

## how to gut a fish

everyone knows how a fish looks like, or at least believes to do so when he puts rubber gloves on himself with a fierce look in his eyes. this is the first mistake he makes, because the job of gutting does not have blessings directed towards surgeons and barriers are unnecessary. it is not about a person's life after all – simple gastric acid and a washing of hands is enough to cover the traces. however, he is not interested in reason, because instead he feels the need to exist everywhere as an absolute entity and proclaim a dozen messages, that which after a swift analysis turn out to be synonymous. they usually report of bleach allegedly mixed with the waxes covering his skin and cyanide flowing through his veins, embedded in him is an insatiable desire to be seen as an unsinkable predator anchored behind the rubrics of cubic centimeters of tissue separating him from his environment. when he puts the fish on the table, he creates an audience separate from his senses from the tangled threads of his neurons. it applauds his obsession with being clean; it is obvious, after all, that he does not undergo this ritual for the fish, but for the people – in everything he does, he must have people, or rather, in order to be able to do anything, he needs the idea of an audience or the knowledge he could put up chairs for it during some of his acts. the fact that a fish has its individuality forfeited to become his victim is not enough for him to ritualise the whole process. as it can be seen, the organ of his crime, the hand, is not mentioned here. the matter presents itself this way because he does not exist in his body as a whole, but only in one point of it which changes cyclically, and which can become anything. as a rule, however, he does not direct himself into the hand, especially when he cuts meat, so that it operates strictly on instinct and does not know the concept of a trained blow.

but mine does.

### 1. everyone knows that the scales need to be removed first.

1.1. not every person wants the creation of bony fibers interlaced with connective tissue wedged between their teeth, especially since a fish stripped of defense is the same fish, but for him it is only the matter of appearance – the impression of scales will remain on the dermis, so when he presses one of his knives, and he has many, so he has to choose well, at the right angle to the unctous skin, his status quo remains practically unchanged, with the exception for the fact that the blade is finally not pointed in his direction.

1.2. the dull film on the fish's eyes is a phenomenon defined by its constant both with the awareness of being able to plunge a knife into the fish's muscle fiber, and with the theoretical ability to leave the fish with a sense of security that, despite its near agonal state, it will soon cease to asphyxiate and return to the water.

1.2a. this of course will not happen, but the fish will not stop harboring hope. it cannot do otherwise.

### 2. everyone knows that the fish has to die, but not everyone knows how.

2.1. some people don't kill the fish with a swift blow to the head shortly after its capturing, but instead choose to wait until it's robbed of everything it depended on, and then drive a cleaver in between its vertebrae, ripping its spinal cord and arteries apart. he is impartial to both modalities, but is more likely to use the former one because of the awareness that the insipid crack of splitting cartilage could expose him to being ostracised. he avoids this contingency by taking the fish to a dimly lit place or a place known for having fish: then his act gains in the eyes of others who, despite their

frowns, are able to recontextualize it to gracefulness and ground it with the fish's fault, judging that it was too stupid to understand why someone would deceive it with the promise of what he needs himself.

2.2. the second mistake he makes is expecting something bigger than his body; something that would liberate him from the prison of electromagnetism that forms the mesh of his atoms while ending a life occupies a much simpler space in a life, similar to a vector driving it somewhere forward. he knows this, deep in the back of his mind, but he tries to push away from himself day after day with increasingly regrettable results, until he has to face it; the sequence of chemical reactions breaking stipulating an end to come.

2.2a. his third mistake is his overly physical treatment of bodies – he will soon realize this too.

3. everyone can hold a knife in their hand, but not everyone can use it.

3.1. some people get rid of the gills first, some people cut through the fish's stomach having begun at the anal fin first. the latter method is recommended; then, one doesn't have to look the fish in the eye as its intestines are torn outside.

3.2. some people pivot the gill cover and gently pluck the tissue away from the branchial arches through tiny punctures. some people are not so sentimental and simply sever the fish's head.

3.2a. i once saw someone catch a fish on a hook and pull its entrails out through its esophagus. i still remember the way its pharynx bulged before the fish spat out its stomach all tangled up and turned on backwards. i don't want to talk about this.

4. after removing the entrails my fingers are covered in blood.

5. the fish is spread out in front of me like an ionic vessel. life has long since fled from it, and its mouth is open in an antemortem expression of longing for water. the fish's existence is gaping along its entire length, through which both i and he can see the red palate supported by the ribs, which converge towards the arch of the fish's spine. this is not the end of the fish, but it will not undergo further transformation, not yet, because the sight of its unnatural emptiness is overpowering. most people come to a standstill at this point, and he is no exception, because in front of him at last is the truth – smooth muscle caressing the undigested contents inside, mucus smeared on the slicing board and, the worst of all, the swim bladder inducing cognitive dissonance through its absence in the human anatomy. the streamlined body turned out to not cradle the coils of human intestines, just so incredibly compressed, even more so than the ones he saw looking through the windowpane at anatomy classes for students of medicine schools. the flesh blinds with its own redness pierces and hurts him through his gloves; he has always thought that meat should be either bitter or ripe with decay, as he either only ate such or only served such.

6. i know from empirical experience that people's reaction to fish are rather emotional, and thus unpredictable. though the fish may have existed in the human consciousness for thousands of years, people continue to be unprepared to meet its substance, as most have only seen its simulacra in articles written under a microscope, its caricatures in sanctioned media, or the sanitised flaps of its body put inside plastic and wrapped in plastic. people need to be slowly introduced to fish.

7. i support his chin with one hand, then put the fingers of the other one to his lips.

7.1. his epiderm has been cracked in drought, but my gentle yet firm gesture immobilises his jaw, preventing him from licking his lip nervously. in the moment, he would've thought of the gesture to be soothing, but afterwards he would've realised he simply had irritated the tissues lying deeper, and his stress would deepen as well. he obviously needs directed guidance.

7.2. i push against his lips and he parts them.

7.3. his insides are quite like these of a fish. warmth and moisture embrace my fingers, which are washed clean of blood, his tongue finally busy with something. from now on, every time he wants to lick his lips in distress, he will return to his thoughts about me and my hands, being jabbed at by the fear of the strange memory of the fish, but reminiscing on the solace that i have brought him. not having the tools to break this loop himself, he will come to me and from under the thick black strands of his straight hair he will look at me and ask for more.

7.4. when i decide that he has experienced enough for a first time, i pull my fingers away. i look at the string of saliva trailing from them back to his mouth, but not at him, or his eyes. this way, i stimulate the region in his brain responsible for satiety, making the foreignness of the fish turns even less important. the only thing that begins to matter is the length of time after which i allow him to sink his teeth between the protein fibers. this is how i make him fall in love with a fish.

8. his fifth mistake was believing that the only being unable to take away his humanity was me.