If there is such a thing as a mutable eternity, it is snow falling in the woods. I am thinking of a windless, steady plummeting. Nothing is moving except for snowflakes. You can hear the snow faintly ticking on the pine needle branches. You can hear it descending-a soft sift of air. You are held in the hand of something enormous yet gentle, something extraordinary yet calming, something evanescent yet quite palpable (from a Latin word meaning "to touch gently"). Every surface receives the snow in its way. A large, fallen, curled maple leaf collects the snow in its center. A boulder's stored heat resists the snow at first, then its surface turns wet as if it were raining, and then, with un-boulderlike delicacy, a thin frizz accumulates. On top of the garden gate a fragile white skein begins to perch. Little, almost derby-like hats grow on the garden fence posts. The mown grass around the house fills in gradually. The stiff, frozen blades seem like little heights. Then the snow, as it mounts, receives itself. Another landscape is created, and for months we live in that landscape.

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