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Two Poems

Gillian Cummings

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••IN THE RED NIGHT CLOUDS

GILLIAN CUMMINGS

If you paint the heavens red, some moon
will arise, bobbing to the surface like a toy,
a boy's lost ball buoyed up, contending
with red water and red fish who breathe red.
Look at the moon and it changes; shadows
curved against such bright light can't but give
back your best and worst dreams, torqued
to a strangeness, a disguise, that hides all
you're not ready to see. Look at anything long
and it will beat in the pulse of your blood: a bird
navigating the night, owl with its heart face,
the berry bushes of your garden mouthing hush.
Look longer still and all dissolves: one color,
one moon, all earth, red as love, red as living.

••UNKNOWING THE CLOUDS

GILLIAN CUMMINGS

The cloud of forgetting below you,
full of sea-softened, blue bottle shards,
full of hydrangeas and swans and jays
and everything maned—horses a-gallop,
sorrel through sorrel, roan through the moan
of fast winds—you're sore, you're sorrowful,
you can't
push them down: thoughts of the earth you
loved.

The cloud of unknowing above you—Pierce it,
you're told, with a ray of bare heart, of holy
ardor.

But the horses have hooves to trample your
wimple,
your simple, blue veil. The pieces of beach glass
scratched with memories of cuts—now to forget
them.

But you're caught between, you're nowhere,
going slow.

You want God, but more what you mean is clean
madness.