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EXCERPTED FROM

BURN YOUR BELONGINGS

BY DAVID F. HOENIGMAN

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Excerpted from *Burn Your Belongings*

We're sitting on the steps watching someone else's children chase the pigeons. some drop. roll in the dust and are dragged away by their wrists. does she understand me. what's to be understood. he needs to be fed. to get out of bed at a certain time. to be bought new clothes. his privacy. his space. he often walks off then turns to view her from afar. imagines he's first laying eyes on her. assessing her beauty. she's always surprised by his little bursts of impatience. he's dishonest with himself. I pretend to be afraid. he's slow to react. she's led away. I'll be stranded. I'm trying to read their lips. the expressions on their faces. I hate doing this. that's what she needs to understand. it doesn't give me pleasure. but why does he. it's a sickness. it's bottomless. it's always hungry. I don't need to have faith in him. he'd continue on without me. valuable seconds are being wasted. she's spared. at last she can breathe deeply. I feel as though my laws should supersede theirs. that I'm better suited to keep her from harm. I wish it were earlier. I wish I lived closer. I wish we never had to work again. it now sounds strange to me. something he's fallen out of love with. it doesn't matter what they say. what they promise. it falls short of me. what'll I look to now. is this how death begins. one by one things losing their meaning. will it shift to something else. what I've yet to uncover. or is it progress. something I'm finished with. something I can discard like an empty container. why do I feel welcome here. no thought was given to me. everything I see and touch is theirs. what I bump into. what I swerve to avoid. no one needs me. no one cares if what I say is true. we're light as feathers. we've reached our full potential. our legs dangle uselessly. she puts up her hands to protect herself. forgetting we're no longer threatened. what she feared he was becoming. what she saw at times. we're absolved. we're incapable of thought.

(pg.45)

I'm the worst of them. from whom they expect the least. I'm the least honest. the weakest and slowest. the cause of this terrible silence. it's all my fault. this room. how cold it gets. the disappointment I see in everyone I come across. the broken window. the holes in things. what I do for a living. his failure. how he never moves. his declining health. how it grays and falls apart. how they're growing into

it. I can survive on even less. he's making excuses. no one could be content with this. I did the best I could. I see now why they worry. what he ran away from. what drove her to another. the days of tiptoeing back and forth between attempts to understand. no one can connect me to this. he isn't making sense. those that knew better. those that knew what to expect drifted out past yelling distance. out past the furthest iceberg. she's immune to misfortune here. the ground won't shake. poisonous gas won't seep beneath the door. no one will ever find her. they can give up on me. he can treat me any way he likes. at least he's someone different. she's the most loving. he's the most levelheaded. she's the most unique and spirited. I'm embarrassed when I think about it. how I lavished praise and almost told her everything. she doesn't realize that to me it isn't a sacrifice. that I'd otherwise have nothing to do. we feel the sun on our cheekbones and shoulders. this is how easily I hang my head. how I hope something will carry me off. I wanted to savor every second. flatten them in between my palms and spread them out before me. all that had been kept from me. what's hidden behind their backs. what's slid into secret compartments just before I enter the room. now dangles from the ceiling. spirals up me from the floor. I'm able to succeed at what it felt absurd to dream. her frown doesn't mean anything. is no longer a cause for alarm. only that she's lost in thought. we heard a loud noise and she gripped me tighter. we swerved to avoid an outstretched hand. (pg.72)

This'll be taken from me. who has he become. a weight most others couldn't carry. neither asked him why he did it. still hasn't had time to dry. I saw it happen once. I use it to pound in nails. I have to remind myself that it was actually said. that I asked him to tell me and he did. I'm not usually so direct. he closed the door. spoke to me while packing his bag. if it'd been either one of us we'd have lost our jobs. I can't live with that. he leaves it for me. there are reasons to stay but going makes me happy. I suppose they can do what they want. I can't change how I feel. I can't learn from them. I can't give them my respect. I was taught to look at things a certain way. to value this. things intended for specific uses. that's all he'd say. I should've pressed him. it doesn't matter at this point. he wanted to tell me. it can only be one thing. the same as my own. if it somehow gets out. if it can't be caught. or the simplest explanation. what leaves it all undamaged. what'll walk away from here in a matter of hours. become once again something I only ever see the trail of. or a sound that's drowned out. she was going to enter. saw me inside. quickly turned and walked away. she's no good at being secretive. the same for him. only seconds afterwards. can I trust my senses. I add everything together and refuse to believe what it reveals. the worst in me wonders if I shouldn't demand the same. is she aware of this. has it been explained to her. the benefits. why it's necessary. how they'll never know. how this follows me everywhere. how did it happen. when did it begin. is it true. if I assume this. nothing he says has meaning. I can't care anymore. I try. I reach for what's usually there. it should be clear to him. if he were given this chance. if it wasn't just a thought. if he were allowed to. it's cheapened. I separate them. those that know from those that don't. I wish I were still in the dark. I wish I were one of these children. it's wrong. it's strengthened. (pg.107)

Six Gallery Press will publish **David F. Hoenigman's** first novel, *Burn Your Belongings*, this summer. Excerpts have appeared in other publications as well, such as *Internet Fiction*, *Zygote in My Coffee*, and *Barfing Frog*. There will also be excerpts in *Smoke Box* and *Muse Apprentice Guild*.

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