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### **Ancient Customs**

A friend has told me to pretend  
I am an ancient Roman emperor,  
or, merely, a successful citizen  
of the Republic—a man able to  
have and love a much younger,  
as was custom then, but to do so  
without concern that he won't be  
available to me more than he is,  
that I have him only when I can,  
and possess a fortitude to maintain  
that distance and go no closer.

It is the soundest strategy I have  
yet to hear on the matter.  
But upon seeing him last night,  
now wanting him all day, I take  
the Q out to Brighton Beach  
and there sit amid stinging sand,  
as if it were the port of Ostia,  
a half-day's ride from Rome.  
There had to be men then, too,  
who spent the day reading the scrolls  
of breaking waves awaiting an answer.