

Segment from a Documentary Film

by stephen hastings-king

In this sector of the estuary you swim through continuous showers of sunlight and krill and the array of regularly spaced wavering human forms floating upright seems to extend endlessly in all directions. Each wears a trench coat and private-eye fedora, hundreds of Jean-Paul Belmondos imitating Bogart in the entrance of as many invisible movie theaters; each is tied by the ankles to the bottom like a soldier in Emperor Qin's terracotta army except under water and made from something like kelp as if molded by beings who have seen images of human bodies but never touched skin, a dreaming from deep space made from television signals and repetition. When you navigate the rows of Jean-Paul Belmondos you echo in each passage of a thumb across lips but when you touch one it explodes into vegetable chaos. In this sector of the estuary for the length of a breath you can lie on the bottom and look back at the tourists overhead in glass-bottomed boats beneath the overlapping gazes of surveillance satellites or let yourself float toward the surface through the amniotic haze.

