

Sailor's Visa

by j. h. woodyatt

Did I tell you about Sailor's latest folly? No, probably not.

He's got a rager for *Casablanca*, the old Bogart and Bergman classic. I can't snap him out of it. He keeps wedging his favorite lines from the movie into everyday conversation, and since he's out of his head most of the time, there never seems to be any coherency to it. It makes for really disturbing conversations.

"Hey, Sailor-- you want to come hang out at Cafe Borrone and leer at pretty girls?"

"When it comes to women, Louie, you're a true democrat."

This is how it goes. I try to ignore it. "Come on, it'll be fun. I'll tempt caffeine psychosis, and you'll get out and see how people are dressing this century."

He's sulking. "I never drink with customers."

"You despise me, don't you?" But playing along doesn't help.

"Go back to Bulgaria," he says.

You see what I mean? He's out of control, and he has to be stopped.

He's spending all his time locked in his apartment, drinking hard liquor out of a square bottle and hallucinating in time to the music playing in his head. He's standing on a train platform in the Paris of his mind, with the rain eternally pummeling him to death and he's got this comical look on his face, because someone— someone who isn't even real— has kicked his insides out.

I tell him this isn't good for him, and he snarls, "You played it for her, you can play it for me."

"Come on, Sailor-- we can go to the beach, get you out into the fresh air. Maybe some sobriety would feel nice right about now, eh?"

"I bet they're asleep in New York. I bet they're asleep all over America."

He wants to *go* to Casablanca, the actual city in Morocco.
Says there's something important there for him.

I know better.

He's trying to escape. Sailor has to go to Casablanca like Capt. Yossarian had to go to Sweden. I'm certain Sailor plans just to walk off across the tarmac into the credits and never return.

I don't have the heart to tell him. He's already there.

In the real Casablanca, Ilsa Laszlo does *not* randomly show up in your gin joint, in your town, in your world, at exactly the right time for you to have a shot at redemption.

In the real Casablanca, Sam leaves for double the pay without even looking back.

In the real Casablanca, the fascists don't just slink away into the shadows in shame after you drown out their patriotic chorus, but instead come back with tanks and bulldozers and massacre everyone.

In the real Casablanca, the cops are about as sentimental and lighthearted as bloodthirsty dogs in a warzone, fighting over the scraps of freshly killed collateral damage.

So there he is, just like the rest of the refugees, willing to pawn his own dignity for enough to bribe the officials into giving him a visa and a ticket on the next plane to freedom, and there's a glut of used dignity on the market.

So he waits. And waits. And waits and waits and waits.

