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WATCHING PAINT DRY

Stories from the Trade

“John Burbidge combines his skills as a masterful writer and a master painter to show that, contrary to popular opinion, watching paint dry can be informative, funny and sometimes heartbreaking. This is a book you will want to recommend to everyone you know.”

—Sharon Barrett, book reviewer for 40 years with major metropolitan daily newspapers

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Author's Note

First fact about paint: it's only one-thousandth of an inch thick when dry. But that one-thousandth of an inch protects and colorizes most of what humans construct on this planet, so what it lacks in depth it recovers in width, despite going largely unnoticed except by the people who put it there. The painters.

This book is for them. Dressed in white as they craft a backdrop to civilization, painters invite invisibility, smarting from the stigma of a simpleton occupation. "Just a dumb old painter" is how one of my bosses described himself, yet here he was running a successful business, keeping several people employed, performing a task that preserved and enhanced all the earthly resources that go into making buildings. I heard that same sense of unworthiness expressed by many other career painters, and it needed me. After fifteen years I'd yet to master all the nuances of painting, and I didn't get a sense I ever would. *Simple* is about the last word I would use to describe it.

This narrative starts at the beginning of my painting career and finishes at the end of it. In the middle is a procession of painters whose stories touched my life as the paint jobs that brought us together were completed. Some of these people are still painting, some are in jail, and some are dead from their own destructive doings. But wherever they are, aboveground or below, locked up or let out, to them I say this: *simple* is about the last word I would use to describe you.