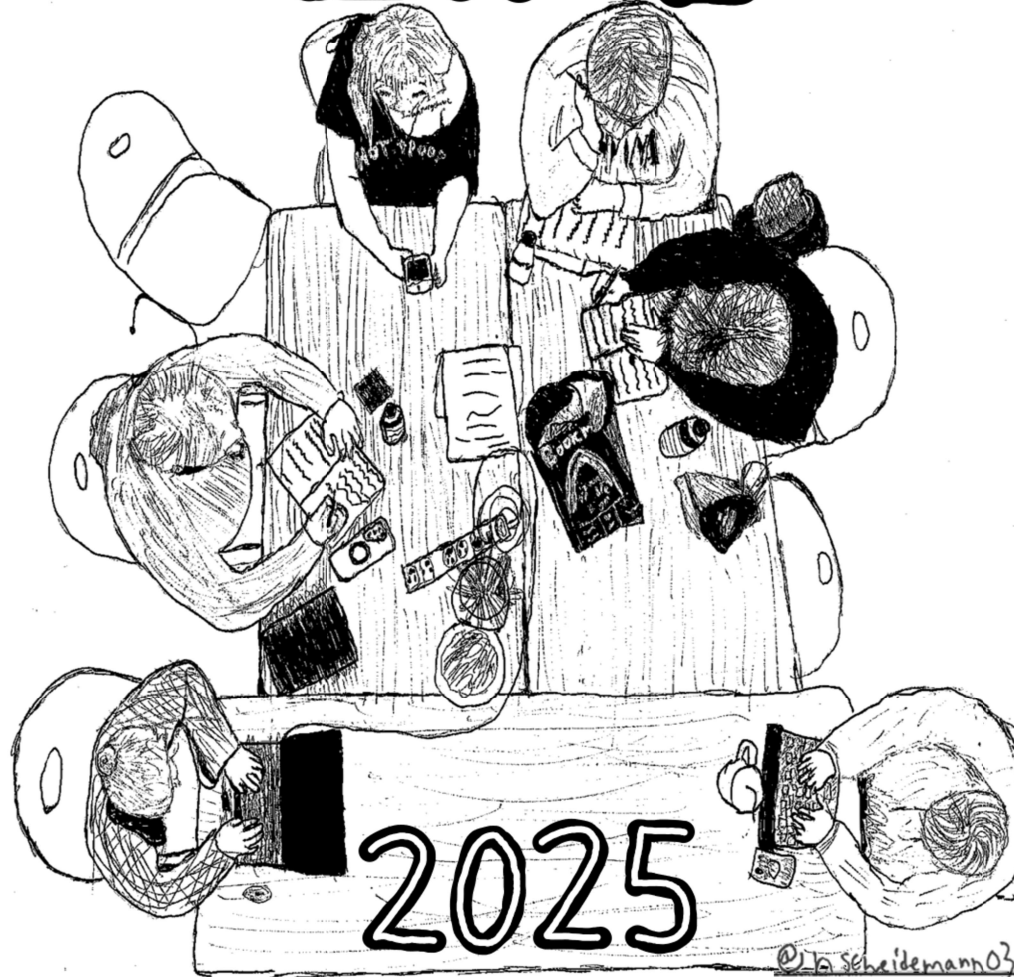
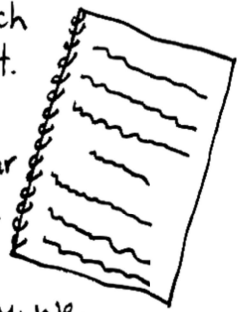


The Strange and Marvelous Walla Walla Public Library Writing Group ZINE



Every Thursday morning we breathe together, we write together, we listen and respond. We witness each other's creativity, and the healing cultivated by it. We hear comedy, science-fiction, philosophy, fantasy, self-discovery, and romance. We hear truth and fiction—and mostly a mix of the two. We snicker about Jarbeefus (inside joke), and snack on anything from donuts to carrots. Mostly, we keep coming back for more. So how did this all begin?



I am not a writing teacher. I'm a curator of kind spaces, and lover of words. Early in 2025, I brought these elements together in a weekly writing group. Writing, as with many art forms, can be a lonely pursuit. Gathering sparks connection, improves craft, and may even help a person accomplish more while taking themselves a little less seriously. "These are my people," you may sigh, relieved to discover you're not the only writing nerd.

If you WRITE, you are a WRITER, and WRITERS need each other's company. Want to take the plunge and start your own writing group? Here are three suggestions to get you started.

- 1 Consider what makes a kind space, and commit to maintaining it
- 2 Pick a time and place, then advertise
- 3 Read Pat Schneider's book, *Writing Alone and with Others*

Or Come join us at the Walla Walla Public Library,
10am - noon every Thursday (excluding holidays).
Warmly,
Tobi Goff

"We are all connected to one another and to the mystery at the heart of the universe through our **strange and marvelous** ability to create words."

-Pat Schneider (Writing Alone and with Others)

The following stories emerged from The Walla Walla Public Library writing group. Every week we engage two writing prompts and then have the opportunity to read aloud. Each spread shows two different handwritten responses to the same prompt.

Biographies:



I am... Jared Ochoa (@XernDrawz) is an artist, writer and aspiring author. He is working on a trilogy known as TAX incorporated. More info about his work at taxinc.miraheze.org



I am..... Nat is, well, not a professional writer, but she doesn't let that stop her from writing away! She is described as an 'impulsive and stimulating writer that always tell you the stone cold truth for how it is. Her substack will prove these claims true. Her substack username is: @hscheidmann03.



I am... Tobin Goff - a writer, impertinent Christian, and small group enthusiast. www.myfavorite.subject.blog / @jesusmyfavorite.subject



I am... Russell Howard Skorina
I am a creature of flesh and zines
I also like to fill space. I understand that ink and paper are equal conspirators in the heist of making art. I produced this zine so if you would prefer each page to have fewer words. Make your own. I will help.



I am... Han LeBlanc, a nonbinary author of YA fiction. This zine features scenes from my novel, *I'd Never Stop*, a sapphic realistic fiction story that covers topics of love, loss, disability and identity. It will be published **EVENTUALLY**. For more of my writing, visit me on AO3 @ [furrowedface.com](https://www.furrowedface.com)



I am... Kryst Atlenech. I am a doctoral candidate of American Studies, 19th century, University of Washington. I'm in recovery for a dissociative disorder and creative expression therapy saved my life outcomes. Creative writing may someday prove a strength! My editor abandoned my first book so it's forthcoming. History-Fiction is my genre.



I am... Laura E. Rodriguez. I am a hobby writer and a member of the Walla Walla Public Library's Thursday Writing group. I write poetry and short stories and love to listen to and learn from my fellow writers.



I am... Gavin S. Lawry. I am a feral house father and aspiring writer. I write mainly poetry, but often delve into short stories. I find writing to be the ultimate form of therapy and healing. You can find more of my work on Substack @ [feralhousefather](https://www.feralhousefather.com)



I am... Amy Covill is a retired psychology professor. Her research focused on the development of writing skill. She has always loved words.

SPECIAL THANKS

Title Lettering by:
Madeline Schaffer

Raychel Kool

Joshua Armstrong

PROMPT FROM AUGUST 21:
**YOU REALIZE YOU HAVE
BECOME A**

**INADVERTENTLY
STALKER**

Aleksy Nurgamemnov by Russell Howard Skorina

Since most people think I've spent the last 12 years stalking Aleksy Nurgamemnov, I need to set the record straight. Now is my last chance—I'm about to leave for college at Tamarac State. We are a nominative flaw in the district's random algorithm.



I've brought this up before, and the answer is always the same. It's a "coincidence". No coincidence could explain our 12 years of identical homerooms. Or that we shared every locker. Or that we always sat next to each other on the annual bus ride to the Okefenokee National Swamp.

But I've figured it out. Our school primarily uses names to seed the random algorithm. His name is Aleksy Nurgamemnov and mine is Alex Nugget. They must not use middle names. Because his is "Aleksandrovich" and mine is "Harrold."



Often, friendship is born from proximity. But this is not my experience. It fails to take into account that proximity, like all drugs, can be overdosed. I am sick of Aleksy Nurgamemnov. And he is sick of me.

When it was time to walk at Graduation, of course I was paired with Aleksy. But this time felt different. This time was different. This would likely be our last "coincidence".

"Why have you been stalking me?" he deadpanned. We both laughed.

"I can't help it," I responded. "My parents named me this way."

It was the best moment we'd had in years. Until he said something more. Something that shook me to my core.

"Where are you going to college?"
"I'm headed to Tamarac State..."



Mothers Are Stalkers
by Tobi Goff

Every mother is a stalker — stealthy as a fox, or loud and proud as a heckler.

She may try on other hats — friend, playmate, shopping buddy, or cook. But she will always return to the well-worn stalker cap.

No one knows exactly why. Perhaps all those years of sleep deprivation affected her brain. Or maybe her partner has become boring. Or her dream of being a paparazzo never panned out and she's done repressing her hunger for juicy stories.

Could it be revenge — on her own mother, or on her child — for needing her when she didn't want to be needed? Is it fear, masquerading as care? Control masquerading as curiosity? Perhaps sheer boredom is the culprit.

Or it could be force of habit — one that began while watching a. infant's chest rise and fall, then following a toddler through play structures, teaching a child how to use a toothbrush, then how to handle a kitchen knife. A long stint as chauffeur cements the habit, and by the time a kid has wheels of their own, stalking is like a nervous mother-twitch that can't be medicated.

Whatever the case, mothers are stalkers, and children are their prey. They follow, but never shoot. They scribble notes and report to their partner in bed at night. They buy new camo when the old is detected, and they keep on stalking even when the tap-tap of their walkers is a dead giveaway.

And, depending on your religious beliefs, upon death they have the best of all — that birds-eye view they always wanted, the ability to hover without being detected, and maybe even a direct line to put in a few suggestions to God about how their child's life should go.

Prompt from March 20: Write a Letter

(1893 - Claimed Washington State Territory) by Kryst Atblench

Dear Mother,

Birth, transferred curious gifts impossible to exchange. Life's walk started in an endless forest circling my disquieting internal multitudes. I may host pagan spirits or cunning demons. I engineer temporary levitations which defy known physics. My internal presences are hurt, scared, and confused but eager to talk. I am never alone.

Mind's Elder Ko' speaks in tongues I understand without learning. He suspects I channel the narrow space dividing Universe from Divinity's province. Ko' watches confused specters picking Origins' boundaries. Purposeless but dangerous. Coming destruction may mark new Creation or existence ceases.

Ko' calms my controlling alters. My vision often blurs and I no longer remember friends. I awake bruised from different personas seizing my body @ night.

Mother, I fear not Hell because I already know endless torture. Each night might bring death I'll face but never see.

Tomorrow, Italy's last Inquisitors arrive. Shadowy Fraternities join Catholics' global fight against Protestant and Secular nationalisms. De-possession after Confession ends my abilities and proves demons' existence. News cable-wired to the world's Spectacle. Failure means a witch's burning stake.

Psychologists offer a Sanitarium's legal protection. But I must confess to being at once Abnormal and also Unknown. Different. Danger to Normal. Once inside, I volunteer every twitch and thought to surveillance. Truth of inner self becomes no longer an object Divine absolution demands. Medical authority instead exposes on my body the roots of mental disease which informs cure. My Self becomes Subject to a regime of Scientific debates in authoritative Texts.

My very identity thus open to an infinity of updates based on neutral observation. Dr. Hytler's notebook etches daily a new leash of liberation.

Modernity's Science gathers each scintilla of the open to also shine brighter lights or flame on others' maladies. My steps to freedom may help but also lengthen other patients' voluntary incarceration.

No matter if I face one stake or innumerable, AKA's Self Ends.

I wish we'd met.

-AKA

Dear Writer's Block, by Gavin S. Lawry

We are currently fed up with your interference with the Author's creative process. We do not understand your current hostility and reason for so thoroughly destroying any potential progress with the Author's project. Is it a sense of jealousy, fear, or just pure boredom? Are you attempting to intimidate the Author into silence? What is your reason for being such an over-bearing stumbling block?

The Author has attempted on several occasions to persuade you to stop. They have unplugged various electronic devices, locked up their cell phone, worn noise-canceling headphones, and even tried changing locations. But still you persist. We are considering having you charged with harassment if you will not refrain from hindering the Author.

On that note, we are attaching a cease and desist order to this letter. It is time to end your foolish harassment of the Author and let them finish their project. If you refuse to stop, we will be seeking to apply more charges and ask for monetary compensation. Also a restraining order may be necessary to protect my client. Be warned, judges do not react well to any delays.

Sincerely,

Casey Law, Esq.
Brain storm Legal Aides & Associates

Prompt from Sept 9: Write in response

Unrecognizable Smells by Jared Ochoa ★

It is September 9, 2025. I am sitting at a table at 10 in the morning. At my writing group, we have been asked to smell little capsules and write about them.

Smells. I've come to realize that I can't recognize a lot of them. There are a lot of things I'm not often exposed to due to my avoidance of them. Bad smells, bright lights, loud noises, all of those things bother me — but nothing has ever bothered me more than the smell of food.

It sounds ridiculous. Everyone likes food.

That has not ever been me. One of the stories I have been told is that, as an infant, I absolutely hated going into restaurants. I would cry and wail until my parents carried me outside. At that point I would stop screaming bloody murder. That's when they realized it was the smell of food I was bothered by; not yet knowing food would be a problem in general. This was before they realized I was born with an eating disorder, before we had a name for it: Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder.

I still avoid the strong smell of soups simmering on the stove, the scent of ground beef and all its seasonings sizzling in a pan. I can't stand stir fries and the unique stench of salad dressing. I find no excitement in the lingering smell of bacon and breakfast. I find that due to my avoidance, more often than not, I can't name a specific scent.

Well, that is what has happened today. I can't tell you what any of these capsules smell like. I don't smell or eat a variety of things, so I assume this is the reason for my struggle...

Or maybe I'm just bad at smelling.

to a strong odor

Victoria couldn't think of many things that would be worse than being trapped in your ex-husband's house for a week with three sick little kids. Well, except for also being sick under those same circumstances, which Victoria was now. By: Han LeBong

Amelia had been the first to get sick, and had quickly spread it to her father and twin sister, Allison. From there, it had spread to Elliott, and finally to Victoria, as she tried to care for her three children and ex-husband, all of whom had hacking coughs.

James was one of those people who acted like a total baby when he got sick, but he usually recovered quickly and was already feeling much better.

Allison had it the worst. Her blonde hair stuck to her forehead with sweat, and her little toddler body shook with chills and the force of her coughing. Victoria rubbed her daughter's chest with Baby Vicks and carefully dressed her in clean yellow flannel button-up PJs.

MAMA HERE, Victoria signed. YOU OKAY. Then she fell into a round of uncontrollable hacking coughs and scooped some more Vicks from the container with her fingers and spread it on her own chest, before rubbing some into Allison's ticklish little feet and covering them in toddler sized fuzzy socks she'd found at Dollar Tree.

I LOVE YOU MAMA, Allison signed and Victoria smiled.

I LOVE YOU TOO, SWEET GIRL. WE GO TO BED NOW? Allison nodded and wrapped her arms around Victoria's neck as she carried the little girl to the twin's room in her ex's house and tucked her into her bed.

SLEEP GOOD, Victoria told her.

Allison nodded and quickly fell asleep.

One of the upsides of having a Deaf child was that Allison didn't even stir when Amelia started coughing so hard a few minutes later that she threw up into the large pink plastic bowl by her bed.

"Oh, sweetheart," Victoria whispered and carried Amelia to the bathroom to repeat the cycle. 8

Prompt from October 16:

Write a letter, in the voice of an object

Dear Anita Knapp,

As you hastily spread me over your side of the bed every night, could you please take a moment to appreciate me once in a while? Is it too much to ask that you pause to admire the fancy stitch patterns and tassels—the perfect, pearl-colored, purls—that your mom created? I know you occasionally look for mistakes in my glorious web of stitches. Is that to make you feel less defeated by your own knitting mishaps? Those things your knitting pals generously call “design elements?”

You must know by now that there are no flaws woven into me. (I think I've even heard you mutter that you wish you could tell your mom how much you admire her skills.) Meanwhile, I'll try to keep my fringe away from your face in those wee hours, even though I am amused by your sleepy swipe at your cheek when my woolly ends create a tickly itch.

Warmly,
T.H. Row

—Amy Covill

LOSS by Laura E. Rodriguez

NO! Leave me alone! Why are you here? Who are you? Where is he? There are strangers in my house. They are talking quietly and keep looking at me. I am leashed and being kept away from our sleeping room. My senses are aware of great sadness.

I love this place. I was the puppy you picked to take home; I knew you were the one after I ran up to you and peed on your shoe. I didn't do it on purpose. I was just so excited to find you! You laughed, picked me up, and announced that I was the puppy for you.

You worked from home and had a flexible schedule. Our days were filled with fun activities: daily walks, playing fetch, and play dates at the dog park with my friends.

Your love for me was expressed freely through laughter, good healthy food, lots of belly rubs, and many adventures. My favorite being water retrievers.

So, why aren't you helping me? I want to stay here. I wait! Where are you taking him? Why can't I see him? His scent is passing me. I bark furiously but, no response. His scent fades and, soon, he is gone.

I am led out of my house-of-love and placed in a crate in the back of a stranger's car. The car pulls slowly away and my house-of-love fades into the distance.

What has happened? What will happen? I curl into a ball, squeeze my eyes shut, and begin to moan.

I AM ALONE.

Prompt from Nov. 6 The accidental name ...

In Honor of Jackson Jenny

by Nat Scheidemann



Jackson Bart Jenny was dearly beloved by many. Anyone who knew him would always tell you about his way of life, and could spend a day or two talking about how he deeply touched and changed them for all the better. In his 67 years of life, Jackson always knew how to cheer you up, even when it seemed impossible. He knew all the secrets to having wonderful life with exceptional quality. Jackson believed in living a similar lifestyle to the late Lemmy Kilmister, having so many jokes ready to go on the spot, drinking lots of Jack Daniels, and being as humble and honest as one can be. He would even stay this way after being in a car accident that would confine him to a wheelchair.



He was always tremendously uplifting and a wonderful person to everyone, no matter what life threw at him, even after the accident. Everyone that had the pleasure of knowing Jackson truly loved him. His laugh was so contagious and hilarious in the best possible way, that you would have no choice, but to belly laugh out loud with him whenever he did. Jackson would be his usual self, even in his final hours. He passed the true Jackson Jenny way, drinking Jack Daniels, listening to metal music on high volume, and enjoying the ride every second, surrounded by many of his family members and friends. It was the most peaceful way for him to go. Quite honestly, it was the only acceptable way for Jackson to go.

Jackson, we all loved you, and always will. Your Family, Pets (Rosco, Nibbler, and Angelina), Friends, and acquaintances miss you dearly.



Rosco is



Angelina

Boring Old Joseph Johnson by Jared Ochoa ★
Joseph Johnson was just about the most boring person you could find.

His name was more unique than your Bobs and Johns and Steves, but even so, Joseph was an unremarkable man in every sense of the word. He had pale skin and short brown hair, the type of guy you would probably see as the star of a jaunty stock photo. Joseph had no hobbies, no career aspirations, no notable family, and no wealth to his name. He went day by day as a grocery clerk and went home to absolutely nothing. Sure, he liked to watch TV, but tangible hobbies were lost on him.

Despite his utterly ordinary nature, Joe had saved enough money to go to a fancy restaurant. By himself. What, you thought Joseph Johnson had a partner? That's funny.

On the day of, he went to the counter to be seated. "I'm Joseph Johnson," he said. "I have a reservation."

The person at the counter narrowed their eyes at him. "No, you're not."

"Yes I am?" Joseph responded with an utterly perplexed tone.

"No, you aren't."

This back and forth continued until finally, poor Joseph showed the man his ID. The waiter escorted him to his table at once, apologizing. "Sorry, I was thinking of the other Joseph Johnson. The famous one."

In awe, Joe googled his mysterious doppelganger as soon as the waiter left. And before his eyes was a famous actor who looked just like him by the name of Joseph Johnson.

Joe was bewildered. He had never seen this guy in a movie in his entire life. He was stunned — how can someone so similar to him become so famous? What did this Joseph Johnson possess that he did not? Talent? Intelligence? Nepotism? Joe sat with his food in silence afterwards, wondering if he should've continued his biology degree instead of dropping out. He wondered if becoming a marine biologist hadn't been too unrealistic after all. Perhaps we will never know.

Joe grumbles while eating his spaghetti, the most average dish of all.

Prompt from October 30:
 Write from an object

placed in your hands 

Bad Days

By: Han LeBlanc

 That Saturday was one of El's many, many bad days since the accident. She'd spilled more spoonfuls of milk and Frosted Flakes on her clothes than she'd managed to put in her mouth; she'd fallen off her stool in the shower, and had cried at her atrocious handwriting after trying to jot down a note with her left hand, since her right was still barely functional.

Khi came over, knelt in front of her girlfriend's wheelchair and did her best to give El a much needed pep talk. She'd learned in the past few months though, that the best way to cheer El up was to take her out to do something that made her feel like her old self.

Before long, Khi was pushing El's wheelchair around a nearby park while El took photos of the fallen autumn foliage and golden-leaved trees. At one point, a tree began to rain leaves like snow while they were under it. El actually smiled then, looking up and holding out her hands. A pristine golden maple leaf, the same shape as the one on the Canadian flag,  landed in her upturned palm and she turned to grin at Khi.

"You feeling better?" Khi asked.

 "So much better," she said, and beckoned her girlfriend closer with a finger. Khi leaped over the armrest and El kissed her. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

 Khi smiled. "Me neither. I love you."
"I love you too."

Airmail by Amy Covill

Wet, chilly, and colorful, a fall leaf floats down to me with a message: The season of sun and warmth, of playful days in the park, is waning. The time for pruning, for making way for healthy new growth, is here. I welcome this deciduous invitation to reflect on what might be ending for me.

In the stillness of the season, I can also daydream about a future with more light and lightness. I can ponder what seeds and starts might bring me joy once the frosty crunch smells like soil again. On that occasion, I will drop to my knees, grateful for the sound of my trowel carving out a space for what's next.