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## **Spontaneous Combustion**

Louis Jenkins

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SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

As the late afternoon sunlight comes in through the window, one thing then another, a chair, a photograph, a glass on the table, is illuminated then fades as the sun moves on. It is as if a thought became suddenly conscious, a few words of an old song perhaps, "gaudeamus igitur something something..." Something you never understood but that remained anyway. It is that time when one is, finally, no longer a child but not yet old, full of strength and light, a time that passes so quickly, never to return. But then, who knows? After all it wasn't the young lovers ignited by passion, though there were rumors.... It was just an old man, no permanent address, a sister living in Toledo. An old man wearing everything he owned, two coats, worn out trousers, three shirts, wool long Johns and a hat. Perhaps it was the old clothes like oily rags and the irritation of wool on skin that set the spark. Some irritation, some annoyance. His soul rose above the flames like the ashy skeleton of a piece of newspaper still glittering at the edges, then broke apart, disappeared in the brisk March wind.