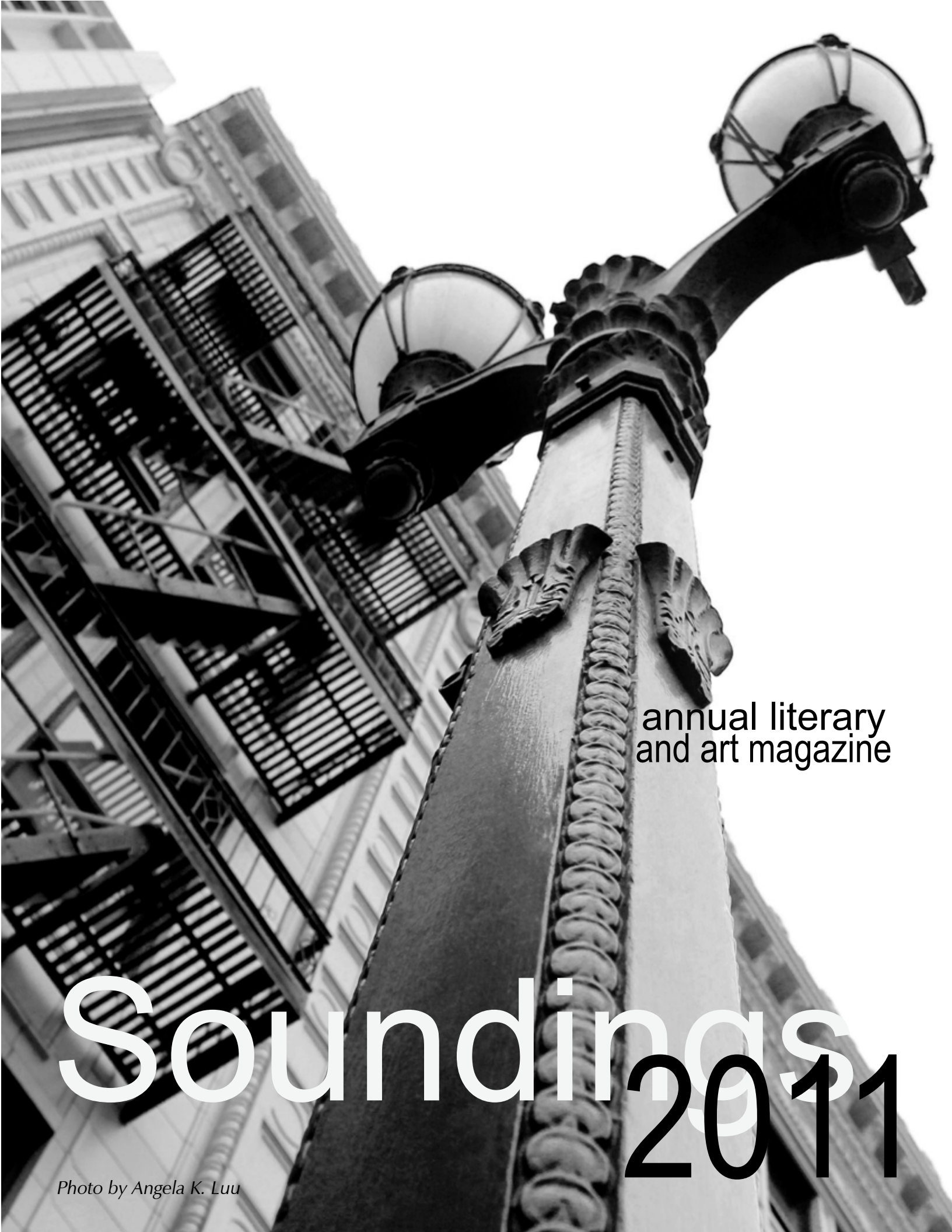


annual literary
and art magazine

Soundings

2011

Photo by Angela K. Luu

soundings staff

Editors:
Arnav Dugar
Nandini Ruparel
Kim Tsai

Review Board & Layout Artists:
Grishma Athavale
Megan Benzing
Cody Cai
Lillian Chen
Giulia Curcelli
Shreyas Doshi
Anoop Gavilanche
Jackie Gu
Cecilia Hollenhorst
Justine Huang
Ashley Joshi
Alex Ju
Evaline Ju
Brandon Judoprasetijo
Samika Kumar
Evelyn Lee
Joanna Lee
Michael Lee
Vivian LeTran
Denise Lin
Kelly Liu
Aashna Mukerji
Shilpa Nagesh
Kiki Shim
Kyumin Shim
Parul Singh
Deborah Soung
Ashley Tang
Kylie Tseng
Ashwini Velchamy
Stanley Yip

Mohith Subbaro

Photo by Jaycie Luo

Poetry & Prose

4 – Elusive by Yeon-ho Kim
5 – Clouds in Summer by Sanjana Chetia
6– Grandmother by Kathleen McLellan
7 – The Story of the Telephone Pole by Anonymous
8 – Blizzard by Darisha Jhutty
9 – Can't Forget by Raven Sisco
10 – Stunning Sedona by Sophie Kang
11 – Lonely Mountain by David Mandel
12 – Direction by Anonymous
13 – To Catch a Memory by Madison Emery
14 – Extracted Sentiment by My-Lan Le
15 – Into the Light by Samika Kumar
16 – Champagne by Sophie Kang
17 – Nocturne by Edward Dong
18 – Looking Glass by Kathleen McLellan
19 – The Confession of Eve by Raven Sisco
20 – Fountain by Darisha Jhutty
21 – Good Days by Sophie Kang
22, 23 – Untitled by Anonymous
24 – I'd Love to Run Away by Deborah Soung
25 – Slumbering Deer by Sanjana Chetia
26 – Gossamer by Sophie Kang
27 – Don't Drink and Drive by Kendall Milton
28 – Swings by Edward Dong
29 – White Crow by Darisha Jhutty
30 – Fantasyland by Kathleen McLellan
31 – Tomorrow by Jennifer Vannier

Artwork & Photography

Cover – Angela K. Luu
2 – Mohith Subbaro
3 – Jaycie Luo, Angela K. Luu
4 – Angela K. Luu
5 – Tiffany Yung
6 – Maggy Liu
7 – Vivian Hsu
8 – Benjy Yang
9 –Austin Kerby
10 – Austin Kerby
11 – Austin Kerby
12 – Sierra Smith
13 – Angela K. Luu, Amelia Troyer
14 – Austin Kerby
15 – Mark Van Aken
16 – Thomas Li
17 – Austin Kerby
18 – Todd Nguyen
19 – Amelia Troyer
20 – Lillian Chen
21 – Kylie Tseng
22 – Alex Mabanta
23 – Todd Nguyen
24 – Louise Guy
25 – Alex Mabanta
26 – Sierra Smith
27 – Austin Kerby
28 – Todd Nguyen
29 – Alex Mabanta
30 – Eren Veziroglu
31 – Austin Kerby, Maggy Liu

Photo by Angela K. Luu

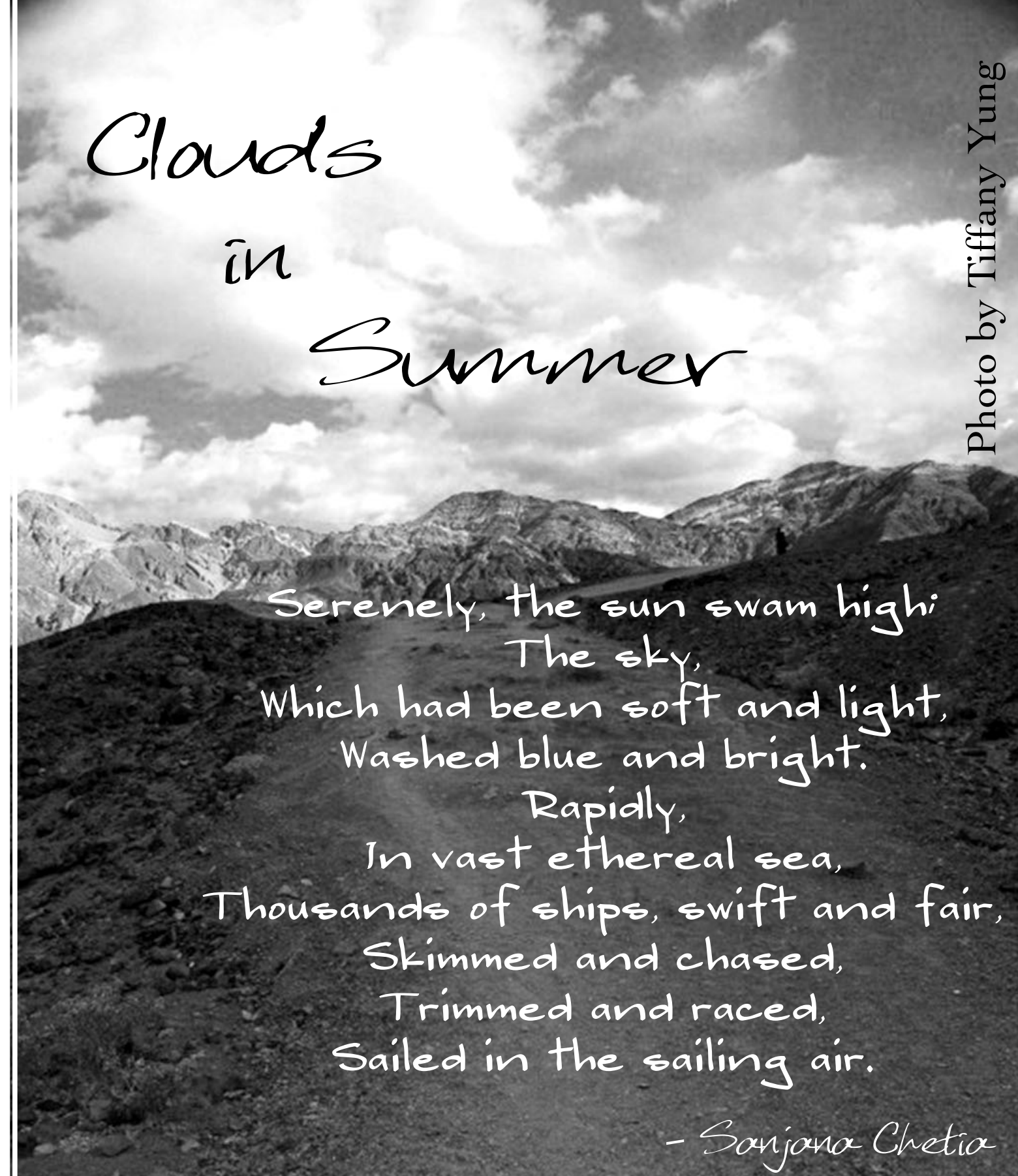
illuminated

Angela Kempf-Luu

elusive

Yeon Ho Kim

As night slithers in, hissing its queer silence, my mind wanders and wonders. Tumbling through the darkness as my brain tries to grab hold of, what was thought firm, reality. The silence grows louder as my exploding thoughts evolve into something more vivid. So surreal everything seems but my senses are not to be trusted for they give the false impression that you are here. I could go on about how your aroma surrounds and drowns me, how your eyes lures and engulfs me, or how your body drives and intoxicates me, but the night is slithering away. It's crawling back to a deep, dark hole whence it came from. You see that is the nature of these encounters. My insanity strikes with such aggression, only to slip away once I attempt to wring it out of it's misery through words. Even now as I write, all that was once is lost, and all I hear is the silent hissing of the night.



Clouds in Summer

Photo by Tiffany Yung

Serenely, the sun swam high
The sky,
Which had been soft and light,
Washed blue and bright.
Rapidly,
In vast ethereal sea,
Thousands of ships, swift and fair,
Skimmed and chased,
Trimmed and raced,
Sailed in the sailing air.

– Sanjana Chetia

Grandmother

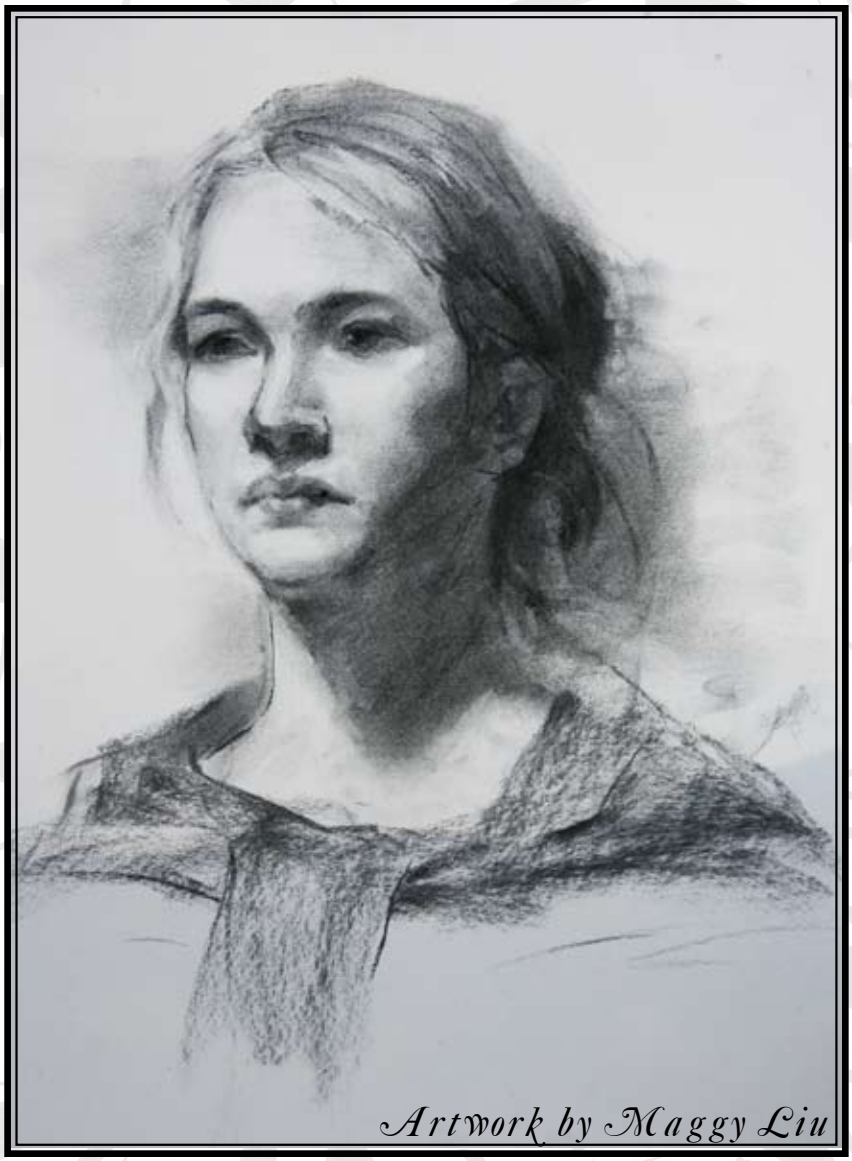
By Kathleen McLellan

I remember her wheelchair:
Hospital smell, squeaky wheels
As I rolled her down the hall.

I so miss her flawless smile,
Her open ears for listening,
Caring hands for bandaging.

I miss her warm greetings
With prize-winning cookies
After our long days at school.

Now, we only have left of her:
Memories etched in our minds
And her plastic leg—in her grave.



Artwork by Maggy Liu

*This poem was inspired by the famous sculpture, **The Puddle Jumpers**, at Old Grandview Ranch in Saratoga.*

The Story Of a Telephone Pole

-anonymous

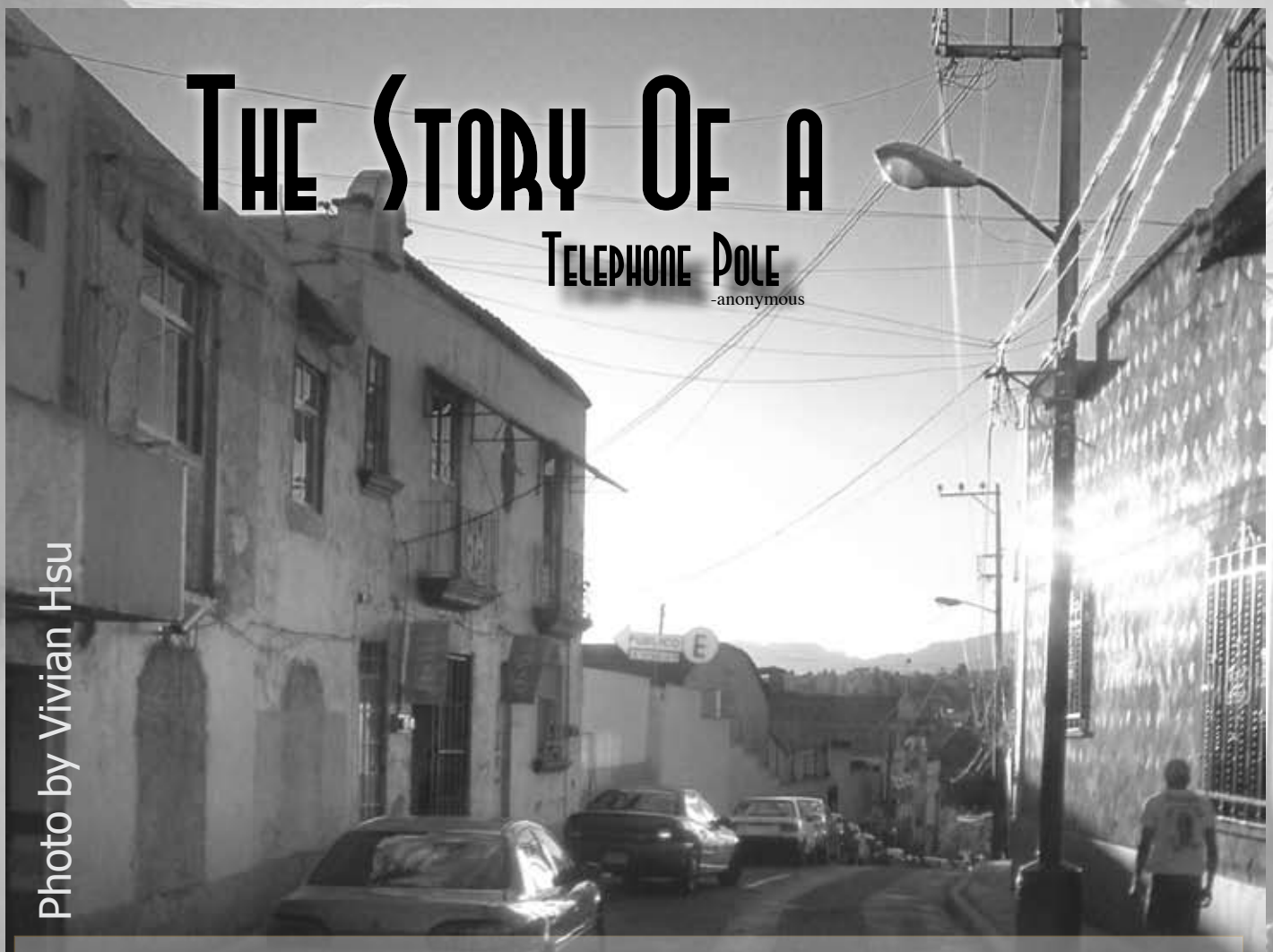


Photo by Vivian Hsu

The pole was not hurt when the sedan hit it
The pole didn't crumple
With tiny bits of metal and blood flying out from under it
The pole didn't need a tombstone and
Was not dressed in black with
Pale, pale white make-up
And dabs of red on each cheek.
The pole did not lie in a casket
As its mother, father, family, and friends
Walked by and touched its shoulder and wept.
The pole did not listen to a pastor's words
Lecture on
"We are gathered here today to mourn the loss
Of this great telephone pole, standing tall and regal
Like a cross standing vigil
Over a black strip of bloodied asphalt."
The pole didn't have to hear its mother break down
Or its father silently let tears roll down his cheeks.

The pole did not die in this horrible
Accident, they said.
The pole did not lose its life
Waiting for the ambulances to come
Sweep it off the floor.
The pole was not run off the road
By another, who stumbled away
Intoxicated
Drunk
Smashed
Wasted
Unharmed

The pole's sister did not have to testify
Have to point a finger
At the man who did this
Who cackled and shook his head
As though he had no knowledge
No memory
Of the murder and what he's done.
The pole's family did not plant an orange tree
In remembrance of a life lost.
The pole's family did not split up.
Father, leaving to Seattle
And brother and sister silently trying
To sort out the confusion that lingers
In an empty house

The pole's mother does not walk by its room daily
And turn away because she thinks
She should've been able to do something
The pole's room does not remain the same
As though it were waiting
For its inhabitant to return again

The pole's friends
Didn't visit it weekly
Every Tuesday
To put some new flowers
And some duct tape
And listen to the silence
At school, harmonized by banging locker doors
Shuffling feet
But noiseless students, somber and sad
As the grey skies overhead seemed to cry
For the desk in first period English
That was never filled.

The pole did not die
On a Tuesday
In the middle of December
At night,
Coming home from the library.
And on the new black tar, there is not
A shrine for this pole,
A cross and some beads
A weathered tire, shredded from screeching brakes
Flowers new and old
And a sign, saying
We love you. We miss you.
Come back to us, we need You.
Not the pole.
You.
The pole did not die.

But then again,
The telephone pole
Standing vigil like a cross
On a wintry day
Only watched
As my light blue sedan
Smashed into its midsection
Because a man after a drink too many decided it would be funny
The pole just kept its head up high
As it took it; its wood splintering
As I shot through my windshield
And tumbled
Tumbled
Tumbled to the ground.

But then again,
That telephone pole

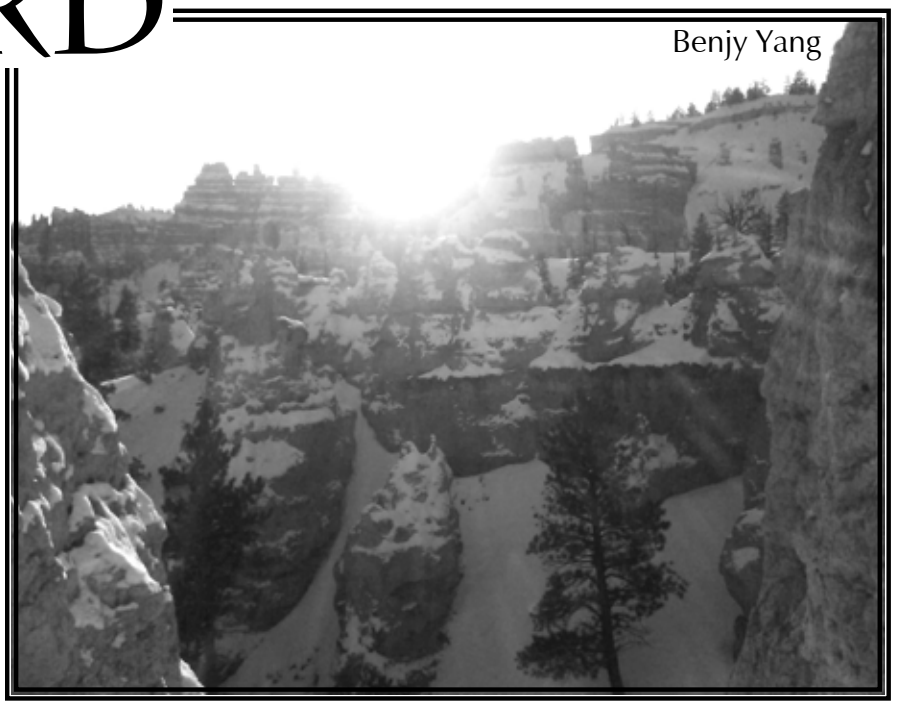
Is not me.

Is not me.

BLIZZARD

White, white, white abounds,
Endless clouds circling round.
It seems I have lost my way
Within a clueless crowd and
The endless cycle of everyday.
Turning away, I set inner storm
Aside, escape blanket white,
Go to my special place. All
Tensions fade; others retreat
To the distance. From chaos,
Countless colors bloom, sun
Glistens, flowers blossom, and
Trees whisper poems of peace.
Restored, I return home in light
With courage ready for the fight.

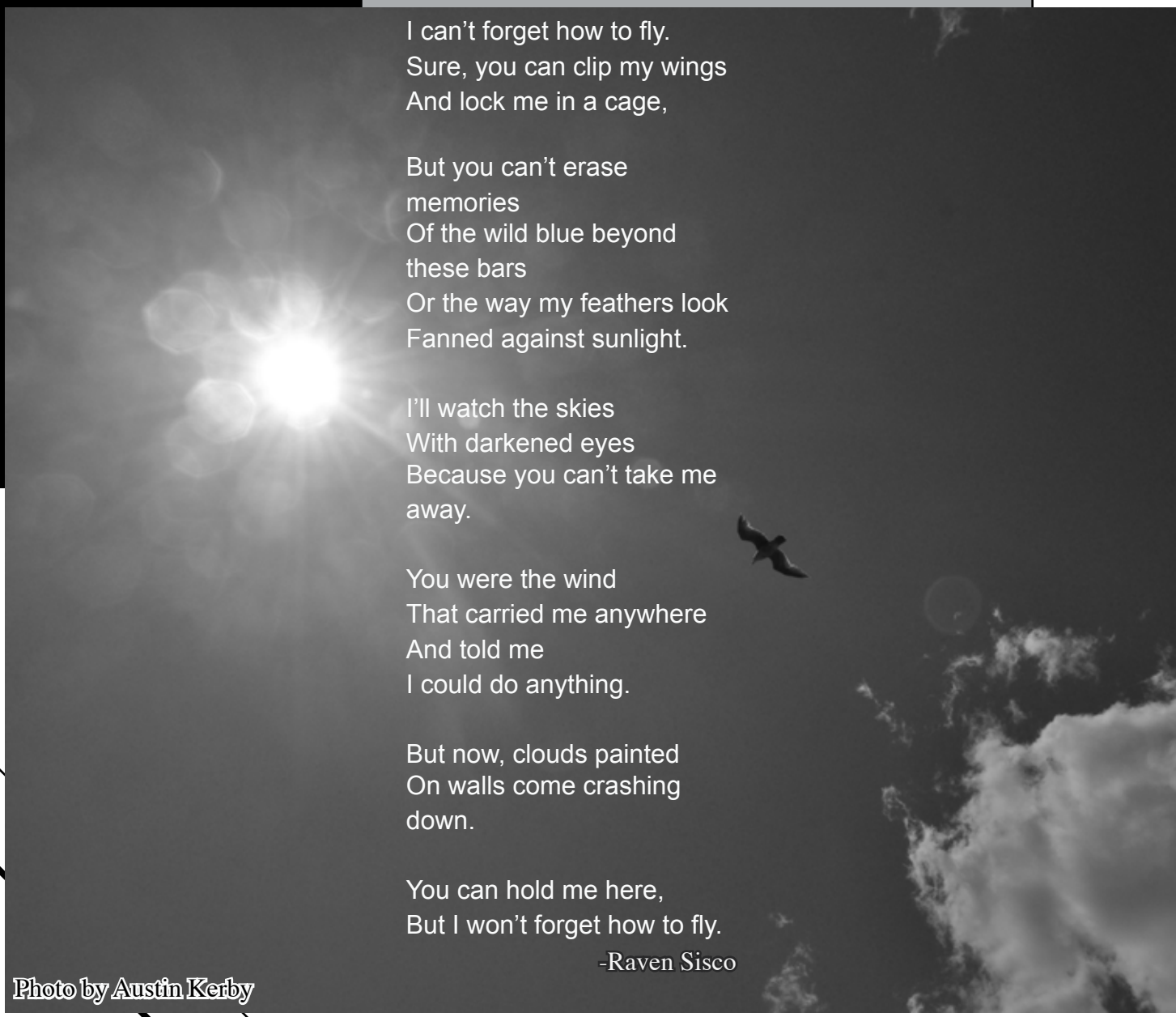
~DARISHA JHUTTY



Benjy Yang

Benjy Yang

CAN'T FORGET



I can't forget how to fly.
Sure, you can clip my wings
And lock me in a cage,

But you can't erase
memories
Of the wild blue beyond
these bars
Or the way my feathers look
Fanned against sunlight.

I'll watch the skies
With darkened eyes
Because you can't take me
away.

You were the wind
That carried me anywhere
And told me
I could do anything.

But now, clouds painted
On walls come crashing
down.

You can hold me here,
But I won't forget how to fly.

-Raven Sisco

Photo by Austin Kerby

Austin Kerby

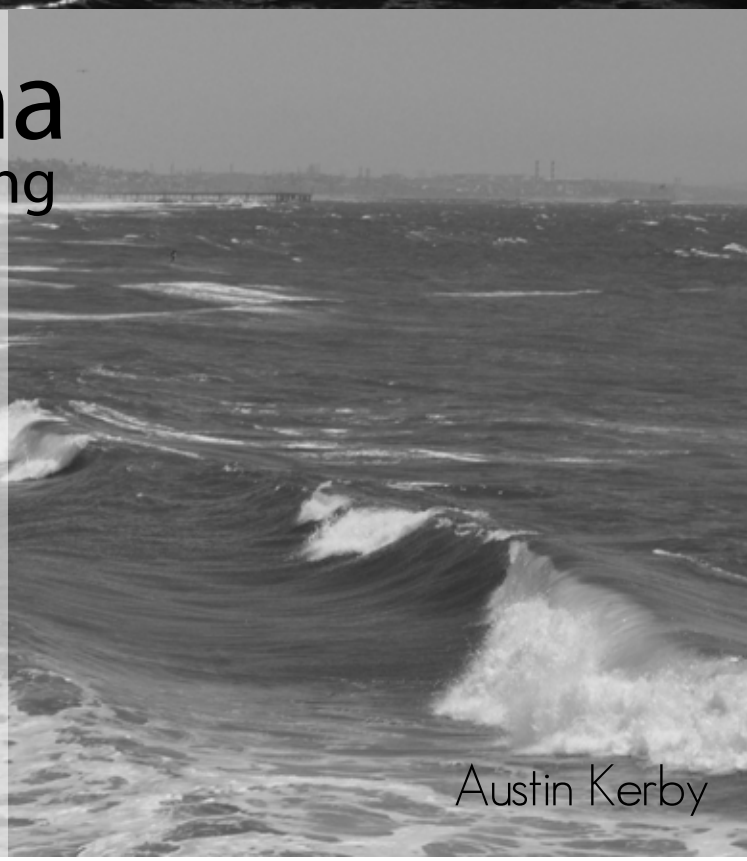
Stunning Sedona

by Sophie Kang

I yearn for sunrise to glide in slow, banishing the grays
And repainting cold cliffs with a child's colorful brush.
I'll pack a suitcase full of whites for days imbued with rays
And linger in the heat waves' hush.

Acres of crimson rock and nothing but the brightest hues
Surround me. Forget what duties, what stresses, what desires—for
What is eternal but these crags of coral and skies of bluest blues
To make my deepest tensions outpour?

I yearn for sunset to glide in slow as the ebbing glow
Leaves me one last phantaswhirl of gold, plum, and peony.
I breathe the cooling, cooling air, feel my calmness flow,
And embrace desert night's ebony.



Austin Kerby

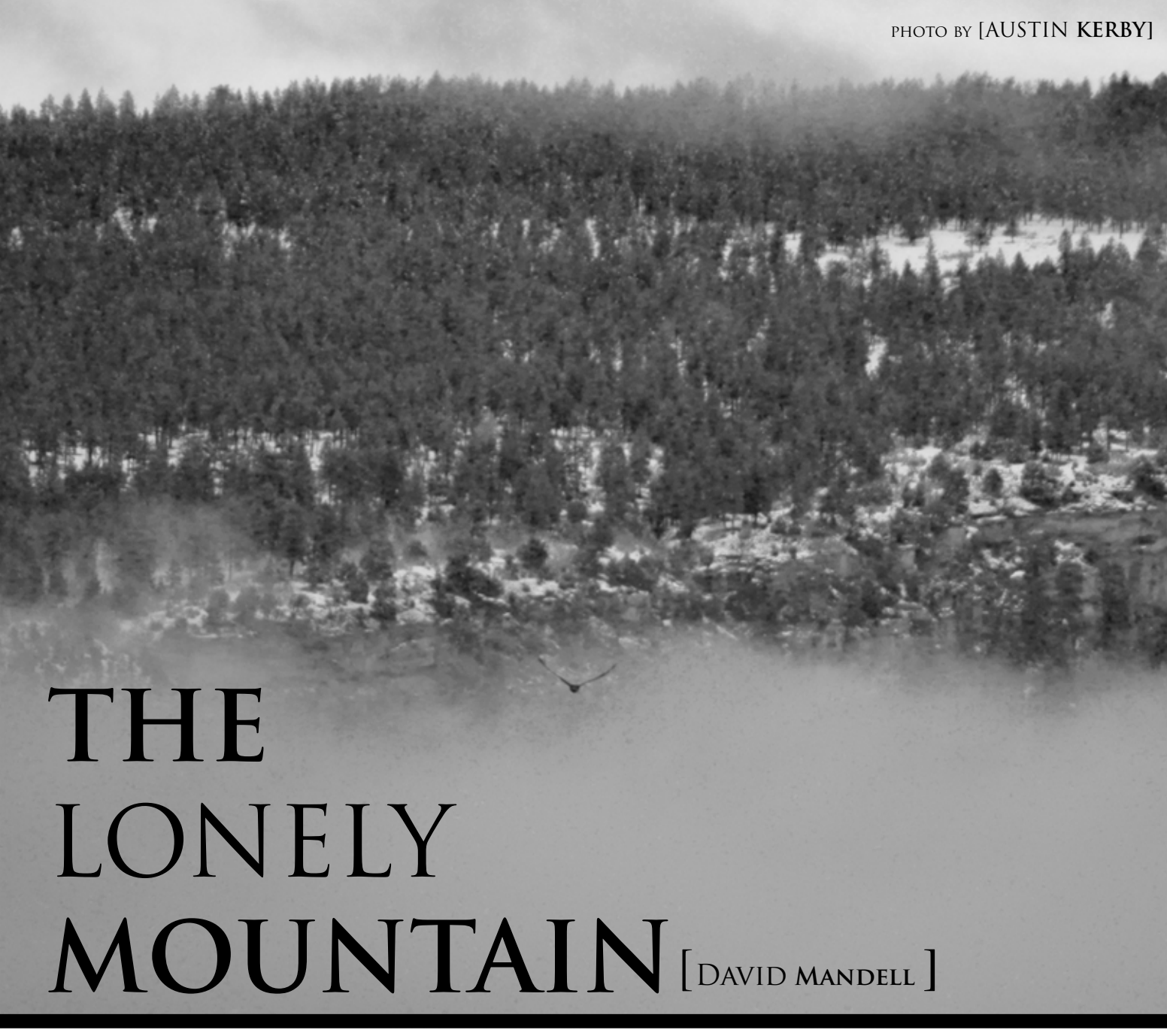
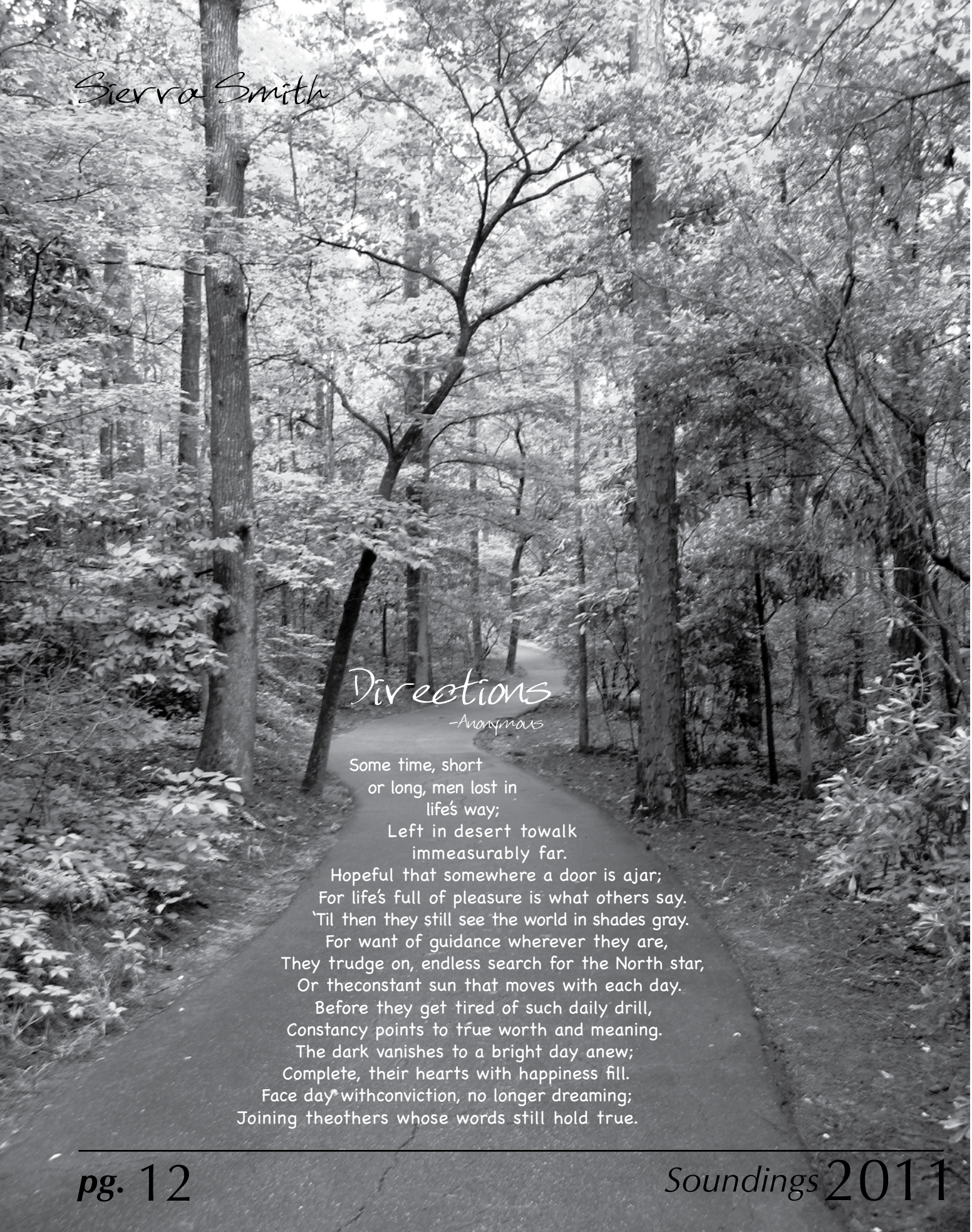


PHOTO BY [AUSTIN KERBY]

THE LONELY MOUNTAIN

[DAVID MANDELL]

That lonely mountain that waits for the day,
When bliss will rain down on his somber estate,
Waiting with the hope with no hope to stay,
The only option to pursue is to–wait.
When you wonder, lost in the complete darkness,
No light shines to illuminate the forgotten path,
And without light you will become heartless,
Then surely you will feel the inevitable wrath.
If I were like a hiker upon this peak,
Fixed by the isolation from the world,
I would wish for the warmth of nature's leak,
That rushes to all who do not become furled.
You can let them go if you love with your heart,
But if you are in love, never let them part.



Directions

-Anonymous

Some time, short
or long, men lost in
life's way;
Left in desert towalk
immeasurably far.
Hopeful that somewhere a door is ajar;
For life's full of pleasure is what others say.
'Til then they still see the world in shades gray.
For want of guidance wherever they are,
They trudge on, endless search for the North star,
Or theconstant sun that moves with each day.
Before they get tired of such daily drill,
Constancy points to true worth and meaning.
The dark vanishes to a bright day anew;
Complete, their hearts with happiness fill.
Face day withconviction, no longer dreaming;
Joining theothers whose words still hold true.

To Catch a Memory

by Madison Emery

Amelia Troyer

To catch a memory is a fruitless task,
And those who attempt to do so might as well try to
Count the stars, chase the wind, and trap the light.
A memory cannot be compacted, contained, or condensed.
Memories cannot be pinned down and petrified.
Like pressed petals, all that is beautiful and vivacious
Withers and wanes when crushed in the clutches of one too fearful
Of loss, of time, of remembrance, or the lack thereof.
A memory must not be chained to the mind but invited by the heart.
Like a sweet aroma, a memory must be drawn in.
As the eyelids drop and the chest rises, buoyant with breath
And pregnant with the pungency of this fresh reverie,
It must be allowed to roll around and roam in one's head,
The details crisp and thrilling.
But a memory is careful not to overstay its welcome.
As the once sharp details dull and dilute, it must be released.
An inhale to the exhale, the keeper of the memory must relent
And let it be breathed out. It will return,
Just as sweet as before, but replenished with the new life
Breathed into it by the one with the courage to leave it free to come home.

Angela K. Luu

Photo by Austin Kerby

Extracted Sentiment

I don't really know this place anymore
My feet dangling off this shrunken bed
Ankles sorely kissing wooden edges
Ceiling's faded chemo-luminescence
No longer a night sky's splendor to me.
The textured echinoderms from those seas
Have long lost what they used to be, I see
Only corpses; brittle preservation.

I don't remember -- my treasure trove
Has become plastic trinkets, old with dust
Curations curiously trivial
As the afternoon sun only whispers
Of when the hours were long and lazy
Warmth engulfing our soft, affected bliss.

written by My-Lan Le

Into the Light

Samiika Kumar

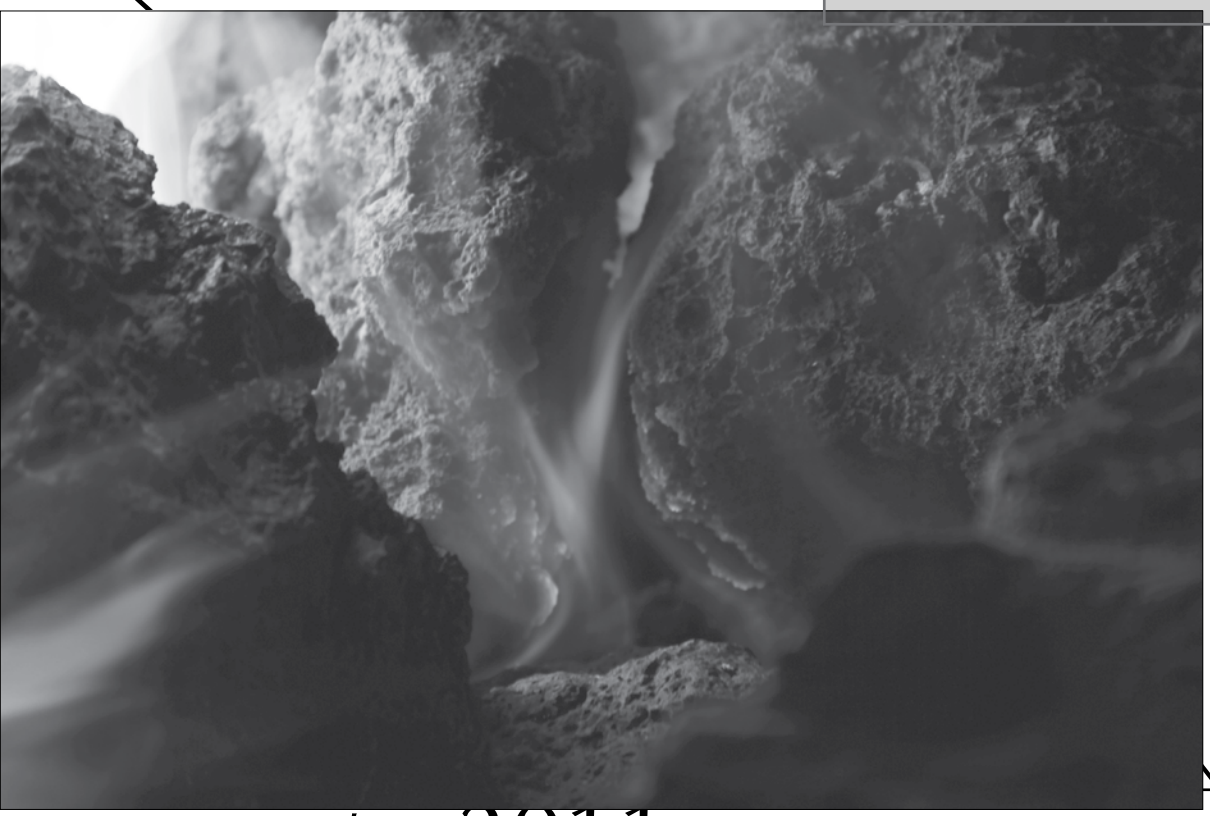
Beneath the weight of the mighty bridges
Above the stability they lack
Across the valleys and pointed ridges
Live shades of white and black

Resurrected from their ancestors' notions
Molded by their sermons and chants
Unbeknownst to them that the flawless curve
Of the earth is a foreordained cant

They live in empty with dribbling smiles
Forever wearing their leather-bound shoes
Unaware of their perjury and sins that while
Have extinguished others with all due

Cemented to dirt by their preconceptions
Chained to their insignia of gold
The children, the women, the men's deceptions
Are the stories they have never told.

Into the light does the darkest shade come
Misconstrued from what the eye sees
Ridiculed at most, for they think it is dumb
But only it detects the ironies



Mark Van Aken

Champagne

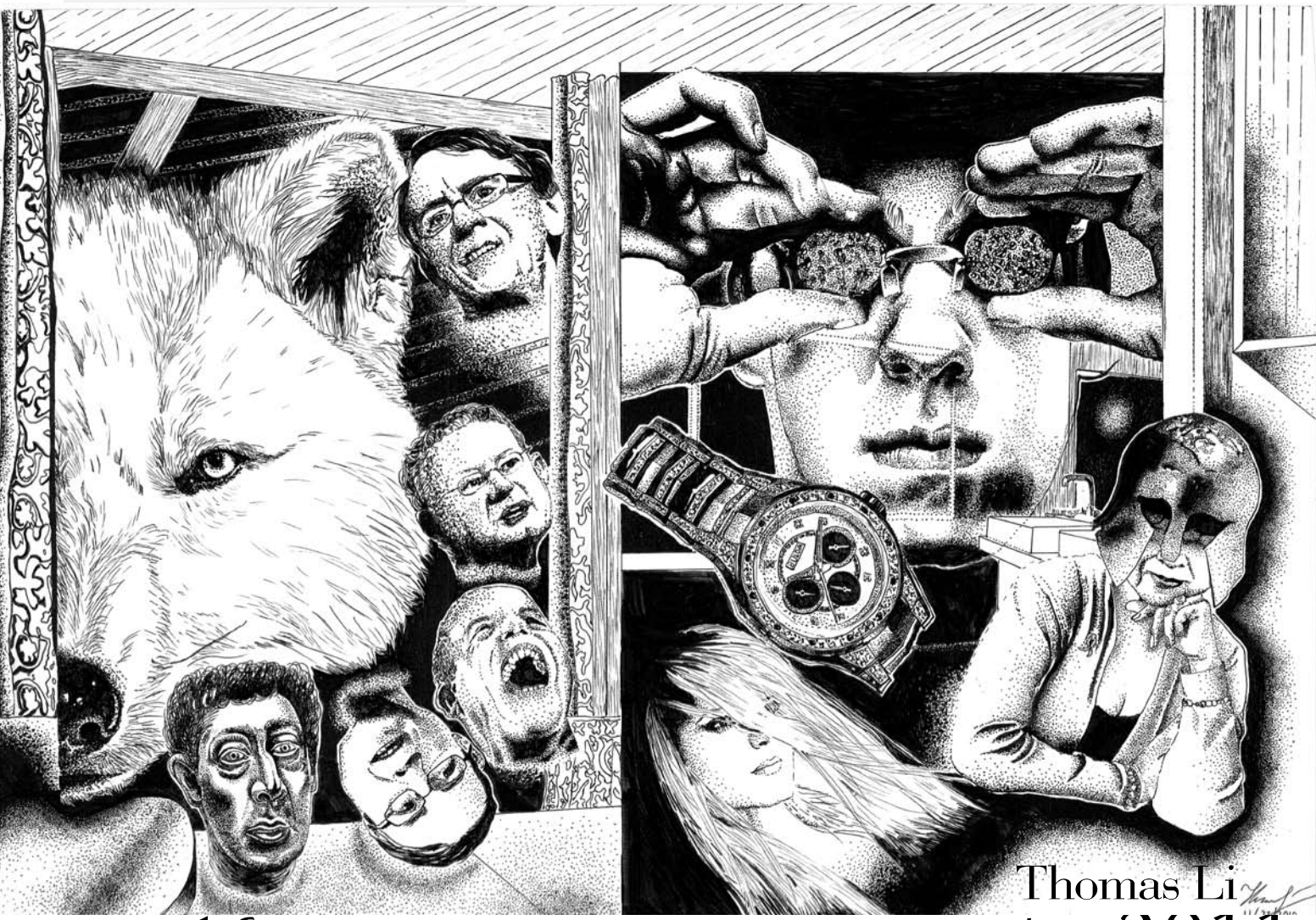
Balanced on idle fingers,
A crystal flute bubbles
With golden liquor,
Empties too quickly
And refills too fast.

Her face glows: is
It from happiness or
Maybe from taste
Sparkling with flavor,
Warming a deep cold?

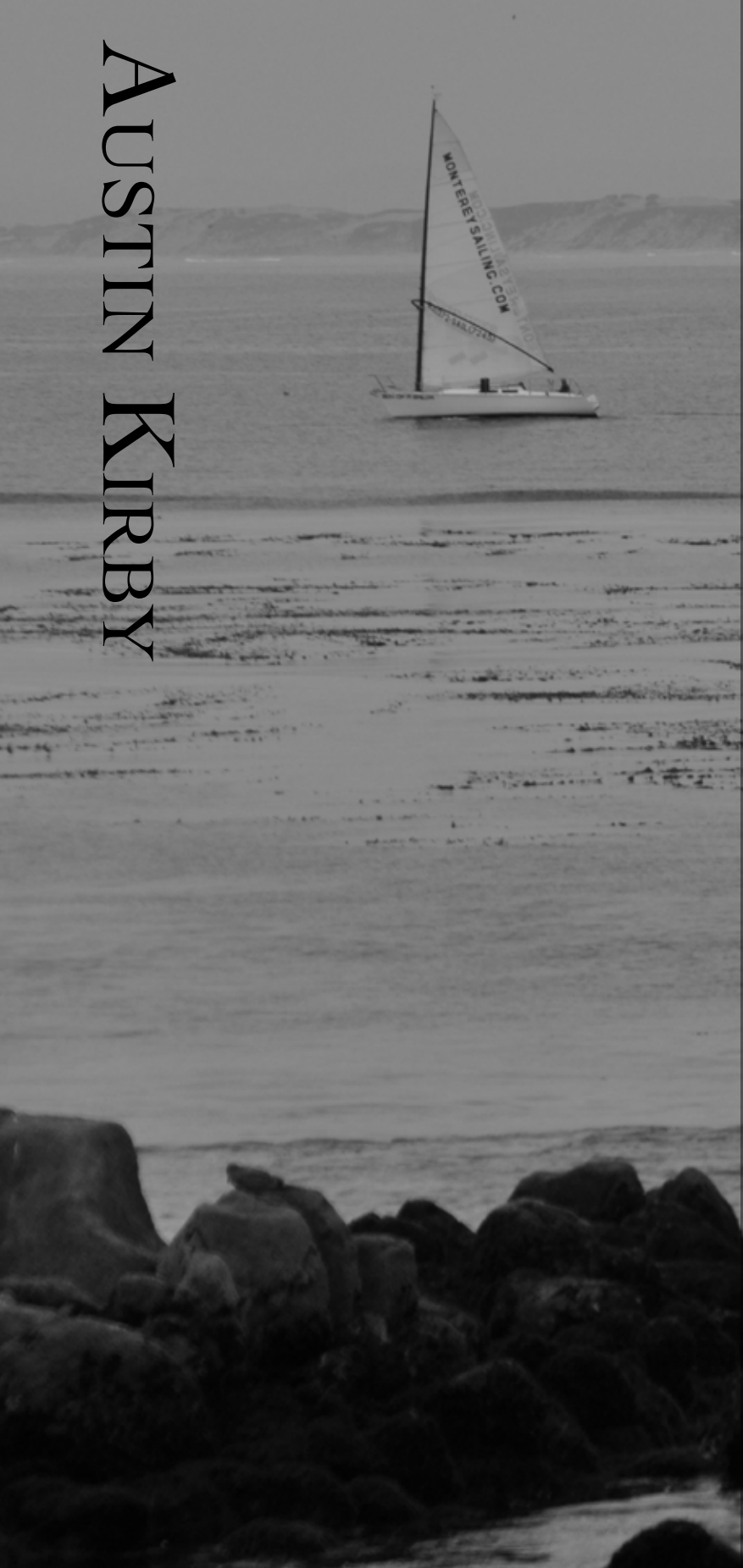
She listens but little,
Loses the messages
Between thinly veiled
Propositions to sin and
Embraces to forget.

Only in her sleep does
She still see his face
In visions of before
Their lives followed
Paths to worlds far apart.

By Sophie Kang



Thomas Li



Austin Kirby

Nocturne

Sunset fades; ruddy curtains
Open to reveal night's stage.
Glossy on quivering strings
And poised bows, moonshine
Descends from a lonely light.
Breezes pass, stirring boughs,
Leaves clashing in applause.

The concert begins. Crickets
Fiddle a vibrant allegro while
The frogs resonate overtones
With sonorous cellos. Violas,
A mellow duet of owls, echo
Motifs of melancholy melody.
Rosy curtains close—Dawn!

-Edward Dong

Looking Glass

by: Kathleen McLellan

Three short phrases from "Kubla Khan" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge inspired this poem and appear in it.

Deep within the forest, I wonder
At drop designs from gray sky.
It seems as if Someone above
Cries, long and lonely.

Pondering, I follow a secret path
Leading to lush vines. Parting them,
I discover a transparent portal
To another world.
Rain drips down the large glass
On this side and that; but peering
Through, I recognize changes—
A parallel universe
Where all has changed, and
I now understand His tears; for
In place of trees, paths, and vines,
I find smog, litter, and freeways:

Our world filled with trash!

The Confession of Eve

Raven Sisco

In the hour of this abandonment,
I wonder why every breath drawn
In tastes bitter on my Tongue.
Resonance is meaningless,
Actions even more so.
What could I say or do
To make you realize
What I mean when I tell you
How I feel?

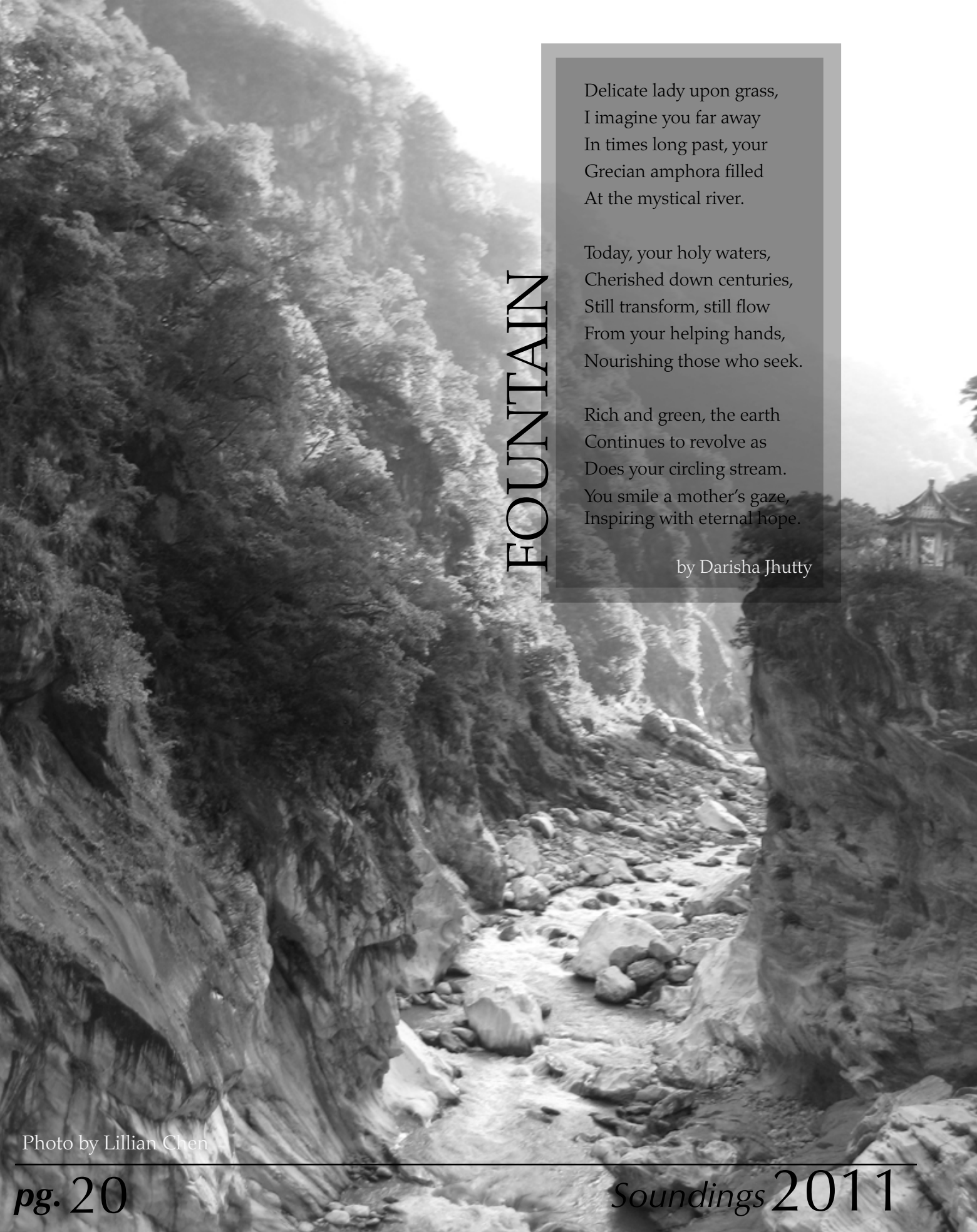
Where is our Life?
The fruit to be grown from
This fragile flower
Would taste so sweet, but
I fear its death in wintertime:
It would shrivel before
We could set our hands on it.

The Serpent nears!
And the compass box won't
Reveal the right way to you and I,
Once again made into weary
Travelers.

You tell me you have a secret.
It festers beautifully
In your head, gnawing at memories
Until you can't quite
Remember who I am or
What apples taste like.

I weep for the loss
Of flowers and knowledge;
Stow away the shriveling petals
Into the soil
To be rediscovered by another
Innocent who once believed
Like I did.

Amelia Troyer



FOUNTAIN

Delicate lady upon grass,
I imagine you far away
In times long past, your
Grecian amphora filled
At the mystical river.

Today, your holy waters,
Cherished down centuries,
Still transform, still flow
From your helping hands,
Nourishing those who seek.

Rich and green, the earth
Continues to revolve as
Does your circling stream.
You smile a mother's gaze,
Inspiring with eternal hope.

by Darisha Jhutty

Photo by Lillian Chen

PHOTO BY: KYLIE TSENG

GOOD DAYS

POEM BY: SOPHIE KANG

From a mountain
Of covers, pillows,
And toasty laundry
I crawl out, groggy.
Forgotten were the
Hours upon hours
In salty, wasted tears
And tissue paper.

Rubbing the remains
Of sleep off my lids,
I look out the window
And greet frosty lights
Marking a still winter.
Hello to an endless
Sunday afternoon.

Dear Stranger,

I fear that I am fading away. I fear that I am just one of the countless, lost faces in the world, enmeshed in tragedy and hopelessness, waiting to disappear.

Of all the things I fear in this world—death, war, illness, surgery, spiders, sharks, snakes, needles, the dark…I think that complete disappearance is the one I fear the most.

Sometimes, I need to be reminded that I am not going to disappear. They—whoever they are—say that at any given moment, there is always at least one person thinking about you.

I'm thinking about you, and I don't even know who you are. And by simply writing this letter, I am taking a step to ensure that neither of us disappears.

I don't want to describe myself or tell you who I am or what I'm like because that's not what this letter is for. This letter is for you. It's so you will always know that I'm out there, somewhere, thinking for you—not about you. I don't know who you are either. I can't think about you. So I'm thinking for you. So you will always have that thought, somewhere in the universe, that makes sure you will not vanish.

Take a deep breath, my dear. Look around you. Even when you feel lost and alone, the thought that is tucked away between the fibers of this page and the letters of the words will keep you safe.

The world is a terrifying place, but we are not alone. Even when we are sinking slowly and we feel as though we are losing who we are, just remember this:

Helen Keller said, "Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadow."

You are my sunshine. My only sunshine. You keep me happy, when skies are gray. You'll never know, dear, how much I love you. Please, don't take my sunshine away.

With a tragically sweet song such as that, I hope you know that there is as much pain as there is joy in this world—for every tear of sadness that is cried, someone else will cry a tear of happiness.

Do not hurt, fear, cry, flee or fret. Life was not created to be wasted away doing things that are unimportant. Life was created to love others and create bonds and bridges that will never be burned. Each of these bonds is held in a memory, and a memory can neither be created nor destroyed, like energy or matter or mass. Memories can be misplaced, but never lost; they can fade but never completely disappear; they can be recycled without being replaced.

Make as memories as you possibly can, Stranger, because life is too short to live without them. After all, without memories of others, how can we know who we really are?

With love and thoughts,
A Fellow Stranger

Alex Mabanta

Todd Nguyen

drawn by
Louise Guy

I'd Love to Run Away

I don't understand
why people always seem angry,
why girls no longer want to be dainty,
why parents don't let boys hold hands.

But most of all
why people never stop talking,
why they always seem mocking,
why I always feel like hiding,
why I contemplate dying.

What I understand most is
how good it feels to make someone smile,
how much it hurts when we're separated by miles,
why we all hate to grieve,
the relief in knowing I will someday leave.

written by
Deborah Soung

SLUMBERING DEER

by Sanjana Chetia

The autumn knoll lies like a deer asleep,
Hidden by underbrush and fallen leaves.
From the crested head rise twisted trees,
Slender antlers saluting the faraway sky.
A skeleton of smooth rocks sits exposed.
Emerald ivy clothes its uncovered back.

From an unseen mouth, a stream trickles
And surrounds the deer's drowsy flanks,
Keeping away the concrete grip of man.
No building or road shall dare to disrupt,
As long as calm creek flows untouched.
Shaded by leaves, the deer will slumber:

A golden knoll of wilderness untouched.

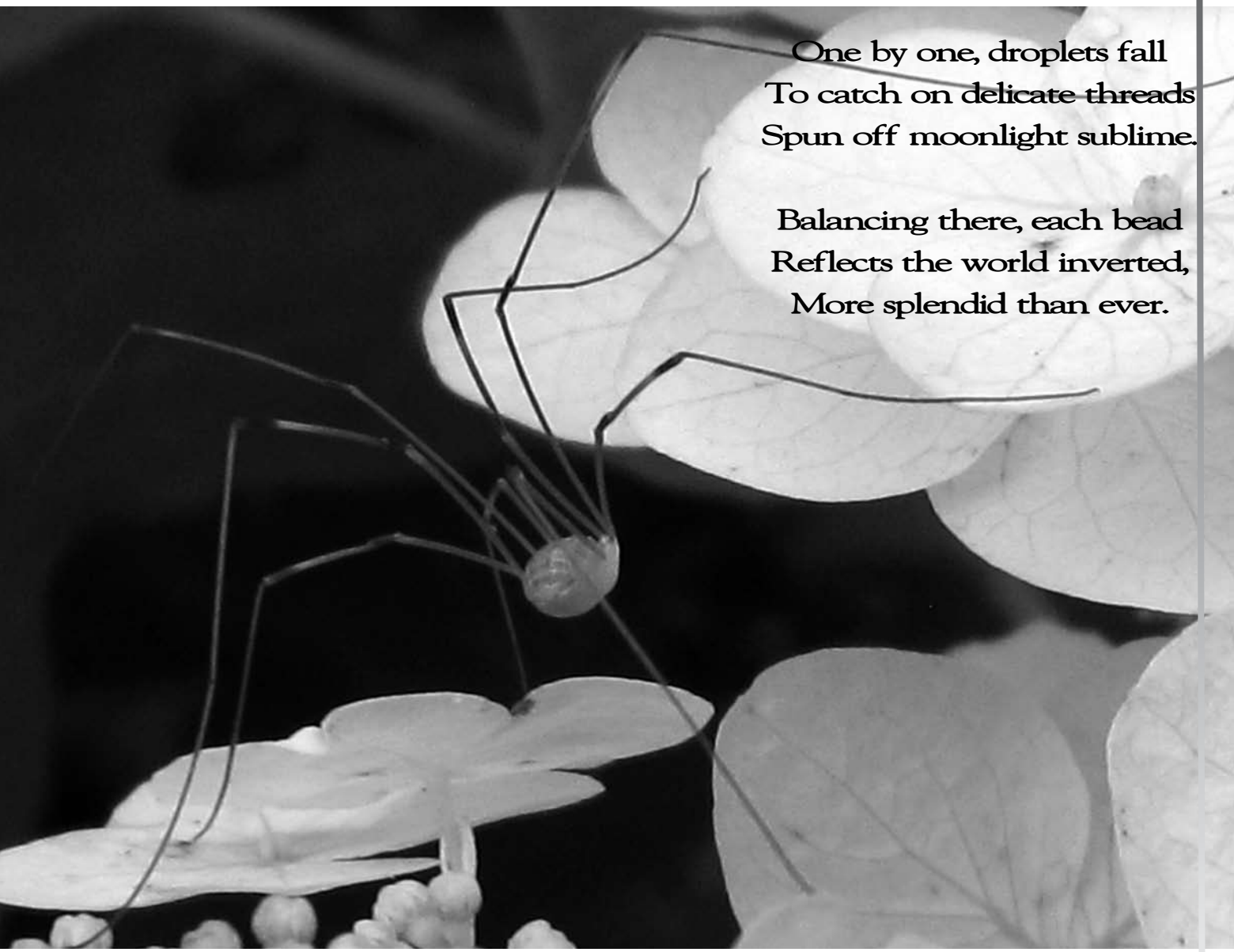
Photo by Alex Mabanta

Gossamer

by Sophie Kang

Creating a masterpiece
Of silver silk, the spider
Settles on her lacy design.

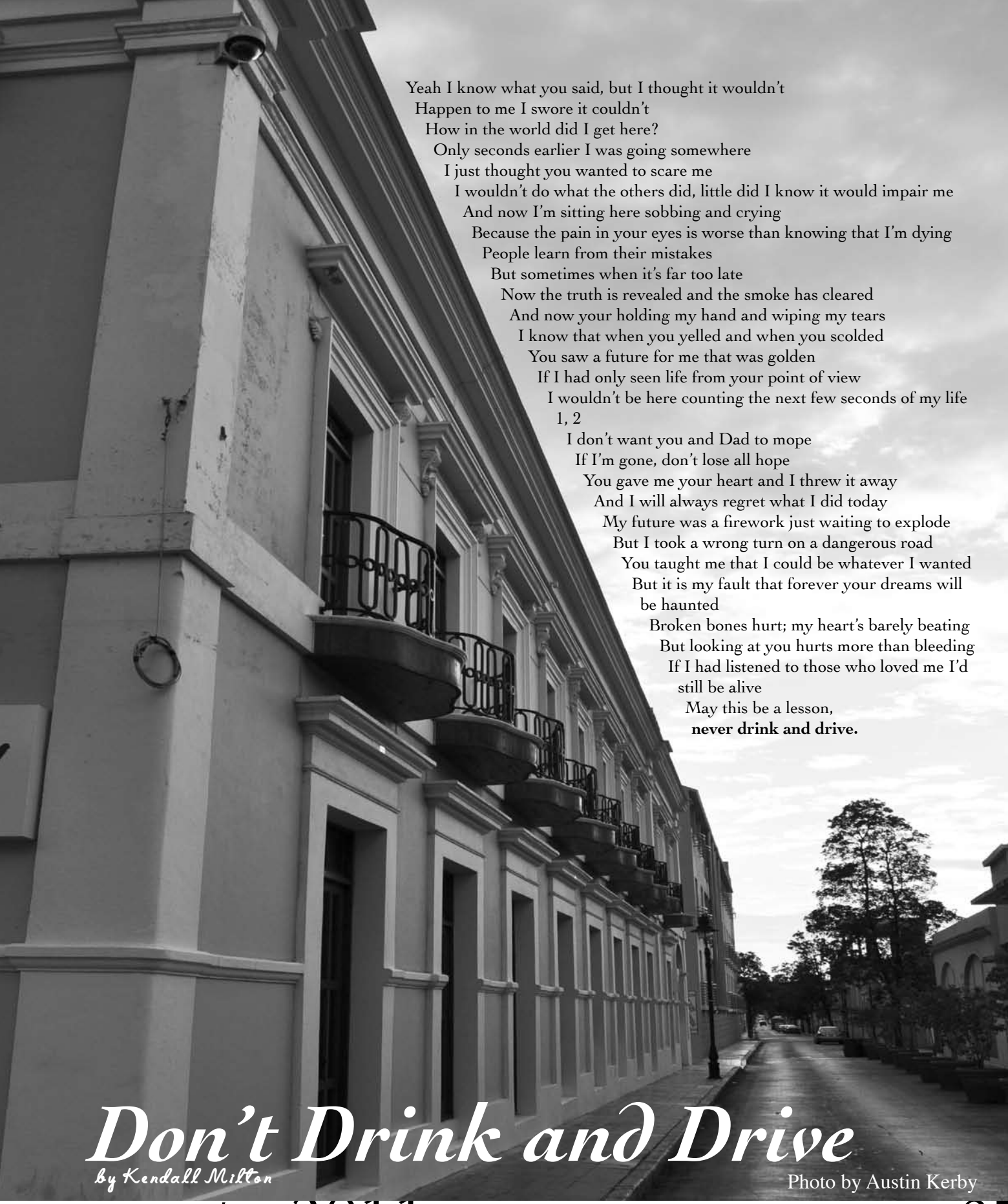
Clouds in charcoal skies
Warn of heaven's rain,
A test for the airy haven.



One by one, droplets fall
To catch on delicate threads
Spun off moonlight sublime.

Balancing there, each bead
Reflects the world inverted,
More splendid than ever.

Sierra Smith



Yeah I know what you said, but I thought it wouldn't
Happen to me I swore it couldn't
How in the world did I get here?
Only seconds earlier I was going somewhere
I just thought you wanted to scare me
I wouldn't do what the others did, little did I know it would impair me
And now I'm sitting here sobbing and crying
Because the pain in your eyes is worse than knowing that I'm dying
People learn from their mistakes
But sometimes when it's far too late
Now the truth is revealed and the smoke has cleared
And now your holding my hand and wiping my tears
I know that when you yelled and when you scolded
You saw a future for me that was golden
If I had only seen life from your point of view
I wouldn't be here counting the next few seconds of my life
1, 2
I don't want you and Dad to mope
If I'm gone, don't lose all hope
You gave me your heart and I threw it away
And I will always regret what I did today
My future was a firework just waiting to explode
But I took a wrong turn on a dangerous road
You taught me that I could be whatever I wanted
But it is my fault that forever your dreams will be haunted
Broken bones hurt; my heart's barely beating
But looking at you hurts more than bleeding
If I had listened to those who loved me I'd still be alive
May this be a lesson,
never drink and drive.

Don't Drink and Drive

by Kendall Milton

Photo by Austin Kerby

Swings

Edward Dong

Across the park a child sprints
To empty swings. Her mother,
Lifting the rubber seat, glances
Beneath to check for rainwater.

I watch the clouds. White sails,
Traversing cerulean skies, halt
As if waiting on a windless sea.

She's swinging, her golden hair
Unfurling behind on every rise,
And with each return sweeping
Into her face like sunlit curtains.

Gone, the sails! By the horizon,
A darkened armada approaches.
It seems to freeze when I watch.

I don't wanna go home! Mother
Listens as the child's cry echoes.
I wonder, *How long before she's*
Like me—too old for the swings?

Todd Nguyen

WHITE CROW
~a prose poem~

Darkness comes and I dream. Many baffling yet beautiful birds call to me while circling our earth: sometimes, swans in pairs, necks stretched like question marks; sometimes, hummingbirds in solo, zipping away, searching always; and sometimes, crows in flocks, clad in black silk, and aloft unified all at once. Sudden as night approaches in winter, they soar, fall, swoop into soulful sky– and I want to fly with them, escape for but a moment though I'm clad in white.

Sometimes, people assemble too, hunched against the wail of weak weather; but none heed the birds, all remain silent– even me. By instinct, I dig into my pockets for anything handy to call the crows to return; but falling night holds empty pockets, empty spaces, sky that turns inside out, keeping me grounded.

Yet still, I own the crude truth, the sting of our limited, primitive mind; yet still I wave my wings at every bit of moonlight and strive to reach Heaven. At last, roosters crow at crack of dawn; and I awake from my dream– darkness departing.

Darisha Jhutty

"The Lake Isle of Innisfree" by William Butler Yeats inspired this poem celebrating my childhood family trips to Disneyland.

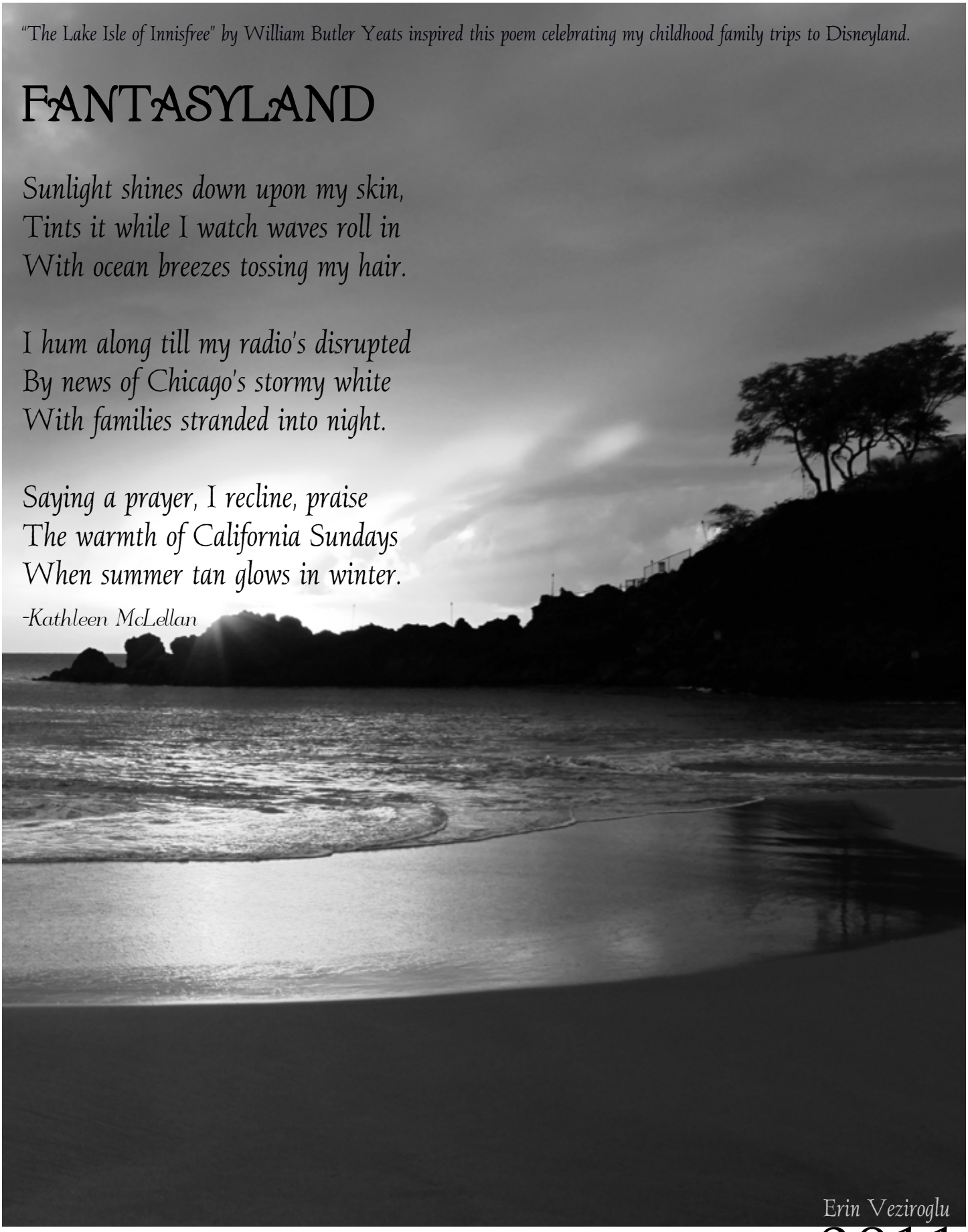
FANTASYLAND

Sunlight shines down upon my skin,
Tints it while I watch waves roll in
With ocean breezes tossing my hair.

I hum along till my radio's disrupted
By news of Chicago's stormy white
With families stranded into night.

Saying a prayer, I recline, praise
The warmth of California Sundays
When summer tan glows in winter.

-Kathleen McLellan



Erin Veziroglu

TOMORROW

Jennifer Vannier

Tomorrow is full of possibilities,
So we always reach for tomorrow.
We fight and work and dream.

But what about today?
Today was a tomorrow once.
So unless today's tomorrow is better than
yesterday...

What's the point?
The point is to make today the tomorrow,
We wished for.

Photo by Austin Kerb