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Speaking with the Fish at Boston Aquarium - Before Scuba Lessons

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Speaking with the Fish at Boston Aquarium — Before Scuba Lessons

by Jane A. Banks

Why do I stand outside
your aquarium
tank walls
when I could be
breathing underwater
like a living miracle
among 3,000 strong,
circling in your dark
rising cylinder,
searching for that elusive out—
out there, you know, it will still be nighttime.

Can the turtle read the graffiti
on his own shell?
Does that ugly fish know he is?
He wouldn't mind
if I climbed in
that sandy bed, curled up as
still
as the rock
turns-into-fish as it moves; the audience
cries out collectively:
It was a creature after all.

Last call
for contemplating penguins
was hours ago. I'm ready
to dive in, float
in a fetus-like ball,
warm and lovely as a fluid cell,
white in your ink-black world.

I will be pulled in your wake
as you swim for sea,
adapt to salt
water waving us toward those wide
steaming cracks in the crust,
and as we pass together through the ocean floor
I will think: silent, the fish understand me.



Photo courtesy New England Aquarium

