

Ai-Quynh Bui | Photography

**THE
PHOTO
PORT
FOLIO!**

2021-2023

"You should come over this weekend. Bring your camera."

And I always do. Sometimes, they don't even have to ask. For me, photography hasn't always just been an art form. It's endlessly been the valuable documentation for the people and events in my life that I don't want to forget. Photography uplifts me if my memory falls short.

Aesthetically, I aim for bold colors, authentic rhythm, and balance. I appreciate both depth and harmony in my images, making the frame full of what makes the subject(s) and myself feel fulfilled, every element featured with purpose. I strive to make my images as bold as the moments that they represent.

With content, there is nothing I love more than people and the love they have for each other. My work explores the most intimate and warm parts of being with those you love. I want to capture every conversation on the couch in room 303, every embrace on the dance floor, and every laugh and "I love you" expressed without hesitation. I want to remember the way my friends look at me and each other. I want words and feelings to break the fourth wall and invite the viewer to join the scene.

Ultimately, my photography is a visual diary of my experiences, observations, and emotions. Each image is a frame of a unique story, and together they form a narrative that invites viewers to explore unbridled love. My hope is that my photographs can serve as a catalyst for deeper connections, fostering a greater drive to seek out and create the most special moments in life. Go to that party. Ask for that hug. Fall in love with life, others, and yourself again. Be present and I'll take care of the rest. Photography uplifts you if your memory falls short.

— Ai-Quynh

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ai-Quynh".



NiCK + NiKO





2021→ Instead of turning towards professional photographers who probably went to art school for this, Nick and Niko, friends I used to go to school with, trusted me enough to do their senior photos.

Even though this wasn't the case when we went to school together, they've become my closest friends from that school before I started high school elsewhere. I'm glad we reconnected when we did in 10th and 11th grade, and I gained so much from doing so. I've never had such unique, creative friends as Nick and Niko, who inspire me to be as authentic as they are to themselves and each other.

Moreover, aside from Minneapolis, I can't think of a place where I'm more myself. While this project was senior photos for friends, it also, in a sense, pays homage to the city. The city itself may not have been the subject of these photos, but I can't imagine these photos in any other setting. The city is where we grew together and is part of what makes this project, helping defining its style and displaying who I am behind the camera.

We capture photos to capture memories. I took these photos to immortalize my friends, the familiar faces from my past, now my present, and hopefully my future. But by extension, I also took these photos to eternalize the city that defined my upbringing and who I am today.

I had a great time during this shoot, and I know they did too. Hopefully these photos can show and eternalize that.

And even though Nick and Niko thanked me for doing them a favor, I want to thank them for doing me one too.













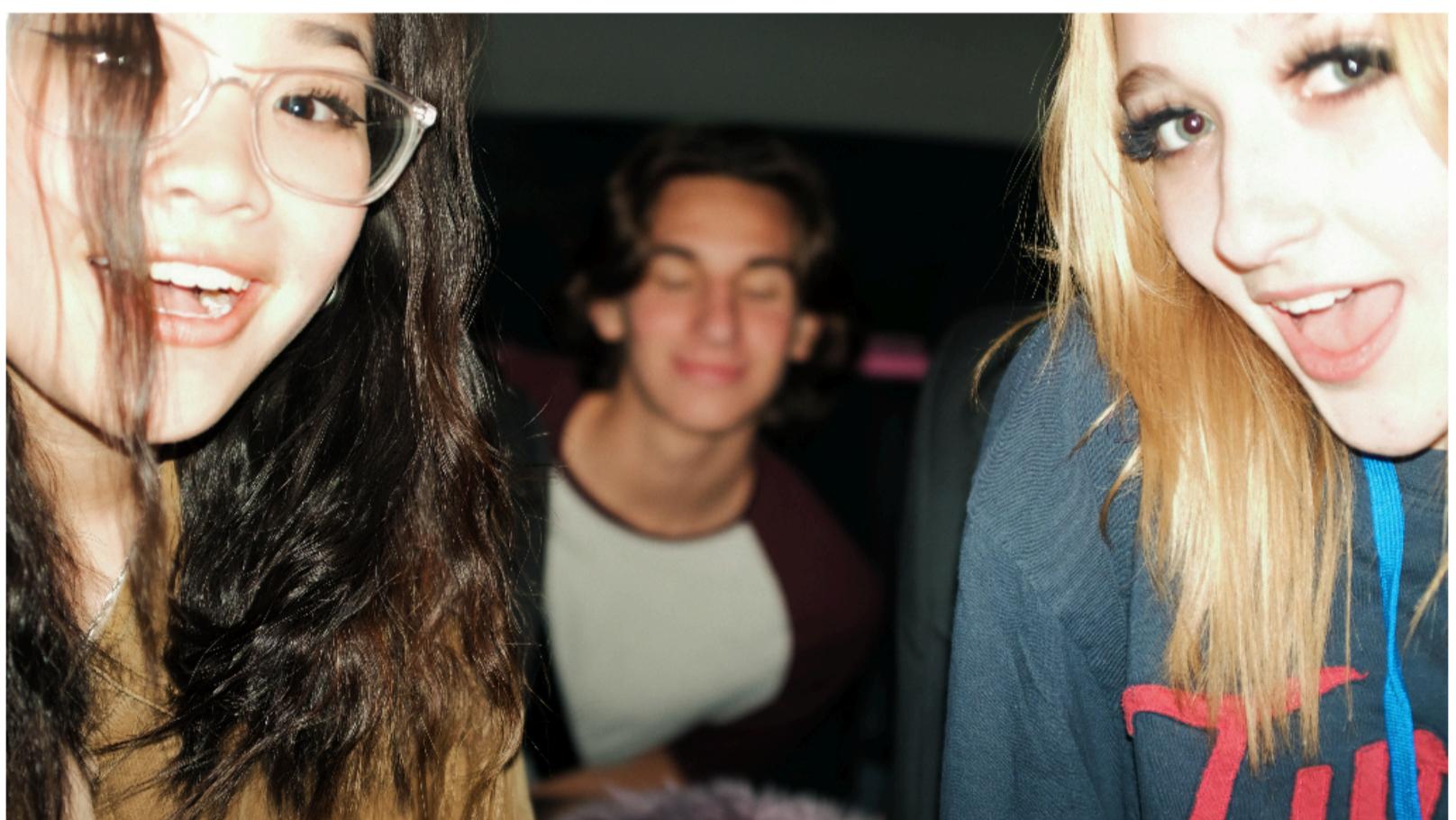






GRADUATION





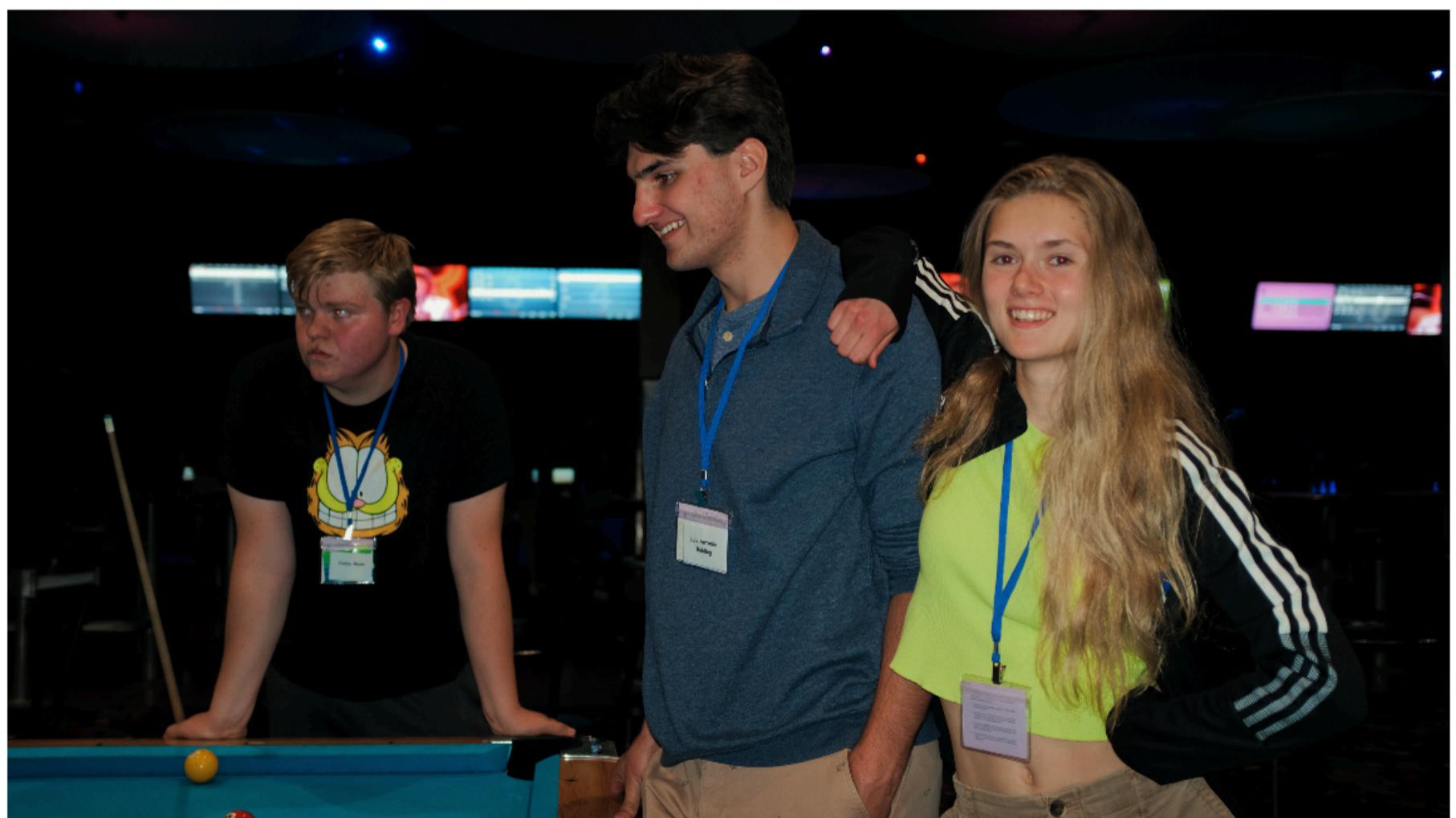
2022 → I like to hold onto things. I like familiarity and consistency. Leaving high school was scary in that regard, but I also knew there were better people and places (and frankly, curriculums) for me. By the end of senior year, I was itching to graduate not because I hated high school, but because I wanted to propel my life and potential forward.

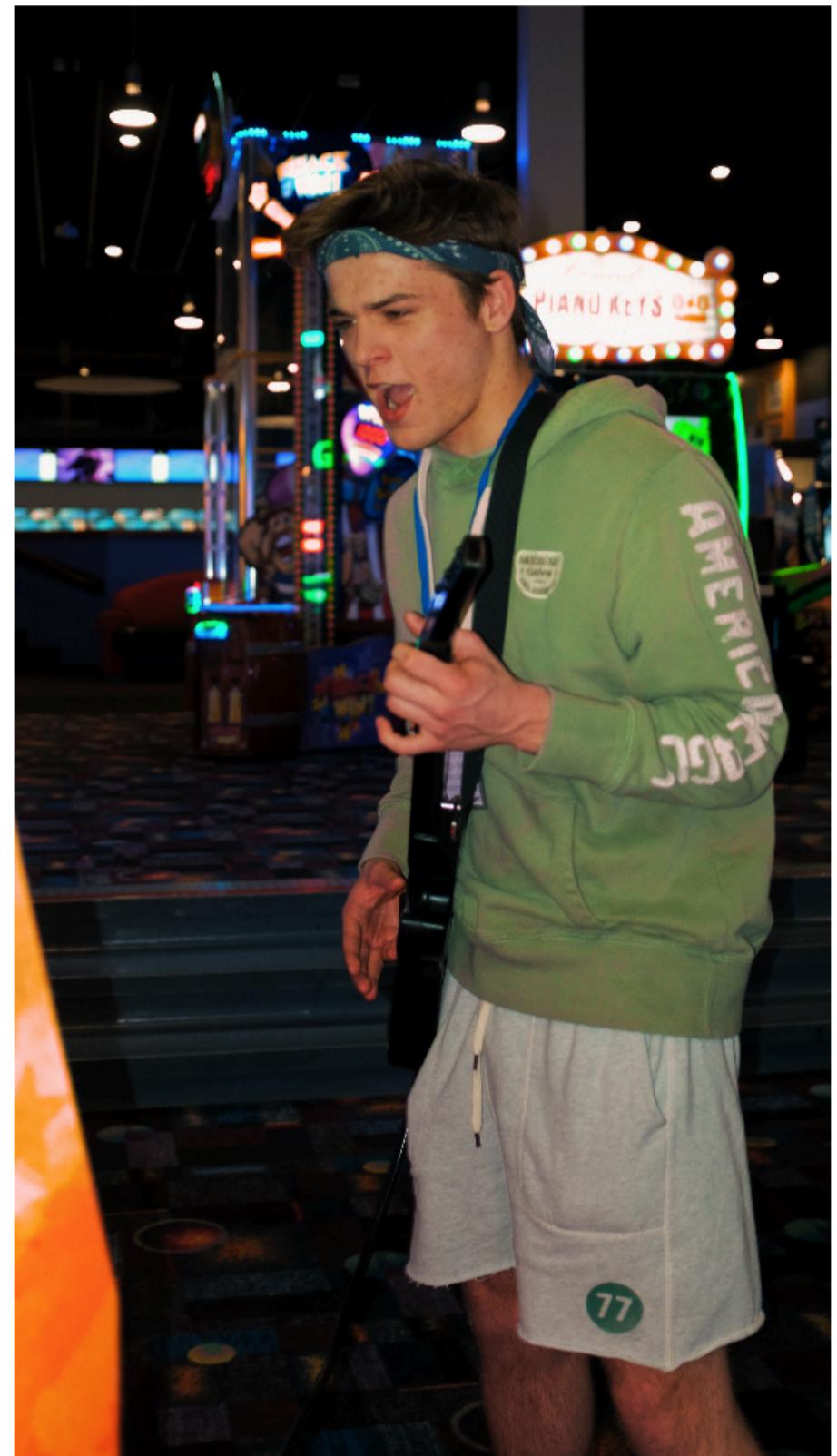
And I think my classmates felt that too. Some wanted to leave because they actually hated high school, but others too wanted to propel their lives and potentials forward too. There's so much more to life than homecoming season and the same cliques we've known for years; were these instances of familiarity and consistency barriers in the long run?

During our graduation ceremony and all-night grad party, the energy was palpable that our barriers had broken now that we'd left the structure of high school. I made quick friends with the foreign exchange students I had never talked to before, and did "Sex and Candy" karaoke with "popular" people I never thought would've wanted to talk to me. On the bus when I yelled for everyone to smile for a picture, there wasn't any hesitation to do so. Doors didn't just open but rather fell off their hinges entirely; I'd never seen such a widespread community in high school until there was no high school.

While it was unfortunate that it took graduation and 10 hours at an entertainment center to find such a community, I'm glad it happened at all and that we were all on the same page to get off that same page. Everyone wanted more, so we forged a community in that common wanting. We grew in separate directions, but never completely out of sight. We were happy to grow up and get out, so we celebrated. And to me, I celebrated the privilege of high school, of all places, being the one to grow up in and get out of.





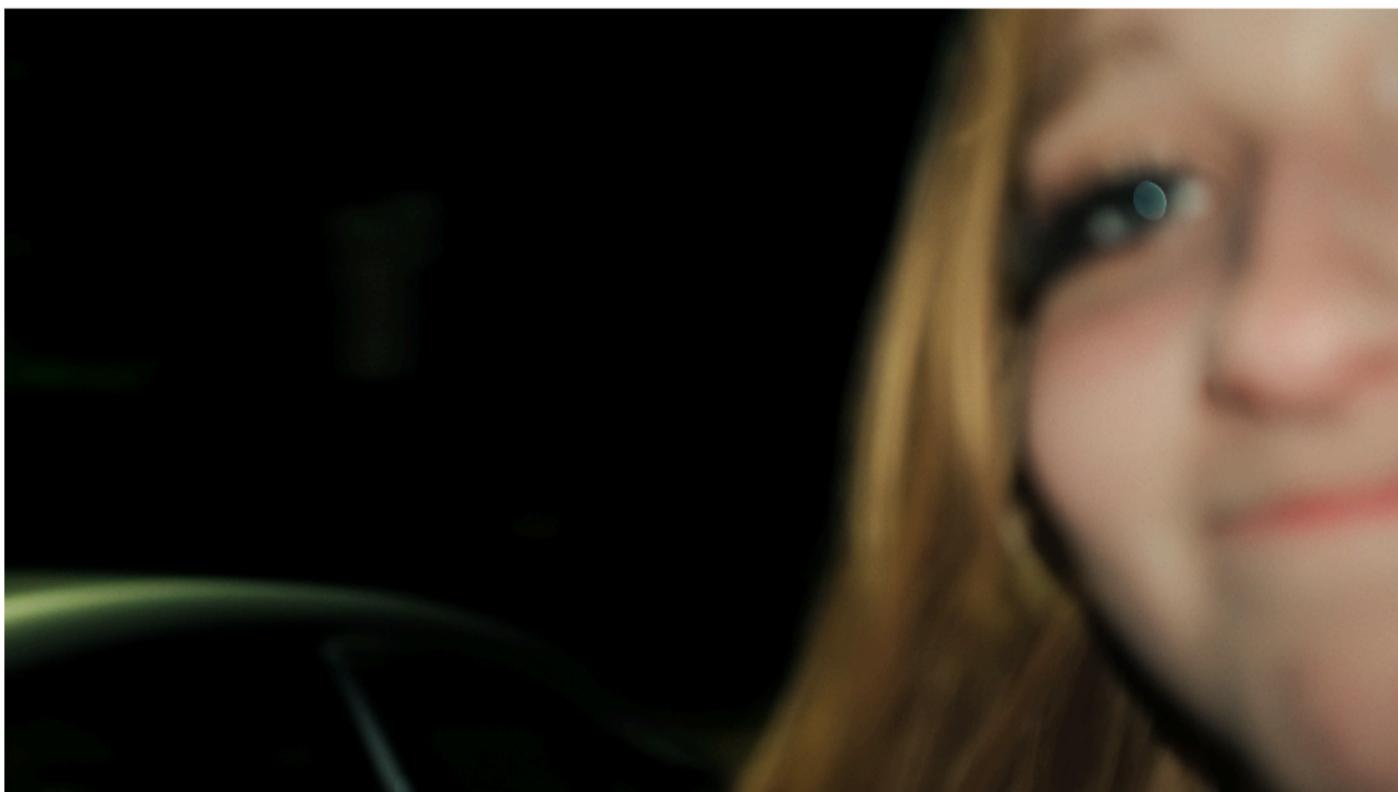
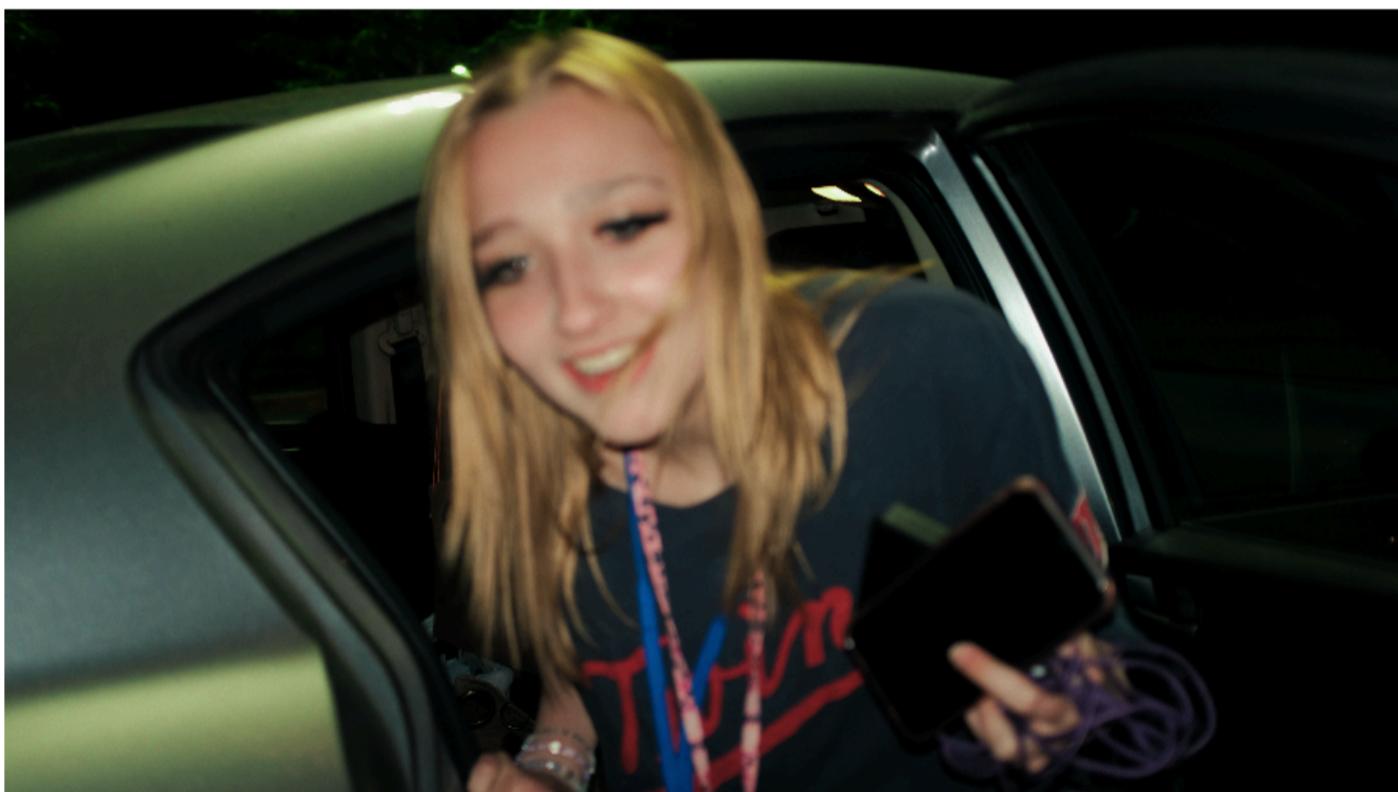














KAPPA SIGMA





2022-2023-> I felt at home at Kappa Sigma. They were the first community, not just the first people, to welcome me into the University of Minnesota.

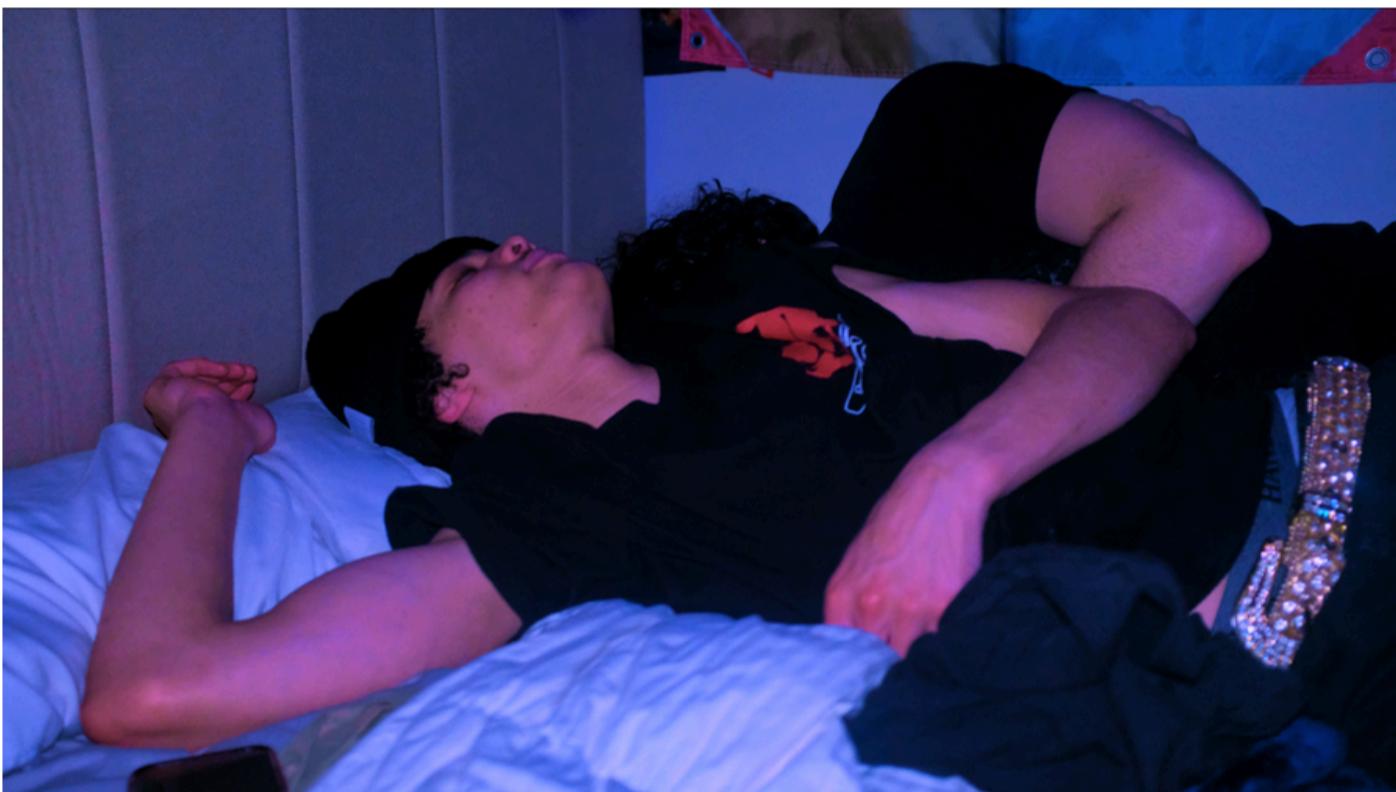
Whenever things happened to me that I don't feel are pleasant or even appropriate disclosing here, they kept me safe and took care of me. I was welcomed into room 308 like it was my own, and there and with them I received endless love and endless care. Under KSig's roof, blankets were supplements to warm hugs and drinks of water were supplements to cool kisses on the forehead, coupled with "I'm here—you're okay." The KSig community took care of me not just so I was functioning again, but went above and beyond so I was doing better than I was when I arrived.

And when nothing bad happened to me and my night was safe, they always welcomed me back with an open door and open arms. Every "You're here!" was expressed with unbridled affection.

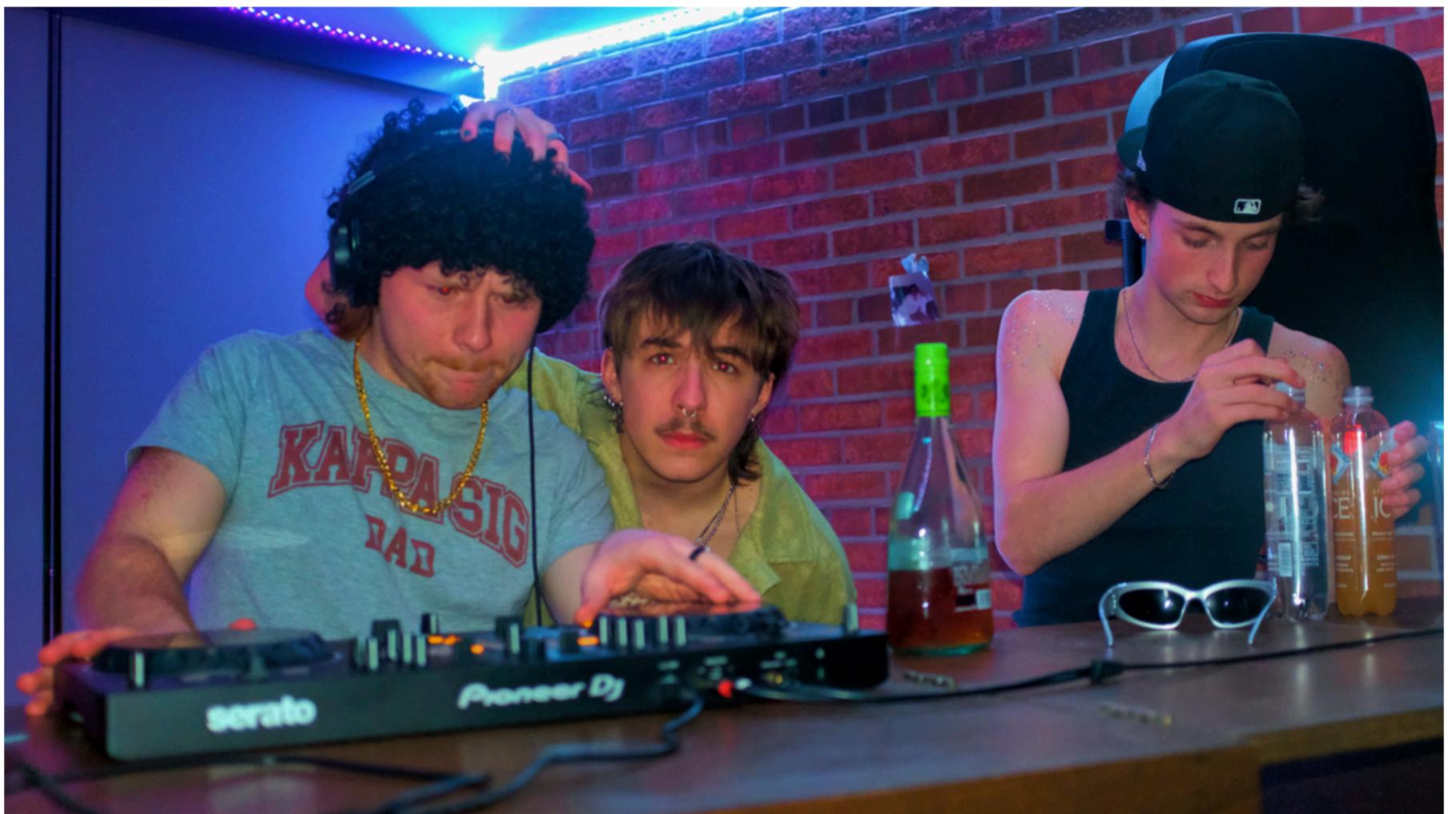
I've never felt so loved and admired by a group, much less a group this big. Brothers and friends alike, the community gave me warmth and welcome during a time in life when I felt cold and detached. Broadly, college was the best thing that's happened to me, and KSig was an undeniable catalyst in making it the best thing that's happened to me. I've never been busier but I've also never been happier, and I want to thank KSig for always being a place I could visit, giving me things I could do, and introducing me to people I could talk to. There, Saturday nights were never spent without company or without love.















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