Cartoon Syllabus

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For more information, please write to:

PsychoTactics Ltd., PO Box 36461,
Northcote, Auckland, New Zealand.
Phone: 64 9 449 0009 (If you need to call, check the time in NZ before calling).
E-mail: sean@psychotactics.com
Website: www.psychotactics.com |

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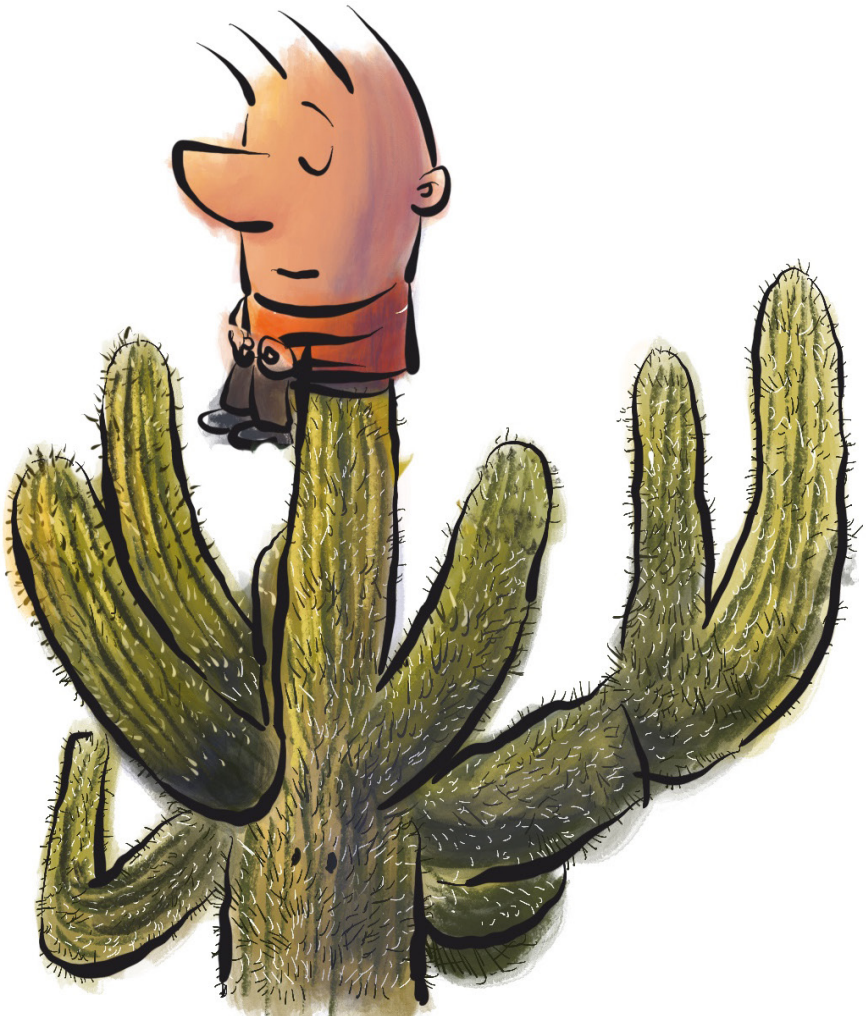
Syllabus?

A syllabus should be like a river—changing as it goes.

Even so, the river has some sort of direction. This PDF document shows you what's possible. You rapidly go from saying, "I can't draw" to being able to draw in the first week itself.

To get an understanding how dramatic the changes are, here is the syllabus. And while it may look complex, the instructions are so precise that everyone hits the ground laughing.

Let's get going, shall we? We have some laughing—and drawing to do!



Syllabus?

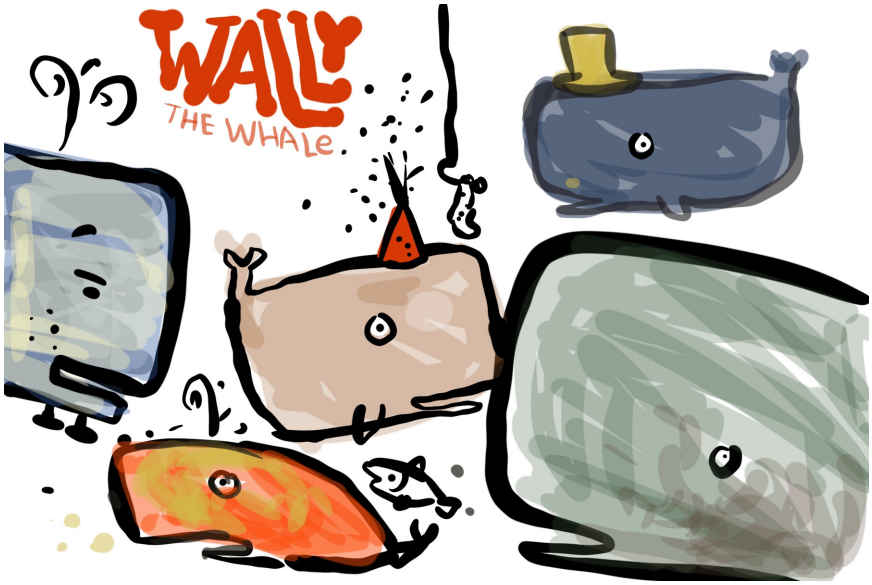
Week 1: Shapes

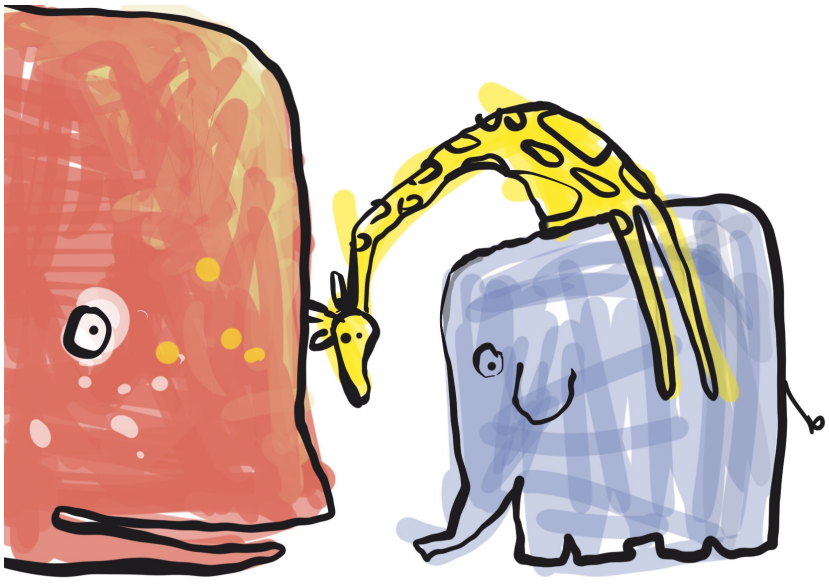
The core of drawing is the ability to recognise a shape. When you and I think of a tree, we might think of a rectangular trunk and a round (almost perfectly round) set of leaves and branches.

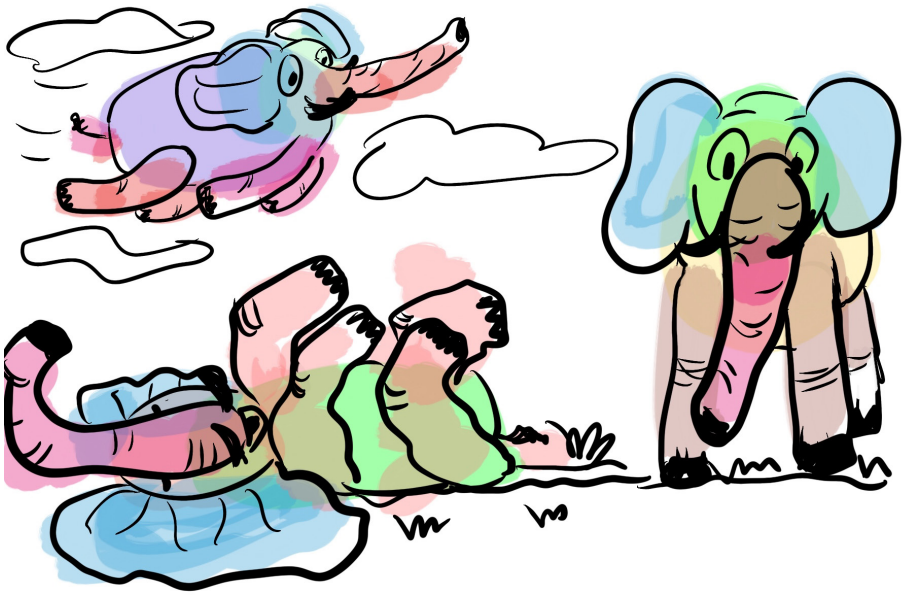
Look outside.

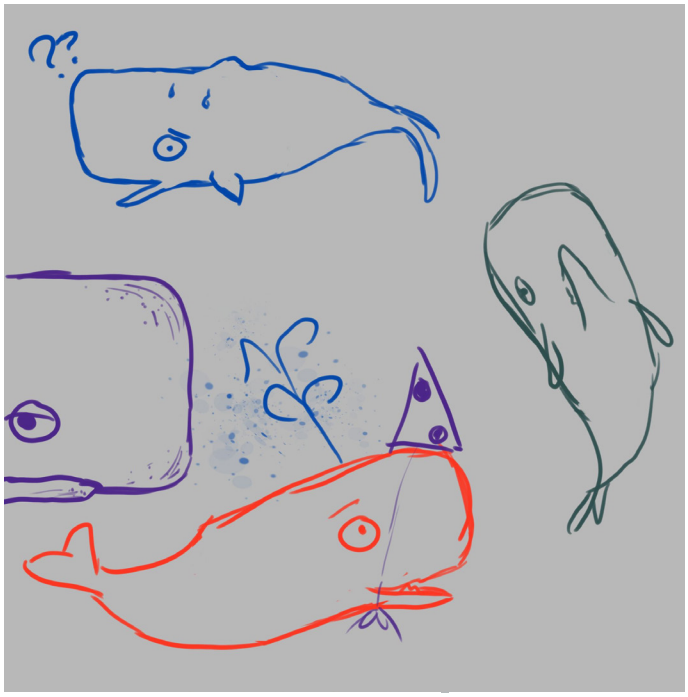
A tree doesn't quite look like that.
Yet, despite our inaccuracy, people look at our slighty odd drawing and say:: "Oh, you drew a tree". We take this human understand of shapes and apply it to cartoons. When you see something like a whale, you don't say: Oh, that's a guppy.

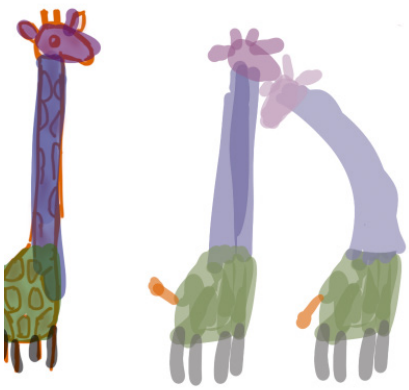
Here's what you can expect to achieve.

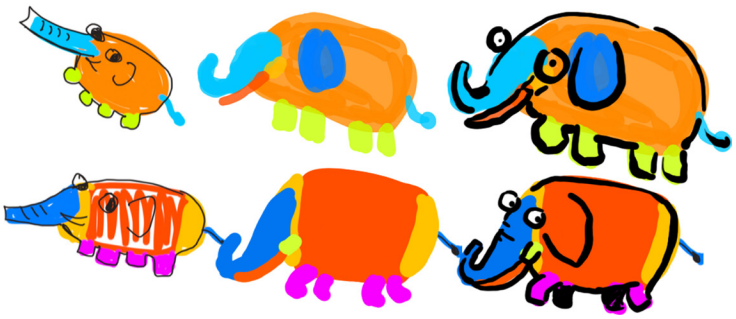








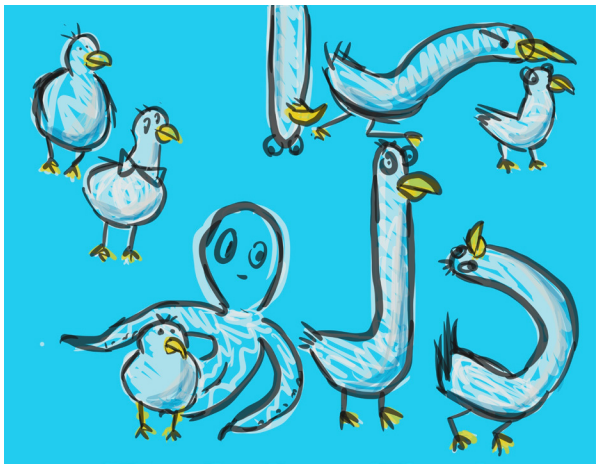


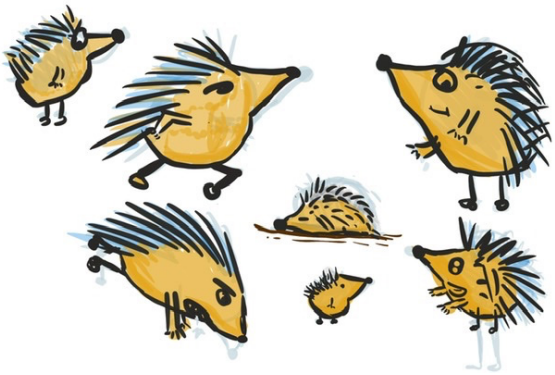


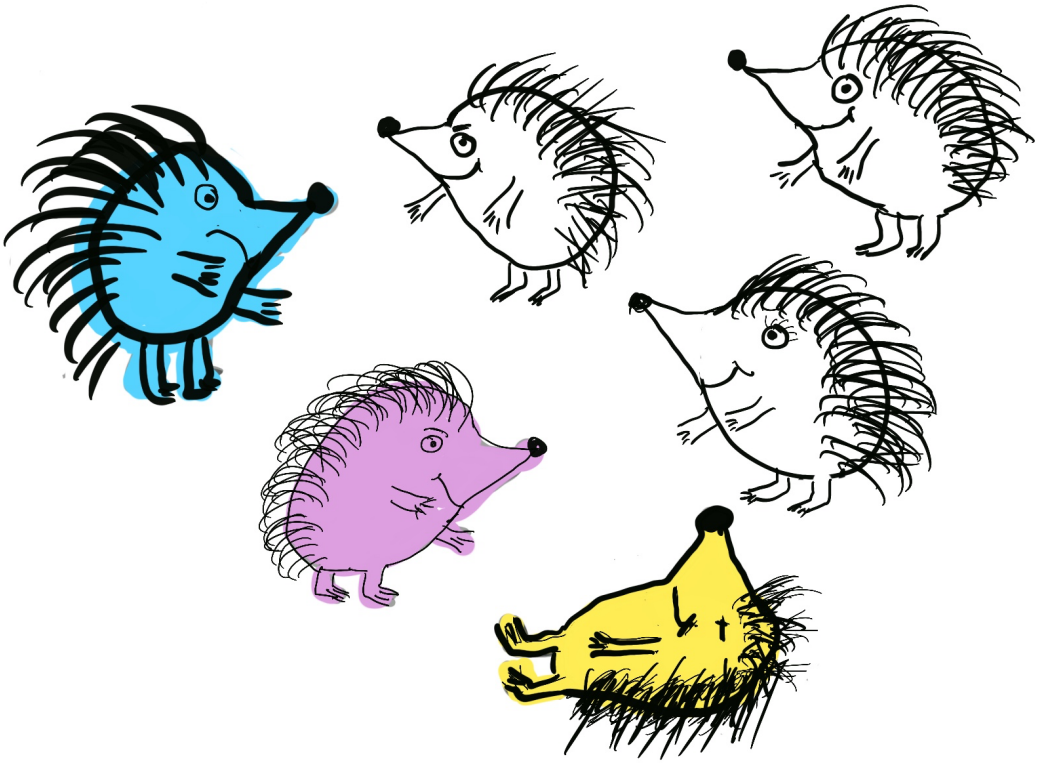
Week 2: Bear, Octopus, Gull, Hedgehog

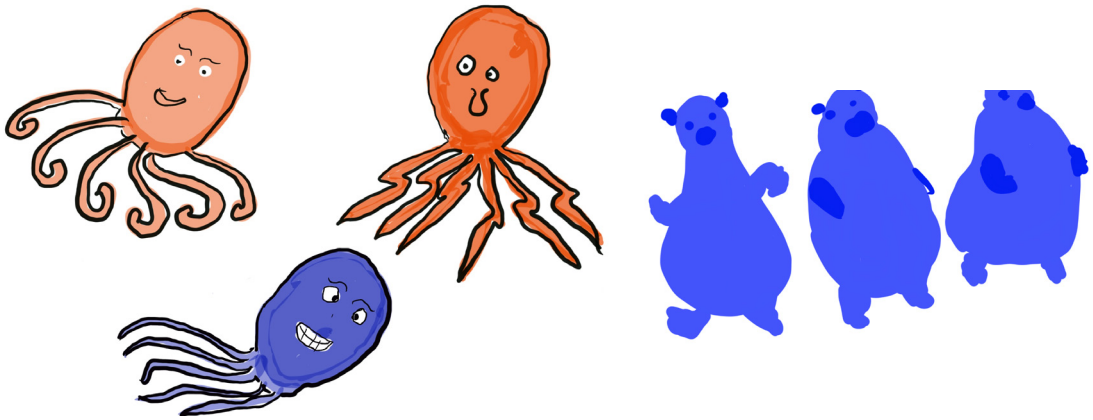
By Week 2, you're already drawing another bunch of animals, and with remarkable ease as well. Almost magically, you're able to replicate the shapes, because it's all in your memory once you learn them.

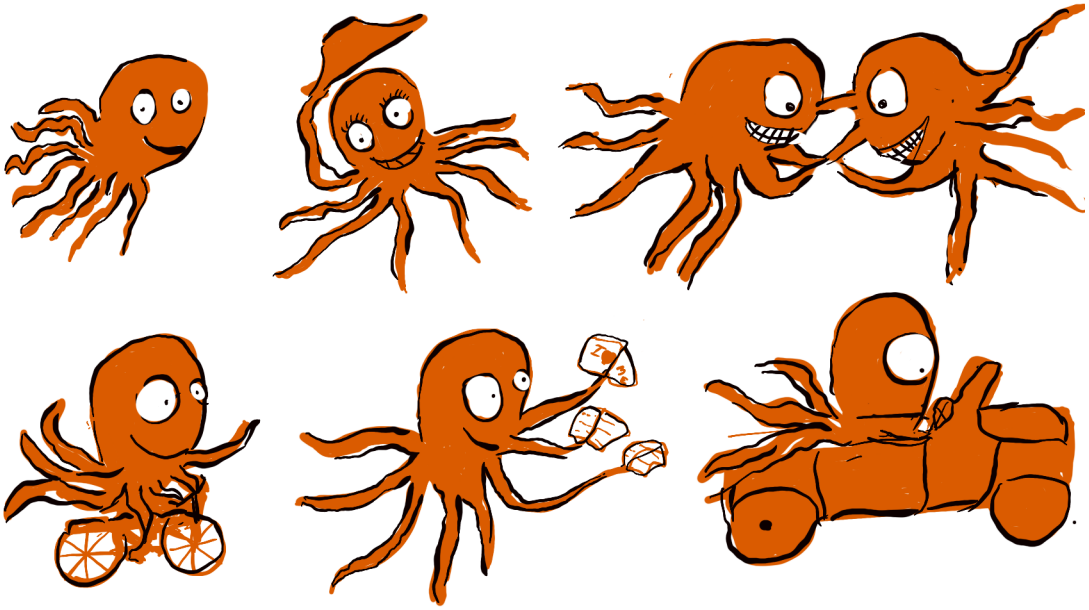
By Week 2, you're already starting to leave the "I can't draw" philosophy behind. We'll get right into the work of clients.











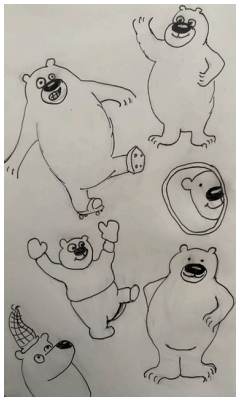
Week 3: Consolidation: Part 1

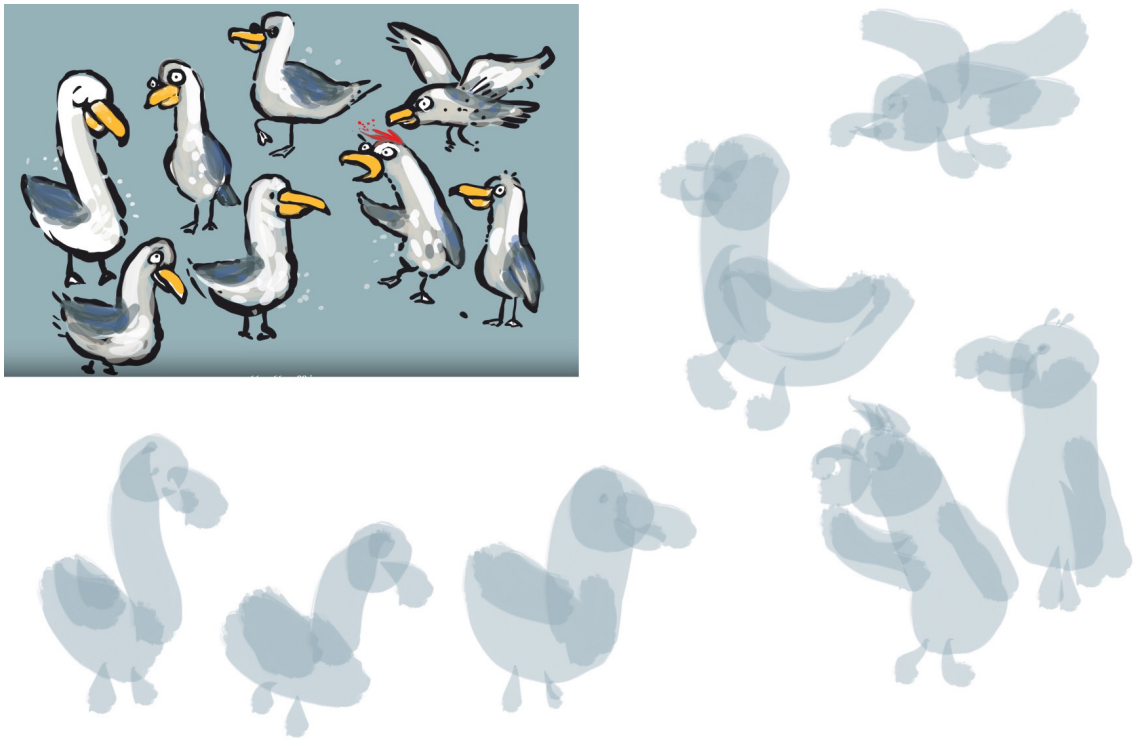
So soon?

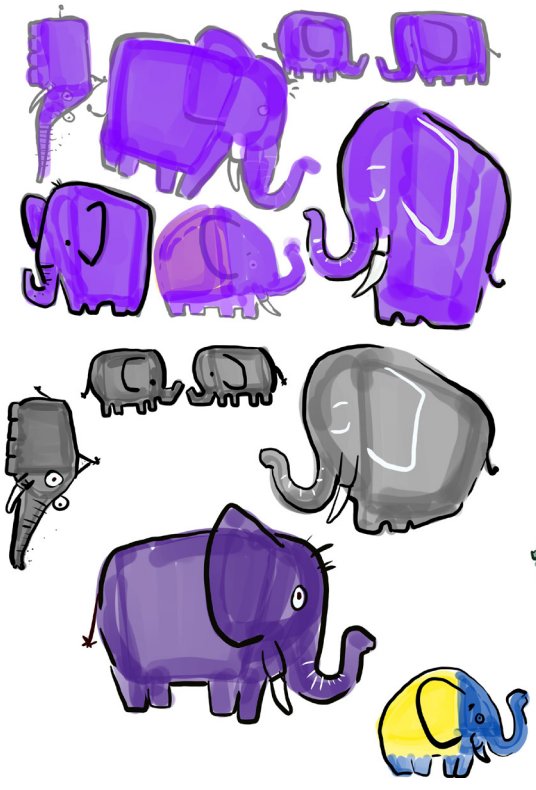
Yes. we make a pit stop pretty early in the learning process. When you get into a new space (e.g. a forum or classroom) it takes time to settle in. There are new people to meet, new tools you're discovering, plus there's new material to learn.

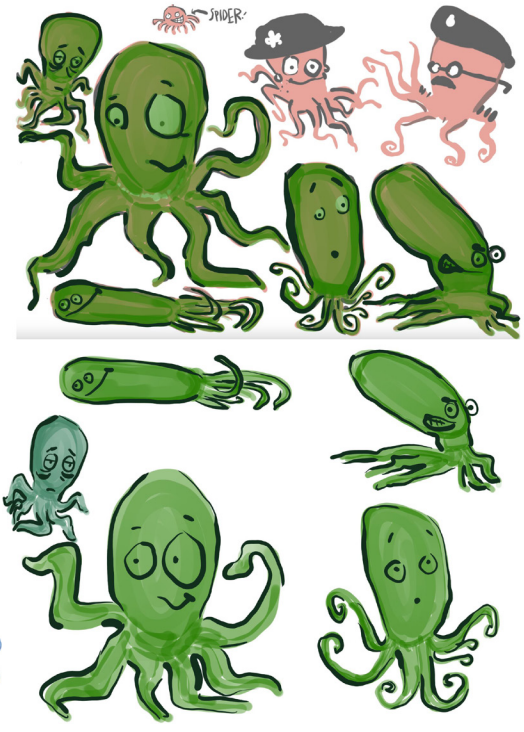
Rushing madly ahead is not a great idea at any point. A few weeks of learning needs to be balanced with some time to consolidate. Which is where you really start to see how the very same artwork starts to get different. Better, yes, but also different.

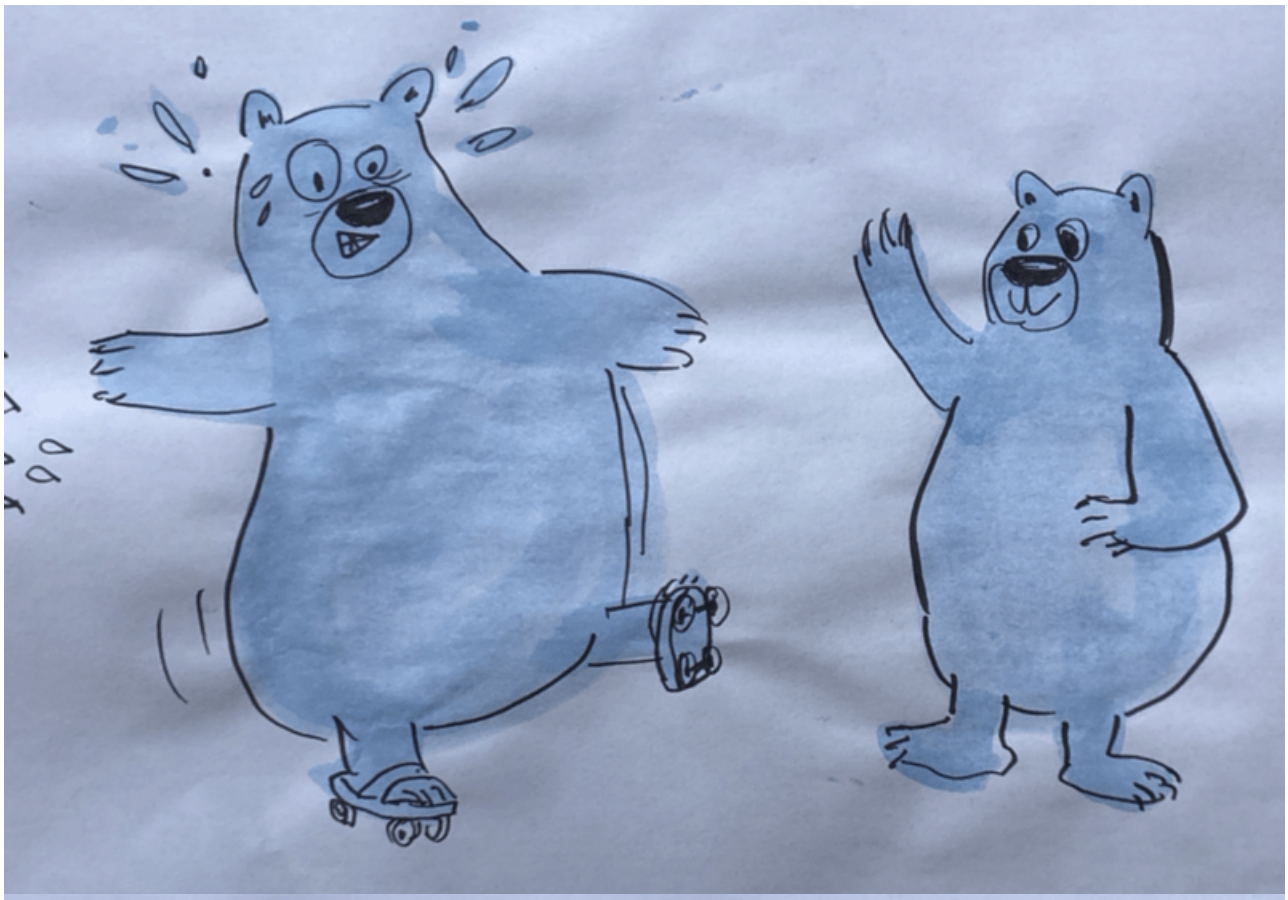
Here's Week 3.







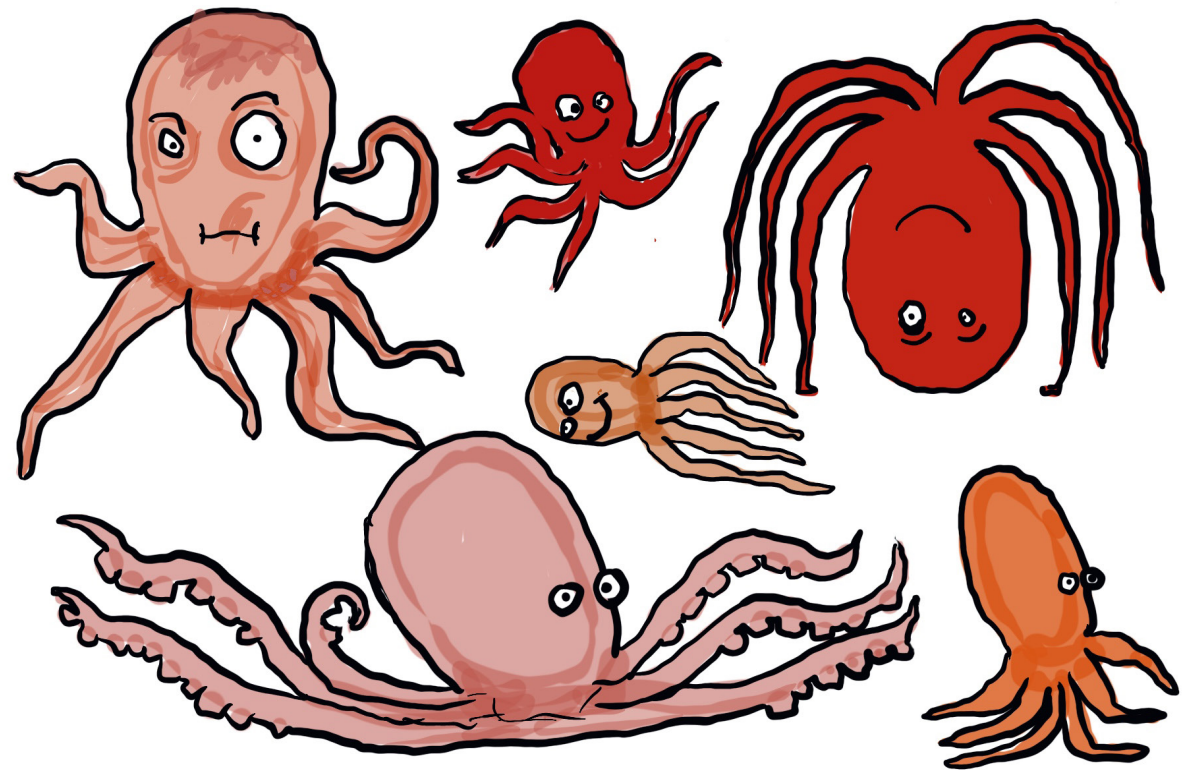


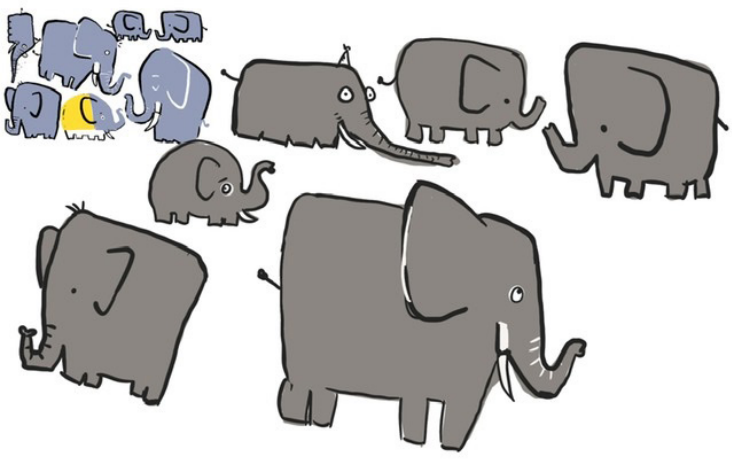


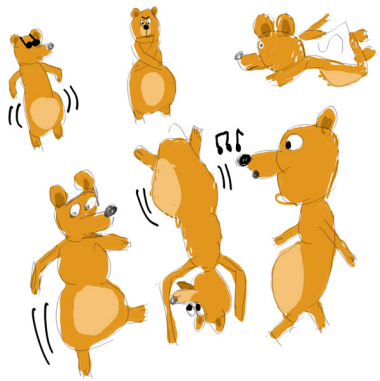
Week 4: Consolidation: Part 2

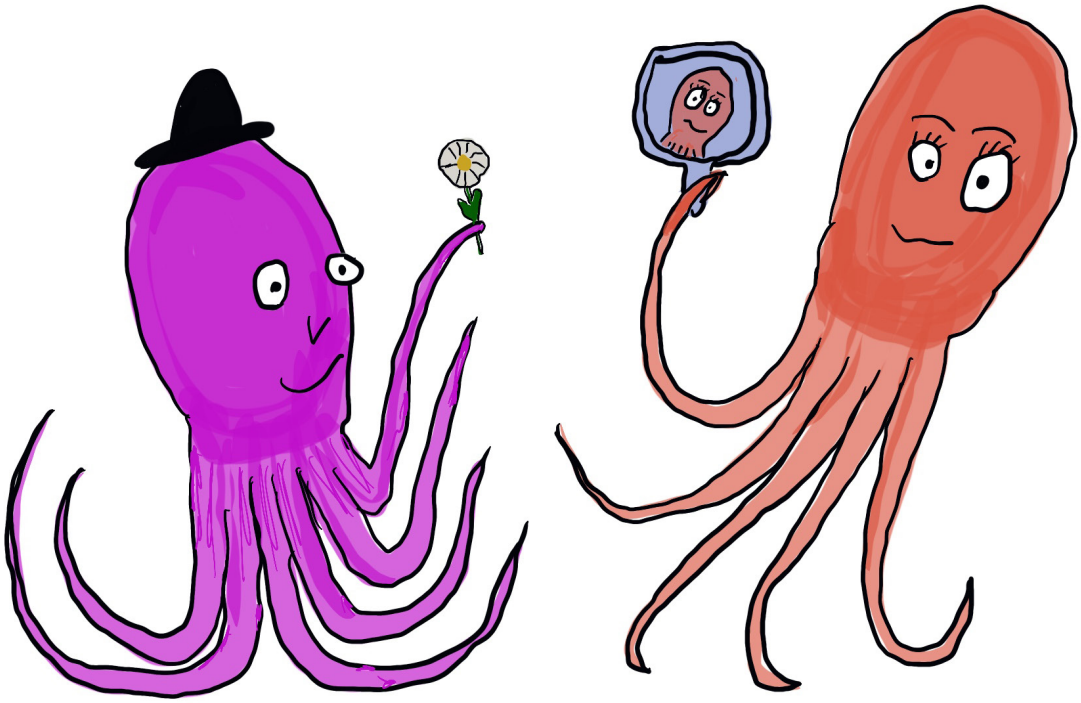
And another week of consolidation.

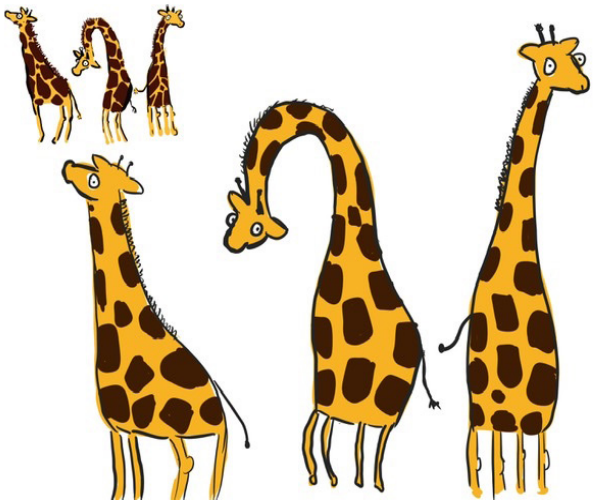
Slowing down does wonders. Slowing down speeds things up because the confidence goes up.

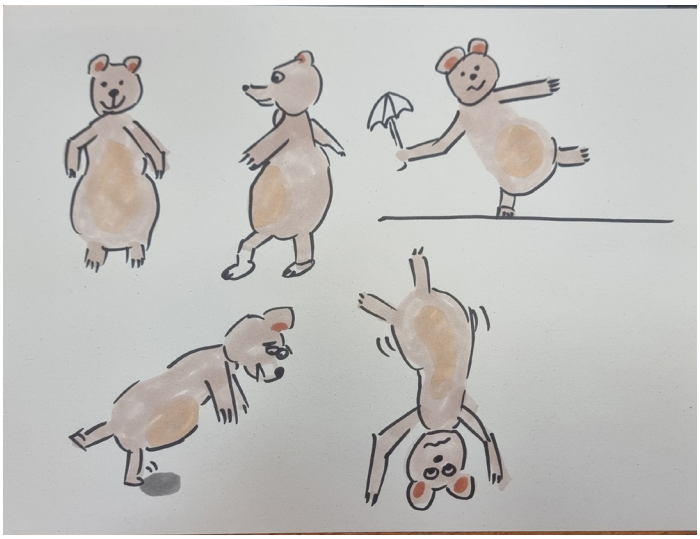








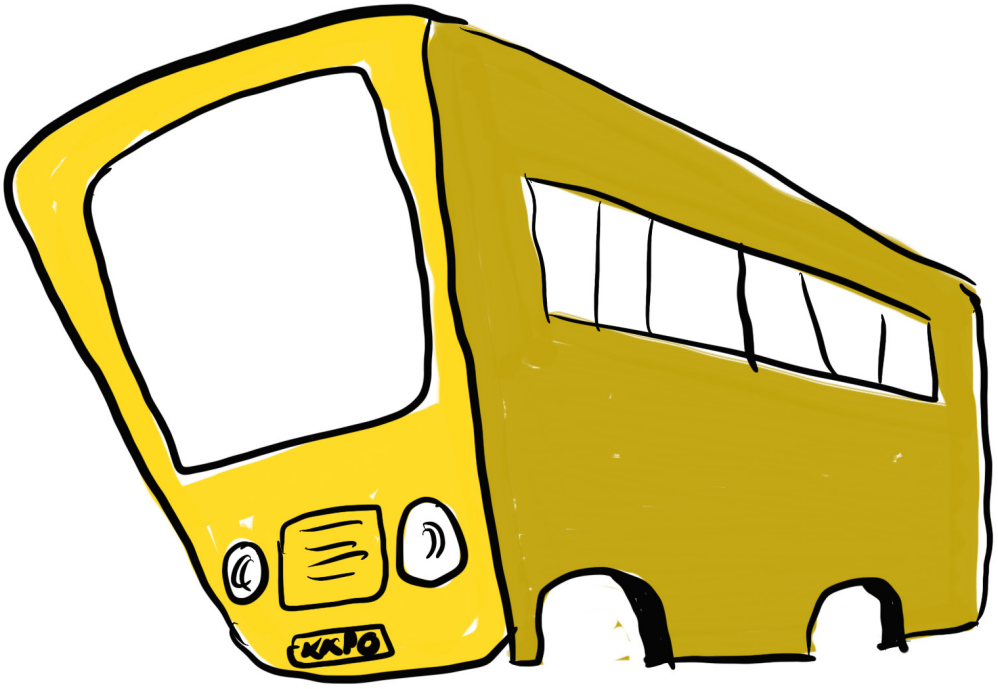


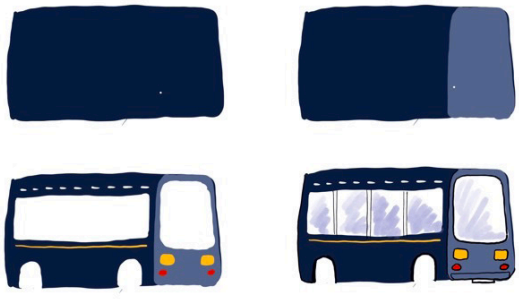


Week 5: Vroom or Zoom

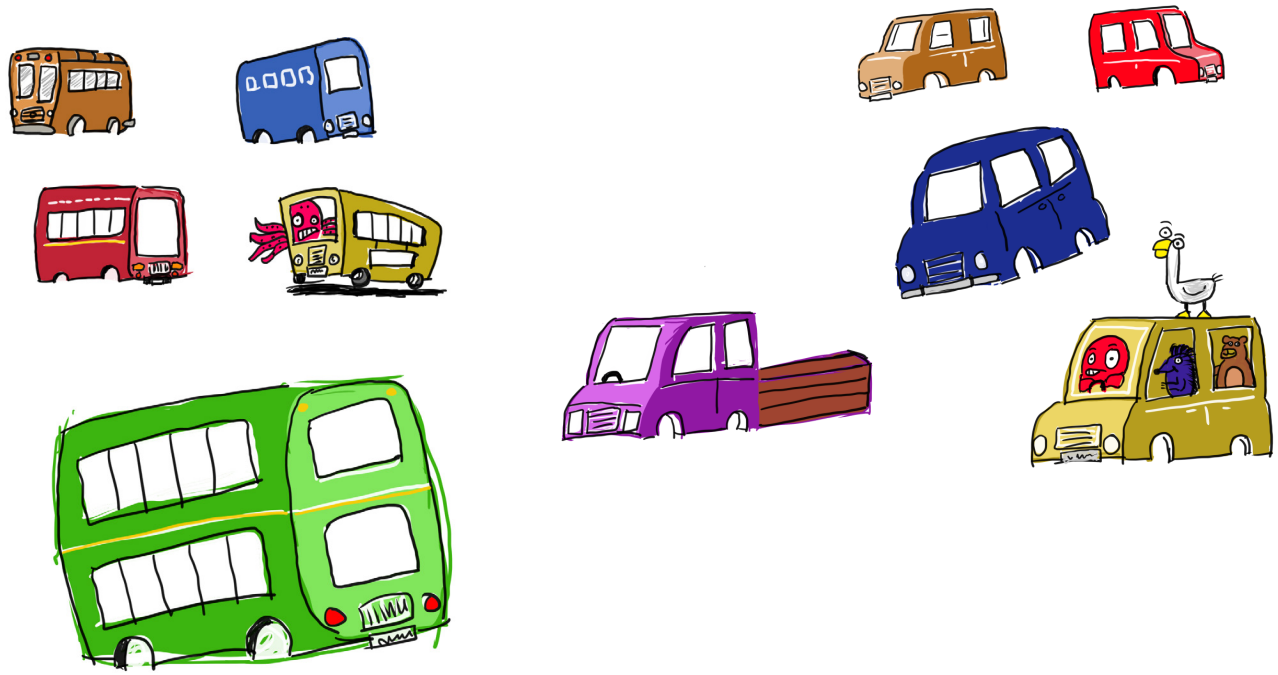
When you ask someone to draw a car, you get a flat drawing. Yet, getting from flatness to 3-D cars isn't quite that difficult. It can be done in minutes. And once you learn how to draw dimension, you can apply it to any vehicle.

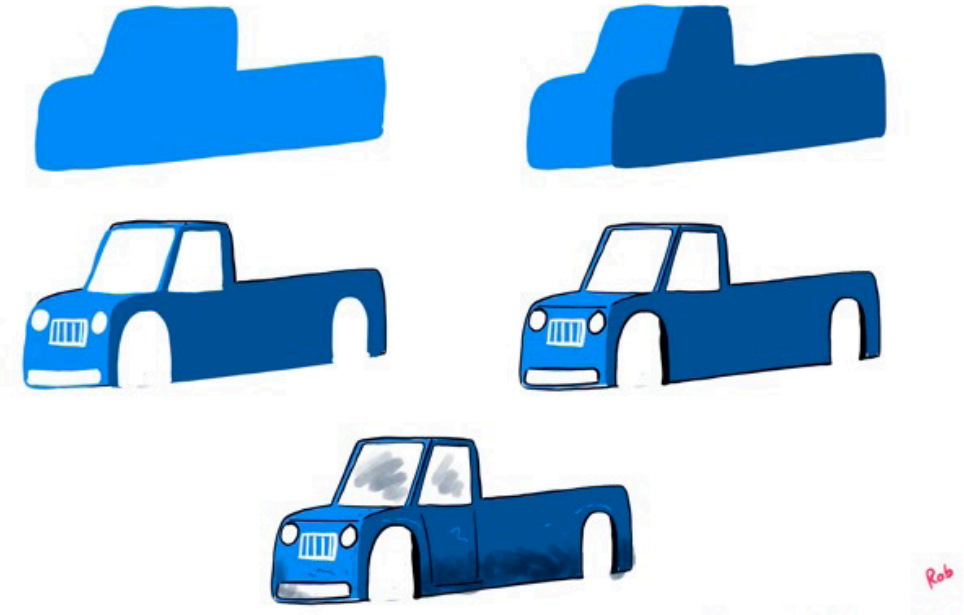
Plus, those characters that you learned all the way from Week 1 to Week 4, can now ride on top of, or even inside the vehicles.





DA VINCI 2022 WEEK 5: VROOOM OR ZOOOM! - BUSES

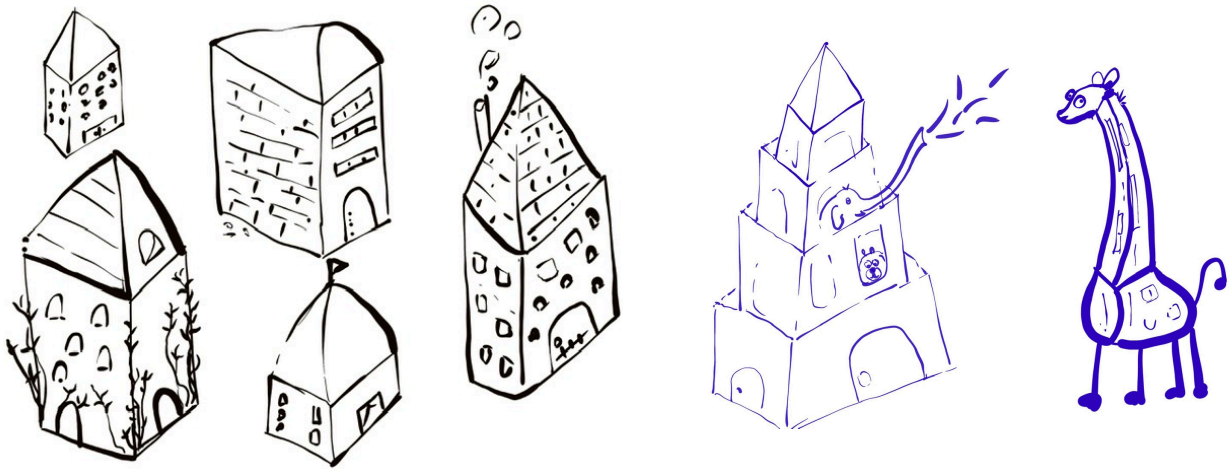



Rob
DA VINCI 2022 WEEK 5: VROOOM OR ZOOOM! - CARS - UTE

Week 6: Perspective in minutes

Perspective almost seems so very painful. If you look up a dozen random videos on YouTube you'll see how you can draw perspective. However, it seems like you've got to draw a lot of lines and vanishing points.

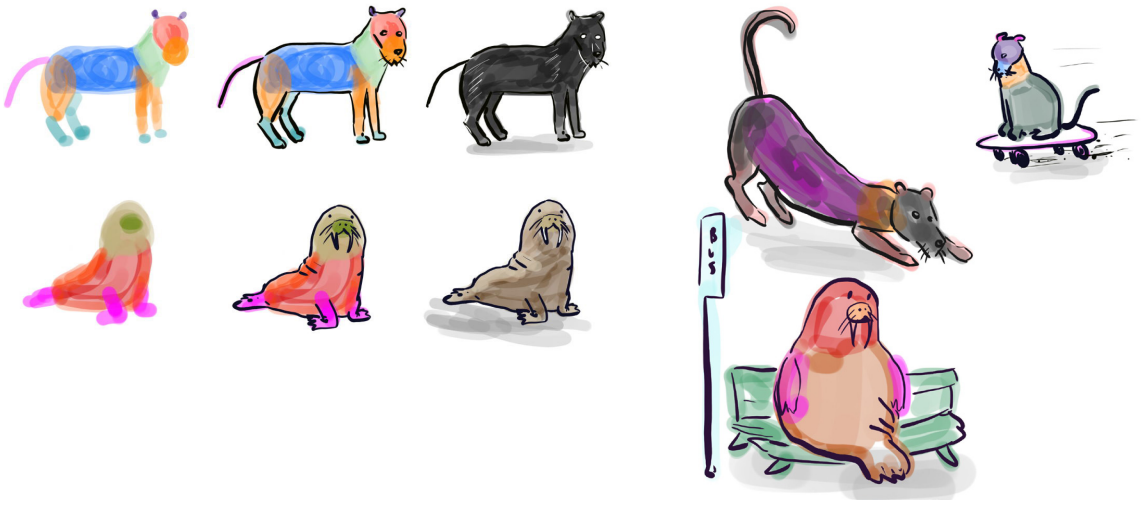
Instead, you can learn how to draw in minutes. No rulers needed, either. Clients go from never having drawn anything in perspective, to absolutely stunning perspective.

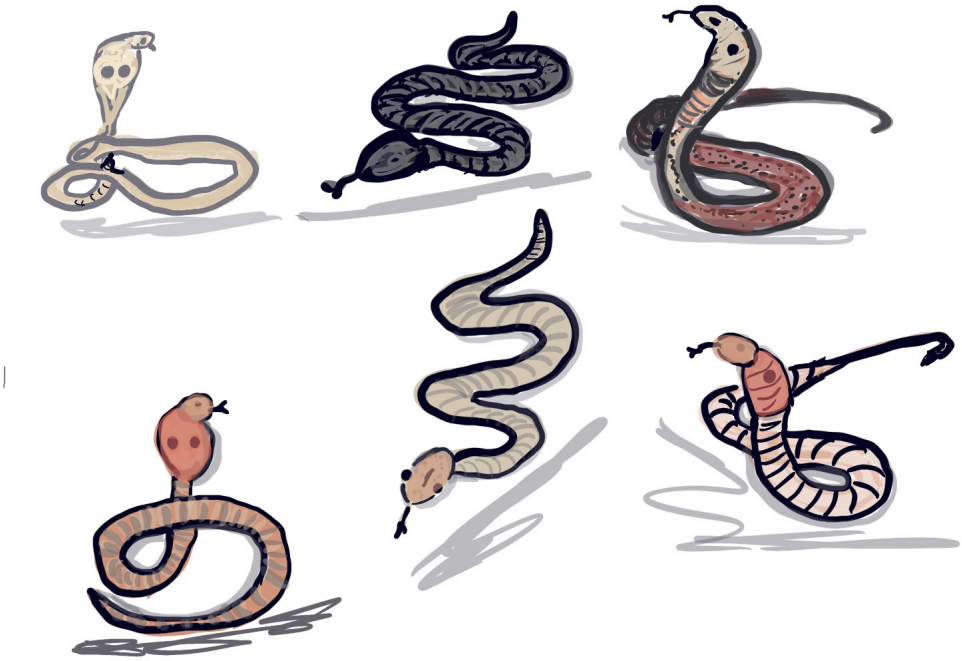


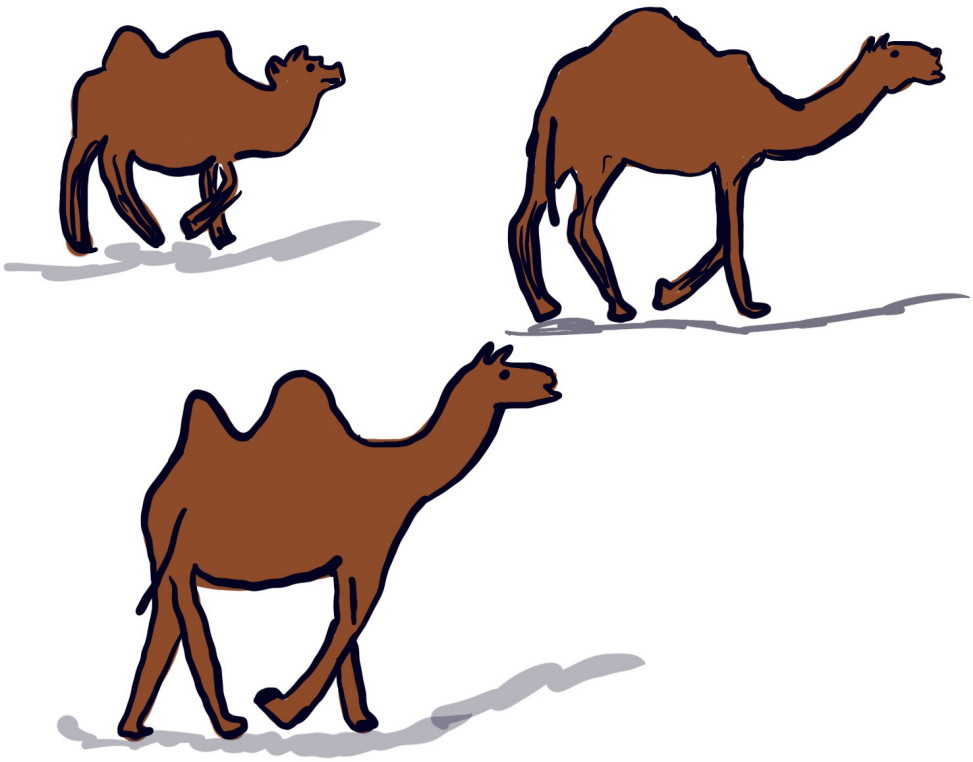
Week 7: Drawing shapes

Drawing a series of animals—or people—is about seeing shapes. When you can "see", you can draw. Hence, this week is all about seeing the shapes in animals, so we can go go to more complex illustrations down the line.

In a way, it's a form of consolidation. Slowing down is necessary, not for practice, but for the brain to realise that you're getting better at drawing (and seeing) at a very rapid pace.



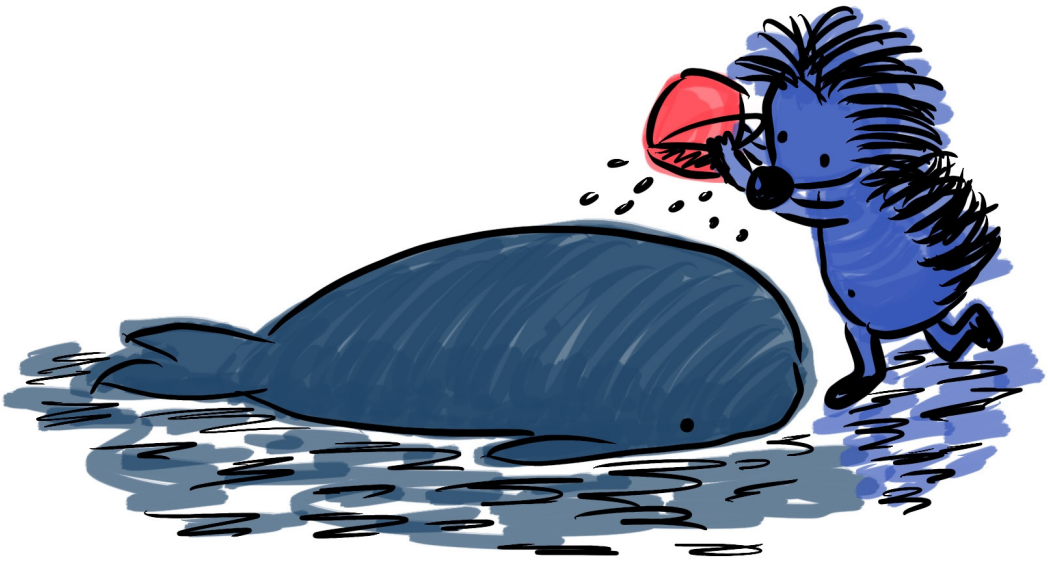


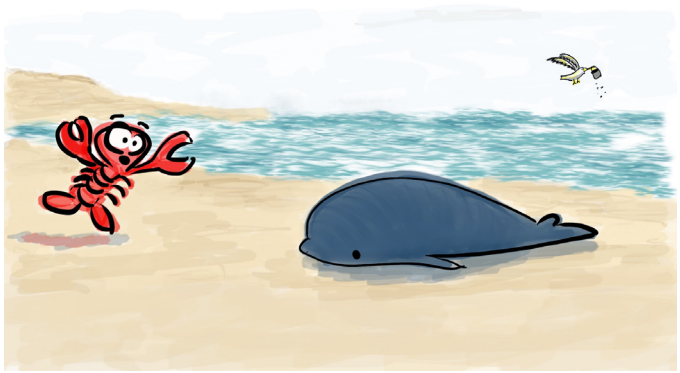


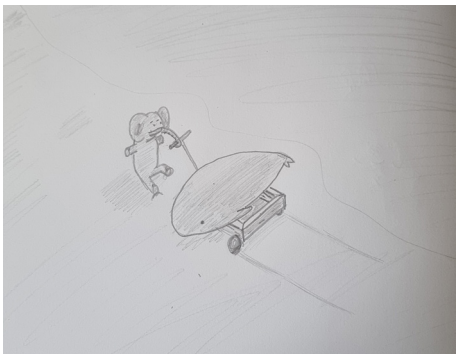
Week 8: Drawing characters!

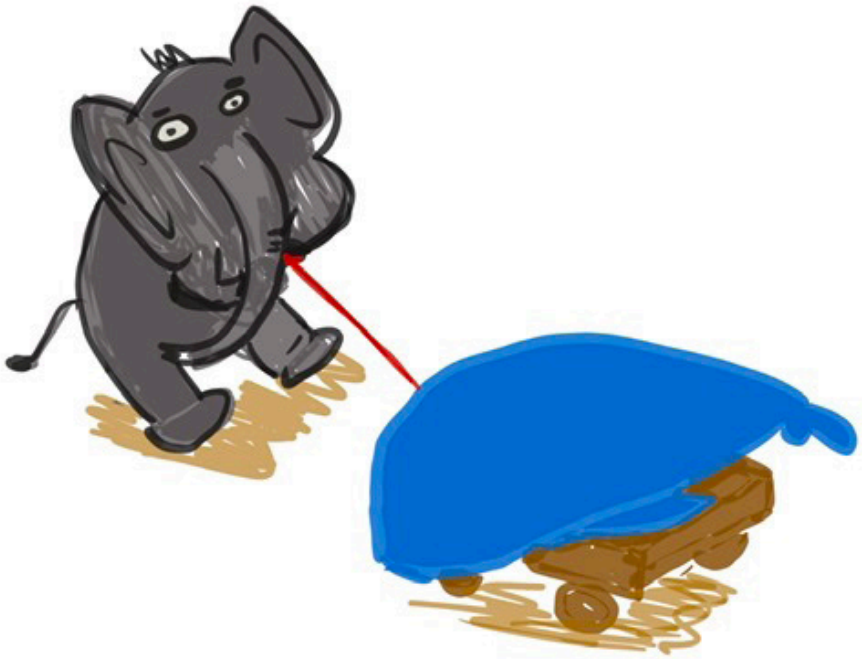
Woah, so soon?

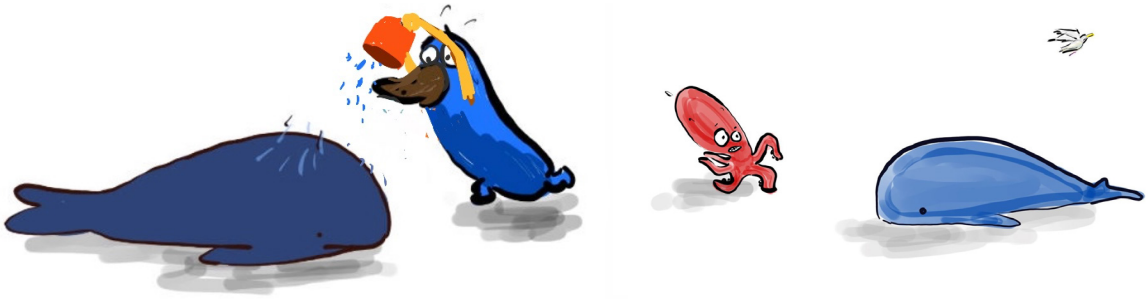
Yes, why not? By this point, you've learned to draw animals, houses, cars, and see better than ever. Why not take something super complex—like a children's book done by a talented illustrator—and then put your own work in that setting?

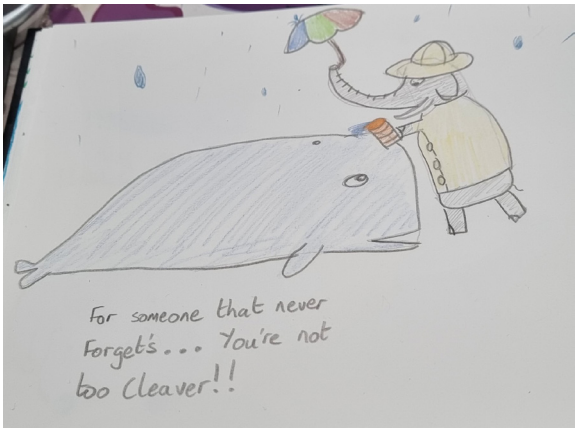










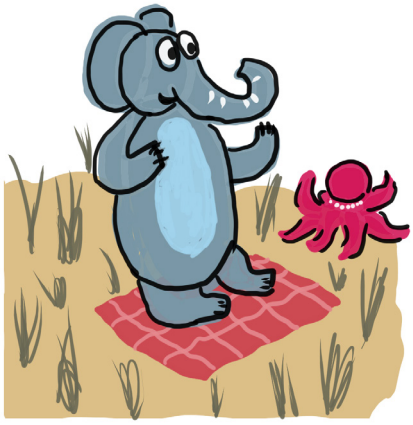

For someone that never
Forget's... You're not
too Cleaver!!

Week 9: Drawing characters-Part 2

The characters go on through a second week.

What you'll notice, however, is a change in the scene. There will be situations with the character's back to the audience. And there will be more complexity with the props, the houses etc.

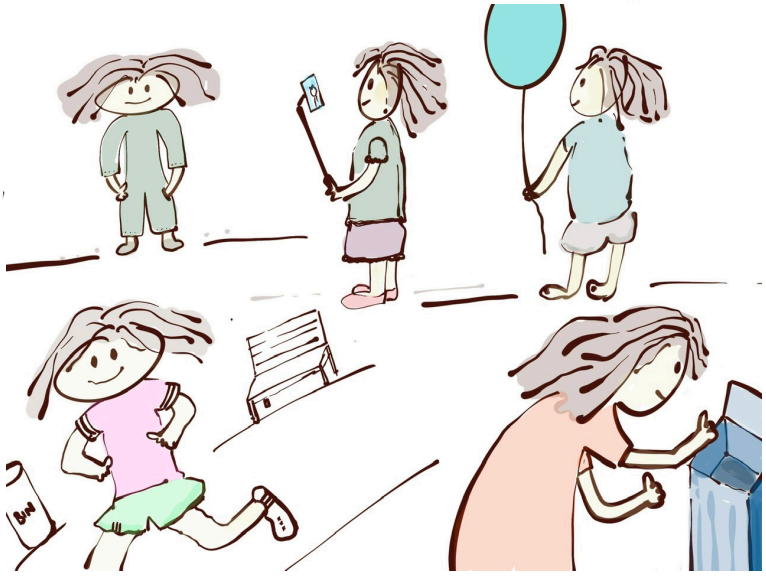
Complex? Nah, because you can see it and draw it all.

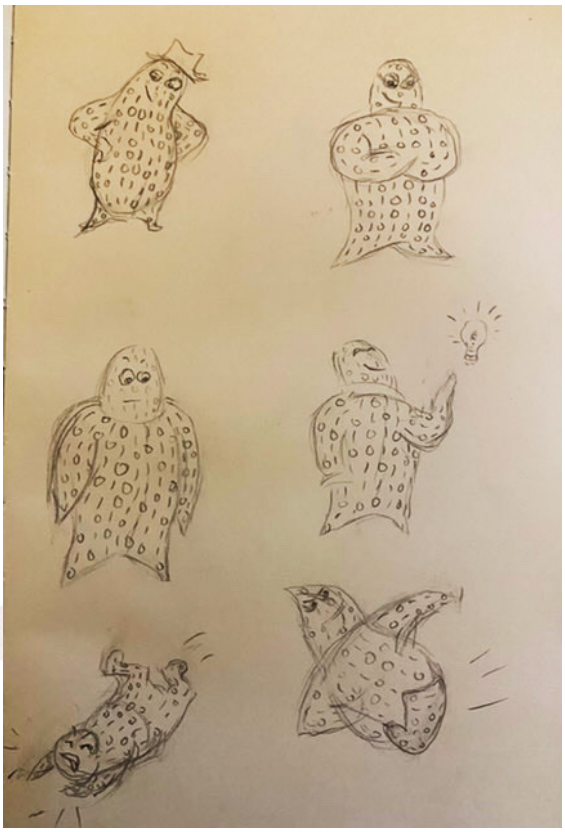


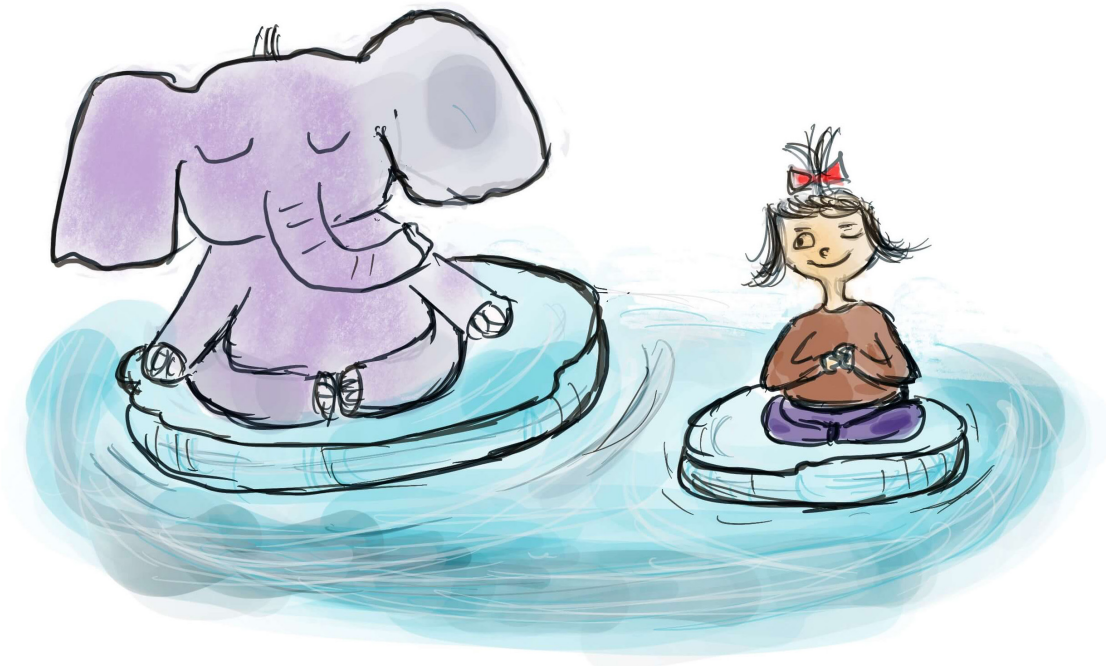
Week 10: Human + Animal characters

Week 10 is where we gently introduce your own character. It could be a human, or an alien. Maybe a robot. We don't know. What we're trying to achieve here is to get both "animal" as well as "human-like" characters in the mix.

It feels like a character is a big leap, and it is. Even so, everyone seems to slide into the rol



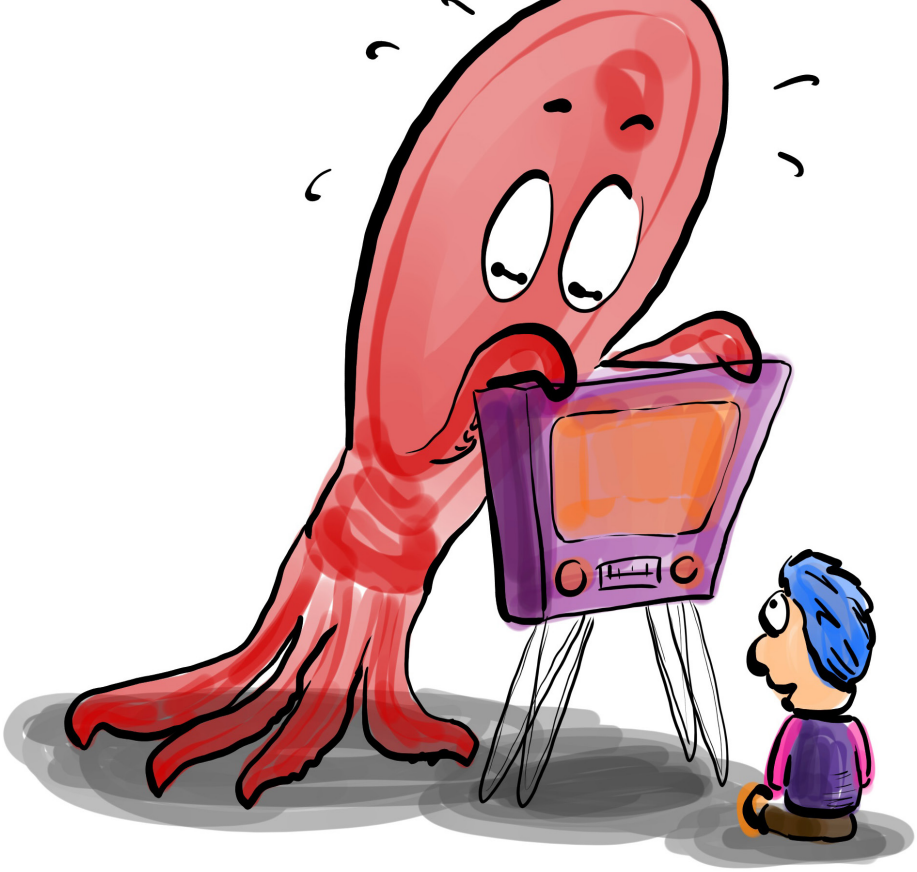


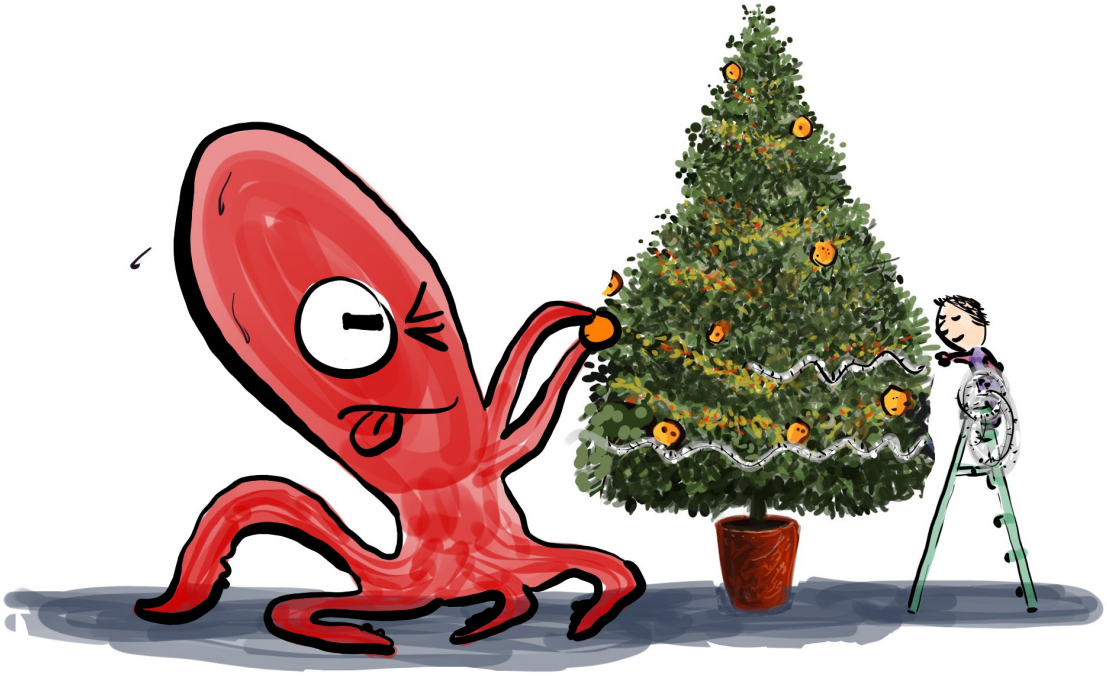


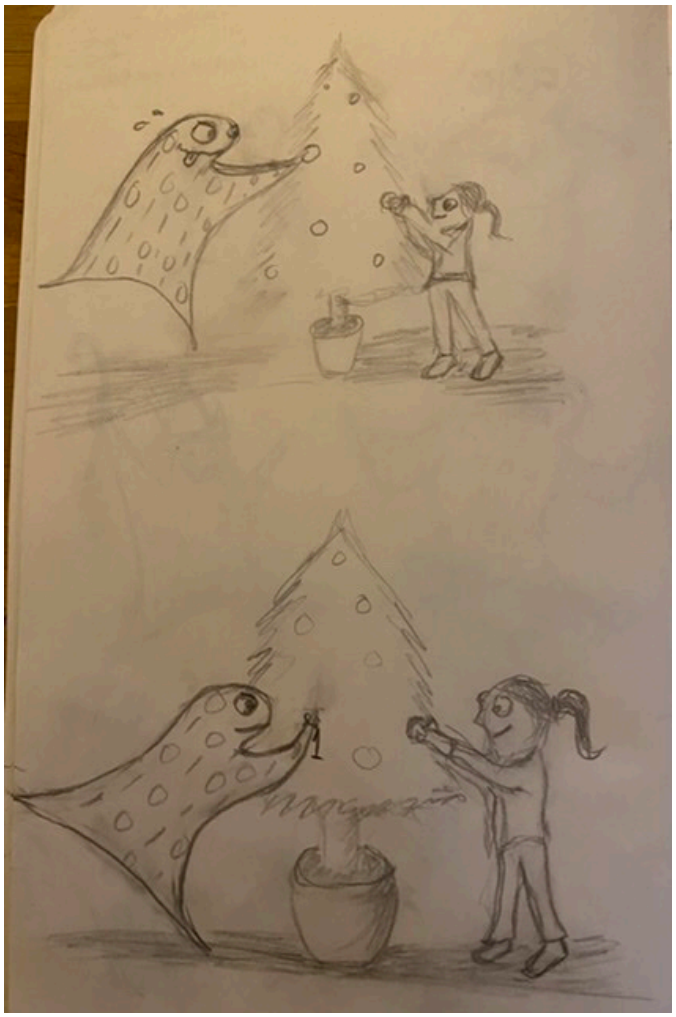
Week 11: Legs, Hands and Eyes

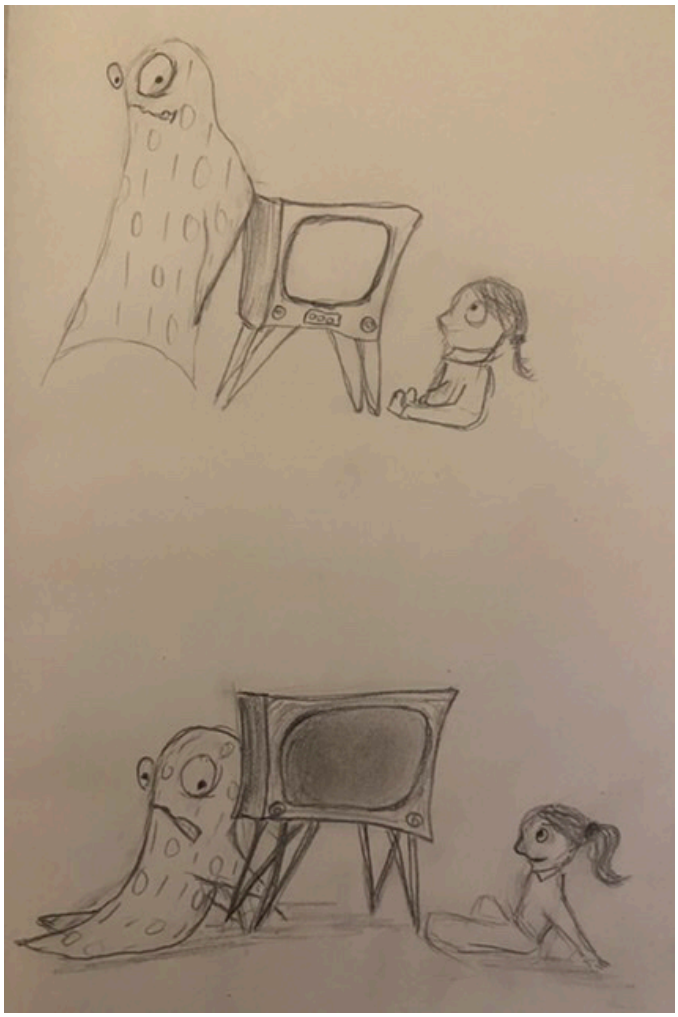
Wonky legs bring a lot of momentum to the image. And while it's great to have wonky legs when you're dealing with "disaster", they can be used for all sorts of situations. And yes, hands and eyes too.

Week 11: Legs, Hands and Eyes





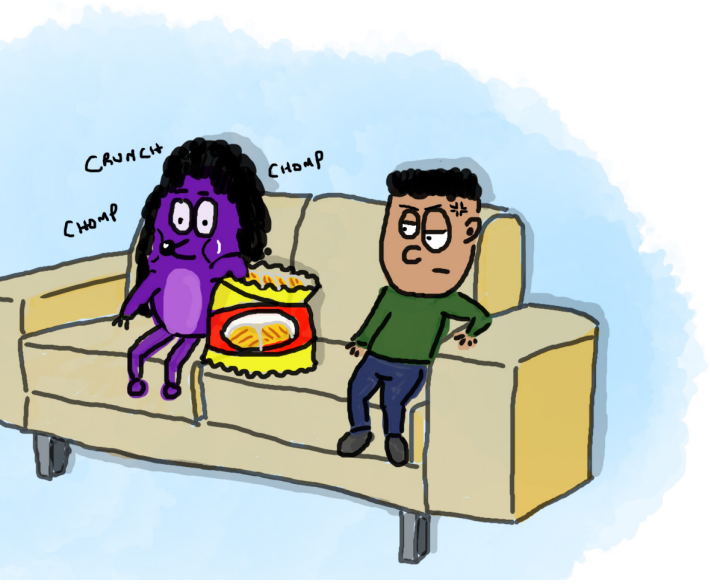


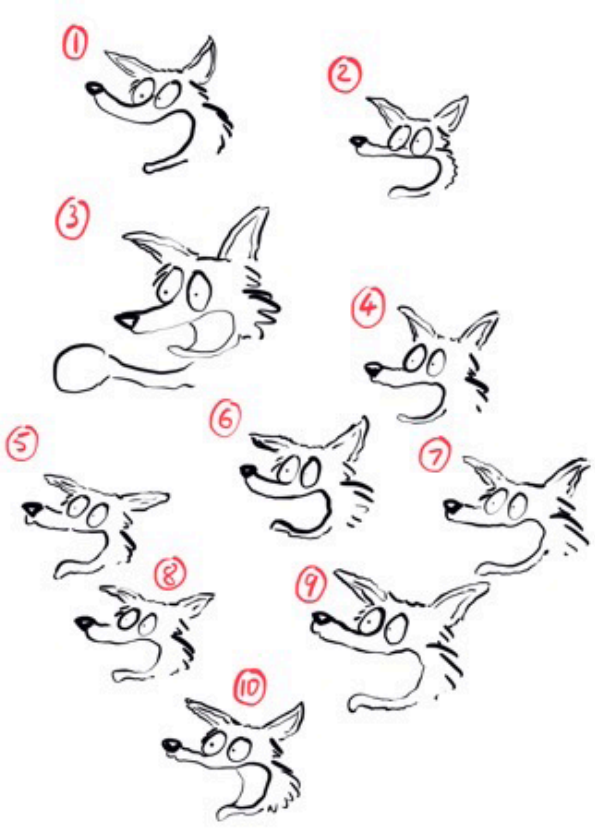


Week 12: Expressions!

Expressions are vast in number.

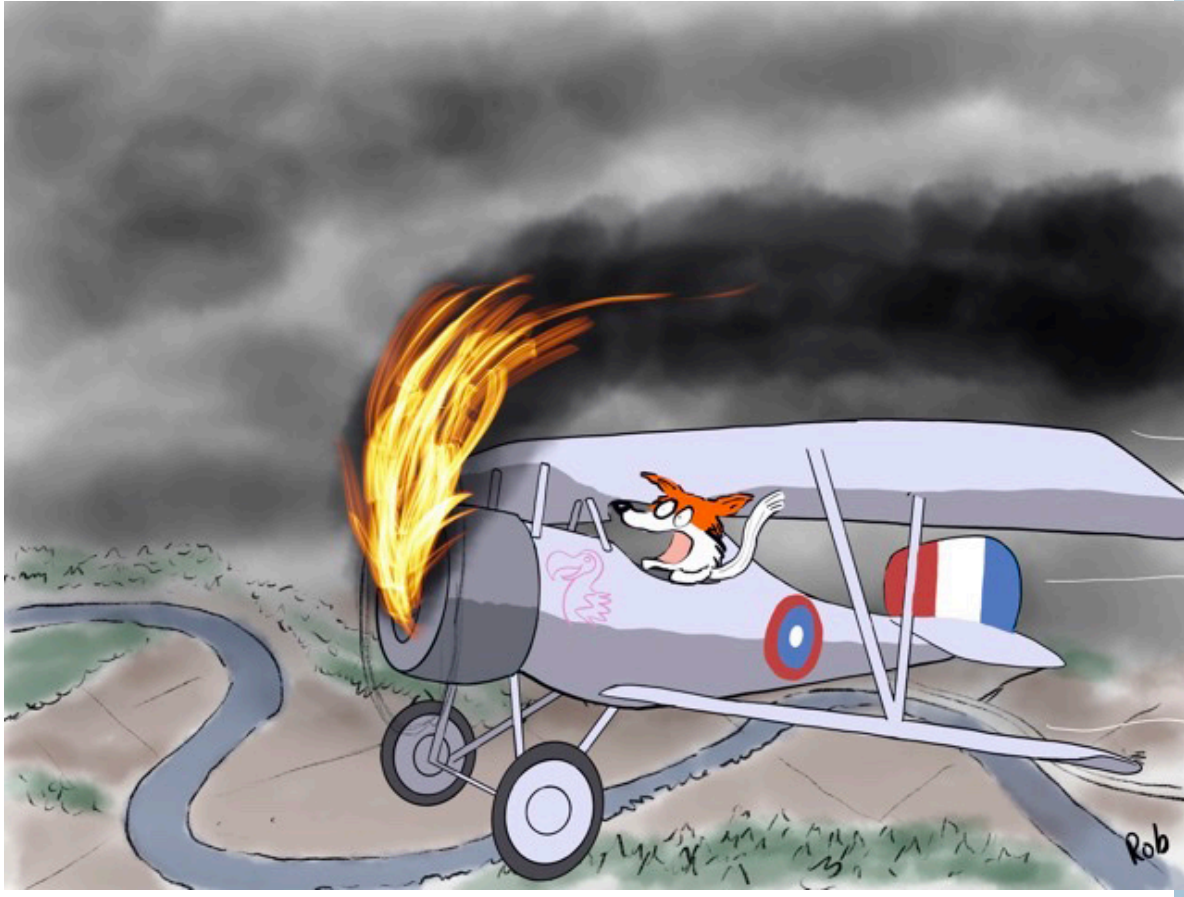
We laugh, smirk, giggle, despair, show frustration—and the list goes on. Instead of trying to get every expression under control, we work on a few.

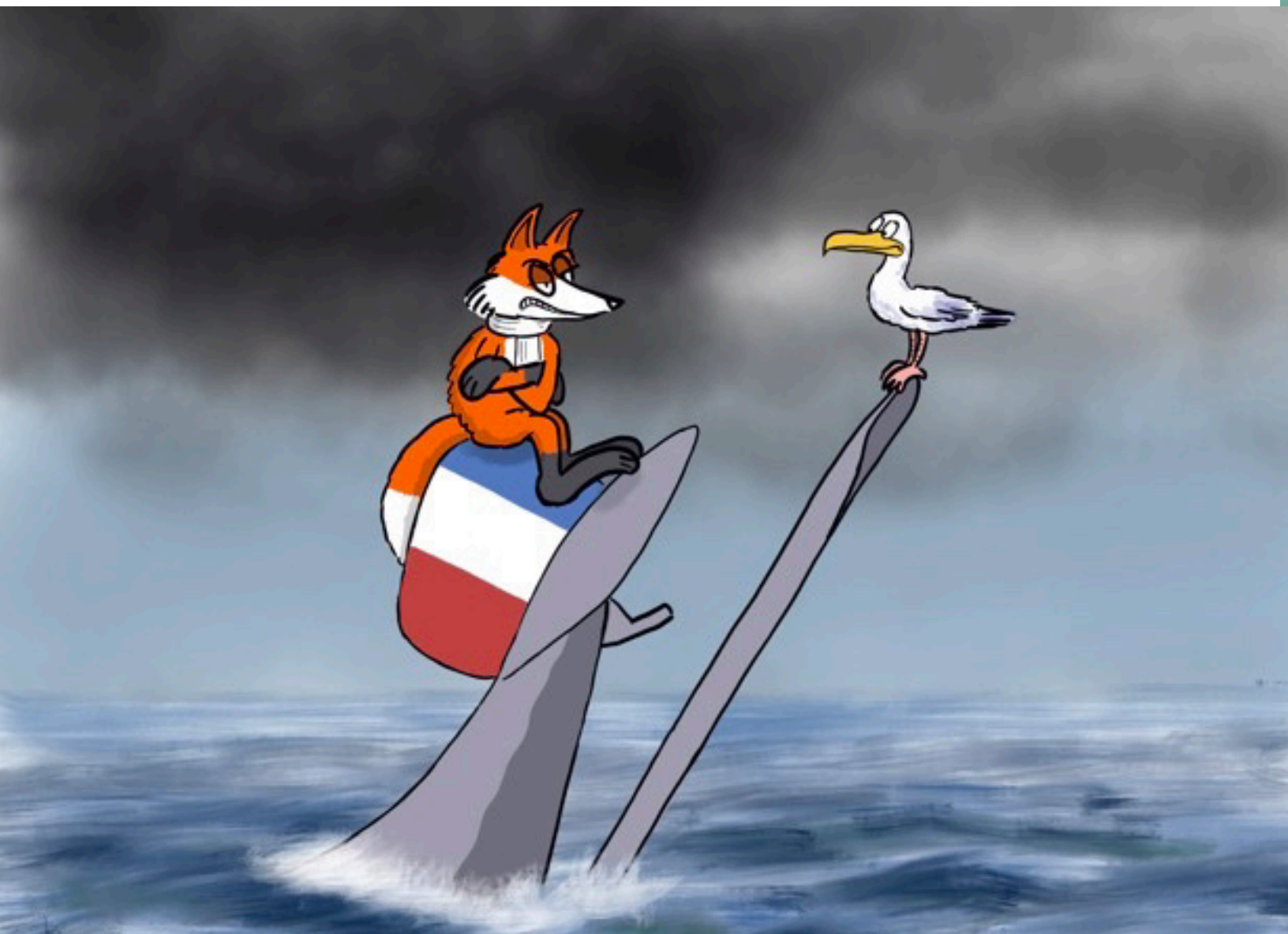


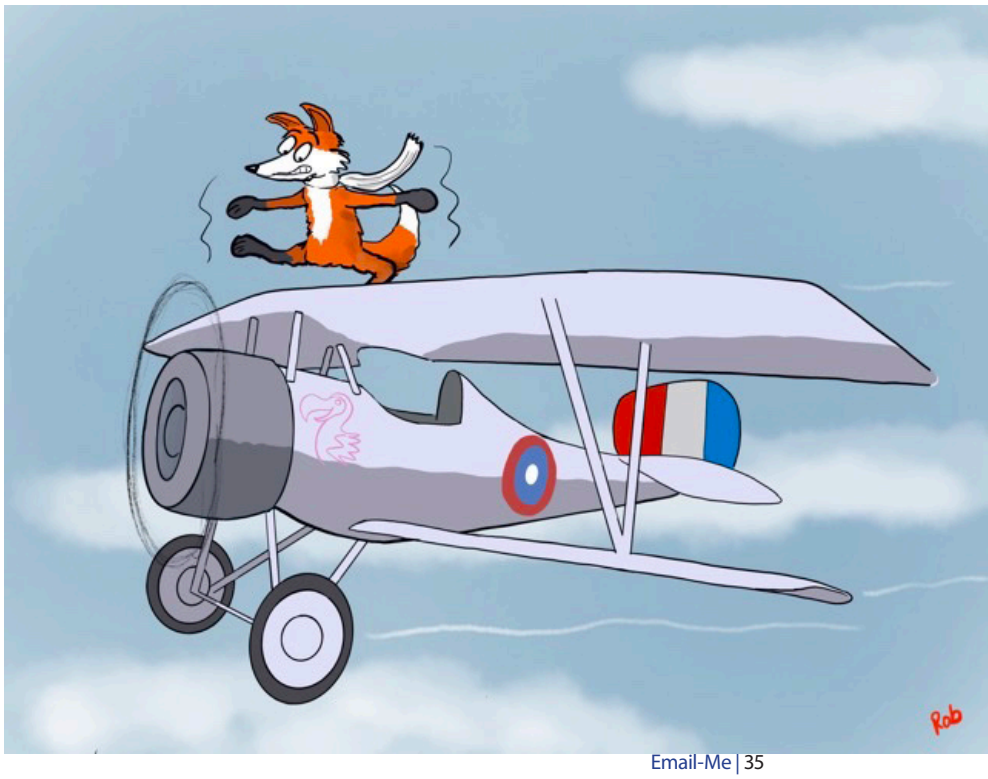


Horrified Felixs

Week 12: Expressions!



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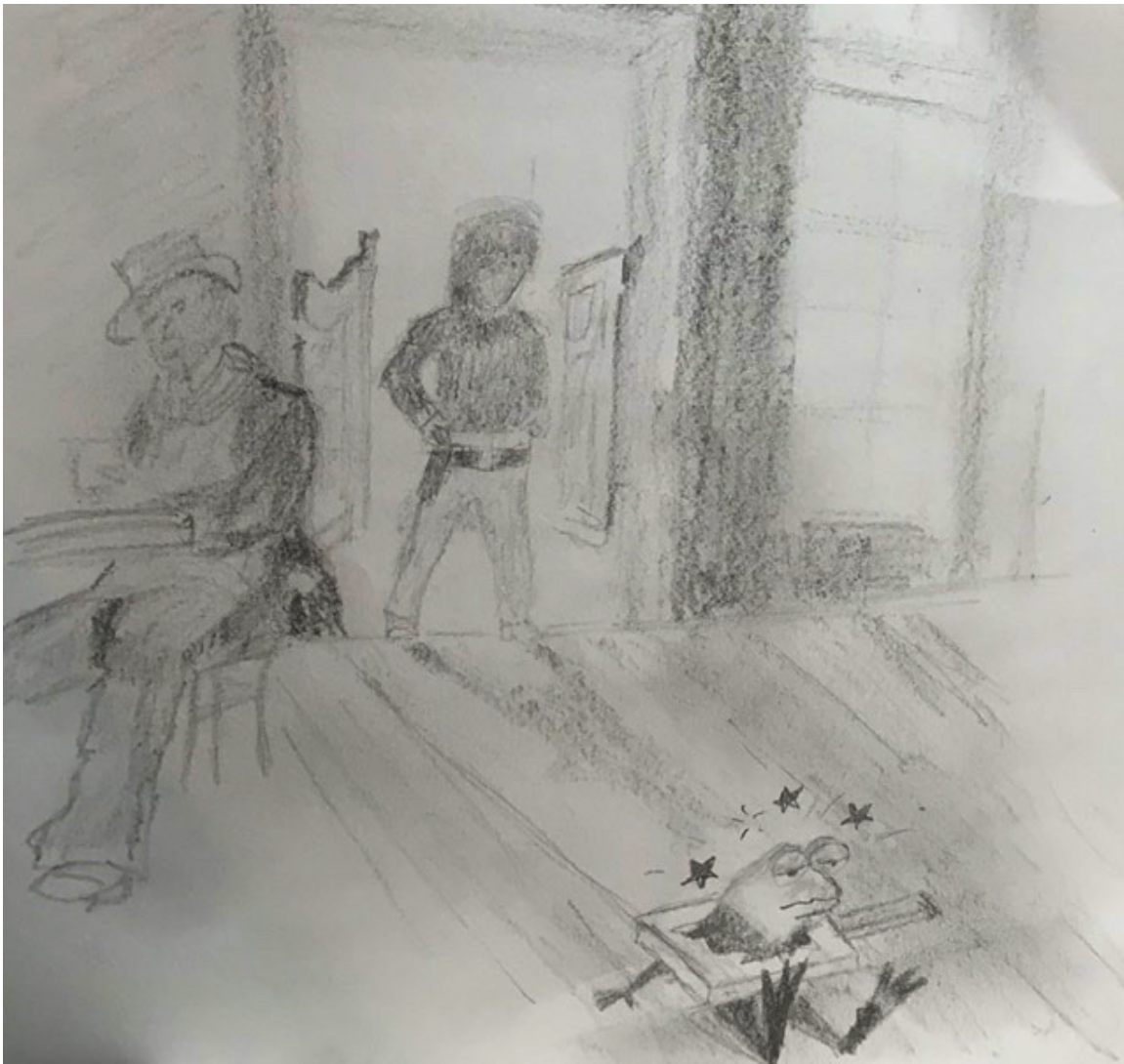
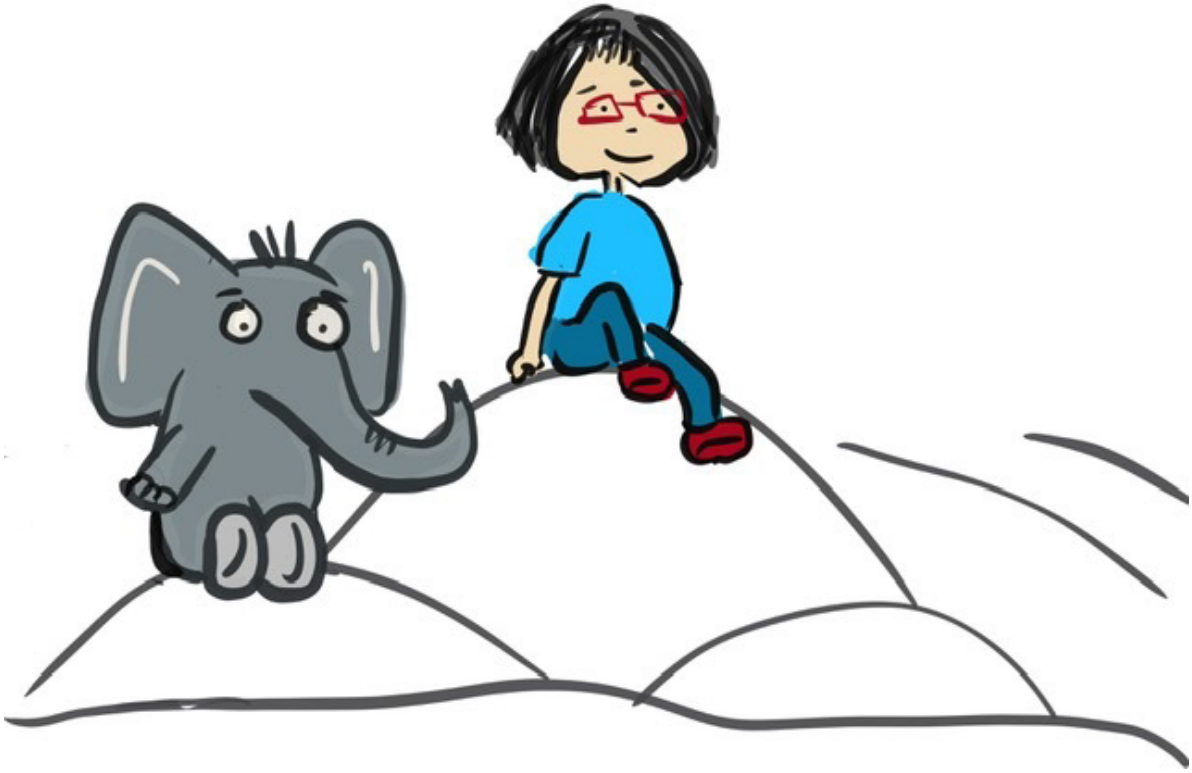


The portfolio continues

Once you can draw and know what to do, you can keep going. Which is why the examples keep going. Remember that almost everyone starts off not being able to draw, so it's kind of incredible that any of this is even possible.



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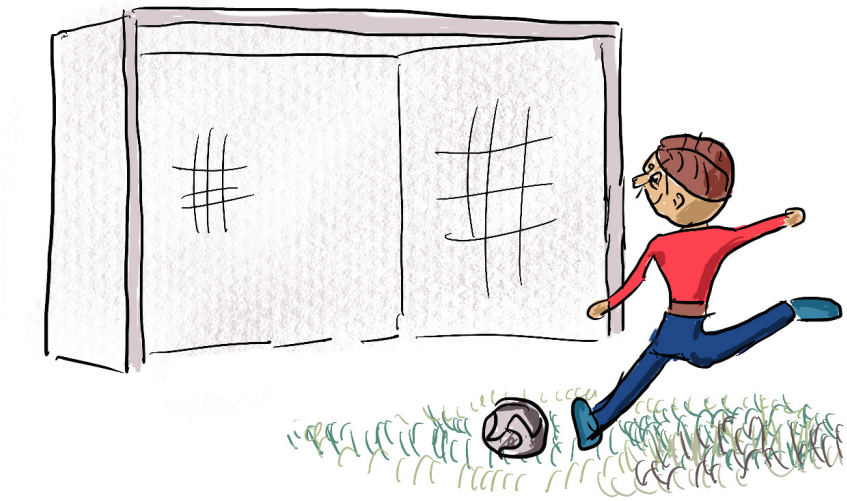

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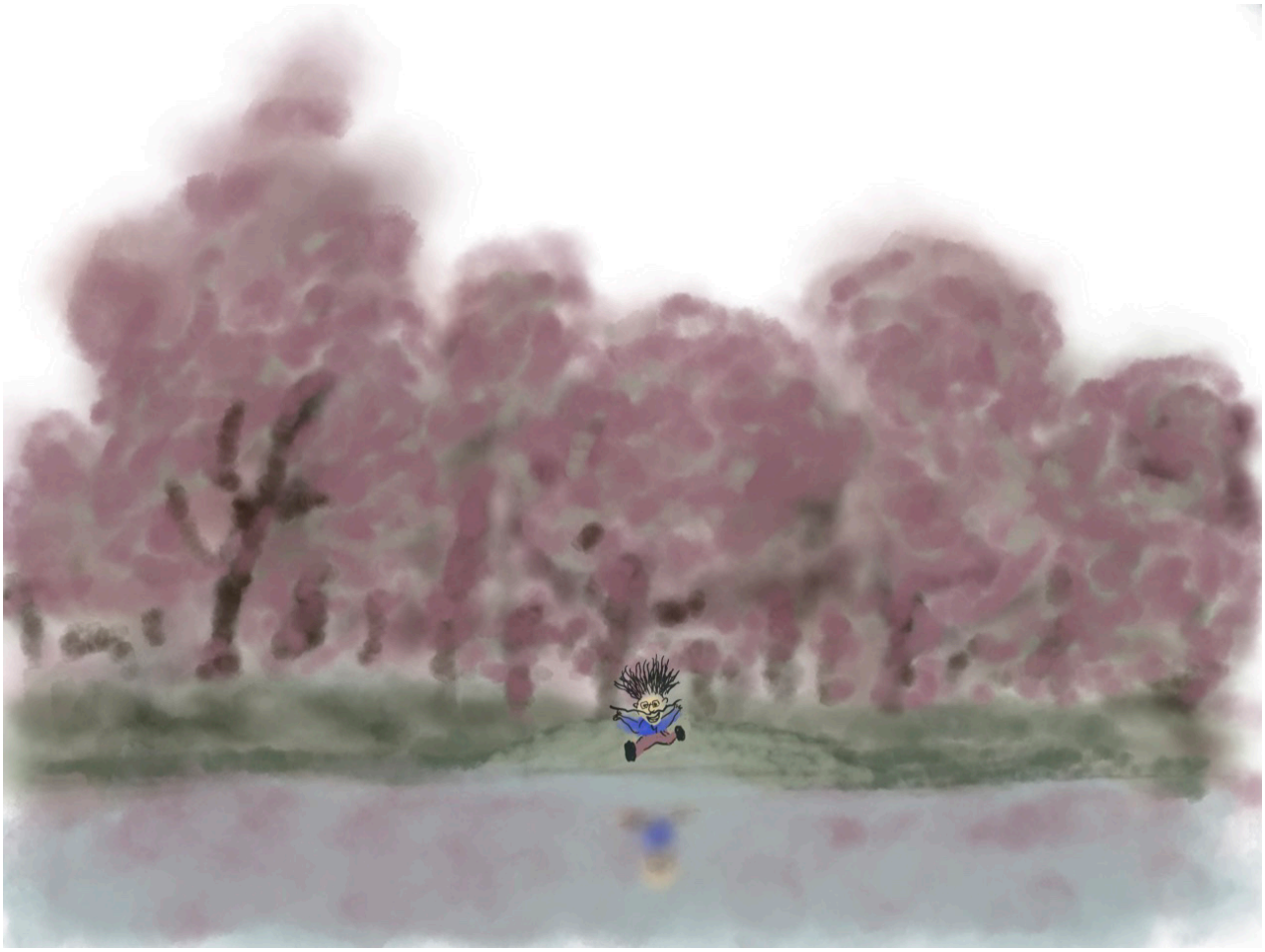
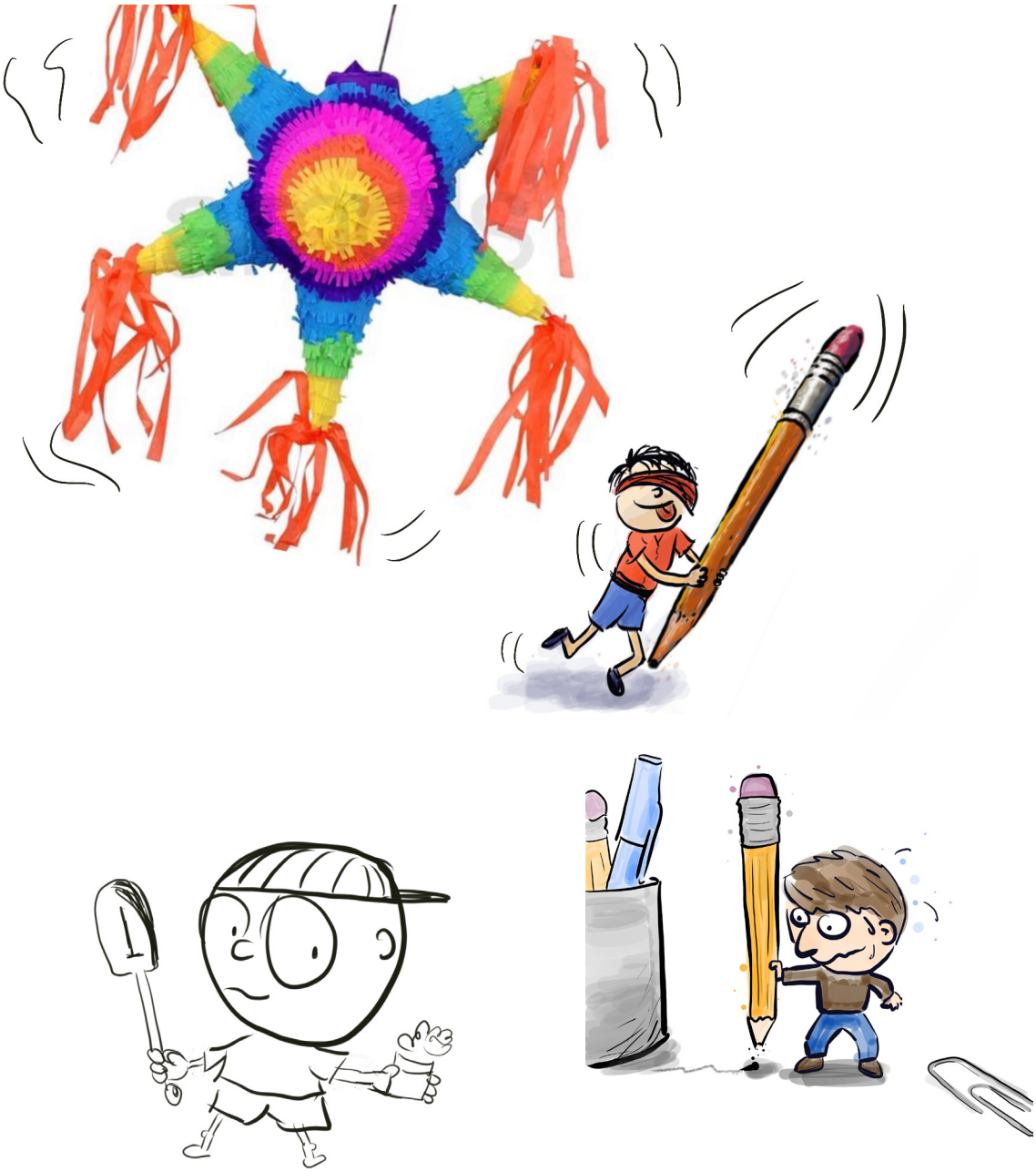
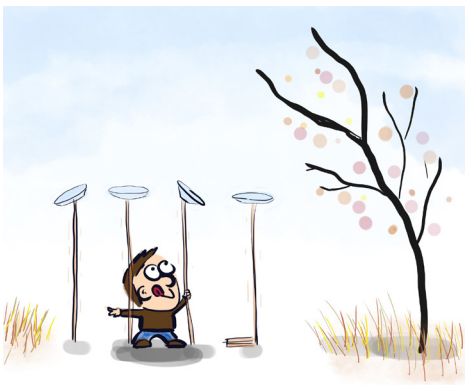
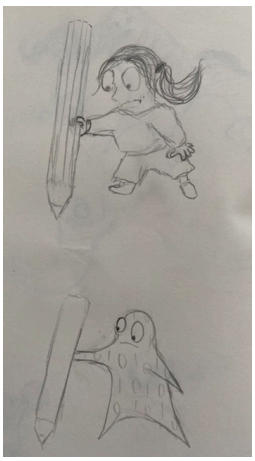
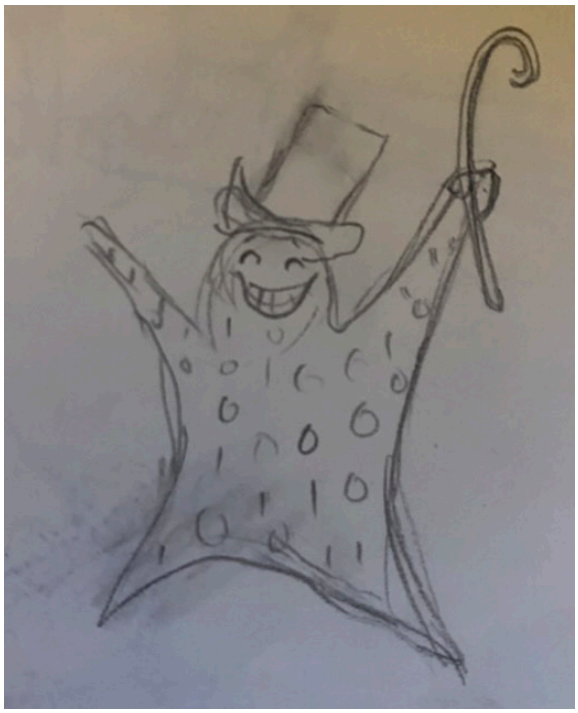


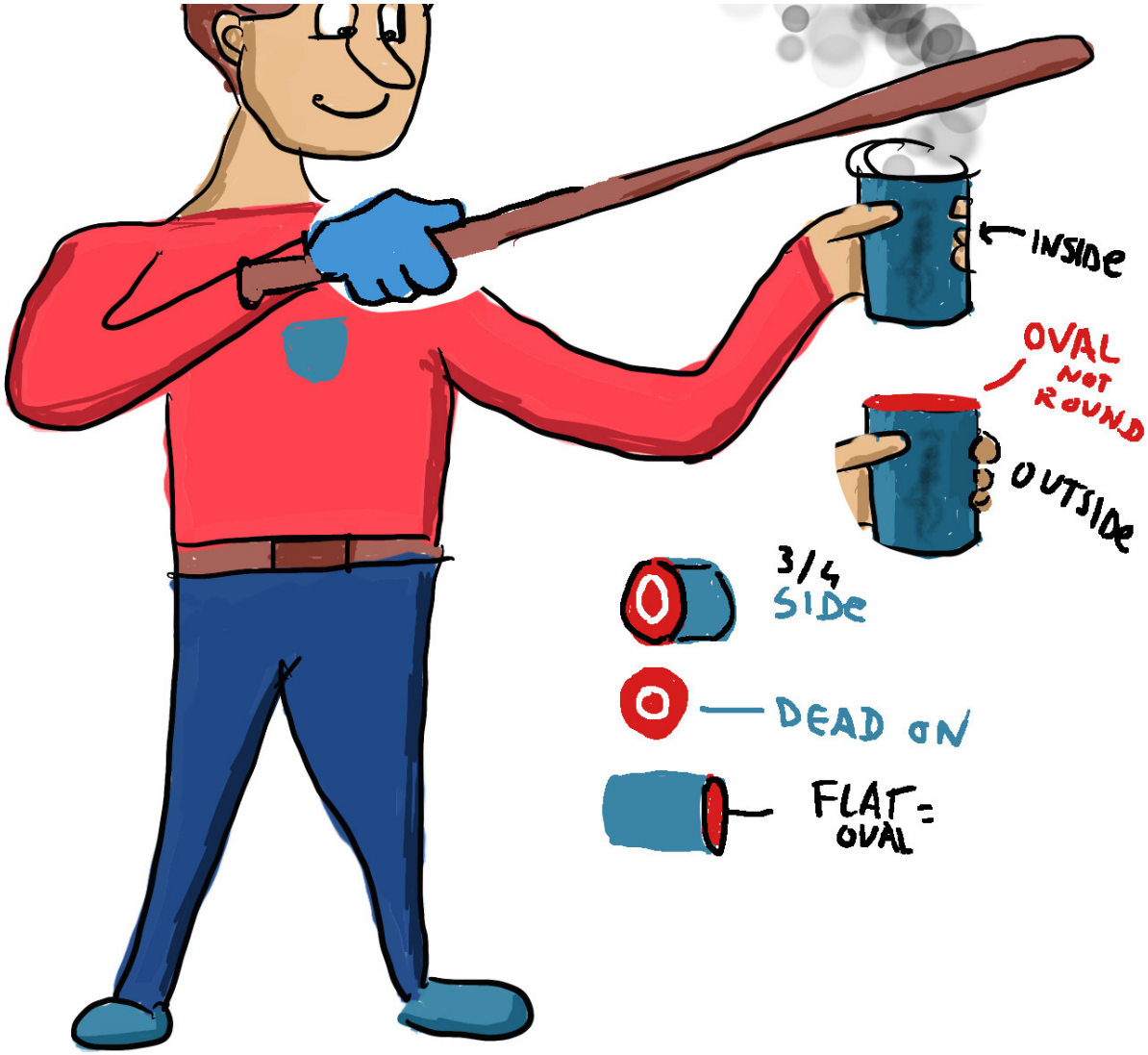


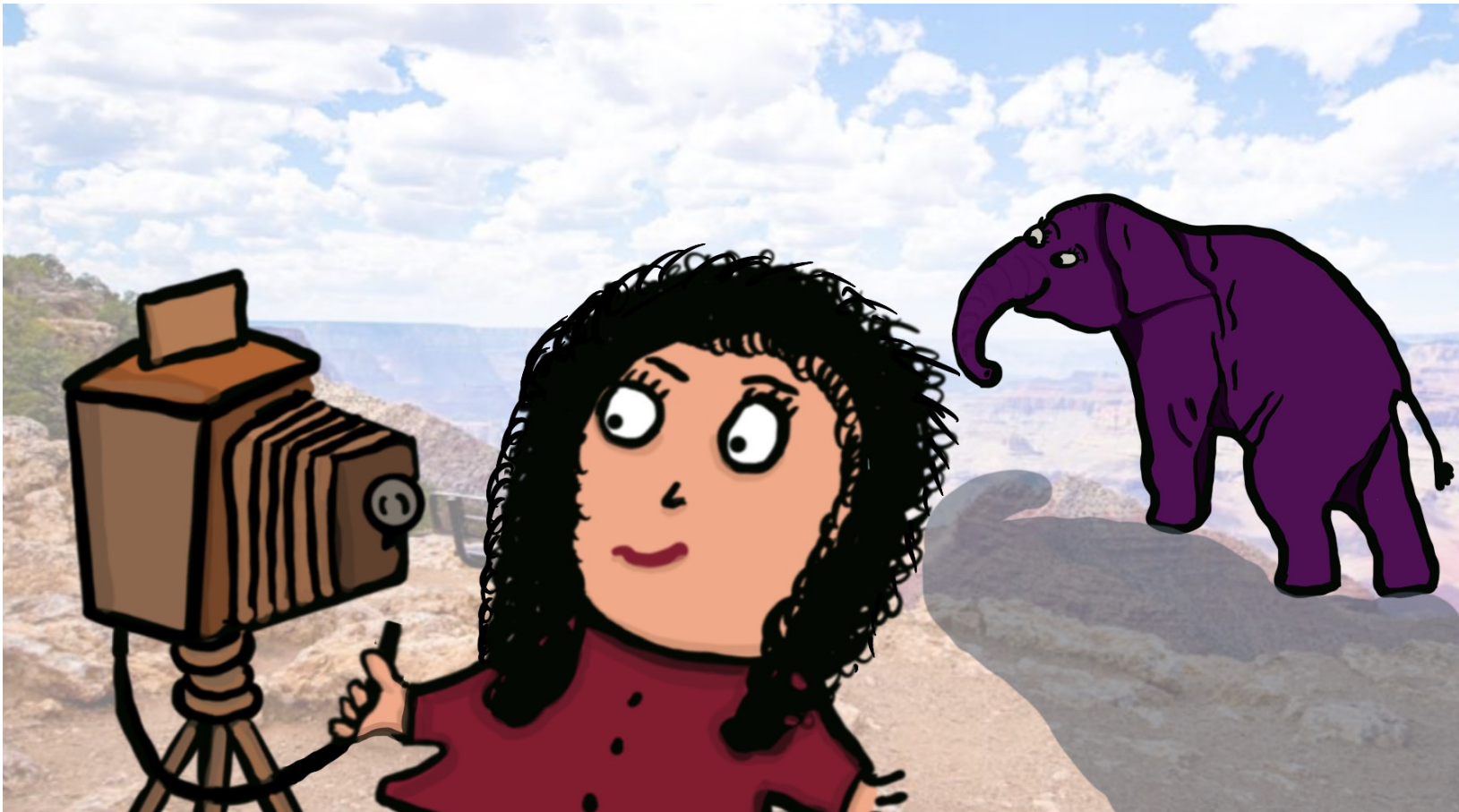




The portfolio continues







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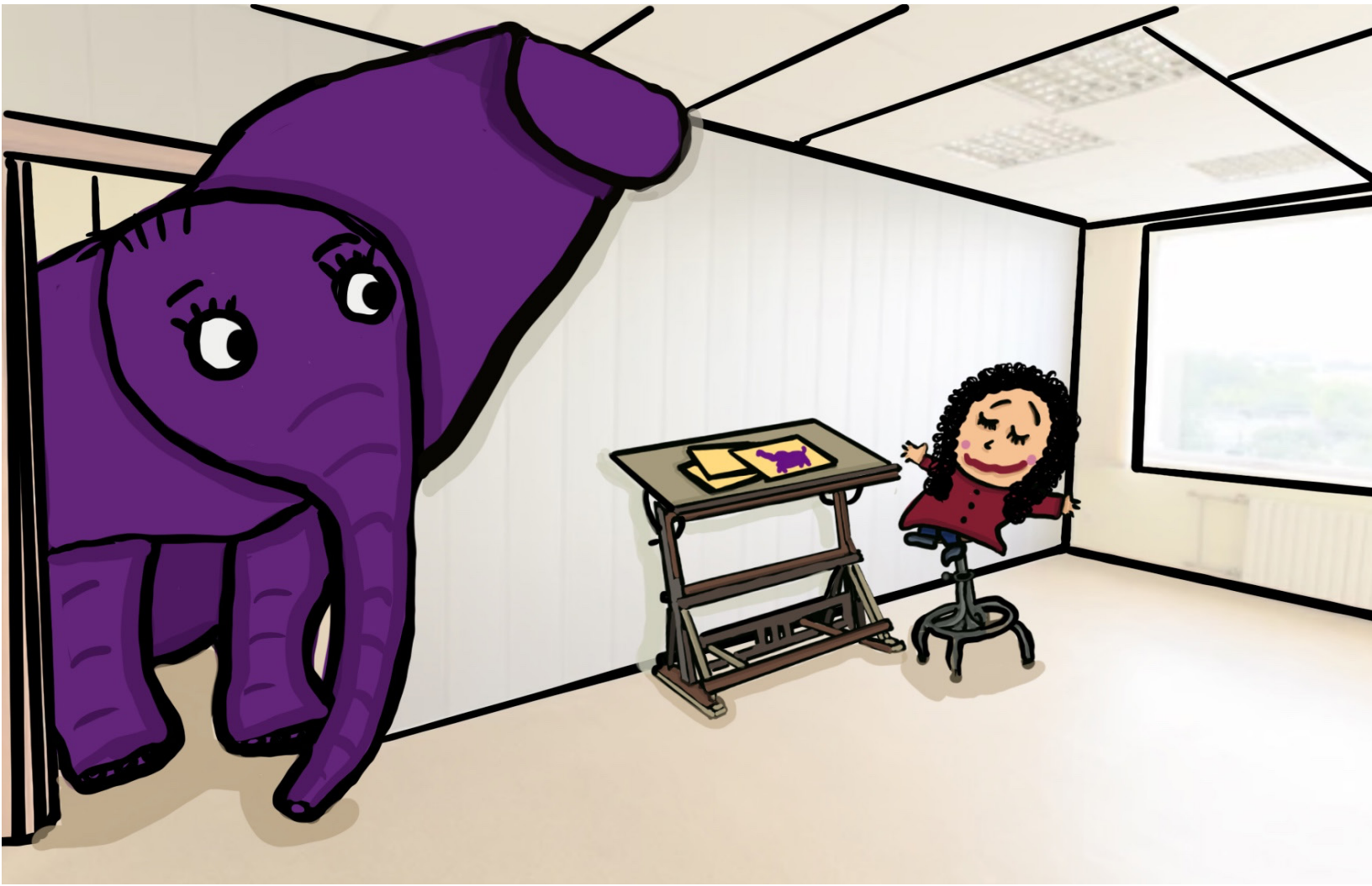

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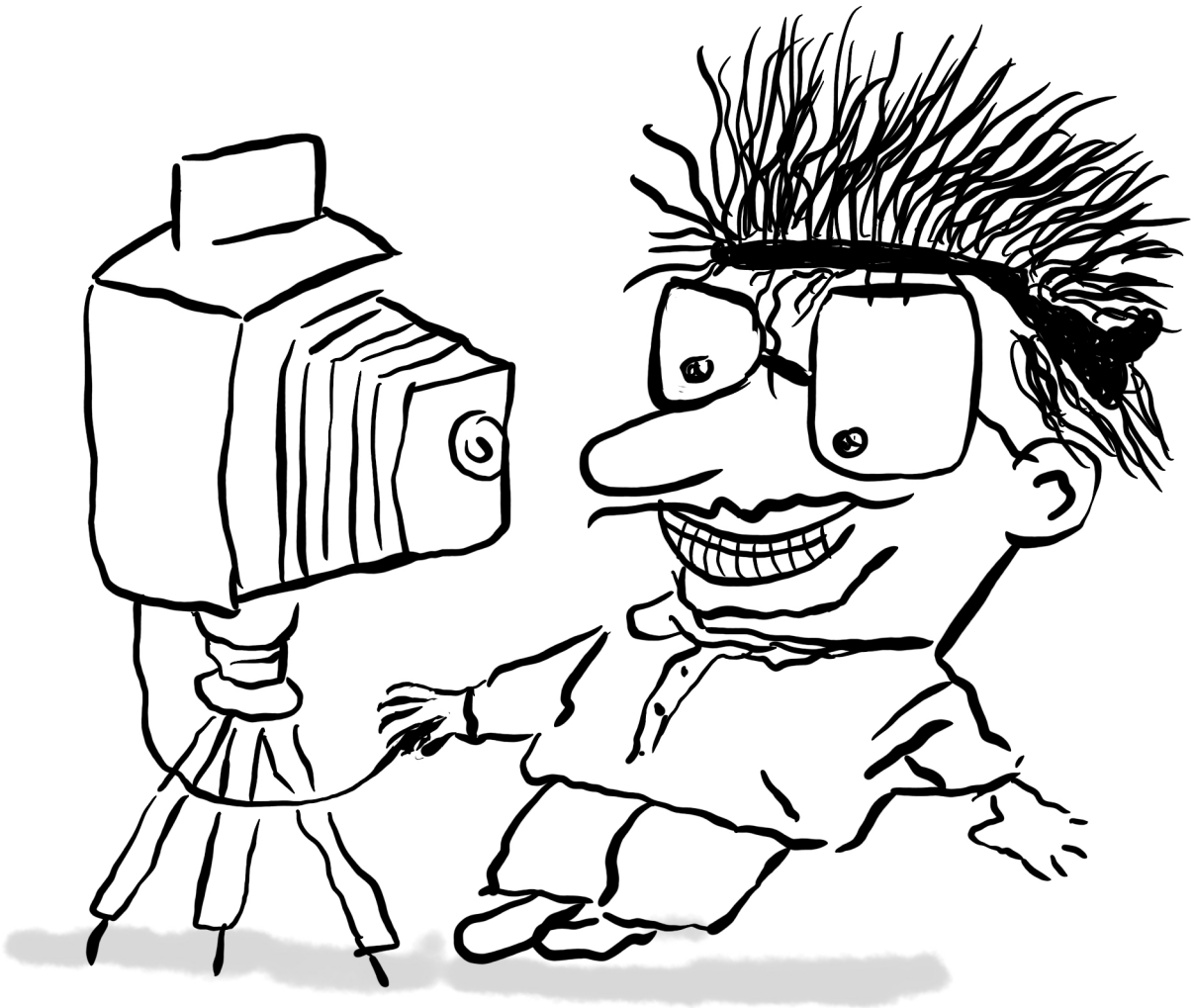

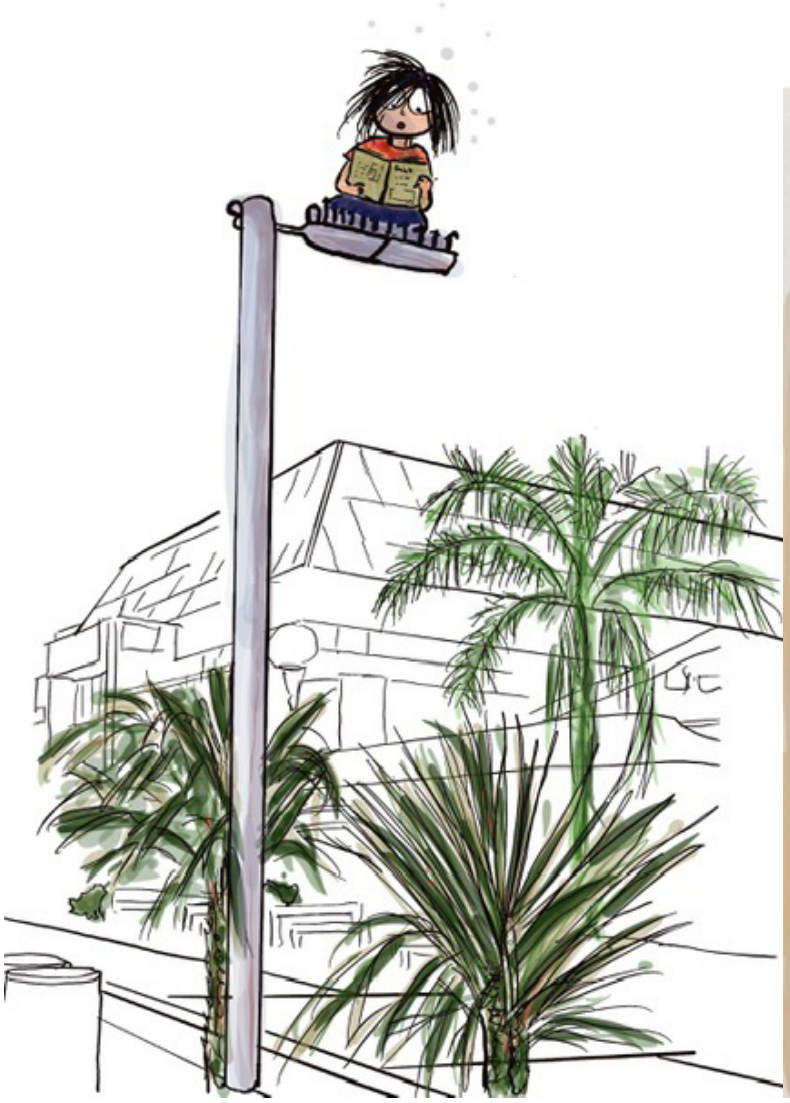

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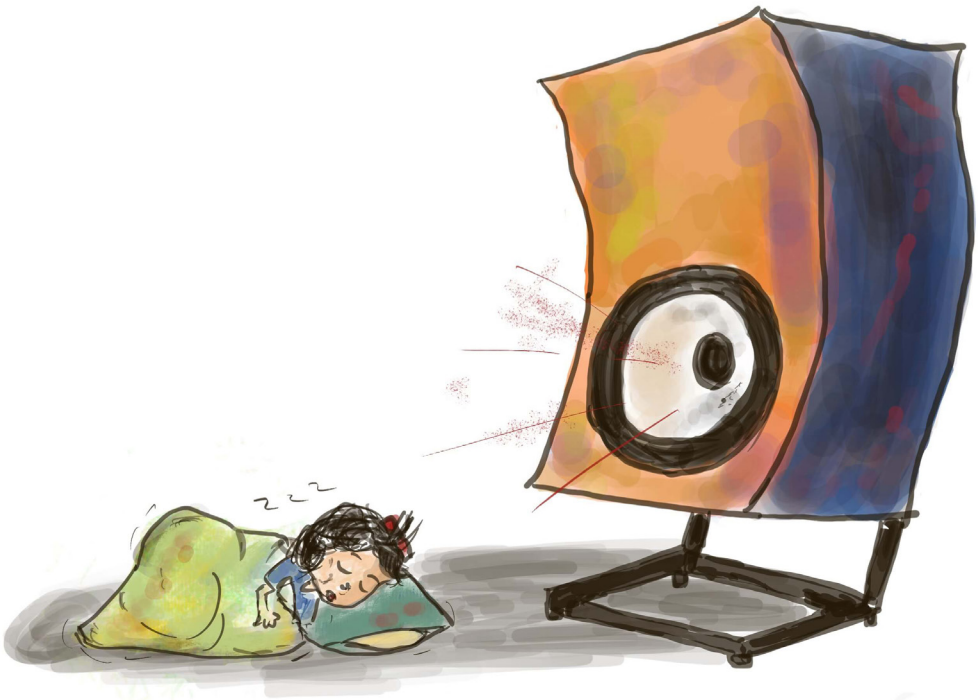
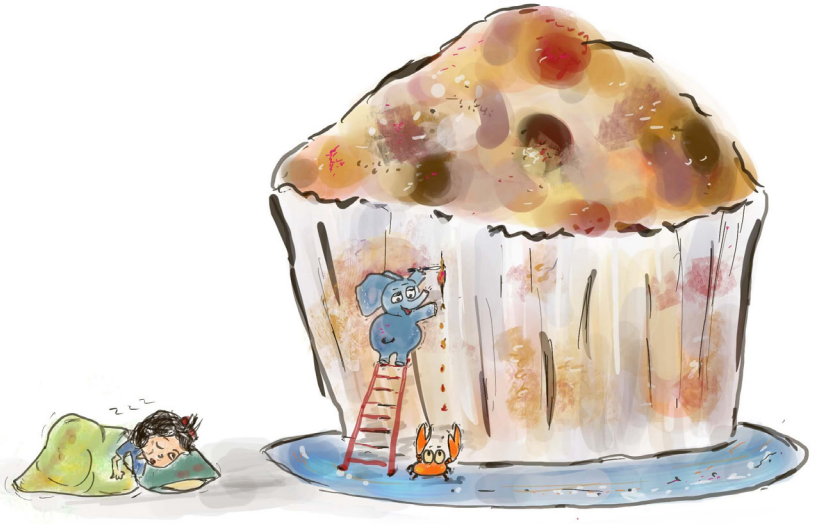


Week 19
Day 1



Feb 1st 2023
Week 19 - Day 2

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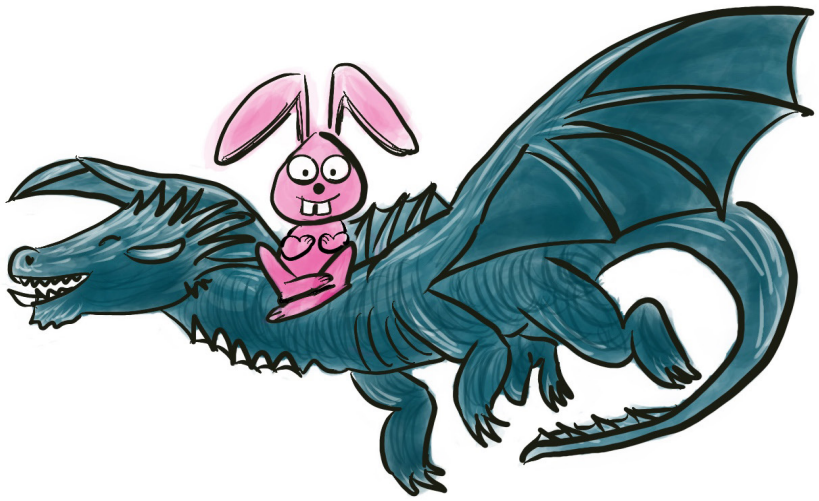

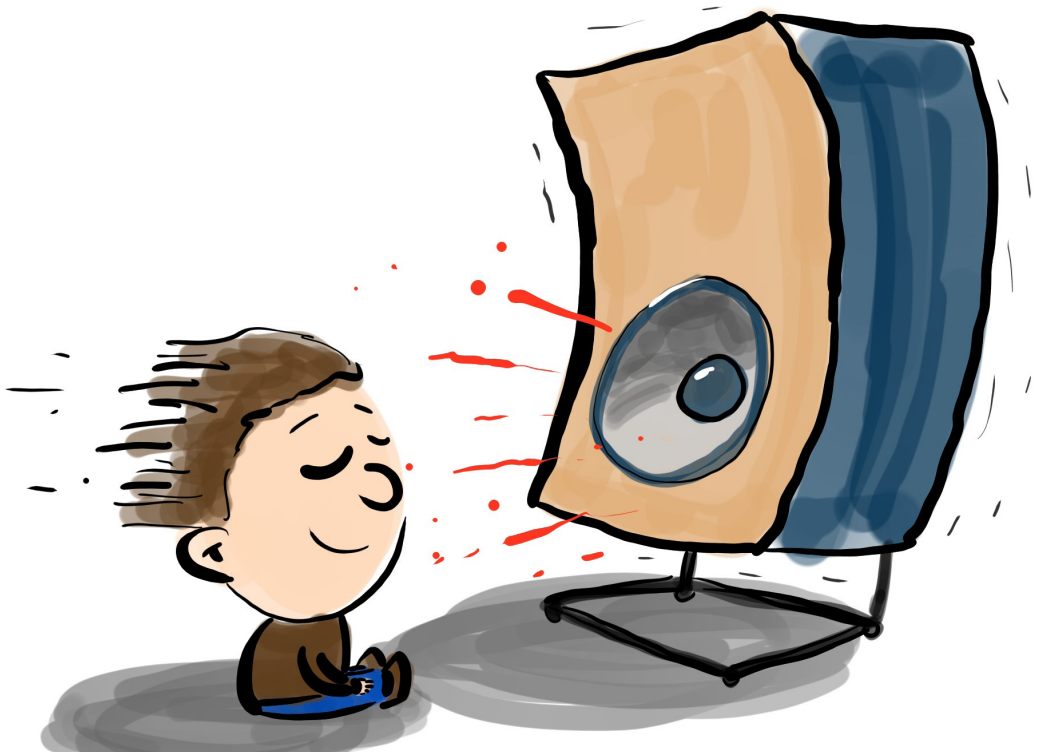

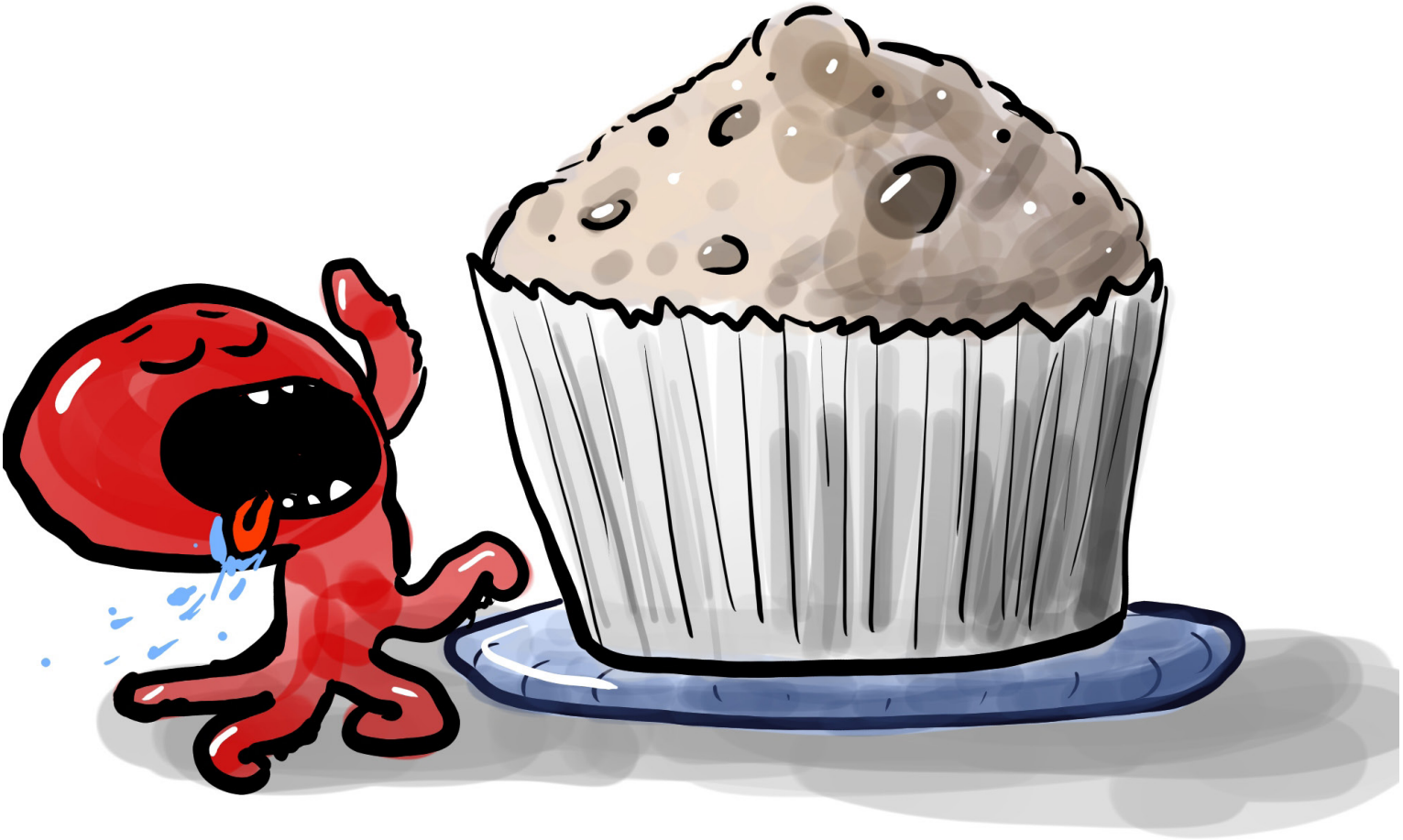

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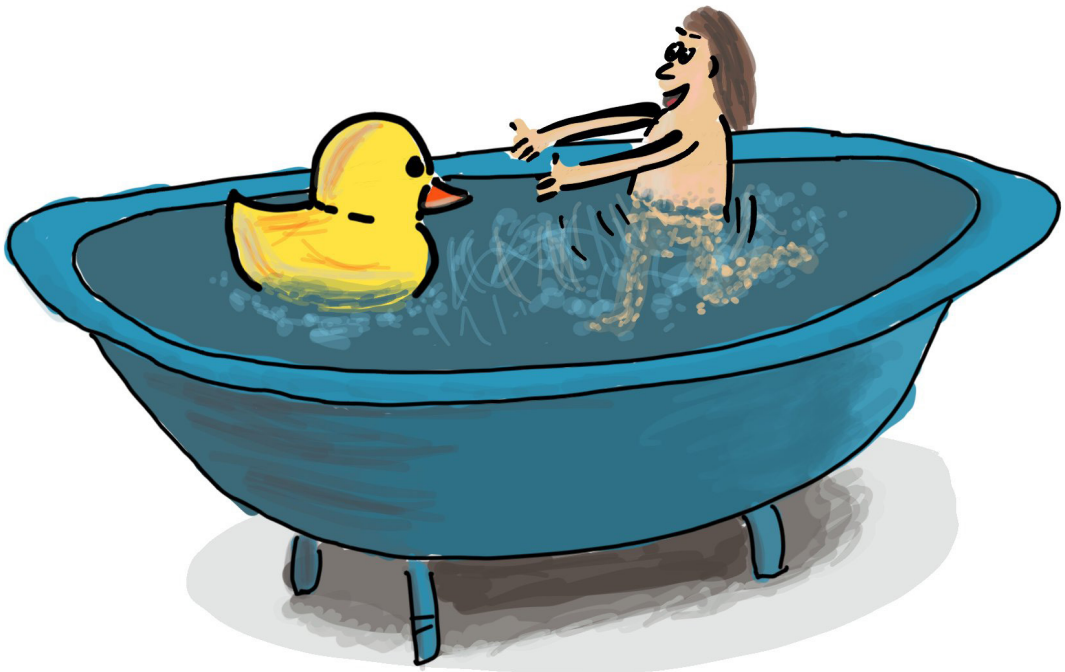

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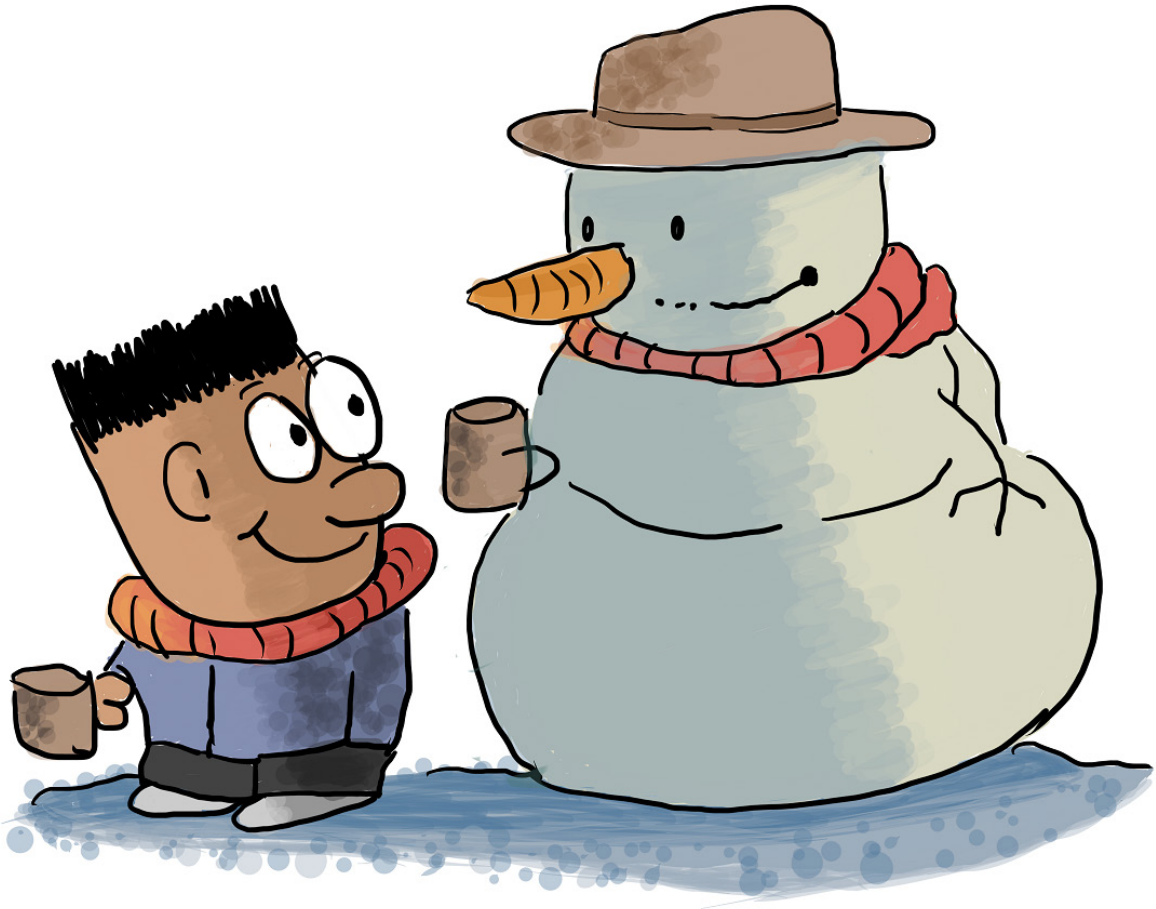

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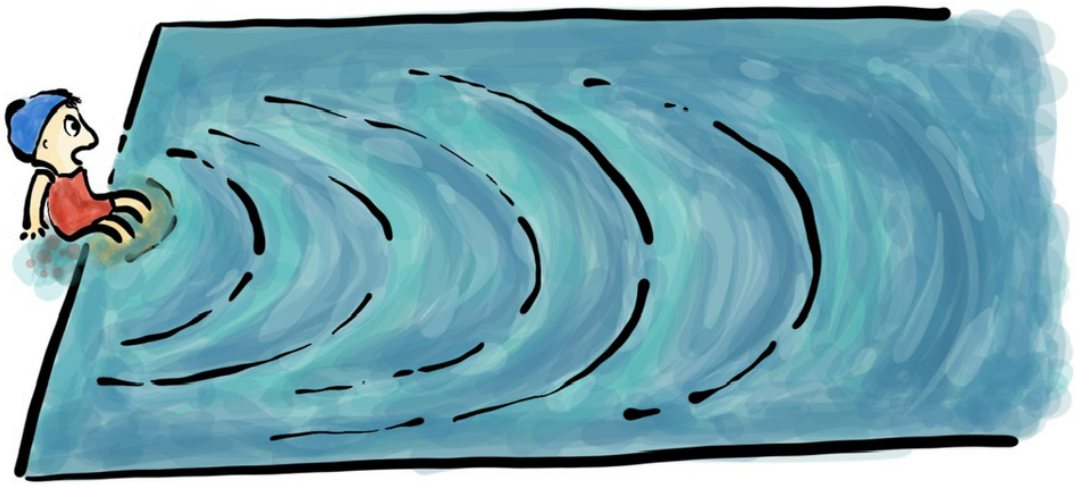

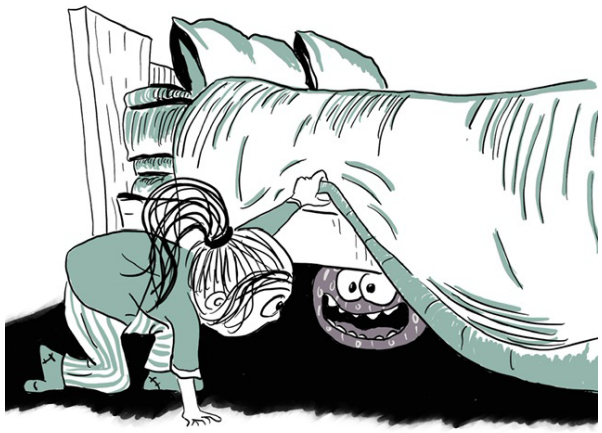

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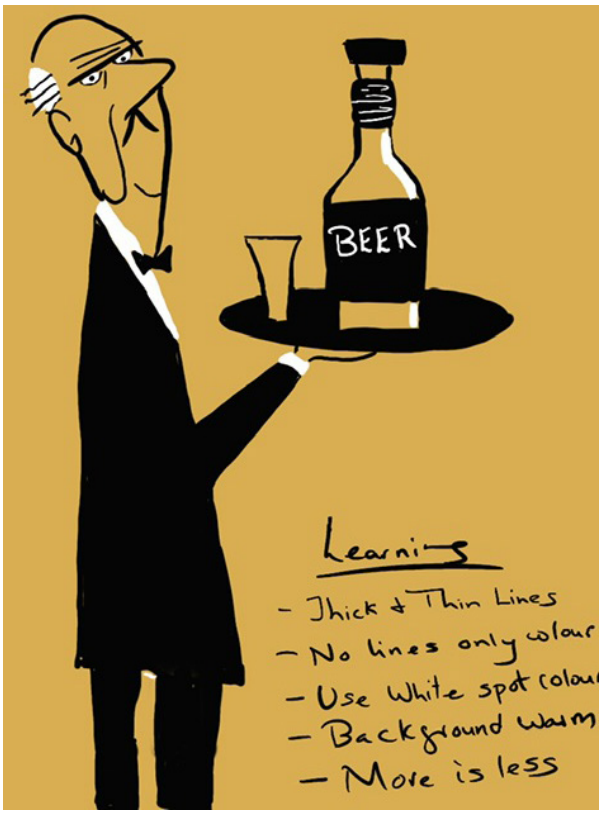
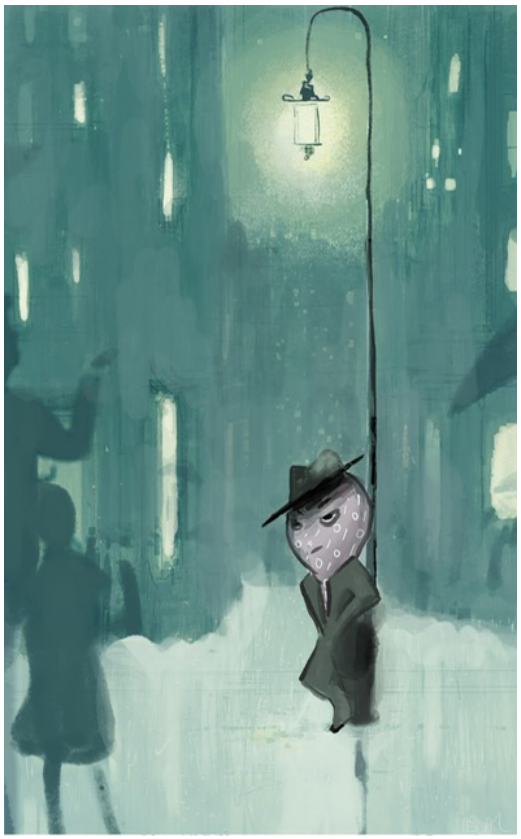
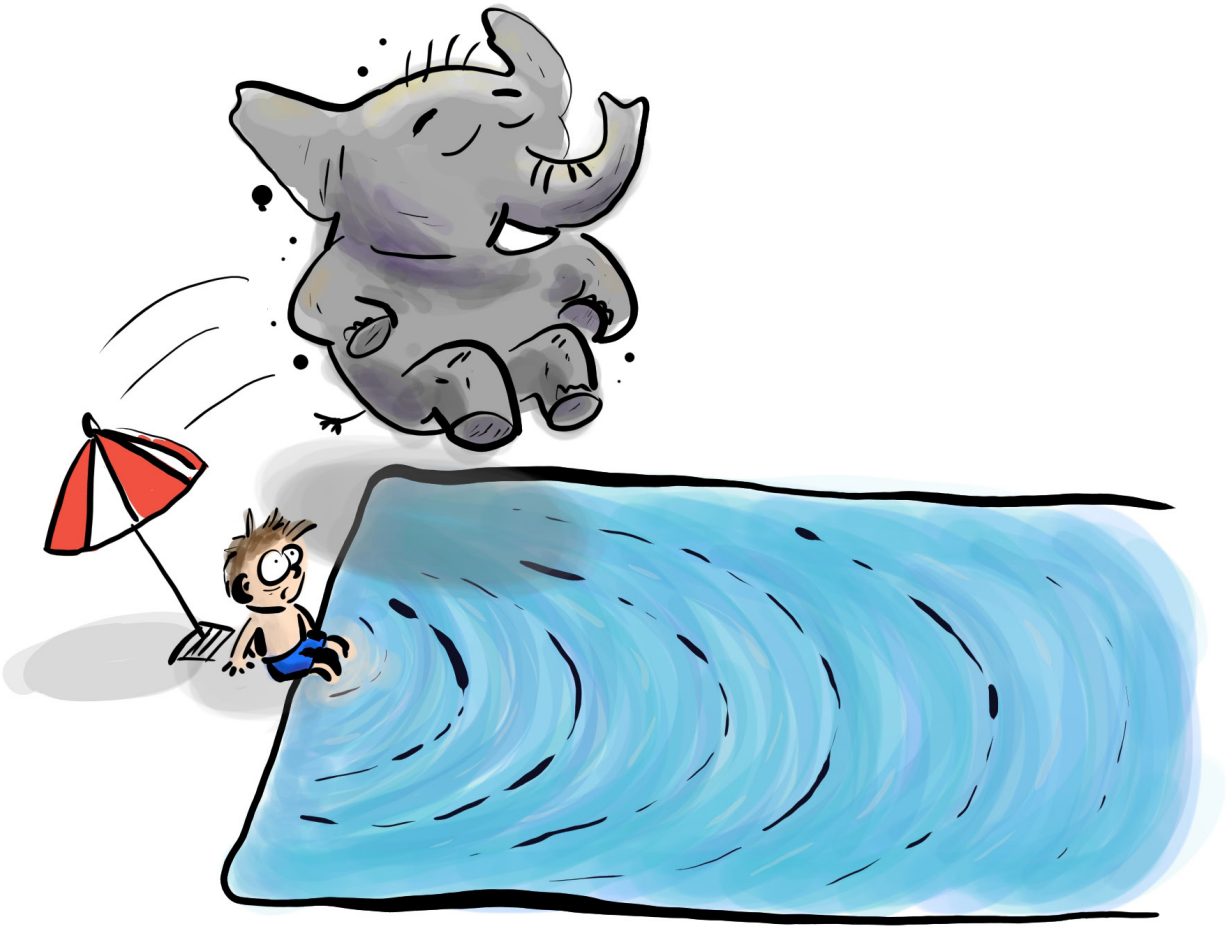

BEER
Learnings
- Thick & Thin Lines
- No lines only colour
- Use White spot colour
- Background warm
- More is less

Rob





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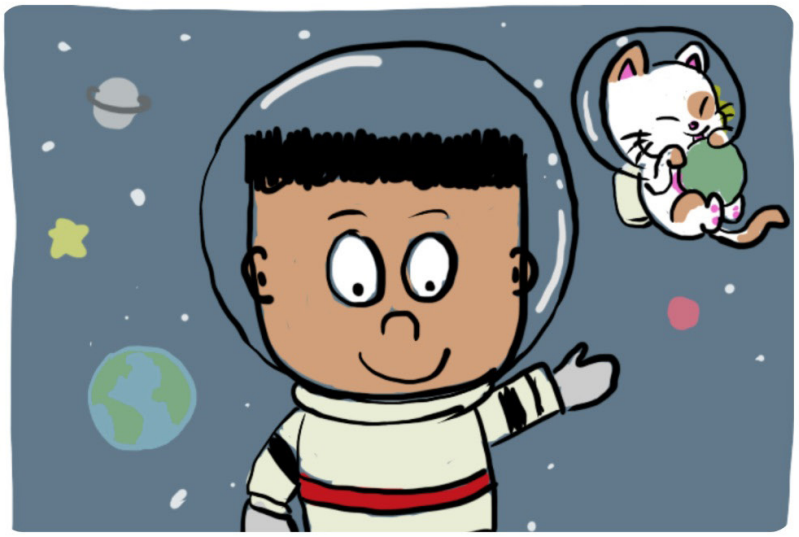

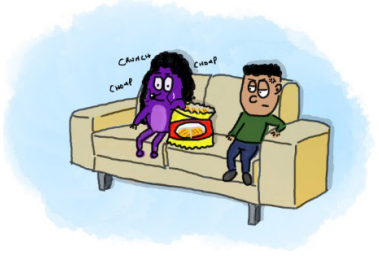

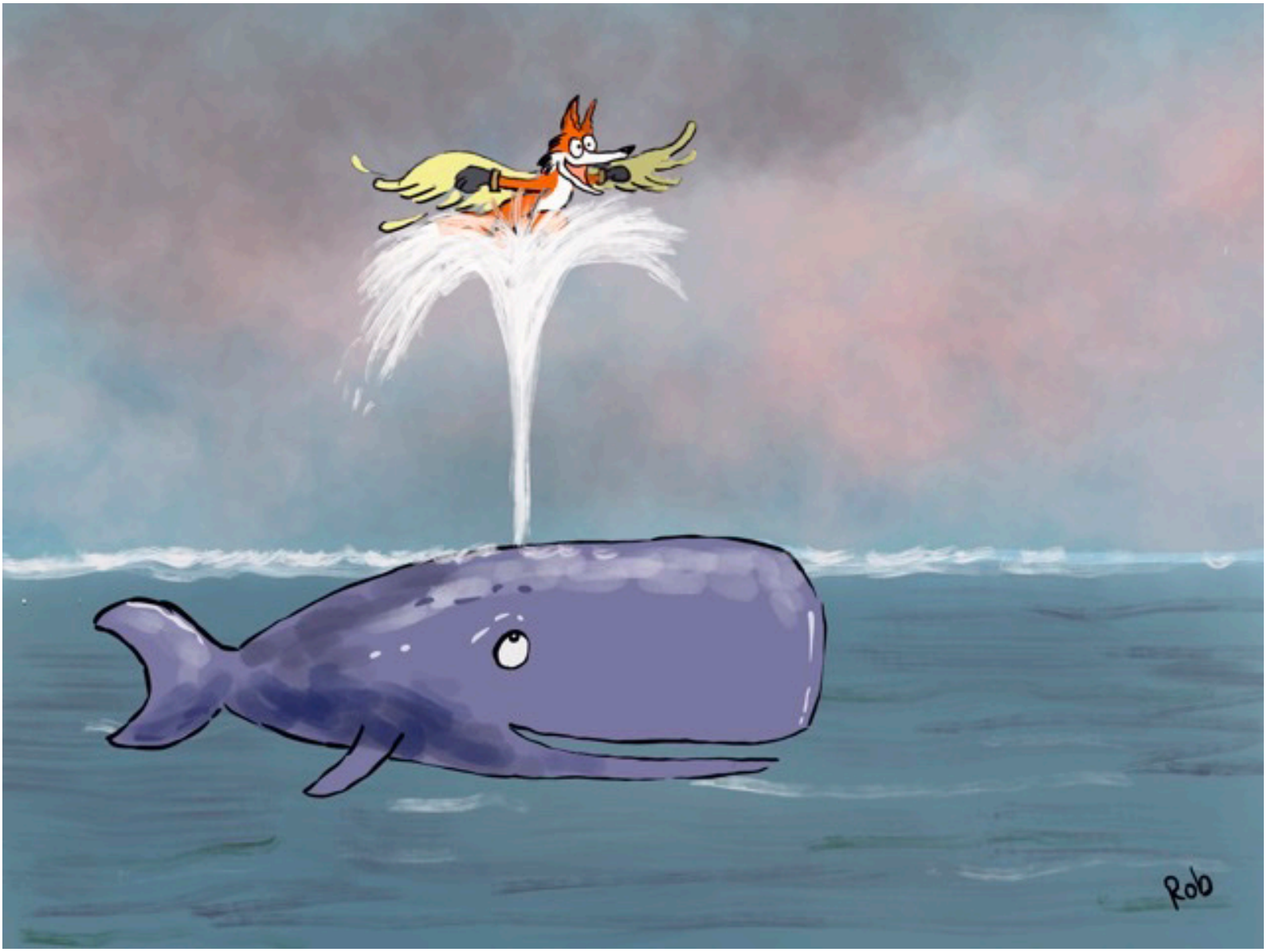
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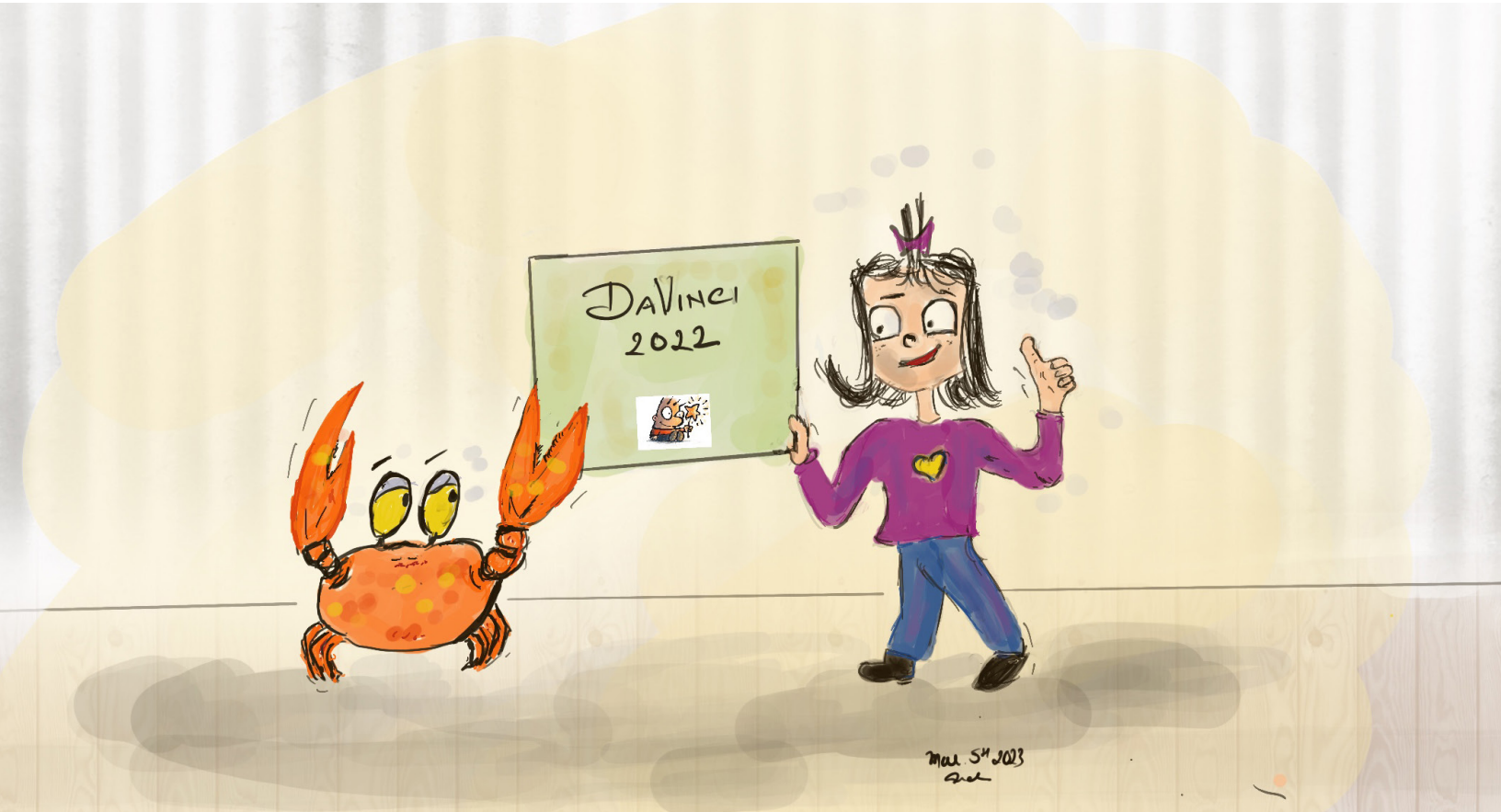
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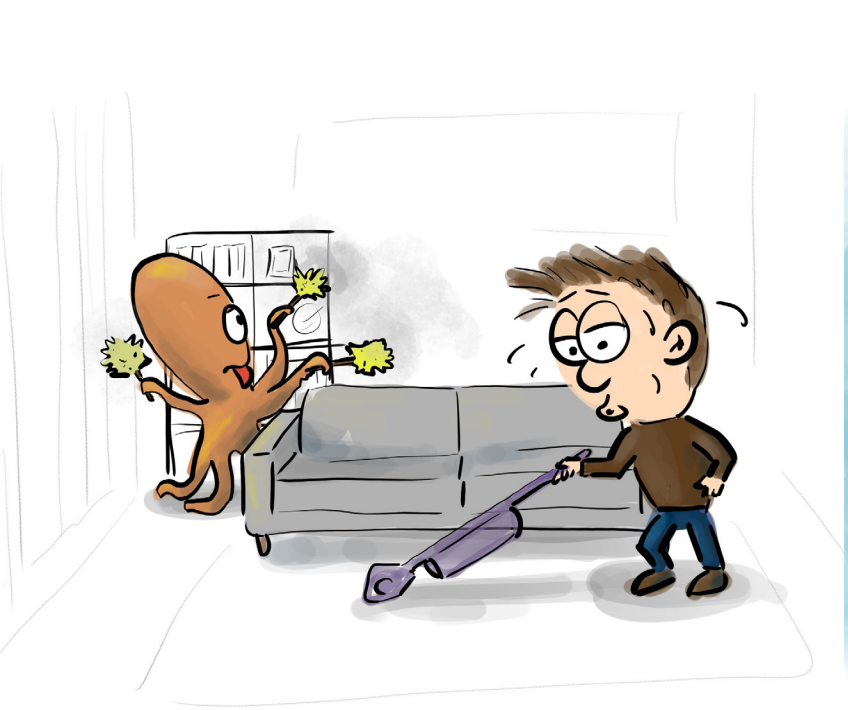

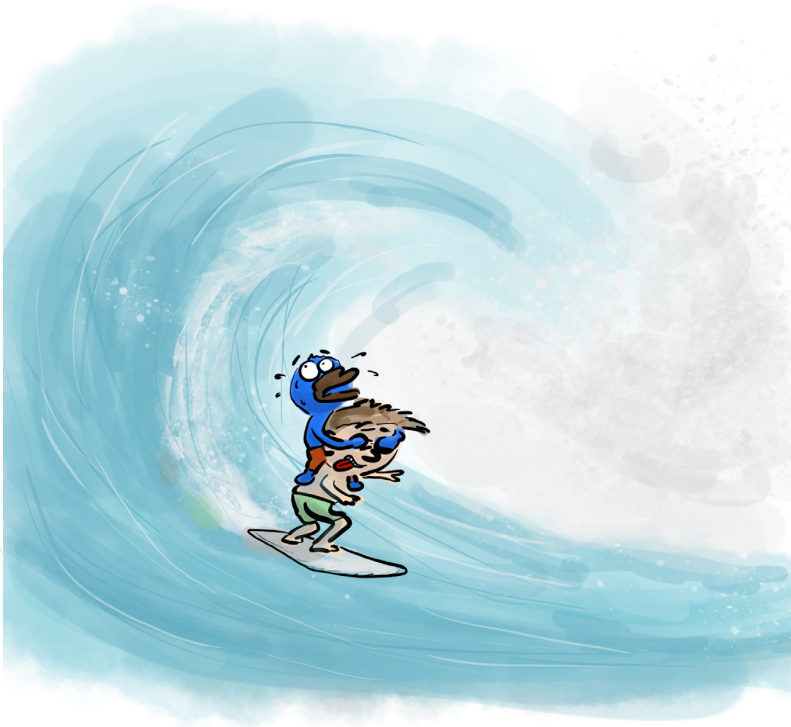

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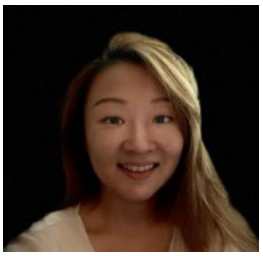


Heather's Experience

"My drawing skills were probably at the time when I was possibly 7 years old. Very childish and I often have to beat myself up for it."

Most of the mental blocks were coming from how do I make my drawings more appealing. Drawing is only one of the many aspects of the course. How to make a better connection with my audience is the bigger challenge. I often see a disconnection within the cartoon itself, where the elements felt disconnected. It is almost like two persons not having an emotional connection despite sitting together.

The forum helped lots.
Coursemates' drawings gave inspiration and I often checked Renuka's assignments first before I embarked on mine. The sharing of work on forum also helped me understand how we have progressed as a group and how much more I could achieve as a student. On the whole, it was highly interactive and it brought a lot of good vibes into it.

The teacher is always around
And you get guidance from teacher and feedback from friendly coursemates. Its a full hands-on course. A step-by step one where everyone gets to the destination together. You definitely become way better in drawing than those life-time access courses.

First, there was an ah-ha moment when I saw how you moved my bear's arms from chest area to shoulders. I began to see what goes where. Second, when I can finally draw a character confidently with finger pinches.

My family and friends were blown away!
I received feedback and comments when I post on my Instagram stories. Some of us grew up not exposed to drawing. And not being able to draw is a handicap that stopped us from moving forward creatively. It was a regret that I had to manage before. I am really happy with my work. And I have shared the Psychotactics website with them.

I got to know about this course from attending Henneke's course.
I see great potential for the course to reach more people. And wished i had attended it earlier. But well, there's always the right time and alignment.

I really happy that I achieved a lot from this course. Self confidence in drawing. I gained some bragging rights that I can draw now.

Kevin's Experience

"I had zero skills in drawing cartoons before starting the course. I knew I had to draw a character to represent me on the website but had no idea how to do this."

I had no idea about digital tools and it was the first time I bought a pen tablet. Initially, I had thought of using pastels but luckily went with digital."

I did not have any mental blocks when it came to the course.
Because I've taken other courses (other than drawing) and know that if we put in the work required then you always learn it. And it's about improving my own skills rather than comparing with others. Sometimes it felt challenging to start working on the assignment considering it would take some time to get it done especially when adding more details.

The forum helped with encouraging me to keep working on the skills especially members like Cliff, Rob, Renuka, Teresa, Ryan and others. It was also helpful to check out other people's drawings and notes for learning and inspiration.

The training system is a series of weekly assignment with focus on a particular topic each week. The daily assignments are simple enough tasks to complete. It shows the weekly progress as long as you keep doing the work every day. It's great to have Sean point out the mistakes and improvements needed so you can keep those in mind for the next drawings.

I think it was around week 10 when I turned a corner
It's when I started to work on developing our characters. Then the more I drew the characters in different situations, the better it became. The time we learned about using referencing and tracing also helped a lot to get things done faster and better.

I've not shown them to family/friends as it's a secret project.
I did post a few on Instagram and those have been really appreciated by fellow illustrators. I thought I was not good at drawing before the course but I draw much better now. If you keep working on it in the right way, you'll become better at it. I would recommend using digital tools because it's much easier to learn and fix mistakes.

I think it's a great course to learn drawing cartoons.
I'm nowhere an expert at this but definitely better at drawing than before the course. I would especially recommend it if you're looking to build your own character or mascot for your website or freelancing.

Swami's Experience

"I used to draw a couple of times before this course. But I could never grasp the skills since self-learning was not very useful (at least in my case)"

I never used to imagine shapes or have imaginary aspects of perceiving a thought. It was a significant effort for me to imagine an idea and fill a color on top of that thought

I had a mental block of imagining certain things with creativity.
I used to imagine something with words; my imagination was related to words and not many images. So always, there was a gap between what I wanted to draw and my drawing output. I never had the clarity of my imagination and struggled with crystalizing a concept. All my front-end stories were filled with words even though the backend was imaging. Our brain's default mode is images; somehow, I have lost it as part of growing up with education and working in the corporate world.

The forum was instrumental, and all my friends helped me with their daily feedback and personal feedback process. I have received lots of motivation from my group friends and have learned a lot from them. Learning from someone else's mistakes is effortless, and the forum helps reduce errors. Also, one will not be overwhelmed by making mistakes since every group member supports everyone else. I was lucky to get some good feedback from forum members. Forum members motivate you a lot, and everyone helps everyone. Overall, most of them are great motivators and good human beings.

Every day of the week, you would be given a tiny bit of an assignment.
It is like the going back to school process. But this time, no one will push you to do your homework. Instead, your classmates will motivate you, and everyone will encourage everyone else to complete your and their homework. You will never feel the overwhelming factor at all. After some time, you become confident in your skills; you will achieve your progress and results. All you need to do is to "Trust the system."

It was a struggle for some time
After a couple of weeks of attending this course, We were given several assignments. The assignment was to copy his work with freedom. It was a turning point for me. I had started copying the assignments and slowly could see the progress. I have realized that "you do not need to be unique to learn a skill."

One needs to learn the skill before he tries to apply the skill.
In the art world, we call it a reference. It would not be easy to draw without referencing, and one must be comfortable with referencing. I had the freedom to reference the concepts and develop my own. So the referencing was a turning point for me.

I had given a women's day card to my wife and daughter with a couple of cartoons. They were pleased with the cartoon cards. So I plan to create more cartoon cards soon to give to my friends and family circle. Also, I have started posting my cartoons on Twitter without feeling guilty. I believe in small increments and enjoy this part of my life.

I recommend taking this course and trying to complete the daily assignments. Also, this course will significantly activate your right brain if you are good at numbers and rational thinking. The system will help you use the right brain often if unfamiliar with the artistic world. Also, please trust the process. Sean is a great teacher and will help you to reach your objectives. Before taking this course, keep your low expectations and aim to achieve only three objectives. The system will help you to achieve your goals.

All is well. Focus and never give up on your dreams. Aim for a long shot than short-term rewards.

Laura's Experience

"My intent after graduating from college in graphic design, was to work in that field but then life took over (marriage, kids, and homeschooling our girls for almost 10 years)."

I always enjoyed drawing/ illustration classes yet never imagined doing that after college because I just thought I was average. That was my mental block right there- thinking that my drawing skills were not that great.

The DaVinci forum group really helped to boost my confidence in my drawing skills.
Everyone was so encouraging and helpful. Being involved in a group that was going through the same assignments helped me to push through when I got discouraged. And it also motivated me to do the work and turn it in consistently.

If you are debating about taking this course like I was, you will be amazed at how quickly your drawing skills will develop. Each week focuses on training your eyes to see things differently, plus the training system helps you developing these drawing skills.

I feel like I turned a corner in the course when I took the plunge and got an iPad and learned Procreate.
It was a bit challenging at first but with the help and encouragement from everyone, I was able to learn faster than I would have on my own. And I saw a huge leap in the quality of my drawings after I went digital.

The best part?
It's been a great boost to my self confidence to see the reaction from my family and friends when I show them my drawings! They are amazed and want me to keep sending them more of my work ! Plus my daughter, who is a graphic designer, asked if she could hire me out to do contract illustration work for her- she thought I was that good!

If you think, like I did, that you are not that great at drawing- I would say, sign up for this course, do the daily work consistently and you will see a vast improvement. The DaVinci course was able to "draw out" a hidden talent that I never thought I had. It taught me that consistency- in any area of my life- will bring out amazing results.

But most importantly, this course boosted my confidence, and opened the door to a whole new amazing drawing adventure!

Becky's Experience

"Before starting the course, I did not feel I could draw a stick figure. Drawing was something I never thought I could do well."

I did not believe I could learn to draw cartoons. I was a little nervous the first time I posted an assignment. However, the forum and group format were good. The group size was good for engaging with each other. We created a community where we felt safe to share feedback and encouragement. It was fun watching everyone in the course with varying levels of skill help each other and develop their styles.

The training is conducted in tiny increments.
The weekly lessons are short. Students can immediately apply what they have learned by completing and sharing the daily assignments. The other students and the instructor provide helpful feedback and encouragement. Each week builds upon the week before. Learning this way helps the student build their skills and avoid overwhelm.

It is hard to say when I turned a corner, but by mid-way through the course, I had the confidence to know I could draw cartoons using the techniques you shared.

The family and friends with whom I have shared my work have reacted positively. I actually sent some of my work out in the Christmas card I sent in 2022. Amazingly, my boss (who is a musician) saw some of my work and asked me to draw an album cover for him. That was a massive boost of confidence. I will work on that for him after the course is completed.

I understand when someone says they're not good at drawing.
that feeling completely. I was that person before I took this course. If I can learn to draw using this method, anyone can. It was just so much fun. After taking this course, I will be able to create illustrations for my writing and my website. While I don't consider myself a professional cartoonist, it is flattering when someone I know asks me to draw something for them. Who knows where this could go in the future?

I am really glad that I took this course. I enjoyed learning a new skill. I value the friendships that have developed around the forum. I look forward to seeing where drawing cartoons will go for me. mensely. I feel honored to have gotten to take this course. God Bless.

Esther's Experience

"I didn't really know how to draw, only that I wanted to be able to illustrate my own articles. I loved looking at the work of others but for some reason (probably fear of failure) could never get pen to paper myself."

I'm not even sure where to begin with counting the amount and type of mental blocks. There were plenty! I think I was afraid to begin creating and drawing because the result could never be as good as what I was imagining in my head.

It was wonderful to have such a supportive community.
If this had been an art course or a community of people who called themselves artists I wouldn't have joined because I didn't (and still don't) see myself as an artist. The fact that everyone was probably wanting to learn to draw to achieve a larger goal (such as to illustrate their own articles)/as part of a larger scheme lowered the threshold for me. It really helped me to see how others were progressing, both as an inspiration and I also learned from their struggles. It was invaluable to be able to see everyone's work and the feedback on it. In that way it feels like it's not just me doing the course as one person and receiving feedback on the work

I'm able to produce in the time of the course. Instead, it's almost like doing the course many times over and receiving new feedback each time. For example, some people were already ahead and getting feedback on backgrounds while I was not ready to focus on backgrounds yet. Still by looking at their work and reading the feedback I was already learning about backgrounds so that when I was ready to work on some myself I could take all that learning and apply it in my own work.

And of course it was really motivating to see how different people interpreted the assignments and receive feedback from my course mates. I always looked forward to see what others had created and, even though it was a little scary, what they would think of what I had created. I will really miss this creative and supportive little community!

Every week there is an assignment for four days of the week
The last day (Friday) is spent enjoying each other's work and offering feedback to other students. You get feedback on every assignment, not only from the teacher but also from your fellow students. That means daily feedback specifically for you, and often even multiple times daily (if you choose to adjust and turn in an improved version). There's also a lot to be learned from what the other students are working on and the feedback they're receiving. I found it delightful (though a huge time sink) to look through all the different groups and threads to check out everyone's work.
I turned a corner quite early.

It was in the first few weeks when I realised I didn't have to draw from my imagination but that it was ok to use reference images photos and learn (this was made clear right from the start, but it took me a little while of stubbornness and still trying to draw animals from memory sometimes until I was really able to embrace the use of references (when I saw how much better my own work and that of other's became when references were used).

The next corner came when I started using not only photo's but also illustrations/ cartoons from artists I admired and copied elements from them to learn how to draw in their style/what it was exactly that they were doing. I realised there were somethings I wouldn't have noticed in their work until I tried to reproduce it. Drawing became a new way of seeing for me. A way to discover new techniques and become curious about the world and especially the imaginary worlds of professional artists.

I haven't shown many people, but the one or two that have seen it have said they liked it and were impressed.
You might surprise yourself with the creativity you have inside you and drawing can be a great outlet to feel fulfilled, share that creativity with the world and connect with others.

I really enjoyed the course, learned more than I can feel it is possible to describe here, and feel so much more equipped to illustrate my own articles now. Now I just need to take the article writing course to actually learn to write these articles I've been dreaming about so I can illustrate them ;-)

This course has really shown me how much fun and how satisfying drawing and just creating in general can be and at this point I want to continue to do so just for the fun of it and to improve my skills, not necessarily to achieve something / for practical purposes (like an illustration for an article).

Ryan's Experience

"I have done a bit of sketching over the years, since I was a kid. But really I just drew one little cartoon character all the time and not much else."

I would sometimes draw just the cartoon heads of myself and wife in holiday cards, quickly, but that's all. I was anxious to even try drawing anyone else because of how easily things can get distorted and offend someone! It felt overwhelming to think of drawing something else, like any kind of animal, and I wasn't really that motivated to try.

I had made very simple digital drawings for work. But they were taking absolutely ages to create. I wasn't very fluent in using drawing tools - but I did get layering and extremely basic operations. This was a big motivator for me to see if there was a different way I could go about making illustrations. That and it is also very hard to find specific images I need for the niche work that I do.

One mental block I had was that I wasn't sure how the course was going to turn out. I was sure I could get a better skill at drawing, but I wasn't sure if it would help me what I needed for my work. I hesitated a lot on this before signing up for the course.

I think another mental block I had was for a while I was always trying to draw something new for every assignment. Perhaps I thought it was easy or I was worried I wasn't going to be able to come up with my own ideas. But what happened was that it accelerated learning - I spent the time and energy I had on doing something new, quickly!

The forum works great! It helped tremendously to see others' progress.
Often this gave me a kick start to get going on my own assignment. Or if I felt like I was hitting a wall, there were lots of ideas from others doing the same assignment. The group was super supportive, too. Where I tend to find more flaws in my own work, others saw good progress and fun images which was reassuring and helped propel me forward.

Right off the bat you learn a different way of thinking about drawing: the shape!
You start with the shape, then add the outline, and do colouring and shading last.
Referencing is also a crucial way to accelerate your learning. Within a week or two you can be drawing your own animals. Another week and you can draw almost any animal you can find in a web search!

Once the foundation is in place, you start to learn a bit more about the environment, and layering little skills that add details that flesh out a character, emotion, and

scene. There's lots of examples, and things go in small steps, so it's straightforward to keep going. Sean does an excellent job of pinpointing where you need to make adjustment, even showing you explicitly how to make an adjustment, but only when it's really needed.

Right off the bat, using the shape was a major change.
I know I've been told this before, but it always seemed like an afterthought when it was explained to me. However, it was made to be crucial foundational step to begin the course, and it changed everything.

Another corner I turned was somewhere in the first third of the course when I started using more of the examples to reference by my own choice - I think once I gave myself "permission" to reference - even trace when needed - I saved so much time and energy in learning the weekly lesson, it felt like I was learning a lot faster.

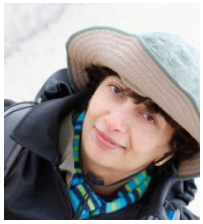
I also did a bit of extra drawing a bit more related to my work - ocean waves, buoys, ships etc, and started using them in my work after only a few weeks. I think this was also when I turned a corner into realizing that I could do a lot more than I was hoping for.

My coworkers have all been very supportive and excited.
I put some of them the work I did in the course into my first information product and both my colleagues in my company and out said they really enjoyed it. I've added cartoons to my blog posts and it's helped provide something visual and unique to them, too.

Some of my coworkers mentioned they were surprised at how fast I seemed to be learning cartooning (I didn't tell them I was taking a course lol).

Da Vinci wasn't born with a paintbrush in his hand either!

One thing that really surprised me was how relaxing drawing was.
The focus and attention required helped quiet a busy mind and was actually helpful to do for me at the end of the day.



Audrey's Experience

I had done an old version of the course a long long time ago. After the course ended, my drawing days also ended.

I did try once or twice to restart but very quickly fell off the wagon. So I was basically back to zero when I started. But this time, since I had just got a new iPad and procreate, I was eager to get started again.

Coming into this course so late was a bit daunting. My idea was to just follow along privately. I'm so glad I got butt kicked out of that idea.

Having watched way, way too many cartoons as a kid/adult, I find that there are small things that happen in my daily life, where I can immediately picture a cartoon. But the thought of actually drawing it and getting the perspective right etc. etc stops me from even starting.

I like the forum format.
I'm an introvert and this format suited me perfectly. I looked forward to the feedback from the group(s). I enjoyed seeing what everyone was drawing and would get ideas from them. True, I was sometimes intimidated looking at what I was drawing compared to some others but there was always someone encouraging and motivating me forward.

Start the course with an open mind and trust that the teacher knows how to guide you.
Don't try to question things and expect it to be like some other course you've done. Every course and teacher is different. Just do the assignment and you will be guided if you're going offtrack. What I liked is your drawing skill level is assessed and your are guided forward accordingly.

There was one week where I was just copying Sean's cartoon examples and adding a little something. I really enjoyed myself. For one, I was copying, which meant I was faster. And secondly, I was adding something funny of my own that made me laugh. When I chuckle at my own cartoon, is when I'm really enjoying myself. My husband is always encouraging me and him telling me I've improved a lot which does wonders to my ego. :) And oh yeah there is my favorite butt kicking sister who always tells me I'm funny. :D

Thanks for letting me join the course half way through. I also especially liked when you would take my cartoon and show me exactly where and how I could have made it better. That's a lot of work for you to do. And you would do it for so many people.

I've had a lot of fun. And intend to keep cartooning. Thanks so much!

P.S. A tiny note.

The core of learning a skill isn't any sort of inborn talent. Incredibly, it's mostly confidence that gets you there. You know this to be true, because you can learn a new language and still don't have the confidence to speak.

Even if you have all the skill in the world, it's virtually impossible to get going without a considerable level of confidence.

This course may seem to be about skill. You've seen how almost everyone believed they couldn't draw. However, skill is relatively easy to achieve (despite what we've been told or experienced). The biggest task is to get you confident—and skilled.

Then you too can send a little card like Becky did. Thanks Becky!

If you find anything that bugs you, please click on the bug above to send me an e-mail. Nothing is too small or too big. And if I can, I'll be sure to fix it. E-mail me at: sean@psychotactics.com

PsychoTactics.com

PO Box 36461, Northcote, Auckland, New Zealand
Tel: 64 9 449 0009 | E-mail: sean@psychotactics.com