Some places become homes by habit

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When the thousands of mysterious Sumerian tablets were translated,
they were thought to be business records, but what if they were poems or psalms?

My love is the same as twelve Ethiopian goats standing silent in the morning light Shiploads of thuya are what my body wants to say to your body.
— Jack Gilbert.

I know, by science, the exact time it takes to row from one end of this river to the point where it meets the Atlantic, somewhere off the distant islands of São Tomé.

I know, provided the energy exerted between two equal strokes of the paddle remains constant, what it takes to sail across vast swathes of water, unmarked

except by seals of light in the dying sun. One day, bathed in sun-spill and a shade of orange like the yolk of an egg, I rowed with my lover to a place

where none but the river hawks could find us — as they journeyed home in formation, after the day's labour — where you could see the pebbles, brown

and slippery, nestled closely underneath the clear body of water. Here, we stopped
to wait for deep into nightfall, when we'd let ourselves be struck by the gold

plummet of the moon, while the reverberations overpowered us in a nocturnal symphony, and the damp smell of decaying timber rose like a thousand voices

from the body of our fisherman’s boat. My lover had thrown little stones into the river, to see the ripples spread apart and dissolve within a circumference,

then in-between strokes of the paddle, I heard him whisper to the evening air: *in this place of waters, every gay man is a gambler, throwing a random dice*

with his own life as wager, after which he disappeared through a trapdoor and would never be seen again. But tonight, as I look up to the full moon

in its bright elegance, it seems as though he’s back to lean again, against the hairy chambers of my chest, drawing imaginary vignettes with the tips of his fingers

as we let the canoe navigate itself away from questioning eyes, as again, we return home to a familiar smell, but also to a new aching and begin again,

the simple rites of floatation.

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