

inside. I think everybody else felt the same thing; they just sat there; they didn't even clap for a few minutes.

That night, I thought about Essie for a long time. What was there about her? I knew that the rest of us were not like Essie. I couldn't figure out what it was that made Essie so—so different. Yes, I reckon there's always been somethin' kinda odd about Essie.

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## The Flame

Flint to sulphur struck by unknown hand,—  
Flame let loose to tremble for an hour  
In a room where smoke and shadow twist,  
Stalking light they know they must devour.

Always fearing careless winds that whirl  
Ever near to fan or snuff the spark,  
In a world of doubt we long to cut  
Truth from grim distortion, light from dark.

Delicate, yet so deliberate,  
Burns the flame which wonders whence it rose:  
Seeing dimly what its rays reveal,  
It can only question and suppose.

—Martha Burbank