

Hemetera

2008

Editors' Note

Writing is an art through which we express thoughts and emotions. Poets and prose writers express thoughts pertaining to their lives and worlds. The writer composes, the public reads, and through this process, ideas are conveyed. Visual art also conveys our messages. Artwork can portray a situation or capture a memory. It is important that we create art, both written and visual, as these works are necessary elements of our lives. These works enrich our lives for both the artist and the audience. The writers and artists in this journal have messages to communicate to you. We hope that these messages inspire you.

Laurel Bell-Krasner

Jennifer LeBlanc

Eileena Long

Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.

-Anton Chekhov

Hemetera 2008

Editors: Laurel Bell-Krasner

Jennifer LeBlanc

Eileena Long

Editorial Assistants: Alison Cawley

Judith Norton

Advisory Editor: Professor Patricia Elliott

Production: Elizabeth Beauicaut

Michelle Samedi

Amanda Shedden

In 1946 a “doughty seedling poked its vigorous head” into the Regis College Community with the emergence of the new literary magazine *Hemetera*, meaning “Our Own” in Greek. The magazine was founded as an opportunity to spotlight the creative talents of the student body. Published annually by the students of Regis College, the magazine welcomes submissions of poetry, prose, artwork, and photography.

Table of Contents

Poetry

Jackson Pollock	Tiffany Blessing	9
One Kiss Can Last a Lifetime	Rebecca Chilton	10
Brooklyn	Elijah Rooks	12
You're just another heartache	Hanah Fadrigalan	13
LOST	Victoria Dunham	14
Sleepless Cold	Jeannie Zhu	15
Serenity	Marianna Scandole	16
singing goodbye	Jennifer LeBlanc	17
A Little Love for Dan	Laurel Bell-Krasner	19
Hugs and Kisses	Jevon Biffinger	20
Difference	Jennifer Thomas	21
Seasons	Rachel Anderson	23
The Stirring Silence	Morgan Heath	24
Cardinalis Cardinalis	Amelia Onorato	26
-Vague Brushstrokes-	Savannah Eden	28
Some Peace	Amanda Beaulieu	29

Fiction

When You Have to Let Go...	Rebecca Chilton	31
Princess Prada	Tiffany Blessing	33
Rendezvous in Ruins	Morgan Heath	39
Who am I?	Jevon Biffinger	44
Aftermath	Amelia Onorato	46

Artwork and Photography

Amanda Beaulieu	22
Tiffany Blessing	18
Aubrey Byron	8
Eileena Long	53
Ifeoma Onuorah	11, 27, 54
Michelle Samedi	30
Rathy Uy	25



Aubrey Byron
Swallow, Watercolors on paper, scanned, and Photoshop altered colors

Jackson Pollock

It's there, under all the layers
You may never see it, but
perhaps it's not meant to be seen

Free form, free movement, free
action. No boundaries, no shape,
no rules. Under all the layers

Peel them away, line after line
A penny, a wrapper, some ash
All in the moment, all in this space

He lived in that moment
It lives in that moment
Under those layers of paint

Metallic and bold, thick
and thin, wrist and
arm, all in time

Stand back and look
A web of curves, layers
and lines, in his mind

It's there, underneath
and in every layer, upon
layer. His passion.

Tiffany Blessing

One Kiss Can Last a Lifetime

August, 1945
Times Square
New York City

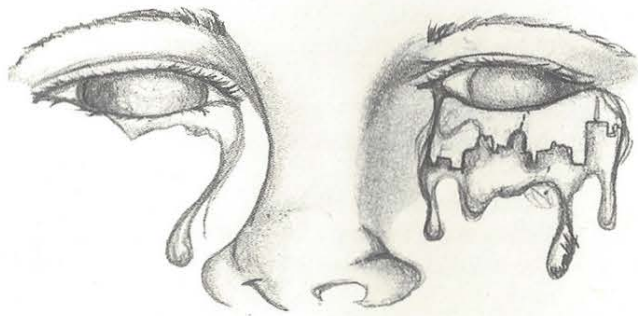
Navy blue uniform
Complete with the white cap

Plain white dress,
Stockings and white shoes

Ecstatic the war has ended
Finally home to family and friends
The sailor cannot contain his excitement
He grabs the nurse,
Dips her back
Kisses her.

They look like they have missed one
another
Truth be told they never knew each
other
Sixty-two years, and counting
This one moment lives on.

Rebecca Chilton



Ifeoma Onuorah
Tears for Brooklyn, Graphite on white paper

Brooklyn

I have seen it all.
I've seen a million sunrises.
I've seen a million bloody nights.
I've seen murders and robberies.
I've seen women sing and children play.

I've heard gospels early Sunday morning.
I've heard the homeless cry at night.
I've heard the laughter of children late into the night.
I've heard the same children cry as they go hungry.
I've heard the prayers of the young and old alike.

I've felt the happiness of a newborn.
I've felt the sorrow of murder victims' mothers.
I've felt the kiss of passionate lovers.
I've felt the fear of abused children.
I've felt the hug of a caring mother.

I am the soul of those who were lost chasing a dollar.
I am the voice for those being ignored.
I am malt liquor and unpaid child support.
I am beaten wives and alcoholic husbands.
I am everything you are.

Elijah Rooks

You're just another heartache

You're just another heartache.
Yes, I can feel it,
it's my heart at stake
and I won't let it get ripped.

You're just another distraction
to mess with my mind,
another boy to think about
when I sleep at night.

You're just another man,
a person to love,
someone to hold on to,
someone to have.

You're just another person
who will break my poor heart,
so before that happens to my dismay
I'll just take one step away.

Hanah Fadrigalan

LOST

Car keys snuggle in between couch cushions
Accompanied by shiny dead presidents covered with
mystery sprinkles
Will anyone notice you're gone?

Magnetic vowels huddle under a rumbling fridge
Gently covered in a blanket of fluffy dust bunnies
Will anyone think of you?

A single diamond earring is whisked away from its
pair down a silver lined black hole
Slowly it drifts further and further from its mate
amidst the unwanted grit and grime
Will anyone replace you?

Happiness sucked out of a grieving widow's lonely
heart
It leaves regrettably unsure if it will be allowed to
return
Will anyone try to bring you home again?

A brother to me, a son to you, lost in an alternate
universe
Trapped inside the glassy walls of a syringe filled
with a solution of false hope and happiness
Will anyone try to fix you?

Sanity lost to the tiny black hands on the wall
With each rotation the thought of ever returning
dwindles away
Will anyone miss you?

A brave soldier lost to the selfish war fueled by greed
Hopefully his soul will finally rest in the safety of the
clouds
Will anyone stop this from happening again and
again?

Will anyone remember the things that are lost
in the world?

Does anyone cry for them?

Victoria Dunham

Sleepless Cold

It was a cold night in November
The kind of cold that bites through
The walls and
Into your skin
The kind of cold that has a color
Grey
Like a steel sheet
Blowing in the wind

As I pull on an extra sheet
Knowing all too well
There are people tonight
Sleeping on the streets
Trying to allow the warmth to slow
Into my legs and arms
Without ever over thinking the feel-
ings of guilt
Remembering that I should smile
genuinely
At man on the ground
Who I passed by today

The only glimmer of relief
To sleep
Memory of him
Smiling back at me

Jeannie Zhu

Serenity

Snow falls all around,
Yet it doesn't make a sound.

The essence of beauty is seen in the
night,
But, is illuminated in pure white.

Flakes float gently to the ground,
Yet they do not make a sound.

singing goodbye

waiting in the old church hall,

manila paint chipping off the walls and
air cold enough to see my breath,

I am listening to the occasional
piano key or clarinet note

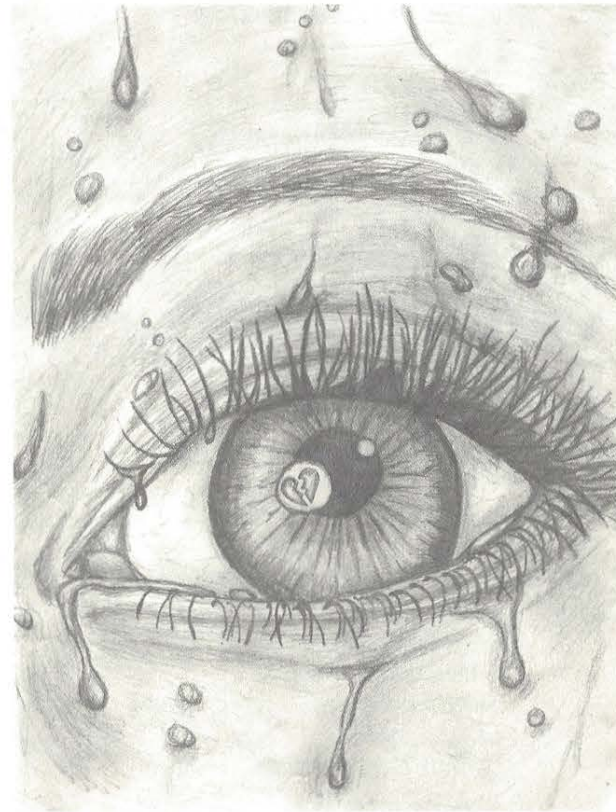
warble or squeak,

and I am wondering how long

we would have gone on arguing about
music and religion

had you not called it off and
sung, so sweet, goodbye.

Jennifer LeBlanc



Tiffany Blessing
Loverain, Graphite on paper

A Little Love for Dan

What is love?
A special kiss.
A secret code between friends.
A feeling that exists just as much as
any tangible thing.
Death by broken heart.
With sword,
Or maybe just a little something
slipped into a sweet Starbucks drink.
Love knows how to kill.

But what is life without love?
Utterly aimless.
We wander to find love.
If there wasn't love we'd all just keep
wandering.
Love wanders in and out of our lives,
Touching us, moving us, and changing
us along its path.
If there was not love,
There would be no angels or saviors
on this earth.
God has mercy on those who pray,
And on those who love.

Laurel Bell-Krasner

Hugs and Kisses

What's in a hug?
The warmth of an arm wrapping around my body
What's in a kiss?
The tender kisses that make you tingly all over
What if you miss that someone's true intentions?
There have been many loves, but none like this
What makes this relationship so different?
It has to be that touch that lingers and lets me know what is real
Everything else fades until that touch and kiss are all that's left
There is nothing left to search for in the present
But is anything for certain?

Jevon Biffinger

Difference

I didn't want to leave.

I cried when I said goodbye to my best friend.

I will cry when I say goodbye to my roommates.

I moved away from home for the first time.

I am saving money so I can live in an apartment.

I was surrounded by unfamiliar people.

I smile and say "Hi" to people in the hallways, even if I don't know them.

I cried the first time I had to take a shower with flip-flops on.

I befriend the maintenance workers, because I know they are the ones cleaning the showers.

I trudged up the hill to get to class.

I rolled my hoop down the grassy hill in front of the President's house.

I earned my first "A" in a math class.

I failed a class but learned a life lesson.

I found out there was a shortcut, a tunnel.

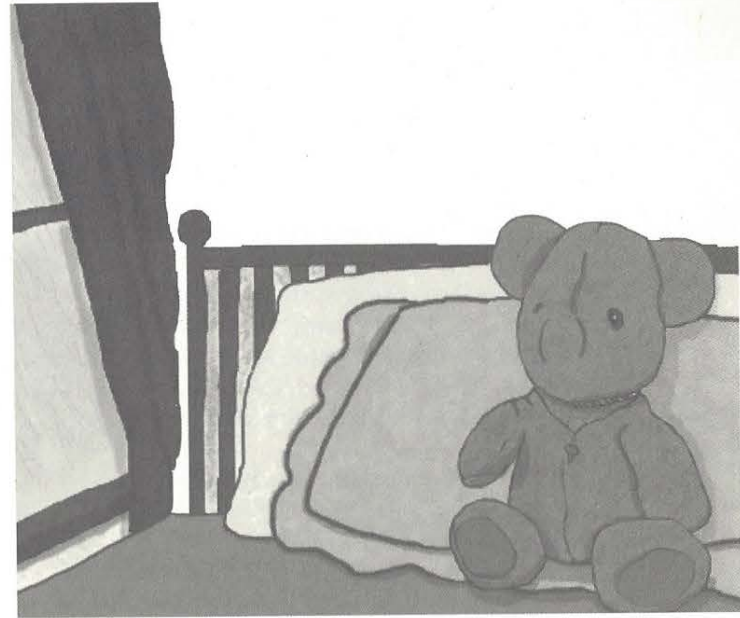
I avoid the tunnel because it smells and is hotter than a sauna.

I went home every weekend.

I refer to my dorm as "home."

I don't want to leave.

Jennifer Thomas



Amanda Beaulieu
old friend, Digital image illustrated with Adobe Photoshop

Seasons

Sift through this old life and make it whole
Dandelions wave in a gentle breeze
Whipping white pollen into the air
Surrounded by verdant grass

Take this hand and press it to pounding hearts
Cloudless summer skies reflect against shimmering lakes
Bare feet dance in midnight puddles
The burning sun greets tired faces

Bits and pieces, fragments of previous selves
Scatter like autumn's decay across the broken path
Shake off former skin and let it simmer on the pavement
Wander forward into tree limbs aflame

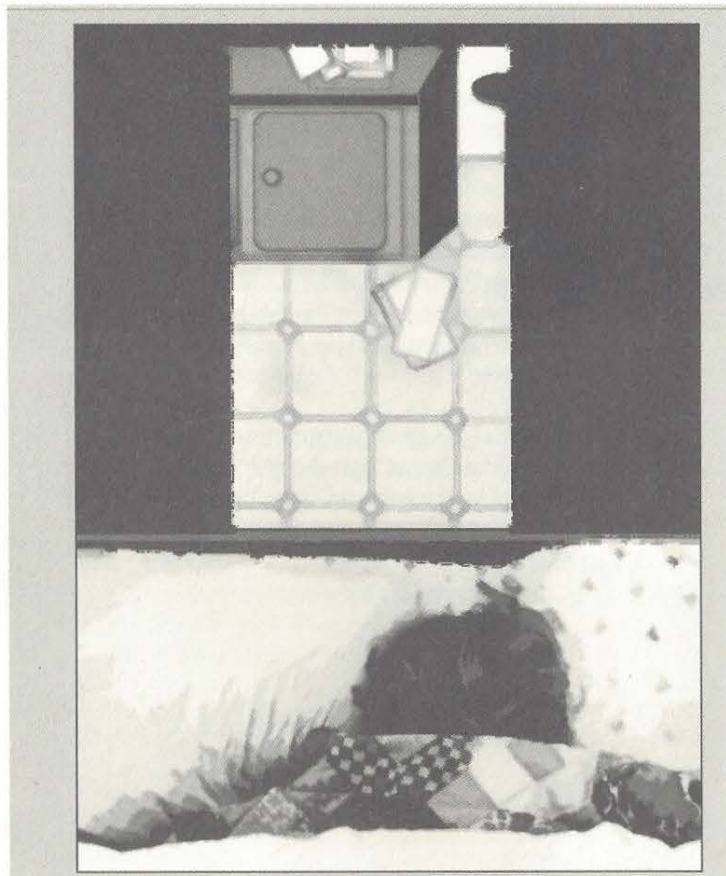
White lonely embrace as the door slams closed
Each snowflake a reflection of our minds
Hearts crack like icy pond water
We await the coming thaw

Rachel Anderson

The Stirring Silence

The distant sound of falling rain
She hasn't moved, it looks the same
The room is dark, the year's been gray
Been asleep since yesterday.
Shadows dance on skin like cream
Did someone speak, or was it
dreamed?
Her eyes snap open as she awakes
She screams because the world is fake
The wind runs in and the curtains
billow
She cries a curse into her pillow.
When dreams were all she ever sought
When love was lost she only fought
No one was there to stop her violence
All there was,
 was the stirring silence.—

Morgan Heath



Rathy Uy
Exhaustion, Photograph edited in Adobe Photoshop

Cardinalis Cardinalis

I wonder why someone
decided to call them cardinals.

So far as I know,
no member of the clergy
dances and sings,
twirling the swirling train of his red robes
through the stoic naves and opulent
basilicas
in the Cradle of Catholicism.

No, far removed from
the sunny steps of the Vatican,
celebrating another kind of religion,
they skip and laugh like trickster heroes
in stolen crimson choir dresses, clamoring:

“Cheer, cheer, cheer,
what, what, what?”

In the face of February’s full ferocity
they are safe behind their black bandito
masks.

Under the stark bony branches
knitted across the flat gray sky—
little diagrams in the snow,
how to foxtrot in trident shoes.

Amelia Onorato



Ifeoma Onuorah
I got soul, Color pencil and oil pastel on pastel paper

-Vague Brushstrokes-

Is it smugness or bliss
that is played upon the lips?
An age old question that
ignites spectators' curiosity.

The whole mystery
that shrouds it, is
ever so inviting.
Indecisive.
Unclear.
Intriguing.

Perhaps an intended cloaking device
by its creator.

It screams Italian Renaissance,
as the subject sits plainly,
hands in lap,
neither joyous,
nor sad,
nor angered.

Most evasive if you ask me.
Yet hauntingly beautiful.

Savannah Eden

Some Peace

In the quiet field I have found some
peace
at the base of an ancient tree
content to look upon a world about to
close old eyes to dream for another
night.

And there, silent apparition,
a hawk alights upon a towering
evergreen,
silent wings silhouetted against a
claret sky
beating the soft breeze.

He gazes upon a vast heaven,
strong talons gripping old bows,
turning his slender head about
with a deep sense of calm.

I wonder if he too is content
to watch the world fall asleep
before autumn
steals away this last warmth.

Amanda Beaulieu



Michelle Samedi
Grandpa and his Girls, Hand drawn in pencil, colors added in Adobe Photoshop

When You Have to Let Go...

I look at the clock for the seventh time in the last fifteen minutes, and it only reads 4:45 pm. I really feel like I might explode if I have to sit here for fifteen more minutes. What should I wear tonight? Every time I think of the plans I have after work, I get a nervous excited feeling in the pit of my stomach. It's similar to the feeling of missing a step when you are walking down the stairs.

I cannot take another phone call. I hate my job; it is miserable. My energy has been drained since I started working as a secretary in this lousy doctors' office. Maybe I should paint my nails before I go out. I probably won't have enough time, considering he is picking me up at 7:00 pm. I can't believe we have been seeing each other for over three years and I still get a nervous excited feeling when we plan to go out on a date. I love when he makes dinner reservations but keeps the restaurant a surprise. I wonder if tonight will be the night. The BIG night. Only a small part of me wonders that now; I have much doubt, considering he obviously seems to be afraid of commitment.

I swear I will only look down at the clock one more time... 4:57 pm. Good enough!! No one will notice if I leave only three minutes early. All the other cubicles are empty as well. Everyone else must have exciting Friday night plans, too. I grab my new summer tote and take the elevator down to the first floor. I can tell it is scorching hot outside by how high the air conditioner is blaring at the entrance. I walk to the door, and a rush of excitement comes over me. I can't wait to get home. I love the feeling of the hot summer air swarming me after being cooped up in a frigid office all day. I find my car standing alone in the parking garage. I open my car door, and it is probably ninety degrees warmer than it is outside. I can't even touch the steering wheel yet. It feels like my hands just might melt off. I crank the A.C. and try to maneuver the wheel as best I can until it cools off.

What joy rush hour traffic is, only moving at 10 mph and always more traffic when I have something really exciting to do after work. Even if I get home in the next twenty minutes, I will still only have an hour to shower, shave my legs, get dressed, and do my hair and makeup. I will definitely be cutting it close. Maybe I don't need to necessarily take a complete shower, considering I did take one this morning... I could probably just wash my hair and shave my legs. That will cut a huge chunk of time off of the beautifying process. If I can plan exactly what I will wear now, in the car, then that will save me some time as well. What is even clean at this point? Oh! I could wear that coral skirt with the new white blouse I haven't worn yet! Perfect! Do I have shoes that match the skirt? I have those brown sandals, but I don't think those would really go well with the coral. I have the white slip-on sandals from last summer... I guess those will have to do.

My thought process is interrupted by the ring of my cell phone.

"Hello?"... "Hi, Hon, I was just thinking about you."... "You're still at the golf course. Are you running late?"... "Are we still on for 7:00?"... "I thought you were planning on playing the tournament on Monday night?"... "I know things can come up, I just don't understand why you can't say no. I was really looking forward to dinner with you, but I guess we can reschedule if playing in this tournament is *that* important to you."... "Okay, well, whatever, have fun!"

I put the phone back into my tote and continue driving home in silence. I pull into my driveway, put the car in park, and just sit there thinking about the phone call I just had. Golf? Instead of dinner with me? Golf?! How did this happen? *When* did this happen? I don't think I can be second best to golf.

I dig for my phone and find it in the bottom of my bag. I dial his number. I don't know what I'll say, but I know I can't do this. My heart skips a beat when he picks up the phone. "Hey...it's me. I'm not sure we can reschedule our date."

Rebecca Chilton

Princess Prada

"What the hell are you staring at?" Stanley jumped and started to scramble with the papers on his desk as Veronica glared at him on her way to her office. Veronica loved to watch her puny young intern become flustered, and she smiled to herself as she distinctly heard a mumbled "bitch" escape from his lips.

She then glided to her destination and slammed the door. While carefully placing her venti caramel macchiato on her solid cherry maple desk, she felt a twinge of guilt. Maybe her reaction to Stanley was slightly harsh. After all, he was probably just admiring her new white velvet Chanel suit and matching stilettos. She pulled a sticky note from her top drawer and scribbled herself a note. *Apolo-gize to Stanny, then tell him to pick up blouse at drycleaners.*

She stuck the memo next to her phone, then spun her chair around to the New York skyline. The large glass paneling in her office offered a beautiful view of the city. She often sat and watched the people scurrying along Times Square in herds. They looked so small from the 52nd floor. And that's how she liked it. It was like having her own personal ant farm.

Veronica Wells was creative director at Jettison Design Firm. Being only 31 years old, she was the youngest person in advertising to be promoted to this top position. This could be attributed to her few years of hard work, and also to her uncanny talent of always getting what she wanted.

Just then the phone rang, and she scooped it up still in spinning motion. "Tell me something I want to hear."

"We just opened the Cezaar account, congratulations, as always. We scheduled a meeting for you and their marketing executive Andrew Pettinger. The dinner meeting is seven o'clock tomorrow evening at the Vino Bella on Madison Avenue. I suggest that you make a solid attempt at being on time." Jared, her accounts manager, knew enough to use only the most polite tone when speaking to Veronica Wells. One wrong word and she would surely snap into a fit of threats to fire him and throw him out on the street. Although Jared was the best account manager on the east coast and knew he could land a job anywhere else in New York, he allowed Veronica her diva moments. Being on Veronica Wells's elite advertising team may have caused ulcers and expensive therapy sessions, but it was a damn good position to be in.

"Actually, tomorrow evening isn't exactly going to be an ideal time for me. You know how uptight my hair stylist is about keeping appointments," Veronica replied in an even more polite tone than Jared had used.

"Stanley has informed me of your schedule. Your hair appointment is at five o'clock, giving you plenty of time to meet with Andrew at seven."

Veronica began to tap her tortoise shell fountain pen impatiently on the corner of her desk. "Yes, my appointment is at five o'clock,

which is usually the time reserved for happy hour at Le Ice Lounge. And therefore, that will be getting pushed from its usual five o'clock spot, and is now reserved from six to eight tomorrow evening," Veronica retorted.

Jared took a deep, but muffled breath and replied, "All right, Veronica, since I understand that happy hour never actually lasts an hour with you, I pass on this responsibility to you to change this appointment with our company's newly acquired and largest account holder to date. Good luck." Jared had hung up the phone briskly, without giving Veronica any time to throw a fit in his direction. Veronica began to yell into the dial tone nonetheless.

After her small and unheard rant, Veronica stormed out of the office and straight to Stanley's desk. After hearing her coming, Stanley made sure to be paying particular attention to something incredibly interesting in his calendar log. However, his attempt at hiding from Veronica's wrath failed as her voice shrilled into his ears.

"Stanley darling, I need you to call this Andrew Pettinger for me and have him reschedule to Thursday evening at eight o'clock."

"I will call him right away, Ms. Wells. Anything else?" Stanley whispered.

"No, that will do." And Veronica marched towards the elevator across the room. With all this morning stress, she decided to take an early lunch and grab a martini down the street. Or three. As she stepped inside and the doors began to close, she called out across the room. "Oh, Stanley! Drycleaners on 36th St., blue Valentino blouse!" And she was gone, leaving Stanley to wonder why she could not get her own blouse on her way out. The cleaners was right on the way to the bar he assumed she was going to. It was ten o'clock am, and vodka was one of her favorite breakfast foods.

Two hours later, Veronica returned to her office in a much better state of mind. She had met a stock broker who bought her three rounds of cosmopolitans and innocently asked for her number. In turn, she did what she had always done when men showed interest in her. She gave them Stanley's cell phone number and made it clear that they only call her when they got a job making more money than she.

She entered her office and found her blue blouse hanging behind the door and a note on her desk. *Called Andrew, will not change appointment. I left for lunch. -Stanley.* Veronica knew Stanley had carefully planned his lunch escape in perfect timing for her return. With no one to complain to, she decided to call up this Andrew Pettinger herself and give him a piece of her mind for not being more flexible with the top design firm in the city. She might mention that if he would much rather prefer Kinko's, there was one on the corner of 65th and Washington.

As the phone began to ring, Veronica once again swiveled her chair to face the crowds of people below. Before thinking of possible guilt trips to lay on Andrew, a small, mousy voice answered the phone.

"Andrew Pettinger's office. May I ask who is calling?" The feeble voice sounded pathetic, somewhat terrified. It reminded her of a female version of Stanley.

"Yes, this is Veronica Wells. I need to speak to Mr. Pettinger immediately. This is an urgent issue. Do not give me an excuse that he is not in the office. He is a client of mine, and I need to discuss a certain matter with him at once."

"Please hold, Ms. Wells, I will transfer you through," squeaked the voice.

A minute of silence was broken by an abrupt "Give me some good news." His voice was deep, but flowed through the phone with an electricity and power about it. Veronica seemed almost startled at this, and began her reply.

"Yes, Mr. Pettinger, this is Veronica Wells of Jettison. I had asked my secretary to call and reschedule our meeting for this evening. I am afraid something urgent came up. My mother is sick and I must tend to her. Would Thursday evening work for you?"

"Actually, Veronica, tonight will work just fine. I am sure your mother will understand that her daughter is handling a multi-million dollar account and forgive your absence. If not, you could send her to a nursing home. I recommend the one my mother is in. Or, you could just visit her tomorrow. I am assuming she will still be sick tomorrow and you will not be missing anything important." Andrew's tone was airy, yet firm.

Veronica had not expected this. Her position of power always forced her clients into submission. Never had she heard such a rebuttal. What shocked her the most was that she would have said the same thing if an employee called in sick with a lame, emotional story about a sick relative. She paused to think of an argument, but decided against it.

"Then tonight will work out just fine. See you at seven, Mr. Pettinger." She hung up the phone. She was more intrigued than anything at who this Andrew Pettinger was. The audacity he had. She would surely put him in his place tonight at dinner. She called her stylist and canceled the appointment. She didn't argue against it. Veronica was very convincing as she explained the terminal illness her mother had suddenly contracted. Veronica then picked up her Valentino blouse off the door and left so she would have plenty of time to get ready before the meeting. She also allowed time for a quick stop at Le Ice Lounge on her way home.

Veronica put on a black Versace dress with a silver cinch belt and patent leather pumps. Veronica was naturally tall and slender, but she loved the lift her five-inch stilettos gave her. On this evening, she spent particular time on her makeup, curling her long black eyelashes and applying her deep red lipstick. She took one last look in the mirror at her straight blonde hair and grabbed her Dolce & Gabbana clutch. Seven o'clock rolled around when Veronica decided to leave her apartment. She planned her arrival at Vino Bella to be approximately seven-thirty. Then she could be fashionably late and show

Andrew that she was in charge of this transaction.

She swaggered into the restaurant at seven-thirty-five. She told the host that she had a meeting with Mr. Pettinger and he should be expecting her arrival. Shock was an understatement when the host informed Veronica that Mr. Pettinger had not yet arrived and escorted her to an empty candle-lit table.

Andrew arrived at seven-fifty and sat down without apology.

"I imagine you were late only because you were visiting your mother in her nursing home," Veronica noted as she opened the wine list and began to peruse.

"I actually stopped to read to a group of blind children down at the orphanage," Andrew replied, flipping open his own menu. "Now, let's quit the small talk and get to business. I want this diamond campaign to out-market even the symbolism of Tiffany & Co.'s little blue boxes. The promotional advertising needs to be huge..." Andrew's voice drifted away as Veronica stared straight ahead at this man. Who does he think he is? How is it that he can make the blood running through her veins turn cold? She had this instant hatred for him. But never before had she desired a man as she did now. She, of course, denied any such feelings to herself. Or perhaps she couldn't identify these feelings because they had never been aroused before.

Andrew was tall, dark, and handsome, one might say. His eyes were an intense green, which seemed to bear into you, forcing even Veronica to look away. His black hair seemed to glisten when the light hit it. Not a hair out of place. It reminded Veronica of the Ken doll she played with as a girl. Only, before she had ripped its head off after a particularly heated argument with Barbie.

Above all, Veronica was impressed with his choice of attire. His Louis Vuitton tie complemented the black Versace suit. This in turn further complemented the lilac Dolce & Gabbana shirt tucked neatly into his silver-buckled Prada belt. Andrew could have successfully strutted down a runway right at that moment.

The rest of the meeting went on with discussions of print advertising and packaging designs. Once Andrew was satisfied they made a good dent of progress, he picked up the check and they departed.

That night, as Veronica lay in her 7000 thread-count silk sheets, she dreamed of diamond rings.

The next morning, Veronica entered her office and expected to see two dozen red roses on her desk. Surely, Andrew had been impressed by her stunning good looks and charm. But nothing was there but a few post-its of calls she missed that morning. This irritated her, and she double-checked that none of the missed calls were from Andrew. Since none of them were, and since that clearly must have been a mistake, Veronica picked up the phone.

The mousy voice on the other end informed her that Andrew stepped out for the morning and that he made note of another scheduled meeting between himself and Veronica.

Veronica left work again early to prepare herself for the second

dinner meeting with Andrew. This time she wore a white shift dress and threw on her Winston diamond ring. She curled her long blonde hair and grabbed a pink heart-shaped Chanel purse on her way out. This wonderful ensemble she had picked out for herself would surely stimulate Andrew Pettinger's senses. She walked with a bounce in her step and arrived right on time. Andrew however, arrived forty-five minutes late and sat down with the same roughness as he had during their first encounter. The meeting was all business, and Veronica left feeling light headed and disappointed.

The meetings continued for the rest of the week, and each evening they discussed the campaign and the promotional advantages they had over other firms. The account was developing beautifully, but Veronica's love life was not.

Three weeks had gone by, and Veronica had become sick of practically throwing herself at this man. Clearly there was something wrong with him. He was probably married, which never seemed to stop men before. She decided to call and make her own meeting with Andrew, on her time. In turn, Andrew postponed this meeting, and Veronica agreed to show up when convenient for him.

She arrived at Vino Bella ten minutes early, and he was an hour late. That gave Veronica plenty of time to loosen up with a few martinis and think about how she would approach this issue. Andrew sat down and ordered a bottle of Pinot. He then asked Veronica for the final details of the campaign.

"Tell me, Andrew. We have revolved the advertising around engagement rings. What is your personal experience in this area?" Veronica's words were slurred. Veronica Wells was known for her impeccable ability to advertise, and also her incredible ability to hold her liquor. Veronica Wells was grounded, confident, and always in complete control. This man had driven her mad over the past few weeks.

"If you are asking me about my personal life, I can tell you that is none of your concern. I will respond that I am not a married man. And quite bluntly, if you are asking me because you have an interest in me, I will tell you right now that you are not my type. Quite frankly, Miss Wells, you are one of the bitchiest women I have ever met. I respect your designing views, but that is where our relationship ends."

Veronica felt as though she had been slapped in the face. The blank stare towards Andrew might have lasted only five seconds. But it could have lasted a full five minutes. It was hard for her to judge time under her intoxicated condition. She mumbled something about "professionalism," and how dare he assume she could have any personal feelings towards an ass such as himself. Veronica Wells sat through the rest of the meeting in complete mortification.

Her face felt burning hot, either from the embarrassment she endured or from the vodka pulsing under her skin. She finalized the remaining details of the Cezaar account so that she would no longer have to meet with Andrew Pettinger. She walked home in the rain and slept in the pink dress she had worn to dinner.

The next day, Veronica walked into the office to see a bouquet of a dozen roses. She smiled and walked right by them. They were sitting on Stanley's desk with a note attached. *Thank you for being a great intern. PS- Green Versace blouse waiting at drycleaners.*

Veronica then sat down at her desk and swiveled her chair around to watch the herds of people below. Just then the phone rang. She scooped it up and answered, "Good morning, Veronica Wells, what can I do for you today?"

Tiffany Blessing

Rendezvous in Ruins

The only times that Jo tended to get out were when she and her family were moving houses. She wasn't a big fan of sunlight, and she hated being around other people. The press of the crowd on a city's streets made her feel claustrophobic, and a bit out of control. People tended to *stare* at her, and though she wasn't self-conscious, she was paranoid. That was part of the reason that they moved around so much. Others, some more pertinent, weren't worth dwelling on.

For Jo to be out around nine at night at a coffeehouse in South Sol City was definitely unusual. For her to meet a man whom she hadn't seen in over a decade was completely unprecedented, but she could not pass up his sudden reappearance in the city. Jo had spotted him at his mother's funeral, and honestly, she hadn't expected him to show. No one had even heard from him- not even his family- since the day that he had disappeared without a word.

She arrived an hour early, anticipating that Aiden would probably come a half an hour before their scheduled meeting. To her amusement and discomfort, she ended up holding the door open for Aiden who was on his way in as well.

He smiled tightly, nodding his head toward a booth in the corner. "Shall we?"

Jo shrugged, deciding that there was no point in trying to out-guess Aiden and no censure was needed. "Let's."

Aiden was only a couple inches taller than Jo, but she thought that he was probably taller than he looked due to the way that he seemed to be slouching slightly. She wondered if it was normal for him, or simply the aftereffects of the glum funeral. As they slid into their seats, Jo took a moment to consider Aiden.

He looked different from the picture that she'd seen of him in the paper. A couple of years after he vanished, Jo had noticed that he wrote articles for the Rendoh City Bugle. Recently, a piece had been written *about* him due to his sudden success in journalism. The picture hadn't been able to convey the sheer intensity of his dark hazel eyes or the intelligence that was reflected in them. The brown leather jacket he wore complemented his coloring far more than Jo's navy blue and purple windbreaker suited her. Even though his official records claimed that Aiden had brown hair, Jo would have disagreed with that description. There were deep red strands mixed in the dark hair, creating an enticing dark honey that begged to have fingers mess it up. It was an odd thought to indulge in. Jo wasn't usually so fanciful.

All in all, Jo instantly detested the new Aiden Cooper. It was an irrational feeling, but one that her childish streak couldn't relinquish. Jo watched as most of the women and a few of the men in the coffeehouse stared outright at Aiden. He didn't seem to notice.

It wasn't that he was simply attractive, Jo thought. Aiden radiated confidence and assurance, a subtle charisma that Jo was sadly lacking. Aiden had presence, and people were naturally drawn to it.

Jo fought the urge to yell at everyone staring.

The waitress came promptly, a faint flush on her cheeks as she focused on Aiden. "Can I get you something?" she asked, her eyes never leaving the man's face.

"Could we see the menu first?" Jo inquired, a bit amused at the way she jumped at the sound of her voice. Jo had been completely overlooked, despite her rather unusual dinner partner.

"Um, yes, sure..." she replied, a bit off balance before she hustled off to procure the requested item. Aiden didn't react at all, his expression pleasantly neutral as he was handed a menu.

"Thank you. If you'll give us a few minutes?" he asked, the dismissal gentle but firm. Jo watched as she hurried to obey again, like a well trained dog. She knew that the waitress would be returning in precisely five minutes.

Aiden didn't bother studying the menu, neatly setting it aside. Jo could feel the way Aiden was examining her, but chose to ignore it in favor of a mental debate as to whether to get the cheesecake or the chocolate mousse. She'd heard the cheesecake was especially good there, but mousse sounded like a good idea since no one could ever go wrong with chocolate.

She decided to simplify matters and just get both. Satisfied, she folded the menu and set it down. Aiden was still looking at her like she was a specimen on a slide.

"Do you know what you want?" Jo asked, trying to find some place to begin the conversation.

"Just some coffee," he answered. "I'm not very hungry."

Jo squinted, thinking the features were more angular than the picture that she had seen of him from a year earlier. "You should eat more."

"Life has been a little hectic lately." The reply was spoken politely enough, but the venom in the words was undeniable.

"That's an understatement," Jo replied, shifting on the booth's seat as she thought back to the funeral and the unrelenting rain that had drenched each and every one of them.

"Perhaps," Aiden answered, and that was the end of the topic.

The waitress reappeared, her hands fidgeting with the green apron that was wrapped around her slender waist. Her posture was shy, and the faint blush on her face made her look younger than the twenty-something she probably was. "Have you decided?" the woman asked.

"I'll just have some coffee" Aiden said.

"Are you sure?" she asked, concern coloring her words. She clearly wanted to insist that Aiden needed to eat something.

"Yes." He stood firm.

"I'll have some coffee as well, along with the cheesecake and the chocolate mousse. Could you throw some strawberries on the cake and add extra whipped cream with the mousse?" Jo inserted, smiling innocently as the waitress started scribbling the notes a moment late. She nodded, smiled at Aiden, and headed for the kitchen.

Jo could hear the buzz of conversation in the room, their bab-

ble a convenient cover. Despite their mismatched pairing, it wouldn't be likely people would think anything of her and Aiden.

Silence hung between them like a thick drape, obscuring communication. They stared at each other uncomfortably before Jo caved. "You recognized me at the funeral," she said.

"You haven't changed much," the smile on Aiden's face was touched by something similar to intrigue. "You're very distinctive, so it wasn't that hard to put two and two together. Not many people have eyes like yours."

Jo knew that she tended to stick in people's memories. It wasn't even simply her looks that caught their attention, but the careful way that she moved around as though she were aware of everything. People always caught things that were out of the ordinary, and even if she tried, Jo could not act like just a member of the sea of humanity that swelled around her- so she didn't even bother making an attempt.

"That may be true," she conceded. "I am concerned, naturally, about what you've been up to for these past eleven years, Aiden."

"I would say that you were worried about me, but I doubt it," Aiden replied.

Jo tilted her head slightly to the left, encouraging Aiden to explain.

Aiden could tell that he was being tested. "You're one of those people who don't change their attitude over the years. We've only been here for ten minutes, but I can already tell that you're still the same stubborn woman that I knew as a teenager."

Aiden's rationale was perfect, as Jo had expected. "So why do you think that I asked you here, then?" Let Aiden be the one to get the ball rolling.

"I think you want to know why I left," Aiden said bluntly. "Most people would have forgotten about their former lovers after a few years, but your ridiculously bitter personality refuses to allow you to let things rest. While you don't particularly care, now that you're a twenty nine-year old mother of two with a loving husband, you still want to know for your own peace of mind. Am I correct?"

She wasn't sure if she was pleased that Aiden was as sharp as she'd thought. The reasoning was sound and his explanation was concise. Often times, people who were capable of understanding something weren't able to elucidate, their thinking muddled by words. It was a rare and valuable gift.

This time, the waitress was the one who interrupted Jo in a form of unexpected revenge. She balanced her tray with the precision of experience as she navigated down the thin aisle. Deftly, she placed their cups in front of them both, "accidentally" pressing against Aiden's arm as she leaned across the table to serve Jo. Aiden accepted her apology absent-mindedly in a way that made it clear that such "accidents" happened often around him. The waitress looked disappointed, but left when it was apparent she had no excuse to linger.

They both reached for the creamer at the same time. Their hands brushed, and a crackle of static electricity lanced between

them, causing a slight grunt of pain to slip through Aiden's lips at the jolt. If Jo had been superstitious, she might have thought it to be a bad omen.

"Sorry," Aiden said distantly, withdrawing his hand so Jo had possession of the pitcher.

Most people would have demurred and offered their own apology or waved the incident off, but Jo wasn't most people. She ignored it, happily topping her coffee with enough cream to turn the beverage lukewarm.

Aiden looked a bit taken aback as Jo daintily sipped. "That's not... very healthy," he finally said. His own coffee lacked cream and sugar entirely, as black as he could swallow it.

Jo smiled, never happier than when consuming sugar. "It tastes better this way, and I have a high metabolism."

Aiden just took a sip of coffee, cradling his cup in his hands as Jo attacked her cheesecake, cutting a piece neatly off, scraping it along with the strawberry juice before depositing it in her mouth. The cake was rich and creamy, the café living up to its reputation for excellent desserts. She chewed slowly, savoring the taste that danced across her tongue.

It was a test of patience for Aiden, a subtle one Jo knew would serve to irritate. Deferring important business in favor of food wasn't a popular decision at any time. Now, with the death of Aiden's mother hanging in the air, it was an even more trying move.

Aiden was indeed remarkable. He didn't squirm under the pressure. Instead, he sat drinking his coffee the way he would with an acquaintance he was comfortable with.

"So tell me- what made you come back for the funeral?" she asked a couple minutes later as she pushed aside the empty cheesecake plate and pulled the mousse closer. "You hadn't contacted your mother for over a decade. She barely even considered you a son anymore. I was more of a child to her than you ever were." Picking up a spoon, she collected a small amount of chocolate, waiting for Aiden.

He didn't answer immediately, the pause indicating that he was thinking on how to properly phrase himself. "You always did care for her more than I did. Still looking for the mother that you never had?"

"You're an asshole."

"Be that as it may, it's still true."

She smiled unpleasantly at him. "Let me tell you something. Whatever reason you had for leaving your parents- for leaving me- isn't good enough to justify what you've done."

He stared at her for a moment. "Do you really want to know why I left?"

Jo didn't answer at first. After poking at her dessert with her fork a few times, she sighed grudgingly and looked up at him. "I do, but at the same time, I really don't."

"Then why did you ask me here?" Aiden sounded curious.

Jo shrugged and glared down at the table. "I loved you. I really did. I suppose I just wanted to see you again, and I suppose I wanted to tell you how much I hated you for leaving me to fend for myself.

I think I already know why you left, to be perfectly honest. You had too many people to take care of here in Sol. Man's strongest instinct is his own survival. I would think an atheist would have even keener survival instincts."

"How do you know I'm atheist?"

"It shows," she replied easily as she met his eyes once again. "You only believe in yourself."

"I was brought up Roman Catholic, but I lost faith when I realized how much life sucked. Anyway, it's better than being agnostic."

Jo just laughed softly. "Perhaps- but maybe it just means that my mind is more open."

Morgan Heath

Who am I?

I wake up with an excruciating pain that covers my entire body. My first thought is, why does my body hurt so terribly? The next questions that come racing into my head are, where am I, but more importantly, who am I? And while I'm at it, what day is it? I can pretty much figure out that I am in a hospital, but in what city, state, or country is foreign to me. I try to rack my brain to figure out the answers to some of these questions. My brain feels like it is about to pop right out of my body and tell me to stop thinking so hard. The room is now spinning. The pictures on the walls are in motion and spinning whichever way they feel as if they are performing some dance routine on speed. Faster and faster they spin until my body is no longer in pain and there is nothing spinning, just blackness.

My eyes slowly open again, just a crack. I see a figure in front of me, so I blink a few times to make sure that I am not hallucinating. There is someone there, and I'm wondering whether the room was just spinning out of control for her as well. From the looks of her, she was not feeling the same symptoms as me. After all, I had a breathing tube and several scary-looking needles protruding from my arms, and she was sitting attentively in a chair with a smart navy-colored business suit and a tight bun in her hair. But, back to me, I was still in pain, and that had not gone away. Figuring that I could get some information out of this woman, I decided to start a dialogue with her. She seemed nice enough.

"Where am I?" I say in a muffled voice. She proceeds to blink a couple times, and I think that I can see her eyes starting to get a little glossy, but it could just be my own that are making it appear that way. She responds in a very caring and assertive tone, "Key West, Florida... James." Well then, I think to myself, now I'm getting some place. I now know where I am and potentially what my first name is. Key West. Not too shabby. My mind racing with images of sunsets and a wooden sign that reads "Mallory Square," I would assume that this is what my memory holds of Key West. Perhaps Key West is where I live. She probably knows that as well... so, I think that I will probe a little more. "Now that I know my name, what is yours?" I state a little less muffled. This question, however, seems to really upset the lady, and I have no idea why. Her pretty aqua blue eyes start to water more, and now there is a single stream of a tear falling down her sun-kissed skin. I apologize for making her cry, and she tells me, "My name is Amy Baker, and we know each other quite well, James."

I can't say that I am at all ashamed that I could potentially know this woman "quite well." Now I'm wondering why I don't feel so scared that I have absolutely no recollection of who I am or what I have done in my life. Maybe I should be worried. Amy continues, "The doctor does not want me to overload you with information at the moment, but I can tell you that the date is November 22, 2005, and you were in a terrible accident. You are also on several drugs

at the moment, but not to worry, you are a fighter, you always have been, and you will make it through this as well.”

Well, now I am very curious what kind of an accident I was in. But for the life of me, I cannot get myself to care anymore than just wondering. I do feel some pain, but other than that I think this lady might be exaggerating a little bit. I want to ask her more questions, but a very round nurse enters the room and tells Amy that visiting hours are over. She listens politely, then comes over to me and caresses the side of my face very daintily with her slender fingers as if she has done that before. She stares into my eyes, and I stare back into her four, and then the blackness hits me again.

Jevon Biffinger

Aftermath

The world ended in 2012, the same year that natural redheads became extinct; although according to *National Geographic* the bombs had nothing to do with that. It was mid-October, and a little boy stood ankle-deep in Lake Pend Oreille watching the vapor trails tracing white, white arcs across the blue, blue sky and contemplating the absurdity of that statement—after all, his mother was a natural redhead and she was doing just fine. His hair was too long. He brushed the sweaty mop out of his eyes with the back of a grubby forearm and adjusted the collar that slipped off his shoulder for the seventh time that day.

Autumn was coming late to Sandpoint, even this close to the Canadian border. Halloween was rapidly approaching, but it was still warm enough for t-shirts and wading. There hadn't been snow in almost four years, ever since the melting ice caps had flooded the oceans, changing the water's salinity, affecting the currents and thereby precipitating Glow-bull Warning. Aaron had explained it to him, and he didn't understand a word of it; but Aaron was his older brother and ever since they had gotten a flag in exchange for their daddy, Aaron was Man-of-the-House and that meant that he was always right. At least, that's what Aaron said.

“Aaron. Hey, Aaron,” he shouted, forgetting that he wasn't supposed to get his pants wet and letting one cuff splash into the water as he pointed up into the clouds. Mud oozed up around his toes and he wriggled them delightedly and smiled. So what if the whole world was at war? He was seven and on a permanent summer vacation. “Lookit, planes!” Aaron ignored him, but Aaron always ignored him, especially when Isaiah was around. Both teenagers were already looking up, anyway, and exchanged a brief, solemn glance that had nothing to do with planes.

He sighed and shrugged in a jerky parrot imitation of adult exasperation, and used the pointing hand to pull his hand-me-down jeans back snug with his butt. Without warning, in the most casual gesture in the world, Aaron reached over, disentangled the other hand still holding up the remaining dry leg, and enveloped it in his own as delicately as though it were a newly hatched chick. His older brother looked about as surprised as he felt, and suddenly more important than what Aaron was telling him was the fact that he held hands like Mom. In front of Isaiah, no less. Isaiah was pointing back up the hill and saying something.

“What?” Aaron asked, at the same time Isaiah repeated “Doo-djerMOM,” and sure enough when they turned to look there was Mary Margaret Finch running through the overgrown field towards them, still wearing her farm-issue rubber apron and boots, her frizzy orange hair exploding from its braid, her pale round face screaming their names. She descended upon them with such ferocity that his first reaction was to flinch back against Aaron; but she just wanted to touch them, and she did, her hands still wet with chicken blood

that left dark streaks on his forehead and stuck in his hair when she combed it back, a thumb print on Aaron's cheek. She scooped him up and he automatically wrapped his arms and legs around her, holding on for dear life as she stumbled back up the slope with Aaron's help.

The last glimpse he ever had of the world the way it had been was over her shoulder, through her strawberry blond hair. For some reason Isaiah stood standing on the shore, watching them go for a little while, before turning back to the lake. It sprawled away to the horizon, opaque shades of green, framed by golden grass still spotted with bloody drops of Indian Paintbrush, until it kissed the cerulean sky. The white clouds disappeared to the south, beyond Pend Orielle, maybe beyond Idaho entirely.

Isaiah didn't make it to the shelter; their mother didn't make it out.

To be on the safe side, they didn't leave the underground pantry until the day after all of the food ran out; and then mostly because he kept crying about the duct-taped refrigerator in the corner, the soot from the kerosene lamps, the smell of two unwashed boys, and the runs he got from too many prunes. Aaron, the one who ran outside once a day to dump the bucket, the one who found the lamps and coaxed them into prolonged life with canola oil, the one who had figured out what to do with Mom's body and taken care of it himself, never once complained.

The power had been out for almost a month, and Aaron was adamant that they shouldn't open up the fridge to bury her outside, no matter how many tears he cried or tantrums he threw. They stood in the kitchen over the trapdoor, and couldn't figure out how their father had gotten the damned thing down there in the first place.

"She's kinda buried already," Aaron pointed out uncertainly; chewing his nails down to the quick while he swung the combined fist of their joined hands back and forth, back and forth. He shrugged sulkily, and refused to look at anything but the linoleum between his toes. In the end they agreed, guiltily, to leave her where she was; but Aaron found a padlock and a Sharpie, and he found a picture of her, and together they created a memorial that they didn't feel too horrible about.

The house was dark and claustrophobic, which wasn't unusual, but when they fled outside they were greeted with still air hanging heavily over sun-starved plant life in what should have been mid-afternoon but more resembled an overcast evening. He clung to Aaron's side like a limpet as they walked through the yard, past the discarded axe Mom had tossed aside in the middle of slaughtering the hens in order to come find them, past hutches full of dead animals.

Sandpoint itself was no better. Broken and empty storefronts stared accusingly at them on Main Street, creaking doors yawned at them on Elm Street. A shuffling figure wrapped in a quilt looked up from the dumpster it was digging in and flinched away like a stray dog. The gaunt face under disheveled lank hair looked startlingly like

Mrs. Phelps, the church pianist, but she fled down an alley before they could acknowledge her.

They stood blankly in the middle of a street with no cars, surrounded by blocks and blocks of empty buildings. Hours later they hadn't come across anyone else, and exhausted and dehydrated he started to cry, but he had no tears left. Aaron picked him up and carried him as he hiccupped miserably, stepping gingerly around the trash littering the gutters and sidewalks. "Andy, Andy," Aaron crooned, more to fill the silence than anything, "rhymes with... candy," he adlibbed, and smiled a little when a hiccup came out as a snort instead. "Fine and dandy?" he tried, and his little brother wiped a snotty nose on his grungy shirt. "Drew, Drew!" Aaron shouted to the dead sky, and his big voice boomed through the ghost town, "Cries 'boo-hoo!'"

"Do not!" he protested, punching Aaron's chest and scrambling to the ground. He stood bravely in the middle of the road while Aaron poked around in what few cars were left for anything that might be useful; then a generator sputtered whiningly before stalling with an echoing bang like gunfire, and he was immediately by Aaron's side again. There were keys in the ignition of the Ford Aaron was currently halfway inside. The brothers looked at each other; Aaron reached out and turned them, and the car roared to life, loud as thunder in the silent street.

"Is this stealing?" he asked timidly, but Aaron shook his head looking at the copious build-up of dust on the upholstery. "I don't think it matters anymore," he said.

Aaron guessed that Sandpoint was so out of the way on an enemy hit list that it escaped a local EMP, and that the power outage was due to national power plants being wiped out. For proof he cited the car starting up, and the generator they'd heard. They loaded the dusty Ford up with what food they could find in town and set out to put Sandpoint, and the contents of the bomb shelter refrigerator, behind them.

Carhopping was a popular habit on the back roads of back-water America in the chaos following the global missile attacks that ended World War III. It consisted of finding a car whose battery still had a charge and driving until the gas ran out, at which point the process was repeated. Without electricity there was no way to work gas pumps. There were more than a few times their car broke down in a "hotspot" of fallout near what remained of the major cities, at which point Aaron would herd him out of the passenger seat or rouse him from the back and they would get out of the area as fast as possible. Sometimes they threw up afterwards, and he had a fever most of the time, but a general rule of thumb of where was "safe" and where was "hot" was the presence of live plants. As the dust settled, more pushed their way up through the ashy silt.

Aaron explained it once, the time they had the BMW. He'd had to fight another man off for it, but Aaron was big for his age and most people were too afraid to put up a big fuss. It was almost a year

since the month in the converted pantry beneath their kitchen, and his nightmares had gotten better. "They said after Hiroshima that nothing would grow for 80 years," Aaron said. He had been reading up on fallout and radiation poisoning at every library they passed that was still standing. "But you know what? Plants started coming back within the month! Fallout from bombs has a shorter half-life than nuclear reactors that go haywire, so it'll go away sooner, but," Aaron paused a moment in his monologue to fight with the gear shift. The car grumbled grudgingly. "I think there were so many missiles that we have global fallout, not local."

He didn't understand any of this, but Aaron always seemed content enough to chat to himself. The one good thing about the tail end of nuclear winter was that it had temporarily nullified the greenhouse effect and the air that came in the open windows was cool on his face. He coughed halfheartedly, and dozed, and dreamed about their mother's padlocked tomb.

Old people and kids got sick first, and some not at all. Aaron was one of the few who seemed immune to whatever malady was going around and carried him around the crowds of hairless, toothless screaming people on big shoulders, although he must have been at least nine by then, and getting big. The worst Aaron got were those bubbly blisters on his hands and arms from testing the food they found in ruins of cities or places that might have had atomic rain recently, and he argued that it was better to burn himself on the outside than them both on the inside.

The supply of cars had run out by the time he was so sick that they could no longer pretend the problem didn't exist, so when Aaron casually announced they were going hunting for a doctor he was a little skeptical about how transportation was going to work. Or where they were going to find a doctor in the first place.

"Where are we going to find a doctor in the first place?" he asked, his head bouncing on Aaron's shoulder.

"How 'bout California?" Aaron quipped. "There used to be good doctors in California. On TV."

They were in Wyoming. "You can't carry me all the way to California," he pointed out, and coughed. "Used to be," he echoed. "TV." Aaron ignored his pessimism, just boosted him further up his back. He closed his eyes and sighed. Aaron plodded on, humming to himself.

He wondered if Aaron ever got tired of taking care of him like this. It occurred to him for the first time that they'd never really spent time together before that far away day in Sandpoint. He tried to remember the colors he had seen over his mother's shoulder, but they came out dulled, muted, as though the dust cloud that blocked the sun was hanging over his memory, too. "Let me down," he wheezed, "Imma walk." Aaron let him down.

California, huh? "The ocean," he breathed.

"The ocean," Aaron agreed. They held hands.

They found a bike in Reliance, which they both found amusing, a little way off WY-30. It was a boy bike, which Aaron confessed to never understanding because that extra bar was a pain if you hit something and slid forward off the seat. Literally, he added with an impish grin, and Aaron laughed. There was a metal shelf bolted to the body of the bicycle behind the seat and over the back wheel, like a macho version of a girl's handlebar basket. He sat on that and kept his feet planted on the bolts either side of the wheel, Aaron took the seat and the pedals, and they were off.

Aaron passed the time by talking and asking him questions, even when he was out of breath from pedaling them both uphill. It helped in keeping his mind off the fact that he was sick and useless, his arms wrapped around his brother's chest while Aaron did all the work and he still breathed the heaviest of the two.

"Do you remember Dad?" Aaron would ask, standing up for leverage. He would hook his fingers in Aaron's belt loops and try to lean forward to help with momentum.

He remembered a laugh, a smell, big hands and sandpaper cheeks; but no face, no events. No name but "Daddy." "No," he said as they would coast down the hill, and it wasn't really a lie.

Aaron would nod. "Do you remember Mom?" he would ask, zigzagging the bike over the shattered remains of streets when they were on level ground because he knew his little brother liked it.

He remembered their mom. It was a dumb question, not worth the breath he had left, so he would pinch Aaron in response, and Aaron would laugh.

"Do you remember snow?" Aaron asked just once, his voice thick with something like longing but more like loss. He had stopped the bike overlooking where San Francisco should have been, and where a giant, white crater was.

He recognized something in the way the ocean whistled up over the coast and sent ash swirling into the air. It floated around them and got stuck in their hair and eyelashes, but it didn't melt like snowflakes and he hadn't needed a painter's mask when he was three and someone held him up to the window to see a rare winter storm.

He tightened his arms around Aaron's waist in what could only be called a hug, but they both pretended he was only holding on for balance.

"Do you remember the sun?" he asked in response, and in response to that Aaron started pedaling again, and didn't answer. He never answered questions, only asked them.

The doctor they found claimed to have been a surgeon in Beverly Hills. Now he worked in Moorpark off the Ronald Regan Freeway, out of a first story apartment that smelled like urine. He explained candidly enough that this was about as close as you could get to Los Angeles, even two years after the attack. His nurse, a lumpy looking woman with five strings of hair still attached to her

head, nodded in agreement. The left side of her face was completely covered in burns; the fingers of the corresponding hand were fused together. Aaron caught him staring and kicked him.

After a strange, awkward examination on the scuffed and stained kitchen table, the doctor announced that the patient had a faulty diaphragm, and that surgical intervention was the only way to save him. Aaron opened his mouth to say something, but the doctor raised his hand in a request for silence.

"What I can do to the flesh, so can Hester do with machines!" he announced like a circus ringleader, and Hester the Nurse smiled and batted her eyes. At some point she had smeared lipstick clumsily on her mouth; it looked like a bloody gash across her face. Aaron was further silenced as the contraption they planned to install in his little brother was produced. It was explained as being akin to an iron lung, but whereas the original iron lungs were lumbering giants for which parts no longer existed, this was his masterpiece, weighing in at a paltry thirty pounds. Aaron was not convinced.

"Yeah," Aaron said after the doctor's fifteen minute pitch, "but will he have a normal life?"

The doctor stared at him blankly for a moment before responding. When he did, his voice was flat with incredulosity at the stupidity of the question. "Of course not. He'll be a little boy with a machine on his back in the middle of a nuclear wasteland."

That shut Aaron up.

"But he'll be alive," the doctor added, almost grudgingly, picking at the dirty torn hem of a coat that must have been white once.

And that made Aaron agree.

The generator was out, the doctor apologized. It looked more like someone had taken an axe to it, but although Aaron was pale he didn't say anything, so neither did he.

The doctor produced a bottle of chloroform and a dirty rag, which he then presented to a visibly terrified Aaron with disjointed directions of the application and a sparse excuse that he would normally do this himself but he had to prep himself for the operation. Aaron looked at the things in his hands, then him, and shook his head in mute despair. The last time he had seen that expression on his brother's face Mom hadn't woken up, and Aaron had had to take care of it all by himself because he hadn't been able to stop crying. He decided to be brave this time. There was no turning back, anyway. Hester was floating around them like a misshapen ghost, placing lit candles everywhere there was a flat surface.

"S'ok," he squeaked, and Aaron sank onto the bed beside him.

"Minas Basin, Nova Scotia," Aaron said, pointedly. Talking calmed them both down. "We're going there next." This was news to him. "The Bay of Fundy is near there. It has some of the strongest tides in the world." That sounded interesting. He nodded.

Aaron smiled, mussed his little brother's hair, and then surprised them both by leaning forward and planting a quick kiss on his

clammy forehead. It was something Mom would have done. "See you when you wake up," he whispered.

Lies.

Amelia Onorato



Eileena Long
Connor, 6B Lead Pencil



Ifeoma Onuorah
The culmination of ME, Soft pastel, acrylic paint, and color pencil on pastel paper

Colophon

Hemetera is a student submitted, judged, and published literary and fine arts journal of Regis College.

The cover was designed by Michelle Samedi. The cover artwork was created from alternate pieces of work from the following students: Amanda Beaulieu, Tiffany Blessing, Aubrey Byron, Ifeoma Onuorah, Michelle Samedi, and Rathy Uy. The trim size of the 2008 edition is 5.5" x 8.5". The titles of the works are set in 12 point Gill Sans Light typeface, the authors' names are set in 11 point Myriad Std Tilt typeface, and the body copy is 10 point Times Roman typeface.

Regis College - 235 Wellesley Street - Weston, MA - 02493