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A Human Life

a book of poems

by
pc keefer

book four



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20251105.1 | kids

I've experienced over five decades

Childhood was beautiful: loving, secure family

Teen years were great: friends, laughter, exploration

Twenties were fun: education, travel

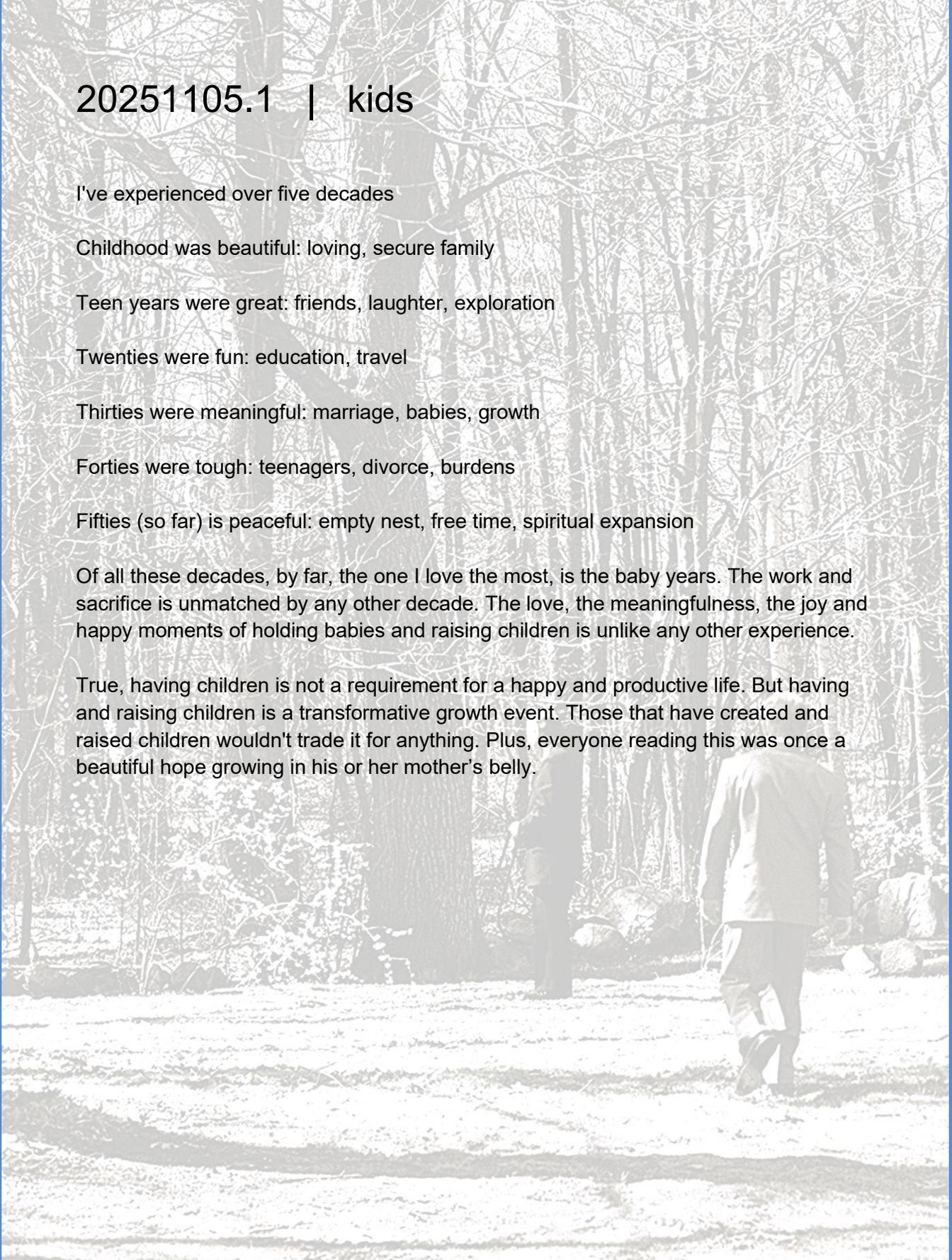
Thirties were meaningful: marriage, babies, growth

Forties were tough: teenagers, divorce, burdens

Fifties (so far) is peaceful: empty nest, free time, spiritual expansion

Of all these decades, by far, the one I love the most, is the baby years. The work and sacrifice is unmatched by any other decade. The love, the meaningfulness, the joy and happy moments of holding babies and raising children is unlike any other experience.

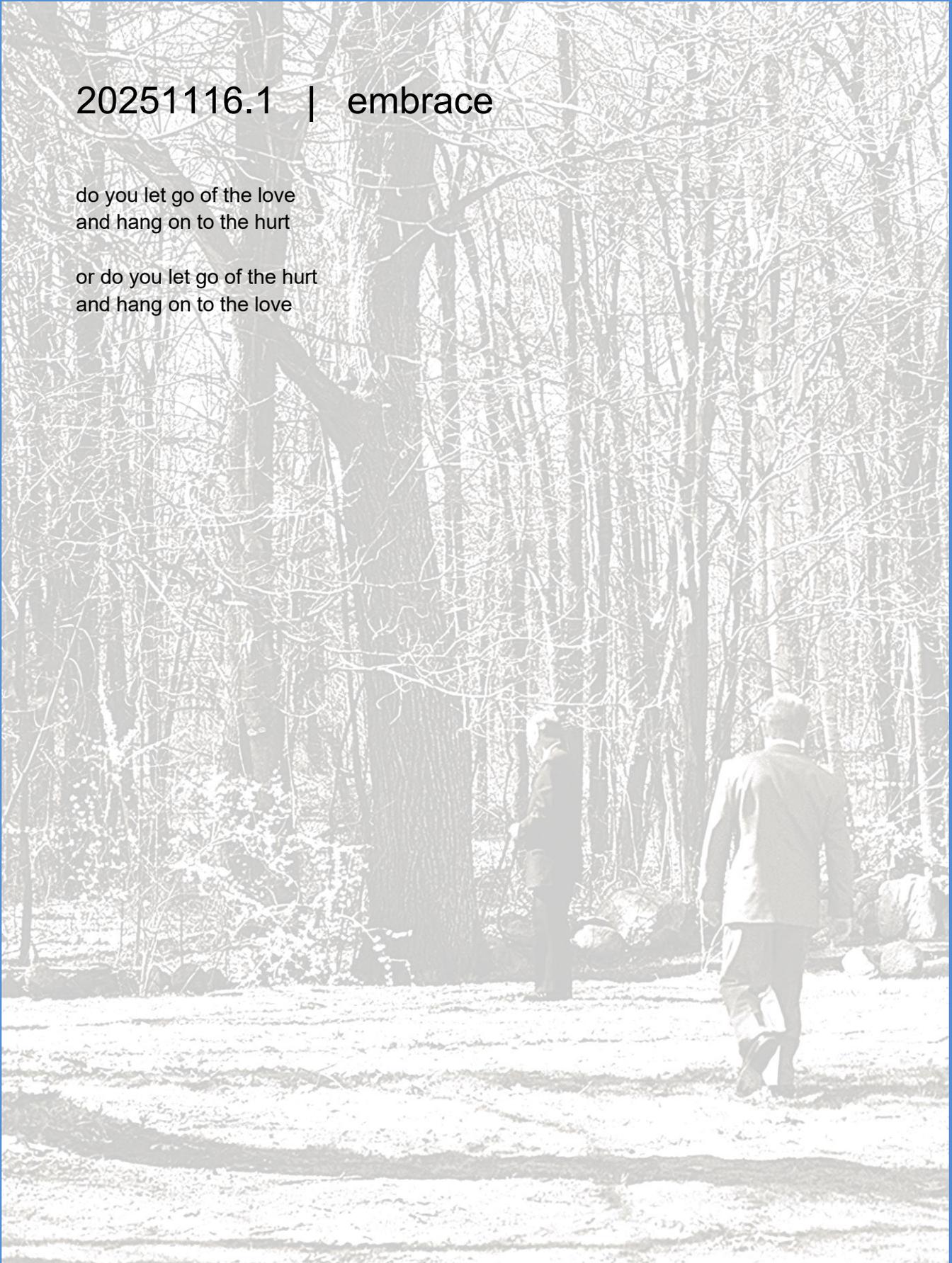
True, having children is not a requirement for a happy and productive life. But having and raising children is a transformative growth event. Those that have created and raised children wouldn't trade it for anything. Plus, everyone reading this was once a beautiful hope growing in his or her mother's belly.



20251116.1 | embrace

do you let go of the love
and hang on to the hurt

or do you let go of the hurt
and hang on to the love



20251124.1 | motion

i want to be hot in the summer

i want to be cold in the winter

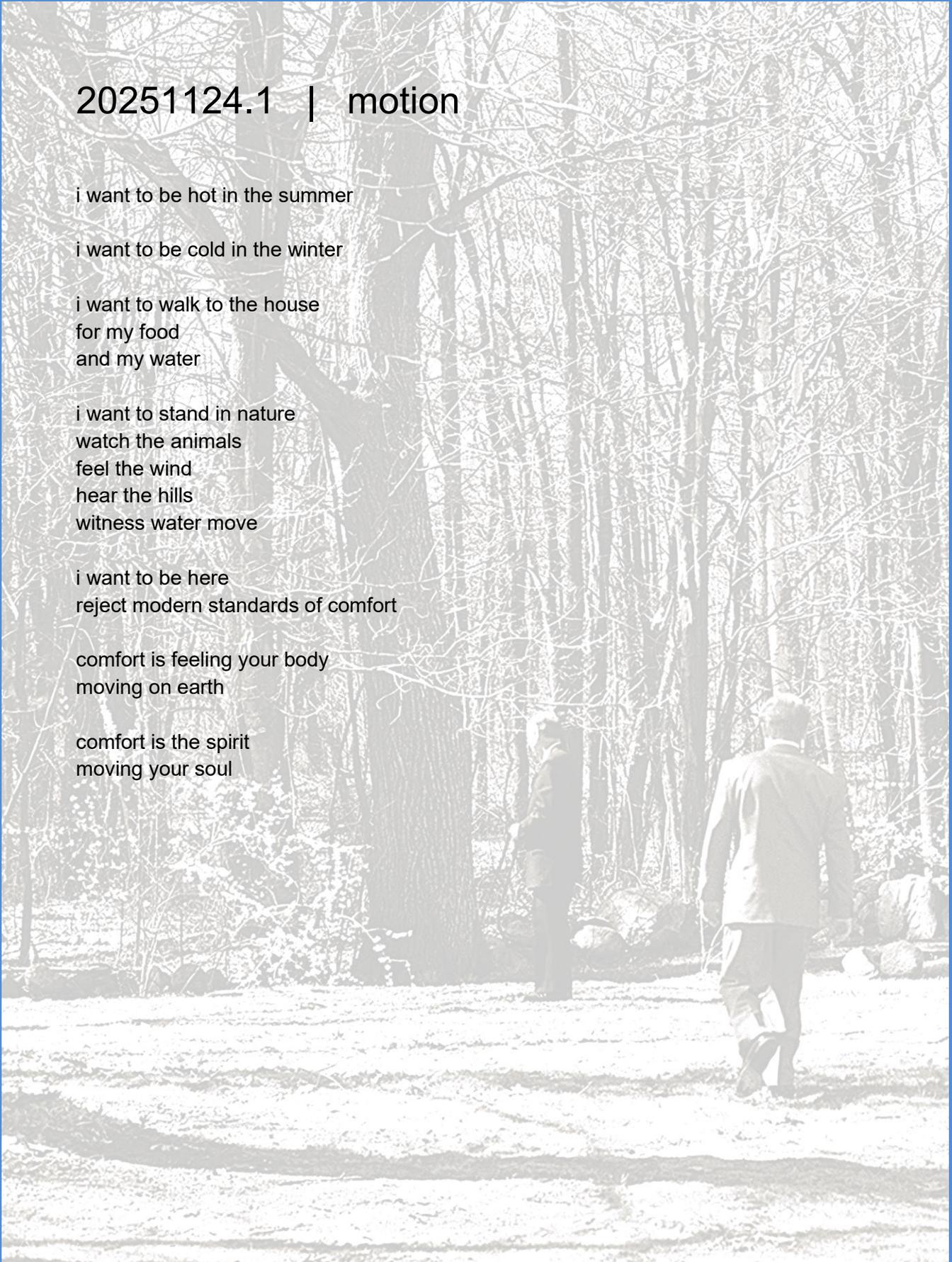
i want to walk to the house
for my food
and my water

i want to stand in nature
watch the animals
feel the wind
hear the hills
witness water move

i want to be here
reject modern standards of comfort

comfort is feeling your body
moving on earth

comfort is the spirit
moving your soul



20251127.1 | joy

the skull is pinched to a cone
the ribcage squeezed
hard
to get the fluid out

trained hands
pulls the neck
cuts the cord
siphons the airways

dry air hits new lungs
98.6 degrees
is now 70 and room temperature

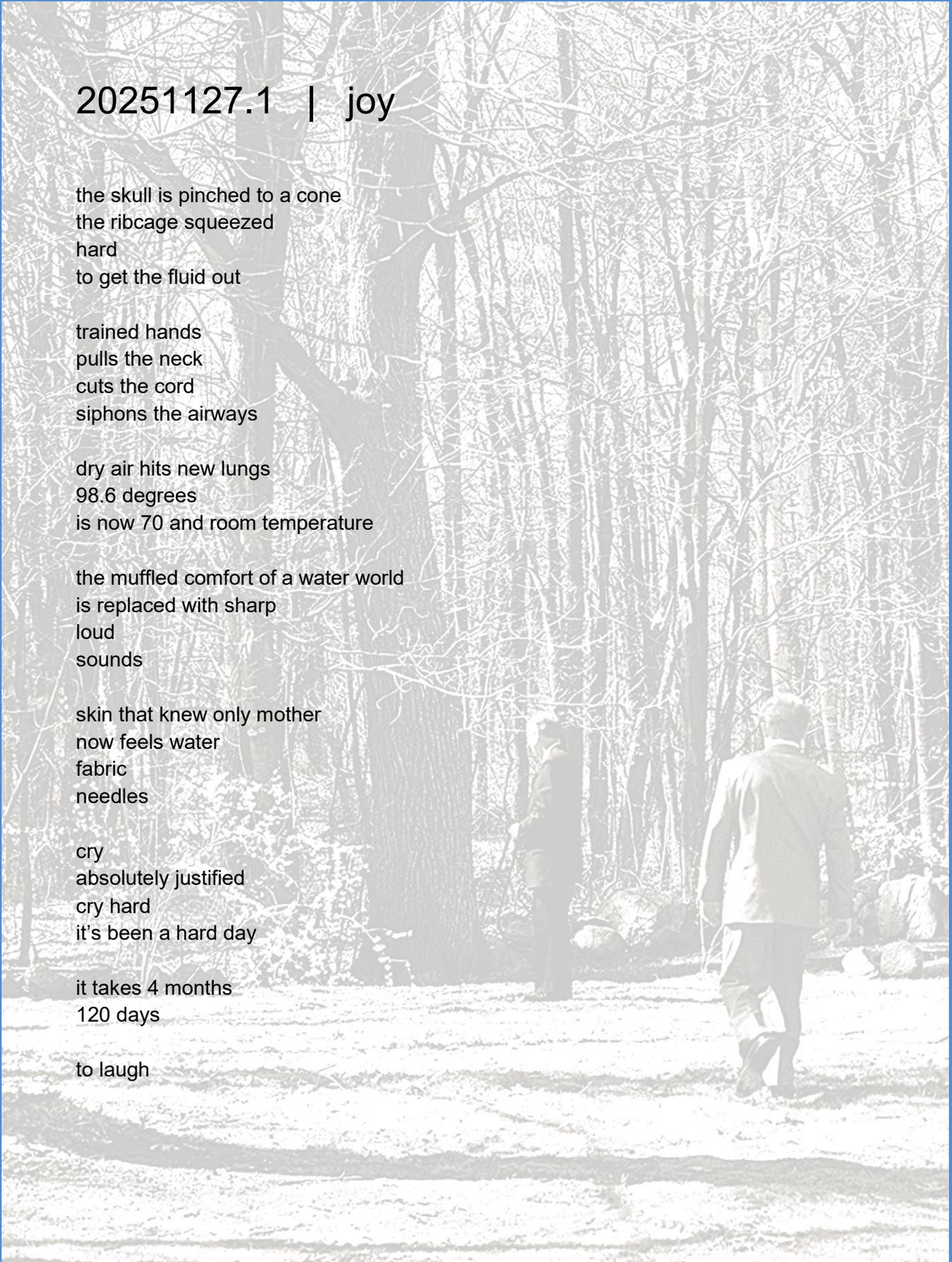
the muffled comfort of a water world
is replaced with sharp
loud
sounds

skin that knew only mother
now feels water
fabric
needles

cry
absolutely justified
cry hard
it's been a hard day

it takes 4 months
120 days

to laugh



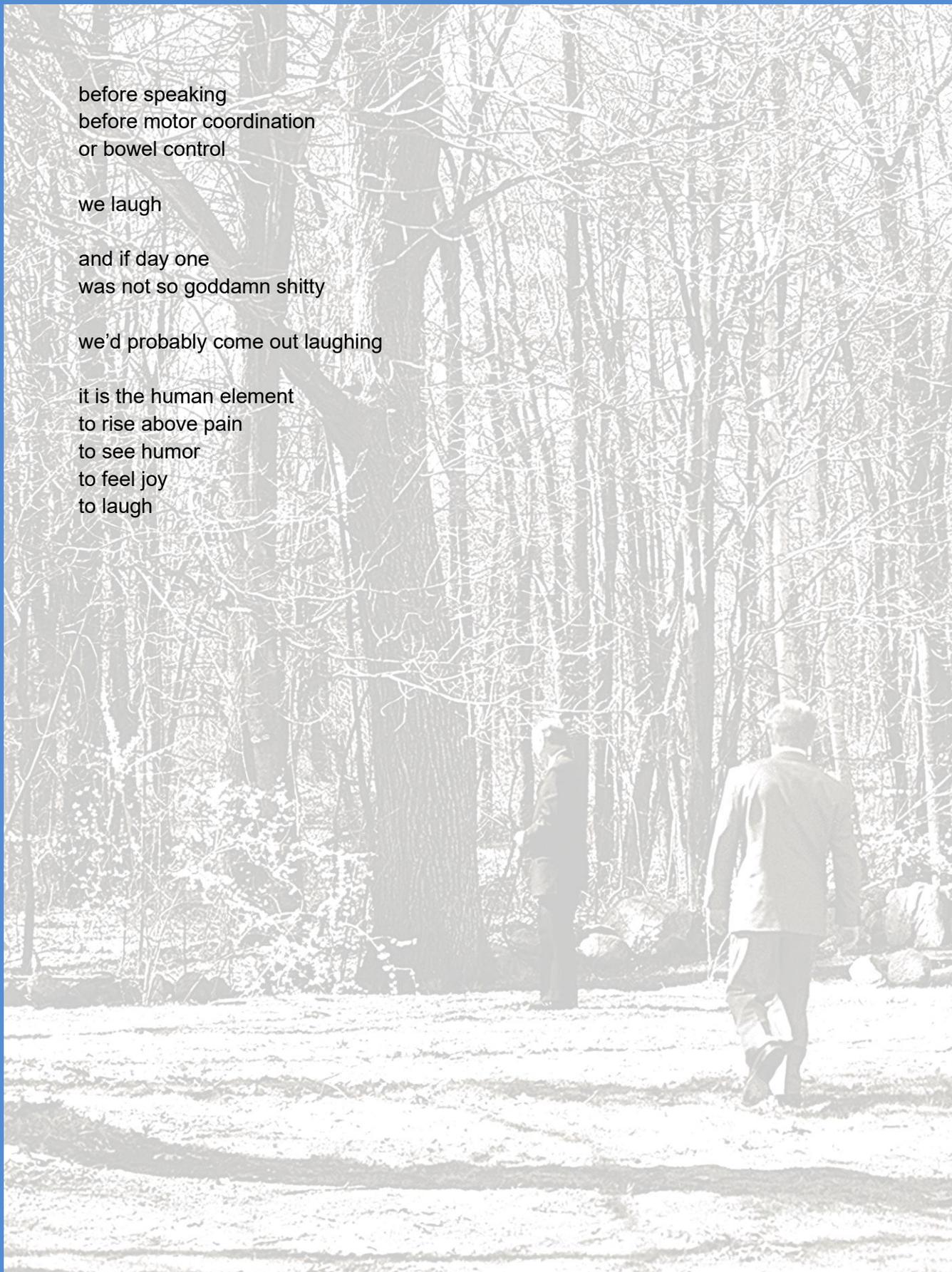
before speaking
before motor coordination
or bowel control

we laugh

and if day one
was not so goddamn shitty

we'd probably come out laughing

it is the human element
to rise above pain
to see humor
to feel joy
to laugh



20251220.1 | once healed

a goddess suffered and injury
which grounded her

here
among mortals
i met her

she needed held
and i held her

she needed comfort
and i comforted her

she needed
laughter
hope
a friend

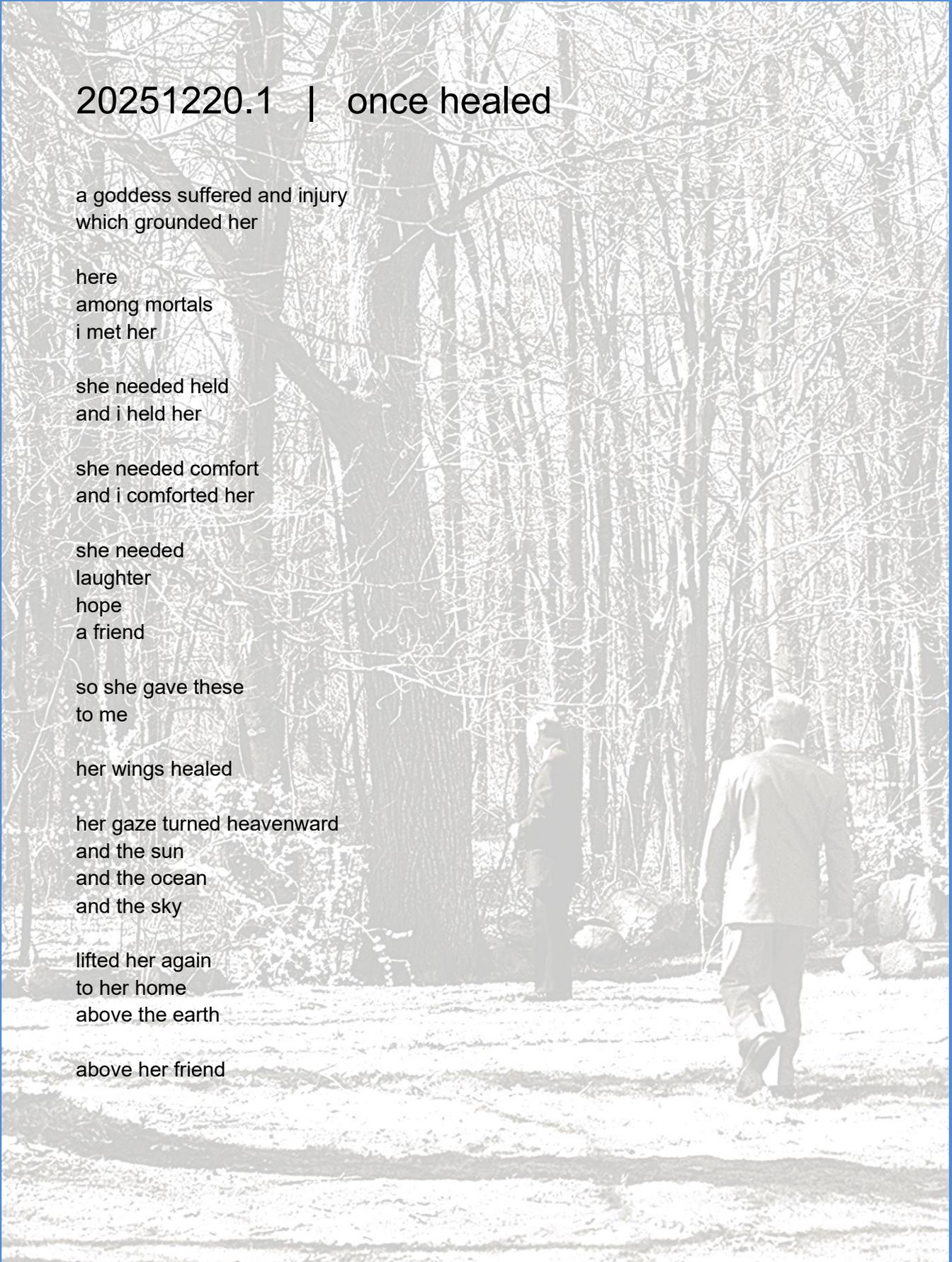
so she gave these
to me

her wings healed

her gaze turned heavenward
and the sun
and the ocean
and the sky

lifted her again
to her home
above the earth

above her friend



20251220.2 | a wormhole appears

two years

a text arrives

a wormhole appears out of thin air

i am in awe

i text back into the wormhole

silence

i look around

the room

take stock

of my life

of my worth

it's okay

for a ghost

who you love

to appear

if only for a flash

a dead brother comes forth

and embraces me in a dream

a cherished lover texts

after years of silence

just once

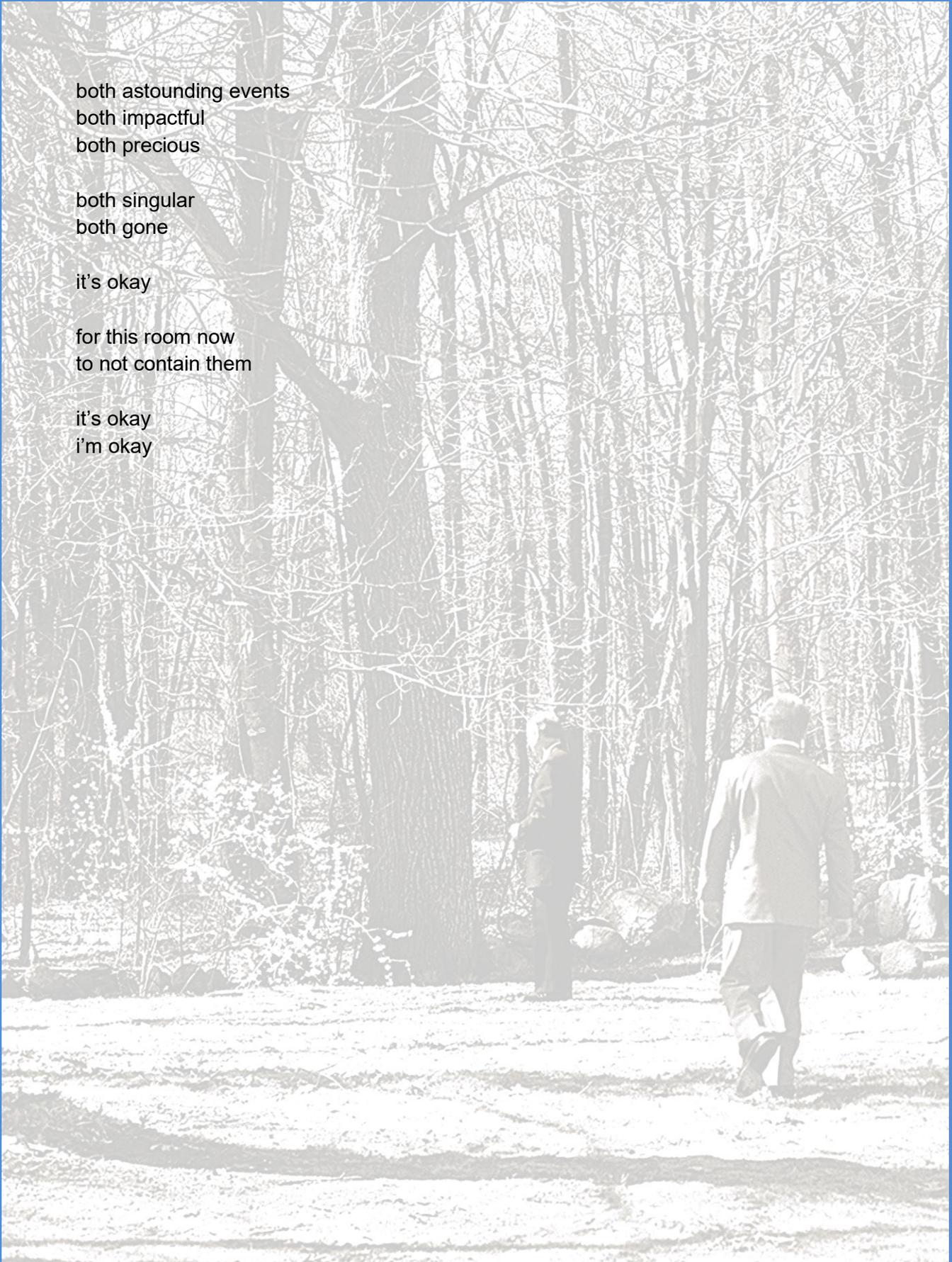
both astounding events
both impactful
both precious

both singular
both gone

it's okay

for this room now
to not contain them

it's okay
i'm okay



20251221.1 | passing through

my muse is change
when the pattern you love
won't repeat
when echos fall silent
and the reflection in the mirror
a stranger

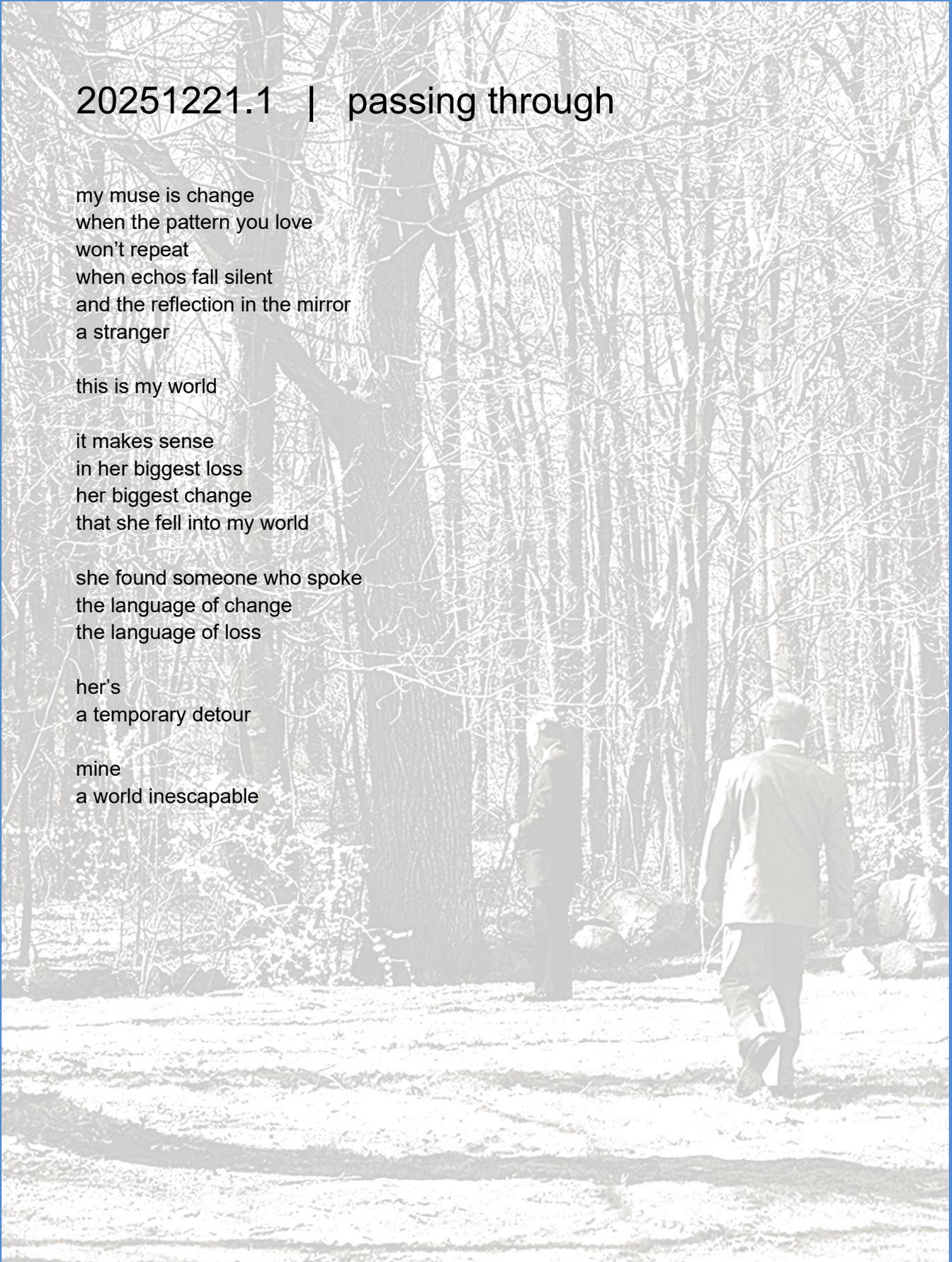
this is my world

it makes sense
in her biggest loss
her biggest change
that she fell into my world

she found someone who spoke
the language of change
the language of loss

her's
a temporary detour

mine
a world inescapable



20260118.1 | poetry in song

jersey girl

i'm not from jersey

neither are you

but boy

when i listen to that song

i am right there

by your side

hand in hand

heart in heart

love swimming in the air

love in every touch

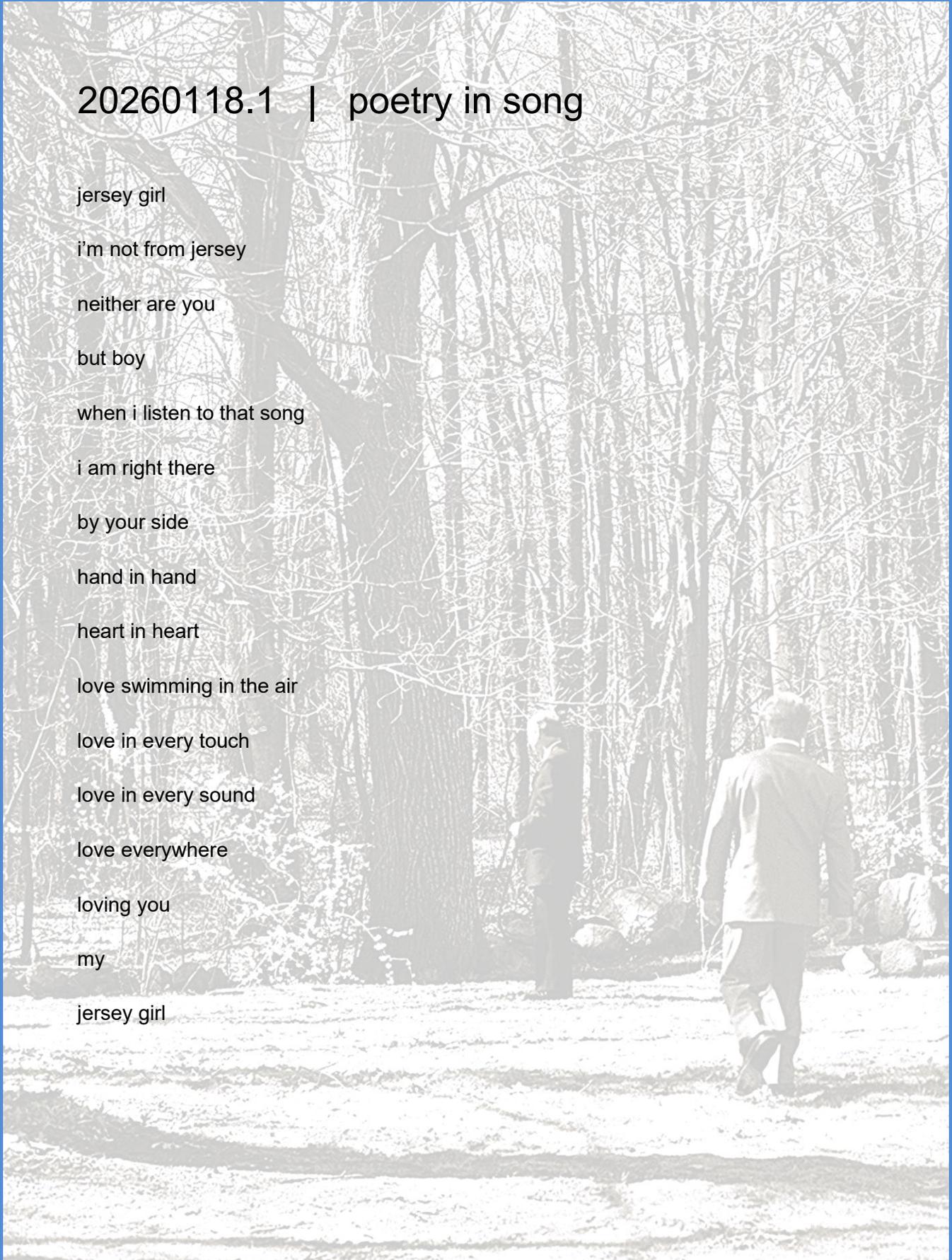
love in every sound

love everywhere

loving you

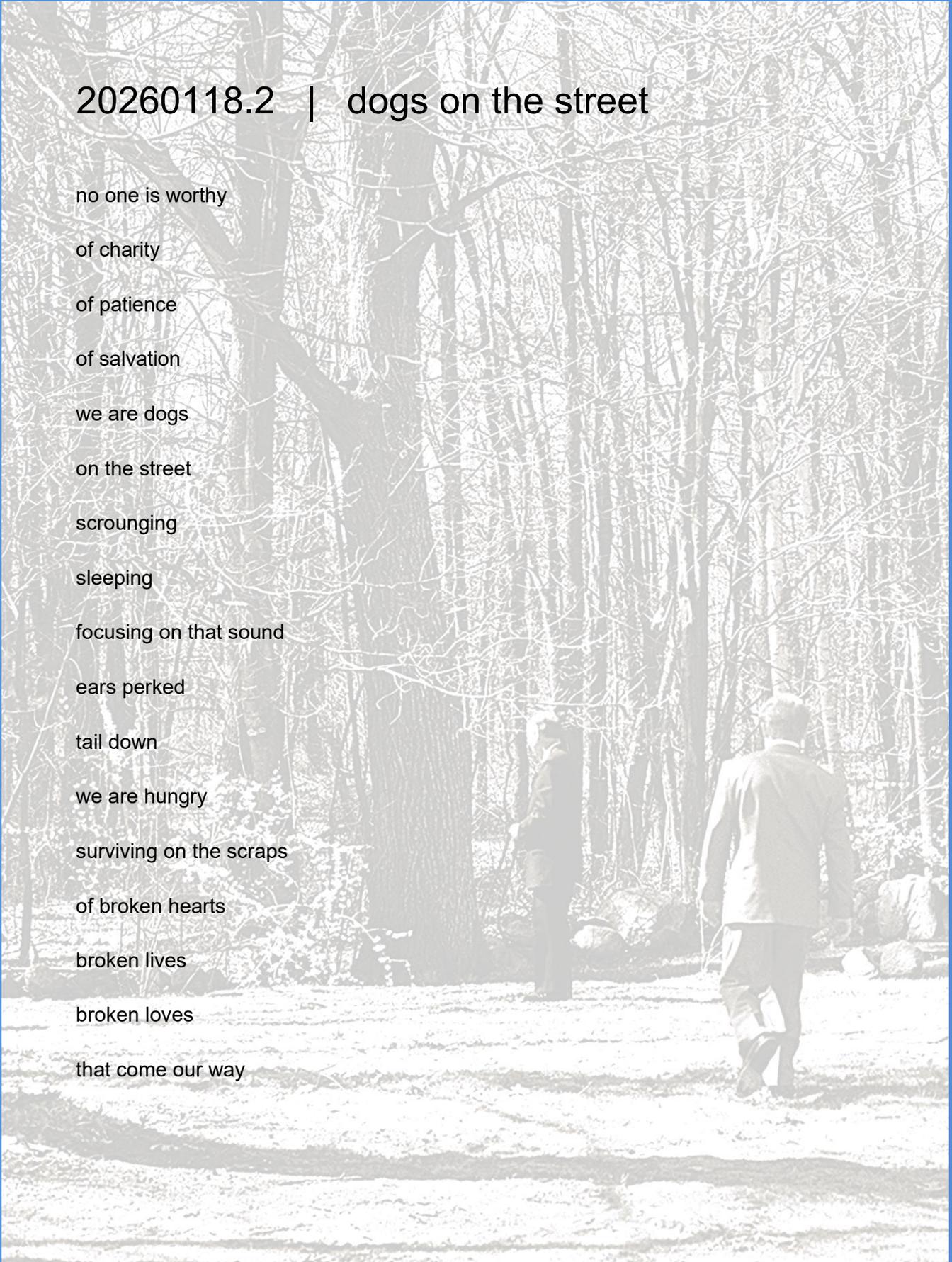
my

jersey girl



20260118.2 | dogs on the street

no one is worthy
of charity
of patience
of salvation
we are dogs
on the street
scrounging
sleeping
focusing on that sound
ears perked
tail down
we are hungry
surviving on the scraps
of broken hearts
broken lives
broken loves
that come our way



20260208.1 | frankenlove

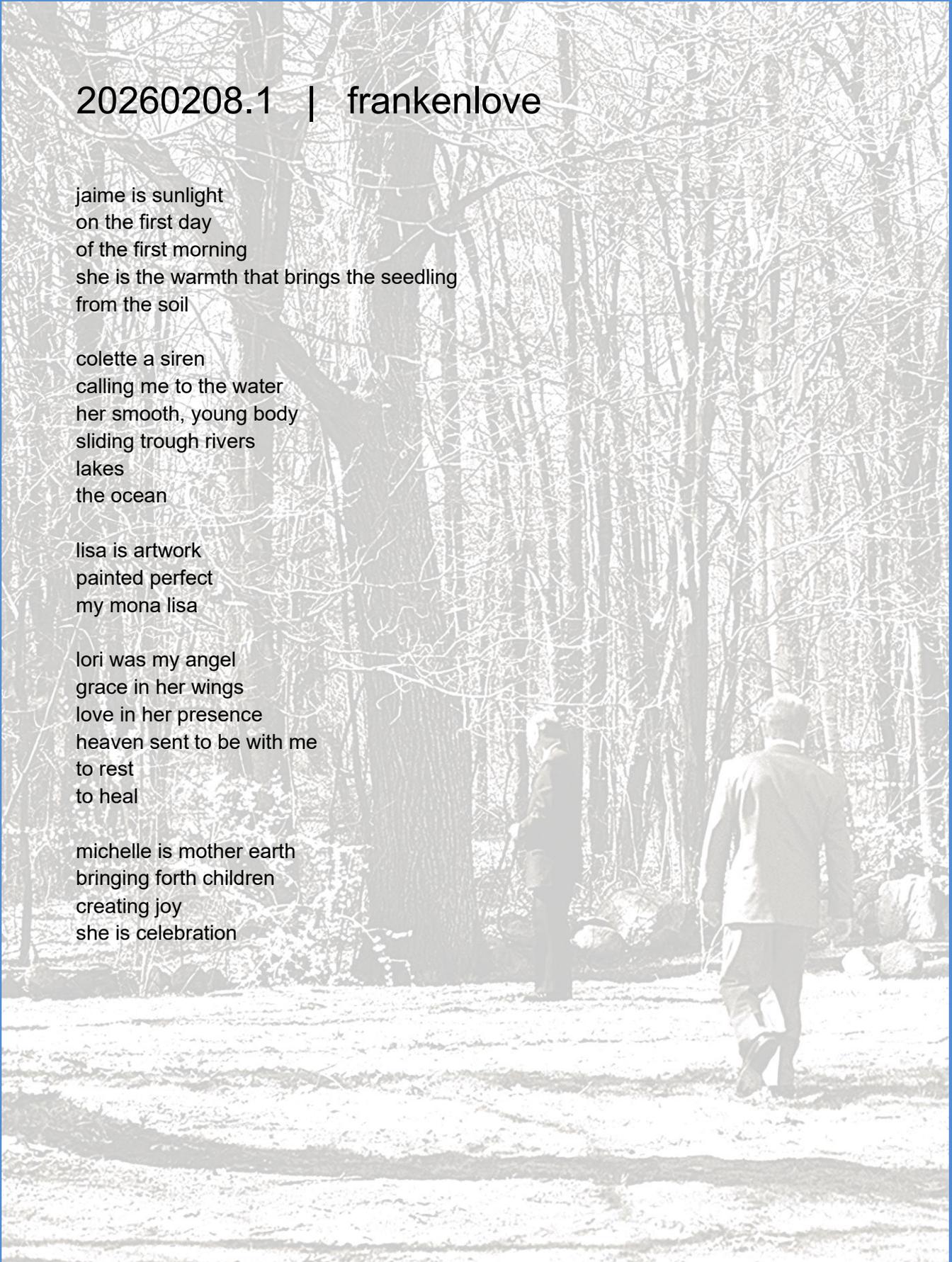
jaimie is sunlight
on the first day
of the first morning
she is the warmth that brings the seedling
from the soil

colette a siren
calling me to the water
her smooth, young body
sliding trough rivers
lakes
the ocean

lisa is artwork
painted perfect
my mona lisa

lori was my angel
grace in her wings
love in her presence
heaven sent to be with me
to rest
to heal

michelle is mother earth
bringing forth children
creating joy
she is celebration



sandra is yellow and gray
beauty and sadness
a place i could have easily stayed

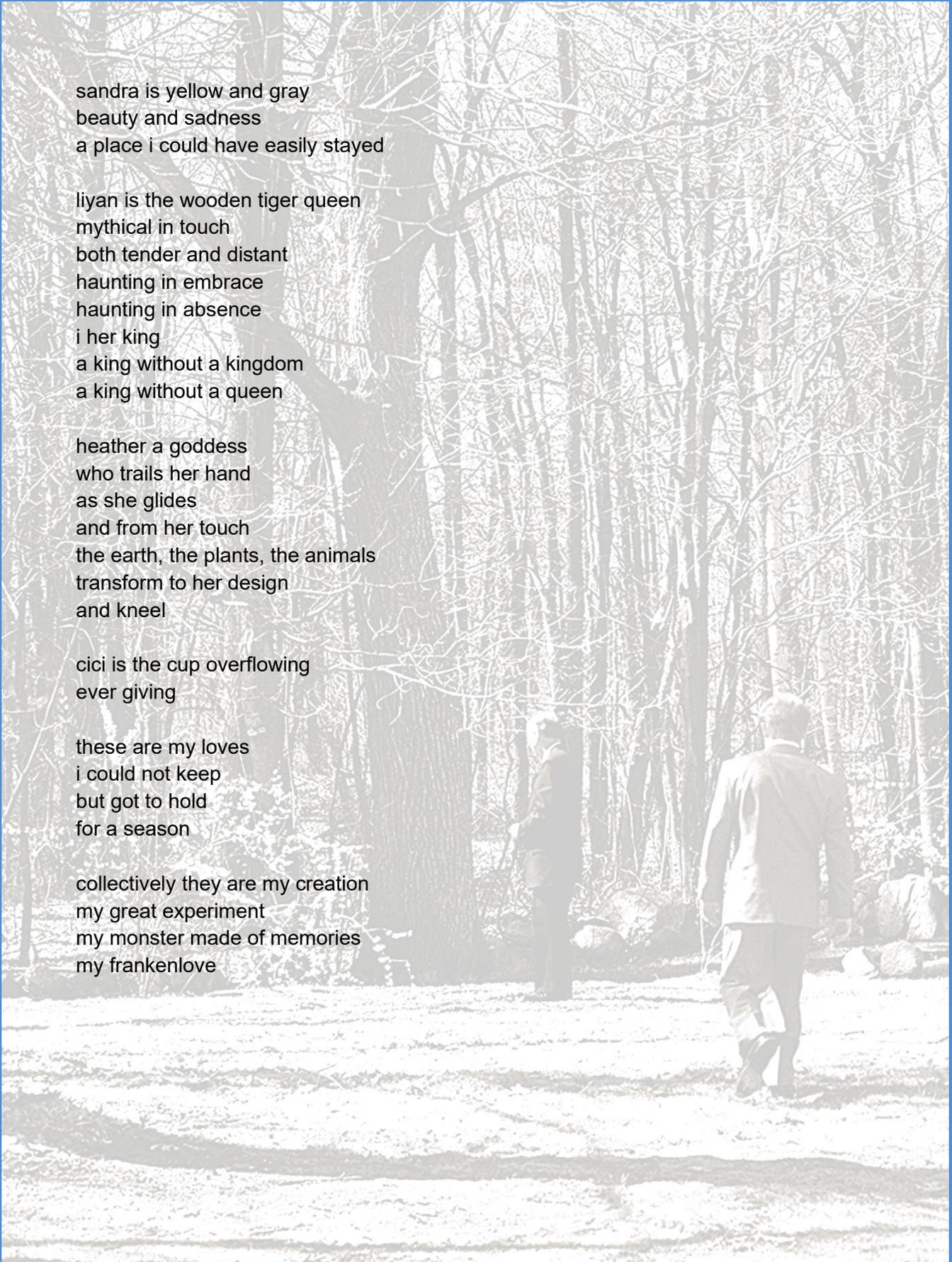
liyan is the wooden tiger queen
mythical in touch
both tender and distant
haunting in embrace
haunting in absence
i her king
a king without a kingdom
a king without a queen

heather a goddess
who trails her hand
as she glides
and from her touch
the earth, the plants, the animals
transform to her design
and kneel

cici is the cup overflowing
ever giving

these are my loves
i could not keep
but got to hold
for a season

collectively they are my creation
my great experiment
my monster made of memories
my frankenlove



20260208.2 | cost of depression

the cost of depression is
the removal of gratitude

gratitude is
the releasing of the ego

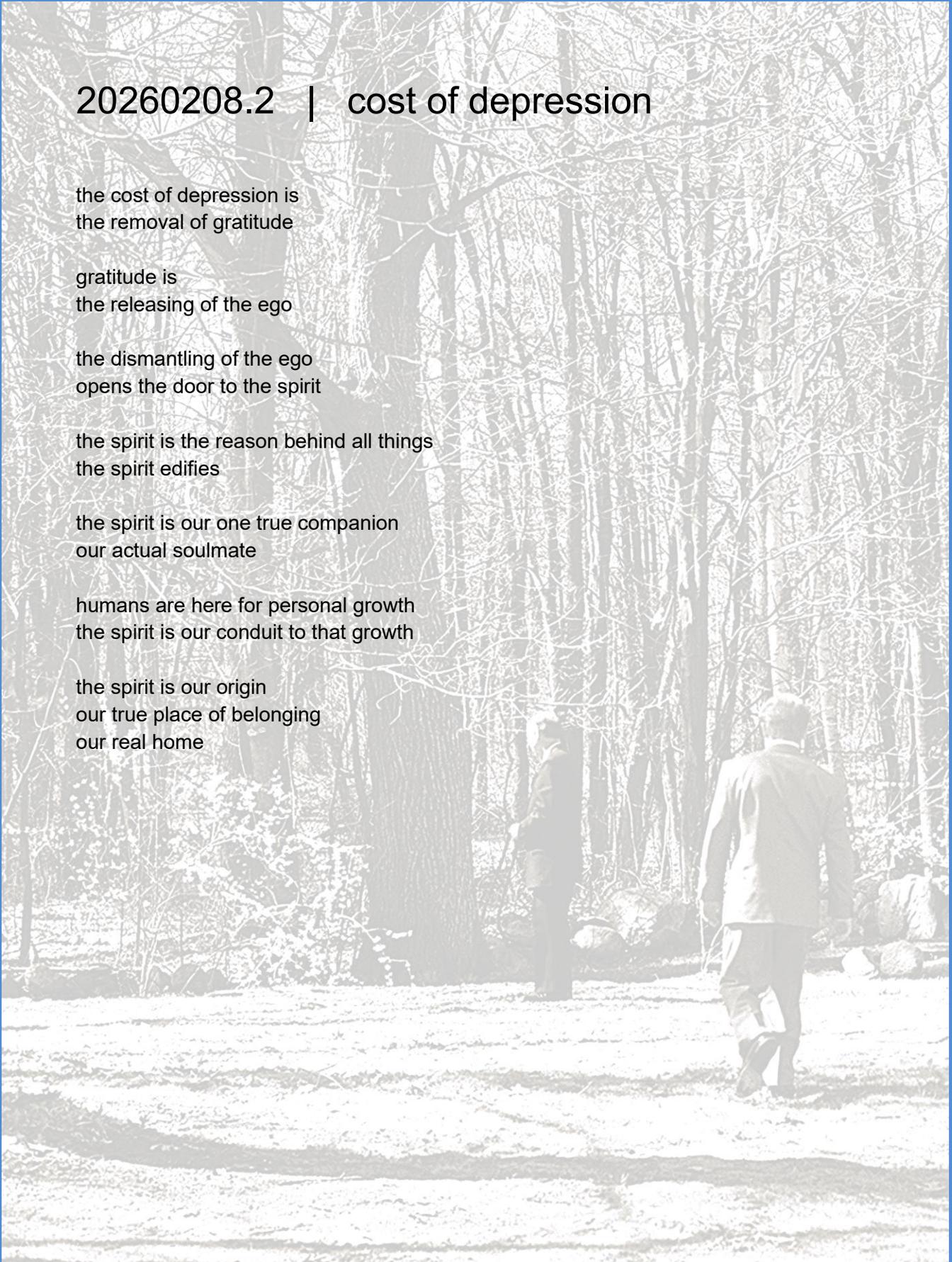
the dismantling of the ego
opens the door to the spirit

the spirit is the reason behind all things
the spirit edifies

the spirit is our one true companion
our actual soulmate

humans are here for personal growth
the spirit is our conduit to that growth

the spirit is our origin
our true place of belonging
our real home



20260208.3 | walden 2.0

walden
love it

the abridged version, that is
the unabridged version has some
not so great opinions of the era
the abridge version was smart enough
to leave this stuff out

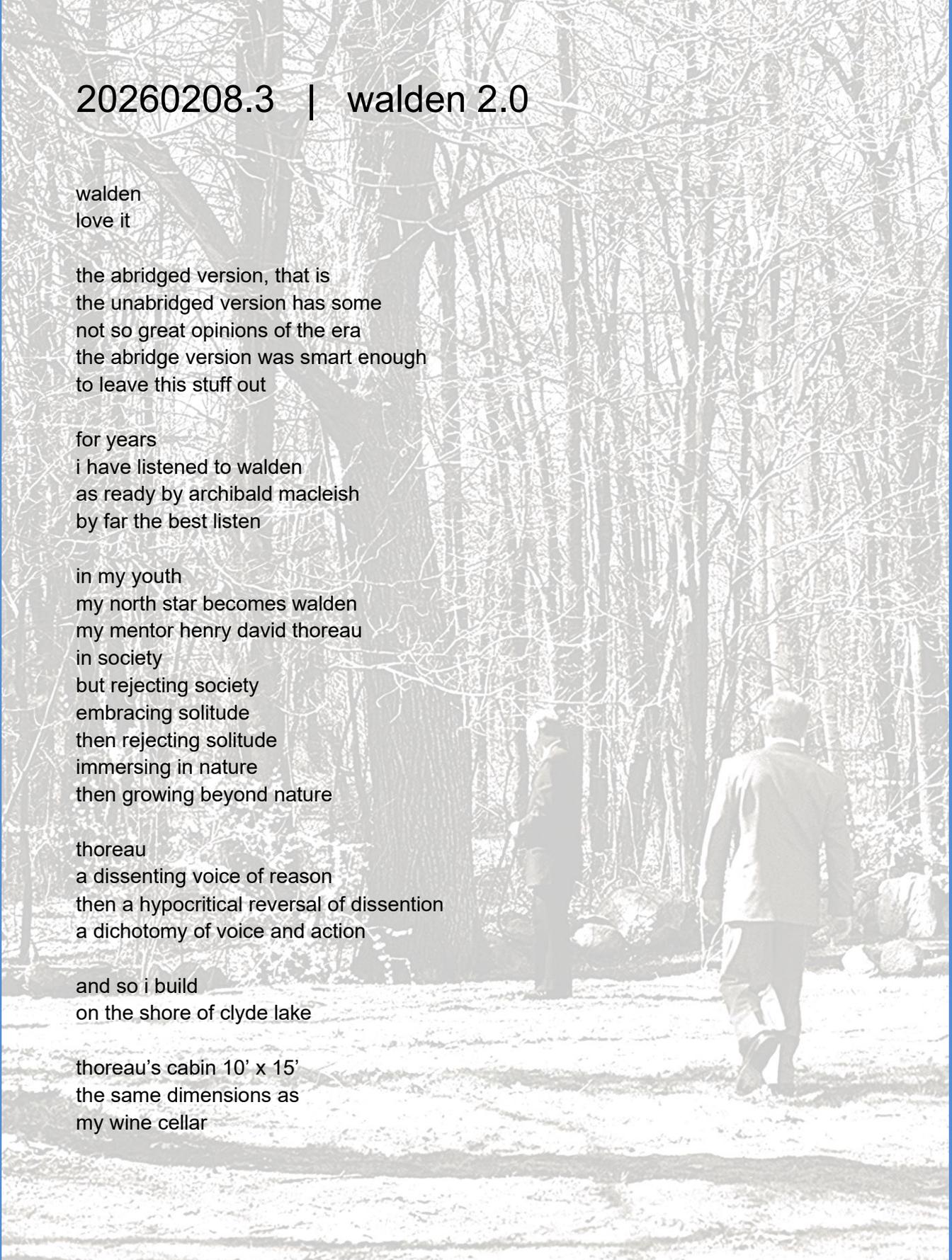
for years
i have listened to walden
as ready by archibald macleish
by far the best listen

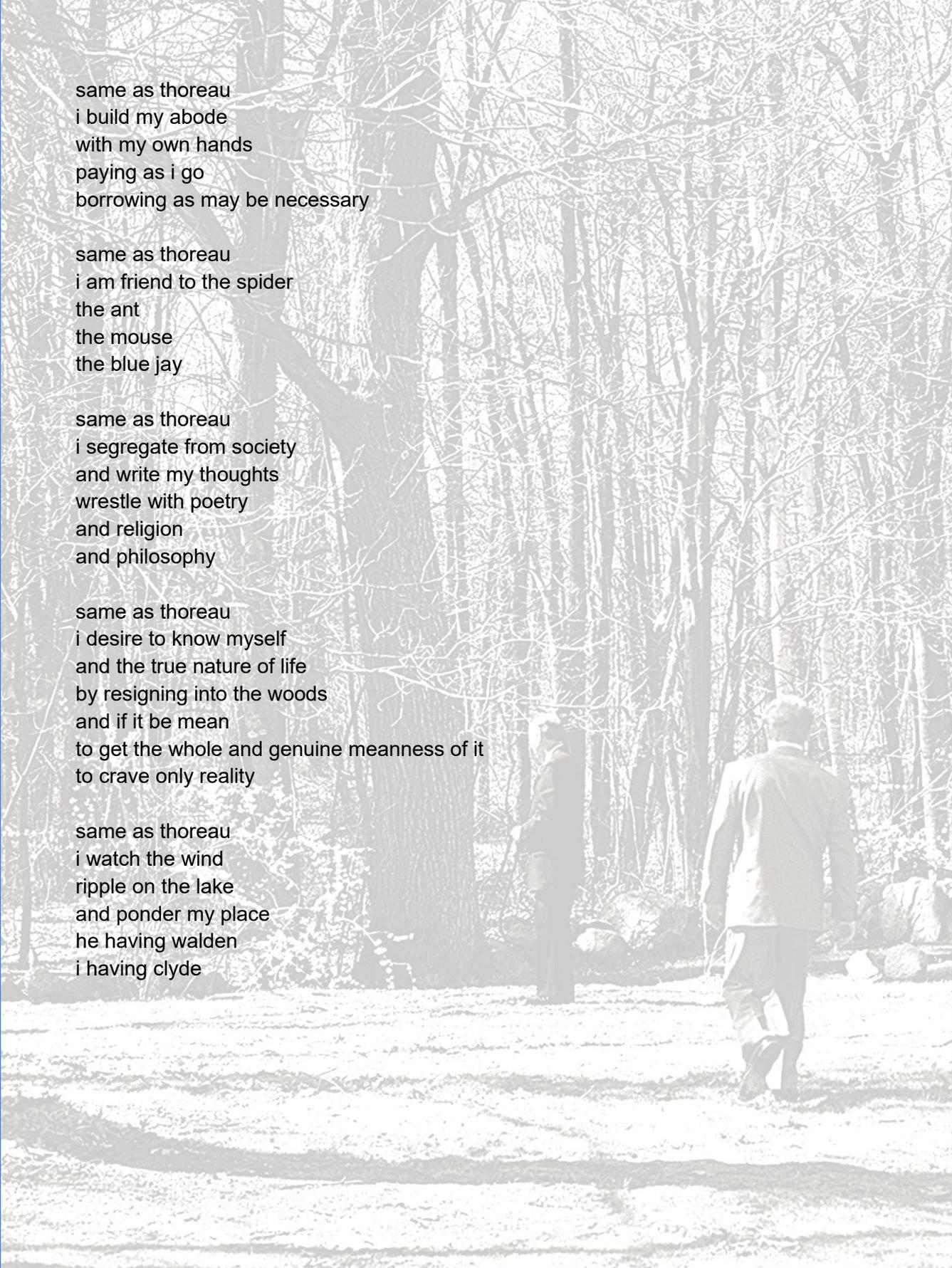
in my youth
my north star becomes walden
my mentor henry david thoreau
in society
but rejecting society
embracing solitude
then rejecting solitude
immersing in nature
then growing beyond nature

thoreau
a dissenting voice of reason
then a hypocritical reversal of dissention
a dichotomy of voice and action

and so i build
on the shore of clyde lake

thoreau's cabin 10' x 15'
the same dimensions as
my wine cellar





same as thoreau
i build my abode
with my own hands
paying as i go
borrowing as may be necessary

same as thoreau
i am friend to the spider
the ant
the mouse
the blue jay

same as thoreau
i segregate from society
and write my thoughts
wrestle with poetry
and religion
and philosophy

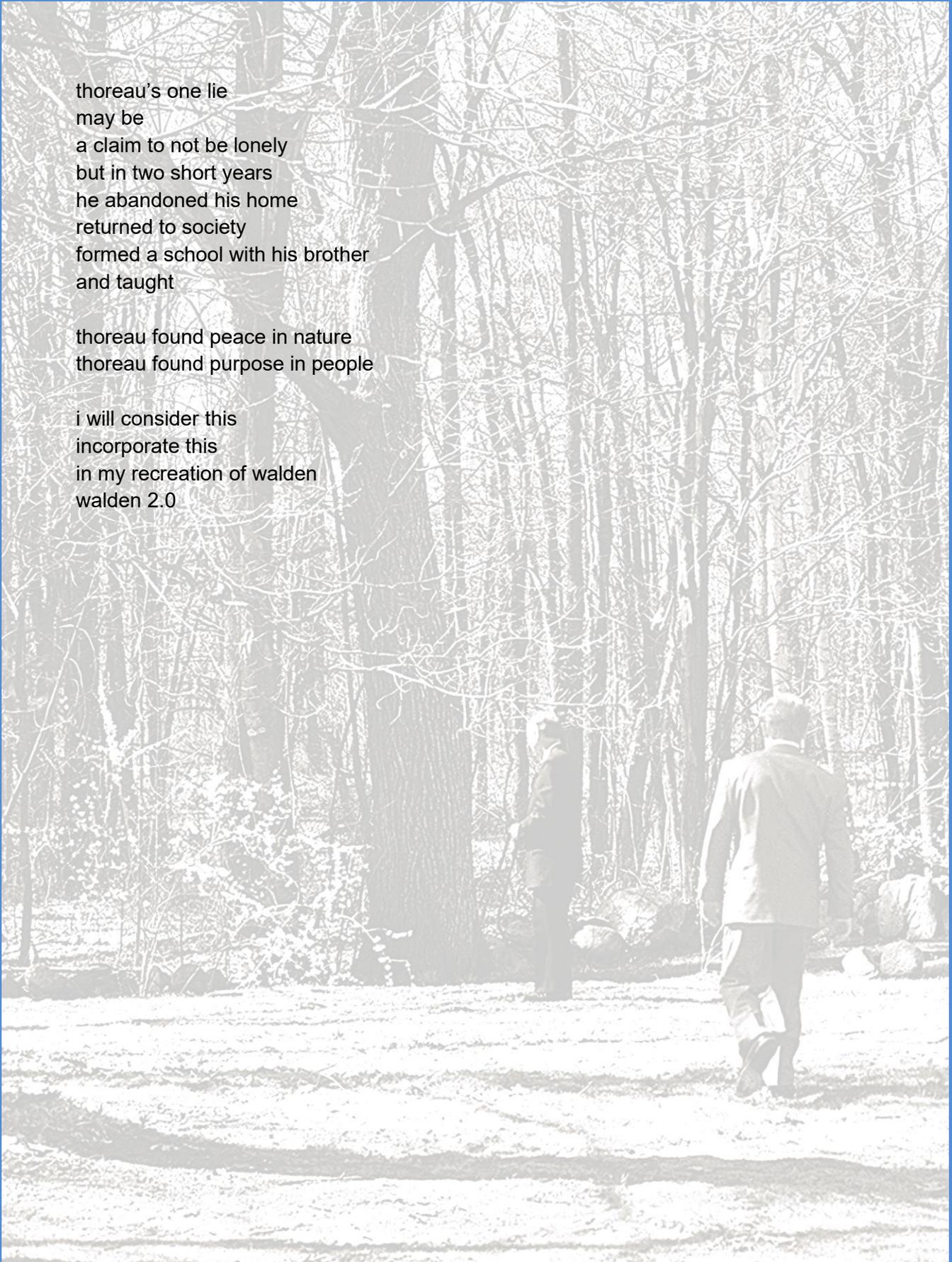
same as thoreau
i desire to know myself
and the true nature of life
by resigning into the woods
and if it be mean
to get the whole and genuine meanness of it
to crave only reality

same as thoreau
i watch the wind
ripple on the lake
and ponder my place
he having walden
i having clyde

thoreau's one lie
may be
a claim to not be lonely
but in two short years
he abandoned his home
returned to society
formed a school with his brother
and taught

thoreau found peace in nature
thoreau found purpose in people

i will consider this
incorporate this
in my recreation of walden
walden 2.0



20260220.1 | howitzers in the distance

i hear howitzers in the distance
105 mm shells
rocketing to targets
explosions

my grandmother heard explosions
took her baby, my mother, quickly into her arms
ran to the basement
or the underground
sometimes under the stairs

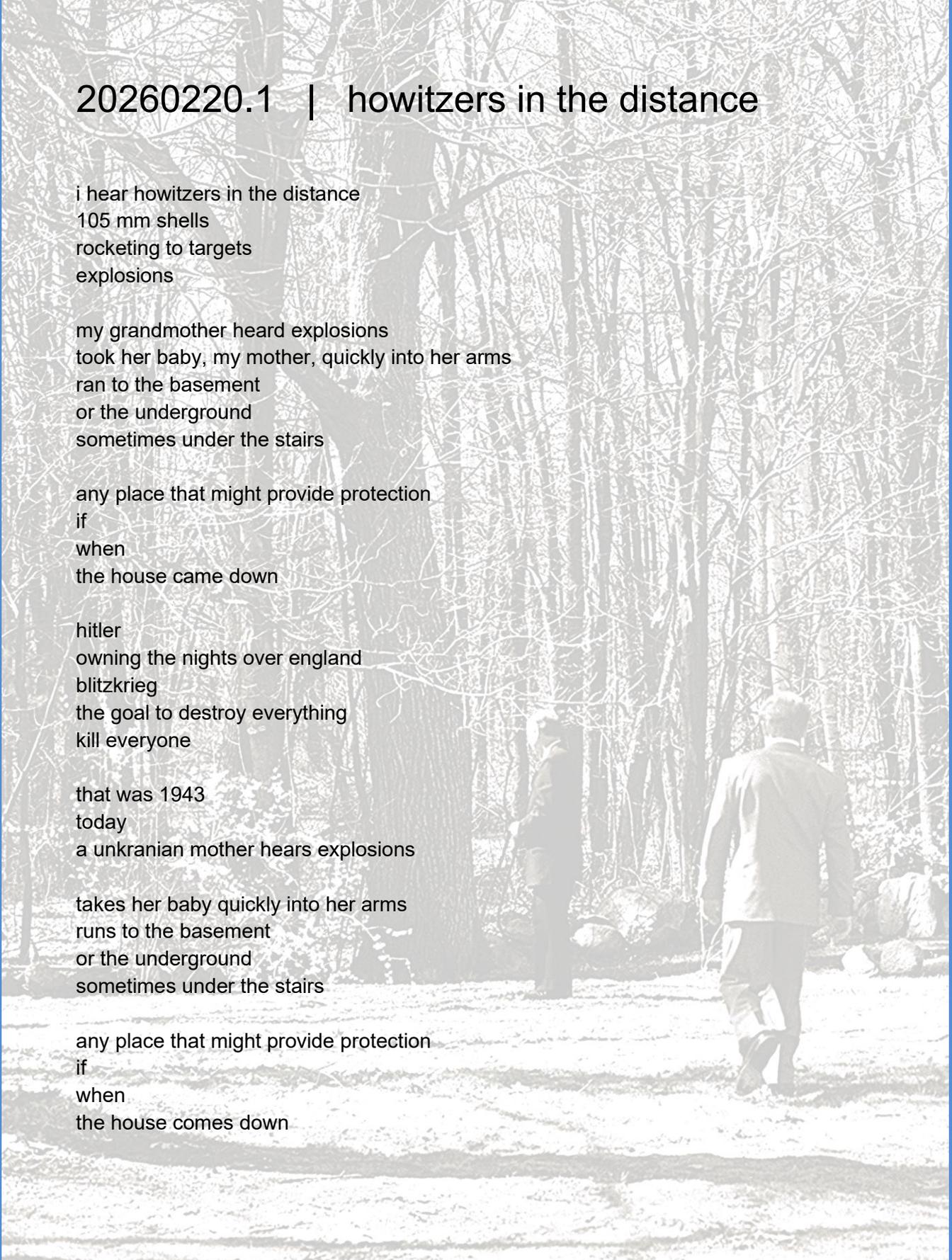
any place that might provide protection
if
when
the house came down

hitler
owning the nights over england
blitzkrieg
the goal to destroy everything
kill everyone

that was 1943
today
a unkranian mother hears explosions

takes her baby quickly into her arms
runs to the basement
or the underground
sometimes under the stairs

any place that might provide protection
if
when
the house comes down

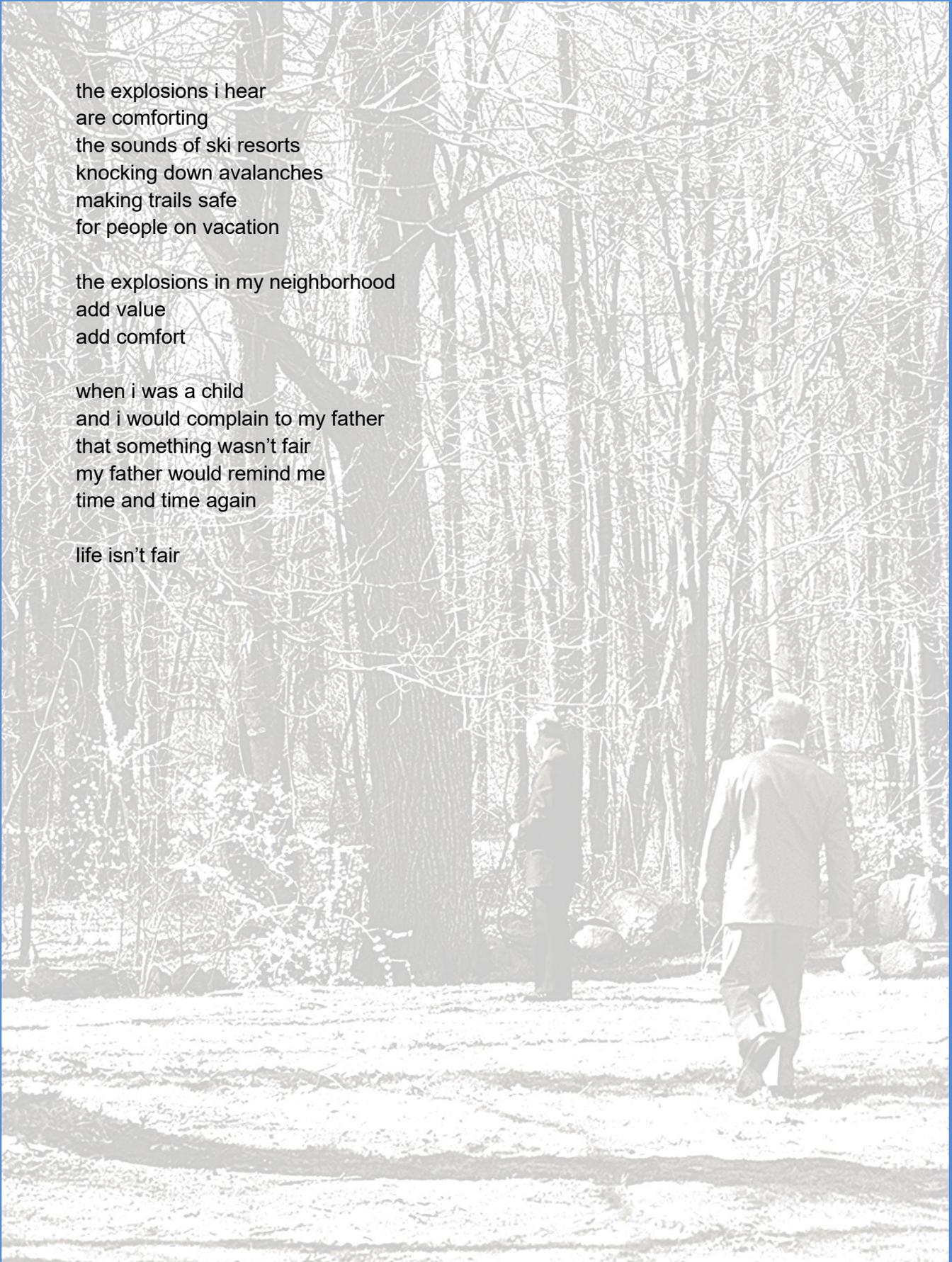


the explosions i hear
are comforting
the sounds of ski resorts
knocking down avalanches
making trails safe
for people on vacation

the explosions in my neighborhood
add value
add comfort

when i was a child
and i would complain to my father
that something wasn't fair
my father would remind me
time and time again

life isn't fair



20260220.2 | john campbell

john campbell is my cousin
about ten years my senior

john was raised in los angeles
and when grown
moved to san francisco
and rented on market street

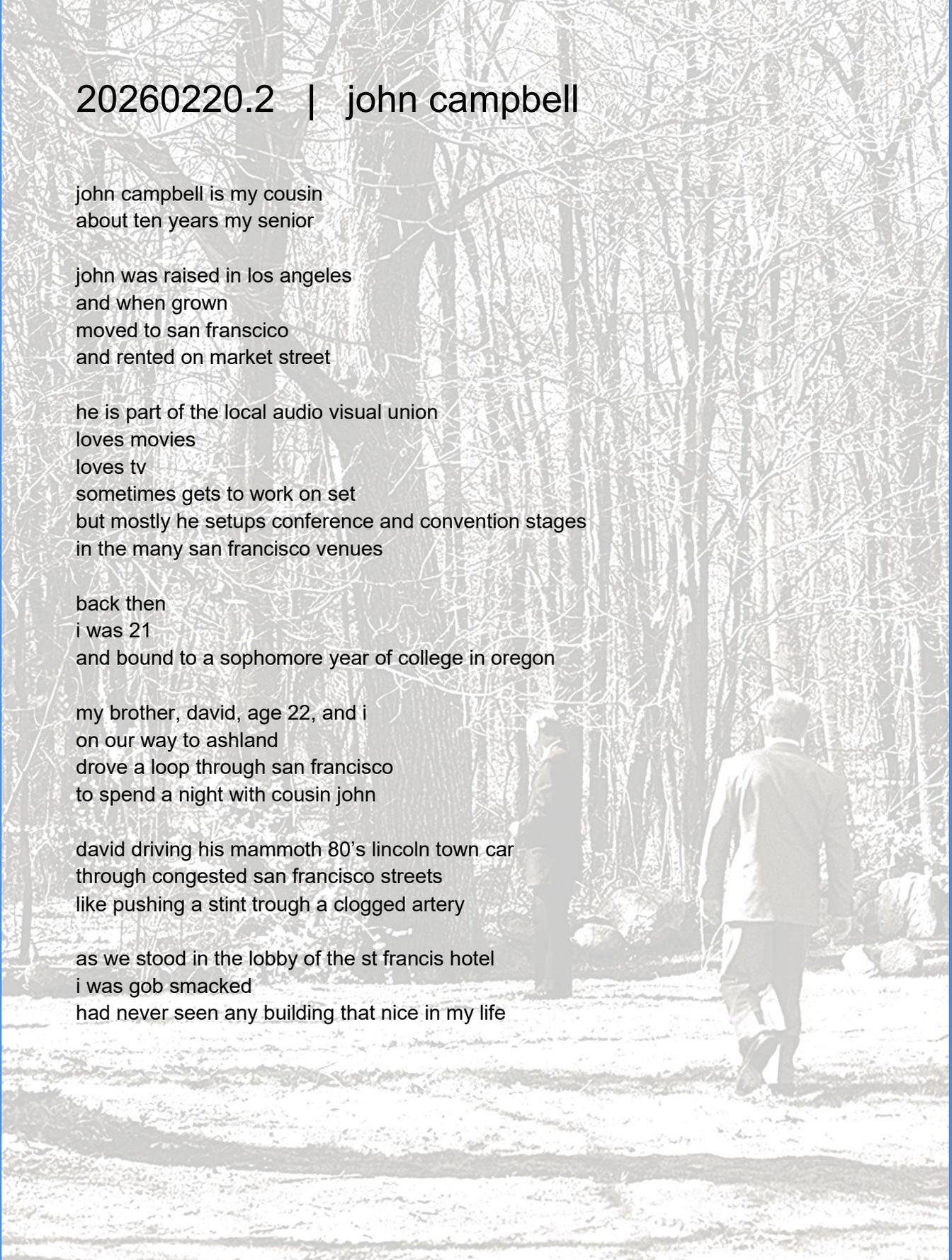
he is part of the local audio visual union
loves movies
loves tv
sometimes gets to work on set
but mostly he setups conference and convention stages
in the many san francisco venues

back then
i was 21
and bound to a sophomore year of college in oregon

my brother, david, age 22, and i
on our way to ashland
drove a loop through san francisco
to spend a night with cousin john

david driving his mammoth 80's lincoln town car
through congested san francisco streets
like pushing a stint trough a clogged artery

as we stood in the lobby of the st francis hotel
i was gob smacked
had never seen any building that nice in my life



john walked from the heart of the hotel into the lobby
like he owned the place
smiling, confident
he belonged
this was his realm

john and are now off leash
david doesn't drink and he has a car
this is perfect for us

the evening starts with the dv8
and not that weak little dance venue in slc
this is the san francisco dv8
in the not-so great part of town
under a freeway viaduct

three hours of my hourly wage
just to get in the door
another three hours of work
for one drink

the techno is thumping
lights are flashing
the dance floor is shaking with the ferocity
of cop cars, ambulances, and fire trucks
all in a bash up derby
this derby being hot sweaty women
with tits and jewelry swinging every which way
and blurry-eyed men in suits
flexing rolexes above heads

i go to pee
and shit you not
lines of coke being snorted in the bathroom

this is absolutely not that weak-ass dance club in slc
and i am in over my head
this is all eye candy for me
if i landed digits here
i lacked the bankroll

the game
or the balls
to even dial her area code
for me, this is a trip to adult disneyland
enjoy the ride
but keep your hands and feet in at all times
it was so fucking cool

but i would be broke
before i got drunk
so we moved to an irish bar

three campbells
generations removed from scotland
in an irish bar
in san francisco
throwing darts
two of us slugging guinness
alternating with long island ice teas
and shots of jagermeister

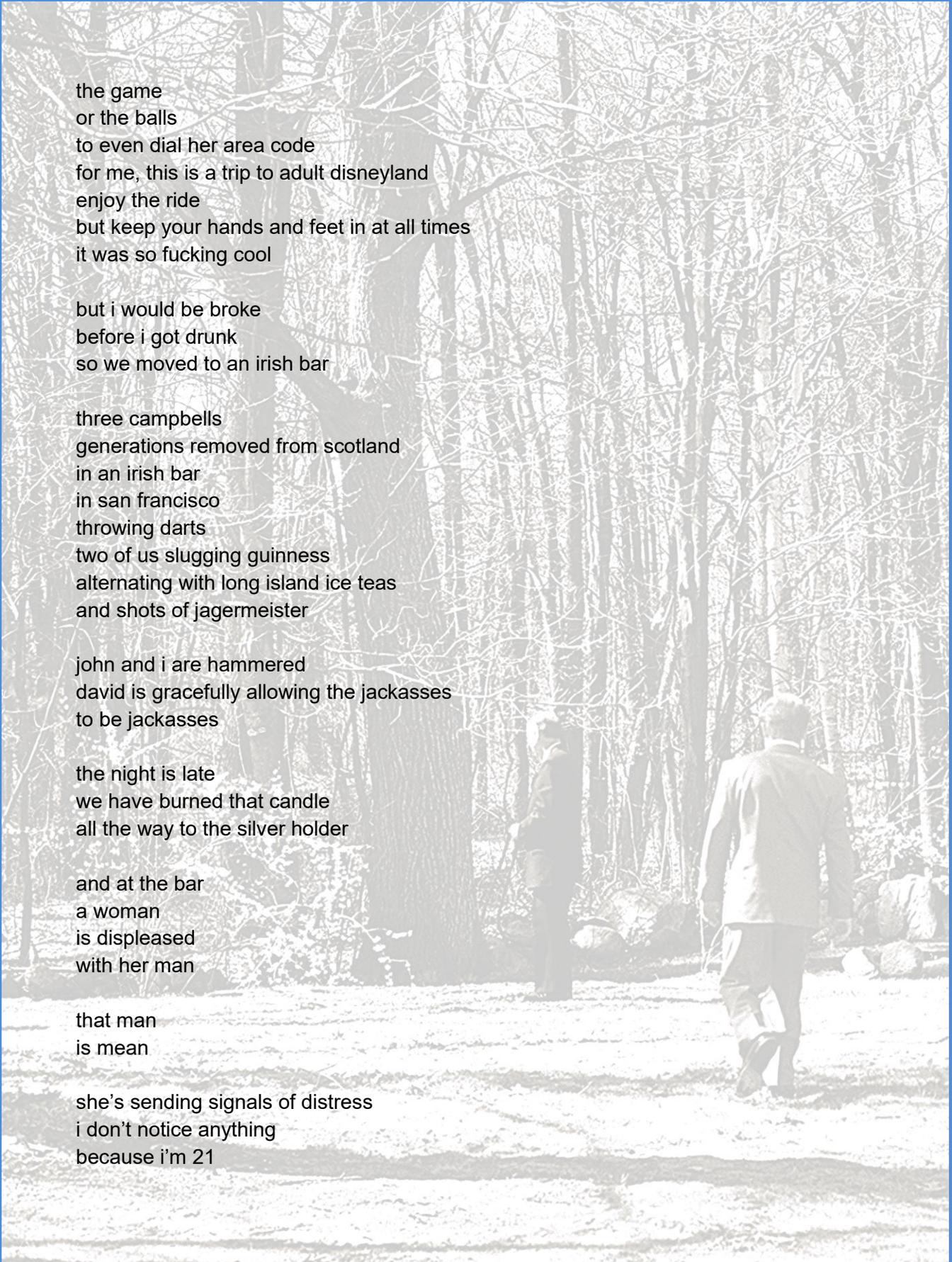
john and i are hammered
david is gracefully allowing the jackasses
to be jackasses

the night is late
we have burned that candle
all the way to the silver holder

and at the bar
a woman
is displeased
with her man

that man
is mean

she's sending signals of distress
i don't notice anything
because i'm 21



and fully hammered

but john notices
he says to her
in front of mean man
'leave with us, we'll walk you home'

mean man says
if you leave with them
i will kick all your asses
he is selling this statement with conviction

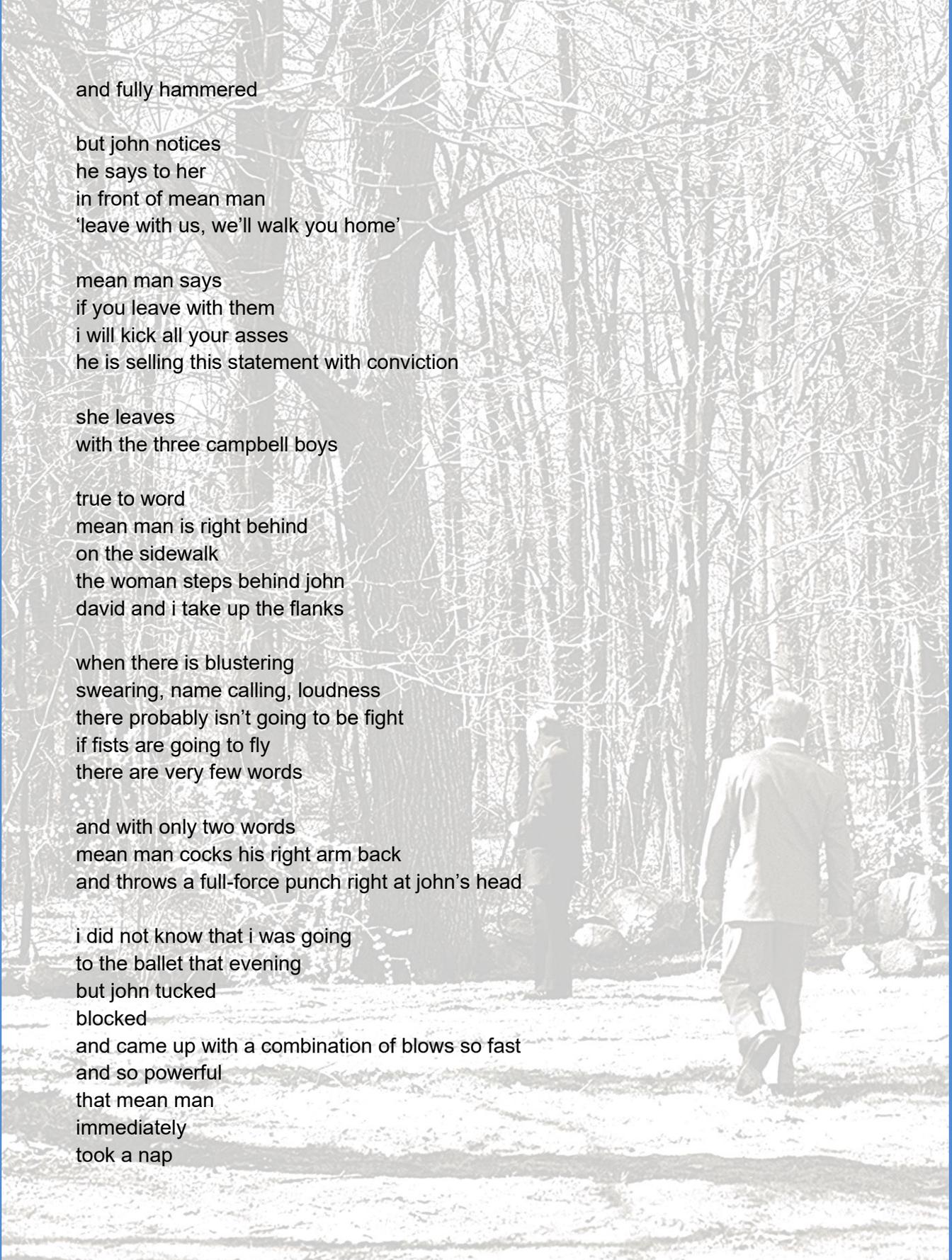
she leaves
with the three campbell boys

true to word
mean man is right behind
on the sidewalk
the woman steps behind john
david and i take up the flanks

when there is blustering
swearing, name calling, loudness
there probably isn't going to be fight
if fists are going to fly
there are very few words

and with only two words
mean man cocks his right arm back
and throws a full-force punch right at john's head

i did not know that i was going
to the ballet that evening
but john tucked
blocked
and came up with a combination of blows so fast
and so powerful
that mean man
immediately
took a nap

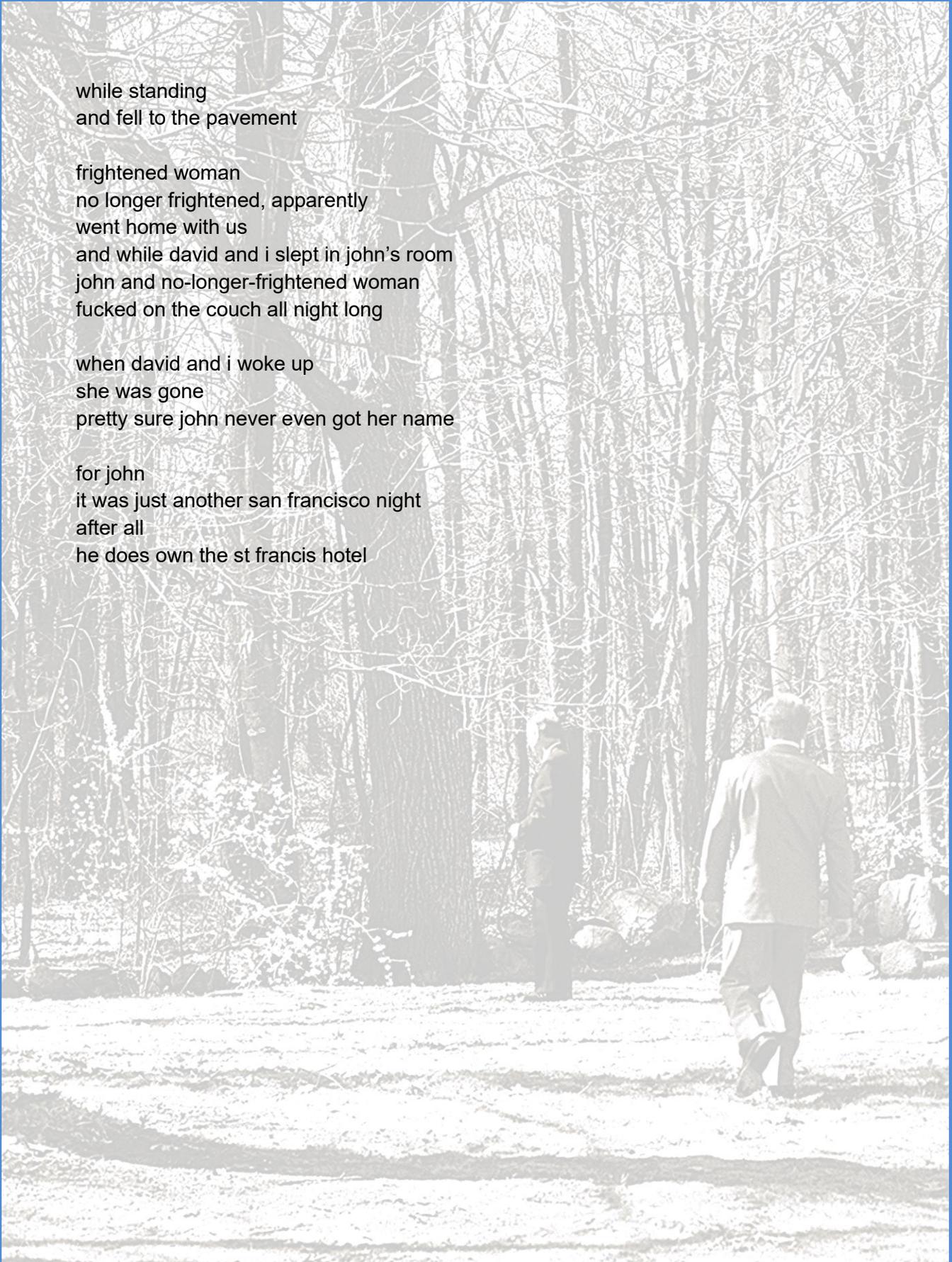


while standing
and fell to the pavement

frightened woman
no longer frightened, apparently
went home with us
and while david and i slept in john's room
john and no-longer-frightened woman
fucked on the couch all night long

when david and i woke up
she was gone
pretty sure john never even got her name

for john
it was just another san francisco night
after all
he does own the st francis hotel



20260227.1 | this much i know

black hair
moves past the kitchen window

i rise from the tasks
at my desk

open the door

liyan
and her dog

in winter
on the side of a mountain

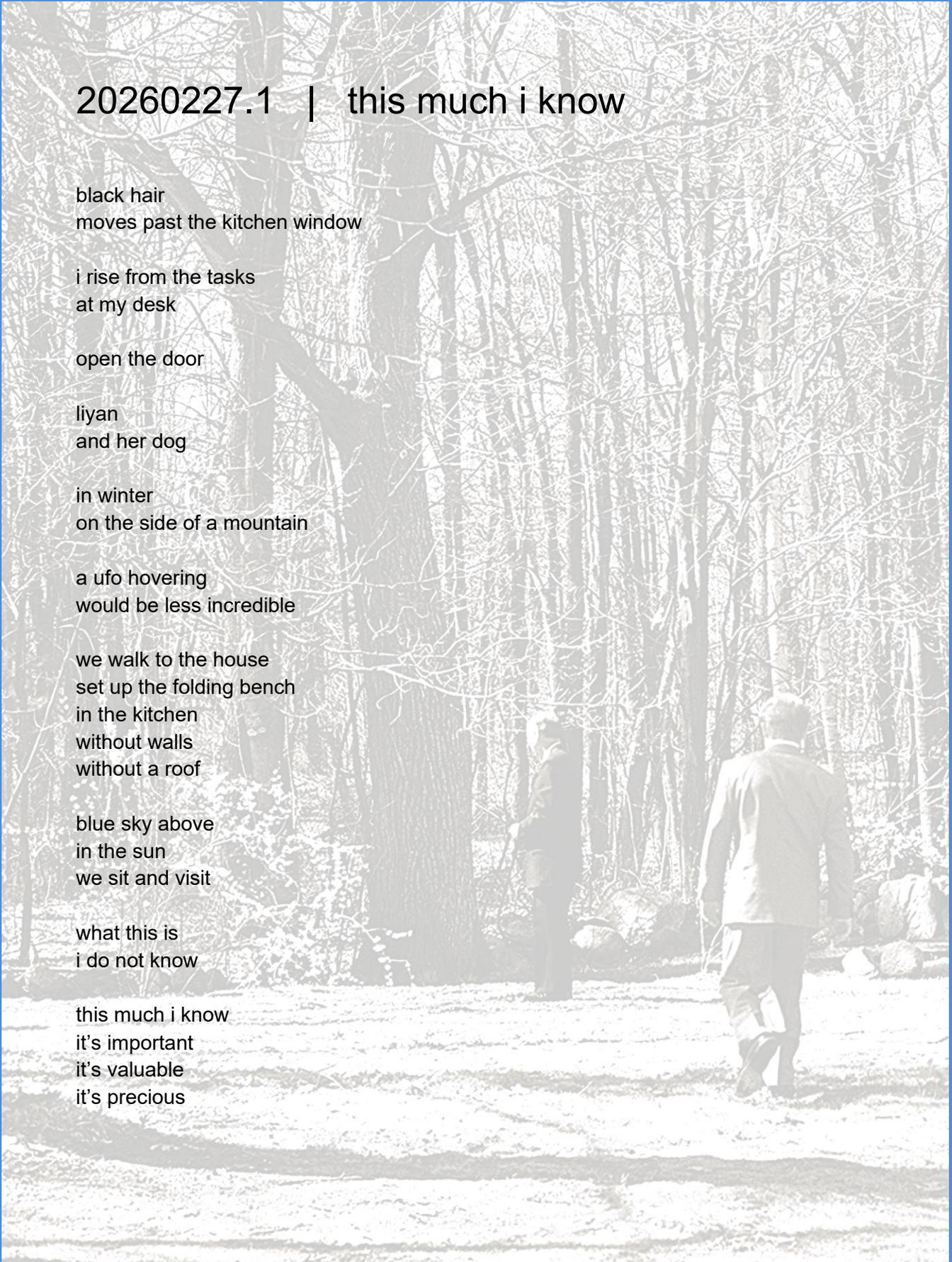
a ufo hovering
would be less incredible

we walk to the house
set up the folding bench
in the kitchen
without walls
without a roof

blue sky above
in the sun
we sit and visit

what this is
i do not know

this much i know
it's important
it's valuable
it's precious



20260301.1 | up from the mud

an appraiser
walks the house
walks the property
measures
photographs
generates a market analysis
an appraisal report

in that report
a term called
'highest and best use'

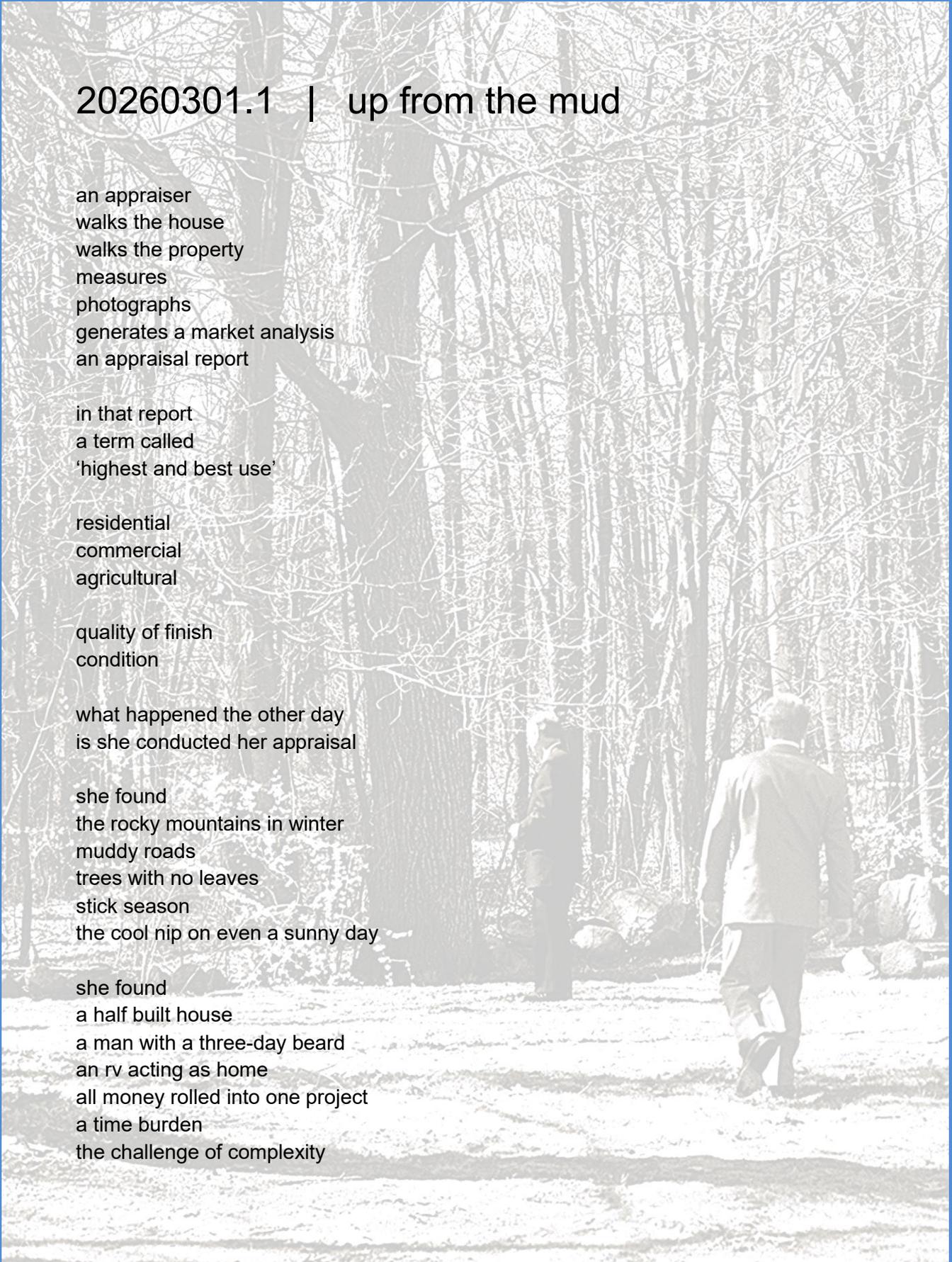
residential
commercial
agricultural

quality of finish
condition

what happened the other day
is she conducted her appraisal

she found
the rocky mountains in winter
muddy roads
trees with no leaves
stick season
the cool nip on even a sunny day

she found
a half built house
a man with a three-day beard
an rv acting as home
all money rolled into one project
a time burden
the challenge of complexity



labor, inspections, approvals
all still ahead

she returned home
performed her analysis
finished her appraisal report

not her highest
not her best
use

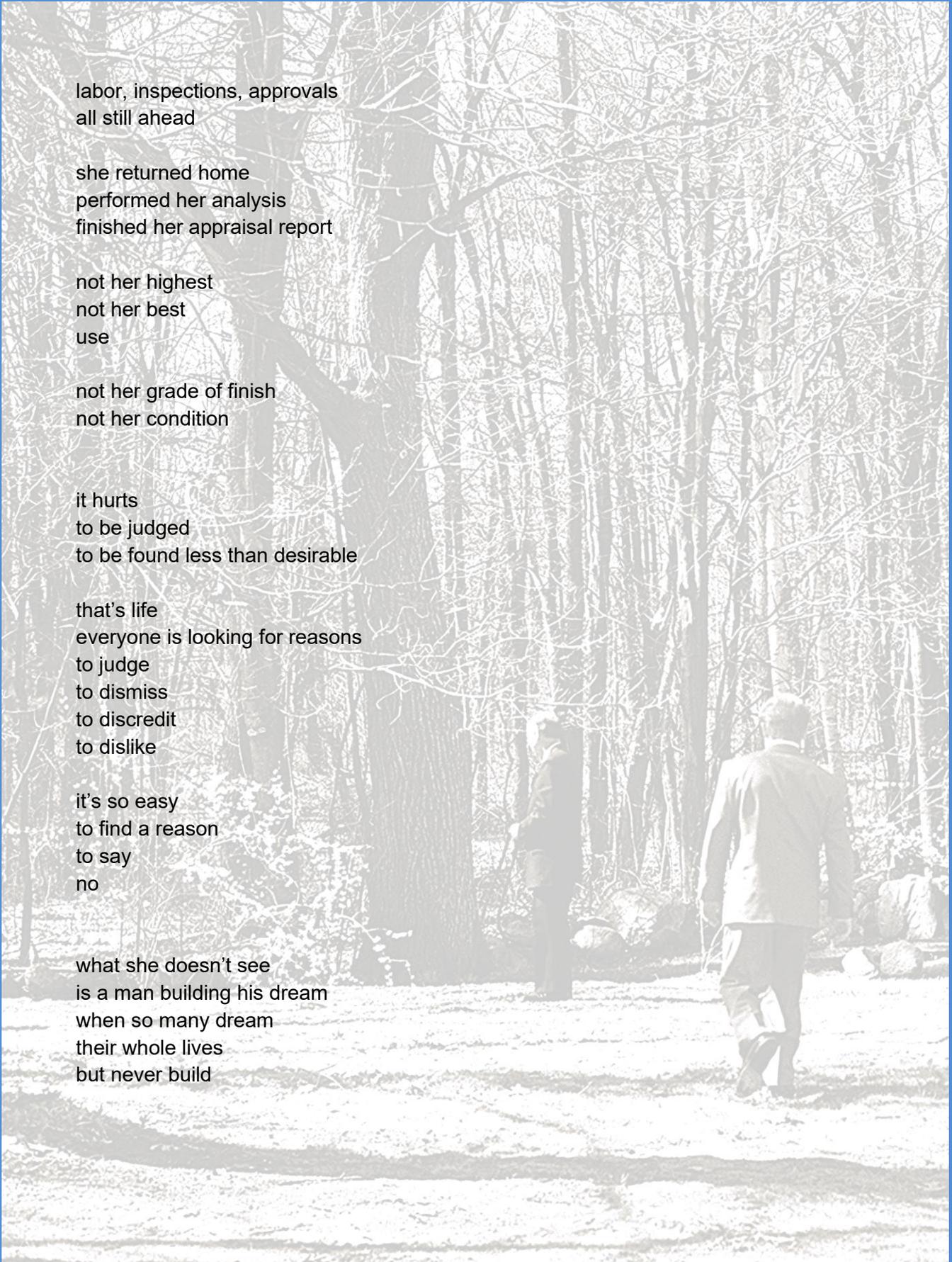
not her grade of finish
not her condition

it hurts
to be judged
to be found less than desirable

that's life
everyone is looking for reasons
to judge
to dismiss
to discredit
to dislike

it's so easy
to find a reason
to say
no

what she doesn't see
is a man building his dream
when so many dream
their whole lives
but never build



what she doesn't see
is a free and clear house
six months from the finish line

what she doesn't see
is final grade
rock over mud
traction-tread stairways
for winter access

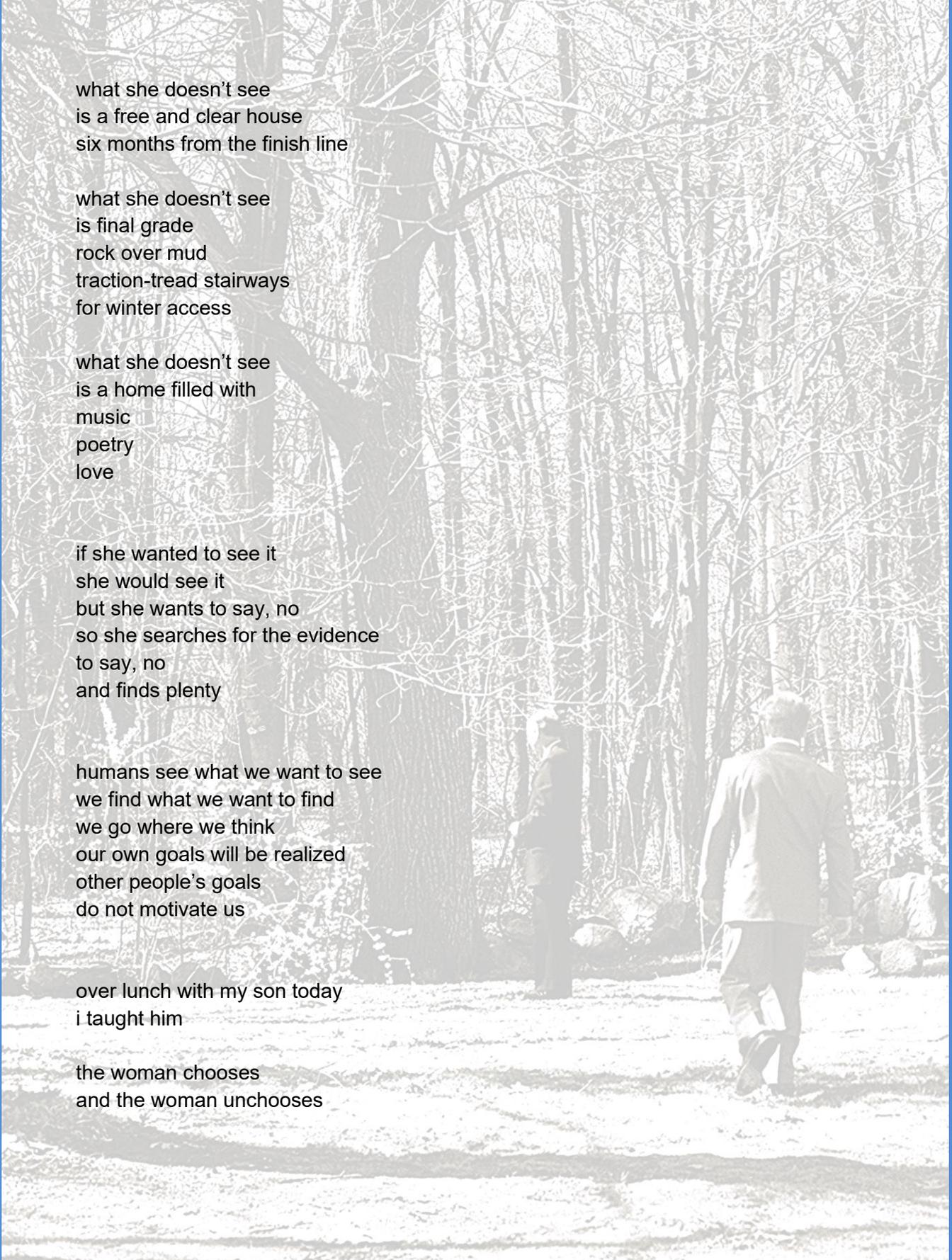
what she doesn't see
is a home filled with
music
poetry
love

if she wanted to see it
she would see it
but she wants to say, no
so she searches for the evidence
to say, no
and finds plenty

humans see what we want to see
we find what we want to find
we go where we think
our own goals will be realized
other people's goals
do not motivate us

over lunch with my son today
i taught him

the woman chooses
and the woman unchooses



the best thing you can do as a man
is to be a man
set your goals
work your path
accomplish your dreams

and if a woman walks with you
for part of the journey
big or small
enjoy her
love her
every day a blessing

but do not give up being a man
for her

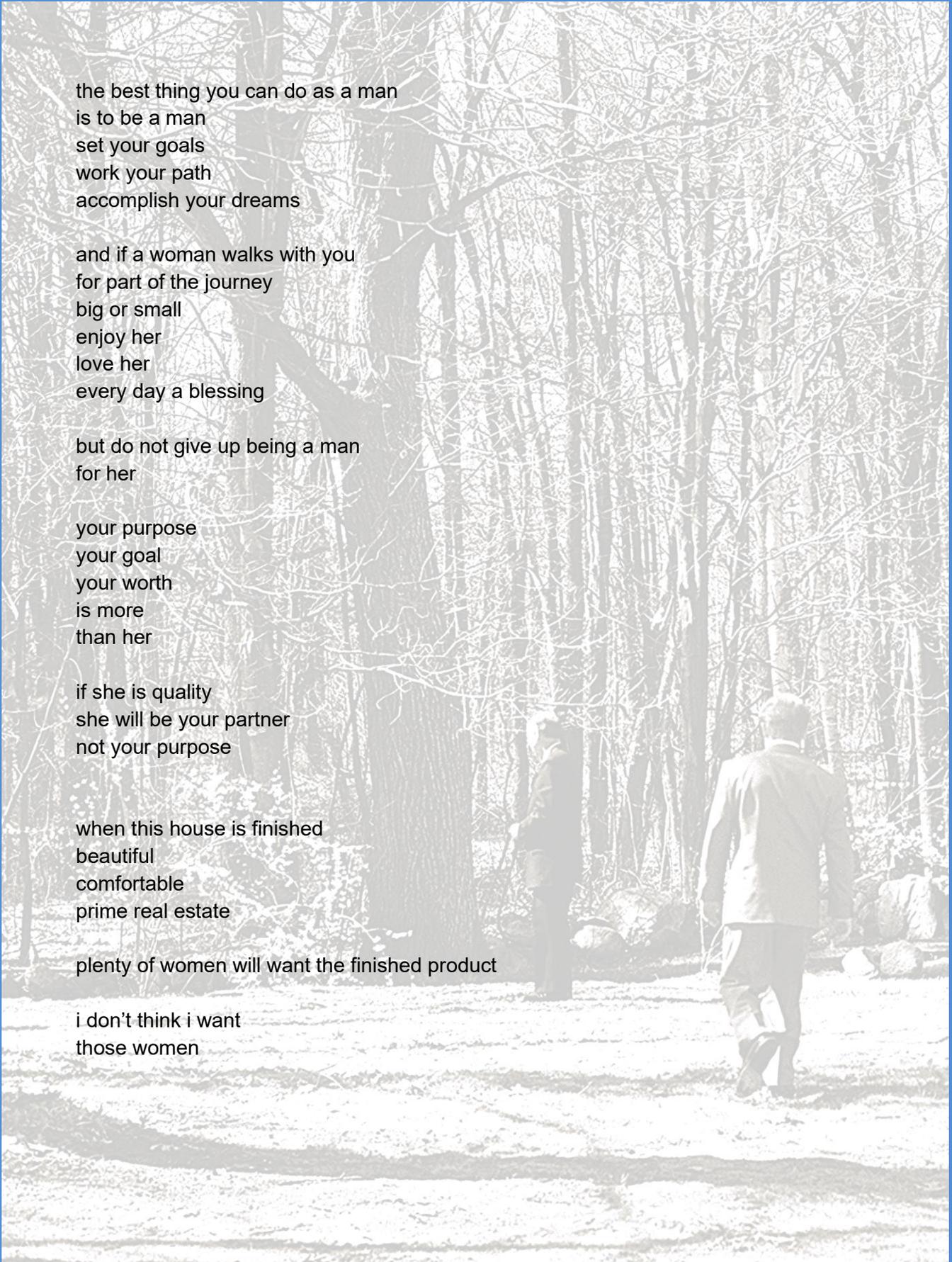
your purpose
your goal
your worth
is more
than her

if she is quality
she will be your partner
not your purpose

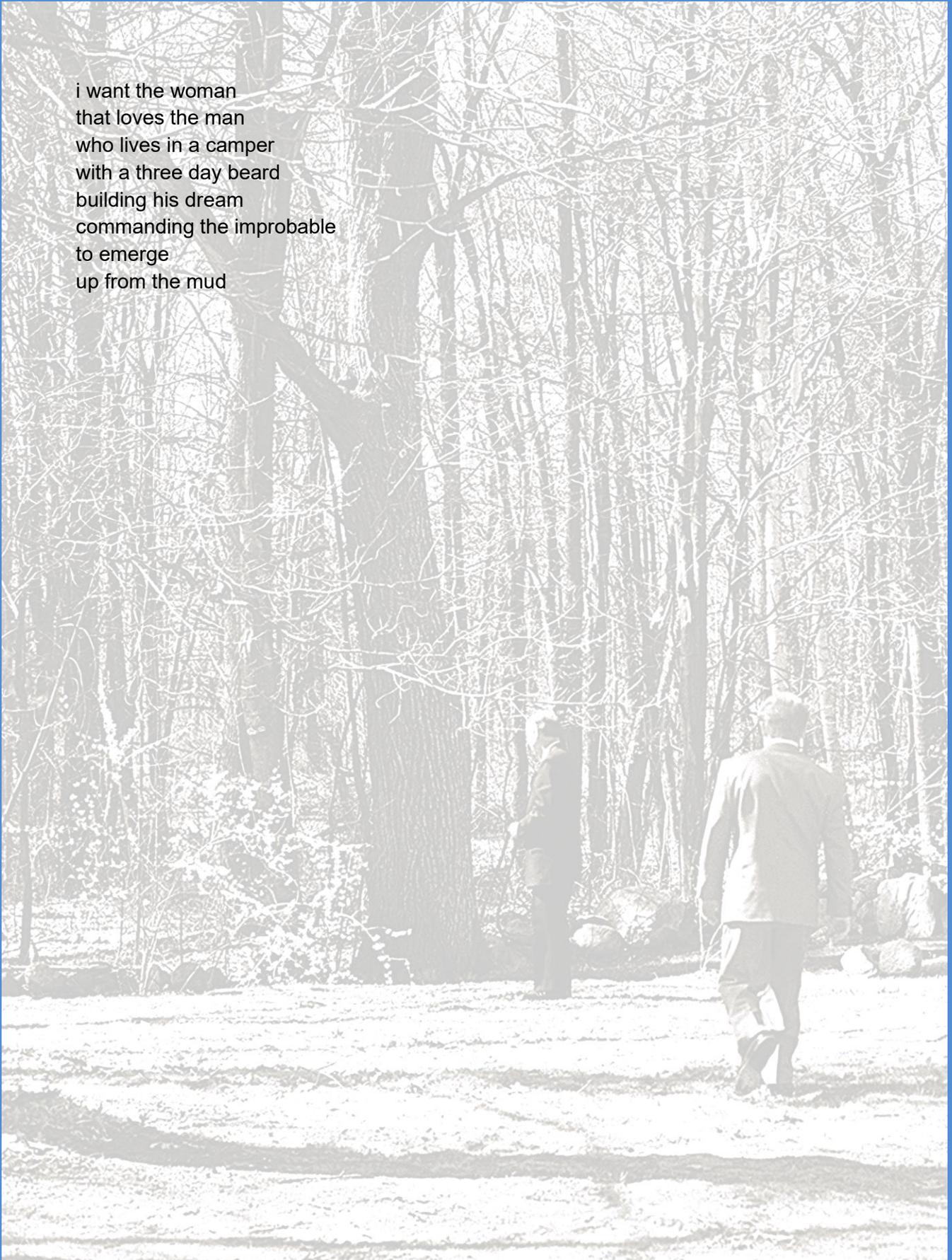
when this house is finished
beautiful
comfortable
prime real estate

plenty of women will want the finished product

i don't think i want
those women



i want the woman
that loves the man
who lives in a camper
with a three day beard
building his dream
commanding the improbable
to emerge
up from the mud



end

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