

## Passwords

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# I Wrote You a Fish Once

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## I Wrote You a Fish Once

Liz Lyon

I used to write you letters, remember?  
 Long, sprawling spidery lines of letters and words.  
 I would take three days for one letter,  
 Fill it with drawings and nonsense-thoughts  
 And everyday occurrences.

Do you remember what you said  
 When I wrote you about the fish?  
 I was cleaning the tanks; and one  
 Had sunk to the green gravel bottom.  
 It wasn't quite dead yet—this I didn't know.  
 It had probably been sick a few days, a cancer  
 In its eye, growing larger and larger.  
 The lens remained intact.

A dry test tube, and the sickly-sweet smell of ethanol—  
 No, we didn't use formaldehyde—and the fish  
 Was girdled in death-juice.  
 Its mouth twitched,  
 A premature burial  
 More like pickling  
 Did you know what? Its eye  
 Stuck to the side. It stared, wet and round  
 Against that dry surface.  
 That luminous globe, that viscous eye seeped blood.  
 Tainted, orange-red, the eye was a dying sunset.

And now, when I see blue fading  
 Into rusty orange, smeared across the sky  
 I think of the eye of a dying fish  
 And how you asked me not to write you  
 Such things anymore.