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## ***Something About Fire***

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# Something About Fire

by Yvonne Carpenter

Two times a week,  
wind at low velocity,  
we gathered the house trash  
and carried it to the rusty  
fifty-gallon barrel sitting  
alone in a circle trod bare,  
except in April when  
winter grass springs lush.  
We dumped the sacks of refuse:  
mails, empty envelopes, school papers,  
into the barrel, keeping some of the  
thinnest, most flammable for the top.  
From our pockets came the match box,  
soggy with use, with sandpaper strip  
scarred and patchy. When no  
grit remained, we struck the match  
on the barrel's skin. (My cool, older cousin  
could ignite the match by flicking  
the head off with his thumb nail.) We held  
flame to thin paper and watched blazes  
grow and dance. Most interesting  
flames, iridescent yet timid,  
came from dyes in slick advertisements.

Catalogues consigned to trash  
when the new edition arrived, we ripped  
into smaller, digestible parts and  
fed them into the fire. Occasionally,  
a fiery page lifted from the barrel  
and floated to be chased down and stomped.  
While waiting for the fire to burn down,  
we pushed a pencil-grubby homework sheet  
in the ant hill and lit it to see what  
the insects would do. By age eight, we knew  
power; we changed trash to ash  
and flirted with destruction. Often  
we blistered our fingers and sometimes  
singed our bangs. We knew the horror  
stories of those neighbor kids who  
shirked their patrol and burned a wheat field.  
And the delinquents who snuck some matches  
into the barn, destroying barn and hay.  
But we responsible children  
burned the trash.  
Only a few of us became  
intentional arsonists  
or serial killers.