

Website Link:

<https://goldhorse.neocities.org/>

Gold Horse is an ongoing writing and artwork project. This document contains: website link (1), development guidelines (2-4), 6 writing passage examples (5-9), and artwork (10-16).

Gold Horse is a multi-media project that was created in the summer of 2025, and is still currently ongoing. The narrative is hosted on a website (goldhorse.neocities.org), which is text-based, as story images still need to be added in. The website's story is still ongoing, but it is able to be read in any order, as it is a hypertext piece where some of the narrative cannot be found without reading and clicking through the initial story. The document hosts the website link, worldbuilding guides to narrate the story about location and characters, and a few artworks I made for the characters. I coded and illustrated borders for the entire website.

This is one of my lighter projects, where its purpose is to illustrate a world through a character's story. It has two sides of a story, told through the characters Elio and Ábel. Most entries in it right now are written through Ábel's perspective, narrating him as a character but also the events important to his life. There are writings regarding his culture's new year celebration and a law he created. Ábel's writing is more about the world surrounding him and the affairs of others, while Elio's about his emotions at each moment. This project has been included, as I wanted to show off my current abilities with work I was proud of, even if it is still ongoing. I wanted to combine my history and folklore studies in a creative space, to explore the complexities of creating a world and its laws/beliefs.

The story follows two characters and the growth of their friendship. A king named Ábel that descended from dragons, embarrassed by his combination of man and beast. A wandering mercenary named Elio, who feels so disconnected to people that he wants to be a horse. The two maintain an odd relationship over the years, with bickering and opposing opinions. Yet find comfort in the selfish acts each perform to secretly take care of one another.

Sárkánytava:

A landlocked kingdom, surrounded by two long rivers, large plains, and low mountains. Lush greenery, with weather that is not sweltering in the summer, though a thick frost may arrive in the winter.

The central capital, or the original Sárkánytava, is situated around a thick forest and mountains. A small pathway has been cleared in the centuries past to allow for easier trade and travel. In the mountain area, more citizens have built residence there, finding value in the passing people. The borders of the kingdom are divided by the steep mountains that block enemy entry.

Sárkánytava is smaller than its neighboring countries, and does not engage with them aside from necessary trade requests. It has been, within both the people and king's favor, that the affairs of their neighbors are kept outside. Most rulers have not offered help in times of war, and would only offer aid in famine and drought when it had become a dire emergency. This has then stereotyped its people as cold and cruel, with no warmth towards their own. But this is not the case, as they cared for one another so much, they were afraid of attack from the outside. To give aid meant you were in good faith to the other land, and the rulers that neighbored Sárkánytava had habits of disagreement and anger towards one another. It seemed that their sides were in a constant state of change, never knowing who would be in each other's favor. If they were seen as an ally during the time of war, then Sárkánytava puts the lives of its people at risk.

The people are known to be skilled in horsemanship, taking pride in their stables and delicately bred horses. Costumes were made for the horses to parade during the seasonal festivals. Art and embroidery was made of flowers and leaves, sometimes decorated with a bird. The people found it too prideful to evoke a dragon in everyday objects. Only objects created for special occasions or architecture were incorporated with the fearsome beast.

An old tale narrates how the land was once an empty and sad village, but a beautiful dragon helped bring prosperity to the land. A child's tale, but true history was never as exciting to tell. The rulers after that were all dragons, with a castle built to match their size. They took on human forms, to not create much distance between them and their people. But not many had gazed upon their dragon forms, only brief glimpses in the sky. The days of real dragons slowly crept away.

People of Sárkánytava could be considered pagans.

The land once had its own calendar, but adapted to the Julian calendar in order to properly understand their affairs with neighboring lands.

Cuorvallo:

A village far west from Sárkánytava, with little importance. It had no ruling party for a long time. It was situated on an island looking out into the sea on the west, and bordering the kingdom of Si'Aniaza. No one knows how it brought about settlers, but those that lived there felt as bright as the sun.

Folk art was decorated with rectangular shapes and silhouetted, rounded, figures. They preferred to represent fish and kept the colors bright against dark backgrounds.

Most will take jobs as fishermen or wagoners, splitting profits fairly between those who catch and those who ride into the towns to sell. The warm weather year round kept their hopes up. The people of Cuorvallo and most of the surrounding regions were Catholics.

It was then in 1425, two young kings would fight over the region. Plundering the small villages, leaving them to rot.

King Ábel:

Born in 1370 in the capital of Sárkánytáva. His mother was the prior ruler, and had married a blacksmith from the far north, an ordinary man. It was then that people worried for the future of the kingdom, even before he had been born. If the kingdom was founded and ruled by dragons, would the new prince be able to take care of them as strongly as the past rulers?

He was born with seven heads. Not seven personalities, every head shares the same mind. They are hidden beneath his thick hair, and scrunch up, similar to a seal. Ábel can hide his emotions, but the other heads may display them more profusely than his front, poker face.

It was unsettling and as he got older, many would blame times of suffering on him. Not for how he ruled, but because his existence went against the past. But truthfully, these nasty beliefs were from an older generation, who had since passed in the current day. But Ábel never stopped believing their feelings, losing faith in himself, he worries he will bring destruction and grief. He feels confused upon who and what he is. He is a dragon, but he is simply not as strong as one. He is a man, but he cannot harbor the weak hate they all keep in their hearts.

Combined with changing attitudes of dragons from an outside world, Ábel has grown dismayed with living. But to end his own life, would prove to others that he was a failure and met their expectations. Instead, he enacted an act in 1397, that passes rulership down to whoever can kill him. An honorable duel, for those who feel hatred toward him.

Ábel's text is proper, condescending at times even. But broken with emotional outbursts on occasion. Uses the word, 'gods', uncapitalized.

Eliseo/Elio:

Born in 1399 in Cuorvallo. For most of his life in Cuorvallo, he worked in the stables. If you were to ask about this period of life, he would give the answers quickly, with little detail. He married the then stablemaster's daughter, Letta, in 1418. But she had fallen ill and passed in 1422. In 1424, illness had bedridden him upon returning home from a larger city. Covered in blisters and a sweltering fever, he laid atop of the stables. The solidarity had made him finally take in his grief, and he told the horses resting below the stories of Letta. When he recovered, something in him had changed as he had spent so long talking to horses that he began to understand the deep loneliness in his life. In 1425 his town would be part of a delinquent squabble.

He had become fearful of solidarity, and had begun a habit of overindulging himself among others. They did not bring all the comfort he sought, but their adoration had reminded him of the love that could be there. He travels every season, a man of many talents and many jobs. He has watched the wild horses roam free, and believes that they do not long for anything like people do.

Elio writings are more laid back, and less telling of what is really going on. Perhaps it is a bit of an unreliable narrator, or that is just Elio's extravagant personality at play. In text, 'God' must be capitalized by him.

The Horse:

Most horses are domesticated horses that are now feral, is there a true wild horse?

What does being free mean? And does it include others?

The horse is something that is pure that both characters want to achieve, but they are both selfish in their own ways.

Horses are not solitary animals

But it is important to bring up the first folk tale of Sárkánytáva, the other figure involved in it was a unicorn. What does this evoke to the people? And what of their horsemanship?

Gold Horse Plot-Points of Interest:

Elio's side takes on present, future.

Ábel's side takes on present, past.

Elio and Ábel meet, Ábel likes Elio for his, the story is slow, divided by seasons.

Discussing how their views grow into a friendship, then into a relationship that is far closer than friendship but not romantic. This is about the love we create for others, and grief from separation. Eventually Ábel will see Elio as far greater than he is, and vice versa. Ábel begs Elio to take the throne, but he must fake his own death. The two have known each other for twenty years, but must not meet anymore.

A Fishing Village with No Name [Elio and Ábel]:

In this section, given from both Elio and Ábel, it narrates their differing perspectives on Cuorvallo.

A Fishing Village With No Name (Elio)

A fishing village with no name on an island just along the mainland with a sturdy bridge to connect them. But it did have a name, yet he would never speak of it, and truthfully, it has been so long that it has long been forgotten.

Fifty three people in it to be exact. There were villages far larger and greater than this, so who would stay. But no one else could reel in a tuna better than the folk here. And there was always a large feast among friends and family.

And a beautiful mare named Zia, owned by an even more beautiful woman named Letta. Zia was one of the residents that helped take the people to and from much larger lands. He gave her extra care for her coat and hooves, just to hear compliments ring from Letta's voice.

When he was nine, his sister left home with a dreadful man up north. At eleven, he began as an apprentice for the stablemaster. While fourteen, he swore the horses who traveled far and wide would tell him that his sister still loved him no matter how far. Three months before seventeen, he would visit Letta while her father went on extravagant business trips to the city. Letta looked so beautiful when they wed at nineteen. They could never grasp a child even when they were twenty-one. Oh, twenty-three is much too sad to think upon. But he was still living at twenty-five, his body was trampled by blisters and left to lay above the stable. At twenty-six, flames would burn down and he'd run as far as he could on an aging Zia until her legs would give in.

A fishing village with no name, and no one left to care about what it once was.

A Fishing Village With No Name (Ábel)

It had to have been over ten years ago. That two kings from the far west by the sea would fight so childishly over the land. Two brothers, who had never even been born in that land. The younger amassed wealth through pillaging, while the older gained it through trade. Their father had. But a small sliver among the sea had not been divided by their father. A simple slip of his aging mind as he wrote his will. So the two fought and argued. There was no silver nor gold to be gained, but it was rather a battle of superiority. Who deserved more.

Caught in it were small-scale cities and villages, as little pawns to capture as their own. Fire ran through those who proved to be of no use to a king's cause.

When the conflict was settled and enough were dead. Both kings had come to a split of 35-65. Being older has its advantages.

New people from their lands came to inhabit it as time went on. New names passed along to places that had no one to speak for them. Their history removed, and created new from their oppressors.

It was not his conflict or land to cry for. But statements had to be made in case one king decided to ever charge into his land.

Spring Festivities

[Description of Sárkánytava's new year]

Four days of celebration begin on the first new moon of spring. Yelps, clangs, bangs, and trumpets all swell within the capital of Sárkánytava. Traditionally, this was Sárkánytava's new year before the adoption of the residing kingdoms' calendar. Feast, drink, and dance, and be filled with the past to help guide you through the year. It would also display the dwindling dragon population, as Ábel's relative circle grew less and less. Most dragons nowadays were either dead or steered far away from humans.

Ábel has been draped in a sheep-wool wrap and attire embroidered with green, pink and white. His servants would braid his hair in intricate knots, intertwining dried lilies and tulips from last spring. All eyes were on him on the first day, as dragon shaped gourds were passed to him to sip, then to each citizen after. Their lips touched, indirectly kissing a dragon. Good luck in health for the coming year.

The second day they lit fires as big as god. Children ran with handmade puppets of past rulers, cheering, their mouths filled with crisp, sweet pepper. He enjoyed this day the most, as he got to watch the generations grow and change.

Ábel would fish for the people on the third day. The dragon would catch the festival's feast. This task was much simpler when Sárkánytava was just a small village. But he would never disappoint his people. They would follow him to several rivers, watching the beast plunge his claws, effortlessly dragging carp and catfish into the sky, for celebrators to catch in padded baskets.

Nobles from other lands would appear the most on the fourth day. The king must dance all day, for a dragon never tires, and everyone shall be allowed to grasp his hand. He never quite liked that phrase. Of course, a dragon will tire, and the amount of eyes on him since the first day is

already exhausting enough. Tired physically, no. But tired mentally, as if he could hibernate for the winter right now. It was the conversations with foreign nobles that made it the worst day. Questions of alliances, trade, and marriages, selfish to gain something for their own land, not being entirely present in celebrating his own.

With the celebrations over, the year shall burn brightly.

Lineage Act of 1397 AD

To appease those whose belief in the King has fallen flat and to establish how his own birth has broken the ties in which this land was established upon, King Ábel has ordered a change of ruling selection as of 1397 AD. Original terms had claimed lineage of a ruler was passed through parent unto first-born. In order to compensate for the unknown longevity of parents and offspring, a ruler is only allowed a position for one-hundred and fifty years. It shall then be the first-born, or in cases of death, an appointed child or relative, to be given a ruling crown. But the dragons of Sárkánytáva were born with sensitive hearts. If their emotions caught up to them, then their rule was not as long as the limit.

As of 1397 AD, Ábel has been king for a mere 12 years, where he took upon the throne at a youthful age of 27. The position was not passed upon by time limit or death, but by his mother's sleep.

Ábel, the rightful king of Sárkánytáva, would change the terms to be lineage by strength. If the people do not believe in the rightful ruler, they must take it upon themselves to kill and claim the throne. It will then be their generations forward, who can continue this path of fear and hatred.

As of 1435 AD, countless men have lost their lives, but King Ábel still stands with five remaining heads.

Awaiting a Killer

The die had been cast for thirty-eight years, yet Ábel had found himself alive, physically well, dissatisfied with the amount of women his uncles and nephews had begged on their knees to have him wed just for the benefit of familial connections, and worst of all, it was his least favorite season. Sárkánytáva had been covered in greys and blues and his castle was built at such a large scale that it needed a fire as large as a young oak tree just to keep one room warm. It is the time of the year where Ábel can feel just how small he is.

When he first initiated a call to kill, dozens of men from all paths would knock upon the kingdom's doors, ready to take their shot at the man whose birth disgraced their land. Tanners,

fishers, tailors, and men who had enough coin to send ten in their place. He had stopped counting after two-hundred, why count your losses? But the years dwindled the men Maybe it was because he had flourished in strength that most were struck with fear. Or maybe the amount of men that hated him has gone down since he was born, it has been seventy-seven years, and now, in the eyes of his people, there was a bold, diligent, and calculating leader that stood on the throne. Knights lined up to kiss his hand. Artists cried that their works could never capture him just right. But in Ábel's eyes, he felt their disappointment was hidden. The adoration was all a ruse, that they all knew he was weak since birth.

Now it is mostly other rulers looking for an easy shot at land. You don't need an army to kill one man, it saves time, money, and men compared to an invasion. What a bore. They don't even care about what he is. It is not a debate on if he is strong because he is a dragon, or weak for being a man, but of how much wealth he had accumulated through trade.

The first man who cut off his head was out of pure luck. A dragon's tail leaves him open to many disadvantages and faults. Tripping over yourself is an embarrassment that he would not like to admit to.

The second man smelled heavily of fish soup. He must have come from a warm home thickened with spice, a loving home. But it was early? Had the smell lasted overnight, or had the man been served in the morning. Was it left-overs that were kept hot overnight? What family would leave any trace of the soup after their bellies were full? You had to be greedy and eat as much as you could at that moment. Did the cook slice the carp thin, or were they heavy, three-finger cuts just like his mother would make. He grasped the man's body, surrendering to the smell but also wishing to capture the memories it gave. He had not realized he was one head short till the man screamed under his tight grip.

He had been awaiting the day he could die, he would have done it himself, but he had always dreamed of a death built on the honor of battle.

Dragons

Powerful, strong, kind and grand. A narrative upheld by the villagers of the kingdom.

What did it mean to be a dragon? Was a dragon only a dragon if his scales could deflect the sharpest steel? Or perhaps only if its spikes sat upright, sharp, and deadly. Though, there is the case of dragons who could spew a poison that stunk for days.

Could a seven-headed man, who dawned skin of leather and a fat wyrm tail be a dragon? No, he couldn't possibly be. For even if his blood ran as cold as one, there was a problem with his face. It could not evoke fear or respect. It was human.

So for Ábel's long youth, he spent days wondering where the beast in him begins and ends. What makes him so different from his mother? He towered over humans, and even a slight grip would tear into their skin. His voice rang out throughout town, surely even the distant kingdoms could hear him. Servants were treated to feasts each night. Festivals never failed to turn up a swelling crowd. No family would go without a pig for the winter. And his hair, it was just like hers. It would get matted and she would always pull a bit too rough with the comb. He's never been able to learn how to prevent a tough knot.

When he became too frustrated over the question of why, he began to throw blame on to his father. It was of childish anger, but he threw fists into the ground. Oh, how I wish mother had never loved you! You doomed me. You doomed me father. How selfish of you to ruin this kingdom, and how selfish of me to ever be angry at you for it. Father, I'm sorry. I never should blame you, and I should never speak so ill of the dead. But I am all alone.

A great mangling dragon, with knots in his chestnut hair and clenched teeth.

Character concept art:





[Possible alternate design choice]



[Older/King Elio, concept, inspired by Matyó wedding outfit]



[Cuorvallo folk art of 'The Dragon King from East']



[Sárkánytava style Throne]

Setting artwork:







