

All That Glitters Is Just Water

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GIL: A goldfish who believes he's human.

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE": The omnipresent, almost mocking narrator or conscience who speaks through the bubbles or fishbowl filter.

MILO: Gil's friend who talks with an occasional lisp.

SUSHI CHEF: Quiet, barely speaks. Blabs randomly to himself, carries a rusty knife, and wears a greasy "Kiss The Chef" apron.

Scene 1: "Clock In, Give Up"

Setting: A clear fish bowl that looks like a miniature city, streets made of coral, tiny plastic buildings, a desk with a computer made of shells, and a fake tree to the side.

(GIL swims lazily to his office and to his "desk". He swipes at a small computer screen made of coral and clocks in.)

GIL

Another day in paradise. I mean, you'd think this whole "glorious existence" thing would get more glamorous the longer I'm stuck in this bowl. But no, just the same food pellets, same filter hum, and no one to talk to except...

(GIL stops.)

...you.

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE" (sarcastically.)

Ah, yes. Me. The omnipresent voice in your head. Your one true friend, trapped in a glass cage. But hey, look on the bright side, Gil. At least you're not a shrimp. You could've been a shrimp. Just think of the existential crisis you'd be having.

GIL

(Rolls his eyes.)

Yeah, nothing says "life goals" like being a shrimp. No thanks. At least I've got my human job.

(Mimics typing.)

"Dear Mr. Shrimp, I have finished the report."

GIL (sighs.)

Okay, actually, I do wish I were a shrimp. I bet they don't have to feel this much pain.

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE"

You don't feel pain, Gil. You're a fish. Your brain is the size of a pea. You think too much for a guy who can't remember what he had for breakfast five minutes ago.

GIL

Yeah, well, I'm a deep fish. Ever hear of Nietzsche? Guy got it. Everything is meaningless and we're all just swimming in circles, trying to find a reason to breathe.

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE"

Are you quoting Nietzsche now? In a fishbowl? Do you even know what "eternal recurrence" means? You can barely remember how many bubbles you've blown today.

GIL (sarcastically.)

Oh, look at you, you think you're hot shit just 'cause you know a couple facts. Yes, I'm aware I can't remember yesterday, but hey, that's a blessing in disguise. If I could remember every miserable day I've spent in this tank, I think I'd swallow a rock.

(GIL swims past a tiny plastic tree, kicking it over, as if it's symbolic.)

GIL

(Sad and softly.)

This is my life. This tiny glass prison, with plastic trees, a fake “career,” and a computer screen that does absolutely nothing. But you know what? At least I get to feel something, right? So maybe that’s it. The point of it all. To just feel like you matter, even if it’s just for one moment in the glow of an LED screen.

SHELLSEA “THE VOICE”

You’re doing that thing again. Getting all melodramatic. You’re a goldfish, Gil. You have a memory span of three seconds. You can’t existentialize your way out of this one.

GIL (sighs.)

I wish I could forget. I wish I could be like every other goldfish in here... mindlessly swimming, blissfully unaware. But no... instead I’m here, ranting to myself and pretending this fishbowl is a metaphor for something. Like there’s a “big picture” I’m missing. Maybe I’m just... tired...

(takes a deep breath.)

...tired of pretending this place is a world. It’s just a... a fishbowl. I’m not special. I’m just... swimming.

(GIL stares at his reflection in the glass.)

SHELLSEA “THE VOICE”

Yup. That’s it. You’re swimming. Might as well make it look good while you’re at it, right?

GIL (sighs.)

Yeah. I’ll put that on my LinkedIn profile “Living the dream... until I don’t.” I’m not sure if I’m looking for answers or just a distraction at this point. But hey, I’ll keep swimming. Because, well... What else is there to do?

SHELLSEA “THE VOICE”

Exactly. You’ll swim. And maybe, just maybe, you’ll catch a glimpse of the truth. Or a bug. Same thing, right?

(Gil stops swimming, stares out at the tiny “world” beyond the bowl. He lets out a slow, heavy sigh as the bubbles rise.)

GIL

Day 350 completed... time to clock out.

(GIL then “clocks out” and swims away.)

Scene 2: “SuShi”

Setting: A tiny, dimly lit sushi bar tucked between a laundromat and a taxidermy shop. A Neon sign flickers “SuShi Happy Hour”.

(GIL pushes the door open, a little bell jingles.
MILO is already inside, slouched at the counter.)

SUSHI CHEF
(Trailing off.)

Irasshaimase.

GIL (muttering.)

Yeah. Real red carpet treatment.

(MILO waves him over, almost knocking over a
fake candle)

MILO
(Excited, lisping.)

Gilly! Over here! I got uth a booth!

GIL
(Joins him, slumping onto a tiny rock seat.)

Wow. A booth. Living the high life.

SHELLSEA “THE VOICE”

Psst, You hear that? Booth seating. That’s how you know you’ve peaked.

GIL (whispering.)

Shut up, not now.

(The Chef slides over a damp coral menu.)

GIL
(Reads out loud.)

“Tonight’s Special: Goldfish Tempura. No substitutions. No refunds. No

hope.”

SHELLSEA “THE VOICE”

Spoiler, you’re the entree and the side dish.

MILO (chuckling.)

That’th what they call a “fthignature dithh.”

SHELLSEA “THE VOICE” (whispering.)

Signature dish? Yeah, it’s your signature on your own death certificate.

SUSHI CHEF

WASABI IS JUST SPICY SOAP!

(Sniffs and rubs nose.)

MILO

(In a teaseful playful tone.)

Tho, you’re theeing any lucky ladie-thees?

(He winks.)

GIL

(Annoyed and embarrassed.)

Milo, stop it! you know I’m saving myself for marriage until I find my lucky lady.

SHELLSEA “THE VOICE”

The only “Lucky Lady” is going to be the ones you look up on Fish Hub or Fishes Near Me at 2am.

MILO (sassy.)

Pfft. Lookth aren’t everything, Gil.

(Pauses.)

But if they were, I’d thtill be killin’ it.

MILO

But hey buddy, What’s wrong? You look like a guppy who just found out college ith a thcam.

GIL

Long day. Boss made me alphabetize algae samples. Again.

MILO

(Cackles, slapping the bar)

Algae alphabettthin'?!
 (Laughs harder.)

MILO (Cont.)

That'th it, I'm callin' the union.

SUSHI CHEF (muttering.)

Miso soup is a government trick... never trust a clam that talks back.

GIL

Anyways...

(To the chef)

Do you have anything that's... I dunno... less horrifying?

SUSHI CHEF

(Stares, muttering to himself. He whispers.)

The water knows your sins...

(Awkward silence. MILO grins like it's normal.)

MILO

You ever think we're the lucky ones, Gilly? Like... like maybe we're meant to be here?

GIL

Yeah. Meant to be born, meant to suffer, meant to eat ourselves one sad little roll at a time. Real fairytale stuff.

(The Chef places two tiny plates in front of them, each has "sushi" made of multicolored pebbles and algae paste.)

SUSHI CHEF

(Quiet, to himself.)

Everything decays... even the dreams...

(He wipes the counter with a dirty piece of kelp and stares off into the middle distance.)

GIL

(Staring at the plate.)

Do you ever order dinner and feel like you're just staring into your own obituary?

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE"

No, Gil. Just you. Most fish just eat and shut up about it.

MILO (cheerfully.)

Thith is delictiouth! It tasteth like... if hope had a flavor!(pause)Like... if hope were really thalty.

GIL (dry.)

Yeah, Milo. That's the salt of the crushed dreams. Freshly harvested this morning.

(Gil reluctantly picks up a fake piece of pebble sushi, chewing thoughtfully. He speaks to himself.)

Maybe the real secret of life is pretending it's not as dumb as it actually is.

MILO

(Sipping gross sake out of a tiny cracked cup.)

Y'know, buddy...

(Slurring slightly.)

Maybe it don't matter if ith real. Maybe it only matterth if you feel it.

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE" (mockingly.)

Aw, that's cute. Next he'll be selling you inspirational kelp posters."Hang in there!"

MILO

(Swiping at his face.)

Y'know what, Gil? We may be small. We may be... pointlethh.

(Holds up a soggy sushi roll like a trophy.)

But we are here.

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE"

Technically, you're "here" because the universe forgot to flush.

GIL (smirking.)

Nice. Motivational quotes from a guy who once got stuck in a six-pack ring for two days.

(Laughs.)

MILO

To another day of the good life!

(They clink their cups. One cup immediately cracks)

and leaks everywhere.)

GIL
(Small, tired smile.)

To whatever this is.

(The scene fades and only the sound of bubbles and the faint buzz of the neon “SuShi” sign is heard.)

Scene 3: “Flakes of Freedom”

Setting: Late Night, eerie lighting, The SuShi bar is closed. Everything looks warped and wrong, like a dream glitching. Gil swims alone through the empty, flickering world. The neon “SuShi” sign is now missing letters, buzzing weakly.

GIL (whispering.)
There’s gotta be a way out.
(Looking up.)
There’s always... a crack. A door. Something.

SHELLSEA “THE VOICE”
Oh sure. Just swim through the sadness hole and land right in Disneyland. Great plan.

GIL
No. No more sarcasm. No more cheap shots.
(Looking around.)
You don’t get it. I can feel it. I’m close.

SHELLSEA “THE VOICE” (amused.)
Close to what, genius? Drowning in slightly more depressing water?

(Gil spots something, a shimmering, faint line in the “sky” like a crack in glass.)

GIL (whispering.)
There it is.
(To himself.)
Freedom.

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE" (laughing.)

Freedom? Gil, buddy, you're a goldfish in a novelty bowl. "Freedom" is a brand of fish flakes they sell at discount pet stores.

GIL

(Ignoring the voice.)

I just have to get through... just once... just push harder...

(Gil starts swimming hard toward the crack, faster than ever before. Water around him ripples violently.)

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE" (nervously.)

Whoa, whoa, hold up, Flipper. Let's think about this. Maybe just... chill?

GIL

(Gritting teeth.)

NO. You don't want me to get out.

(Realizing.)

You're scared. Because if I leave... you die.

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE"

(Scoffing, but shaky.)

Pfft. Please. You need me. Who's gonna narrate your failures if not me?

(Gil swims faster, smashing into the crack. It starts to spiderweb open, glowing light pours in.)

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE"

(Urgent, almost begging.)

Gil. Seriously. Without me... who are you?

(Beat.)

You're nothing but a dumb little fish flopping around pretending to matter.

GIL

THEN MAYBE I'D RATHER BE NOTHING!

(Gil slams into the crack one last time, it shatters, brilliant white light floods the whole bowl. Silence.)

Gil floats there, stunned. The tank looks the same.
Nothing changed.)
GIL (quietly.)

I made it?

(No response.)

GIL (softly.)

Hey...

(Looking around.)

Where's Shellsea?

(Dead silence. The Voice is gone.)

GIL

It was you or me.

(Gil's alarm suddenly goes off and Gil jolts awake.
screaming.)

SHELLSEA "THE VOICE"

Morning, sunshine! Did you miss me? Ready to fail all over again?
(Laughs.)