

# Anise Fish and Colin behind the glass

*by* Alison Wells

“What is the sickness that you have?” Colin behind the glass wondered.

“Too much world,” said Anise Fish.

“We have that in common.”

“I’ve always had it, since I was tiny.’ Anise stroked the glass. ‘I ate four cots. They had to keep replacing them... I ate the curtains and the table legs like a puppy. Things used to go missing - pegs, toothbrushes, spoons...”

“Spoons?”

“Yes, and yoghurt cartons an’ all. One day a man came to the house. He lifted me up and spun me around and I jingle jangled. They did an x-ray and found all sorts of things inside. Once my uncle said that I must have eaten the constituents of a garden. Mud, worms, flowers, rocks, bits of twigs. ..So in a way I have a garden inside me...”

“You do?” he said, then he reached out for her and their fingers touched through the glass.

She saw him pale as wafers, as edible as the moon. “Come outside with me, you can’t live in here.”

He felt: homemade lemonade and the assault of her eyes. He took a deep breath and turned the handle of the window.

“Come into my room,” he said.

He stepped back as she leaned on the window sill and clambered up. He felt the oxygen of the world as she opened the window wider and climbed through. He relived for an instant that trip on the train when he was five and the countryside was moving too fast. The grass was a blur, the cows, dry stone walls, the sidings, wide motorways. Victorian warehouses with old kiln dried bricks, the

metal skeletons of goods trains, graffiti filth, the onslaught of cities and their electric lights.

Anise Fish had brought the outside in. He covered his face with his hands and then he felt her hands on him. Her face so immediate, so close. He reached out for her.

There was no honey. There was salt, seaweed and sand, and yellow; the colour of buttercups under her chin. Her skin felt like paper first and feathers and old books, all those old musty books from his room that he had buried his nose in, face down flat on his bed. Her tongue was slippery and muscular like a fish.

She kissed every inch of the half-moons under his eyes, the dark inventive hollows, the hamlets of his temples, his lip topography, licked his cheeks of fragile dawns and fever.

He tasted the air on her skin and the sky with kites, sea spray, bog ale, moss and pine needles, forest floors and old dung at stiles with wind waves of dried sedge beyond, the snap of licorice dogwood, red twig fire between the teeth.

*Come outside* she had said. "Come outside." whispered Anise Fish. And she kissed him again, that soft fishy tongue in the salt of his mouth. And he sucked on her mouth for air and he held onto her shoulders and ribs for his scafenfolding.

He was inside now, right inside, inside this room, inside this girl, all sensation.

Anise: the tips of her fingers were popping, her groin was burrowing into the molten earth core, into dark tunnels of ancient trolls with groping gnarled fingers, down smooth slippery rivers of ice and fire.

Their legs had gone from under them. They sunk into the soft billow of sun sheets. They lay at the bottom of the pond, in the salty rockpools then; watching shoals of tiny two-spotted gobys, sea anemones waving fronds.

His hand fell from her as she rolled away. He heard water running and remembered trips to waterfalls; his own perpetual screaming at the overwhelming sound and the relentless pouring. He recalled his

parents' bemusement. He caught a glimpse of her hair and it was the sun in his eyes. He covered his face.

He rolled onto his back, naked, onto the sheets that were not too anything, feeling his own fingers in his own space, the ghosts of trains still clattering in his exerted heart. He put his finger to his lips and could taste the world from them.

He became aware of an insatiable yearning.

From the pale iced door, returning, Anise's face contorted. He closed his eyes against the view of her and continued to chew. The bedstead tasted of meatloaf.

