

ETC.

**2022 SUMMER
MAY 31
ISSUE #1**



**AN
INTRODUCTION
TO THE REGENT
DUNGEONS
& DRAGONS
CAMPAIGN**

**“JOY AND
ENCHANTMENT”**

**INTERVIEW:
RCSA PRESIDENT
AMELIA HAMITER**



**“ASH” BY DRYDEN DEMCHUK
AND
“RENATA” BY STEVEN GOMEZ**

JOY AND ENCHANTMENT

ABIGAIL GERMAIN

Historically, I am someone who will be completely overcome by the beauty of the world before me. It could be a city skyline, a rolling expanse of water, a furrowed farmer's field, or a sky full of stars. Whatever it is, it will elicit a strong emotional response from me filling me with enchantment and wonder.

Before moving to the Pacific Coast in January 2022, everyone collectively told me that Vancouver was one of the most beautiful cities in the world and they did not expect that I would want to return to dumpy little Hamilton after encountering its glory. My response was always, "I'm sure Vancouver is beautiful, but I think I prefer the quiet, unassuming beauty of the Hamilton escarpment – it's home." Nevertheless, I did fully intend to enjoy the West-Coast splendour during my time here.

"My own heart let me more have pity on; let me live to my sad self hereafter kind, charitable."

I flew into Vancouver in the middle of a snowstorm and had to wait two days just to catch a glimpse of the mountains. When I finally did see them, these snow-covered crests looming on the horizon, I tried to stir up the familiar sense of awe, but all that came into my head was "I'm definitely not in Hamilton anymore." In the next several weeks, I would sit for long periods of time just staring at the unfamiliar landscape trying to make myself feel something, anything.

As Vancouver began to blossom into an uncertain spring, patches of colour burst forward wherever I looked, taunting me with their beauty. I saw the flowers, the shades of white, pink and yellow. I took photos and posted them for others to enjoy receiving back exclamations of envy and admiration. But I felt nothing. An enormous sense of guilt started to sweep over me. Here I was amidst all this beauty and I, like a petty child, was not able to enjoy it.

Then, one evening at the end of April I was sitting at Jericho beach writing a reflection on the landscape before me while the sun slowly sank to the horizon. I looked out toward the mottled sky and the silhouetted mountains above the sparkling inlet and a long-forgotten phrase came into my head: "Is there a felicity in the world superior to this?" This phrase from Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* has frequently come to mind when I am overcome by a beautiful prospect. Yes, it is overly melodramatic, but it nevertheless encompasses my wonder in the moment.

With the recollection of this phrase came an immense sense of joy and relief along with the realization that I was starting to have a sense of belonging. I'm not home, but for this season I may be able to eventually enjoy the beauty that is slowly becoming more familiar.

Through this experience, I have been reminded that we have a limited emotional capacity as human beings and we should temper our expectations and standards accordingly. How can we feel ecstatic joy when experiencing loss? I have been reminded of this again and again throughout my life in each period of mourning, or even periods of deep fatigue. However, it still catches me by surprise. If I feel "fine" than I assume I should be able to function as normal.

Each of us goes through seasons like this in our own way and for different reasons, but these seasons do come. When they do, be gentle with yourself. As the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins says:

"My own heart let me more have pity on; let me live to my sad self hereafter kind, charitable."

I do not expect to suddenly be able to fully enjoy every moment of beauty in this city as I would a familiar Hamilton landscape. However, by God's grace and through seeing the enjoyment of other people, I look forward to many more small glimpses of wonder as spring turns into summer and (Lord willing) the sun begins to shine.

NOTES FROM THE UNDERDARK, EP. 1

JONATHAN LIPPS

When I was growing up in the 80s and 90s, prevailing Christian wisdom dictated that "role playing games" were a dangerous activity that opened one up to Satan's influence, if not outright Satanism. If I could give this view a charitable philosophical reading, I imagine it would be something like this: Satan proposed the first counterfactual, therefore imagining oneself counterfactually (e.g., playing a demonstrably false imaginary role) is Satanic by association. Of course, this view, if anyone actually ever held it, is just bonkers, but the Christian hysteria around games like Dungeons & Dragons was certainly frothy enough to keep childhood me well away from its many nefarious devices, such as "20-sided dice" or "spell lists" (Gasp of Puritanical Horror; can be cast as a Ritual; grants self -3 INT for 1 minute).

It is with a certain amount of relish in making up for lost time, therefore, that I have gathered with several other anonymous Regent students this Summer to embark on an epic high-fantasy adventure in an imaginary world designed by our Dungeon Master ("DM"). Feeling relatively grounded in reality as a not-quite middle-aged person, and with a high degree of confidence that I will not suddenly start wearing cleric's robes to chapel or attempt to use incantations to alter my test scores (beyond those standard invocations used by all Regent students), I am unconcerned about Satanic influence (not least because we have agreed to leave our phones at the door and will thus, for a few blessed hours, be free of social media).

My alter ego in this adventurous campaign is a hard-bitten battle cleric by the name of Fennin Gilear ("Fenn" to his friends, which you all may now consider yourselves). According to his backstory (most of which must remain clouded in the secret past, for now), Fenn has seen a lot of the world, maybe too much. But in the game, he is a "level 1" character, which means he could lose half his life force if a particularly rancorous chicken looks at him sideways. There's a lot that I don't know about Fenn, and a lot more that I don't know about the world Fenn inhabits. The great



thing is that he (via the omniscience of the DM) knows these things, and so I'll get to learn them along the way, and through crafting Fenn's story will (perchance, and devil chickens aside) make some kind of mark in the history of the world.

Fenn will not be alone in his quest. He doesn't know it yet, but I have it on good authority that he'll soon be thrown together with the rest of his adventuring party: Evendur, Rynne, and Orwin. Together they'll receive their first mission, and attempt to work together to survive and to grow. Assuming enough of that surviving and growing happens, one day they may be able to participate in a grander drama on a grander stage, and help advance the cause of scattered humanity in a world of multifarious gods and monsters, whose overwhelming power and underwhelming interest in humanity's existence require the raising up of epic heroes like ours!

Or, we could run into one of these nasty chickens on our first outing and have a total party wipe. Either way, stay tuned to the Et Cetera and I'll share about our epic deeds or misdeeds as the heroes journey on.

THIS DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CAMPAIGN IS BEING PLAYED BY DRYDEN DEMCHUK, JONATHAN LIPPS, AMELIA HAMITER, AND ABIGAIL GERMAIN.

SPECIAL THANKS TO DUNGEON MASTER AJ REIMER FOR MAKING IT POSSIBLE.

STAY TUNED TO ETC. FOR UPDATES.



There was a pueblo in the highlands, before the ground rose sharply to become the Andes. A river ran past on its way to feed a lake and provided cool refreshment even as the Sun beat down on the plain. The pueblo was small, but it sat near the road going west so travellers were known to come by, usually on their way into the mountains or coming down from them. The women would sell their trinkets, the farmers their vegetables. The travellers—mostly Spanish, sometimes Indian, occasionally gringos—were not always interested.

The pueblo had no name. It was not large enough to need one. If anyone asked, the people would shrug and say “El pueblo.” (The gringos would rarely understand and tell others that they had passed a quaint little village called El Pueblo.)

No one knew how the sickness came or what it was. They only knew it killed almost everyone it touched. People would cough, grow feverish, and vomit blood. There would be pain and swelling in the privates or underarms or even the neck; some people’s skin turned black. Then they died.

Renata, ten years old, wandered between houses and the paths that served as streets. It was not yet time for siesta, but school was shut and few were out of doors. The pueblo that had looked so alive now seemed abandoned. Renata met Julio sitting on his front steps, whittling a stick. “Why aren’t you at work?” she asked.

“Because, señorita, there is no work. No one needs a carpenter anymore, not even for coffins. They’ve started digging the common grave.”

A few minutes later Renata found it was true. To one side of the graveyard several men were at work. Padre Aurelio stood near the tiny chapel watching them, hands clasped behind his back. His cassock was always spotless, his grey hair always combed.

“Why are you not visiting the sick?” Renata asked him.

“They will send for me when their time comes,” answered the priest.

“You will give them the blessing?”

“Yes. But outside, through an open window. I

must do all I can to keep myself safe until the end. Your souls are in my care. Someone has to give you all the blessing.”

“The end of what?”

“The plague, niña. Soon enough we will all be in there.” And he pointed to the gravediggers. They had already made a very large ditch. It would be larger still. Renata looked and saw it like a mouth, opening wider and wider, and into that gaping maw was poured the whole pueblo, all wrapped up in cloths, each morsel swallowed by the ravenous earth.

She returned to her house and her abuelita was lying on her cot. “Abuelita,” she said, “what can we do?”

“About what, chiquita?”

“The pueblo is dying.”

The old woman sighed. “Death will always be.”

“But why?” Renata was unexpectedly angry.

“Do you remember when we buried your papa? Or were you too young?”

“I remember.”

“And you didn’t know your mama. She gave us you and then she gave up the ghost. Death was with us then. Death is with us now. Death will always be. What God has written, He has written. We are in His hands.”

Renata said nothing. “Now leave me to rest, chiquita.” Abuelita said, wheezing. “I have a headache.”

Days passed and the sickness claimed more and more of the pueblo. Deaths came more quickly. Abuelita was now coughing up blood. Renata tended to her, knowing that soon she herself would give in to the plague. In the pueblo of little more than a hundred people, only twenty now remained well. The rest were either dead or on their way to the common grave. One, Julio the carpenter, unexpectedly recovered; instead of celebrating with joy, people were almost resentful, as if they had been hoping for his death. The

The pueblo was going to be destroyed—was he too dignified to join them? Did he have no respect? More than resigning themselves to their fate, they had embraced it. All except Renata.

One night she dreamed a dream. It was dark. She was in some kind of cave. There was firelight coming from somewhere. A woman was sitting with her back towards her, and the woman was weaving in the manner of Indian women. Renata could see at first only bright colours, an impression of something beautiful, the way you see things in dreams. Then it resolved itself into a pattern and she saw that it was a picture, like a map of the pueblo. There was the river and all the houses and even the tiny chapel. All along the border were figures of people, some black, some red, a few gold. Then Renata realized with horror that the woman was *undoing* the tapestry, pulling it apart thread by thread. Renata started to weep.

What is it, niña?” came a voice.

“You are destroying my pueblo,” Renata said.

“I am not destroying it, the plague is.” The woman kept pulling threads. Renata kept weeping and could contain herself no more. “Stop!” she yelled through her tears.

The woman’s hands stopped their work. “Niña? Death will always be. This is the story of all things. Why do you weep if your people are in God’s hands?”

“Because I am angry. Because I am sad. Because I love my home, but they do not seem to care.”

“And what would you do for your home? What place would you take in the story of your pueblo?”

Renata at first didn’t know how to answer, but then she did. She looked down again at the tapestry and it had changed. Now all the figures were gold. All but one. That one was black. She said nothing, but the woman did not need to hear. She turned toward Renata—who all at once saw that it was not firelight that filled the cave, but the light of this woman’s purity. The glory of her grace shone like the Sun and Renata bowed her head away. Our Lady said: “Wake now, niña, with my blessing and with the blessing of the dawn.”

Renata woke with sunlight on her face. The air smelled different—or maybe it was only her. She rose from her mat and looked over to where Abuelita lay. The old woman had vomited more blood in the night; it caked the floor and the cot near her head. Her arms and hands were turning black. She opened her eyes for a moment and then closed them again. Renata did not say a word, but only went to her bedside and touched her forehead. Almost at once, Abuelita gasped, chest heaving, her whole body heaving. Then she went limp. The black flesh returned to its normal hue, her sweat dried, her breath came regular. Abuelita opened her eyes and gazed at her granddaughter. Renata took her by the hand—now warm and alive—and they walked out of the house.

They went next door and Renata touched the dying man who was there. Across the way, she touched the baby and her mother. She did the same at each nearby house, touching all who were sick. One by one they all rose from where they lay or sat—healed of the disease. And they followed her as she went, to see each wonder for themselves.

Renata and the growing crowd came to the house of Julio the carpenter. He told them to go away, thinking they’d come to mock him again. But Renata pushed the door open—it gave at her touch—and went in. The disease had scarred him where the swellings had been; she touched the places and the flesh became smooth and unblemished.

She went through the whole pueblo, touching everyone who was sick and even a few who seemed perfectly well, who had contracted the illness without knowing it yet. She healed them all. And when every home had been visited, she led the pueblo down to the graveyard and the tiny chapel and the pit in the earth.

Padre Aurelio came out staring. “What are you all doing here? Aren’t you sick?” But he could see they were not, and also that they all stared or pointed silently at Renata. Renata went up to him and gently clasped his hand. He felt warmth travel up his arm.

“There would have been no one to give you a blessing, Padre,” she said. “But you may have mine.” With that she walked through the rows of

wooden crosses to the edge of the common grave—then climbed down into it.

No one followed her there. Presently they heard movements, grunting, hoarse voices. Then a hand came up and grabbed the ground. A man pulled himself out of the pit and blinked in the noonday Sun. “Ricardo!” cried out his wife, while everyone gasped. More people were climbing out now, some still partly wrapped in their shrouds. Last of all came Renata, who stood there on the edge of the grave as her pueblo became whole again.

The people calmed down and began looking at her, awe in their eyes. Padre Aurelio lifted his hands to heaven and called out in a loud voice:

“Praise be to the Lord for our salvation! Blessed are you, niña, for yours are the hands of life! Death shall die, and the glory of the Lord has been revealed, and all flesh—”

And Renata collapsed to her hands and knees, retching and retching and it was blood. Her body shuddered violently. She raised her head and they saw a swelling on her neck. Her skin was blotching over with blackness.

Having taken the sickness from her pueblo, and with a last loving look at her abuelita, Renata crumpled over and died.

If you find yourself on the road going west, in the highlands before the Andes, and come across a small pueblo beside a river, the women will sell you trinkets and the farmers will sell you vegetables. And if you ask the name of this quaint little place, the people will smile and say that this is the pueblo of Santa Renata. Her relics are in the chapel—two pesos to touch them and be healed.

It was impossible to know how many days had passed since the young man had been sent to hell. The skies hung over him in a constant cloud of ash and haze which never seemed to darken with the night or grow brighter with the day. Without day or night to guide him, he would sleep when he could no longer keep his eyes open, and had no measure of how much time had passed when he awoke. The air still brought a metallic taste to his mouth and a constant itch to his skin. Though, he no longer noticed the taste after all these days of canned food. That was one part of hell that he had never heard from any priest - all the tin cans.

The young man had learned that there were a lot of things about hell that no priest had ever gotten right. The priests said that hell as a place of fire; a place of screaming and torment. There was fire, this much was true. There was a moment of fire. And yes, the fire brought torment. The fire brought agony, suffering, and screaming. But the inferno was not hell - that was where the priests were mistaken.

Hell arrived in the way that the priests said it would. It began with the sins of greed and pride, and it arrived in grey-haired men making judgments on the world from high above - Old men seated in parliamentary buildings and white houses. It began with old men making decisions and young men being sent into the flames. But, contrary to the doctrines of the church, it was the righteous and not the wicked who disappeared into the flames. Those who survived the flames were sentenced to endure hell.

One of the first people the young man had encountered in hell was an older man he found in a cellar. The young man had been wandering through the blackened remnants of a house, seeking temporary shelter from the cold, when a charred rafter snapped under his weight and dropped him onto the dirt floor of the space beneath the house. He found the man lying on a bare mattress in the corner. The hole in the man’s head and the pistol on the ground told an obvious story, but this corpse was not charred like those who had perished in the fire; This man had initially been sent to hell just like the young man. Exploring the cellar further, the young man found a shelf lined with tin cans and bottled water. A metal case lay open on the ground adjacent to the shelf. Inside the box were endless bundles of

paper money and an envelope containing dirt-stained government documents. If money counted for anything in hell, this man would have been rich. Perhaps he was sent to hell for his greed. Perhaps he was one of the powerful old men who brought hell to the earth; who wreathed hell’s arrival with seductions of power and might. Perhaps he was among those who hid themselves in bunkers of concrete and steel while hell arrived as if they wished to elude the rescue of the flames and endure hell instead. This is the part of hell that the young man could not have anticipated: Those who willingly brought themselves to it, hiding in their bunkers and blaming anyone but themselves for its arrival.

If this man shared in the responsibility for hell, the hole in his head suggested that he had lived to regret his choice. Yet, like all men who brought hell upon the earth, this man surely felt irresponsible for its arrival. He had likely blamed his enemies, his superiors, or those whose hands he pushed to the launch button; anyone but himself. Among the first sins committed was brotherly murder, yet it was followed by an illusion of irresponsibility: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Christ warned that hell and judgment would come when we forsake our own brother, and surely our guise of irresponsibility would follow then as well.

Despite Christ’s warnings against the destruction of hell, the priests had said that Christ had descended into hell himself. Father Ilya once told the young man that even John the Baptist had descended into hell as the forerunner of Christ. That was years ago when the young man was still at the border of childhood. He smiled bitterly to himself as he remembered the way he used to press the local priest for information on the things that kept him awake at night: Death, hell, heaven, evil, sin. Poor Father Ilya was forced to venture to the end of his seminary training almost every week by the anxious boy.

“If only Father Ilya was here to see hell with me.” The young man often thought to himself. Father Ilya was not sent to hell – he was able to escape into the fire. As far as the young man could tell, nobody from home had been sent to hell with him. Their corpses lay vacant and frozen underneath hell’s wasted ground. Before he went to sleep, the young man would pray to them. He would ask Father Ilya to intercede for him. He would ask to

join their corpses in their relief from hell.

Prayer may have seemed futile in hell, but if John the Forerunner had walked this ground himself, then surely the invitation to repentance lingered in hell’s radioactive air. Like the woman who touched the hem of Christ’s garment, perhaps the young man would find redemption in a mere footprint of Christ amidst hell’s toxic ground. Every step he took was motivated by this: He was not exempt from following Christ here in hell. “Take up your cross and follow me”, Christ had told his disciples. And then he went to hell.

The young man’s thoughts were punctuated only by the crunch of ashen gravel underneath his feet and the gentle motion of his sackcloth bag bouncing against his back as he walked ever onward. Deeper into hell, perhaps closer to Christ.

INTERVIEW:

AMELIA HAMITER, RCSA PRESIDENT

Tell me a bit about yourself - where are you from? What brought you to Vancouver? (or Regent?)

I was born in San Francisco, California, but have lived most of my life in what we call the “East Bay,” which is basically the part of Northern California that has Oakland and Berkeley. I did my undergrad at Scripps College, a liberal arts women’s college in the greater Los Angeles area, and then worked in public health for a few years before starting the MATS program remotely in 2020. I was really interested in intercultural and contextual theology (though I’ve now learned that it’s more accurate to describe all theology as contextual!), and I’ve been able to study these things in the World Christianity concentration. I come from a multiracial family and spent part of my childhood as an overseas missionary kid, so cultivating a theological perspective that can withstand (and even actively integrate) such a combination of cultures has been a necessary turning point for my own Christian spirituality – and frankly, is probably key to the health of any church living in a multicultural, globalized society.

What are your favourite books? Favourite Music? Favourite Movies?

Books: *Pioneer Girl* (Bich Minh Nguyen), *Re Jane* (Patricia Park), *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (Karen Joy Fowler). (Also, to show that I actually am a theology student – lately I’ve been making my way through *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to Women of the Torah and of the Throne* (Wilda C. Gafney) which has been great.)

Music: I go through a lot of phases but some consistent faves are St. Vincent and Janelle Monáe.

Movie: I have a soft spot for movie musicals of the 50s and 60s, and also Star Wars.

What do you like to do for fun?

I used to dance a lot but that’s kind of gotten lost between the pandemic and moving to Vancouver. Nowadays, honestly if I get to spend a few hours watching TV or playing guitar in the evening I consider that a win. Or, of course, spending time with friends!

What are your academic interests? How have your interests been able to develop since coming to Regent?

I came to Regent specifically to study World Christianity and was focused on topics like religious extremism, nationalism, radicalization, etc. However, in my World Christianity classes I’ve been introduced to the joy of reading theology written from and for human experiences that have not been well attended to in Western theological thought. So I think a shift has been learning to de-centre the louder and more “problematic” voices that are out there, and instead centre my studies around that which is liberating and life-giving. In that way, it’s been a really healing time and is expanding my imagination for what theological and spiritual care can really do (and not just un-do) in our communities.

What exactly is the RCSA and why should Regent students be engaged with it?

I think a helpful way to view the RCSA is as the channel through which students can have some participation in college governance, be it interacting with the Board and college

administration, providing services like lockers and a student kitchen (or stand-up desks in the library!), or helping us stay connected to the many resources and perks of being a UBC affiliate campus. Thus, students should stay engaged because it directly impacts our student experience. (While we’re on the topic – we’re still looking for a VP External! Go to rcsa.regent-college.edu to learn more.)

What current needs do you see in the Regent community?

I think for a lot of students, the current state of things makes it hard to know where to start with making friends and finding “Regent community” in the first place. It’s an unfortunate inevitability with hybrid learning that half of the people in a class are basically inaccessible to the other half (and shout out to the Professors and TAs who are splitting their time across both groups!). In a group of students who all have different schedules of coursework, family responsibilities, ministry commitments, jobs, commutes, etc., that 50% reduction in points of contact makes a big difference. I’ve found that while the desire for community is present, the opportunities feel slim and diluted – perhaps especially now, when a lot of current students didn’t have the opportunity to initially get situated with a solid cohort. This is of course difficult when studying remotely, but when I moved to Vancouver last summer after a year online, I was also surprised by how lonely studying in-person was. Despite my best efforts, that really only changed after a few specific people intentionally invited me into their friend groups. So I would encourage us all to continue being open and present to each other, and just be attentive to where we can take initiative and extend invitations.

Was there one thing in particular that inspired you to run for President?

Personally, as someone who applied to Regent before the pandemic started, I’ve had to come to terms with the reality that the bulk of my time here won’t have been what I hoped or expected when I applied. I think getting more involved with RCSA is an attempt to make the most of a non-ideal situation – and honestly, RCSA is also where I’ve found that there actually are a lot of resources and opportunities out there that bolster our agency as students. So as President, I hope to steward these resources well.

DAD JOKE OF THE WEEK:

I said to my son, "I need a battery so I can tell the time."

He asked, "Is it for a clock?"

I answered...

"I don't know! That's why I need the battery!"

MR. BEZOS SAYS...



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We all know that one guy...



SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

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Articles, fiction, artwork, and poetry are all welcome. Submissions must be in Word format. Maximum length for prose is 1000 words. Longer submissions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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