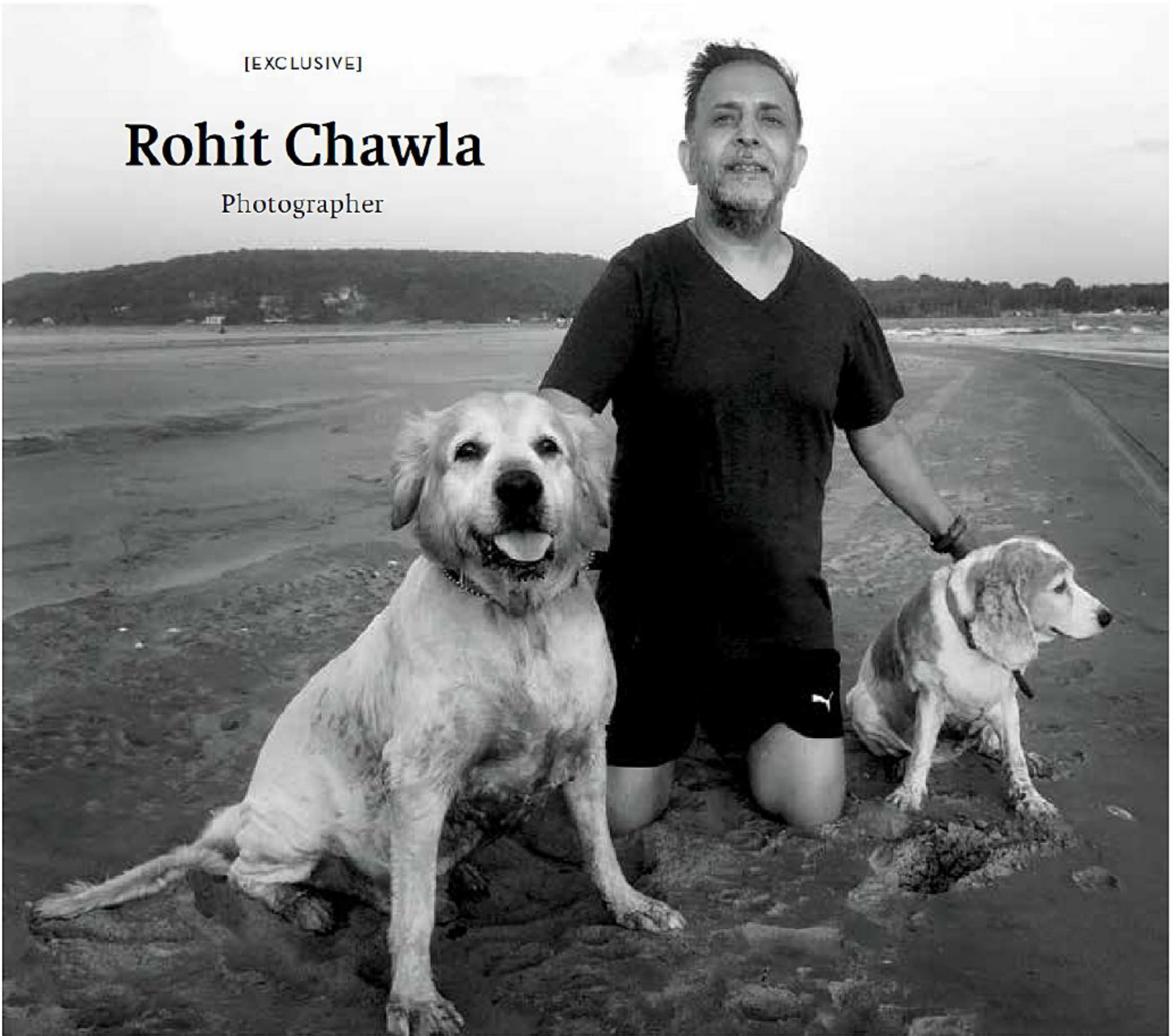


[EXCLUSIVE]

Rohit Chawla

Photographer



What intrigued you about Tishani's poetry to juxtapose it with your photography?

Both photography and poetry rely upon capturing the transient, finding that elusive moment and fixing it in the imagination. Felt it was possible to attempt to twin these forms without one diluting the other. After reading *Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods*, I was compelled to respond to her words with images. When she writes of Syria, violence against women, the fragility of coastal life, there is an equal insistence upon the sacredness of the human body, the transformation of fear and desire. This potent cocktail of words & emotions had a visual calling that I wanted to embrace and be a part of.

How did you curate the entire visual narrative?

I attempted to make, not mirrors but companion pieces to her poems. The photographic narrative needed a certain abstraction that occasionally surprised in a quirky way too. And in choosing to photograph Tishani herself in a discreet invisible manner literally on her own home turf in Chennai and my adopted hometown of Goa for some of the poems. I wanted

her to be a constant visual "sutradhar" of sorts in the photographic journey.

What is it about the black and white medium that fascinates you?

The poetry of black & white has a universal appeal, color distracts and assaults at times. But B&W always lends the quiet introspection that an ever elusive slice of time commands in a photographic idiom.

What is the emotion you feel when you get behind the viewfinder and what kind of stories drive you and pull you right in? I feel at home & strangely content behind a camera, the viewfinder becomes a microscope of sorts where every detail is amplified and yet I can shut out the visual excess from the world I choose to focus on. Each year its imagery that reminds us that we are living in the most dangerous of times, These images are also a photographic tribute to challenge those dangers yet embrace the fleeting moments of beauty, and to "find the poets." p

Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods

Rohit Chawla + Tishani Doshi

Both photography and poetry rely upon capturing the transient, finding that elusive moment and fixing it in the imagination. Is it possible to twin these forms without one diluting the other? Reading the poems of Tishani Doshi's *Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods*, I felt compelled to respond to her words with images. To make, not mirrors, but companion pieces. When she writes of Syria, violence against women, the fragility of coastal life, there is an equal insistence upon the sacredness of the human body, the transformation of fear and desire. Each year we are reminded that we are living in the most dangerous of times. This is a photographic tribute to challenge those dangers, to embrace the fleeting moments of beauty, and to "find the poets."

Rohit Chawla



Find a tree to hold all the faces of your
dead-their hair, their rings. Hang
their solemn portraits from branches.

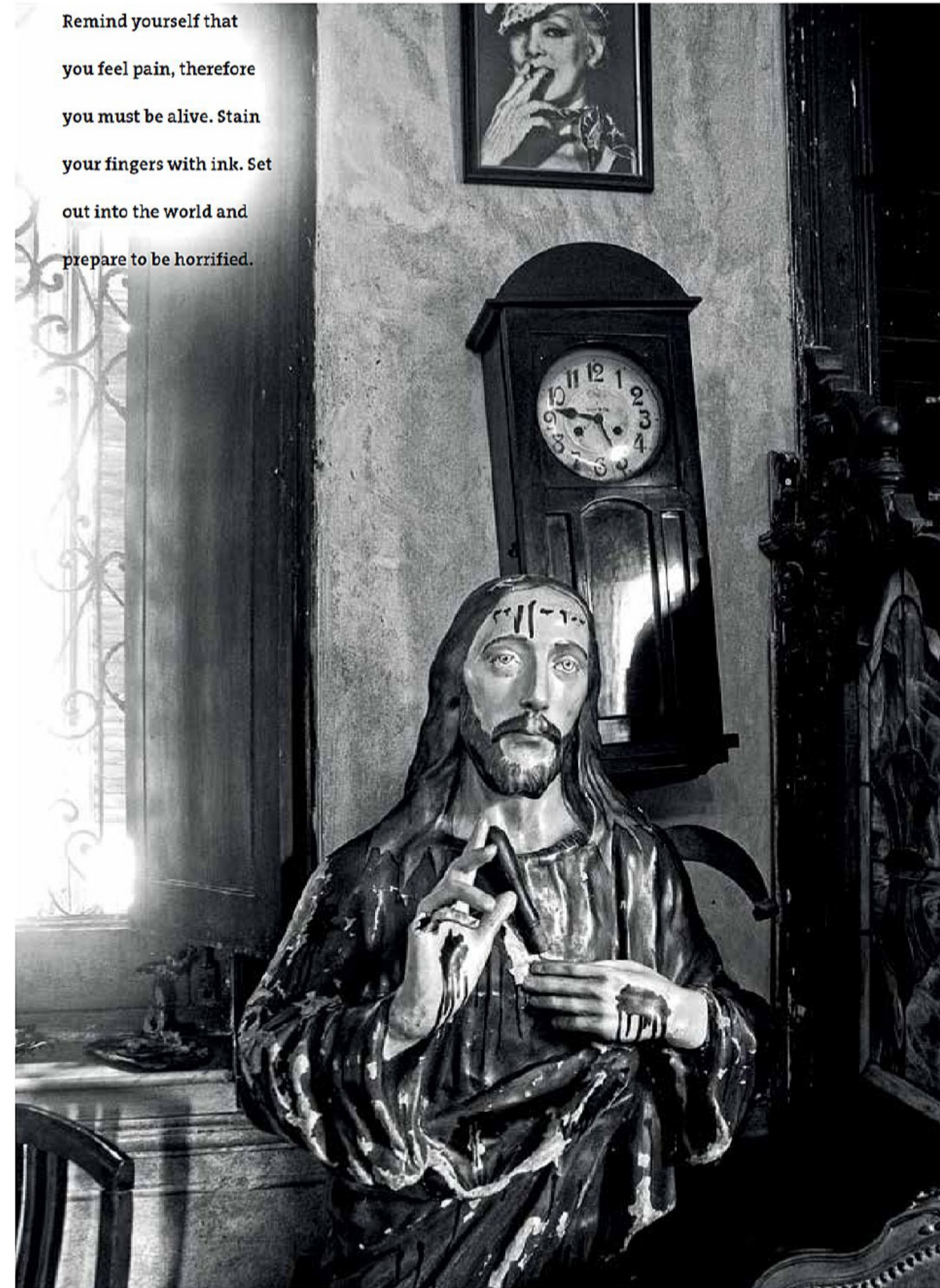


Girls are coming out of the
woods, Lifting their broken
legs high, Leaking secrets
from unfastened thighs...

For a family thinking they
will return. Maybe the house
still stands. Maybe the sea.
The dead leave no clues
about what lies beyond.

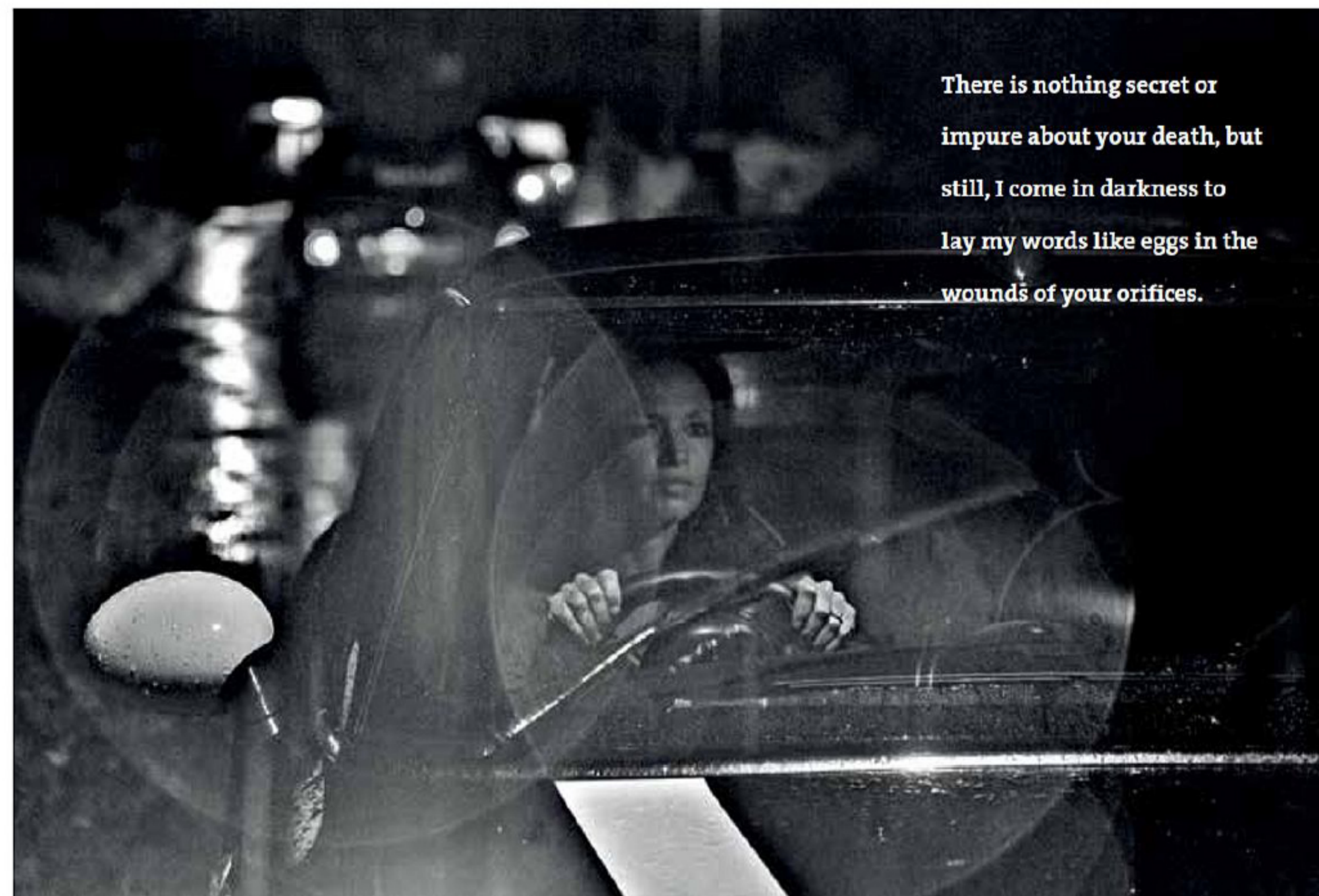


Remind yourself that
you feel pain, therefore
you must be alive. Stain
your fingers with ink. Set
out into the world and
prepare to be horrified.





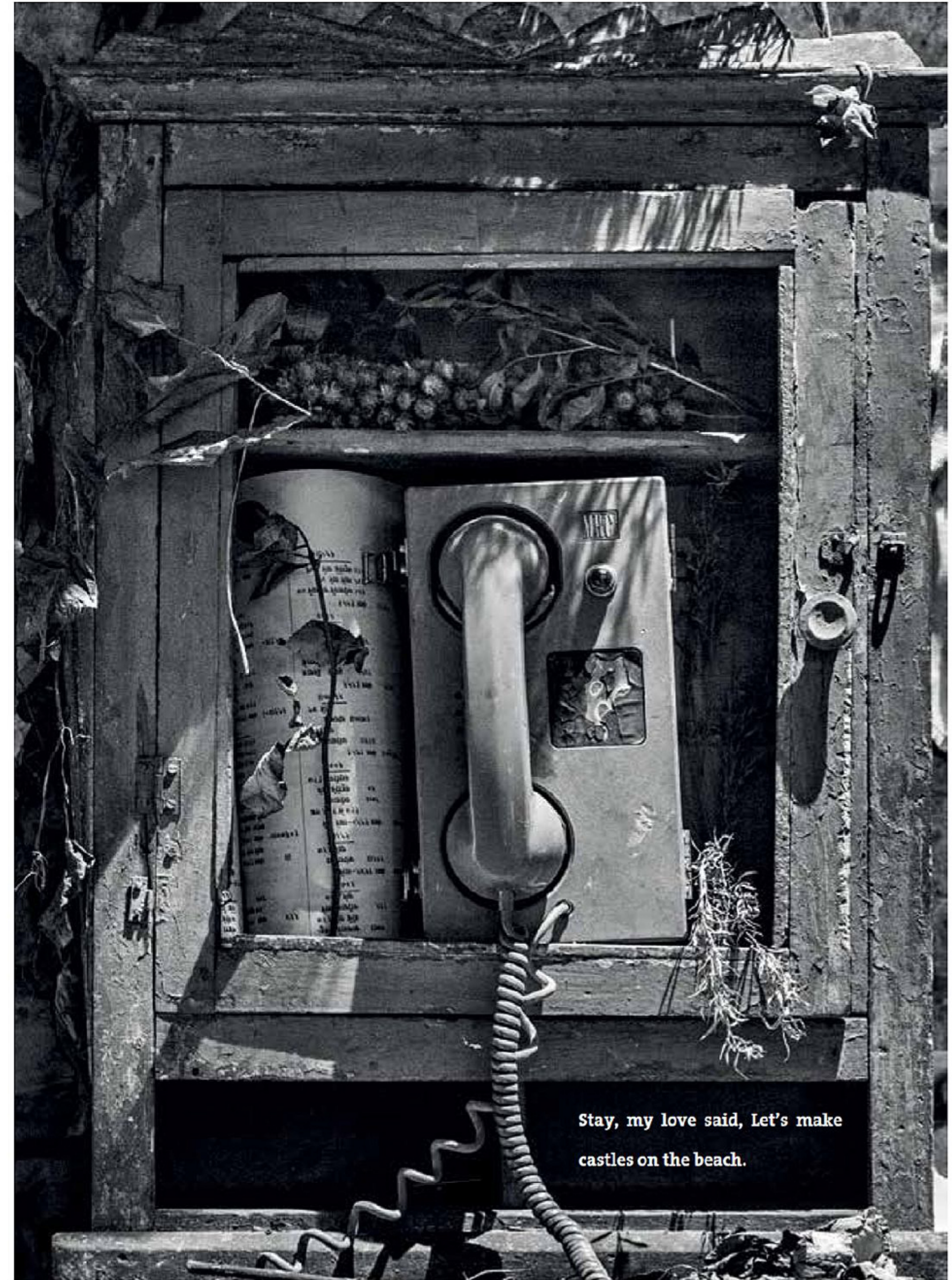
Virginity returned in a chastity box. Letters of love, letters of lust, the 1980s, funeral dust.



There is nothing secret or impure about your death, but still, I come in darkness to lay my words like eggs in the wounds of your orifices.



We stamp and dance, drift
from here to there, but a city
will come when we must rest
in our contradictions.



Stay, my love said, Let's make
castles on the beach.



Where do the poets live these days,
and what do they sing about?