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# The Heavenly Ladder

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JOHN WITTE

*The Heavenly Ladder*

A beauty beyond us  
you stroked her sleek withers  
raked and shoveled her stall before your lesson I went on

to the library. A cautious  
love you seated the bit. I pored over  
the brilliantly illuminated miniatures of the eleventh century.

The horse peevish  
frisky I learned what happened  
later how our lives diverged the jewel-blue water surging

from the left  
across the bottom of the picture  
the horse buckjumping pitching you up and down your teacher

covering her mouth  
with her hands there was nothing  
I could do I was not there I was absorbed by the small figure

of a monk gathering  
his violet-blue tunic closer  
the shimmering golden ladder extending diagonally into the sky

I had to  
imagine you lurching side to side  
a black curtain falling between you and the spinning world.

You awoke  
on your back under the blue arc  
of heaven the enormous head of the horse gazing down.