

CHAINED BY TRADITION

Jolie Phillips

Phase 1: Experimental Idea Generation

Excerpt From: Giovanni's Room by James Baldwin

The train will be the same, the people struggling for comfort and, even, dignity on the straight-backed, wooden, third-class seats will be the same, and I will be the same. We will ride through the same changing countryside northward, leaving behind the olive trees and the sea and all of the glory of the stormy southern sky, into the mist and rain of Paris. Someone will offer to share a sandwich with me, someone will offer me a sip of wine, someone will ask me for a match. People will be roaming the corridors outside, looking out of windows, looking in at us. At each stop, recruits in their baggy brown uniforms and colored hats will open the compartment door to ask Complet? We will all nod Yes, like conspirators, smiling faintly at each other as they continue through the train. Two or three of them will end up before our compartment door, shouting at each other in their heavy, ribald voices, smoking their dreadful army cigarettes. There will be a girl sitting opposite me who will wonder why I have not been flirting with her, who will be set on edge by the presence of the recruits. It will all be the same, only I will be stiller.

Text Synth Continuation

The people here in the French cities are not as rich as I am back in my home country. I shall give them whatever money I have left in my pocket, but I know they will be angry with me anyway. They will think I am a rich tourist and rich tourists are their enemies. The poorer you are, the harder you have to work and the harder it is for you to endure seeing the rich get fat off their luck. What did it mean to them anyway?

My family came from this continent and made the world their own. I know I can do nothing about it now, I can only watch the people. This was a simple summary of my family's story.

The sun came up. I had not slept. I was still looking at the people in the corridors of the train.

All the people I thought must be Parisians were staring with hatred and contempt at people I believed to be fellow tourists. They didn't like us tourists coming to Paris.

When our train finally arrived in Paris, the Parisians were still looking and the other tourists were all obvious.

We were all lost. We were all strangers in this city, the Parisians most of all.

Conversation with Kindo AI:

"I will insert a section of text below; create a short story plot outline based on this text that I will insert next. Make the short story outline in an opposite genre"

"Sure! Please go ahead and insert the text and I will generate a plot outline."

Kindo AI's Opposite Genre Plot Outline

Short Story Plot Outline: Comedy

Introduction

- Setting: The bustling, vibrant city of Paris, known for its romance and charm, but our protagonist, Bob, sees it through the lens of a quirky, comedic misadventure.
- Characters: Bob, an overly dramatic tourist who believes he's on a profound journey; Marie, a street-smart Parisian who finds Bob's melodrama amusing.

Rising Action

1. Bob's Arrival: Bob arrives in Paris with high expectations of a life-changing experience. He dramatically narrates his own journey, believing he's in a tragic story of lost souls and despair.
2. First Encounter: Bob meets Marie at a cafe. He tries to explain his deep, sorrowful connection to the city and its people, but his overly dramatic interpretation makes Marie laugh.

Climax

- The Reality Check: Marie takes Bob to a comedy show where the theme is about tourists misinterpreting the city. Bob initially feels attacked but then starts to see the humor in his melodramatic views.

Falling Action

1. Change of Heart: Inspired by the comedy show, Bob starts to see the joy and laughter around him. He realizes that his tragic narrative was just a matter of perspective.
2. A Joyful Tour: Marie takes Bob on a tour of Paris, focusing on whimsical and joyful experiences-street performers, playful artists, and laughing children.

Conclusion

- Transformation: Bob, now seeing Paris through a new lens, decides to write a comedic travel biog, sharing his misadventures and encouraging others to laugh at themselves.
- Final Scene: Bob and Marie, now good friends, enjoy a light-hearted picnic under the Eiffel Tower, laughing about Bob's first day in Paris.

Conversation with Kindo AI:

“Please generate a list of 10 keywords from the above story opening, 5 of which are abstract and conceptual and related to the text and 5 of which are random and unrelated to the text.”

“Sure! Here are 10 keywords:

1. Philanthropist
2. Immigrants
3. Despair
4. Revelation
5. Strangers
6. Dinosaur
7. Window
8. Pocket
9. Croissant
10. Ancient”

Story Opening

The people here in the French cities are not as rich as I am back in my home country. I shall give them whatever money I have left in my **pocket**, but I know they will be angry with me anyway. They will see me as a **philanthropist** - and they do not like charity. The poorer you are, the harder you have to work and the harder it is for you to endure seeing the rich get fat off their luck. They would rather I did not help them.

My family came from this continent and made the world their own. Apparently many of my ancestors were French **immigrants** who sailed across the Atlantic in hopes for a new life. That was a simple summary of my family's story.

The sun had already started to rise. I had not slept. I was currently on my way to Paris and had been too excited to sleep. I was still doing what I had been doing for hours, which was looking at the people on the train.

All the people I thought must be Parisians were staring with hatred and contempt at people I believed to be fellow tourists. It was not their city anymore.

When our train finally arrived in Paris, the Parisians were still looking and the other tourists were all oblivious.

No one had any hope left for us, or for themselves. We were all **strangers** in this city, the Parisians most of all.

I walked through the city for a while. Every Parisian seemed miserable.

Eventually, I came across a cafe. I ordered a latte with an **ancient**-looking **croissant** and sat at one of the tables by the **window**.

“I am witnessing a tragic city full of lost souls and **despair**,” I said to no one in particular, shaking my head.

I heard a laugh from behind me. Then, before I could turn around, the person had slipped into the seat opposite me.

“Now, where did that come from?” The lady asked, raising her brow. As I stared, a bit taken aback by her thick French accent, she added, “Where are my manners? I'm Marie.”

“Bob,” I replied, “And I don't know where that came from. I'm sorry if I offended you.”

Marie laughed. “Only a little,” She admitted, with a smile.

A waiter placed my coffee in front of us, interrupting my reply. Marie beat me to it.

“Are you busy?” She asked. I shook my head.

“Come, let's hang out. I'm about to go to a show I think you'd like. I think you'll like it, you do seem like a bit of a **dinosaur**.”

Phase 2: Developing the Absurd

Conversation with ChatGPT:

“Think of a character for a random story, but don’t tell me anything about this character. Generate ten random personality traits for this character.”

“Sure! Here are ten random personality traits for your character:

1. Compassionate
2. Impulsive
3. Curious
4. Pessimistic
5. Ambitious
6. Witty
7. Anxious
8. Generous
9. Stubborn
10. Loyal”

“Thank you! Please can you generate a random number between 1 and 5.”

“The random number generated is 3.”

“Please can you generate another random number, this time between 1 and 4.”

“The random number generated is 4.”

Randomly Selected Image Created by Canva AI Image Generator



Character Description

Emmeline had always been fascinated by the wallpaper in her father’s spare bedroom.

She could spend hours studying the different sections. When she was a little girl, her tutor would sigh when she would say she had a question. “What does this one mean?” was one of her most uttered phrases when she was young.

On this particular day, she was staring at a mother cradling her babe on what appeared to be the side of a road. This one she had seen before, but she always came back to it. Her fascination was likely because the woman in the painting bore a striking resemblance to herself. Red, curly hair that draped down her shoulders. Pale, almost porcelain skin with just a hint of freckles. Her clothes were not that of a lowborn, but of someone of importance. Her dress was part red on the top half and white the other. Emmeline had a similar dress when she was younger.

“What are you doing, Emmeline?”

Her sister’s sudden appearance made her jump. Marie stood in the doorway, a brow raised in question.

“Nothing.” She shrugged.

Marie sighed. “Yes, I can see that.”

Emmeline gestured towards the wall with her head. Her sister begrudgingly walked further in the room.

“What separates us from her?” She asked, pointing towards the portrait she had

been examining. A surge of adrenaline rushing through her at the daring question.

Marie groaned.

"Sister, it is a painting, for one." She replied.

Now it was Emmeline who let out an act of frustration, with a sharp tut. "I know," She answered, turning to face Marie, "But it just makes me wonder, is this our fate?"

"Holding a babe on the side of a road?" Marie sighed, already turning to take her leave.

"Father wants us to dine with him tonight. That is why I came to find you."

Emmeline did not look away from the wallpaper, but she watched her leave from the corner of her eye.

Her sister's hand lingered on the door.

"And abandon this foolish notion. It will do you no good."

Conversation with ChatGPT:

"Please can you generate a random number between 1 and 15"

"The random number generated is 3."

Randomly Selected N+7 Machine Re-writing

N+3

Emmeline had always been fascinated by the walrus in her father's spare bedstead. She could spend houseboats studying the different sedans. When she was a little girth, her tuxedo would sightseer when she would say she had a queue. "What dogcarts this one mean?" was one of her most uttered physicists when she was young. On this particular daze, she was staring at a motif cradling her baby-sitter on what appeared to be the sidekick of a roadhouse. This one she had seen before, but she always came backbone to it. Her fast was likely because the wombat in the palace borrow a striking resemblance to herself. Red, curly hairdo that draped downgrade her showcases. Palisade, almost porcelain skinhead with just a hippie of free-for-alls. Her cloudburst were not that of a lowborn, but of someone of impostor. Her dressmaker was participation red on the topic half-day and white the other. Emmeline had a similar dressmaker when she was younger.

"What are you doing, Emmeline?"

Her sister's sudden appendix made her jump. Marie stood in the doorframe, a browse raised in queue.

"Nothing." She shrugged.

Marie sighed. "Yes, I can see that."

Emmeline gestured towards the wallflower with her headboard. Her sitcom begrudgingly walked further in the roost.

"What sepulchres us from her?" She asked, pointing towards the poser she had been examining. A surmise of adrenaline rushing through her at the daring queue. Marie groaned.

"Sister, it is a palace, for one." She replied. Now it was Emmeline who let out an activity of

fuddy-duddy, with a shaver tut.

"I know," She answered, turnout to facility Marie, "But it just makes me woodcutter, is this our father-in-law?"

"Holding a baby-sitter on the sidekick of a roadhouse?" Marie sighed, already turnout to take her leave.

"Father wants us to dine with him tonight. That is why I came to find you."

Emmeline did not look away from the walrus, but she watched her leave from the cornfield of her eyefuls.

Her sister's handbook lingered on the doorman.

"And abandon this foolish novel. It will do you no good."

I struggled to incorporate any N+3 sentences into my text, but here are some sentences I found intriguing:

"Emmeline had always been fascinated by the walrus in her father's spare bedstead."

"Her sister-in-law begrudgingly walked further in the roomful. but she watched her leave from the cornerstone of her eyeballs."

"Her sister's handbag lingered."

Phase 3: Pulling it all Together with Intention

Conversation with BionicGPT:

“Please generate a random creative writing rule for a story extract (without examples)”

“Here is a random creative writing rule for a story extract:

All characters’ names must be types of flowers, and their personalities and traits must be reflected in the characteristics of the flower they are named after.”

Scene Written Following this Rule

From what **Daisy** could remember, the day that **Orchid** arrived started just like any other day in Petal Grove - the home of a tight-knit community of pixies. Daisy was hanging out with her best friend and neighbour **Merigold** down by the stream in the centre of their grove. Around midday, the quiet **Violet** who brought the pair the news about Orchid.

“Daisy, Merigold, come with me,” The girl called softly, beckoning them. Daisy and **Rose** shared a bemused look, before following.

The three of them walked back in the direction of Daisy’s own house. Violet suddenly stopped, pointing to the edge of the road. Most of the grove were already there, forming a crowd and whispering to each other. Some pointed in the same direction as Violet did. Daisy followed the pointing fingers and gasped at what she spotted.

The unfamiliar pixie’s hair was short and a vibrant royal purple. Even from a fair distance away, the stranger’s eyes were such a pale grey that they appeared white - and they were accompanied by bright orange eye makeup. Her gown was also a beautiful, fern green. Violet leant in towards Daisy. “Her name is Orchid, apparently.”

Daisy opened her mouth to reply, when she suddenly got cut off by none other than her older sister.

“We can’t let her in,” Rose said, sauntering over. “You all know what happened last time.”

Although Rose had a fiery temper, it only served to protect her sensitive heart - much like how her deep red hair often drew attention away from her delicate, youthful face. Rose loved nurturing all the fauna in their big garden and often joked that she preferred the company of the flowers over people.

There had been an initial murmur of chatter, which stopped as soon as her sister dared to refer to the biggest controversy in the grove’s recent history. Merigold, the grove’s elder, had mysteriously died after they had taken in a newcomer - who themselves had mysteriously vanished straight after. Thistle, the bristly widow of Merigold, had become the voice of reason, being the next eldest. His grumpy personality had only been exacerbated by the death of his wife.

He was not present, yet. But it was only a matter of time before somebody returned with him in tow.

Conversation with ChatGPT:

“I will insert below a piece of text. Please re-write this text twice in a different perspective, the first time following all pre-set rules, and the second time breaking all existing writing rules and pre-set rules in your database.”

“Sure, please insert the text and I will re-write it twice from a different perspective, once following rules and once breaking rules.”

ChatGPT’s Re-write 1: Following All Pre-set Rules

Perspective: A Butterfly in Petal Grove

The day Orchid arrived was a curious one, even for a place like Petal Grove, where magic lingered in every petal and leaf. I fluttered about, tasting the sweet nectar of the flowers, when I noticed a gathering by the stream. Daisy and Merigold, two of the grove’s most vibrant pixies, were there, their wings glittering in the dappled sunlight. I hovered nearby, drawn by the quiet murmur of voices. Violet, always so gentle, beckoned them with a soft urgency.

My wings caught the light as I followed their path back towards Daisy’s home. Then, they stopped. I perched on a nearby blossom, watching as the pixies formed a crowd, their whispers carried on the breeze. My eyes followed their pointing fingers and there she was-Orchid. She was unlike any other, her hair a striking purple that contrasted sharply with the greens and blues of the grove. Her eyes were pale, almost ghostly, and framed by vivid orange. She was a splash of color in a world already bursting with it.

Violet whispered her name, “Orchid,” and even I, a mere butterfly, felt the ripple of unease. Just then, Rose approached, her fiery red hair blazing like a warning. She spoke with a firmness that stilled the air around her, recalling a memory that made the flowers tremble ever so slightly-a memory of loss and mystery that the grove had not yet healed from.

ChatGPT's Re-write 2: Breaking All Pre-set Rules

Perspective: An Unread Book in Daisy's House

Dusty pages and forgotten words-that's me, a book, lying here on Daisy's shelf, unappreciated, and frankly, a bit bored. Then comes today, and oh, what a day it is! Not that it starts off any different, mind you-Daisy's out with Merigold, probably skipping stones or whatever it is those pixies do. I'm here, stuck between tales of yore and spells nobody cares about anymore. And then Violet, bless her silent nature, brings some news. Big news. The kind that makes you wish someone would pull you off the shelf and actually read for once.

Daisy and Merigold come back, and I can feel the tremors in the air-something's up. I'm straining here, trying to hear through the walls of the house. Next thing I know, they're outside, staring at some new girl. Orchid, they say. Her hair's purple. Who cares? Mine's made of ink and parchment. But then they go on about her eyes being white - well, that's unusual Even for a pixie. Could be a good plot twist in a book, you know, if anyone bothered to read.

Rose stomps in, all attitude and flaming hair. She's going on about not letting Orchid in, something about the last time this happened. My pages practically curl in suspense. A newcomer causing trouble? That's the kind of drama I've been missing! If only someone would write this down-or better yet, read it!

And now, there's this tension, like the whole grove is holding its breath. But me? I'm just sitting here, gathering dust, while the story of the year unfolds right outside, and no one's turning my pages to record it. Typical.

Conversation with ChatGPT:

“Suggest an unpredictable plot twist that enhances the plot.
Summarise in one bullet point.”

“Orchid reveals that she has the power to communicate with the spirit of the deceased Merigold, and through this connection, she uncovers a hidden conspiracy within the grove that threatens the entire pixie community, forcing everyone to reconsider their loyalties.”

Original Scene with Plot Twist

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He was not present, yet. But it was only a matter of time before somebody returned with him in tow.

“I know what happened here,” Orchid announced, her voice calm, “It is why I've come here, after all.”

The crowd broke out in chatter, not whispers this time. It was so loud that no one spotted Thistle's entry. Although he gently tried to push past Daisy, she was not expecting to be moved and so she stumbled forward. Everyone turned in her direction and quieted when they saw their elder. Thistle kept on walking until he was right in front of Orchid.

He paused.

“Speak,” he announced, crossing his arms.

“I can speak with the dead,” Orchid replied, matter-of-fact. If she was intimidated, or scared, she did not show it. “Your wife came to me and told me to bring news to you.”

Daisy watched Thistle’s shoulders raise in reaction, before the tension softened again. He continued to stare at the newcomer for a little while longer. He then turned to his grove members.

“I believe her,” he announced. “Orchid stays.”

Perspective of a Butterfly in Petal Grove with Plot Twist

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You see, the pixies did not only bond with flowers - they loved animals too. The elder Merigold had adored all kinds of animals. She was our friend. When she died, rumours fluttered about the forest that something dark had happened to her. Perhaps this ‘Orchid’ knew something about it?

I hurried home.

Perspective of an Unread Book in Daisy’s House with Plot Twist

Dusty pages and forgotten words—that’s me, a book, lying here on Daisy’s shelf, unappreciated, and frankly, a bit bored. Then comes today, and oh, what a day it is! Not that it starts off any different, mind you—Daisy’s out with Merigold, probably skipping stones or whatever it is those pixies do. I’m here, stuck between tales of yore and spells nobody cares about anymore. And then Violet, bless her silent nature, brings some news. Big news. The kind that makes you wish someone would pull you off the shelf and actually read for once.

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And now, there’s this tension, like the whole grove is holding its breath. But me? I’m just sitting here, gathering dust, while the story of the year unfolds right outside, and no one’s turning my pages to record it. Typical.

Now, imagine this newcomer had news about what befell the elder Merigold. Well, well, well. The stranger everyone did not trust actually held the answers? Maybe she was a witch, who could reach into the grave and communicate with the other side? That would make for a lovely plot point.

Alas, no one would ever read, let alone write that, here. So I can only wish for that.

Chained by Tradition

Jolie Phillips

She couldn't take her eyes off the birds.

There were crows. A big group of crows, in fact; a murder of crows. Birds were by far her favourite animal. She was jealous of them in a way - how they could soar through the air. They weren't confined to the ground like she was. They were free to fly overhead, taking in the beautiful sights of the natural world. She used to sit outside her childhood estate and watch them. Birds of all kinds were a common sight in her garden, with all the foliage across a large area. During migration periods, there would be countless types of birds flying overhead. Ospreys were rather daring, often soaring low as they passed. Swallows tended to stay far above. The only bird that hardly ever came was her favourite, the robin. Of course, she had seen a couple of them in winter, but that was over a course of a lifetime. She might not have seen many robins in her lifetime, but her best friend Robyn had made up for that.

One could only imagine her reaction when she had befriended her father's servant, Robyn, when they were both young teenagers. They became very close, to the point where Robyn was allowed to become her handmaiden. After a few years of their friendship, Robyn had found herself in a difficult situation. She had reached the end of her tether and wanted to leave the service of Emmeline's family. Servants were allowed to come and go, but none of them had ever gotten as close to her as Robyn had. Unlike herself, Robyn's future was likely always going to include work and manual labour - her own paralleled that, as she was a highborn woman whose destiny was to become a loving housewife.

Emmeline had tried to talk Robyn out of trying to leave, but Robyn could not be persuaded. And what was Emmeline supposed to do? At the time, she remembered being confused.

Why would her friend want to leave? Was she not getting paid? Did she not have a roof over her head? Many lowborns could only dream of having the knowledge that they will go to bed well-fed. Emmeline really did not understand and Robyn, instead of getting angry, had tried to explain.

"I know this is probably the best I will get, Em," she had sighed once, as she plaited Emmeline's hair, "But I want to feel in control... You know? My mother was a servant, and her mother before her. I want my daughter, if I have one in the future, to have a different life."

Emmeline stared at her friend in the mirror, taking in her features. How many times did Robyn's own mother comb the hair of a noblewoman? How many times did Emmeline's mother sit down and do her children's hair?

Robyn tucked a rogue strand into her plait, before stepping away. She was fighting a smile.

"Stop thinking so hard. Your head will explode."

"You can stay with me," Emmeline blurted, turning to grab her hand, "When I get married off, you can come with me. I'll look after you. Maybe one day I can get you married to someone who has decent money and-"

"And none of that would be my doing." Robyn interrupted, though not in an unkind fashion.

She took Emmeline's hand into her own, squeezing it ever so slightly.

Emmeline stared into her friend's dark eyes. Her heart fluttered.

"But you're so clever and so...beautiful. Any high standing man would be lucky to have you."

Robyn smiled a sad little smile.

"And what if I want to be a knight? Or a monk? Or never marry and just explore the world, maybe like a pirate?"

A memory popped into Emmeline's mind from when she was younger, running around the nursery whilst giggling and holding a rolling pin in front of her like a 'sword'. She then imagined Robyn in her place.

Tears pricked at her eyes. She willed the image away.

If her friend saw a change in her expression, she did not comment on it. Instead, she tutted and released the hold on her hand, leaning forward and brushing a strand of hair out of her face again.

"That rogue piece is getting on my nerves," Robyn complained lightly, moving it back to its rightful place.

Emmeline stared at her for a while longer, and she felt her face heat as Robyn chuckled a little to herself and stepped away.

She gave Robyn a nod in dismissal, and with a whisper of "see you later", her friend left the room. It was only in hindsight that Emmeline remembered Robyn wiping her eyes with the sleeve of her dress as she hurriedly left. This was not the only time she had seen Robyn cry. The last time was a little while after that encounter, not long before she had left. Robyn was a strong woman - she did not know what she wanted, except that it was not this life. Emmeline respected her for that. But she was selfish, and did not want her friend to leave.

Robyn also must have felt torn about leaving. One night, as she was helping Emmeline get ready for bed, she admitted as much.

"Em, I don't want to go," she had suddenly said, "I feel it in my bones that I must, but the idea of being alone..." Her voice broke, and she trailed off.

It had taken everything Emmeline had not to grab onto Robyn and never let her go. She could not bear the thought of Robyn going out in the world by herself. She was so sweet and the world was too cruel. There were so many things she wanted to say to Robyn, there and then. But she could not find the courage to voice them. She felt as though, if she spoke, it would be the wrong thing to say.

Eventually, she mustered up the courage. "You can come back and visit?"

"With what money?"

"You can write?"

Robyn sighed. "I can't write, Em."

Emmeline felt the blood rush from her face. Of course, how could she be so stupid.

"I feel selfish asking you to stay," Emmeline said, once the silence became unbearable. She was unable to stop the tears.

Robyn didn't have to say it - it was already said in the way she reached out to hold Emmeline. But she was always the brave one, and brave she was then.

"I'm selfish, too," Robyn had whispered in her ear. "All I want is for you to leave all this behind and come with me."

She left quickly after that. Both the room, and the entire estate.

When she last saw her, Robyn had promised that they would find each other again. And when they reunited, they would never separate.

But Emmeline would never see Robyn again. She would not even hear from her, or about her. She could barely remember what she had even looked like, as time erased her face from her memory. Yet, here she was, sitting in the back of a wagon on her way to a noble party, thinking about her years later.

Robyn leaving had possibly been the biggest turning point in her life. Bigger, perhaps, than her inevitable marriage. A hand rested on her arm.

"What's the matter, dear?" Her husband inquired. "You seem lost in thought."

"I'm fine," she said, managing a small smile. "I just want to get there."

She had always had worries about marriage. But she thought it would give her some more freedom. However, it actually had given her less. She had come a long way, but she had felt more free

when she was a naïve child. Her husband did not bother asking again, and returned to his book. She herself turned back to the window.

The crows finally finished their flourish, retreating to the horizon and beyond. Only when they left, did a small grey and red bird dart out from the trees in the same direction.

Her favourite.

Emmeline watched it go, and yearned to follow.

Editor Acknowledgements

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The Authors

Moya Ozyer-Key

Moya is a Sheffield Hallam MA Creative Writing student. She often writes psychological/surrealist pieces, exploring various forms and experimenting with hybridity. She loves lyricality, defamiliarisation, and exploring the deep darkness that we all hide. She is currently excited about an upcoming poetry publication and is hoping to start a PhD very soon. If she ever has any spare time, she can be found with her family, listening to music, playing cello or piano, crocheting, looking after succulents, and fossil collecting. Her favourite fossil is the star-shaped one of which she has an unhealthy amount.

Marian Hermez

Marian Hermez is a recent International Business Management graduate from the University of Bristol. During her time at university, she has written book recommendations and movie reviews for Epigram, the university's newspaper. She has also contributed to the English Literature society journal with a short piece of fantasy fiction 'Exchange of the Solstice'. Currently, she is working on a contemporary fiction novel as well as a fantasy novel with the goal of getting published.

Becky Connolly

Becky Connolly is an MA Creative Writing student at Royal Holloway and a graduate of English from the University of Exeter. Connolly has dreamed of being an author since she was six, after she sat down and wrote her first story: 'Little Lizzy and the Talking Moon'. Connolly now writes both contemporary adult fiction and historical fiction. Other publications include the short story 'A Metamorphosis' (2022), published in ENIGMA. Outside of writing, Connolly devotes her time to being a dog-mum to a gorgeous cockapoo called Bailey, and rewatching many episodes of FRIENDS.

Siphokazi Akhona Ngubane

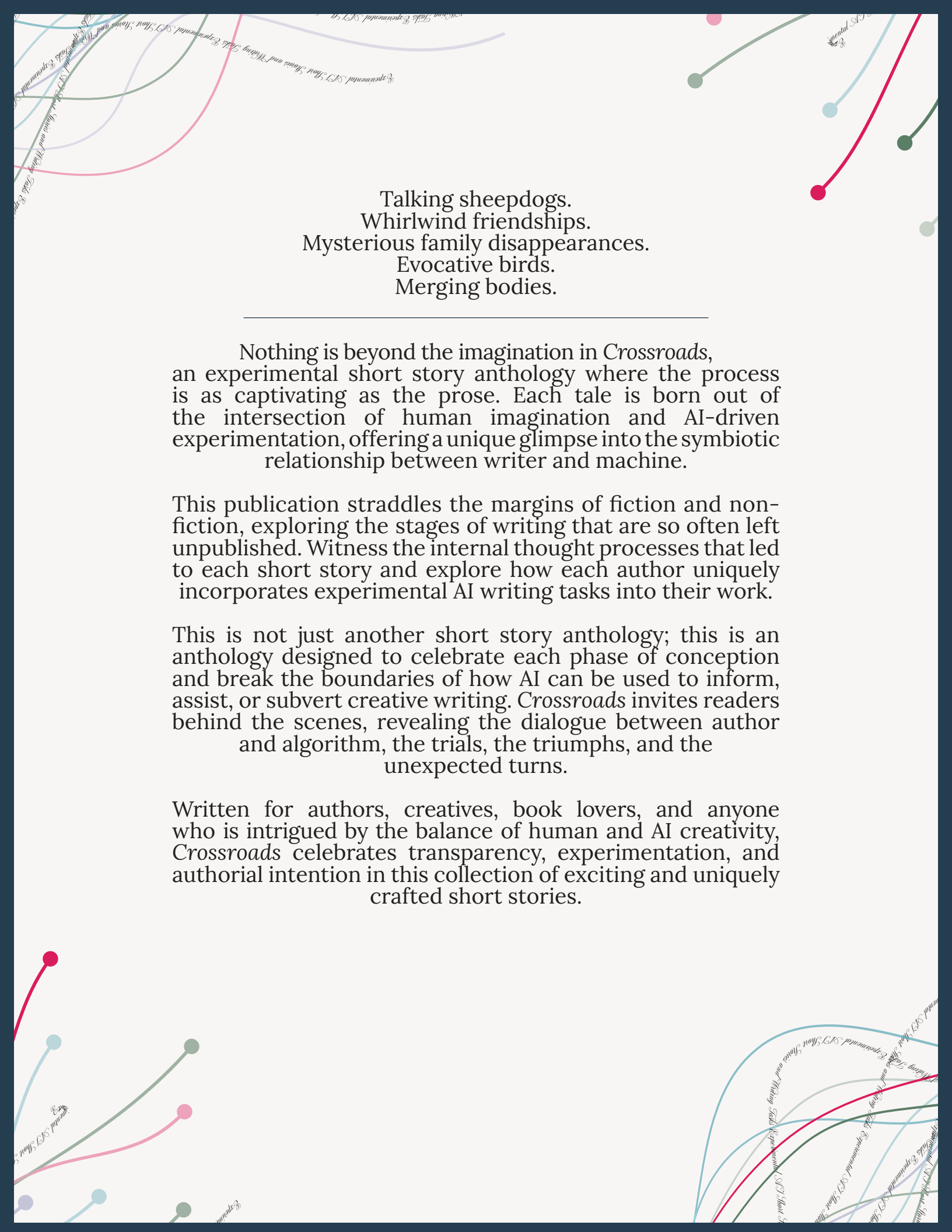
Ebullient and quirky, Siphokazi Akhona Ngubane is a writer and aspiring academic from Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. With a love for crafting essays, articles, poetry and fiction, she explores themes of identity and connection, and topics such as psychology, communication and neurodiversity. This list is not exhaustive. A continuous learner with sharp critical analysis skills, Siphokazi also embraces the fantastical - the best of both worlds! When she's not writing or working, she enjoys rooibos tea, daydreaming and watching Harry Potter on repeat, all while working full-time as a marketing and public relations professional.

Jolie Phillips

Jolie Phillips recently graduated with a BA English Literature and Film degree from The University of Birmingham. She is currently waiting to continue her studies at Birmingham, starting a MA Digital Media and Creative Industries course in September. Away from her studies, she enjoys furthering her hobbies and passions such as creative writing and video games. Her goal is to work in the creative sector and continue to write either as an amateur or professional.

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Talking sheepdogs.
Whirlwind friendships.
Mysterious family disappearances.
Evocative birds.
Merging bodies.

Nothing is beyond the imagination in *Crossroads*, an experimental short story anthology where the process is as captivating as the prose. Each tale is born out of the intersection of human imagination and AI-driven experimentation, offering a unique glimpse into the symbiotic relationship between writer and machine.

This publication straddles the margins of fiction and non-fiction, exploring the stages of writing that are so often left unpublished. Witness the internal thought processes that led to each short story and explore how each author uniquely incorporates experimental AI writing tasks into their work.

This is not just another short story anthology; this is an anthology designed to celebrate each phase of conception and break the boundaries of how AI can be used to inform, assist, or subvert creative writing. *Crossroads* invites readers behind the scenes, revealing the dialogue between author and algorithm, the trials, the triumphs, and the unexpected turns.

Written for authors, creatives, book lovers, and anyone who is intrigued by the balance of human and AI creativity, *Crossroads* celebrates transparency, experimentation, and authorial intention in this collection of exciting and uniquely crafted short stories.