

"Plant the books, turn in an alarm, and see the firemen's houses bum, is that what you mean?" Faber raised his brows and looked at Montag as if he were seeing a new man. "I was joking." "If you thought it would be a plan worth trying, I'd have to take your word it would help." "You can't guarantee things like that! After all, when we had all the books we needed, we still insisted on finding the highest cliff to jump off. But we do need a breather. We do need knowledge. And perhaps in a thousand years we might pick smaller cliffs to jump off. The books are to remind us what asses and fools we are. They're Caesar's praetorian guard, whispering as the parade roars down the avenue, 'Remember, Caesar, thou art mortal.' Most of us can't rush around, talking to everyone, know all the cities of the world, we haven't time, money or that many friends. The things you're looking for, Montag, are in the world, but the only way the average chap will ever see ninety-nine per cent of them is in a book. Don't ask for guarantees. And don't look to be saved in any one thing, person, machine, or library. Do your own bit of saving, and if you drown, at least die knowing you were headed for shore.

"But that would just nibble the edges. The whole culture's shot through. The skeleton needs melting and re-shaping. Good God, it isn't as simple as just picking up a book you laid down half a century ago. Remember, the firemen are rarely necessary. The public itself stopped reading of its own accord. You firemen provide a circus now and then at which buildings are set off and crowds gather for the pretty blaze, but it's a small sideshow indeed, and hardly necessary to keep things in line. So few want to be rebels any more. And out of those few, most, like myself, scare easily. Can you dance faster than the White Clown, shout louder than 'Mr. Gimmick' and the parlour 'families'? If you can, you'll win your way, Montag. In any event, you're a fool. People are having fun"

I know a man who printed our college paper half a century ago. That was the year I came to class at the start of the new semester and found only one student to sign up for Drama from Aeschylus to O'Neill. You see? How like a beautiful statue of ice it was, melting in the sun. I remember the newspapers dying like huge moths. No one wanted them back. No one missed them. And the Government, seeing how advantageous it was to have people reading only about passionate lips and the fist in the stomach, circled the situation with your fire-eaters. So, Montag, there's this unemployed printer. We might start a few books, and wait on the war to break the pattern and give us the push we need. A few bombs and the 'families' in the walls of all the houses, like harlequin rats, will shut up! In silence, our stage-whisper might carry." They both stood looking at the book on the table.