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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

A Chilly Night

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I rose at the dead of night,
And went to the lattice alone
To look for my Mother's ghost
Where the ghostly moonlight shone.

My friends had failed one by one,
Middle-aged, young, and old,
Till the ghosts were warmer to me
Than my friends that had grown cold.

I looked and I saw the ghosts
Dotting plain and mound:
They stood in the blank moonlight,
But no shadow lay on the ground:
They spoke without a voice
And they leaped without a sound.

I called: 'O my Mother dear,'—
I sobbed: 'O my Mother kind,
Make a lonely bed for me
And shelter it from the wind.

'Tell the others not to come
To see me night or day:
But I need not tell my friends
To be sure to keep away.'

My Mother raised her eyes,
They were blank and could not see:
Yet they held me with their stare
While they seemed to look at me.



She opened her mouth and spoke;
I could not hear a word,
While my flesh crept on my bones
And every hair was stirred.

She knew that I could not hear
The message that she told
Whether I had long to wait
Or soon should sleep in the mould:
I saw her toss her shadowless hair
And wring her hands in the cold.

I strained to catch her words,
And she strained to make me hear;
But never a sound of words
Fell on my straining ear.

From midnight to the cockcrow
I kept my watch in pain
While the subtle ghosts grew subtler
In the sad night on the wane.

From midnight to the cockcrow
I watched till all were gone,
Some to sleep in the shifting sea
And some under turf and stone:
Living had failed and dead had failed,
And I was indeed alone.

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