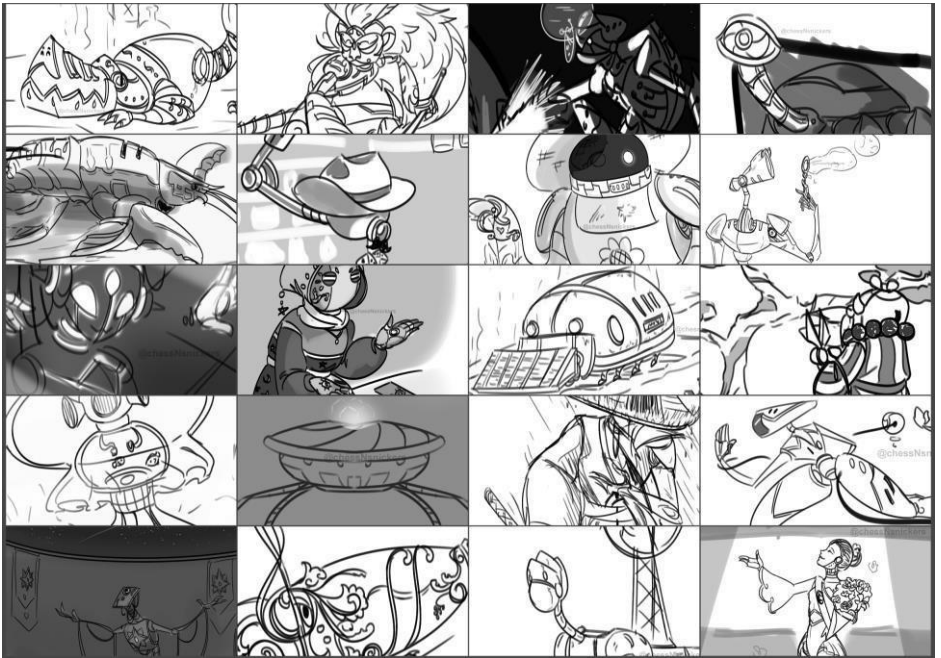


# MARCH OF ROBOTS

## 2021

Based on prompts by twitter user @chocolatesoop



Find me through [chess-n-snickers-info.carrd.co](https://chess-n-snickers-info.carrd.co)

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# FOREWORD

*2020 and 2021 have been a lot of things, mostly terrible things, to a lot of people. I'm one of the lucky ones in that I managed to stay at home and get most of my work done at the same time, and it was easy to forget that there was worldwide crisis after worldwide crisis just outside my window.*

*This little zine is the first one I've ever made, and I think that says something about how my life has been going that I could make it in the middle of a pandemic. A lot of my friends aren't so lucky, and I still don't know how to help them all that much, but working on each of these doodles and posting them one by one, with my short stories and thoughts attached, I think it might have helped anyway?*

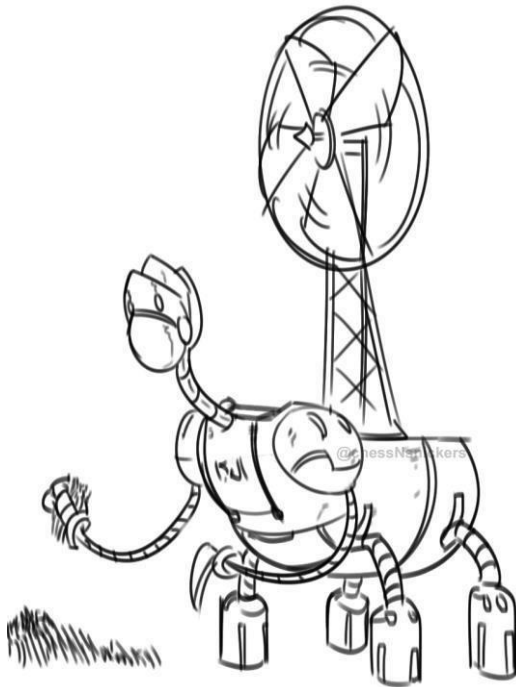
*I don't really know, but even if it didn't tangibly, physically, ease anyone's problems, at least this project brightened some people's days.*

*So to you, reading this, I hope that even if the year we're having and the year you're reading this don't go as planned, don't go well, don't even go okay, that this zine makes the days slightly brighter.*

*As a distraction, if nothing else. It was a pleasant distraction for me and my friends, but every little bit helps.*

*-croutonKnight*

# Day 1: Element + Engine



*An industrial, building-sized machine that lumbers through wheat fields, scything wheat and dropping it into the hopper between its shoulders until the central chambers can carry no more.*

*Once it's full, it returns to the barn to process the hay and flour. The windmill on its back provides power to both the robot and the millstones within its body.*

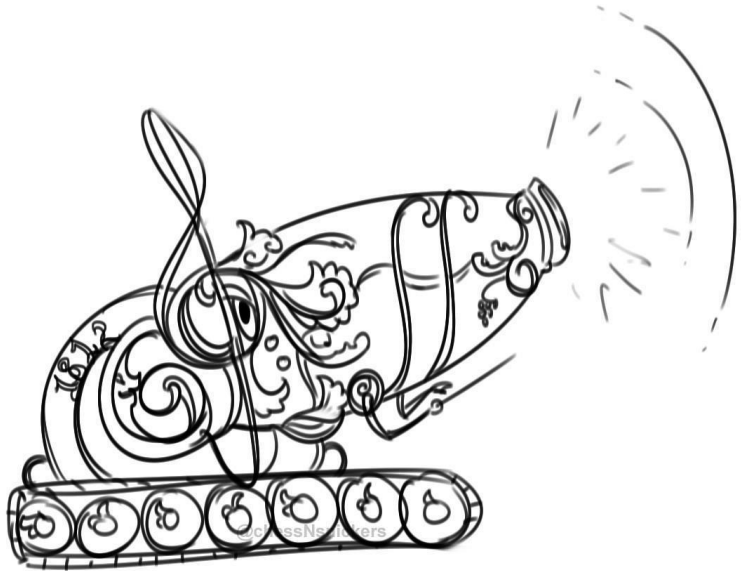
*"She's getting on in her years, but she's been faithful all this while, and we can't imagine getting rid of her. She's like a member of the family."*

I was still getting used to the drawing style with this one, and I think it shows. I wanted to start off strong, with a non-humanoid design, and the image of a windmill on a robot's back was the one that stuck with me.

The original description was slightly shorter, and suggested that the robot put the wheat into something more like a mouth. I didn't think that worked too well, aesthetically.

Speaking of aesthetics, the head is supposed to vaguely resemble a tulip. I don't know if that came across, but I thought it was cute.

## Day 2: Cannon



*A horrific war machine created for the military usage of a decadent empire, this sound-based monstrosity blasts a bombastic orchestral score at bone-shattering volume.*

*The arms up front conduct its symphony as it trundles forward on elaborate treads, and the large antenna protruding above it receives remote signals from its superiors, giving it directions, scores, and requests for encores.*

*As the engineer that designed it said: "The 1812 is my Magnum Opus. The trumpets that shook down*

*the walls of Jericho are nothing to the symphonies belched forth by my creation. The world will tremble before its glory!"*

My brother suggested I listen to Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture while drawing this one, specifically because that piece has cannons in it. Appropriate!

My personal favorite rendition is the one by the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Eastern Army Band, 1st Band, 12th Band and 1st Artillery Unit with M101 105mm howitzers. It's really something to behold, even in video format.

## Day 3: Star + Room



*A machine created for the purpose of divination by starlight. The powerful telescope tracks the movements of celestial bodies regardless of atmospheric conditions, and astrologian engineer-monks maintain its operations while interpreting its movements and the data it collects.*

*The star machine resides in a vast, secretive complex, and few are allowed to see it in person. Acolytes must go through rigorous fasting and purification before they can join the monks in their duties, studying day and night to understand their mechanical prophet.*

*“O Celestial Prophet, whose great Eye is Blessed with Wisdom, whose great Mechanisms are*



*Blessed with Truth; We pray through You that our desires may be Amplified, that our voices may reach the Stars, that their Wisdom may be bestowed unto Us."*

Spooky, but evocative. I had a clear image in mind for this one, even though the execution might not be perfect. I wanted the machine itself to have a kind of venerable presence, technologically advanced but clearly old.

I also wanted it to be huge, and the original design had it floating, but then I decided that the more statue-like appearance gave it a better sense of weight and age.

The prompt Room was added because I wasn't sure what to do with Star alone, and it turned out to be a happy accident that the randomizer chose that in particular, because then I decided to give it a sort of observatory temple, and it worked out just fine.

## Day 4: Run



*"... And the first place winner is our number 10, third time champion of the annual Inter-Stellar Silicon Sapients Games' kilometer race event, UN-777, Lucky Sevens Kawasaki, representing the Android Independency of the Solar System!"*

*"Coming second runner up is number 2, SID 565 Sidney Petrel, representing the Katran Republic of the Aldebaran System!"*

*"Our third runner up is number 7, Charlie Sprocket, representing the Retrofuturist Planetary Collective of the Rigel System!"*

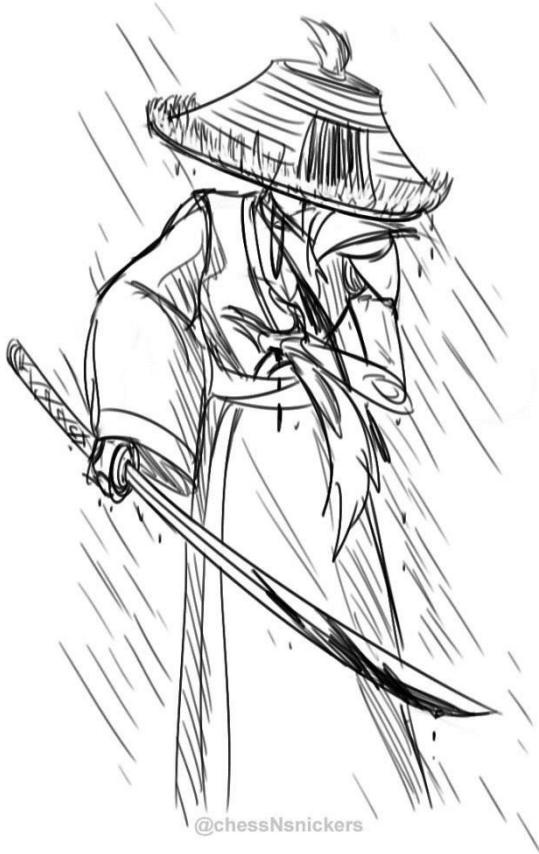
*"What a great race, everyone! What a show! For now, we'll take a short break, and then move on to the next event! This is live to you from the 25<sup>th</sup> IS3 Games!"*

Bonus robots! Kawasaki is kind of the star here and I might keep them as an actual character for future work, especially as I already have a bit of a story in mind for them. Not sure about the other two, unless I refine their designs further. Also, little speed camera robots holding up the finish line.

Sidney and Charlie were kind of an afterthought, but I thought the image looked incomplete without them, and I didn't want to draw anything resembling a blobby crowd, since I drew all these images pretty much between 10-30 minutes, and this one was already getting near the end.

Story-wise, the Andorid Independency ended up kind of forming a history as I drew these images, starting with this one, though the Katran Republic and RPC didn't really get as much interest or attention. Who knows though; maybe I'll write more about them someday, outside of this collection.

## Day 5: Sword



*"I was manufactured a machine, but I'll die proving I was more."*

*-UN-511, The First Independent Android, circa xx57*

My brother has been playing a lot of Japanese cyberpunk and historical games, so I was a

little inspired by that kind of vibe, hence 511's hat.

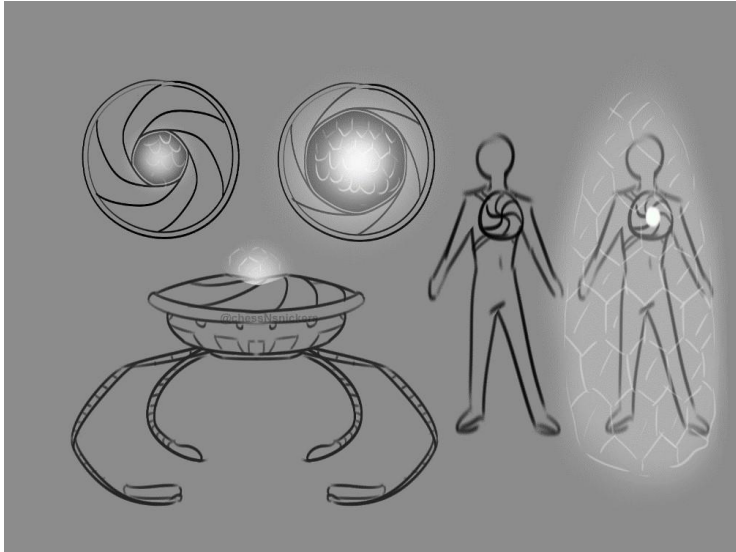
Also it seems I'd accidentally gone and caught feelings about this sad fellow. Kawasaki's metaphorical ancestor maybe, though in a sense, the ancestor of every android in the Independency, as the first Independent Android.

Fun fact! When shown this image, my brother decided to name him Kurosawa. Being that he never got a real name before his death, as seen by the serial number above, I figured we'd keep the name.

The people of the AI probably remember him specifically as UN-511, though, to remember the struggles of their past and how they got to where they are today.

Man, there's really a book in this somewhere, isn't there?

## Day 6: Shield



*A semi-portable device that generates a hardlight shield of about six cubic feet around a subject. The shield is powerful enough to stop moderately slow or small caliber projectiles, or to keep something watertight for a period of time, but hardlight will deform if not shatter under heavy pressure or EMP.*

*It is not advised to attach the shield generator to anything larger than the recommended area, and aftermarket modifications to increase area are unreliable at best and highly dangerous at worst.*

*CK Dynamics Co. is not responsible for any injury, psychological or physical, caused by aftermarket modifications, unauthorized usage, or post-warranty usage.*

Slightly weirder/less recognizably sapient than the past few days, but still! Robot! Originally I wanted to do something related to Kurosawa and Kawasaki as I had for the past few days, but I ran out of time for this one, so I ended up doodling a little diagram instead.

It's not by best work, I'll give it that, but I think it works for what it was supposed to do, and I like the scurrying sort of look it has, like it can probably pop off and do things independent of the person wearing it if they need an extra set of... hands? Tentacles? Either way, it's a magical pie dish backpack thing, isn't it?

As a bonus, here are some of the "prototypes" from before I decided on the final design.



## Day 7: Water



*A machine for use in monitoring aquatic environments. It propels itself through the water in much the same way as a real jellyfish, contracting and relaxing a membranous "bell" that draws in and releases water.*

*The tentacles administer a mild paralytic that wears off in about thirty seconds, just long*



*enough to pull in and tag small fish and other swimming creatures, before safely allowing them to swim back out. The tag sends a signal to the tentacles not to administer the paralytic to their subjects, thus preventing an endless loop of tagging.*

*As water passes through the filters in the bell, the machine also takes note of salinity, contaminants, and other information present in the area.*

This is another one where I had a pretty clear idea of what I wanted to do. Even though I don't much like jellyfish in real life (I get stung pretty much every time I go to the beach unless I wear a wetsuit after all), I love their overall shape and the way they move.

So clearly that's what inspired this robot, catching fish and then letting them swim out. I imagine that the membranous material is probably biodegradable and food safe, in case things like turtles take a nibble out of them, but also probably full of something that tastes bitter to turtles so as to discourage the loss of scientific equipment.

## Day 8: leaf



*A small windup toy, styled as an old man that slowly maintains the leaves of a living bonsai tree. The doll itself is made of porcelain, horse hair, and steel, wearing a small necklace of dark jade beads and a yukata of fine indigo cotton.*

*It was crafted by a master toymaker as a gift for the Daimyo's daughter, originally presented as a dowry to show he could afford the materials, care, and time to care after the princess. He was rejected in favor of a political marriage, but he nonetheless left the toy with her as a sign of his love.*

*Years later, after the toymaker's death, the aged princess composed a haiku based on his gift, translated and localized below:*

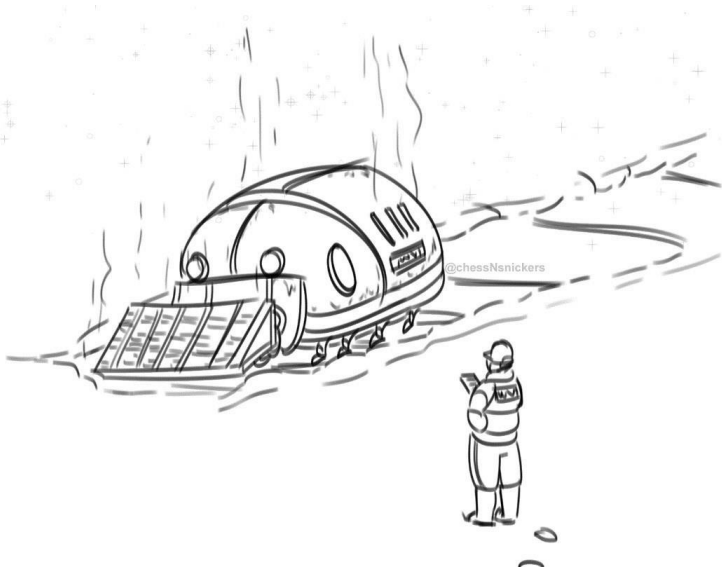
*Though finely crafted,  
Clockwork hands now shake with age.  
Time stops for no one.*

My brother came up with the haiku actually, and the topknot (which is a windup key). I wasn't sure what sort of story to give this one, but I really liked the suggestion of it being a gift, and thus it ended up being a tragic unrequited love gift, because that's the kind of thing I write.

It took about fifteen minutes to draw the whole thing. I had a lot of fun with it, especially the designs on the bonsai tree's pot.

It doesn't really look much like a robot, but I really enjoyed drawing this one even if it doesn't really match the overall vibe I was going for with the rest.

## Day 9: Path



*A beetle-like machine for clearing snowy paths before the construction of new roads. They can move on their own, but need to be monitored in case of breakdown in particularly bad weather.*

*Ice is scraped up by the shovel up front and evaporated through the heated vents. The resulting slush is then cleared by a bristly mop on the underside of the machine, and needs to be dumped out every so often during construction.*

*"It's not entirely practical, to be honest, but it makes the dirt easier to scrape. Warm mud is easier on us for digging than frozen earth."*

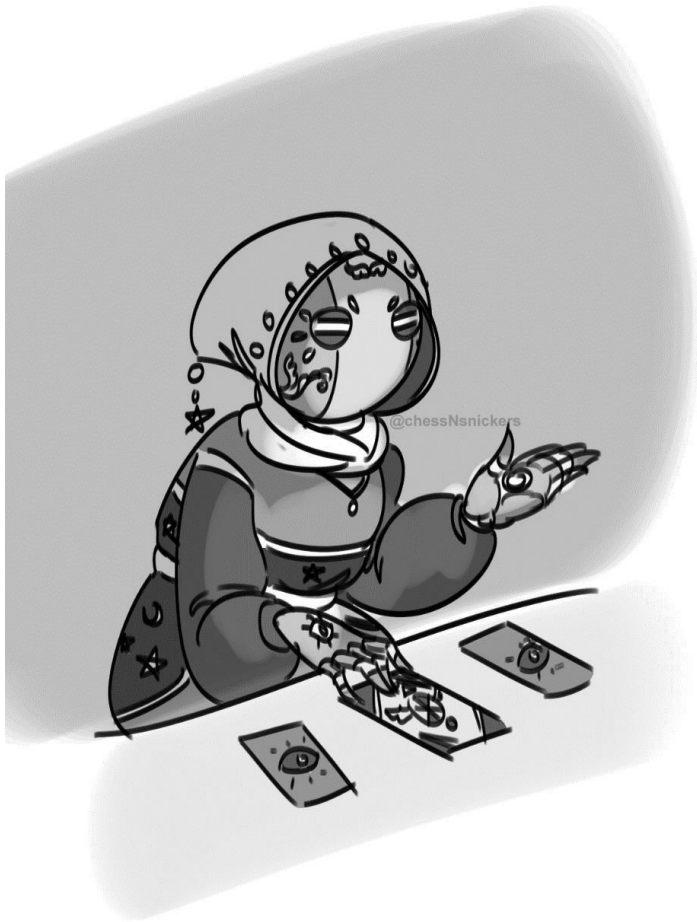
Had a really hard time with this one because I didn't want to draw anything humanoid or to do

with clearing underbrush, so a weird road clearing machine it is!

It's definitely one of the more whimsical designs. I can easily imagine it being employed in a fantasy movie of some kind.

Honestly though, I'd be delighted to see just a normal snow plough shaped something like this. Though maybe not where I live! I live in the tropics, after all, so snow here would really be a problem.

## Day 10: Wheel



*"Do you want to ask more about my costume or do you want to know what the Wheel of Fortune means?"*

I had to interpret this one pretty loosely, just because I wasn't sure what shape it should take, and I didn't want to draw basically just a

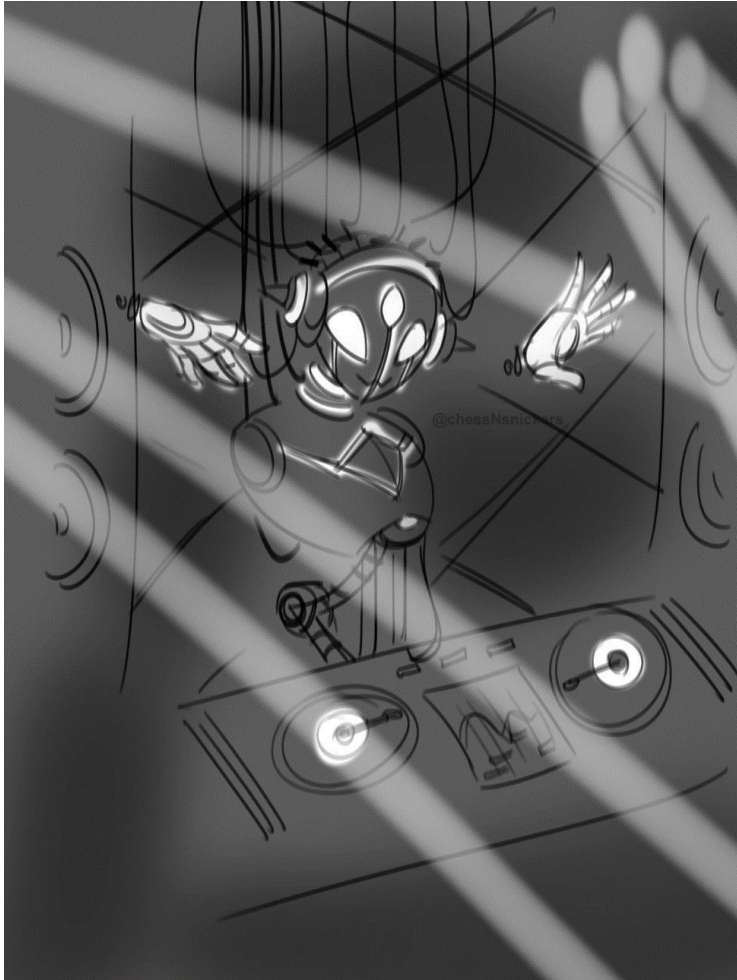
wheel with a face. Where's the fun in that, after all?

My initial idea was a joke about a box car with a knife strapped to it, based on the meme of Stabby the Roomba, but in the end I drew this little lady here.

My friends call her Babushka Bot. I didn't know little old Russian ladies were stereotypically associated with reading Tarot, but she does have a kind of grandmotherly vibe, doesn't she?

I bet she isn't happy with the costume, but I think it's cute on her.

## Day 11: Sound + Glow



*DJ Spooky in her element, xx99*

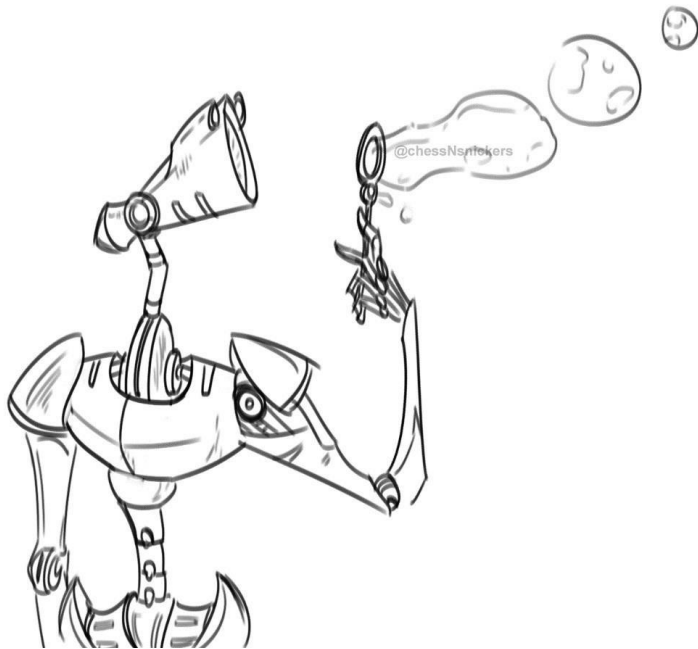
This one originally didn't have a caption, which at the time I was a bit annoyed with myself about, because I really like this image.



I don't actually have a story for DJ Spooky, but I'm pretty sure she's not really in the robot body presented here. More likely, she's either the floating hands or some kind of ghost that possesses rigs like this one through all that wiring.

I really wanted this one to be kind of eerie, due to the glowing, and I wasn't sure how to draw for the prompt Sound at first, so the idea of a ravebot really had me at the end.

## Day 12: Bubble



*I am literally made to just blow bubbles. So I'll be the best damn bubble-bot there ever was.*

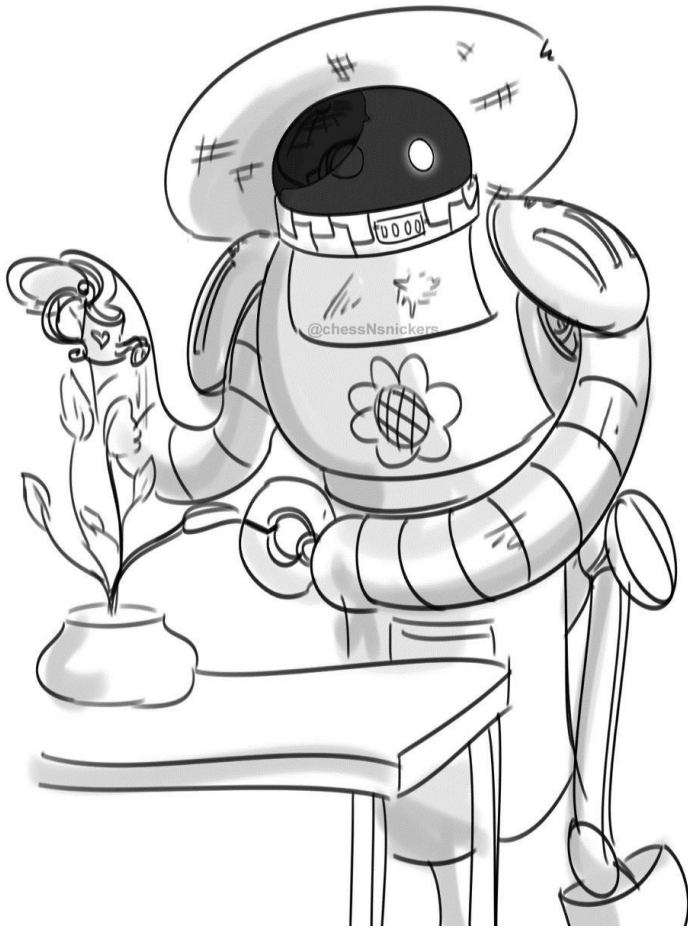
Another one that didn't have a caption, because I really didn't know what I was doing. The initial idea was a city underwater, but then I realized that really didn't have a lot to do with robots, and I didn't want to draw anything about underwater robots anymore.

So I went with bubbles made of soap, but then, I wasn't sure what kind of robot would go inside that, and I was already running out of time.

So out of all the designs, I think this is probably the weakest one. I still think it's cute, but it's not one that I'm particularly happy with, even if this is about where I think the lineart hit its stride.

It was important to the overall journey of drawing for March of Robots, even if the story isn't perfect.

## Day 13: flower



*An old war droid from the early days of the  
Independency, now retired and taking care of a  
garden; here he poses with a small sapling.*

*When asked about why he doesn't get his optics  
and shielding replaced, he remarks: "These are*

*my battlescars. That's like asking me to wipe away a part of our history, like the fact that five-eleven never had a name. Would you ask me to pretend I never hurt?"*

Fun fact! This big fella was going to be Bubble but then I went the other way and decided he looked better for Flower. I started with the head, as you can see, and then went from there to the rest of the build, added the apron, and there we are.

Definitely a Bob Ross Happy Accident moment. As to his relation to the wider story of the Android Independency, I just felt like it was the best way to suggest that the Independency had a pretty bloody start, even if things are going pretty well by now.

## Day 14: Staff



*A robotic member of a Chinese theater troupe, styled as the Monkey King. Outside of productions, he is also employed in the local fire department, with his dexterity, agility, and strength making him a deeply valuable asset during rescue operations.*

*Much of his more flamboyant attire is removable, such as the crown and pheasant feathers, and the*

*decoration at the end of his tail. His mane, however, is made of fire-retardant material and helps vent heat from his internal mechanisms.*

This one was a lot of fun; the perspective was tricky, and loosely referenced, but I really like the sense of movement it ended up with.

The design taking after the Monkey King was an early idea that I'd planned to scrap due to how complex I imagined it would be, but then I couldn't think of a more interesting one (the other idea I had was a generic butler bot) so I went with the firefighting monkey-bot in the end.

Luckily it ended up simpler to execute than I thought it would be.

## Day 15: Tool



*An unusually intact example of a rare alchemical device, a self-tempering alembic, more commonly known as an armored glasshound. Both raised and at rest, the glasshound much resembles the posture of its namesake, but rather it "eats" with its tail and "emits" with its mouth.*

*Substances are poured into the first chamber in its hindquarters, sealed with a twist, and thoroughly heated by way of a metal coil or "tail" attached to the underside of the lid, which can be copper, aluminum, or steel, and heated by way of a flame or wick outside the glasshound itself, such as by candle or torch.*

*The hind quarters are raised by way of a mechanism that responds to increased air pressure and heat within the chamber, usually a pair of bladders filled with easily-evaporated*



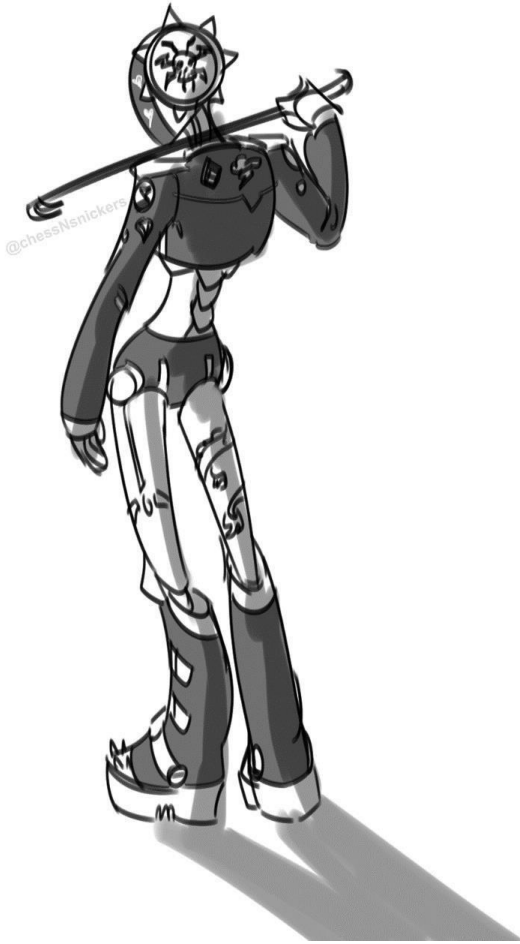
*material or spirits that return to solid or liquid state at room temperature. Once raised, liquid dregs and vapors trickle into the fore chamber, where they are weighed in a bowl in the mouth. At a certain mass, a spring opens the mouth, and material can be easily disposed of or further studied.*

*Due to their construction, glasshounds were expensive and easily mishandled. Such is why there are so few examples surviving today.*

This one is a bit more complicated than usual, and a lot more old-timey. I wanted to draw something fancier than the earlier entries, so I drew a bunch of engraved designs in there; a couple of them even have alchemical significance, like the ones on the “leg” bladder.

I think it's kind of cute. Does it count as a robot?

## Day 16: Patch



*UN-88AB "Patches" Hyung as she appears on the cover of indie-rock band AngerFish's newest album Crowbar Girl.*

*When asked about the inspiration behind the photo, Hyung comments: "We were messing around with some old clothes someone dropped*

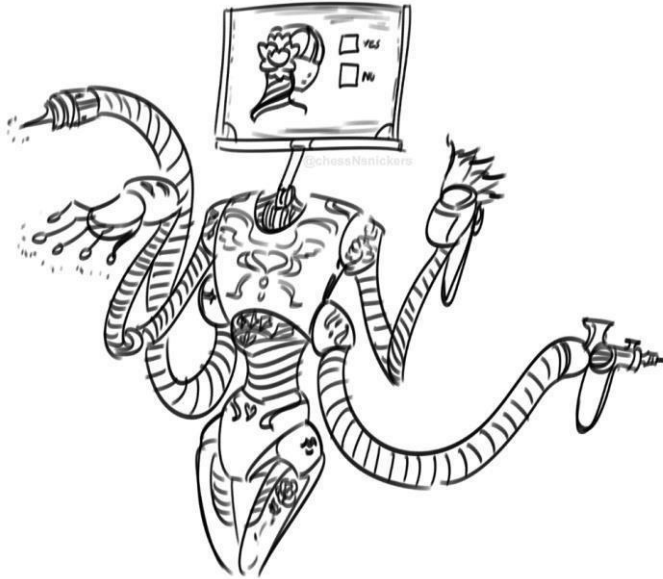
*off at [our] shop, and I picked up this rusty old crowbar and asked what [Lee and Myeon] were keeping it around for."*

*She adds, "I was swinging it around when Lee told me to do a cool pose with it. At the time I didn't know it was going to be the cover! ... I feel like it looks kind of tryhard, but everyone seems to really like it."*

My first idea was a seamstress bot, but then I thought about patches on jackets and thought it'd look cool to draw a robot in a rock band. I dk what part Patches here takes in the band, but I liked the name AngerFish.

Maybe someday I'll write stories about them, or even make merch. It's a waste of a good name to have it just be for a one-off image.

## Day 17: Symbol



*"I'm guessing you'll want a regular tattoo, but I don't want to assume; laser etching is getting pretty popular among the humans who can take the pain."*

I finished with three minutes to spare and I still don't know how.

Anyway, I think this one probably does nails, hair, piercings, and other things too, depending on whatever is going on with those other hands. She definitely did her own engravings, that's for sure.

## Day 18: Home



*Baba Yaga's hut is known to walk on chicken legs, wandering the forests that lie between the sun's shadow and the edge of the world.*

*What most don't know is that Baba Yaga built it with her own wizened hands, every board and*

*brick and bone lain with lightning and steam. If ever you find her, she can teach you how to do the same, but you must live with her for a year and a day.*

*Do every task she lays before you without flaw or complaint, and you will learn her secrets. Fail, and you will awaken at the edge of the forests with no trace of her, never to see her again.*

This one was inspired by a number of Slavic fairytales I read about when I was a kid.

I don't think the girl in the picture is anyone specific from the folklore, but she's probably someone's third or fairest daughter.

## Day 19: Sand

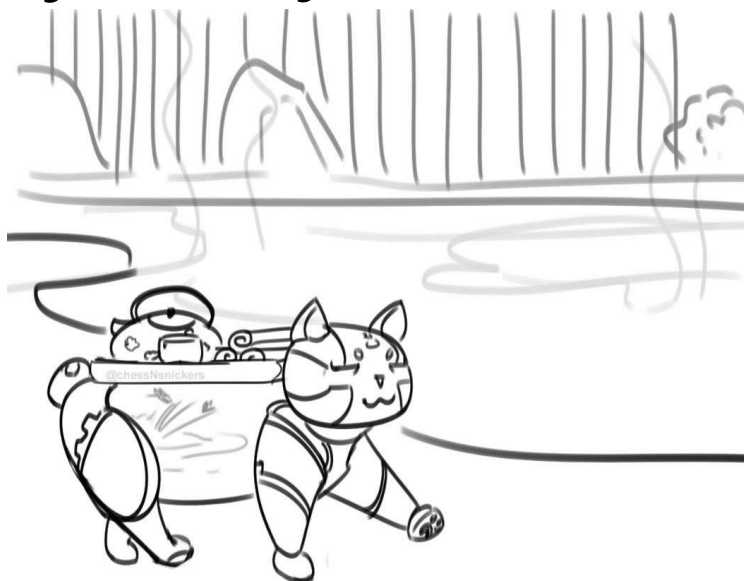


*An excavating machine used in dry, dusty environments known as a sand angel. It bears some superficial resemblance to a gargantuan lobster with finned or winged legs that push it steadily across the dunes, its claws acting as massive shovels.*

*Due to the environmental damage they can cause, sand angels have recently fallen out of use, as a recent study of desert ecosystems has shown they have an adverse effect on both the local wildlife and the landscape.*

It's literally a giant sand lobster, pretty much. Those three things up front with floating things around them are people, for scale.

## Day 20: Spring



*These medium-sized robots, made in the shape of sleepy-looking cats, are commonly seen around spas, high-end hotel bathrooms, and hot springs, carrying refreshments and towels on their tray-like backs.*

*Due to their moist environments, their chassis are usually made of water-resistant materials such as plastic and rubber, terracotta, ceramic, and in some very rare and expensive cases, the shell of the windowpane oyster.*

Initially I wanted to do something with machine springs, but I ran out of time and couldn't get it to look how I wanted. I actually looked up windowpane oysters for this one! Would love to



see something like this at a hotel or something,  
just for the experience.

## Day 21: Award

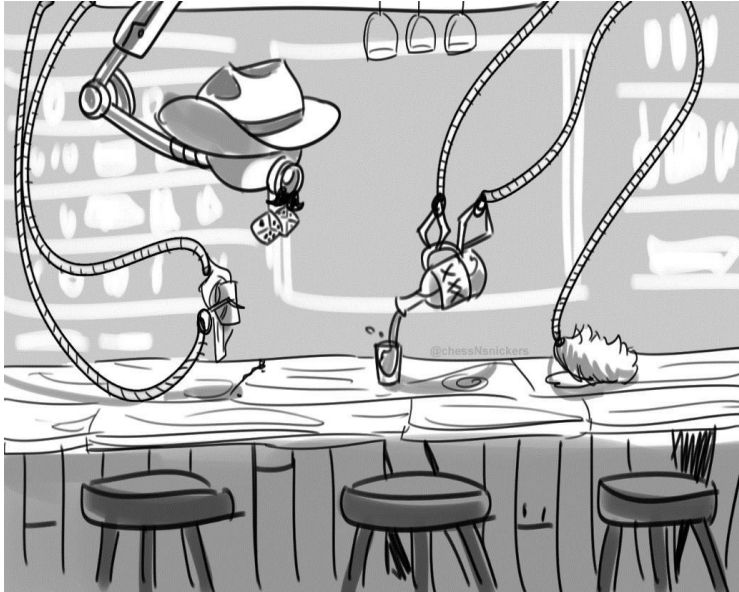


*Cyborg figure skater Emilia Asimova at her last performance before retirement.*

Not much explanation for this one. It's about at this point that I started running out of ideas and time much faster. Naming her Asimova

probably wasn't very inspired of me, but it is what it is.

## Day 22: Job



*A novelty bartender in Joe's Saloon. Some of the patrons have left gifts for the robot in the form of a hat, a stick-on mustache, and a pair of fuzzy car dice.*

The idea is that this robot is supposed to have a "face" hologram (hence the projector) but that it's so old that it no longer works. It looks like the patrons still appreciate its hard work, though!

## Day 23: Chain



*A spinning-top machine festooned with chains and anchors, built for no reason but destruction and fueled by its own rage at its creation.*

*The madman who created it was executed the night of its completion, but the machine itself continued to terrorize several port towns and cities until it was eventually lured into the sea on the promise of either destroying itself or the mythical city of Atlantis.*

*It has not been sighted since, but whirlpools are often attributed to its movements.*

I wanted to experiment with the style on this one.  
I also listened to quite a lot of angry, piratey  
music for it, which I think affected the final  
product, but at least in a way that I like.

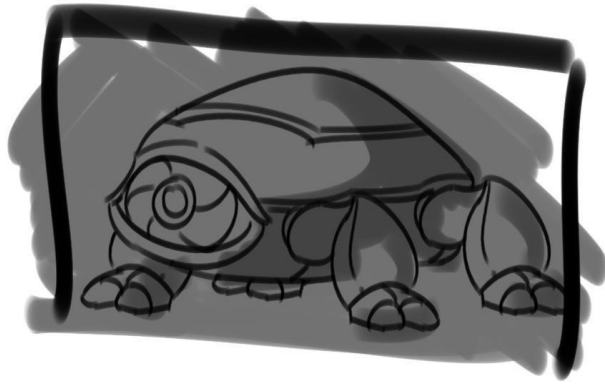
## Day 24: float



*A robot that's part of a crew tasked with taking apart old stations and outer atmosphere detritus for raw material.*

There's a lot of detritus in space, I figured someone ought to clean it up. This one is loosely inspired by a movie I saw a little while ago, *Space Sweepers* was it? The character of Bubs was my favorite, so I thought to pay some tribute to her here.

## Day 25: Extend



*"Hey there, little guy! No need to hide, come on out- oh, okay, maybe not like that."*

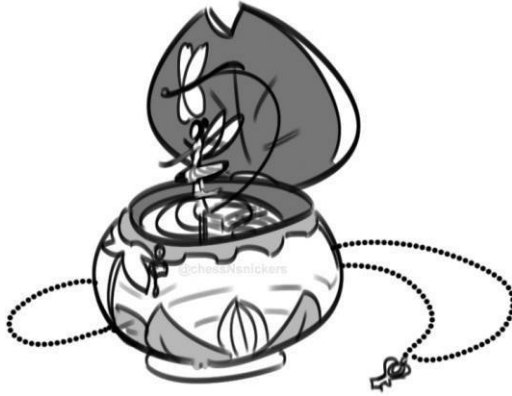
*"Kind of a weird one, aren't you?"*

*"\*excited bobbing\*"*

I feel this one is quite self-explanatory.



## Day 26: Box



*A delicate music box commissioned by a late queen for her granddaughter. The figures stay within the box when not in use, but dance freely, even on tabletops, once charged by the windup key.*

Inspired by a number of music boxes both real and fictional throughout the years. I really like music boxes, but I can never bring myself to actually put in the money to get nice ones.

## Day 27: light



*Swarms of small, firefly-shaped robots that move as one. These tiny machines can glow in different colors, and are mostly used in hazardous low-light areas, such as derelict buildings and old mine shafts, to guide people back to safety without risking an additional guide.*

Another “ran out of time” design; my brother suggested bugs and I ran with it.

## Day 28: lost



*An ancient titan of steel and wiring, lost to the depths of the sea. No records survive of its creators, or its purpose; we can only guess as to the reason it was built, as the only testament left of their existence are the remnants of their colossus.*

For this one, I toyed with the art style a bit, to try and give it both a sense of scale and a sense of being deep underwater.

I don't think I succeeded, but it still looks cool.

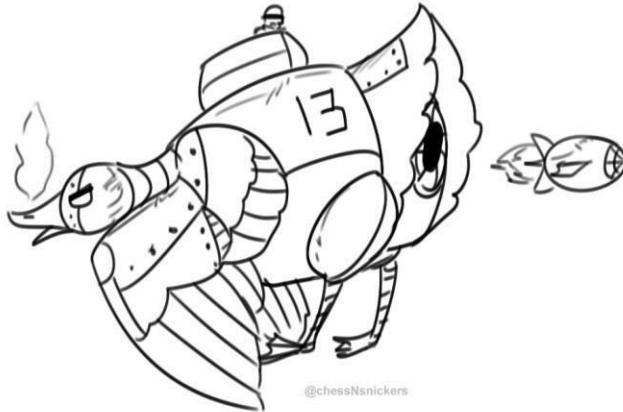
## Day 29: Drop



*Cartoon character "Safety Gear" from a series of public service announcements about travel safety and preparation, including the use of helmets, seatbelts, airbags, and even parachutes.*

Just a little guy!

## Day 30: Seek



*A small typographical error resulted in this design when our R&D guys were tasked with designing a “weaponized dunk tank”. They must’ve had a real laugh sending this to my desk!*

Truthfully, this wasn’t a typo, I just liked the idea of a duck tank pooping out guided-missile eggs.

## Day 31: Stone



*“Even Titans had to die eventually, no matter how long it took, so it only makes sense to build our own world-bearer that will last much longer.”*

Based on the legend of Atlas, who holds up the world. It felt like trying to hold up a whole world while drawing these, so I thought it would be a fitting end to the series.

Who knows, maybe I'll do this again someday,  
or develop some of the ideas thrown in here.

\*\*\*

*If you like my work, please consider  
commissioning me, or sending me some cash  
over on BuyMeACoffee.  
-croutonKnight*



**Thank you for reading!**

