

Violet's Hunt for Happy

By Lauren Lucas

Violet's Hunt for Happy

A short story by Lauren Lucas

Dedicated to the students and faculty of the Sweetland Minor in Writing.

Violet awoke with a smile on her face.
She was moving to college!
Her heart started to race.

Excited and nervous, on the tip of her toes,
she was beaming, you'd say, from her feet to her nose.

“This is it! The big day is here.
I know what I'm doing,
the path is so clear.
I'll study and party and make all new friends.
So glad that high school came to an end.
So long to that place, those people just holding me in.
Hello college! A fresh start,
I can't wait to begin.”

A photograph of a cluttered bedroom. In the center is a bed with a dark metal headboard and footboard, covered with a white sheet and a patterned blanket. To the left of the bed is a wooden nightstand with a lamp. To the right is a white nightstand with a lamp. A desk with a green chalkboard is in the foreground, surrounded by various items including a black bag, a blue laundry basket, and several bags of clothing. A black suitcase is on the floor near the door. The room has yellow walls and a doorway leading to another room.

A photograph of a cluttered bedroom. In the center is a bed with a dark metal headboard and footboard, covered with a white sheet and a patterned blanket. To the left of the bed is a wooden nightstand with a lamp. To the right is a white nightstand with a lamp. A desk with a green chalkboard is in the foreground, surrounded by various items including a black bag, a blue laundry basket, and several bags of clothing. A doorway is visible in the background, leading to another room. The walls are light green, and the floor is light-colored.

There in that moment, it finally felt real.
She was going to college
and didn't know how to feel.

“What if my roommate refuses to clean?
Or my professors are all really mean?
I don't even know which major to choose.
Oh god! What if my RA finds all my booze?

What are the chances that I fail a class?
What do I do if someone offers me grass?
I hope that my roommate and I will be close.
Are the frat houses I've heard of really that gross?

What if the bars don't take my I.D.?
Does it only take four years to get a degree?
Should I study abroad? Say, maybe, Berlin?
What if I don't find a place to fit in?

Will my parents be okay
now that they're on their own...



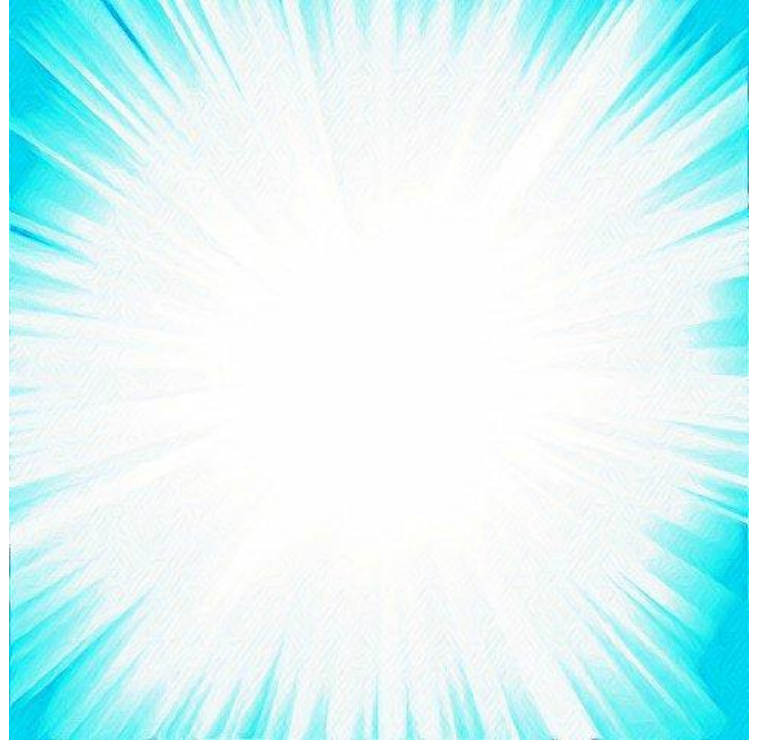
Scratch that.

How will *I* feel when *I'm* all alone?"

All of the worries were hurting her brain,
so she pushed them aside and packed fast as a train
And a few hours later...it was time!

Her hair tie was tied and suitcase was suited,
she was ready to go, when,
“Stop right there!” Mother hooted.
With a roll of her eye Violet sighed,
“What’s the matter?
I have to get going, there’s no time for more chatter.”

“You forgot something,” she explained with a huff,
“Something so big it’s huge! Something you ought not to lose!”
She reached in her pocket and pulled out the thing
and it shined in her hand like a diamond light... *ding!*



Violet looked down and there it was.
The thing that she'd almost forgotten because...
Well, that's just what happens sometimes, I suppose.

See, in the rush of the packing and planning and craze,
Violet's head had gone off in a sort of a daze.
She'd packed nervous and friendly, jealous and scared,
hopeful and cranky, shy and prepared.
But she almost left behind the one thing that would make
her college so wonderful, awesome, and great.

Her *happy*!

This happens to everyone every now and then;
we lose track of our happy,
but
we must find it again.

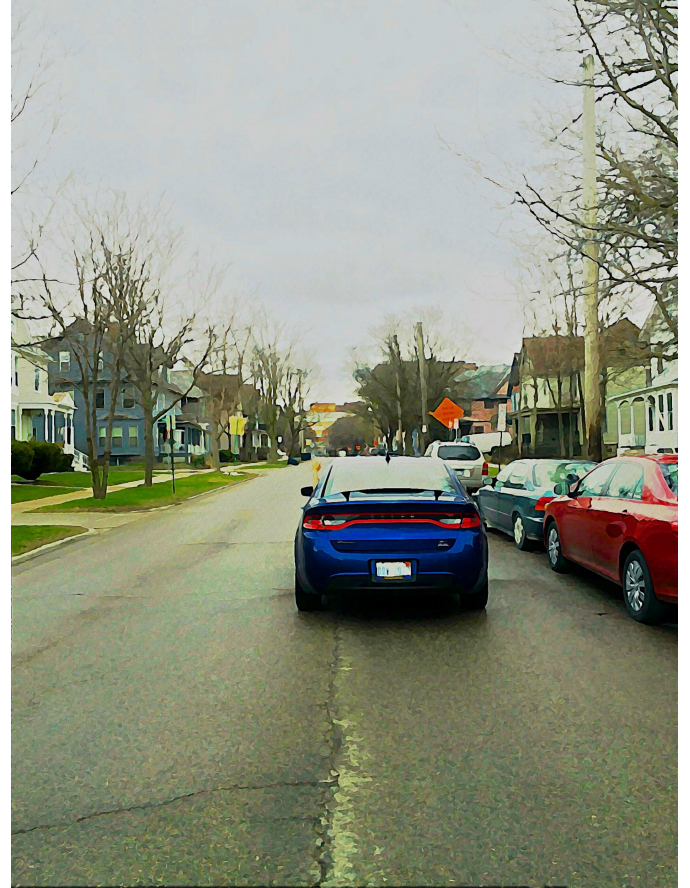
Mother leaned in for one final embrace,
and with tears in her eyes, looked at her daughter's face.

“You’ll learn lots at school, Vi, but there’s one thing you
should know.

Hold on to your happy; don’t you let it go.
Bad things might happen, and people may hurt it,
but your happy is strong, and you always deserve it.”

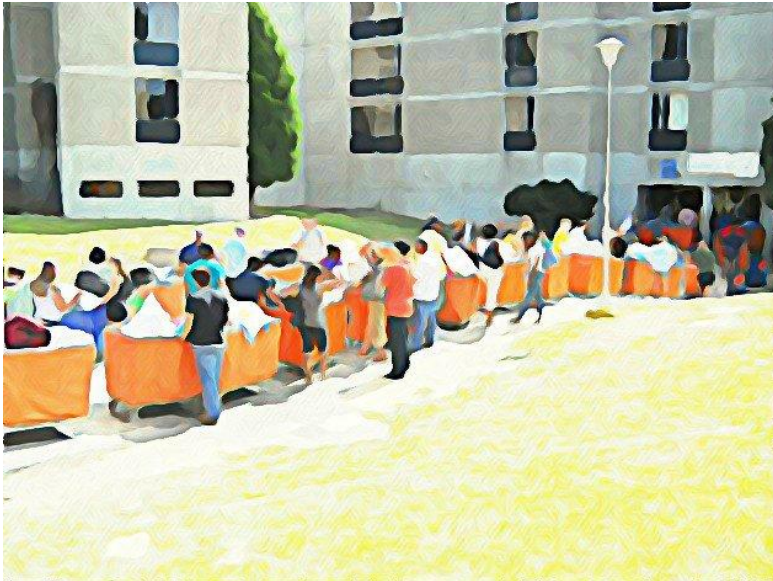
With those words, Mother wiped the tears away,
and said to her daughter,
“See you Thanksgiving day!”

So with her happy in hand, feet firm on the ground,
Violet took the first step on her own, college bound!



Those first steps on campus, Violet filled with delight.
“I made the right choice,” she thought, “This feels right.”
Looking around, she couldn’t believe
all the things going on; there was so much to see!

Moving trucks moving down crowded streets,
new roommates shaking hands as they meet,



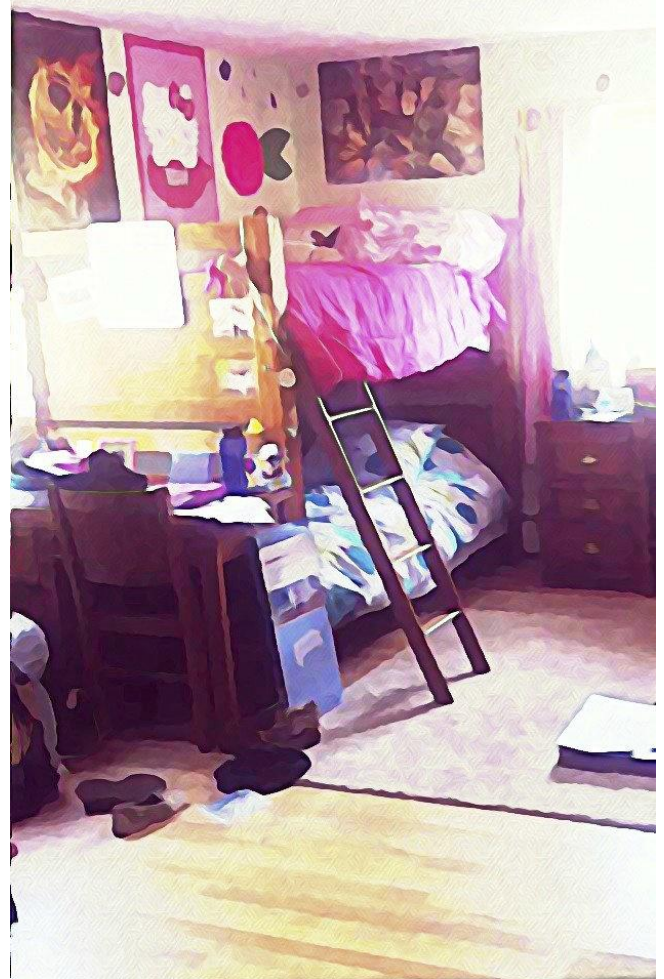
athletes running late for their practice,
high school loves sharing what would be their last kiss,
kids standing ‘round in a big smoky cloud,
the infamous bar she’d heard stories about,
girls wearing letters walking in a swarm,
and then –there it was! –Violet’s new dorm.

With a smile and a shake of two hands,
Violet met her new roommate who said, “Call me Anne.”

They unpacked and chatted and hung picture frames
and made plans with each other for the first football game.

A few hours later Anne said, “I need a break.
How ‘bout we grab a chocolate milkshake?”

With those words, Violet thought, “I’ve found a new friend!
What a wonderful way for my first day to end.”



The next weeks, Violet couldn't get enough experiencing all the brand new college stuff.

Shopping trips at the downtown campus store, movie nights with kids that lived on her floor, shotgunning beers at parties she didn't throw, makeouts with cute boys that she didn't know, staying up late learning bartenders' names, then waking up early for the football games, dinner with Anne's good high school buddy, and even library visits to study.

With every step, Violet's happy came, too and with every smile, it grew and it grew.



For Violet, all that new stuff was fun
but soon it caught up, like it does for everyone.

It seemed like one day she was happy as could be,
then the next morning she woke up and couldn't believe.
She looked at her calendar and welled up as she saw
all the things still to do,
and had she started them? Nah.

It was strange how it all had crept up so fast
when not long ago, she was having a blast.
College was fun, she loved it, that's for sure.
But now, big decisions were all up to her.

What to study, what to eat, how to balance her time,
how to tell people staying in wasn't a crime,
what to wear, clubs to join, who to live with next year,
how to handle the flu when her mom wasn't near.



So many choices piled up on her plate
and so many opinions, she couldn't think straight.

Don't forget: deadline for marathon registration is tomorrow at 5pm!

Did you finish you half of the presentation yet??

Advisors telling her, "Sign up for this class!"

Students yelling, "Join this club!" "No, that!"

I could really use help on mine...

Girls with the letters chanting, "We're who you need!"

Anne and her friends saying, "Come party, please!"

Come out tonight!!! 🤪

A million questions crowding her mind
with a billion answers all intertwined.

Come on you know you want to 🤪🤪

Overwhelmed with it all, Violet lay down in bed ,
when her favorite movie popped into her head.

She wanted to yell down the hall to her brother,
“Come watch with me! If not this, then another!”

In that moment, she felt the homesickness sink in,
it was clear from the tears and her quivering chin.

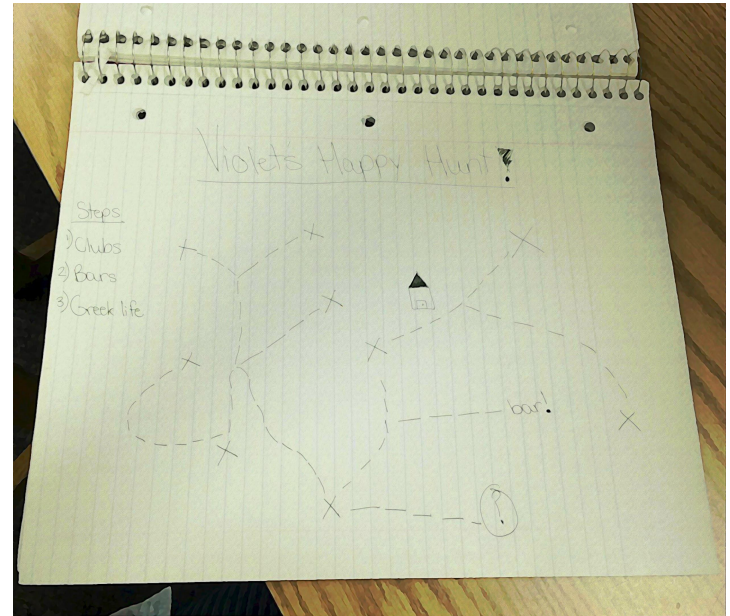
She tried to hold on to the thing that would help her for sure
but she just couldn't help as her *happy* slipped out of her pocket
and onto the floor.

The next morning, something had changed about her new home.
Anne was right there, but Violet felt so alone.
She looked at the ground and to her dismay
her *happy* was gone! Only left was pile of gray.

Feeling distraught, Violet stayed in her bed
until her mother words came into her head:

*You'll learn lots at school, Vi, but there's one thing
you should know.*

*Hold on to your happy; don't you let it go.
Bad things might happen, and people may hurt it,
But your happy is strong, and you always deserve
it.*



“I have to find my *happy*, but don't know where to go.
Anne seems to have found some; maybe she'll know!”

She grabbed her backpack and coat from the wall
And yelled, “Anne! Meet in the dining hall!”
There, next to the early birds already smoking a blunt
Violet and Anne mapped out their *happy* hunt.

They started by looking around different clubs.
“How about debate team?” Violet asked.
“No, too many scrubs.”

They looked and they looked but everything Violet said
was followed by a frown and shake of Anne’s head.

Violet was scared to look by herself,
but she didn’t want her opinions put on a shelf.

She turned and said, “Anne, I’ll see you at home.
I think it’s important that I go alone.”



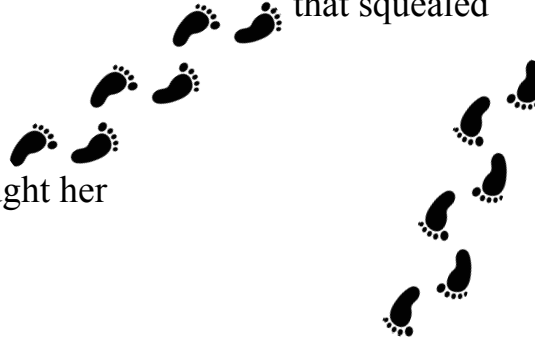
She looked in the bars with her new fake I.D.



She looked in the drinks that boys bought her
for free



She looked with the girls in the letters
that squealed



She looked by the people that smoked in the field



She looked in her classes – history and math

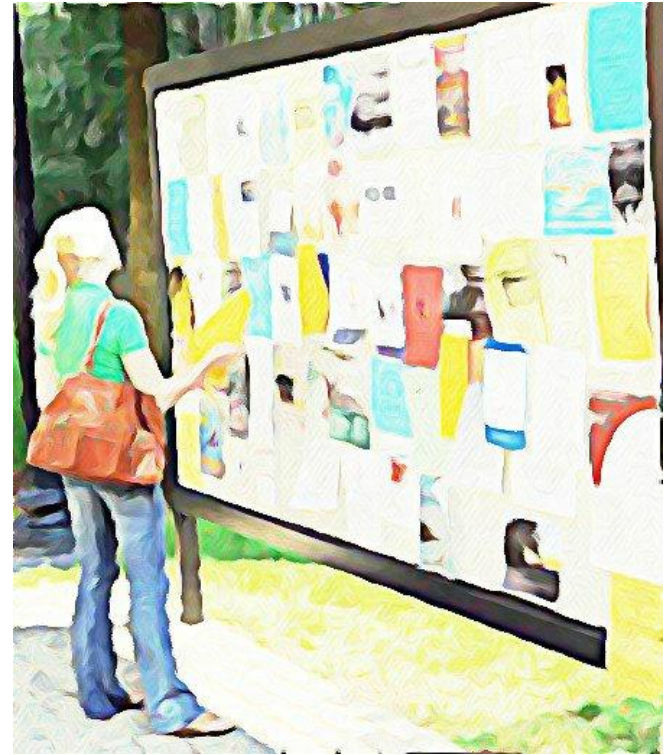


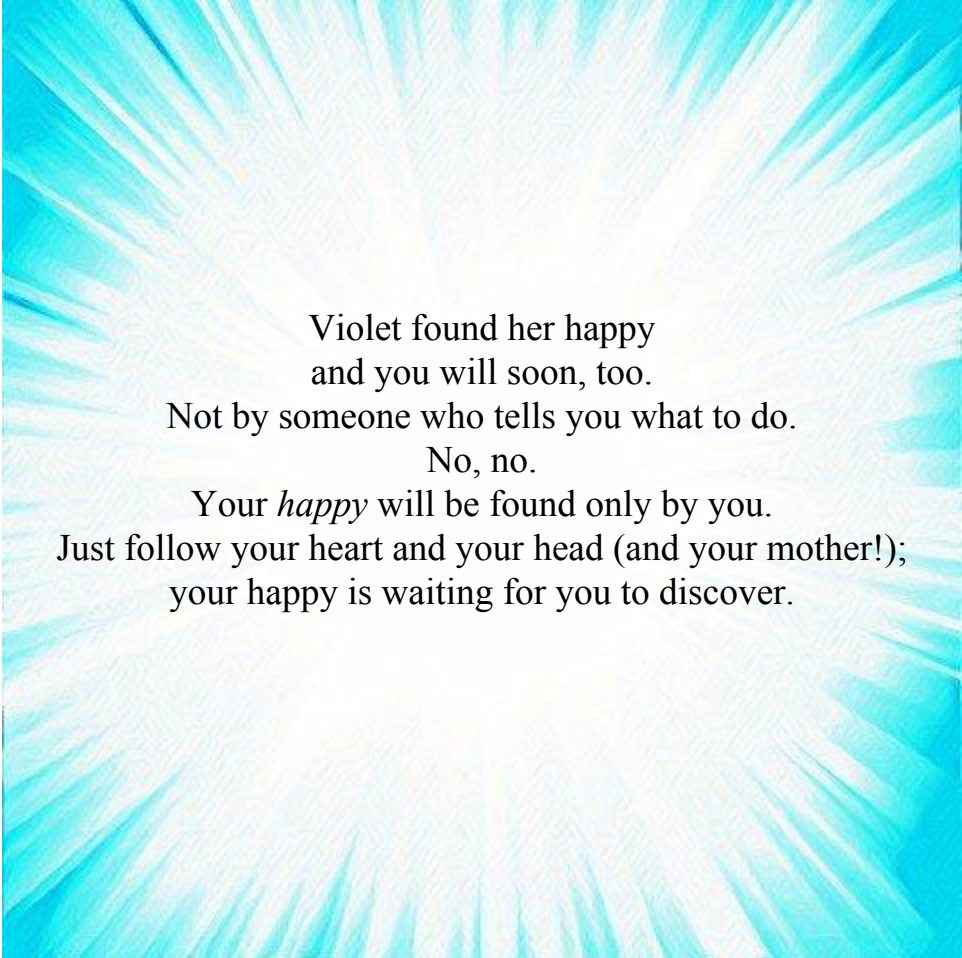
but found no *happy* at the end of each path.

Finally, something caught Violet's eye,
a flyer that read, *Like to dance? Come stop by!*
She wasn't quite sure, but she swore she could see
peeking out 'round the paper was a glimpse of *happy*.
She followed the signs, thinking all the while,
"I haven't danced in years, but it always made me smile."
When she got to auditions her heart got real tight,
for there in the room was her *happy* shining bright.

"I didn't think to look here but now I'm starting to see
there are so many happy things out there for me."

After that, Violet put her heart in control,
and boy oh boy was that girl on a roll!
She found *happy* in the club that Anne said wasn't cool,
and more at a fitness class run by the school.
She found it on bar nights on weekends, that's true
but also in writing and science class, too.
As Violet put herself out there and continued to explore,
her *happy* kept growing more, more, and more.





Violet found her happy
and you will soon, too.
Not by someone who tells you what to do.
No, no.
Your *happy* will be found only by you.
Just follow your heart and your head (and your mother!);
your happy is waiting for you to discover.

Violet's *Happy*



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