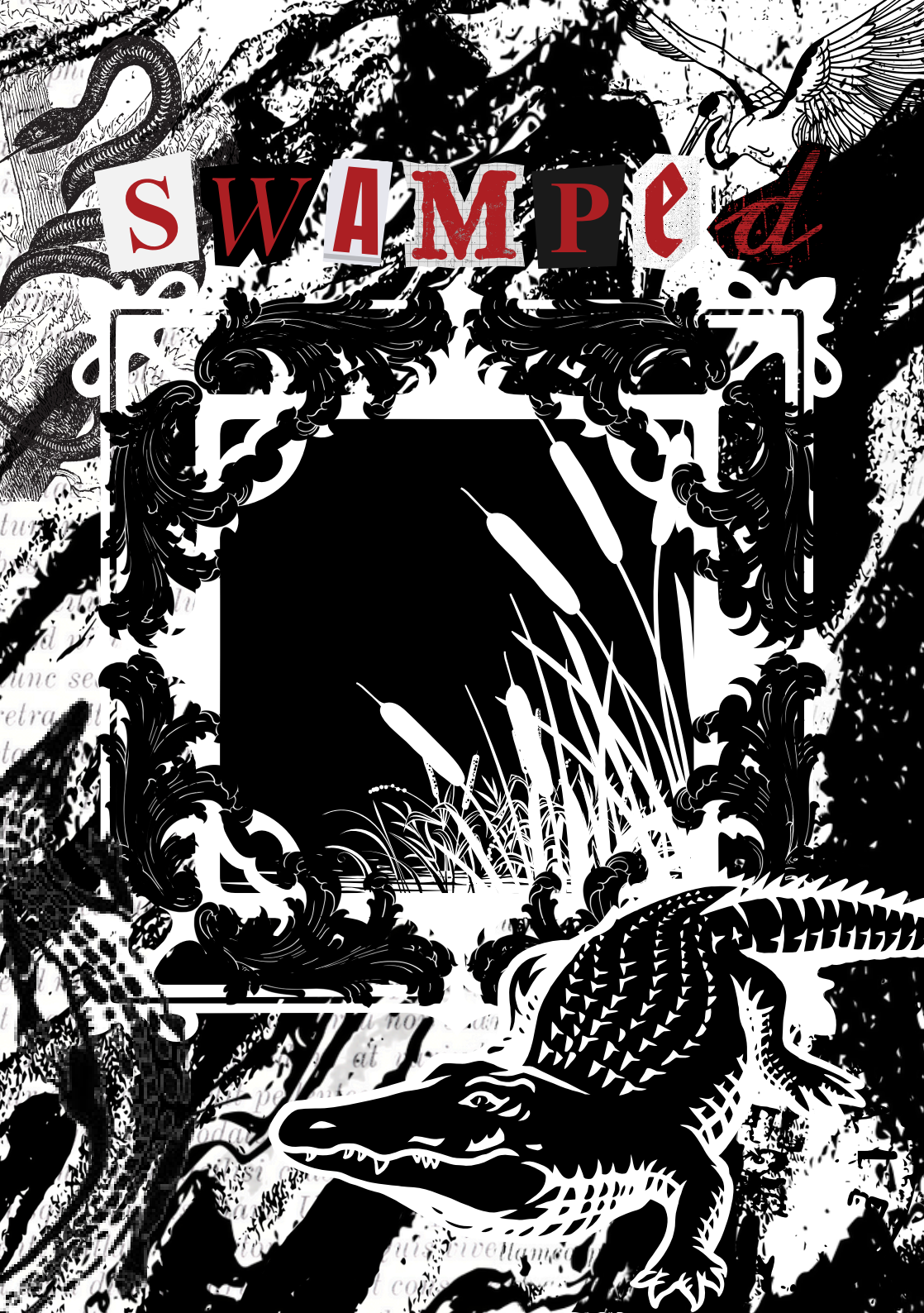






“ETHAN!
DON'T
POKE
IT
WITH A
STICK!”

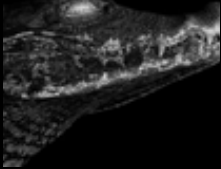
THAT WAS THE FIRST ALLIGATOR I
SAW IN THE EVERGLADES.

**“WHY CAN'T I POKE
THE ALLIGATOR WITH
THE STICK?”**



“THEY ARE THE WHOLE REASON WE
CAME HERE! COME ON AVA, HAVE
SOME FUN.”

WELL I WAS HAVING FUN. I HAD BEEN
LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS FOR A
LONG TIME.



The Everglades national
park is known as a
place where people can
get a taste of the
Florida wild life, and no
one ever gets hurt...
right? Ethan, Tanis,
Sam, and myself had
started this hike with
high hopes.

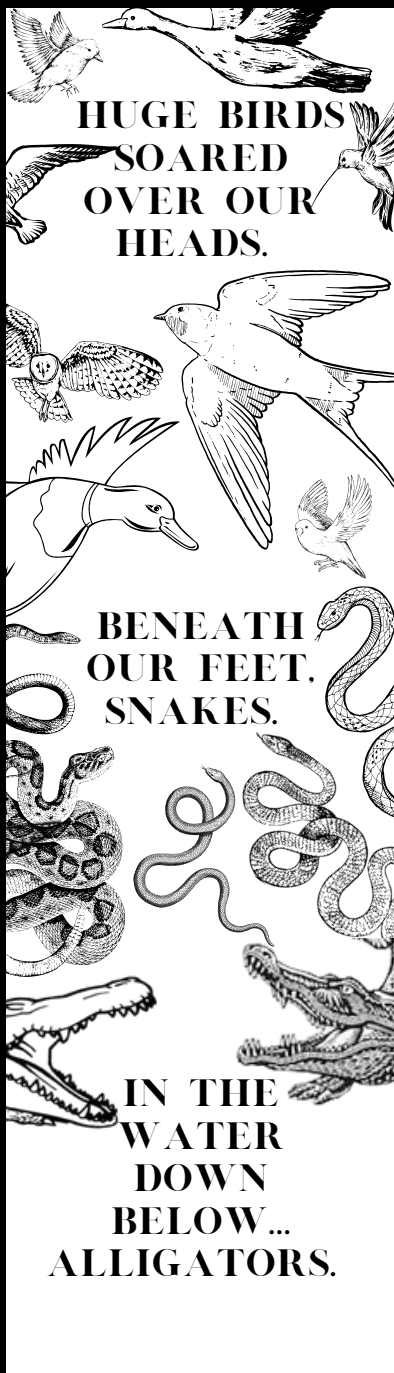


**AS WE EXPLORED THE EVERGLADES, WE
WERE SURROUNDED BY WILDLIFE.**



That thing could eat me whole.

THIS WAS A SIDE
OF NATURE I HAD
ONLY SEEN IN
BOOKS AND FILM.
NOW IT WAS
RIGHT IN FRONT
OF ME.



“Is anyone else getting cold”

“Oh come on don’t be a baby, Ava. Look at how nice the sunset is. I told you to bring a sweater.”

SAM WAS ALWAYS THE ONE TO ACT TOUGHER THAN THE REST, BUT WE ALL KNEW HE WAS ALSO FREEZING.



WE HAD BEEN WALKING FOR OVER 3 HOURS. EVERYONE WAS COLD AND TIRED, BUT I WAS THE ONLY ONE TO ADMIT IT.

“Ethan, please order the Uber.”

I SAID AS IF IT WASN’T ALREADY OBVIOUS WE ALL WANTED TO GO HOME.

“I have no service.”

Shit.

A shadow was casted over the group. My stomach turned as I calmly said “we need to get to higher ground”.

Only three thoughts were repeating in my mind:

*This is not happening.
We can not get stuck here.
We need to find a way home.*

WE NEED TO

FIND A WAY

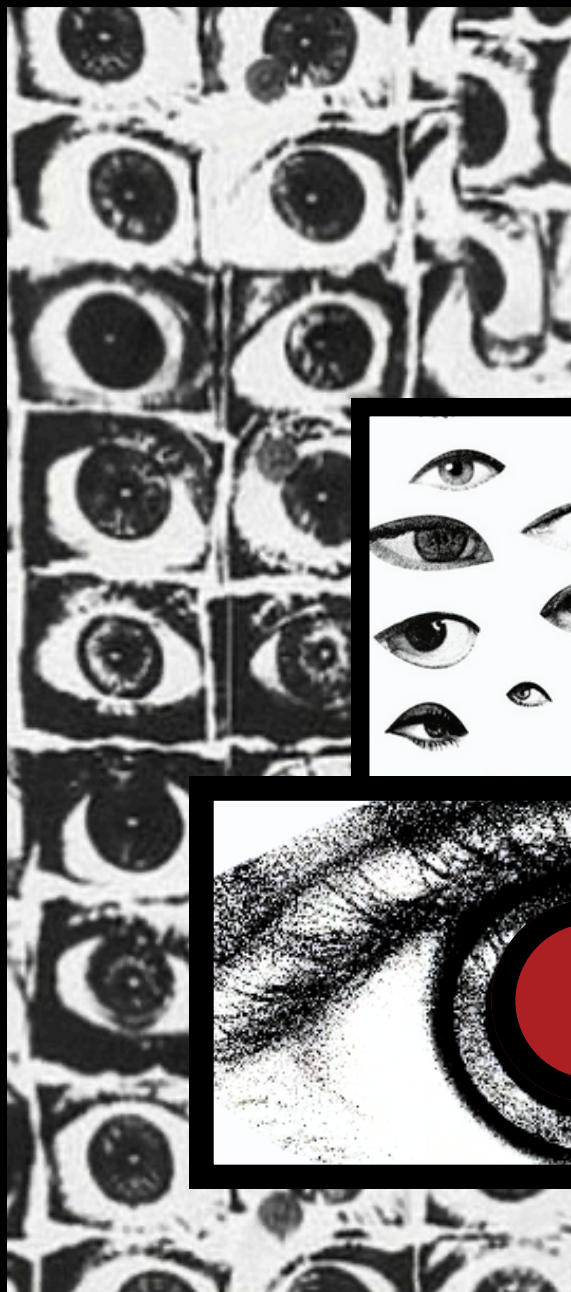
HO

ME

EVERYONE WAS SHAKING

**IN
THE**

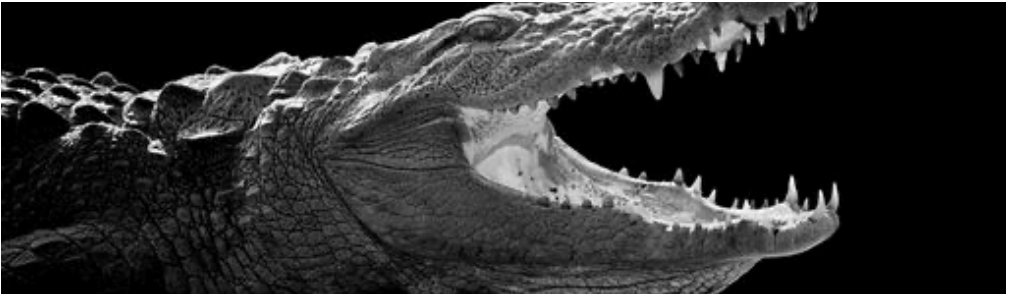
COLD



THE ONLY THING WE COULD SEE THROUGH
DARKNESS WERE THE RED BRIGHT EYES.

SN
AP

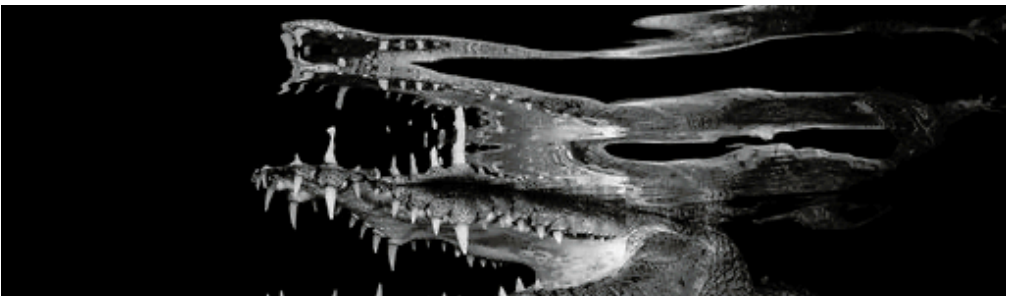




A PAIR OF **RED EYES**
JOLTED TOWARDS

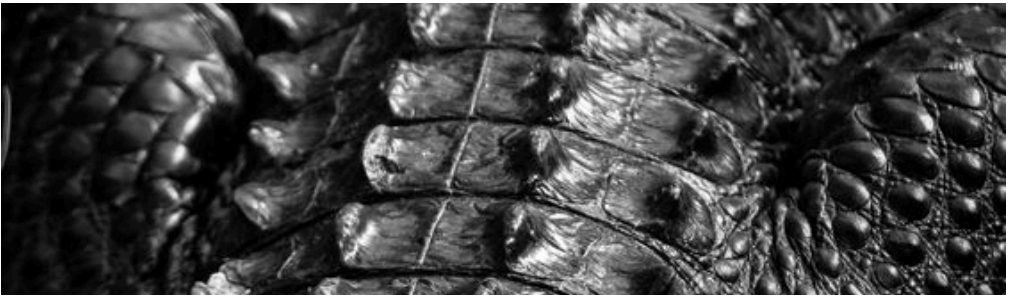


TANIS AS SAM PULLED
HER AWAY



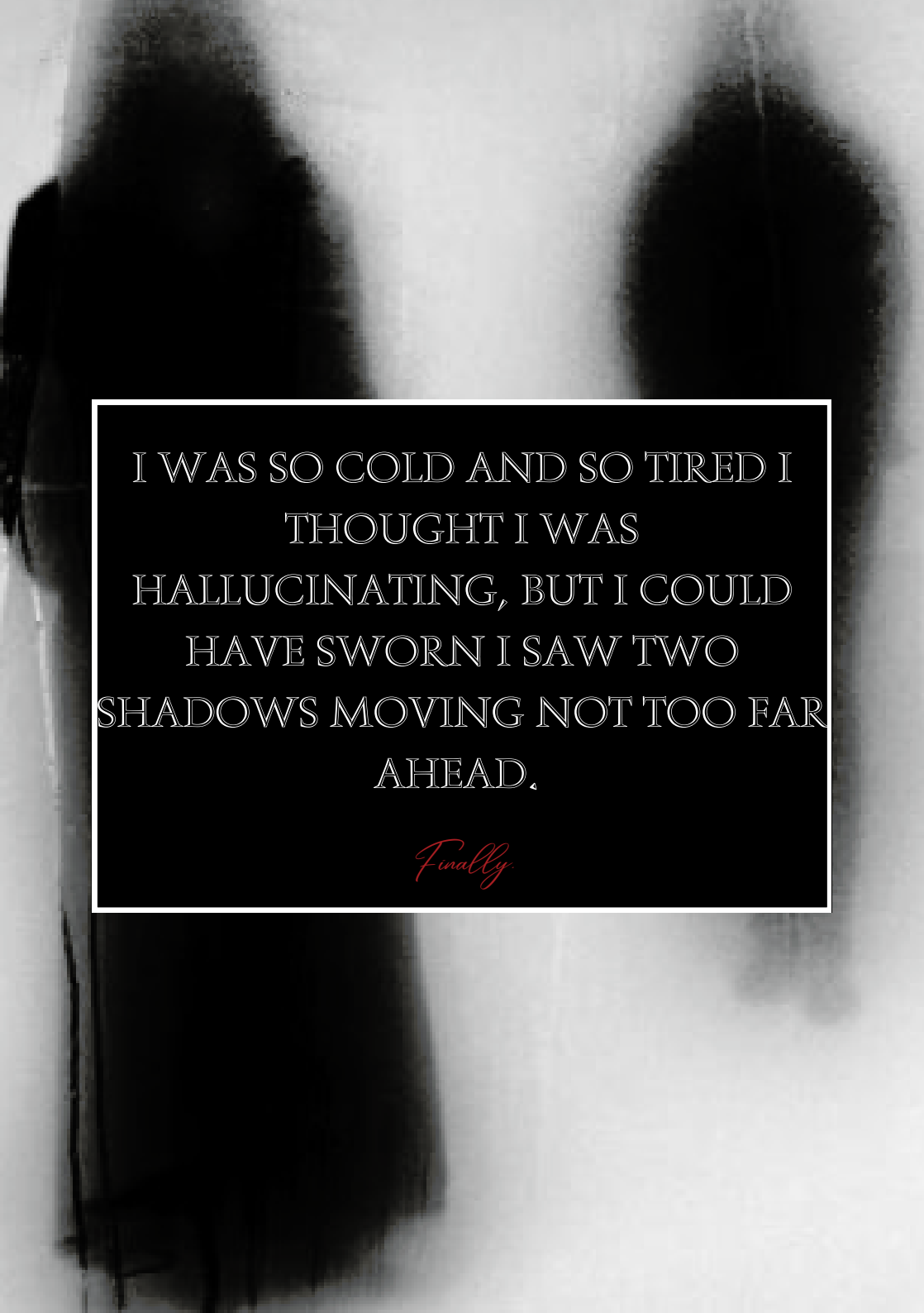


**DAMN THESE THINGS ARE
GETTING HUNGRY**



**WHAT THE HELL WOULD I DO IF AN
ALLIGATOR ATTACKED?**





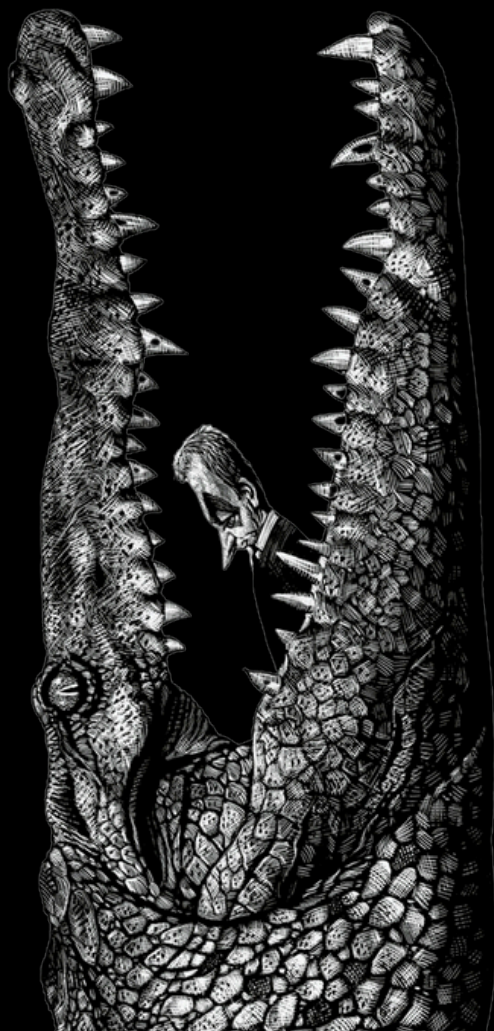
I WAS SO COLD AND SO TIRED I
THOUGHT I WAS
HALLUCINATING, BUT I COULD
HAVE SWORN I SAW TWO
SHADOWS MOVING NOT TOO FAR
AHEAD.

Finally.

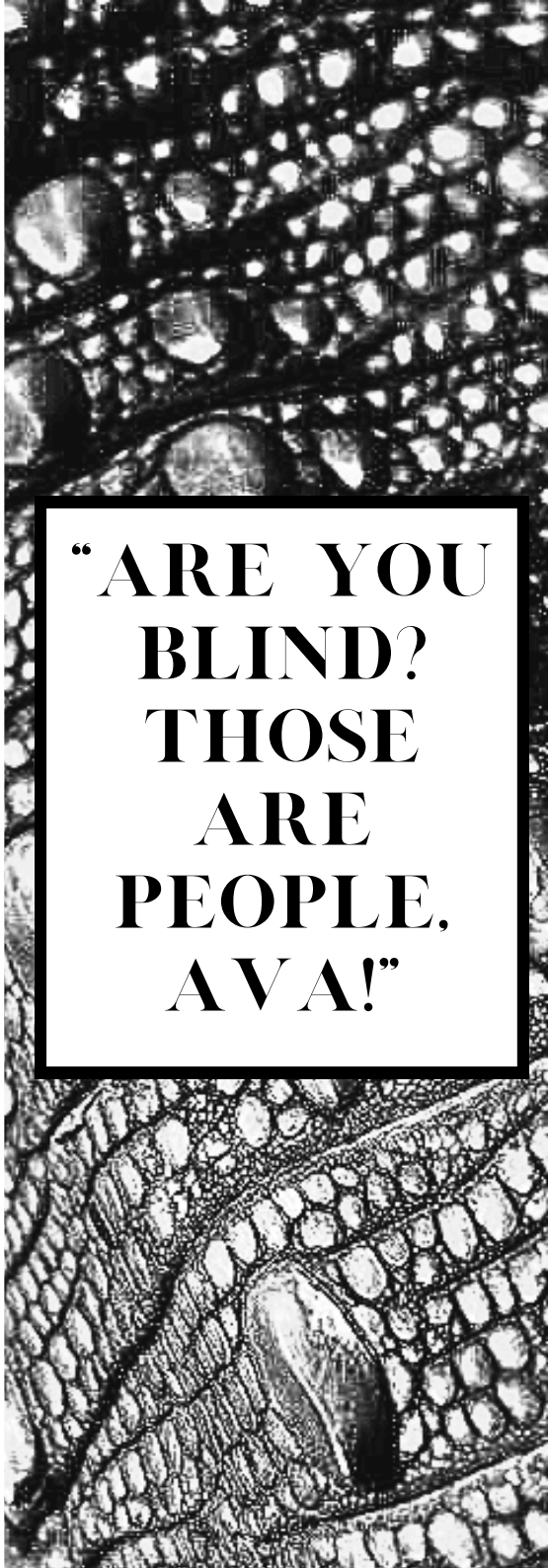
*Please don't let that be
another alligator.*

“PEOPLE!”

“ARE YOU SURE TANIS? THAT
SHADOW COULD BE A LOT OF
THINGS.”



“ARE YOU
BLIND?
THOSE
ARE
PEOPLE,
AVA!”



WE WALKED TOWARDS THEM AS I
SAW THE COUNTLESS NUMBER OF
BEER CANS ON THE GROUND. I
COULD HEAR THEM LAUGHING AND
SPEAKING WITH WORDS THAT CAN
ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS
GIBBERISH.

“THESE PEOPLE ARE
DRUNK”

ETHAN SAID A LITTLE TOO LOUD.

“WELL WHAT DO WE
DO?”

Please don't say hitch hike.

“HITCH HIKE! THEY ARE
OUR ONLY OPTION.”

*God my parents would kill me if
they knew I was asking drunk
teens for a ride home*



EVERGLADES

GROUP OF FOUR TEENS DIE DUE TO DRUNK DRIVING. WHAT HAPPENED TO THEIR BODIES? ALLIGATOR FOOD.

The whole conversation

was a blur as mind mind was racing.

Are we going to get kidnapped?

What if they crash?

I can see the news headline now:

group of four teens die due to drunk driving. What happened to their bodies? Alligator food.

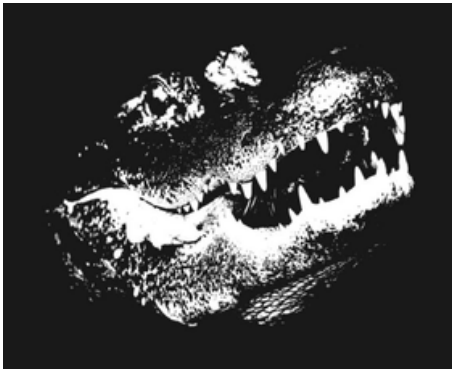


“Our parents

are picking us up, I’m sure you can catch a ride”One of the new guys said with broken drunk English.

Thank God.

My only worry now was being kidnapped.



DECEMBER 19TH, 2023

11:30PM

EVERGLADES NATIONAL

PARK

MIAMI,FLORIDA

TANIS AND I STAYED SILENT AS THE BOYS HAD A BEER WITH OUR NEW 'FRIENDS'.



A CAR PULLED UP IN FRONT OF US AS WE SQUEEZED 6 PEOPLE INTO THE BACK.

"ROUGH DAY?" ONE OF THE PARENTS ASKED.

"YOU HAVE NO IDEA"

"YOU CAN COME BACK TO OUR PLACE. THERES SERVICE SO YOU COULD ORDER AN
UBER FROM THERE".

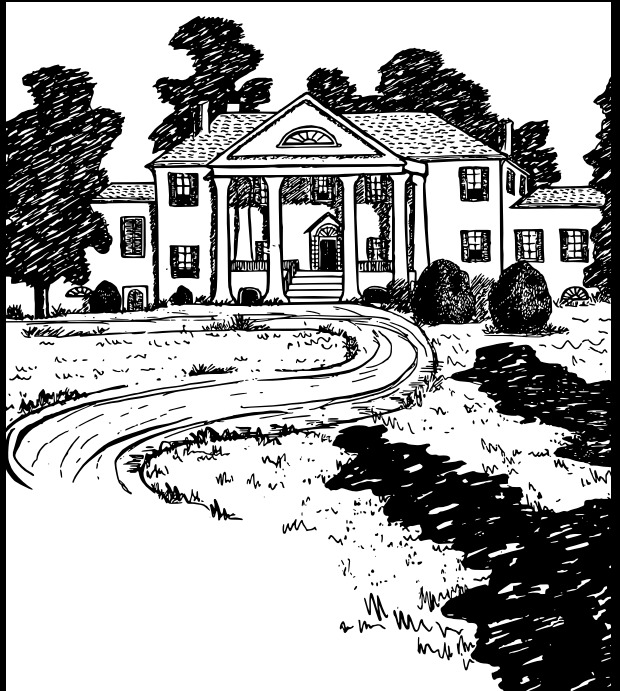


THE CAR RIDE WENT ON FOR WHAT SEEMED LIKE FOREVER. MY FRIENDS WERE SILENT AS THE FAMILY IN THE FRONT HAD SOME SIMPLE SMALL TALK.

“WOW, WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT.”

TANIS WHISPERED SO THE FAMILY WOULDN'T HEAR. IN FRONT OF THE CAR STOOD A HUGE MANSION. ETHAN WAS LOOKING AT HIS PHONE AS THE REST OF US WERE DISTRACTED BY THE SIZE OF THE OF THIS PLACE.

“I HAVE SERVICE”





I FINALLY TOOK MY FIRST BREATH OF
RELIEF IN WHAT SEEMED LIKE FOREVER.

We did it.

WE HAD MADE IT OUT OF THE EVERGLADES
ALIVE. AS I WAS THINKING TO MYSELF
ABOUT HOW I NEVER WANTED TO PUT MY
FRIENDS INTO A DANGEROUS SITUATION
AGAIN, I WAS INTERRUPTED.

