

Spring 1973

A Fire

Gary Gildner

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gildner, Gary (1973) "A Fire," *CutBank*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 5.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss1/5>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mail.lib.umt.edu.

A FIRE

I am building my father a fire
in the fireplace we never use
—the one for looks
in the living room.

He nods, rubbing his palms,
but doesn't speak; his cheeks
are scarlet, there's a grin
trying to surface, trying
to travel a lifetime.

Oh I know he's happy
and the room's so clean!

I lay more kindling on,
a split white pine
as smooth as skin, and licks
of flame surround the birch.

Such extravagance!
He's really grinning now
and I am too, in fact
we're clapping
—softly so that
no one knows
we're there.

Mother
is the first, I think, to see
the mouse bound out.
Still, no one speaks—
even when it lifts
a leg and pees
against the television.
But something must be done.
I have a can of insect
spray and, as in former days,
stretch and fire home
a wicked fastball
—but I miss.
The mouse curls up
beside my chair,
Father falls asleep
—he looks at peace—
and Mother joins him
with a nest of pine cones in her hair.