

First three words

by [Julia Spicher Kasdorf](#) in the [September 23, 2020](#) issue

At thirteen months Ben can say *Ma Ma, Da Da*
and *Fa Fa*, which he watches his father create

in a wood stove each day to heat their home.
Tonight Ben rocks beside the iron box chanting

Fa Fa as softly as flames draw light from paper,
then drops his head and charges to the kitchen

to point toward the range's burners: *Fa Fa*.
When I tip a foiled pot of tulips

to his face, he finds no name for what lifts
his spirit: *Aah Aah*, his cheek, fingertips,

Aah, his lips against those yellow petals!
Gentle, gentle coos *Ma Ma* as he strains

to cradle the blooms without crushing them,
his delight so pure he might burst into flame.