

# Poetry Porch: Poetry

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## **Minding the Fire**

By Miriam O'Neal

As the blizzard builds, we lose power, so our father builds a fire while we drag quilts and pillows into the living room to lie as close to the flame as our parents will allow as our mother settles the babies.

Outside, wind winds up the dark, piling snow against the glass. She tacks up blankets closing kitchen and dining room off to trap whatever heat the fireplace provides. Then she sings

our bedtime songs. Except this time, we hear them all in the same room instead of down the hall as she moves bed to bed tucking us in, while our father kneels to mind the fire—bits of driftwood and dried pine-

cones snap and bloom in blue and green and gold—an aurora borealis trapped by the hearth. And when she finishes all the songs, Frankie asks for *We Three Kings* even though it isn't Christmas.

We aren't yet old enough to know our father fought a war. We don't know what it means to be married. At dawn the sun spins its brilliance across the buried lawn.