

Grace

by [Sydney Lea](#) in the [February 10, 2009](#) issue

He awakens on February first, stunned again by that odd wonder: how quickly *old* has come. Of course if his will were done he'd have risen youthful, but age is here, he'll own it. He thanks God

for its coming without companion pain, without reliance on medicine. As he has since he was younger, he puts on snowshoes and clambers over drifts and up a daunting bluff. As much by determination

as muscle he powers on through the powder. The view from here—a blessing: eastward the white White Mountains all seem to be staring placidly down on ice-dams hunched in the river. He kicks his feet out of leather bindings

to climb a tree. West, a neighbor's strange herd of alpacas mills, all wool, though mere months back—short-shorn, with feeble reeds for necks—they were fragile creatures, naked, susceptible, silly, same as us all.

He forces air out through his teeth—birdwatcher trick—and imagines a lisping cloud, his sounds small jets of steam. *Let kinglets come*, he dreams. Did an eagle shriek? Too far to tell. But golden-crowned kinglets are flying

from his south to land all around, on his limb and all the way up to the crown, then are gone so quickly he all but missed the marvel: the kinglets come.