

IN MEDIAS RES
Spring/Summer 2009

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Letter From the Editor

So, it is finally finished. Even with scarcely attended meetings and a limited selection of submissions, the hardworking staff of in medias res was still able to produce its very first issue! With Graduation approaching and summer break in sight, the excitement is simply overwhelming.

Personally I found the experience quite interesting, this being my first year in the publishing environment. I hope to expand the influence of this magazine even further by getting more people interested and involved. But for now, it will have to do.

Thank you again to all who participated in PCHS Literary Magazine! It meant a lot, and everyone contributed in their own way. And Special Thanks to Mr. Pilola for getting us started!

Sophia Cosby

The Staff

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Featured Submission

Along with the theme of graduation comes this selection of haikus by Kylie Regan, a recently graduated Senior. You can definitely tell she had senioritis.

Eight Ways of Looking at My Week: By Way of Apology

If you expect this
To be a profound poem
Sorry, think again.

I.
Four AP classes:
People say it makes me smart.
Clearly, I'm insane

II.
I can't read a poem
Now without feeling the urge
To spout some nonsense

III.
TCIS. Yay.
Running in the rain til eight.
Fun times had by all.

IV.
I'm too tired to think.
I'm feeling the absence of
Creativity.

V.
I look like a wreck,
Not to mention how I feel.
Prom is Saturday?

VI.
So sick of reading
"This section will take forty
Minutes. Write Clearly."

VII.

Angst. I am filled with
Angst. When will this week, this month
Finally be done?

VIII.

You are all lucky
That I took the time to make
These poems haikus

This is honestly
The best I can do right now
(See one through seven)

“In the long Run” by Kylie Regan, 12th grade

The familiar anxiety knotted in my stomach as I walked onto the track. The hurdles were lined up before us, seeming to go on infinitely. Just three hundred meters, I told myself. Three hundred meters that I’d run countless times before. My legs were loose, the smell of muscle rub burned in my nose, and I had the mentality that I was going to win it all. The sky was dark with ominous rain clouds, but that was how I liked it on race days: it made the temperature just right, not too hot with just a slight breeze. Everything seemed perfect. Cheers exploded from the other end of the track as the crowds egged on the runners in the heat before mine. It was time.

The director made sure we were all in our proper lanes. I returned my competitor’s too-bright smiles and choruses of “good luck”—it was an outwardly cheery but realistically meaningless ritual. We were the best hurdlers in our conference, and we weren’t about to yield to anyone. The only girl with whom I didn’t exchange these pleasantries was the one from our school’s rival, Academy. The standing joke around the conference was that Academy secretly practiced genetic engineering so that they could train the ultimate athletes from birth. No doubt about it, they were good at every sport they competed in, and the girl I was up against, Jenna Black, seemed to be perfect. She had never run a bad race in her life, and she walked with a confident stride. She was taller than I was which was saying something, and had a thin athletic build that seemed perfect for hurdling. And she was beautiful. Her long black hair was always tied back in a perfect dark braid that fell down her back, and she had beautiful green eyes that always gleamed with something near smugness. I’ll admit that I was jealous: she had looks, talent and composure.

But regardless of Jenna’s intimidating perfection, I was ready for what was to come. It was the last conference race I would ever run, so what did I have to lose? And really there was no reason why I shouldn’t be faster than her today. The seeds were calculated from a comparison of numbers on paper, numbers that more often than not weren’t accurate. Coaches almost always exaggerated the times of their runners, making them seem faster than they were and thus allowing them to run in a more advantageous heat. And the seeds weren’t set in stone; times could change on any given day. I fully expected to run faster that day than I ever had before.

“Runners to your mark.” The command shocked me out of my distracted thoughts. I exchanged a quick, expressionless glance with Jenna Black before she turned to walk calmly take her position in the blocks. I rolled my shoulders, took a deep breath, and did the same.

“Set.” The tension thickened as the word dropped into the still air. It was completely silent all around the track. I could almost feel the stares of the crowds on the other side, of my teammates scattered around the track, of my coach waiting at the finish line. I anticipated the gun, muscles tensing, waiting for that resounding bang that would signal the beginning of my victory.

My muscles twitched forward. The gunshot did not come.

I didn't actually leave the blocks, but it was enough. The gun fired a second later, and then fired again. Two shots meant a false start. Disqualification. The walk of shame off the track. For a wild moment I thought that it might not be me, that the slight movement hadn't counted against me and some other girl that I hadn't seen had taken a step before the gun. But the race director pointed to me, called my lane number, said that I was disqualified and would I please leave the track. I stared at him dumbly before I realized with a sick feeling would never get to run that race. The girl in lane six looked at me sympathetically. It only made it worse. I dropped my head and walked off.

Never in my life had it taken so long to walk around a track. I walked on the asphalt road that encircled the track, the spikes in my racing flats clicking on the hard surface. This isn't good for the shoes or my legs, I thought almost deliriously. But I didn't really care. I was numb. How did that happen? It didn't seem fair. Months of preparation, just to have it come to nothing.

I hadn't walked very far before I heard the gun go off behind me. I didn't want to watch the race that I should have just been starting with all the others, but at the same time I had to. I stopped and turned. Jenna Black had already taken the lead, of course. The lead that I should have had. None of the others were anywhere near her. They turned the corner as I should have been turning it, ran the straightaway as I should have been, glided over the last few hurdles and crossed the finish line, as easily as it should have been for me. I found myself desperately wishing that one of the other girls to sprint ahead and beat Jenna; anyone had to win but her. But of course she won with several seconds to spare. I stood transfixed as I watched the girls that I should have defeated with no difficulty cross the line and bend over, gasping for breath. I continued to watch as they stood in their lanes and waited for the unofficial results to come up on the electronic board. I couldn't move, planned to never move again.

"Leah!"

The voice was startlingly close. I didn't realize that anybody was around me. Looking around, I saw three of my teammates coming towards me. I knew they'd try to tell me it wasn't my fault and half-heartedly console me before they asked what they really wanted to know: what happened out there? They'd make me recount the story more times than I ever wanted to, and behind their sympathetic masks would be accusatory eyes and quick minds calculating our team's chances for victory after this shameful setback.

I knew that it was more than I could bear. I turned and quickly walked the other way, ignoring my teammates' beseeching cries.

That was when the tears started to come, a delayed reaction. My failure completely registered in my mind, and my body trembled with it. I knew that I'd have to face my coach, who would sincerely care about me, and who would do her best to hide her disappointment so she would not make me feel worse. But I knew how much she wanted to win, and my own guilt would do the job as surely as if Coach told me herself that I was a disgrace.

Maybe our team still has a chance, I thought. But I had just caused us to lose five or six points that we had counted on getting. There were still plenty of events to go before the meet was over and the final team scores were announced, but I had a dark premonition of how the day would end. The tears fell faster.

It shouldn't mean that much to screw up one race. But it was my senior year, and running was the only thing that was mine anymore. I was never particularly pretty. My already mediocre grades were slipping as senioritis overcame any concerns about my future. I had a few friends who I loved and the sweetest, most supportive parents in the world, but soon I would be leaving them all to go to college on the other side of the country, a fact that made the looming date of graduation a painful thought in my mind. My sole comfort was running, as pathetic as that sounds. It was the only thing that I could do with confidence of my success, the only thing that I was the best at, the only thing that didn't bring worry whenever I thought about it. It was a release, it was liberation, and it was mine. But now I had lost it.

I ducked my head to avoid the stares of those I walked past, pulling my hair down to partially obscure my face. I had almost walked around the entire track. My coach was only a short distance away, and I could feel her concerned eyes boring into my slouching figure. Just before I reached her, someone walking past brushed my arm. I reflexively looked around and found myself staring after Jenna Black. She glanced back briefly, her perfect green eyes skipping over me without taking me in. "Sorry," she called absently over her shoulder before walking confidently on, not even realizing who she had bumped into.

My shoulders convulsed as I bit back a sob.

"Get it together, Leah." The comforting voice of my coach came from next to me. I turned to her, taking deep breaths, trying to stop the endless stream of tears. I still shook as Coach gave me a firm hug. After a minute she released me and my uncontrollable sobbing had dwindled to a few streams running down my cheeks. I took a few more deep breaths and tried to think about anything but that race. But when my other thoughts yielded nothing pleasant, I had to desperately try to think about nothing at all. It was a gradual process, but eventually I regained some semblance of control over myself. Coach did not ask me to explain what happened. She talked to me for a few minutes before she had to leave to focus on timing upcoming races and making sure other athletes were prepared for their events. Before the day was over, I was asked to explain the race several times, tearing up occasionally and to my extreme embarrassment, until I started avoiding everyone I knew. Eventually I took refuge in a numbness that replaced my violent emotions.

At the end of the day, the awards ceremony was held. Our team lost to Academy by three points.

A week passed. I went to class, attended practice, and studied for exams when I got home in the afternoons. It was an uneventful seven days, but I began to come out of my emotional slump as our team prepared for our last meet, where we would be racing all the private schools in the state that were roughly our size. It wasn't as personal as the Conference race, and it wasn't likely that we would win it, so in a way it was less important. But it was still important to the team, and I saw it as a chance for redemption. When the day of the meet arrived, I was almost as energized and confident as I had been before that last unfortunate race.

It became almost immediately clear that our team would not win this meet; there was a huge, extremely wealthy school from another part of the state whose team was simply bigger and better than everyone else. We accepted that, being as it was nothing

unexpected that they were dominating the competition. Our real goal was to place ahead of Academy.

The beginning of the meet passed in an eerily similar manner to the Conference meet. The competition was close between us and Academy and everyone became increasingly more excited about every event. We picked up a few unexpected points when our girl who ran the mile dropped twenty seconds off her time to place third in the race, and everyone who didn't improve in a similar fashion seemed to be performing as well as they always had. We all became tentatively hopeful; maybe we would finally beat our rival school.

During these early events, I stayed hydrated, ran a few laps to warm up my muscles, and stretched. Then the time came for the three hundred meter hurdles. I walked over to the tent and checked in. At that point all I could do was wait for the race to begin. Jenna was in the same heat as me. She was projected to come in second, myself fourth. We acknowledged each other with nods and the ghosts of smiles as we crossed the infield on our way to the starting line. I reflected that, strangely, in all the races I'd ever run with this girl I'd never said a word to her. We both knew well who the other was, but no words were ever exchanged between us. I guess now isn't really a good time to start a conversation, I thought wryly as we came to a stop before the track.

The heat before us started, and we took our places in our proper lanes, Jenna directly to my left. The former heat finished on the other side of the track to explosive cheers, and I felt an unpleasant sense of *déjà vu*. This day was almost identical to the day of the Conference meet, the only differences being that the skies were clear and more people were crowded in the stadium. I pushed all of my anxiety away. Three hundred meters, and then I would never have to run another race in my life.

"Runners to your mark." The command set my heart beating fast. I walked to the blocks and took up my position. After a minute, the second command came. I raised my body into a crouch, and then remained perfectly still.

The gun went off; two shots in quick succession. My heart sank.

But I didn't move! The thought cried again and again in my head, a mental shout. I was perfectly still, I did NOT move!

The race director pointed to the girl two lanes to my left. "Lane Three, you stepped before the gun. I'm sorry, that results in your disqualification from the race."

The girl stared at him, looking almost outraged. I realized that she was the girl who was seeded first, wearing the uniform of the school that was winning every event. She turned on her heel and strode briskly from the track, glaring at anyone who happened to look at her. I noticed that Jenna Black looked mildly surprised at the development. She seemed quietly pleased as well: she was now expected to win.

My sprinting heartbeat slowed a little. It's alright; it was her, not me. I won't make the same mistake twice.

We returned to the blocks, listened to the first two commands, and this time the gun went off only once. I flew out of the blocks.

I glided over the first few hurdles, the movement feeling as natural as walking. It was hard to tell how well I was doing in comparison with the others, being as the start was staggered. But as we approached the curve of the track it was apparent that I was doing better than I usually. The only girl near me was Jenna, who caught and passed me halfway around the curve and remained just a few steps ahead. There were really only

two people in the race: me and her. Everyone else seemed to be far behind as we sped forward. We completed the curve of the track, with only the straightaway left. Four more hurdles between us and the finish line.

Jenna was still ahead of me, tantalizingly close. I jumped the first of the last four hurdles and sprinted forward until I was abreast with her. The fans were going wild in the stands, but they were only a dull roar behind us, drowned out by the pulse beating in my ears. I was going to catch her, was going to win the state race.

And that's when my foot clipped the top of the hurdle.

I knew as soon as I felt the contact that I would not be able to recover my balance and land on my feet. My body pitched forward, and my right leg did not come with it. As I was falling, I registered the collective gasp from the stands. Then I landed hard on my left elbow and both my knees.

I rolled once before coming to a stop on my back. Pain throbbed in the places I had scraped, and I could already feel blood flowing freely from my knees.

The girl in the lane to my right had to extend her stride to step over one of my arms that had fallen in front of her. It was at that moment that I realized what this meant.

My next thoughts flashed through my head in the span of only a few seconds. This is what it had come down to: Leah Hanson, to go down in the school's history as the promising hurdler who lost her touch. I realized that this would not be forgotten for a few years, until all of our freshmen runners had graduated. I also realized that what I did next would be part of the story. I could stay on the ground, the pain throbbing up my legs until I managed to get up and limp off the track; I could then hide from everyone again, absorbed in self-loathing, until the meet officially ended and I would leave the track for the last time in bitterness. Or I could get up and finish the race, taking whatever came next in my stride.

I got up and kept running.

“The acrobat” by Allie Johnston, 12th grade

Once again it was time for his performance. He only performed once a week, when his ringmaster would allow him. Young Norton stood upon his small platform, staring out into oblivion. As he examined the obstacle ahead a sense of fear overcame him. If he was to succeed, his audience would no doubt roar with jubilation. But if he were to fail, he would meet the worst fate.

A tiny bead of sweat rolled down his cheek and landed softly on the ground. He could hear its light ping as it collided with the metal landing. He gathered himself, still finding it strenuous to breathe. Stretching to prepare himself once more, he said a short prayer, and reminded himself that he was the Master of the Air. He was in fact the youngest boy and child to ever attempt this magnificent feat. With one last hesitation he lunged toward the first bar, his limp body swinging madly through the air. Once he felt the cool metal slide behind his fingers, he clasped it in desperation. He dared not look down in fear that seeing such heights would make him fall. In one quick motion he flung himself again toward the next bar, but overlooking the reach, he missed.

Suddenly he was floating, falling, crashing toward the ground. His thoughts raced in a blurred frenzy: hoping, worrying, praying that he would survive. He landed with a painful thud. The audience, who had fallen silent, was now loudly exchanging worries. His ringmaster rushed towards him, coat-tails flapping in the breeze. He grabbed young Norton, cradling him in his arms. And as Norton's father carried him to the park bench, Norton peered over his father's shoulder at the treacherous monkey bars, and vowed that he would make it next time.

“The Trees” by Mary Meidenbauer, 12th grade

A tall oak stands upon the milky ground
His bare arms stretch so long and touch the sky.
Beside him rests a pine, so fresh and sound
Her cones grow loose and gently kiss goodbye

Their leaves touch and their branches intertwine
Grown closer than the living creatures could
Young ivy binds their roots, beloved vine
Since shoots together they have always stood

The snow lays fine and thick upon the earth
And men come marching far to see their love.
One day they bring a rope to check her girth
And then a saw to break, and arms to shove

A pine stands proudly dead on Christmas Eve,
An oak bends sadly o'er her stump to grieve

“6/8” by Samantha Allen, 10th Grade

Life is a rush
Trying to finish this and that
Pushing each minute to the edge.
This rush needs a rhythm,
To make a pace.
But the rhythm of the earth's too vague
The rhythm of my heart may stop.
So I create my own.
My rhythm lives in my music
It can go slow or fast
In this rhythm I live my life
My music will always last.

“My Recluse” by ‘Janet Caesar’, 11th grade

I must confess
That I'm quite intrigued
By the life of a Hermit
I seek no religious enlightenment
Just a reprieve
From the woes the world
To revel in privacy
Fearing nothing
Loving no one
Alone
If I try it for a day
I'm sure I would find
That it is not to my liking
I would miss everything
My family, some friends
And wish to return . . .
And deal with company again
But until the day comes
In which I can engage in a solitary life
I must secretly harbor
This sad little desire
And feel ashamed

“Don’t Forget” by Lauren Reimer, 11th grade

There was a time when the world lost its color,
immersed in damp shades of grey.
People forgot their potential,
and gave into their pointless obsessions.
Men and woman with their eyes blank,
moving with mechanical strides,
had their minds stolen of emotions.
There is one exception, the child, dreaming
about something sufficient, something more,
something abstract.
She envisioned a refuge, a starting breath
of freedom which came together like puzzle pieces
from shattered glass.
She painted the sky orange,
and splattered the ground a sparkly violet.
She could see herself dancing in the wide field,
pulling in the curious scents of the unidentified
flowering plants mingled with the tall grass.
The trees extended their branches to caress the clouds.
The sun, in all its illuminating power,
would not allow any shadow to taint the fragile scene.
She saw animals, ones with long curling tails
And big eyes which reflected the world.
And it was a perfect, world
there was no weight
No pull.
My alarm clock went off.
I woke up and got ready for school.

“Untitled” by ‘Tacitus Detrick’ 11th grade

Funny thing about having divinity,
People forget about your humanity.

Life in the queue

They told you you were one of a kind,
So you kept your life in order,
Always keep in line,
So you refused to stand out,
But soon they will tell you that you must do what is told.
Is that what you want while you get old?

“Five Months, Post Civilities” by Brittany Mason, 12th grade

I.

He said, “Get out.”
And she turned away in silence,
Dropping her keys on the table.
The door knob clicked back
In response as he whispered,
“You forgot the cat.”

II.

He used to wear his wedding ring
On his keychain
Next to the old house key,
Until a bottle-opener replaced it.

III.

He saw her walking into a pawn shop,
Knowing full well what was in the bag.
Rent was due, and gold was pricey.
He never told her it was his mother's ring.

IV.

She saw him enter the restaurant
Where she sat to study nursing manuals
Every night at eleven.
He was wearing a young girl on his arm
Next to a tattoo
She wished she could forget.

V.

The news said it was an accident;
Twelve cars on Highway Nine
Met each other in a ditch
And exchanged intimacies.
He was identified by a singed tattoo-
She wondered where the girl was.

“Ravaged” by Kate Fegley, 11th Grade

Yellow, orange, red.
The colors invade
Leaving pleasantness, warmth
Within.

My fingers dance lightly across it,
Touching the soft skin.
Reverently,
Feeling the curve.

Ravenously – I bite.
Succulent juice dribbles
Down my lips and chin,
Sweet and sticky.

The core is soon exposed
From the ravaged meat.
Wiping my hands on my shorts,
I throw the rest away.