

Is the glass partition still there?

The Business Man Glanced indifferently through his mail and, as he expected, failed to find many of those crisp orders for so many thousand gross of this or that. Yes, business was pretty bad, pretty bad. Well, if people wouldn't buy his wares, he couldn't buy other merchants'. He shook his head sadly. Hello! What's this? He drew an oblong folder of Nile green from its envelope and opened it. A black bass gorgeously dappled with purple seemed to be darting straight through sea-green water toward four tiny black minnows.

The Business Man took in all the details of the picture: the sheet of celluloid which appeared to be the glass side of an aquarium, the tall eel grass, the realistic air bubbles in the water. Then he wondered why the minnows were depicted so unafraid. To be consistent, they should be darting away from the hungry, open mouth of the bass. He turned back to the first page of the folder for information or explanation, and read:

A naturalist divided an aquarium with a clear glass partition. He put a lusty bass in one section and minnows in the other. The bass would strike every time a minnow approached the glass partition. After three days of fruitless lunging, which netted him only bruises, he ceased his efforts and subsisted on the food that was dropped in.

Then the naturalist removed the glass partition. The minnows swam all around the bass but he did not strike at a single one. He was thoroughly sold on the idea that business was bad.

Moral: Take another shot at the glass partition. Maybe it isn't there any more.

A half moment of thoughtfulness and the Business Man jerked his telephone toward him decisively. He dialed a number and said, "Hello, Thompson? Well, never mind canceling that order. Put it through. Yes, I said put it through."