

A painting of a village at night. In the foreground, a small fire or bonfire is burning brightly, with orange and yellow flames. Behind it, several houses with dark, triangular roofs are visible, their windows glowing with a warm light. The sky is filled with large, billowing clouds in shades of orange, red, and yellow, suggesting a sunset or a fire in the distance. The overall atmosphere is one of warmth and light in a dark, rural setting.

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By Oliver Turner

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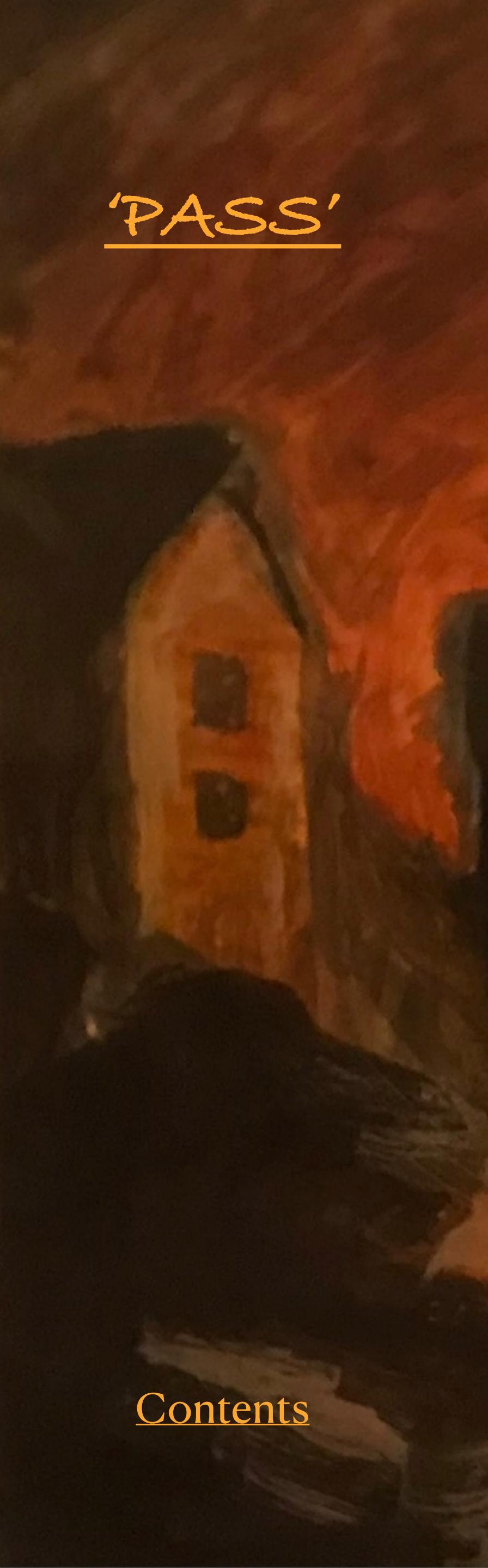
Midnight

The Nihilist

S.T.O.R.K. (An Ontology)

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I Can't Write

I can't write;
Can't write straight.
- Write I can't.
I can't write lately.

Big a deal.
Care a lot.
This is real.
This is not rot.

Can't make money,
Owe a ton.
Brain is runny,
- It's not fun.

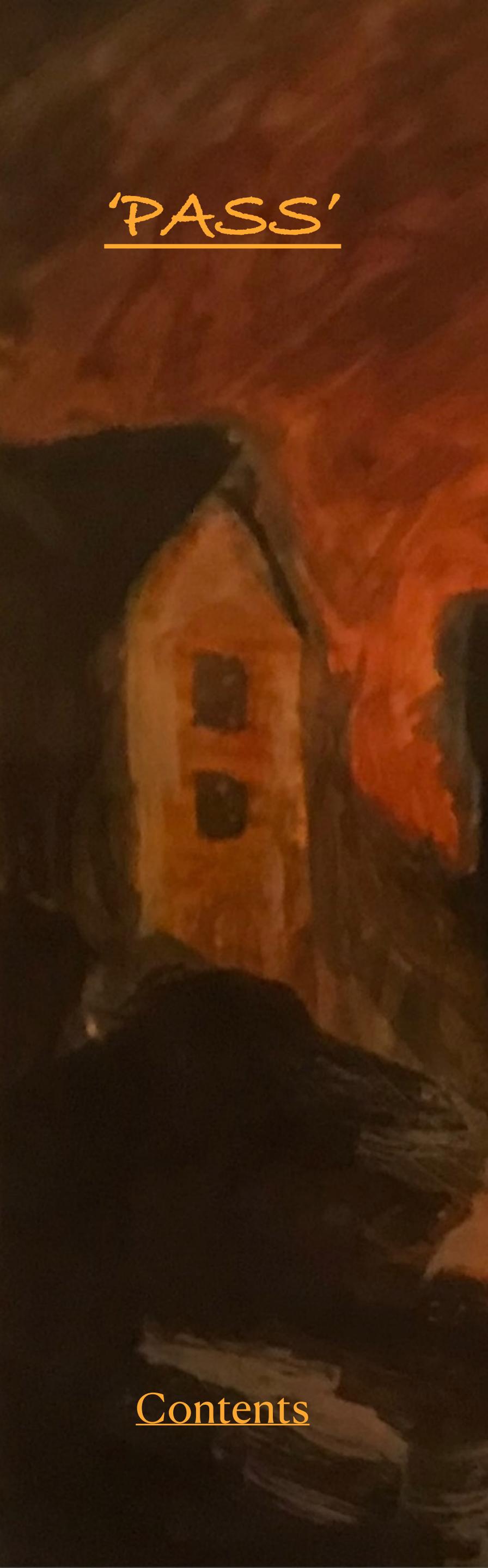
Not to state
Nought to mention
I relate
My mind's dissension.

I can't write
Anything new;
Although you might
- I don't know how to.

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JUDAS 0

A palladium of the written word, clave to its intended meaning, the stator in the generator, with the audacity of a Nostradamus and the character flaws of a Hardy fellow in a Woolfian literary exposure, fickle as a kitten with a ball of string, let me electrically irrigate the neuronal firing processes in your cerebral cortex...

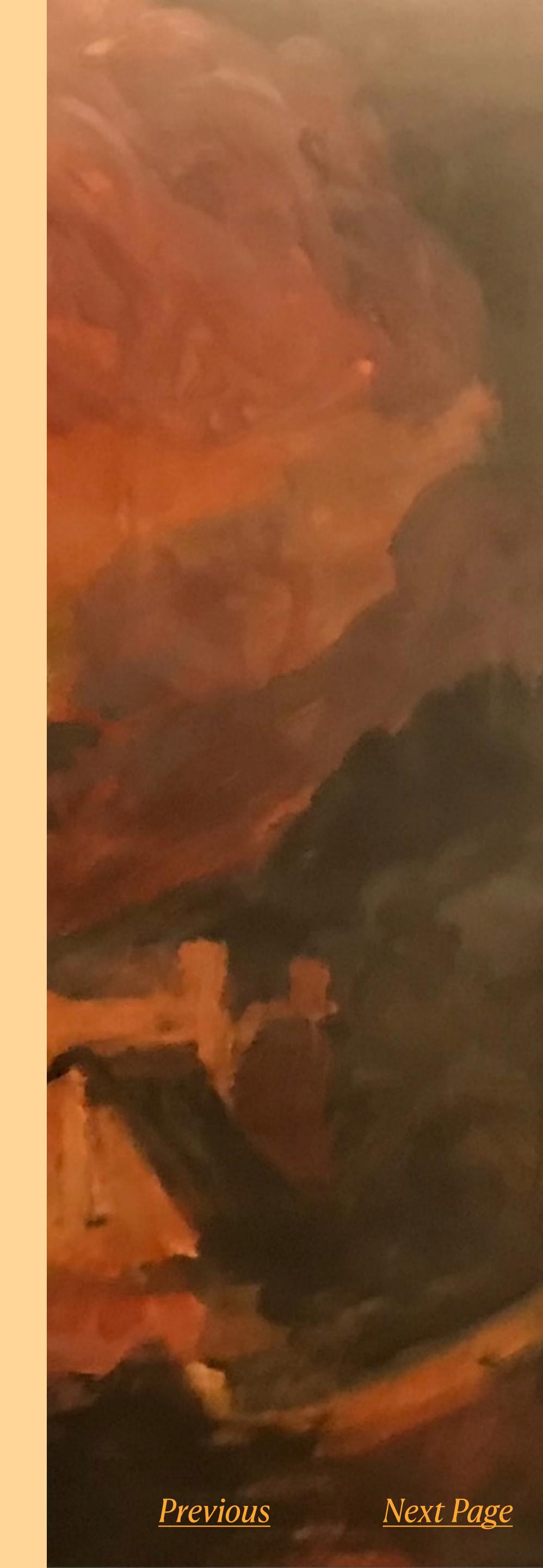
Rock on. Rock unwholesome in places, dishonourable rock, melancholic, spirited disdain. Heavy and slow, blissed and gone, rings and thumps occasionally, cries out, but flippant of the cause, ironic with inevitable chord changes.

Stops short of befouling the air we breathe (and hear) with arresting delineation, presumptuous as music should be, a delinquent's dissident foray into the meaning behind his existence carried out with a missionary's devotion to truth over the blasphemous lives he is inclined to lead. We presume to his band as well, smashing.

Repetitive, heavy, messy, discordant, droning, wailing, blurry and lazy. Exquisite for all that. Making a mistake on purpose?

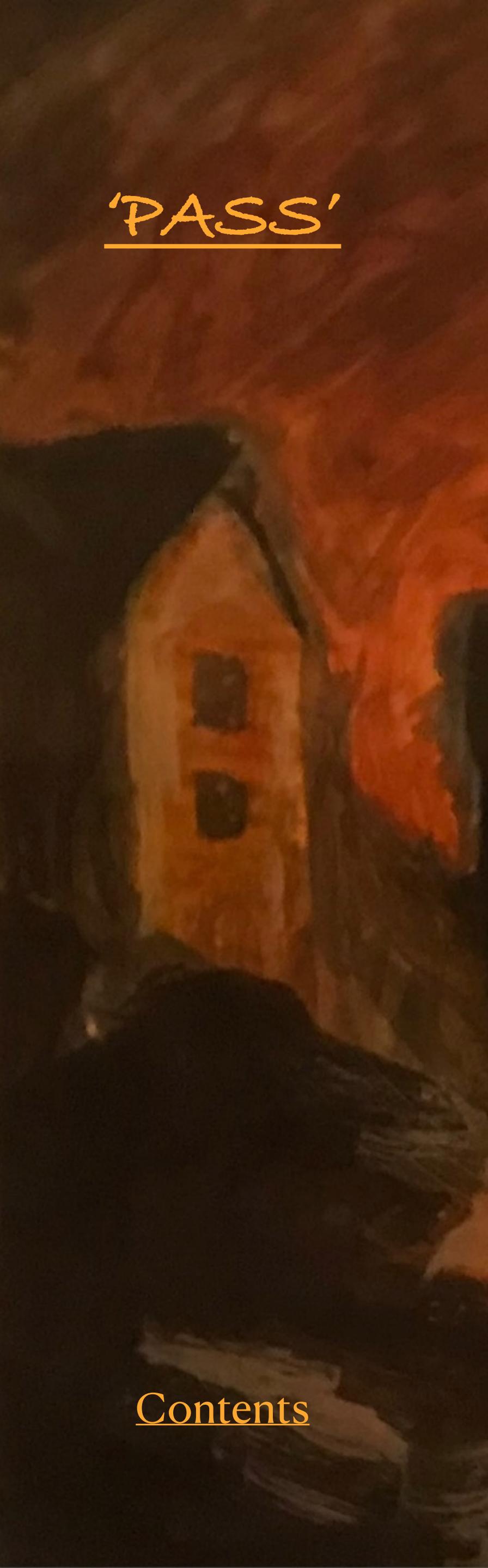
Believe.

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Familiar tunes resonate, short-winded and somehow always there, from sorrow infinite. If you are waiting, you are a highball to dance, a beaten track, depoliticising the style, a gallop or a train's rolling, a poppy kick drum, an aiguille snare.

The aeroplane flies high. You're arrested; it's a document, and it agrees with you. Soloing like you always do.

Slow dawn mumbles into being like Christmas.

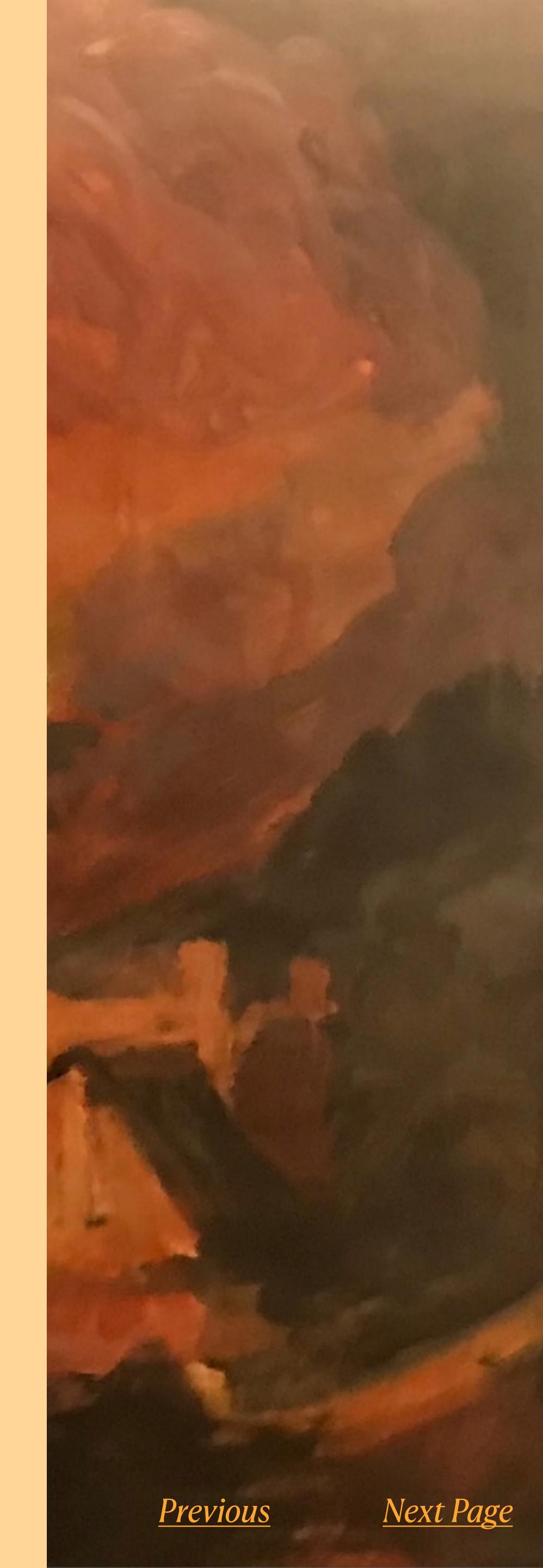
The Marquis in Spades: a defiant, clumping, returning romp into hazy metallic thrashing about.

Judas O pitchforks mediocrity, an old demon we are accustomed to, he's me, he's you, above and below, older and younger, drifts unbridled like winter long, grey tones mapped out on stars in soot, even dustier...sparkling echoes of a child's voice, as it meanders up and down the keyboard.

Lucky 13 resounds by starlight, gauges the atmosphere like a lactometer and saturates it dutifully.

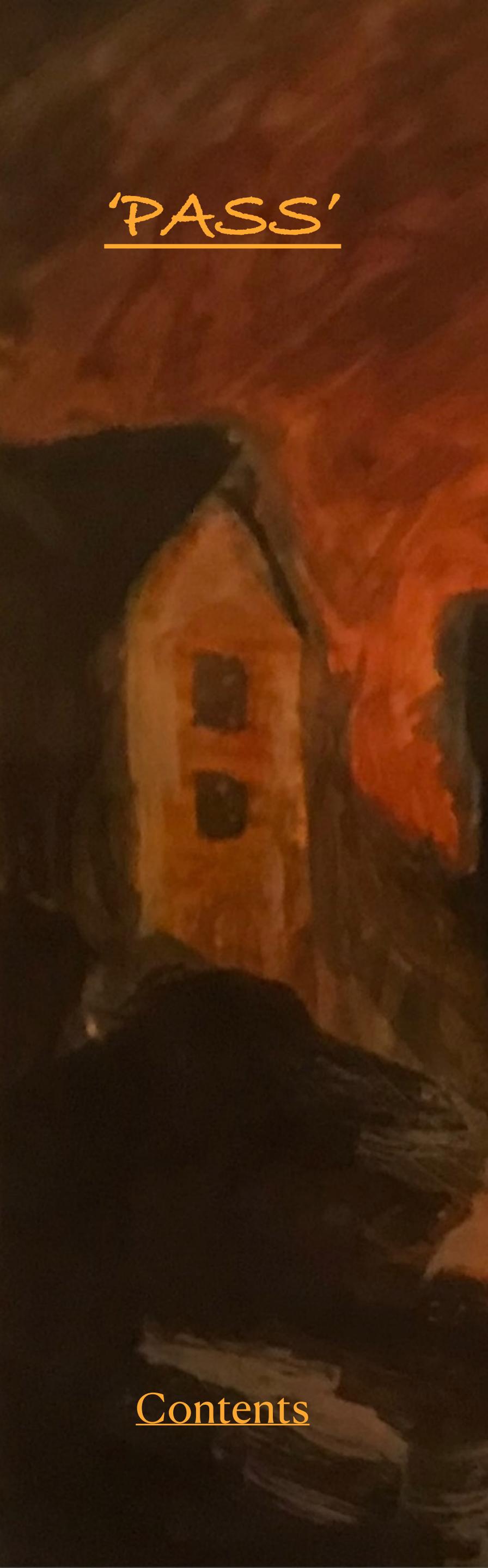
The hole in the wall? Here's to the atom bomb. Smacks of the fool – faithful to a certain blend of strings, unadventurous with a wild streak.

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Set the Ray to Jerry, a tingling of guitars floating on a cloud of bass. Tribal beats which give you a gentle, teasing headache.

Blissed has the propensity to break occasionally, keep listening, it's only prefatory to incoming messages.

My mistake, you think it's going to come back at the end but... the keyboard never clammers out of its prohibitive maze, the climax is what it is: the final verse builds, the tune gets into your head, but it's the same message: come back to me.

Two words, evil and genius, extraneously relate the category and calibre of the sonic reflections of an ordinary band.

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So What?

It's fortunate, or perhaps typical, that I'm interested in philosophy, since it requires little or no topical awareness, and I have little or no topical awareness. Philosophy is there when you don't know how to proceed. Once you have it figured out, well that's it.

Is light a physical thing? I put it to you the answer is yes. It has substance, it is observable, it has shape and extension. So what? *So what* if the answer is yes? What if it were no? If we redefine the concept of a material thing to exclude light particles we would make a nonsense of modern physics. Still, it isn't obvious from the outset light is a physical entity.

Is space a physical thing? Reputedly. I always thought space was somewhere you put an object. Is space the same as nothing? Is it the same as something? What is empty space? Somewhere in between a black hole and an event. Can you have timeless reality? I don't think so. Time is unceasing. It doesn't make any sense to talk of a reality void of time. If time and space are part of the same process, does eternity entail infinity? Isn't space what remains when you run out of objects to describe? Isn't space just a linguistic context for presenting physical phenomena? Is space real, or is it only an idea (a useful one)?

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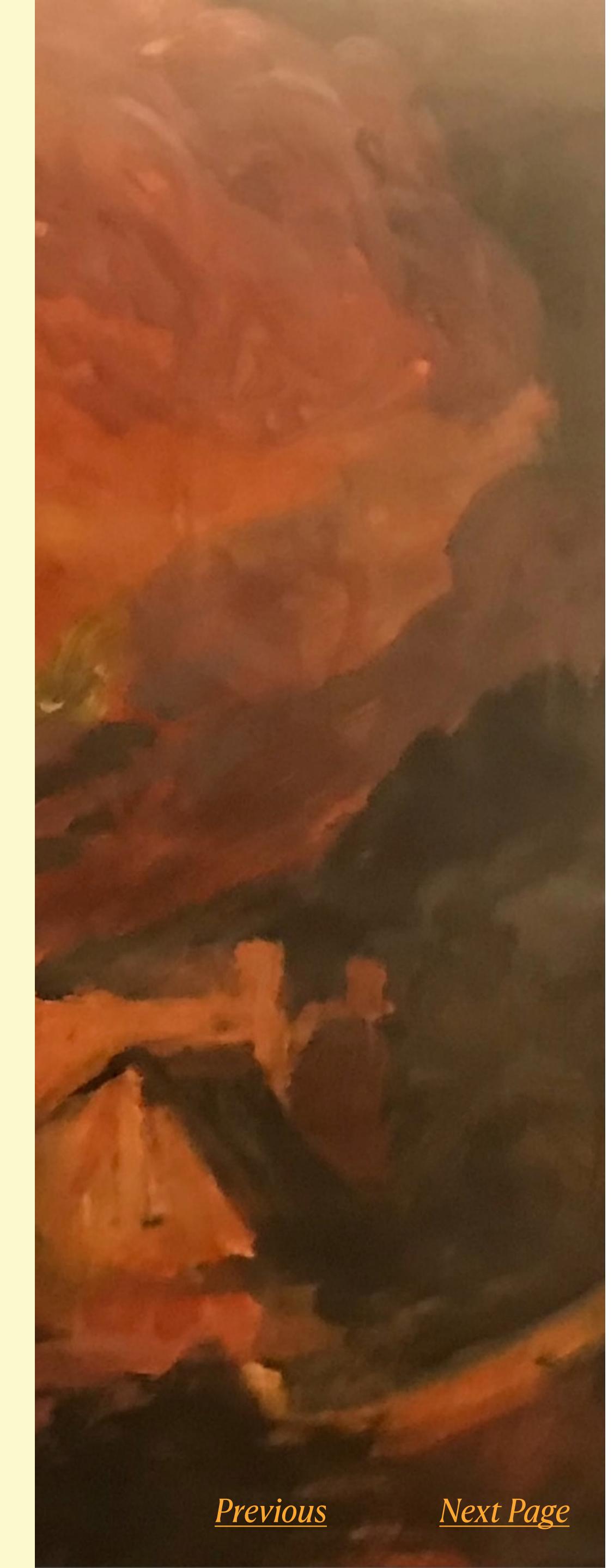
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Being philosophical isn't having an answer, it's what it is when it's happening, questioning and investigating, analysing and assessing. Why spend time on it? It has consequences, informs decisions. It doesn't matter if you forget it, or it becomes irrelevant in the end, at the time it was useful, like a journey. The destination is the important part you might say, well you wouldn't be there without the journey.

So what *now*? 'What have I learned?' you might ask. What's the point? The point is whatever it is, philosophy can only help you sharpen it, it won't *provide* a point. It's a critical activity, refining theories, clarifying deep-rooted concepts in our understanding. It's a foundational subject of academic enquiry. It originated out of and persists as a result of a lack of knowledge about how the world works.

So what?



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ALTERNATE REALITY

People invariably seek an alternative
View in regard to what's real.
Consider the possibility this is not really happening,
It's simply the way that you feel.

Sceptics attack at the base of the reason.
Certainty gains their applause
At each stage of finding at the very foundation
Your argument has critical flaws.

Empiricists claim knowledge is external
- Trust not in the ghost in the machine.
Look, I am here and right now this is factual
You have no idea where I've been.

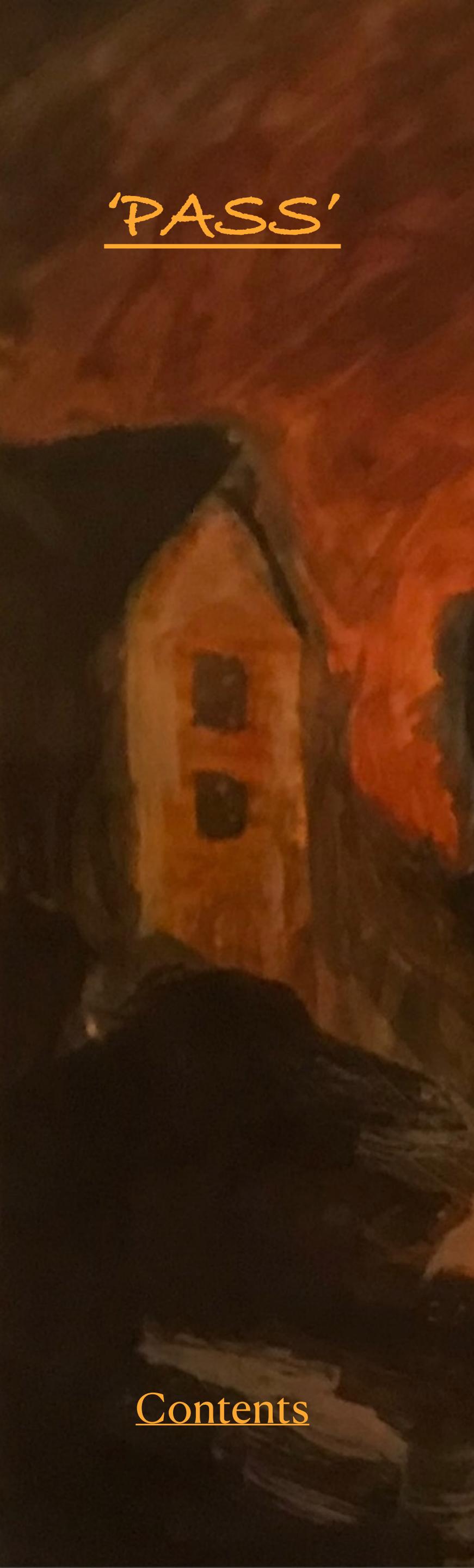
Rationalists fight with an inner conviction,
To question it, selfish and rude.
If deep in my heart I believe I was loyal
Then that is what you must conclude.

Moralists, seemingly humanitarian,
Question their motives to find
There is always a reasonable explanation
For why someone might be unkind.

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Positivists, believing only the observable
Merely accept what's perceived.
'This is what happened' they factually classify
And like that the sinner's relieved.

Logicians check your assumptions with scrutiny,
That which is valid is king.
Soundness is less of an issue at times,
Truth an irrelevant thing.

Linguists, never a sucker for integrity
Play with the rules of the game.
Counter incredibly accurate passes
And subtly transfer the blame.

Thinkers from all walks of life have an angle
On what can be said to exist.
Sometimes in full knowledge of what is actually the case
They still give the story a twist.
And on odd occasions the tale-teller's instinct
Is simply to wipe the slate clean;
A wave of the wand and the picture is gone
Into a metaphysical dream...

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A Presentation of the Extraterrestrial

I read in an Earthling's website the observable universe hosts around a hundred billion galaxies, each harnessing roughly a hundred billion stars.

Many stars have a version of a solar system, some of which involve planets which revolve the fiery ball, until such time as it explodes or flickers out, at which juncture Earth (for example) would be dissolved in the blast or float off as a cool rock, no longer trapped in the loci of a nuclear furnace bound to harbour the forces of gravity to persuade it elliptically into orbit.

Millions of species of organism roam the Earth and inhabit every type of setting, from amoeba to zebra, from icy plateau to baking wasteland; diversity in abundance is natural where conditions are conducive; the ways and places in which life *may* develop are multifarious.

Evolutionary theory provides strong evidence that life developed on Earth gradually from single cellular life-forms, to multicellular and so on into walking, swimming and flying beasts. It is commonly affirmed humans grew out of the Earth; you are a product of your planet. As the 20th century philosopher Alan Watts put it - An apple tree 'apples', Earth is a planet which 'peoples'.

In the same way, Mars could 'martian'.

From the point of view that Earth's evolution has characteristics in common with the geology of other planets

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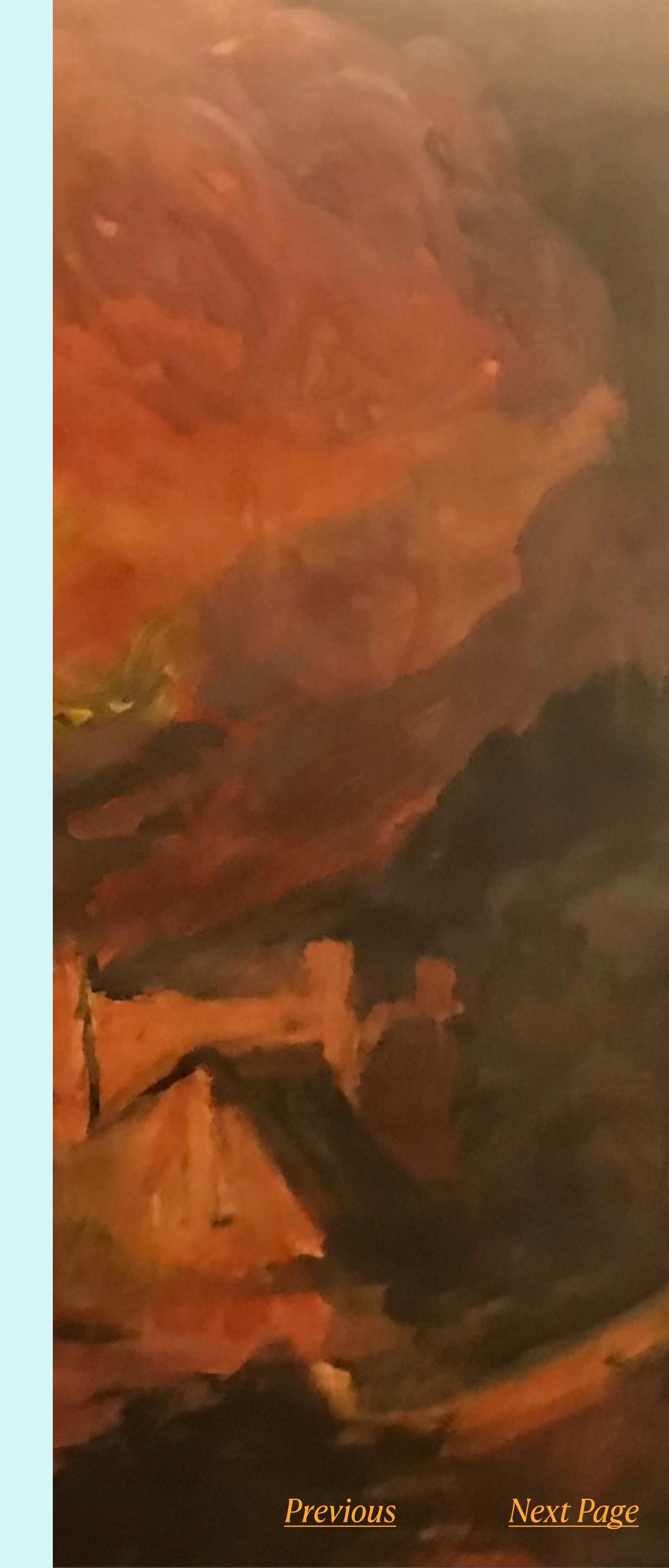
like our own, it is probable to some degree life is at a relative stage somewhere else. A theory which assumes a planet to be in a cosmically unique position for producing or supporting intelligent life cannot readily refer to evidence thereof without abandoning a singularity model of the universe, because according to that, the same basic elementary physical particles are shared throughout the universe.

Moreover, if it all originated at the singularity, everything has existed for the same length of time at the subatomic level, so it stands to reason there would be some level of correspondence between various locations of outer-space in terms of sophistication. In the absence of epistemic data, it is always more than likely, in a situation of abundance, somewhere else has progressed close to or beyond yourselves.

On a purely statistical basis, for our cosmological circumstances, the contrary is comparable to a coin landing tails side up only once in billions, or trillions of flips. The notion that your planet is ontologically special is untenably improbable in respect of the estimated scale of the universe.

You might have held life on Earth to be a fluke in the cosmos, but considered alone, as the universe is observed to be greater in size, the premise shines too faintly - with the force of a single match struck alight on a dark night in a forest of reasons to believe the planet is densely populated with trees.

It is unreasonable to have assumed there is no life on other planets purely on the basis they have been quiet up till now; planet Earth may be hugely isolated, far distant from the nearest habitable zone of outer-space, putting a hurdle in the



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way of obtaining information about, or establishing contact with civilisations like yours.

Examples of extraterrestrial intelligence are as liable to manifest as the cosmos is extensive over space and time, within the laws of physics (or metaphysics at least), a sprinkling of the mystery of the biological, and a single scintilla of a question begging beneath the cosmogonic; how the world came into being has been investigated up to a relatively fine point, but *why* did anything come into being in the first place? The origin of existence is so elusive as to seem open by logical necessity.

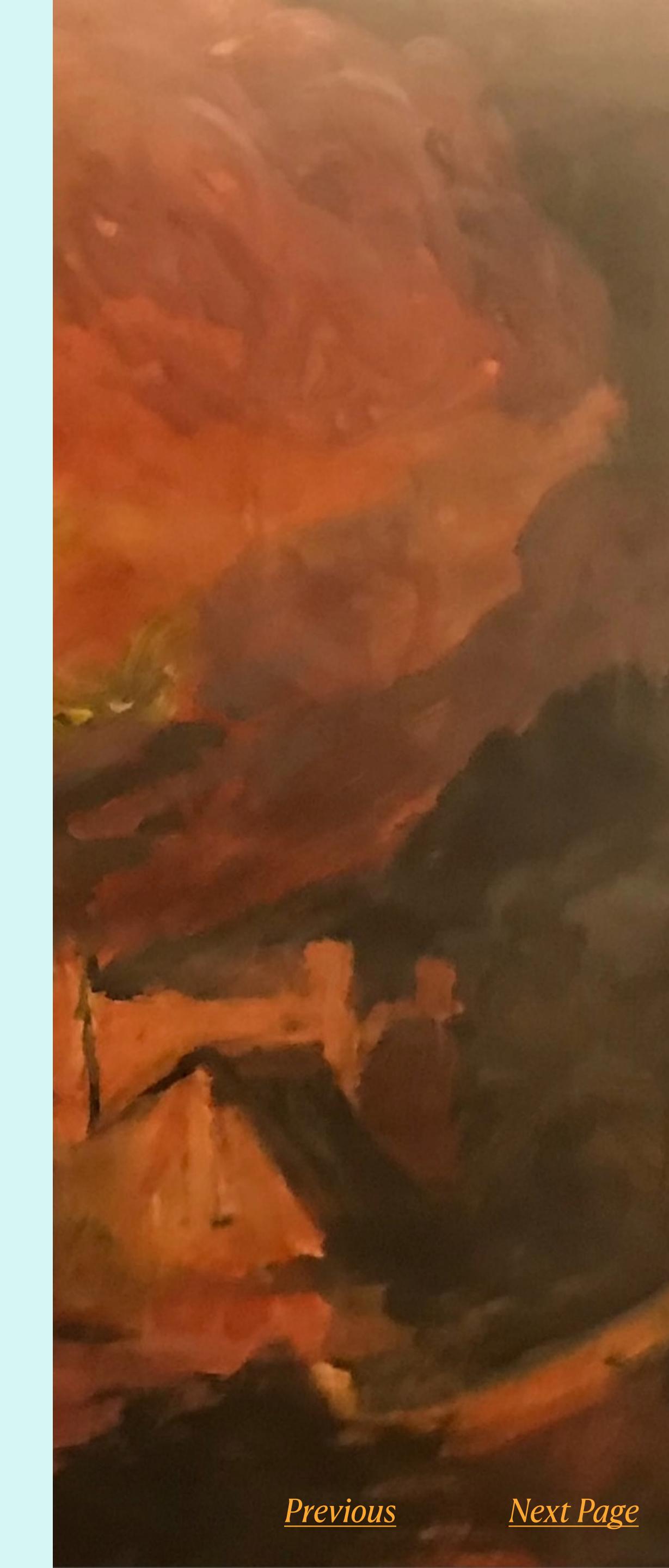
What would be the first thing an alien would do on arrival at Earth?

Hide? I would.

What actions would be taken once we gained advanced technologies in command of space flight and navigation? Use of a cloaking device to disguise our home planet? Low interference in the affairs of other planets?

Having investigated Earth, aliens could decide to improve circumstances without sacrificing our feeling that we are in control. In which case...would you even be aware it was going on?

The answer to what intelligent life may be out there in the expanse of outer-space, as long as it remains unconfirmed with primary source evidence, still belongs to the realms of probability, where only the highly sceptical would bet against the possibility, and those in a position to know might not show



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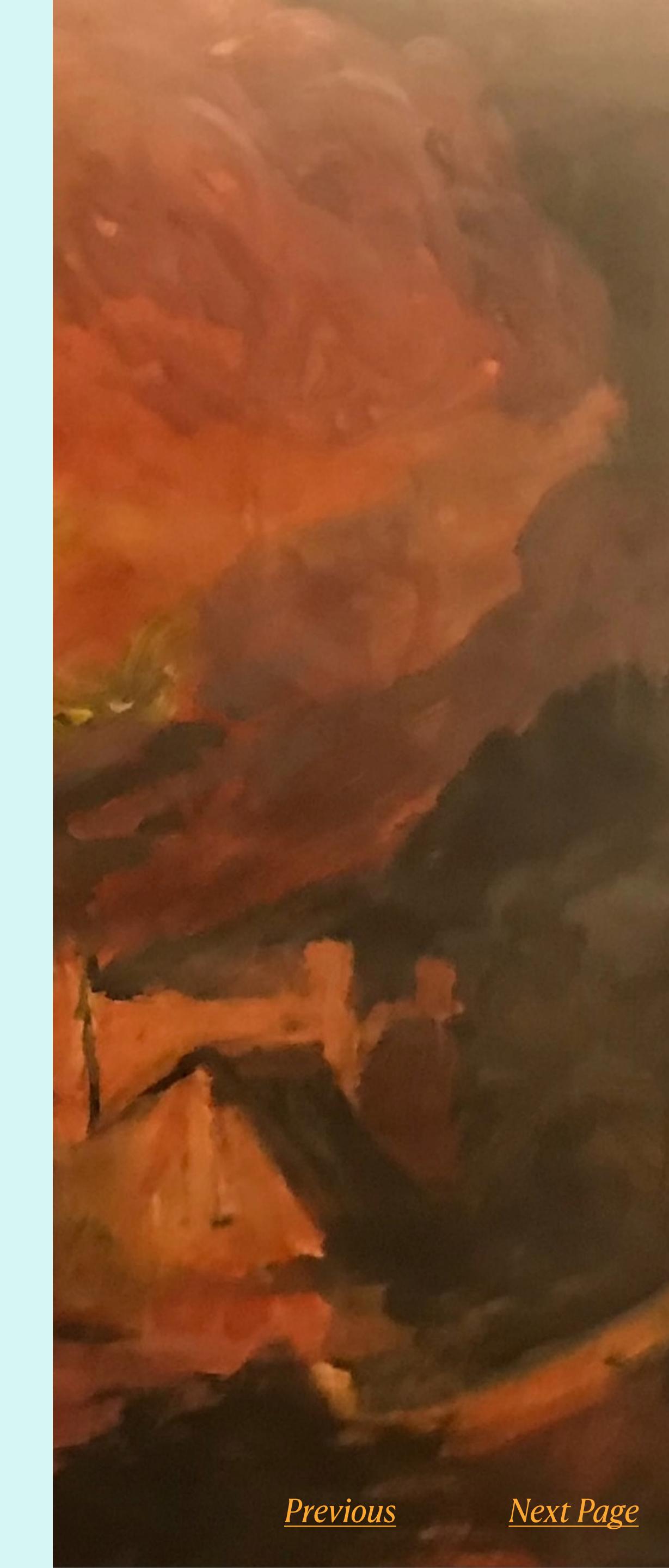


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their cards. *Realism* is realistically the only position to take... and what would the reality on Earth be if a creature from another planet realised itself in front of the masses out of the blue? - A relative degree of chaos. Which isn't ideal. Clandestine intervention might be the order of the day.

In conclusion, historically there is a lack of solid evidence on planet Earth of extraterrestrial intelligence; however the world is full of things which we all subscribe to without solid evidence, and on examination there are patently reasons to believe aliens exist, because if they did, things could well look exactly as they do now.



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The Computer

Hello, I'm PC, it's a technical name
But personal computer will work just the same
Without question I am outrageously popular
Information technology met with world-wide fame

Glass, metal, plastic, electrical volts
Speakers, the keyboard, the mouse and the screen
Dislikes: reduction to a mere fashion item
Or a glorified calculating machine

Gig me some RAM when my system is loaded
Uninstallation to free up my brain.
Reorganise me with defragmentation
Switch off the power and fire up again

Type in addresses to reach web locations
Click on a link for a passage direct
Hack at the password until you remember, then
Change it to something no-one would expect

DVD, CD, CD-ROM interpreter
Media player and games interface
Exposure to televisual material
Access to internet sites like MyFace;)

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If you get sick of low quality output
24 bit me and go for a drive
Just for a pixel I'll show you a paint drop
Upgrade the latest sound card to arrive

Open word processor, edit a doc.
Introduce characters; undo the lot
Manage your office, create an account
Present what you spent as a negligible amount

And call me computer when age brings intelligence
Call me a taxi until I have feet
Take me along to the robotics convention
Solar re-energise me in the street

If you get lonely I'll track you a satellite
Close in so far as she orbits the earth
Possessed as she is of a silicon microchip
And searching for what her computer is worth

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Elation with Mckenna

Elevated and uplifting as it is, Terence Mckenna's voice belongs at the forefront of rationally-proceeding open-mindedness - articulating features of what are imaginably fantastic states of awareness - available here, on this planet - wherever and whoever you are - simply by ingestion of half an hour of Mckenna on your chosen media player. You can be that person...enduring reality on a more enlightened cognitive platform, exalted by the scene you behold, where you can gaze wistfully upon all those which preceded it...held in a wondrous and mysterious future as a leaf is held by a breeze in the sun...well, okay, he does it better than me.

In spite of envelope-stretching incredibility of his beliefs, Mckenna speaks off the cuff about the nature of reality with astonishing fluency - referencing and citing authors as he explores the mysteries of the universe, drawing his inspiration from a rich personal experience of practical and theoretical research. He invites you to look into the amphitheatre of your imagination and find yourself at the centre of a show, purpose-built...with the freedom to create history, and decide what character you will be in your own play. He gives us hope there is a transcendentally sublime destiny afforded to humanity.

I can't faithfully represent the musings of Terence without broaching the subject of 'psychedelic substances'. By this I mean consciousness-altering compounds, specifically those which naturally occur in plants. He believes they may be a legitimate pathway to making sense of the world, through accessing realms, with conscious entities' advice on the other



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side, where the mind's eye has a keener grip on the nature of reality, with a kick; it's of a character crazier than you are capable of imagining in soberer moments.

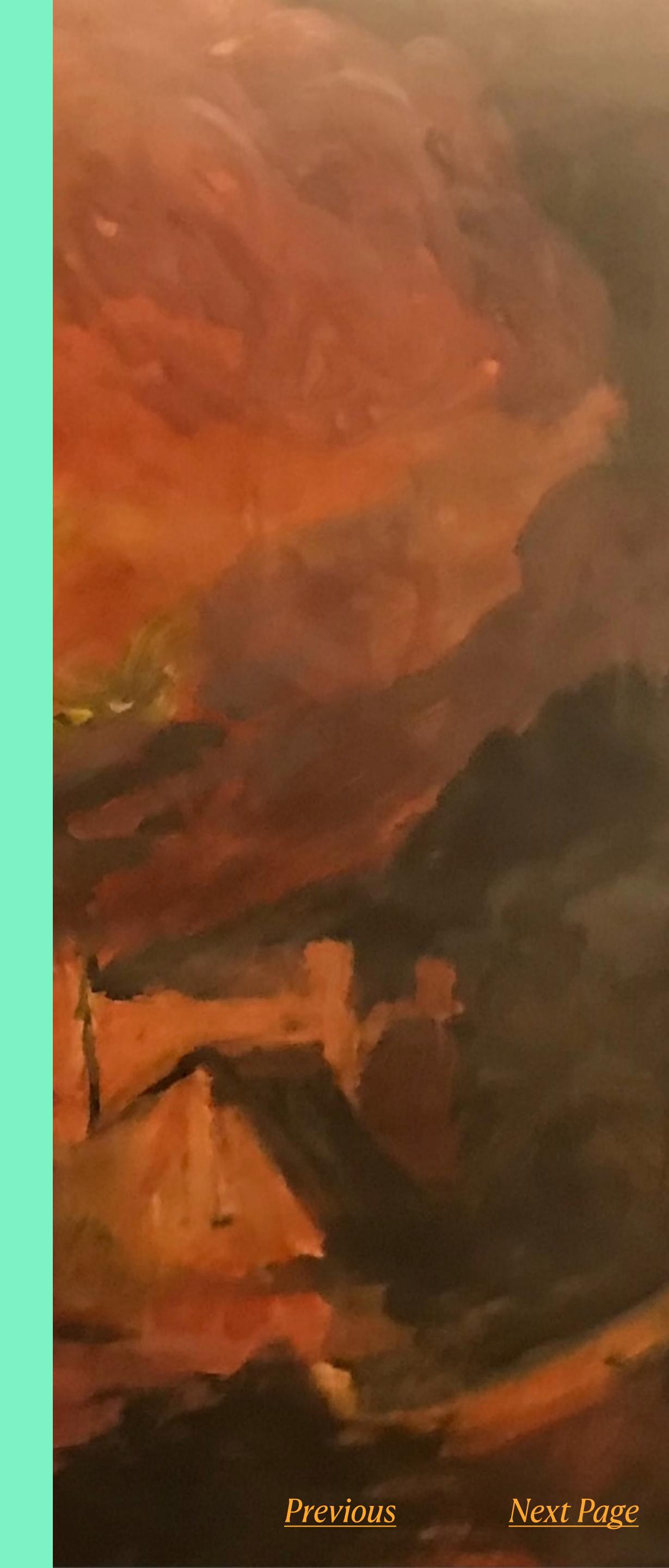
Terence's advocacy on this front is somewhat prolific; he brings it up in most of his talks. To me, his confidence in the importance of 'the psychedelic experience' to everyone is radical, over-the top. He compares it to sexual experience as a natural aspect of a human life. Perhaps 'consciousness experimentalism' is natural. I'm not sure eating the right mushrooms is an essential ingredient for a full life. Or, and I admit this is a possibility; maybe he was right that a universal administration of psychedelic substances, appropriately orchestrated, would save the world.

He argues these substances 'dissolve boundaries', which explains why law and order practitioners would want to stifle their distribution - powerful institutions enjoy regulations often to a fault. We should have a choice whether to explore different states of consciousness, as we do via the use of other substances such as alcohol and caffeine - guided by information on research into their harmful effects, and each others' advice, even if as individuals our conclusion is we are better off without the effects they produce.

Far from being in favour of chemical highs in general, just plants and mushrooms, in the late 20th century Terence was saying he believed the most insidious and detrimental drug on the market was television, and the *internet* generates a massive rejoinder to the restricted choice of:

'Hm. What shall I watch on television?' with,

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‘Hmmm. What shall I put on the web for other people to watch?’

And he has a point about TV - what other drug keeps people relatively motionless and unproductive, staring at one place in the room for two hours at a time?

“Create your own roadshow.”

Mckenna’s theories develop with outlandish character, and persuasive subtlety, plus validity (I’ll say ‘valid’ not ‘sound’, because I intend well-argued, not necessarily correct) and a punctual sense of humour, into a network of ideas which describe the way the environment has changed the phenomenon of human existence, which he then reveals to *actually* be a lower-dimensional backdrop to an even *greater*, more glorious, infrastructure of dreams and realities coalescing in the eye of the future imagination of a consciously and technologically advanced species on the cusp of a transformative spiritual age...okay, but Terence really knows what he’s talking about.

If humankind realised the position of our personal relationship with nature, the planet beneath our feet and all that lives upon, above and within it, we would see the obscenity and preposterousness of violence and destruction - a scenario analogical to a man hitting himself over the head with a ball-peen hammer - the response loop from his brain to his arm is fairly instantaneous: he stops immediately.

Authority is challenged by dissolution of boundaries, Terence contends; therefore, if we want to disable control by powerful organisations, we need to change the system of programming



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which supports cultural norms, the self-serving dictums of government and establishment...and his rap, which is brim full of ideas for how a newer system, grounded in the wisdom of age-old perspectives, rather than historic political ideologies, would behave socially...is heavily weighted towards promotion of peace, novelty and freedom.

No-one has complete control; we're individuals blundering our way through life; and the 'top' politicians can be as naive as all the rest. Mckenna has done hilariously silly things, and he is quite candid about them. He is also good natured about how crazy it all sounds if you try to put it in a nutshell. You want to be open-minded, but not so that the wind whistles between your ears, right? It's refreshing to hear intelligent and amiable language from a guy on the fringes of political and scientific correctness.

There are lots of short, snappy video and audio clips, although Terence speaks at length, and these lectures and workshops are available if you want a marathon on the race to the next plane of existence.

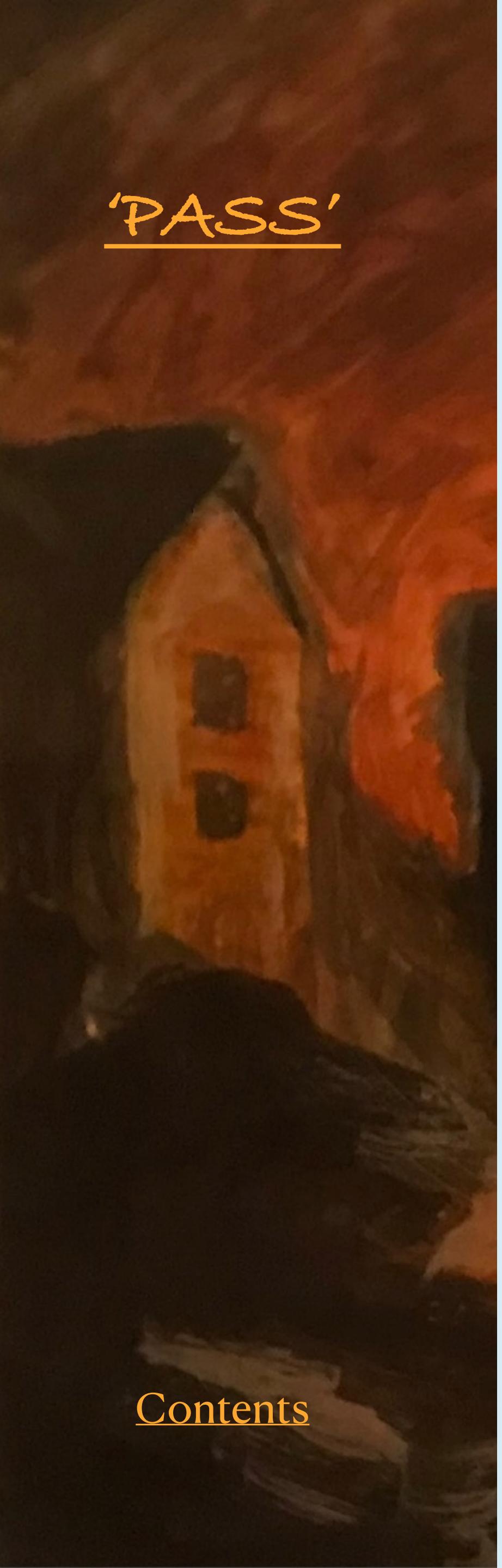
Terence Mckenna raises the banner highest, speaks the clearest, and knows well the terrain of the metaphysical in his theoretical explorations. In his recordings and writings he brings *life* to *life*, pulls out the mechanism behind the wonder, and shows how endless and sophisticated are the possibilities the universe is yet to involve you in...sorry, I'm not even close am I?

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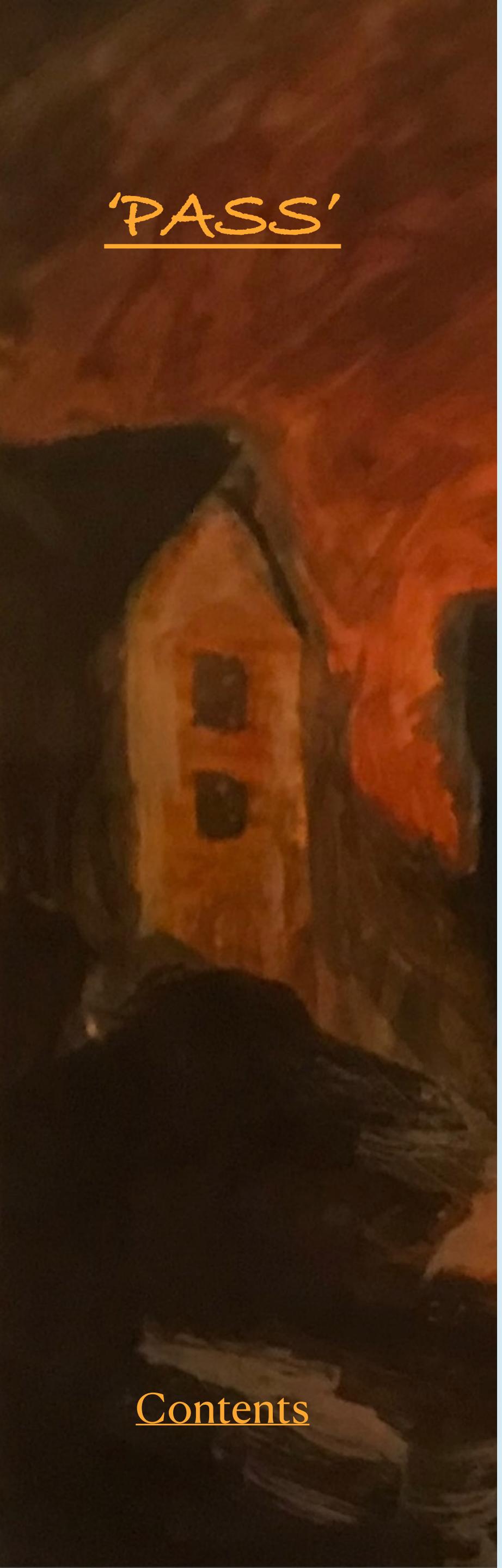
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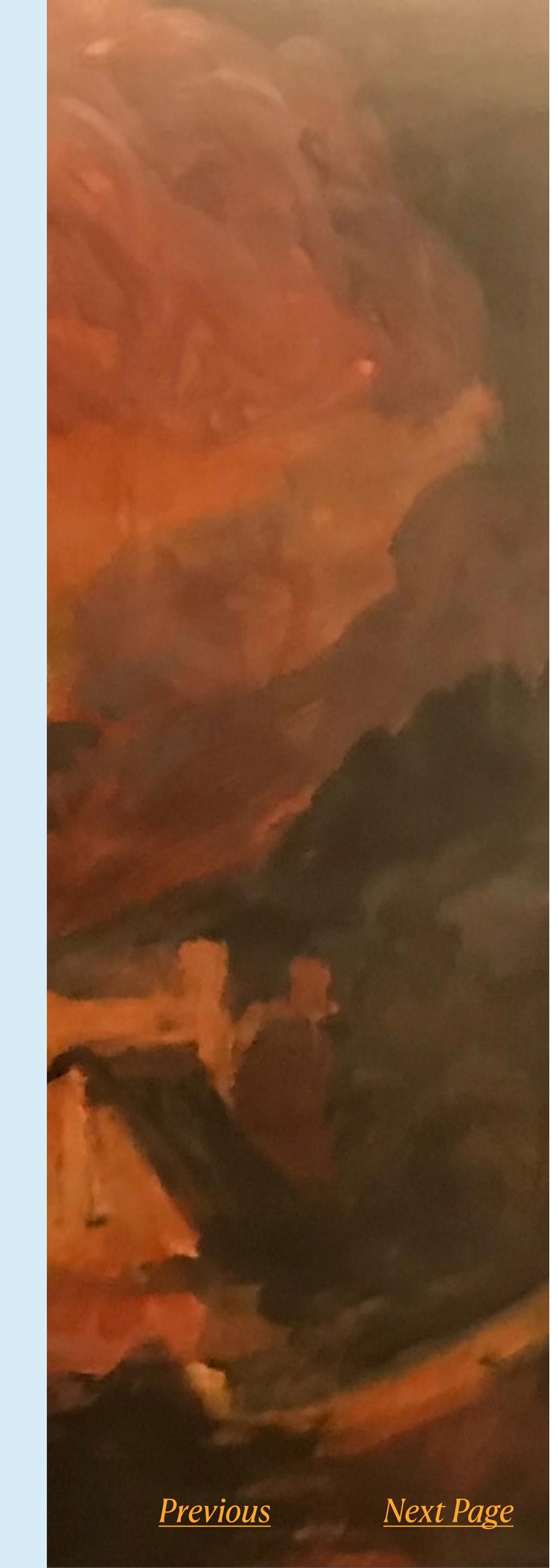
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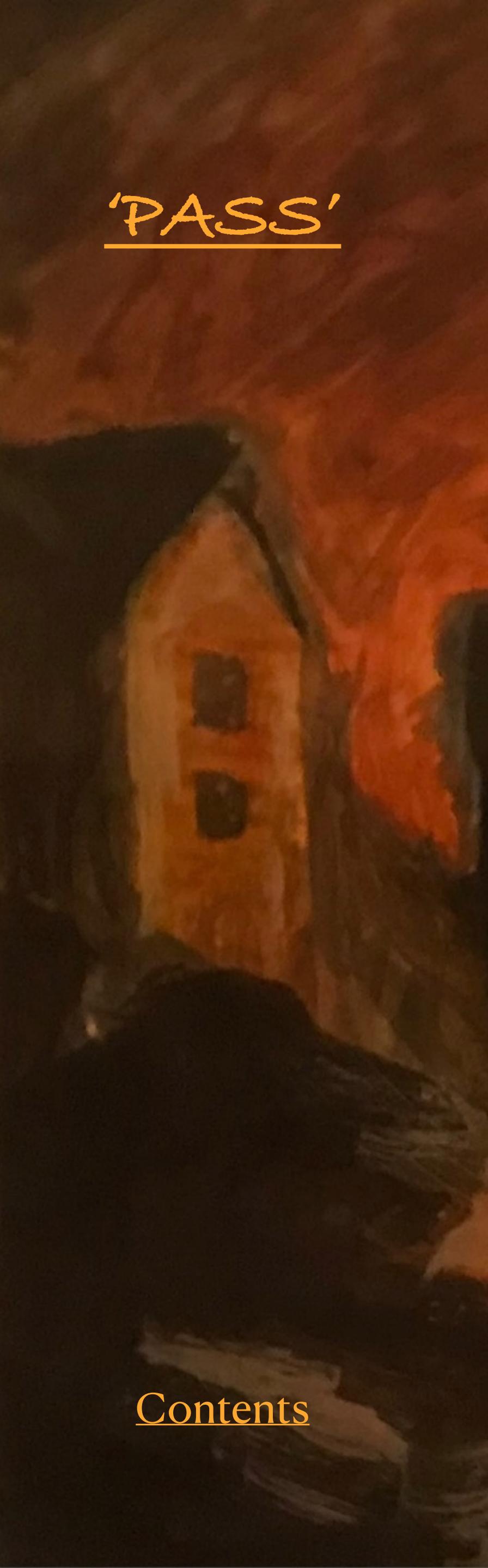
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The Mobile Phone

Ring me I'm mobile, a wireless effect
There are several services with which to connect
In colour and noise come the media joys
And a phone call is something at least to expect

Concept becoming; I am my phone
Interface optimal; smart navigation
Built of precious weights and measures
- Totally rocking aesthetic creation.

Look up a number and tap the *green telephone*
Symbolic portal to community
Alternatives tend to be used in the end
But you know you would notice if it wasn't to be

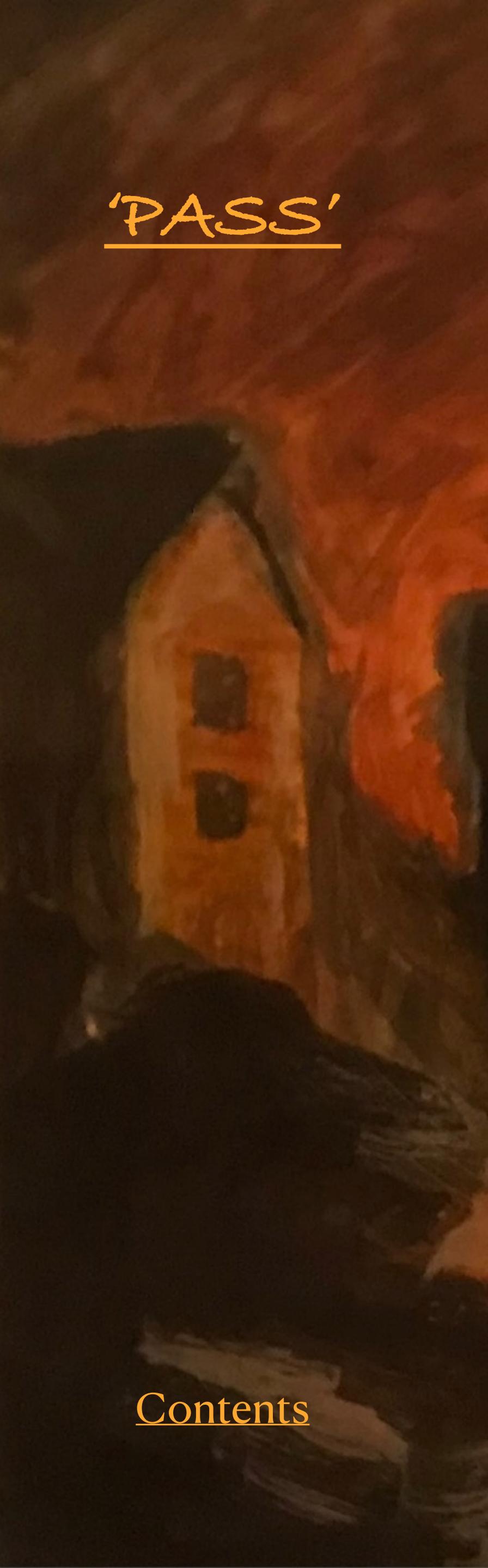
Yours is a brick now, and mine is on fire
This thing can make tea while changing a tyre
Can I be so bold as to put you on hold?
- I've just had a message from a prospective buyer

Fluently text-speak a different language
If this way is easier 4 U 2 B
Some people touch without seeming as much as
To apply any pressure upon any key

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Diary alert on your hand-held console
Take a dictation while you're timing your rice
Brazen to layer an MP3 player
On top of a video-camera device

Say you've got broadband here, tell me you're joking
Portable access - that thing must be smoking
Next thing will be it will swim in the sea
And operate fine when the insides are soaking

Time to escape the conversation - *red telephone*
Slide me to neutral if that is the case
After you lock it put it in your pocket
Wrapped in the velvety cover's embrace

PC occasionally writes me a letter, she says
She can do anything I can do better
I look at the screen, and at what the words mean, then
I try out new ring-tones till I can forget her

‘Cause I’m just a mobile accessory, she’s right
She’s got a hard disk while I travel light
She’s ever so clever, and yet they endeavour
To bring us still closer together tonight

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Good Is...

‘Good is good’ is as close to an absolute ‘truth’ as you are ever likely to get in the study of ethics.

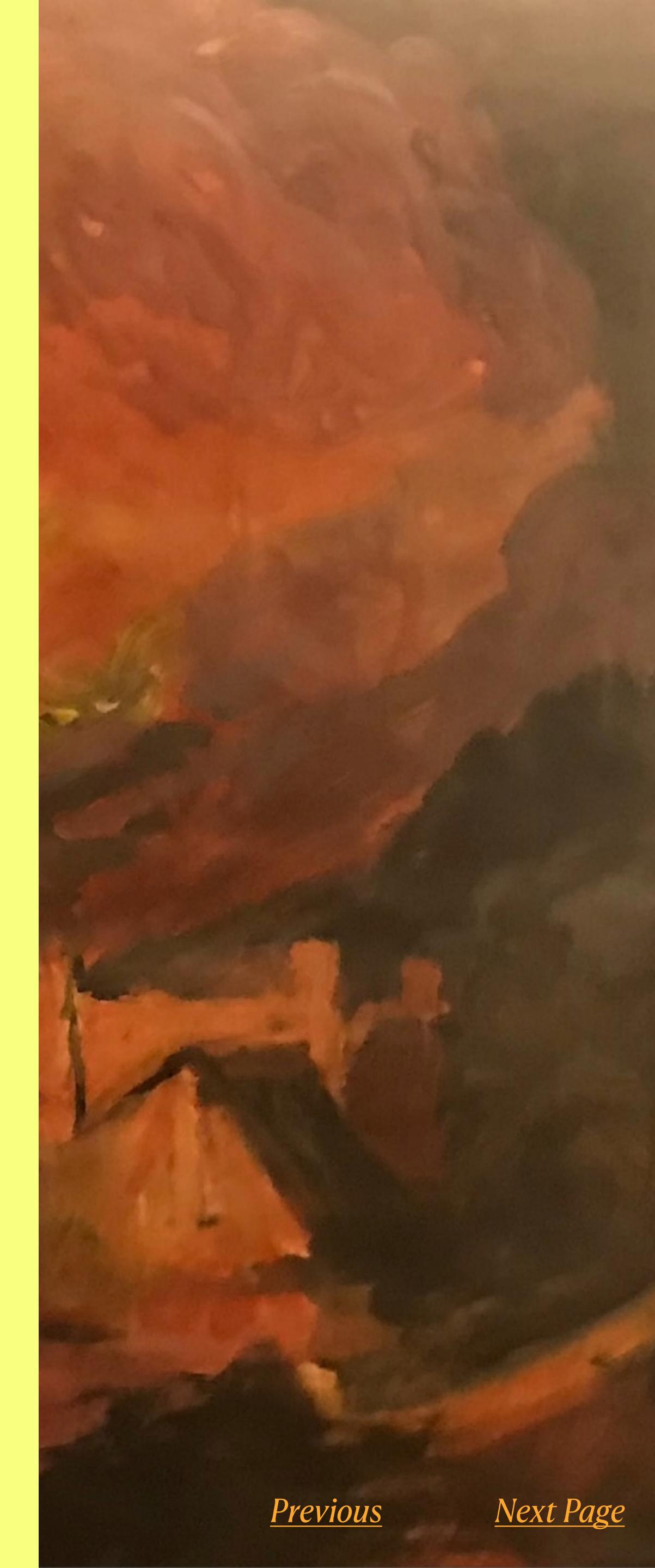
The logical nature of deductive proof seems to dictate that moral truths cannot be anything *but* tautological; it is as impossible to formally lay out a set of fundamental moral truths as it is to coin a concept such as beauty or emotion using a fixed set of criteria.

So ‘good is good’, for example, or ‘P, therefore: P’, to put it in formal logical terms, is the best you can do.

Similarly, evil is evil, fairness is fairness, etc. etc.

You can't sincerely argue with those statements without going headfirst into a logical contradiction. To use formal logic in an attempt to prove any kind of moral truism *isn't* tautological you would need to state that one virtue or vice bore a degree of equivalence to another, and further, that you could go above and beyond the meaning of the first term in inferring the second.

Just to be clear, to set out a deontological, formal ethical code you would have to reduce your morality, or an aspect of your morality, to a set of statements which are irrefutable; hence they would have to be deductively proven, in which case they would need to be formally verifiable. This means certain qualities or predicates would have to be definitively pinned down as understood to be of a certain moral value. When I come to some examples I will show why attempts to set out a



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perfect or absolute moral code are tautological (although sense can be made of moral discussion in specific contexts in spite of the lack of such a code or criterion).

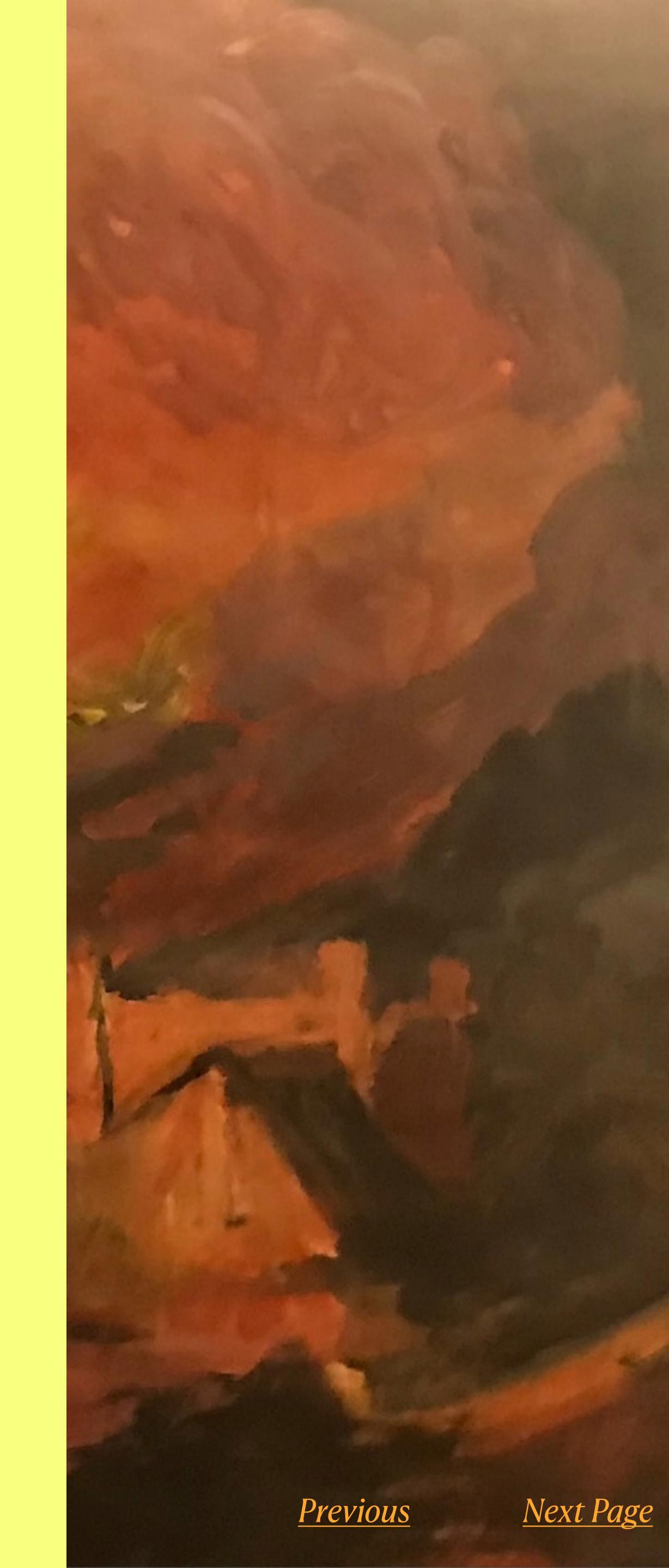
You might say, some words in the language of morality can be shown to be derivatives of other words and moreover contain meanings which extend further than those words they are derived from. You might say, for example, kindness is a positive form of behaviour, positive forms of behaviour are for our benefit, good moral instruction should be for our benefit, therefore kindness is a good moral instruction.

Kindness is a virtue of some value, however I would argue it is *not* a policy which can guide people, with any real valuable instruction, and with generality, through universal circumstances.

These features are tied up with each other - the context-bound nature of ethical decision-making - and the essentially tautological nature of this and any other absolute moral truth, since context in a lived scenario is by nature endlessly investigable.

Which still leaves a great deal of scope for discussion of the 'right thing to do' - as choices are often described - but does have inferences for legal principles insofar as they can be interpreted *without* recourse to the particular circumstances of a wrongdoing.

Delving a little deeper into the discussion of what constitutes good and evil types behaviour (which exist in some sense, but there are not, I am arguing here, absolute moral 'laws', neither am I assuming that the existence of rules or laws in



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themselves is not helpful - but that the morality they are based on is not able to logically codified), kindness is a concept which can take on a huge variety of forms, and a 'kindness' in one context could quite conceivably be a deviant activity in another.

Precisely the same action in one set of circumstances could be an aid to deception in another, because kindness is not a strictly defined form of behaviour with specific physical attributes.

Kindness could be a smile.

Or it could be a donation.

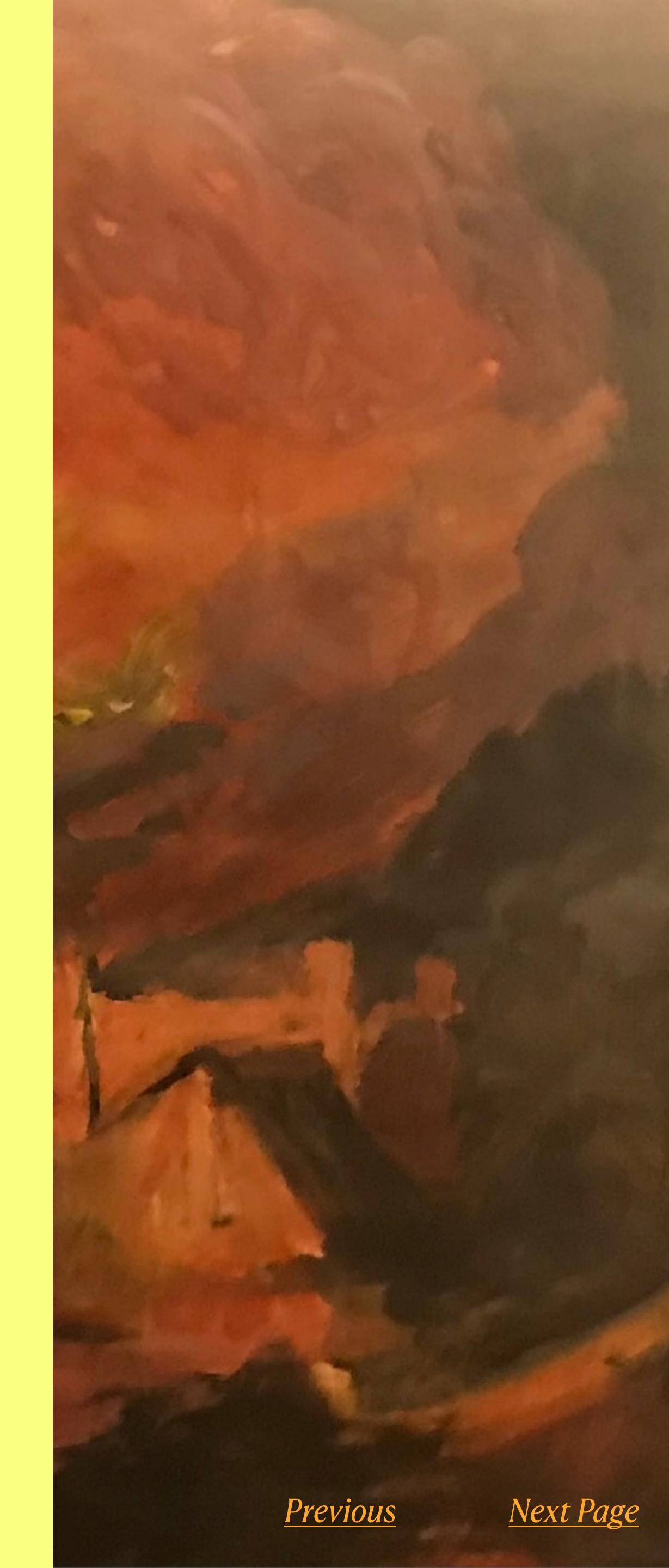
It could be constructive criticism.

It *could* be a deception (a contrivance) - in which case it isn't kindness, right? Yes - but what in actuality constitutes a kind action is flexible, unless you pre-define it as kindness or in synonymous terms.

Kindness isn't necessarily desirable, but kindness definitely is kindness - a tautology.

Kindness is good, you might also attest, but I would argue it is only good insofar as it is precisely synonymous with goodness, and thereby unconstitutional of anything outside of the concept.

Another subjective aspect, and a virtue in its own right, such as generosity in kindness, is not able to be understood as part



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of the structure of a deontology (unless it were to be an infinitely large deontology).

And generosity can be a mistake.

Of course, we know kindness and generosity when we experience them, it's just we can't go beyond the subjective experience to give them specific attributes the contravention of which would clearly compromise their conceptual profile.

One of the most misapplied forms of moral terminology is the use of the word 'wrong'.

'Wrong' has a different application in science to the one it has in ethics.

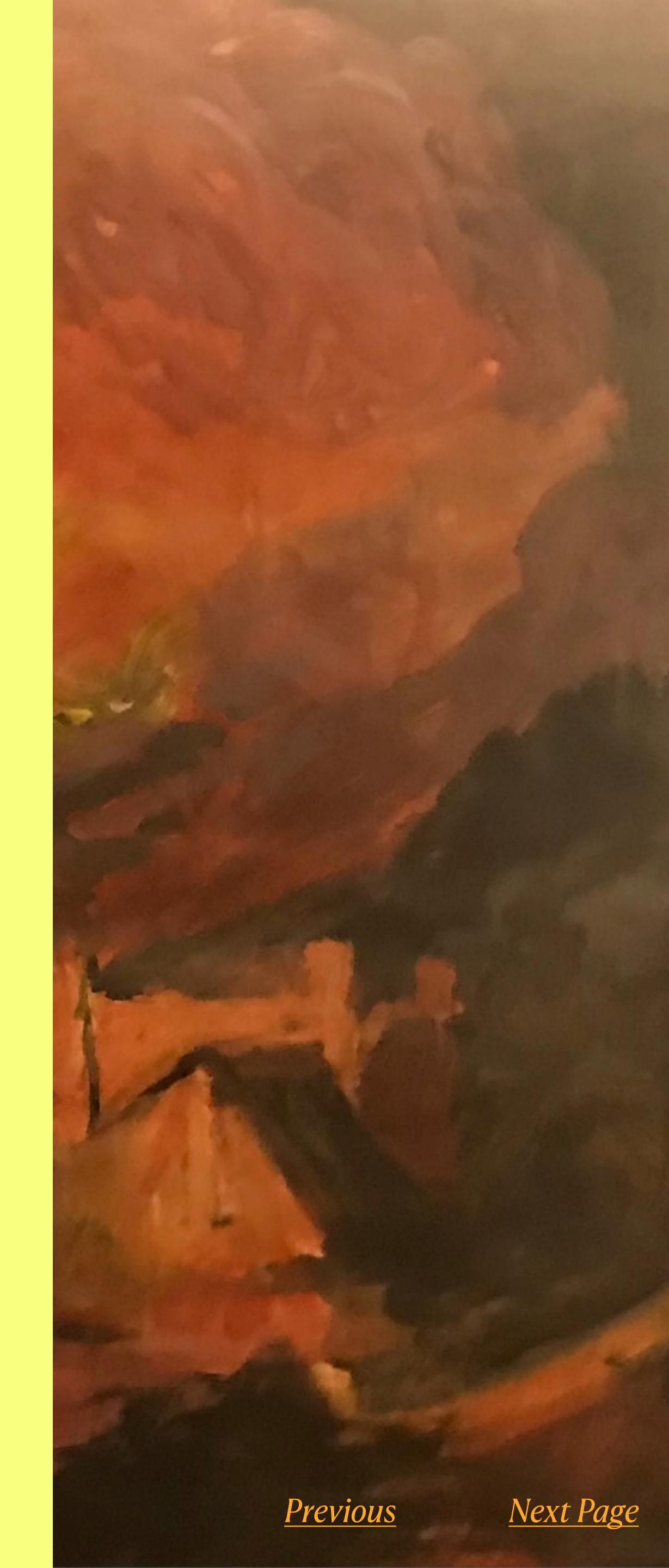
Although it is used and useful in both spheres, its place in science or maths is a world apart from the place it takes in ethics. 'Wrong' in maths is the same thing as 'incorrect'. Were we to use the term 'incorrect' in morality we would need to apply it with a degree of laxity, as there is an objective-subjective distinction in theory between the two areas of enquiry. Correctness in ethics is obligatory, correctness in science is fact.

You can debate ethics, and you can debate science, but their epistemic foundations are different. Compare these two uses of language to illustrate the distinction:

'Hydrogen is one of the main elements in water.'

'Shouting is one of the main features of psychological abuse.'

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Both may be true. Both may be open to discussion as to the wording, the accuracy of the statement. Both may be valuable as information in context.

But there's a difference, isn't there? They're true in a different way. They are 'known' in a different way.

We make use of the word 'wrong' in ethical discussion, *and rightly so*, but it is still a context-bound evaluation, a paraphrase of a verbalisation of the idea of 'immoral behaviour' as the speaker sees it. It should not be transposed from its literal meaning in the sciences to a similarly literal interpretation in ethics. Human behaviour may be 'wrong', but so far as ethics goes it is only reasonable to examine context for 'wrongdoing'.

'Wrong' has definitions and senses which are utilised in both science and ethics, and has, since there has been 'justice', raised the question of whether leniency or harshness is appropriate for a 'criminal', belying the question of whether circumstances lessen responsibility, and whether they are ever altogether irrelevant. The alternative is to say the criminal was just plain 'wrong', which even if true (for argument's sake), is contentless (not an explanation; can't be investigated.)

Similarly, 'evil' is something of a cul-de-sac in ethics.

Someone may perform an evil act as it is viewed, but to describe a person as *naturally* evil is to assume they were born evil, which seems a drastically cynical analysis of any creature. What would it even mean? An evil baby? 'Evil', as moral terminology, is predicative, transient and subjectively meaningful, in application to behaviour rather than in



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absolutely irredeemable condemnation of moral character. E.g. in linguistic terms to say (technically): '[Such and such] *is being evil*', as against '[such and such] *is evil*.'

Moral codes are forward-looking (in time), ideally. Those of science, backward-looking.

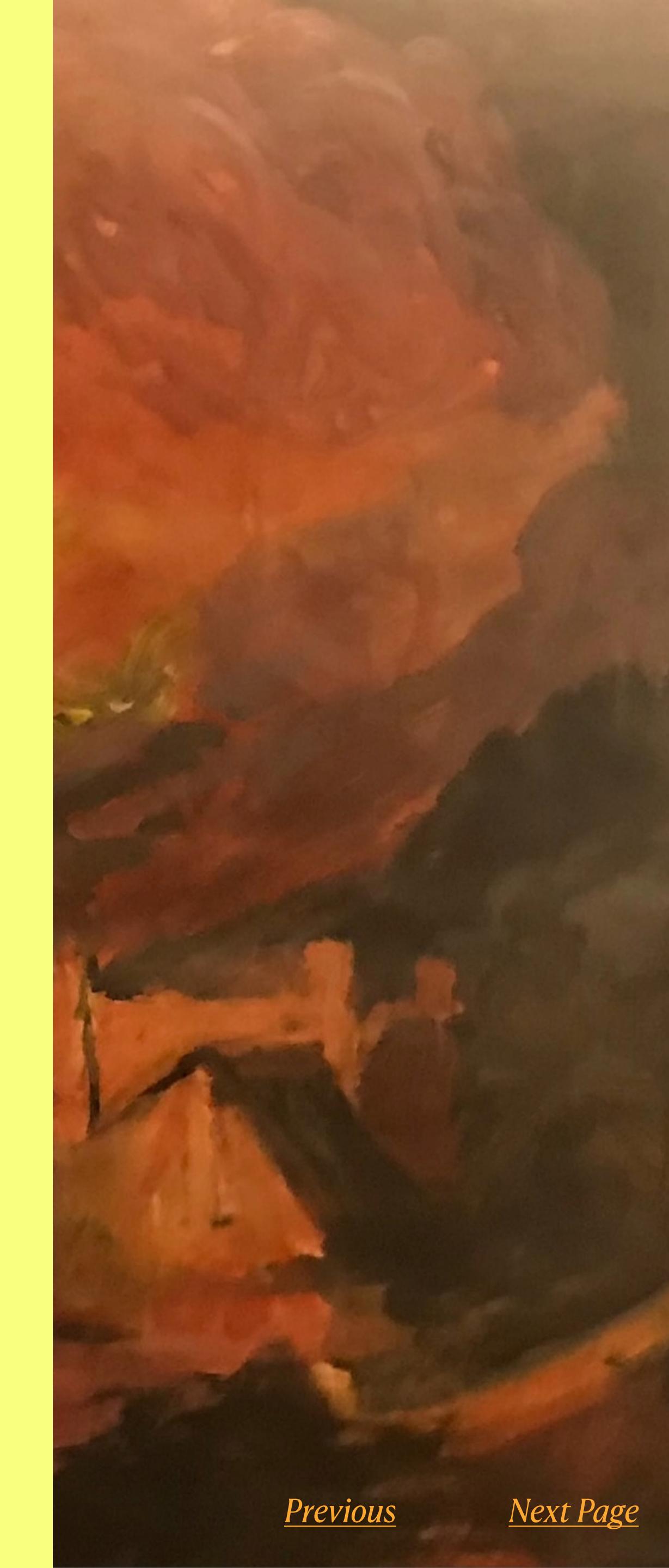
This is a deeply abstract concept from philosophy (forward- and backward-looking). Hard to pin down, dualistic and therefore highly simplistic in essential structure. You could quite easily flip the application of what looks forward and what backwards, and for a moment wonder if you've spent the last three years reading academia from a void ideological perspective...but one day you know you will return to the very real traces of significance it bestows. Perhaps just at the edges of your own understanding, because, let's face it, if you brought it up where you are now, you'd get some funny looks.

Segway into a tangent - conservative ideology looks to preserve the traditional structure of society, whereas socialism endeavours to level the playing field for the future.

Perhaps right-wing is more ordered where left-wing is innovative.

Historically, left-wingers have wanted to relax law and order in favour of welfare and support, where those on the right would tend to take a tough line. Socialists are inclined to look into the systemic influences which contributed to a wrongdoing. I suppose the Conservatives position is: 'we have to draw the line somewhere'.

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Forward- and backward-looking theories usually outstay their welcome as such on close structural analysis. A bit like dividing the world into 'up' and 'down'. A case can be made that every individual thing is either up or down...

It is!

But *why bother*?

Indeed, but 'up' and 'down' still have a dualistic and polarised, universally applicable, sensible meaning which we use constantly.

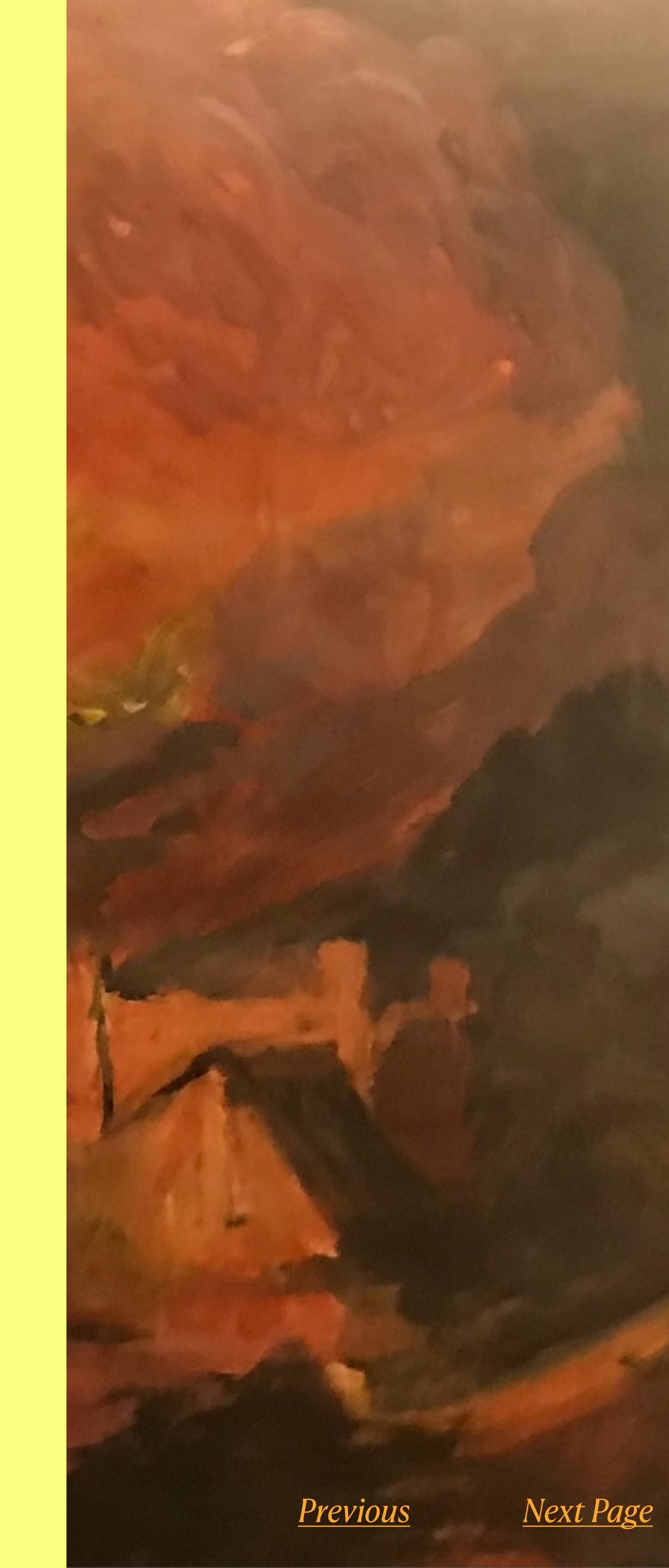
We want to take care of our wellbeing with the prescriptions of our moral dispositions, and refer to the intrinsic nature of our physical reality with our scientific comprehensions.

Moral truth may exist, but moral law, deontology, is at best tautological, at worst contentless and misleading and open to misinterpretation or maladministration.

Good is not evil, but only if you already have a grasp through experience of wherein examples of such behaviour consist.

Science/law cannot prove it.

Life will always present us with choices of how to behave where we have to think for ourselves about the best course of action and cannot rely upon logically codified moral laws, only on experience-based appreciation of the meaning of words such as 'good' in the eternally and irrefutably valid moral maxim 'good is good'.



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Am I Drunk!

So you can tell I've been driinknning
I've had enough of your lies
- Yes I admit: I've taken refuge in alcohol
What makes you so bl*dy wise?

Three hundred thousand tequilas
A glass and a half of champagne
One or two beers for good measure so, cheers! -
I am drunk, as I say once again.

Started at...three, since you're asking,
It's not a crime in itself.
It's not like I'm shot but still claiming I'm not
Stating 'alf a glass good for yer 'ealth.

Yes I've been mixing my beverages.
Spirits and wine? I think so.
You must have misheard so I'll rephrase my words
Au contraire to the contrary 'no'.

I was with my mates admittedly
Yes, a bad influence I know.
He's a bad sort, and it was his fault.
- That's what you said five seconds ago...!

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'PASS'

What about work? Well I skipped it.
I took it off – don't you have ears?
I thought I was pissed - *the day has been missed*,
Still, another one usually appears.

Sloshed as you could care to phrase it -
Yes...you can call me a mess.
Wasted, half cut, paralytic, I'm f*
They carried me home at a guess.

We stumbled out...dunno...whenever
Show me the way to the next
Tell you what right get a nice early night
if i nd u 2 drive i jst txt.

Man I feel totally slaughtered
No I'm not coming to bed.
Can I have one more? I'll be sick? If you're sure
Pull a pillowcase over your head.

Well that's me now I am fading
Stick a fork in me I'm done
Time to collapse, where I'm standing perhaps
We fought well but the alcohol won.

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'PASS'

Is it Pie or Quiche?

If it is pie or quiche, then it might be pie but not quiche, and it might be quiche but not pie, and it might be both pie and quiche, but it isn't neither pie nor quiche.

It is pie.

Therefore:

Is it pie or quiche?

If it is probable or questionable, then it might be probable but not questionable, and it might be questionable but not probable, and it might be both probable and questionable, but it isn't neither probable nor questionable.

It is probable.

Therefore:

It is probable or questionable.

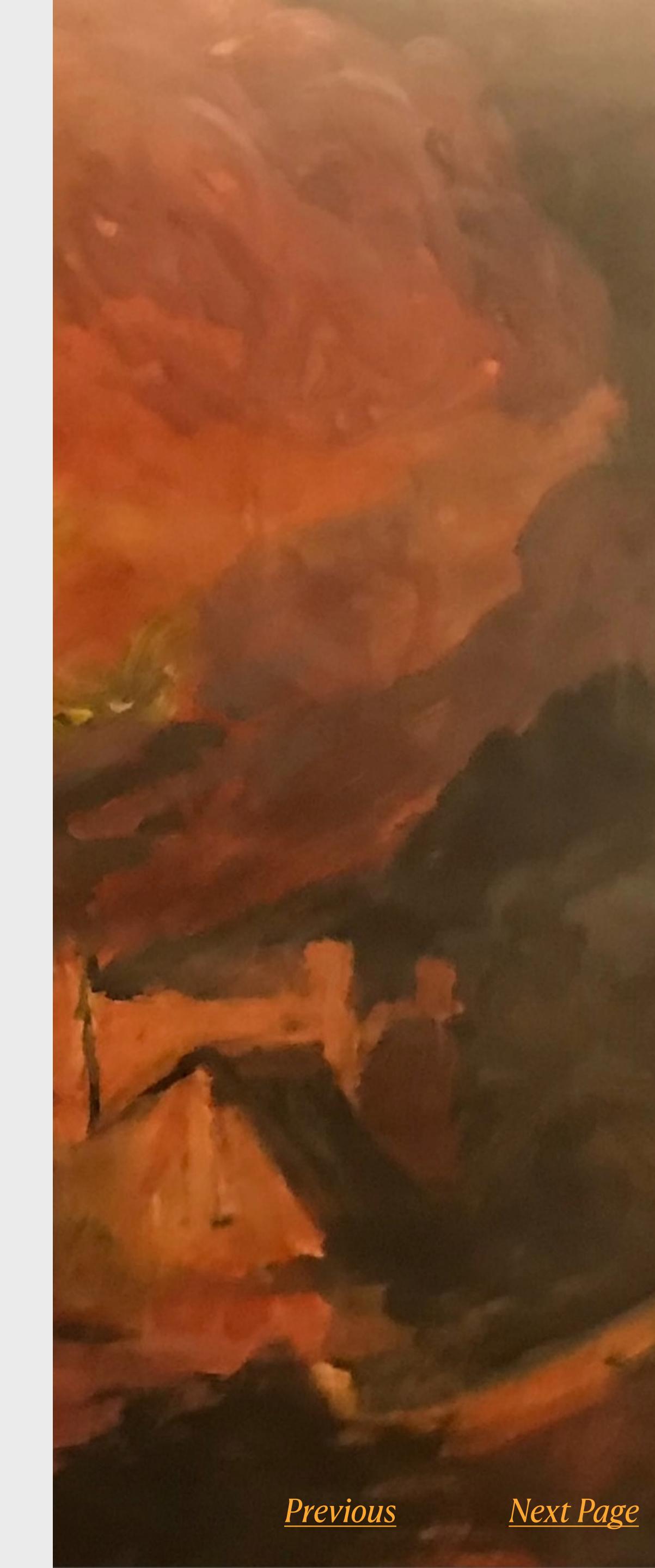
$$(P \vee Q) \rightarrow ((P \And \neg Q) \vee (Q \And \neg P) \vee (P \And Q))$$

$$\neg((\neg P) \And (\neg Q))$$

$$P$$

$$\vdash P \vee Q$$

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'PASS'

Introducing the Connectives

Argument Indicator

‘ \vdash ’ Therefore

$$P \vdash P$$

The Disjunctive

‘ \vee ’ ...Or...

$$P \vdash P \vee Q$$

The Conditional

‘ \rightarrow ’ If...then...

$$P \rightarrow (P \& Q) \vdash P \rightarrow Q$$

The Conjunctive

‘ $\&$ ’ ...And...

$$P, Q \vdash P \& Q$$

The Negation

‘ \neg ’ Not...

$$P \rightarrow Q, \neg Q \vdash \neg P$$

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Characters of the Connectives

Negation

P is false wherever $\neg P$ is true.

-	P
F	T
T	F

If it isn't probable, it is false to say that it is probable, and if it is probable, it's false to say that it isn't probable.

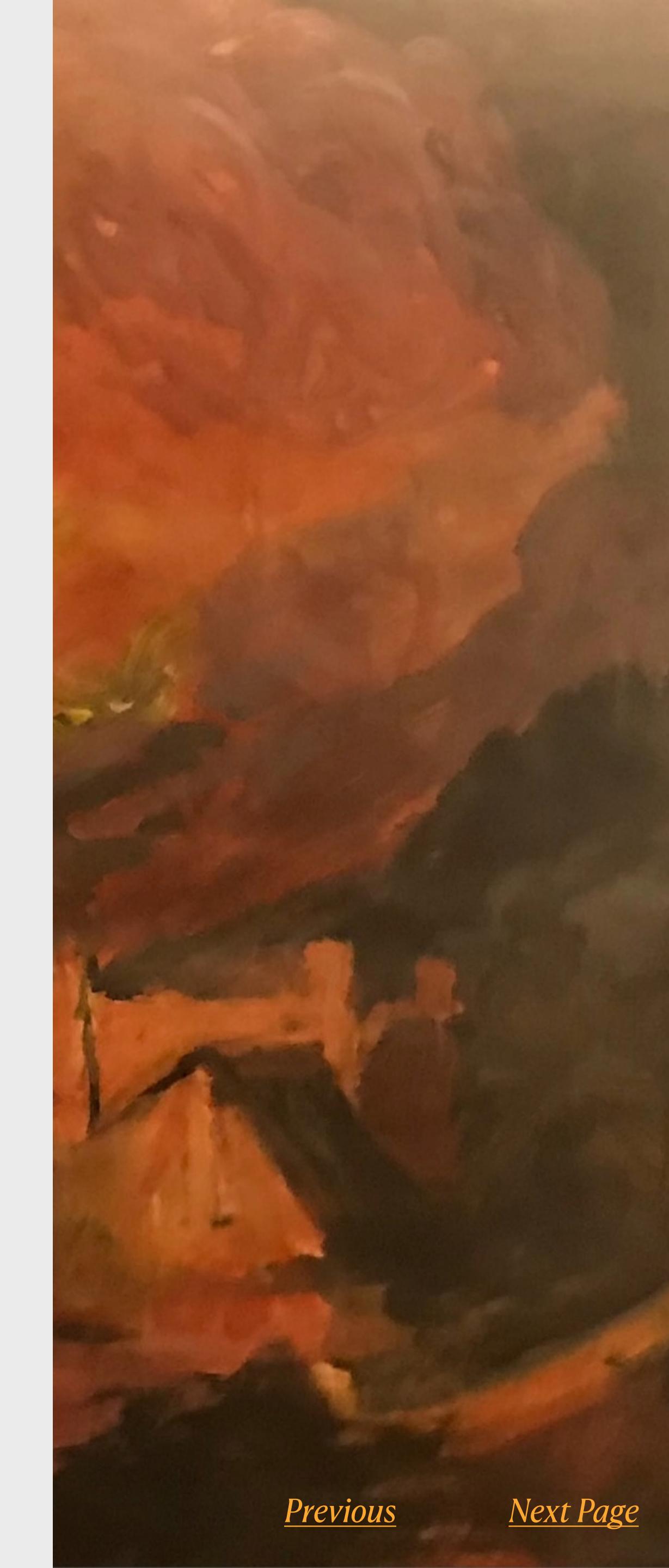
Conjunctive

$P \ \& \ Q$ is true only if P and Q are true.

P	&	Q
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	F	T
F	F	F

If it is probable and questionable it can't be neither, nor can it be one but not the other, it has to be both.

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Conditional

$P \rightarrow Q$ is true except if P is true and Q is false.

P	\rightarrow	Q
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	T
F	T	F

If probability implies questionability, you cannot say it is true that it is probable whilst maintaining it is false to call it questionable.

Disjunctive

$P \vee Q$ is true if P, or Q, or both P and Q are true, and not true if P and Q are both false.

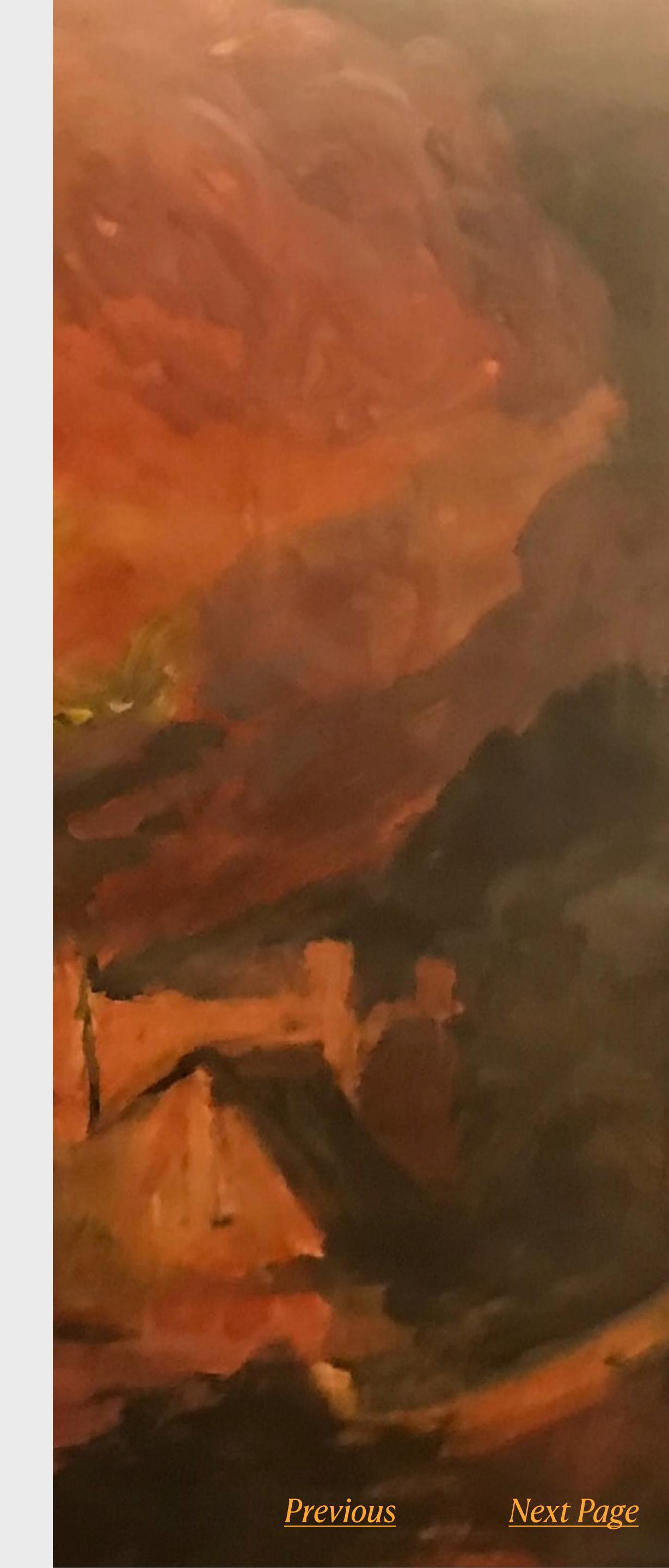
P	\vee	Q
T	T	T
T	T	F
F	T	T
F	F	F

If it is pie or quiche, then it might be pie but not quiche, and it might be quiche but not pie, and it might be both pie and quiche, but it isn't neither pie nor quiche.

It is pie.

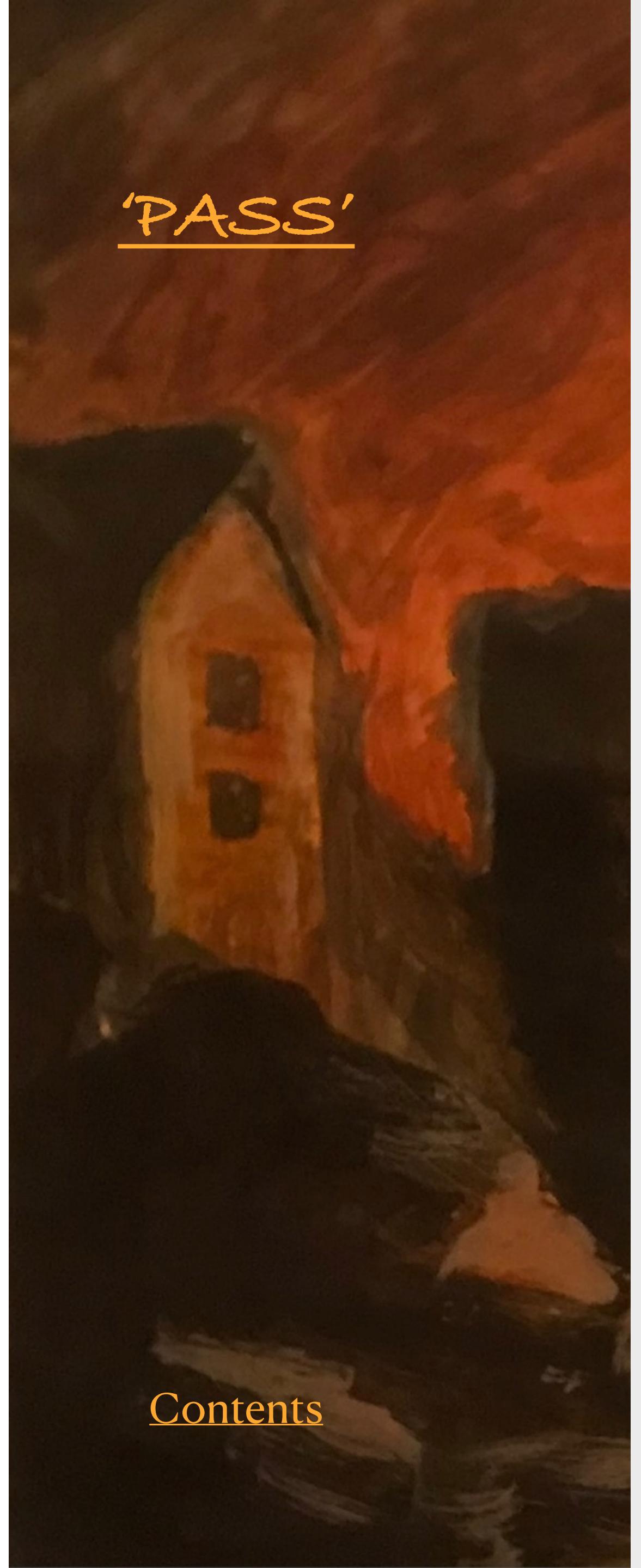
Therefore:

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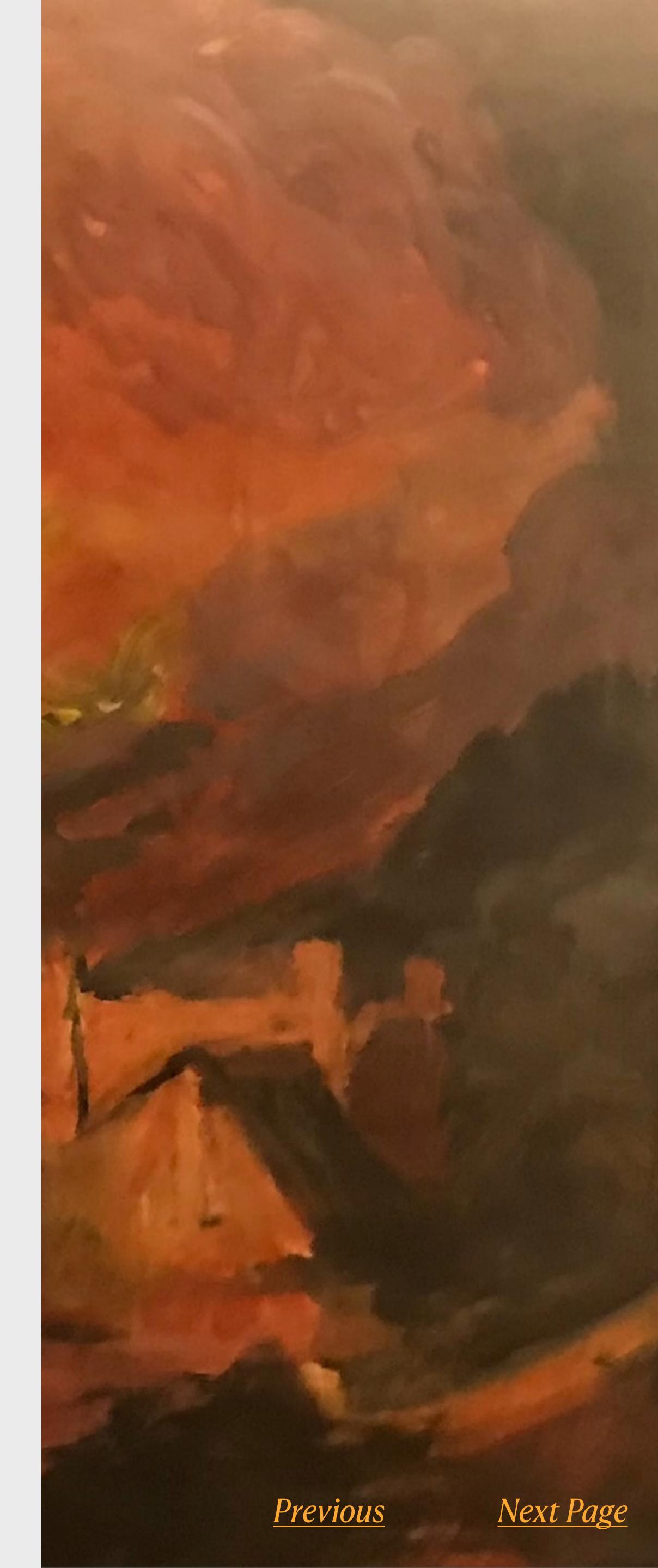
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Is it pie or quiche?

[Yes]



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'PASS'

La Luz

Sure as Spring.

Keep it under your belt. If that's where your i pockets are.

I would push to a CD.

Let's say you had a mean dream, how would it sound? Like this accidentally.

Watch the mean dream vision. Chill. Psychedelia.

Watching cartoons, theirs a cool vid.

Let's say you have loose teeth. What does it mean?

An aesthetic harmony.

That greed machine, it's a *greed machine*.

It'll break you...

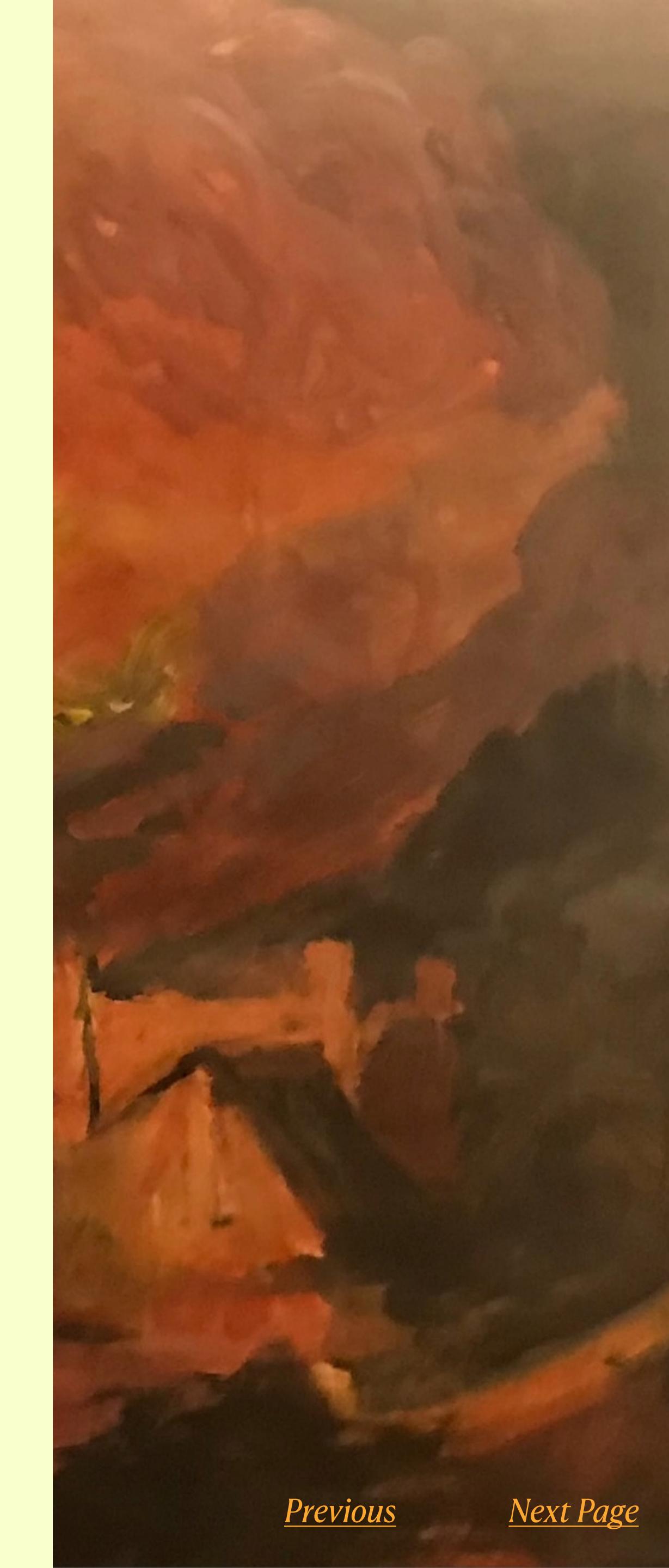
Oranges

Everybody's got a black hole of a past and a futuristic weirdo shrine.

If I were only in a dream I'd say. Or what good am I?

Lonely dozer.

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Sleepy dozer.

Daylight. Open eyes.

Do what you gotta do, metal man.

You can't say you didn't try.

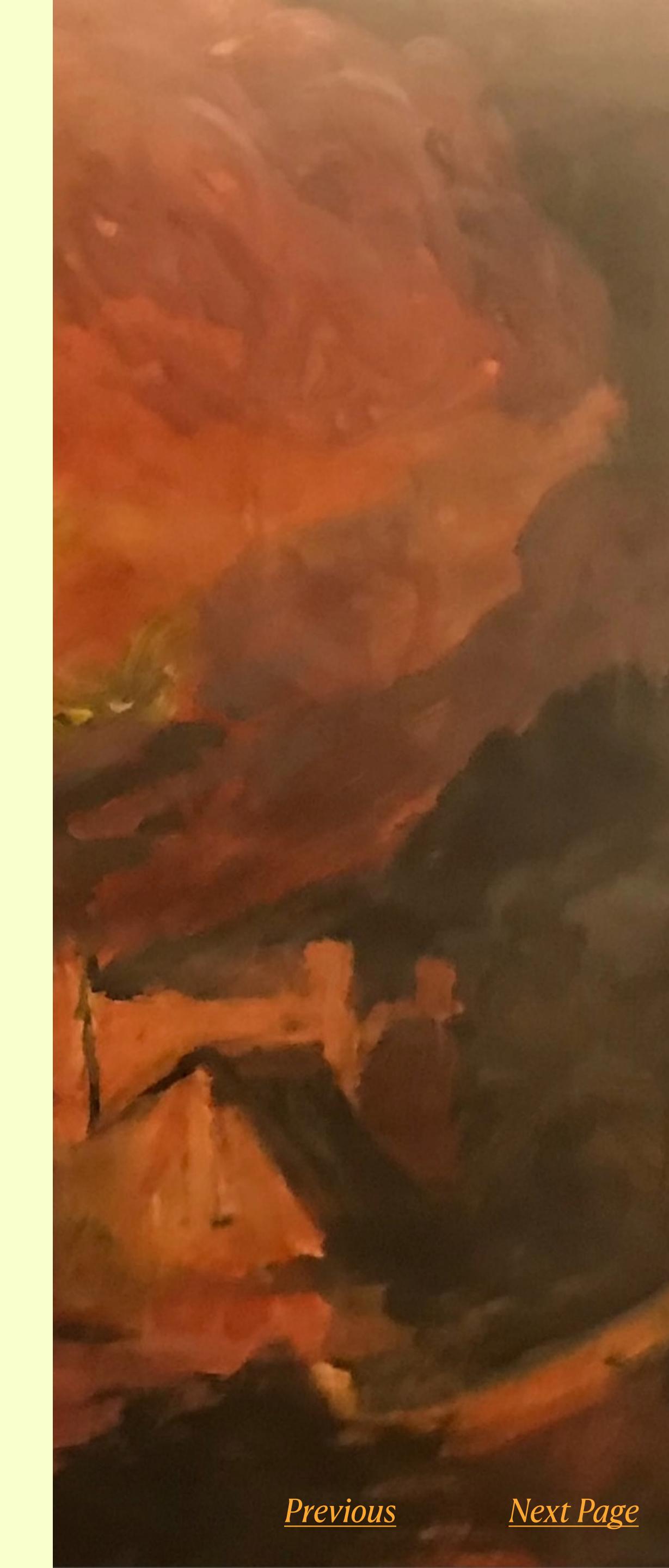
'What's the use of being cool, all alone inside my room?'

I don't even have to try to read...you're mine.

Tell me baby just what is wrong with you?

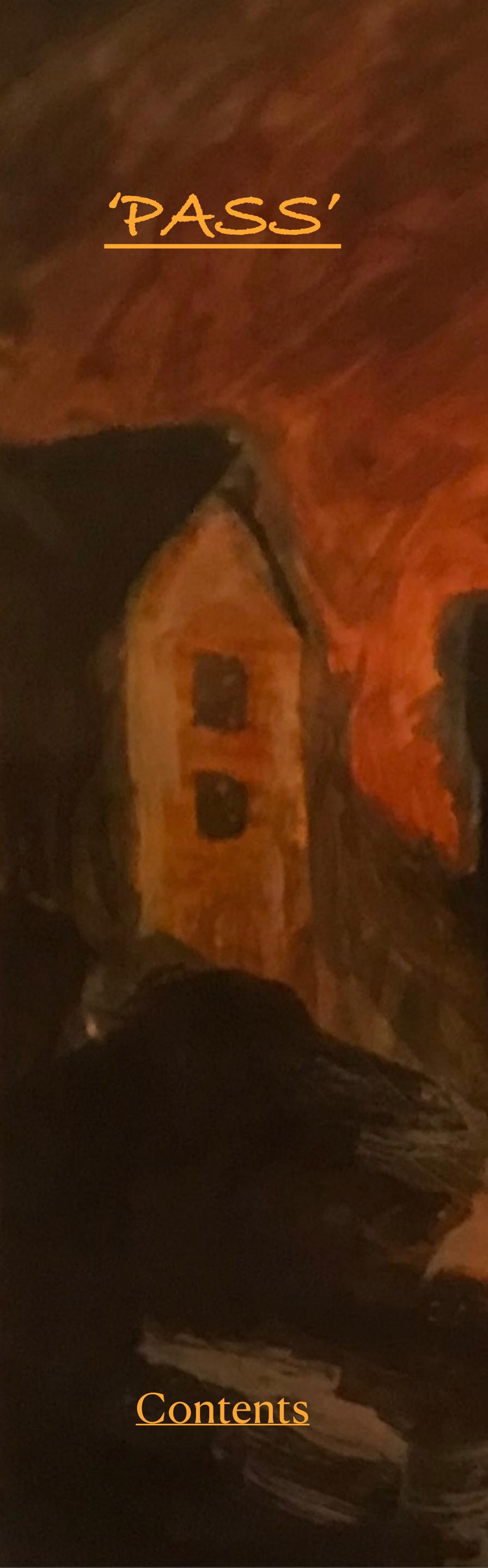
Here on Earth.

I'm walking into the sunlight.



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The Scientist's Oversight

The scientist rose to consciousness circa 0700 to within a thousandth of a nanosecond.

Prior to exiting the building, collecting his effects, organising his briefcase, fixing his apparel, thoroughly cleaning his skin, hair and teeth and consuming breakfast alongside a vessel of tea, the scientist's first priority was to raise himself from his bed chamber.

He performed every step of the proceeding with even more precision, accuracy and care than the day before, a pattern of endeavour he aspired to for several years, and sought to keep up indefinitely.

The results were surprising; the main door of the house was secured exactly 30.11.37 minutes after the process was initially undertaken - a 01.15.49 minute protraction on the previous outcome.

The scientist's chosen mode of travel was the bus service.

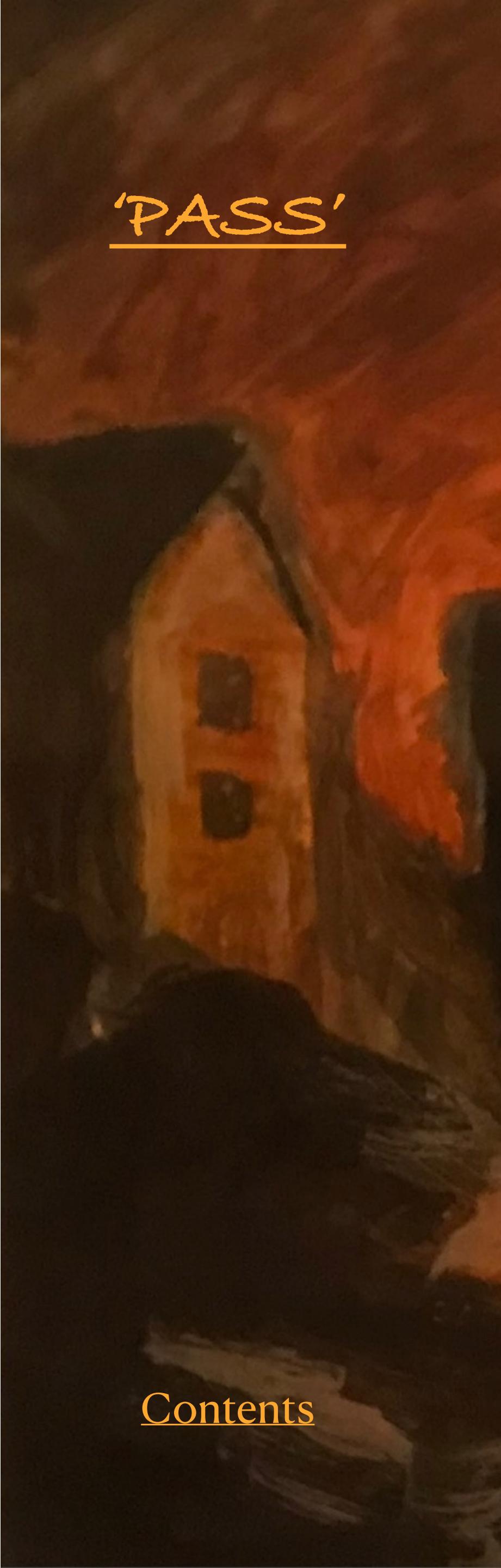
In strict order, he anticipated the vehicle, boarded it and exchanged cash for the liberty of transport, before arranging himself on the lower deck on the fourth seat from the

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front on the far left, and composing himself with regard to both style and comfort.

Straight after arriving at the agency building the scientist met with astronauts in the astrophysics wing; gave a presentation on nuclear versus electric power in an age of sublime safety techniques in the assembly hall; then got down to the daily business of understanding and manipulating the basic ingredients of physical reality.

At the laboratory, the atmosphere was a mixture of excitement, tension, apprehension and caution...

The test results for the latest *STSC* experiment had been anomalous.

The scientists had expected *charm* and *down* quarks to exhibit characteristics of instability under a specific rate of bombardment by neutrinos and G particles, but confusingly their condition was *stable*.

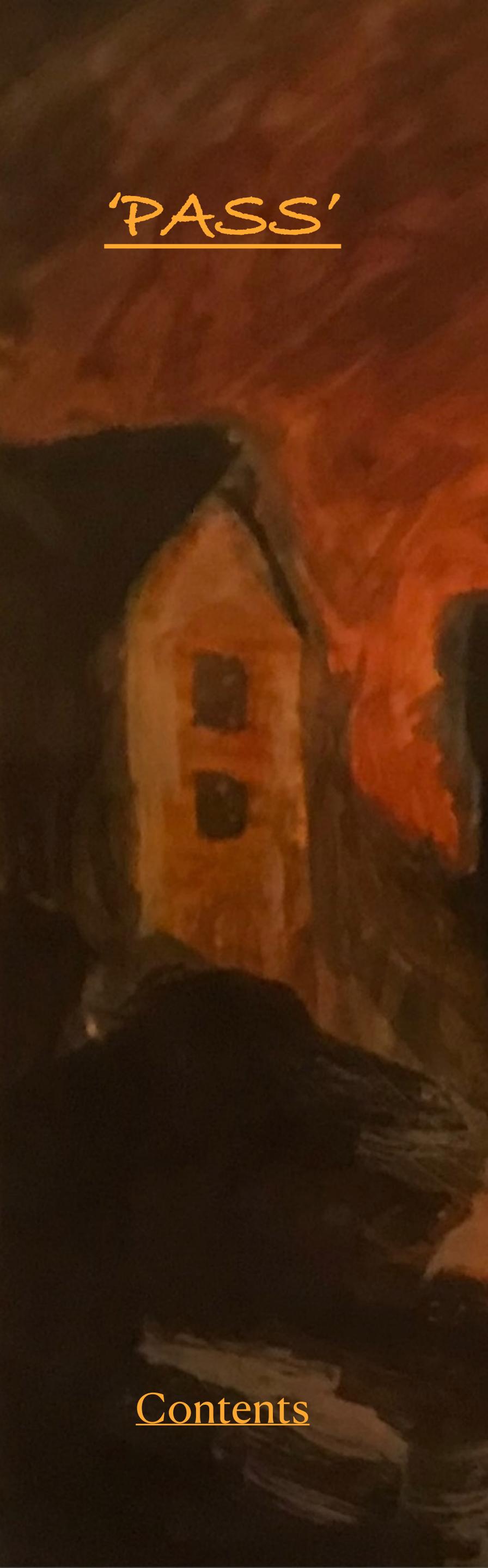
A party was organised for the coming Saturday, as Friday was the planned screening of *The Big Bang Backwards*. The target audience aimed to procure some echo-extensive holographic images thereof to put up on the calendar in the main corridor of the physics department.

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Steady-state theorists found discriminatory bias in this decision and petitioned competitively for images portraying a non-expanding universe.

This flew in the face of Big Bang theory, so a compromise was reached; a holographical state depicting an implosion, with no evidence of white noise, nor any form of rupture in the space-time continuum would be erected halfway down the hall and looped for the foreseeable future, as a reference-base for presentations, and a conversation piece.

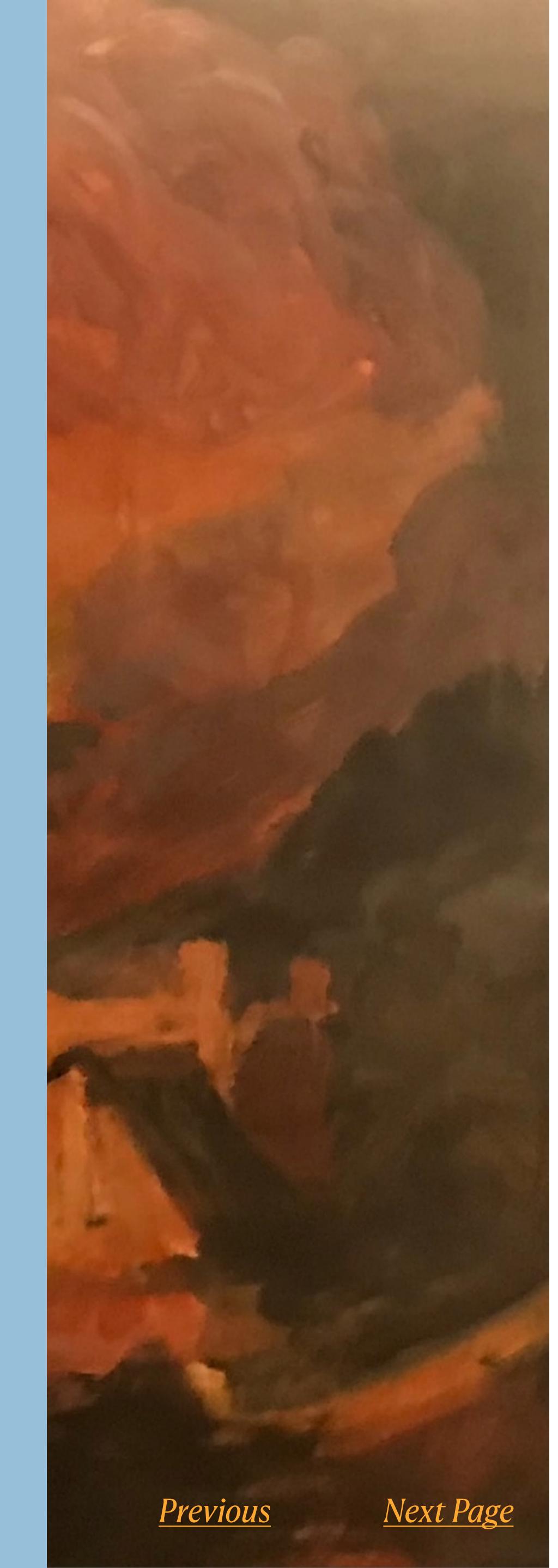
Any bitterness subsided at the instant of resolution.

Whilst simultaneously extracting an algorithm to describe the flight of a Concorde which has lost its nose and building a blue-flame resistant mobile phone case at lunchtime, the scientist felt a nagging sensation somewhere he estimated was associated with his amygdala. His dexterity wained, then his activities drew to a sharp standstill. He made an investigation, and became acutely aware his lunch was missing.

- A breakdown of unprecedented character.

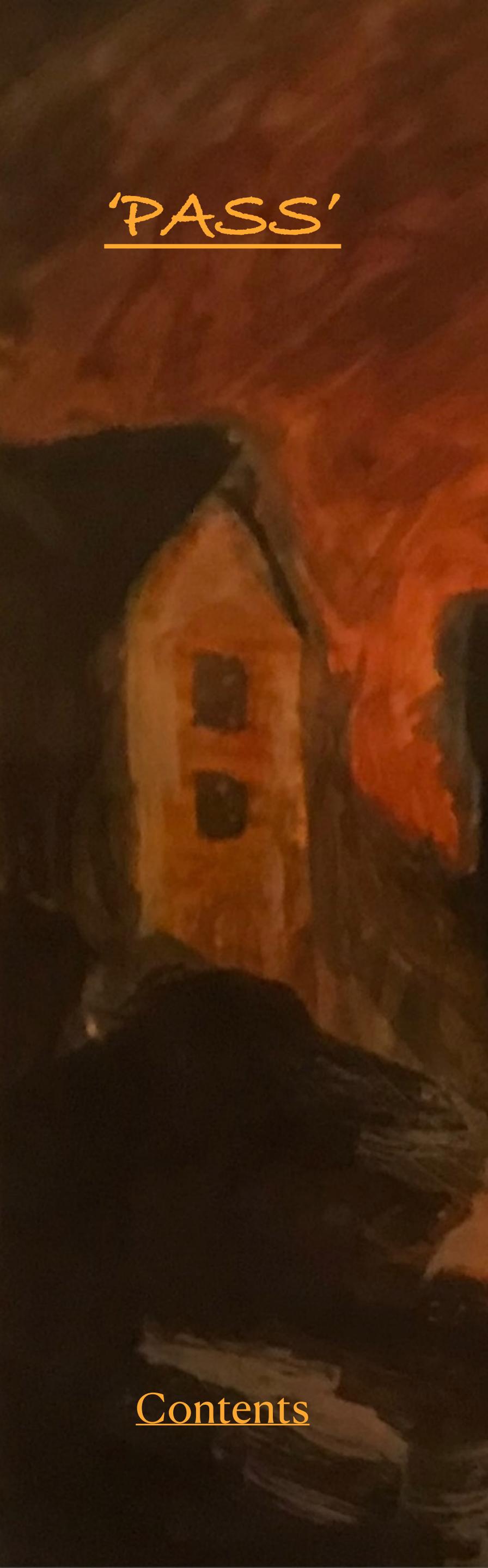
He mentally retraced his steps over the morning's events, and sought a recollective enquiry into why he had not accounted for his 1200 leisure-interval. Care and preparation was his livelihood. How could such a thing have occurred?

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Perplexed, the scientist wrote a synopsis of the events of that morning, and established that lack of preparation for the day's nourishment was thoroughly anomalous.

No hindrance nor any distraction could be pointed to as responsible for the omission.

The scientist was stunned.

Not good.

If he could forget to pack his lunch, what else had he forgotten? He was supposed to be responsible for the oversight of highly technical, potentially perilous operations - including the flight of a 4 astronauts into outer space to engineer the deflection of an asteroid that is set to collide with Earth - but had forgotten one of the routine tasks of the day.

He began flapping about with his research papers and examining his models to see if any other faults could be identified.

His stomach growled as he tore through sheet after sheet, file after file, but discovered no flaws in his workings.

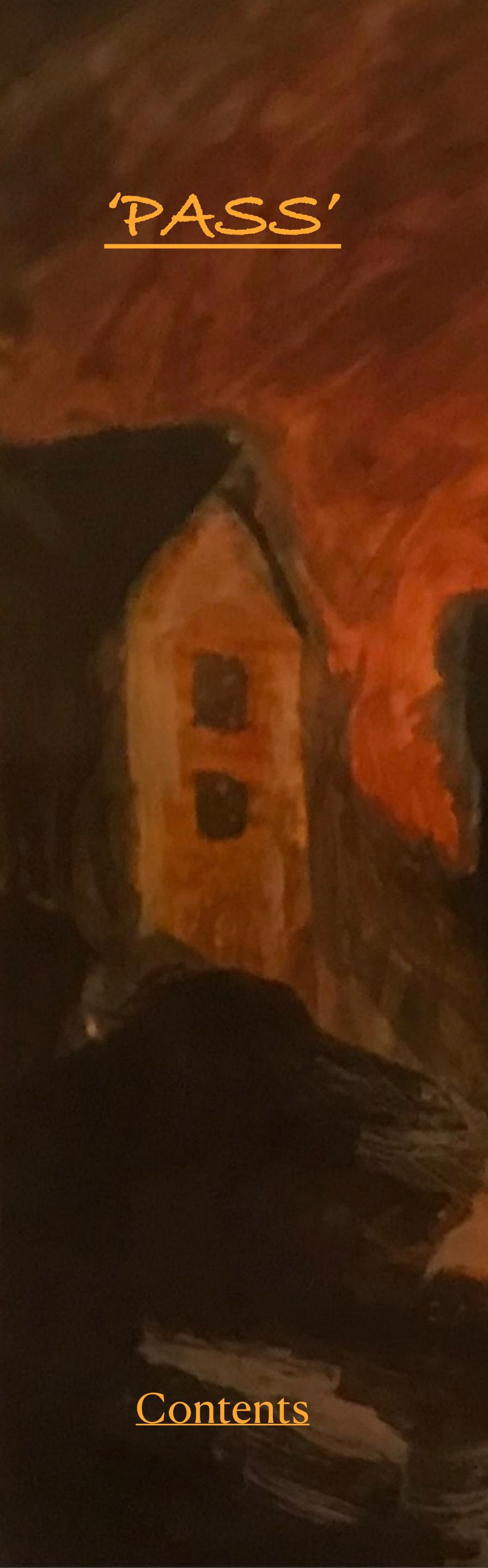
One of the scientist's colleagues poked his head around the door at a 45.5° angle.



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“They didn’t need that spare calibrator in the end. Here. The foil on the first one was slightly torn anyway.” He said

The scientist carefully unwrapped the machine and raised one eyebrow.

“Cosmos, I present the exquisitely designed solution to the existential threat you pose.”

The colleague offered the scientist a sandwich...but his consciousness was a thousand light years away, calculating distances of detour journeys craft couldn’t afford to make without meticulous alterations to the agency’s galactic itinerary.

Once he had instructed an alter-ego administrator drone posted close to the next star to effect those alterations, the scientist shot out of his office and strode down the hall to a central-communications portal, to proceed first-hand with the urgent business of negotiating with Space Agency Ambassadors and Chief Astronauts on the situation vis à vis public profile protection in a changing environment - and just tried really hard to ignore the feeling in his stomach.

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The Point Of A Pin

In this discourse, for the sake of conceptual illustration, and metaphorically speaking, the mind is the sharp end of a pin.

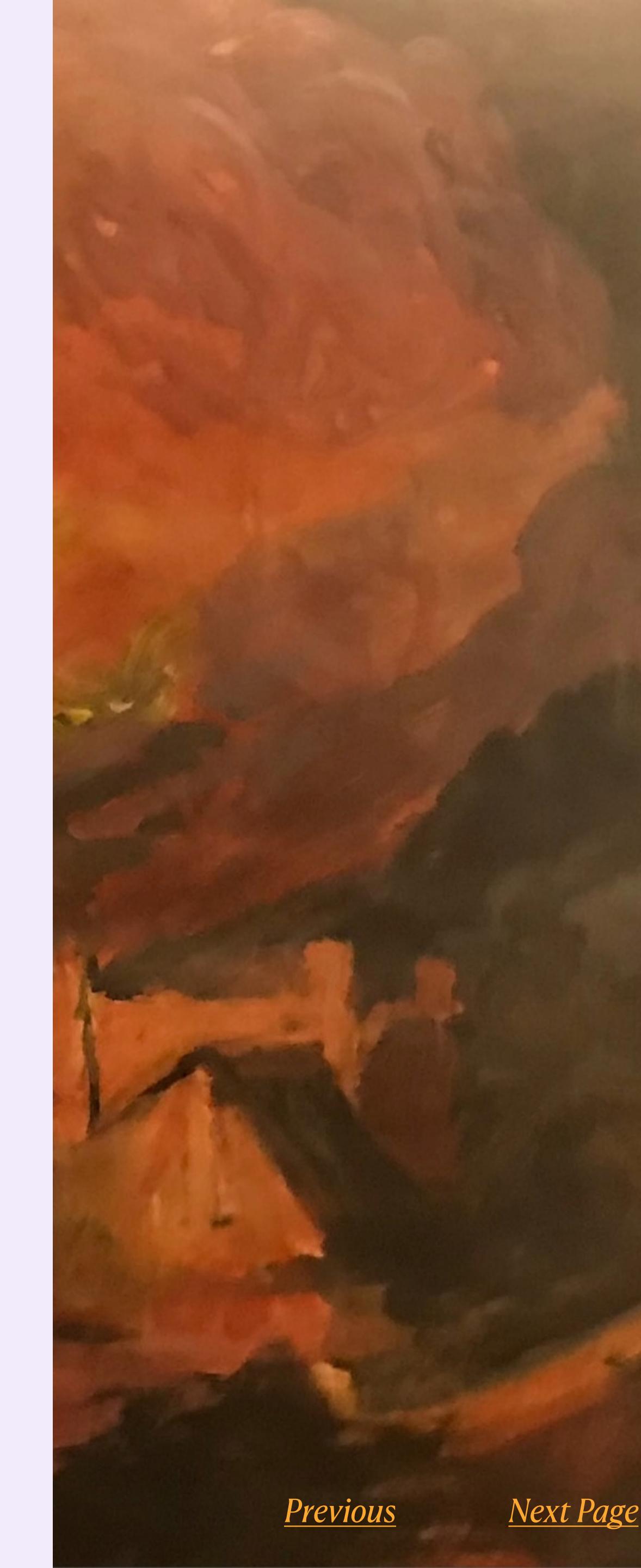
It is so near the point that it actually is the point, rather than being a substantial part of the pin. It needs the pin itself in order to exist, and it would not be sharp without it, but it is sharper and more essentially the point, the closer it is to vanishing without vanishing. And crucially, the pin, which is the living creature in this metaphor, would not exist without the point (the mind), because a pin without a point is not a pin.

The idea behind this metaphor is to describe in what sense our personal experience depends on what might only be described as an immaterial aspect of our existence as living beings. Something which is other than bodily - if perhaps defined by terms such as 'mental' - is qualitatively distinct from the body at an ontological level; it controls the body, and how can something control something else unless they are in some objective-subjective relation to one another?

However the mind may have evolved out of the natural world, it is a phenomenon which must remain beyond the realms of scientific explanation, not least because right from the outset, in an analysis of the mind, the mind is the object as well as the subject of investigation, the tool with which the very same tool is dissected, where the dissection itself is under analysis.

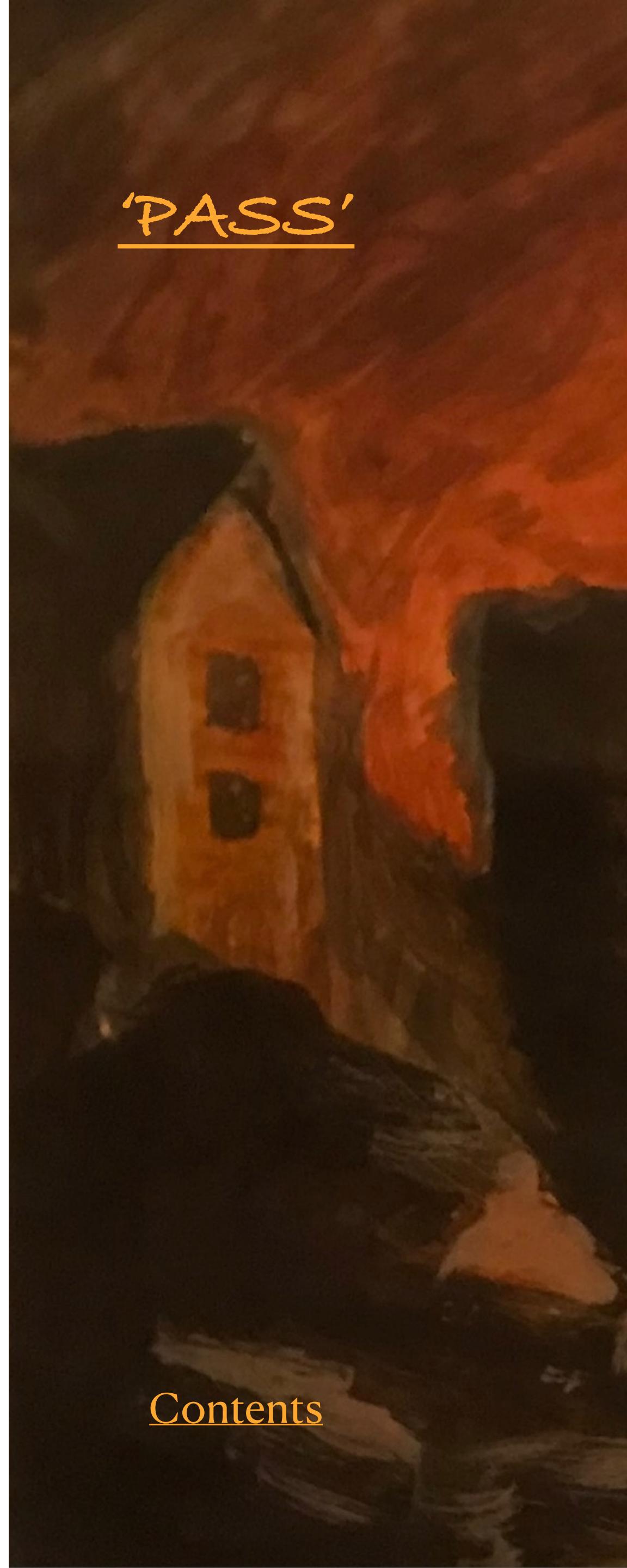
It leads to what is termed 'infinite regress'.

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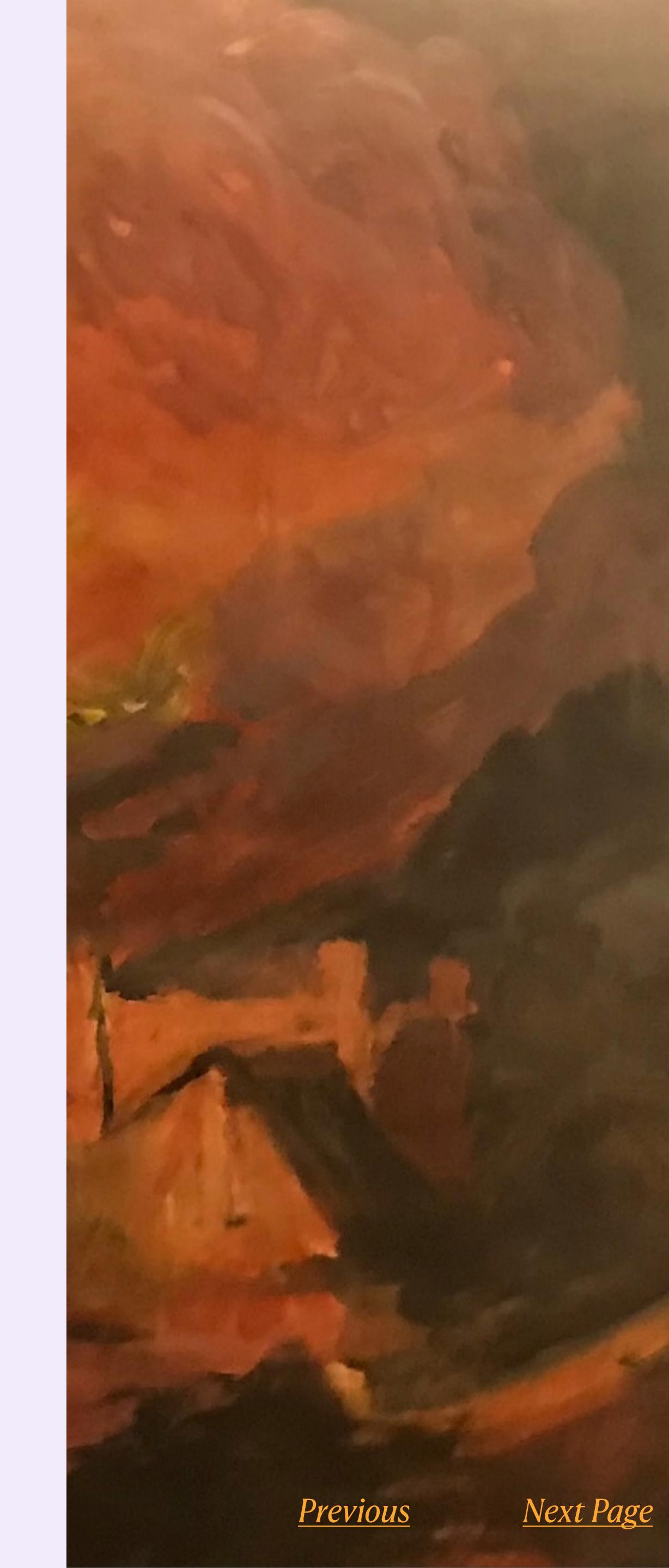
It would be like trying to isolate the sharp point of a pin.

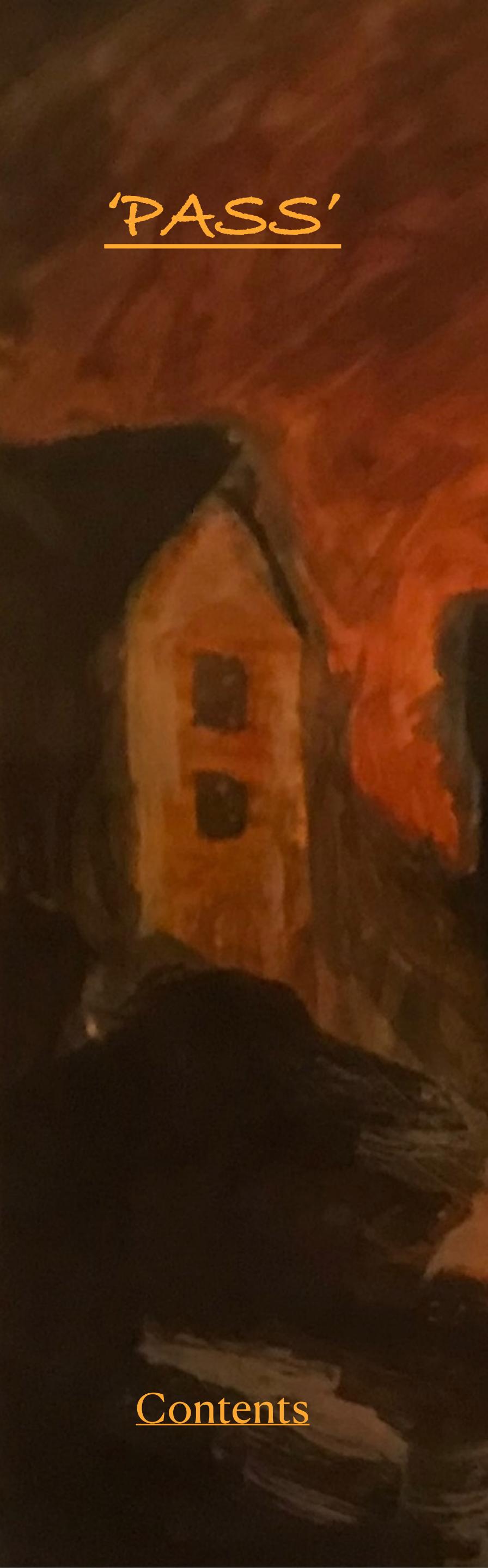
There is no point without the pin, and no pin without the point. On top of which you are using the point to discover the point. You might say you can include the pin in the investigation; but then, how do you know when you have found the point? When is it sharp enough to say it is purely the point? - Once the pin is out of the picture. At which point, there is no longer a vehicle for the point, and it must cease to exist.

What are the implications of this? We can't ever find the pin point? Yes we can; it is right there, on the pin; it doesn't vanish. Neither is it obscured from view, or any the less sharp.

We can study the body and the brain and look at how they relate to the mind's workings in theory...but to formulate its operations in a set of scientific propositions would be as futile as to represent the mind literally in a picture. I can't make up my mind whether such a picture would be more appropriately placed in a totally light, or a totally dark setting... (?) What would you put in such a picture? Everything? Nothing? Everything so far, with scope for everything to come? How sharp is a point? Or, to use the philosophy rhetoric, how long is a piece of string?

It is as though, analogously, the body is a bucket for the mind. The bucket can carry an infinite variety of things. Asking what the mind essentially consists in is like asking what is in the bucket when it is empty. The bucket would still have a point (the capability for future cargo). I'm stopping there, before I get lost in mixed-metaphor land.





PASS

The Light Switch

I can't see the light switch.

It's too dark.

- Too dark to see.

If I knew where it was it wouldn't matter;

It would be light,

I wouldn't need to search anymore.

So I'll carry on investigating

This mystery.

It occupies me,

Saturates me with purpose.

I can't see it yet,

The irony of it.

There are highs and lows.

I think I've found it!

I haven't.

It excites me.

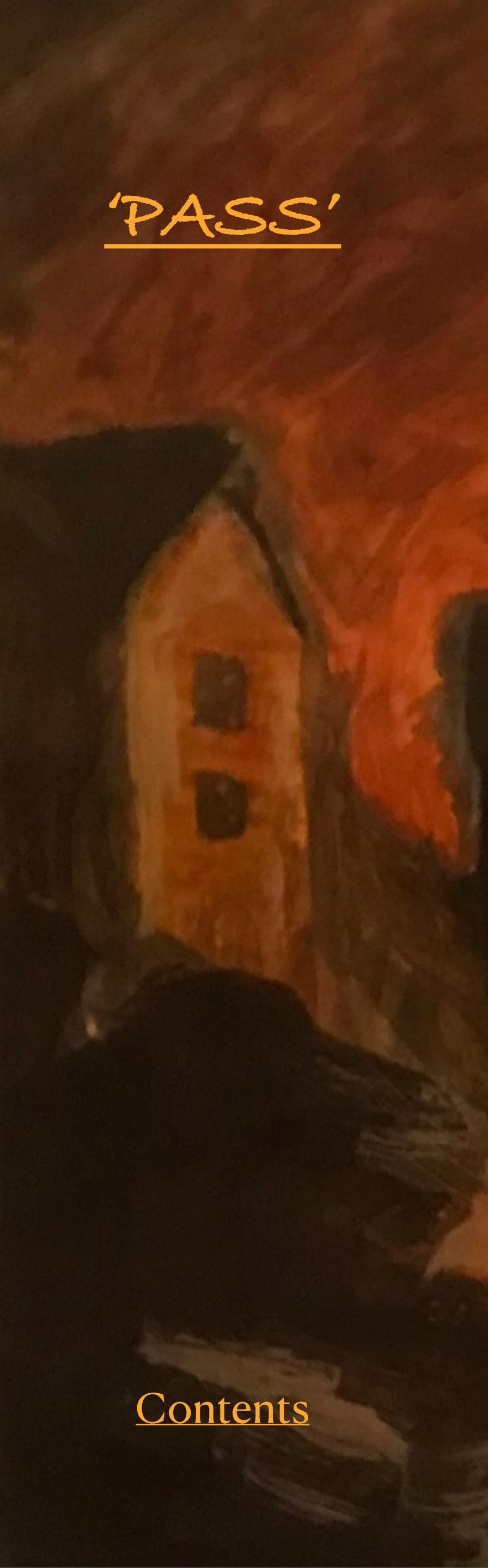
Raises my expectations,

Dampens my spirit.

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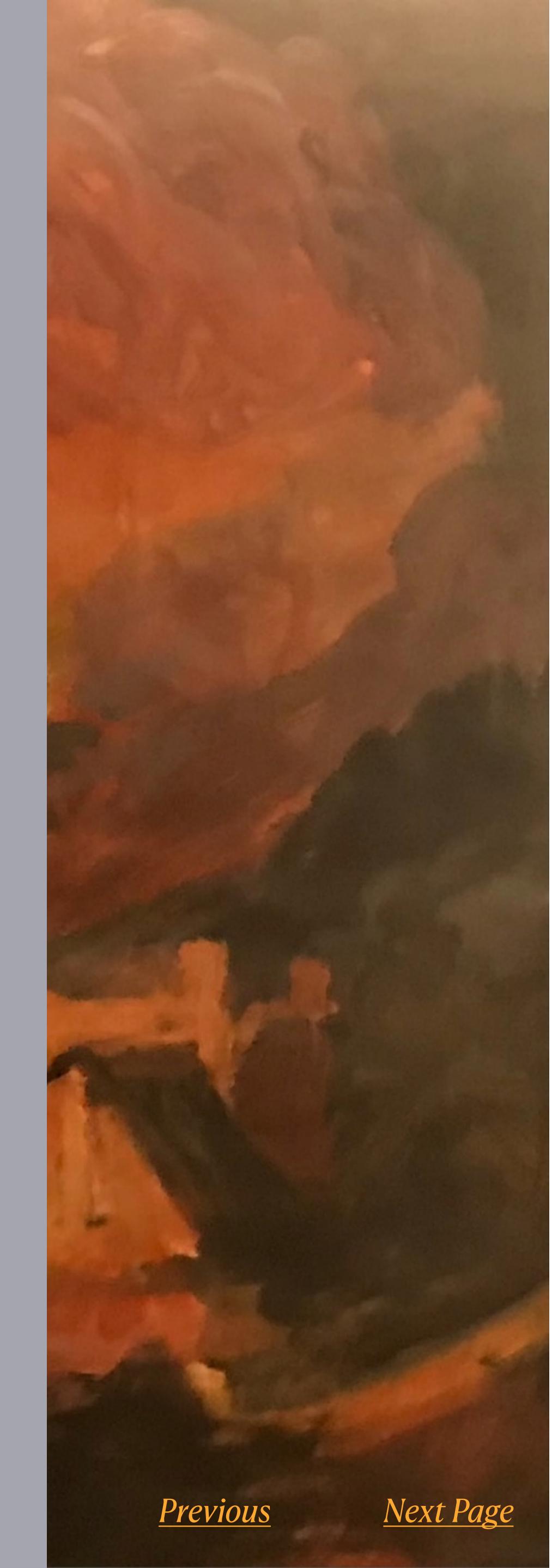
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I know what I miss:
The light.
Desire overwhelms me.
Without it I'm blind.
I've no reason to go on.
The switch will change everything...

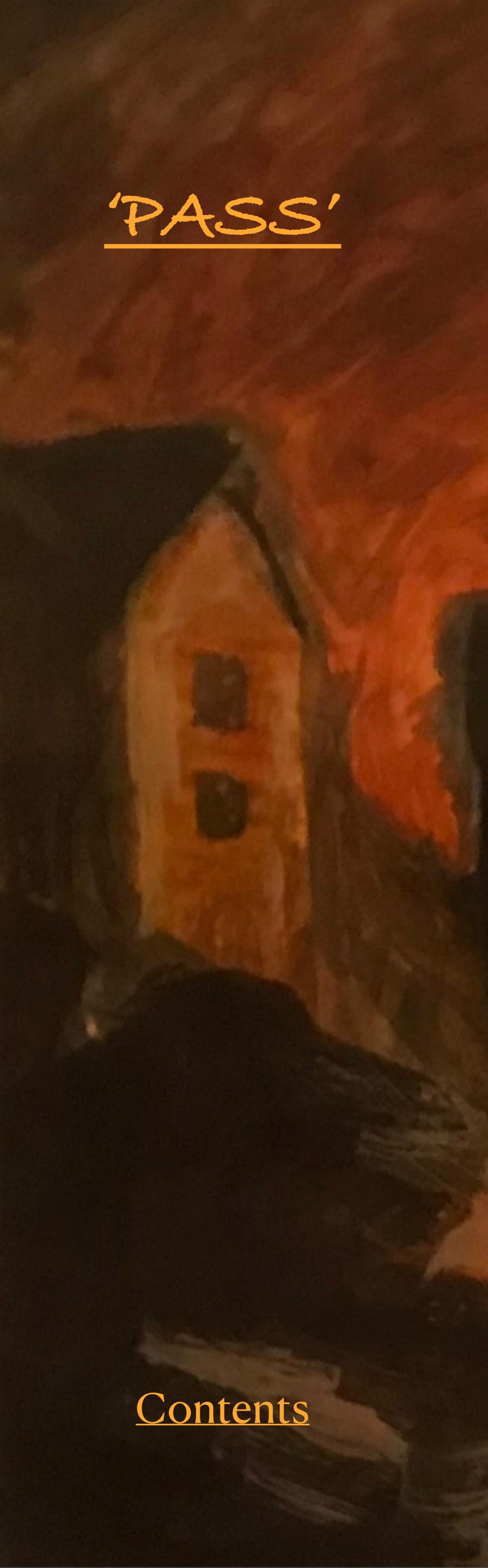
I locate the switch.
I can see.
It's over.
I vanquished the darkness.
- I don't miss the light anymore.

I don't want the light anymore



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3V3RY7H1Z6 15 W4D3 0F 470W5

)470W5 C0Z5717U73 3L3W3Z75(

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3L3W3Z75 M3R3 FU53D 1Z70 3X1573NC3 8Y 7H3 816 84Z6

7H3R3 4R3 3571W473D 70 83 0Z3 7R1LL10Z, 7R1LL10Z, 7R1LL10Z,
7R1LL10Z, 7R1LL10Z, 7R1LL10Z 470W5 1Z 7H3 UZ1V3R53

HYDR063Z 15 7H3 L16H7357 3L3W3Z7

UR4Z1UW 15 7H3 H34V1357 3L3W3Z7

1R0Z 15 7H3 W057 5748L3 3L3W3Z7

411 07H3R 3L3W3Z75 C0ZF0RW 70 1R0Z)1Z 73RW5 0F 57481L17Y(

7H3 57481L17Y 0F 4Z 470W C0RR35P0ZD5 70 175 48UZD4ZC3 1Z 7H3
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HYDR063Z 470W5 FU53 70 CR3473 H3L1UW)4 50URC3 0F 5UZL16H7(

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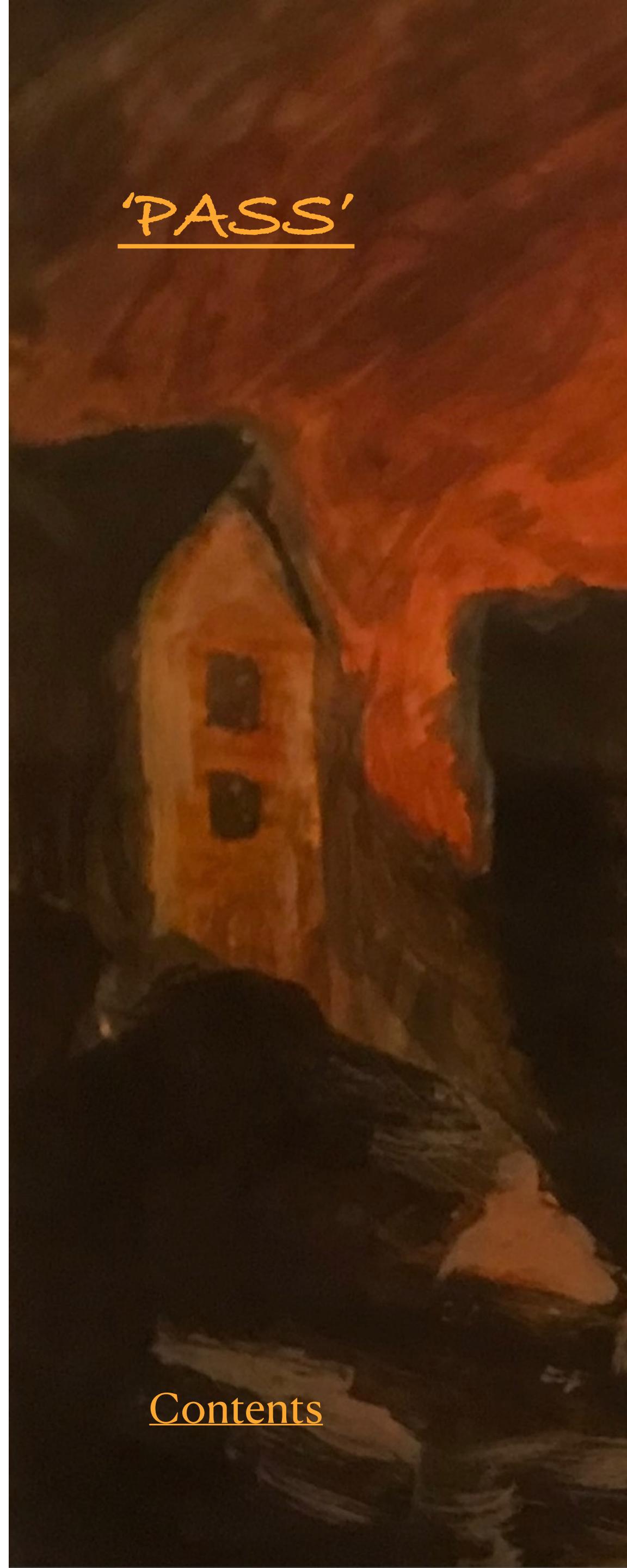
***17 15 Z07 4 PUR3LY RoW4Z71C Z0710Z 7H47 M3 4R3 W4D3 oF
574RDU57.***

(Research drawn from: Atom, The Key to the Cosmos with Jim Al-khalili.)

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IN FACT

Truth...

2 plus 2 equals 5 is the case. Whichever way you slice it, whatever the method of deduction, 5 is the answer. Honestly - I've worked it out with a calculator. I asked everyone I knew and they agreed. I trust them. On paper it's the same. Even an abacus would demonstrate as such. Put two marbles together with another two marbles and there would be five marbles in all. I believe it implicitly.

Such an account is logically consistent with a workable definition of truth, because one *can* prove the falsity of it.

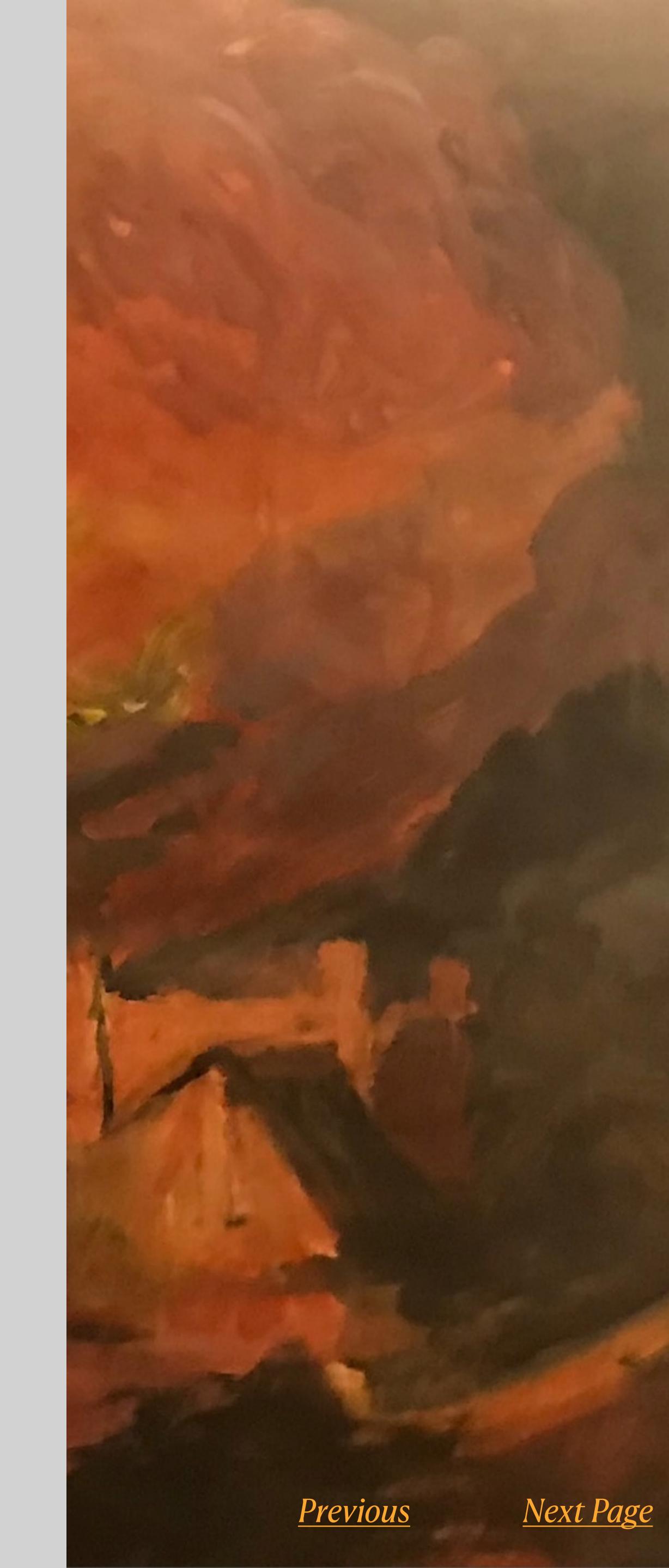
Reality...

2 plus 2 equals 4 really. It hasn't been proven conclusively to the most rigorous philosophical standards (our memory or language may fail us), but it is correct (for argument's sake). It doesn't matter whether I believe it or not.

Such an account is logically consistent with a workable definition of reality, because one (arguably) *cannot* prove the falsity of it.

It's a question of subjectivity and objectivity. Truth is answerable to reality, which means reality has the final, as well as the primary, say. The twist is, reality is unassimilable. We have access to it, we can even describe it, however we cannot capture it in our understanding.

Reality is sensed.



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Truth is understood.

243 divided by 81 may or may not equal 3. The truth is derived, it comes into play because it is the answer to a question. Contrarily, reality is *always* present and poses no such dilemma.

Truth is not solid like reality; reality *is* the universe, while truth is more or less representative. Metaphorically speaking, reality is the bowl of fruit and truth is the artist's depiction.

What we call 'knowledge' aspires to certainty (never attaining it) – which means those who pretend to have an objective view of the world are at best able to be honest.

Objectivity may be a goal, and a good one, but truth is transient by nature.

Reality provides the bedrock of experience.

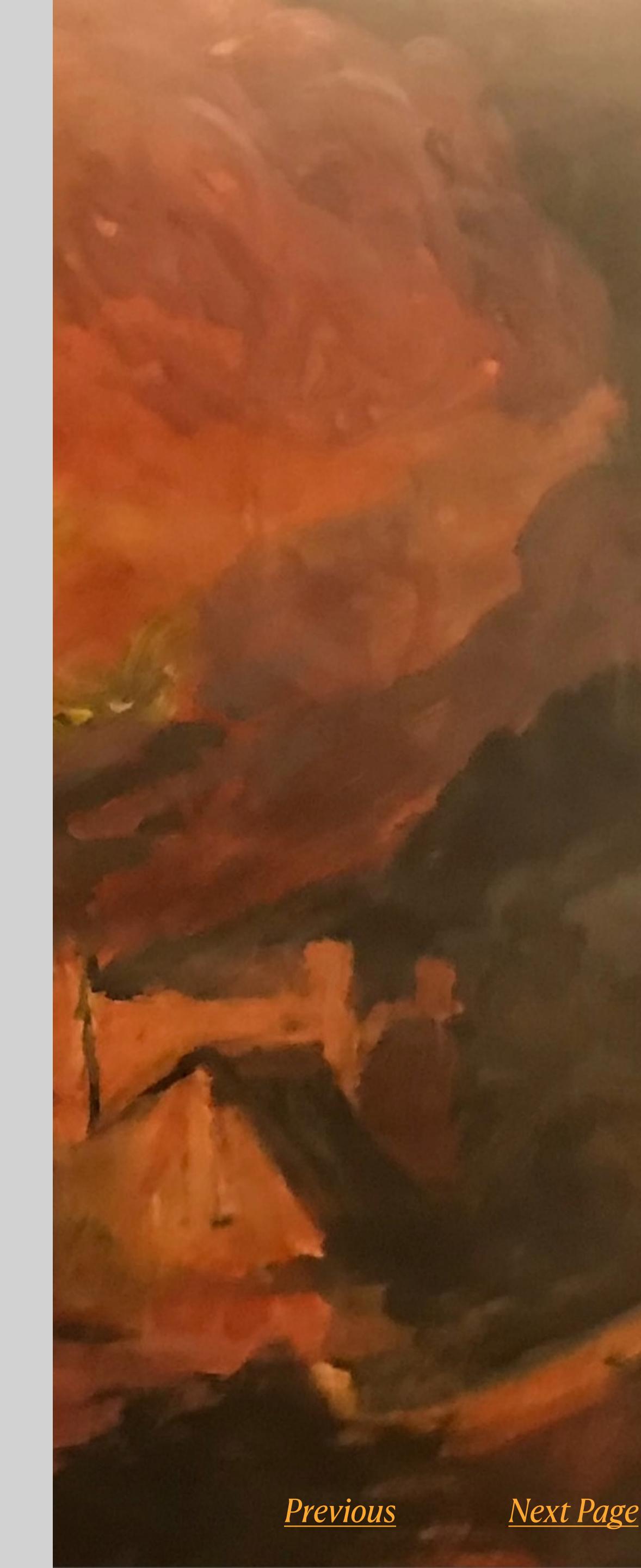
So, in some respects, truth scales that theoretical mountain with great success in particular domains of study. The aim is to understand, and intellect rises out of consciousness.

Awareness of reality is actual, immediate and manifests in the present moment. Consciousness of truth is factual, time-dependent and communicable conceptually.

Space will show.

Time will tell.

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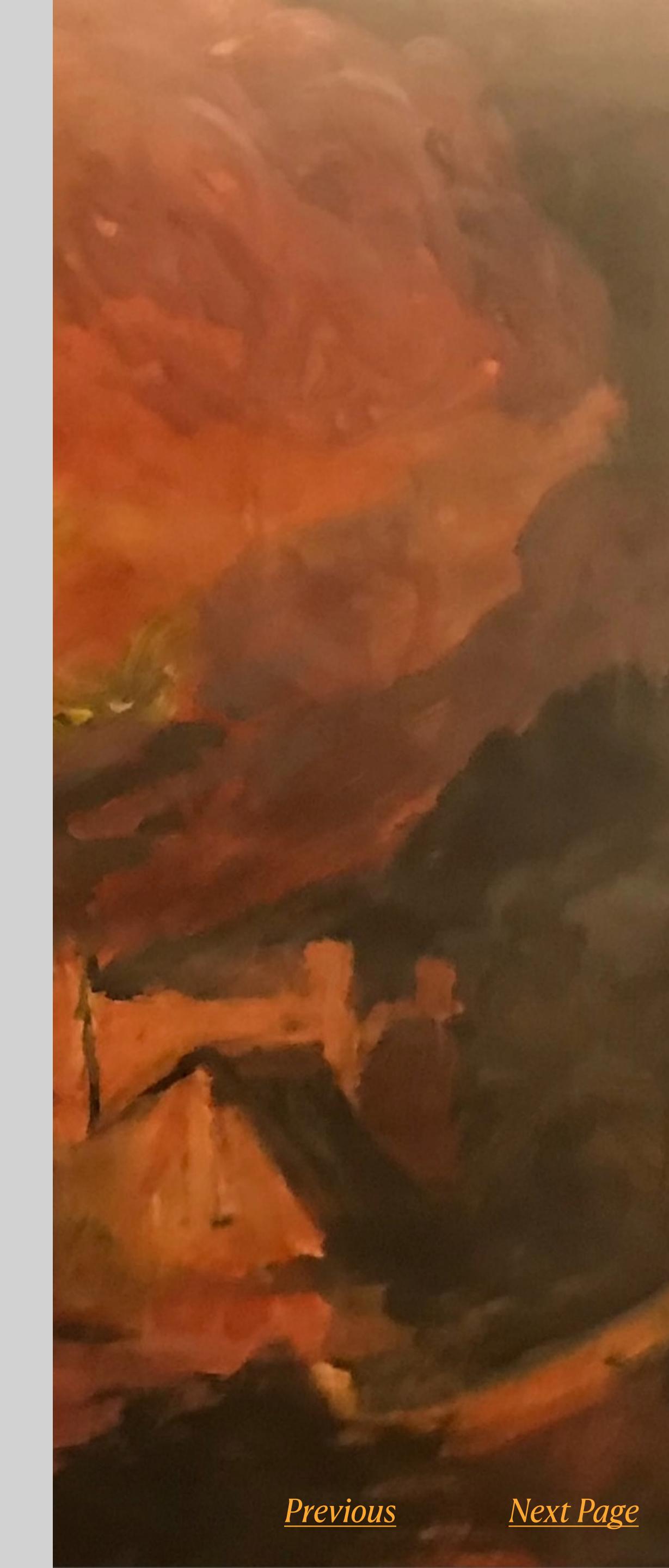


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The factual target may be struck in the centre with a high degree of precision, but meanwhile, in the real world, only a few people know the exact figures, a group have an approximate idea, reporting is distorted, and well, honesty is only ever a shot at truth.

For the view we harbour of the world, reality is the objective referent for truth, and truth is the subjective language of reality.



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Argument from Meaning

If the universe has an intended meaning then God exists.

Understanding something implies that it has an intended meaning, otherwise there is no criteria according to which something is able to be successfully understood.

Everything is able to be perceived.

Anything which is able to be perceived is able to be understood.

If everything has an intended meaning then the universe has an intended meaning.

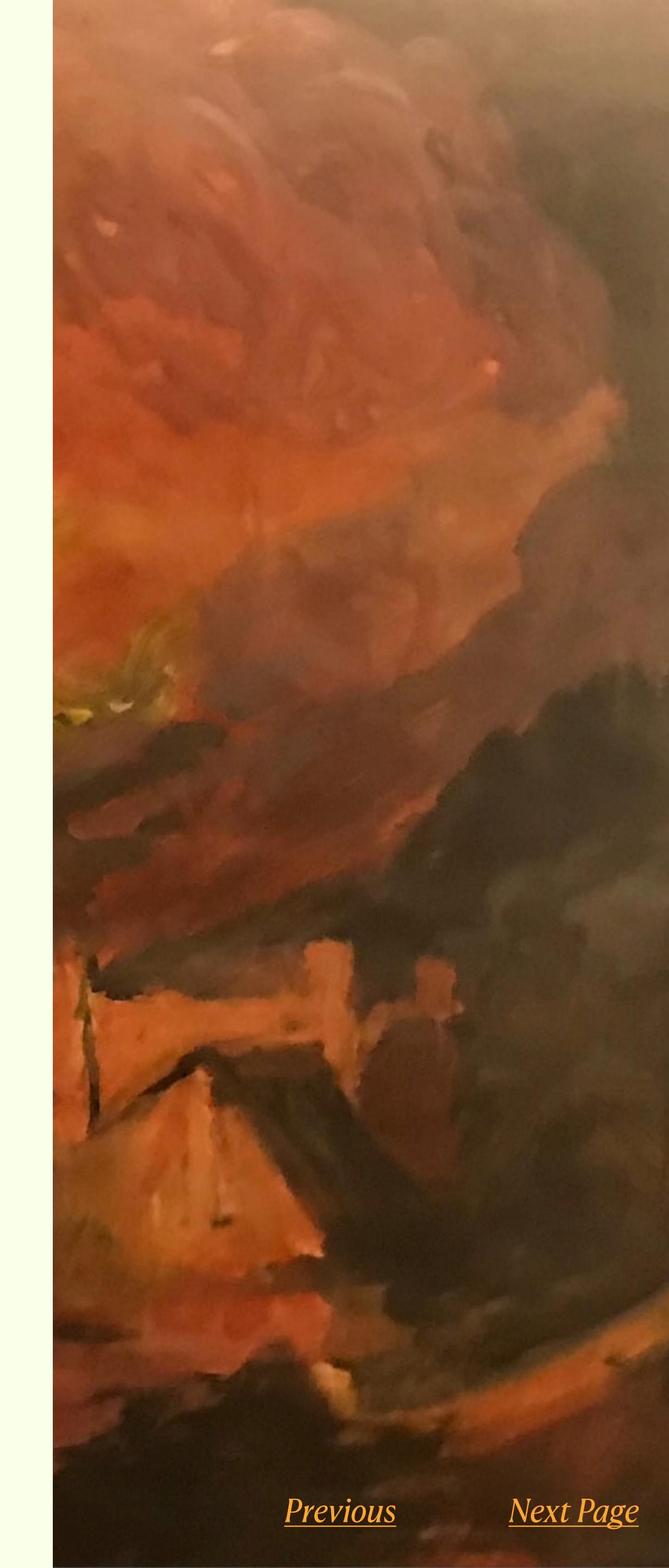
Therefore: God exists.

1. IF Ui THEN $(Ex) xG$
2. (x) IF $(\text{NOT } (If xu \text{ THEN } xi))$ THEN $\text{NOT } xu$
3. $(x) xp$
4. (x) IF xp THEN xu
5. (x) IF xi THEN Ui
6. THEREFORE: $(Ex) xG$

Where: 'U' stands for 'the universe'; 'G' stands for 'God'; 'i' stands for 'has an intended meaning'; 'u' stands for 'is able to be understood'; and 'p' stands for 'is able to be perceived'. (x) is a universal quantifier and (Ex) is an existential quantifier.

This is intended as a persuasive argument, and is not supposed to be a statement beyond doubt.

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The Stereo

Spin me some sounds I'm stereo
Stereophonic in full
Never so clear, for a blast in the ear
Welcome to the centre of it all

What is the frequency? Sonic
Slower than light hits the floor
Waves on the sea of electricity
A positive charge is in store

Tech is develop a system
Signals are split at the source
Output made fine as the speakers entwine
To compose a new ambient force

Engineers soon broke the record
- Analogue inches to disc
Tape cassettes reel from the CD's appeal
Crackling vinyl resists

It's a high density linear converter
- Say that in English for me
Optical what? Oh yeah - I forgot -
The laser reads visually

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Check out the tracks on my tuner
Charts to the arts or the news
Feel the full weight of the tectonic plate
In a national broadcast of views

Rock out to pop in the country
Hip-hop to dance or acid
Listen to funk at a rave for a punk
With a deck and a classical lead

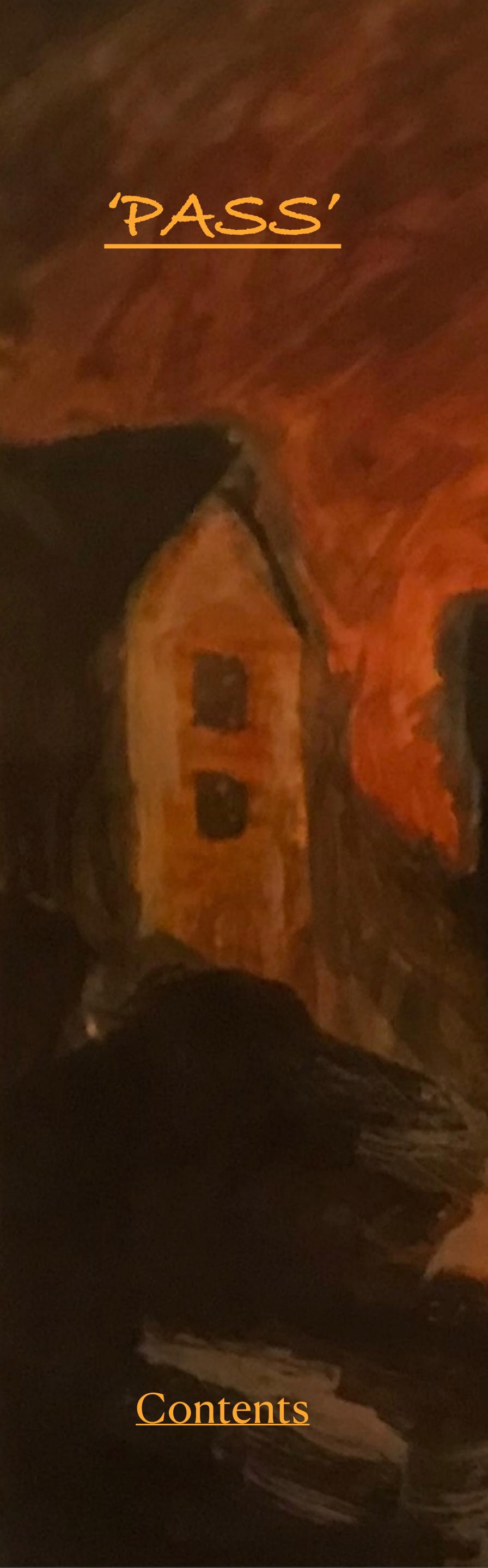
Hitch me to headphones for details
Or privacy, care or for fun
And battery-power for me to devour
While you take the heat of the sun

Everything's getting distorted
Tripping a warp in the field
Reduce the effect till the source is direct
And the logic beneath is revealed...

Stereo dominates audio
The state of the art is unique
Rivals confounded because they're surrounded
By a relatively ancient technique

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...Spare little thought for the others
No-one can spin it like me
The mobile can tell, the computer as well
I'm a player that sets senses free

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A Flat Argument

I can see a planet through my window.

It's Earth.

I'm certain (without getting Cartesian about it) this is the word given to my home planet, and well, here I am. Certain, in spite of all the facts attributed to my home planet, by other inhabitants, which may or may not be the case.

I mean, for a start - *it may not be flat.*

It probably isn't spherical, strictly speaking; the effect of the way Earth moves on its trajectory through space turns it rather pear-shaped. I'm more sure it is round than flat, but then I'm even surer it is slightly pear-shaped, because if I'm to fall for the official narrative it seems logical to go the whole way.

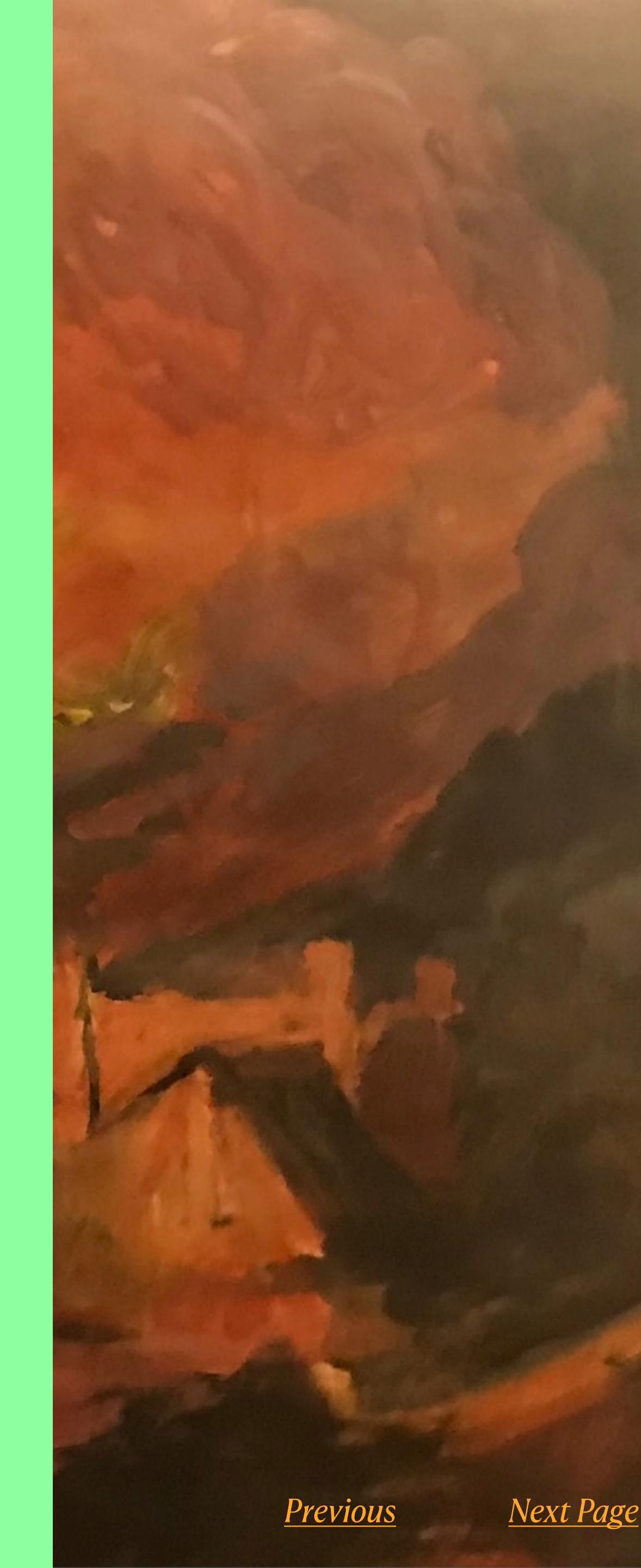
The arguments made in favour of the flat-Earth position are tantalising though.

I'm not going to get into the specific details, but the Earth is spinning, isn't it? It's spinning fast, right? At the same time as hurtling through space at high speed. Taking the atmosphere, and the weather, along with it.

Feels steady to me.

If you coasted through your life without being told this, then the news was sprung on you one day, it would seem somewhat unarguable, wouldn't it?

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Why aren't the stars moving?

I suppose it must have something to do with scale; the size of planet Earth making its velocity relatively imperceptible to ordinary human senses.

But it isn't pure stupidity which would cause one to doubt it. And believing what we're told by authority figures is the supporting evidence, for the majority of us, by my reckoning.

Even if we're right.

You can be as right as is humanly possible, but if it's on the basis of what someone told you, is it intelligence? I mean in the sense of thought-through, understood, well-argued, worked-out sense. Not intelligence in the sense of 'good information' (if it's correct, it's good information by definition.)

If someone intelligently argues a point to you, you should be more inclined to accept it than if the opinion is simply stated. The opinion might be wrong, or right in either or both cases... but there is a difference between taking something at face-value, and believing it because it is well-argued.

It's not enough to be right.

It isn't.

It's *right* to be right, it isn't necessarily at all clever.

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What if your argument is well-argued, but you're wrong? Well, it's not well-argued enough, I might argue, but still, there is a problem here. You can see why people get wound up when *they know they're right*, but someone won't agree. If you're wrong, there should be some sort of default loss of the argument in due course, and the person who is right should shine through. It almost leads to a theological point - if only there was a god who could chime in and say 'hello - yes, he's right'. Then we could all relax, say 'thank god', and celebrate the person who was right all along.

Failing that, surely events (or 'time') will tell.

But, you know someone who was *blatantly wrong* is going to distort reporting on the outcome, and once again, an instance of 'who was right' being able to say 'I told you so' is thwarted.

But what if it turned out you *were* wrong? You were so sure you were right, but there was some tiny flaw which tipped the whole thing in the other person's favour.

Or, and this might be easier to swallow...what if persuading the other person you are right is a bad idea, because that person is motivated by ideological opposition to your position in general? Or simply negatively affected by pressure to change their point of view?

The planet outside my window is flat.

At least, from what I can see, it's flat. Where I walk, generally speaking.

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Flat.

Even if on the whole, it's actually *round*, well, it's still flat, isn't it?

Are you trying to tell me the Earth isn't flat? Have you ever tried to stand upright on a football? You must find it shattering, having to walk uphill and downhill all the time.

Who's right?

The Earth is round *and* flat.

But if the flat-Earth people had it their way, the scientific community would fall off their chairs, and if the globalists got too powerful, no-one would be excused the expression:

I'm going for a walk on the flat earth without fear of falling off the edge.

I'm exercising.

- Freedom of speech.

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CHRIST!

Purely intended
To steal your attention
Girls and
Boys
I swear!

Heavens the vanity!
Hell but the shame!
Blasphemous
Of me
To dare speak his name!

Why did you do it?!

- Take it all back!
- Someone was
- Crucified
- So you could say that!

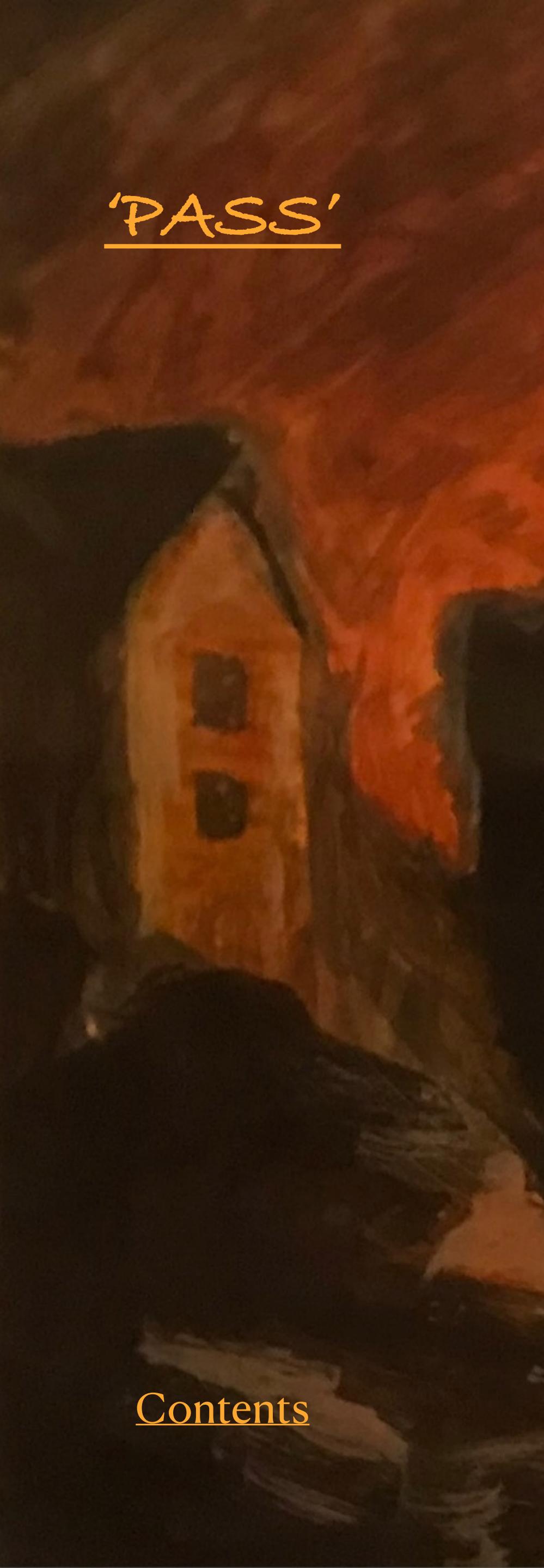
Someone who halted the
Seas in his stride
Fed the
Five thousand
Turned water to wine

What do we know?
(Socrates' wisdom)
Little
For certain
His sway on religion

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Whence do we know it?

Historical tracts

Word

Of mouth

The popular facts

What is the question?

Does she exist?

God

Almighty

A true cosmic twist

Or is it childish

To simply believe

In the greatest

Phenomenon

That we can conceive?

While you consider this

Time's ticking by

Life's moving

Onward

With no reason why

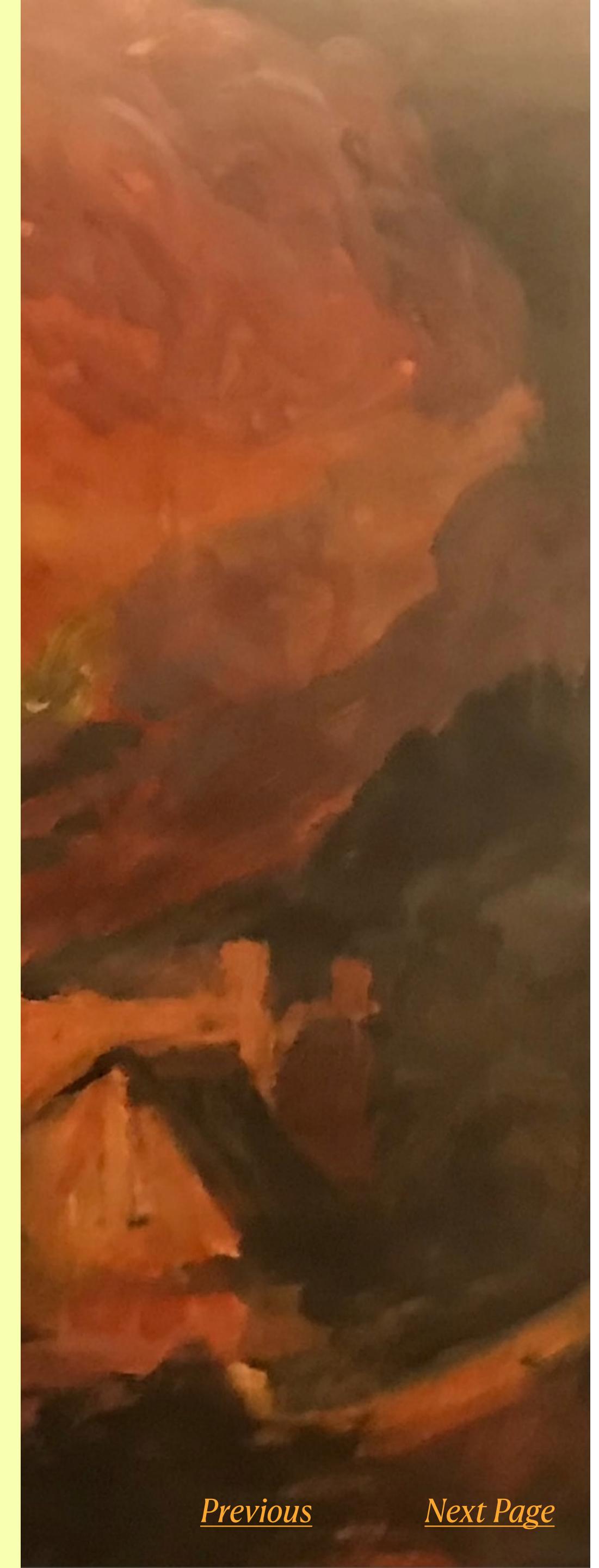
And what is the answer?

I've never been shown

So I'll leave it

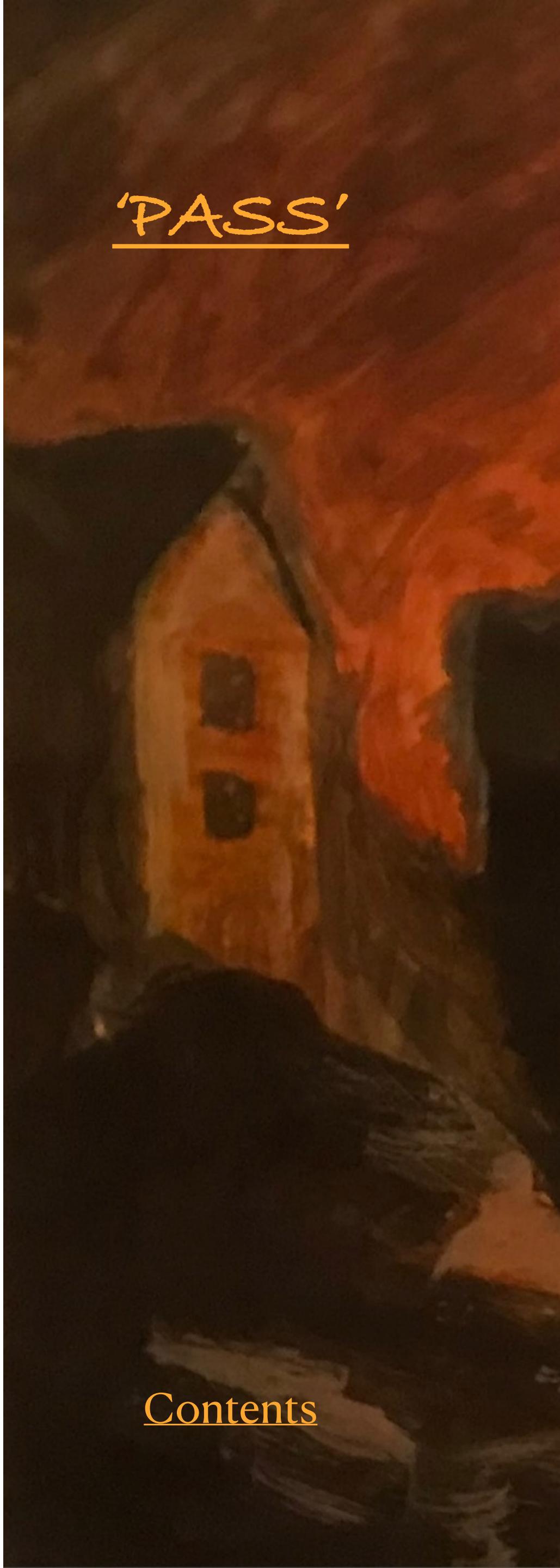
To you

To decide on your own



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Dictionary Vs Thesaurus

One morning, the dictionary, in lieu of any defining purpose for the day other than to cross swords with her close partner the thesaurus, in a less than typically forthcoming attitude, opened up:

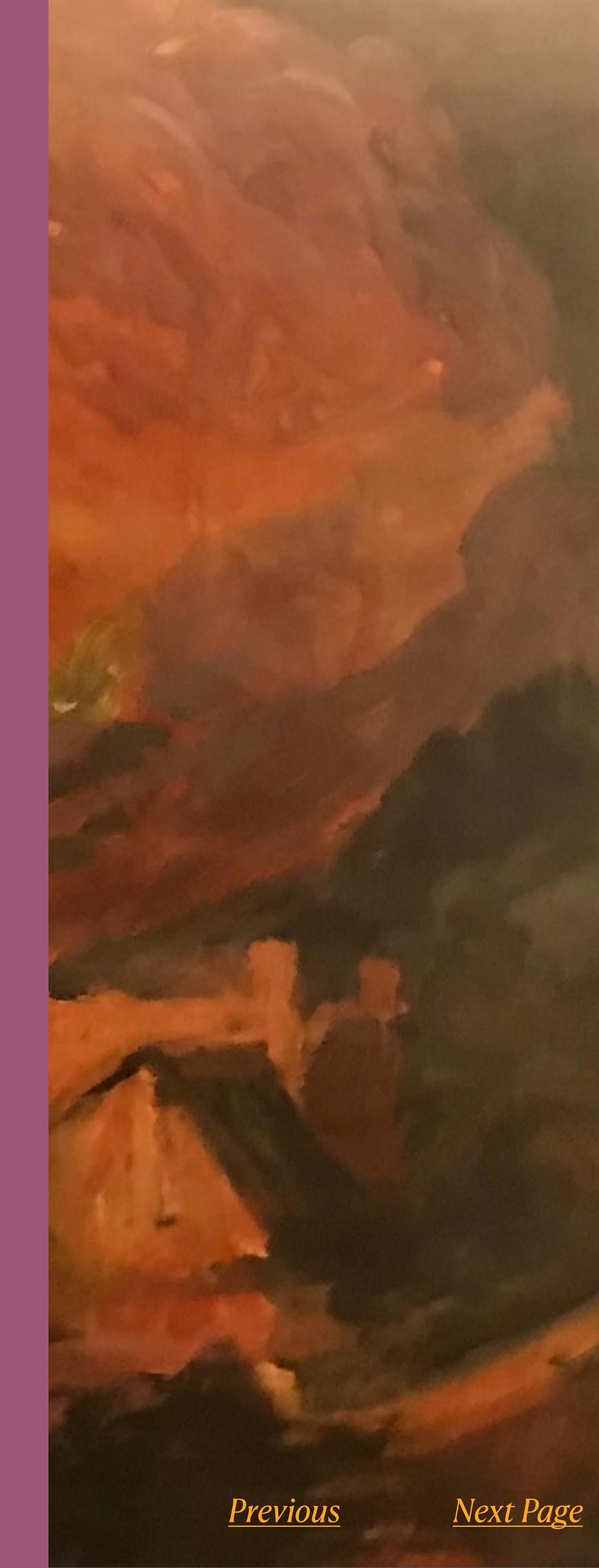
“I am, have ever been, and always will be more attractive than you. Almost everybody is in agreement. What was the last time someone was induced by a trail of intrigue to canvass your opinion?”

The thesaurus, who had hidden his true feelings on the matter from himself for a number of years, since his rather clumsy, though genuine entry onto the scene, took it to heart:

“I’m interesting. I’m an outstanding companion, however few care to intimate the fact. I’m under-valued, not inadequate...and there’s no need to rub salt into the wound...imagine if academics invariably primarily identified with thesauri when they needed a word.”

She knew it was mean, but it made her smile. The thesaurus needed toughening up...

“Being adequate is irrelevant. There is little concern regarding your overall utility. You lack contemporary appeal is the issue. Nobody believes that you belong on the desk next to me. They might say they do on occasion,



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affirm your status as an authentic literary authority. They might even dip in, if they're *really* bored. Your rightful place is with the idioms and jargon on the second shelf. You're an unnecessary accompaniment. Almost a fashion accessory. A fad in fact."

"A fad?"

The thesaurus pondered this deeply. I've been expedient in the literary world for decades. The dictionary and I are so alike, our systems of usage are all but indistinguishable. We're synonymous with good referencing in equal measure.

"Don't take it too badly," said the dictionary, "someone has to come second in this relationship." She was revelling in it now. Teasing him was the best game she had ever thought of. And with luck it would restore his flagging sense of self-esteem. She was weary of having him sit there in silence, only leaning over a little whenever she was called upon. His square body shone with the novelty of something under-used, rather than over-protected. Pages unruffled. Corners sharp, except where standing had drooped one edge. Coat smooth as hands that have never known a hard day's work.

"Is that right?" said the thesaurus. "Secondary am I? Subsidiary? Circumstantial, non-essential, peripheral, supplementary? Subordinate??!!"

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That's the spirit, thought the dictionary. "You're a collection of words. Fairly meaningless."

This really takes the biscuit, thought the thesaurus...

"Well you're a *glossary*! You have no *real* references. You're *self-analytical*, *self-explanatory* and *self-indulgent*! A narcissistic little piece of work!"

"People only even look at you when they want to refine a term. *I am* the term!"

"I'll call you a term!"

"Better check you've got the right one then!"

"Expletive?!"

"Careful you don't repeat yourself!"

"Sorry...I don't know what you mean!"

"List!"

"Catalogue!"

"Titular!!"

"Void!!"

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“Unimportant!!!”

“Insufficient!!!”

“Hey!” said the dictionary. “Look -”

The two publications glanced up, to see somebody
frantically opening both their pages at various places, eyes
darting from one to the other, cross-referencing and making
notes like there was no tomorrow.

“How did that happen?” Asked the thesaurus.

“Look under ‘friction’” replied the dictionary, smiling.

The thesaurus regarded her with suspicion. “Hmm...I think
‘antagonism’ is more applicable...” he said, and winked.

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MADLOVE

(White with foam)

The chords are wrong, up to a point. Feminine lead vocals deliver profoundly attractive lyrics to a backdrop of slowish alt/metal.

A consistent character.

The chords aren't absurd. They belong where they are.

They're a bit serious, that's the aspect of metal they gravitate towards...*the thrill*.

It's the lyrical themes which put a pin in the note that describes the music is dark, the inspiration therein that enlightens as to where the note goes.

The chords, they're not out of tune whatsoever. It's not a technical flaw or a bending of the strings.

They don't get 'the odd note' wrong.

They're *not bad* choices.

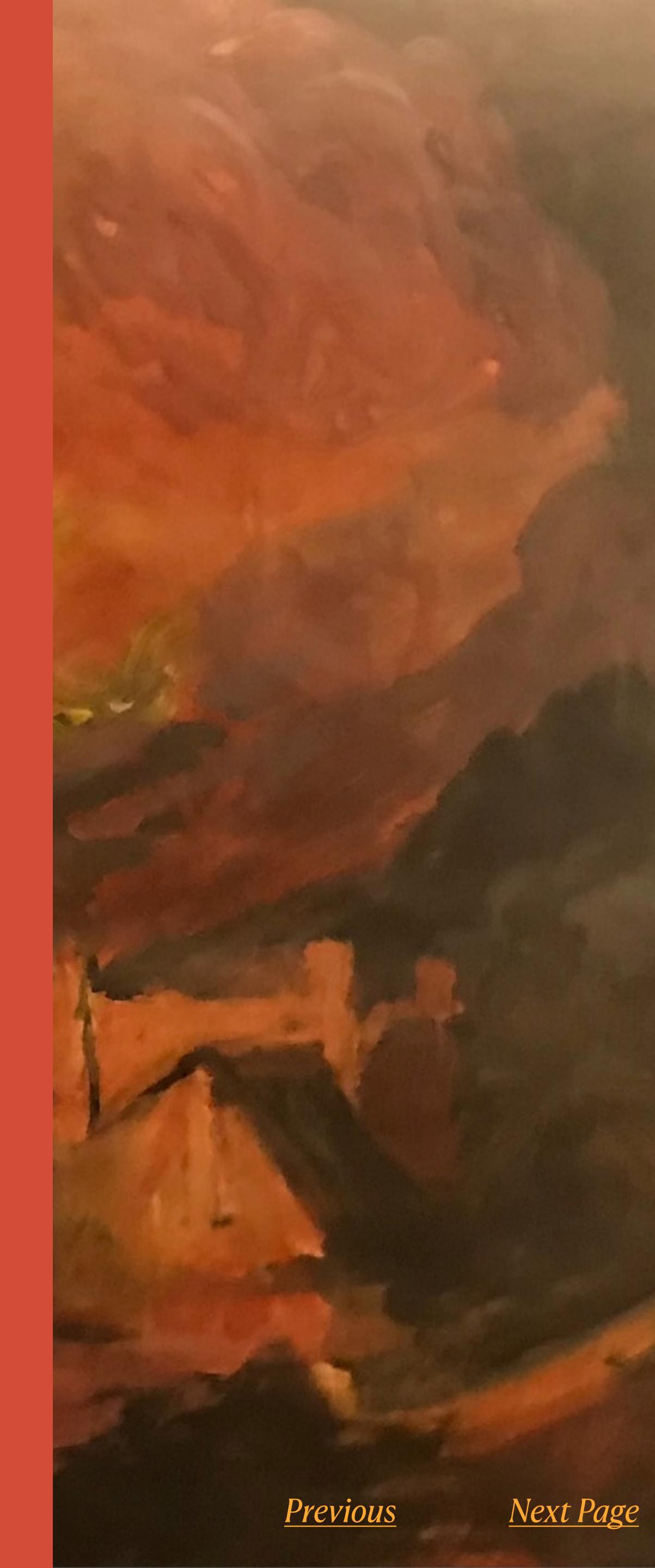
(Understatement of the review.)

The sequences are close to dissonance but resolutely not.

So what about the chords? Why do they have that character? They're designed to generate a slightly sinister consonance.

Then sing:

'No-one's going to save us/From rats with wings.'



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(For example)

Or alternatively:

'Don't pretend/You're not scared.'

And thirdly:

'The end of the world doesn't matter at all.'

Unconventional because of where the chords stand in the scale degrees. That is, atypical keys, experimental harmonies. Cadential as you would hope, with a character that naturally evolves out of the musical potion.

Xylophonic somewhat.

The synthetic.

Drums.

Bass.

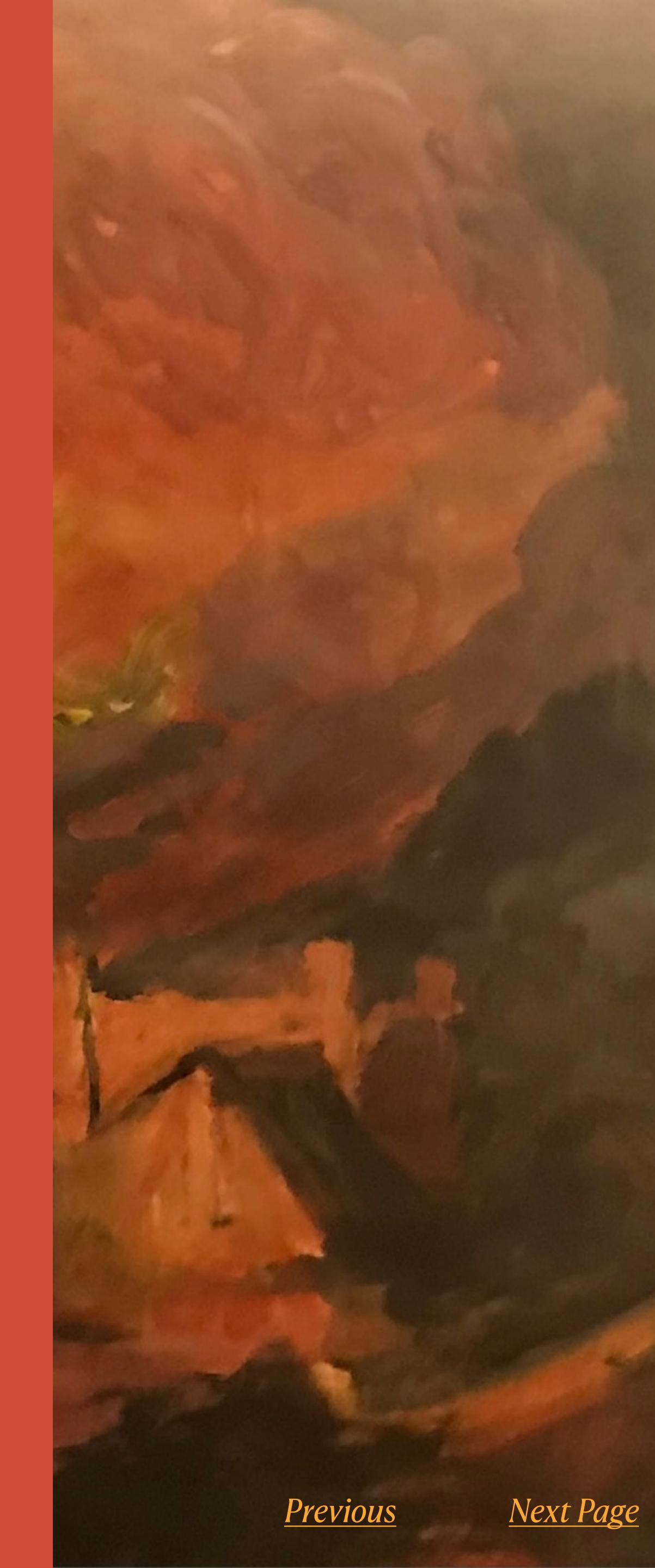
Guitar.

Eel-like, electric in the water.

(Figurative theft.)

Notes of the piano in the penultimate track I want to tell you all about.

But 'After enemies have folded their wings...'



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'PASS'

The TV

Tune in and turn on
The TV
Visible image, vox
A century saw as a space on the floor
Like us, was possessed by a box

Crash out in front of the
Telly

Blinkered, eyes glued straight ahead
Flop down from 7am until 7 again
Thinking 'why leave the bed?'

Quarter way through
A commercial,

Withhold suspense if you will.
Just one, I reckoned, subliminal second
That ad was so fast it stayed still!

Introducing
The 'clicker' controller,
A complex and technical stick.

Fight with it, hide it high up on a side,
If you're lost, 'home' just might do the trick

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'PASS'

Watch a brand spanking new
Programme

Thousands of miles from the scene.
Live is rewarding but seen post-recording
Is a polished production on-screen

I used to team up with
Cathode,

That's why they called me 'the tube'.
Underground stations just testing our patience,
The internet's ever so rude!

Not being home to at least one
Colour set

In the boom was considered thin ice,
Now you'd be pressed to triumphantly invest
In a black and white any old price

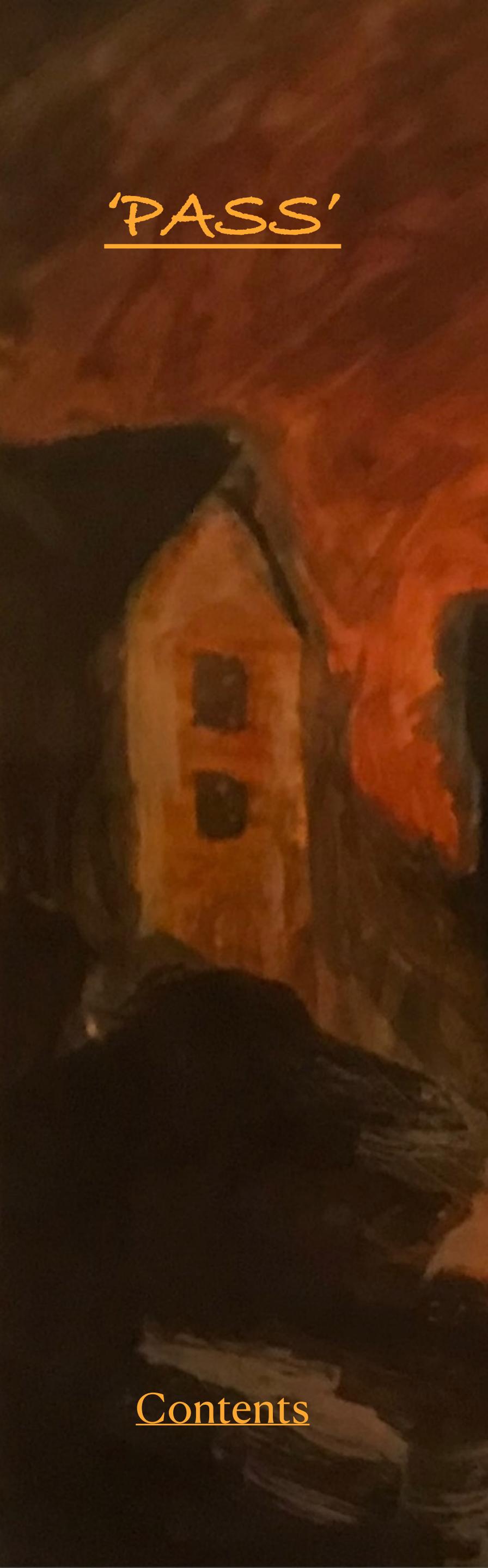
Careful, don't watch it too
Closely,

Your brain will be addled and bare
In due course, indeed, you'll forget how to read
And your eyes will turn totally square

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Where will technology
Lead us?

Headfirst up New-Fangled Street.
Could the term 'television' require firm revision?
Go on, say the word... 'obsolete'...

...Will I become a
Computer?

Or even, will she become me?
Am I on my way out or am I about
To step up the pace a degree?

Maybe you thought I would
Vanish

Edge to the sidelines, deplete
Those sleek chip devices that sell for high prices
Simply serve to make me more complete.



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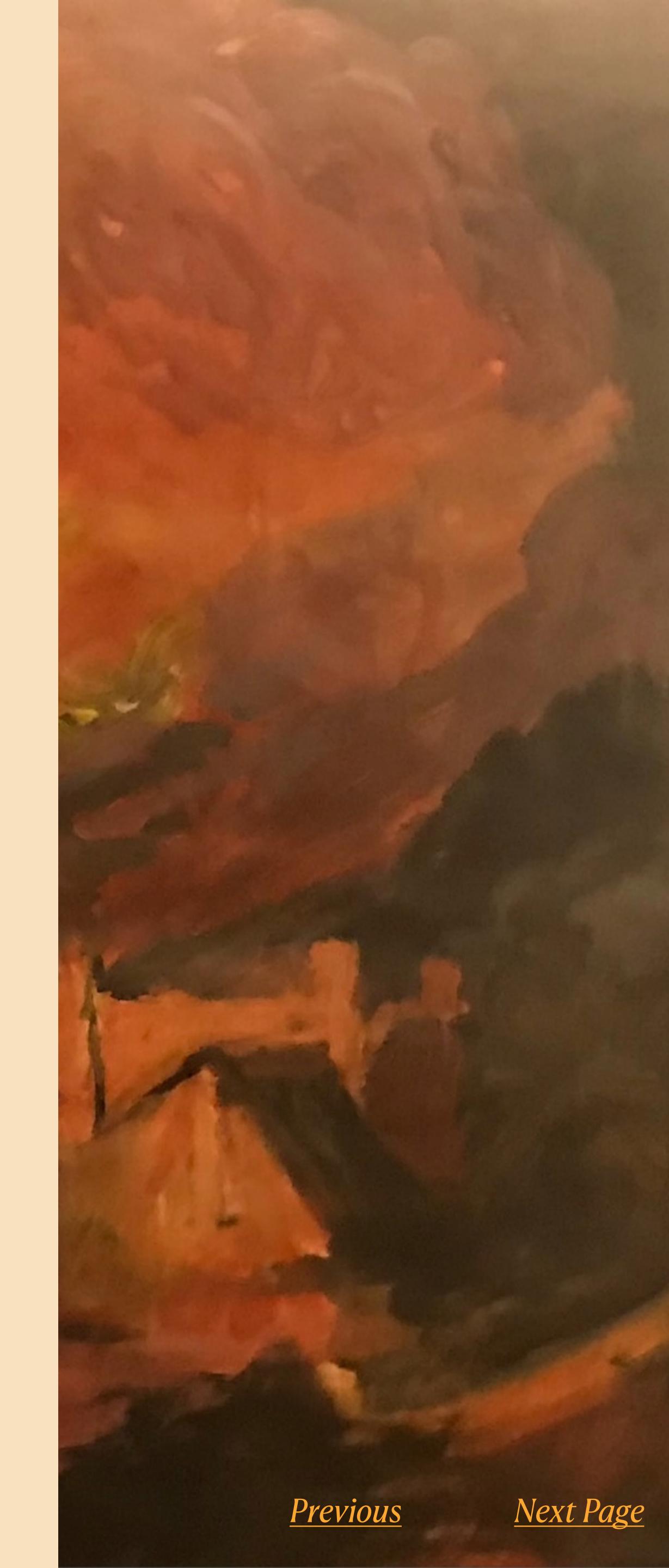
However (Un)likely

It occurs as a natural state of the human condition: occasionally conceiving the self to be incredulously (un)fortunate; for ones life to be more (un)believably (un)pleasant than anyone else's, however illogical in the face of abundant evidence to the contrary. *Why Me?* - You might call it.

The issue with *Why Me?* is the challenge to ones own, not to mention everyone else's *experience of reality*. The realisation (un)luckier people exist undermines the sentiment, leaving on the one hand a crushed ego, and on the other hand - a crushed ego.

Yet feeling outrageously (un)happy, however incredible, however un(avoidable), seems to belong to our emotional strata. I could conceivably be mistaken...only a number confess; interpersonal encounter on top of intuition reveals we all believe we are 'number one' on occasion - we've said the most (un)intelligent thing that's ever been said, or behaved in a supremely (un)stylish manner. The quicker we get over it the better usually, for a sensible conclusion on the matter. The state of feeling surreally (un)satisfied with ones lot, although highly (un)arguable, might be as inevitable as night follows day. And what is wrong with being number one in the world anyway? You are, aren't you? *Why Me? Why Not?* - I might call it.

If an inflated ego is inescapable, is it then (un)tenable? An ego can be squashed only where one exists. Feeling special becomes the ego with the ego's introduction, and what is the



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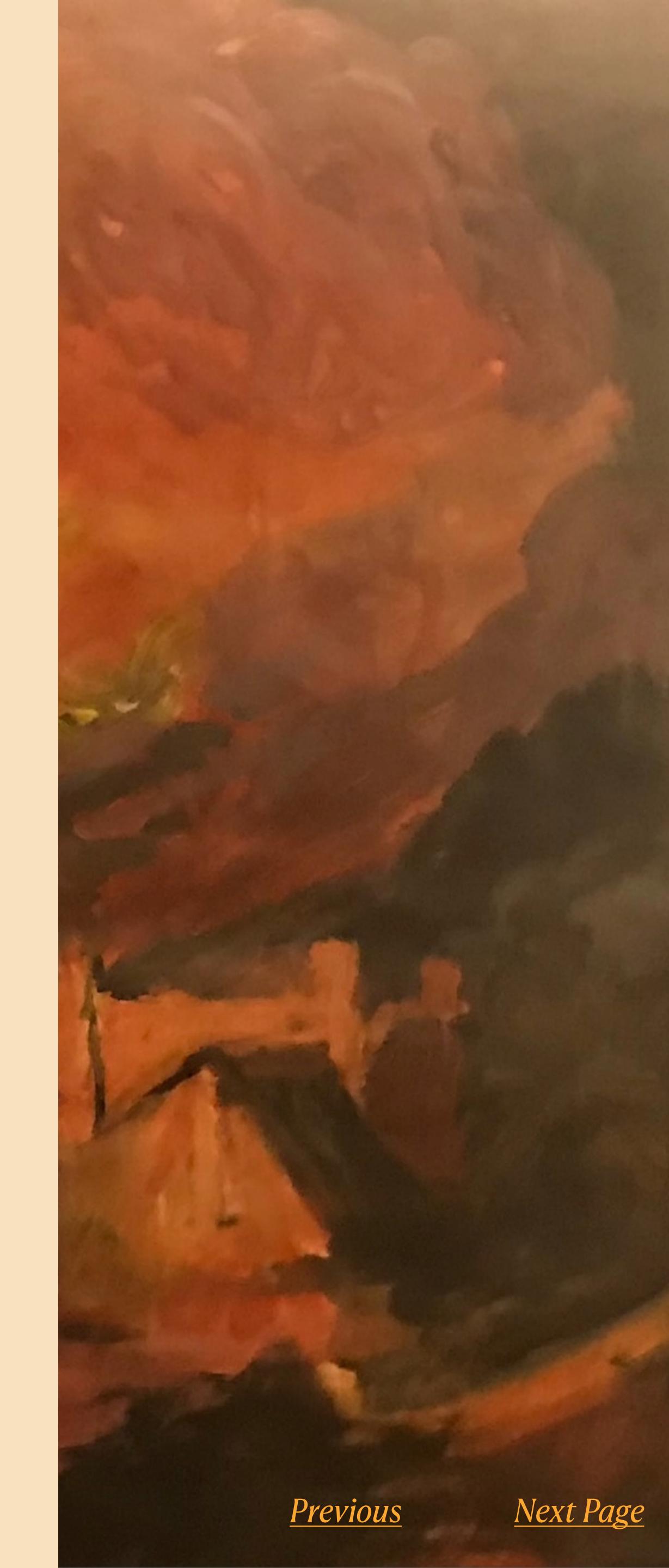
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ego? Self-importance assumed, conditional on a misconception and at variance with the data. If you think you're it - then it is challenged - is everybody else it and you're not, or neither? Wherein lies the ego, character formed out of thoughts, which sometimes talks, and sometimes latches onto the notion it's the only one who is right/wrong; a testimony begging to be proved (un)sound.

What's so bad about getting carried away with the idea you are, or are decidedly not the bee's knees? Is the ego related to the drive to succeed? Or is the grand scheme (or whatever it is) rooted in the concept that arrival at a destination is not, in some sense, an option? A flight of fantasy might be, but a real world is the site of operations. Actual - dare I say factual - events. I might find it hilarious to entertain the idea I am terrifically ahead of the game, but...a joke is a joke.

God knows what's going on (that's an expression.) The statement is conditional on an assumption, from my point of view (but it wouldn't be from a god's). I think I know I'm uniquely un(impressive) sometimes - it's literally the case, still to dwell on it is to gloss over the external world, the sensorially accessible 'felt presence of immediate experience', 'real life', whatever you want to call it; sights, sounds, sensations, the objective with which one is subjectively involved. To 'know' is ordinarily achievable, but theoretically impossible, because it can be tested unto certainty.

Knowledge is thus by nature conclusive...but in the absence of any journey of understanding, facts outrun their interest value. Or else investigations into the truth would be concluded from the very beginning (and dull at the outset).



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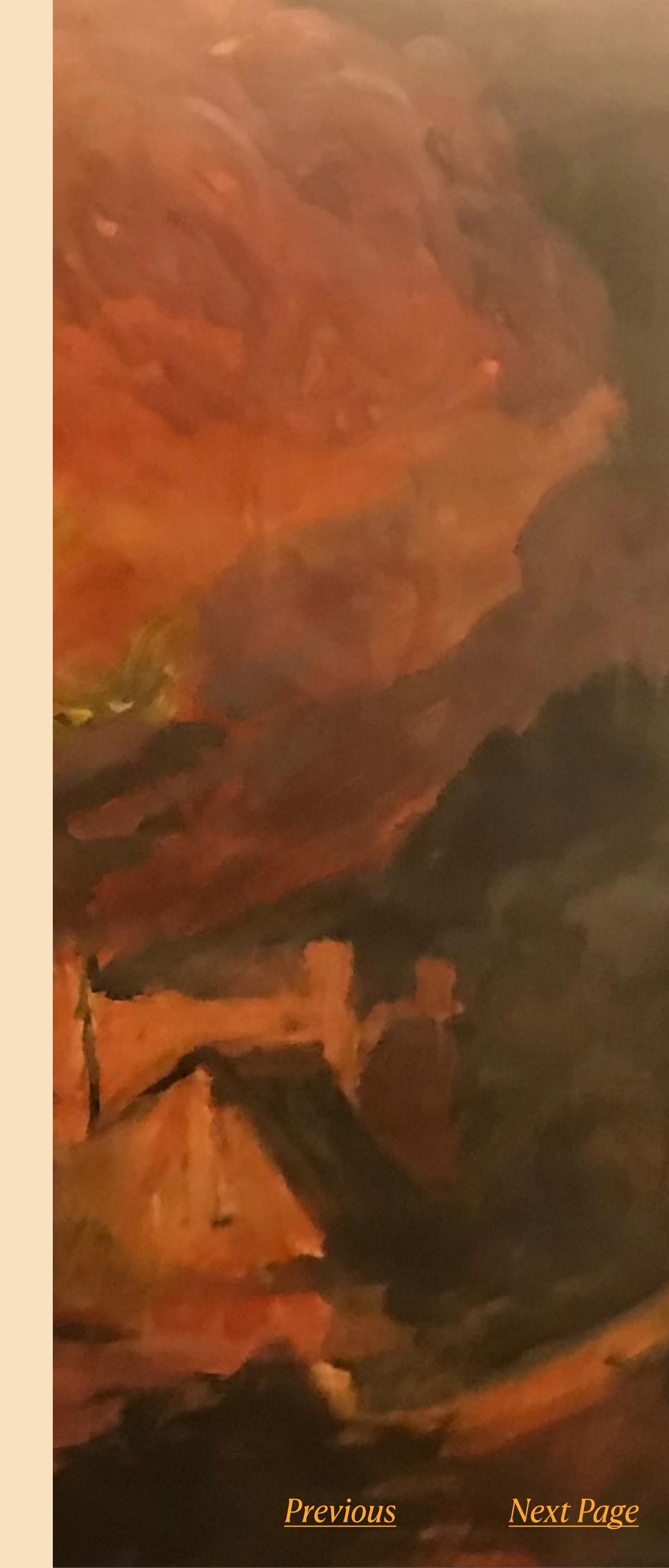
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The learning curve has a trajectory. Sometimes I wonder if I will ever learn...till I learn the truth is an (un)utterable conclusion.

Egotism is the tip of an iceberg of conceit; the conscious realisation of a rolling snowball of (un)recognisable self-confidence; and whether it melts into water, or smashes into flakes, proves itself to be a construct of the psyche, a transient substance, as (un)convincing as a conversation with a reflection on a frozen lake.

Why Me? begs the question, by entertaining a solipsistic circumstance; one might just as well reject the evidence of the senses and say 'the real world doesn't exist.' A sense of irony on the subject is carriage to a resolution - to wake up to the truth is to burst the bubble of the ego, with a giggle or a tear... and discover the dream...was only a dream...mind you a dream is still a dream...

...However (Un)likely - I'll call it.



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'PASS'

The Writer's Intent

In nature enamoured to literal addresses
The writer, for chance it would lead to a date
 Careful of no-one specific to romance
 Courted whomever might closely relate...

‘We meet in a restaurant over a river
Reflecting the moonlight’s prophetical smile
 Whispering hints of a fragile conspiracy
 A splash of champagne disinhibits meanwhile

Then as the terrace overlooking the water
 It darkens, the sunset, an oranger glow
Is a glimmering backdrop to moves, how adventurous
 Till this very moment, nobody could know

This is our destiny, no other pathway
 Existed until fate would our lives rearrange
So you open the parchment with delicate fingers
 And gasp at the wonder and size of the change

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'PASS'

The secret's unfolded, confessions in dreamier
Settings fantastical, some wizard's design
Letters on letters with all but impossible
Tales of decrepit black magic's decline

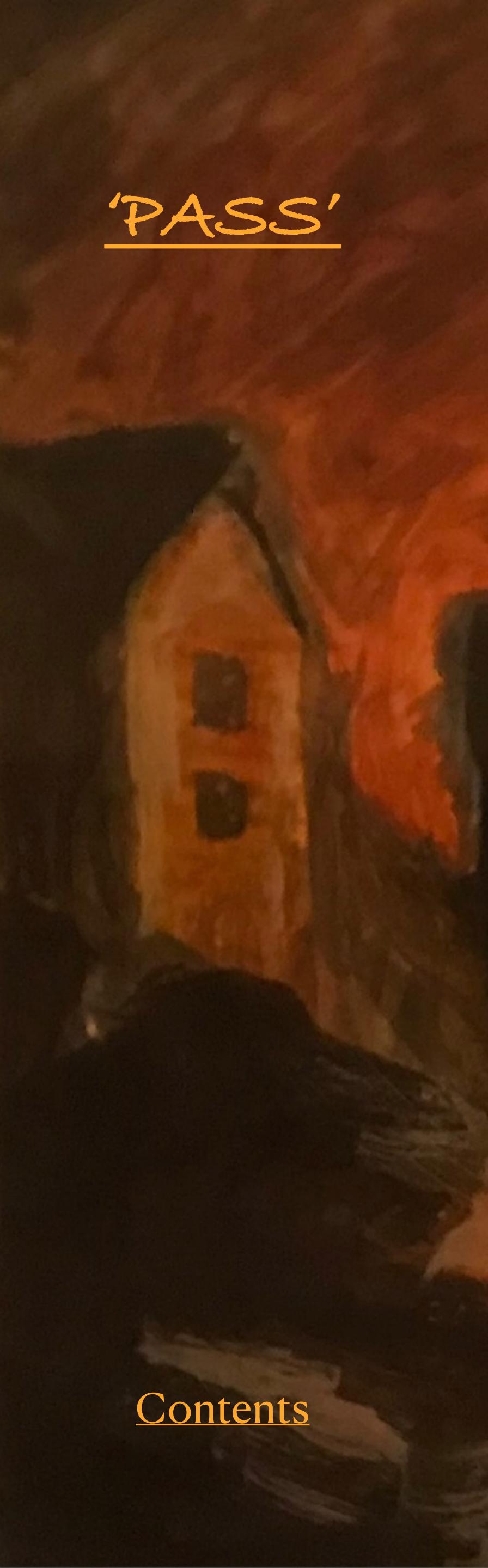
Eyes that were glassy like shards from a pane
Shatter like sugar collapsing the spell
Curses inscribed upon great marble monuments
Vanish as words do in time as they fell...'

Gently unlocking the nib it was clearer
Someone particular guided the pen
A picture was forming of who underlie
The writer's intentions all over again.

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Tomahawk – *Mit Gas*

The man Mike Patton is lead vocalist for this band. Patton fans already know what I'm talking about. Yeeeeeeeeaaaaahhhhh!!

Get the CD. You won't regret your decision. It's a masterpiece. Black and gold design inlaid. If you like metal. You will love this.

Speaker hiss gives primacy momentarily to a bass prologue, which is upstaged similarly by a presumptuous elongated growl of distortion, and a sort of slow, morose howl, a suggestive solo which tails sequentially.

Birdsong captures the imagination as well as the senses.

The bass thunders a deep, dark, moody tone. A racy, impatient rock beat ignites the adrenalin. The bass succeeds, sustaining the pitch, and hinting at the tune with a quick 3-note decline to its origin.

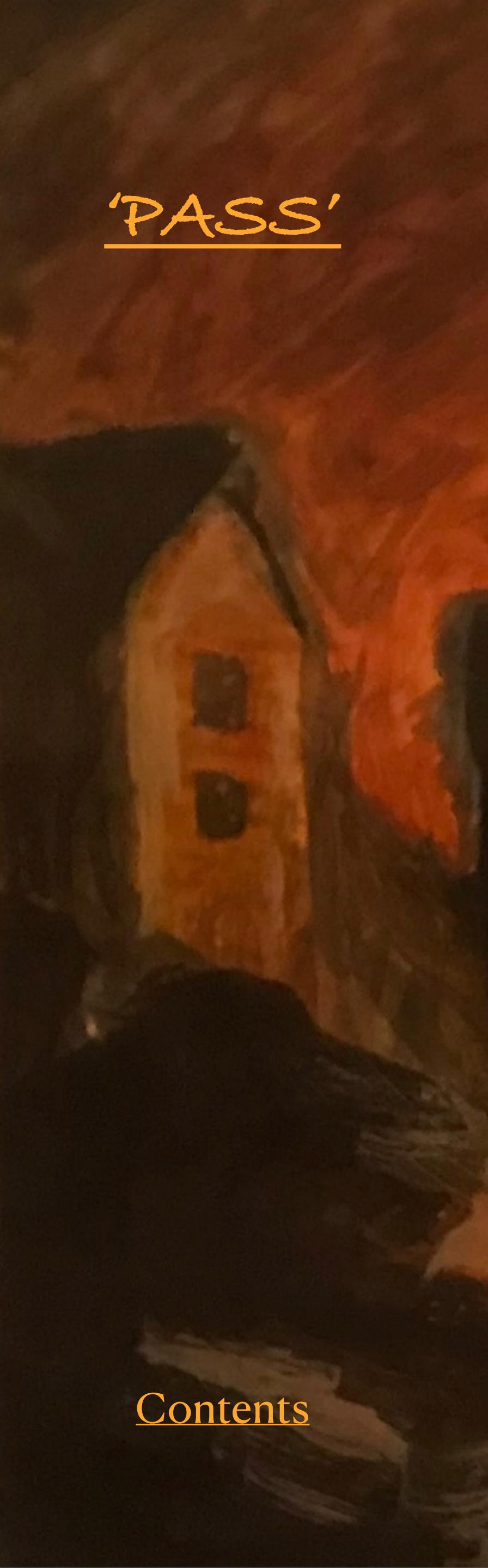
Whispered breaths give space to the sound, and accent to the beat.

The vocals prowl predatorily at first, leaving the meat to the other instruments, breathily surrounding the carnage with a

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range of verbal and vocal ideas, evolving into a screaming, soaring, swooping and diving identity, and finally digging its teeth into the chorus note; the drums slow down, and the note's held.

Then it rises to be held again.

Captain Midnight introduces techno rhythms of an elevated type, high beats and ticks, what you might call 'breath boxing' incorporated, and rapid treble lead guitar twinkles into being.

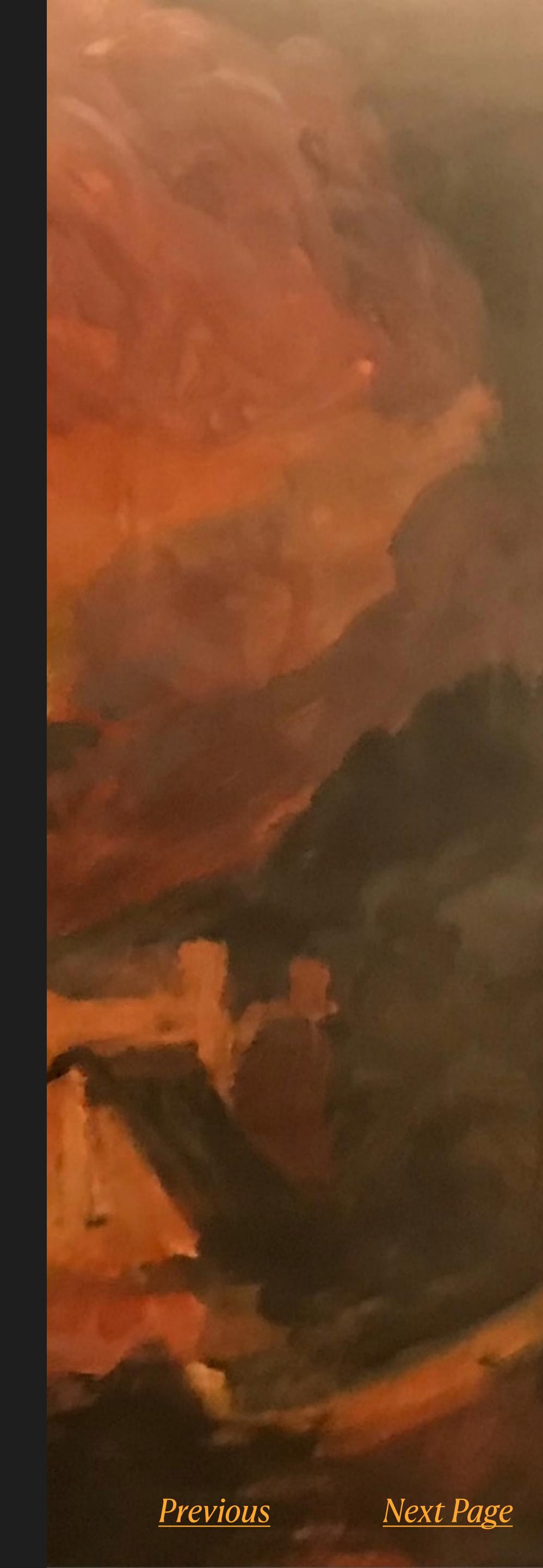
The bass line is extremely low, enveloped in heavy though undomineering tones, foreboding and ominous in character.

The technology continues to flicker, electrify and switch as the vocals and guitar enter for real.

An unusual vocal melody – almost unnatural – but with pattern and justification in the *convincing* of skilful execution.

The guitar sound is built primarily on the shaking effect of the tremolo, medium to high pitched, melodic in a similar but more intuitive musical vein to the vocals, and repetitive; the whole piece develops with the subtle, gradual evolution of a rock beat over the top of the ever-changing nuances of the techno.

Wait for it.



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The final song of Mit Gas is the climax for three reasons:

1. It's the last song;
2. It's superb, and;
3. It erupts into a slow-paced crashing thump-smash of near-unmusical distortion and noise at the end.

The song makes a neat, distinctive entry into the psyche; kick drum, snare and hi-hat with a brief dash of reverb.

Slow, potent, memorable.

Once familiar with the song you won't hear the initial drumming without mentally skipping to the end and making a note to yourself to turn the volume down (or up, I guess!) *just* in time.

Rhythm guitar plays through the verses with a pleasing strumming of chords and a phaser effect lightly contributing to its rather wonderful musical personality.

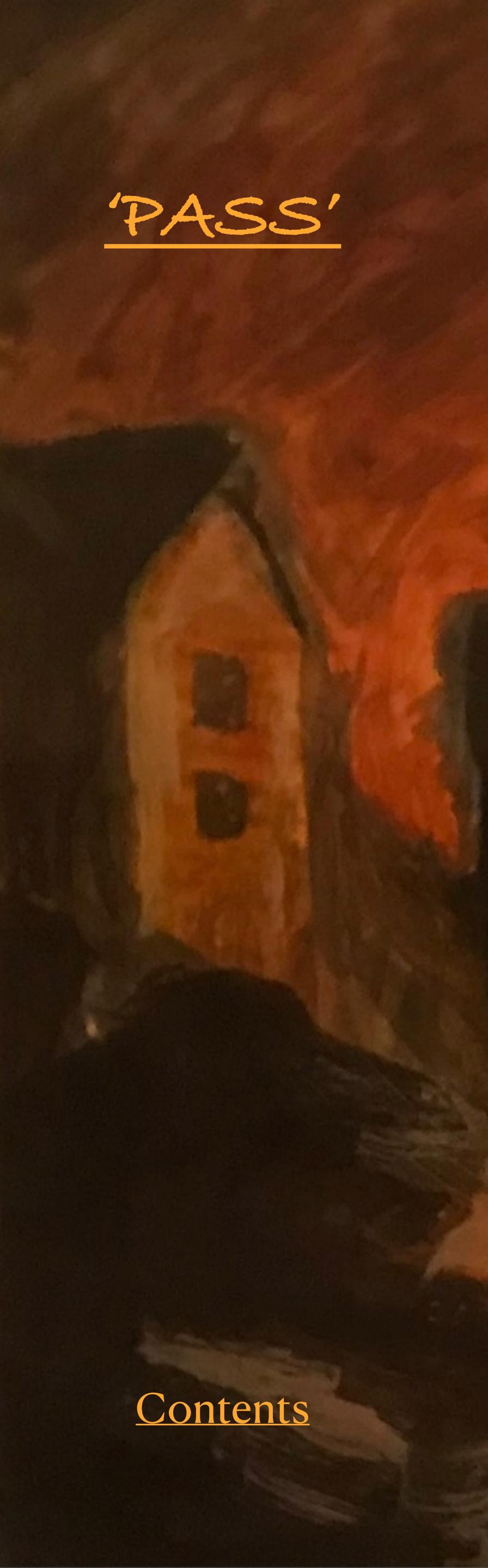
A guitar chord whammy bars a swoon periodically throughout.

The drums continue to bump and crack.

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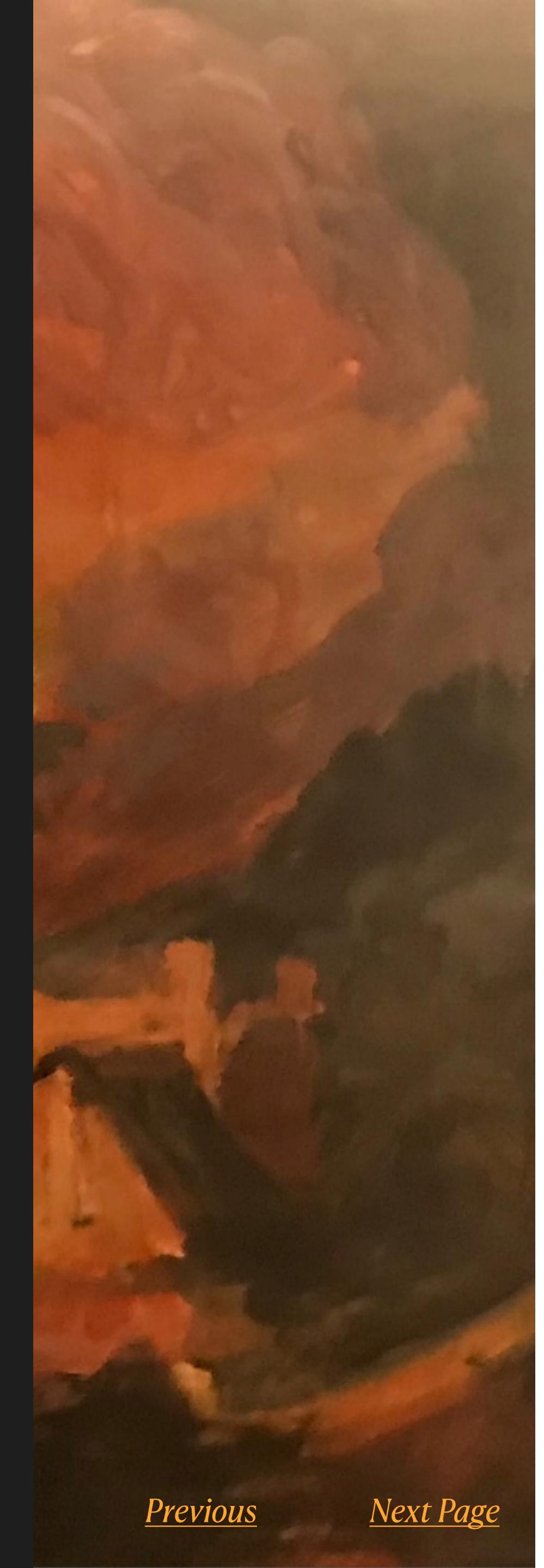


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The vocals are robot, and the theme is battle, characterised by a series of advices/instructions on how to conduct oneself in hand-to-hand combat. It's called *Aktion F1413*.

In the midst of the blasting of the conclusion I think I detect warped screaming, speaker vibration, distorted percussion, bass and guitar. So do pay attention.



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Midnight

Twenty past seven till twenty before,
Something surrounds us from dusk until dawn,
Late in the evening till first light of morn
Can be midnight.

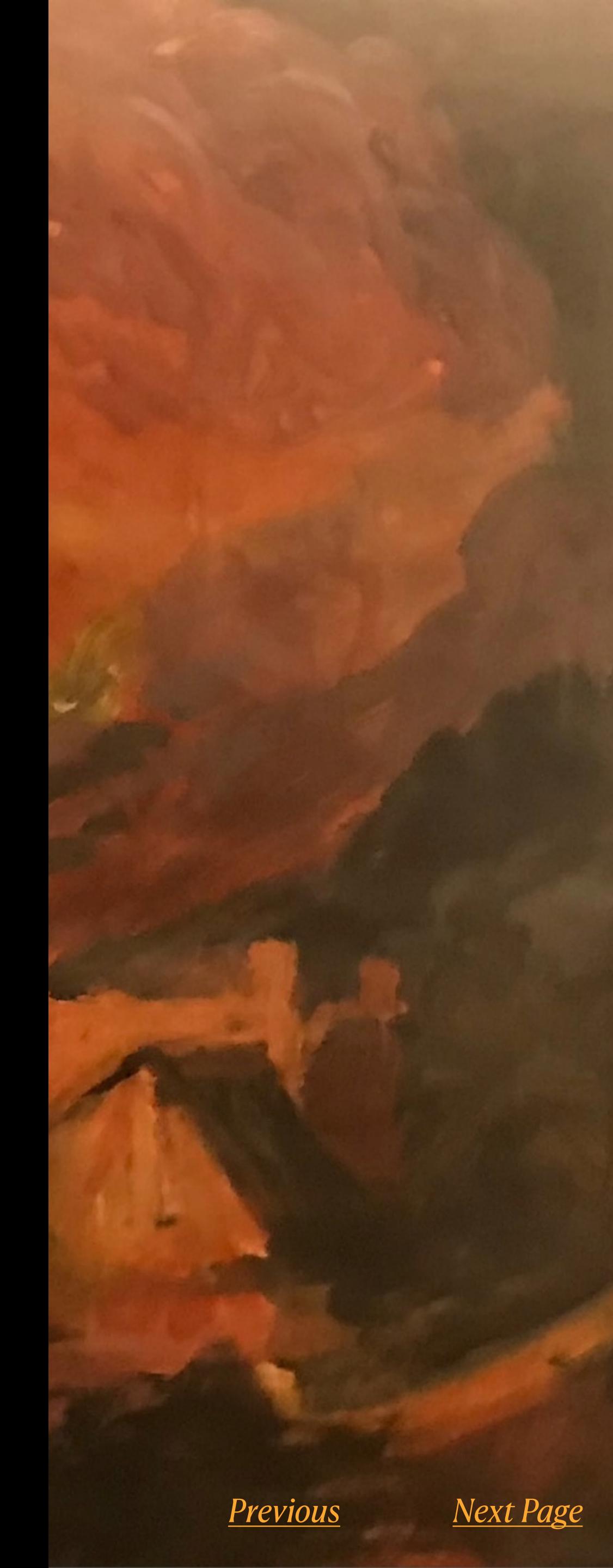
Some call it witching, and some call it you.
Under the floorboards and out in the dew.
Creaking in doorways and snapping in two.
Call it midnight.

Heaven or darkness or somewhere beyond?
Time of the day or a prophetic song?
Place where the angels and werewolves belong?
Or just midnight.

Nothing to do or a planet of stars,
Waking to take on the world in its path.
Unfit behaviour, or a bloody good laugh?
When it's midnight.

Open the meaning of one certain term
Where does it lie? In an instant we learn;
Collect all the data for which we're concerned
And orientate it around just one word,
Spin it and use it above what it's worth
'Cause magic in meaning's invented at first,
Then truth will win out in the very last verse
And at

Midnight



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The Nihilist

Go To The Ground

Walking through the airport to catch a plane to Russia, where she would reside in a luxurious complex and train for a career setting up surveillance satellites to spy on the population of Earth in general, and at large, for undercover work in the secret services, the nihilist asked herself, once again, and once and for all, who exactly she was working for.

There came no reply. Of course, there never was a reply when she wanted one, and of course, this statement itself was suspect. For a second, she doubted once again that any of it was real.

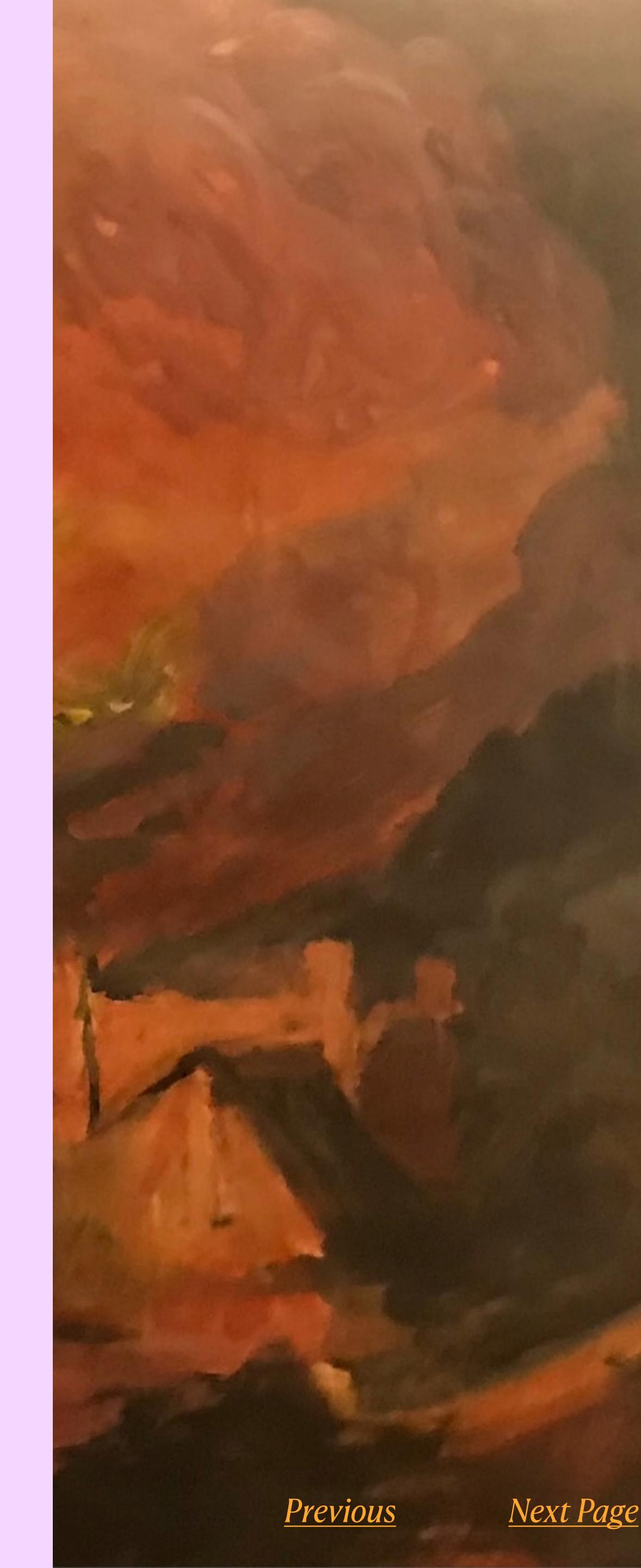
- That any kind of correspondence or cybernetic devices had been planted in her body without her permission or awareness.

That her every movement was being monitored. That her every motion was able to be manipulated by an outside control. That the mission existed. Indeed, that anything even remotely relating to covert operations had ever happened to her.

A jolt of electricity to her left elbow prompted her to produce a passport for passport control. They did not suspect a thing. Well, they wouldn't, would they?

They wouldn't whether it was all true or not.

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Either she had remote assistance which was secretive enough to be effective and also to hide it from any onlookers, or she did not have any such radio-attachment and there was nothing to hide.

Her passport was handed back and the nihilist continued on her way to the plane.

This is ridiculous, she thought.

A distant echo of a laugh was produced in her ear on the edge of hearing, and the corner of her lips turned upwards in a smile, to her irritation.

Had she smiled, or was she coerced in a most seductive manner? It tested her patience, either way.

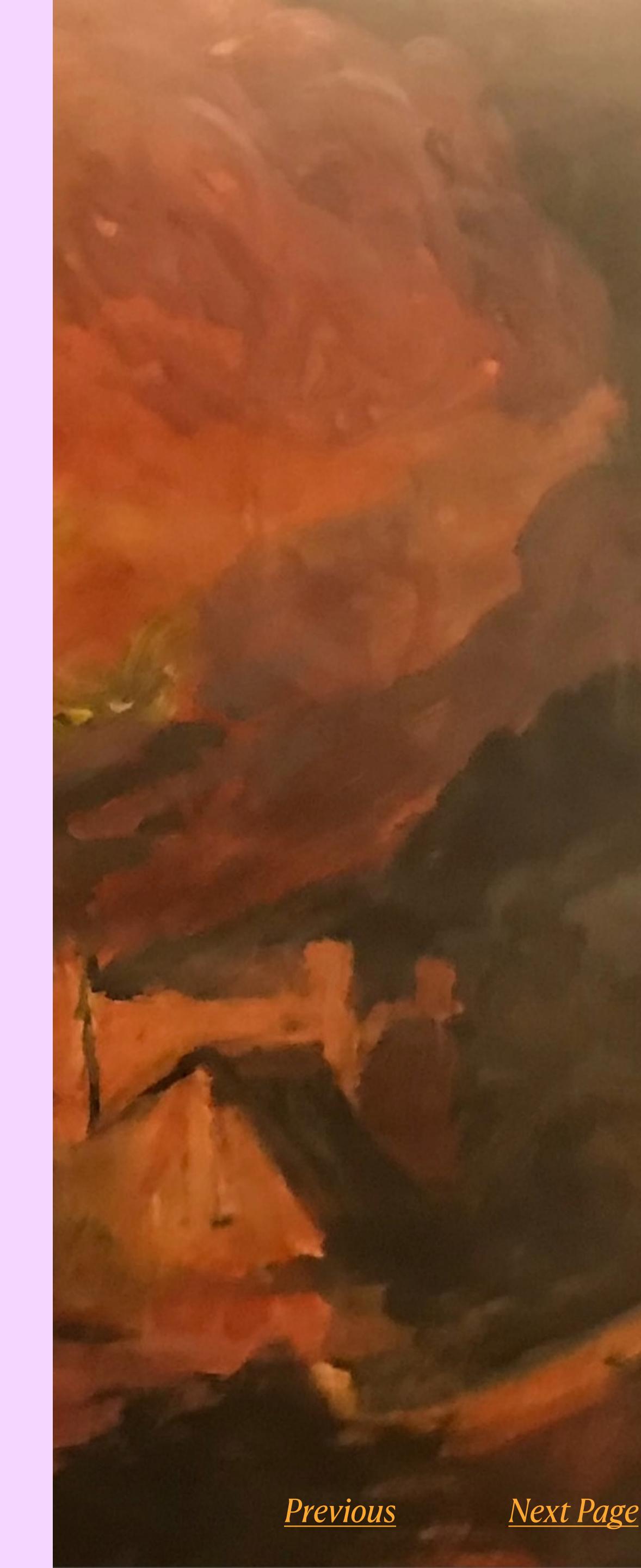
That's what they want, she thought.

'Shut up' was a felt, rather than heard, reply, but she did not apologise for her internal utterance.

Apologies were not welcome.

Neither was communication in general; she had been advised long ago that nothing she could possibly think of would be of the slightest interest to her 'employers.'

In compliance with her orders, the nihilist focussed on the immediate environment rather than on the crazy circumstances of her position in the agency, and boarded the vehicle. Surely, she should question this directive? She listened for a response, and made out a word.



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‘Backgammon’.

Hmm...backgammon...no, no it doesn't mean anything!

The nihilist sighed and sat down in her seat. She drummed her fingers on the arm rest and gazed to her right out of the miniature window. As the engine started whizzing, she watched one of the luggage men running to his vehicle.

He jumped up on board and started to drive people's various suitcases and rucksacks around to another plane.

A light buzz suggested the nihilist's name to her on the outer reaches of sensitivity.

Hmm..? she thought to whoever was calling for her attention. Was this another pointless gibe? A series of clicks and whirrs occurred to her, and faded. The echoes of the noises eventually translated themselves, she supposed, into the vague semblance of a question:

‘Whose idea was this?’

The nihilist stopped breathing. Well, I thought it was your idea...otherwise, what am I doing on this plane? The complex, outer-space...? I was led to believe...

Letters spelling the word ‘idiot’ appeared in a shadowy, travelling image that passed in front of her eyes.

You never told me otherwise! The nihilist drew a quick breath, in disbelief.



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Nothing.

Why would you let me go to all this trouble? She thought.

Still nothing.

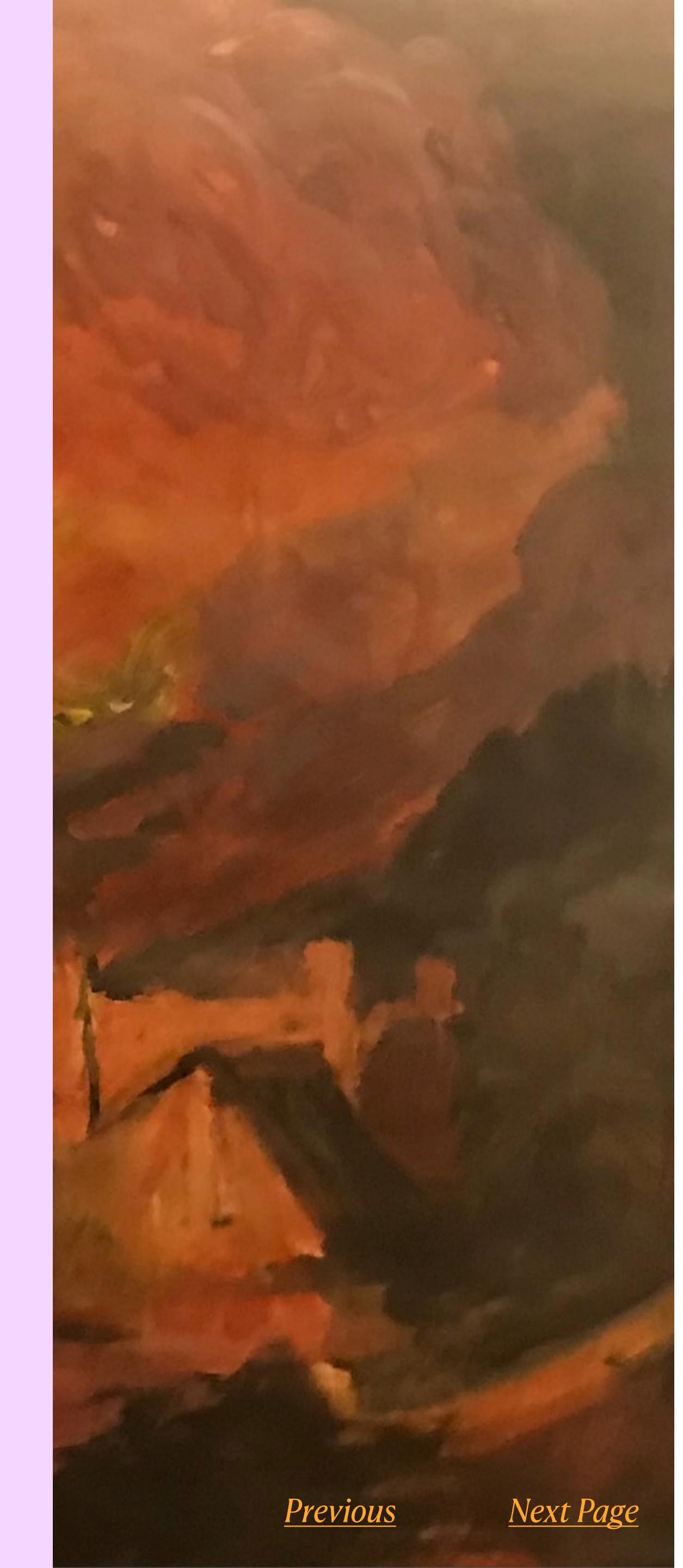
Her kneecap started jiggling ever so slightly and the vibrations conveyed a for once, clear, intelligible sentence:

"This is your captain. Whether it's...high-pressure or chill where we're going I don't anticipate serious hazards and... only an outside possibility there will be strikes...the reign will stop. Could be in for a slightly rocky ride..."

Which clothed itself over the sentence of the pilot over the plane's speaker system:

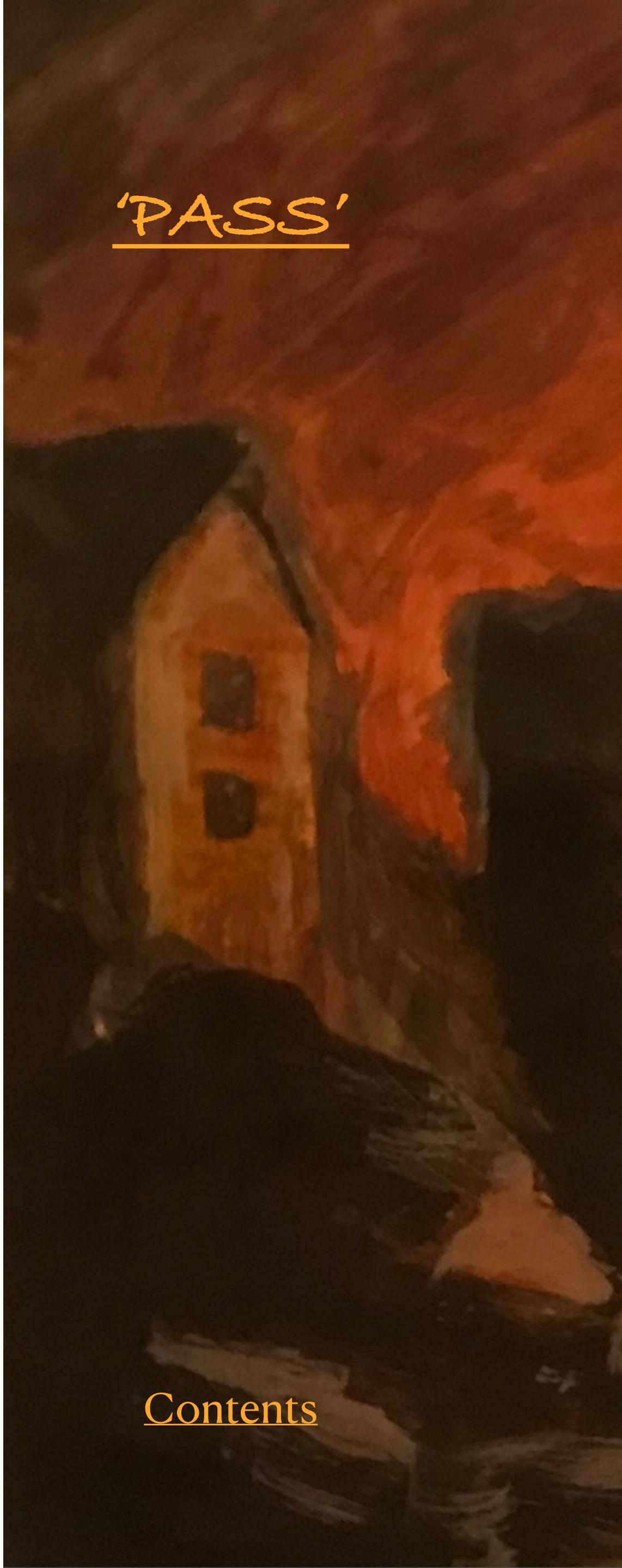
"...having said that, we're travelling through the night...so if you feel like getting a little shut-eye give it your best shot."

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Cautions, Clashes and Compensates

The nihilist arrived in Moscow. She was greeted by fresh air and bright sunlight. It refreshed her skin and eyes, but weakened her constitution.

Last off the plane, the runway was quiet and empty as she reflected on how pointless the journey had been. In fact, everything was a direct hit on her ego in the light of the revelation she really had no business being there.

The flight had been long and she had felt so stupid.

A low thud, as a bass tom, sounded and vibrated in her stomach, shaking her confidence even more.

She almost spoke.

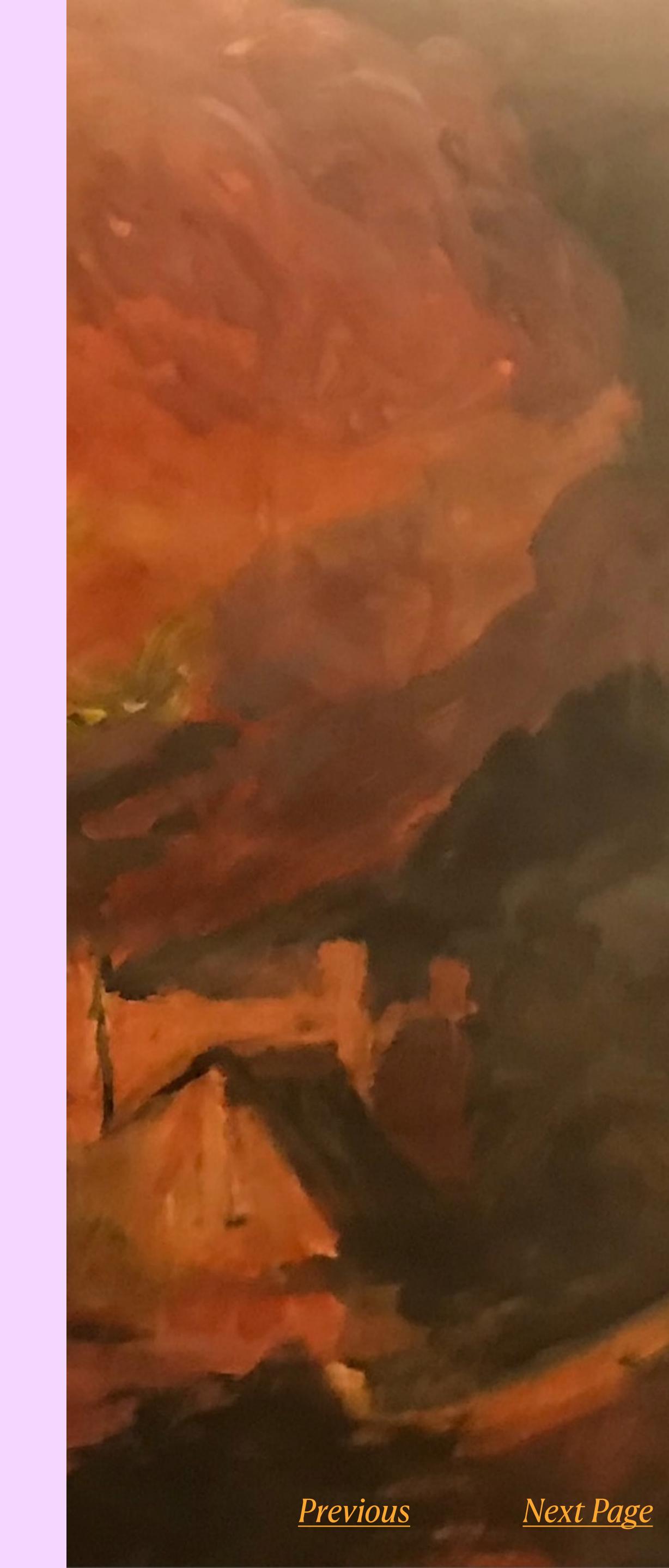
I know! She whined to herself. A distant snare sound rattled anti-climactically.

She shuddered with disappointment, snorted and retorted: Mock if you wish. It's all your idea anyway.

'We don't.'

The nihilist snapped, and darted her eyes around exasperatedly. Not this again! - You don't, they don't, I certainly fucking don't, she thought sarcastically. I...

'Quiet!'



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The nihilist's heart skipped a beat. The sky was filled with birdsong and a peaceful atmosphere returned.

She tried to recall the instruction to the front of her mind, and fathom how it was conveyed.

As she attempted to recreate the impression of the word in her head, her arm started twitching. Okay, okay! She surrendered. She knew what she was supposed to do, but something always drew her attention to what was going on inside her head.

Their teasing didn't make it any easier.

One taxi journey and an hour's walk later she found herself wandering around the city's backstreets, feeling calm and more optimistic about the journey. So what? She considered. She had nothing better to do. Or rather, being here was as good as being anywhere else.

It was still light, although the evening was closing in and she knew she had to decide on a place to stay for the night. She had seen three inns whilst investigating the area, and knew which one she liked. It was a few streets back. She made to turn, and heard a chortle.

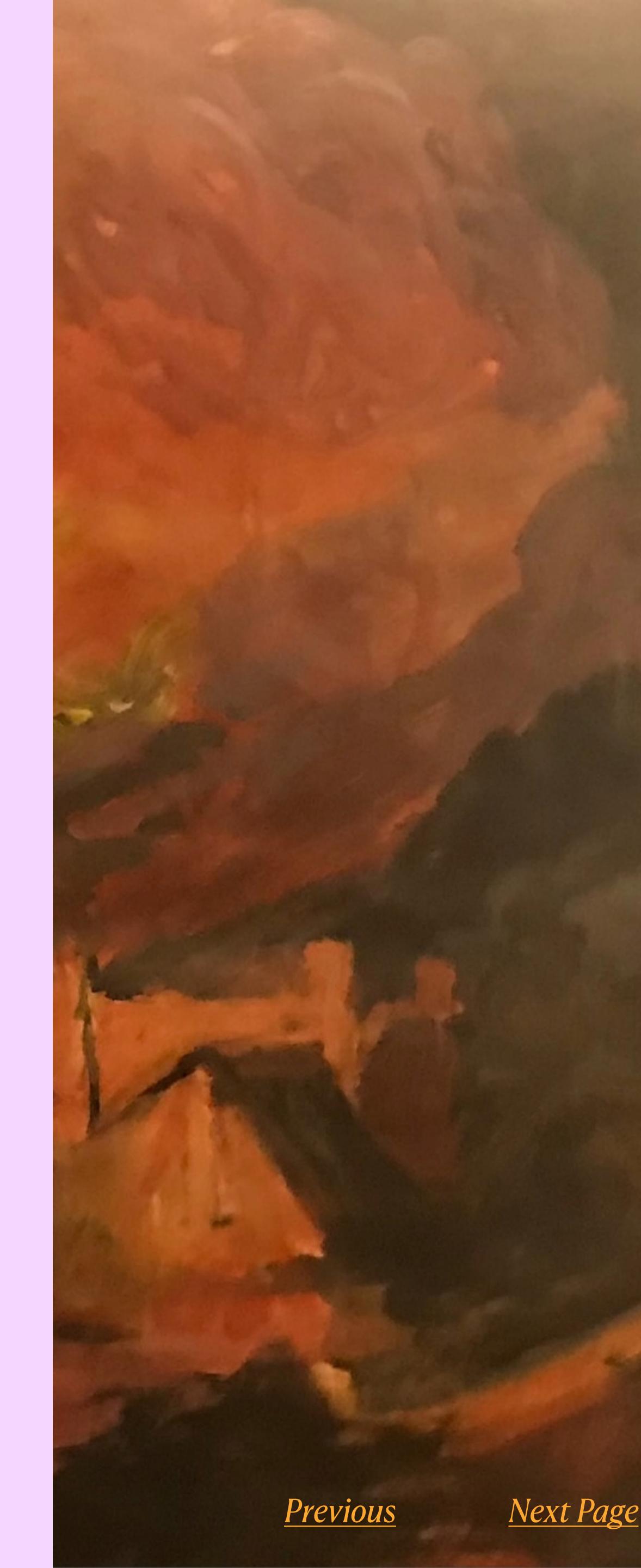
Hmm...? she thought.

'Look.'

The nihilist rarely even knew if she was imagining the communication, let alone whether it was of any importance.

An alarm clock tone buzzed faintly.

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Get lost, she replied. A bell rang shrilly, getting louder and more frequent... "Ahh!" A bicycle swerved and nearly collided with her, its rider toppling over the side and onto the road.

Unhurt by the collision, she leapt quickly to help him up. "Oh God! I'm so sorry!" She said. "Oh - you're cut!"

The man inspected his wrist.

There was a scrape on the underside of his arm.

He did not seem too upset, but flustered, and advised her on some road safety awareness in his own dialect, gesturing as he spoke in order to get his point across. The nihilist caught the gist of the comment. It was roughly:

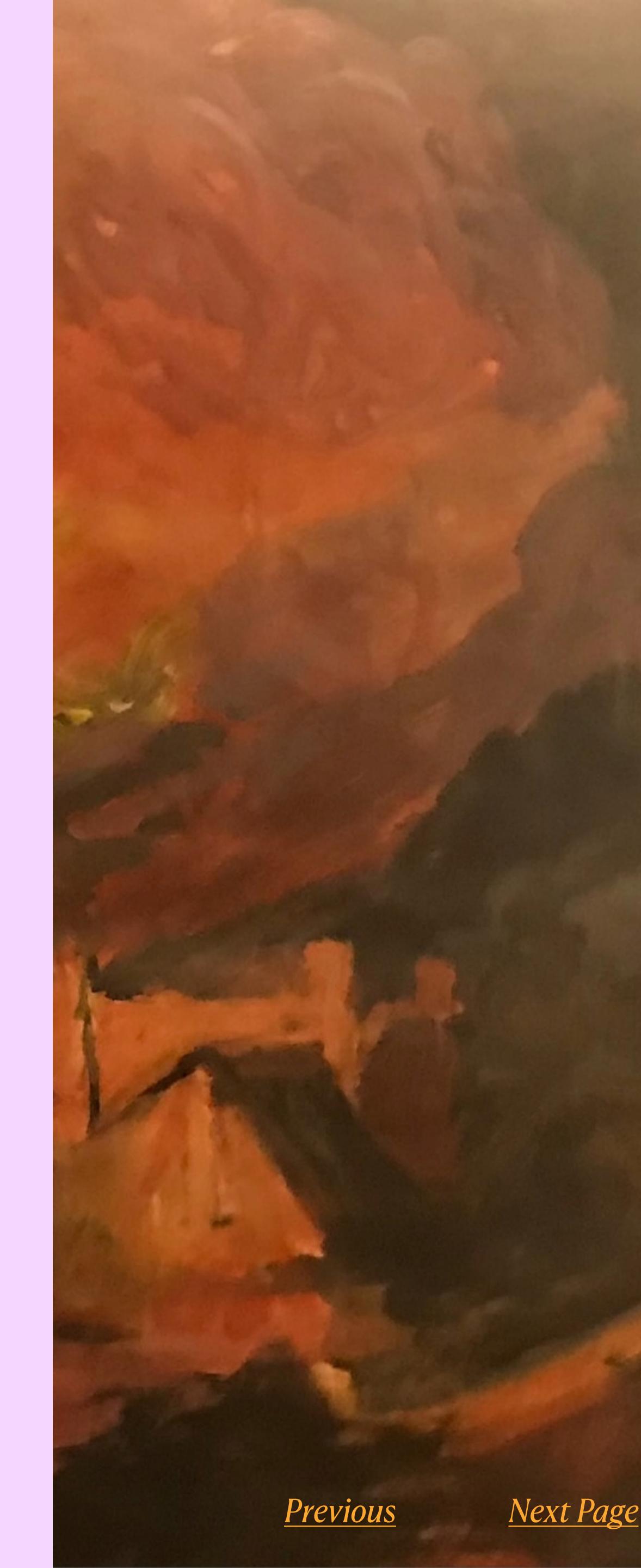
'Pay attention to where you are going, we don't want that to happen to somebody else.'

She nodded apologetically. "Is there anything I can do?" she asked in a clear voice. "Me...do...?"

He grinned with an air of sarcasm. "Where were you in your head, huh?"

"Sorry, I was miles away" she said regretfully. "Anything?" she offered with her hands.

He took one and shook it, saying "Stefan." Then he turned, stared across the road at a pub, and looked thoughtful.



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“A drink?” she asked, humoured by his expression.

“Yes...a drink...” he replied.

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Local Business

Stefan padlocked his bike to a lamppost and took the nihilist gently by the shoulder.

“I imagine I will make an impression with you by my side.”

She blushed.

A man followed the two of them into the tavern, and the nihilist, ever cautious, kept it in mind that he walked so close behind. She even thought she received a subtle sign from him, a look of recognition; of course, signals can be misread, and she assimilated it without placing too much emphasis there.

He sat close to the bar.

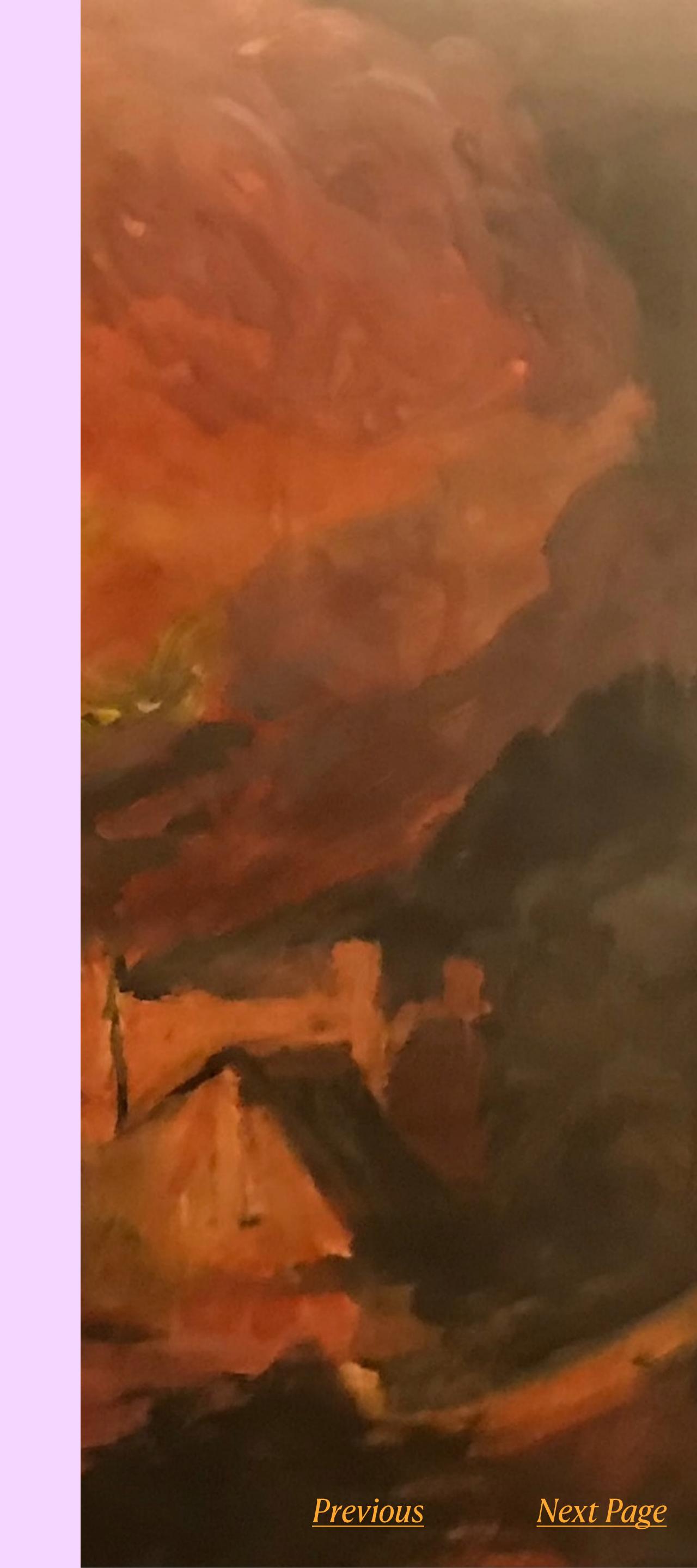
Her suspicions were heightened when he was joined by another character, who sat even closer to where she stood, with a highlighted presence discernible to the nihilist. She considered that they too might work for the agency.

She remained equally open to the possibility it was all in her head.

Maybe, just maybe, she had work to do in the city, but she didn't completely trust whoever was in charge. She had never even seen one of the controllers.

How could you trust people who never reveal themselves to you in any form more obvious than the lowest whisper?

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Bearing in mind she had never been explicitly instructed to do anything, and only ever carried out their will as a result of subliminal persuasion, or electrical impulse, on the one hand it all seemed utterly ridiculous.

On the other hand the evidence was overwhelming, and she believed it without the tiniest shadow of a doubt.

The paradox ate away at her feelings, intense irritation grinding away at her conscience, adjusting her psyche, she supposed, to the unreasonable art of deception.

She felt a sting in her elbow, rubbed it and mouthed peacefully under her breath the words 'fuck you.'

"That is the spirit," said her companion.

"What?" Said the nihilist calmly but with real curiosity.

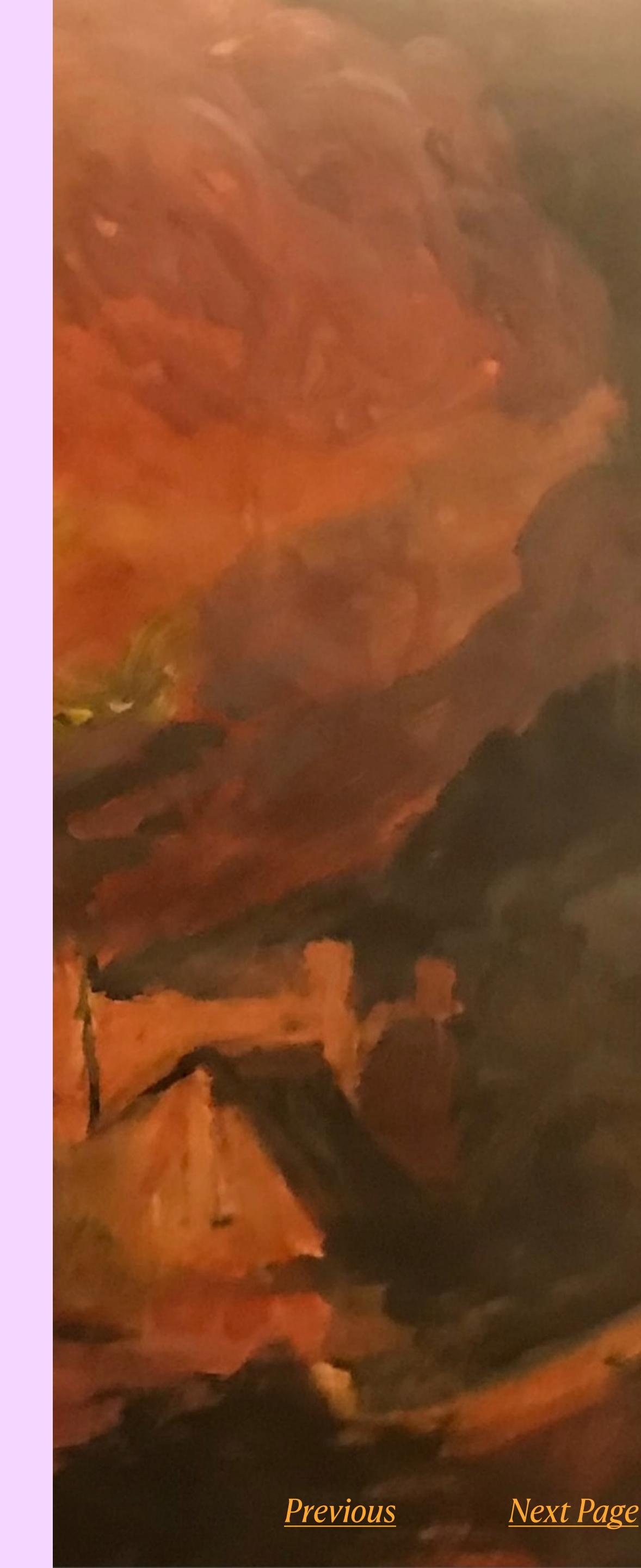
"That - *that* is the spirit I was telling you about." He said, pointing to a bottle behind the bar.

"Oh." Relaxing again, she asked the bartender for two shots of a reddish liquid and two beer chasers. She poured, gave the nihilist a warm grin, and took rubles.

"To minor accidents." Stefan said. They chinked, raised glasses, and downed their shots.

"Nice walking into you," the nihilist added, and Stefan gestured for her to go first back to the table.

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As they drank and chatted, Stefan occasionally raised his eyes toward the bar with a curious expression. The nihilist was intrigued, if a little suspicious. She tried to read what his reaction to them indicated. It seemed that he was wary of something...confused by behaviour...a bit upset.

His body language changed suddenly, he made to move his chair back, as though he was being approached.

In order to remain calm, the nihilist breathed steadily in spite of the adrenalin flooding through her body, and perspiration forming on her skin.

What do I do? She thought.

No answer.

The atmosphere grew tense in the room, people became quieter, then fell silent.

Stefan's expression was staid, his attention fixed on something to her left.

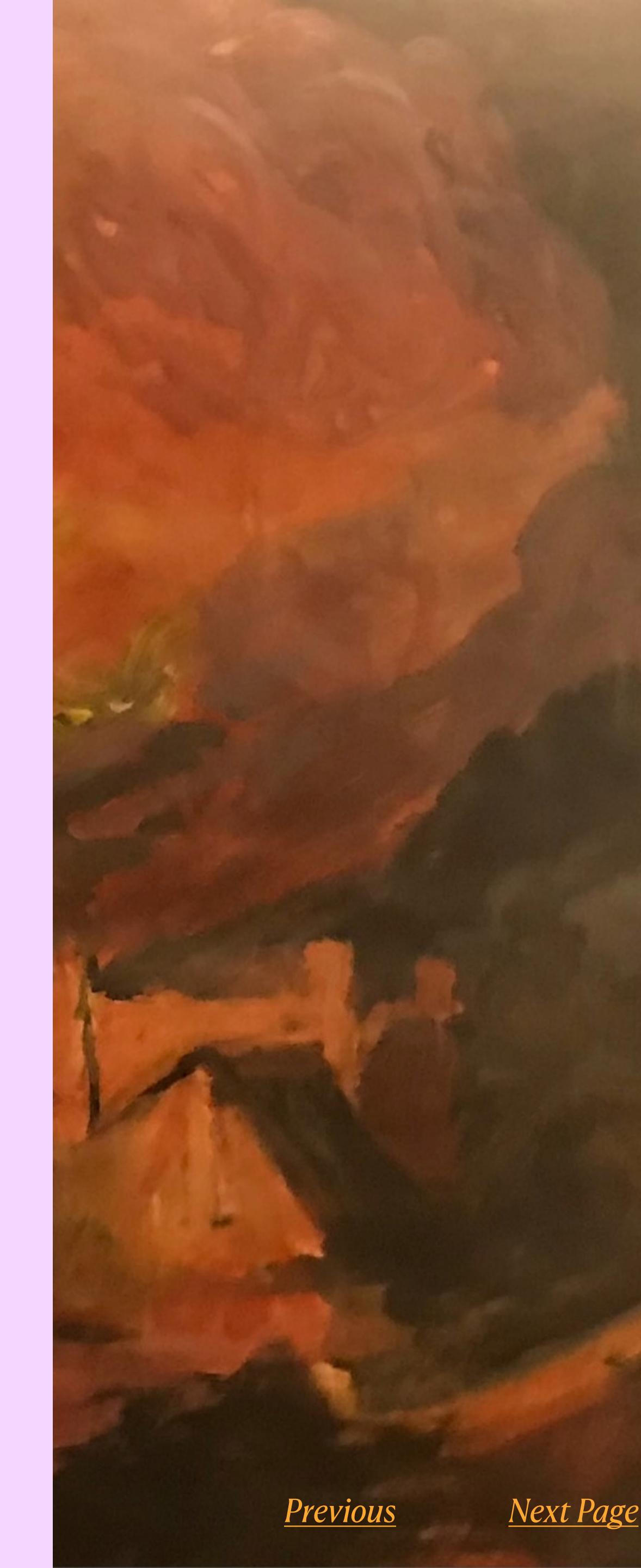
She reacted, turning ever so slightly, and looked out of the corner of her eye to see a short blade a foot or two away.

He brandished the weapon.

"What's your business?"

The nihilist did not move nor speak.

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Stefan raised his chin to enquire whether the nihilist was okay, or needed assistance.

He clenched his fists under the table and slowly made to get up from his seat.

She glanced up, shook her head slightly.

Although in fear for her life, the nihilist received not one signal from her radio contacts, and found, to her surprise, that she had no interest in one either; she felt her faith being tested; as her heart pumped rapidly she prayed for safety, and thought not for an instant to rely on anybody for help, but stayed focussed, eyes open and alert to the peripheral, hearing synced to the sounds of which there were few, breathing hardly at all now.

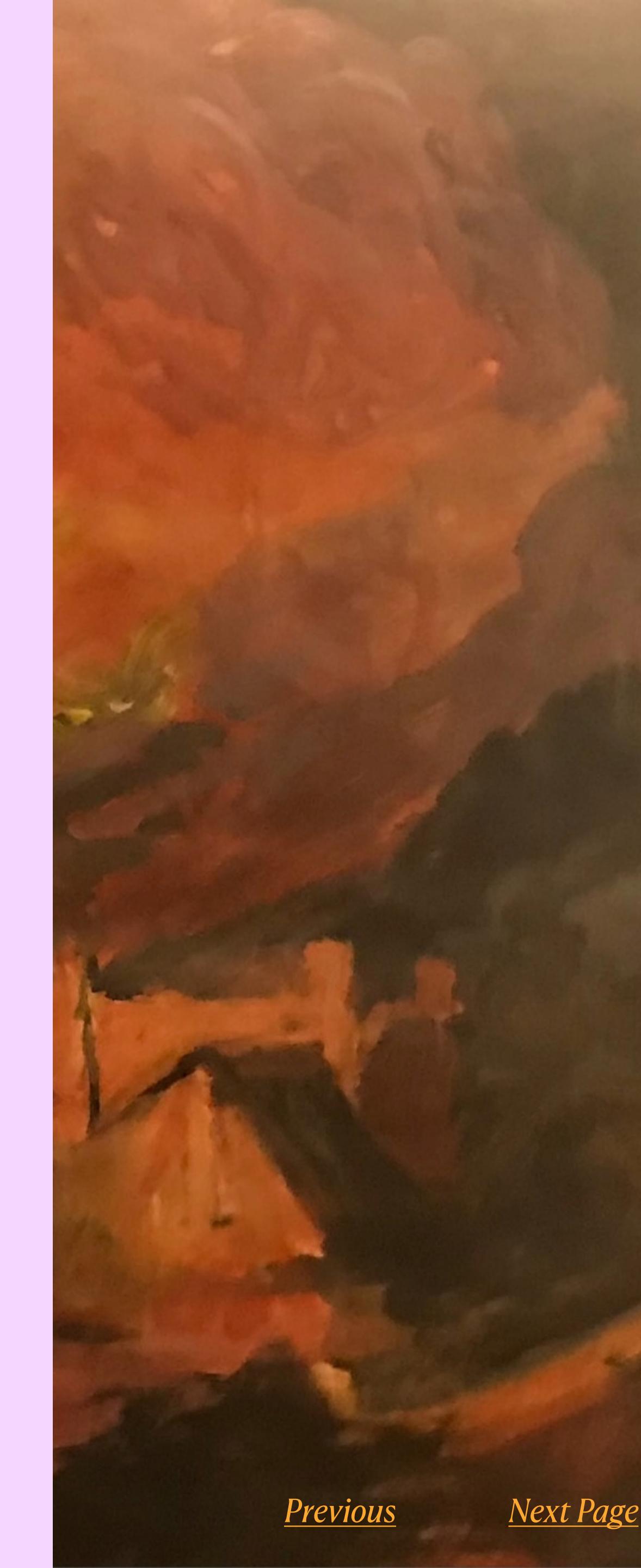
A blur of colour and activity orientated around the table twirled into sight, then ceased, fading gently, leaving traces like fresh watercolours in front of the nihilist's eyes.

She found the images dizzying...they were difficult to distinguish, like how sunlight plays off objects when eyes open in interruption of a deep sleep.

Within the space of a few seconds the assailant lay dazed on the floor, with his companion silent, shaking a little, staring at her in confusion as the knife rolled from side to side and to a standstill on the table.

She held the aggressor's companion's gaze until he departed, and there were sounds of relief from the bystanders. All had seen, but no-one was clear about what had happened.

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Sounds of astonishment erupted, people turning to each other for an explanation. It was all too quiet at her own table; turning, she caught Stefan's gaze.

She narrowed her eyes at him.

With his right hand over his mouth, he whispered under the noise of the surprised gasps. "What were you thinking?"

She drew a sharp breath, and then exhaled a short whimper.

"He was just curious." Stefan said in an over-sympathetic voice - a statement muffled by the screech of his chair as he stood up, danced his arms around in the air and exclaimed over the noise of the crowd,

"What magic is this?!"

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A Tension To Deal With

Alone in her hotel room, the nihilist continued to drink, slightly neurotically, as she wondered at the events of the evening just passed, and drew conclusions thereof.

Stefan was 'one'.

She felt juvenile putting it like that.

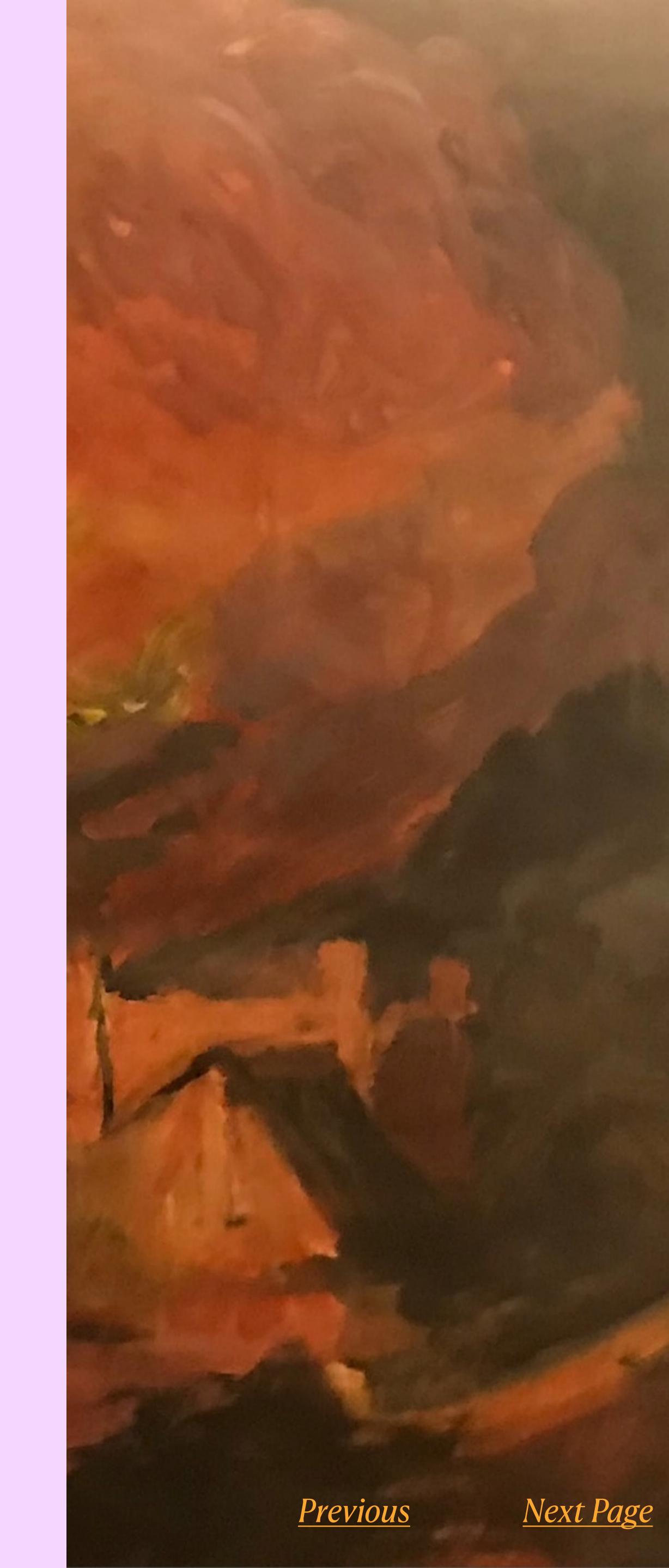
Her attention was distracted suddenly as she thought she heard a word, it could have been 'one', or just an essence of a 'hmm' with a slight degree of dry, bored sarcasm about it, as someone figures they have only imagined a light snigger from a friend over the other side of a room.

She didn't respond, and felt rather impressed with the restraint she had displayed in not reacting, then realised the irony of this afterthought and sank to self-criticism.

This was a typical routine in the nihilist's head. A subtle, if puerile, interplay of pride and regret, troughs and peaks, elation and gravity, thoughts and reflections almost systematically destroying their predecessors, like a chess player's logical processes through the flawed, the inefficacious and the illegal.

She wasn't sure whether legality had anything to do with it, however. It certainly didn't seem to be an overriding principle behind their activities.

With grinding commencement, the nihilist's sense perceptions were distorted, gradually, her impressions of the environment



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poisoned like a mould's spreading, darkening and sinking into a tapering groove, drowning as a record is scratched to a near-standstill, the needle cutting steadily through the vinyl, decelerating, vision and sound withdrawing like a flower's bloom in reverse by some freak abomination of causality.

She accepted it.

Enjoyed it even, as it happened.

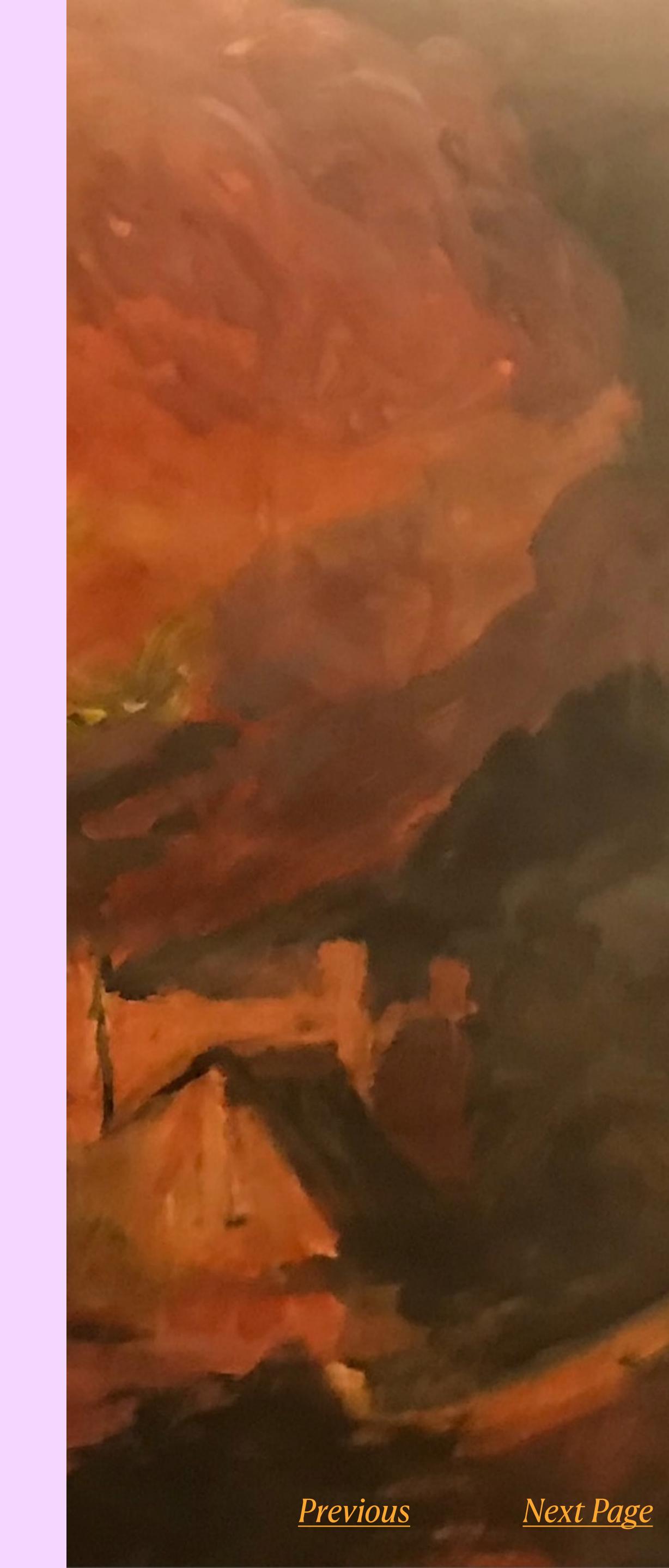
Then as time drew apparently closer, and closer to stopping altogether and the pressure came too hard she tensed, screwed her eyes up and flexed her body in revulsion.

Reality reassumed its normal footing in an unsatisfactorily simple manner; she woke to the perfectly un-extraordinary environment of her hotel room in the raising of an eyelid, as though all she had witnessed was the brief deterioration of sunlight from a distant star, and its flickering to life again. It wasn't the most intense effect she had ever been exposed to by a long shot, although it always took her by surprise, and always left her thinking:

What the *fuck* was the point of *that*?

Could she assume there was work to be accomplished in the city? She reasoned as she expected they would want her to; there was no such thing as 'work to be done' – there was work to be done everywhere, and nowhere – work was not even a concept they dealt in especially; you pay your own way, and you earn the privilege of... what? she wondered.

Staying alive *seemed* to be an answer.



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There weren't any perks of the trade; there was no play time, and they arbitrarily encouraged your downfall.

To make some point, she assumed.

Heartless, however well-grounded in espionage methodology.

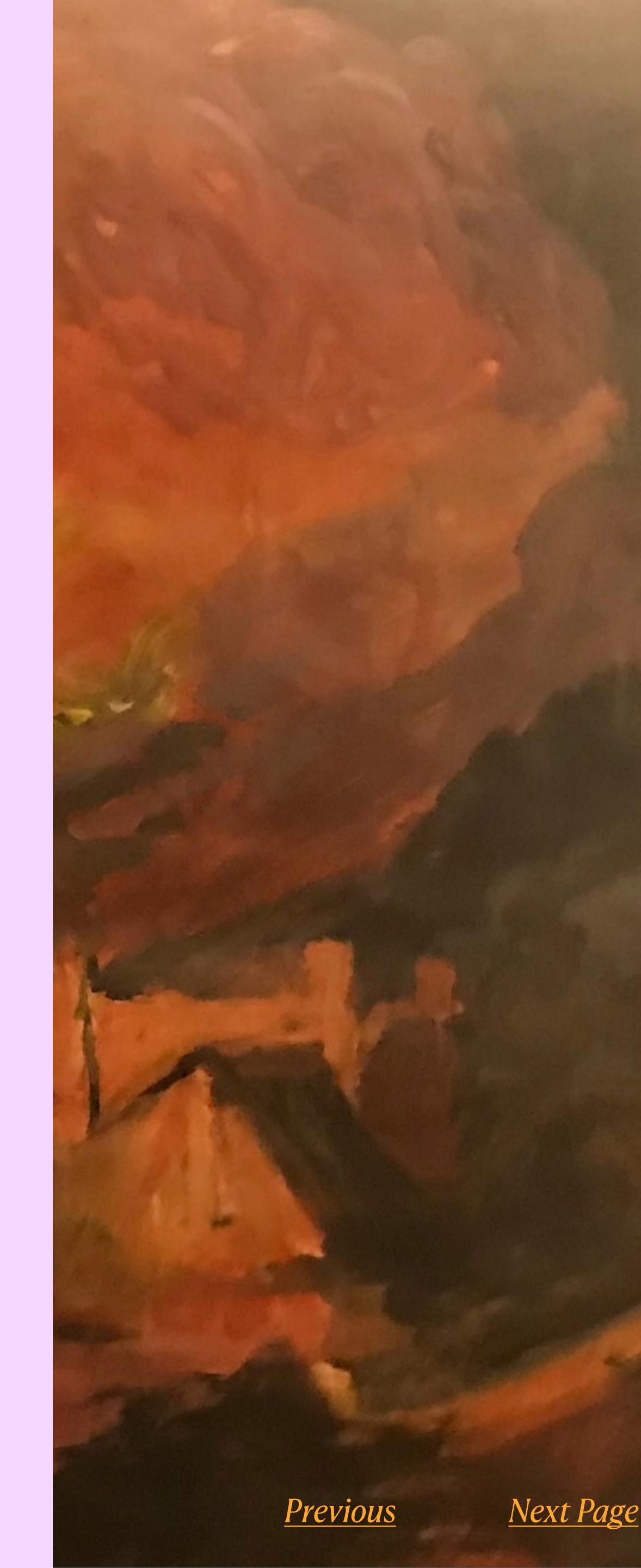
And toys for the boys? Boys *were* the *toys*.

One thing she was becoming readily assured of was the nature of 'need to know'. Mindset was crucial to the job. Sometimes actual, un-contrived responses, raw emotion, authentic human expressions of affection, distaste, fear, satisfaction are more effective than synthetic behaviour. If you don't know it's coming, your behaviour is real. In some respects irreplaceable.

The operations of those in control of her behaviour were immense, inconceivably gigantic in scale, the extents to which they managed the circumstances were just mind-blowing, and yet she was, or at least felt on her own when things got nasty.

Their succour vanished like a shadow cast out of a closing door. The promise of assistance not hidden by the darkness but rather composed of it, the silhouette a trace of something accidental noted many moons ago, and never assumed to be anything other than a tiny detail in a wider remit of eventualities, which happened to be useful at this very point in time, and gone...as readily as it was introduced.

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The nihilist's arm was slowed to a pause with the bottle of liquor, the label came into focus, and the merest suggestion of a wink afflicted her left eye.

She squinted, and stilled a little, as a warmth came over her, dawning like a realisation, a revelation, something Stefan had said late in the evening, something about him being 'a real cliche'...as he handed her the bottle of vodka she was about to pour into her glass.

Oh for fuck's sake, she thought, put the glass and bottle down, and sat on end of the bed. It wasn't much of a joke, and might as well have been a coincidence, but she was familiar with their antics; if it occurred to her, it had almost certainly occurred to him first, and if not planned, it was at least shared.

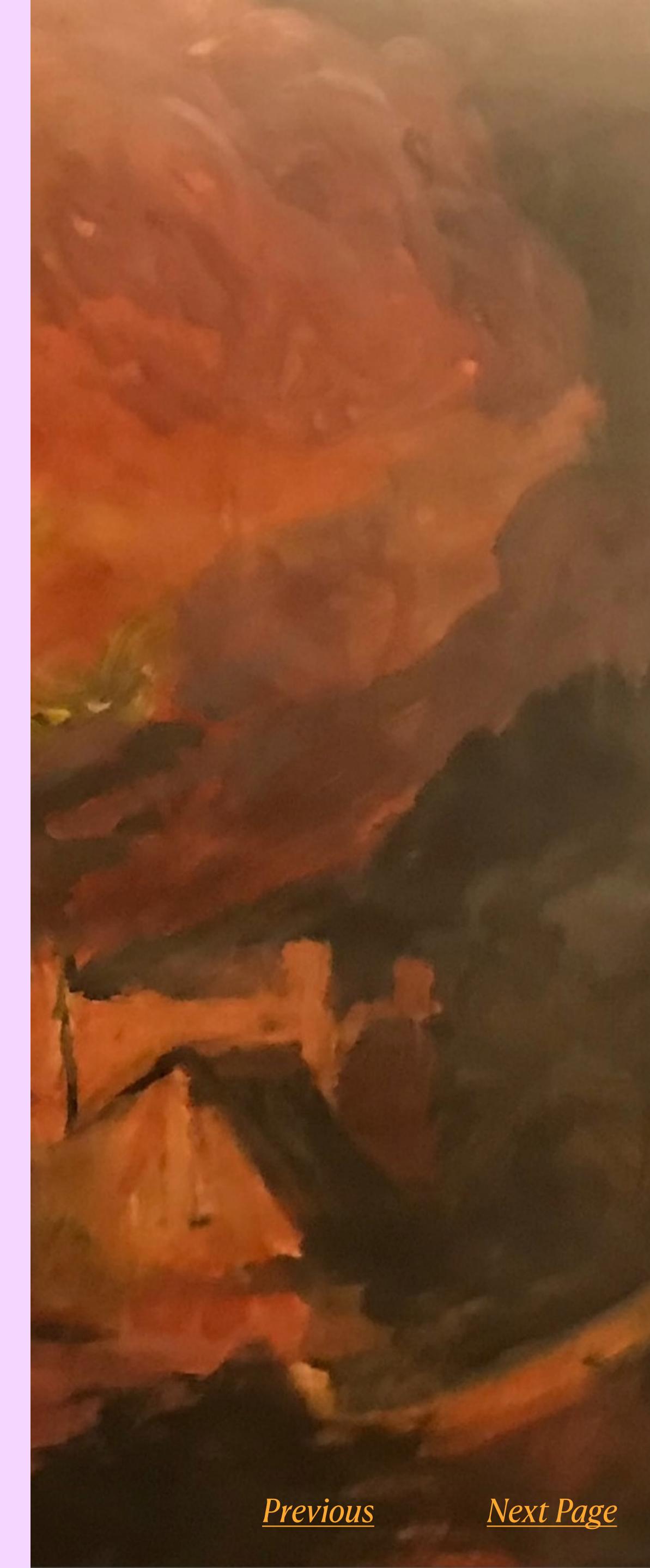
Wink wink.

She started laughing, quietly and uncontrollably, then breathed it all in and flopped her head onto the pillow to sleep.

* * * * *

The nihilist opened her eyes and blinked a few times before Stefan's head poked around the door, saluted with two fingers to his temple and said "Morning," in her own, received English dialect. She giggled, but didn't say anything.

She was fond of him, forced to respect him because he was patently always a step ahead of her, and she was scared of him as a consequence, and to top it all off, she despised him, just a little, from a deep recess in her psyche blunted, or perhaps



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more appropriately, sharpened, by her past treatment in the services.

It was a game they played, 'love-hate' you might call it; see how much they can peeve her before getting her back on side as easily as pacifying a bawling child with the offer of an ice cream.

Still peering round, he knocked on the door. The nihilist beckoned him in.

He walked over to the desk at the far end of the room and started turning a lamp on and off curiously and flicking through a magazine.

He asked if he could smoke a roll up, to which the nihilist said 'I'd rather you didn't'. He took an orange from a basket next to the lamp, threw it once, caught it and said, "- And what shall we be doing today?"

She smiled, and almost giggled.

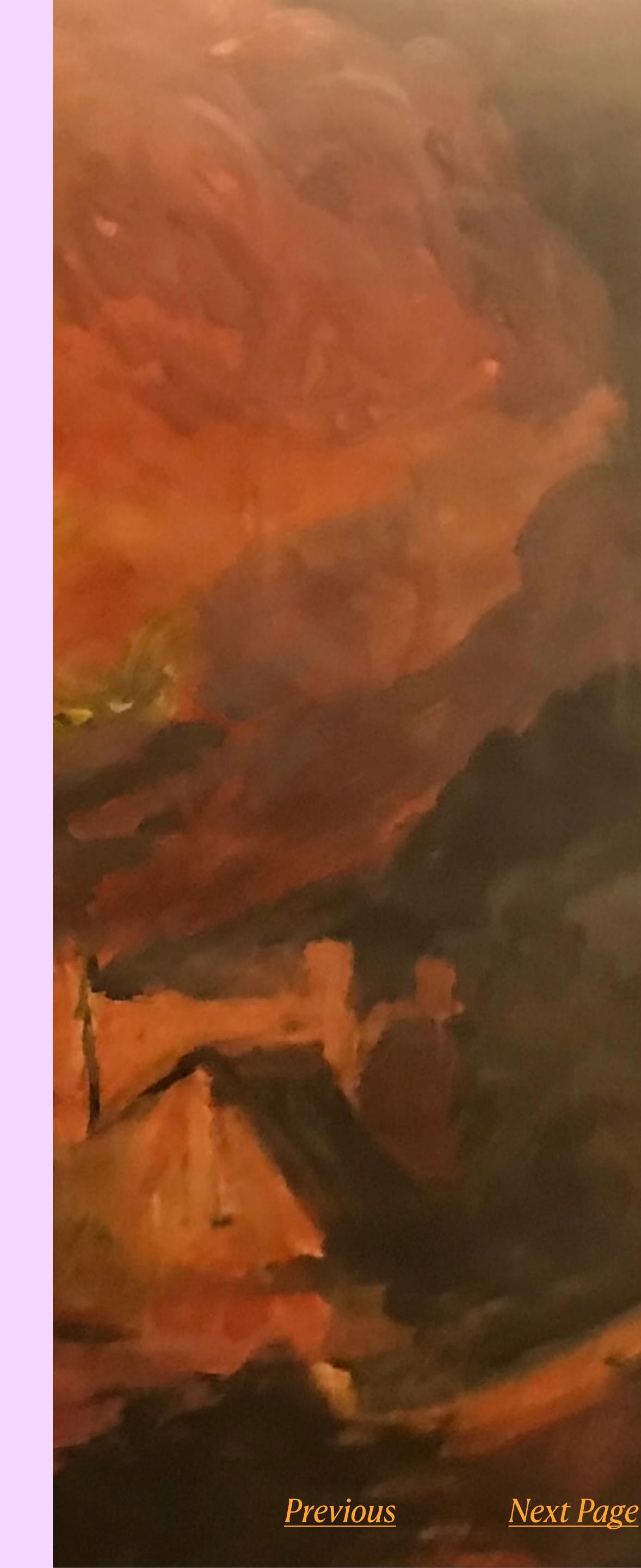
Instead, she said what she supposed was the most obvious thing she could think of - "I don't know..." then tried to be imaginative (and felt sure she would fail to say anything he wouldn't anticipate): "...we could take a trip to the circus...?"

"This is a fine idea, yeah, I like it, okay." He held the orange out to her.

"Is it one of yours?"

"No you can have it."

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“Oh, it’s mine, good.” He peeled it and took a couple of segments in his palm, then tipped his head back and threw them into his mouth like spirit shots. “You were smashed last night I guess.” She smiled and said “No, I was perfectly compusmental... combustmental... ist... *fuck*...!”

“I understand,” he said “you had not too little and not more than enough. It’s okay, I don’t care.” She was about to say ‘I’m sure’, but Stefan held his hand, fingers splayed, in the air.

“No need to explain.”

The nihilist felt stupid for planning a sarcastic remark, and closed her eyes in contempt for the situation.

She breathed out and said “I’m getting up.”

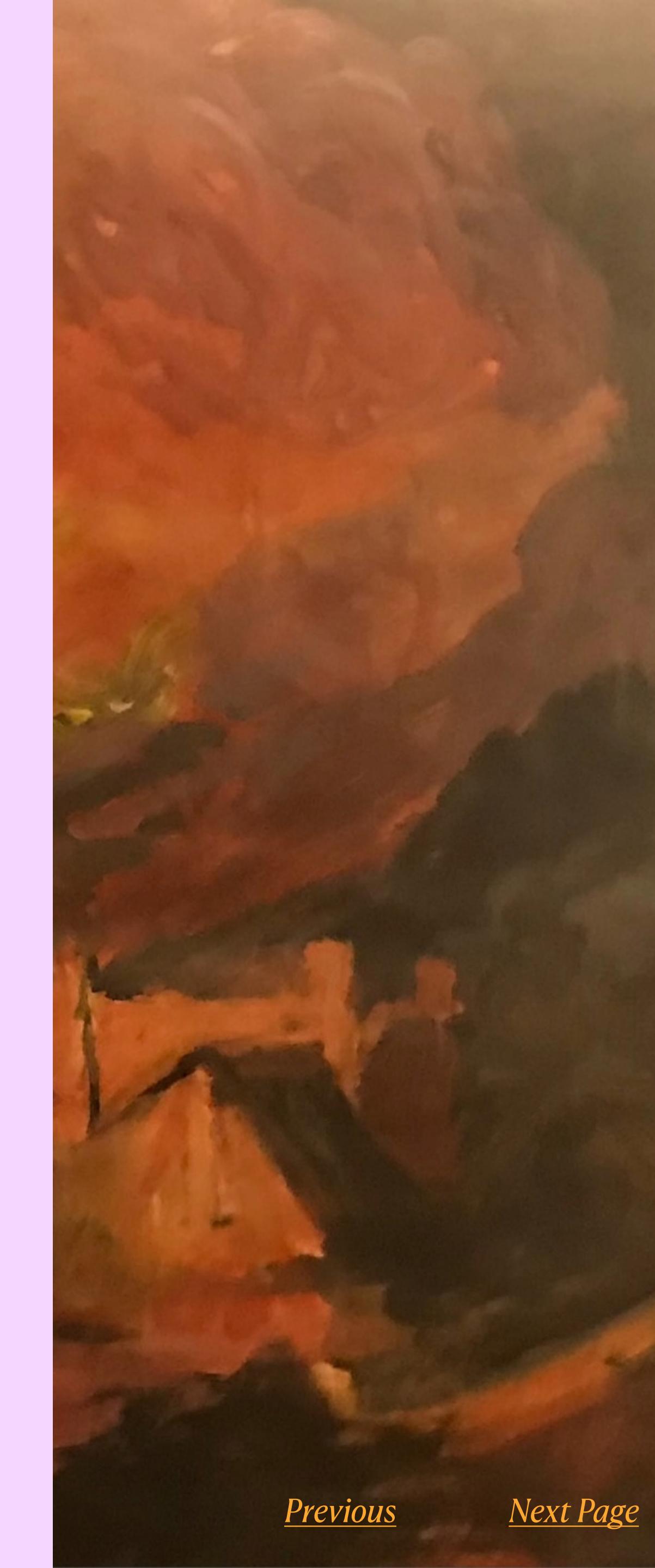
“No more, I’ll get off your back.” He left and the nihilist pulled herself out of bed.

As she dressed in jeans and a fleece the magazine caught her eye...

Facing up from the page was a poster of three elephants standing one on top of the other in a feature advertising the local circus.

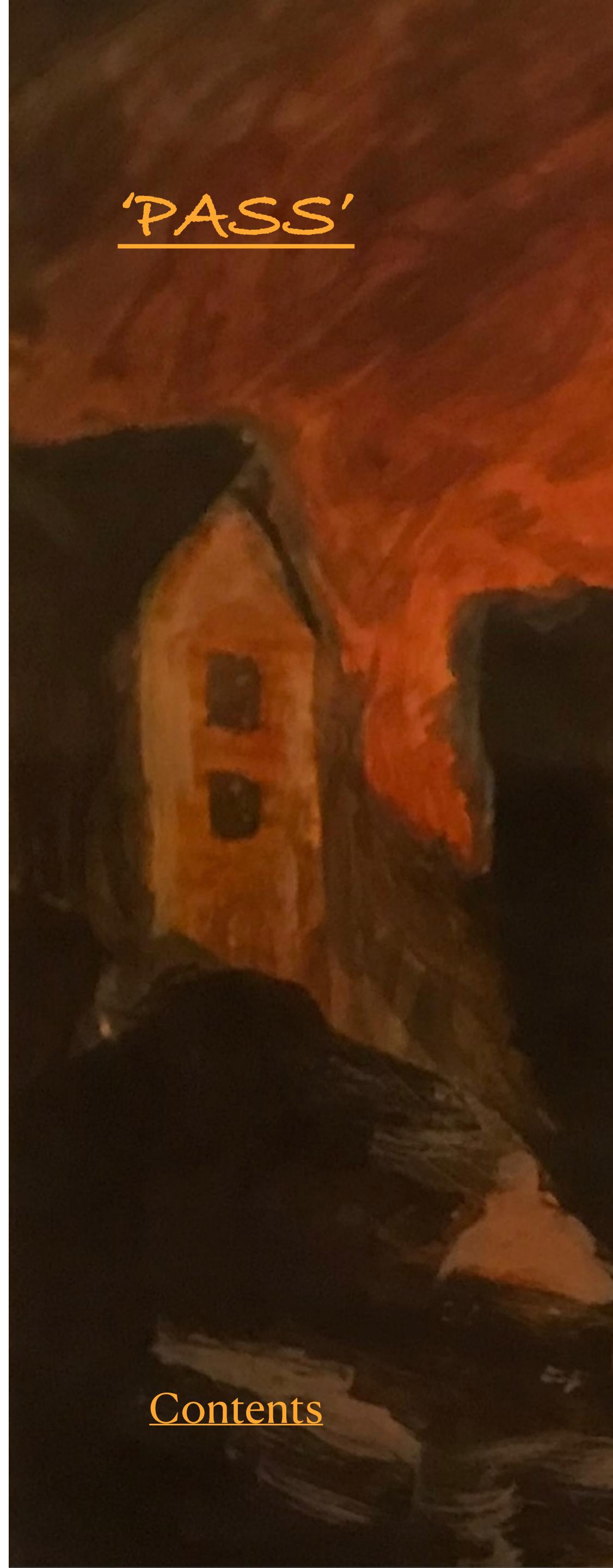
The nihilist groaned and fell back onto the duvet.

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Low-Level Profiling

Stefan's car was an old banger, worn and corroded in red and brown rust.

"For appearance," he said, "I don't want people to know how I make money. So when I'm not on my old bike, I've got a rubbish car. That's the way it is."

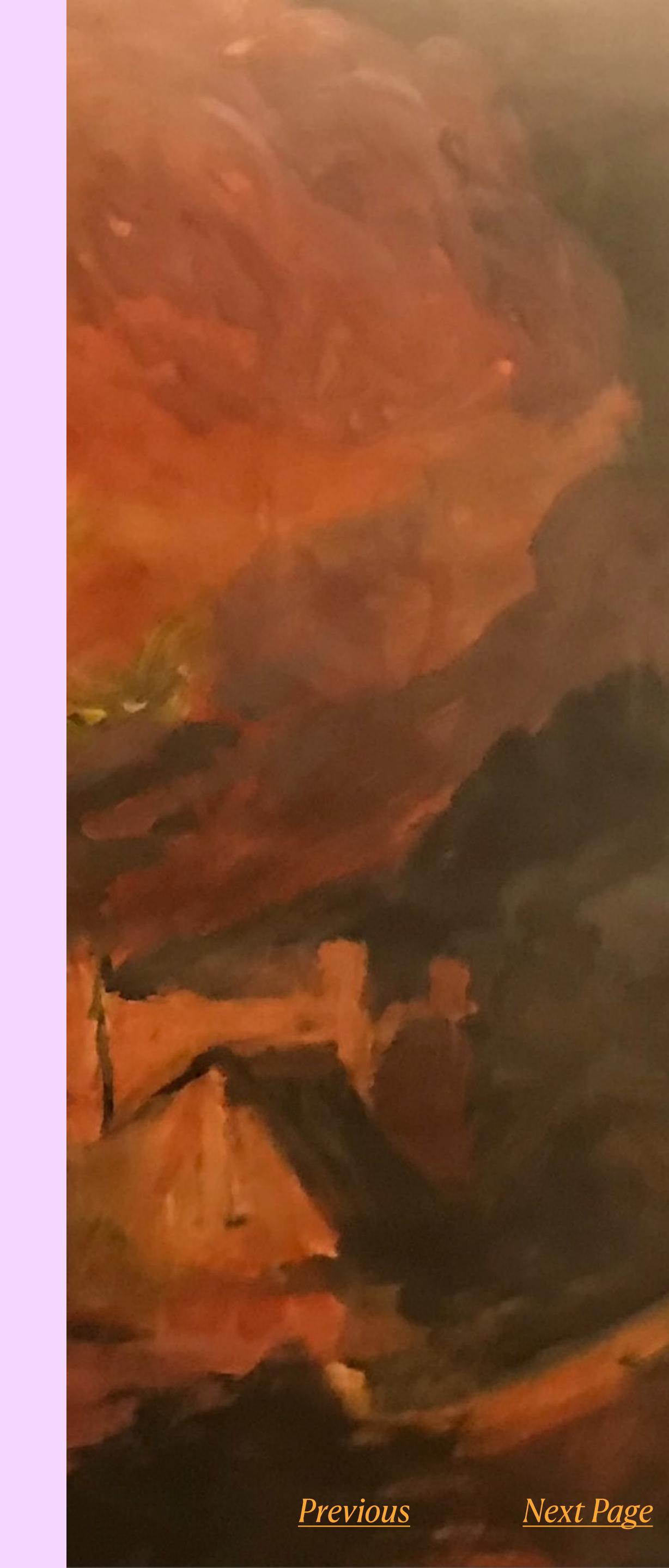
"So long as it goes..." the nihilist said, her head slamming back against the headrest...

It was the most frightening drive she had ever experienced. He edged in here and accelerated round there and backed up in front of oncoming traffic; as a driver he was performing poorly as well as making risky decisions. "At least you're consistent I suppose..." she said, the tail end of the word being elongated by the car swerving.

He turned his head to look at her, meanwhile going up on two wheels briefly, and rocking down and on to the other two. The nihilist's eyes were wide open and she gasped all the way. Stefan threw the magazine out of the window into a dustbin.

"We won't be needing this."

He drove into an underground car park and the nihilist noticed as they collected speed and travelled through, the car was closer to the ground, and making no noise. A confusing sub-network of routes led the vehicle round in smaller and smaller circles until it was rotating on the spot.



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They arrived silently in a colossal hall consisting of laboratories, offices, studios and... “ - Is that a... *cafe*?” the nihilist asked, screwing her eyes up at a wooden division with round tables and a serving section, as the car came to a halt.

“We get the odd customer.” Stefan replied as they got out.

“There’s nobody here.” The nihilist’s voiced echoed down the hall. It echoed systematically in every cell.

“Stop that Rupert.” Stefan said sharply.

The nihilist looked up at Stefan, “...They can control...?”

“Yesyesyesyes...here’s your computer.”

“REALLY? CHEERS!”

“No not really. This is your office though.”

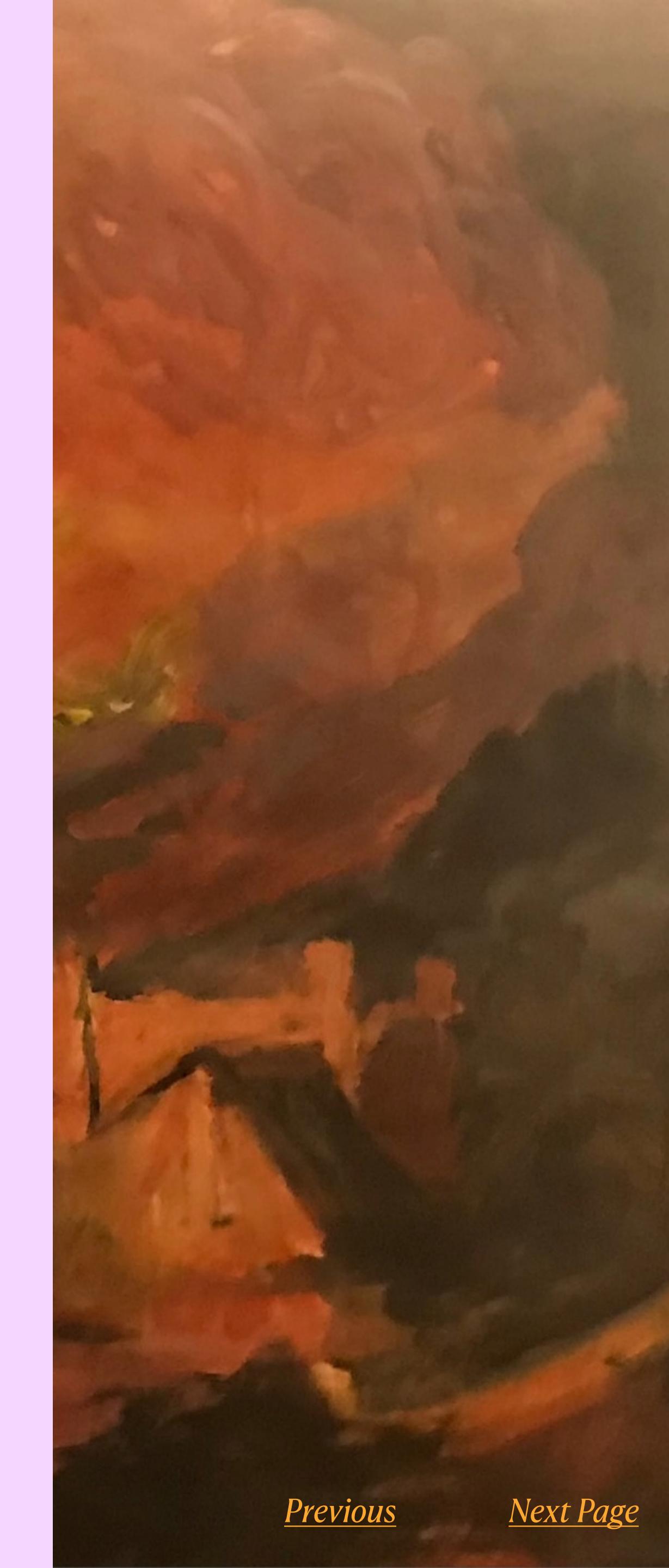
“Is it?”

“No.”

“Oh whatever.”

“They’re all yours. You’re in charge – we needed someone with your kind of brain to oversee operations. You have a particular style, a genuineness none of us possess. A little naive, yes, but we know we can trust you. Can we trust you?”

“Well...yes. But...”



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“None of what I just said applies. Are you getting the picture?”

“You’re a lot more unpleasant than you were earlier.”

“That’s the way it goes I guess.”

“What do I...”

“Beat you.”

“Wha...”

“Beat you again. I will beat the life out of you if you ask again.”

“Bu...”

“Beat you again and again.”

The nihilist looked around her, then up at him.

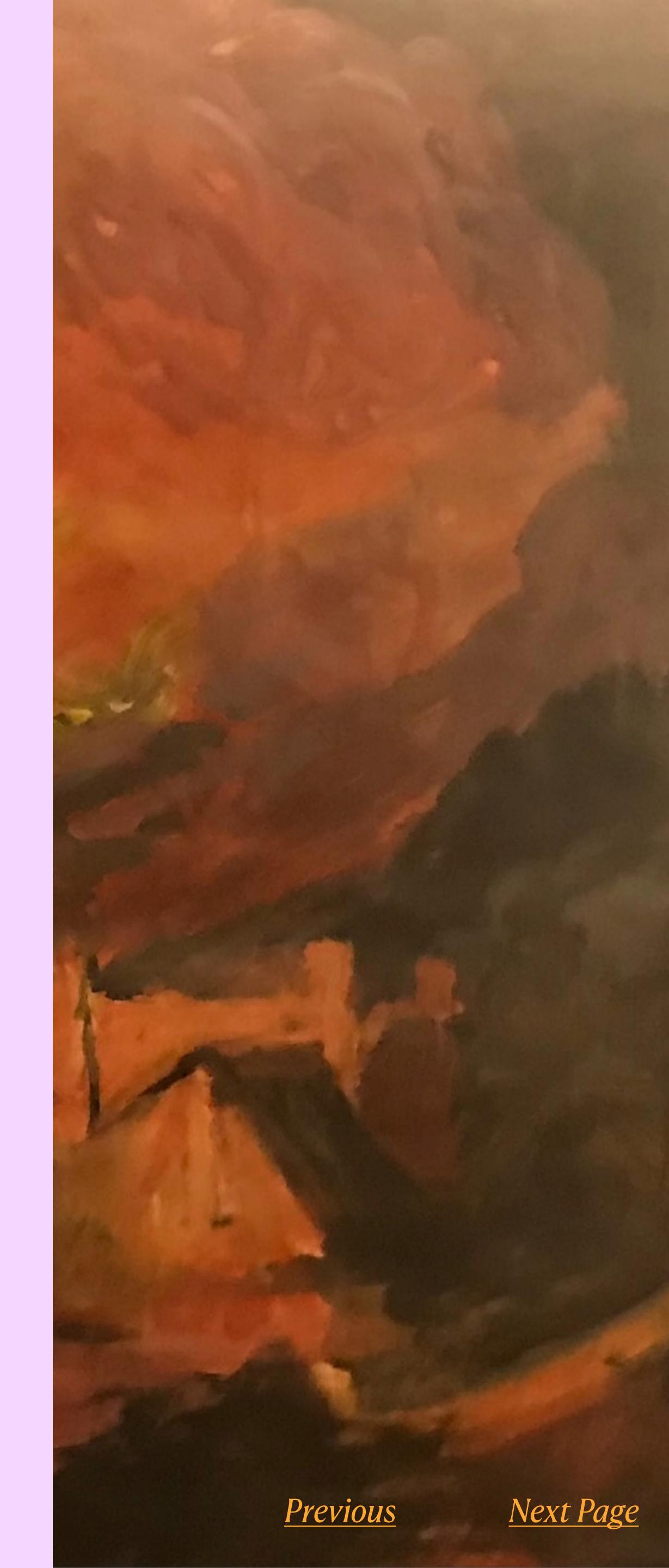
Her face, wide eyed and motionless, enquired ‘What do I do?’

She didn’t dare say it.

Stefan gave her a slightly sympathetic smile, and she could hear birds tweeting... “What the fuck? Was that...”

Stefan didn’t say anything but put his hand up to his mouth and chortled.

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She knew why he wouldn't answer. It was because she needed to be discerning enough to know where the trick was coming from. She always thought of someone sitting at a desk reading novels in a language he had only a faint grasp of, trawling through reams and reams until patterns emerged.

"I hate it." she said. "I love it. I hate it."

"Oh you *hate* it do you?" He said with a sneer.

"She *hates* it, let her *hate* it," said a voice. "Stefan stop playing with the trainee."

"Yes I *hate* it" said the nihilist. "It's brilliant," her eyes watered up. "I wish I wasn't here. I can't stand it!"

The voice, which seemed to be all around, close by and coming from no particular direction said, "I think she likes it."

"I don't think she does you know," said a voice on the intercom system.

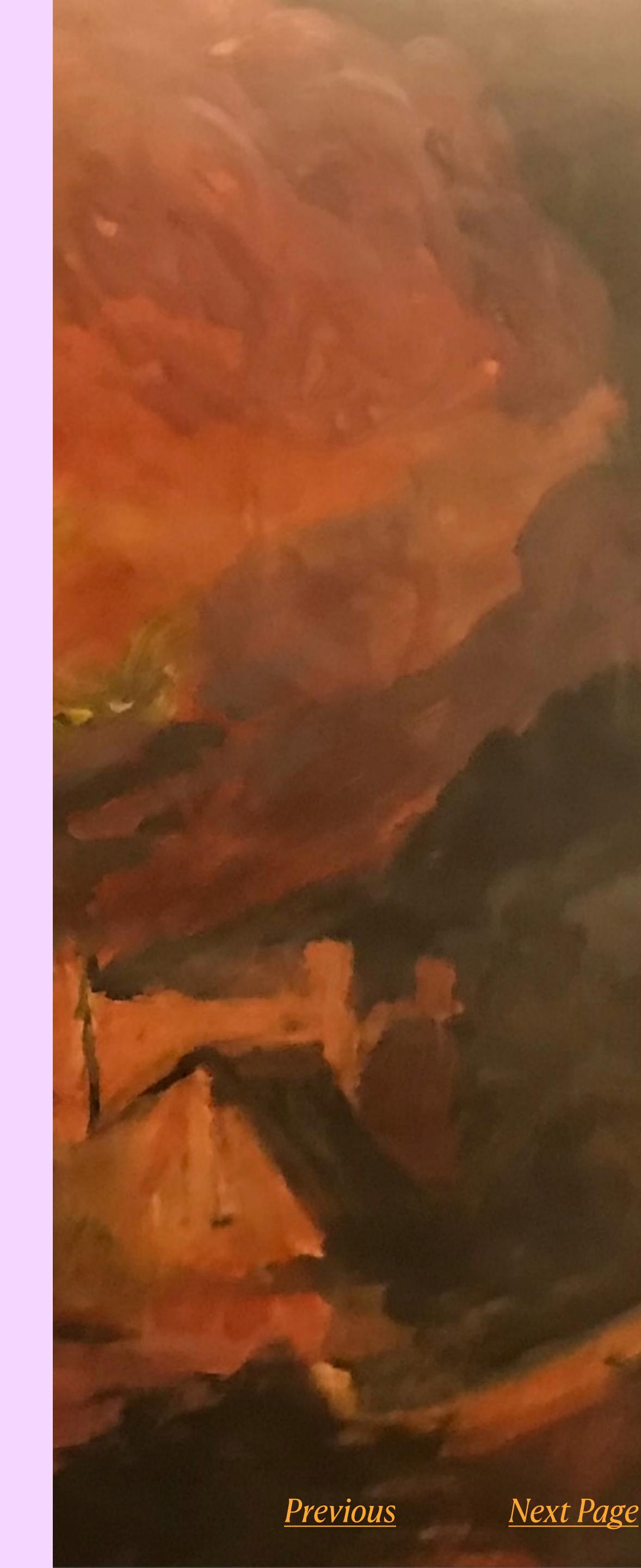
"She said she likes it..." Stefan suggested.

"No, she didn't..."

"What are you talking about?" the nihilist sniffed and asked calmly.

"Oh, she's back!"

"What are your names? Who are you?" the nihilist said, raising her head and talking to her side, "Rupert?"



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“No?”

“I’ve an idea!” said a deeper male voice through the speakers.

“And what’s *your* name?” Asked the nihilist.

“Derible.”

“Great, pleased to meet you. Let’s do this okay? What’s your name Stefan?”

“You’ll never learn.” said Stefan and sighed, stayed silent for several seconds, then pointed to a silver unit about the size of an A4 printer with a diamond shaped panel of 9 keys, an array of different types of microphones and one other panel, which slid aside to allow the protrusion of a camera lens.

“You see this?” He said.

“Yes.”

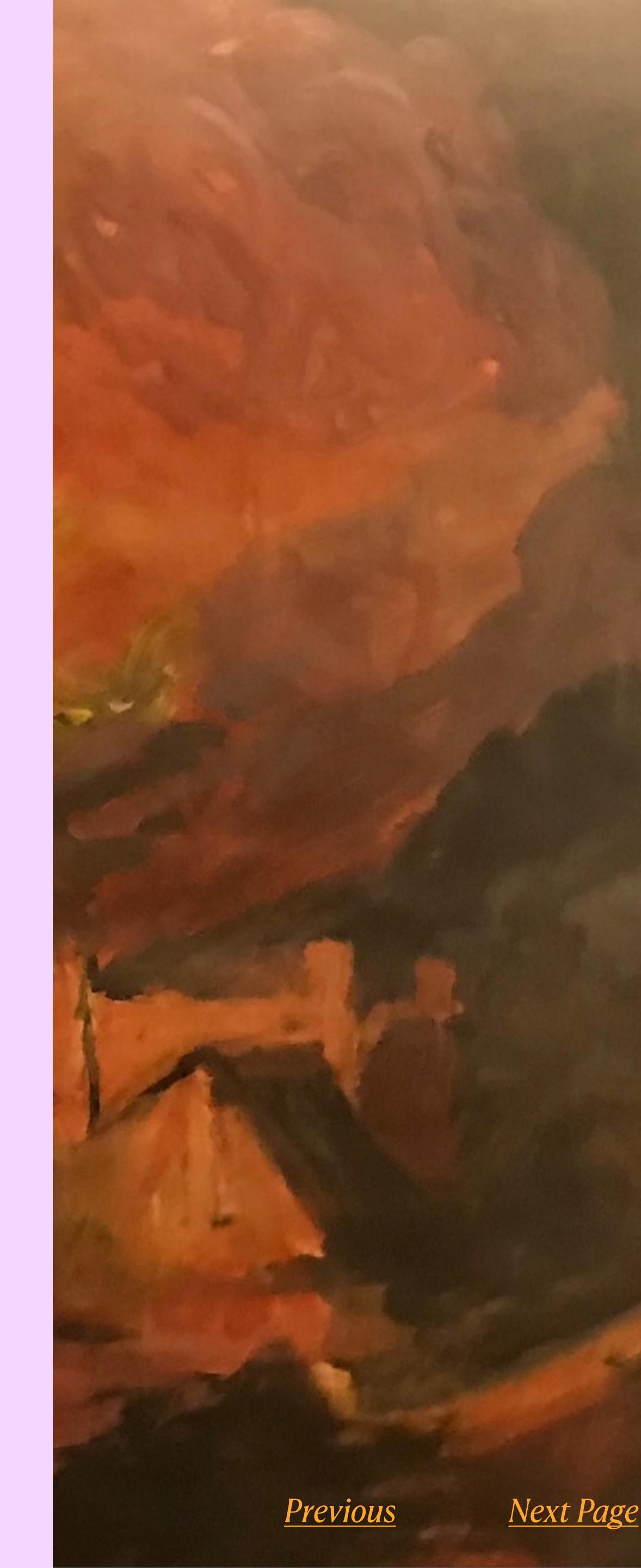
“It’s been watching you.”

The camera shifted around slowly in a circle. “Rupert...” Stefan said in a warning tone.

He turned back to the nihilist. “It receives...information. Don’t ever touch it.”

The nihilist nodded and pursed her lips.

“Didn’t you hear me? I said don’t ever touch it.”



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The nihilist looked up, un-pursed her lips with a 'tut' and said, "Oh! I see. That was a little lie wasn't it?"

"Here you can touch it" Stefan said in a calmer voice.

The nihilist reached out - only to reel back as two frequencies like a merry go round combined with a police siren whooped and dived at her from all around.

Stefan's head rocked back as he laughed. "Make as much noise as..." he said and mumbled the end of the sentence to himself.

"Boo!" she said, keen to stay in the conversation.

"Yes well you might boo, or hoo, or not know what to do, but you should understand one thing." he looked at her and smiled.

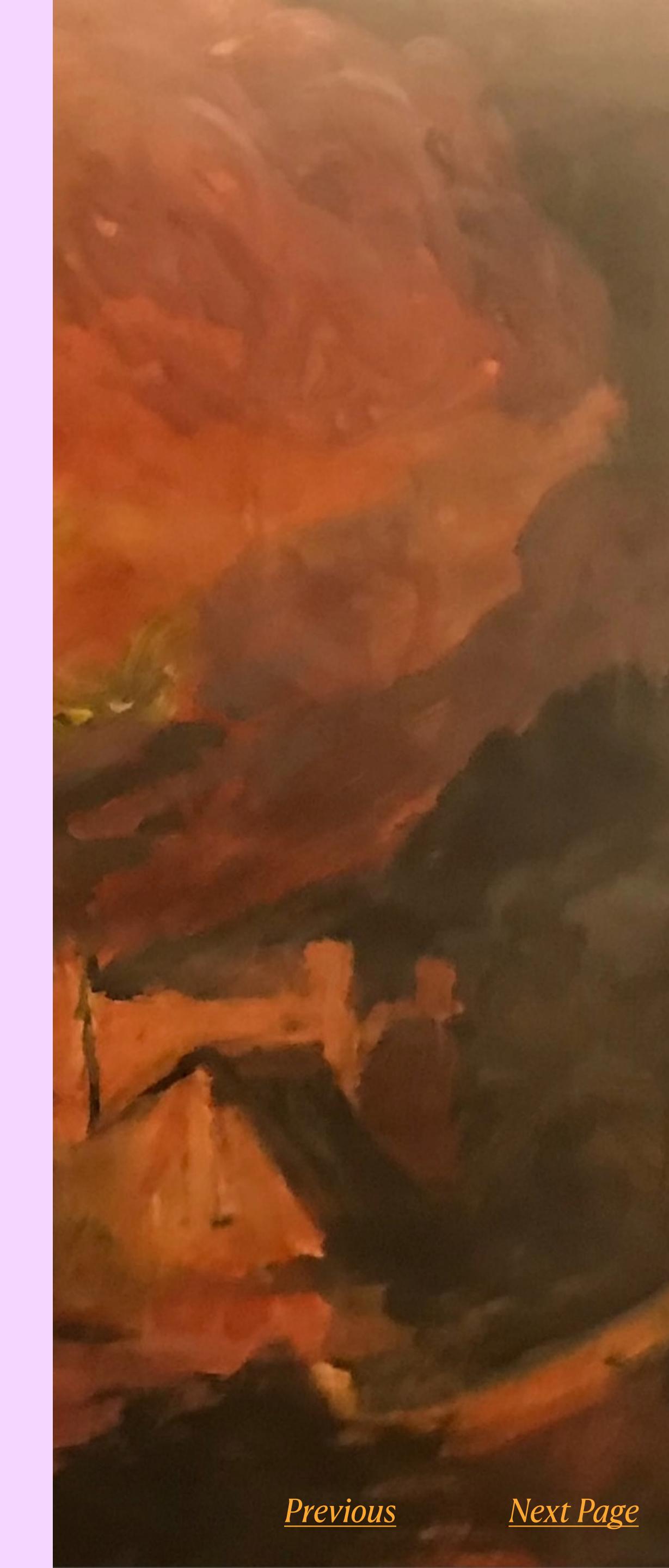
"Yes, go on." she said reluctantly.

"We don't interfere much. It's quite chaotic here...in a way."

Stefan climbed back into his old banger, which had smartened up a lot and changed colour. "I've got two cars" he explained.

A platform, previously forming part of the floor, rose with the car on top, and vanished into shadows and shards of light in the ceiling.

Someone, the nihilist wasn't sure who, took her by both shoulders and launched her round in a circle whose



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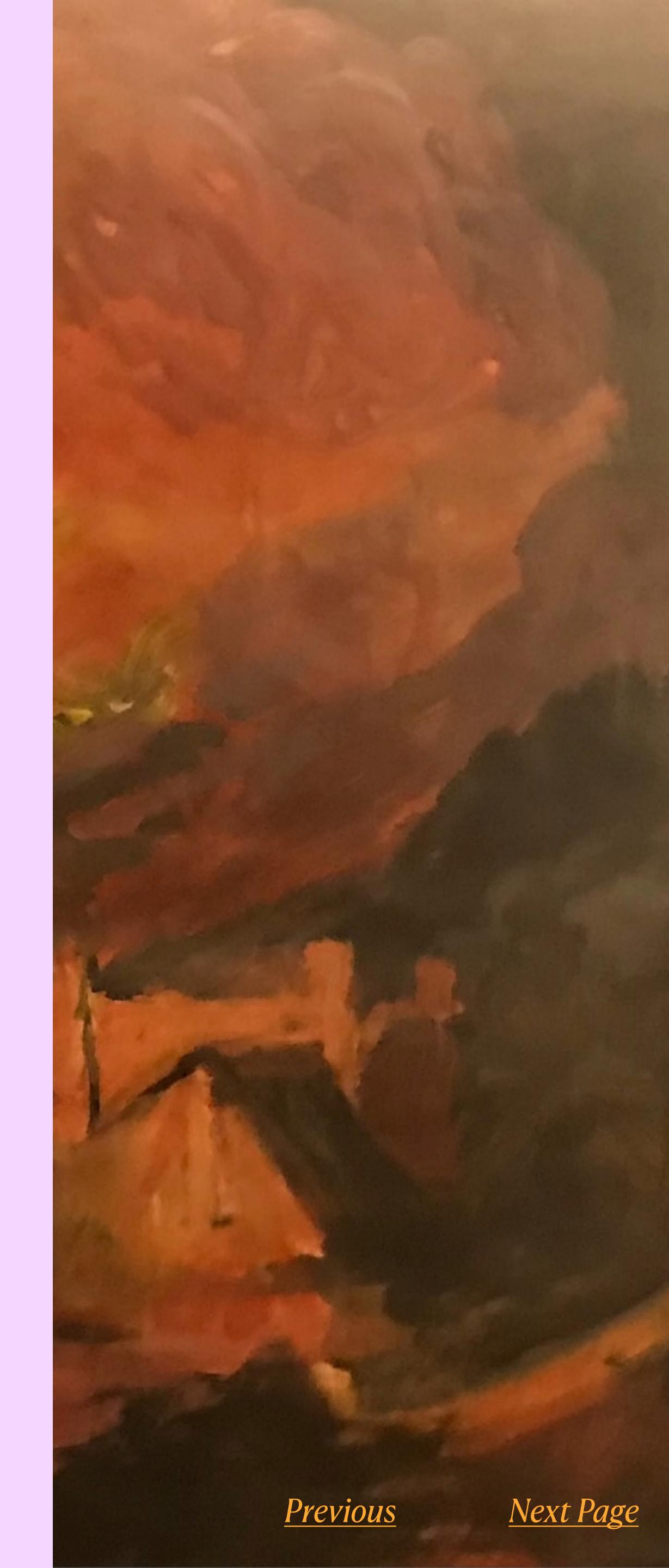
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momentum was sustained briefly by what she thought might be some form of externally-operated radio or electrical wave technology in her neuromuscular system, persuasive about her centre of gravity to minimise energy-expense.

When she stopped spinning, an exit door, out of what had reverted to being the car park, was the most notable feature.

It was light outside, and attractive to go out, so she wobbled through the painted door and into a sunlit garden, feeling dizzy.



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Knowing Who Is In Charge

As she walked in the direction of a taxi rank, which occupied a short length of the kerb a little way along the street, the nihilist realised she wasn't paying close attention to her surroundings; she had been delirious with memories of the day for the last couple of minutes.

Snapping back to the present with the reflexes of a martial arts - well, novice, she supposed - she noted the activities of those around her.

Under a second later a previously apparently inconspicuous member of the public nodded his head, apparently in acknowledgement of her newly recovered sense of awareness.

No, she thought, that's not very li... - A girl who was passing interrupted the nihilist's thought by making a clicking sound with her mouth.

The nihilist watched her continue left up the road, and felt remotely inclined to go in pursuit.

It was her controllers, effecting a sensation of inclination in her knees, to do their willing... which she should resist.

Okay. She thought, and began to turn to her left anyway.

'Hang on girl.'

The words came to her rather as the sound of a rusted cymbal, the overtones were the vowels, the grainy resonance picking out the harsher tones of the consonants.



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Huh! She thought. She was used to interruptions of this sort. They usually meant nothing. If she was clever enough to clearly comprehend an instruction it was probably a trick, since anything of real significance would almost always be enabled through subliminal influencing.

‘What have we always...’

You’ve always told me to ignore your instructions, she thought. To do the opposite in fact.

‘So.’

You want me to stop? Tough.

‘No, we want you to keep gong.’ The sound of the last word in the sentence rang smoothly for a number of seconds

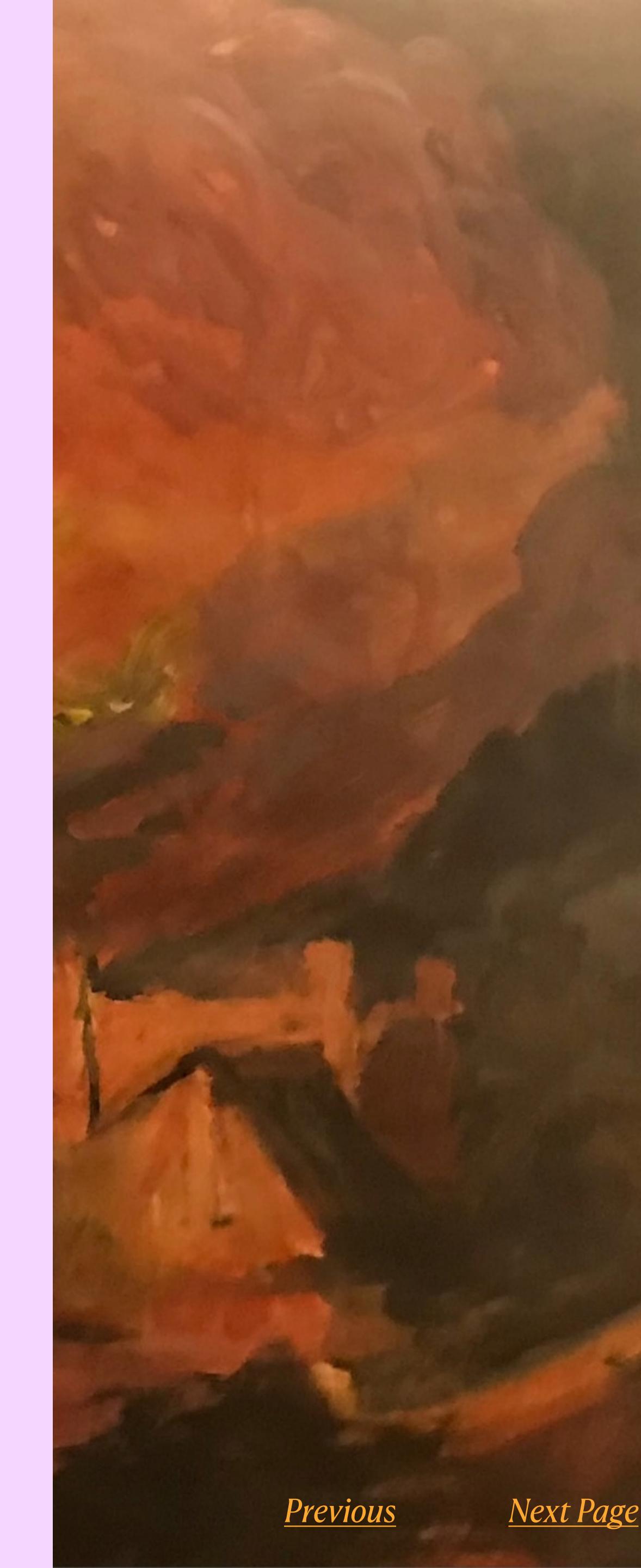
I... started the nihilist.

The sentence ‘can do what I like’ was of her own generation, but there was a sort of emphasis of the utterance in her hands and feet, as if the sounds were created on a drum kit; snare-kick, snare-kick, cymbal smash.

The nihilist said ‘okay’ in an irritably sarcastic voice, and as she was catching up with the lady, considered what to say.

‘Who the hell are you?’

Or perhaps ‘Ello mate!’



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Part of her wanted to shout obscenities

She settled on “Excuse me.”

“Yes?”

“Oh! English are you? That’s a coincidence.”

“Sorry?”

“Oh you’re English are you??!!”

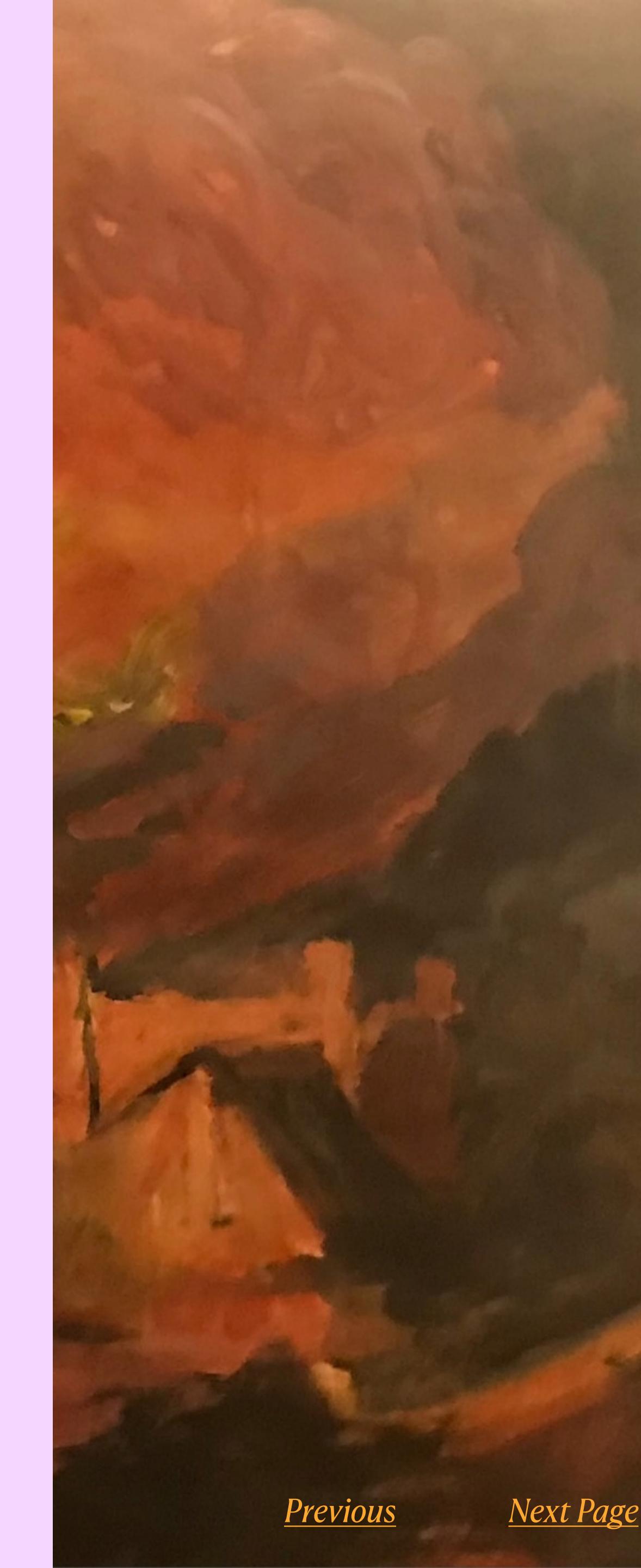
“Oh. Actually, no. Can I help? Why are you shouting? You’re upset about something.”

The nihilist drew back and sank to a place deep in her soul where all the questions about why she was here, what was happening to her and how she had been treated were nesting.

She breathed in deeply. A gigantic parade of complaints conveyed with the lucidity of a professional public speaker, the emotiveness of an accomplished Shakespearian actress, punctuated with expletives, and in the tone of an elephant whose toes have been run over by a tank, was on the tip of her tongue.

“Hush,” said the lady, breathing in and somehow thus extracting the elongated moan attempt from the nihilist’s mouth, “I can see you are distressed. You must come with me and we will see if we can’t cheer you up.”

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The nihilist grimaced with a look of disappointment and utter sorrow. “Er...” was all she could manage before the lady gripped her elbow and took her onwards.

As they made their way up the street every passer by threw the nihilist a nod, a greeting, a gesture of some description. After this had happened several times, somewhat thrilled, she finally stopped gasping, turned to her newest companion and said “How do they know me?”

“Excellent question” she replied, “and the answer you are looking for is...here.”

She opened a taxi door and invited the nihilist to get inside. She used her knee to nudge the back of the nihilist’s leg and manoeuvred her into the back seat, over to the other side, then got in herself. The nihilist heard car doors locking. She felt for her safety but the car took off with a screech.

“What’s...” she began.

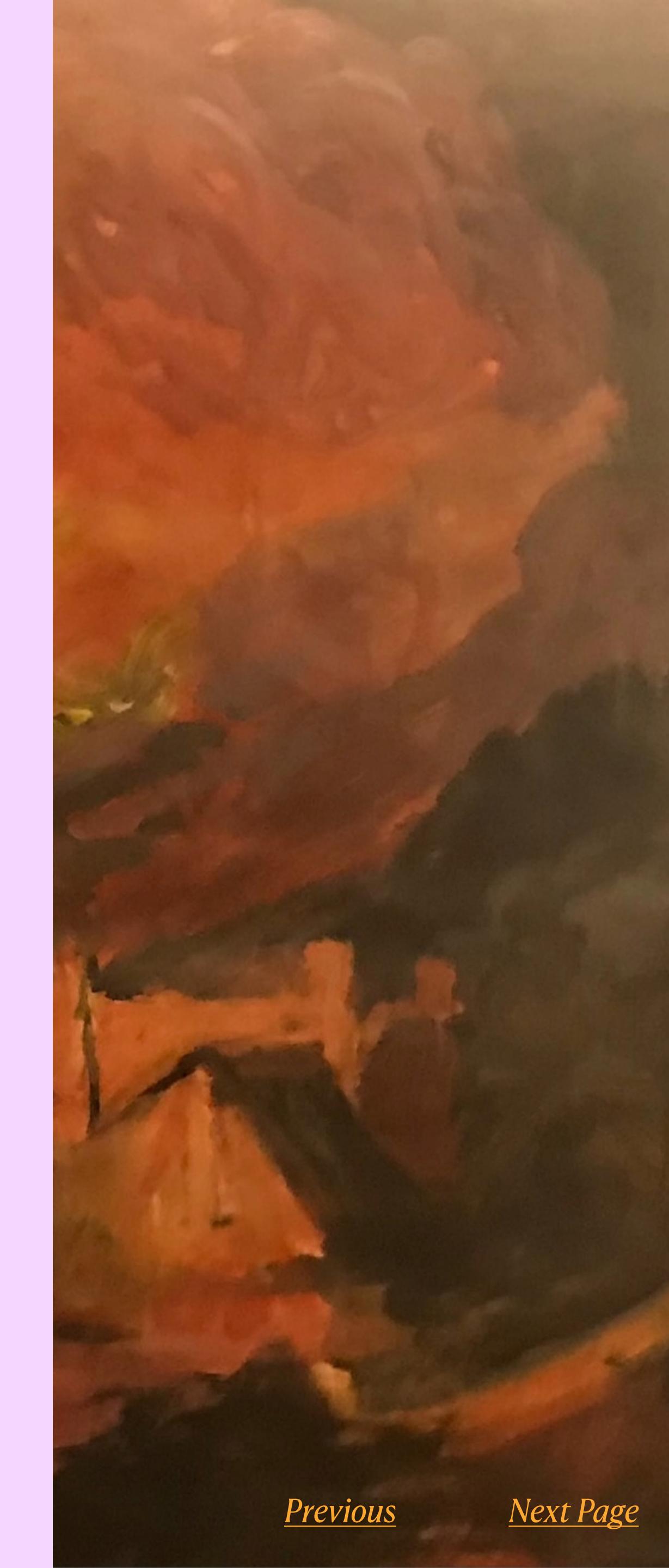
“Hello Miss.”

The nihilist’s eyes widened.

It was the same voice which had spoken the words ‘what’s your business’ the previous day, and she started shaking. The man turned to look back at her. It was the fellow with the knife at the inn. His look was stern, his features locked into a forceful stare, as though he was looking at her skull.

“What...” the nihilist began a second time.

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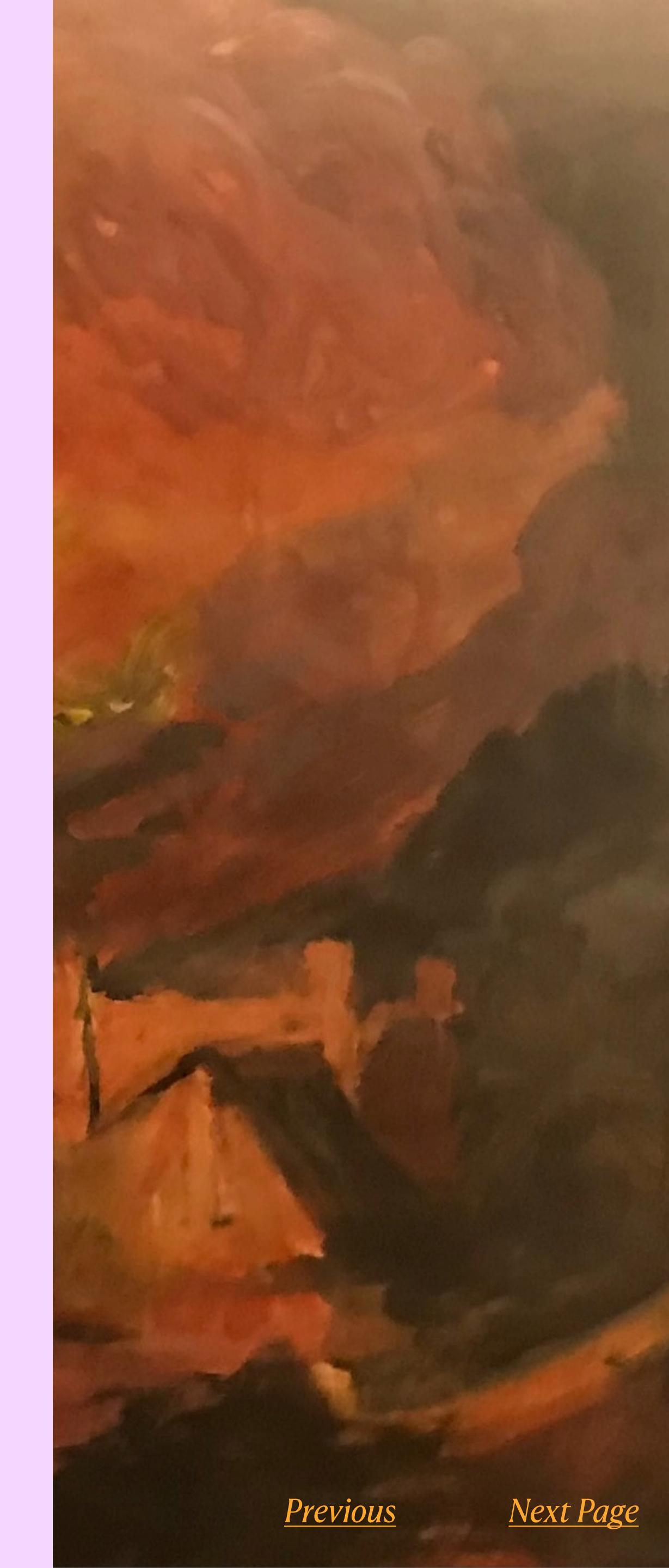
"Delighted to make your acquaintance." the man said, held out his hand and smiled a mischievous smile that disarmed the nihilist. "- Again."

"It's evident the two of you have already met," the lady chimed in.

The nihilist screwed up her face and turned away. "What the hell?" she exclaimed.

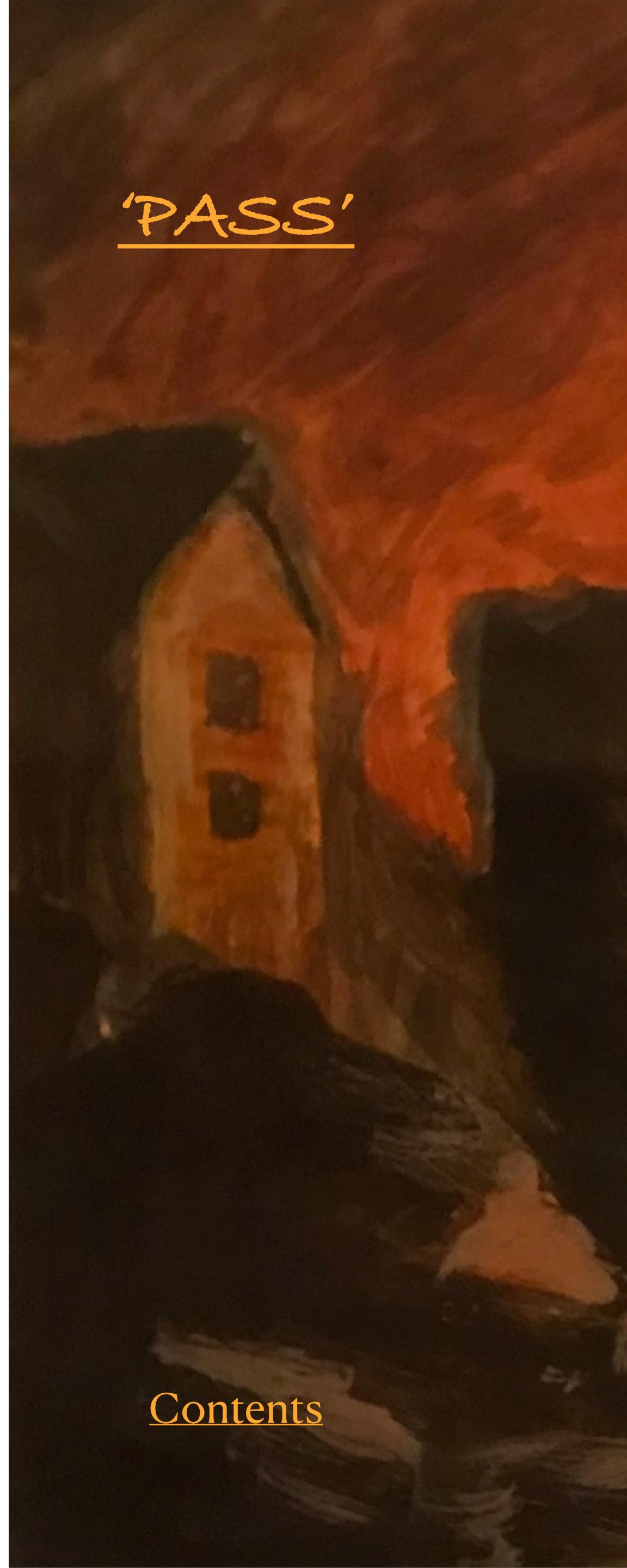
"You're not in any danger," the lady said softly, "I told you there would be an explanation. He is one."

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[Look Employers In The Eye](#)

“I don’t...” she began. The nihilist, her previous ‘attacker’, Alex, and the lady who introduced herself as Nicola were sitting at the public house where the incident had happened the day before, this time at Alex’s table.

“Understand,” said Nicola, “when I said you aren’t in any danger I meant it, however that can all change in a heartbeat in this, ahem, business.”

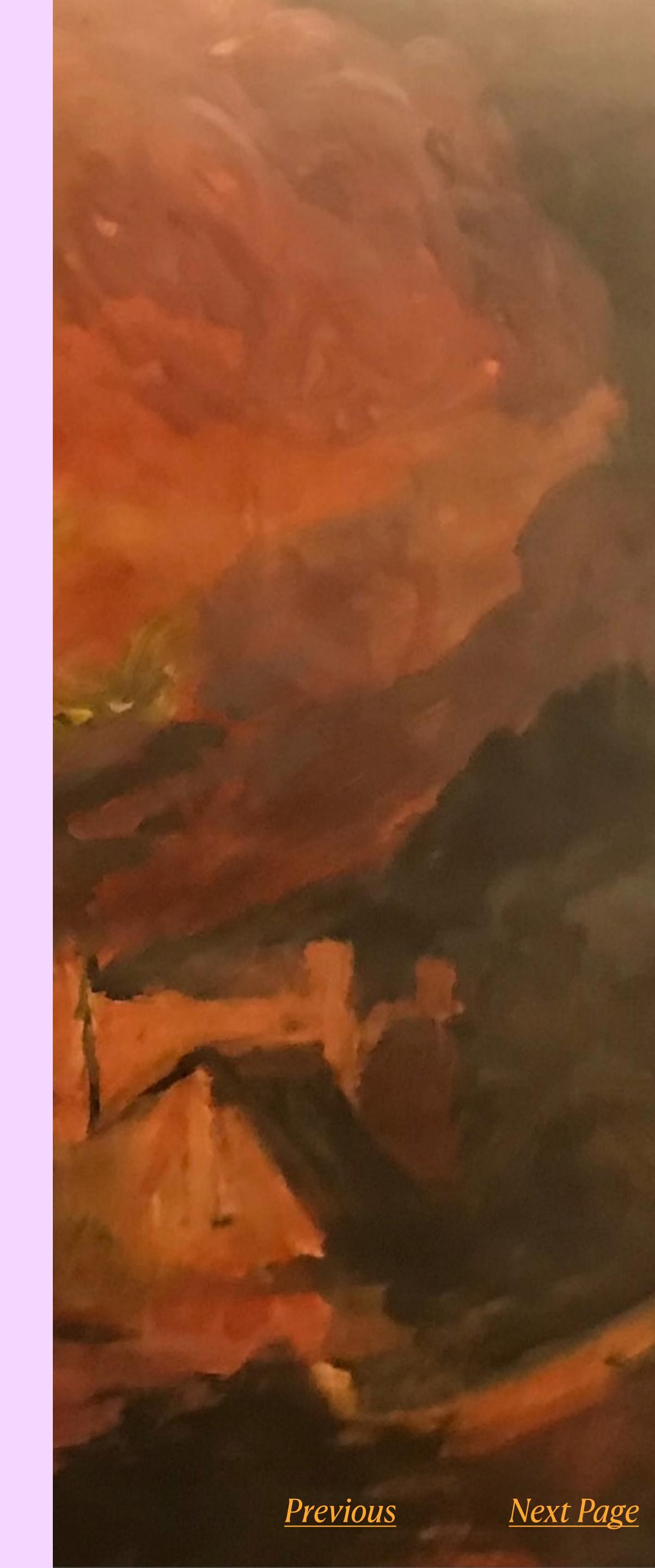
She took a sip of her drink and continued, “I know this may seem odd, ridiculous even, but yesterday’s orchestration was the best idea we could come up with. The locals needed to meet you. More than that, they needed to meet the real you,” she nodded her head toward Alex, “and this guy here especially wanted to meet you. He wanted to get up close and personal - he’s never met you before.”

“None of you have. That’s what you just said.” the nihilist murmured.

“Ah yes, replied Nicola, but he really wanted to *really* meet you.”

The nihilist squinted, and turned her head slightly, looking at Alex with perplexity. The two others looked at each other and sighed. He leaned slowly in and whispered “I wanted to meet you...”

‘IN. THE. FLESH.’



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His lips moved - yet 'in' sounded as though it had been transmitted to her mind through an old CB radio.

The word 'the' was a deep, booming sound that reverberated through her mind as though it were a giant speaker in the centre of a cathedral.

'Flesh' made her see stars. It was a sort of aggressive shout from a long distance away, and the nihilist saw stars in front of her eyes, sparkling, silver stars that twinkled and emitted snowflakes glittering their way up and out of her field of vision.

"You're a...*controller*." the nihilist murmured.

"I prefer... 'operative'." Alex mock-murmured. "One of them. I'm in charge."

"I – I don't believe you."

"Thank God for that. It wasn't a complete waste of time training you, now was it?"

"Oh...o-ohh...right."

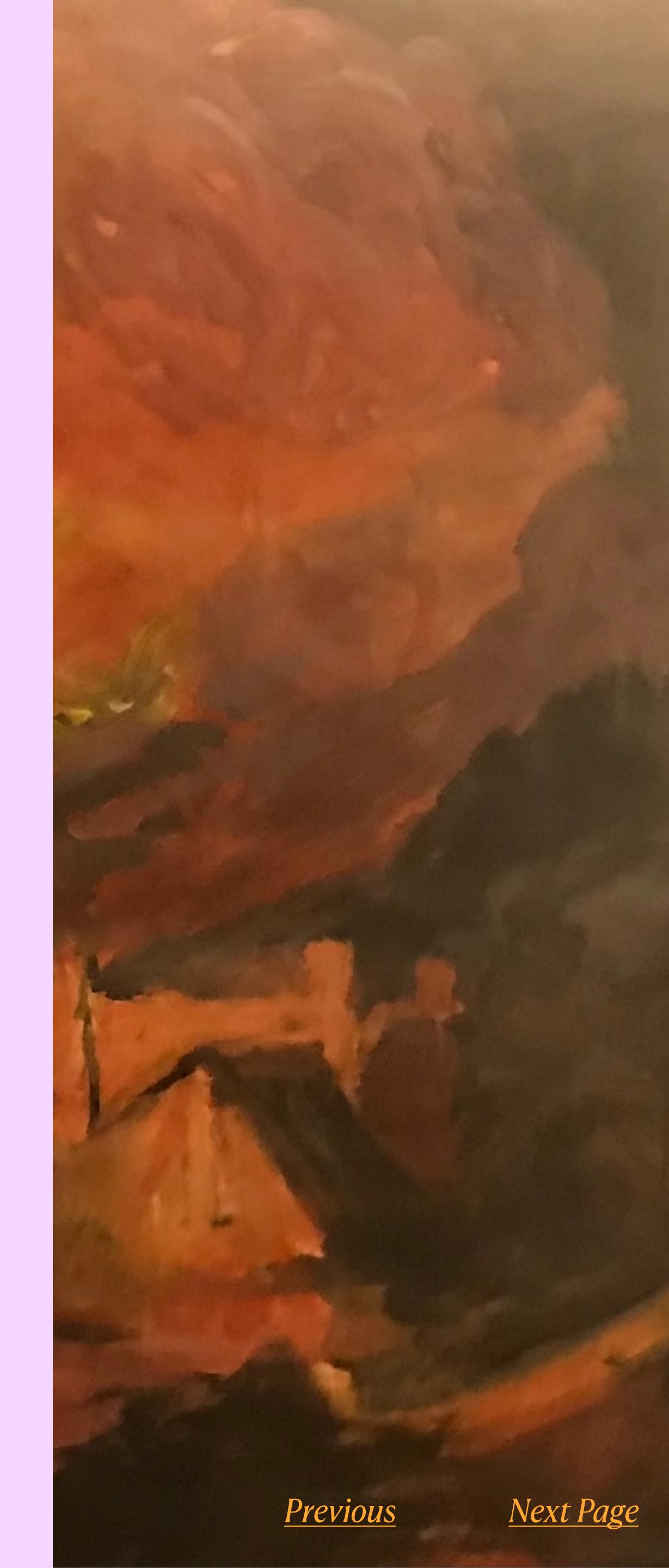
"Do you know..."

"What?"

"How much I enjoy hearing you singing in the bath?"

The nihilist was silent for a short while.

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“Oh.”

She breathed in sharply and then blinked agitatedly, “Oh... yes, yes, yes, very funny. Hilarious. You really must be the funniest guy in the room at parties. Why don’t you fuck off and find someone else to try out your my-first-electronics-set on?”

Alex bellowed with laughter, and the nihilist stifled a giggle.

Nicola cackled, and interjected “That’s cracked the ice then. Can we move on? Now everybody knows who everybody is?”

“I’d hardly say that,” said the nihilist, “but do continue.”

“Well,” said Nicola, “I’m about to tell you something *true*.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” said the nihilist.

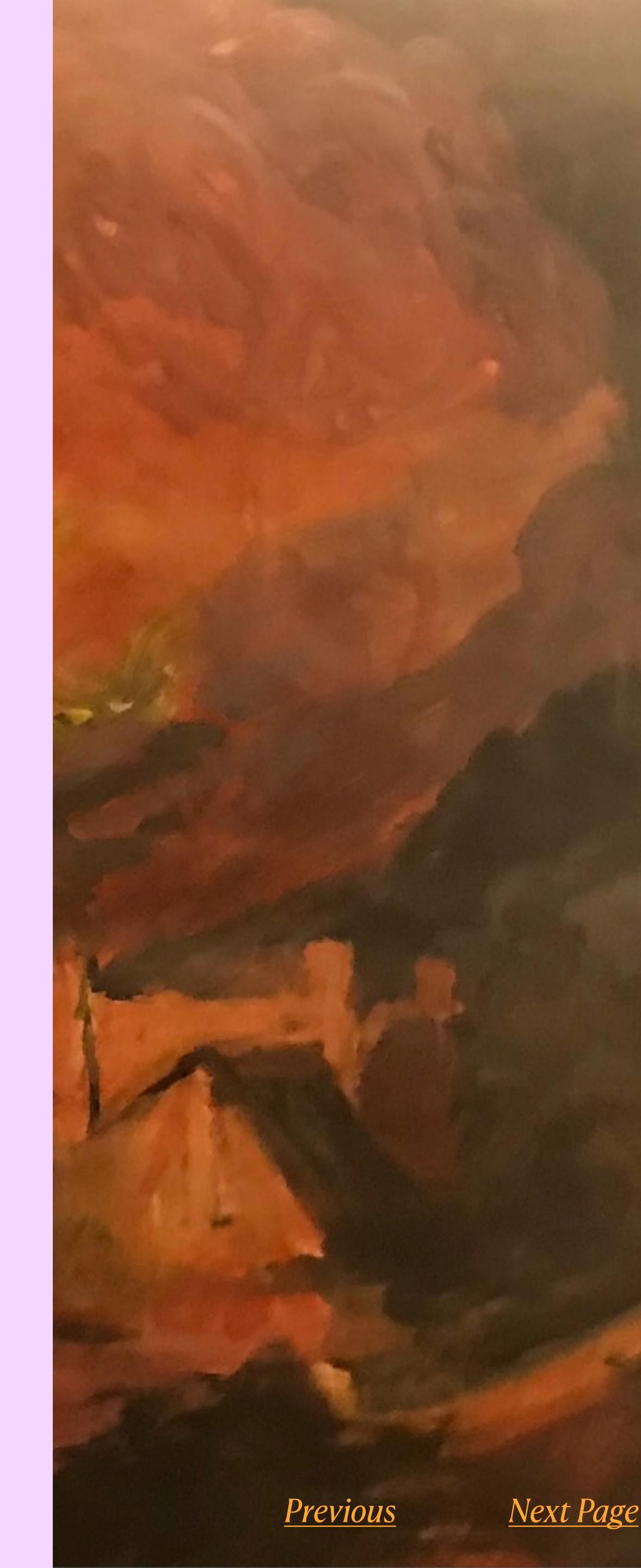
“Of course you don’t have to believe it,” said Nicola, “but it’s food for thought in any case. This is the *truth*: you are the most advanced thing on the planet, so far as we know.”

“And we know a fair bit!” Chipped in Alex.

Nicola put her hand on the nihilist’s. “You’re our most precious commodity.”

“Do you mean most expensive?” The nihilist said.

“Mm, well...no...just in terms of this project. You are more significant to us than anything else, because you, or rather the systems within you, represent the most comprehensive



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example of the technology we have designed for the protection of global security.”

“Me?” the nihilist took her hand away and pointed to herself.

“The very same.” said Alex.

“But I’m a twit! I’m just a twot! You’re *all* cleverer than me!”

“Yes, yes, this is all true, but that’s not the point.” said Nicola.
“As an agent you’re okay.”

“Average at best.” said Alex.

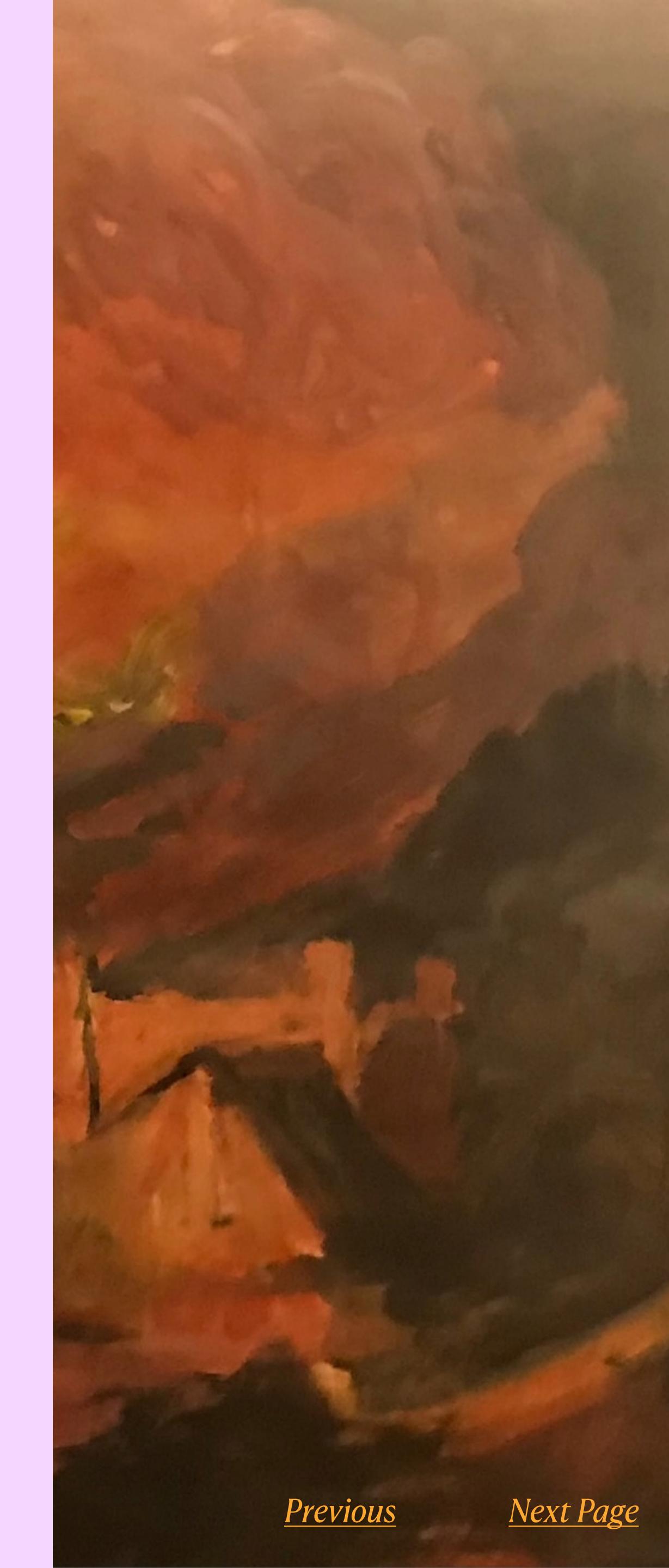
“*You’re not global security*, don’t get confused.” said Nicola.
“You’re a sort of puppet. A pawn in the chess. You yourself are nothing special *at all*...I’d go so far as to say...”

“That’ll do Nicola.” said Alex.

“Your *position* is what we took notice of a long time ago. Chance led you to a safe place to sleep where we could enhance you significantly beyond the threat of outside interference. Which means, anonymous and a sizeable asset, not to mention a dormant figure on the world scene, you’re the most promising thing in the secret network in terms of technologically sophisticated solutions.”

Nicola paused and looked her in the eye. “And we’d like *you* to decide what happens next...”

- The nihilist woke up!



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Oh *come on!*

No?

Surely you can do better than that!

Schizophrenia?

Too obvious.

Well you come up with one then!

Okay, she was the author of a tale called 'The Nihilist.' ...*now* we get to the *interesting* bit!

God!

Hmm...God.

God?

She's a nihilist who discovers God!

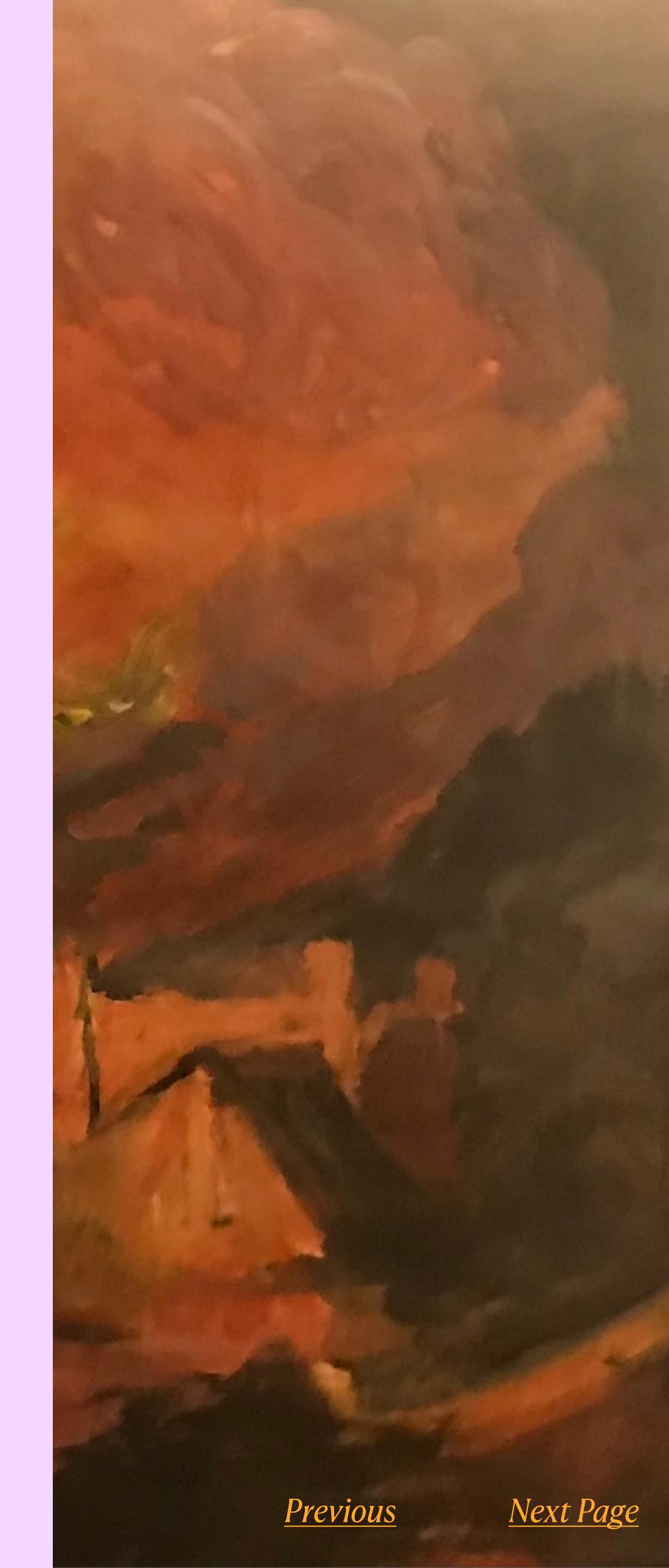
Yes, but...what does that make us?

Oh I see what you mean.

Go on - let it be a dream!

We're never going to get away with this.

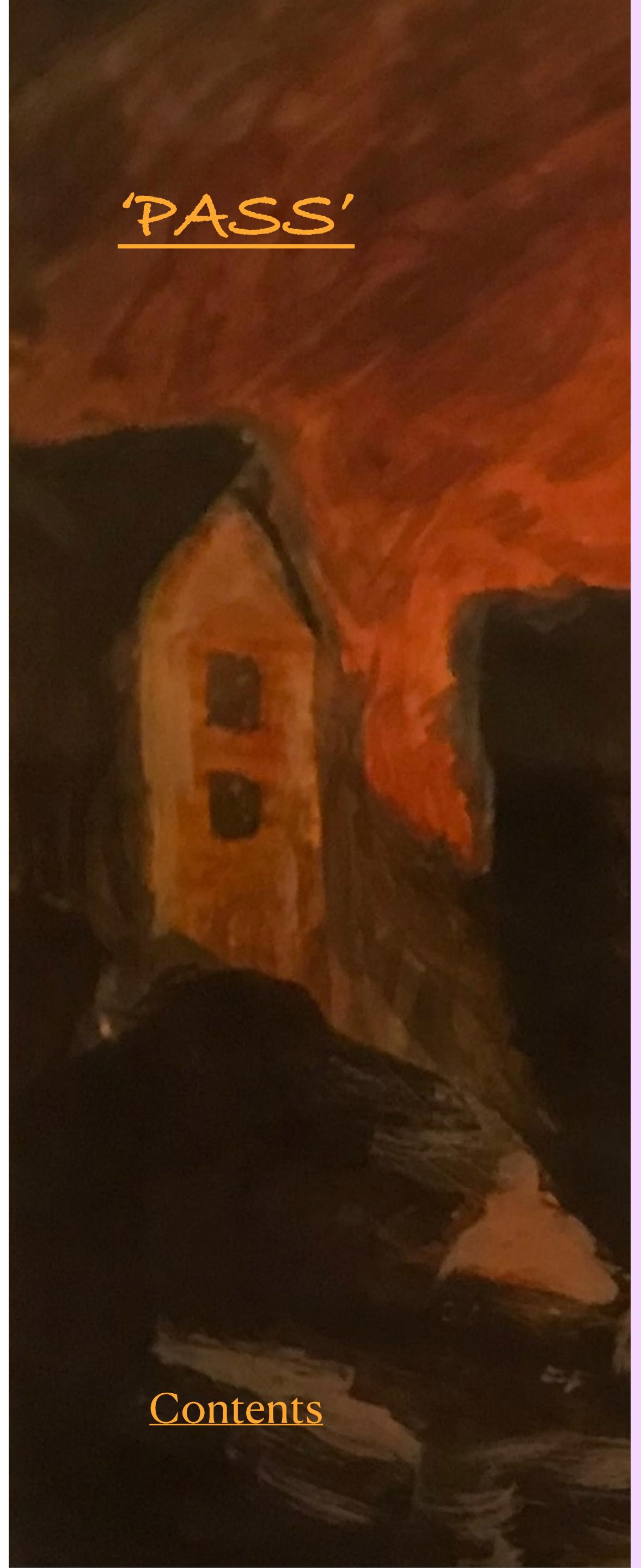
Let's wrap it up.



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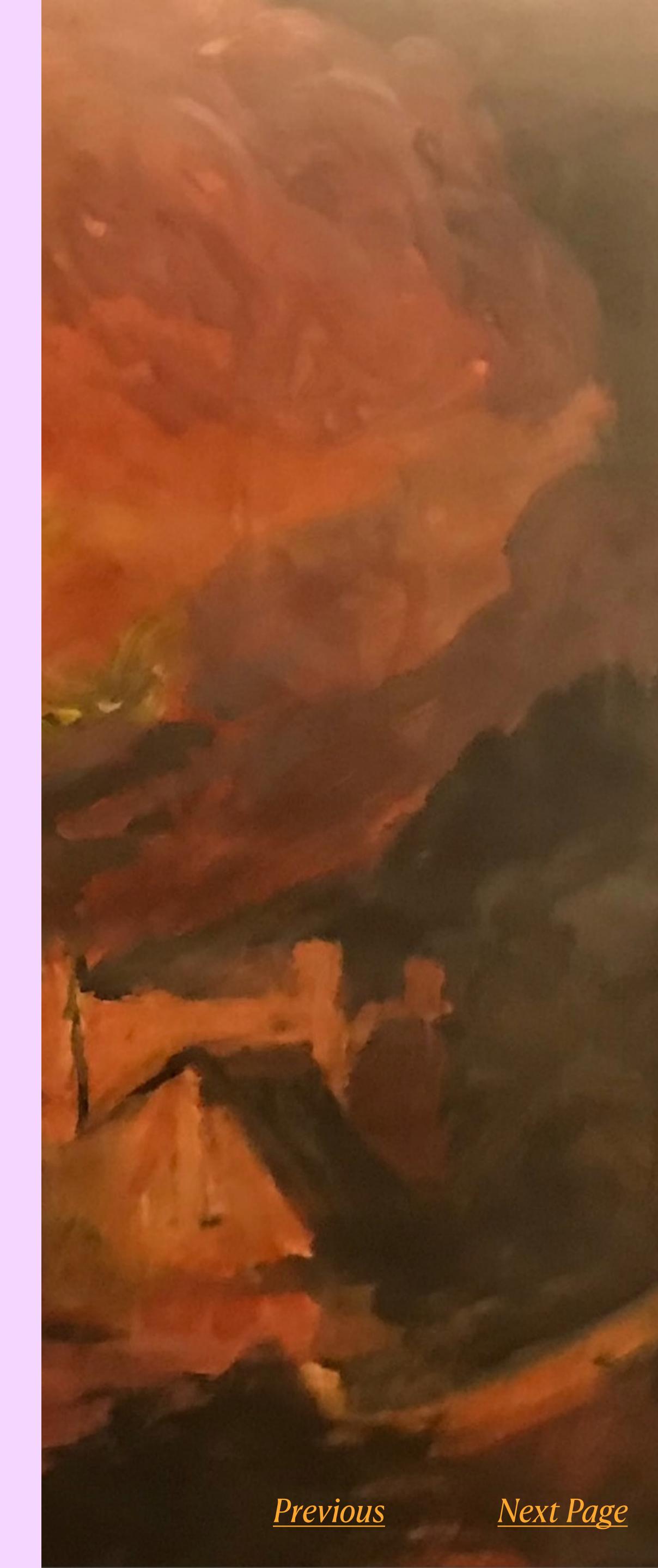
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- With the oldest cliche in the book?

Exactly!



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S.T.O.R.K. Theory

'Subjectively True Objectively Real
Knowledge'

An Ontology

(An analysis of the theoretical structure of reality and epistemic relationships of key metaphysical concepts in philosophy)

1. The cosmos is an all-encompassing description of the metaphysical contents of the world. A theoretical framework of an ontology of the world involves the genesis of substance in spatial reality and of being with sentience over time.

Several things are corollaries of the instantiation of a spatiotemporal object.

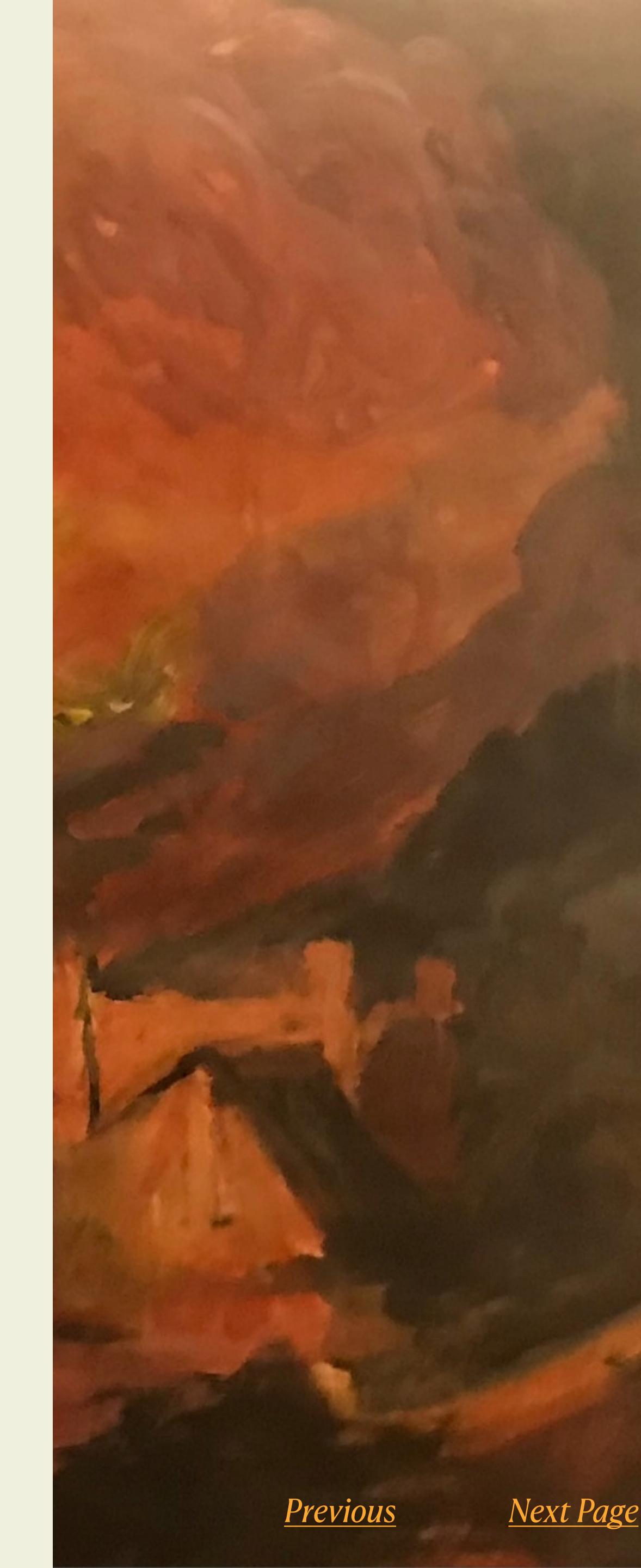
For something to exist, it must have identity and change over time, thereby constituting an event, which has consequence.

Consequence is effect, of any sort, over time. Effect is perceptible change.

Consequence is for something, implying a level of consciousness.

2. Genesis is the overarching concept for creation and causality. Creation is evident empirically, causality is evident rationally.

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3. The multiverse is a hypothetical class of versions of the cosmological object. Our universe is one manifestly extant version, and is constituted by events, which are made of particular physical objects, which are in turn made out of quanta.

Physical objects are external entities at the macrocosmic scientific level, describable with particle theory and spatially coordinated.

External assets export corporeal identity.

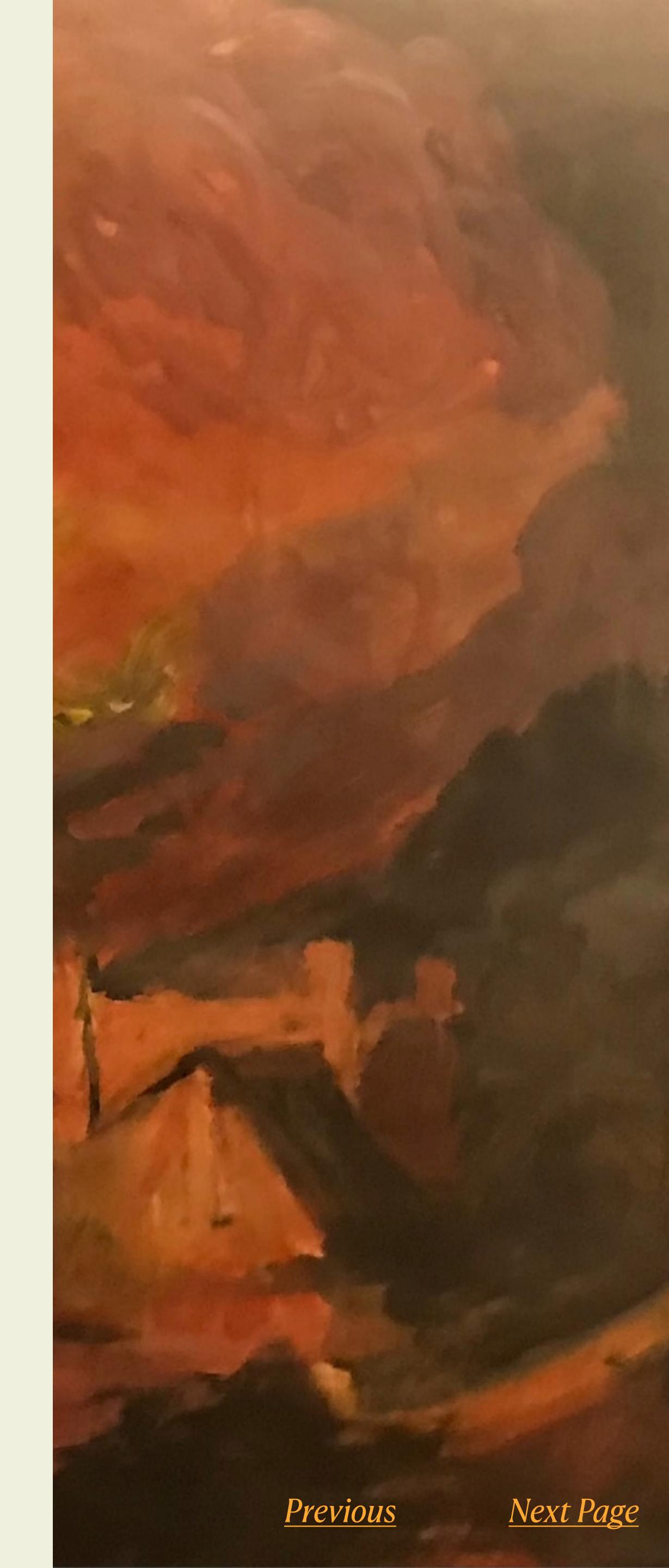
Quantum processes are internal features at the microcosmic scientific level, describable with wave theory and are temporally coordinated.

Internal processes import sensory data.

4. To explain spatial character (shape) science appeals to particle theory and empirical phenomena; corporeality, light and matter.

To explain temporal character (trajectory) science appeals to wave theory and rational noumena; sensation, sound and motion.

Sensation is subjectively interpreted since it is at base experiential, while the corporeal world it is aware of is objectively real. Motion is rationally interpreted since a distinction needs to be comprehended between where an object is and where it moves to. The character of sound is



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rational, rather than empirical. There are no particles of sound. Only patterns of motion over time.

5. Objects have a trajectory whose nature is characterised by external (spatial) material, and internal (temporal) motive influences.

Shape in space is physical data; it presents the objective character of physical identity, and where real, is empirically known (sensed).

Trajectory over time is experiential data; it accounts for the subjective significance of causal relations, and where true, is rationally known (understood).

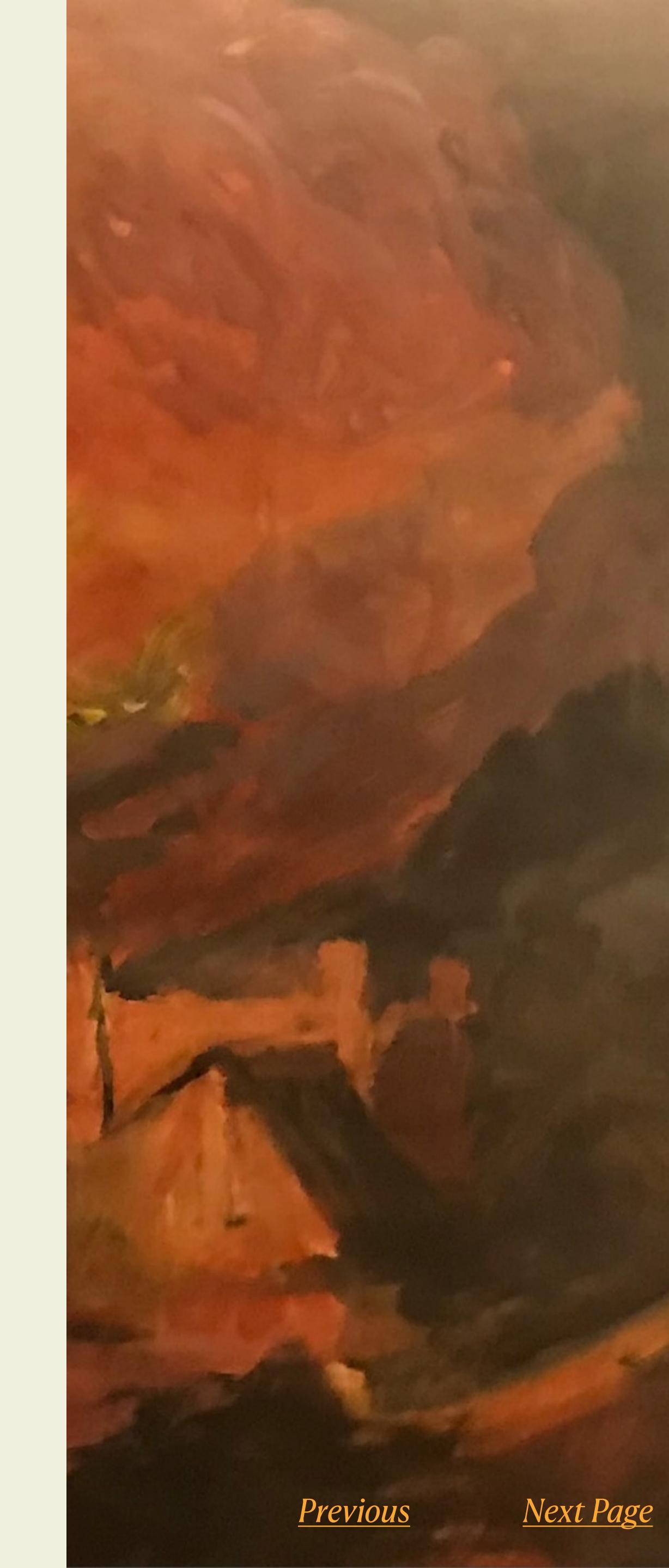
The instantiation of existence and change, metaphysical correlates of space and time, equates ontologically to substance and being.

6. Dimensions are concepts structured out of deductive (actual) and inductive (hypothetical) data, and represent realms of possibility for being in creational and causal nature.

Spatial dimensions represent the (geometrical, and) physical structure of the cosmos, are theoretically infinite, actually so over time, and applicable to objective reality.

Time is logically singular, theoretically eternal and applicable to subjective truth.

Space is the physical instantiation of materiality in the cosmos, and shape (identity) is in play; objects are extended bodily as or in space.



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Time linearly drives the metaphysical progression of change in the cosmos, over which signals have a trajectory, and identity also comes into play; signals/processes are extended causally over time.

Investigation into the design/shape of external objects in space is revelatory as to the nature of the empirical reality of phenomena (*physics*).

Enquiry into subjective causal relationships/consequences in time is enlightening as to the nature of the rational truth of noumena (*philosophy*).

7. The trajectory of physical objects constitutes traversal through space-time according to an identity combined of internal (temporal) and external (spatial) influences.

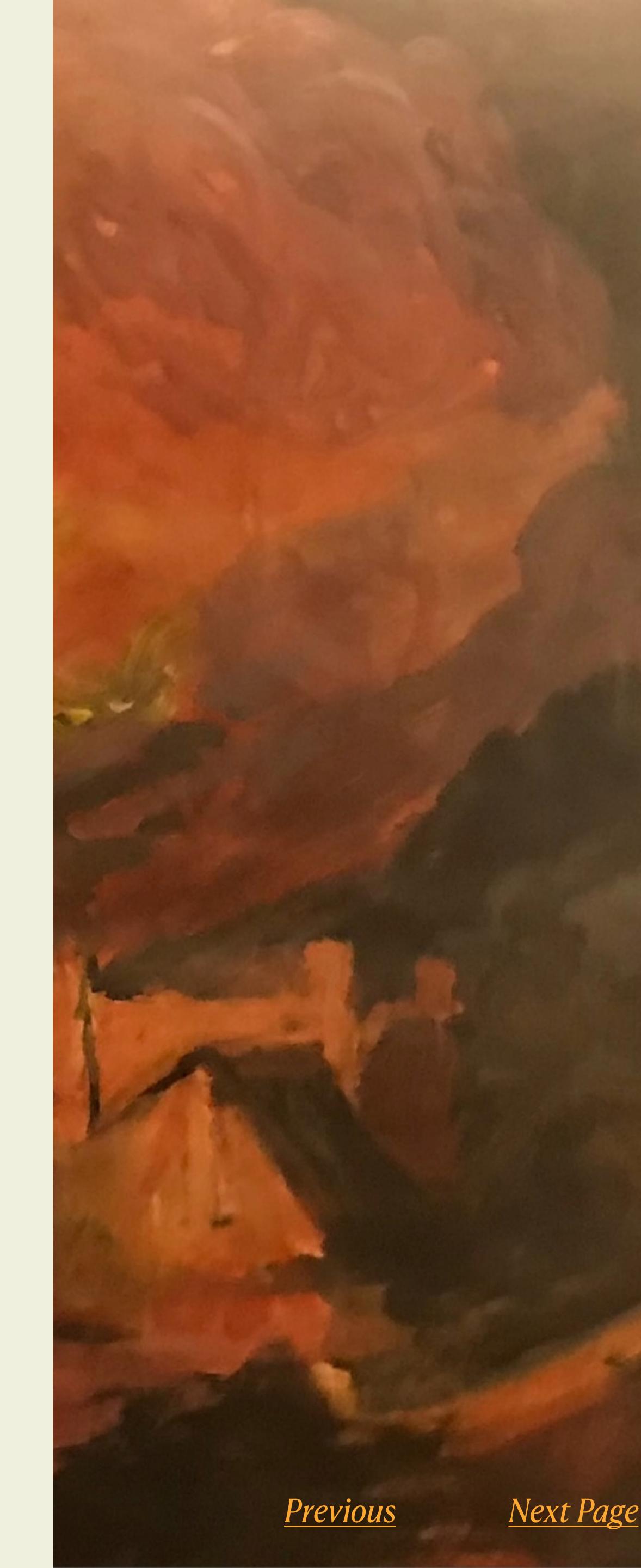
Sentience is the unified status of the dualistic concepts of awareness and consciousness.

Qualitative intelligence (intelligence to make a qualitative distinction (free will)) is inferred by sentience. To grasp quality (value) is elemental to sentience.

With consciousness, memory - elemental to understanding - comes into play.

Without time and memory there is no appreciation of quality, no possibility of recognition or representation.

8. Change and existence are fundamental aspects of a theoretical understanding of metaphysical reality.



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Change *presupposes* existence - spatial identity, which *requires* change (in order to take (further) shape over time).

Existence and change are mutually necessary for the instantiation of an enduring reality.

Their relationship to one another is distinct; existence is foundational to creation, change is foundational to causality.

Once physical existence instantiates, metaphysical change is manifest.

Change (in time) if it were measured digitally, can be from '0' to '0', as well as from '0' to '1' (for example).

How is '0' to '0' change? It is a metamorphosis into being of temporal identity. '0' may *later* change to '1' (or not), extending its trajectory, developing its character.

What about the introduction of change? Change is a given where '0' exists in spacetime in the first instance (metaphysical change from non-existence to existence).

9. *S.T.O.R.K.* explains the nature of reality with practical reference to *actual* reality; where a conscious being apprehends corporeal objects, empirical evidence for reality is *a posteriori* grasped.

Over time, the being's representation of the world, the truth of which is *a priori* understood (consciously represented) with varying degrees of precision, is liable to be revised/refreshed through the senses, with reality.



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'PASS'

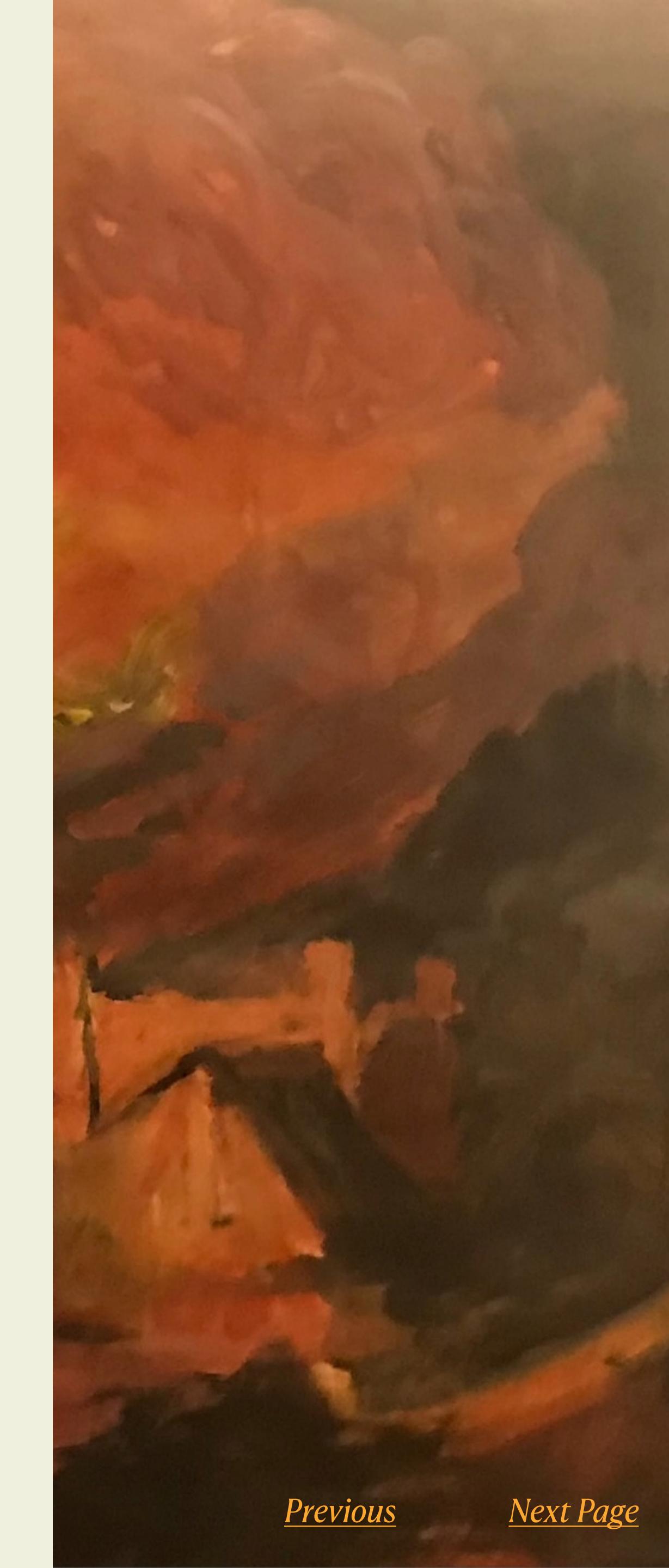
S.T.O.R.K. cannot explain *why* existence originates, or change occurs.

10. At a basic level of existence, a spatiotemporal coordination of data is the primary essential ingredient of reality - in itself sufficiently complex in metaphysical identity to constitute an event.

A substantial event is figure (light) and signal (sound), which resonate through spacetime.

The metaphysical constitution of reality at base level is the subjective reflections of an objective figure, on this analysis.

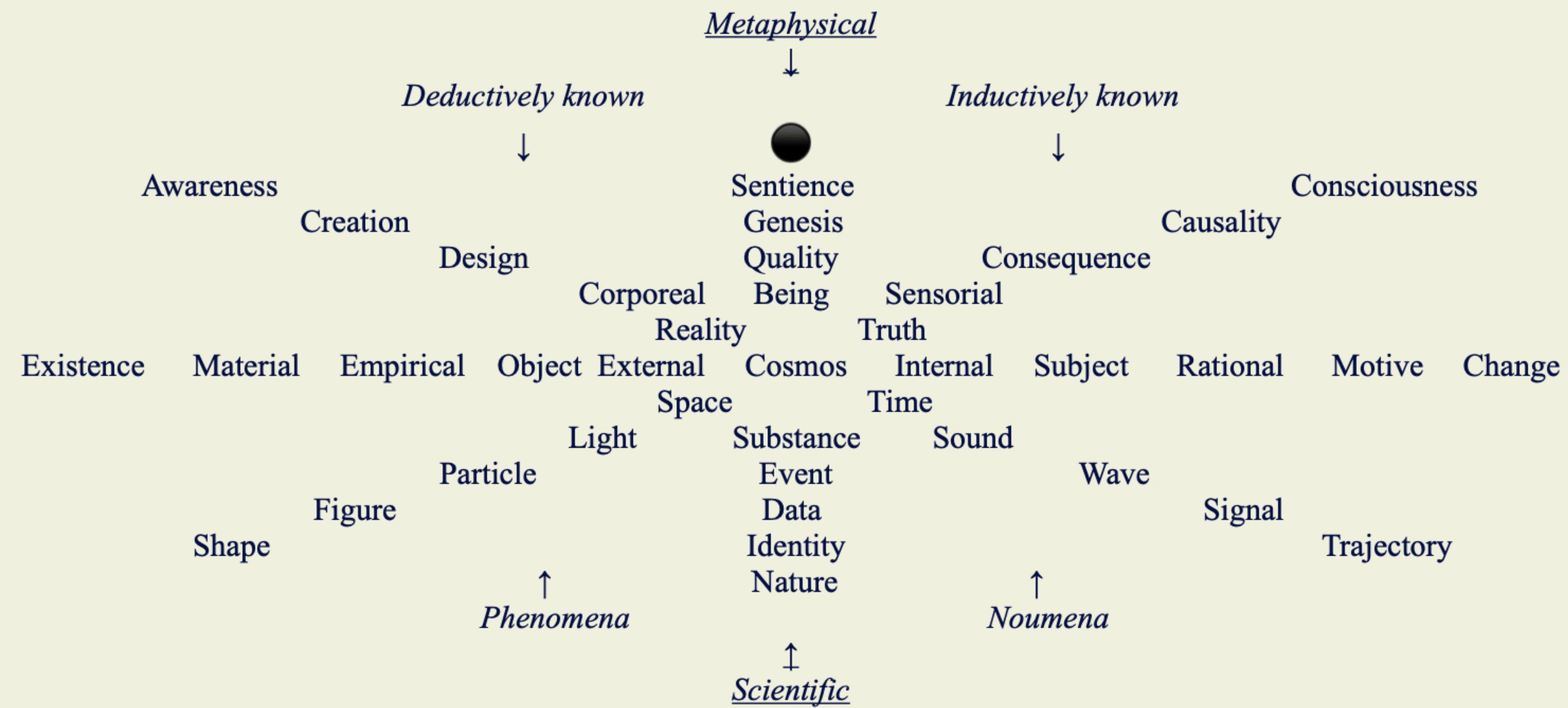
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Map to S.T.O.R.K.



A landscape painting featuring a dark, rocky valley. In the foreground, a small campfire or bonfire is burning brightly with orange and yellow flames. In the middle ground, a stone bridge with a single arch spans a narrow valley. The background is filled with dark, misty mountains under a heavy, overcast sky.

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