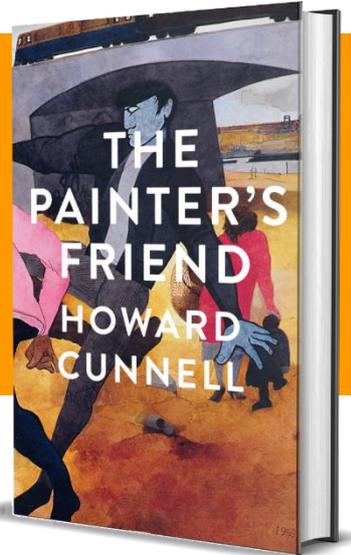


# THE PAINTER'S FRIEND

By HOWARD CUNNELL

Picador | 8.7.2021 | £16.99 | hardback & ebook



**An urgent and blistering story about class, protest and art, from the acclaimed author of *Fathers and Sons*.**

The painter Terry Godden was on the brink of his first success. After a violent crisis, he finds himself outcast.

In his fifties, and with little money, he retreats to a small island. Arriving in the winter, the island at first seems a desolate and forgotten place. As the seasons turn, Terry begins to see the island's beauty, and discovers that he is only one of many people who have sought refuge here. These independent outsiders, all with their own considerable struggles, have made a precarious home.

The island is owned by the business man and art collector Alex Kaplan. His decision to enforce a rent increase as he seeks to improve his property looks set to destroy this community that cannot afford to lose the little they have left. As an artist, Terry believes making the invisible struggles of the island visible to the world will help – but will his interference save anybody other than himself?

*The Painter's Friend* shows the human cost of gentrification for those dispossessed. The novel also explores the role of art in protest, and asks who gets to be an artist and what they owe in return. Written with visual lyricism and driven clarity, Howard Cunnell's incendiary story about class and resistance builds to an unforgettable climax. It is an urgent novel for our unjust times.



Howard lives in Sussex.  
(Author photograph (c) teddave)

**Howard Cunnell's** acclaimed memoir *Fathers and Sons* was read on BBC Radio 4's Book of the Week, and described as 'unique, and uniquely beautiful' (*Financial Times*); it explores his experiences as a fatherless man raising a transgender son. His novel *The Sea on Fire*, 'maps new noir territory in an incandescent underwater world' (*Guardian*), and draws from Cunnell's life as a dive guide and scuba instructor. He is the contributing editor of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road: The Original Scroll*, which the *New York Times* called 'the living version for our time'.

**Howard Cunnell is available for interview. For further information please contact Kate Green on 07811487578 or email: [kate.green@macmillan.com](mailto:kate.green@macmillan.com) (@greenkatie)**



**A note on the full jacket image (see above) for *The Painter's Friend*:  
*The Straw Man* (1963) by Edward Burra**

1905-76, Burra lived all his life in Rye, just down the road from Cunnell, when he wasn't travelling in Harlem or Spain, or elsewhere. Burra suffered from lifelong arthritis and rheumatism and was in constant pain, choosing to work with watercolours because it was easier than using oil. Burra was an outsider in the main because of his originality, disability and sexuality. Best known for his Harlem paintings and paintings of music halls, nightclubs, cafes, cabarets, sailors pubs.

In *The Straw Man*, Burra's "control of (the) details creates an intense psychological landscape... The metaphor of the straw man illustrates a logical fallacy: to set up a fight with a straw man and then declare victory, while the real opponent stands by untouched." - Simon Martin, *The Danse Macabre: Burra's Dark Side*, in Simon Martin, *Edward Burra* (Lund Humphries, in association with Pallant House Gallery to coincide with the exhibition *Edward Burra*, at Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, 2011), p. 98.

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**Further praise for *Fathers & Sons*:**

'There is so much aching love in this book, such pain and beauty. Behold, and rejoice' – Tim Winton

'A miracle of a book: sad, wise, strong and hopeful' – Sunjeev Sahota

'Bold, brave, beautiful - much more than biology. This is life itself.' – Jackie Kay

'I admire Cunnell's eye, his precise notation of light and water, whether in Mexico or Brixton, and the emotional commitment of his book. There is a resilience here that is on intimate terms with powerlessness.' – Adam Mars-Jones

'Essential reading.' – Sarah Winman

'It is one of the most good-hearted, big-souled books I've read, a memoir about what it means to be a man, but more importantly what it means to be a parent.' – Alex Preston, *Guardian*

'Concise and beautifully written, it is an unforgettable exploration of fatherhood, masculinity and family' – *Express*

'For this book is all kinds of exceptional: an urgent, agonising exploration of fatherhood, masculinity and family; a testament to the power of the written word to reach out to us in dark times; and, above all, a hymn to the "shaping axe" of human love.' – Caroline Sanderson, *The Bookseller*

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