

## **Adrift on the Mare Commutatio**

Dana William Paxson

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[Insert Pic adrift.jpg Here]

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SO YOU PUSHED the ejection handle,” Soprano Atropos said, a scowl on her face. The ammoniac sea tossed their raft high; tears ran from seven pairs of eyes.

“It read ‘ejaculation’, and I was watching that sex holo we liked so much,” Sweet Bella Donna answered. She turned and voided her lunch into the pale-blue waters. The multicolored feast spread and sank, the bits changing shape as they went. A huge dark shape passed beneath them; the sea whelmed.

Bitter wind lashed them from pink and curdled skies. The Wastrel Monkshood murmured, “Fine vacation. I hope we’re near shore. Exorphins are getting low.”

“Shut up, Wastrel.” Farouk the Cardsayer shifted his bulk and the other six bodies heaved upward, almost over the raft’s bulky gunwale.

“Hey!” It was Pseudolus Maestro, at last awake and clutching a rope. He raised his pencil-thin body and looked around at the sloped and shifting walls of water. “Where’s Nostradamus Feingold?”

“He fell overboard an hour ago,” Rosetta Stone yawned. “Leaves more food for the rest of us.” She stretched, rearranged the wet and half-dissolving shreds of her undersuit, and winked at Monkshood.

He looked her over; his eyes gleamed. “Care to test that fine physique of yours with me when we get to land?”

“Shut up, Wastrel,” Farouk said again. “This water changes things, see?” He held up a hand; his fingernails had grown long and brilliant green.

“Then we’re doomed,” Soprano Atropos said. The wind whistled through her words.

“Maybe not,” Sweet Bella Donna answered. “Maybe we’ll just become something marvelous instead.”

Beneath the raft, Nostradamus Feingold spread his ten-foot jaws in a hungry smile.