

THE BIRD AQUARIUM

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.