



GONE! AH GOD, FOUR LETTERS ONLY.  
ONE WORD. ONE THOUGHT. ONE BREATH OF AIR.  
YET ALL OF LIFE TO ONE WHO HUNGERS,  
ONE WHO CLINGS TO NIGHT'S DESPAIR.




GONE SHE IS, THIS BLACK DECEMBER,  
AS DECEMBERS PAST COMPARE.  
AND MY SOUL GONE OUT THERE WITH HER,  
THROUGH ALL SNOWS OF YESTERYEAR.

# Clarice



STILL SHE STANDS AGLOW BEFORE ME,  
PALE AND TENDER, WARM AND RARE.  
STILL SHE RUNS THROUGH MEADOWS LAUGHING,  
LOCKED IN MEMORY, SLUMBER'S SNARE.



WE SHARE THEN THE RAINDROP'S LAUGHTER,  
WE JOIN THEN IN SPRINGTIME'S FLAIR,  
WE EMBRACE THE SUMMER'S GLORY,  
WE STEAL KISSES ON AUTUMN PARES.

'TILL THE EVENINGS COME TOO QUICKLY,  
AND THE STARS HANG COLD AND STARE,  
AND SHE TREMBLES LIKE A FLOWER,  
UNDER SNOW THE WINTER SHARES.

AND THOSE SNOWS TAKE ONCEMORE FROM ME,  
MY WHOLE LIFE, MY SINGLE HEIR,  
TO FACE THIS CABIN'S CHILL AWAKENING,  
BEGGING GOD IN DRUNKEN PRAYER.

WHY I COME HERE EVERY SEASON,  
DRIVEN BY THE GHOST OF DREAD,  
I CANNOT IN TRUTH YOU ANSWER,  
'LESS 'TIS GUILT I'M BLINDLY LED,

TO THESE OAKEN WALLS I STUMBLE,  
NIGHTMARE'S CLUTCH IN VAIN TO SHED,  
WHILE WITHIN THE FIREPLACE DANCES,  
FLAMES OF THINGS WE DID AND SAID.

I RECALL, NOW ETCHED FOREVER,  
ON MY MIND BY REVERIE FED,  
TOGETHER HERE NEAR THESE SAME ANDIRONS,  
TOASTING YULETIDE'S NODDING HEAD.



ME THE FOOL OF WINE'S GAY PRISON,  
SHE STILL LIGHT IN FIRELIGHT'S RED,  
SOUGHT THE BITTER NIGHT FOR FIREWOOD,  
'FORE WE SANK TO CHRISTMAS BED.



I N'ERE HEARD THE DOOR BEHIND HER,  
BLOW TIGHT SHUT IN FRAME OF LEAD,  
OR HER RAPPING, OR HER POUNDING,  
I WAS TO THE WORLD ONE DEAD.



HOW SHE SUFFERED AGONIZING,  
HOW HER SCRAPPING FINGERS BLEED,  
HOW SHE SCREAMED MY NAME IN TERROR,  
I'LL RELIVE IN YEARS AHEAD.

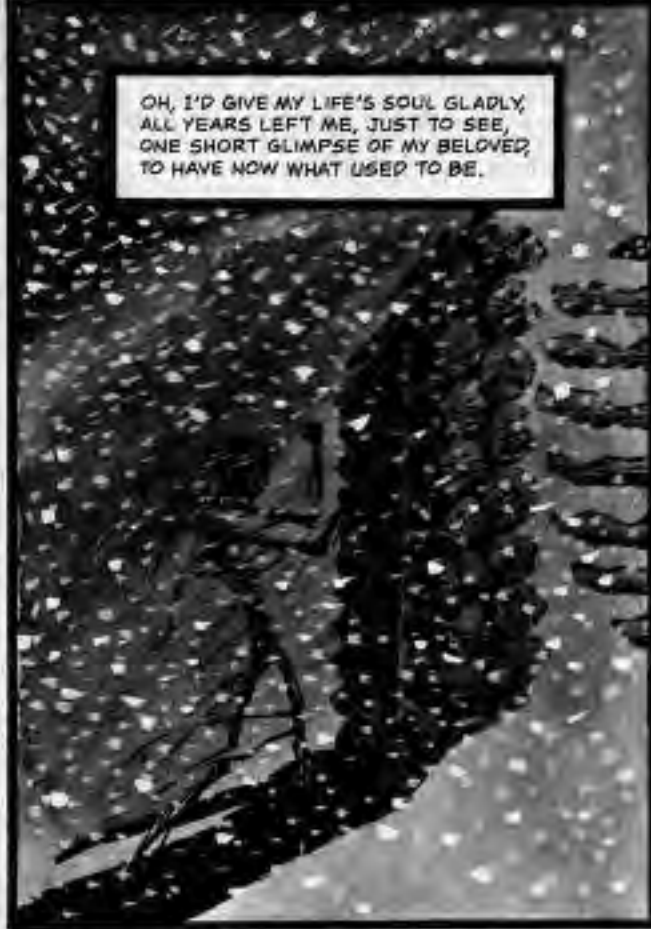


WILL MY BRAIN SOMEDAY DIMINISH,  
SIGHT RELUCTANT EYES MUST SHOW,  
BECKONING STILL, ON FROZEN DOORSTEP,  
SCREAMING SILENT WITH THE CROW.


THERE MY WITS FROM ME DEPARTED,  
MADNESS CAME WITH ICY BLOW,  
AS SHE REACHED WITH CLUTCHING TALONS,  
FOR A WARMTH SHE'D NEVER KNOW.

ON A FIELD OF DESOLATION,  
'NEATH ICE-COVERED LIMBS THAT BOW,  
THERE I LAY HER SILENT FIGURE,  
WHILE THE SUN SANK EVER LOW.


AND ALL NIGHT I HEARD HER SCREAMING,  
ALL NEXT DAY THE POUNDING FLOW,  
OF HER FISTS AGAINST THE OAK WOOD,  
PHANTOM CLAWS THAT WON'T LET GO.




OH, I'D GIVE MY LIFE'S SOUL GLADLY,  
ALL YEARS LEFT ME, JUST TO SEE,  
ONE SHORT GLIMPSE OF MY BELOVED,  
TO HAVE NOW WHAT USED TO BE.



TO HOLD IN ARMS DECAYED WITH WANTING,  
THAT FRAGILE FORM ONCE PART OF ME,  
AND FEEL THOSE AMBER EYES THAT BECKON  
TO SANITY'S DOOR THEY HOLD THE KEY.



IF I COULD BELIEVE SHE HEARS ME,  
KNOWS MY ANGUISH, FEELS MY PAIN,  
I'D LEAVE THIS MORTAL HUSK FOREVER,  
AND LET HER WANDERING SPIRIT CLAW.



TO SEE HER STAND ONCEMORE BEFORE ME,  
TO KNOW HER TOUCH WHILE I YET LIVE,  
TO HEAR HER TENDER VOICE CONSOLE ME,  
"BELOVED HUSBAND... I FORGIVE."