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Mythos

Writing the world

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Fine Arts in Film and Animation

School of Film and Animation

College of Art and Design

Rochester Institute of Technology

Rochester, NY

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Date

Thesis Chair, Associate Professor, School of Film and Animation

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Date

CCO of Pure Imagination studios

- Abstract

Mythos is a 2D animated series project developed by Mattea Guldy and Selma Peña. The story revolves around a fairy named Marina and her misfit friends Enki the faun, Demetri the unicorn, and The Kodama, a cute forest spirit. The project consists of a series pitch with a pilot, an episode of the series, a pitch deck, and an animated proof of concept.

Our fantastical world aims to represent the diversity of human beings and make the audience question where their beliefs and conceptions come from. The story's main plot is the following: Marina, a fairy descendant from the creature accused of closing the portal, is living a tough life with her other misfit friends: Demetri, Enki, and the Kodama. When Marina finds one of her old grandma's necklaces with strange symbols etched on the back, the group of friends manages to re-open the portal by reading the inscriptions. Back on earth, the group of friends will search for answers regarding the portal's closing. They will discover plots, dark secrets, and unfriendly folks along the way. But most importantly, Marina will reconnect with her past and her family, becoming stronger and wiser than she ever thought possible.

- Introduction

When we began our journey in this collaborative project, Mattea and I wanted to discuss stereotypes and the negative culture of shaming women's bodies. The original idea revolved around our protagonists being the only "ugly" creatures in a perfectly beautiful mythological society. But we quickly realized that pursuing that idea would push us into a corner to decide what's beautiful and what's not, replicating everything wrong with this very vane and toxic society. When we label someone as ugly, we are replicating social patterns where only certain physical traits are considered beautiful, and so instead of being part of the solution, we would be reinforcing the idea that is intrinsically wrong.

As we attempted to avoid a literal representation of the problem that we wanted to discuss, we focused more on the story, making it rich and fun, and then in a more subtle way, finding ways to discuss important matters. That new point of view helped us realize that the story we were trying to tell had a lot more to do with immigration – characters that leave their magical world on a quest to earth, where they don't know much about their rules and dangers.

I was born and raised in Mexico City and emigrated to the United States to pursue my Master's Degree in 2019. One day after reading some of the ideas we had for the episodes, I noticed that I had a lot in common with these creatures; they felt confused and lost on earth. Very much like I felt when I moved to New York. As I think of this process months after finishing my thesis, I realize that sometimes the best stories find you when you least expect it and when you stop forcing a theme or an agenda as your goal.

Mattea found her own ways to connect with the characters, and we both became very passionate about our project. Even though we started with a goal in mind: to discuss stereotypes, our goal changed, but it became richer and deeper.

Another thing we were both interested in was the exploration of mythical creatures, especially the ones with a negative connotation, like Medusa. Mythical creatures are fascinating because they've been part of our culture since early civilizations like Mesopotamia; Humans have always had the need for fantasy and magical thinking. But the most exciting thing about them is that those creatures represent us as human beings, and their stories represent our conflicts. So, a creature like Medusa, presented by the Greeks as a violent and seductive female figure, was intriguing to us because stories of women and female figures throughout time, especially when they're powerful, tend to have a tragic ending. Some examples are: Athena, the goddess that sacrifices herself for a man, the Greek Sphinx that was sent to earth to prey on humans as a consequence of her crimes, Arachne, who was jealous of another woman's beauty and therefore punished; and of course hundreds of witch stories that when feared as very knowledgeable or powerful, were sent to their deaths (And of course they're always represented as ugly).

So when creating Mythos, one of our core ideas was: what if Mythical creatures were real but disappeared before we could document them? What if we just forgot about them, believing they were just stories? We loved this concept because we could treat these "horrible" creatures like Medusa a bit more fairly. What if Medusa was never terrible? Maybe she was just misunderstood by humans.

And so we embarked on a journey of creating Mythos, the world where every single mythological creature ever created by humanity lived. We found the heart of our world: 1000

years ago, the human world and the mythical creature's world were connected by a portal. Old human civilizations were inspired by centaurs, unicorns, fairies, jinns, etc; All because they were able to interact with them. But one day, while all mythical creatures were away in their world, celebrating their most important festivity, the portal was closed, separating the two worlds forever. Years passed, and the stories of those great mythical friends became just that: stories. Humans forgot they were real. But for mythical creatures whose lives are way longer than humans, the story remained fresh. Suspects were singled out, families ruined, and the hope of the portal opening again never faded.

- Review of Research

Some of our inspiration came from the following places:

- She-Ra and the Princesses of Power

A Netflix show made by Dreamworks where the whole cast is incredibly diverse, and woman empowerment feels real. The character design shows a variety of body shapes and skin tones. The protagonist is not looking for love from a man, and she doesn't need to be in sexualizing clothes (like the 80's version) to be an aspirational figure.

- Hayao Miyazaki films like Spirited Away, Princess Mononoke, or Nausicaa.

In these three movies, the protagonists are strong women who face hardships but accomplish everything they want. Miyazaki is not afraid of showing flawed yet determined women that are not looking for romantic love; instead, they're after a personal goal. The characters feel real and unique and have empowered women for

decades. Marina, the protagonist of Mythos, is similar to Chihiro from Spirited Away in that they both have to learn to trust their inner power to succeed.

- The Odyssey and the Hero with a Thousand Faces

The Odyssey is one of the classics that mentions mythical creatures like satyrs and sirens. We had to research some of their early descriptions to add them to our world with their unique twist. As for Joseph Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces, we knew it would be essential for our research as Joseph himself had tons of knowledge of Mythical creatures and archetypes. We needed to understand the basics before attempting to stay away from them and making new stories.

Story Of Medusa: A Tale Of European Fear Of Black Women With Spiritual Power, Like The Sibyls



This article discusses the possibility of Medusa as the representation of black women to discourage mixed-race unions in greek civilization. The author describes that some of the first cultures, like the ancient Egyptians, were inspired by African priests, magicians, and kings and therefore admired and feared their people. Black women, then, were seen as a threat, and any relationship with them was discouraged. But most importantly, stories like Medusa could have

been one of the first expressions of racism in human history. After reading this article, I couldn't help but think of all the "dangerous" or "nasty" characters in stories and how they might have represented vulnerable groups of people across time. This reflection inspired me to write about other mythological creatures that have always had a negative connotation and represent them in a better light. One of these examples is trolls; in episode 4, Marina and her friends meet a very sweet and loving troll.

Mythical creatures from around the world

The most important research was to find interesting mythical creatures from different cultures. We didn't want to have creatures only from Greek mythology, so we had to dig deep to find out our options not only for our main characters but for the villain of the show. But we focused on what our story needed before attempting to read about every single mythical creature that has existed on this planet. For example, when we needed a shapeshifter for dramatic purposes and to fill in a story need, we searched for the most interesting shapeshifting Mythical creatures. We learned that there are shapeshifters in Greek, Irish, British, Nordic, and many other mythologies. But we loved the Chinese shapeshifter, the Huli Jing because she usually appears as a red fox and can transform into anything, making her incredibly interesting for visual exploration.

Another angle we considered when looking for Mythical creatures was to analyze where and what was happening in the story in order find the best options. A great example is when Marina and her friends are traveling through Germany in episode 4, and they encounter a naughty creature that was sent by the villain to spy on them. We wanted this creature to be unique to German folklore, so when looking for some options, we found the "Kobold," a mischievous

Mythical creature. He is described as being small and good at hiding, which made him the perfect fit for what we needed.

World history general timeline

We also had to do some research on the general timeline of human history. We needed to know when humans invented important objects that would affect our story, like the printing press or windmills. All of this was important, especially in figuring out when the portal to Mythos had to be closed in order to make sense for the audience. For example, if we had stated that the portal's closing happened 200 years ago instead of 1000, then we would have had to justify the fact that 200 years ago, there were several ways to capture historical moments, and if Mythical creatures had been roaming around humans until then, there would be enough evidence. So 1000 years was the perfect number for our show because there was really no reliable method for recording history except handwritten books that can be easily manipulated.

- Pre-production

Mattea and I decided to do a collaborative thesis and join our skills in screenwriting and animation to develop a full pitch for a Tv series. The professors at SOFA were very supportive of the idea and encouraged us to brainstorm the main ideas together. And so, Mattea and I developed the world, its rules, characters, and main backstories. Then, we came up with the story for the pilot and the specific part of the pilot that we would use as proof of concept.

During the fall thesis semester, we worked on the pre-production of the project; Mattea started storyboarding our short scene for the proof of concept, and I focused on the bible of the series, thinking about the big arch of the season and the secondary stories. This part was the hardest one

to figure out, at least for me. Having a general plot with a clear goal is not hard to come up with, but thinking about how the secondary character's stories intertwine and support the main plot is more complicated than it seems. We had a faun, a fairy, a unicorn without a horn, and a tree spirit on earth, ready to catch up on the 1000 years they'd missed by being away, but now what?

What's between that moment and the end of the season? What's the adventure?

With a lot of support from Mari Jaye, our thesis chair, I was able to fill the holes in the series with fun and exciting characters that gave the series a new tone, a sillier and more adult tone, but we liked it better. Some of these examples are: Arif, a kid our characters meet by the end of the pilot. I thought he needed a more significant role and to stay present throughout the series. I wanted him to mirror Marina, Enki, and Demetri's experience as "immigrants" with a real-life immigration problem. Maybe Arif had been separated from his family while trying to find political asylum, and Marina and his friends could help reunite them. And for a brief moment, I thought I had found our B story. But it wasn't until I pitched the idea to our thesis advisor that I realized that Arif's story was too serious to be compared with the story of a silly group of magical creatures. Mari Jaye encouraged me to find experiences that were closer to mine (in terms of immigration) and to stay away from a single character telling a story of immigration; since there are thousands of ways to experience it. That's how I came up with the idea of having multiple humans and mythical creatures encountering Marina and her friends on earth, each with a unique immigration story. Another suggestion from Mari Jaye to fill in the B story's gaps was to completely nail the characters' back story. She wanted us to know everything that happened when the portal closed, and during the time Marina's grandma was the queen of Mythos. She thought that if we had control over all those details, the B stories would flow more naturally, and

eventually, they did. Thanks to all those meticulous details, hammering down the season finale was a piece of cake.

Production

- Scriptwriting and bible

During the fall thesis semester, I developed a short script that Mattea would then animate and a rough draft of the Bible of the project. The priority was the short film script because Mattea needed time to do her pre-production, designing the characters that would be in that scene, the environments, storyboard, and recording the lines from the actors to sync the animation to the audio. So when the semester started, we were already running out of time and had a lot of things ahead of us.

Luckily for us, the couple of scenes we decided to animate were essential to our pilot and our series, and we had labeled them as a crucial, pivotal moment months ago. So, we agreed on animating the moment when Marina, Enki, Demetri, and the Kodama accidentally open the portal and get taken to earth.

The first drafts of the 3-minute film had lots of notes, the biggest one: Too complex for animation. Writing a script that will be animated is utterly different from a Live Action script. When you shoot with a camera, you don't have to worry if animating the legs of a horse will be too complex for a student film. The other notes had to do with subtlety in the dialogue. As a non-native speaker, this part is the hardest when it comes to writing; how to make it sound natural? I remember that I was making them sound too proper. Marina was referring to her grandma as "grandmother Zia," and she's supposed to sound like a young adult, so I changed it

to “grandma”. I was very lucky to have Mattea’s and my advisor’s support, who always helped me improve my writing.

After feeling happy with our script, it was time to test it with fresh new eyes; the rest of our committee. We received good feedback in general, but we had to adjust some jokes that sounded too weird when spoken out loud. For example, we had a joke about a “traitor granny,” and we repeated it several times throughout the first scene. Tom Connor pointed out that the joke would get lost, and we needed to find an alternative. John and Tom also suggested cutting a joke about humans “not wearing any pants” as it could be confusing. But in this second case, we decided to stick with the joke and repeat it even more; after all, as Mari Jaye said, if you repeat it enough, it eventually gets funny, and it did; at least, that’s what I think.

The Bible was trickier to develop because, as I said before, we were getting to know our characters more and more as our project evolved. Some of the things we thought would be part of our character traits eventually had to be re-designed because they were unnecessary for the story. A good example here is Marina; Marina started as a completely frustrated, sarcastic, and negative fairy. We wanted her to be resentful of the way Mythos society had treated her. But as the story evolved, we saw that our protagonist was pretty unlikeable and that she also needed positive traits for the audience to be able to connect with her.

This is what Marina’s description ended up sounding like: Marina was born in Mythos centuries after the portal’s closing. She is a strong-willed, kind, and patient fairy. Marina believes there is more to the story of the portal’s closing (her family’s great shame). She doesn’t believe that her grandmother acted out of malice or selfishness: she must have had a good reason for sealing the portal connecting Earth and Mythos. More than anything, Marina wants the truth. As a fairy from

an ancient house, Marina has the potential to wield extremely powerful magic. However, since her family has been outcasts since before she was born, she has never been properly trained, so her abilities are simple and limited.

Marina's positive personality traits also helped us, as creators, to connect more with the story. She felt more real and unique, full of contradictions, like every human being. Mattea and I connected with the idea of a character who's unaware of how powerful she is because of low self-esteem and self-doubting. We can relate to Marina because we've felt the same way; her problems are something a lot of people can relate to, even though she's a magical creature and we're not. And that's what makes her a good character and a great protagonist.

With Demetri, it was easier to figure him out because he's the typical "smarty-pants" character, but we wanted him to be funny too. Demetri also evolved from a boring unlikable character to a sarcastic hilarious faun. And his description ended up as follows: Demetri is a faun who comes from one of the most reputable and wealthy families in Mythos. His ancestors inspired the ancient Greeks and Romans. His kin is known for their attractive, muscular bodies and for throwing the best parties in Mythos. Demetri has never fit in with his family. He's a nerdy, unathletic know-it-all. He is passionate about human culture and history before the closing of the portal. He loves to read and learn. Because Demetri refused to live the way his father demanded, he was banished and disowned. Marina and Alston found him and gave him a home under their roof.

When we developed Demetri, we wanted to ensure that his motivation to follow Marina wasn't because he was in love with her. We wanted to stay as far as we could from that idea because female characters have thousands of reasons to be followed, and passionate love is a very

traditional and not very interesting one. Instead, we planned for Marina, Enki, and Demetri to feel like siblings, motivated by family love to protect each other. This idea worked really well to create comedic conflict between the three of them because since they know a lot about each other, they have a lot of tools to make fun of each other as well.

Enki was always meant to be the comedic relief; we thought he would be the goofy character that's always in a good mood. But as I was writing episode four, I realized there was a lot of darkness in Enki too, and that it was ok if he was grumpy sometimes because it made it seem more real. Enki is a descendant of one of the oldest families of unicorns; his ancestors inspired the first ancient Mesopotamian tales. Everyone in Enki's family possesses a horn made of the most precious metals. Everyone... except Enki. Instead, Enki has a tiny bump that looks more like a pimple where his horn is supposed to be. Enki's dream is to find a way to make his horn grow. He feels insecure, but he rarely lets it show. If you met Enki, you'd think he's a very confident and happy (and goofy) unicorn.

The Kodama is originally a mythical creature from Japan. Kodamas are tree spirits and have been portrayed in movies like *Spirited Away*. Since we started our research about Mythical creatures around the world, we were sure we wanted a Kodama as part of the group. There's not much of a back story for him because he doesn't talk, but we thought he could be fun to have around and that he would complement the group pretty well story and design-wise.

By the end of the first semester of our thesis, we had: an animatic for our proof of concept, a short script, a rough draft of the bible, and we had recorded all our character's voices. So, for the spring semester, we focused all our efforts on the music, the screenplay of the pilot and episode

four, and finishing the bible and animatic. There was a lot to do, but we were very organized and passionate about our series.

- Recording voice actors

To record our characters' dialogues, we used the Mix-pre 6: a professional sound equipment, and a sound booth to prevent any sound interruptions.

Before recording, we sent a casting call to everyone in the Rochester area interested in voice acting, but especially to all SOFA students that wanted to be a part of our project. We set a date for Zoom auditions and recorded the meeting, where everyone had a chance to perform a part of the script in their own way. After the auditions, Mattea and I sat down to discuss which actors had been our favorites. We decided to cast Natalie Stornello as Marina, Brandon Munger as Demetri, and J.T. Blake as Enki. Later, we added David Decaro as Kodama, who recorded remotely and sent in his lines.

- Music

I had worked with Andrew before; I met him at RIT during my third semester. Andrew is a film and animation student who is crafting in sound and directing. When the time came to choose a compositor, I couldn't think of anyone better; he's just incredibly talented. Mattea and I briefed him together and gave him some references to fantasy scores that we liked. Some examples are: The Lord of the Rings "Concerning Hobbits" or some tracks of the score of How to Train Your Dragon.

Very early in the spring semester, he showed us a couple of examples of melodies for the film. We made a decision, and he went and composed the score of the whole short film. At first, we had some notes on the music because we felt that it was overpowering the dialogue, and some

parts needed to be slower for dramatic purposes. He took all our notes and feedback and delivered the final piece with plenty of time left for us to deliver the finished project. What's more amazing is that Andrew managed to compose and deliver six other projects that semester and two of those were thesis projects as well; they were all pretty great.

- Pilot and episode 4

I started writing the pilot at the beginning of the fall semester, but since I had other pressing matters like the short script and the character descriptions for Mattea to be able to work, I couldn't finish the pilot until the spring. Writing a pilot is probably one of the hardest things to write; it must be fun, show the essence of the show, engage with people and convince them that your series is worth watching, and at the same time, it needs to contain a lot of information and set the plot in motion. So yes, writing a pilot is hard.

The pilot begins with Marina and her friends in Mythos; their lives are tough because Mythos society, and especially the king, hates Marina and her father. Before they accidentally open the portal, Marina finds her grandmother's necklace, and the audience learns that it's very likely that Marina's grandma closed the portal that used to connect the mythical creatures to earth; therefore, all the mythical creatures are upset, even after 1000 years have passed. The pilot then takes us through the crossing of the portal and the character's first experiences on earth. But the world has changed a lot since the last time Mythical creatures were able to visit, and Marina and her friends weren't even born yet. One of the first places they visit is a museum, and they try to understand what happened in the last thousand years. At the museum, they meet Arif, a kid from

Iran, and they become really good friends, but most importantly, Arif can help them all understand the new rules and complexities of the earth.

Writing episode four, “Ricky,” Was a lot of fun. I didn’t have to worry about setting a plot; I was able to relax and enjoy the characters a lot more. I believe that writing this episode helped me find the true voices of our characters. While writing the scenes and conflicts, I also got a better sense of what a good pacing of the series would look like. Episode four was about an adventure through the mountains where our heroes meet a new friend: Ricky. Ricky is a Latino artist finding his way across Europe, bartending and waitressing. He’s so handsome that Demetri gets nervous around him. While getting to know him, they suddenly encounter a troll named Greg. Marina is confused; why is there a troll on earth? After Greg explains that Marina’s grandma wasn’t the only mythical creature who was left behind, he invites them to his underground cave, where he has a family of trolls but also shares space with a family of dwarves. Greg gives Marina a piece of paper torn from a journal belonging to her grandmother; there’s a symbol printed on it. Marina thinks that her grandmother sent her on a quest to become stronger. Then later in the episode, drama emerges when while staying at an inn, Ricky’s ex-girlfriend and a Kobold start chasing the group.

I enjoyed writing episode four; I was able to see our characters in action and experience what a regular mid-season episode would look like. This helped me improve the characters' descriptions and develop a more solid bible.

- Pitching

We were very close to the presentation day, and everything was pretty much ready, except that we were not a traditional thesis; we weren't supposed just to hit play on our film and then read an artist statement. We had to deliver what was promised: a pitch.

I believe pitching is an art, and the only way to get better at it is by doing it hundreds of times.

When it came to the pitch, Mattea and I decided that I would do most of it. I had previous experience pitching to animation studio executives. However, most importantly, Mattea had done the animated proof of concept, and I still needed to show what I had done on my end, with her work being more tangible than mine.

John Roberts had shown us some very successful pitch decks, and we tried to replicate the simplicity of those. Still, it's challenging to condense a whole world with complex characters in a short PDF without being confusing or vague. Our pitch deck was very heavy on text, trying to cover everything we had developed in a year of work. It contained the bigger plot, some of the B stories, and part of the back story. Other elements on the pitch were: a synopsis of season 1, the characters and their descriptions, short synopsis of other episodes, and some information about us. We even added a QR code where people could download the pilot.

If I had done this presentation today, I would have cut the text in half and avoided explaining unnecessary plots. We were ambitious in wanting people to understand the villain's story and arc, and we lost the audience when we did.

- **Screenwriter and animator team**

I've described our work as a team briefly and how great it was, but I would like to elaborate more on this topic, considering the good parts and the bad parts of working as a team, especially because it's the first time that this type of collaborative thesis happens at SOFA.

Some of the most challenging things about working as a team were having to work remotely, the differences in perceptions between a live-action student and an animation student, and making collaborative creative decisions.

During our thesis year, the Covid pandemic had winded down, but most people at school were still cautious about being in a room with others. Mattea and I decided to work mostly remotely, and then I moved to another state, making remote logistics inevitable. It took a lot of work to come up with good ideas and big concepts on zoom calls; I often found myself too mentally exhausted to have long online meetings. Mattea was very understanding of this, and she gave me my space to work on the ideas at my own pace and then discuss them together. However, that way of working took some of the "collaborative" aspects away from us. It would have been way better to be in the same room, bouncing ideas with each other.

When it comes to live-action students, it's unusual for us to know the animation pipeline and restrictions. I believe I have good knowledge of those things; still, when it came to planning our proof of concept, we had very different points of view. One good example is the time I suggested a dolly shot for the last scene of our short film. I was convinced it would look great, but Mattea had never tried anything like that, and also, it was hard to translate those movements into animation. At first, we thought it was too ambitious for a short film, and when I understood the complexity of it, I discarded it. But in the end, Mattea worked hard to do it; she watched a few tutorials and asked for help from our committee. I believe that shot is one of the best moments in our film, and it's a great example of a situation that started as a problem but became a great

success and an example of good collaboration. Still, I think we should avoid very complicated shots in proof of concepts in the future.

Finally, making collective creative decisions is hard; we both had to learn to give up ideas that we had in our minds to make space for the other one to interpret things differently. One example of this is the design of the Kodama. When I imagined the Kodama in my head, he looked completely different than what he ended up looking like. In my opinion, the early designs of it looked cuter, and it had started looking more like a little Alien. However, Mattea seemed to love the Kodama's design, and she listened to most of my preferences for the other characters. I decided to let it go and embrace the fact that two heads had come up with those characters and, therefore, wouldn't look exactly as we both had hoped for, which is perfectly ok. After a few weeks, I started liking the Kodama's design more and more, and today he's one of my favorite character designs.

- The Future

The good thing about doing a series pitch for a thesis is that its lifespan is longer. Shortly after our thesis presentation, I moved to LA, where I continued my work as a script coordinator and now as Jr Creative Executive at Moonbug Entertainment. Mythos is still in my plans, along with other projects I've developed, and there's always the possibility that one day it will be bought and produced. I think that having a proof of concept helps our chances of getting someone interested in it.

I would like to focus on fixing some of the backstory plot holes and finding a funnier or unique angle to attract investors to this project.

Regarding the next seasons, Mattea and I discussed season two a while ago. An interesting angle would be something like this: The portal has been opened for a year, and mythical creatures are slowly adapting to modern life. The problem is that things are getting out of control:

Leprechauns are stealing gold from humans, genies are charging big bucks for “wishes,” and some scary creatures are causing panic in specific communities. Meanwhile, Marina is in the middle of a political fight against the Mythos King, wanting to claim her throne back. Mythos is divided between Marina supporters and Oculus supporters. Government representatives from different countries of the world find Marina and Oculus and ask for solutions to the chaos, or mythical creatures will be persecuted and captured. Marina, Enki, Demetri, the Kodama, and their new partner: The Huli Jing, have to go back to earth and try to fix things amongst the mythical creatures. But Oculus’s sidekicks follow Marina and steal the necklace that opens the portal, leaving them trapped on earth. Now Marina and her friends have to find a way to save all the mythical creatures on earth but also find a way back home.

- Evaluation

Since no one had done a series pitch for a thesis or capstone, the general comments were pretty good and similar in the sense that no one really knew what to expect, but they liked what we did.

One of the negative comments was that we could have made our theme clearer, especially if we were discussing interesting and important topics like immigration. Professor Munjal Yangnik said we could have had that even more present throughout the presentation to engage better with the audience and because he felt that the immigration angle was unique and exciting.

Others commented on the presentation being full of text and how that was distracting when listening to me talk. I agree with this note, and as I have mentioned before, there was room for improvement in my pitch; today, I would have done things differently.

- Refinements made as a result of feedback

Since the day of the pitch, we have submitted Mythos to a couple of pitch contests and festivals, and therefore we had to tweak the pitch deck and make it better. We removed a big chunk of text and left a clear big arc for season 1. The pitch deck is now full of art and visually more attractive. In terms of pitching, I recently had the opportunity to pitch another of my projects to Hasbro Entertainment. To say that my thesis helped me make a better pitch is an understatement. I was a lot more prepared this time; I wrote a script for the pitch, considering everything I wanted to say, and I rehearsed it for days. I even practiced with my friends as an audience to be sure that what I was explaining made sense and no one was getting lost. Being able to pitch Mythos in front of the school of Film and Animation was scary and shocking. However, it enabled me to develop skills I'm still using in my current role at Moonbug entertainment and as an independent Animation Creative Producer.

- Conclusion

Developing a series pitch was ambitious; Mattea and I tested our teamwork skills. I believe that we did a good job and ended up with a very integrated and cohesive project. It wouldn't have been possible if we hadn't worked as a team. We figured out the big plotheoles together, and we

did most of the worldbuilding together. Having a solid base allowed us to go in different ways during the fall semester while still keeping the essence of a cooperative project.

To execute our idea, we needed to do a lot of research, especially figuring out what was happening on earth 1000 years ago. We required the timing of the closing of the portal to be convenient for us, in the sense that we needed humanity to be at such early stages that the only proof of mythical creatures really existing was in writing.

For our story to be deep and meaningful, we first focused on making fun and relatable characters and then finding situations that could represent things important to us, like immigration. We found the soul of our concept while working on it and figuring out who our characters were.

Several things could have been better; the pitch needed to be more straightforward in terms of text and during the explanation. The second part of the pilot needed to be more dynamic and funny, but I didn't get enough time to fix it the way I wanted it. I also think our proof of concept could have been a more rounded story, less dependent on previous knowledge of the series.

Although it was a challenging project, I believe that, as I've said before, a good pitch is hard to master, and we're just getting better at this. We learned a lot from this project, and I think it made us better prepared for work life, where many things and decisions depend on teamwork.

Mythos

Directors

Selma Peña - Head of Writing

Mattea Guldý - Head of Animation

A story by Selma Peña and Mattea Guldý

Kind of Film

Project Bible

Pitch Deck

3 Episode Scripts (20 pages/per)

2D Animation

1:30 Bard's Telling-of-the-Tale (proof of concept)

Rationale

Our goal is to develop a project bible and pitch deck, as well as complete 3 episode scripts and approximately a minute and thirty-second short music video of a bard telling a boiled-down version of our first season as a proof of concept. We will not only be exploring the first season of this series but the following seasons as well, building this magical world from the bottom up. We know that this hasn't been done before, but we are confident that we have the tools to create a successful and well-rounded pitch that we can take with us post-graduation.

We both grew up feeling we were being pushed into a mold that someone else created for us. Because of our shared experiences feeling as though society was trying to tell us who or how to be, we want our series to reflect on how our individual differences make us stronger instead of weak or less valuable. We intend on using mythical creatures and their potential "societal issues" to pursue this narrative, along with some comedy to help discuss these sensitive topics. Over the course of the series, we hope to touch on body positivity, the mental strain of society's pressures, total love, acceptance, and hopefully more. Since we want to cover a wide variety of topics, we know we must reach out and consult with a variety of people to gain their important and insightful perspectives. Feedback will be essential to the success of our series and it is something that we always keep in mind.

Thesis Statement

Society's standards are set to an unrealistic degree and should allow for deviation from the norm.

Overview of Story

Pilot Treatment

Centuries ago, the Earth used to be connected to this other world called Mythos. A portal connected both worlds. Mythos is inhabited by mythical creatures; centaurs, mermaids, dragons, jinns, trolls, kappas, etc. Humans and mythical creatures knew of each other's existence and coexisted in peace. But 200 years ago the portal was closed. It was unclear why, and theories were made by both sides. With time, humans forgot those times and eventually thought that those creatures were part of stories and nothing else. On the other hand, mythical creatures, with longer lives, kept their memories of humans and began to idealize them as a powerful and perfect race, longing for the portal to open again.

Our pilot begins in the present time. Our protagonist: Marina, is a forest fairy. Her grandmother was young when the closing of the portal happened and she has lovely memories of humans. Marina has two best friends: A unicorn without a horn named Enki and a thin and weak fawn

named Demitri. The three of them are tired adults, disappointed by their society where only the most beautiful mythical creatures are important. And where, if you don't meet certain standards you will never fit in.

Enki is currently going through a crisis and really wants to find a horn to fit in with the other unicorns that refer to him as a "horse". In an attempt to get help from powerful humans, the 3 friends decide to try to open the portal to earth. Marina opens the portal, surprised by her powers in doing it. But they don't know that a more evil creature follows behind them: Medusa. - End of pilot

Season Synopsis

The 3 friends realize they are trapped on earth when they try to go back to Mythos and the portal is completely destroyed. Meanwhile, Medusa becomes a celebrity around the world. Humans become obsessed with her beauty and make her their "queen". There are a few humans that don't fall under her charm.

Marina, Enki, and Demitri start leading the resistance, trying to find a way to take Medusa back to Mythos and save humans from her spell. It is revealed that Medusa was never actually a mean creature that transformed people into stone. She was just so exotic and beautiful that some humans were jealous of her and made up that story to keep people away from her.

Marina becomes addicted to her new fame as the leader of the resistance, becoming everything she criticizes Medusa; longing for the love and acceptance of humans. Demitri and Enki stay focused and start digging out the truth about why the portal was closed in the first place, but they are sad that Marina is changing and losing her essence.

Through a series of scenes in the past, it will be clear that it was actually Marina's grandmother who closed the portal because she was trapped in a very toxic relationship with the King of earth, who becomes obsessed with her. He builds her statues and shrines inspired by her beauty and begins to watch every little thing she does. She wants out, but he threatens to turn humans against Mythical creatures if she doesn't stay with him. She plans a complete retreat from Earth and closes the portal forever, thinking that it's best for both sides. However, she never says any bad things about humans, she understands that it would be unfair to generalize, and she tells only nice stories about them.

When Marina learns the truth she realizes that she fell for everything her grandma fought against. She let herself become an idol because it felt good while losing herself in that process. She finally understands that being herself is more than enough and that if her grandma closed the portal she has the power to somehow open it again. Marina uses her magic and with all her strength manages to create for a moment a portal to Mythos. Now, she's ready to get Medusa and fix things.

Medusa refuses to go and in an epic battle where Enki proves to everyone that he doesn't need a horn to be a unicorn, he and his friends finally trap Medusa and force her to "break" the spell

she unleashed on humans. At the end of the season, Medusa reveals that there was never a spell, it is human nature to take things to an extreme, becoming easily obsessed with superficial aspects of people. Still, Marina opens a new portal and brings Medusa and her friends back to Mythos, where things are not that different from earth, but now they've learned the lesson, seeking validation from others is dangerous.

Budget

| Project Areas | Supplies | Cost | Notes | TOTAL |
|---------------|---|-------|------------------------|---------|
| 2D Animation | Adobe Suite | \$240 | \$20/month (12 months) | \$1,403 |
| | Storyboard Pro | \$28 | \$7/month (4 months) | |
| | Toon Boom Harmony | \$160 | 12 month subscription | |
| | Cintiq Tablet | \$0 | In kind | |
| | Sound (Composing and singing) | \$500 | | |
| | Festivals | \$400 | | |
| Screenwriting | Final Draft Software | \$0 | In kind | |
| | Resgistration in the Writers Guild of America | \$75 | \$25/script | |

Schedule

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References



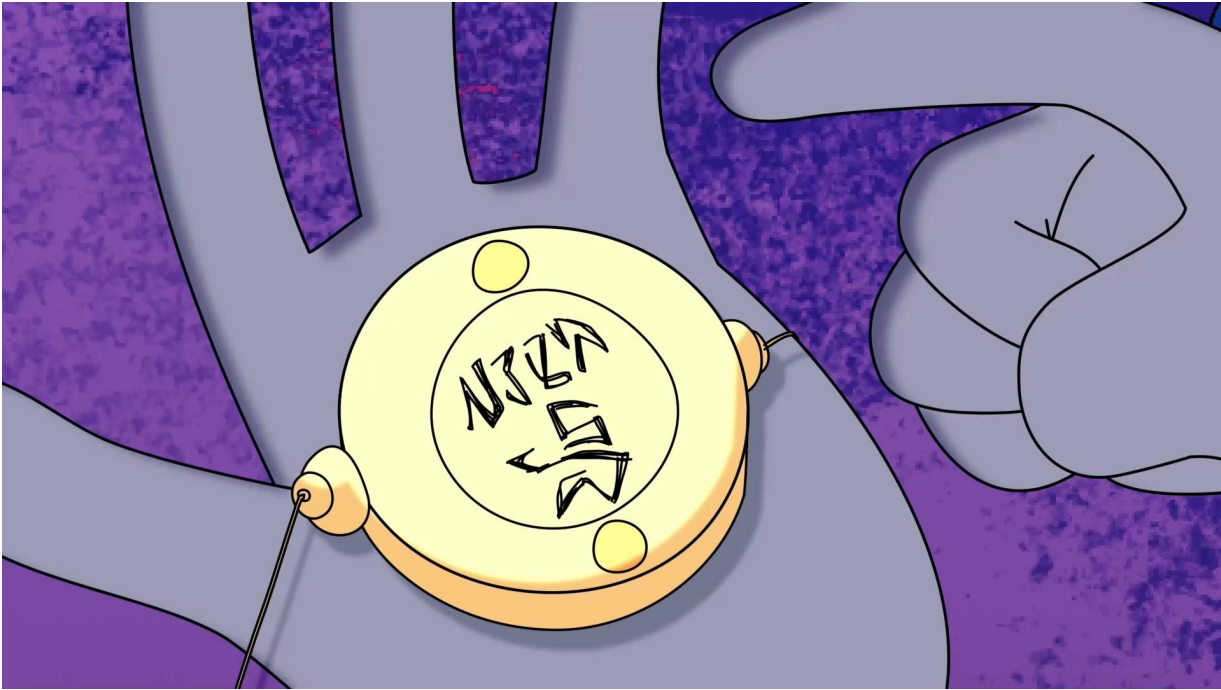
Screenshots



Screenshots



Screenshots



Screenshots



Screenshots



MYTHOS

CREATED BY
MATTÉA GULDY AND SELMA PEÑA

DIRECTED BY
MATTÉA GULDY



**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FUFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
MFA DEGREE IN THE SCHOOL OF FILM AND ANIMATION,
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
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MYTHOS

A series by Mattea Guldy and Selma Peña

INTRO

Long ago, the world of humans (Earth) and the world of mythical creatures (Mythos) were connected by a mystical portal. Throughout history of human civilization, these two peoples co-existed as part of their everyday life.

But one fateful day, the portal was closed: the two worlds forever separated. Now, 1000 years later, history has become myth. Humans have forgotten that mythical creatures truly existed. But in Mythos, they have not forgotten.

There is yet hope among the creatures of Mythos that the portal might one day be reopened.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Length: 22 min episodes

of Episodes (Season 1): 10

Target: Teens (12-18)

Secondary Target: 18-49
(fantasy fans)

Genre: Fantasy Mystery

Format: 2D full animation



REFERENCE SHOWS

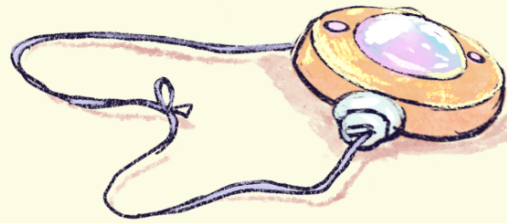


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SEASON 1 SYNOPSIS

Marina is a teenage fairy living in Mythos. It has been hard living under the burden of her family's stigma. (1000 years ago, Marina's grandmother infamously closed the portal, sealing herself and everyone on Earth away from Mythos.)

With her other misfit friends: Demetri, Enki, and the Kodama, Marina accidentally activates her grandmother's magic necklace to reopen the portal. Marina and friends are shocked to find themselves on Earth, where they will discover twisted plots, dark secrets, new friends, and devious foes. Most importantly, Marina will realize her great importance in the fates of the two worlds, and in her family's mysterious past, and become stronger and wiser than she ever thought possible.



MARINA

Marina was born in Mythos centuries after the closing of the portal. She is a strong-willed, kind, and patient fairy.

Marina believes there is more to the story of the portal's closing (her family's great shame). She doesn't believe that her grandmother acted out of malice or selfishness: she must have had a good reason for sealing the portal connecting Earth and Mythos. More than anything, Marina wants the truth.

As a fairy from an ancient house, Marina has the potential to wield extremely powerful magic. However, since her family has been outcast since before she was born, she has never been properly trained, so her abilities are simple and limited.



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DEMETRI

Demetri is a faun who comes from one of the most reputable and wealthy families in Mythos. His ancestors inspired the ancient Greeks and Romans. His kin are known for their attractive, muscular bodies and for throwing the best parties in Mythos.

Demetri has never fit in with his family. He's a nerdy, unathletic, know-it-all. He is passionate about human culture and history before the closing of the portal. He loves to read and learn.

Because Demetri refused to live the way his father demanded, he was banished and disowned. Marina and Alston found him and gave him a home under their roof.

ENKI


Enki is a descendent of one of the oldest families of unicorns; his ancestors inspired the first ancient Mesopotamian tales.

Everyone in Enki's family possesses a horn made of the most precious metals. Everyone... except Enki. Instead, Enki has a tiny bump that looks more like a pimple where his horn is supposed to be.

Enki's dream is to find a way to make his horn grow. He feels insecure, but he rarely lets it show. If you met Enki, you'd think him a very confident and happy (and goofy) unicorn.



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THE KODAMA

The Kodama doesn't speak, so we don't know too much about them. They are a type of spirit that likes to dwell in the woods.

The Kodama is good-natured and playful, and likes to be with his friends Marina, Enki, and Demetri, who sometimes call them "Kody".



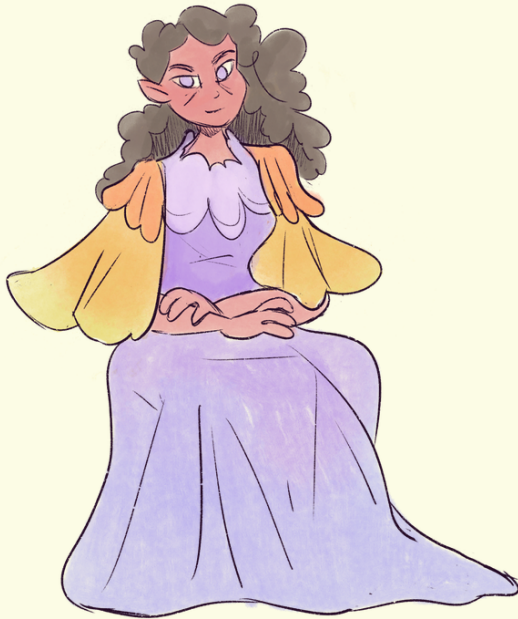
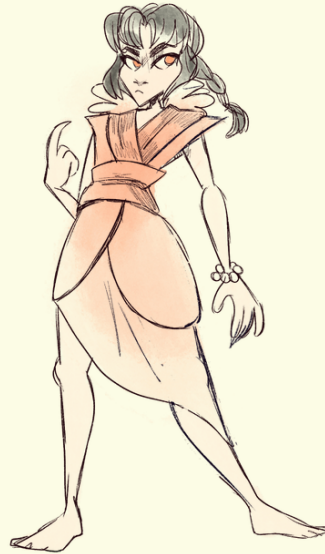
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THE HULI JING

The Huli Jing is a shapeshifter. She is the person truly responsible for the closing of the portal.

Her goal is to corrupt humans and mythical creatures. She wants to rule over the earth, considering herself superior and worthy of humans' admiration.

The Huli Jing's default form is that of a beautiful red fox. With enough power, she can shapeshift into any form she desires.



ZIA

Marina's grandmother.

She fell in love with King Thomas (a human) 1000 years ago, before the portal was closed.

An extremely powerful fairy, she was the queen of Mythos before being trapped on Earth by the closing of the portal. She has been trying to catch the Huli Jing ever since.

Grandma Zia has a great sense of humor.

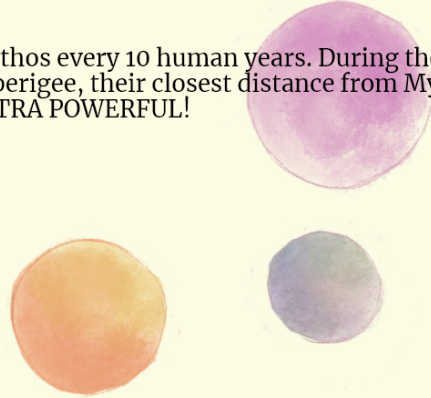
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THE MOONS

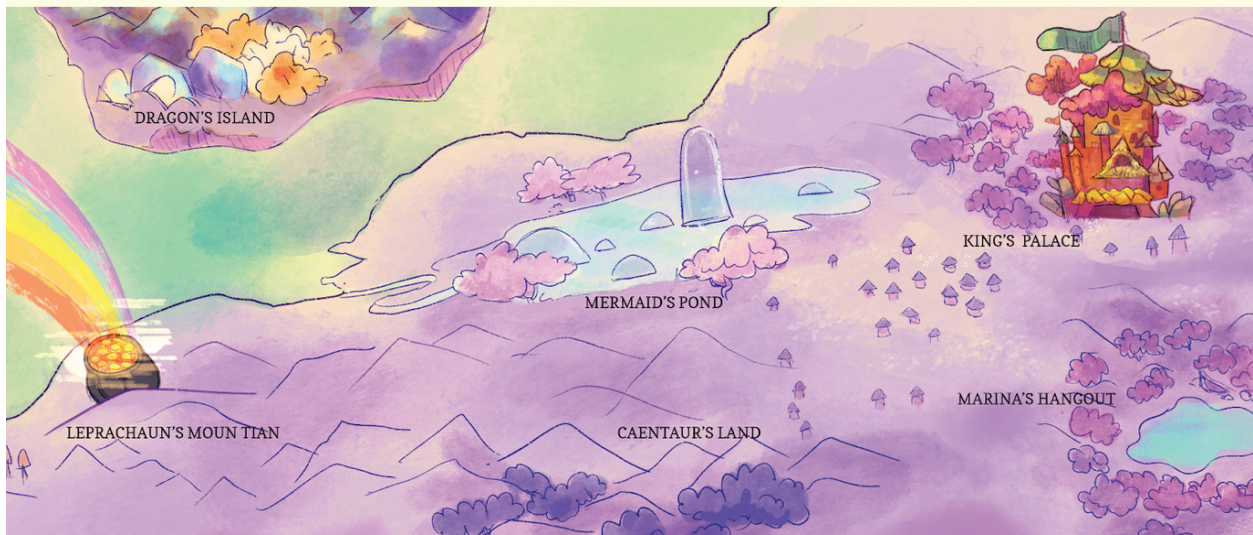
The three moons of Mythos and Earth's Moon are an important element in this series.

The moons give Mythos creatures the ability to recharge their powers. The Moon on Earth can also provide power to Mythos creatures, but it is not as effective as the combined strength of Mythos' three moons.

The Three Moons Festival is celebrated in Mythos every 10 human years. During the festival, the three moons align and are all at perigee, their closest distance from Mythos. This event can make all Mythos creatures **EXTRA POWERFUL!**



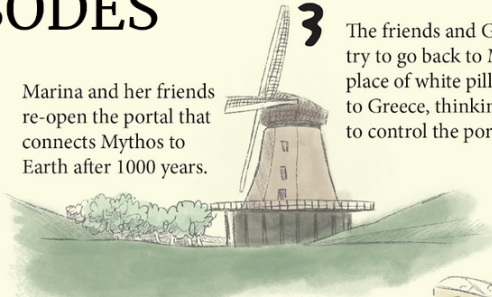
THE LAND OF MYTHOS



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EPISODES

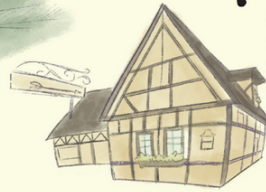
- 1** Marina and her friends re-open the portal that connects Mythos to Earth after 1000 years.



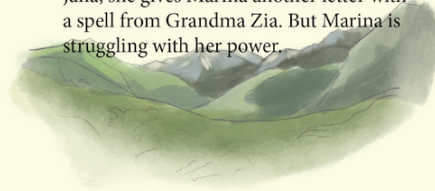
- 2** Along with their new friend, Arif, the friends try to understand the modern world. When they get in trouble a powerful being saves them: Grandma Zia.

- 3** The friends and Grandma Zia unsuccessfully try to go back to Mythos. Marina dreams of a place of white pillars, so the group decides to go to Greece, thinking they'll find the knowledge to control the portal.

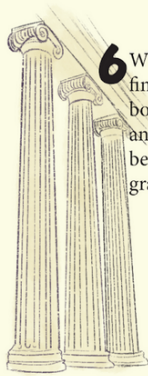
- 4** The friends meet a troll named Greg; Marina realizes that other mythical creatures were left behind on earth. Greg gives Marina a letter from grandma Zia with a powerful spell.



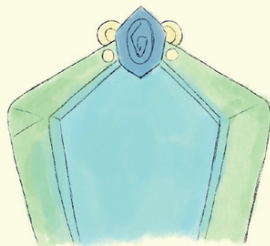
- 5** The group meets a half-vampire named Jana; she gives Marina another letter with a spell from Grandma Zia. But Marina is struggling with her power.



- 6** While in Rhodes, Marina and her friends find grandma Zia's lair. Going through her books, they find the spell for the portal and ... a goodbye letter, implying that she's been dead for a while. Then who was the grandma they saw earlier?



- 7** The grandma Zia they thought they had met was, in reality, a shift shaper called: The Huli Jing. She needs to return to Mythos to regain her strength, get her army, and finally enslave humans.



- 10** The final battle takes place at the doorstep of the portal. Marina battles the Huli Jing with all her strength, and in the end, they win. But knowing how corrupted some of the Mythical Creatures are, should they keep the portal open?



- 9** While imprisoned, Zia's spirit takes everyone to the past to learn the truth about everything that happened 1000 years ago when the portal closed. Learning the truth makes Marina angry, angry enough to let her powers flow.

- 8** Marina and her friends try to escape, but the Huli Jing takes them back to Mythos and makes them look like traitors. Marina's powers are still not enough to save them.

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SCREENPLAY
Pilot/Episode 4-Ricky



EXT. SMALL TOWN - DAY

MARINA, THE KODAMA, and DEMETRI are riding on top of ENKI. The group of friends look exhausted. Demetri's stomach is growling, Marina's hair is full of twigs; completely tangled and messy. And the Kodama is poking their nose.

MARINA
I would die for some Manna right now.

DEMETRI
A full belly that lasts over forty years... those things are awesome, and delicious. I prefer the Matcha version.

Demetri drools a bit, and cleans his mouth with his arm.

The Kodama begins eating his boogers, making a <squeaky sound>

ENKI
Ughh... I can hear that. Stop eating your boogers, it's gross.

KODAMA
Wii gee gee

ENKI
I know you don't care but as long as you're riding on me, I can decide what you CAN and CANNOT eat!

THE CREATORS

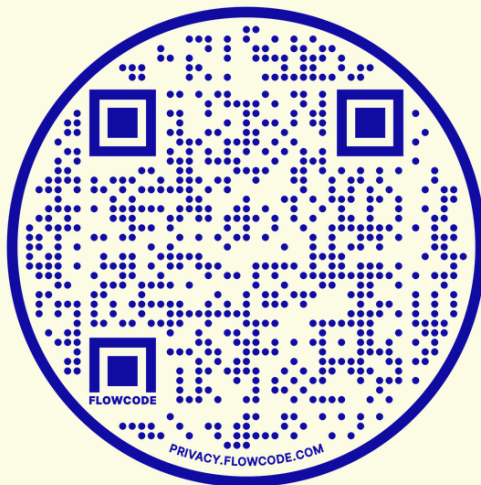


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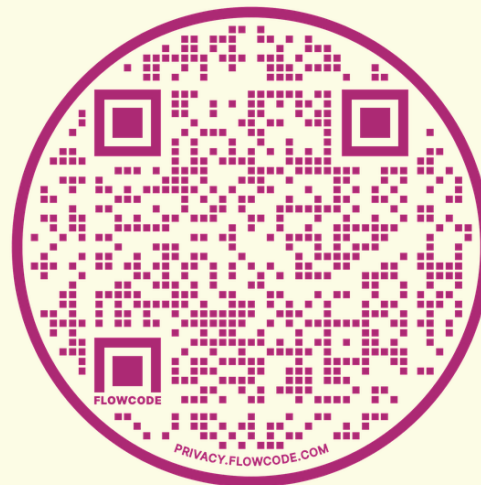
PROOF OF CONCEPT



Animated Proof of Concept Feedback
General Art Feedback



Script and Story Feedback



Short script

MYTHOS - SHORT FILM

Written by

Selma Pena Arenzana

Based on a story by:

Selma PeAr and Mattea Guldý

Number: 856-912-5050

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Sitting by the lake are 3 mythical creatures: A fairy in her 20's, MARINA, is levitating a piece of pottery between her hands. The artifact is floating while she molds it. A unicorn that looks more like a horse due to the fact that his horn looks more like a pimple, ENKI, is looking at his reflection on the water, immersed in his thoughts. Finally, DEMETRI, a skinny faun also in his 20's, is sitting beside the lake dipping his hoofed feet in the water. He's reading a BOOK titled: "HUMANKIND EXPLAINED". Marina notices Demetri's book.

MARINA

Seriously? Humans again?...

DEMETRI

They're fascinating! They... they
forge their own swords, they have
mills powered by wind and...
impeccable fashion; no pants!

He says that last line pointing at his book that has an illustration of two kings dressed in togas. Marina stares at Demetri, looking up and down at his clothes. He is dressed similarly to the drawing.

ENKI

(To his reflection)
It's growing... it's finally
growing.

Marina and Demetri turn their heads towards Enki.

MARINA

What?

DEMETRI

He's talking to his reflection
again.

MARINA

Enki, you are a beautiful unicorn
stop torturing yourself.

ENKI

(To his reflection)
You are a beautiful unicorn.

In that moment a ghostly round creature, KODAMA, emerges from inside a tree. He's wearing a toga made of leaves. He twists and spins, looking very happy that his legs are unclothed.

DEMETRI

And YOU are a beautiful Kodama...
Hey, you're not wearing pants! See,
Marina, he loves human's style!

MARINA

No one's seen humans in 1000 years!
We really don't know anything about
them... what if they do wear pants?

Demetri looks insulted.

MARINA (CONT'D)

What if they were the ones who
closed the portal on us?!

Enki hears this last part and finally turns his attention to
the conversation.

The Kodama floats near Marina and starts playing with her
scarf. He spins until he's fully wrapped in it. A NECKLACE is
revealed on Marina's neck.

ENKI

Marina, you know we love you, but
everyone in Mythos knows it was
your family's fault.

Marina looks sad. She places her piece of pottery on the
ground.

MARINA

I don't know, recently I've been
feeling like there's more to that
story...

The light hits the Marina's necklace and it starts shining.
Its brightness is so strong, it catches everyone's attention.

ENKI

Where did you get that faaancy
bijou? Can I have it?

The Kodama tries to pull it from Marina's neck but she
doesn't let go.

MARINA

No you can't!

Marina slaps the little Kodama's hand

MARINA (CONT'D)
You can't have it either. I... I
found it in my dad's stuff, I think
it used to belong to my grandma.

ENKI
Ahhh vintage bijou. Love it.

Demetri stands up abruptly.

DEMETRI
Let me see it!

Marina looks frustrated but she lets Demetri hold it.

DEMETRI (CONT'D)
It has some ancient symbols etched
into it... I think...

ENKI
Ooh, granny's secret symbols!

DEMETRI
...it means Khalos, irteh
stichorah... wait, I've never seen
this last symbol.

ENKI
Easy, that one means pu...t on...
somh... pants

Demetri gives him a nasty look and is about to respond when suddenly an intense light shines from the necklace, then... A rumble in the ground. From the bottom of the lake emerges a beautiful stone portal. Written on it there's a sign that says: "from here on you become gods". An intense blue light shines inside of it. The group of friends stare at it for a while. Then the blue light starts fading.

DEMETRI
Did we just...?

ENKI
Oh I'm totally going inside the
shiny portal...

Enki jumps towards the portal. He crosses and disappears.

MARINA
What in the underworld? Enki!!

DEMETRI
Marina! Come on, maybe there'll be
some humans on the other side...
And we have to bring back Enki.

The Kodama follows Enki looking excited. He crosses the
portal.

DEMETRI (CONT'D)
And The Kodama...

She nods and both of them jump.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

In the middle of the woods an old, stone archway starts
shining; a blue light in its center. Marina and Demetri are
ejected out into the forest. The bump into each other while
trying to regain their balance. Marina is about to say
something when Enki interrupts.

ENKI
Shh!

Enki points his head in the direction of a bonfire.

DEMETRI
(Whispering)
Humans?! I knew it!

Enki nods. Demetri looks excited beyond words.

EXT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Hiding behind nearby trees, the 4 mythical creatures are
observing the humans sitting beside the fire. We see the
silhouettes of 3 humans: one of wearing a knight's armor,
another has a wizard hat, and the third is a girl dressed as
a medieval lady.

DEMETRI
(Whispering)
Ok nobody panic, I've studied
everything there is to know about
them.

Demetri is clearly freaking out. He starts rifling through
his Human book.

DEMETRI (CONT'D)
They should be... friendly.
Especially the one with the pointy
hat and no pants.

The human with the pointy hat raises his staff with one hand
and shouts:

SORCERER
I raise my staff and tell my unseen
enemies: Now feel the power of my
scorching ray.

A giant flame erupts from the bonfire. The 4 mythical
creatures freeze, looking terrified. The camera slowly starts
moving forward and we finally appreciate the human group in
full detail. The "sorcerer" is a kid whose fake beard is
falling off his face. He's holding his staff with one hand
and a box with dice on the other.

As the camera keeps moving we see that the girl is holding a
fire starter liquid and she looks excited about the show. Her
costume now looks cheap. The same for the knight. As the
camera finishes its movement we see a large banner that reads
"MEDIEVAL FAIR - DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS CONVENTION".

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