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Homage to Poe

I cut my father into firewood. He made about a half cord, plus a small bundle of kindling. All through three winters he burned, not fast and pretty as birch, not long and smoky as oak, but steady, with light in exact proportion to the heat it gave off.

Years later: brutal winter. There was of course no more father for the fire. But I gathered our small family and, on our knees, we gave thanks for the unselfish gift he had once provided us in time of need. Then we all went to bed save me, who stayed up per usual staring into a fire consuming some other manner of fuel.

From within the play of flames I was assailed by a small doubt: did my father really offer himself so freely? Was there not the distant, muffled memory of his objections, repressed until this very moment?

I plunged out of the house, onto the porch, the cold smack of night. Stars were there, oh yes—distant and many, their clean, granular fires. But not one answered *yes*, or *no*.