

Wilderness House Literary Review 17/4

J. C. Wagner

Free

Diving deep in wild water. On the ocean floor I stop to listen. A seal
cocks its head at me. Two black beady eyes in the murk.

I kick towards the surface. A lurid fleck of sunlight hovers above. As I
swim up, it expands. Ascension, mixed with that painful urge to—

Breathe. Breathe.

The surface calms. A gray glass film. Fog hides the coast.

Breathe.

Pat looks extraterrestrial in his dive mask.

You okay?

I'm good.

People ask if I'm ever afraid. I am. Afterwards. When you're down
there, you never think about it. Like death doesn't even exist.