

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

BKX

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is BKX My maiden name is My date of birth is 1943.  
My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I went into care as a baby. I was never told that I had a family. I had no idea, until I got my records from Barnardo's, that my father died when I was a baby. My father worked in Glasgow, with Rolls Royce. He was 53 years old when he died, from aortic disease. My mother was 26 years old when I was born. They had three children together. I have an older brother, and an older sister, MPC MPC is just under three years older than me and is eighteen months older than me. My mother decided to keep and put my sister and I in a home. I have a half-sister, who is five years younger than me.
3. I found out later that my mother and father were not married. My father had a previous marriage. My mother moved to Scotland from England with my father when he got the job at Rolls Royce. My mother was left stranded when my father suddenly died. Everything was taken out of the house because the things were on hire purchase. My mother came down to Wolverhampton where her family lived. She moved in with my grand-parents who already had other grown-up children and grand-children living with them. There were eleven people in this small house. My grand-parents decided to put

the girls in a home, keep the boy. I don't know why we didn't go into care in Wolverhampton.

## **Life in Care - Scotland**

### **Comlongon Castle, Dumfries**

4. Doctor Barnardo's kept babies at Comlongon Castle, until they were school age. For the first five or six years, MPC and I were both in Comlongon Castle but not together. I didn't know MPC then. I don't know whether MPC knew about me. I didn't know I had brother either. I stayed at Comlongon Castle until I was five years old, when I went to Glasclune, in North Berwick.
5. I have good memories of Comlongon Castle. When I went back there as an adult, it still looked the same as I remembered it. Comlongon Castle was beautiful. There was a balcony that the staff put all the babies' prams on, to get their bit of sunshine for the day.
6. My first memory is from when I was about three or four years old. I have funny memories, like stealing the gardeners hammer and throwing it in a bed of daffodils. I was a bit naughty. There were quite a few children, boys and girls.
7. There were always seven or eight ladies dressed up like nurses, with caps and an apron. Comlongon Castle was comfortable, I have no bad feelings about that stage of my life. There was nothing abusive that I can remember.

## **Routine at Comlongon Castle**

### *General Routine*

8. We slept in big rooms, dormitories. I think it was girls in one dormitory and boys in another. Sometimes we shared beds, we were so tiny then. The routine was very rigid and regimented but not painful. You had to make your bed before breakfast. Then you'd have a bible reading. We shared baths.
9. The dining-room was big and had a beautiful fireplace, with a big mirror above it. The staff discovered a secret compartment behind the mirror. The staff asked us all to sit down, cross-legged on the floor, so we could see what they were going to find. There was beautiful bone china hidden in the secret compartment. I was quite fascinated by that.
10. The staff organised us to be ready for meals, they herded us into the dining-room. The food was wholesome, meat and three veg. Breakfast would be cereal and juice. I was fed well. No-one was forced to eat at that early stage, that came later on, at Glasclune.
11. We wore normal clothes and shoes, although they were hand-me-downs. There wasn't a uniform as such. There was a place where the staff would fit shoes to your feet.
12. We went on some outings and to a pantomime once. Games and activities would be planned. I had a little black metal pram I pushed around, a dolly and a three wheeler bike. Those things were shared with the other children. I didn't have any personal possessions. We played in the gardens or in the building, depending on the weather. There were books about to read and the staff would read stories. I learned to read later, at Glasclune.

13. There were prayers at meals and you always said Grace. We went to church on Sunday. The church was Presbyterian although I think Barnardo's is Church of England.
14. When I was about four years old, I went to hospital to have my tonsils out. I remember going into hospital very well. After the operation I was lying on my pillow saying that I wanted ice-cream. I got my ice-cream but I felt very sorry for myself. There was another child sharing the bed with me, at the other end of it.
15. I had bedwetting problems. I wasn't punished for it in Comlongon.

### **Leaving Comlongon Castle**

16. My sister, MPC was already at Glasclune, North Berwick when Doctor Barnardo's decided that I was old enough to go there. I didn't know I had a sister until Barnardo's were removing me from Comlongon Castle to Glasclune. The staff said to me that I was going to move to Glasclune. That didn't mean much to me. I protested bitterly that I didn't want to go and I cried. I had become secure where I was.
17. The staff said I would meet my sister, to encourage me. That didn't have a big impact on me. I didn't understand anything about sisters and brothers. It didn't mean anything to me, I was an individual little girl.

### **Glasclune, North Berwick, East Lothian**

18. Glasclune was a beautiful home. My first impression was walking through the front door of this mansion and seeing this beautiful hallway. The hallway was where we all used to congregate on special occasions, for Christmas and things. It was all oak panelling, I was impressed with that. I thought Glasclune was lovely.

19. As you walked into the hallway, to the right was the big dining-room and to the left was a play-room for the children and a downstairs bathroom and toilet. There was another room off the play-room where we sometimes went to play games. There were stairs up to the next floor, where the dormitories were. There were several big dormitories. The dormitories went in age groups. There were about seventy or eighty kids, boys and girls. There were several bathrooms.
20. My sister MPC and I didn't get on very well. MPC used to do things like throw salt in my eyes. I thought, if this is what having a sister was like, I didn't want to have a sister.
21. MPI was the matron in charge when I first arrived at Glasclune. I think she was at Glasclune on her own, I don't recall a husband. MPI wore a pin-stripe suit. She looked like a bulldog, that's what I always thought of her. MPI looked elderly to me, maybe in her fifties. MPI wasn't at Glasclune for too long, she left or retired a year or so after I went to Glasclune.
22. After MPI, BDO/SPO came to Glasclune. They were the Superintendents who ran the home. BDO/SPO were in their late thirties or forties. They had their own, separate apartment, on the second floor. I never saw BDO/SPO very often. She was away somewhere else in the home doing things. BDO/SPO had two children, . They were about my age. I got on quite well with . was a cry baby. mingled in with us quite a lot, they were part of the crowd. They weren't special or treated differently.
23. I think most of the staff lived in. There seemed to be a staff member for each group, all female. More than one member of staff dealt with me. There was always different staff around you. There was a Mrs Kenny who was there a lot. I can't remember the names of the other staff but I can remember their faces.

24. My negative memories all begin in Glasclune. Glasclune was quite traumatic. I was terrified of the whole thing. There were no questions asked, I just did what I was told. The regime was very strict.

### **Routine at Glasclune, North Berwick**

#### *First day*

25. I think staff from Glasclune came to pick me up from Comlongon Castle. When I arrived at Glasclune, it was quite overwhelming for me. I cried and said I didn't want to go into the home. It was when I went to Glasclune that I first got to really know my sister. MPC had a little pink plastic tea set that she shared with me. MPC offered me a cup of tea. That was my introduction to my sister. MPC didn't know me and she was being forced to look on me as her sister. The staff guided me and told me what I had to do. I met all the other children.

#### *Mornings and bedtime*

26. We slept in dormitories. In the first dormitory I was in, there were about ten children in single beds, all girls. MPC was in a different dormitory, because of her age. A lady, one of the staff, would come in and say, "Good morning." We'd have to say, "Good morning" to whoever it was. You had to make your bed straight away. Then you went downstairs.
27. Downstairs was a huge eagle, bible stand. We would stand and stare at that, waiting for BDO/SPO to read us the bible. Then there were prayers. I would start to faint because I hadn't eaten. I needed to sit down and have breakfast.
28. The older ones stayed up later than the younger ones. The younger ones were off to bed quite early. A staff member would be supervising. You didn't get a story read to you at night, the staff were too busy getting us off to bed. I imagine it was quite a handful, getting all those people in a dormitory settled.

29. There were several baths in the bathroom. We had a bath every day. We were kept clean. We had our own toothbrush and Gibb's pink toothpaste in a tin. I loved the smell of it.

*Mealtimes / Food*

30. We all went into the same dining-room and had our tables to sit at. The food was brought to us. Breakfast was basic, a bit of cereal, porridge or toast and a drink. We had a cooked lunch at school. Dinner was quite reasonable, vegetables, mashed potatoes and meat. On Sunday afternoons, we had dripping on bread. It wasn't good for you but it was nice with salt and pepper on it.
31. Sometimes the staff made you sit there and eat the food, if there was something you didn't like. Sometimes you would vomit because you didn't like it. It's not a good thing, force-feeding anyone.

*Clothing / uniform*

32. We had a school uniform, a black pleated tunic, white blouse, tie, white socks and black shoes. We had our own individual clothing in Glasclune. You had one special dress for special occasions. I had a blue taffeta dress. The clothes were alright. I don't think any of the clothes or footwear were new. You wore your clothes until you grew out of them. Our name was in the clothes. There was a huge room full of shoes. The only time I got taken out to go clothes shopping was when I was leaving England to come to Australia. The staff took us to a place to get everything new.

*School*

33. Starting school was daunting. I had to meet new people at school as well. The school was a public primary school, North Berwick Junior Primary. There were things about school I enjoyed. I was average at school, from my school reports.

34. The children from Glasclune were teased mercilessly. We were called the 'Banana Kids' because we were Barnardo's. We were made to feel we were a bit different to everyone else at school.
35. There were always punishments at school, like if you had words with the child next to you or in the playground. You would have to hold your hands out, one on top of the other with the palms up, and be hit on the palms of your hand with the two-tongued leather strap. That happened at an early age. I didn't like the headmistress, she was the one who gave me the strap. The headmistress was brutal.

*Leisure time/Trips / Holidays*

36. I liked reading, playing games and the high jump. There were books at Glasclune and you could sit by the window and read. I played dollies. We nicked fruit from the orchard. We were children, we did naughty things just because we could. I remember there were girls around me a lot of the time. The boys were kept separate.
37. There were some lovely times at the beach in North Berwick. We had swimming lessons and went swimming, during the course of the year. We went to the pantomime in Edinburgh. We went ice-skating, that was such a thrill. There were always a few activities.
38. From the age of nine, until I went to Australia, MPC and I went on holidays with a couple called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. We called [REDACTED] Aunt [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Uncle [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were in their late thirties or forties. They would take MPC and I out of Glasclune. They were in Stranraer. They met us somewhere halfway, Glasgow or somewhere. We went there every holiday. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were really nice. They had no children when MPC and I went there. Later, they adopted a boy, [REDACTED]. I never met [REDACTED] because, by then, we were getting ready to come to Australia.
39. [REDACTED] was a big, rosy-cheeked farmer. MPC and I used to tickle him because he didn't like being tickled. It was an innocent thing to do. [REDACTED] was always giggling and



carrying on over that. We went to a few Highland Gatherings. Aunt [REDACTED] was especially nice. I didn't like coming back home, to Glasclune.

### *Birthdays and Christmas*

40. Christmas is one of my few happy memories of Glasclune. Christmas was exciting. You always had a stocking on the end of your bed in the morning, when you woke up. In the stocking were walnuts, apple, mandarin and some sweets. There was the most beautiful Christmas tree in the hall.
41. You were allowed to make a short Christmas list of what you would like. I always said a stamp album and a fountain pen. They were the main things I wanted. I got them. I got a beautiful doll which was used in the Nativity play. These things were for me to keep. There was a gift for each child on the Christmas tree. A lot of donations were gifted to the home. We had a nice Christmas dinner.
42. On your birthday, you always had a cake and everyone sang 'Happy Birthday'. You got a gift.
43. At Halloween, we scraped out the orange pumpkins and put a candle in it.

### *Healthcare*

44. Judging by my health records, Barnardo's was very particular about healthcare. There were regular check-ups for everything. A doctor came to the home to examine us. I had bronchitis a lot and I was always being checked for that. Once, when I was about eight or nine years old, I burned myself with an iron. I stupidly put the iron up to my jumper and it burnt through to the skin. It wasn't serious but I had to have the doctor look at it. We went to the dentist regularly.
45. We were out on a Sunday walk and I broke my ankle running down a hill. The staff didn't believe I'd done much to it, so they were twisting my ankle this way and that. I was screaming with pain. The staff checked my ankle later in the afternoon and

realised that it was swollen up, like a football. I went to hospital in Edinburgh and my leg was put in a cast. I was in hospital and then I got the mumps.

### *Religious Instruction*

46. There were prayers at meals. We went to church on Sundays. At Christmas time we went to church twice, in the morning and in the evening. We had smarter clothes and polished shoes for church.

### *Chores*

47. There were a lot of baths to clean and I did a lot of cleaning of baths. I think I was too young to be cleaning baths. I cleaned hand basins. We did all the cleaning, sometimes in the morning. I polished shoes. There were eternal inspections of everything, by the staff. If you didn't do the cleaning right, you did it all again. I learned quickly in life to make sure I did it right the first time.

### *Bed Wetting*

48. The staff didn't have much tolerance for bed wetting and you were always punished. You were made to feel really bad for doing it. Once, when [REDACTED] BDO/SPO [REDACTED] were running the home, the matron in charge of the dormitory tied my knickers around my face. The matron left me sitting there, on a chair in the middle of the dormitory. It seemed like ages that I sat there, a couple of hours, probably more. I don't know the lady's name. I was quite young at the time and hadn't been at Glasclune that long. The bedwetting went on for a few years. I was wetting my bed from five to eight years of age. There were other children who wet themselves.
49. When I was eight or nine years old, I was given a bluebird of happiness brooch for my birthday from Barnardo's. I thought the brooch was beautiful. I wet myself and the staff took the brooch off me. I never got it back.

*Discipline*

50. I was always being punished for something or another. I was quite mischievous and I can remember all the mischievous things I did. We walked past the kitchen which was a big, old-fashioned kitchen with a stone floor. We saw a loaf of bread on a board, with a knife. We went in and nicked a slice off it and ran for our lives.
51. Our dormitory was near [BDO/SPO] apartment. [BDO/SPO] stored all their biscuits and things in a cupboard. We found a key for [BDO/SPO] cupboard on the floor, near our dormitory. I got the key, opened the cupboard and got this tin of biscuits out. I took the tin all the way downstairs, out of the home, into the back garden and up to the treehouse, with a baby's blanket over it. A whole heap of us munched the biscuits in the dormitory as well. We left evidence everywhere, crumbs. We got punished for that. We had to stand against the wall outside the dormitory, for quite some time. It wasn't a horrendous crime.
52. Sometimes I'd be physically punished by Mr [BDO] because I hadn't done my chores right, usually by being hit with the ruler. Mr [BDO] hit me on the knuckles, three times on both hands. I hurt. I was crying.

**Abuse at Glasclune, North Berwick**

53. Miss [MPI] beat me on one occasion. When I had broken my ankle and had the mumps, I was isolated in a dormitory. I was the only one in there. The coal fire was going. I had a brown and white checked apron. When you're stuck on your own for all these hours at a time, you want to be doing something. I decided to wave the apron in front of the coal fire. It caught fire, just as the matron, Miss [MPI], walked past. Miss [MPI] came in and asked what I was doing. I sat on the floor, cried my eyes out and wet myself, in fear. Miss [MPI] enjoyed seeing me fearful. I was fearful of what she was going to do to me. Miss [MPI] punished me severely for that, even though I had a sore ankle and mumps. Miss [MPI] whipped me hard on the bum, quite a few times, with some sort of stick. It hurt.

54. When [BDO/SPO] took over, it was Mr [BDO] who beat me. He would take me to the second room on the left, in the foyer area, where we played games. Mr [BDO] hit me a lot with a ruler and with a leather strap, three on each hand. Mr [BDO] hit me on a regular basis, there was always something wrong. He derived a lot of pleasure from that. Other children got punished as well.
55. I can't even remember what I had done wrong but I was hauled into the bathroom by Mr [BDO] I was made to strip and bend over a bath. Mr [BDO] hit me with the back of a brush on my bottom. There were just the two of us in the bathroom. I was nine or ten years old. I was terrified because I didn't know why I was being punished. I was so fearful, thinking, what have I done?
56. Mr [BDO] was always caressing the teenage girls who were developing breasts, myself included. I was eleven to twelve years old. He would come up behind you and his hands would be around and over your breast area, feeling your nipples. I saw Mr [BDO] do it to other girls. He would do it in the foyer where everyone was mingling. Mr [BDO] did that on a regular basis, when the opportunity arose. I was too frightened to say anything and who do you say it to? You know it's not right. You live in fear in places like Glasclune because the staff are the ones in charge, they give out the punishment. How do you turn to someone like that, confess that you're worried and don't like what they're doing? I don't recall anyone at Glasclune ever asking me anything. The girls didn't talk about what Mr [BDO] was doing. We were all too fearful. People like Mr [BDO] prey on that.

*Abuse whilst on holiday at the [REDACTED] in Stranraer*

57. My Aunt [REDACTED] had a relative, I assume he was her brother, we were asked to call him Uncle [BKU] He seemed old to me. I can still vaguely see him in my mind. Uncle [BKU] didn't live with Aunt [REDACTED] he lived a few miles away, on a farm. From when I was nine years old until I was twelve years old, Uncle [BKU] would take [MPC] and I into the fields. Uncle [BKU] would sit on the brick wall, sit me on his lap and put his hands up

my knickers. On every occasion we went to Stranraer, if we were to meet up with Uncle **BKU** this would happen. It happened more than once or twice or three times.

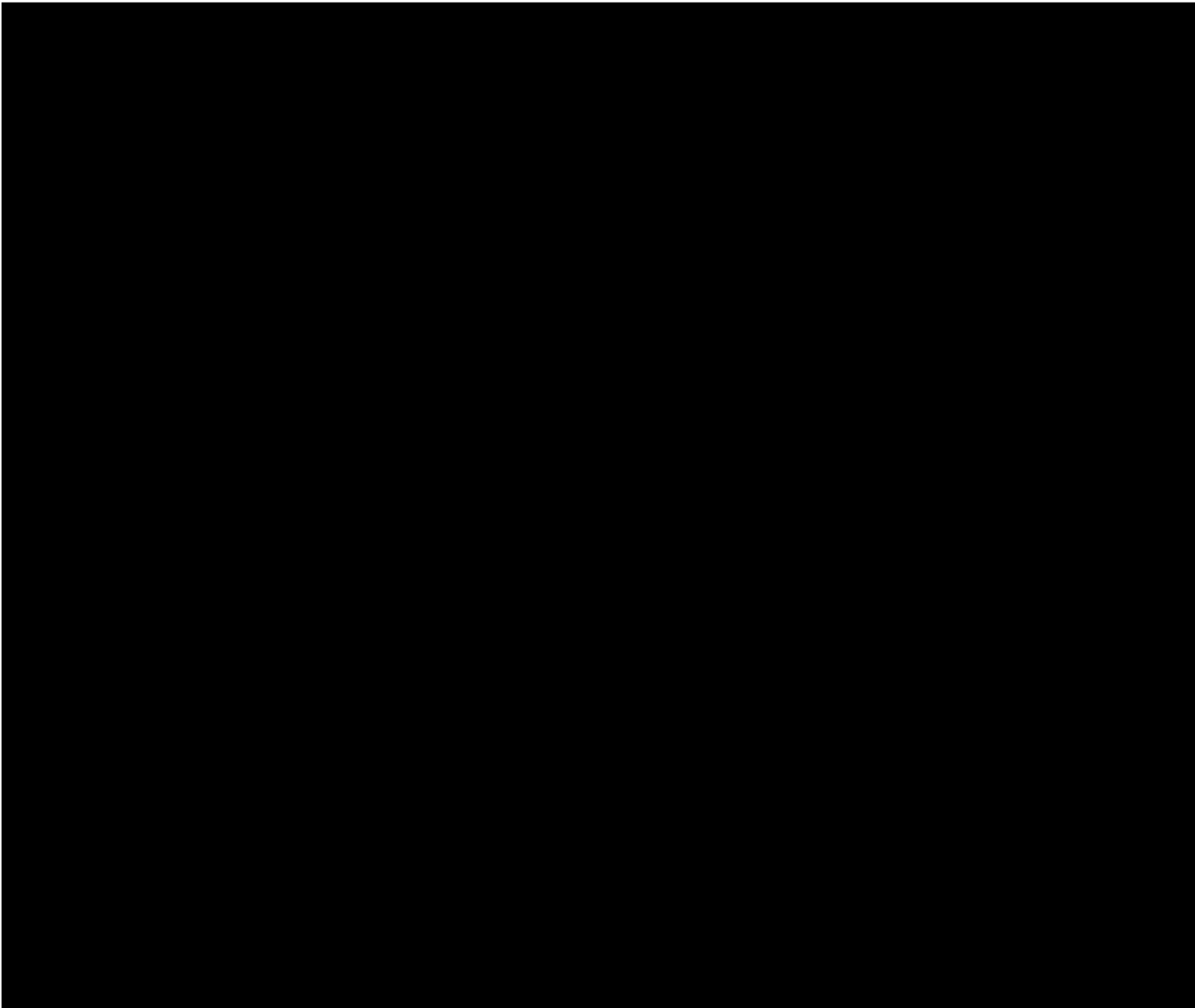
58. Uncle **BKU** did this to **MPC** too. It was many years later that it suddenly came out, between my sister and I, that we'd both experienced it. **MPC** was with me when I was on Uncle **BKU** lap but we never discussed it at that time.

59. I was so innocent. Something in your brain says, is this right or wrong? You question it. I was confused. You realise when you get older it was wrong. How does a young girl approach an adult and say, "This happened to me today"? I always lived in fear of being punished. I don't think anyone would have believed me anyway. Now I realise how wrong that was.

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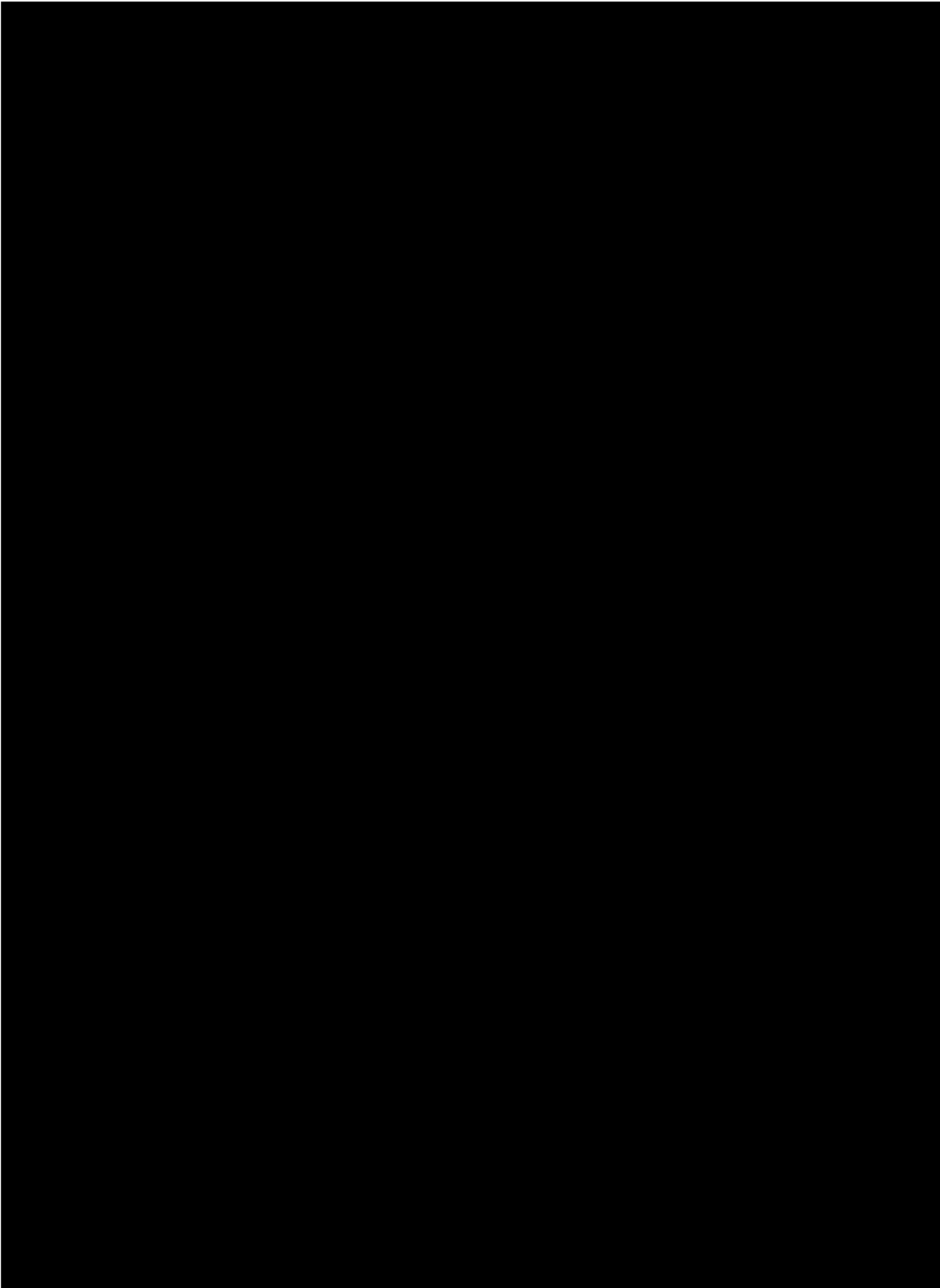
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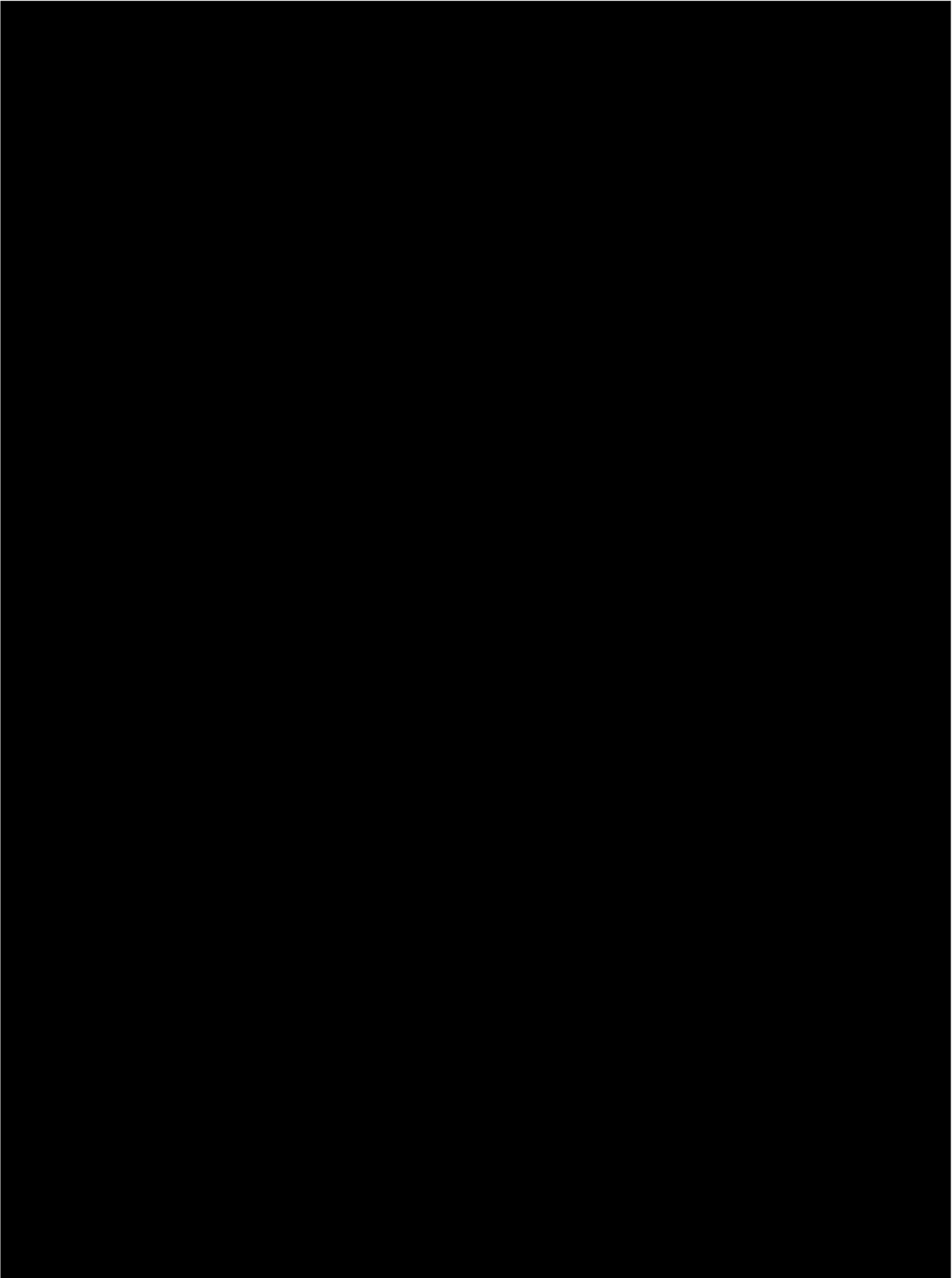


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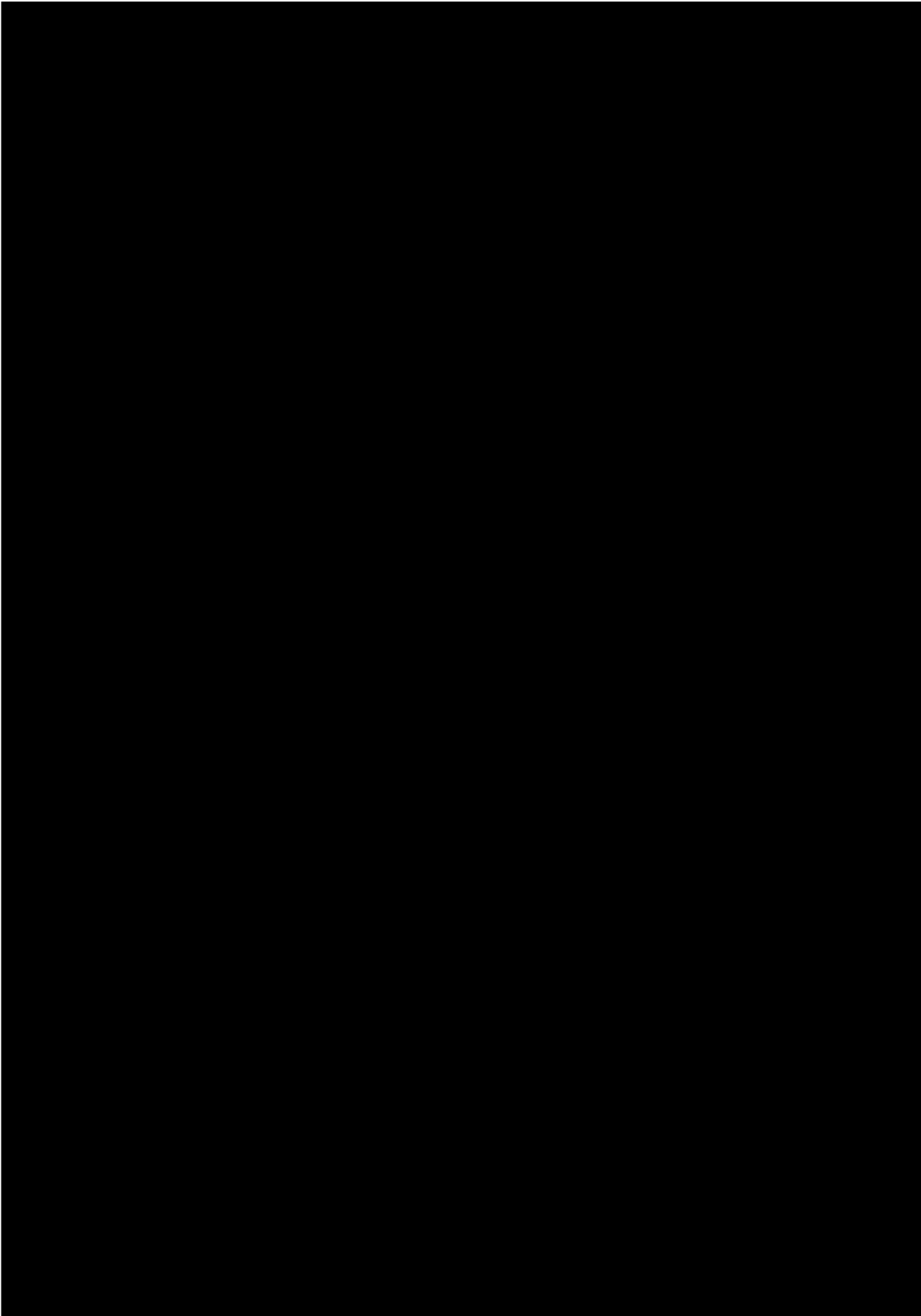
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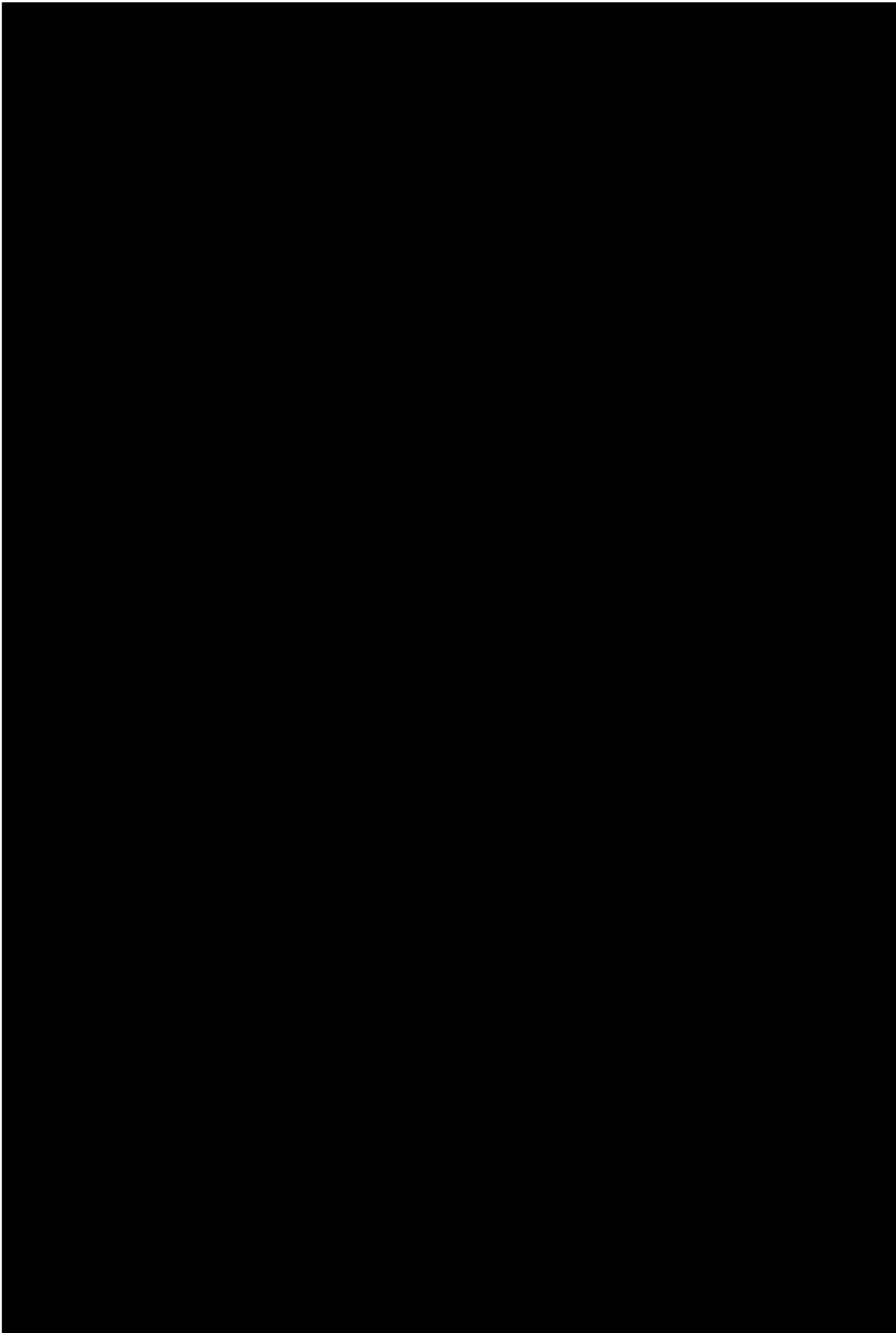
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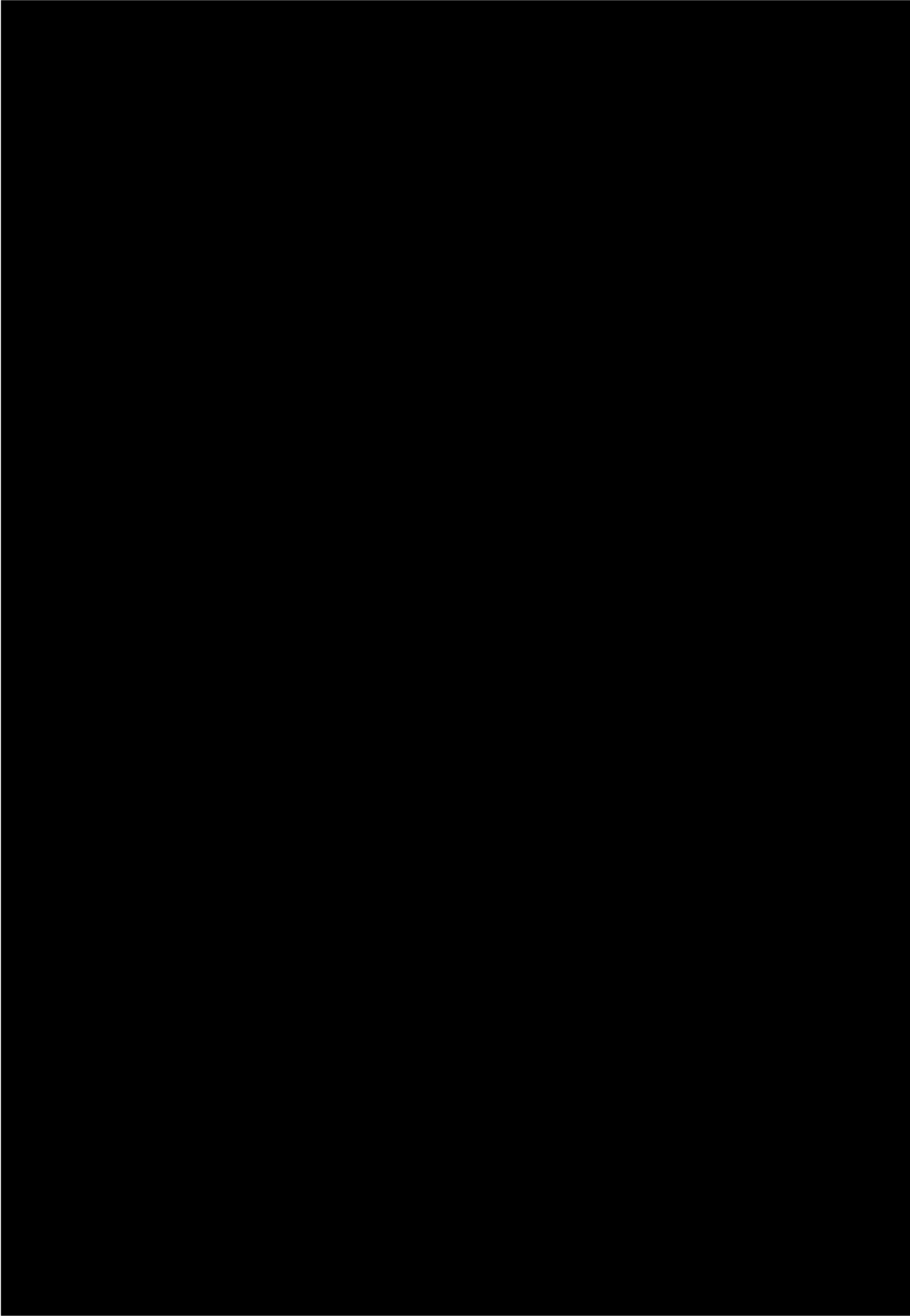


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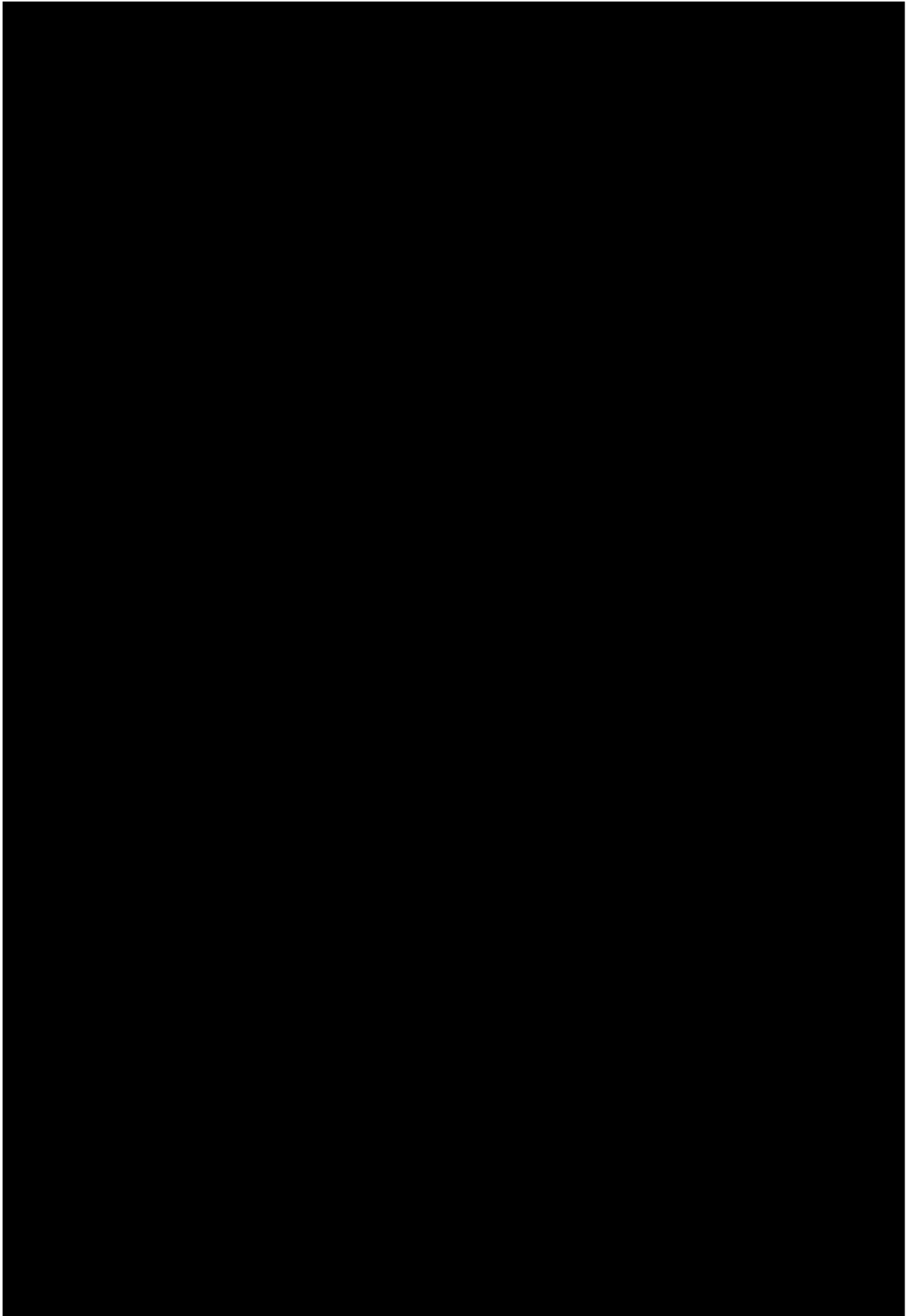
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**Impact**

105. MPC and I didn't know each other at Glasclune and we didn't get on at first. I didn't like MPC and she didn't like me. We were never close because of our separation. Now, we love each other. MPC and I couldn't imagine life without each other. MPC

is my sister and she's been a godsend to me throughout the years. She was the only family I had. I didn't meet my family in the United Kingdom until I was 55 years old.

106. For the first few years of our lives, MPC and I met then separated, met then separated. That's how it was. It's understandable why we didn't get on very well for a few years. Deep down in my heart I always knew MPC was my sister. We had the same mother and father. MPC and I shared what we had been through, being in institutions. It was difficult. You can't form warm relationships with anyone.
107. The staff at Glasclune were not very nice. I don't ever remember feeling warm and comforted. The only good that has come out of my experience, is that it has made me into a very strong person. I'm able to deal with anything. In the early years of my life, I had a few insecurities all because of my childhood. There was one emotional trauma after another. I couldn't mix well with people. I've improved over the years. I've learned a lot in life. I'm quite savvy.
108. There were some nice times at Glasclune but, sadly, the thing that you wanted was missing, the emotion, the love, the hugs, the kisses. I was afraid to show my emotions in the end. I always vowed I'd make up for that with my own family. My family got love, hugs and kisses. I was very loving with my family. All the time, I must have been subconsciously thinking, this isn't going to happen to my family, they'll get the attention I didn't get.

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115. I've never blamed my mother for putting us in a home. She was given twelve months to take us back. My mother would have had to pay Barnardo's money for my upkeep in the first twelve months. It became obvious my mother didn't have the money, so I

was kept in the home. I think my mother had to live with this terrible guilt that she was forced to hand two children over. I always reassured my mother that I never once held it against her. What must it have been like for her, to be left stranded, with a wee baby, a three year old daughter and a little boy? My mother had no choice. She did what she thought was best. I have no regrets.

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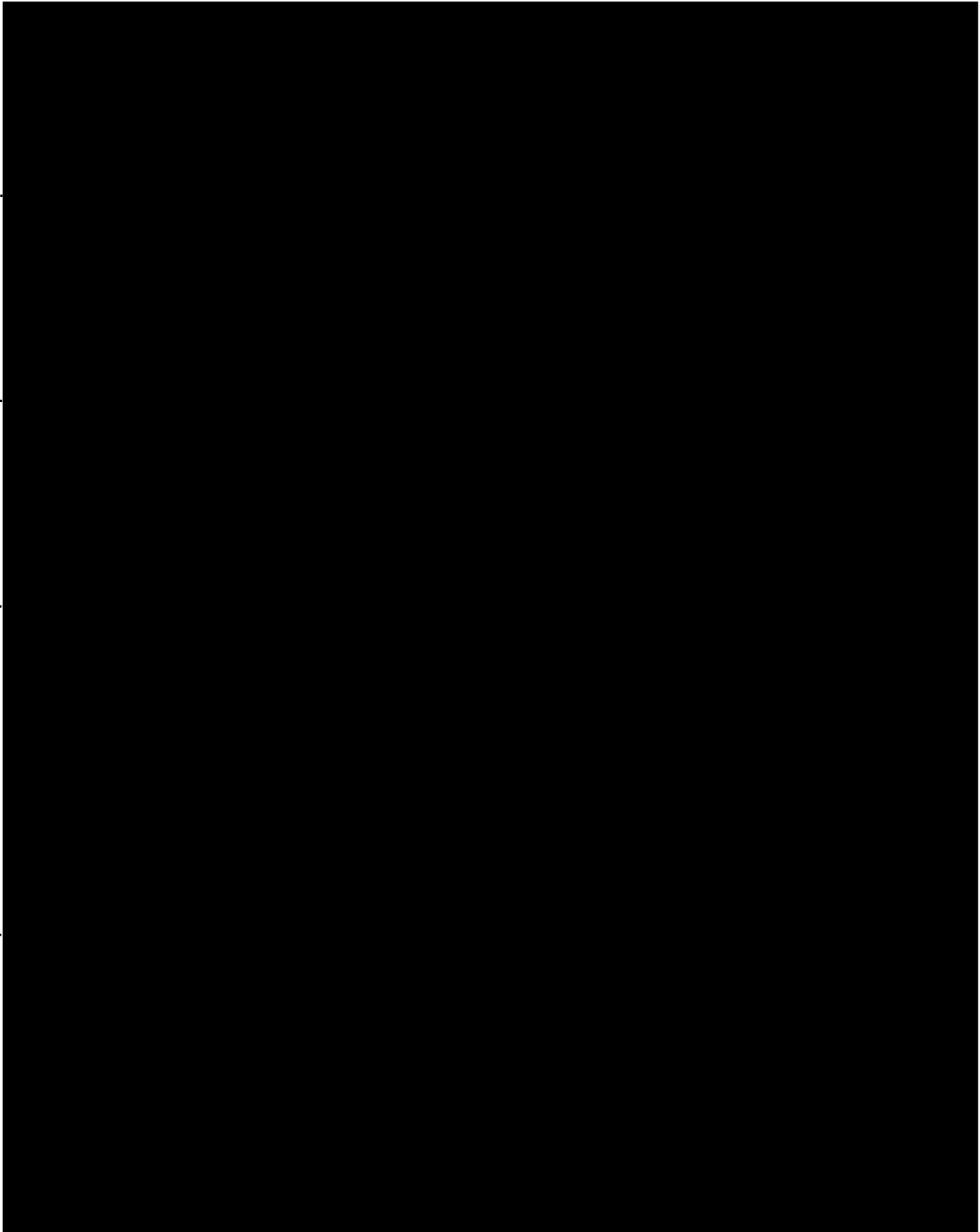


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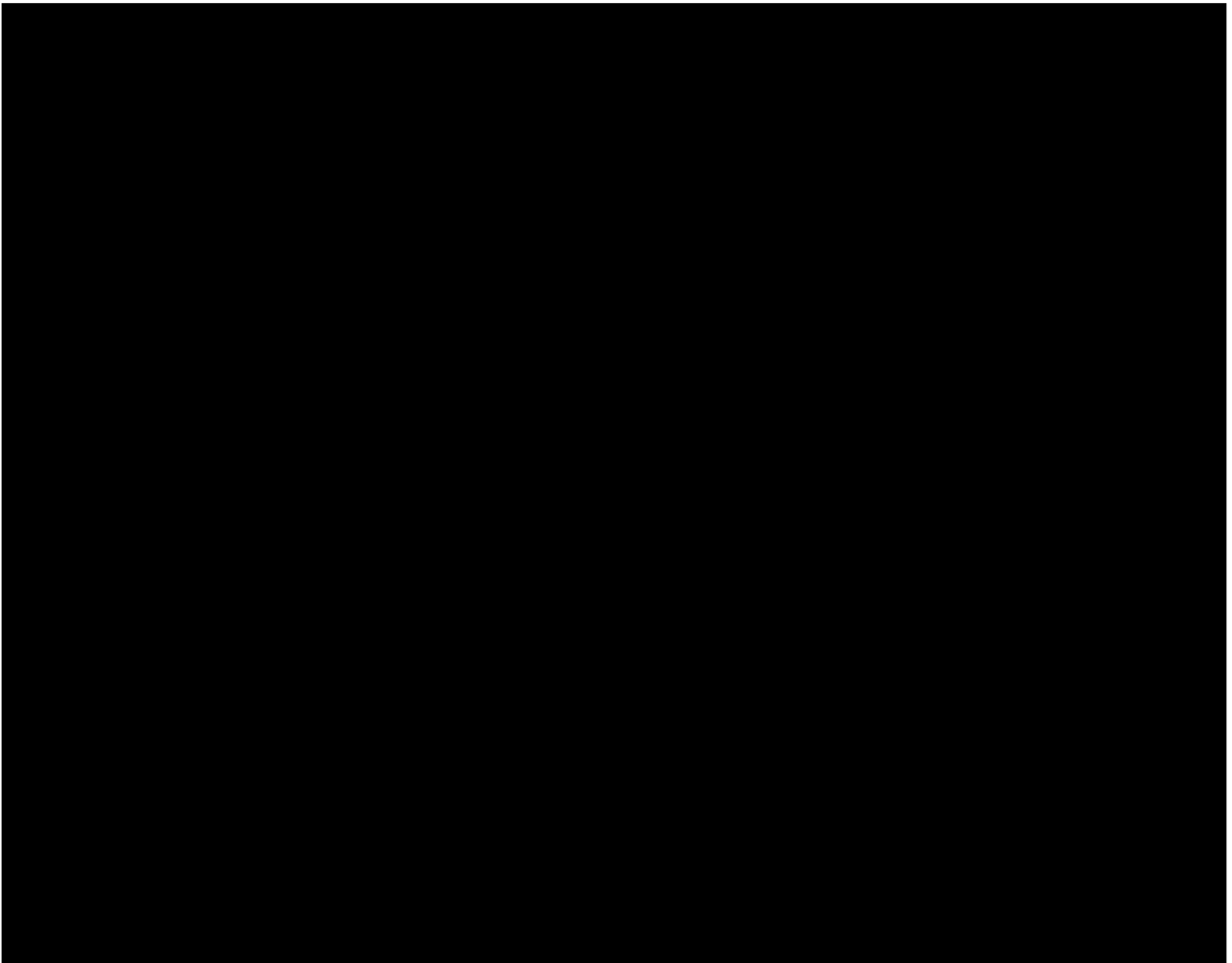
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### **Records**

126. I got my records from Barnardo's about twenty years ago. Barnardo's gave me information that I could apply for my records. Barnardo's vetted the records first and blacked out things they didn't want me to see, like family addresses. Getting my records was devastating. It was the cold way Barnardo's made their reports on you, like you were nothing, just a number. It was awful, the way they wrote the reports, almost like you weren't there. It's like the reports are not about you.
127. I got the records from Barnardo's in Australia. They had got information from Barnardo's in the United Kingdom, collated it and sent what they thought you could see. There are quite a lot of records but I do feel some of it is missing. There was a lot about my family that I would have liked to have known more. I don't think Barnardo's were telling me everything,

128. There is information about my mother, when Barnardo's interviewed her. Barnardo's commented that my mother was a fine looking woman, well-kept but evasive about certain information Barnardo's wanted from her.

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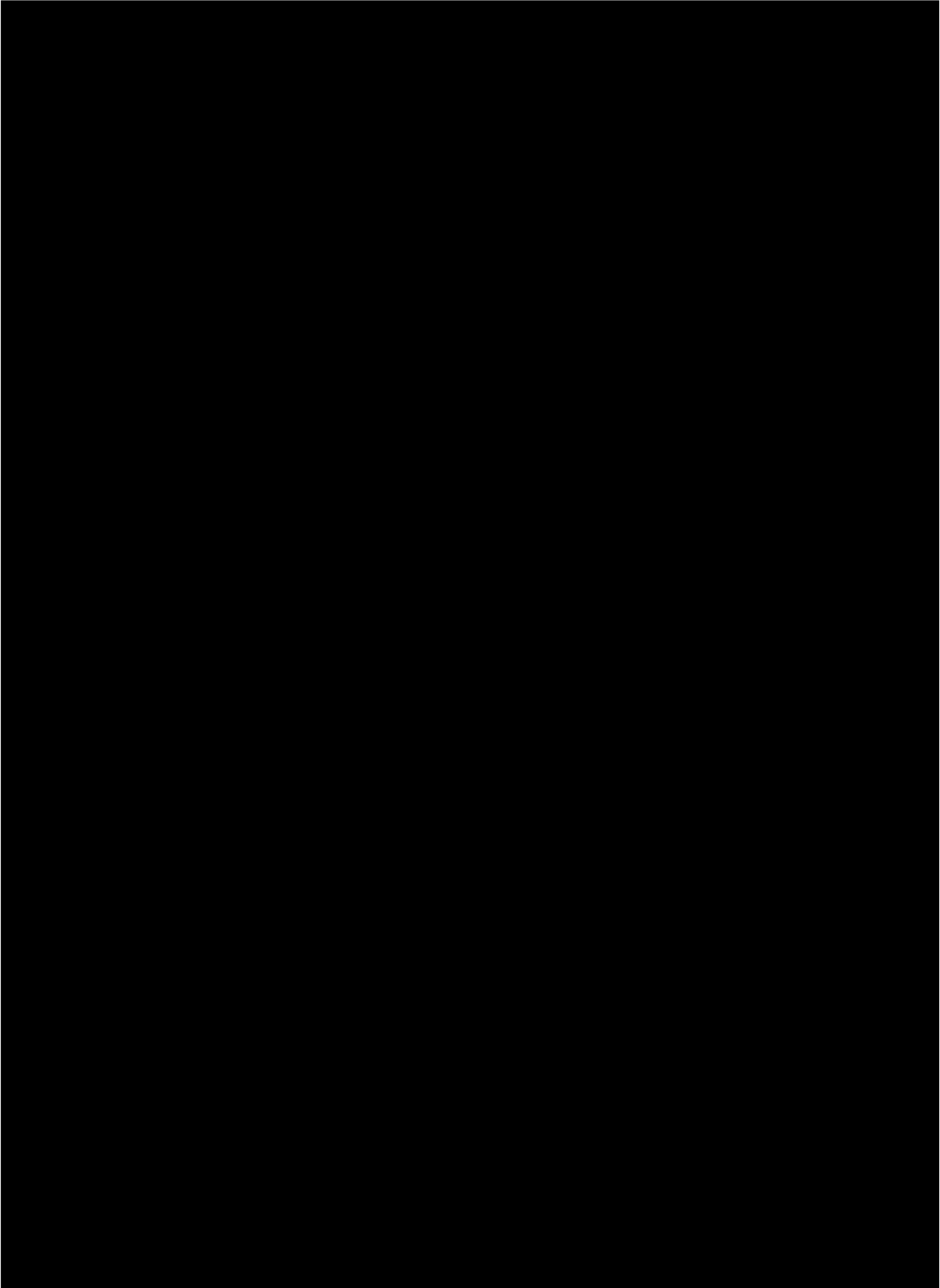
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**Lessons to be Learned**

- 138. I'd like to think, in the future, people will be vetted and trained more thoroughly, so that children cannot be exposed in the way we were ever again. We were very exposed, we weren't being helped. That shouldn't be allowed to happen anymore.
- 139. Institutions should allow for children's feelings and emotions. There should be warmth and understanding, even if the staff can just put their arm around your shoulder and ask how you are. There was none of that for me.

**Other information**

- 140. My life is well on its way. If people can learn from it and if whatever I have said can help anyone and improve the way things are done for the kids of the future in homes, I'm happy.
- 141. 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.

Signed.....  .....

Dated..... *24/05/2019* .....