

The Understanding

by Matthew Robinson

The young boy picks up a coin that has rolled to his feet. It is warm, too warm considering the cold air streaming around him. While he searches for the coin's origins, police cordon off the street ahead. The next block has vanished behind an expanding wall of dust and smoke. At first the sound, the sensation of the explosions seemed like part of the city to the boy of six years, but the reactions of those nearest to him counteract the thought. He lifts the coin into the daylight: dark blotches of grease dull the elaborate carvings, distort the lettering. His other hand, grasped by his mother, is nearly asleep she holds it so tight. He asks her, "What's going to happen now, Mommy?" She is a long time answering. The initial wave of people fleeing past them, toward an idea of safety, begins to give way to those surging into the distorted scene, speaking of their blood, the most valuable currency now. The boy looks to his mother, her eyes trained toward the site of the bombing. "Now," she says, not entirely to her son, nor to anyone in particular. "Now, we help each other."

