

WHEN I SAW THE NORTHERN LIGHTS FOR THE FIRST TIME

when you didn't stop at the city skyline
the moon slept at our feet
ripples moved away from us and
the river laughed at my expense
lady hung her head and years passed by

you were this skyscraper, reaching toward some God
with your arms stretched around her highest peaks
and I held this small-town heart and a big-city mind
for too long you moved slowly, in waves
there was so much between us—
so much time and space and space and time
we stopped collecting shells

and all that time we heard the piano weep
not knowing it was a melody I'd reminisce
that way of falling in love with something new
leaves me only ever living in retrospect

you were once a potted plant, knee-deep in dirt
and grounded then, you were uninterested in
roots or how they had grown
or the way I cried when that woman danced a story
into the air and I know you felt it
like glacier cold crawling over the white
as the moraines creep up and remind us
we are always changing, moving
like shifting plates we separate after quakes
quivering in our own indifferences

I'm thinking of warmer springs and geysers
that still explode now and then like
how I want to erupt on a Brooklyn-bound 6 train
at 6 pm and you're already somewhere
not waiting for me

and I'm reminded we are as explosive as Earth's
roughest terrains, strolling in lava fields
in the heaviest of Iceland's winters
those distances that always bring us home
slightly different, slightly weathered
and a little less alone

by Christina Alaimo