

## IN THE SAME TANK

### Int. Aquarium

*A teenage girl dressed in blue, stares at a large fish tank. She watches as the fish gently swim around. She seems captivated by the fish as they gracefully move past her. Occasionally she may even try to reach out and touch one.*

*Another teenager dressed in orange, black and white approaches. She see's the young girl staring at the fish. A slight smile comes to her face.*

**Anne:** I knew I'd find you here.

*Beth doesn't even have look at her.*

**Beth:** Well La Di Da for you.

**Anne:** Come on Beth, this isn't going to solve anything.

**Beth:** Oh no. Then what will?

**Anne:** Talking to someone.

**Beth:** About what?

**Anne:** You're seriously going to pretend like nothing is wrong?

**Beth:** Nothing is wrong Anne.

**Anne:** You know, your Mom said you were acting strange.  
But to pretend like nothing is wrong is not strange it's delusional.

**Beth:** Thanks for pointing that out.

**Anne:** Look, I know things aren't good right now.

**Beth:** Hmmph. Understatement of the year.

**Anne:** But they will get better Beth. I promise.

*Beth doesn't say anything. She just continues to stare at the fish. There is a look in her eye that tells us she is somewhere else.*

*Anne just stares at her for a moment, not really sure what to make of all of this.*

**Anne:** You really like it here don't you?

**Beth:** My favorite place in the world.

**Anne:** It's an aquarium Beth. Not the TAJ MAHAL.

**Beth:** Yeah well... (Anne obviously doesn't get it.)  
Look, thanks for coming, but I really just want to be left alone right now.

**Anne:** I know.

**Beth:** So if you don't mind...

**Anne:** I don't.

*Awkward pause as Anne just stands there by her friend's side facing the aquarium.*

**Anne:** I will just stand here and mind my own business. I won't be in your way. (Beat) I promise.  
Go on. Look at the fish.

*Beth and Anne stand side-by-side just watching the fish.*

**Anne:** Hey is that Dory? Cool. A lot, smaller in person than I would've imagined. Where's Nemo?  
(Searching the tank) I want to see Nemo?

**Beth:** It's called a Blu Tang.

**Anne:** What?

**Beth:** Dory. The fish is called a Blu Tang, and now thanks to the damn movie, the species has to fight for its own survival.

**Anne:** What are you talking about?

**Beth:** The Blu Tang. Or Dory, does not breed well in captivity. It needs to be free, to swim the ocean reef. And now all these fishermen are trying to catch the Blu Tang to sell at fish stores for home aquariums. Which means that they will no longer be able to breed as they once did, and will most likely end up on the endangered species list before to long, if not wiped out all together.

**Anne:** Well that's not good.

**Beth:** Tell that to the 6 year-old little girls, that want Dory as a pet.

**Anne:** Damn you Disney. (*Mocking*) Curse you!

*Both girls begin to giggle for a second.*

*Anne just stares at the Tank. Then a realization hits her.*

**Anne:** Huh!

**Beth:** What?

**Anne:** It's kind of amazing how this all works huh? All these fish swim around and they never really get in each other's way. They all seem to understand their place within the water. Sure, the bigger fish bully the little fish and the little fish try to run and hide. But they still seem to be living in harmony. Like there connected to each other some how.

*Realizing how funny she sounds, she catches herself.*

**Anne:** Oh geez. Sorry that sounded corny, like Richard Attenborough voicing some documentary or something.

**Beth:** No it didn't. You're right. It's like a ballet. You can see movement after movement. An *Adage* here, an *Allegro* there, then a *Fish Dive*, or even a *Pirouette* - some fish swim quickly to chase down food, while others glide slowly, content to feel the water rushing through their gills. The grace and strength in their fins, as they swoosh through the water.

*Beth, being's slowly doing ballet moves, as if she were a fish dancing through the water.*

**Beth:** What seems effortless to us, takes every muscle in their body working in unison to get them through the water. It's the balancing act between *grace* and *strength* that makes their effort so beautiful – it's poetry, in motion.

*Anne finally starts to realize.*

**Anne:** I know its not fair Beth. But you're not dying.

*Beth stops her pirouette abruptly.*

**Beth:** Yet.

**Anne:** They will find a cure Beth. Science is good like that.

**Beth:** I have epilepsy Anne, not cancer. Nobody is looking for a cure for epilepsy.

*This hits Anne.*

**Anne:** They have new treatments Beth. Your mom was telling me...

**Beth:** It doesn't matter. Don't you get it? I have it. I can't get rid of it.  
(*Beth begins to break down crying.*) And I will never dance again. Not like I used too.

*Anne goes to hug her friend.*

*Beth stops her.*

**Beth:** Stop!

*Trying to contain her emotions.*

I'm looking for sympathy. (Pause) I just want to be able to dance the ballet the way I used to. To soar through the sky, like a bird in flight. To be able to gracefully move through the stage like a...

**Anne:** Fish moving through water?

*Beth stops and looks at Anne for the first time with clarity.*

**Anne:** I get it. Why you come here. (Pause)

**Anne:** It's a ballet. Grace and Strength. You see yourself in those fish. What you were like before the fall. Before you hit your head on the stage. Before they took you to the hospital. Before they told you, your life was never going to be the same again. Shit. I'm so sorry. I couldn't see it before now.

**Beth:** I need to be free to swim the ocean reef Anne. I will not last long in captivity. My mom is afraid to even let me ride my bike to the corner store. Do know what its like living your life like you're in an aquarium. It looks all pretty and safe and fun to everyone else, but it's not the life I was meant to live. It's not the life these fish were meant to live. I get to stay safe and walk around the house, so my mother can watch me. But I don't get to dance anymore. Something died in me the day that doctor gave me my diagnosis. Like a fisherman had pulled me off the reef and said, you can't swim here anymore. Don't I get a say in this? Don't I get to decide how to live my life anymore?

**Anne:** You're mom is only doing what she feels is best.

**Beth:** I know Anne. But what about what is best for me?

**Anne:** Staying safe, is what's best for you.

**Beth:** Why? So I can die in captivity, never able to reproduce the magic I felt on that stage again. They may as well kill me now. Get it over with.

**Anne:** Beth, you don't mean that.

**Beth:** Don't I? How would you know? You're not in the same tank as me.

**Anne:** Oh no? Then why am I here?

**Beth:** Because you feel sorry for me. Because, my Mom asked you to! Or maybe because you think this is what friends are supposed to do? I don't know, but I never asked you to come.

**Anne:** No. You're right about that.

**Beth:** So just go all right?

**Anne:** You never ask me to come. I have to find you.

**Beth:** What's that supposed to mean.

**Anne:** We're friends Beth.

**Beth:** And?

**Anne:** You're scared. Alone. You think nobody understands what you're going through.

**Beth:** You don't. You can't possibly. People only pretend to understand.

**Anne:** You sure about that?

*Beth just looks at her friend – as if to say 'what the hell are you talking about!'*

**Anne:** I had cancer Beth. When I was 6, Leukemia to be exact. I spent almost a year in the hospital getting treatments. And if it weren't for a bone marrow transplant from my dad, I wouldn't be here staring in a fish bowl with you.

*Beth just looks at her friend.*

**Beth:** You never told me.

**Anne:** Why should I? So you could feel sorry for me like everyone else? Look at me with those 'poor little thing' eyes. I didn't want your sympathy; I wanted to be your friend. Besides. It happened. And I'm here now. The cancer is in remission and the doctors say it should be gone for good, but with cancer you never know.

**Beth:** Now I feel like a jerk.

**Anne:** Don't. You have every right to be angry. It's not fair. It never is. For a long time I sat around worrying about whether or not my cancer was going to come back. Worried, that if I left my house something bad was going to happen to me that would cause it to come back. But slowly, I started to realize that everyday I was here, was gift. A gift to me! And there was still time to enjoy it. (Pause) So yah. You won't be able to dance on the stage the way you used to. And, I won't ever be able to live without worrying whether or not my cancer is going to come back. But, there is still magic in our lives that we can be part of. Even if that means, watching other fish dance the ballet for us from time to time.

*Beth just stares at the tank, trying to take in everything she has just heard. Then almost on cue:*

**Beth:** Look its Nemo!

*Both girls smile.*

**Anne:** Where?

**Beth:** Right there, with his beautiful orange, black and white stripes. He found Dory.

**Anne:** Now how's that for magic for you?

*Long pause, as they both stare at the clown fish.*

**Beth:** So we just keep on swimming?

**Anne:** Yup, just like Dory and Nemo.

**Beth:** Even if its not fair.

**Anne:** Especially, because its not fair.

**Beth:** (Beat.) Ok.

**Anne:** Ok.

**Beth:** Thanks for finding me today.

**Anne:** That's what friends do. We find each other...

**Beth:** Because we need each other.

**Anne:** Grace

**Beth:** And Strength.

**Anne/Beth:** Besties.

*They both pose for a Selfie with the Aquarium behind them.*

## **Ballet Terms Defined**

**Adage, Adagio** (a-DAHZH) *At ease or at leisure.* is incorporated into ballet classes and most classical pas de deux combinations.

**Allégro** ([a-lay-GROH) *Bright and brisk movements.* This ballet term is associated to all jumps in ballet. So, whether it is petite allégro, or grand allégro a dancer will aim to show a sense of ballon and spring in the elevation.

**Fish Dive** This ballet terminology is used in pas de deux, it is an advanced and impressive move. Most commonly, the female is supported by the male and she is off the floor in a horizontal position.

**Pirouette** (peer-row-RET) *Whirl or spin.*

A test of balance as the dancer turns on one leg on demi-pointe and the head keeps spotting as you turn. The other leg is raised to a retire and the body is contained in a strong effort to control the turn.

