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## The Black Ship translated by K. H. Anton

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## *The Black Ship*

Cifar, in his sleep, heard the cries  
and the howling conch horn in dawn's  
fog. He watched the ship

—motionless—  
still set in the waves.

*"If you hear  
in night's  
dark half,  
in the deep waters,  
the shouts asking  
about the harbor:  
    turn the rudder  
        and flee."*

Cut in the froth,  
the dark and woodbored hull,  
("Sailor!" they shouted)  
the riggings and cordage torn  
and swinging, and the sails  
black and rotten.

("Sailor!")

Standing up, Cifar grasped the mast.

*"If the moon  
lights up their ashen  
and bearded miens  
If they tell you:  
'Sailor, where are going?'  
If they beseech you:  
'Sailor, show us  
The harbor's way,'  
Turn the rudder  
and flee."*

Long ago they weighed anchor  
Long centuries ago they have sailed in the sleep.

*They are your own questions  
lost in time.*

Pablo Antonio Cuadra

*Translated from the Spanish  
by K. H. Anton*