I was cold.

I was numb.

The wind blew at all sides of my body as I sat in my usual spot in the streets. I had about five dollars to my name, which were to be used on a McDonald’s dollar menu item sometime in the near future. My shorts were ripped at the seams and my shirt was at least two shades darker than it should have been, soaked in soil and rain water. My teeth chattered as I watched a family emerge from a restaurant, the father happily whistling, the child joyously prancing around, and the mother smiling brightly at her beautiful husband and son. They are probably warm, I thought, furrowing my brows and wrapping my arms around myself. They walked past me, humming along to themselves, speed walking by to avoid making eye contact with me. I watched the wool fabric of their clothing walk by, the flow of the scarves, and the comfort of the mittens and boots. I stared down at myself, for all I had were my bare feet and rags. It’s weird how life works, I thought to myself as I thought about my life and how I ended up where I am now. My skin was turning purple and I could see my breath in the air as I exhaled vigorously to keep my hands warm. I was cold, and I knew that if I didn’t get warm any time soon, it might be one of my last nights on the streets.

And that was when a small flame emerged from the dumpster I was so conveniently seated by.

*Warmth.*

I watched the flame sway with the wind before it went out, leaving me cold and in the dark once again. I looked around me to see if there was anyone pulling a trick on me, eventually acknowledging that I was indeed alone. Confused, I contemplated the possible sources of the abrupt flame that seemed to have emerged from thin air. I was back to shivering, reminiscing on the few seconds of warmth I had with the tiny flame before the entire trash can lit on fire. I was taken aback, increasing the distance between myself and the dumpster. I watched the flames roar aggressively from the dumpster, emitting a fume of smoke and ash.

I continued to stare at the dumpster, worrisome of burning down everything within miles of this mysterious fire. I continued to toy with the idea of finding a bucket of water to diminish the flames, until the fire disappeared magically in front of my very eyes. I began to shiver again, and the fire reappeared.

Something strange was going on.

And that was when I realized,

The strange thing was me.

I let the heat encompass my body as I began to hysterically laugh. Whether or not it was of fear of myself and this strange ability, or of the pure excitement of finally being warm, I did not know. There I was, a homeless man, laughing loudly in the middle of the night in a dark alley way next to a dumpster that is currently lit on fire. The irony is uncanny. I watched as my purple-speckled flesh turned to a healthy shade of pink and felt my rosy cheeks that were raw vicious wind fade away. The flames continued to grow as I rose my arms higher and higher. I am in control of the elements. This my own doing. I was warm. I was finally warm.