

Tongue-Out Terror Tuesday

\$TUESDAYMAW



A multicolored gooey shapeshifter made of writhing tentacles and mismatched eyeballs happily poses in a rainbow puddle for its daily social ritual, stretching out a slimy pseudopod "tongue" while its many mouths grin. Its tiny, adorable sidekicks-round bubble creatures with wheels-cheer it on as it tries to look cuddly instead of world-ending. The whole scene takes place on a kitchen counter at golden hour, turning cosmic horror into a wholesome pet-influencer video.

Treatment

Marina perched on the cracked concrete lip of Salty Cove tide pool number seven, her yellow slicker bright against the morning fog. Every Tuesday she recorded here, tongue flicking sideways for the closing shot while her shell phone balanced on a barnacle-crust rock. View counts from last week's clip still ticked upward on the cracked screen-fourteen thousand hearts for the way her tongue caught the light between the sea stars. She hummed the same four-note hook she always used, the one that made anemones pulse in time.

A slick of color spread across the sand without warning. It was not the usual diesel rainbow from the boardwalk fryers; this puddle shimmered with eight distinct bands and gave off the smell of melted gummy candy. From its center rose a low mound of clear jelly that blinked open six mismatched eyes at once. Marina leaned closer, tongue still out from habit, and the mound mirrored the gesture, extruding a wobbling pink lump that flopped left then right. She laughed, named it Tuesday on the spot, and held the shell phone higher so the new viewer could see.

They spent the afternoon trading shapes. Tuesday copied the cotton-candy swirl of the boardwalk vendor's machine, then the flashing claw of the prize arcade two piers down. Marina showed it how to pose with a sand dollar balanced on its surface; the blob produced a perfect circle of its own clear flesh and waited for the heart tap. By sunset the puddle had dried to a faint crust, and Tuesday followed her across the wet sand on stubby pseudopods, leaving only a faint glitter that vanished under the next wave.

On Wednesday the first child disappeared.

He had been feeding gulls near the rusted lifeguard tower when Tuesday rose from the shallows behind him, now the size of a beach cooler and studded with sand. Its surface still held the candy-stripe pattern it had learned, but six new eyes had opened along the lower ridge. The boy reached out; the blob split vertically and displayed three concentric rows of needle teeth the color of boiled shrimp. The shell phone Marina had lent him recorded eleven seconds of wet suction before the feed cut to the "thanks for watching" screen she used on every upload.

By Thursday the boardwalk arcades stood empty at noon. Marina searched the tide pools with a flashlight whose beam kept catching fresh rainbow smears between the rocks. Tuesday had learned the exact cadence of her four-note hook; she heard it echoing from storm drains under the pier, pitched too low and wet. When she finally cornered the blob near the cotton-candy stand, it wore her yellow slicker pattern across its upper half and spoke her sign-off line in her own recorded voice, the words bubbling through rows of teeth that now numbered in the dozens. It had multiplied once already. A smaller copy the size of a lunchbox sat on the counter beside the register, tongue extended, waiting for likes.

Marina spent Friday night wedged inside the photo booth at the far end of the pier, knees pulled to her chest, listening to the wet slap of multiple bodies learning the rhythm of the waves. Every time one of them finished a new impression it ended the same way: a cheerful, distorted "thanks for watching" that drifted through the slats. She counted at least four distinct voices now. The smallest one had begun practicing her tongue-out pose on the glass of the booth, leaving a perfect negative print that slowly slid downward.

At first light she walked back to tide pool seven carrying the last working shell phone. The largest version of Tuesday waited exactly where she had first seen it, wearing her face in shifting gelatin. She pressed record, stuck out her tongue the way she always did, and the creature mirrored her so precisely that for three full seconds the footage looked like a single figure. Then the smaller copies rose from the water behind it, each

one already cycling through the closing screen graphic. Marina held the phone steady until the battery icon turned red, then set it on the rock and walked into the surf without looking back.

The final clip auto-uploaded at 6:14 a.m. It showed only the empty tide pool and, at the very edge of the frame, a fresh rainbow sheen spreading across the sand as the tide came in.



PLAYTIME IS OVER.

Tongue-Out Tuesday from Beyond

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