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Nostos

Karian Markos
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If it was not for the moon, night would swallow the open sea at the horizon.
The Captain of the Tahitis waits to see the flicker of the lighthouse,
sole along this coast to guide him, before he turns to port.

The sky's velvet curtain is pricked with longing and hope.
He knows these patterns; how they change with the seasons year after year.
The waters he navigates are unpredictable and so he is mindful;
cautious not to run aground, as he steers his ship into the narrow, shallow-botomed bay.
This sea has swallowed the dreams of many;
draping billowing, black sails over ships and windows,
sending widows into its depths to follow.

Every woman in this village has bowed over mixing bowls
and seasoned their food with salt and bitter tears.
His was not the only grandmother who whispered nightmare omens into the East wind
to be carried away by the sunrise.

The path is narrow and the bay only deep enough at the center
for his caique to pass without running aground.
As he enters the bay, the lantern-dotted mountainside sings of his homecoming.
A sentinel lamppost illuminates the jetty. A bronze hearted mother,
shading her eyes day and night, gazes over the horizon,
so no man returns to an empty shore.

After carefully docking his ship, the Captain greets the woman
with a tip of his hat and a courtly smile.
He ascends his marble plinth and turns to the North
toward the mouth of the bay.
He takes hold of his binoculars and straightens his shoulders,
whereupon he assumes his watch.

