

Shore Leave

Raqs Media Collective

The sailor has left his starboard watch and gone on shore leave. Unmanned, the observation deck is mute, unable to speak to the mountains.



The sailor too is speechless. Following a phone number, he visits a prostitute in a harbour brothel. They share no language other than arithmetic. A price is settled by hand signs.





Her body is a parcel bound up in tape. His lust is as clean as a ream of fresh paper. No words are exchanged. They print nothing on each other.





Abruptly, she turns off the heating. The energy spent in each cabin is measured to the last joule. Desire, divided by rationed electricity, is reduced to a fraction. The sailor shivers. The prostitute is bored. It is cold. Their business has ended.

The sailor resumes his furlough. His action-figure soul secretly mounts the afternoon's trapeze. He leaps, he flies, he cartwheels and canters. He parks in odd places and recovers his lost balance, waiting for a down-pour to end. He doesn't know her name, but he still has her number.



Meanwhile, in her head, the prostitute turns a trick to please a transient rain god. He condenses to shine in the light of her dreams.





And daydreaming a great white ship as high as an iceberg, she beseeches him a favour.



*“Freeze me a cobweb to catch, to keep, and to warm the
love of a sailor made cold by counting.”*

Pleased with the blaze of her ardour he grants her this
wish as he fades to a blur in a horizontal illusion.

The sailor walks up to
the sky deck and looks
down below him.

The city, in waves, is
frozen in rising. Her
wish is amongst them.
So many desires have
stood up to be count-
ed that he finds him-
self wanting.

He has no name for
their number and his
ship is waiting and the
shore leave has ended.



