

And then... there will be a city filled with people,
and a port without people.

And you?

We are musicians. Or at least we would like to be
musicians. We want to produce rap music. Rap is
the sound of the sea and of the flatlands and the
port. The four of us together. The other Marseille
bands are all old, it is time for someone new.

Time for us.

And anyway we want to do something creative.
We are creative people. You can come and see us
on Saturday at the town square. We are
performing then.

I will come, said Sparrow, knowing already he
would be somewhere else, or I will try to.

We will give you a lift back to town. It is too far
for you to walk and there are no buses out here.
And you could pay us something for the ride, not
much but just to cover our costs.

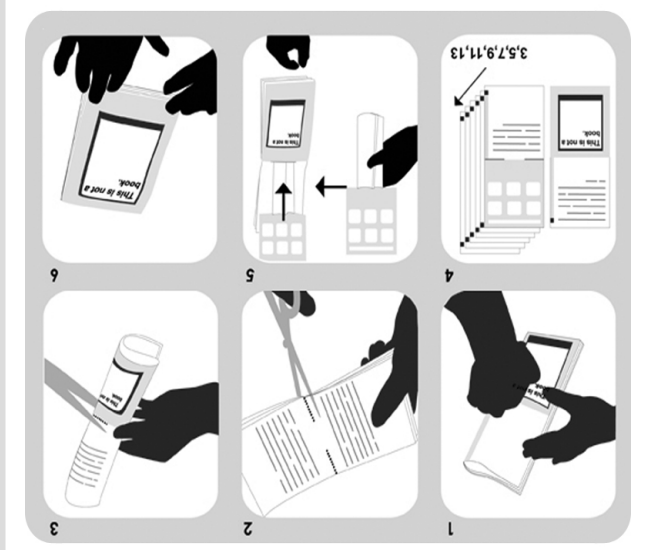
Sparrow looked out at the road, which stretched
out into the distance, in both directions. He
looked at the small saloon car, full of beer, and
the four men who should also fit inside.

And then?
by the people from outside.
that power, and then everything will be controlled
to stop the ships. And soon probably they will lose
power. That's all the union have now, the power
last of the union workers, but they still have some
bosses and the government want to get rid of the
the ships wait it costs the bosses money. The
still work in the port know that they if they make
here. They just unload and depart. Those few who
strike, because the ships don't bring any money
the union of port controllers. There is often a
The ships are waiting, because there is a strike of
Engatse!
Its all fucked.
What a whore of shit of fuck-up.
What a fuck-up.
Whore of a whore of a whore.
Shit.
Five men beside the sea.
passed it from one to another.
drank beer together. They rolled a large joint and

Marseille Mix: along the beach

William Firebrace





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Marseille Mix: along the beach

A long strip of land beside Fos-sur-Mer, to the North of Marseille.

On the one side the sea. On the sea some dozen container-ships and tankers.

On the other side, a canal, a motorway, and the various large industrial buildings, some derelict.

Petrochemical tanks in rows.

In the distance the cranes of the container-port of Fos.

On the beach, a container re-used as a beach cafe, marked FUN FOS. Beside the container three people with fishing rods, sitting in beach-chairs.

A few cars parked beside the road. The windows were blanked out with sheets of newspaper, certain activities continuing within. Occasionally a man and woman emerge for a cigarette.

A warm cloudy day.

Sparrow was walking alone beside the sea.

At last he was outside the city, beside the Mediterranean, out in nature, even if a nature taken over by alien objects. This whole area seemed to be dominated by a feeling of vast scale the open sea, the ships, the tanks, the cranes of the container port. There seemed to be no relationship between the this zone and the busy

streets of Marseille. This was not really a place for people, who became quickly lost amongst the size of the spaces, it was a zone for a different age, where people were needed no longer, and remained only at the edges, uncertain as to quite why they were here, half-engaged in some kind of dubious activity which could take place out here, away from the city.

He walked on, always coming slightly nearer to the cranes of Fos, but always remaining at a distance. He was aware that he was no alone out here, even the parked cars and fishermen had vanished.

Sparrow heard a car coming up from behind, and the sound of loud rap music. The car slowed down. It was a small black saloon car, occupied by four large men. They leaned out of the window and shouted something at him, as they drove slowly past. Sparrow wasn't sure whether they were greeting him or threatening him. He raised his arm in a vague gesture which hoped seemed amiable. Suddenly he felt exposed out here, with no one else around. If anything was to happen, if someone were to attack him or rob him, then there was nothing he could do and nobody who could help him.

This is a fragment from *Marseille Mix*, a forthcoming book exploring the city's literary, criminal, urban, gastronomic and cinematic aspects.

excellent car.

Good, he said. I will come back with you in your shoulders and turned away.

gradually from sight. The men shrugged their become a dim grey, and the distant ships faded rain began to fall. The colour of the sea had Sparrow considered the matter. A few drops of Research, shit. What is there to research here?

I am researching.

And what are you looking for, German, out here?

found what I was looking for.

if I had just gone a little further I would have now, I will always think I missed something, that It is not time for me to go back yet. It I return No, he said, thank you, but I think I will walk on.

The car drove on and then suddenly turned around and came back towards him. The doors opened and the four men emerged, dressed in cargo-trousers and T-shirts, two wearing baseball hats. They seemed even larger than when they had been squeezed into the car. All were drinking from cans of beer. The music seemed very loud.

Are you a German? asked one of the men

No, I am not a German.

You look like a German.

No, really I am not a German, I am Swiss.

That's a pity, said another of the men, we like Germans.

The man put out his hand and took hold of Sparrow by his hand, in a kind of arm wrestling. He held Sparrow's hand tightly, as though to push him over.

Now we are all friends.

Well yes, it is good to be friends.

But we like German music. We like German DJs. We like the German sound.

I am not a DJ.

seawall, looking out at the container-ships. They All five sat beside the sea, on the rocks of the lukewarm liquid.

One of the men pulled out a can of beer and gave it to Sparrow. He pulled off the cap and drank the drink together.

But because we are all friends now, then let us full.

The man pointed inside the car. The whole interior was filled with cans of beer, empty and we could sell you a beer.

That's a pity if you have to go. Just now. Because we have lots of beer. And if you had money then go.

It's really time for me to go, said Sparrow. The men looked around. There was nowhere much to and looked out to sea, at the container ships far

The men looked at him in silence. Sparrow turned so much money.

You look like you have money. And we don't have No, not so much.

Do you have any money?