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## Snowscape

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## SNOWSCAPE

Half-past winter and still snow  
spilling down from the mountains. You wake  
slow as a worm. For two days you think  
how these iron bars have crept  
to their casements, how easily they have closed  
around you, how well you have grown  
to your submission. You sit in a canvas chair,  
fingering your rosary, trying to remember  
all the sorrows you have ever imagined.

There is nothing here  
to keep you from dying and yet you look  
for anything you can hold to, anything  
you can call your own. You know these arms, these hands,  
the shallow palm with its short life-line  
you've taken to heart, the small sear  
on the lip of a finger. These are yours  
like those long years you call your own.  
And each breath, almost religious  
in the way you count them now, fingering beads,  
feeling the smooth roundness, wanting  
always the same touch, the same cool  
hardness. It is how you know you are here,  
by counting, by touch.

In the east are the mountains  
with snow piling on snow, moving closer  
everytime you look. You cannot see  
to the west but you know what's there, can almost  
feel the cold slipping into your mouth, the rough edges  
lodging in your tongue. At night  
you hear the odd hooting of an owl.  
You think how one more day  
it will be gone, lost in its own slow sorrows  
of winter. How calm it all is, your willed

dying, a deception you're painted yourself,  
your final giving in to the last rites of winter.