

It was Big

Still and silent Barbara and Barry, Barreleye fish both, hovered in the deep, deep twilight near the bottom of the Mesopelagic Zone, somewhere in the north Atlantic. Eyes turned up to catch the faintest glimmer of the silhouette of any luckless passing prey, the two fishes hung in the cold dark gloom. Conserving energy was vital in their food-scarce surroundings, and stealth was their chosen hunting strategy. Lying in ambush, just a gentle fluttering of the fins, only what was necessary to keep them on their chosen station, allowed their bodies to remain motionless and undetectable, while their highly adapted eyes, rotating in their transparent heads, remained ever watchful for zooplankton to pass by.

In the almost total darkness prevailing near the boundary between the twilight and the midnight zones, and with little variation in the temperature and pressure of their surroundings, the deep sea denizens have no apparent means of communication and little to say about the monotony of their lives, if they had any such means. However, the Barreleye fish, unique in so many ways, had evolved a sophisticated form of telepathy among themselves, allowing them to discuss the quality of the water, the richness of the hunting grounds and in the case of Barbara and Barry, their occasional frustrations with each other.

With no way to measure the passing of time in the unchanging gloom, a seemingly ageless age of waiting passed before Barbara, who was the more closely attuned of the two to her environment, felt something new whispering along her delicate scales.

<What was that?> she thought to Barry. <What was what!> he thought, irritation at her disturbance of his quiet introspection colouring his telepathic sending. <I felt something...>. <You're always feeling things. Why can't you just be quiet and ...> but he never completed that thought. Barry too could now feel a sudden, strong wave of pressure all along his side, pushing him away from their hunting ground. Down and away they were forced. With increasing speed, their small lightweight bodies spun and tumbled in the turbulence, their frantic fins completely unable to stabilise the frightened fishes. Then they were being thrown upwards, up, up towards the brighter regions where sunlight could still dimly penetrate.

<What's happening? I don't like it up here.> Barry caught Barbara's panicked sending, before they were dragged back down into the darkness once again. Like two corks caught in a current, the two fish were whirled and twirled helplessly, tossed and shaken by tremendous forces well beyond their experience or understanding, until at last, dazed and exhausted, the world resumed its unchanging stability around the two. Shocked and scared, Barbara sent again <What was that?>

As the severed bow section of the White Star liner Titanic continued the final part of its first and only voyage down through the blackness until it came to rest on the sea bed more than another thousand metres below the two, Barry thought back <I don't know. But it was BIG.>