

## BEFORE THE DAWN

**I**N that one darkest hour, before the dawn is here,  
Each soul of us goes sailing, close to the coast of  
Fear.

There in the windless quiet, from out the folded  
black,  
The things we have forgotten—or would forget—  
come back.

Old sorrows, long abandoned, or kept with lock and  
key,  
Steal from their prison places to bear us company.

All softly come our little sins—our scarlet sins—  
and gray,  
To keep with us a vigil till breaking of the day.

And there are velvet footsteps; or oft we seem to  
hear  
Light garments brush against the dark; so near—  
so very near!

Then heavily, as weighed by tears, each haunted  
moment goes,  
For dawn steps down the morning sky, in robes of  
gray and rose.

O fairies of the forest-ring, and little men in green,  
And pixies of the moonlight, and elves no eye hath  
seen,  
Brew us a magic potion, of deep and fairy power,  
A draught of Lethe—for one night—to tide us  
past that hour.