

PAINT ...THE

BURNING!

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(HELP! FIRE!!)

By

Lowell Weber

WHY I LIKE IT: *Fiction Editor JOEY CRUSE writes... Lowell Weber's, "Paint the Burning House," is poetic apocalyptica.*

The speaker is a man who is watching the world burn, sees no alternative, and would rather pinpoint the last vestiges of beauty as a means to create something out of what's left.

He is a speaker of hope.

He is scared.

He will not go down without clutching the last flower left.

He is, as the title suggests, putting paint on a burning house.

What this piece holds tight to and one of its strongest points is the conception of the “they” vs. the individual. An elite group of humans hellbent on taking rather than spreading, “And as they destroy themselves and everyone else, they will think that everyone else would do the same if they had the power, the choice that is power. Everyone deserves what they’re about to receive because everyone is exactly like them; stupid, cruel and selfish. They are, in their minds, the best of their sordid ilk, the most righteous of the despicable.”

But there is action in accountability for one’s own actions. There is agency in being able to take control of one’s burning house so to speak.

There is hope.

There is hope.

Weber’s work here is a piece of poetry throwing paint over an ugly painting of unsustainability, the loss of care, and indoctrination – providing one of the only solutions we have for the fire: empathy, beauty, and poetics.

Enjoy.

QUALITY QUOTABLE (for the love of language...)

What a future. Thousands of years of construction and destruction cycling like a gasoline piston, bright energy, choking exhaust, but always the road lay ahead. Not for much longer or for much further. The end is there, the dead end where the bright energy is measured in millions of degrees, the choking exhaust in radioactive darkness.

Paint the Burning House

I would stay and try; try to save what I could, who I could, try to keep alive the best and most promising, try to hold the despair and collapse at bay. I wouldn’t succeed. I would die in a fit of failure. Worse, I would die feeling I had betrayed and been betrayed, a victim of my own vanity and obstinacy. Because there is no doing, only trying and it is madness to pretend otherwise. We are ruled by fear because we let ourselves be ruled by others. We let the thoughtless do our thinking, the arrogant do our judging, the cheating decide our worth. We let the worst decide what’s best and are shocked when it is wrong.

For all of that, I would stay and try and be overwhelmed.

But I must leave. There's only anger and frustration for me here. Not an excuse or even a rationalization. I'm frankly scared. Relying on myself alone frightens me. I know I have to go because I am afraid, afraid for us all. I can always come back to wait it out in your company. I like to think I'd slit my throat rather than do that. But I'm too much of a coward.

Or am I? Am I? I don't honestly know. That's part of it, finding out. Principally it's hope, a sad kind of hope. There's a great big terrible world out there teetering on the brink of self-destruction. Before it implodes in explosion I want to dive into the draining pool, slap paint on the burning house. I want to know what I'm losing, what we are all losing, before it's lost.

What a future. Thousands of years of construction and destruction cycling like a gasoline piston, bright energy, choking exhaust, but always the road lay ahead. Not for much longer nor for much further. The end is there, the dead end where the bright energy is measured in millions of degrees, the choking exhaust in radioactive darkness. The world is run by people who are too stupid, too cruel, too selfish to allow anyone else to lead even if it means staying alive. The damage they have wrought, the enemies they have cultivated mean their end is assured, so they assume.

They won't be going to their graves quietly. They will take everyone with them in a great final funeral pyre. And as they destroy themselves and everyone else, they will think that everyone else would do the same if they had the power, the choice that is power. Everyone deserves what they're about to receive because everyone is exactly like them; stupid, cruel and selfish. They are, in their minds, the best of their sordid ilk, the most righteous of the despicable. If they are flawed then the entire world is as well, only more so. How can it be otherwise?

No need for suicide. Ours is to wait for it and hope we are inside the fireball when hell takes over. In the meantime, I will take my dive and my brush my paint and hope I'm wrong, that the pool is still deep enough, the paint nonflammable enough, that the water and fire will embrace each other, cancel each other, that the stupid, cruel and selfish will dissolve in the torrent of tears and the pleas for mercy.

I will hope.

I will hope.

I hope.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *I live in a place geographically and climatically similar to the Ukraine: flat, fertile and mid-continental with extremes of temperature. I know Celsius and Fahrenheit meet at -40 because I've been there; cold that can kill in minutes. What would I do if fighting broke out here with nowhere to run to and nowhere to hide? What could I do but hope?*

I read a great deal. As a student of English Literature, I've read many of the greats. I admire Faulkner's endless, flowing sentences and Hemingway's staccato brevity. I live in between.

AUTHOR BIO: Lowell Weber is a furtive creature who inhabits a mind located in a suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota. He's been to Canada several times before the border wall was erected.