

Amber

A Short Story By Jade Alyse

THE CAN OF KEROSENE rattled her wrist a bit. This was the only way it could be – there were no other options. It wasn't particularly heavy, but just a little bit uncomfortable in her grip – like trying to fit into a pair of your younger sister's jeans because they look more expensive, more appealing, not because they were more reasonable.

She told herself to focus. But she'd lost her conscience somewhere, in the waves of it all, and her wrist was now sore.

She often walked on her tiptoes – that was the best way to get anywhere. She liked surprising people, getting the best of them – she liked being in control.

Her palms were a little clammy now and her fingers moved in every direction. Her breath was a little ridged and she thought for sure that she'd just stop.

It would have been easier to conk out on the floor and have them find her that way – she wouldn't have to explain later on why she'd been such a fool to begin with.

All she would feel was peace.

But this was the only way to do things now – this was the only thing that made any sense to her.

She started to breathe a little better when she flicked her wrist just so that a sloppy mark of the clear liquid splayed on a pretty white French door. She smiled a little.

She was in a house and she needed to be quiet. But the house was large and there were

a lot of rooms to get lost in. There was a cool draft that ran along the floorboards and created a loud creaking sound when she stepped on them just so. She needed to be quick – the smell of the old furniture was starting to make her sick.

She'd learned the house quite well over the pass few months.

She knew where to hide; especially at night.

She splashed the liquid on a couple of walls down a narrow corridor – it got a little easier each time. She now twirled with the can, letting the wetness run freely around her, on her clothes, in her hair. She even allowed herself to smile. It was easier this way.

She heard a quick stirring near her and stopped abruptly, and the can clamored to the floor.

She wouldn't know how to explain herself if she was caught.

Who would understand that she'd stolen a key and made a copy of it?

Who would fathom that she was just as connected to that man as the woman lying beside him right now?

Who would take her seriously if she said she did this out of love?

Her skin tingled, her heart pumped so loudly that it bled through her eardrums, and she thought she heard the house exude a long, humming, eerie moan.

This is the way it has to be, she thought.

She was a beautiful, smart girl once – or maybe he was? Maybe *he* was the reason why she'd lost all sense of herself. The balance beam looming and teetering over lucidity and overwhelming absurdity rattled in her head.

She ever-so carefully picked up the can of kerosene and moved toward a room at the end of a long hallway. She knew this room well – it seethed, and swelled and moved within her. It was she. She would never understand anything more.

She opened the door to a bedroom slowly and peered into nothing but blackness.

And she moved toward a closet. She peered inside and ran her hands along several pieces of fabric gingerly, pressing the tip of her nose against their surface. It was him, she smelled. A gentle buzzing encapsulated the space between her thighs as she grinned hollowly.

She then flicked the kerosene in its direction and smiled a little harder.

Then she loomed over his bed – and she watched him sleep. She wanted to touch his face. She wanted to remember him just as he was.

She wanted to be the last person to see him that way – beautiful, resplendent, at peace.

She wanted to remember why she was a fool.

She tipped the spout of the kerosene can downward and watched the liquid pour over him.

He did not move.

Then she danced out of his room, back down the long corridor, growing dizzy with the unexpected pleasure that the smell of the gas brought her. She twirled down the main staircase, trailing her fingers over photographs and trophies and precious works of art.

They were all false memories from a life hollowly lived, of a family that only existed for staging purposes.

They were not real.

She could not stop smiling.

She idled in the doorway, set a match aflame, and lulled herself under the dancing amber light before her eyes.

She loved surprises – this was her biggest one to date.

And she stood on the lawn and watched her fiery masterpiece, tears running their

course along her cheeks, in awe of her own power.

And she parted her lips just so, as the wailing of sirens in the distance silenced her thoughts, and murmured, “Happy Birthday, Daddy...”

Copyright © 2012 Jade Alyse