

A Monster Like Me by Francesca Kyanda

There are only two reasons to start a fire: to light the way and to cause destruction.

When you said that I am not exactly the equivalent of sinking sand but that you found it dangerous to build your house upon my land, something inside me shifted—or crumbled, as you so humbly suggested. To you, I was Titanic, or maybe the iceberg that made her sink in all her glory. Perhaps she would still be seeing passengers on the great wide sea if it hadn't been for my recklessness, my desire to be big, to take up space, to be seen. It was countered by your desire to be right, to be the only thing that was right, to see me like a bug to crush underneath the heel of your sneaker. No one would miss me, I think that's what you assumed. No one would hear a tree falling in the forest in the first place, so you found me safe to chop down, your words swinging axes in my side. The pain made me want to rip my throat apart, the pain was so horrible, and from hands that were soft with others.

Your hands were never soft like that with me. Looking back on things, that's all I wanted: soft hands. My hands are not soft, they are lit flames, clenched fists, battle-ready for a world that I knew would not welcome me at first glance. I became fire and vowed to burn everything down.

I wanted to rip my body apart, become a pulsing heartbeat and dead fingers, dormant limbs so you could pick the pieces that you wanted to keep and discard the rest, make me doll or puppet. You told me that you wanted to be an engineer, to use your massive intellect to create solutions to those troublesome problems that interrupted you from daily life.

Yet I forgive you. Without fail. Every single time.

The first reason to light a fire? To light the way. To create a path where there was none and find your way to where you were going. Home. Church. School. Whether your path was in the middle of a forest or just a road leading the way to your house, it was to try and find your footing. One foot in front of the other, it was that simple. If you were lucky, you didn't need to rely on anything other than the torch in your capable hands and your own two feet, perhaps sneakered or even bare. You were a firefighter; you didn't

understand the reason that everything seemed to burn around you. I was a firestarter, I was the reason behind the burning—and why you had something to do in the first place.

We were vastly different in the aspect that you would try to save whatever was burning; you knew what it was like to be on fire unfairly and you did not wish that pain and agony upon anyone else, but I, I knew what it was like to feel skin char, to know that if I was to come out of this, I would be a changed human and no one would be able to look at me without knowing I had been through, so I left things to burn, things that shouldn't have seen the light of day anyway. You were the light of day, weren't you? Or was that what I wrote to you as and then made it into the truth? God said 'let there be light' and saw that it was good, so why is your light salvation and mine is sin? These hands, they never knew how to be soft and heal; they were hard and knew how to hurt.

There were only two reasons to start a fire, but no one told me that other people burned the same way that I did. Perhaps if they did, I wouldn't have burned the whole world down with you trapped and helpless. Now you know at least what it's like to be abandoned and begging for forgiveness. Time will tell if this feeling ignites anything inside of you will turn you into a monster like me.