

Jonah's fish

by [Laura Wang](#) in the [April 21, 2019](#) issue

I was hungry, and he thrashed
like a hurt turtle, paddling nowhere
on his sprawling, knobby joints.

Between the endless ropes of kelp
and the breath-bubbles spiraling
about his head, I didn't see

his eyes rolling to whiteness,
the matted fur of head, chest, limbs
that would have signaled: man,

earth-born scourge of the seas,
now overthrown and scallop-pale
with cold. I swallowed him whole.

First he bellowed; later, voice ragged,
his whimpers bounced off my bones,
rattled them like bars. Then, slowly,

a vibration as his breath circled
my womb's vault, warming my throat.
He chanted; I admit I listened

(he called me Hades—I decided
to let that go). And then he said a thing
that sent me careening through the depths

for terror: that it was *he* who'd cast him off,
wrapped his hard heart in a blanket
of waves. What fearful creature

was I carrying? Would I be stricken
for harboring him, stripped of my fins

and forced to trawl the sand?

Into the lightless waters where I fled
he spoke, and spoke to *me*.

It was enough
to turn my gut: I sped to shore,
spit him up there. Since then, fullness
hasn't felt quite the same.