

The Night Fire

Claude McKay

No engines shrieking rescue storm the night,
And hose and hydrant cannot here avail;
The flames laugh high and fling their challenging light,
And clouds turn gray and black from silver-pale.
5 The fire leaps out and licks the ancient walls,
And the big building bends and twists and groans.
A bar drops from its place; a rafter falls
Burning the flowers. The wind in frenzy moans.
The watchers gaze, held wondering by the fire,
10 The dwellers cry their sorrow to the crowd,
The flames beyond themselves rise higher, higher,
To lose their glory in the frowning cloud,
Yielding at length the last reluctant breath.
And where life lay asleep broods darkly death.

Textual Note

This poem also appears in *The Liberator* (May, 1922).

2 ;] , *Lib.*
9 ,] *om. Lib.*

13 .] ; *Lib.*