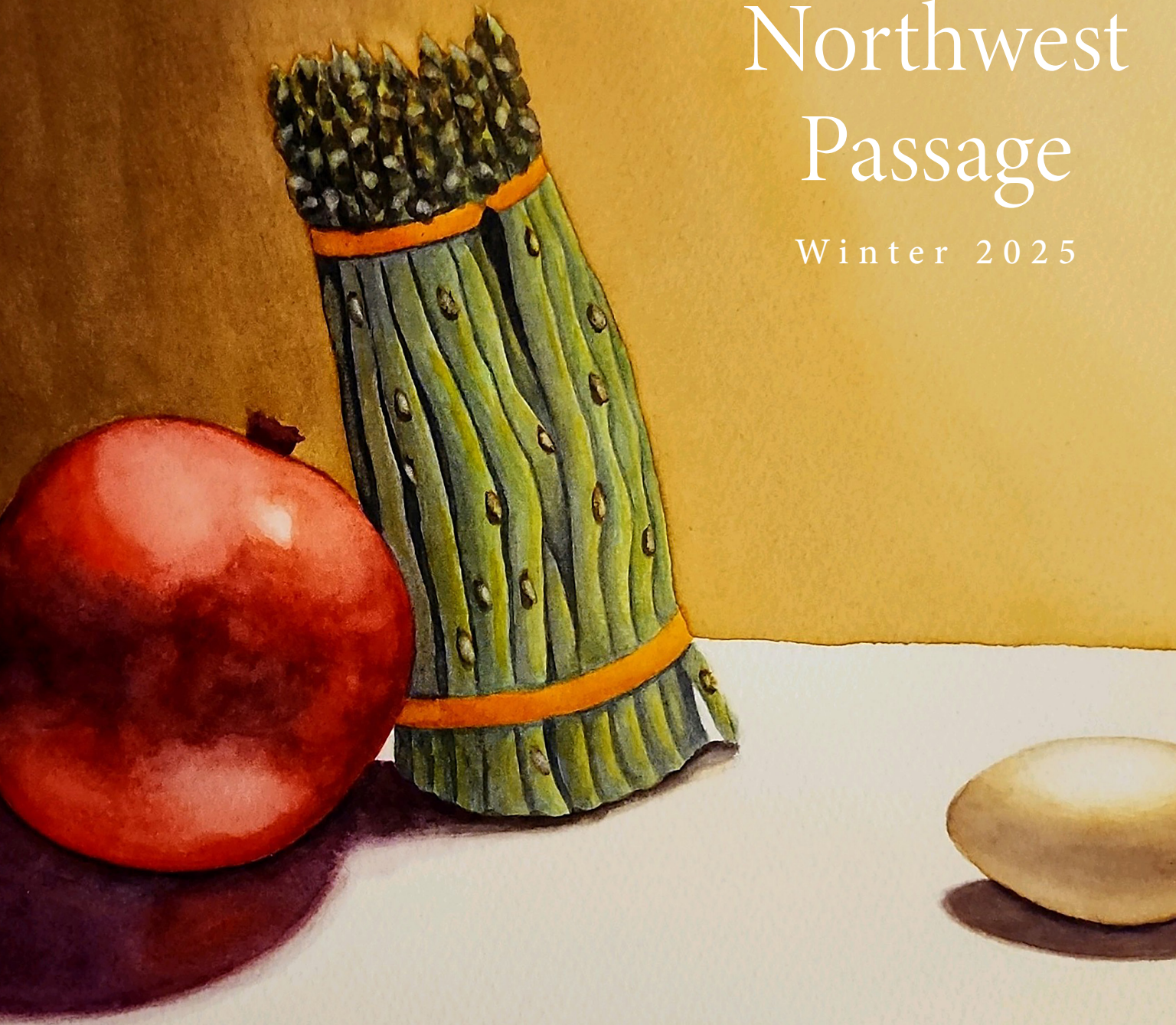


# The Northwest Passage

Winter 2025





*A Conversation between a Pomegranate,  
Asparagus, and an Egg*

Chloe Elmore

# The Northwest Passage

Western Oregon University's Student-Run Art and Literature Magazine

W i n t e r 2 0 2 5 I s s u e

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[wou.edu/northwestpassage](http://wou.edu/northwestpassage)

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# Letter from the Editor

This is my second term as Editor-in-Chief for the Northwest Passage, and I have certainly done some learning since the first term! It will always be challenging to learn the skill of balancing life, work, and school at the same time, and I would once again like to thank those who supported me on this journey. So many talented artists and writers have decided to put their art out into the world this term, and we are grateful. I feel honored that I have been given the opportunity to publish the work of my peers, and I know that you, the reader, will enjoy!

## Submission Guidelines

1. Every submission should have a title or be marked Untitled and be emailed as an attachment to [northwestpassage@mail.wou.edu](mailto:northwestpassage@mail.wou.edu).
2. All WOU students, faculty, and alumni over the age of 18 are invited to submit their work.
3. Leave your name off of your submission files to help the editorial board maintain voting impartially.
4. We accept art of any medium, photography, poetry, short stories, scripts, screenplays, creative essays, spoken-word, lyrics, and music compositions.
5. Submissions must not exceed eight pieces of work. A maximum of five submissions per creator will be published per issue, but additional submissions may be considered for future issues.
6. Art must be in digital format; please take high quality photos of artwork for best printing result.
7. Due to space constraints, all written work has a word limit of approximately 1,500 words.
8. Music and spoken-word is published in our digital album once a year, during Spring term.
9. Submissions are accepted all year but must meet deadlines to be considered for individual issues.
10. The Editor-in-Chief reserves the right to edit submissions but will not publish edited versions without creators' permission.

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Classroom chatter

I stare at the note you left me  
in white letters **against** a  
dark **gray** screen:

*I know this will hurt you a  
lot,*

*but I cannot stand this world  
no longer.*

The teacher walks about,  
checking our responses  
to depressed ducks, dogs,  
and dolphins  
self-destructing their  
wake.

You are homeless, suicidal,  
miserable and **a mess**,  
your twenty-one years to **my**  
seventeen.

**Worse**, with thousands of miles  
between us,  
what could I do to ease your  
pain?

*Focus **on** your*

*work, my  
teacher  
**says***

and you're right; it hurts me

so much **that** I don't **have** the  
strength to force

you **against** your  
will.

I suppose happiness is the  
only gift **I** can give  
to someone who I cannot reach...

*I'll let you go, I*  
type,

and when I get home  
later,  
no new **messages**

so *I'll respect your wishes*

and let  
my  
sobs

carry me to  
sleep



*Golden Gaze* Chloe Elmore



# Memories of a Child

Hailey Cook

Remember the time before tik tok or  
Instagram  
Hours spent running wild, getting covered  
in mud  
Going for walks or shouting “i can almost  
touch the sky”  
While swinging.  
Comparisons didn't take place.  
I never looked at myself and wish I looked  
a little more like the girl in a post that I  
will never see  
again.

That I wanted a big house, with an indoor  
basketball court and hidden rooms,  
Like some of the influencer I see filling my  
screen everyday

Wishing I had what they had, but did I  
really know what they had?  
Sure, they looked happy but one thing I've  
learned is that sometimes all we see are  
facades

And those facades can only chip away so  
much before it falls completely  
Shattering at the viewers feet  
And we wouldn't even see it coming  
Because to us they are perfect  
With the perfect hair, gorgeous  
smile, and enough room to have 5  
kids and a couple dogs.

To us they can do no wrong,  
Unless they make one mistake, then we shun  
them for lying about who they are When in  
reality we never knew them to begin with  
We see what they show  
We believe in what we see  
All it takes is one misstep for our views to  
turn jaded



Fairytopia

Brittany Austin



Where the Ghosts Live  
Brittany Austin

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# Swim Lessons

Peter Cooke

Please enjoy your time  
In this 100 per cent  
Lethal environment.  
Practice, please sinking  
And blowing bubbles  
Your best imitation of  
drowning.

And save yourself  
At the last minute.

There are bored high  
school kids

Keeping sleepy watch.

So not to worry.

Also disregard your red  
rimmed eyes

From what is mostly water  
And partly chlorine. And

A hardly detectable  
quantity

Of urine, dead skin, and all  
The makings of a really  
good



*Klause's Adventure* Emma Antonio



## *Landscape* Elijah Tabellija



### *Bentley's Sonnet*

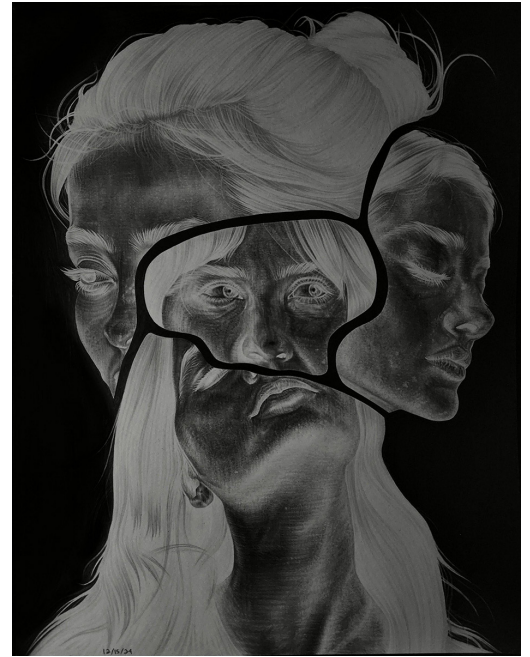
Claire Phillips

I came into this world  
facing the sky  
With hopeful notions  
yet to be conceived,  
I never was prepared  
for him to die;  
He was the greatest  
thing I'd ever grieved.  
Paws hit the damp  
ground with fervent  
purpose,

Small toddler feet follow  
closely behind.

A pup is born with  
wisdom to serve us;  
To stand loyal, always by  
our side.  
And that's what Bentley  
did until the end,  
When mornings were  
clear, and evenings were  
free,  
Away to the rainbows he  
did ascend,

## *In Converse* Spencer Thiel



The most gentle dog I  
ever did see.  
To know a dog is  
to make your heart  
whole;  
Both young and old,  
every dog has a soul.

## *Not a Word*

Karis D'Orazio

I never felt strong until  
she told me I couldn't be  
I never wanted to yell until  
she told me to be quiet  
I would have apologized  
but she told me to before  
I could even get the words out.  
I didn't even say a word  
and somehow I said it wrong.

## *Heart of Iron*

Emily Killebrew

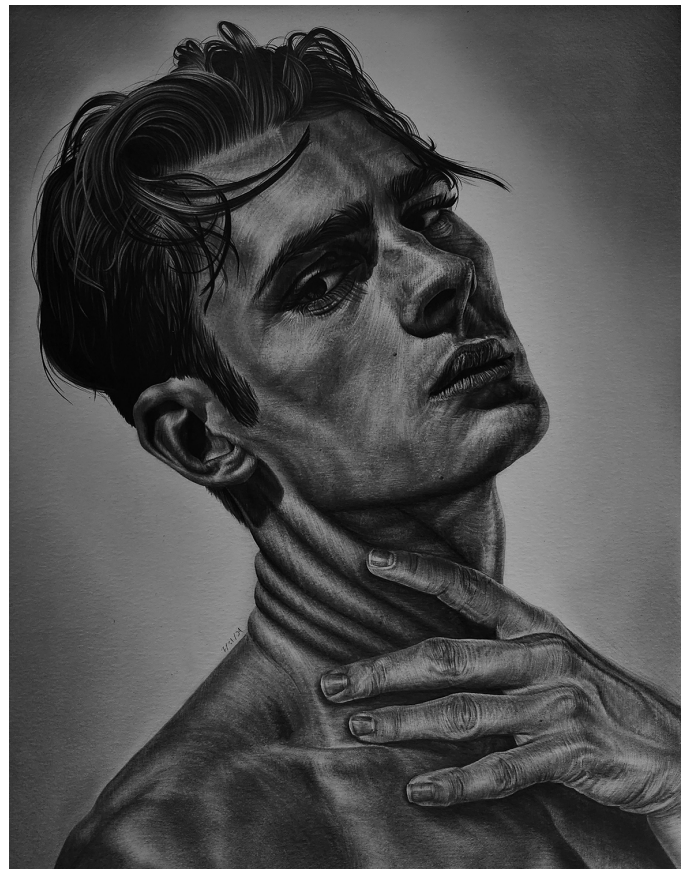
Cooling metal against iron,  
before **I'm** stuffed again into  
fire  
to be beaten into the tool I am meant  
to be,  
bending, flattening, rounding  
against the anvil from the smiths'  
hands.  
**Sizzles** on my red hot skin  
I cry out when their hammers drop  
down,



Voice dinging in my **ears**.  
Smiths, let my cries be silenced.  
**Just** take my voice **away**,  
and it replace it with one like  
yours

## *Flora Urbana*

Diego Diaz



*Voicing*

By Spencer Thiel

**Grass Roots**  
Peter Cooke

This haze, nag champa  
Reminds me of skipping school.  
One day I wandered in  
A bookstore, so it claimed  
And I guess there were  
some there. The Mists of Avalon.  
The Tao of pooh, and Rumi.  
A rack of incense left  
over the years Indelible,  
a scent of jasmine,  
Patchouli, and sandalwood.  
Brass and crystal twinkled  
On glass shelves, softly lit.

Ambient music, just loud enough  
To hear over the whoosh  
of passing cars.  
A case with packs of tarot cards  
And handmade velvet bags  
Where dragons danced  
Among Celtic knots.  
And little bottles with fragrant  
oils.  
In darkened corners, kindly gods  
Peered out from  
Brilliant tapestries, their hands  
Holding tridents, shells and

there, I'd meet a stranger  
Fellow browsers  
in this place that dealt  
in wares of wonder.  
I never saw anyone buy  
anything  
But looking back I know,  
We all left  
with more Than the scent  
of nag champa on our clothes.

# Hailey Cook      The Lost Meaning

I remember the last time you saw me,  
how you cried, and I understand now that  
your tears didn't represent sadness of not  
knowing who I was or of missing me.

But instead those tears were the only way  
you could tell me how really you felt.

Words were no longer your strong suit.

You looked at me with watery eyes hoping  
I would understand that you love me and  
how it brings you joy to see me in your  
arms.

You cried. Not because my face held no  
recognition.

But because it reminded you of your  
family.

I could barely look at you.

Not because I didn't love you or want to  
see you.

But I was scared that looking into my eyes  
would tell the truth.

I was scared.

Of losing you. Facing the fact the fact that  
one day you would be gone.

Your scent would disappear from the scarf  
I wore around my neck

One that you had in your closet.

Your voice would become a distant  
memory.

Afraid that one day I will forget what  
you sounded like when you held a  
conversation with me.

Did you roll your rs? Say your s just a little  
bit sloppy? What was it like when you said  
my name?

I was scared my eyes would tell what I was  
trying to hide

I wrote you a birthday poem.

I never showed you

Not because I thought you would hate it.

But because I was afraid my voice would give away my  
emotions. Shaky breaths.

If I read those words out loud, you would know  
everything

All the naked truths I tried to hid from the world.

And I wouldn't let you see the scars forming on my  
heart.

I couldn't bear to see your eyes get misty

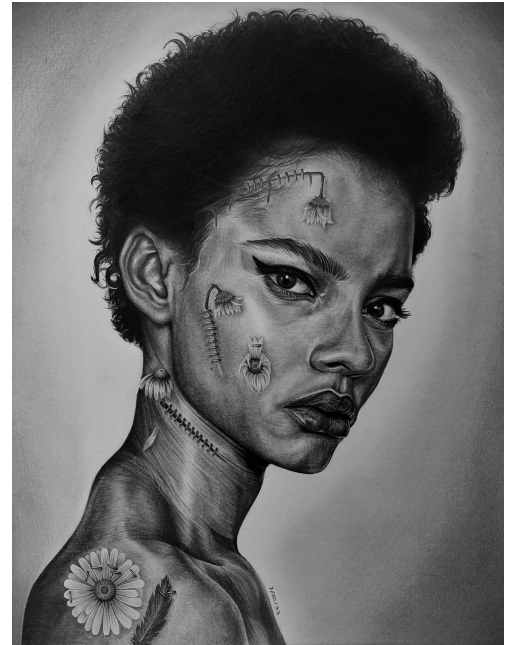
Unshed tears forming, slowly dropping

Again, your tears didn't represent the saddens over not  
remembering who I was or the  
memories my words held.

But because you were scared.

Of forgetting the moments we shared.

So Called "Growth"      Spencer Thiel





*Three Sisters of Fate* Chloe Elmore

*The Death of Trust*

Aidan Korff

Our trust is gone.  
I want to say it was shot to death,  
killed off quickly, but honest introspection says it found a slow descent to its mausoleum. How hallowed was that trust I fashioned for you - the one who taught me the craft of words,

who first showed me I could be strong of mind and body both. Did your intent become wretched only with time, or was it always so? You taught me to preach a message I hardly understood, preying on that sacred trust - it took forgive you that wrong,

and all my will not to make war with you. A month ago I broke your delusion of me, so you stuck a knife in my joy and left my spirit bleeding. In His way I forgive you - which I know you detest - and I walk away.



## What is Grieving Like

Emily Killebrew

Nana, it's past my  
bedtime  
and I'm trying to **rest** before **classes**  
tomorrow,  
but I lay awake still, realizing your life is both  
empty from many departed  
and full of Hope.

How do you do it?  
Faithfully going through mourning and troubles.  
How should I grieve when you **pass away**?

Should I be full of sorrow?

Or should I sing joyful praises to God?  
for your face to-face with **Jesus**?

I know that my grieving path will be  
different from yours  
for

you have endured long, but for  
now, please  
teach me what you know while you  
still can.

I love you  
and want to hear more of your voice  
until it is drowned out by the storm.

# *The Last Breath*

Alona Kemenyash

Looking at the reflection of the half moon in the ripples of the water I pondered if this is what I truly wanted. I tried everything I could to stay surviving, but she... He hit me, your honor! Her voice echoed in my mind. Her voice is the only thing in my mind. I-I was pushed and forced into... Sex. Like shit she was. I felt my chest tighten and tears swell up to the surface. I asked her, made sure, and she... She never loved me. "I have to do this. There is nothing left." I mumbled, determined to put an end to this shit hole. She ruined my damn life. You're a rapist! I step closer to the edge, the railing ripped from both sides. They could have at least covered this up, but I guess they give no shit about someone like me. Someone who didn't ask for this. Did you hear what he did to his girlfriend? No, what happened? He raped her. Is that why he was taken away mid-class? God, why did she do this to me? Am I a monster? I look up, tears falling down my cheeks and blending in with the rain on my face. "Is this your way of punishing me?" Only sounds of water hitting the ground was heard as the answer. I look down at the void beneath me.

Our apologizes, but we have to withdraw our offer after doing the background check.

Due to reasons we have to decline your application to our institution. I had dreams too like she did. We dreamed of a life together. Talked about how we would try every single arcade there is and review them online. How we would make an album filled with our photos from every state. Heeeey, guess what? What? I loooove you. I love you too. So, wanna dance? I don't know how. That's okay, let's just feel it. The moon is pretty, too bad we can't see the stars. You know, we are alone. I thought you didn't want to loose your virginity till marriage? I changed my mind. Hmm... Are you sure? Absolutely. I can't fucking believe you cheated on me! I didn't! We broke up a week before you and I got together. Bullshit. You'll regret this. Kaila, I- Save it for the court. Sudden sirens draw in and I hear tires squealing. Are you fucking serious? You fucked the bitch? He h-hit me and grabbed my neck leaving this... bruise. I don't look back. "Baby, don't! This isn't the wa-". I step forward and let the wind

catch me. The wind whistles past my ears as the sirens fade away and I feel cold water around me. My body draws in a breath. I can't breath! Fuck! Honey, you know it's not your fault she lied. I believe you, she sounds like a bitch anyway. My friend has a job you could possibly take, although it is a car wash job... Maybe you can wait on college till you have some money? Trying to swim up, my lungs burn and I trash around. The fluid pulls me further down. This feels useless. I feel useless. So... want to maybe go out for dinner? I can't pay, though. I'll pay for you, it's okay! Only if you want. I do. I like you. I like you. I Like You. Please! No! I'm sorry! I'll be better! Please! The iron taste fills my mouth and I can't take a breath. My lungs burn and I feel heavy. I watch as the blurred moonlight fades from view. My freezing body feels warm and I feel tired. My head pounds and the light above seems too much. I close my eyes. I like you, Andrew. Maybe we can do this more ophn...

# Not What it Seems

By Hailey Cook

You see a man walking down the street grumbling like thunder right before the lightning strikes  
He looks mad when he almost bumps into your shoulder, like it was all your fault instead of his  
You mumble under your breath about watching where you are going.

But just 10 minutes before he lost the love of his life unexpectedly  
The doctors said nothing could have prevented the unthinkable stopping of her heart but he wishes he did everything differently  
56 years together but he wishes he told her I love you one more time  
The little girl at school is all alone  
Gets picked on everyday for baggy clothing and unruly hair that they describe as a birds nest.

They say things like her parents don't love her  
what they don't realize is how right they are  
She's reminded everyday.  
By the clothes that don't fit right, the scrapes of food left on the far food left on the table after her parents eat.

It's not that they don't have money,



but the don't feel the need to take care of the little girl they to the world.  
This teen girl was sitting in the far corner of the dinner  
A place she thought would go unnoticed  
Just for once. No mistakes  
The waitress wonders what could make a girl so kind, and empathetic  
heartbroken  
She puts herself out there to boys at her school  
They play along with words of affection and kind gestures  
Until they had enough when she wouldn't put out  
Then they said hurtful words that felt like a stab to the back  
People laughed and her friends turned their backs.  
Everyone has a story.

# Medicine

By Abigail Krupar

Formulas, orchestras  
a sum of two, bright red and blue  
tie your shoelaces, familiar faces  
Where is the stop sign? I cannot see the lines  
Another equation, medicine takes persuasion  
As pills slide down my throat, one goes missing in my coat, the goats say meow, but how?  
Take my chemicals, make it technical, to see the light with no fights for sleepy nights, lost in the  
pillow, I dream of the wise willow

-multicolored with answers-  
Doctors don't know the truth, and neither do the pastors, it's never smooth

Word problems gotta solve them, I already have enough on my plate, try and try again but never  
get it right, let's begin with a clean slate  
Sure, I'll take a bite  
Fools say they understand the phenomenon, you hear them go on and on.

Lost and Found Juliette Lloyd



# *The Past*

By Hailey Cook

Unruly blonde hair and eyes like the ocean

Layers of clothing that don't match but a smile on her face like he hung the moon

Holding onto to a hand three times the size of hers

Trusting his strength and love to help her jump off the boulder on the beach. A memory in a picture that will never be forgotten.

A beanie, gloves, and boots too big for her feet

Family surrounding the little girl in snow, sledding and stuffing faces with food

Eyes looking down at the little wonder who was only just learning about the world and magic that could be made.

Curiosity wiped across her face, a cold breeze felt like the arctic

She thought "how could anything be so cold"

A picture still clear as day in a USB drive on the desk of a home that is no longer hers.

Two girls, two pink dresses, one spoken rule to never mention the dance or the pictures that followed.



Delete the evidence of a night full of drama and heartbreak  
Hurt feet and loneliness  
The only people who have a piece of that night are two moms and their phones.  
The pictures in an album saved from 2019

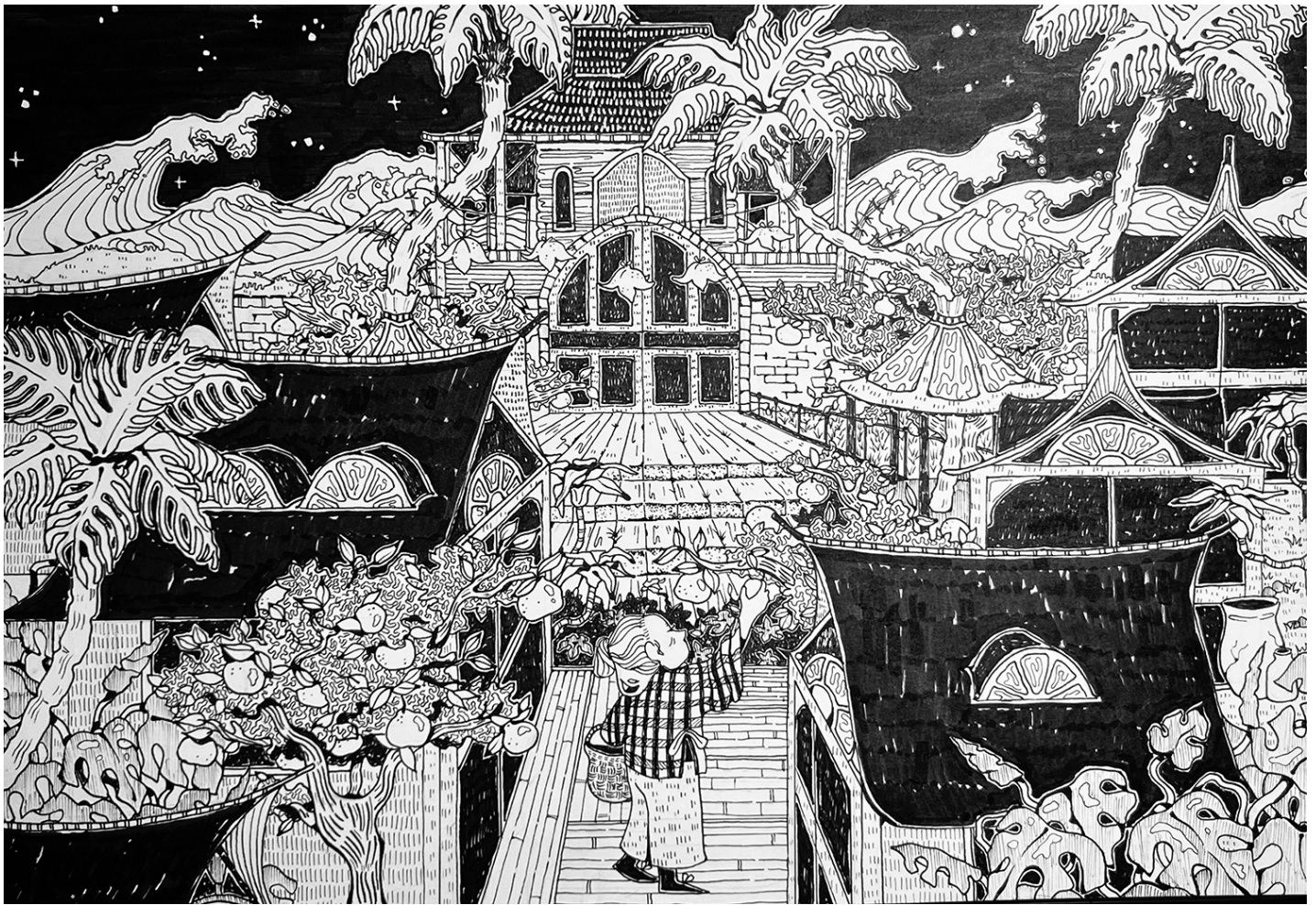
*Rotting From The Inside Out*

Spencer Thiel

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# What's Left

By Ella Bintoro



## *Littered Table*

By Hailey Cook

Scrapbook filled pages lined with memories  
Of a Disneyland trip in the summer  
And a visit with papa on the weekend  
The image of two people, one small  
and one grown  
Gathered around a table littered with  
crafts

A beautiful quilted blanket on the  
side  
Stickers to remind us of our  
adventures  
Scissors in our hands, pictures in  
our minds  
And endless stories to unfold from  
the depth of our souls.

## *Nothing Abnormal*

Karis D'Orazio

I have a chronic illness  
you can't tell by looking  
at me; I look perfectly  
regular nothing abnormal

I put on a brave face every  
morning  
I try to wear it throughout  
the day, sometimes I slip  
and people start noticing

I am barely a human  
I only do the basics  
no time or energy to  
add anything extra

I struggle to walk to class  
I have to make sure  
I manage my pace,  
everything  
I eat makes me nauseous

No one would know  
just by looking at me  
that I am fighting for my life



*Peeling Crushing* Spencer Thiel

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Winter 2025

