

THE CRUCIBLE OF CREATION

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The materials I use with my art are very limited and somewhat basic. I have always been very fond of the simplicity of ballpoint pens, and the look they give a sketch even in its early stages. Another medium I have used recently is digital art on the Procreate app on my iPad. I received my iPad as a highschool graduation gift from my grandparents, and fell in love with it instantly for a couple of reasons. Most of these reasons can be applied to my love for ballpoint pens as well. Growing up I was never very wealthy and my family didn't help much with the development of my practice as an artist, so I had to work with the cards I was dealt, which in most cases was a ballpoint pen or a number two pencil. I often got annoyed when seeing other more fortunate artists using more expensive "professional" materials like Copic markers or Prismacolor pencils, and would think to myself "If I had those things my art would be so much better." It wasn't until I stumbled upon a Youtube artist named Jazza while looking for a tutorial on how to draw the human figure that this changed for me, but I'll talk more about that later.

Although I thought ballpoint pens had a cool sketchy look that fit the aesthetic of my art style, I still wanted to find another way to practice my art in an affordable way. As I mentioned before, I received an iPad as a highschool graduation gift from my grandparents so I didn't actually have to spend any money on it and to make things even better, the app I use is totally free. For a while I was absolutely obsessed with this way of creating art largely due to the fact that I would basically never have to buy a marker or paint again. Any material you can think of exists as a digital brush on Procreate, which was absolutely essential for me considering my lack of actual, physical art supplies and money to acquire said things. The last medium I use for my art can also relate to the idea of saving money while still obtaining an appealing finish. Ever since I was a child I enjoyed working in a more hands on approach to my art from time to time. In my younger years this took on the form of PLAY-DOH or paper on some occasions, and

naturally as I got older this evolved into other forms of sculpture like metal working, wood working, clay, and even cardboard. Although I really enjoyed using all of these methods of sculpting, some of them just didn't tick all of the right boxes for me.

Wood and metal work were always sculpture methods that interested me and I often watched wood carving or metal working videos on youtube usually related to weapon or armor smithing. Once I entered college I was fortunately given the opportunity to take classes that involved these two things, and I shortly realized that they were a lot of fun and that it was something I would like to involve in my art if possible. But those who work in those materials know that it isn't necessarily a cheap way of making art, and therefore did not check that box off for me. On the contrary, another material I used in that class was cardboard which is, of course, dirt cheap and in most cases free, and while I did enjoy working with it I found that it was too taxing and the end result was not pleasing enough for me. Not to mention the 1000 cuts and third degree burns I received from hot glue and exacto knives.

So naturally the next cheapest option was to work with clay, specifically oven-bake polymer clay, which is in my opinion the goldilocks of sculpting materials. Not only is it affordable, but you also don't need anything but an oven to cook it. Aside from the cost of the clay it also has a variety of different types from terracotta to my personal favorite semi-translucent. In my opinion there is nothing more satisfying than building up something from wire and tin foil to holding a clay sculpture you created in the palm of your hand. There is something so rewarding to me about having a tangible form of art that is more than lines and color on a paper or canvas, and it also makes it significantly easier for me to bring my ideas to life by eliminating the need to effectively portray it in a made-up space. I would say when I'm working with clay it makes me feel the closest to being a fine artist, especially when I work in bronze or wax, and I get to carve away at something for hours adding layers and layers of detail.

Even though I like to pretend I am completely original with my art, I actually have a lot more influences than I realized once I sat and started to list them. The first one that comes to mind and definitely the most influential is my older brother Jonny. My brother and I have been drawing for as long as I can remember and if I had to say, I most likely started drawing because his art inspired me to get good too. One of my earliest memories of his drawings are some monsters from a scary movie my grandma used to watch, unfortunately neither of us can remember the name of it. I remember loving them even though the movie scared me because he was able to make them seem friendlier and less grotesque through the way he rendered them in his own style at the time. Once I realized I had the power to recreate anything I liked by drawing it, I would start drawing all of my favorite things everyday, filling at least 3 sketchbooks a month. One of the very first things I can remember filling a sketchbook with was drawings of predator helmets from the movie "Predator" which is still one of my favorite franchises to date. I must have filled ten sketchbooks with predator helmets alone in the 5th grade. I think a major motivator for me was all of my friends and even people who never talked to me, were now starting to show an interest in me and always complimented me on my art, even now this is still a big motivator for me. Through copious amounts of practice drawing the same thing over and over again I eventually learned how to simplify the helmet into more simple shapes and started to develop my own style. I would then use this same process with other characters or things I loved to work on my technical skills and my style.

Another major inspiration for my art is a game I played daily with my brother Jesse called Resident evil. The one we played was Resident evil 5, and is one of the more controversial games of the resident evil franchise. Playing these games growing up I had no knowledge of or experience with the other games, so I was going in with no expectations and therefore I enjoyed it. As I got older I was able to get my hands on the other games and shortly realized why Resident Evil 5 was so poorly rated. Resident evil 5 was made shortly after resident evil 4, but unlike its predecessors it was more of an action game, instead of a horror

survival. This is far from the first time a game franchise has had a change of heart or wanted to try something different, but it is for sure one of the most disappointing. The games went from being genuinely scary, and suspenseful; to being a typical arcade shooter game where you do ridiculous things like punch boulders out of your way. This is not the most upsetting part of their format change however, for me personally it would have to be the change in designs of the infected enemies. In the earlier installments of the franchise the infected enemies were gnarly zombies and the occasional huge mutated evil scientist. These designs were always super creative and interesting to me and have definitely inspired some of my art. Most of the time this involved grotesque tendrils or externalized organs like the enemies called Lickers” whose brains are totally exposed and have long razor sharp tongues they use to lacerate flesh and bone in an instant. Some more common features of resident evil enemies are mutated limbs (often claws or blades) and multiple eyes growing from various unexpected locations. Although these things are definitely crazy or even ridiculous, there was still a guideline or general similarity to the designs of creatures or infected in the earlier games, these so called guidelines were thrown out the window and set on fire with the following installments, with very few exceptions. To give you an idea of this point, all of the enemies in RE1-RE4 kept a somewhat humanoid resemblance, with a zombie dog or bug here or there. Starting with Resident Evil 5 we start to see more lazy and outrageous designs like a man who turns into the tongue of a giant zombie fish, or just some normal militia dudes who have just resorted to using guns instead of eating you.

In a similar vein, another favorite game of mine that has heavily inspired my art and interests is Dead Space. Dead Space is a survival horror game much like the earlier versions of Resident Evil games. Instead of zombies, we have to deal with humans who have been resurrected into mangled, grotesque, fleshy creatures covered in claws and mandibles who have been infected by a space parasite. These nightmare fuel creatures are called necromorphs because you guessed it, they're dead and have morphed from infection. Unlike Resident Evil 5 this game was far too scary for me to play and enjoy as a child. Unfortunately I

made the mistake of playing it anyway with my brother Jesse and friend Gabriel. Naturally this lasted about 15 minutes and ended in us screaming and turning the Xbox off after seeing a shadow figure run past a door at the end of a long dark hallway, and for a while that would be the last time I touched that game. But of course as I got older I would become tempted to give it a try once again. I started with Dead Space 2, then Dead Space 1. To my surprise, I fell in love with these games, and they became my favorite games for quite some time. I even went as far as to make art inspired by the games main character Isaac Clarke, an engineer who is trying to find his girlfriend on the ship she has been working on called the Ishimura. Isaac then goes on to single handedly defeat the necromorphs and the Marker, an alien artifact that can manipulate thoughts and turn organic life into necromorphs.

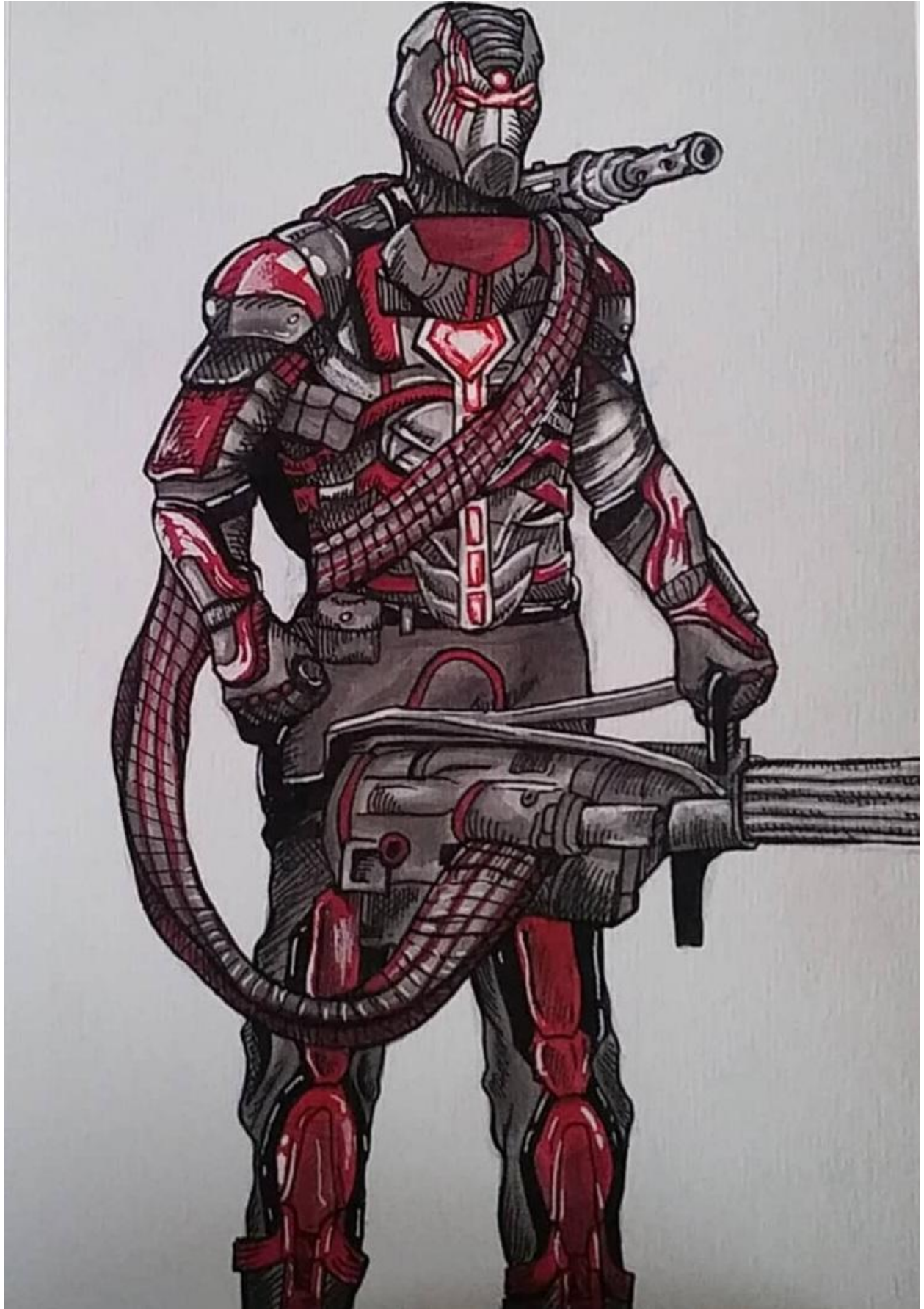
On pages **1-2** are some of my drawings that were inspired by the Dead Space games and the Marvel super heroes Ironman and War machine. The first drawing is the main character from the first 2 games of the franchise who I mentioned before, Isaac Clarke, as ironman. Some names I've thought of for him are Isaacman, Isaac Stark, and Iron Clarke. The second drawing below is the new character we are introduced to in Dead Space 3, whom the 2nd player can play as in cooperative mode. Cooperative mode is a mode that some games have where you can play with a friend. Although Dead Space 3 is still a great game, it definitely faced the same problem as the Resident Evil games in that it shifted from a horror survival game and became an action multiplayer game. This is not the only way the game suffered from change however, Deadspace 3's main problem for me was their decision to make the enemies less grotesque and more humanoid, or in specific instances less humanoid. In the first two games we see a variety of nasty terrifying humanoid creatures with a few exceptions of slightly more animalistic ones like the stalkers, who's screeches alone scare the shit out of me and haunt me to this day. The design changes that upset me the most are the Lurkers, the Pack, and Crawlers. These 3 monsters were originally necromorphs that were created from human babies, and they were absolutely haunting, however in the 3rd game this was considered "too morbid" and the lurkers

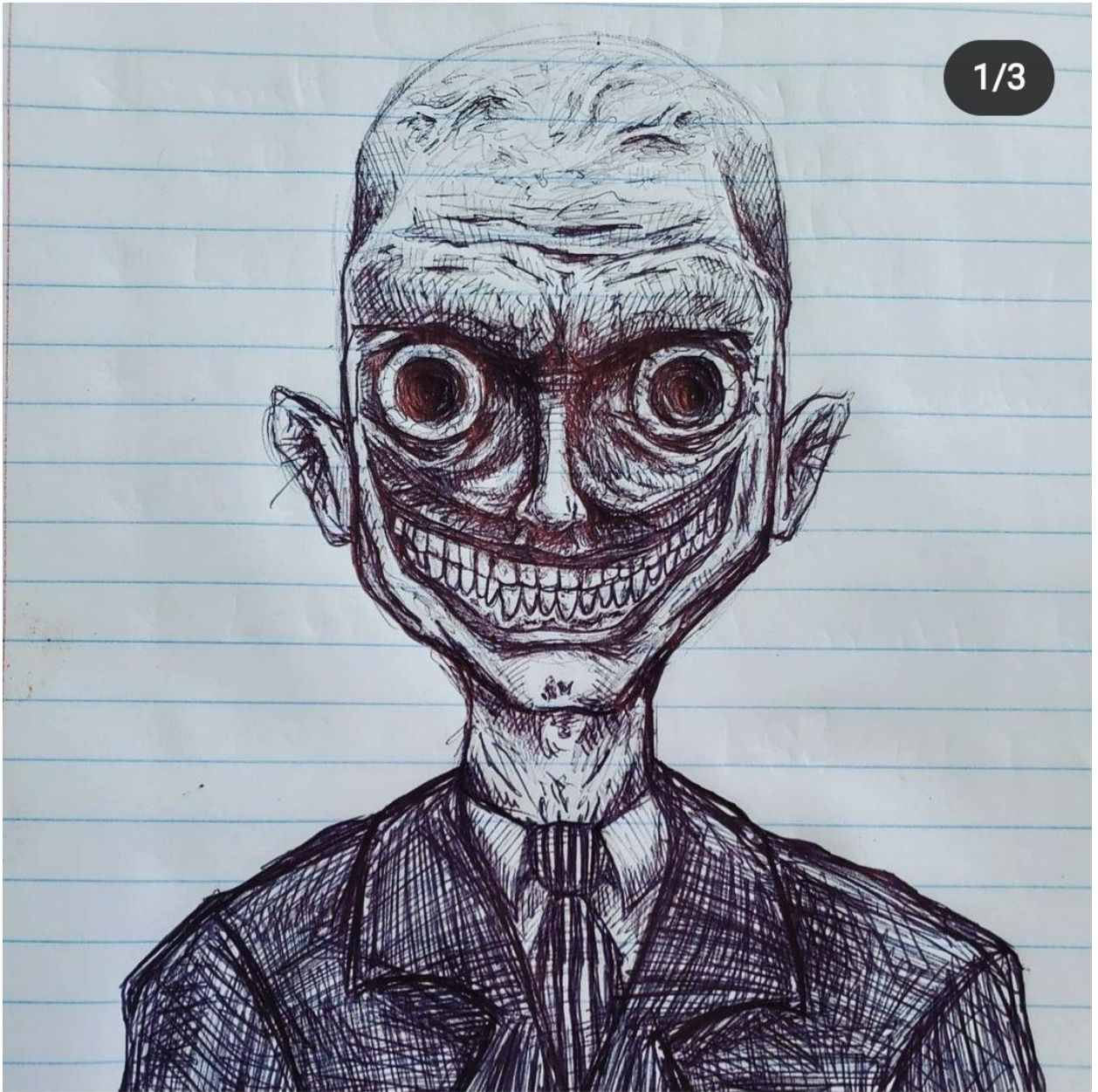
were turned into dogs and the other 2 completely removed. Now.... as messed up as it may seem that this upsets me, I am not the only one disappointed by this. I am probably upset about this mostly because the idea of babies becoming terrifying monsters is an absurd idea that plays with the theme of contrasting ideas and tension, which is my main focus in most of my art.

One way I like to portray these themes is by drawing somewhat gross looking monsters, who have very friendly personalities or that wear clothes that you wouldn't expect to see on a monster. On top of this I also like to put them in poses or situations that you wouldn't expect too. Pages **10-13** show some of these monsters I've drawn. Another HUGE inspiration of my art and style is Marvel, as you may have guessed by the iron man/deadspace hybrid. And I suppose DC is also an inspiration of mine as well, but not nearly as much. There isn't really a reason behind this other than I think the stories and characters are less interesting and derivative. Growing up I was always in love with Marvel superheroes, and I had a big poster in my room with every Marvel character you can know and think of and then 100 more. Like most kids, Spider-man was and still is my favorite superhero, and to give you a better idea of just how much I love him, I dressed up as spider-man for halloween for no less than 5 years in a row. And although I said DC Comics is less interesting to me, it still was an inspiration for my art. When it comes to DC, Batman is the only thing I'm really interested in, and I mean all of the characters related to him as well. Some of these other characters are Nightwing, Red Hood, Harley Quinn, and The Joker. Pages **14-17** show some drawings inspired by these things. These drawings all happened in a pretty short period of time, which seems like an impossible task for me at this point in time. I think a huge reason I was able to knock so many good drawings out in a short period of time was because I was super motivated and inspired by my new art supplies I had recently purchased. All of these drawings are created using Prismacolor markers with a few instances of Prismacolor pencils, and are the first drawings I ever used these markers for. I also believe a large factor of this motivation kick was due to me still being in highschool and having a lot more time to draw for pleasure and improve my skills as an artist.

This leads me to my next and final point. When I think about my art and where I am as an artist, there are a few important things that come to mind. The first one being that at this point in my art, I am not satisfied anymore with the quality of work I am able to put out. There are a couple of reasons for this. This is not to say that I believe my art is bad or that I am untalented, but that I have a vision of what my art could be, and that I am not there yet. A large reason for this is the lack of free time I have to work on my art, or the feeling that I could be spending my time doing something more productive. I am aware that this mindset is toxic and counterproductive, and I am working on fixing it, but I also believe a large cause of this is the structure of college and the speed at which they expect you to push out work. I plan on working on my technical skills much more after graduation since I'll have a little more free time and won't be drawing for homework anymore. Some things I would like to work on in my art are dynamic poses that feel organic and less stiff, dynamic clothing, compositions, and backgrounds. I plan on working a lot more digitally and with sculpture because they are my current favorite mediums.







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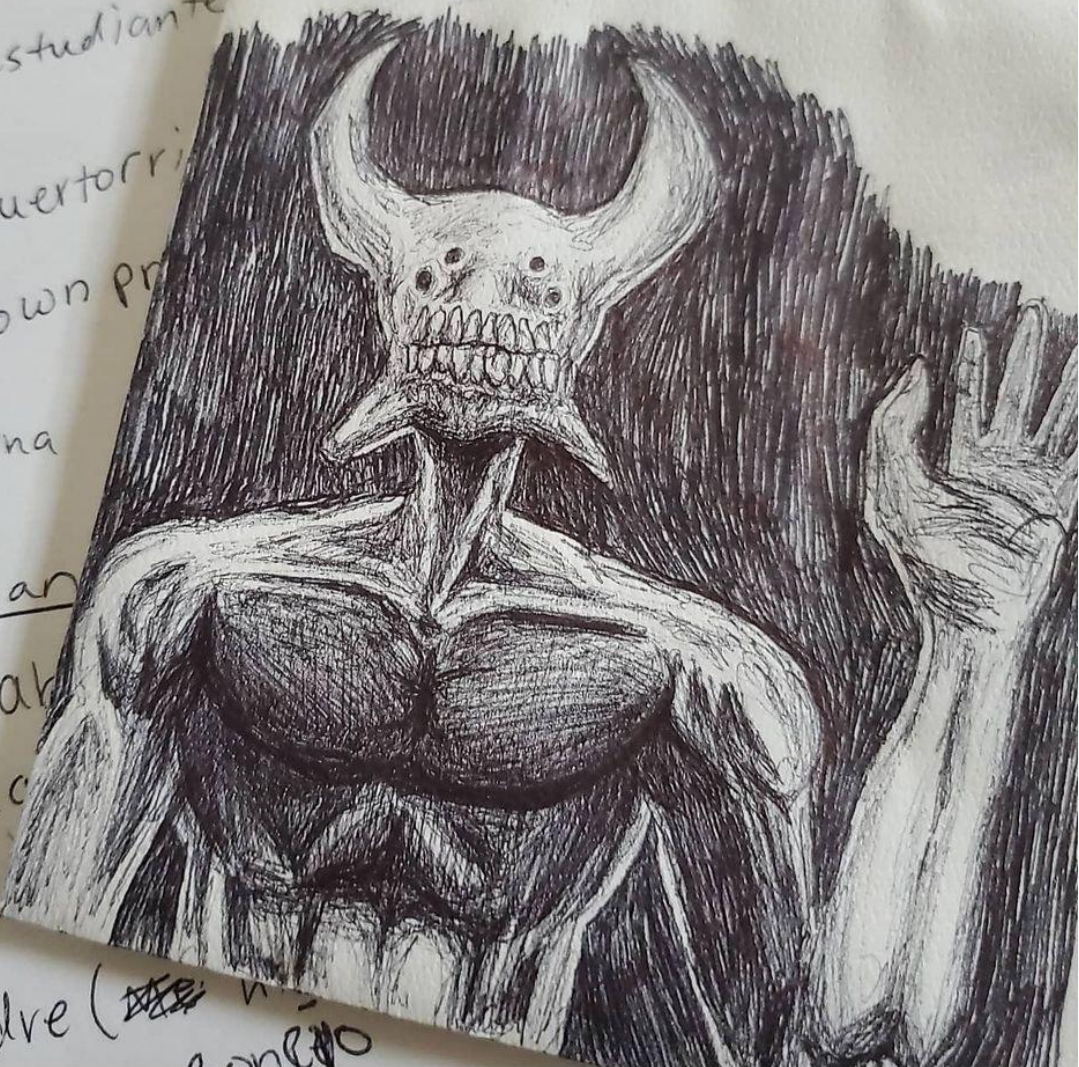
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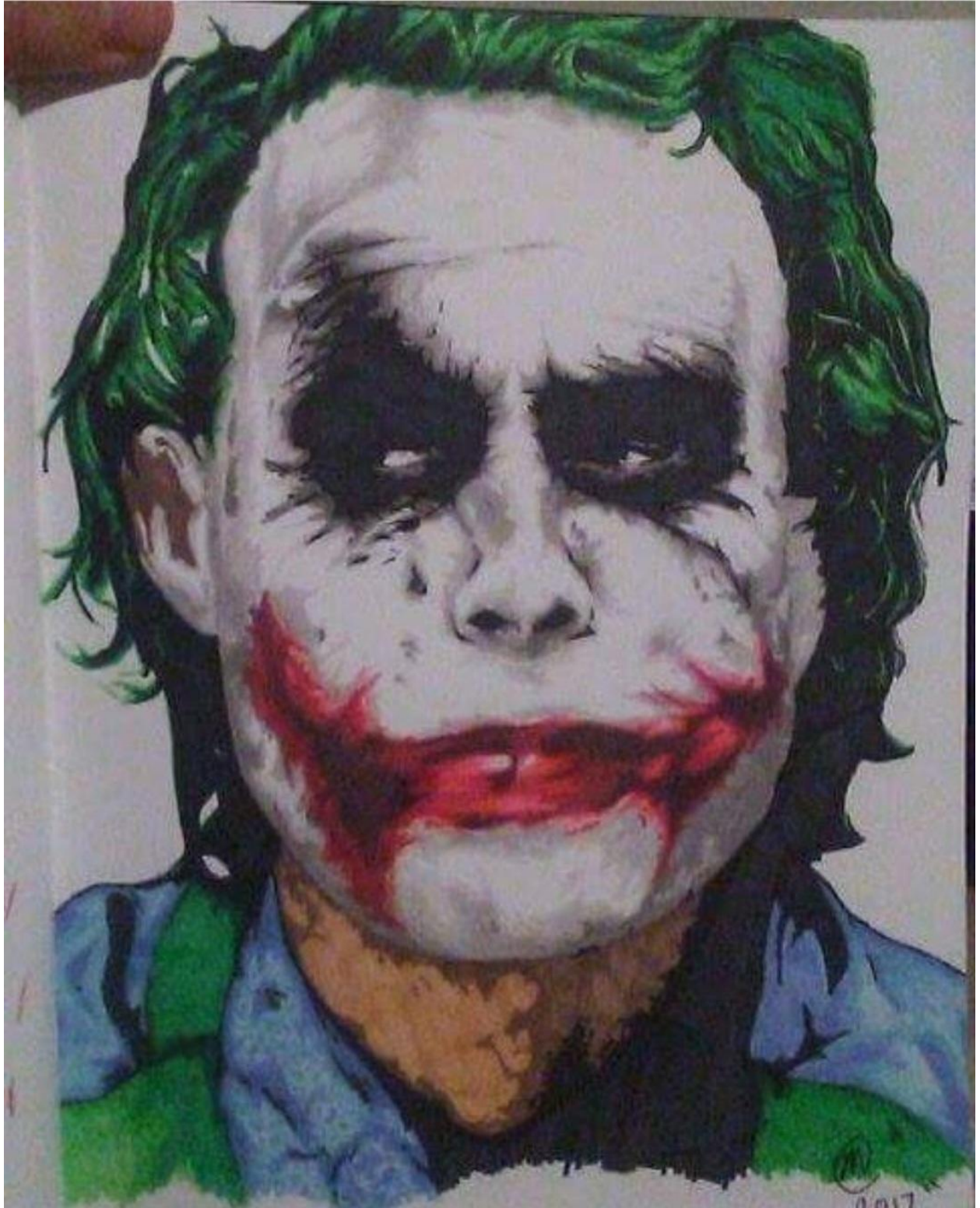
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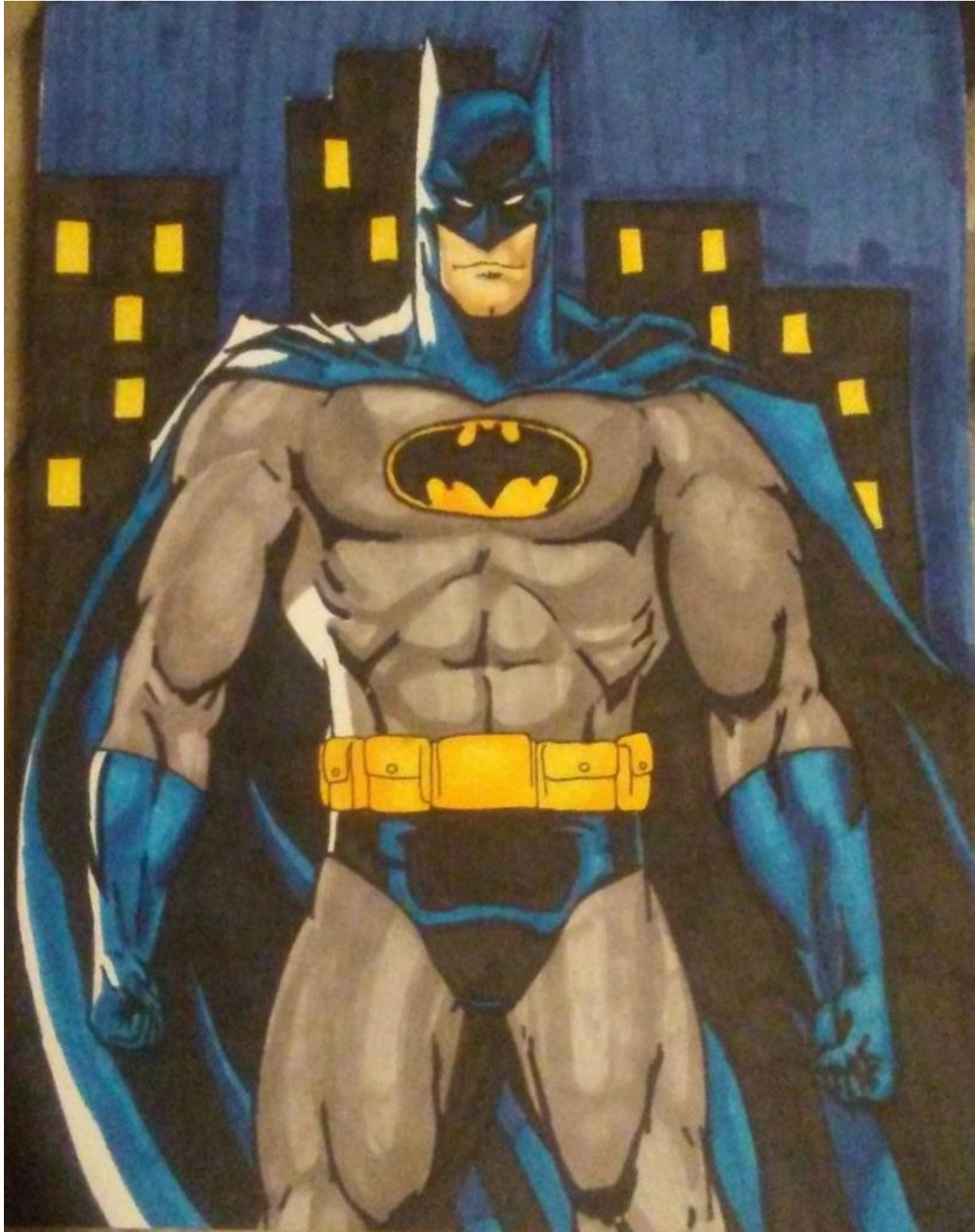












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