

Senior Division, Poetry
Sabrina Pinksen, Wild Cove

How to Gut a Fish (An Excerpt)

1. Dig your fingers under the gills
of the fat turbot your father's
just torn from a net, stolen
from the shallow seabed
of the Grand Banks.
2. Slice the gills open. The sound
of the corded cartilage is a feeling
in your fingers: a scrape and grind
against the thick rubber shielding
your hands. The eyes like cold marbles
as its life leaks onto the fibreglass floor.
3. Carve across the top
of the turbot's tender belly
and tug the knife through
its iridescent scales. Reach inside
and pull out the crimson, currant, eggplant,
indigo, and lapis of its insides, until there is only
the white flesh, sinew, and bone.
4. Watch as your father pulls a creature
from the net. It is long, green, and shining,
and he presses its swollen belly
and it gives birth on the table. You are
a twenty-three year old girl,
one-hundred-sixty miles offshore,
and your father brought you here
because you are sad; he didn't know
what else to do with you.
5. Toss the guts into a bucket. Look
at the fish, their concave bellies,
and bulged eyes. They'll be sold
once you get back to St. John's.
Sixteen thousand pounds of fish
that your green, aching hands,
have cleaved open.
6. Blink against the icy spray
and wipe at your face with the crust
of your salty sweater. Taste
the stinging copper, the sour bile
in your throat, until the wind rips
across the deck and scours you clean.