

# The Shadow

By Madison Cawein

## I

Mother, mother, what is that gazing through the darkness?  
What is that that looks at me with its awful eyes?  
Tell me, mother, what it is, freezing me to starkness?  
Through the house it seems to go with its icy sighs,—  
What is that, oh, what is that, mother, in the darkness?

## II

Child, my child! my little child! 'tis a waving willow,  
That the night wind bows and sways near the window-pane:  
Here's my breast, my little son. — Let it be your pillow.  
Have no fear, love, in my arms. Go to sleep again.  
Go to sleep and turn your face from the windy willow.

## III

Mother, mother, what is that? going round and round there?  
Round the house and at the door stops and turns the knob.  
Hold me close, O mother love! keep me from that sound there! —  
Hear it how it's knocking now? —Don't you hear it sob? —  
Guard me from the ghostly thing that goes round and round there.

## IV

Child, my child! my little child! 'tis the wind that wanders:  
'Tis the wandering wind that knocks, crying at the door.  
Hark no more and heed no more what the night wind maunders. —  
Rest your head on mother's heart, list its faery lore.  
Go to sleep and have no fear of the wind that wanders.

## V

Mother, mother, look and see! what is that that stands there?  
With its lantern face and limbs, mantled all in black!  
Gaunt and grim and horrible with its knuckled hands there!  
Now before me! now beside me! now behind my back!  
Mother! mother! face it now! ask it why it stands there!

## VI

Child, my child! my little child! 'tis a shadow only!  
Shadow of the lamp-shade here near your little bed!  
No! it will not come again when the night lies lonely.  
Sleep, oh, sleep, my little son. See! the thing is fled.  
Mother will not leave her boy with that shadow only. . . .

## VII

*Will he live? or will he die? Answer; fearful Shadow!*  
*O thou Death who hoverest near, hold thy hands away!—*  
*Oh, that night were past and light lay on hill and meadow! —*  
*Does he sleep? or is he dead? —God! that it were day!*  
*Light to help my love to fight with that crouching shadow!*