

Tales of a childhood pyromaniac



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Tales of a Childhood Pyromaniac Fall was always my favorite time of year. I couldn't wait to see the leaves changing colors in the dimming autumn sun. I'd stare out my bedroom window in anticipation of the first falling leaves, knowing what the future held. No, I did not look forward to the impending Barbie Doll winter with its stifling slush. It was October and my days would be spent in the country, helping my grandmother rake the leaves from her yard. Before the real fun began there would be a few fleeting moments of jumping into the giant piles of soft leaves. Soon, when the time got right, we would set the massive pile on fire and create one of my favorite childhood memories. .

My grandmother was a careful lady. As far as I know she had never been in a traffic accident, gone through a divorce, or suffered from identity theft. She was just as careful when we were burning leaves. She would make me wait until the wind was absolutely still. I would sit by the pile watching the weather and waiting for the calm of late afternoon. When the wind would stop I'd go get my grandmother and she would always ask, " Is it as still as a sinner in church". She would get her old silver lighter and head out to the backyard.

Grandma always let me light the first leaves. She would break out an antique Zippo lighter and hand it to me. I would struggle with it as I lit one corner of the pile. The sparks would fly like fireworks, the wick would ignite, and the leaves would succumb to the flames. Lighter fluid would seep from the lighter and leave my hands smelling like a used car part. With the scent of the fluid filling my head I would hand the lighter back to my grandmother and she would finish lighting the pile.

The flames roared as my grandmother made sure I kept a safe distance.

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Even from afar, the heat would embrace my young face. I would imagine that the fire was a distant sun and I was a distant planet. Here, in my own world, I could find the warmth and comfort of a familiar face and a familiar place. The smoke would chase me around the yard as I danced to the crackle of the roaring flames. All too soon, the flames would die and the ashes would fade back into the earth to be recycled in another season.

I can still smell the aroma of that lighter and the pungent smoke. They chase through my memories and romp through my dreams like unruly brats. The memory of my grandmother is now embodied in every falling leaf I see. As the leaves blow wistfully by my window, I remember the time when I would dance to their demise. Now, they bring a twinge of sadness at the loss of summer and the passing of my childhood. However, as I watch the wind swirl the leaves into natural piles, I imagine a little girl, her grandmother, and savor a childhood memory.