I am snowshoeing in my father's woods while the others are cleaning up and getting on with the rest of the day-after-breakfast. No one thought my father, at age ninety-one, should accompany me; not even my father thought so.

Last summer we walked in the woods, he behind me for perhaps the first time in our lives, he breaking off the ends of branches, twigs. When I asked him why, he explained, smiling, embarrassed, that last week he had lost his way, couldn't find the path back, lost in the woods he first encountered in 1914 and walked in for most of the rest of his life.

I kidded him. "Why break off the twigs when, even if you find them, you won't remember why?"

Now, in the snow, there is no sound of his laughter. No sound at all when I'm still, no bluejay or squirrels or chipmunks. Only a distant crow, and the creak of the leather bind-