# Fire Bug

*by* Emily Smith-Miller

We long suspected she was a super hero, with her stringy blonde hair hanging limply across her black eyes, we long suspected that, but we never knew she started the fires.

We were all either half in love, or half obsessed with her, but everyone was fascinated by the way she towed the line, in school and in our neighborhood. She lived like Marines in the swamps of Vietnam, swatting insects away and moving through vast undergrowth without making a sound. She was hunting Charlie, but we didn't know who Charlie was, we envied him though.

The rest of us might not have even existed to her, but she was our Joan of Arc, heavenly messenger and harbinger of doom. What a girl. Barely old enough to walk the street on her own, and there she was, at all hours of the night, breathing in thick filter-less cigarettes and exhaling plumes of dragon like smoke through her nostrils. The boys and I tried one of her cigarettes once. Troy vomited and we all knew Marcus didn't inhale. She just looked at us with the same scrupulous tone, visage partially hidden. Then there was the day we found out who she really was.

The bug had lit twelve separate fires all over our town and neither hide nor hair of him had been discovered by the authorities, we were all beginning to believe in spontaneous combustion, that buildings just blew themselves up like any normal how do you do thing. Maybe she wanted to get caught, perhaps she was bored, or maybe she finally wanted credit for her chaos, but there she was, making sure we could all see her.

She was outside the house with one of her unlit cigarettes dangling from those chapped lips, she was carrying the can of kerosene and wearing a pair of red Mary Jane shoes, even her footwear smacked

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of violent drawing mystery. She was singing 'Sympathy for the Devil' and we couldn't see her mouth move because there was so much hair in her face, but she started pouring the contents of the can around the perimeter, sloshing it on the wood walls, and finally throwing it through the front window. She lit that cigarette and smoked it until she finished the song, then she threw the butt inside the same window. We saw the flames all the way down the block. We knew she had a secret identity, we knew she was a super hero, but we never thought she was the Williamson fire bug.