

ANATOMY FOR FANTASY ARTISTS

AN ILLUSTRATOR'S GUIDE TO
CREATING ACTION FIGURES
AND FANTASTICAL FORMS

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additional text by BEN CORMACK

PARTE 2



Section two

Cast of characters

Here is a gallery of characters to inspire your creativity, demonstrating and applying the techniques taught in the previous section. They give just a taste of the boundless possibilities open to you as a fantasy artist. Use this gallery as a spark to fire your imagination to create your own unique characters.

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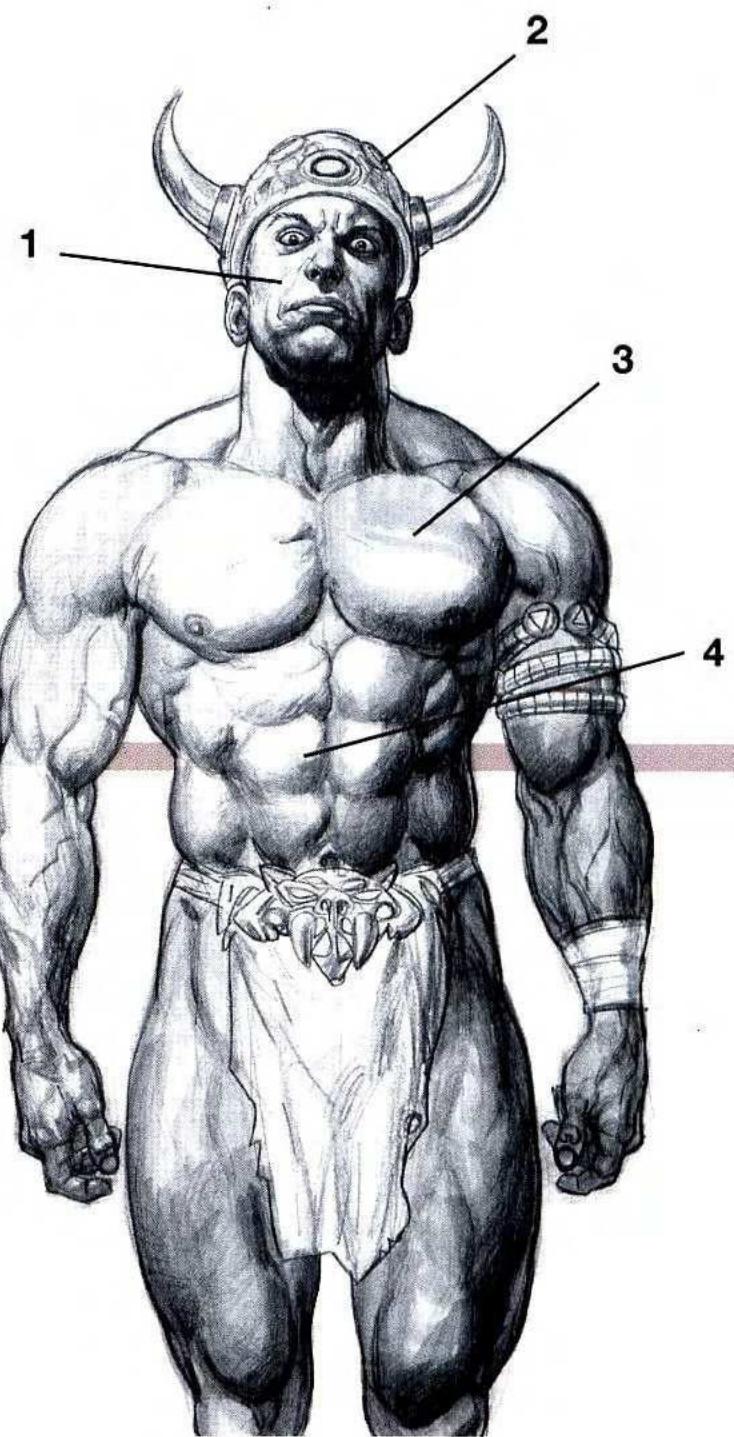




Sven the barbarian

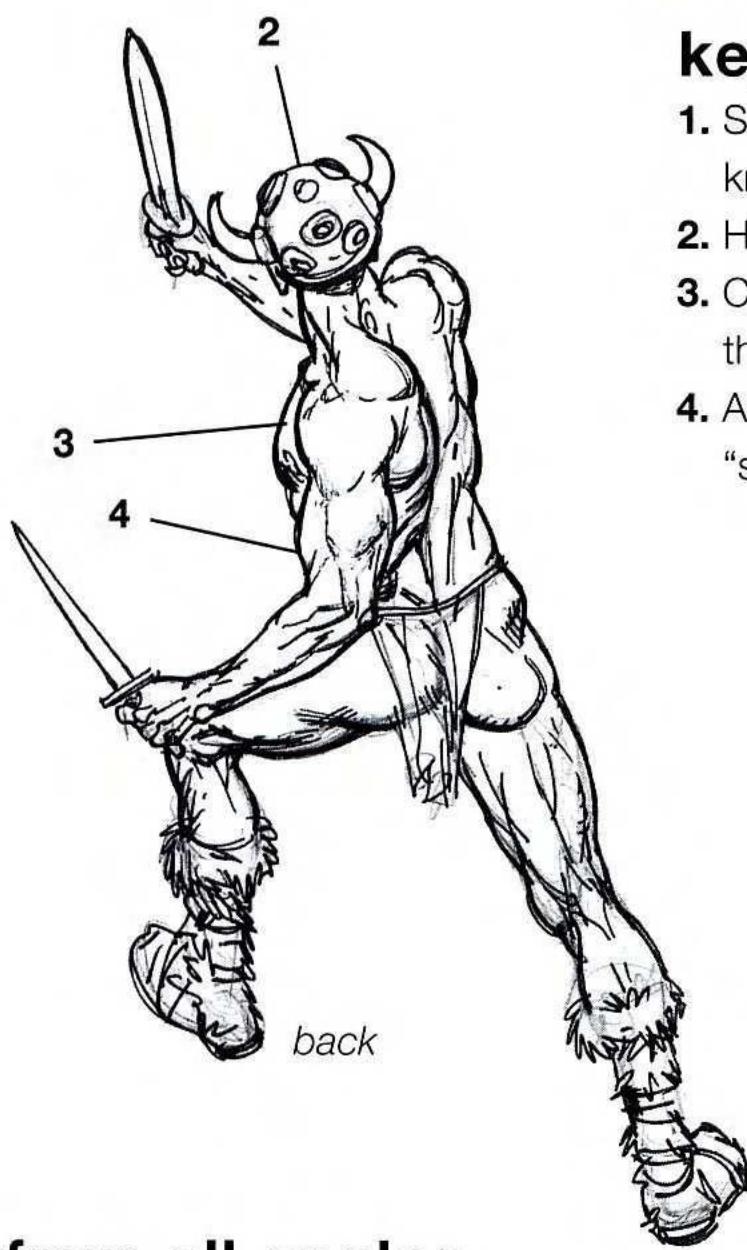
Sven is our not very lovable Viking hero, or antihero, with the typical mesomorphic body of the hero in fantasy art. Sven is a muscular, athletic character with an aggressive and outgoing personality. He is very fit, like a body builder, with well-defined musculature and hardly any fat. Sven has an impressive stature with slim hips and waist, broad shoulders, big arms and legs, and a thick neck.

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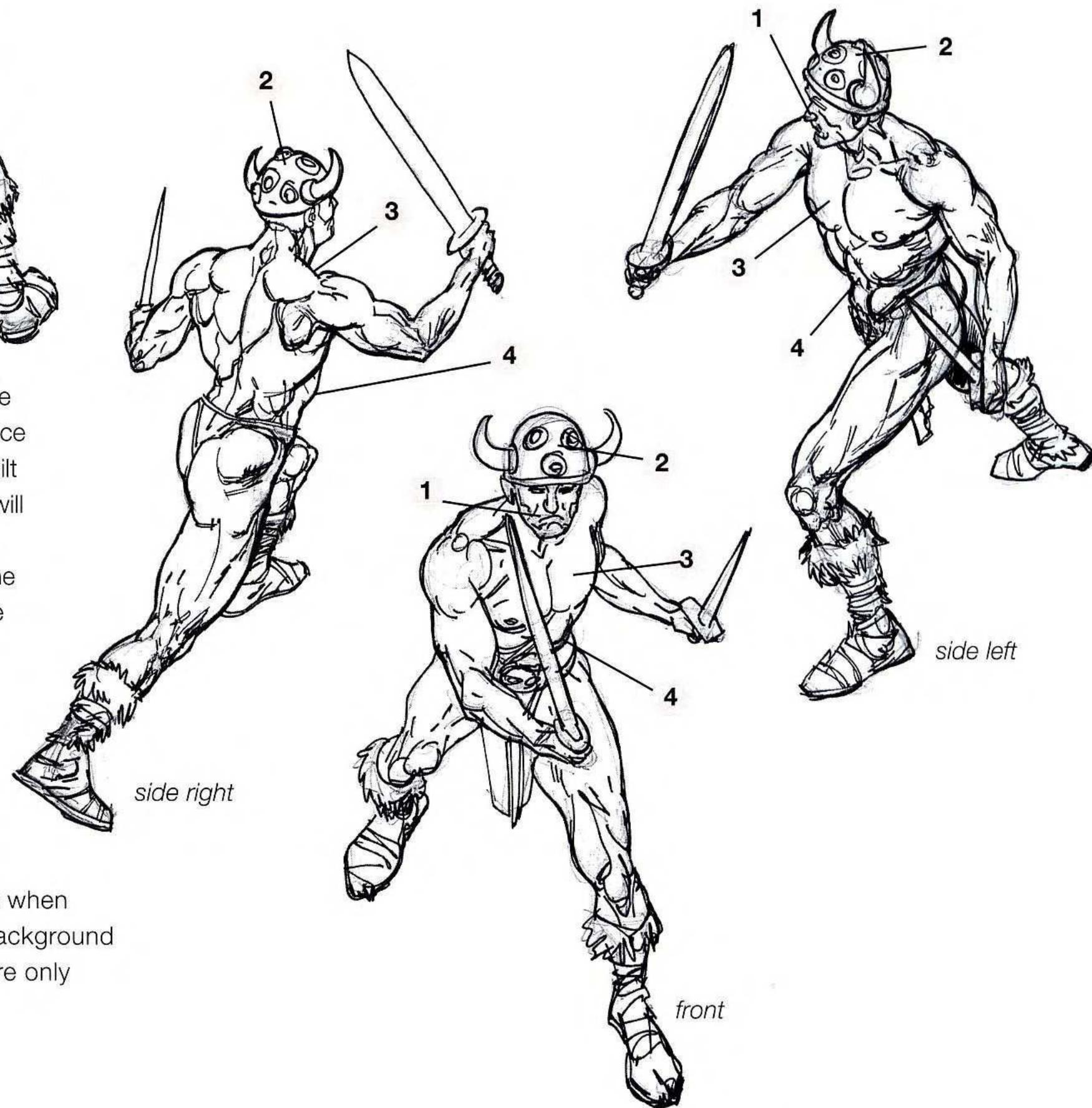
key characteristics

1. Surly, belligerent, aggressive expression, known in the industry as "the Arnie."
2. Helmet, loincloth, and bracelets in place.
3. Chest is big and broad; main features are the pectorals (pecs).
4. Abdominals (abs) well-defined, the popular "six-pack" of the bodybuilding tradition.



from all angles

Because of the range of mobility of the trapezius it is important to use reference material when drawing such a well-built character. When wielding a sword, it will be necessary to pay attention to the arms—the flexors along the front of the arm, supinators, and extensors on the back of the forearm.



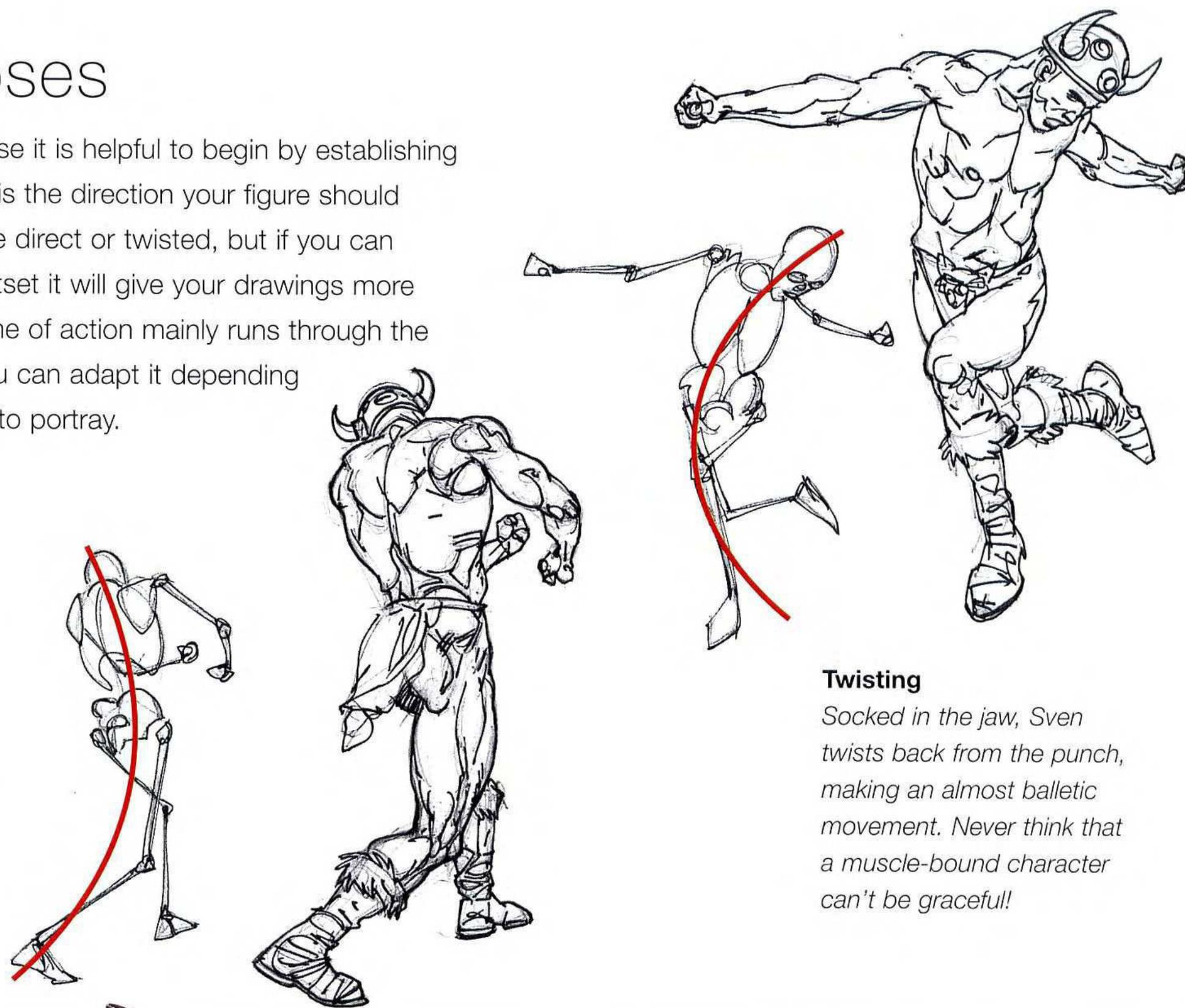
◀ portfolio picture

Liam Sharp

Barbarians are in their element when shown in battle scenes. The background of carnage and destruction here only adds to the overall picture.

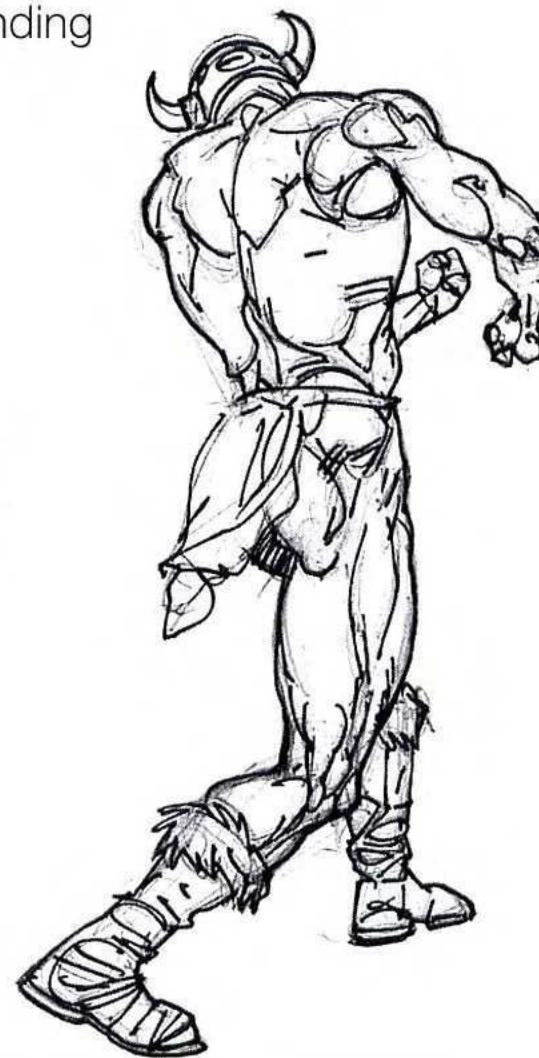
action poses

For poses such as these it is helpful to begin by establishing a line of action, which is the direction your figure should move toward. It can be direct or twisted, but if you can visualize it from the outset it will give your drawings more energy and life. The line of action mainly runs through the legs and spine, but you can adapt it depending on the pose you want to portray.



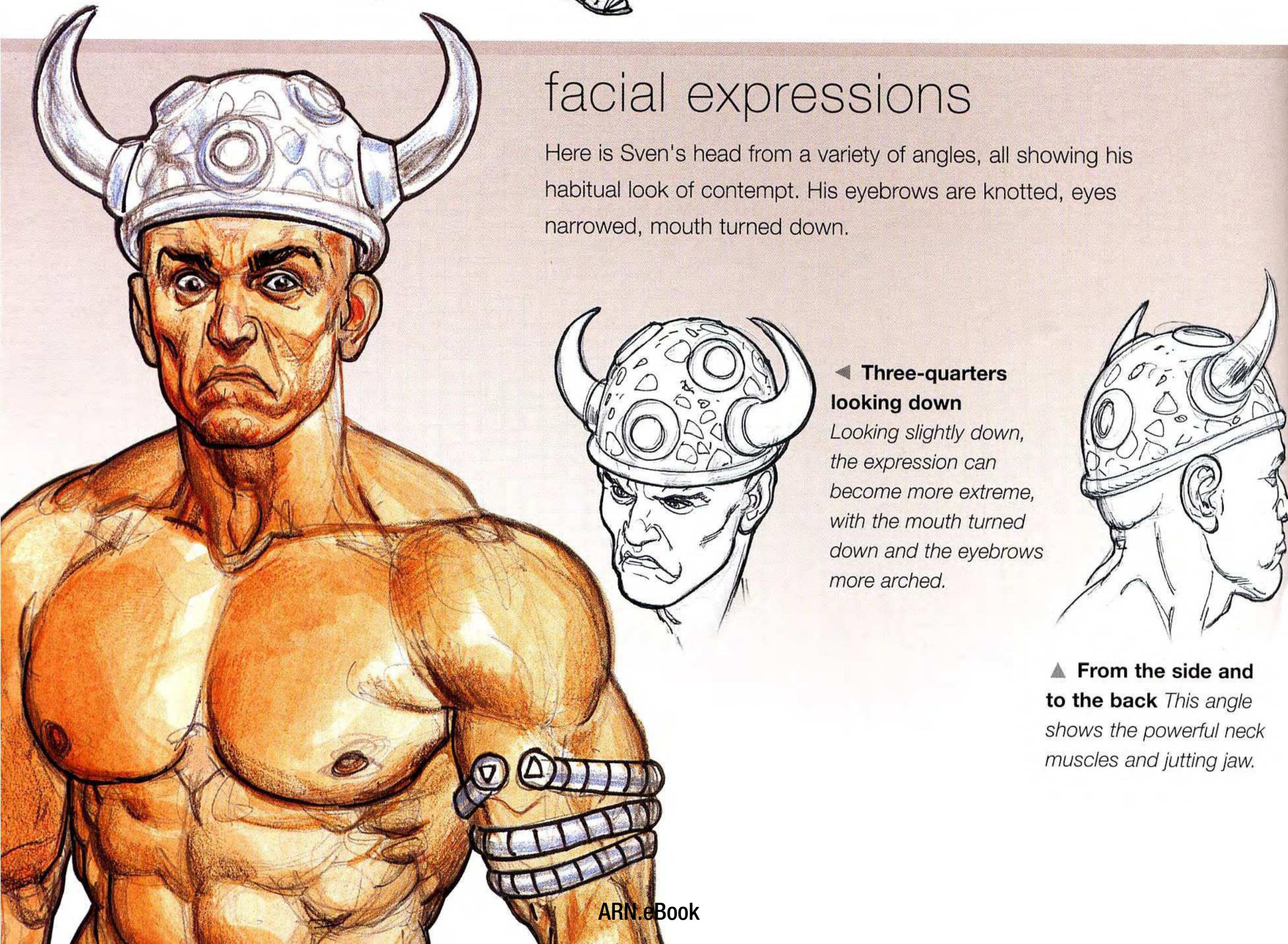
Punching

Sven throws a punch, and the body moves away from it, giving a nice stretch.



Twisting

Socked in the jaw, Sven twists back from the punch, making an almost balletic movement. Never think that a muscle-bound character can't be graceful!

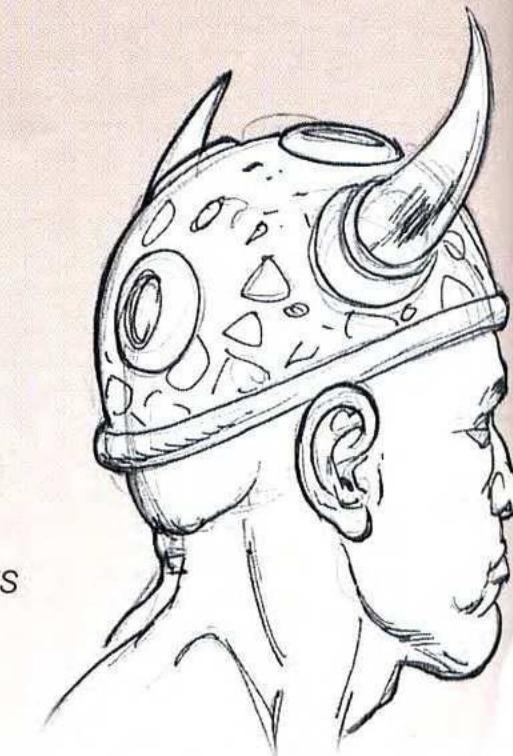


facial expressions

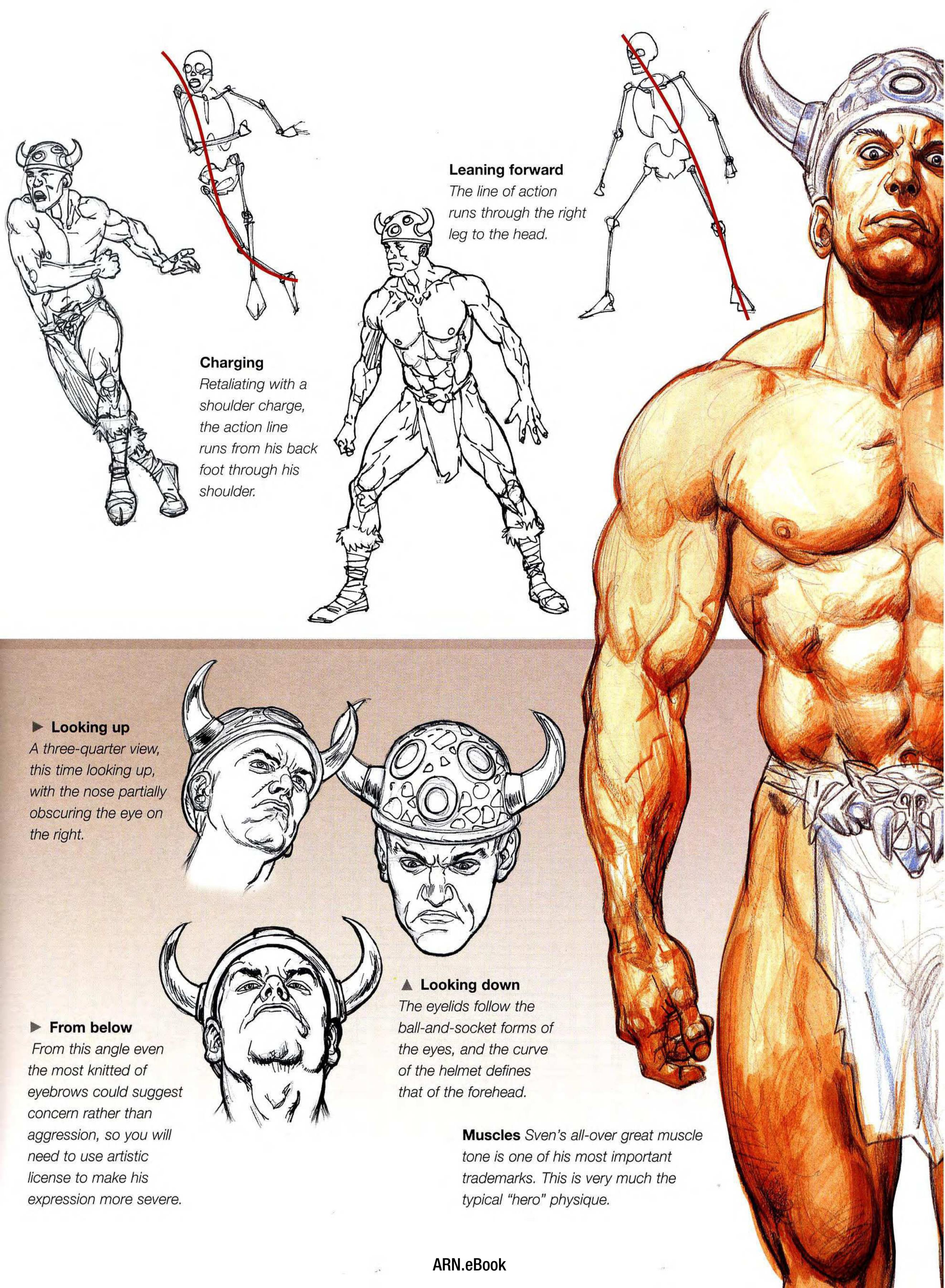
Here is Sven's head from a variety of angles, all showing his habitual look of contempt. His eyebrows are knotted, eyes narrowed, mouth turned down.

◀ Three-quarters looking down

Looking slightly down, the expression can become more extreme, with the mouth turned down and the eyebrows more arched.



▲ **From the side and to the back** This angle shows the powerful neck muscles and jutting jaw.



Charging

Retaliating with a shoulder charge, the action line runs from his back foot through his shoulder.

Leaning forward

The line of action runs through the right leg to the head.

► Looking up

A three-quarter view, this time looking up, with the nose partially obscuring the eye on the right.

► From below

From this angle even the most knitted of eyebrows could suggest concern rather than aggression, so you will need to use artistic license to make his expression more severe.

▲ Looking down

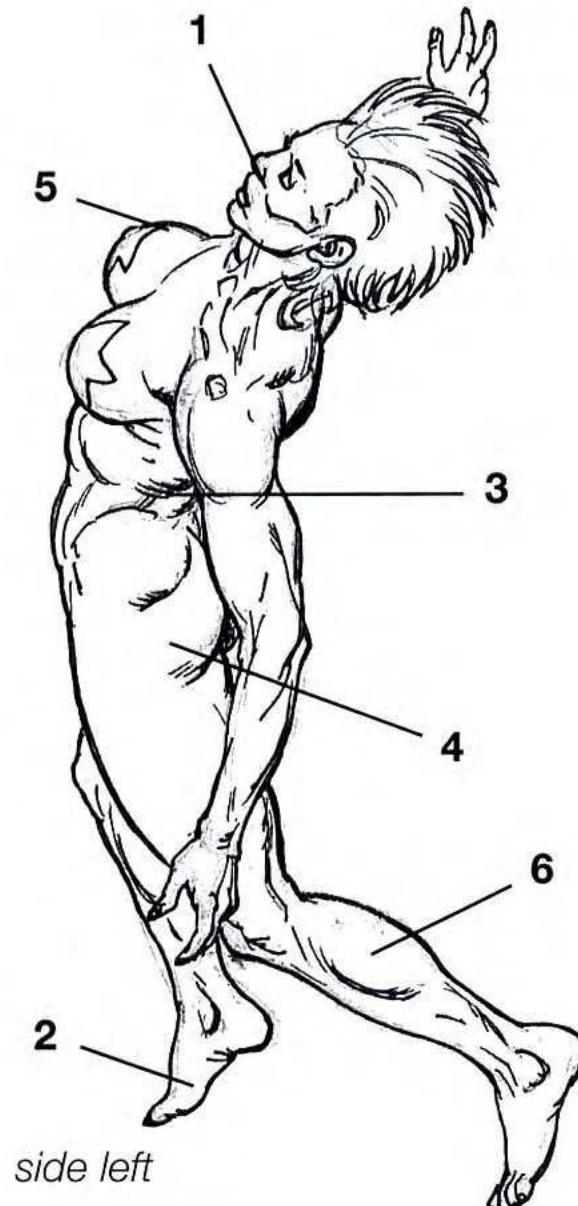
The eyelids follow the ball-and-socket forms of the eyes, and the curve of the helmet defines that of the forehead.

Muscles Sven's all-over great muscle tone is one of his most important trademarks. This is very much the typical "hero" physique.



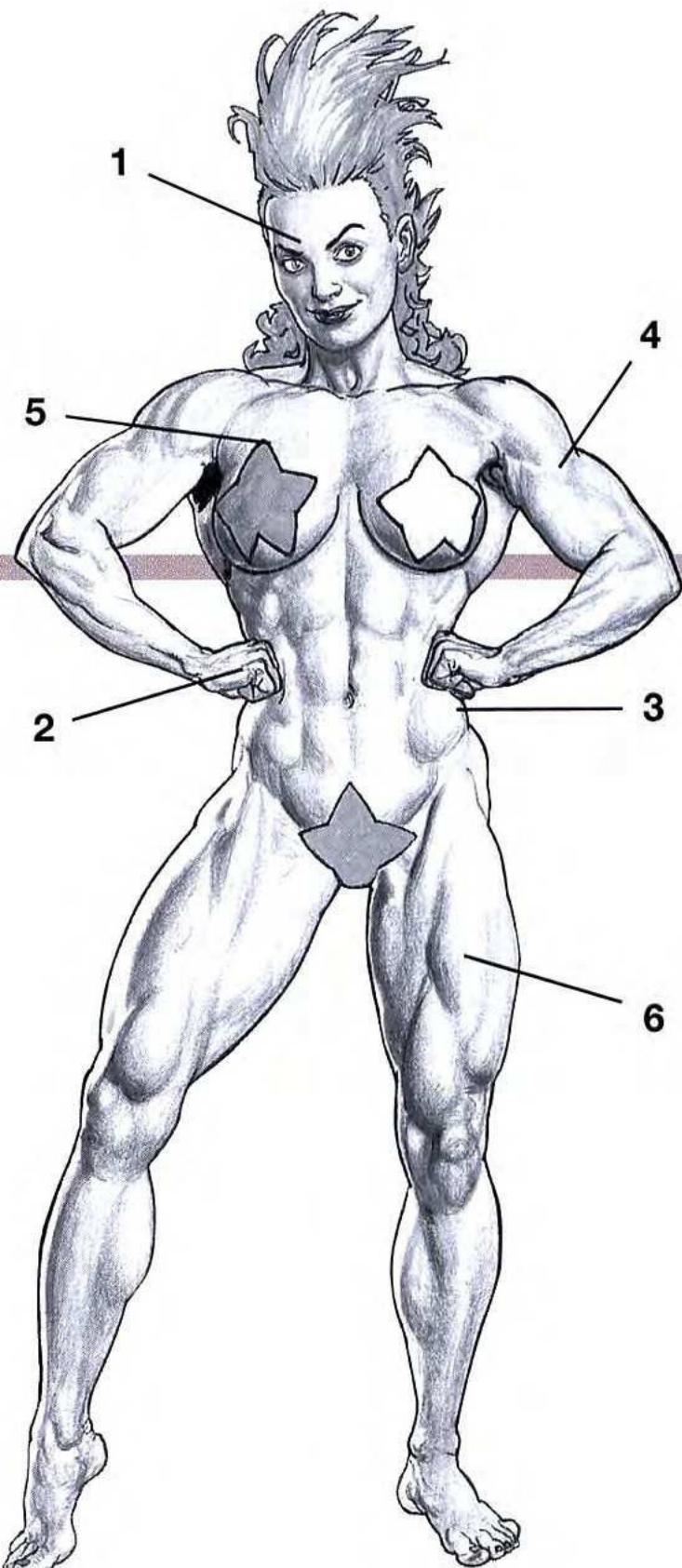
Sonia the adventurer

Sonia's most immediately recognizable feature is her muscular body—she's so hefty, in fact, that it can sometimes be tricky to allow her to retain her femininity. It's important to remember the standard proportions of the female fantasy figure's body: about eight and three-quarter heads tall, with wide hips, narrow shoulders, and petite hands and feet.



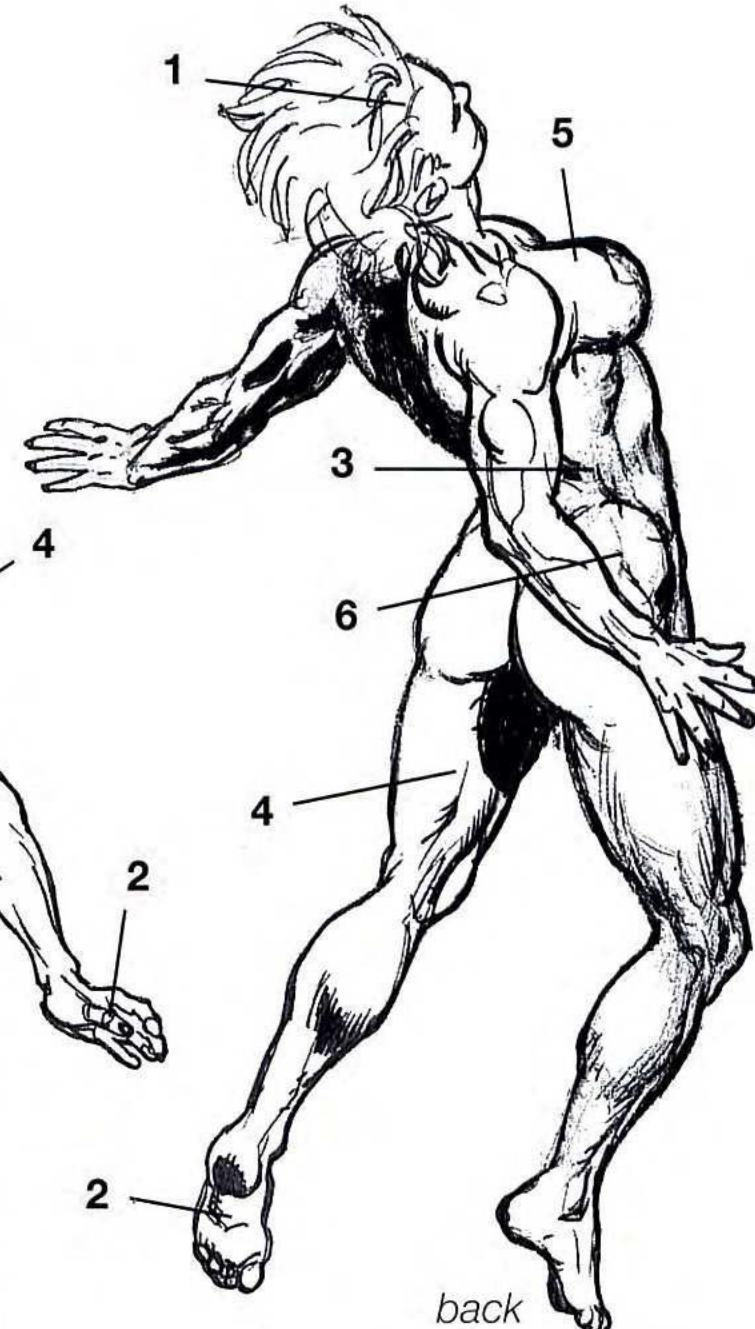
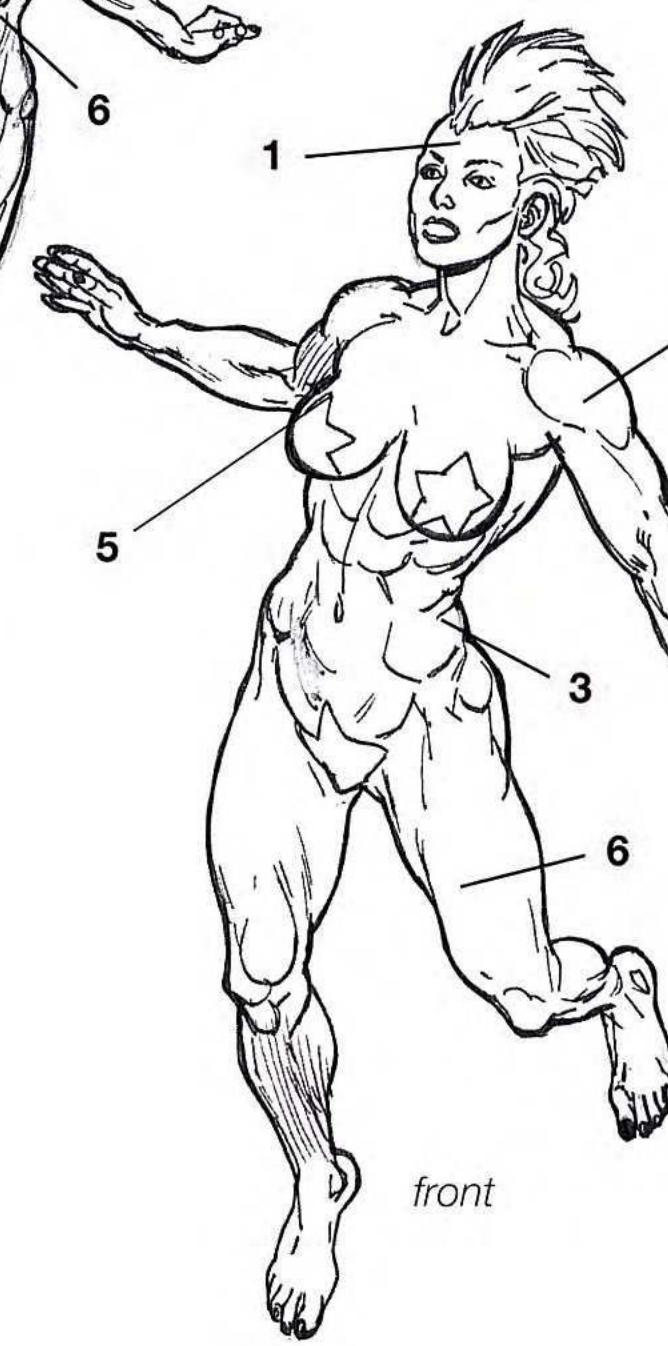
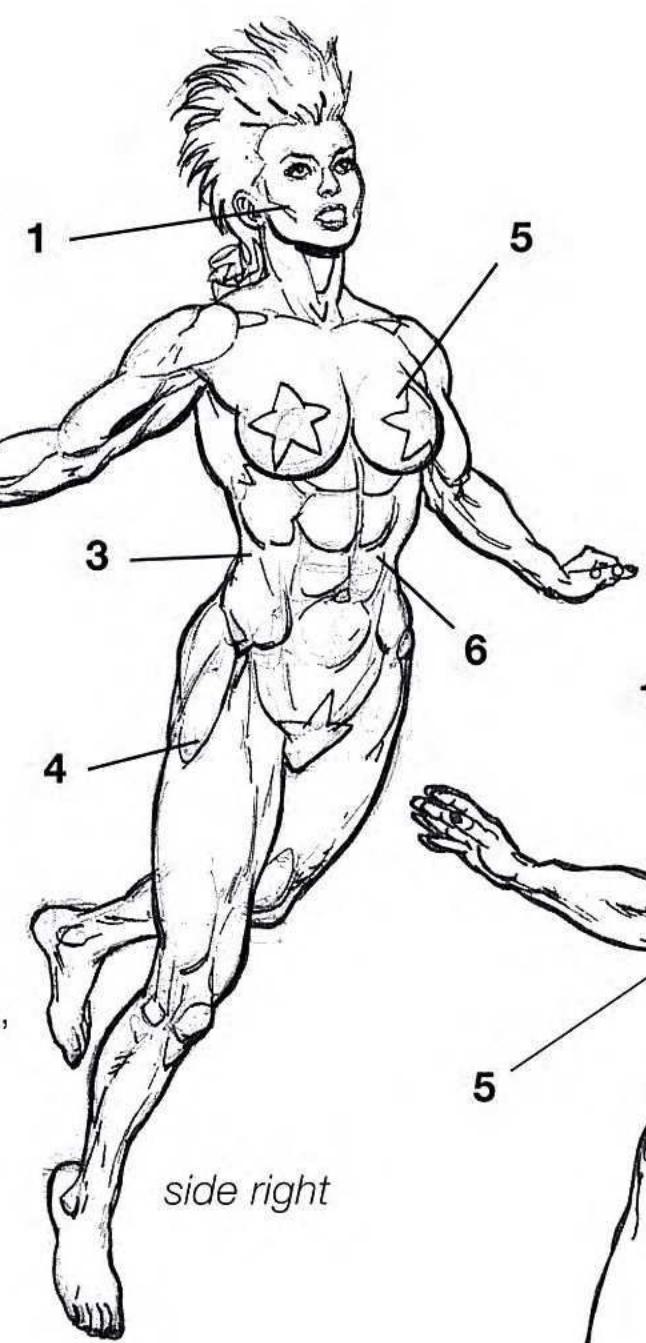
key characteristics

1. Masculine facial features (bold) and head shape (rounded).
2. Undersized hands and feet.
3. Waist barely narrower than hips—unusual for a female character.
4. Extremely well-defined muscles.
5. Focus drawn away from feminine features.
6. Body shape in general dictated much more by muscle than by bone.



from all angles

Sonia's masculine nature is reflected in her stance. She is usually positioned exactly as one would arrange a male figure, highlighting none of her feminine attributes. Only the female head, breasts, and clothing tell us this is actually a feminine form.



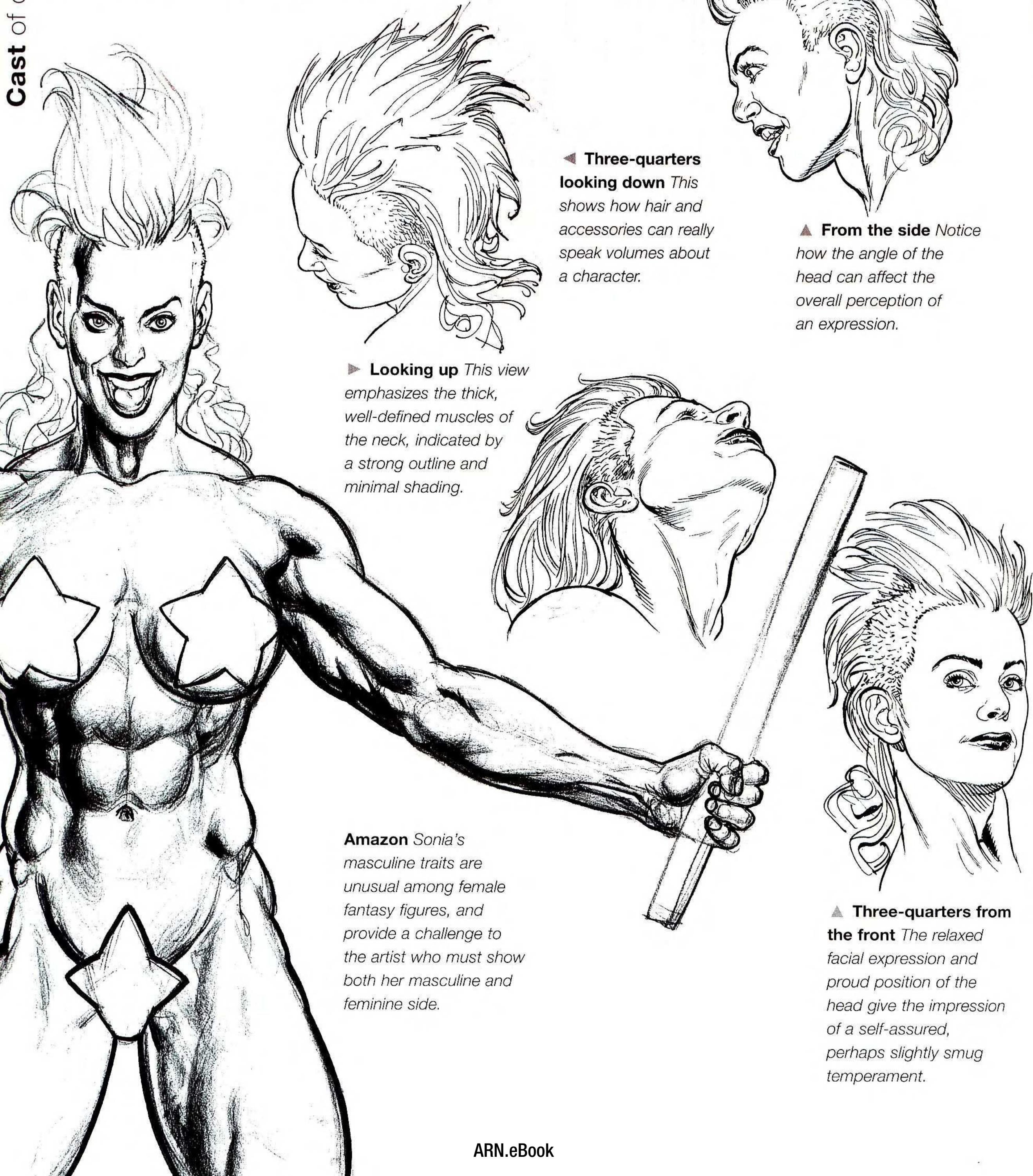
portfolio picture

Glenn Fabry

The addition of decorative feathers, primitive costume jewelry, and face paint all contribute to the character's distinctive image.

facial expressions

Much of Sonia's personality is revealed by her hair and make up—loud and wild! But for a really believable expression, every part of the face and body should be saying the same thing, including the position of the head and the tension of neck and shoulder muscles.



Amazon Sonia's masculine traits are unusual among female fantasy figures, and provide a challenge to the artist who must show both her masculine and feminine side.

► **Three-quarters looking down** This shows how hair and accessories can really speak volumes about a character.

► **From the side** Notice how the angle of the head can affect the overall perception of an expression.

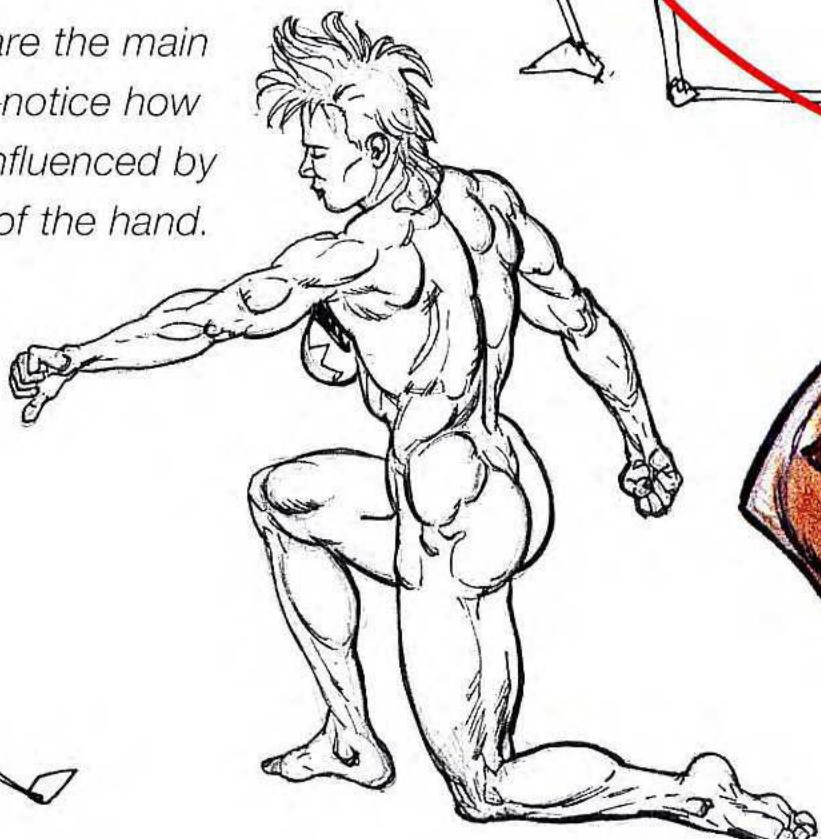
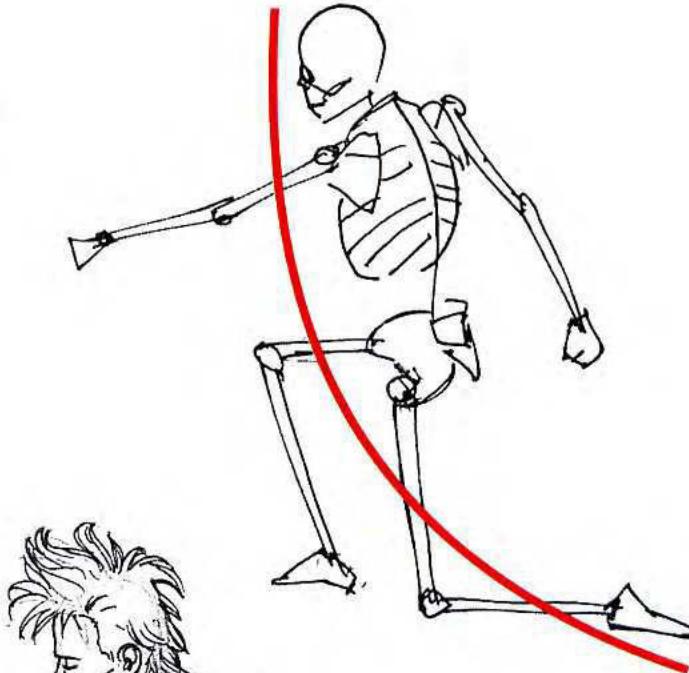
action poses

None of Sonia's muscle groups stand out as larger than others, but because she is well-toned enough for most of them to be visible, you need to remember the whereabouts of all of them for each drawing!



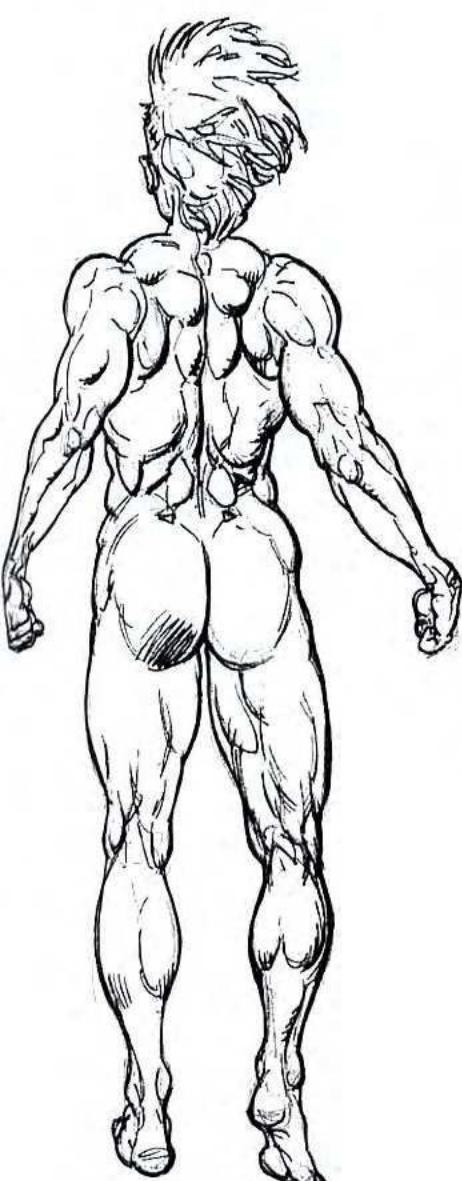
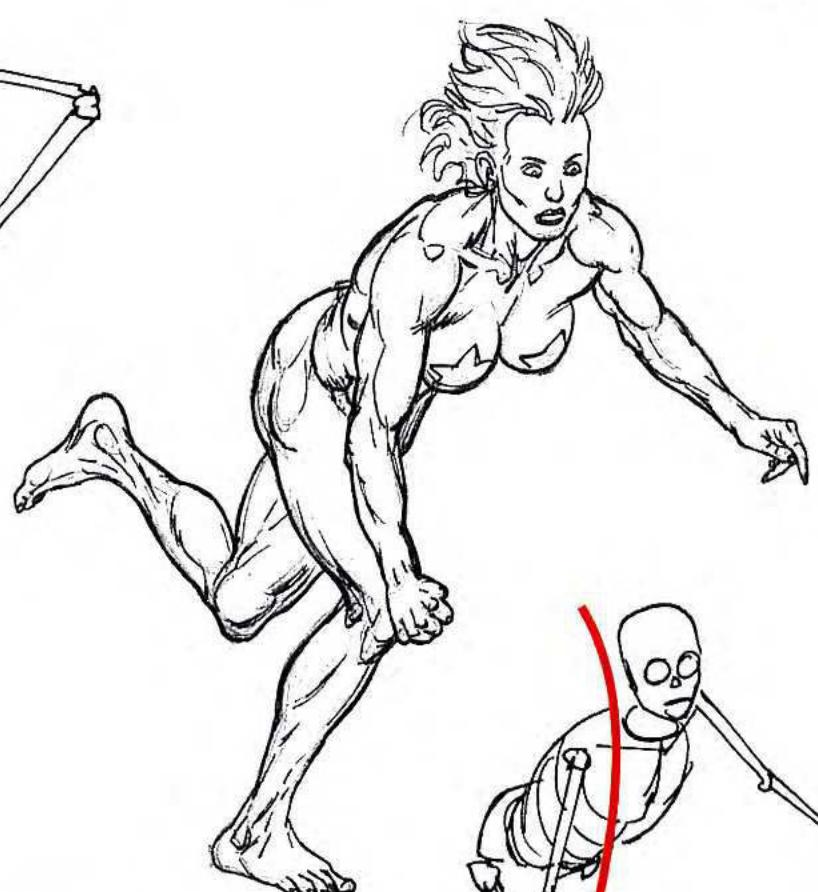
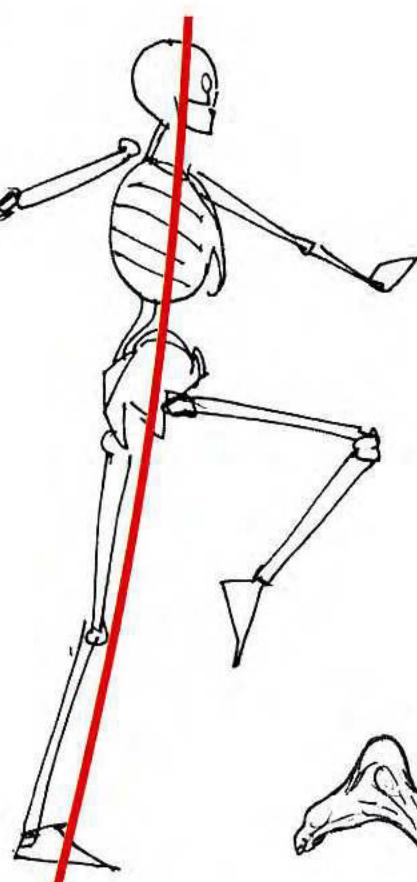
Kneeling

The triceps are the main focus here—notice how each set is influenced by the position of the hand.



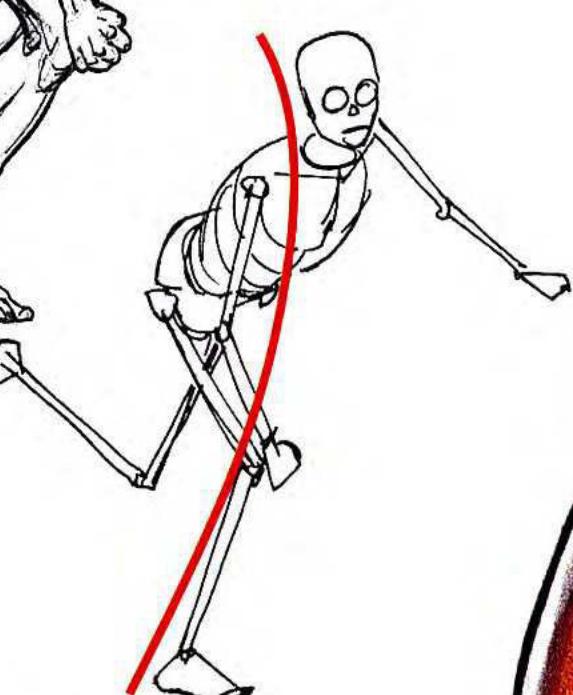
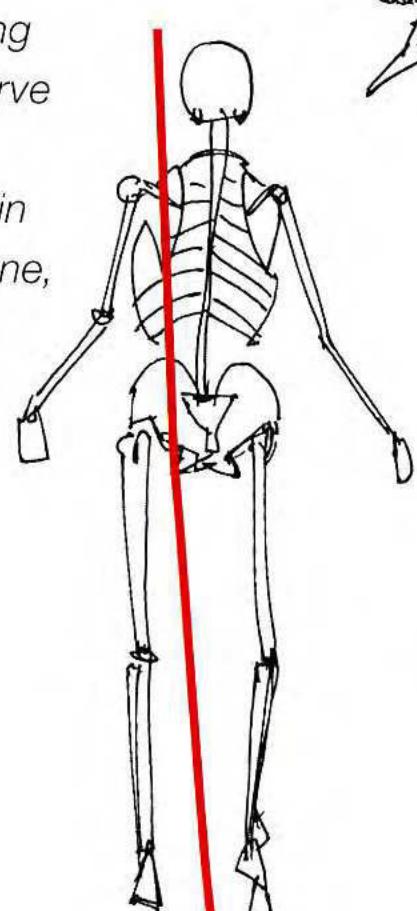
Skipping

Wow! Just look at those huge quads! If you're unsure which muscles will be flexing during a particular movement, perform it yourself and feel the way the muscles work. But don't try anything too dangerous!



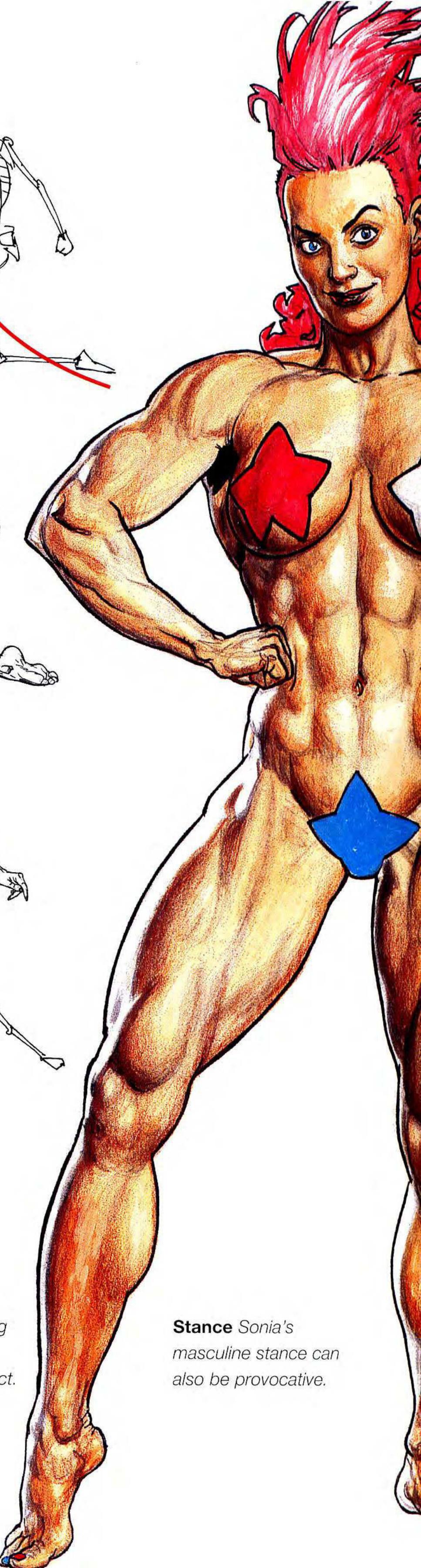
Stretching

When concentrating on the back, observe how numerous groups are visible in the lower back alone, and that the thick calves also have clearly defined muscles.



Stumbling

Exaggerating the incline of the moving body can give the drawing more impact.



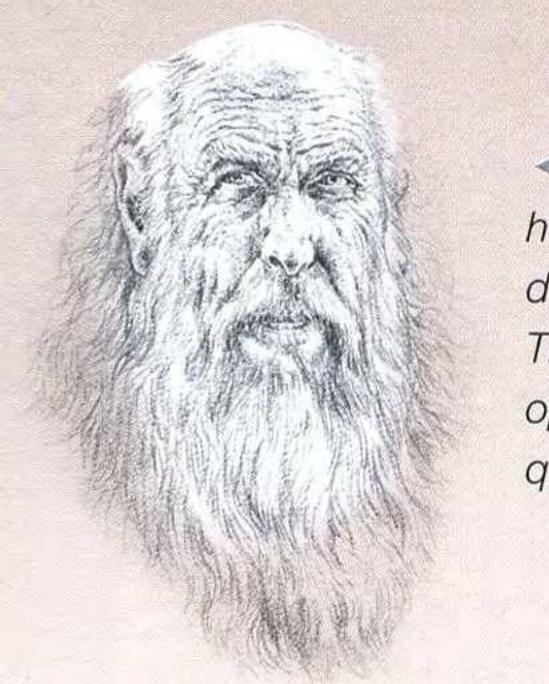
Stance Sonia's masculine stance can also be provocative.

Myrddin the wizard

Wizards aren't always scrawny and gaunt, and our wizard Myrddin proves it. He subverts our expectations while adapting some classic characteristics. He is accustomed to long, tough journeys and many years hunched over books. He has great stamina, little body fat, and a powerful muscularity often concealed beneath a cloak. This wizard's physical strength cannot be judged by the length of his beard or the lines on his face.

facial expressions

Deep wrinkles and luxuriant facial hair characterize the wizard's features. Furrows are deeply etched on the forehead and around the eyes. His expressions are sometimes stern, sometimes benign.



► **From the left** The wizard in a more thoughtful mood. The knitted brow and narrowed eyes suggest introspective musing. Profiles also highlight the large hooked nose.

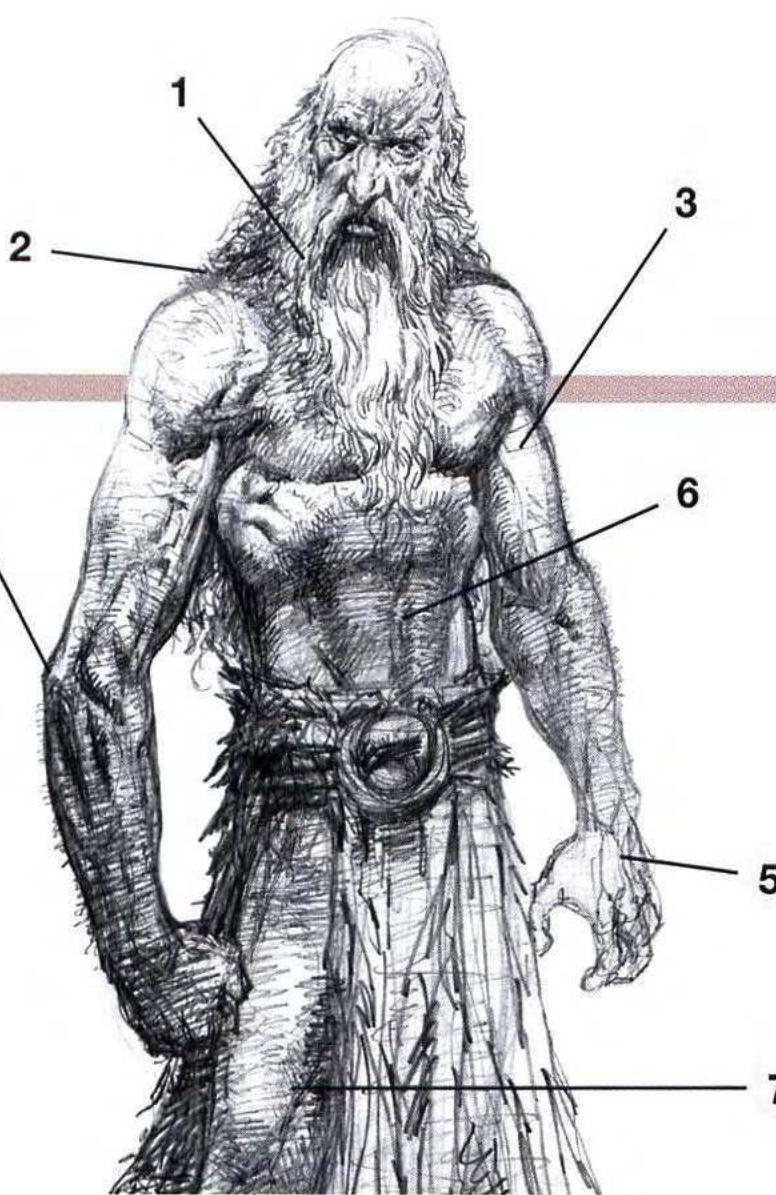


◀ **From the right** This profile shows the wizard in a lighter mood. Almost closed eyes, clear laughter wrinkles, and bunched-up cheeks give a subtle impression of good humor.



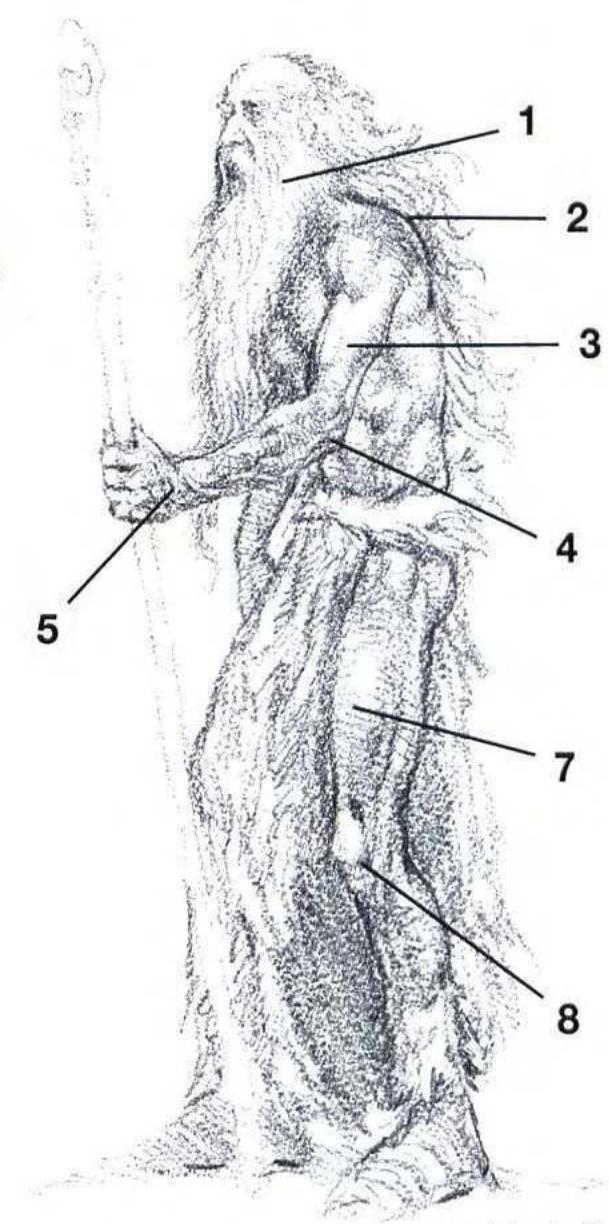
▼ **Looking down** Here he looks up at us through heavy eyebrows, with his expression perhaps suggesting an unwelcome interruption or a prelude to a warning.



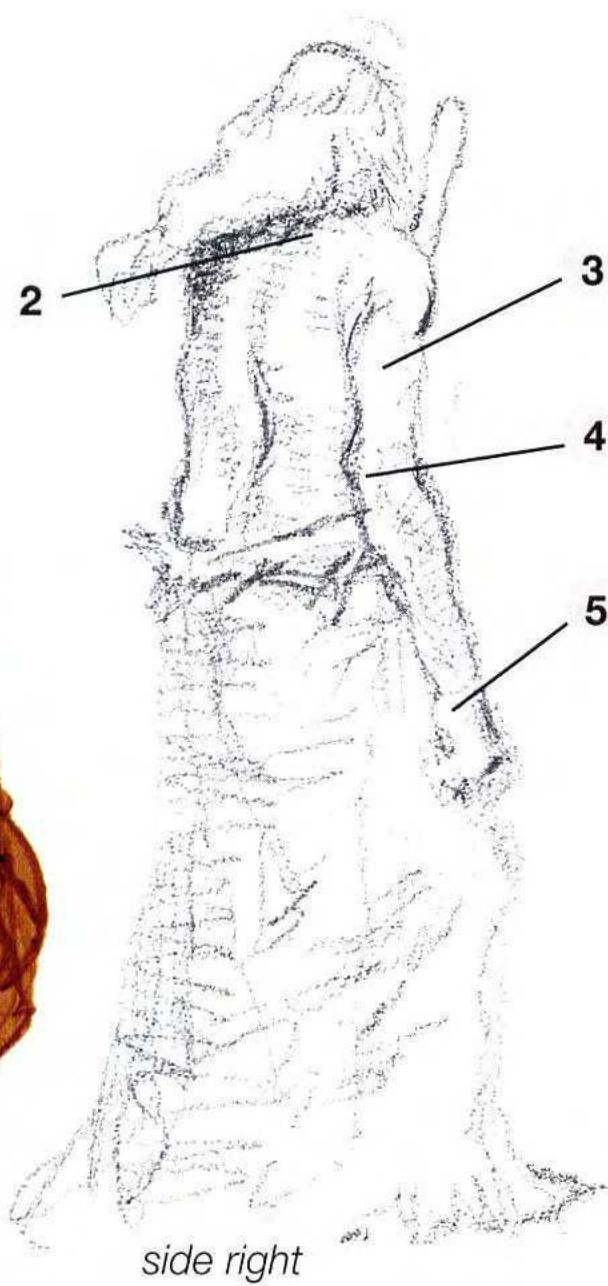


key characteristics

1. Long white beard, hooked nose, craggy overhanging brow, and bright, intelligent eyes.
2. Powerful, hunched-up deltoids.
3. Strong, sinewy upper arms.
4. Swollen elbows.
5. Powerful forearms and hands.
6. Lean, wiry abdominals (abs).
7. Long, slender thighs.
8. Swollen knees.



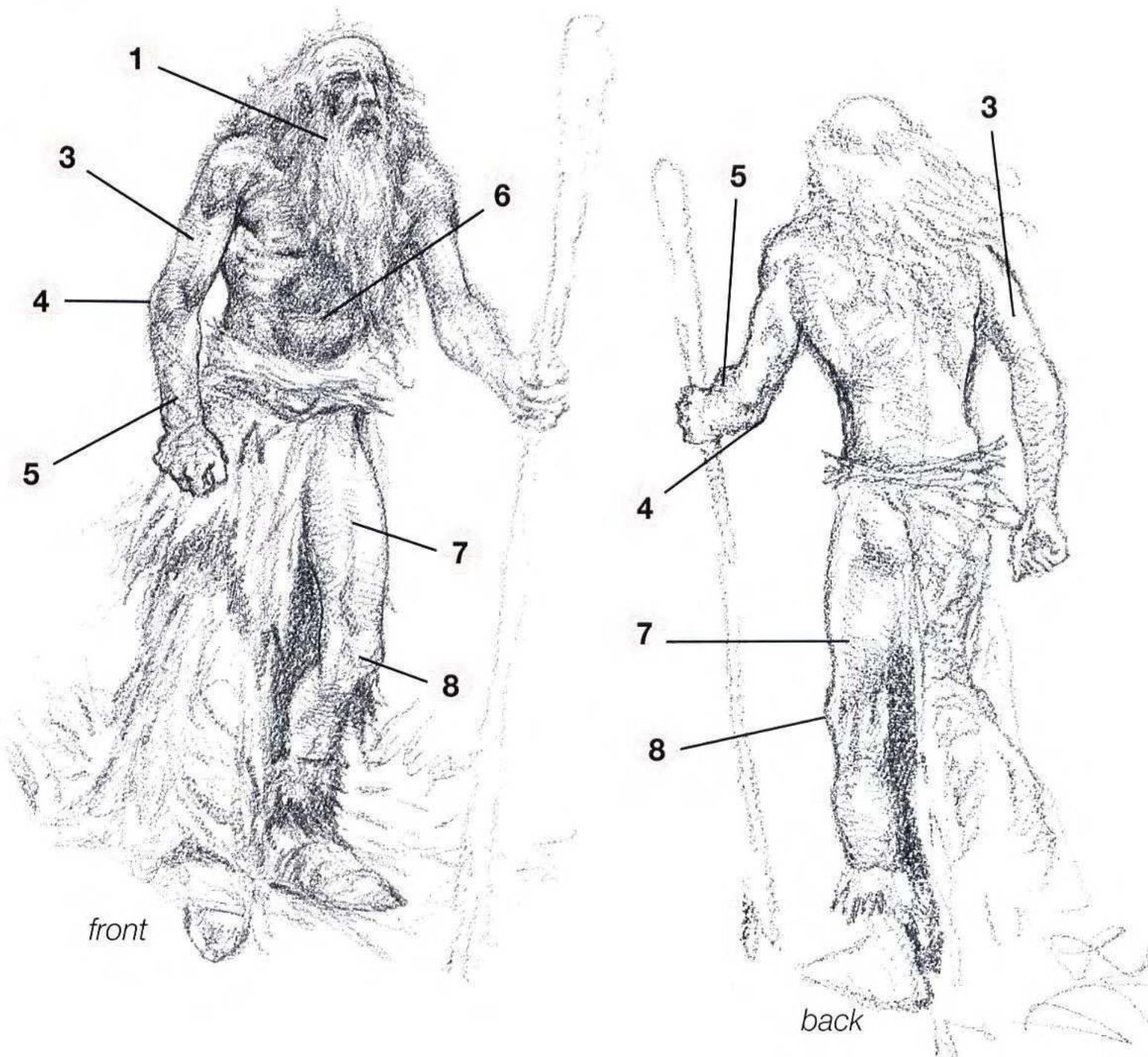
side left



side right

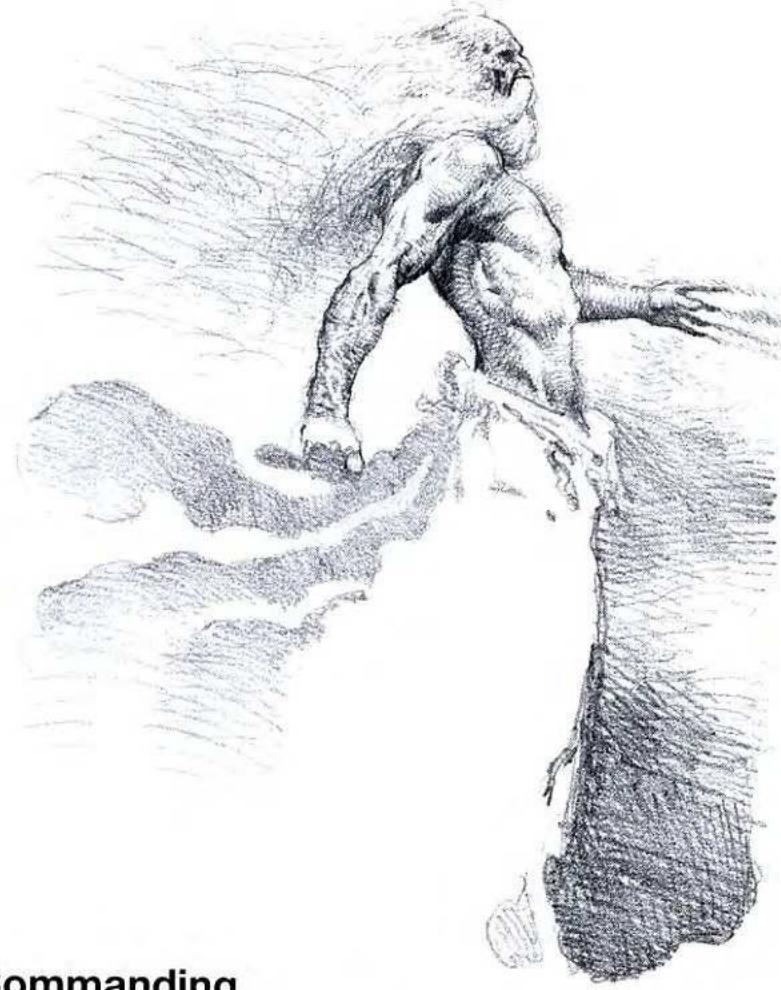
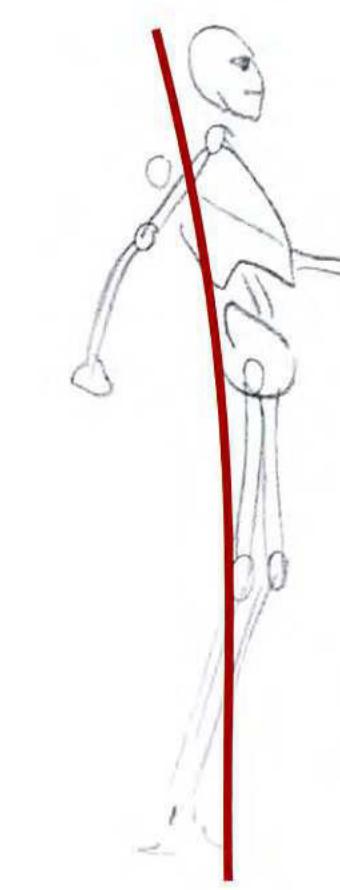
Concealed strength

The wizard's aged appearance belies his power and agility.



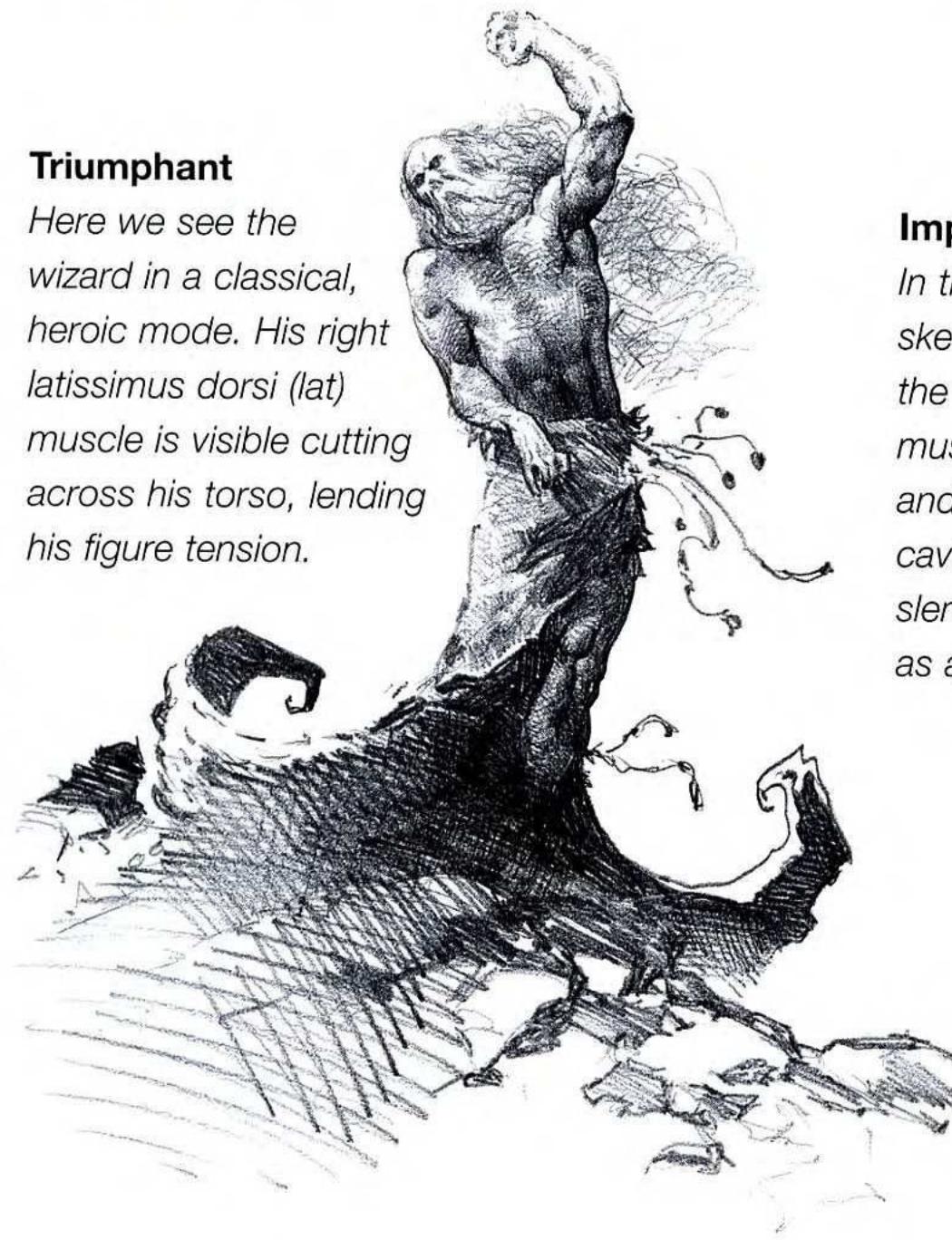
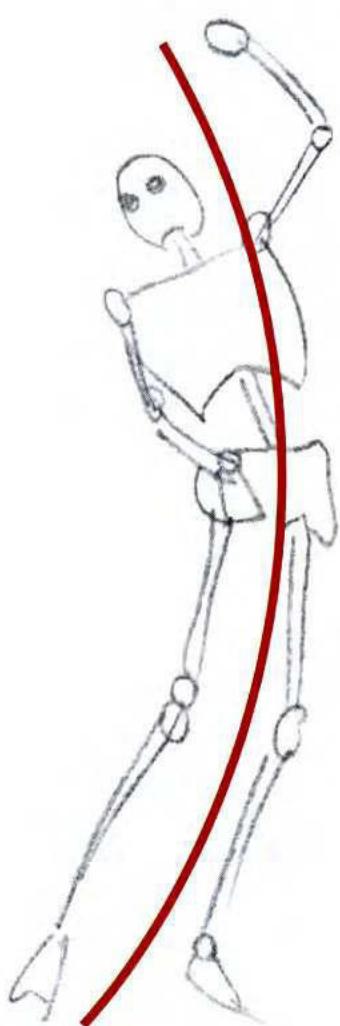
action poses

The vertical line in each of these sketches is the line of action, which indicates the direction in which your figure should move, and gives the piece momentum and energy. The movement is normally through the legs and spine, but you can adapt it depending on your needs.



Commanding

The wizard's authority and power is conveyed through his posture and stance.



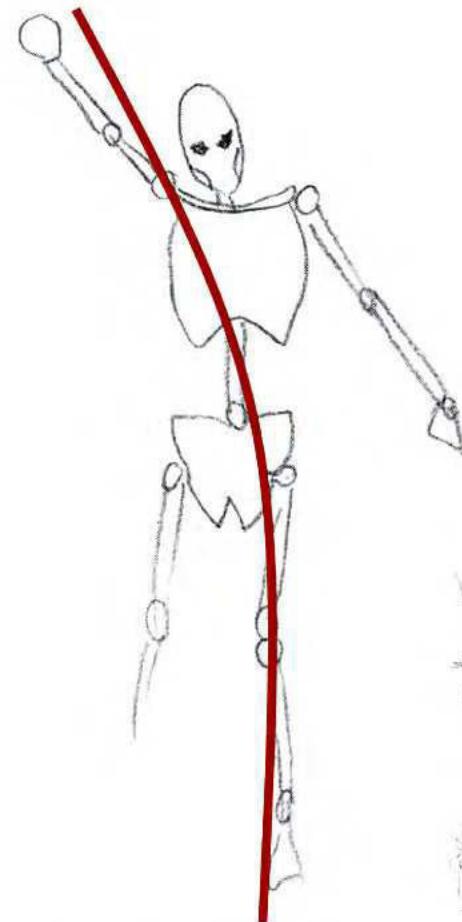
Triumphant

Here we see the wizard in a classical, heroic mode. His right latissimus dorsi (lat) muscle is visible cutting across his torso, lending his figure tension.



Standing

The wizard's powerful musculature, as displayed from the back.



Imposing

In this preliminary sketch we can see the wizard's muscular chest and abdominal cavity. His arms are slender but powerful, as are his legs.



portfolio picture ▶

Martin McKenna

Notice how the setting contributes a great deal to the figure's sense of character. This same character portrayed over a backdrop of a 1970's roller disco, for example, would give a distinctly less magical overall impression.

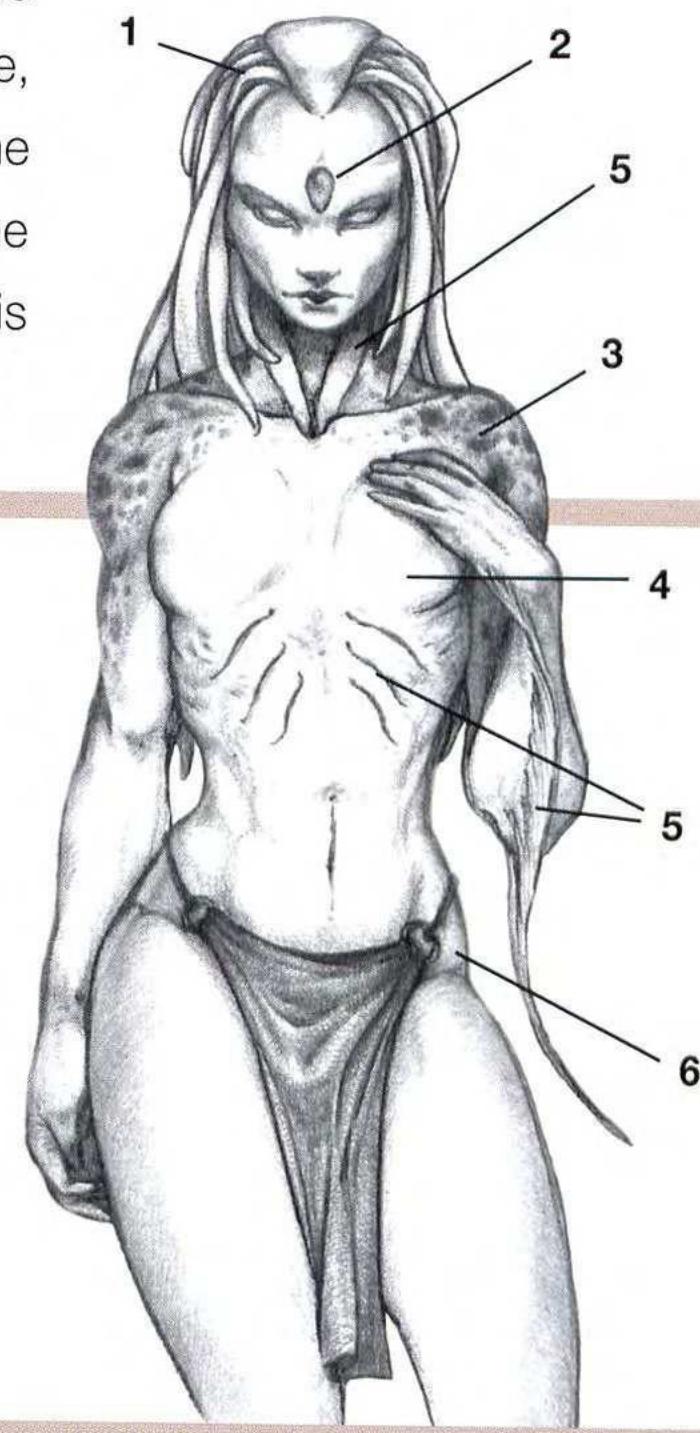


Charybdis the alien female

Sultry, shamanistic, and thoroughly strange, Charybdis embodies what every artist looks for in an alien female, though physically she is based on the female heroine figure. Keep the image simple, paying attention to the basic form and the way the joints move. No figure is entirely believable unless the foundation is in place first.

key characteristics

1. Alien "hair"—thick strands of flesh.
2. Forehead marking—individual features such as these help to create a complete picture of the character.
3. Skin markings give the skin a tougher, more nautical feel.
4. Skin does not sag at all—this is particularly visible on the breasts.
5. Gills on the torso and neck, and fins on the forearms.
6. Wide hips and narrow shoulders mimic the generic female heroine figure.



facial expressions

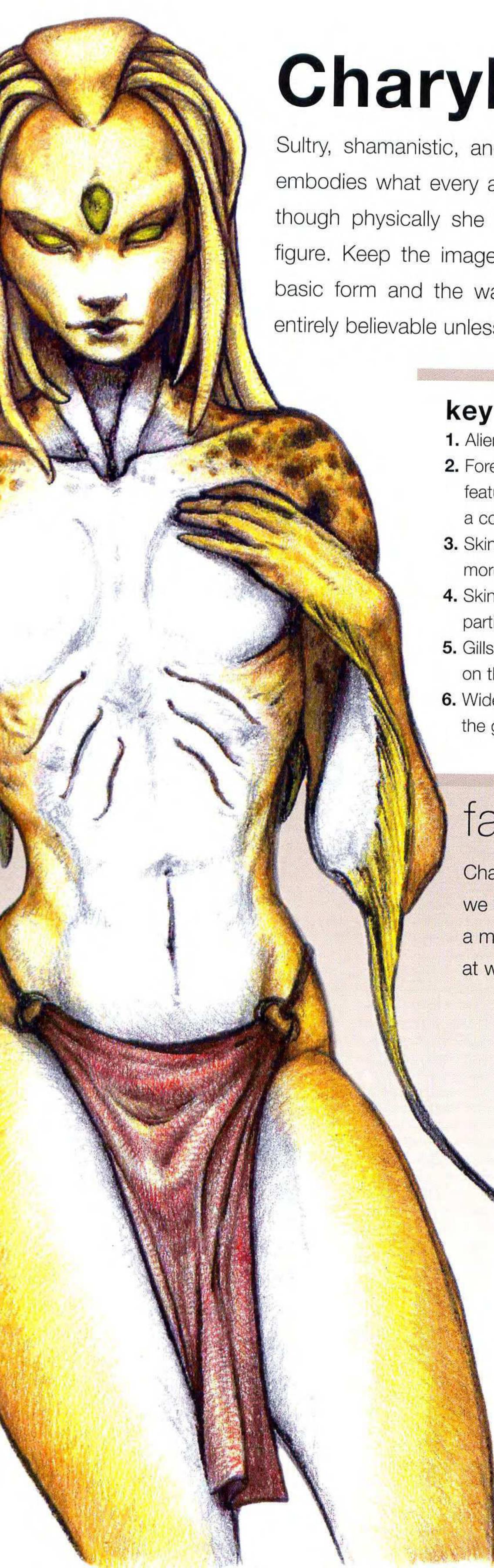
Charybdis's muscles appear to be made from a more turgid material than we are accustomed to. This suggests a greater degree of strength but also a more meager level of expression. Only subtle changes in expression hint at what lies beneath the stony façade.

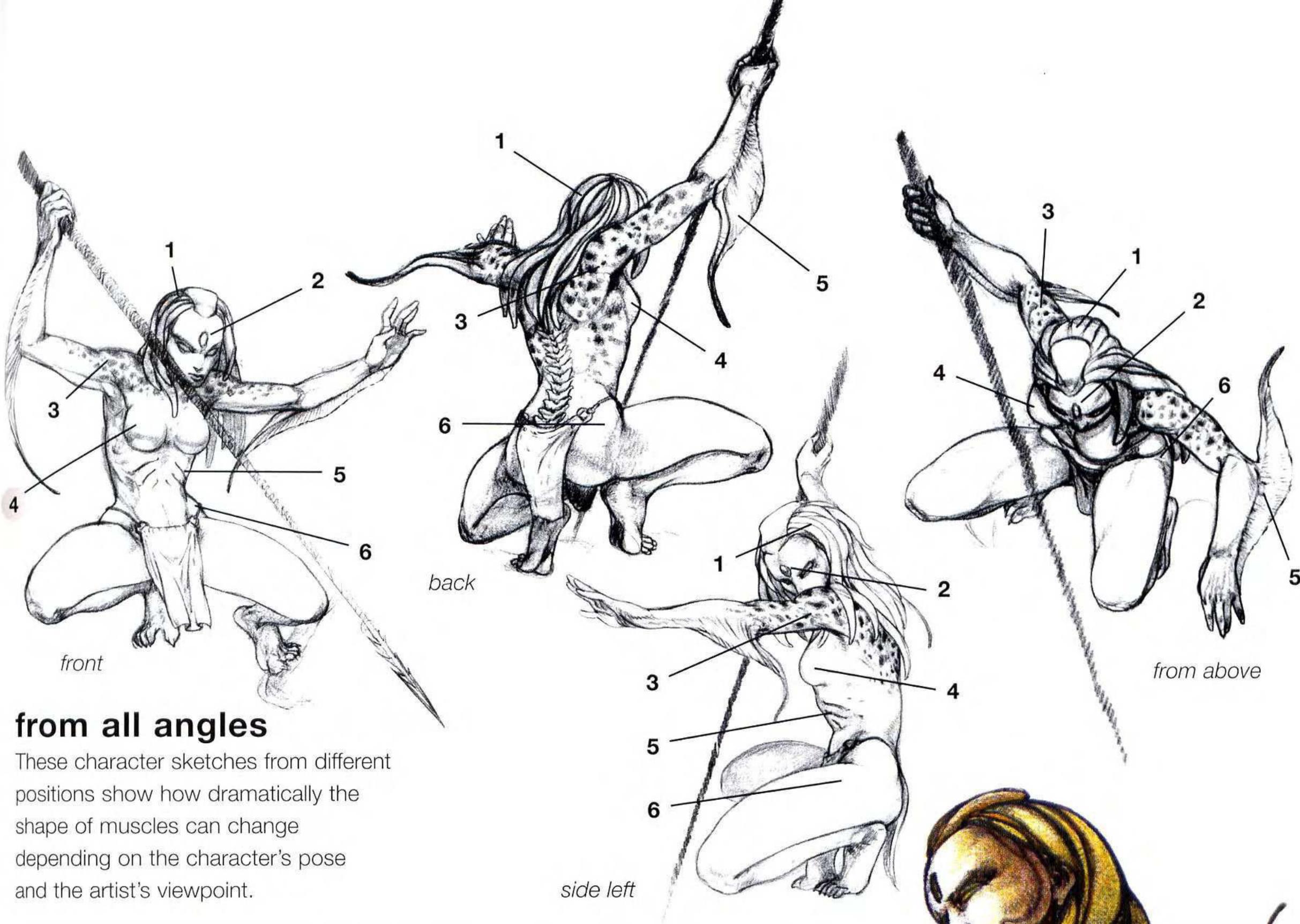


◀ **Three-quarters from above**
Coarse, but the slightly furrowed brow creates a suggestion of thoughtfulness.



► **From the side, looking up**
Tiny details, like the way in which the edges of the mouth are slightly turned down, can give a distinctly angrier look.





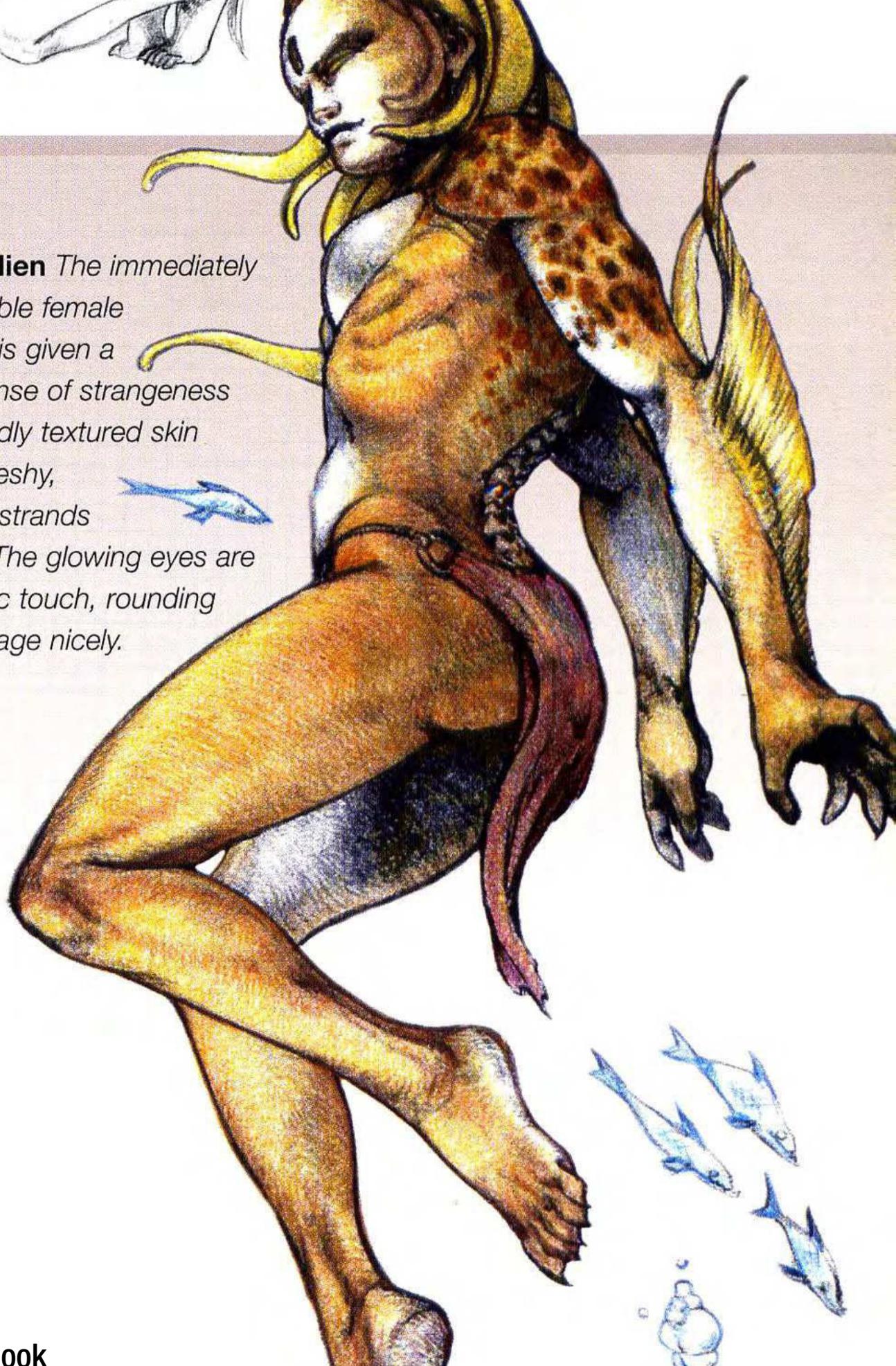
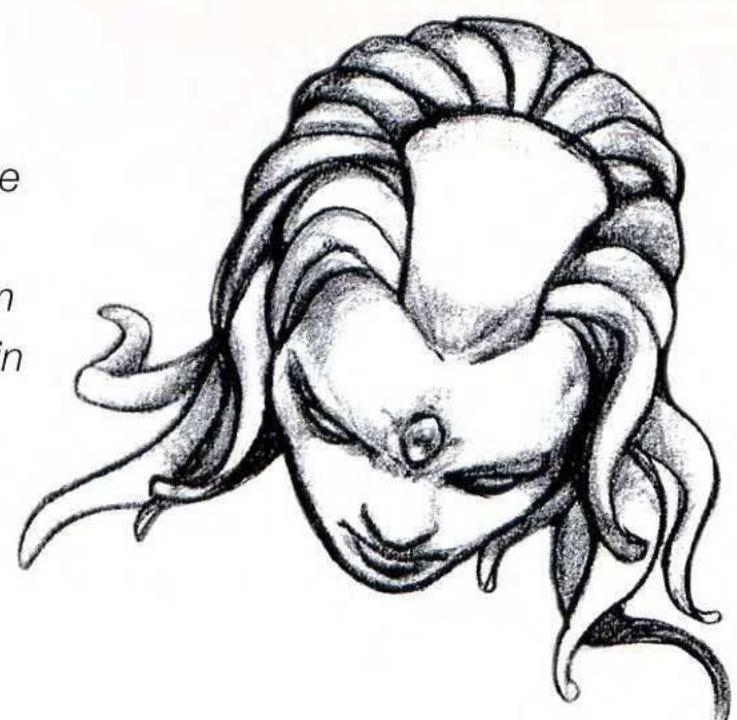
from all angles

These character sketches from different positions show how dramatically the shape of muscles can change depending on the character's pose and the artist's viewpoint.

◀ **From the side and to the back** Notice the gill on the upper part of the neck. This echoes the gill-like openings on the torso and makes the attribute more believable.

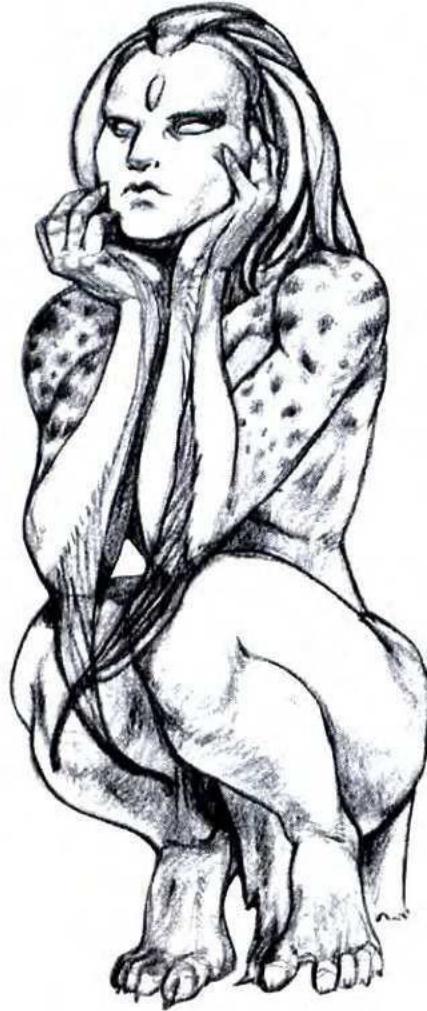
Marine alien The immediately recognizable female physique is given a strong sense of strangeness by the oddly textured skin and the fleshy, snakelike strands of "hair." The glowing eyes are a dramatic touch, rounding off the image nicely.

► **From above** Observe how firmly the "hair" is stylized—there's no room for flimsy half measures in fantasy art, so be bold.



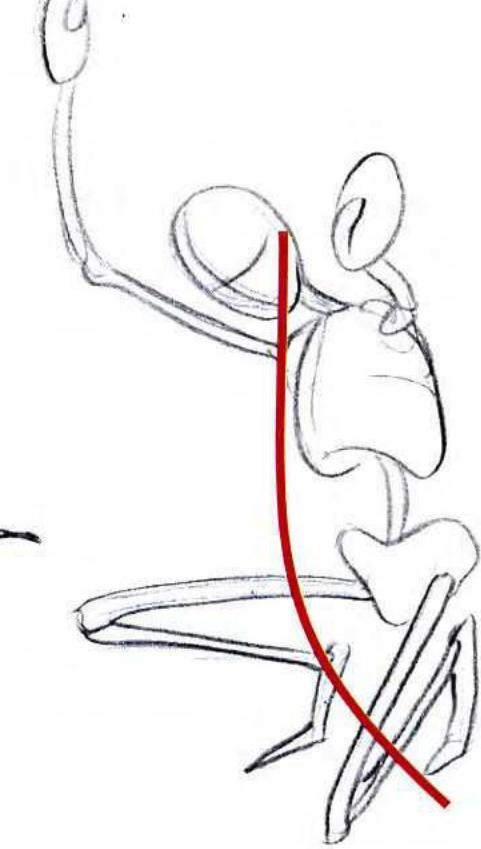
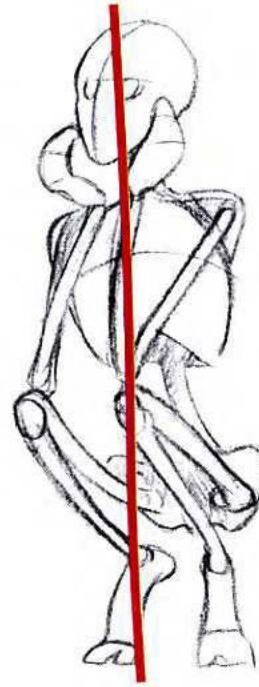
action poses

Charybdis' marine references are expanded on here with the addition of the harpoon. It's always advisable to retain as much continuity as possible with a character's attributes. Otherwise, it's likely that your character will become unconvincing.



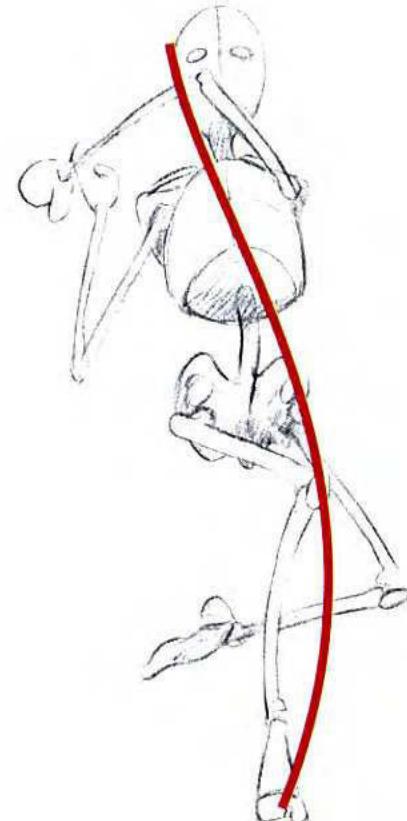
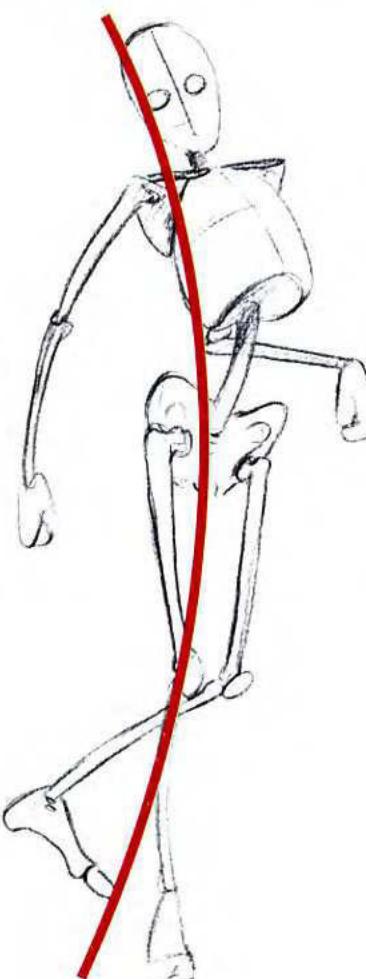
Perching

Notice how the embellished positioning of the fins compensates for the reduced secondary movement in the hair.



Crouching

The character's defiance and power are conveyed in her eyes and the positioning of her hands.



Standing

The extreme foreshortening of the left arm makes the posture look more comfortable and believable.

Lobbing

The positioning of the legs and arms here suggest a body tensed for action.

portfolio picture ►

Joe Calkins

The character's alien nature is reflected not only in her strange coloring but also in the otherworldly nature of her surroundings.

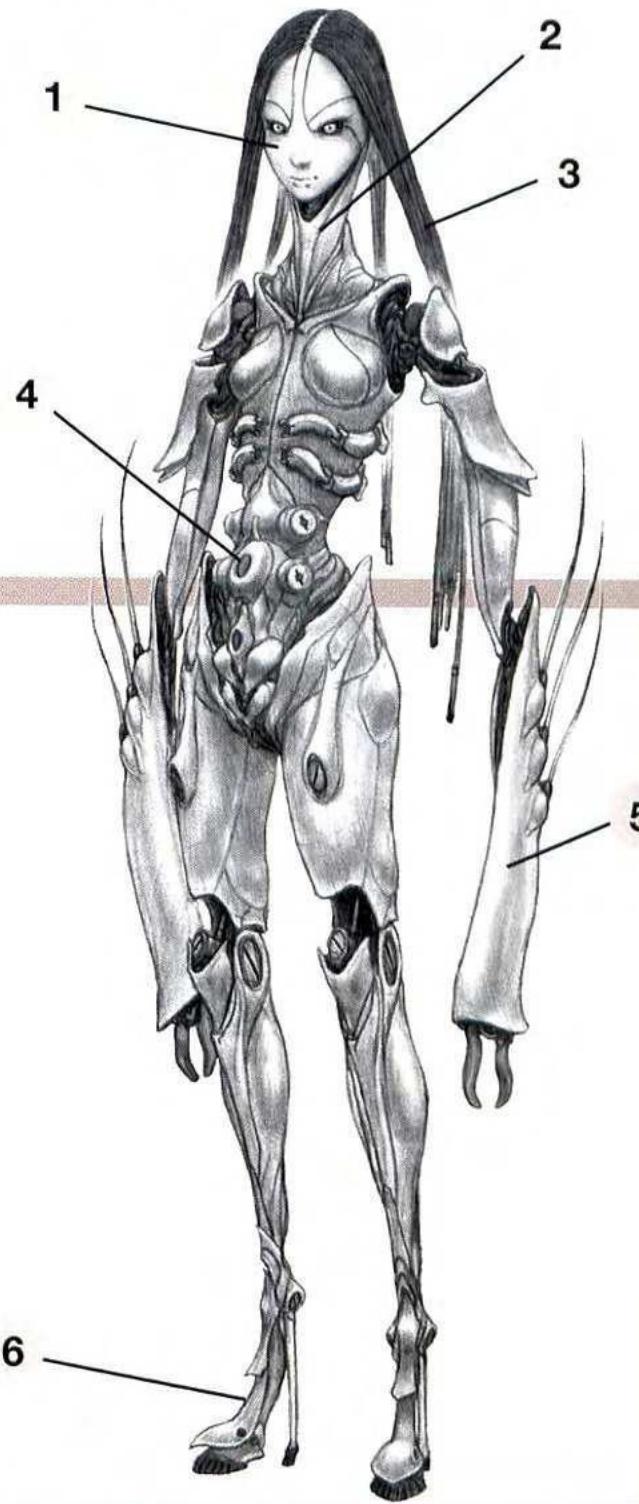


Mk2 the robotic female

Mk2 is the second model in a series of combat robots intended for MOUT (Mobile Operations in Urban Terrain) deployment. Quick and agile, the Mk2s utilize speed and surprise in guerilla warfare and are effective against both soft and hard targets.

key characteristics

1. Visage is a plastic mask, the eyes swivel, and the irises dilate or contract.
2. Long neck can swivel 360°, allowing more freedom of vision.
3. Hair acts as a heat sink and can steam during high activity.
4. Antennae carry myriad sensors.
5. Long, insectlike limbs tipped with alloy pincers.
6. Gyroscopic balance allows minimal ground contact.



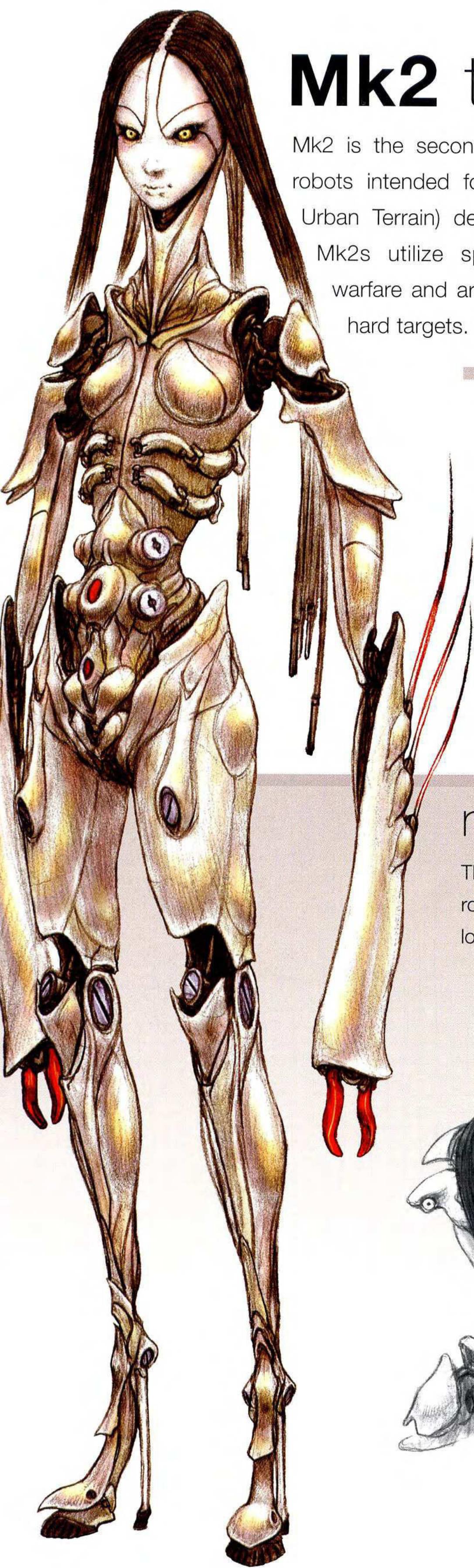
robotic features

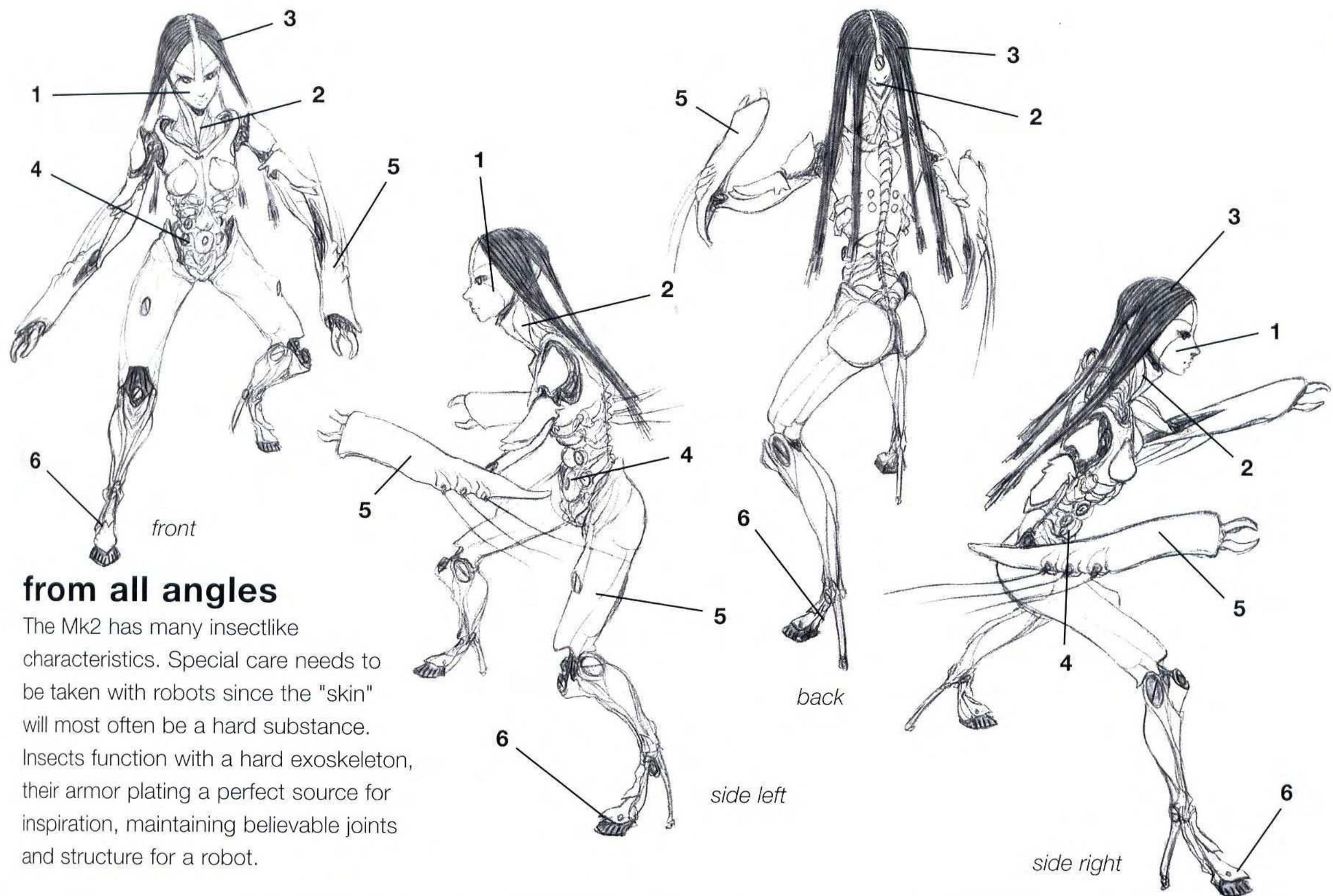
The Mk2 is graceful, but also very direct in its actions. Based on speed, this robot tends to spring and lunge in a linear fashion. Although the anatomy is long and thin, all the limbs are curved like those of a human.

◀ **From the back** Panels on the head flip open and rotate. This exposes internal sensors and systems and can allow an even larger and more diverse field of vision.



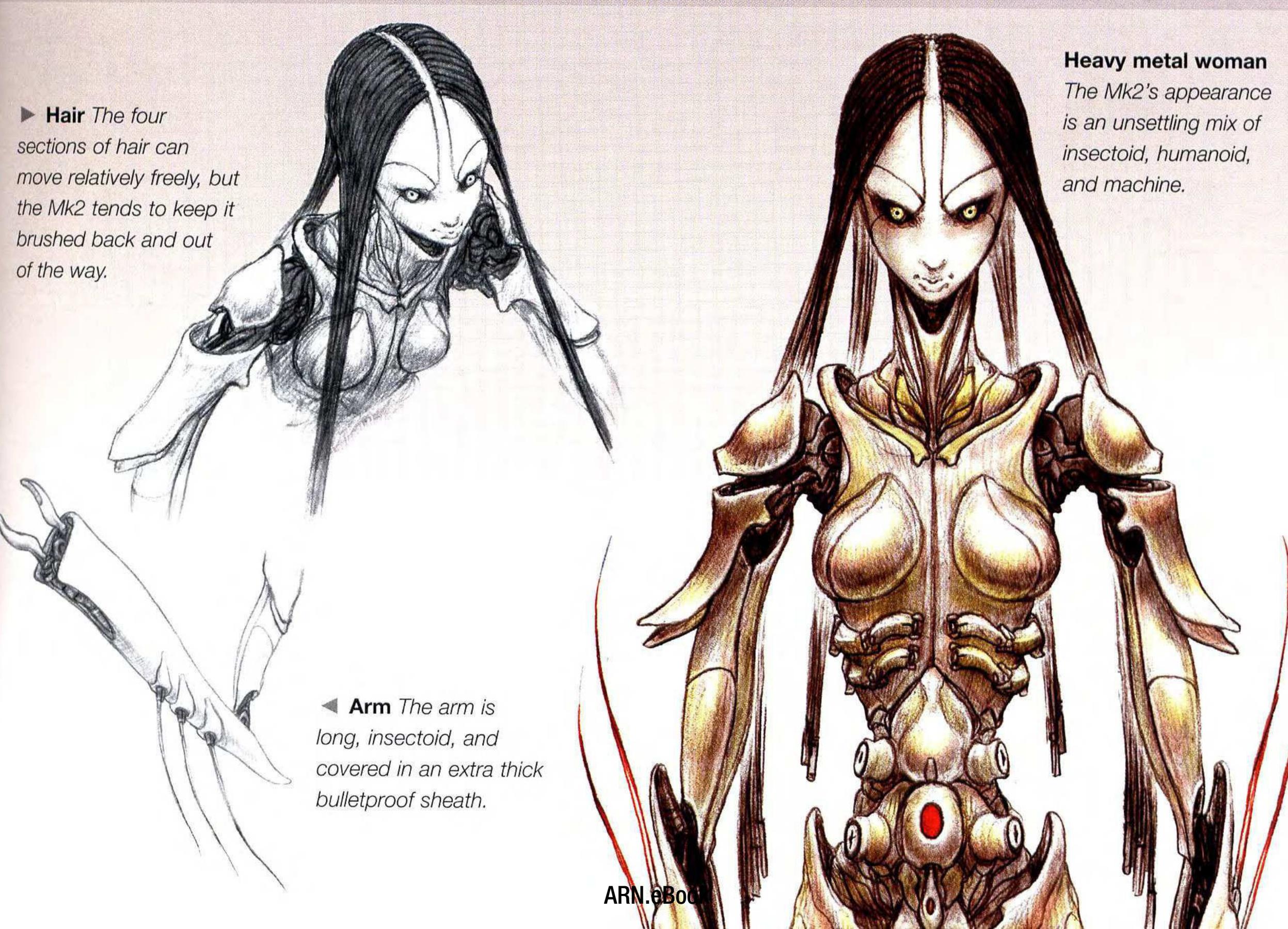
► **From the side** The Mk2's insectoid features are clear in its swiveling eyes and long neck.





from all angles

The Mk2 has many insectlike characteristics. Special care needs to be taken with robots since the "skin" will most often be a hard substance. Insects function with a hard exoskeleton, their armor plating a perfect source for inspiration, maintaining believable joints and structure for a robot.



► **Hair** The four sections of hair can move relatively freely, but the Mk2 tends to keep it brushed back and out of the way.

Heavy metal woman

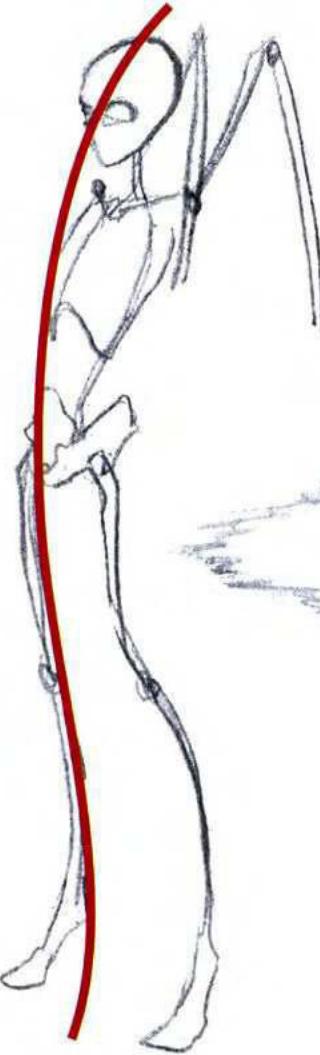
The Mk2's appearance is an unsettling mix of insectoid, humanoid, and machine.

◀ **Arm** The arm is long, insectoid, and covered in an extra thick bulletproof sheath.

ARN.eBo

action poses

The Mk2's female appearance delays return fire from human combatants. Her body design maximizes her battle potential, both offensively and defensively.



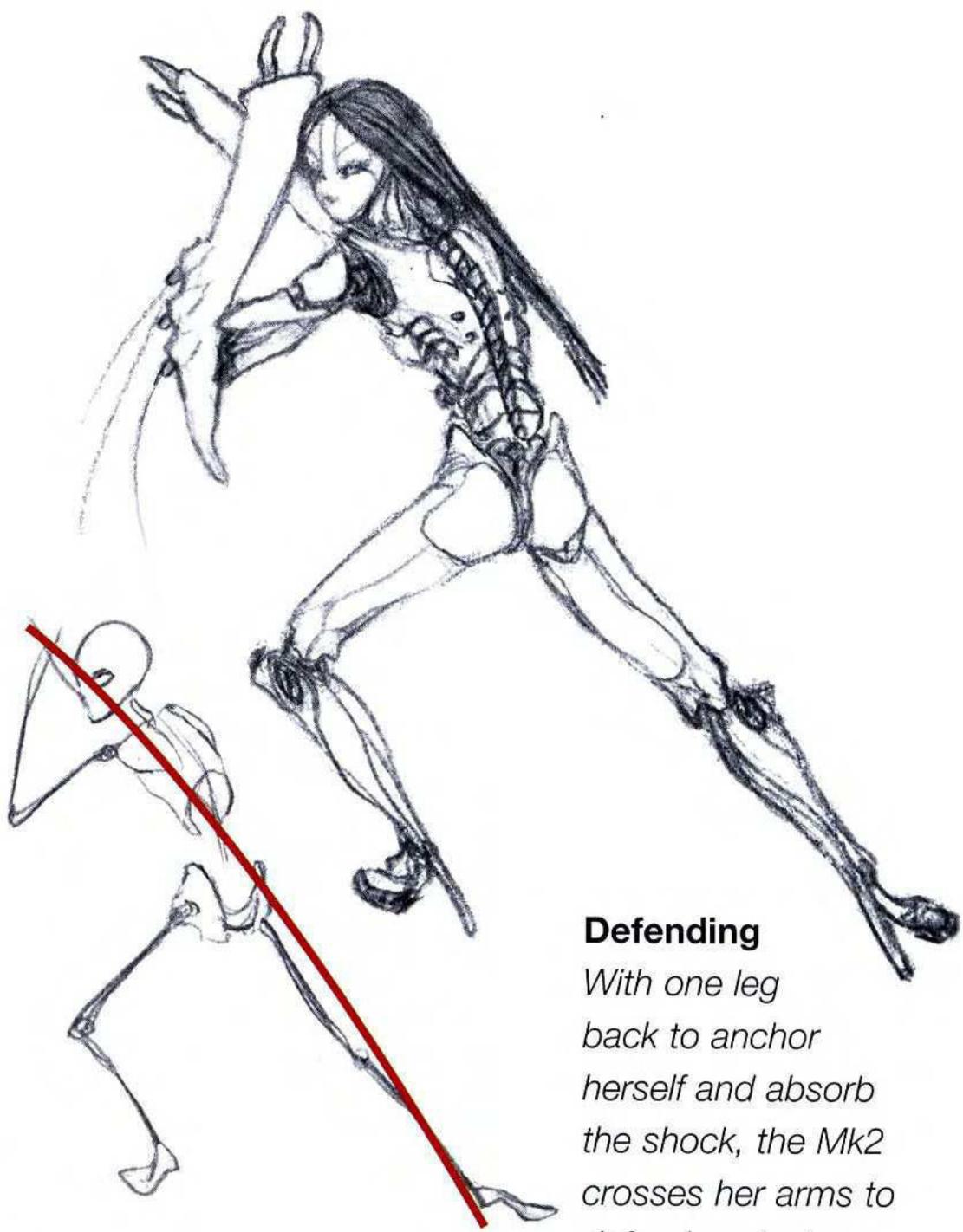
Lunging

Lunging directly at an opponent, the Mk2 stays low to the ground.



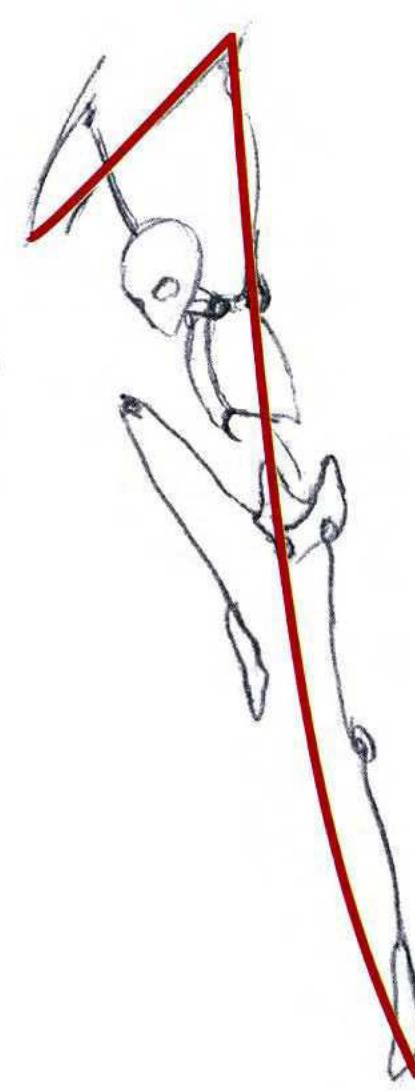
Shooting

The Mk2 has swiveled her arms back to deploy her integral flechette guns. The arms also tuck her hair back from the ejecting shell casings.



Defending

With one leg back to anchor herself and absorb the shock, the Mk2 crosses her arms to defend against a barrage of fire.



Springing

Leaping, the Mk2's arms can swivel at an angle that would be impossible for a human.

portfolio picture ▶

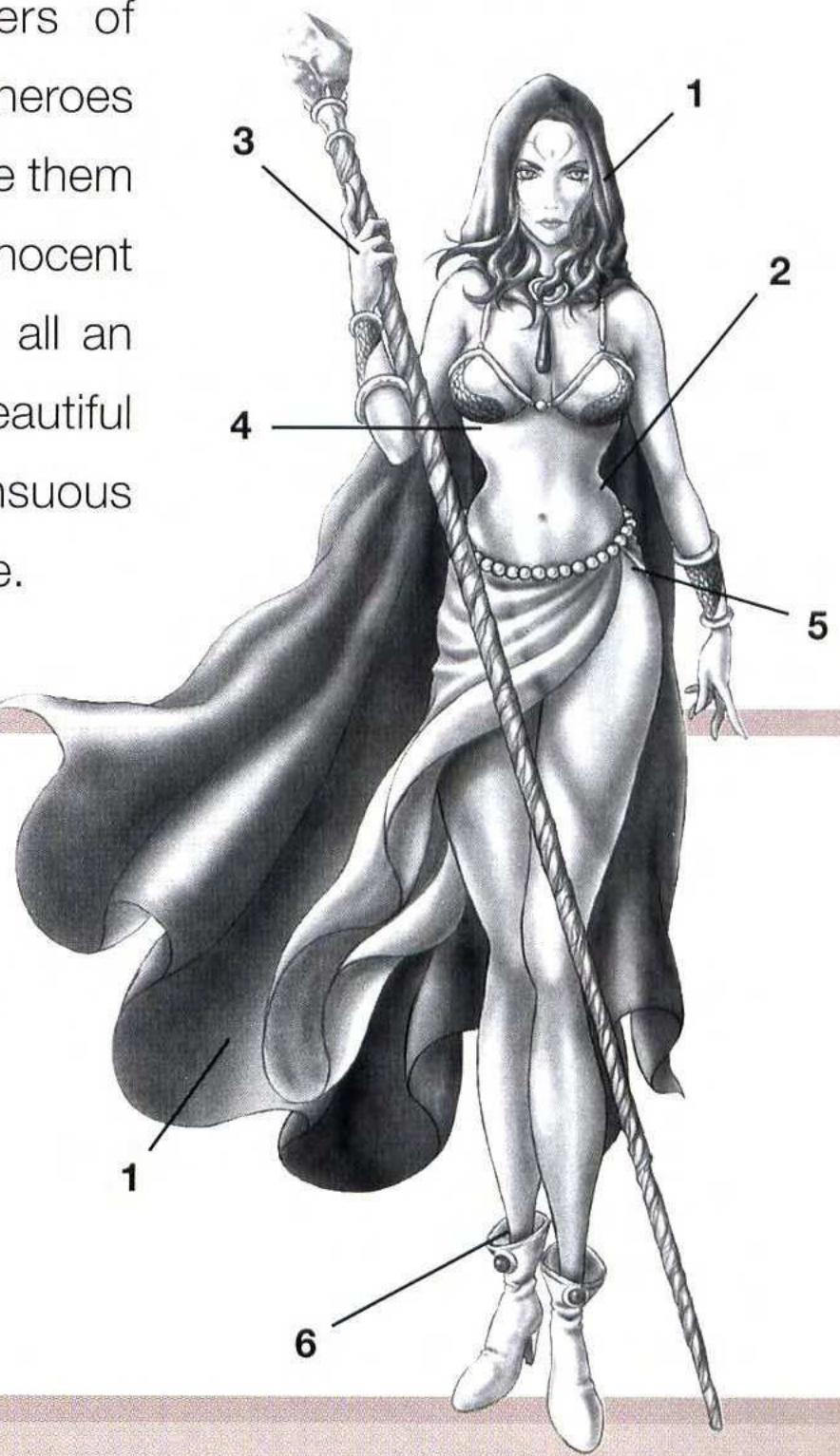
Keith Thompson

In real life, design is often hindered by functionality. Not so with the robotic female. In this artwork, its cool curves and awesome accessories defy logic but look amazing.



Circea the enchantress

Betrayed by men, Circea uses her powers of enchantment solely for revenge. She tempts heroes from their true paths and casts spells to change them into animals. This lovely female appears quite innocent to those she ensnares, but her innocence is all an illusion. With charms few can resist, the beautiful Circea tempts men into her lair with sensuous dances and then transforms them into swine.

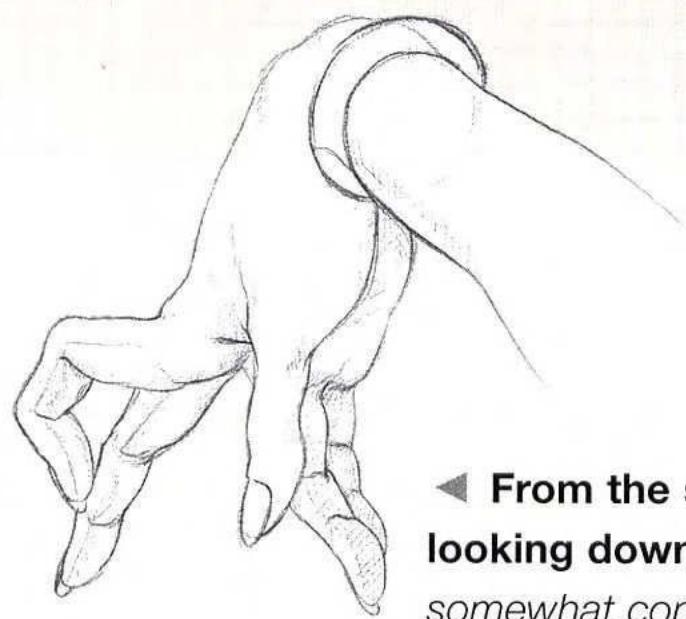


key characteristics

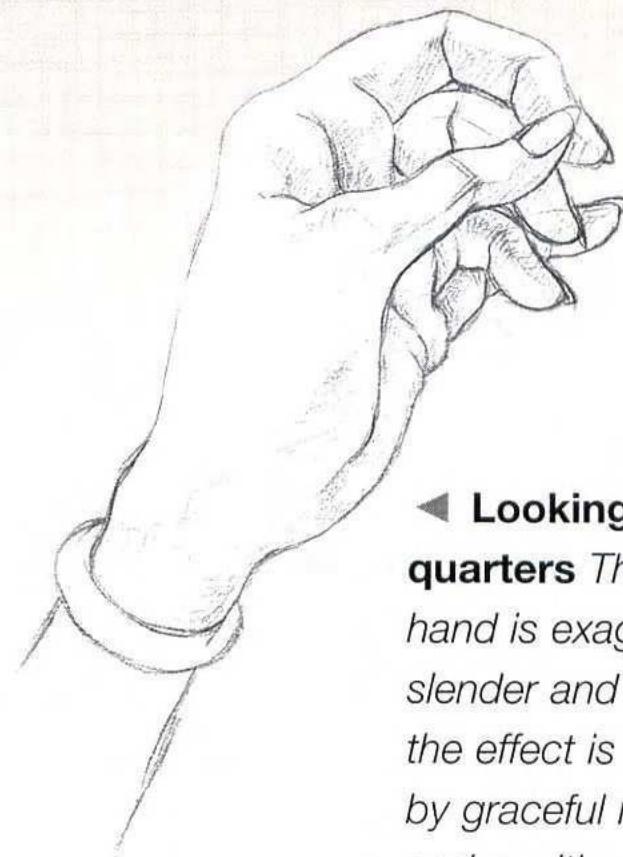
1. Dark hair and cape.
2. Exaggerated curves.
3. Stylized hands with long, thin fingers.
4. Rib cage smaller than average.
5. Hips placed higher than normal.
6. Extremely slender ankles and wrists.

hand gestures

The enchantress's hands are especially important because she uses them to transfix her quarry and, inevitably, to unleash her dark magic when she gets it under her spell. Start with your own hands and stylize them later: This way you will be able to map out an image with good proportions and perspective and then add special characteristics such as these long, slender fingers.



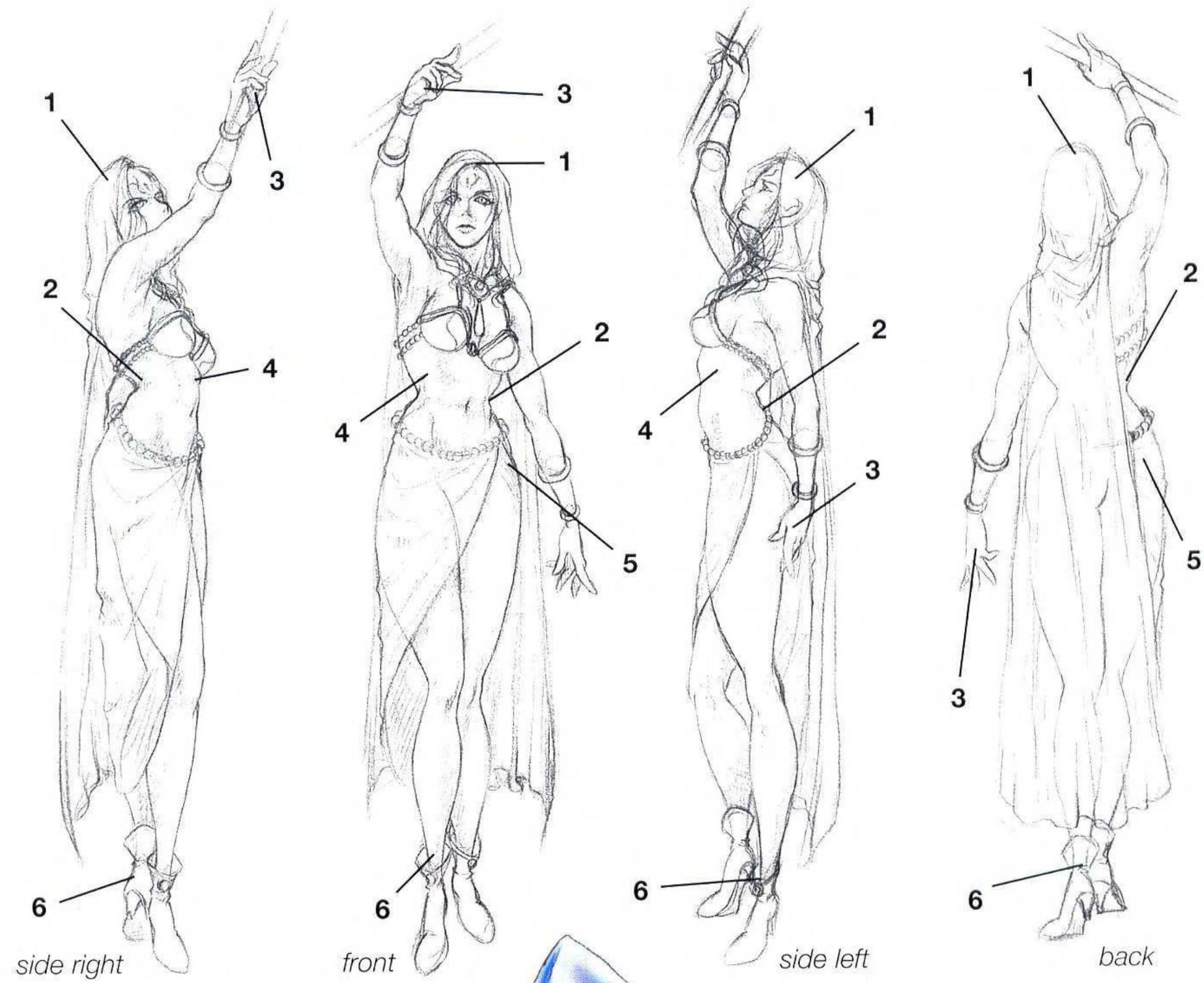
◀ **From the side, looking down** The somewhat contorted hand stresses the dark side of this lovely character's nature.



◀ **Looking up three-quarters** The whole hand is exaggeratedly slender and willowy, and the effect is enhanced by graceful movement and positioning.

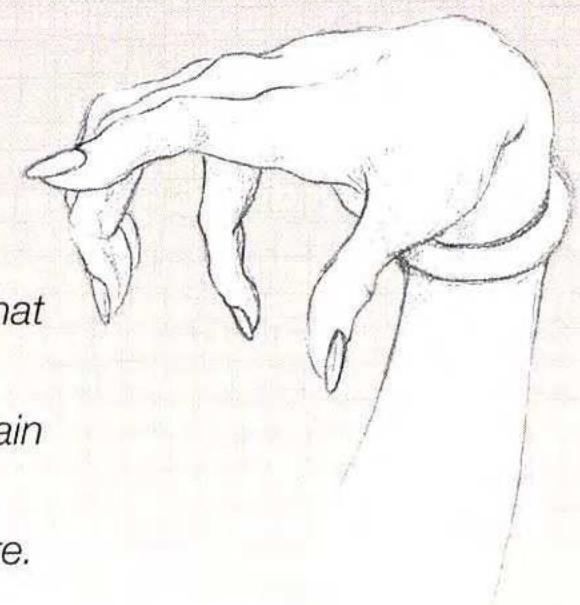
from all angles

Notice here how the enchantress's body, which is essentially round and smooth, contrasts with the sharpness of her features, her elongated hands and feet, and the relatively petite size of her head. The enchantress is scantily clad, and her clothes are designed to leave little to the imagination (all the better to lure her male prey!).



From above

Every part of a character should say, or reaffirm, something about that character, so it's important to maintain the sleek feminine look in every feature.



From below

Additional small details such as pointed fingernails and the bracelet that shows off the thin wrist are a good way to emphasize a character trait.



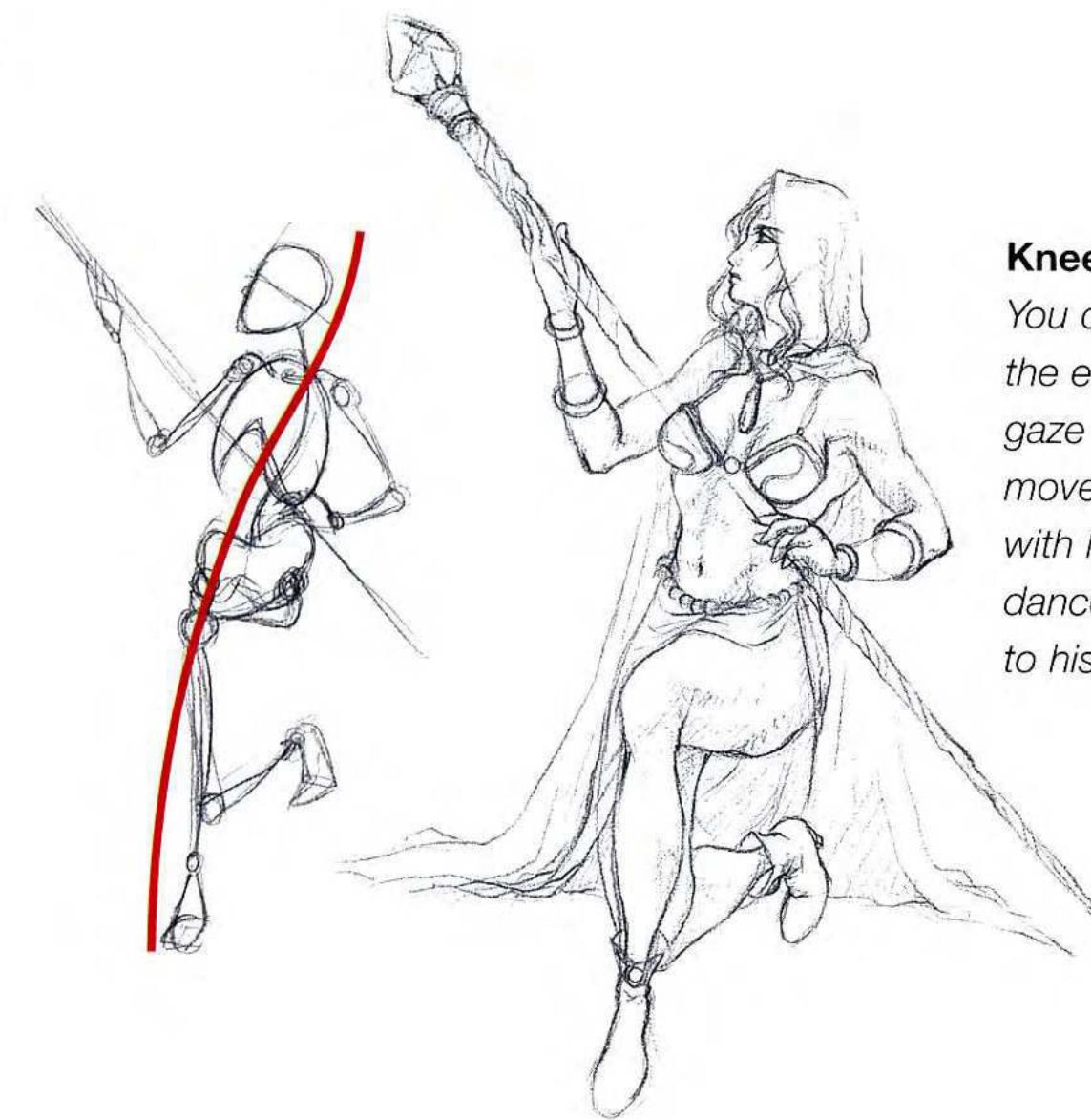
Side left A general rule in fantasy art is that the more evil the character, the more distorted and twisted her postures will be. Small details such as the position of fingers and movement of clothes and hair can make a huge difference.

Come hither The mixture of beauty and sexual allure makes the enchantress a bewitching character.



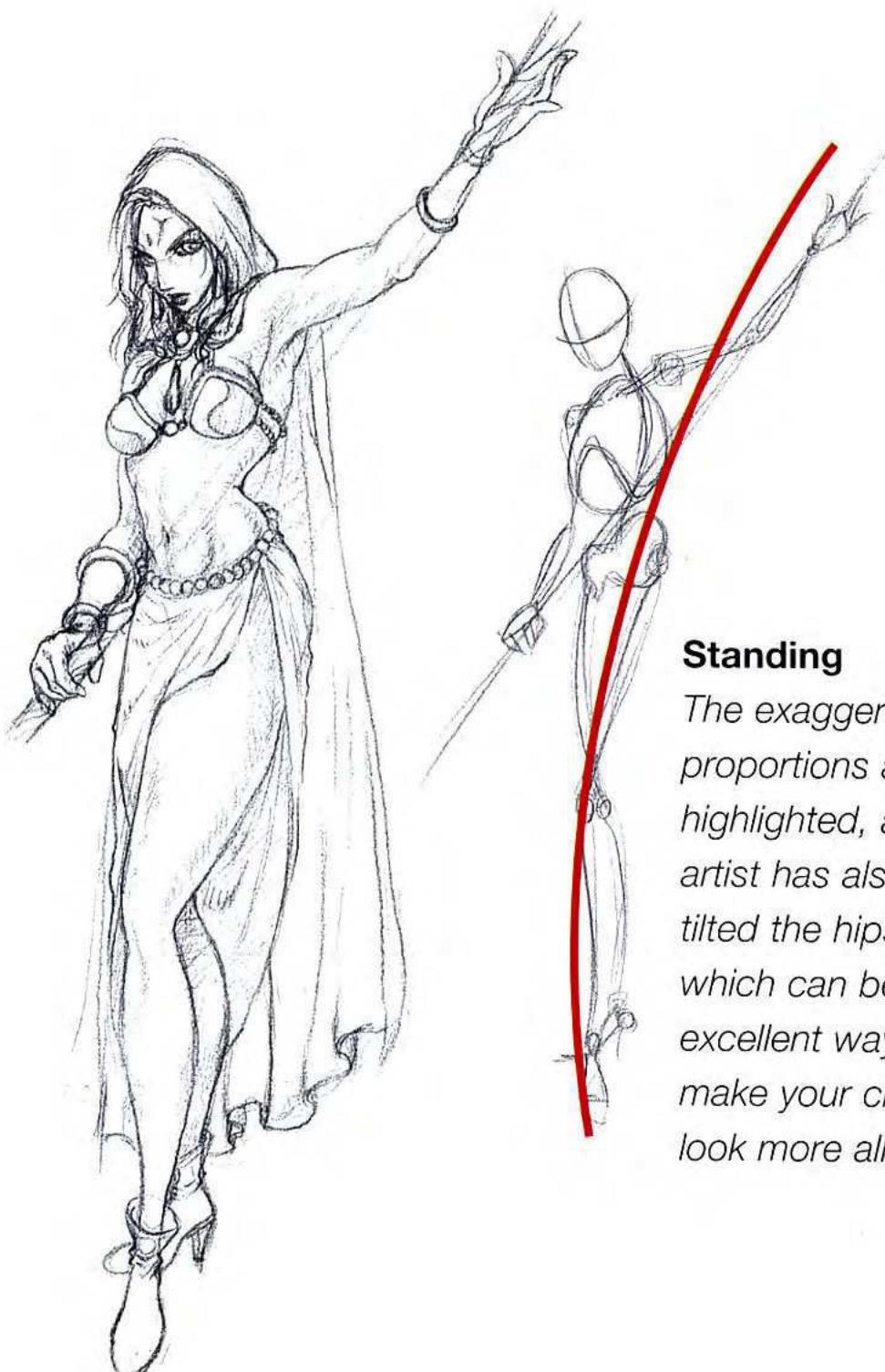
action poses

The artist used Art Nouveau prints together with images of dancers as references for her work. Although Circea's dance poses are modeled on real people, a fantasy element has been introduced by elongating her limbs and exaggerating the curves of her body.



Kneeling

You can almost imagine the enraptured male's gaze taking in her every move as she tricks him with her heavenly dances and leads him to his doom.



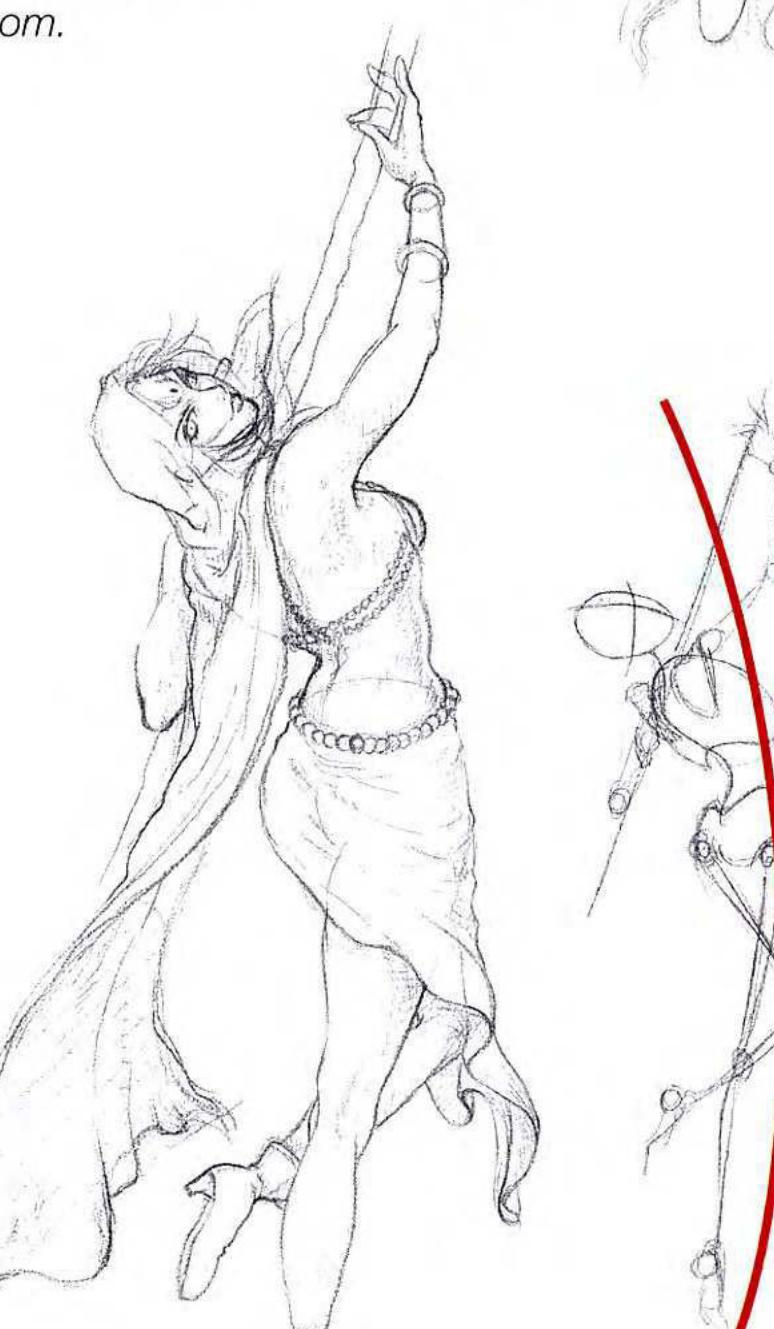
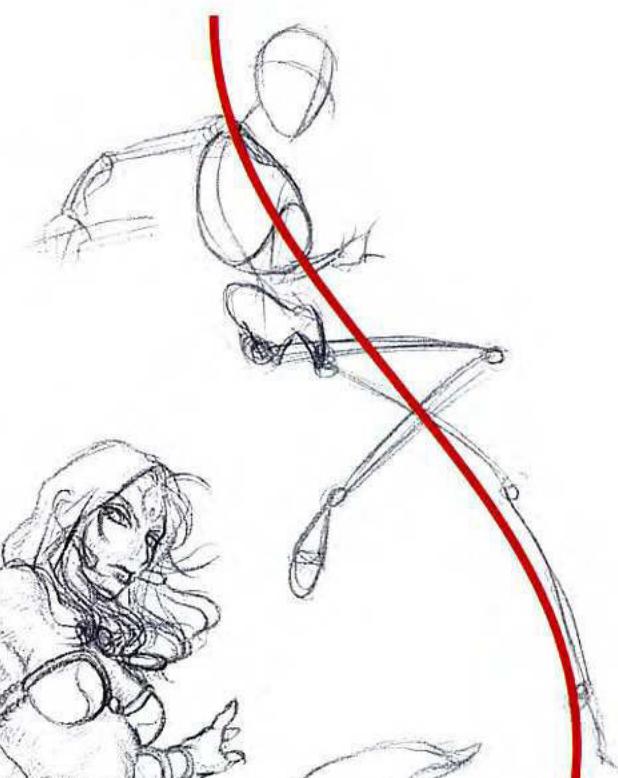
Standing

The exaggerated proportions are highlighted, and the artist has also tilted the hips slightly, which can be an excellent way to make your character look more alluring.



Leaping

Notice how the arm appears to shorten as she leans toward you. This is a perspective effect known as foreshortening, and it can be exaggerated to create a sense of space and movement.



Reaching up

This image highlights the contrast between the rounded figure and the sharp angularity of the features, hands, and feet.

portfolio picture

Michael Cunningham

In this interpretation, the enchantress's pale skin, sharp features, taloned hands, and dark outfit lend her a much more sinister air.



Brutus the hulk

Brutus has an immensely broad back and enormous arms—twisted forward into an ape-like stance to better display their mass and exaggerate his vast trapezius muscles. His comparatively small head appears half submerged in his torso, and he wears very little clothing. Such hulks generally stand around six and a half to seven feet tall.

facial expressions

A chilling evocation of a pugnacious hard nut. Everything about Brutus's facial expressions is guaranteed to instil fear into his enemies.

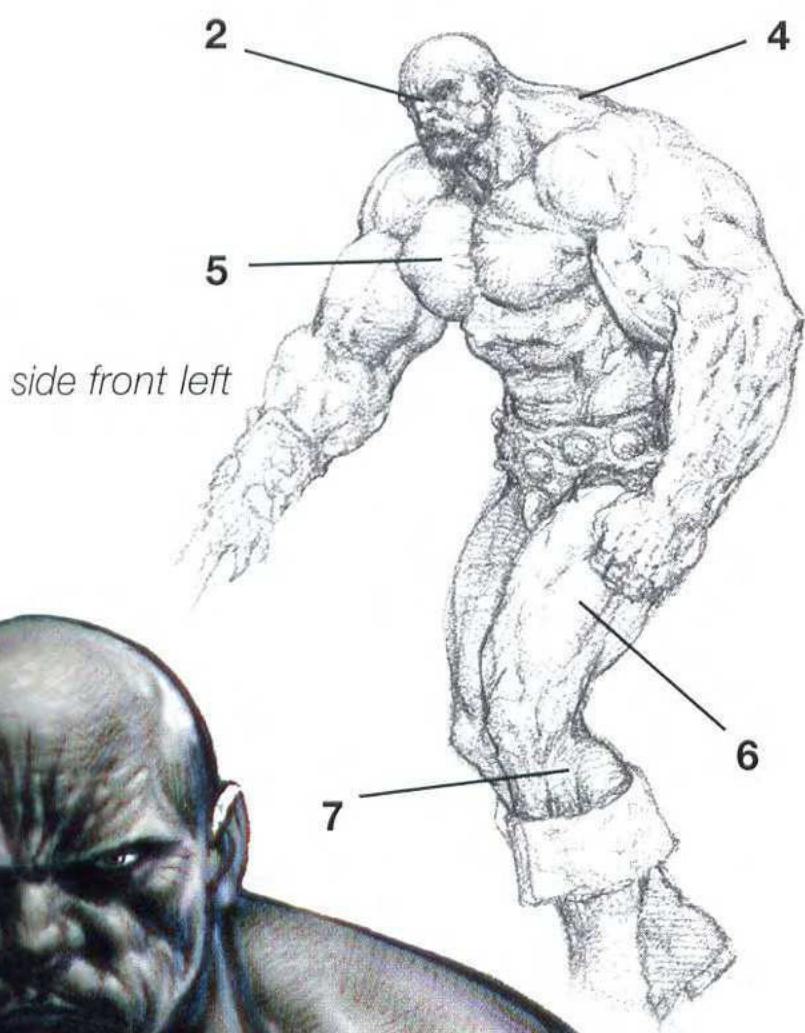
◀ **From the side** In profile we can see his shattered nose and jutting jaw, as well as the cavernous overhang of his brow. Heavy shadows here lend brooding intensity to the character.

► **From above, front**
left This semi-profile from slightly above the figure gives us a good look at his brutishly thick, almost square skull.

"Don't mess with me!"
 This pose suggests barely controlled aggression.

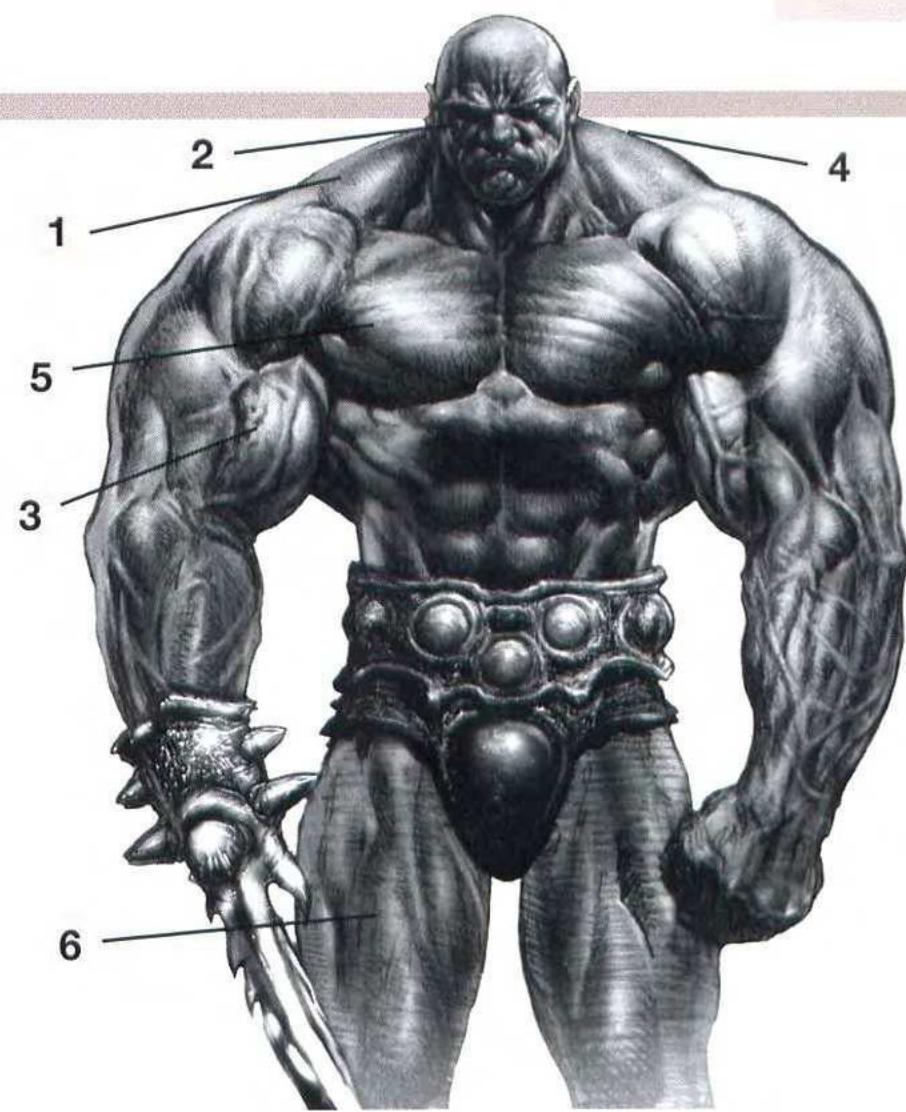
◀ **From above**
 This straight-on head shot from slightly above is standard fare in barbarian fantasy paintings—
 "Time to die..."

◀ **From below** This view gives an overwhelming sense of Brutus's height as well as his bulk. The down-turned mouth is smugly contemptuous, and the threatening knitted brow is all but pointless—a picture of self-assured might.



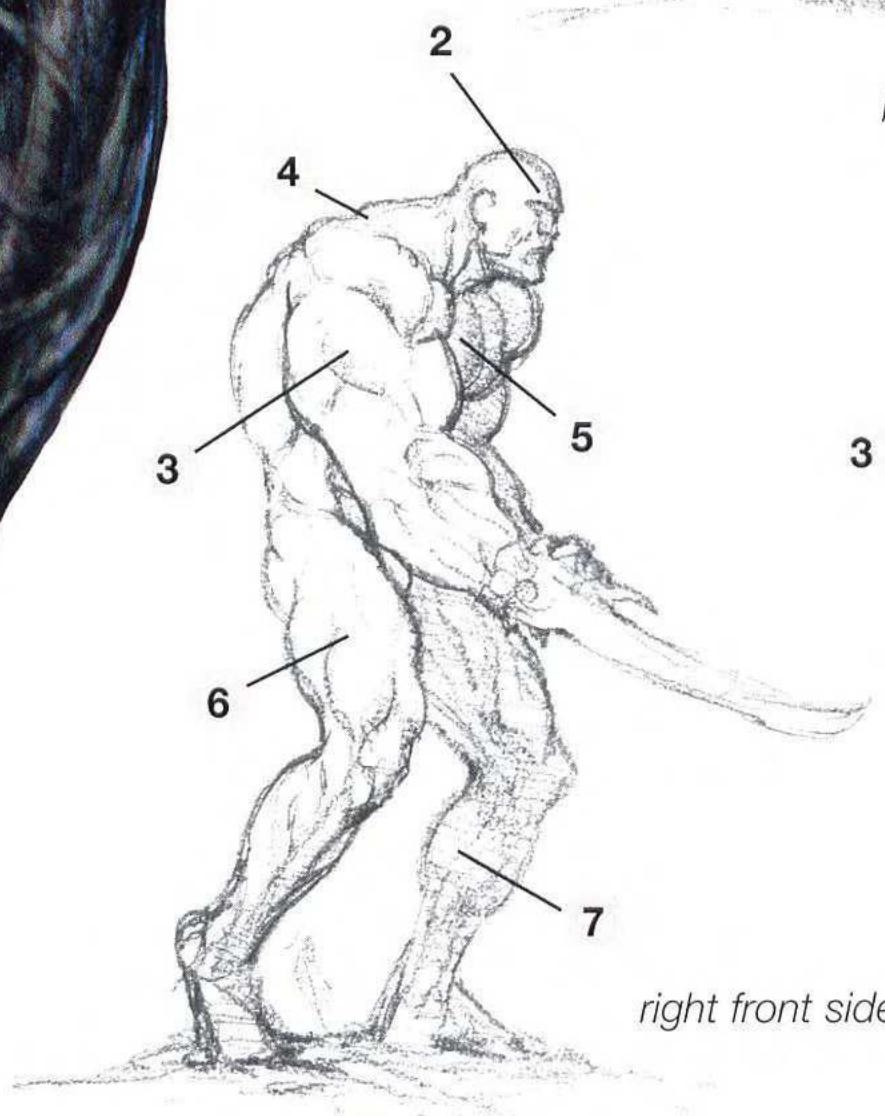
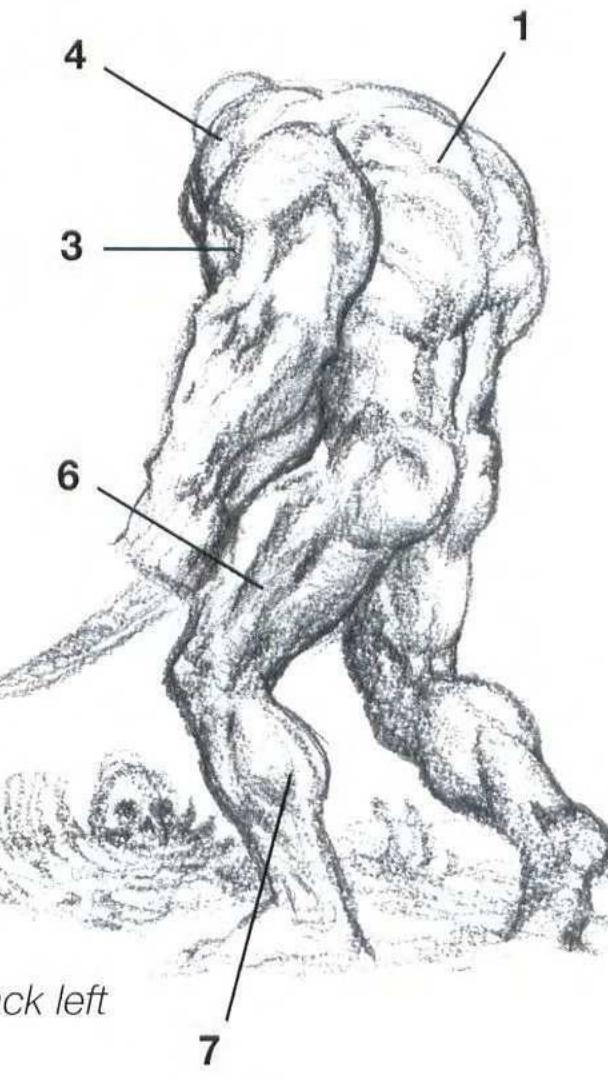
key characteristics

1. The trapezius muscles (traps) extend across the shoulders from the base of the skull to halfway down the back.
2. A permanent frown. The steely glare of a killer burns in his beady eye. A wide broken nose, down-turned mouth and clenched jaw.
3. Huge triceps for truly Herculean arms.
4. Latissimus dorsi (lats) of spectacular proportions.
5. Dense, striated pectorals (pecs).
6. Thick quadriceps (quads).
7. Massive calves.



from all angles

Seeing the hulk from all angles reveals just how deep chested this character is. His mass is concentrated in three main areas: lats, which give him that great wide back and classic "V" shape; triceps, which constitute the largest muscles in the arms; and traps, which bunch up around his neck and shoulders, giving him that hunched-over bulldog look.

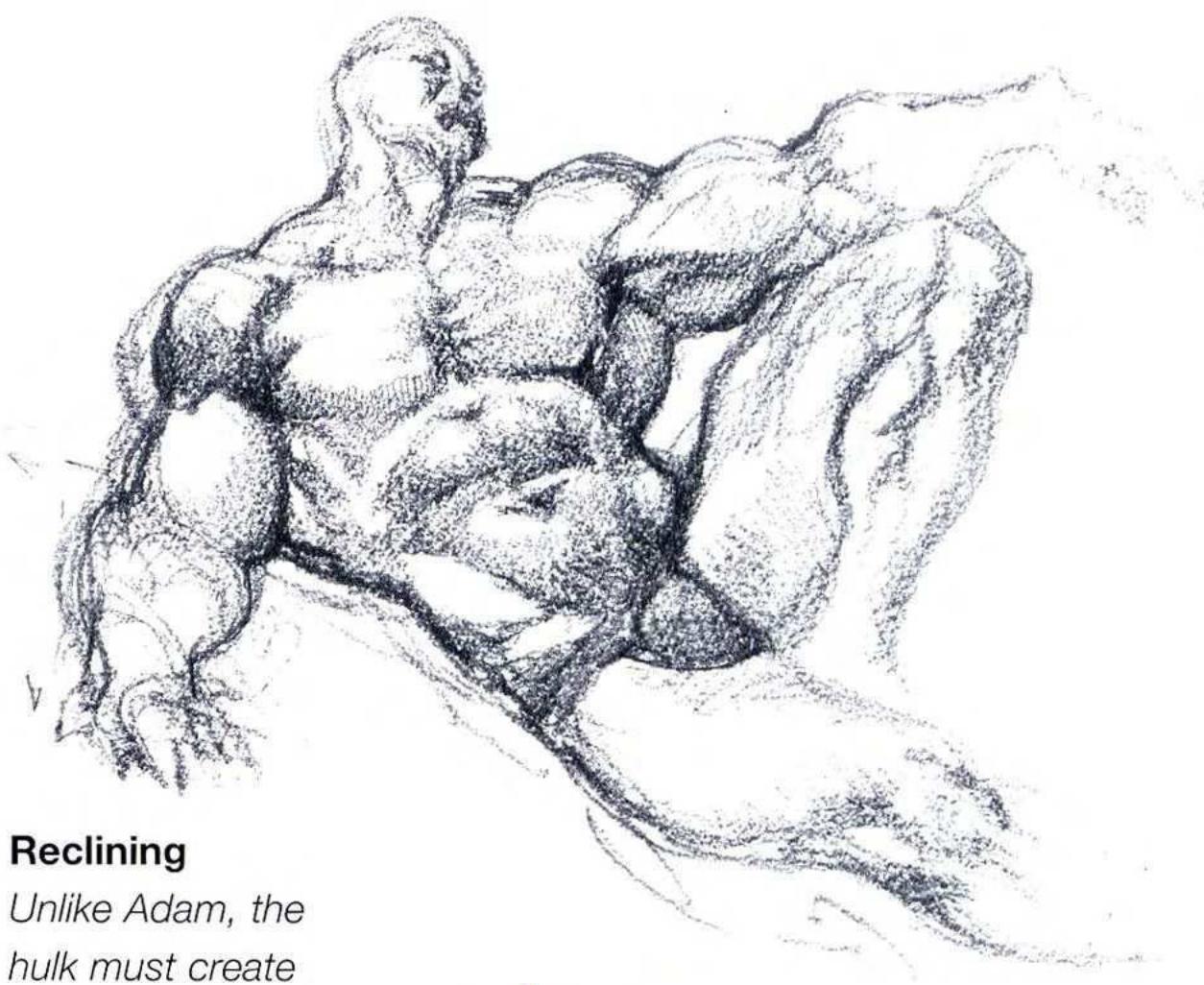
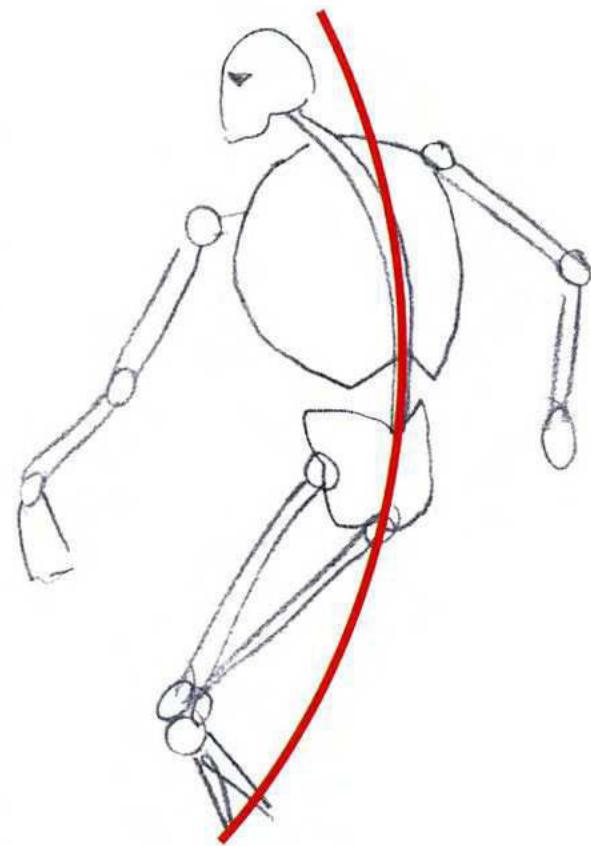


action poses

Whether in repose or in action, the hulk's extreme physique is on display, every muscle exaggerated and given definition.

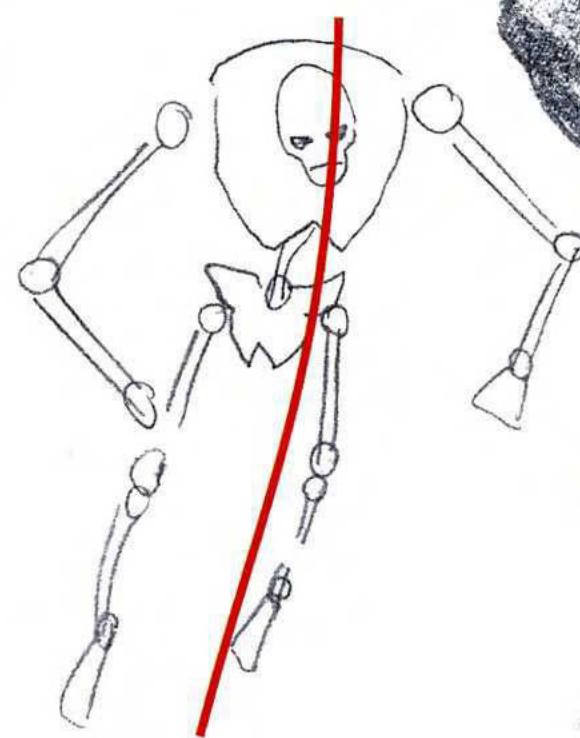
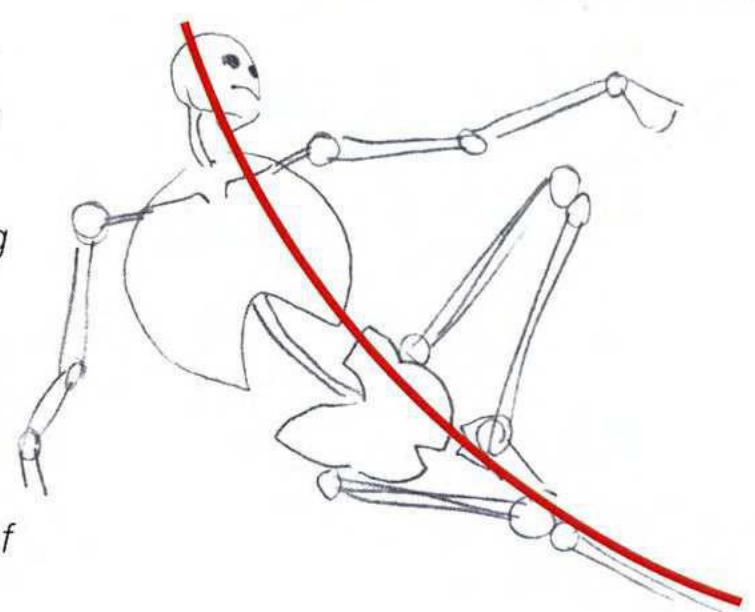
Lurching

In hulking characters, the back is especially important. This drawing shows the lats clearly, and the way the muscles in the back bunch against each other. You can also see how the deltoids (shoulder muscles) roll back when the arms are lifted.



Reclining

Unlike Adam, the hulk must create himself. Such mass has to be rigorously maintained, which makes many hulking characters exceedingly vain. In this classical pose we can still see the incredible breadth of the lats and the dramatic narrowing at the waist. Even when relaxed, the hulk is impressive.



Springing into action This pose shows how even so vast a bulk can be given grace, speed, and agility if handled right.



portfolio picture

Michael Cunningham

Notice how thick the hulk's arms are, and how the main muscle groups (biceps and triceps) are complemented and given a better overall shape by the numerous bulges that surround them.



Hermia the winged avenger

Created by an eminent hierophant to cleanse the world of evil, Hermia was fashioned from blessed ivory and bone, and instilled with magic. Many men of ill-repute fell to her daggers. As she killed, she increasingly saw some taint of impurity in everything that met her gaze, and soon even her creator found himself subject to her judgment.

key characteristics

1. Wings are her most powerful limbs. Notice that the feathers are slightly coarse—she is pure, but a tireless warrior nonetheless.
2. Large eyes signify not innocence but omniscience. Nothing escapes her gaze.
3. Slight frame, and musculature not pronounced. She does not enter into combat—she executes judgment.
4. Porcelain skin emphasizes her purity.



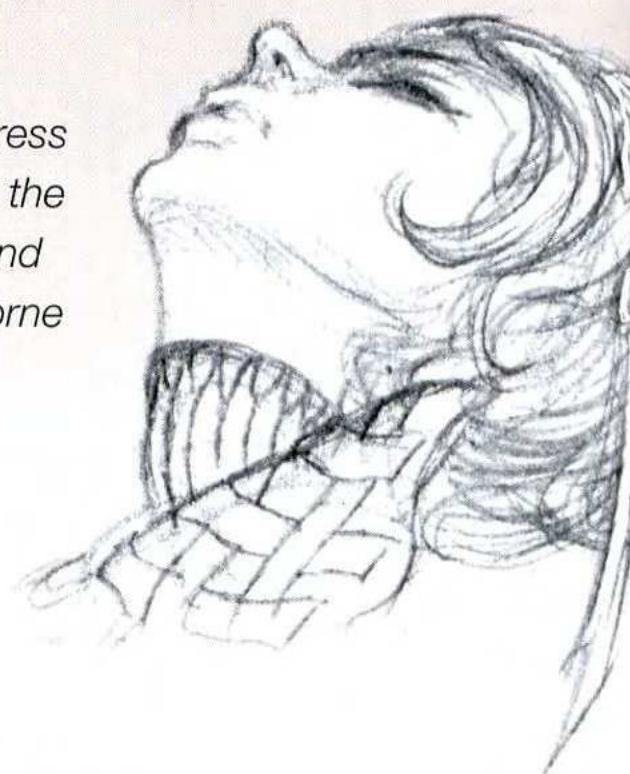
in the round

A slight frame suits an avian character, as does light armor consisting of leather, fabric, and lacquer. For believability, ensure that the wings appear large enough to convincingly lift her in flight. Remember that the character is, in effect, four-armed, so the wings should probably join around the shoulders and not lower on the back. Notice how long the flight feathers are. When resting in a standing position, the wings should curve inward like arms.

facial expressions

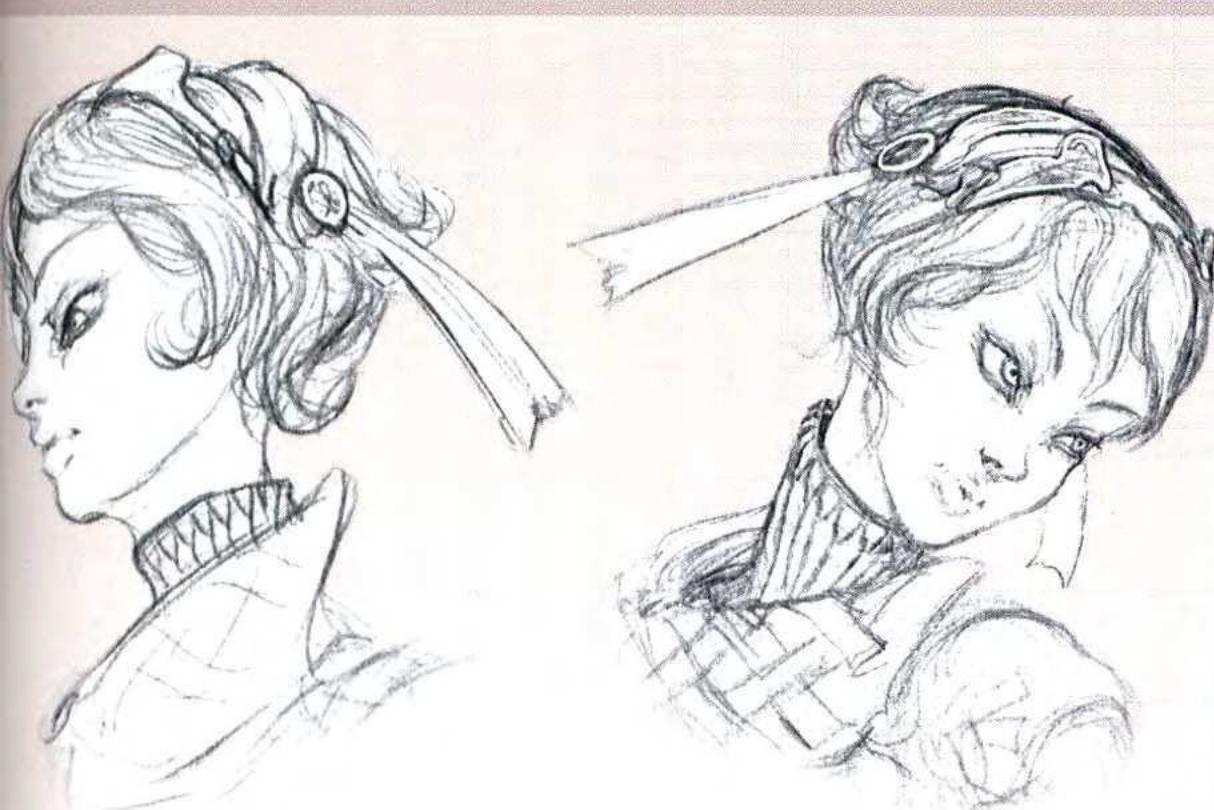
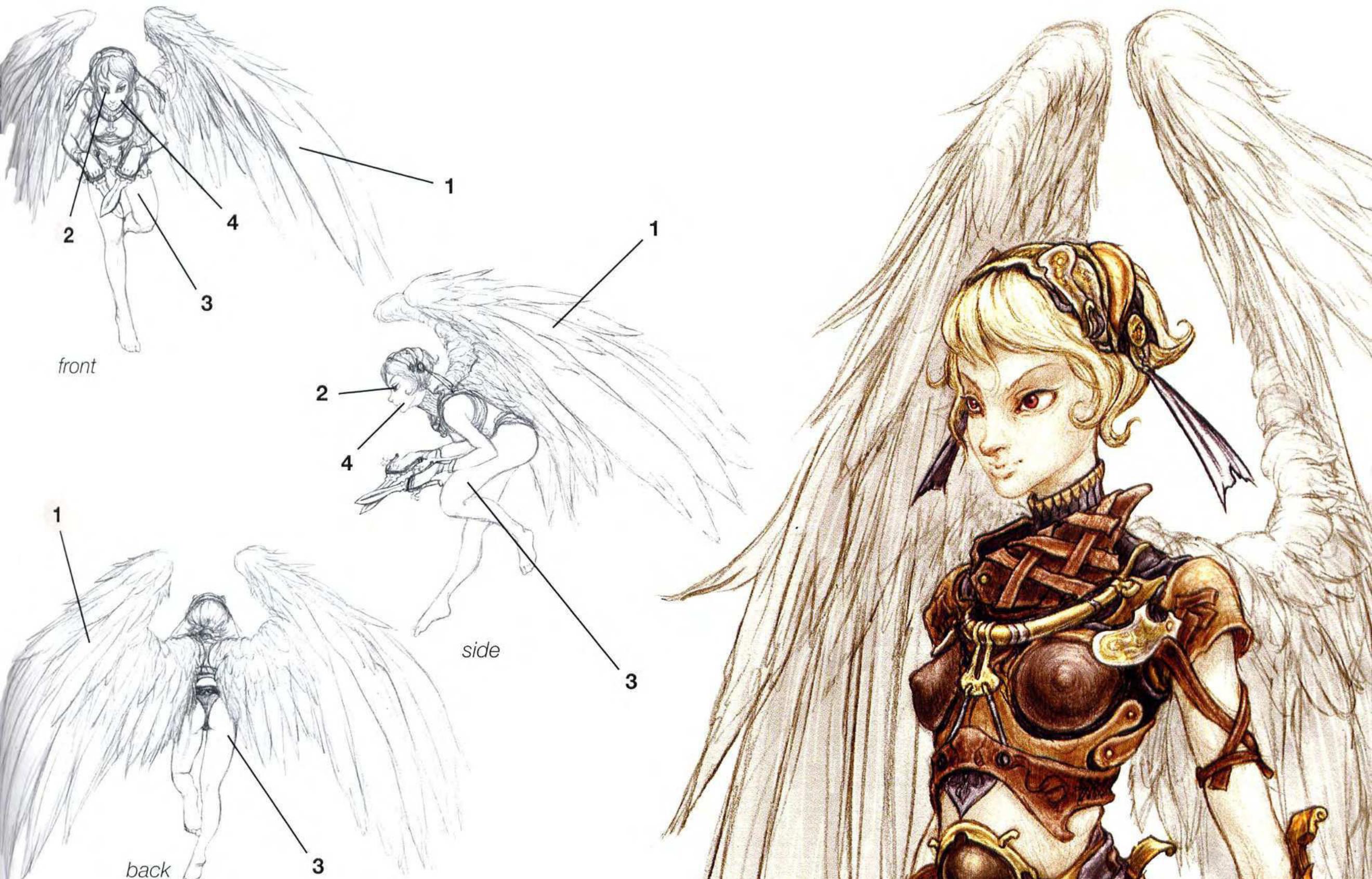
Most of the time, Hermia wears an inscrutable smile—rather like the Mona Lisa—that resists interpretation. It reflects the fact that she keeps her own counsel and is beyond social interaction.

► **Looking up** The feathers on her headdress serve both to highlight the direction of her gaze and to emphasize her airborne motion.



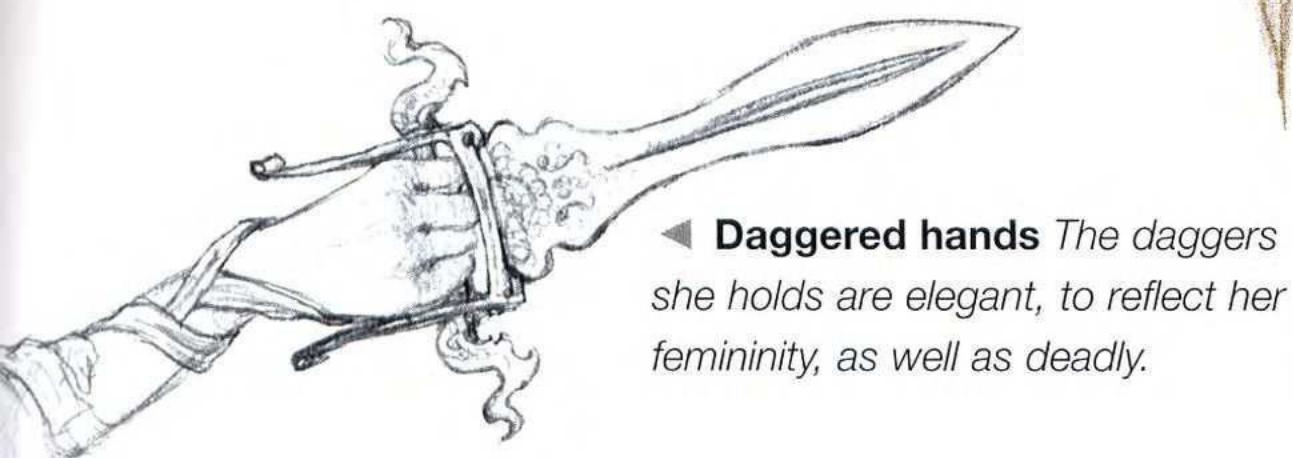
Merciless judge Hermia's sweeping gaze is never at rest as she tirelessly seeks out impurity wherever she goes.





▲ **From the side** Her large eyes are slightly slanted to give her a feline, predatory look.

▲ **Looking down** The armor she wears is light and does not restrict her movement in any way.



action poses

The action of flying introduces us to some interesting new styles and textures, as well as a whole new set of postures now that the legs are no longer load-bearing and take a bigger role in balance. This is where all those simplified skeletons you've drawn will start to really become useful as you draw your characters swooping and soaring through a range of aerial acrobatics with ease!



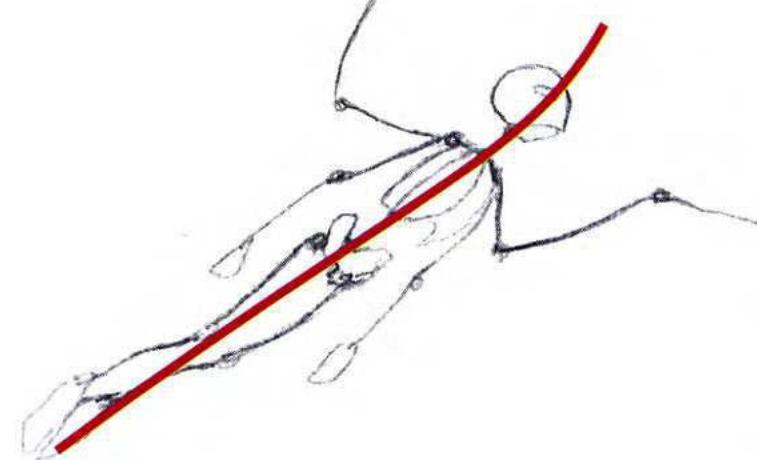
Soaring

Having launched into flight, Hermia is streamlined, holding her legs together and her arms close by her sides.



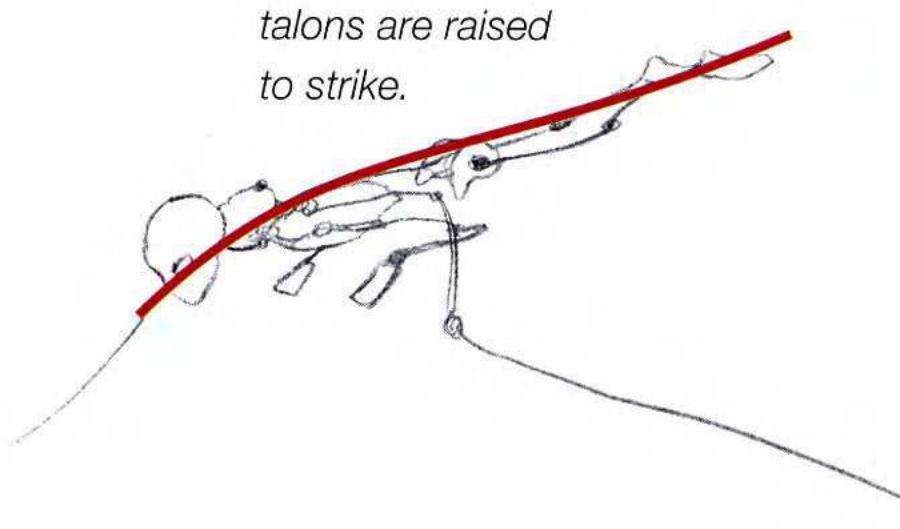
Striking

With her dagged hands, Hermia uses her speed and momentum to effortlessly deal death-blows to her victims.



Swooping

Coming in for the kill, Hermia's talons are raised to strike.



portfolio picture

James Ryman

This beautiful yet terrifying creature shares Hermia's ivory skin and large, piercing eyes. Her flaming sword, her horns, her black armor and shield, and the horsetail flowing behind her are all redolent of the Apocalypse.



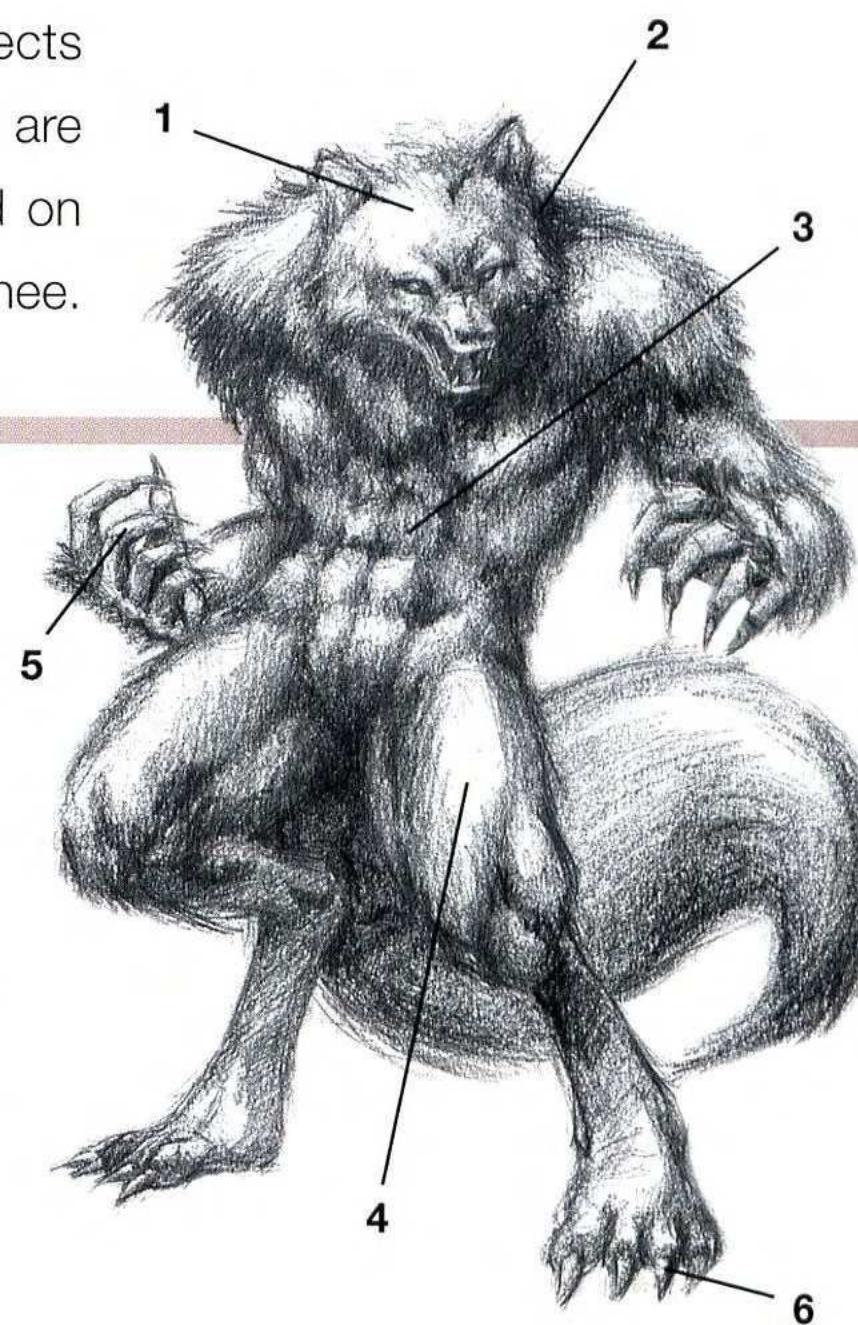
Sovann the werewolf



The werewolf has characteristics of both human and wolf—the difficulty is remembering which aspects belong where. Traditionally, the head, legs, and tail are wolflike, but the torso and arm muscles are based on human anatomy, as are the leg muscles above the knee.

key characteristics

1. Head entirely that of a wolf.
2. Head mounted on front of shoulders.
3. Muscle groups in arms and torso very human.
4. Legs those of a wolf, although more upright and mounted more like human legs.
5. Hands human in structure but fingers tipped with large claws.
6. Toes protrude farther than on a wolf, and carry larger claws.



facial expressions

It is usually assumed that werewolves are quite primitive and don't have a wide emotional range. The mouth and nose don't have the same scope for movement as a human's, so the artist must rely on the eyes—and, of course, on body language.



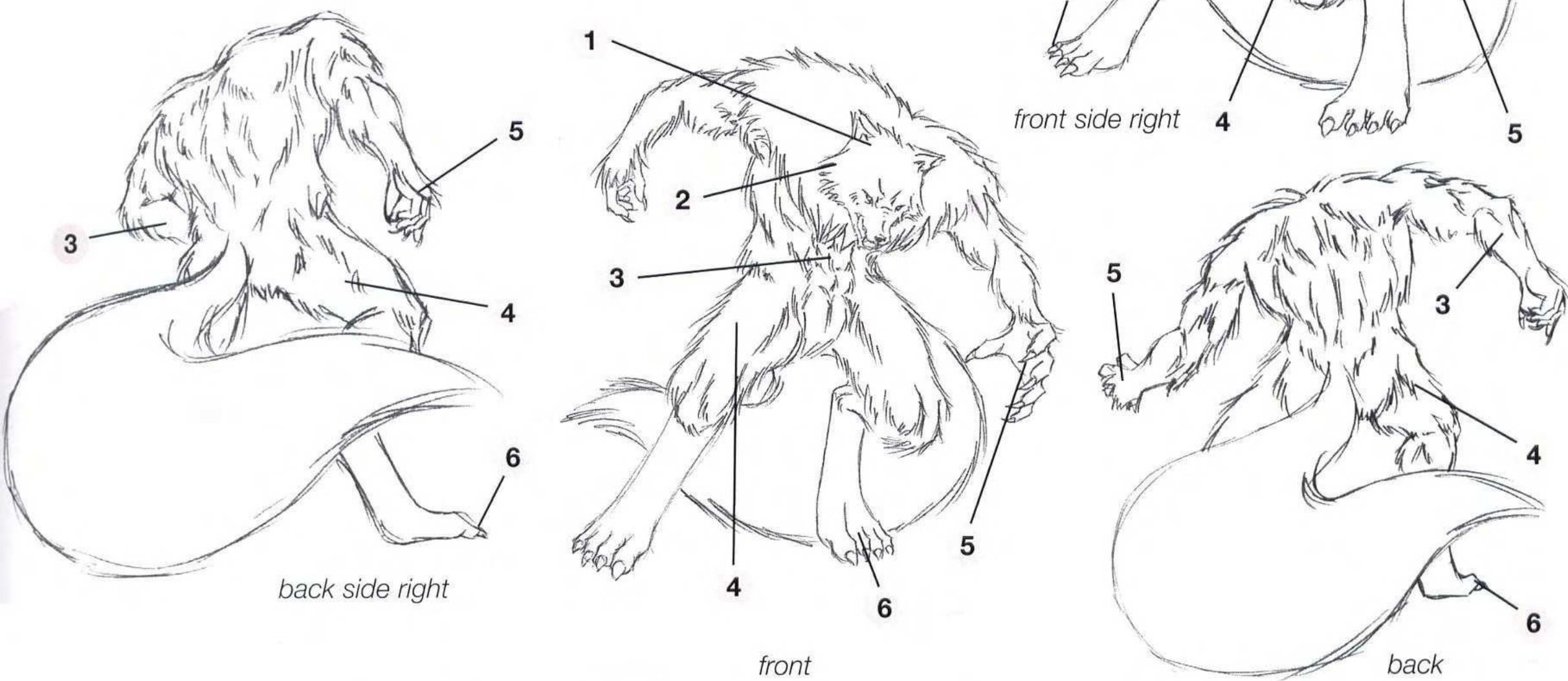
▲ **From the side** The open mouth and bared teeth—the werewolf's primary weapon—stress its character and impart a sense of menace. The ears, laid back, contribute to the overall expression.



▲ **From the front** This is the standard expression we might see in a sleepy domestic dog. You will need to use animal skulls as reference for structuring the face and positioning the features.

from all angles

Posture and stance contribute to the development of characters. The neck is that of an animal, protruding in front of the shoulders rather than sitting above them, in a style which is suited to walking on all fours. The protruding head also creates a sharply hunched upper back, which can be exploited in side views. Another feature is that the heels never touch the ground, which makes the werewolf lean forward imposingly, adding to the sense of menace.



► **From the side** The position of the head in relation to the body can add an extra degree of tension to an illustration. The creature could just be yawning, but somehow we doubt it!

▼ **Three-quarters** The furrowed brow, closed mouth, and pricked-up ears give a sterner expression.

Magnificent beast The artist has used a digital paint technique to soften the appearance of the fur to make it look thick and lustrous.



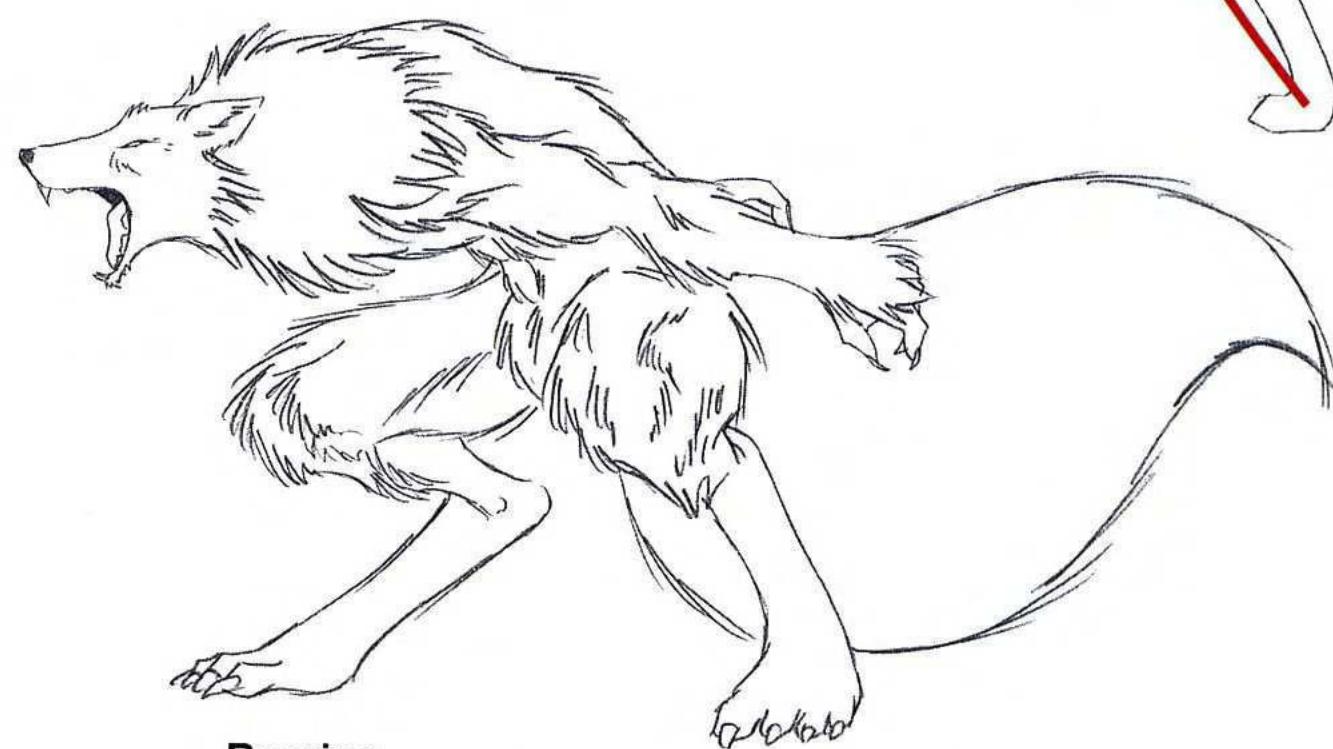
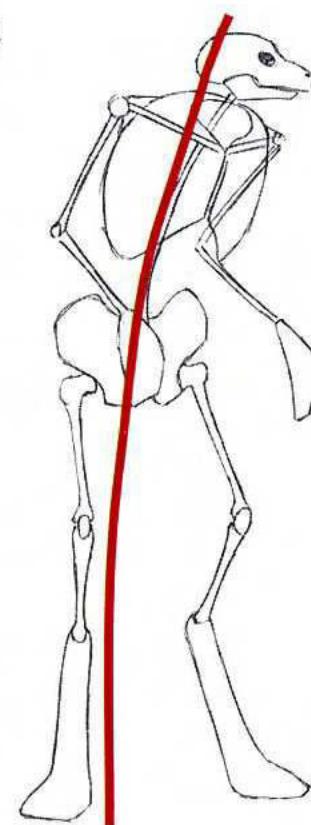
action poses

The hybrid of wolf and human traits extends into all the character's actions. He seems able to harness the most useful attributes of each form, which means you have to be able to draw both. A few simple variations on the standard can have dramatic results, making the creature either more human or more wolflike.



Standing

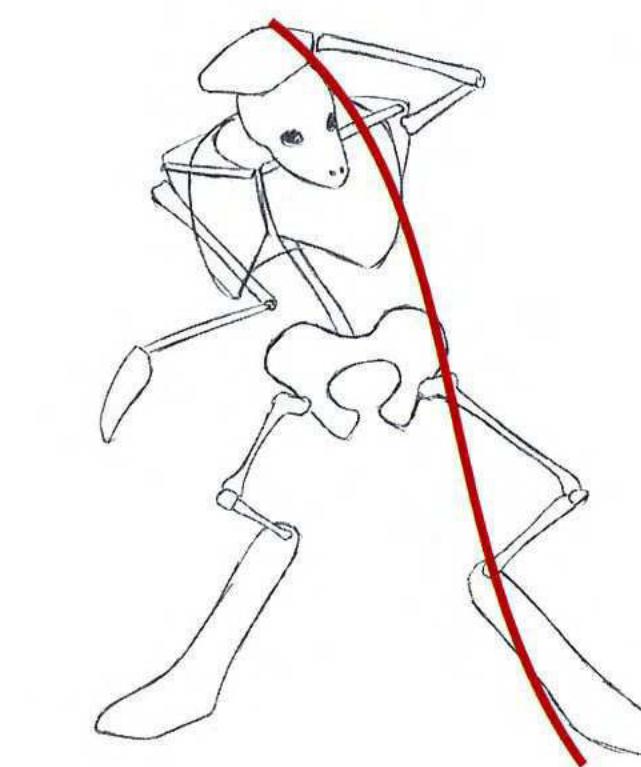
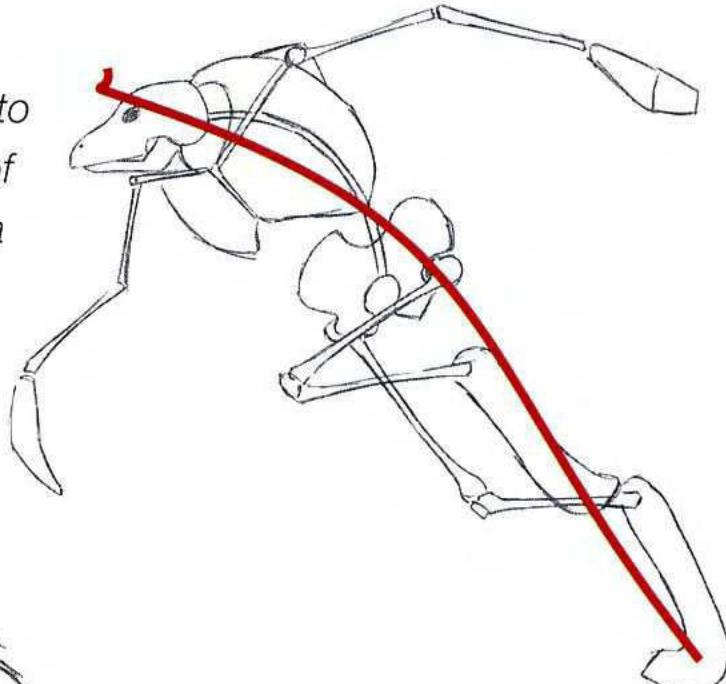
In this illustration, he appears more human because he is standing tall on his hind legs.



Running

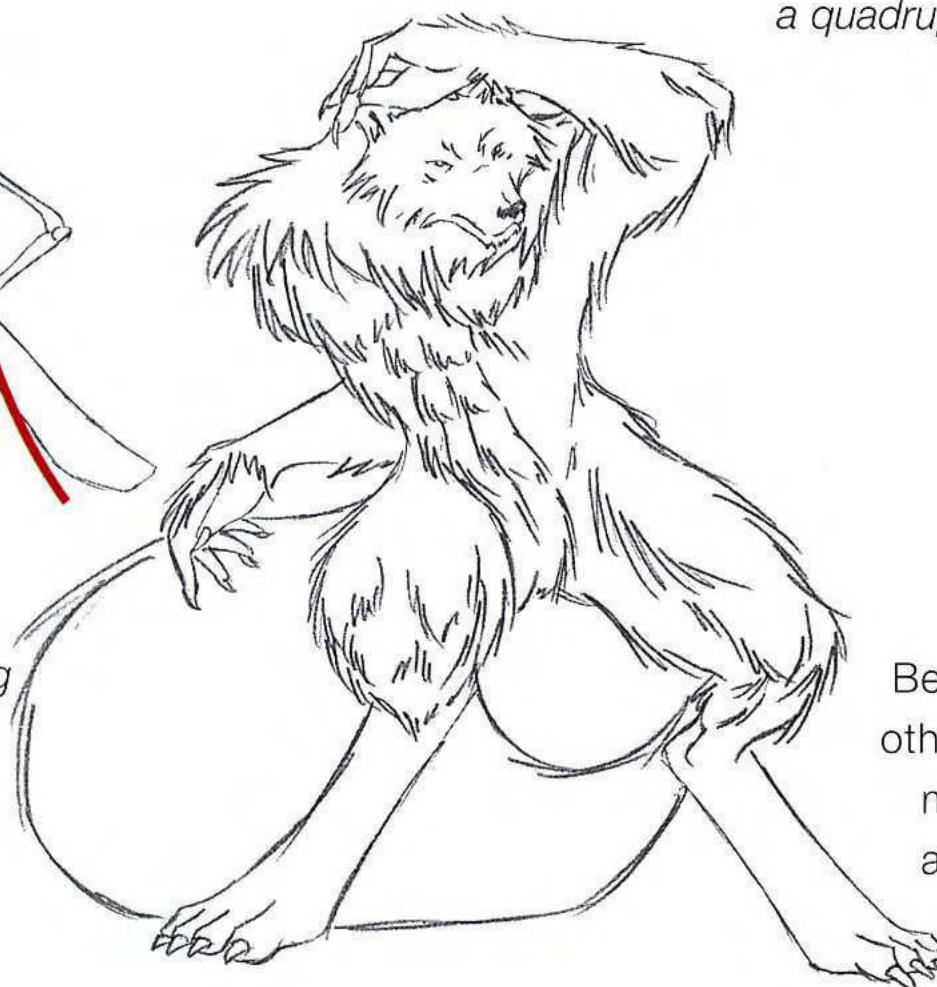
When the werewolf runs, he leans so far forward that he is almost on all fours.

This posture is used to give the impression of speed, but it is also a canine characteristic.



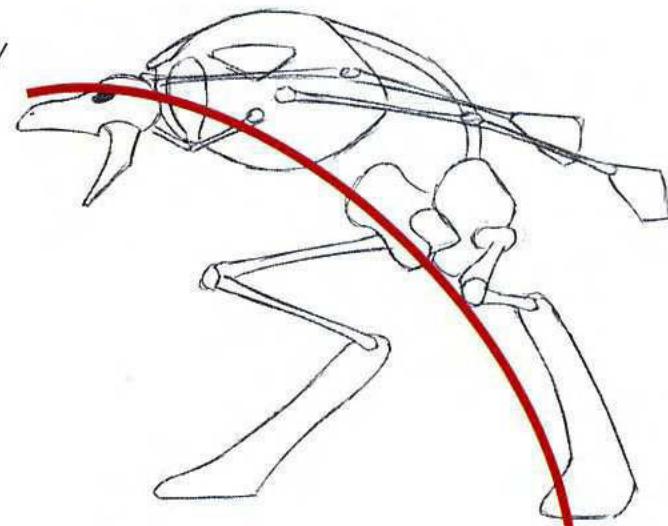
Defending

His stance in this drawing combines elements of both man and beast to result in a pose that is not typical of either!



Roaring

Here his center of gravity is much lower and he appears more like a quadruped.



portfolio picture ▶

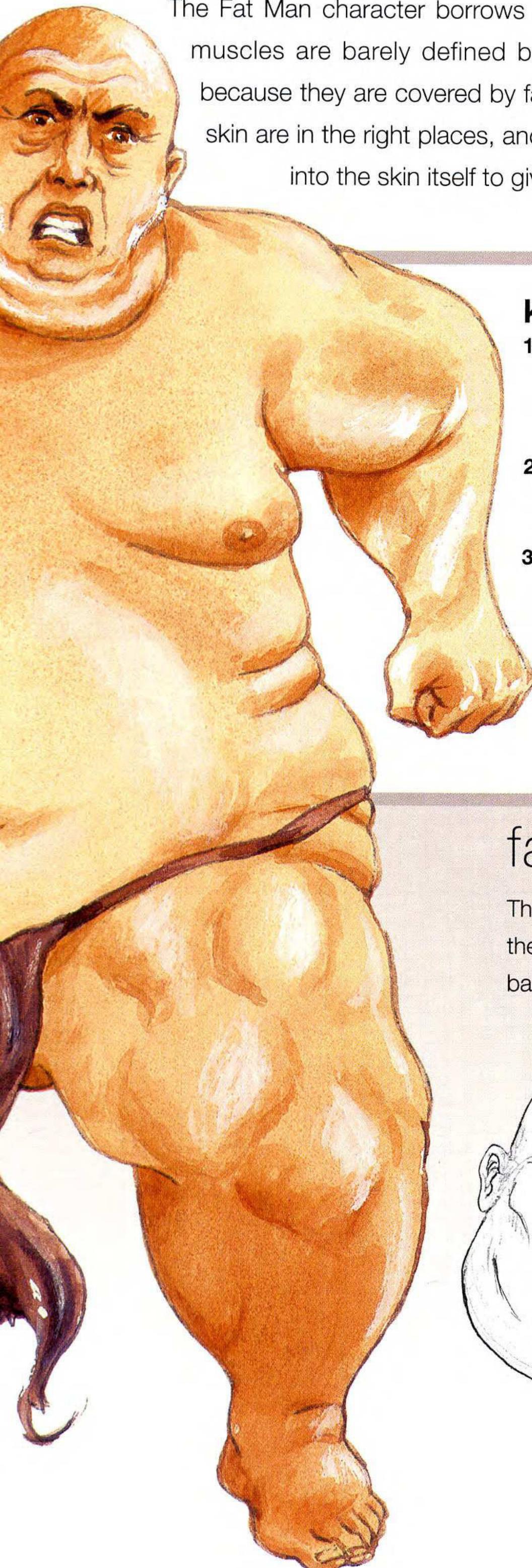
Martin McKenna

This werewolf is vastly more wolf than human. Because this creature transforms from one to the other, you can slide around on the scale making it more human or more wolflike as required. Even at this far-gone stage of transformation the legs retain their unusual shape.



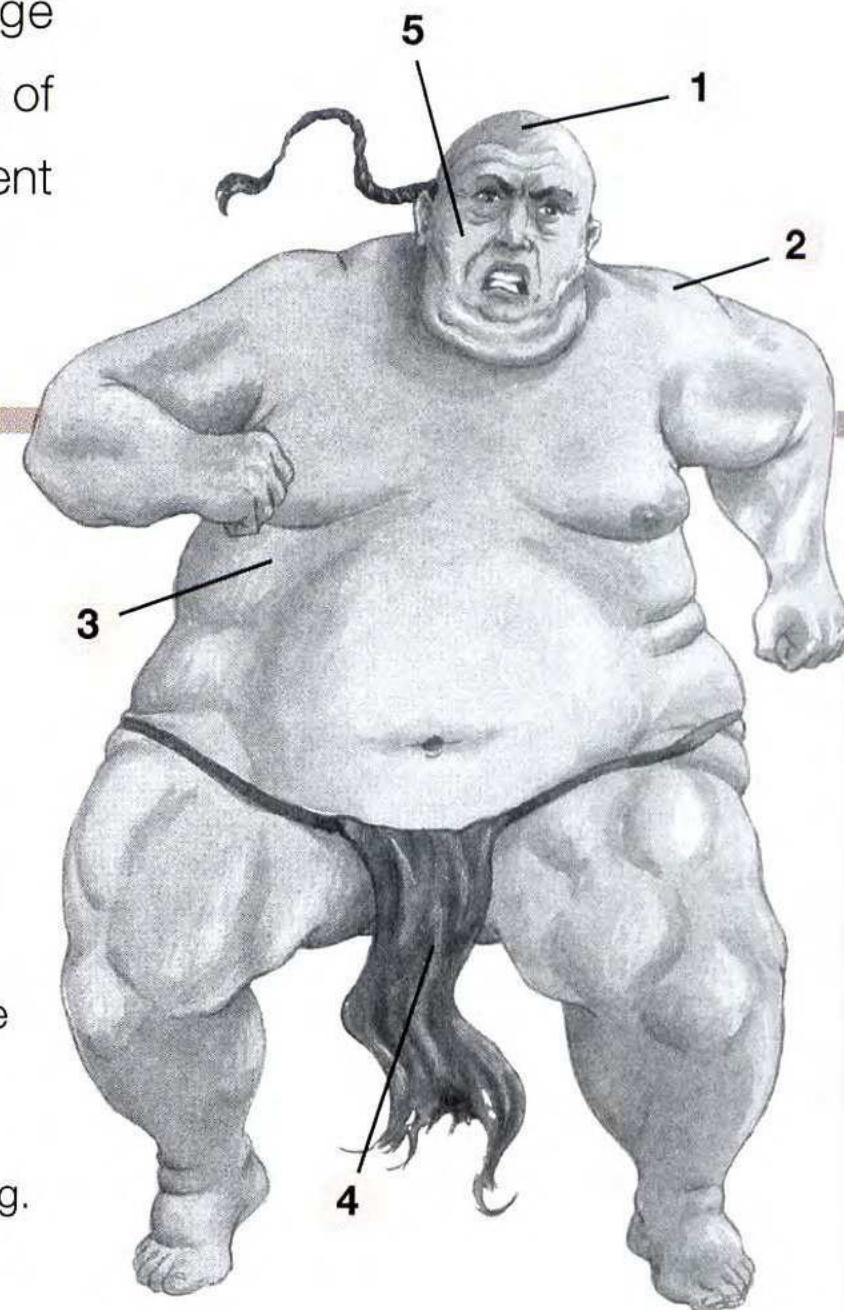
Mu the fat man

The Fat Man character borrows a lot from the Sumo wrestler. The muscles are barely defined beyond the suggestion of a bulge because they are covered by fat. Make sure the folds and sags of skin are in the right places, and incorporate secondary movement into the skin itself to give a better feeling of movement.



key characteristics

1. Minimal hair on face or head—the traditional look of the character. Here a ponytail is added to exploit secondary movement.
2. Muscles in the arms and legs are apparent, but are greatly softened by the layer of fat.
3. Morbidly obese, particularly around the torso, but strong enough to maintain good posture.
4. Minimal “Sumo-style” thong clothing.
5. Head small in relation to body, but also covered with fat.

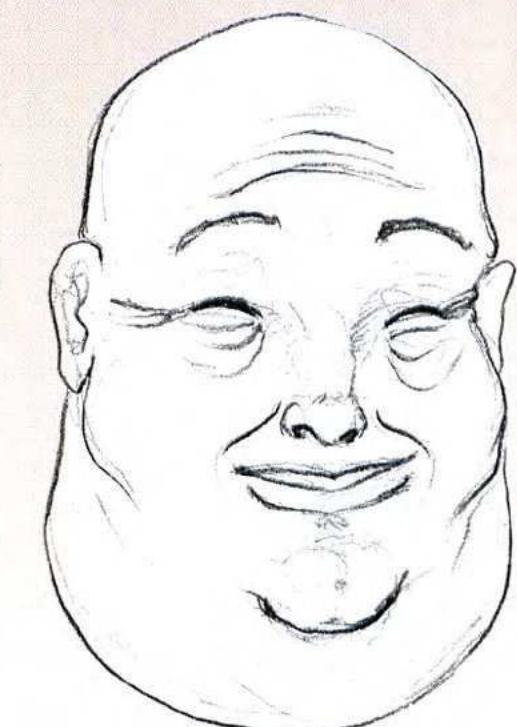


facial expressions

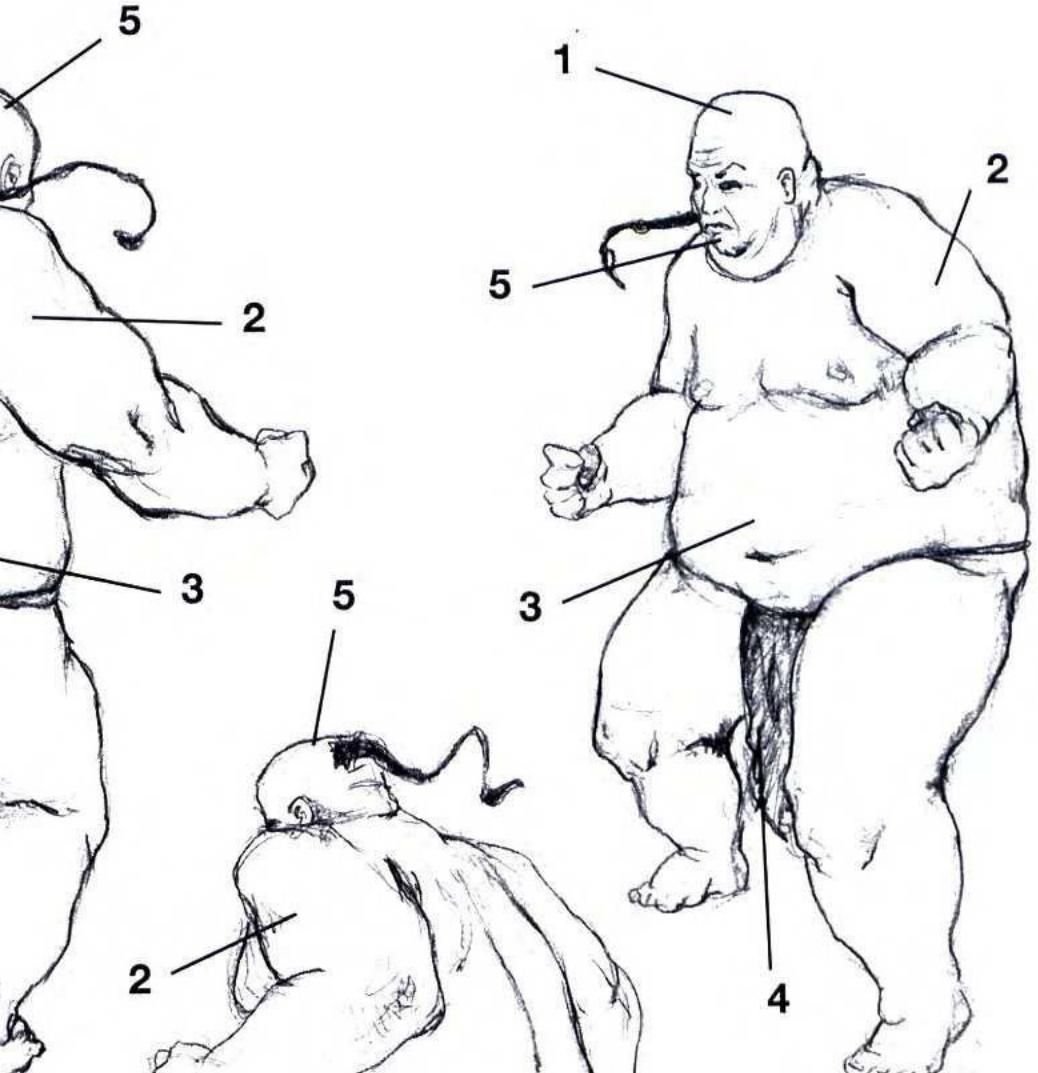
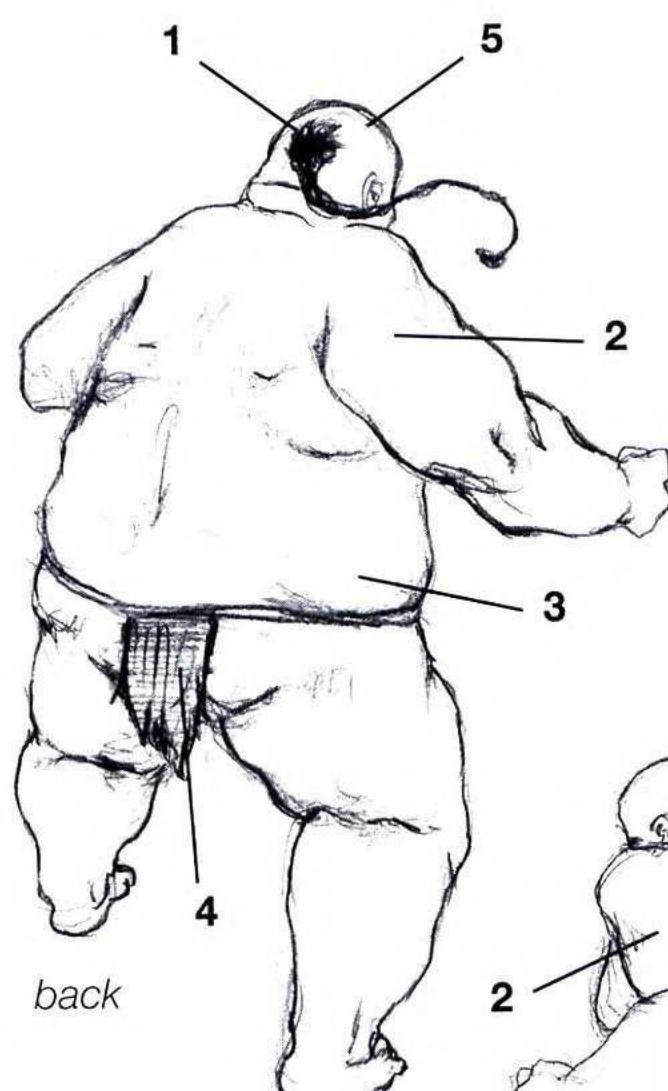
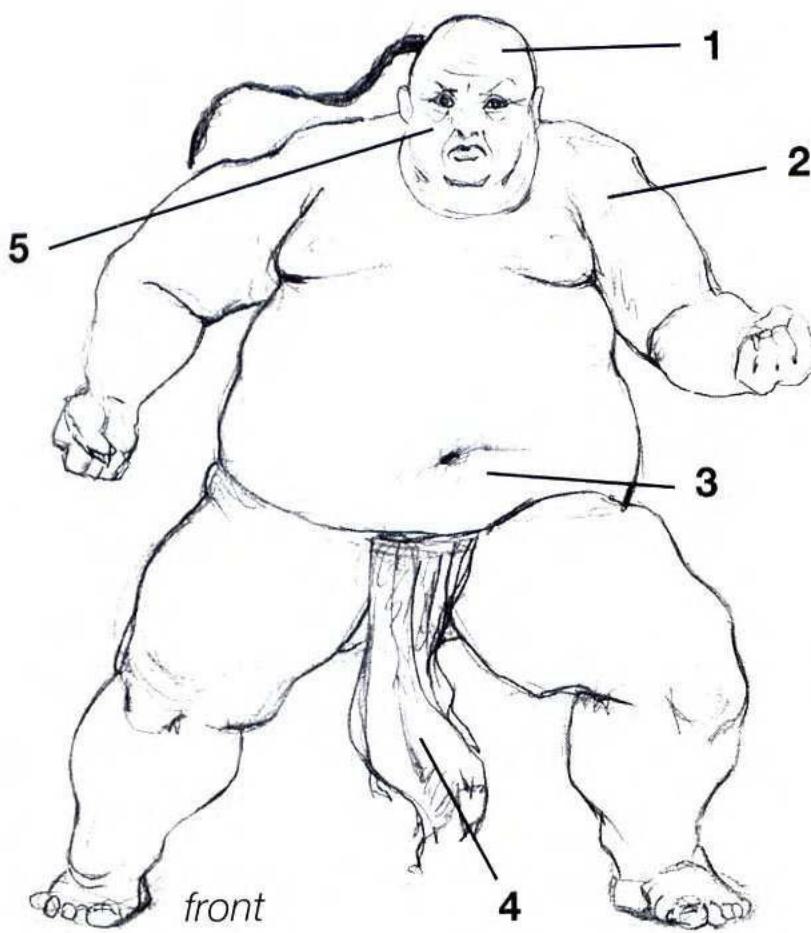
This series of drawings illustrates the way in which increased fat can change the proportions of a face. This can present a few problems if you don't refer back to the basic skull structure.



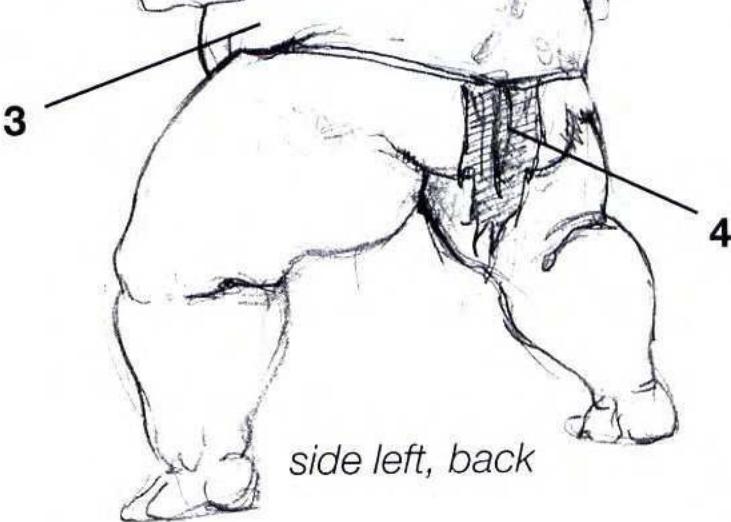
◀ **Looking up three quarters** This example demonstrates the method of drawing the face on top of the skull's outline, adding the chin and cheeks afterward.



▲ **From the front** Normally, the eyes would be in the middle of the head, but because the chin carries additional flesh, all features need to be situated higher than normal.



side left, front



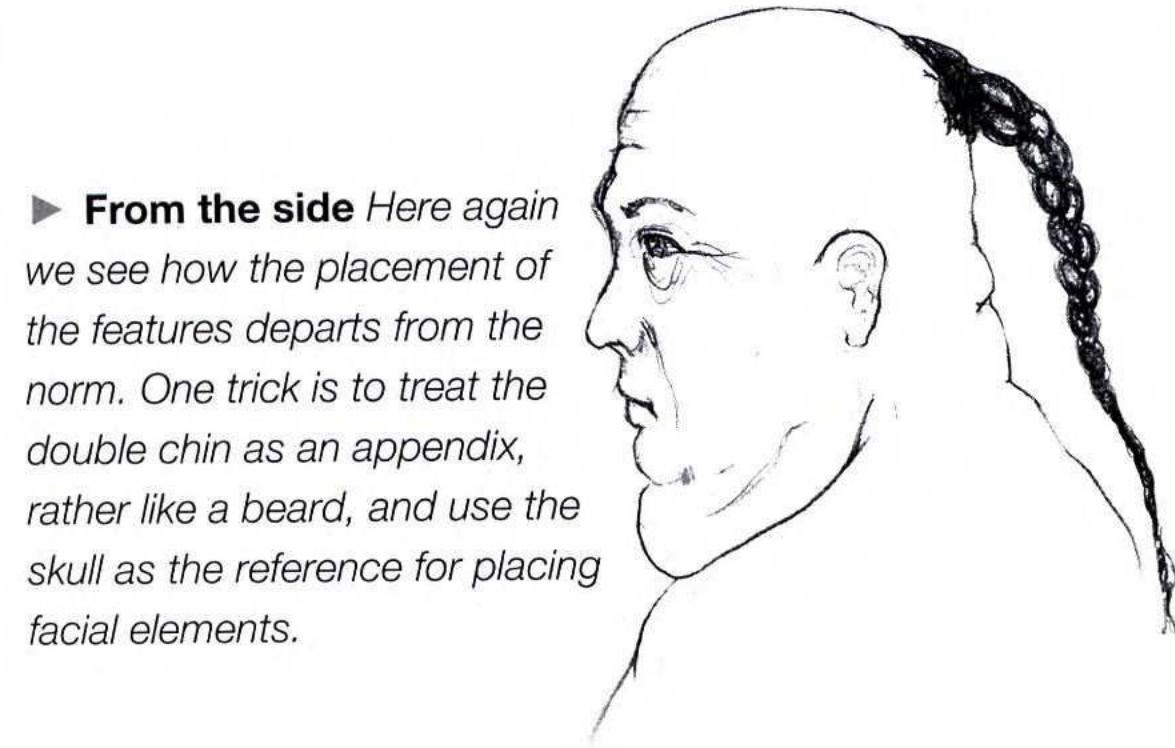
from all angles

Note the locations of the rolls of flab on the concave side of any joint, under the chin, and at the back of the neck. When these are in place, it's simple to add extra weight as you build up from the skeleton—fat softens bone and muscle curves and has no set shape. But remember that the distribution of fat can constitute secondary movement and give the impression of action. Always remember to smooth the edges of any muscle group—use only high-definition lines for the edges of skin folds.



◀ Three-quarters looking down

down When drawing a stern expression, it's best to slightly exaggerate it or it may come across merely as a feeling of discomfort!

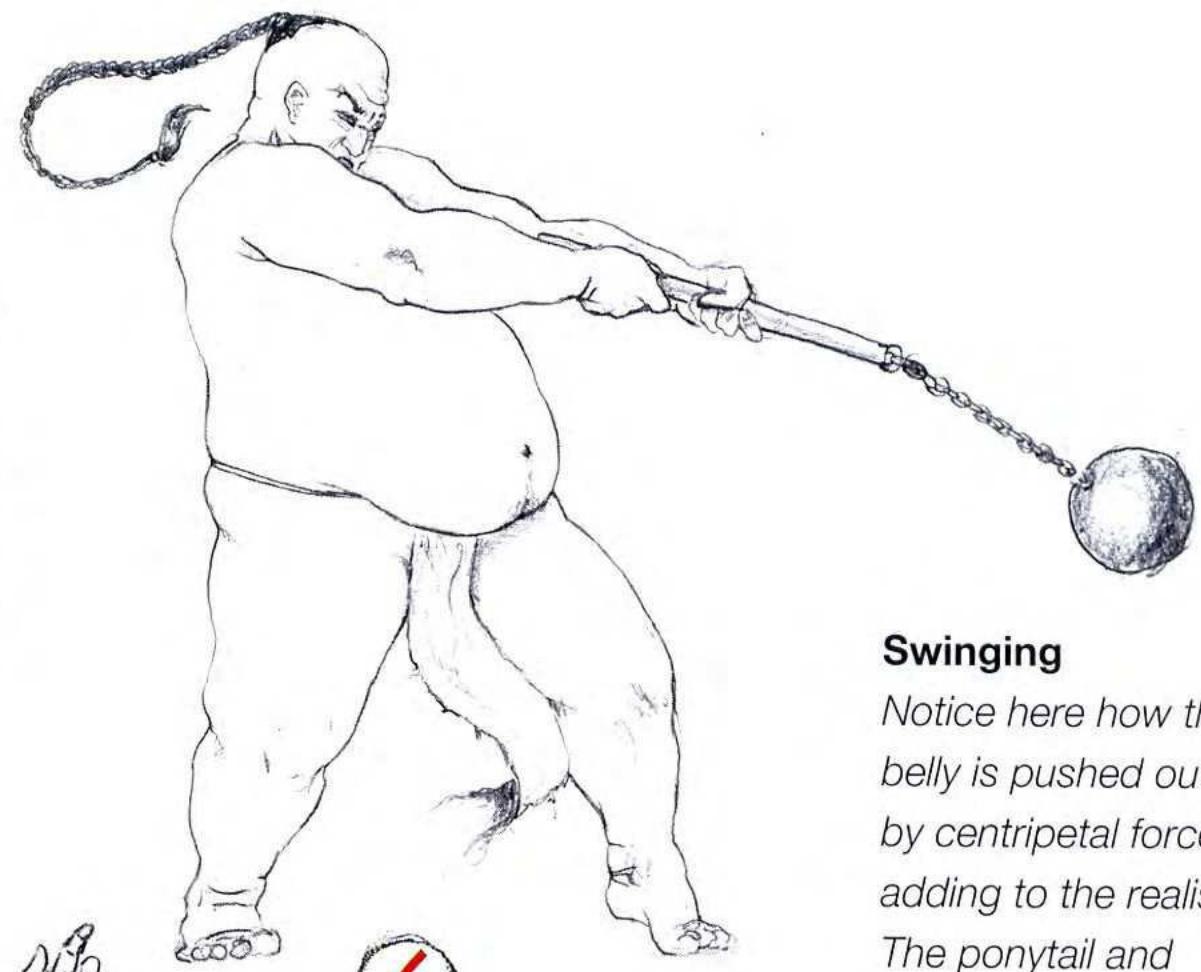


► From the side Here again we see how the placement of the features departs from the norm. One trick is to treat the double chin as an appendix, rather like a beard, and use the skull as the reference for placing facial elements.



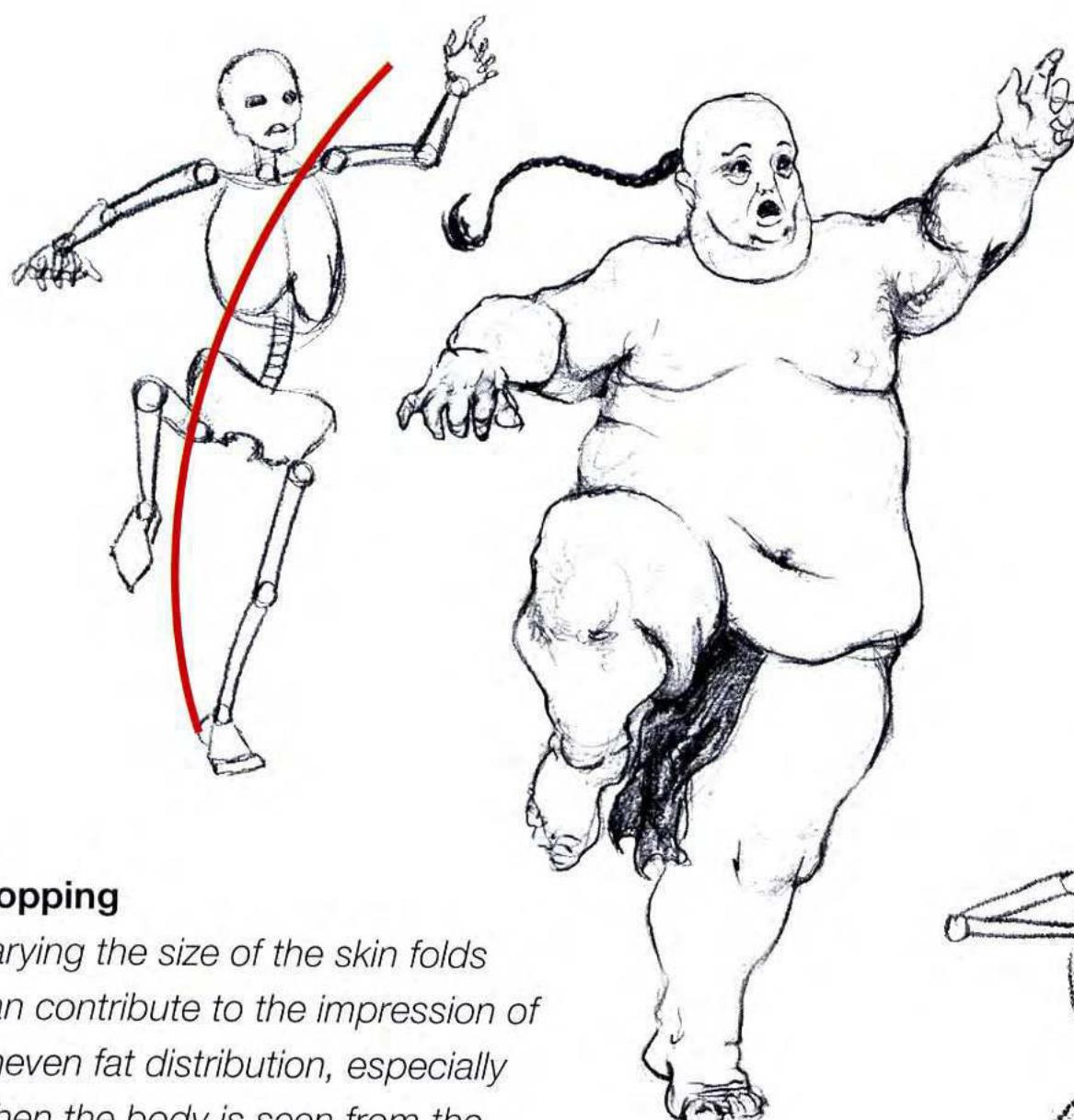
action poses

The Fat Man's realism lies entirely in the way the flab is distributed. One helpful technique is to block out the larger groups of fat on the torso, upper arm, and thigh during the skeleton stage. You can then easily draw around these, leaving you free to concentrate more on getting the skin folds looking right.



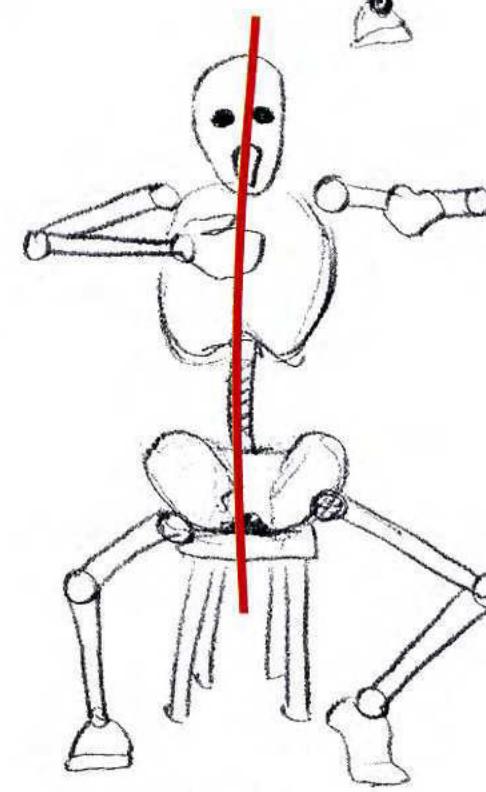
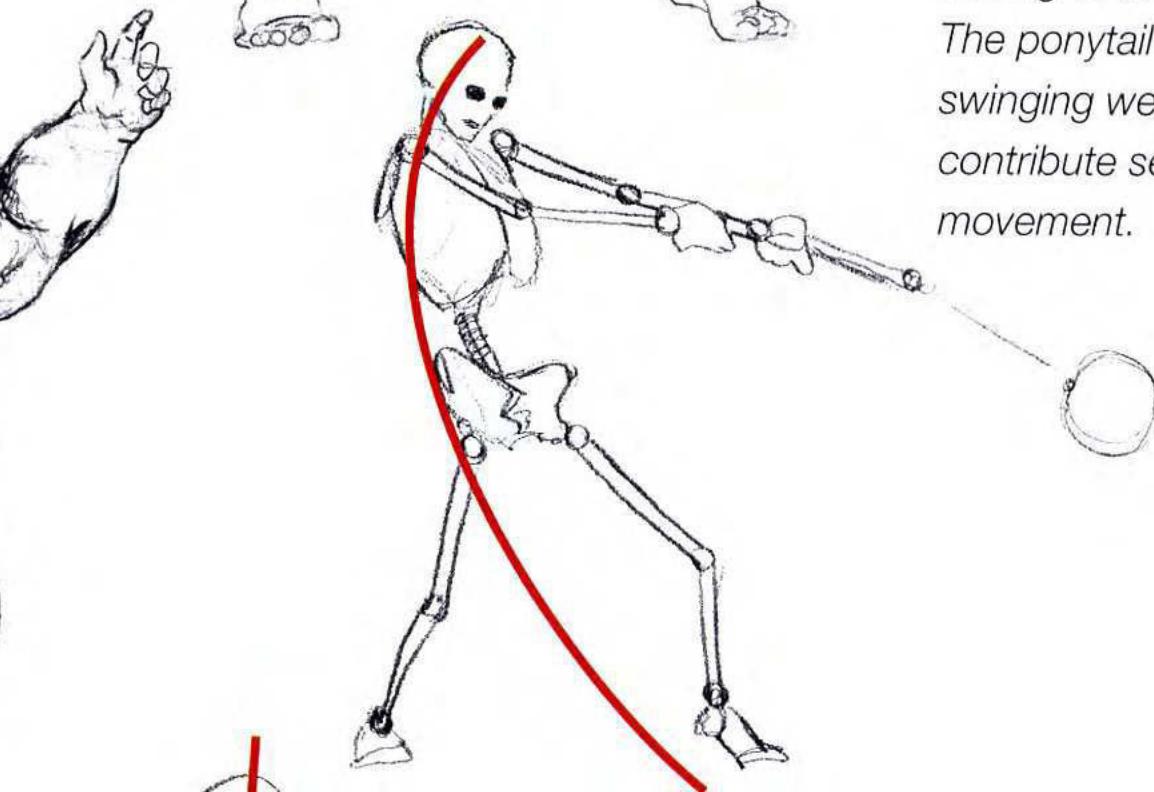
Swinging

Notice here how the belly is pushed out by centripetal force, adding to the realism. The ponytail and swinging weight contribute secondary movement.



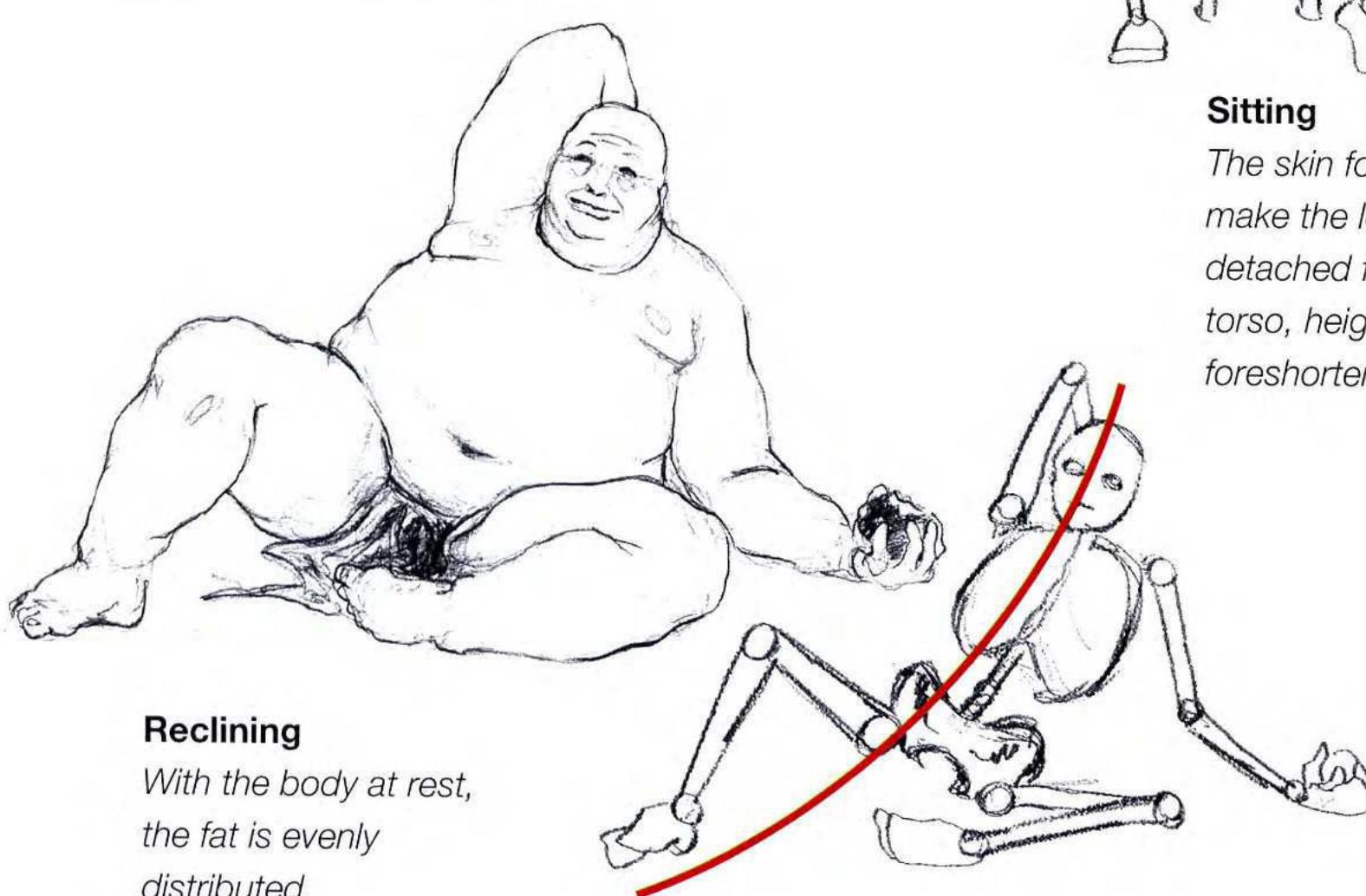
Hopping

Varying the size of the skin folds can contribute to the impression of uneven fat distribution, especially when the body is seen from the back or front. Again, the position of the ponytail accentuates the impression of movement.



Sitting

The skin folds almost make the legs appear detached from the torso, heightening the foreshortening effect.



Reclining

With the body at rest, the fat is evenly distributed.

portfolio picture

Michael Cunningham

The composition of this image accentuates this fat man's massive size—he is almost too large for the page, bursting out of its constraints.

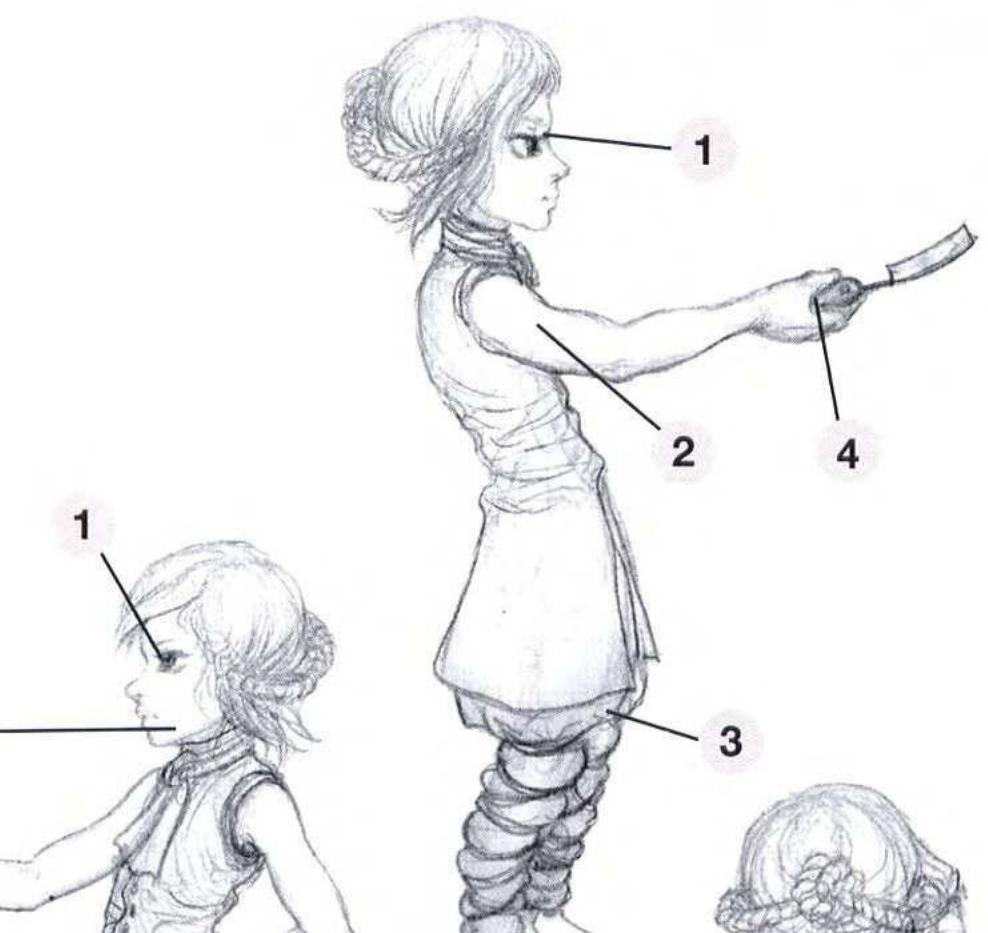


The barber's daughter

Possessed by the spirit of her father, who was put to death for spying, this young girl continues his work as an assassin, her form enabling her to avoid suspicion. The main anatomical differences to note for children are that the head is rounder and larger in comparison to the body, and the limbs are shorter and more curvy.

key characteristics

1. Notice how enlarged the eyes are—this is a common practice used to make the character appear more innocent or inquisitive.
2. The features are drawn especially rounded, and the skin is unsullied by blemishes to promote a youthful look.
3. The oversized constrictive clothing highlights her meager size.
4. Objects appear much larger and are handled differently in tiny hands. Her small fingers barely reach around the handle of the shaving razor.



from all angles

Compared to an adult character, the barber's daughter's head, hands, and feet are much larger in proportion to the rest of her body. Also, the slightly enlarged eyes give an eerie and questionable sense of innocence.

Clothing

Although the barber's daughter's facial features are distinctive, and her skin is unusually pale, much of her character is communicated through her strange and unusual outfit.

distinctive features

Child characters, particularly girls, come with an enhanced air of innocence, so the inclusion of some suspect character traits and accessories, such as the shaving razor she carries, can provide this type of character with some eminently ominous and spooky undertones.



▲ From above

The hair is soft, fair, and wispy, like that of a baby. The simple braids are also typically childlike.



► From below

The oversized collar emphasizes how small her face is.



◀ From the side

The small, slightly upturned nose is another beguiling feature, usually considered cute and endearing.



▲ **Hands** Again, her clothing accentuates her diminutive size. The bulky cuff of her coat-sleeve almost engulfs her hand.

Possessed child

The barber's daughter is dressed in an outfit very complex and detailed for a child— younger characters usually wear more simple attire. But her bizarre appearance and her lack of expression, also unusual for a girl her age, add to this mysterious impression.

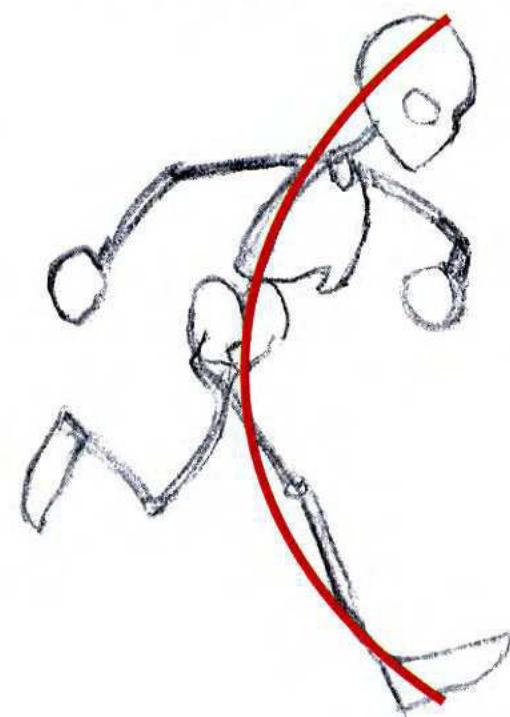
action poses

Children can be quite a task to draw, and their mannerisms and stance can be just as important as their anatomy. Of course, in this case, there's a purposeful juxtaposition of adult gesture performed by a child's body.



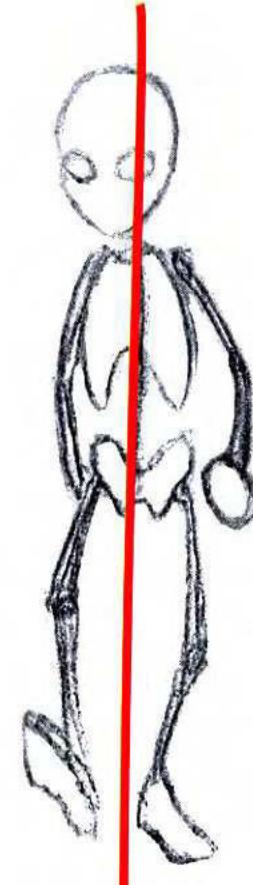
Running

Notice how the barber's daughter never appears to show any emotion, which creates an air of detachment around her character.



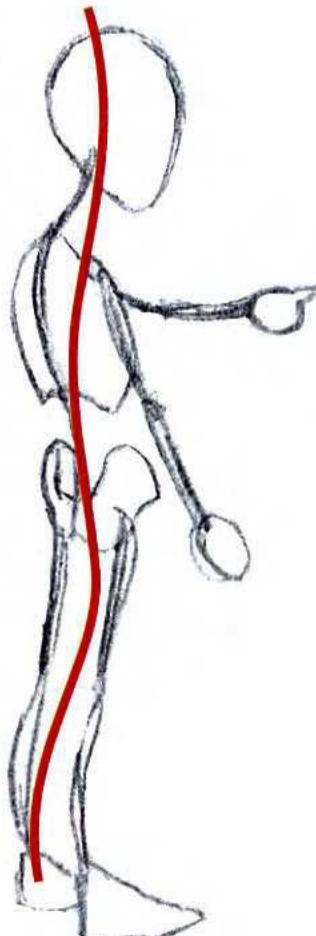
Walking

Her physical attributes lie not in strength or speed but in stealth and lightfootedness.



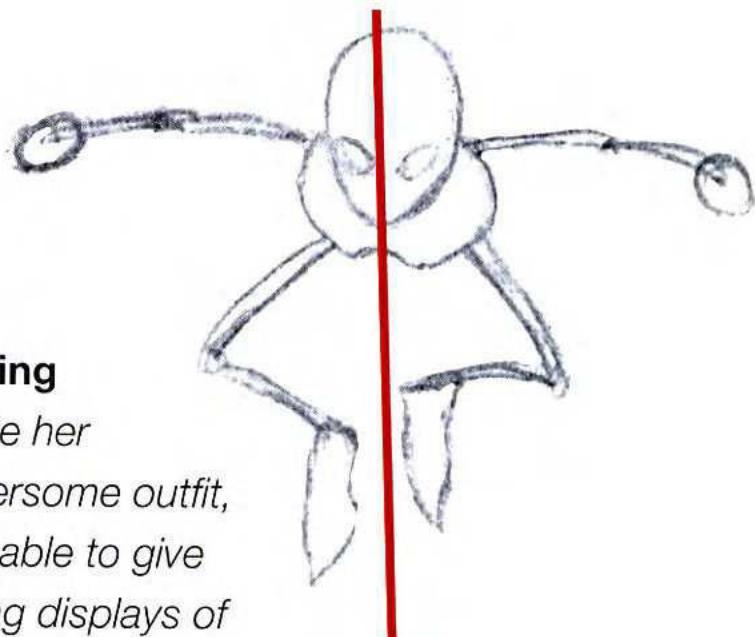
Pushing

The structure of her body is similar to that of an adult, but the proportions are different. The sizes of the head, hands, and feet are larger, as is the torso compared to the length of the limbs, although the pelvis is proportionally similar to that of adult females, who are generally drawn with hips wider than their shoulders.



Jumping

Despite her cumbersome outfit, she is able to give dazzling displays of aerial dexterity.



portfolio picture ▶

Fealasy

This young girl looks innocent, and yet her apparent calmness in such a bizarre setting, surrounded by alien creatures, suggests experience and an eerie confidence beyond her years.

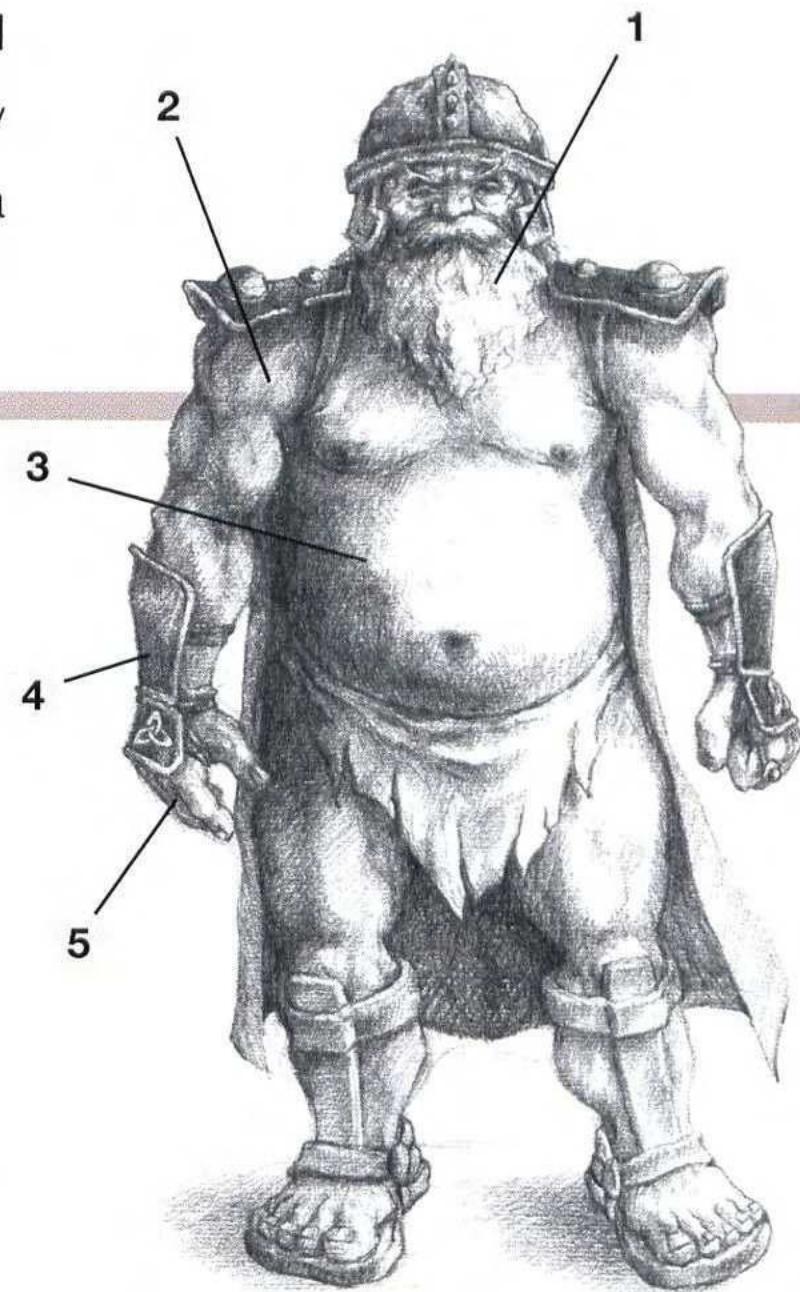


Grenvil the comic sidekick

A good friend to have in a fight, Grenvil is a hard-bitten, cantankerous old warrior and the hero's archetypal sidekick. He is quick to laughter, even quicker to his deadly axe, and loyal to the end. Strong and stocky, he sports a large belly and a thick, gnarly gray beard.

key characteristics

1. Unshaven and grimy, with impressive physique shaped by over-indulgence in drinking and eating, and late middle age.
2. Stout but extremely muscular physique—all muscle groups not hidden by flab are highly developed.
3. Huge belly.
4. Heavy "Viking-style" weapons and clothing.
5. Proportions uniformly broad and stocky.



facial expressions

Because Grenvil's face is mostly covered in hair, it can sometimes be difficult to convey a wide range of emotions. The trick for the artist is to use the possibilities inherent in this mess of hair to realize the full breadth of Grenvil's character and his expressive catalog of laughter, howls, comic eyebrow raises, growls, and humbugs.

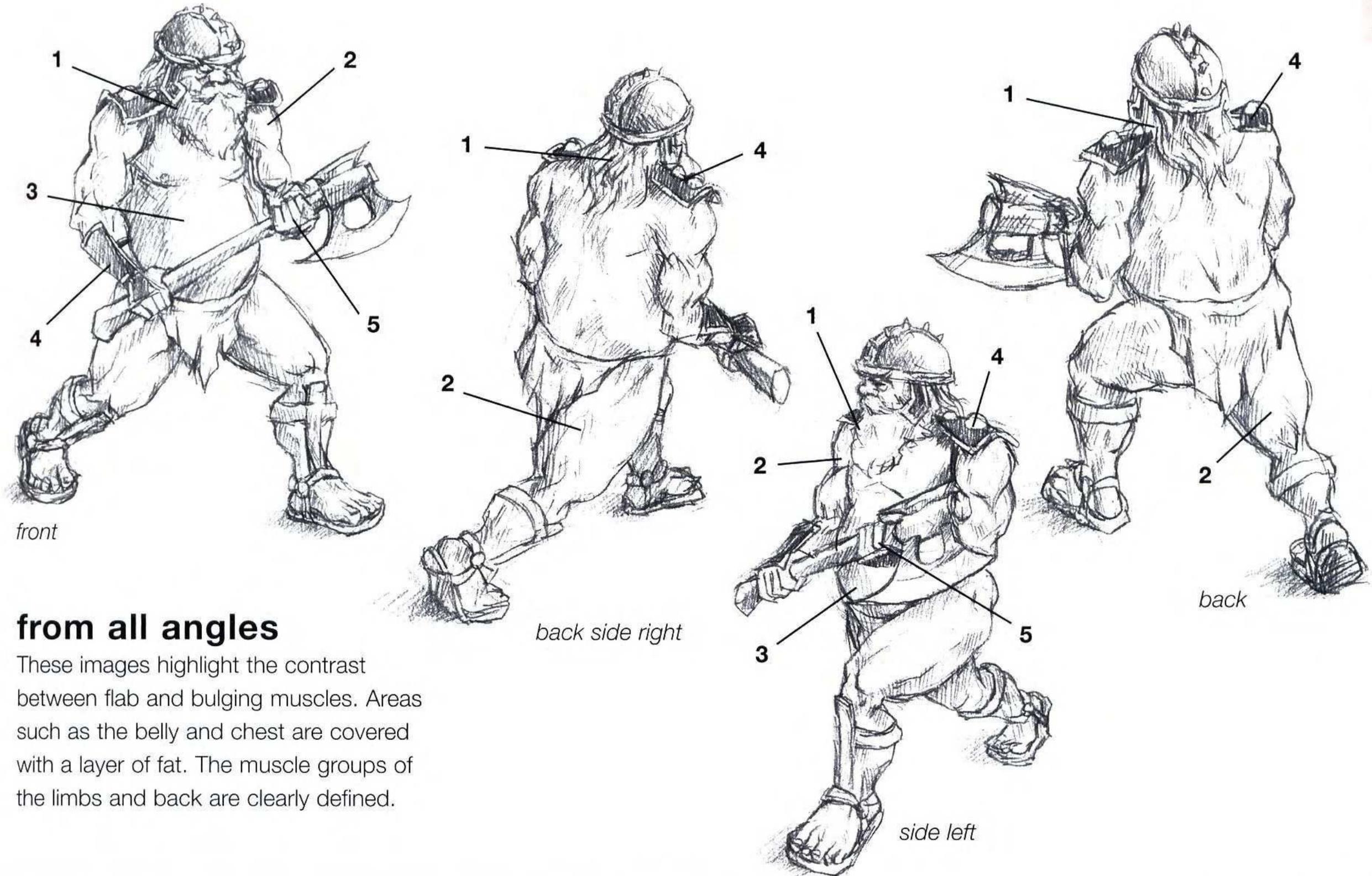
▼ Raucous laughter

His eyes crease and his facial hair seems to take over in this unbridled gale of laughter. His sense of humor is broad and jolly and anyone can expect to become a target of his cruel fun.



▲ From the side

A furrowed brow expresses a sense of comic disbelief.



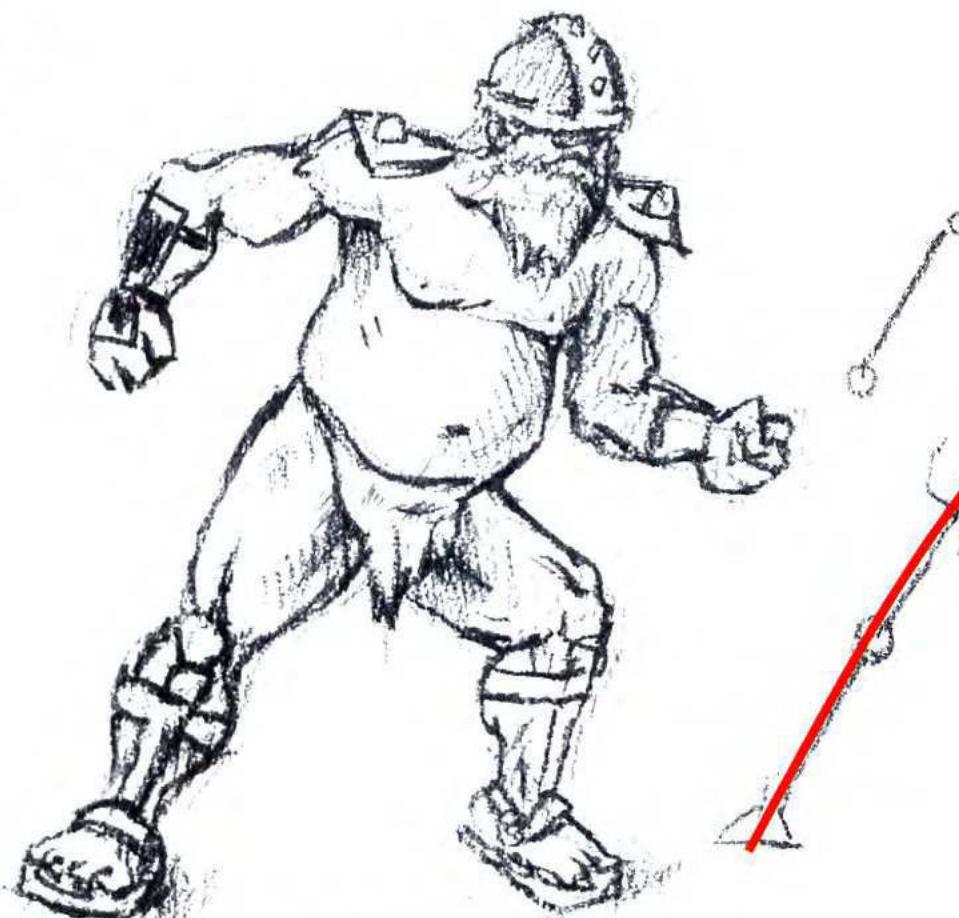
from all angles

These images highlight the contrast between flab and bulging muscles. Areas such as the belly and chest are covered with a layer of fat. The muscle groups of the limbs and back are clearly defined.



action poses

It's easier to get away with a bit of artistic license when drawing Grenvil in an action pose because his stocky and stout physique means movement is seldom graceful and can often be buffoonish. However, there are a few important rules that you need to remember.



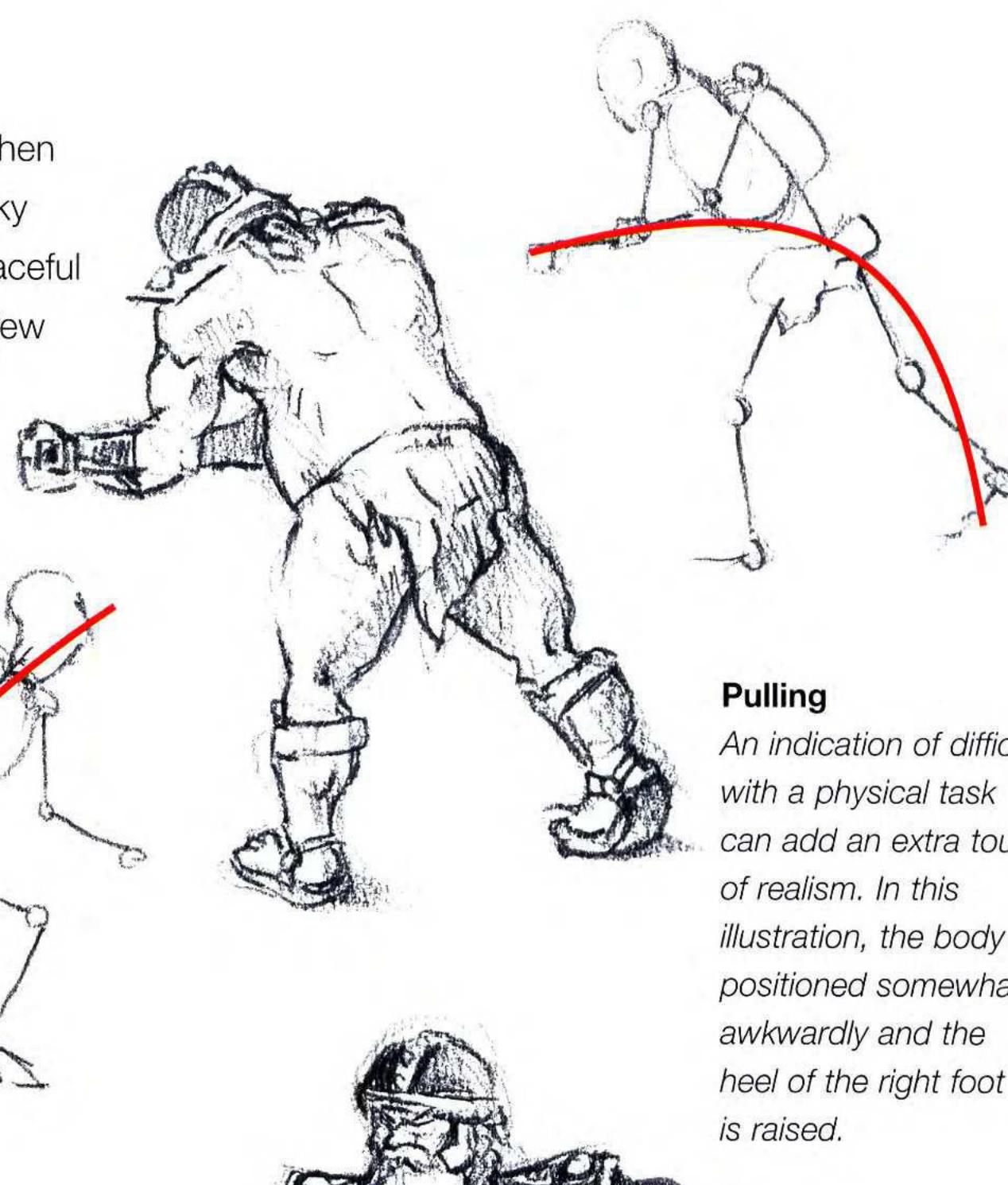
Ready to fight

The portly Grenvil has a fairly restricted range of movements, so the stances should not be too exaggerated. This is about as extreme as it gets!



Ramming

As this illustration clearly shows, the body leans at only a slight angle, suggesting slothfulness, but the bulging leg and upper body muscles belie this to give the impression of real strength.



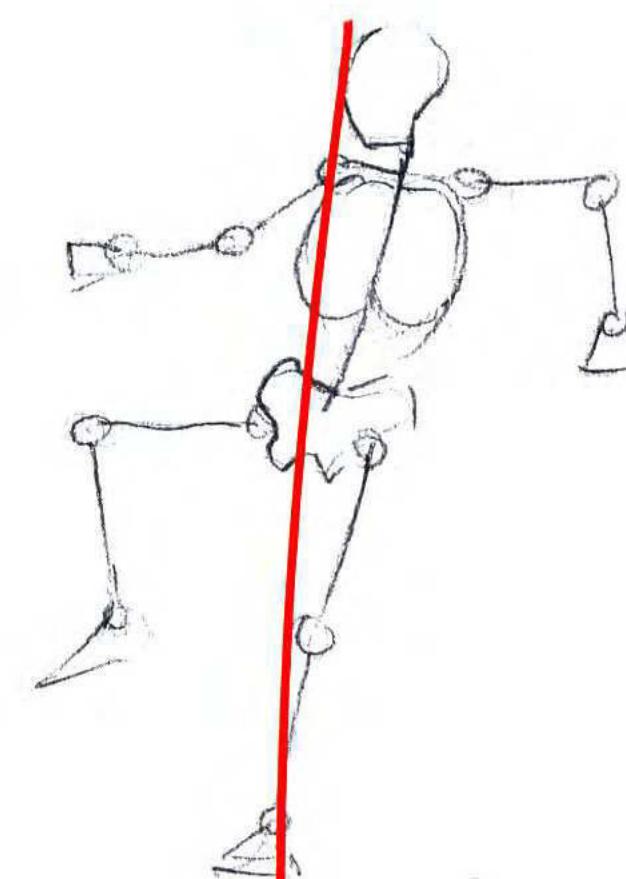
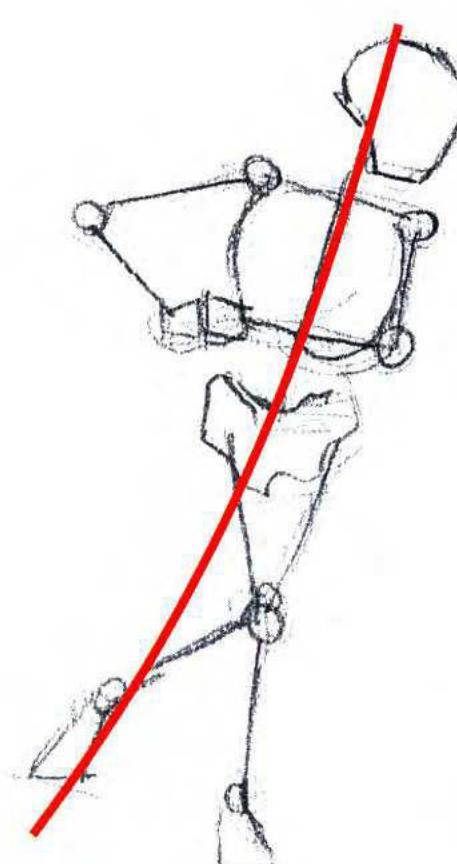
Pulling

An indication of difficulty with a physical task can add an extra touch of realism. In this illustration, the body is positioned somewhat awkwardly and the heel of the right foot is raised.



Stepping

Any secondary movement of the hair and clothing should be kept to a minimum in order to make the body movement appear slow. For the comic sidekick, brute power always comes before stealth.



portfolio picture

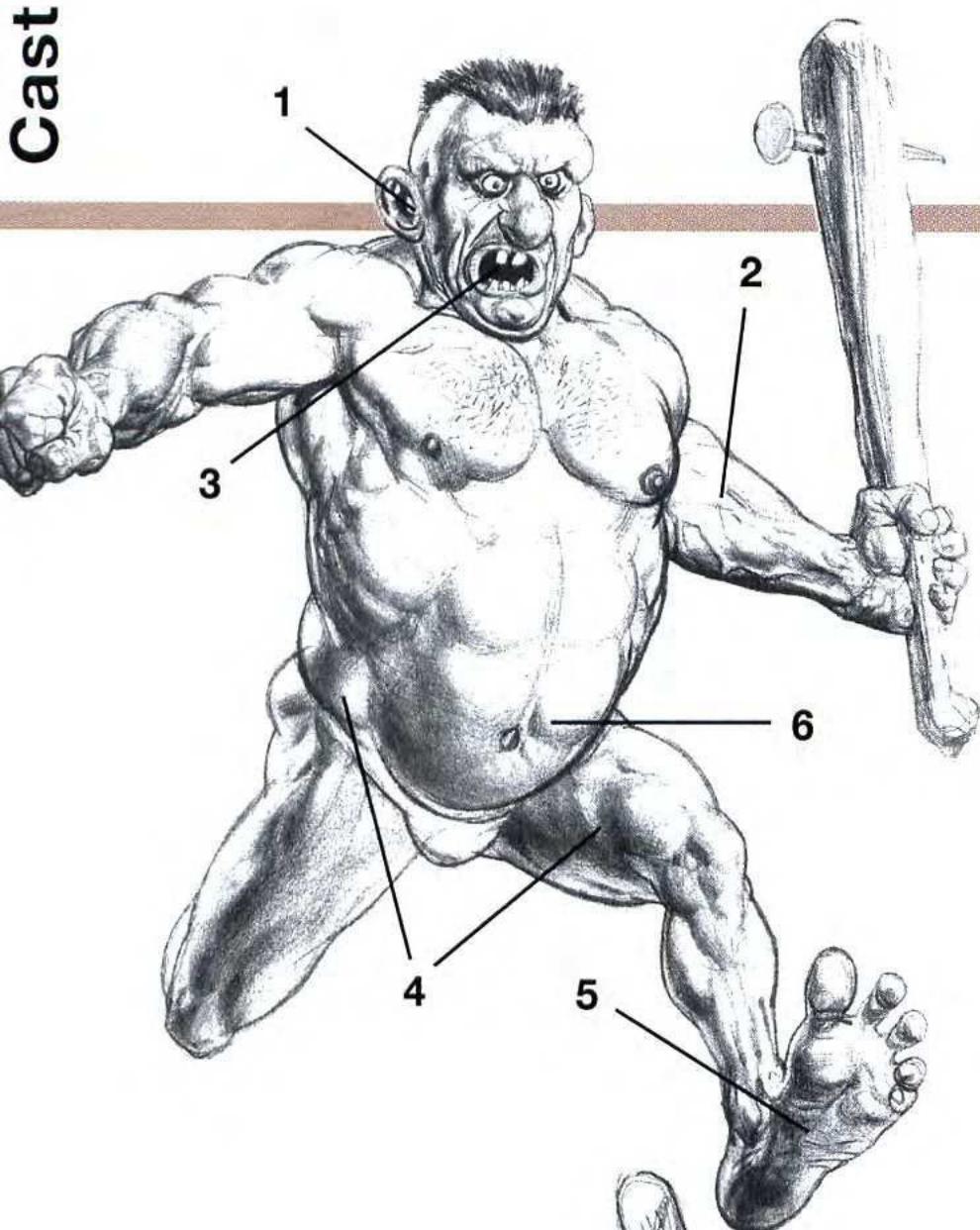
Greg Staples

This interpretation of the archetypal comic sidekick focuses on the character's bravery and fighting prowess over his clownishness and slightly comical physical appearance.



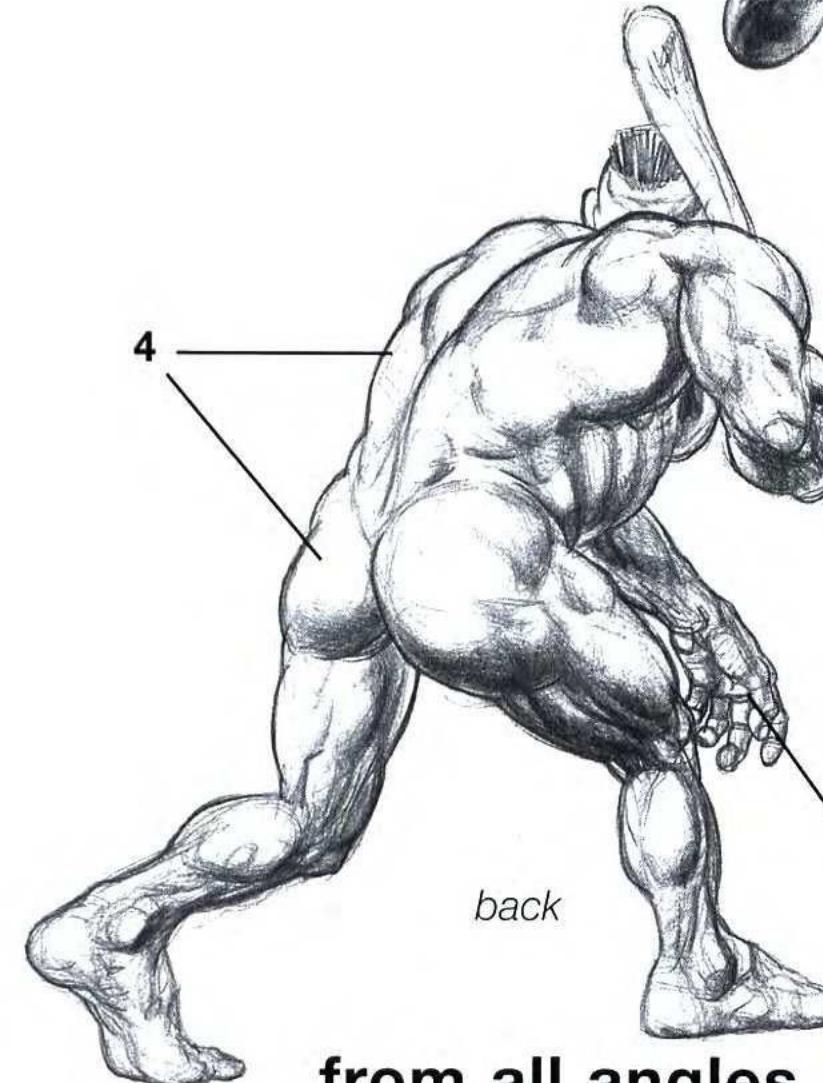
Orin the ogre

Orin is built with potential as a comic character, and as such he needs to be able to appear in positions that appear humorous. This may be dictated by the pose itself, but more importantly by the structure of his skeleton (squat and stumpy), the distribution of his muscles (hunched and awkward), and his covering of fat (primarily in his large potbelly).



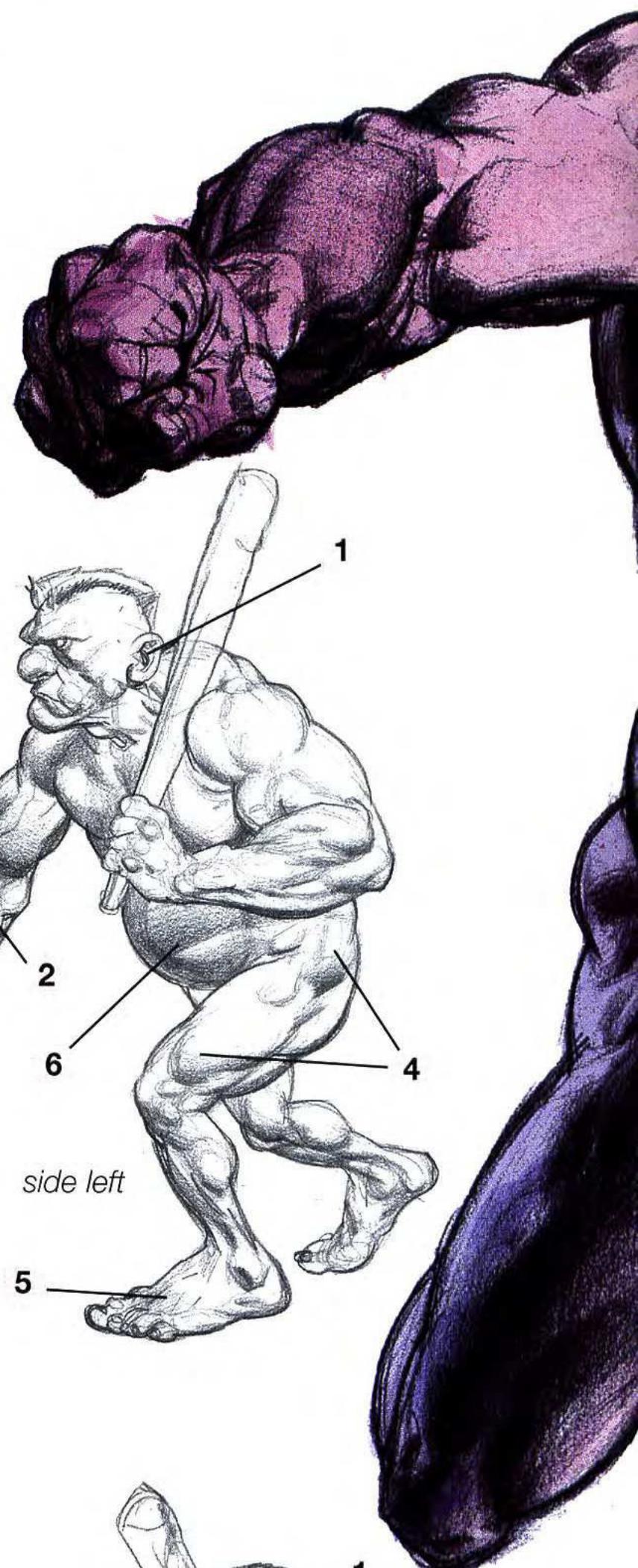
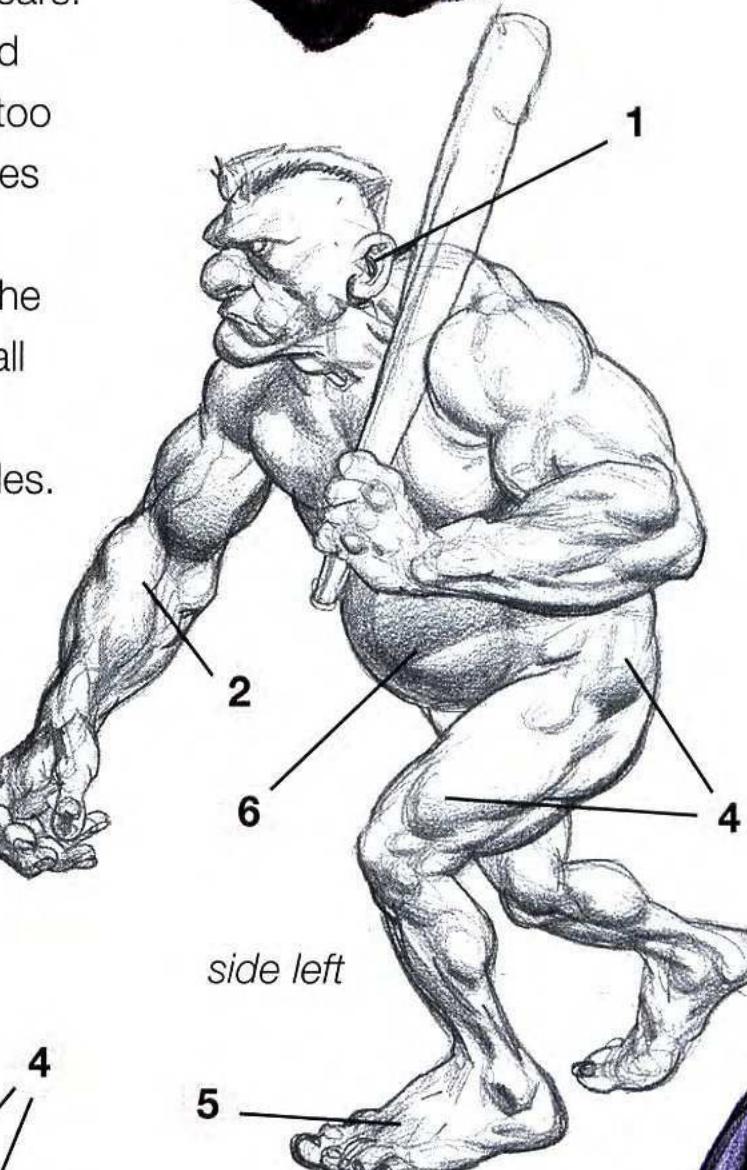
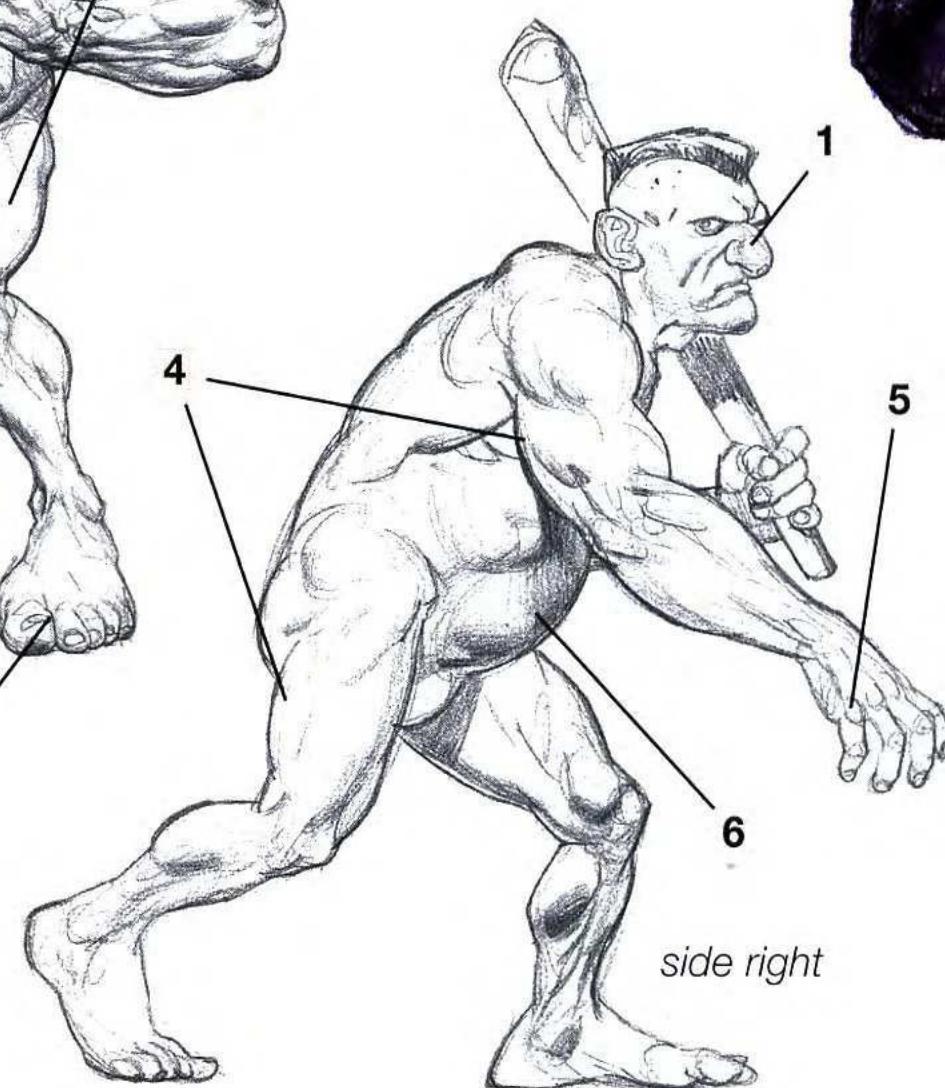
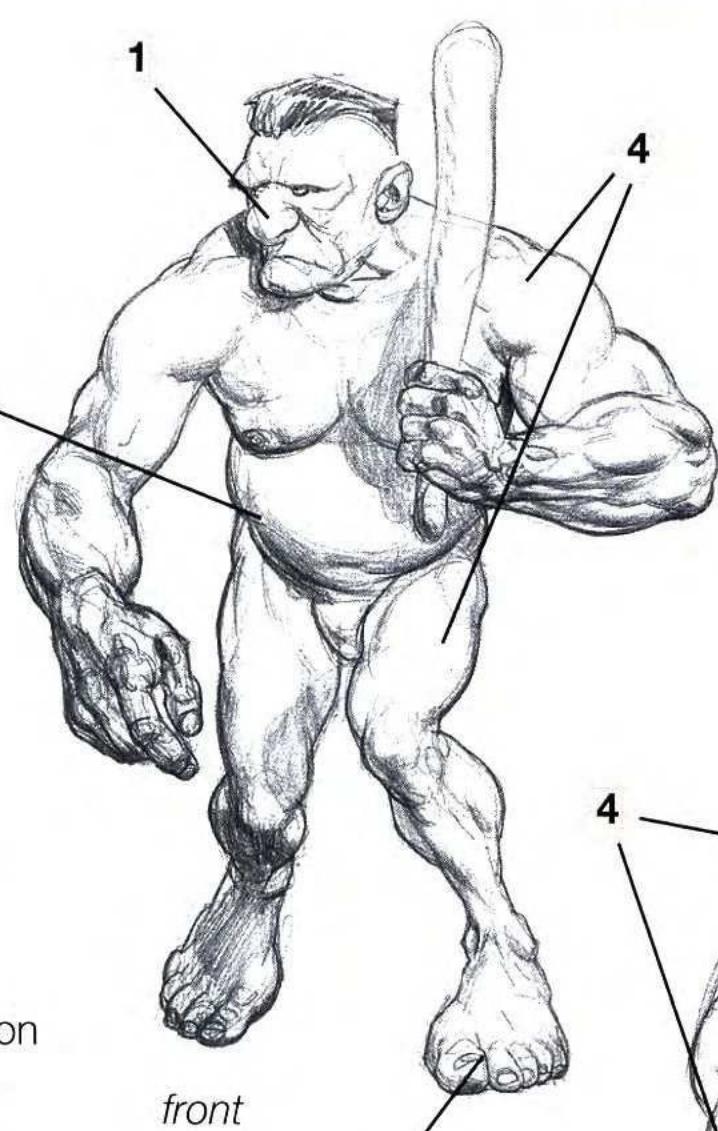
key characteristics

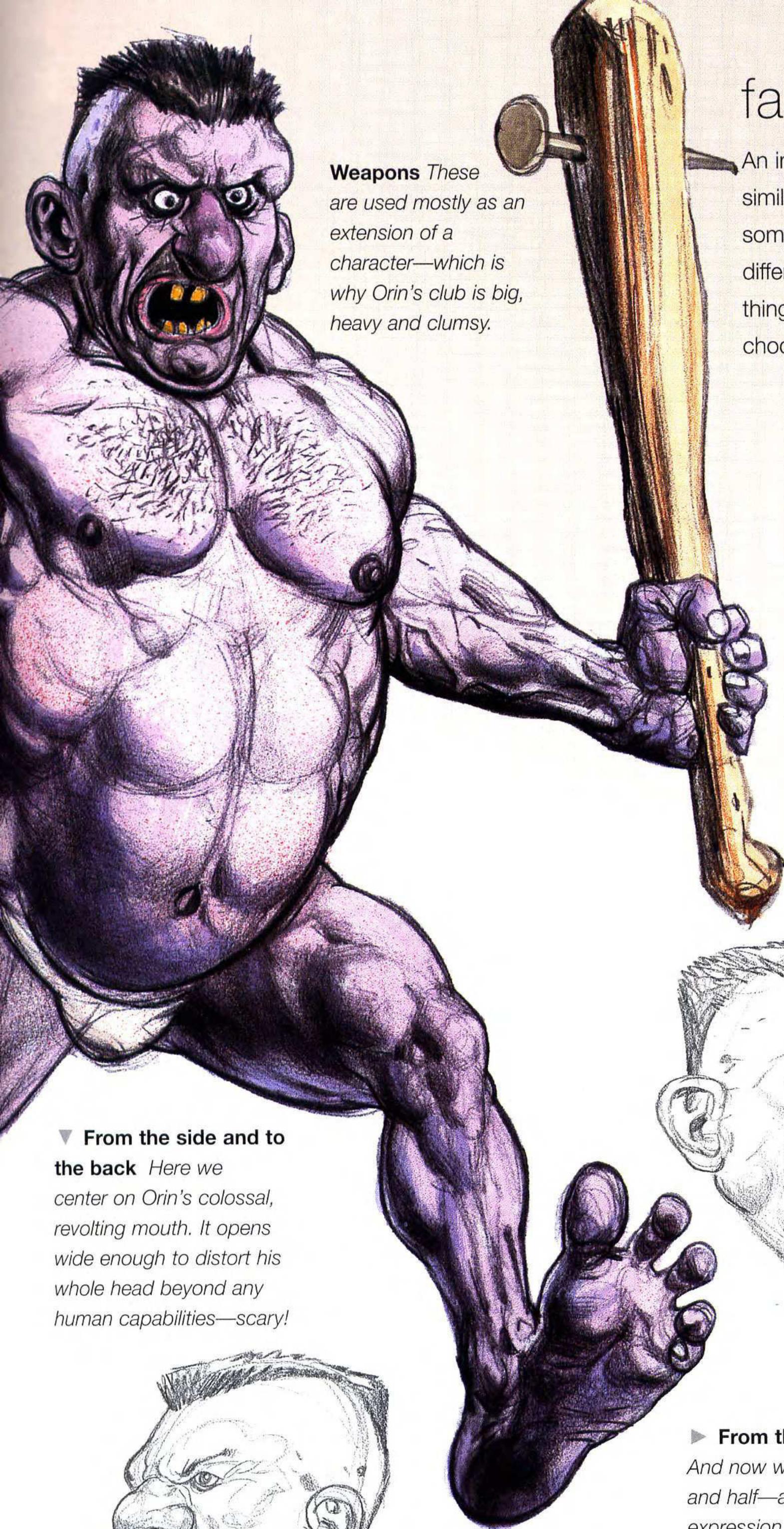
1. Enlarged mouth, nose, and ears.
2. Prominent veins on arms and legs—generally considered too unattractive for fantasy heroes and heroines.
3. Missing teeth contribute to the grubby and unsanitary overall impression.
4. Uneven distribution of muscles.
5. Huge hands and feet.
6. Vast, overflowing abdomen.



from all angles

Here we can see how weight distribution can have a huge effect on stance and movement. Orin's large gut in particular greatly affects his movement, making him hunch forward to compensate for being top-heavy when he moves.





Weapons These are used mostly as an extension of a character—which is why Orin's club is big, heavy and clumsy.

▼ **From the side and to the back** Here we center on Orin's colossal, revolting mouth. It opens wide enough to distort his whole head beyond any human capabilities—scary!

facial expressions

An interesting feature of Orin's face is that it is similar enough to that of a human to make some very familiar expressions, but also different enough to do some distinctly scary things. It all depends which elements you choose to focus on.

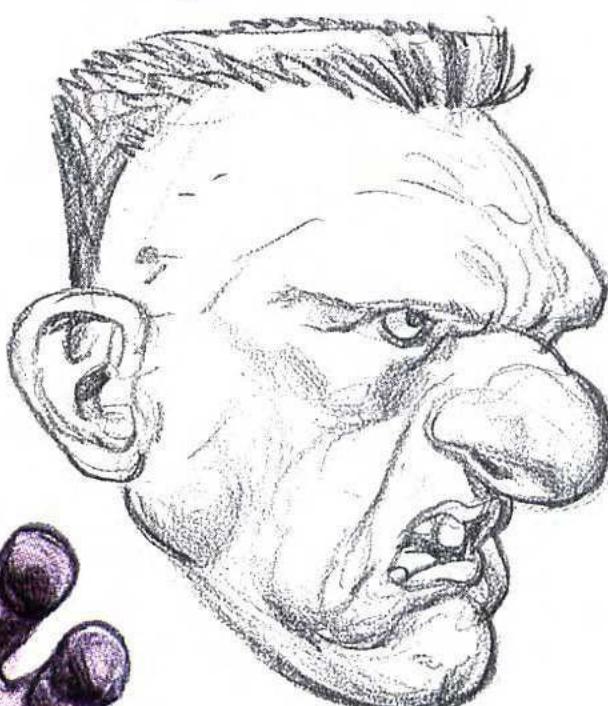
► Three-quarters

The eyes, often the most expressive facial feature, convey a familiar shifty look that seems quite human.



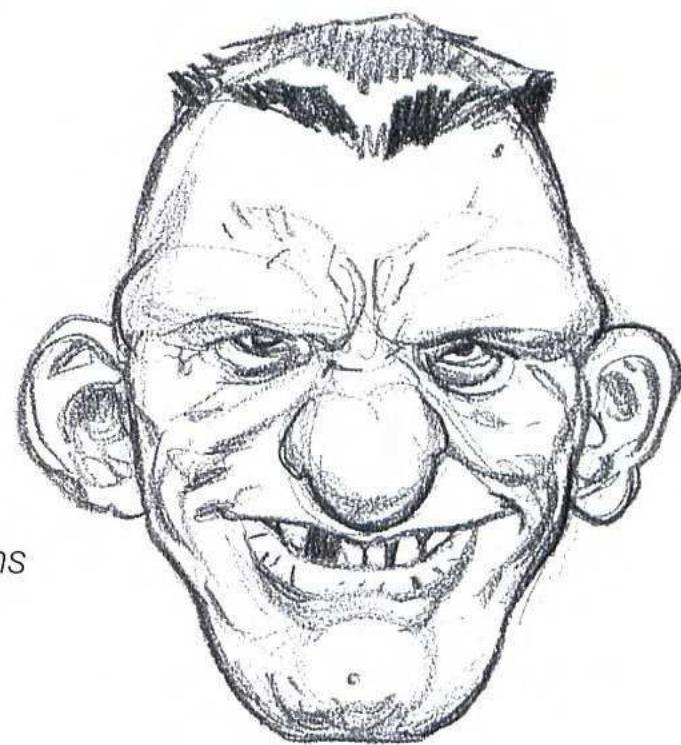
◀ From the side and to the back

One of Orin's inhuman features, the oversized nose, is given a sharp focus by squashing up the features around it—frowning the brow and half-closing the mouth.



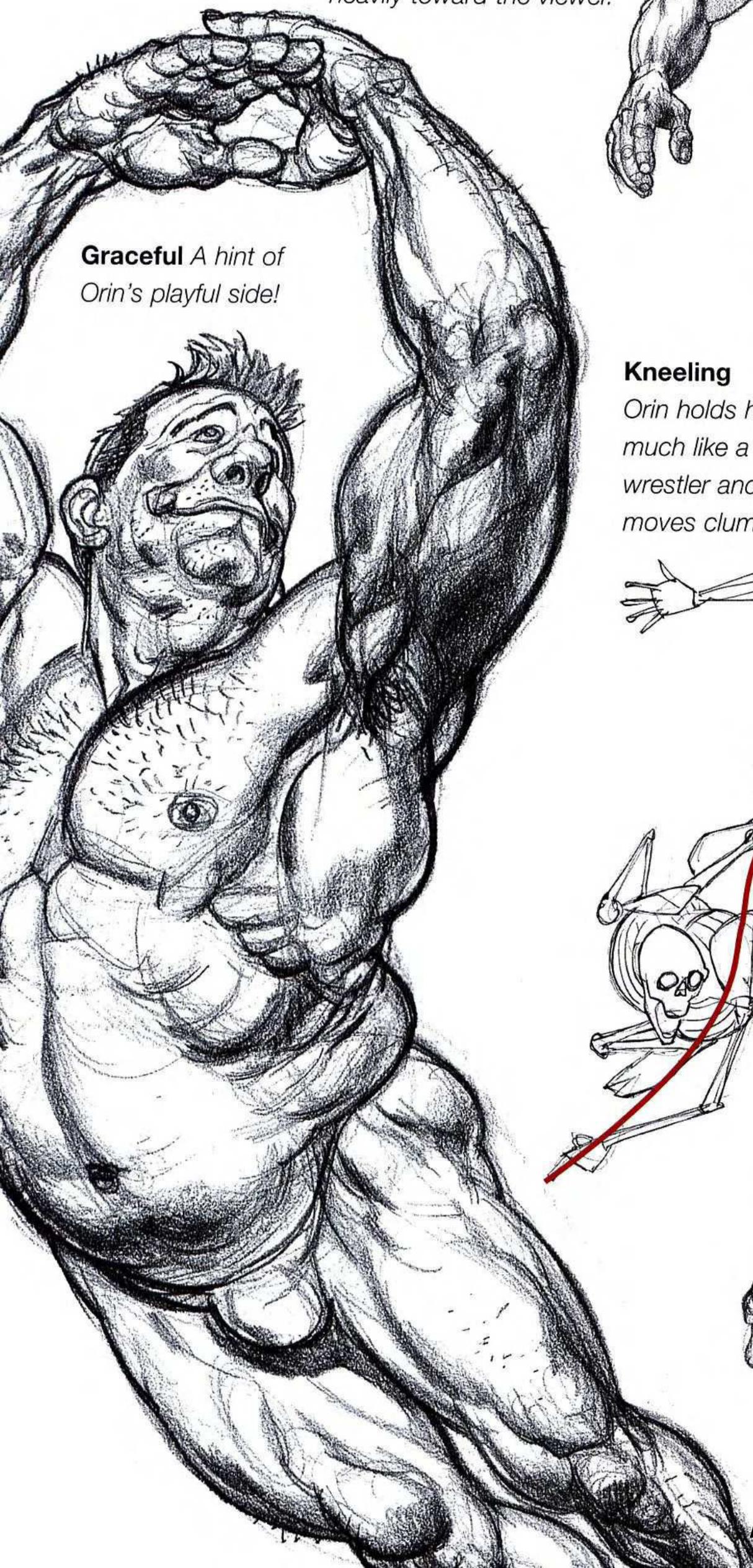
► From the front

And now we see half and half—a human expression given a humorous quality by the unusual proportions of the features.



action poses

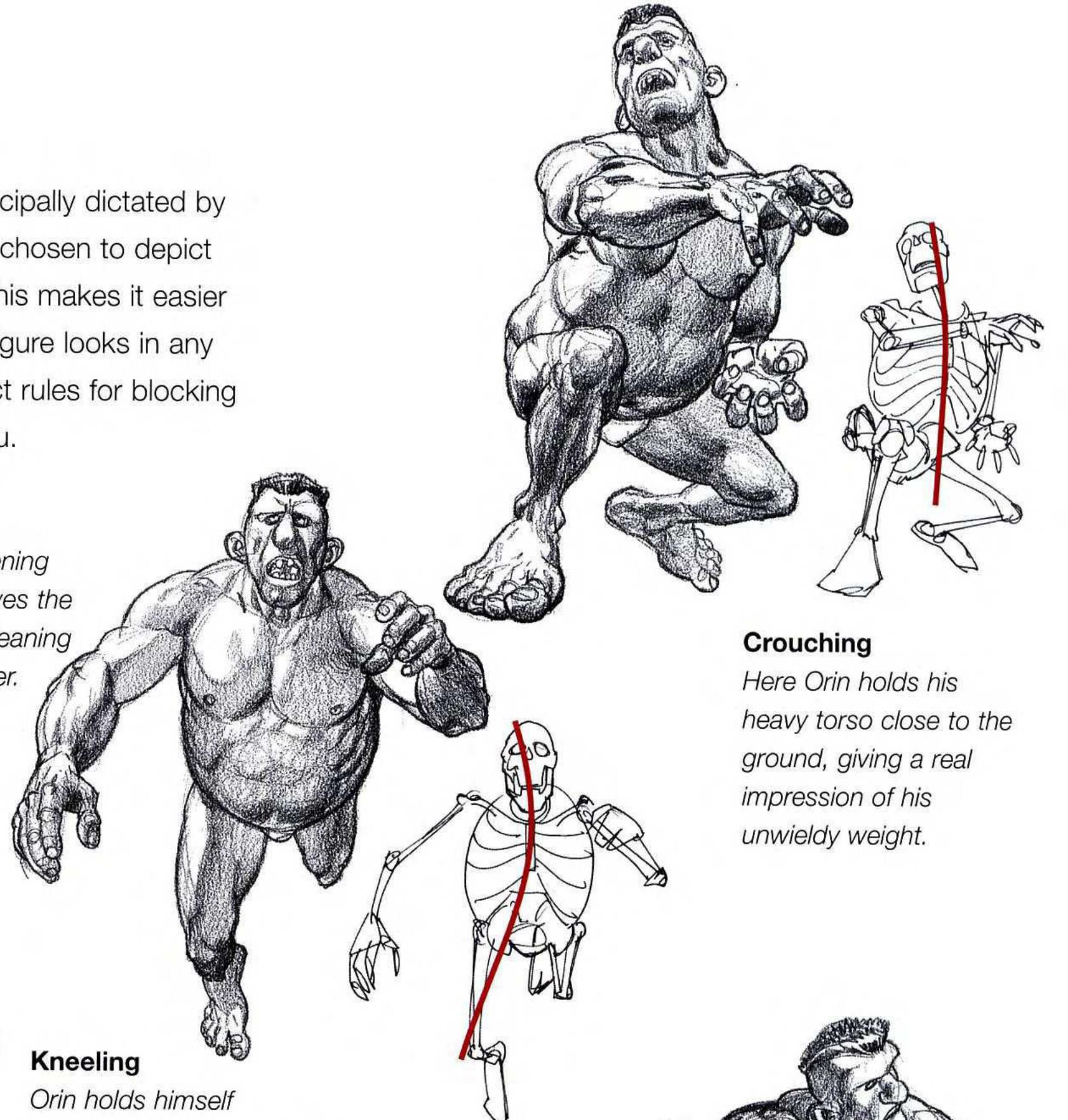
Orin's posture and movement are principally dictated by the weight of his torso. The artist has chosen to depict this initially as the skeletal model, as this makes it easier to see early on how comfortable the figure looks in any position. Remember, there are no strict rules for blocking out—just find a way that works for you.



Graceful A hint of Orin's playful side!

Leaning

The dramatic foreshortening on the arms and legs gives the impression that Orin is leaning heavily toward the viewer.

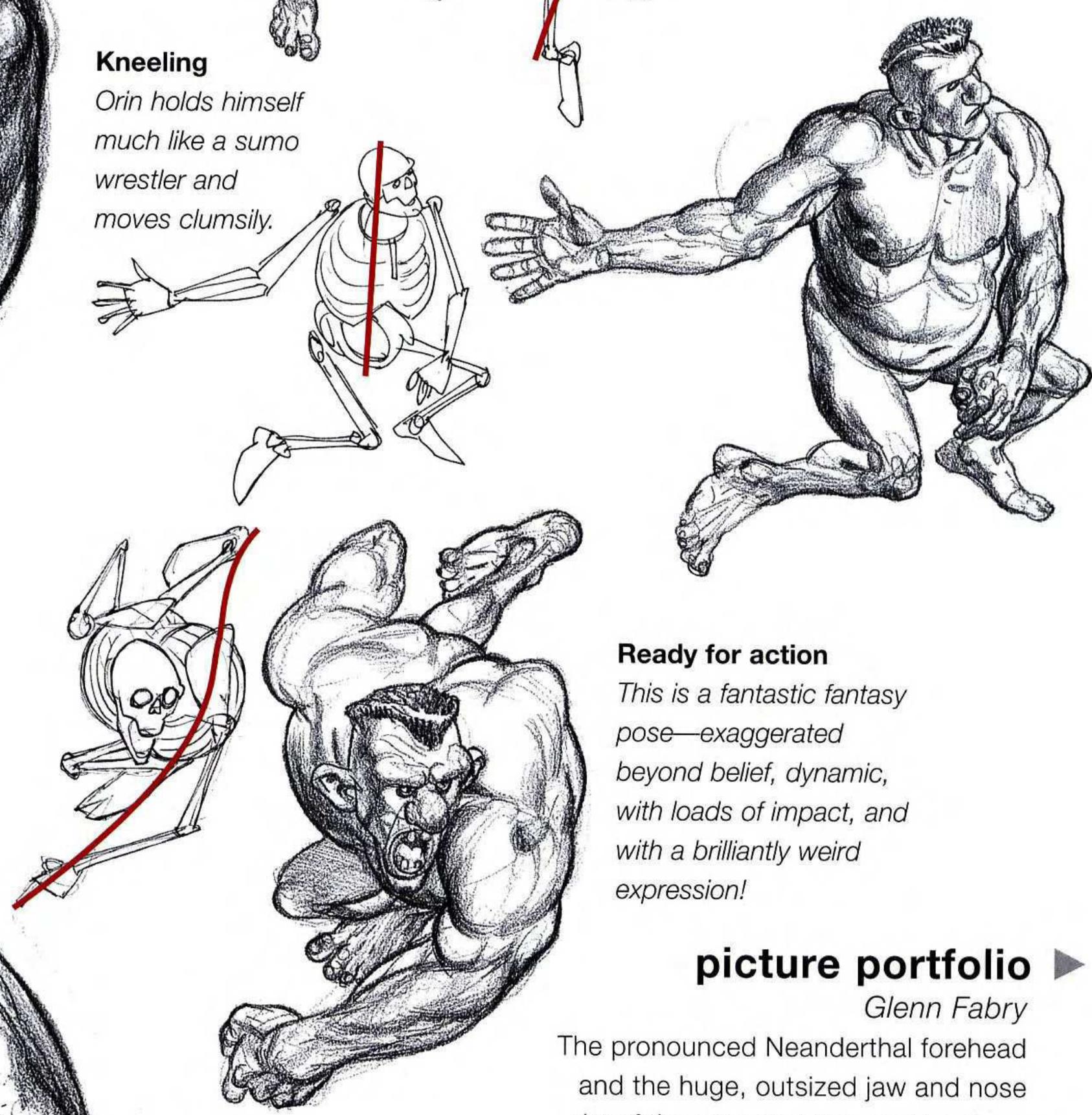


Crouching

Here Orin holds his heavy torso close to the ground, giving a real impression of his unwieldy weight.

Kneeling

Orin holds himself much like a sumo wrestler and moves clumsily.



Ready for action

This is a fantastic fantasy pose—exaggerated beyond belief, dynamic, with loads of impact, and with a brilliantly weird expression!

picture portfolio

Glenn Fabry

The pronounced Neanderthal forehead and the huge, outsized jaw and nose dwarf the eyes and lips, making them oddly delicate and unattractive.



Gobbo the goblin

As fantasy archetypes go, Gobbo is very much the runt of the litter. Whereas some characters are corrupted by power or strength, Gobbo's unpleasantness is mainly caused by his resentment at being one of the most downtrodden, exploited, and kicked-about figures in fantasy literature. As such there's no depth of depravity that he won't sink to in order to satisfy his evil cravings for revenge.

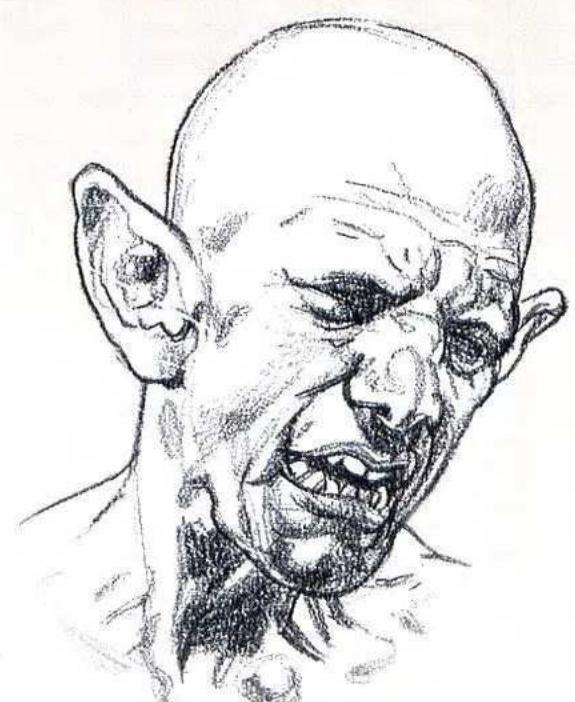
facial expressions

Gobbo is arguably the most expressive fantasy archetype, which is why his features are so human. When constructing a facial expression, it can be useful to think of him as a destructive, hyperactive child—emotionally highly charged, attention-seeking, and permanently frustrated.



▲ Three-quarters

Thoughtful and observant—this is an excellent example of how similar Gobbo's face is to that of a human.



► From the left and to the back

Disgust? Thoughtfulness? Just a "faraway look?" Who's to say? It's a good idea occasionally to let a character run loose and let him do what you feel without having to justify his every expression.



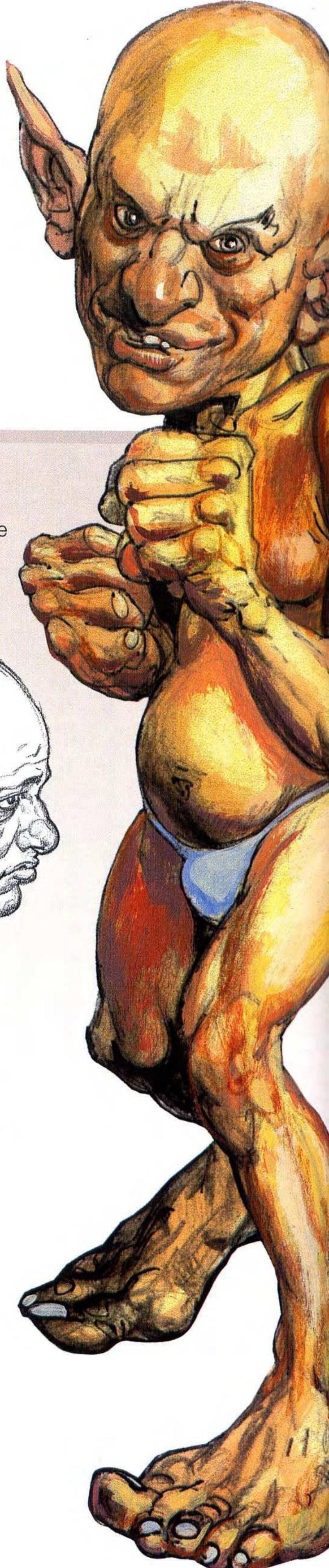
► From the side

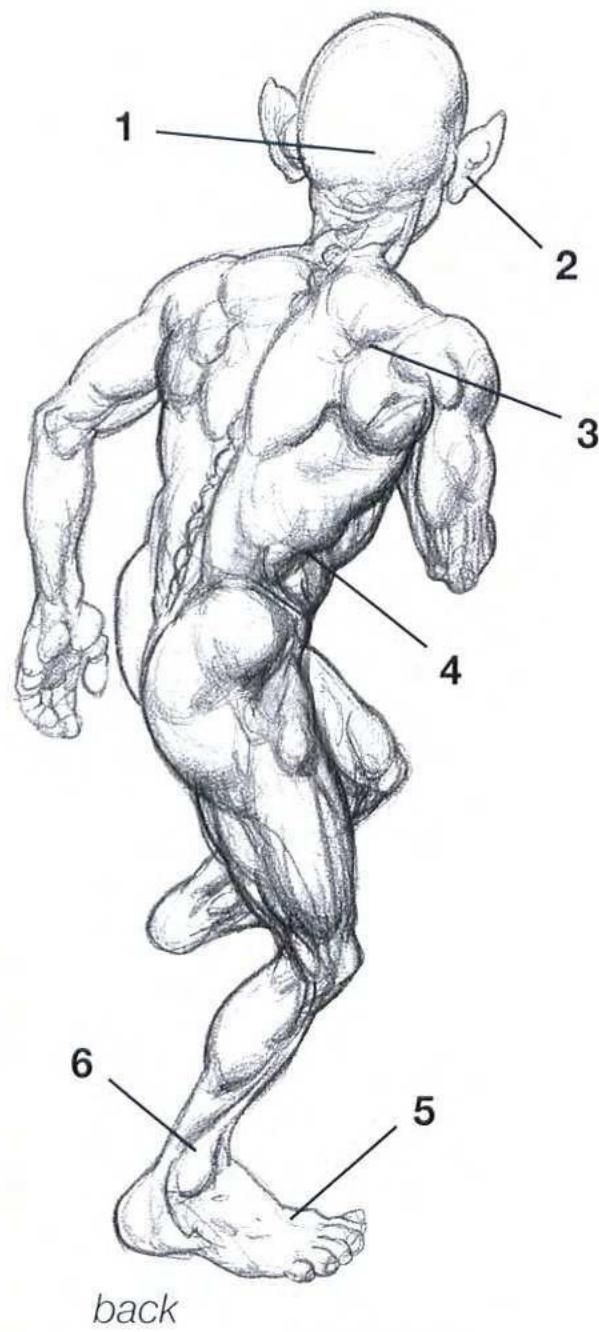
Caught off-guard, we see how melancholy Gobbo can be without a distraction.



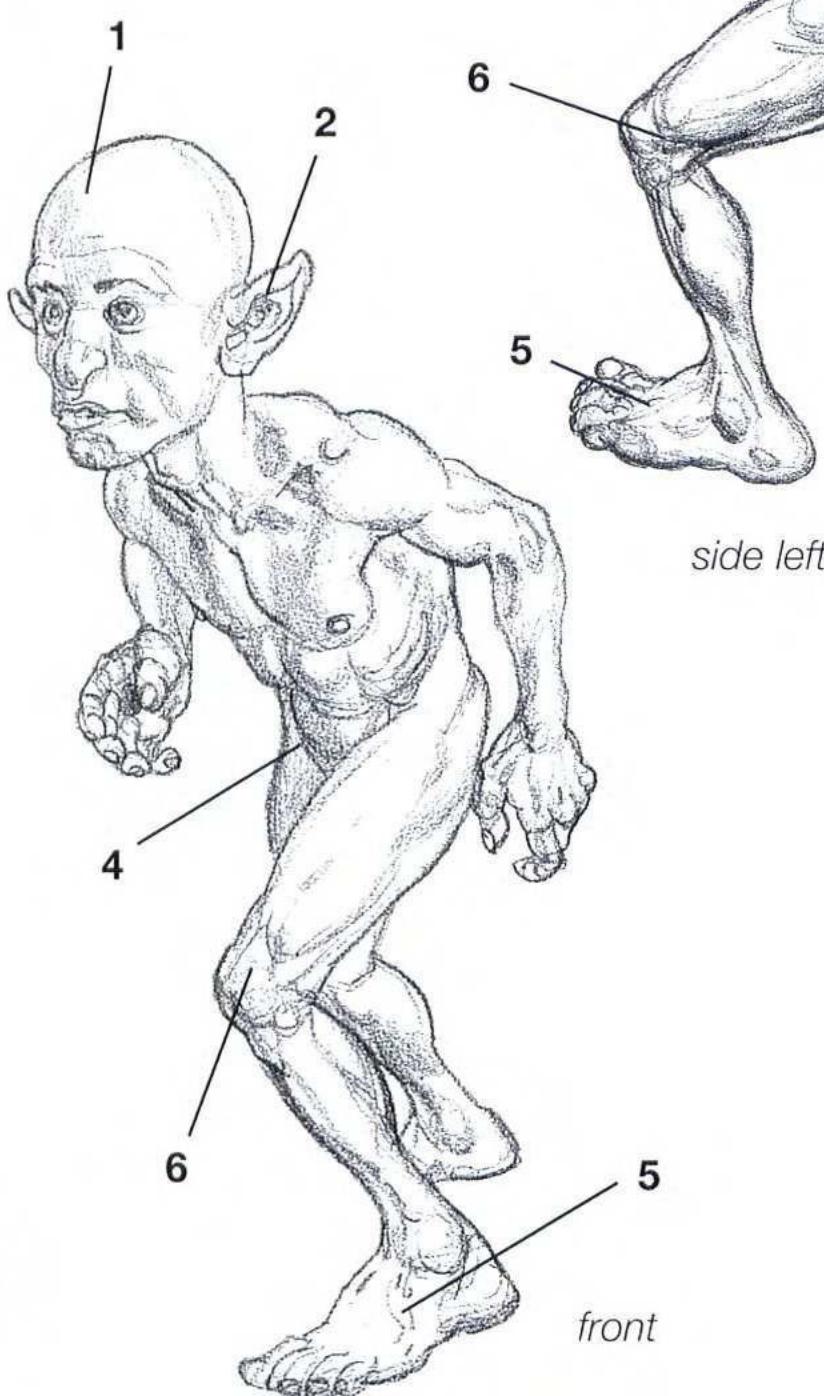
◀ Three-quarters

looking down *Manic depressive right now, but don't worry, in a few moments he'll have forgotten all about it.*

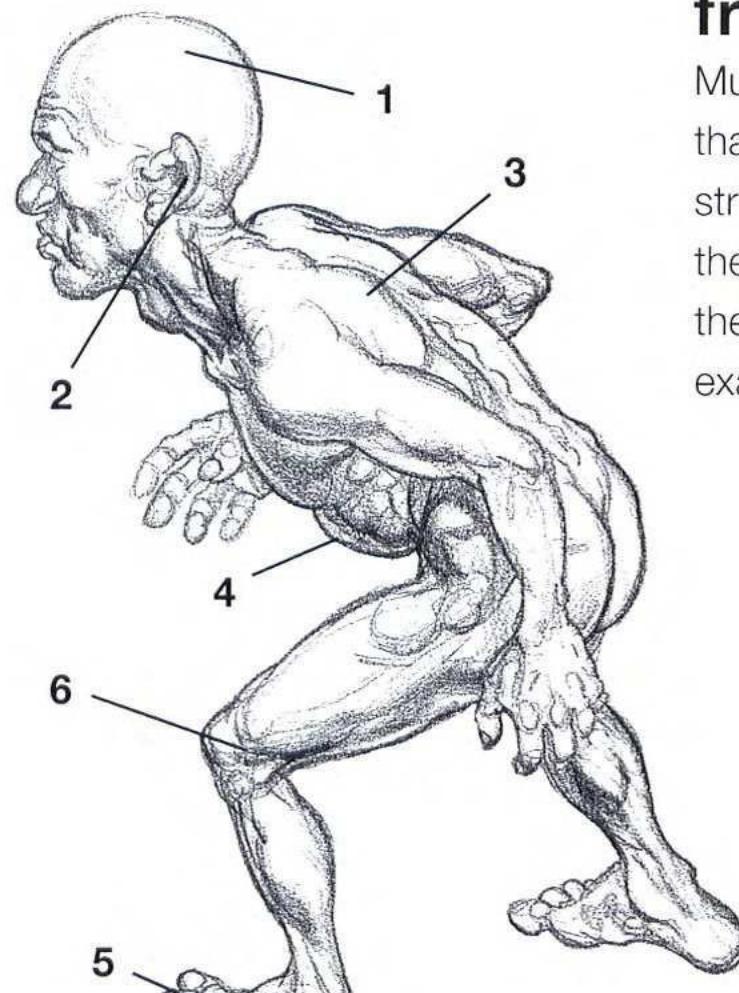




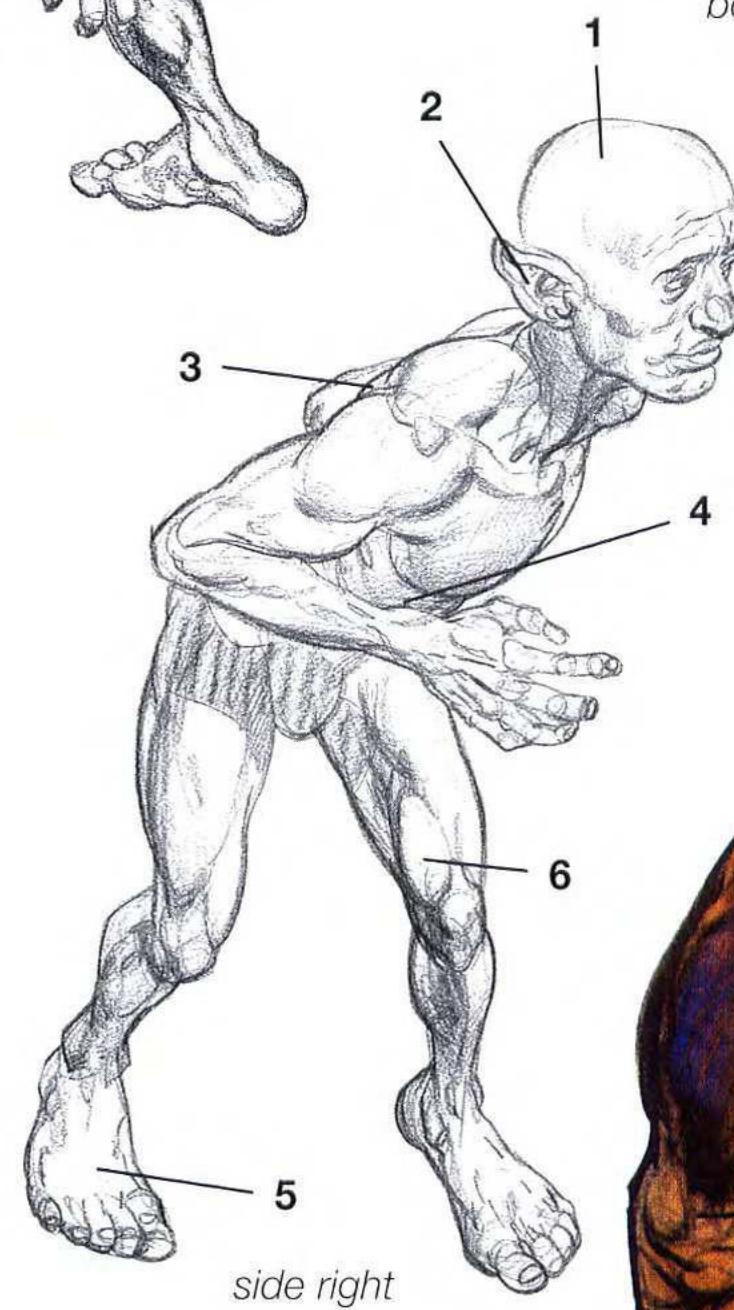
back



front



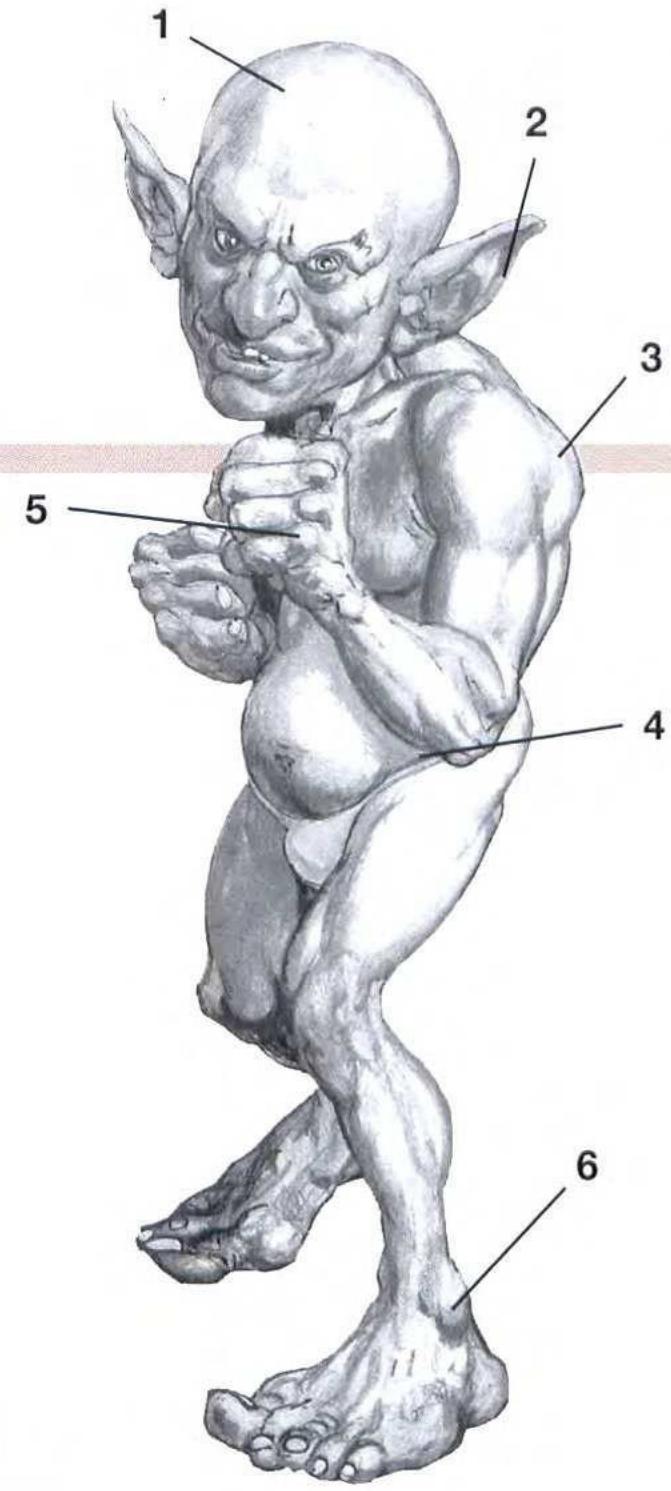
side left



side right

key characteristics

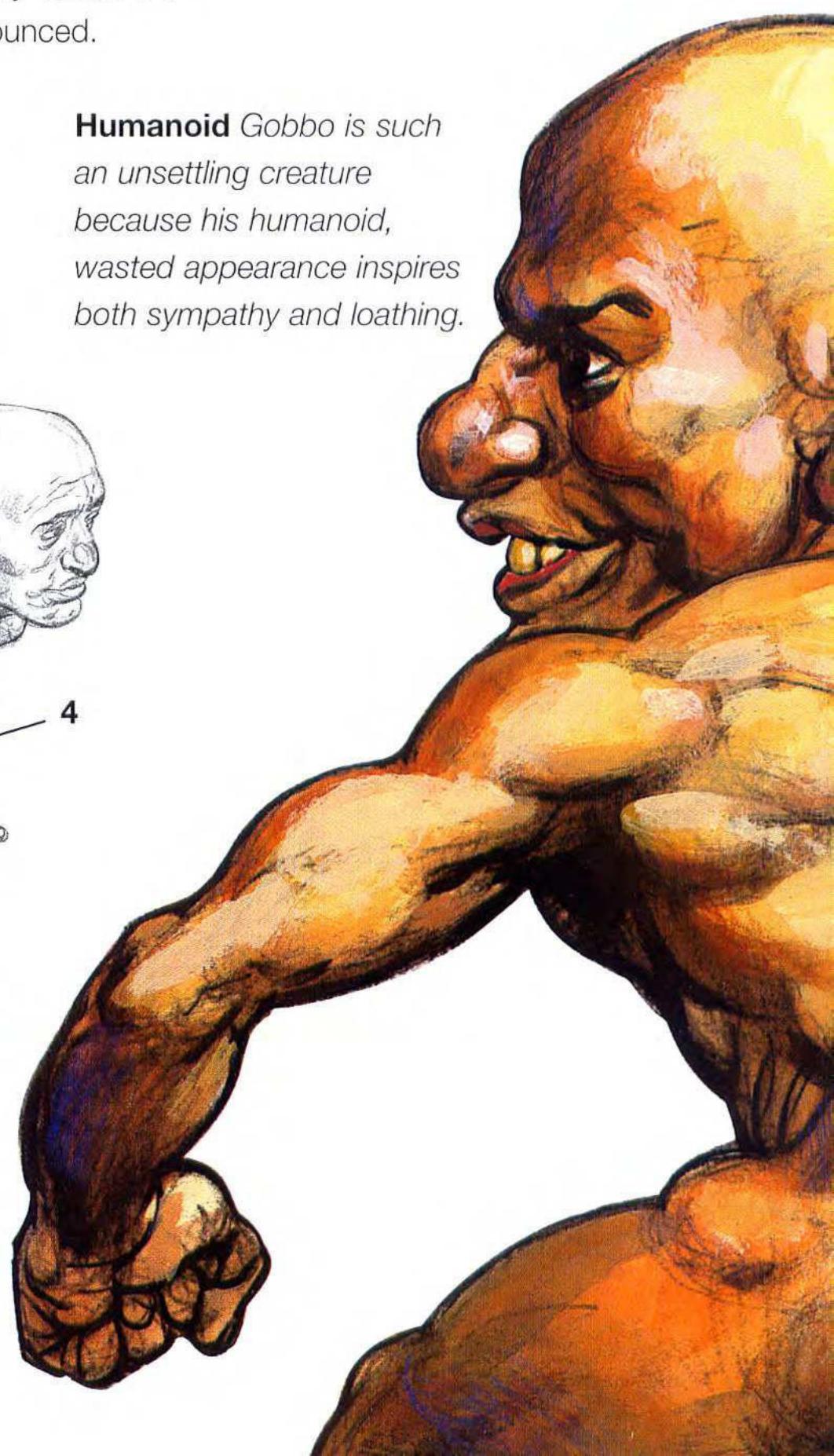
1. Essentially hairless.
2. Ears and nose disproportionately bigger than the rest of the face.
3. Dowager's hump—a clear sign of aging.
4. Leathery, unyielding skin hangs off bone and muscle like cloth.
5. Large, skeletal hands and feet.
6. Bones almost as pronounced as muscles.



from all angles

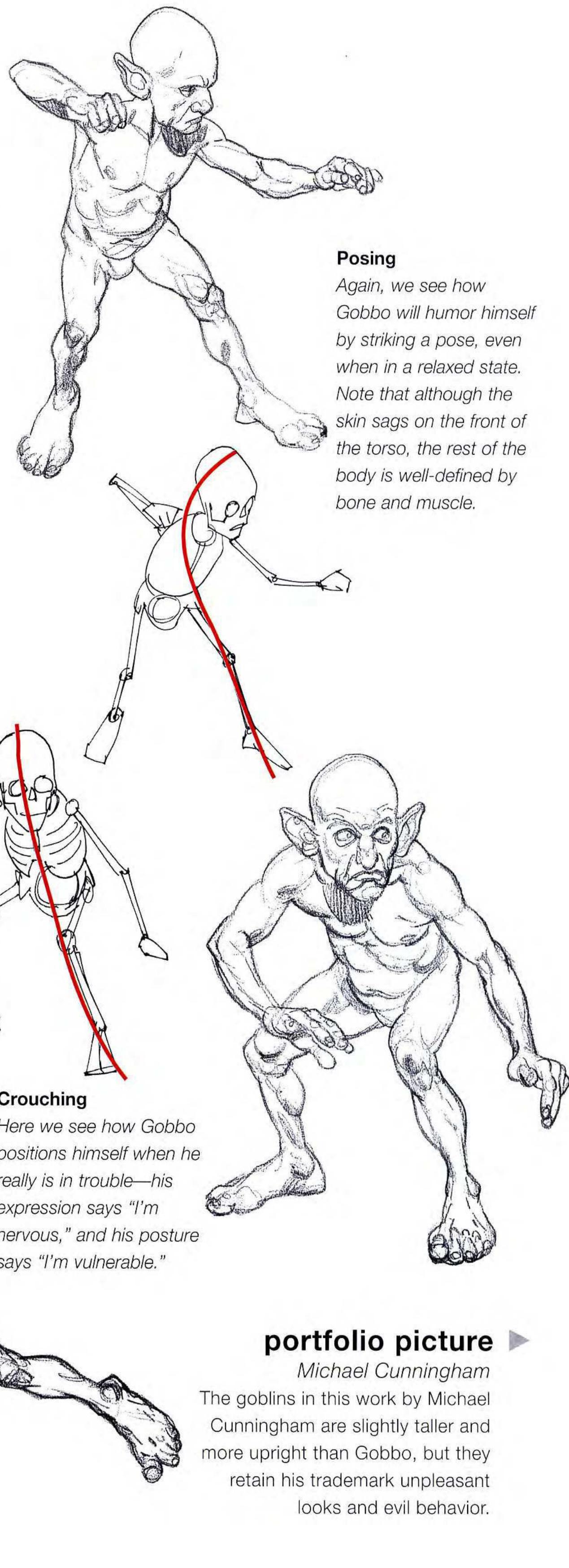
Much of the body is so emaciated that its shape is dictated by the bone structure. This is most noticeable in the wrists, ankles, head, and especially the back, where every vertebra is exaggeratedly pronounced.

Humanoid Gobbo is such an unsettling creature because his humanoid, wasted appearance inspires both sympathy and loathing.



action poses

Gobbo's look is that of a humanoid creature who has thwarted death and remained agile for many hundreds of years, but has been ravaged beyond recognition by age. Indeed, in many fantasy stories this is how goblins come about.

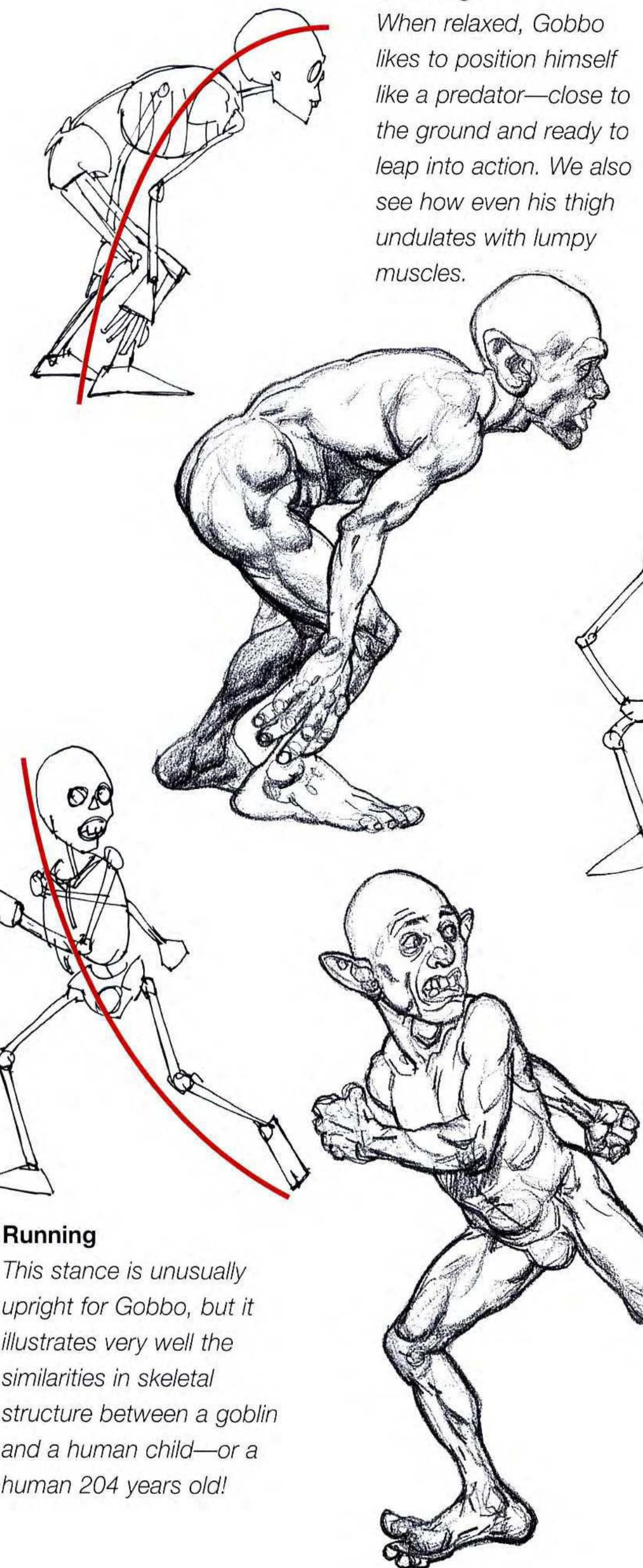


Bending

When relaxed, Gobbo likes to position himself like a predator—close to the ground and ready to leap into action. We also see how even his thigh undulates with lumpy muscles.

Posing

Again, we see how Gobbo will humor himself by striking a pose, even when in a relaxed state. Note that although the skin sags on the front of the torso, the rest of the body is well-defined by bone and muscle.



Running

This stance is unusually upright for Gobbo, but it illustrates very well the similarities in skeletal structure between a goblin and a human child—or a human 204 years old!

portfolio picture

Michael Cunningham

The goblins in this work by Michael Cunningham are slightly taller and more upright than Gobbo, but they retain his trademark unpleasant looks and evil behavior.

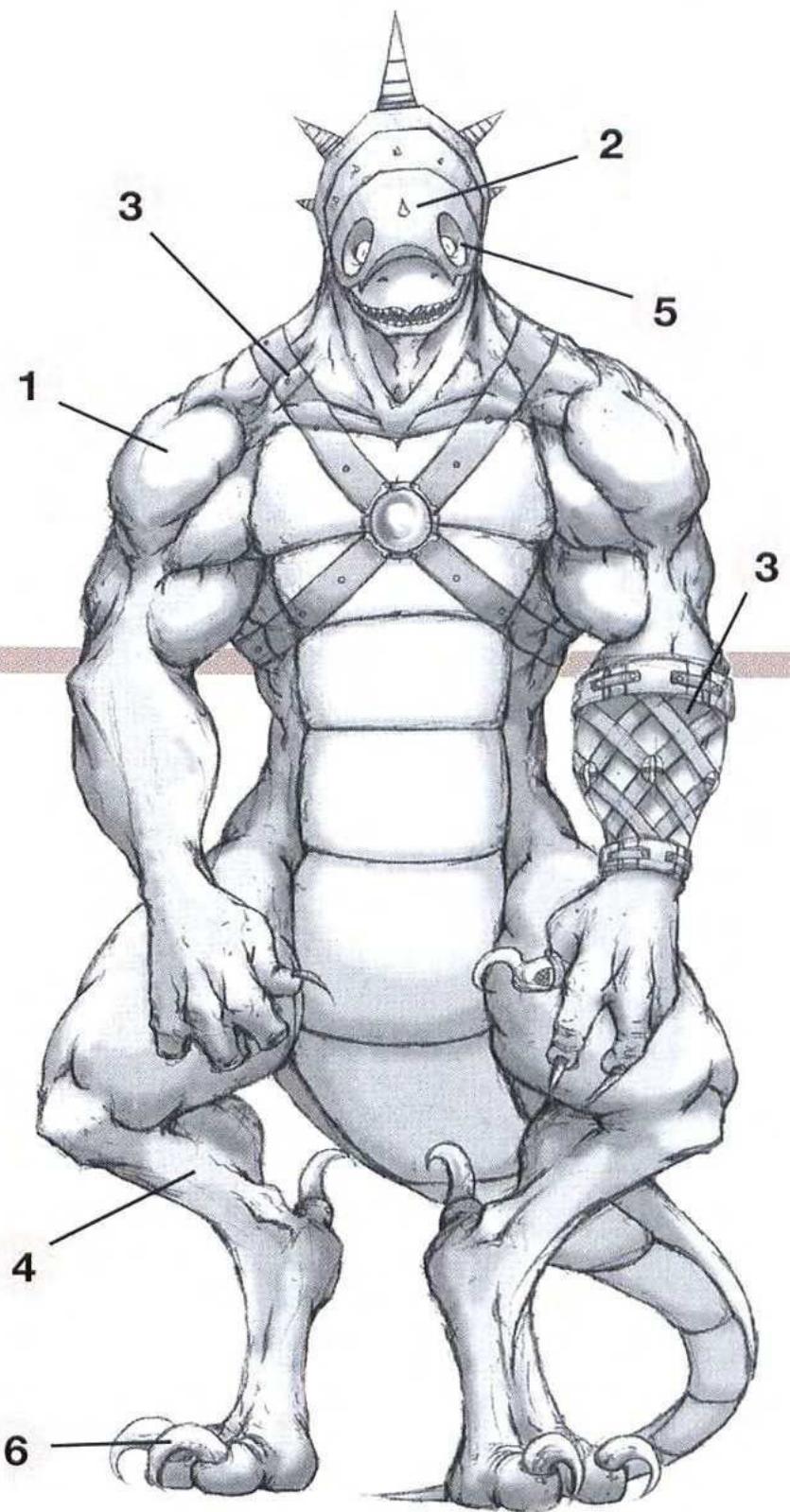


Kyvar the lizard

Every character needs a hook—a distinctive feature that sets it out from the rest. Kyvar, as a gigantic lizard, fits the bill perfectly. As important as it is for a character to be different, it's also vital that all fantasy characters share a few simple universal traits. Kyvar also illustrates these similarities.

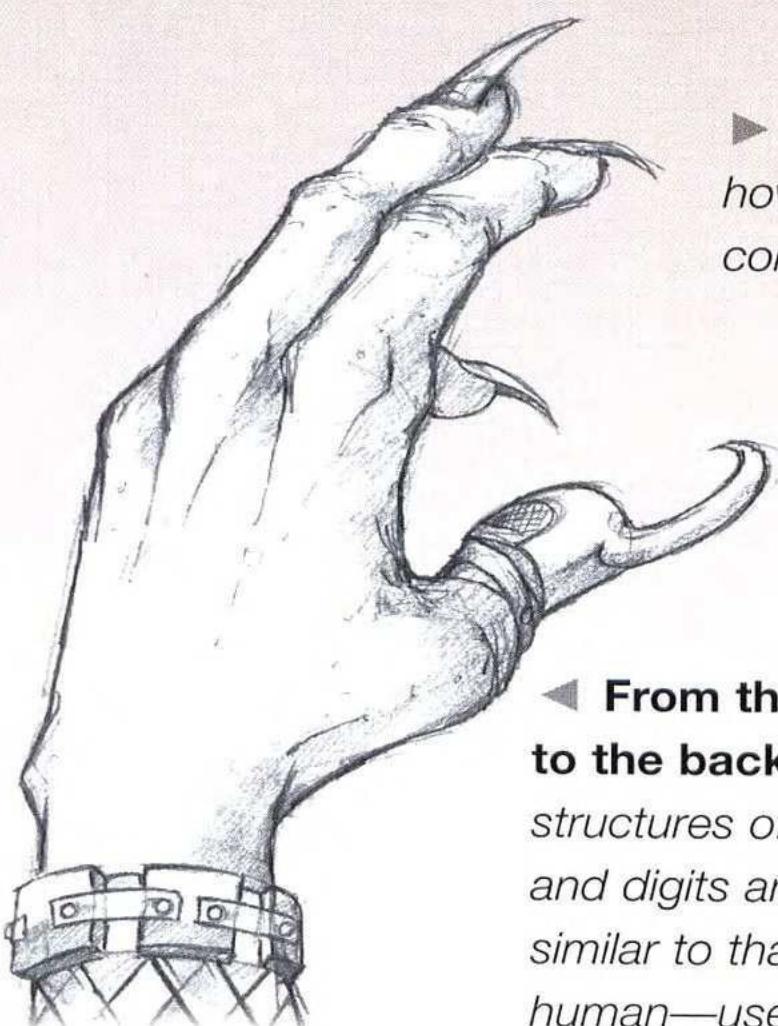
key characteristics

1. Exaggerated shoulders and arms—important for any hero whose strength doesn't lie in the supernatural.
2. Distinctive facial expression.
3. Minimal, carefully chosen accessories.
4. Upright legs make him appear bipedal, but with lizardlike joints.
5. Eyes mounted at the front—a trait associated with predators, and a must for all fantasy combat characters.
6. Huge claws—remember the golden rule: if it looks good, exaggerate it!



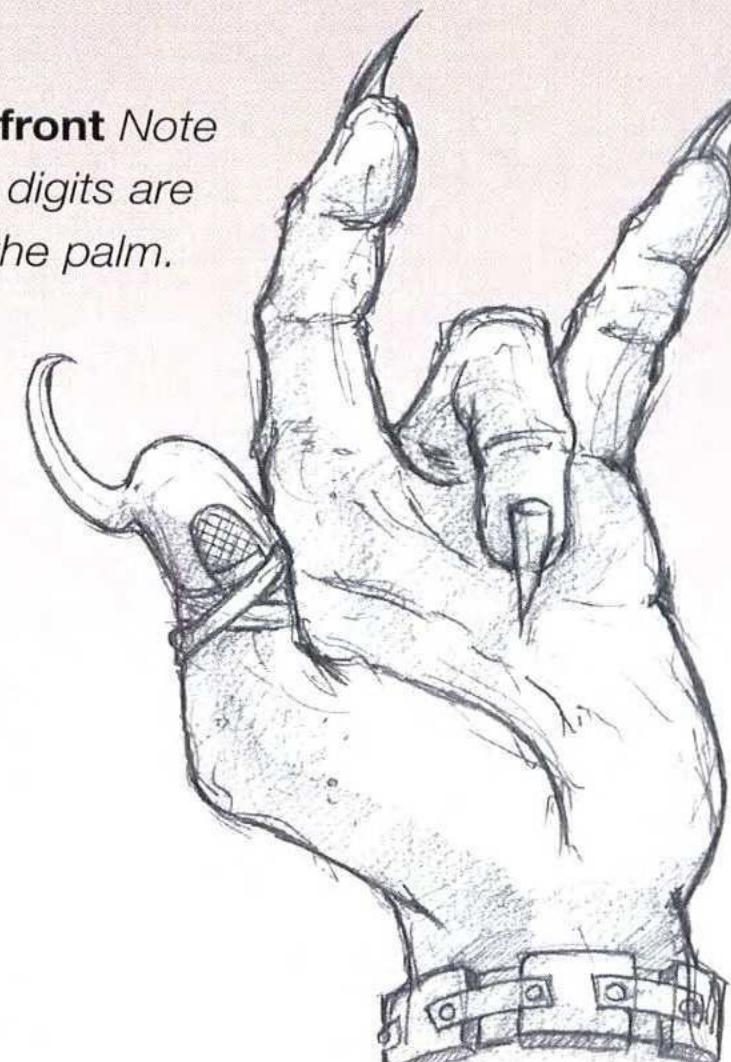
hand gestures

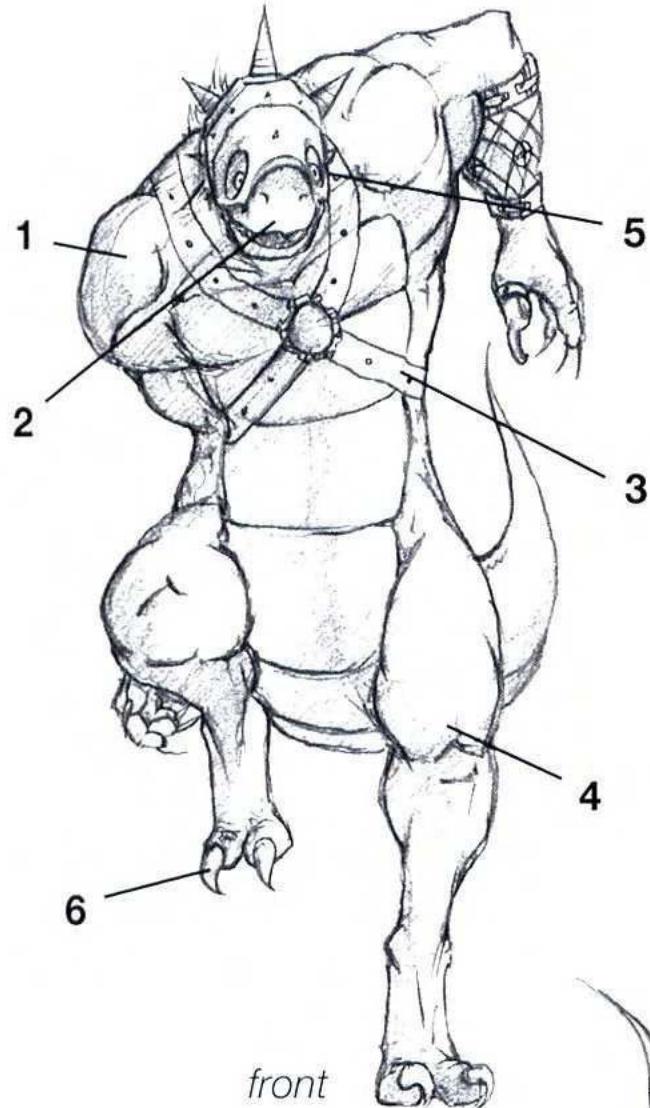
The structure of Kyvar's hands borrows heavily from that of a human's, a common trait in nonhuman fantasy figures. There is a slightly sharper bone structure and bulkier muscles as well as the obvious differences in the number of digits and the large claws that adorn them.



► **From the front** Note how bulky the digits are compared to the palm.

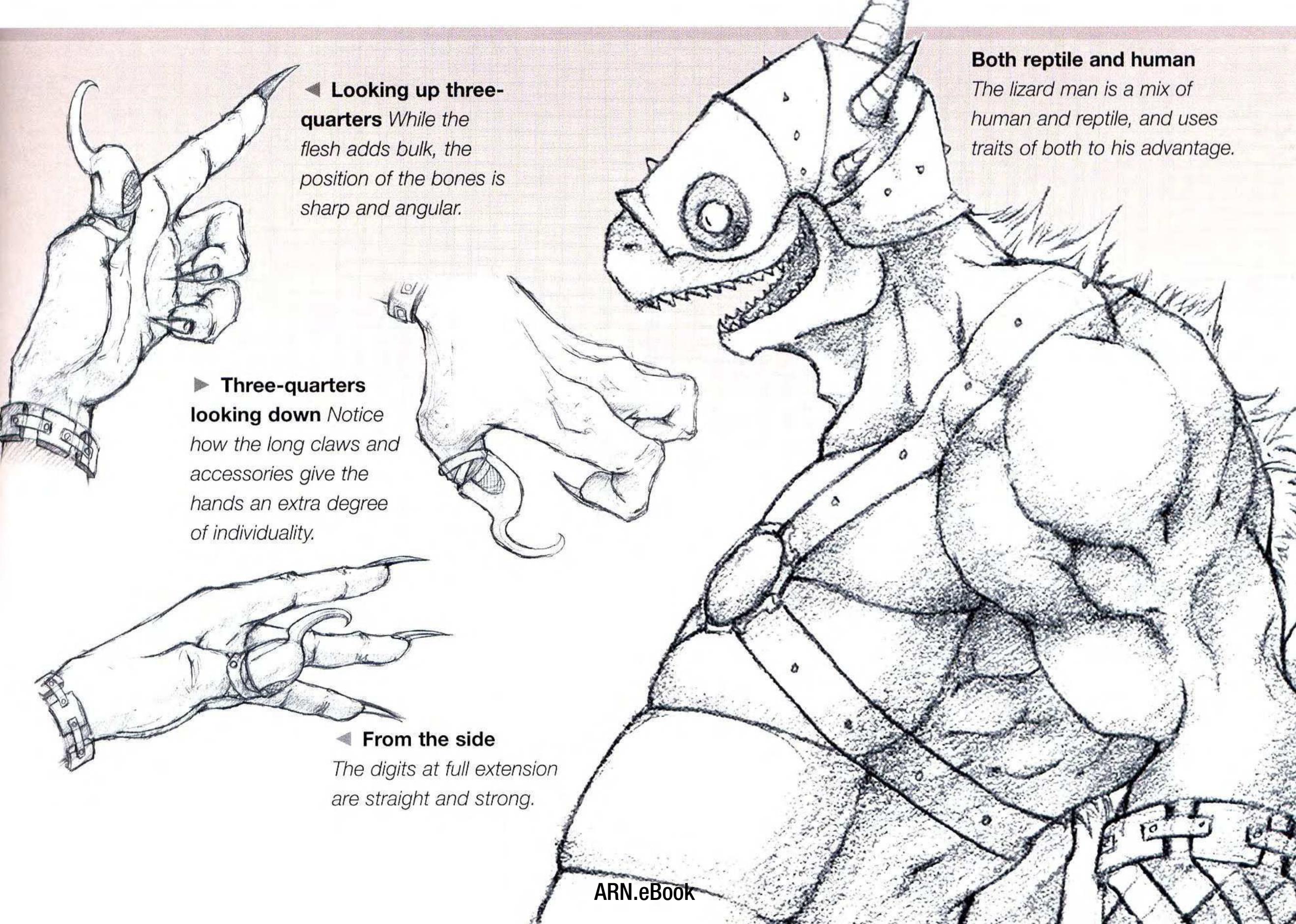
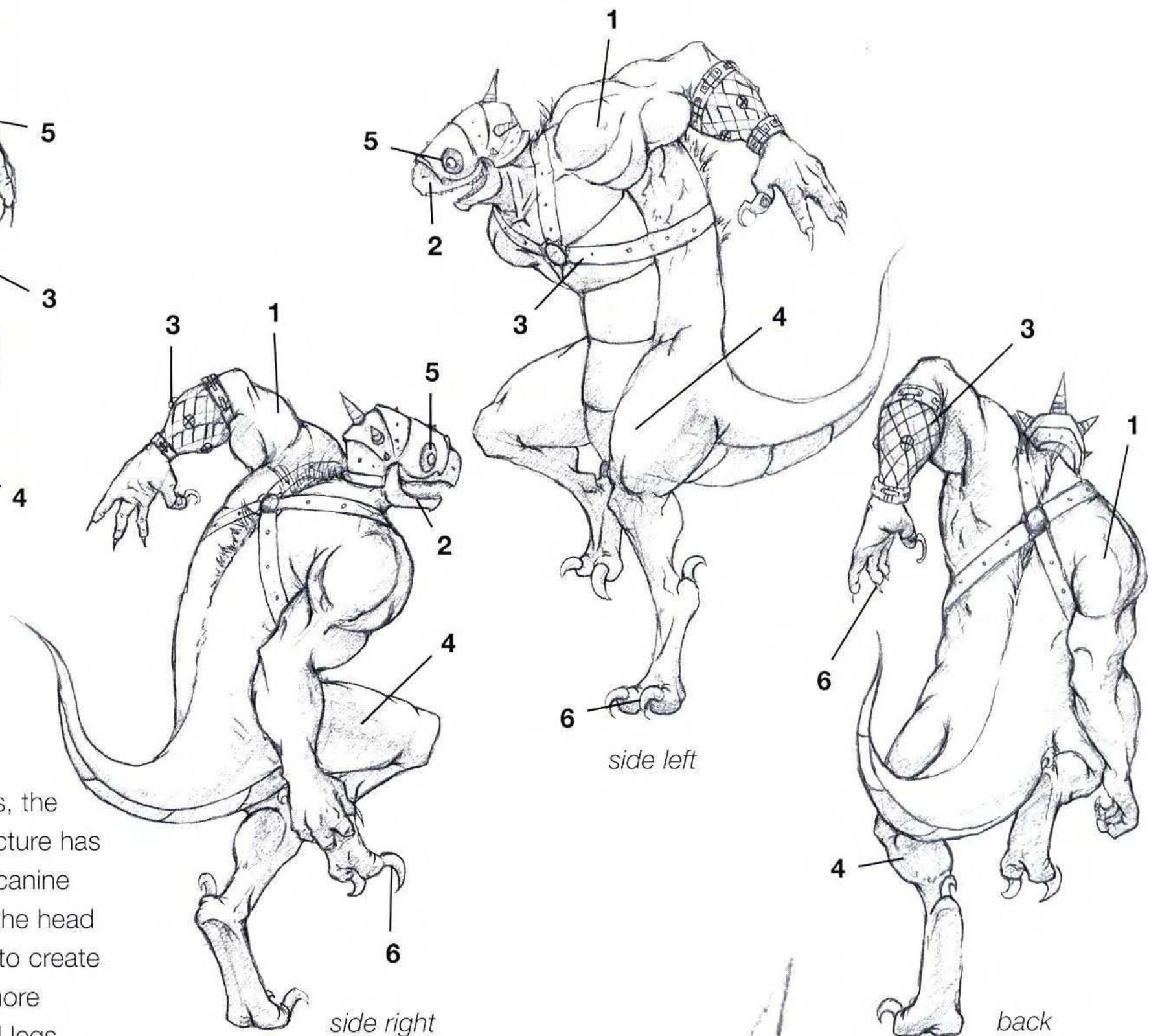
◀ **From the side and to the back** The bone structures of the wrist and digits are very similar to that of a human—use your own hand as a reference.





from all angles

Note how, particularly in the legs, the distinctly humanoid muscle structure has been grafted on to the reptilian/canine bone structure. The position of the head and tail has also been modified to create a creature that appears much more comfortable standing on its hind legs.



action poses

Part of creating a realistic illustration is adapting bone and muscle structure so the figure looks comfortable in any position. Kyvar's body must be able to switch between biped and quadruped, which is achieved by modifying the structure of his reptilian legs and positioning his head so it faces forward and upward.



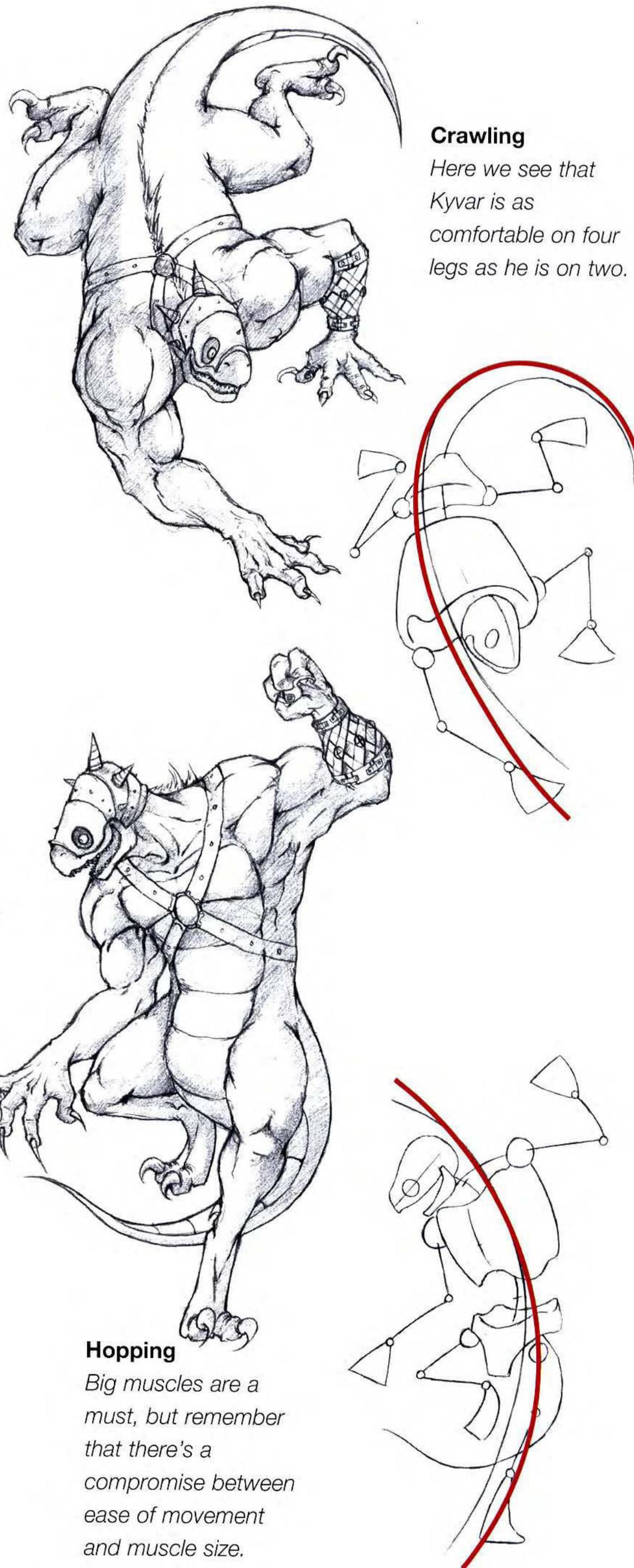
Attacking

Smooth reptilian skin makes shading a lot easier, so remember to accentuate those bulging muscles with bold outlines.



Charging

Notice how Kyvar's whole body is at an incline—you can make a character appear more dynamic by increasing this angle of movement.



Crawling

Here we see that Kyvar is as comfortable on four legs as he is on two.

portfolio picture ▶

Michael Cunningham

The addition of chain mail, primitive weapon, and aggressive posture result in a very different reptilelike creation than on the previous pages.





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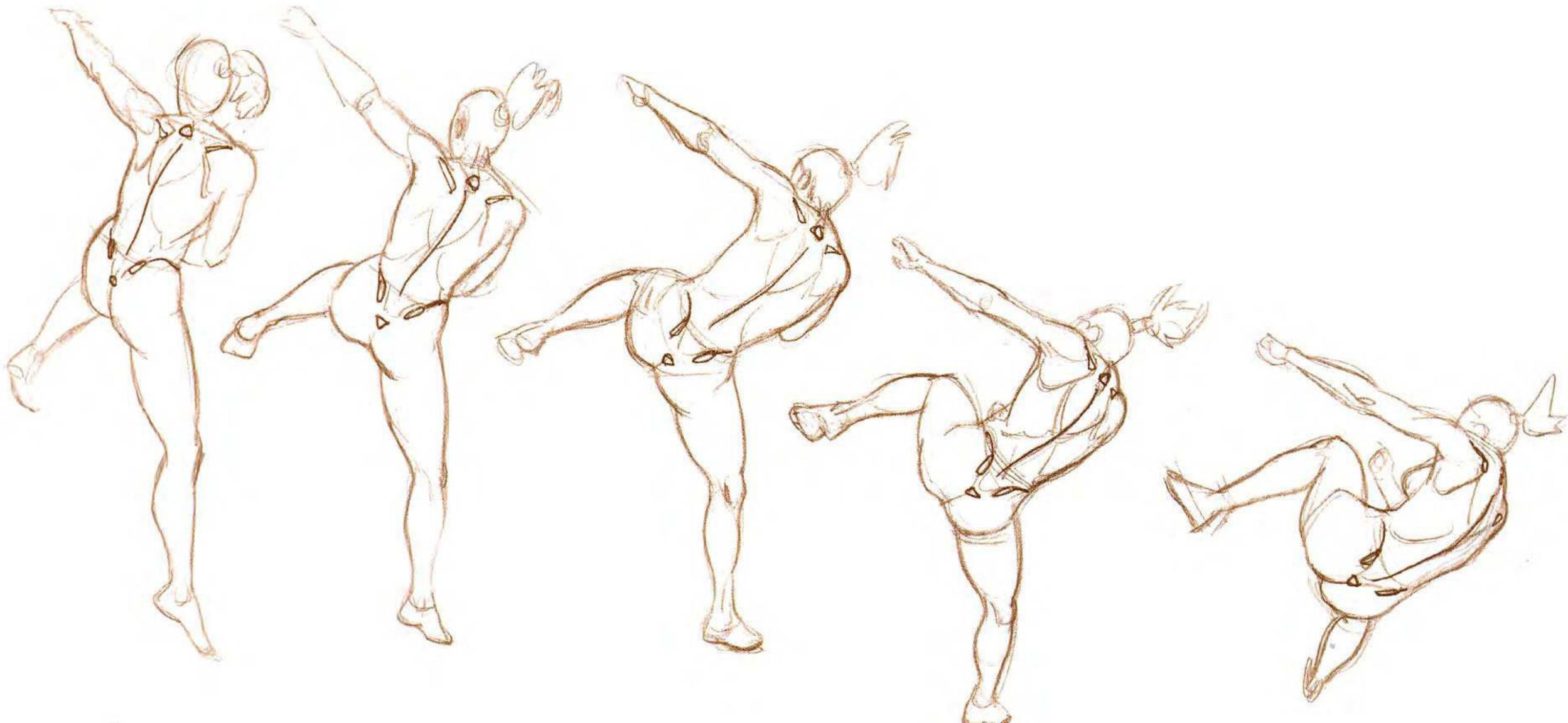
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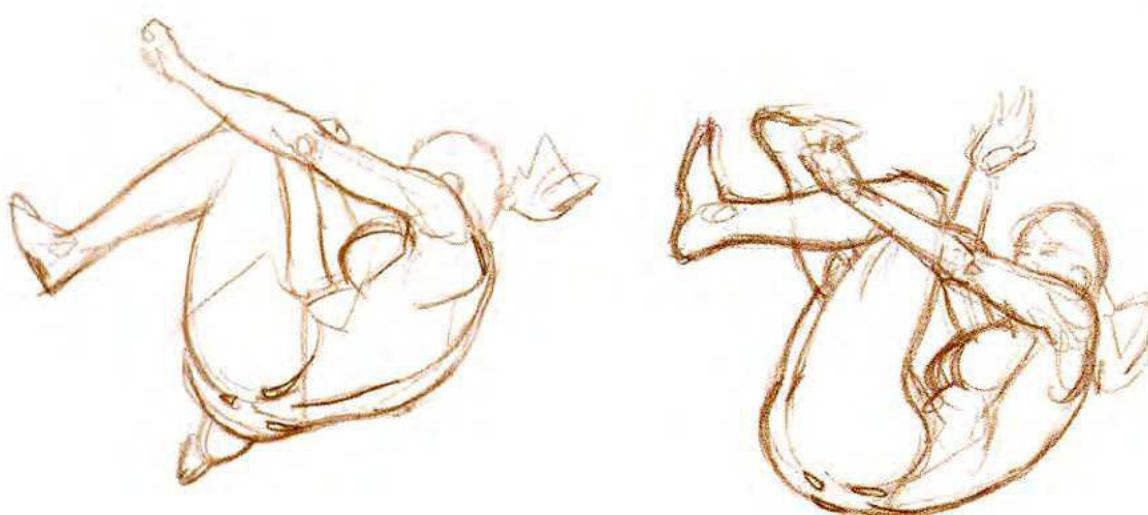
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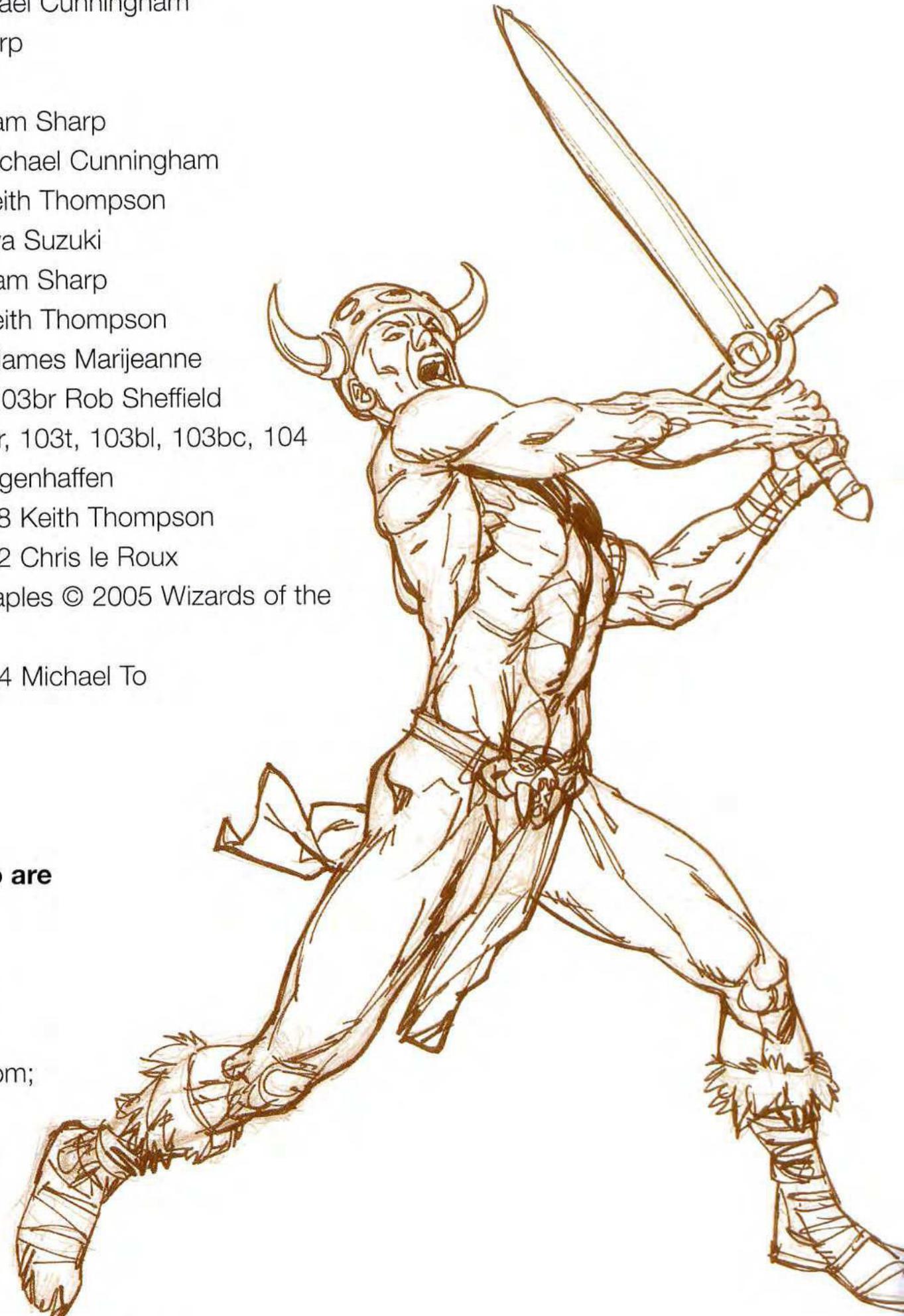
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AUTHOR'S DEDICATION

Lots of love to Nikki, Tom and Kitty