

Burn

by Christian Bell

Burning the Novel

No one believed me when I told them this: I took all of my novels and tossed them into the fire. Complete, mostly complete, in progress, stalled, scraps of thoughts scribbled on spiral notebook paper and coffee shop napkins, single sentences that never achieved original greater aspirations. I watched them burn. Burn, baby, burn. You might say, well, everything is kept on computer files these days, so really, the paper thing is just symbolic. So I also threw floppy, Zip, and flash drives into the flames as well. An old computer that held 150 pages of a futuristic city plagued by color-coordinated fascists and protagonists yearning for the bygone past got tossed in as well. The only thing left is what's dancing around in my brain and, while I'm not going to toss myself into the fire (see: *Terminator 2*-I cannot self-terminate), I plan on drinking heavily for the foreseeable future. Die, you fuckers, die.

Dreams of Fire

When it was he stopped dreaming of fire he wasn't sure. Maybe when the Cold War ended. Maybe when he started taking melatonin for sleep, eating healthier, and exercising regularly. Maybe when he sent *her* packing. Yes, *her*, and he's always sure not to say *her* name but say *her* italicized, which, if you've been where he's been, you'd know how to do. There are many nights of lost sleep because of you know who that he'll never get back, and the lost sleep is kindling ready to explode him into cancer, obesity, early death. Eventually, though, he got back to sleeping and fireless dreams. Sometimes, though, he wakes up from a dream of *her*, heart racing and sweating and the taste of *her* returned to his mouth, and it's all too real again.

Dreamkiller

When I started writing, I had dreams of being a novelist, a short

story writer, a poet, an essayist, a playwright, and a scriptwriter. As the writing has accumulated over the years, I've shed those notions one by one. Now, I'm down to short story writer. Now, I'm ready to get rid of that one too. Are you giving up writing, the Charlie Rose like inquisitor across the table from me that exists in my mind asks me. I laugh. Hardly, Charlie.

Checklist

Pilot lights. Matches. Firecrackers. Bic lighters. TNT. Propane. Sunlight and a magnifying glass. C4. Lighter fluid. Zippos. Nitroglycerine. Plutonium-239. Fireballs. Black powder. Lightning. Madmen with itchy fingers. The candle that burns twice as bright. Kingsford Match Light charcoal. Star R136a1. Your uncontainable desire.

I Feel

I feel for all those in the world suffering from the fever of our times. I feel for Chachi when he forgot to turn off the grill and Arnold's went up in flames. I feel for those who want to see the world burn. I feel for Uncle Owen and Aunt Beru, who meant well and really just wanted to be Force-less farmers. I feel for those long gone summer days of youth when there was nothing but sweat and energy and legs ready to go. I feel for the other Sarah Connors who didn't have the foresight to have unlisted phone numbers. I feel for my dead friend, who's long since been cremated. I feel for whoever has to change Hot Stuff the Little Devil's asbestos diapers. I feel for the people left suffering in buildings they couldn't escape from. I feel for a particular character at the end of the recent *Captain America* movie but I can't tell you any more since the movie just came out and I don't want to give away the ending. I feel for you and everything that you're feeling and I wish it could all be made right again and I hope things do get somewhat better before too much of life gets away.

Trinity

JRO knows what he's done but he doesn't know what he's done. The authorities confirmed, some remotely located ammunitions containing large amounts of explosives and pyrotechnics exploded, but there was no loss of life or limb. For years after, he dreams of fire and death, a virus unleashed that day in the desert. Now, I am become Death, etc. Later in life he walks the white sands of the Caribbean, his head down, asks his daughter, why do I walk unscorched ground. Somewhere else there are shreds of paper floating in the air, flickering paper snow, the accumulation of lives now undone, so easily.

