

The Cold Within

Six humans trapped by happenstance
in black and bitter cold
Each 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 on the faces around the fire
She noticed one was black.

The next man looking 'cross the way
Saw one not 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 his sight,
For all he saw in his stick of wood
Was a chance to spite the white.

And 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 stilled hands
Was proof of human sin,
They didn't die from the cold without,
They died from the cold within.

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Source: The poem was written by James Patrick Kinney in the mid 1970's

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