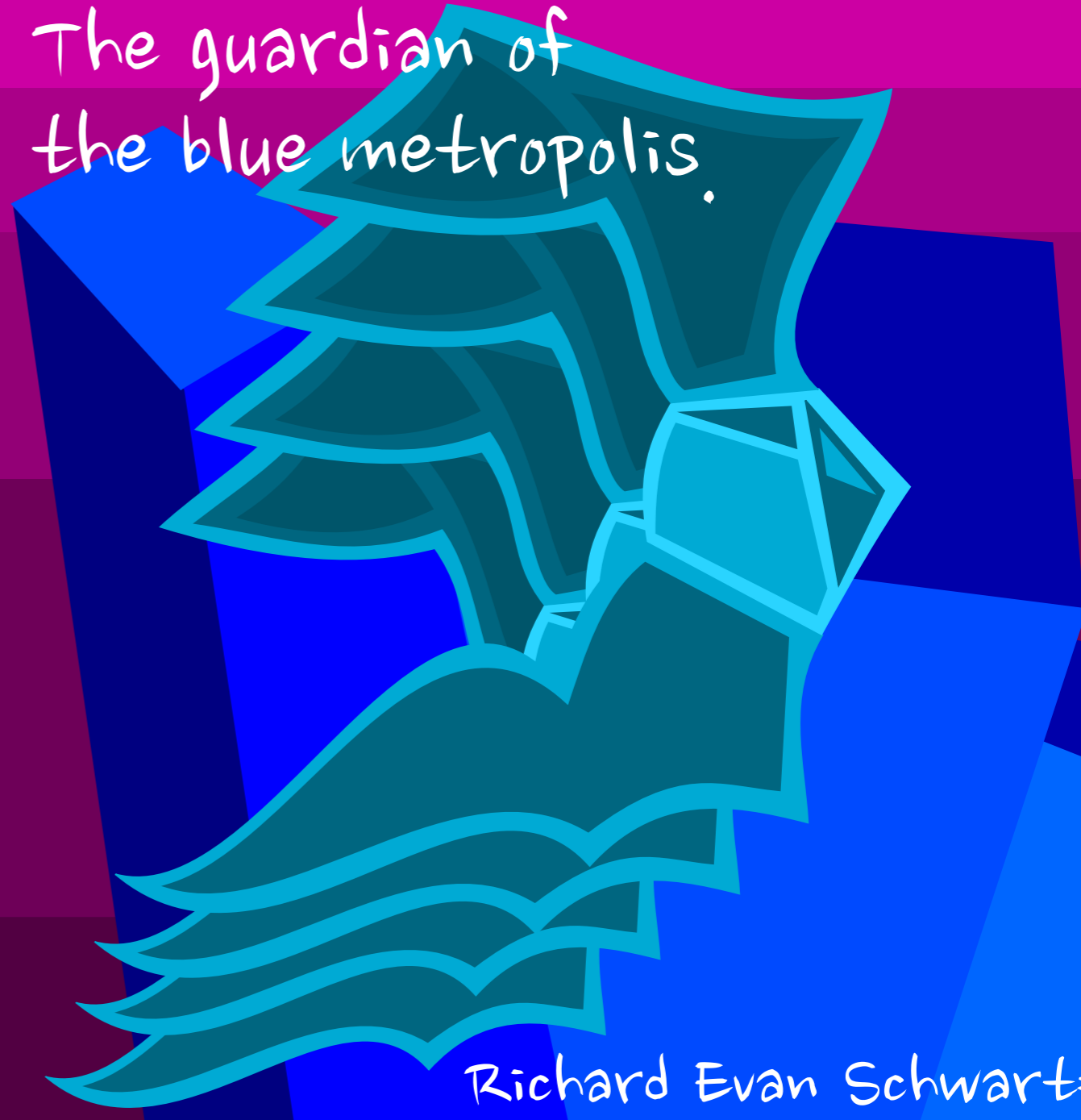


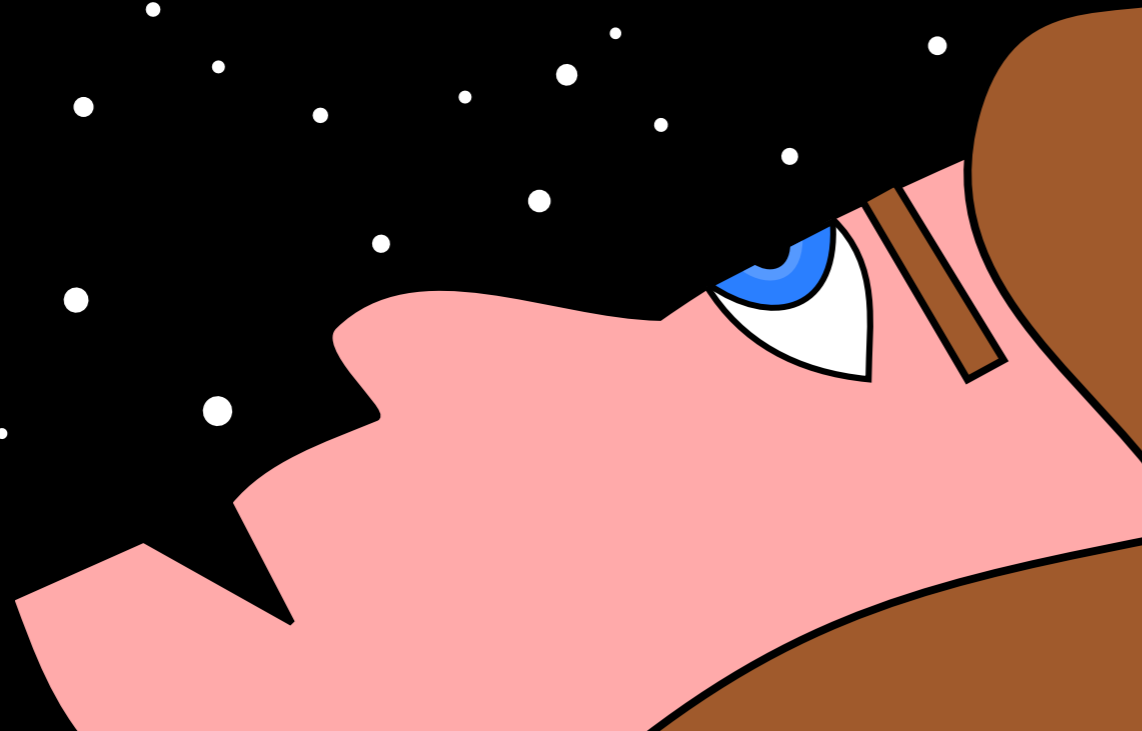


The guardian of  
the blue metropolis.



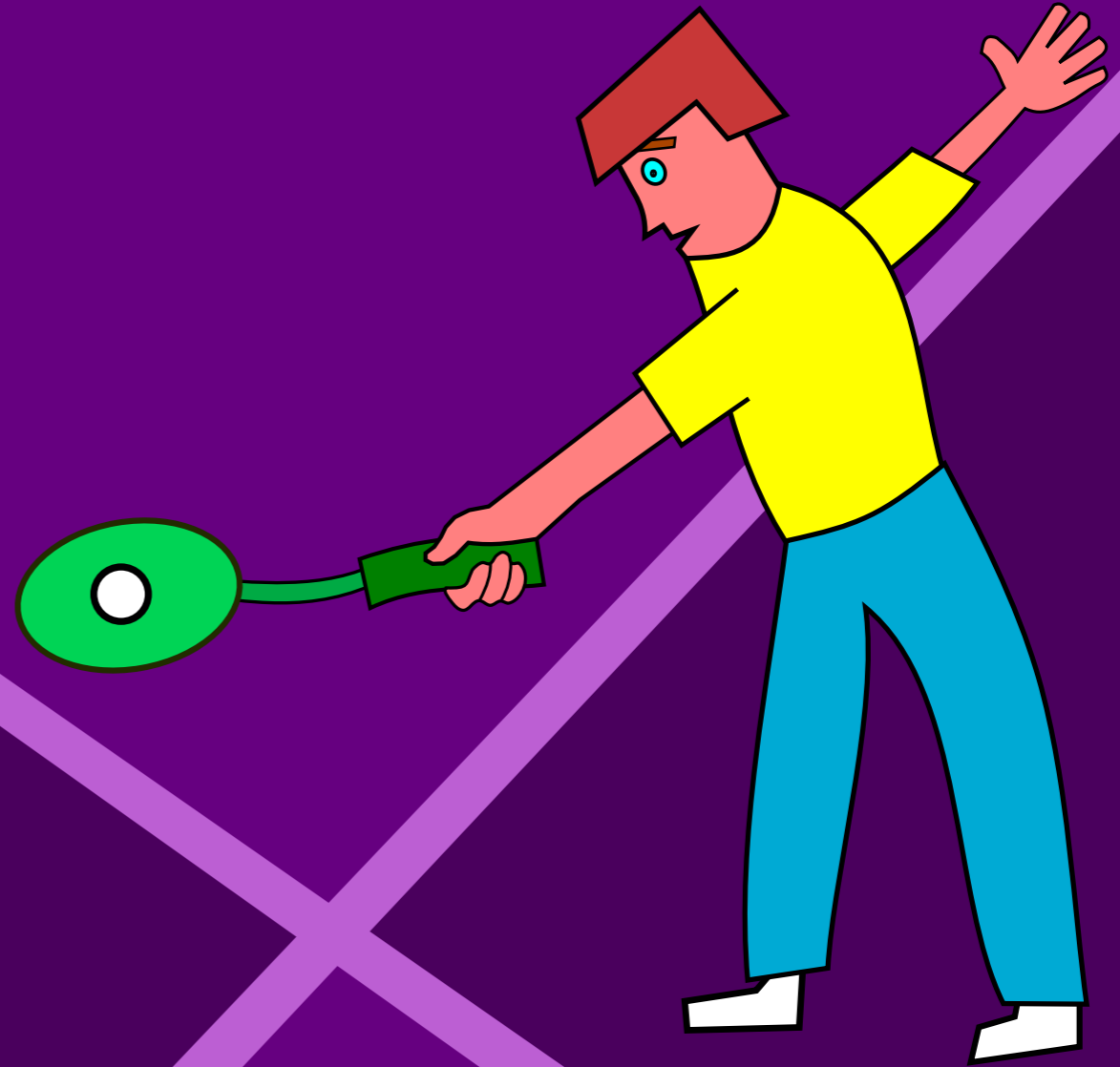
Richard Evan Schwartz

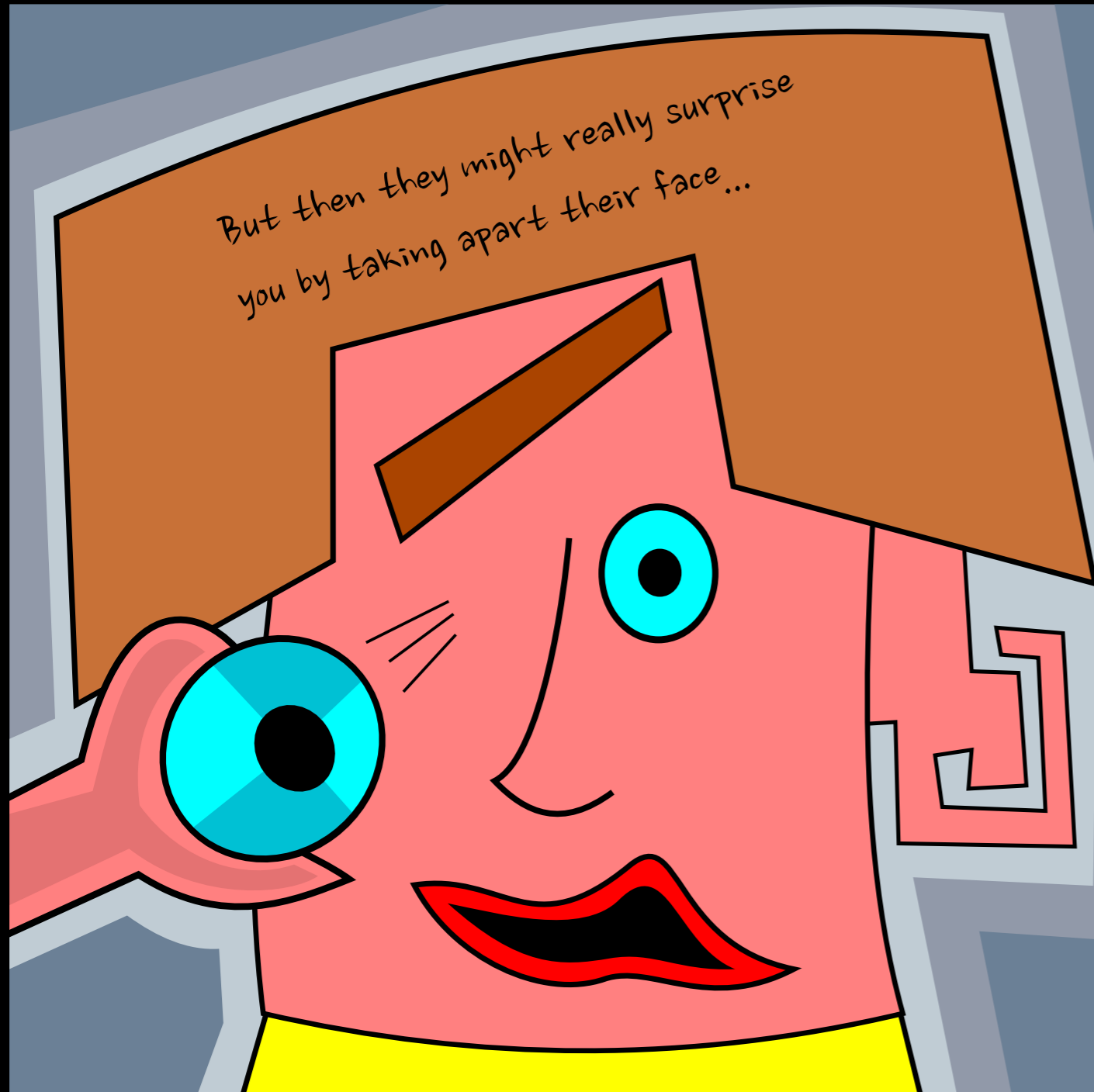
If you are like me, you sometimes look up at the night sky and wonder what sorts of aliens you might meet if you could travel the universe. What would they look like?





They might like some of the  
same games that you like...

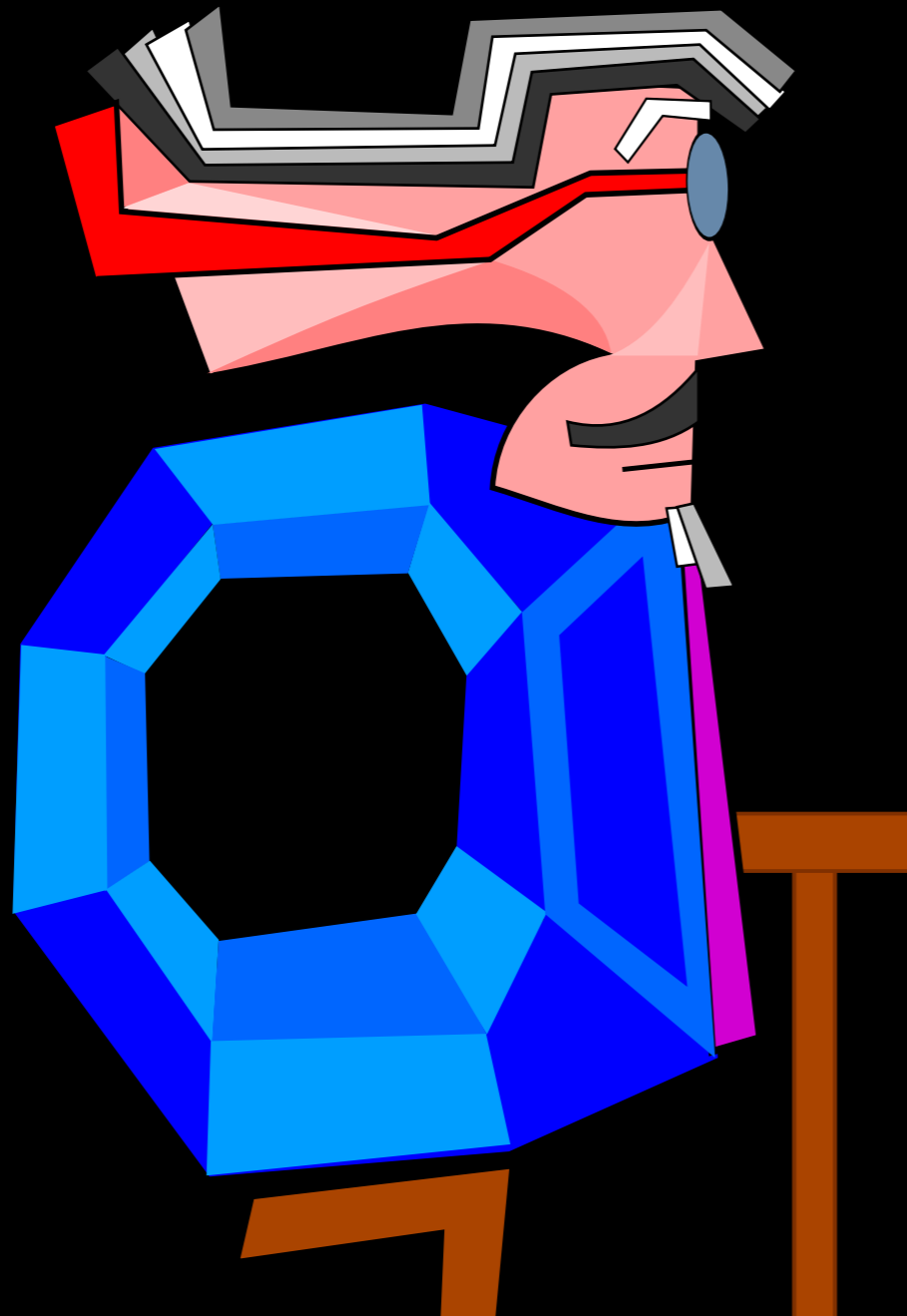






You might meet  
some aliens who  
look sort of like  
you from the  
front...

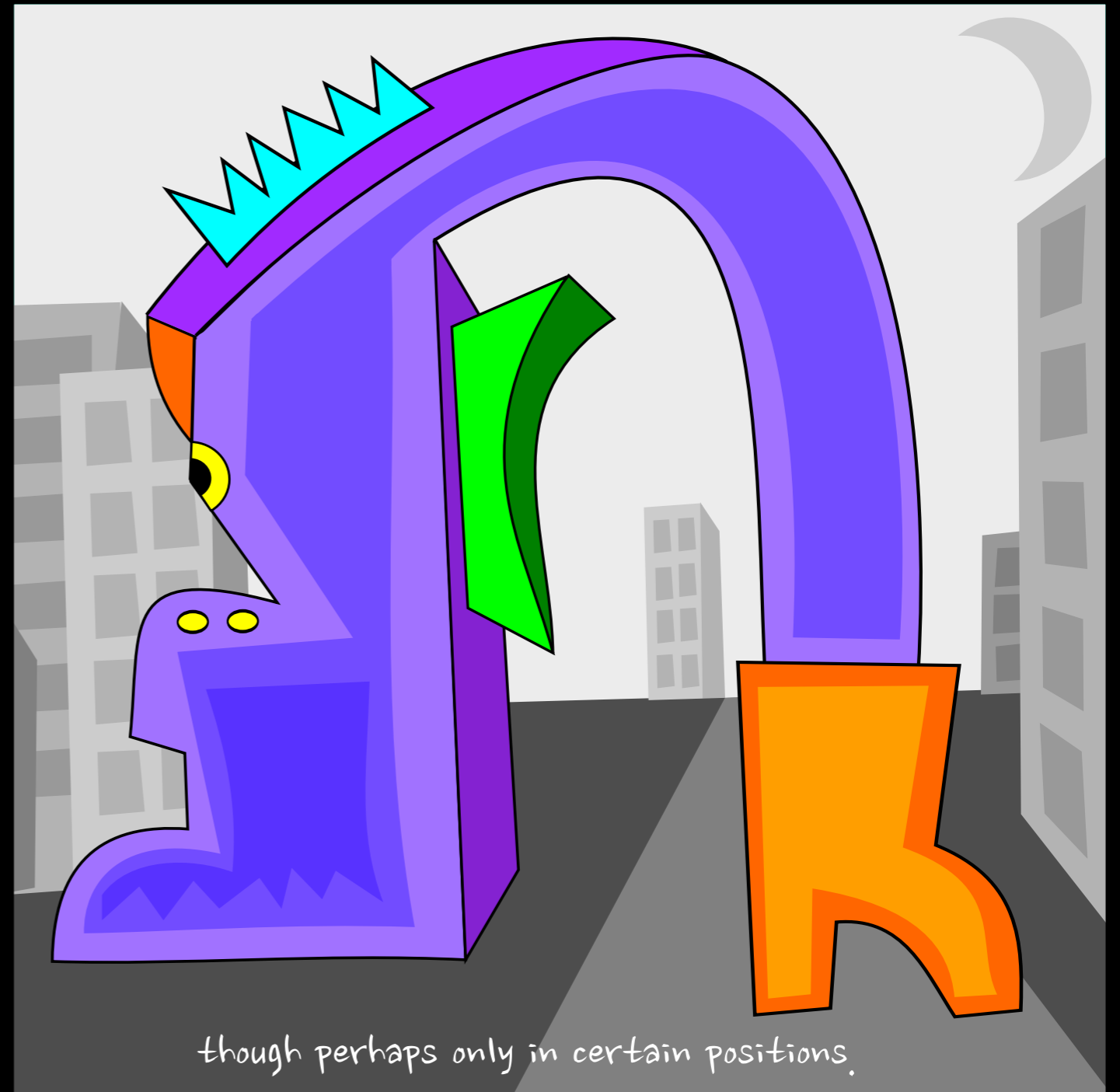
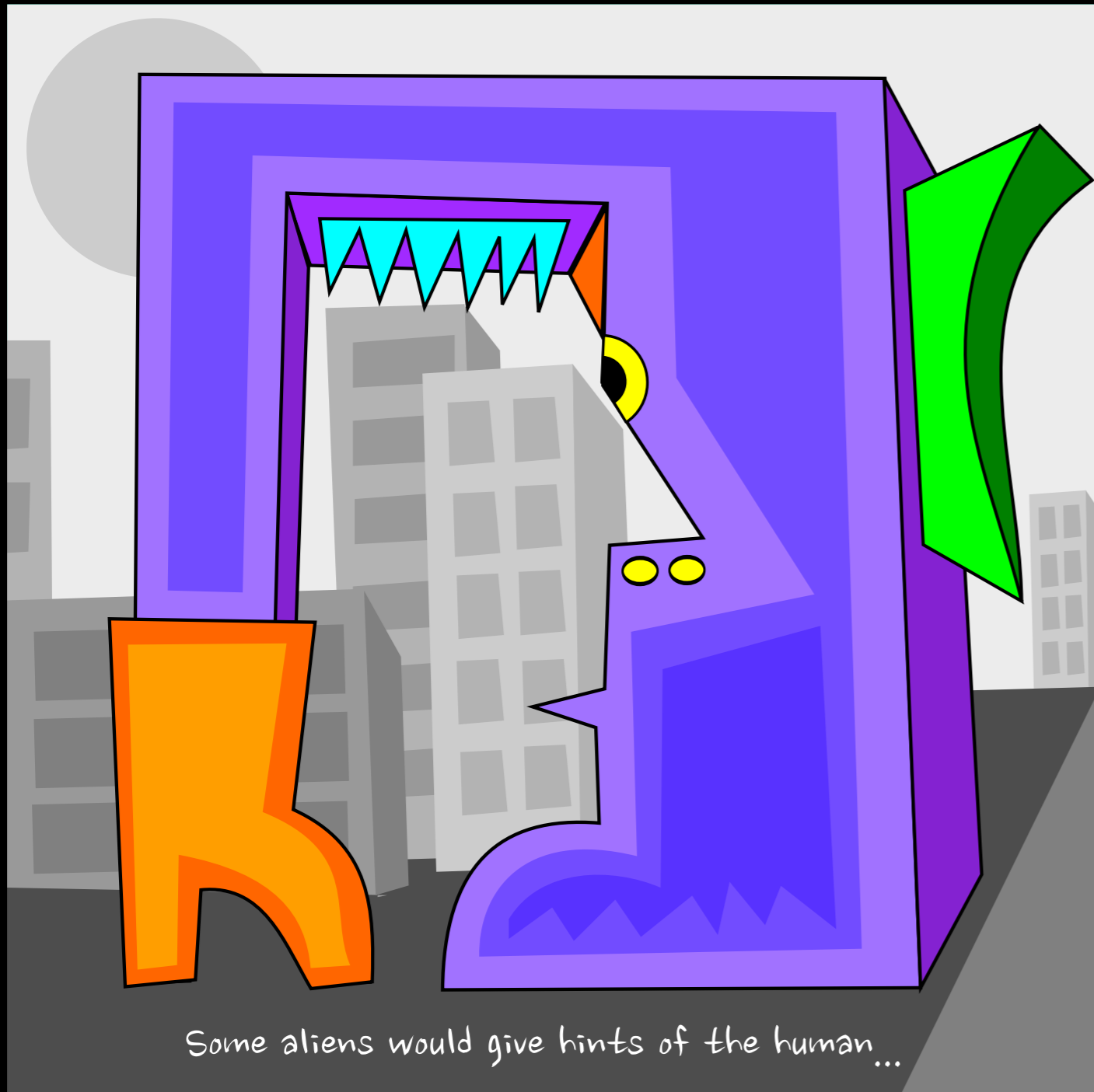
but when  
you look  
from the  
side it is  
a whole  
different  
story.



or maybe  
they only  
look like  
you from  
a distance.

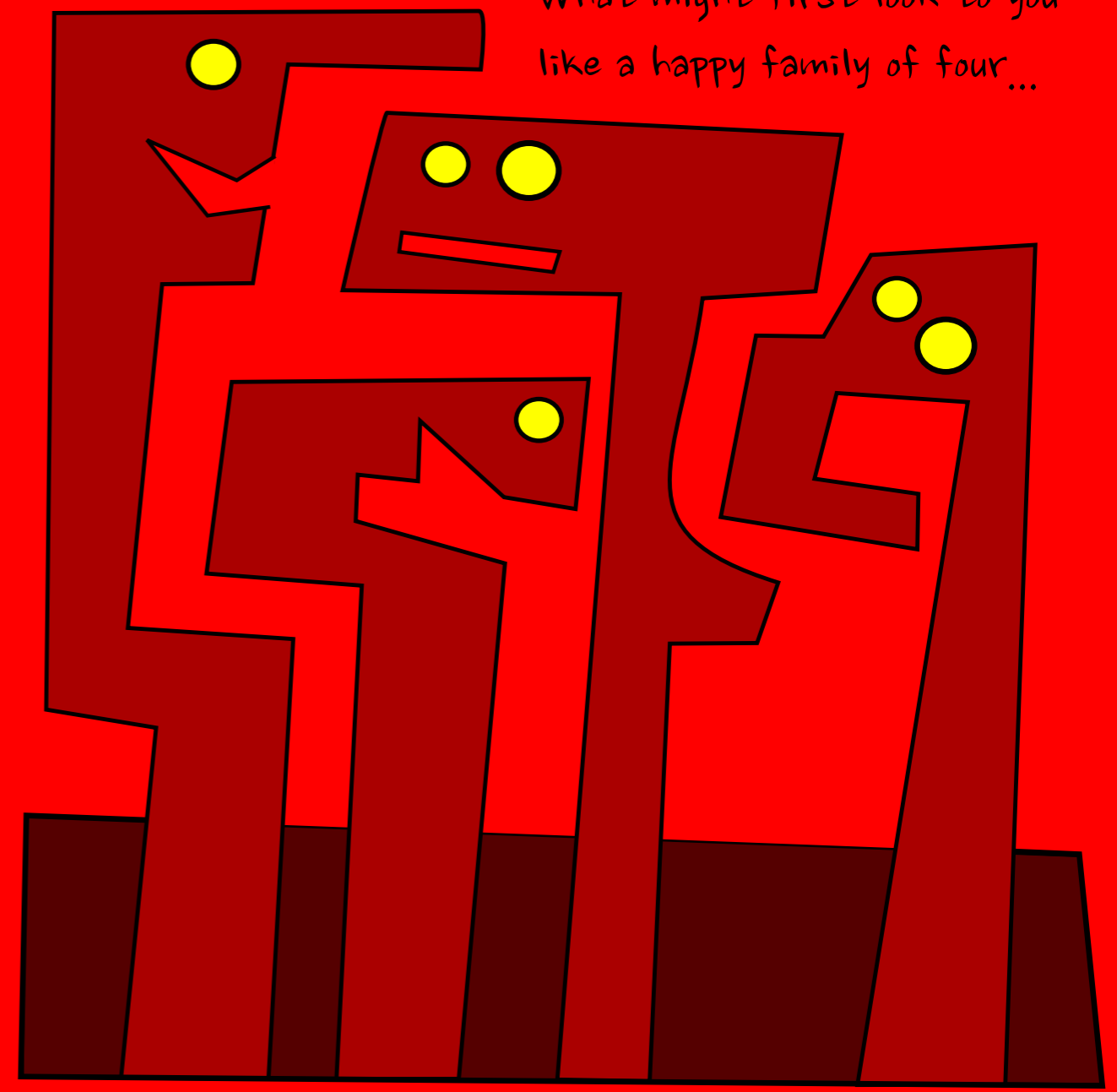




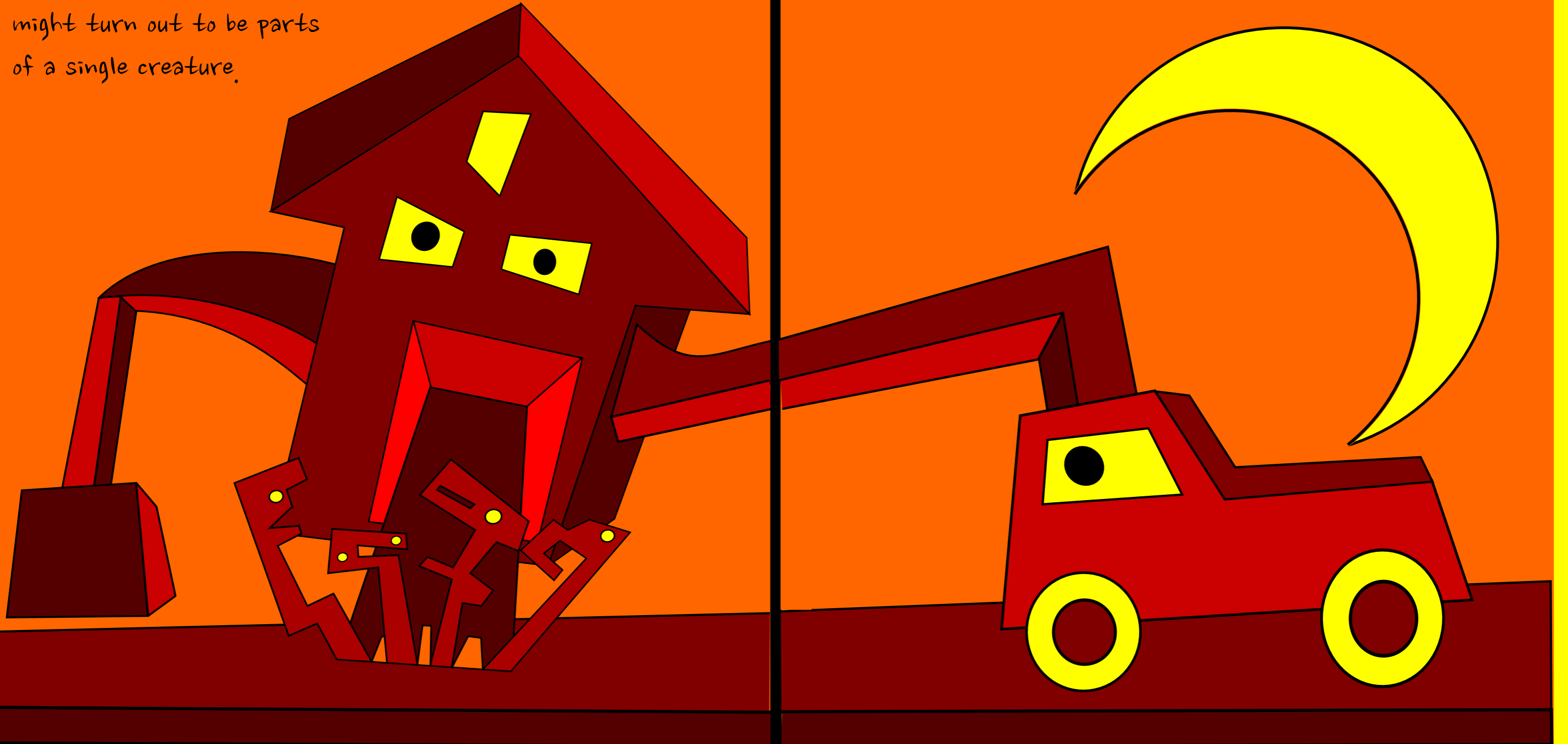




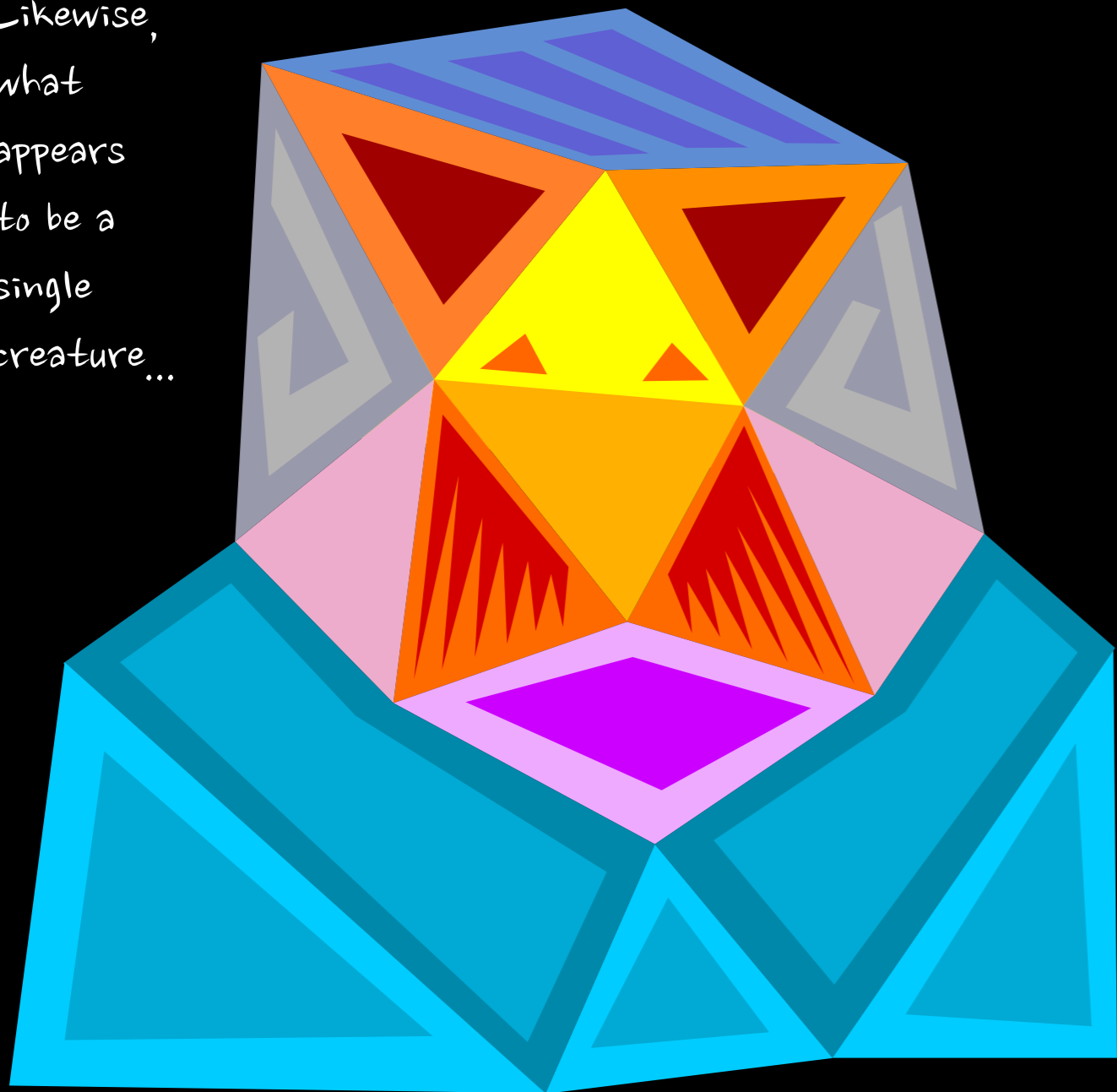
What might first look to you like a happy family of four...



might turn out to be parts  
of a single creature.

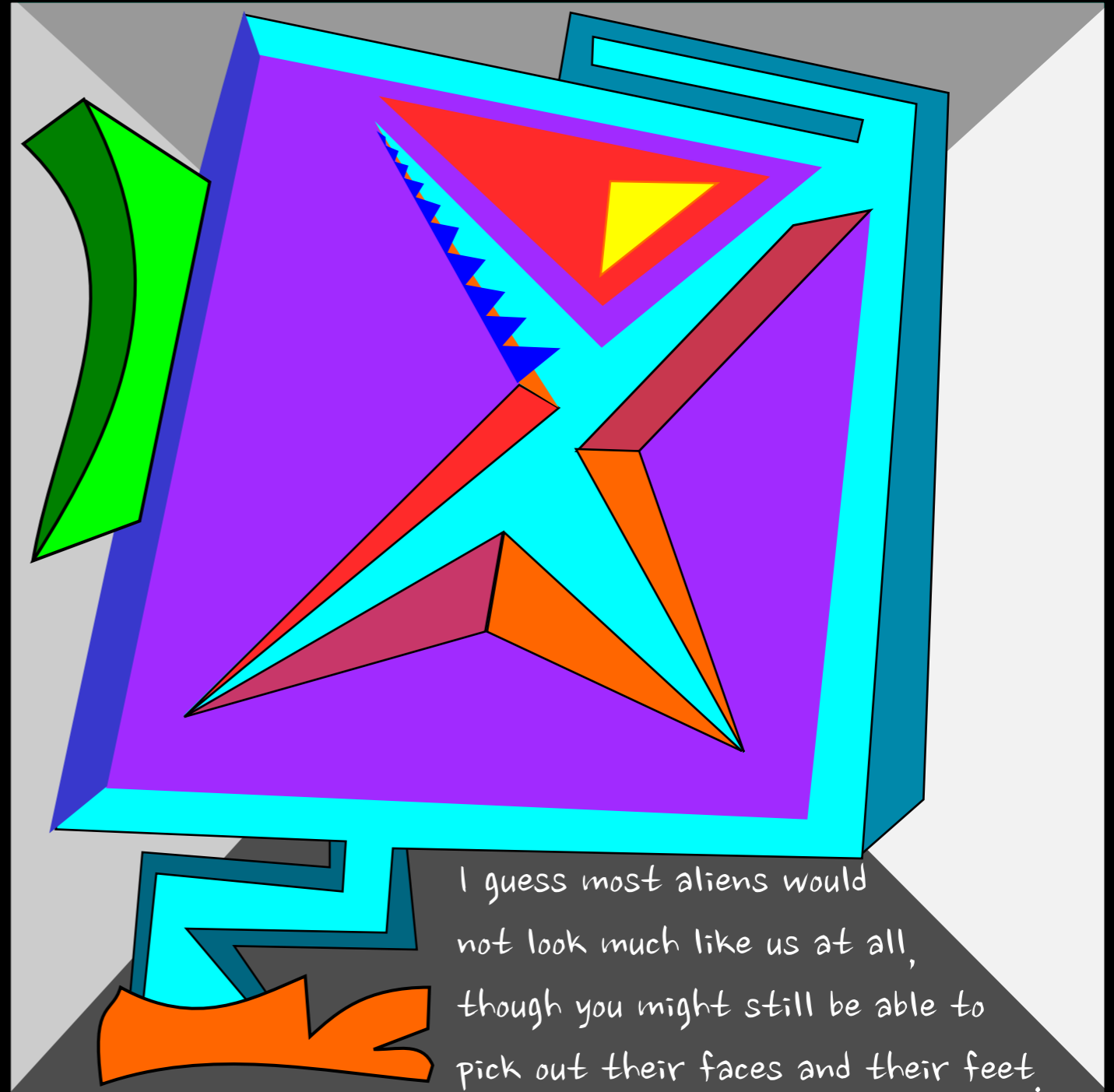
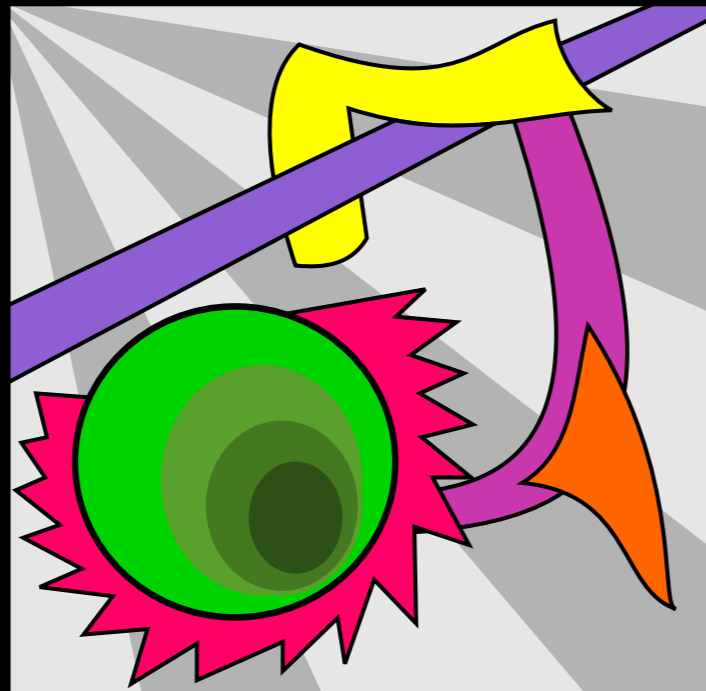
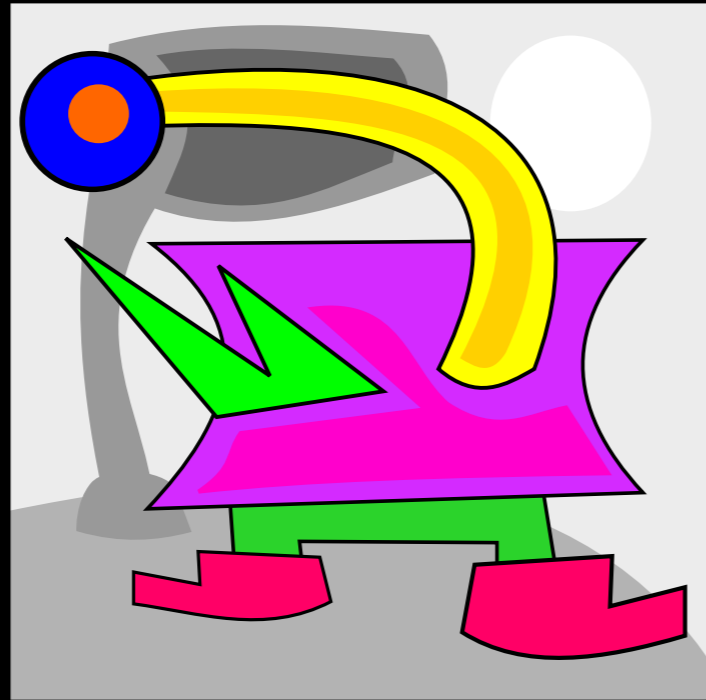


Likewise,  
what  
appears  
to be a  
single  
creature...

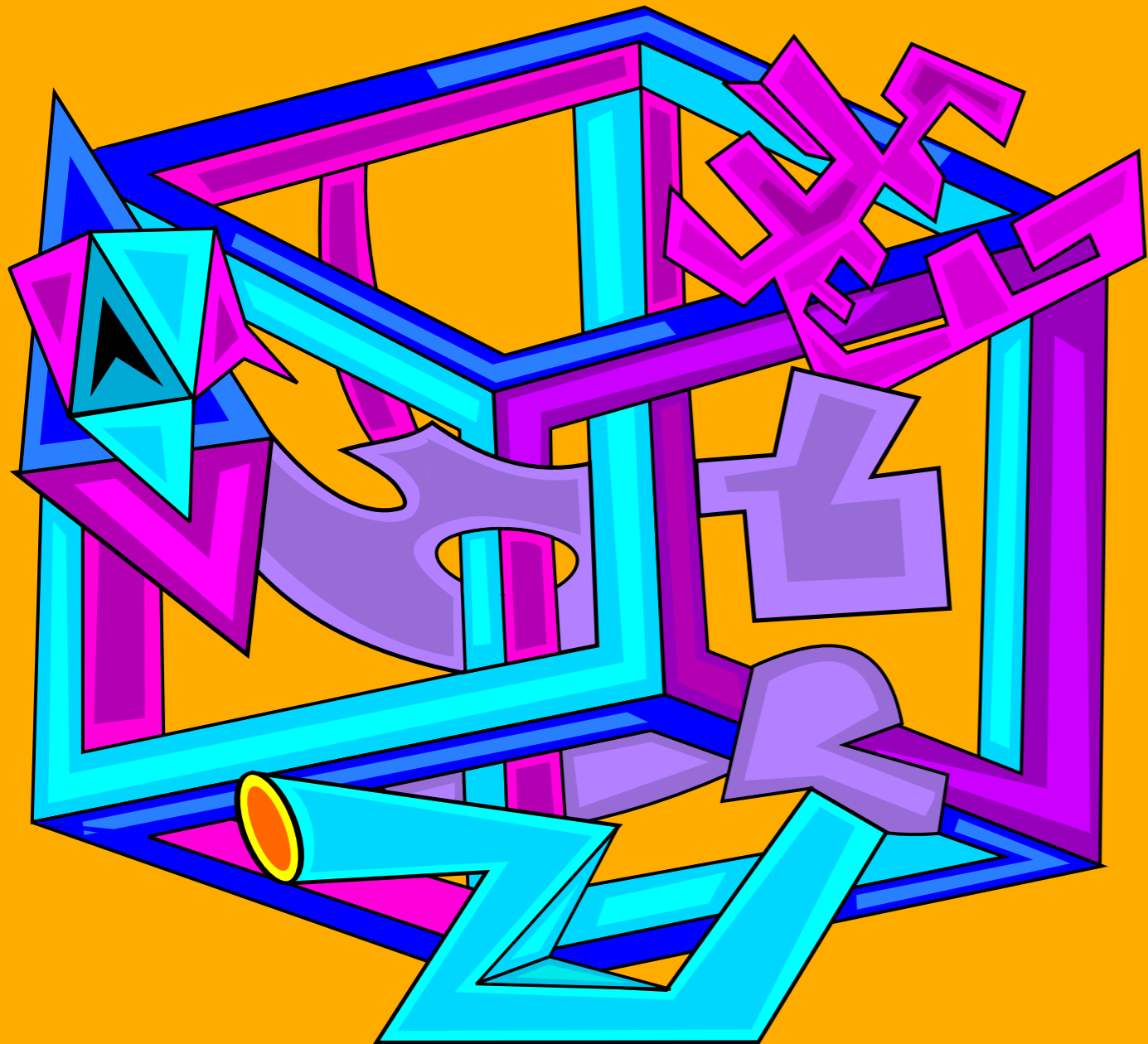


might  
turn out  
to be a  
colony.

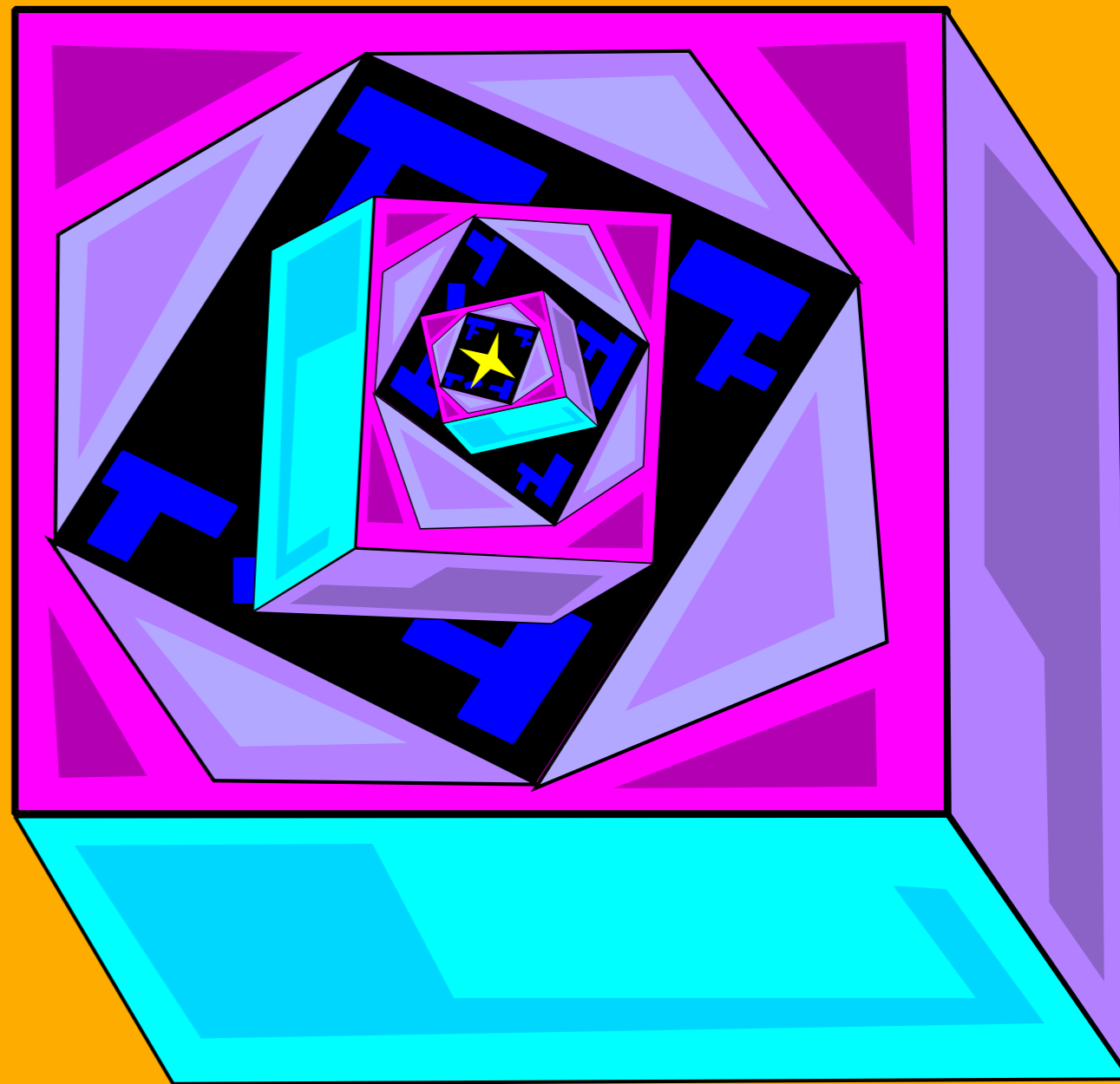




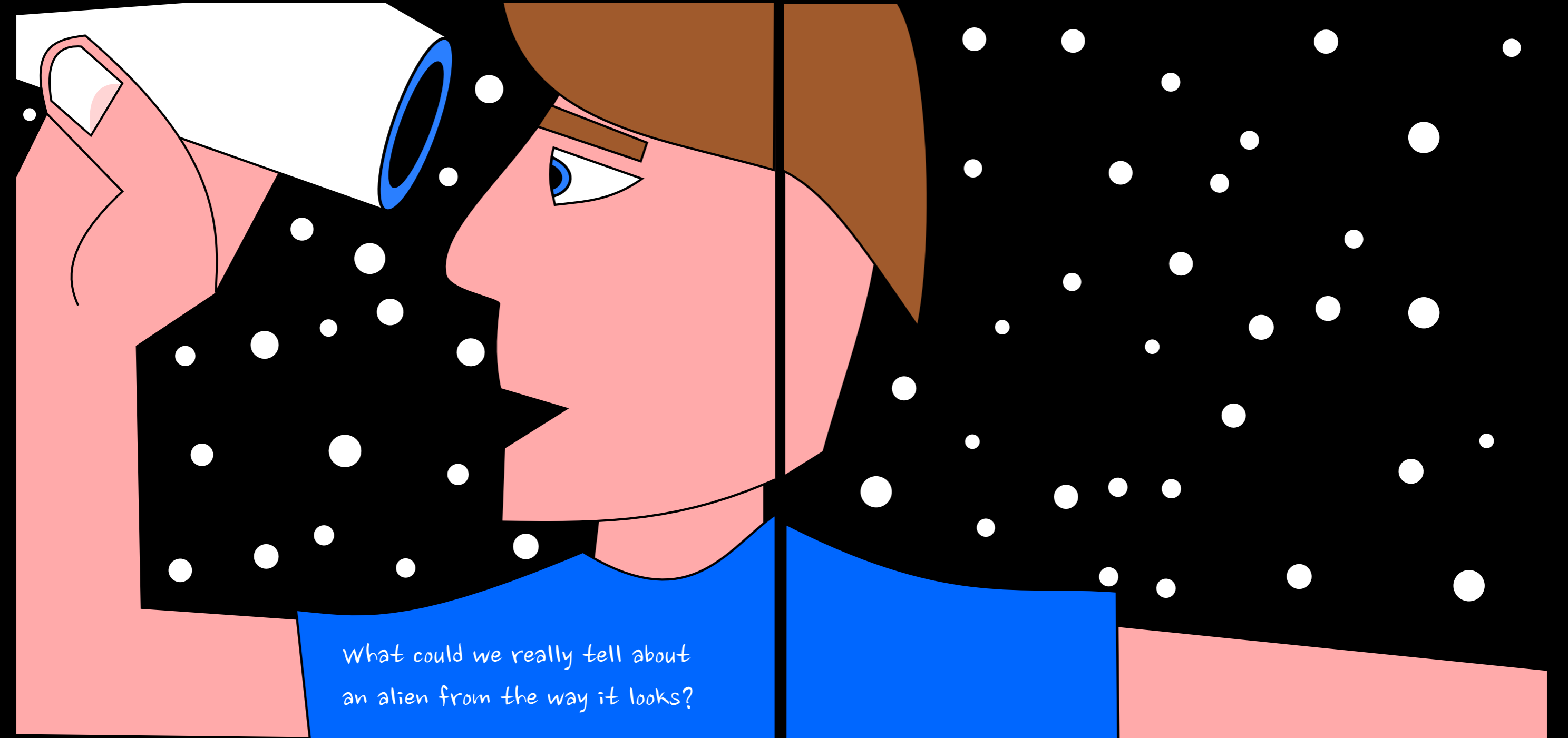
I guess most aliens would not look much like us at all, though you might still be able to pick out their faces and their feet.



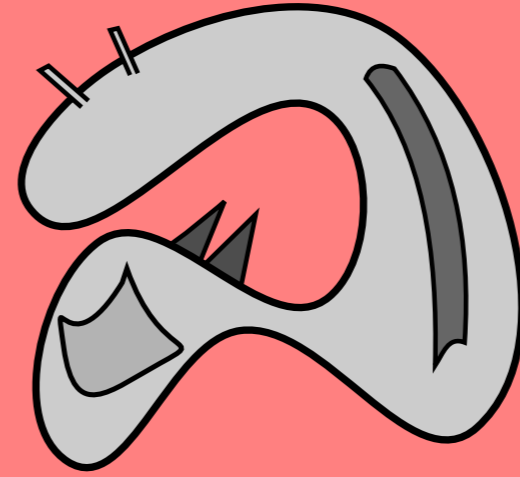
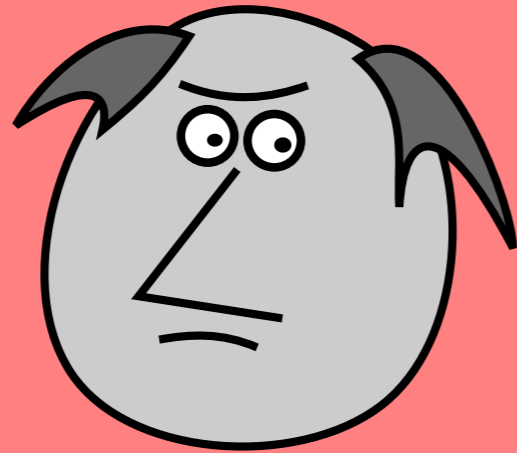
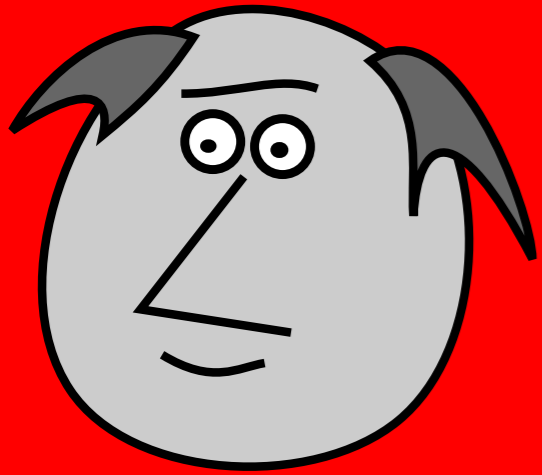
Some of them might not have faces or feet.



They might not even be in one piece.

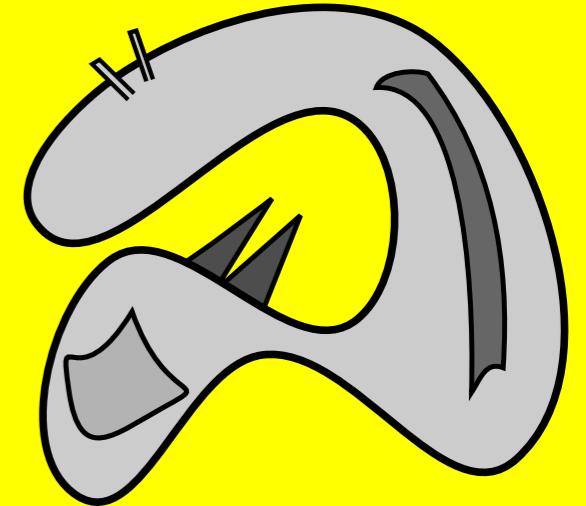
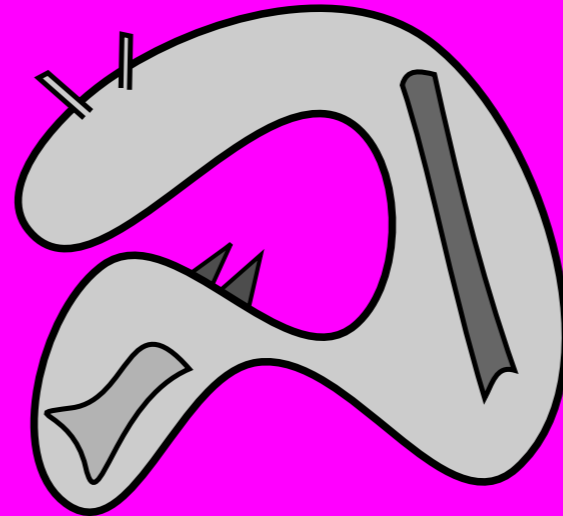
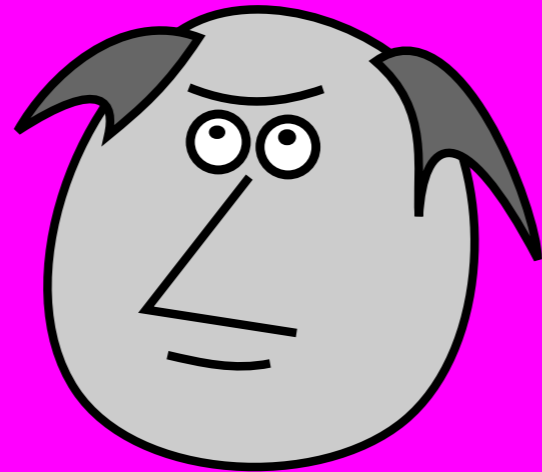
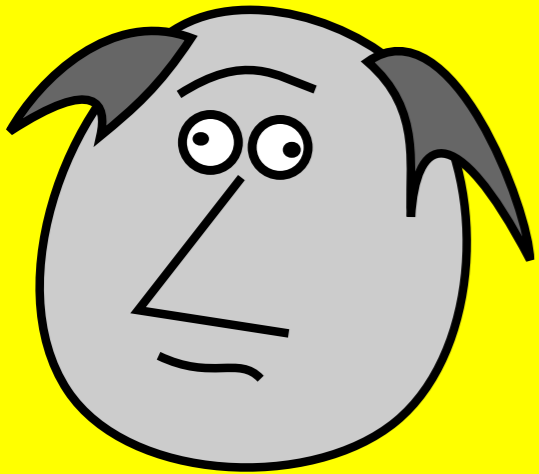


What could we really tell about  
an alien from the way it looks?



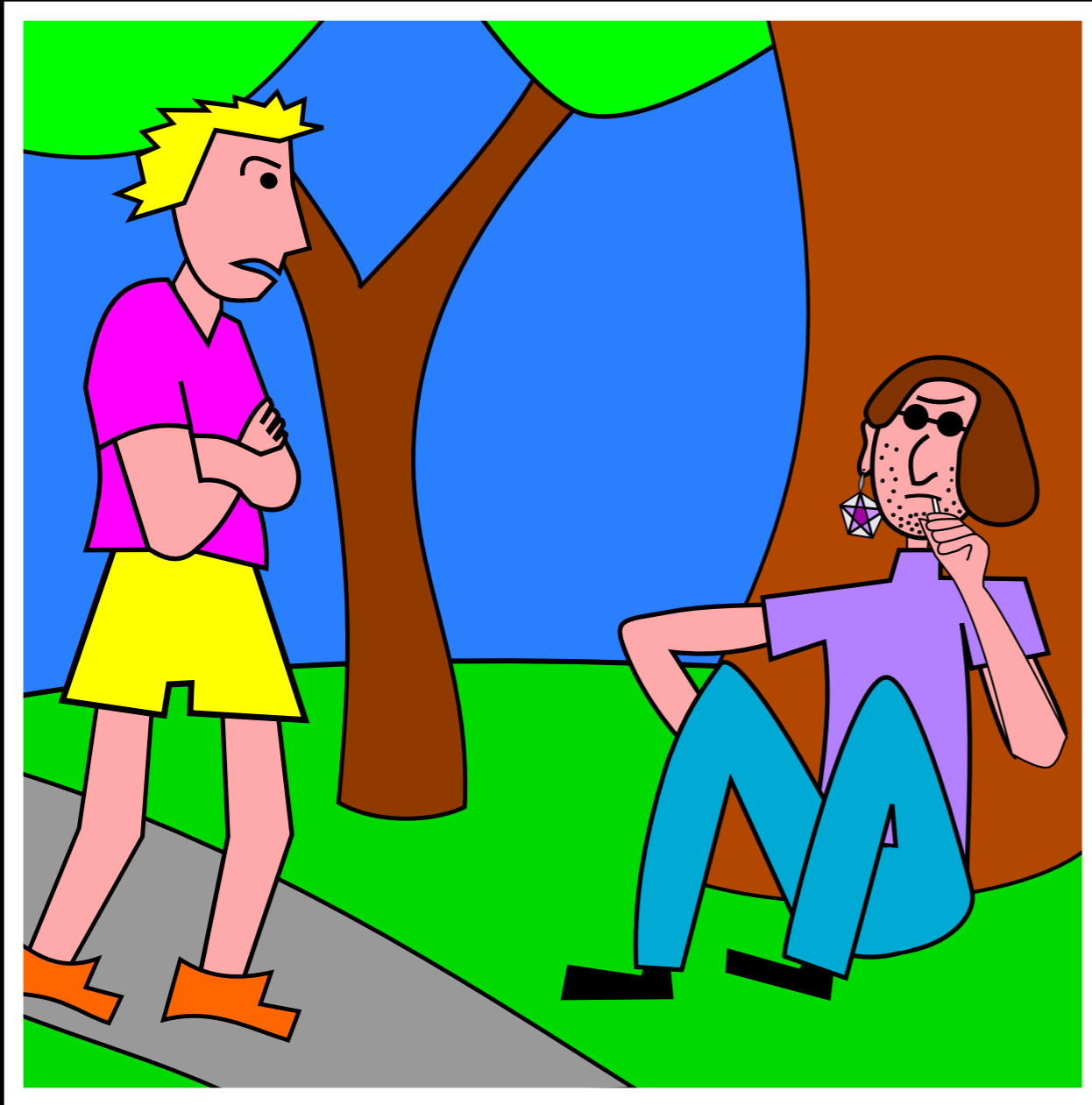
Sometimes when I look at people I think about how small changes in their expressions make such a big difference to us.

It might be the same for aliens, but probably their expressions would mean nothing to us and ours would mean nothing to them.

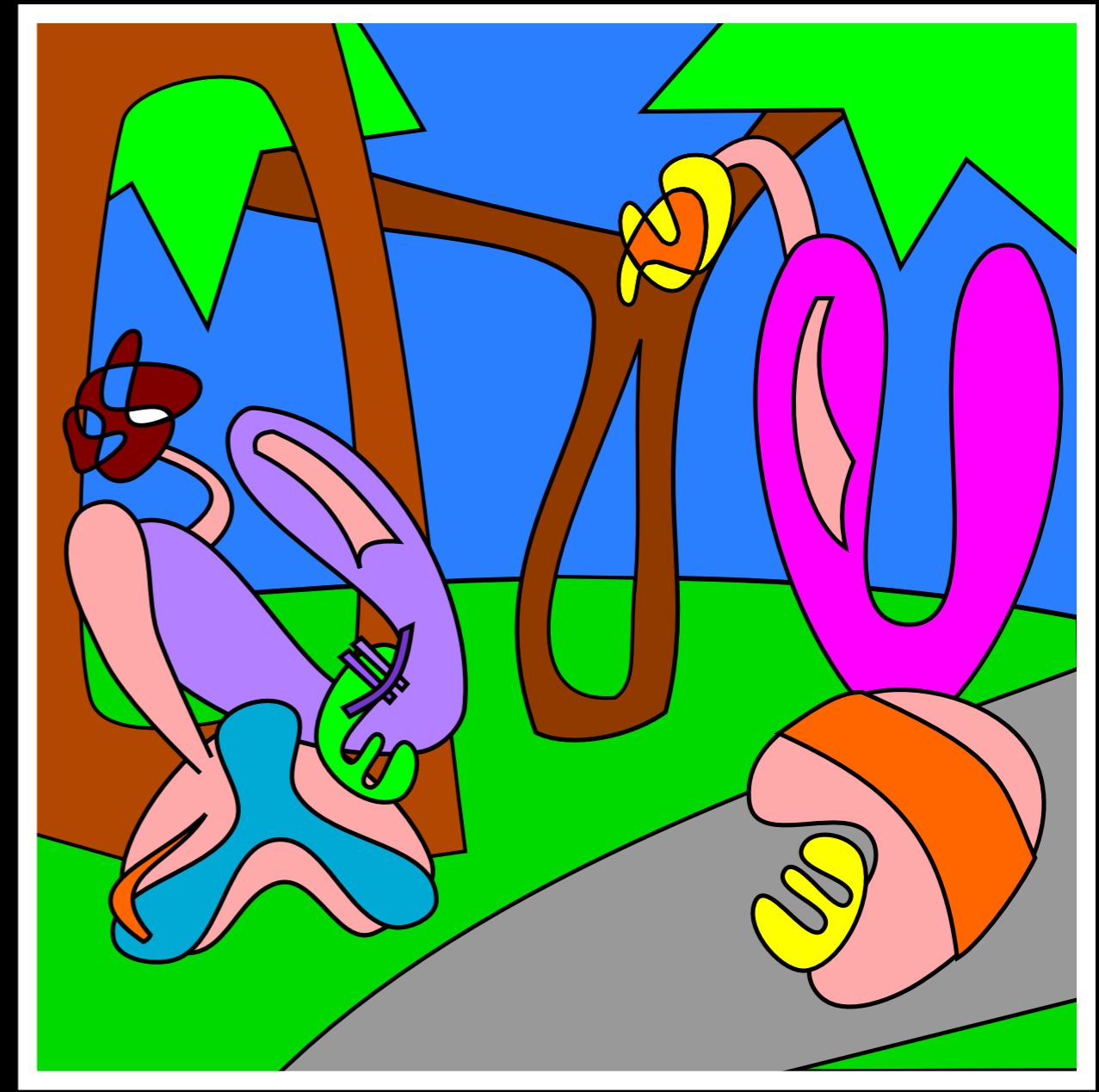




I wonder if the way we size each other up

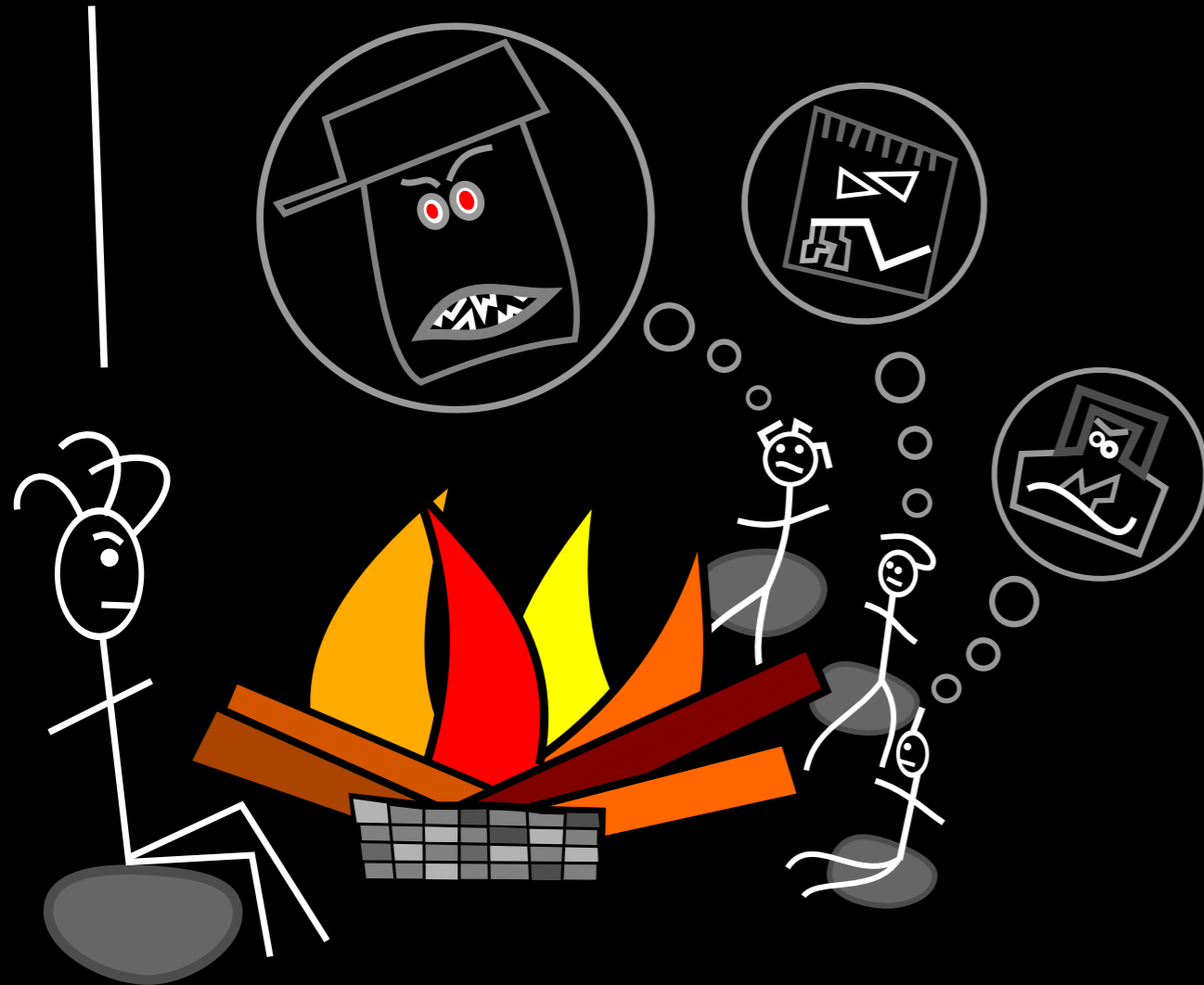


based on appearances...



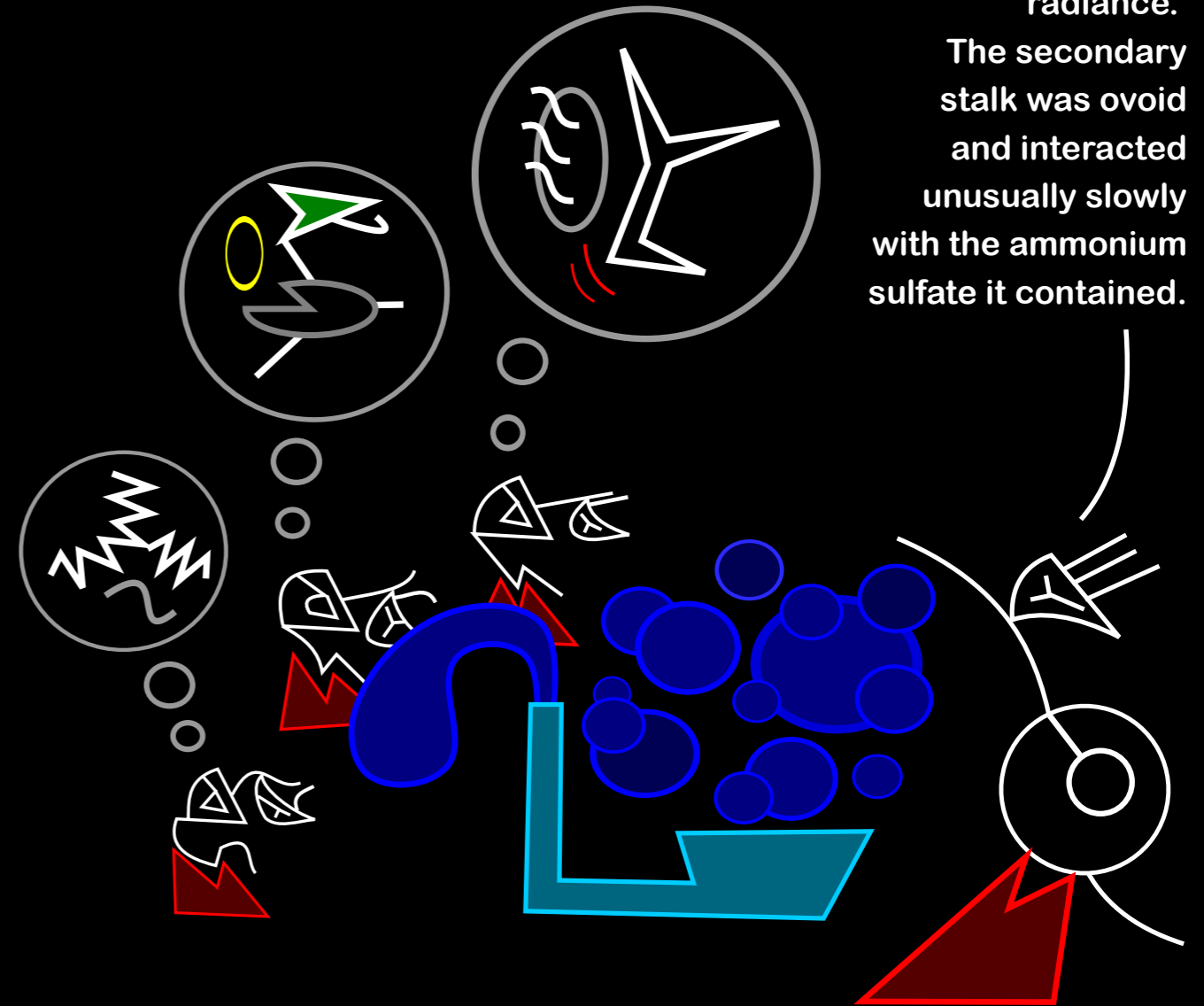
also happens on other planets.

He had beady, close-set eyes that seemed to bore into your soul. He had a crooked grin that covered chipped teeth.



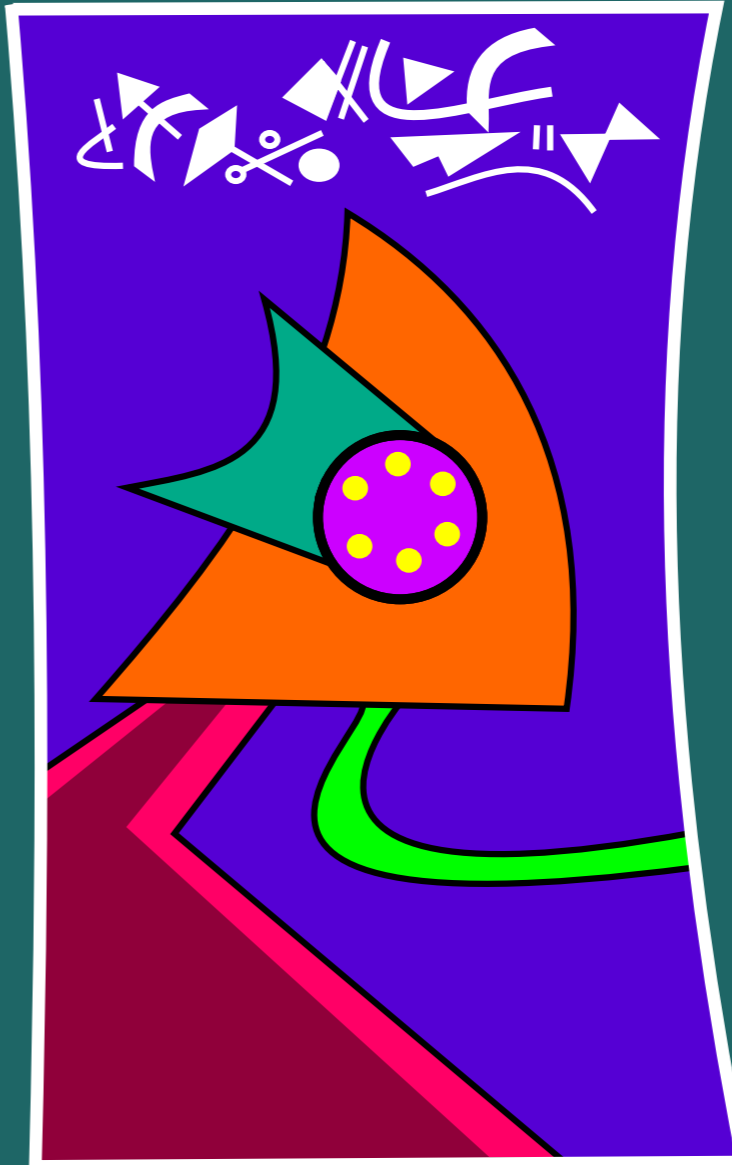
It had an extra bend in its tripod which seemed to give off a bleak radiance.

The secondary stalk was ovoid and interacted unusually slowly with the ammonium sulfate it contained.

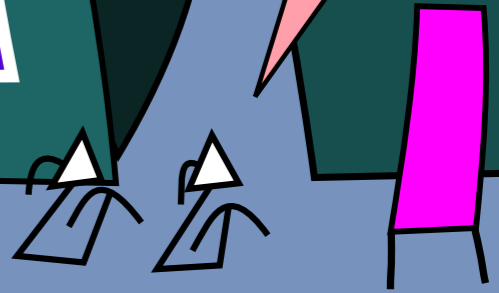


John Icewater has a square jaw and a steely gaze. He's clearly the right person to run things in our state.

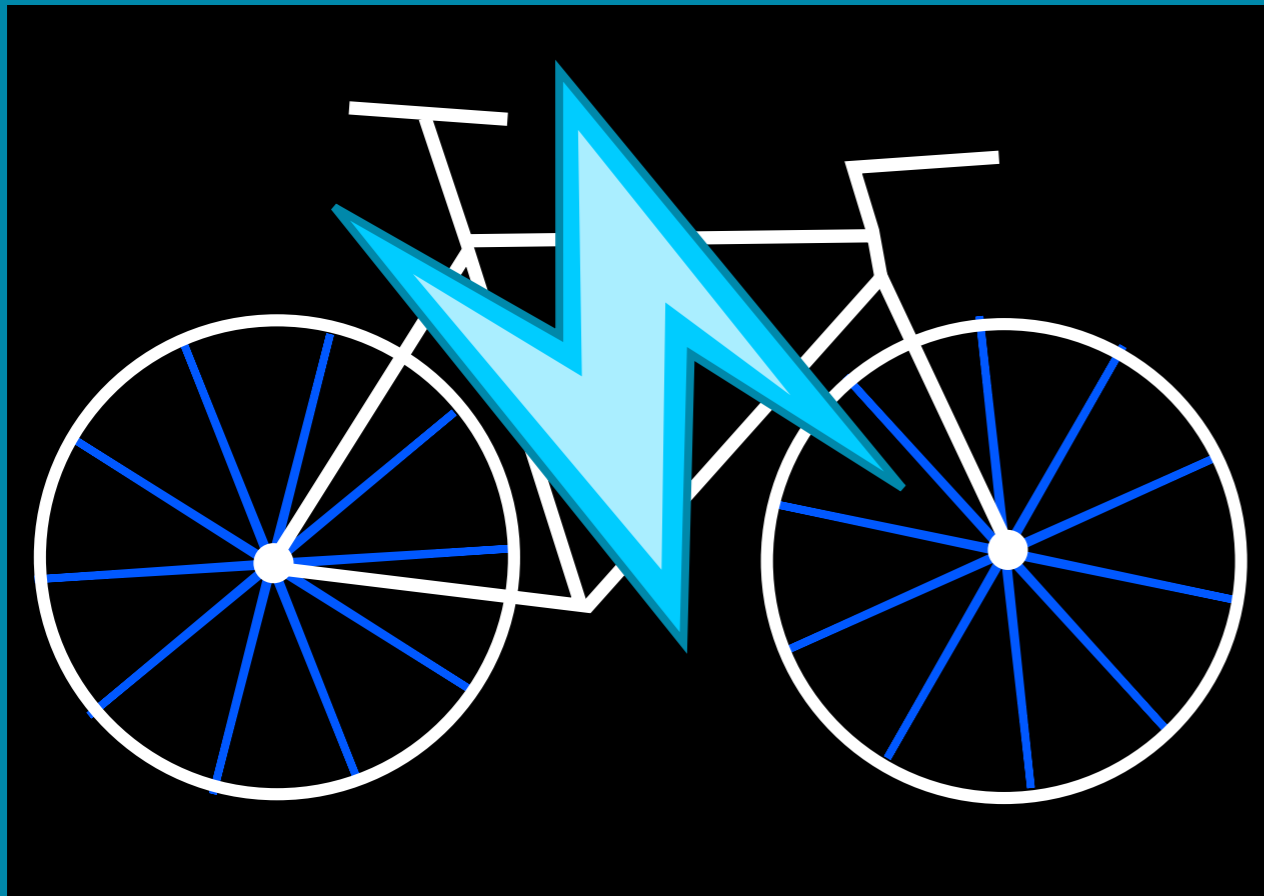
**VOTE**  
Icewater for Governor



Boon Zixboing has a clean arc to his [untranslatable] and a vigorous index of refraction. Therefore he is the optimal choice for manager of Sector 7.



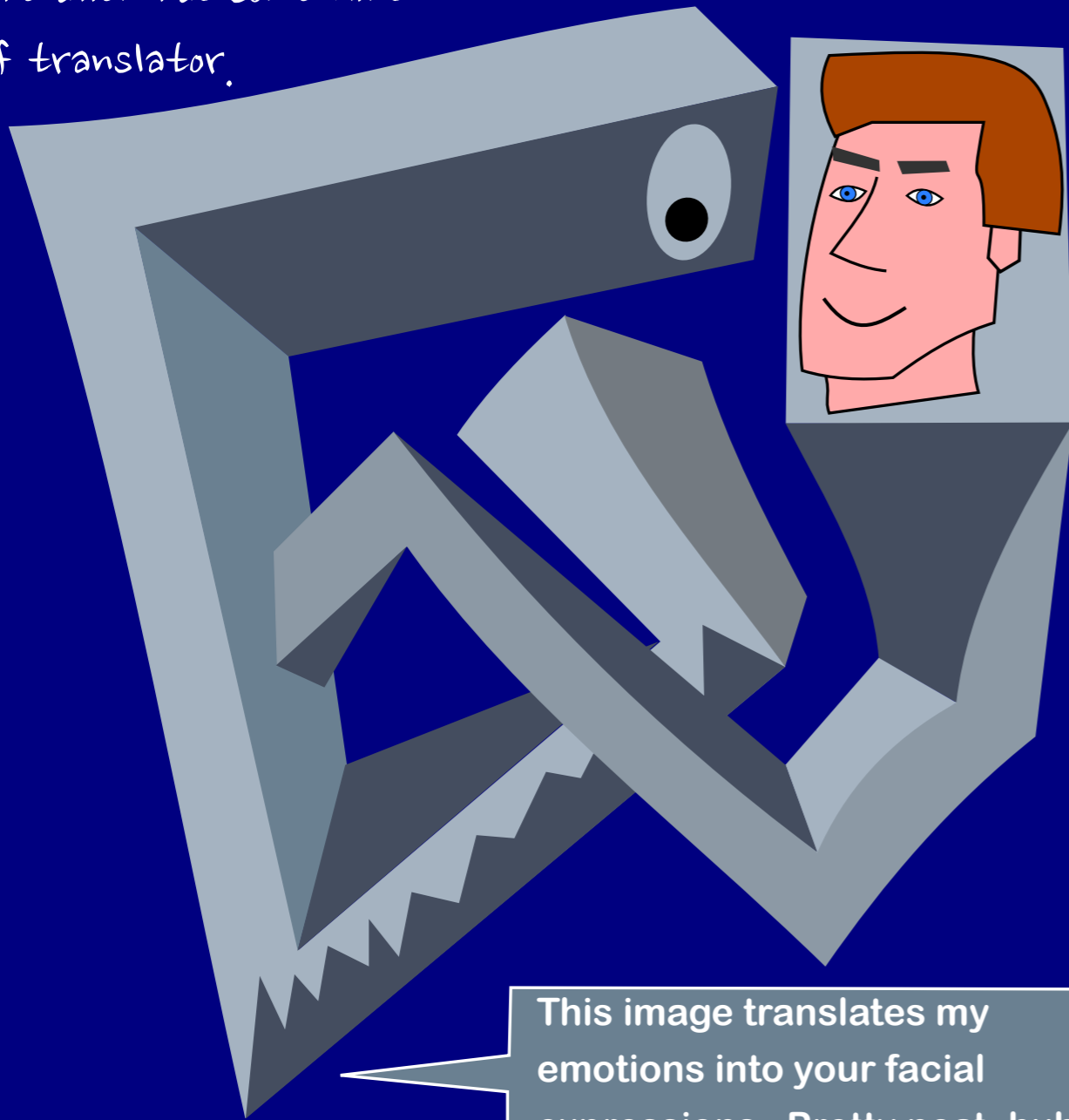
We probably make a lot of foolish mistakes when we go by appearances, but often we can't help it. Our brains fill in the unknown with the familiar, giving us the illusion that we know what is going on.



When it comes to aliens, there is probably nothing at all we could figure out by their looks, unless...



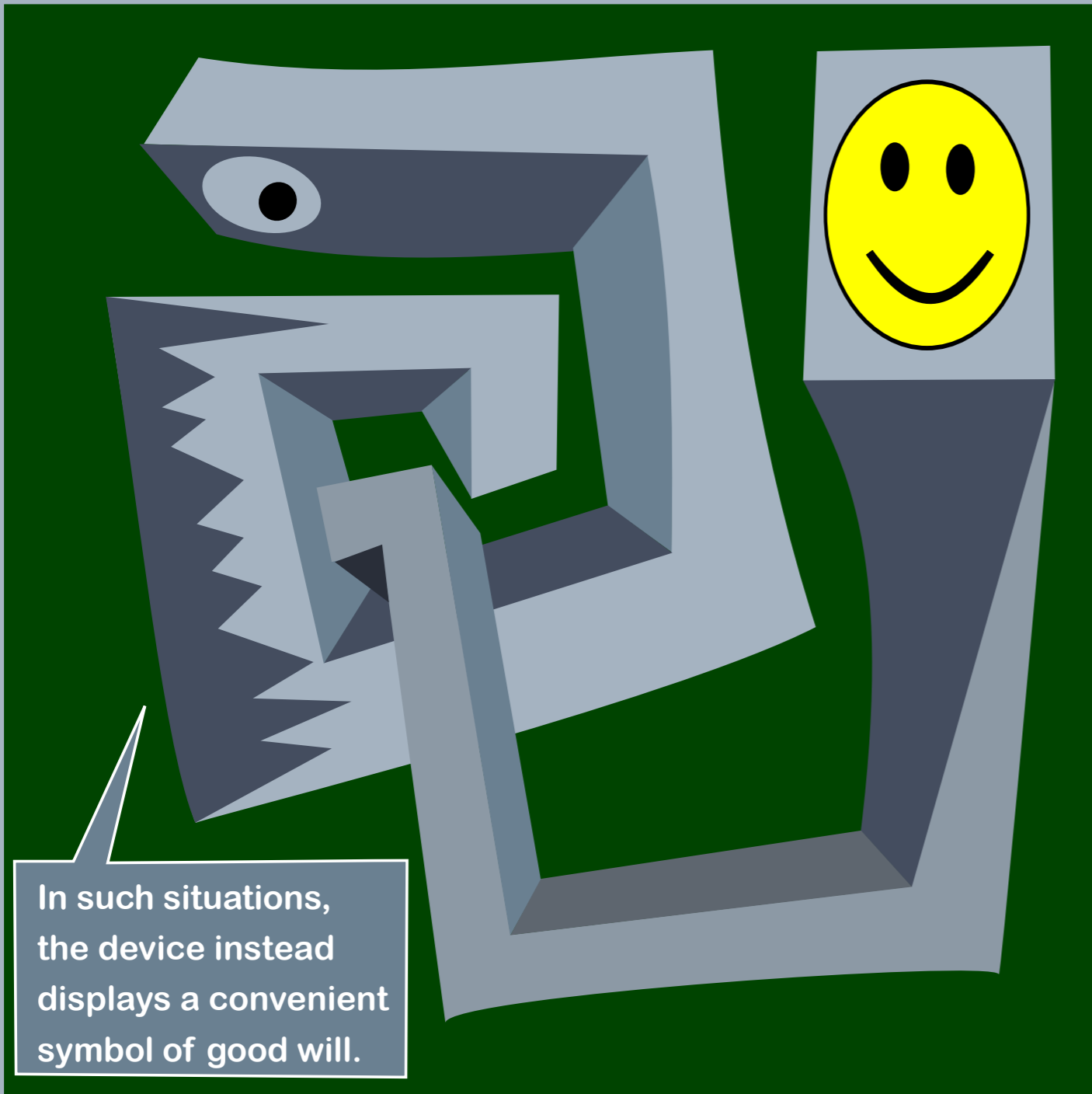
the alien had some kind  
of translator.

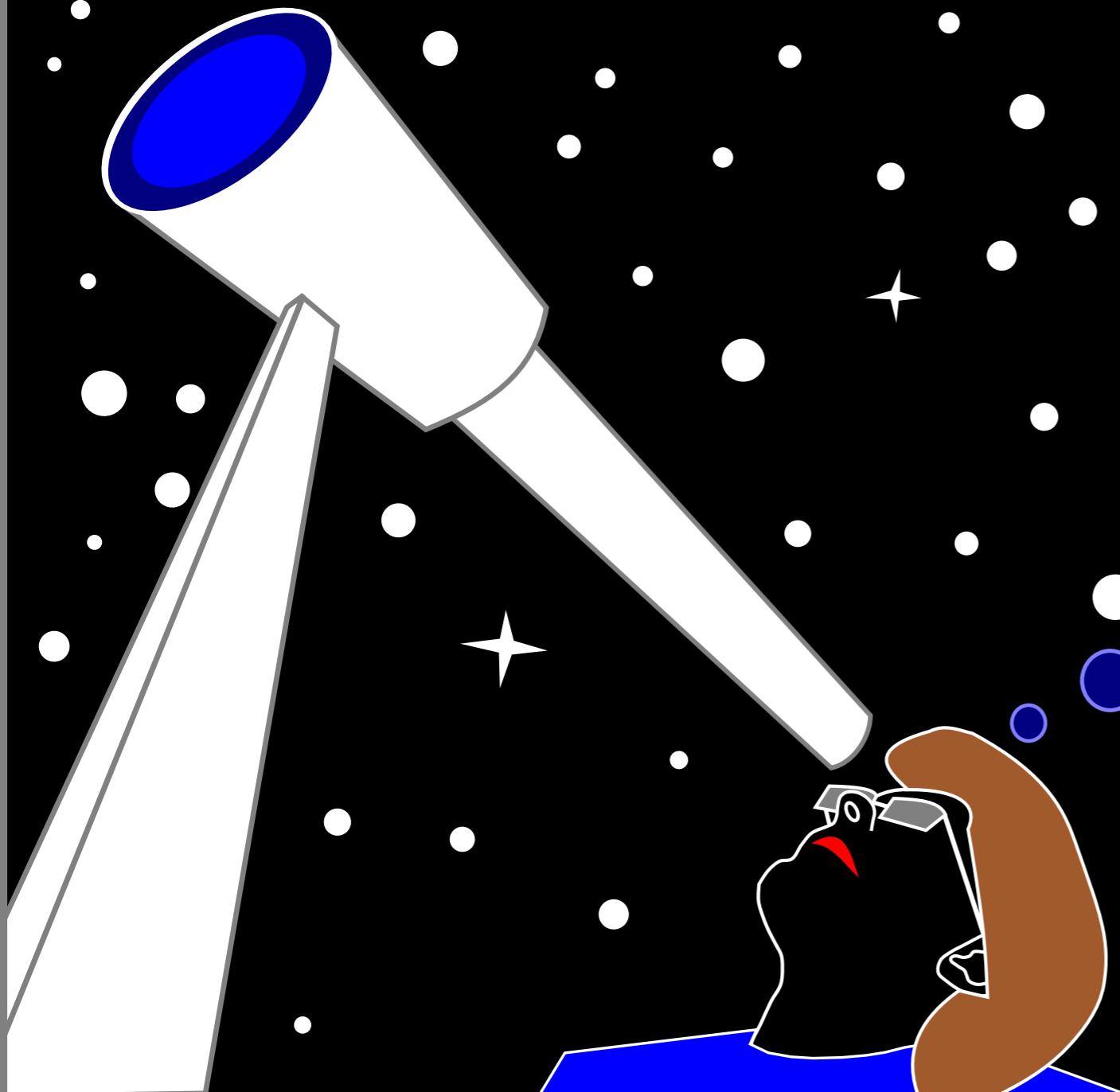


This image translates my  
emotions into your facial  
expressions. Pretty neat, huh?

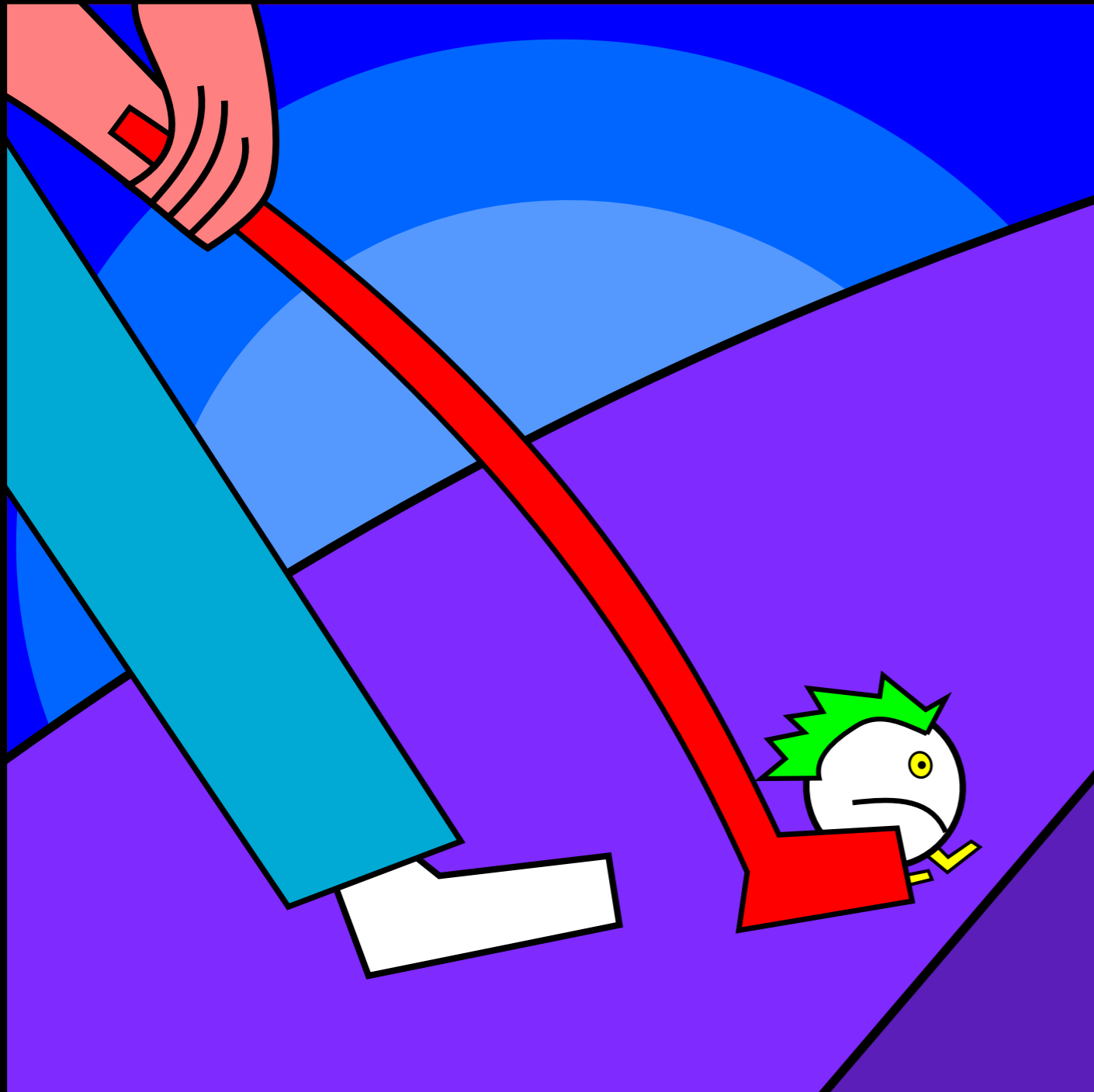


Of course, thanks to my superior  
brain, 99.8% of my emotions cannot  
be translated into your terms.





Even when we could size up an alien by its appearance, we still might not be able to understand the things it does.



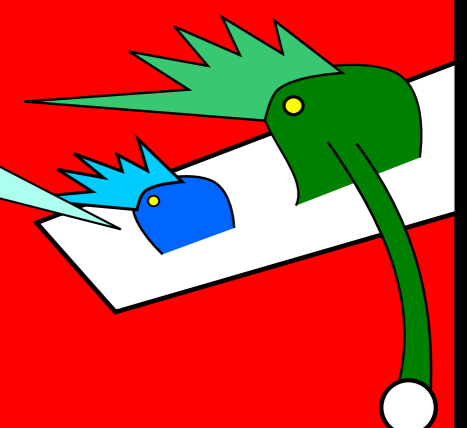
What looks from afar  
like golf might be  
something else entirely.



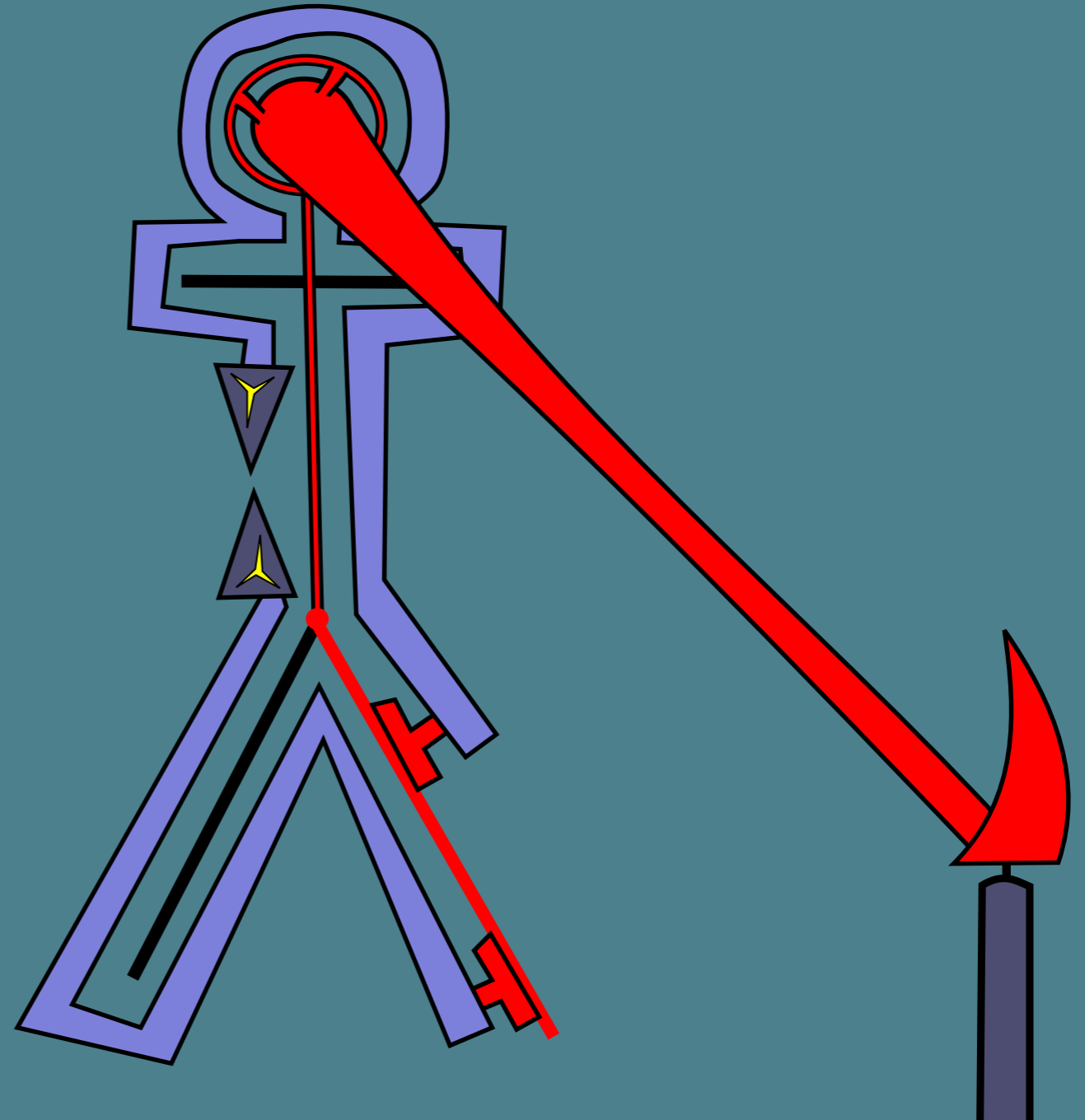
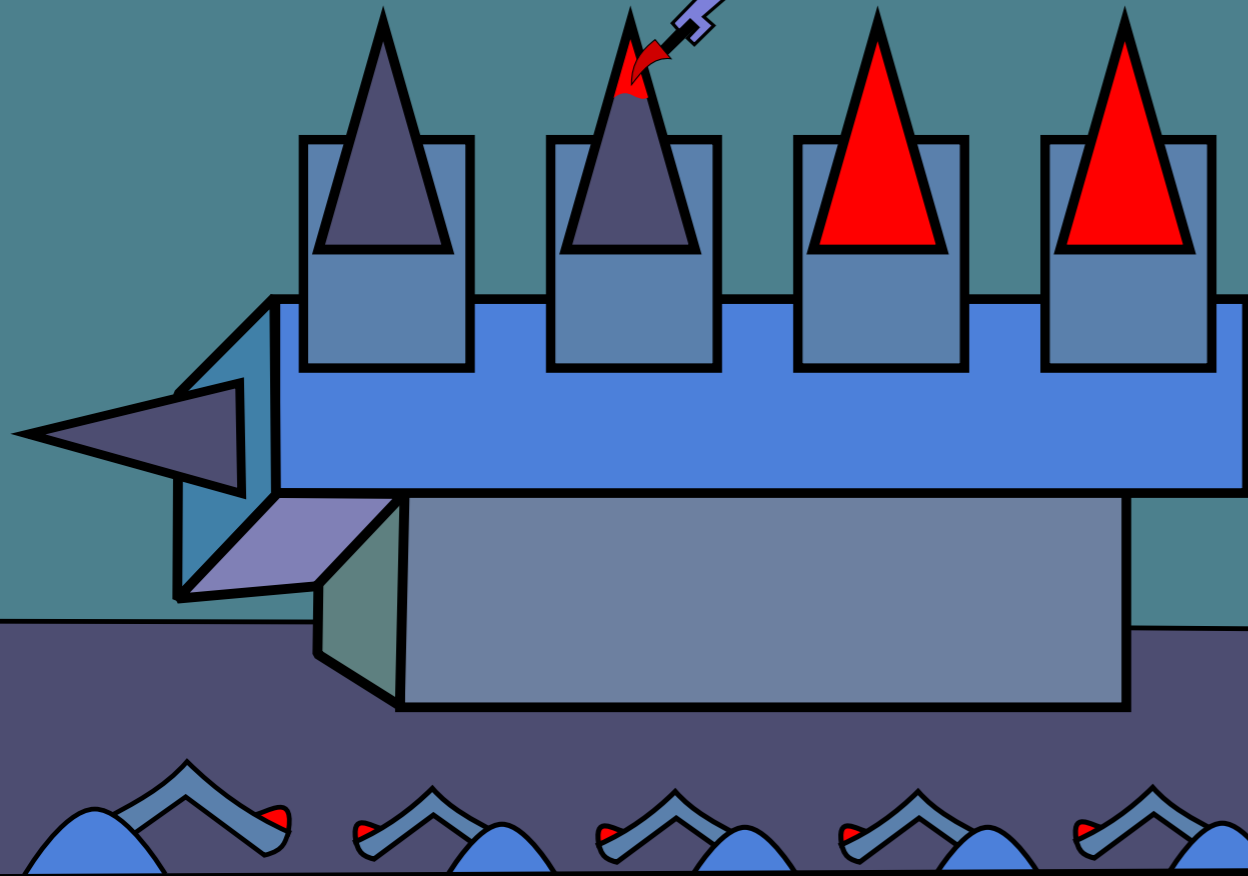
"Tennis" also might have some surprises.

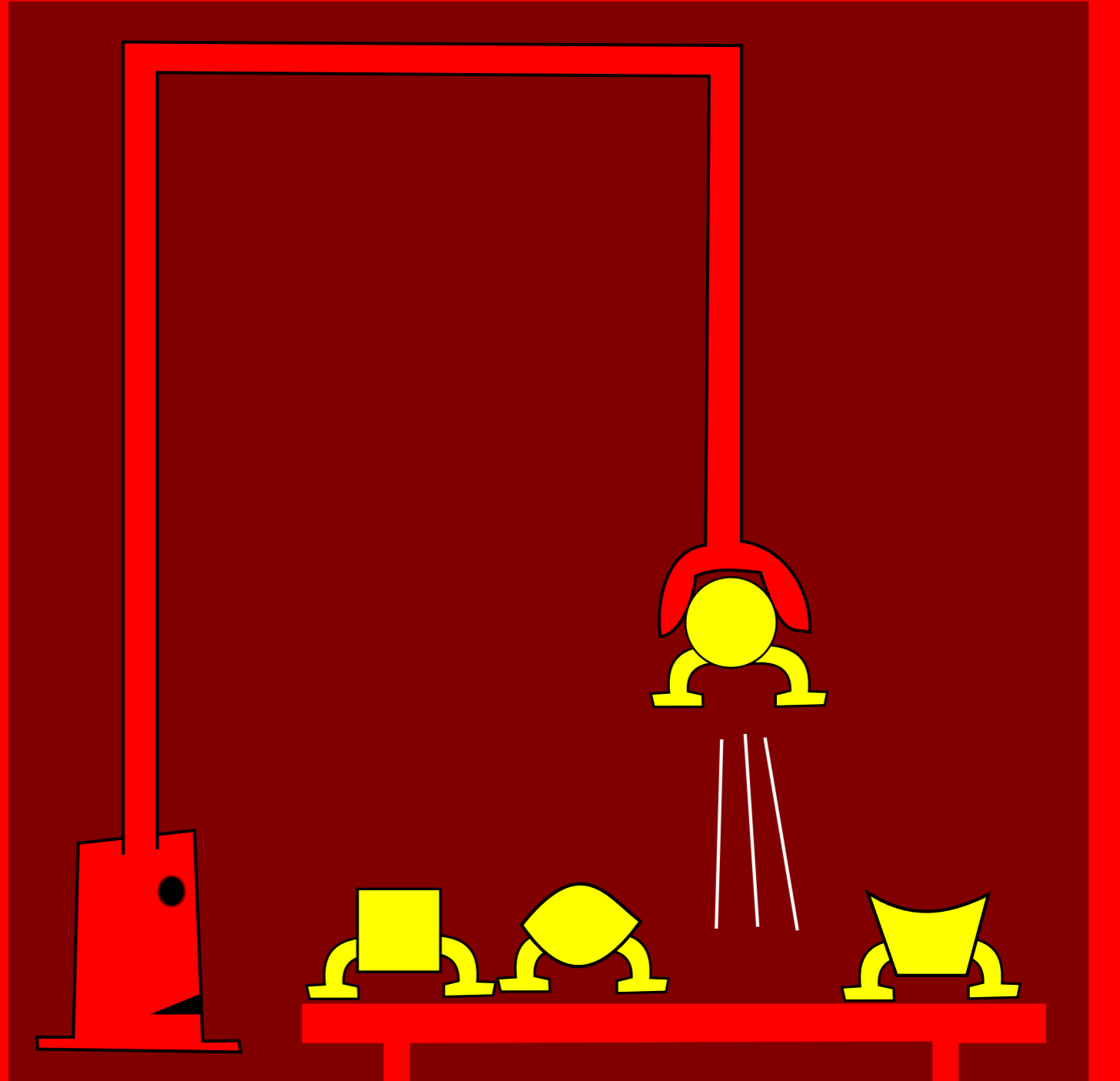
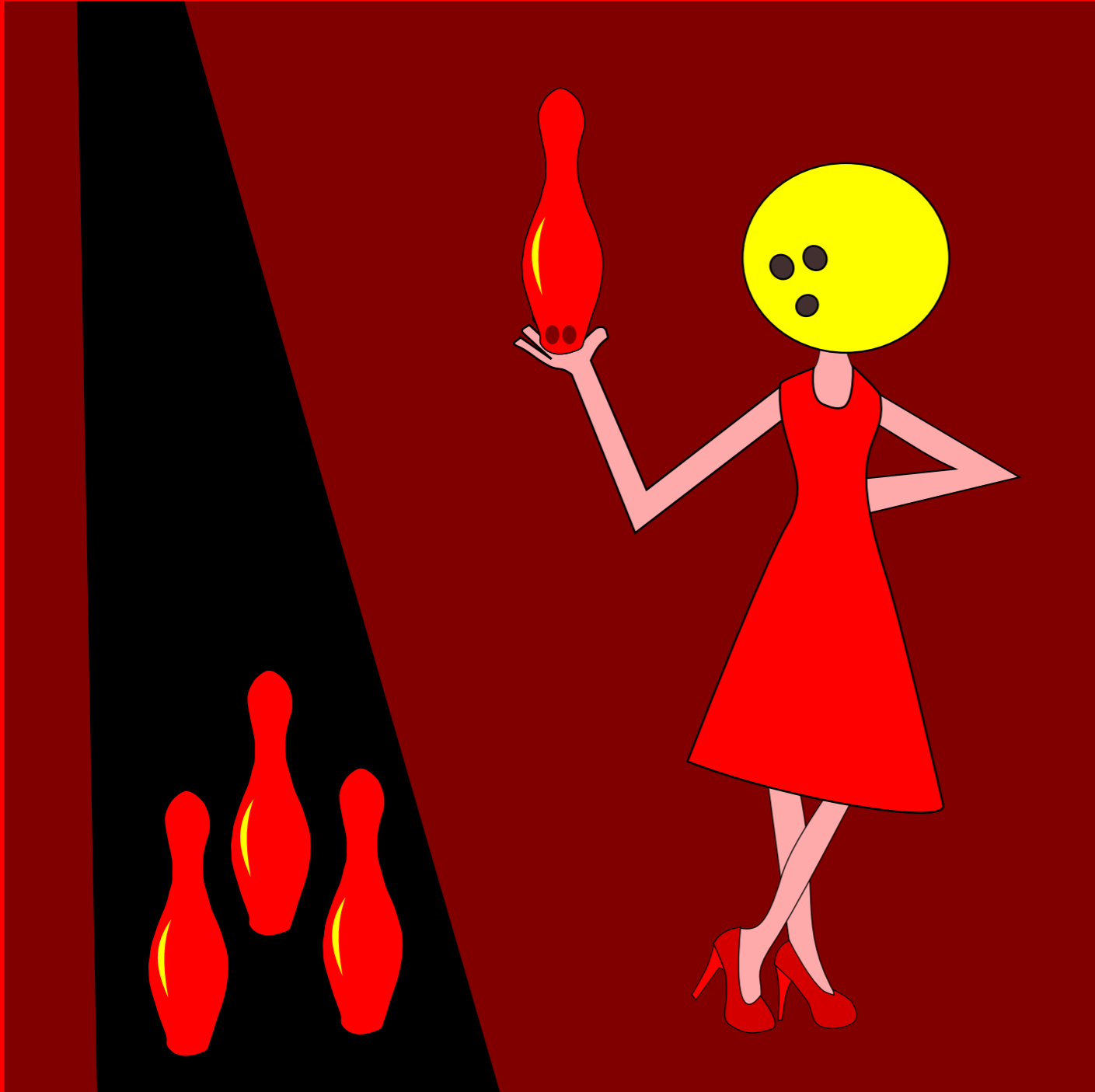


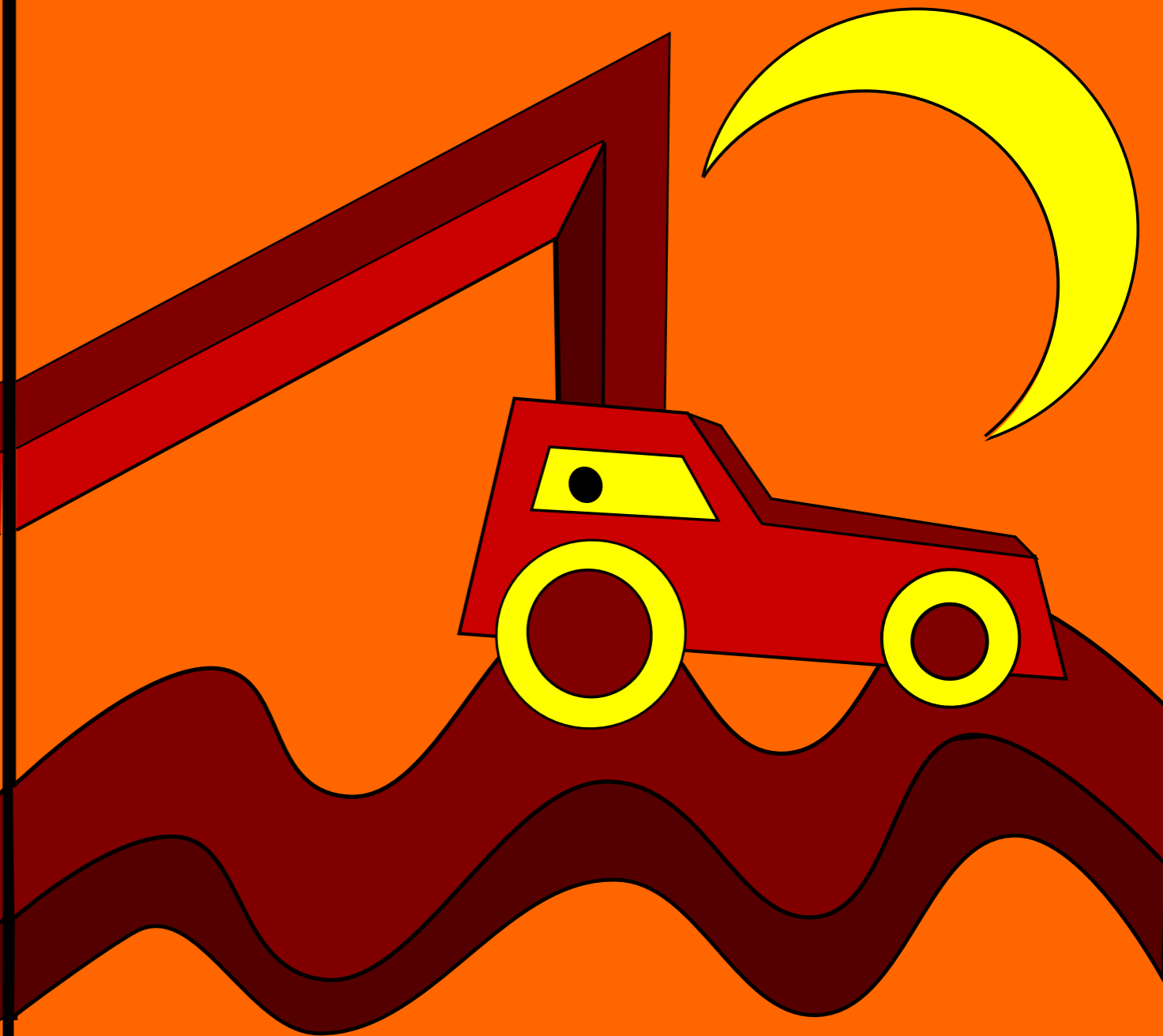
Translation: Ooh... spectacular!  
Dad, throw him another one after he puts himself back together

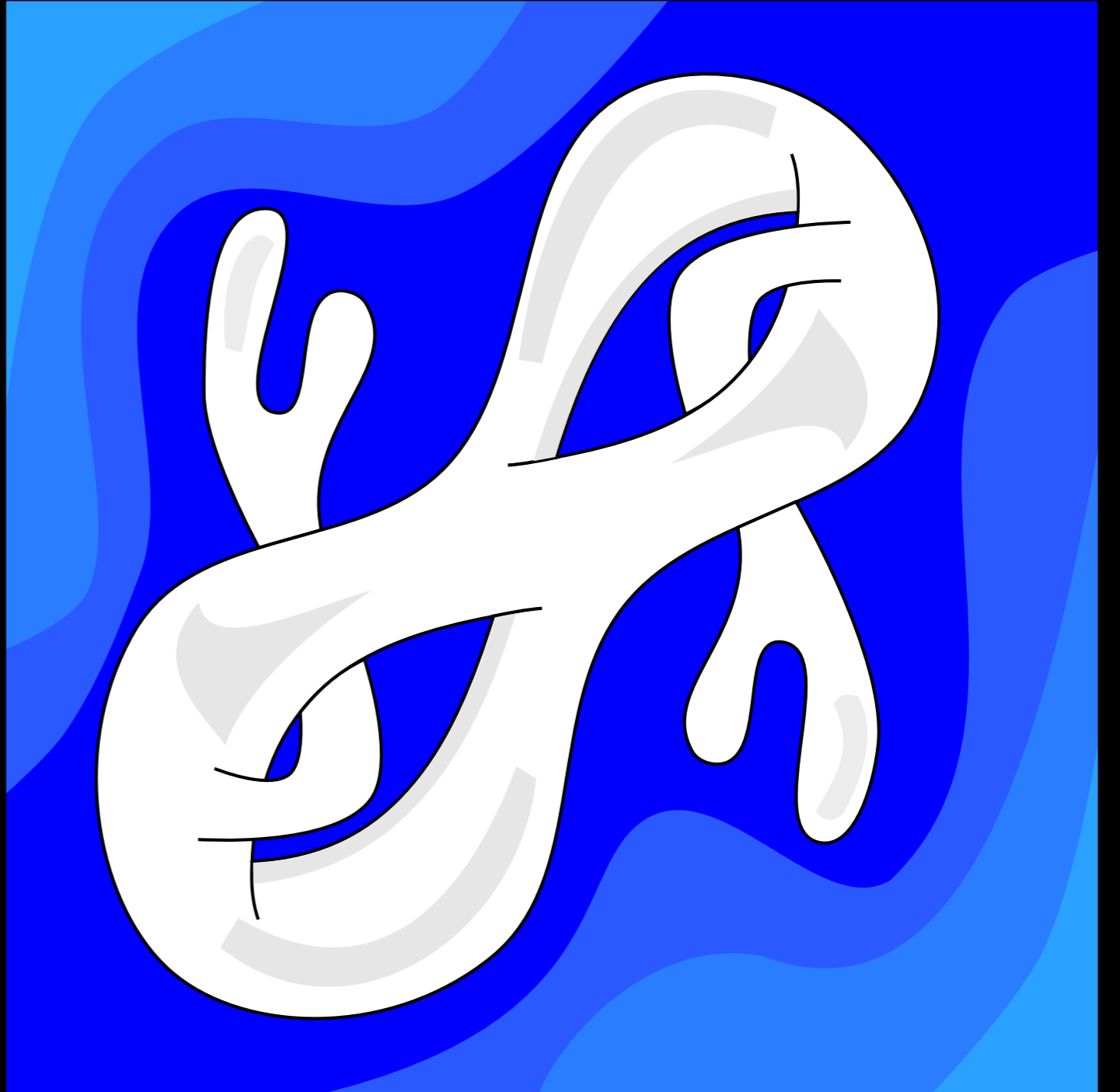
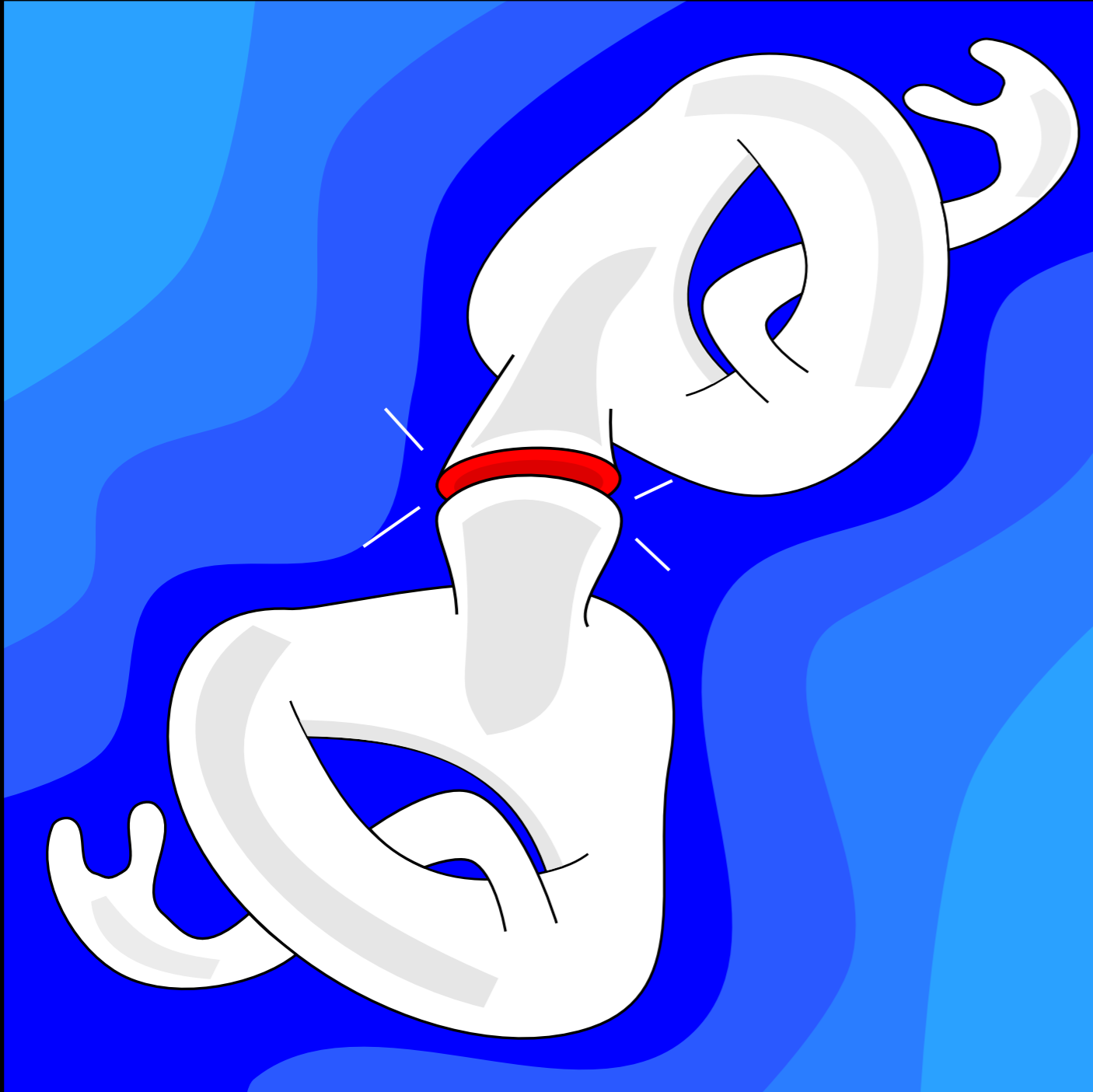


Many alien activities  
might have strange  
and partial connections  
to human experience...

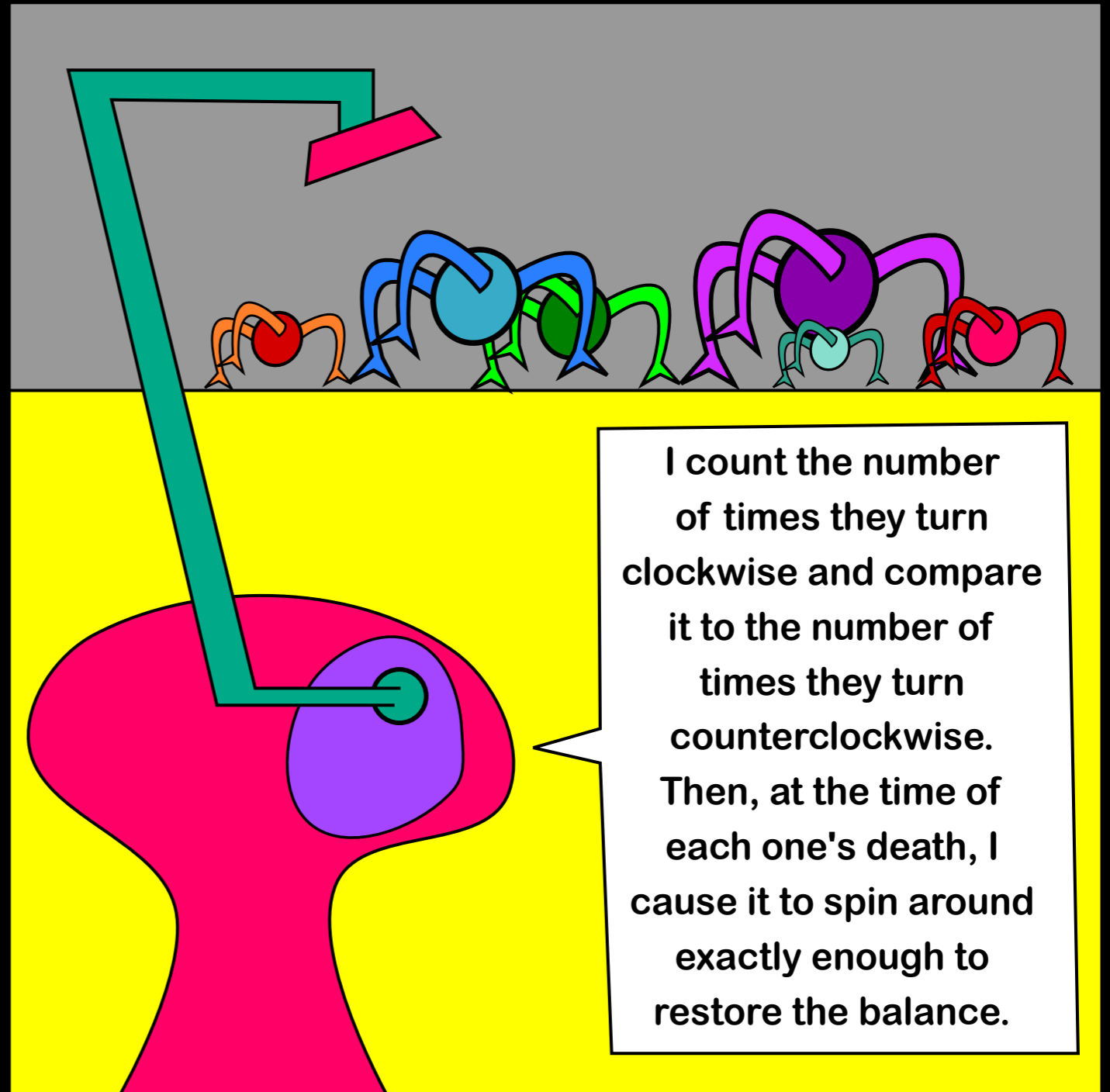
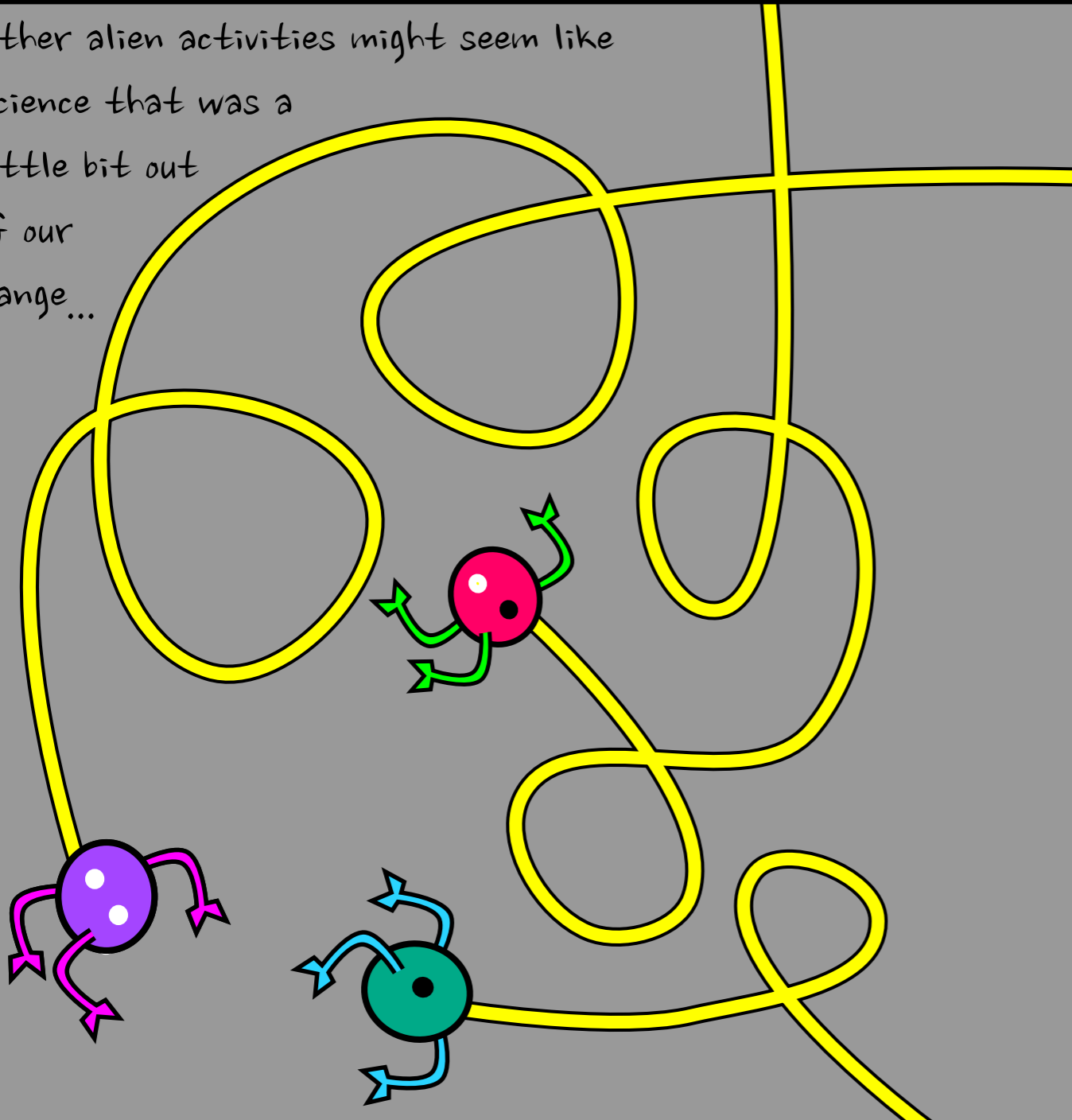






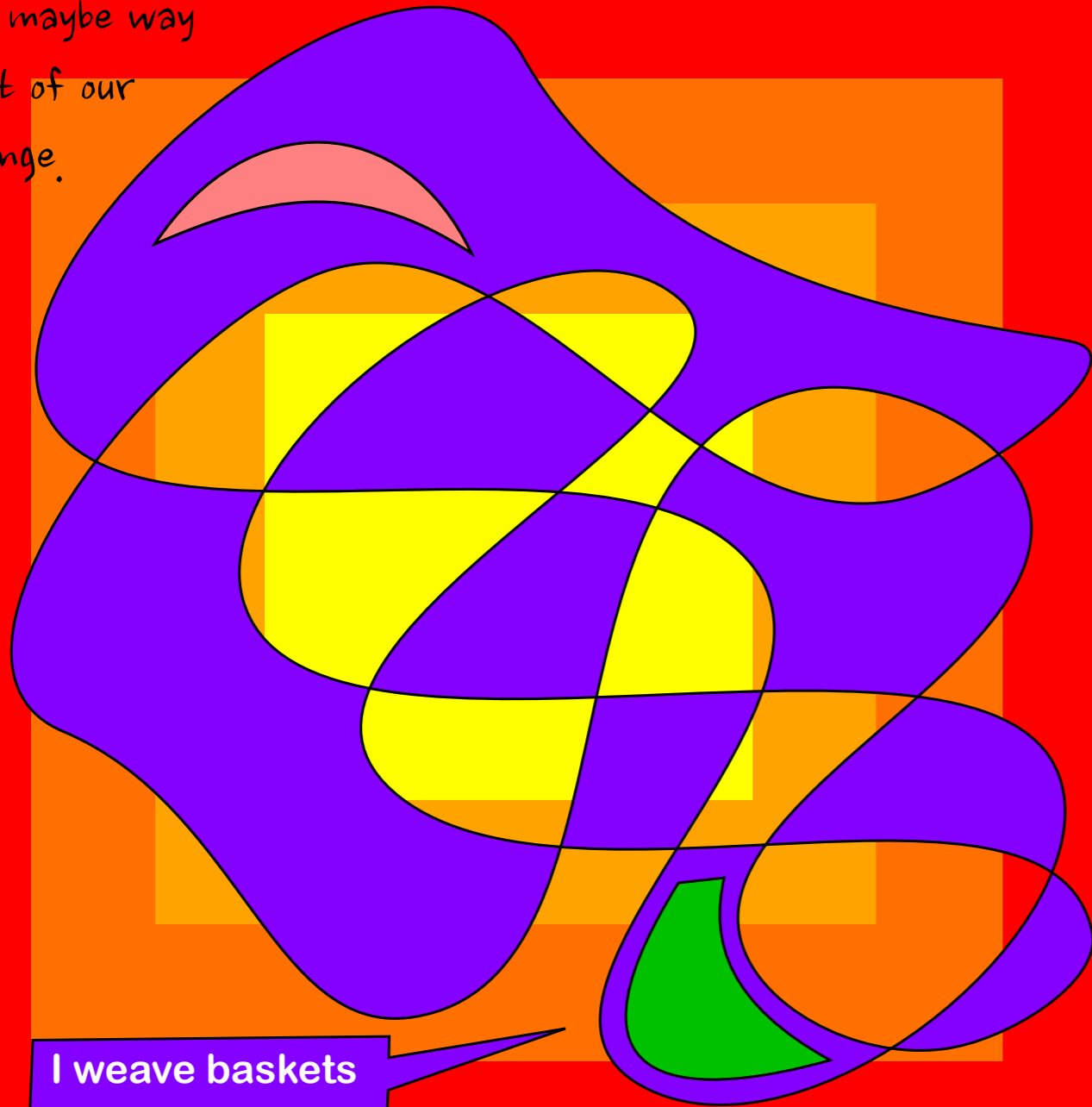


Other alien activities might seem like science that was a little bit out of our range...



I count the number of times they turn clockwise and compare it to the number of times they turn counterclockwise. Then, at the time of each one's death, I cause it to spin around exactly enough to restore the balance.

or maybe way  
out of our  
range.

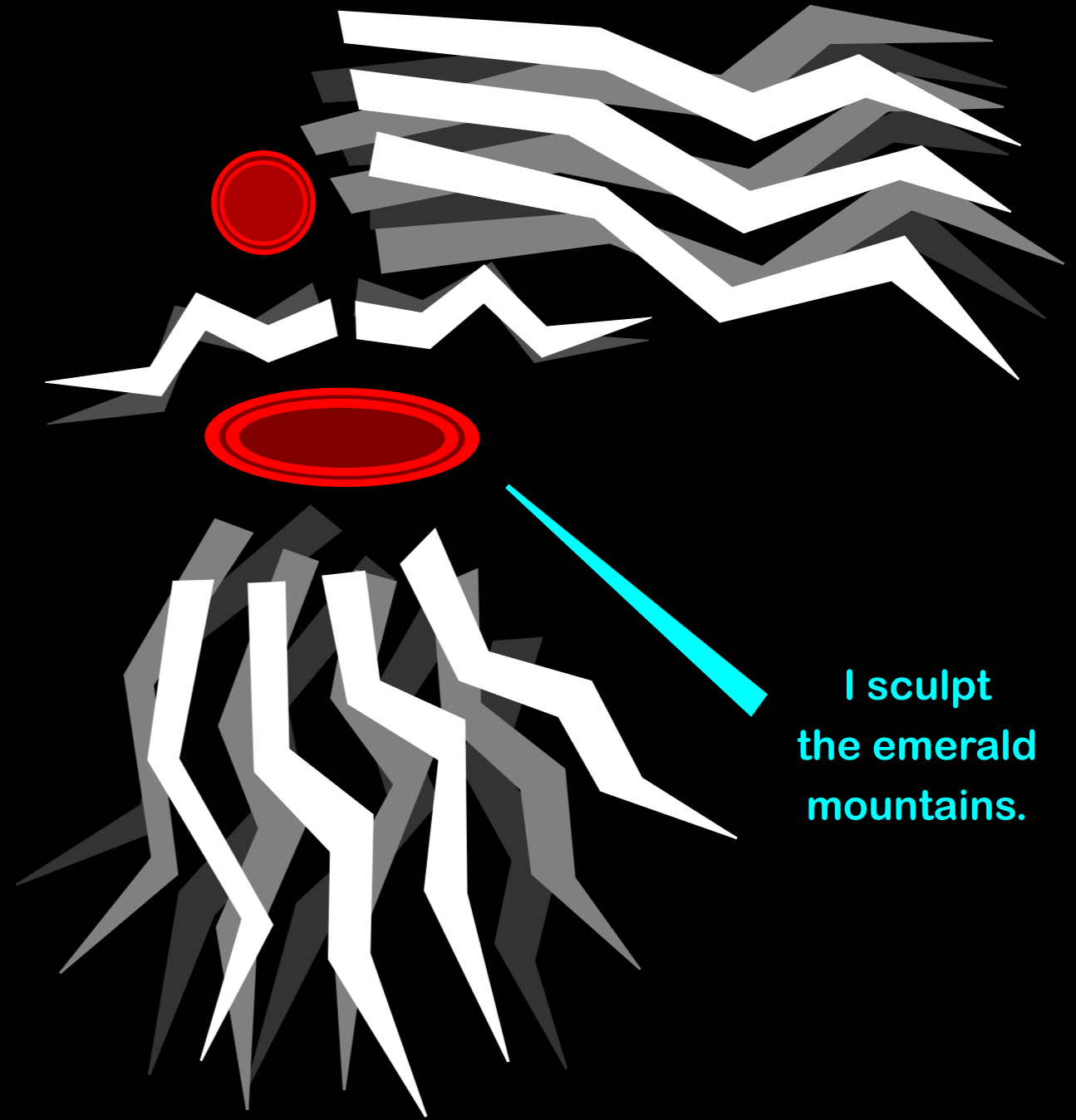
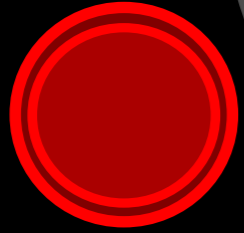


I weave baskets  
out of light.



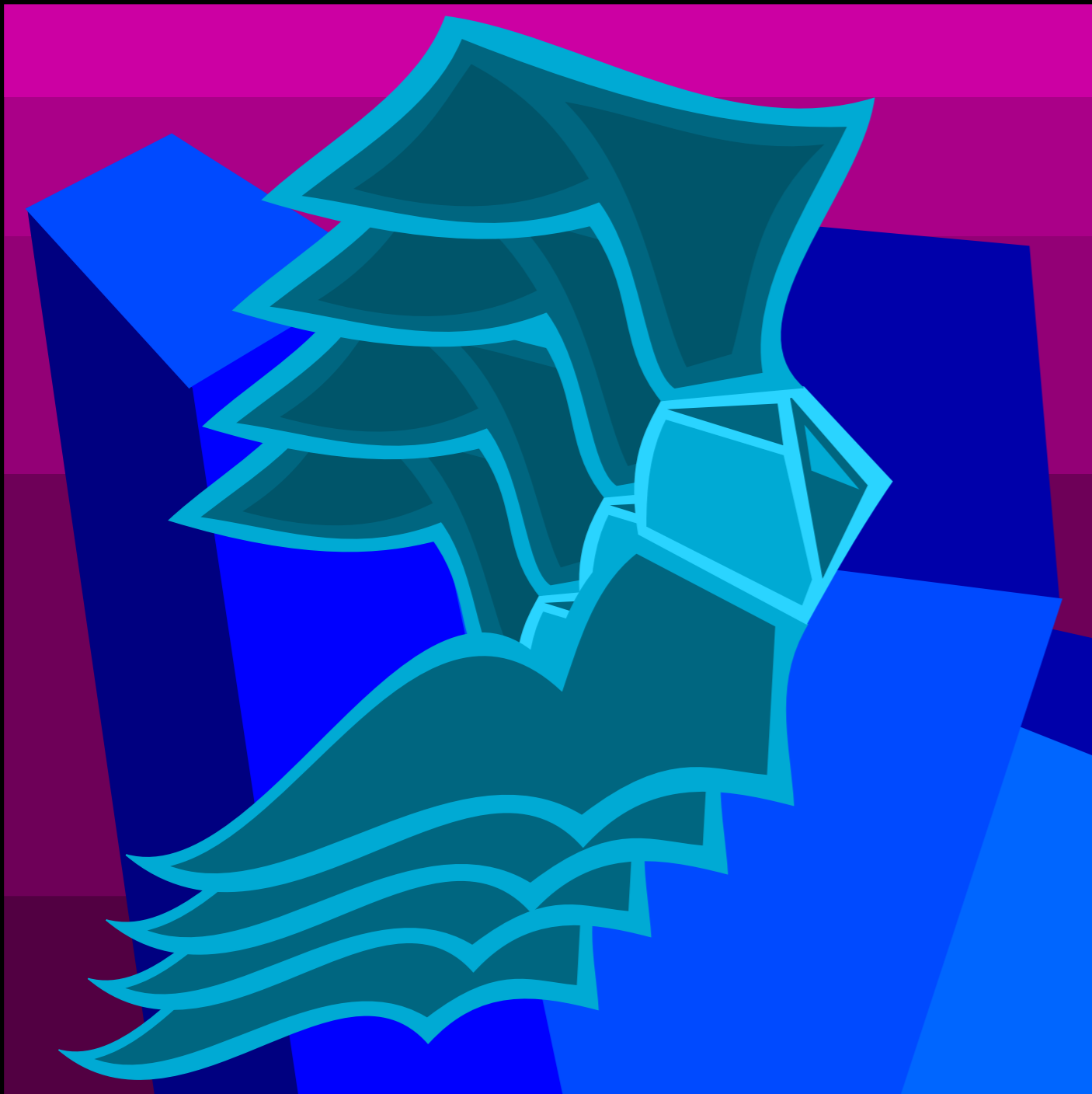
I braid x-rays and freeze them  
into place. It is sort of like  
basket weaving with light,  
but more intense.

Going far  
beyond us,  
what they did  
might take on  
a super-human  
majesty...



I sculpt  
the emerald  
mountains.



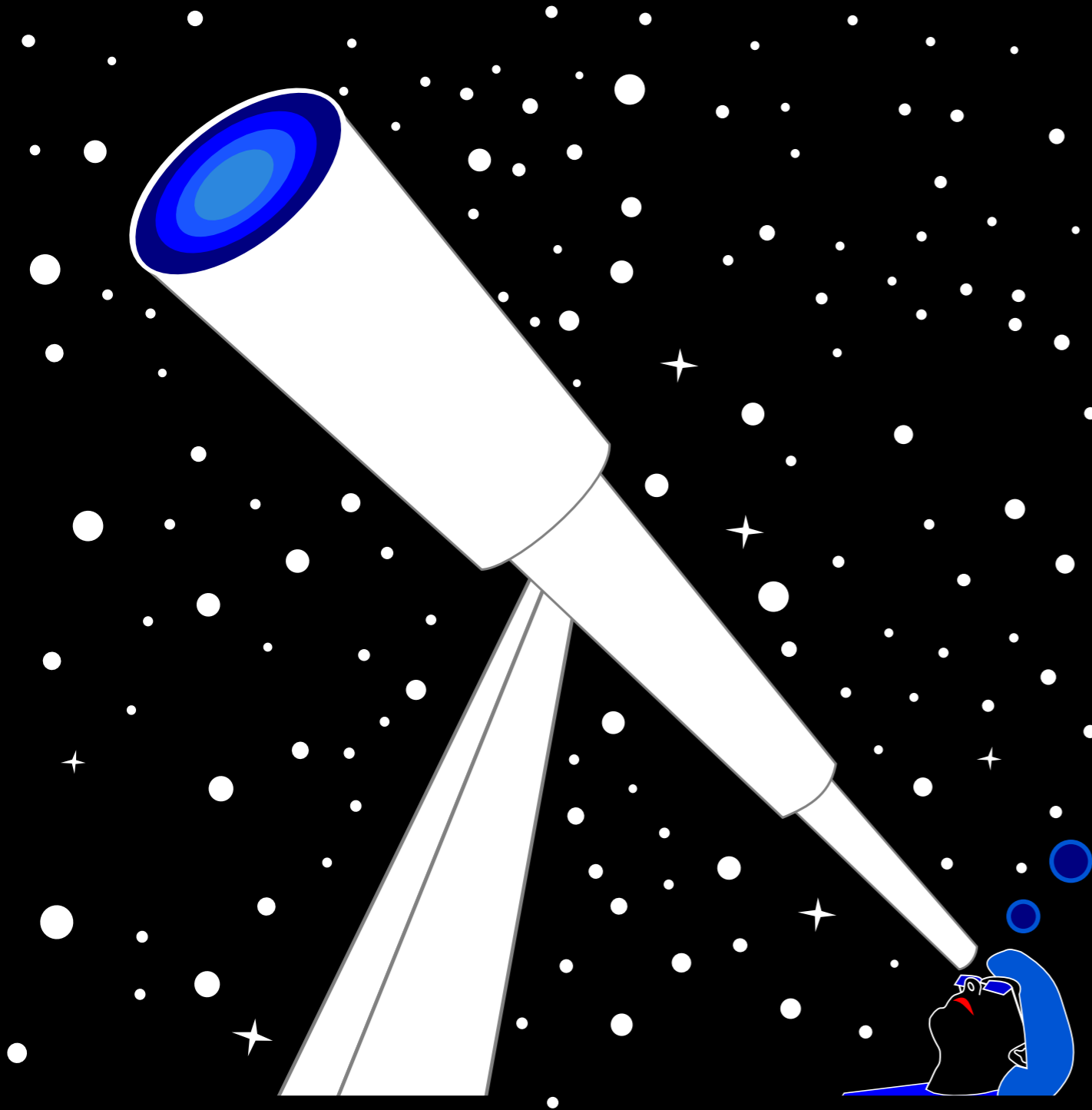


I am the  
guardian  
of the blue  
metropolis.



Recursive brain lamination complete.





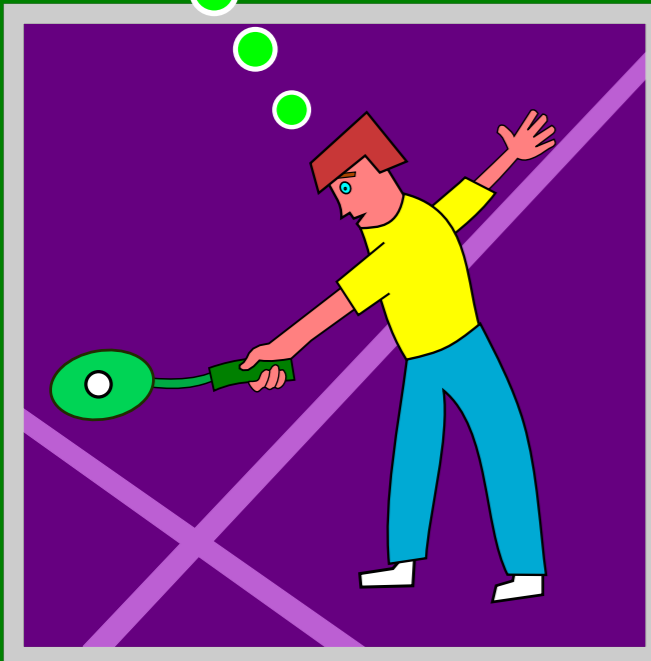
We probably couldn't just plunge right in and understand what an alien DOES before finding out what it THINKS. What kinds of thoughts would we find out there?



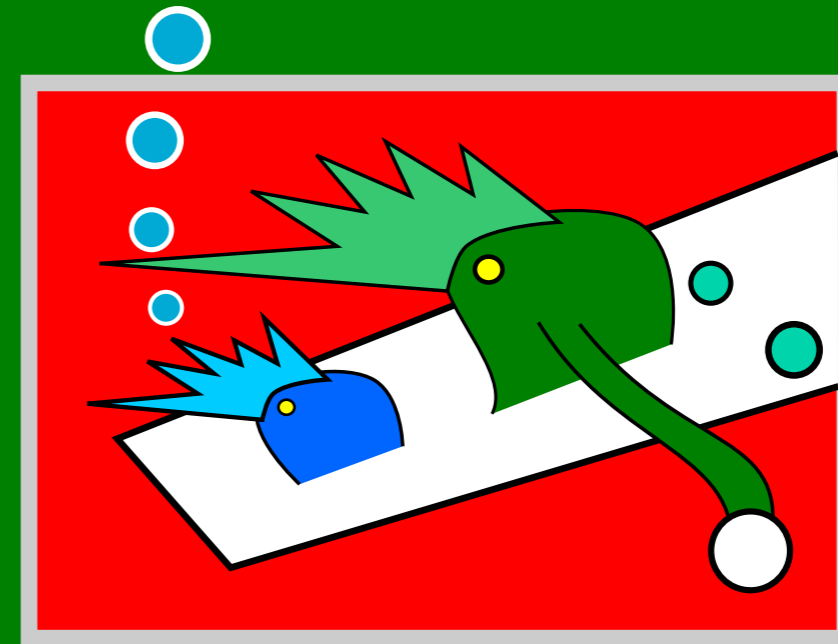
We might find more or less familiar thoughts played out in unfamiliar scenes...

Woof, woof!  
Oh boy! My master just threw me another ball!

Oh boy...oh boy!  
What is happening?  
This never happened to me before.



Man, that was a great one! It really popped off a long way. I can't wait to tell my friends about this.

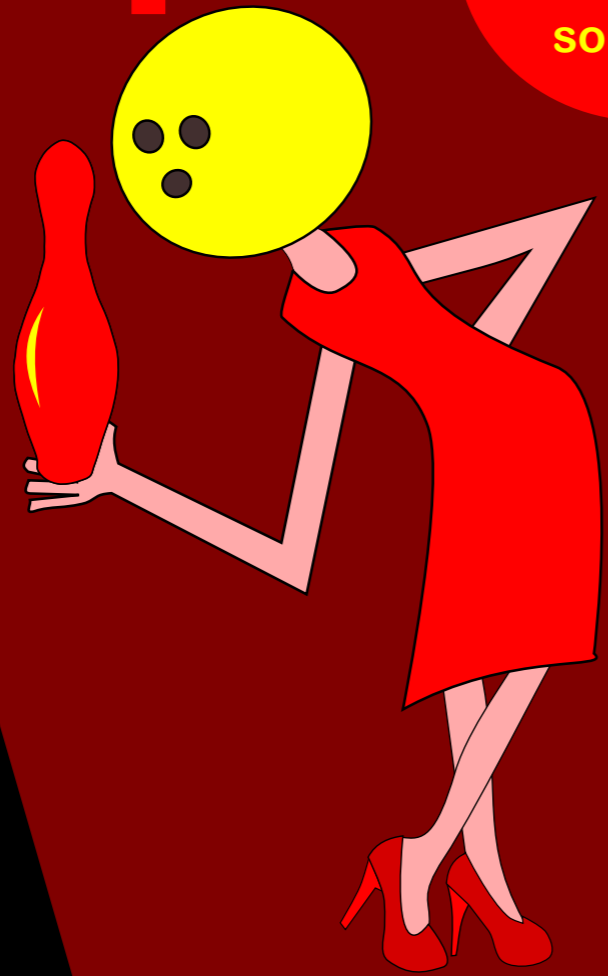


Well, if you've seen it once, you've seen it a million times. I can't believe they charge [30 bucks] for this.

I just want to smash these [guys]!

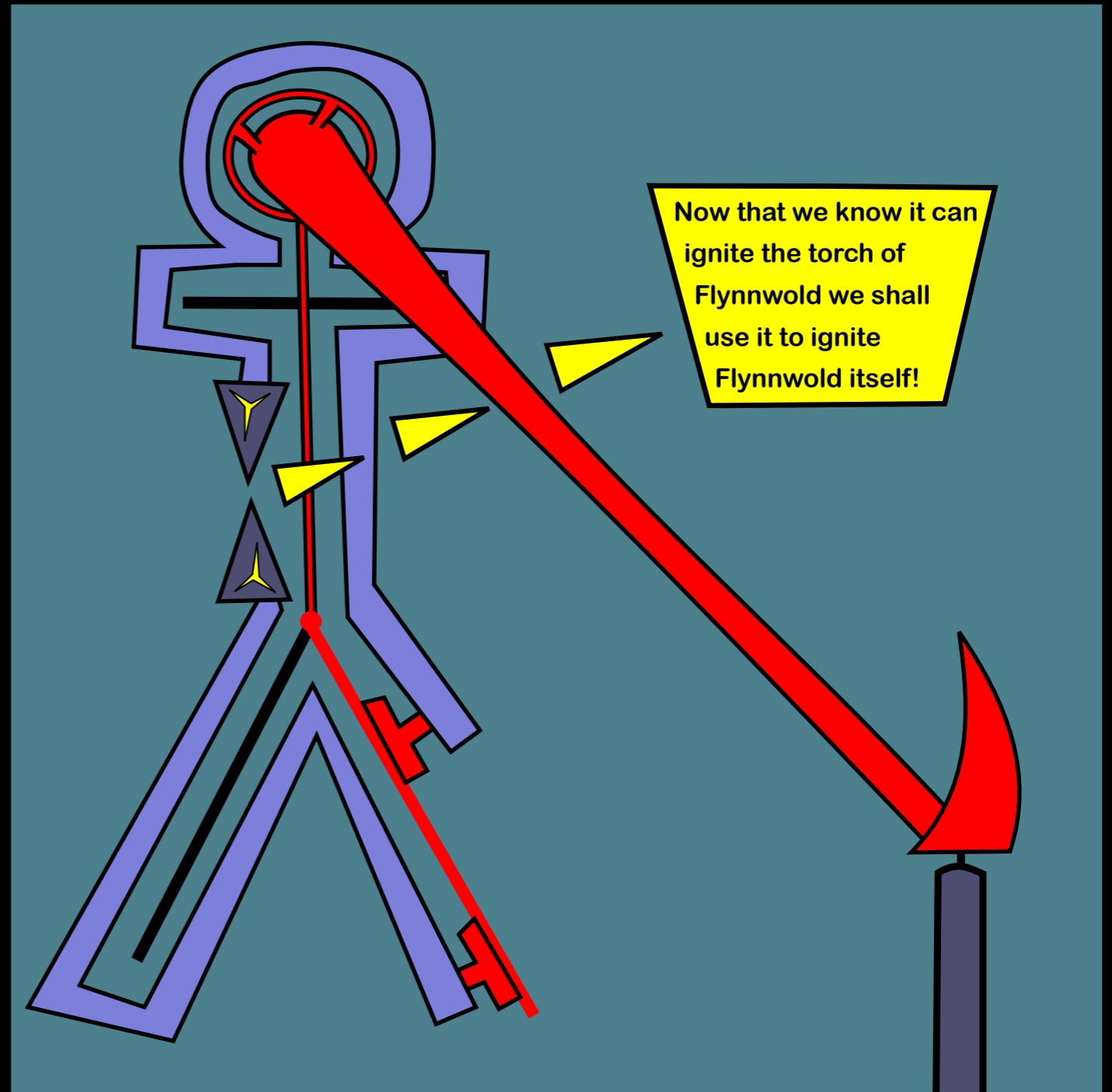
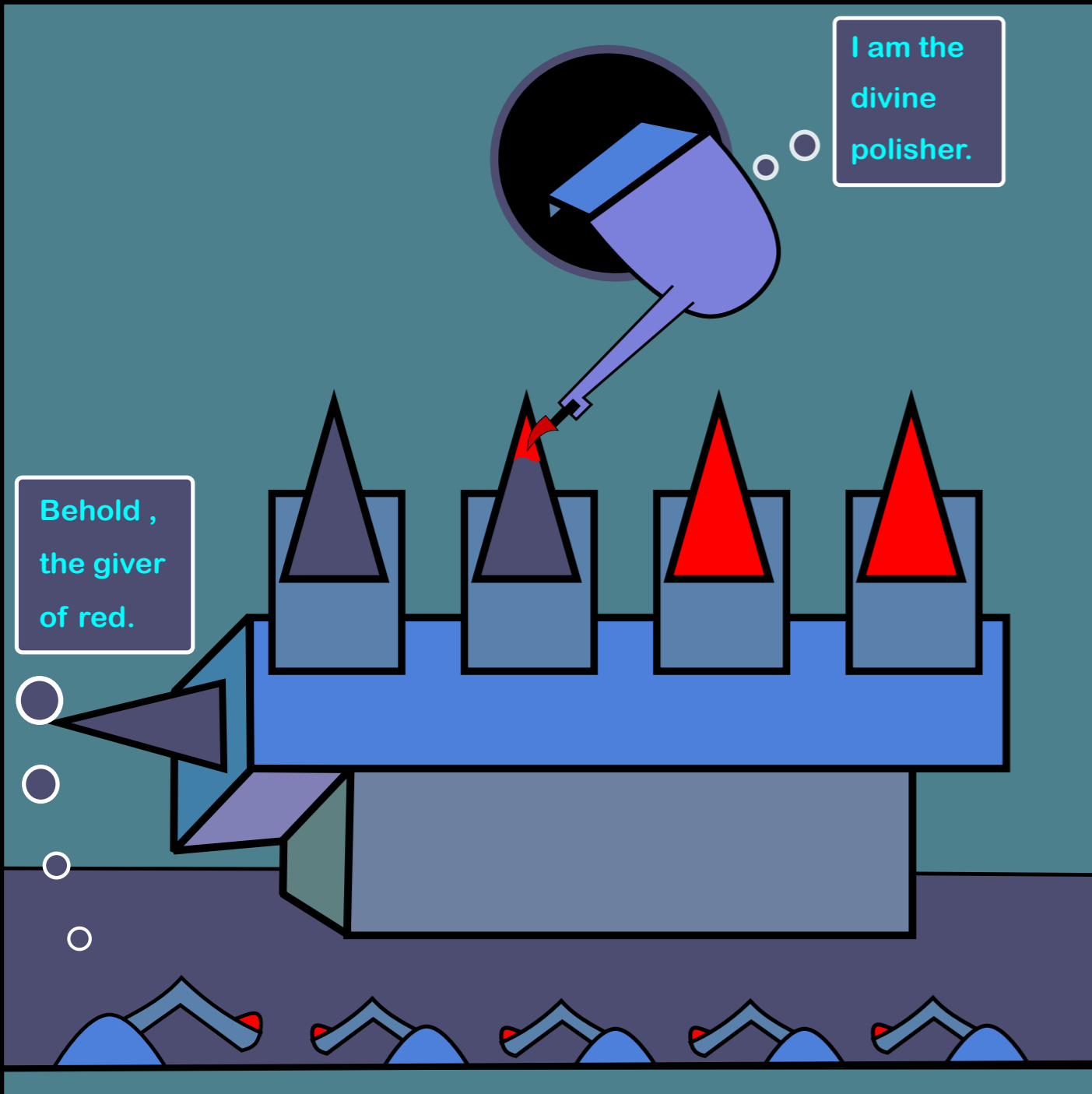
why am I always first?  
It is over so soon.

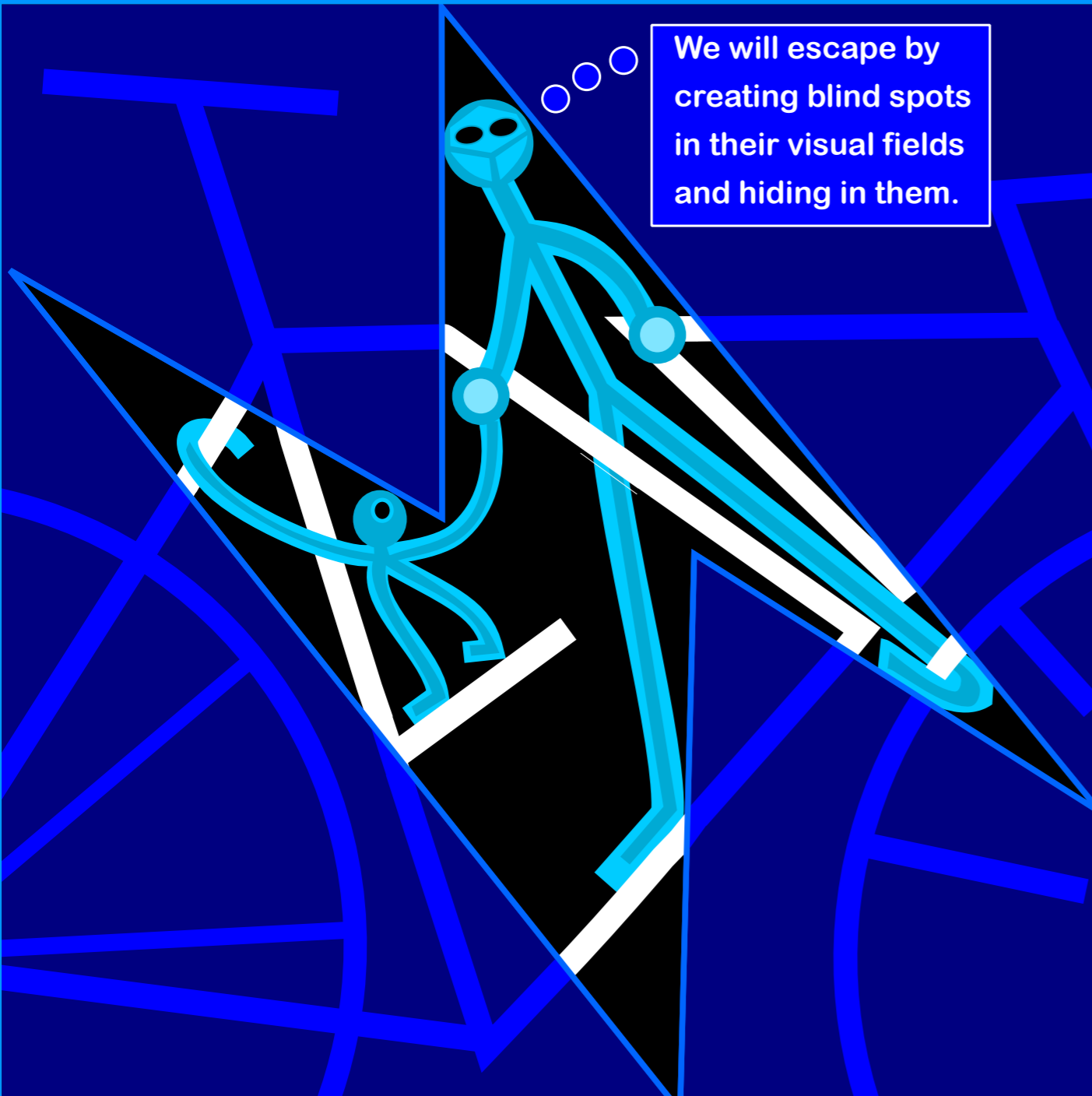
why am I always last?



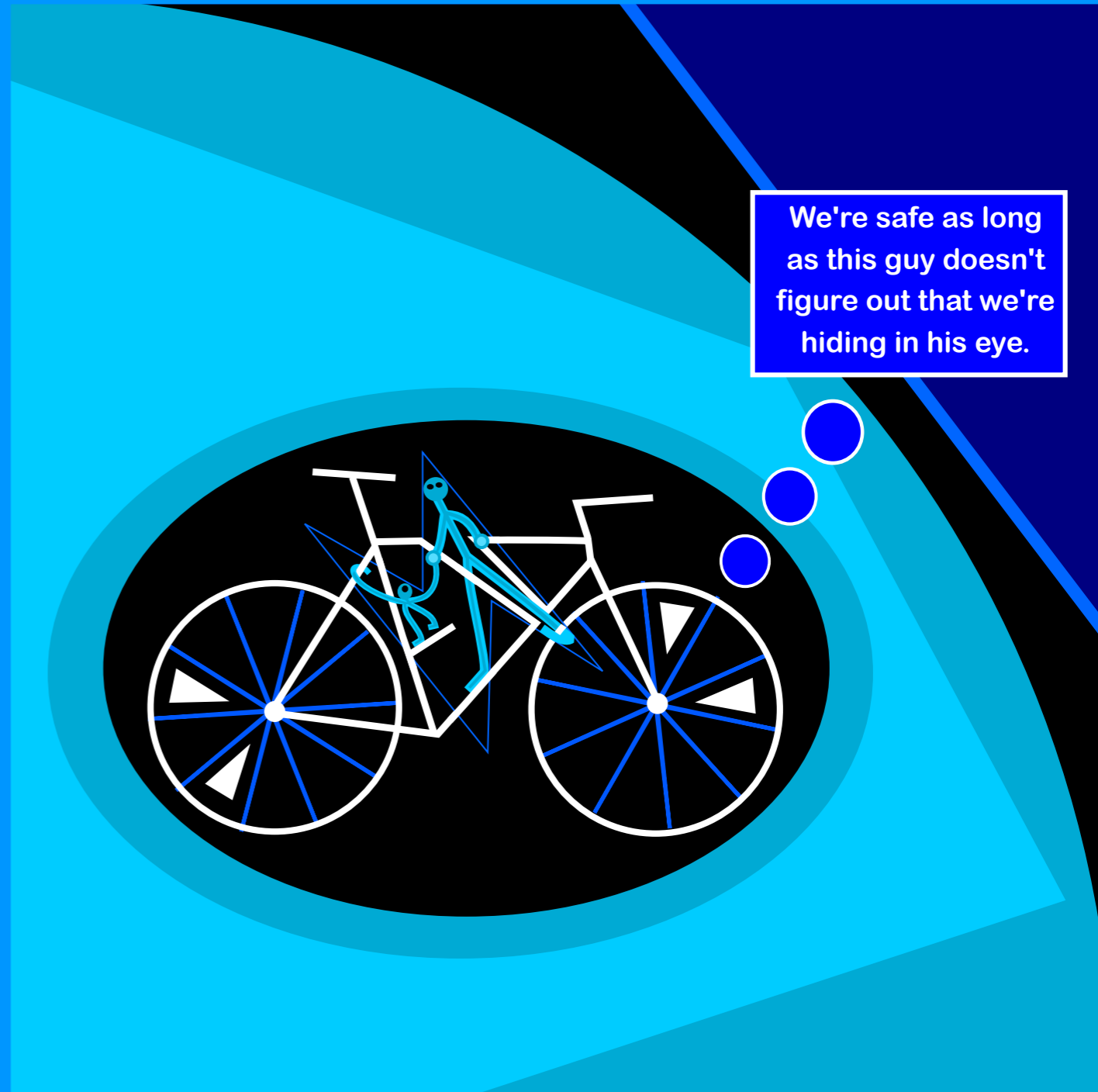
[Bob] is probably going to wear his square body today, so I should wear my round body.





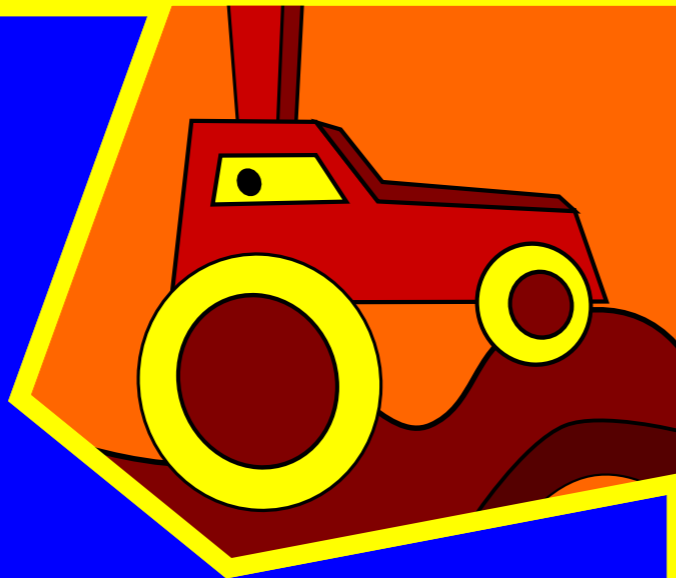


We will escape by creating blind spots in their visual fields and hiding in them.



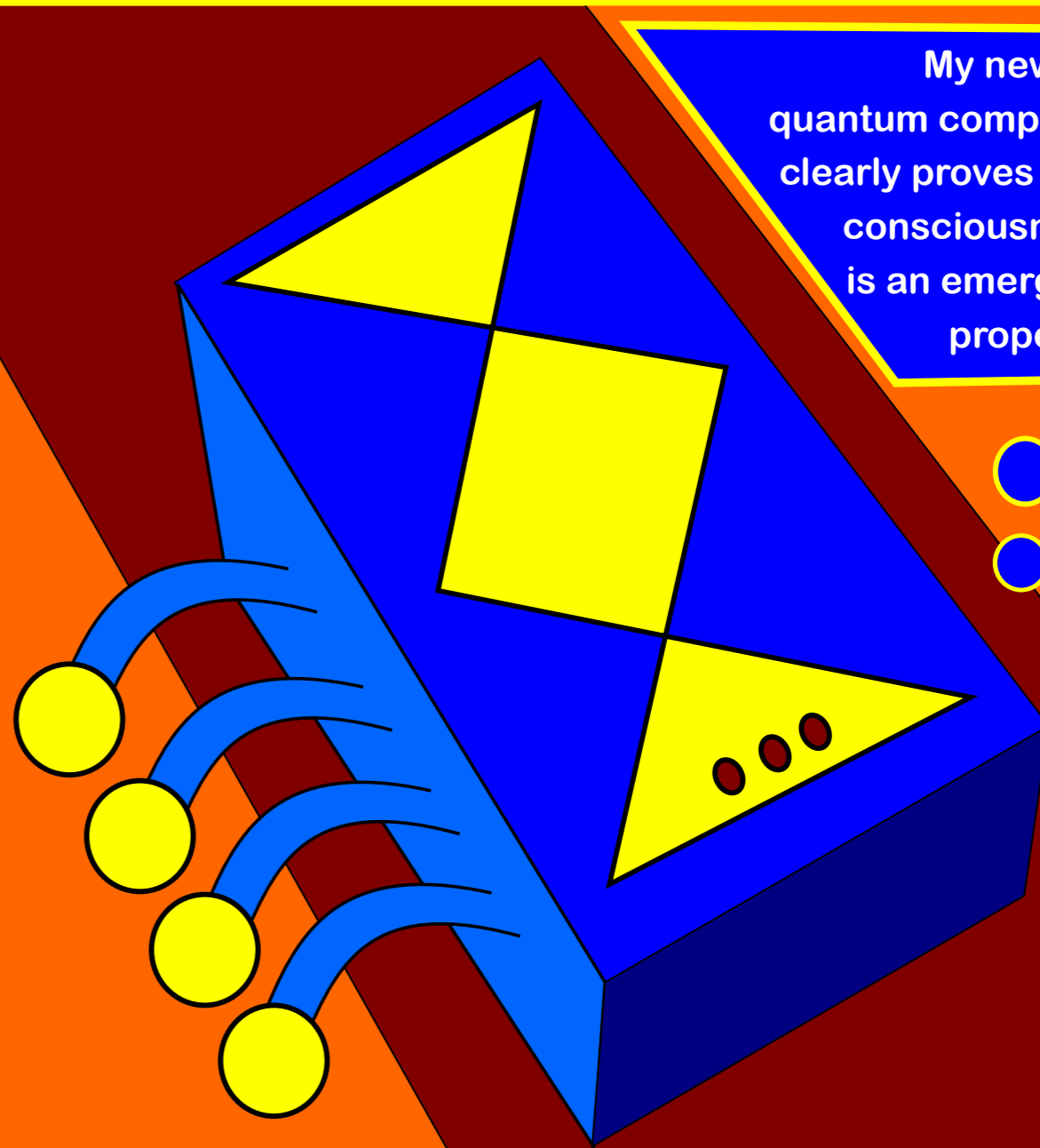
We're safe as long as this guy doesn't figure out that we're hiding in his eye.

These waves spread  
out along the roads and  
give laws to the land.



Truly, I rule  
the world  
with my fist.

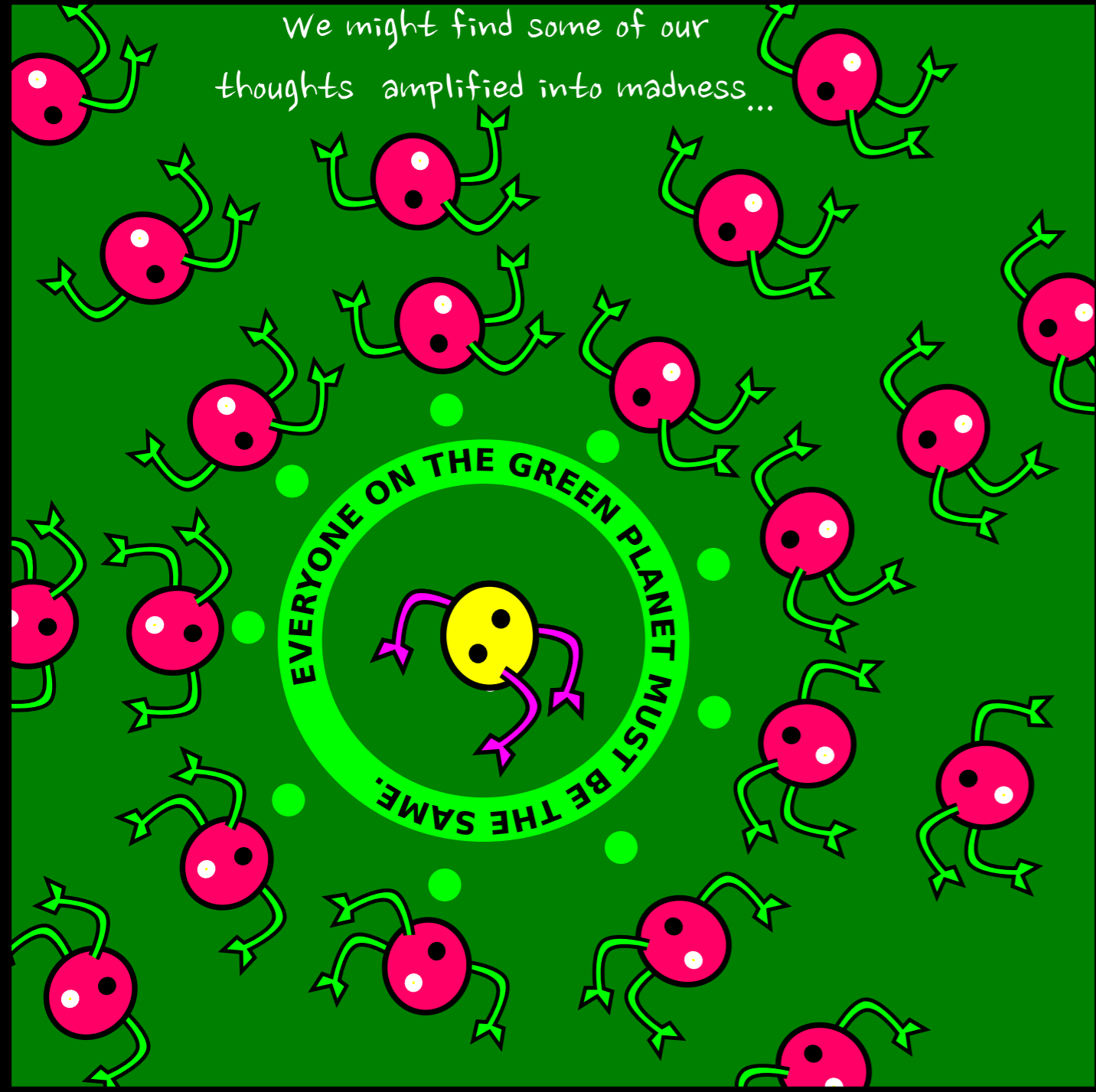
My newest  
quantum computer  
clearly proves that  
consciousness  
is an emergent  
property.



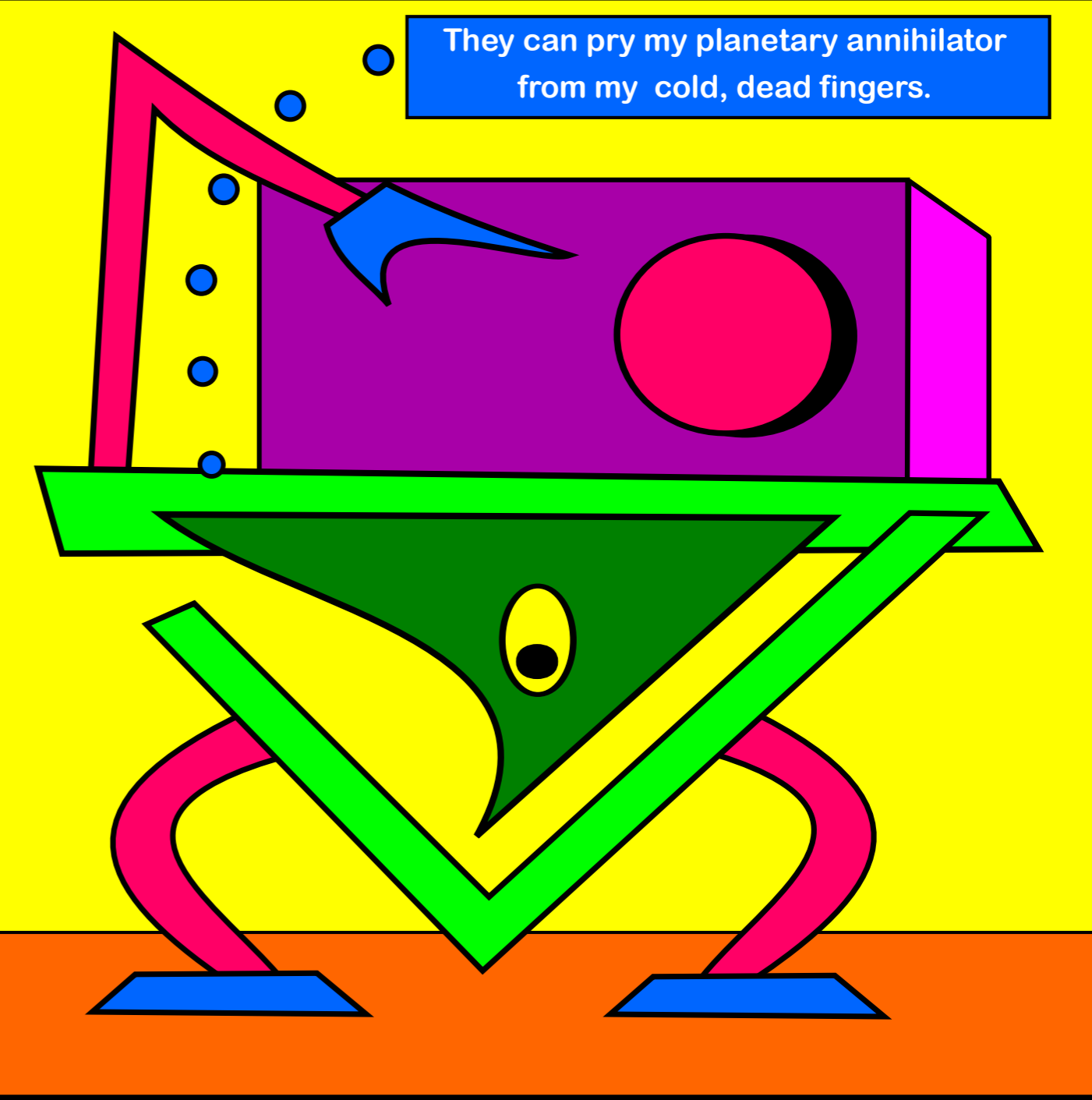


We might find some of our thoughts amplified into madness...

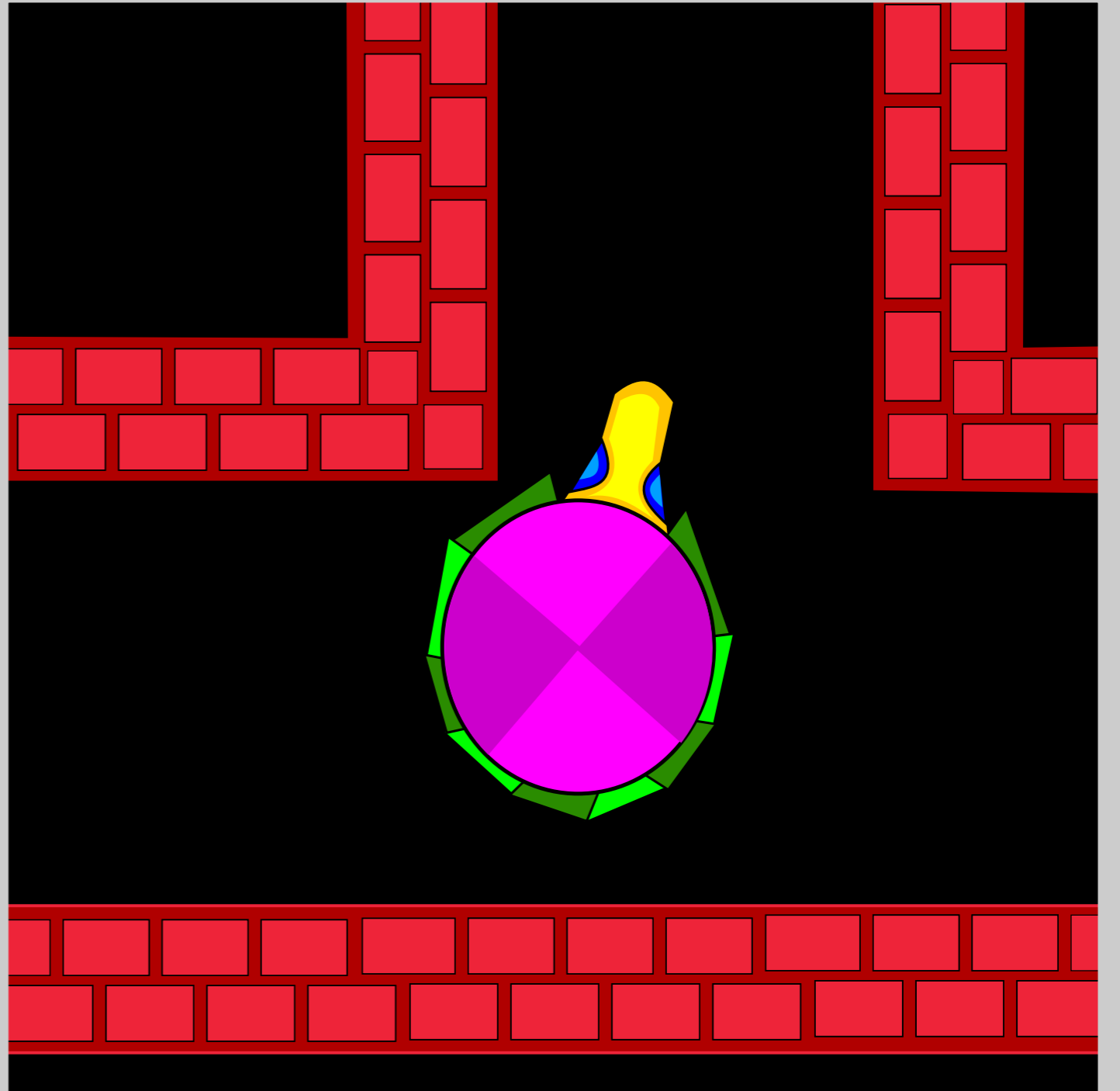
EVERYONE ON THE GREEN PLANET MUST BE THE SAME.

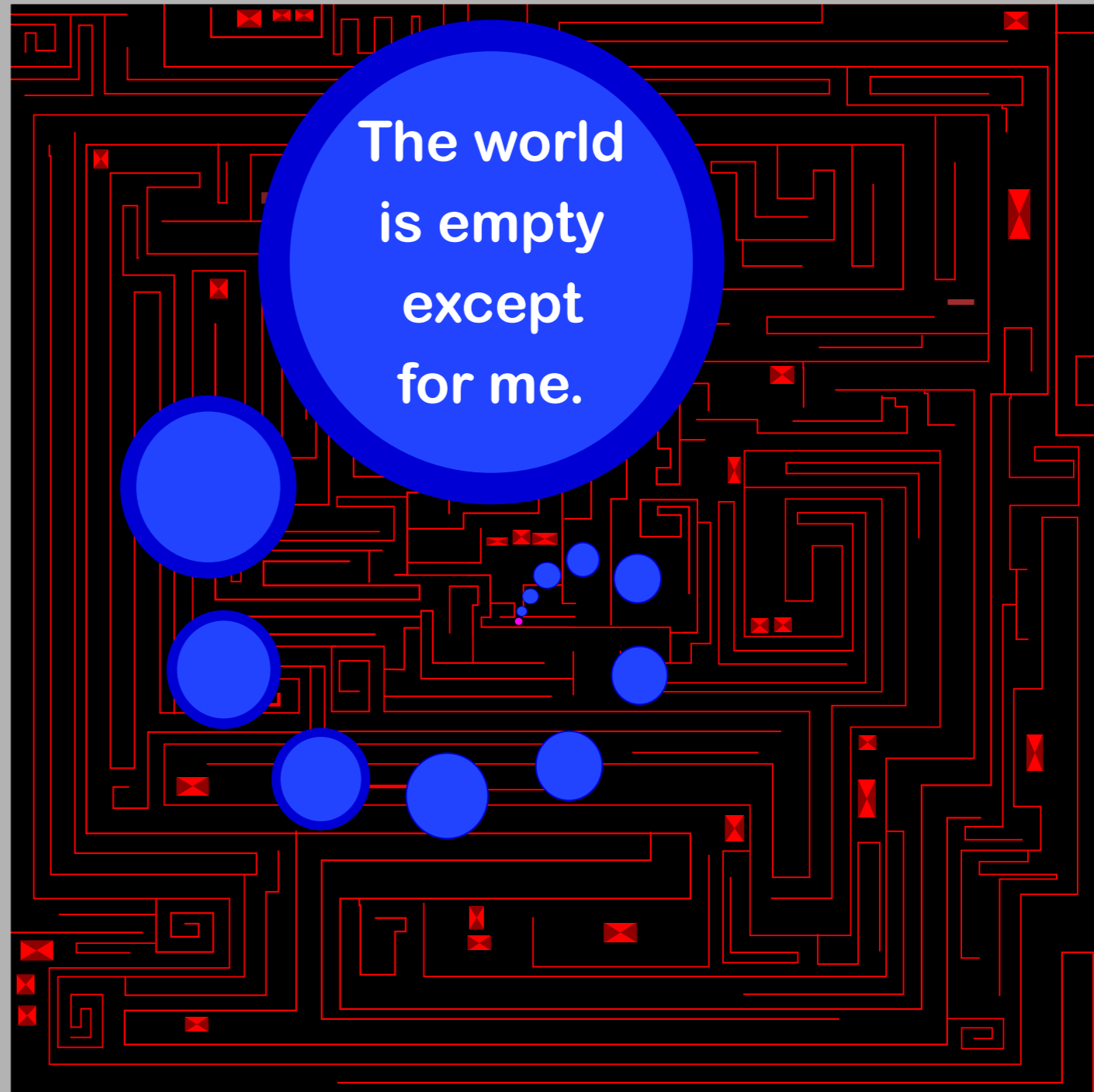
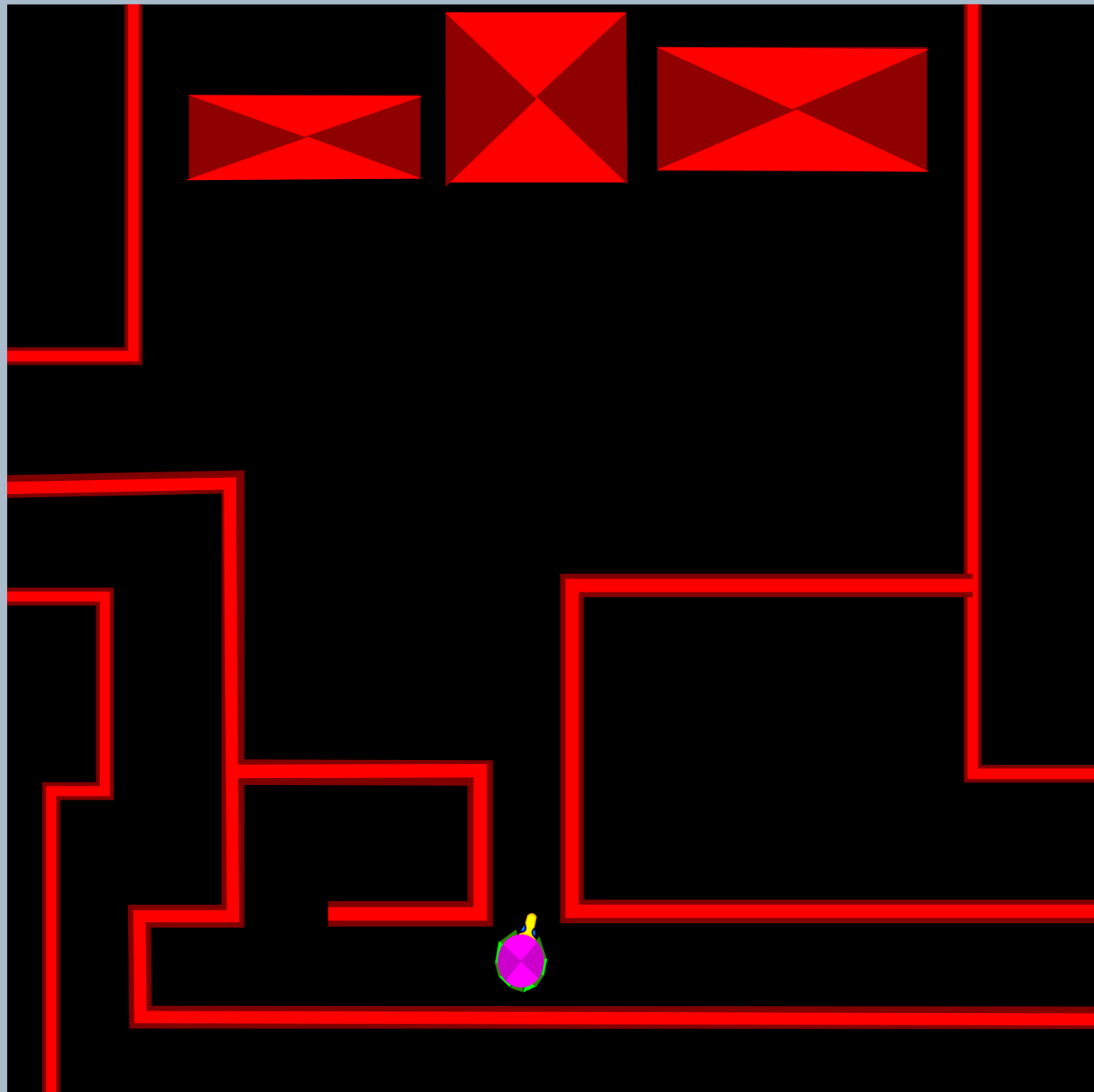


They can pry my planetary annihilator from my cold, dead fingers.

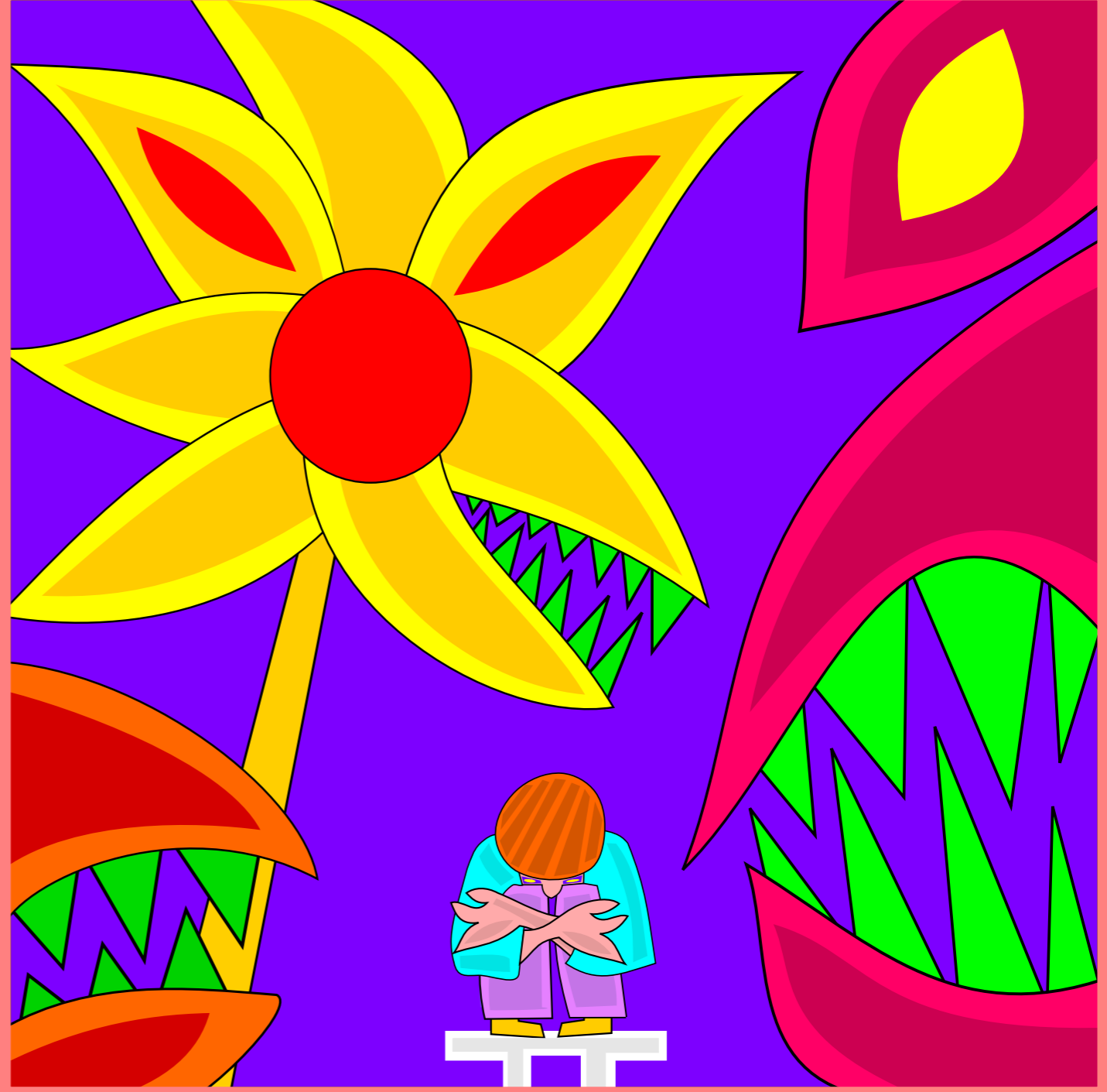


and madness turned real  
by circumstance.





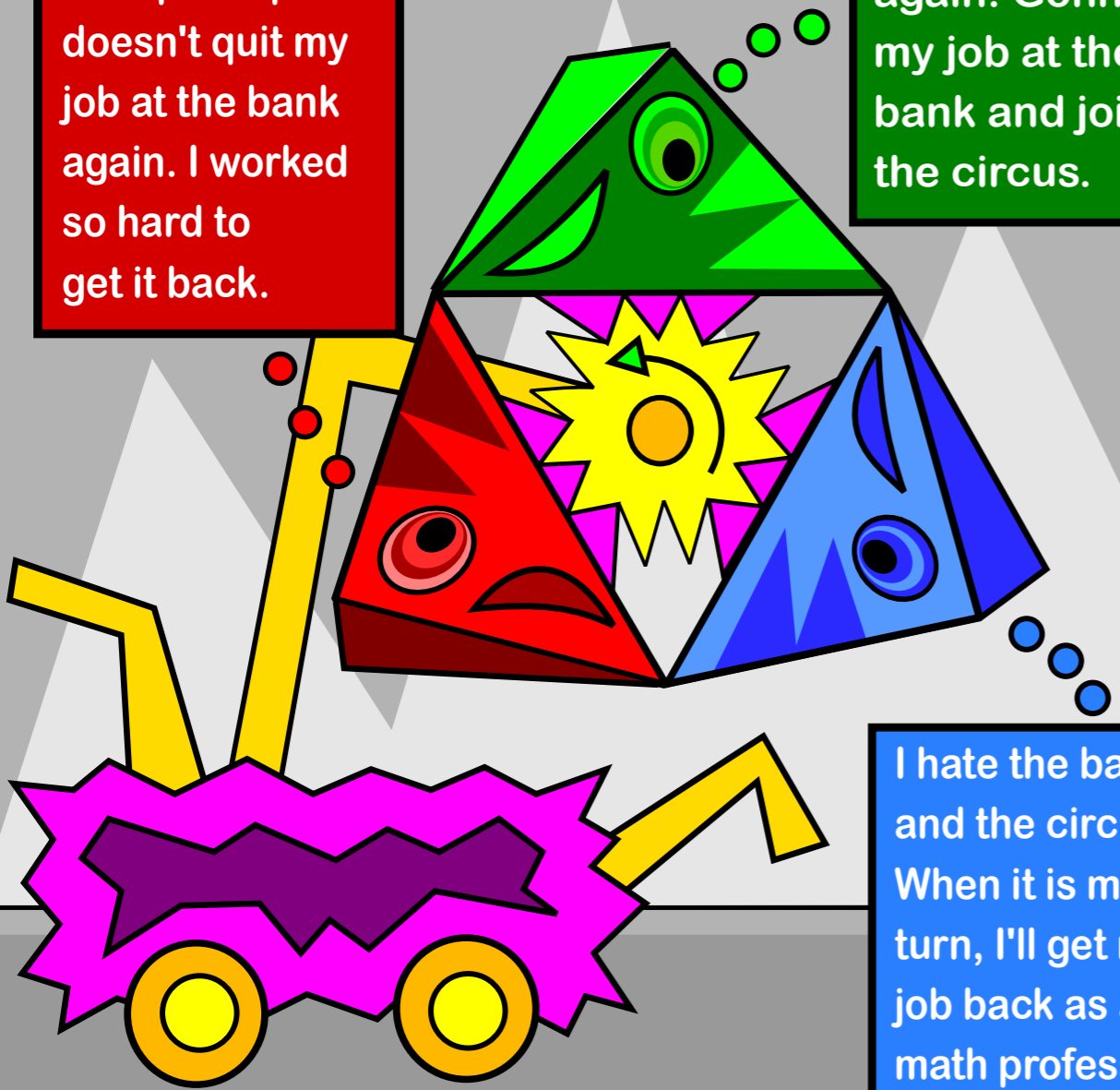
I can't  
look at the  
flowers.  
They  
terrify me.



Ugh! [Green] is on top. I hope he doesn't quit my job at the bank again. I worked so hard to get it back.

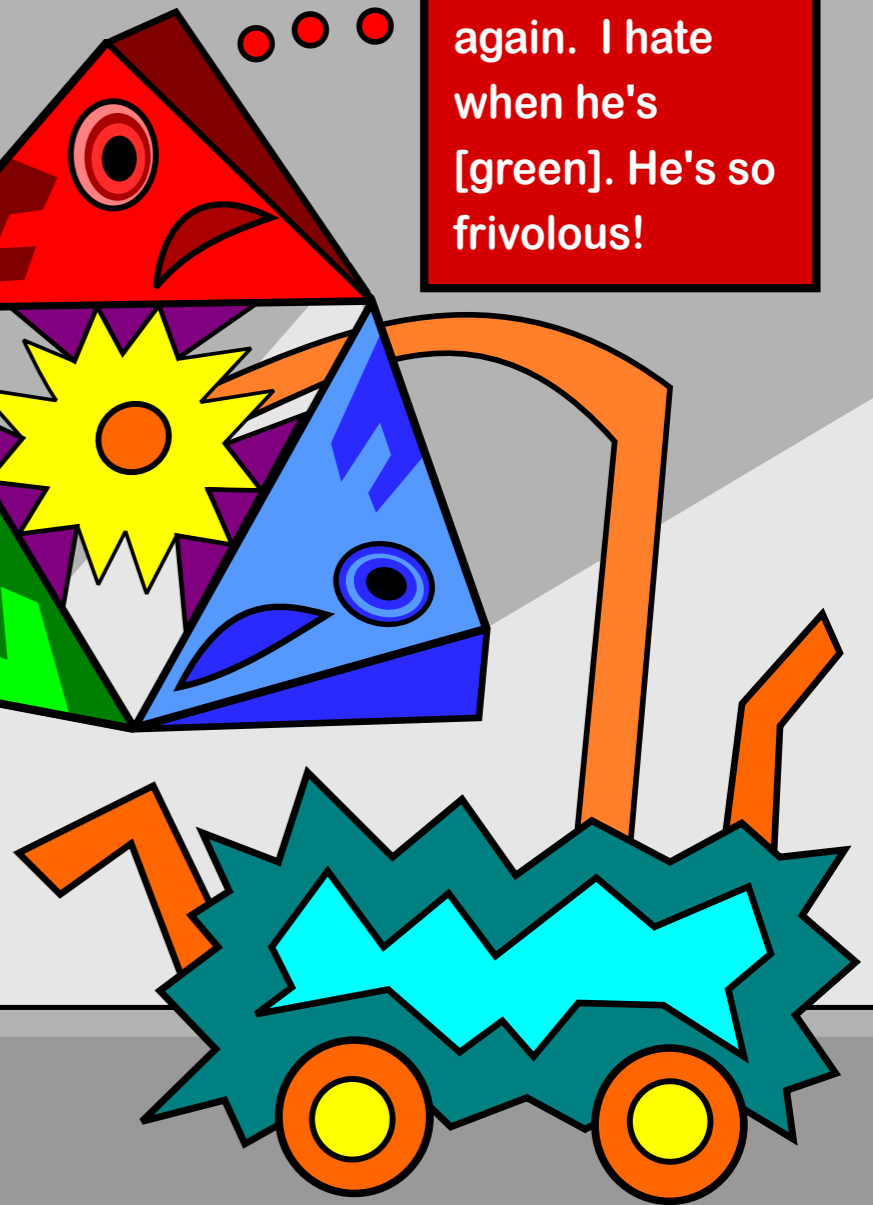
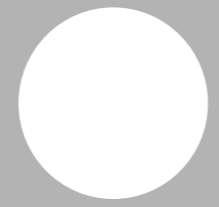
Finally! I'm on top again. Gonna quit my job at the bank and join the circus.

I hate the bank and the circus. When it is my turn, I'll get my job back as a math professor.



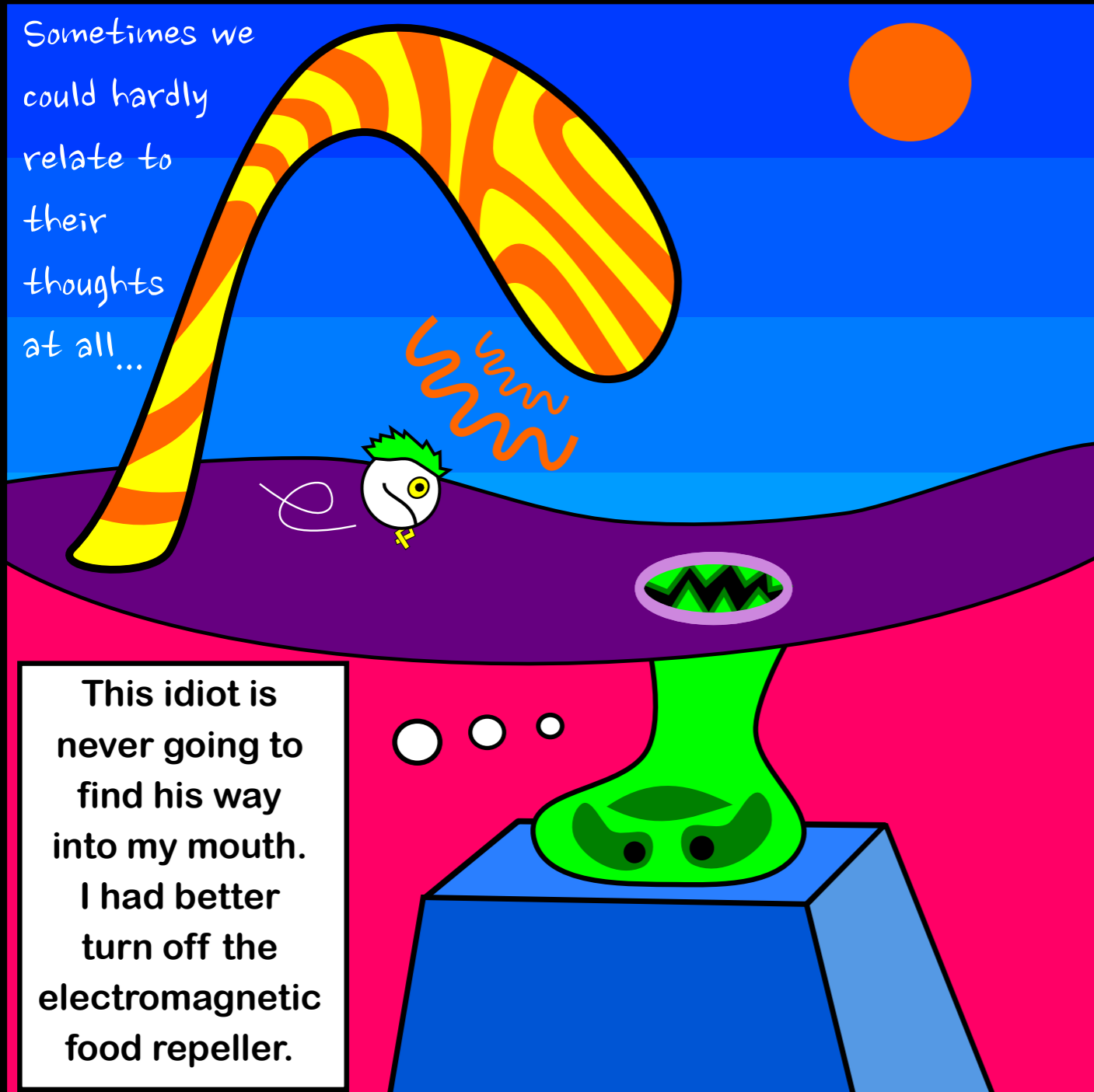
I wish I was on top, so I could talk to [Bob]. He's really a fun individual.

There's [Bob] again. I hate when he's [green]. He's so frivolous!



Sometimes we  
could hardly  
relate to  
their  
thoughts  
at all...

This idiot is  
never going to  
find his way  
into my mouth.  
I had better  
turn off the  
electromagnetic  
food repeller.



Now that it  
finally comes  
to the end there  
are two of them  
and I can't decide.  
I had better turn  
around and go back.

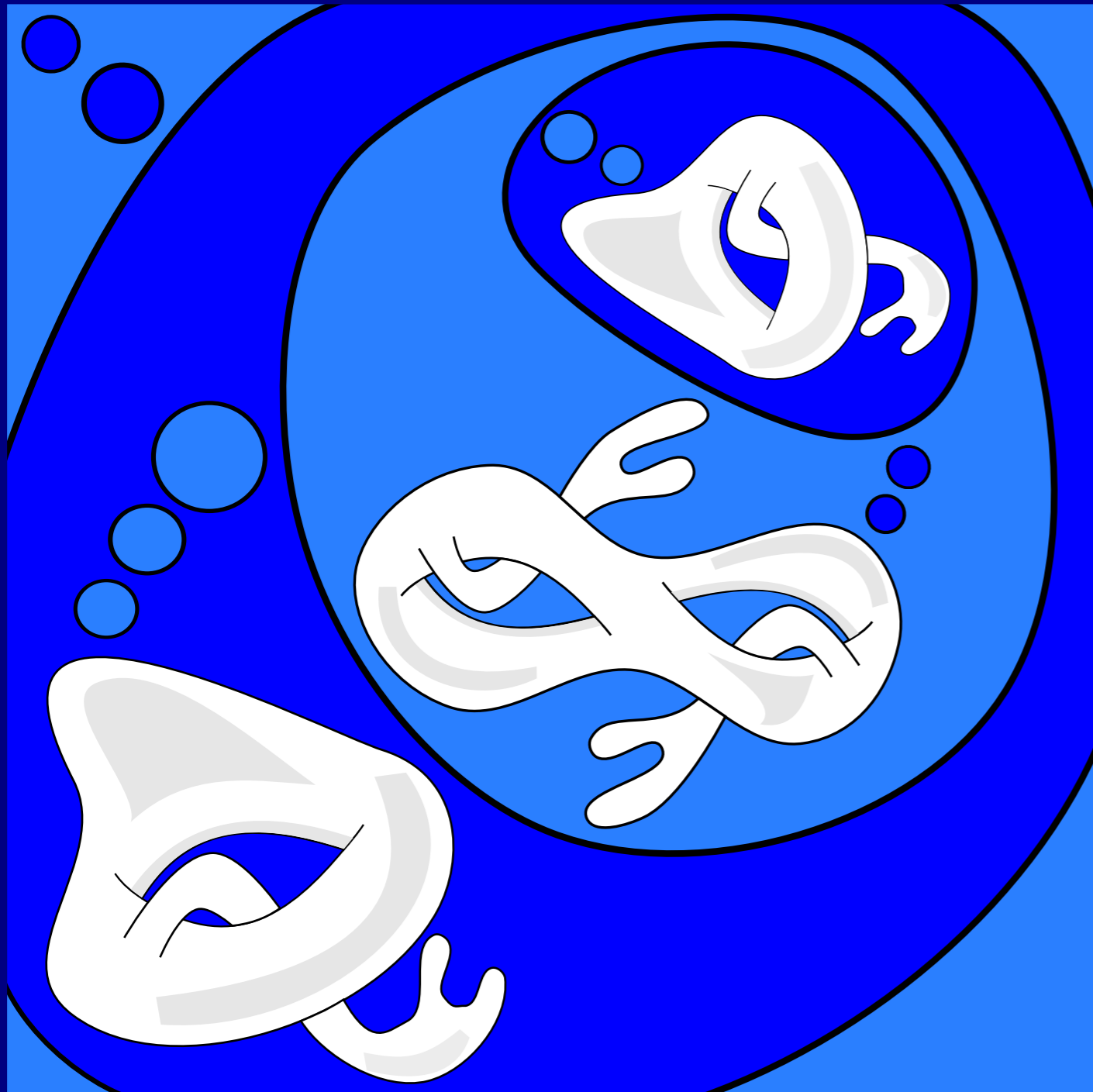


Technically, a recursive brain lamination happens the instant the brain understands itself completely, but if you are clever you can game the system and bring it on a bit earlier.



Now that I have surfed a memory vortex, I know that the song of the universe has overtones of [untranslatable].







We might be surprised...



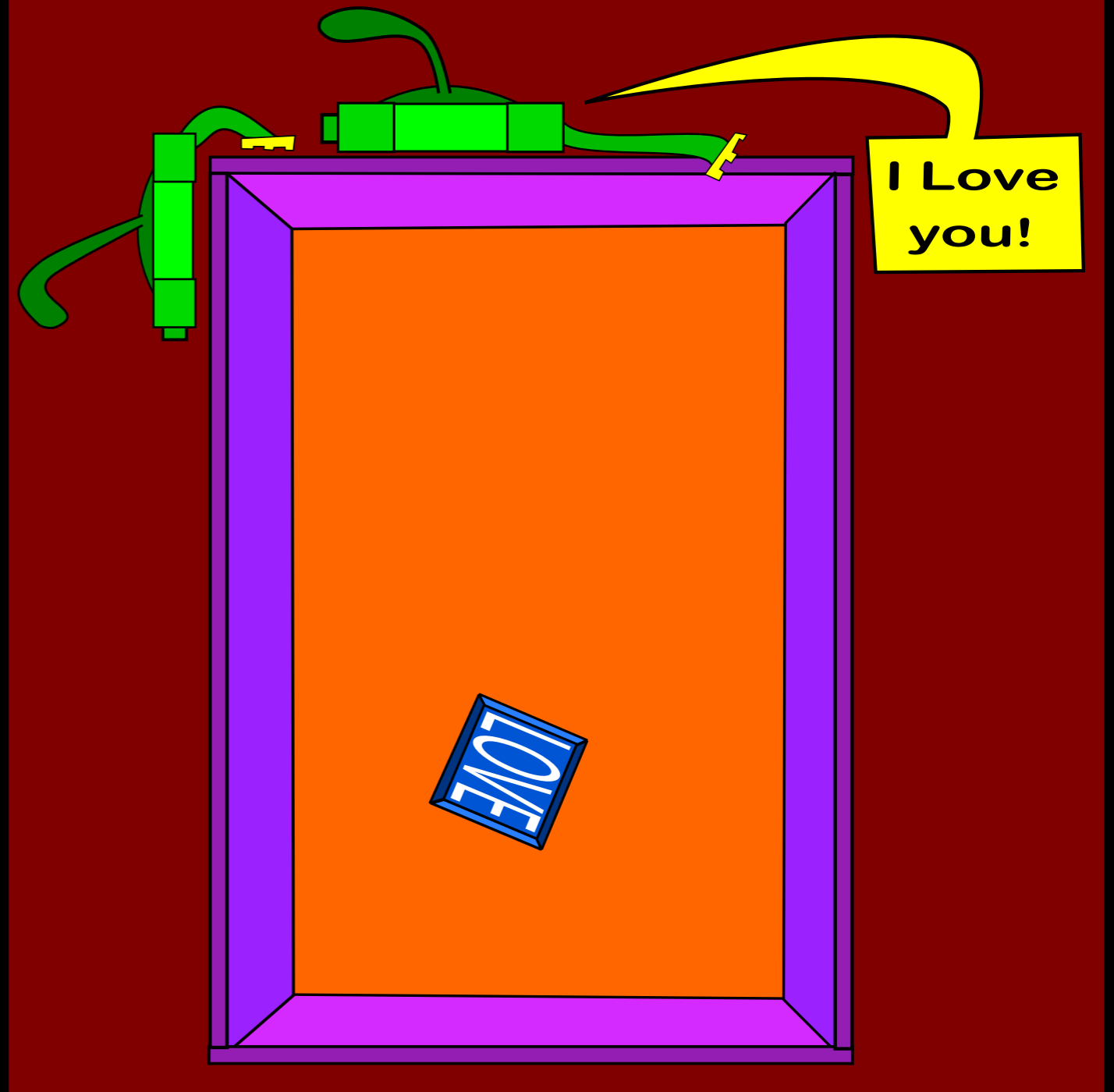
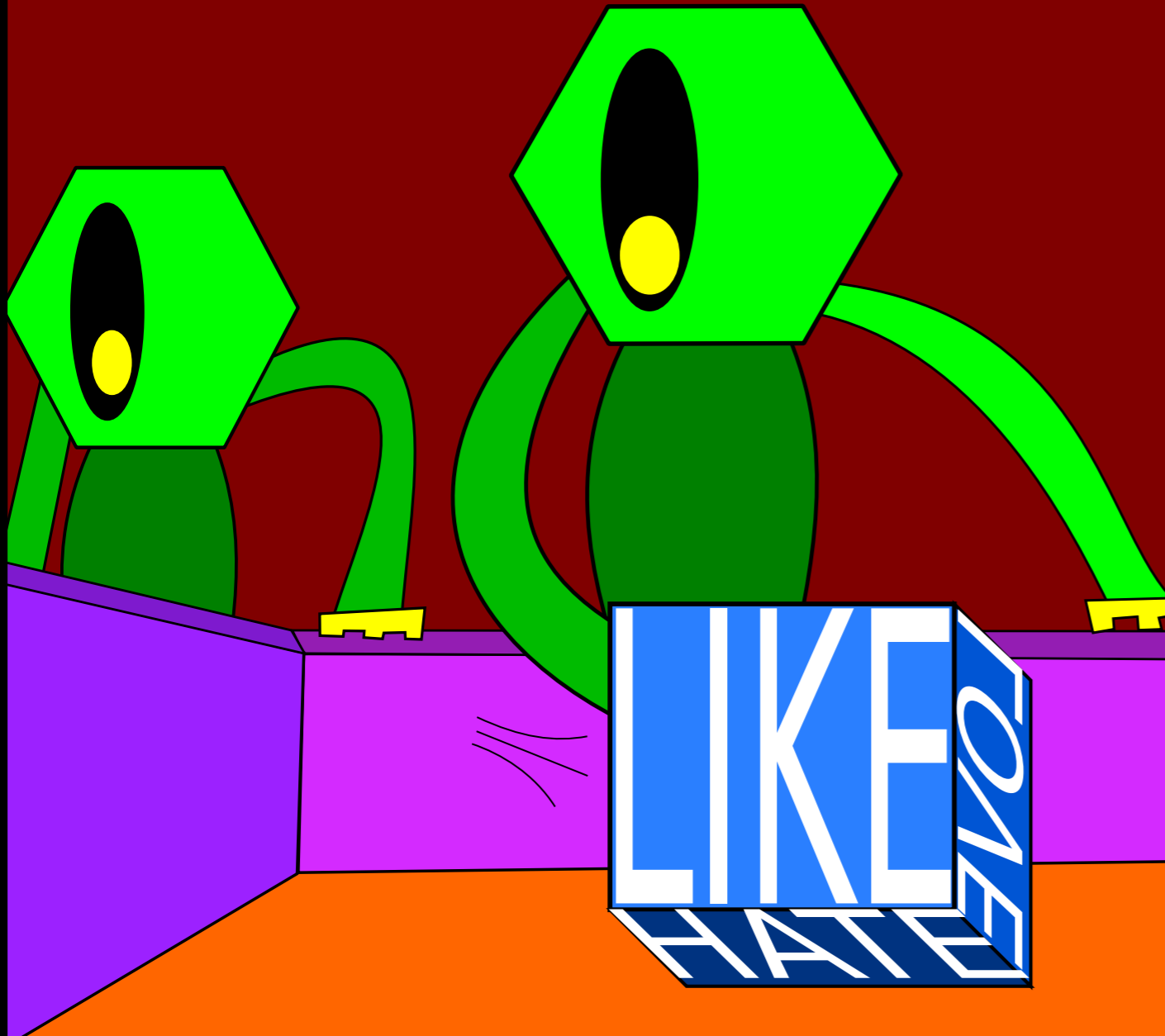
not just by WHAT aliens think about...



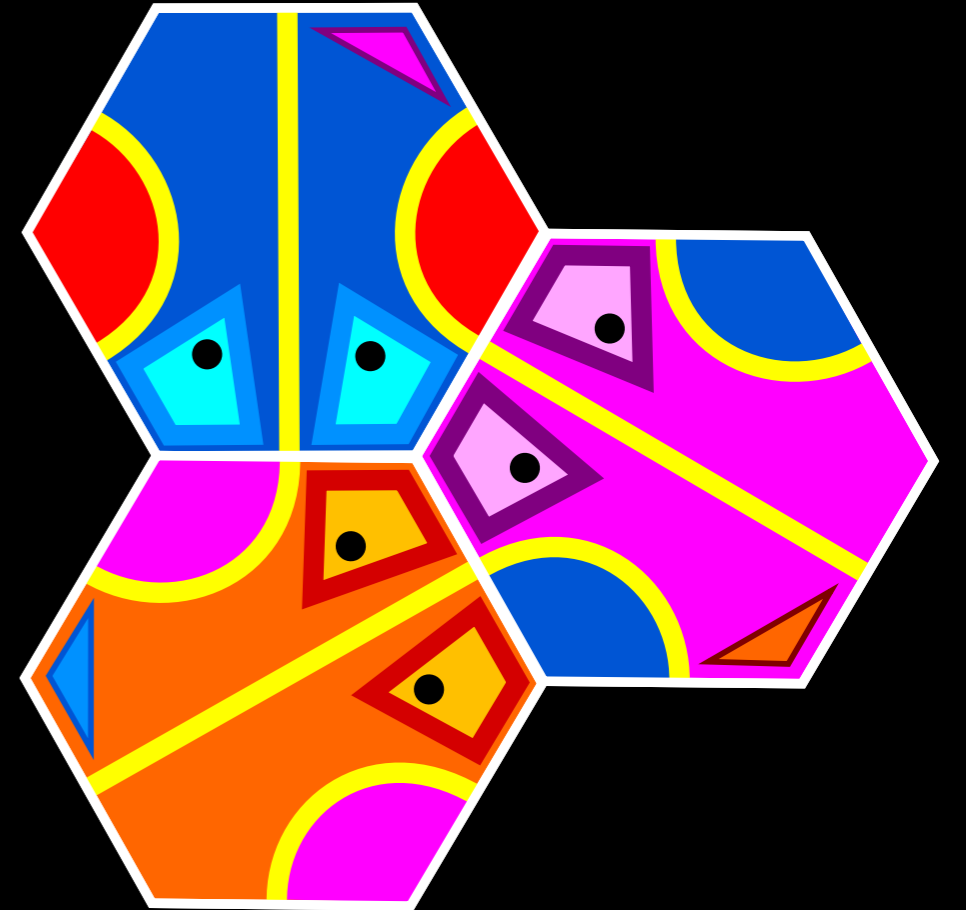
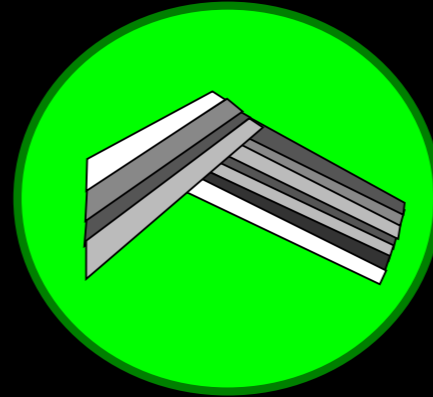
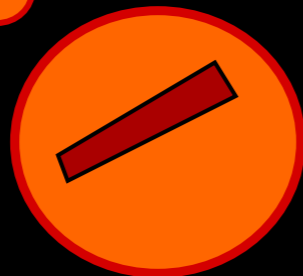
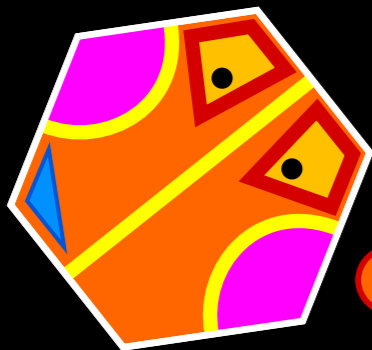


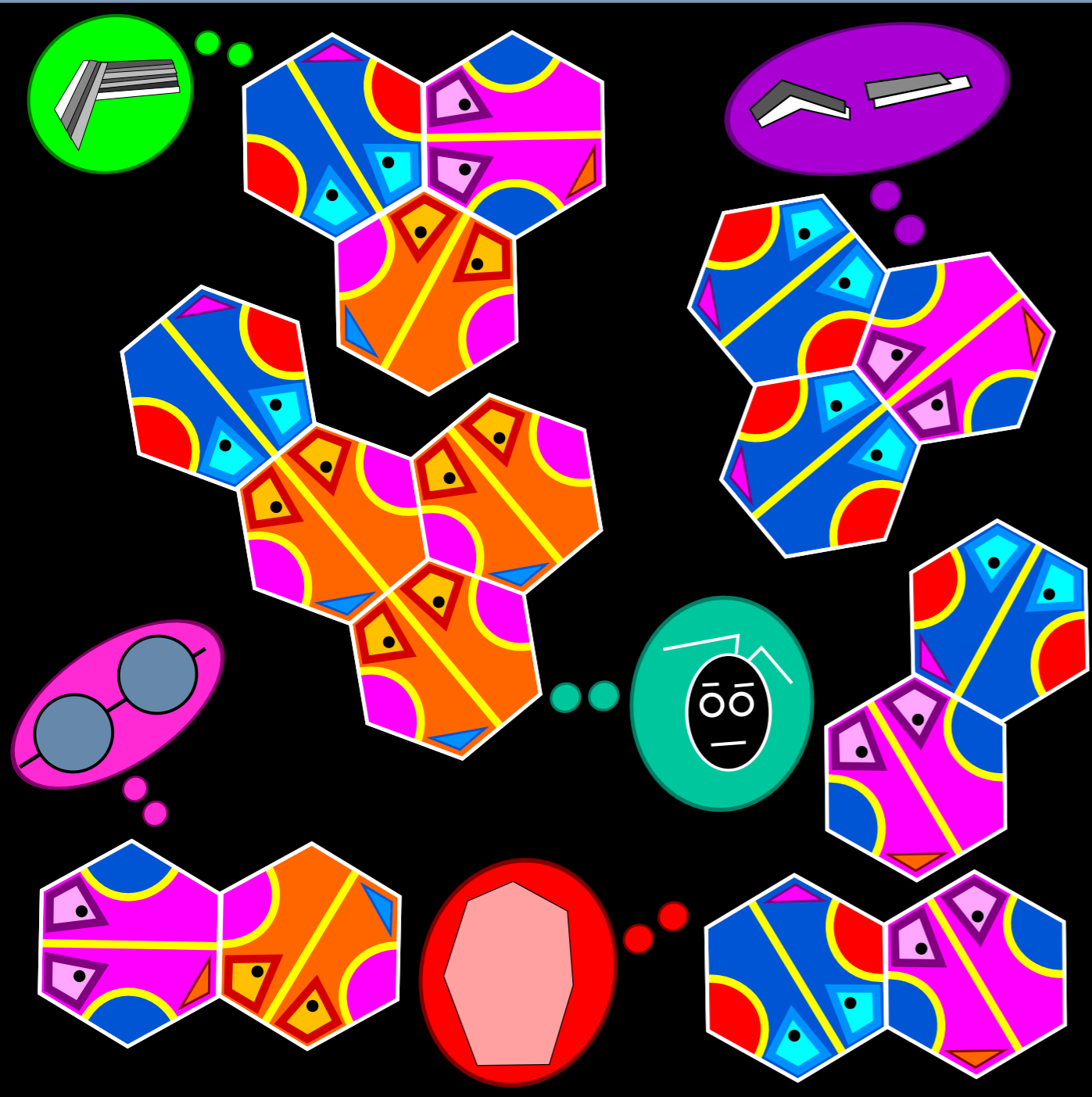
but by HOW  
they think.

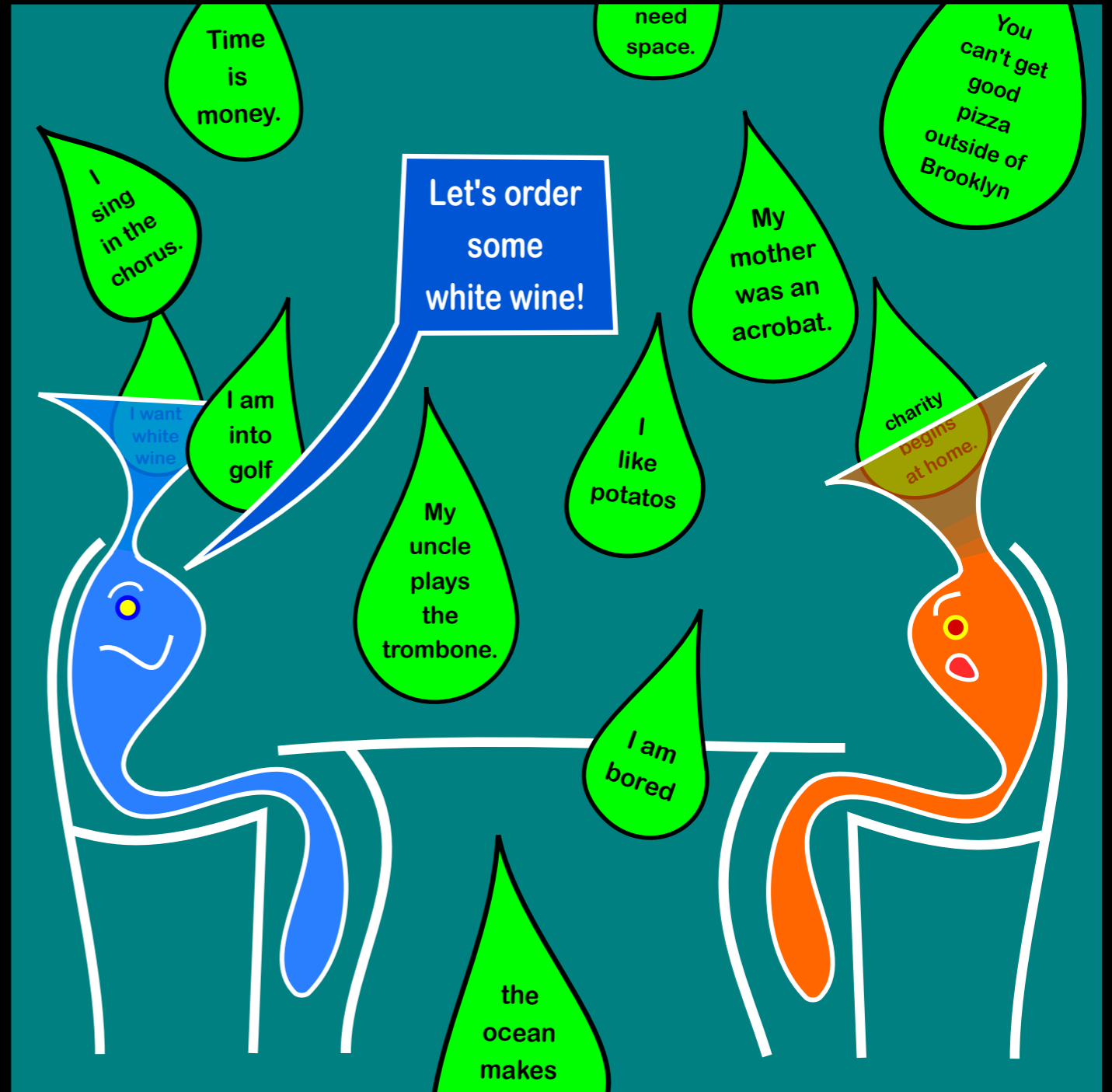
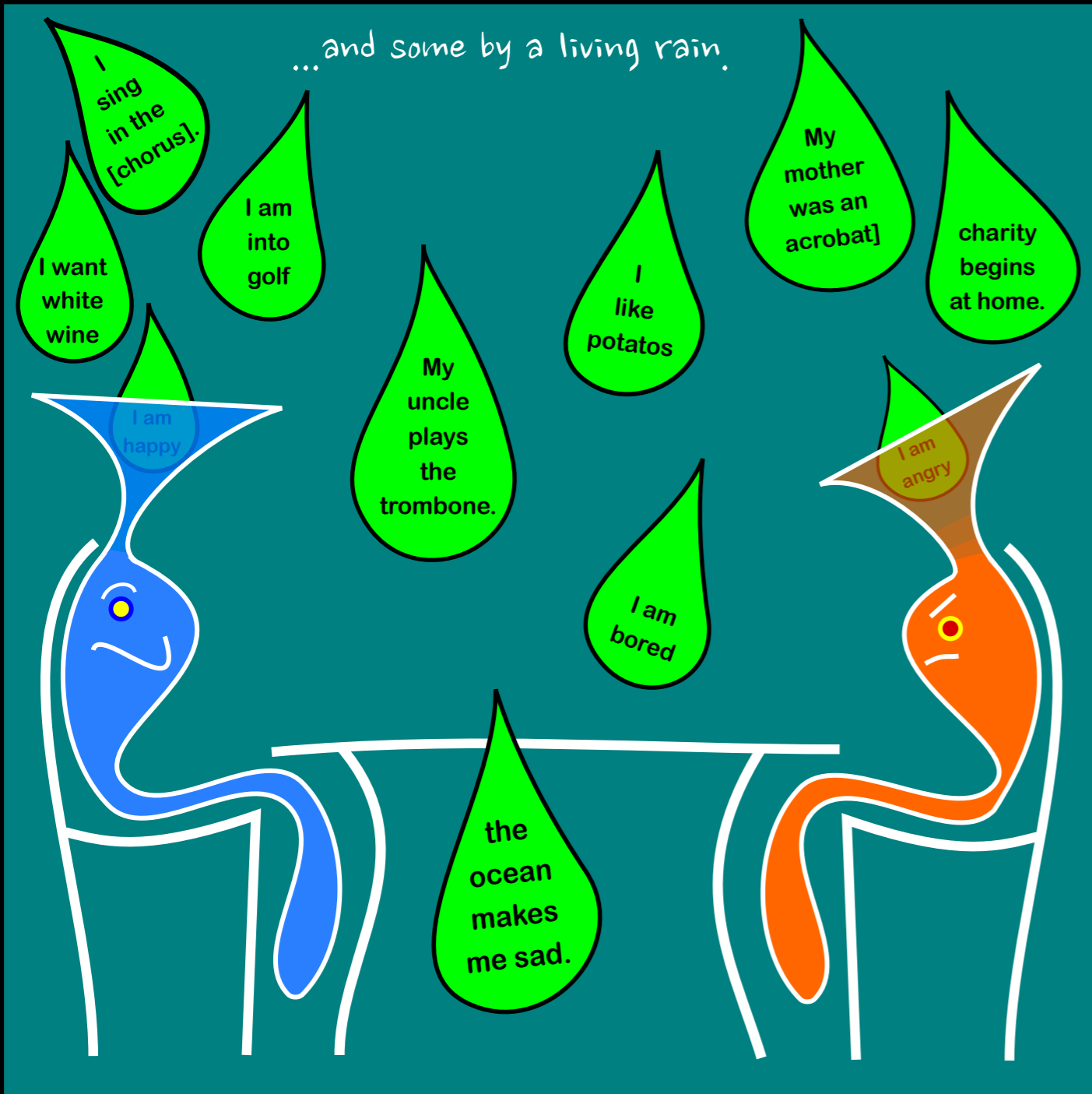
We might find some alien thought determined by chance...

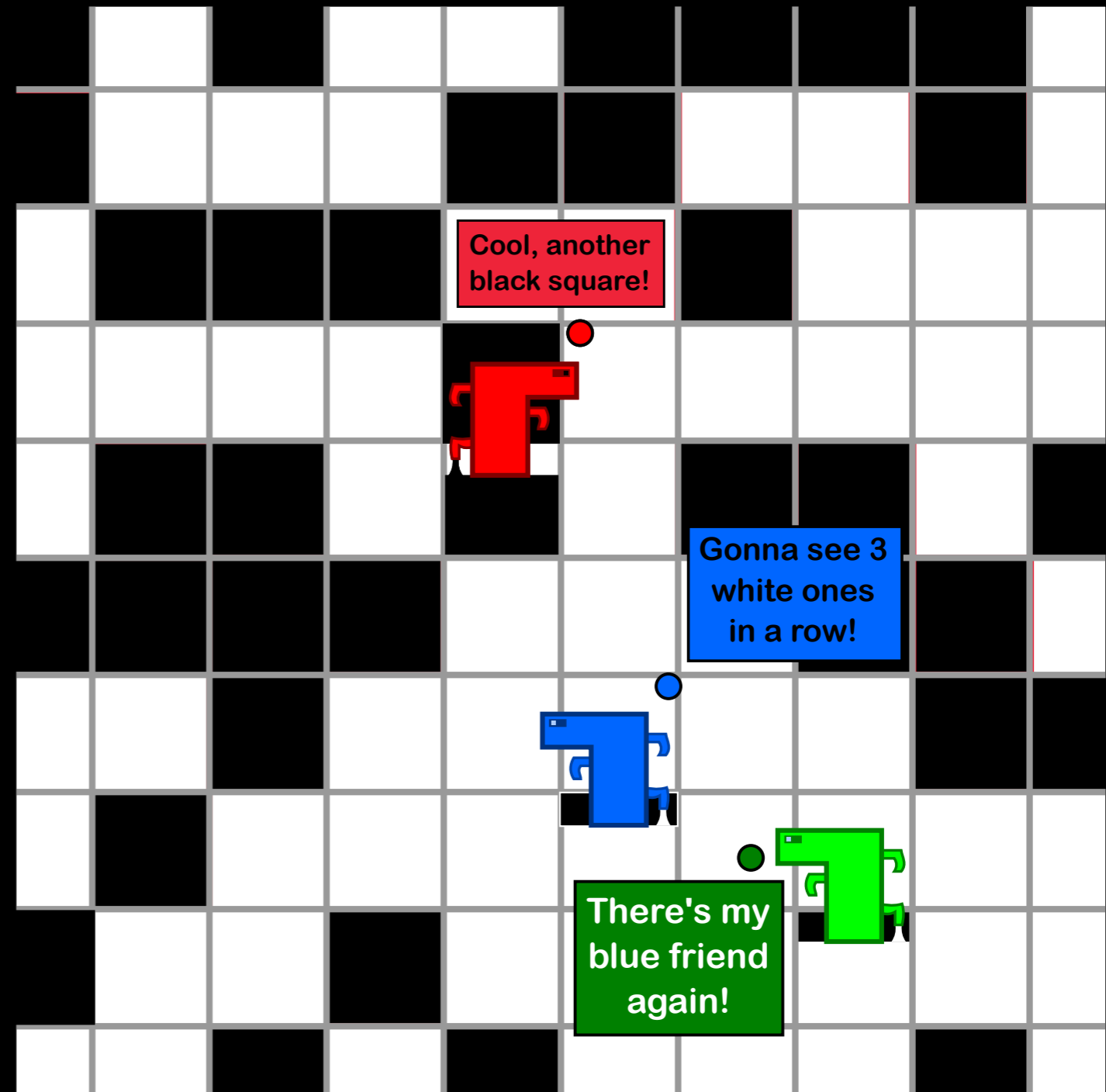
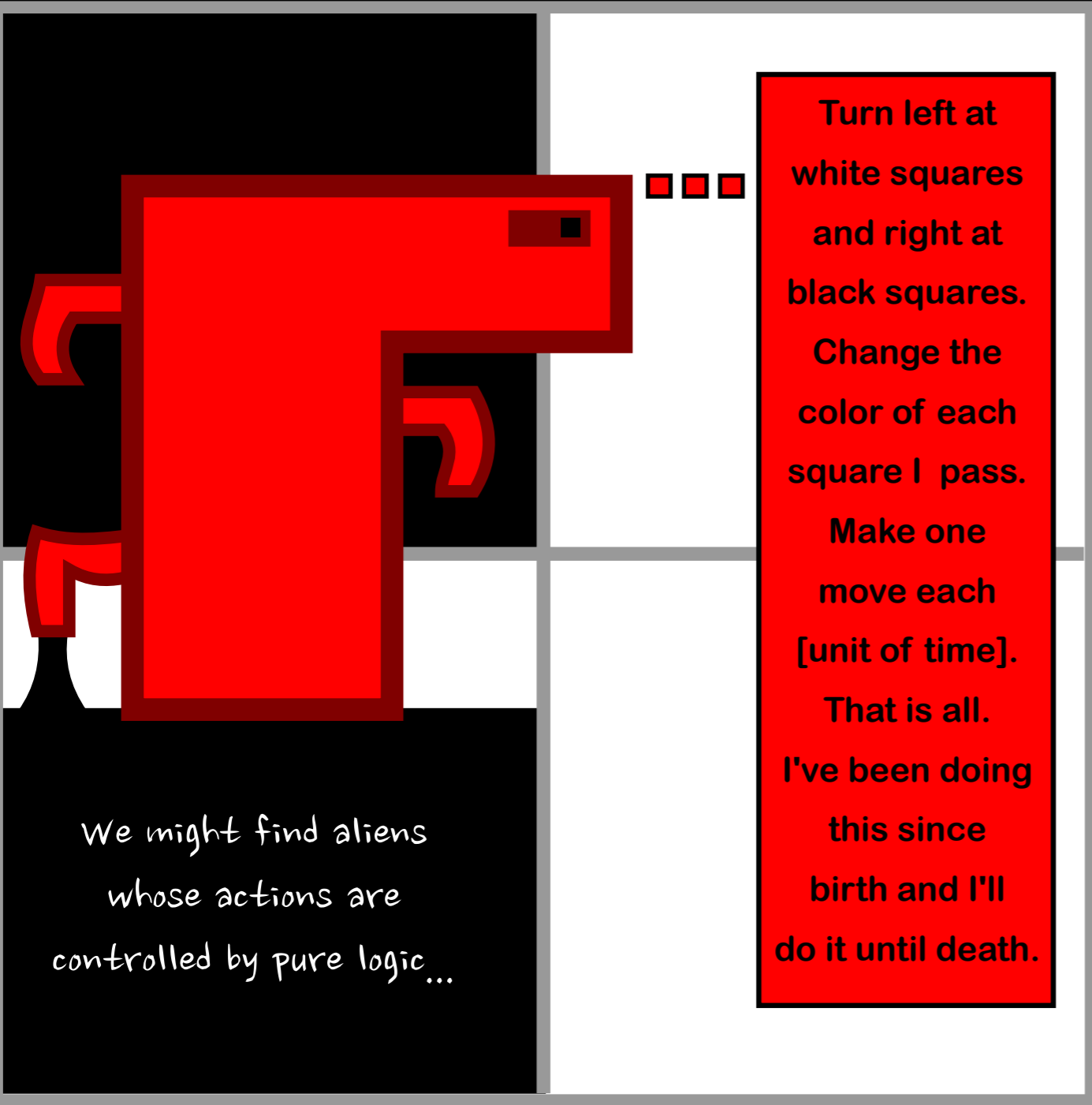


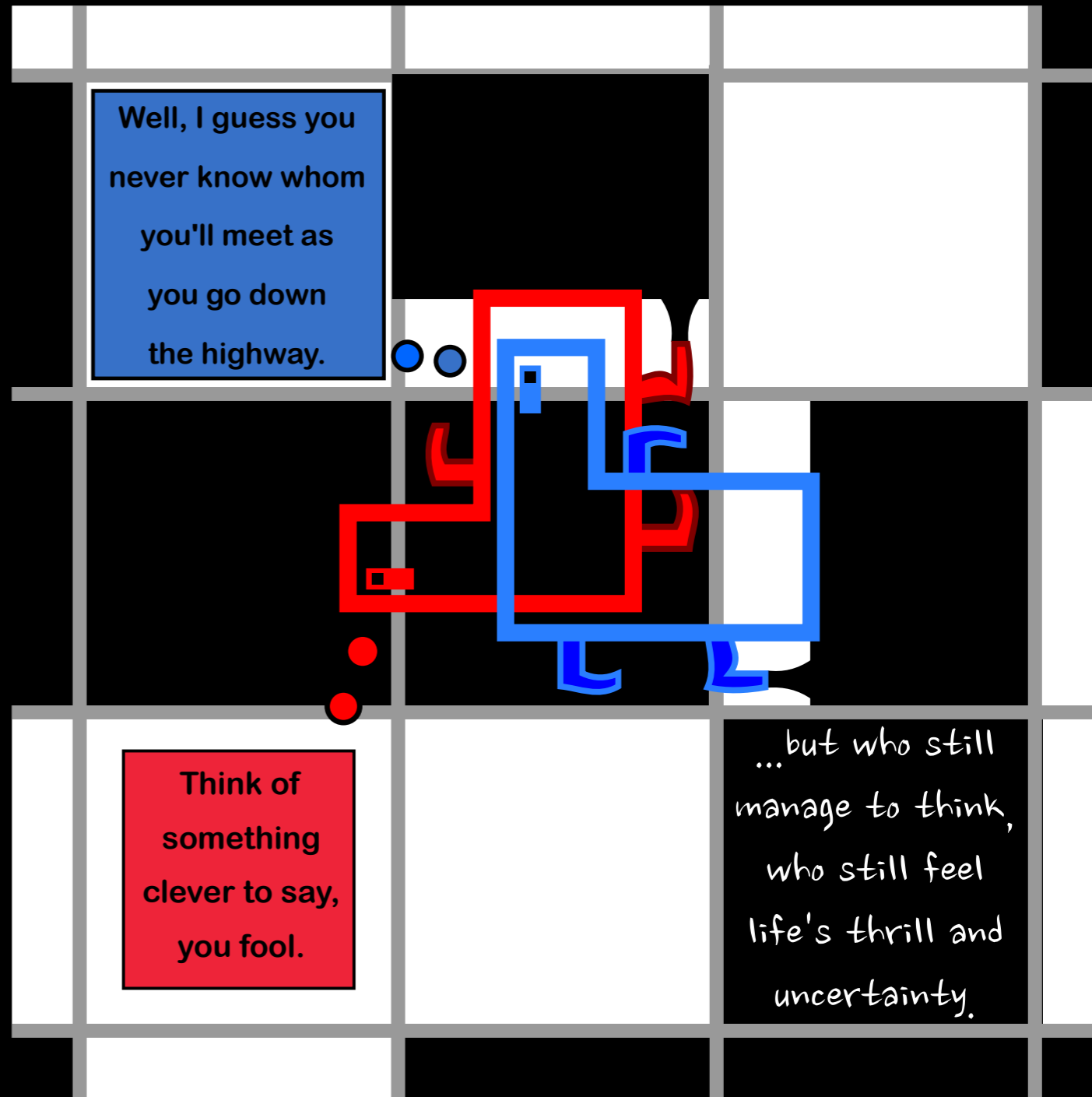
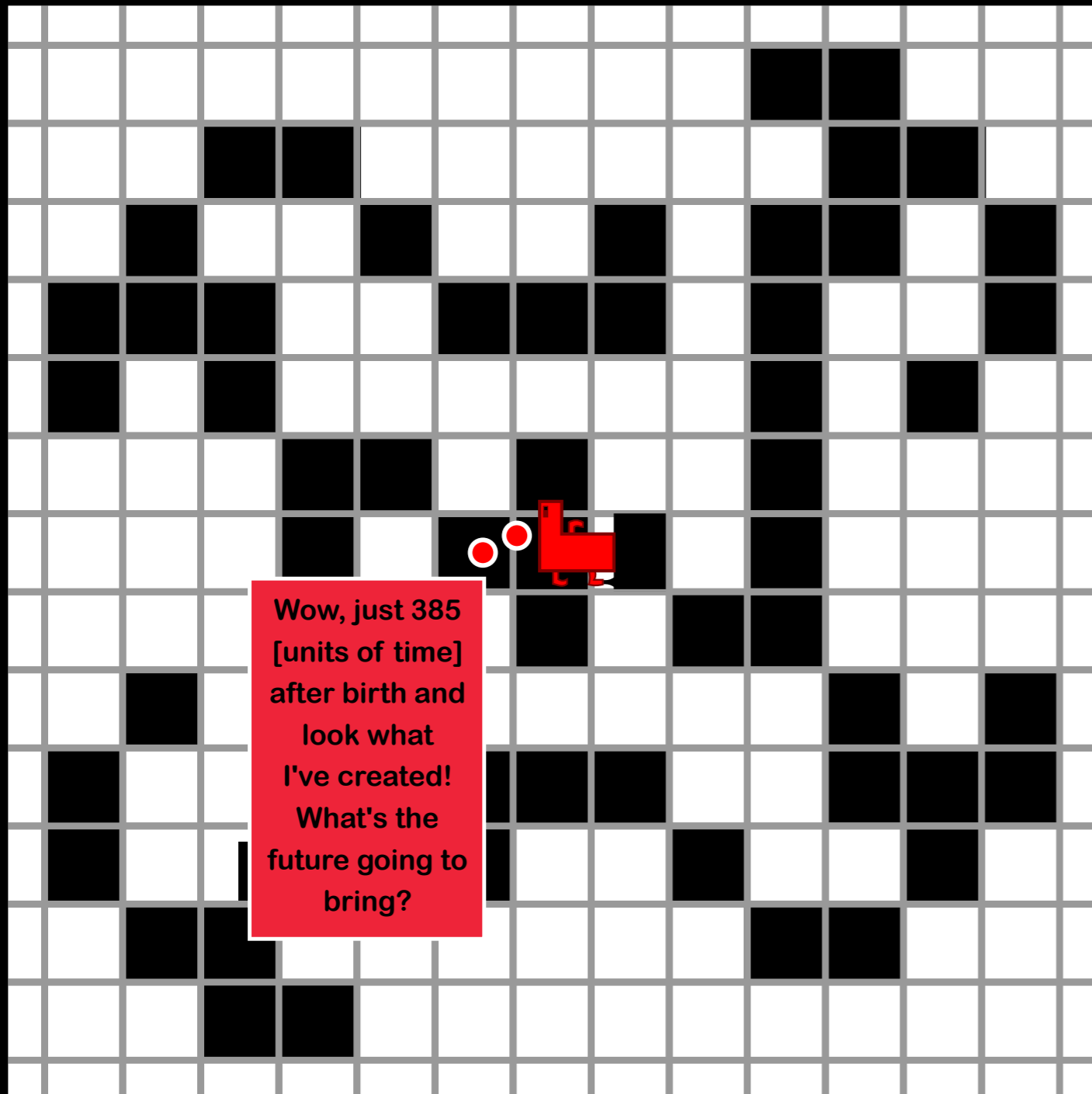
...and some by committee...







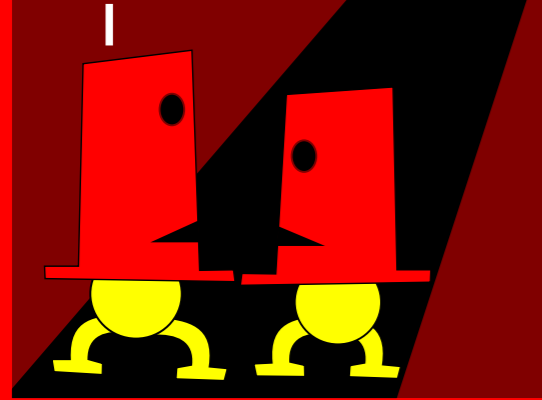




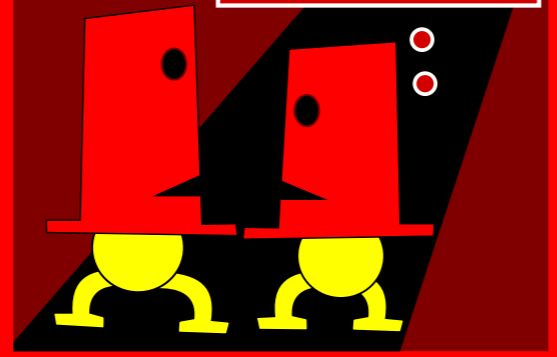


We might find aliens who think without

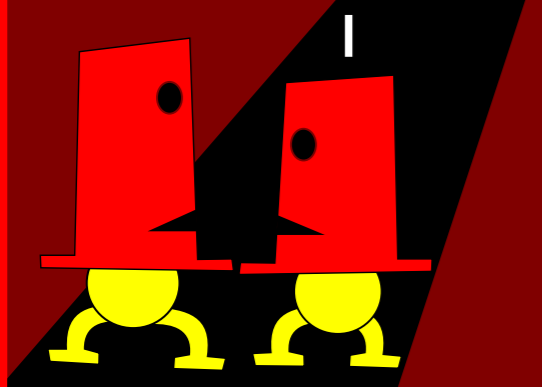
I'm glad to be here with you.



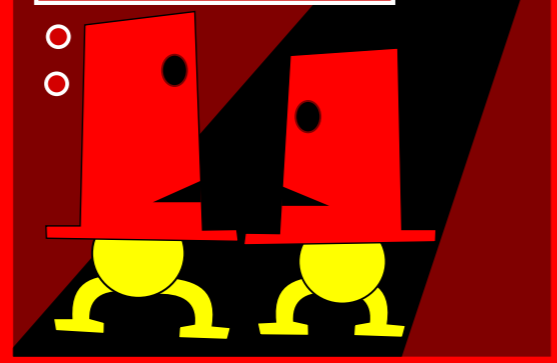
Now I know [Adam] is glad to be here with me, but he doesn't know it.



I know that you are glad to be here with me.

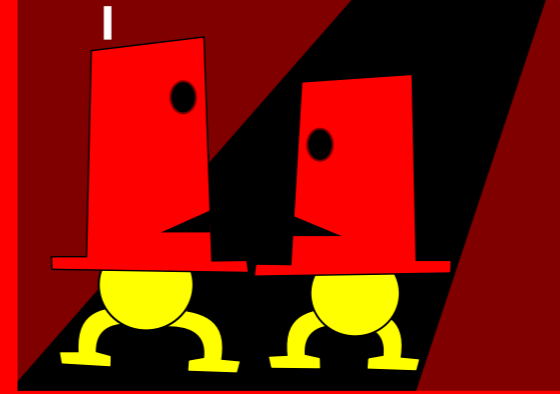


Now I know that [Bob] knows that I am glad to be here with him, but he doesn't know it.

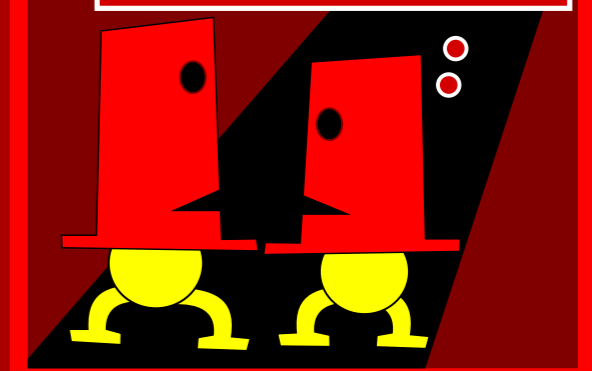


certain powers of deduction...

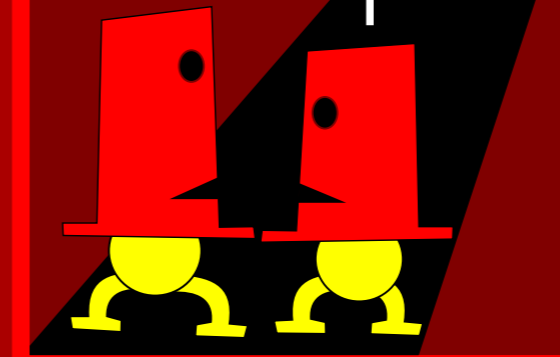
I know that you know that I am glad to be here with you.



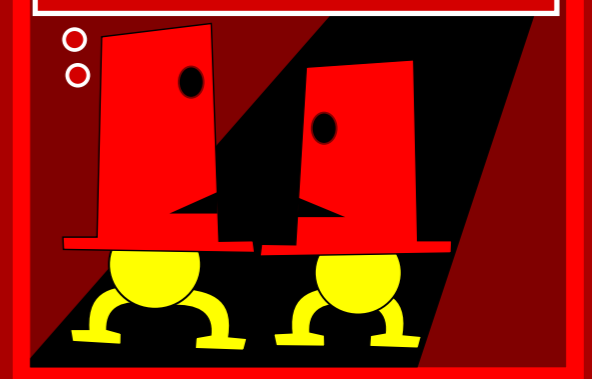
Now I know that [Adam] knows that I know that he is glad to be here with me, but he doesn't know it.



I know that you know that I know that you are glad to be here with me.



Now I know that [Bob] knows that I know that he knows that I am glad to be here with him, but he doesn't know it.



aliens whose thought runs too easily into infinite loops...

or aliens who think  
without any idea  
of SELF...

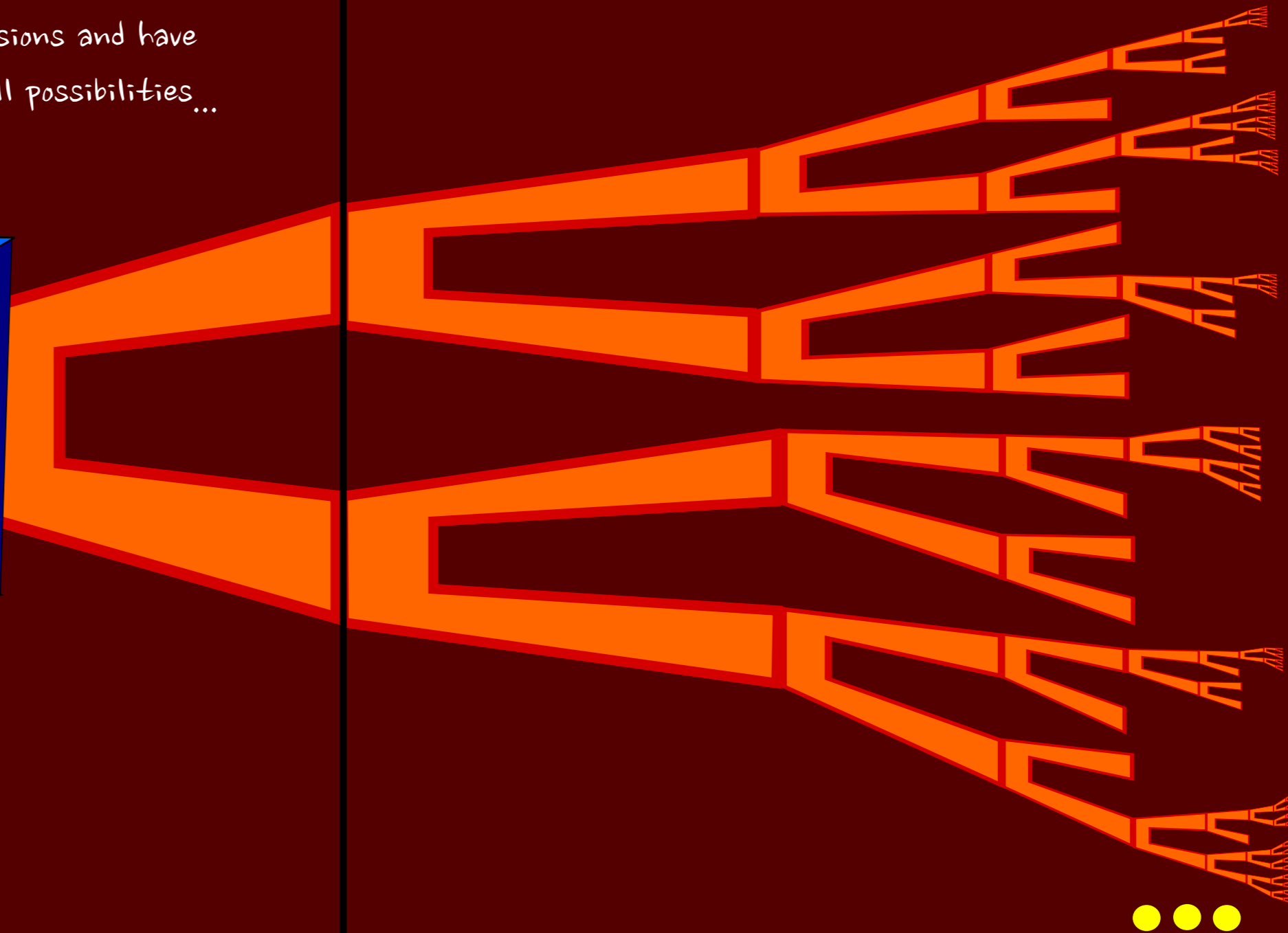
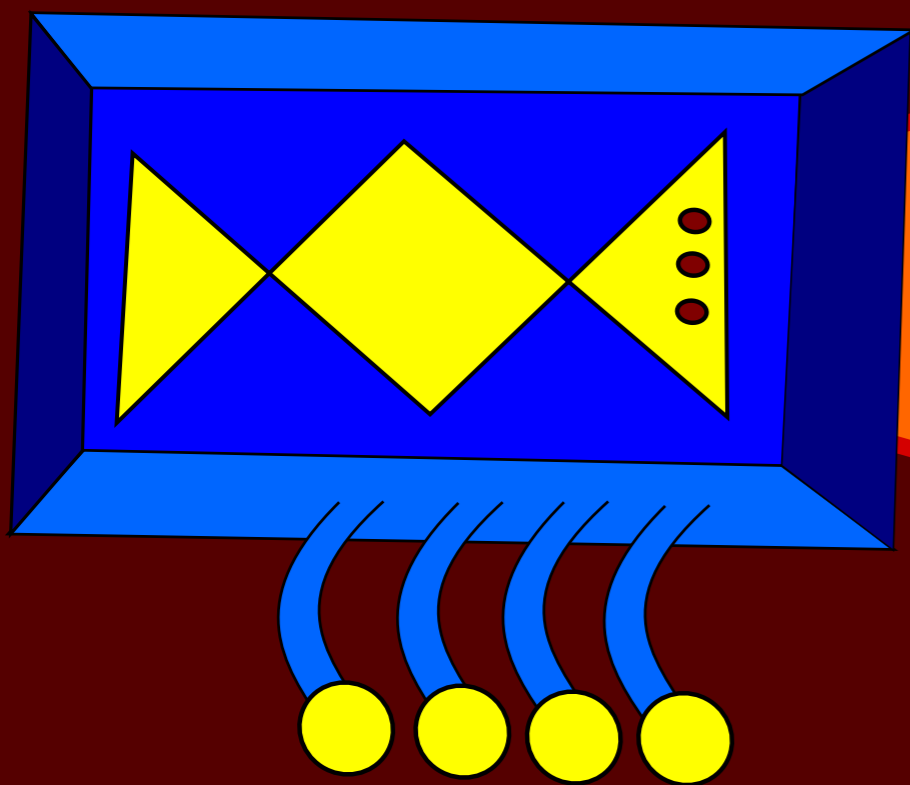
**Moon destruction done...**  
**Symphony number 22706 begin...**  
**New virus synthesis phase 10 begin...**  
**[Egg sandwich] cooking step 3 done...**

aliens who plan and accomplish  
astounding things  
but don't  
know it...

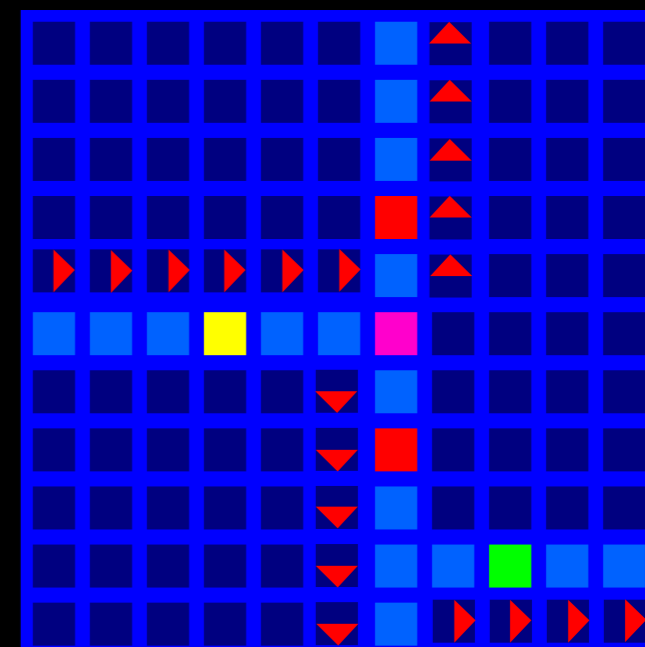
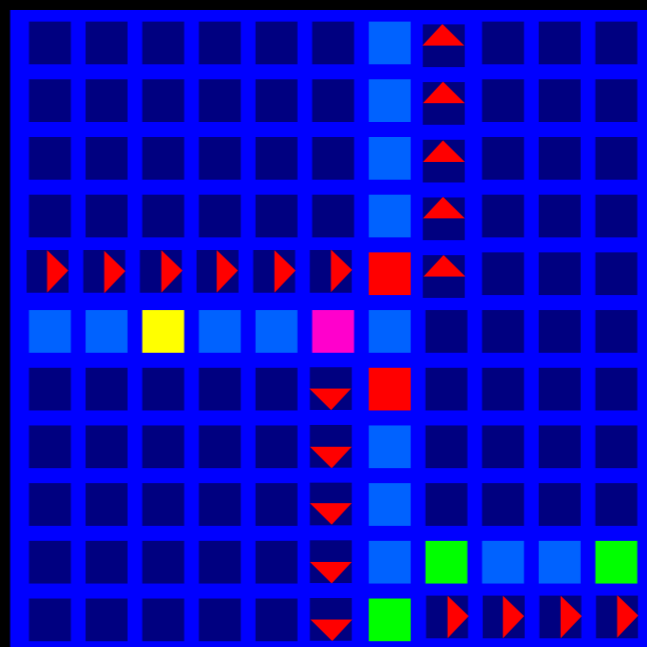
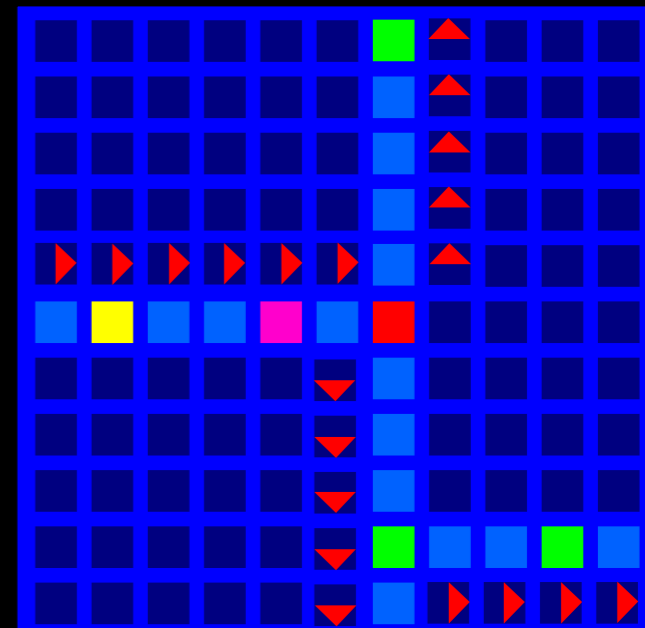
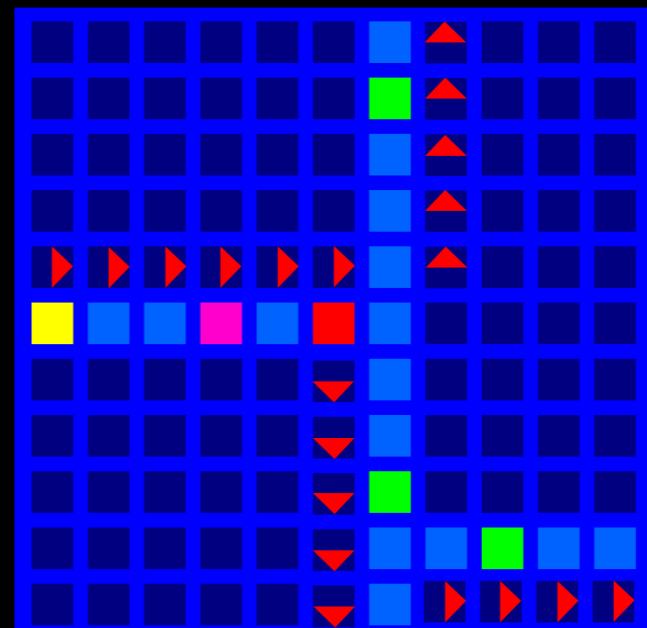
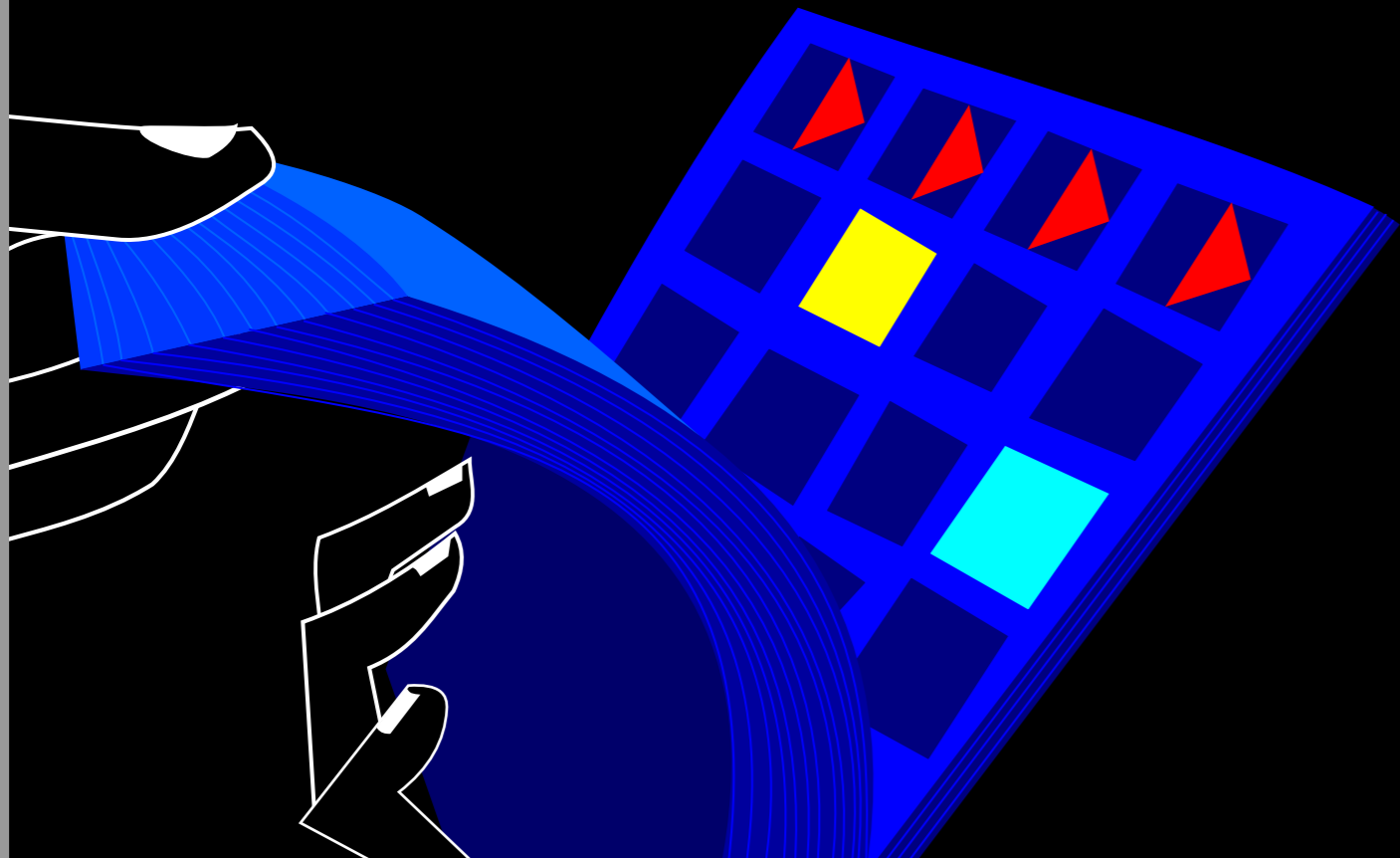
**Symphony number 22706 done...**  
**New virus synthesis phase 10 done...**  
**[Egg sandwich] cooking step 4 begin...**  
**Stellar warp drive phase 3 begin...**

aliens who are  
completely  
empty inside.

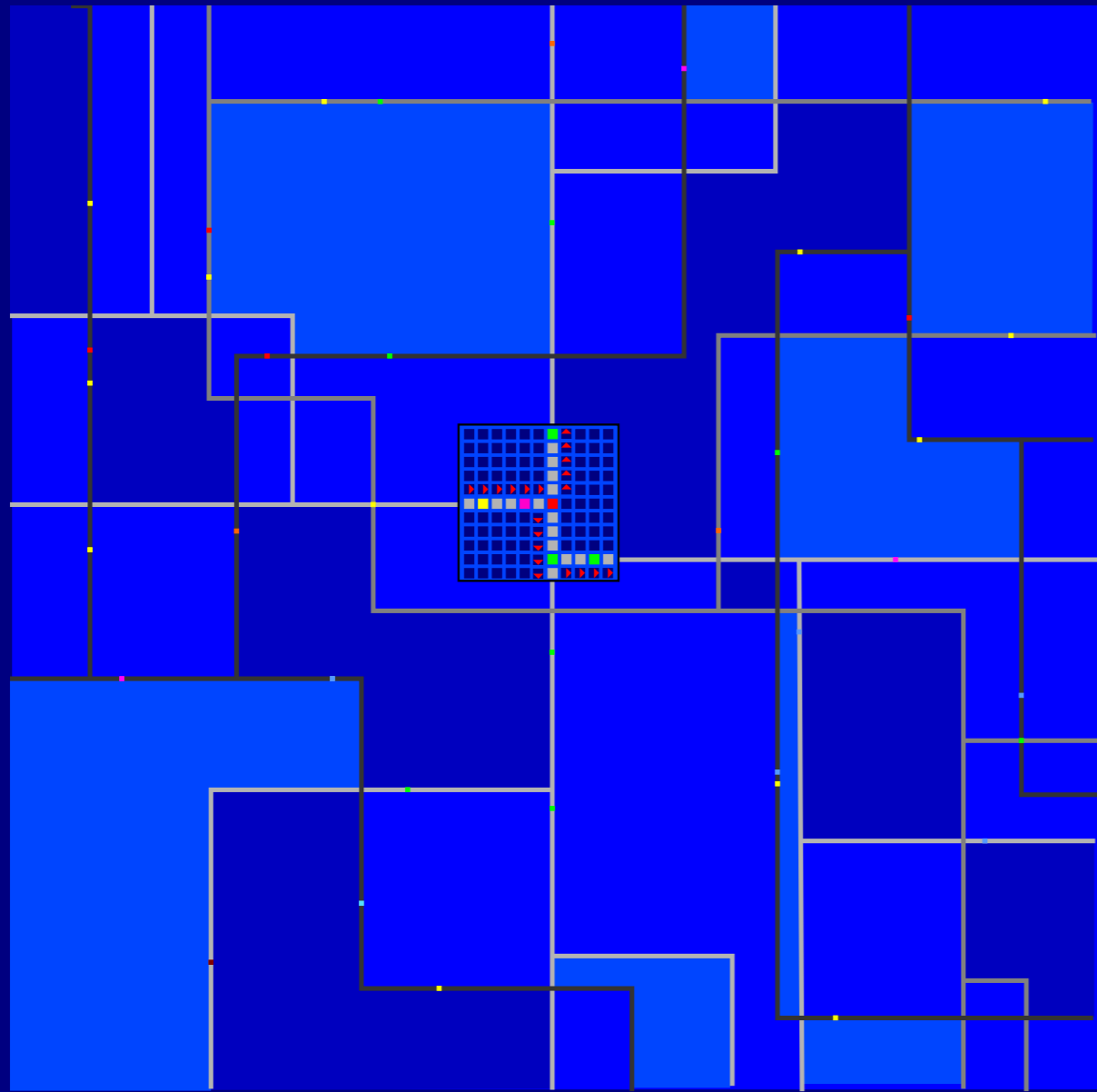
We might find aliens who make no decisions and have no plans, but rather think by trying all possibilities...



or aliens who have no moving parts,  
like images in a cosmic flipbook...

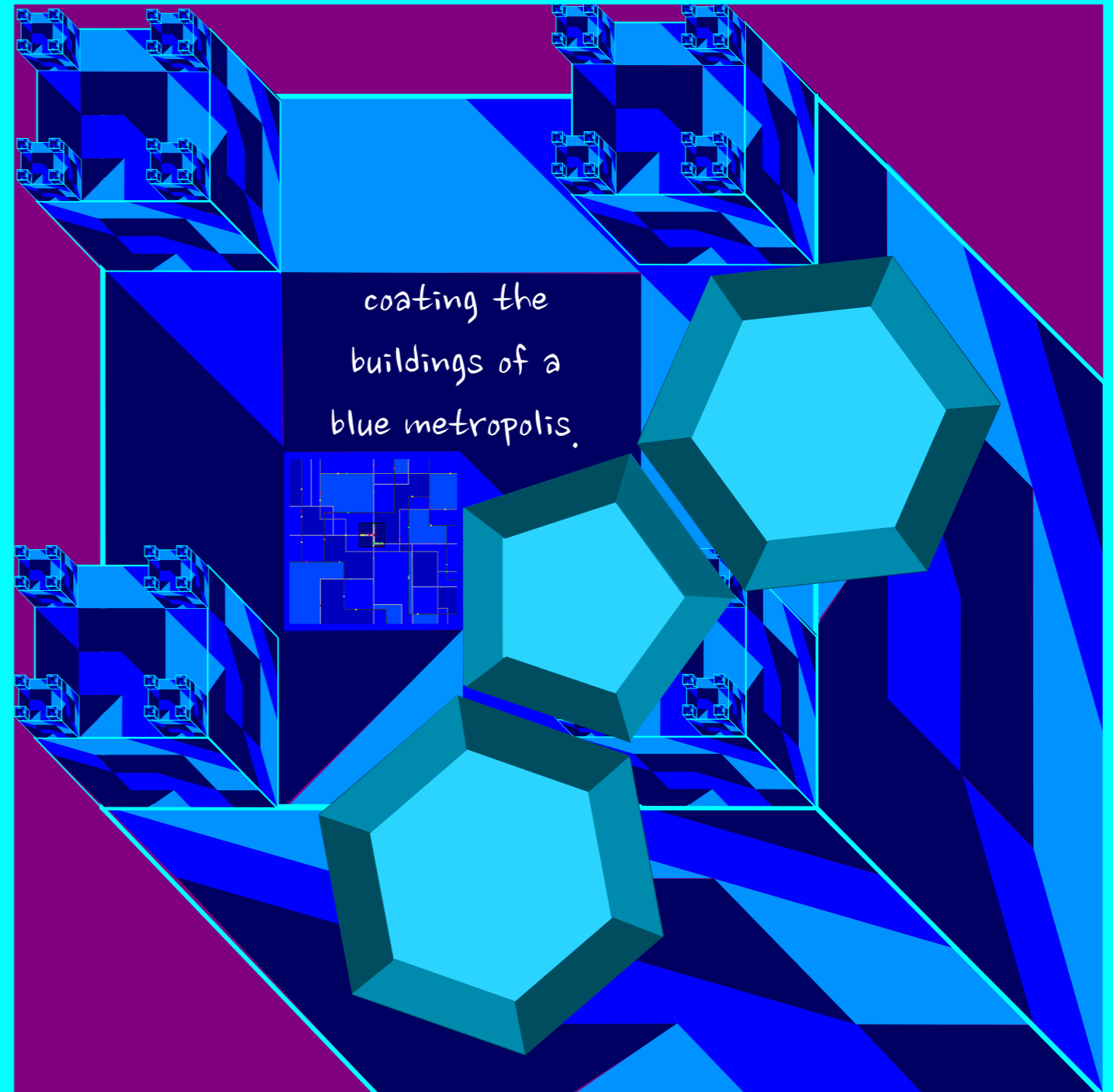


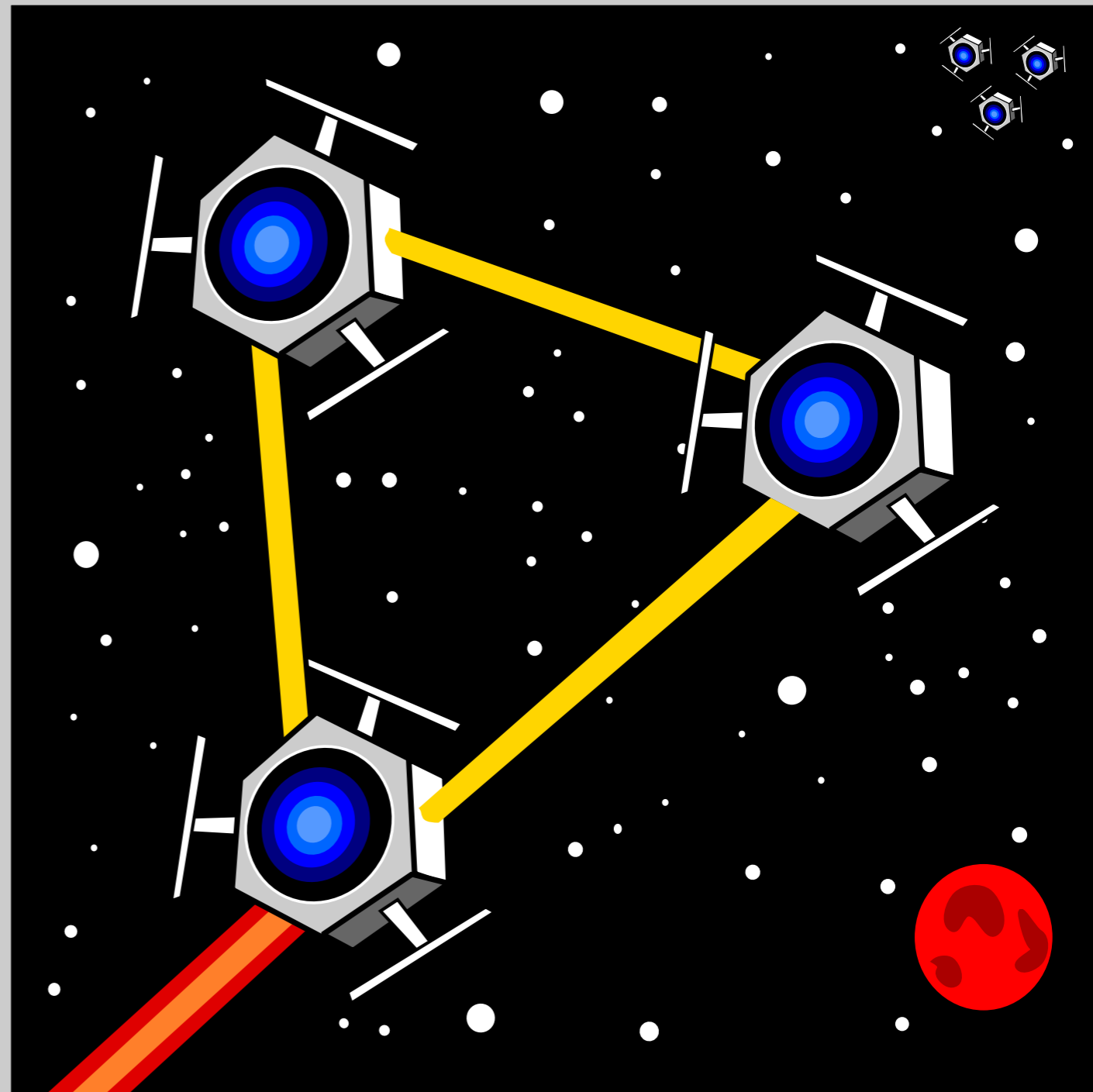
their thoughts emerging from logical circuits,

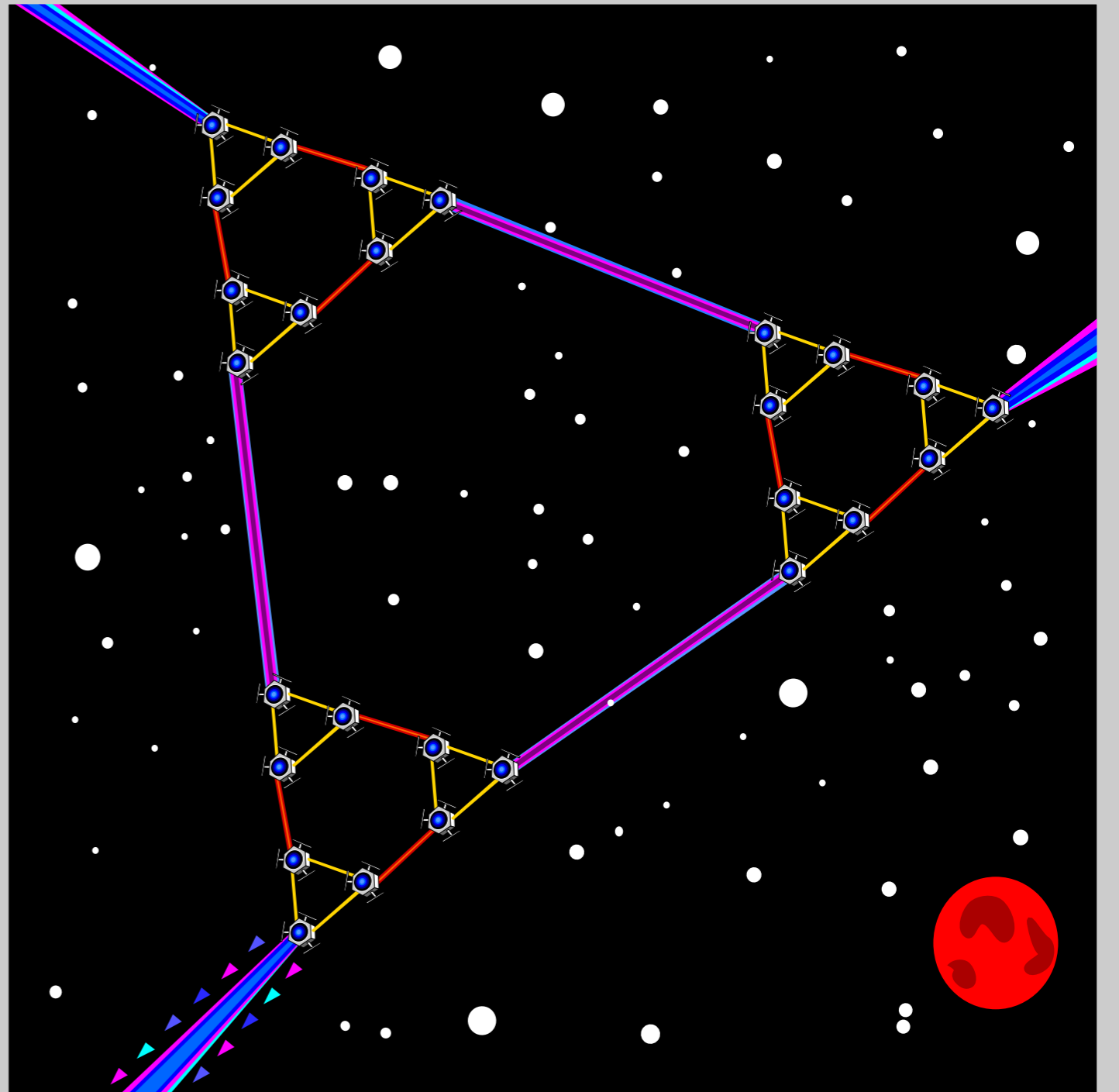
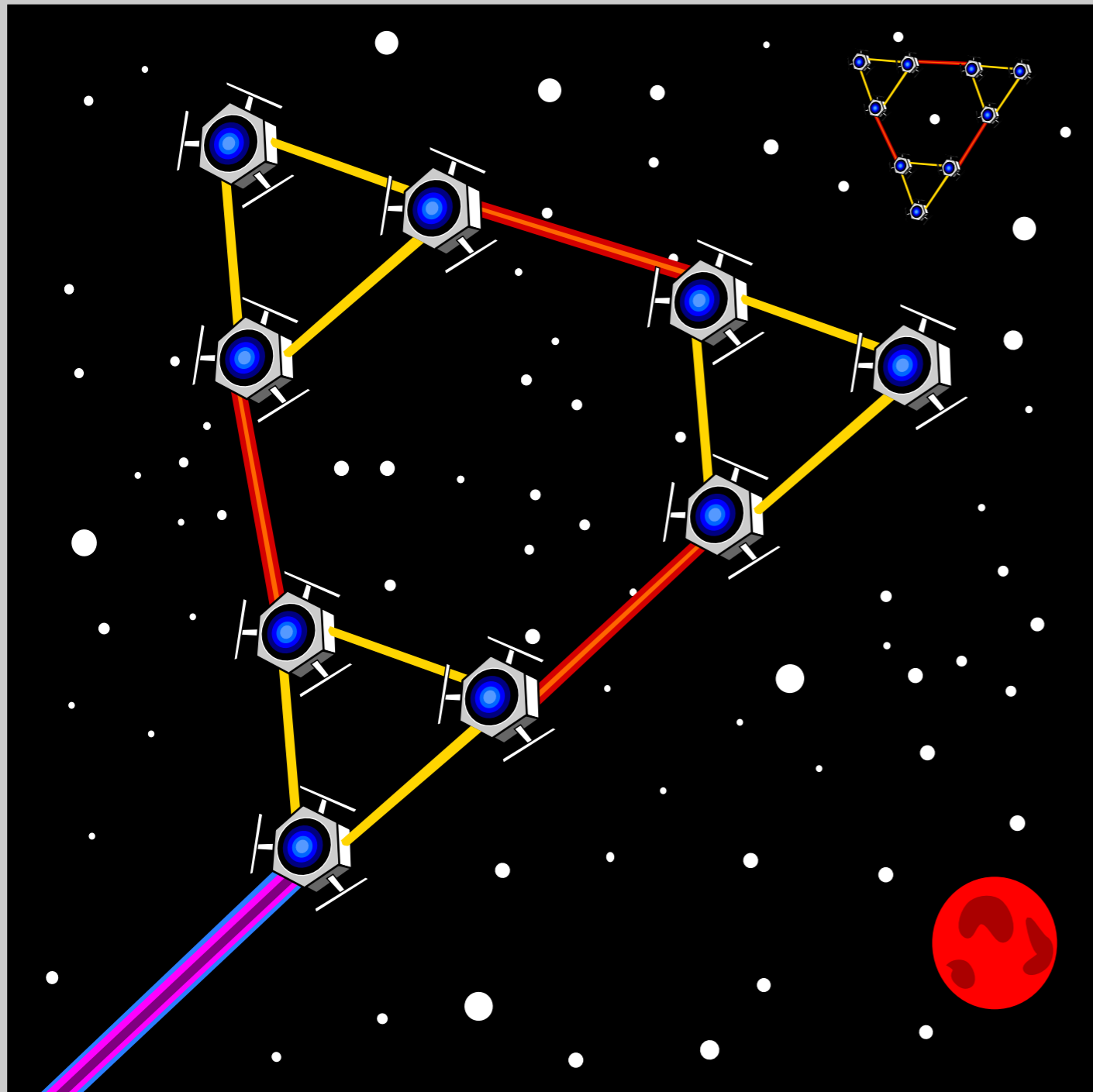


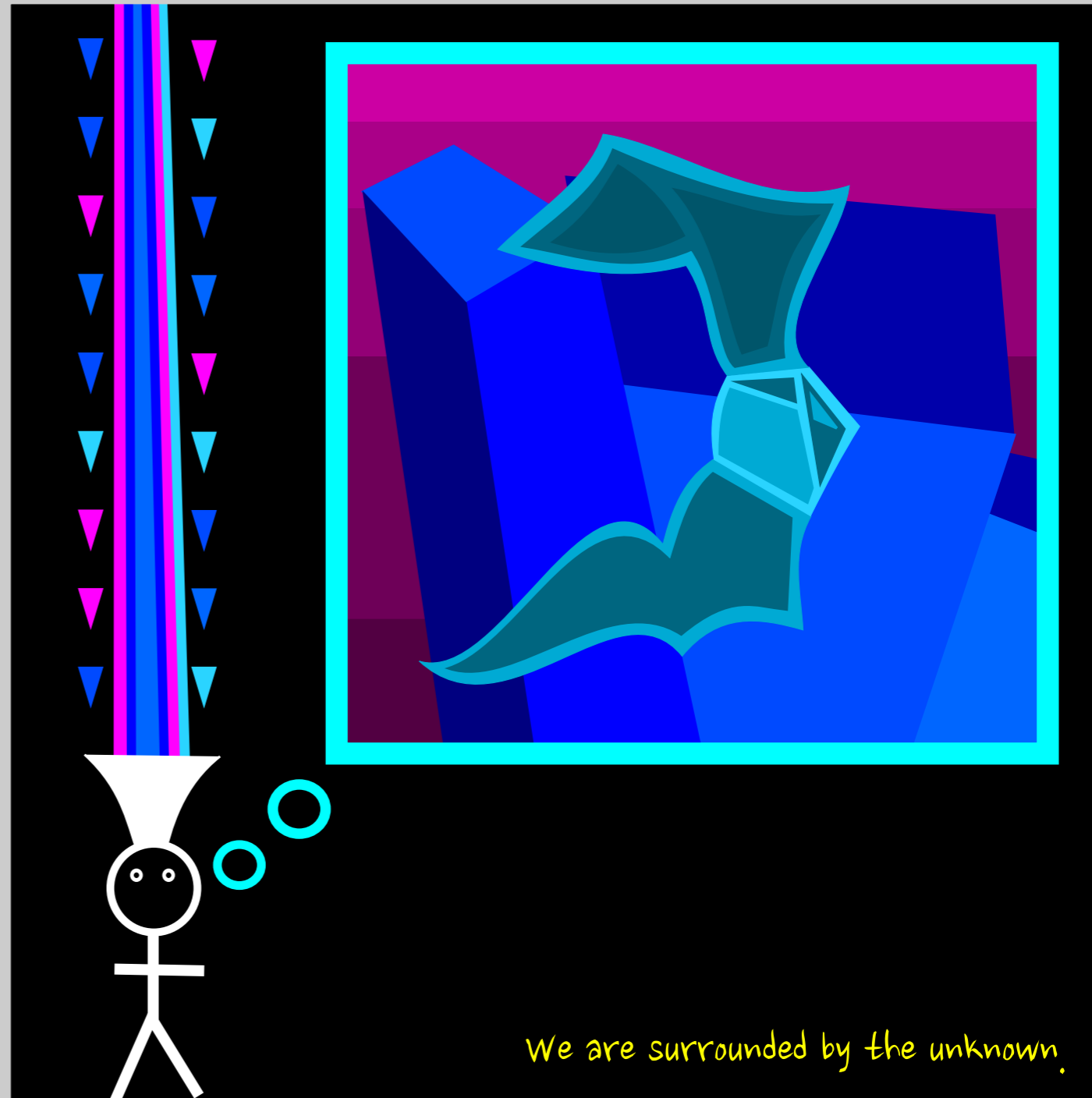
advancing one click at a time...

coating the  
buildings of a  
blue metropolis.









*We are surrounded by the unknown.*