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The Gods Are Real

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THE GODS ARE REAL

but I believe in the power to make them up,
and in the eventual need to wake all
of us, if we are merely dreaming. The dark
girl I was swarms up a pine, just ahead
of a boy—brighter, younger—worth the years
she'll hang from like a cotton gallows god

left to sip secrets from the gallows tree.
When she hears one, she hears them all: Imagine
a future where every man you love will break
your body or your heart. You'll still love them—
it's crucial to love what can consume you
despite knowing what you know, but still,

The gods are real, she tells another lover,
and nurses up a thread of bitter smoke
from the navel of the spoon he must
give her not to hate her. Eye to eye
at an altar, there's enough blood for two gods,
but they can hardly bear the one they feed

together—who can bear to see their brand
so illuminated on another? Men and men
and emptied bottles slip between the years ahead—
she'll drown in gods—she'll fuck her way through what
she thought they were, skull cracking on a floor
like the stone left eye of a gallows king.

O god, the body breaking yields a doubled
heart, wet as a molted cottonmouth, the husk
still surging in a current of cold. The year
of old animals—of oath and cure and relapse
and brute love—splits the gods between us.
They swim between us. They sip the slaughtered

names, dole out scars, then gamble with seeds
as white as weak light, having buried the body
of a girl halved like a trickster's war. The gods hang
fruit on their gallows tree and reach up for my
familiar heart. They want what's left to ask for.
They ask me to believe in something else.