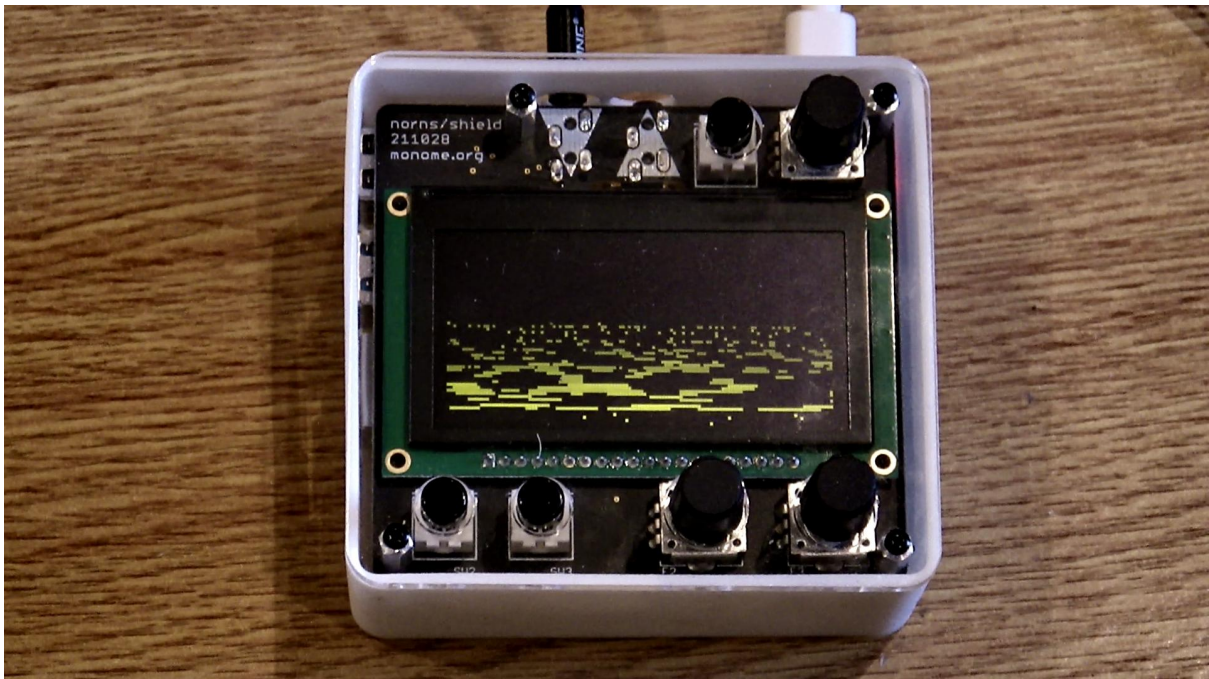


# *Their Tells*

## 8. What We Talk About When We Talk About Water



*I am... a part. And I am a parcel*

*I am here. I stand in the middle surrounded by waves. I am already preparing the protective shell around me; a cocoon, a suit of armour.*

*The loss is already in the past and so I don't look at her, that different me that was before. She is already sloughed off, like the skin of a lizard.*

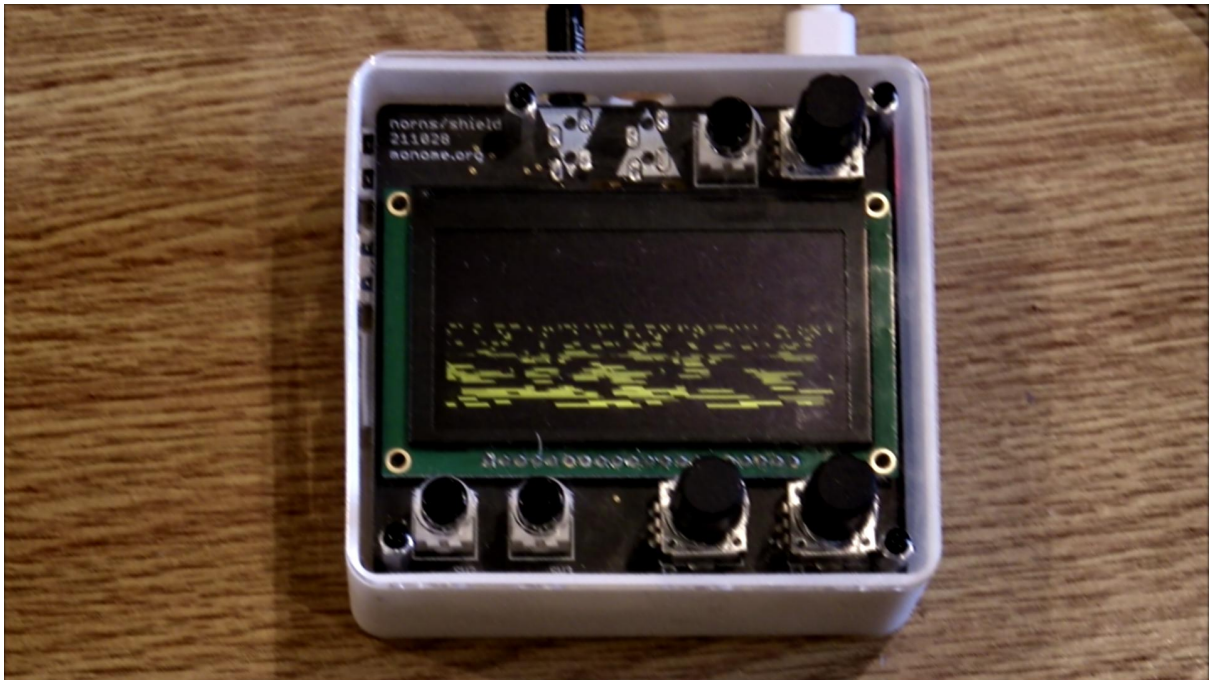
*I am evolving. Hardening into brilliant cold diamond. I am here and I am looking only within and I am the shell to ensure that I can withstand the onset of the waves. I am erecting the barriers, and I am her-who-is-in-the-now. I can't imagine being able to be anything else.*



*I am here. I am the she-who-was-before. My little world is rooted in fun with no consequence; I am the sound of carefree uncomplicated laughter.*

*I paddle in the shallows and I am present only in what is happening right now. Already something looms on the horizon, dark and foreboding, but the here and now is my focus - i don't need to move with haste, I dont need a path when I can relish the arbitrary journey. There's little need to look within when i can look without, an oblivious spectator lost in the throng and loving the shelter of crowds.*

*I find the idea of other Me's distasteful. Why would i need to be anyone other than who I am?*



*I am here, again, in the middle.*

*I am looking back to shore and I can see my earlier self dipping her toes in at the edge. But I cant see her face; something huge and unseeable stands between us, waves of distortion rippling in the air between us like a haze. I know that if I could see her clearly, each would each be unfamiliar to the other. I cant work out if its the invisible presence hanging in the air that would interfere with our vision, as it obscures with absence all that passes through it, or if we are so different from each other - so suddenly different - that we are as two distant relatives bound only by blood.*

*It's harder and harder to make out any features at all on the small figure, and I wonder if she ever really was me or if, underneath, i have always been the shell that guards from what has been.*



*I am here. I am standing in the future and I'm talking to you from now, the now that has moved past the other two thens.*

*There is a part of me that doesn't want to be here; that wanted to stay in the middle, guarding not only myself but also the memory of how we three came to be. As if somehow growing beyond the need for the shell is in a sense betraying the need for a shell at all; as if inward growth means letting go of the outward pain. Instead, I stand here and know now that you can be both testament to the reasons for pain without becoming a totem of the pain itself.*

*Speed is distance over time; these things happened to other selves, copies that I kept to transfer the pain onto. Simulacra that seemed real but were merely tools. But the rest of me; the vital, core essence of me that is hidden in the centre, keeps the memories and the love alive*

*Three lives - existing simultaneously through time, in slices over a lifespan that is all happening right now - formed to protect and remember the loss of one.*

What We Talk About When We Talk About Water  
The Voice: Fiona Nicolson  
Written and Created by Ruaridh Law