AT THE SHEDD AQUARIUM ON YOM KIPPUR

atone for me dumb fish finning through cobalt waters atone for me oh distracted priest with your incessant motion prayers swing a curved staring fish over my head wash me in the tank waters of mikva

leave me on the bottom of the sea like Jonah burp me out of that big dumb dutiful fish who stares stupidly at the crowd waiting for a better dinner than a lousy cantankerous monkfish prophet waiting for scallops in Szechwan sauce or classic drawn butter, or perhaps waiting for an order of brazier-grilled conch and barnacles.

I stand to the side of my people swimming between schools to Patmos because I am a lowly Jew who believes in the sign of Jonah who believes in IXTHUS, the sign of the fish,

an article of faith that would surely pfisch off Maimonides for I believe with perfect faith in the lowly Jewish carpenter whose friends were a lower-class band of loud-mouthed fishermen, sons of thunder gonif types who most of the time didn't quite catch what was going on like a whole lot of us yakking crappie know-it-alls who might, in a rare moment of silent honesty, admit that there is no efficacy, no antidote, no bleaching agent potent enough to scrape and tear off the stinky scales of sin rough necks who might in a fit of truthfulness find it plausible to make a philosophical move into unknown waters penitents who might finally concede that there's no net and trawler tough enough to haul us back there's no fast excruciating enough except starvation to erase the guilt of a dirty world sinking into itself trusting to save itself in its Titanic luxury liner trusting to save itself by sheer will, grit, and works.

What bosh this is to the mollusk ears of a common day worker who will tell you in a minute how futile is his service, how insignificant his labors in the immense face of God. Trusting myself to save myself is crazy, illogical, a slippery fish credo, a millstone dragging body and soul to the depths, as one fated

to be cracked in half like the giant limestone carrier *Carl D. Bradley*, whose stern rose high and then plunged straight down exploding to the bottom of Lake Michigan.

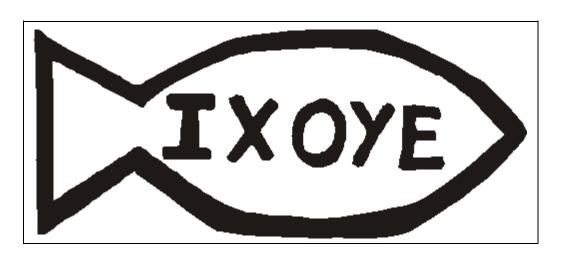
Here's where self-reliance jettisons its faithful.

I should shed my pride, strip down to basic faith, and like Peter, swim to the shores of Galilee, to dry off in Nazareth's sun rays to join a band of misfits who hold no money in the bag except for a coin yanked out of a fish's mouth to pay Caesar.

The fog horn shofar keeps blowing from the Waugoshance Lighthouse warning of our wild and unpredictable nature of our shoals, jagged rocks, and cold undercurrents. We're in the trap, up to the gills in guilt, stuck in the snare of self

Atone for me, IXTHUS—save a drowning man; pump out the dirty water; breathe in new life.

Write me in your waterproof book, oh Son of man, oh fisher of men, you who got some nasty fish-hook scars in the house of your salty friends.



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