

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

AAS

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is [REDACTED] AAS [REDACTED]. My maiden name was [REDACTED] was known by my foster parents' surname, [REDACTED] from about the age of ten. My date of birth is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1949. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. My mother's name was [REDACTED]. She and my father, [REDACTED] were married and later divorced. I've been told that my mother and father were no longer in a relationship when I was conceived. They both had new partners. They bumped into each other on a Christmas night out and got together for old times' sake. My birth date ties in with them having met up around Christmas.
3. My mother and father are deceased. I never met my father. According to my brother, [REDACTED] my father never recognised me as his. [REDACTED] was my only full sibling. He was five years older than me. He's now deceased. I have six half-siblings, who are my mother's children.
4. I don't know the circumstances of how I ended up in care. I was born in an ex-army hut in Pollok. It was a place where prisoners of war had been kept. It was called [REDACTED]. People had started to live there after the prisoners were repatriated. I visited the site as an adult. The huts were gone. It was so small. You'd miss it, if you blinked as you went through it. It was really just a field. I was

speaking about it recently to a friend, and he produced a photograph of himself standing at the site. You can see the huts in the background.

5. I don't know who was living in the hut with my mother. I believe people squatted in them, but I don't know whether my mother was squatting or lived there officially.
6. In later years, I met up with my mother's sister, [REDACTED] and she told me that I was about two when I went into Smyllum. She said that my mother couldn't care for me. She had taken me down to London and then brought me back, because she just couldn't cope.
7. I also found out that my mother's two sisters, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had wanted to look after me. My mum refused to allow my Aunt [REDACTED] to take me. Aunt [REDACTED] lived in [REDACTED] and drove all the way up to ask if she could have me. She had one daughter, who was five years older than me, and was quite affluent. I wish I had gone down there. I would've had a better life. I've been told that my mum was a bit jealous of [REDACTED] and that's why she refused to let me go with her.
8. My Aunt [REDACTED] was told by the welfare officer, Miss McKendrick, that she couldn't have me because she had two children of her own. Miss McKendrick's office was at 64 Union Street in Hamilton. She was the chief welfare officer. I met her for the first time when I was about five.
9. I don't know whether there was a court hearing for me to be taken into care, or whether it was done voluntarily.

Smyllum Park Orphanage, Lanark

10. Given how young I was, I have no memory of going into Smyllum. My baptism certificate shows that I was baptised in St Mary's Church in Lanark, so I was obviously baptised after I went into Smyllum. That just dawned on me when I was looking at the certificate last night. St Mary's was next to Smyllum. I was baptised on

██████████ 1952. I was two and half years old. That helps to confirm when I went into the home.

11. Smyllum was run by nuns. I don't know what the religious order was. They wore great big headdresses in those days. They frightened the wits out of me. I don't remember any of the nuns' names. That's one thing I regret.
12. My very first memory of Smyllum is getting moved to another part of the building, which I think was around the time I was to start school. I think I was about 4 or 5. I can't be specific about what age I was when things happened, or how long I was in places.
13. I remember being taken into a cloakroom, which had stone walls and floors, and a nun took my hat and coat off. There were a lot of people around me. I was so shy. My head was always down. I wouldn't have looked at anybody. I was then taken up a set of stairs into a room, which I call the play area. This is the place where I spent most of my time. When I think back to it, I feel that I was always in that wee room, never anywhere else.
14. I don't know how many children were there, or the age range. I think I was one of the younger ones. I only ever saw girls in Smyllum, except on one occasion. I found out many years later that boys had been in Smyllum too, so they must have had their own areas.
15. It was a huge old house, with a large entrance hall. It had been standing since the 1800s. I don't think it had been updated in all those years. I've got a book which has old pictures of Smyllum in it. The pictures are just as I remember it. I went back to visit with my two daughters when I was in my thirties. We took sweets and fruit but it was boarded up. We were told it got boarded up just two years before.

Routine at Smyllum

Mornings and bedtime

16. The dormitory was right next door to the play area. There were rows and rows of beds. It always seemed so overcrowded.
17. We got out of bed and washed ourselves in the morning. We then lined up to go into the food hall. The food hall was along the same corridor as the dormitory. We all walked in a straight line, in silence, into the food hall.
18. We'd go back to the play area after the food hall and then run up the wee hill to the school.
19. I drew a picture of the play area some years ago which shows the layout of the room. There were little cupboards along one of the walls, with windows above looking out to the outside play area. All of the children had a cupboard each and a key. There were windows on the opposite wall and a big fire against another wall, with a fireguard from floor to ceiling in front of it. The communal bathroom was at one side of the fire, and there was a cupboard full of jars and sweeties on the other side. There was an area at the other side of the room with toys, such as prams, dolls and dolls' houses. It had rope barriers round it. We could see the toys but weren't allowed to play with them.
20. We got a sweetie at 6 o'clock before we went to bed. It was always a liquorice allsort, which are still my favourite. When I went back as an adult to visit, I was told that a local cafe used to donate sweets to the home, so that's probably where my liquorice allsorts came from.

Leisure time

21. I spent most of my time in the play area. I don't remember how many kids were in there with me. I just remember us all playing about in this horrible room. We weren't allowed to play with the toys, so we just ran about in the room and amused ourselves.
22. I didn't have any special friends. The other kids didn't want to know me. I was so quiet. I was very, very shy. I noticed that some kids had friends. They were probably a bit more talkative than me.
23. We wore a uniform, which was a black dress with a white pinafore over it. We all had the same haircut. It was a bowl haircut above the ears – not very stylish. It was so regimented. Everybody was the same.
24. As I said, we all had a cupboard and a key, but we didn't have anything to put in them. I remember deciding to save up my liquorice allsorts. I put them in the cupboard until I had ten. I took them out one night and put them on my wee pinny. I was sitting with my sweeties on my lap and kids came running up to me, saying they'd be my friends forever if I gave them a sweetie. I gave all my sweeties away so they'd be my friends.
25. There were wee steps from the play area which led down to a tiny door. The door opened out to the front of the building, where there was a small square playground with swings and a roundabout. There was one other thing in the playground, but I can't remember what it was. We played out there sometimes. We didn't get out every day, only on rare occasions.
26. The nuns didn't read us stories, nor did we have access to books or comics. I don't remember there being a radio, but I remember we used to sing a song which was a Eurovision song, sung by someone called Teddy. The words were "There's a bird in the tree, there's a tree in the meadow..." I don't know where I had heard it. We

sang another song: "Where will the baby's dimple be?", which was my wee party piece when I got older. I think we sang these songs just to amuse ourselves.

Food

27. The food hall was exactly like the photo in my book. There were rows and rows of tables and benches. There seemed to me to be hundreds of kids in the room. I don't know where they all came from. We had to be quiet during meals. The nuns would walk up and down the whole time, watching what you were doing, waiting to reprimand you.
28. I don't ever remember getting a good dinner. The food was awful. I used to pass it on to someone else when I couldn't eat it. There was always someone hungry. I didn't eat very much. I remember eating the bread. It always nipped my tongue. I used to wonder why. I know now it was because of the blue mould on it.

School

29. I got introduced to school not long after I got moved to the building where the play area was. We'd go down the stairs in the play area, out the back of the building and walk up a wee hill to school. I might be wrong but that's how I remember it.
30. I think the school was just for the children in Smyllum. We all wore the black dress and white pinafore. The teachers were nuns. The school was just like the pictures in the book I've got. I remember the classroom so well. There were rows and rows of desks and glass partitions between the classes. You could see through to the other side.
31. I remember watching the teacher writing numbers on the board one day, and we had to copy them down. I used to do the figure 8 by putting 2 noughts together. The teacher saw me doing it and hit me across the fingers with a ruler. It was so sore. The ruler came down so hard on me. I was crying.

32. I used to write with my left hand. They knocked that out of me by constantly hitting me over the hands with a ruler. I remember the nun saying, "This is evil". When I left the orphanage and went to an outside school, my first teacher there was the same. She hated anyone writing with their left hand. For some reason, it seemed to be a problem back then.
33. So, that's what I remember of school at the orphanage. I was always getting chastised for trying to write with my left hand. I was a good wee girl too. I would never have crossed the line. I always did what I was told. I was so scared of the nuns.

Holidays/trips

34. I have a memory of walking along a jetty with a tall man, who was wearing a long coat and hat. I don't know if it was a trip out. We walked to the end of the jetty and the water was up to the same height as the jetty. I remember thinking we were going to walk into the water. I was so scared. I can still remember how frightened I was. I was hiding behind the man. I don't remember any females being there. There were other people around, but I don't know who they were. I was always going about with my head down.
35. I have another memory of walking up the stairs on the outside of a house, and then going into the house. I don't know if it's connected to the memory of being on the jetty, or whether that was a different day altogether.
36. The only other time I remember being out was when we were taken to Lanark for Lanimer day. There's a picture of Lanimer day in my book. I remember seeing all the floats going past and waving the wee flag I'd been given.

Birthdays and Christmas

37. I think it was Christmas when I got a bottle of fizzy juice for the first time. I drank it through a straw and it went up my nose and gave me such a fright. I never drank it

again for years, because I was frightened of that sensation. I don't remember getting presents for Christmas or ever seeing a Christmas tree.

38. I don't think they celebrated birthdays. There were probably too many of us.

Religious instruction

39. The church was right next door to the orphanage. It was very small. I don't know if it was really just for the nuns. We used to go on Sundays. I was baptised in there. We said our prayers before and after meals. We also knelt down by our beds and said prayers at bedtime.

Meeting prospective foster carers

40. I remember the Mother Superior coming up to me one day. I assume she was the Mother Superior. She was so scary. I don't know how long I'd been in Smyllum when this happened. She took me to the dormitory and got me dressed in a blue, scratchy dress. I then followed her along parts of the orphanage I'd never seen before.
41. I remember looking all around me as I walked behind her. Everything seemed so big to me. The floors and walls were wooden. The floor was highly polished and so shiny. You could eat your dinner off it. We got to a set of double doors, and the Mother Superior suddenly stopped and gave me a lecture. She was very stern. She put her face right into mine. It was very frightening. She said, "Now, I don't want you to talk unless you're spoken to. Be on your best behaviour". I wouldn't have said "boo" to anybody at that point in time.
42. She opened the double doors, and I just stood there. I saw all these children lined up. They were all lovely wee girls in pretty dresses and ribbons. I don't know where these kids came from. They certainly weren't from Smyllum. I had never seen any of them before. All the kids in Smyllum wore a uniform and had bowl haircuts. These wee girls looked so out of place.

43. I was put right in the middle of all the wee girls, and we were all spoken to, more or less in the same way the Mother Superior had spoken to me earlier. There were other nuns in the room too.
44. After they got us all sorted, the doors opened and lots of men and women came in. They started inspecting all of us. They went through our hair looking for nits, looked in our ears and checked our teeth. It was like a cattle market. Every time I think back to it now, I remember how terrible it was. It was so humiliating. I just stood there. I didn't know what was going on. Nobody explained to me what was happening.
45. All the wee ones in the pretty dresses got paired off with people. And there was me, the typical wee orphan, left standing alone. Eventually, the people who later became my foster parents, Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] came up to me. I would later call them "Mum" and "Dad". My mum tapped me on the shoulder and said something like "Come on darling, you come with me". I'll never forget it.
46. I walked out into the hallway and the big front doors were open. I went out to the steps and saw a lady, Miss McKendrick, and a car with a chauffeur. It was a beautiful big limousine. It was Miss McKendrick's car. We all went to my mum and dad's house in the car. That was them taking me home for a trial weekend. I think it was a weekend. It was a few days anyway.
47. We were dropped off at the house, and I still didn't know what was going on. It would have been nice if it had been explained to me. I was about five, but I was bright for my age. I was very aware of things. I've always been very aware of people. I judge them right away. I know what kind of people they are as soon as I see them. I've always been like that. I think it's down to the fear that's in me. I was always frightened of my own shadow.
48. The first thing my mum gave me was a bag of sweeties, all to myself. I couldn't believe it. I remember asking if they were all for me. I only ever got one sweetie a

day. That brought me round a wee bit and made me comfortable. I remember asking where my dorm was and she took me upstairs to a wee plain room with a bed in it.

49. My mum went out early the next day and bought me a doll and a nice new dress. She realised how uncomfortable I was in the scratchy one. I played with the doll all weekend. She also gave me a little ring that'd been hers when she was a little girl. It was a rose gold signet ring. It fitted me perfectly. I wore it the whole weekend. I was so proud of it.
50. Everything was fine during the visit. I remember my dad talking and playing with me. I can't remember much more, other than being taken back to Smyllum in the chauffeur-driven car.
51. When I went back to the orphanage, the nuns took my nice dress off and put my uniform back on me. They took the ring and doll from me, both of which were never seen again.

Visits/Inspections

52. My brother, [REDACTED] was in Smyllum when I was there. That's where I met him for the first time. I don't know when he went in. It might have been the same time as me. I know that he wasn't in long. My father took him out and raised him.
53. I met [REDACTED] when we were all taken out one day to play in one of the fields. The field was part of the premises. There were trees around it and lots of other trees beyond it. It looked lovely. All the kids were running around playing, and [REDACTED] approached me. He must have recognised me. I didn't notice if there were other boys around at the time.
54. I didn't know [REDACTED] I remember he had a wee badge on the lapel of his jacket and wore short trousers and woolly socks. He told me he was my brother, and I said he wasn't. I asked him for his badge, but he wouldn't give it to me. There were no adults present. It was just me and him. It only lasted about 5 or 10 minutes.

55. I think the meeting was set up by the nuns. That was the one and only occasion we were taken out to that field. I never saw another boy in Smyllum the whole time I was there. I never saw [REDACTED] again until I met up with my mother and siblings when I was about sixteen.
56. I had one visit from my mother in Smyllum. That was another occasion when I was put into the blue, scratchy dress. The Mother Superior came and got me again. She took me down to a big hall full of folded up tables and chairs. I've since thought that maybe that was the food hall for the boys.
57. I saw a lady sitting by herself. She was wearing a black and white suit and a wee hat. She was very smartly dressed. She had two white buttons in her ears. I didn't know what earrings were, so that's what I thought they were. I can't remember everything we talked about, but I do remember her saying that I was getting big and that she was my mum. I said to her "Are you going to take me home to yours?". She gave me a tube of Smarties, which I ate straight away as I knew I wouldn't get to keep them.
58. I now wonder if that was her coming to see me because she knew that I'd soon be getting fostered. That was maybe her last chance to see me. That's what I do: I think about all these things now and surmise what was going on. I don't know for sure.
59. I don't know why nobody else ever visited me. Seemingly, my aunts knew that I was in there.
60. I was never visited by Miss McKendrick. I didn't go home with the [REDACTED] until quite a while after I'd met them. I had no ongoing contact with them after the first meeting. I never saw them again until I went to live with them permanently.

Abuse at Smyllum

61. I got the impression that the nuns were frustrated at having to be there. I don't think they wanted to be looking after kids. We were always being told to be quiet. Children were to be seen and not heard. I always remember the nuns being so cold towards us and chastising us all the time.
62. You'd get smacked and put to bed if you spoke in the food hall. I remember kids being dragged out of there by the neck for speaking, or doing something else the nuns didn't like.
63. The nuns never showed any concern, warmth or love for us. They weren't nice or caring. There were no cuddles. In some ways, I think it taught me some lessons in how to be a good mother. I gave my kids what I never had. I loved my kids to bits and was always kissing and cuddling them. I respected them. If they weren't happy about something, I'd explain it to them. The nuns never explained things to me. They were just so cold.
64. We got smacked and sent to bed without dinner if we got caught playing with the toys in the play area. I think I did it only once or twice. Whether you got told off or smacked and sent to bed, depended on the mood they were in.
65. We were smacked and sent to bed without dinner, for one thing or another, on numerous occasions. We were playing in the play area one day and a kid found a potty and did a pee in it. We all found it funny. One of the nuns came in and went spare. We wouldn't say who had done it at first, and then someone must have said who it was. The wee girl got smacked and put to bed. I could hear her screaming in the dormitory. Everybody was frightened. We all got lectured and put to bed for not having spoken up.
66. We used to line up for our bath in the communal bathroom. I was first in the queue one day. I could see the steam rising from the bath and didn't want to get in. It was obvious, even to me as a kid, that it was too hot. I remember holding back and

saying something like, "No. Burny". The nun smacked me and told me to get in. I had to get in. I remember screaming with the pain. The water must have come up to the top of my legs. I had marks there for a long time. I don't know what happened after that. I don't know if I was left in there. I might have blacked out. I don't know whether I got taken to the hospital, but I do remember the pain. You'd expect an injury like that to be documented somewhere. I don't know if they did that.

67. There was an incident when I wet the bed. I remember the nun coming through to the play area, shouting my name out and then dragging me by the scruff of the neck into the dormitory. She took me to my bed and shouted, "Did you do that?". I was so scared. She then pushed my head down and rubbed my face into the wet sheet. I was then made to stand with the wet sheet over my head. I don't know how long I stood there with the urine-soaked sheet on me. I cried and cried. It was terrible. I don't remember ever wetting the bed again. I saw other kids being chastised in the same way.

Leaving Smyllum

68. I remember the day I left Smyllum for good. I think I was about five or six. I was taken by a nun from the play area to get dressed in the blue, scratchy dress again. I remember my mum was upset that I didn't come out with the things she'd given me. She knew the blue dress irritated me and asked the nun why I was wearing it. She then asked about the doll, dress and ring she'd given me. They said they didn't know where they were. I was crying when I realised I wasn't getting these things. I had forgotten about them. I was then taken home in Miss McKendrick's chauffeur-driven car.

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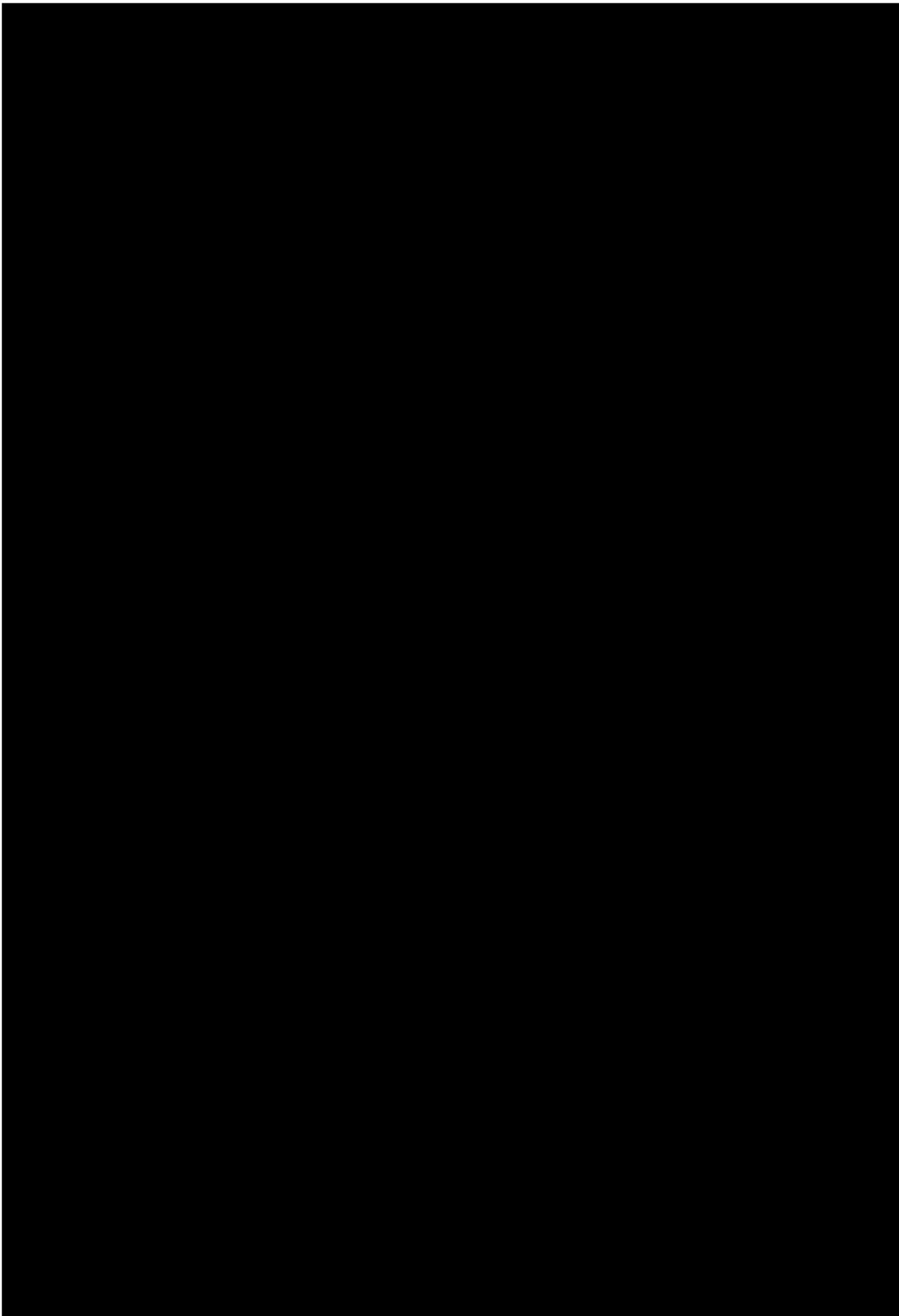
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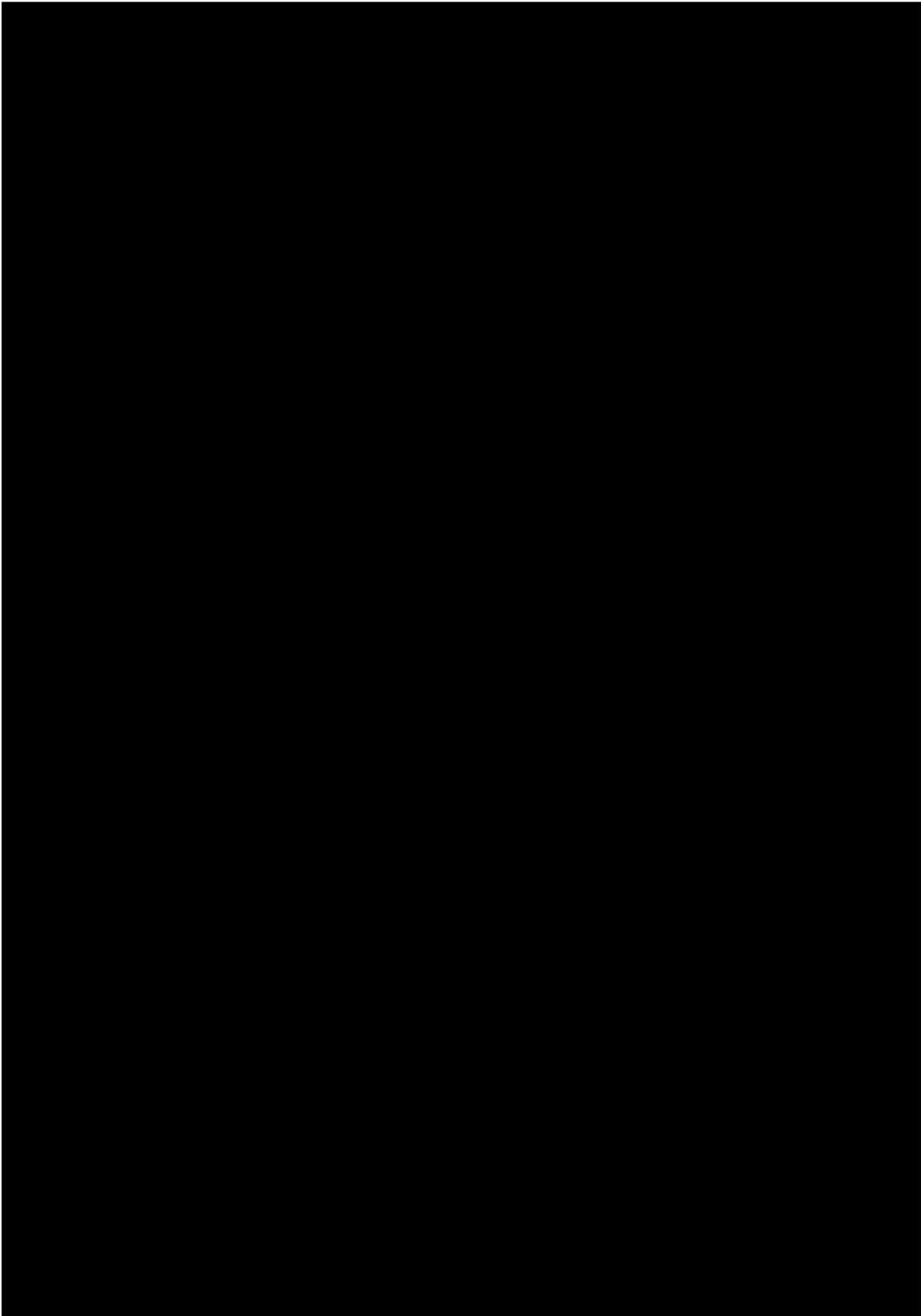
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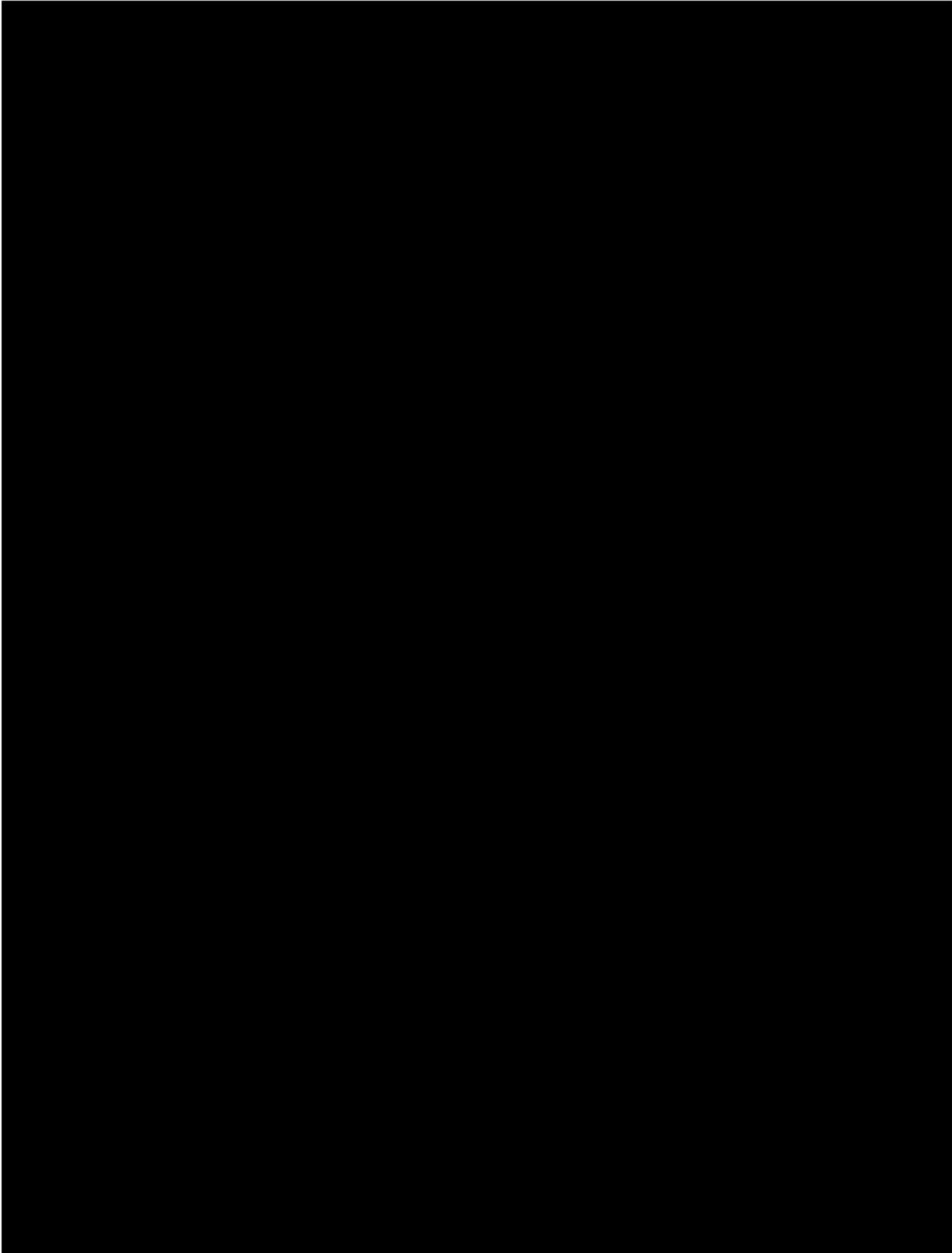
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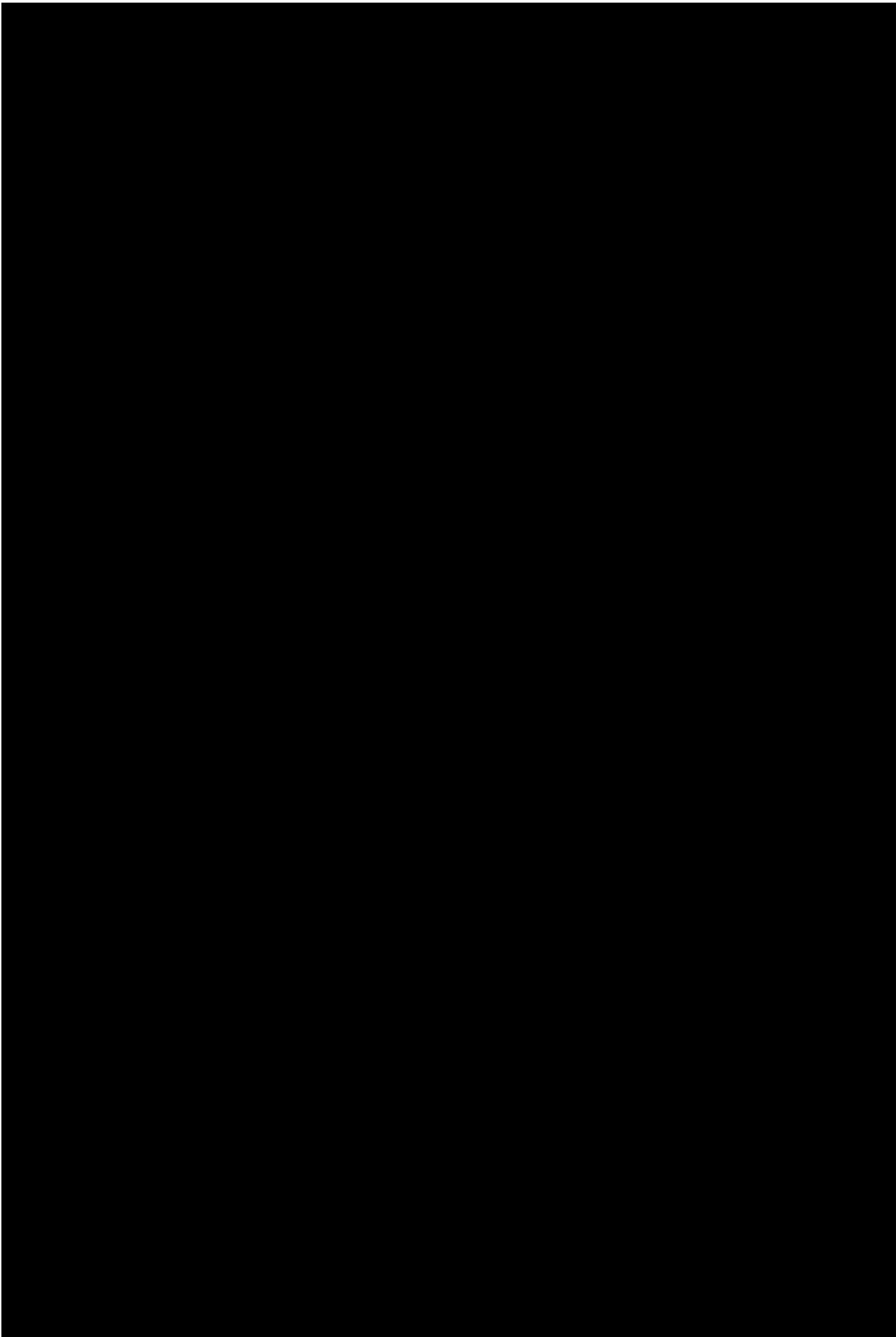
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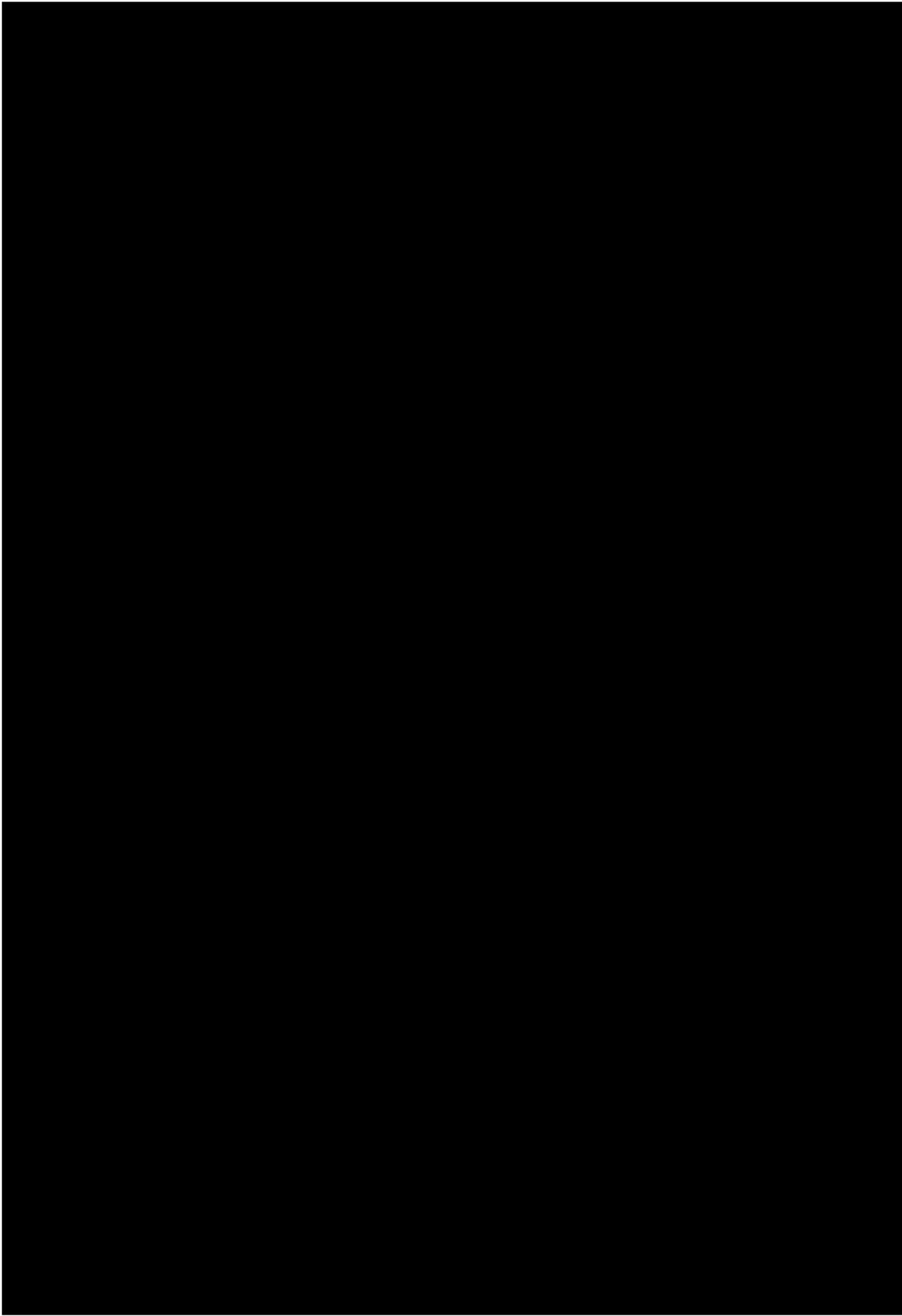
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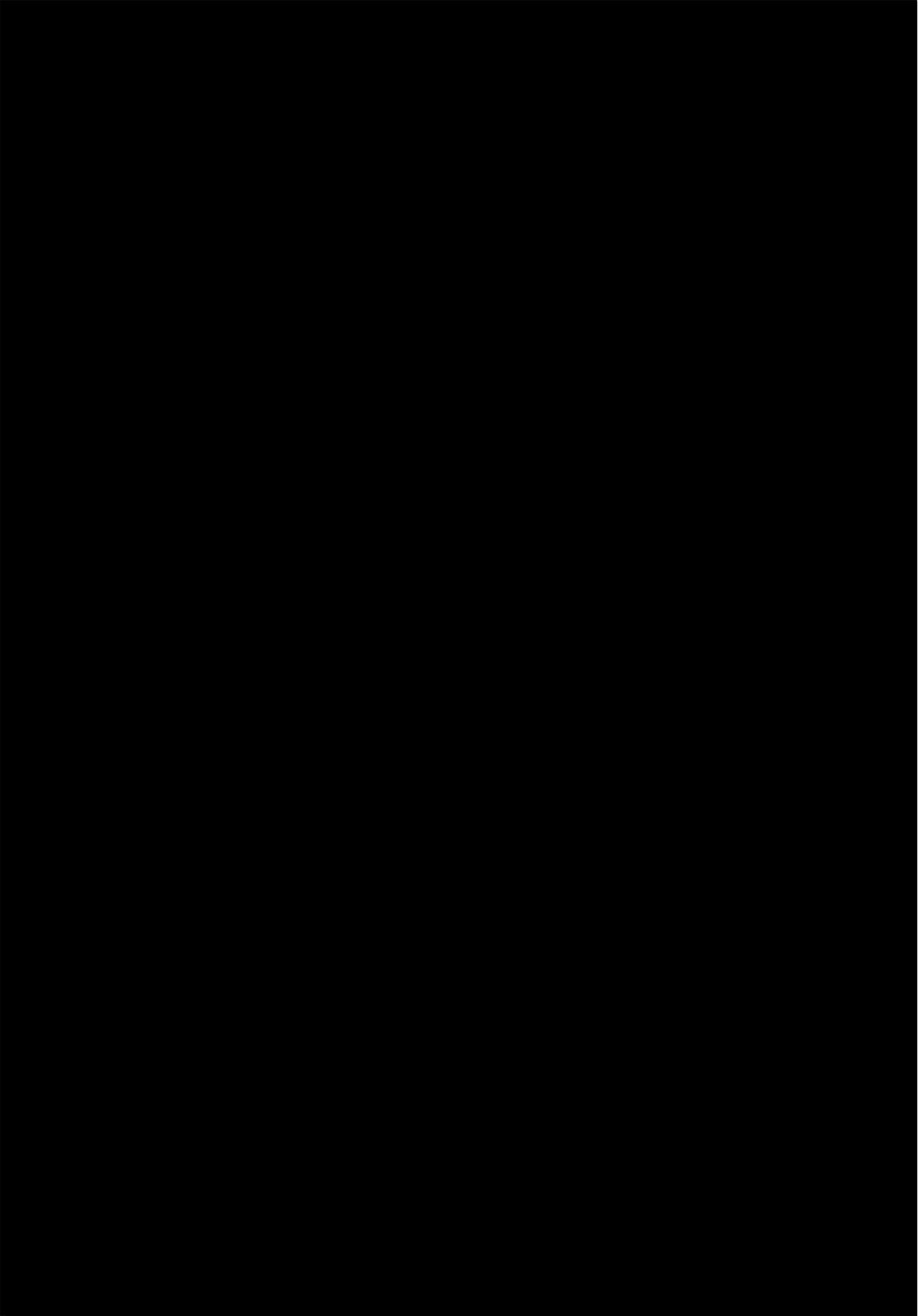
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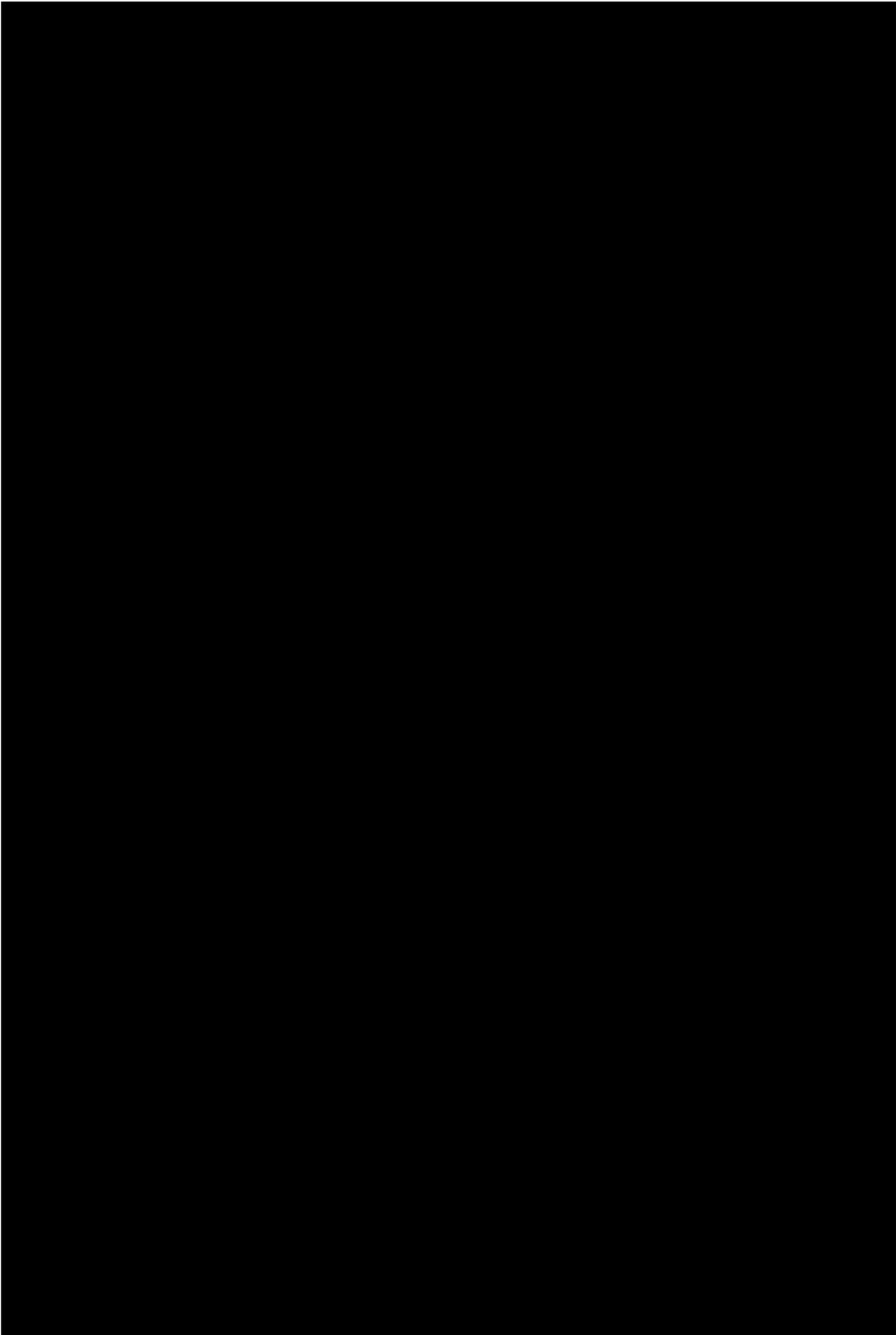
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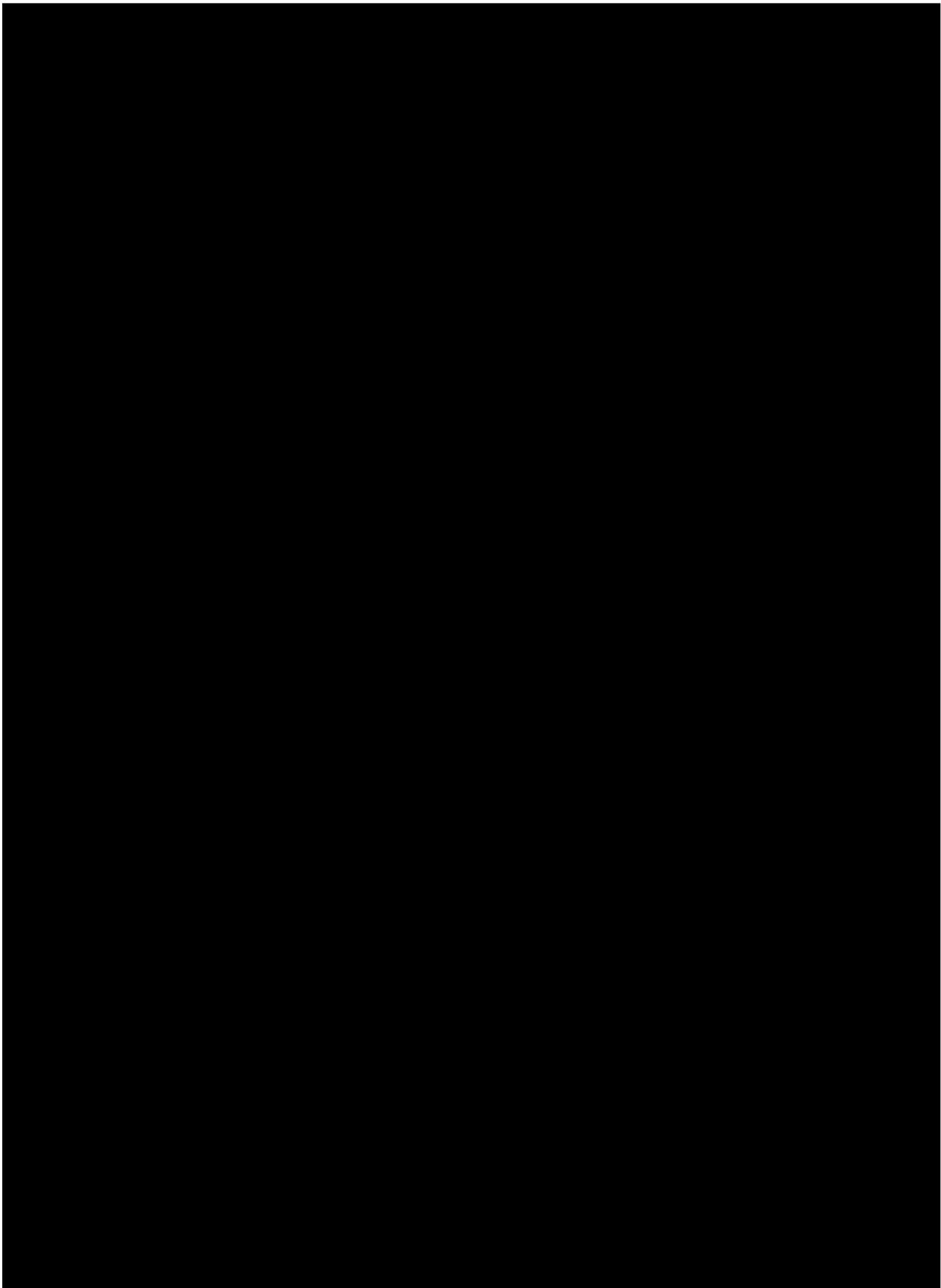
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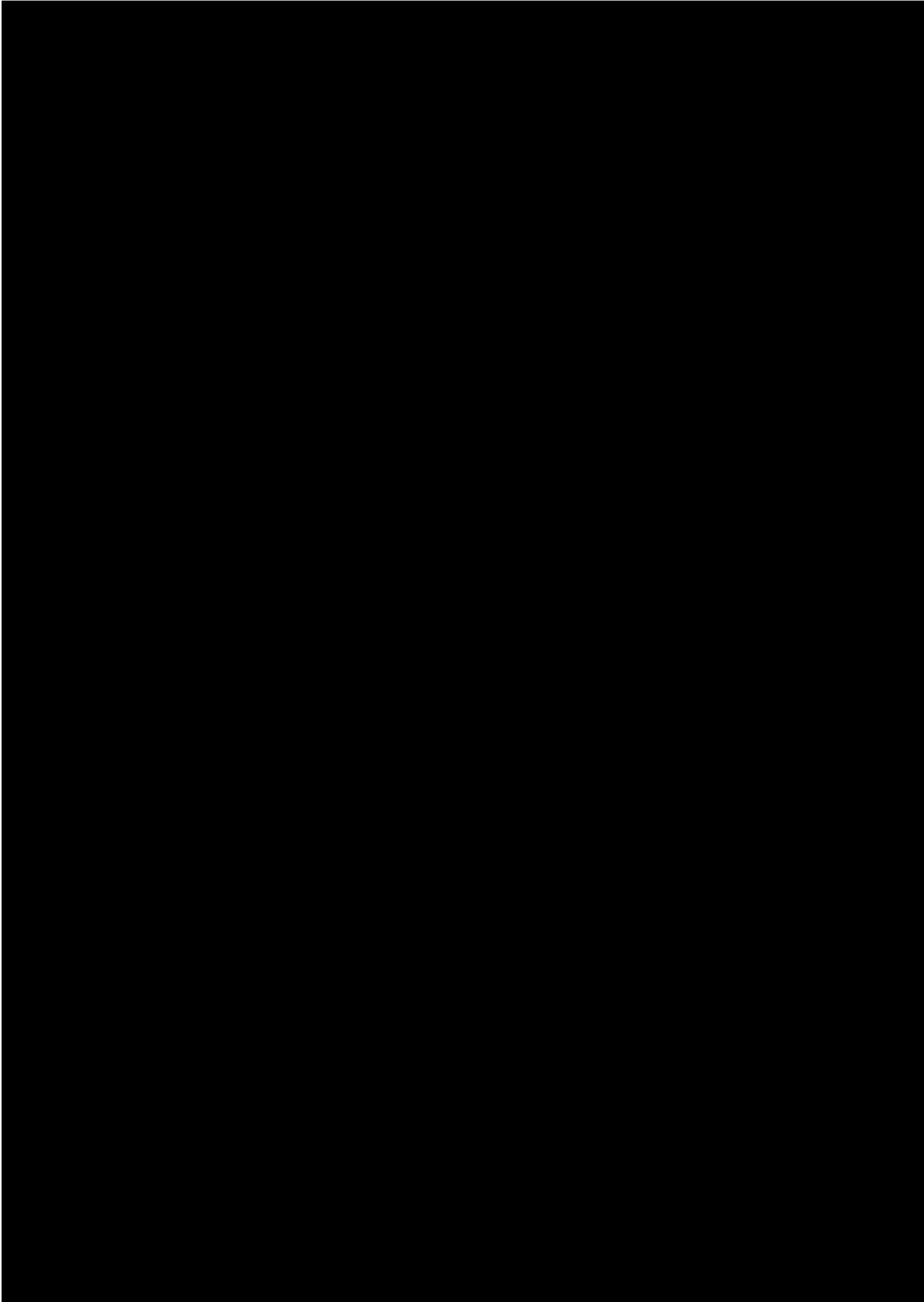
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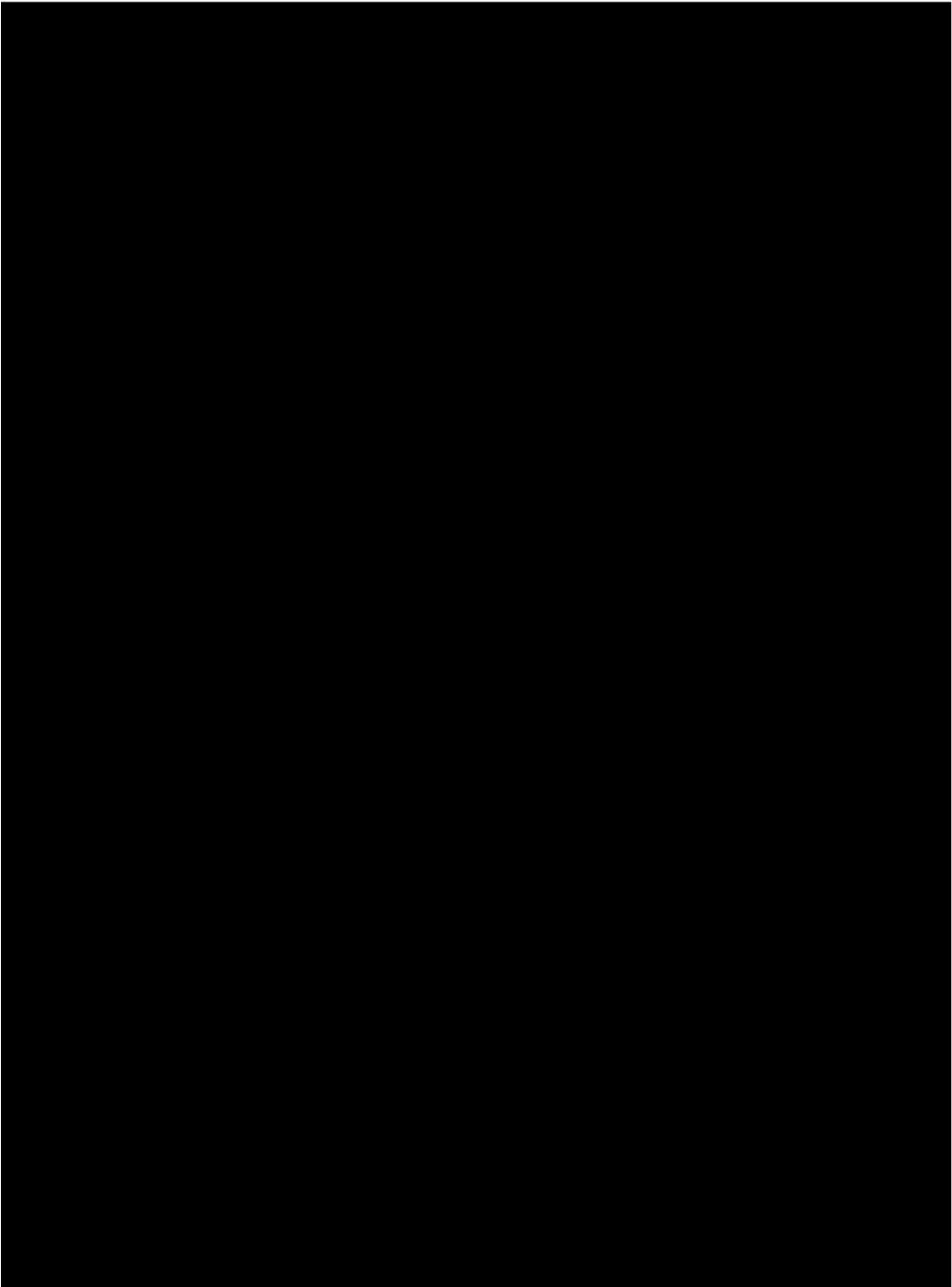
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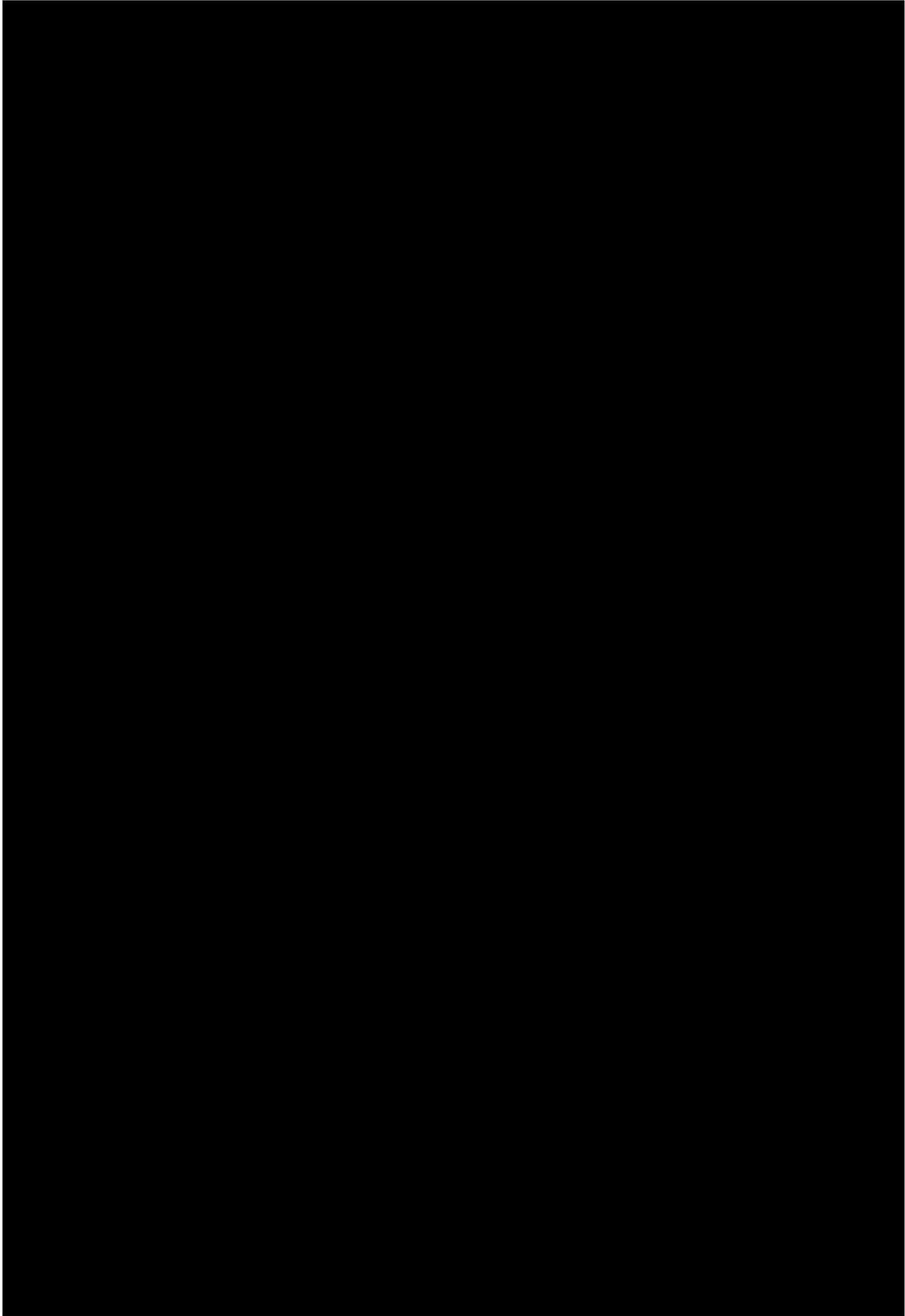
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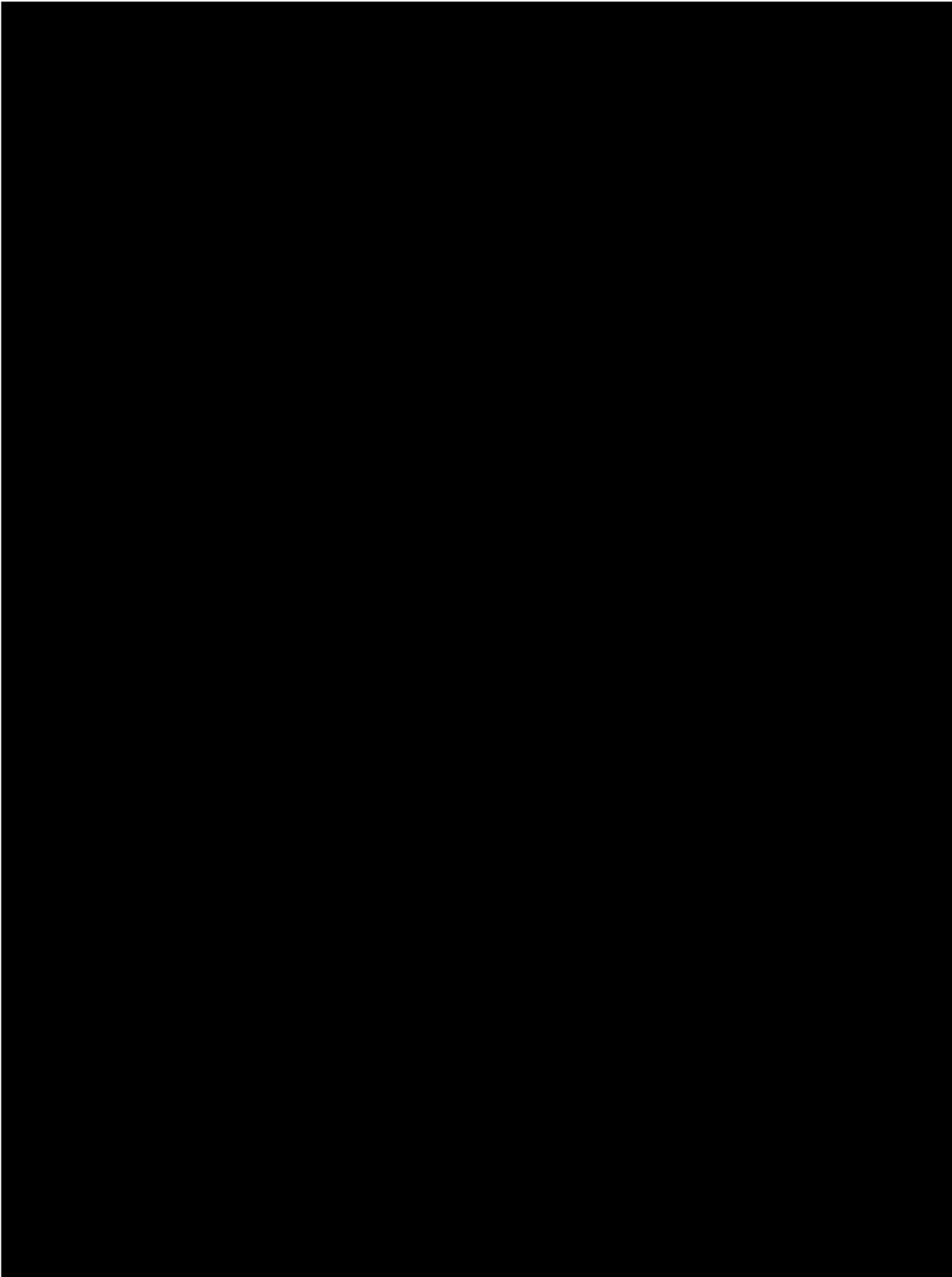
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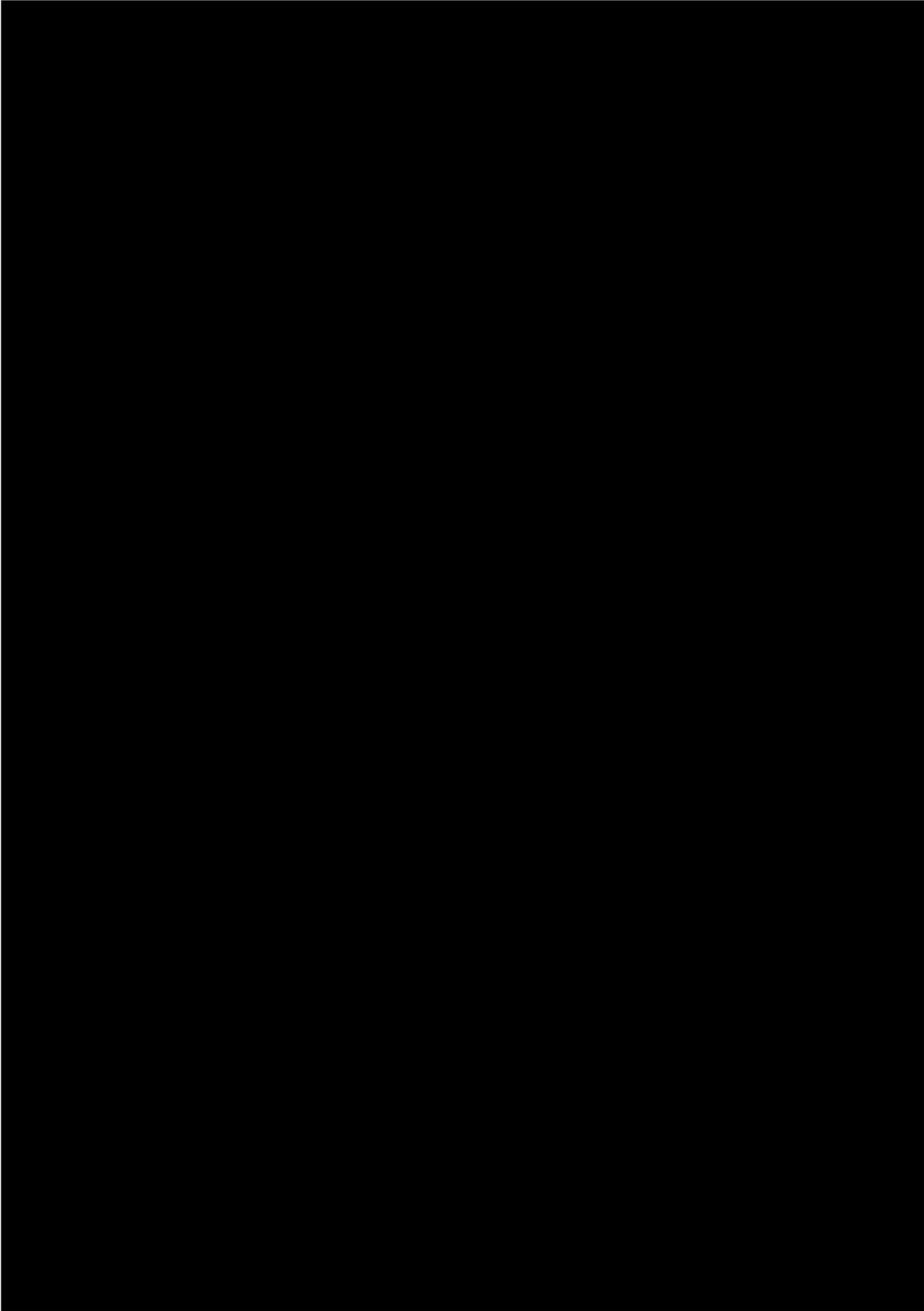
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Leaving foster care

158. I lived with the [REDACTED] until I was 19, but I stopped being under the care of the welfare office when I turned 16.

159. I was asked to go into the office in Hamilton to see Miss McKendrick before she signed me off. That was a bit of an eye-opener. She said it'd been lovely to see me

blossom into a young woman and asked me if I'd been happy with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] I said, "Yeah". I couldn't bring myself to bring any of this stuff out. She then told me that she was supposed to send me off with some money in a wee bank book, but there was nothing in mine because all my allowances had been used up each year. They must have had a yearly budget for me.

160. I don't think she was putting my mum and dad down. She asked me if they ever bought me anything. I reminded her that I always came to her if I needed anything. She then said, from what she saw, they never bought me anything.
161. I was dying to tell her that I never got to keep half the stuff she gave me because my dad pawned it. She then told me that she was going to put £10 in the bank book for me. She gave me that out of her own pocket. It was a lot of money in those days. That was the end of my involvement with Miss McKendrick.

Life after being in care

162. I lived with my mum and dad until I was nineteen. I had left school at fifteen and just worked away in my job. I got £3 and 14 shillings in wages and they took £3 for digs money. I had to buy clothes and toiletries with what I had left. I was good at my job and was appreciated. I used to get overtime on a Saturday. My mum and dad asked me for extra money when I got a rise or did overtime, but I got wise to that and stopped telling them about any extra money.
163. Life was still the same living with them, but I was a bit older and wiser. I used to stay over at my pal's house quite often.
164. I married my husband, [REDACTED], just to get out of the house. It was an escape route. We lived in Glasgow at first and then moved to East Kilbride. We have two daughters, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], and seven grandchildren.

165. My mum and dad used to visit us. I was their only child. They came up on a regular basis to visit the kids. They were so good to the kids. It became like a kind of a competition between them and my parents-in-law to see who could give the kids the most presents. I'm not bitter about it. It was just so different to how I was treated.
166. I looked after my mum and dad as they got older and became ill. I used to do things like decorate and lay carpets for them. I was a good daughter.
167. I was married for 21 years. In those days, you made your bed and had to lie in it. [REDACTED] was very jealous. I was beginning to find my voice and he was jealous of that. We had arguments and fights. He'd hit me and I'd hit him back.
168. I left [REDACTED] in 1990 and later got divorced. I met a new partner and was with him until he died about six years ago. We were engaged to get married. He was the love of my life.

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Reporting abuse

172. I've never made any reports to the police or any other authority.
173. It's taken me a long time to speak about my experiences. I've started to speak about it a bit more now. My friend, [REDACTED] has been helping me a lot. I've also spoken to another friend, [REDACTED] I've told my daughters some of it. I haven't given them the full details.
174. My husband was the first person I told. I didn't give him the full details. I think [REDACTED] is the only person I've told everything to. If you're a private person, you don't want everybody to know your business. Also, you blame yourself for being treated like that. You think you must have been bad, even though I know that I wasn't a bad person.
175. I think the Inquiry was the impetus I needed to start speaking about my own experiences. Other people were coming forward and it's a little bit easier knowing you're part of a group, that others have had similar experiences.
176. I've spoken to some people who are involved with the INCAS group, but I've not had any specific help or support from them.

Impact

177. My overall memory of Smyllum is that I was always frightened. I was frightened to speak. I wasn't good at conversations for a long time. I was just so shy, so frightened of doing wrong, even when I came out of there. I was so cowed. I think they knocked any confidence I had out of me. I never felt worthy. I don't think I've fully recovered from that. I think that feeling is still in me.
178. My experiences in Smyllum definitely affected me in my later years. I always remember thinking about it even after I left. I used to sit in school and think about

things that had happened. I couldn't concentrate on my lessons for thinking about things. It was just constantly there. It's followed me for a long, long time. I think the fact I was so afraid all the time explains my demeanour nowadays. I did eventually grow up and start speaking up for myself, but it took a long time to do that.

179. I think all the school moves when I was in foster care affected my education. That's one of my biggest regrets. I was always behind in class. I did do a bit better at the latter end of my secondary schooling, but probably not enough. I left school at fifteen and didn't go on to further education. I think I didn't have the tools to do it then.
180. I always felt that I wasn't intelligent and felt that I had to prove myself. I did that by working hard and doing well for my family. As my girls got older, I went out to work and did really well in the jobs I went into. I held management positions in retail and won performance awards from various employers, but I still feel that I didn't reach my full potential.
181. Also, it's not until you get older that you realise just how you were treated by the staff at school. I felt that the schools always had it in for me, because I was poor and maybe didn't look good. I always felt inferior. I was always frightened of teachers and doctors - anybody in authority, really. I never felt worthy. That was the case up until maybe only a few years ago.
182. I didn't dwell on my past too much when my kids were wee. As you get older, you think back and want answers as to how this was allowed to happen. I keep thinking back to my experiences in care and can't understand how somebody could be treated like that. I think about it a lot.
183. I'm really close to my grandkids. I look at them and think about what I went through as a child. I can't bear the thought of them ever being treated like that. My youngest granddaughter is four. I'd hate for anybody to touch her or chastise her, yet the people who were supposed to look after me had the right to do that to me.

184. I took my four year old granddaughter to see Santa and she didn't like him. You can see a change in her, even at that young age, when she doesn't like or trust somebody. I had that fear and mistrust all the time.
185. I've always been a very nervous person. I've tried to hide it. Friends would describe me as hyper. I've always got to be on the go. I've been on antidepressants for years. I sometimes feel that I'm lucky to have turned out the way I am. I know of kids who suffered more at the hands of nuns than me and didn't turn out to be good. They went down the wrong road. I always wanted to be better, always be good and do well, which I did in my later years.

Records

186. It never occurred to me that it might be possible to get a copy of my records from South Lanarkshire Council. I intend to make enquiries now. Now that I'm talking about my life, I have even more questions I want answered.

Lessons learned

187. Lessons must be learned so that no child goes through anything like that again. People need to be properly trained to work in children's homes. I don't suppose there was any such training available for the nuns in those days. They didn't even want to be there anyway. Children need to be loved and cared for by people who want to do the job.
188. I feel so let down by the welfare department. They saw the places I lived in and the number of schools I went to. They should have sussed my foster dad out a bit better. There needs to be a lot more scrutiny. I think they're much more strict when doing adoptions and fostering now. I hope the level of scrutiny is enough.

189. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

AAS

Signed.....

Dated..... 21/8/2017.....