STEVEN BELLEDIN
ILLUSTRATOR

July 21, 2015

U.S. Copyright Office
Re: Orphan Works

To whom it may concern,

I studied illustration at Brooklyn's Pratt Institute and earned a BFA in Communication Design in 1998, at which point I began plying my trade. In 2001, I became a full-time, professional illustrator in the gaming and publishing fields and my work has since been regularly included in juried shows and publications.

The foundation of my business and life as an illustrator is the creation of copyrightable imagery. For me, this includes paintings produced in various media, as well as any derivative works. Licensing the copyrights of such works is how I make my money. Anyone who would infringe on my copyright is effectively taking that money out of my pocket. Thus, it is vital to be able to control who is able to use the imagery I produce in order to maintain a living.

Copyright in its current form allows for a very clear-cut way to voluntarily control which entities have permission to use my work and to pursue those who violate my copyright. Any change to that (including the allowance of "good faith" infringers as well as the creation of derivative works by others) waters down my ability to control that which I create and would affect my ability to stay afloat financially.

The value of this imagery is not just in its initial existence nor does it decrease after publication. Indeed, oftentimes the value of an image and its copyright can increase significantly after initial publication and can even mean a steady income stream for a long time to come.

Everything I create—every sketch, doodle, study, reference photograph, 3-D model, and finished work—becomes part of my business inventory. Such inventories have only increased in value in the digital age.

In short, copyright is not just words on a page. Copyright is my livelihood. Copyright protects me from the many parties who would coopt my imagery to utilize as their own and profit from it. In no way would I welcome such a thing, and I fear the implications of eroding those protections.

Sincerely,

Steven Belledin

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