

Speech

by [Sarah Rossiter](#) in the [January 29, 2020](#) issue

Seated before the woodstove,
bold tongues of fire licking
the glass door, I wonder
what it was like for the first
person to discover she had
the power to subdue the night
by striking two stones together,
sparking tendrils of smoke
to rise from dead twigs, grasses,
watching thin fingers of flame
quicken, flickering,
expanding.

She must have held her breath,
scarcely believing such a thing
was possible, a world not yet
imagined, a circle of protection
opening to warmth in winter,
to light in darkness to the scent
of meat, roasting grains stirred,
thickening, a place to gather,
together, faces lit by firelight
as she struggles to form sounds
that others will understand,
struggles to find ways to say
This is how I feel.
This is what we need.