

Robert Gibb

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*Remission*

Not windsock nor kite nor traced shoal  
Of starlight, the goldfish still managed  
To take to the air above the pump-flushed

Waters of its tank and vanish completely  
From our sons' stunned room—a miracle  
Of absence we came to, that Christmas,

After the presents had been unwrapped.  
*It was there this morning*, the elder  
Informed us, nearly breathless with alarm.

His brother was sadder: *He was my favorite,*  
*I gave him a name.* Things die, we said,  
Moving the dresser away from the wall,

But where we thought to find the fish  
There was only baseboard, so we rifled  
The drawers as well, plunged deeper into

Mystery, and came up empty once more.  
*It couldn't have just disappeared*, I offered,  
My one article of faith. What's left except

To check back further beneath the dresser?  
And there it was, a little froth of the tropics  
Come to rest in the dross

And wrappers, flat eye blankly staring,  
Colors fading already from the scales.  
What if we'd lost it for good there,

Seeping out oils, the oxygen thinned  
From its blood? What if I didn't discover  
That scooped into the net it twitched

And in the tank wobbled slowly toward  
The bottom, gills kneading, plumes  
Of dust fluttering all about it? How might

Any of us have guessed that by nightfall  
We'd find it, buoyant, flashing again  
Like tinsel in its billow of gauzy fins?