

Spontaneous Human Combustion

The thought that life could ignite
without warning or wanting.

That you could burst into flames in your
Laz-E-Boy, watching the evening news.

“S.H.C. ”, it’s called in the paranormal
literature, where case descriptions abound.

Mary R. (*the “cinder woman”*), consumed by flame
in her Florida livingroom, *except for a slippered foot* .

George M. of Des Moines, whose remains
strongly suggest he exploded.

Proving, to believers, *a special kind of fire*
(*Fire from Heaven*, one writer refers to it).

A sort of rapture then. As angels are said,
when they sing, to burn up in bliss.

*Extreme stress could be the trigger that sets the human
being ablaze*, speculates another author-enthusiast, who

posits a *preternaturally-heightened susceptibility of cells
to ignition* in certain individuals, who knows why?

Raising the question: who would
want to believe? If its not *preventable*?

Still, it is sort of thrilling: the thought
that what sets one on fire, might.

A conflagration about you and you alone, efficient
and traceless. Producing a radiance which consumes its source.

(In reports, the persons burn, but not the sofa/
mattress/rug/recliner they were lying on.)

Skeptics and detectives (as well as Mary R.'s son)
insist cigarettes and high blood-alcohol levels explain it all

(in Mr. George M's case, the tank of air and box of "barn burner"
matches left out of his paranormal case history).

None of which evidence dissuades, in the least, believers.
Fact is, research supporting the existence of *S.H.C.*

is disappointingly weaker by far than the science refuting it.
Though forensic experts agree that by whatever means

of ignition, women do burn quicker and hotter than men.
When it comes down to your remains, they concede,

*we're talking statistically-- it's definitely your women
that are more completely combustible.*