

PREFACE

This publication has been prepared as part of the CDC Foundation's Take Action: Engaging Young Leaders to Address the Health Impacts of Climate Change grant program. This project was a collaborative effort between staff and students in Nature Nexus Institute's Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program, Summer Fellows Program, and medical students from the Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine.

Our publication is a culmination of the time we spent thinking deeply about how health, nature, and community climate resilience interact. We did this thinking through many different actions: hands-on habitat restoration activities at our local park, interviewing and engaging community members about their thoughts on the topics, collective sketching, and by convening two summits for these distinct groups of students to have shared nature experiences and meaningful dialogue. To complement all this action, we also took time to be still in solitude, to be quiet observers in outdoor spaces most accessible to each of us individually at home. We reflected on our past, present, and future - how our approach to daily life fits within the complex relationships ebbing and flowing among health, nature, and community climate resilience. The resulting writing in this publication is deeply personal, with the hope that you, the reader, might be inspired to reflect on similar moments in your own life.

Students in the Greenhouse Program took an epistolary approach to their reflective writing, describing their cherished memories and hopes for the future. Each letter shares their passions and inspirations in three separate, but interrelated, categories: letters to their 3rd-grade self, letters to their 35-year-old self, and letter to a future Greenhouse Program student or a person newly arrived to Los Angeles. The medical students focused their reflections on how time spent in nature and in community influenced them personally and possibly their future as soonto-be physicians.

With the very real consequences of climate change looming over us all, the students also collectively developed some recommended actions that individuals and communities can take to foster resilience. And, we have included a few coloring pages at the end of publication to balance those recommended actions with a little quiet reflection as well. Our publication invites you to relate to our experiences and hopes to inspire you to see how health, nature, and community climate resilience interact in your own life. We all seek to relate and connect to each other, to come together. This is what the writers aim to inspire: togetherness and resilience, through community and nature.

Dear reader,

I'd like to start by posing a question: when was the last time you went on a walk without your phone or headphones? What did you do while on the walk, and how did you feel?

Many of us might not even be able to give a clear answer to the first question. It's no secret that as a society, we've become technologically dependent. Even basic actions — like going on a walk or standing in line to pick up your morning Starbucks order — seem impossible without staring at your phone or blasting music in your ears.

Yet we are not entirely to blame. Society teaches us to always seek "more"; to strive to be better. In this constant pursuit of productivity, taking a walk around the neighborhood while listening to music might seem to some as their only escape. But in that process, we've become so individualized. When we're surrounded by these constant distractions and only "trust what's on the screen," we "avoid our intuition... listening, learning, and making our own connections," as artist Anna Brones says. How do we know we're even living life if we're constantly consumed by distractions? If we never have a moment to disconnect?

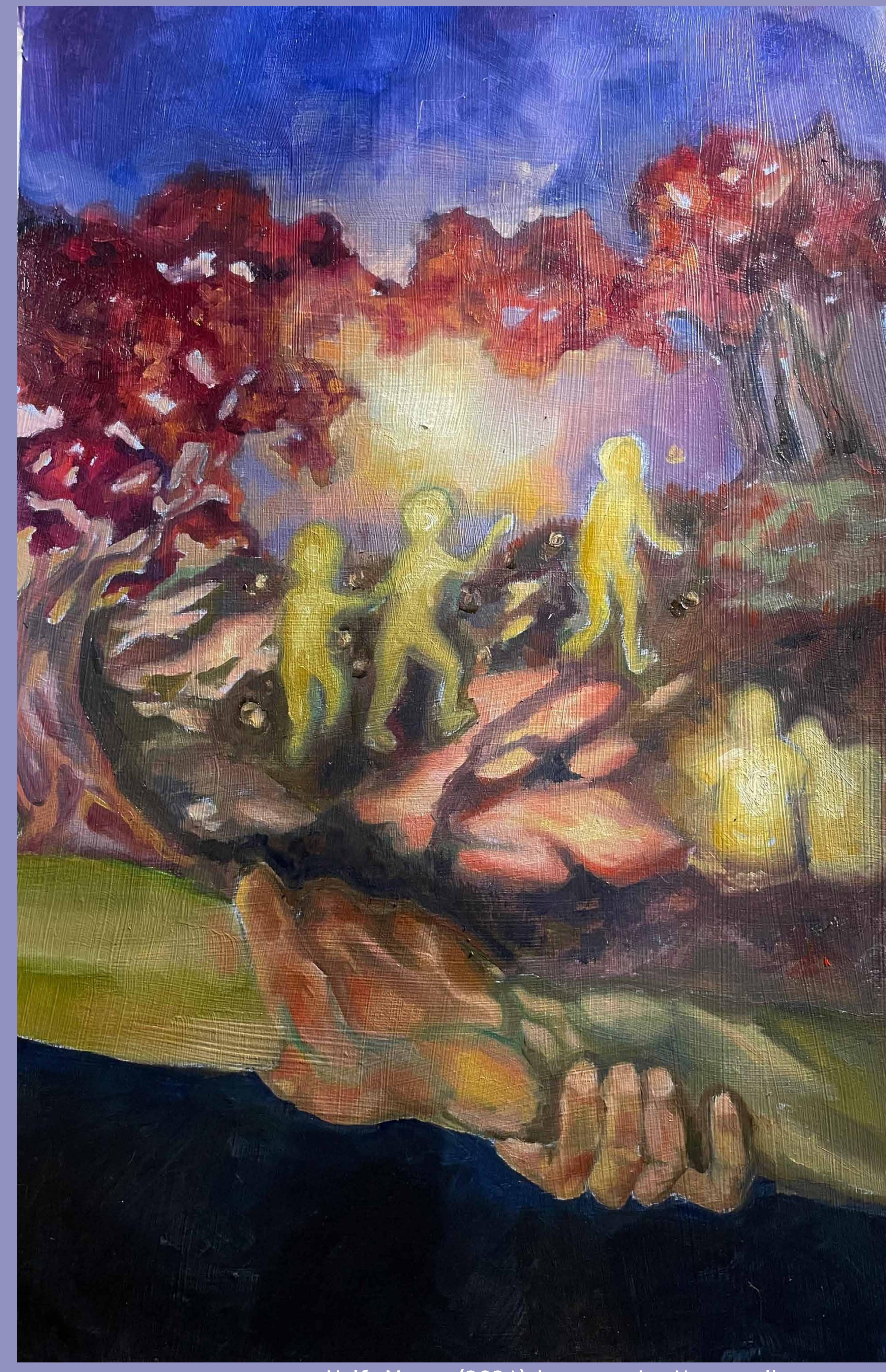
We've failed to value what we have right now; what we have in front of us, and yet continue to ignore. We've failed to value each other, and the outdoors. As a society, we need each other. Solving any issue, particularly one as complex as climate change, requires more than just a single mind. And it's nature that'll be our biggest tool in addressing climate change.

For one, we can't solve climate change without understanding that nature is essential for our individual health. This is not a surprise. Many studies find that exposure to the outdoors is essential for mental health and well-being. It is in that walk around the park, as the cool evening breeze sets in, that we learn how to live in the moment — to feel at peace amid the overwhelming life that consumes us. When people have access to green spaces, they are more likely to develop gratitude for their experiences outdoors, and understand the value in protecting nature.

But it is also through nature that we also find a sense of belonging, a realization of where we are and that we live in a world beyond just ourselves. Author Barry Lopez writes that "existential loneliness and a sense that one's life is inconsequential, both of which are hallmarks of modern civilizations, seem to... derive in part from our abandoning a belief in the therapeutic dimensions of a relationship with place." Being grounded in our surroundings and feeling a sense of community is inextricably tied to learning how to slow down and appreciate what's around us. It's when we do this that we can find gratitude for our experiences in the outdoors, and in the process not only gain awareness of the value of accessibility to green spaces, but ultimately find the encouragement necessary to partake in the broader community effort to tackle climate change.

It is through the mediums of art and writing, and in communicating the value of nature, that we might find our best solution to the problem of building community climate resilience. These two mediums allow us to tell stories and uncover larger truths that may not be immediately recognizable: How do you understand the value of nature and community interaction in addressing climate change, when exposure to green spaces — something that is inextricably tied to health — isn't equally accessible for all? Art and writing bring to life the idea that experiences in nature are essential for individual and community health, and in the process cultivate climate-resilient communities.

This publication, relying on a mix of art and writing components, brings together a wide range of groups — middle school students, high school students, medical students, and community members — to show what's possible when we come together. Through the varying components of this publication, including collective art posters, letters, and reflections, we hope to highlight how facilitating community connections to understand the intersection between nature and health is necessary to foster a community equipped to tackle climate change. When we collaborate as a community to discuss these concepts, it's evident that we can cooperate; that perspectives can shift. When we work together, we can cultivate change to promote health and fight climate change in our communities.



Haifa Maung (2024), Introspective Nature, oil on canvas

STILLNESS

Stillness - slowing down one's mind and body. It means to focus on the movement or lack of movement within oneself and the visible world. Finding balance in life can be tough, but is necessary to establish a healthy life. In terms of nature, stillness allows people to explore the intricacies of a plant, animal, or the land with mindful observation. Meditation can be a great tool to better one's mental health. In slowing down and reflecting on the day ahead or the environment surrounding oneself, stress can be mitigated.

Stillness also allows communities to come together. By realizing the interconnectedness of oneself to nature, appreciation for the environment can be achieved. There is potential for people to connect within their communities and build resilience against climate change. Since the broad concept of stillness encapsulates various ideas, the written works of middle and high school Greenhouse Program students as well as Kaiser medical students have been separated into three themes: **balance**, **appreciation**, and **connection**. Each of these themes are important aspects of stillness that have been showcased in the pieces that follow.

STILLNESS: Balance

Finding Stillness Amidst Medical Training

During our first activity, we drew pictures reflecting on the previous week, the present/the park, and our hopes for the future. For some preface, we had rescheduled the date of our initial event due to Hurricane Hilary. I hadn't thought much about it until the activity. When the hurricane happened, there was a decent amount of rain, some localized flooding, and power outages. I spent most of the day actually studying at a coffee shop and didn't think much of it. It wasn't until we did the activity, that I reflected on what it meant for a hurricane to touch down in LA. It had been about 83 years since LA had last seen a hurricane. This activity made me more aware of my surroundings, as well as the tunnel vision that being in medical school had given me. Having never been to Baldwin Hills Park, I became more appreciative of the park and more aware of how we could incorporate nature into our every day.

Being able to sit down and think about my past week, as well as Baldwin Hills Park, let me observe the stillness of nature. I felt grounded within my surroundings. The constant nature of school made it seem like it was impossible to find time to take a breath. Going out to Baldwin Hills Park helped me realize that I can make time for it, and I have continued to since. While nature can be still and grounding, it can also be volatile, thinking back to the hurricane. I've also gone on hikes with friends and on runs at parks, another way that I've seen movement play out in nature. People were also exercising around us and doing mediation practices as we did activities with regard to the summit.

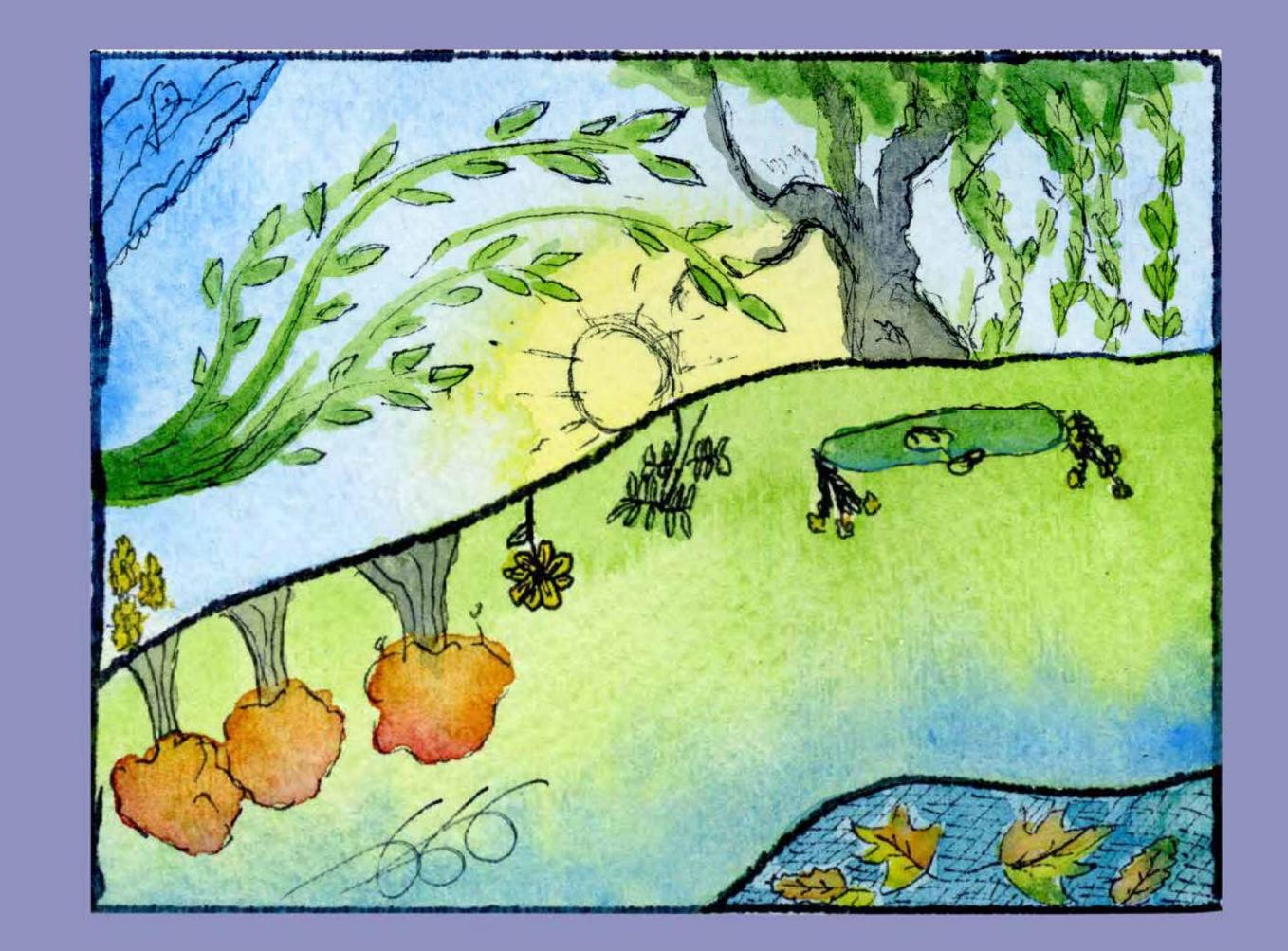
As a medical student, it will be important for me to realize how easy it is to become pigeonholed into our daily routine. Finding time to go to the park or on a walk can be difficult for patients and understanding of that will be important for me as a future physician. Not to mention, the fact that many of my patients struggle to access parks. Just being more cognizant of that and understanding external circumstances that patients can't control will be very beneficial in the long run.

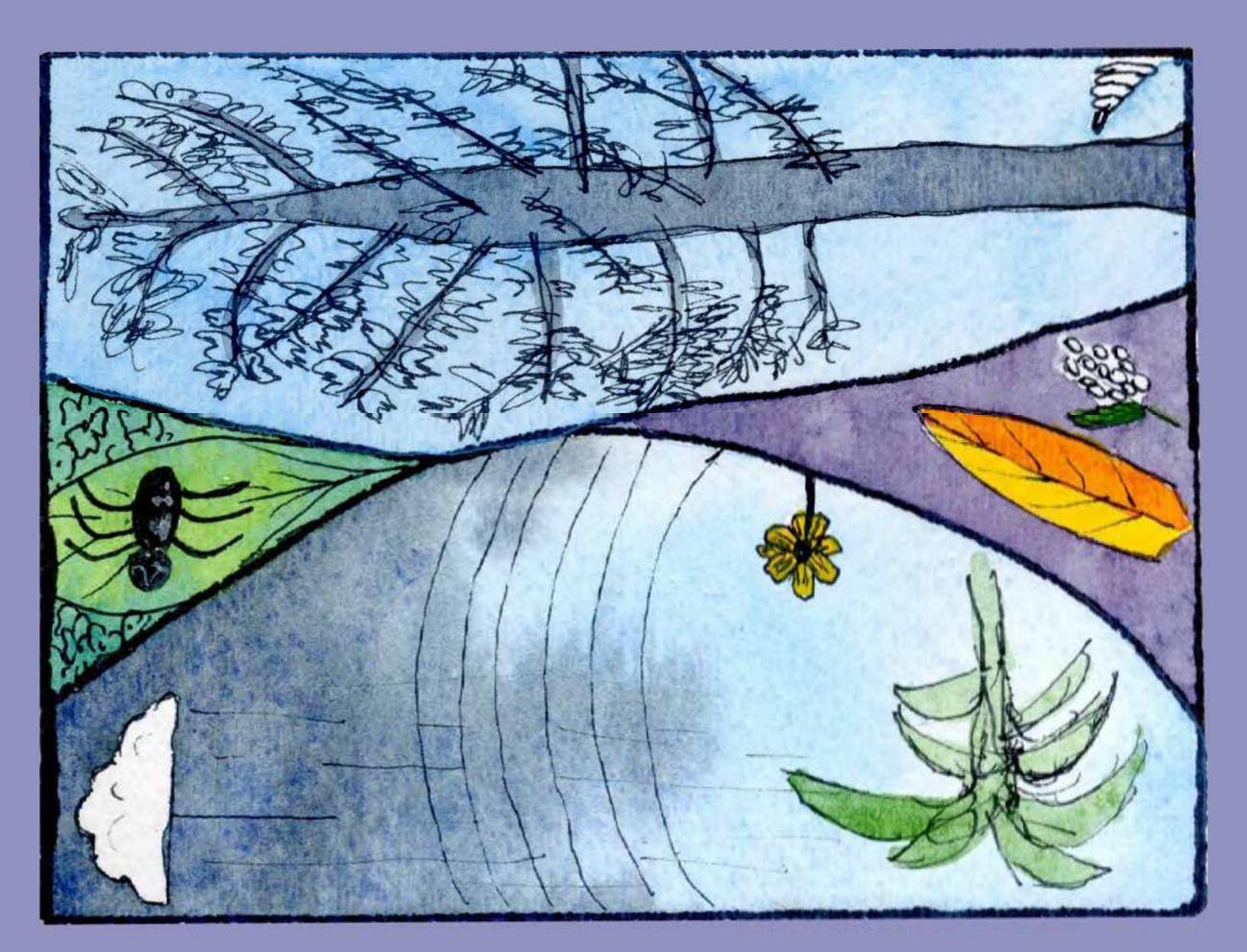
Reflections on Nature, Stillness, and Clinical Practice

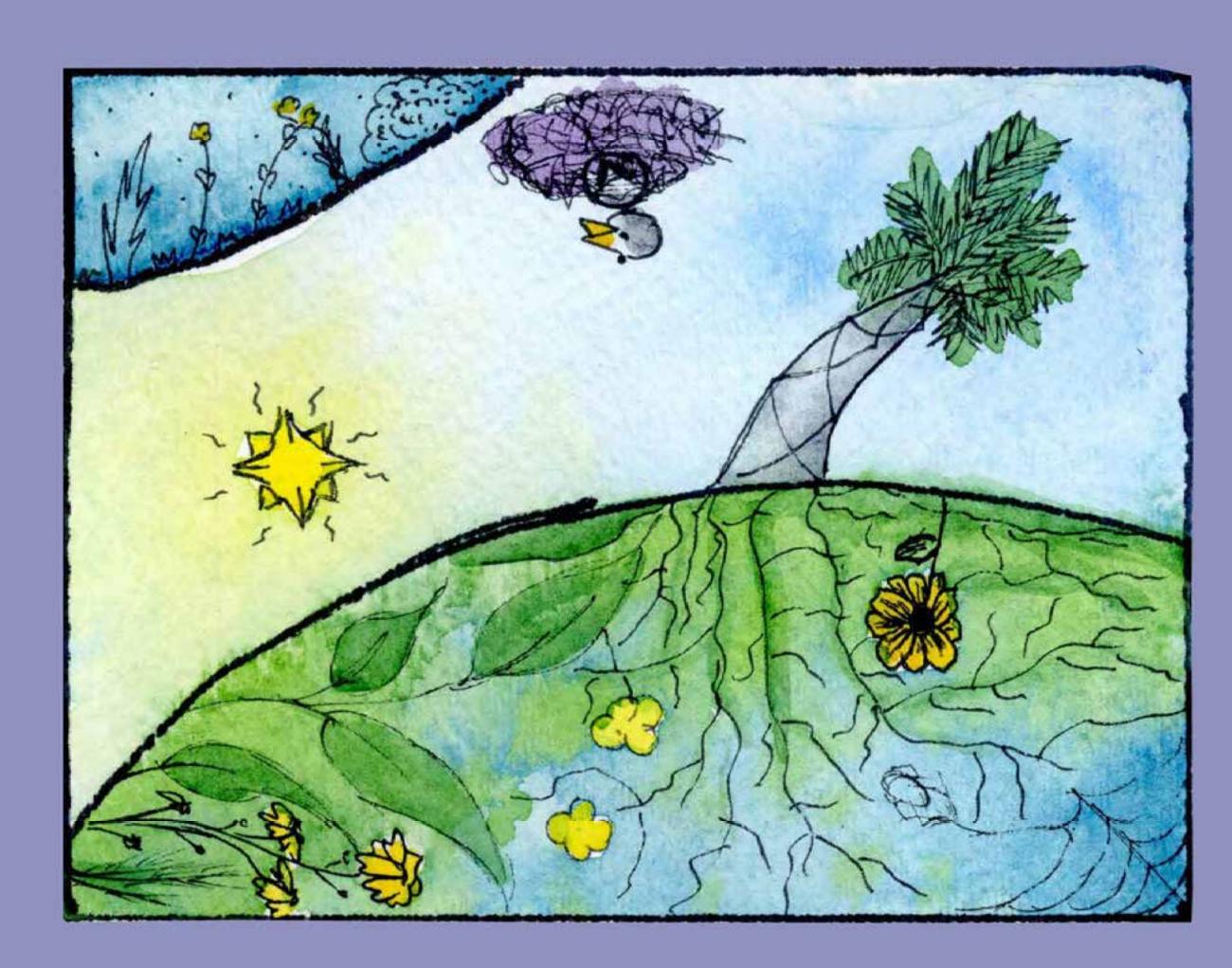
It was a pretty hot day, and hazy, but everyone had come prepared with hats and sunscreen. We were taking refuge under pergola and crowded around in little groups of five or so thinking about the questions being posed. Most people were chatting casually, occasionally jotting something down on the page. Everyone seemed very cognizant of leaving space, and there were frequent, if short pauses where you could notice the sounds of the breeze rustling over our poster. During one such pause, I heard a loud grunting noise. My head whipped around, and I was greeted by a very large man hanging about two feet above me. At first, I was a little annoyed at the lack of personal space during my "nature moment." But looking back, I think there's something beautiful in sharing space so effortlessly in that way. There were so many people using the park in the way that suited them best, coexisting in this little piece of their daily life.

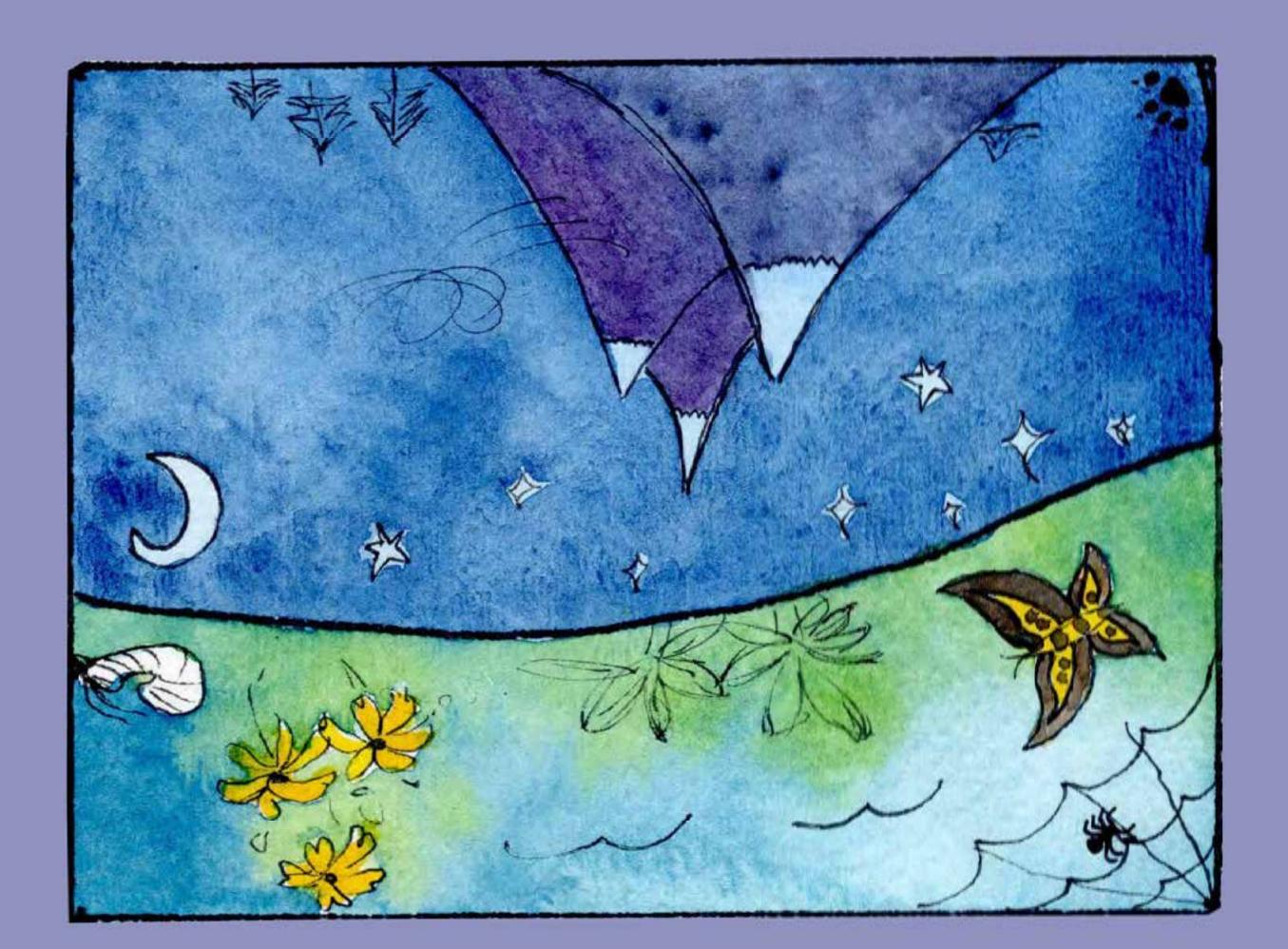
I notice in my reflection that it was the stillness of the moment that allowed me to notice the movement. And likewise, it was the stillness of reflection that allowed me to appreciate the movement without being overwhelmed. I often see a tendency to strive for perfection; I can see this in natural spaces when I'm looking for "total stillness" or "untouched nature." However, the reality is that neither of those exist. To me, nature epitomizes balance, a world where there is stillness and movement, light and darkness, good and bad - and almost nothing is ever 100% on each side of that spectrum. The world is full of dualities and realities and there is constantly more to see, do and learn. But of course, that can only be coupled with rest.

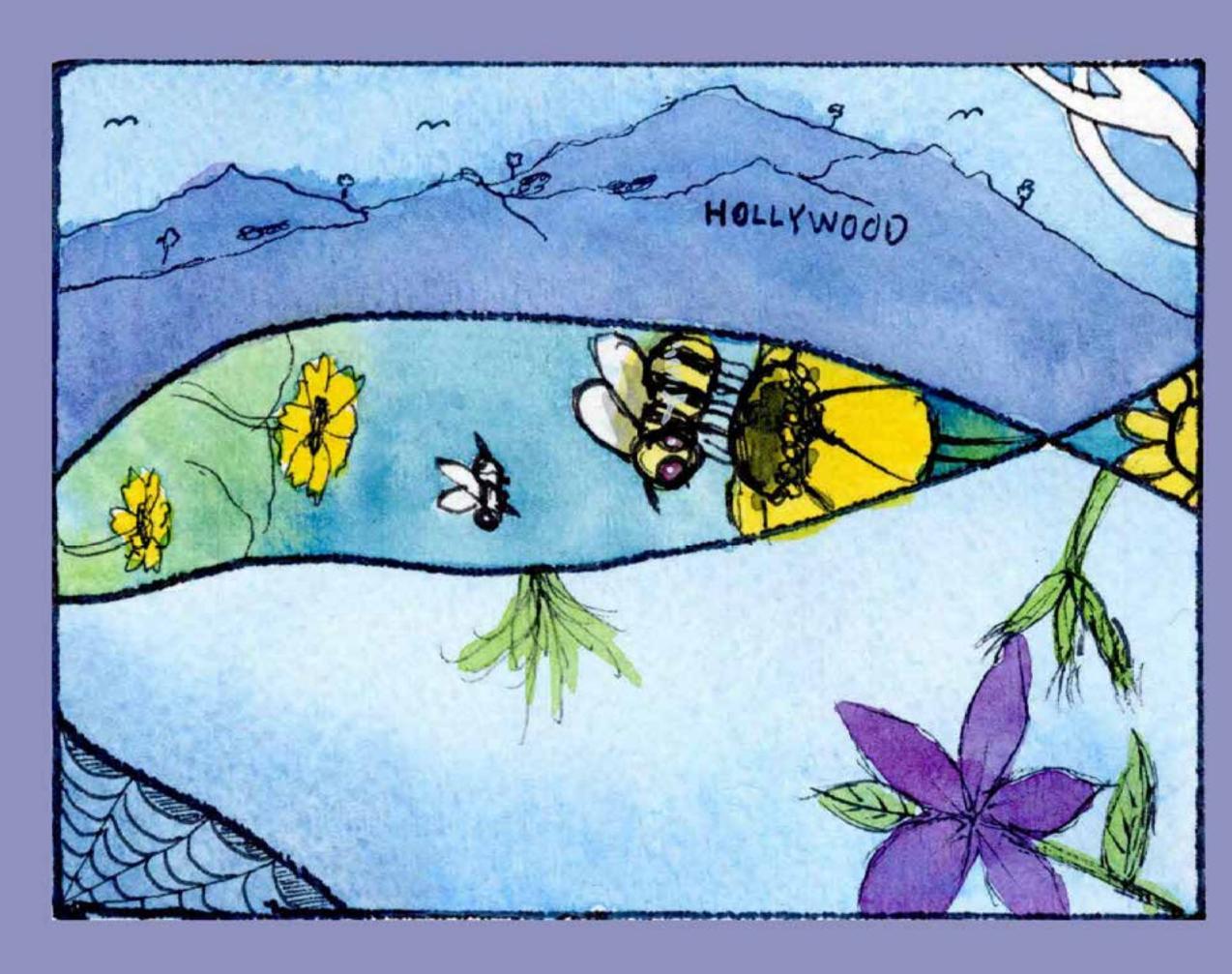
For me, the summit was a study in the progress of imperfection. The balance that nature exudes can be easily compared to clinical practice: progress is imperfect, goals shifting, and surprises everywhere. Of course, that doesn't mean it is always easy to apply. I find the diagnostic criteria and differential scaffolding to be stifling and rigid at times. I would like to continue to push myself on those in-between moments, to question the beauty in a situation I find frustrating, and to approach life with the laughter and levity that will allow me to truly see the people and environment around me.













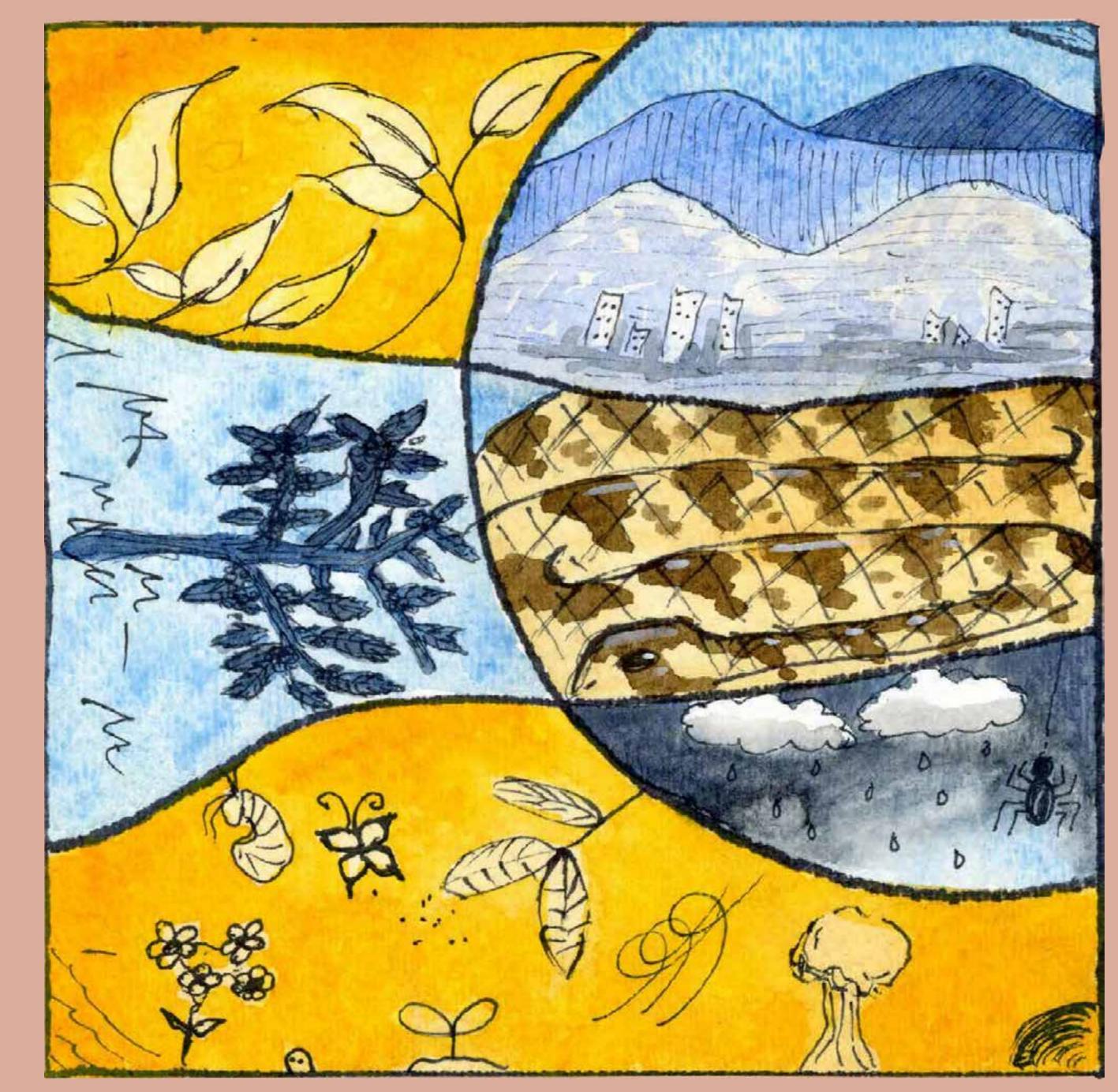


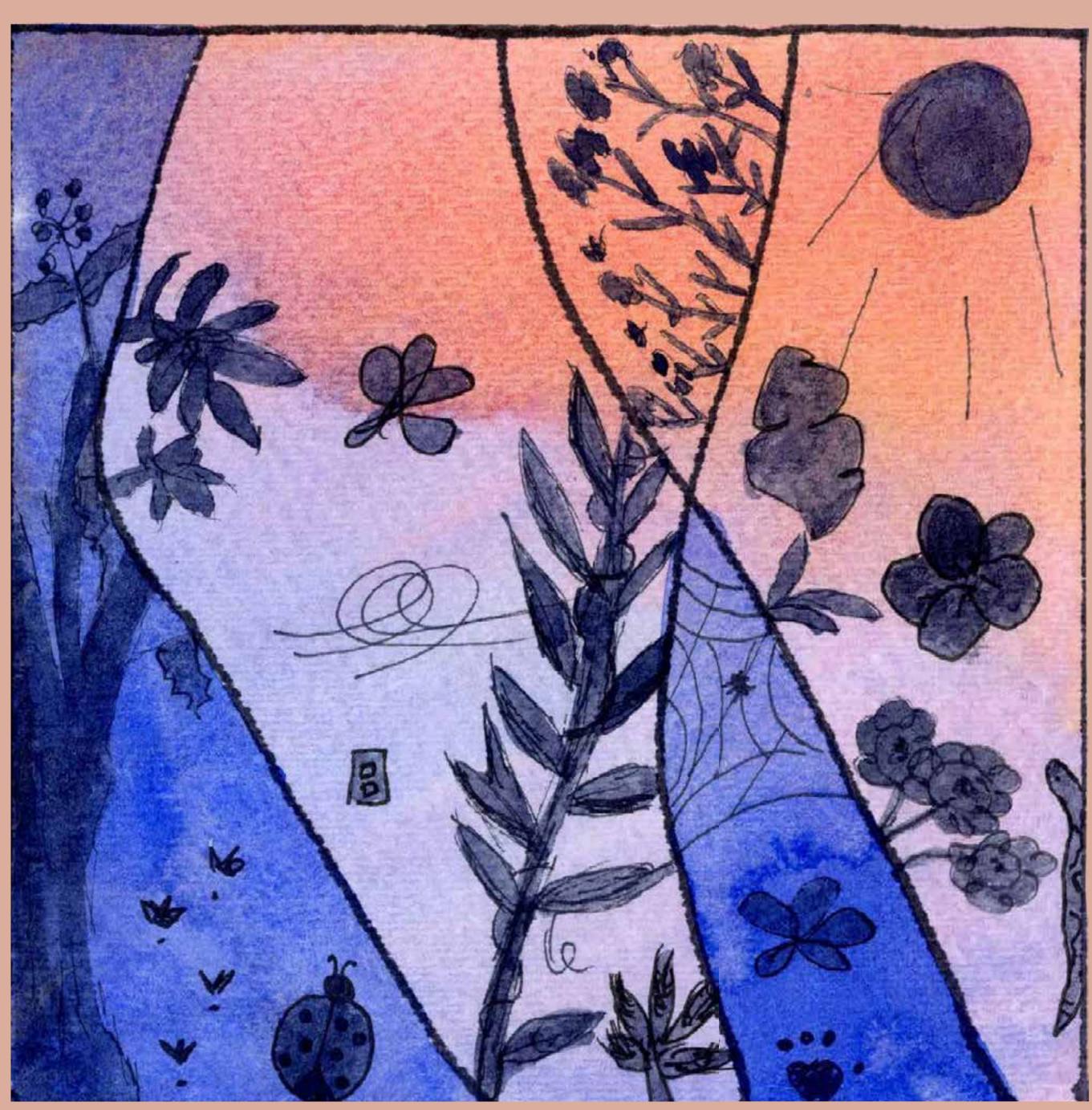


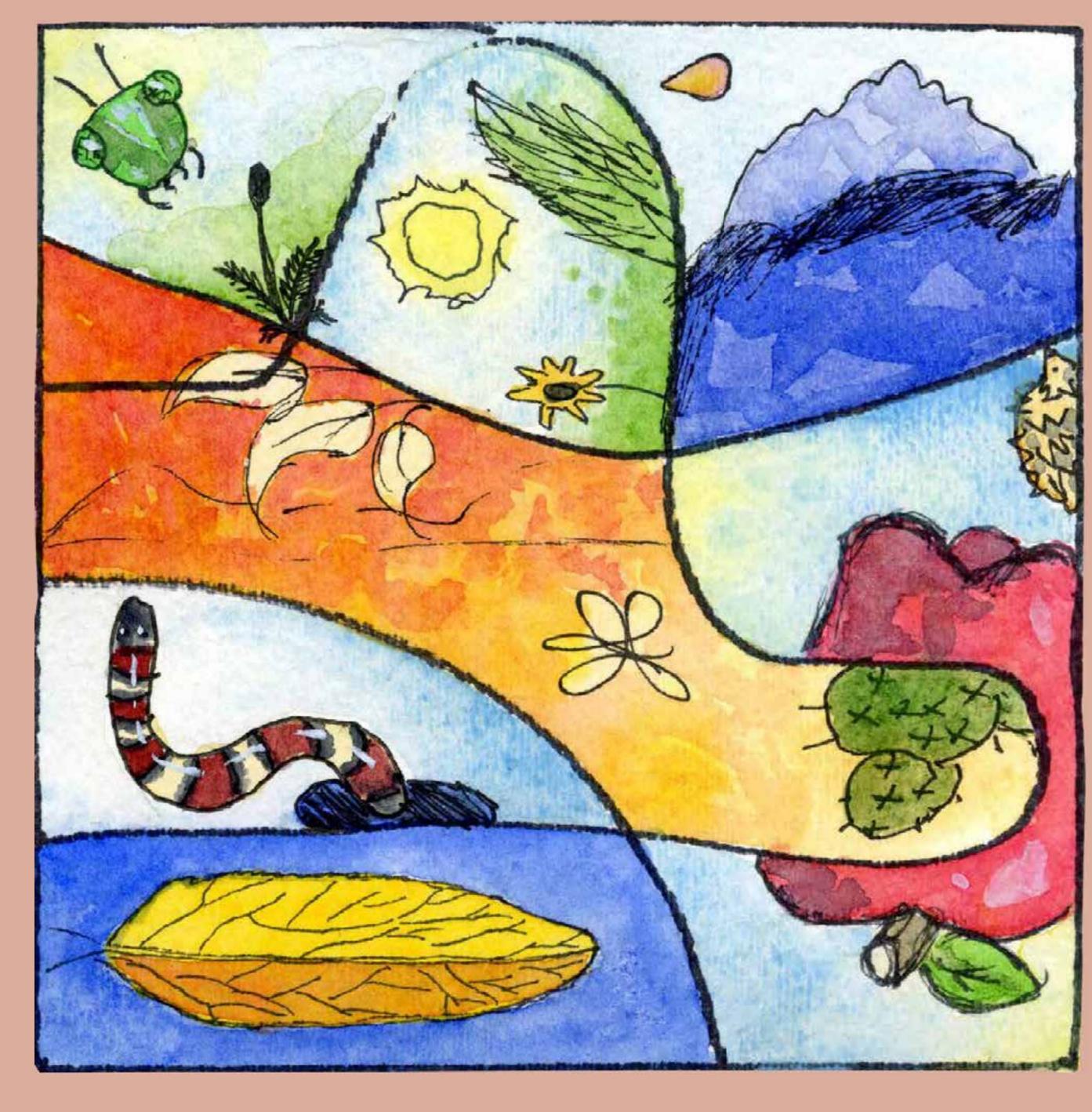
Nature's Equilibrium in the Heart of Urban Life

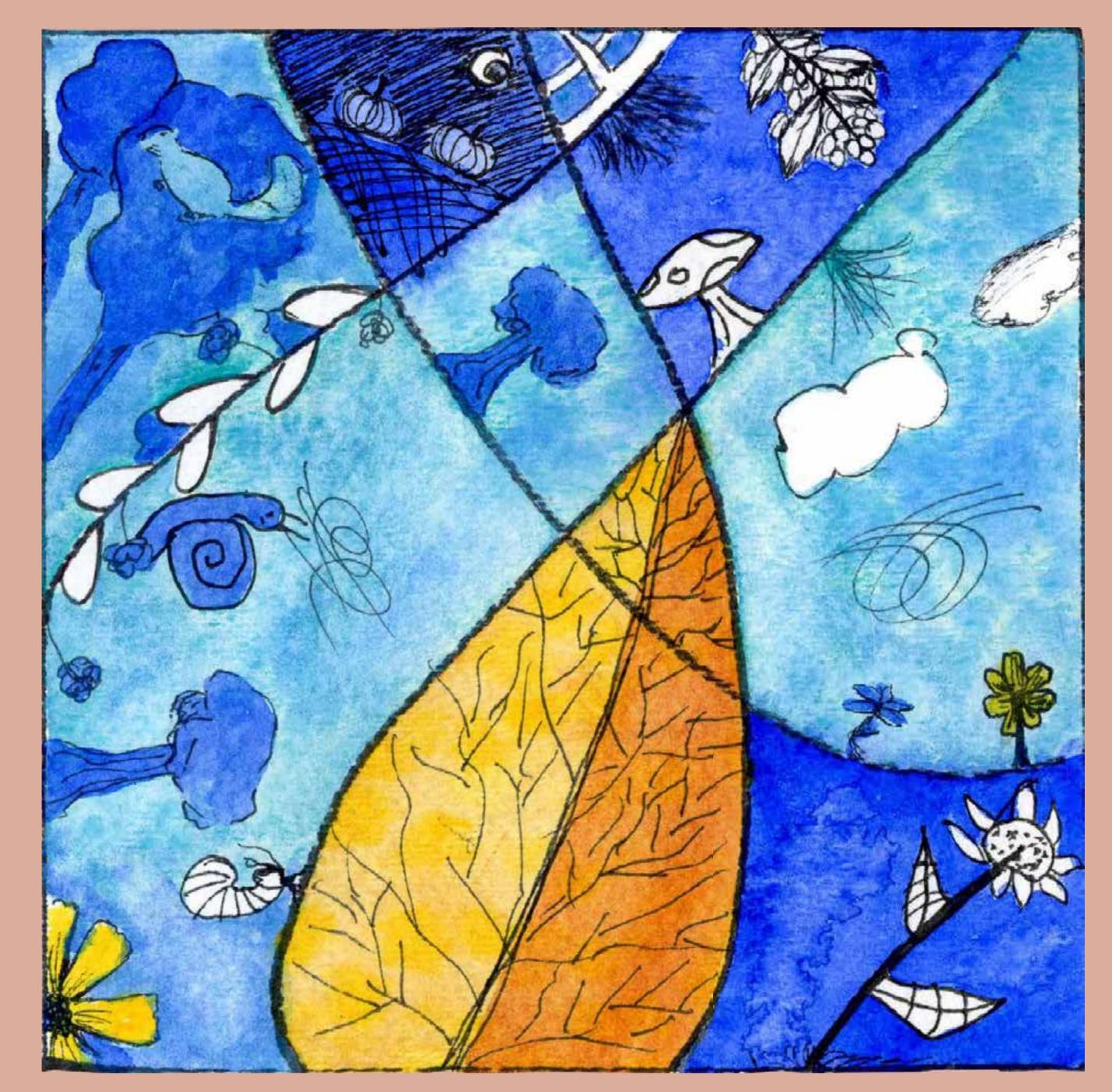
I had never been to LA's Baldwin Hills. Its placement almost seems anomalous to me - a towering hill with a 360 degree panoramic view over the entirety of LA. As I stood on top of Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, sketching the delicate branches and intricacies of a tree's leaves, the city of Los Angeles below seemed to fade into the background. The buzz of traffic and constant bustle of urban life were instead replaced by the buzz of insects and rustling of leaves as birds played amongst the foliage. In this intentional act of isolating a single element from the grand chaos of LA, I entered a realm of stillness. Although I am by no means a skilled drawer or artist, this practice of deliberate focus on the minute details of the tree allowed me to also witness a different kind of movement. The subtle swaying of branches in the hot breeze and the scatter of sunlight filtering through the leaves, it was a reminder to me that even in the heart of a whirring city, nature maintains its own rhythm, its quiet blend of stillness and movement that often may go unnoticed in the fast-paced urban landscape.

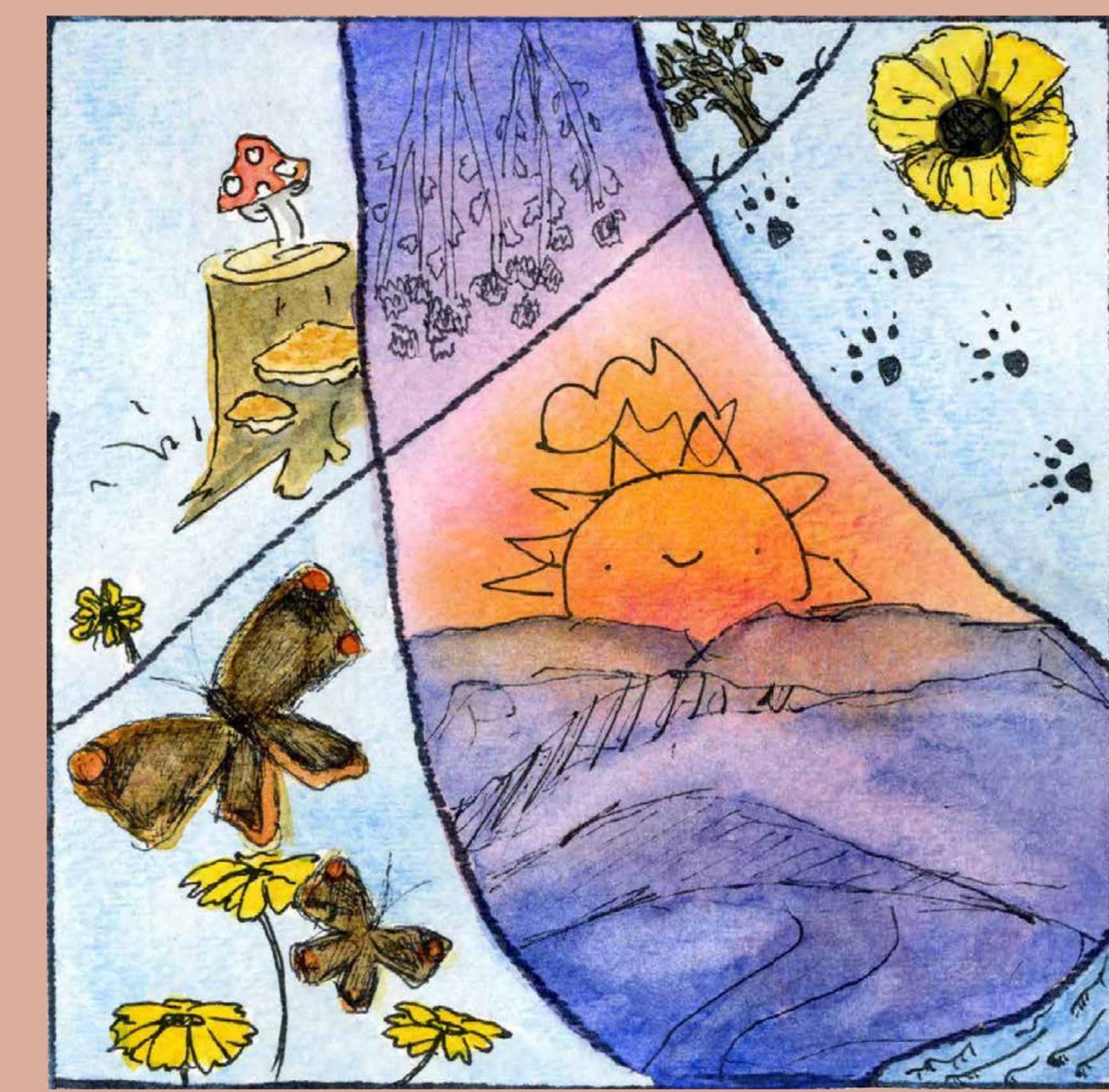
The theme of stillness and movement within nature resonates with a sense of balance for me. They represent an equilibrium that helps to sustain life in the day-to-day and also in each generation for millennia. The tree I was sketching, although it bore signs of wear, stands resourcefully amidst the city's jumble. It represents this balance between stillness and movement. It is a symbol of resilience, rooted in stillness, yet constantly in motion as it adapts to the changing climates while continuing to grow toward the sky.







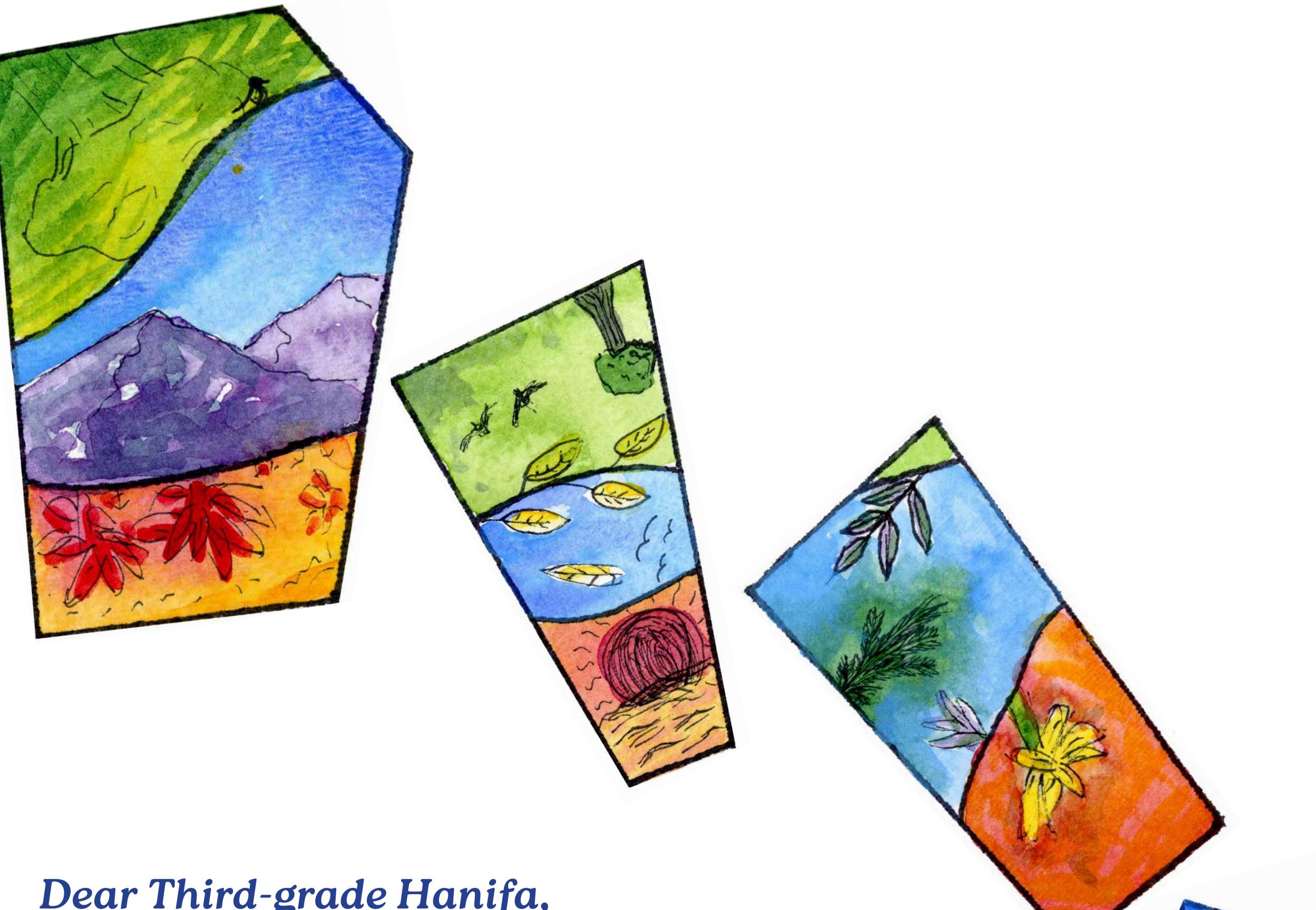






These themes of balance and interconnectedness between stillness and movement hold significant implications for my future career as a physician. In the pace of the healthcare profession, where lives are in constant motion, and decisions must be made quickly, the ability to find moments of stillness becomes important. I believe it is crucial to cultivate a capacity for focused attention and to isolate critical details from the noise, just as I did with sketching the tiny veins on a leaf attached to that tree. Moreover, the theme of balance extends beyond the individual to the broader healthcare system. The web of relationships between patients, healthcare providers, and the surrounding community requires a dance of stillness and movement. Just as the tree draws nutrients from its surroundings while maintaining its individuality, as a future physician, I must navigate the intricate network of healthcare, collaborating with others while upholding the unique needs of each patient.

As I envision my future career, I am reminded of the importance of finding moments of stillness within the dynamic environment of healthcare. The ability to zoom in on the intricate details of a patient's history, symptoms, and concerns while simultaneously maintaining an awareness of the broader context is a skill that spending time in nature can help cultivate.



Dear Third-grade Hanifa,

Hi Hanifa, I hope you're doing well in school, I know you struggled a lot with fractions, however you get smarter as you develop into high school, which is when I'm writing to you right now. You are a freshman in high school with tons of friends who love you and you're in a healthy relationship with yourself and your significant other.

Things are probably really hard for you right now moving to a new school knowing nobody, but it goes away I promise! Your love for cats and animals hasn't changed and has only grown, even more.

Especially since you finally convinced Dad to get you your first cat and one little kitten to come! Our relationship with our sister has become so much more connected than how you feel right now (we are best friends). As for the rest of your family, it's still the same, a lot of hard days with bittersweet moments here and there. You still love eating ramen and binge-watching all the old Barbie and Tinkerbell films in your free time and spending time surrounding yourself with nature.

With all the trips that are coming your way in the future have only made you feel more connected with nature and more at peace when you're outdoors. Our coping mechanism ever since I was your age till this day has always been and will probably remain, taking walks diverting ourselves away from people and noises and just lying on the grass while listening to music.

Nature has remained a beautiful thing to you. We continue to grow from childhood with Lily (our first cat) and we still take her on her daily walks around the parks. Currently, you're doing well in school and still have the same dream for a life you planned at the age of 6 years old. School is getting tougher and tougher, however your ability to keep your mental health stable is going great so far!

Dear Future Greenhouse Restoration Leader,

I hope this letter finds you well. How is your experience with the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse family? I hope you feel as welcome as I did when I first arrived. This is only my first year here as a Greenhouse Intern, but I've learned so many new things about the world around us. I also got to do some hands-on work in the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park. I hope that being out in nature helps you as much as it does for me. Ever since I joined the Greenhouse program, I believe my mental health has improved by being in nature and breathing fresh air for at least one day out of the week.

One thing I remember is how hard it was to pull out some of the invasive plants like mustard. Did the mustard situation get noticeably better after 3 years? During our invasive plant removal, we came across a domesticated bunny. Someone most likely dumped them there, thinking it was their natural habitat, but in reality, it was invasive. Ultimately, my friend took the bunny and gave him a loving home. She gave him lots of cuddles and good food, and she named him Mr. Banana. I feel lucky that we happened to be doing habitat restoration that day to come across that bunny. I'm happy that because of the greenhouse program, I could help the bunny find a good home. This is just a cute story I wanted to share with you.

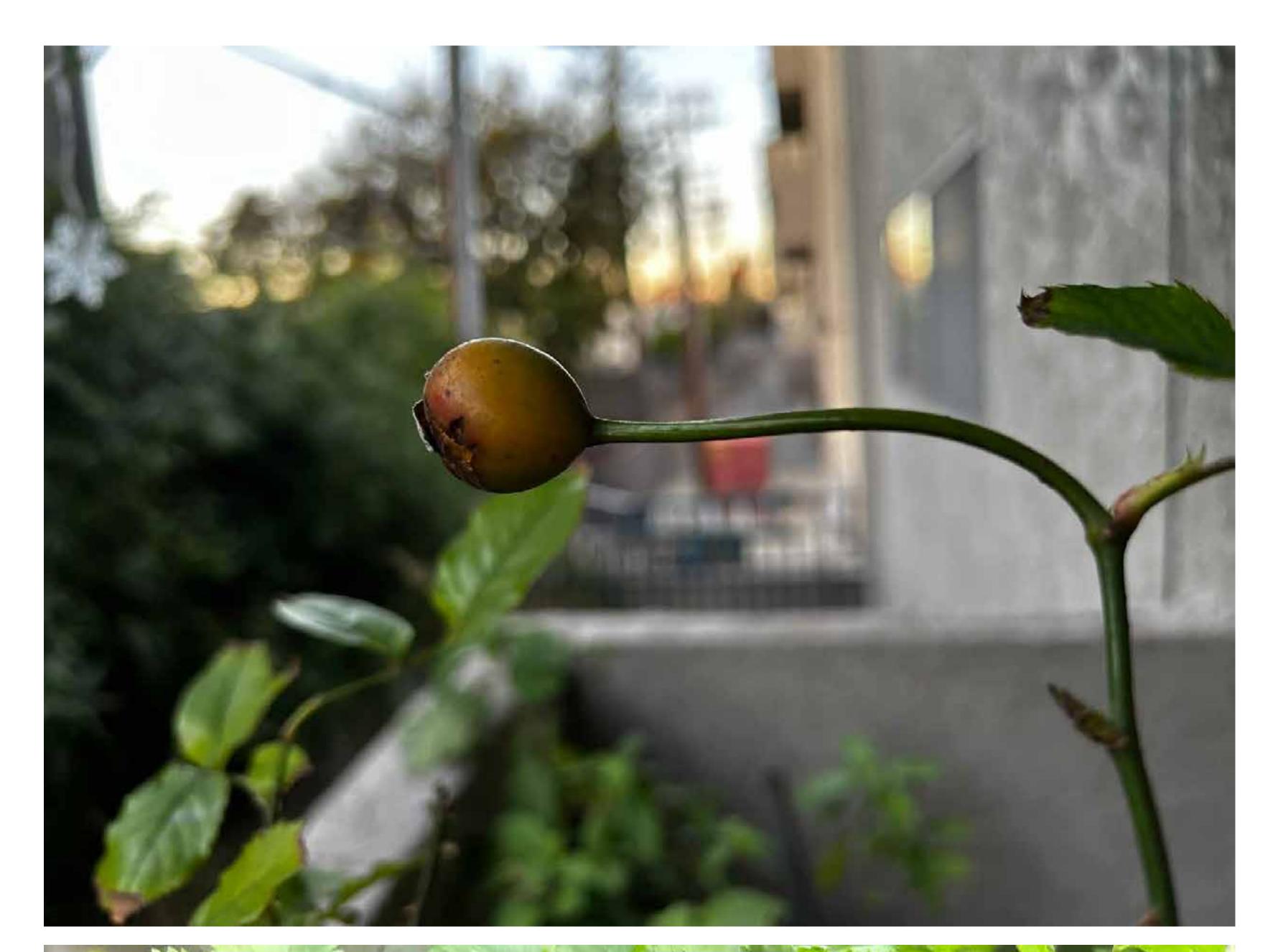
Have you come across any domesticated animals at the park? I hope the park is as beautiful as it is now. The sunsets from the top of the hill were always so amazing. One of the things I love about the park is that it feels like you've entered another world because the only thing surrounding you is

> nature. The busy noises and the sounds of sirens get replaced with birds talking and the wind rustling the leaves. It's a place where you can just get away from everyone and everything, which makes it so special to me. In Greenhouse, they teach you things that are not usually

> > taught in school. I hope you gain an astronomical amount of knowledge about the Earth and nature so that you can understand the world in which we live. Knowledge about nature helps you understand and gain empathy for the planet. Without even noticing, I became knowledgeable about topics like native plant species, moon phases, and sustainable

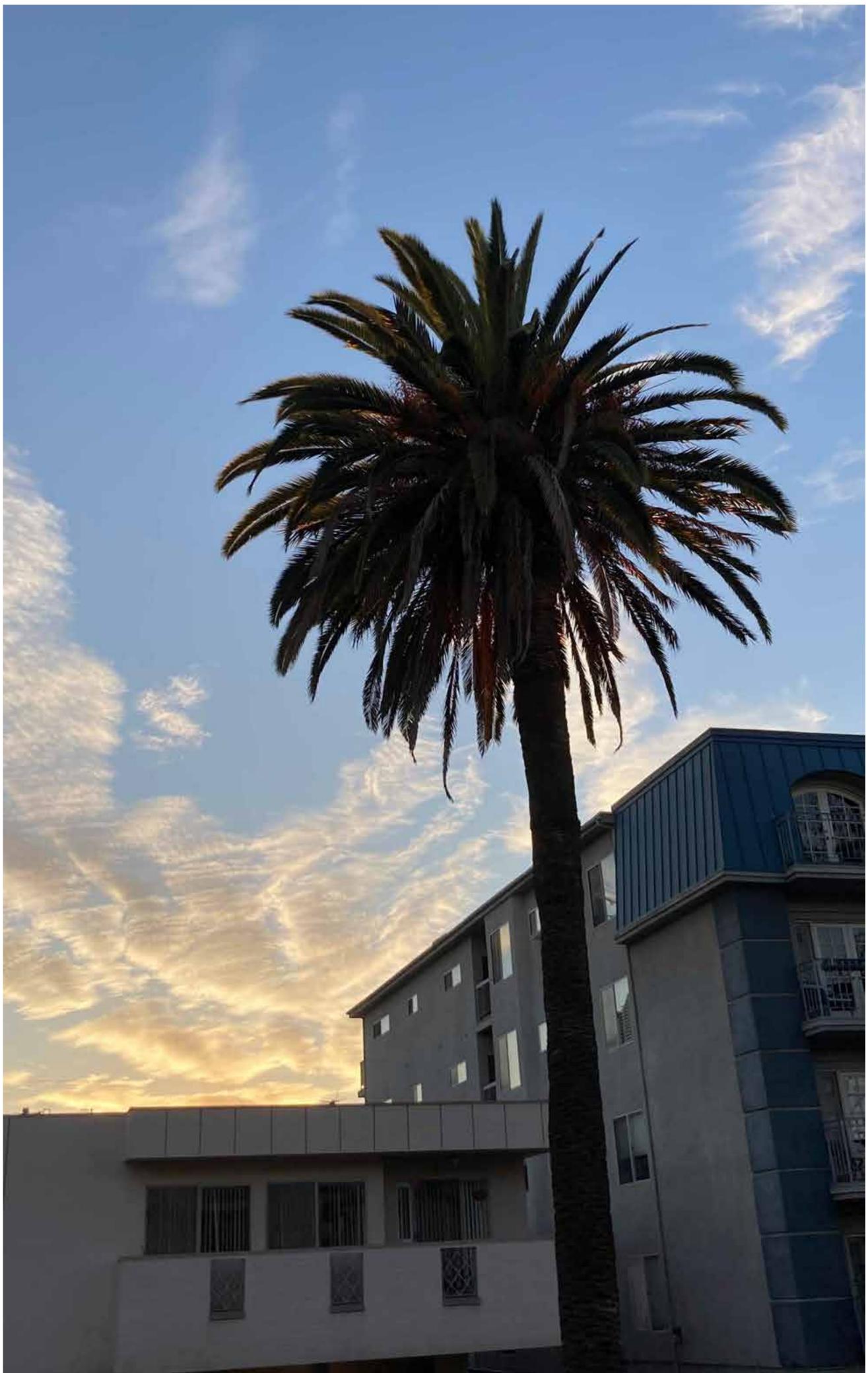
ink-making that I wouldn't have gone into if not for this program. Make sure to make the most of it and carry what you learned to use in the future. Most of all, have a great time and strengthen your connection with nature. Wishing you the best, Katie Y







STILLNESS: Appreciation





Dear Future Greenhouse Student,

Congrats on joining such a unique program!

My name is Emily and I am happy to share that I was in the program when it first started back in 2008.

What I love about this program is that it highlights the importance of nature and community- one can't exist without the other.

In this program, you will learn about your local nature including animals and native plants, but you will also have the opportunity to gain skills in leadership, public speaking, and collaboration. These are important skills needed personally and professionally throughout life and doing so in high school is a perfect opportunity to start (if you haven't done so yet).

The Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, the park you will be working in, opened to the public in 2009. I planted native plants back then and throughout the last 14 years. I've watched them grow and provide habitat for animals and shade (and photo ops) for parkgoers. But no matter what year you join this program, you always contribute to the growth of native habitat there. In this program, you will be getting your hands dirty and become involved throughout the habitat restoration process which includes: weeding, collecting seeds, seeding in flats, transplanting, watering, and directly planting native plants. When you plant a shrub or tree, you are leaving your footprint at the park. It is a plant that will be there for many years and will provide food for critters (like rabbits or squirrels) or nesting spaces for birds including an endangered bird called the California Gnatcher. When you plant native plants, animals of all sizes including our tiny pollinators will show up.

By the time you get this letter, I hope the shrubs, trees, and cacti that Greenhouse students have planted over the last few years are overgrown and established on their own. I hope you get to start in new sites at the park and continue to fill gaps in our older sites.

When I started this program, we focused on restoring habitat that will bring a bird called the Cactus Wren back to this area. Knowing that the endangered bird I mentioned earlier, California Gnatcher, lives in this urban park, I feel like it's not impossible to see a Cactus Wren at the Overlook. And I hope you get to see it or any other other wildlife that is not common to see at the park. It's important because if an animal that is not commonly observed there is seen (or heard) it proves that nature is resilient and persists. To me, it is beautiful and inspiring to witness that, especially knowing it all started with seeds and 1-gallon pots.

Being outside, whether weeding our invasive Black Mustard or leading a nature walk with a group, is so relaxing; in fact, even science says being outside is good for mental health (along with physical health) so I hope you get to feel that joy of being outside in this program.

You made a great choice in applying and joining. As I mentioned, this program is unique and I hope you make the best of it.

Once a Greenhouse student, you are forever connected to Nature Nexus Institute.

We strongly support Greenhouse alumni so even post-high school, we engage in community events even paid positions! This means you can potentially get a paid summer job with us while restoring habitat at the Baldwin Hills.

I hope you enjoy this letter as much as I had fun writing it. I hope we get to meet and plant some native shrubs together. Lastly, be yourself, make connections, and have fun.

PS My favorite native plants are prickly pear cacti and black sage. Can't wait to learn which native plants will be your favorite.

In community, Emily C

Dear Third-Grade Me,

Hello! Hi! How have you been? Spending time in nature? Maybe, maybe not. I know you haven't particularly thought about what nature means to you or if it means anything significant at all yet, so let's take a quick second to reflect (don't worry, I'll do my best to make it not too boring).

Even though you and I live in the city, which seems like the farthest thing from what you imagine to be nature (like the intense wilderness of jungles or forests you see on National Geographic), there's always nature around us in some way. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as, "the external world in its entirety." Personally, I think that's pretty beautiful, but also a really expansive and hard concept to grasp, so I'll break it down to hopefully make it more understandable. Nature is our surroundings. Nature is what we experience outside with our five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch. Be it the grass and tree corner at school that you go to during recess, the backyard with all of the different plants, the ants that roam the bricks leading up the driveway, the little flowers that grow through the cracks in the concrete, or the big, wide open ocean that you love going to at the end of year party... Nature is all around us! A good idea is to come to notice and appreciate it more, little by little. Think about it, who would want to live in a big city that's completely made of gray concrete, gray metal, and gray gravel? I know you wouldn't, and neither would I. Life would be much too boring for that. I love seeing the pops of color that nature brings. I know you do too! The little red-orange ladybugs, the tangerine dragonfly, the dark purple blueberries, and the scarlet strawberries that I see in the backyard bring me as much joy as I remember they do for you. (And I know this isn't seeing, but hearing the crunch of dry leaves during fall will never get old.)

I know this may feel abrupt, but know that you can be free to spend time outdoors in the open spaces that smell crisp and have that cooling effect of cough drops on your tongue. You can enjoy the scenery of the vibrant poppy hills, even if your legs get sore from all the walking. You can take extra time exploring all the little nooks and crannies of the park near Grandma's house. You can think that you have seen it all, but just remember, there are endless amounts of things all around to still discover and explore.

Anyway, if you want some updates about what's been going on with me more recently, here it is! I'm actually helping out at a park you haven't heard of yet, but have passed many times: Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook. It's near your best friend's house, the one up in the hills (not to be mistaken with mountains) that seems so far away. There, other students and I participate in restoration work, learn about some of the native and invasive plants of the area, and more. I've also been camping! I know, it's quite shocking. It's such a foreign concept and I know you thought you'd never actually go camping or have the experience of sleeping in a tent, but nope! It truly has happened. I'll be honest, it is pretty much always cold at night, but it's especially fun to sit by the fire with friends and see the dark night sky illuminated by a clear moon and countless stars.



Lastly, I want to impart a few more things to think about and maybe even do, so bear with me for just a little bit longer. You may find school challenging at times, which is completely valid, but don't put too much pressure on yourself. You're still really young, even if you don't feel like you are. Try to find fun in your classes, even the Saturday ones. It may seem tedious, but as they say, "Where there is a will, there is a way." Lastly, remember to take pride in whatever you do! Be proud of the big things, but don't forget the little ones too.

In any case, have fun, be a kid, suggest going out on walks more, and be well!

See you later,

Lilly

Dear 3rd grade me,

You're in for one hell of a journey, filled with both triumphs and challenges, particularly about facing yourself. I want to share a few words and offer a slight peek into the future.

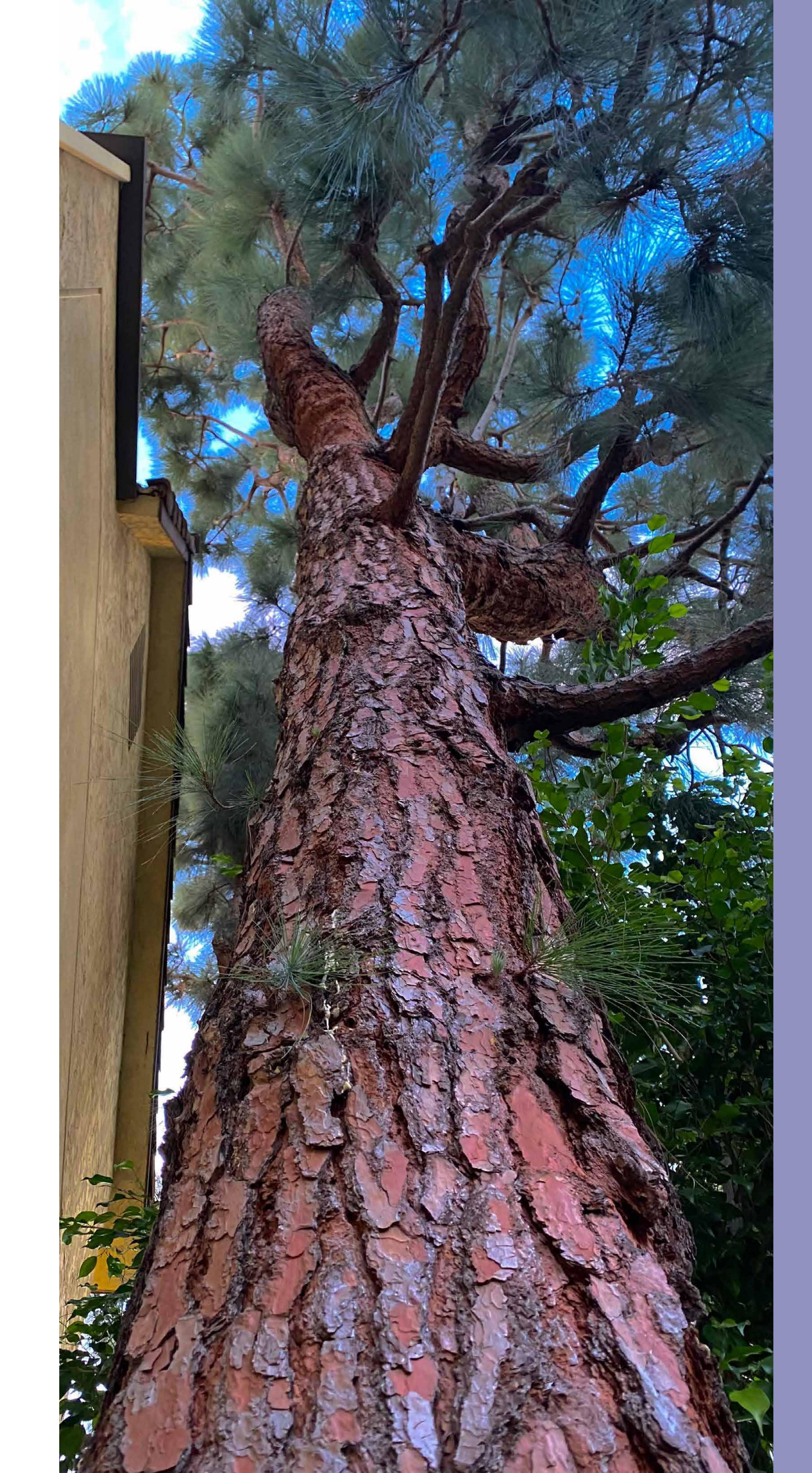
Anyways, first, never forget to maintain your curiosity. Pose questions, marvel at the mysteries that cross your mind, and pursue to seek answers. There's nothing as helpful as curiosity when it comes to helping you guide you throughout your life, leading you to discover a profound purpose. DO NOT devote your youthful and most precious time of your life to SOCIAL MEDIA!!! It will corrupt you in all ways possible, it will eat away your identity, rendering you dull. Instead, direct your curiosity towards nature. Explore the extraordinary facets of this beautiful world that lies beyond the screen.

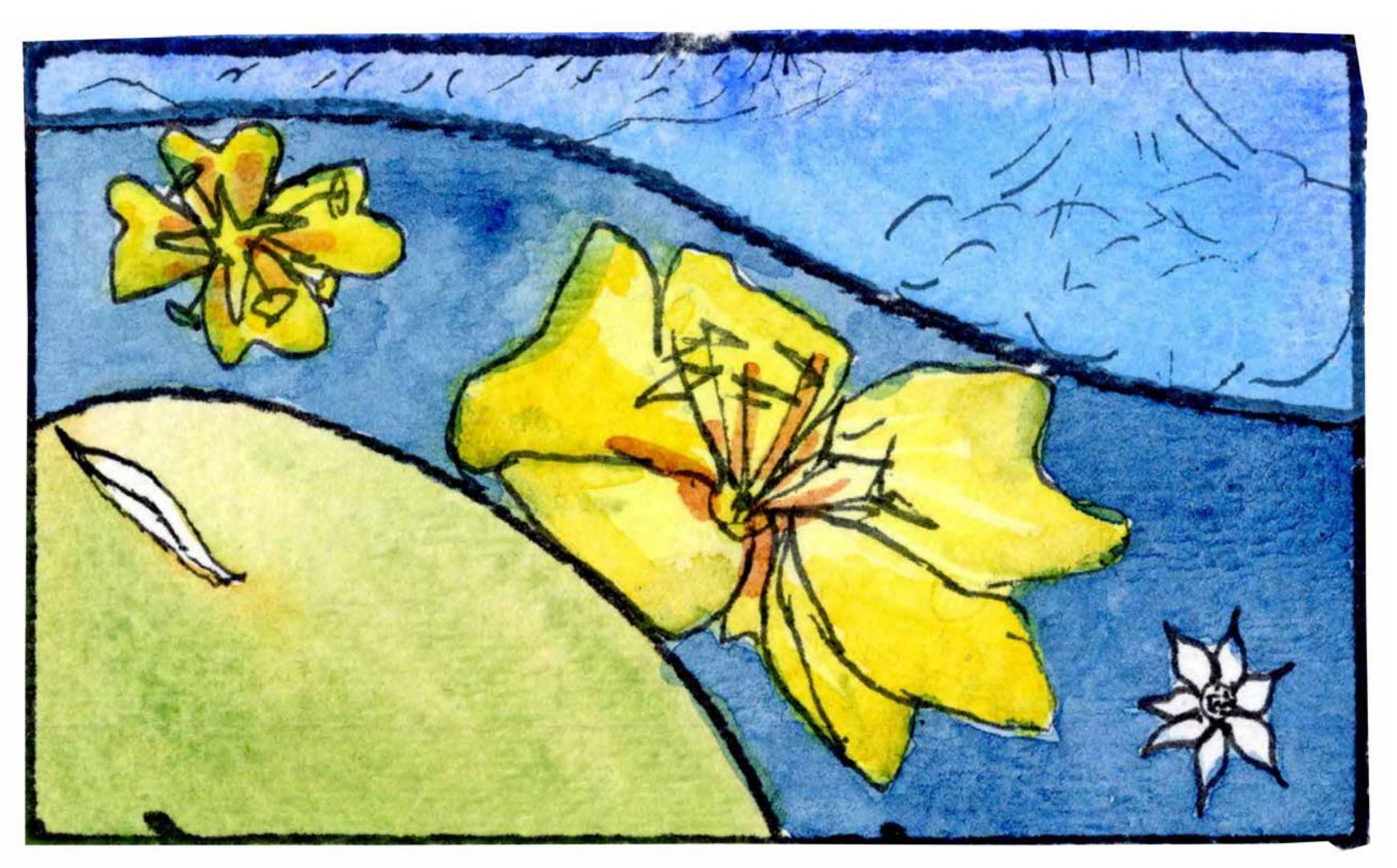
As you grow, remember to cherish your relationships with friends and family, and realize how nature has intertwined our lives together with various people throughout life. They are there to support you in both times of joy and moments of sorrow. Kindness will always be a constant, and the relationships you cultivate will evolve into lifelong treasures. You must realize that you are blessed with people around you. Express gratitude for their friendship, understanding, and enduring presence, even during moments when you may be acting negatively. Thank them for initiating conversations, inviting you to play at a park, swimming on the beach, and so on and so forth.

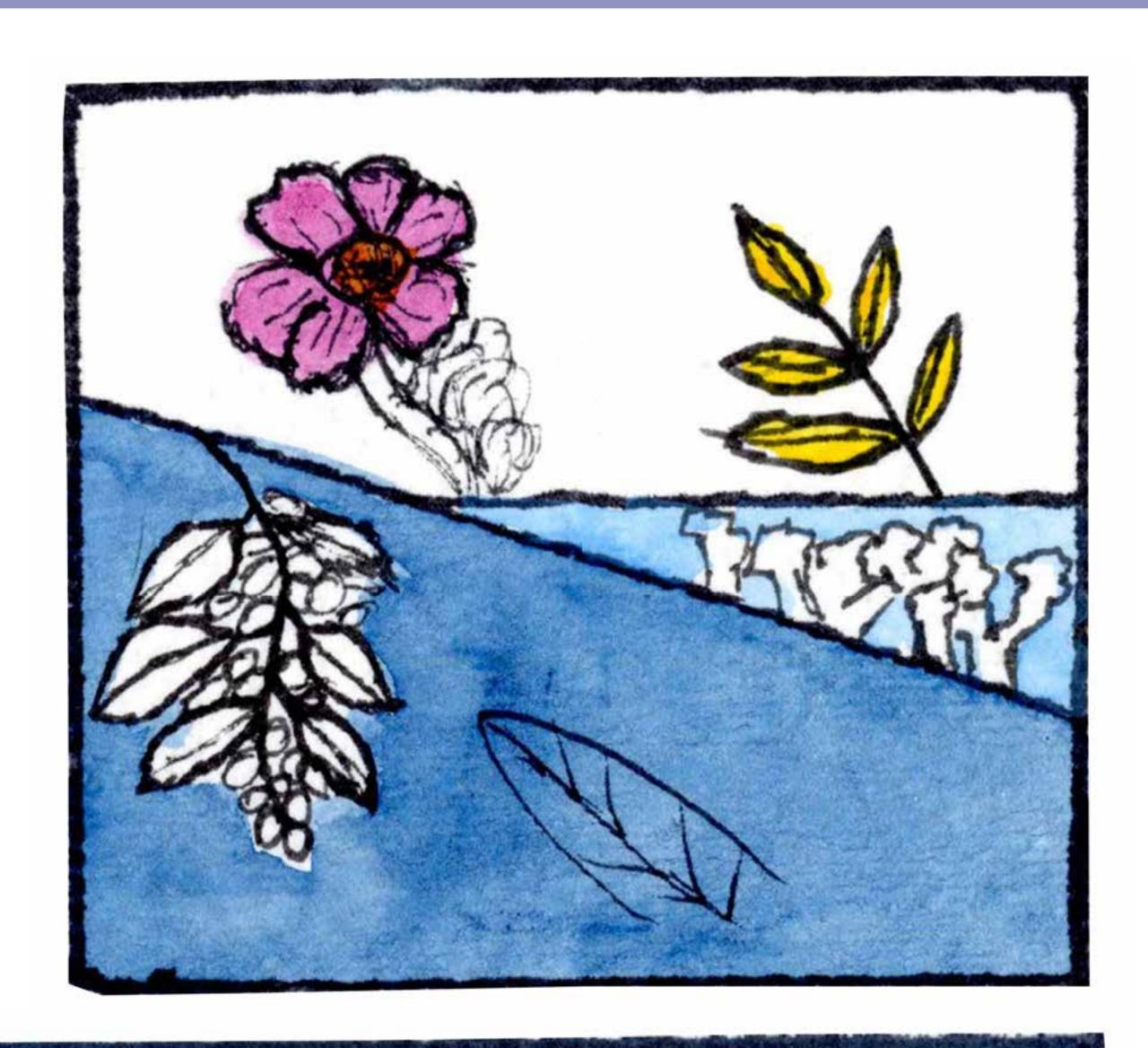
Now, let's talk about nature. You are a very energetic kid and you always feel uneasy when doing nothing. Remember those afternoons spent playing tag at the park with your friends till the sun falls below the horizon? Or when you would want to go on an adventure into the forest or simply just get out under the sun? Hold onto that connection with nature. Be attuned to your surroundings. The rustling of trees, the birds chirping, and the beautiful fragrance of the flowers. As the years pass, it's easy to get caught up with other things such as school, jobs, relationships, etc. But don't let the allure of the outdoors slip away. Take the time to appreciate nature. Breathe in the fresh air, feel the ground beneath your feet, and let Mother Nature inspire you.

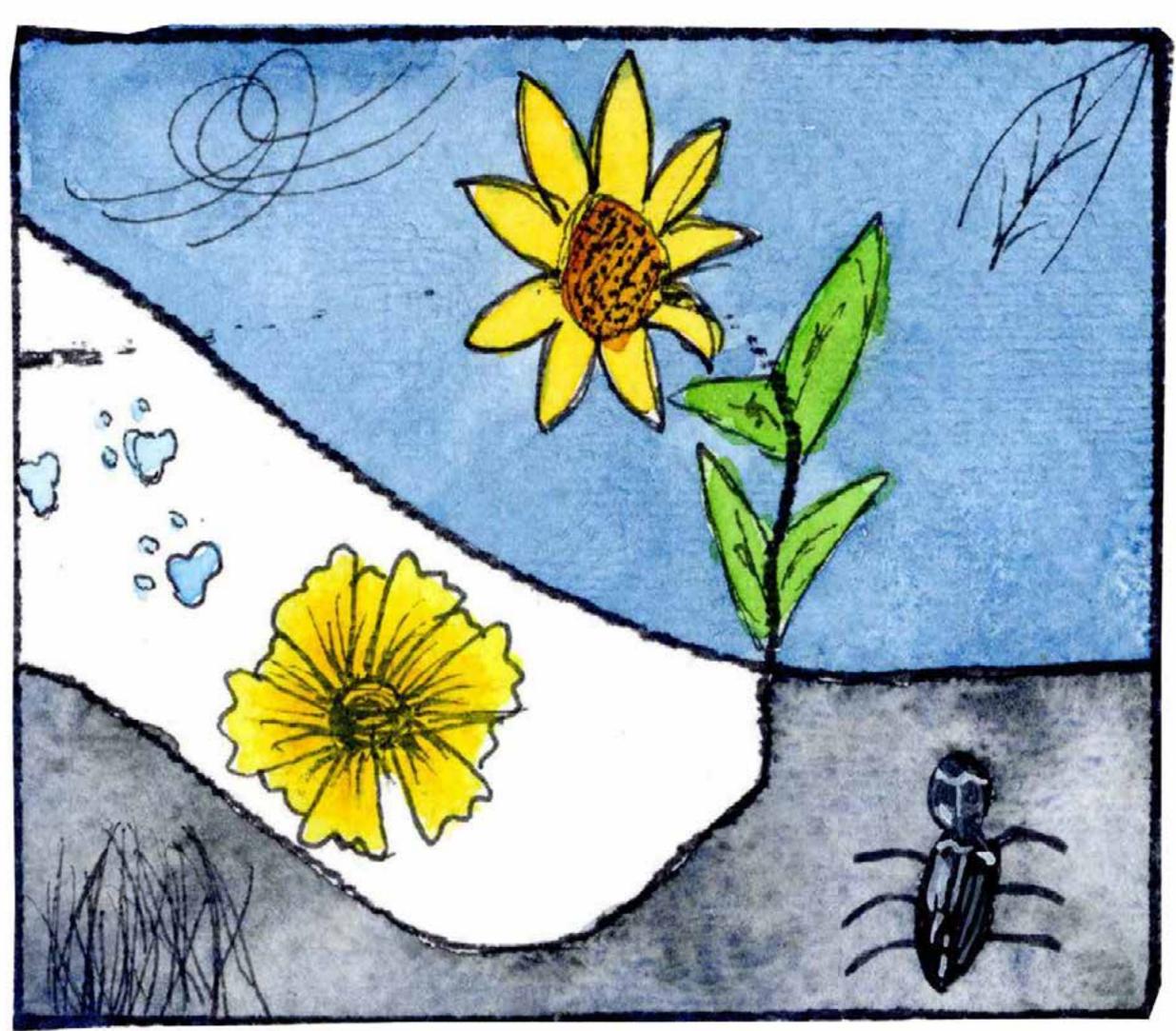
Even when life gets busy, endeavor to savor the simplicity of a sunset or the serene whisper of the wind brushing your ear. Keep your world colorful and fun. You will find constant inspiration in nature, supporting you when you might feel overwhelmed with things going on in the world.

I hope you live your best life.





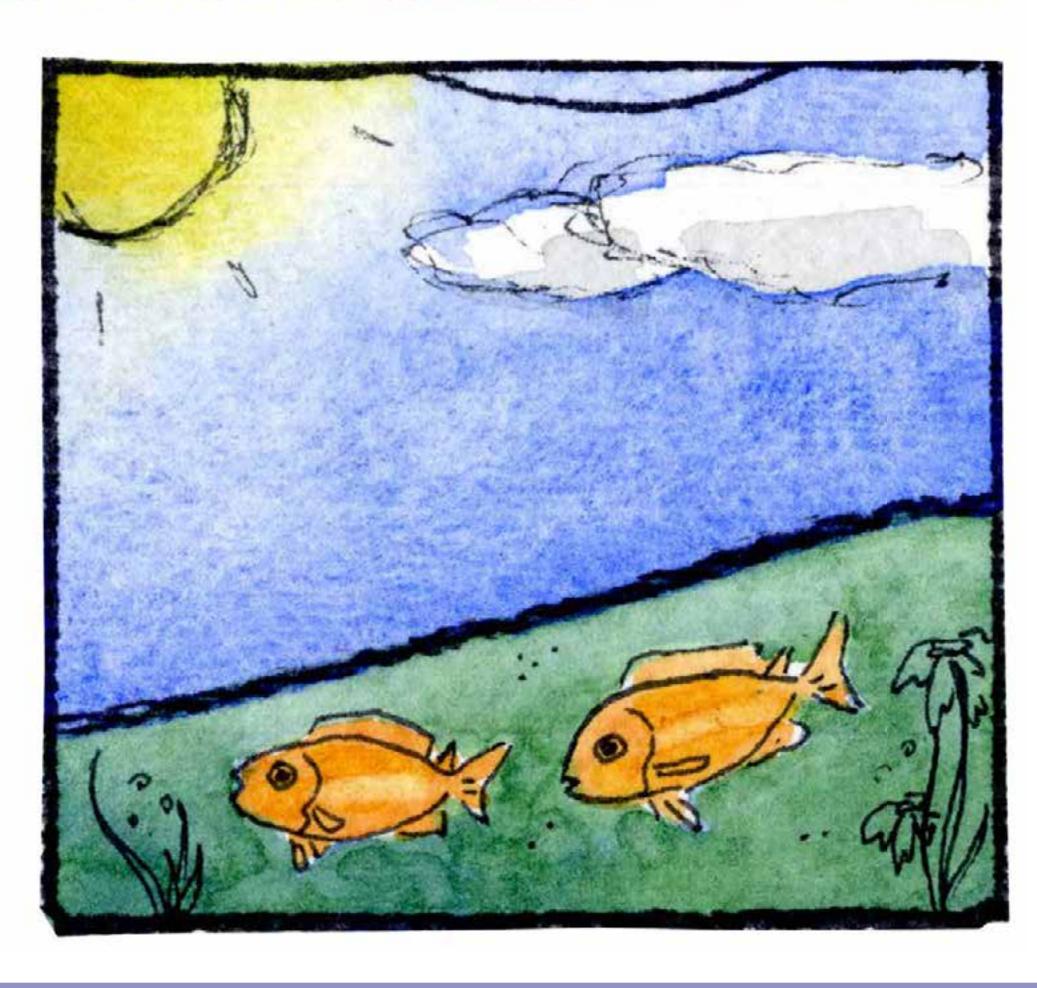










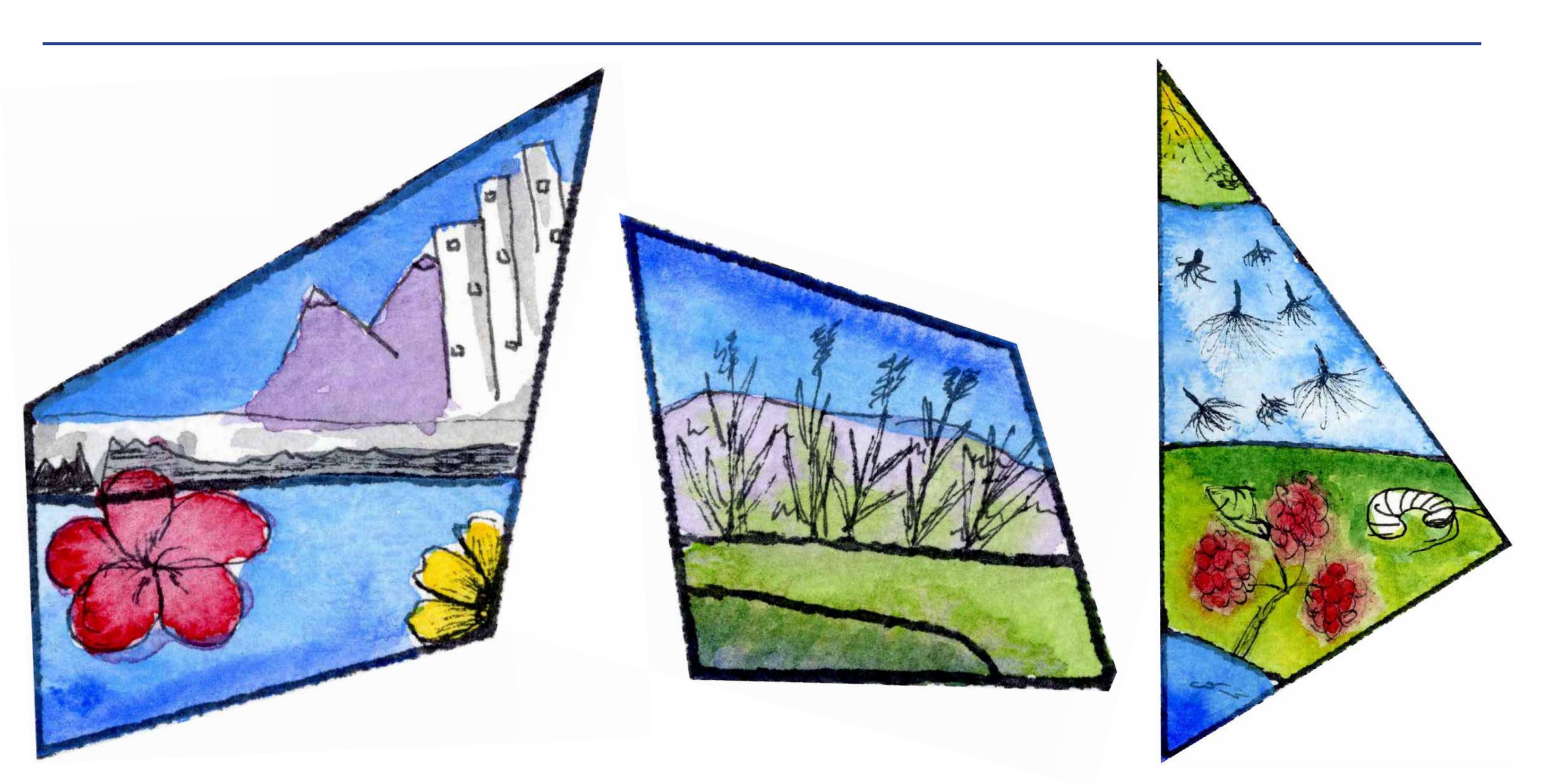


Dear Third-Grade Christine,

You're on an AYSO soccer team right now, I think your team name is "The Green Rockstars". Although you're only playing for fun right now, as you run across the field during practices and games, I hope you appreciate the trees around you, the smell of the dirt, and how soft the grass is, even when you fall down. As you grow older, you're going to start getting into more competitive soccer, and in 2 years, you will join Santa Monica United Football Club! You will grow to love soccer even more, but you will also start to prefer smooth turf that allows the ball to be dribbled and passed uninterrupted over the bright green grass you used to love so much. The turf smells like rubber; it is hot in the sun, burns you, and leaves you bleeding when you fall. You will fear the prospect of making mistakes and falling down because the stakes are higher.

There are no more trees around you as you practice; you are surrounded by high fences so that the ball cannot escape into the street. But you will still prefer the turf. Although soccer brings you lots of joy, your preoccupation with constantly improving and winning will start to diminish the peace you once felt playing soccer in open nature. It will start to become another area of your life you must always be improving in and practicing, competing with others. You will love this about the sport, but I promise you, it will get exhausting and your expectations for yourself will be set too high. So, while you can, I hope you will allow yourself the mistakes met with laughter during practices and games, to fully appreciate what a blessing it is to play soccer for the sake of it, on gentle grass that smells familiar and inviting.

For a while, you grew detached from everything nature has to offer. You became consumed by smoother turf fields and soccer matches with higher stakes, focused on school and friends and not making mistakes and your future, and forgot about alone time. Just as you forget to embrace the imperfections nature has to offer, you will forget the importance of making mistakes and stop allowing yourself to make them. I hope you won't; each mistake is an opportunity to reflect and grow. Appreciate nature, especially its "flaws", and you will rediscover the healing capabilities nature has on your mind and body; disconnecting from technology and being alone in nature will clear your mind and rejuvenate you.



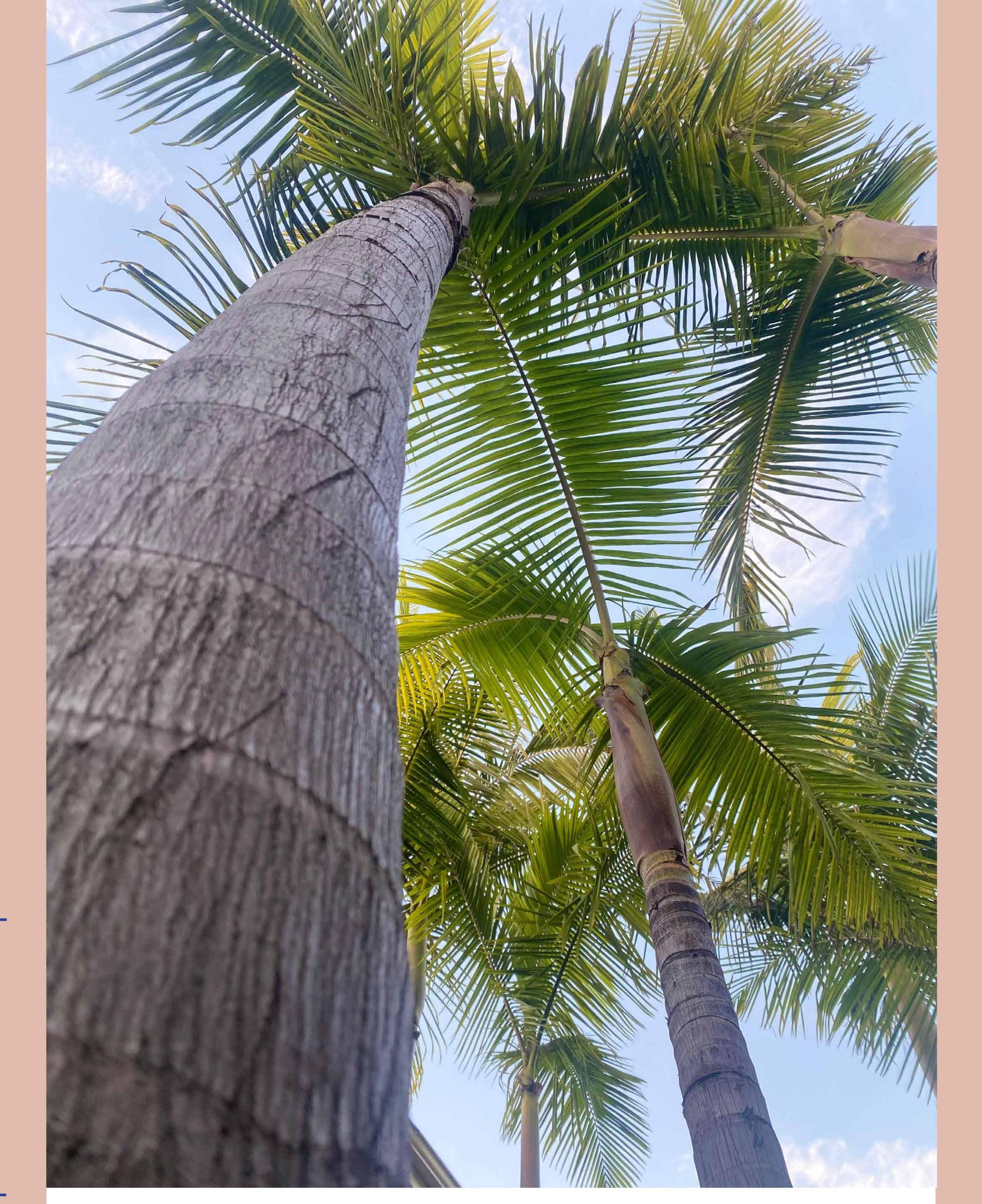
Dear 8-year-old Anne,

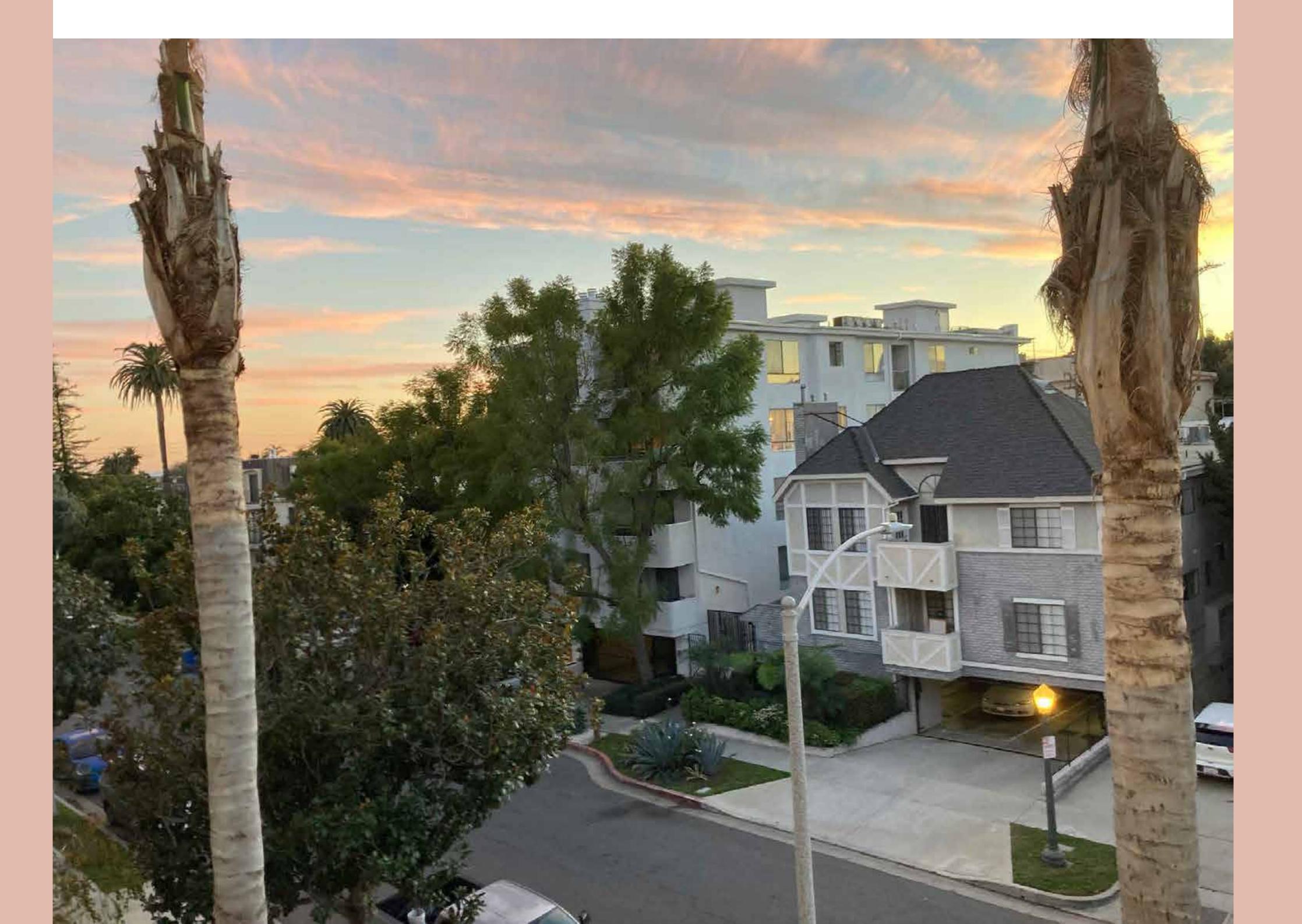
I hope you're enjoying your time at elementary school. I know you're bored of the playground, but you'll soon miss it. Being an 8-year-old, I don't blame you for wanting to pick the pretty flowers and take home the interesting plants. But soon, you'll realize there's more to plants than just images. Instead of looking at purple hydrangeas and wanting to take them home, you will now look at them and appreciate their beauty and grace. Over time, you will understand that taking a plant is uprooting it from its home, just as if someone took you away from your own home. On your walks around the neighborhood, instead of becoming annoyed by the abundance of sweet gum tree droppings, you will soon understand to look at them in a different light. Now, walking around the neighborhood you're similar to a dog: taking time and looking at every different plant and animal. You still get excited when you find a four-leaf clover or when you spot a red ladybug in the grass, but growing up will help your vision in nature.

You don't know this yet, but you will become fascinated with traveling the world and scoping out every natural possibility. Hikes around Los Angeles will become your new hobby, and instead of running off in different directions, you will learn that off-road hiking is harmful to the environment growing there. Remember your grandparents' mountain house? That will be your favorite place to stay in the summer. Instead of surrounding yourself with buildings, light pollutants, traffic, and the bustling city of Los Angeles, you will understand the importance of connecting with nature. Choosing to stay in North Carolina for the summer rather than Los Angeles. Now you don't know how it is there, but I can describe it. The minute you step into Charlotte Airport, the air is fresh and you feel as if you can finally breathe. The drive back, all windows down enjoying the mountain scenery. At night, when you go out for a nighttime walk, there are triple stars than there would be in Los Angeles. Stepping right out the doorstep is immediate nature, comforting you, welcoming you, and allowing you to finally breathe and relax. Staying in North Carolina will soon become your favorite thing, and savor it before you have to leave. When you're not in North Carolina, there is one thing you never thought you would enjoy: camping.

Right now, you're probably wondering if I'm crazy, how would I like to sleep outdoors without proper bathrooms or bedrooms? Now, it is your favorite thing ever. In California, there isn't much of a focus on nature. But going to Northern California to camp will suffice for part of the year. You will enjoy cooking your food on the grill, waking up to nature, and being surrounded by plants and animals. But the thing that you will enjoy most is the sound of the crickets and wind almost lulling you to sleep. Take advantage of nature now, breathe in the air, stop to look at every plant, and take an interest in every animal.

Love, Anne





Hey Third-grade Naomi!

I know you are so little right now and have no care in the world except for maybe your third-grade crush. There are so many things I want to tell you but I will start with the important ones.

First, I want to mention nature. I've noticed how our relationship with nature evolves as we grow up. I remember when I was your age, I spent a lot of time playing outside, exploring the neighborhood, playing with my neighbors, scootering around, and playing with dirt, sticks, rocks, and plants. I know you loved making dandelion necklaces and climbing on trees. I remember using the huge branches as a stepping stool, trying to peek through the leaves, and feeling so superior and accomplished once I got to the top. When I got older, I realized and was more aware of my appreciation for nature. Those tall trees I climbed on when I was little do so much more than provide a fun time for me. They produce oxygen and clean the air by sucking in the carbon dioxide. In addition, I started going on hikes, and gardening, and even joined the Greenhouse Program! We do so many cool activities, like transplanting, learning about the native plants, and going on fun trips. Being in nature brings me a sense of peace and tranquility. It's a way for me to disconnect from the busyness of everyday life and reconnect with the beauty of the natural world.

I've also become more aware of the importance of taking care of our environment. Nature has had a profound impact on me. Whether it was teaching me to appreciate the simple joys in life or finding peace amidst the chaos, I always have been and always will be extremely grateful for it. Whenever I'm surrounded by nature, whether it's hiking through mountains or gazing at the starry sky, I feel a sense of connection. It is a constant reminder of the beauty and wonders that exist beyond our busy lives. It's amazing how something as vast as nature can make us feel so small yet so alive. Nature has also inspired me to be more mindful of the environment and make eco-friendly choices. I try to recycle, reduce waste, and reuse sustainable products. Nature is such a precious gift, and it's up to us to protect and preserve it for future generations.

Some words of wisdom I have for you are to be prepared to go to a new high school, be more open to new things, and treasure the moments when you are young. Appreciate how loved you are and before you know it, you'll be in high school, and in two years you will be graduating! Cherish every moment with your friends and family because they're the ones who will always be there for you. Live every moment and do not be in a rush to grow up. Remember to believe in yourself and always follow your dreams. You're capable of achieving anything you set your mind to. Keep being the awesome person you are!

Sending you lots of love, Future Naomi

Dear 8-year-old Angeles,

It's been 9 years since I was last you, and honestly, a lot has changed. Mentally, physically, and personality wise, not only have I matured and grown a lot but the world around me has also changed for better and worse.

My own personal life has been affected and therefore developed due to my environment and those around me. I'm a senior in high school now, having fun with friends, exploring different things that interest me, working hard in school, and waiting for college acceptances. I have grown used to my current environment and become accustomed to the nature spaces that surround me. I know of places that I can comfortably go to in order to spend time in nature. I love to go on walks at Marina del Rey beach in the morning with a big puffer jacket on, when it's cold out and the air bites my skin. I enjoy walking across the street to spend time at Fox Hills Park, sitting in the grass and basking in the warm bright sun. I know my surroundings very well and which ones make me feel comfortable and safe so the idea of moving somewhere completely new and losing access to these nature outlets is scary. However, I take it as an opportunity to learn and adapt to a new way of living where I will be pushed to find new safe spaces again.

In the 9 years that have passed between you and me the world in general has changed a whole lot both positively and negatively. I know all the current issues aren't something you are aware of and I think you should keep it like that for a bit more. You don't have to worry about any problems just yet, instead focus on having fun and being kind to those around you. If I remember correctly, you love nature since it's the medium you use to do all the activities you enjoy, like soccer. I remember that you love playing it on the green grass fields, where when you fall the only real issue is dirt stains. I also know you hate playing on the dry grass that scrapes you up, though get used to it because soon enough you will start playing on turf, something that will even burn you.

I know you love the small white flowers that grow at El Marino, and that you adore making flower crowns out of them. Although you may love all these things I don't think you are aware of your relationship with them, and that's something you should try and do. Try to be more appreciative of nature and green spaces in general, from trees to flowers to the beach. Take a bit more time and focus some awareness on it since it's such an impactful aspect of your life now and in the future.

My relationship with nature has changed and grown; it has gone through many stages. For a period of time I didn't really care about nature as much as I do now, I didn't spend much time on it and therefore sort of forgot its importance. But now my subconscious love for nature has developed into a conscious effort to appreciate it more. I try to give back and nurture the environment that provides me with so much. I now utilize nature to take breaks, especially when I'm studying for long periods of time. These breaks consist of me just going out and walking or sitting in nature. It helps me feel grounded and as though my stres es and concerns aren't so important and crucial. It makes me feel alive; reminding me that I'm human and that I don't need to hyperfixate on a goal or a task. Though this is something I don't expect you to worry about so much. I know nature is a safe place for you, though you may not know it yet, and I just want you to know that's still the case. Nature is something I still turn to in order to have fun and relax.

Dear Third-grade Norabelle,

Gosh, how old are you now? A whole eight years old? You are so young; old enough to know that there are so many things you don't yet understand, but far too young to learn their intricate truths.

Try not to grow up too fast, even though it seems like everyone may want you to. Treasure your youth, it is a greater gift than you know. It is okay to not be okay, it is okay to be childish: you are a child and are entitled to act like it. Run and roll in the dewy grass, don't for a second think of or worry about the green stains on the knees of your polkadot pants for they are nothing but glorious evidence of your joyous and youthful adventure. Don't stop looking for worms and rolly-pollies in the mud, even when people tell you that they are gross and therefore you are gross by extension. Run and play, feel the clean air in your lungs and the wet grass between your little toes. Smile carelessly and wide, even though your teeth aren't quite straight. Giggle, cheer, and shout; your feelings deserve to be received, they are valid no matter what.

Spend more time outside, sit on the deck, and stare at the trees, their leaves rustling with every breeze, take note of their shapes and colors: each so unique yet working seamlessly together. Take in the scene, the trees gently swaying, as if breathing along with the earth, the wind rustling through the grass. Then, look to a tree, no matter how big or small, and really look; maybe make some observations about what you see, or what that tree makes you think about, how you think it may work. Now, look deeper into the very same tree and grant your focus to a branch: notice the connection of the trunk to that branch, the bridge from that branch to each leaf; is the branch still growing? Where do the new leaves come out anyway? How? Finally, try and notice each leaf, each vein on that leaf, and each creature that calls that leaf their home. You can look closer and closer or farther and farther for eternity, you will never be absent of something to observe. The whole world can look teeny tiny or tremendously huge depending on your perspective, embrace that power. One of our greatest gifts as humans is our ability to observe and learn, and then utilize it.

Take deep breaths, fill your lungs with as much fresh air as you can muster, hold it for a moment, and then let it all out in one joyous blow. Be freezing cold, be scorching hot, be just right. Feel, I urge you to feel. Take every new experience with delight: how exciting that a new gifted moment has been bestowed upon you. Reconnect with nature, notice the peace and serenity you feel lying in the grass, the excitement you feel foraging for critters, the life you feel running through a sprawling green field. Don't stop moving. Don't run away from the past but toward the future.

Everything is okay, not always perfect or predicted, but okay. Life is for living, so live.

Thank you for listening to all this, don't worry about it too much I love you, and I always will.

Nora < 3



STILLNESS: Connection

Art in Nature and the Power of Narrative Medicine

A moment that stood out to me was when we were at the top of Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook and engaged in a land-scape sketching activity. Each person was given a piece of blank paper and a writing device. We were instructed to draw what we saw. With a near 360 degree view of Los Angeles, the possibilities were endless. My eye fixated on a tall cement that dominated the space. The building had organic curved, steel ribbons which wrapped the exterior of an otherwise rectangular-shaped structure. It was so unlike everything in the surrounding area. At the end of our drawing time, we shared with partners around us what we had drawn. Oddly enough, no one else picked this monstrosity of a building. Others picked the rolling mountains, the crisscrossing freeways, the bustling traffic. It resonated with me because something that dominated my vision so much was not the thought of others. We all chose to focus on different aspects of our environment and that influenced what we drew.

During this activity, each attendee shared why they decided to draw what they did. My explanation was rather simple—it's a big building that I hadn't seen before. This was my first time at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook and in this area of Los Angeles, so it was all new to me. The still, tall tower is what stood out. To the other attendees, namely the students, they had stories attached to these places. One student shared intricate details about the bus routes, which

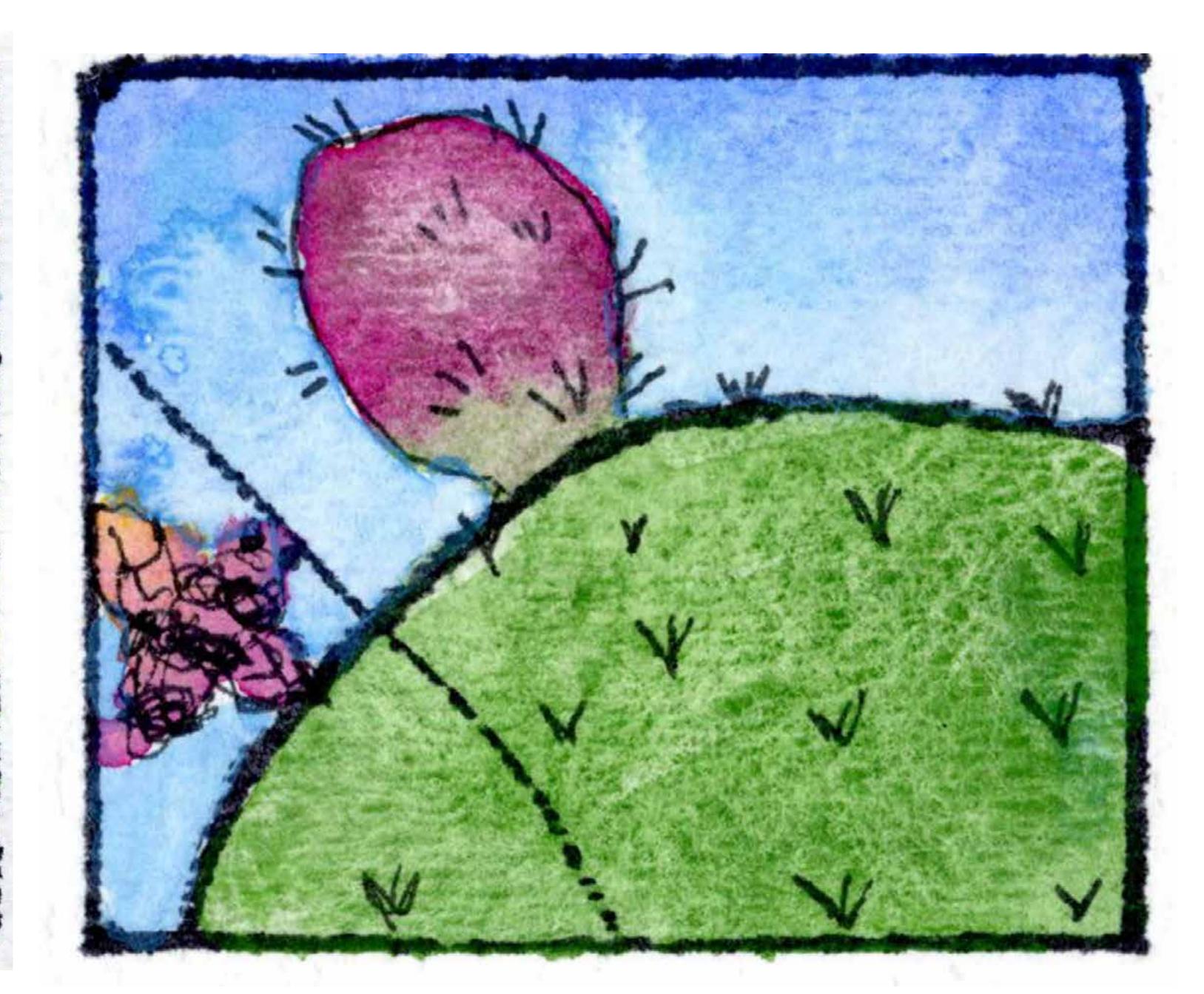


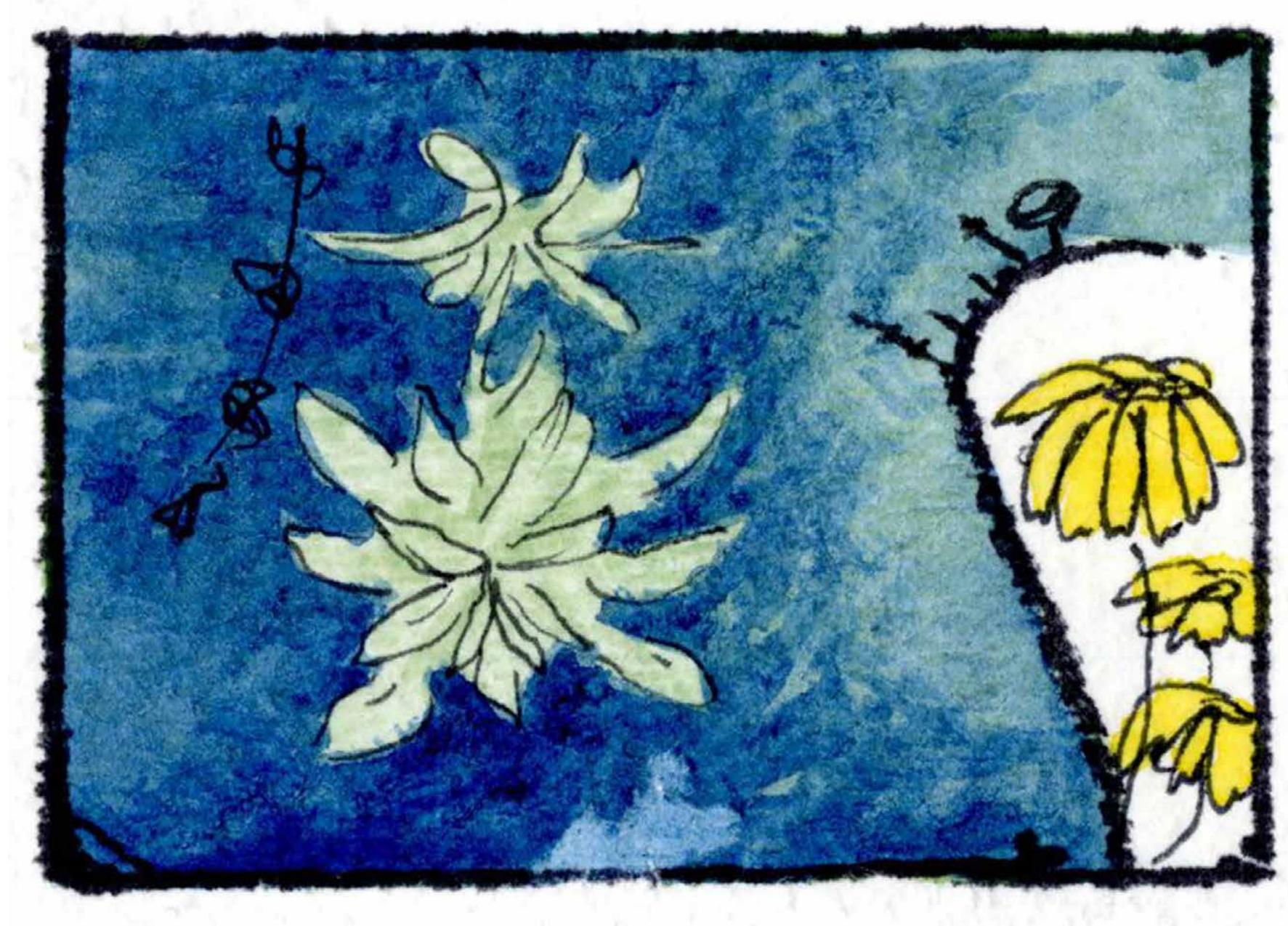


Embracing Diverse Views in Nature and Practice

A moment that stood out to me was when we all picked a piece of the landscape to draw. I appreciated the moment to take in our surroundings and observe more closely. My eyes went to the mountains. They were bigger than the rest of the landscape and so beautiful that it seemed most natural to me to focus on them. However, hearing others share what they chose to draw revealed so many more places that my eyes and mind had skipped over. For example, one high schooler saw a street that they used to take to go to school when they were younger. Another group member saw an interesting building in Downtown. Another focused on the same mountains I did but picked a smaller chunk of the landscape and added in more detail of the mountains themselves, rather than the pieces that stood between us and the mountains. It stood out to me that when we're all in the same place, we're still experiencing it differently. Our eyes focus on different elements. We have a different focus when we come as visitors vs. when we've built a personal connection to the place.

The structured moment that we had to focus on our chosen piece of the landscape created stillness. Even though I had been to Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook a few months before, I saw new aspects of the land when I had this moment of stillness. I didn't just think, "cool, mountains." stillness. I didn't just think, "cool, mountains."





he drew, as he was used to moving through that space on his way to school and work. Another student talked about the hills in the background, hills that they had hiked before. It occurred to me that we were each viewing nature and our environment differently, and based on previous movement through that space. Where I saw a set scene with a large tower, the students saw memories, movement, and stories.

One of my chief takeaways from the summit was that people see things differently. The way we view our environment and the way we interact with our surroundings is shaped by our previous experiences and by the stories we live. As someone who loves narrative medicine, or the role that stories and narrative accounts play in medical care, this was a resounding reminder. It reminded me of the importance of not only listening to someone's symptoms but hearing their story.

Instead, I got to focus on each mountain's shape and the way the color of the sky changed near the horizon. I am someone who often associates my time in nature with movement: for example, running or hiking. Standing still observing the features of the landscape brought out an appreciation for different details. It wasn't just that I had more time for this appreciation; I also found myself interacting differently. For example, when I run, I often find myself focusing on motion. I love squirrels, and I'll watch squirrels along my route, or the way the light shifts as leaves rustle in the wind. As I stood still, I looked more at the still mountains and the many shapes in the landscape, rather than my eyes darting to each little being that was in motion.

The activity reinforced that each person's perspective will be different. Patients and coworkers whom I work with will focus on different aspects even when we look at the same thing. I even will focus on different aspects depending on my state of mind (ex. moving vs. still). I think the moment helped me appreciate stillness as a tool that I can try to incorporate into my practice. i.e., taking a moment to not try to move things forward, but just try to observe how a patient is responding to something. i.e., incorporating still moments throughout my day so that I can use both me in motion focus and me in stillness focus, since those seem to be two different states for me. The summit also exposed me to people of different ages and backgrounds and it reminds me of the importance of taking in others' perspectives throughout my career so that I don't become too narrowly focused.

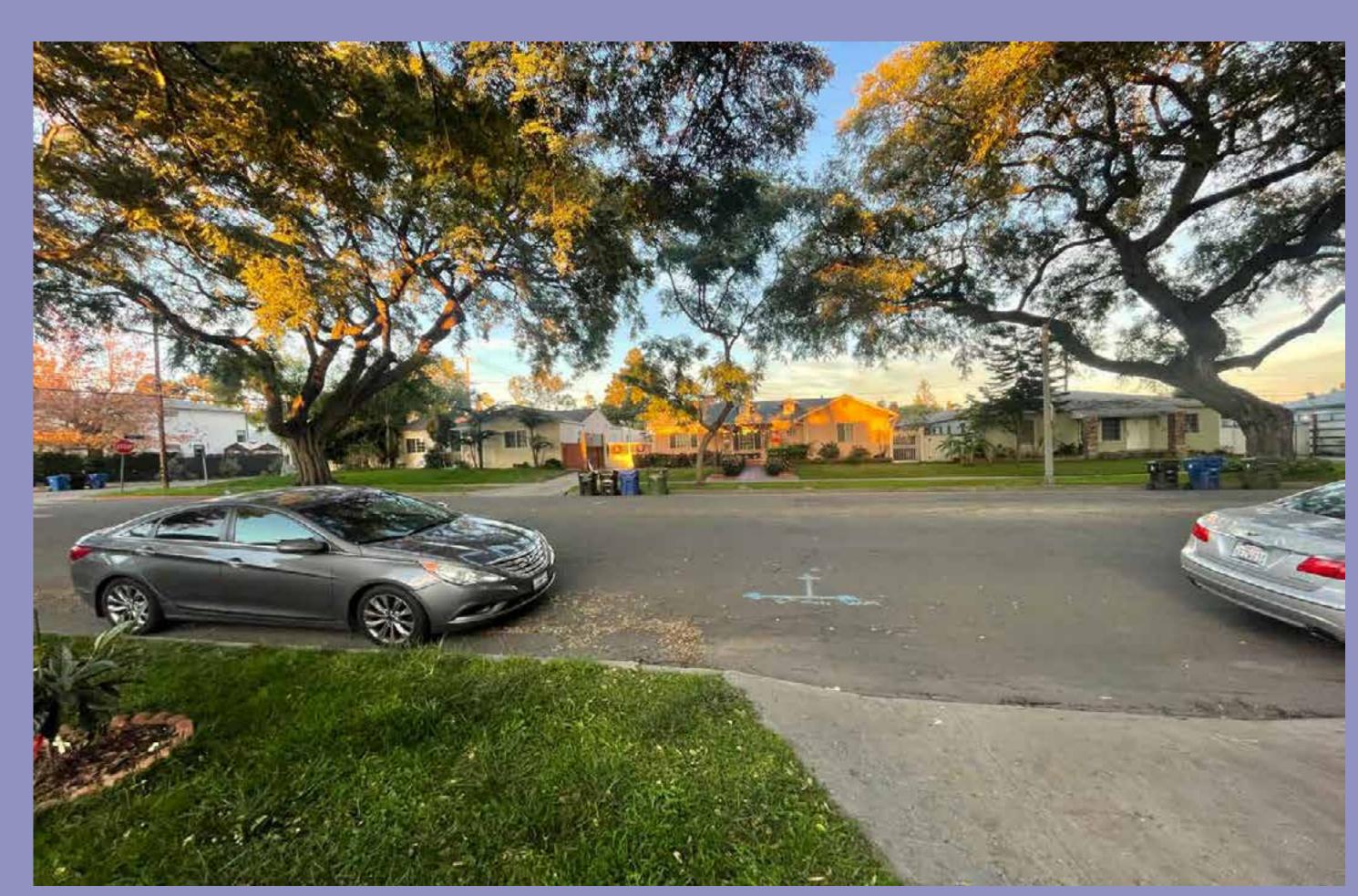
Lessons from Nature's Balance in Community Wellness

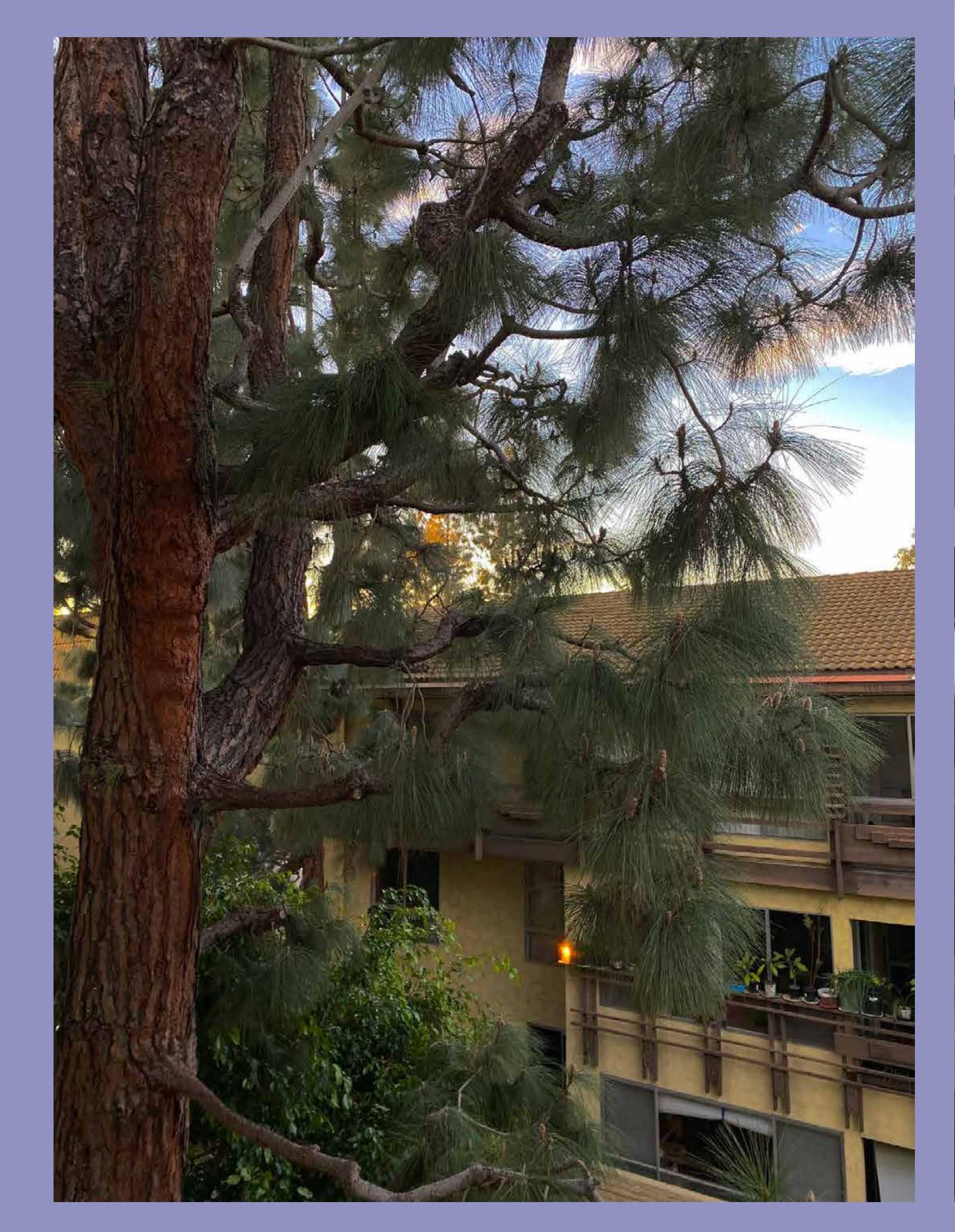
It was my first time at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, and I immediately noticed and appreciated the diversity within the park. In a region with a complicated history and current issues around gentrification and access to public parks, seeing people of different ages, races, and backgrounds peacefully coexisting made me smile. There has been a lot of valid discussions lately questioning assumptions about what a "hiker" looks like and how consumerism has plagued the outdoor industry; the implication that you need expensive gear and athletic apparel to appreciate nature. But within the park I was reminded that outside of essentials such as comfortable clothes, shoes, and sunscreen, there are no requirements to be out in nature.

I was observing one of the group exercise classes taking place on a grassy hill when I noticed something that truly embodied the themes of stillness and movement we had discussed. Participants had just completed an intense series of bodyweight exercises led by an instructor. Then, the instructor guided everyone to lay on their backs, close their eyes, and take five deep, calming breaths. As everyone transitioned from the vigorous activity to a restful repose, I was struck by the contrast. But I also realized how both states are vital - the movement and the stillness - not just in a workout class, but in appreciating the natural balance all around us.

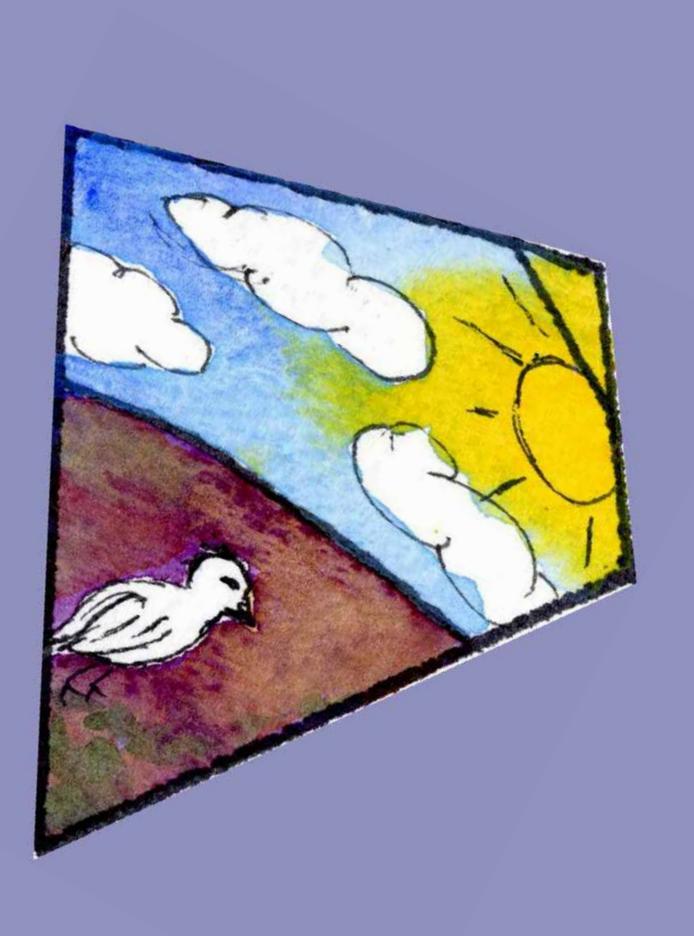
Watching the class experience both movement and meditative rest made me consider how I can apply that lesson as a future physician. In my own medical training and career, I know there will be intensely demanding periods requiring action and focus. But I must also prioritize finding moments of stillness, whether through mindful reflection or connection with nature, to center myself. I want to facilitate that same balance for my patients as well, helping them understand the equal necessity of motion and tranquility in one's life. Witnessing how people from all walks of life embodied this harmony through a group activity in the park was an insight I'll continue reflecting on.











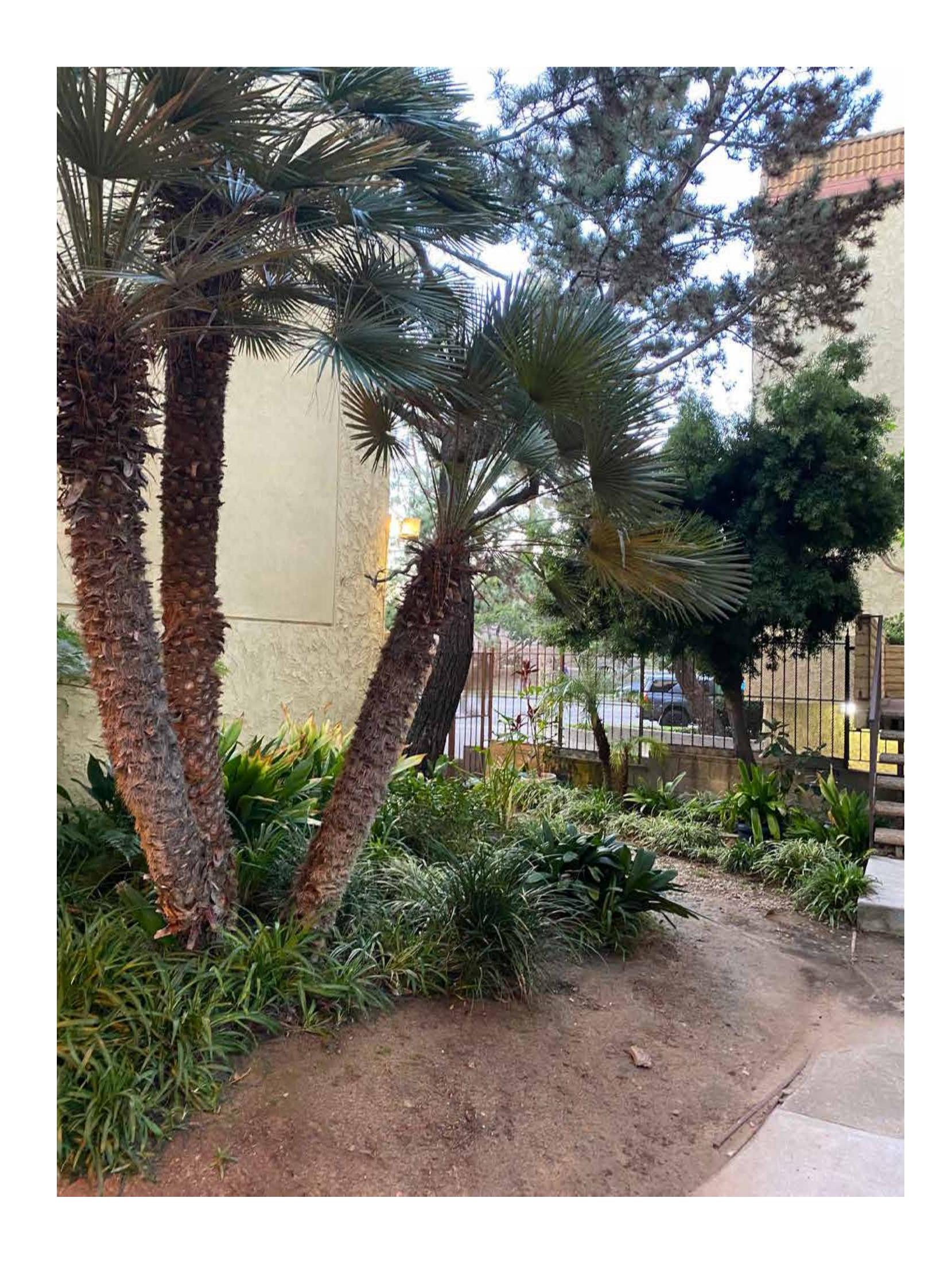


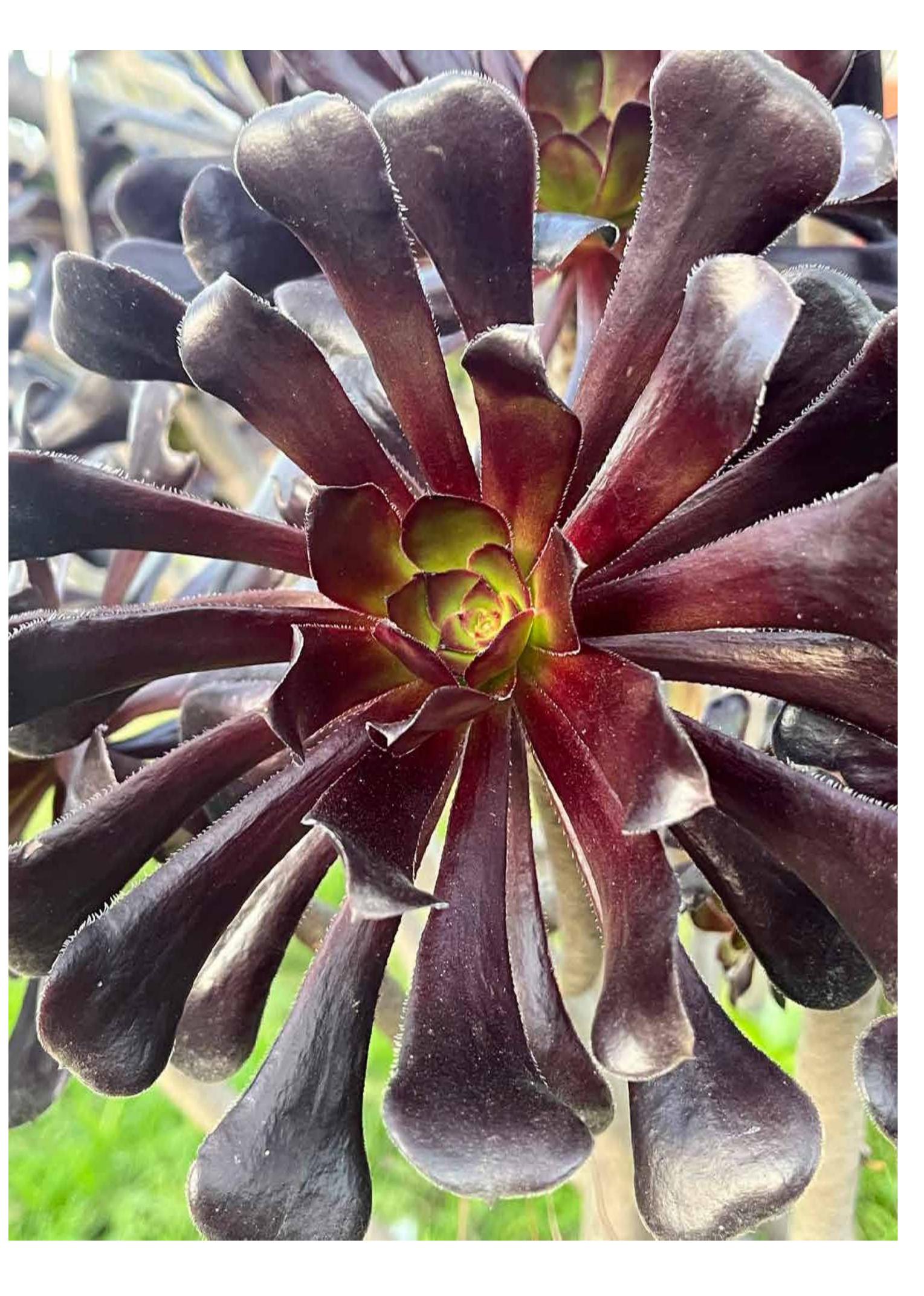


Bridging the Gap between Stillness & Action: Thinking about Health & Wellbeing

The people who visit Baldwin Hills Parklands have the opportunity to access a variety of mental and physical health benefits during their time outdoors. The preceding Balance section covered many of the effects of mental well-being—the stillness of nature helps to clear the mind and reduce stress.

The reduction of stress, in turn, benefits physical health, as stress can lead to many detrimental long-term risks. During two summit events held at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, students convened to map out how individual, community, and ecological health interact to help build climate change resilience. Additionally, one student wrote specifically about how nature affects their physical health.





Dear Third-Grade Kimani,

I just wanted to start off by saying, to keep doing what you're doing; as long as you believe in yourself, there is absolutely nothing to keep you from your goals. Elementary school is/was a breeze: you will find it to be the most lax time of your life in which you can discover lifelong friendships. Middle school was a bit more of a hassle, but you learn to accommodate and prepare yourself for high school: starting off extremely awkward, but growing into the most developmental, stressful, and engaging part of your life so far. However, I must acknowledge that some of the greatest regrets of my life have been because of my lack of confidence and lack of comfort in my ideas and opinions which has stopped me from doing and being what I now see as ultimately better for us and to no detriment to others.

As you may already know, your - or should I say our - social skills have never been the best; we make great friends and always try to be our best selves in front of everyone, but we seldom think of our comfortability in these environments. After 8 years, I have learned how to truly appreciate myself, finding safety in my own body as well as in the love that I can give myself. You must know this. You must know that through anything and everything, you can always and forever find solace in your own self, your own feelings, your own comfort, and your own love. You will meet people you will love and those who love you, but to find a true sense of peace you must see that you, yourself, can provide that love too, as I am still learning.

Nature, as little a part of your life as it may seem, has grown into a great appreciation of mine, developing into a source of comfort, functionality, and self-centeredness. Now, I know you love to run around playing tag along with all of our great friends, and this desire remains insatiable. What's best is running in nature: the scenery is always fulfilling, the paths always exhilarating, and the freshness of the air always rejuvenates your asthma-stricken lungs. The beauty of nature never ends. You will find the most appealing designs of anything to be flowing and ebbing like the fluidity of running water; you will find that your most peaceful moments are in those of the outdoors; you will find that the natural is in most ways superior to the unnatural. And through it all, you will know to always act for the protection of nature, for its destruction would mean both the loss of biodiversity and of countless other people's health.

Also, you may not know this yet, but the architectural field will soon catch your eye. Although rapid urbanization through the construction of awe-striking skyscrapers, freeways, homes, and more has ultimately played a detrimental role in the natural ecological processes, methods of architecture that do not destroy the existent to make room for the new but instead co-exist with the present nature greatly interest me. Hopefully, as we grow older, we can learn to create these homes and buildings flowing like the run of water or as bold as the most vibrant of flowers while protecting the right of the vitality of countless flora and fauna.

Finally and essentially, embrace others, embrace yourself, embrace nature, and you can live life in the way you know is best, in the way you can be your best. ALSO, JOIN ROBOTICS, VOLLEYBALL, AND CROSS COUNTRY IN FRESHMAN YEAR NO MATTER WHAT.

With love and sincerity, 16-year-old Kimani

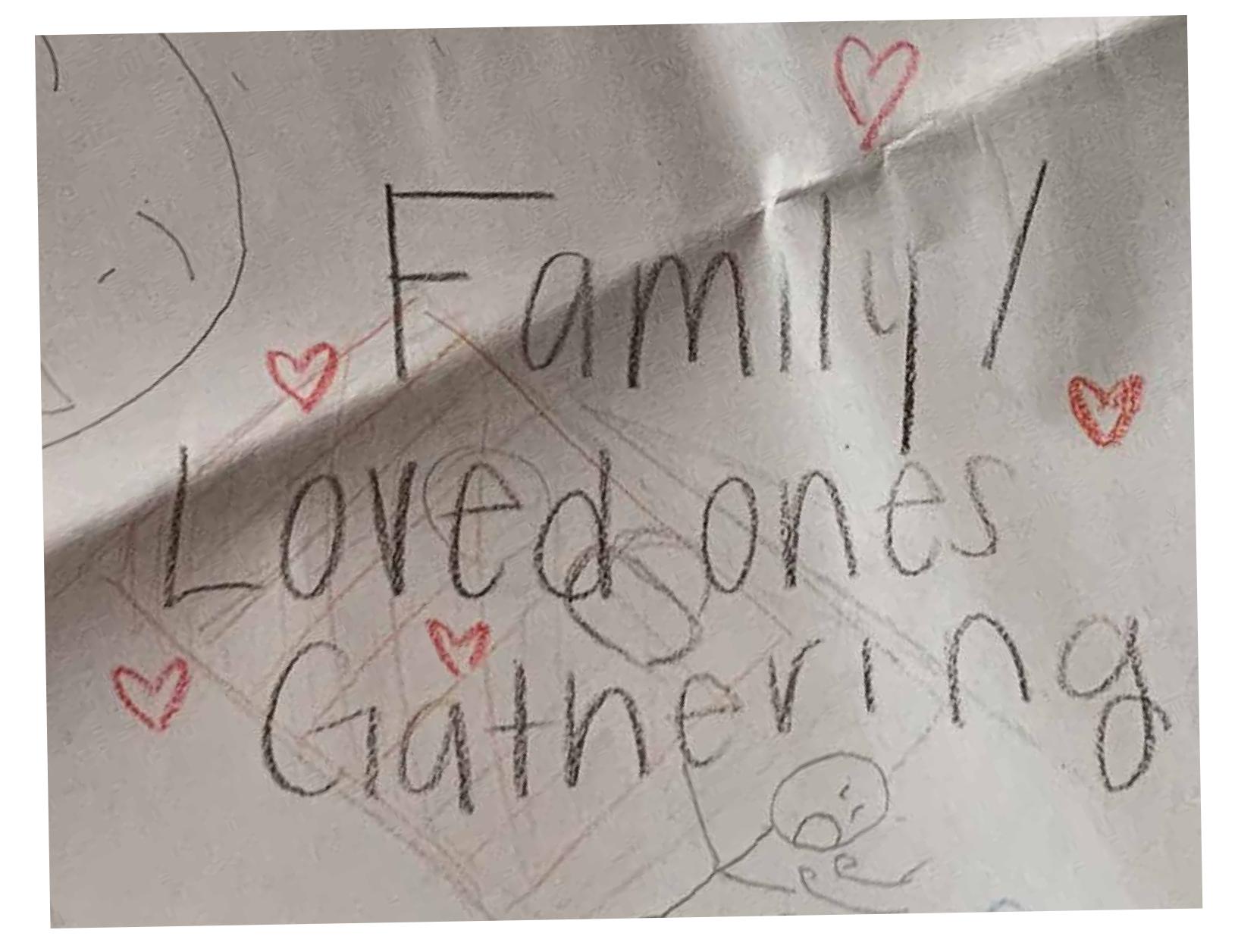
"Being in nature makes it easier to be friendlier to people."

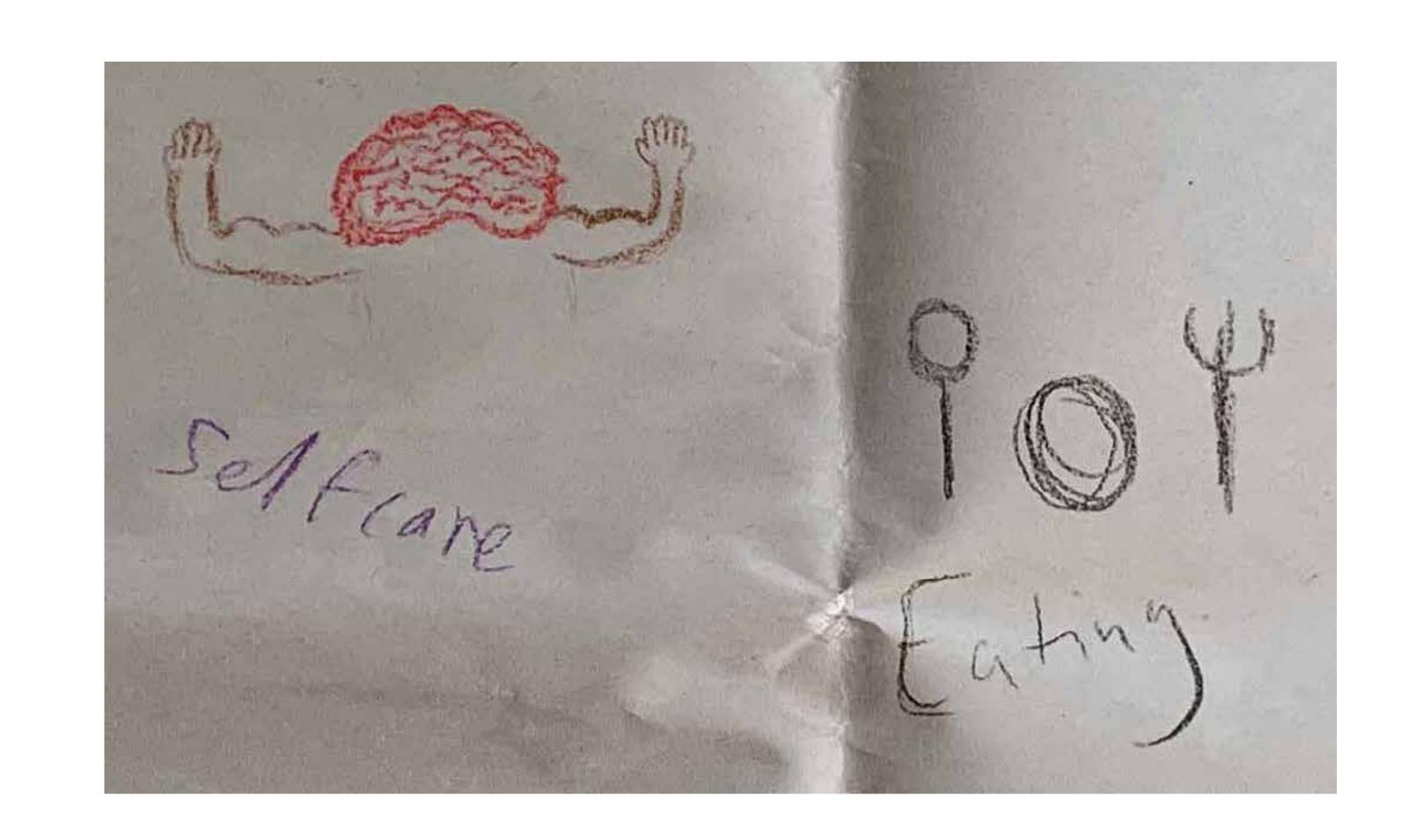
"I feel the promise of a future for other families."

> "I feel like I bring people together when they see me out in nature."

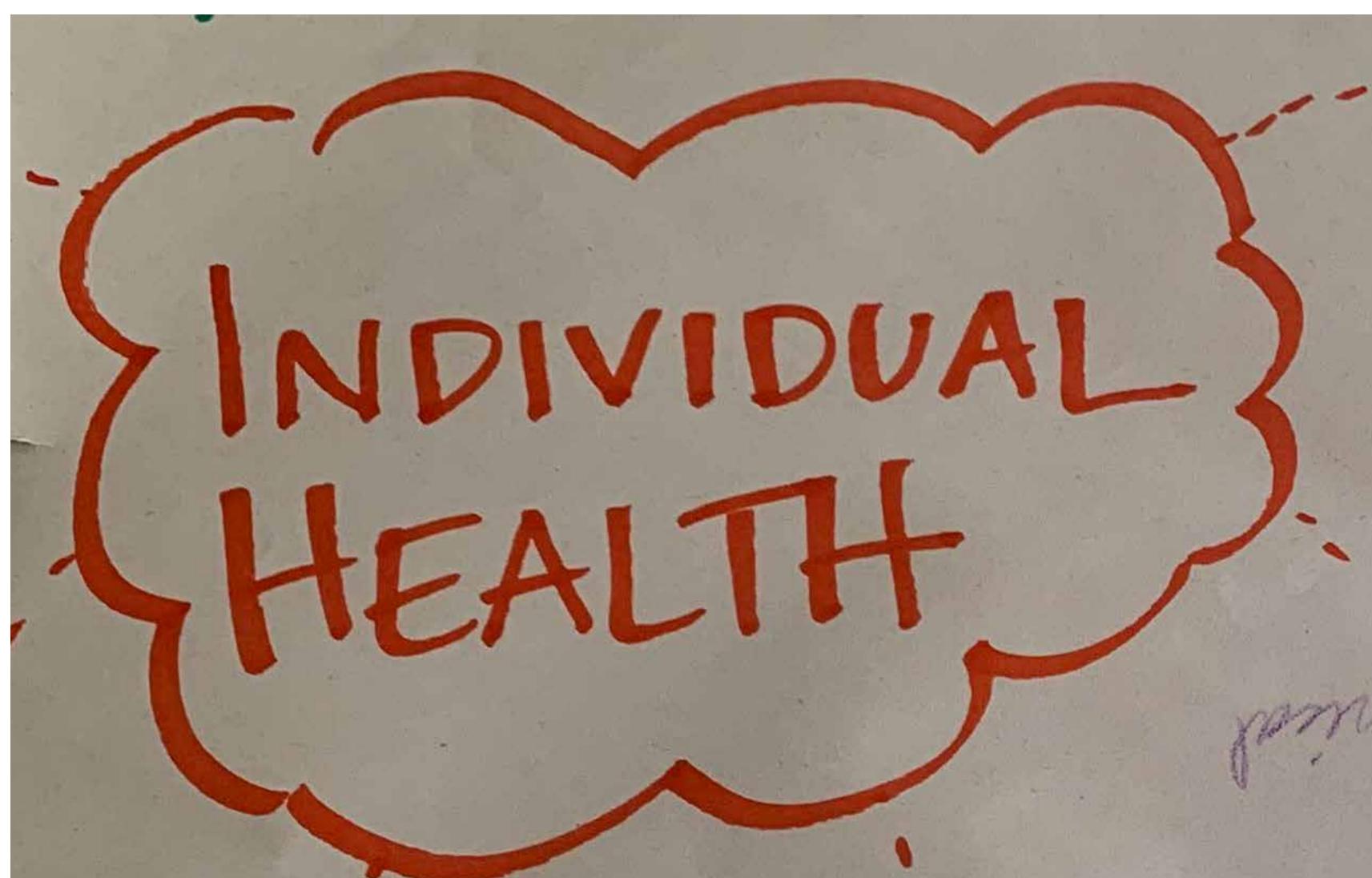
"Nature lets families connect with each other."

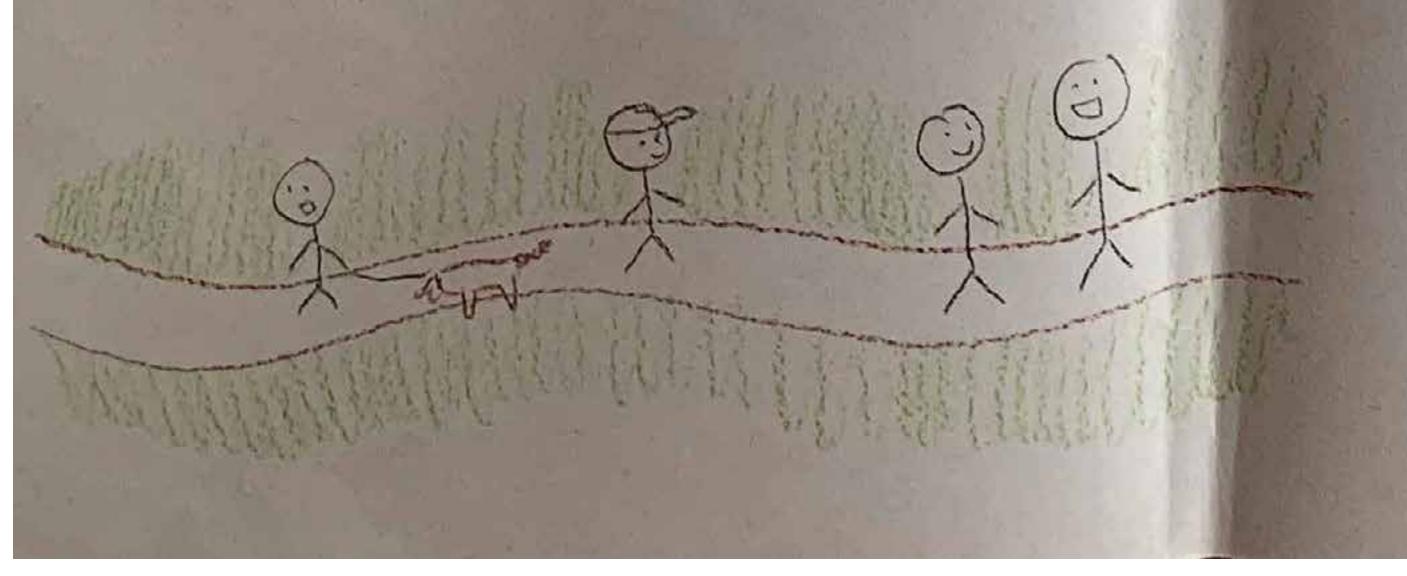
Keeping in mind the themes of nature, health, and climate resilience, the following quotes from community members are showcased. These were gathered when students conducted interviews with community members about their relationship to nature. We hope that these quotes spark thoughts about your relationship with nature and just how impactful nature can be on both the individual and community level.

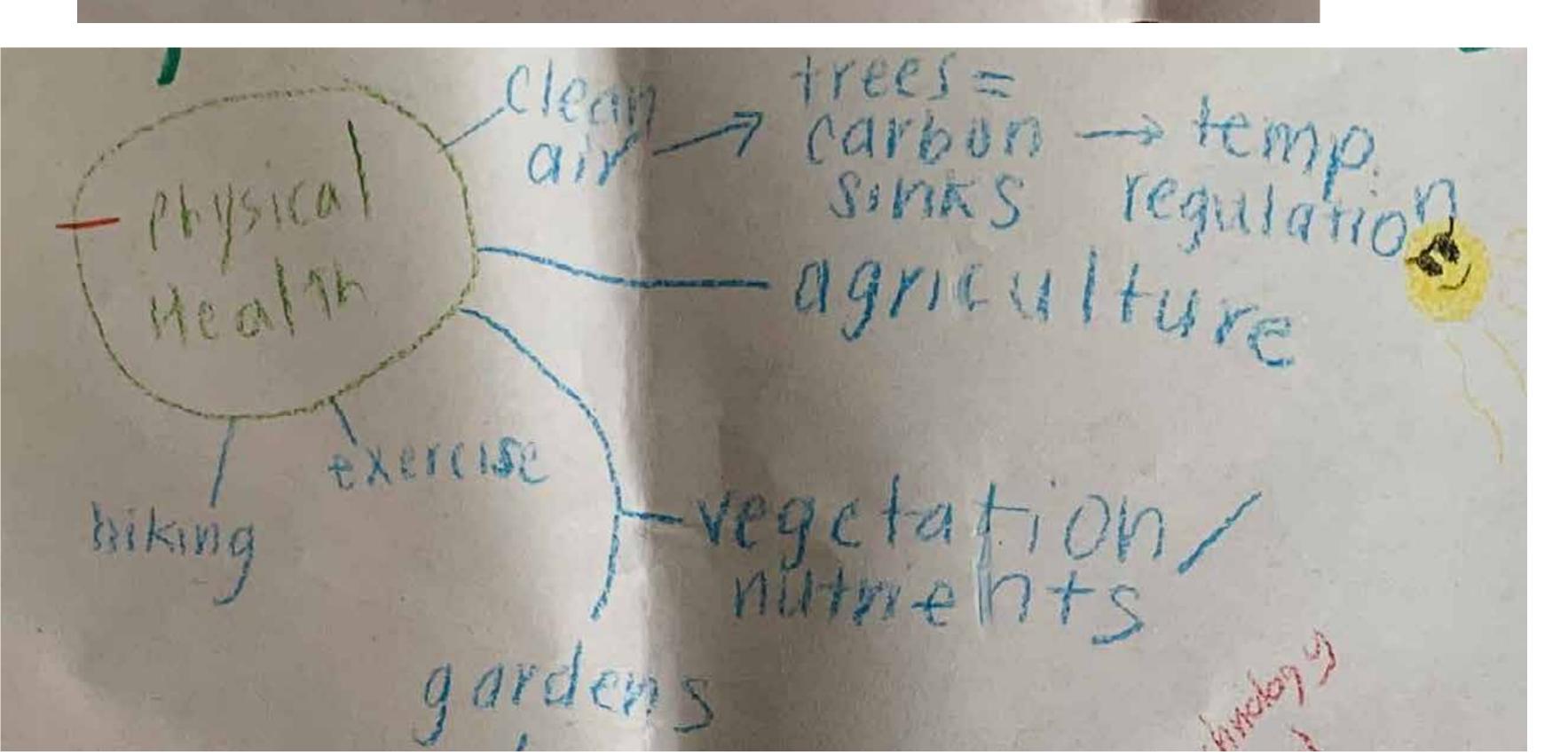


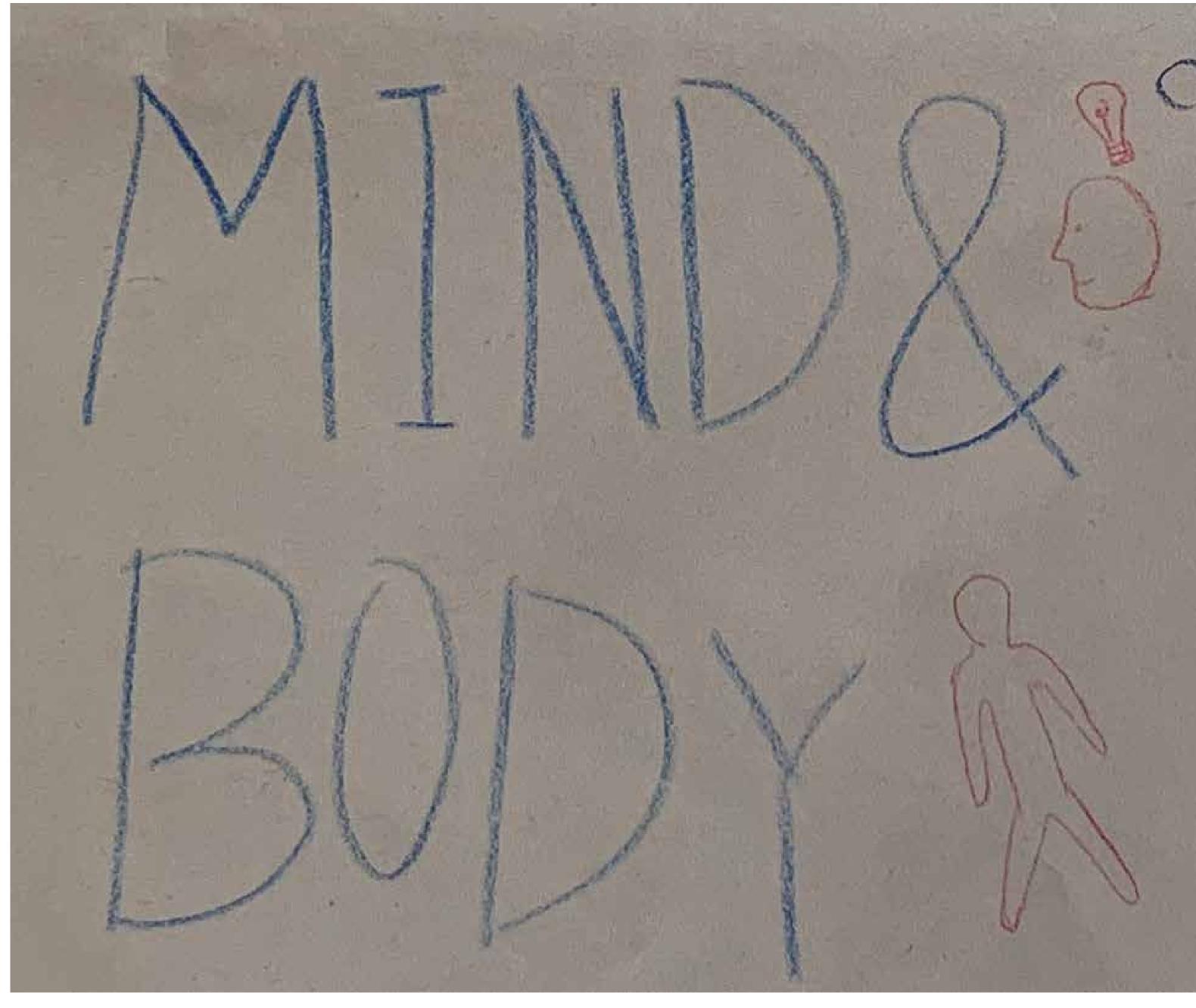


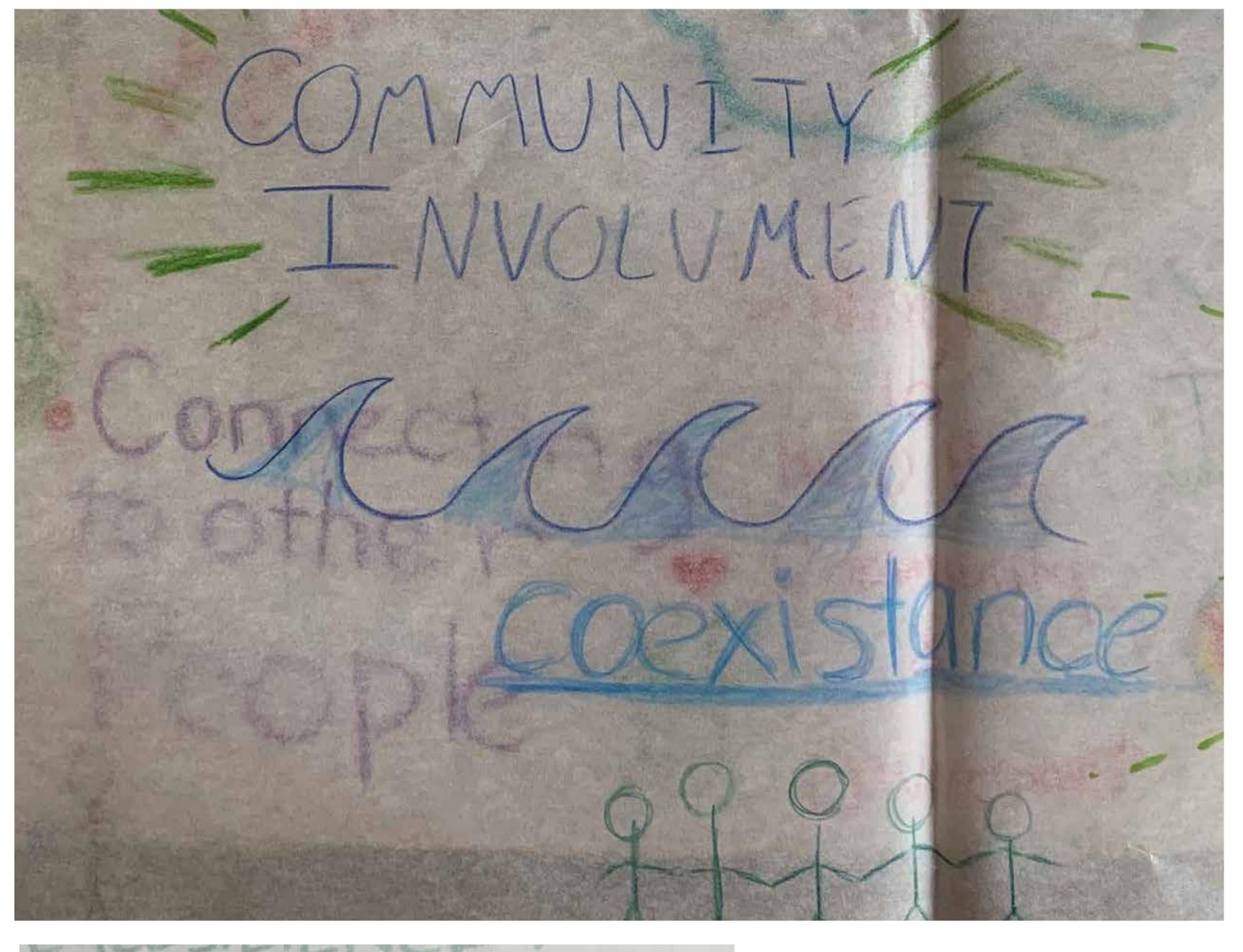






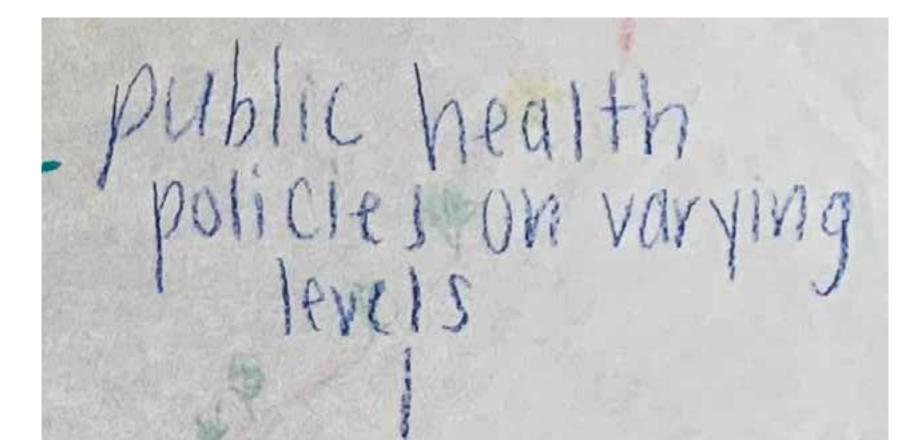




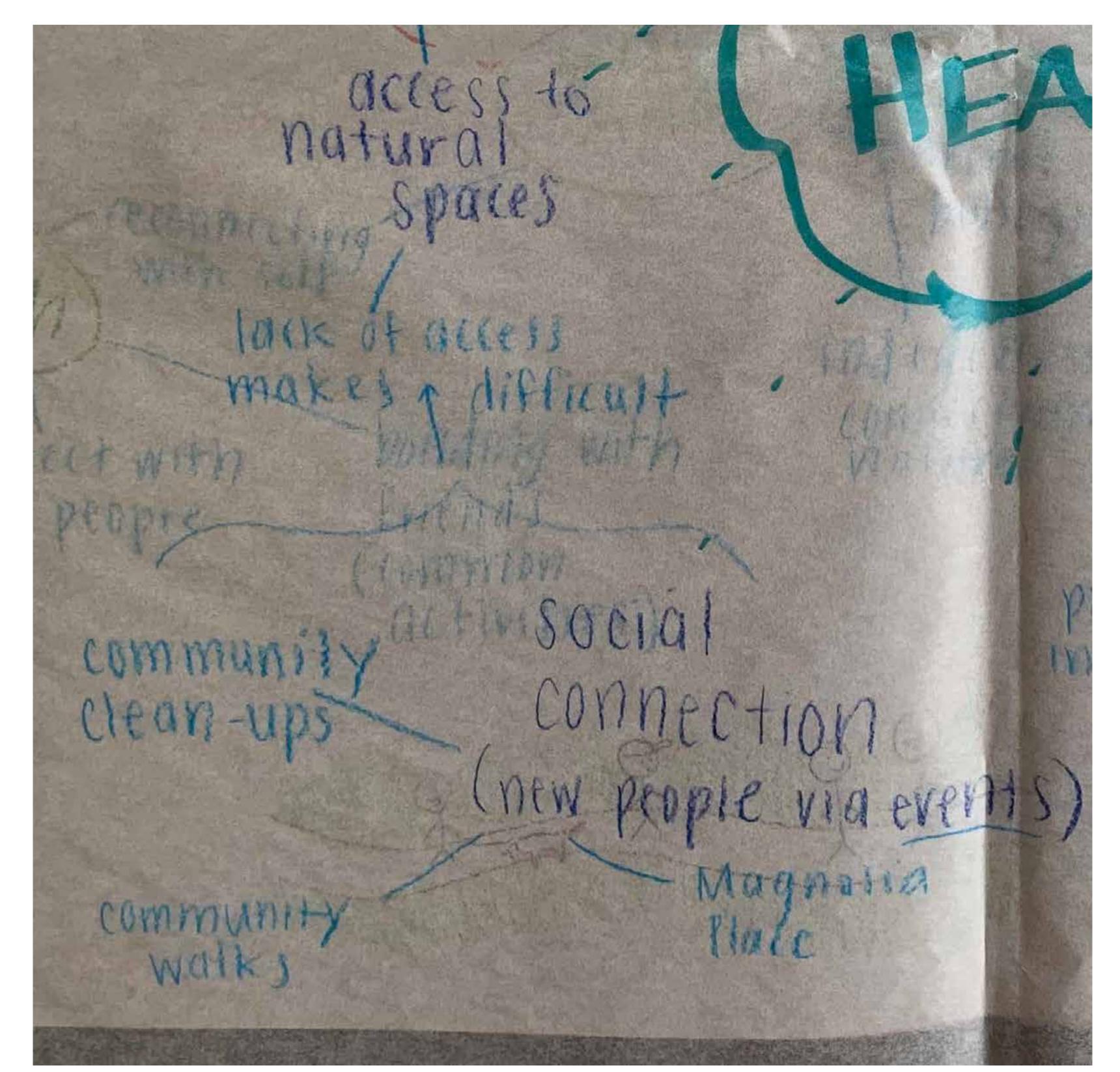
















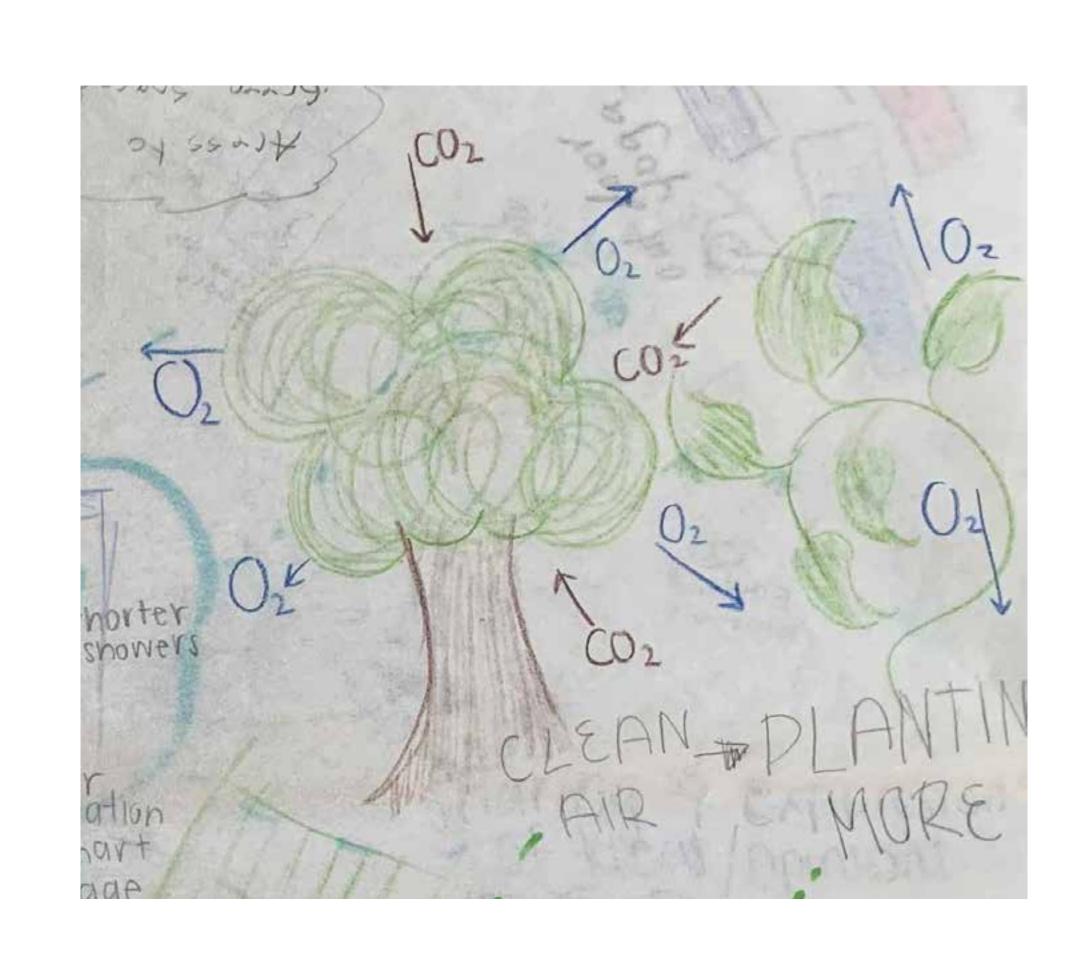
"A resilient human community is 'a place where people can rupture and repair, face hardships but face solutions and build skills in adversity."

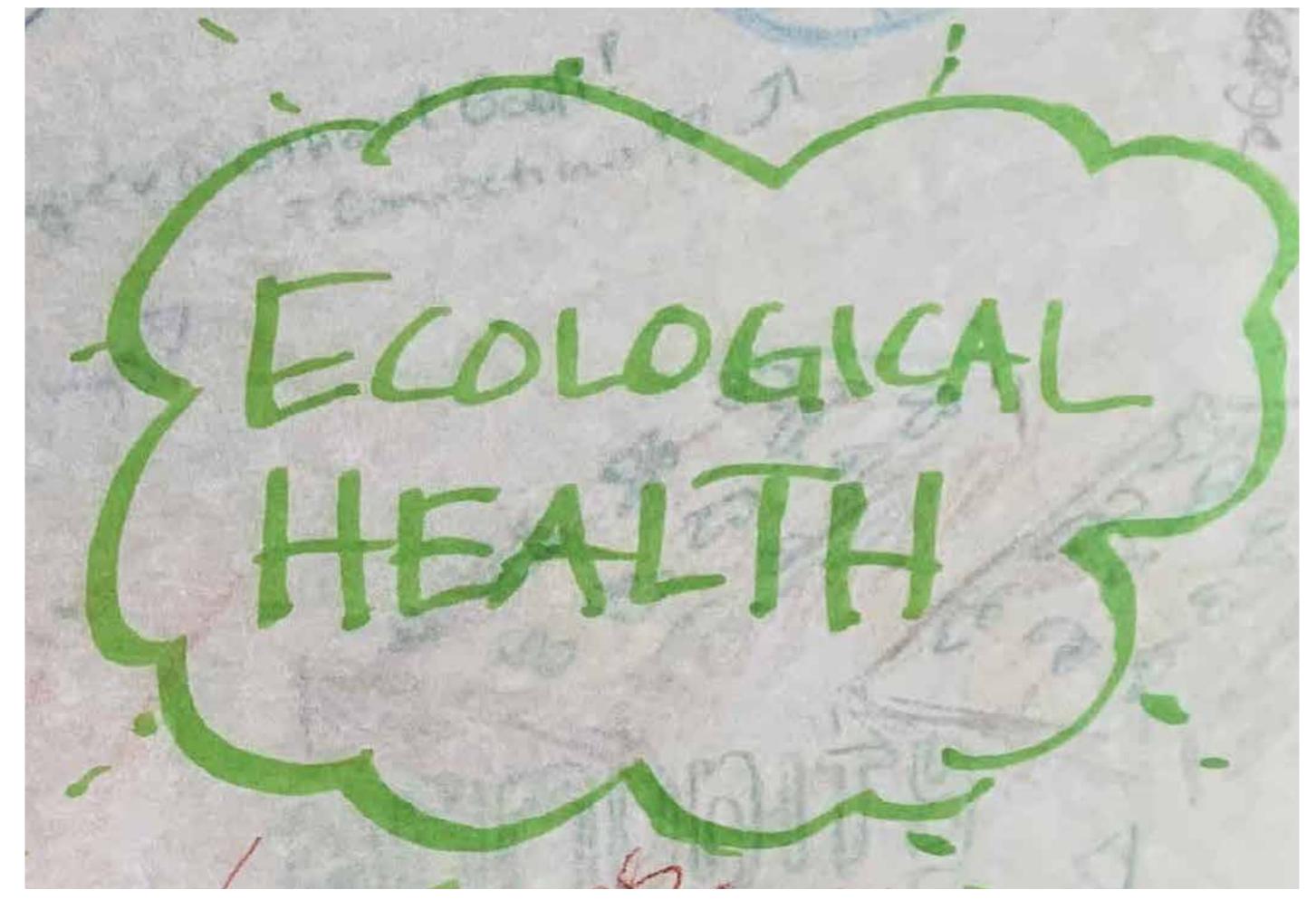
"I think people get hurt in relationships and we heal in relationships...and we heal more strongly in communities."

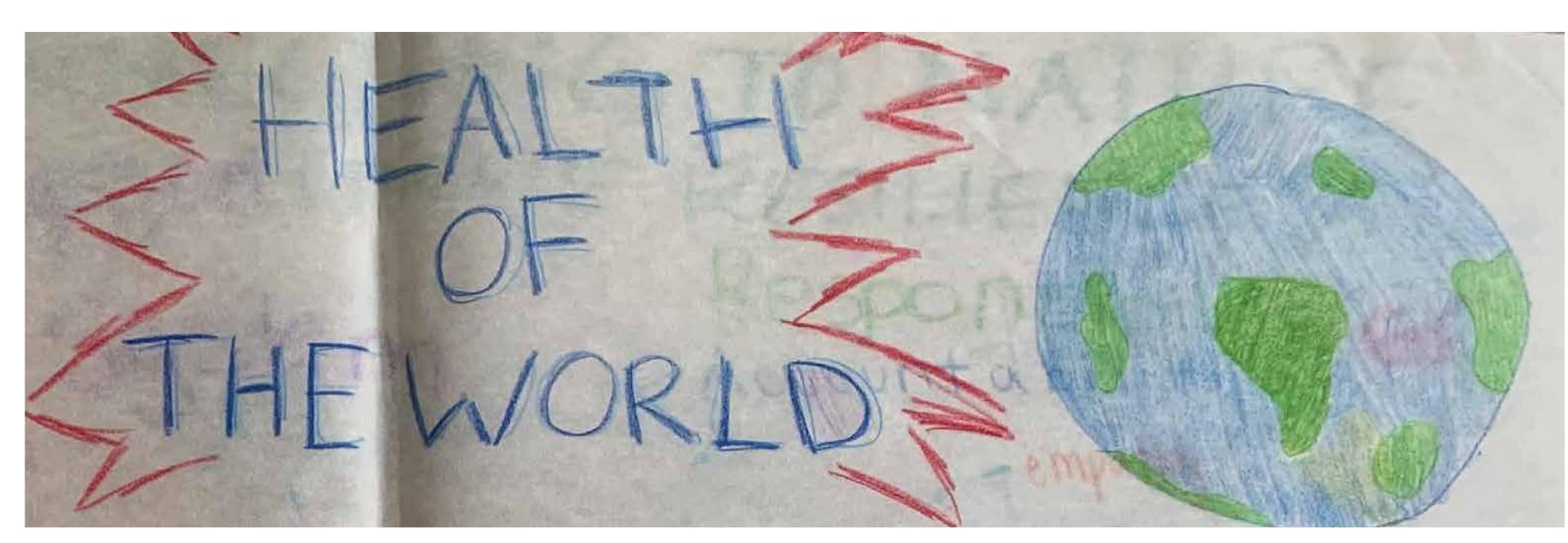
"If you don't have the fundamental connection to nature around you, what do you care if rainforests are cut down? You need to first care about your places locally."

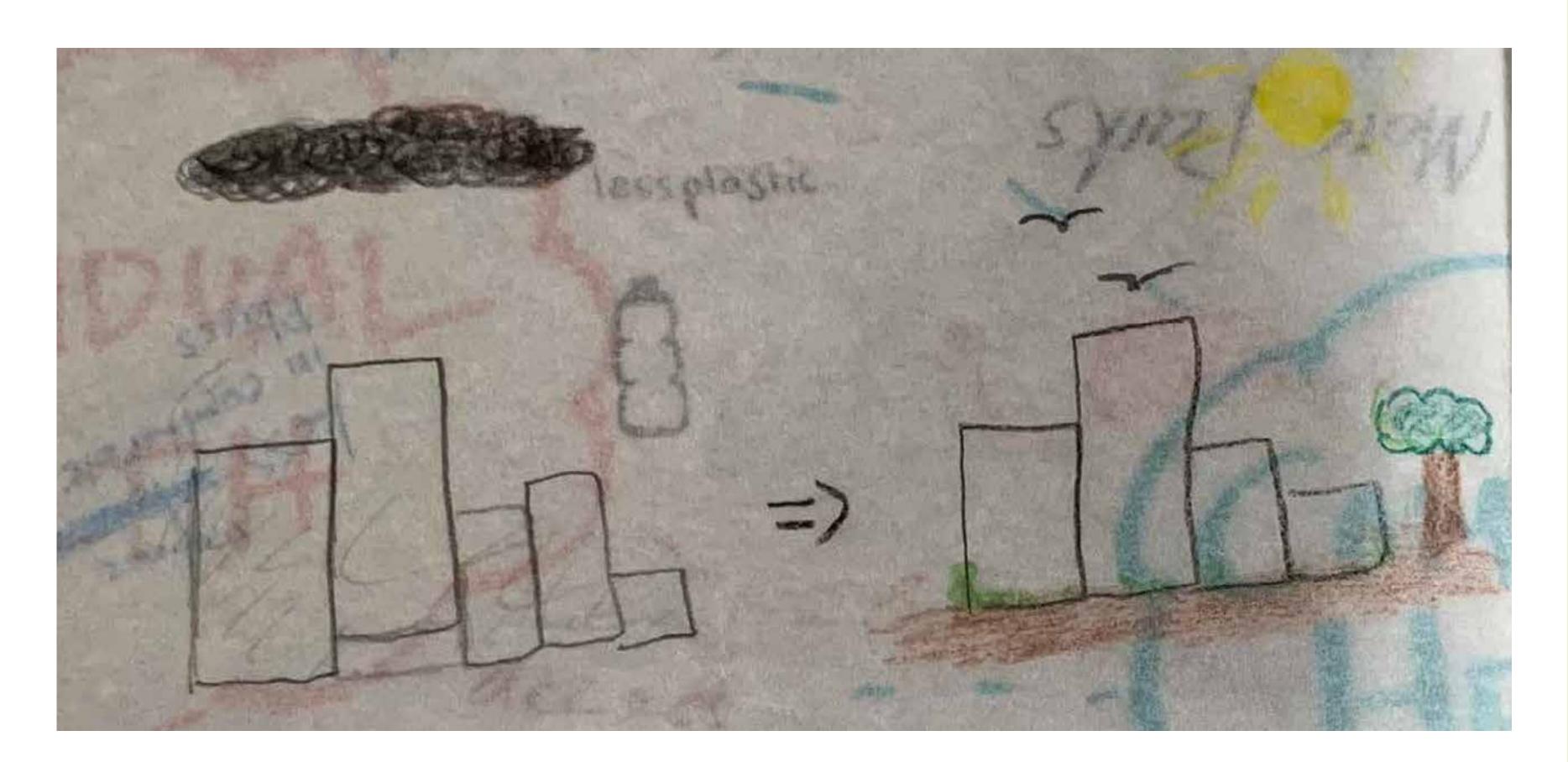












"It affects my health in a positive way, it calms me down, helps me get out of the house and being in nature offers a different perspective of life."

"I feel more normal [in nature] and I feel everything is going to be okay, and all these things are always growing. No matter what's going on in my world, and yet beautiful things grow. I feel peaceful, calm, hopeful, accepted, relaxed, and i feel like I'm good at hiking when I do it"

"Being out is a collective solitude"

ACTION

What does it mean to actively engage with nature? To move through green space is to negotiate your place in the natural world. It is to take charge of your own path through a landscape in constant flux and in that assertion of agency counterintuitively find stability. It is to learn about the world that you find yourself in and what you can do to preserve it.

This is a communal process. Moving through nature must always involve moving through nature with others; working together with others; learning together with others. Individual agency, then, in the context of community resilience, is rooted in collective agency. The following collection of letters reflect on this work of finding community in one's journey through the natural world through three main themes: agency, learning, and (again) connection. We also end the Action section with some recommendations for ways others can take action.

ACTION: Agency

Dear Third-grade Jayden,

How are you? It's been a while since I've seen you! It's been 5 years since I saw you. Many things have changed since then. Things like being a restoration leader at the Greenhouse Program and that garden that you started a while ago can now be finished. I've worked on learning about different plants and their environment. It's really fun and more interesting than I thought.

And I know you are wondering about school. I go to a charter middle school. I have many friends, and I'm sure you'd like them too. Keep that curiosity burning bright. Your endless questions? They're your ticket to understanding the world. And don't sweat the mistakes—they're not roadblocks, they're detours to learning cool stuff.

Hold onto those friendships you're building. They're the solid ground in the whirlwind of growing up. Be an awesome friend and you'll have awesome friends by your side. Basketball is going strong still and I can definitely say I'm way better now. As for height, I grew a lot now I'm 5'6. As for Taekwondo, I stopped doing most of the stuff and am just doing it for fun not competitively. Recently I went to New York City and went shopping and skiing, it was really fun! In the future, be sure to keep doing things the way you're doing it, and stay kind, intelligent, and focused. Also, remember to be kind to your younger cousin and treat him with respect.

Take care of yourself, and don't eat so much.

Sincerely,

Jayden

Dear 35-year-old Amelia,

35 years is a long time to be alive! Let me begin by reminding you of who 16 year old me is. I am a junior, a soccer player, a member of the school garden club, a Greenhouse restoration leader, a robotics team member, and a girl with a loving family and a group of friends that make her happy. As I write I am forced to wonder, who have you become?

Despite the hardships you surely faced, I hope you followed your dreams and haven't let life change you too much. I hope you went to a college where you were happy, met people who value you, and put yourself out into the world with confidence despite your introversion. Most of all though, I hope international progress has been made socially, politically, and environmentally so that there is more equity in the world, and so that climate change is no longer as big of an issue.

In terms of your personal and professional life, I am hopeful that you pursued your goals of studying environmental science and engineering, as the overlap between these fields seems to hold great potential when it comes to helping improve the world. I trust that you are still staying active physically and mentally, whether that be while hiking, backpacking, camping, going on runs or to the gym, visiting national parks, or whatever else brings you joy. If you haven't already, I urge you to travel. Go see the Amazon rainforest and the northern lights. Visit Italy with your sister like you promised so you can feast on pasta. Take a risk by stepping out of your comfort zone and meeting new people. Maybe even try to see a platypus in Australia like you've always joked about.

Although I have a feeling this hasn't happened yet, if you are ready to settle down, make space for your own little garden so you can grow vegetables and herbs. Maybe add in a bird fountain and some fruit trees.

Make sure the people you spend time with have similar values and passions to yours. Don't forget to share your knowledge of the world with others, interact with the communities you belong to, and don't doubt your own potential – the world depends on young people like you. Or I guess I should say middle-aged people like you (:

Finally, here are some last pieces of advice you may have strayed away from over the years. Don't forget your past, but also don't dwell on your mistakes. I know you probably still push yourself a lot, so remember to take breaks when you need them, and to spend time in the physical world around you. Speaking of which, how does the world look now? It will be 2042 by the time you are receiving this letter, so who knows what crazy new inventions will exist or how the world has changed. Find balance and movement in nature— and take comfort in the fact that the world is constantly changing and adapting just like you are. Form stronger relationships with your family, your neighbors, and your community. Tell stories, live, laugh, and love the world around you. Look for life in your surroundings when times get rough. Mosses on rocks, bugs on pavement, small mushrooms, vibrant leaves. . . Appreciation and reflection are powerful tools when the future looks bleak, so remind yourself of the things that make you feel gratitude. Leave a positive impact on the people you meet, and use your skills to join companies or projects you believe will benefit the world.

Here's to hoping you've lived without regrets and gained wisdom along with age. You've got this!

Love, Amelia



Dear Third-grade Jordan,

How are you? It's been far too long since I've last seen you. My memory of my past is foggy with no clear remembrance of what my life used to be, and that's my issue. Try things that truly interest you. Don't spend all your time on meaningless stuff that has no impact on the future. For example, the horrible amount of games you played. Enjoy your time as a kid, and make moments you will remember. Don't be embarrassed to do anything, and be in the moment, take a look around you, and realize who you are as a person. Your feelings, morals, and the people who you surround yourself with, and ask yourself. Are they good people?

A problem you will face is changing your school. I know it's challenging to move, but it's a chance for you to learn new things. It doesn't end there though, you will be moving to a different city in a few months. Away from the scorching 100-degree desert valley, and towards LA, the land where your dreams come true, or so they say. It's nice in LA if you don't mind the constant homelessness issue and the lack of nature spaces they have here. It's barren of anything green. Don't mind that though, you still have so much in life ahead of you, so start something. Take action on your life. Make it meaningful and enjoyable, and don't be lazy. Don't spend your free time playing video games all day. Do something you love, something that you're proud to say you did. Keep on learning the piano, play a sport, and stay with it. You have so much time to think, but if you don't start, that time goes by instantly. I watched a YouTuber named Ruff, and I can't tell you how much of an impact he had on my life.

If I hadn't discovered him, I would've been home playing games instead of studying for the test the next day. So don't waste your time. Especially when you're young, time is so precious, and if you have any dreams of becoming an adult and being able to do anything you want to. I want you to first, take those thoughts, then get rid of them

High school life is pretty miserable. Not horrible, but bad. The time you have now is something so valuable to others. Anyone older than you wish programs hey could be you, so don't take the time you have for granted. Again, work on yourself. Learn how to not procrastinate. That skill is vital to getting good grades in school. Focus, especially when it comes to extracurriculars and grades. Be that one kid that your parents always bring up to family friends, and be that one kid who had A's all of middle school.

Also, search up Pinterest. It's going to save your life. You can learn about room designs, clothing, and anything else.

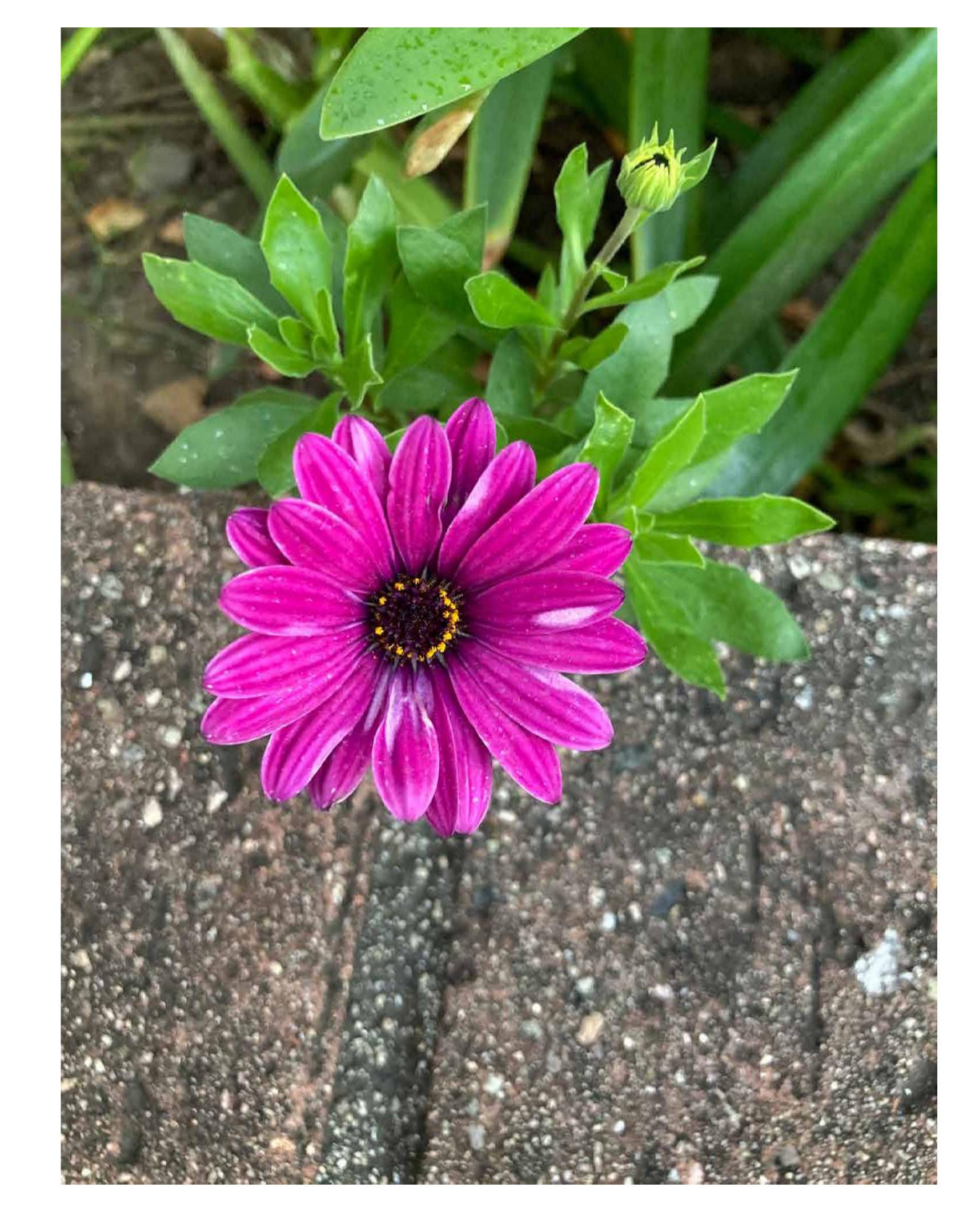
Okay, now talking about nature, it's one of the most beautiful things you will soon admire. When you can, just take a moment while you're outside to take in your environment. Breathe in the freshness in the air, the chirps of the birds, and the wind on your skin. I never really knew how breathtaking nature could be. Anywhere in life, you're able to pause for a second and enjoy the environment. Getting closer to nature is lovely, and has helped me learn how to love the environment and treat it with respect. I wish someone had taught me how to enjoy nature when I was younger.

I feel as though I haven't started enjoying nature early enough to find out all the intricacies and beauties of it, but now is never too late. I can't wait to find out more about the environment that constantly surrounds us because the more I understand the world around us, the more safe I feel. Nature's beauty gives a feeling of awe and comfort. I wish I could spend my life lying in a flower field with someone I love so dearly, but LA has nothing even close to that. Unless your flower field is a polluted street with car horns as a background.

That's what programs for habitat restoration and nature connection are for, to connect with the natural life around you. I joined a program called Baldwin Hills Greenhouse just for college apps, but the more I learn and interact with the people there, the more I am learning and loving about nature. I haven't fully understood what nature is yet, but I'm glad to have been exposed to some great people connected to it.

Just to conclude, enjoy your life, work hard, and observe nature because, in the end, it'll all pay off.

Sincerely, Jordan



Dear 3rd-grade Katie,

Hi! It's your 17-year-old self-writing to you. You are probably at home watching Disney Channel and not outside in nature like you should be. Enjoy it while you can. Unfortunately, Disney Channel is not the same anymore. However, we still rewatch the old stuff, like Wizards, Austin & Ally, and Tinkerbell. You know that feeling you get watching the Tinkerbell movies, seeing the beautiful trees, plants, and animals that sparkle? You now feel that in your everyday life. The magic you thought was only in those movies is all around you. In all the trees, in the droplets of water that fall on spider webs, in the ocean filled with so many creatures, it feels like a different planet.

Speaking of the ocean, you will be moving to Tutuila pretty soon. Life there is pretty tough, but your experiences make all the hardship worth it. Just warning you, there is no internet on the island. I know that sounds terrifying; you can't watch the Tinkerbell movies anymore. But you'll get plenty of chances to connect with nature outside. You still spend a lot of time at the beach, but soon, you'll swim in the water, snorkel through the coral, and even catch lobster. There's also no such thing as driving to the beach. You're either going to be hiking or walking. But these experiences created your love for nature. This seems unbelievable, I know, but soon, this will be a reality, and what seems crazy will just be your new normal.

Eventually, you move back to LA to the same house and district. You will be blessed with the most amazing dog in the world, Potato. Potato has some health problems, and it's not always easy, but it's always worth it. We go on nature walks together, which helps us both. He gets to smell new areas and get his energy out, while I get to be more present and focused.

This brings us to now. I wish I could tell you your biggest fears didn't come true, but they did. We got in a car accident. A bad one too. We lost a lot of people. We also got stuck in the elevator. Yeah, those six years you took the stairs and refused to take the elevator because you were so scared of getting stuck didn't prevent anything. Although, it prepared you for all the hiking we did in Tutuila.

On the topic of hiking, I know Dad would always make you hike up the Baldwin Hills scenic overlook in exchange for Baskin Robbins. I remember how much you hated it. Now you've grown to love it. You even have an internship at a program called Greenhouse at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook. Overall, life is great.

I'm sure reading this makes you feel scared. Experiencing all this was scary. The thing that has always given me comfort during this time was nature. Along with all the scientific aspects of nature helping with depression, anxiety, and overall well-being, it also has helped you connect with yourself and the world around you in ways I don't think you could fathom at your age. Connecting with nature gives me a sense of purpose, like I'm a part of something bigger than myself. It's like my life, thoughts, and actions aren't just affecting me; I'm a part of an ecosystem that needs all the help it can get to thrive. Having this perspective has also made the scary experiences I've described seem minimal when thinking about the planet and the universe. It keeps me grounded, and no matter what's going on in my life, connecting with nature fills me with gratitude like nothing else can. Hopefully, after reading this, you are inspired to go outside more and watch less Disney Channel. However, life is about balance, so don't give it up completely. I hope you remember that everything happens for a reason, and it will all work itself out. You're going to be ok.:)

ACTION: Learning

Dear 3rd grade Me (aka Angela),

Elementary school has many rough patches along the way but somehow you make it through to middle school, then to high school, and eventually through college. I'm sure all you care about right now is Barbie dolls, Hello Kitty, and all the other girly things I was into long ago. The biggest struggle for you right now may be making friends, but that's ok because along the way we eventually find our people, genuine friendships. All you've known so far is playing with Barbie dolls, reading, watching TV, and playing outside in your backyard either by yourself or with your siblings. Soon you discover a not-so-friendly-looking creature that will become a never-ending passion once you hit fifth grade.

Can you guess what it is?

Fine, I'll tell you.

You've seen your older brother always catching all the creepy crawlers from your front and backyard since you can remember. They aren't your favorite things in the world yet, they may even scare yo,u but I promise that will all change, as did many other things that we liked. You'll start to slowly build a relationship with spiders starting with your fifth grade science fair. From there, you begin to realize that what had you thinking that your brother was a weirdo wasn't that weird and that spiders weren't so scary after all. No, they become interesting, that you memorize all the facts you added to your spider science fair board and you keep repeating them for years until you get into high school. There you join an outdoor program and there was just one question that they happened to ask before being accepted into the program that probably developed and grew your passion for spiders even more than before: "If you encountered a spider during habit restoration, what would you do," and you said you would hug it if you could!

It's insane to think that it would lead you to being the spooky weird spider spider-loving nerd that you are super proud to be. Even though you spent almost all your childhood hiking at Kenneth Hahn, spending time at the beach, and playing outside in our front/backyard, we never realized or appreciated just how much there was to the outdoors. Trust me, the outdoors is going to be your favorite place to be. The Greenhouse program opens your mind to more spider knowledge because boy your facts from fifth grade weren't doing much for you anymore.

Not only do you learn more about spiders but you learn so much more about nature in general. You learn about birds, plants, and other animals. I mean you probably only know about a blue jay, (it's actually called a California scrub-jay, by the way), a pigeon, and possibly about bald eagles/hawks. Now you pretty much know most of your common backyard birds! You even know all of your native plants at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook. So impressive, I know. Anyways you'll love it out there, you'll discover so many things in the outdoors, you'll have your first ever camping experience through this program, and you'll experience snow for the first time in the desert! Can't wait for you to experience all this magic that nature has shown me.

Also, one more thing you'll learn to appreciate and realize when you get older is that nature never judges you for who you are and how you present yourself to the world. All the creepy crawlies that everyone considers scary are just being themselves without a care in the world and you'll soon learn to live that way. Anyways, trust me you'll be calling yourself Tarangela one day! Get it? Tarantula plus Angela equals Tarangela! Hahaha anyways enjoy your Barbies soon you'll trade them for spiders!

Sincerely,

Spider nerd







ACTION: Connection

Dear 35-year-old Arely,

I am writing to you hoping that my passion and relationship with nature have evolved greatly. I hope that I get to further explore the local green spaces in Los Angeles and discover what they have to offer me. I want to believe that I will continue to enjoy snow days with my nieces and show them new cool nature facts I learn throughout the years. I want to believe that I will finally get to hike in ten different state parks in California and maybe even evolve to parks out of the comforts of California. I dream that I will have more expertise in identifying fungi! I would love to have found a passion for backpacking with my partner or even on my own if I become brave enough.

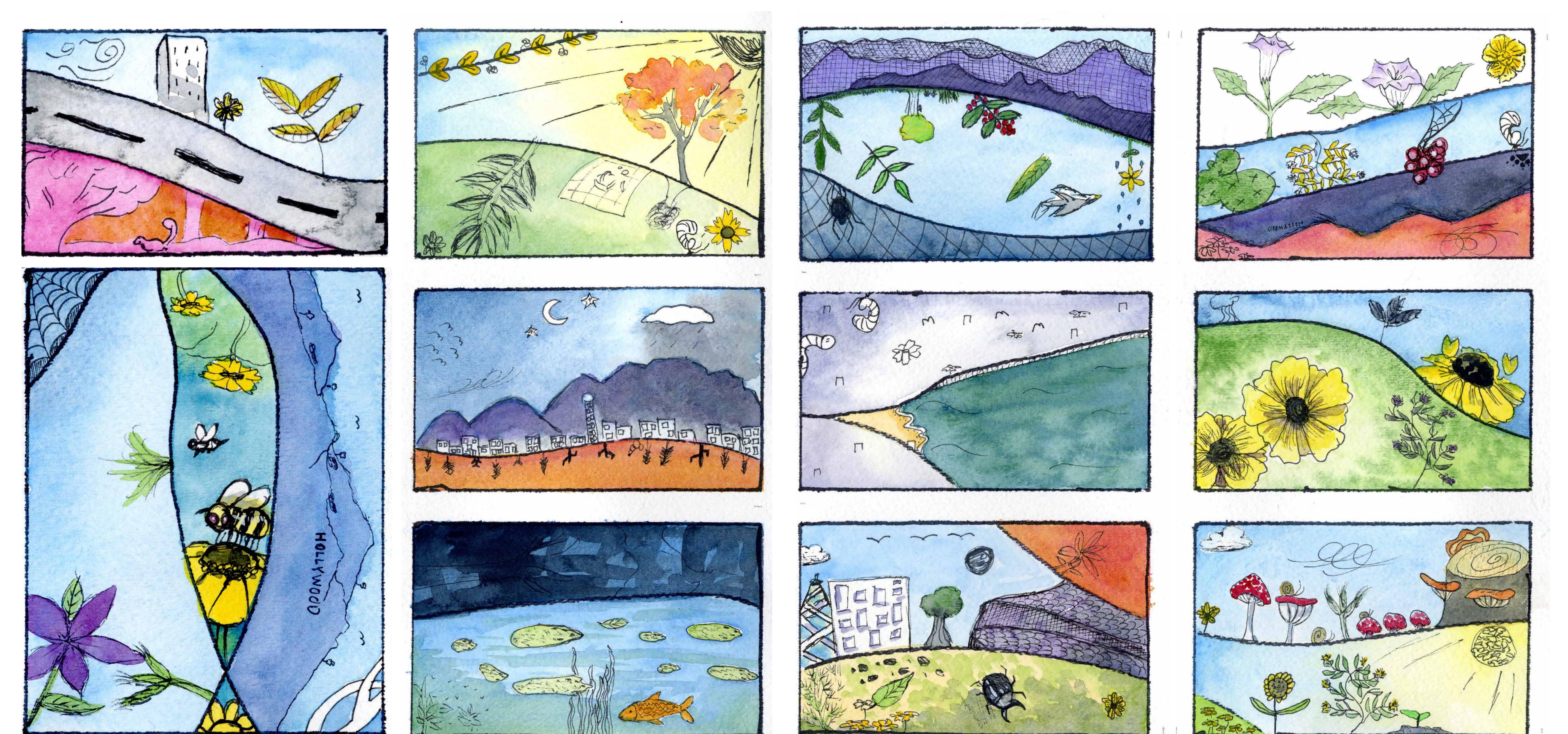
I hope that I finally get a certification in wilderness first aid. I dream that by the age of 35, I will have shown how much my relationship with nature means to me and inspire my nieces to have a relationship with nature of their own. I hope that I become more experienced with camping. I want to continue to inspire young and old generations to care for and love nature; nature works so hard to be beautiful and help us survive every day. I picture myself still working at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook, taking photos of baby native plants growing out of the soil and admiring the insects crawling on the leaves of the sages, and I still feel that sense of happiness when I take a moment to stop to look up at all the work I put into making the place a space of love.

I want to think that in the future, I get to relax more and do more things that I find fun or relaxing. I hope I become better at crocheting and doing all sorts of crochet projects! I want to picture myself sitting near a window with my nose stuck in a good book and drinking good coffee or sitting outside with my notebook and writing up new stories inspired by nature. I hope that I finally have the confidence to finish that writing project that I have been working on for so many years. I also hope that it encourages me to start a new writing project and reignite my passion for writing again.

I want to believe that I finally get to grow my own little native plant garden and watch the wild-life enjoy the efforts of the love I put into it. I hope that I finally figure out what nature tattoo I will get, or if I have already got one, I hope I love it. I want to believe that I will have become more confident in sharing my relationship with nature with those who are eager to have a connection of their own. I hope I have gotten better at answering interview questions about the passion I have for my job in front of a camera. My overall dream is to continue to grow my love for plants, fungi, andwildlife as I get older. I hope I can look back to when I first started that connection with nature and be proud of myself. I hope I can look back to this letter and say, "Well, at least half of this has come true."

Look forward to reading this in 8 years,

Arely



Dear 35-year-old Ashley,

I know life may be hard and scary thinking the world will end before you're even 35. Kinda childish if you think about it but we made it and we had a long and hard journey through the way. Hopefully we still have our dream house in the middle of the forest that we have been dreaming about since 5th grade. And you should remember the Greenhouse Program, if not, then let me fill you in on that.

In the beginning of 9th grade a program we already were in introduced the Greenhouse Program where we could learn and show others in the community about plants and nature. We got paid so of course little you wanted in on that. You had an option and of course you chose the intern position not knowing how stressful and a lot of work it was. Anyways, it is fun except you're a really big shy person and you don't talk to anyone. But moving forward, I'm writing this letter to you from your 14 year old self on 1-9-24 to see how much the

Greenhouse Program has changed or influenced you. But I would say this program gave you the opportunity to experience how to work before you actually have to work a real job. Other than that, this program gave you an opportunity to go out and plant, write, get paid, do something for others, and it's a really fun experience. I do hope you bring your child here. You learn a lot, especially you get to cherish these moments of enjoying work before getting older. But after my experience, it's good for other kids to enjoy this program. I know for sure my future kids would let her kids have their own experience at the greenhouse just like I did, so they could enjoy nature and understand things about plants and why we admire the animals that fly in the sky, the animals that love to hop around, and the animals that love to create their home on plants.

Dear 35-year-old Jonathan,

Where do I even start? First of all, happy 35th birthday! As your 18-year-old self, I can't even imagine what life will be like and what you'll have hopefully accomplished by then. Right now, I'm buried in the chaos of senior year and college applications, which I'm sure you'll have been all too happy to forget.

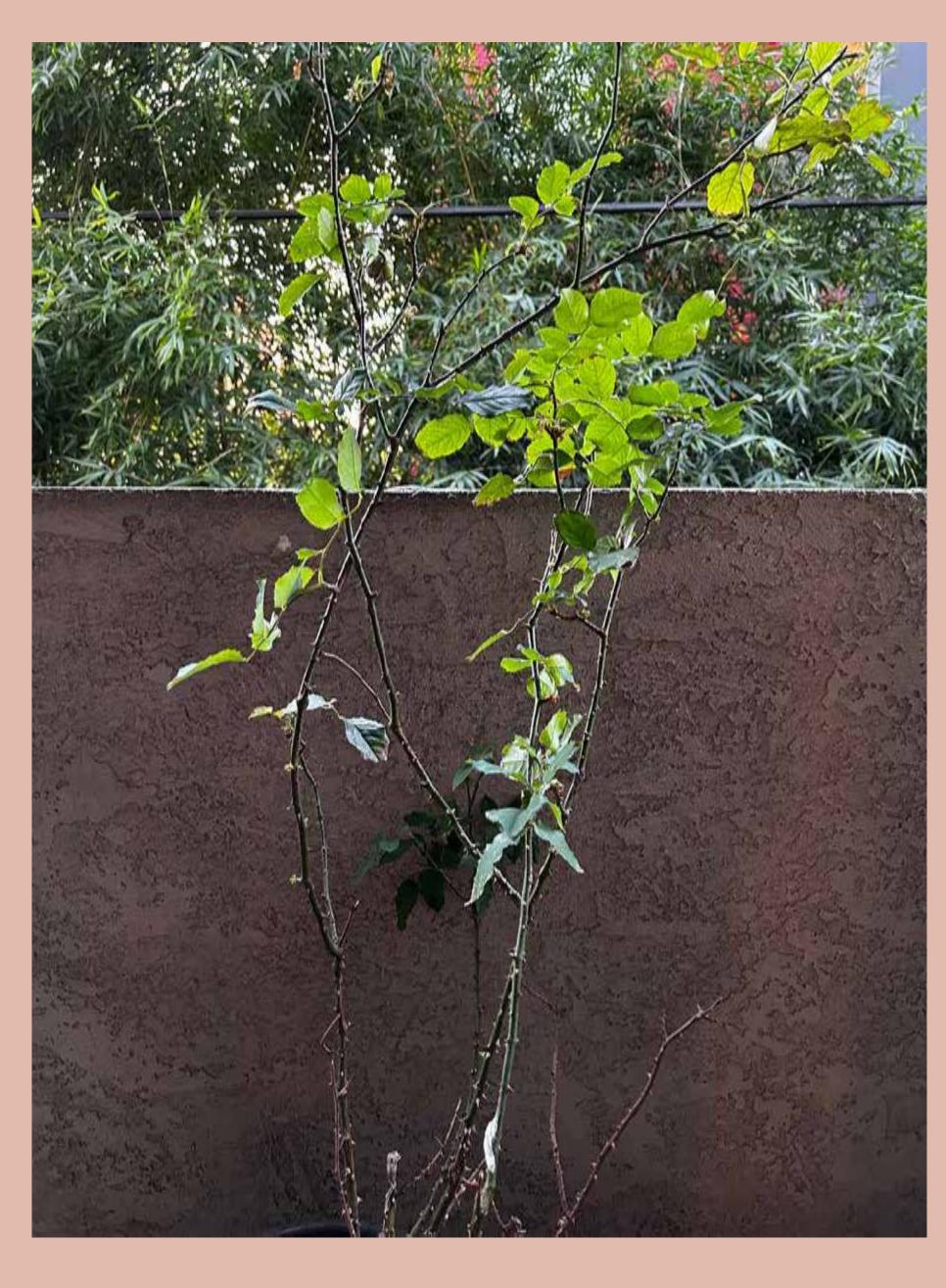
But anyway, 16 years from now in 2040, here's what I hope:

I hope that you're content, wherever you're at. Anxious over where I'll go to college and how my senior year will finish, I know right now it's hard for me to think too far ahead in terms of where I want to go and what I want to do. But whatever you're doing, I hope you read this with a smile on your face, knowing that you did everything in your power to realize your career and life dreams. I expect that you continued to pursue your near lifelong goal of going into sports medicine, and achieved your dream job of being the team doctor for the Dodgers. But even if your dreams and paths have changed from your idealistic teenage self, I trust and know that you made the right decision.

But at the same time, I hope that your career ambitions didn't detract from what really matters, your day-to-day







joy and appreciation for life. Because who cares what you do if you'll be perpetually unhappy or stressed? Learn to find joy — in the ordinary moments and in the big moments — and cherish what you have. And hopefully, you've found this through your love for nature, which I hope is still a big part of your life. I trust that these many years later, you've finally revived your love — and found the time — to go hiking. And if you haven't, go strap on your hiking boots, grab your bag, and just head to any mountain — any trail. Remember how it feels? When you, your grandfather, and brother trekked up the peaks of the Santa Monica Mountains or Mount Baldy — the summer breeze, the amazing people you met along the trail, and the joy of spending time outdoors with your family. I know it's been hard for me recently, and probably for you too, to find the time to go trekking up trails like I used to and even spend enough time in nature, but there's still plenty of time to go climb that mountain you always wanted to hike or even just spend more time in green spaces out in the city. Your grandfather, or I guess our grandfather, taught us so much about nature, as did the Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program (remember that?), so I hope you'll still be interacting with the outdoors on a daily basis, just like when I used to go on these hikes. And one day, I hope you can play that same role to your kids that our grandfather did for us. Taking them on hikes and teaching them about all of the amazing things there are to learn about nature — the animals, the plants, just how enriching it feels to be in the outdoors — trust me, these are unforgettable lessons, and it's now your job to pay those lessons forward.

And regardless of where you're at right now, I know — and trust — that everything will have fallen into place. We can only control what we can control, so don't be too disappointed if things don't go your way. Life is supposed to be a challenge and through those moments, excruciating and beautiful, we learn the most about ourselves and how we can help ourselves and others. I know you might be missing your youth (or maybe everything is already great as it is?), but there's still a lot of time left to do what you want and live a fulfilling life. Just know, it's never too late to start. You got this!

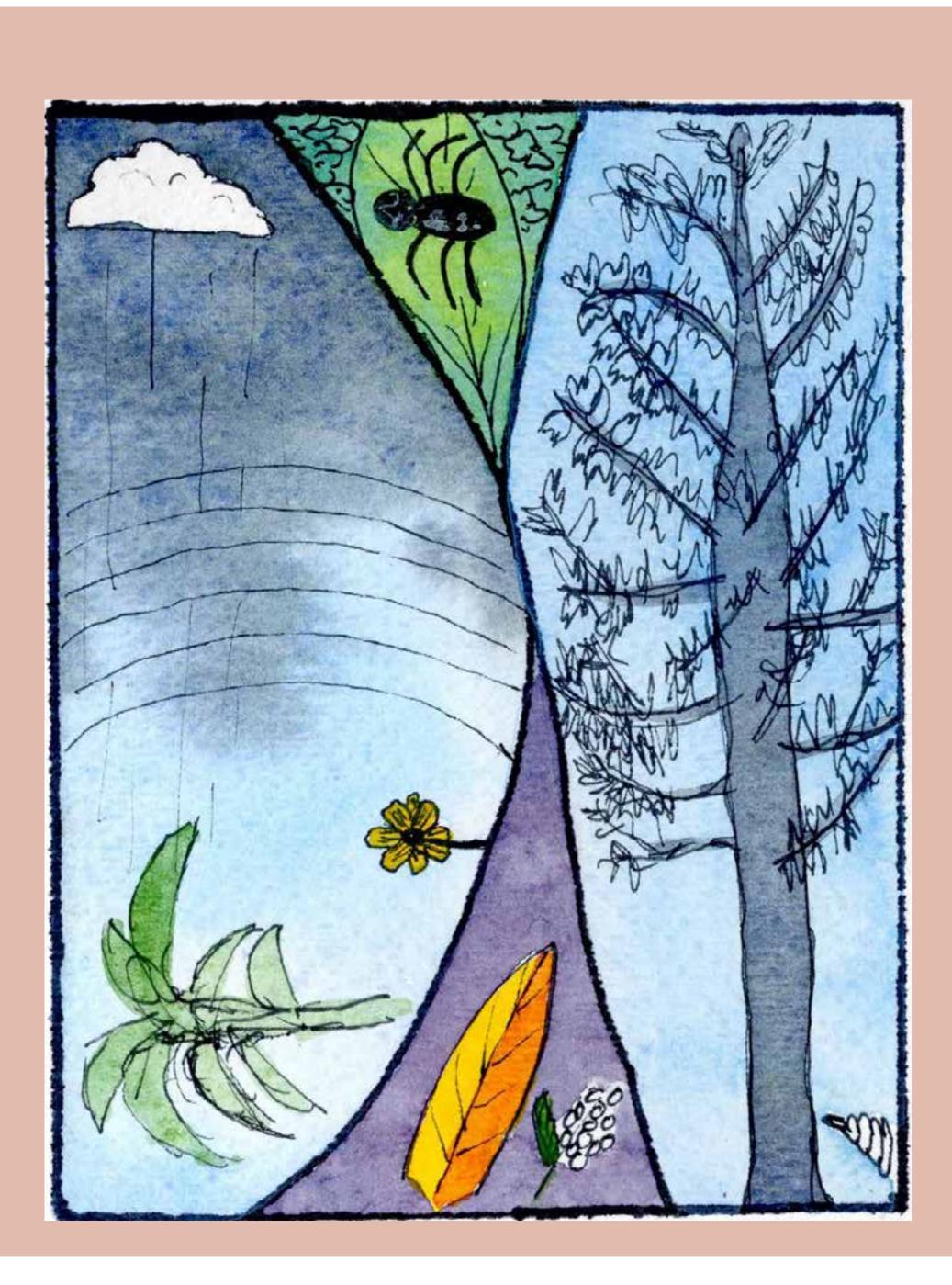
Best wishes, 18-year-old Jonathan

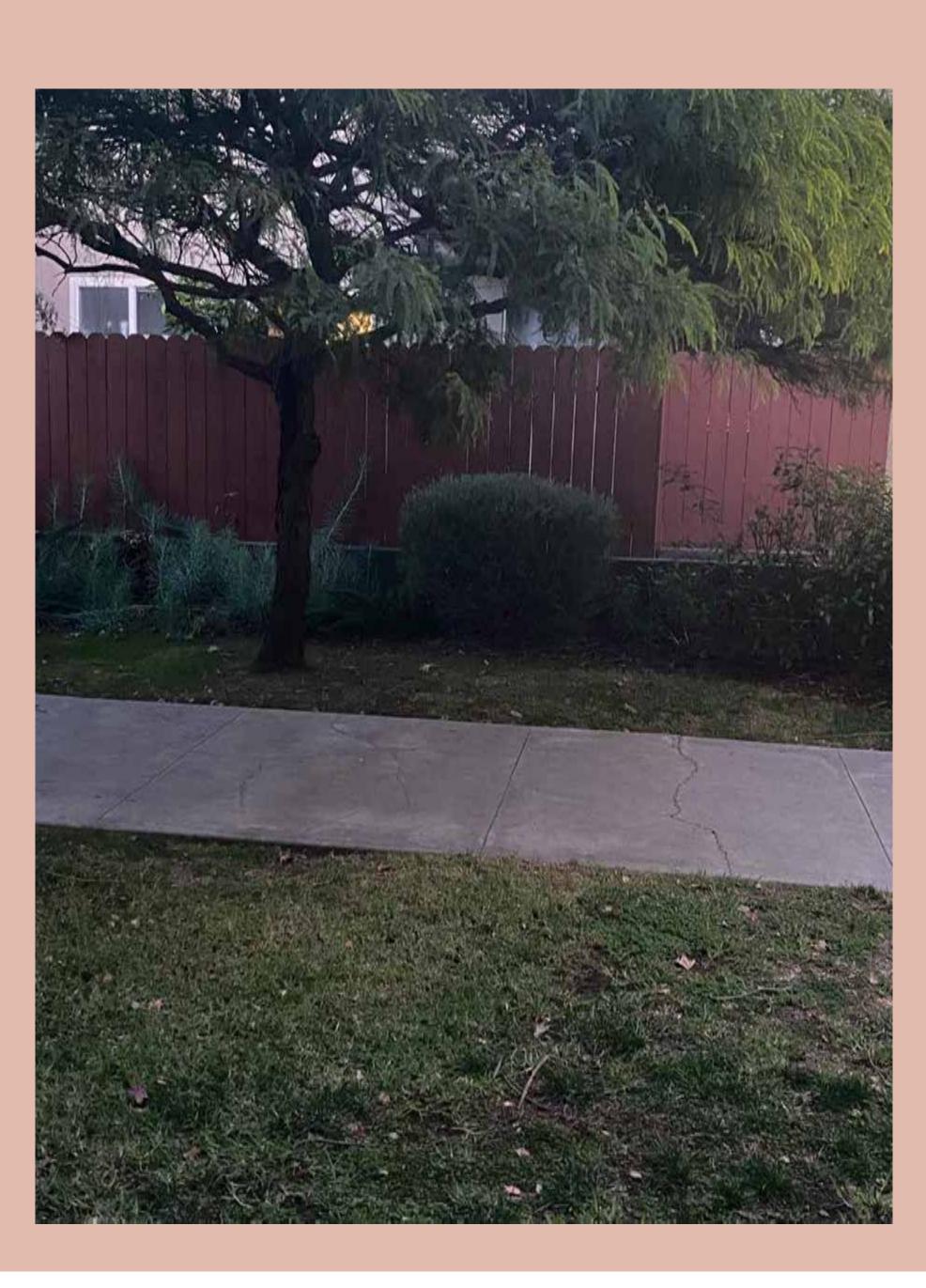
Dear 35-year-old Haifa,

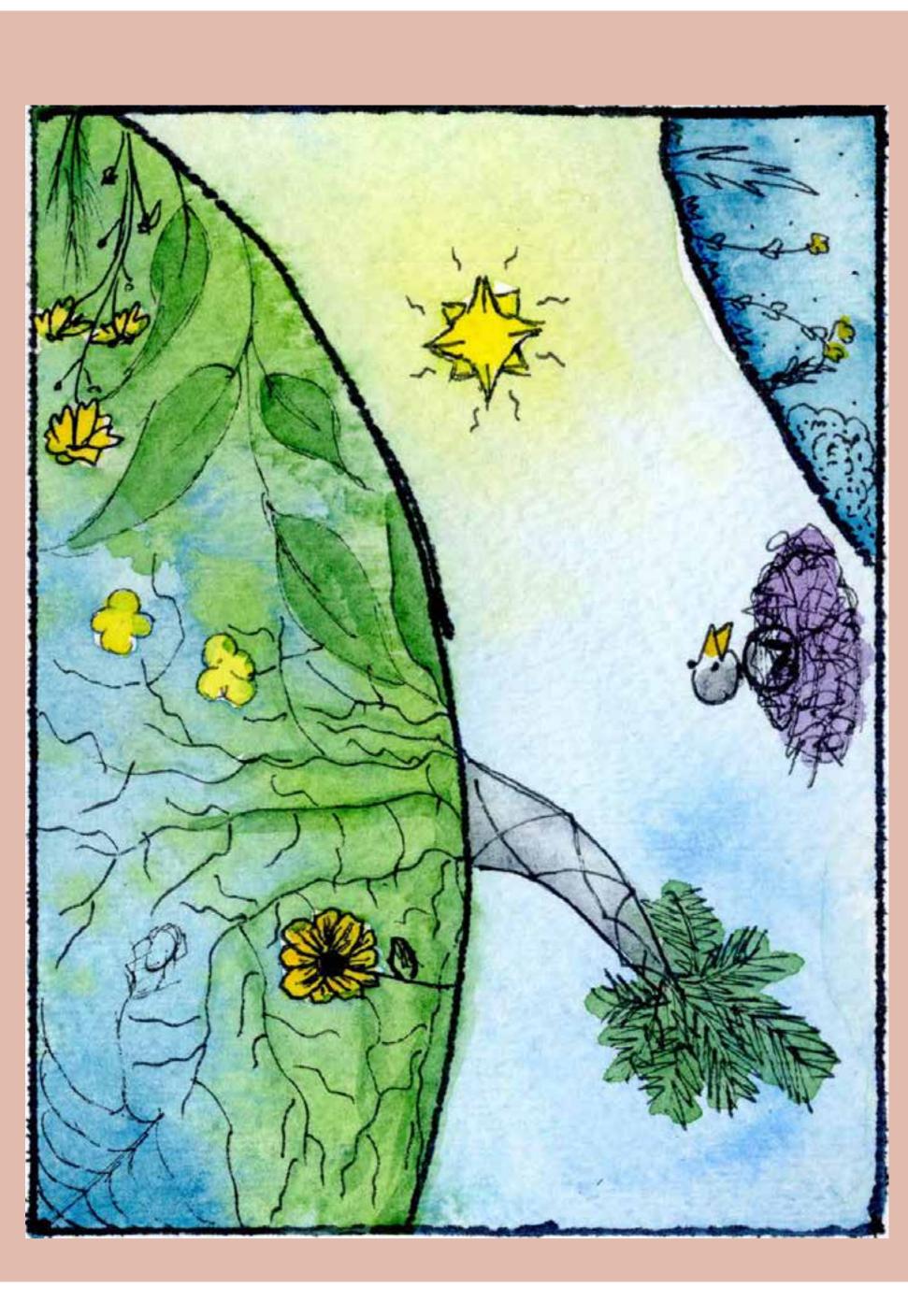
I hope by this time you have accumulated enough scientific knowledge to expand on your connection with nature and the world. By traveling to the highest mountains and the farthest oceans, I hope you have seen breathtaking views and contributed to groundbreaking research. I'm assuming that because I love fungi now, you have been able to study different species and maybe even discovered a new one that has really cool adaptations that can be utilized for medicine or fighting against climate change. Hopefully, you are licensed for diving by now so you can conquer your fears and explore the ocean. As you have gained more experiences, I hope the relationship that exists with nature is one that is filled with intricacies, discoveries, and most importantly one that pushes your growth. Beyond all that you are currently a scientist. I hope that you have turned into the best version of yourself despite all the challenges I am sure life has presented to you. Make sure to take care of yourself so you can continuously make an impact, because by now I'm sure you know that small actions can manifest into the biggest consequences.

When life gets too hard, find joy in the solitude you always have when you get to explore nature on your own. Climb a tree or swim in a lake. There is beauty all around you from the smallest ants to the multitude of stars that fill the sky. Make art that is reflective of the gratitude you feel for nature, curiosity, and wonder that anchors you to the world of science. Push for innovation and never forget that in the same way, humans have greatly contributed to the devastating effects of climate change, there is indestructible power rooted in collective effort that can protect the earth.

That being said, I hope that you have found a strong community that is as passionate and multifaceted as you are. When you feel hopeless in fighting for lasting change and against the systematic exploitation and greed, rely on the shared hope between you and your community. That is, if you haven't already. I'm assuming with the knowledge and my big dreams that I have now, you will surely be close to reaching your goals. And if your goals have changed that's okay

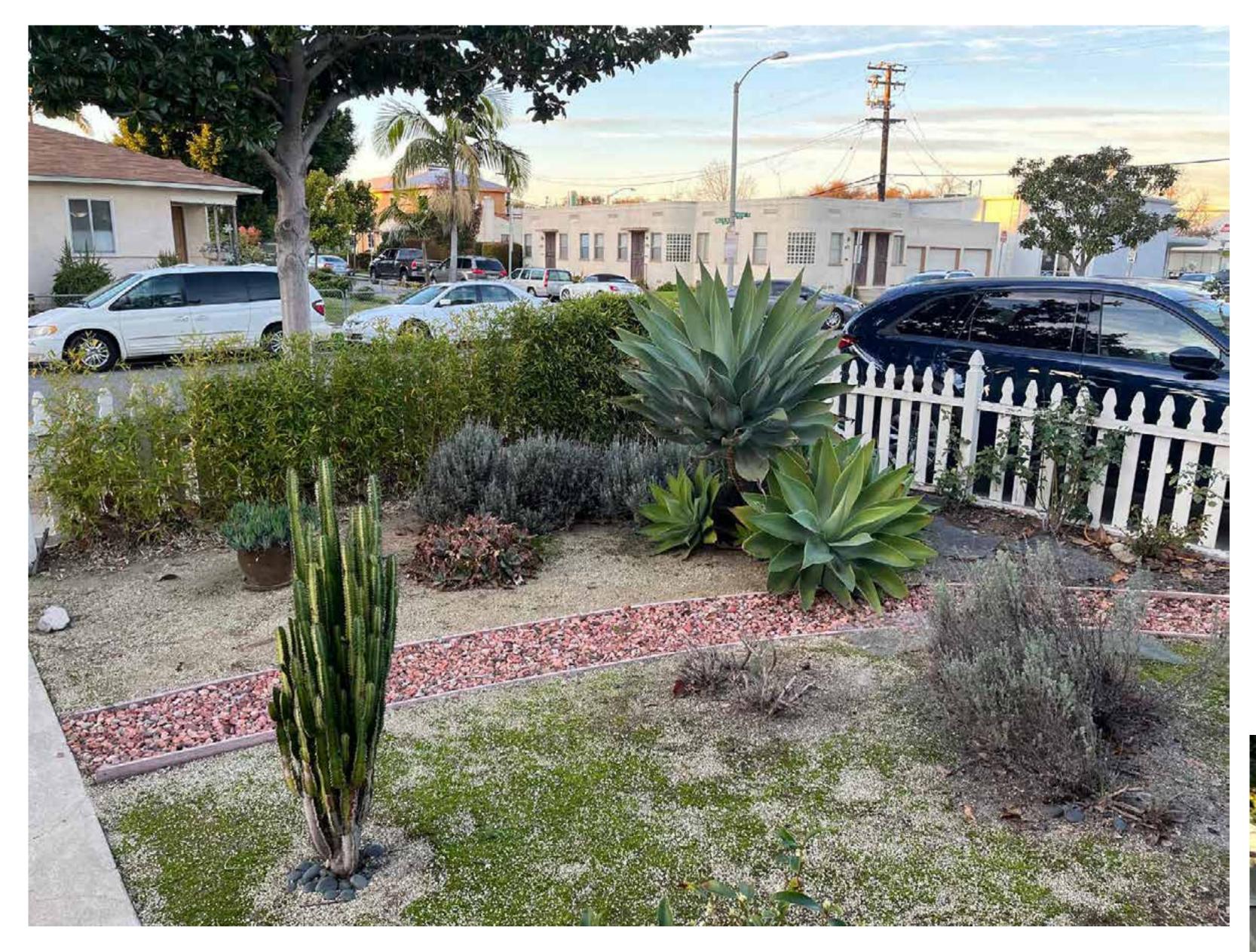


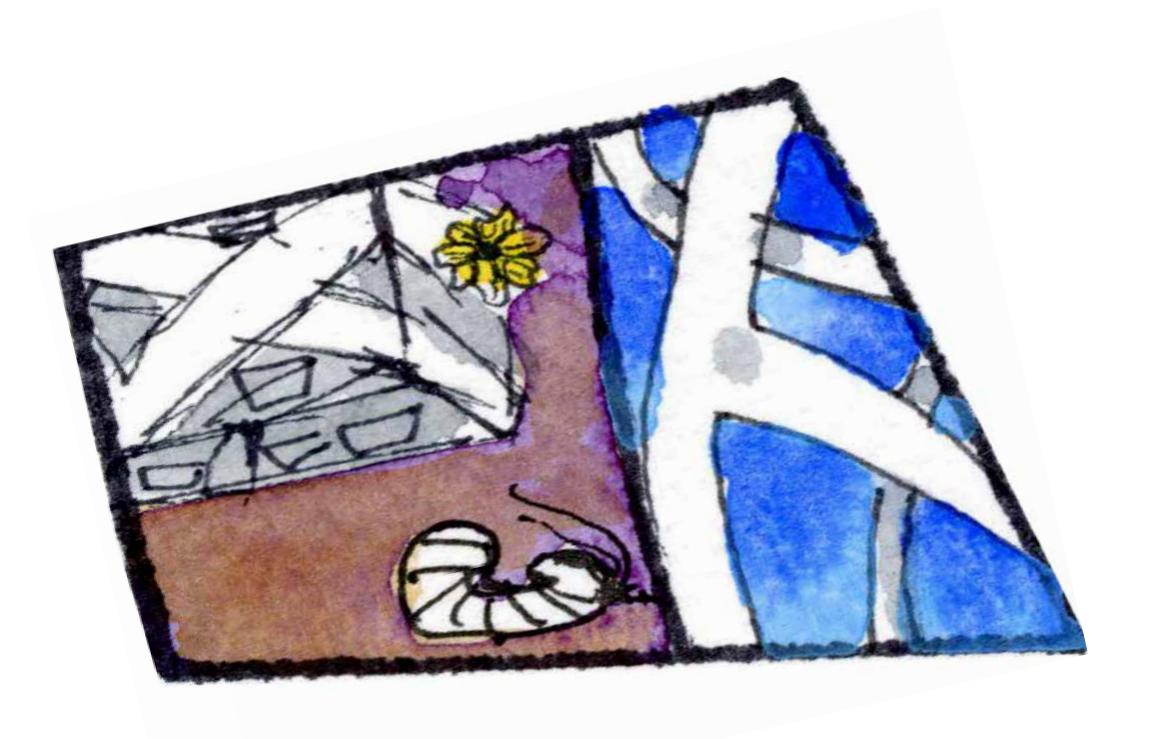




because adapting is what you do best. And no matter where you are in life right now, everything turned out exactly like it was meant to, find comfort and peace in that fact too.

Furthermore, as the embodiment of your love for nature and humanity shapes who you are, I hope you have passed down your scientific and life/academic knowledge whether that is through creating a school, or bringing awareness to underprivileged communities, or a non-profit. Keep reading as many books as you can and engage in intellectual conversations so that your pursuit for knowledge never ends. The ability to gain knowledge, practice, and skill is limitless and so is human growth. That being said, I hope all of your actions are rooted in bettering yourself and challenging the world, so that society too can become better. I know with your passion and consistency, you can transform the lives of those around you even if it is in small ways.







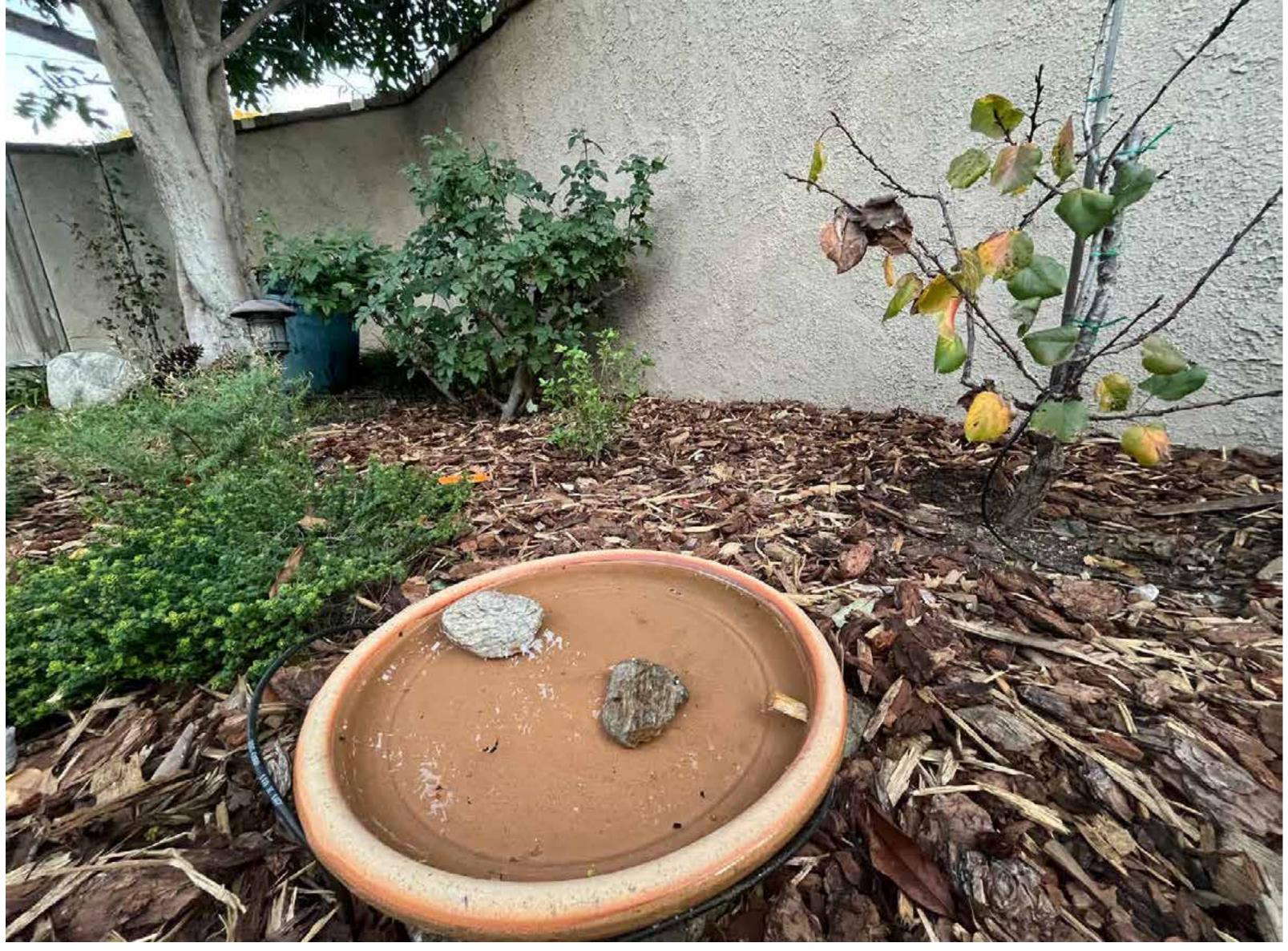












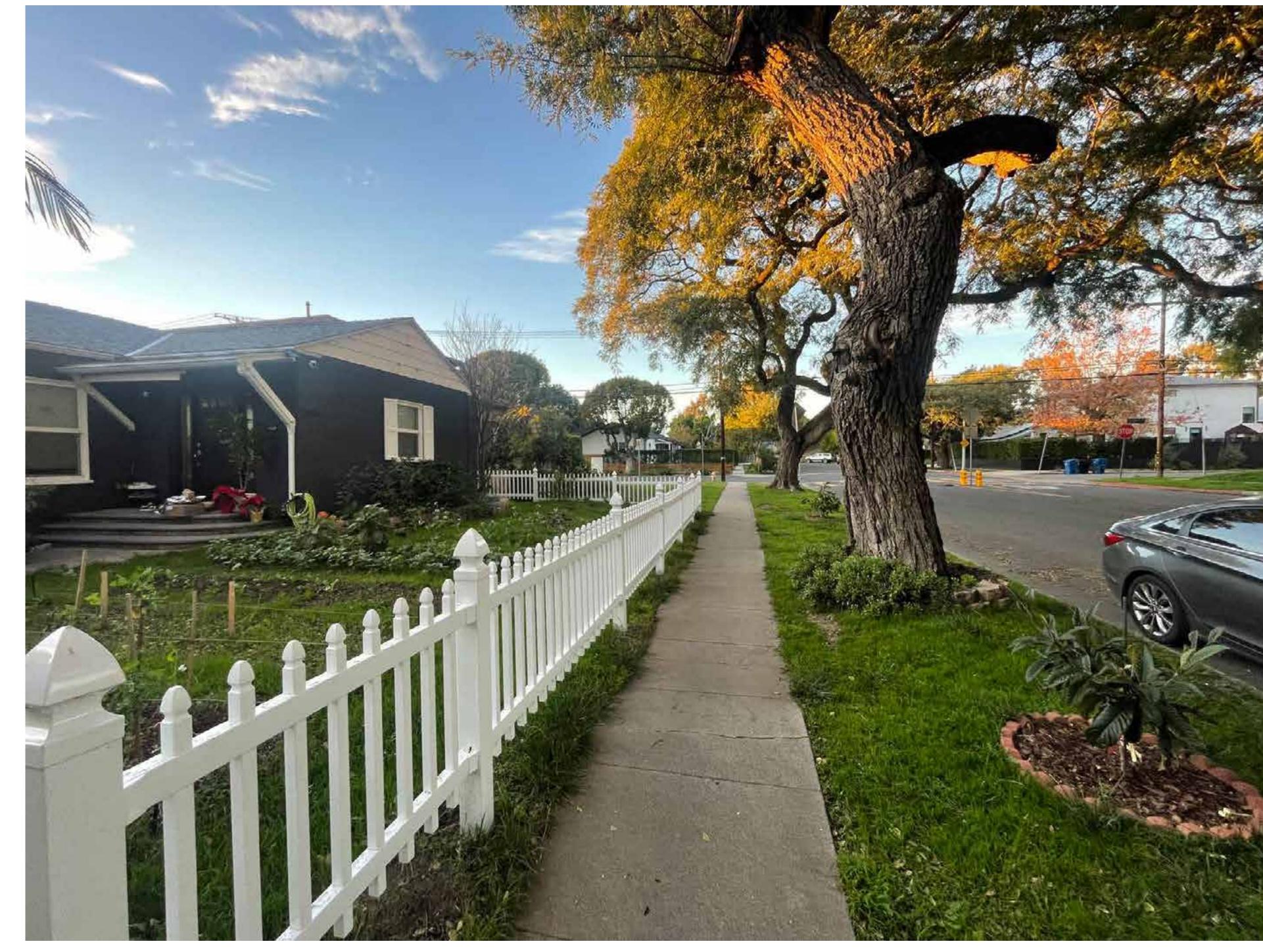


Dear Third-grade Ryan,

I hope this letter finds you amid your childhood adventure, fueled by curiosity and boundless energy. There are a few things I want to share with you, little bro.

Firstly, cherish the moments of being free. Unchained like a bird in the wind. You serve the purpose of learning the basics of the world and having fun. Do what you want and don't let other people tell you otherwise. The world may seem big and confusing, but your ability to see the goodness in every person you meet will serve you well. Take your time growing up and cherish the days of freedom.

Secondly, listen to those who care about you. Your family and friends have your best interests at heart, listen to them. Their advice may often be something you don't want to hear, but their advice comes from experience. Their advice can keep you out of trouble and keep you out of long talks with your parents.



Thirdly, I know those camping trips and those hikes seem hard and tedious. You'll often find yourself counting down the days until you're out of camp and into the "real world" of Wifi and video games, but please cherish those days in the wilderness where there's no responsibilities except your next meal. Camping and hikes seem like a treat nowadays, they come once a blue moon and are often over in a blink of an eye. Camping tells me of the luxury of no responsibilities. Cherish the feeling of fresh air and a world not clouded by the internet, quick pleasure, and the fake world. Nature gives a clear mind on the foggiest days.

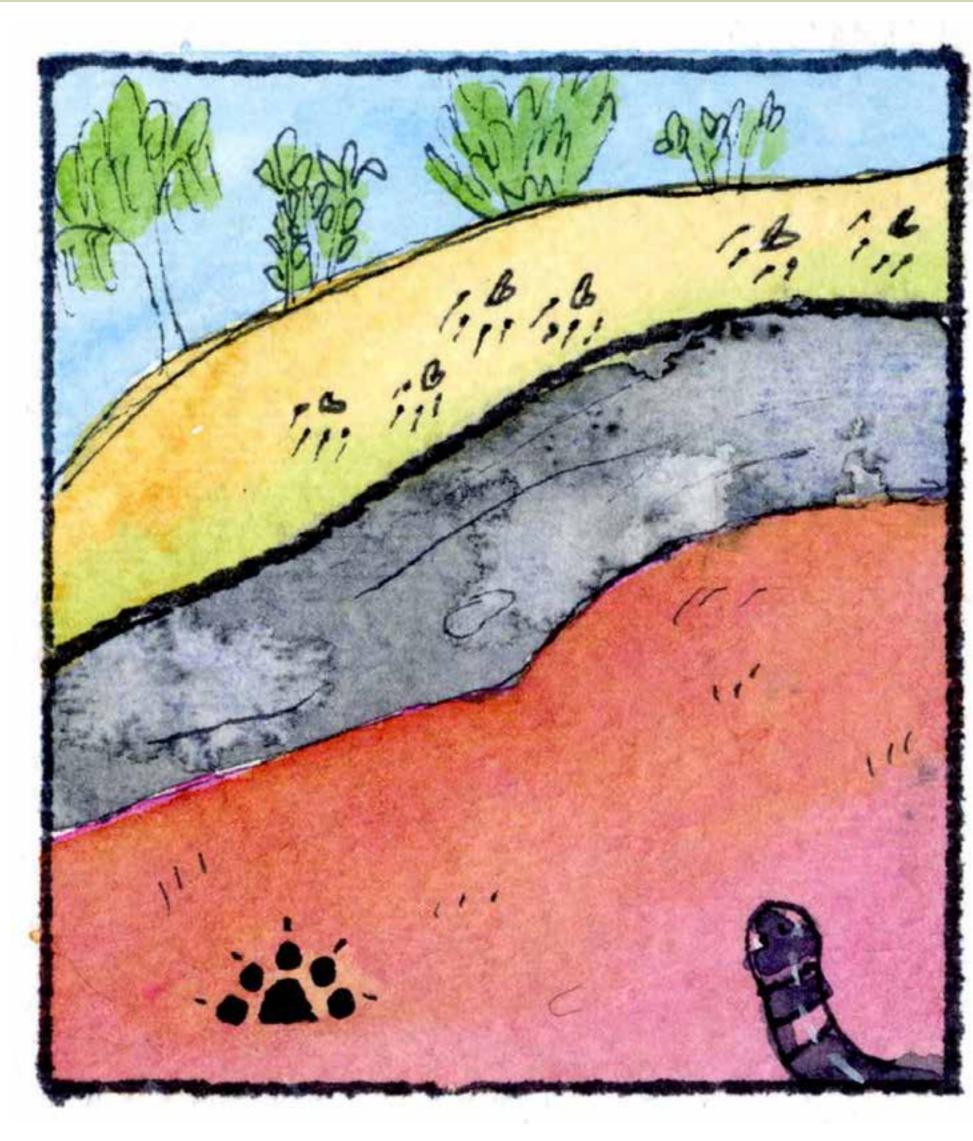
Fourth, take risks and don't fear failure, little guy. Whether it's trying a new hobby, asking that girl out, or facing a challenge. Face it. Don't keep it from holding you back. Mistakes are a part of learning and growing. They don't define you, they redefine you. Learn from your mistakes and you will climb higher than you have ever dreamed.

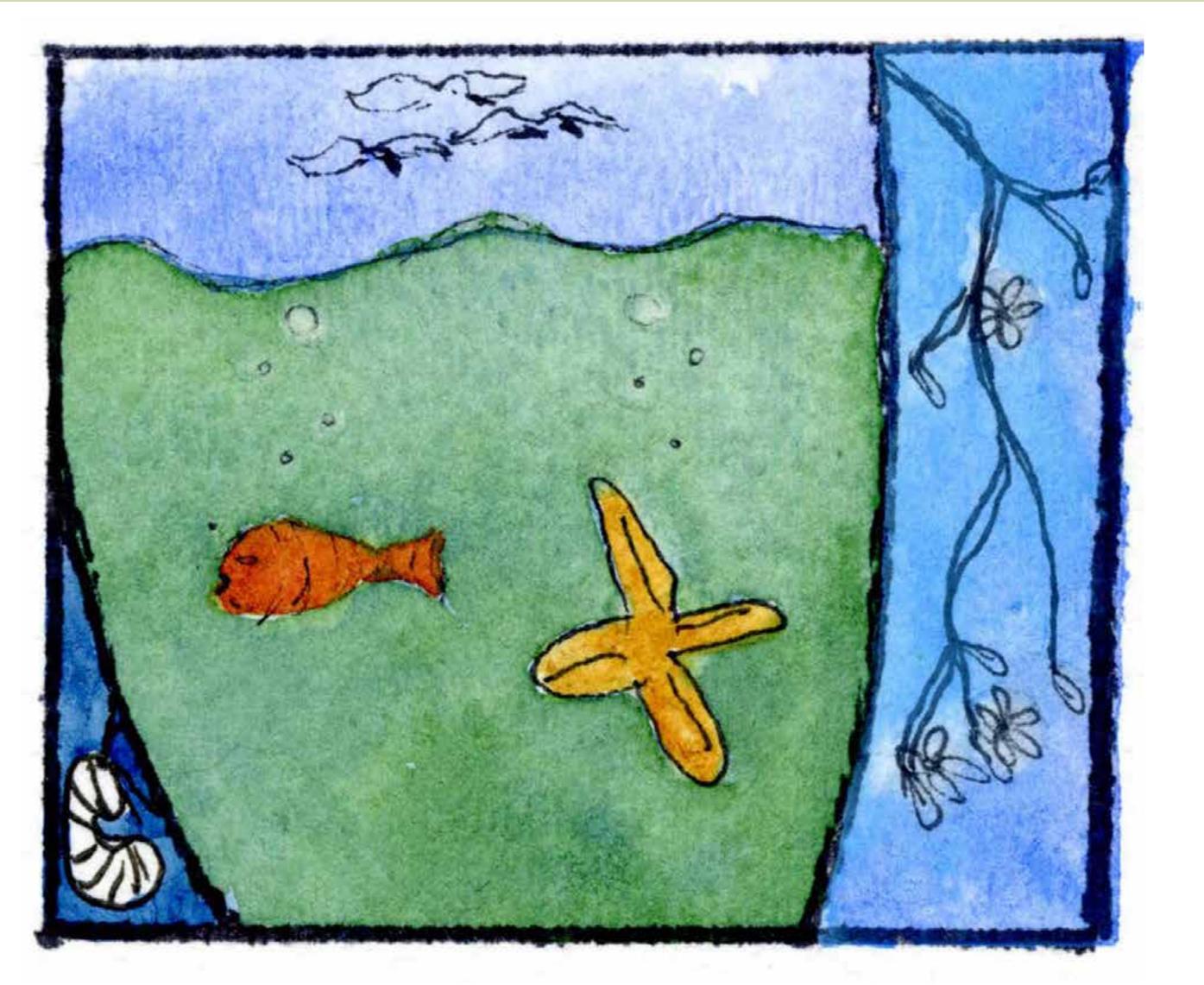
I hope you take these words to heart, little bro. Enjoy your journey through life, embrace the beauty of nature, and never forget the simple joys that surround you every day, and remember you can always retake a class but you can never relive a party.

Reach for the stars, because if you ever fall, you will always have a parent-chute with you.

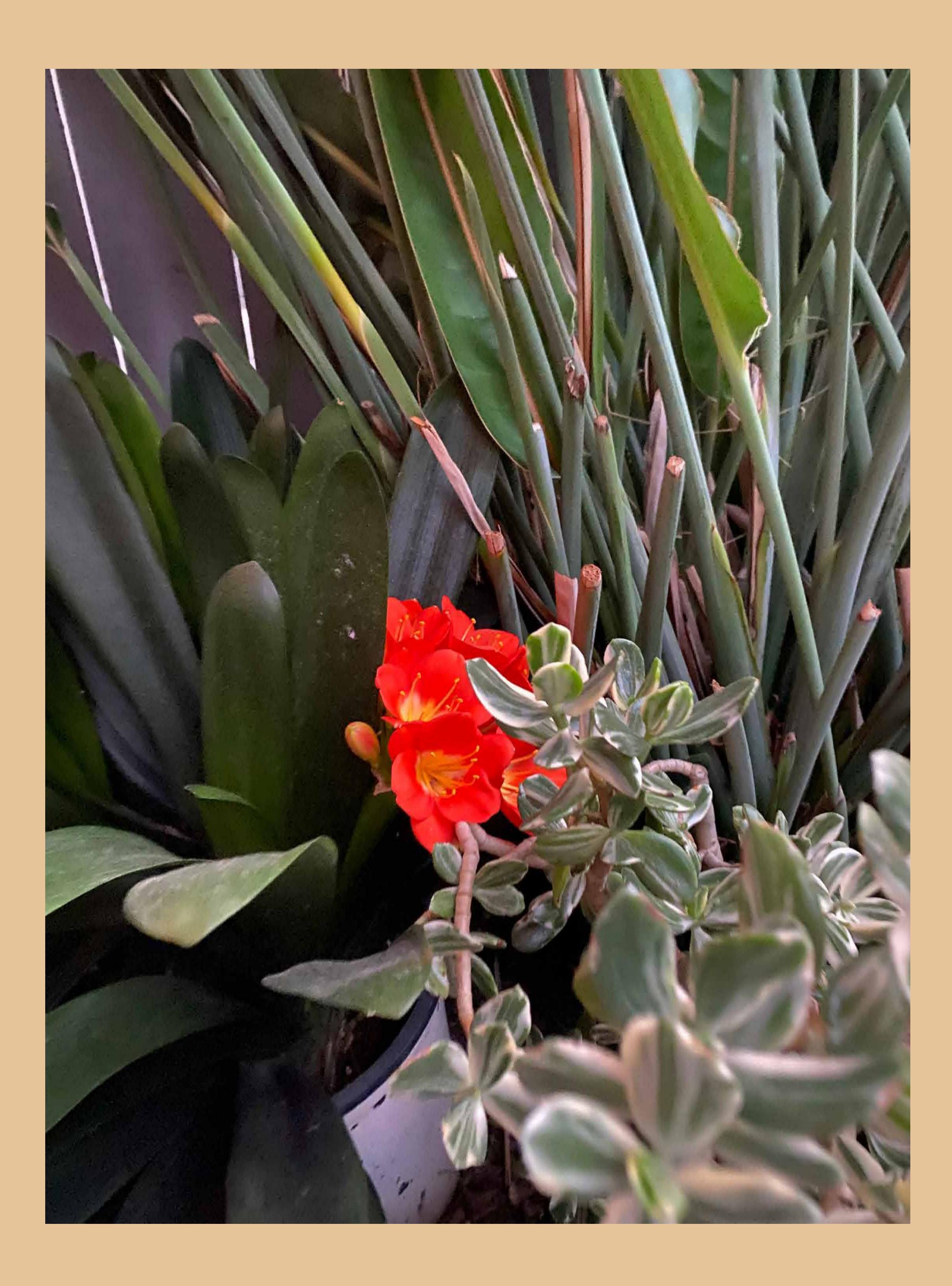
Best regards, Ryan











Dear New-to-LA Person (Bella),

Hi! How are you doing? I heard you recently moved nearby in Los Angeles. I hope your move went well! I wanted to

reach out to help you feel a bit more settled and familiar with the area.

While I'm sure you feel very nervous, I promise that there are so many ways to relax and unwind in nature even while being in a big city like LA. Some locations I absolutely recommend visiting include the Griffith Observatory, Aquarium

of the Pacific, and the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park. These are all amazing places that can help you connect to nature and feel refreshed. There are also a variety of smaller parks and beaches that you can exercise in too. Amazing places to walk, bike, jog, hike, and meditate in nature are all so easy to access in the area. If you're more interested in art, you can always sketch or draw what you see as well as other small nature-related crafts. I, myself, love creating nature-related bookmarks and art with pressed flowers and weeds.

Oh! Birdwatching along Ballona Creek is always an interesting activity to engage in. There are so many different types of birds as well as animals and insects in the creek like the Western Fence lizard or an Orbweaver spider! If you're feeling more adventurous, there are opportunities to go camping, picnicking, and backpacking in more nature-filled zones in LA. You can also keep nature close to you by gardening and weeding in your own backyard or porch! I'll teach you some plants that are native if you ever want to stop by my place too. There is a Greenhouse Program at Baldwin Hills that encourages native plant growth and invasive plant weeding if you are interested in gardening outside of your own home!

Additionally, while foraging is hard to do in the city, it definitely isn't impossible if done safely. With the abundance of beaches nearby there are many water-related ventures that can also be accessed including paddleboarding, kayaking, swimming and even sailing. If you like fishing, that's also available! Along the beach, there are several trash collectors that help the environment through their work. Bat watching, while uncommon, is fairly interesting and not terribly hard to do either, from what I've heard. Some more parks you can explore, albeit a little far, include Topanga State Park and the Bronson Caves.

All of these ideas, places, and activities are easy to access but if you have any questions at all, and I mean ANY questions, feel free to reach out and let me know! I am so excited to meet up with you soon knowing you are close by.

Dear New-to-LA Person,

I hope this letter finds you well. As I am aware, you are new to the area so here are some of my recommendations on connecting to nature here, specifically the La Ballona Creek watershed area. As a resident of the area for 16 years, I am well aware that at first glance, the city looks like a concrete jungle and while this is mostly true, you won't have to walk far to interact with nature. You can find many parks around the area, like Veterans Park, and even some small patches of nature where you can exercise, play games, or meditate. There are also state parks like Kenneth Hahn where you can hike around the hill that the park resides on and also the small ponds near the base of the park. If you walk across the bridge east of Kenneth Hahn and make a small trip through a neighborhood, you can visit the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook. Here, visitors can go on hikes and enjoy views of the city and also the ocean. To help maintain the park, volunteers can sign up for cleanups where they not only clean the litter left but also do nature restoration like weeding plants that harm the ecosystem. You can also expect to see many native plants there as well, like toyon, due to it being a nature reserve.

Outside of parks, there are also many bike paths, most notably, the one that goes along La Ballona Creek which runs by the wetlands and into the ocean. This bike path is for anyone wanting to bike towards the ocean without having to stop at any traffic lights and is a great place for any mode of unpowered transport like roller skating, skateboarding, walking, or running. Although electric bikes are permitted on the path, it is advised that they shouldn't be used due to them being more dangerous and the amount of traffic there usually is especially as you get closer to the ocean.

The Ballona Wetlands is also a place to experience nature in the city. At the wetlands, you can go on walks where you can observe the wildlife and also see what Los Angeles might have looked like if most of the wetlands were still intact. If you go further down the bike path you will reach the Marina Del Rey. At the marina you can kayak, paddle board, or my personal favorite, sail. As you go along the marina, you can dock at Burton Chace Park where you can take a break and play games before setting off again. Although the marina is man-made, you can still see many animals including sea lions, fish, crabs, and seagulls, making a common appearance. If you are in a sailboat or any powered vessel, you can head out into the ocean and experience views from off the coast.

Though it may seem like the La Ballona watershed is only where the La Ballona Wetlands and Creek are, it also extends all the way to the Hollywood and Santa Monica mountains. You can visit the Griffith Observatory, hike up to the Hollywood sign, or any of the other numerous trails up the mountain that lead to amazing views of the city and ocean.

I hope you found some of my suggestions helpful and I am eager to see what places you are visiting in the city!

Dear new neighbor!

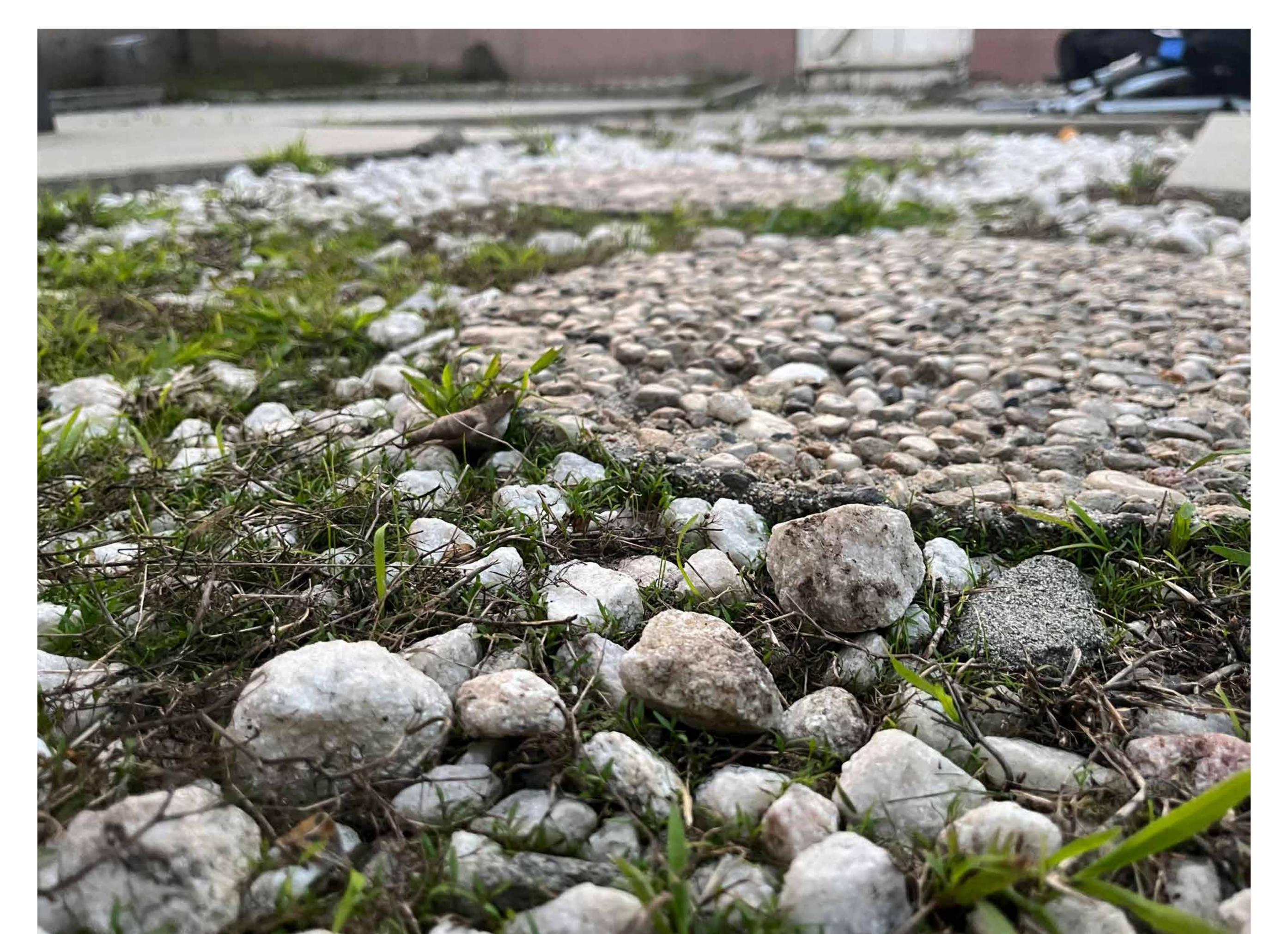
Welcome to LA, I heard that you moved here not too long ago and thought a nice letter could help you feel more at home.

While LA is known for its famous movie landmarks, it's also a city surrounded by nature. I thought that you may want to know of the places around you better and when it comes to the outdoors, I could give you an idea or two of what you can do. To start, the Ballona Creek Watershed is a nine mile long flood protection channel that runs through the cities of Beverly Hills, Culver City, LA and more. The water comes from up north in the Santa Monica Mountains and flows down south to the Baldwins Hills, before emptying into Santa Monica Bay.

Beginning at the Santa Monica Mountains the activities vary from hiking up said mountains to stargazing. If you're more of a hiker and like adventuring through nature, then there are multiple activities for you to do. Some things like hiking, mountain biking, trail running, and more. Perhaps you'd like to come to LA's biggest attraction however, the beaches! You can go fishing, play beach volleyball, and surf through the tides. If you have kids that you'd like to spend time in nature with, there too are opportunities to do activities.

You could take your kids to have a nice lunch, picnicking, or a simple walk even hosting celebrations in mountains with only a permit needed. Maybe you'd like to take things slow and admire all that's around you, things like stargazing and watching the sunset can lighten any sour mood. Perhaps these things may not speak to you. Maybe you'd appreciate truly knowing the history and people of the land around you, going to the Santa Monica Mountains Visitor Center may help you find events and activities taking place at the park.

Another great place to spend your weekend to hangout with friends or exercise a little would be at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overview. The park is located in Los Angeles adjacent to Culver City. The Baldwin Hills is more known for the Culver City Steps, which is a path of stairs leading from the bottom, near a busy road, to the top holding a beautiful view. Perhaps this seems too intimidating or not fit for your family's needs, but no worries! Not far from these hills is a park with a playground for the kids ahead of that is a basketball court to play ball with all your friends and family. Through this park biking is also a popular activity. If even that doesn't quite suit your taste there is also the Culver City SkatePark located adjacent to the playground. Maybe you don't have any human kids but you do have pets! Not to worry if you follow a path that passes by the park ahead you'll find a dog park for your pet to let out all its energy.



TAKE ACTION!

How can connecting to nature support community climate resilience?

Connecting to nature can create something a community can bond over, thus encouraging climate resilience as a community. Climate change and related issues are only solved through collective change, but that shouldn't

discourage any change on the personal level as well.

The following recommendations represent just a few of many ways to engage with nature as both an individual and as part of a wider community.

Use green space! Work toward making space for community use of nature.

If there aren't any communities supporting ecological health, create one! Engage in outreach! Work with

community organizations to promote:

- Cleanliness of community spaces
- Creating more spaces with native species
- Emphasizing the coexistence of technology and nature
- Encouraging more communal native gardens
- Using green space for exercise.

Get involved and take initiative!

Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine Student Recommended Actions

For other medical students:

- Incorporate still moments to reflect throughout your career; this is where growth can be sown.
- Take time to elicit others' views on health while you're learning the dominant views of the medical profession.
- The results of simple observation may surprise you.

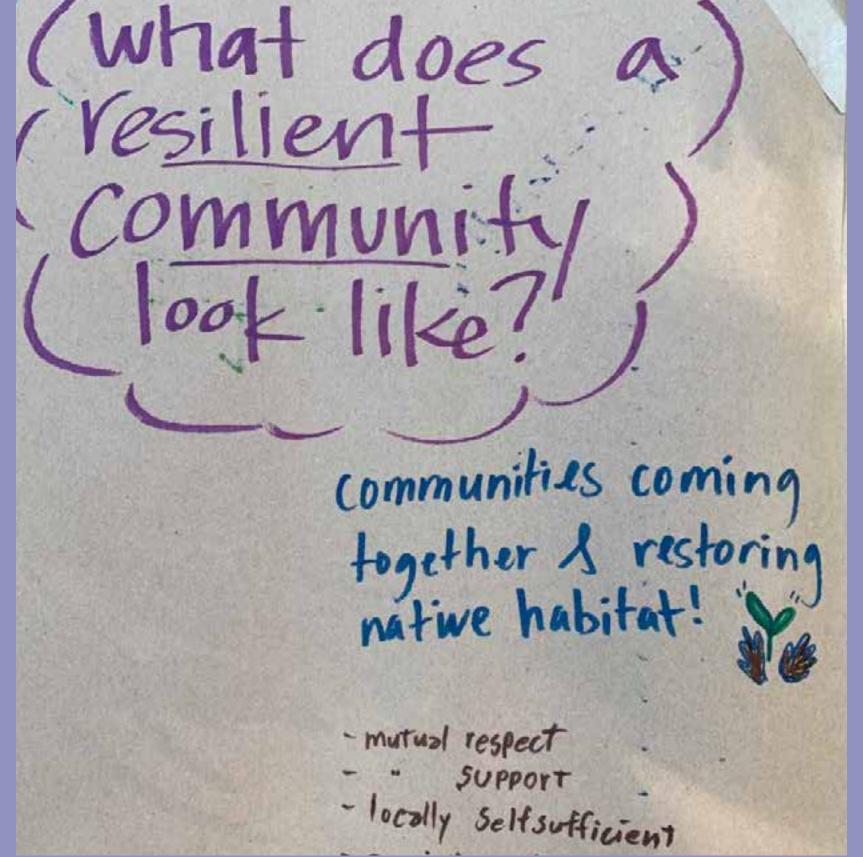
For practicing healthcare workers:

- Make moments to embrace stillness in your practice by taking time to recenter yourself before entering the clinical space. Movement can only occur in balance.
- Find time to visit natural spaces or learn about community gathering places within the areas that you practice.
- This is helpful for patients and lets you share or understand their local resources, fostering a
- strength-based approach.

For the broader community:

- When life may feel like it's on autopilot, consider it as a signal to take a moment in to connect with your senses
- and gather perspective.
- There is power even in small movements. Being still is not always being stuck.

















Dear Reader,

We hope you enjoyed this publication. We want to end with a letter that one Greenhouse student wrote to his third-grade self. It describes how he experienced stillness in nature, as well as how he chose to take action within the community. Hopefully, his words will be inspiring to you and focus your attention on the natural world around you. Thank you for reading!

Dear Third-Grade Eddy,

I hope this letter finds you well. I know you are just a curious third-grader, eager to explore the world and learn new things. You're soon to embark on a journey filled with adventures, discoveries, and challenges. I want to share a few things that might help you along the way.

Firstly, cherish every moment of your childhood. Embrace the laughter, the friendships, and the freedom of being young. Take the time to appreciate the small things around you, like the colorful flowers or the fresh air that trees supply you with. Nature is your friend, and you'll find so much joy in spending time outdoors much more than before. Speaking of nature, I hope you're still spending plenty of time outside and enjoying the serenity of nature. Hold onto that connection with nature. As life gets busier, it's easy to forget the peace and wonder that the outdoors provide. Keep exploring, keep observing, and keep learning from the world around you. Nature has a way of teaching us invaluable lessons about resilience, beauty, and the cycle of life.

Soon you will be part of the Greenhouse Program, and your hands will be actively engaged in restoring habitats and educating communities about the habitat restoration and community enrichment. While being in this program, you will love being around in nature more than ever before.

I also want to remind you that it's okay to make mistakes. In fact, it's more than okay—it's how we learn and grow. Don't be too hard on yourself when things don't go as planned. Embrace those moments as opportunities to learn, adapt, and become more resilient. Also, as you grow older, you'll face challenges and uncertainties. Remember to stay resilient and adaptable. Life has its ups and downs, but each experience will shape you into a stronger person. Never give up even under the worst situations and always know that you will be supported by your peers and family.

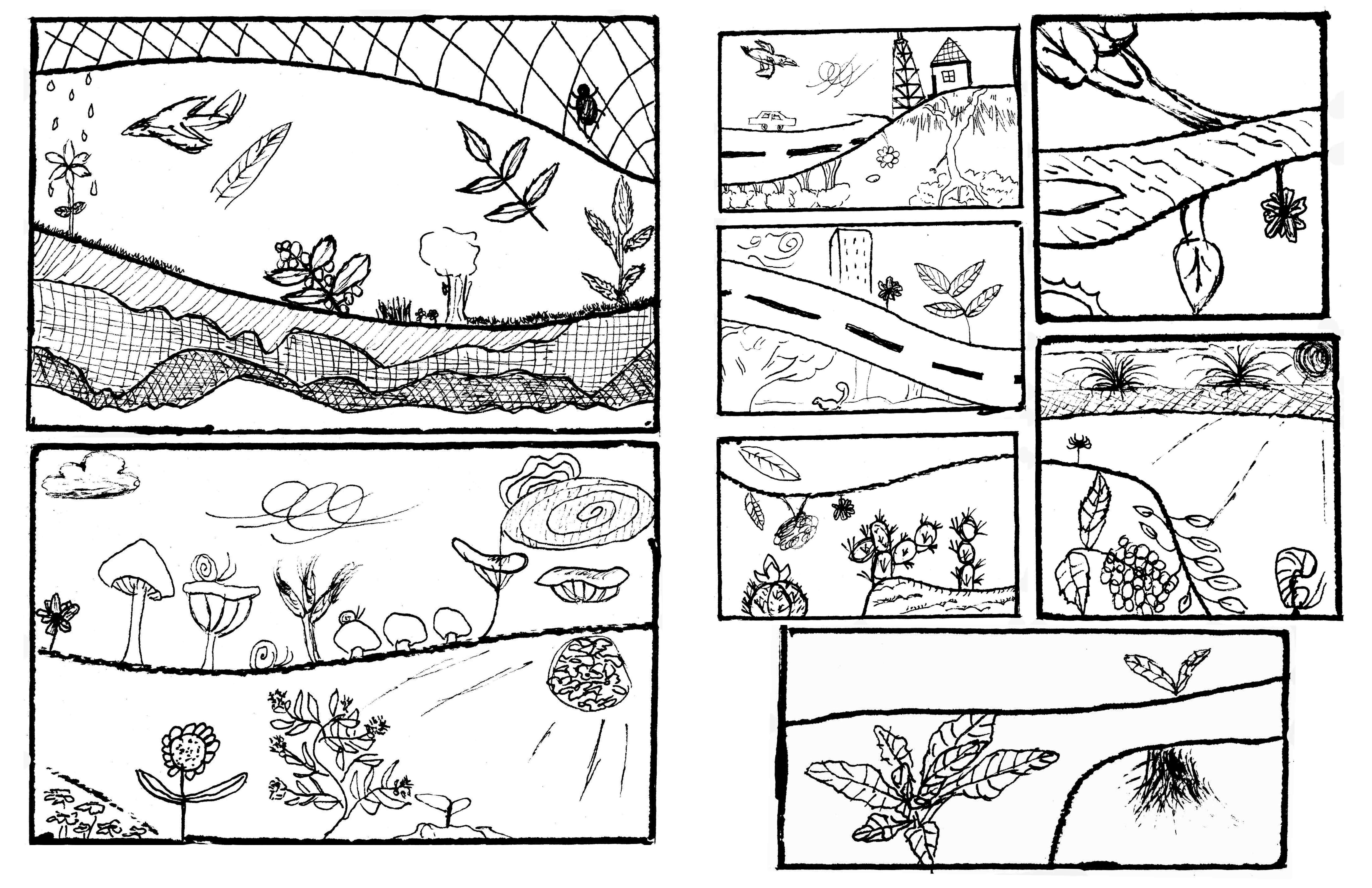
Just so you know, it is essential to be kind to yourself and others. Also, embrace your uniqueness, your quirks, and your passions, and don't worry too much about fitting in or trying to be like someone else. Your individuality is what makes you special, so never forget that. Always keep that spark of curiosity alive and never stop asking questions, seeking knowledge, and exploring new horizons. The world is vast and full of wonders waiting for you to discover, so take any opportunity to experience new things no matter how daunting they may seem.

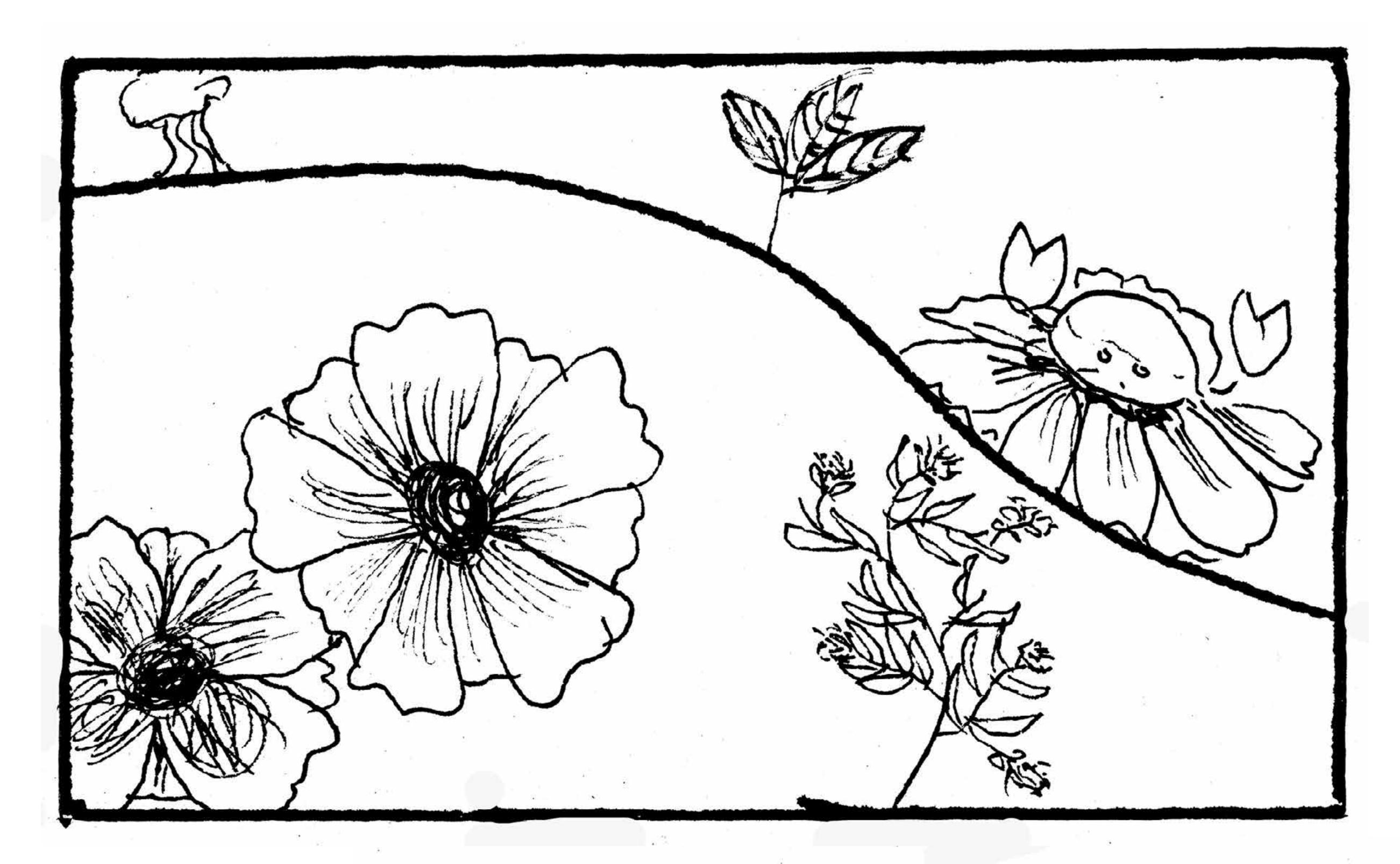
I hope you take these words to heart. Enjoy your journey through life, embrace the beauty of nature, and never forget the simple joys that surround you every day. Best of luck!

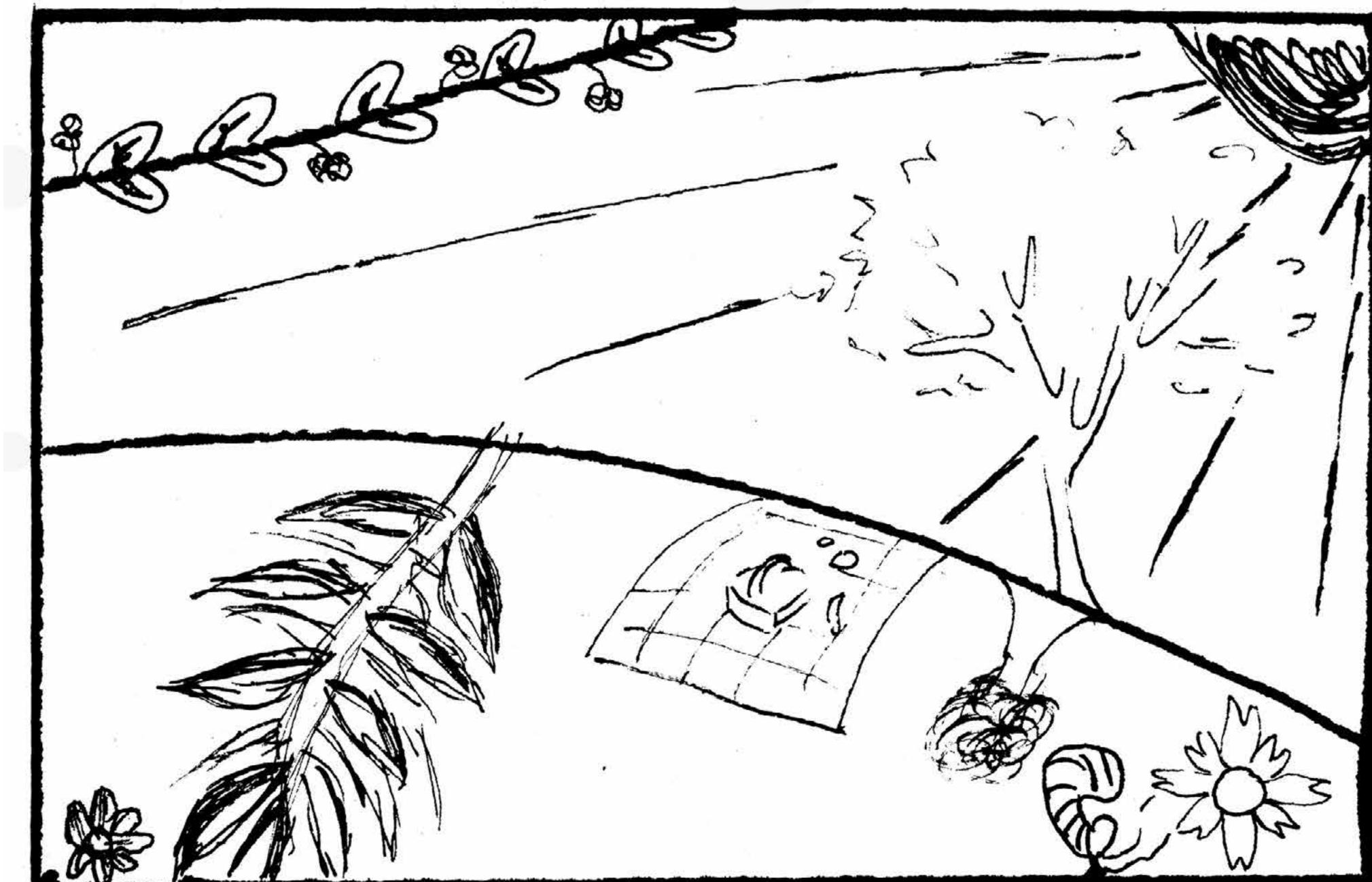
With endless encouragement,

Eddy (future self)

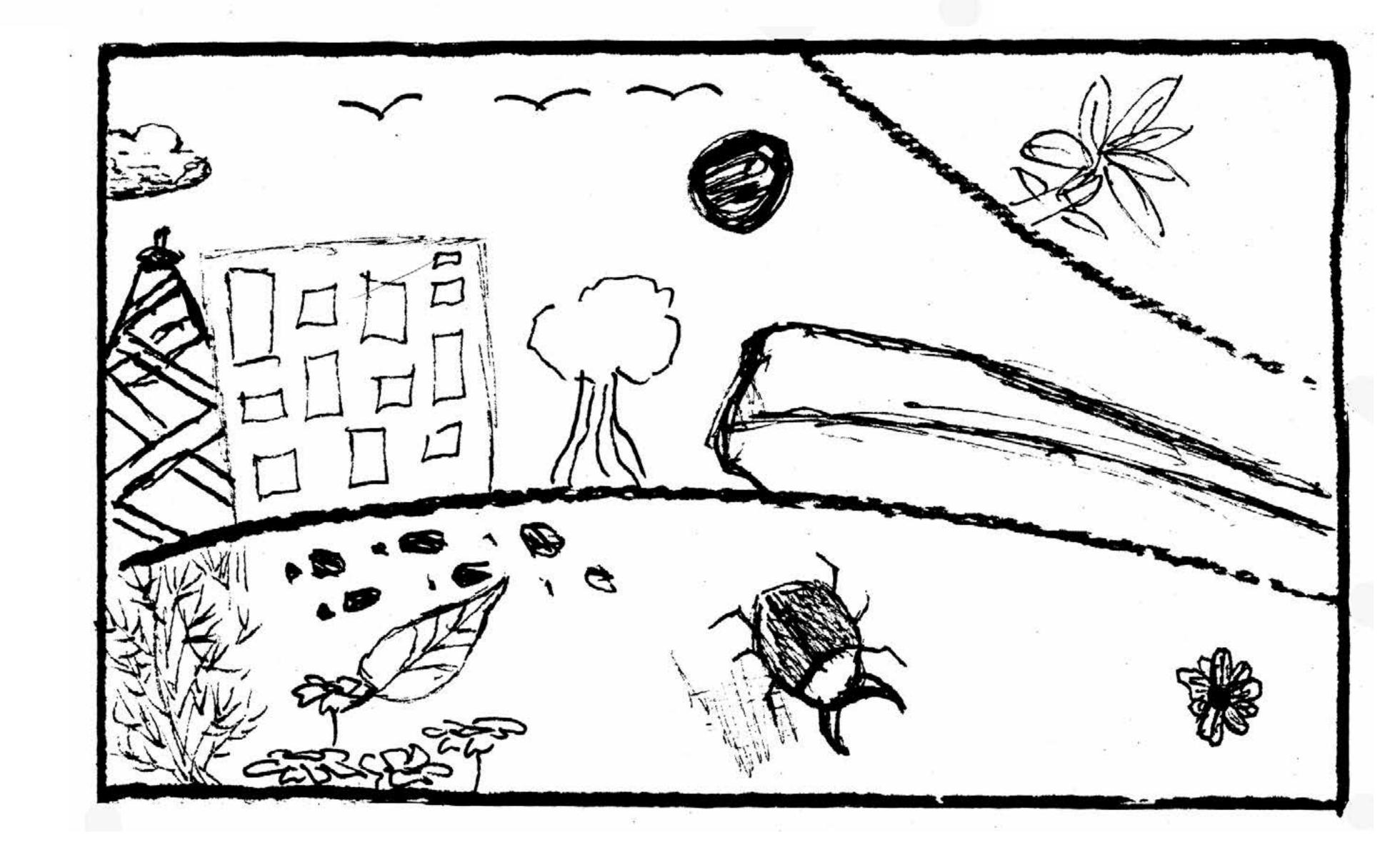




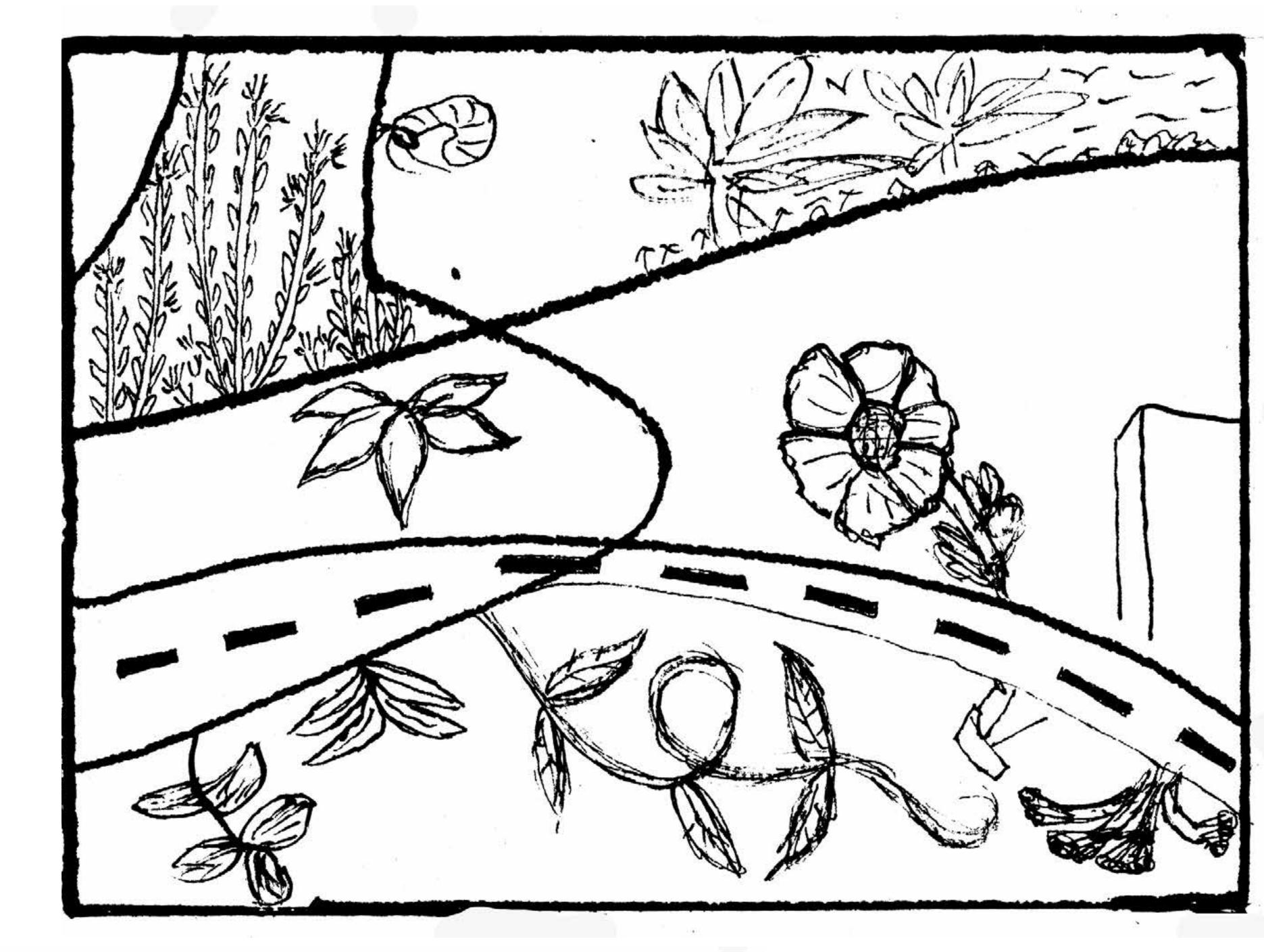


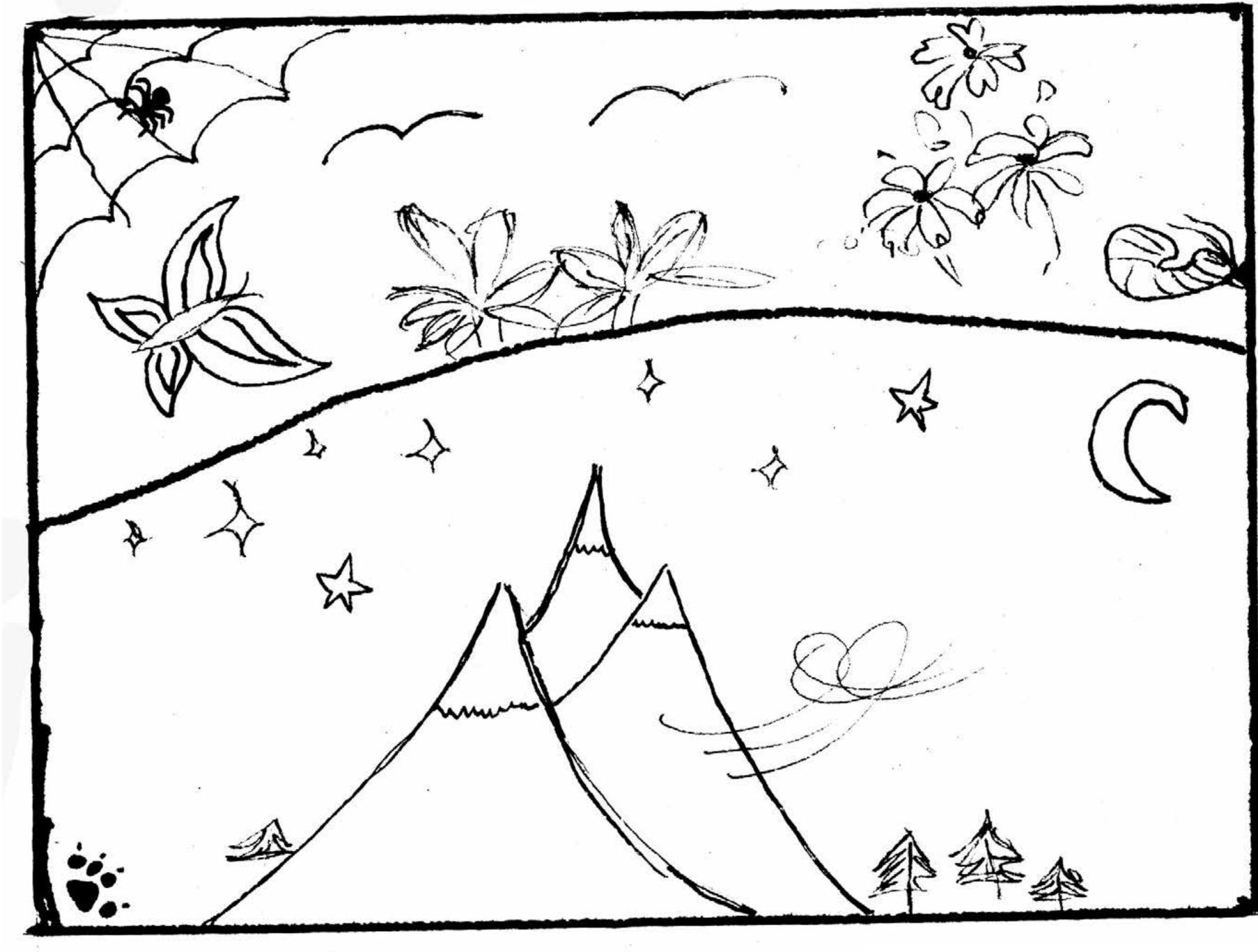


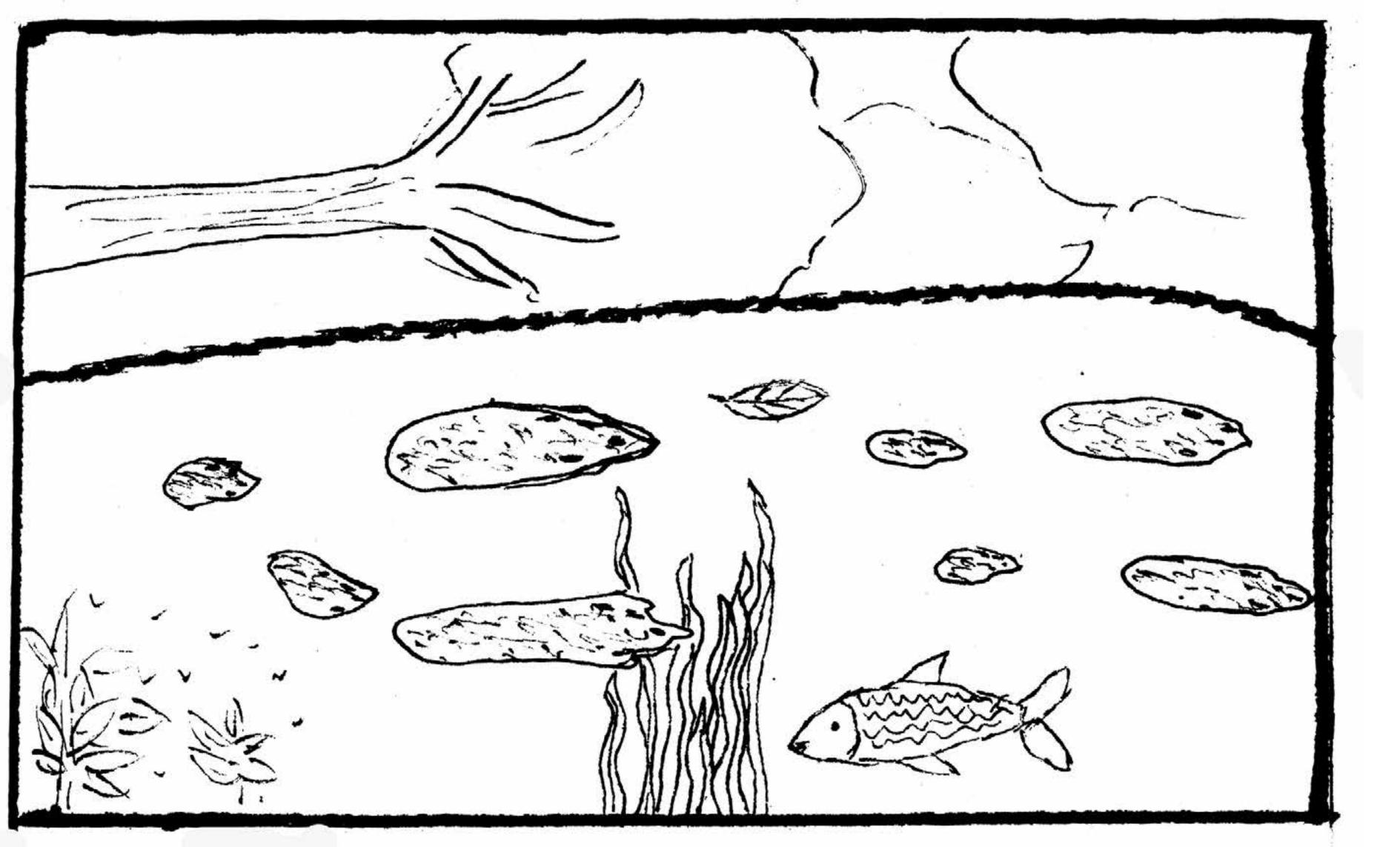
What's a positive memory you have of time spent in nature?



How do you connect to nature where you live?

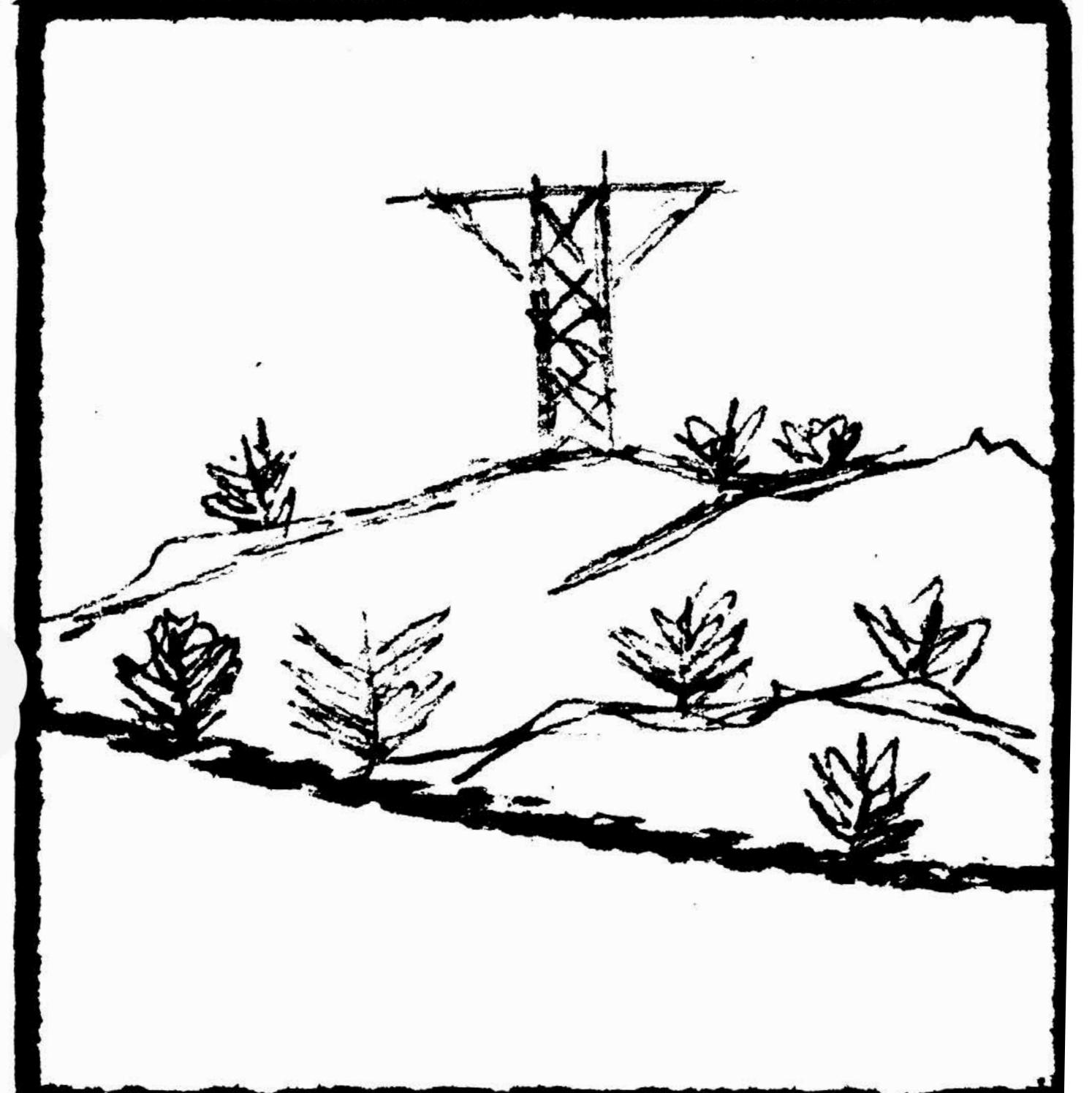


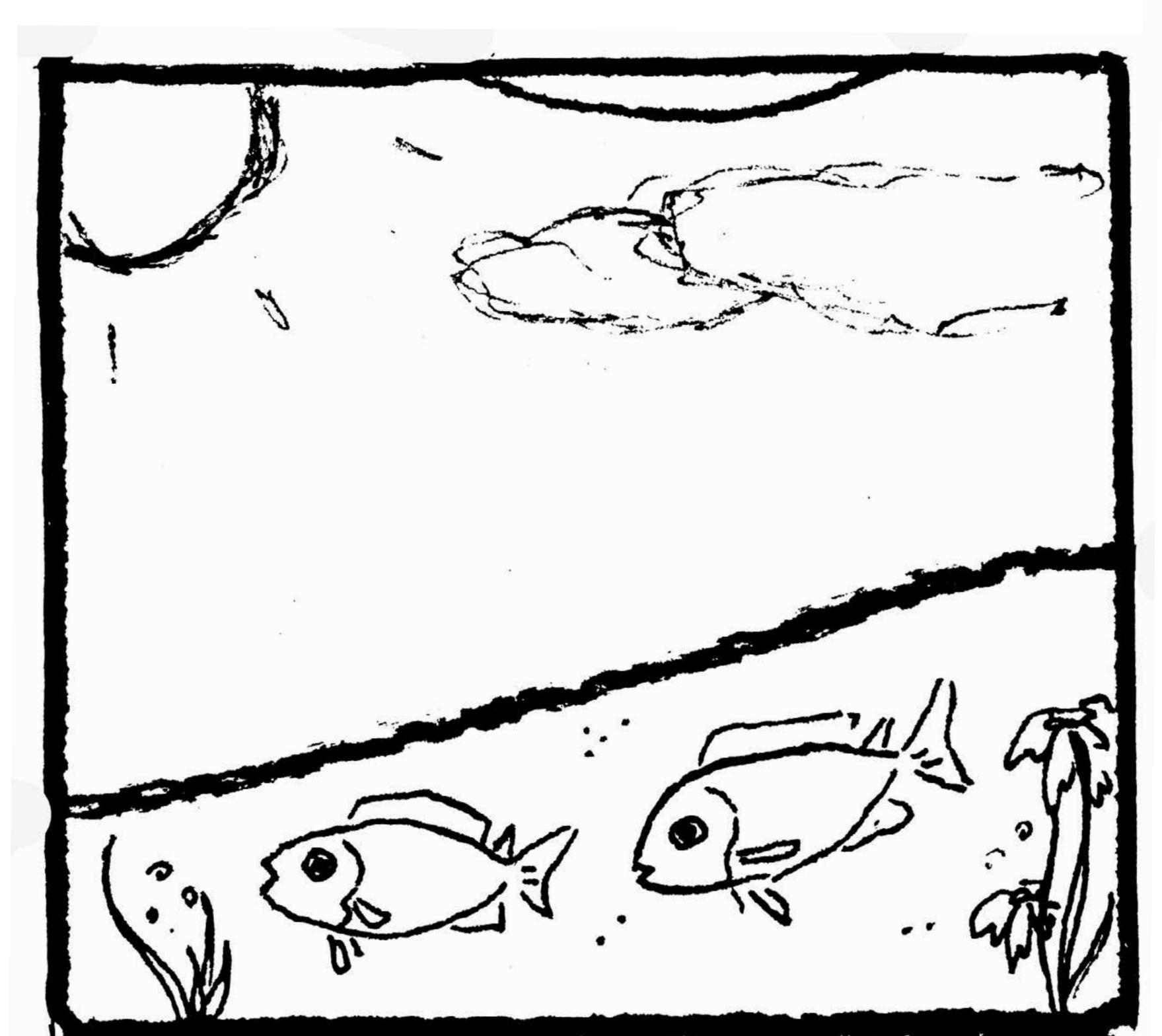


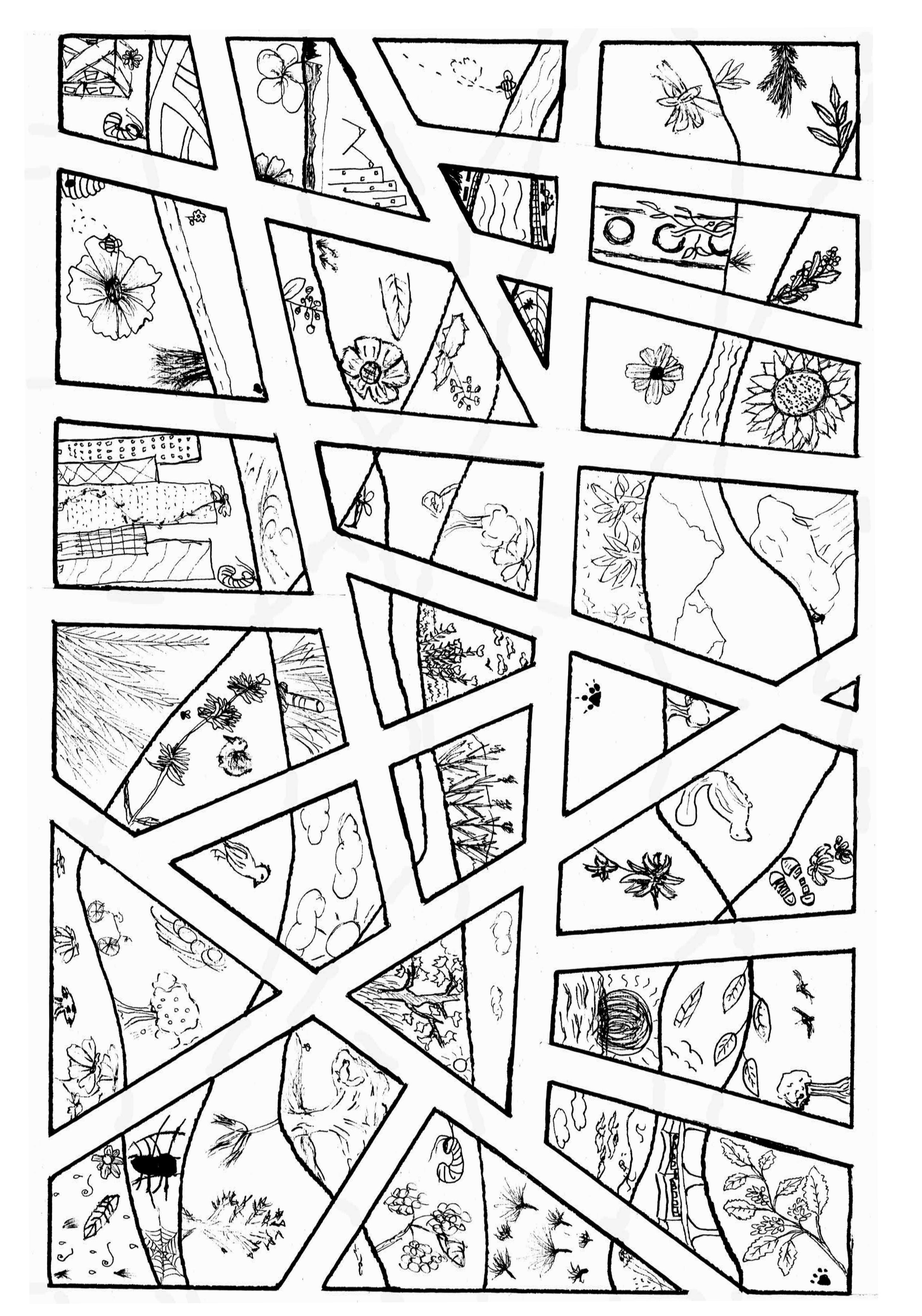




How would you build a climate resilient community?







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Initial inspiration for our collective drawing project came from the work of artist Lina Forrester (@linaforrester)

References mentioned in the Introduction

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