

## THE BIRD AQUARIUM

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*Rosemary Bensko, award winner*

Pet shop light  
bubbling behind glass,  
that's what it is,  
where, in the clear water,  
the unreal becomes  
two birds, fish, panes  
of impossible  
glass. Grey birds  
are looking through red fish  
that surround their air.  
Only still,  
it seems water's all  
there is  
and will drown them.  
Trembling slightly,  
they huddle  
back to front  
and clasp their swing.  
It must be an illusion  
and really be two  
completely clear and  
perfectly lighted,  
uncannily placed  
containers with one  
inside of one,  
a secret depth that  
keeps alive,  
in the purple light  
where shadows swimming  
on grey birds tremble,

doubleness and  
questions about  
used up air and life  
confused with red fish.  
Through water, sound  
does not bring  
me the open-  
and-closed-beak fear of  
the birds inside. Some  
delicately  
made pretty images  
live in cold blood.  
And how little trust  
I have that once I leave them  
they will live.