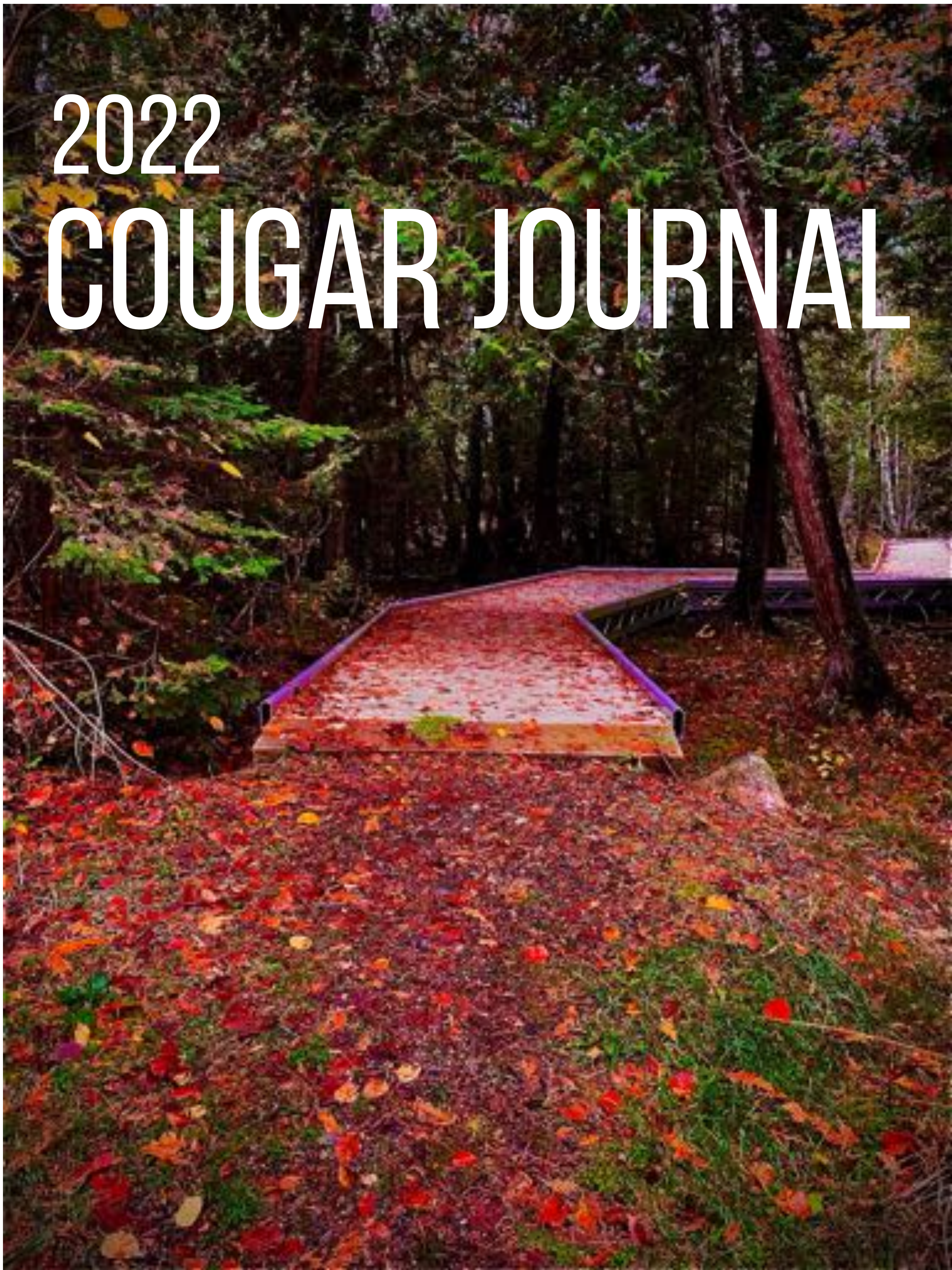


2022

COUGAR JOURNAL



Como Park Senior High School
740 Rose Ave. W
St. Paul, MN 55117
Principal: Kirk Morris

Dear reader,

Finally, after a two-year break, we are so happy to publish the Cougar Journal, Como Park's very own literary and arts magazine. The pandemic has suspended the work of our valuable editors, but this year it has been resumed, so we have worked tirelessly to improve this year's edition and make it unique and unforgettable for every reader. You can't imagine our delight to present the creations of our talented students.

We hope that you will enjoy and appreciate the creativity and hard work that our editors put into the publication that you now hold in your hands. We wanted to make a good place for our young artists, and we recognize the difficulty of putting oneself out into the world in such a vulnerable way. We support all the students who have taken this step to share their talents anyway.

Thank you everyone who put effort into this year's edition, and to you, the reader, for showing interest in our youth's art works.

We would also like to thank the Como Park Booster Club for contributing the funds that made this edition of the Cougar Journal possible!

-The Cougar Journal editors

Editors

Anna Strathman

Sam Eiken

Adelija Aleksejeva

Cover art by Taylor Anderson

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A Bowl of Sonder

In the cold winter days of my childhood
I would be laughed at by family
for not knowing how to
pronounce Khaub Piaj.

This is Khaub Piaj.

A good bowl is of soft and chewy noodles,
formed from rice flour, with chicken
laying in a hot, steamy soup.

A table,

of greens and condiments.

Scoop the noodles gently, not to drop it.

Slurp the noodles, chew it,
and swallow. Now, eat the
soup soaked chicken.

So flavorful,

all down to the stomach.

As a child,

I always looked forward
to a hot bowl of Khaub Piaj
during the ruthless Minnesota winters.

The roof of my mouth would burn
from a lack of patience
of letting the noodles cool.

The noodles

sit in the hot, steamy soup
they've turned unusually soggy
left in for too long.

why? well you see,
distractions of laughter and family talk
too hard to eat while laughing
a spoonful bite of joy.
Just like Khaub Piaj's
changing soup,
my life soon changed.

The divorce of my parents is to
the chili oil that changes the soup as
the soup is to my life.

And when the trees slow down
and plants await to rebloom the following spring,
the ecstatic feeling for
a hot bowl of

Khaub Piaj no longer resides.

Every once in a while,
the noodles fall off the spoon.

Every once in a while,
the roof of my mouth doesn't burn.

Every once in a while,
the noodles don't turn unusually soggy.

Nostalgic joy no longer follow each bite,
but rather, the satiation to my physical hunger.

Now, as I chew the soft and chewy noodles,
an enigmatic yearning accompanies each swallow.

Perhaps, a wondering of sonder
from a bowl of
Khaub Piaj.

—Keng Chang



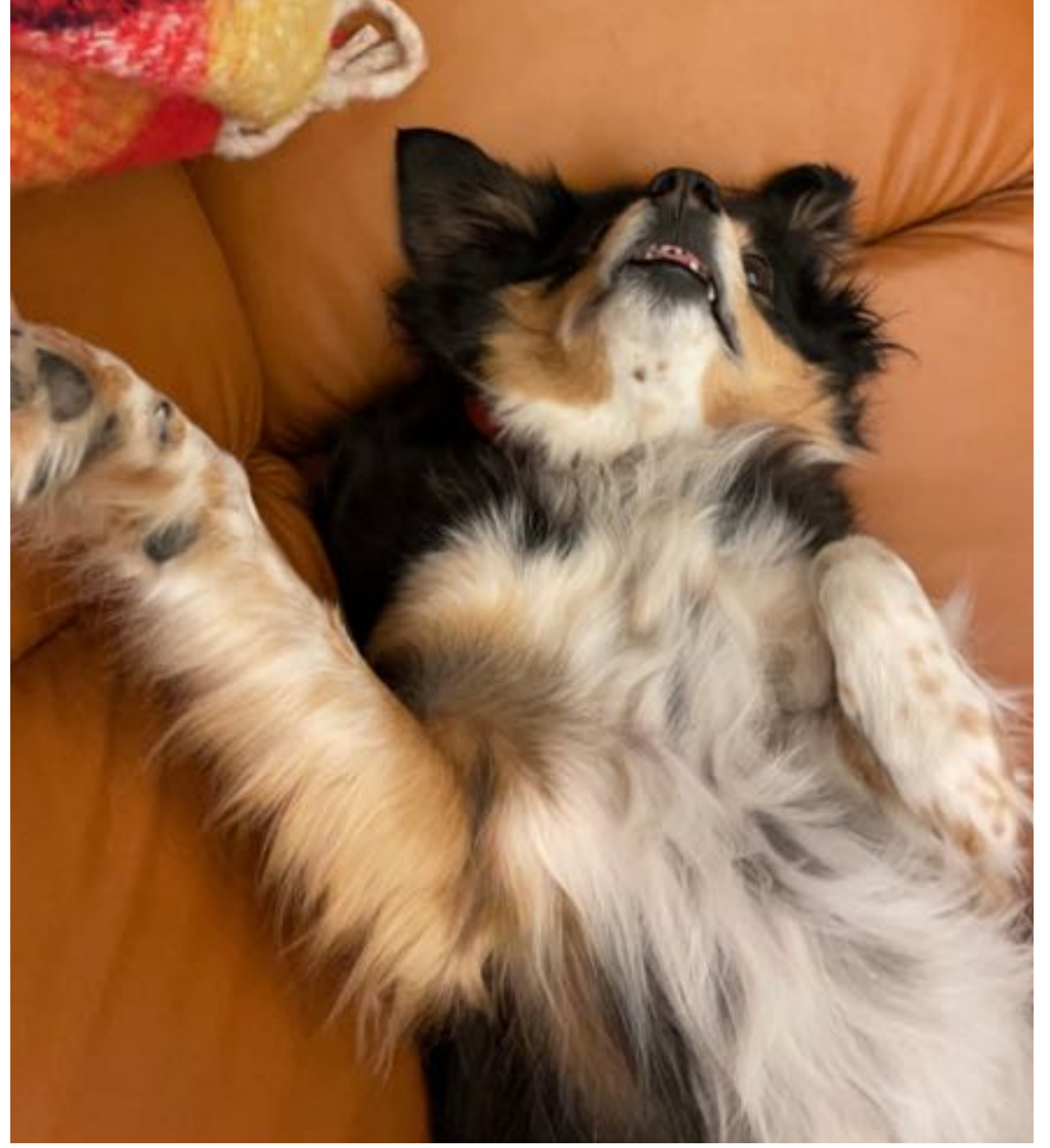
Alexander Le



Dontajah Dunsten

I Am That Freedom

What do you see when you look at me?
Do you see someone controlled or someone free?
They see a girl covered up with layers,
All they do is stare,
because they can't see my hair,
Other's think I'm pushed and limited,
they think I'm uneducated,
they think my voice won't be
Heard when I speak,
because they think I am abused,
They think I'm locked in a cage,
with no one around to help,
All they see in me is fear,
they think I have no power
Except tears and sadness,
but thats not true;
When you look at me
you need to see
The carefree girl
behind the layers,
the inner beauty within my soul,
I am the girl who is filled with sunshine,
the one whose power is the layer on her body,
They think my hood is my weakness,
but in fact that's my power,
I am not controlled by anyone
Except the one who created me,
They wonder why cover up if I'm not controlled,
It's because I chose to hide my beauty,
And will surely get rewarded for it in the day of resurrection.
I chose to be happy,
I chose to be me,
My power is my hood.
-Sabrin Ahmed



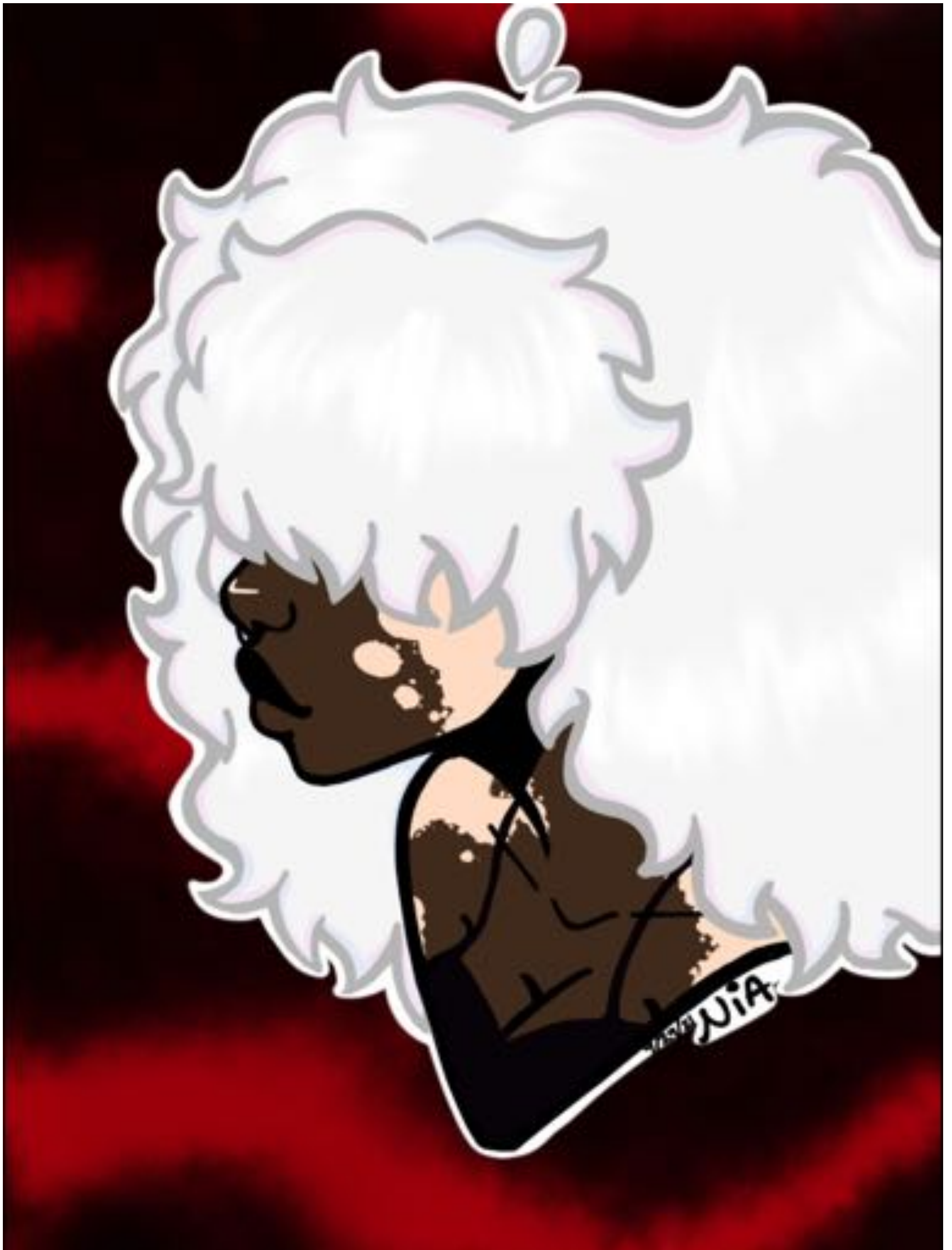
Adelija Aleksejeva

The Stew called home

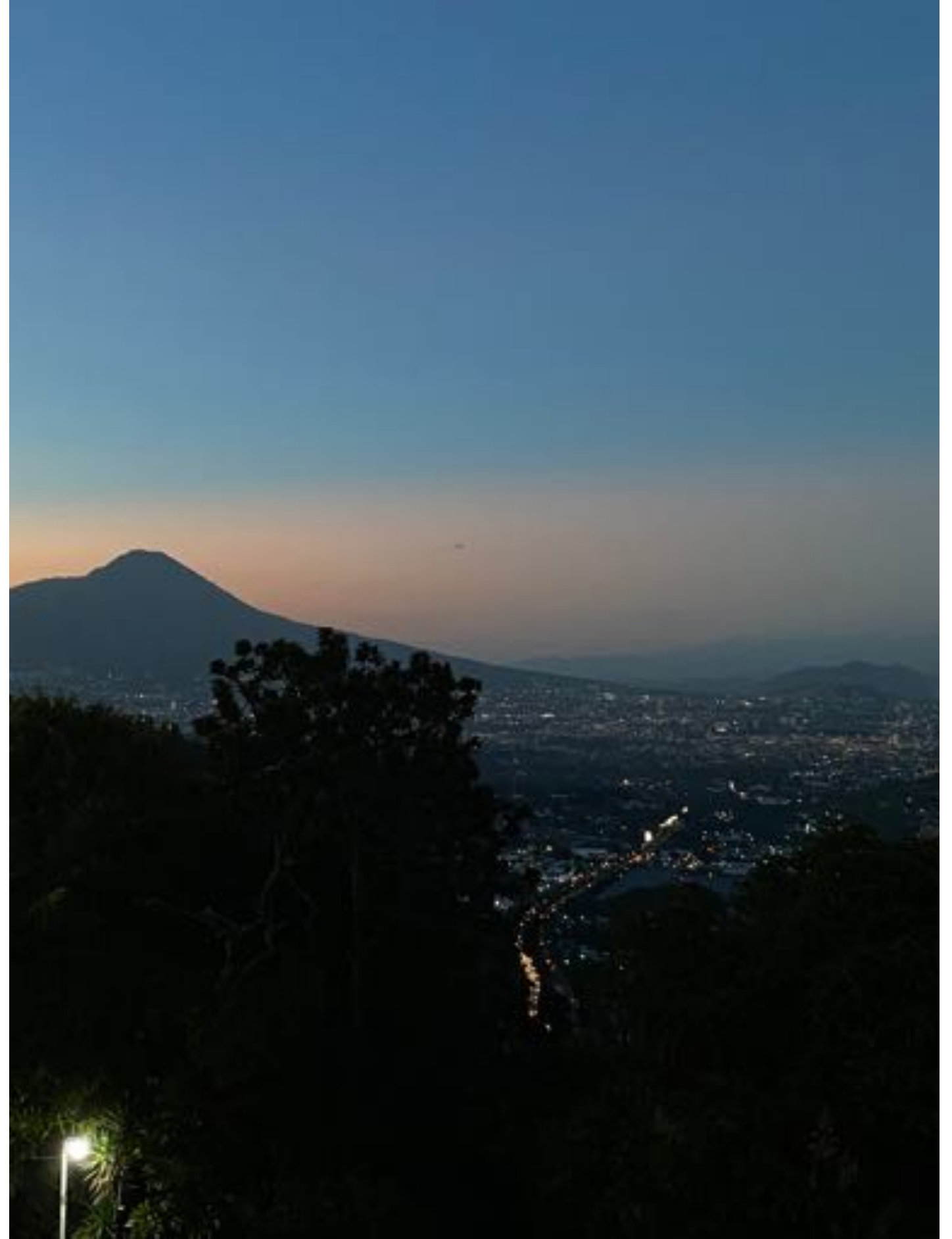
As I think of my childhood
I start to remember the warmth, love, and bursting flavors
Of Gumbo.
Watching my Dad pick apart the veined and slimy shrimp,
And cut up the flavorful sausages and onion.
The smell of the aromatic stew would fill the house
As a cloud of smoke would,
We would all begin to crave this meal.
Seeing the chicken and okra float around
In the big, bubbling pot on the stove
My mouth would begin to water and my stomach would start growling.

Feeling the burst of excitement as my parents yelled
It was time to eat.
We would quickly gather around
As if we hadn't eaten in days
Ready to feel warm and nourished.
Watching as the boiling hot stew got poured over the steaming rice
Like a hot bath,
I would grow impatient.
Once my bowl was empty,
The feeling of love and joy overcame my body like a tidal wave.
I felt satisfied and ready
For a good night's rest.
After the love and fulfillment of this meal,
I have now realized how pleasing it is to
Bring peace and delight to others.

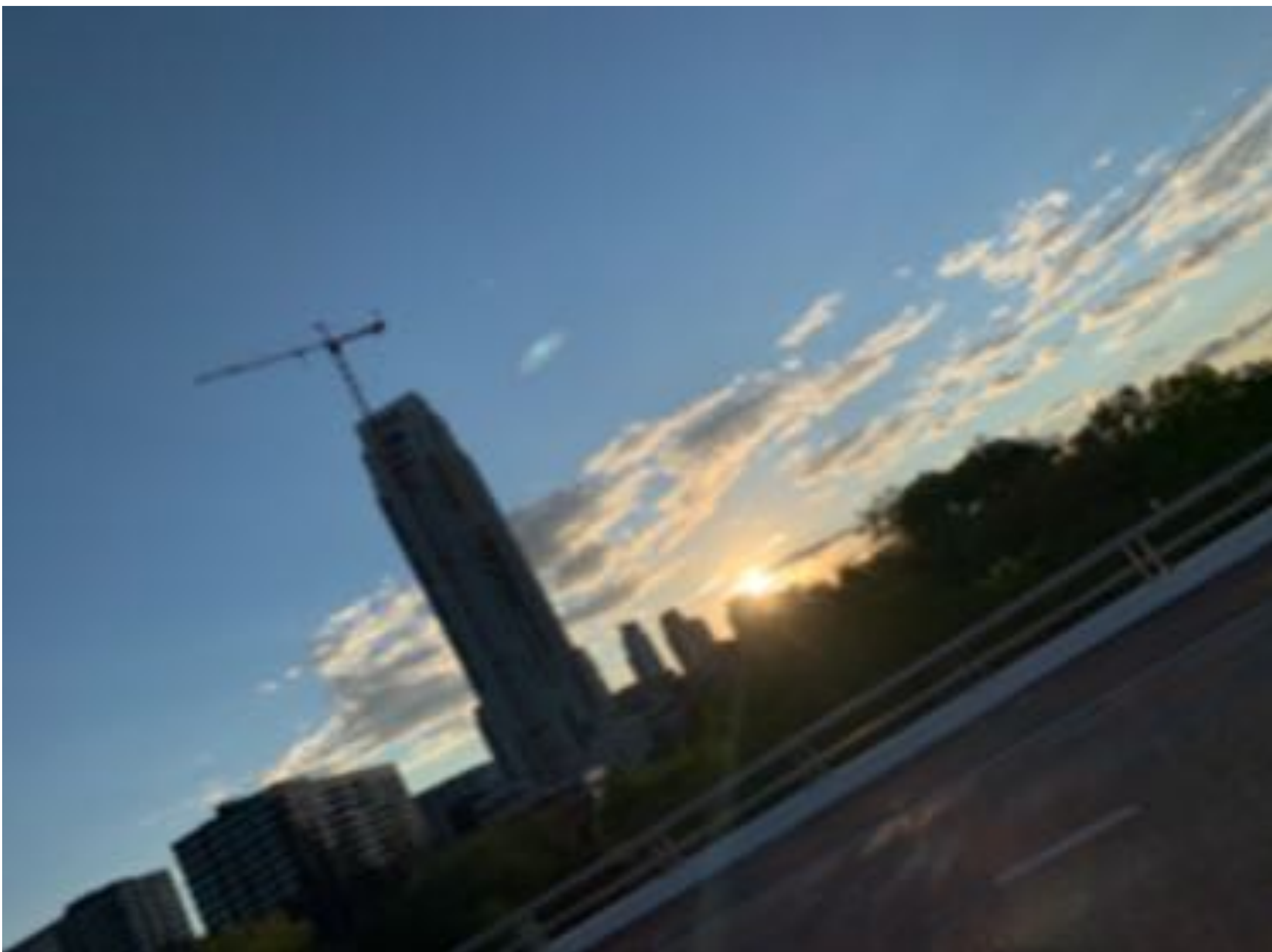
—Addy Moore



Nia Tenbrook



Wendy Coreas



Leyla Haashi

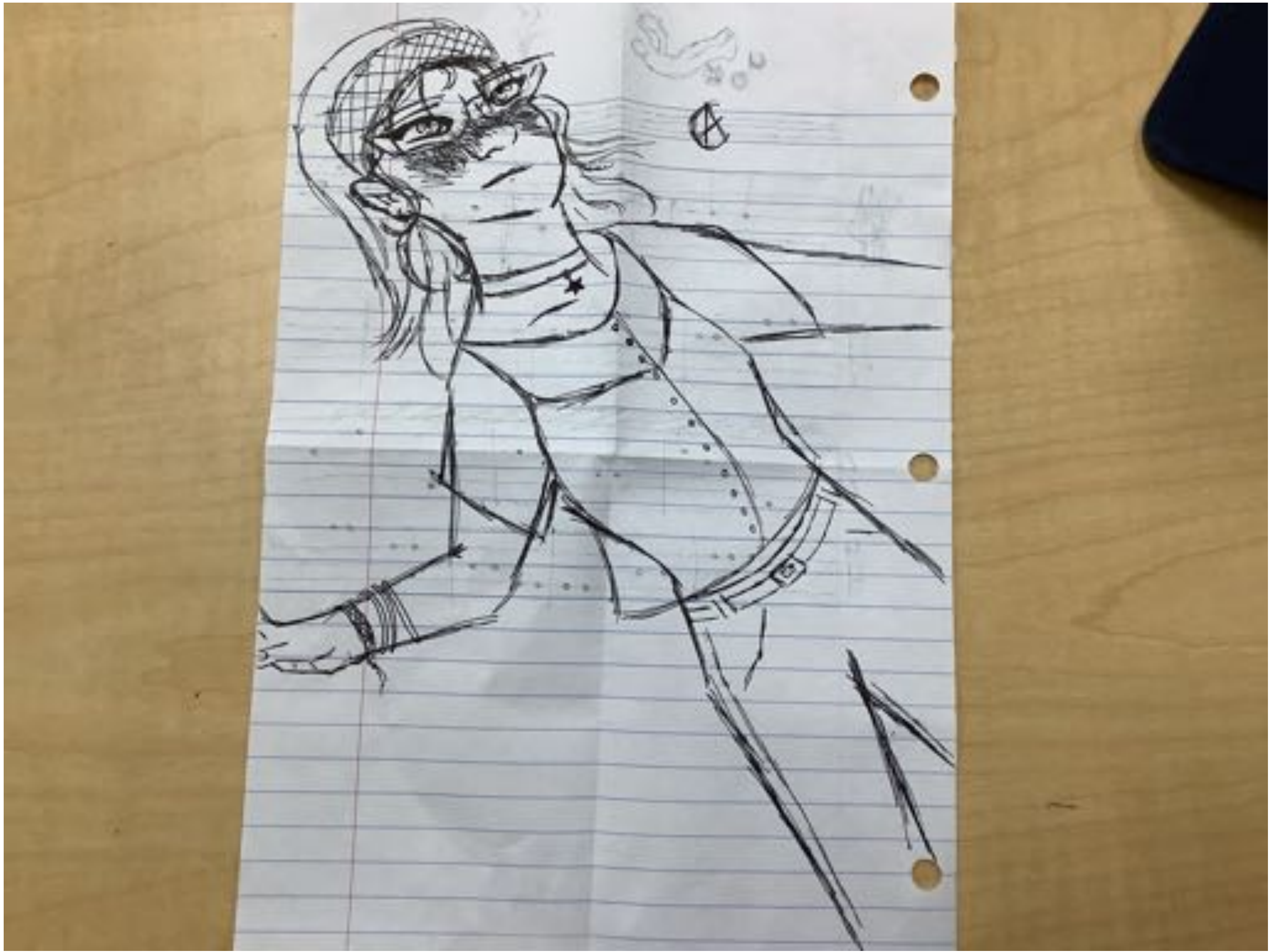


Anna Strathman

I am Mallory Matschina

My roots are in this land
And i refuse to cut them and my braids off
I wear green everyday with the irish in me
whether i physically wear it or not
I don't know what an Indigenous person is "supposed" to look like
But why can't it be me
I may not have a mom to lead me to be a strong woman
But i don't need her
She told me i wouldn't amount to anything
She told me I was never wanted or loved
She told me i was just an extension of her
And there wasn't any room for me to be myself
But here i am
I have a loving boyfriend and friends who want good for me
I'm in JROTC with a community around me who cares for one another
I have teachers who have noticed me struggling and reached out i can't repay them
enough
and they like me
for me as i am
I love the people who love me and show me they do
but ill always love her
her opinion will always affect me
no matter how much she pushes me away
and refuses my love and help
my world can't revolve around anyone but her

-Mallory Matschina

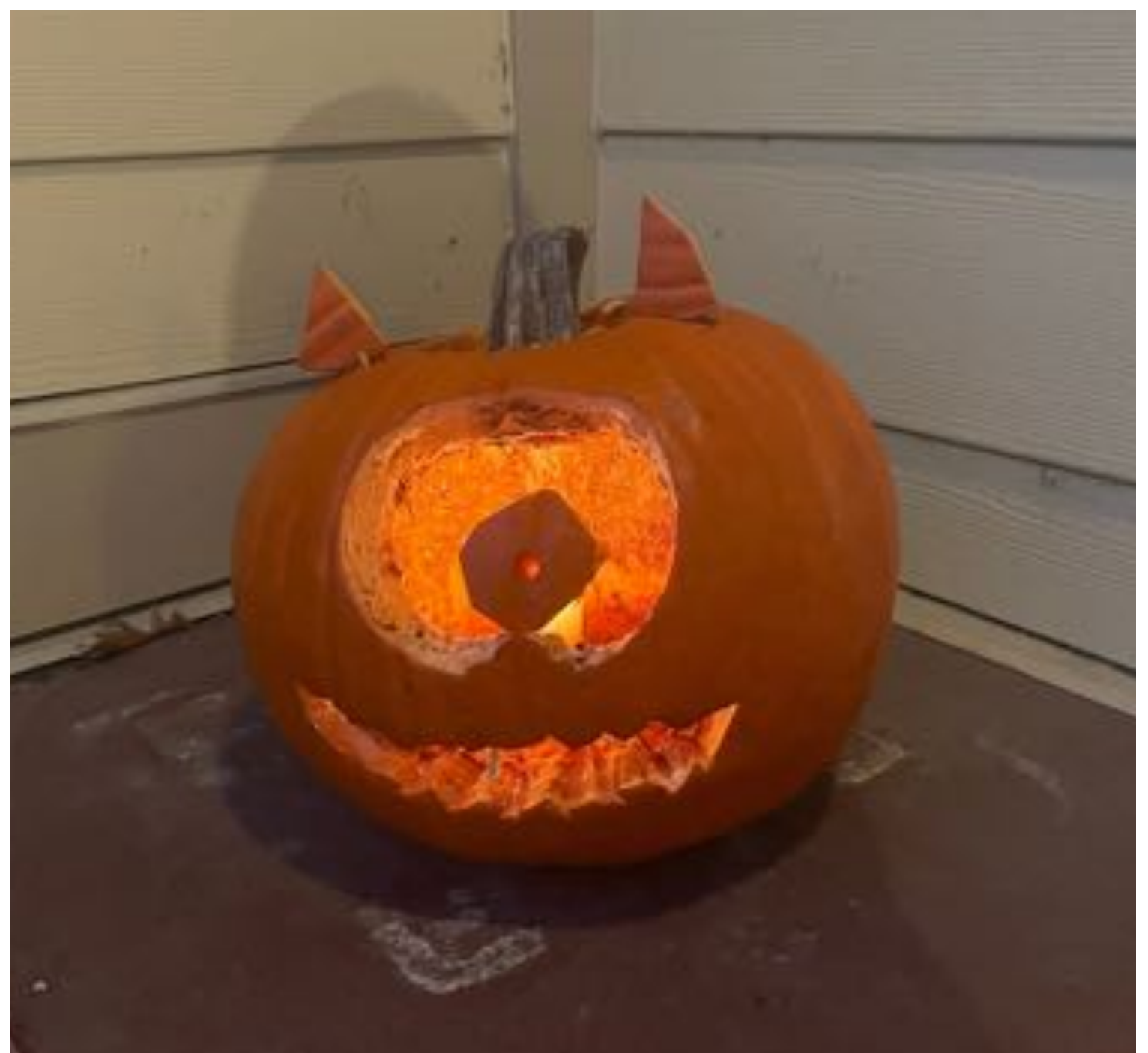


Aine Johnson





Gabriel Napierala



Adelija Aleksejeva

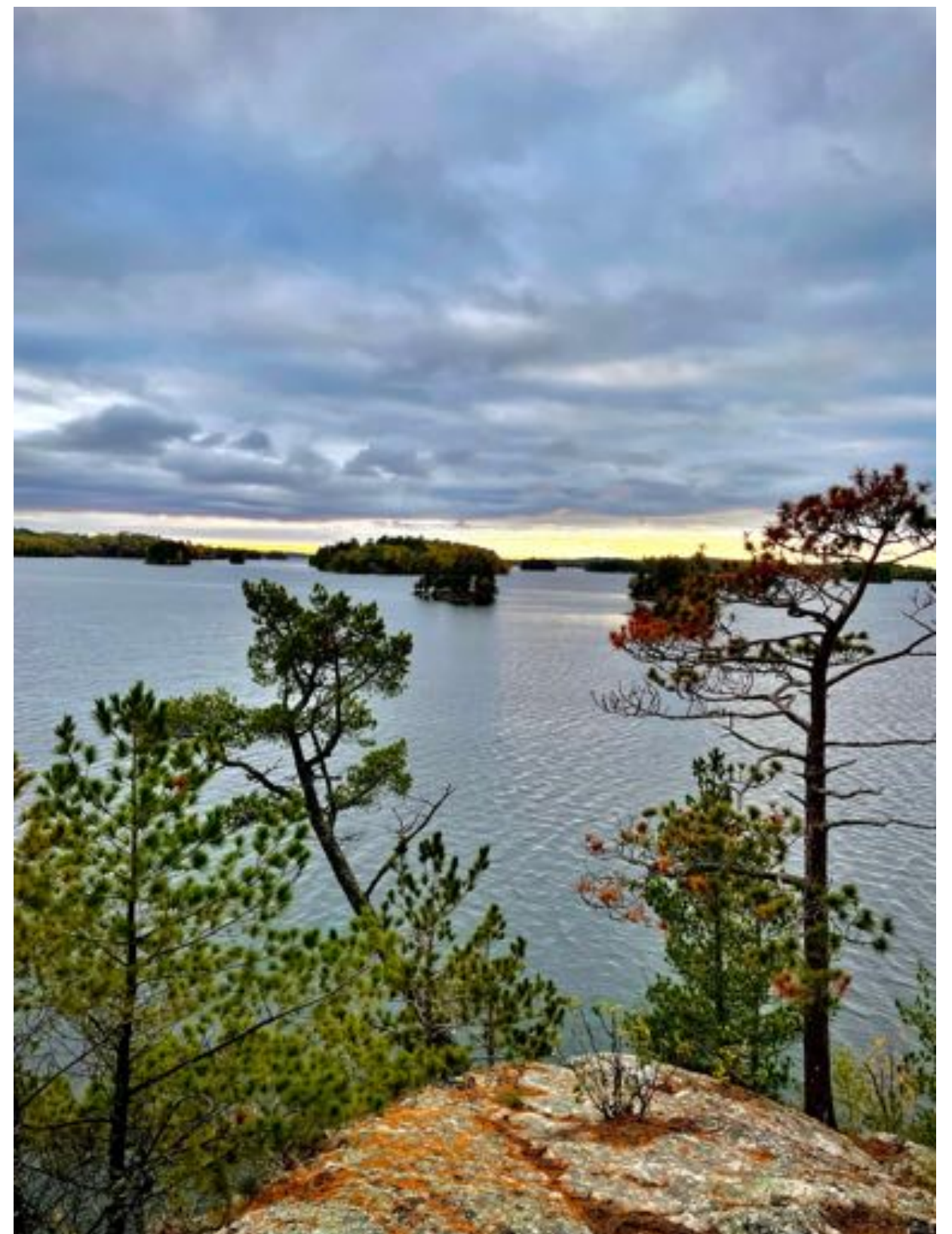
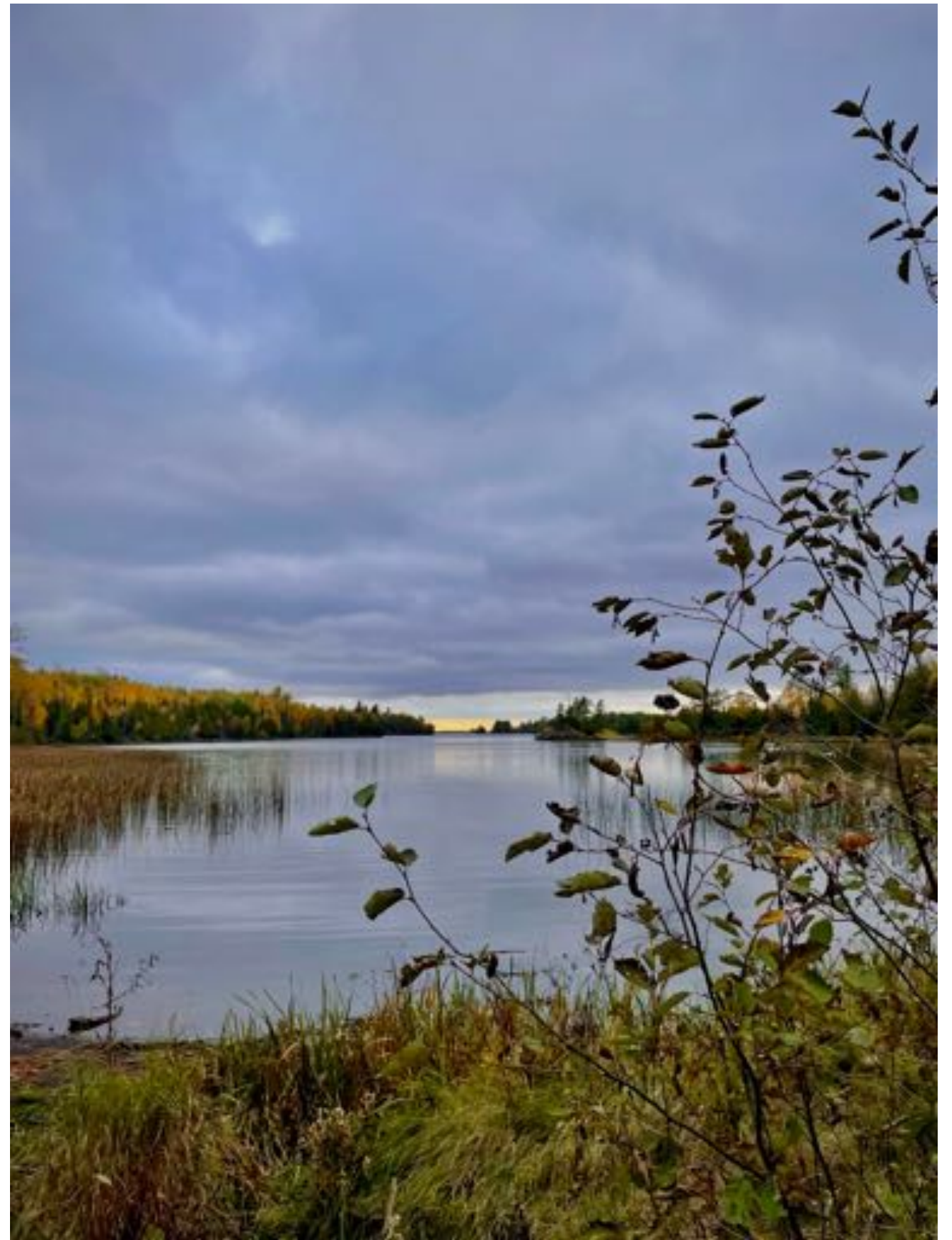
The People of the Cold

I am a Minnesotan, bold and true
My blood runs deep, covered in an icy hue
My strength lies from within, wrapped under layers of clothes
We are the people of the cold, I suppose.
It speaks truth to our resilience, our drive and our power,
A chance to work harder, to bloom just like our Minnesotan flowers.
For we are the first buds to poke their heads out after a long winter's rest,
The ones that survived mother nature's biggest test.
I grow with the people around me,
Working for a day where everyone will see,
How far I've come, what I've achieved,
I'll show all my people, because they've always believed,
Hard work isn't something new to our kind,
A type of characteristic that's difficult to find.
We are the people of the cold,
We are Minnesotan, we are bold
by Charlie Power Theisen

Hot Chocolate

After a long day sledding I walk home
To see a warm cup of hot chocolate waiting for me
As I get up to sit on the counter
A warm whiff of peppermint hits my face
As I take a sip I can feel the warmth and love coming from the drink
The peppermint and chocolate stick to my tongue like glue
It warms up every nerve in my body
Mom's hot chocolate is full of warmth and love
Hot chocolate, the heat for the soul

—Hayden Ambriz



Taylor Anderson

From beginning to end

Neither sweet nor bitter
Sour nor salty
It was a burst of all
Creating confusion as some flavors became strong
while others became small

Rice was sweet
As six pairs of feet
Raced to be first to eat "grandma's" freshly made rice balls
Something so simple that made me feel complete

Rice was bitter
From the splinters
Left by the ones that left my side
without any goodbye
The ones who are looking down from the sky
causing me to cry

Rice was sour
For I didn't feel like a flower
Precious enough to bloom
With everyone ahead blossoming into something beautiful
I felt almost forgotten

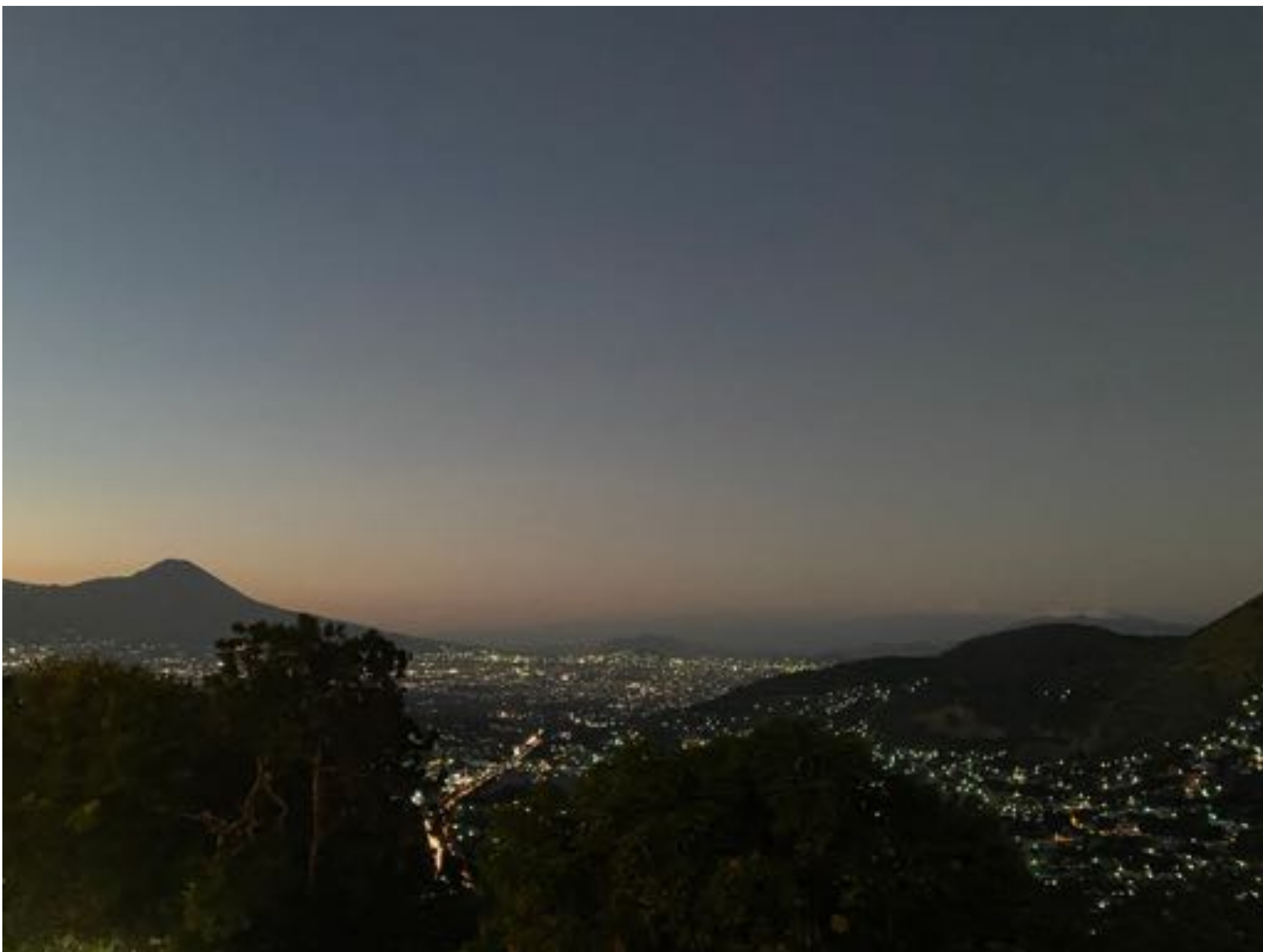
Until my family became my fertilizer
Building me up
Making me see that I was good enough

Rice was salty
From the teardrops that left my eyes
because I was told to comply
Slowly grasping the world around

I realized that all was true
Seeing some things from their view
I didn't feel so blue

Different taste of rice while growing up make me who I am
For I know that there are many more flavors and memories to come
Through it all rice is always there
From beginning to end
"Time's" hands know no end
For the warm rice bowl that warmed my tear
As well as warmed my heart
Just like that dome shape in the bowl
It makes me feel full
And I know
I'm home

—Xee Lee



Wendy Coreas



Taylor Anderson





Sam Eiken

Dear Mae,

Life is hard right now,

There are times where you break down.

You are going through many emotions and challenges in life.

Cry because you feel like there is no way out.

Every day you still wake up,

Telling yourself to have a good day no matter the situation.

Your parents are immigrants,

They don't understand emotions

growing up they were taught to not show emotion,

As it is a sign of weakness.

That's okay because you understand where they came from.

They sacrifice tons to get you where you are now.

You speak the tone of Karen

Many aren't familiar with that

Go to school every day with people you consider friends.

When coming home you feel like you have no friends.

You thought life was full of joy and happiness,

That's wrong.

That's okay because you are going to get through it all.

Everyday you go through hardship,

You deal with it by ignoring it.

You try your best every day,

Hoping someone would see the change you've made.

Smile more
Worry less
Positivity is infectious
And happiness is a choices
Always forgive
But never forget
Patience and Persistence eventually pay off,
But they usually do so very slowly.
You can't change anyone,
Expect yourself.
Celebrate victories in life.
Even the small ones.
Don't worry about getting knock down,
Focus on getting back up.
Listen to all advice and criticism that comes your way,
There always another one at the corner of your eyes.
-Mae Paw



Aymelee Xiong



Taylor Anderson



