to see the needle coming at him, but it flies into the circuitry of the cage instead. The cage deactivates and Tor jumps out of the cage. He looks to the needle and grabs it, along with his clothes as he runs out of the room. He runs through a maze of hallways and rooms until some humans notice and use their AR gear to activate an alarm. Tor tries to evade the guards who try using their UV batons on him, but they don't work. The guards try to catch Tor, but he crashes through a window. He falls for a second, notices the sun, and crashes onto a flying car. Everyone screams and the car moves out of traffic onto the ground.

Tor gets off the car and stares at the sun while the nearby humans are shocked to see a troll. Tor looks to his hands, realizing his immunity to the sun's petrification. He looks back to the building he fell from and runs toward it. As he is running, most of the humans are shocked by him and stand out of his way.

FADE OUT:

THE END