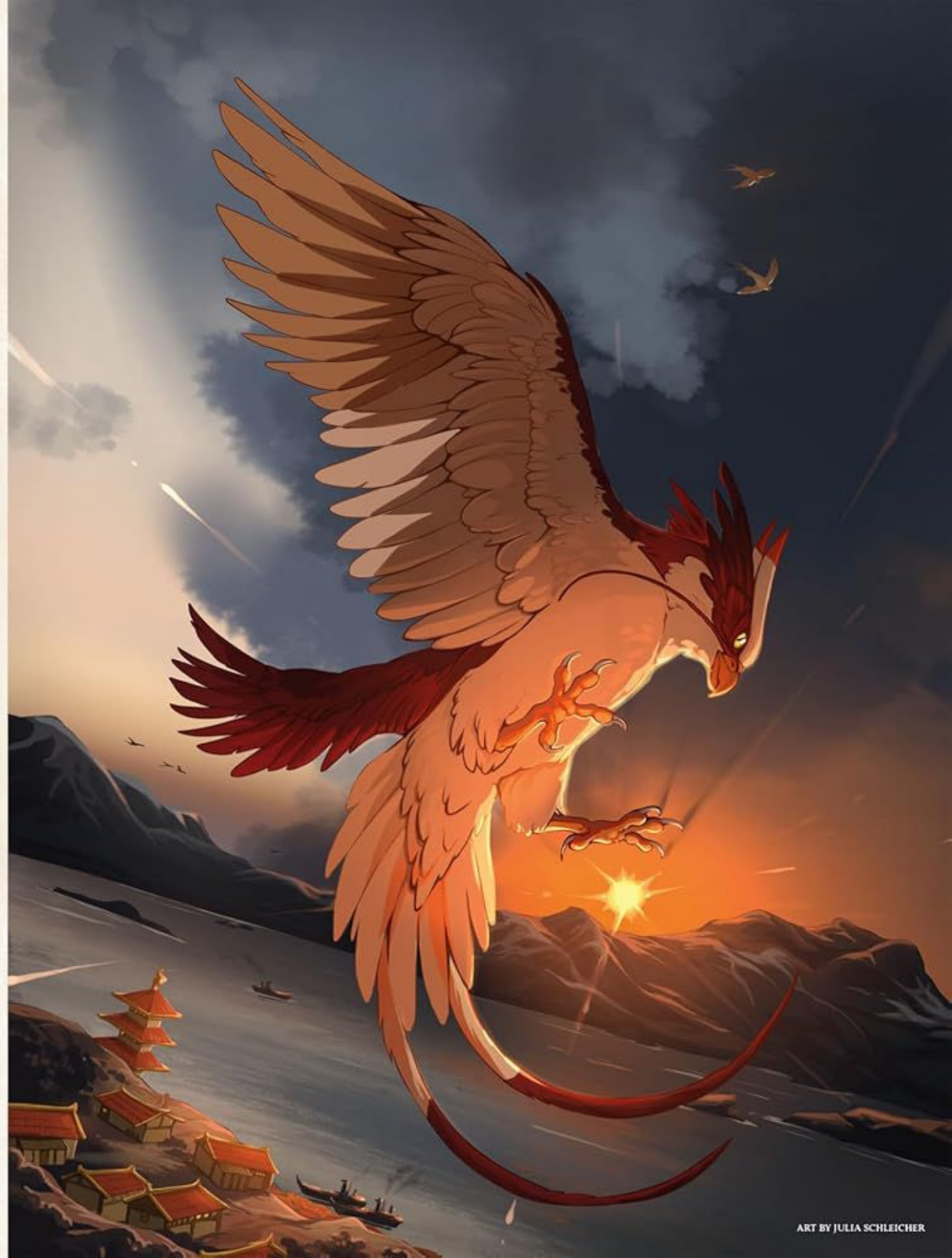


DRAGON-HAWK

This bird isn't really a dragon at all. I'm not sure why it was named that—you'd have to ask people in the Fire Nation. They've been using these animals as messengers for hundreds of years. Dragon-hawks have an uncanny ability to fly long distances to find their target. I've heard that a well-trained one can make the trip from the Fire Nation to Ba Sing Se in a single night. And unlike me, they never get distracted by all the fun stuff you pass along the way. Anyway, I just saw something fun happening outside, so I'll finish this later!

Dragon-hawks are also known as messenger hawks, due to their reputation as reliable long-distance couriers.





CROCO-CAT



Don't get this one confused with the cat-gator—they're very different animals. Croco-cats don't live in the swamp, but prefer to sit in the nice warm lap of a loving human. Instead of fins, they've got fur on their backs and produce milk for their babies.

But they're not all purrs and cuddles. If you make a croco-cat mad, it can turn as ferocious as any saber-tooth moose-lion! So be careful when brushing its scales.

"The Boulder can neither confirm nor deny that he has a pet croco-cat named The Pebble who he loves very much!"
—The Boulder



KOMODO-RHINO

Boy, when you've been chased by as many of these things as I have, it's a little hard to be unbiased. But I'll do my best to just give you the facts.

Komodo-rhinos are the standard mount of Fire Nation troops, and for good reason. Not only are

they fierce and strong, but they're completely immune to most physical attacks due to their thick skin. The hide of an adult rhino is so tough and impenetrable that it can withstand almost any blade. Spears and swords simply break on its back and just end up making the animal angrier.



AARDVARK-SLOTH

This animal is a strange one, and maybe the only one to ever free me from a trap by licking me. Normally, their diet consists of bugs that live in the ground, but in the southern isles of the Fire Nation, they're trained to eat a thick, sticky goo that would turn the stomachs of most animals. The Sun Warriors, who guard the ancient secrets of firebending, use this goo in booby traps as a kind of glue snare to stop intruders.

If you trigger one of these traps, the best way to free yourself is by having one of these aardvark-sloths use its weird, snaky tongue to lick that gross stuff off of you. Getting licked by these things isn't exactly pleasant, but it's a lot less disgusting than being trapped in Sun Warrior goo. Believe me—I've experienced both.



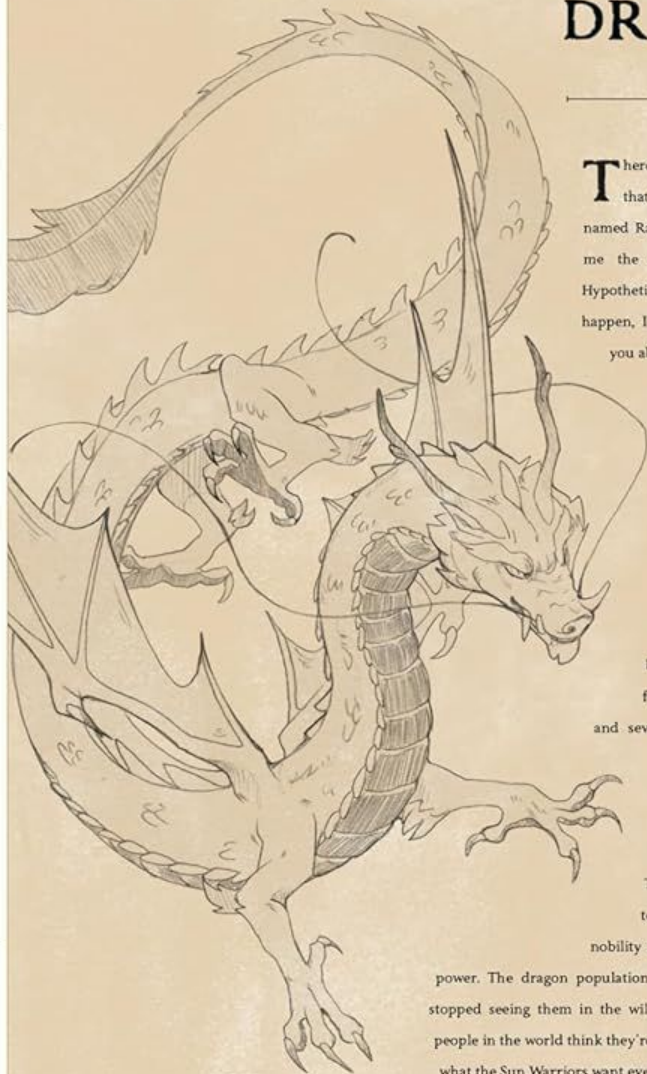
Aardvark-sloth, probably hungry for disgusting slime.



DRAGON

There's a rumor going around that I met two dragons, named Ran and Shaw, who taught me the secrets of firebending. Hypothetically speaking, if this did happen, I wouldn't be able to tell you about it, since I would have been sworn to secrecy by the local Sun Warriors, who guard the ancient secrets of the dragons.

Why the secrecy? Dragons have a fascinating and tragic history. They've always been sacred to serious firebending practitioners, and several Avatars were lucky enough to have them as familiars. Not all humans were as respectful though. They were nearly hunted to extinction by greedy nobility who wanted to steal their power. The dragon population got so low that people stopped seeing them in the wild, and to this day, most people in the world think they're extinct—which is exactly what the Sun Warriors want everyone to think, probably.



But let's say (again, hypothetically!) that the rumors about me are true, and that I did encounter two dragons when I set out to meet the original firebending masters on a remote Fire Nation island. It would have been the most terrifying experience of my life! From what I've heard, dragons aren't the most aggressive creatures, but they're easily the most intimidating. One cough from their mouth, and whatever is standing in front of them would be instantly engulfed in fire breath. Luckily, they chose not to send me to a fiery grave but imparted their ancient wisdom to me instead.

... Not that that happened! But it's what would have happened if I ever met them, I imagine.

Dragon, based on ancient paintings and drawings—and definitely not on the author's firsthand experience.

