**The Cold Within**

Six humans trapped by happenstance  
In bleak 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 man held his back  
For of the faces round the fire  
He 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.

The last man of this forlorn group  
Did nought except for gain.  
Giving only to those who gave  
Was how he played the game.

Their 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 Kenney