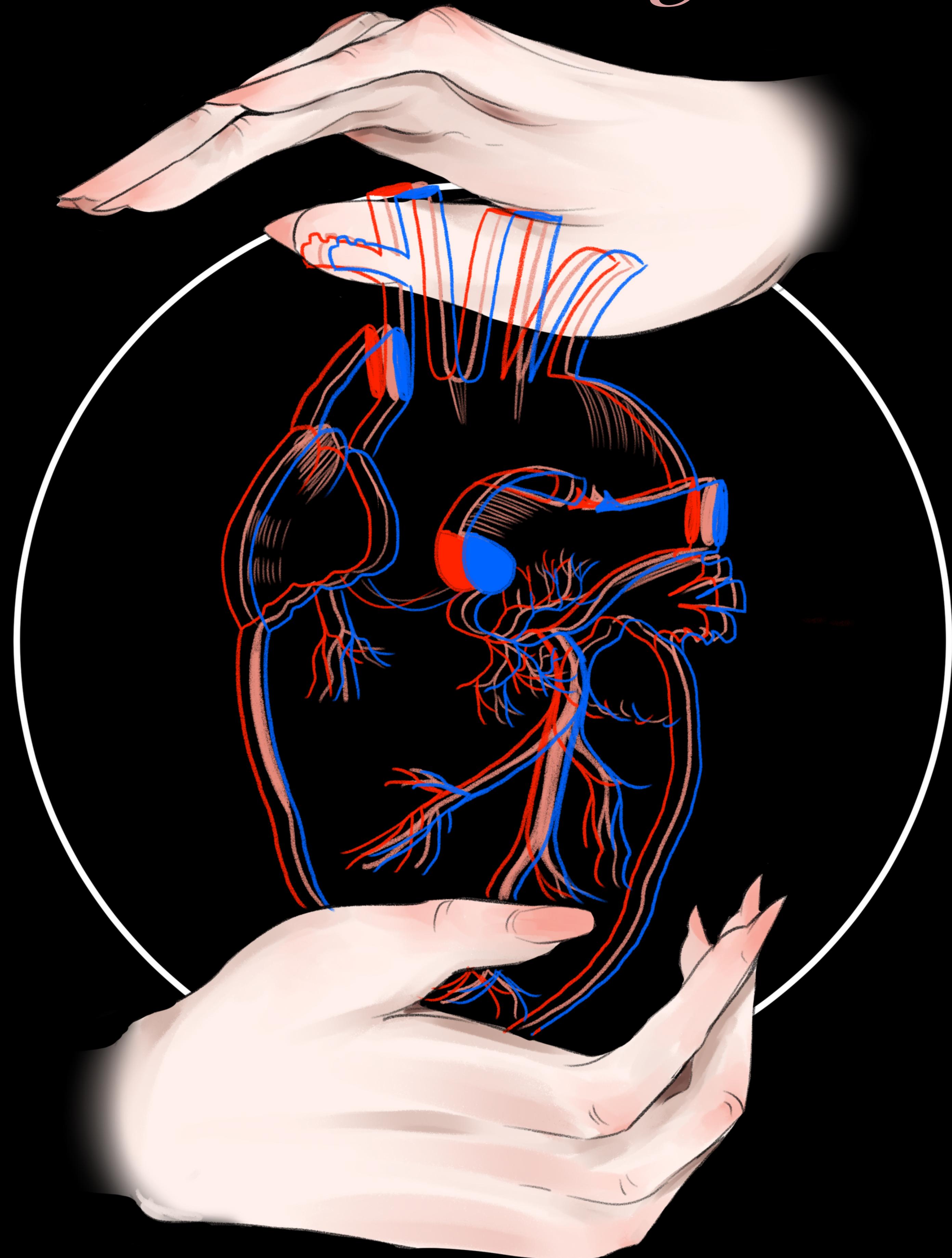


Backroads Magazine



2020-2021

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Preface

"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have" -Maya Angelou. This year's Backroads Editors are proud to share with the creative souls of Alhambra. No matter where your journey takes you, may you never stop sharing your creations.

Here at Backroads, we are dedicated to bringing forward student voices through their art. Whether it be writing, photography, or drawing, we love to showcase the various talents at Alhambra.

These past two years, things have been a little tricky. We've had to switch from a physical magazine to something digital. Meeting as a club has been difficult, and keeping in touch with the student body has been near impossible. But, we've managed once again to display Alhambra's creativity. We anticipate many more successful years of backroads.

- The Editing Team

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Hindsight

How time has flown by

To the person once shy
Those times when nothing would get in our way
Those days when we used to laugh and play

Day after day
Tricks and games
For hours upon hours

We were so young and naive
Innocent and playful
Yet I don't even know what to believe
Matthew Prado

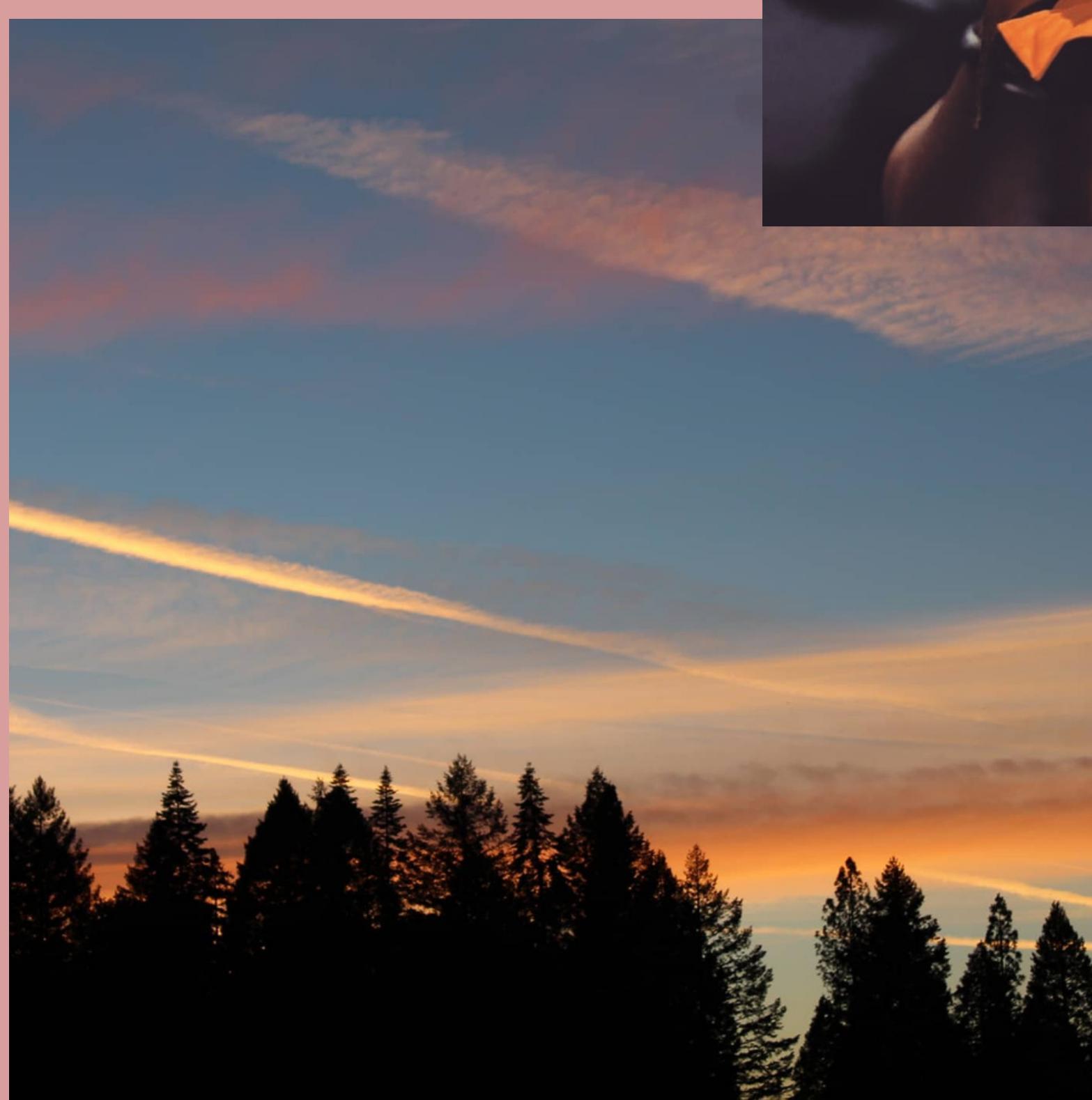
When I look at you now
So elegant, so illustrious
Mature and meticulous

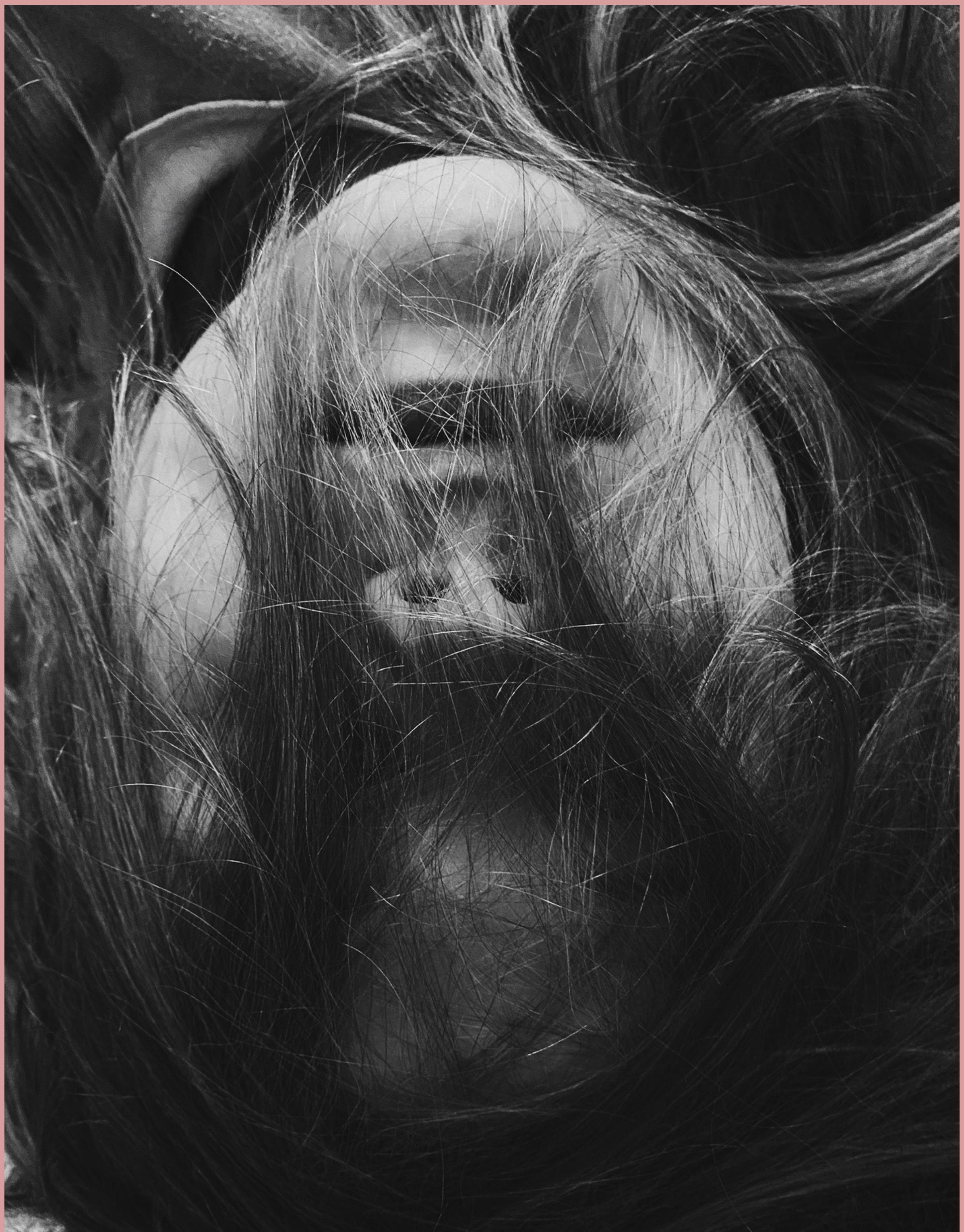
You're not the same girl
I remembered before
But a single glance and I knew
I remembered before

That my feelings for you
Were just as true

Matthew Prado

Emme Robinson





Jacklyn McClearnen

Contemplations

in those moments of bliss
i get her back
then I wake up into reality
the reality that doesn't allow

i still think about how you smile when i smile
so i can get it perfect

i feel like i'm home in your arms

“please don’t thank me for loving you honestly,
this is the true tenderness you’ve always
deserved”

Sydney Lieb



Lara Farrales

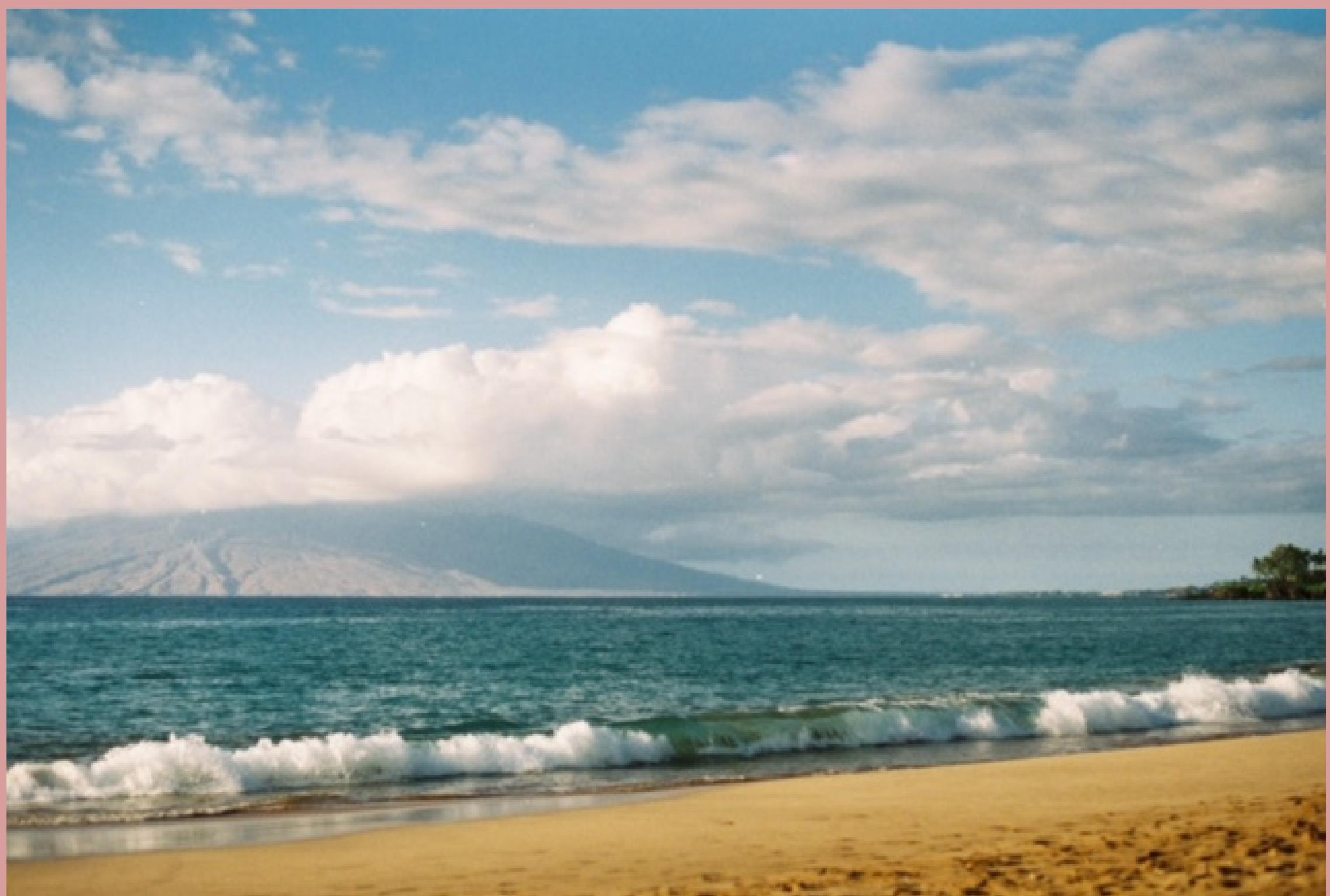


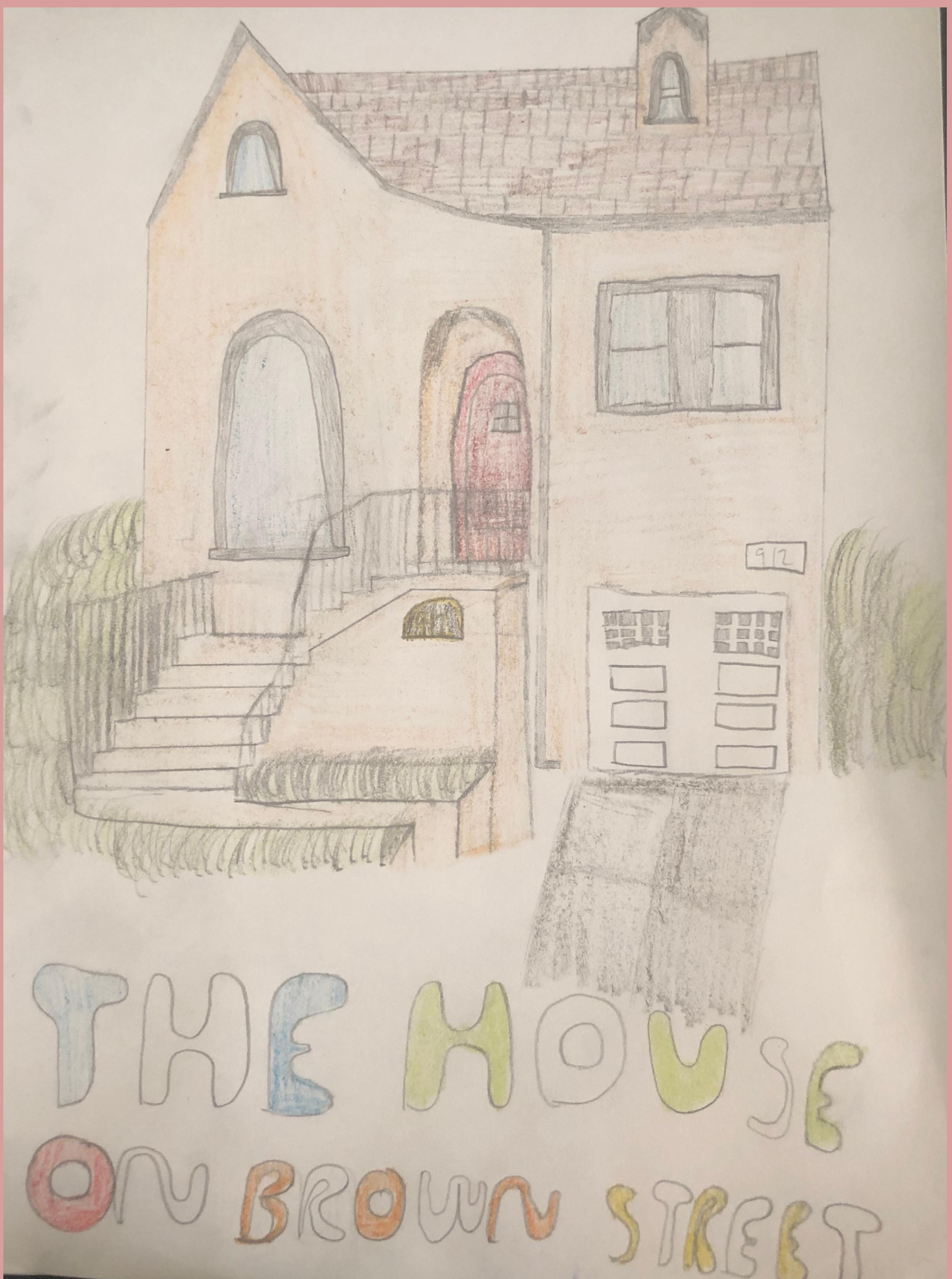


Rebecca Carranza



Michael Lano





THE HOUSE
ON BROWN STREET

Logan Webb

What makes you happy during the holidays

For a one-word answer, I would say my friends
I always have their shoulders to cry on.

If I need them at 3:00 am

They will stay until 4:00 until my sobbing turns into snores

Five simples words would be “I truly love all my friends”

But six words would show more

I go over this phase seven times a week, “I truly love my best friend”

The way she makes me smile, I cannot curate into words
I feel like I’ve known her since I was nine.

We met when I was ten, I would do it again to re-meet
another sister of mine.

Deandra Lara



Kelsey Adams

Questioning

Pins

everything is clouded
from the whites of my eyes, to my heart and it's sins,
you took away my light, i've been stabbed with two pins

one in my heart, one in my mind
the needles are sharp, be careful or blind
left me in the ocean, you know i'm afraid
lost my devotion, why is everything starting to fade?

breathing has slowed, though you keep me alive
my tears, oh how they flow, now it's three forty-five

your mark has been made, not a scar nor a spot
though now there's a blade, next to where i start to rot

Ayla Marie



Jacklyn McClearnen



Michael Lano (above)
Emme Robinson (below)





Emme Robinson



why am i not worthy of love

does there always have to be some ulterior motive?
they have to be preying on me or insecure... right?
do i not have good judgment?
whenever someone cares about me is it wrong?
am i just so unlovable that anyone showing that they care is
wrong?
oh i get it they have to be a predator to show love
they have to genuinely hate themselves to show interest in me
they have to be so mentally f*cked up to think it's even a good
idea
what's so wrong with me that this is the case

Sydney Lieb



Rosa Espinoza

Fall

Fall brings death, but you only
choose to see its beauty.

The trees aren't changing
seasons, they are dying.

Leaves are vibrant orange and blood-red
in one last attempt to scream before they die in winter.

The "crunch" on the sidewalk is you stepping
on the skeletons of deceased leaves.

The beautiful round pumpkin that you've carved
is going to rot in a week because you took it off the vine
to make it into a Halloween
or Thanksgiving decoration.

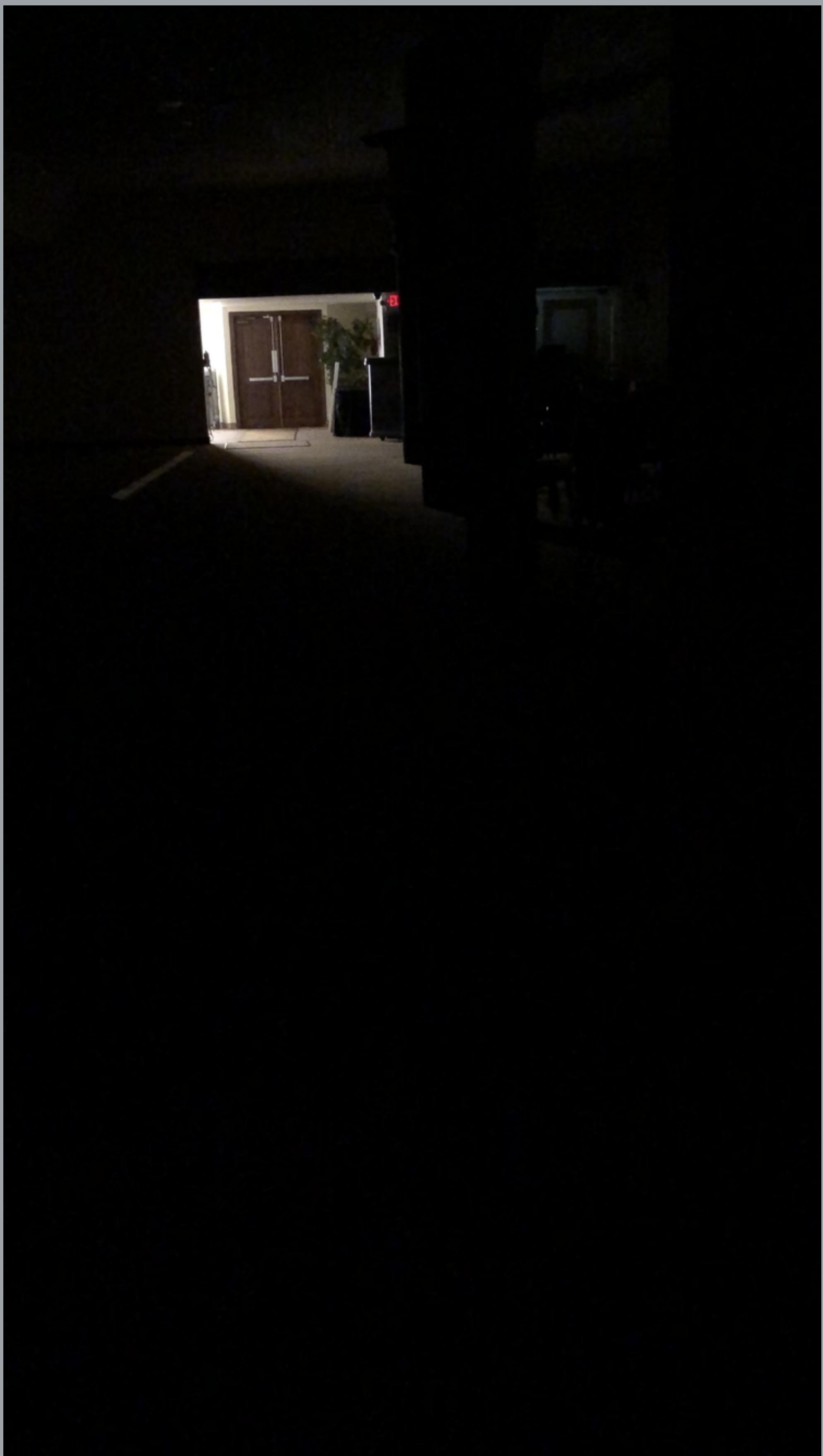
He's dead. The black cat is dead.

He won't bring bad luck, he had bad luck.



Rebecca Carranza

7 Years in Row



Anonymous



Joy Adesida

Sometimes I feel like I'm not good enough
for myself
and I don't know where to love
it feels like I'm picking from a bookshelf
titled "Insecurities and Thereof"

I sit and scan each book
reading every summary and copyright
flipping to the children's section to get a look
at illustrations of vulnerable insight

each page intensifies my anxieties
and makes me feel caught
between many varieties
of things that I overthought

it feels like there is no exit
out of my own head
I'm only desperate
to find a book I don't dread

I examine a separate category
titled "What is Love?"
the papers feel like an exploratory
to find which chapter I want to learn of

so many types of affection
and different ways to express and emit
because everyone has a different collection
of how they wish their love will transmit

self love consists of only yourself
it feels like something that everyone needs
to find the right bookshelf
and abandon your own insecurities

they aren't in need
and take up too much space
they deserve to be freed
to let love stories take their place

Light

What If

If only I had more time

If only I had told you then just how much I care

I would have told you my heart skips a beat when you walk
into the room

I would have mentioned that your laugh is my favorite melody

I would have stared into those breathtaking eyes a moment
longer

I would have hugged you tighter

If only

If only

Next time I won't wait so long

But next time I do hope you wait a little longer

So for now she'll sit right next to you

Just like I always wished I could do

I know I was one of many, but you were the first for me

I'll move on too just wait and see

I'll find a girl who makes my heart leap

I'll find a new laugh to enjoy

I'll find new eyes to take my breath away

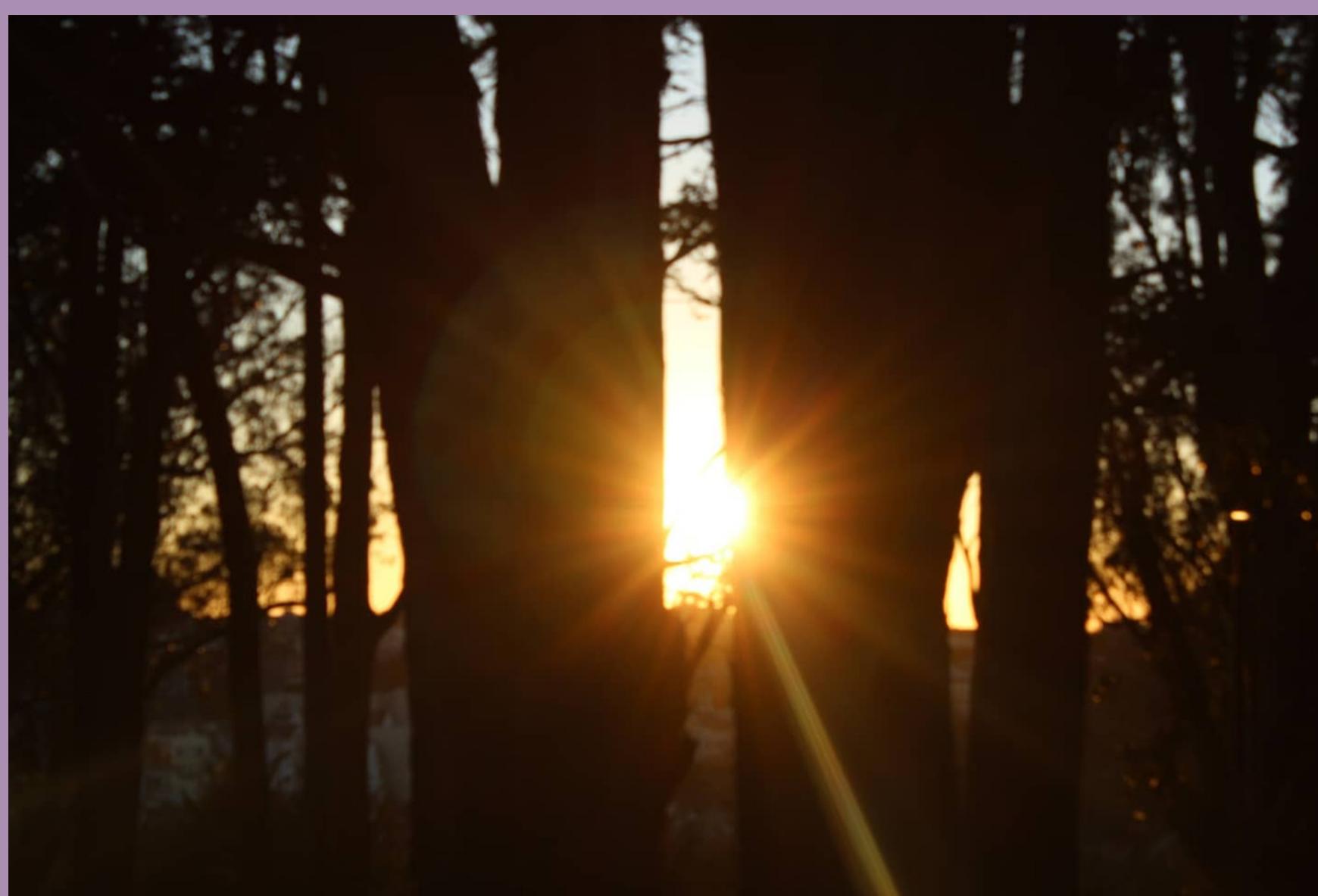
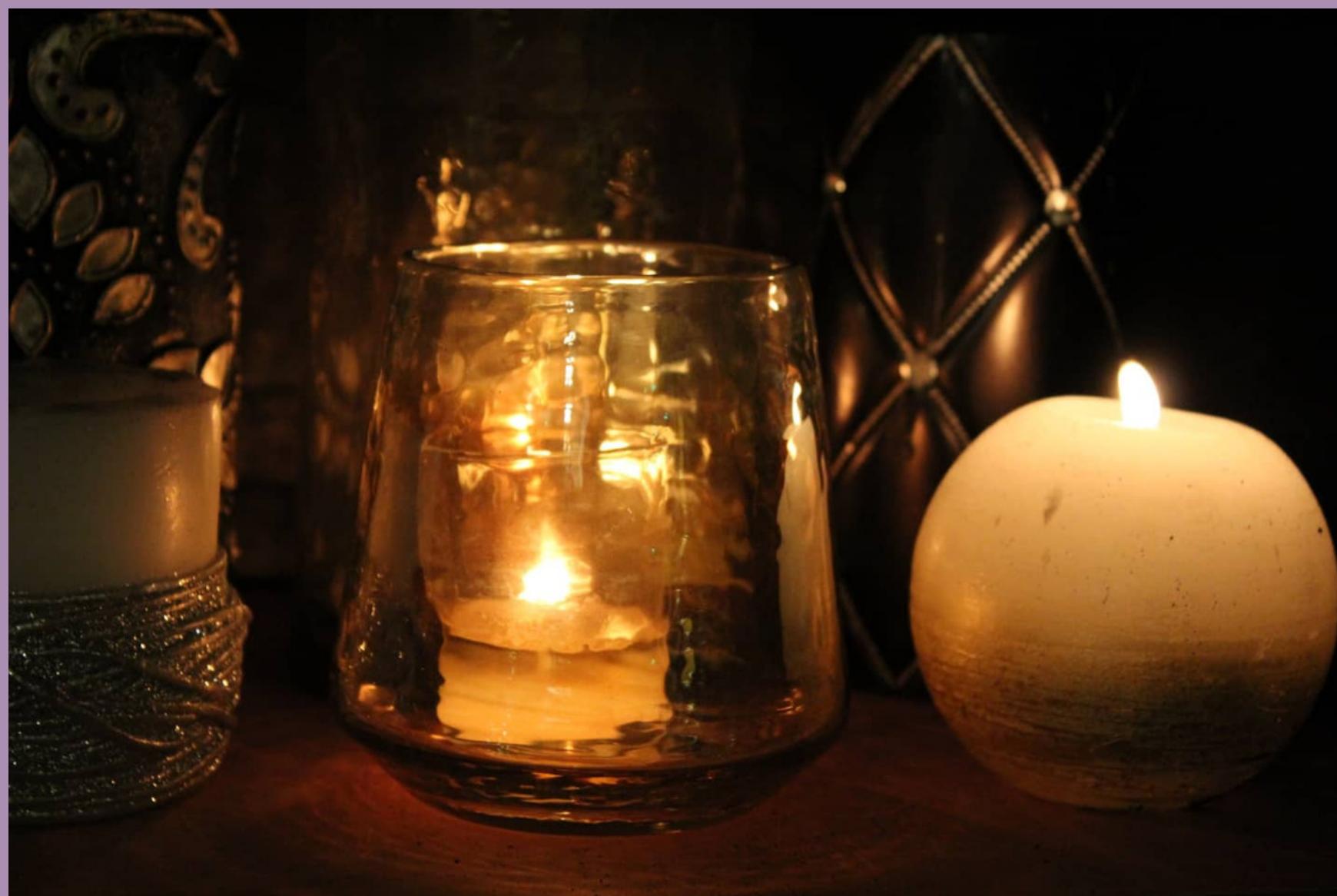
I'll find someone to hold forever

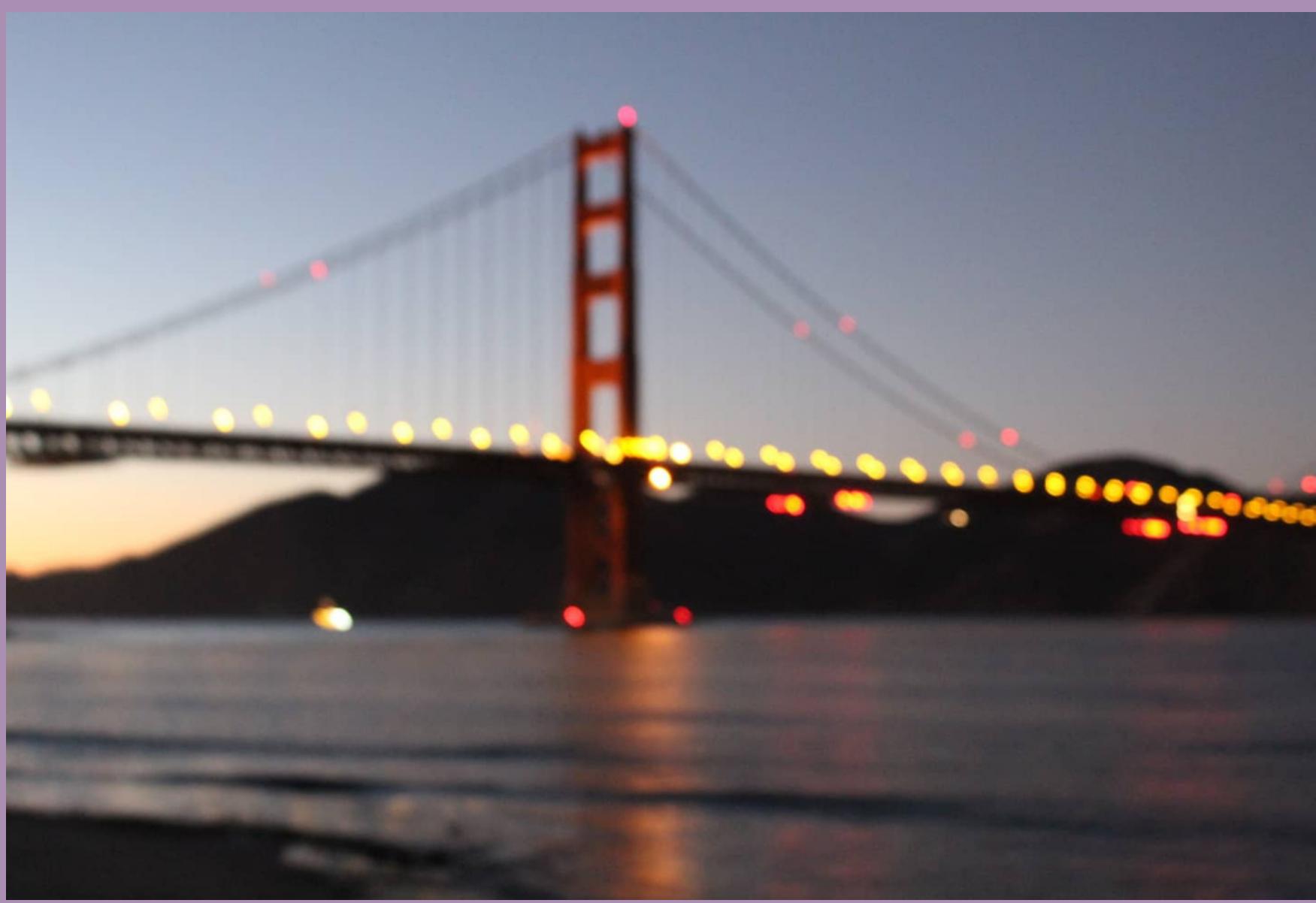
I know I'll think of you every step of the way

But I'll save the "what ifs" for another day

Charlotte Paschall

Emme Robinson





Emme Robinson





Rebecca Carranza

Cherry



Cherry





Lara Farrales (above)
Rosa Espinoza (below)



Michael Lano



Not About Suicide

If Something Were to End...

All the problems in the world,
Into existence, I was hurled.

All the pain and tears which thrive
Are all because I am alive.

If something were to end,
If a world like this could mend,
It would be because I ceased to exist.

Death is not of which I speak,
No, this notion is too cold and bleak.

Tell my problems “go away”
I wish not to see another day.

If something were to end,
If a world like this could mend,
It would be because I ceased to exist.

For the world just cannot heal,
But if I’m not here it isn’t real.
Life would still exist for others,
For all the haters and the lovers.

If something were to end,
If a world like this could mend,
It would be because I ceased to exist.

By Anonymous

Life and Death

Life and Death are tricky,
The sirens of our age.
They'll dance and sing an enticing song,
On a gold and silver stage.

Life will try his best,
Though his best is not always good.
Death will try and persuade you,
But it doesn't mean you should.

You may not quite remember,
But here they've always been.
Life will try to save you,
And Death will always win.

Death will try to please you,
He'll hold you through your cries.
But don't be convinced by looks alone,
His kingdom is made of lies.

Life may not be appealing,
And his kingdom might fall down,
But he'll always be there for you
And you'll always hold his crown.

Don't let him deceive you,
For Death is not your friend.
Please don't listen to the words he says,
As Death is not a trend

Traveling for hours
Desperate in your time
Death will find you crying
And “try to take what’s mine.”

Donning robes of gold,
Under silver moonlight
Life will find Deaths’ ruins.
And try and make it right.

Fate forgot to feel.
He’s used to taking the blame.
His friends will scream and cry at him
He’s stopped feeling shame.

Life will find another,
Someone to console.
Somebody who knew you.
Death has taken a toll.

Death will try to please you,
He’ll hold you through your cries.
But you’re not sure if you can trust.
You’ve seen how much he lies.

Please don’t listen to him.
It’ll only make it worse.
If you trust in Death
His gift will be a curse.

Be safe while you can,
While Life is still with you.
People are there to love and help,
And I’ll be here too.

Signed,
Your happiness

Alyssa Coats



Bailey Robinson



The World is Ending Tomorrow. How will you spend your final moments?

But If The World Was Ending, You'd Come Over, Right?

A short story by Anonymous

The world is ending tomorrow. Earth is about to stop spinning. How dramatic does that sound, I never thought I'd say those words. It was a long time coming, and after many false predictions of the world ending in the past month, this one is correct. I can feel it, everyone can. There's a sense of finality in everyone's movements, and I'm sure that the world is about to end. It's hard to describe, but it's as if I feel the Earth about to give up, exhausted from spinning for so long. As soon as I heard the news, I just felt that this time was the real deal, and everyone around me felt it too. So, it's the day before the world is predicted to end, and the first thing I do is pack a backpack full of food and a change of clothes, along with my favorite stuffed animal. I'm not going home tonight. I tell my parents that I will not be spending my last days in this house with them. They're not overly surprised, but they sure are stunned when I tell them my secret. I run out of the room before they can fully process the news or react, but I bet I just ruined their last days of life. Oh well, they'll have to take it up with me in Heaven- or Hell, I suppose.

I step out of my house and take a deep breath. The air is heavy with the anticipation of rain, but the skies will not open to relieve the tension. We haven't had rain on Earth for quite some time. I check my phone and see a text from Katie: "Come over?" I've gotten a bunch of these texts from my friends in the past week because we all want to say our last goodbyes. Katie is one of my closest friends, but somehow we haven't gotten around to it yet. Maybe we're too scared to say goodbye. I walk to her house, and together we drive downtown. We don't talk about the impending doom, just casual small talk. It's nice to talk about something else. Neither of us knows where we are going, but as we approach the tallest building in Martinez, I park the car. "Let's climb it".

Katie looks at me, considers it, and replies, "What the heck. Let's climb it." There's a fire escape on the side of the building, and we climb up, up, up. It's funny how when you know the world will end soon, your fear of heights fades away. When we reach the rooftop, Katie grins at me. "Now what?" I've told my parents my secret, and it's trying to burst out of me once again. I want to- quite literally- shout it from the rooftops. "Now, we start yelling." Secrets don't matter when the world is ending. She shouts her secrets out, and I cry out my own until our voices are exhausted. With the cars honking down below, everyone trying to escape this city, no one could hear us. But it felt good to yell about who I am. We collapse onto the cement rooftop, gasping for air. We sit up there for a while in silence, and then we slowly descend. On the drive home, Katie is the first to break the silence. "Goodbye." No. "Not goodbye," I say. "See you on the other side." The only reason I'm not completely torn up is because I believe I'll see her again, just not in this world. She gets out of the car and walks back to her house, where her family and girlfriend are waiting. I feel lonely again.

It's only 15:00 (3:00 pm), and there are 37 hours in a day now due to the Earth's rotation slowing down, so there is plenty of time left in the day. I don't know where to go now, but luckily my phone tells me. I see Bella's face pop up on my screen, and I pick up the phone. "Hey." Her voice is warm and feels like home. "Want to hang out for a little while? I'm feeling too small right now, and I need someone to talk to." I drive to her house and am greeted by two dogs jumping up and down. "Hi girls!" I greet them. Bella and I go to her room and sit down on the bed. "So..." she begins. "Looks like we never will grow up. We'll be young forever." It makes no sense to the reader because they don't know her, but it makes perfect sense to me. I smile. "We have our own little Neverland right here, huh? We won't grow any older after tomorrow." The conversation continues for a bit, then grows too heavy to bear, so we head to the kitchen. She turns on some Disney music and we bake cookies, singing along. I'm content for a moment. But the moment ends and we run out of things to talk about, run out of things to do. I mean, what do you do when the world is ending? I know what I'm going to do next, and that's all that matters.

I'm going to see her. Who is she? I think I'll keep that to myself, I won't even put a pseudonym. I show up at her house, and I hardly remember the drive there. My hand shakes as I knock on the door. It opens. "Hi! I didn't expect to see you today!" Her tone is friendly, and her melodic voice washes over me as I lose myself in her hazel brown eyes. Gosh, she's gorgeous. "Hi. I know this is weird, but... um..." There's a gap between us that words may not be able to bridge. How do you say "I'm in love with you?" How can you say that, even knowing for a fact that she doesn't feel the same way? I begin to cry, and suddenly the world ending doesn't seem like a big deal anymore, which I know sounds crazy. She takes in this scene and ushers me inside. "Here come in, it's okay, it's okay. I know, these are strange times." She thinks I'm crying about the world ending, but I'm crying because even if the world continues to spin, she'd never want me. She sits me down on her couch and makes me a cup of tea, which ends up making me cry harder because she's so amazing and I want her so bad. As she hands me the mug, she says, "Want to make out?" Wait, what? "I'm sorry, what did you say?" I ask. "Want me to take it out? The teabag, I mean." Wow, I'm going nuts. "Oh, it's okay, I'll keep it in for a bit, thank you!"

We talk about how all of this craziness is making us feel, about what we're doing to prepare for the end of the world. Then she asks, "Why did you come here today?" It's not accusatory, just merely a question stemming from curiosity. I know why she's confused. We're not super close as friends, and it may be the last day we ever live. Why would I go to her house, of all people? I take a shaky breath. "I don't know. I guess something just... drew me to you." Not a lie, but not the truth either. I rise to leave, disappointed in myself for not telling her. But what did I expect? I'd confess my feelings and she'd say she felt the same way? We'd have some sort of romantic evening together? I'm kicking myself for being so stupid, asking myself why I went to her house. As I walk out the door, she calls out, "Wait!" She approaches me, pulls me close, and softly whispers, "Can I kiss you? I know it's such a weird question, but I'm scared to die without ever having kissed someone. You can totally say no, I know it's an odd thing to ask." She doesn't want to kiss me because she cares for me, she wants to kiss me because she's scared. But did I mention that I'm dumb and weak and hey, the world is ending? So we kiss.

After that whole ordeal, I leave her house half in awe of what just happened and half ashamed that I gave in. But I'm going to do one last thing today that I know is going to hurt the most. I start driving there. I park and walk toward the benches outside the dining hall, where we first met. He's there. "Hey." He turns around to see who spoke, and when our eyes meet, he remembers. He remembers what we were and what we were trying to be, he remembers ants and caterpillars, he remembers my sister and what happened, he remembers me. I wasn't sure he'd recognize me after all these years, I didn't even know if I'd recognize him. But we remember. "H-hi" And we picked up right where we left off all those years ago. He doesn't ask why I made a four-hour trip just to see him, and I don't ask why he cut me out of his life. We avoid the painful questions and just talk. We talk about God and life and what we've been doing lately. We talk about what we think Heaven will be like, and we talk about our families. We talk about our pets as we walk through the trees, the thick scent of pine hanging in the air. We look for birds among the trees and watch ants building their homes, unaware that their existence will soon be cut short. When we get hungry, we break into the dining hall and he makes us some soup that was in the cupboard. I make lemonade from powdered packets I found, and we act as if we do this every day. We could've done this every day.

After dinner, we realize that neither of us knows what time it is. I check my phone. 34:00. Only three hours until the beginning of the end. I shiver, feeling fear about this for the first time. I grab my backpack and he grabs a blanket, and we go hiking up to a giant cliff. When we reach the top, I am completely exhausted, and he's only slightly winded. We joke about how he's better suited for the outdoors than me, and besides, the air is thinner up here. We lay out the blanket and set up a little picnic with the food from my backpack. I change into a sweatshirt, as it's getting chilly, and he pulls out another blanket from his pack to wrap around us. And it's just the two of us, on the edge of a cliff, wrapped up in a blanket together. He sighs and says that he always thought he'd be married before the world ended. "I wanted to marry you someday." Oops. That just slipped out. "I know," he replies. I blush. I didn't think he knew that. When we met, it was just the wrong time with the right people. And now time is going to cease to exist, and we are no longer the right people for each other. We talk some more in hushed voices about anything that has nothing to do with the end of the world. We snuggle up close to each other and silently pray together. I pray that I'll see him and all my friends in Heaven, even if I don't go there. I don't know what else to pray for, but he is still praying so I close my eyes and remain still, letting God's peace wash over me in that moment. We open our eyes together and look over the edge of the cliff, where the sun casts a golden light on all that it touches as it sets for the last time.

By Alyssa Reeves

Preparing for death, this is the end
I'd like to think we'd end on good terms, but that may be hard to apprehend
Although I'm not broken anymore, a part of me is still hoping for more
I have all that I could need including the love of my only friend
But you'll always have a piece of me
So in the end I would need one last thing
Not the last words of my mother or friends
Nor the tears or fear from my captivated mind
Just the confirmation that I'm still in your dreams
After all this time and hatred for you
This is the last thing I'd need to do
To put my heart at rest
I'm gone and never returning
This time I've learned
This time I will die happily
With my best friend who held me up while I fell apart
And put me back together like a puzzle
The world is ending, these are my last thoughts
Leaving this horrid place leaving everything behind
But the one person who showed me who I really was
It was not you, but the one who was there all along
My best friend, now's our time

By Prasumi Chand

I want to be alone at the top of a skyscraper, somewhere in San Francisco or New York. I want to be eating fried chicken with a mucho mango and spend my whole day there, just existing. As I look across the horizon I won't see any people, just endless buildings. I want to be blasting some of my favorite songs that make me feel joy in my heart. And as the final moments come, I'll be feeling content.