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.



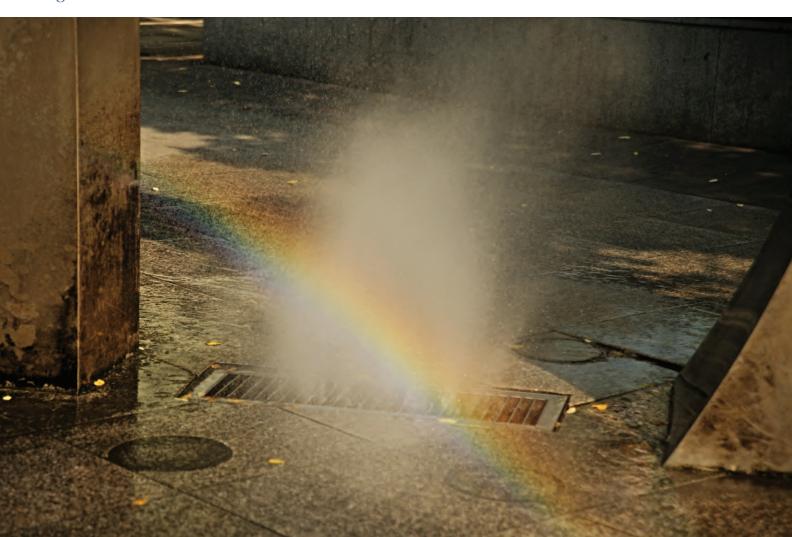


Abruptly, she turns off the heating. The energy spent in each cabin is measured to the last joule. Desire, divided by rationed electricity, is reduced to a fraction. The sailor shivers. The prostitute is bored. It is cold. Their business has ended.

The sailor resumes his furlough. His actionfigure 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 downpour to end. He doesn't know her name, but he still has her number.

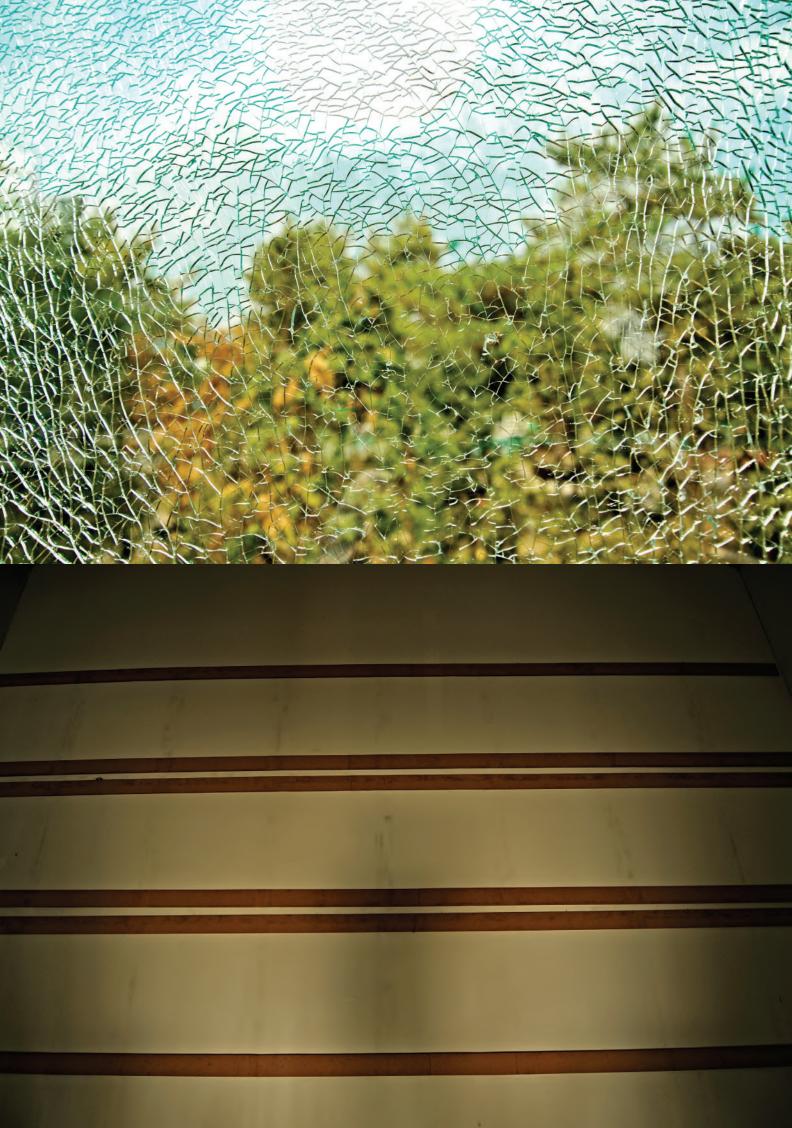


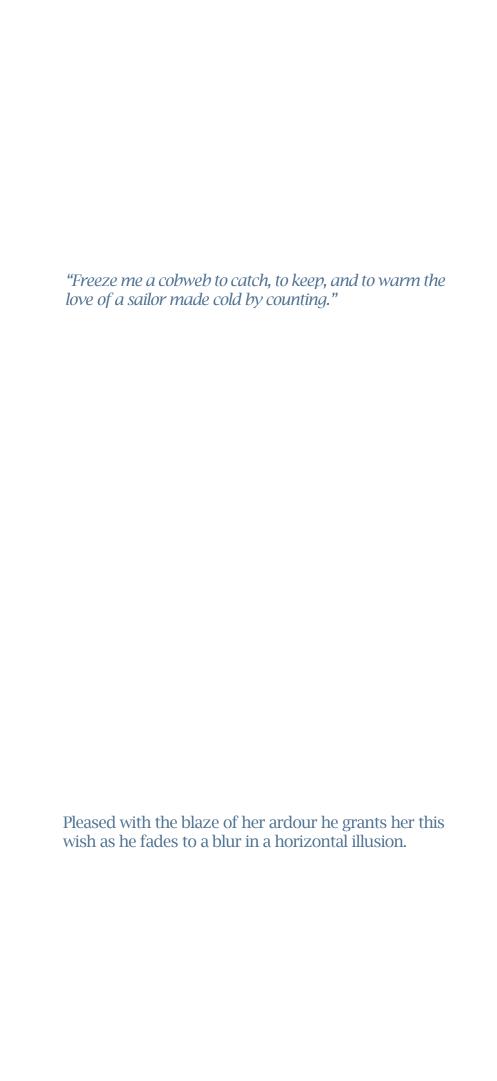
Meanwhile, in her head, the prostitute turns a trick to please a transient rain god. He condenses to shine in the light of her dreams.





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





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 counted that he finds himself wanting.

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

