


LIT VOICES ISSUE 05

PERSIMMON REVIEW

“VANILLA IN THE NIGHT” BY CALEB KIM



An illustration of several persimmons hanging from a grey, gnarled branch. The persimmons are a warm, orange-brown color with soft shading to give them a three-dimensional appearance. The background is a light, warm beige color. In the bottom right corner of the illustration, there is a small, handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "EK".

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

Welcome to Issue 05: Lit Voices of Persimmon Review. The literary magazine's fundamental mission is to highlight the voices of young writers and artists. Therefore, this issue is particularly special because it features pieces from contributors who are eighteen years old or younger. Through this issue, these creators convey their creative voices through impactful art, prose, and poetry. Amplifying their pieces is important because it provides different perspectives and encourages other young writers and artists to embark on their artistic journeys.

Thank you to the contributors who submitted their work to make this publication possible. Additionally, thank you to the readers and social media followers.

It is an honor to share this issue, and I hope it inspires everyone. Happy reading!

-Emily Kim
Founder, Editor-in-Chief

Table of Contents

<i>I CAN'T CHANGE THE WEATHER, IT MIGHT NOT BE FOREVER.</i>	05
by Aadhya Parvathy	
<i>A LONE SEAGULL</i>	09
by Aditi Joshte	
<i>ORANGE</i>	10
by Angelina Tang	
<i>I ASK EARTH TO CHANGE</i>	12
by Avery Leloup	
<i>ME -- THE DOG</i>	13
by Claudia Wysocky	
<i>CHANGE</i>	15
by d. liu	
<i>CLOUD'S TEARS</i>	16
by Dhristii Chatterjee	
<i>HOW MY LOVE IS</i>	18
by Giulia Teixeira	
<i>CEREMONY</i>	20
by Jisu Yee	
<i>THE FIRST TIME I SAW THE MOON</i>	23
by Kasie Abat	
<i>APPLE OF MY EYE</i>	25
by Khloe Fong	
<i>ANNEXATION OF MORTALITY</i>	26
by Meheru Alaspure	

Table of Contents

<i>OVER THE HORIZON</i>	28
by Nana Yaa Abeyieh	
<i>DON'T LOOK UNDER MY BED</i>	31
by Oriane Hong	
<i>A CLASSIFIED INVITATION OVER COFFEE</i>	34
by Prisha Goyal	
<i>EFFECTS OF INSECURITY</i>	36
by Shu J. Liu	
<i>THE NUMBERS GAME</i>	38
by Sophia Quintana	
<i>ALL DOLLED UP!</i>	40
by Yesmine Marouani	

I can't change the weather, it might not be forever.

by Aadhya Parvathy

Aadhya is a high school student from India. She's been writing since she was 12 years old. Whenever she's not busy with school, she enjoys escaping reality in any way she can, and talking to her mom or her best friend.

The way Gracie's mind worked was simple. She doesn't believe in love. She believes in Jo. For someone like Gracie, someone who often took things at face value, love was a complicated emotion. Jo, on the other hand, looked for meanings – *hidden meanings*– in everything. When they were kids, Jo would draw blobs of different colours and say it was like their friendship. She'd say their friendship could be shaped into anything. It would fit in anywhere. Their friendship would always have room in their life. Just like these blobs took on different forms, so would their friendship. After all, it was just her and Jo against the world. She liked that. "Live enough for the both of us, Gracie," she'd said. How was that possible? Gracie's sole reason for not giving up yet is Jo. If anything, it's Jo that's living for both of them. Gracie was a coward. She'd always been one, long before she met Jo. Going out of her comfort zone was equivalent to swallowing an atomic bomb. To Jo, it was any other regular tuesday. Gracie doesn't believe in life. She believes in Jo. Her sweet, courageous Josephine.

Jo, who taught her to live.

Jo, who was the reason she smiled so often.

Jo, who told her to live enough for the both of them.

Jo, who disappeared from her life faster than the wind.

"My sweet Gracie,

I know you're probably wondering where I am and how I'm doing.

I..have never been greater, Gracie. I think this was a good idea. You know, travelling the world, meeting new people, all these experiences. I wish you were here with me. If you were, then we'd be walking around Central Park with our fingers intertwined. I miss you, I'm sorry. I love you, I'm sorry.

With love, your Jo."

The truth was that Gracie constantly thought about Jo. Before Jo, sunsets were just orange with tinges of yellow. The 5pm sky was just pink. Now sunsets reminded her of marmalade, and the 5pm sky reminded her of the strawberry ice cream. Images of Jo's attempts at eating an ice cream cone without getting it on her nose would flood Gracie's mind. Every memory they shared would barge into her mind like a storm with no sign of clearing out.

"O' Gracie, My Gracie!

I'm writing this in the place where they buried William Wordsworth. I know, I know the way I addressed you is from a Walt Whitman poem, but that's your favourite poem, and today I'm all about poetry. Have you read '1383' by Emily Dickinson? It reminded me of you. Specifically, the way your eyes widened when I told you that I love you. The air felt as if it was soaked in honey that day.

With love, your Jo."

No, Gracie won't confess that she waited. But she let the lamp burn. Every day, without her even knowing it, the hope that Jo would keep her promise and come back to her grew. She tried— God, she tried so hard— to forget the days when Jo was hers. But as the storm

petered down, so did the hope she held so tenderly in her heart. And just like that, the woman who sits by the window turned out the light.

“ Gracie, Gracie, Gracie,

These few days I've been thinking. I think I knew you in another life, and you definitely had the same look in your eyes. Things are good, I am good. But I miss you, and I hope that you're ok. Your words keep me sane and happy, Gracie. I hope one day we'll get to dramatically hug in the airport like in those coming-of-age movies I'd make you watch. How's the stuffed bunny? I named him Jelly, just how you wanted when we were 5. I spent, like, 50-60 bucks trying to win you this thing. I hope you love him, Gracie. I miss you, I'm sorry. I love you— hey, don't act so surprised. Happy Birthday, my sweet Gracie. You deserve the world and more.

With love, your Jo.”

‘You know, Gracie, love is never lost when perspective is earned,’ she'd said as she threw a gummy bear in her mouth. And just like everything else about Jo, Gracie believed it. She wouldn't call herself foolish, no. She still remembers the day Jo told her the three words she'd never heard before. They were 15, eating ice cream— in cones— outside Gracie's house. ‘Gracie, I love you,’ she'd said as she ate the last bit of the wafer cone. Gracie's eyes were wide and the ice cream was melting down her arm. ‘What? don't act so surprised, of course I love you,’ Jo laughed as she pulled Haeun into her embrace. That day, she swore to both Jo and to herself that she'd love her 'til the day the light leaves her eyes. Jo taught her to love, and that's all she did. Whenever she had the courage to look at the marmalade sunsets, she'd wonder if she was living enough for the both of them. She'd wonder if Jo was living enough for the both of them.

petered down, so did the hope she held so tenderly in her heart. And just like that, the woman who sits by the window turned out the light.

My sweet Gracie,

It's been a while, hasn't it? I'm sorry it's taken me so long to write.

Life's been hectic. How are things for you? I hope you're living enough for the both of us, and I hope I am, too. Remember that night? Take good care of our Patti Smith records, okay? We saved up for months for those, ha. I miss you, I'm sorry. I'll be back one day, even if you've stopped waiting for me. Merry Christmas, Haeun.

Yours forever, Jo."

a lone seagull

by Aditi Joshte

Aditi is a high school student (currently in year 11), who loves writing. Poetry is a form of therapy for her; a way to communicate and release her feelings and thoughts. She is currently 15 years old and has been writing ever since she was 10.

a lone seagull

soars playfully high.

a quest to find the sea;

a dire need.

its colony has long gone,

long lost with winds.

where they are now,

who knows;

who ever will?

'tis a matter of survival now, of instincts.

a solitary journey;

misery or bliss?

orange

by Angelina Tang

Angelina Tang is a writer from Western New York. Her work has previously appeared in Polyphony Lit Mag, Madwomen in the Attic, and more. She likes jellyfish and lilacs.

Everything is orange on the west coast.

Orange sunsets. Orange fruit. Orange-tinted sunglasses, my little white dress with the orange lace decals. I get tired of it all, the sameness. It was all so exciting. It's supposed to be so exciting. When did it stop?

The sky looks grey, most of the time. Seagulls with grey wings and colorless feathers, staring up at me from the sand with those bright orange-red eyes, they seem to stare right through me and rip me apart into little digestible shreds.

You left so long ago, and the excitement went with you. You took the life, the colors, apart from orange, with you, and I am bitter to this very sunset over it. You were my sunshine, a little nursery rhyme maraschino cherry--the real sun and golden hour rays are only a caricature of you, your heat. They make me so angry.

You were a good lover. Good at loving, good at kissing in the salty sea waves, good at driving fast with an arm around my narrow sunscreen-sticky shoulders, a thin white shirt and tiny shorts thrown over a scarlet bikini you'd approved of with a kiss and a cocktail that tasted of grenadine and vodka with a little paper parasol stuck on the rim.

I recline on the yellow sand after a long day's work, a summer weekend part-time at the beach's bar. Music has grown to grate on my senses recently. The music on the bar--I can hardly hear it sometimes for the noise of the customers. When I can, it seems so tuneless to me. It's a vibe, it's a bop, it's a jam, but it's not sweet. It doesn't smooth out the

jagged lines crisscrossing my brain. It doesn't roll like the acoustics of your little red car going 50 on the 35 down the seaside roads blasting Lana Del Rey making me feel like a real Americana girl fit with heart-shaped sunglasses and a lover's lipstick, the same shade as the one smudged on your flimsy white shirt collar.

I want your music back.

I open my eyes and I see your eyes in the sky, your face above mine. I wish I could dream and remember your face, instead of autumn rainfall and summer's end, a final visit to the beach before I had to drive inland to work and work and slave away under a grey roof and grey sky.

I really hate orange, and I miss the sun.

I Ask Earth to Change

by Avery Leloup

Avery Leloup is a rising high school sophomore who adores reading and writing, along with going on bike rides with friends and having Dunkin' Donuts.

Dark craters

in boxed ceiling panels—

to be stars is

no small task.

Me -- The Dog

by Claudia Wysocky

Claudia Wysocky, a Polish writer and poet based in New York, is known for her diverse literary creations, including fiction and poetry. Her poems, such as "Stargazing Love" and "Heaven and Hell," reflect her ability to capture the beauty of life through rich descriptions. Besides poetry, she authored "All Up in Smoke," published by "Anxiety Press." With over five years of writing experience, Claudia's work has been featured in local newspapers, magazines, and even literary journals like WordCityLit and Lothlorien Poetry Journal. Her writing is powered by her belief in art's potential to inspire positive change. Claudia also shares her personal journey and love for writing on her own blog, and she expresses her literary talent as an immigrant raised in post-communism Poland.

The typical things:

When everyone left,

I screamed,

–Does anyone care?

I moped.

–Stuck inside my room, alone,

Nobody coming to see me.

Everybody left,

–But I want to feel like them again.

Moving on,

Moving on from Me.

Adrift,

Just trying to live,

Ignoring everything.

Sit by the bowl–

Play a game for two!

Nothing better,

–than just being,

Food's on the counter,

Waiting

Waiting

W

a

i

t

i

n

g,

For my faithful owner.

change

by d. liu

d. liu is a rising junior who is an avid writer, but even more so, an avid wanderer, feeler, and explorer.

concepts are pursuits that are intangibly endeavored for
where you reach and never feel or touch or hold
for the grass is always greener on the other side, right?

fresh silhouettes of apples patiently present
in the mahogany crate, presumably, they
signify wealth: money, the
sweet aftertaste of the slashed skin
blood dissipating in your mouth

does the world ever remain still;
a breath of fresh immovable air
status quo sits statically secure
or when the crate is polluted with
venomous liquid, seeping around the rough
edges, do the apples decay?

if they were mittens, would they have
survived in the basin instead?

Cloud's tears

by Dhristii Chatterjee

A free spirited poet on the path of music and poetry Navigating through life with a musical theatre-esque approach to it

Maybe the sky knows im unhappy

So it gives me rain, nature's pathetic falacy

Tears inside, tears outside

My shirt are all wet but i havent stepped foot outside

I tie my shoes

Excited to feel the rain on my skin

But when i go down it stops

As fleetingly as my happiness once did

It comes when im alone, crying secluded

It brings me happiness and then goes like the mirage of an oasis in a deserted place

I am a desert, dry and stranded

I need rain but it fleets away

It does not follow me

I do not let it

Because the rain is a sign of my sadness and it goes away with it

But i want the rain

I want it to come when i am content

When the only fear i have is the fear of it going away

I scream at the clouds, why do u go away?

When i need u the most why do u escape?

I am not made to make u upset, the clouds whispers

I am here to be that fleeting happiness

I bring you rainbows in the sky

I am not ur enemy, child

So for once, i listen to the clouds and i stay happy for the rain

And soon enough when i go outside, it thunders as it cascades

Rain makes me happy, it is a sign of my bliss

Rain sympathizes, natures gift.

How my love is

by Giulia Teixeira

Giulia Teixeira is a Brazilian young writer filled with passion when it comes to living different lives. Being a bookworm, cinephile, theatre kid and author has given her the opportunity to embark on new adventures through simple and meaningful words.

Tinting boulevards

i see the fairest heights;

twilight is in

amber is passing through

I lounge in bed

the sheets remind me of

your wildest swell

and waves sweep me away

in heartstrings.

An auburn tunnel

that ends with

a taupe of mine

one after another and then my softened

lips

the seas

I hope they move you as well;

your infinite brine opens rapidly

reflections of amity

now carry me away.

In a sincere delirium

the navy flag shone and I

amber
foresaw
too soon?
my dearest
it's you
and I'm in pain
that the elbow
struck the tip
chestnut silk
adhere prison's edge
innocent feet
in sunlit asphalt
my eyes on yours.

Latterly it aches
but it is
from love
for it is
of love
that I will perish.

Ceremony

by Jisu Yee

Jisu Yee is a high school student based in New York who writes Creative Nonfiction and Poetry.

The hum of cicadas in the trees pulsed around me like a heat wave, and my dress was glued to my back with sweat. My dad took off his obligatory suit jacket and began walking, his black shoes slapping the stone path in a soldier's rhythm. I trailed a few feet behind him, almost tripping over rocks, and held on tightly to the piece of paper in my hand.

It had been a hundred days since my grandfather's death in April 2020 from a sudden heart attack. Due to South Korea's strict COVID regulations, only my dad was there for the funeral. It was now August, and COVID regulations had been relaxed, so my family went to where we scattered his ashes—a church memorial at the top of a winding hill.

About halfway, my dad and I waited at a bench next to the path so everyone could catch up. The trees behind us stretched upwards but had branches that drooped down, creating the effect of being in a cave and enveloping us into shady darkness. I remembered the night we got the news that he died. My dad standing, forehead leaned against his bookshelf, palms hitting the shelves in heavy thuds like he was begging to be let in some invisible door. His voice oscillated between wailing pleas for forgiveness and a terrifying silence. I ran to the bathroom, locked the door, and felt my feet slip until I was on the floor, head between my knees. Sitting at the bench, running my fingers over thick, plush moss was just as soothing as running my fingers in the smooth grooves between the bathroom tiles.

That night, I was filled with a surprising but overwhelming sense of confusion and anger with myself. I only saw my grandfather for a few days each year. I often shied away

from his eager questions about my life, and rarely asked about his. What right did I have to be so upset, in comparison to someone like my dad? Was I scared of seeing him in so much pain? Was it that I could never truly understand what I had lost, making the loss worse?

We continued walking, now with my aunt, uncle, mom, and grandma. My dad was ahead of us again. I recalled the video of him at the funeral, carrying a large picture of my grandfather—his duty as the eldest son—walking as he did now, rhythmic and silent. My mom had told me not to ask about the funeral, and he never offered any details.

Finally, we had reached the top of the hill. Marked by nothing but a tall slab of stone with Korean writing on it, the church memorial nonetheless seemed to dominate the space; it was covered with flowers from grieving families and the trees seemed to bend in its direction. My grandma added her bouquet and led us through a prayer. One by one, the rest of my family said their own, and then it was my turn. Per my mom's suggestion, I had written a poem—my parents promised to translate it later. I unfolded the paper and began to read.

The poem did reference my few precious memories of my grandfather, such as him brushing my hair when I was younger. It contained my feelings of not knowing how to handle grief and guilt. Mostly though, it contained stories from my dad about everything—why my grandfather quit smoking, his military service, and how he got the idea for my dad's name in a dream. The stories that weaved an incomplete yet loving tapestry of him in my mind.

When I had finished, my dad gave me a tight hug, and he buried his face into my shoulder. "That was beautiful. Thank you so much." He pulled away to look at me and smiled. His eyes—that were just like my grandfather's eyes, and my eyes—were glassy from crying, and in them I could see myself smiling back. I looked around at all the people my grandfather loved and who knew him well. I knew that there are still stories, regret,

sadness, and joy left in them. I can see it in firm hand squeezes, in eyebags from sleepless nights.

My grandma started to sing, her shaky voice stabilizing into a clear ring. When we got to the refrain, I closed my eyes and imagined myself lighting my poem on fire. I imagined a sweet, earthy scented breeze ascending to the sky, like incense at a ceremony, while burnt paper scraps cascaded to the ground, curling around my grandfather's remains in an everlasting embrace.

the first time i saw the moon

by Kasie Abat

Kasie is a young writer based in California who has been recreationally writing poetry for three years. She adores art of all forms, but in her free time she enjoys building Gundams and playing the violin.

i was 15 when i noticed my first new moon,

that was the moment it started.

they say a new moon is symbolic of new beginnings,

but i was never that superstitious-

not until i actually experienced it

i ended up in a trench for the very first time that night.

i stared at the empty sky

reveling in the marvel of nothingness

till suddenly i had fallen,

i never had before-

yet i felt no sense of urgency to escape-

it didn't take long,

trapped would be an understatement.

surrounded by darkness-

completely cloaked in the absence of light,

i've never felt this way before.

void of a way out

i prayed for the moonlight,

the soft glow to brighten the edges

illuminating any path leading me to slip away

i stayed in the trench till i saw my first full moon.

that was the moment it ended.

they say a full moon is symbolic of completion

i believed them.

or at least now i did.

Apple of My Eye

by Khloe Fong

Khloe Fong is an aspiring artist who enjoys making stickers in her free time.



Annexation of Mortality

by Meheru Alaspure

Meheru is a sophomore studying at Ryan International, Pune. She loves tangerine sunsets, turkish lattes, blair waldorf, organic chemistry and sylvia plath. She spends her nights listening to Chopin and scribbling eloquent meaningless nothings into her diary. She is also a big adrenaline junkie, so if you have free sky-diving passes she'll come running. Her work has been published in Alcott Youth, Studio moone magazine and she is an editor for Asterope and Ode to Death magazines and a writer at Med Her Society and Paradise on Parchment.

The sky mesmerizing, like a raspberry cocktail

Dawn's gold veined jaw, it's tangerine clouds

Kisses my cheek, whispering secrets into my ears

The landscape, even more mesmerizing

A human crafted elysium

Collapsed buildings, debris like fallen stars

Beautiful hands scattered like fragrant pollens

Silent cries of plea

Blood and gray matter

Crimson red fire, fluid against the loam as a perennial river

Ash and slaughtered souls

Maybe alive, unblinking

Wails of desperation,

Shrieks of manic agony

Disfigured eyes

Irises still searching for their loved

At the epoch war,

I am reminded again and again

Mortality is a city built to be wrecked

To be annihilated

Who dare breach the laws of humanity,

We all are nothing but nugatory pawns

In the game of the devil

It butchers the heart

Decimates flesh and bones

Leaves you

Cratered like the moon

Without a sun to face

An everlasting eclipse

Over the horizon

by Nana Yaa Abeyieh

Nana Yaa Abeyieh is a high school student in Ghana and enjoys listening to music not bound to any genre but as of now she listens to more amapiano and afrobeats. She also loves to write poems during her free time or when she draws inspiration from her life or issues that surrounds her. You can sometimes find her head buried into a romance book, fantasy, sci-fi or any genre that captures her attention. She finds joy in the chaos of finding what entices her to pour her heart out in her next poem. From time to time she takes interest in watching shows, movies and even anime with her current favourite show being Supacell and anime being Black Clover.

When the world sleeps,
silence enters,
a wave of peacefulness floods my soul.
My thoughts are mine.
I hear them and get submerged
no distractions, just me myself and my pencil.
Trying to put words to my feelings
wanting to capture the moment
before I let it slip from my hands.
Jotting, scribbling and assembling pieces of myself
Every letter, every word,
it comes from a place of loneliness.
A feeling or wanting to belong
to belong,
to find a purpose,
to find my worth in living.

Confused, scared, disappointed

with my brain when I need it.

It fails to aid me.

Letting my emotions control my fingers,

never doubting my instincts.

Trying to articulate a perfect formula

to form my next line.

Just a girl trying to exist

Without the claws of the world

Scratching and tearing me down

ripping off the world I want to create just for me

Finding and loosing myself

In the words

Instead of facing my feelings

Watching the night while away

Looking up to the stars

Twinkling bright as ever

As I look for a source of inspiration

Being confused like never before

Thinking of what comes after this

Am I staying true to myself?

Will my next piece of work

be better than the previous ones?

Questions, uncountable

Fill the hollow part of my mind

Do I push for a way I can be heard

or stay glued to the pattern of dullness I find and see in my life?

Being unique, authentic, transparent

Makes it difficult to be visible

You put your tears and countless hours

To being noticed

Just for others to see it fit as an opportunity

To use you for their own wants

Hungry for pleasure

Growling for power

Then we see the true nature

The nature of humans

What makes us, well ...us

We always want more

Never satisfied

That's the way of life

Keep pushing, trying, overcoming

because that's when all the

stories and truths become more personal.

Understand this and you ought not to complain.

Don't Look Under My Bed

by Oriane Hong

Oriane explores just how far human creativity can go through the means of art. She dreams of one day publishing a novel or poetry collection that could help others in finding their voice. You can find her at a library studying, in the kitchen baking, at a concert singing, or in her room writing.

Good night,

sweet d(sc)reams.

Do you want the light on?

Don't look under my bed.

There isn't a monster with green eyes,

but there are demons

from my sleepless nights

when my soul was losing light;

when smoke was blinding my sight.

Don't look under my bed,

it's where I store all the thoughts

that glimmer in my head

to remind me that

I don't feel

human.

Don't look under my bed,

all my secrets hide in there.

I put perfume to keep you away

everyday,

from dark horrors,
and earthquakes from midnight tremors.

Don't look under my bed,
my unspoken confessions lay crumpled up.
things I almost said
to you
almost confessing
the truth.

Laying here quietly like stone,
but surging back when no one looks
behind closed books
and treacherous diaries.

Don't look under my bed,
there are ghosts, from my past lives
from every time I let myself bleed
to deserving death.
they're still sleeping,
but a little less dead
than me.

Don't look under my bed,
there are winds
from all the breaths I've held
waiting to exhale

except

no one told me

suffocation is the worst type of

silence.

Don't look under my bed,

there are heartbeats

that might beat you to death.

The ones I've saved like money

for nights where I cried so much I choked,

drowning.

Do you want the light (g)on(e)?

No, there are no monsters.

Do I need to check under the bed?

See, nothing;

they're all in your head!

A Classified Invitation Over Coffee

by Prisha Goyal

Prisha Goyal thinks, therefore she is. She is a high-schooler from India and an avid reader of magical realism and low fantasy. She is an alumna of the Iowa Young Writers' Studio, and her work has been published in the Incandescent Summer Studio Anthology and the Spiritus Mundi Review. In her free time she bakes, engages in art, and does yoga.

“Oh my god, how *would* I have faced that door if you had not come to my aid like a knight in shining armor?” I muttered to the boy who had held the door open for me.

He raised an eyebrow. “I believe the correct response should be ‘thank you’.”

“You’ve been stalking me the entire day,” I snapped. “You expect a thank you in return for that? Maybe a heartfelt gratitude card?”

His smile faded a little. “I can explain.”

“Well, then, you better.” I pulled him into the café I’d just entered, and steered him towards an empty table for two. “Talk.”

He insisted on getting two lattes before saying anything. Three minutes later, he began.

“I’ll get straight to it. The headmaster of The Hawthorne School has identified you as a potential recruit.”

It was my turn to raise an eyebrow. The Hawthorne School was a posh boarding school in Surrey. Everyone had their own theories for what went on in that building, but I had a feeling that the boy in front of me knew that each one of them was wrong.

He continued, “The Hawthorne School...isn’t what everyone thinks it is.”

“Happy Realization Day,” I told him.

“We train spies.”

I stared at him dumbly as I tried to let that information sink in. “Spies?” I repeated.

Oblivious to my astonishment – or perhaps choosing to ignore it – the boy said, “Yes. Spies.” He drew out the last word in a way that indicated just how slow he thought I was being.

I blushed slightly, but forged ahead, “And you want me to be one?”

His eyes narrowed, as if he were wondering if that decision should be reconsidered.

“Well, yeah. You spotted my tail today. That’s first-class spy work.”

Then he hesitated slightly, before adding, “And your grandmother was an alumna of the School. I expect you wouldn’t pass up a chance to learn more about her.”

My eyes widened, and I moved to ask the first ten thousand questions that had come to my mind at that. However, the boy silenced me with a look. It was clear that I wouldn’t be getting any answers from him. He produced an envelope from his pocket as he got up, and dropped it on the table. The wax seal on it was emblazoned with an ornate letter ‘H’.

“The new term starts in two weeks,” he said, before walking out of the café as if he’d never been there in the first place.

The Numbers Game

by Sophia Quintana

Sophia Quintana is among the many teenage girls with waning phone storage, a result of her Notes App stuffed with musings and prose, as should behave an aspiring writer. No books written nor prestigious secondary education yet.

I wake before sunrise every morning and pad to the digital shrine in the corner of the nook just outside of my door that tells me my daily fate. The LED display blinked to life and there they were, as inscrutable and divine prophecy—two numbers I lived and died by. Less than yesterday. Victory.

Another night survived a body at war with itself, skin and bone and sinew in a brutal subtraction race. I scoured my performance like a scholar dissecting sacred texts: each calorie logged, each step counted, and in the margins of my life, interpretations and analyses of this daily scripture. If I fell short, what sins had dragged me down? Where could be more stripped away?

Before long, subtraction became the engine driving all else. Work and rest timed themselves around it, relationships fed or starved upon its tides. In the floor-to-ceiling mirror of my room, I saw not who gazed back but the sum of what could still be lost. My friends commented on my thinning in worried tones, but I only heard praise for what more may flee. The annihilation of self, worship in its purest form.

And so the rituals persist, the same questions asked of my dwindling in new lights each morning. The answers stay cryptic as the void howls to be filled. But in spaces between strategies and analyses, my warring flesh whispers of its weariness through muscles' hymns. My stomach growls awkwardly during my mock exams. My eyes grow tired and gaunt, bigger and maybe even cuter, but exhausted nonetheless. My body longs for balance on its own terms rather than obligations set by a click and glow. This

body asks for refuge, as bodies do, while the mind only schemes for more that can be done.

There is no end to a war like this. Each loss becomes its own unbearable lack, each milestone another cruel deception. In this brutal calculus of flesh versus mind, the soul may starve fastest of all.

They say that the passage of time heals all wounds. But at sun's first light, my old friend is waiting, battery-powered and calibrated, to peel back the scabs one more time.

All dolled up!

by Yesmine Marouani

Yesmine Marouani is an 18 year old student who enjoys articulating her thoughts and experiences through any form of written media but most often finds herself drawn to poetry.

I vacuum seal the fabric to my body and mould the clay mimicking my skin by poking and prodding; not quite sure what it is you'd want from me but adamant to achieve it anyway. This pitiful practice has become an unbreakable ritual of mine, one I'd crafted in the early days (before Eve had succumbed to her fate) and uphold with irrevocable sincerity. Occupying some crevice of your mind is my goal and shape shifting, as I believe it, would make this tangible. I had only meant to make this experience more worthwhile for myself yet in the process, uncovered that I'd only known the myth that had been me through the looking-glass of your irises. This was never intended to be purposeful - I need you to know that. White lies escaped my lips with the frequency of your vocal cords and I'd caught myself (on numerous occasions) convincing- truly believing it was you who'd spoken them. I clung onto the notes as they faded mid air and pulled me along with them in the very same way the tide often claims a stray pebble as its own. I'd wished so badly for signs of reciprocation - is it any true wonder I'd been able to draw them out at every turn? That I'd created word searches of your body language and highlighted where your fingertips graced mine. Knowledge of what I now know as your continued indifference has struck me with such electricity I am able to visualise the damage to my bones in the mirror. My reflection bares the black/white image of carvings in my bones from where they'd welded together in such a way as to allow space for the growing pit of residual passion you'd discarded within me. Still, I am unsure how to discontinue this hobby of mine. In many ways I am unsure I should ever want to. To be reminded with every season of ways you'd

managed to approach areas of my mind I perceived inaccessible and then to have presented it before us both fills me with admiration and regret, lacklustre of the feeling I'd first experienced when I'd noted I was incapable of being the one at the centre of that experience for you. I apologise if it had all seemed overwhelming at the time, but surely then you were able to relive a fraction of what had consumed my every breath and devoured the person I'd been before you. It may not be your fault, but at least tell me you wish it were.

THANK YOU

P E R S I M M O N



R E V I E W

persimmonreview.org

persimmonreviewofficial@gmail.com

 [persimmonreview](https://www.instagram.com/persimmonreview)