

This is not my ocean.

Indigo Regis Conat-Naar

Special thanks to my family
and Saint Petersburg, FL.



Mom's sun hat and pink beach towel is in the back of
the 1995 Honda Odyssey
that I am not allowed to drive and
I think about how I might never live here again.



Rosie is in the Suwannee River
at sunset; it is almost June.



I remember a summer where it is hurricane
after hurricane and I remember when they begin
cutting down trees before they have
a chance to fall.



Uncle Ray survives the holocaust,
we celebrate his 90th birthday
and we call Grandma CeCe at dinner.



I think how we could drive over the bridge
go straight, turn right,
and turn left on Rafael Boulevard,
but we don't.



Rosie and Riley sit on car seats in the hot garage and we giggle quietly without waking up the house.



There is a banana tree in the backyard of a house on Rafael Boulevard until 2008.



Mom always stops to smell the Magnolias.



There is a sign in Western Massachusetts,
Celia pulls over so I can take a photo.



Riley has just gone swimming, it is New Year's Eve.



I live next to Sasha in a dormitory,
I sit in his room with him
and sometimes I cry while he plays guitar.



Today is Valentine's day.



I eat my first and only
English Breakfast and the bacon is pretty good
but I don't like the beans.



Grandma CeCe's furniture
is from her childhood home in Belgium.



It is summer in Vermont;
Yijing falls asleep in the pool.



I am born in a hot tub.



My stepmother makes breakfast for six adults and two toddlers.



I see children playing in the sun
in the English countryside and I think about
how I want to go home.



We send a photo of me to Grandma CeCe,
she places it
within the frame of a photo of her mother
and we marvel at the resemblance.



It is Christmas;
Mom teaches Grandma how to make saurkraut.



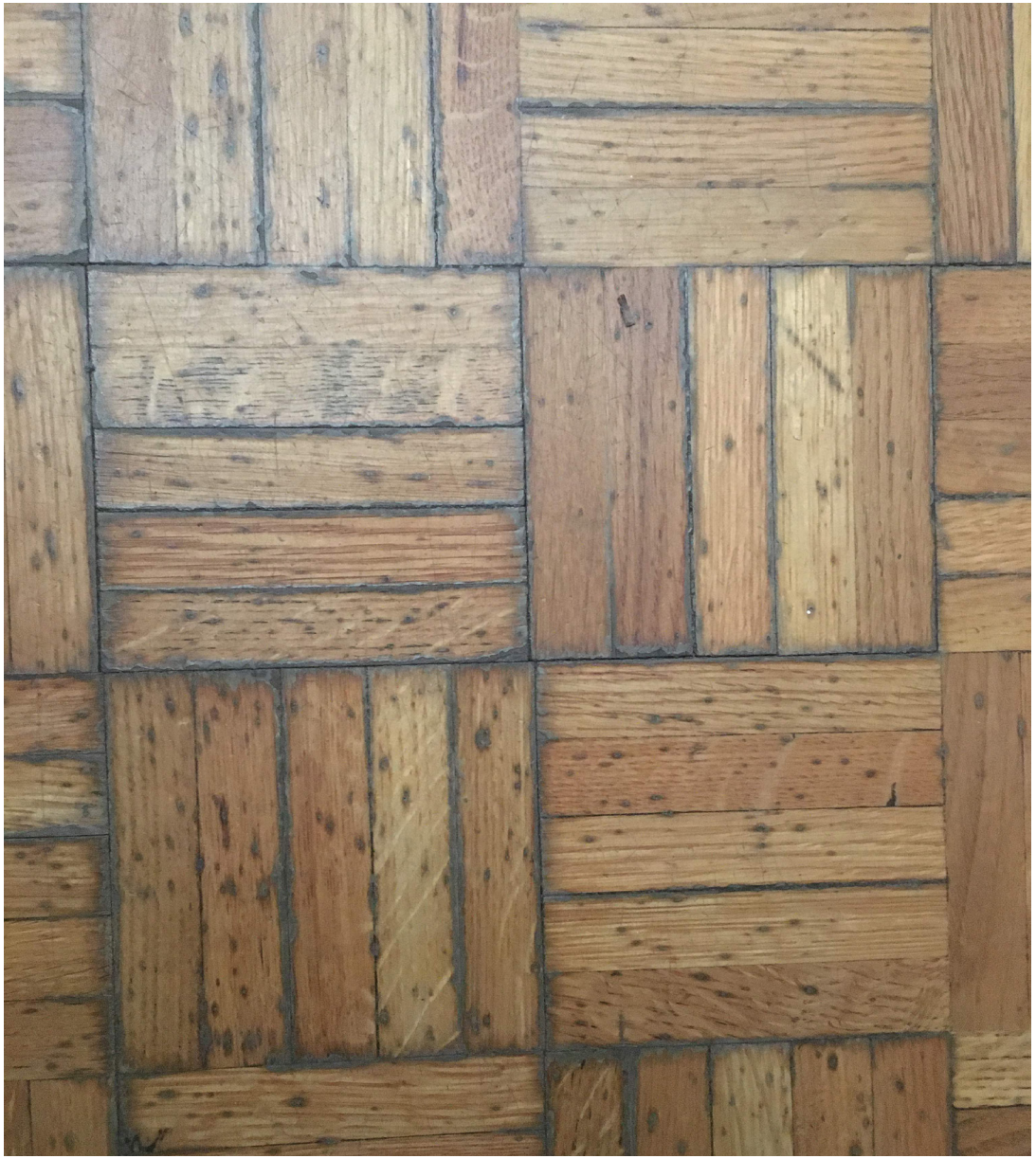
I visit Sasha in New York City in the summer
and at some point I realize
that we aren't as close as we used to be.



It floods in Venice
and I think about how my father knows
that his house will fall below sea level in my lifetime.



A tree falls in a graveyard in early spring
and it is cut down after the fact.



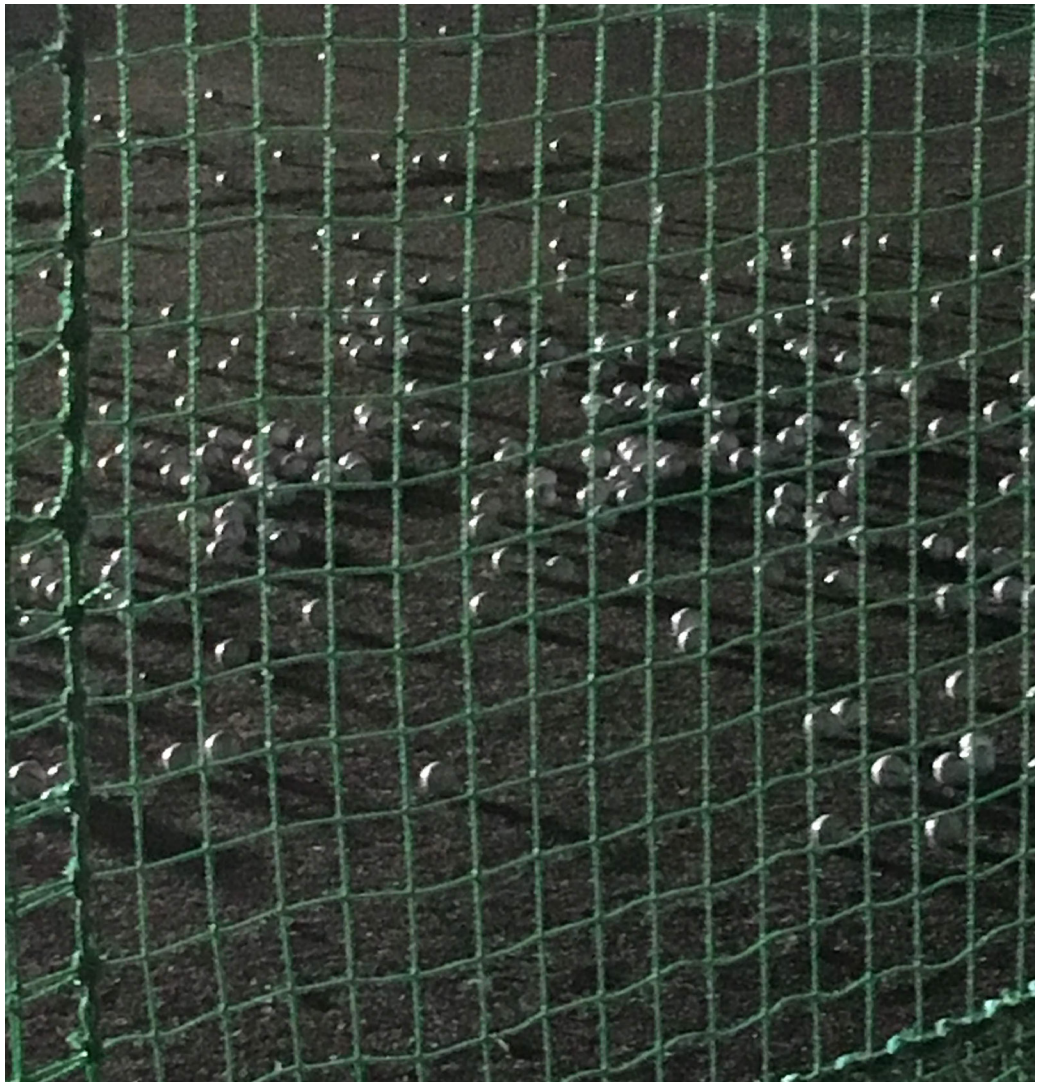
There is parquet flooring in the kitchen of the house
on Rafael Boulevard and there it is again
in the entryway of a house in Massachusetts.



Celia does my make-up in London,
I don't recognize myself.



My father disappears into the background
at my cousin's graduation.



I visit Sasha in New York City, we sit on docks
next to a driving range and we talk about love;
Sasha says that ultimate happiness comes
from other people and I disagree.



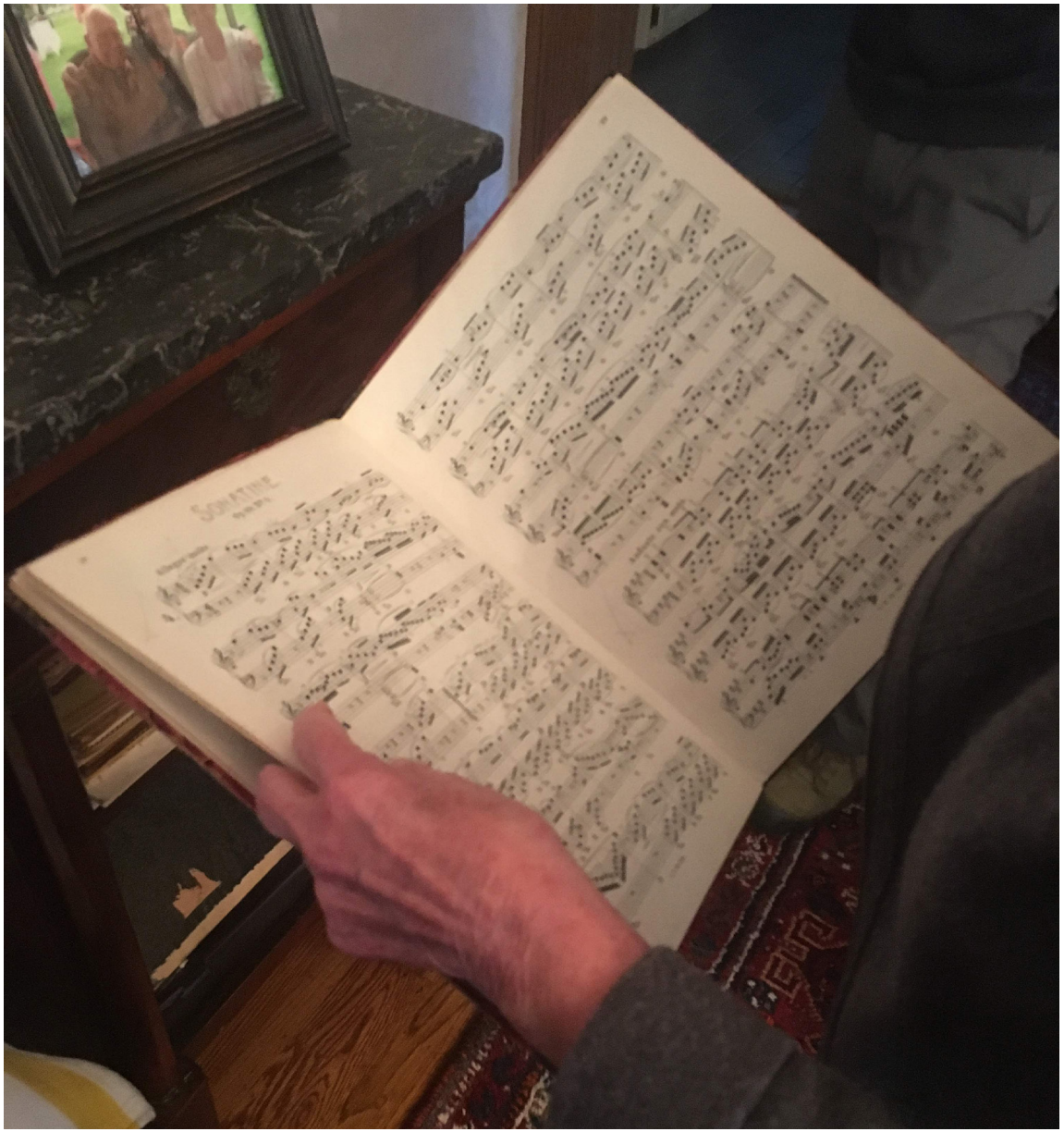
It is summer, I am at my father and step-mother's
house where there is once again
a pool in the backyard and a banana tree.



It is summer, Mom says we have
“enough money for fruit”
and I begin painting my nails again.



Mom falls at the beach, I navigate to the nearest urgent care; she asks to hold my hand
while they stich her up and she asks me to take a picture because she doesn't want to look.



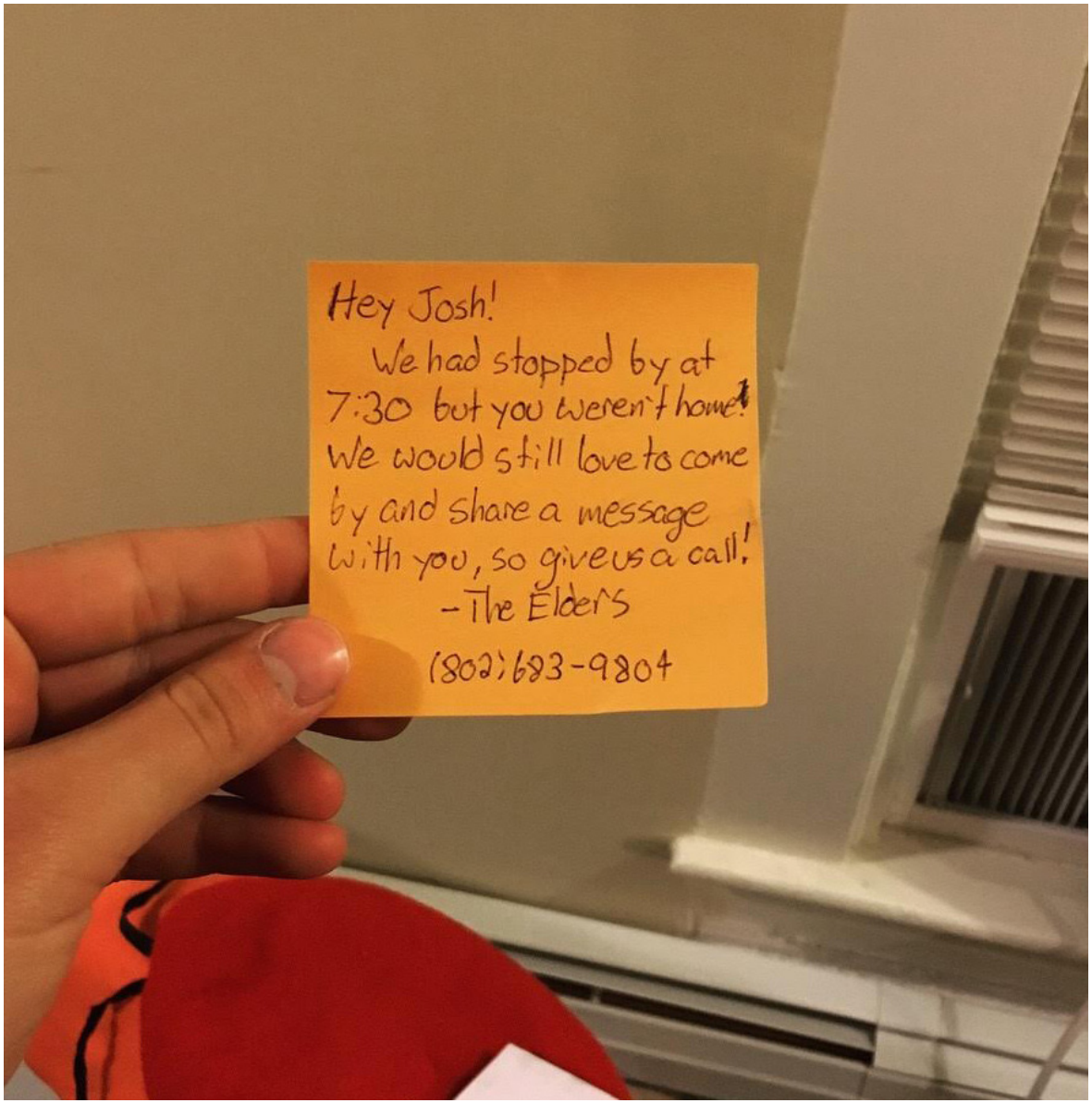
Grandma CeCe shows us everything
in her living room cabinet.



Mom takes a bath almost every night and at the end she uses a coffee mug of clean water to rinse her hair.



I am home for my birthday and
I spend half of it at each house
just as I always have.



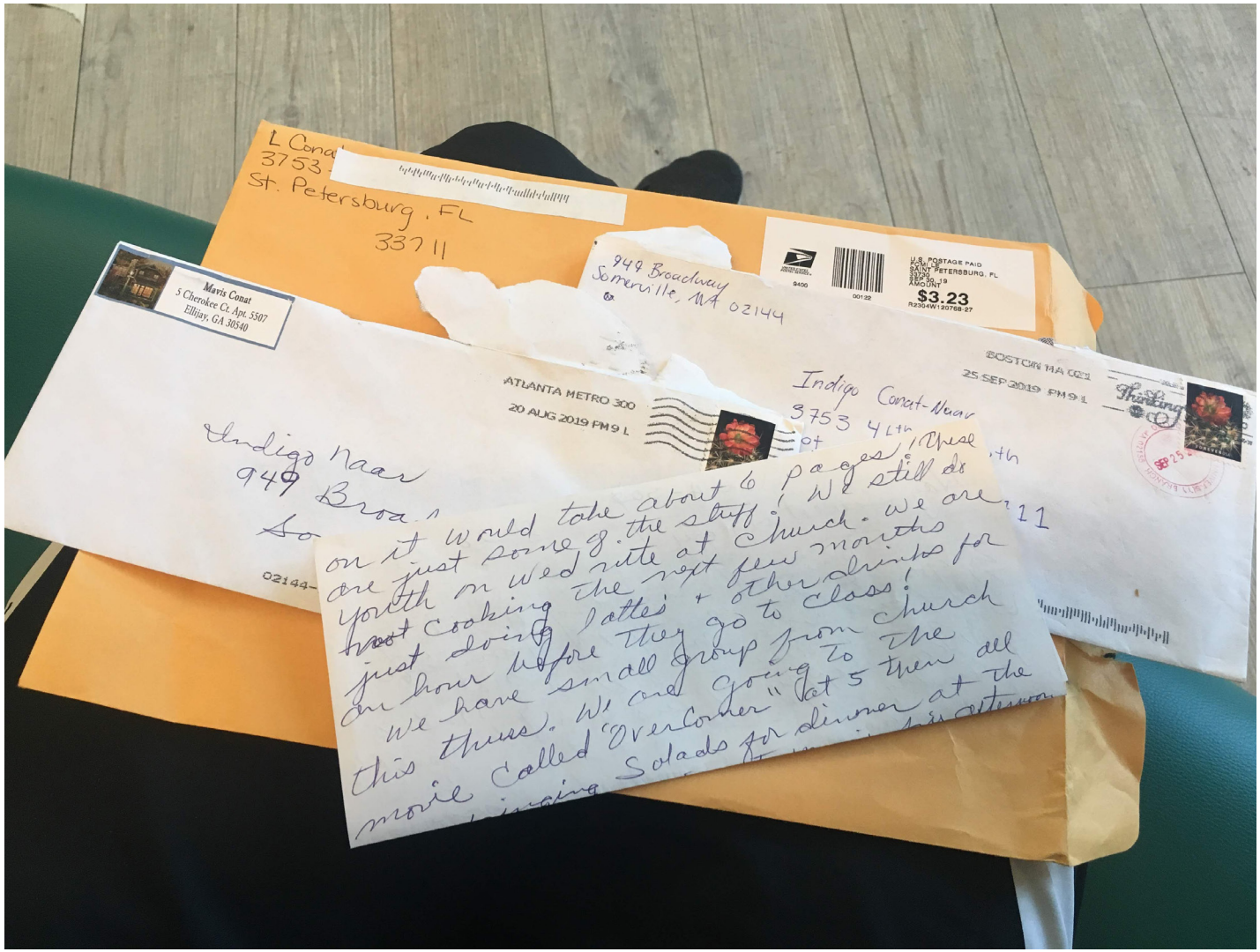
My housemate Josh is going through a divorce; the local Mormons leave him a note.



I am on the shore of Brighton, it is the first time
I see cliffs
and I know this is not my ocean.



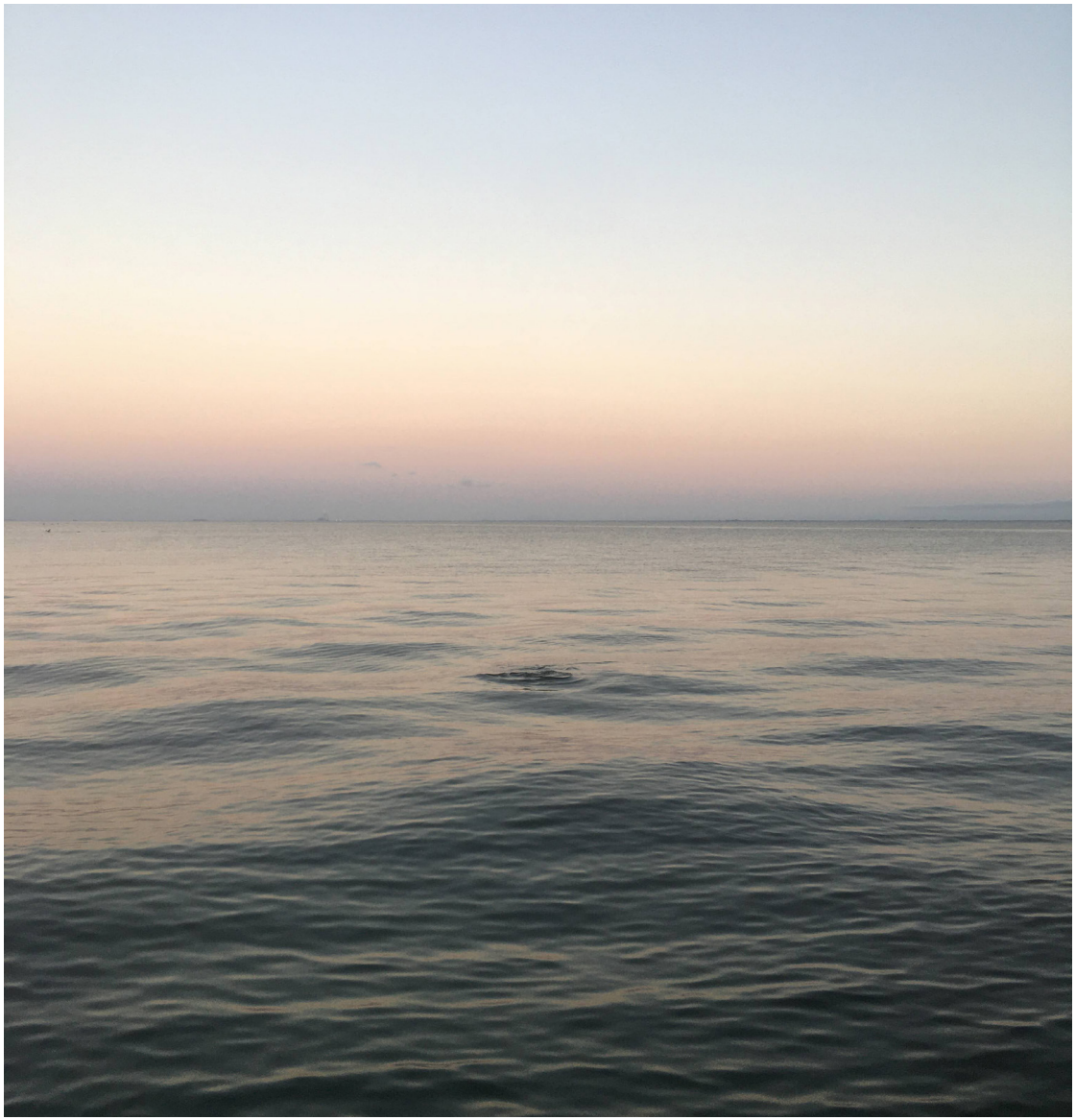
It is Christmas, I am at my step-brothers house visiting my nephews and I think about how hard it must be to raise children alone.



Grandma sends me a birthday letter,
and my housemate forwards it to Mom,
who sends it to my new address in London.



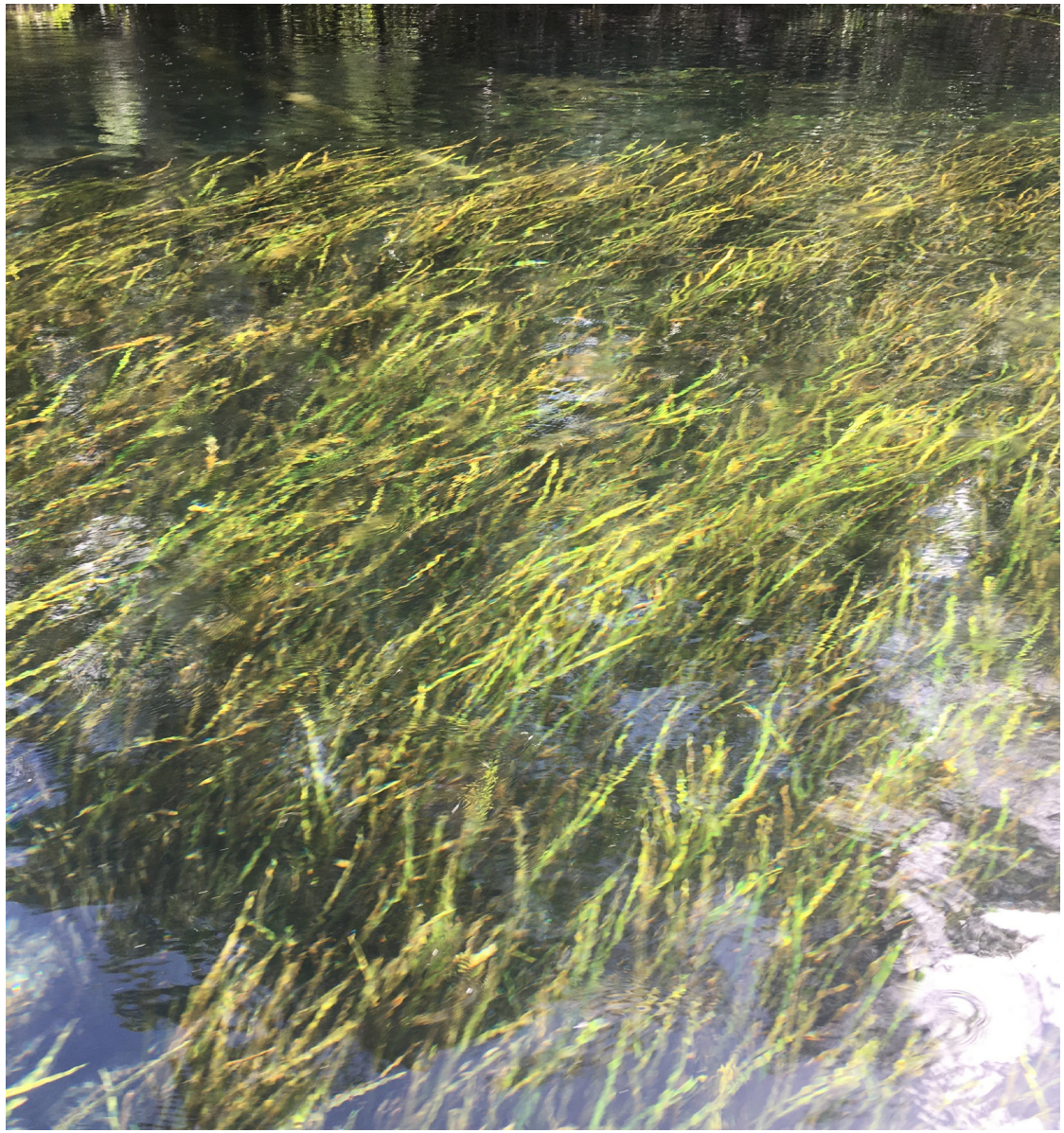
Mom shows me the customized basket
she asked Grandma to make for her,
with extra long straps for her pillow.



It is sunset, Mom and I are going for a walk
and we argue a little
but we stop when we see the dolphins.



Grandpa tries VR for the first time.



It is my birthday, we canoe down Crystal River
and we paddle back right before
the summer rain hits.



It is my birthday, we eat lunch in the car
while it rains, and I thank Mom
for picking up my favorite olive bread.



It is 2008, I begin practicing Taekwondo
at the YMCA; I leave my shoes
under the cabinets and then it is 12 years later
and the cabinets look the same.



I take a train from London, I walk the five miles
from Broadstairs to Kent
and I stand on different shores of the same sea.



Mom texts me a picture of my father and I that she finds
while preparing the apartment
for a hurricane that never comes.



It is winter, I find a tree that is half dead and half alive,
growing sideways
and I recognize something like hope.



Mom and I go to the beach at lowtide,
with our pink towels and we stay
as long as we need to.