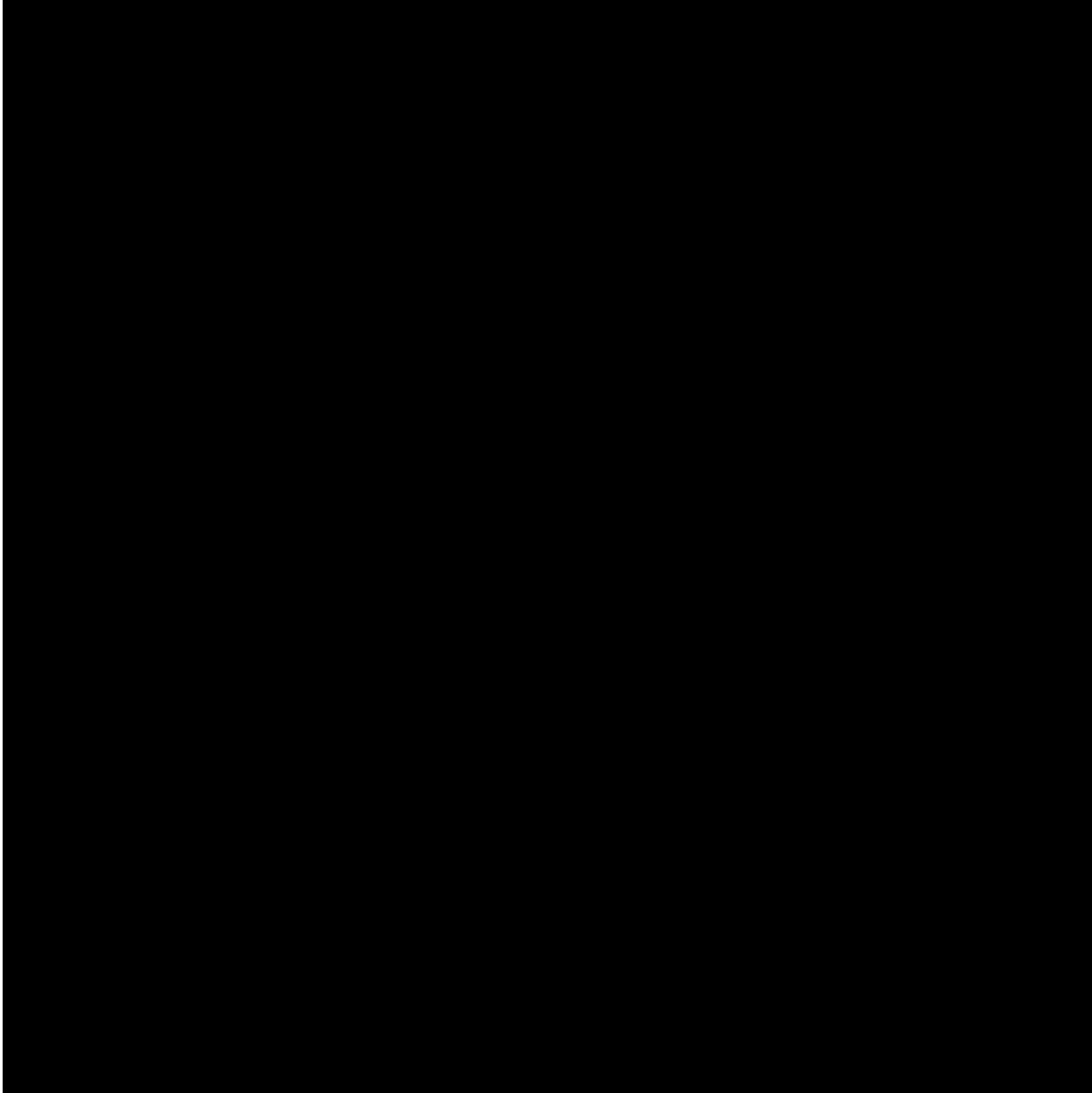
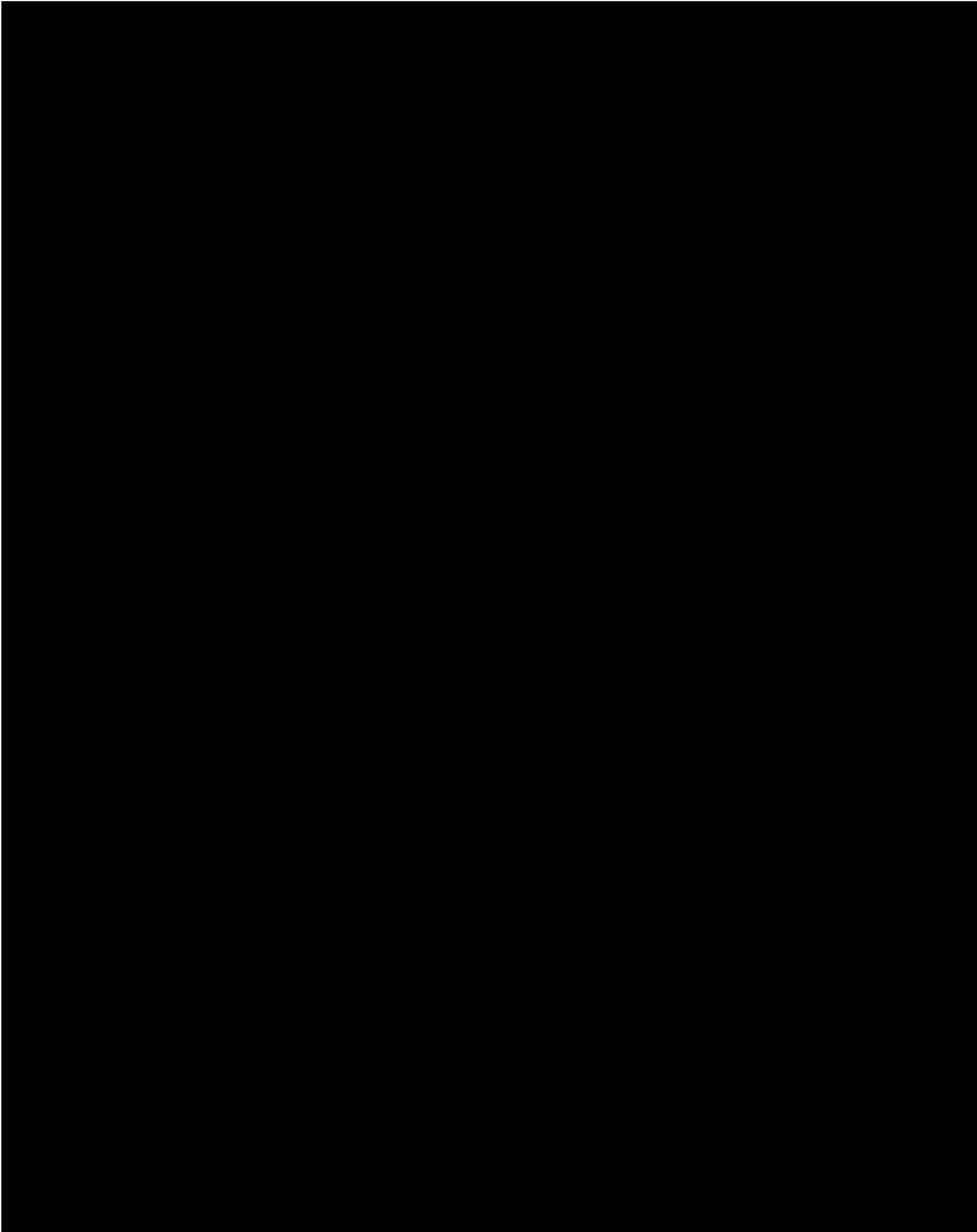
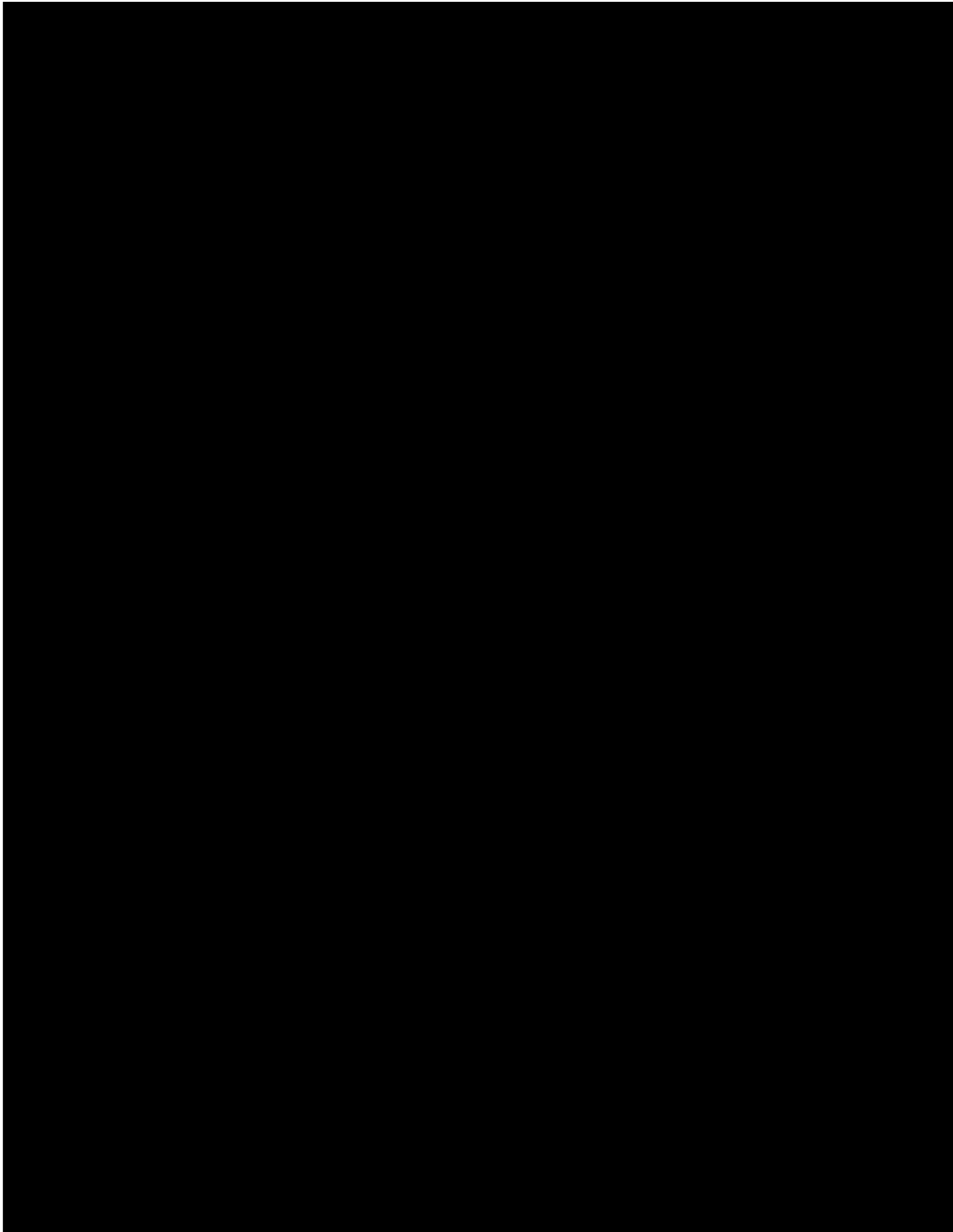

From: Alan White <alan.white@buzzfeed.com>
To: Heidi Blake <heidi.blake@buzzfeed.com>
CC: Craig Silverman <silvermancraig@gmail.com>; Luke Lewis <luke.lewis@buzzfeed.com>; Tom Phillips <tom.phillips@buzzfeed.com>
Sent: 4/13/2015 6:30:31 AM
Subject: Re: No surprises letter

Right. Here we go. 









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Alan White

Breaking News Reporter, BuzzFeed UK

@aljwhite

2nd Floor, 40 Argyll Street, London, W1F 7EB

On Mon, Apr 13, 2015 at 7:30 AM, Alan White wrote:

*how much of our hand to show

On Mon, Apr 13, 2015 at 7:30 AM, Alan White wrote:

Hi Heidi!

Hope LA's going well. In my view this looks much much better - I wasn't sure about how

Thanks

Alan

On Mon, Apr 13, 2015 at 3:52 AM, Heidi Blake wrote:

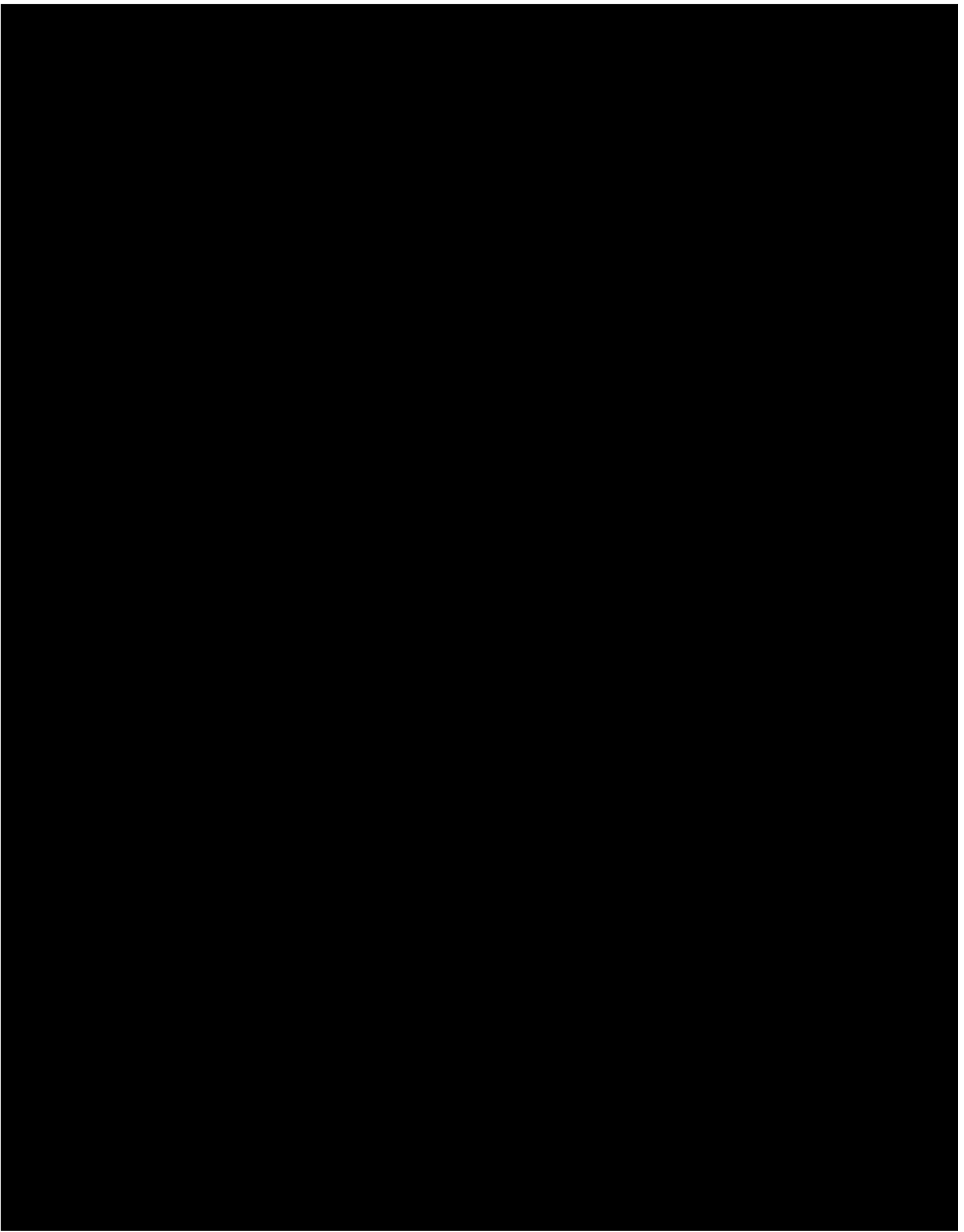
Hello from LA!

I've taken a look at the front up letter and my suggested redraft is below. Very happy to discuss the reasoning behind the changes on the phone if you want to give me a call any time during waking hours here! The main point is that I think we need to give him much more detail about the reasons we have deduced that each article or quotation is fake to give him a chance to point out any holes in our workings. My changes are in red and I've added what I think is the requisite amount of detail for the first two examples so you can see what I mean — I'd suggest you do the same for all the other bullet points too.

My advice is also to go to every other outlet that we name in the story as having bought dodgy content from CEN, giving them links to the offending stories and a brief outline of why they're wrong.

Give me a shout if any questions!

Heidi



Heidi Blake

Investigations Editor

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On Sun, Apr 12, 2015 at 3:56 PM, Alan White wrote:

Thanks Craig, 

That's correct re Argentinian teacher. Pretty sure Tom has asked his contacts for copy on all the ones you hadn't linked to Leidig sites here . Tom - any updates on that or was it as far as we got? It feels like a (microscopic) gamble mentioning them at present. One thing I might do this week is just make sure all the quotes are the same in various versions. If they are and news sites haven't linked out to other sites, they must've been bought.

On Sun, Apr 12, 2015 at 7:00 PM, Craig Silverman wrote:

The letter looks good by me. Only thing I'd mention I didn't see in there is the suggestion that he edits his own Wikipedia page, which I believe is a violation of the site's TOS.

When given the word, I will reach out to the man who Leidig started the charity with. I can also contact the woman who was a co-founder of CEN with him in the 90s. I believe I have her contact info in France.

Screenshotting is great. (Make sure to get the charity site, too.) Note that for CEN articles on sites such as the Mirror, Mail, Metro, Austrian Times, once they are in the Emergent database we capture the original text and any subsequent changes. So if these sites go in and begin making changes or deletions we will know exactly what they did and be able to peg the time it was done within a few hours. One thing I will do it make sure we have the CEN client articles in the database. Then I can watch the changes queue to see if anything happens.

Alan, you mention you'd like to lead with the Argentinian teacher story. I believe the missing element of that is that we do not have conclusive proof that CEN sold words and pics. We see the photo credit on a couple of sites (maybe more) but do not know if they were selling the story, too. Any way to have people who are CEN clients look in archives to see if CEN sent out the text?

Let me know if there's anything else I can do.

Best regards,
Craig

On 12 April 2015 at 11:35, Luke Lewis wrote:

Yes, that sounds sensible.

On 12 Apr 2015 4:32 pm, "Tom Phillips" wrote:

Just to follow up on the initial stuff here: I am spending today making sure we have screenshots of every single thing we might be mentioning. I've got all the big ones already, but I'm going to go through both the article and the no surprises letter line-by-line and make sure we have everything.

Question: I'm making sure to get the headline and pics (with CEN/Europics) credit in each one, but do we want full-length, full article screenshots too? Just to prove that they didn't drop a "hahahaha this article's obviously lies" line at the end? (I mean, a screenshot isn't exactly proof of that, so...)

On Sun, Apr 12, 2015 at 4:06 PM, Alan White wrote:

Purely personal safety. We're telling him we're about to destroy a business that took him over a decade to build along with his entire professional credibility. You just do not know how a person will react to being put in that situation, nor who he knows out there. If that sounds over cautious so be it, I've ended up in a bad situation before when I thought there was no risk at all.


On 12 Apr 2015, at 15:07, Luke Lewis wrote:

Thanks Alan, letter looks solid to me. What are the arguments against going to speak to him in person?

On 12 Apr 2015 1:01 pm, "Alan White" wrote:

Hello all,

Front up letter below.



- So Craig, Tom, Heidi - above all, have I missed anything from the piece here which could be alleged to be defamatory? What else do I need to put to him?

- Reminder that Schoofs advises it's sent in multiple ways - email, courier, physical letter etc. Let's get that side of things organised. As we're doing this, I've not hyperlinked to stories in this email.

Leidig will then be given five days to reply. In that time we need to be:

- Double checking that we have screenshotted EVERYTHING pertaining to this story. EVERYTHING. Because if alarms go off at Daily Mail/Mirror etc once he gets this communication, they could try to start updating/amending. Which in itself is a story. Tom - can you double check? Go through line by line etc. Have we got the charity form for e.g.?

- I want to lead with Lucita Sandoval rather than Bieber bear. Is there anything we can do to make this happen?

- Approaching the Mirror and the Mail press offices. Who else?

- Talk to BuzzFeed News reporters about updating their posts.

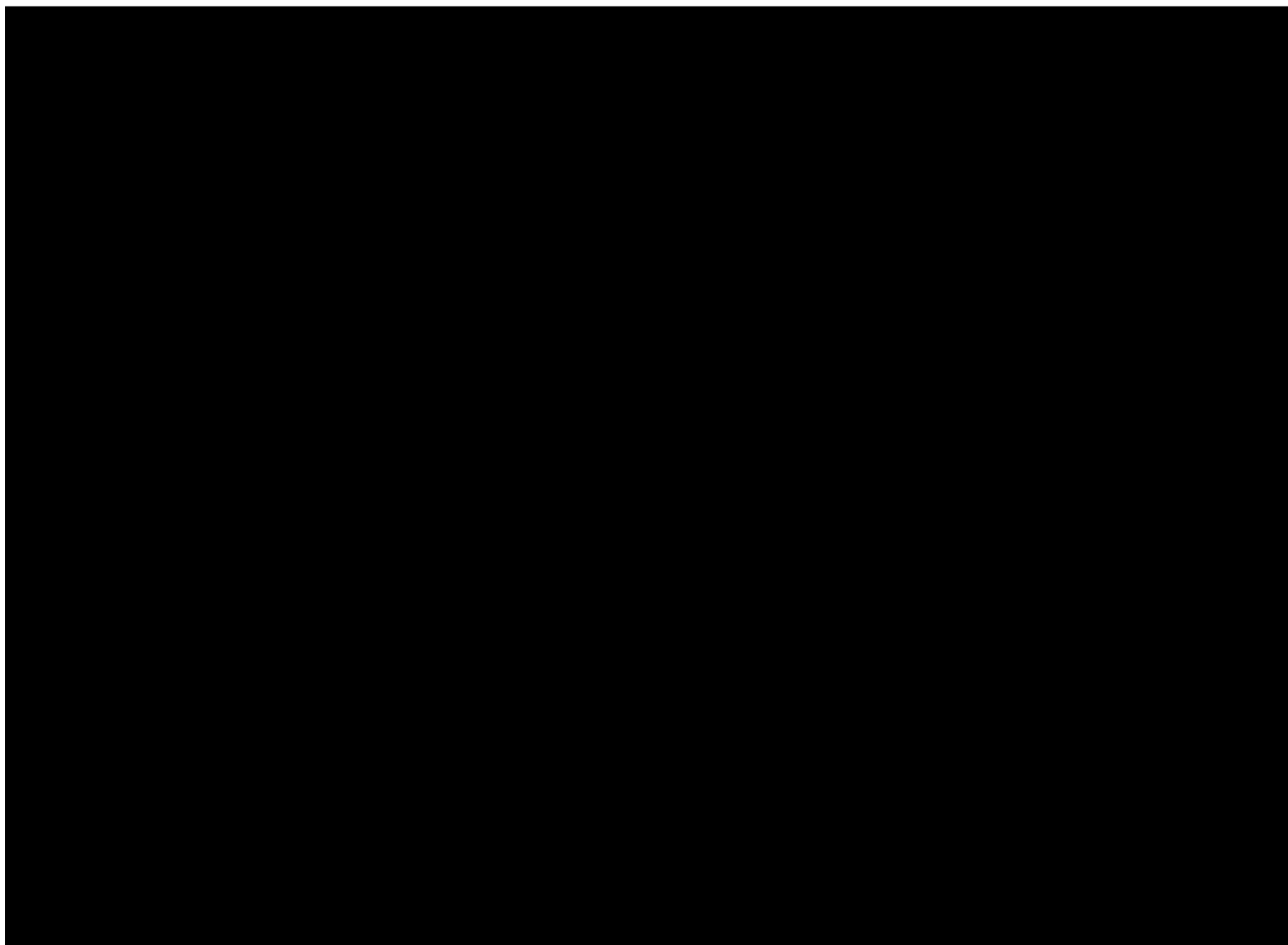
- And we need to get our updates on these stories in order. Here's what Tapeworm sashimi looks like at present, for e.g.

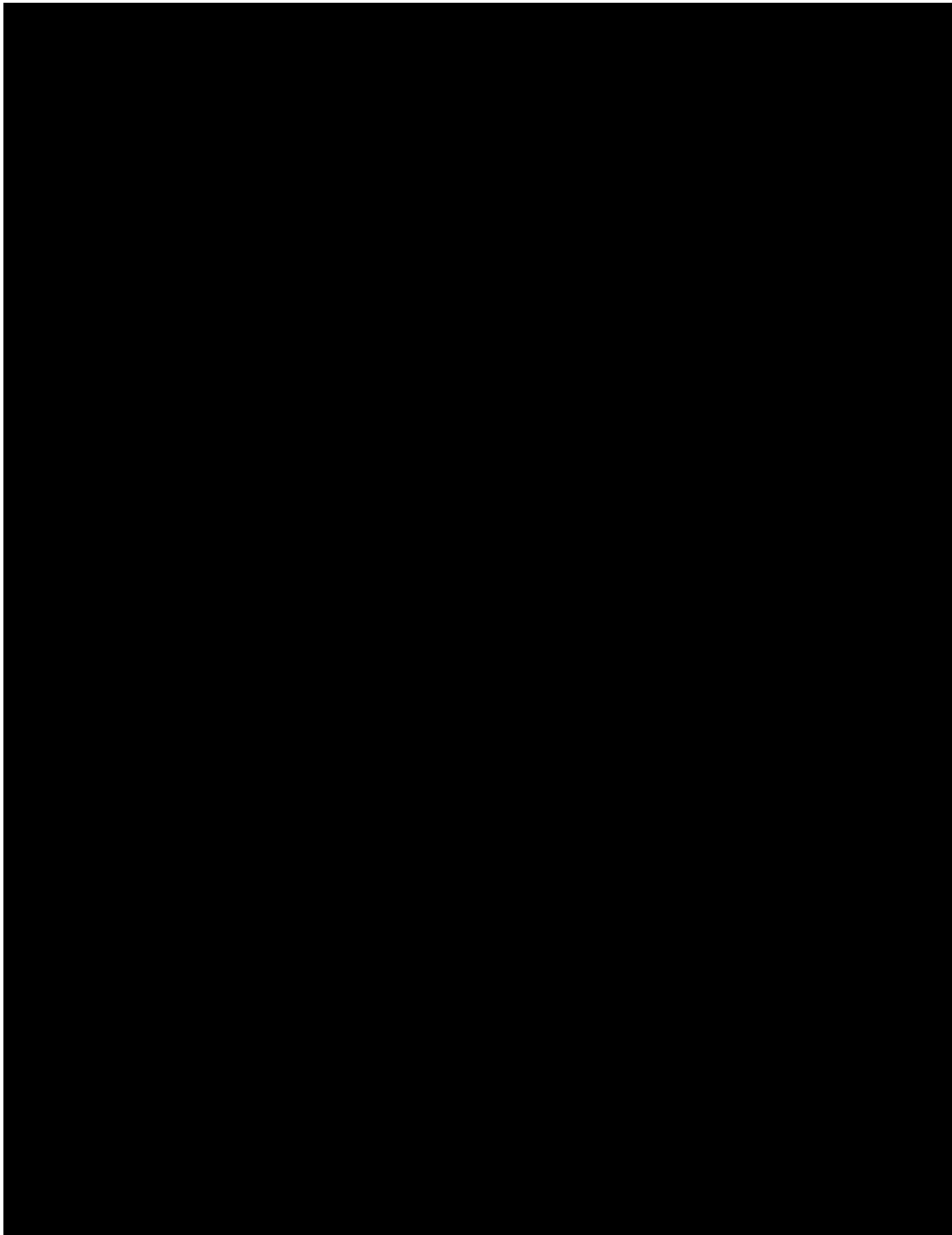
- Craig needs to approach his final set of contacts.

- We need to approach the charities regulator in Austria don't we? Who can take this on?

- ABOVE ALL - Have we got anything at all even a TINY bit wrong? Because if there's a tiny detail that's out of place it will be bad, more than one and it's a disaster and you can bet Gawker and friends will let us know about it. Is there a way we can fact check the claims in this piece one more time? Is there anything more we can do on verifying the source of copy where we don't have that verification?

- And finally, to reiterate: once we send this letter, I will not be going to Vienna to interview him and strongly advise even against two people doing it. I know Nick Davies, for example, abides by this rule, and I've made mistakes in the past I won't again regarding this. As far as I'm concerned - but others may vary - it's telephone or nothing.







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Fellow, Tow Center For Digital Journalism , Columbia University
Twitter | Facebook

514.808.0548

Read the free Verification Handbook:
<http://verificationhandbook.com/>

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