

The four walls of the tank expanded and contracted like the lungs of a giant organism. In this sense, the enclosure seemed more alive than the lone fish that was lying at the bottom of it. Apart from the finned ornament that trailed around its body, the fish was completely still. Only its gills, which opened and closed in perfect synchronicity with the valves of the tank, indicated that it was living. In its horizontal position, the fish was as one-dimensional as a flattened banknote. Its amber eye remained fixed on the surface of the water: a cathedral of tendrils and humming blue light.

The fish was impassive to the tank's other inhabitants as they bolted for food or cowered at the false alarm of a threat. To imitate death, they thought, was asking to be claimed by the Hands. Their confusion surrounding the fish's behavior became annoyance, then later, indifference.

"Go say something" The Eel to its Neighbor, perhaps a relative of the Horizontal Fish.

The Neighbor wiggled its spindly body over to where the Horizontal Fish had last been seen. In its place lay a giant pyramid-shaped pile of food scraps and waste.

As the Neighbor swam nearer, the scraps stirred and revealed the body of the fish. The Neighbor took a moment to revel in the Horizontal Fish's magnificence: the powerful fins on its sides, the beautiful ornament that trailed off of the body. Fish of this sort were so commonly taken.

A shadow fell across the tank and fish scattered in all directions. The disruption of the stillness never ceased to be alarming. The commotion kicked up the debris and food scraps from the floor, scattering them high into the air.

The Hands darted quickly through the water. The fish did not protest as the fingers closed around it.



The sunlight was not so kind above the surface of the tank. The gills at the fish's sides struggled to open and close as they attempted to collect oxygen. The brightness scalded the fish's eyes. The Hands had slipped out from beneath the fish. The fish convulsed and its vision began to flicker in and out.

In absence of sight, memory and dream became the fish's reality. The fish thought again of the floor, where it had prayed to the humming blue light. As though its prayer had been answered by the night, a shadow had passed like a soft blanket over her body. Its dark shape eclipsed the cathedral.

The fish's vision returned, but only for a fraction of a second; a span of time just long enough for the fish to catch a glimpse of a single image: the silhouette of another fish that appeared to be made entirely of metal. A fast fish, an excellent swimmer. Its body would have propelled it through the water.

Though she couldn't see the metal fish, she was sure it was there.

The fish began to quiver uncontrollably with excitement. She felt her body begin to unravel like a sigh.

Her body opened further and further until she became afraid.

What if, she worried, she unraveled until there was nothing of her body left? Would she be a nothingness, an expanse, like water, through which the silver fish could dive?

But the fish's fear did not last long. Its sight never returned to clarify that the fish had confused its own reflection for the body of another. The blind fish did not see the silver object that winked in the light as it lowered towards her, plunged through, and confirmed the presence of a center.