SNEAK ATTACK

I come from a long line of ordained ministers. Good ol' evangelical, southern Baptist, fire and brimstone tent revival kind of ministers. So growing up there were certain things that simply were not allowed... heavy metal music... Heavy Metal Magazine... pulp science fiction novels with barbarian girl covers and dancing... :)

So as a young man in a religious home, I did the only thing I could do... bought all the stuff I wasn't supposed to have and hid it!

I can still remember the feel of those dime store paperbacks with the marvelously forbidden covers by Frank Frazetta, Boris Vallejo, and the Brothers Hildebrandt.. half naked barbarian girls knee deep in the swamp facing some terrible otherworldly menace.

Most often I'd strip the cover and discard the book... too thick to hide well once I had a small collection, and the covers were usually the best part anyway.

It's difficult to overestimate the impact those dime store works of art had on my young artistic mind, and I spent countless hours drawing them over and over again, so it brings me great pleasure to revisit the fascination of my youth with this class.

These drawings are about as close I'll ever come in these classes to drawing the types of drawings I really love, and while I can't write go for broke here, I really had a lot of fun making them for you.

So grab your colors and let's play. In this class we will be exploring the painterly techniques of a bygone era of sensationalism. I can't wait to pull you down into the swamps with me!

Before we begin...

In this work it's important not to over-blend, or for colored pencil users, not to overfill the tooth of your paper when coloring the skin. It's also important to realize that some of the colors I've used may not make sense until the background is colored in! Trust the process!

Copic Colors Used For The Study Page

(Refer to the color conversion chart for non Copic alternatives)

E000
E0000
E04
E13
E27
E31
E33
E49
E53
E70
E87

B000
B21
B32
B45

BV00

R21
R24
R32
R43

RV00

W2
W4
W5
W7

YR31

G0000
G24

YG13

C0

Chapter One:
Coloring The Skin

For this class I'll be using a black and white line drawing. While some of the lines are super thick, I think you'll be surprised how many of them seem to "disappear" in the coloring process. I had a lot of fun inking this, and while the bold black lines (in the main tree, especially) may reduce the coloring area, those lines are essential to the style and free us up to be more creative in our color choices.

I lay in a base color on the face and far shoulder with E0000. I actually put in two layers, one right after the other, to get the color nice and even.
Colored pencil users: Lay this color in soft and be sure to leave plenty of "tooth". We are gonna layer the hell out of this drawing, so as a general rule for all the skin areas, keep your pressure light. In the very last step after everything is colored, we will finalize the skin with "glaze" layers, so keep it nice and open.

I add C0 to the eye sockets, far side of the face, sides and underside of the nose, and to the shadow area on the neck.

I add E33 to the corners of the eyes, underside of the nose, and shadow on the neck, leaving some of the C0 from the previous step to show through. I also draw a hard line "core" shadow on the "break" between the light and shadow side of the face.

I use E70 to soften the transition between the E33 and the lighter E0000 base color.

I add touches of B32 to the eye sockets...

...and bottom edge of the jaw (B32)...

...and to the underside of the nose and outside corners of the eyes.

I use G0000 on the sides of the nose...

...and on the transition line between the light and shadow side of the face.

I add blush to the cheeks with RV00...

I use this color (RV00) on the bridge of the nose...

...and as a base color for the lips.

Here's where we are so far. Again, colored pencil users tread lightly! We have more layers to go... you can do it, just use light pressure and don't worry about "coverage".

I add strong accents with YR31 to the corners of the eyes, nose, chin, and neck.

At this point you may think I've lost my mind, but trust me. We will be using all these same colors in the background and her skin will make sense once we get those colors in!

I then blend it all out with E0000. Notice that each color is still distinct. Be sure yours are too! (Colored pencil users can skip this step.)

I add stronger "pinks" to the lips with R21.

I also add this color (R21) to the bridge of the nose and to the underside of the eyes.

I add a "dot" of E04 to the shadow side of the lips...

...and to the side of the ball of the nose.

I then blend the E04 on the nose only with E0000.

I add E27 to the irises and eyebrows...

….and then to the shadow side of the lips (E27). Don't overdo this!

I blend the lips with R21.

I add W4 to the shadow side on the neck...

...and then use C0 on the far shoulder.

I add G0000 to the far shoulder as well. I want this shoulder to be "cool" in color temperature so it looks like it's behind the closer arm.

I add RV00 to the top edge of the far shoulder to finish it off (for now).

I lay in a base color of E0000 on the near shoulder area...

I add shadow with W2...

...and then accentuate those shadows with E33.

I add RV00...

...and E70...

...then add strong accents of YR31...

I then blend it all together with E0000.

I add darker shadow accents under the arm with W4...

...and in the collar bone area on the far shoulder (W4).

I add some nice strong pink (R21) to the top line of the near arm...

...and to the curve of the breast under the arm to complete this stage of coloring for that section.

I add a base color of E0000 to the near forearm and hand.

I then add shadows with W2. Notice that the back of the hand holding the knife is almost all shadow color.

I place my core shadow and darken the top of the hand with E33.

...then soften the transitions with E70 on both the underside of the arm...

...and on the hand. (E70)

I blend the shadow edges on the near arm with RV00...

Notice how each color from the previous steps retains its color identity. When layering multiple colors like this, it's important to let each layer show.

I add strong color accents to the top of the arm and hand with YR31.

I add R21 to these same areas....

...and use this color (R21) particularly to soften and blend the hand.

I blend the entire arm with E0000...

...then color the fingers with E33.

I use E0000 as an "eraser" to lift and lighten the E33 on the fingers...

I add a base layer of E0000 to the far arm...

...then "cool" the entire arm with G0000.

I add shadows with W2...

...and E33...

...then soften the transitions with E70.

I add RV00...

...and W4.

I add RV21 to the hand...

...and then "glaze" the whole arm with C0 to finish it off.

The enormous color difference from one arm to the other is critical to creating "space" between the two arms. It is important in a work like this to *not* color the skin the same way from one area to the other!

I add E0000 as a base color on the breast and belly.

Again I use two layers, one right after the other, to get a nice even layer.

Colored pencil users use only one layer!

I add shadows with E33. In this step I'm actually drawing with my marker. Had I used ink lines here in the original drawing it would have looked too harsh! Carefully study and try to match the shapes I've made, but don't stress! We will blend most of this out, so it's not critical to get it just right. Don't be scared, and don't skip! Trust me here, you can do this! Colored pencils users, use light pressure... we have lots more layers to go.

I blend the edges (transitions) of the E33 where they meet the E0000 base with E70.

I add strong color accents with YR31...

...then blend it all together with E0000....

...and RV00.

I blend the torso with E000... (Notice that's THREE 0's, not four!)

...then "glaze" all the skin areas with this color (E000), including both arms...

...and the face.

I add small accents of B21 to the side of the torso, under the rib cage, and on the lower belly...

...then soften it out with RV00.

I add a core shadow to the breast with E33...

...then accent with R21.

I add a light layer (glaze) of G0000 to the belly under the rib cage to finish off the skin (for now).

Chapter Two:
Coloring The Hair And Clothing

In this drawing, the hair and clothing and accessories should all be viewed as compositional elements. The hair in particular serves the sole purpose of framing the lighter value face and then "sweeping" the viewer into the composition. These elements must be treated with less detail to be effective.

I start by coloring in a base color for her top with E31.

I add shadow accents under her arm and breasts and beneath the folds of cloth and down her side with E27.

I add E33, leaving the high points of the breast untouched.

I blend it all together with E31.

I then add darker shadow accents with W4 under her arm and on the undersides of the breasts.

I use RV00 as an "eraser" to lift and lighten the color on the tops of the breast to finish off this section of the drawing.

I use E33 as the base color for her hair. I lay it in flat and leave the white paper to show through in the areas I want my highlights.

I add a rim of B32 to the top of the hair to act as a reflected highlight coming from the background.

Following the direction of each hair form, I add E27 to create strands.

I accent the E27 strands with E49...
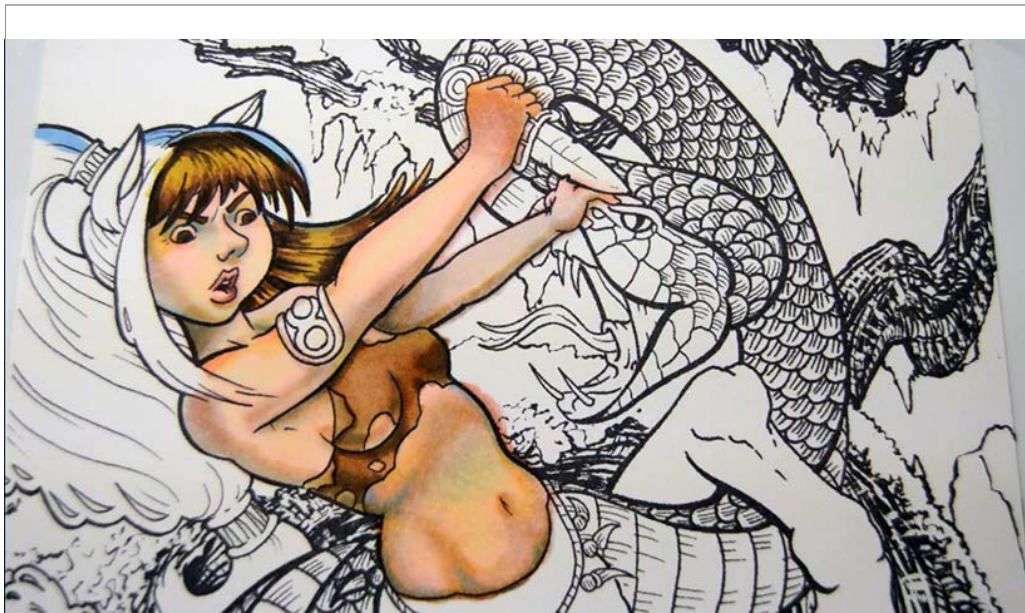
...then blend it all together with YR31. Here I color "across the grain" and in the opposite direction of the hair strands.

I restate some strands with E27 to finish it off.

Notice how unblended it all looks. That's a good thing! Don't overblend here! Remember, the hair is simply a compositional device that points to the snake.

E33…

E27…

E49…

YR31...

E27...

E49.

I use the E49 on the back portion of her hair behind the ear...

...then finish this section off with E27.

I color in the area behind her neck with E22...

...then add dark accents with E49.

I lay in a base on the ponytail with E33, leaving the white of the paper where my highlights will be.

I add E27 strands...

...blend across the grain with YR31...

...and add dark accents with E49.

I add more strands with E27...

...then blend again with YR31.

Getting close :)

I add dark accents with E49 to finish it off.

Note: Color the hair below the bottom hair band the same way.

I use E000 as the base color for the ears...

...then add accents to the top and bottom with E31.

I darken the bottom and tips of the ears with E27, leaving some of the E31 to show through...

...then add accents of E33.

I blend everything together with E31...

...then add touches of E04 to the inside areas of the ears to finish them off.

For the metal accessories, I start with a base of YR31...

...then add shadow accents with W4 to the top band in the openings and on the back side...

...to the arm band... (W4)

...and bottom hair band.

I add dark accents with E27 here...

...here... (E27)

...and here. (E27)

Getting close :)

I do an overall blend layer of YR31 on the accessories to finish them off.

Chapter Three:
Coloring The Background

For coloring the background, I'll be using a wide range of different colors and values. There's no way that you'll be able to create the same shapes in the same areas as I do in the image, and you shouldn't even try.

In this image, the background's sole purpose is to create a "backdrop" for the action of the principle figures. It's not important that you use exactly the same colors in exactly the same areas as I do.
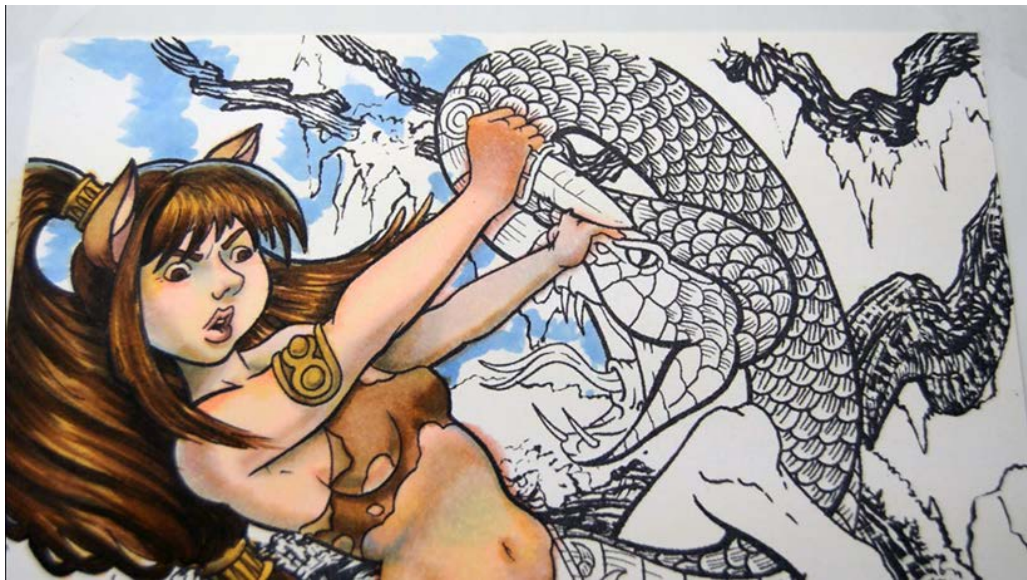
To begin the work, I lay in an abstract pattern with B32.

I add areas of BV00...

...and G0000. It's light, but if you look closely you'll see it.

I add stronger color areas of YR31. Notice how all of these colors cross the boundaries of the line-work. Remember, we're just creating an abstraction here.

I scrub in areas of RV00...
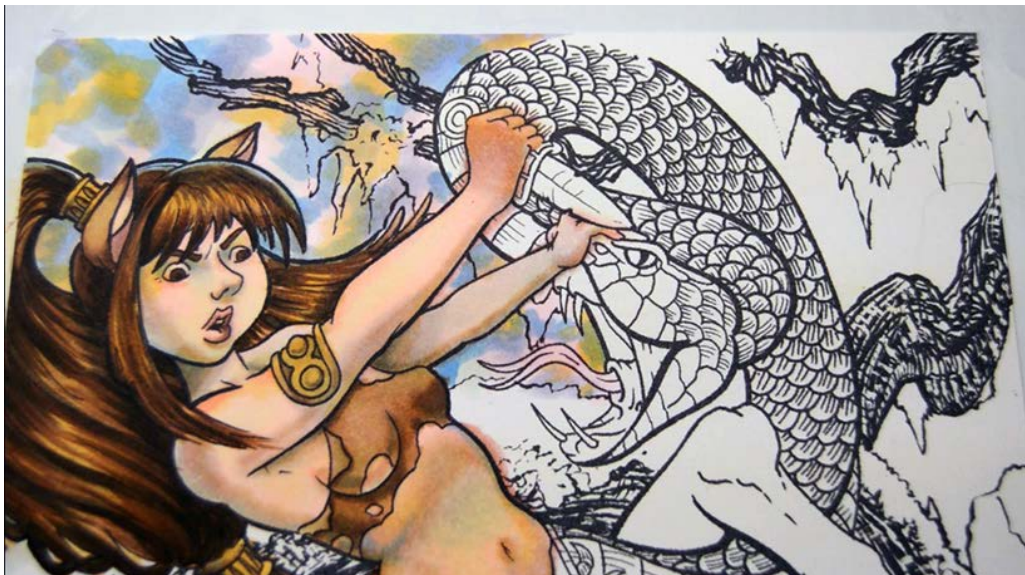
I add accents of B21 and B45, again in random patterns, just filling in the space in a way that looks pleasing to me.

I desaturate the entire background area with W2.
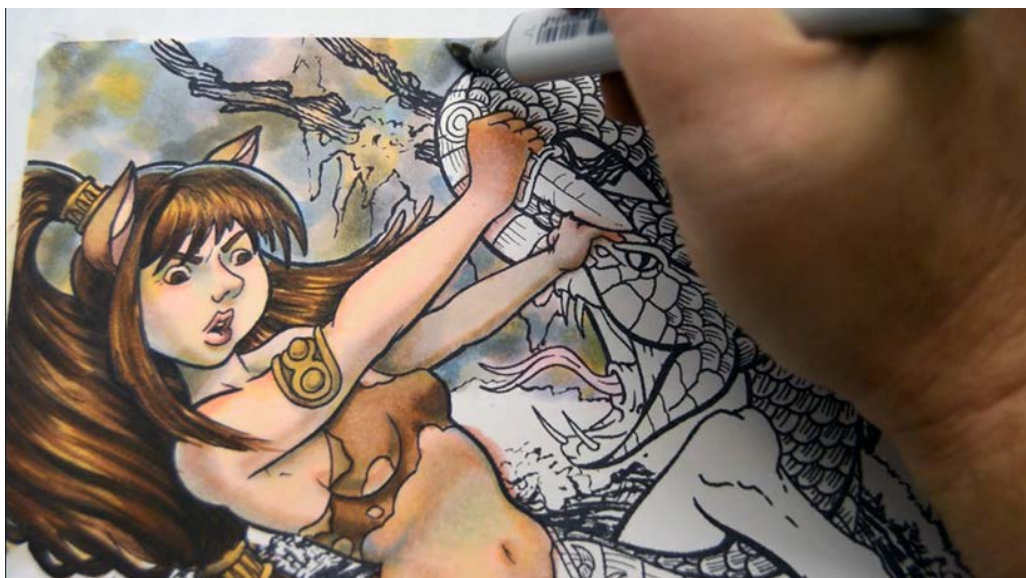
I add dark accents with W4...
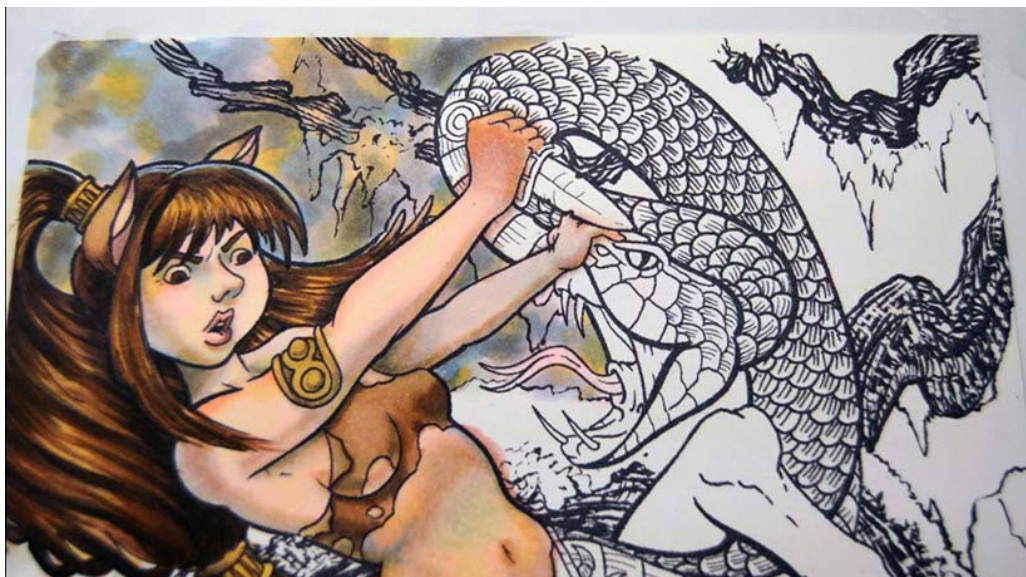
This completes the preliminary stage of the background color application.

I add tree shapes with hanging moss to the background with W5.
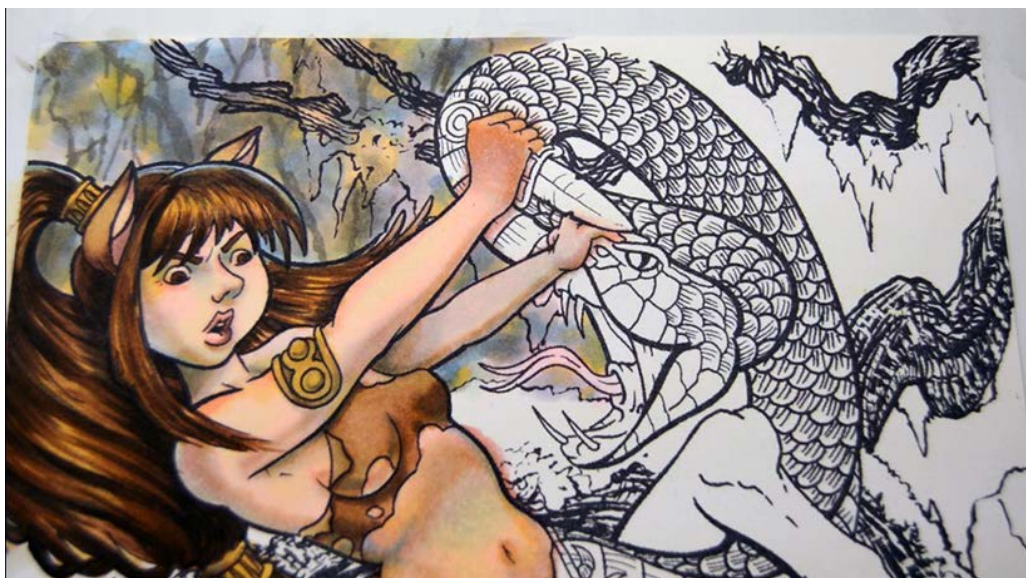
Don't worry, you can do this! We're not actually drawing "trees", we're just making shapes in the background to create space.
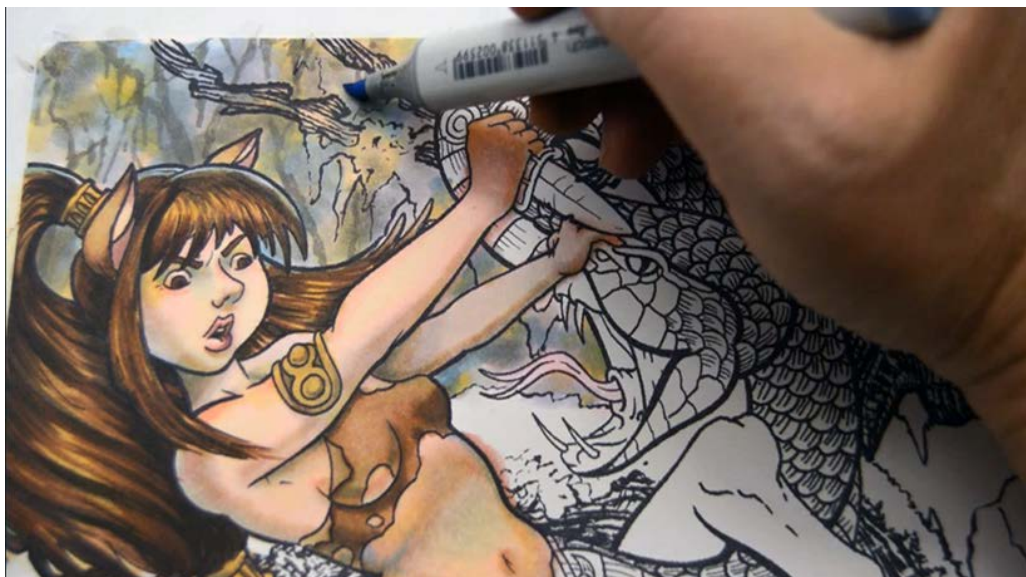
At this stage the background in this area is more or less complete. Take a look at your own work and see if you want to add any other colors to accentuate specific areas.

Here, I'm adding some additional B21, but you may or may not need to add anything at all.
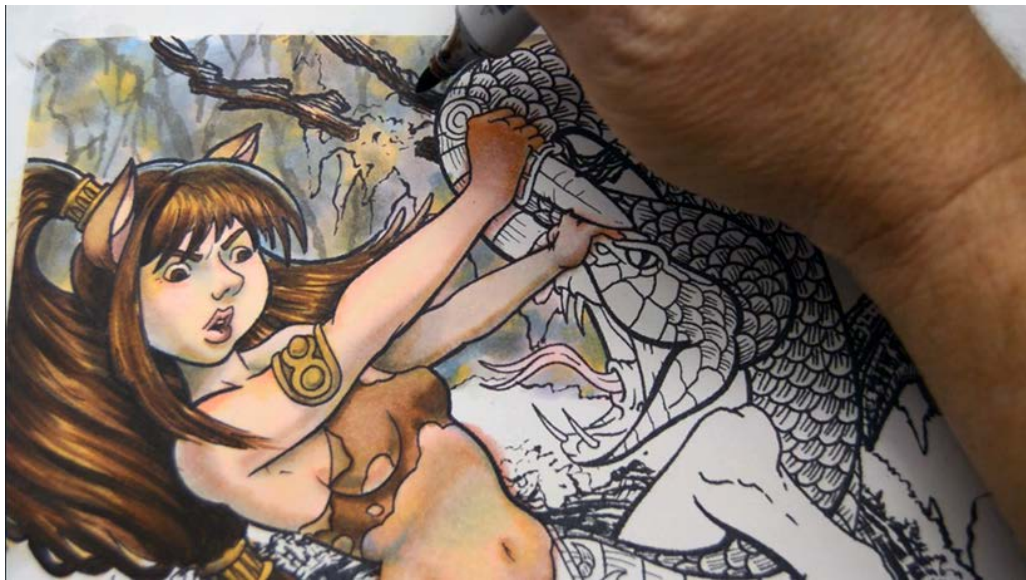
I darken the bottom of the tree branches with E27 to help push them in front of the background.
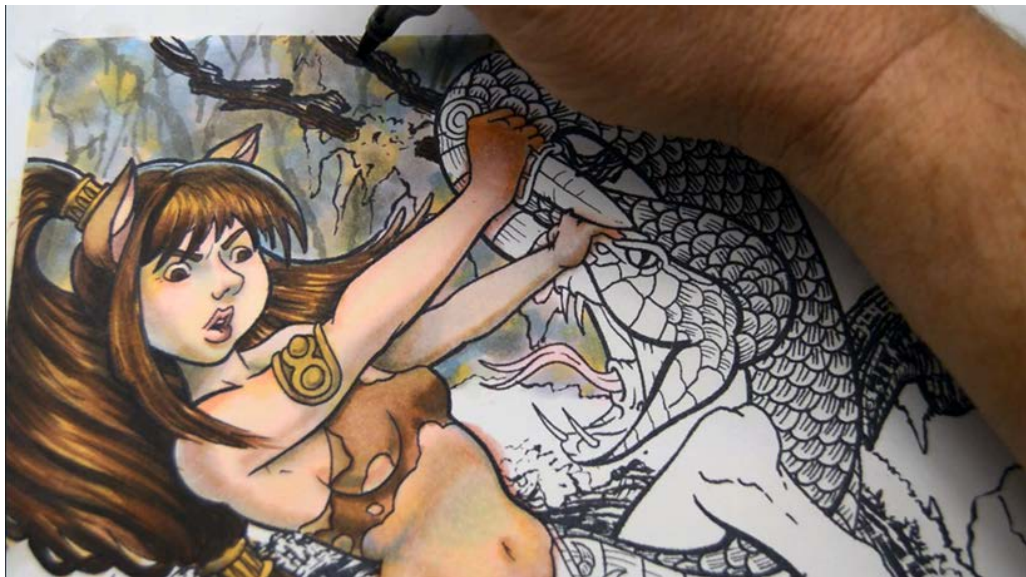
I add dark accents with E49, being careful to let some of the original background colors show through on the tops of the branches.

I use W5 to lay in a base color for the large mosses hanging below the branches.

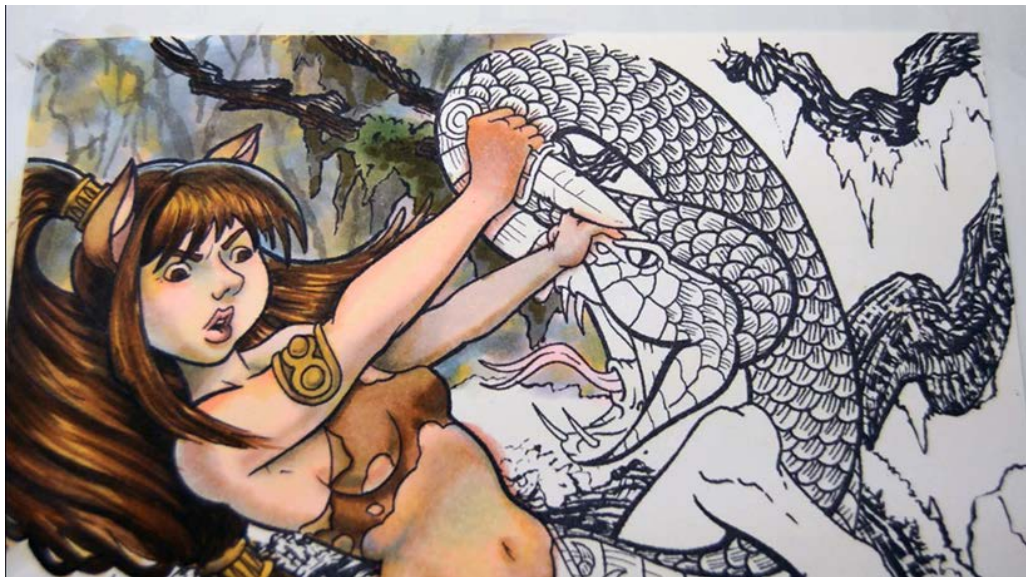I add areas of E87 to the moss on the foreground branch...
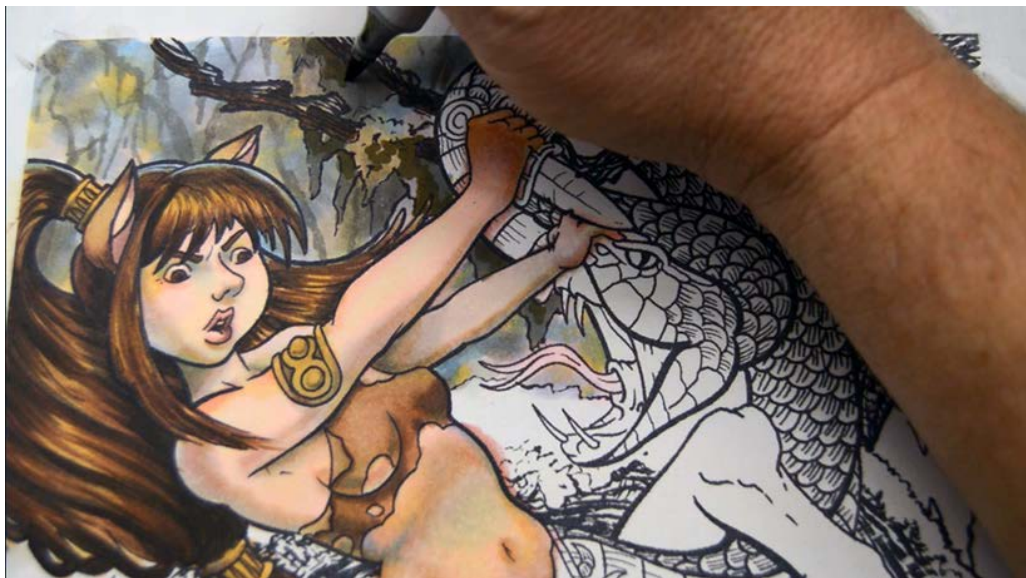
...and background branch.
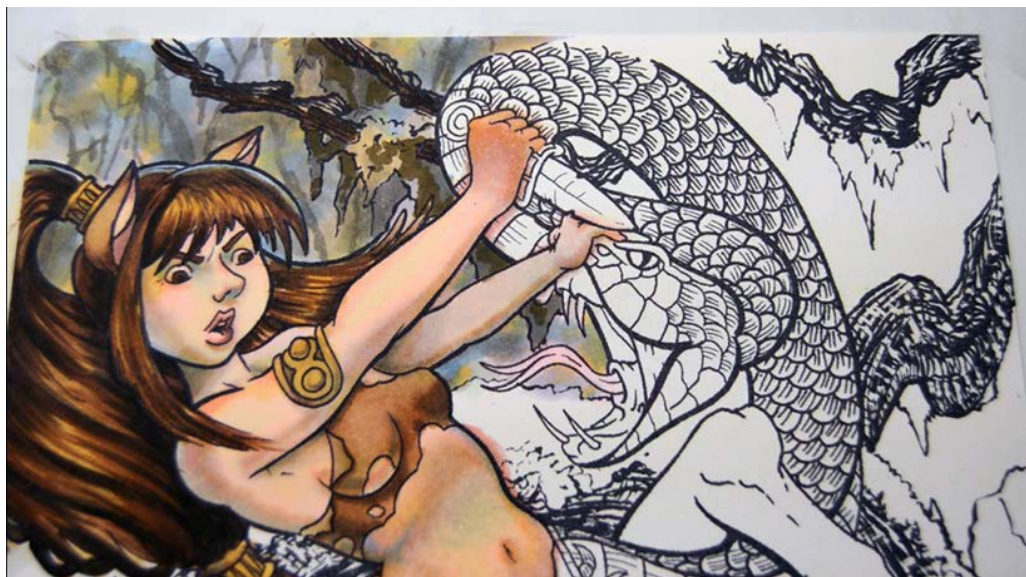
Notice how rough and unblended these colors are.

I add a cleaner G24 to the top portions of the foreground moss...

...and then add texture with E87.

Using the broad part of the nib, I scrub in rough leafy shapes with W5.

I then press the nib down hard using the shape of the nib to create individual leaves.

Combined, these two techniques create interesting leafy shapes in the background.

I use exactly the same colors and techniques to color the right side of the background.

Again, use your own drawing as your guide. Your shapes and colors will be different than mine, but the overall effect should be the same.

After accessing the background as a whole, I decide to add some darker tree shapes with W7...
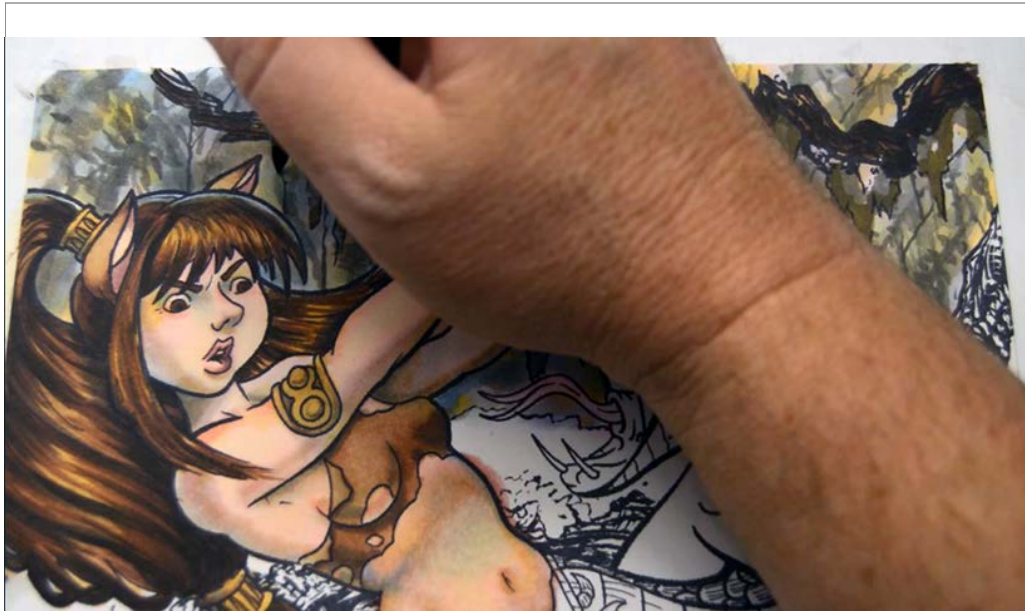
...to both sides.

With the far background complete, I can now turn my attention to the large tree shapes in the middle ground behind the principle figures.
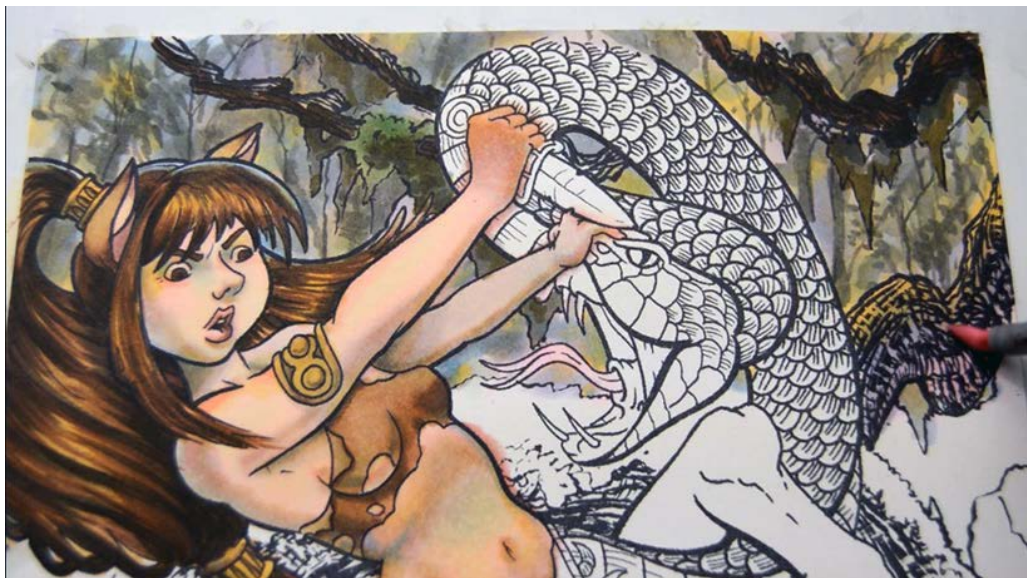
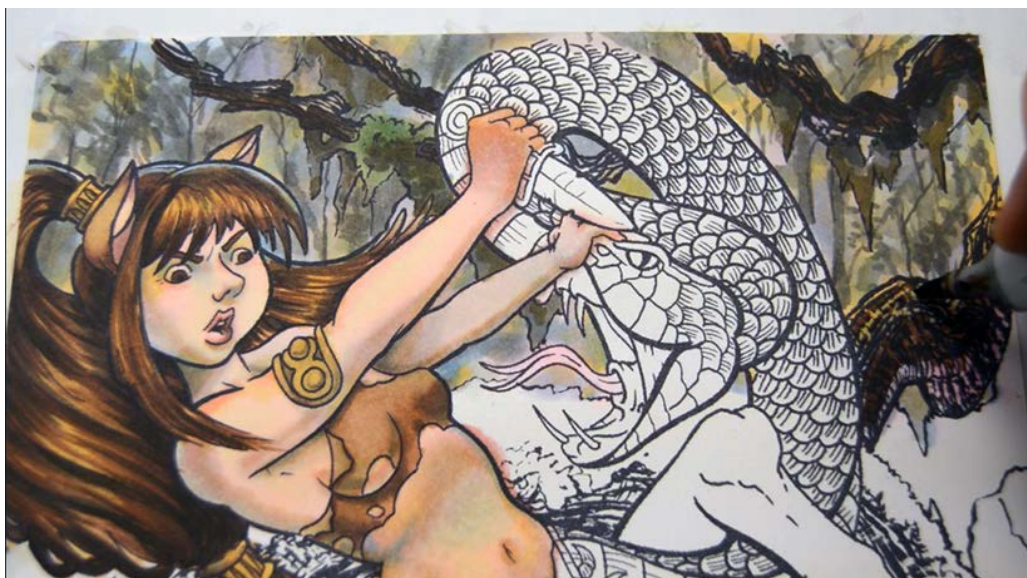I add an abstract pattern of BV00 to the large tree shape behind the snake.

I then add areas of B21...
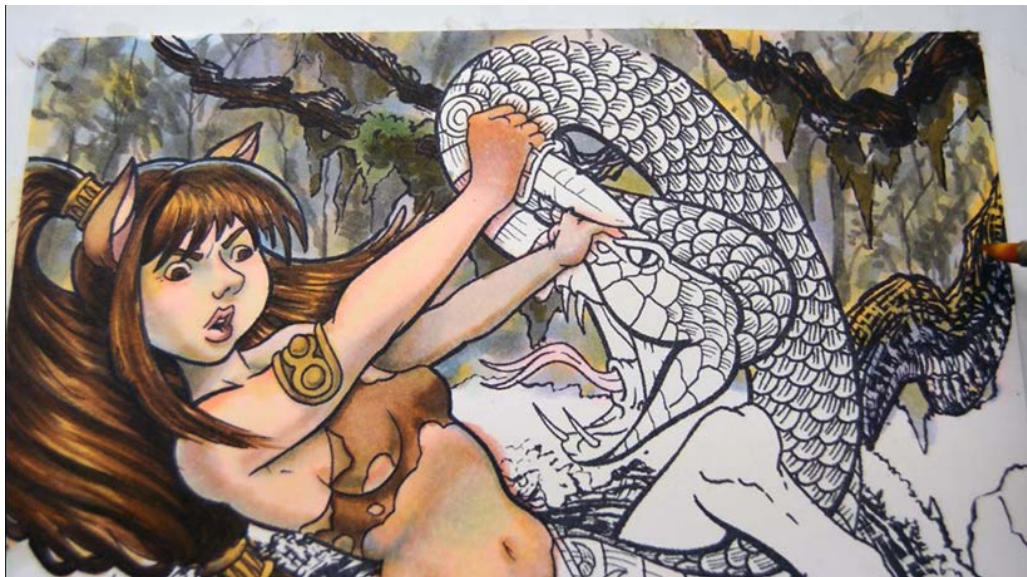
...and YR31.

I add RV00 to the bottom of the tree...

...and then accentuate some of the cracks and crevices with E27.

I add dark accents with E49...

...to finish it off.

I color the moss hanging from this branch with E87.

...then add dark accents with W7.

Notice that the colors in this limb and section of moss are cleaner and more saturated than the colors we used for similar items in the far background. Objects that are closer to the viewer contain darker, more saturated colors, and using these colors in this area helps create the illusion of pictorial space.

We now turn our attention to the large tree shape directly behind our principle figures.

To begin this area, I scrub in a random pattern of BV00.

If you look closely, you'll notice that this color extends to the areas between her belly and the snakes mouth, and behind her hair as well. This will be the case for all the colors we use in this section.

I add B21...

...YR31...

...and RV00.

My drawing looks like this. Your may look different with regard to the exact shape and size of your color areas, but the overall effect should be the same.

I add areas of E33 here...

...here... (E33)

...and here. (E33)

Looking good so far :)

I add darker accents with E27...

...and E49...

...to finish off the bark areas of this large tree shape.

I add a base layer of YG13 to the mossy areas at the top of the tree.

I also use this color (YG13) in the bark of the tree just to keep everything nice and homogeneous. You may or may not do this step, but if you do, don't overdo it.

I add shadows and textures to the moss with E87.

I then blend it out a bit with W4.

I add darker accents to the moss with W7...

...to finish the background in its entirety.

Remember, it's not important if your colors and shapes look exactly the same as mine.

We are going after a broad effect, and as long as you've more or less followed the steps and used similar colors, you should end up with a pleasing result.

Chapter Four:
Coloring The Snake

I'll begin the snake by coloring the mouth. In this composition, the snake's mouth creates tension and a counterpoint compositional interest to her face, so getting it right is important.

I lay in a base color of RV00.

I add darker accents to the far side of the mouth and under the tongue and to the upper and lower gums with E04.

I add R43 to really make the mouth stand out against the desaturated background colors.

I restate my darks on the upper gums and under the tongue with E04.

I desaturate the far side of the mouth and add a base layer to the forked tongue with BV00...
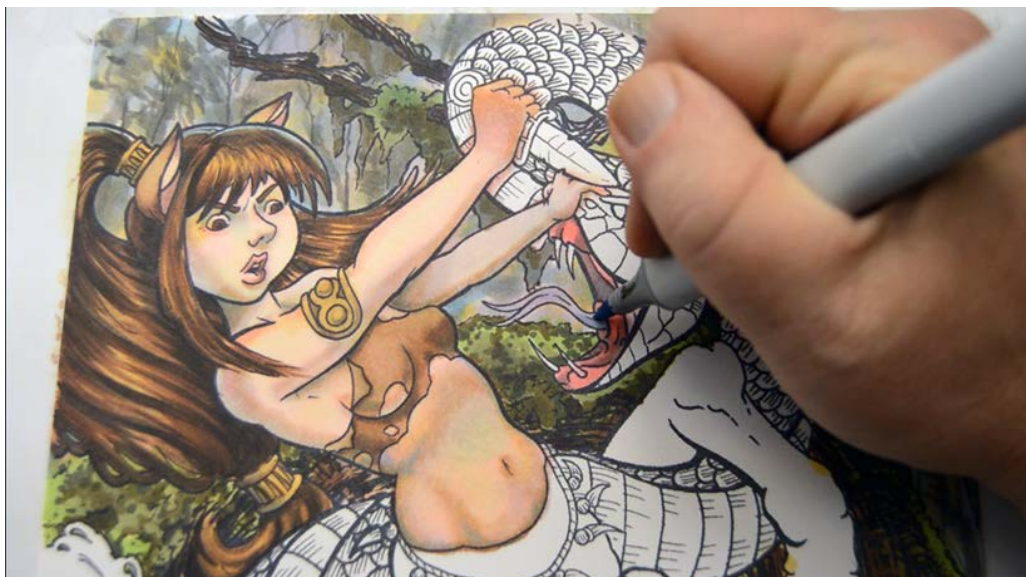
...then add touches of B21 to the tongue.

I add R43 to bring in some pinks on the tongue...

...then add dark accents to the mouth with E27.

I bring in some "true" red with R24 on the tongue and tongue sheeth.

I add YR31 to the "web" between the jaws...

...then desaturate the area with G0000.

I add "stretch" marks to this area with E33.

I color the upper and lower jaws and the smooth underbelly of the snake with a base color of E000.

I then lay a flat base color of YR31 over the head and scales. I also color the E000 base on the underbelly near her body in this step.

I add touches of E04 to the nostril and under the eye.

I use W4 to create shadow areas on the scales...

...and on the head and jaw. (W4)

I run a rough, broad line of E33 that follows the W4 shadow lines on the snake's body.

I add E87 to each scale, individually...

...on the head... (E87)

...and body (E87).

Notice how I leave a rim of other colors to show through at the bottom of each scale. Also notice how rough I've applied the color here. There is no need to be careful.

I add a strong dark "core" shadow line to separate the dark and light areas with W7...

I use this color (W7) to strengthen the shadow under the neck...
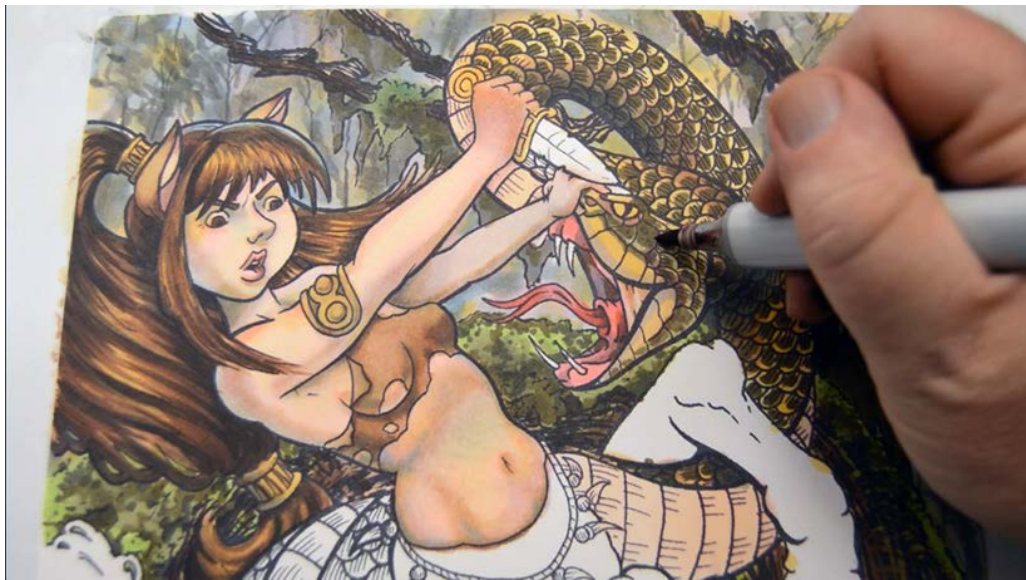

...and under the horse leg (W7).
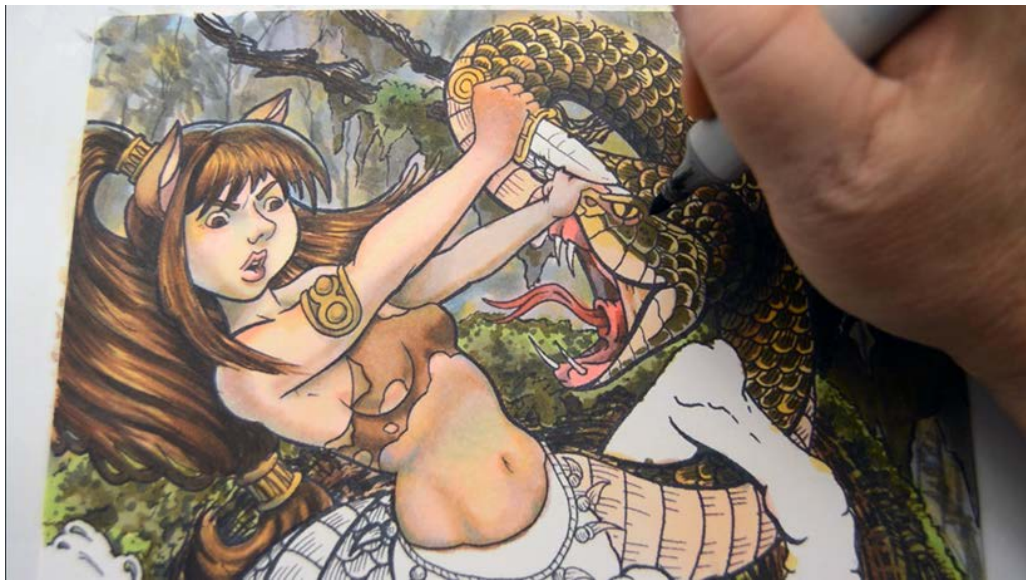
I then add texture "dots" to the scales on the face (W7).

I color the light areas on the upper and lower jaws with YR31.
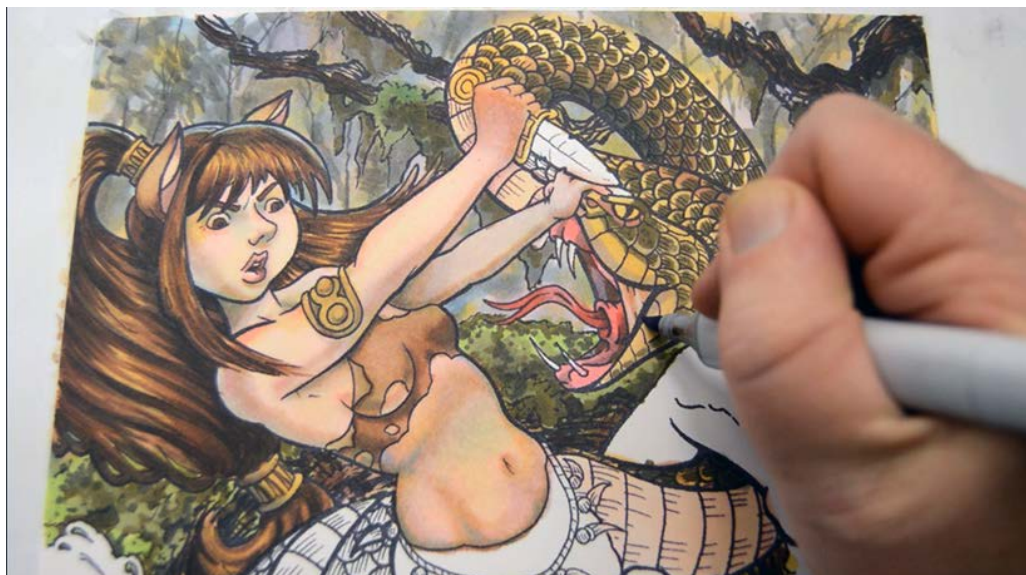
I add BV00 to the line that separates the jaws from the open mouth to desaturate.

I add abstract areas of E04 on the head...

...and body. There's no rhyme or reason here, we just want some red color to add interest.
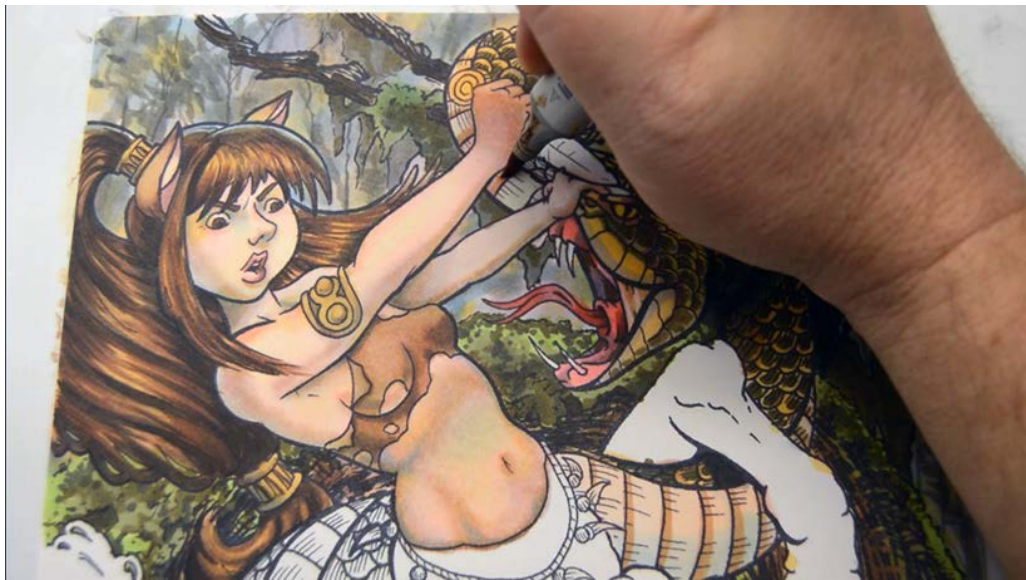

Getting close :)

I use E49 to darken my shadow areas under the neck where the shadow falls on the snake's body and under the horse leg.

The body and head are, for the most part, complete.

I add B000 to the underbelly, taking care to let some of the original color show through.

I use E33 to mark the separation between the belly scales...

...then darken with E27 right up against the lines, leaving some E33 to show through.

I add areas of E70...

...and blend it all together with E000.

I add W5 to the hilt of the knife...

...then soften it out with W2.

I add touches of R24 to the knife handle.

This mimics the R24 touches we used in the mouth and gives the impression that both the mouth and the blade are dangerous.

I lay in a base of W4 on the knife blade...

...then "cool" the lower half of the blade with BV00 and then B45.

I add YR31 to the fangs...

...then add RV00 to the underbelly scales, both top and bottom, to finish off the upper portion of the snake.

For the lower half of the snake I use exactly the same colors and techniques to finish it off.

You can do it! It's absolutely no different than the techniques we've already used. You can use the photo as a guide for shadow placement.

Chapter Five:
Coloring The Foreground Swamp

The swampy foreground area is almost pure abstraction. It's simply a combination of the colors we've been using, "scribbled in" in wavy, open, linear patterns.

There is no way you can match the exact shapes or movements of color that I use in this area, nor should you try. The point is simply to create the effect of rippling water reflecting the environment that surrounds it. Use your best judgment based on your particular drawing to this point to decide the best colors and approach for your work.

I lay in an overall base color of YG13 on the moss on the foreground stump.

Because this stump is in the foreground, I'll be using less gray and more "clean" color to make these areas look closer to the viewer than the middle-ground stump.

I add BV00 in a random way...

...then B21...

...and finally RV00.

I use E13 to indicate areas of a more "true" tree color...

...then darken the undersides of the gnarly twists and turns with E27.

Easy peasy...

I add definition to the moss with E87...

...and W7 to the moss to finish off this foreground tree stump.

I add an abstract pattern to the water with W7.

I then add BV00 all over but with incomplete coverage.

I do the same with B21...

...then make more abstract marks with E87.

I add big bold areas of YR31.

Notice how sketchy and unblended everything is.

I darken the area under the horse body and around the base of the middle-ground tree with W5.

I add a layer of E70 all over but keep it "patchy". I want every color I'm using to show through in some spots.

A little more B21...

...and B45.

Again, you may place these or any other of the colors you are using in any area you think will help the overall effect in *your* drawing.

Looks kinda messy, but trust the process :)

I add more YR31...

...and E87...

...and W7...

...to finish it off.

It's important to understand that the water is simply a supporting element to the main action that's happening in this page. Leaving it rough and abstract not only helps to keep focus on our center of interest, but also in keeping with the way the fantasy painters we are drawing inspiration from treated similar areas in their work.

I want the foreground cattails to look really close, so I'll keep them very dark. The only reason I included them in the drawing at all is to help create space. Since things appear darker the closer they are to us, I'll keep all of the colors in this area very dark.

I start with a base layer of W7...

...then add darker accents with E49.

...and blend it out with W7 to finish it off.

Simple, but see how spacial that area looks now?

I add G24 to the top of the rock and to the lily pads.

I add W4 to the rock...

...and to both lily pads.

I use W5 to accent the rock...

...then add darker accents with W7...

...and texture with W7 as well.

I add E87 to both lily pads...

...then blend them out with G24.

The foreground is finished for now. We will add adjustments and highlights in the final stage of the work.

Chapter Six:
Coloring The Horse

I lay in an overall base color of E31 on the horse body.

I add shadow shapes with E33.

Notice how rough and general these are. They are simply dark shapes on the bottoms of the forms. You can do this!

Still using my E33, I add shadow shapes to the rest of the body. For the hind leg furthest from the viewer, I color in the entire shape.

I "draw" in my core shadows with E27, leaving a "rim" of the other colors to show through at the bottom.

I add E27 to the mid section of the body, again completely filling the shape of the furthest leg.

The finished core shadow patterns before blending (E27).
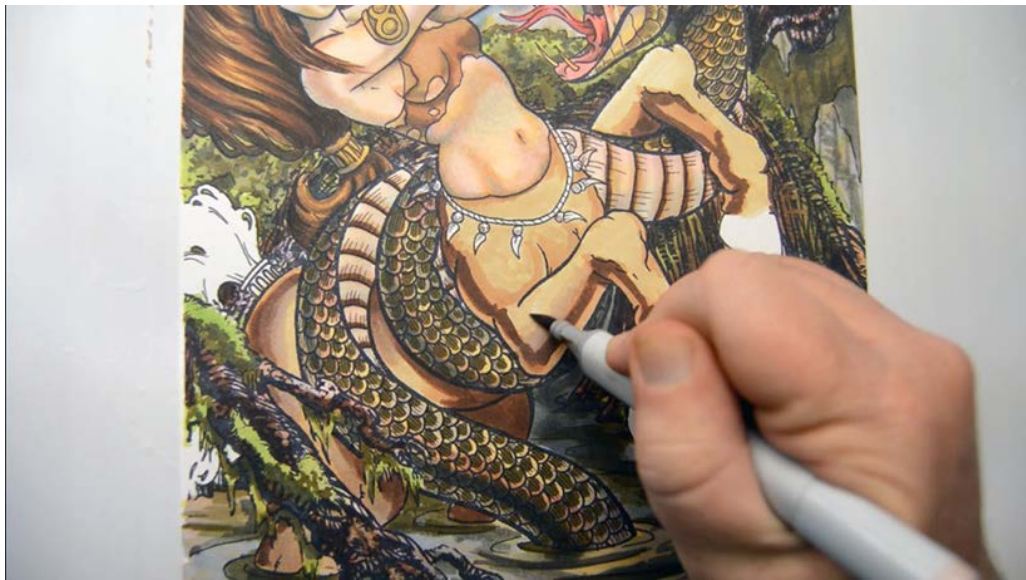
I add E70 to the transition areas between the E27 and body base colors.

Again, notice how rough and unblended everything is at this stage.
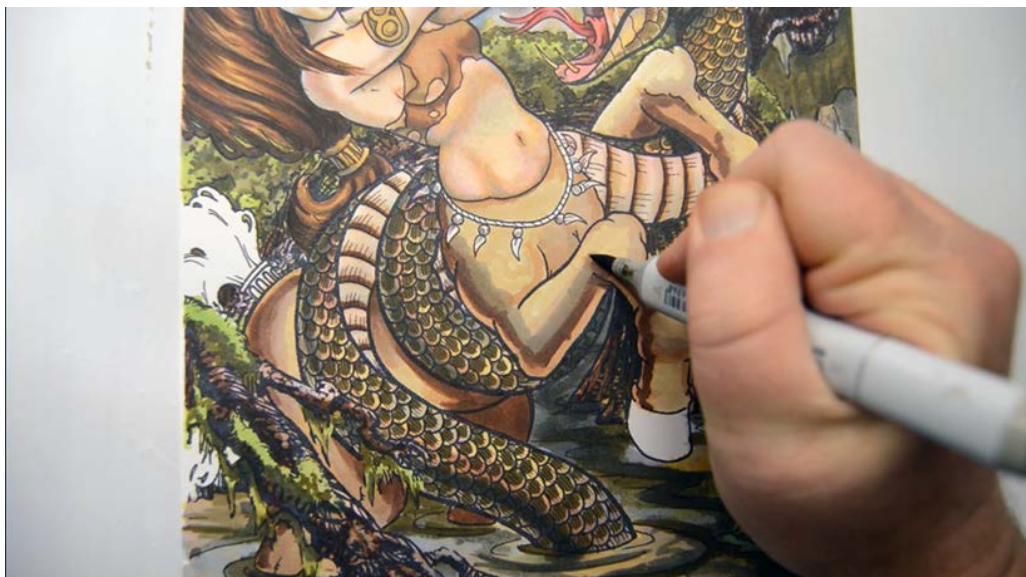
I add a layer of W4 to the transition areas here...
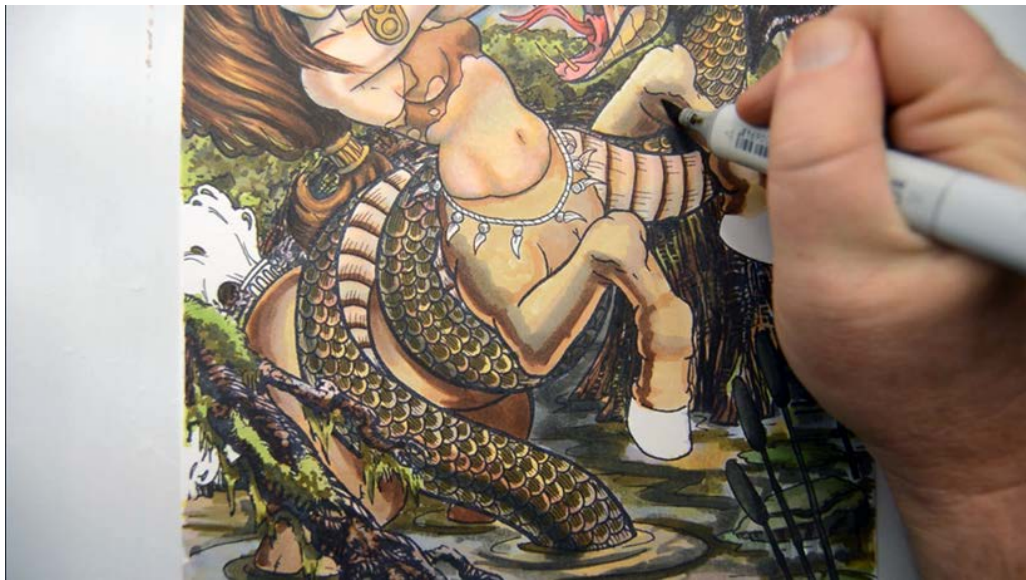
...here... (W4)

...here... (W4)

...and here. (W4)

The shadow and core shadow areas before blending.

I blend the entire body with E33...
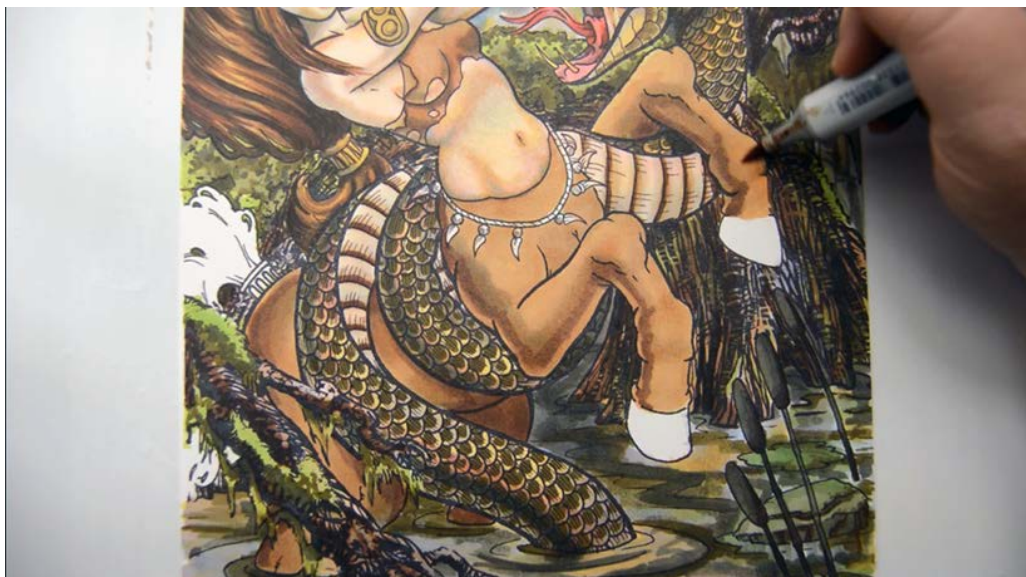
...to smooth it all out and pull everything together. (E33)

I add dark accents with E27.

I soften the E27 and shape the forms with W4...

W4...

W4...

W4...

Getting close :)
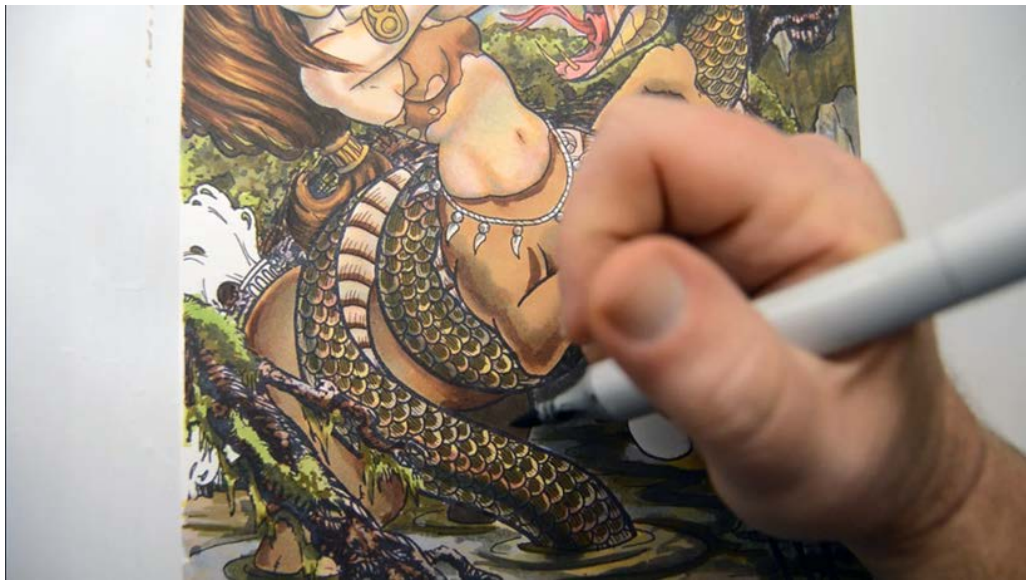
I darken that hind leg one more time with W7. You may or may not need to do this!
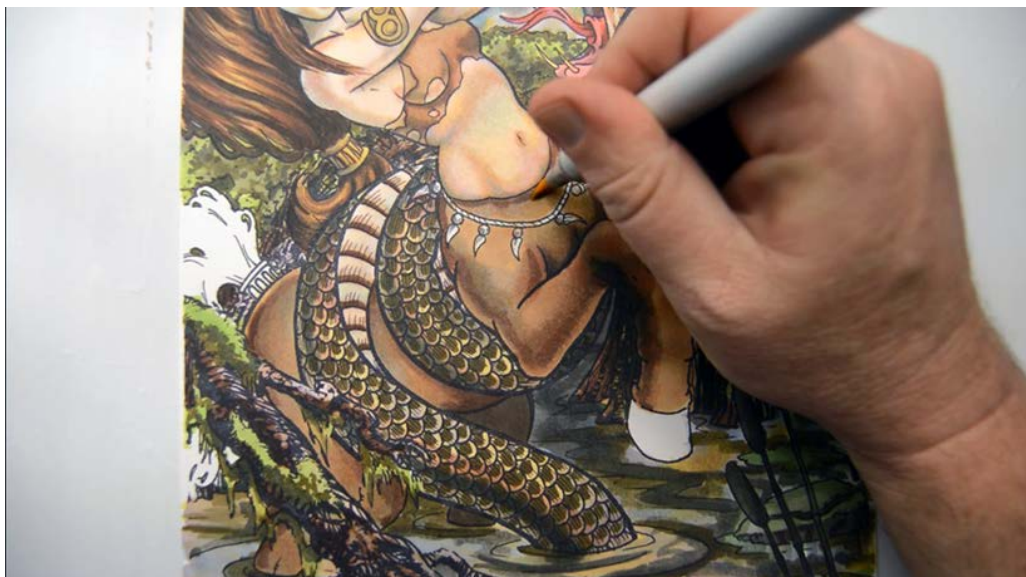

I add very dark accents with W7 here...

...here... (W7)
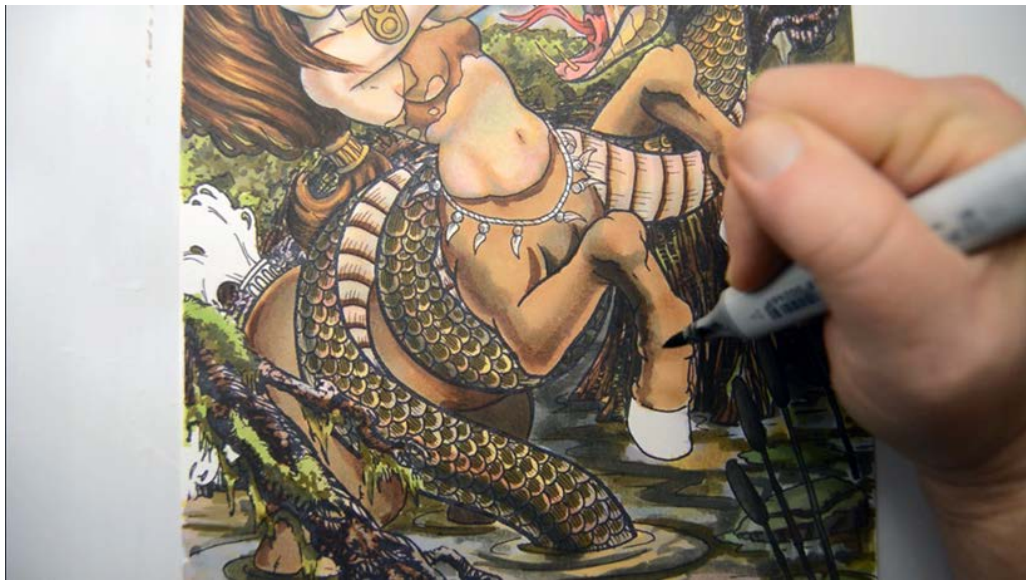
...and here. (W7)

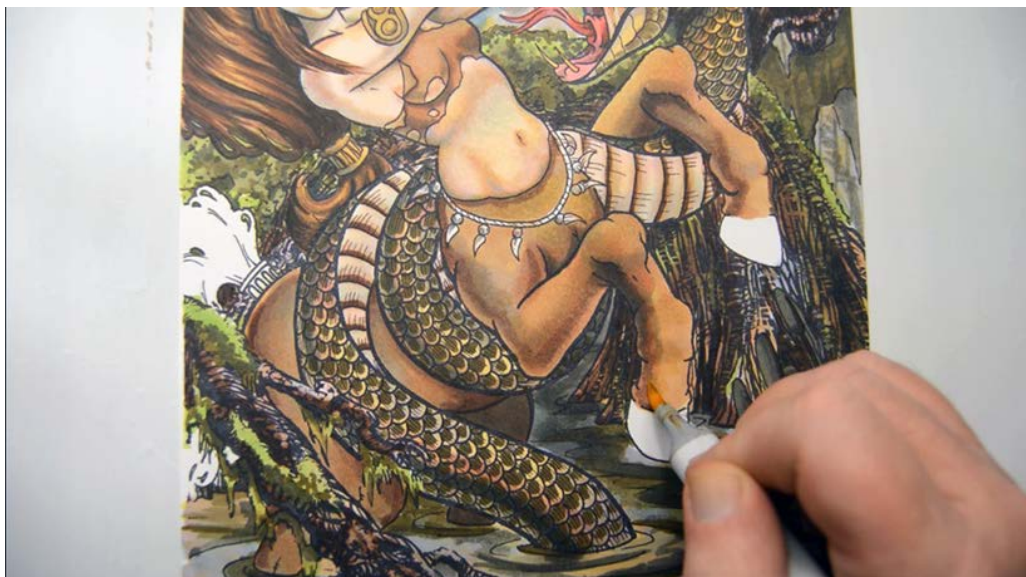I soften the edges of the W7 with E13, being careful not to overblend.
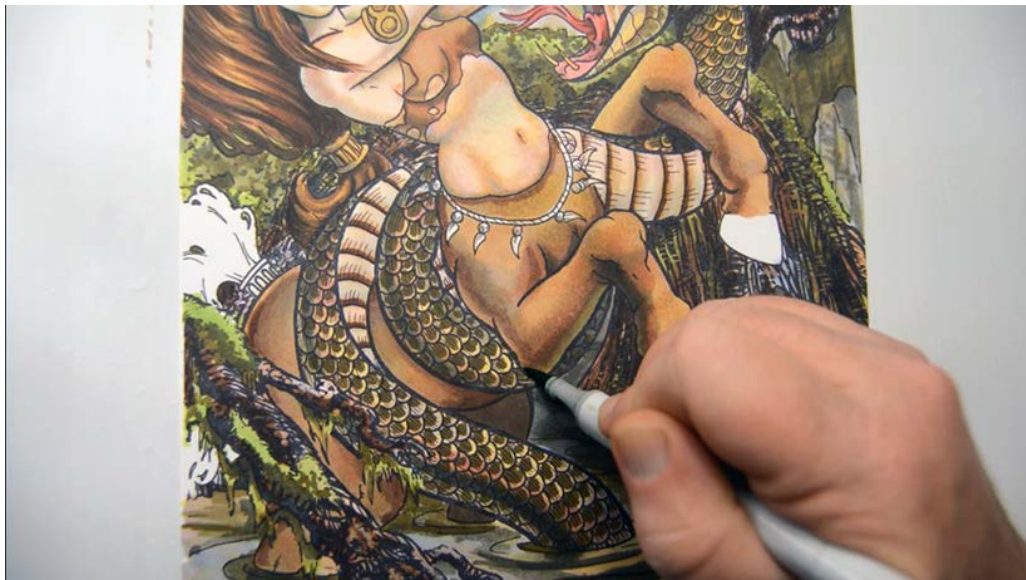

I add YR31 here...

...here... (YR31)

...here... (YR31)

...and here to soften the edges and create subtle highlights.

I add G24 to the areas under the darker core shadows here...

...here... (G24)

...here... (G24)

...and to the belly and back legs.

This color acts as reflected light coming from the swampy environment.

I add E27 to the transition between girl and horse.

...then blend it out with E33.

I use W5 as the base color for the hooves, leaving patches exposed for highlights.

I add W2 to the highlight areas...

...and then darken the hoof all over with E49.

I "shrink" and refine the highlight areas with W7...

...to finish off the hooves.

Chapter Seven:
Refinements

When completing a work like this where every part is so interdependent on every other part, some final adjustment is almost always necessary.

I recommend you set your work aside for a day or two and then come back with "fresh eyes" before making adjustments and adding final highlights.

You may find yours needs little to nothing to finish it off, or you may decide to make major adjustments. It's up to you. It is *your* work after all.

In this chapter I make adjustments and add highlights where I decided my drawing needed them.

You may want to do all of them or none. Again, the choice is yours based on your own assessment of your drawing.

With all the colors in place, I decide my overall flesh color is too light and too cool, so I add a "glaze" layer of E53 all over...

E53...

E53...

I like that better :) but now it's a tad warm...

...so I add areas of RV00...

RV00...

Better :)

I decide to cool the shadows just a touch with B000...
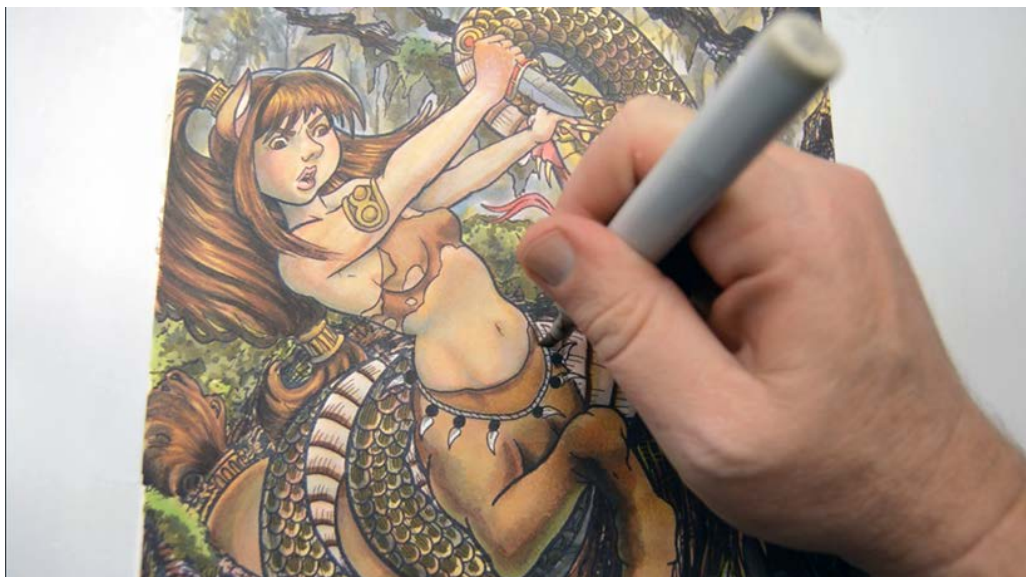

B000...

B000...

B000...

B000.

I like the skin much better now and feel like it fits into the context of the environment better.
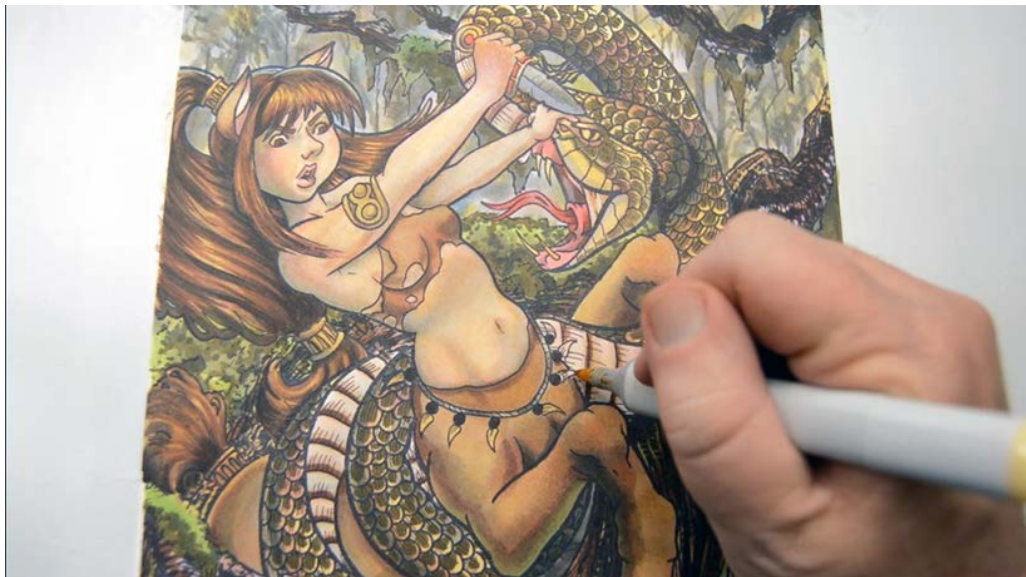

I color the beads on her belt with E49.

I add a layer of W2 to the rope...

...and then add dark accents with W5.

YR31 on the teeth...

...and accents of E33 to finish off the belt.

After toning her skin down, I now feel like the snake's mouth draws too much attention, so I do an overall glaze layer in this area with E53...
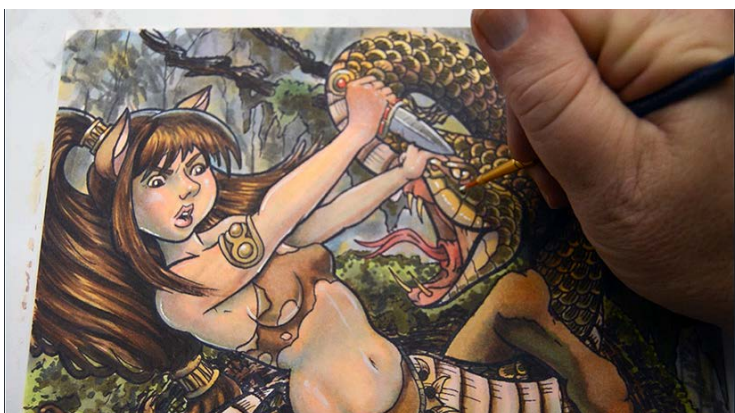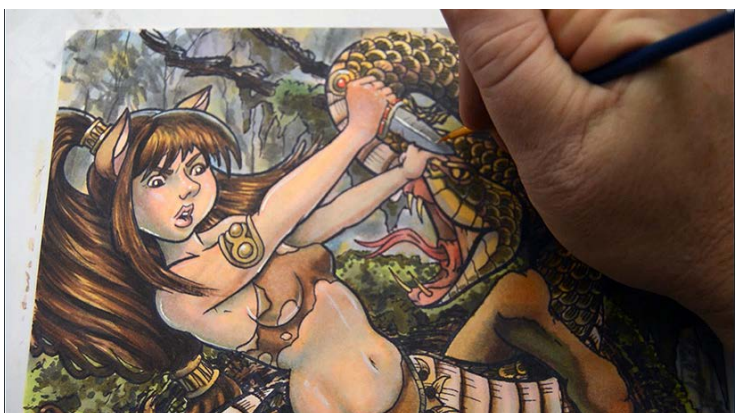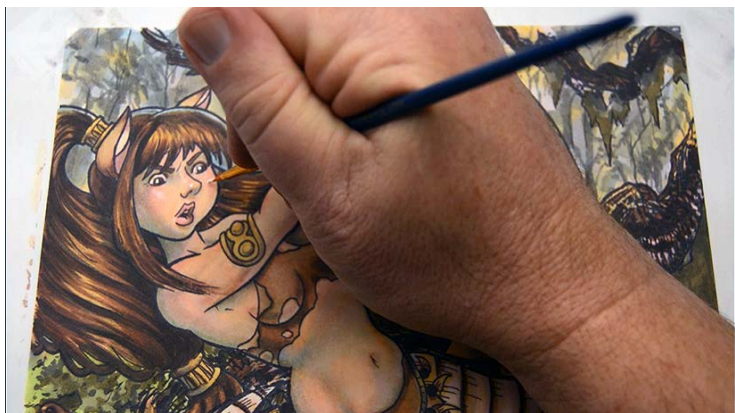

...to tone it down as well.

I add highlights, starting with her eyes, with white gouache on a small brush.

Now... I like *lots* of highlights *everywhere!* You may or may not. I'll show you where I put my highlights in the next few photos, but you *must* decide where, how many, and how strong you are going to apply your own!

The Finished Work

With this class we worked in the style of the masters of pulp fiction covers of the 60's and 70's. The unblended colors and bold highlights are part of the unique style these artists employed.

You may want more blending and fewer highlights in your finished work, but I would encourage you to try this style. The end result is really awesome with tons of action and implied pictorial space.

Until next time...
Christopher Kerry