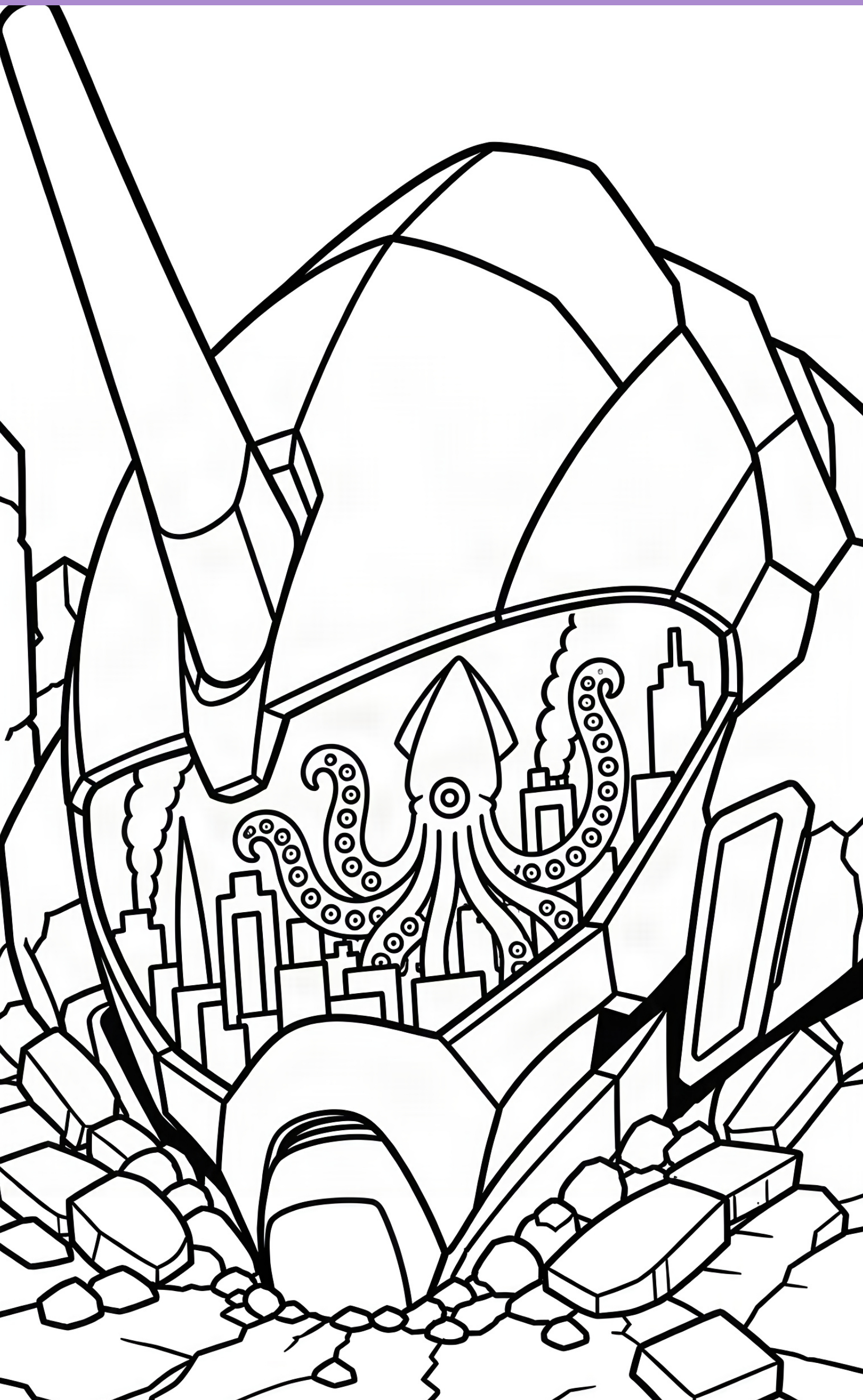
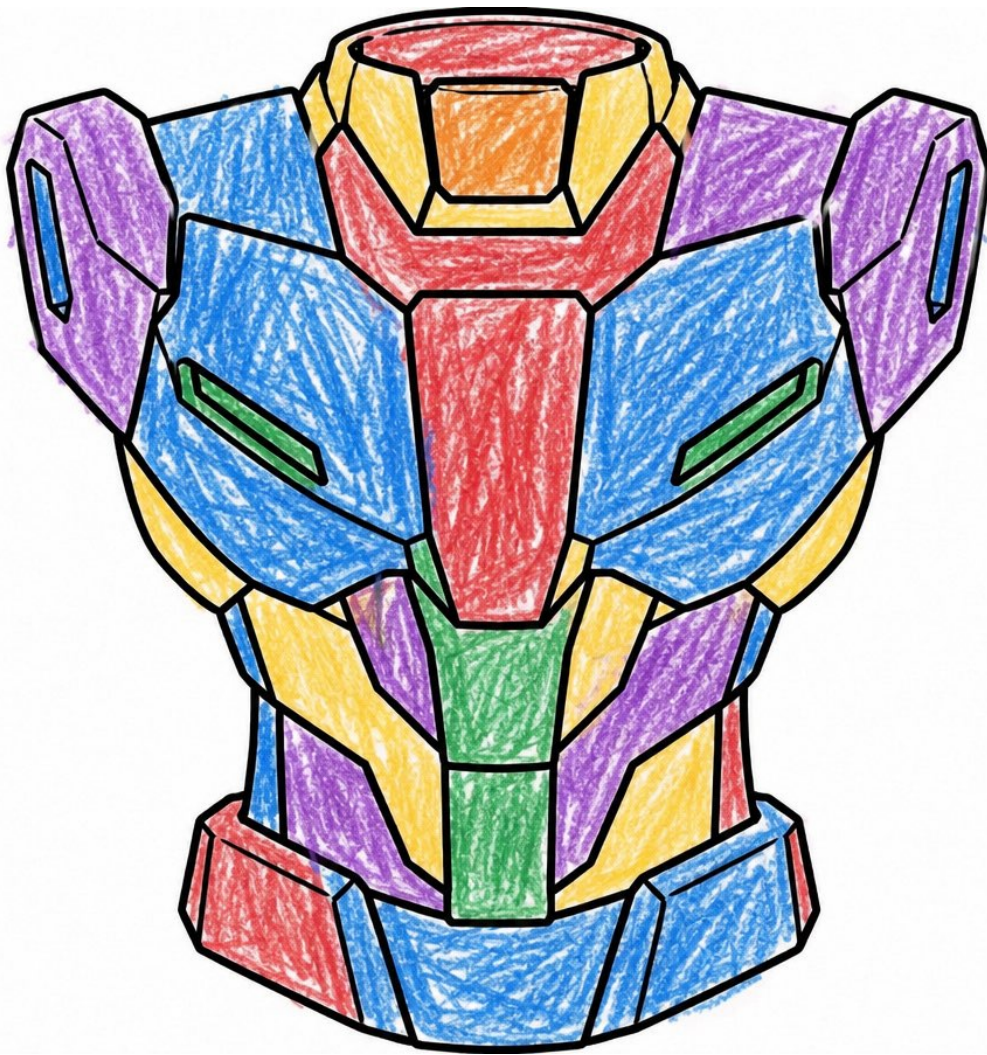






Be Specific

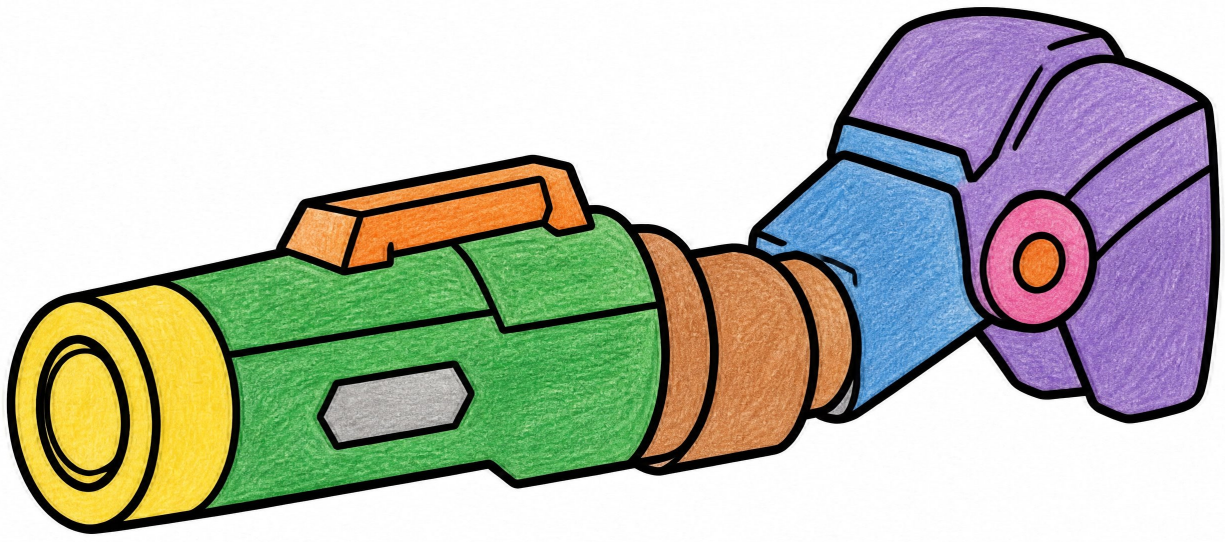
Floyd Largent

Tired of coyotes eating hens, I
Told my dogs to eat the coyotes.
Told my donkeys, "Kill the coyotes."
They replied with solemn nods and
Barks assenting, smiles adoring.

But I meant the yippy kind of
Pest, and not that kind that smuggles
People 'cross the borders, so im-
-agine my surprise when human
Fingers ended up in doggy food bowls.

Livers, kidneys in their mouths, with
Reddened hooves beneath their shinbones,
Sporting looks of confident ac-
-complishment, grins to say "the
Coyote problem's ended now, they're gone," and

That is surely that.



You Had to Be There

Donald A. Ranard

When she called, he was in the canteen, eating breakfast.

“Did you see the pics I sent?” she said.

“I did,” he said.

“And?”

“Looks good. It’s quiet, right?”

“Totally. It looks out on a park.”

“Sweet.”

“And it’s like literally ten minutes from the base.” She paused.

“There’s just one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“It’s on the top floor of a three-story walk-up.”

“There’s no elevator?”

“Right.”

“I’m okay with that.”

“You sure?”

“I didn’t lose my *leg*, babe.

“So, you like it?”

She’d shown him the apartment, and now they were in the kitchen.

“It’s great. You did good, babe. Love the kitchen bar counter.”

“Oh, honey, I’m happy.”

“Furniture looks good. Some kind of rent-to-own deal you said?”

“Uh-huh. Plus, there’s like a ten-percent discount for active military.”

“What, no special amputee discount?” He opened the fridge. “PBR!” He looked back at her over his shoulder. “You’re right. This place does have everything.”

She laughed. “They’ve got this little convenience store next to the business office.”

“Cool.” He set the six-pack on the counter.

“Can I help?” she asked.

“We had this joke in rehab. We’d go, ‘Need a hand?’. . . Smile, babe, it’s a joke. . . Just hold it down for me, will you?”

She held down the six-pack, while he extricated a can from the plastic holder. She watched as he cracked open the beer, holding the can with his left hand and yanking off the pop-top with his prosthetic hand.

“Good job,” she said.

“One of the many things I learned at the VA.”

She removed the rest of the cans from the plastic holder and put them back in the fridge. Then, because he wanted to have a smoke, they went out onto the balcony.

He stood next to the ledge, smoking and drinking beer and looking down at the park. She lay on her back on a plastic lounge chair, with her eyes closed and the late afternoon sun on her face.

“I *like* being on the third floor,” he said. “Above the fray.”

“Mm-hmm.”

Below in the park, people were throwing frisbees, playing volleyball, jogging.

“Look at them,” he muttered. “Fucking clueless.”

“What?”

“I said, fucker’s shoeless.”

She opened her eyes and looked at him. “Huh?”

“Some dude, running barefoot.”

“Oh.” She raised the back of her chair and sat up. “You know, honey, I’ve been thinking. Let’s get a dog.”

He looked at her. “You want a dog?”

“Why is that so surprising? We used to talk about getting one someday—remember? And now we’re next to a park.”

He emptied his beer and crushed the can with his hand. “They had dogs over there.”

“Yeah? What kinds? “

“What?”

“What kinds of dogs did they have over there?”

“They didn’t have *kinds*. Just dogs. Wild dogs. Ran in packs. You’d hear ’em howling at night. Guys’d shoot ’em.”

“Our guys?”

“If they got too close.”

He left to get another beer. He came back, chuckling to himself.

She looked at him. “What?”

“No, I was just remembering something.”

“From over there?”

“Yeah. You know what no one gets?”

“What?”

“How funny war can be.”

“Funny weird or funny ha ha?”

“Both.”

“So, what funny thing were you remembering?”

“Just something Weisenheimer said this one time.”

“Who?”

“Weisenheimer. One of the guys in my unit.”

“That was his name—Weisenheimer?”

“His real name was Eisenheimer. But everyone called him Weisenheimer—Weis, for short. Because that’s what he was. A Weisenheimer—you know, a wise guy.”

“So, what did he say?”

“That’s okay. You had to be there.”

“C’mon, sweetie. *Talk* to me. You never tell me *anything*.”

He looked at her thoughtfully. “All right,” he said. He took a long swig of beer. “It was in this village outside Mosul, after a firefight, a real shit storm. We were standing around smokin’ and jokin’, me and Weis and a few other guys, when this dog comes trotting out of a pile of rubble that used to be somebody’s home. It was a nice-looking dog—not like the other mangy mutts—and one of the guys calls it over: *Here, boy!* And it comes over wagging its tail all friendly, just like a dog back home—only it’s got something in its mouth. ‘Whatcha got there, boy?’ someone goes, and then it comes closer and we see what it’s got. A foot. A human foot. We’re all like, *oh, man*, but before anyone can say anything, Weis goes, ‘*Bad boy.*’”

He shook his head, laughing at the memory of it. “Bad boy. Classic Weis.”

He glanced at her and looked away.

“Like I said, you had to be there.”



Notes from Off the Deep End

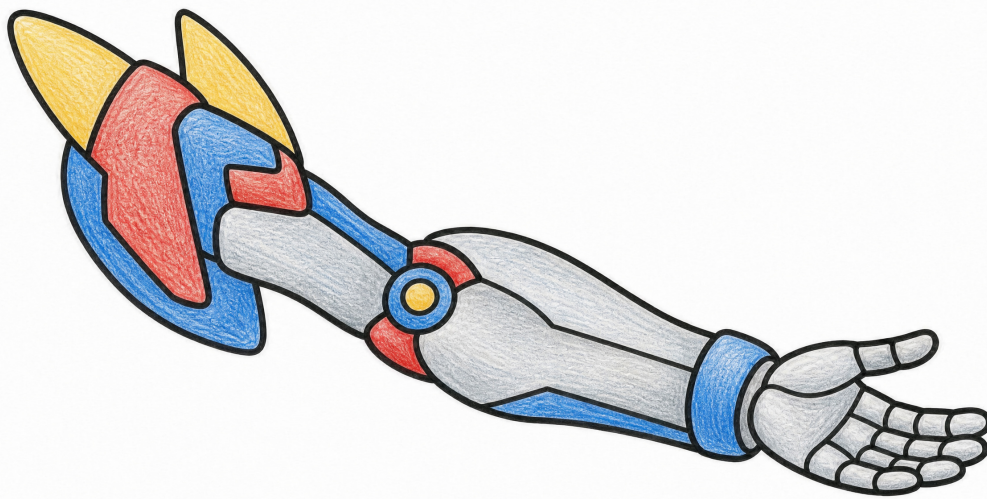
Nsisong Udosen

Chainsmoking books –
that's usually the first sign
I read and read and read and read
until even my retinas have papercuts

Though it may sound drying,
it's cool, I'm cool, any worry a fool's errand

Leave me to swim in a memoir's benthic escape
as a faithful disciple of procrastinator's logic, I believe
if I practice my butterfly stroke in someone else's tragedy
I somehow delay rehearsal time for my own

15 minutes here, 25 there
It works, at least I think so
especially if I squint at the clock



The Frontier Index

Albert Sholem

“I understand the frustration, #37510. Some identifiers feel more natural than others. Each number that is selected, however, is done so with the utmost purpose and intent.”

#37510 thought for a moment before speaking. “Do you agree with this statement, #37510?”

“I respect the council’s decision. I’m just struggling to adjust, that’s all.”

“This feeling is well documented amongst certain candidates. If it provides a sense of comfort, when I first graduated from the academy I was INO #00256. And, for a time, I had the frequent and intolerable habit of still using this INO—in both formal and informal data scripts. It was all quite reprehensible, but with time I adjusted.”

“What changed? How did it stop?”

“Each time I misspoke or wrote the wrong INO, I would apologize—profusely—and make a note of it. Then later, when I was at home, I would use the apartment’s assigned hammer to *correct* one digit for each misidentification. It turns out that not all digits are quite as essential as we think!”

#37510 looked down at the correction-guide's left hand; both her digitus minimus and annularis were disfigured, crooked in fixed positions. “Thanks,” #37510 spoke through a feigned smile. This has been helpful.”

“You’re very welcome, #37510. We will conduct a mandatory follow-up appointment tomorrow. Let’s hope, with some encouragement and a good night’s rest this all will correct itself.”



Standing in the Tide

Albert Hwang

All sand was at one point
continental, tectonic.
Shoulders of a waking world outstretched
And then at some point
crystalline.

There are some probabilities so remote,
made of colliding tectonic denominators.

Like this sand, these latticed children

Wild things whipping around you

Holding your feet firm to the earth

as the tide moves your

continent, as like the shifting

of a heel or toes rounding around

a ledge.

Or the erasing of your footprints,

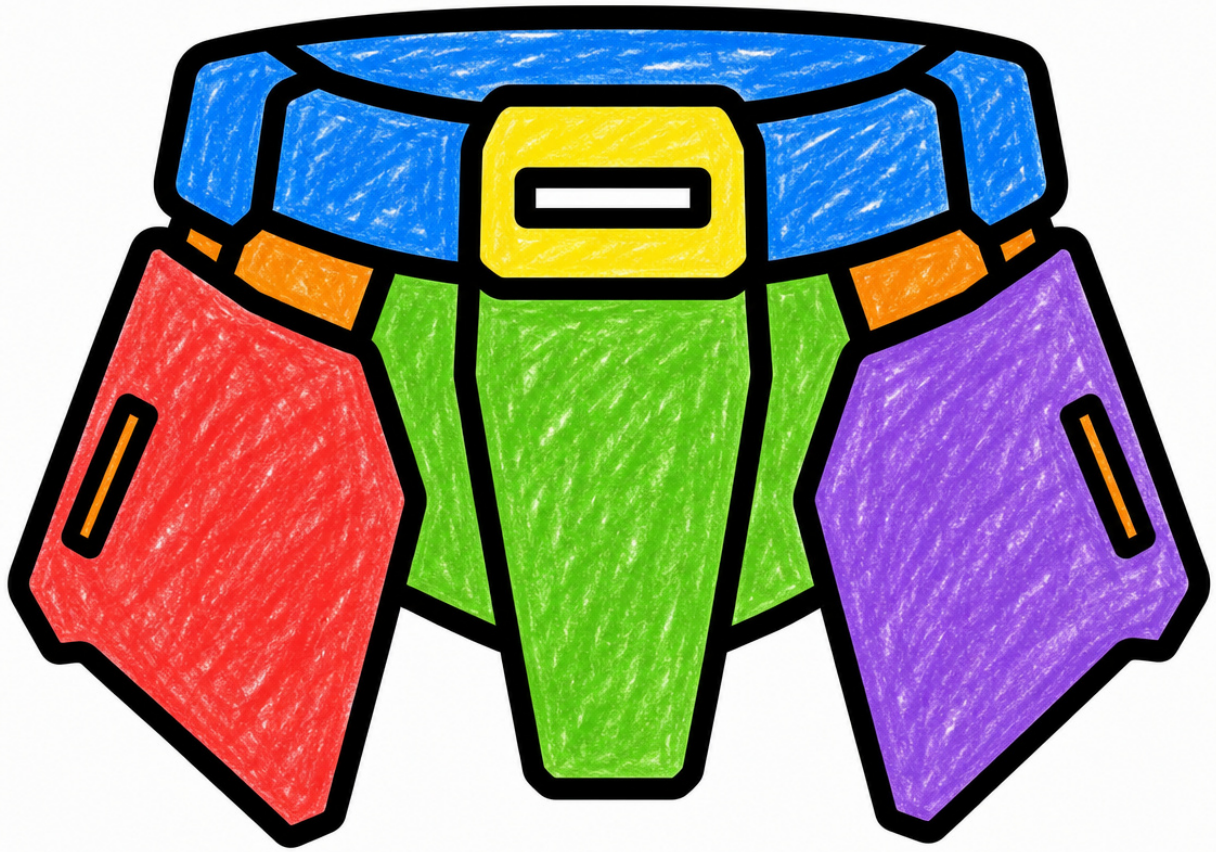
your movements, as if to say you were always

exactly right here.

And yes this is how the earth subducts you

in these small impossible burials

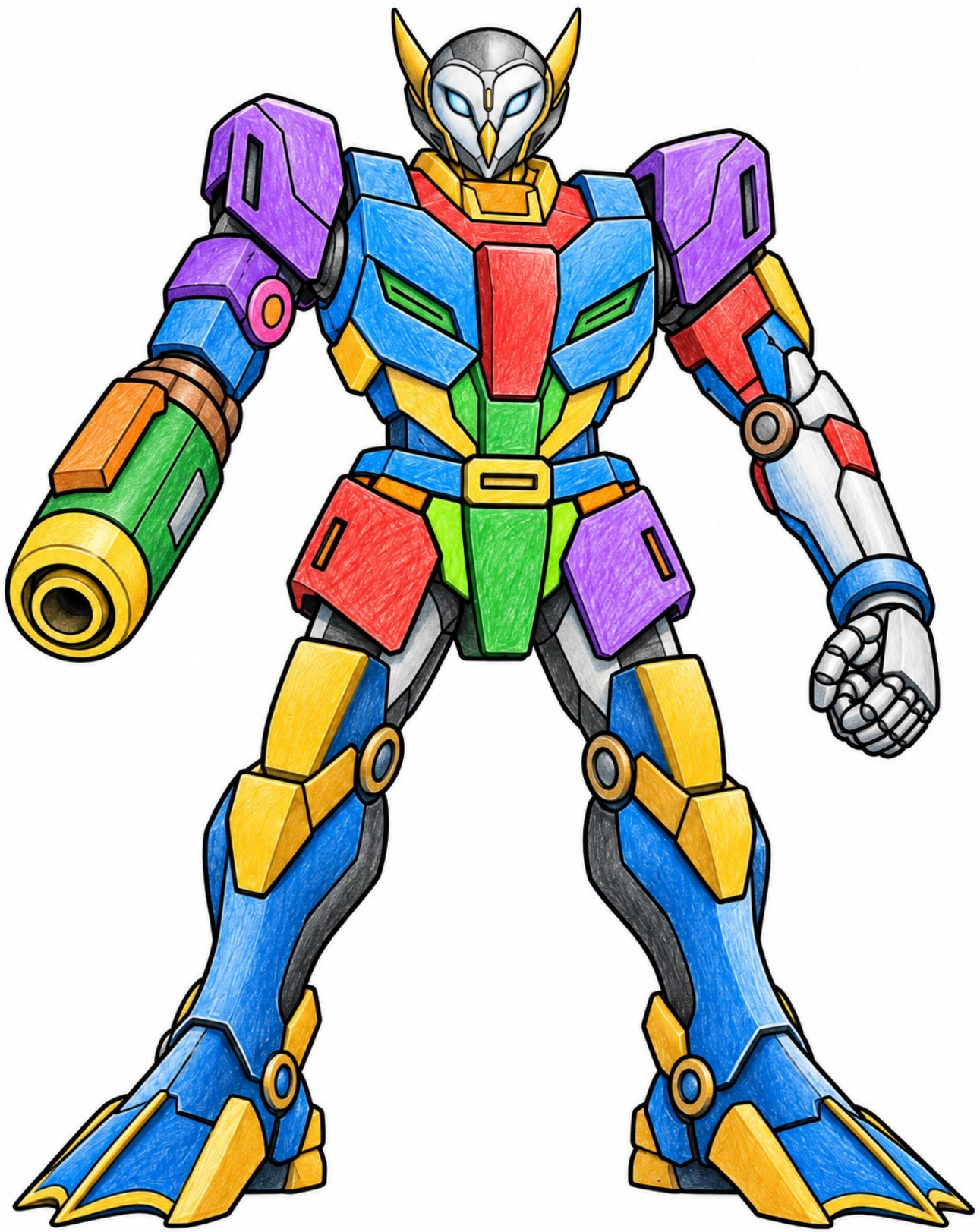
beckoning you back.



The Human Body

Jan Wiezorek

I think it's right to write
about the human body.
She asked me what
I thought about it,
and I was: first, not
expecting the question,
and, second, not sure
what it was I would say.
When I man stands
in the courtyard of life,
his leg runs multicolored,
his face shows its baldness,
a blank look. But over all,
from chest to gut, from
privates to navel, it's
the sun and moon (stars,
too) that cover our nakedness.
So it is only right to stand
on a pedestal and witness
the life-force of the cosmos,
or the breath of a Godhead
saying to us: *Very good*. I don't
know if I answered her question,
but she nodded in understanding,
so I think, so I say, so I believe.

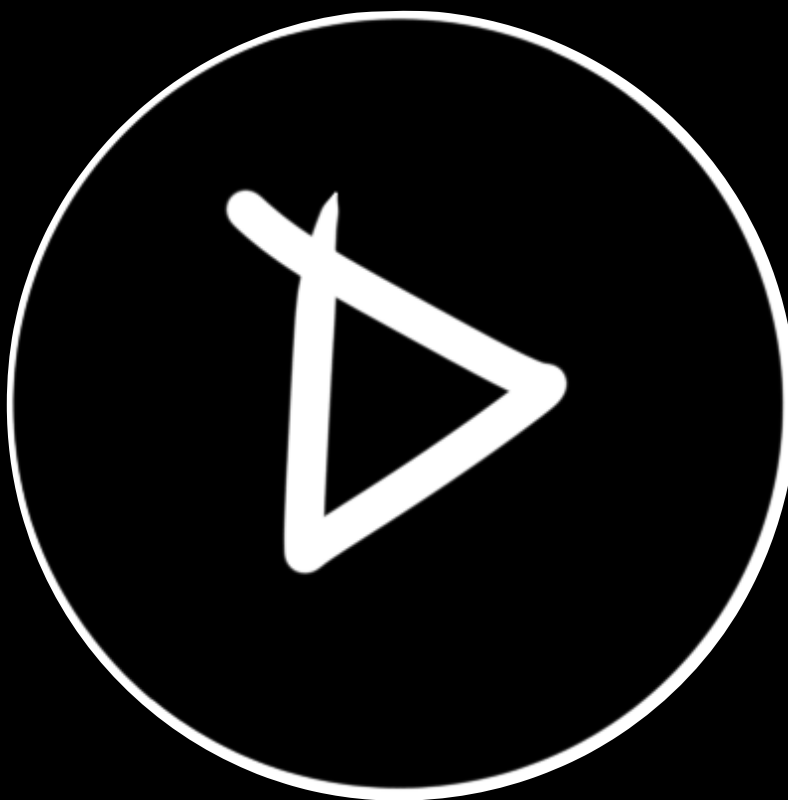


Enduring Sleepless Night

Sulaiman Zorin

The tension is big, I can't hide
Is this the pinnacle of inhumanity?
So, there is a hostile voice inside
Trying to choke my sanity.

A claw is ripping my blue chest apart
While I am trying to throw a huge fart.



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“Be Specific” by Floyd Largent

“You Had to Be There” by Donald A. Ranard

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“Standing in the Tide” by Albert Hwang

Insta: @move.albie.move

“Notes from Off the Deep End” by Nsiong Udosen

“The Frontier Index” by Albert Sholem

Insta: @insteadoftimelateness

“The Human Body” by Jan Wieszorek

Book: [Forests of Woundedness](#)

Substack: <https://janwieszorek.substack.com/>

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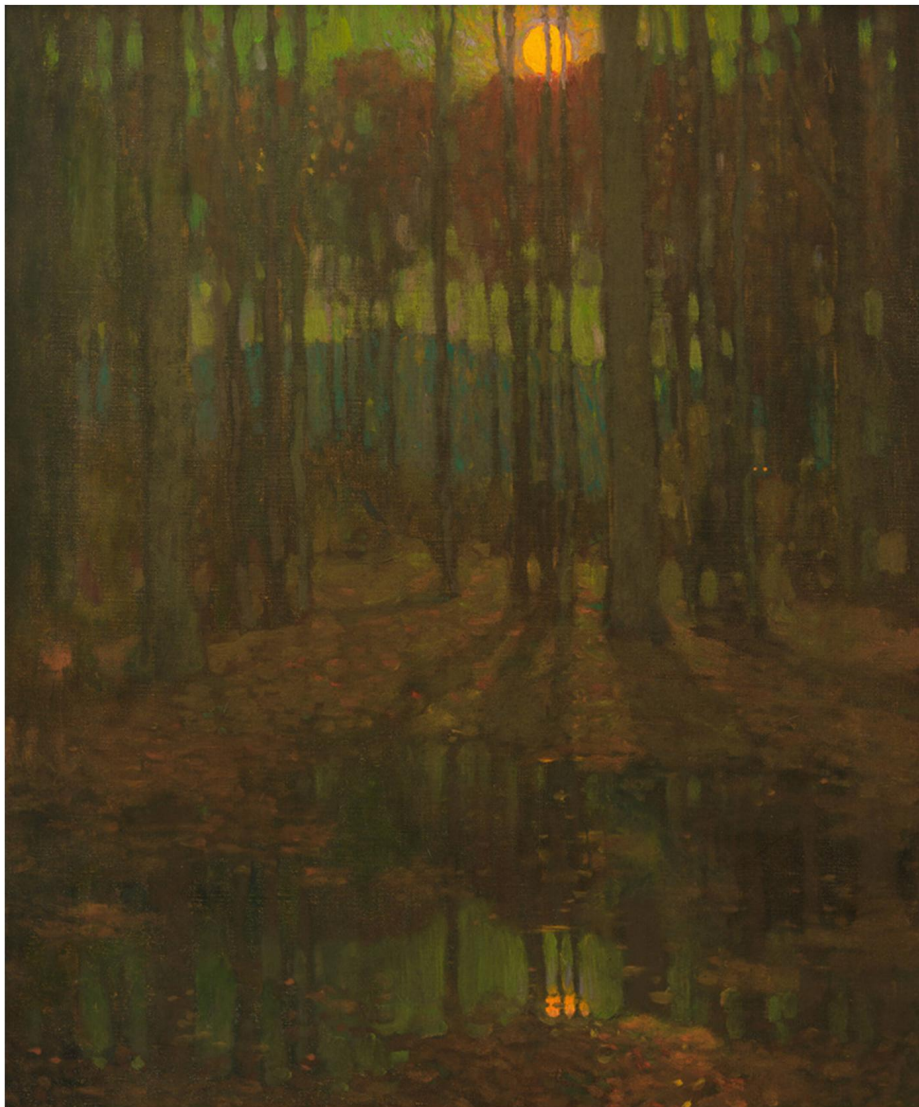
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