

Ships Passing in the Night

Touching your skin,
the soft flesh
of one forty-years old.

My life
as an exile
in Panama—
ships lined up
waiting to enter the canal.

Those ships,
like you, my lover
whose interest has waned,
glimmer with ship handlers' lights,
that dim as the red sun rises.

And I go on living,
making plans to return
to dusty roads in the Southwest,
back to endless
unattainable dreams,
back home,
where I've always lived,
alone.

A ship plies the canal,
its containers as secure
as your emotions,
cargo never slipping sideways,
holding all within,
nothing overboard.

Time passes as
I watch
lonesome birds
search the shoreline
for a friendly wind.

I am stevedore,
not captain,
gazing across the bay,
waiting,
poor and penniless,
for the next paycheck...
or kiss.

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