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At The Sea Merchant Restaurant

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Robert Manaster

At The Sea Merchant Restaurant

He pushed aside the turkey slices and fruit cocktail:
Not ceiling fans or netting or cloth pictures of boats—
No, what fascinated him were fish just beyond the rail

And behind thick glass. Yes, the fish were quite odd and exotic:
One's transparent cheek was pouching the water like loose
Bathing trunks, and instead of swimming chaotic,

It patterned a wiggle away from us. "Look, look
At the fishies," I told my son, whose eyes seemed fixed more
Than theirs. He laughed while his forefinger bent like a harmless hook.

Soon, they schooled toward my finger pressed against their crude
Seascape, swaying their tails like slow wings. Yes, as if they were floating
In mid-air his laughs must have meant. They pouted for food.

No, their pout was laughter. Maybe they just had to stare
At our funny ways of looking, laughing, and floating
In our own sea, odd in our own crude tank of air.