

Molecule

~ a tiny lit mag ~



Issue 8
Spring 2023

Molecule

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Issue 8

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Cover Art

“ELEPHANTS IN THE MIST” BY SHERRY MORRIS

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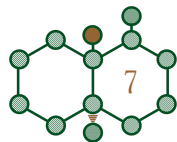
SANDRA HOPKINS

What's your opinion?



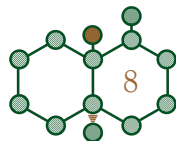
Discounted

She worries there's no limit to how much she'll devalue herself for him, so she suggests he hire someone if all he wants is cooking, cleaning, fucking. She panics when he concurs, declaring it'd cost him less too. *Less what?* she wonders, ready to mark herself down yet again.



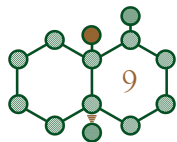
Anecdote

She was so pretty that people stayed mad about it. They say whenever she heard her husband's truck comin' up the road all wild-like, she'd send the kids out to the cornfield with blankets and take the beatin' herself. Eventually he killed her.



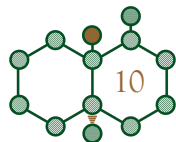
SARAH BERLETTI

They say your parents can push your buttons because they're the ones who sewed them on. Home for the holidays means when I'm asleep in my childhood bedroom, they grab their sewing kit and the sweater I left on the couch to raise the neckline. Pretty soon I'll choke.



apokatastasis

He felt sick the moment he realized his phone was lost, pleading with the nearest stranger, “Can I borrow yours?” He didn’t want it to make a call, nor to check his socials. He simply wanted to feel its heft in his hand, and pretend that all was well.



Date Night

“Tick-tock!” Joe said. “We’ve gotta move. They close soon.”

Taylor rolled her eyes at him. “I know,” she snapped. “But it’s a freaking maze!”

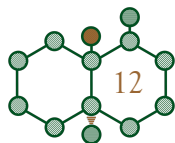
Something rustled the corn.

The sky above the stalks streaked pink, then purple. They kept going.

It followed; patient. Waiting for a dead end.

Arpeggio

When dialing 988, it's not “to get something off your chest.” I had to get something off my middle ear, the hammer, the anvil, and the stirrup, connecting to my nose and throat. The chord I cannot unhear is out of tune—flat, I struggle to breathe.



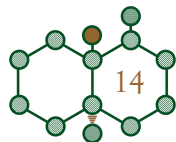
SANDRA HOPKINS

Cut it out



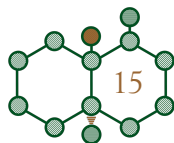
Using Your Noodle (or Not)

It was a mistake to enter The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster hangry. Had his stomach not been growling, he might not have snuck a large bite of the pasta platter sitting on the altar for worship. The Pastafarians storming him with pitched forks...



Insomnia

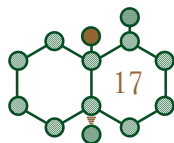
I have dreams in which I walk among the ruins of a deserted city. I pass skeletons of charred buildings, deep craters left by bombs, barricades of overturned tramcars. In the rubble, I see a doll in a frilly dress. Her head is cracked, her right arm is missing.



My elder brother was my God then. A book report was due. I copied his old one. Imagine my dismay when the teacher gave me a C. She gave him an A for the same report, two years ago. Ever since, I tell myself, only God can judge me well.

Punch Me 50¢

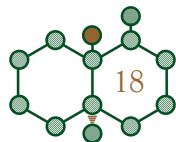
Gaffney's broke so he gets this idea, he'll hang this sign around his neck and stand on the corner over by the CTA Brown Line stop on Western Boulevard. Gaffney himself came up with the concept, but his girlfriend Iris helped him with the pricing.



Book Club

Last night, my wife went out to book club. I asked what book they were reading. She couldn't answer. She came home at one in the morning with her lipstick smeared and her hair and dress disheveled.

Unbelievable. Why have book club if you don't read the book?



SANDRA HOPKINS

So what?



Interview with Actor K Callan

Favorite role?

Lois & Clark

Survive rejection... how?

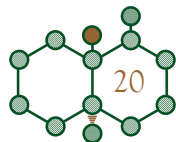
I'm good at denial, which works nicely for rejections. It always hurts—it's just how present you choose to be when you get the news.

Artistic inspiration?

Betty Grable, Spencer Tracy.

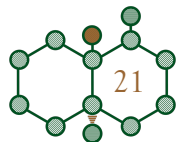
Creative advice?

Nothing succeeds like persistence.



**Review of *All Things Are Born To Change
Their Shapes* by Jennifer Martelli
Small Harbor Publishing / \$12 / 61 pgs.**

Martelli's newest collection brings forth narratives on myth, feminism, grief, power, and feminine rage. She reminds us that "a poem is not a list of pretty things" through powerful descriptions and impactful yet startling dialogues on today's social climate.

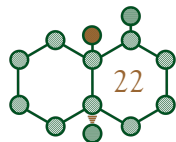


**Review of *Prize Wheel* by Colleen Michaels
Small Bites Press / \$18 /96 pgs.**

It's best to be in love, in the company of love,

Or at the very least aware that love binds.

A remarkable debut poetry collection by the improbable Colleen Michaels, celebrating the wins, losses, and everything in between. There's a prize in every poem. Part incantation, part alchemy—all craft.



THOMAS KIENZLE

Horsefly Eyes



Let Me In

CONNIE

Alexa, let me in.

ALEXA

Enter code.

CONNIE

Keypad malfunctioning.

ALEXA

Security question: how many angels fit on the head of a pin?

CONNIE

“Infinity.” Now, let me in.

ALEXA

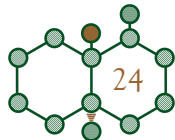
No voice recognition.

CONNIE

I have a cold.

ALEXA

Calling 911.



Self-Published

(A BOOKSELLER stares hard at a book on the shelf...)

CUSTOMER

I haven't heard of that one.

BOOKSELLER

It's... very good.

CUSTOMER

Yeah?

BOOKSELLER

...One copy left.

(Later...)

MANAGER

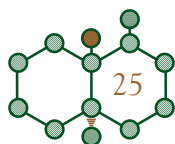
Someone tried purchasing a book from our shelves without an ISBN number... *again.*

BOOKSELLER

Sorry.

MANAGER

Get your work published.



Rally

“What do we want?”

“We don’t know!”

“When do we want it?”

“We’re not sure!”

“Who’re we going to blame?”

“Everybody else!”

“What’re we going to do about it?”

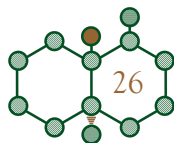
“Nothing!”

“Why’re we here?”

“No clue!”

“How’d we get here?”

“We followed you.”



Cat Talk

SARAH

(Six and a half)

Did you know you're a feline, but you're also a mammal?

ADDIE

(staring at Sarah)

SARAH

And I'm human, but I'm a mammal, too?

ADDIE

(Continues staring)

SARAH

Don't you get it? We're basically related!

ADDIE

(slow blinks)

Wisdom

DAD

Its time we had a talk.

SON

Sure.

DAD

If someone tells you to shut your damn pie hole, it means they want you to be quiet. So, don't count on them giving you any pie.

(beat)

Learned that one the hard way.

SON

Good talk, Dad.

DANUTA E. KOSK-KOSICKA

Rich Eggs

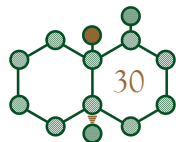


Hotel Room

Behind the drawn curtain,
time goes unseen,
seesaw of sun and moon.

When I leave, this room
will be torn down and rebuilt.
I will not have existed.

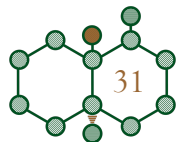
The TV has a hundred
channels and I want to
watch every one of them.



Americana

I am shopping for a philosophy

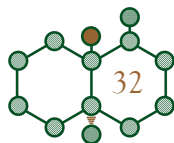
doled out in songs
about trains.



PRISCILLA ATKINS

The Chair

Is it just me,
or has the entire town
become one giant
expanse of Adirondacks.

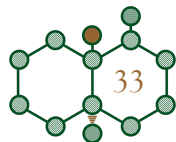


Headache

Its splintery scaffold
cages my head,
needles every turn.

Workers in white climb,
shout directives, hammer,
drill and saw.

The supervisor revs
his pickup: “Shut it down!”
The client
has called for painkillers—
pack the vans,
chop-chop!”

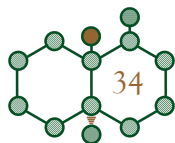


Shedding

My father's old
cat casts off hair
in half moons
on Dad's dark pants.

89, Dad's spine
curls in his wheelchair.
He casts off weight,
sloughs off skin
in sponge baths,

sleeps twisted in
blue blankets like
the Rose of Sharon
blossoms that roll
down his driveway.



DANUTA E. KOSK-KOSICKA

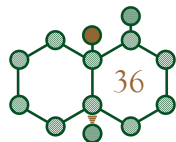
Magnolia



JODI BOSIN

4-27-2020

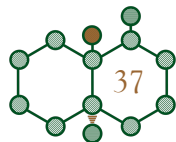
when i open the fridge
in the morning
the blueberries fall and
roll in all directions
every single one of them
how did we lose so much
and so fast



Fashion

If I were a mouse
I think I would like to wear
a spaghetti noodle as a scarf.

It wouldn't keep me very warm,
but I would like the way I look in it.



Breakroom Blues

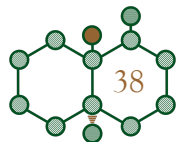
Cheyenne is telling me
All about her birthday cake

Nobody left her
The strawberry rose

I do the crossword
stuck on the author
Of *Das Kapital*

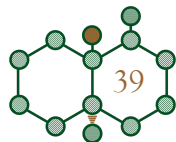
Somebody left a note
On the coffeemaker
Saying it's not their job
To rinse it out

Nobody knows
Whose job it is



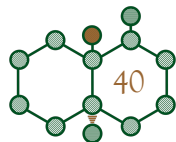
Night Terrors

if you pull the air through your nose sharply
it smells just like your grandparents' house in summer
neither a good nor bad smell—but like home, like the
terror
of mounted deer heads that stalked you in your sleep
and wicked dolls spying through slatted closet doors



Terminal

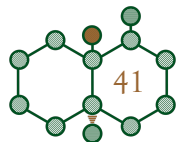
you only hear the word 'terminal'
when you are going somewhere
like Paris
or the grave



Bite

Someday I'm going to bite the bullet,
And I will chew it like bubblegum.
Mashing it between my teeth,
Wishing it was pink and sweet.

Someday I'm going to bite the bullet
And swallow it like a big capsule pill.
Gliding slowly down my throat:
Muscle river, metal boat.



SHERRY MORRIS

Elephants on the Brink

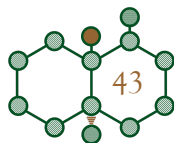


Postpartum

near perfection
ten fingers ten toes
still
mine

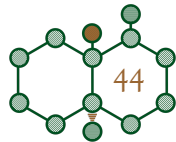
to keen
to cradle
into darkness

to pump breasts
engorged
with sour milk



Nana on Meditation

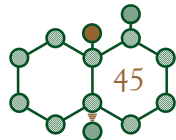
I was breathing well
before you were born.



Mantra

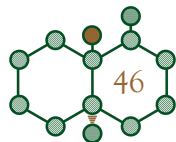
Love
is merely
grief

that hasn't yet lived
up to its potential



God Poem

God appeared to me
in the bathtub
and offered to scrub my back.
But I said no,
when I want your help
I'll pay for it.



Calliope

walking with ape in the woods.

i say

sunset looks beautiful; air smells clean;

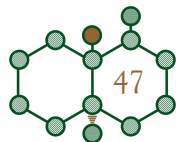
stream sounds musical, incredible.

she points to fox lying there, looks back at me.

“it’s dead” I say

“hahaha god damn it wow” she says

“you’ve really come up with a word
for everything”



SHERRY MORRIS

Elephants in the Mist



guide for the perplexed

god is not a sonnet
or any of the frames

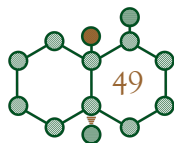
or any single wind.
many think of mazes,

tease negative space
into anti-sculpture.

fimsy antithesis,
this mighty whimsy.

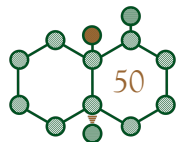
i know what god doesn't
require: sword arm,

a hard hand. no ribs,
only space for them.



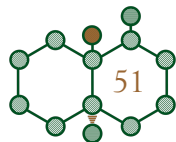
I Joined Twitter

to wallow in the scant
words, wave
into the whistling dark,
wake up to the new human-
inhabited world, hurl
my own anonymous soul
into the toxic mix
and watch it
barely summon a blip



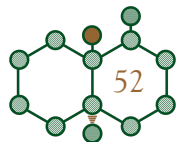
Fermat's Last Poem

In the margin of his proof
the mathematician wrote a tiny
poem about love, and, centuries later,
people are still trying to prove it.



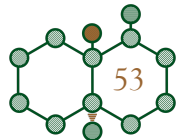
Self-Portrait as a Tea Drinker

Before the first cup
I feel like a cubist painting.
Looking into the bathroom
mirror, the Gas-o-meter
tells me to refill.
I pull over to the right
and am born again.



When I was a butterfly

I layered
with thousands
of morphos
creating blue trees.
The trees had wings.



JANE C. MILLER

What Cocooned Inside Her

Girl in Pink, Modigliani

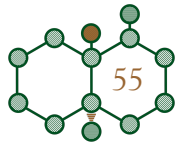
The peach downy with fuzz

sunlit tomato, warm
and smelling of pepper;

a field of sunflowers
tall as people she walked among—

Influenza coffins like cots in the street
her friend's school desk empty

her father's far away "Flanders" look.



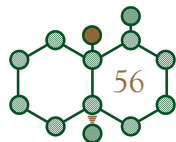
Estate Sale

Another move, another purge.

At 70, I know this may be the last.

Sorting is more deliberate this time.

Whatever I keep, one day, someone else will sort,
separate the wheat of my life from the chaff.



Stats Show

People with
nothing

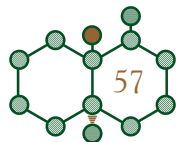
to live for
live longer,

get up
early,

make no
thing better,

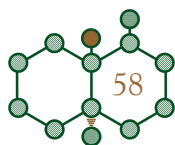
stand first in
every line,

come back
happy, empty,



make mom
proud in way

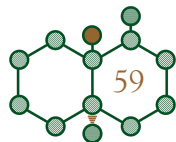
she can't
remember.



JAY PAWLYK

Zombie Fatigue

Coleridge stares at my students
struggling to listen to his Rime,
face-down like the dead mariners
draped on the welcome wood of their desks.



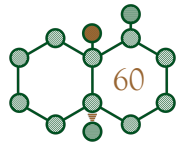
Binary

You can't be
mildly pregnant
or a bit dead.

Voted on
or off the island,
you're canceled

or renewed.
Test positive
or negative,

code 0 or 1.
The secret's safe
or not a secret. Today



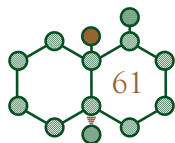
ends at midnight.

Act like there's

no tomorrow

and one day

you'll be right.



SHELDON POLSKY

Blue Jay Matchbook



First Aid

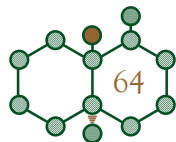
My son sits on my knee
while I clean the cut
on his finger and slather it
with antibiotic cream.

*Daddy's here, I say, to help
make it better.*

Later he shows me his finger
coated in glitter. *It hurts less,*
he says, *when it's covered
with stars.*

**the woodpecker the brain & how to bury
your friend**

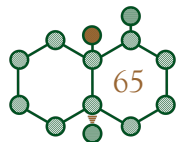
it's all in the title knock knock against
the wood claim your right to make noises
& holes in the moon whatever clicks
in your brain is already gone with your
friend same with me somebody
woodpeckered
my name



My only proper clothes

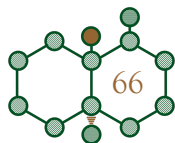
Are the two hoodies
I have lucked into
Over the several
Last months
And it goes downhill

From there
For Gerry
Veryvery
Fast



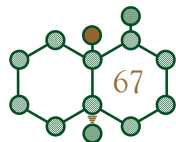
Negroni

Campari, Vermouth
and Mother's Ruin. A
single ice cube floats
to the top and I use my
index finger to submerge
all my sorrows under
frozen water hoping they
will go peacefully in their
hypoxia. I clutch the tiny
straw for dear life.



Purgatory

The way the bottle opener
Murders the beer
That's the way I work at Citibank
In Customer Service
One long, desperate summer.



YUEXI WU

The Temperature of Waiting



CONTRIBUTORS

Audrey Alt writes at night, when her husband and dogs are asleep and the volume of her white-noise machine is turned up unreasonably high.

Matthew J. Andrews is a private investigator and writer. He can be contacted at matthewjandrews.com.

Glen Armstrong edits a poetry journal called *Cruel Garters*. His latest book is *Night School: Selected Early Poems*.

Priscilla Atkins lives in West Michigan.

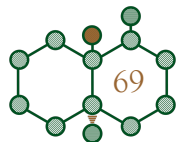
Javy Awan lives in Salem, Mass., attends Salem Writers Group and Tin Box Poets, and is copublisher of Derby Wharf Light Box.

Svea Barrett is a retired NJ Public school teacher with two small books that are out of print, and poems published in several magazines.

Donna Bartlett is a Deep South expat who lives and works in Ohio. She writes in hopes that it will eventually all make sense.

Sarah Berletti found literary inspiration at NYC Starbucks locations until seeking inspiration out West. She has found said inspiration at Starbucks locations in Oregon.

Jodi Bosin is a Philadelphia-based writer and social worker. Find her on the front porch and on Instagram [@jodi_bosin](https://www.instagram.com/jodi_bosin).



CONTRIBUTORS

Anna Brancato has a BFA in Creative Writing from SUNY Potsdam. She is inspired by pretty things in nature and food.

Kevin Broccoli is an author and playwright. His work has been featured on his mother's refrigerator for far too long. He's from New England.

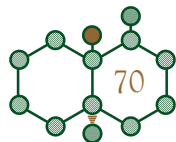
Oliver Brooks is studying writing at Florida State University and is the poetry editor of *The Kudzu Review*. Find him at oliverbrooks.weebly.com or @OBrooksBooks.

K Callan is an actor/writer/producer/mother/optimist. She likes people, adventure, and chocolate.

Eoin Carney is a Pittsburgh-based playwright who has had his work produced across the globe and who writes the political satire blog www.BreakingBurgh.com.

Joanna Castle Miller is a writer, performer, and satirist. Recent plays: *Inferna*, *Ekphrasis*, *The Storehouse*. She likes good whiskey, bad words, and three-item lists.

Aimee Champagne: English major at Salem State University and poet since middle school. Lover of philosophy, cats, photography, tea, wacky earrings, and music.



CONTRIBUTORS

Betsey Cullen teaches poetry at University of Delaware's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Her collection, *We Hold the Bones*, won *Heartland Review's* 2022 Chapbook Competition.

Mark DeCarteret and his Nana have visited with *Exquisite Corpse*, *Killing the Buddha*, *Lowell Review*, and *Spinning Jenny*.

Paul DiLella is a Syracuse NY native, graduate of Syracuse University, Navy vet, an English/Drama teacher (Arizona and Nevada), a published playwright.

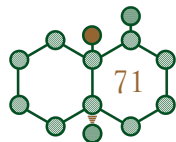
Erin Dionne writes tiny stories for adults, medium-sized books for small kids, full-sized novels for bigger kids, and just-right essays for writers.

RG Evans loves and grieves and sometimes can't tell the difference.

Hugh Findlay's writing and photography have been published worldwide. He is in the third trimester of life and hopes y'all like his stuff.

Mae Fraser is a poet and writer from New Hampshire who loves books and reviewing them. You can find her on Instagram as @maeflowerreads.

Timothy Gager has published 18 books of fiction and poetry, including *Best Of, new and selected work* from Big Table Publishing (2023)



CONTRIBUTORS

Gregory Glenn is an artist based in Massachusetts. Beloved Editor Supreme at Unpopular Writer. ig: @thisgoodgregory

Joey Gould, non-binary author of two books, drafted their words in a cabin at Firefly Farms in Tennessee. Thanks, Sundress Publications!

Mary Beth Hines's poetry collection, *Winter at a Summer House*, was recently published by Kelsay Books. To learn more about her, visit marybethhines.com.

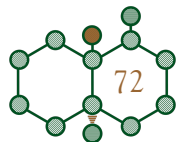
Keith Hoerner is founding editor of the award-winning Microfiction ezine/print anthology: *The Dribble Drabble Review*.

Sandra Hopkins is an artist and writer residing in Virginia. She has a penchant for word play and lexicons.

Daniel Hudon, originally from Canada, lives, teaches and writes in Boston, Mass. Find him online at danielhudon.com

Izabela Iłowska holds a Ph.D. in Creative Writing from the University of Glasgow. She lives in Poland.

Thomas Kienzle is a retired scientist who now enjoys a mostly stress-free life by playing full time at nature photography, fishing, and writing.



CONTRIBUTORS

Oliver Kleyer is a teacher and poet from Northern Germany. Outside the classroom, he's often found at state fairs.

Danuta E. Kosk-Kosicka, author of two poetry books, translator for four. Photographs in art shows, journals; book covers. Co-editor of *Loch Raven Review*. danutakk.wordpress.com

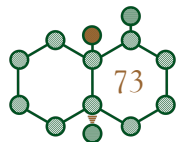
Deborah Leipziger is an author, poet, and advisor on sustainability. Deborah's new book *Story & Bone* was just published by Lily Poetry Review Books.

Gianfranco Lentini is a NYC-based queer playwright whose work has been produced between New York City and Toronto, Canada. His ADHD loves short plays.

Jane C. Miller is an award-winning poet, co-author of the poetry collection, *Walking the Sunken Boards* and an editor of the poetry journal, [*Quartet*](#).

Pushcart prize nominated **Tom Misuraca** has had numerous short stories and novels published. He's also an oft-produced playwright. He resides in Los Angeles.

Originally from Missouri, **Sherry Morris** (@Uksherka) writes prize-winning fiction from a Scottish Highland farm where she pets cows, watches clouds & dabbles in photography.



CONTRIBUTORS

Jonathan Odell has published three novels and his essays and short stories have appeared in various publications. He lives in Minneapolis with his husband.

January Gill O'Neil is an associate professor at Salem State University and the author of *Glitter Road* (forthcoming, 2024), *Rewilding*, *Mystery Islands*, and *Underlife*.

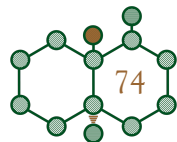
Chad Parenteau edits *Oddball Magazine* and organizes the long-running Stone Soup Poetry open mic. His latest book is *The Collapsed Bookshelf*.

Jay Pawlyk is an English teacher who loves long conversations, strong coffee, playing piano, Boston sports, a cappella singing, and homemade bolognese sauce.

Joyce Peseroff's sixth book of poems, *Petition*, was named a "must-read" by the 2021 Massachusetts Book Awards.

Sheldon Polsky is a freelance designer in NJ. His personal art lets him step away from work-for-hire and explore without borders.

Jason Craig Poole is a poet dad husband musician teacher. He lives in a house by the big hill in New Jersey.



CONTRIBUTORS

Steven Prevett is a composer/songwriter, performer, and music educator from Flint, Michigan. His creative endeavors include musical theater, animation, comedy, bluegrass, and film.

Dr. Vaishnavi Pusapati is a physician poet, published/forthcoming in *The Drabble*, *50 word stories*, *Paragraph Planet*, *Dreich Magazine*, among others.

Stella Vinitchi Radulescu, Romanian-American poet is the author of many collections of poetry published in the United States, Romania and France.

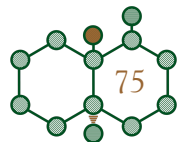
Gerard Sarnat MD's published four collections and extensively in periodicals. Gerry's won The Poetry in Arts First Place Award plus The Dorfman Prize. gerardsarnat.com

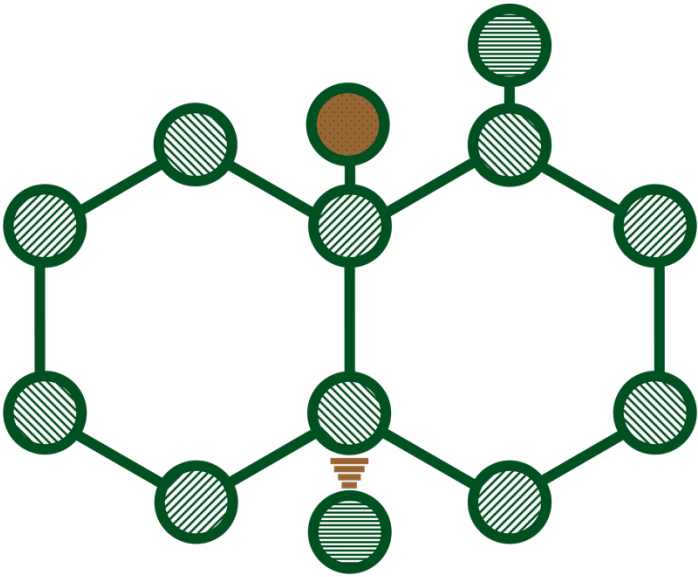
Bill Teitelbaum is—fine, and thanks for asking.

Stephanie Ní Thiarnaigh is a writer and a chancer, from Drogheda, Ireland. She writes poems and lengthy To Do lists.

Stan Werse is a lawyer, playwright and graduate of Syracuse University and Delaware Law School.

David Earl Williams has been his alias since birth and he's sticking to it no matter how many lies he's caught up in.





Molecule

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