

Fae Sapsford

## Necropsy report

Turtle blood coagulates rigid as sadness in a throat. Fresh carcass, opportunity for learning. She (confirmed by observation of the pimped ovaries) died on the boat. Propeller strike, the meat is free from parasites. We get to split her open, the vets explain that the heart keeps beating with a little stimulation – she was big enough to locate the sinus venosus and feel its toughness. The gizzard still has sea grass trapped inside, we saw what shade healthy livers looked like, we saw the body cavity filled with ocean. We have understood her on the nose, rotting in the sun under washable umbrellas, understood her by measurements, by feeling the muscle her shoulders pulled, by the contents of her stomach, and intestines preserved in alcohol. We have understood her as an overanalyzed poem, we have understood her as no amateur is capable.

## Half Mile Down

*[The observation of living things] eventually tends to become for us merely so much material to be used in the solution of the many tantalizing problems which it suggests. We are, indeed, obsessed by problems. No doubt this is the correct attitude for the seasoned investigator, and no doubt a certain spirit of skeptical inquiry should be cultivated even in freshmen, but surely we should realize, like the amateur, that the organic world is also an inexhaustible source of spiritual and esthetic delight.*

—William Morton Wheeler, *Etymologist in Hades*

Subject your relationship to a strength test, to underwater pressures ninety-two atmospheres at depth, come climb into the bathysphere. The lid is sealed with ten bolts tightened by a winch, we've got a hose pipe to pump air in.

They're making deep sea camera cases forged out of one sheet of plexiglass – no joins. What colour are your partner's eyes? How about the paint on their kitchen walls? How about the shape of the crack in their corner of their room that you always seem to end up staring up at while their breathing gets deep and constant as a vampirotoothus squid, billowing its soft skin in the coolness of the ocean? The curve of a cheek, their widow's peak, indelible on the brain as the bathysphere leaks.

There will be no opportunity to diffuse the situation, these are the moments that we either get through, or succumb to the pressure. You're in this together. A steel ball, dangling like a tooth. Male anglerfishes fuse into the female's bloodstream by the lips, a husk nourished by her hunting trips; sixgill sharks bite their partners to stay together during sex; clutch each other by the hand, so you don't lose each other in the dark.

Pee in a bottle. Let the tray of soda lime absorb the carbon dioxide you breathe out. They say that experiencing something new together strengthens your bond. They say that their first child is not a citizen of any country, he was conceived in the unregulated state of the deep sea. Sometimes, in the darkest places, he glitters like a diamond tiara, lit up with a million bioluminescent spots.

## Factoid

Deep sea creatures come up to the reef only on the verge of death; ballerina ribbonfishes more elegant than mink settled on the shoulders of women. We gasp while she glistens in the shallows like molten silver. Fresh -fish cooler, starboard-side gossip. Eleven meters long, scintillating filaments falling flat like a flounder in metamorphosis. One day they will both sink to the bottom and never come up again. She slips into myth. We made a sculpture of her from polished cedar. The leviathans of the triangle live! New-age artists worship monuments of suffering. A whalebone box ornately portrays hamstringing. Books have been written about the actualization of rage. The freedom of art is in that it can never be wrong. We've made mounted tiger sharks, handbags out of sheep's balls, a liquid sploosh made of real wolves. Fishermen proclaim size between arm-lengths stretching continually wide. She: haggard, confused, death spiraling. It's so awkward to die at a party. A skipper claims to have seen her in her throes and gone blind.

## Alphabet Soup

Oh! Crushed tomatoes letting their zest off! Six year old hands scrying in the alphabets. We have no Oracle here, we exist mythless. Today we're getting a new castle spire. We're checking the traps, the yoghurt pots, for captures – it might take us hours. We said “goodbye, trees!” they once dropped paw paws, fermenting on the lawn, a big digger dropped it in, and we climbed on. Burn our tongues on metal spoons. David Hockey splits the scene into collage, and we all stick together our bit with masking tape. One day we will be in Canada, or England, and be teachers, or flower pickers paid by weight, and be in love with something other than a puzzle, or the refrigerator, or the pollinated tomato plants swelling to globes. They will never zest as well as this again! Just like our father said about the Hovis loaves, weaved together with the bicycle and the wicker basket and the manure, and his mother, as she rode through the farmlands to take his pre-school, pre-us persona home, home, home. Thanks Hockney for the fisheye you called a ‘joiner’, thanks Chuck (dad’s friend whose kids are all grown up) for the fort! We slip our skinny torsos into the metal milk jugs, we talk to stuffed tigers, we find fossils in the mud, though this island was dinosaurless, and hardened, like candy, in the sea only 100 million years ago.