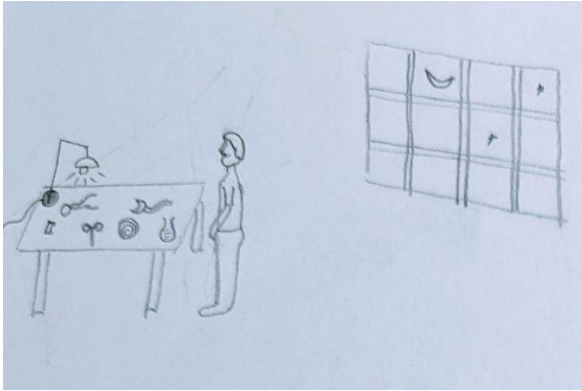


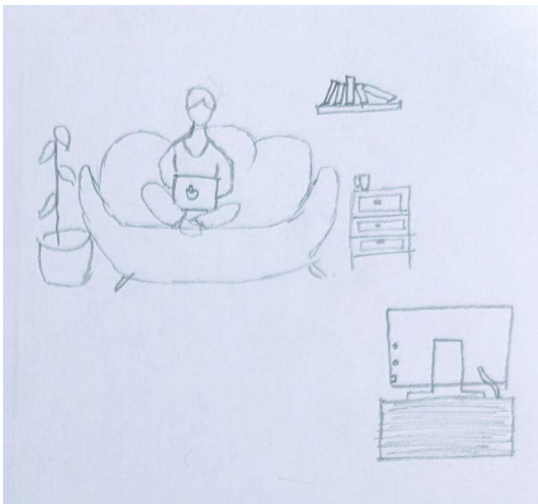
# Alien Roulette

*I* always found it sad to see creatures that play with their food: the majestic orca cruelly



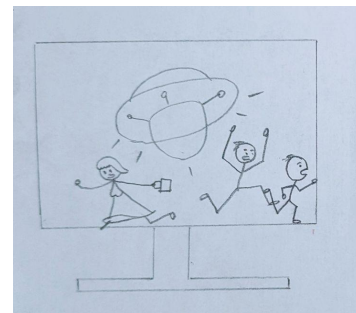
terrorising its victim seals, torturing them before finally putting an end to their misery. Or the cat entertaining itself with its suffering, half dead prey as opposed to eating it quickly. Now this was what was happening to me. To the human race. Ever since space travel began advancing greatly in the late 2020s, sceptics were always predicting imminent doom. But of course, we live in a world where every claim is thoroughly questioned, and so no rational person with an inkling of intelligence would pay attention to these so called visionaries.

Turns out, every rational person was wrong. Here I was, a graduate from the International Institute of Technology, the most prestigious university in the solar system, building a robot in a dark prison cell, fearing for my life. I decided to go with a catapult system as opposed to a flywheel or any other launching mechanism, as I found it to be the most efficient, the balls always reaching their intended target, the high goal. For some reason however, I was not able to focus on the task at hand. I couldn't help but keep reminiscing on the events that led me here.



I had been working on a project at home - a deep learning artificial consciousness that could be my companion, carrying out menial tasks with frightening precision. While doing this, I overheard the television my roommate was listening to, a news channel broadcasting breaking news about a new alien species being discovered - this was a great accomplishment - the second alien species we humans had found scattered around the universe. Furthermore, the company, Starmining Incorporated, was claiming that these new creatures were intelligent. I distinctly remember feeling proud of my planet.

We had gone so far from our primitive beginnings, achieving so much. The beings were, however, much more intelligent than anticipated. They even had technology, although it was far more complicated than ours, and it made us seem antediluvian when it came to machines. The next fortnight passed by in a blur, and I do not want to go into detail about it, as it involved some of the



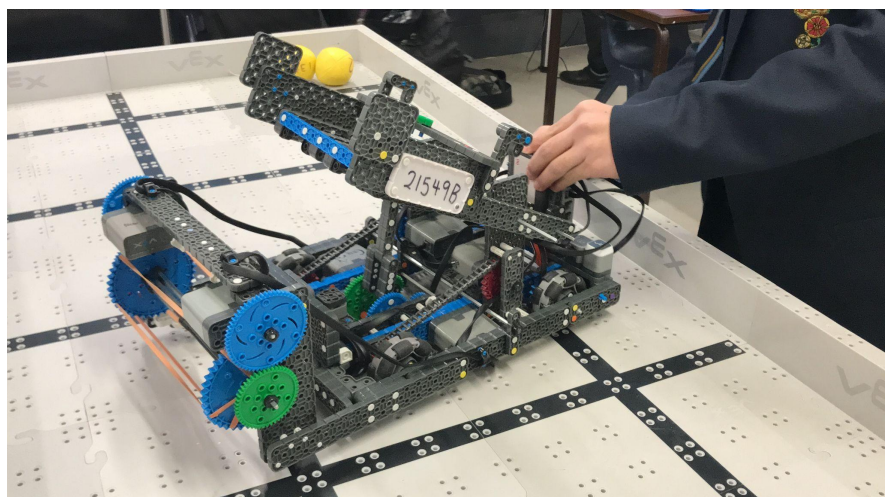
most painful experiences I have ever gone through. All you need to know is that the aliens turned out to be twisted, vicious creatures, and they were indefatigable conquerors. This leads to around a week ago, when our Earthly military forces surrendered. The lionish beasts established control over our species, and began issuing humans to do various menial or undesirable tasks. It was horrific, and the death toll of each day was as high as it was during the worst of the atomic wars in the 2050s. It is now evident that the aliens enjoy playing a game - their version of football or basketball you may say. In their language it is gerst pirth, which roughly translates to 'Pitching In,' although the majority of humans gave it the epithet of Alien Roulette. It could be an interesting game, if it weren't for the fact that the loser(s) are put to death...

The game involves the construction and driving of robots, and there are multiple 'dialects' of how you can play - it depends on what part of their planet your extraterrestrial host originates from. It is relatively simple to comprehend - the basic rules are that a robot has to go around a 6 foot by 8

foot field, collecting 3 inch wide balls which it can either score in a high goal

or low goal, the high goal scoring 6 points, and the low goal scoring 2 points. As aforementioned, depending on your host there may be a sole driver, or there may be two drivers working together. The third possibility is an autonomous robot that drives itself around the field, scoring points. The game is meant to be based on the aliens' polytheistic mythology, in which they believe their gods held a competition: a sort of Olympic Games, and Alien Roulette is a combination of those games, with the robots symbolising

the gods, and the yellow balls symbolising the fireballs used by them. Coming back to the present, since the game involves teams, the creatures put people into teams based on their whims - I was once part of a team that was composed primarily of people who wore glasses. So far I had survived 3 games, all of which I had somehow won, thanks to a prodigious driver and a disqualification. All of this had



led me here - constructing a makeshift robot out of spare parts. My team were all petrified, and this meant that my assertive words were not enough to convince them to actually do some work - I sighed thinking to myself that this was destined to be a one man job. A thought that engendered fear and anxiety in my mind, as I reasoned that I should make the robot lightweight to give me an advantage.

After working on the robot for another few hours, I was called upon the grand stage by my host, a rather infamous alien that went by the nickname of the merry murderer. I carefully laid out my robot at the predetermined position, trying to focus more on the 22 balls and where they had to go, and less on the hundreds of grotesque aliens staring at me with their several eyes. This was a skills game - I was on my own, and worse - I had no idea what the score to beat was. My team had all starkly refused to drive, meaning I had to pilot the robot. I took one final breath, as the crowd counted down, and as the timer began with a melodious sound, I pushed down the joystick. To my horror, nothing happened. The robot didn't move. I turned to see a member of the opposition with a cunning grin etched on her face...

