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On Moving // Letter to Lesbos

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On Moving

I.

They say that moving is fine, if harrowing.
The change washes like a wave hits on the Jersey shore, all salt and
wetness and the moment of pain
and then it's gone
like it never happened
and how lucky are you, that you've never experienced it?

Your love is like this:
Sea Isle,
Wildwood Crest,
Atlantic City and Point Pleasant, if a little more soured.
There are a million cities you haven't been
to and there are a dozen you have, but none
are like the salt,
the sweetness,
the fake smiles,
the boho shops that steal your money,
the tired residents that come with.

You loved it so much that you thought about
moving to Long Beach Island when you were
twelve, scoping out the schools around town
and looking at house pricing.
Is it so lucky, then, that you never did?

2.

What happens in Staten Island stays in Staten Island.
The fight club of the city, it's got rules, it's got a reputation
that lasts a mile and some.
Mostly, it's that rule, and *run the fuck away while you can, kid*.
You, who didn't happen in Staten Island, did not stay.
Lucky. You never did like this place, did you?
Even if you fight for it now.

And there is a beach down on the north shore,
With waves like overworked labor
scents like everything wrong with this damn town.
You don't go; you never have the time.
But you always wish you did, because

3.

The best part of those beach side towns:
the salt in your eyes
the water in your lungs
the lurch of sand under your feet.
The moment that's gone too quick.
As much as you hate change, you love
fluidity in the ocean, how it never stills.
It could bring you along if it felt like it.
Be lucky you're not dead.

All this to say, in every word except the fact:
you have never moved, consider it lucky, but don't.
Wandering soul you are.
Lover of the state everyone else hates.
Of the borough everyone wishes didn't exist, except you.
The one who wishes to be the waves.

SAMMIE TERPENING

Letter to Lesbos

Sappho, I'm sorry
I don't know how to be you
I don't know how to follow your words
maybe they aren't even yours
but they are in your name and I cannot follow them
in the way I so desperately want to.

Sappho, Saint of the Queer,
if there is a normal way to be a homosexual
bless me maybe
there is none
but at least let me understand what the beautiful people are singing
when they describe the need for sex.

Sappho, if I am what I am
and you were still alive
would you love me
maybe you never existed but
you are a concept I want
to be loved in the way that makes me whole

by the one I know is right.