**Photo Paper**

Open land is always seen as physical opportunity, but sometimes it can seem darker than that. A photograph’s message can change drastically with the loss of color. While nature is colorful and vivid, different shades of gray make the photograph easier to dissect. By that I mean we are pulled out of the marvel of nature’s beauty, left to interpret the image for our own message. I find life in this photograph, but life in the sense of its unpredictability and the progress all life seeks to make.

I look and see a beautiful expanse, uninterrupted by any foreground or subjects. It is a path. My goals rest at the end, far away in the background. They stand tall as monuments of my achievements, and while it’s possible to reach them, the journey will be long and treacherous. Yet throughout this dangerous climb from the valley to the ridges, there is serenity. The gradient within the photograph gives a deep sense of depth and perspective. The contrast in the background has a strong presence. We can never anticipate the universe, including ourselves.

The smell of grass and rich earth emanates from this photo. A feeling of relaxation sweeps over me. While it’s easy to get lost in detail and texture, the open sky and vast middle ground give me a breath of fresh air. I don’t know how long I will be in this place, but I won’t ever feel lost.

I walk through the forest, and hear squirrels scurrying loudly across the dry tree bark. Water splashes and churns as a buck runs through the stream. I hear a lot of different things in this photo, but the combined noise is one I find very peaceful. Intermittent chirps, a distant squawk, and rustling leaves can disturb people on their own, but it is better to combine all the elements for a continuous natural tune that sounds as beautiful as a mellifluous symphony.

A strong gust of wind builds up over the open air and smacks cold against my body. I stand tall, but the powerful force threatens to knock me off balance. As I step my foot in the ice cold water, it stings every inch of my feet like needles in a pincushion. The smooth stones in the riverbed massage my tired sole. Mud squeezes in between the gaps of my toes, and the overall feeling is a vulnerable one. The power of nature is evident and I feel like I am at its whims. But nature knows to respect me, and I respect it.