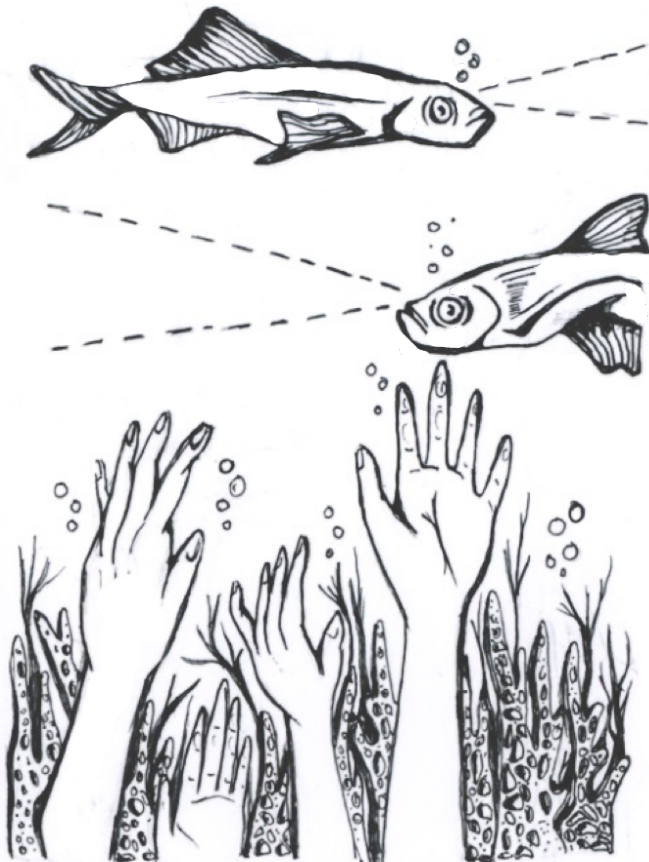


Aquarium Maintenance: A Manual

Selecting the Proper Tank

Your first fish tank: state fair—pulling cotton candy from your hair like gauze. Mom says *Here*, passes you the baggie. Cellophane crinkles in your pink kid palm, pocketing knotted top and inside: goldfish. Hold it to the sun, watch light warp through plastic, scales reflecting summer.

(Your first, first fish tank: a kind of crinkling sac, amniotic baggie. What did you look like, held up to the fluorescents? Imagine a flashlight pressed to your mother's belly. Swelling, translucent, veins unstrung from thin skin membrane. Watch her glow.) **See: Blowfish**



Stocking Your Tank

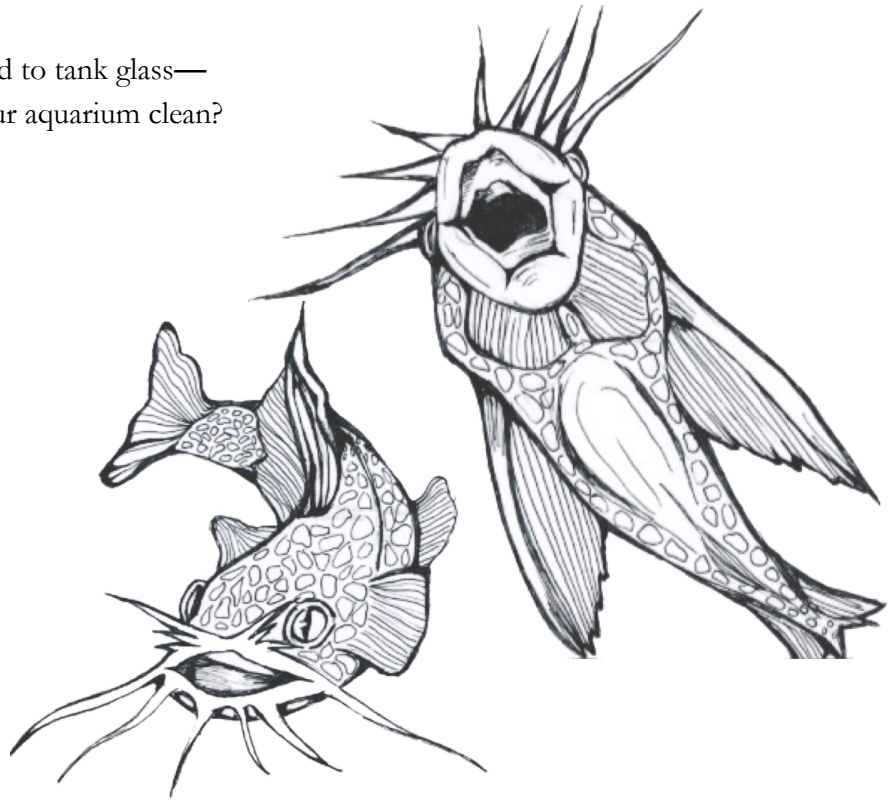
Stocking requires two primary components: **(1) Fish** and **(2) Water**. Tank aesthetic can be augmented, however, by introducing other elements—including but not limited to **Coral & Algae, Snails, and More Fish**. Some aquarium owners might choose to include **More Water**.

(It's true: water quantity can be infinitely increased without detrimental results. When everything is underwater, it is impossible to drown.) **See: Swim Team, 2016**

Catfish

Speckled scales and gummy lips, suctioned to tank glass—suck and pop. How else will you keep your aquarium clean?

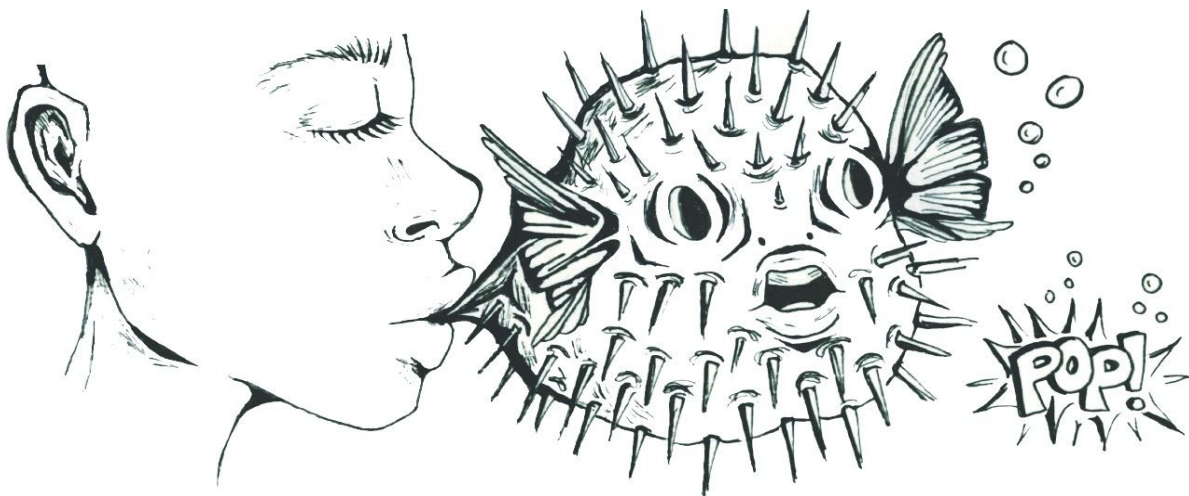
(Think: sitting on your bedroom floor. Just watched *Grease*. Ryan says, *A hickey from Kenickie is like a Hallmark card*. You say, *I don't get it*. She presses her lips to her own forearm, a foamy sound, *Watch this*. Her mouth expands, contracts, the skin sucked up and underneath her spit shines slick, bruise an inky blue. Extend your arm. *Do me!*)



Blowfish

Other names: globefish, honey toad. Elastic skin stretches, thinned like spine, thinned like chewing gum blown and popped. **Did you know?** Blowfish spines are only visible at maximum puff.

(Remember pressing a flashlight to your thumb, glowing through your skin? Veins and fingerprints like reverse palimpsest, erased lines drawn darker?)



Other names: sugar toad, sea squab.
Sugar, Mom says, *oh, honey*. *Honey toad*, *honey girl*, *my little girl*. Not little anymore. That summer, you swell. Hold a flashlight to your belly and trace elastic waistband ribbings, the scaly pattern of stretch marks. Run a finger down your spine and wonder where it went.

(Remember blood broiling against the wall of your nail, keratin clear like tank glass?)



Coral & Algae

(Think: spongy. Think: string cheese. Think: the rubbery pink of palate, of tongue. Think: fungus, but underwater.)

It is recommended to line your tank with different types of coral and algae for your fish to swim through, nuzzle against, and most importantly, duck within. Swallowed on all sides by glass, it is crucial that your fish have a place to hide. **See: Snail**

Swim Team, 2016

A journal entry: Thursday, January 21st.
6:33 PM. It's best to cry in the pool because nobody can tell.

(It helps both because of the water



and because of the goggles.)

Snail

Thirteen years old. *Don't you want to go out, honey? Honey toad? Sugar? Why don't you eat dinner with us? Why don't you leave your bedroom door open? Please leave your bedroom door open.*

You say, **See: Coral & Algae**, Mom.

Swim Team, 2016, cont.

Inside the goggles: tiny pools.

Tear pools. You pools. The goggles are a type of tank now. Everything is a type of tank now. When everything is underwater—

