



LITERARY MAGAZINE



Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking the time to read issue five of OCSA's literary magazine, Insight. In one semester, the student run magazine staff, as well as the students of OCSA, have worked together to create a body of work that we hope represents the artistic endeavors of our student body. Our students are complex, artistic individuals and each piece was specifically chosen by our content staff to exhibit these qualities.

Insight has been an OCSA staple for three years, publishing semesterly and the intention behind our name—Insight, which is defined as the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing—is to try and open the eyes within our community and encourage people to obtain knowledge. Each submission period we accept submissions from students in all grades of our school that fit into our chosen theme. This issue's theme, Vulnerability, was chosen by our staff through popular demand. We believe that the public is currently in a vulnerable position, socially, economically, and politically, and we were interested in seeing how our fellow students were personally reacting to it.

Sincerely,

Jonea Mathis, Editor in Chief

As a publication, our goal is to provide a collection of unique, quality literary art to the community and we hope you will join on us on that journey.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Ms. Mignon Austin

Mr. Brian Capley

Mr. Alvin Olivo

INSIGHT TEAM

Editor in Chief
Jo'nea Mathis

Editors
Armani Rosario
Jordan Rodriguez
Jackson Yon

Content
Erika Battisti
Delaney Lazarus
Justin Nazario
Elizabeth Sipple

Layout
Jonathan Coss
Alexander Mayancela
Maireni Nunez
Cindy Paccor

Public Relations
Gabriella Quance
Jarilynn Santiago



L

and looking at the family photos
hasn't been the same. i lock mom's
photo albums and bibles with the
Christmas lights and only notice the
box when i'm getting the decorations
from the attic. i sleep with my back
to the door in my apartment because
when armageddon strikes i want it
to be a surprise and maybe pretend i
didn't see it coming. i was born a
skeptic and died a believer.

LUNGS.

II.

I bought marley her crayola markers today. It set us back six dollars and fifty-three cents, even after my coupon of thirty percent off plus a dollar off any crayola item worth five dollars or more from September third to the sixth. I told her the importance of saving money from such a young age, but how do you teach a six year old about what it means to be an adult?

III.

the ten minutes from the bus stop to the walk home are some of the most intimidating of my life. my eyes cry sweat and my knees are bitter, walking almost feels like a burden to myself. it's almost as if the only thing i deserve is to purposely endure the heat of the sidewalk against the soles of my feet until they blister, and then write in my journal about how terrible the day was. my dad says it's a defense mechanism but sometimes my piano plays itself at night.

IV.

i rested the shopping cart against the red van. It was layered in faux spray paint, cheap red adhesive that was peeling against itself. I rubbed my nails against it and swiped.

JUSTIN NAZARIO

BUILDING THIS IS WHAT I LIVE. FOR.

A bond being created among the rubble,
The spirits of our past guiding us from the release of destruction into a better future.
If only we weren't living in fear, we could construct more than just this.

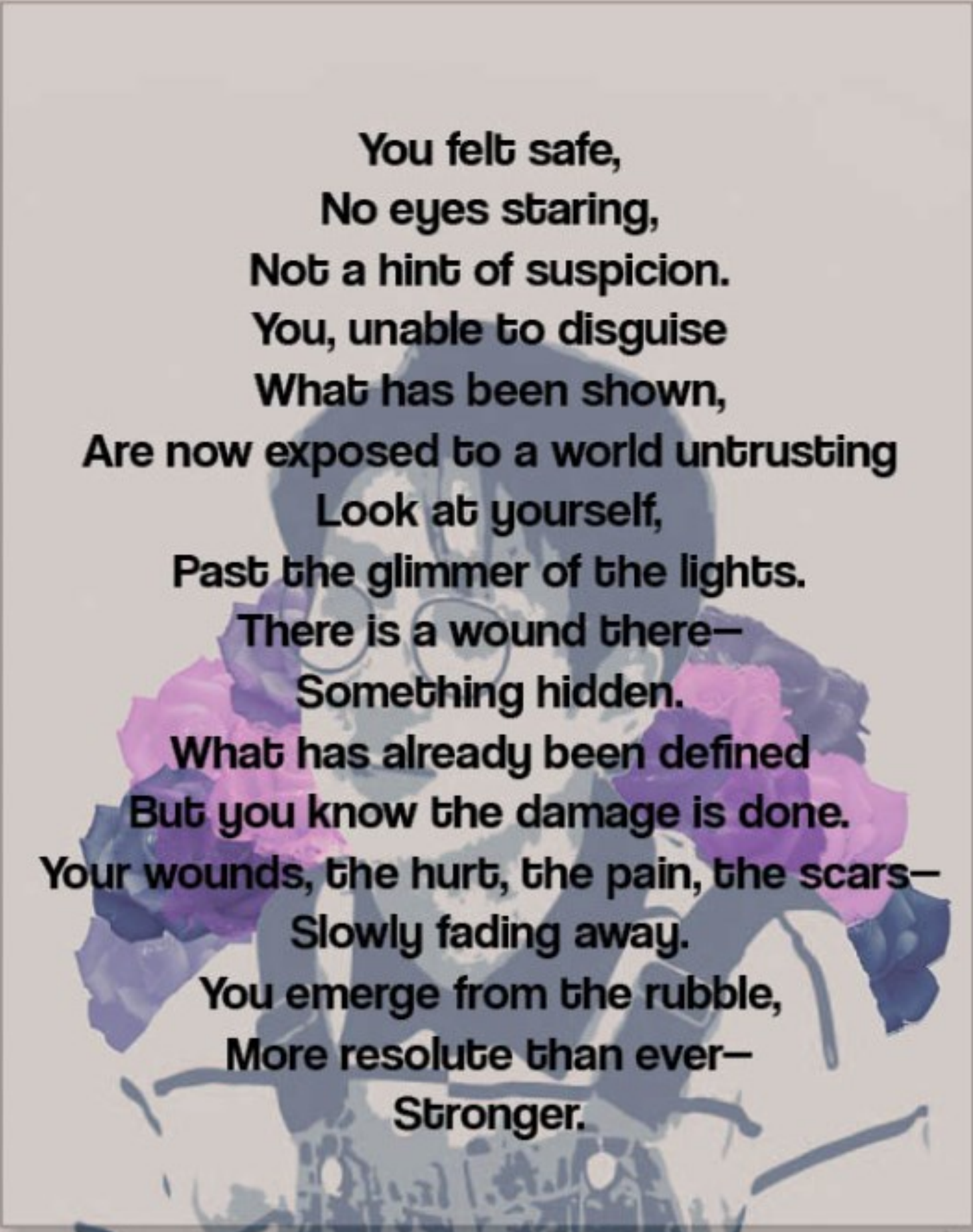
We are afraid of submission.
A release of emotions, a part of ourselves
Devotion in each other's arms.
A fulfilling bond, taken deep within our delicate minds
If only we just read between the lines,
Not fearing the consequences within circumstance.
We could construct more than just this,
Becoming an inevitable alliance.

Together we are a rare commodity,
An unordinary paradox, unbelievable yet astonishing
But we let simple inhibitions crash upon us
Not allowing us to submit match to match.
Refraining from building,
Allowing fear to consume us whole.

Building this is what I live for.
The rubble has given me eternal strength, ambitious spirit
To grow, construct, and form the inevitable.
Swallowing this fear deep into the core.
For now, we can build and build,
And let our hearts be everywhere

JARILYNN SANTIAGO

STRENGTH.



**You felt safe,
No eyes staring,
Not a hint of suspicion.
You, unable to disguise
What has been shown,
Are now exposed to a world untrusting
Look at yourself,
Past the glimmer of the lights.
There is a wound there—
Something hidden.
What has already been defined
But you know the damage is done.
Your wounds, the hurt, the pain, the scars—
Slowly fading away.
You emerge from the rubble,
More resolute than ever—
Stronger.**

LUKE GABRIEL

AN OCEAN

To say 'thank you' is an insignificant piece of language,
'I love you' is no vital news,
'I don't feel okay' is another miniature attempt for your attention-
Once again ignored- like my presence,
An action speaks louder than words,
But you say words have no meaning.

I am a fish caught between love and hate,
A swallowing net that keeps me on the brink of insanity,
This median that has me bobbing for life-
In this never-ending cycle of chasing love from you and never finding
it,
Of seeking you and not being sought out, and I am craving you being
with me.
Of speaking for you, and waiting for your voice to grace my presence,
It is an ocean-
You are an ocean.

A frothy surface that seems so magnetic,
The deep colors mesmerize me like I am staring into a siren's eyes,
And they beg me to strut in deeper,
Only to be swept under last minute into a whirlpool
Of your anger.

The reparations that you hand to me, they tell me I need to forgive,
But the quest has my attention split.
Between leaving this identity I have risked so much to live in,
Or saying goodbye to my name,
Saying goodbye to the unrealistic standards I set against myself.
So, I seek another path.

BRIE QUANCE

MY HEART EASED

My hurt eased through the pores of my skin,
A bliss of which I could not deny.
I did not know where to begin.
With much on my mind, I spread myself thin.

My thoughts raced.
Where had I been?
Where was I allowed to go?
The confines of my sensibility had trapped me.

Time;
It was something I lacked.
Something I had pleaded the great Lord for more of.
I was denied.

Every time I cried his face wore a grin,
So devilish it made me shudder.
I was broken down the center of Yang and Yin.

I was running out,
I could not stop time.
No one could stop time.

I gave in.

RUNNING UP THE STAIRS

Running up the stairs,
My feet start to pick up pace.
Feeling like I'm floating off the ground.
Shutting the wooden door of my room,
Ignoring my mother's voice from downstairs.
I move into the corner,
The one that's behind the cerulean colored desk.
I sit down, hug my knees,
And cry.

My cheeks are drenched with tears.
I can't breathe,
My lungs have wasted all of their air.
Gasping every two seconds,
Hoping for oxygen to fill my lungs.
Crying so much that I get tired.
Eyes slowly closing, I find peace.
Sleep.

Wake up.
The sunlight from the curtains hit my tan face.
I open my chocolate brown eyes and notice
That I'm still sitting in the corner of my room.
The door is still shut.
The faded tears still there.
It's a new day.

Feet hitting the stairs,
Dust starts to pick up on my feet,
From the space that mother had forgotten to dust.
The stairs creak with each step,
I lock eyes with her.
Her gaze seems of care and forgiveness.
As if she had accepted past events.
I run into her arms,
She wipes the faded tears.

For a moment,
I feel safe.
Then I notice the empty bottles on the table.
Empty bottles of liquor.
Imagining her last night.
Drinking from the bottles,
Till the last drop.
I told her no more,
I told her to stop after a bottle or two.
Her response was always no.
I knew that she mourns,
Over her loss.
But that was a year ago.

Locking eyes with my mother once more,
Eyes filled with confusion and disappointment,
She does not meet my gaze after that.
She felt ashamed of herself.
She felt ashamed because her own son was looking at her with those eyes. Walking off,
I knew what she had to do.
I grabbed a trash bag,
Tossing the empty bottles in.
Stop.
The cupboard that was filled with liquor
Had only a few bottles left.
I trashed them too.
And no matter how much mother pleaded for me to stop,
No matter how my mother tried to grab the bag,
I kept going.

As the trash bag fell into the bin,
I felt like my problems had gone away.
Peace at last.
But this was only the beginning.
Of a new era.

VALERIA RODRIGUEZ

NEW GAME

This feeling was unpredictable.
She was new to this game and didn't know
The rules or players.

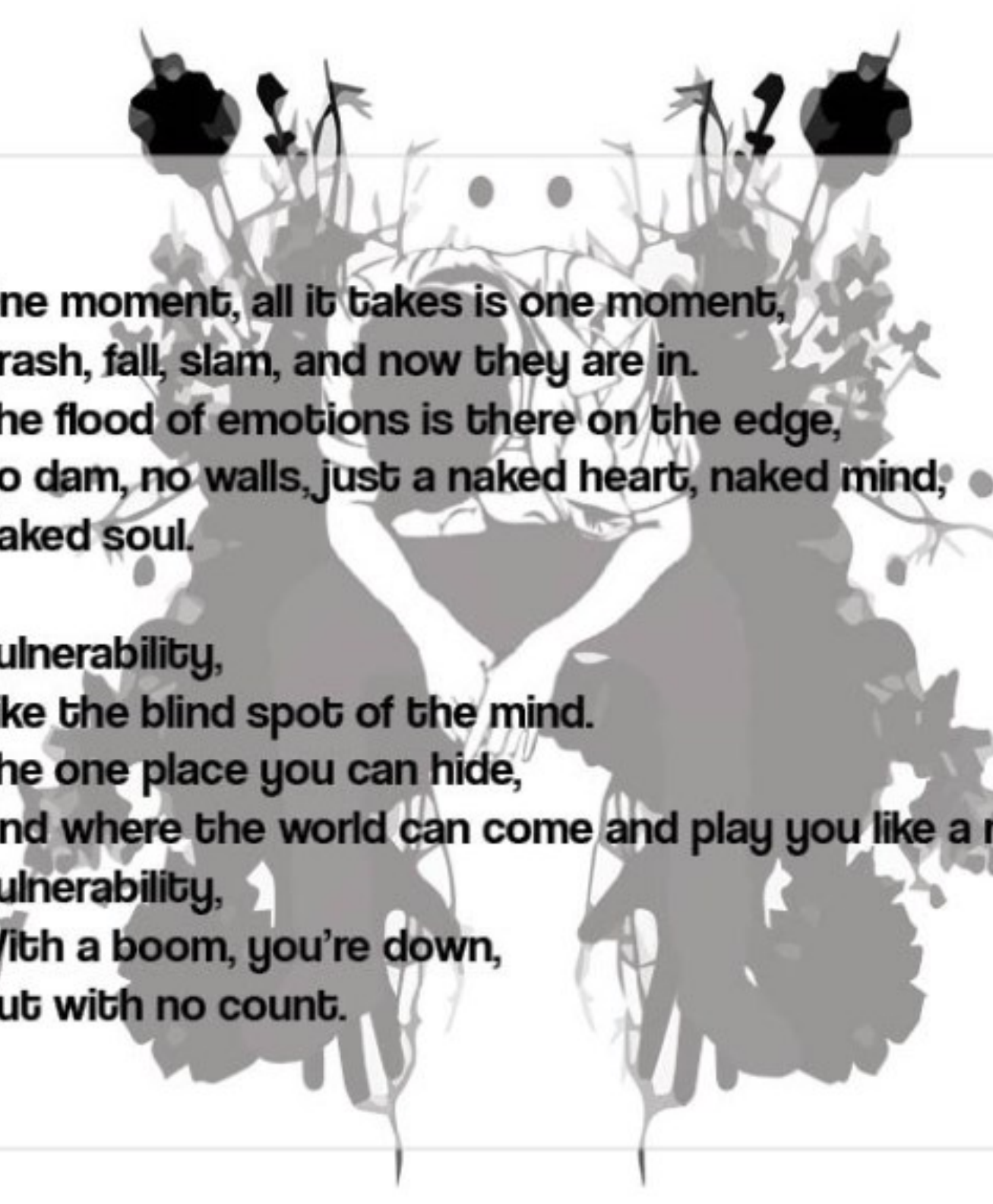
She walked the halls, trying to be unnoticed,
But everyone was staring, whispering about her.
The hawk-like stares worried her
Of the words spoken and the
Spreading rumors.

She's always been protected, safe.
She knew the world was turned against her,
Her safety coming at a price she never thought she'd
pay.
But now the check came, and the price was doubled.

She tried to act like everything was normal.
She had lost the most important person in the world.
Her savior.

ANTONELLA PADILLA

ONE MOMENT



One moment, all it takes is one moment,
Crash, fall, slam, and now they are in.
The flood of emotions is there on the edge,
No dam, no walls, just a naked heart, naked mind,
Naked soul.

Vulnerability,
Like the blind spot of the mind.
The one place you can hide,
And where the world can come and play you like a ride,
Vulnerability,
With a boom, you're down,
But with no count.

NAYAH FERRER

SHIPWRECKED LOVE

I loved the sunrise
You said take heed
A crimson sky
Meant violent seas
A raging lover
I can't get free
Not enough to leave
A walking nightmare
Your words aren't true
You live for no one
I'd die for you
A tortured soul
You pity me
You take advantage of
My misery
I can't see the reason
For letting me drown
A ship underwater
Never to be found

ANGELIQ RIGBY

THE SINNER

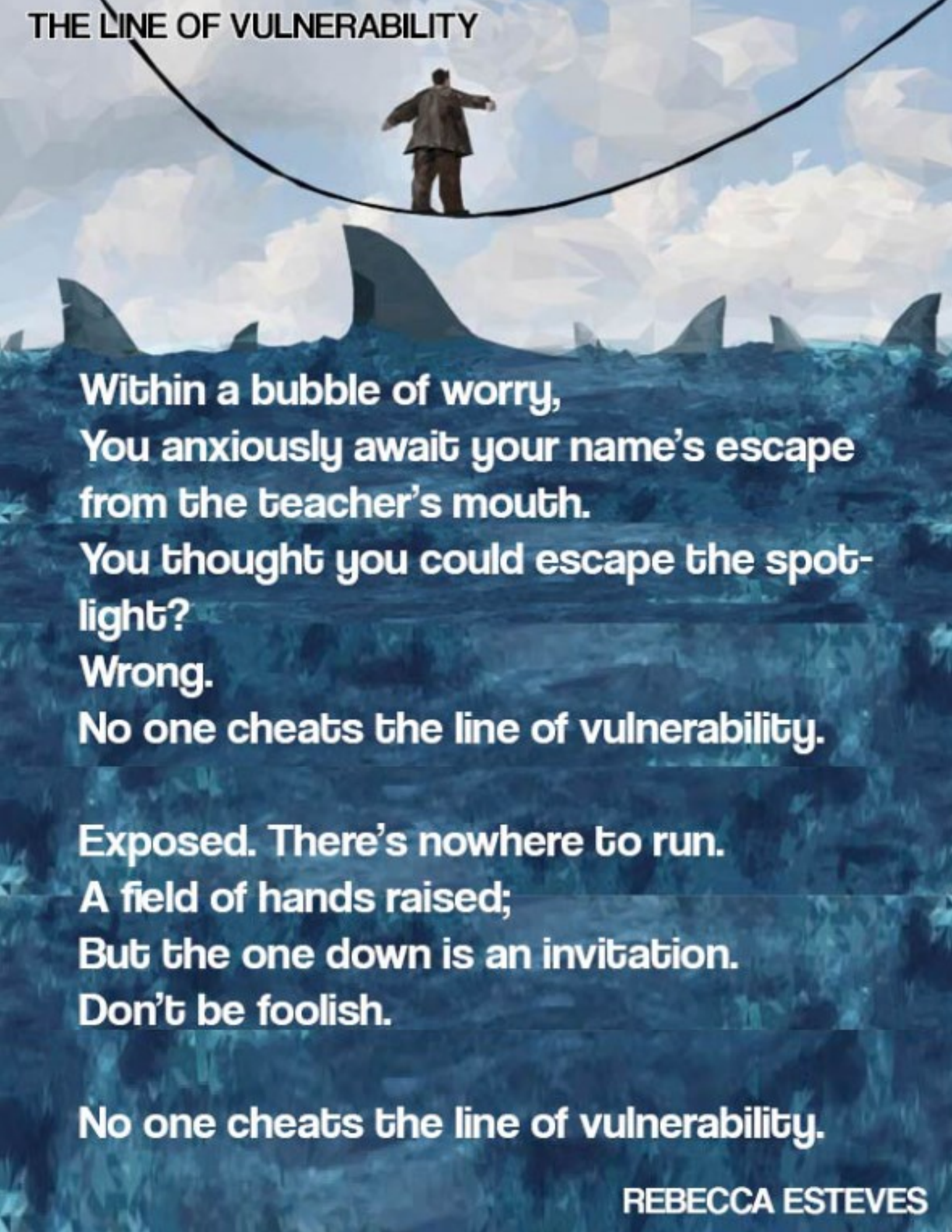
Before the judgement, you tremble,
Sins laid out before you,
A list of flaws,
Of which you are stripped bare.
You are asked to fall to your knees
And grovel for forgiveness.

Even lacking faults,
One cannot see through you.
Feeling naked,
It's as if being forgiven has made you
No longer yourself.

You wonder if you can be perfect,
To those who opine your honesty.

The ultimate fault of humanity
Is being mistaken
Time and time again.

THE LINE OF VULNERABILITY

A man in a brown suit is walking a tightrope that stretches across the top of the frame. Below him is a dark blue, choppy ocean with several shark fins visible. The sky is light blue with white, fluffy clouds. The overall style is a low-poly, digital illustration.

Within a bubble of worry,
You anxiously await your name's escape
from the teacher's mouth.
You thought you could escape the spot-
light?
Wrong.
No one cheats the line of vulnerability.

Exposed. There's nowhere to run.
A field of hands raised;
But the one down is an invitation.
Don't be foolish.

No one cheats the line of vulnerability.

REBECCA ESTEVES

A SMERALDO FLOWER.

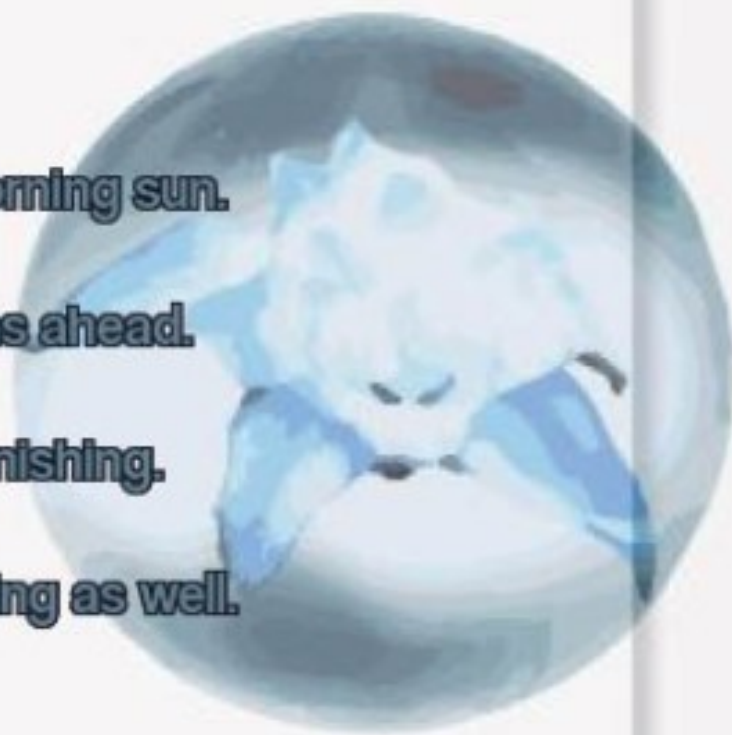
She felt unreal,
She felt as if she were in her own bubble,
A delicate, fragile bubble floating in the sky.
She didn't want to be exposed,
Her bubble was her own little world.
A little world that held a rare flower,
A smeraldo flower.

It wasn't an ordinary flower.
It kept her safe,
Its blue petals glistening in the morning sun.
Its essence made her feel calm
Until she bore witness to what was ahead.

The smeraldo flower was slowly vanishing.
Its petals fell off, one by one,
And her own bubble started cracking as well.

She started to panic.
She didn't want to be exposed.
Yet once the bubble broke,
She wasn't falling,
But flying.

Her wings brought her comfort now,
For the new world that was awaited her.



THE THOUGHTS OF THOSE EXPOSED

The shields were down,
The castle open to attack.
They could now reach me,
Break me.

I had no more clothes to wear,
My body was naked and exposed,
To the people
Who wished harm upon me.

A broken heart,
Watery sight,
A lone hand resting on my shoulder,
In hopes of taking advantage.

I'm alone,
A heart too heavy for
My own bearing.
Their hurtful words
Are all I can hear.

I'm scared
Of the dangers
That lie ahead,
That will shatter me.

THE BREEZE FLOWING IN THE MORNING

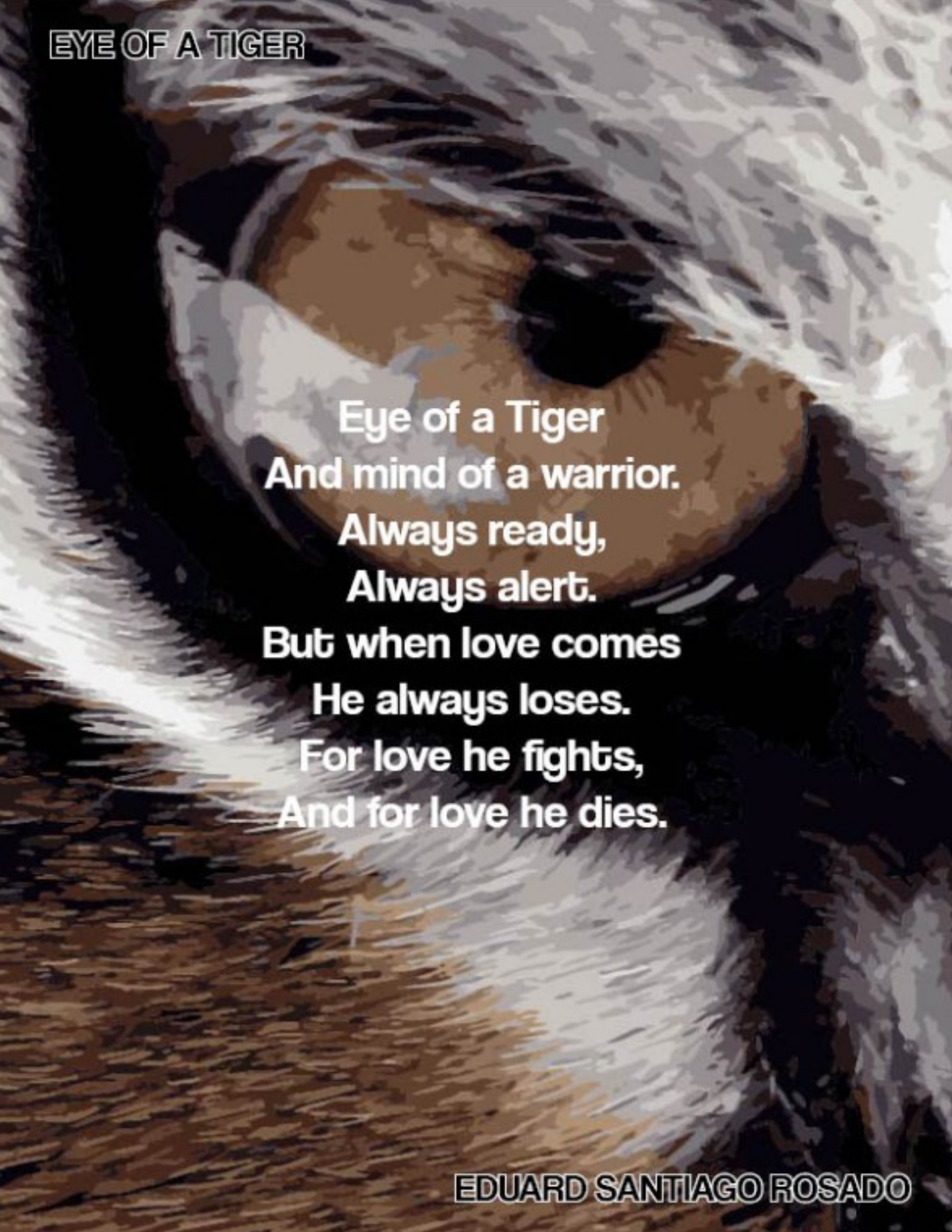
The breeze flows in the morning
The emerald color of the grass shimmering
The rays of the sun beaming
The misty morning dew glistening

Silence is shattered
From the barks of a tiny dog
The humming of a little girl
And the clicks of a silver leash

Step by step the sidewalk's end nears
Turning around and heading home
A white van stops at the corner
The door flies open

Sweets in his hand
A wonderful time for the child
Tells her there's more
That waits inside

Mind full of candy, she looks inside
Arms wrap around her
She's gone in a second
And there's nothing to be seen.

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a tiger's eye. The eye is a deep, golden-brown color with a black pupil and a dark, vertical slit. The surrounding fur is a mix of light and dark brown stripes, creating a textured background. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the fur and the intensity of the eye.

EYE OF A TIGER

**Eye of a Tiger
And mind of a warrior.
Always ready,
Always alert.
But when love comes
He always loses.
For love he fights,
And for love he dies.**

EDUARD SANTIAGO ROSADO

HER HEART

Her heart
Was a blank canvas,
Ready for anyone
To paint their colors.
Her eyes were a clear gateway
Into the catacombs of her soul.

Her lungs burned
With an aching desire
To be protected.

She had already slipped
Through the cracks,
Consuming her heart,
Her mind.

Their words hit like a truck
And there was nothing she could do
To land back on her feet.
She had no shield,
No strength,
Nothing.

She was an open book
So desperately wanting to be closed,
To not be seen.

She wanted to disappear.

WHEN A PARENT ASKS

When a parent asks their child to choose between a parent, it may be hard but the reason why it's hard is because they always come up with an excuse to win her over. Dad would say, 'I'll let you eat ice cream every day!' And momma would say, 'I'll cook you your favorite meal!' back and forth, back and forth. Despite Mom and Dad fighting, in a way, they still forgot about her. They forgot that their little girl might be small of age, but she was in fact clever, and knew exactly what was going on.

Eventually the little girl figured something out. She would stay with dear grandma; she who would give the girl what she needs and occasionally what she wants. On Mondays through Wednesdays she would be with mom and Thursdays through Saturday she will be with dad. And on Sundays, the little girl spent the day with her Grandma.

YULIANA MALDONADO RODRIGUEZ

ONLY A BROKEN HEART

A sore, broken heart
That beat with pain
Of everyone she had loved.
She had been taken advantage of
And left
Stranded.

Her heart was now open,
But the word spread
Like a wildfire on a Summer day,
That her past lover had left for another,
A girl who was higher class.
Boys looked and some laughed
But they all knew
What she was going through.

Many took advantage
Knowing that they might lure her
Into their trap.

AUTUMN LAWRENCE

THERE HE STOOD

There he stood. My best friend, Andrew. A comrade, a soldier. His sniper raised and pointed in a dangerous cut into a silent wind in the middle of the ice cream parlor. I could hear his shaky breath, bullets flying in cutting creases through unforgiving soil. Voices shallow under the grey skies, and heartbeats felt through the tiles underneath our feet. The grenade rolled, taking a clinking stop against his combat boots. My vanilla cone fell out of my hands and onto the ground. I raced to jump towards him, to pardon him from a fate I believed destined to be mine, but the blast had already created the flames in his eyes. I felt the stroke of my wife's hand through my hair and I could hear her soft whispers, telling me it would all be okay. Andrew was gone. He flew away in my imagination and was never there to begin with. Everyone in the ice cream parlor stared.

JASMEEN RIVERA

TO FEEL LESSER THAN

To feel lesser than
To be in a place where I have become isolated
Where I no longer feel the care
of a loving God
Trapped in my own thoughts
Where I am far from where I'm supposed to be.
Escaping my own identity
Running from He who
Only wants to love me
Hug me
Craves to see me be
The absolute best
I could possibly be
in his name

Amen.

SAHARA GUTIERREZ

SHE WHO HAS BUILT UP WALLS

She has built up walls for fifteen years now, torn down instantly at the sight of love. They talk and talk, opening up her mind, heart, and soul. She is vulnerable to him in more ways than she knows. She tried not to let it show, to not show that her walls have been down the instant their eyes locked, but such attempts were futile. The mystery of their love is still unknown, but she knows it will all work out. Her love will prevail and shine through the cracks of the splintered fortress she is encased within.

MYLIN HARRIS

WHEN A MAN AT STARBUCKS STARES AT YOU

Naked. That's how it feels.

He is ogling me

Eyes hungry

Stare stripping away

Any dignity I have left

I cover myself with arms

Wrapped around me tightly

It doesn't change anything

d

His tongue reaches out to

Licks his lips and I

Seal mine tight

As if the water from his mouth

Could reach me from across

The room

My friends don't think

The rose in my cheeks bloomed

For this drink. The one with my name on it

He's read my name.

He is ripping my name away from me

When he leans forward

and mouths it on his lips

ARMANI ROSARIO

TOO VULNERABLE

You found a lover
Who twisted and wrung
Your heart,
Stabbed it with sharp words.
Kneaded and pressed it until
There was nothing left.
It was flattened, abandoned,
You face anger when there's
Nothing left for you to give.
You are the tsunami of a thousand pains
But your desire to breathe
Is so much stronger than the need to no longer
be.
You are powerful,
Everything you see is healing.
Becoming something better than it used to be.

NUMBER 21

Seventeen year old Ally Lee had beautiful blue eyes and shoulder length blonde hair until she dyed it hot pink, earning her 1003 Instagram followers. Her mother, Amber, described her as "loving and kind-hearted", which was reflected through her posts. She often posted pictures of herself and friends, encouraging everyone to be their true selves.

Ally lived in the small town of Cabool, Missouri with her girlfriend, Briana, as well as two of her friends, Isis and Andrew. She had dropped out of high school and began discovering herself, even coming out on social media as "mostly lesbian, but pansexual" in May. Another one of her posts was captioned "I am beautiful. I don't care what people think." She was very proud of who she was, always referring to herself as beautiful in her posts, and wanted pride within the LGBT+ community to increase as well. She was happy with Briana and loved her girlfriend unapologetically despite the constant backlash she received.

Ally's otherwise loving relationship with Briana was strained after a fight that turned physical they had on September 3rd, leaving both parties upset. The tension spread throughout the entire house, the other two roommates, Andrew Vbra and Isis Schaur, taking Briana's side and turning their backs on Ally. No one had heard from her after the incident when she left and did not contact anyone.

On September 14th, 2017, Ally's family reported her missing after not hearing from her for two weeks and suspecting they were being lied to about where she was. Her friends reported to police they had not seen her since the fight, claiming she stormed off and never came back home. This raised many questions and worries everyone close to her.

Only two weeks later, a body was found in a chicken coop twenty miles from Ally's house. It was later identified by authorities and, upon hearing this news, Ally's family grieved. Because she was transgender, investigators reported the corpse as that of a man, but the victim was indeed Ally Lee Steinfeld. Articles written by local news outlets misgendered and deadnamed Ally after her death.

Ally had been killed in her living room on September 5th. She was stabbed in her genitals, had her eyes gouged out, and she was set on fire by Briana, Andrew, and Isis. Andrew was the one to initially stab Ally, but he said his original plan was to poison her. She refused the poisoned liquid, so Andrew reached for a knife instead.

They chopped up her remains and Briana asked a friend, James Gribbsby, to help her hide the body. He complied, placing the charred flesh into a large plastic bag, and dumping it off at a shed near the chicken coop.

Andrew Vrba was 18 when he murdered Ally Lee Steinfeld. Briana Calderas was 24 years old and Isis Schauer was 18 when they both witnessed her girlfriend being stabbed to death. Despite the killers bragging about the attack and confessing to the crime, investigators insisted that the murder was not a hate crime.

"The American Bar Association urges federal, tribal, state, local and territorial governments to take legislative action to curtail the availability and effectiveness of the 'gay panic' and 'trans panic' defenses, which seek to partially or completely excuse crimes such as murder and assault on the grounds that the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity is to blame for the defendant's violent reaction."

Ally was estimated to be the 21st transgender person brutally murdered in 2017. 2016 had the highest number of trans murders ever recorded with 23 trans people killed, but 2017's numbers climbed at an alarming rate and surpassed the previous record. These acts of violence are often not labeled as hate crimes and are sometimes seen as justified by some. The "trans-panic" defense is being used in court to excuse violence against trans people. It has been successful in lightening sentences in murder cases like Gwen Araujo's and Jennifer Laude's. Their attackers were not charged with murder because their sentences were downgraded. Letting someone's status as a member of the LGBT community influence a decision is legal in every state except for California.

Even in her death, she has been ridiculed for her gender identity online. The comments on her Instagram, while full of love and condolences, contain users damning her, referring to her as a man, and referring to transgender people as sick.

In Ally's last post before her brutal murder, she called herself ugly for the first time on her Instagram account.

EMOTIONALLY WOUNDED

The feeling of being defenseless;

You can feel it in your chest.

Hopeless and weak,

People never see you at your best.

The surrender of control gives opportunities to others

To swoop in, which fades your true colors.

Being fully exposed, in a world which attacks,

Not only hurts you, but the ones who see you go

through what you do.

A heartbreak or a loss can make you a wreck,

Yet it is even worse when you start to lose yourself in

the process of the mess.

GIANNA DE PONTE