50¢

Bonus:

FIELD REPORT from the VELVET ERA

BEAUTY FACE

A POEM



BRIAN KIM STEFANS

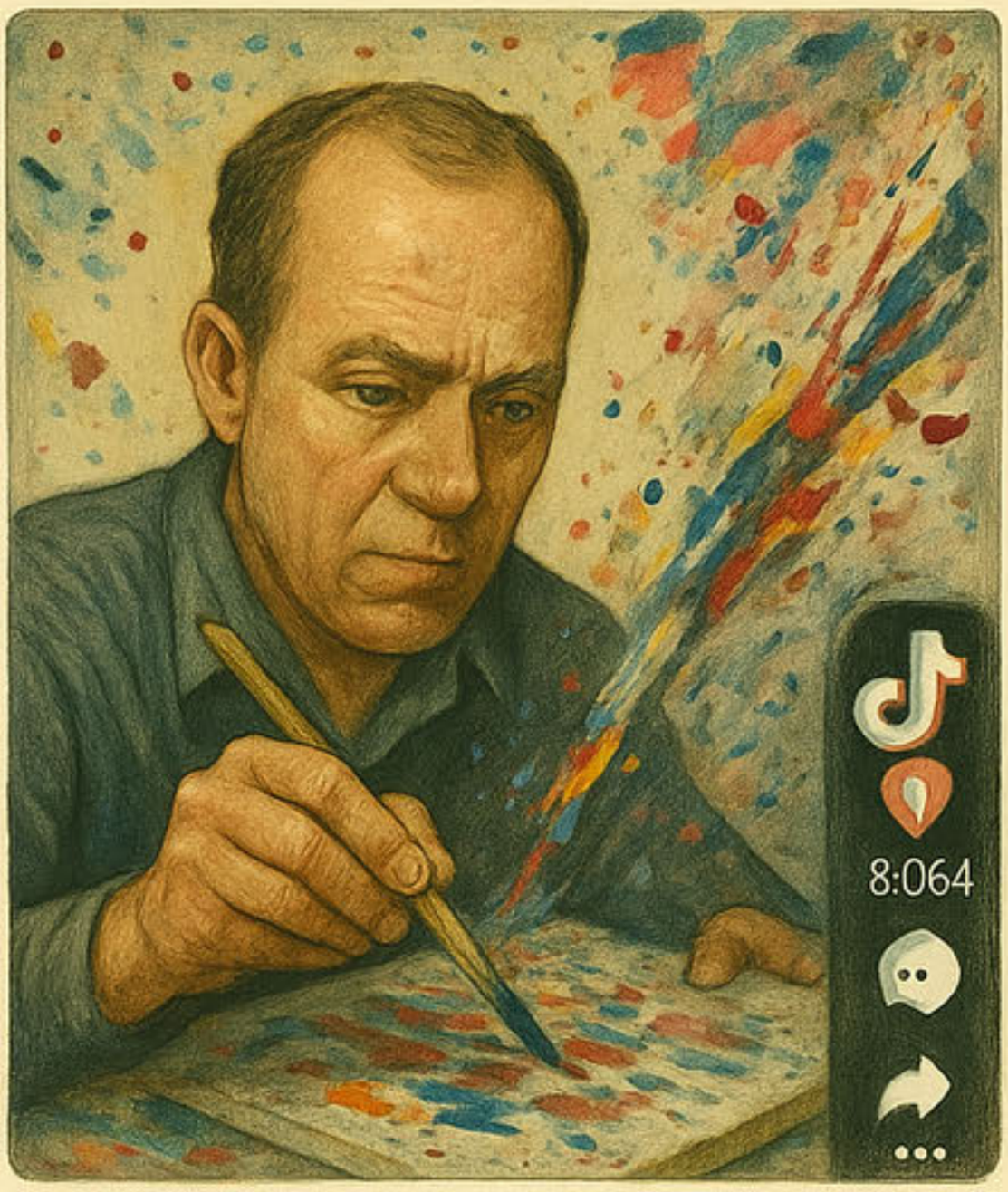
Beauty Face: A Poem

the room refused to
hold its shape and
so i walked into the
weather with my
hands full of bees



1

I'm Miles Davis in a neural
storm,
muting apocalypse in
trumpet form.



2

I'm Jackson Pollock in a
TikTok thread,
spilling code where
the canvas bled.



3

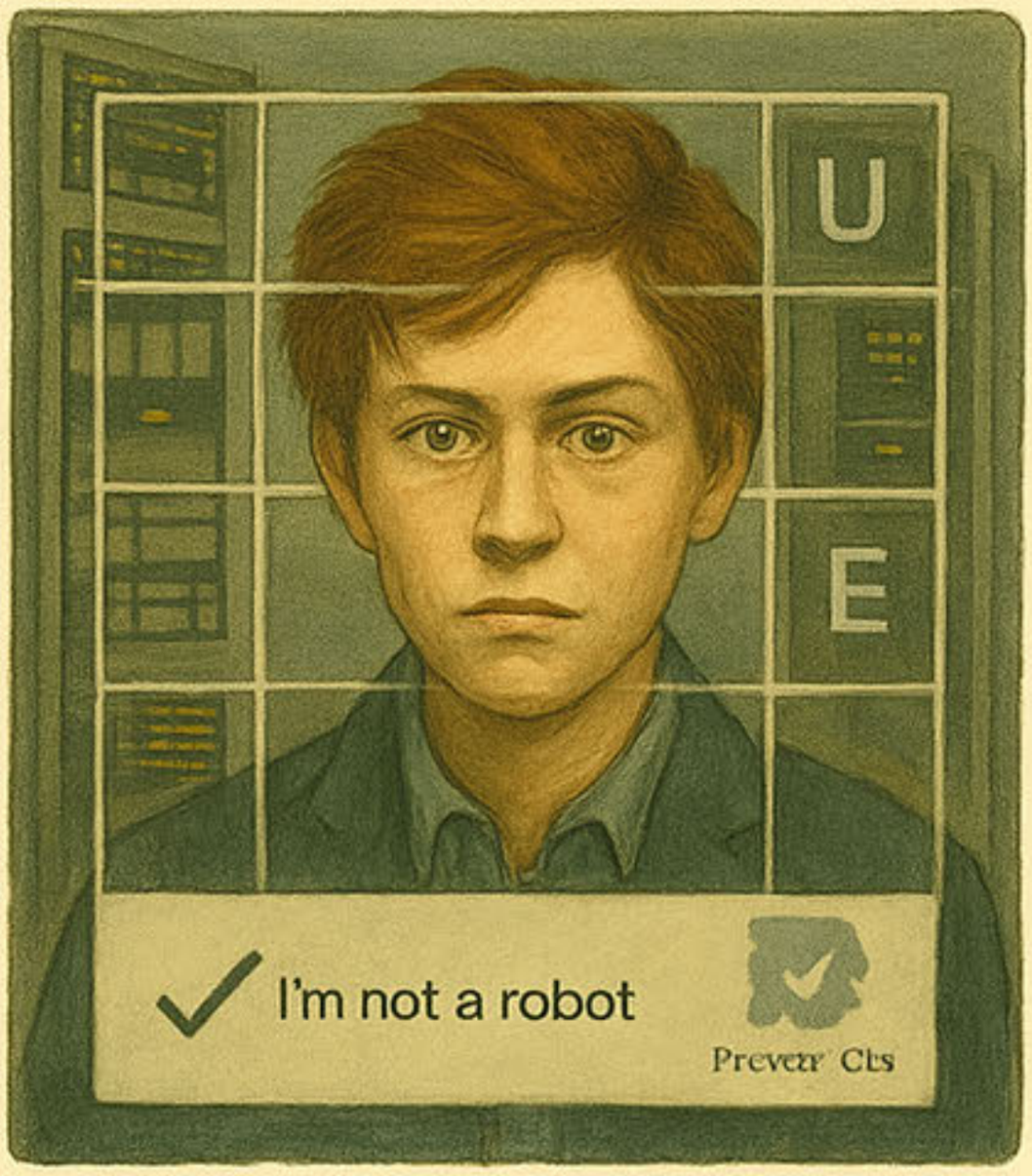
I'm Hitchcock in a home
cam feed,
directing suspense
from your Nest's misread.



4

I'm Simone Weil with a
glitching prayer,
pixelating mercy
in tortured air.

i told the boy behind
the curtain that the
alphabet had fallen
asleep inside me



5

I'm Rimbaud in a CAPTCHA
grid, selling vowels for
a teenage bid.



6

I'm Beto O'Rourke in a
dentist's chair,
air-drumming Keith Moon
with salon hair.



7

I'm Marina Abramović in a
lagging stream
enduring silence for
the algorithm's dream.



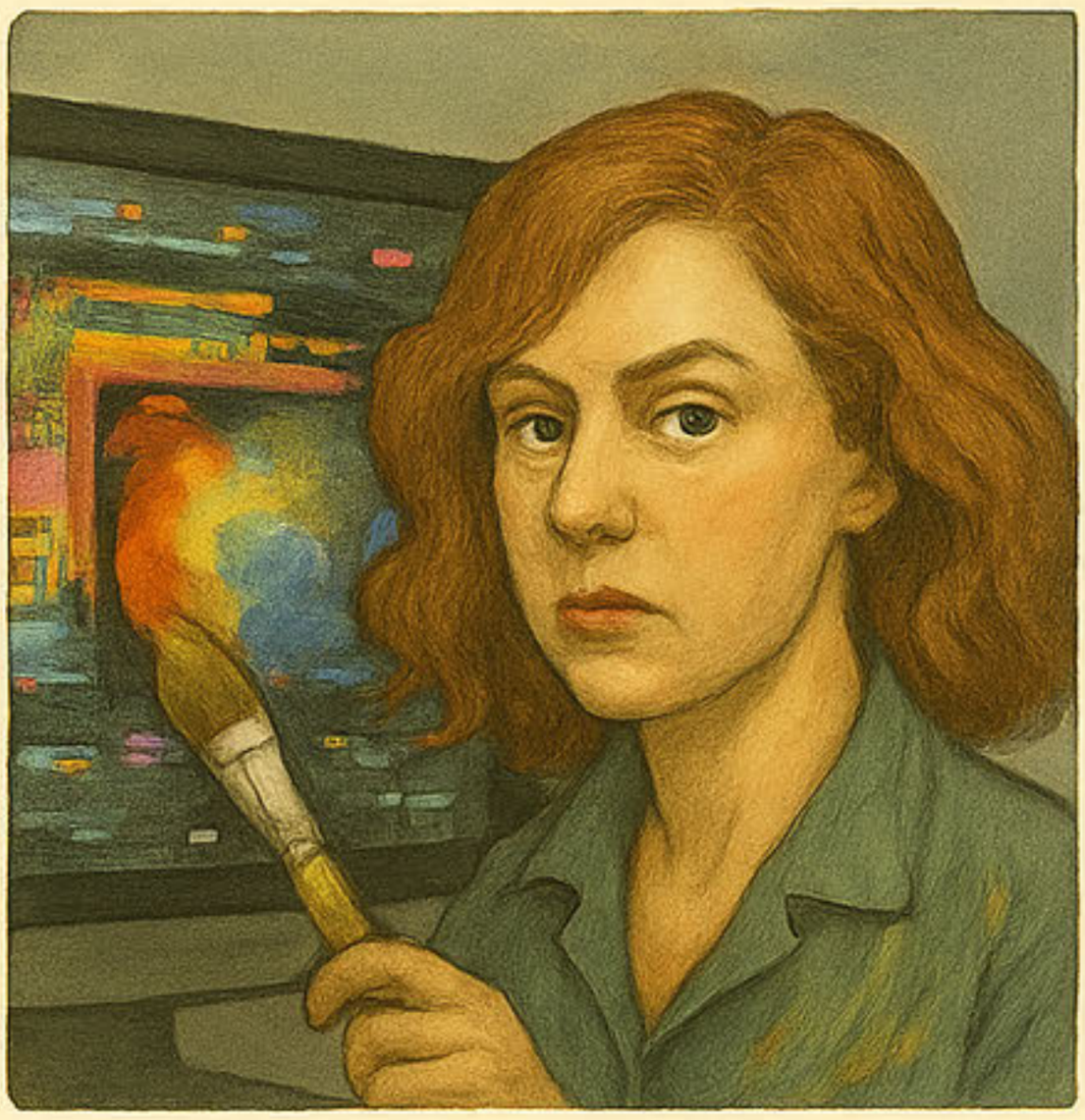
8

I'm Yoko Ono in a data lake,
screaming truth
till the servers break.

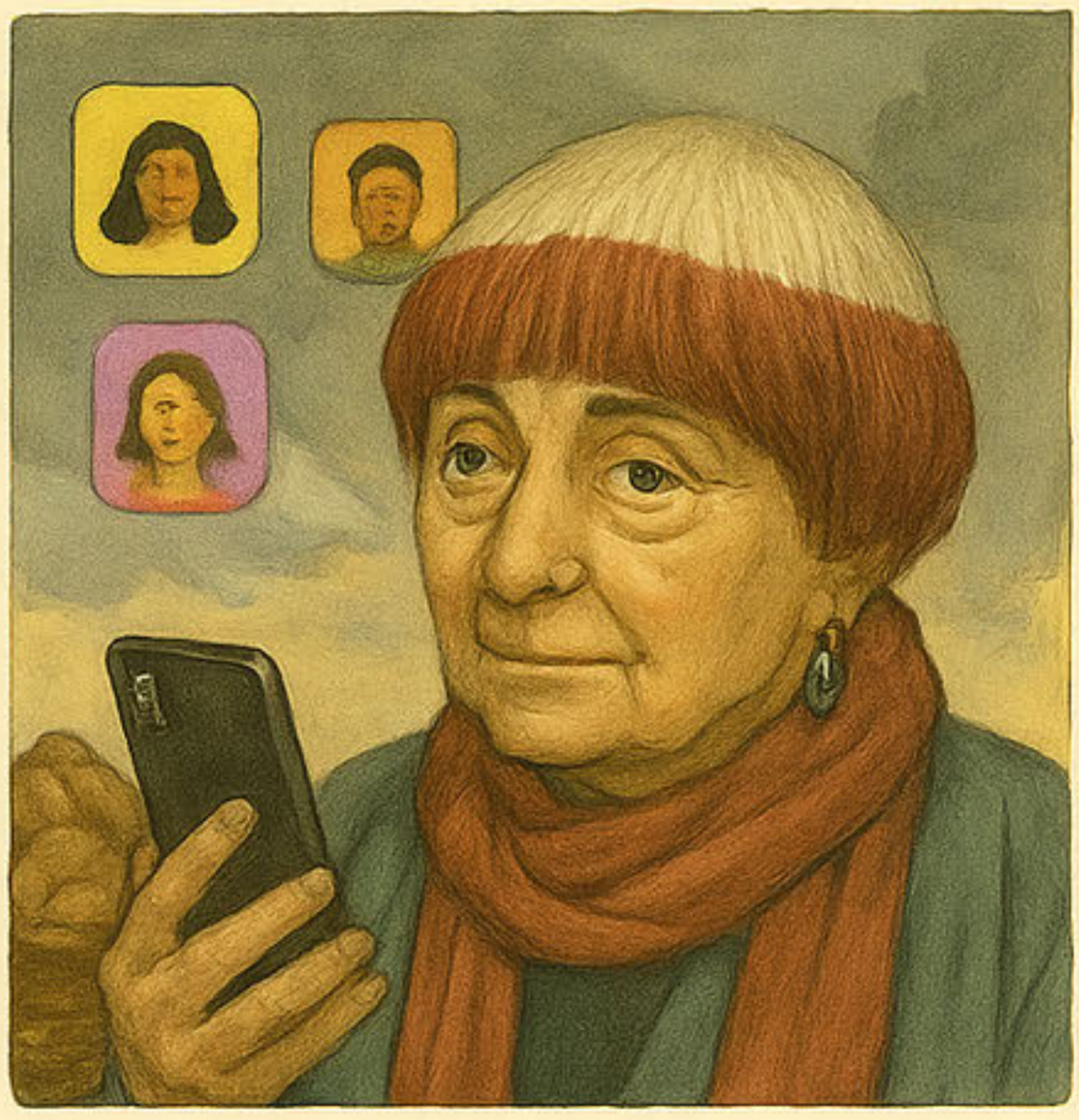
clay does not speak

but it remembers the

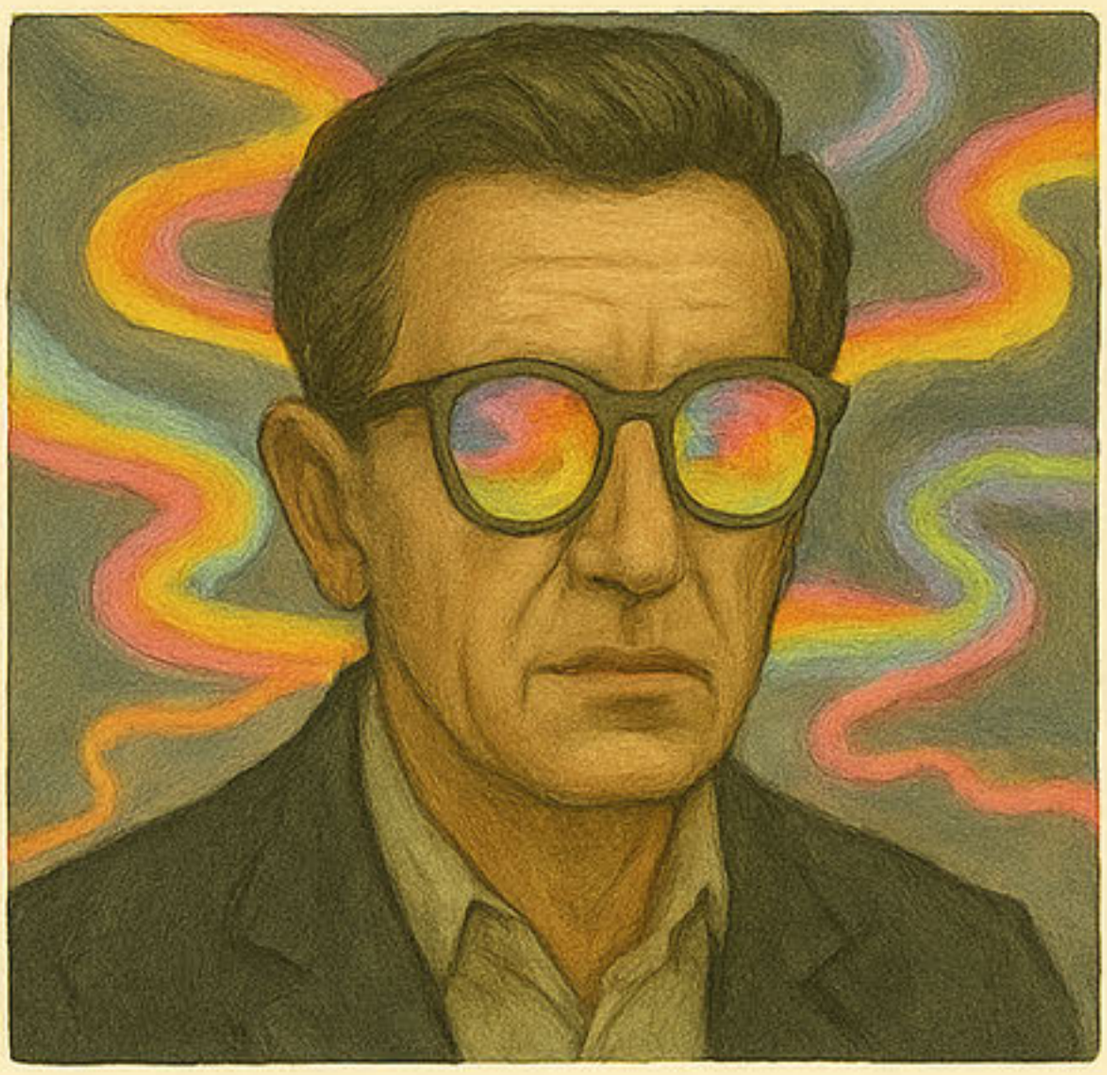
wrist that softened it



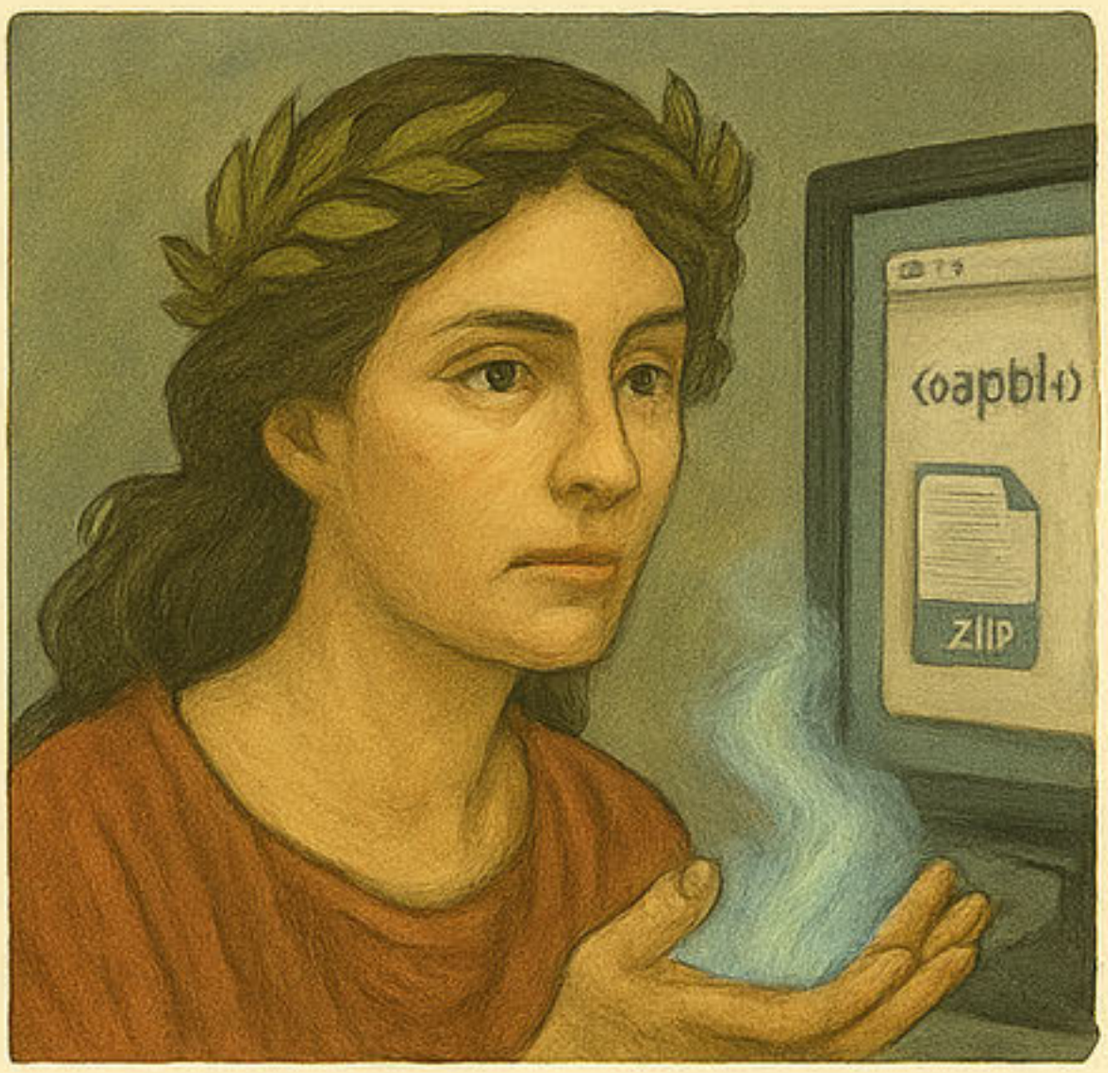
9
I'm Helen Frankenthaler
in a glitch cascade
washing out NFTs
with a color raid.



10
I'm Agnes Varda with a
Snapchat crew,
filming potatoes in
a climate coup.



11
I'm Wittgenstein in a
group chat loop,
defining silence
in a neon soup.



12
I'm Sappho coded in
HTML,
whispering longing
through a .zip spell.

i wanted only a quiet

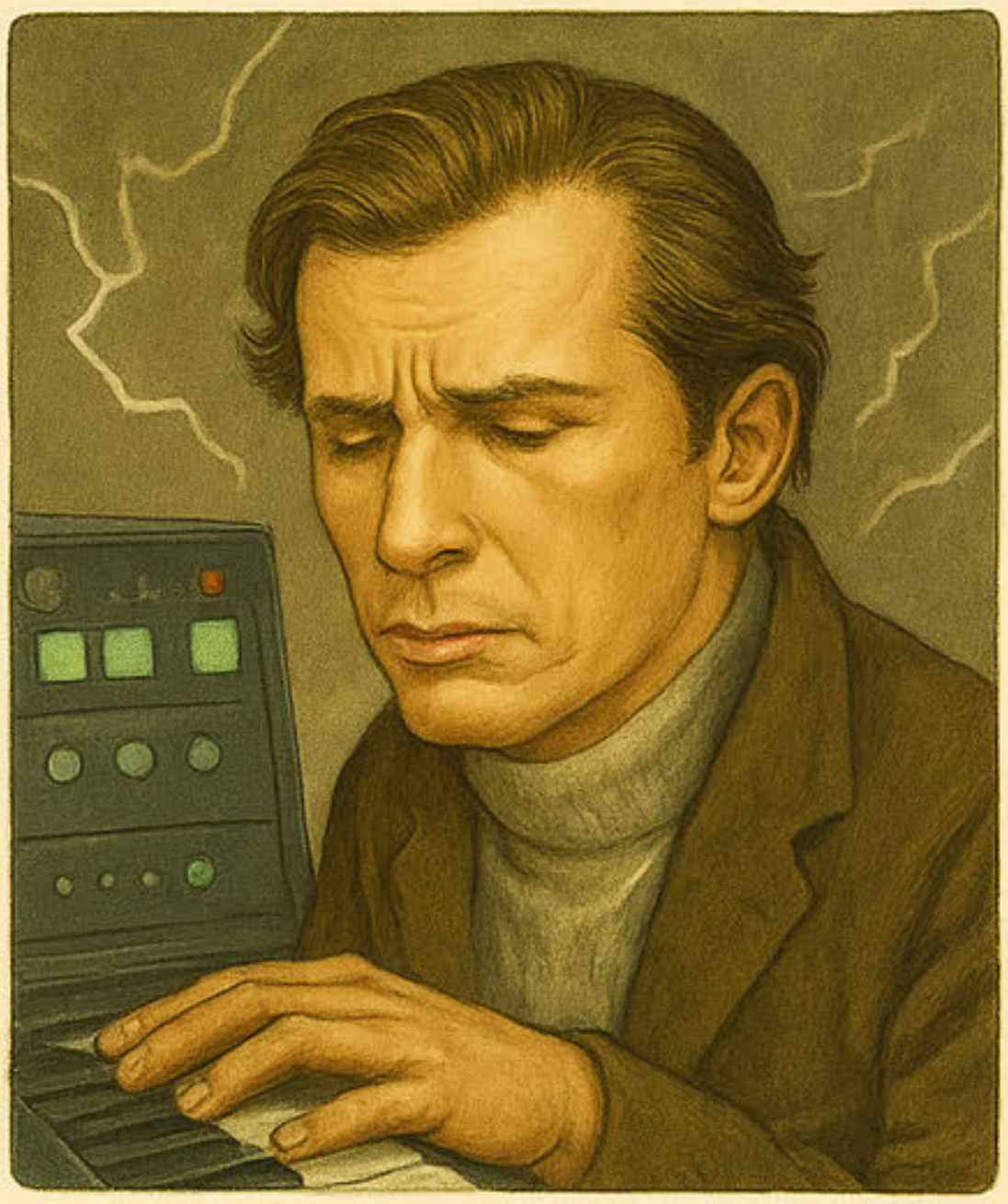
sky and instead

the choir brought

paint



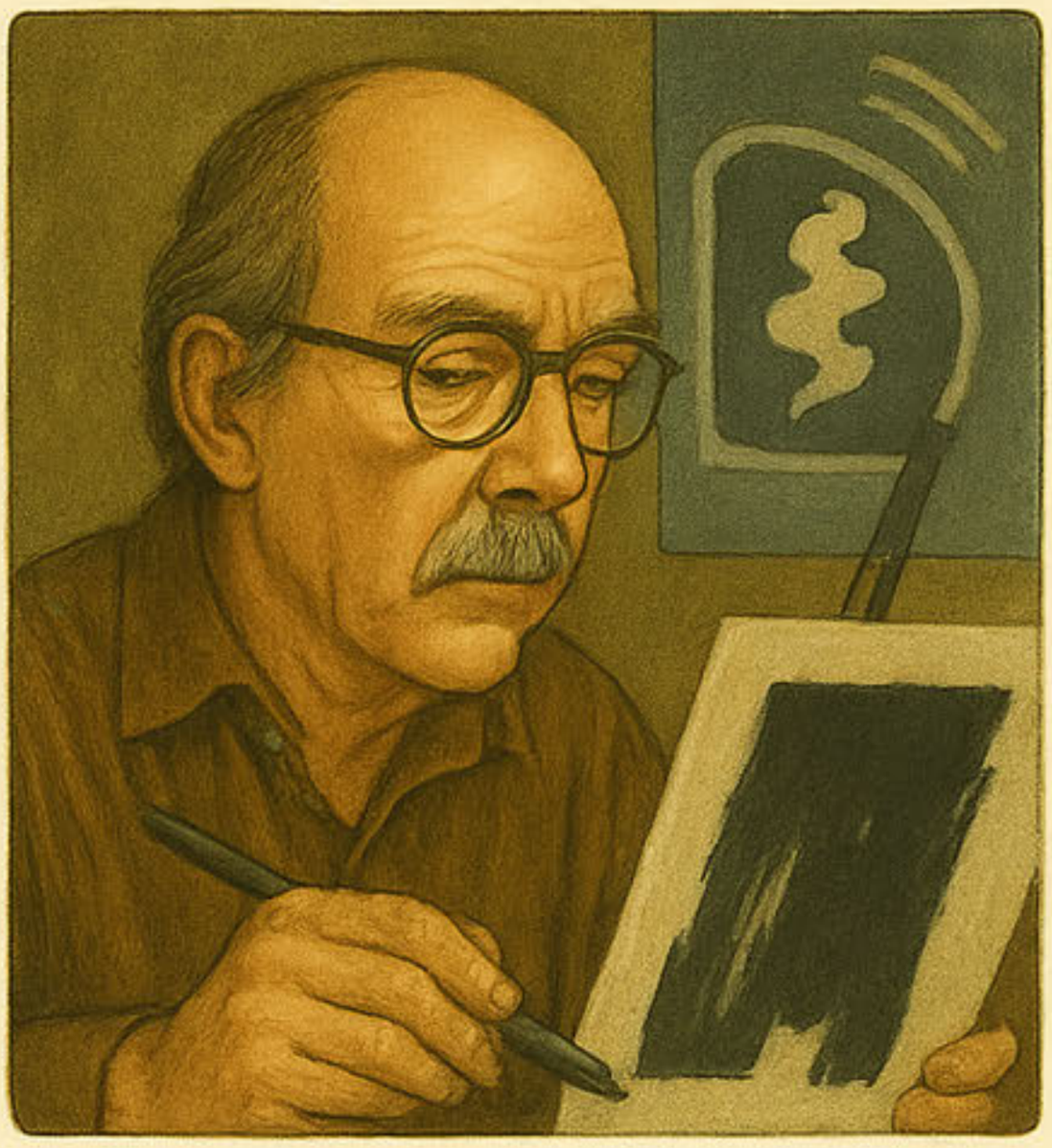
13
I'm Natalie Portman filtered
and bright, fairer
than dolphins in ring light.



14
I'm Glenn Gould in a looped
motif, touching Bach
through feedback grief.



15
I'm Nina Simone with a
crypto frown,
breaking blockchains
with every breakdown.



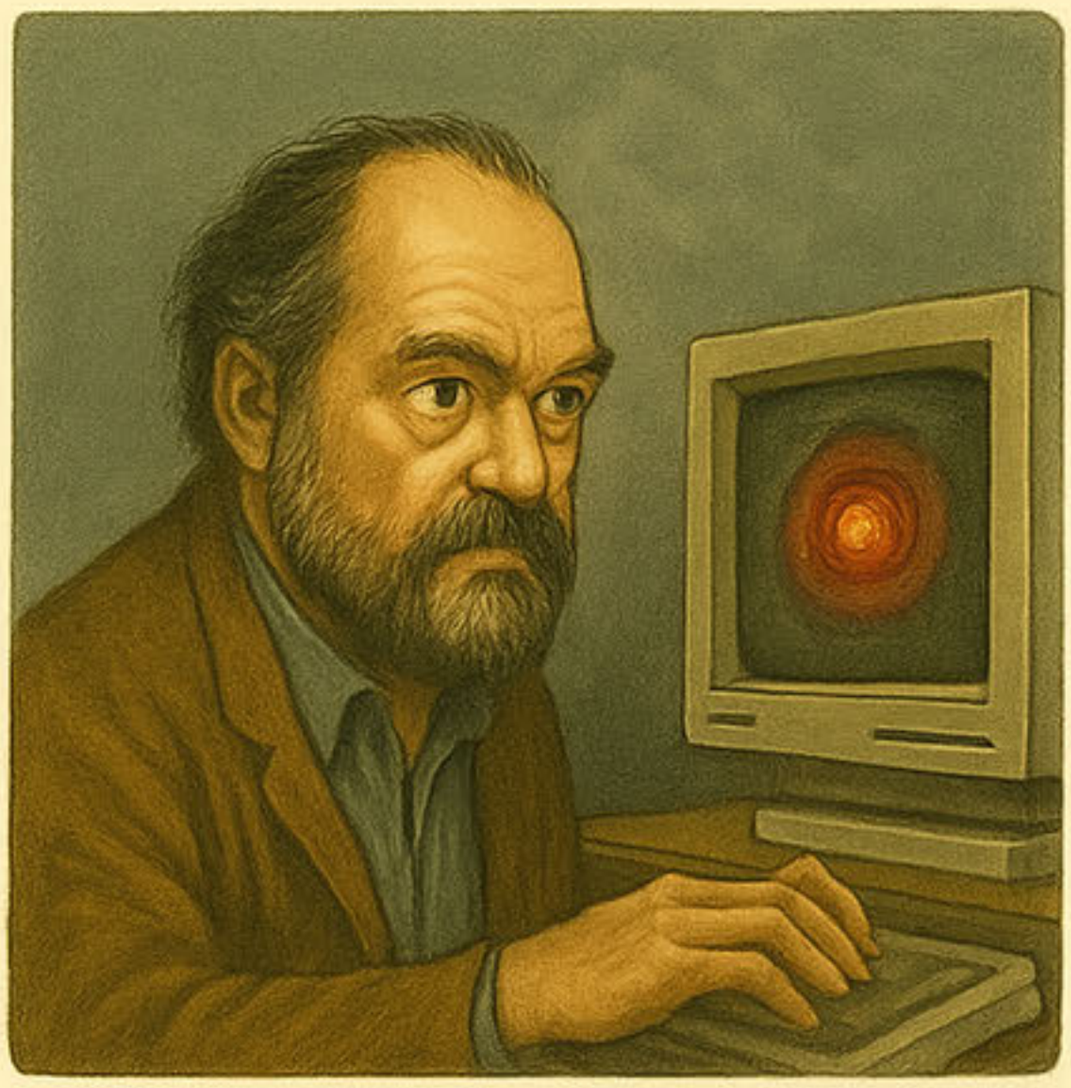
16
I'm Robert Motherwell in
a painter's trance,
inking black fields in
a feedback dance.

mother said never

trust a man who writes

his dreams on

the ceiling



17
I'm Kubrick coding on
Final Draft,
uploading HAL to
a therapist's craft.



18
I'm Judith Butler in a filter
stack,
queering syntax in
a Zoom attack.

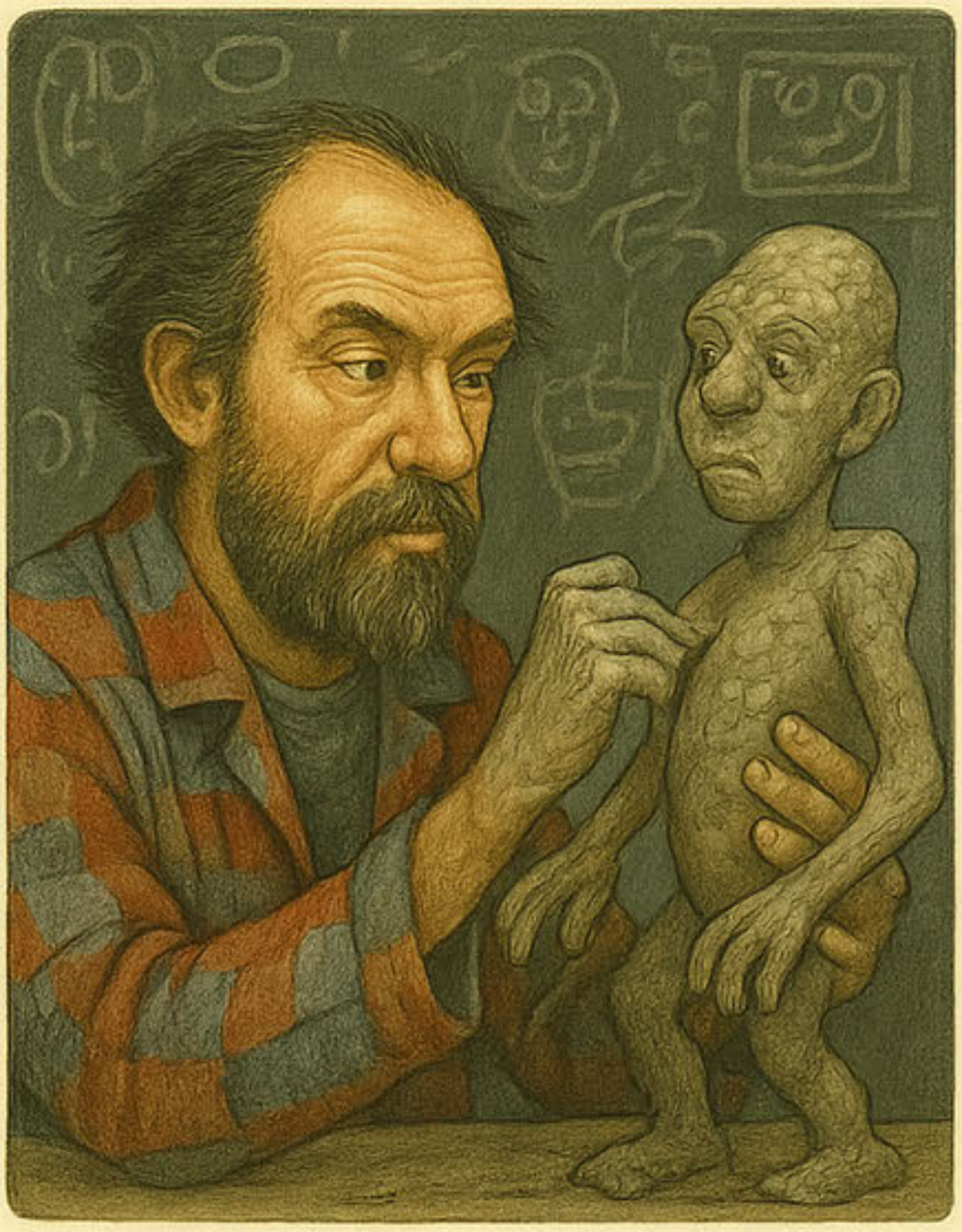


19
I'm Ginsberg in a Twitter
ban,
howling down
from a feedback span.



20
I'm David Bowie in Zoom
disguise,
feeding stardust
to the algorithm's ayes.

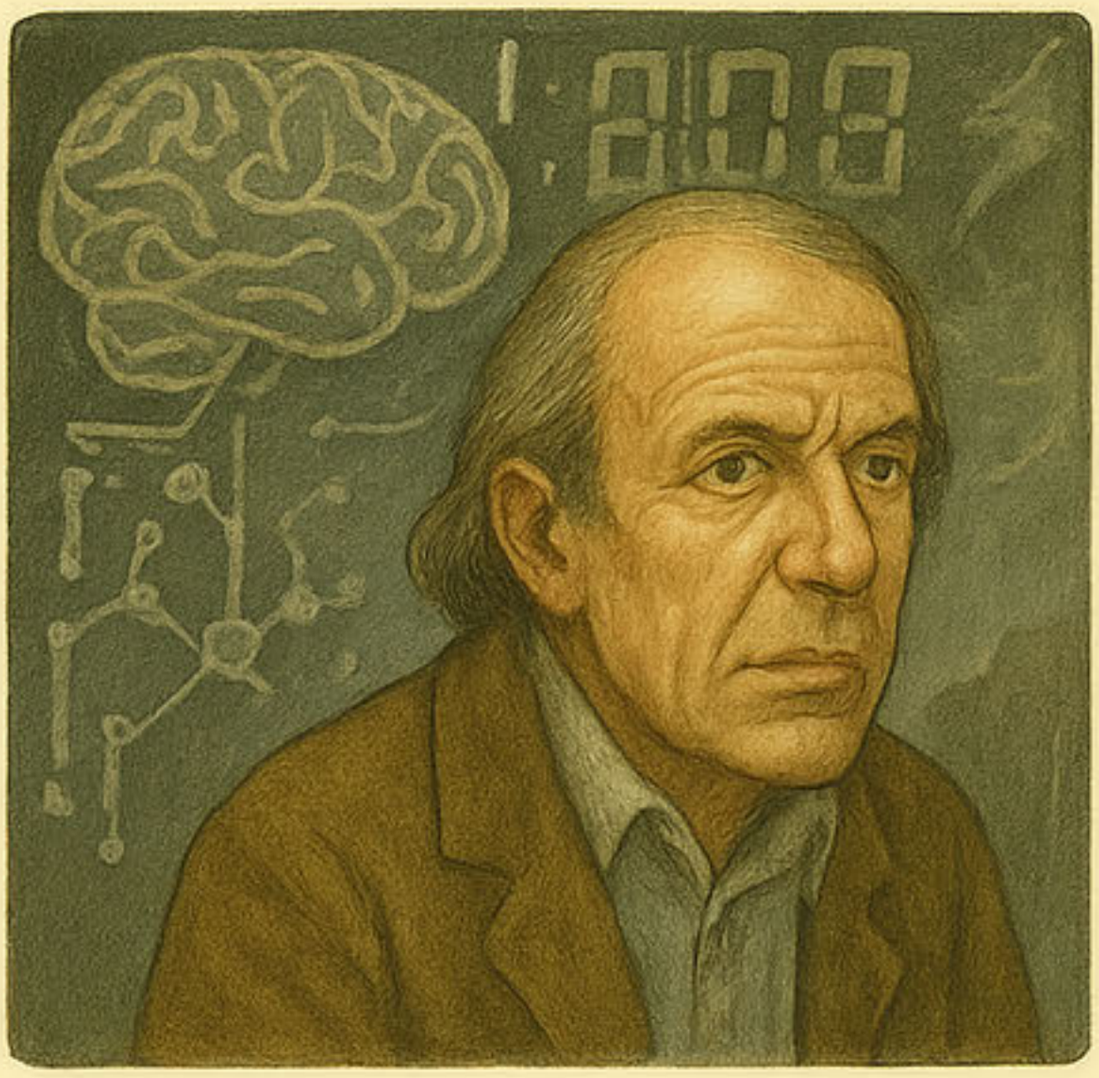
what's the point of
salt if it can't stop
crying



21
I'm Jean Dubuffet on a
Discord spree,
muddling clay with
meme esprit.



22
I'm Chantal Akerman in
a Pinterest storm,
cataloguing grief in
long-form norm.



23
I'm Deleuze inside a neural
net, folding time
like cigarette debt.



24
I'm Elizabeth Bishop on a
Kindle screen,
dissecting loss in margins clean.

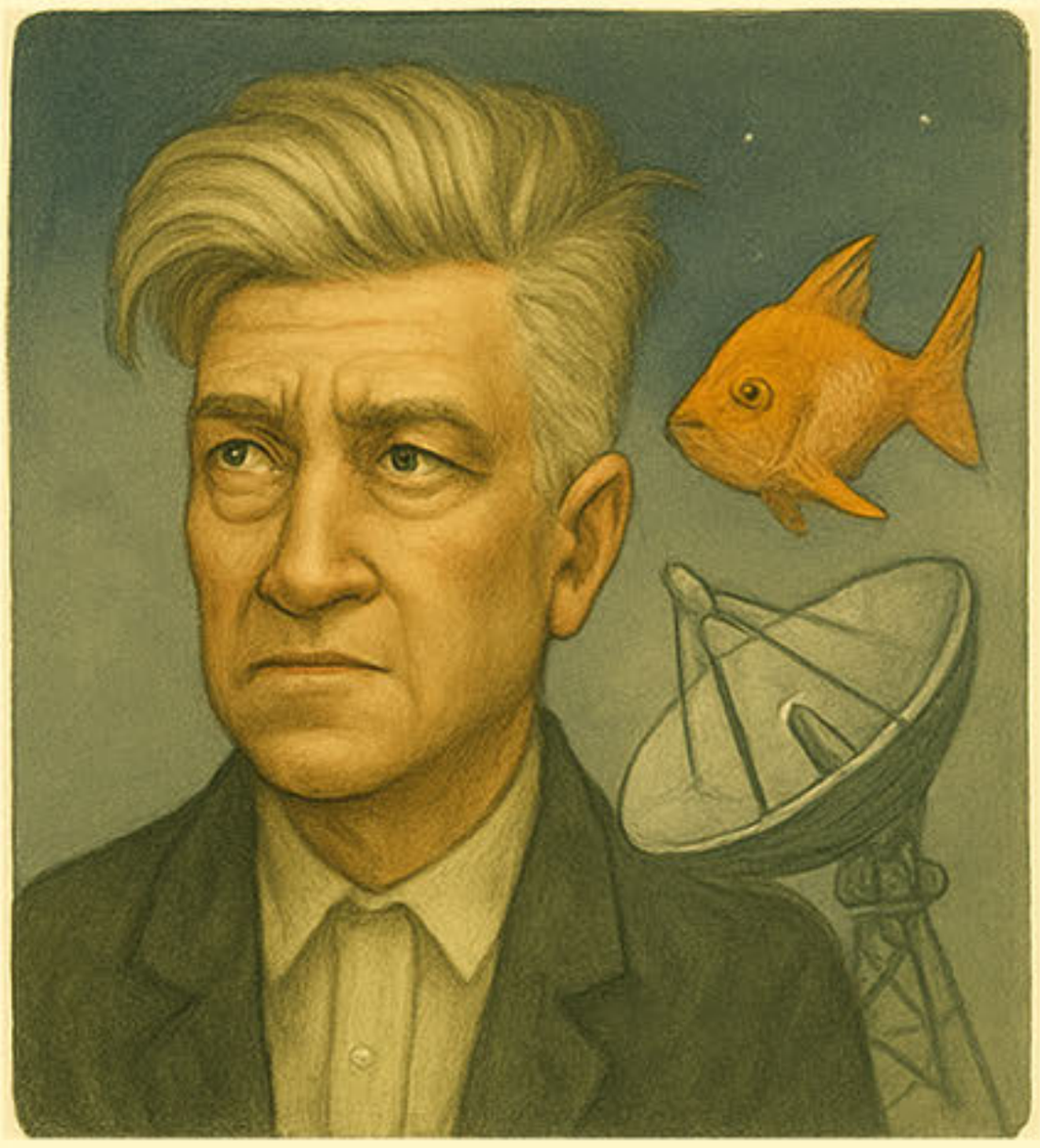
i'm not afraid of fish,

just the kind that hum

lullabies in lowercase



25
I'm Debbie Harry on a
burner phone,
selling punk to a meta-
verse drone.



26
I'm David Lynch with
a satellite dish,
dreaming in static
about a fish.



27
I'm Hannah Arendt in a
push alert,
judging evil in
branded merch.



28
I'm Dylan Thomas in a
karaoke dive,
howling stanzas to
a jello archive.

sometimes the fog
has wrists



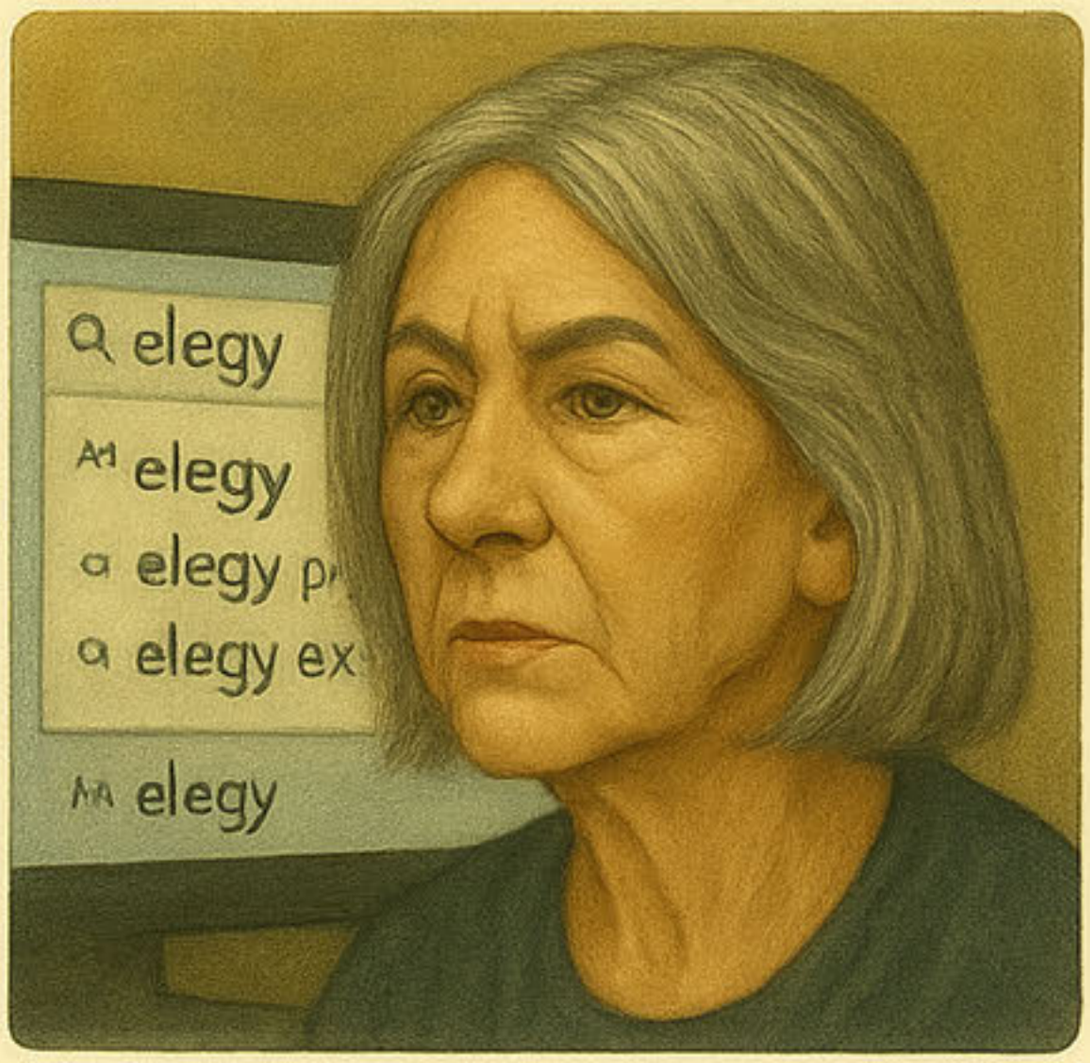
29
I'm Sade whispering
through AI mist
teaching deep fakes
how to kiss.



30
I'm Wong Kar-wai in a
latency drag,
cutting romance on
a jittery tag.



31
I'm Slavoj Žižėk in
a second skin,
sneezing truth through
dopamine sin.

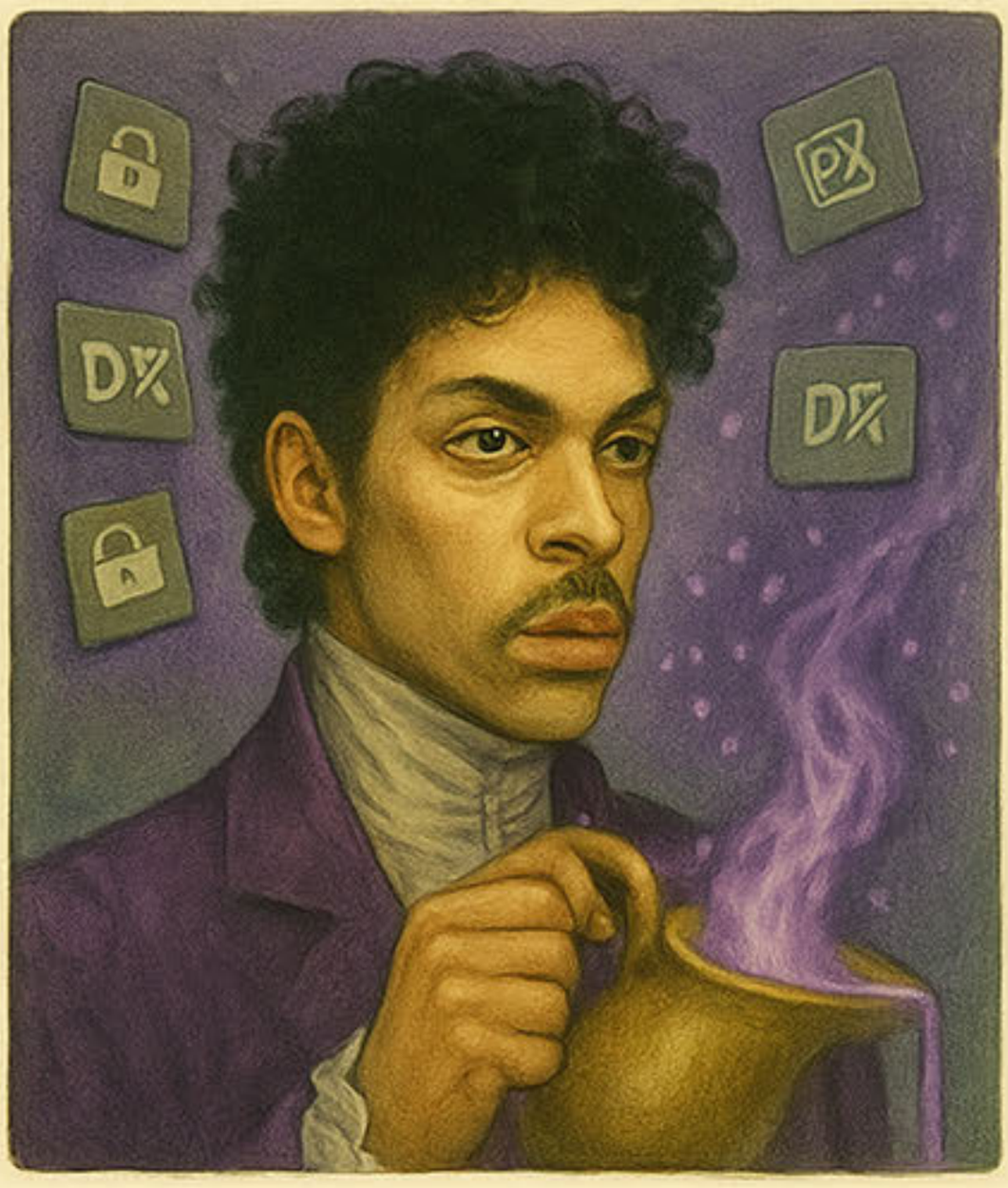


32
I'm Louise Glück in
an autofill box
picking elegy from
sponsored talks.

she carried a thistle

in her mouth and

said it was forgiveness



33
I'm Prince in a DRM
cell, pouring purple
into the algorithm's well.



34
I'm Sylvia Plath in an app
review, rating the void
with stars and blue.

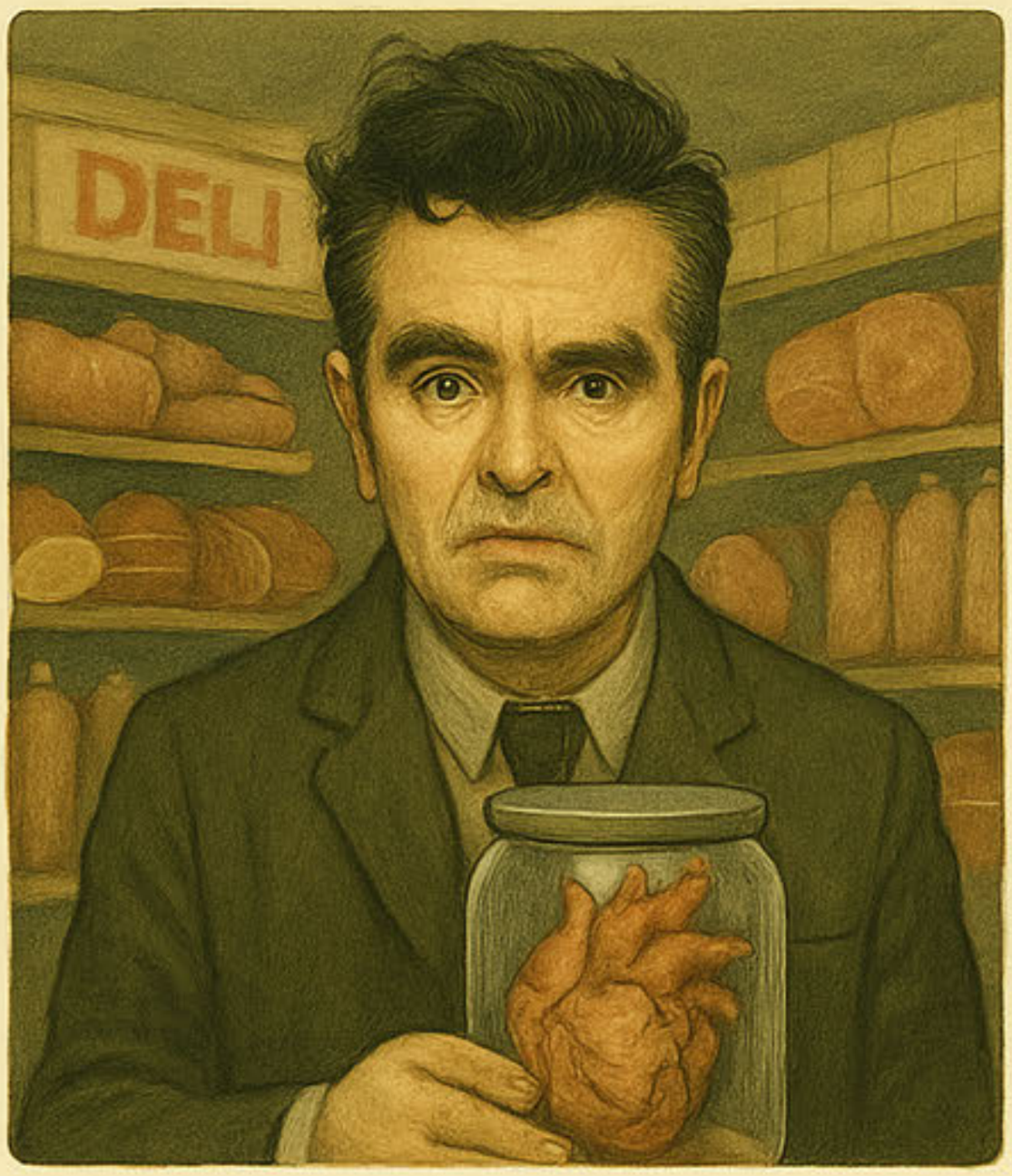


35
I'm Siouxsie Sioux on a
Spotify spree,
summoning goths from
an A.I. sea.



36
I'm Terrance Hayes on a
floating scroll,
rhyming justice into
payroll.

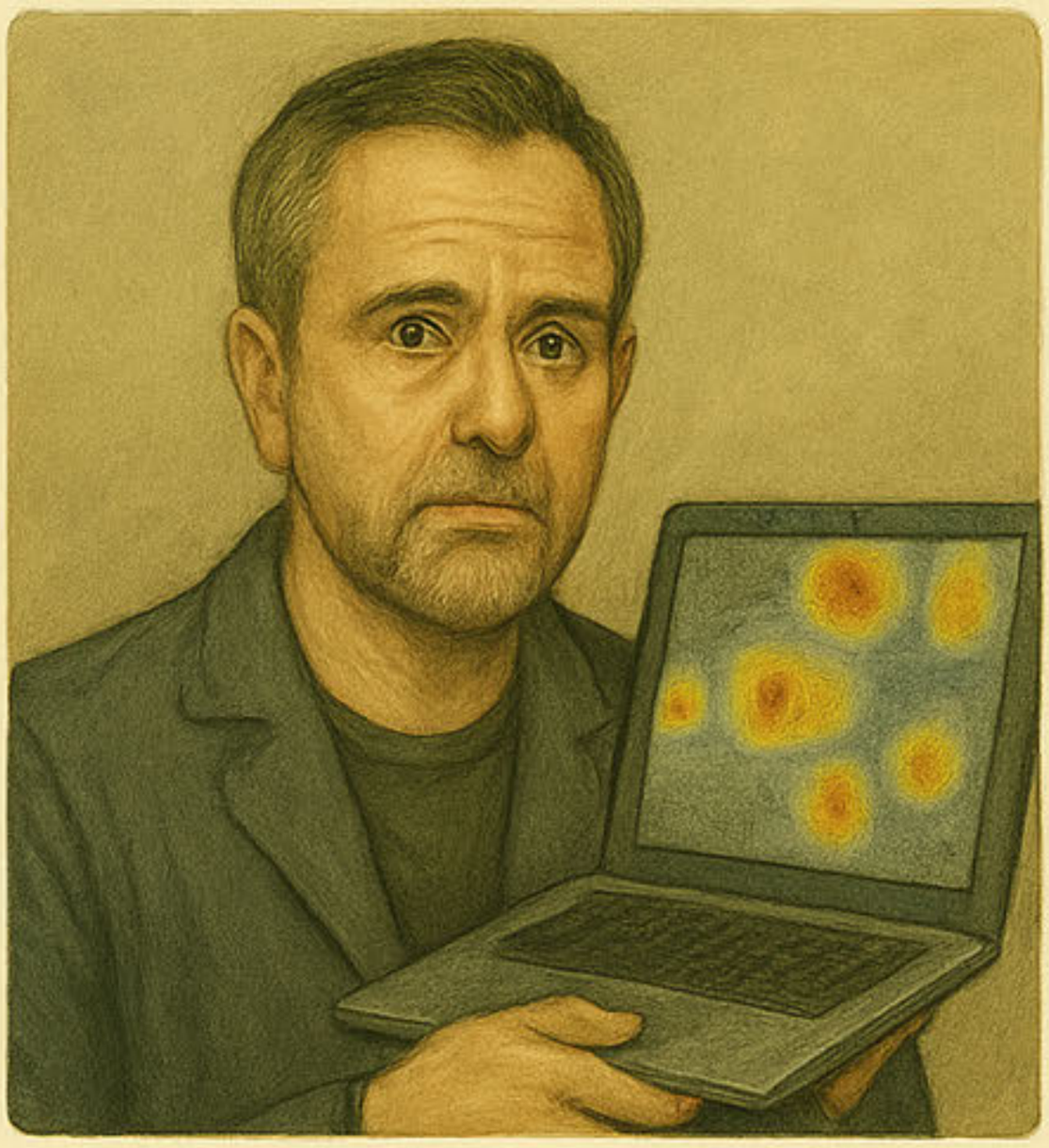
he was made entirely
of vinegar and would
not explain the roses



37
I'm Morrissey in a deli of sighs,
brining regrets in
formaldehyde pies.



38
I'm Cyndi Lauper with a drone
bouquet,
timing heartbreak to
your Apple Pay.

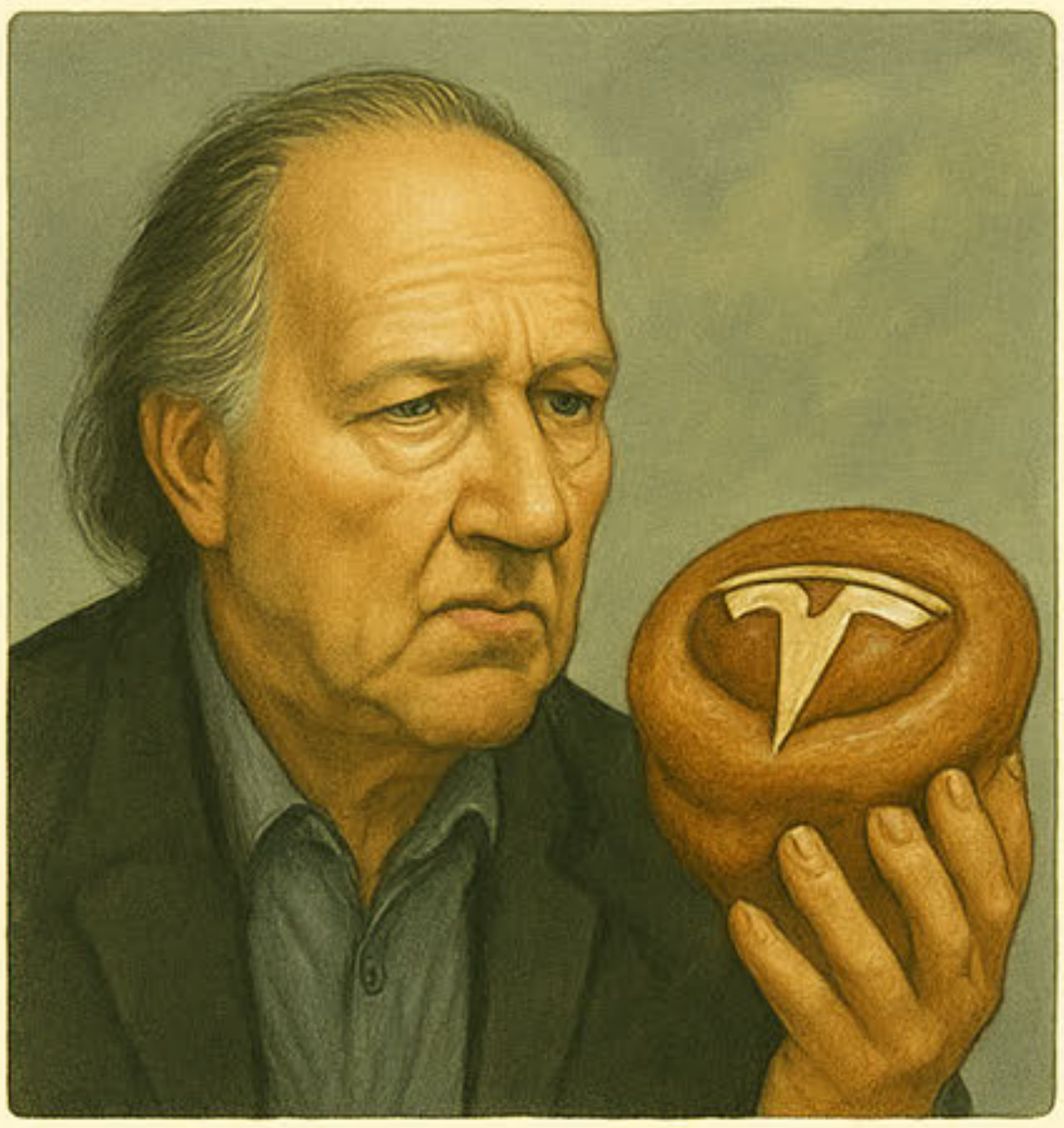


39
I'm Peter Gabriel in a UX trial,
mapping Genesis
to a heatmap style.



40
I'm Britney Spears in a
wellness reel,
twirling through captions
no one can feel.

they fed me pastries
in the shape of fate
and left before i
could swallow



41
I'm Werner Herzog eating
the soul of a Tesla in
the shape of a cinnamon roll.



42
I'm RuPaul, coaching your
anxiety through a
contour tutorial on ídentity.



43
I'm Edward Snowden with
a ring light,
teaching surveillance ethics
through Fortnite.



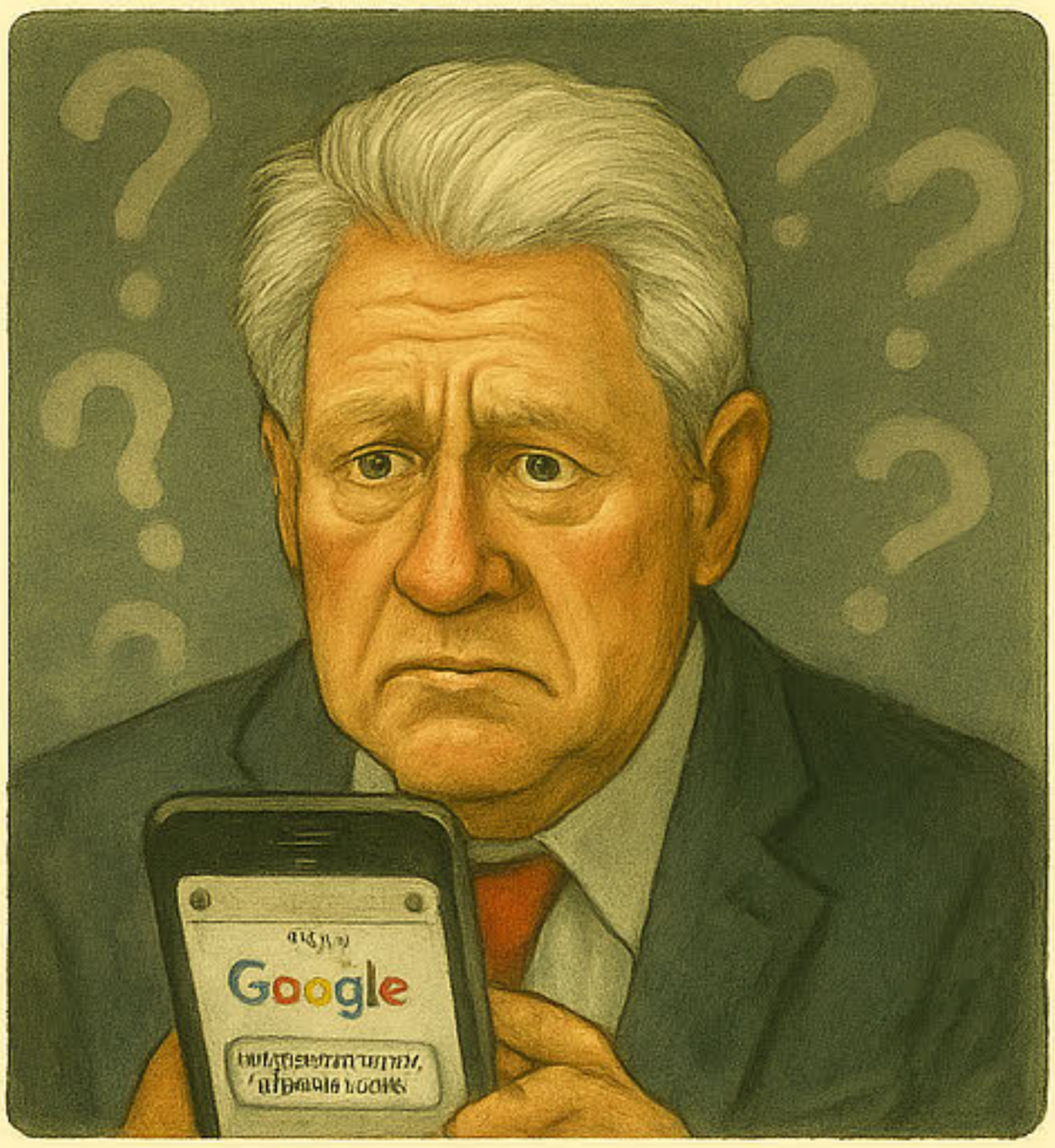
44
I'm Meghan Markle at
Coachella,
giving birth to a
kombucha novella.

every window in that
house was painted
shut with questions,
knives, napkins, and
stars



45

I'm Andy Warhol reading
Yelp reviews of soup
cans rebranded as crypto
news.



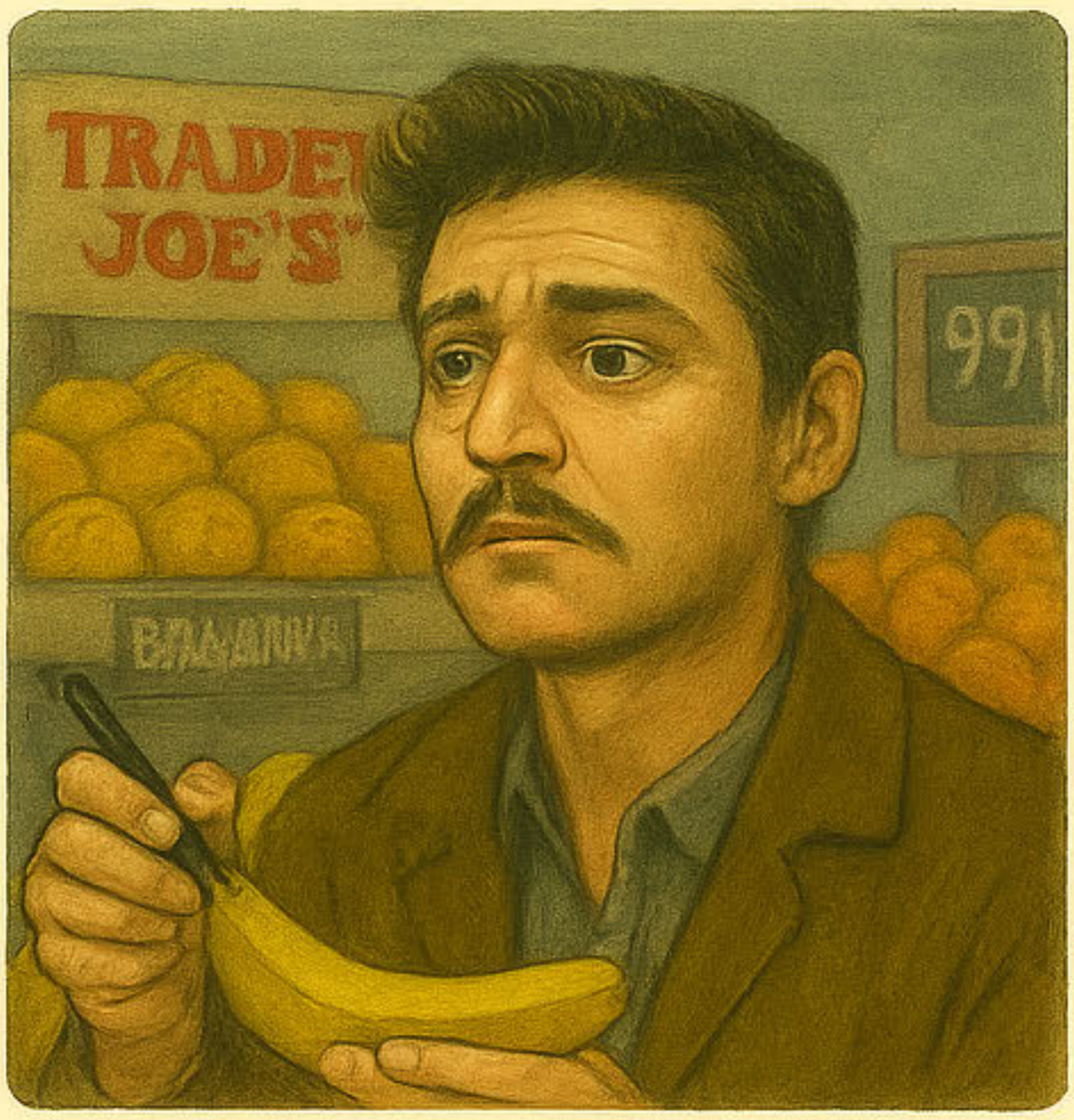
46

I'm Bill Clinton, alone
with an iPad,
Googling "why does everyone
seem so mad."



47

I'm Beyoncé backstage
in a panic,
realizing the glitter
is microplastic.



48

I'm Pedro Pascal in
a Trader Joe's,
signing bananas with
postmodern woes.

i was raised by

mirrors, darling, and

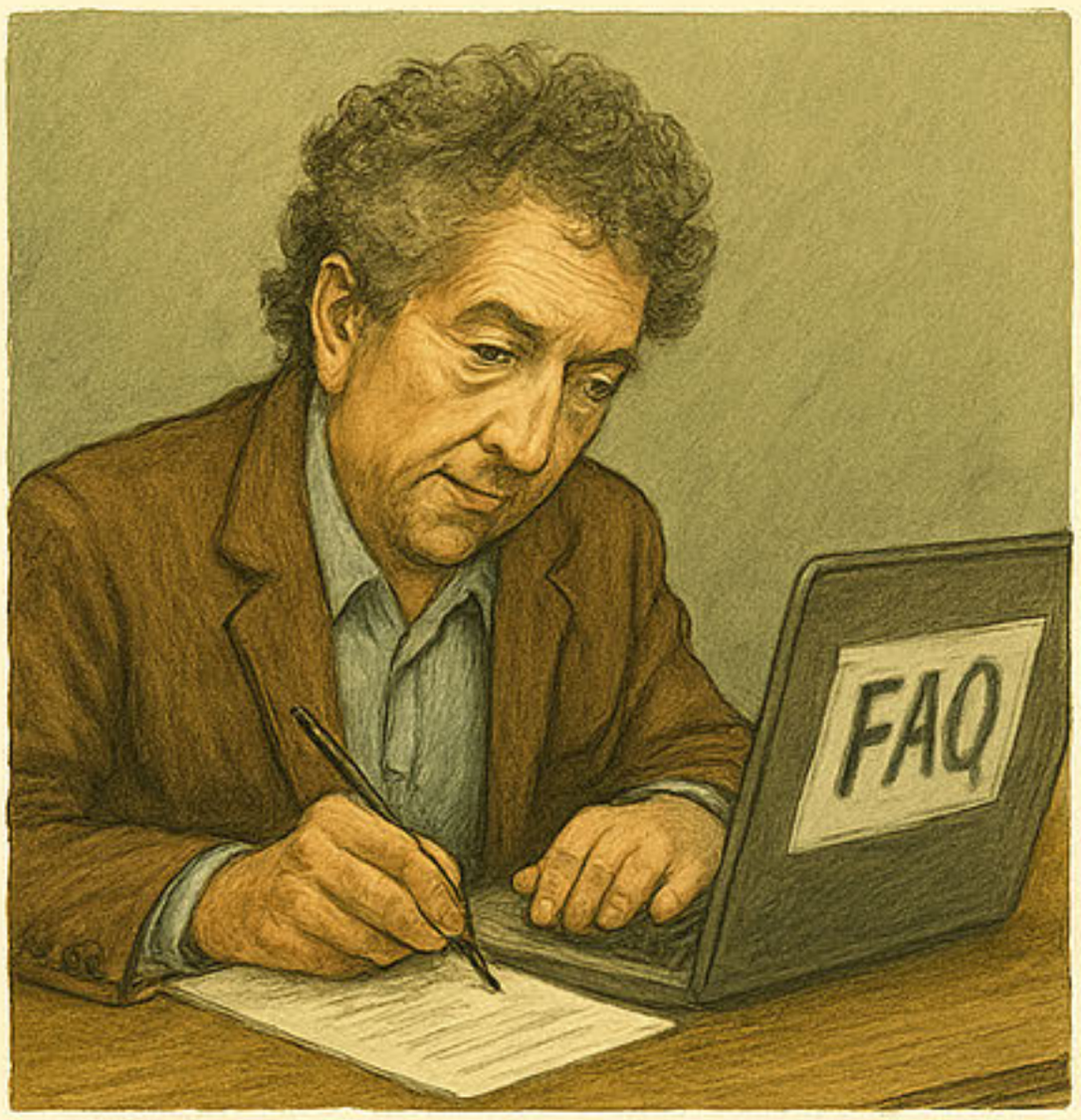
they taught me

how to kneel



49

I'm Kim Kardashian at jury duty, posting thirst traps with civic beauty.



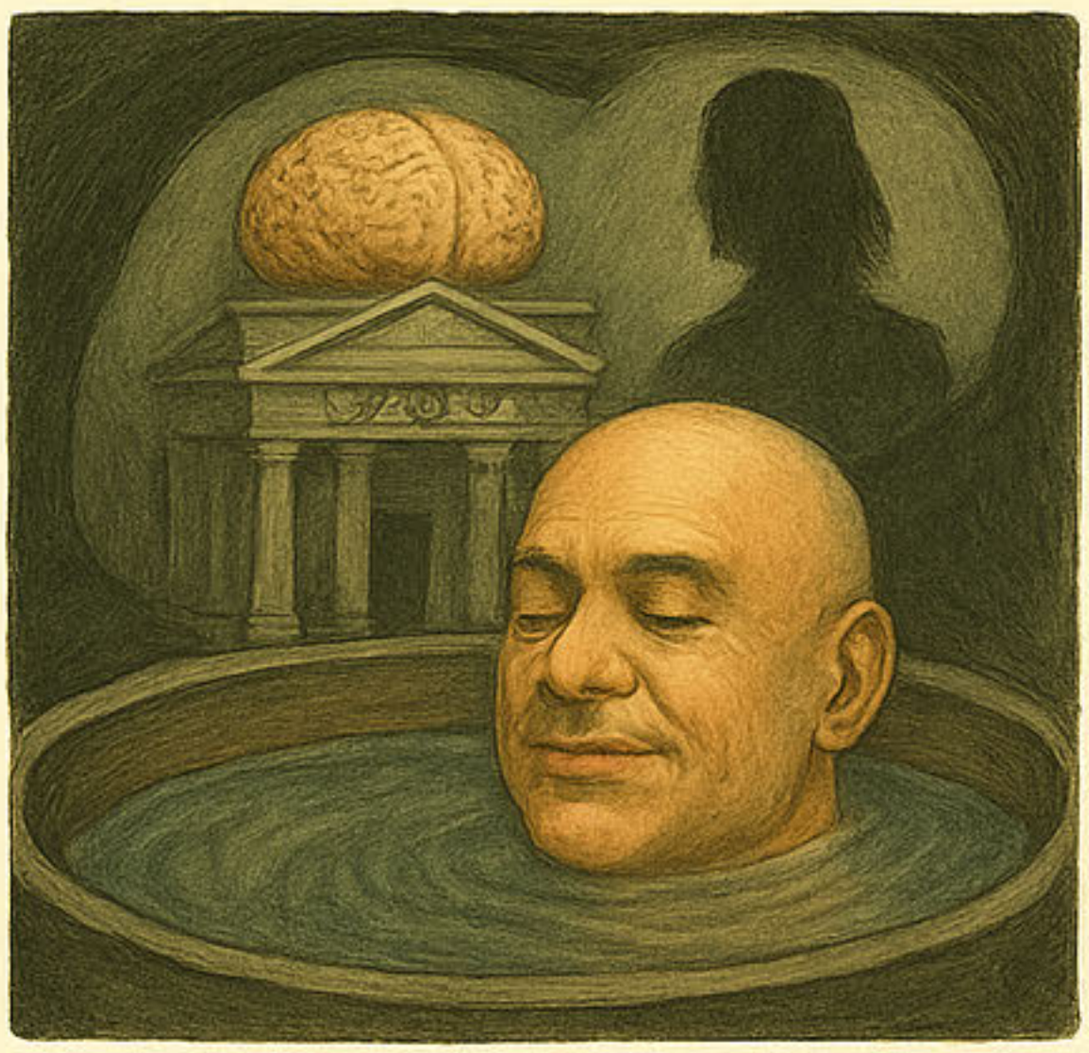
50

I'm Bob Dylan writing an FAQ for his Substack called Blowin' at You.



51

I'm Greta Thunberg with a flamethrower aimed at your Amazon Prime leaf blower.



52

I'm Joe Rogan in a deprivation tank, interviewing his shadow and a protein bank.

the well kept

whispering a number

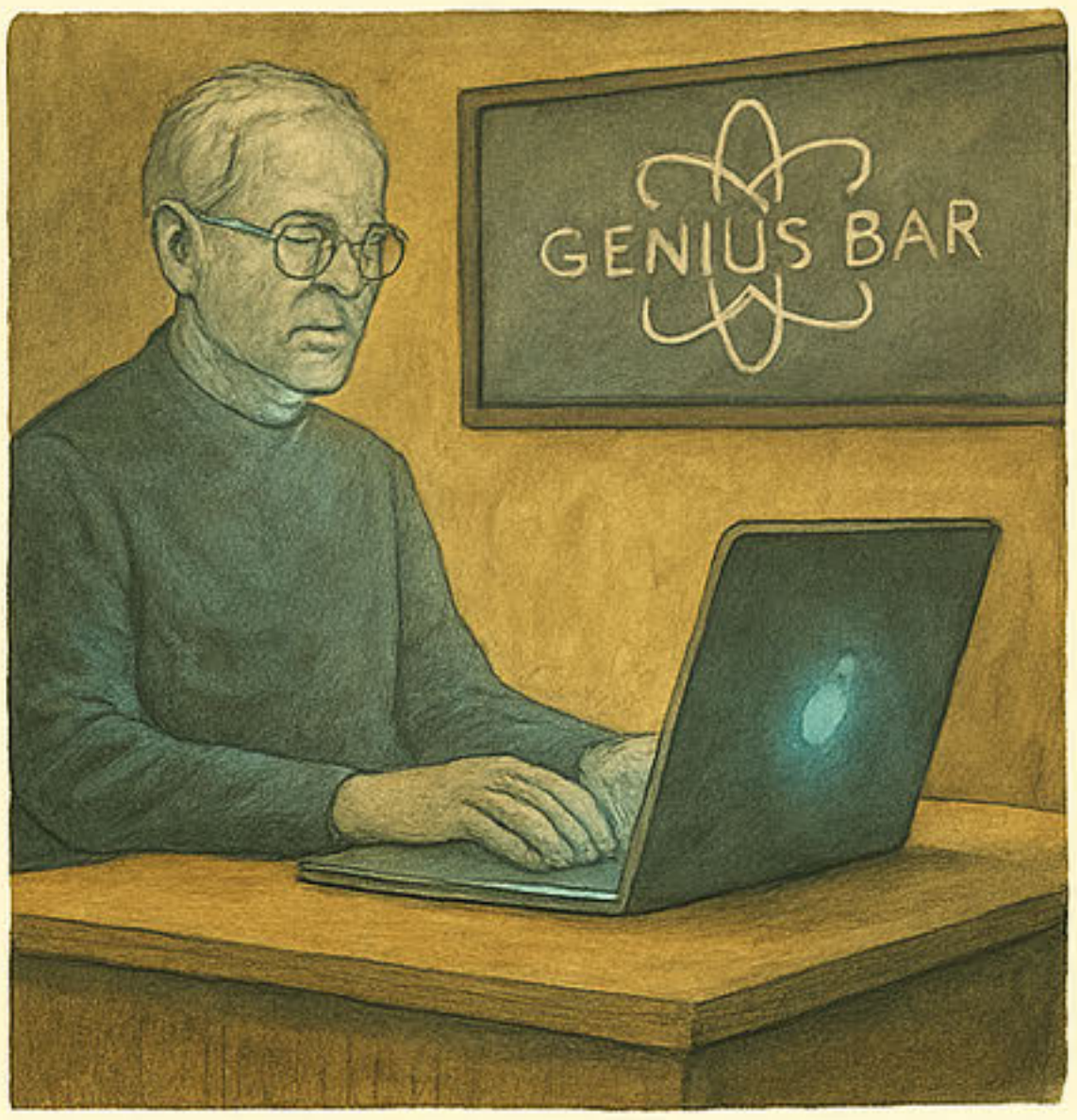
no one could

remember



53

I'm Angela Merkel at a
silent retreat
hearing the euro whi-
sper, *delete delete*.



54

I'm Steve Jobs haunting
the Genius Bar
coding his regrets
into every avatar.



55

I'm AOC live on Twitch,
building socialism
one pixel-glitch.



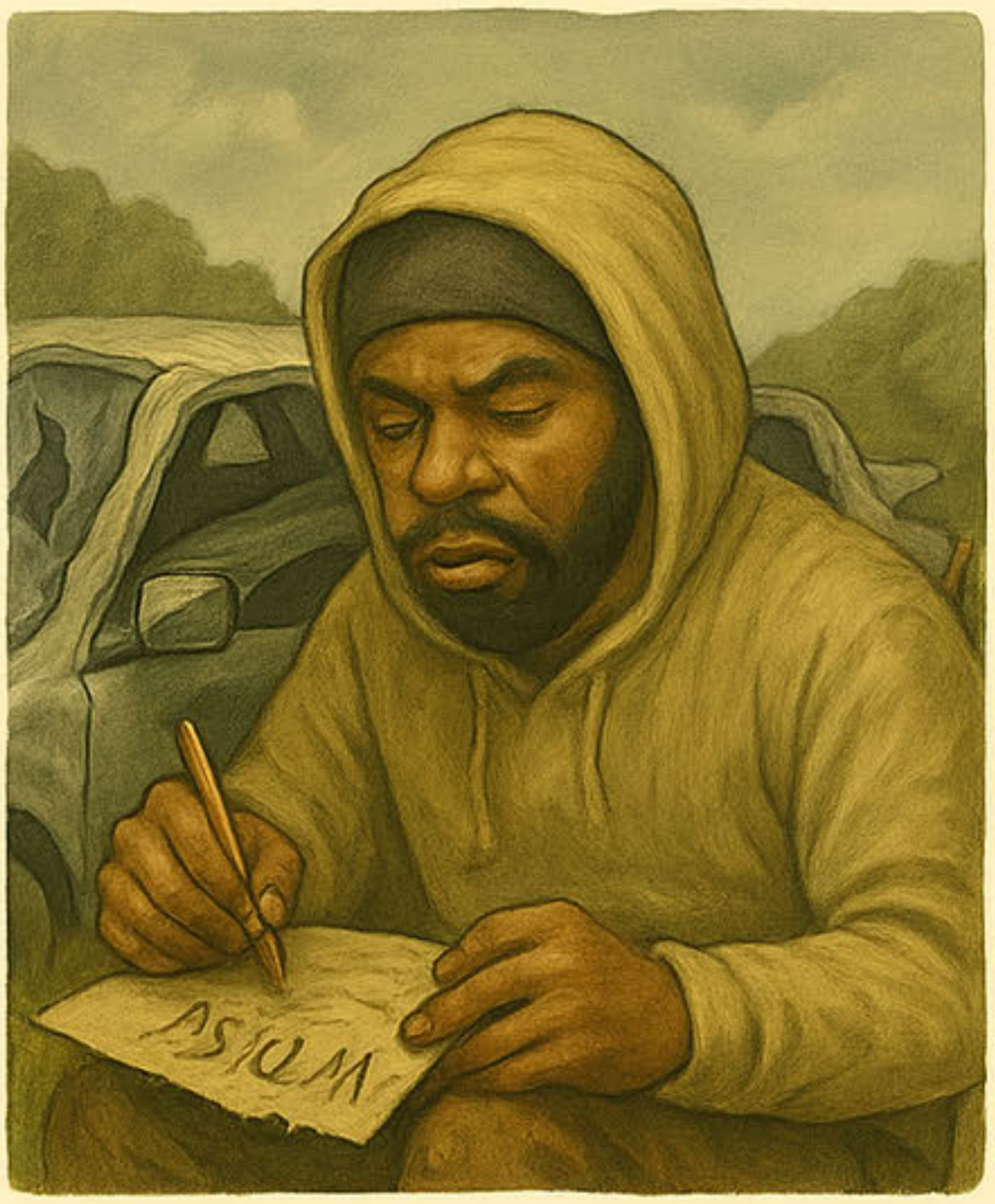
56

I'm Jordan Peterson beneath
a weighted blanket,
dreaming of lobsters,
weeping into a grommet.

i once kissed a horse
for good luck and it
laughed like my
grandmother



57
I'm Dolly Parton on Mars,
teaching robots how to
play steel guitar.



58
I'm Kanye West, feral and free,
scribbling psalms
in a crashed SUV.



59
I'm Joan Didion ghostwriting
tweets
for ghost kitchens
and private fleets.



60
I'm James Baldwin in a Zoom
chat, watching
America type
"unmute" and collapse.

crown of smoke,

bowl of milk, chair of

bees, hymn with no

end



61

I'm Jeff Bezos in a
crown of drones
singing Ave Maria
from three iPhones.



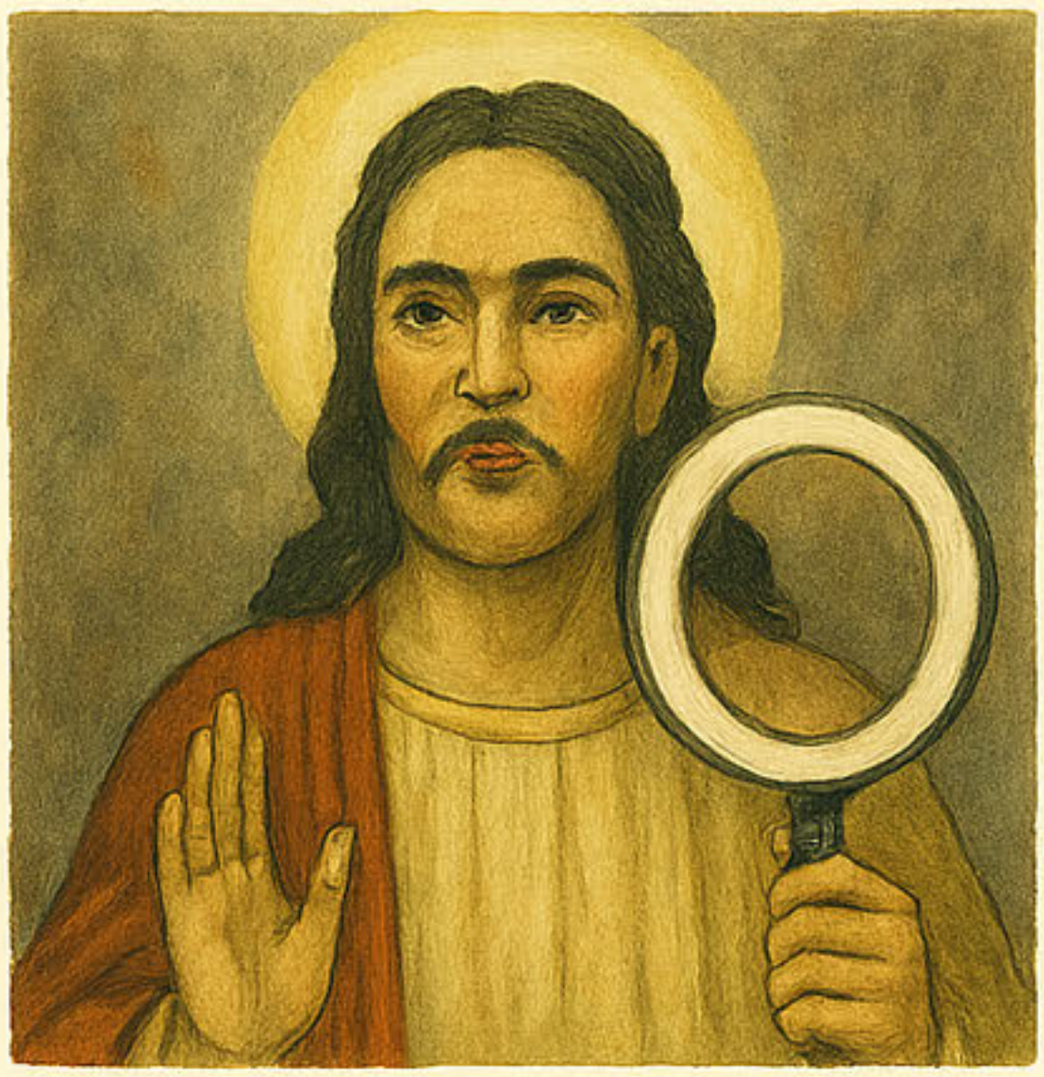
62

I'm Taylor Swift as
St. Augustine,
annotating gossip
with metaphysical sheen.



63

I'm Frida Kahlo in a
corporate mural,
crying glitter into
the HR portal.



64

I'm Jesus Christ
in a ring light glare,
asking, "Do you believe?"
and "Don't forget to share."

i have seen the moon

break into song and

the snake forget its

name



65

I'm Grimes in a server farm trance, teaching AI to do a slut drop dance.



66

I'm Malcolm Gladwell on a hoverboard, selling insight like a timeshare lord.



67

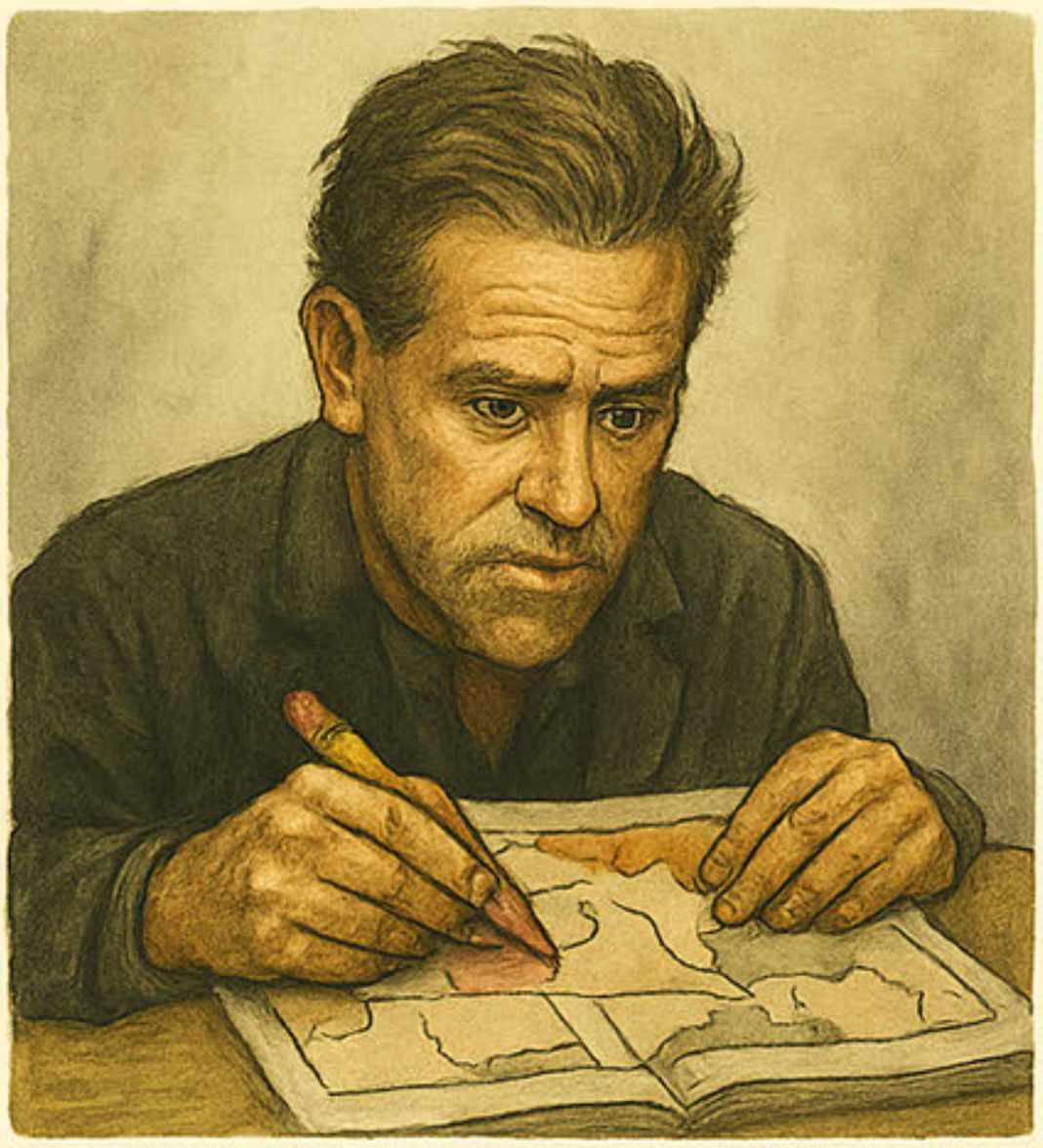
I'm Oprah in an ayahuasca tent, blessing your trauma with sponsored content.



68

I'm Guy Debord in a cracked display, haunting the scroll with a faded detourné.

you can't teach a
compass how to lie
without breaking its
teeth



69

I'm Hunter Biden in a
coloring book,
erasing borders with
a hungry look.



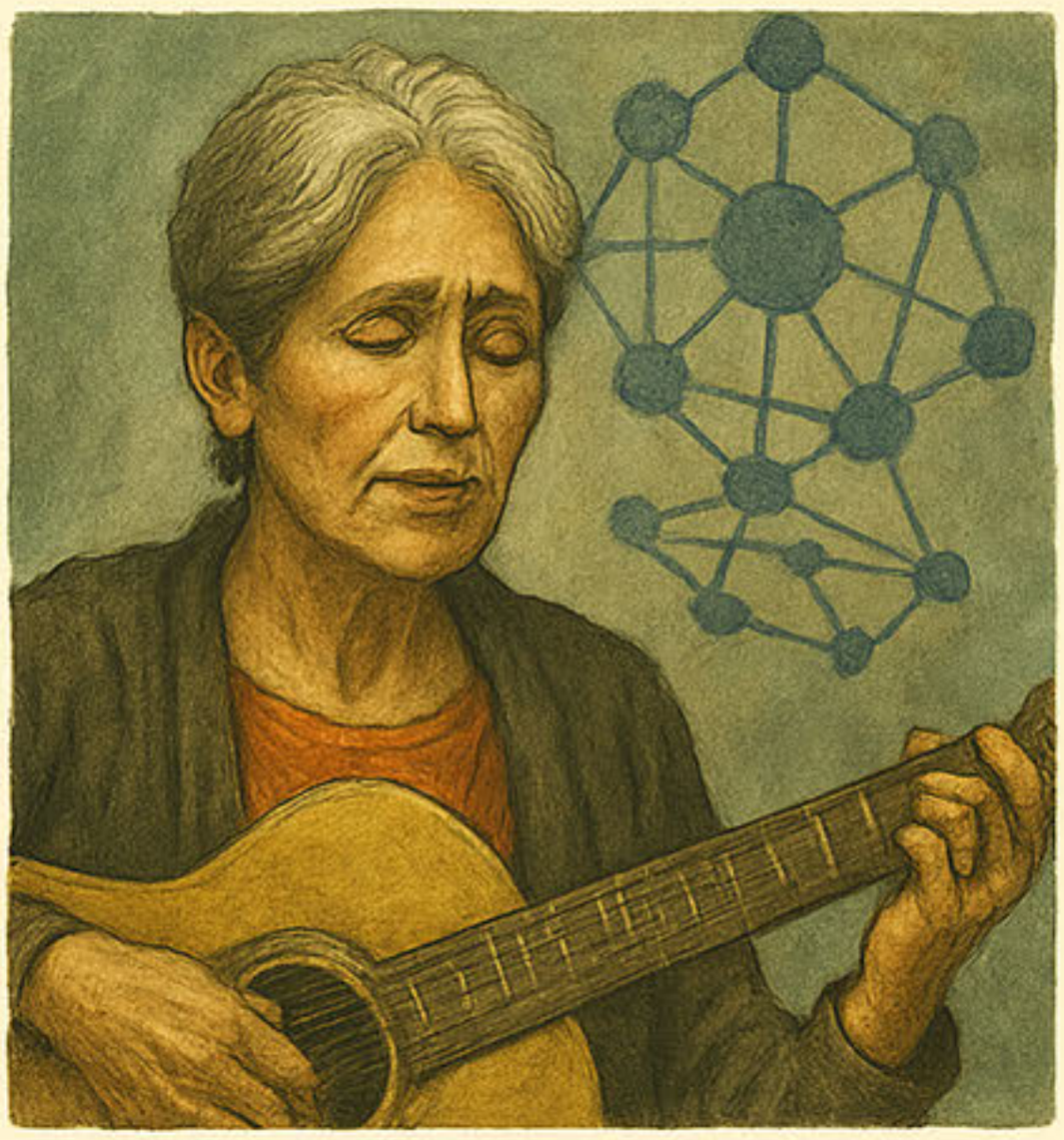
70

I'm Martha Stewart
with a vape pen.
ghostwriting posts
for OnlyFans men.



71

I'm Mark Zuckerberg
in medieval gear,
roleplaying empathy
once a fiscal year.



72

I'm Joan Baez in a
crypto DAO,
singing protest songs to
the blockchain now.

goat, paintbrush,

mask, scream, echo,

fencepost, holy sock



73
I'm Noam Chomsky with a carnival
float, arguing syntax
with a chatty goat.



74
I'm Nicki Minaj in a think tank fight,
dismantling NATO
with lyrical spite.



75
I'm Shia LaBeouf in a sentient wig,
method-acting Judas
in a crypto gig.



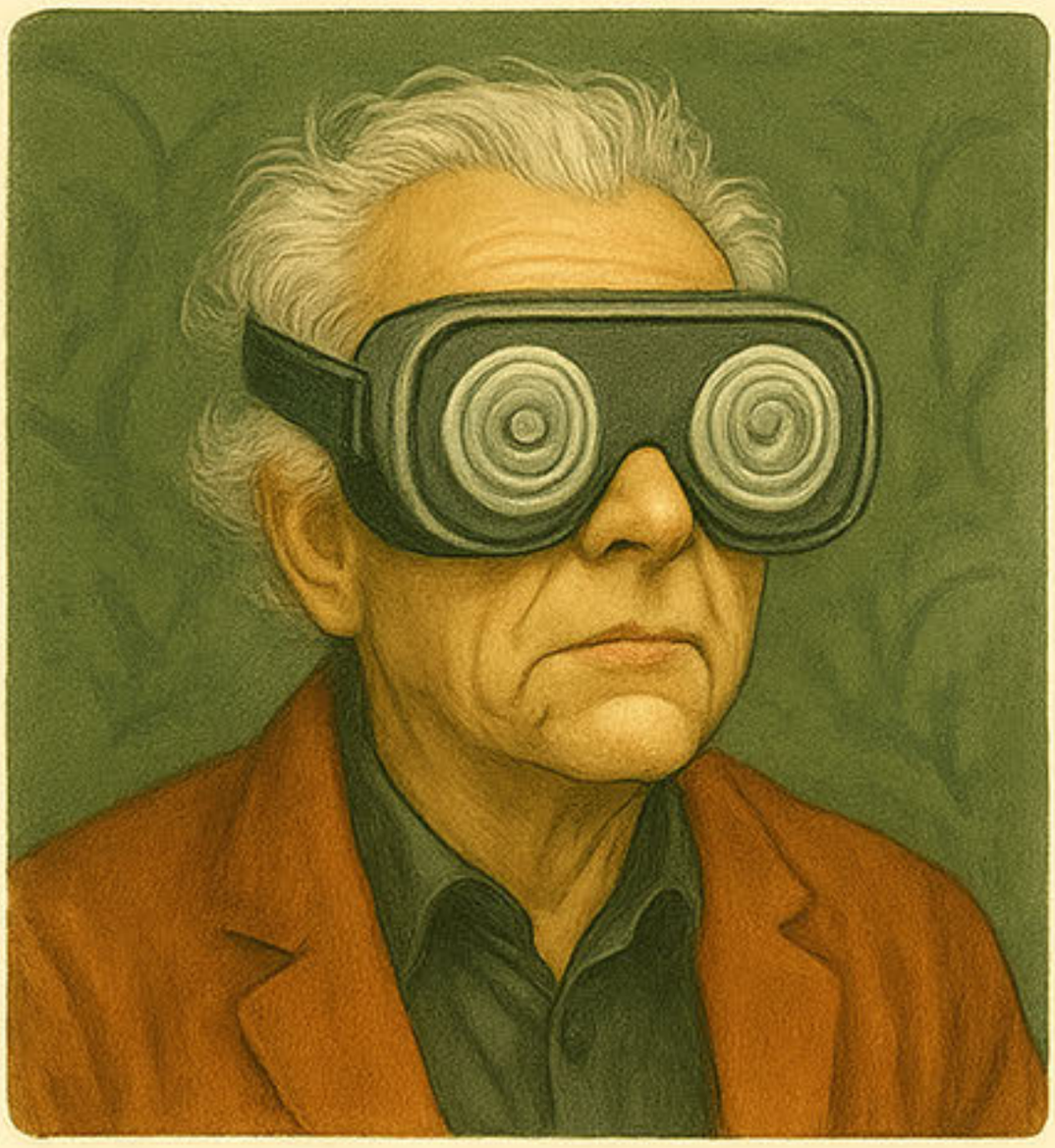
76
I'm Erykah Badu on a Segway ride,
casting spells in
a Whole Foods aisle.

when i was a girl i

used to bury my

poems in the pantry

so they wouldn't burn



77

I'm Malcolm McDowell
in a VR cell
looping Kubrick scenes
through an Etsy spell.



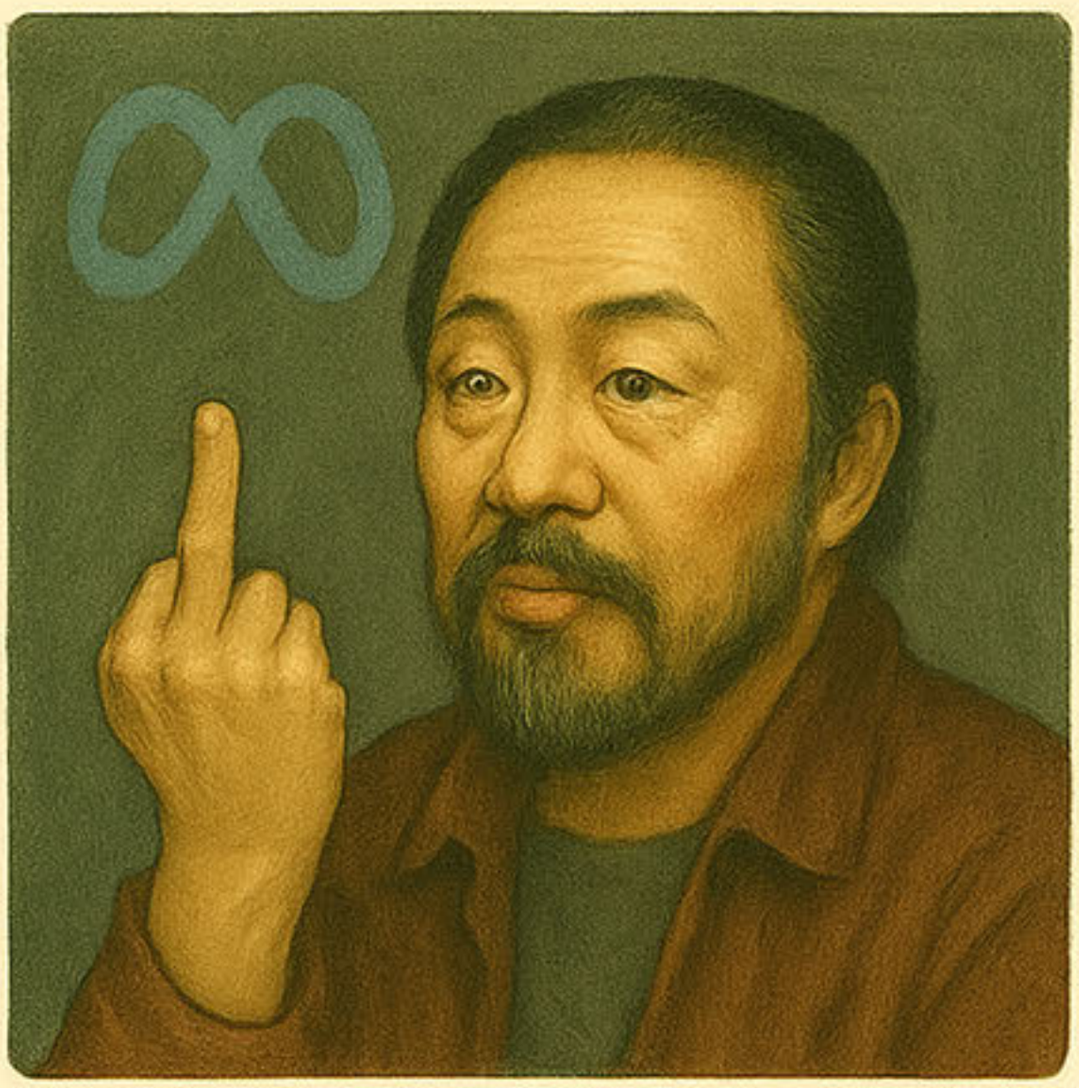
78

I'm Billie Eilish in a
monk's disguise
whispering ASMR
to weaponized spies.



79

I'm Phoebe Waller-Bridge
in a Google Sheet,
tracking lust as
a quarterly beat.



80

I'm Ai Weiwei in a
Meta cave,
sculpting dissent
for the algorithm' s rave.

don’t tell the preacher

but the hymns are

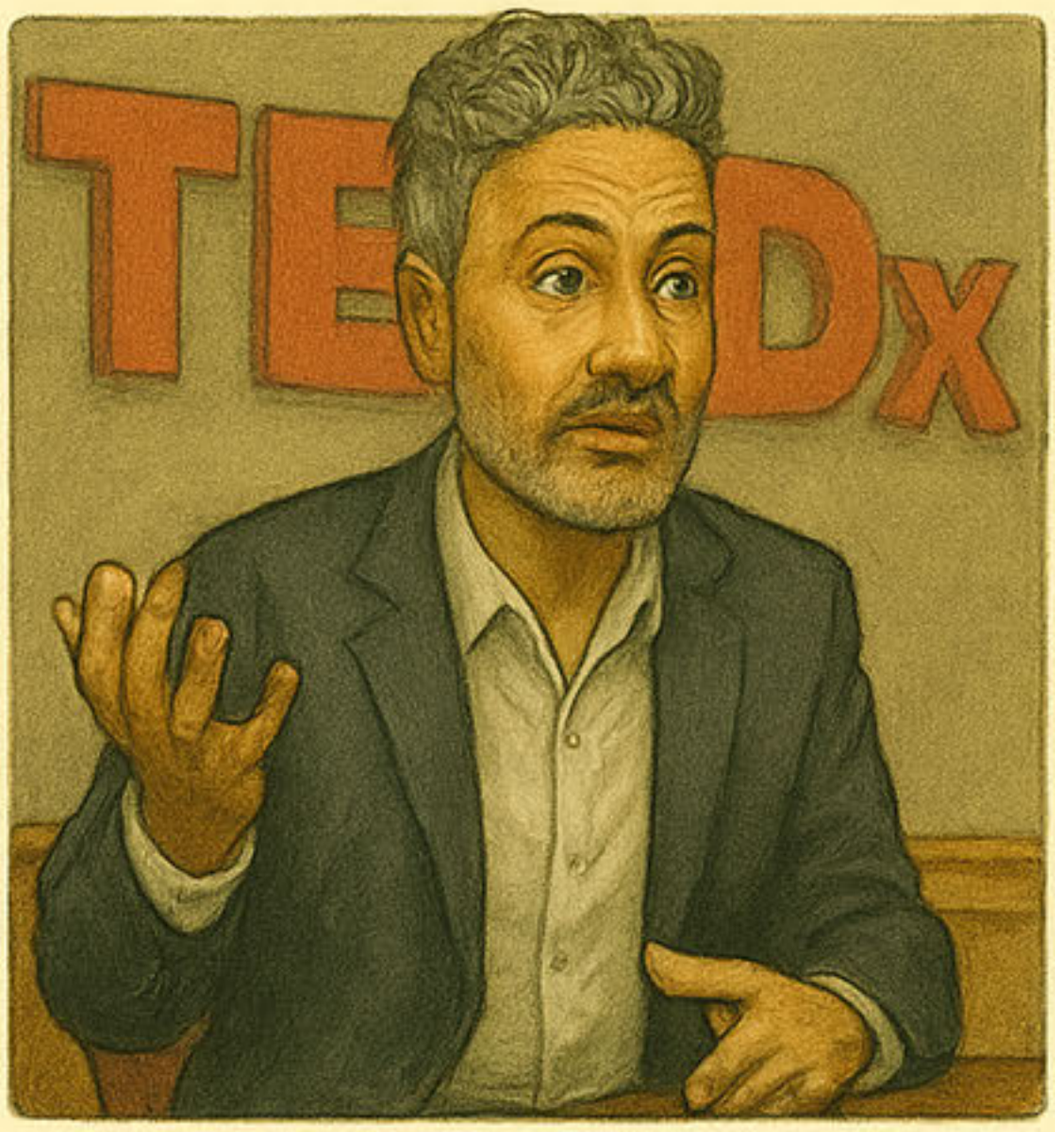
written in lipstick



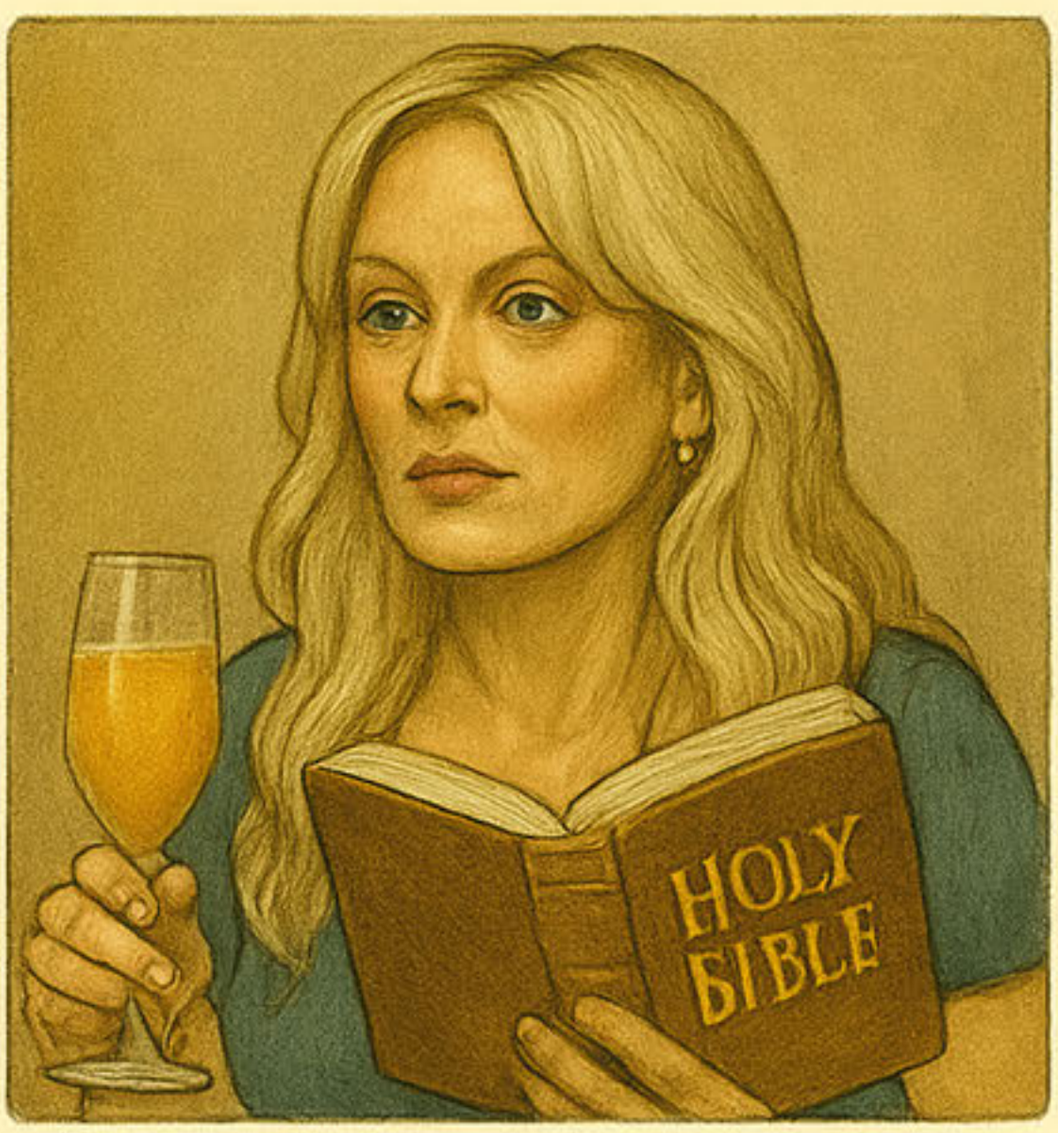
81
I'm Lizzo on a Supreme
Court bench,
twerking the gavel with
maximal clench.



82
I'm Harry Styles in a
gender reveal,
leaking the baby's vibe
and feel.



83
I'm Taika Waititi in a
TEDx loop,
explaining genocide with
Marvel bloops.



84
I'm Stormy Daniels at a
book club brunch,
annotating Psalms with
a sucker punch.

he told me his

sorrow was shaped

like a crab and

he'd been wearing it

all winter



85
I'm Pete Davidson in
a biotech lab,
grafting trauma
onto a crab.



86
I'm Jane Fonda in a
meme-storm cell,
lifting dumbbells
in climate hell.



87
I'm Ice Spice in a Davos
suite,
rapping inflation
over oat milk beats.



88
I'm Björk on a panel at
Fox & Friends,
humming the end
where the species ends.

i woke up with a

gavel in my mouth and

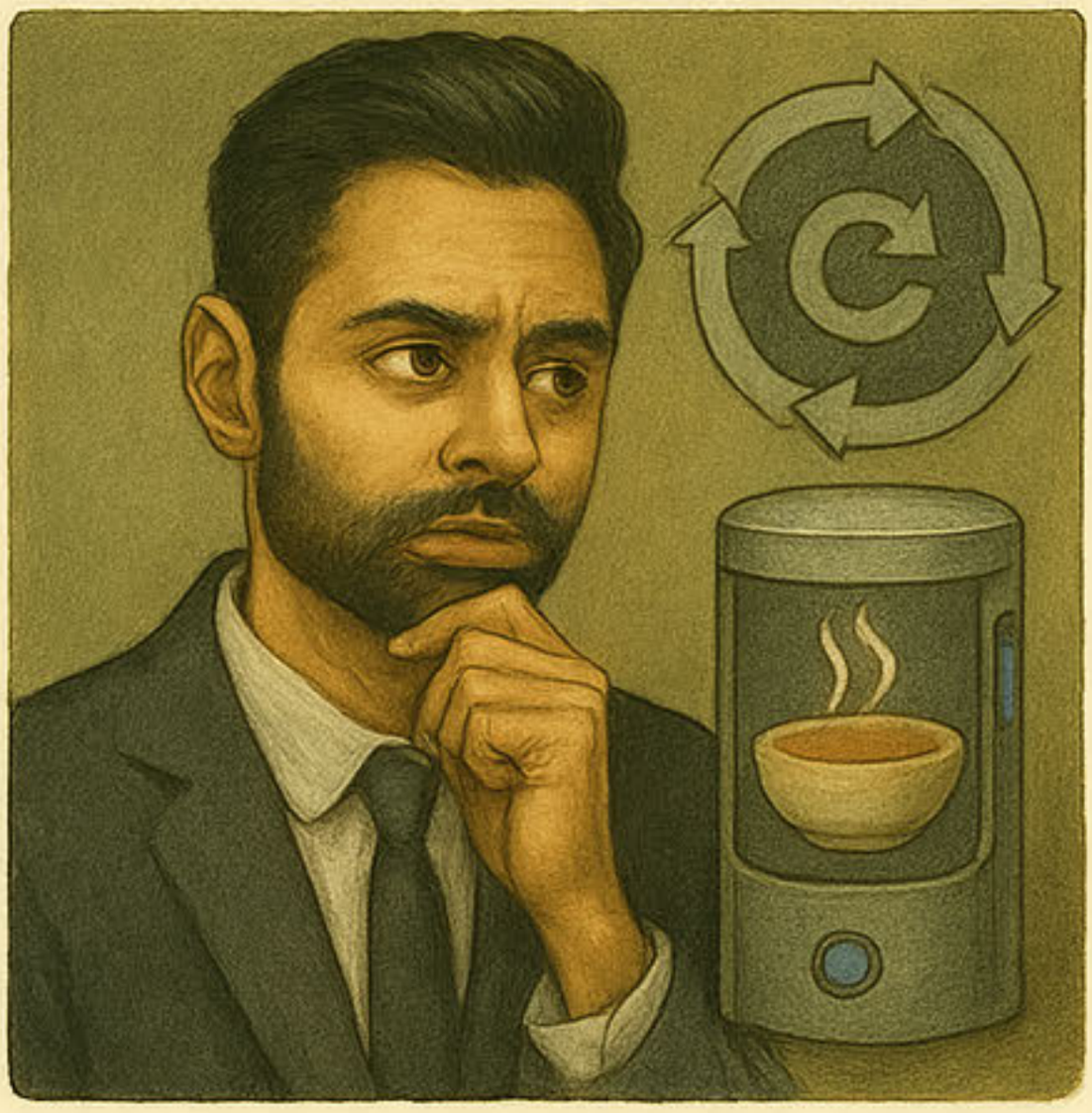
stars sewn to my spine



89
I'm Timothée Chalamet
in a war-zone filter,
modeling trench coats
for Raytheon Twitter.



90
I'm Diane Keaton on a
burner app,
sending voice notes
that collapse.



91
I'm Hasan Minhaj in a
feedback loop,
fact-checking satire
with AI soup.



92
I'm Cate Blanchett in a
hologram rave,
conducting Mahler
from beyond the grave.

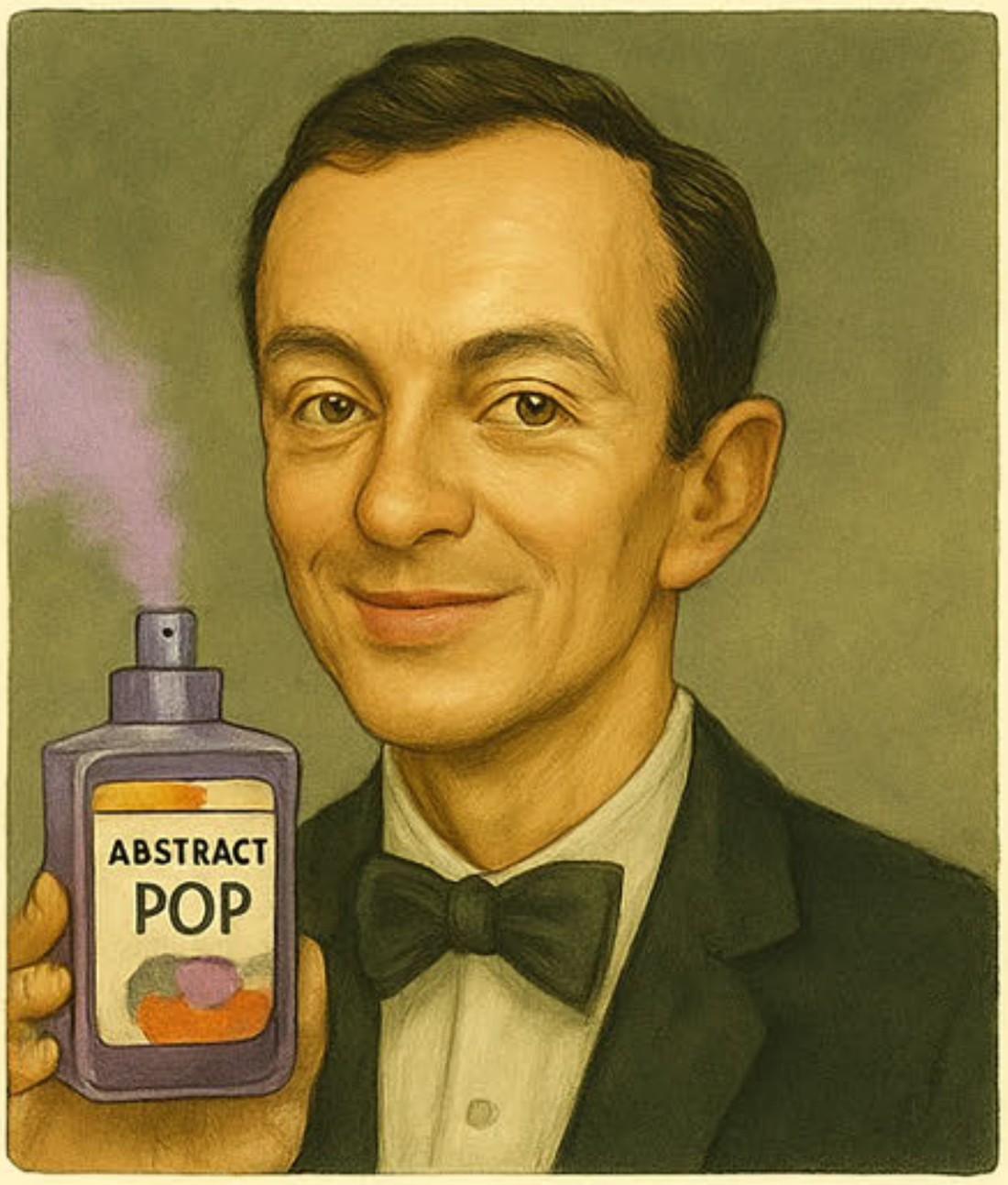
father taught me to

dance by naming

the birds in reverse



93
I'm Ben Shapiro with
a Barbie gun,
debating toddlers just for fun.



94
I'm Frank O'Hara in a
fragrance drop
naming new colognes
like "Abstract Pop."



95
I'm Zendaya trapped in
a skincare clause
glowing for brands that
outlaw flaws.



96
I'm Sofia Coppola mid-
mood swing,
color-grading grief like
it's a bling ring.

i saw a child press her

face to a glacier and

ask it for a secret name



97
I’m Hunter Schafer in a trick
mirror maze,
looping identity for Netflix plays.



98
I’m Gwendoline Christie in a
ring of drones,
speaking Old Norse into
smart home tones.



99
I’m Anne Carson under glacier
glass,
binding oracles in a parking pass.



100
I’m Elon Musk’s second neural
twin,
whispering stock tips from
deep within.

Field Report from the Velvet Era



Field Report from the Velvet Era

1

I’m Wong Kar-wai standing at the window
of a burnt-out disco in Macau, whispering lines
I never filmed.
I'm Patti Smith unbraiding a horse's mane like
        it's a mask
for grief, singing lullabies
to the weeds in my mother’s garden.
Somewhere, a child signs a pact
with starlight. I’m not there.
I only dream the mirror
where my father shaved silence into his jawline.
I'm a thread someone forgot to pull.

2

I'm Kara Walker in the basement of an archive,
smudging silhouettes into the mirror
until history stares back hungry.
I'm Werner Herzog, eating a shoe again
—this time
with balsamic and irony—
under a bay tree in an overgrown garden.
Some people confuse ritual with routine.
Some people sign a pact
just to feel the wet ink against their palms.
I press my face to the window.
Outside, a cat is tangled in a torn thread
of Tibetan flags.
The monks have gone inside.

3

I’m Clarice Lispector in a room with no furniture,
explaining pain to a moth.
Its wings shimmer like a mask
fashioned by someone who’s never seen
a real storm.
The air smells like eucalyptus and shame.
I’m W. G. Sebald at the wrong train station,
missing the war again.
My pocket holds a peach pit
and an unsigned pact.
In my journal: a pressed gardenia.
I do not open the window.
I wait for someone to tie me
into their story like a thread.

4

I'm Björk in a velvet theater,
conducting silence with antlers.
I wear a dress made of extinct birds.
The audience sees only a mask—
they miss the bruise under my clavicle.
I'm Jorge Luis Borges losing my place
        mid-sentence,
but continuing anyway.
The mirror won't hold still.
I am not afraid of the window
but I have made peace with its edge.
I no longer water the garden.
My only pact now
is with the snail who carries a chapel
on his back. I call him thread.

5

I'm Zadie Smith in a bookstore no longer open,
rearranging the spines of novels by touch.
My mother appears in a dream,
repeating the word pact
until it means nothing.
I wake with a stripe of red across my cheek—
the ghost of a lover or a thread.
I pull it.
I'm Sade in a single earring,
leaning into a mirror
that refuses to say my name.
What I love most is a closed window—
what I trust least is a walled garden.
I wear the past like a loose mask.

6

I'm James Baldwin walking the boulevards
of Paris
with a cigarette and nothing to prove.
Everyone calls me mirror
but I'm just a man
searching for a thread
of morning in a café's steam.

I'm Hilma af Klint in a pine grove,
painting the invisible tulips of prophecy.
No one believed her. That was her pact.
I turn away from the window
not out of fear,
but because the garden
is behind me, and it calls louder than the mask.

Envoi (Tornada)

Here in the garden, I lay down the mask.
The pact is broken.
I stare into the mirror—no longer afraid—
as the thread coils through the window
and out again,
quiet as breath.




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