

# Pigeonhole Episode 47

[bright ambient music]

## Introduction

CHORUS OF VOICES: Pigeonholed, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole.

[ambient music fades into layers of tranquil music, chimes, and burbling water]

CHERYL NARRATING: A few years ago, I went to the Oregon Coast Aquarium in Newport. I got to pet anemones in their touch pool. I saw a whole bunch of yellow boxfish in a big tank. Let me tell you about them. The particular species on exhibit resembles a cross between, say, a marshmallow peep, a snail, a lemon cookie, and a spatula. It's a couple inches long, and it's got giant eyes on top of its head, pointy antennae sticking up past the eyes, a cute puckering mouth, flippity-flappity fins here and there along its boxy body, and the underside is flat, flat, flat. They caused me extreme cuteness overload. But then? I found the seahorse exhibit.

While all my other podcast episodes on YouTube are just the podcast logo with the episode audio, this one will have video. Of the seahorses in their cylindrical tank. It's all shot close-up on an old iPhone those years ago. That makes it hard to tell what size they really are, though I can say that it's only seahorses in the tank even though I use an endless string of names and nicknames that floated through my head when I visited them. Fish horses. Tiny sea monsters. A swimming letter S. Creatures with the bell of a trumpet built right onto their faces. All of that? Seahorses. It seems like, from my video, they range in size from my pinky finger to my index finger, always upright as if they're standing in the water, rows of spikes all around and down their bodies. None of them seems thicker than my thumb, and the tiniest seems like I could fit two or three in the space of my pinky finger. Believe me, I wouldn't mind being able to put my hand in the water and waiting for one to pop by so I could really see just how pinky versus index finger it is. I hope this captures the absolute wonder of these busy little fish. A friend recently asked me a question that I hope you'll come away with after watching or listening to this episode. The question was, and I quote, "How are seahorses even?"

## The seahorse film

CHERYL AUDIO DESCRIBING: Arcing metal chains crisscross through the tank. Seahorses, upright, float backward, forwards. One rises, curls its tail around a chain then slithers up. Long horsey snout pointed down, another slips lower, nestling belly into the arc of one link.

S-shaped bodies with rough rings of spikes. One tiny sea monster snuggles against the peeling-paint chain. Another leans from a platform as if to plunge.

Gills open and close. Salt and grit floats by. Lips pucker. Tiny head fins flutter.

At the center of the tank, a blueish glassy dome curves out of the sand. You could step under and watch from inside the dome. One creature tries and tries again to grab a chain with its tail. A feathery fin on its back vibrates. Tilts head back in triumph as it secures its spot. It bows, traces a circle with its body, tail wrapped tight on the chain.

Light bounces off the center dome, making colorful ripples. A little seahorse, tail coiled up, casts a shadow on the blue-tinged yellow sand. A larger creature zips past, tail extended. Others examine their miniature seafloor.

A copper pipe hangs down capped by a tiny platform with holes in it, each filled by a spiky little monster. Fluttering its dorsal fin like a fan, a larger one lets go of a chain and zooms up to the pipe.

It takes a spot, and like musical chairs, another swims circles around the copper pipe in case a spot opens back up.

[tranquil chiming music and burbling water continue, layered on with a jaunty, lumbering march of tuba, trumpet, and drums]

Two head down from the pipe in slow motion. [pause] One glides along the dome and stops short when it bumps into a hunk of burgundy coral. [pause] Considers the coral a while, then takes off. [pause] Shadows drift around. Seahorses slip across the scene here and there, heading off to do their seahorsey things.

Big and small, dark brown or tan, their heads are bowed as they swim or stay awhile. One chain link attracts four creatures, all looping their tails into the lowest link, creating a tangle like seaweed. The biggest one lets go of the link, joins a miniature creature waiting nearby, and the pair takes off.

Back at the tangle, one horsey looks at the camera, puckers.

[the brass band march ends with a pop, leaving the tranquil music and water burbles]

Tiny striped seahorses are reflected all around the dome. Four spiky horses drift away.

[tranquil music and burbling wade fade as bright ambient theme music returns]

## Wrap-up

CHERYL: Every episode is transcribed. Links, guest info, and transcripts are all at [WhoAmItoStopIt.com](http://WhoAmItoStopIt.com), my disability arts blog. I'm Cheryl, and...

TWO VOICES: this is Pigeonhole.

CHERYL: Pigeonhole: Don't sit where society puts you.

**Music in the episode:** "Bumbly March," "Dewdrop Fantasy," and "Garden Music" Kevin MacLeod (incompetech.com) Licensed under Creative Commons: By Attribution 4.0 License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.