

Chapter 1

My name is Violet Williams. I am twenty-four years old. I was born in Gemma, Georgia in 1935. That's where I live now, but I only just moved back. I was gone a long time.

I figured I'd say all that first, so we're well acquainted—after all, you're as brand new as I am to writing a diary. Plus, then, if I lose you, folks'll know how to get you back to me. They'll recognize my mama's name and bring you to her house. Leave you in the mailbox or something.

I moved back three months ago and now I'm finally getting around to writing about it. I wanna say something nice, but all I can think is how small it is here. Gem, this house, even the people seem smaller—I used to understand how they could live mundane lives as long as they were happy, but now after seeing everything else—everything beyond the mundane—I can't believe they're happy. It's all just too small. The whole town feels like a great big boa constrictor around my chest that keeps getting smaller and smaller, tighter and tighter, as I start to lose my breath.



Ivy Collins Poitras

As this is a letter, I highly recommend italicizing, but I have seen instances of leaving it styled normally, so I won't make that change for you.

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Ivy Collins Poitras

Fiction and nonfiction books are written in the Chicago Manual of Style, which teaches us to write out numbers 1-100 before switching to numerals thereafter.

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Ivy Collins Poitras

Quick rule of thumb: hyphens go between letters (creating one word or connected phrase), en dashes between numbers (showing spans of time, etc.), and em dashes between words (as punctuation).

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Listen to me, I've become so melodramatic! Whenever I wrote ten years ago, I had the writing skills of a caveman, but now I can't decide which is worse, melodramatic or Neanderthalian. Oh, well. It is what it is.

Mama could never stand that saying, "it is what it is." I always liked it, 'cause it was comforting when sometimes there's just nothing you can do about something, and you gotta let it go or you'll go crazy. Mama doesn't feel like that. She tells me not to say it in front of her, going, "I didn't raise you to think it's fine and dandy to jus' give up, tellin' yourself this nonsense 'it is what it is.' It is what you say it is or it shouldn't be nothin' at all." I try to reassure her that it's just a simple saying, but she'll have none of it.

That's mama. She doesn't take shit. She doesn't take excuses. She doesn't take giving up, and she will not hear "it is what it is."

Even when it is.

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Ivy Collins Poitras

With the correct spelling, this IS a word, despite spell-check still trying to say otherwise!

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Ivy Collins Poitras

Quotation marks unless inside of an existing quote (a quote within a quote)

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Ivy Collins Poitras

Example of a quote within a quote using apostrophes!

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I gotta close you up, my new friend—going to sleep early to get outta here early. I'm trying out the new book shop downtown, and I'm hoping just a little they might still be hiring. I hate being back at church.

Like I said, I'm new to this, so.... bye.

VNW

“Mama?” Violet called cheerfully as she pulled open the screen door to the kitchen, shooing away a summer fly that tried to accompany her into the house. “Mama, I picked up those peaches from the grocer for you!”


She set down the mildly heavy paper bag on the linoleum counter and scooped up the daily newspaper that rested there. The headline shouted that a Cuban man named Castro who'd taken control of Cuba earlier in the year was aligning himself with the Russians. Further down on the page, a new Marilyn Monroe film was playing at the drive-in. Violet flipped through the pages, musing on how six months ago, in New York, she would've paid much more attention to such important news—now, back in Gemma, Georgia, nothing big and important like that seemed to

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Just trust me on this one, okay? 😊


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Your narrative tone here is generally formal enough that “much” flows better than “way.” Something to keep in mind—consistency is key!

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reach her. She wasn't "safe" from it, that wasn't the feeling; it was more like she was hearing the rest of the world through five feet of water, trying to make sense of it while drowning.

Gemma, pretty and peachy and submerged, was drowning her.

"Violet?"

She turned at the sound of her mother's soft, low voice, dropping the paper where she found it, thinking she might go back to do the crossword.

"Picked up some peaches, Mama. I remembered this time," she added with a small grin. "And I've got an hour before I go to meet Reverend John. I've been waitin' on him to fill out paperwork for the church renovation for a week now. I don't have the faintest idea why he would've hired me if he wasn't plannin' on listenin' to a word I say! Anyway, maybe I can help you whip up that cobbler in the meantime."

Violet's mother set down the watering pot she'd walked in with.


"Violet, baby, I gotta tell you something. I'd like you to sit down."

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
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In instances like these, it is a proper noun.

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Remember to be consistent, and add apostrophes in place of removed letters.

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Violet sighed, straining not to roll her eyes ~~at her mother~~. Her mother was intent on poking her nose in her relationship until it unraveled completely. “Is this about Kenny? I swear, you never can let these things go ~~—~~ marriage is not on either of our minds, honest to God.”

“Baby... Reverend John, he... he died last night.”

Violet stilled, her eyes shooting wide. “What?” she responded in a breathless voice, shocked. “What... what happened?” She ran a hand through her hair, grasping for something to thread through her fingers, something that could make sense. “I told him,” Violet stuttered. “I told him he needed to eat better, or his heart would just blow to pieces ~~—~~ I kept tellin’ him ~~—~~”

“He hung himself.”

All feeling whooshed out of Violet instantly. “What?”

“He hung himself,” her mother repeated. |Tears sparkled in her eyes, but Violet was gone. “In the parsonage. Julia and Mrs. Brown found him and called here for you and I answered. I’m so sorry, baby girl.”



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Deleted for repetition; the directly following “Her mother” is more important structurally and provides the context for the preceding sentence.

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