



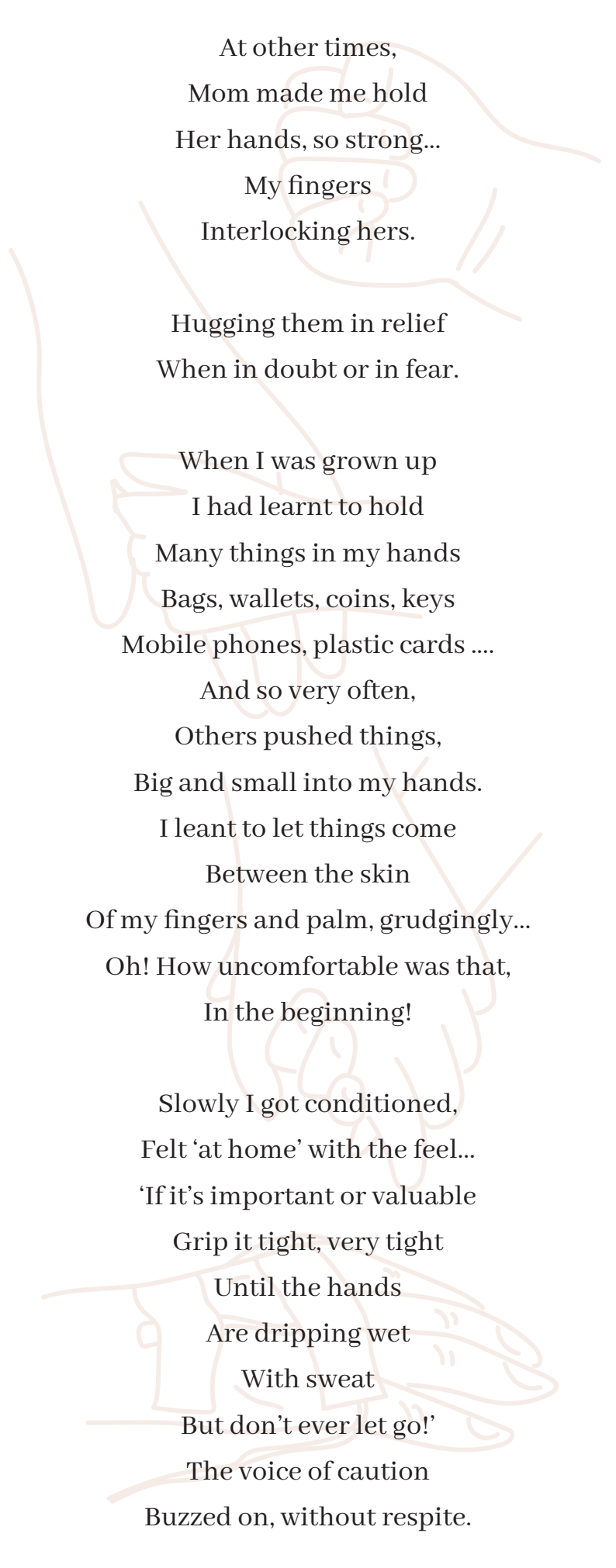
Hand to Hold

Vasanthi Vasudev

When I was born
All moist and warm,
My fingers hugged
My soft, fleecy palm,
Close... Very close.
There was nothing
That could come
Between their skins.

As I grew bigger
Mom and others
Often forced
A paper- note
Or a 'stick – pencil'
Through the wee gaps
Between the two skins
And made me
Hold it firm and tight...
The tighter I did,
For some reason
I still don't know why
But it made them
Happy and full of smile.



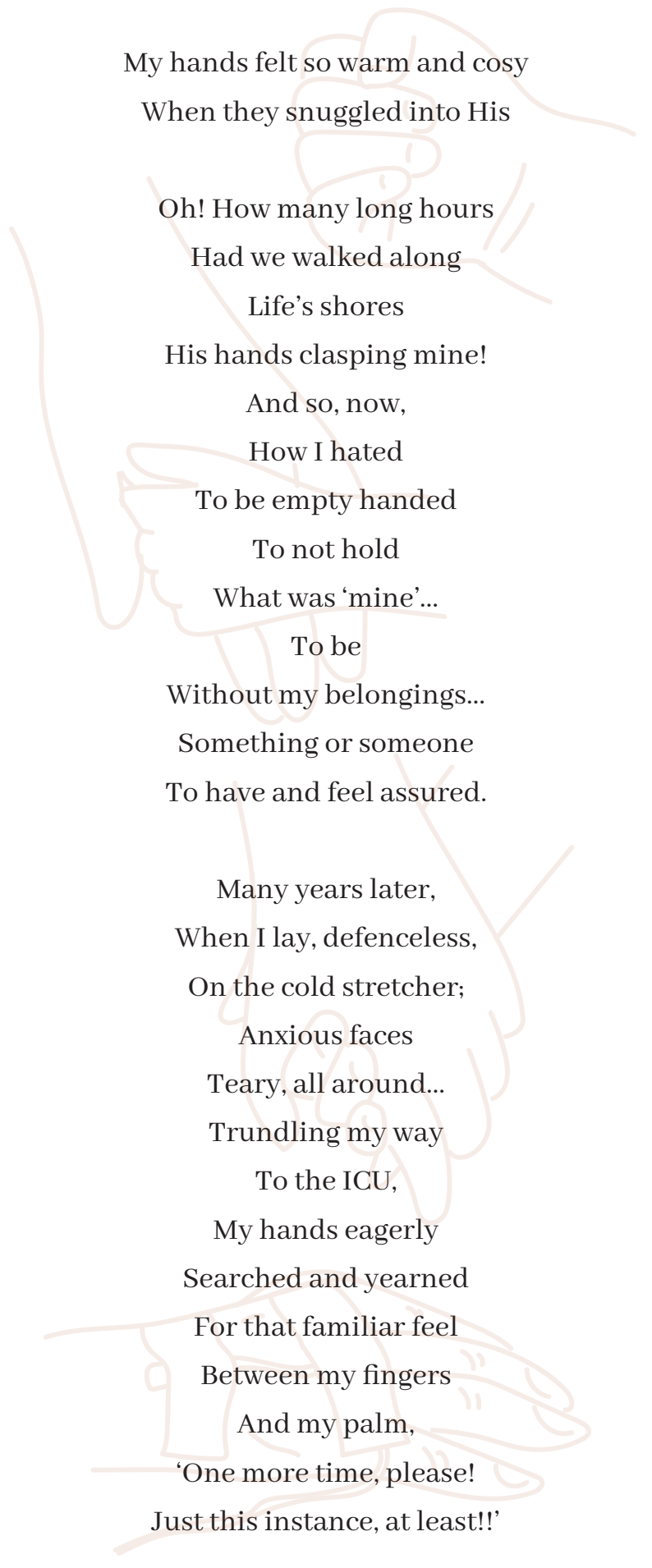


At other times,
Mom made me hold
Her hands, so strong...
My fingers
Interlocking hers.

Hugging them in relief
When in doubt or in fear.

When I was grown up
I had learnt to hold
Many things in my hands
Bags, wallets, coins, keys
Mobile phones, plastic cards ...
And so very often,
Others pushed things,
Big and small into my hands.
I learnt to let things come
Between the skin
Of my fingers and palm, grudgingly...
Oh! How uncomfortable was that,
In the beginning!

Slowly I got conditioned,
Felt 'at home' with the feel...
'If it's important or valuable
Grip it tight, very tight
Until the hands
Are dripping wet
With sweat
But don't ever let go!
The voice of caution
Buzzed on, without respite.



My hands felt so warm and cosy
When they snuggled into His

Oh! How many long hours
Had we walked along
Life's shores

His hands clasping mine!

And so, now,

How I hated

To be empty handed

To not hold

What was 'mine'...

To be

Without my belongings...

Something or someone

To have and feel assured.

Many years later,

When I lay, defenceless,

On the cold stretcher;

Anxious faces

Teary, all around...

Trundling my way

To the ICU,

My hands eagerly

Searched and yearned

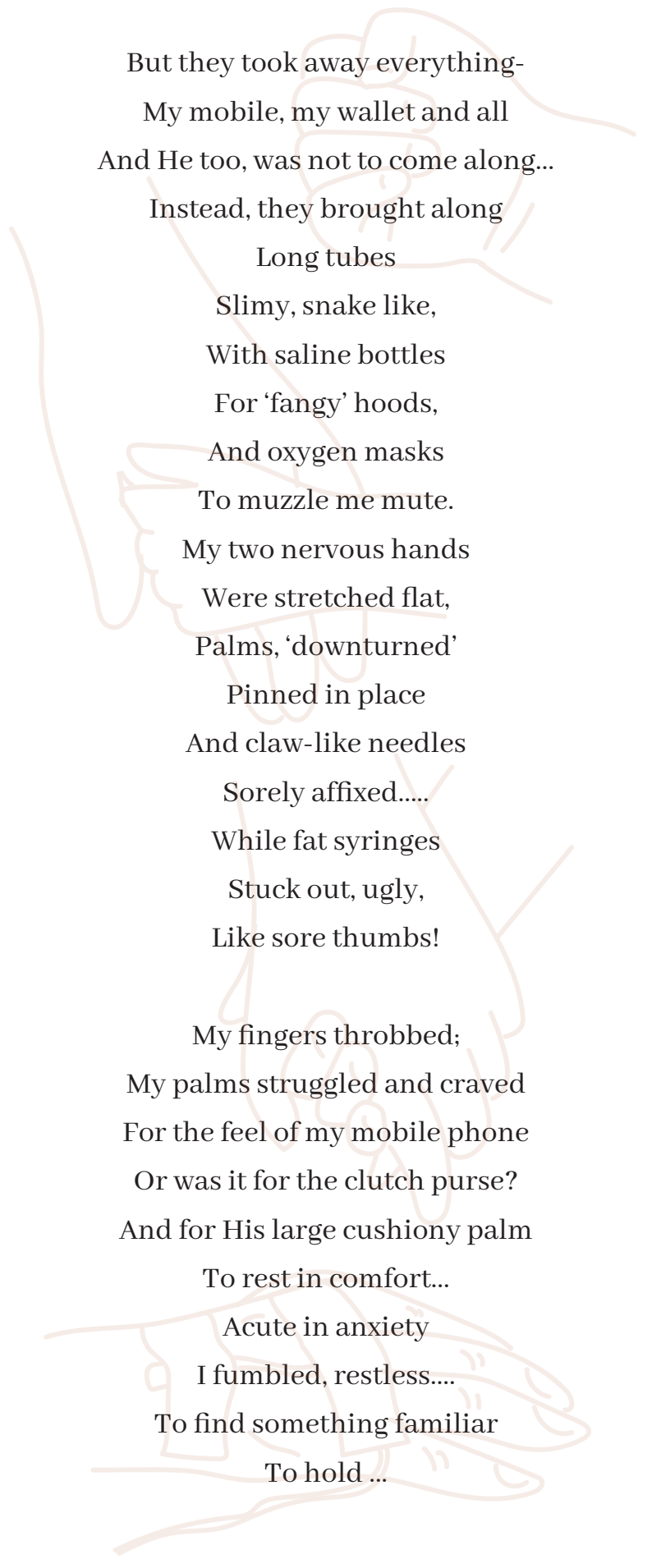
For that familiar feel

Between my fingers

And my palm,

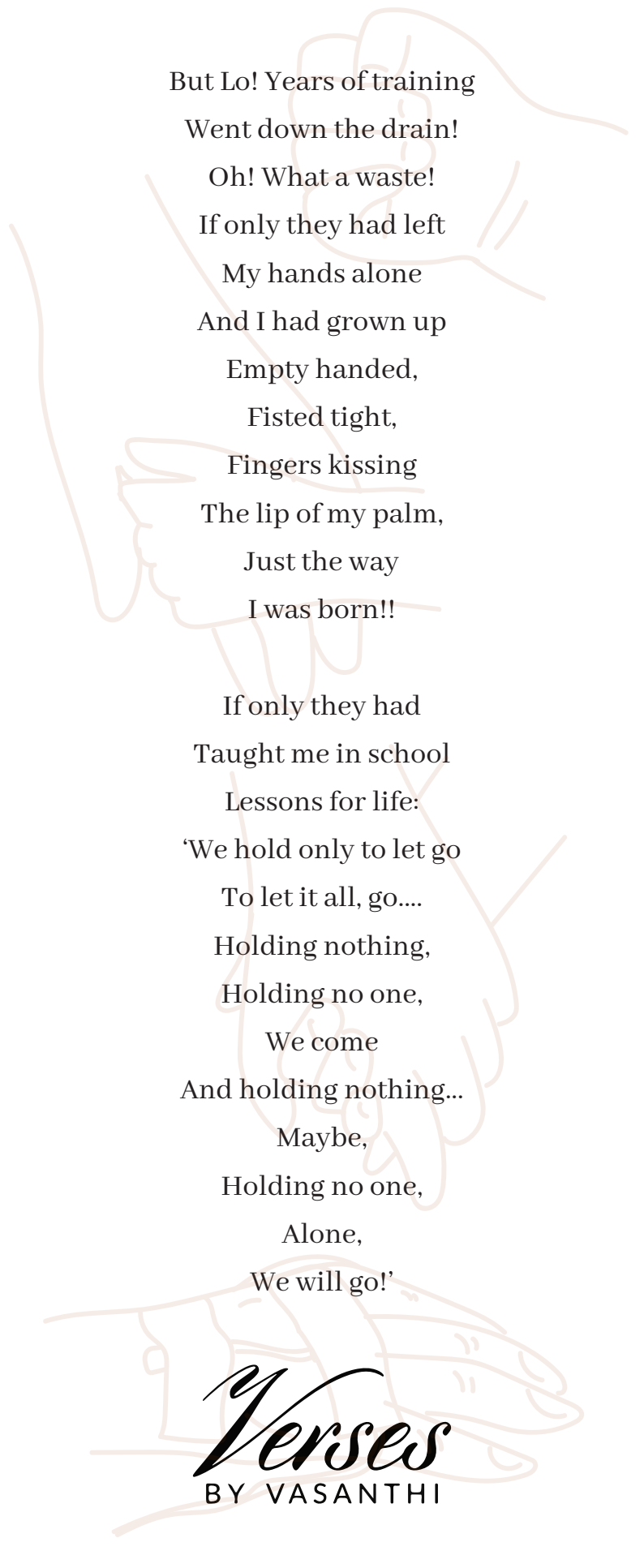
'One more time, please!

Just this instance, at least!!'



But they took away everything-
My mobile, my wallet and all
And He too, was not to come along...
Instead, they brought along
Long tubes
Slimy, snake like,
With saline bottles
For 'fangy' hoods,
And oxygen masks
To muzzle me mute.
My two nervous hands
Were stretched flat,
Palms, 'downturned'
Pinned in place
And claw-like needles
Sorely affixed.....
While fat syringes
Stuck out, ugly,
Like sore thumbs!

My fingers throbbed;
My palms struggled and craved
For the feel of my mobile phone
Or was it for the clutch purse?
And for His large cushiony palm
To rest in comfort...
Acute in anxiety
I fumbled, restless....
To find something familiar
To hold ...



But Lo! Years of training
Went down the drain!
Oh! What a waste!
If only they had left
My hands alone
And I had grown up
Empty handed,
Fisted tight,
Fingers kissing
The lip of my palm,
Just the way
I was born!!

If only they had
Taught me in school
Lessons for life:
'We hold only to let go
To let it all, go....
Holding nothing,
Holding no one,
We come
And holding nothing...
Maybe,
Holding no one,
Alone,
We will go!'

Verses
BY VASANTHI