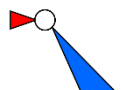


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bncdoc.id	H0R
bncdoc.author	Fitzgerald, Penelope
bncdoc.year	1988
bncdoc.title	Offshore.
bncdoc.info	Offshore. Sample containing about 42735 words from a book (domain: imaginative)
Text availability	Ownership has not been claimed
Publication date	1985-1993
Text type	Written books and periodicals
David Lee's classification	W_fict_prose

<1002/c>	loaded, nosed her way through the low arches by the Middlesex bank, where there was no room for other craft, passing, or surpassing, all the shipping there. At Tower Bridge if four foot diameter discs bearing black and white signal stripes are displayed fourteen foot to landward of the signals, this is an indication that the bridge cannot be raised from mechanical or other cause. Only Grace could pass, not Maurice, not even Dreadnought, a sight never to be forgotten. Men and women came out on the dock to watch as the great brown sails went up, with only a six-year-old boy at the winch, and the Grace, bound for Ushant, smelt the open sea. There was a scratching at the heel of the mast. A cat, with her mouth full of seagull feathers, was feebly trying to climb up, but after a few feet her claws lost purchase and she slithered back by gradual stages to the deck. "Stripey!" The ship's cat was in every way appropriate to the Reach. She habitually moved in a kind of nautical crawl, with her stomach close to the deck, as though close-furled and ready for dirty weather. The ears were vestigial, and lay flat to the head. Through years of attempting to lick herself clean, for she had never quite lost her self-respect, Stripey had become as thickly coated with mud inside as out. She was in a perpetual process of readjustment, not only to tides and seasons, but to the rats she encountered on the wharf. Up to a certain size, that is to say the size attained by the rats at a few weeks old, she caught and ate them, and, with a sure instinct for authority, brought in their tails to lay them at the feet of Martha. Any rats in excess of this size chased Stripey. The resulting uncertainty as to whether she was coming or going had made her, to some extent, mentally unstable. Stripey did not care to be fed by human beings, and understood how to keep herself warm in cold weather. She slept outside, on one or other of the stove pipes which projected out of the stacks on deck. Curled up on the pipe, she acted as an obstruction which drove the smoke down again into the barge, making it almost uninhabitable. In turn, Woodie, Willis, Nenna, Maurice and even his visitors could be heard coughing uncontrollably. But Stripey rarely chose to sleep in the same place two nights running. From the masthead Tilda, having sailed out to sea with Grace, took a closer survey of the Reach.
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p><u>Her whole idea of the world's work</u></p> <p>was derived from what she observed there and had little in common with <u>the circulation of the great city which toiled on only a hundred yards away</u>. No movement on Lord Jim. Willis was walking towards Dreadnought with the man from the boatyard, whose manner suggested that he was refusing to supply more tar, gas and water until the previous bill had been paid. On Rochester, Woodie was getting ready to lay up for the winter. It seemed that he was not, after all, a true barge dweller. His small recording company, as he explained only too often, had gone into voluntary liquidation, leaving him with just enough to manage nicely, and he was going to spend the cold weather in his house in Purley. Managing nicely seemed an odd thing to do at the north end of the Reach. Woodie also spoke of getting someone to anti-foul his hull, so that it would be as clean as Lord Jim's. The other barges were so deeply encrusted with marine life that it was difficult to strike wood. Green weeds and</p>

	<p>barnacles were thick on them, and whales might have saluted them in passing. Maurice was deserted, Maurice having been invited, as he quite often was, to go down for the day to Brighton. But his deckhouse did not appear to be locked. A light van drew up on the wharf, and a man got out and dropped a large quantity of cardboard boxes over the side of the wharf onto the deck. One of them broke open. It was full of hair dryers. The man then had to drop down on deck and arrange the boxes more carefully. It would have been better to cover them with a tarpaulin, but he had forgotten to bring one, perhaps. He wasted no time in looking round and it was only when he was backing the van to drive away that his face could be seen. It was very pale and had no expression, as though expressions were surplus to requirements. Willis, walking in his deliberate way, looked at the boxes on Maurice, paused, even shook his head a little, but did nothing. Nenna might have added to her list of things that men do better than women their ability to do nothing at all in an unhurried manner. And in fact there was nothing that Willis could do about the boxes. Quite certainly, Maurice did not want the police on his boat. “Ahoy there Tilda! Watch yourself!” Willis called. Tilda knew very well that the river could be dangerous. Although she had become a native of the boats, and pitied</p>
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