

L I N D A P U R D Y

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## THE GOLDFISH SUICIDE

Like a saffron robed monk  
He kept his vow of solitude  
Swimming circles of silent devotion  
Around the narrow circumference  
Of his golden life.

He lived in the kitchen—  
His bright glass globe  
On the window sill,  
Alongside the ripening green tomatoes  
And purple velvet violets.

In the early afternoon,  
Beams of sunlight lit his bowl;  
He would rise to the surface  
To feed his soul  
On rays of illumination.

Yet if you faced him close up—eye to eye,  
The water magnified his presence,  
As in a trick mirror at the carnival.  
He looked enormous and distorted:  
A twisted golden freak.

I was fifteen when  
I won him at the county fair—  
A lucky aim at the penny arcade.  
I didn't even name him—  
Poor anonymous fish,

Living in the kitchen,  
So far from nature and so close  
To the sink,  
Filled with dirty dishes  
Five days old.

My mother, being frugal,  
Saved odd leftovers.  
That's why the glass of chocolate milk

Landed on the window sill  
Next to his bright cell.

Opaque and brown,  
Most likely spoiled,  
The chocolate milk  
Became his neighbor  
And his lure.

Even the best of us  
Are restless and want more.  
So who can say if it was ambition  
Or some darker wish  
That urged him

To forsake his vow.  
With one mighty leap  
He answered to temptation,  
And flung himself into the dark  
Unknown.

I was still fifteen,  
When I found him  
Floating in the chocolate,  
But I got it—The world so big—  
his fish bowl, so very small.