

The Cold Within

Six humans trapped in happenstance
In dark and bitter cold,
Each one possessed a stick of wood,
Or so the story's told.
Their dying fire in need of logs,
The first woman held hers back,
For of the faces around the fire,
She noticed one was black.
The next man looking across the way
Saw not one of his church,
And couldn't bring himself to give
The fire his stick of birch.
The third one sat in tattered clothes.
He gave his coat a hitch,
Why should his log be put to use,
To warm the idle rich?
The rich man just sat back and thought
Of the wealth he had in store,
And how to keep what he had earned,
From the lazy, shiftless poor.
The black man's face bespoke revenge
As the fire passed from sight,
For all he saw in his stick of wood
Was a chance to spite the white.
The last man of this forlorn group
Did naught except for gain,
Giving only to those who gave,
Was how he played the game.
The logs held tight in death's still hands,
Was proof of human sin,
They didn't die from the cold without,
They died from the cold within.

- by James Patrick Kinney -