

In Case of Fire

A young child runs out the front door, action figures and monster truck cars in hand. The door slams and they throw their toys in a pile. Reaching into their pocket, they pull out a wand lighter they stole from the kitchen drawer. A wicked smile creases their otherwise innocent features.

Their primary test is conducted on the monster truck. Surprisingly, the rubber tires ignite first. They morph into molten black blobs. A bright yellow light produces the scent of sulfur. The flame sputters out when they remove pull the lighter away, sputtering into a single line of smoke. The child makes a mental note not to inhale.

Next to burn is the car's chassis. A much longer exposure to flame is required before it erupts. A large amount of smoke accompanies these flames. Blue tendrils reach out the windows, grasping at the sky. Those that manage to escape flick yellow before they disappear. The child feels a black joy at the sight.

Their second and last experiment is conducted on the corpse of a fallen soldier. The flame catches quickly. His helmet melts as the child holds it. This flame is yellow, aside from the tip, which is blue. A molten plastic crown boasting a liquid sapphire. A drip falls from its head to the child's hand, scarring their flesh instantly. The ranger falls to the concrete, where it leaves burn marks that never wash off.

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The perfect steak comes from a fastidious process. Each step must be adhered to, lest the slaughter be in vain. Clean the butchered meat of excess blood, then bring it to room temperature. To ensure even cooking throughout, the center must be the same as the exterior. Once the flesh has acclimated, season it. The more aggressive the better, but at least ground salt and black pepper are required. Be sure to scrape the meat into the residuals. Cause the salt to enter the flesh. Mop it up.

Preheat the metal to between 450 and 500 degrees. Cast iron creates the cruelest sear. Add oil to the pan. This prevents the exterior from sticking when we flip the flesh. Press the steak down, do not move it. Watch the flame weave its spell. Note your mouth as it waters. Shiver as the hiss of death kisses your ears. Ecstasy beckons.

After thirty seconds, turn it over. No time now to savor the process, continue swiftly. Add butter, garlic, and thyme to the pan. They will create the last line of defense between the corpse and the flame. As they collide, their flavor merges. Love is key.

Test the meat with a thermometer only once you believe it has reached the desired heat. Each piercing of the flesh releases more of the precious juices. Be sure to sear closed any holes you make. Now, remove the result from the pan. It needs to rest before we devour it piece by bloody piece.

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Once the autopsy is over and cause of death determined, prosthetic parts and/or implants are to be removed. The body is kept in a temperature-controlled room and placed into a combustible vessel. This is the last time the body is ever seen. The vessel is placed into the furnace. The chamber into which the vessel is placed is called the retort.

The heat of the furnace is raised up to 1800 degrees Fahrenheit. The only place these temperatures occur in nature is deep within the pyroclastic enzymes of our earth. Flames envelop and consume the vessel and the form that lay within. These flames are maintained for up to three hours.

The muscles and skin melt away, the liquids evaporate, until only bones remain. Then they become brittle. They break under their own weight. All that's left are small fragments and ash. A magnet is passed over the top of the pile to remove any metal. Then the particles are collected and placed into a cremulator. The device grinds and crushes the remaining pieces into a fine powder.

This treasure is brought home. It is placed on the mantle where it can be seen. It is put in the closet where it never will be seen again. It is brought to a forest where its contents can return to the earth. We are transformed.