

Fish Tales

by Foster Trecost

Billy's days were much like his yesterdays, with little hope the ones to come would be any different. The monotony played with his young mind: sometimes he saw things not there, other times he missed things that were. Such was the case when he gazed upon something new, failing to realize it had been there all along.

He moved in close, so close his nose nearly touched the glass. He saw, in the language of his age, an assortment of creatures, some big, some small. They moved about the confined space and he wondered if they were bored, too.

His brother, a little bigger and lot wiser, knew how to explain things just right. "Where's my brother?"

"Playing," said his mom. The answer was always the same, just like everything else. But the creatures on the other side of the glass were trapped, they were not going anywhere, and Billy could wait.

"What you looking at?"

His brother arrived, and Billy wasted no time: "What are they doing in there?" Then, "What kind of life is that?" And finally, "Do you think they're happy?"

"Slow down, little brother."

"That one," said Billy, pointing to a large figure hovering in the back. "Why is that one so much bigger?"

His brother presented a different view: "She's the biggest alright, but that's got nothing to do with anything."

"She? How do you know?"

"I just do. You can tell."

"They have boys and girls?"

"And grown-ups and children, too. She's the mother of everyone.

"Everyone?"

"Not everyone, not the skinny one. He's the father. He worries all the time, that's why he looks so sick."

Billy believed every word, which he should have because every word was true, or at least the truth as his brother believed it. He had spent hours staring through the same glass. Surely, his brother had thought, we can't be all that different.

"Is our dad like that?"

"Every dad is like that."

~ ~ ~

Billy spent the next day aligning what he learned with what he saw. He concluded, just like his brother, that they were not so different.

"You still thinking about them?" asked his brother. "Don't waste too much time. It's hard enough understanding our side of the glass."

"You're right," said Billy.

"Not always, but most of the time." The two boys laughed, then his brother said something never said before. "Come on, let's go play."

"Really?" replied Billy.

"Sure, let's go. The others are waiting." They turned away from the glass. "You want to race?"

"Can I have a head start?"

"Okay, but you better go now before I change my mind."

Billy raced away without another word, his fish tail all that could be seen, moving from one side to the other. After a few seconds, his brother swam after him just as fast as he could.

