

## *Spicatto*

All morning of the winter's  
Coldest day, I tried  
In desperate concentration  
To read Saint Paul.  
But though I clung to them, the words  
Whirled and hurled me out.

It was then I sheered,  
An eccentric body waging  
Into outer space, until  
The orbit of my being  
Snapped: I thought myself  
Out of the influence of the sun.

But some habit of motion  
Remained, some alien  
Principle ingrained.  
I paced in slow steps  
Across the creaking snow,  
A sleep-walking child,

Up the path I had climbed as a boy,  
Past the idled sawmill,  
Across the snow-drifted hill,  
Into the secret country  
Where a boy had climbed: and stood  
At the gorge of the leaping falls.

I thought back on boyhood  
And summer, on these rock-shelved  
Falls as they used to be,  
Routing from ledge to ledge  
A tumult at sunrise, the pulse  
And pageant of my days.

Now the water from the ledges  
Hung without motion or sound,  
Stories or icicles depending  
On stillness and rock. Underneath  
On the snow a heap of them broken  
Was a cold, luminous blue.

I stared at the bearing  
By which I was lost; while  
Boyhood and summer plied  
Their accustomed course, wheeling  
Together away, I floated  
In the shy snows of space.

Cold was through and through,  
Noiseless. Nothing  
Save the clouds at my nostrils  
Motioned. Then I uttered a word,  
Softly a bleak word  
Slid from the lips;—at that moment

A topmost icicle dislodged  
And dropped, and struck  
Another with a bell-like sound,  
And another, and a peal of icicles  
Woke down the ledges, ringing  
On the rocks and on each other

With pure, cold notes.  
The silence turned around  
And was silent again.  
I bowed my head. In God—  
In God we live, and move,  
And have our being.

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