



The Brothers Lionheart



by Astrid Lindgren

*designed by
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Concept Statement

For a children's story this is quite a dark tale. It is about death, abandonment, good vs evil, oppression, and violence vs non-violence, but is also mainly an adventure, and a story about sibling love. Good and evil is represented on one side by the brothers and their friends, and on the other by Tengil, his army and the dragon Katla.

Astrid herself said she wanted to give children something to believe in in a time when the christian heaven was not the obvious truth anymore in Sweden. Children most of all fear abandonment and loneliness, and sick children fear leaving their mum and dad, perhaps more than the actual death. Having grown up with this book, I myself have always thought Nangijala is what I hope after-death looks like, and I don't think I'm alone in that.

At the same time, in the book, it is left to the reader to decide if it was all real or just a fever dream by Skorpan.

This version is based on the book, but made into a modern dance piece. The audience is anyone who either has a relationship to the original book, or is interested in modern dance in all ages above six or seven. The stage would either be in a traditional theatre or an alternative location like a barn, warehouse or factory building. The dancers should be close to the audience and use all space available, but it is not immersive theatre.

The stage would, for scenes set in Nangijala, have an installation of fabric flowers hanging upside down from the ceiling. These could be movable and operated. For Cherry Valley, the flowers would be smaller and white, for Thorn Rose valley the flowers are bigger and more pink. Barbed wire would also be added to differentiate between the places and represent the tyrant's rule. The idea is to create a dreamlike landscape without it being in the way for the dancers. There would also be some sparse scenography, and while scaled down and abstract, still in that dreamlike fairytale style and not too abstract and plain.

To contrast the more airy flower theme there would be a heavy counterpart present in mountain scenes. The main colour palette for stage is restricted to white, pink, green, silver and black.

The costume designs are to have a starting point in traditional Swedish folk costume. That will be more or less visible in the different characters. I have played around with the shapes and in some costumes ended up closer to an abstract shape than the starting point. The costumes are a physical enhanced representation of their personalities. The costume is something to enhance movement fitting to the character and be worked with, not in spite of or against. They also need to be easily washed and safe to use.

The characters are tied together by a recurring pod shape,

but also colour and material. The main fabrics are wool, silk and linen, but also include Tyvek, dress net and micromodal. The colour palette is pastelles mainly (pink, green, yellow, beige), with the exception of Tengil and his soldiers, who are in stark red and black. While everyone else fits into the dreamlike flower world, Tengil stands out like a sore thumb.

It is important to me to be sensitive about the serious themes while remaking this into something completely new. Environmentally friendly and a more sustainable, informed design thinking have also been at the forefront of my mind in this project when it comes to material choices.



Synopsis

The brothers Jonatan and Karl (Skorpan) live in a Swedish town with their mum, who is a seamstress. Karl is severely ill with a cough and knows he is going to die. He is afraid.

Jonatan tries to calm him by telling him about the made-up land Nangijala, where it is still the time of "sagas and camp fires", which is where you go after death.

One day there is a fire in their building and Jonatan saves Skorpan by jumping out of the window shielding him. Jonatan dies in the fall and Skorpan survives.

Skorpan mourns Jonatan in his sickbed and is longing to see him again in Nangijala. Any doubts he had on the truthfulness of Jonatan's story is quenched by a snow-white dove visiting him on the window sill.

Skorpan dies not long after and joins Jonatan in Nangijala. They reunite in Cherry Valley, where their new home is. Skorpan is overjoyed with suddenly being healthy, owning his own horse and being united with Jonatan.

They meet Sofia, "the dove-queen", Jossi, the owner of the local Inn and the rest of the village. All is well, but Skorpan suspects there is something serious he doesn't know.

Very true. It turns out it is not all well. In Cherry Valley there is peace, but in the adjacent valley, Thorn Rose Valley, an evil tyrant called Tengil is oppressing its people with the help of his army and his dragon Katla, which he controls with a horn/trumpet. Sofia is the leader of the resistance in Cherry Valley, but the leader in Thorn Rose valley has been abducted and thrown into the prison caves of Karmanjaka, Tengil's land. There is also evidence of a traitor in Cherry Valley, but they don't know who. Jonatan goes to help Thorn Rose valley, and leaves Skorpan where it is safe. But Skorpan soon follows him, not wanting to be left behind again.

In the mountains, Skorpan stops to rest in a cave, and accidentally becomes witness to a meeting between the traitor and two of Tengil's guards. Turns out the traitor is not Hubert, but Jossi! Jossi leaves, but at the last minute, Skorpan is discovered by the soldiers in his cave.

By lying, he manages to get brought into Thorn Rose valley, which now is enclosed by a wall. Hoping against hope, he rushes into the arms of a random old man, claiming him to be his grandpa, and the man, Mattias, saves him.

Turns out, Mattias is part of the resistance too, and is hiding Jonatan in a secret room in his house. They make a plan to dig an underground secret passage out of the village from the secret room. Through this, and with some luck, they escape the town and set off to Karmanjaka to save Orvar, the leader of the resistance in Thorn Rose valley.

This is not before Tengil himself has made a visit to the town and taken more men to his mines, and executed a man in front of his wife and children for protesting.

They reach Karmanjaka's mountains and find a hidden passage inside. They save Orvar and take him back to the town where he starts the proper rebellion. On the way there, they are chased, and Skorpan is left behind, hiding. He meets Sofia, Jossi and Hubert there, and unmasks Jossi as the traitor he is. Jossi dies when he flees.

In the battle, Jonatan snatches Tengil's horn/trumpet and compels Katla to kill her former master. The people decide to get rid of Katla once and for all, and Jonatan volunteers to seal her into the caves in Karmanjaka. Though on the way there, he loses the horn/trumpet in the Karma Falls, a waterfall on the way, and Katla lashes out, free at last. Suddenly a lindorm rises out of the depths of the falls and engages Katla in a fight to the death, which kills them both.

Jonatan reveals to Skorpan that he was burned by Katla's fire, which means that he will soon be paralysed and die, "and go to Nangilima" the next after-death land, where Mattias is waiting for them. Skorpan, not wanting to be separated from his brother again, decides to jump them both off a cliff, letting them go into this new land together this time.



Research



"Det står väl inte i Mose lag att gamla kärringar inte får klättra i träd!"

Astrid Lindgren



Astrid Lindgren

Astrid Lindgren, 1907-2002, was a Swedish children's book author and editor. She was often inspired by her own childhood in Vimmerby, Småland, but also her experiences during the WW2 and moving to the capital. She is one of Sweden's most famous writers, known for books such Pippi Longstocking, Emil of Lönneberga, Ronia the Robber's Daughter and of course, The Brothers Lionheart. Astrid was also an important political activist speaking out for children's rights, against nuclear power and in climate issues to name a few. When Sweden recently renewed their note designs, Astrid replaced Selma Lagerlöf (a Nobel price winning author) on the 20-crowns note.

To me her stories represent the very essence of childhood and wonder. I grew up listening to the audiobooks of her books, which she read herself, and she is the best storyteller I know. The number of times I fell asleep as a child listening to Emil's shenanigans... Her voice, life story and legacy will continue to inspire and influence people for a long time.



Natural Textures

Nature is always the first source of inspiration for me. Last summer, I decided to look for interesting textures in the environment around me and make it into a small personal photo project. It was also a way to keep a piece of Nordic nature with me when I went back for this year. Fallen trees, bark, pine forest and unusual perspectives are but a small selection of the textures that influenced this project.





Bea Szenfeld

In this project I took inspiration from fashion designers who work with nature and flowers in their work and also unusual shapes in silhouette or regarding movement.

A designer who stands out though, not for her work with flowers but with unconventional materials and fashion verging on wearable art is Bea Szenfeld, a Swedish-Polish fashion designer whose exhibition I was lucky to visit last summer. That exhibition focused entirely on her creations in paper. There is a majestic quality in the craft of it all that I find very fascinating.



Rebecca Louise Law

Rebecca Louise Law, a British installation artist, is known for her huge installations of suspended preserved flowers. Themes of sustainability, consumerism and the passing of time are ever present in her work. Her amazing flower installations have been my main inspiration for the setting of my project. The ethereal and beautiful creations communicate the same sense of unnerving calm that the story needs. A sense of paradise and harmony, immersion, imagination, life and death.

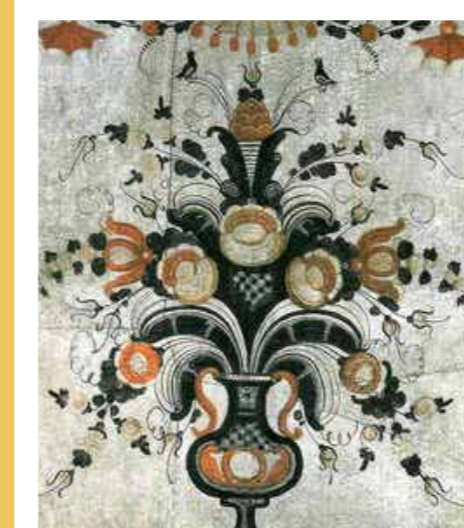


Swedish Folk Costume & Art

Swedish folk costumes are today often used on holidays like Midsummer or special occasions like graduation, though it varies from county to county how common they are. They are specific to certain areas or villages and there are a lot of rules regarding the look and wear depending on who you ask. Originally these costumes come from what the working class wore in early 19th century, but many costumes were created or reconstructed about a hundred years ago when national romanticism was high in popularity. The tradition had another renaissance in the 60s-70s and has continued from there.

Kurbits, a decorative painting style from Dalarna, is defined by its characteristic overflowing flowers. It is most often painted as a vase with flowers but can also be found as ornamentation in the more storytelling scenes of the "dalmåleri" (painting from Dalarna) on furniture and tapestries, made by painters in the 19th century. Truly, kurbits is more an integral part of dalmåleri than a separate style.

Swedish folk costume and the kurbits painting to me represents a connection to where I am from. I love the detail and the use of colours and the memories of past Midsummers and folk music events that I associate with this type of dress and art.



A stylized landscape illustration. In the foreground, a thick, white, winding river flows from the left towards the bottom right. Behind the river, there are several dark green, jagged mountain peaks. The background is a light green, textured sky. In the upper left, a white circle represents the sun or moon. The overall style is minimalist and artistic.

Design Development



Initial Experimentation

My textile experimentation was my main technique in my design process in this project. I played around with paper shapes, did a lot of draping in different materials, lasercutting, gathering, embroidery and so on. When finding the basic shapes for the costumes, the draping was especially beneficial. I would start with an idea of a personality trait or a feeling and experiment my way from there.

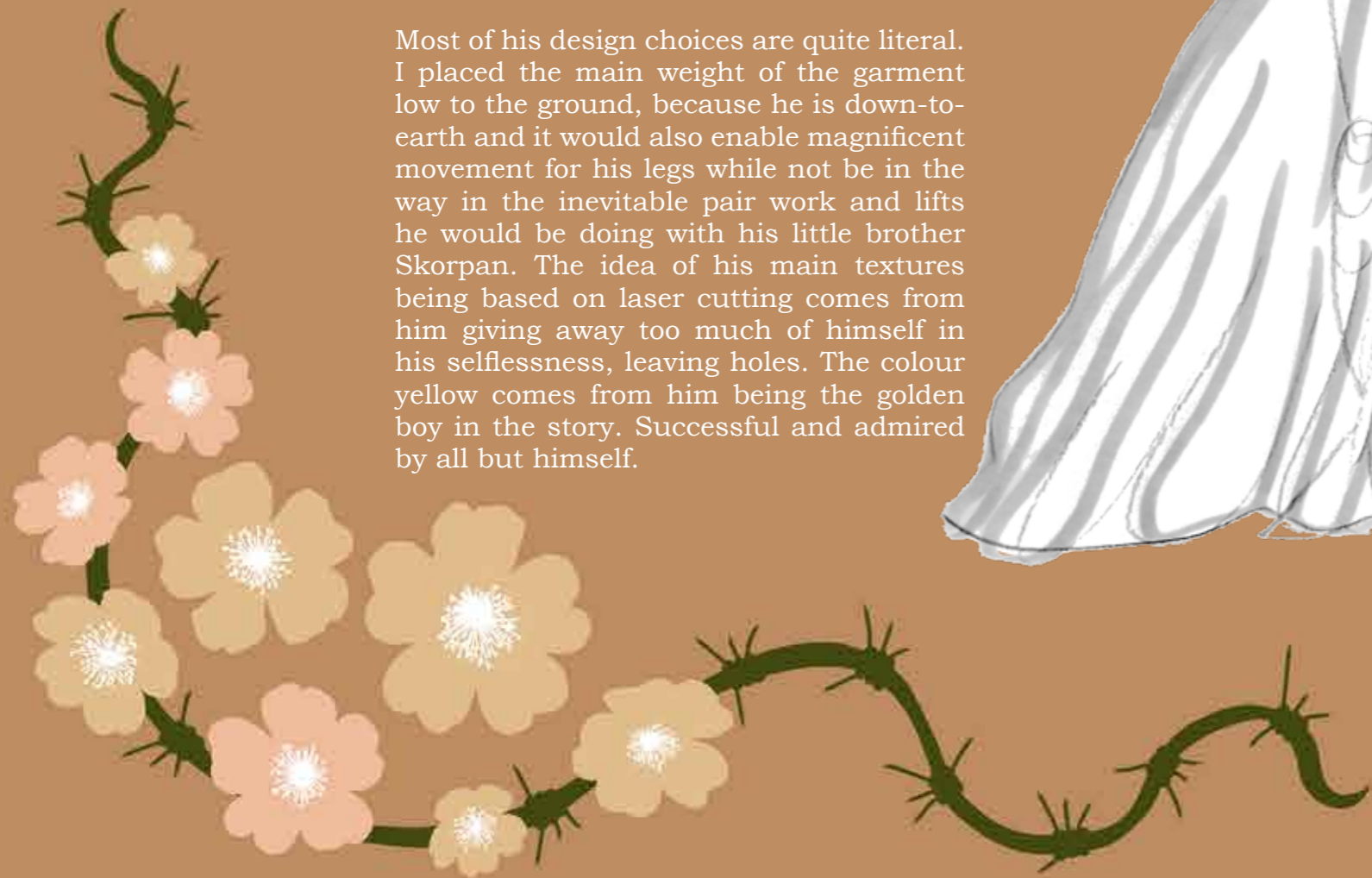
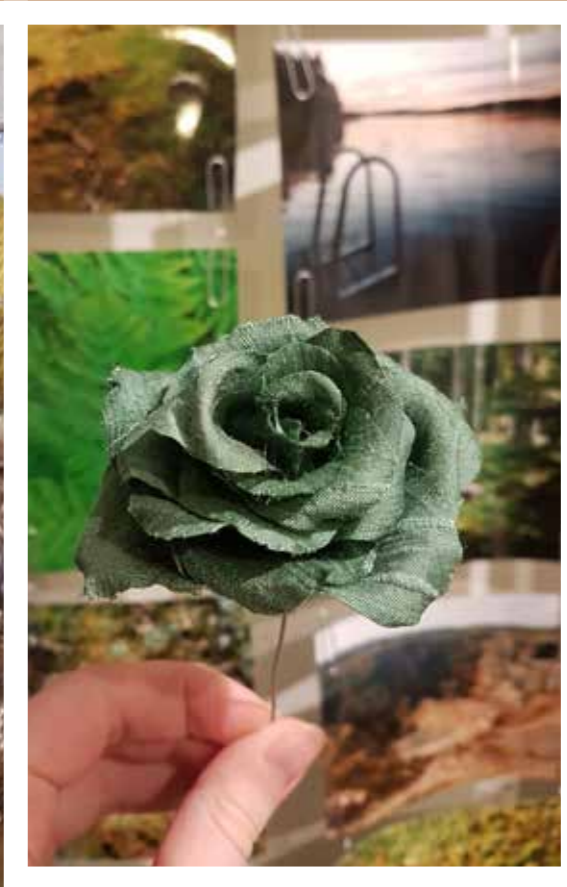
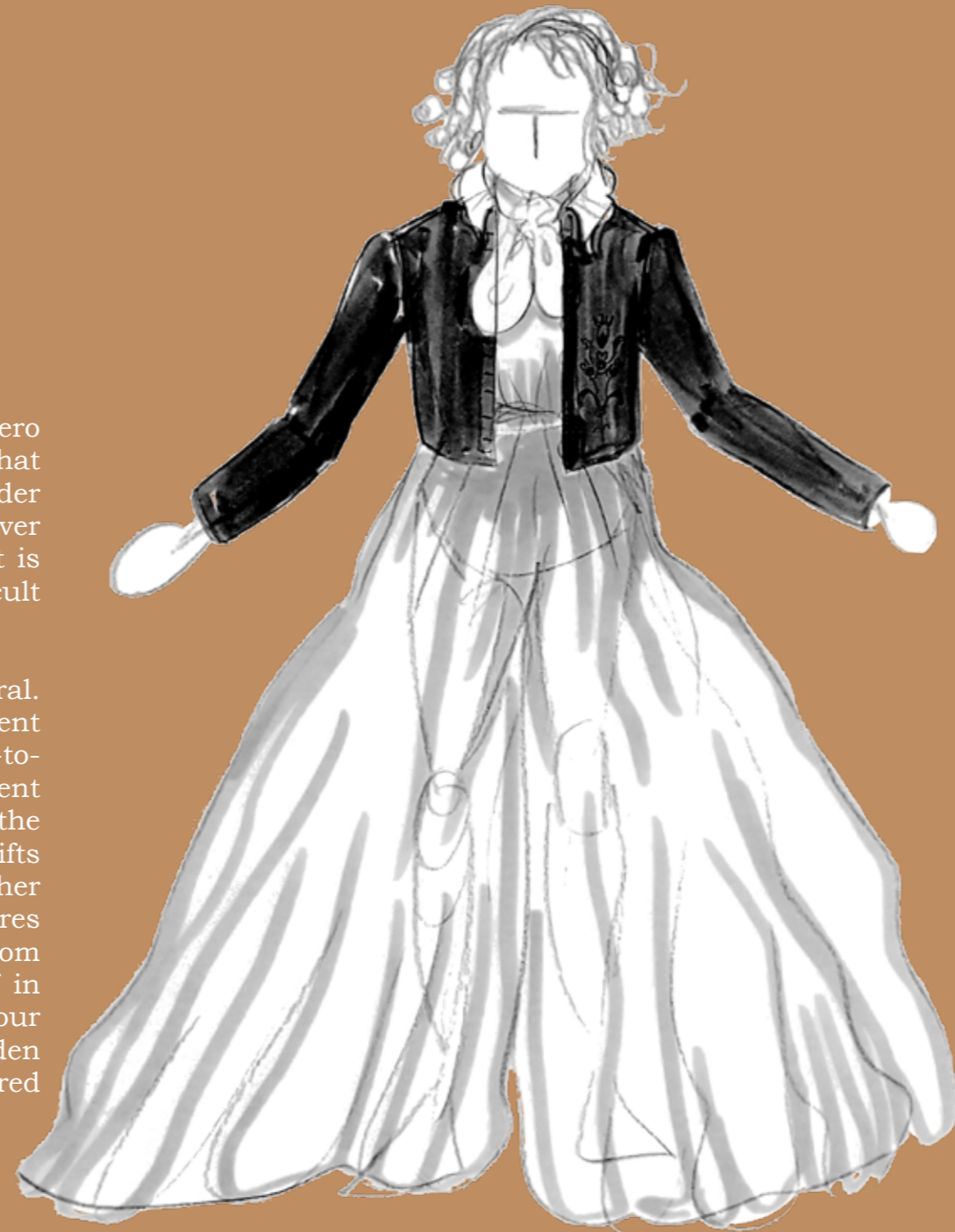




Jonatan

For Jonatan, the selfless perfect hero and protector, I needed something that communicated both beautiful leader and quiet humbleness. He would never dress fancy and over the top, but that is how other people see him. Two difficult contrasts to unify.

Most of his design choices are quite literal. I placed the main weight of the garment low to the ground, because he is down-to-earth and it would also enable magnificent movement for his legs while not be in the way in the inevitable pair work and lifts he would be doing with his little brother Skorpan. The idea of his main textures being based on laser cutting comes from him giving away too much of himself in his selflessness, leaving holes. The colour yellow comes from him being the golden boy in the story. Successful and admired by all but himself.



Skorpan



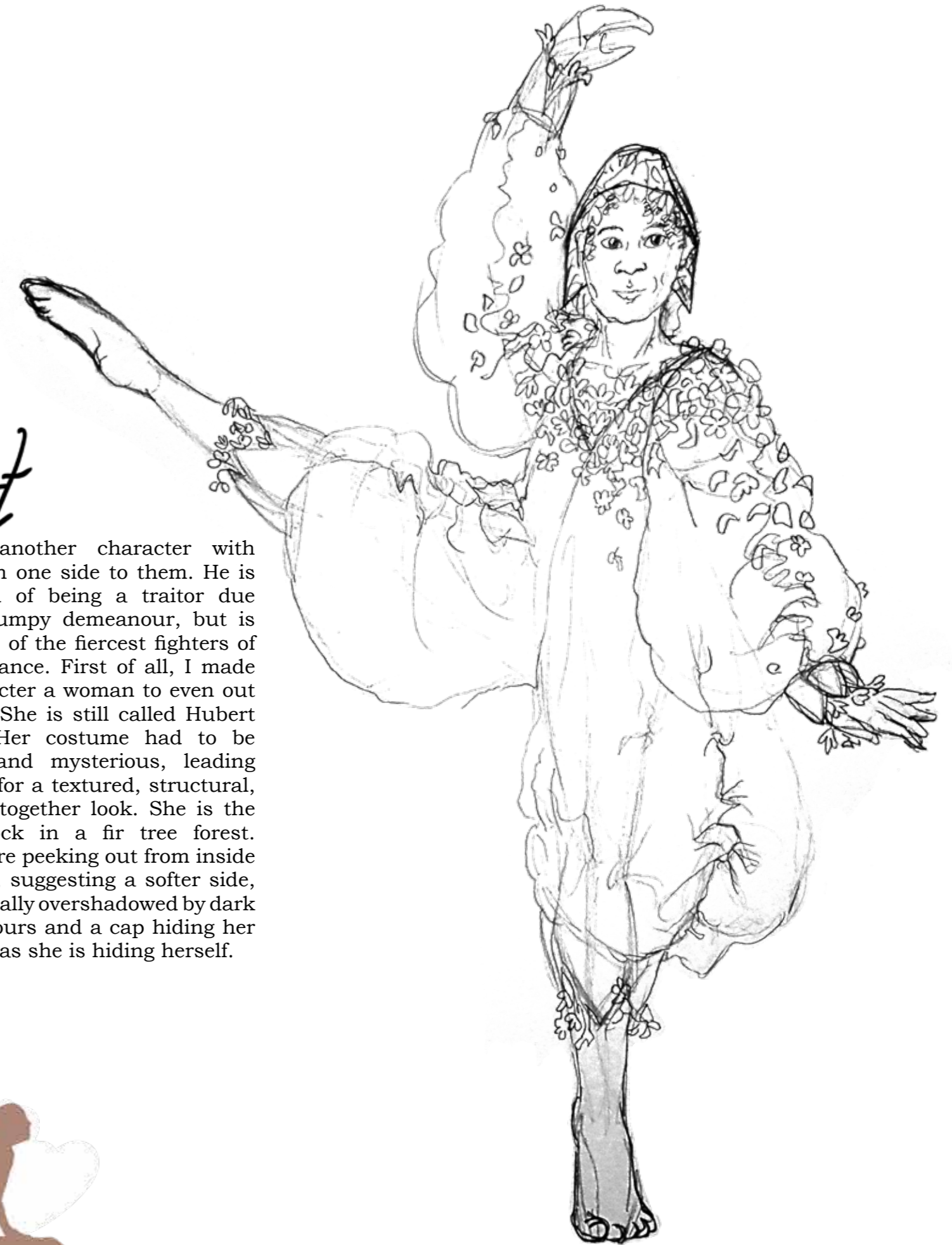
Skorpan, the terrified brave child and main character, needed a costume that could symbolise his leaps between absolute terror and determined bravery. With inspiration in nature, a pod shape became his signature. A shape in which he can hide from evil, but also emerge like a growing flower or butterfly from its chrysalis. It is quilted to keep shape and be almost like armour and is lined with the cut out pieces from Jonatan's costume, because Jonatan gives the most of himself to his little brother. Underneath, Skorpan is wearing traditional folk costume knee length trousers. His colours are more beige and grey, due to his low self-esteem.

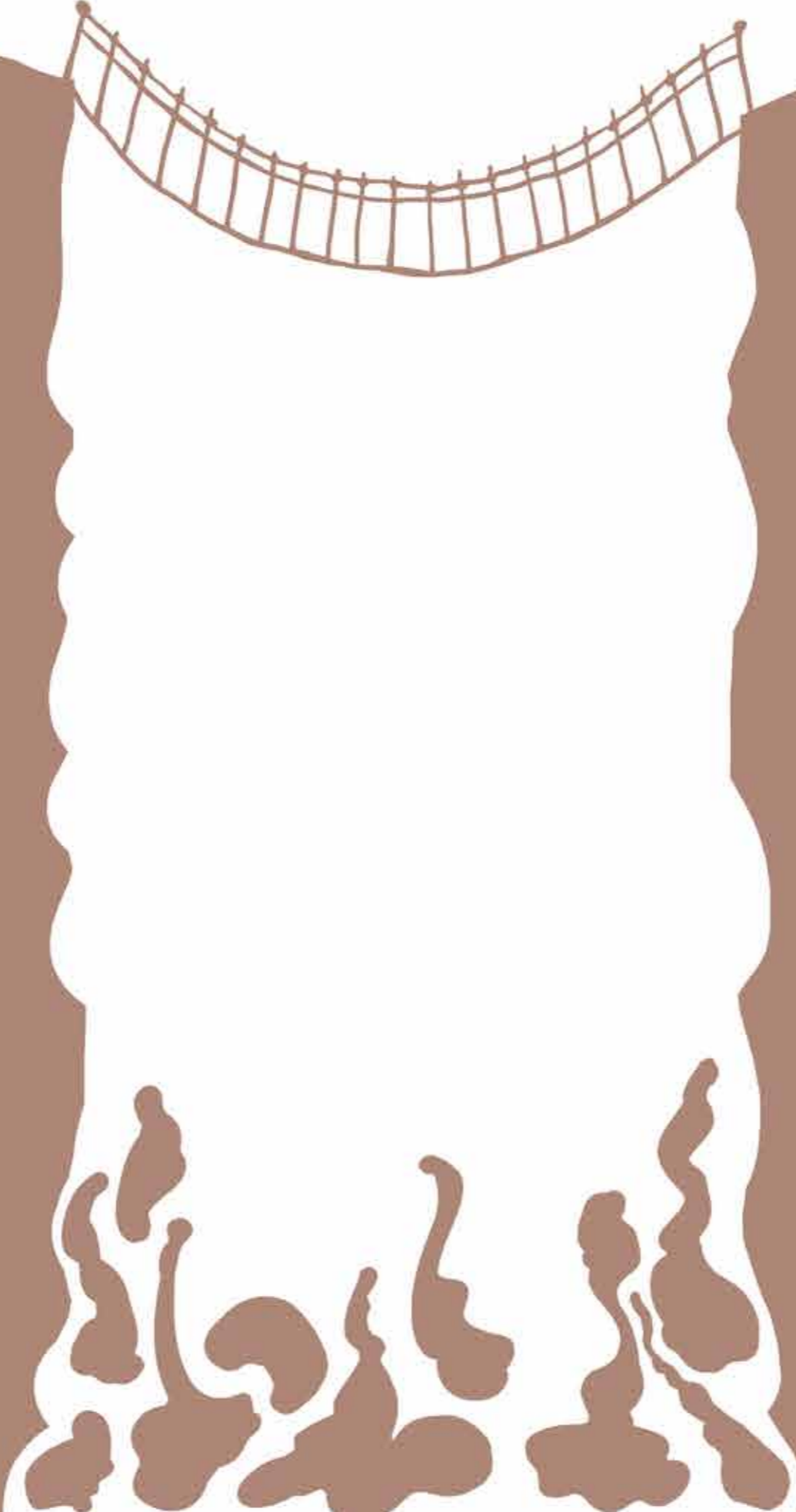
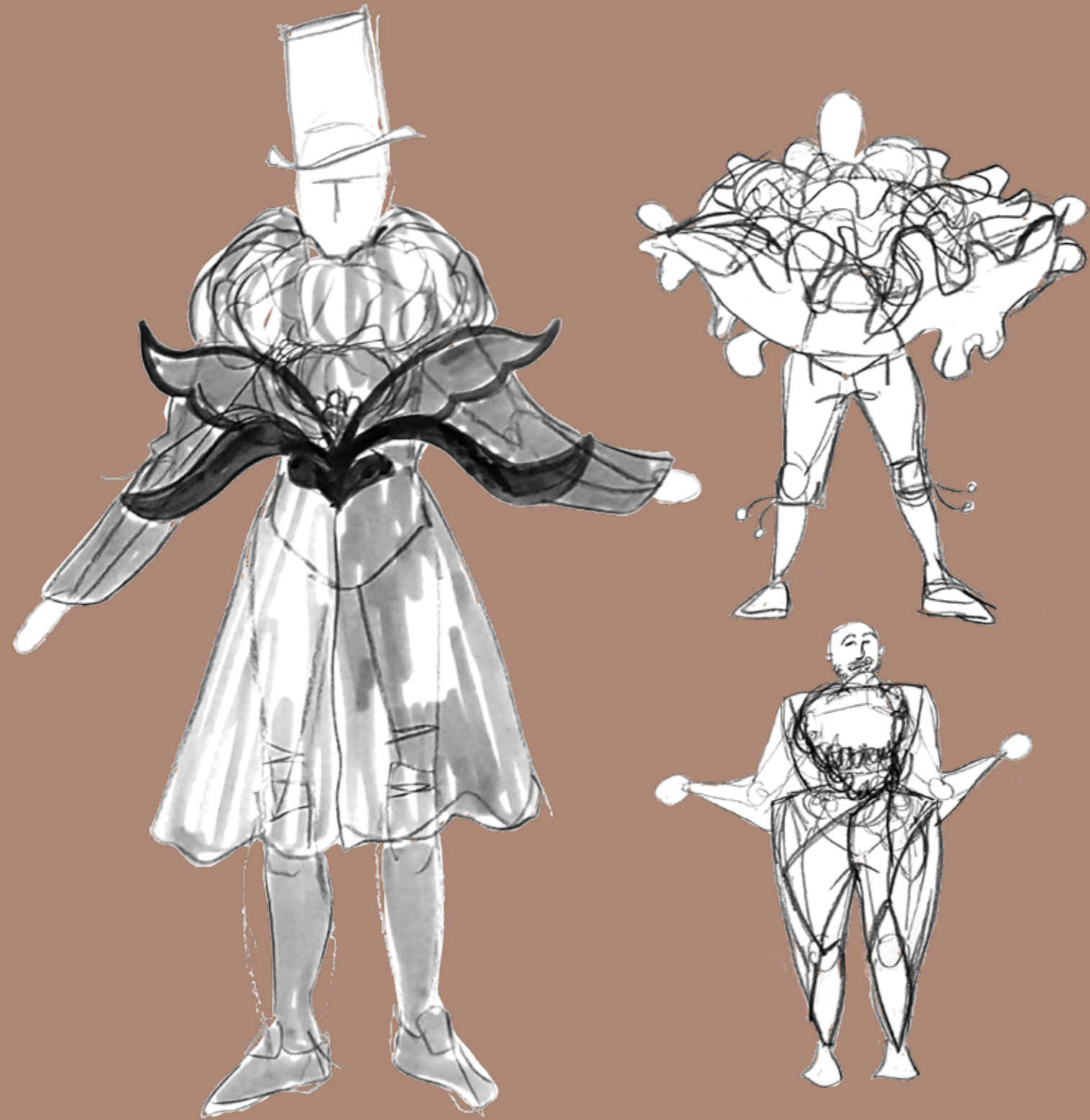




Hubert

Hubert, another character with more than one side to them. He is suspected of being a traitor due to his grumpy demeanour, but is really one of the fiercest fighters of the resistance. First of all, I made the character a woman to even out the cast. She is still called Hubert though. Her costume had to be grumpy and mysterious, leading me to go for a textured, structural, bunched together look. She is the mossy rock in a fir tree forest. Flowers are peeking out from inside garments, suggesting a softer side, but is initially overshadowed by dark green colours and a cap hiding her face, just as she is hiding herself.





Jossi

Jossi, burly innkeeper and greedy traitor. In his self-centered nature and pride in his deceit, my main focus was to puff out his chest in self-absorption. Finally, I settled on a ruffled massive shape like a upturned skirt, really accentuating his upper body. But underneath is hidden his traitor's mark, and when the time is right, that can be revealed by turning the skirt down. It would be created in a combination of tulle and Tyvek.





Veder & Kader

The guards Veder and Kader wear their uniform. They are evil but daft and enjoy elevating themselves by pushing other people down. Their uniform is inspired by another story by Astrid Lindgren where the main villain has a heart of literal stone and likes to rip other people's hearts out with his hook. Here, the guards' hearts appear to have been ripped out, making them evil and soulless and loyal followers of the tyrant Tengil. I chose not to create a normal crest, as I am too influenced by the iconic original in the film.

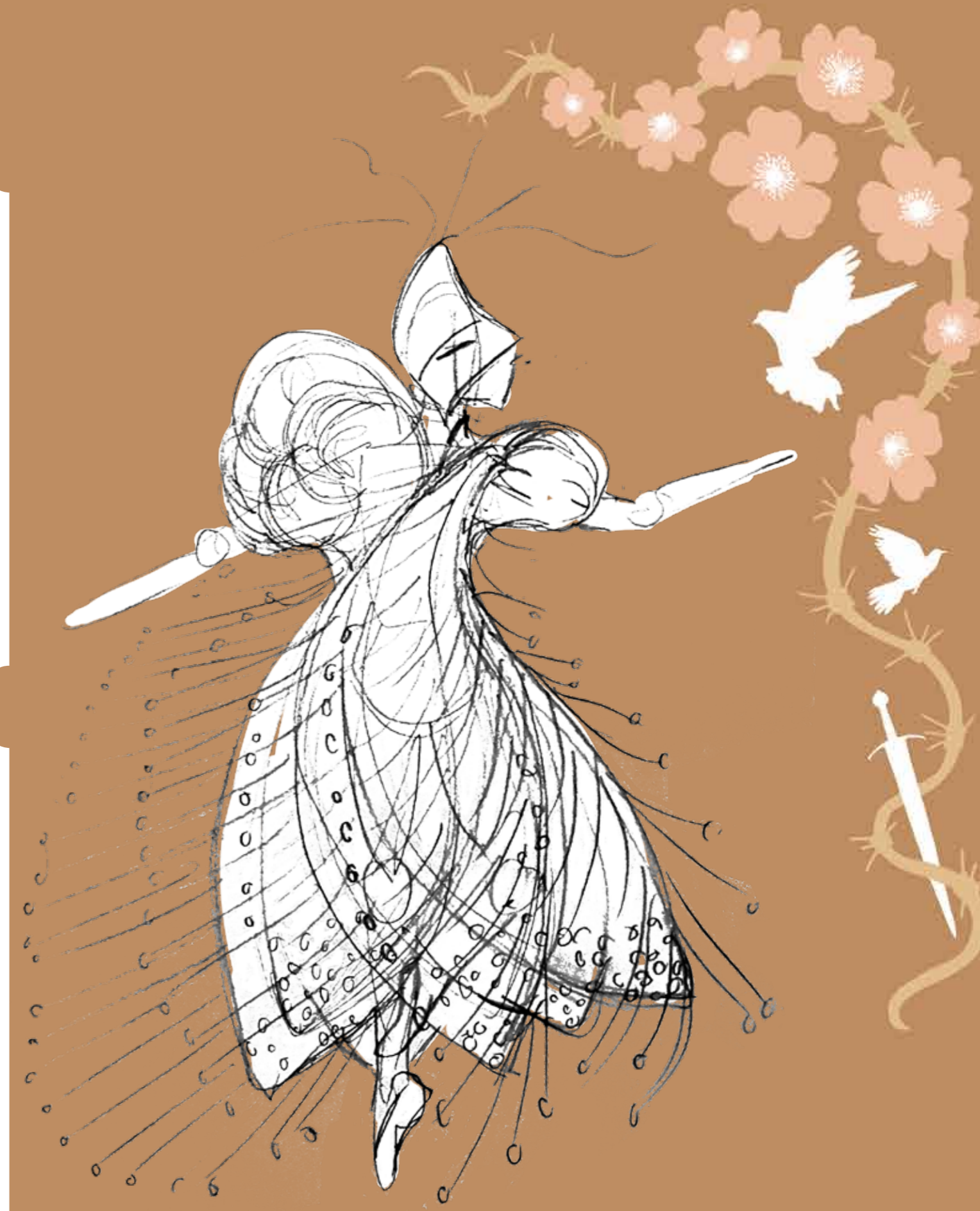
The colour black and red comes from the original book and serves to make them stand out starkly against everyone else and the setting as well. They do not belong there. The garment shape is inspired by the playing-card-guards in the animated *Alice in Wonderland*, as I feel they have a similar purpose and feel to them and also are 2-dimensional.





Sofia

Sofia, also known as the Dove Queen and leader of the resistance. When she is first seen in the story, she is surrounded by a cloud of doves, almost obscuring her. That image is how I imagine her. A force of graceful nature. She is wearing a micro modal jersey dress draped in pod shapes and is also wearing a cap like Hubert, not to hide, but as a crown. Her colours are light as her doves and the cut outs appear here again to symbolise her caring nature.



Tengil



Tengil is the cruel tyrant who is ruling the Thorn Rose Valley by fear and he commands the beastly dragon Katla with his trumpet. He does not say a single word in the whole book, which made me explore different masks and helmets covering his face at an early stage. A faceless enemy is more terrifying.

His enormous cape makes him take up a disproportionate amount of space, giving him all the power of the room. Some characters I found inspiration in is Jabba de Hutt from Start Wars (the snail-ness), Sauron in Lord of the Rings (the presence) and King George in Hamilton (the way he is hiding under his cape using minimal movement only to suddenly reveal his costume underneath).

Tengil's main scene is him making an appearance in the main square and point to the ones he condemns to work for life in his mines. His pointing finger is a death sentence, which made the way that gloved hand appears from this enormous cape-monster especially important to consider. The cape is supported by a crinoline structure and is stuffed with wadding.

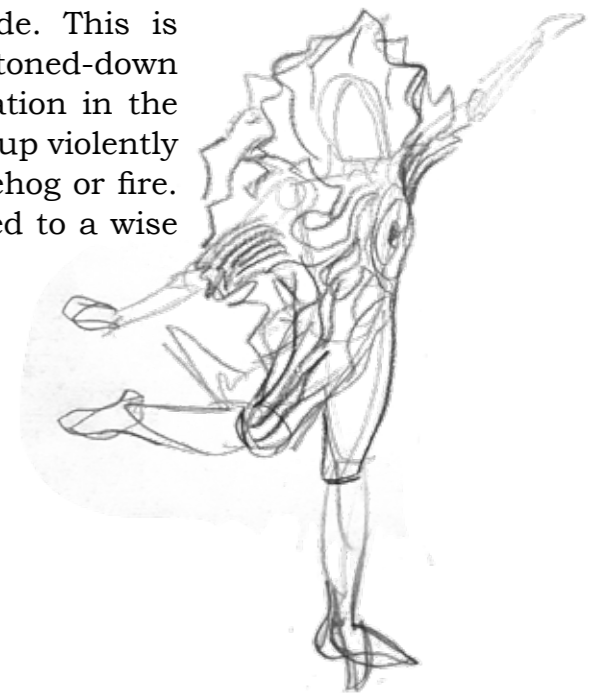




Mattias



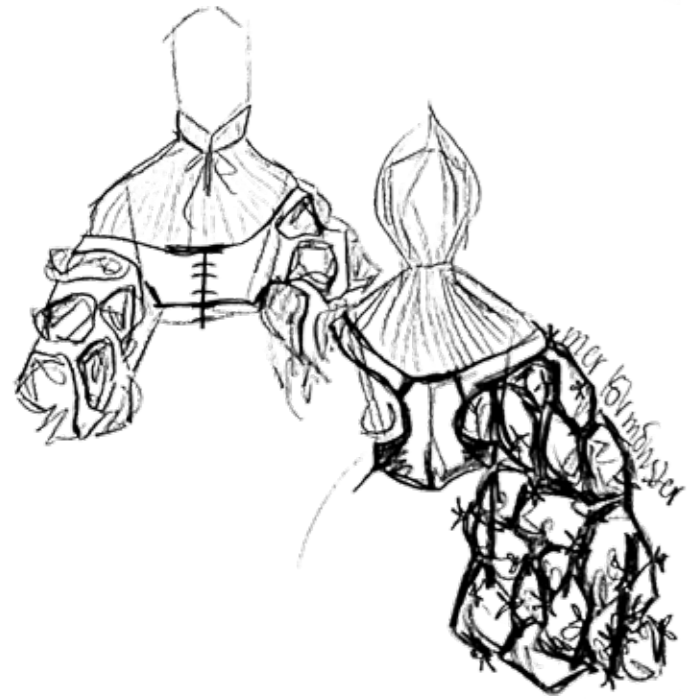
The “grandpa” who over and over again bravely risks his life protecting the Lionheart brothers, using his snarky attitude. He has lived in poor conditions in Thorn Rose Valley under Tengil’s rule for some time and it shows in his appearance. Pieces are falling off and his clothes are worn but well mended and cared for. Towards the guards he plays the part of merely a bitter old man, but more or less hides his rebellious side. This is illustrated with a quite toned-down wrinkly fabric manipulation in the front which then spikes up violently in the back like a hedgehog or fire. He can also be compared to a wise old oak tree.

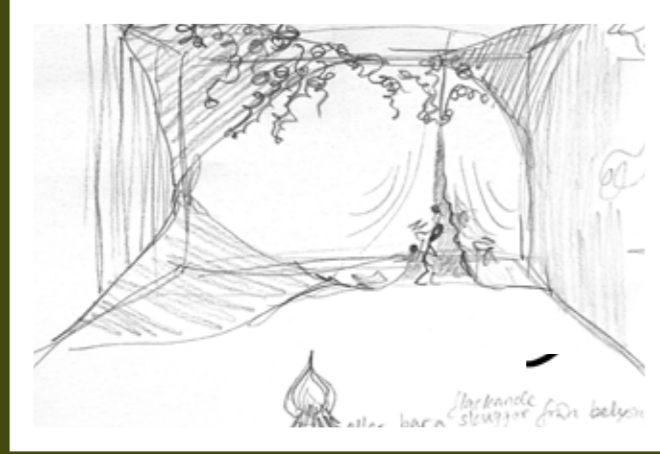




Orvar

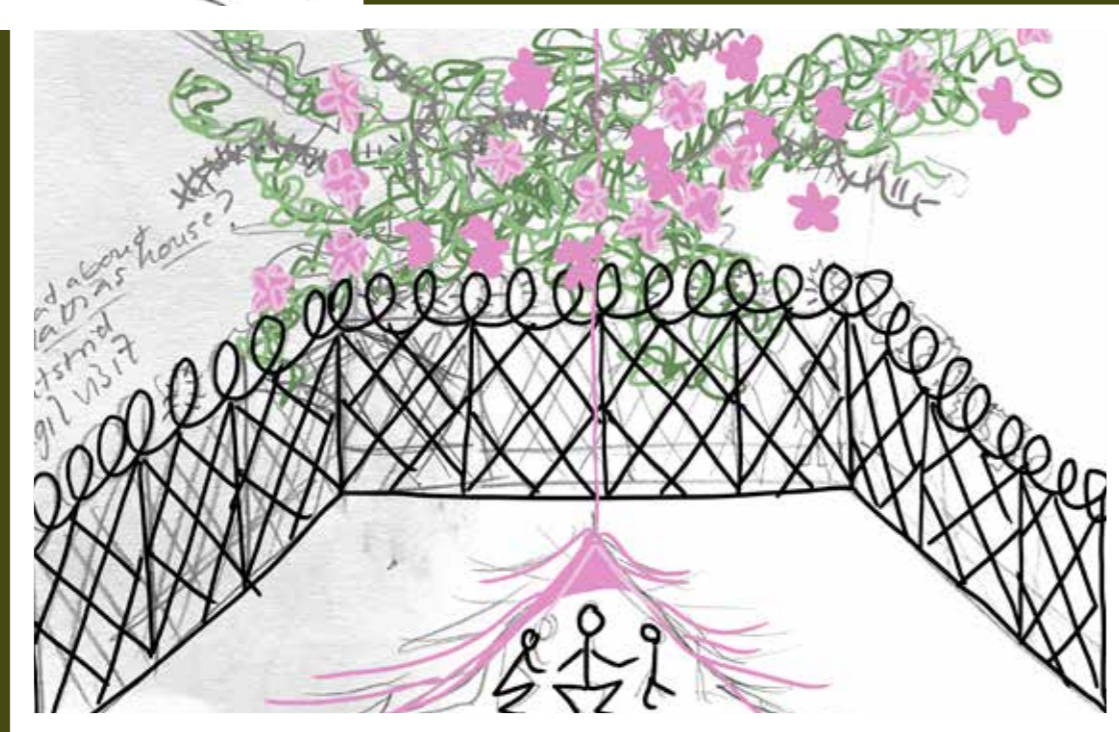
The leader of the resistance in the Thorn Rose Valley, who has been captured and needs rescuing before his execution. A passionate hot-head, originally a man, but I have chosen to change this character into a woman to even out the cast. Her costume is hanging off her in rags and is all a kind of net holding her in. The flowers that used to peek out in her clothing has died and dried while she has been imprisoned in the dark cave. Her movement is made sluggish by the weight of the garment.





Set Design

The set design is stylised and minimal to leave a lot of floor space for the dancers. The flowers after which the two valleys are named hangs in a flower installation from the ceiling. Fabric walls and floor works as cave openings and underground tunnels. The valley under tyranny rule, which in the book is trapped within a wall, now has a barbed wire fence instead, the barbed wire also doubling as the thorns of the thornroses.

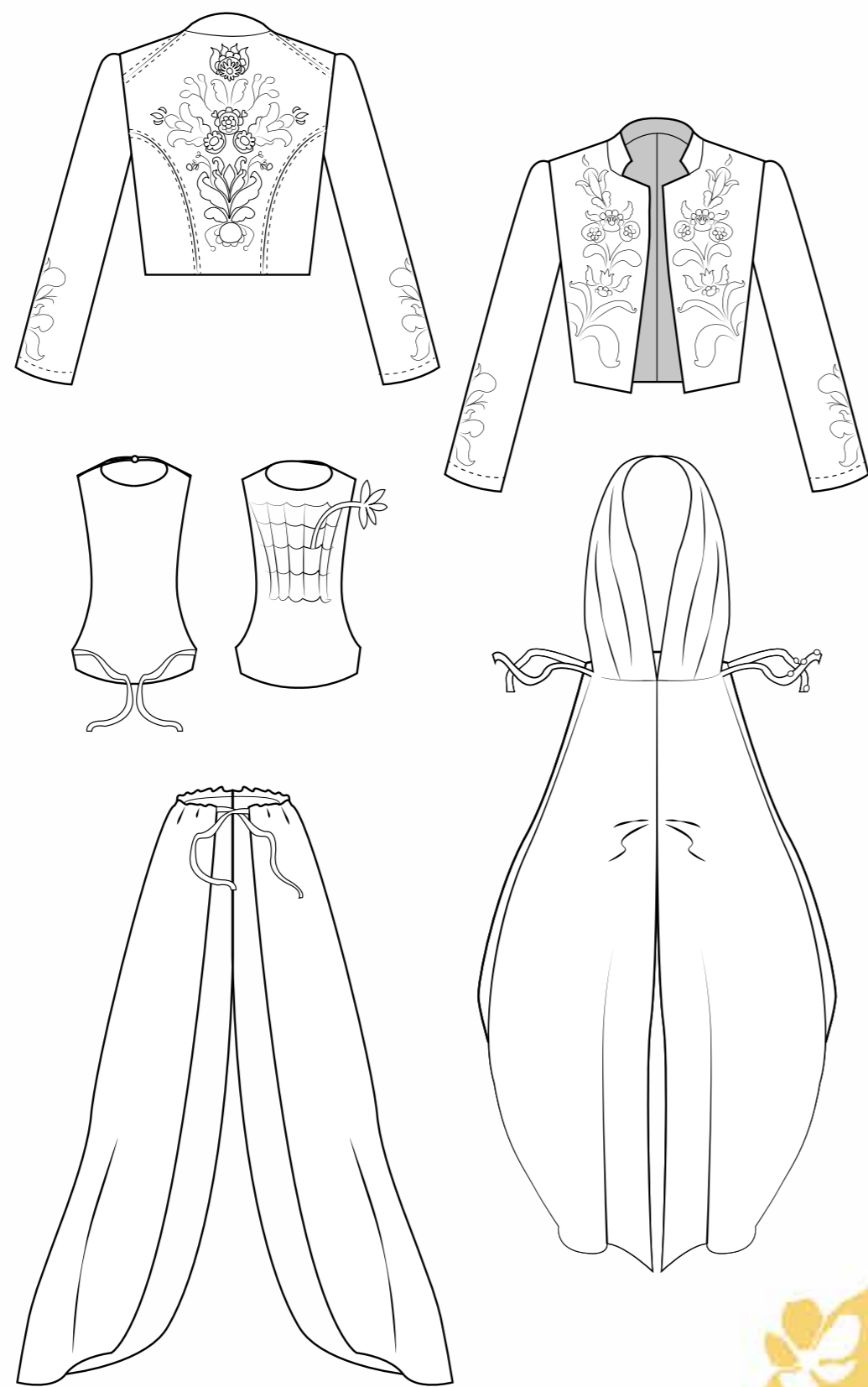




Final Designs



1. Lasercut Bamboo Silk.
 2. Dupion Silk flowers.
 3. Embroidered Dress Net + Boiled Wool + Dupion Silk.



Jonatan

"Nog var du en hjälte så god som någon."

A beautiful and selfless youth, this kind-hearted saviour is a brave and humble pacifist, and is idealised by his little brother. His portrayal is coloured by that. A proper fairytale hero who has grown up too fast and carries a heavy burden on his young shoulders.

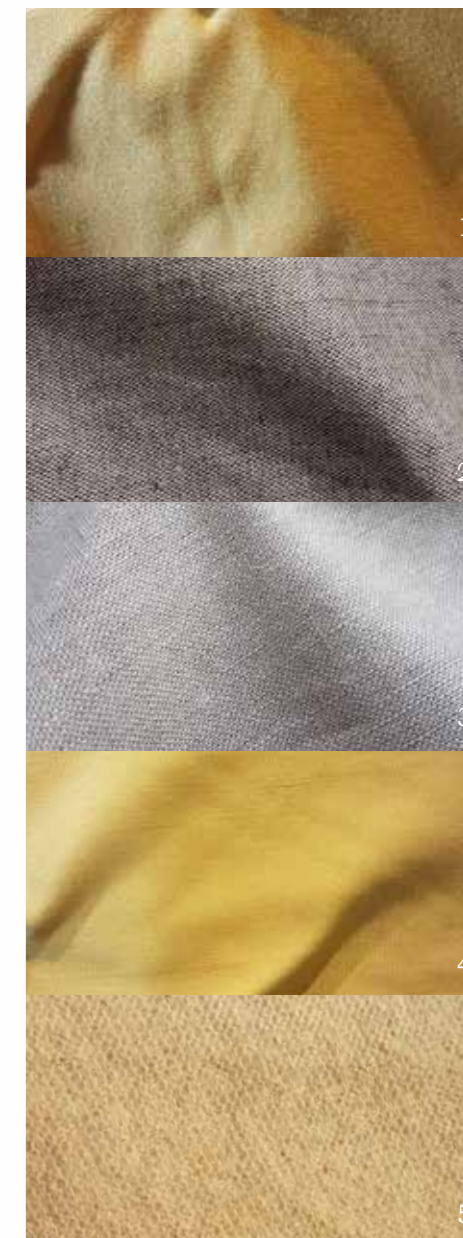
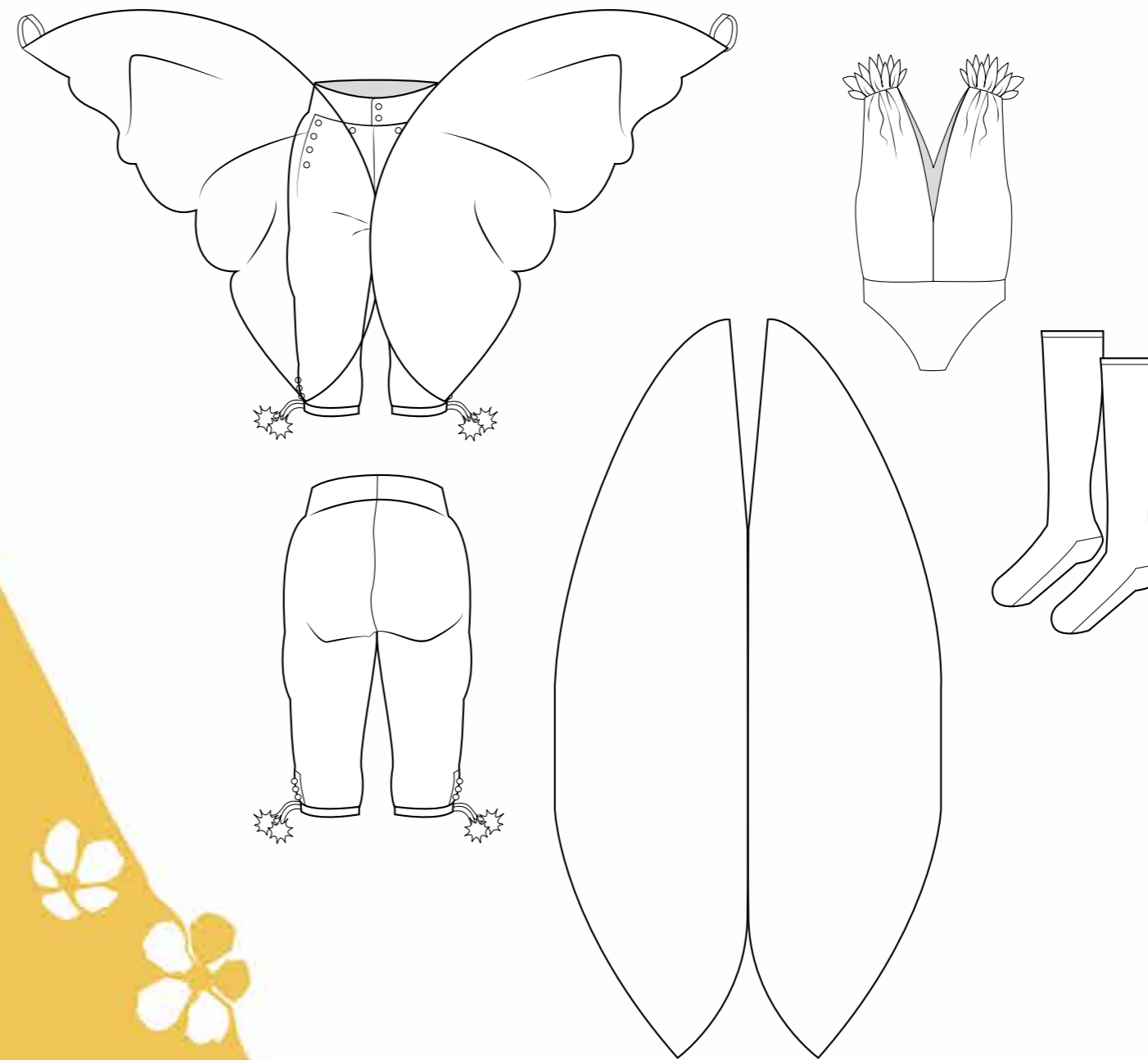




Skorpan

"Vet du om att jag ska dö? sa jag och grät."

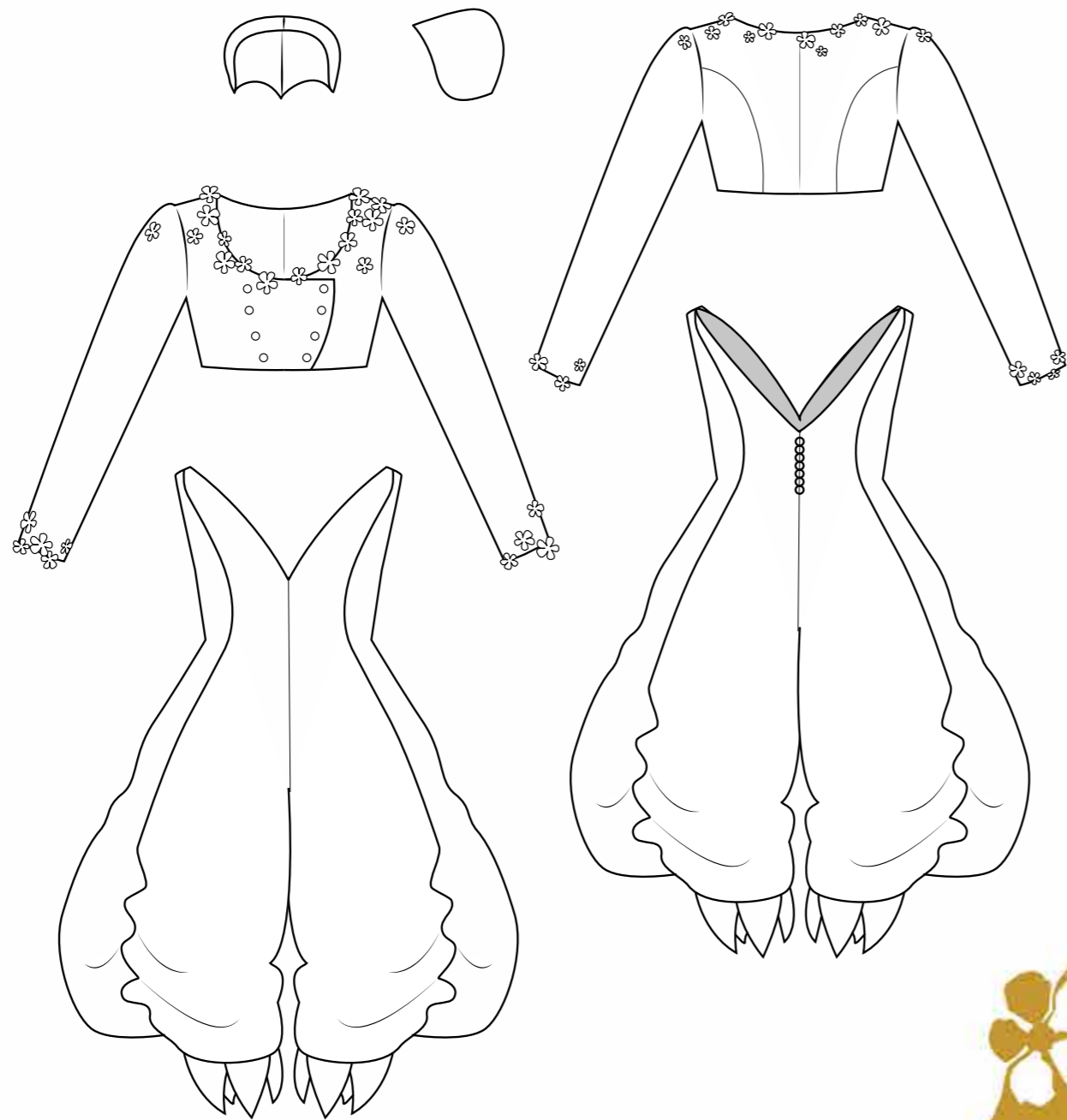
Karl Lionheart, also called Skorpan (Rusk), is Jonatan's little brother who has spent almost all his life on a sick bed. In the afterlife he is then amazed by everything he finally gets to do. He has terrible self-esteem and tells himself how ugly, cowardly and stupid he is compared to everyone else, while doing one brave thing after the other. He has an immense fear of abandonment which goes before everything else.



1. Micromodal Single Jersey
 2. Organic Cotton Crossweave
 3. Linen-Cotton Mix
- All three part of quilt, see technique on page 24.
4. Bamboo Silk
 5. Boiled Wool + Dress Net



1. Wool
2. Micromodal Single Jersey
3. Organic Cotton Crossweave
4. Wool (laser-cut into flowers)



Hubert

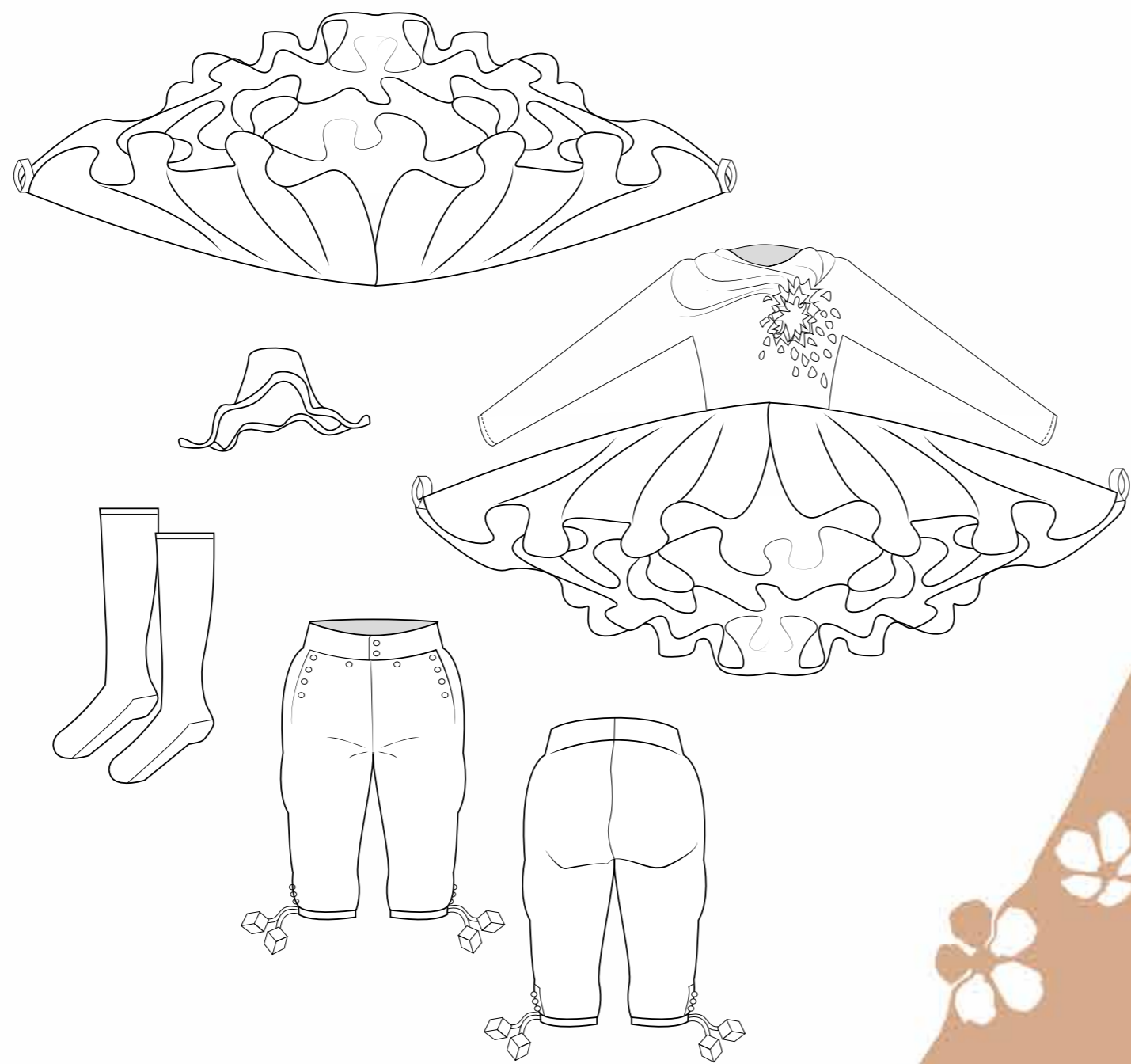
"Jag hade lagt märke till honom för att han hela tiden satt och såg vresig ut och inte sjöng alls."

Hubert is a grumpy loner and the best archer in Cherry Valley. Her jealousy towards Sofia's leadership affects her short temper, though she is a caring person, just uncomfortable showing it initially.





1. Organza
2. Bamboo Silk
3. Tyvek
4. Wool
5. Cotton Twill, Felt, Polyester Satin



Jossi

“Jossi, han som var så snäll och glad och rödblommig och som hade gett mig kakor och tröstat mig när jag var ledsen - han var förrädaren”

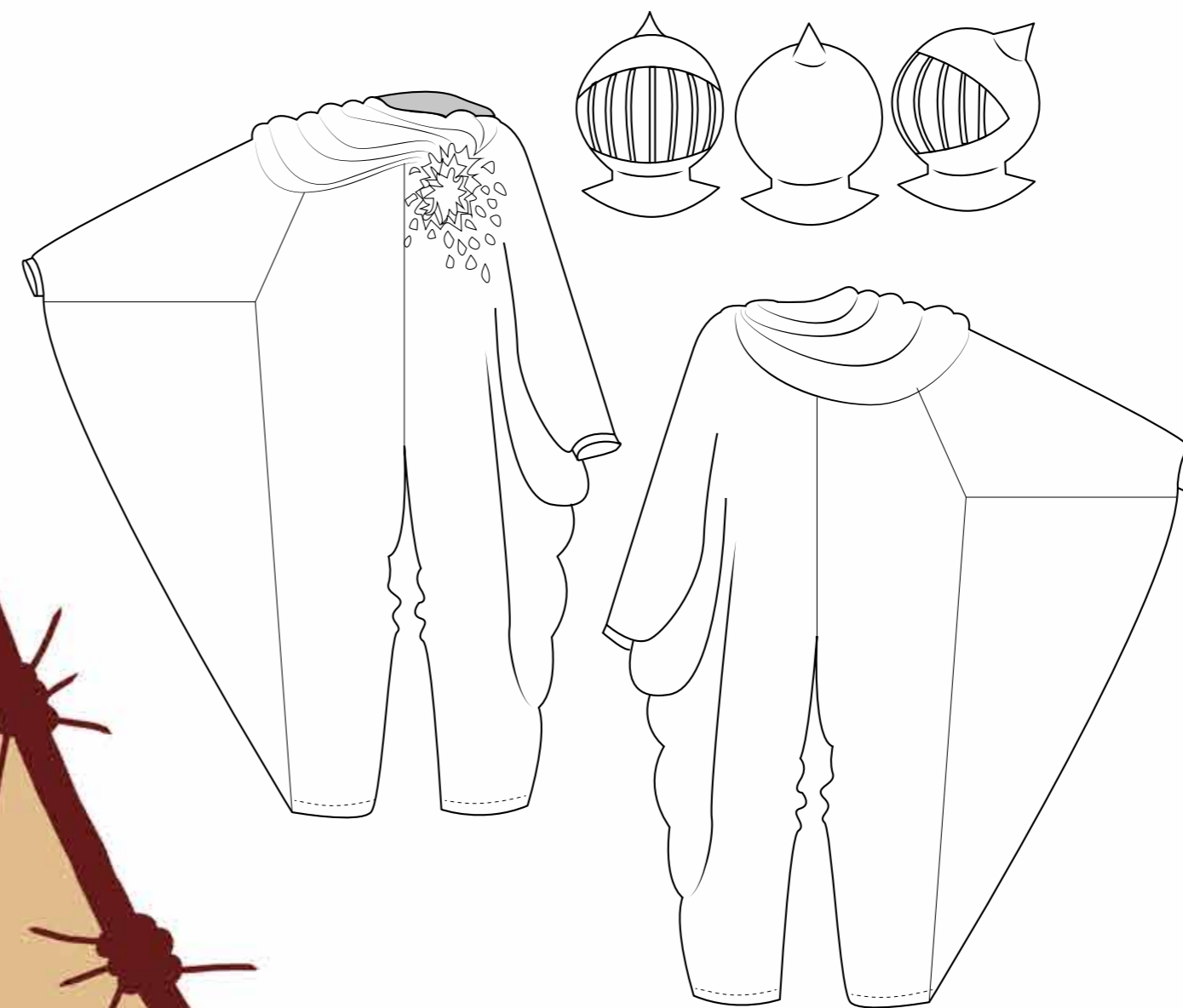
Jossi is the burly innkeeper in Cherry Valley who likes to be the center of attention. He breaks his friends trust by betraying them to Tengil, revealing his greedy, selfish and false nature.



Veder & Kader

*"Så särdeles sluga är di inte,
di där Tengilsmännen' sa Mattias
'Fast di tror det själva."*

Veder and Kader are two of Tengil's entitled, evil soldiers. They enjoy oppressing other people and has a real dangerous presence, though are quite dumb and lazy as well and is repeatedly tricked by the resistance.



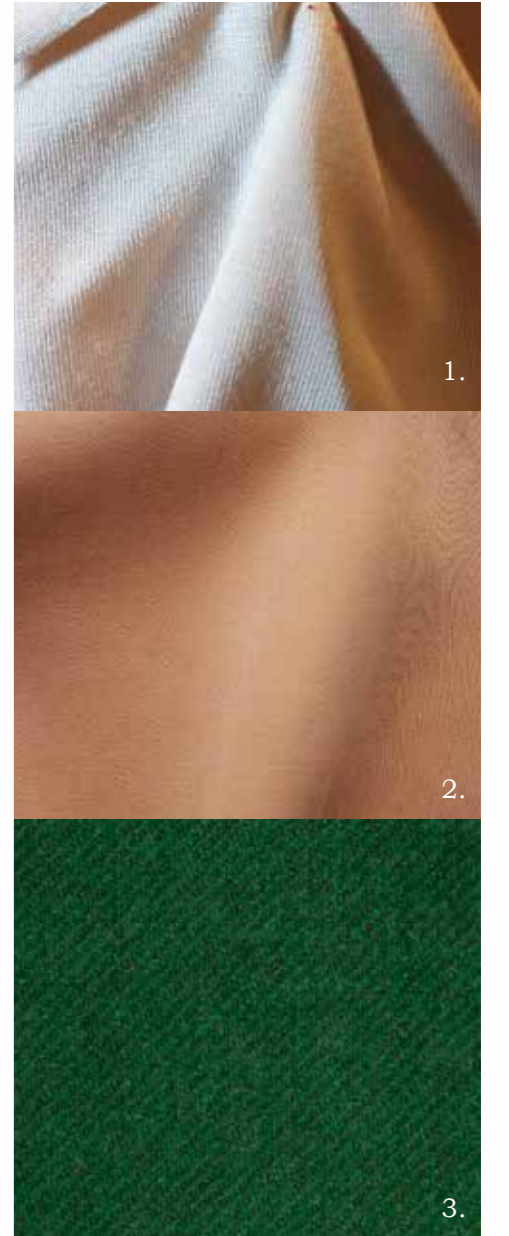
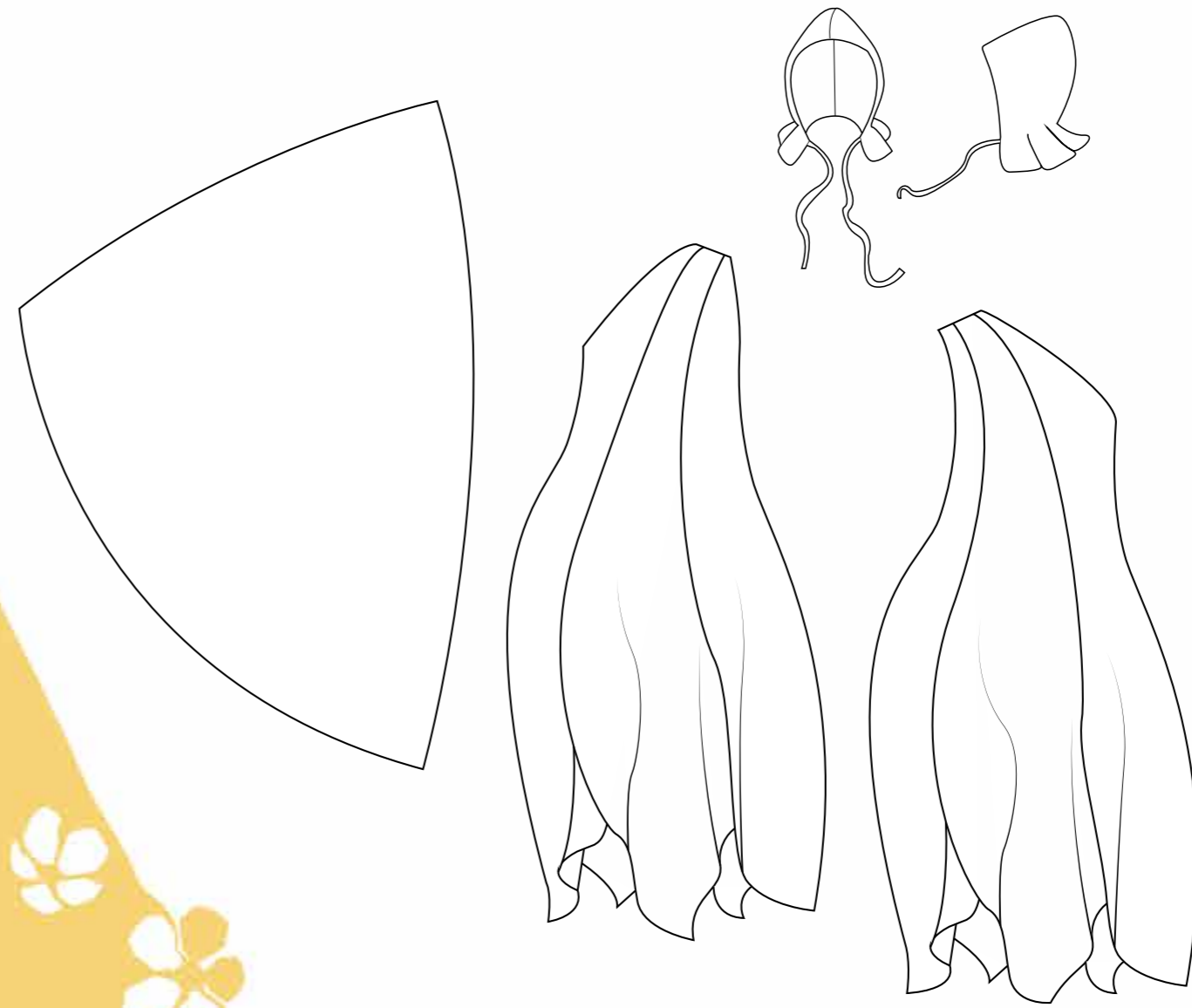
1. Cotton Twill, Felt, Polyester Satin



Sofia

*'För att hon är stark och kan
sânt,' sa Jonatan. 'Och för att hon
inte är rädd ett enda dugg.'*

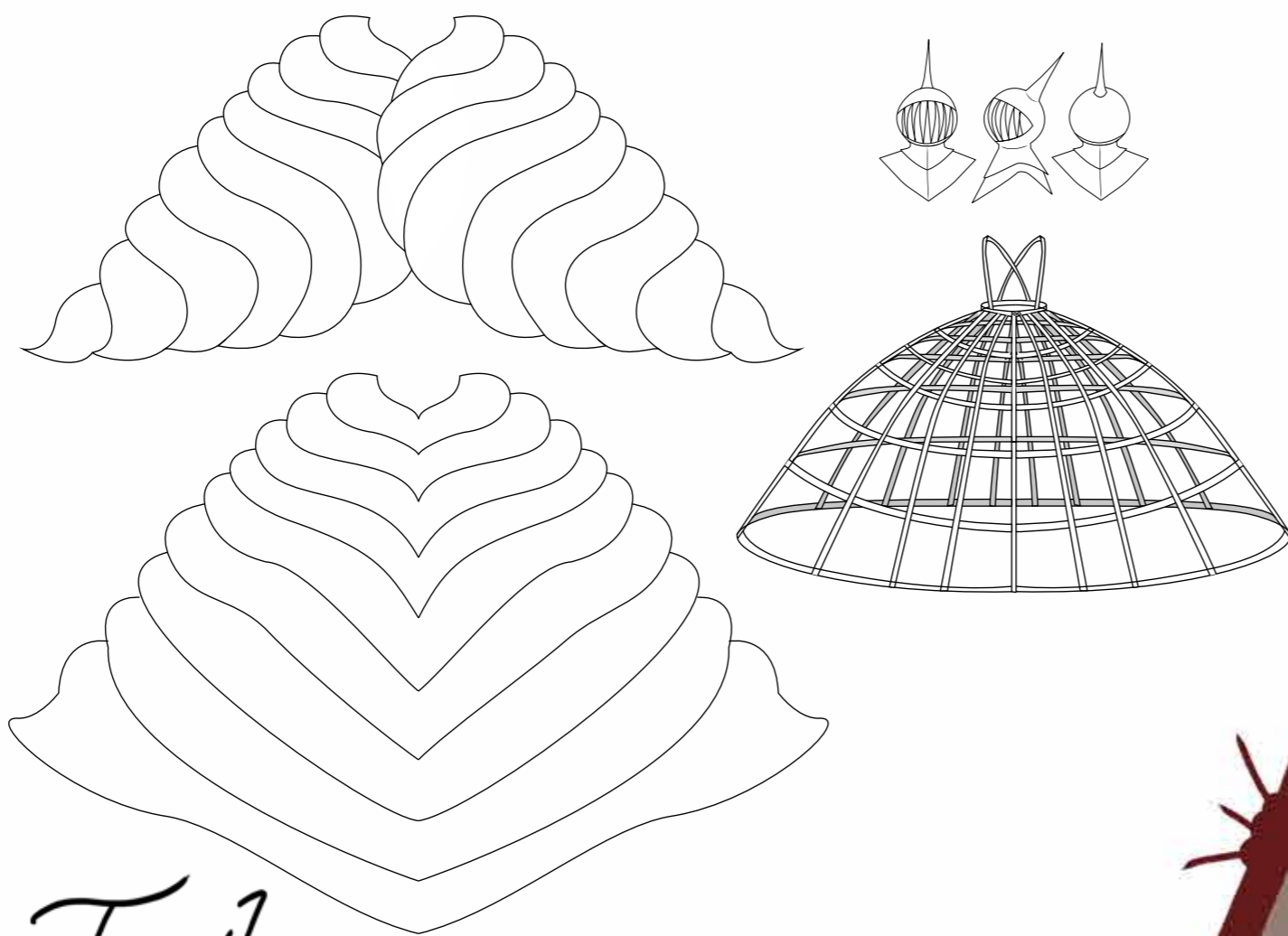
Sofia, the "Dove Queen"'s doves are the only ones who can carry messages between the two valleys. She is neither old nor young and is the leader of the resistance. She is serious, strong, caring and do not talk unless needed. Her fellow people look up to her unassuming authority with reverence.



- 1. Micromodal Single Jersey
- 2. Bamboo Silk (technique seen on page 20)
- 3. Wool (embroidered like Jonatan's jacket)



1. Micromodal Single Jersey
2. Dupion Silk
Technique seen on page 35.



Tengil

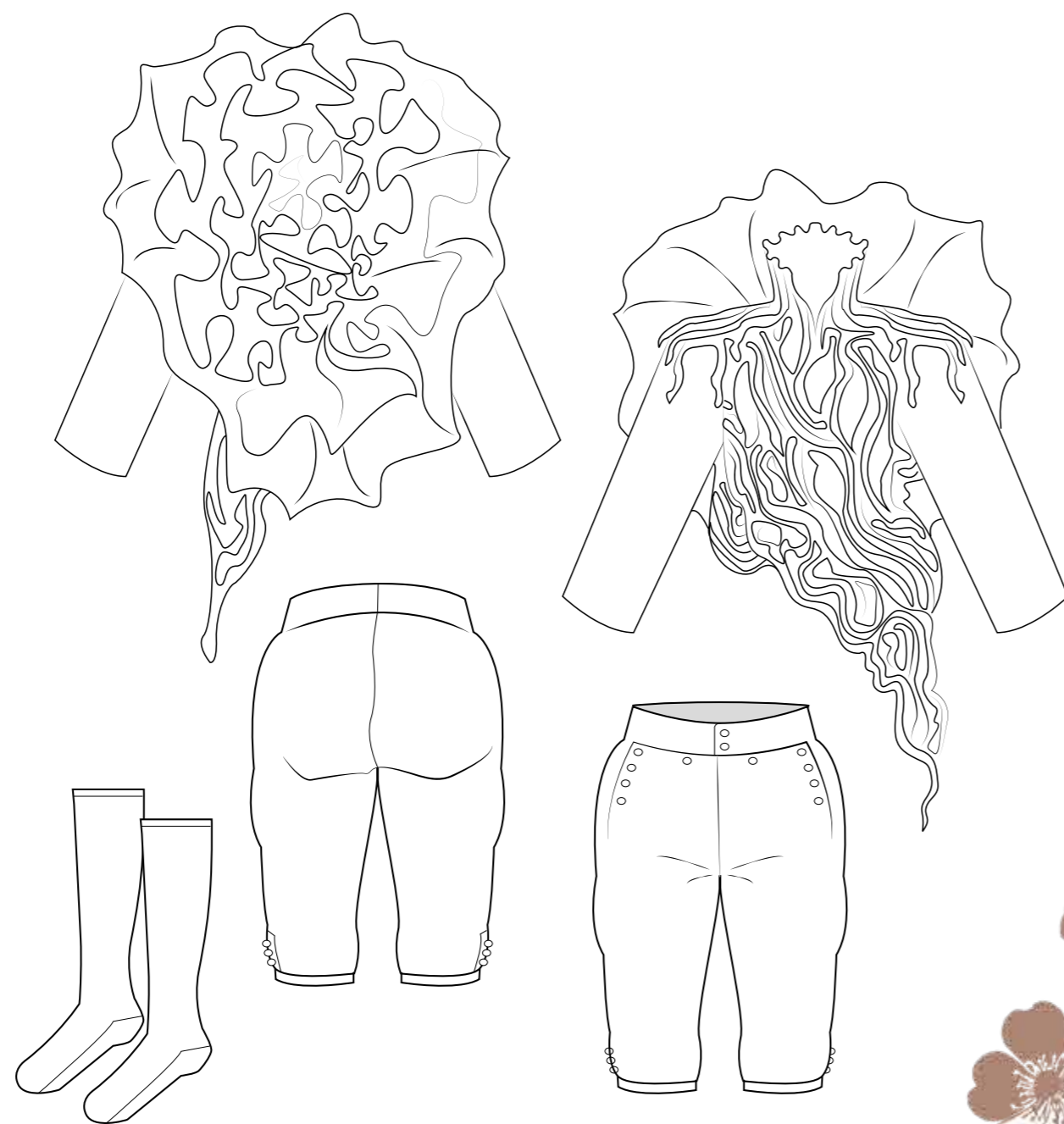
"All makt åt Tengil, vår befriare!"

Tengil is the tyrant who has taken over the Thorn Rose valley with his army and the dragon Katla who he controls by the fear she has in the sound of his trumpet. He is tall and imposing, cruel and blood thirsty through and through, imprisoning and killing people who speak against him. He does not say a single word, and does not seem to see people beneath him but lets his soldiers speak for him, proclaiming threats disguised as his mercy as their 'saviour'.





1. Organic Cotton Dunweave
 2. & 3 Organic Cotton Crossweave
 4. Dupion Silk
 All tightly gathered and draped, see
 technique on page 36.



Mattias

"Dödsstraffa mig hit och dödsstraffa mig dit!"

Mattias is a poor old man who lives in Thorn Rose valley. When Skorpan arrives to his home, he pretends to be his grandpa to protect him. He is loud-mouthed, kind and brave and puts himself in danger to save others. He speaks back when Tengil's soldiers try to put him in his place and irritates them to no end.



Orvar

“Frihetens storm ska komma, och den ska knäcka förtryckarna som när träd knäcks och faller. Den ska gå fram med ett dån och sopa bort all vår trældom och äntligen göra oss fria igen!”

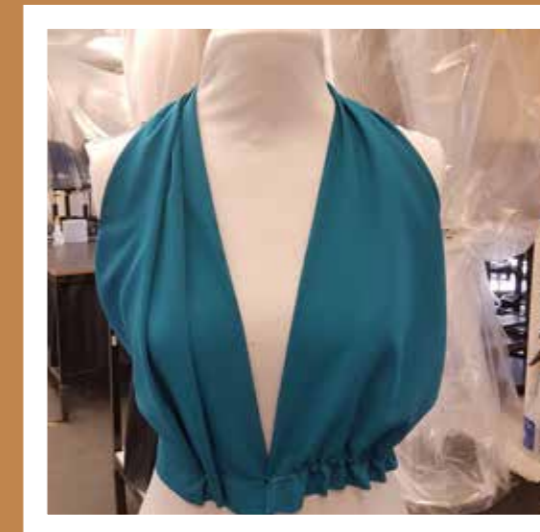
Orvar is the leader of the violent rebellion, but has been captured by Tengil and put in Katla’s cave. She almost loses her life but the brothers Lionheart rescues her in time. Though drained in energy by her captivity the passionate fire burning inside her drives her on in her fight for freedom.



1. Wool Twill and Organza.
The purple Satin would instead be the number 2.
2. Bamboo Silk
3. Dupion Silk



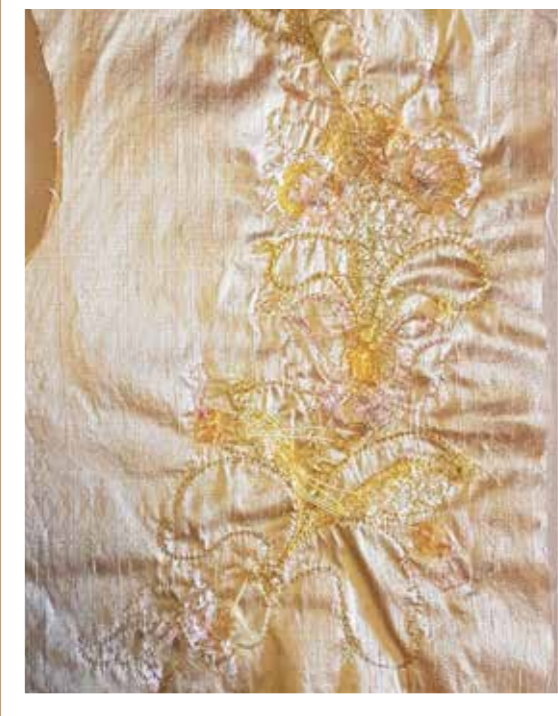
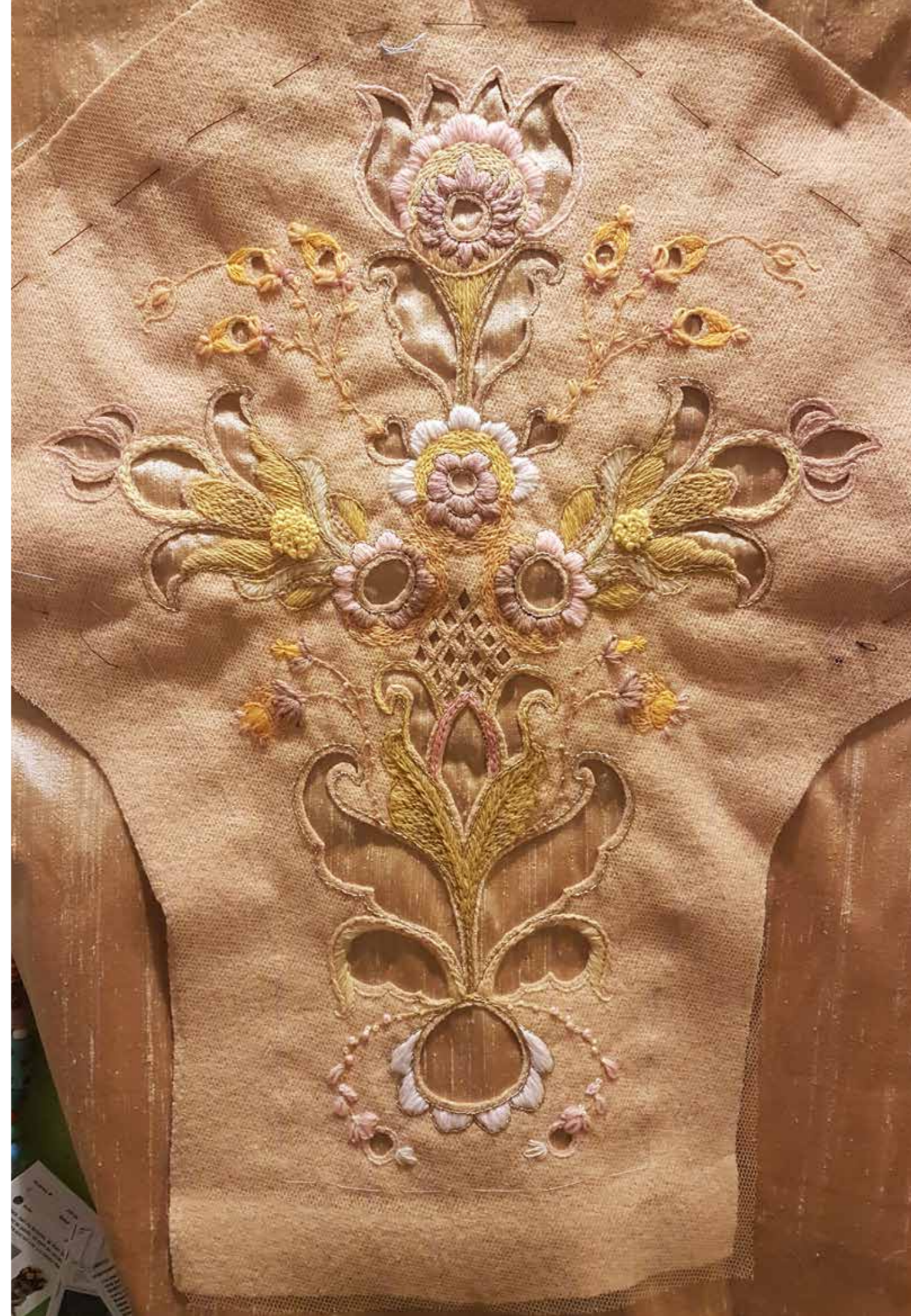
Making & photos of costume



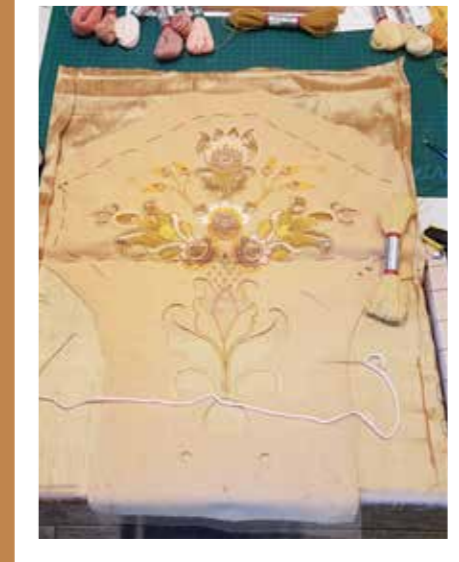
The construction of the jumpsuit was quite simple and straightforward, but with the jacket I needed a few tries before getting the fit right and the seams where I wanted them. Seen in the pictures are toile 2 out of 3.

The most complicated thing with the jumpsuit was to figure out how to fasten the "overskirt" to the "underskirt" invisibly.





I am especially proud of the extensive embroidery on the jacket. The pieces were first cut out, then lasercut and then embroidered. It took me approximately 130h to complete!



The layers are first dupion silk, which is showing through the lasercut holes, then boiled wool and dress net, then embroidery. I also interlined it with heavy interfacing and domette before stitching it together.





The lasercut flowers turned out to be too fragile, and I had to reinforce them all one by one by hand for them to hold wearing and working with. The reinforcement are bemis and a beige merish, and looks invisible even quite close.

The jacket pieces ended up very thick, and I stitched most of it by hand, as it almost did not make it into the machine and it needed to get right on the first try.

I ended up using buttons to fasten the jumpsuit around my waist. It is not complicated putting on but was complicated figuring out. There are tiny holes in the fold in my top concealing a ribbon that ties on the "overskirt"-part.





Photos by Scott Marshall



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