My Campfire

The white flame nearly reaches the top of the canvas. White, traced out in yellow, and that yellow, traced out in orange. Faces around the campfire, and more, come to life in the night.

To the left of the flame, a young man strums a guitar. His head is turned away from the fire. Eyes squinting. Not necessarily because he squints his eyes when he plays, and/or sings (we can't verify he's singing, of course; no sound waves are painted as coming from his mouth, or anything like that), but because he, like everyone else, squints his eyes in the face of smoke. To the right of the flame, another young man sits, staring into the fire. Not squinting; he's facing less smoke. Leaning forwards, towards the fire. Elbows on his knees, hands clasped together, dangling a bottle by its neck.

The flame illuminates the fire pit, a short stone wall. A perfect circle, just about. Tin foil reflecting the orange light. Little balls of tin foil. To the left of the guitar player, a third man stands, feet squared to the fire. His head is turned to his left, away from us, away from the fire. His left arm shields his face, and from that same arm, in his hand, he holds a bottle of Old Grand-Dad, its label nice and clear. His right hand holds a stick to the flames.

It's unclear what he's doing with the stick. The fire is doing well, very well, without whatever it is he intends to do. No more sticks are needed. No logs need be repositioned. Maybe he's going to check on the tin foil, on the potatoes presumably inside them. Or maybe his standing is pre-emptive. He's drunk and anxious to do something. He's standing with the expectation that poking the fire will soon be useful.

In any case, he's an amateur. They all are. Their fire is big, but at

building and maintaining fires, all these guys are clearly amateurs. Their fire is *too* big! Think about it. They're just cooking potatoes, not burning a man at stake. They're trying to chill, to drink whiskey and listen to the crackling of the fire mingle with the strumming of the guitar. But at this rate, they'll burn through all their wood before the second bottle (implicit, off page) is opened. They don't know what they're doing. But it could be worse — their fire could be too small. Too weak to admire. Yes, it could be worse; their effort is commendable, actually, certainly commendable, and their fire is certainly admirable. Because these are men from the 21st century, men from contemporary Western civilization, men raised on electricity and processed foods, television and sugar, men who drive automatics, who jerk off more than any other generation of men did ever — and here they are, my friends, sitting around a fire. Joining the generations of men that have sat around campfires. That have sung to the fire, whiskey on their tongues, though few whiskeys as consistent as Old Grand-Dad. Smoke in their eyes. Or not in their eyes. A skyscraper of a construction faltering in the flames it helped create.