

I

We started off in a sloop out in the north part of the sea; spirits and the weather were fair,
But one can never tell, what sort of tricks the Sylphs and Undines have waiting out there.

In that instant, the west wind rolled the thunderclouds in, shrieking, but did not start the show,
Grey masses they were, lined up repeating, ominously, row after row after row.

Our party did not falter and our captain still pressed on,
We let escape not a shudder, and not a one's face appeared drawn.

There was no drizzle to be had, no downpour either, but just then a fog swirled off the sea,
It crept, it flitted around the boat's bow, its path wandered and looped around even me.

The mist kept building and layering itself thick,
Soon we would find ourselves staring at a wall built, brick by brick.

Now our party revealed some of its fright, our captain his disdain
Said he, "No mere fog shall keep me at bay, lo, there isn't even a droplet of rain."

Then the fog moved, and appeared off the port side, a dark bobbing object, really quite small,
When we approached, it would seemingly move, as fast as candlelight down an abbey hall.

This went on for quite a while, no one knows forsooth, how long truth be told,
All the guests were increasingly pallor, and not a one broke from this rigid mold.

Out there, what's that, the object has stopped,
It appears if our ship doesn't slow, the fast approaching dock will be chopped.

That was it indeed, a place to moor boats,
And the object we chased, a ship fit for a moat.

Grey, green, brown we saw; quite a muted pallet,
Down into the pits of our stomachs went a pang, like a mallet.

How dreadful, how odd, and what mutated hues,
There is something not right, thought I, and hoped this not The Reaper to collect his dues.

The dock ended at a large white house, with double doors and wrap around porches,
I, in my fright and because the light so dim, wished for a candle or one of those ancient torches.

Our party disembarked and stumbled up the plank of a dock,
We would not have, if we could only see, the ghoulish specters that waited there under lock.

To the door we travelled, a chilling house indeed,
But our party was forlorn, the fog, the cold, we were lost sailors in need.

A voice, a feeling, a notion so small in my gut
Said "Run you fool, run, away until your feet are cut!"

We did not run, as the door creaked open; what we saw as the light caught his face,
Was a small older man, who thankfully, if need be, we could easily outpace.

He bade us to enter his tidy, yet ominous, ivy-covered home,
So thankfully in we went cold, wet and dripping of sea spray and foam.

Something in my mind said again, there's more here to be seen,
But try as I might, I could only continue to graciously sip our host's black tea.

We were seated in the old fashioned parlor, when our small host slowly rose to speak,
"Now I have saved you, and taken you in, kept you warm from chill and what makes you weak,"

"You now, for me, must give something in return; something you value, your spirit will work."

We exchanged glances laced with fear, "What," I shrieked, "you want us all dead?" only then I had noticed his lurk.

"That's not what I said", he calmly replied, "your spirit, said I, and I won't be denied."

With that, his hand raised, our minds were all lost, no resistance was possible, no matter how we tried.

My muscles, paralyzed, my bones, shocked, but my mind still aware, this gift he gave.

As I feared, I felt my heart slowing, my breath trailing off, preparing to enter my grave.

I remembered, "Death, so close, please stay with me awhile."

II

Blackness upon midnight cannot describe, the color saw as I opened my eyes,
A shadowy world developed before me, so opposite, I could have cried.

“Is this my death, my eternity? Where am I, what happened?” I stammered on,
“What place is this, who are they?” I was not alone this noiseless, darkened pond.

I noticed there were souls just like me, who were sitting or wandering, their expression torn,
All types of people, all kinds of costume, all seemed to be distraught, quiet and worn.

My sense of dread compounded when I saw again our host, but wait, another, perhaps 5 at most,
I struggle to stand and hide my poor face, for frightened, alone am I - have I become a ghost?

The fog in my head will not abate, I’m numb all around,
And my memories have been lost, recollection, not found.

I fight it, I move, I keep going up; gladly no being stuck here stops their slow walk,
My mind, my mind, who am I? Remember, remember, fight, fight, talk, talk.

I reach the stairs unnoticed by Hosts, trying to confirm, was I forever here?
My oneiric mind was not my own, terrified still, I swallowed to assuage this fear.

I moved up the stairs, past specters trapped in this frozen, gauzy dream,
They seemed not to notice, lo, but their eyes, you see the vacancy of their stream.

A window, just small enough for a glimpse, behind a curtain with color faded to the past,
My head is thumping, numbness again invades, and I and exert my strength to the last.

I go to the window, and what did I see, but a boy so small, looking up at me,
“You there,” I shouted, though not sure he heard, “Help us, we’re trapped and must be set free!”

His face grew white, he turned and ran, I hoped that with help, he would return,
I was now alone, in front of this window, my hands they tingled, my eyes to burn.

A wail, a scream, of a thousand voices it seemed, now began to see, and slowly recall,
Fight to feel, struggle to know, a conscious self, what makes me, me – then, fall.

They keep us here bound, for some unknowable reason,
Like a spider they wait, centuries they fly by, their vile activities know not a season.

My fingertips feel, my mind cloudy, I see a picture of a boat?
Again numb, and losing fast, oblivion longed to cover me like a cloak.

A dream? Awake? Or is this Death? What does that mean?
Open eyes or shut in a grave? I cannot wake it seems.

A moment, lucid – another, gone.

In what state am I? I must know before long.

Dreams that leave a residue; mud that fills a space.