Alaska Girlhood

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Eden was a winter
when gods skated the earth.
They’d warm themselves by the fires
that lit the man-high snowbanks
bounding primeval lakes.
Their shadows fingered the forest
under the black eternal sky.

I was a child and remember
the time before feeling died,
deep nights when
the auroras strode in columns
across heavens so clear
they crackled with danger.

And we were gods-in-making,
following the paths they’d forged
through the snow, sometimes to the edge
of the known ice, sometimes beyond.
Or, holding our toes to the flames,
breathing the dry pine heat,
we heard their laughter and their somber talk,
drinking it in with wassail and hot milk.

In our infancy we knew all things:
the sublime with the unspeakable, both
writing themselves in our formative minds.
We saw, accepted in our innocence
which was not innocent but
a great quilt of snow.