



VIOLET MARGIN

2022

A Literary Journal

Dear reader,

I cannot speak enough to how proud I am of this collection of work. Violet Margin- even since it was Alchemist Review- has always been a space for young writers to test the boundaries of writing. The collection is continuing to deliver that promise in even more innovative ways. The 2021-2022 Violet Margin staff believes that this collection is a breath of fresh air in the world of undergraduate literature. The short stories demonstrate what storytelling can do through the lens of surrealism. Each poem is a form of raw honesty that cannot be replicated. Each image here captures the surreal nature of what is real.

I am proud each writer in this collection because it takes courage to write and create in a way that is this genuine and so to one's self- not only this, but to then take the risk to submit the work to be published. I beg every reader to consider how each piece here is a celebration of Violet Margin's values. I beg readers to notice the diversity, the experiments, and the authenticity in these works. Because reader, once you notice that, you have opened your eyes to all of the stuff you have missed in the margins.

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Predawn

Paula Lauer

It's 4:49 a.m. and 34 degrees.
I know this,
because the computer tells me so.
It's an ungodly hour,
meaning if ever there was a God,
It isn't now.

The room is cold,
and I expect to see my breath.
Or steam rising off the dog,
who looks up blearily and blinks.
She is soft, sentient, and without sin.
Though I sense judgement.

The moon glows weakly outside the window,
and the shadows outside look brittle.
I remember my rosemary plant,
which I forgot to cover,
and feel remorse.
I hope it forgives me.

Faintly, I hear the clock chime five times.
And I think of all I must do
when the sun comes up.
I hope the sun comes up.
Five bells still feels like a time
when there is no God.

In my bed, the me-shaped space
grows cold,
and I miss that void
like a childhood hiding place.
If deep space or death, or 4:49, were like that,
there would be less to worry about.

In the basement, the furnace wakes
like a cat. Or a god.
The weak crescent moon slips
shyly behind clouds
as if losing interest in the dawn,
chagrined after another one-night stand.

Some people feel energized and efficient
at 4:49 (or 5:18).
I am not one of those people.
There is nothing I want to do
in a cold, godless space
that I can't do with warmth and light.

If I walk down the hall,
avoiding the creaky spot,
I imagine the air will part,
repelled by my warm body
and close behind me.
A wake that lingers like fog.

But I don't.
There's no reason to pace there
Or disturb the innocent air.
I'll go back to my cold bed instead
and hope for sleep.
Or redemption.

Outside, a shape moves in the yard.
A coyote.
Indifferent to me, the moon, or
the temperature, which is now 35 degrees.
I know this, because the computer tells me so.
While the coyote stares back like a God.

The Wake

Kaylee Sadler

We found a grey finch
twitching red in snow.

Made a grave
with our mittened-hands,
offering last spring's dogwood flowers
and two pennies for his eyes.

Three shots through brother's bedroom,
chipped pebbles retrieved from the
driveway as bullets. Maybe it's not a warning,

but a courtesy. My dreams are forgettable,
but the bird's always there,
wearing an executioner hood,

shaking frost off his feathers. The coyote skull and
the pile of feathers,
a childhood left south past the parish line.

A quiet, burning house, destroyed
by a sleeping cigar.
Wait for the snow to melt,
this is what hell tastes like.

Crushed leaves make an
X and welcomes us,
don't jump.

Last Friday Night: The Morning After

Y. Zazi

Stayed out all night; forgot to turn off the alarm; woke too early but have to pee; roommate is lying in the bathtub hugging the shampoo; trip over sister's pit-bull lying in the hall; burn mouth on coffee and cuss; where did I put my phone?; search in couch cushion then search under loveseat; roommate enters the room rubbing salt from shot eyes; *you didn't drive yourself home last night*; then who did?; *ask Alexa*; SEARCHING ASK; not you Alexa! ; VERB, TO SAY SOMETHING IN ORDER TO OBTAIN AN ANSWER; Alexa STOP; sister storms in frowning at roommate; **did you drink all my milk?**; *I'm lactose*; wait, where are my keys?; *I'm going to the gym in a bit want to come*; Manny put down my shoe!; *I'm making a protein shake first*; Manny please stop humping that!; **who drank my milk?**; *nobody drank your fucking milk*; **then why is it gone?**; where is my phone?; Manny barks; sister throws empty milk carton; **I know you drank my milk!**; *you're a psycho*; has anyone seen my keys?; **I thought you were looking for your phone?**; I was but I can't find my keys too; *someone partied too hard*; Manny hunches and growls; Nia get your dog!; **why is he doing that?**; how would I know?; a strange man sheepishly enters the kitchen; Manny barks loud and runs over to sniff his crotch; the man's clothes are soaking wet; *who is this?*; **I thought you knew?**; *girl, I'm not that desperate*; the man holds out his hand to me; *this was clogging the toilet*; how did that get in there?; *party animal!*; sister pours a bowl of cereal to eat dry; **found your keys!**

Summer's Ideology

Abby Smolinski

In a quiet moment in an otherwise busy day,
waiting at a traffic light,
a grasshopper jumped its way
onto my passenger seat.
For a moment, it frightened me:
How would it get out?
Would I have another passenger for the long drive?
But it simply leapt away,
leaving me lost in thought.

A simple moment in time,
disturbed only for a second
By something that had no idea
there was even a disturbance.
A day halted, every thought lost
in order to focus on a momentary occurrence.

A moment so small, and yet so huge.
The tranquility it carried
through its spindly legs
hopped into my mind
much like my companion's ride.
Peace was brought into the day
no matter how busy the day became,
a sense of calm already existed.
Constant serenity resides in those
who do not seek a bustling life.

Hourglass

Hayley Payne

Resting in the palm of your hand,
falling to the ground
with the slightest movement of your fingers.
Fingers that decide the fate
of the warm, rocky sand
Carrying the weight
of what might be
or even, what will be
an open palm reaching into time,
Time that can never be replaced.

After Church

Stella Stocker

In his car after Sunday Mass
His hands pressed to the hillocks of my hips, he said
I am made of sin.
He spoke it and I drank the wine that is actually grape juice
From the grocery store a couple of minutes down the road
So it must be true.

I am a perverted, inverted, spun around version
Of what a woman of this God should be.
I am going to Hell, I am going to boil over and blister
And all that will remain of me is an ember.

His words are thorns piercing my heels.
He spoke it as I remembered that slumped man nailed on the cross
With a vacant look in his eyes, the man almost seemed to nod at me.
So I know it must be true.

Feminist Freedom Anthem

Kaylee Sadler

Where does freedom lie?
I am about to discover that
freedom lies between my lily-white thighs
my baptism into feminism
but I don't comprehend this just yet.

There is no passionate kiss or even
a gentle touch but
he kneels before me rolling the condom on.
His face is set with a kind of duty
and I guess I thought this moment was supposed to be
full of a kind of sentimental beauty...

Why am I here?
Why is he here?
I think I am bored and lonely and he
probably doesn't get lucky too often.

But it hurts like hell and he
graciously offers to stop—
one of the only men who would ever offer that—
and I sent him on his way
I stood there, swaying in the soft summer's night
still a hydrangea
And as his taillights disappeared I saw
my mother's headlights swerve drunkenly up our drive.

La Pivoine: A Short Story

Xuwen Yan

The fresh neon lights outside of La Pivoine sparked, and it hurt my eyes, as though it was a bolt of colors. Amidst the tides of luminously electrified glass tubes, a picture of a French artist, who designed the inner decoration, was firmly glued on the side of the window. Right next to it was the menu, written in bold French, and English translation right underneath every exotic name.

The reason why Dave and I always choose La Pivoine was evident and understandable. It's an ideal spot for romantic yet formal dinners, essentially for the first dates between men and women, their anniversaries, and oftentimes a prelude for an upcoming one-night stand. It's neither luxurious nor tacky, but at a reasonable price-scale. When the couple finishes a satisfying meal, exiting from the golden-painted revolving door, the male usually offers us homeless people a couple of dollars for a treat to impress their female partner, showing a little extra mercy.

Dave carelessly played with the stuffed animal that a little kid just handed to him, intermittently grimacing at me to reiterate how little money we had made so far this evening. I gave him a gesture to soothe him that the waves of diners were either coming or leaving, and we had to be patient.

The sky furtively looked cerebral, indicated by the shifting shadows of the moon, as raucous noises from La Pivoine gradually softened, accompanied with the fussy and hurried chirps from the footsteps. A man under the influence walked out from the rear door while unconsciously dangling in his overly packed suit. He almost lurched on the sidewalk, consistently gasping and vomiting, and it took him some time to stand straight and notice the existence of Dave on the other side. The wasted man said some words inarticulately with a woefully twisted tongue, threw something to Dave's stained cup, and disappeared in a taxi between the shades of evening. Dave cautiously examined the mysterious objects inside his cup with an immoderately joyous face and excitement that I hadn't seen from him for a while. I fixed my numb legs and got up and approached him in a hurry.

There were two bills, sunk in the muddy cup, then appeared to be tightly grasped in Dave's dirty hands. I saw two Benjamin Franklins between Dave's fingers. They were two one-hundred-dollar bills.

Dave unconsciously rose from the ground, shaking the specks of dirt attached to his bottom, and asked me what we should do with the money. We didn't have a bank account or anything in our mind that we ought to purchase since we never anticipated having such an amount of money. Dave asked me when was the last time we slept under a roof. I said I don't know.

Dave and I roamed around Midtown purposelessly, in utter happiness. We recognized an office building fully wrapped with glass, a few flashing lamplights through the windows and a reflected image of the broken moon. Cars, dogs, passersby. Everything was identical, but to us, it didn't feel the same at all. Not knowing how many corners we had passed, Dave eventually

pointed to a peculiar-looking architecture. It was built with yellowish marble, the subtle rococo-style outline, and incalculable rooms with lights on. There's a tiny fountain located right next to the driveway, without any water spraying up but an inexplicit sound of liquid surrounded. Dave suggested that we should wash our faces before entering, so we found a public restroom near Central Park, and yet it was sadly closed due to strict opening hours.

I've never been to a hotel like this ever before. The lobby was dramatically spacious, carefully waxed floor without any detectable stains. Right across the center, there was a giant grand piano sitting there, quietly and elegantly. An antiquated chandelier hung above the heads, illuminating the entire space without any additional effort. Dave and I were nervous, slowly advancing to the front desk and told the lady that we wanted a room, a double room. The doorman was really friendly and treated us like all other guests, leading us to the right room on the correct floor. We tipped him \$20 even though we didn't have any luggage to carry or own.

There were six irregularly shaped pillows neatly placed on our double bed. Dave and I both jumped on it before having an agreeable conversation. Without even a word, Dave kissed my lips, then ascendingly my side cheek, my forehead. He roused my chest, the skin around my belly button, and finally my groin, carefully examining and reexamining my sensibility as if this was our first time feeling each other with our hands, the first time attempting to impress the captive half and getting to make the best out of God's gift. We made love on ecstasy while our repressive moans were echoing against the double bed. Dave was on top of me, and I incidentally observed his charming profile through the obscurations created by the angle from shutters and the floor lamp, as though it was my first time seeing his face.

Dave and I met around West 37th St, near a gift shop. I sat by the train station all day, persistently asking strangers for some change. Around nighttime, a young beggar hesitatingly approached me, and I inferred he was like all other junkie boys who try to bother another junkie girl. Yet, I was wrong. He came to me and asked if he could buy me a drink while jingling pocket-coins. I said yes. We went to the closest 7-eleven, and he got me a bottled Dr. Pepper. I didn't know if it was the magic tricks from the outdated light bulbs inside the store which put an indescribable color on Dave's pupils, or it was a hormonal code secretly hidden in my genetic sequences that I longed to explore but failed to ever since; I developed some intangible feelings to the strange guy standing next to me, who strived to grab two one-dollar-coins from pockets of his beat-up jeans. We meandered beneath the magnificent buildings above the skyline, holding hands in between the biting wind. A fast-food chain had its lights on, so we went in and lounged by the corner so cashiers wouldn't notice us. He passed me a piece of mint.

"Tuck it under your tongue," he said.

I did.

DAVE. He pronounced his name for the first time in front of me, and I repeated it after him. D.A.V.E. A brief voyage of my tongue; the top teeth intimately touch the bottom lip, lightly resonating. D-A-V-E. It reverberated between my teeth, while the mint was blasting the bizarre taste under my tongue, making D-A-V-E the flavor of mentha leaves.

An abrupt telephone bell awakened me. The front desk lady gently asked me if we wanted to extend another day or we had to leave right now. I woke Dave up. The mattress reminded him of the bed in his grandma's house. Dave once told me that his mother abandoned him to his grandma before hanging herself in the attic. They didn't notice her death until the looped odor of demise abounded in every inch of the house. It was so unbearable that it saturated through all the doors, wooden stairs, and even the front porch. Dave spent his entire childhood smelling the death of his mother, in that house, up in his room. The odor of despair. The first thing he did once turning 18 was to leave the afflictive house, the hometown within the pain, hopping on the earliest bus to the Metropolis, where he thought he could find something glowing and gratifying, but he was obviously wrong.

I left my town for the Big Apple before even turning 18. As of today, I still had mnemonic fragments of my hometown here and there but failed to put an integrated image anymore. My house resided alongside rays of verge weeds, the middle of nowhere, a necessary path to the pond close by where people kayak on the weekends. Families of four usually drive their trucks, hooking a canoe on the back, and park perpendicularly by the waterside. I used to spend entire afternoons leaning my head on the desk, listening to chatters or laughter from the families through my window -- to abstractly perceive what a "family" means, literally and emotionally. My father was an alcoholic punk who suffered severe OCD. I recalled one time back in my grammar school that our teacher gave us the assignment to bring an object from home and present it in front of the whole class the next school day. There was nothing in our cabin but cans and bottles and cutlery, countless amounts of them. The next day I brought an empty bottle to the class, lying that it was a message in the bottle I found on the shore by the pond not too far from my house. I even spuriously wrote something on a slip with my spidery handwriting and put it in the bottle that still possessed a pungent smell of alcohol. The entire class believed in me, even our teacher, who acclaimed me for doing a wonderful job.

After checking out the room, we lingered around the impressive architecture to make the most delightful memory. Then we strolled around the city and begged for some change again as we did in the past hundreds of days. We murmured after every stranger walking passed by, children, women, men, tourists, elders, even dogs. Most days are mundane and disappointing; coins could barely reach to the half-line of the party cup. Sometimes we got extra lucky, then we would go to a hostel, sleeping on a bed together along with another sixteen roommates. Occasionally, we would sneak into some parks and rest on a dusty bench. I don't want to reinforce the myth of how pathetic it is to sleep roofless at night. It's certainly uncomfortable, but it's not as bad as it might sound like. One time, Dave and I shared a poky bench at a park, and suddenly we heard some uncanny sound moving into our sheets. It was a squirrel. She piteously snuck into my hoodie pocket inside our thin sheets, because she was cold.

The irradiative sun gradually appeared to be impotent, following swift footsteps of people off work. The moon bashfully revealed its chin, fringing the sunset wordlessly. Dave and I rambled along the Upper East Side and attempted to arrive at La Pivoine before the sky turned pitch-black. The sidewalks became crowded, filling men and women; they all smiled childishly, exposing their neatly arranged teeth. It seemed to me that all the hardships hurling on Dave and me might never become a problem to any of them. Their whole lives are sweetly bubbled, easily savoring the honey with a spoon, whereas Dave and I never knew what honey was.

We walked past Central Park, glancing at clusters of tourists from all over the world. They took pictures, posturing in and out of the frames. None of them might have an idea that people could actually sneak into the park after its closure at 1 AM. Dave notified me that if we were quiet enough, we could slink in at the entrance at W 72nd St. As long as we were hushed, we wouldn't be caught. We did it once, stealthily lying under a hole in the bridge. We were cold, almost frozen to death. *What should we do?* Dave said if we make love, we could create heat from dopamine, so we kissed eye-closed while fiercely putting senseless hands against each other's skin, generating warmth from nowhere. We couldn't moan or make any sound, so we beat each other's lips, tasting mildly sweetened blood from the beloved half. We made love all night long until we heard the first wave of bird chirps from elms. We survived another ruthless night.

Once again, Dave and I tented apart outside of La Pivoine again, pretending that we didn't know each other so that we could most likely get a double reward. If someone hands a dollar over to Dave, then when he walks past me, he would give me a dollar as well, very likely. If we both sit together like a couple as we are, people would just give us a dollar in total, the fund for the entire household.

"Hi, Miss, can you please spare me some dimes so that I can go get a cup of coffee?" I sincerely stared at a young lady who was trying to enter La Pivoine.

The young lady rolled her eyes, glimpsed down at me and promptly unzipped her patent leather purse, "Sorry, I don't have any change."

"Have a good night," I nodded.

She smiled wryly at me, then entered the restaurant, greeted her male companion, and disappeared into the gaudy lights. Oddly, a host, who was in black suit, noticed Dave on the other side. He rebuked Dave for sitting too close to the rear door, so Dave had to move a little bit further from La Pivoine and me.

La Pivoine grew more and more boisterous with the movements of the hour hand. The familiar noises emerged again in my ears. A couple stepped out, arguing something inarticulately—both in carefully selected garments.

The man shouted to the woman in the face, "Hey, yo, you know how hard I work, how much I sacrifice for you?"

"Honestly, Chris, you know what the fuck you did, you know it very well," screamed the woman.

"Go fuck yourself! I don't give a shit about you anymore."

"Get lost! You fuck!" the woman paced away. Her violet-tinged high heels hit the ground densely. The sound weakened as she disappeared at the end of the road.

The man still stood by the restaurant, glared at the woman from behind, and gave her the finger even though she never looked back. His cheek swelled angrily like a pufferfish. He turned his head unintentionally and spotted me and double-checked to see if the woman was gone and strolled hesitatingly over in front of my plastic cup full of rusty cents.

"Hey, Mister, can you please spare me some money so that I can go buy a burger? I'm hungry," I raised my head and looked at him.

The man remained silent, staring me in the eyes, suddenly mumbled, "Hey, yo, Blondie, your hair is beautiful," he pointed at my hair.

"Thank you, Sir, but can you give me some change so I can get something to eat? I'm hungry," I begged earnestly.

The man didn't say anything, kept staring at my face, my mucky shirt and my ripped pants. Then he opened his mouth, "You know you have pretty hair, but it's dirty, very dirty."

"Excuse me, Sir, what do you mean?"

"You have nice hair, but it's dirty. Are you deaf?"

"No, Sir, I'm not."

"You know, at my place, I have this giant bathtub, which can easily fit two people at the same time. You can wash your hair there, and I can help you if you need any help. ANY!"

"Sorry, Sir, I don't need a bath. I only need a couple of dollars to buy some food." I looked over at Dave behind the man's waist, at a relatively far distance. Dave didn't notice the man and was thinking blankly.

The man kept staring at me, my face, and my body greedily. He scanned around to make sure no one was nearby, naturally ignoring Dave's existence. He raised his hand and gestured a "two". I didn't respond.

"Two hundred. How's that sound?" the man muttered.

After a few seconds of silence, I repeated, "Sorry, Sir, I don't need a bath. I only need a couple of dollars to buy some food," I intentionally volumed up so that Dave could notice me over there. It worked. Dave peered at me from a distance.

"How about three, then? Three for three hours," the man stared at me wryly.

Three hundred dollars. Dave and I could go to the hotel again, lying down on the double bed that almost feels like a "home", a real home. Maybe we could buy two tickets heading out West to where Dave was born, rambling around the deserts and cactus -- to breathe, feel, and sleep on scalding soil. We could probably come to La Pivoine too, ordering the entree dish that I couldn't pronounce -- *filet de loup* -- for both of us, maybe some martini as well. The golden lights inside La Pivoine will no longer be scattered but intimate, not glaring but tender. The host wouldn't say nasty things to Dave and me ever again; we would be treated like all other diners in nicely tailored outfits. Everyone would grin at us without any expression of disdain nor aversion.

It took me some time to get up from the ground with my numb bottom and shake off the dirty sticky to my pants. I pointed at Dave and told the man to wait here for a second. I hesitatingly shuffled to Dave, gazed down while walking, bent over and gently kissed him on the forehead. He didn't say anything, staring at me in stillness. We were both quiet.

"Dave, babe, wait for me here, aight? I'll be right back. I see you here, at La Pivoine," I gave him all the cents I collected the entire evening, enough for him to buy a bag of chips or a chocolate bar.

I walked away as Dave didn't make a single sound and followed the man and didn't look back at Dave again before I snuck into the man's purple-polished limo, because I knew La Pivoine's voguish light was so shining, so dazzling that I could barely catch Dave. Even if you stand by us, on the same side of the street, you could hardly spot us, even under the neon lights. *We're so dim.*

Belief

Zoe Sjogerman

if god is real, we would be lucky if he were to only demand of us our prayers. We would be lucky that we are not asked to drag the scapegoat to the top of the highest mountain, slash its throat and dip our fingers in its blood, streaking it across our sweaty faces. Hoping that this is enough to prevent being asked for more, asking for our firstborn, asking for the sacrifice of the flesh of our flesh, asking for everything we have, asking for us to tear ourselves apart and reach into our bodies and grab our hearts, bleeding and slimy and to put our hearts on a scale, hoping against hope, that our sins will be forgiven and that we can be absolved while the crocodile below waits, teeth sharp and ready, and the angels, many winged and many-eyed burn, and we cannot stare right at the face of god, but have to turn away blinded and weeping.

we are lucky if we are only asked for prayers

Moon Child

Rachael Rosenstengel

Moon Child.

You'll never be
an Earthling.

Sure, you lived
your entire life
on Earth.

That doesn't
qualify you
as terrestrial.

"Redundant" word patterns
fall out your mouth;
the Earthlings translate.

That is,
if they have
the patience for
you and your
harmless mannerisms.

Everything you do
is normal,
on the Moon.

Don't expect all Earthers
to apply the same rules
to themselves as they
put on you.

Remember, you
aren't an alien
invasion threatening
to end humanity.

If only that peaceful
message was told to
Earthers wanting
to eradicate
the Moon in you.

If others treat you
like a burden THEY
have to carry, remember,
you're the one
from the Moon.

One day, you'll
be the one translating
Earthling speak for
the ones on the
Moon.

Untitled 2021
Savannah Saltsgaver



Meadow
klozure



Odes to Illusory Inamoratas
Bre Scott

"Inevitable Loss"

after "Allusions Against Time" by Grace Shuyi Liew

All thoughts that end in her end in longing

for less

Suffocating is all I'm feeling & revolting

against a wave of time, chasmic drowning,

Suffocating

she

remains oblivious, unconfined

& I will keep her shielded

from this intrusive

blossom of fatal emotions exerted with every release

normal for me, I

long to feel less like

her, for her.

When her eyelash drops my heart drops

gravity blessed to even touch a part

of her

but my time in her presence

ticks down slower,

slower, and slower, and faster and faster like

irregular palpitations

Suffocating with each

of her breaths out each of my breaths in

Suffocating without her company Suffocating I'm destined to sit by her side

damned to her great paradox, enigma, anomaly

Suffocating without notice, internal bleeding prominent
Suffocating, my lungs capability fails me
as I'm Suffocating I know it's too late and I'm
Suffocating in the lack of minutes we have
I suffocate when she carries on.

"confrontation"

I could hear her heartbeat, skipping once twice
Expressing a cacophony of feelings she didn't want me to know.
She inhaled her deepest breath
How heartless considering that
She held my breath in her lungs as much as she held her own.
Once she let it out it would belong to me as much as
it would belong to the dirt underneath my shoe,
and as much as it already belonged to her.
I wanted my breath back.
I wanted her heart to be steady and the breath in her lungs
To be hers. Not mine.
She wanted she wanted to preclude our souls from tethering,
How selfless and selfish
Her eyes avert from mine shamefully.
She drew a longer breath, releasing what I could never get back.
It was tainted breath mixed with the emotions I didn't want
To know. To feel.
The silence was deafening It was comfortable

Knowing that
The silence
Was all I was hearing.

I didn't want to hear her.
I didn't want to hear myself.
My psyche may be yearning to pry into her mind,
But my heart wanted to sit in silence. Forever.
She didn't know her own mind.
Why should I.

"Villains"

I did not want *this*.
The touch of your soul to mine
Has tainted and eroded and maimed
All thoughts of sanity. All acts of honesty .
and now just like you I deserve no empathy.
I fell
Into your inhospitable embrace.
You have stolen the veracity from me
With only a whisper of your lips brushed against the temple of my psyche,
You have snatched the sympathy from my heart
And bewitched me with the promise of a heart you are unwilling to give.
The contents of the organ sitting in the abyss of your chest cavity
Are filled with nothing but the smoke of empty promises
And the ashes of the broken ones.

Your cold fingers breach my ribs,
 As sweet nothings grace my ears
 And suddenly, breath escapes me.
 I rely on you only *you*.
 I was naive. The thought that you could do wrong
 never
 Crossed the ignorant depths of my mind.
 When you
 Dropped me, I fell from hell. My soul
 S p l a t t e r e d,
 And *burst* into miniscule fragments that mirrored the real you,
 And not the pretty poisoned words that
 slithered out your mouth,
 And wormed their way into my bloodstream
 Into my heart.
 You have made a villain of you You have made of villain of me
 You have made a villain of *we*.

The Sitting Man Oluwatobi Akinroluyo



Wildflower

klozure



Queen of the Bees

Paula Lauer

The notebook paper was folded tightly and stuffed in an old cigar box with a bunch of other junk from my childhood—a N.I. GAS mechanical pencil I found by the gas meter, a small magnifying glass, a rusty skate key, a tiny acorn, four silver dollars, my first pair of glasses from second grade, and a red Swiss Army knife.

I pocketed the knife and unfolded the paper carefully. On it, written in my cramped, childish handwriting, was my name, June B. and a numbered list entitled, "Bee Facts."

1. Bumblebees are relatively docile, but they will mount an aggressive attack when provoked.
2. Bumblebees are capable of stinging their prey repeatedly, unlike honeybees, which die after inflicting one sting.
3. Ounce for ounce, bee venom is more deadly than cobra venom.

And, my personal favorite:

4. Bees fart.

I remember looking this information up at the library so I could drop my newfound knowledge casually into conversations with my Uncle Jimmy. I figured he'd be pretty impressed with my genius. Unfortunately, on account of the "the incident," as my mom likes to call it, I never got the chance to share my research with him.

Uncle Jimmy's my mom's younger, and only, brother. He had been in and out of our lives for as long as I could remember, but the summer of 1972, he came to live with us after he got kicked out of the army. I don't think my mom necessarily invited him, but he ended up staying most of that summer.

My mom was and still is a nurse, and I think she figured having Jimmy around meant she could take some extra shifts at work. I, on the other hand, had mixed feelings about the arrangement. I had just finished fifth grade and was looking forward to having the summer to myself now that I was 11. Lucky for me, Jimmy was what you'd call a hands-off adult figure—meaning he did his thing and was content to let me do mine. Depending on mom's work schedule and Jimmy's carousing schedule, we'd see each other for breakfast or dinner some days, but mostly we just circled in and out of each other's lives in our drafty little house at the end of McDonald Road.

Even though it's a small house—just a black-and-white tiled kitchen with one tiny bathroom by the door; a dusty living room filled with mismatched furniture and overflowing bookcases; and two small bedrooms (one yellow, one blue)—we could go days without even seeing each other until bedtime. My favorite feature of the house is a large pass-through closet with a porthole window overlooking the side yard and, further down, the creek and some scrubby apple trees we called the orchard.

The house itself had perpetually peeling white paint, a saggy front porch across the front, and two big old oak trees in the yard that prevented much grass from growing within a 75-yard radius. I used to wonder why anyone would plant oak trees so close together like that,

but Jimmy said they were probably planted by a forgetful squirrel about 150 years ago, “and squirrels aren’t known for their botany skills.” He has a point.

After Jimmy came, I gave up my room (the blue one) and slept in that closet between the two bedrooms on a creaky old cot with a nightstand me and Jimmy made out of an old wooden crate. It’s a pretty good nightstand if I do say so myself. I used to keep the adjoining bedroom doors cracked so I could hear mom’s soft snores and smell the cigarettes Jimmy smoked in bed while, like me, he read himself to sleep.

Sometimes, late at night, I could hear Jimmy tossing and mumbling in his sleep. If it went on too long, I’d go in there and touch his face with my finger—just enough to stop him from being restless, but not enough to wake him. One time, though, he sat bolt upright, and I yelped and dropped Mr. B, the old bear I slept with, and dashed back to my cot, my heart pounding so hard I was sure my mom would hear it in the next room. The next morning, Jimmy was already out, and Mr. B was sitting in my chair at the kitchen table.

Although my mom used to nag Jimmy a lot about “getting off his ass and finding a job,” it wasn’t bad having him around. He fixed lots of stuff around the house, including the flat tire on my bike, the washing machine, and the holy roof of our old falling-down garage, where he set up a little repair shop, fixing people’s cars, lawnmowers, dirt bikes—pretty much anything with an engine, Jimmy could get running again. Sometimes people paid him money; mostly they paid him in beer.

This is probably as good a time as any to say that even though he wasn’t much of a role model, my Uncle Jimmy is not a bad person. I’m sure he feels bad about what happened and the fact that I am probably scarred for life or whatever. I think he wanted to be useful, but he was probably what my guidance counselor at school called “unmotivated.”

I will say my mom is still pretty pissed at him, and it’s been five years. She’ll probably talk to him again eventually. Just to be safe, I never told her about the book Jimmy mailed me for Christmas that year. It’s an antique encyclopedia called *The ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture* by AI Root. It was first published in the 1800s, though mine’s a reprint. Still, it’s pretty cool, and I still look at it sometimes.

The first week of vacation that summer, me and Jimmy were hanging my hammock between the oak trees, and I noticed all these holes in the ground that, it turns out, were bee nests. Like I said, not a lot of grass grows under those trees, but there was enough to hide the nests until you were almost on top of them. Looking more carefully, I could see we were basically surrounded by dozens of far bumblebees flying in and out of those holes like early-morning subway commuters.

“Now what?!” I moaned. “Where am I going to hang my hammock? I thought bees lived in hives, up in the trees, in the woods.”

“Too much Winnie-the-Pooh,” Jimmy said, lighting a cigarette. “Most bees actually nest in the ground. And these guys, they won’t hurt you unless you bother them. Just be cool.”

Blowing out a stream of smoke, he added that more people get struck by lightning than die of bee stings, and, maybe in an attempt to set my mind at ease (which it didn’t), Jimmy also told me the average adult can withstand about 1,000 bee stings, though a child can be killed by 500. Swell. Given my current proximity to stingers, I figured the next thunderstorm would be my last.

That was the thing about Jimmy—he seemed kind of loser-ish sometimes, because all he did was putz around in the garage and go out with his friends, but he knew stuff, like how to skin a squirrel, or how to make a grilled cheese over a campfire. He was also full of all this random information. Like the fact that rabbits can’t puke. Or that if you cut the head off a sea slug, it’ll grow a whole new body. And apparently there’s a jellyfish called the Immortal Jellyfish that can transform its cells back to its childhood state. Whatever the childhood state of a jellyfish is. I guess it’s good to have options.

And he was right about the bees. Once I was in the hammock, they pretty much left me alone. I felt like we had a mutual respect for each other, me and those bees. Sometimes, when I dozed off, I’d wake up to find them just sitting on me, like little Lilliputians gloating over their giant. Or when I was reading, one or two of them would circle my head and then land right on my book, or even my hand. I studied their fuzzy faces and marveled at their tiny, iridescent wings that, from a physics standpoint, should not have allowed them to fly at all, let alone swoop around like drunk little stunt pilots. Jimmy said a bee beats its wings over 200 times a second, and they have special flight muscles that allow them to hover or even fly backwards.

Up until “the incident,” I was loving everything about that summer—sleeping late, eating whatever and whenever I wanted, putzing around in the orchard or wading in the creek. Every couple of days, I’d ride my bike to the little library in town and get new books. That summer, my goal was to get through all of *The Bobbsey Twins* and *Happy Hollisters* books before I went back to school. I was a little embarrassed to be reading such sappy kids’ books, but I loved escaping into those perfect little worlds where everybody got along and all the big kids were sweet to their sisters. I longed for a best friend like Holly Hollister and a responsible older brother like Burt Bobbsey to be sweet to me.

Most afternoons, I’d wrap my books and some snacks in an old beach towel, zig zag carefully through my bees, and spend the rest of the day lounging in the hammock, reading, sweating, and occasionally dozing off to the lazy jazz of cicadas and the low hum of bumblebees flying around me, like sentries guarding their queen.

When it was time to go in, I’d ease down out of the hammock and tiptoe carefully through the field of tiny mines until I reached the porch. Then, I know it’s corny, but I always wished them a good night, because everybody should have somebody to say goodnight to, even if it’s just bees.

“So, let’s say you’re dumb enough to stand there and get stung by 1,000 bees,” I said one rare night when we were all eating dinner together. “What happens after you get stung one thousand and one times?”

"Dunno," Jimmy said, "Maybe you just keel over. You'll have to ask the guy who volunteered for that study and see how he's doing."

"What if you're allergic?" I countered.

"Oh, then you're fucked," he said, patting his pockets for a lighter.

"Jesus, Jimmy! Language," my mom said swatting him. "Quit saying 'fuck' in front of her! She's 11!"

"It's OK, mom, I've heard worse."

"From who?" she said, glaring at Jimmy.

"Whom," Jimmy corrected, shoving back his chair. "Gotta go, poker night..." and he was up and out of the kitchen, the screen door slamming behind him.

"I'm working a double tomorrow," mom yelled after him, "make sure you're home!"

"I swear to God..." she muttered clearing the plates.

"Mom," I interrupted her train of thought, which probably had to do with her last nerve and Jimmy not getting off his ass to find a job, "did you know one bumblebee nest can contain more than 400 bees?"

"Fascinating," she said. "Come help me with the dishes."

The next day, when my mom was working that double shift at the hospital, Jimmy had some guys over. I didn't say anything, but I felt my mouth get kind of tight, like my mom's does when Jimmy smokes in the house, and I wasn't sure if I should stay and keep an eye on things or stay out of the way. They filled the kitchen with their bulky voices and skunky odor, crowding the table with ashtrays, beer cans, playing cards and poker chips. Someone called me "girlie," which I hated almost more than the way their dull, hooded eyes raked over and then dismissed me. Except for a greasy, skinny guy in a black Judas Priest T-shirt. He called me honey and said I could bring him luck if I sat on his lap. Yuck.

"Hey! That's my niece, asshole," Jimmy said, cuffing him on the back of the head. "Show some respect."

"Oh, I'll show her something, but it won't be respect," he muttered.

"Fitz thinks he's still in Nam," chortled a fat guy in a ball cap. "Got a taste for young ones over there."

"I'll give him a taste of my fist if he doesn't zip it," Jimmy said shuffling the cards, and the other guys laughed while Fitz sneered and winked at me over his beer.

"Perv!" I spat and stalked out the door, letting it slam behind me. Outside, I noticed Jimmy's Swiss Army knife stuck blade first into the soft wood of the porch railing and plucked it free. Pausing only for a second, I also stole a beer out of the cooler before picking my way carefully across the yard to the hammock. The bees, only mildly stirred up by my light steps, resumed their regular routines, and we all settled into the rhythm of another lazy late afternoon. I drank the beer quickly, belched, and, more than slightly buzzed, floated in and out of sleep, waking occasionally to the bellowing laughter, whoops, and profanity wafting out the windows and across the yard. I wished my mom would get home, but then again, I was hoping she'd miss what was happening to her kitchen.

A couple of the men left, more came back, and the gravel driveway slowly filled with grimy trucks and growling motorcycles. I could hear bottles clinking and cans being tossed in the hard-packed dirt. The bees, still hard at work, seemed to drift higher and higher, circling and surveying, the pitch of their drone rising, falling, then stopping like a held breath before beginning again.

I must have dozed off again, because I woke suddenly to silence. The sun was almost down, the bees were still. I wrapped the towel around me and turned my head slowly toward the house. My glasses were askew, but I could see lumpy shadows on the porch, grunting and muttering. The fat guy in a baseball hat was bent, puking over the railing. And another skinny shape, standing in a black T-shirt, was swaying slightly and peeing at the bottom of the tilted steps.

I tried to sit up, but too fast, and the hammock tilted crazily, creaking on its ropes and threatening to flip me into the dirt. I yelped and put one foot down, reminding some nearby bees I was still there. The sun was even with the treetops, and tiny wings glinted in the golden light as the bees rose gently, circling me in halfhearted challenge. I froze and held my breath.

"Heeeey, girrrrl," the man slurred softly, stumbling and turning toward the oaks. "Whatcha doin' out here? Gotcherself a nice hammik there to lay on...looks so comfy, got room in there for me?"

He was still holding his crotch, only he wasn't peeing, he was stroking himself and shuffling toward me. I was trapped in my hammock, frozen in horror and disgust, not knowing but also knowing exactly what was happening.

I thought of Jimmy's knife, currently unreachable in the back pocket of my cutoffs. Shit.

"Gross! Get out of here you weirdo! Uncle Jimmy! Uncle Jimmy!" I yelled, still struggling to sit up and free the knife. Fitz cackled, pulling and rubbing harder on his crotch. "Jim's a pussy, 'din you know that? Fucker's passed out DRUNK onna floor, owes me hunnert, no, more than hunnert dollars, and Ouch! FUCK! Sonnav BITCH!!"

I watched wide eyed as his oil stained boots scuffed clumsily across one, two, three more ground nests, and the bees rose in waves to confront the affront, stinging his bare arms and neck, swarming his chest and head, rising in fury as he flapped his hands, his ridiculous dick now waving side to side as he flailed and stumbled, stirring up still more nests until the harmonious hum of angry bees melded with his screams and he fell, trapping bees beneath him as still more swarmed over him.

The commotion drew the attention of more drunks who in turn got drawn into the attack when they stumbled outside to see what was happening, and pretty soon the yard was full of screaming idiots, flapping and falling all over themselves, trying to get away from clouds of furious bees. Just about then, my mom pulled up, took one look at the situation, reversed back down the driveway, and drove to a neighbor's house to call the police.

As for me, I stayed right where I was, in the hammock, wrapped in my towel until everybody left and the dust settled. Jimmy, who was passed out on the kitchen floor, missed all the excitement, but he got hauled away with the rest of them. I think we might have been the only two who didn't get stung that night.

The next morning, I got up early and ventured outside. The air was heavy, and the light had a green cast as the rising sun met mounting thunderheads. The yard was a mess, full of bottles, beer cans, shirts, mismatched shoes, and...glitter?

No.

It was bees. All around the oak trees and across the yard, I could see the sparkling wings and bright stripes of my bees, their tiny bodies crushed and mutilated, the air still and silent.

"Oh no," I wailed. "My poor bees."

I heard my mom push the screen door open behind me just as a white-hot needle of pain seared into my ankle.

"SHIT!!" I yelled as the venom jolted across my foot. I hobbled in a circle, trying to outrun the agony.

"June!" my mom gasped wide eyed from the porch. "Language!"

"Bee," I panted. "Stung me. Hurts so much!"

"Well come inside, let's put some ice on it," she said. "Hurry up."

Off in the western sky, the dark clouds roiled, and I saw distant lightning.

"I'm so sorry," I whispered, tears blurring my vision. The thunder rumbled gently, as if in reply. Then, stepping carefully, I limped back to the house, ducking onto the porch as more lightning flashed and the first fat, heavy drops hit the dusty ground like small explosions.

Puppet Strings

Stella Stocker

Feet hanging, string necktie, doll legs

Puppet what is left to say

Without a ventriloquist propping

His mouth open

With the magic wands from his backyard

And emptying sounds from lips

Used mostly for stupid smiles

Like the clock calling out the hour

For an earless house

Feet hanging, string necktie, doll legs

Fighter's fists posed at bullies

Turned inwards towards tormentors inside

This is what his sister called fighting back

Succeeding is string sister

Moving past dolls and seeing ghosts

Cradled in their miniature porcelain palms

Woman-Girl

Stella Stocker

She's a woman. She's a woman but you call her a girl and you'd break her like one if you could. Less like breaking, more like slicing and opening and searching for where it hurts the most like a pig rooting around for truffles. When you kiss woman-girl, your lips are coated in lemon juice and she tears up at the acid against her mouth. Her strength is a challenge and you hover at the edge of her vision ready to take and take and take. Spare nothing, make her hate the color yellow because it was her and your favorite. Cut woman-girl down to the bone, call her baby and yours and bitch and useless. You want her beauty to be owned by anyone except woman-girl herself, you have no beauty of your own so you want to own hers. Your love is hunger and eating and consumption. All you know is to own and woman-girl was taught to fall for your love-eating and be consumed by you. You say she's there because of you, she's in college and loves books and drinks way too much coffee and smiles at sunsets but all of her is nothing without you. Through the lens of your possession, woman-girl's everything was molded by your hands in the image of a far from faded dream. Smart girl, pretty girl, cool girl you categorize her so you won't be threatened by her. She will never be anything more than a girl in your eyes. But you will still hurt and try to consume her anyway.

The Girl with A Double, No Triple Identity Crisis

Ava Maria

Ava Maria was born in Chicago IL. She was born in Rush Hospital but her coming out of the womb was no rush. One week in labor, poor Mrs. Mendoza still had Ava Maria inside the womb. But at least Ava Maria made it, after nearly experiencing death 3 times.

Ava Maria is American.

Ava Maria is Mexican.

"How do you say it? Ava or Ava Maria?"

Ava if you address her as an American. Ava Maria if you address her as Mexican.

Why can't everyone say Ava Maria without separating American vs. Mexican?

"Oh, you are named after that beautiful Christmas song!" Ah yes, now she is American, Mexican, and a Decembran.

Ava Maria speaks English but stumbles speaking spectacular Spanish.

Her anxiety of having perfect Spanish haunts her.

She *totally* is able to speak and write Spanish... as perfectly as her English. Ava Maria is buried in American culture and Mexican culture.

Yet, Ava Maria questions why she must pick one culture.

Why should one be better than the other?

Ava Maria is too American to be Mexican.

Ava Maira is too Mexican to be American.

Ava Maria exists in the Middle.

Does she look Mexican enough?

She stares at the mirror, observing her features.

She touches her soft, Dark Black hair that passes the shoulders.

There are Red highlights in the hair... does that minus the Latina look?

She observes her Olive skin... is it Olive enough?

Did she get enough vitamin D?

Her eyes, Dark Brown with Black dashes that only her best friend pointed out. Are they dark enough?

Her Lips are full but are they too small or too big?
What about her nose? What about her face?

What about her voice?
Can she roll the Rs?
Can her Accent be heard?

It's okay to not reach the Latina criteria because she can be thrown into the American category. She knows English.

She likes Burgers, Fries, and Milkshakes.

She knows the National Anthem, and Pledge of Allegiance.

She can't roll her Rs.

Her skin gets too Fair during the winter.

Her Accent disappeared.

How do you prove to society that you are both American and Mexican enough to be considered both?

Ava Maria questions that often, more especially when exposed to other beings just like her. This inspired her to become a writer.

She has worked on many poems and has shared her recent poem "Mexican Thief" for her college's writers conference.

While she dreams of being a biologist she is taking a separate path to becoming a writer.

While she is able to pursue two different career paths and not get judged, why must she have to hide her two different identities?

There is no straight answer, just something she thinks to herself as usual. As she grows older, she realizes the multiple conflicts she has with identity.

Don't even get started on her Native American Heritage...

From the River Ren Parks

I am so fortunate
to have lived,
loved,
and experienced
all in so many lifetimes.

80 Mile Man

Ren Parks

terrible, terrible ache
that comes in
wonderful
waves of blues, greens, and yellows.

fatefully
fleeting
orange.

made
for
photographs.

I Traveled this Far Because I Love You

Zach Murphy

"The Antarctic cold definitely feels a lot different from the cold in Idaho," Adam said.

"Sure does," Rodger said as he flicked the mini-icicles off of his thick mustache. "Once we cross this next glacier wall, we'll have reached the edge of the earth."

Adam and Rodger trudged on with their overstuffed backpacks through the wintry terrain, looking like a pair of snails with shells full of climbing equipment and survival supplies.

"I really think we should turn around," Adam said.

"But we're almost there," Rodger said.

Rodger pulled out his map. A harsh gust of wind swept it off into the snowy distance.

"See!" Adam said. "Even the wind is telling us to go back!"

Rodger checked his compass. The red needle was frozen stiff, as if it had given up on doing its one and only job. Rodger tapped the glass face of the compass, but the needle wouldn't budge.

"It's so cold that the compass broke," Adam said. "If that isn't a sign, I don't know what is."

"It's not broken," Rodger said. "It's just confused."

Adam sighed and rolled his eyes. "How much further do we have to go?"

Rodger pointed ahead with the focus of an olympic athlete. "If we keep moving, we should get to the glacier wall within an hour," he said.

Adam came to a halt and forcefully planted his boots into the snow. "I have something to tell you," he said.

"What?" Rodger asked as he hiked on.

"I don't really think the earth is flat," Adam answered.

Rodger choked on his own snot from laughing so hard. "You're kidding," he said.

"Rodger!" Adam said. "It just doesn't make sense!"

Rodger stopped. "Wait," he said. "You're being serious?"

"Yes!" Adam answered.

"Did you not watch the YouTube documentary I sent you?" Rodger asked.

"No one ever actually watches videos that people send them," Adam said. "Especially when they're two-hours-long."

"Then why did you decide to come?" Rodger asked.

Adam took a deep breath. "I thought it would be a good bonding experience."

Rodger squints. "A bonding experience?"

"I just feel like we've been drifting apart from each other the past few years," Adam said. "Like, there's this fracture growing between us."

Rodger took a seat in the snow. "I've always wanted to accomplish amazing something before I turn thirty," he said. "You know, to prove that there's something special about me."

"Please don't go all Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront* on me," Adam said.

"It's true," Rodger said. "I feel like my life has been disappointment after disappointment."

"You've been my best and only friend for almost my whole life," Adam said. "That's a pretty awesome accomplishment."

Rodger entered a deep stare. "I'd shed a tear right now but it might freeze," he said.

Adam smiled. "Let's go," he said as he held his hand out to Rodger. "Let's get to that glacier wall."

Rodger grabbed Adam's hand and popped up from the ground. "To the glacier wall!"

Adam dusted the snow off of his coat. "After that, I'm not going any further."

"There is no further," Rodger answered.

Adam took another deep breath as they traveled on.

After scaling the glacier wall, Rodger and Adam pulled themselves to the top of the summit and gazed ahead. The sun's faded rays shone a gentle glisten across miles and miles of frozen tundra.

Rodger dropped to his knees. "It's not the edge of the earth," he said.

"But it sure is a beautiful view," Adam said as he placed his hand on Rodger's shoulder.

Dr. Ethan Lewis

Stella Stocker

A person who devotes their whole life to study
A person who neglects nothing and is so cheery
Went into the trenches and came back all ruddy
But did not let the trenches make them all dreary

I've had the great honor to call him my teacher
I've had the great honor to call him my friend
One who deserves awards where they're featured
The small overlap in two careers' start and end

In death and time, he will be long forgotten
And I won't have someone to share poems with
Let the coffin be a reminder of him, now rotten
Picture your corpse, lifeless and stiff

Even if you disappear into mist
You'll always be Dr. Ethan Lewis

Notes from our Contributors

Savannah Saltsgaver:

I decided to enter my painting "Untitled 2021." I made this painting last year during the Spring 2021 semester as a summation of all of my paintings I had done throughout my Painting 3 class. I wanted to submit this piece because it's one that I'm proud of and I wanted to share my art with others. Also since I'm pursuing a career in elementary education and visual arts in order to be an elementary art teacher, I want to spread my abstract art around to as many eyes as possible to inspire others to pursue their love for the arts. Even if your art is a little weird like mine. :)

Paula Lauer:

I'm a nontraditional student taking Creative Writing at McHenry County College. My writing background is in journalism, marketing, and copywriting. Creative writing is a newly added outlet that I hope will carve some new pathways in my brain.

Kaylee Sadler:

Kaylee Sadler is a 21 year old, senior English major attending the University of Louisiana Monroe (ULM). Kaylee's works as a tutor for her university's writing center and as a peer leader for ULM's Freshman University Seminars. She also participates in on-campus organizations such as Sigma Tau Delta (International English Honor Society) and Lambda Society. She is currently in the process of applying to graduate school to pursue a Master's degree in Creative Writing with a concentration in poetry. In her free time, Kaylee enjoys writing, playing video games, creating art (such as photography), and intently curating playlists for each of her moods.

Y.Zazi:

I am currently a student at the University of Illinois at Springfield. In my spare time, I enjoy music and collecting things. This (Last Friday Night: The Morning After) is a piece inspired by Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl".

Abby Smolinski:

I am currently attending McHenry County College. I'm currently the student literary editor of Voices magazine, which is the literary arts magazine for my school. I'm new to writing poetry, and hope this is a good submission. I would love feedback for this work, as I'm always looking for constructive criticism in anything I do.

Hayley Payne:

I am an undergraduate student at the University of Illinois Springfield. I plan to graduate May 2022. I am a Communication major with an English minor. I like to write poems, DIY crafts, go on hikes, and thrift shop!

klozure:

Attends the University of Illinois Springfield.

Stella Stocker:

Stella Stocker is a sophomore Creative Writing major at Bradley University. Stella has works in her school's literary arts journal, Broadside, and an upcoming work in Loomings literary journal. She enjoys baking almost as much as she enjoys writing.

Marissa Weihofen:

An undergraduate student at the University of Illinois Springfield studying English. They were born in Hinsdale, Illinois and currently reside in Western Springs. In their free time, they enjoy writing poetry and short prose. When not writing, they enjoy reading psychological thrillers and drinking tea.

Xuwen Yan:

I am currently attending DePaul University studying Filmmaking and Philosophy. My literary and cinematic works often concentrate on marginalized groups and communities. I think the purpose of art is to help us understand what it feels like to be a human being.

Zoe Sjogerman:

I am a student at the University of Springfield Illinois. Although I have always considered myself more of a reader than a writer, I have been inspired by a creative writing class at UIS to write some poetry. I would be honored if they would be considered for the literary magazine.

Rachael Rosenstengel:

It is an honor to be featured in the Violet Margin. I am biology major and writing minor at Illinois College, and I am a Forte' editor for Illinois College's literary journal. Since I cannot publish in Forte, I would like to add to the Violet Margin. My poem "Moon Child" delves into what being autistic (neurodiverse) means when interacting with the neurotypical world, the good and the bad. I hope that everyone enjoys my poem and learns something new.

Ava Maria:

This (The Girl with a Double, no Triple Identity Crisis) is a Self-Portrait Poem about my struggle with being a Mexican-American.

Bre Scott:

I am a sophomore at University of Illinois Springfield. I am a queer, nonbinary, disabled English major who loves to write, craft, and do various art activities.

Ouluwatobi Akinroluyo:

I am a senior at the University of Illinois Springfield. I am a Nigerian-born aspiring artist from Minneapolis, Minnesota. I don't know how to quite describe my art because I am still figuring out my art style. Lately, I've been using charcoal and pencil which is the medium that was used for "The Sitting Man."

Ren Parks:

Ren Parks is a queer writer and managing editor of Forte Literary Journal at Illinois College. They are currently a senior studying English Literature.

Ray Ryterski:

I'm a nonbinary student studying English at the University of Illinois Springfield. I have a larger poetry manuscript in progress. But until that is done, I thought it would be good to submit other poems in the meantime.



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violet



margin