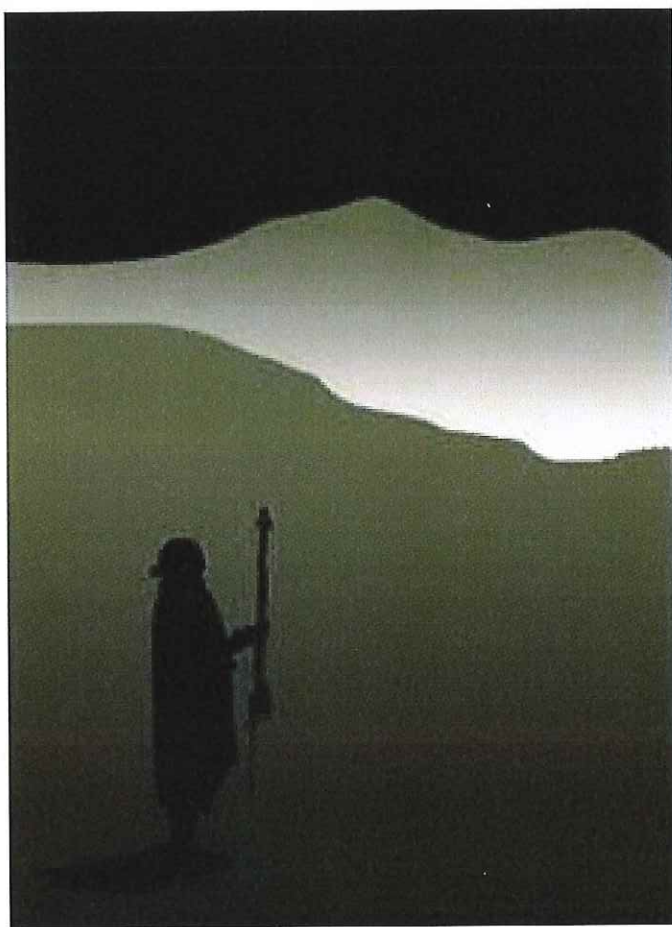


# THE EARTH BEGINS



LA TERRA COMINCIA – Joe Santangelo



CASA EDITRICE KIMERIK



**This is dedicated to all the Children**

**Strive hard to be Warriors**

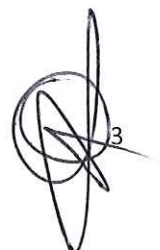
**Many THX to Mrs. Silva Lloshi  
for the translation**

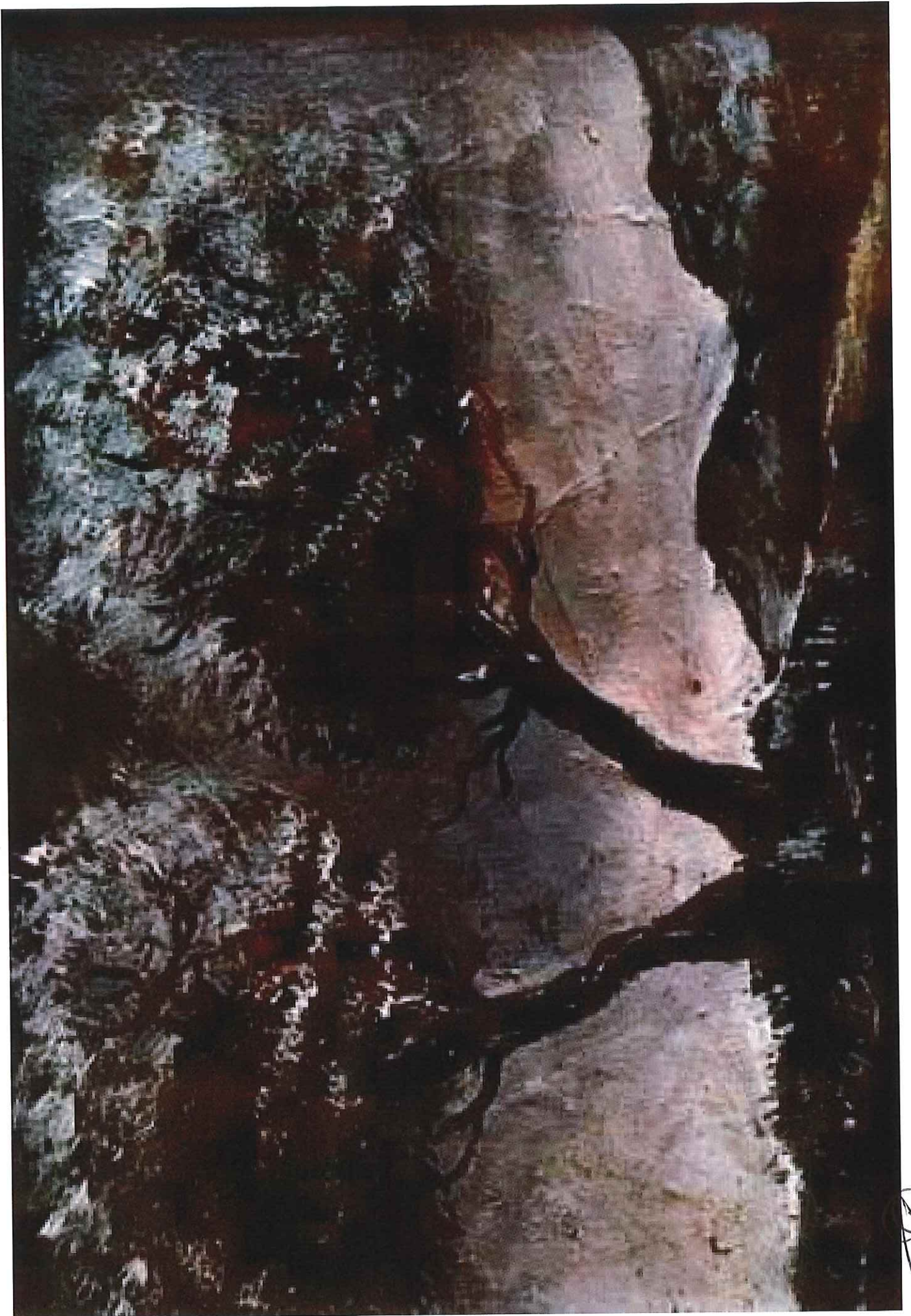


## THE EARTH BEGINS

**T'S NIGHT:** one of those dark nights where you can see nothing, but can imagine everything. So black, it's like in a nightmare and I find it difficult to breathe. And it's cold, so icy cold.

I've been walking for a while, step after step, through dirt and pebbles, but now my feet squelch through a stretch of soggy mud. When I raise my eyes, all I can see is total darkness. Far away I notice braziers burning bright and I carry on, knowing that I'm going in the right direction. I'm carrying only a few warm clothes in my backpack, some bread and a half full bottle of water. In my right hand I have a stick – it will come handy with the obstacles, along the way. There is no road here, there's dead trees everywhere, leafless trees that look like the shadows of what they once used to be. There's a never ending wind that blows from far away, and it chills my soul. Not even the moon has enough courage to show up. This place must really be Hell, but I still carry on, because I know: I'm going in the right direction.



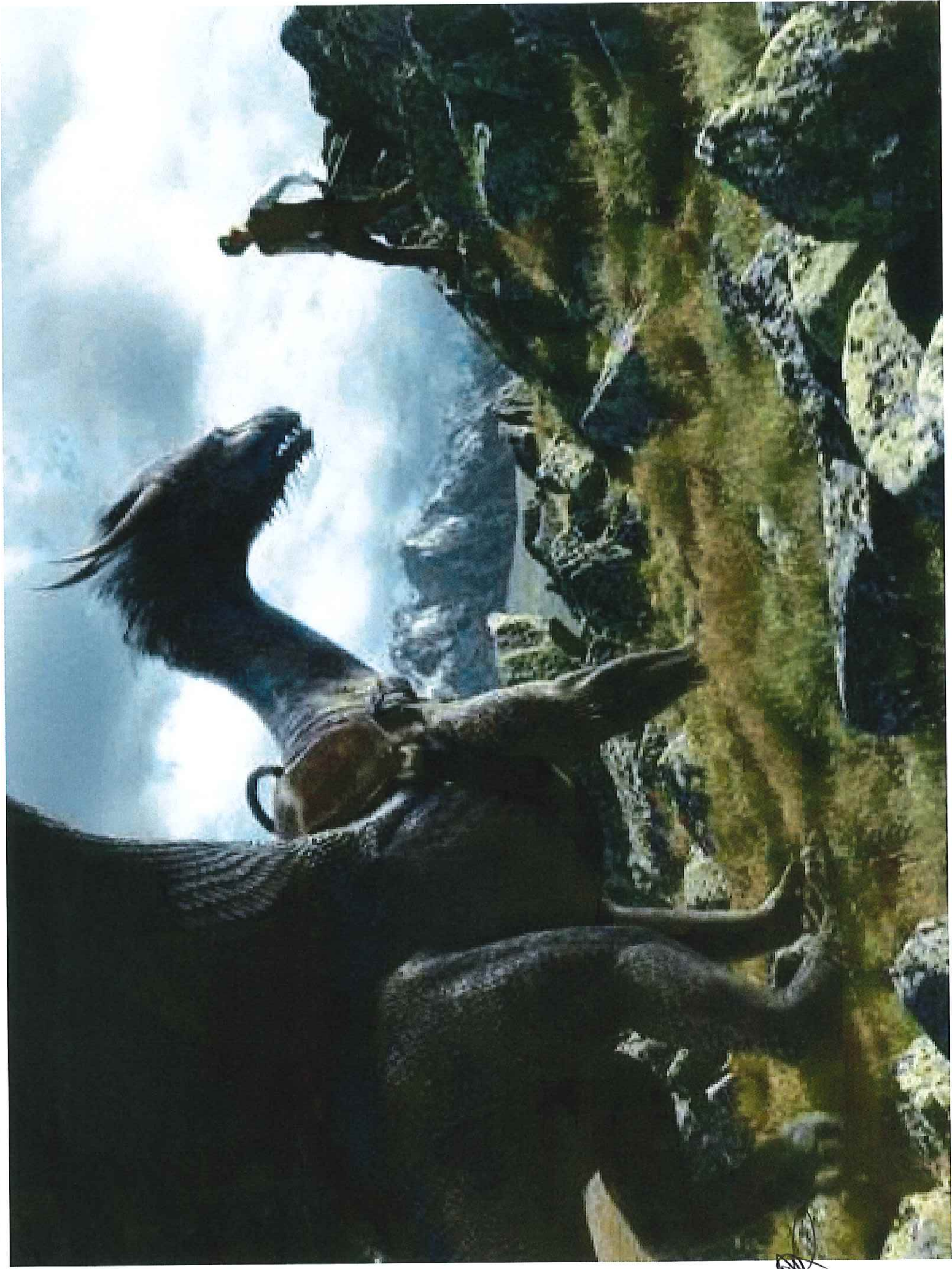


Handwritten signature or mark.

- AND WHO ARE YOU ? – I hear. The voice makes me shiver. I stop and turn, but nothing, not the slightest movement around me. So I rest the backpack on the ground and start waving my stick, but all I can hear is it whooshing through the air. I stop and try to see what’s happening and I spot some moving forms. Then I hear a fluid and imposing noise coming from all directions. Then a tall and formless being, rising from the mud, takes shape in front of me. I hear his vulgar roar of laughter followed by his deep throaty voice.

*“WHO ARE YOU?”* – asked the monster. I cannot see his face, but his head is the size of an elephant and his body as tall as a giraffe.





Handwritten signature or initials in the bottom right corner.

- I am a human – I answer.

- And what are you doing here, you 'human'...? – His head swings from side to side and I have to raise mine hoping, to glimpse his face.

In the meantime, the moving forms have come closer. The flickering flames make their faces appear even more frightening. They're tall and mighty creatures, with 3 wolves at the end of their woody vine-like hands. The howling wolves are getting closer, but I stand fast and don't move.

I keep myself still like a stone.

- I've come looking for treasure – I reply.

- *TREASURE?* What type of treasure do you think you can find in a place like this?

- Treasure! – I repeat. I've come in search of LIFE!



The wolves continue to howl, responding to the owner's command. A greasy liquid keeps falling from the monster's shoulders. Steam is coming out of his nose and he opens his eyes. They're enormous, bulbous, yellow and shiny.

- LIFE? Don't you already have life?

- It's not just life I'm here for. I've come in search for a FULFILLING LIFE.

- I don't see what the difference is, little human... – replies the monster.

- All these years I've wasted my time and energy on futile activities. I could have helped those who needed my support, but chose not to. I could have spent my time with those who needed my company, but again chose not to. I should have enjoyed the beauty and generosity of every single sunny day, but was incapable of doing so. If I can't share my thoughts with other humans, if I'm not capable of enhancing their lives, what have I got? That would be a useless life, even death would be more honourable!







The monster listened while watching me straight in the eye and scratching his chin.

- What you are looking for, little human, has never existed. It's a fantasy, an illusion.

- No it's not. I know it DOES exist – I reply.

- How can you be so sure, human?

- Because I know, Sir. I know that kind of life does exist.

The monster bellows with laughter, his voice filling the black and dilapidated space around us. His servants too, start laughing, while the wolves continue to howl. I try to look ahead, but all I can see is trees in flames.

- So tell me, little human, how do you intend to proceed? – he asks me.

- I've got strong feet and with my shoes I will be able to cross this muddy road.

- Your journey will be full of dangers – ferocious beasts you've never seen before, deadly traps for explorers of new worlds, and noises that will deafen you. HOW DO YOU THINK YOU'LL OVERCOME ALL OF THESE?

- My stick will always be with me. If needed, I will use it to defend myself.

- And how will you feed yourself, little human?



- I have bread in my backpack – I reply. When it runs out, I'll look for something else. If I have to, I'll survive on soil, plants, even pitch. If it rains, I'll drink water from the clouds. If not, I'll look for a stream and if a stream I cannot find, I'll do without! I WON'T NEED ANYTHING ELSE.

- They will kill you, human and I won't stop them.

- That's OK – I reply. I already told you: If I can't give meaning to this life, then I'm better off dead. But I must try, Sir.

The monster relaxes and I can hear his breathing calming down. His servants pull the rope and the wolves stop howling. Slowly, these strange creatures start leaving and disappearing into the horizon and all we're left with, is a lunar background, humid and arid at the same time. The strong wind continues to blow. This darkness which surrounds me, is almost touchable.

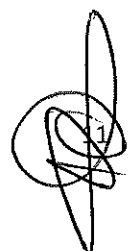
- And who are you? – I ask the monster.

- If I really told you who I am, you would not believe me – he answers.

- It's OK if you don't want to tell me. I have to continue my journey.

- I used to be an angel.

- An angel?



- Yep. Once upon a time, I used to live in a enchanting world, full of light, colours and joy. I had learned to control my reality: I could fulfil all my wishes. I could accelerate time to achieve all that I needed. And still, I had not managed to freeze it, was not capable of living my life in the present.

- And then?

- And then I decided to take up a journey in search of the present. I was looking for wonders. I too, wanted to find treasure, human, a "*FULFILLED LIFE*" as you call it.

I lower my head. I start developing a fondness for this strange creature.

- When I started on this adventure, I was convinced I would have made it, I would have found my treasure. But soon, I found myself on impassable pathways/impossible journeys and met 3-headed invincible monsters. The earth trembled because of me. I was allowed to reign this world in order to correct my own faults. I have been in this state for more than a thousand years, and here I will remain for eternity.





A small, stylized signature or logo consisting of a circular shape with a vertical line through it, resembling a stylized letter 'P' or a similar symbol.

I raised my head again.

- How can you remain in this condition of eternal *NON-LIFE* Sir? How can you stand it? *Maybe I've gone too far, I think to myself: What sense is there in living like this?*

The monster almost turns backwards. He's looking at the size of his reign: an vast greyish expanse of stinky pitch, a deep well filled with grief. *What's so grand about all this?* A teardrop falls from his wrinkled face and I'm lost for words.



- What you are looking for DOESN'T EXIST, human, it has never existed. It's only in books, it's just something one has never experienced for real. They're trying to convince you of something that does not exist, it's just an illusion.

I put my backpack on my left shoulder, grasp my stick and turn my eyes to gaze straight ahead.

- You still want to continue, human? – he asks.

- Yes, Sir.

- Even if you have to face thousands of dangers?

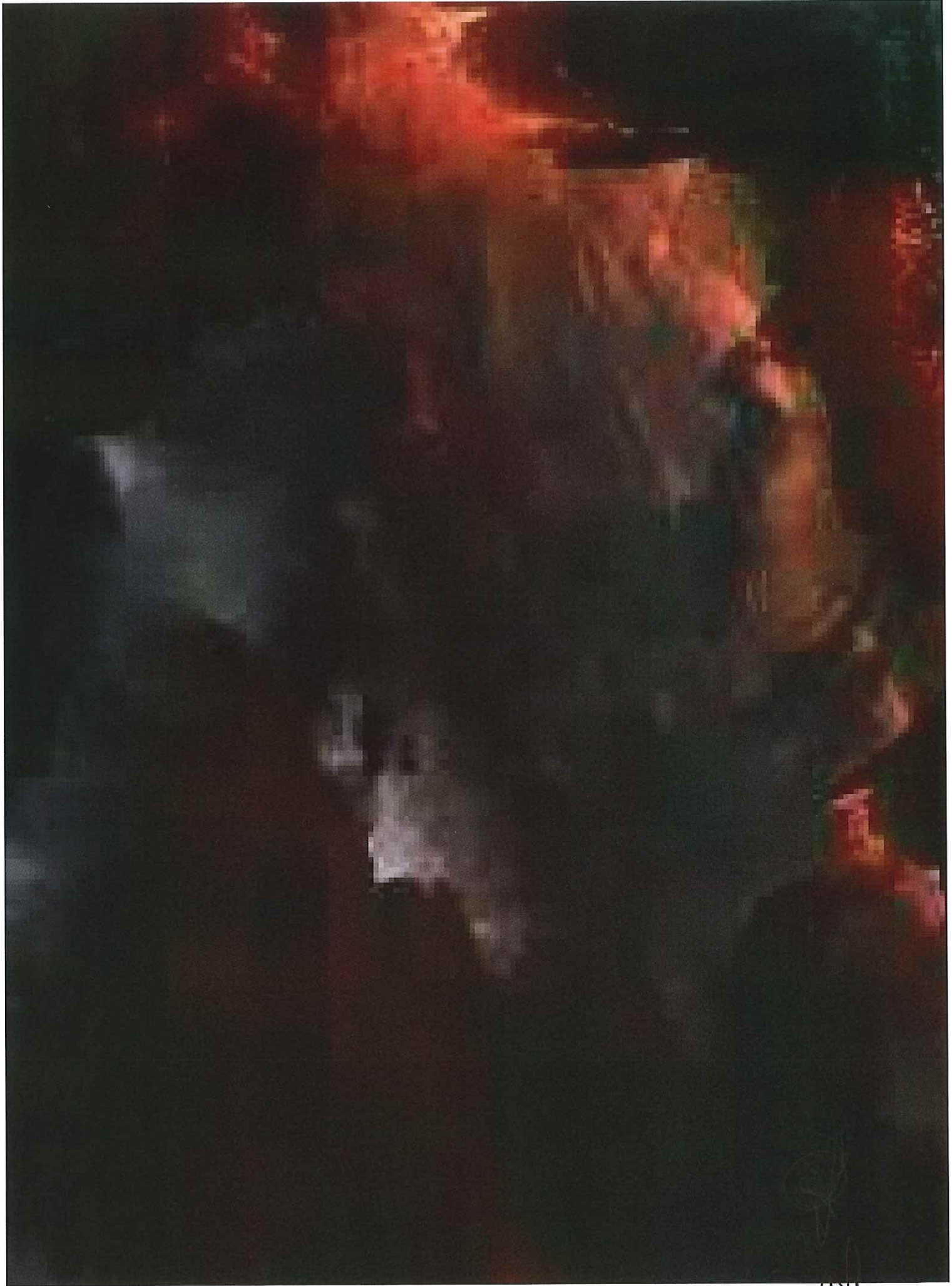
- Yes.

- Even if they'll try to kill you?

- Yes.

The monster opens his jaws wide. Two golden fangs appear underneath his upper lip and smoke comes out of his nostrils. His growling confirms his disapproval.





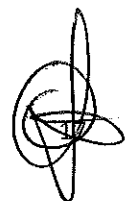
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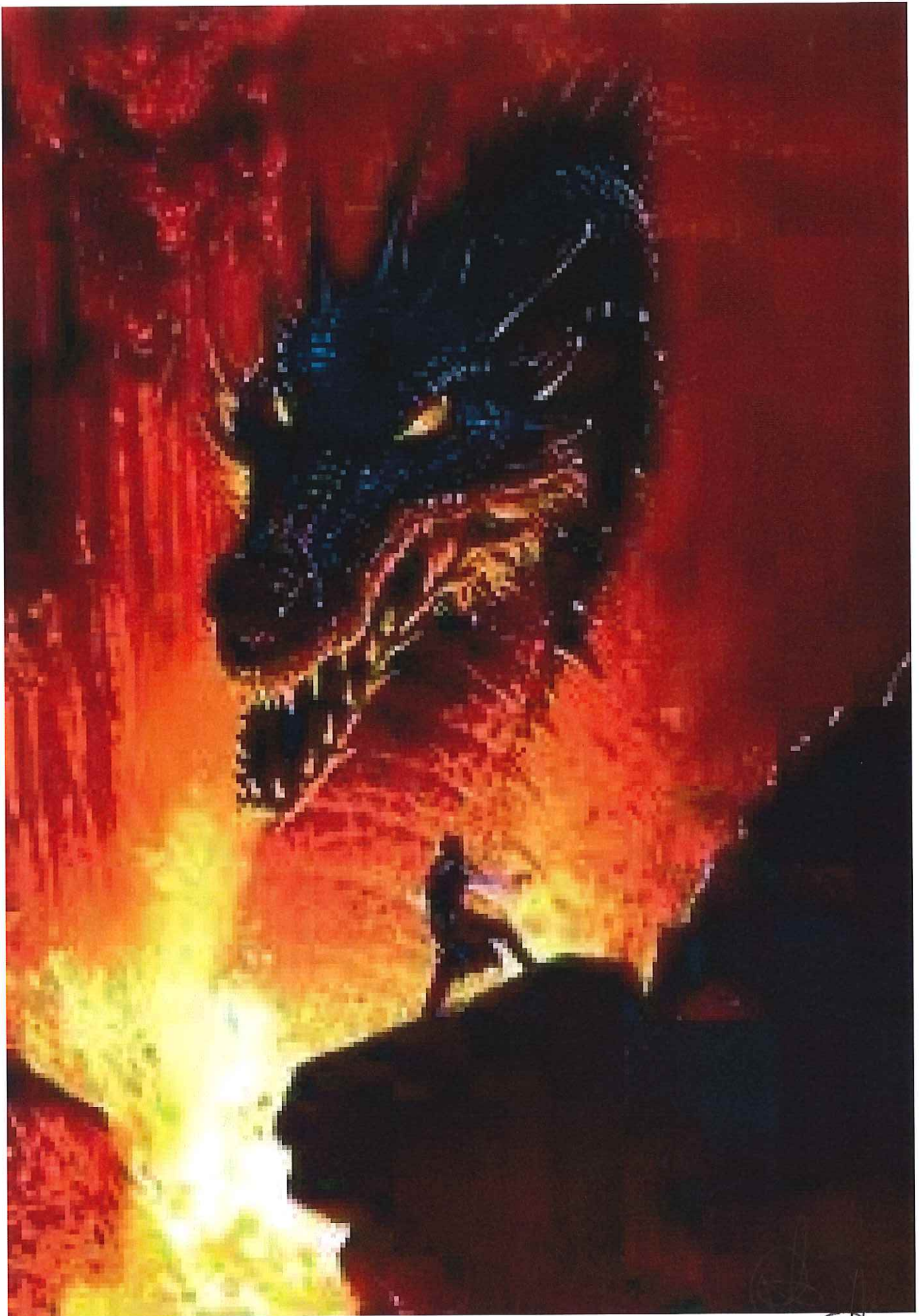


- Even if what you're looking for does not exist?

- Yes – I reply – I HAVE TO CARRY ON.

A moment later, the earth starts to shake and I'd like to close my eyes, but my strength overcomes my fear, and I manage to keep them wide open. The monster bursts into laughter again, his voice becoming stronger and stronger, his eyes gleaming. Long tongues of fire come out of his mouth, but suddenly, AS IF BY MAGIC, the mud vanishes. The black shiny marsh was nothing but the angel-monster's wings, and as they lift up from the soil, the monster starts flying towards the sky. In a blinding flash of light, he disappears and the earth returns to normal – just how I remembered it. A hill, carpeted by a green meadow of colourful flowers, opens up beneath my feet. I raise my eyes and see a black spot on the face of the sun – it's the tail of the escaping angel.

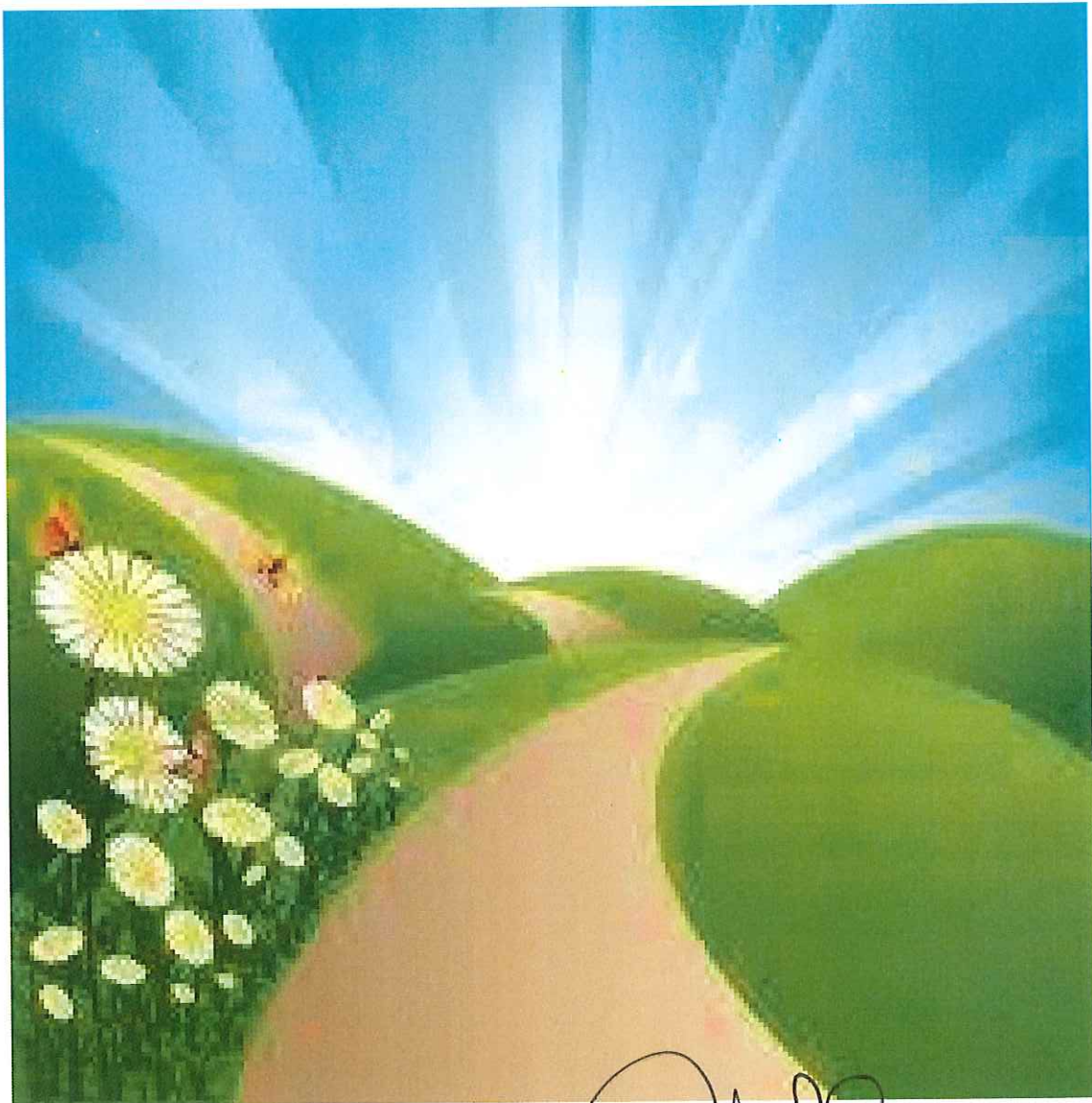




My ears can listen to the echo of the Monster's laughs, but soon after, silence and peace are in front of me again. I *MADE IT!* – I say. Then I keep still, with my eyes that see the upper side of the above, a wonderful carpet of a deep blue, the colour of cobalt.

I made it – I think.

THE EARTH BEGINS.



OR.