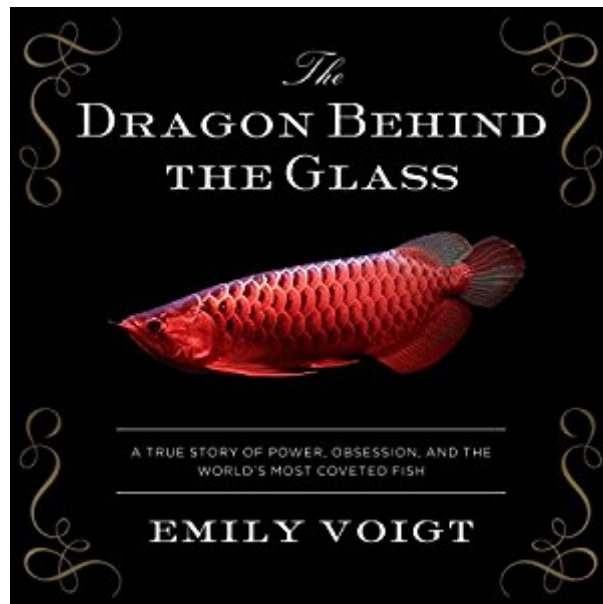


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# The Dragon Behind The Glass: A True Story Of Power, Obsession, And The World's Most Coveted Fish



## Synopsis

A young man is murdered for his prized pet fish. An Asian tycoon buys a single specimen for \$150,000. Meanwhile, a pet detective chases smugglers through the streets of New York. Delving into an outlandish realm of obsession, paranoia, and criminality, *The Dragon Behind the Glass* tells the story of a fish like none other: a powerful predator dating to the age of the dinosaurs. Treasured as a status symbol believed to bring good luck, the Asian arowana is bred on high-security farms in Southeast Asia and sold by the hundreds of thousands each year. In the United States, however, it's protected by the Endangered Species Act and illegal to bring into the country - though it remains the object of a thriving black market. From the South Bronx to Singapore, journalist Emily Voigt follows the trail of the fish, ultimately embarking on a years-long quest to find the arowana in the wild. With a captivating blend of personal reporting, history, and science, *The Dragon Behind the Glass* traces our modern fascination with aquarium fish back to the era of exploration when intrepid naturalists stood on the cutting edge of modern science, discovering new and wondrous species in jungles all over the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

You might not think an exhaustively researched and thoughtful book about the intersections of conservation, obsession, and pet fish would be funny. But you would be wrong. Beautifully written, and a rollicking good read.

I never thought I could be captivated by a book about fish, but how wrong I was. Emily tells some amazing tales of history, evolution, geology and ichthyology. Introduces us to an hilarious cast of characters including explorers, breeders, researchers and traders. Intermingled with fascinating stories of the Victorian explorers who travelled the before her, including my now own personal favorite, Ida Pfeiffer. A funny easy read, which makes you think about your place in nature... it might also make you think that you need a night out in Singapore with Kenny the Fish.

The Dragon Behind the Glass by Emily Voigt is a free NetGalley ebook that I read in early May and finished on Mother's Day. Love you, Mom!Voigt's narration goes beyond just describing arowana, their buyers, and their rarity - she goes into the history of owning pets, of learning about arowana herself, following their owners and breeders around the world, and being an audience surrogate about the sheer mania and oddity of rare animal ownership (both legally and illegally).

I bought this book because of a review in the Wall Street Journal. I know nothing about fish except as a meal or some guppies in an aquarium. I cannot recommend it highly enough. It's like reading a mystery novel. In fact, better than the last two I have read. It has to be a given that people close to the writer will give a great review. After one reads the book there can be no possible reason for someone to write how great it was except for a relationship with the author. I don't know Ms. Voigt or have anything to do with anyone in the book or the publisher so my review is only on how interesting I thought this book was. But it!

I rarely read non fiction and I don't have a particular interest in fish, so when I started this book I wasn't sure if I'd finish it. I was completely taken by surprise with how much I enjoyed it though! With an interesting cast of characters and lots of travel stories, this book is making me re-think how I select books to read in the future!

A different and delightful kind of scientific travelogue I guess you could call it. The author becomes fixated with her subject and travels the world pursuing answers as to why this particular fish is so coveted. She also comes in contact with a number of very interesting characters in her pursuit of this fish.

Who knew a story told 'round the aquarium would be better than one told 'round the campfire. The dragon behind the glass is a mystery, a memoir, a travelogue, and an engaging exploration of

science, conservation, and the environment. I definitely recommend this book, from prologue to epilogue. A fun summer read with memorable characters where you will actually learn something too.

The Dragon Behind the Glass is part exposé, part travelogue, part scholarship, and part descent into madness. It's a combination as addictive as a skillfully made desert. Ahab had a great white whale. Emily Voigt had a great red fish. Voigt is pursuing the arowana. She first hears the name from a law enforcement who is talking to her about the exotic pet trade in New York. She learns that the arowana is a large fish prized by a certain kind of aquarium owner: usually Asian, male, and rich. The latter is the most necessary feature for many arowana owners, because single individuals are fetching hundreds of thousands of American dollars. The arowana is the center of an unusual market, often shrouded in secrecy and both threats and acts of violence. Again and again throughout the book, arowana are stolen, smuggled, and fought over, both in the professional and literal sense of the word. The strangeness of it all is compelling for the reader and Voigt, who ends up pursuing this fish through multiple countries and jungles. She's accompanied by a memorable set of other people, who I found myself constantly googling to see by the time I reached the second half of the book. The Dragon Behind the Glass is not an academic work, but it almost could have been. Voigt's research on the pet trade and the science is flawless. There is lots of solid biology and scientific history. Voigt provides many thoughtful asides about the pet trade. She considers the pros and cons of collecting from wild populations, CITES listings, and the paradox of the arowana being a mass produced endangered species. While I was originally interested in this book because of its relevance to my own research, I kept reading because it was intertwined with the personal stuff, and her own jungle adventures, in such an entertaining way. Voigt is self aware enough to realize that her interest in this fish is... not normal. There's a recurring theme: Am I really doing this and is it worth it? that I think anyone deeply invested in a project will recognize.

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