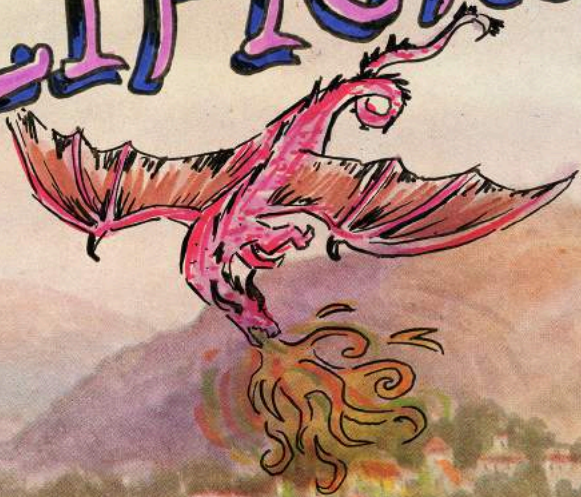


SPELLS & SPELLIFIERS



SPELLS

AND
SPELLIFIERS:

"TO THE DISTANT HILLS...."

BY

James Bradley

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I'd spent my entire life in Kophos Minor...



...that is, until the DRAGON came...

But I'm already getting ahead of myself.



My name is JOPHAS...

...wine merchant, native of Kophos Minor, descendant of the once-MIGHTY Kophos Clan...



...and believer in sights unseen!

Although, some might say...



...to believe in sights SEEN might be a thing that is harder still!



In the END, even my own wife wouldn't listen to me...

... and when the hour was upon us, I couldn't save her...

I couldn't save any of them...

... Yet somehow MY life was spared from the demon's wrath...

... Somehow I alone was spared...

It was in the late
Summer of A.V. 77.
Twelve years ago now...



...when the dragon
first appeared in our skies.

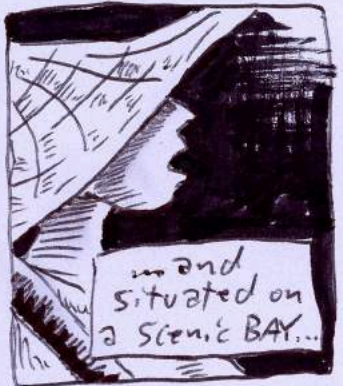
We were a
prosperous
village...



...one of the
few in all
Aeoul...



...and
situated on
a scenic BAY...



...and as such, we desired
that life not change...

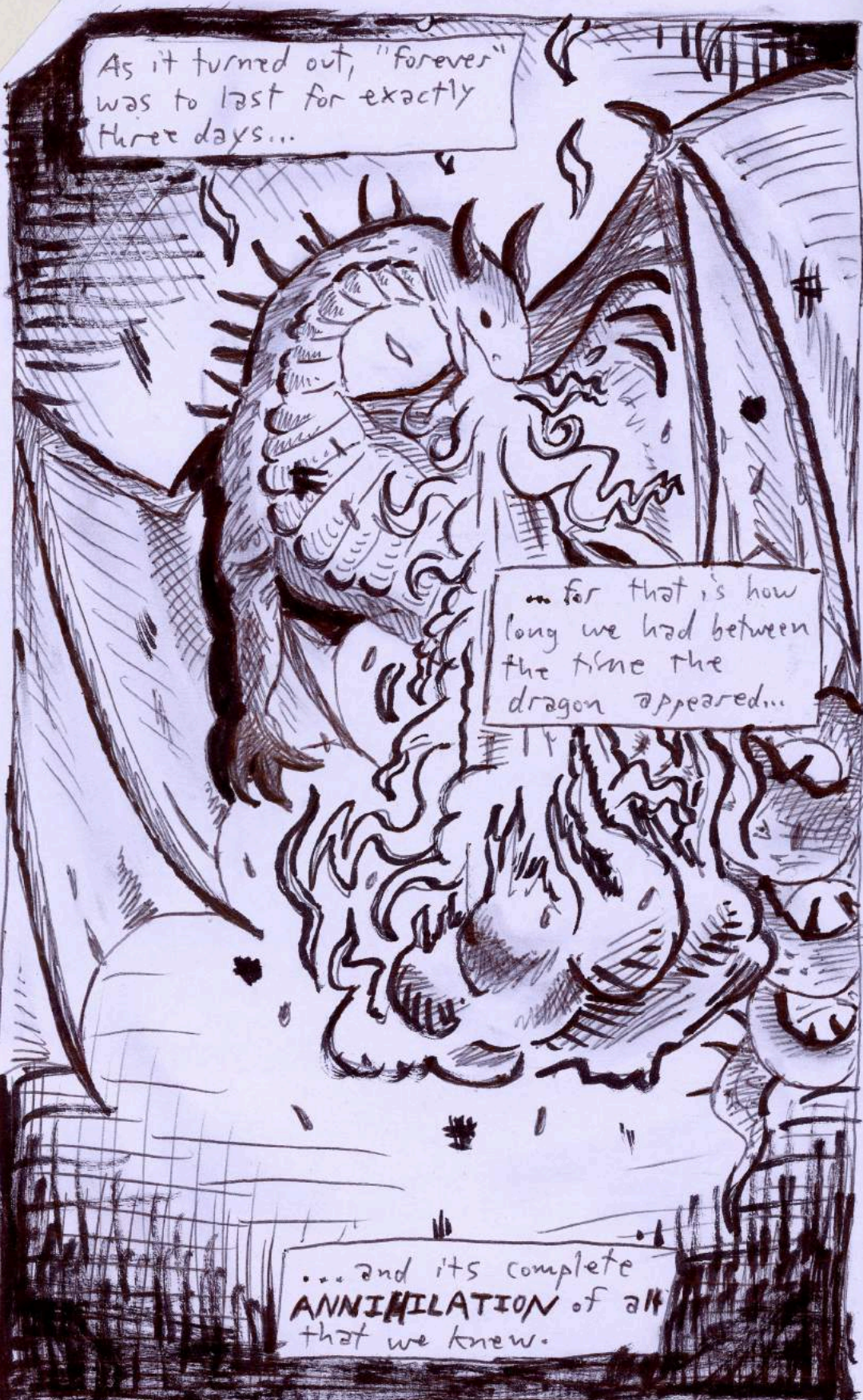


...that it stay
the same...

... forever.



As it turned out, "forever"
was to last for exactly
three days...



... for that is how
long we had between
the time the
dragon appeared...

... and its complete
ANNIHILATION of all
that we knew.

For three days the dragon
could be seen overhead...



...slowly circling...

...and when the
initial fear and
awe began to
wane...

...the people
grew...doubtful...

...and even as I
tried to warn them

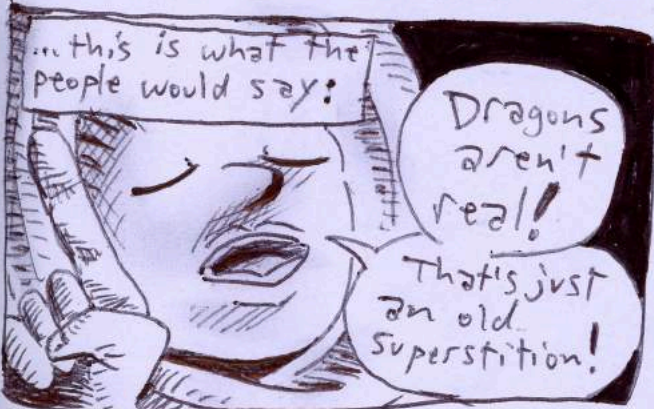


...having seen the danger
first-hand in my youth...



...during my time
in the Army of Aecoul...

...this is what the
people would say:



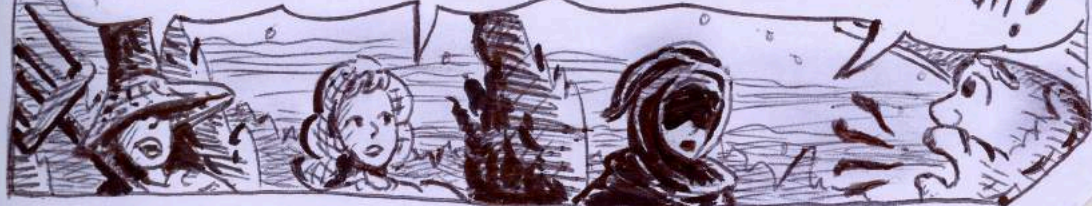
Dragons
aren't
real!

That's just
an old
superstition!

It's like... a trick
with mirrors... a
HOLOGRAM or some
such sorcery!



It's just **SPELLS & SPELLIFIERS!**
Nothin' to be concerned about! Nuthin' at all!





Peasants! Bah!

Still...



...their ignorant refrain began to wear on me...

"Spells and Spellifiers! Spells and Spellifiers!" Over and over as if the words themselves would assure their safety.



And then came the TRUE blow!

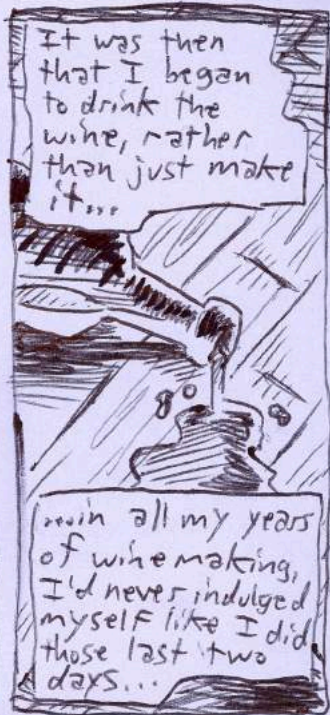
Jophas...

...I... well... you don't really believe all that nonsense, do you?

Malidos. My own wife.

She couldn't even face me as she said those words...

...about the dragon, I mean...



It was then that I began to drink the wine, rather than just make it...

...in all my years of winemaking, I'd never indulged myself like I did those last two days...

...and as the dragon soared above...

...and the villagers chanted their "Spells and spellifiers" below...

...as if possessed, I drank myself into a personal oblivion as if to ward the collective one I knew we all faced.

A day passed, then two, then three...

...for some, life continued on as usual...

...while in others, I noticed a very marked change.

Look at me!
Soarin' HIGH
as a DRAGON!

Hehe!

Villagers — adults and children both — began to display a sort of... overdone mirth...


...they were boastful, proud, and the dragon itself seemed to take on a kind of **SYMBOLIC** meaning to them...

...granting them access to a spirit of defiance and rebellion they never knew they had in them.

The question I kept asking myself was this:


"Rebellion against WHAT?"

Against the possibility...



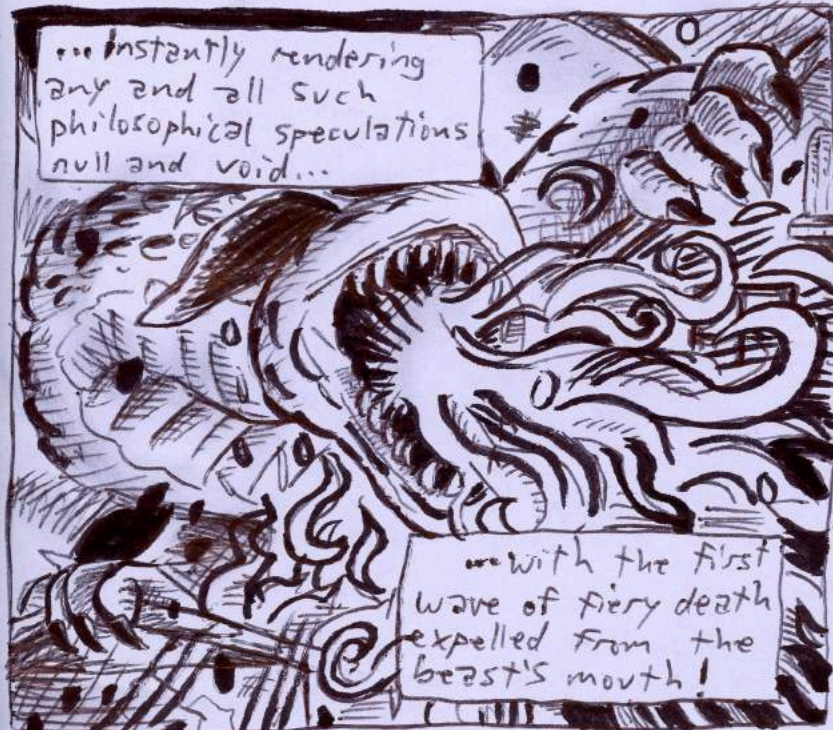
...that they might not be the ultimate arbiters of their own destinies?

Well, just after sundown on the third day...




... the dragon attacked...

... instantly rendering any and all such philosophical speculations null and void...

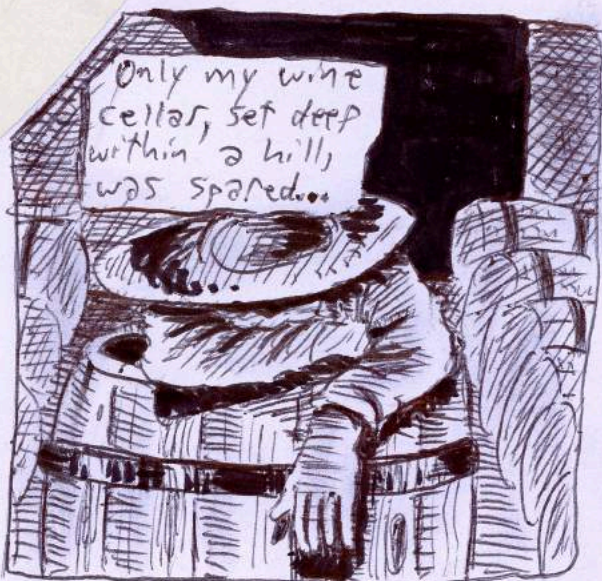


... with the first wave of fiery death expelled from the beast's mouth!

From Kopfos Minor all the way to the distant hills...



... all was set aflame.



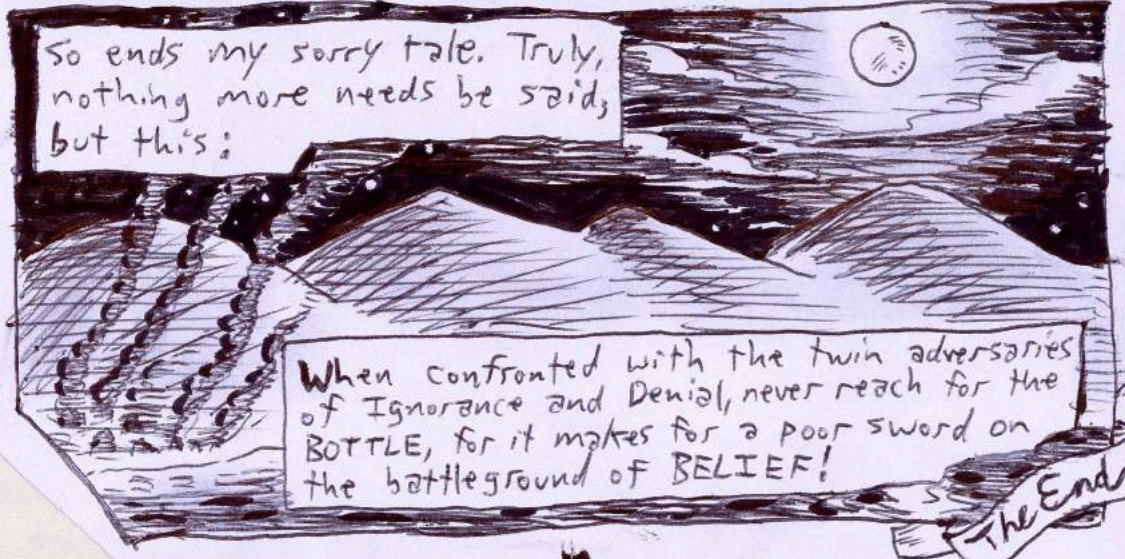
Only my wife
cellar, set deep
within a hill,
was spared...



...and while I slept,
the ANGEL OF DEATH
passed me by.



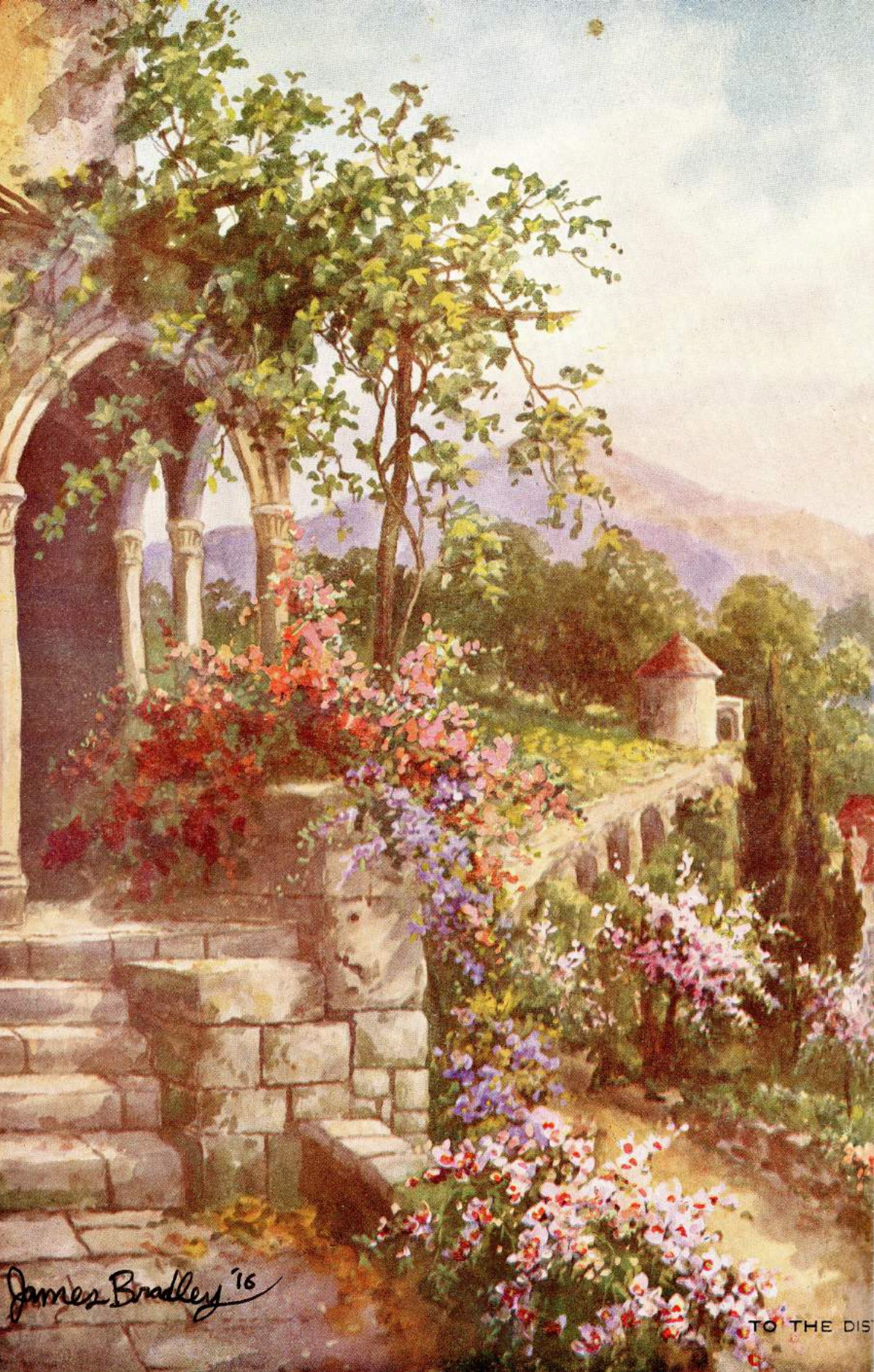
When I finally emerged,
I was all alone in HELL.



So ends my sorry tale. Truly,
nothing more needs be said,
but this:

When confronted with the twin adversaries
of Ignorance and Denial, never reach for the
BOTTLE, for it makes for a poor sword on
the battleground of BELIEF!

The End



James Bradley '16

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