



COMMON COMMUNICATIVE FIRE

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*speculative fiction forward to "The Writer's Place in Civic Space:
Literature as a Means to Social Justice" by Konrad Kelly*

They arrived at the fire after a long time in the darkness. They could see the light from a long way off and its shimmer drew them forward.

"We have been waiting for you," bellowed the flames.

The travelers were stunned into silence by the majesty of the light. Collectively, they examined their own hands and each other's faces for the first time, gaining a visual creature for each voice, name, and shape that had sang, spoke, and storytold to fill the lightless world.

"We are happy to see you, burning with more light than we could've known," said the Bravest.

"Come," beckoned the fire, its many voices speaking in harmony. "Tell your stories and teach your songs, offer what was before kept hidden in darkness. Your shattered silence will feed our cause."

So, the travelers sang and danced and recalled how they had stood strong together in this lightless world. The fire laughed and cried, lapped and sparked, and grew and grew and grew.

The weary travelers slept and awoke happy in the light and warmth of the fire.

"What now?" asked the Smallest, nervous of the answer.

"Look around you," urged the fire, now even greater than when they had arrived. "You've brought so much more into the light."

"But is it enough?" asked the Critic.

With a flick of its flames, the fire tossed a warm, glowing coal into the hands of each traveler. "With the light we've created here, others will see you. Offer them hope. Offer them the chance to bring the world into light."

And with a final look at the bright flames of the fire, the travelers turned and walked back into the vast darkness, together and alight.