

## Black Ice

*Submitted for the NYC Midnight Microfiction Competition, October 2019.*

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I threw the hockey puck a few feet in front of me, where it landed on the thick black ice with a noise that echoed through the water below: clack, clack.

The morning was still, silent but for the scrape of the sharp blades of skates that cut into the hard surface of the frozen pond as I pushed the puck around with my stick, expertly twirling around invisible opponents. In my head, the crowd went wild.

Beneath my feet, the pond echoed: clack, clack.

Movement caught my eye. I glanced down in time to see a flash of silver. The noise had drawn the attention of an unusually curious fish, weak sunlight reflecting from the scales. I skated on, my new companion darting in and out of the blackness, just deep enough to remain almost out of sight.

It became a game. I moved faster; the flash kept pace. In my excitement, I twisted awkwardly, falling to the ice with a grunt. I slid to a stop, staring into the depths, catching my breath.

The silver flash circled, vanished. I pushed myself to my knees. Beneath my reflection, something rose. White eyes peered from a gaunt, skeletal face. Skin, with a pallid, silvery cast, hung in tattered strips.

Its mouth agape, the white eyes held mine as a bony digit traced along the ice. It tapped. Once. Twice.

The sound echoed through the water: clack, clack.