

about. The dreadful thing that came to punish people who disobeyed and played with it.

The dreadful, dreadful fire, that having once escaped from safe keeping would not be caught, but would go on devouring all that barred its way : people's homes, their food and clothes, their little children even, sleeping in their beds, laughing at strong men with their ladders and buckets, poor women with their prayers, and little children with their tears.

Tommy remembered how, years ago, when he was quite small, when it was winter, not summer like today with birds singing and with dear brown, furry bees droning over the pink clover in the orchard; no, but on a day in winter; on a day in winter at the end of a cold, sleety day, when the rain would keep on pretending it was snow come down from the gray heavens as merry snowflakes, and fall against the window, and dissolve into depressing raindrops long before reaching the bottom of the pane; on a most miserable day, with nothing to do, with dreary intervals to wait between meals, and when the gloaming coming early he remembered, night found him sitting amongst the ashes on the hearth.

He had poked the fire with sticks, and had fed it with matches and paper, so that the flames came and sat close beside him, warm and comforting. Their bright blaze played all around him, so that he felt like Christmas, like Summer.

Then the Mother came and told him.

She told him a lot of fire stories while he sat cuddling