“Fish Out of Water”
By Wenli Dickinson

Last night, I kissed a girl.
We were two sea creatures, swishing against one another
a river of chaos, of lips and eyes,
fins flashing in the limelight of novelty.
I knew her by touch, close my eyes, tracing disappointment
at the corner of her mouth
searching for the spark of skin on skin,
but finding myself reeling away—
a fish out of water, writhing on the banks.

Because last night,
I shed my scales for skin, and stood up on two legs,
to breathe in oxygen and exhale
the confession that I’ve dreamed of other boys
during the witching hour, when I feel my loud desires
won’t wake the neighbors in their beds.

Because if they knew, they would throw me back in the water,
with whitewash slashed garishly across my skin,
to paint me like just another fish in the sea,
just another white picket in the fence.

But, do they know how I burn behind my eyes?
Fiery tendrils engulfing an oasis of conformity,
where a fish like you would burn.
Do they know they cannot break me?
And that I will stand up and walk from that shore
and into the wild jungle that is my home.

After all, I am still my father’s son,
I am the message in the bottle thrown from the rocky crags
one hundred years lost in the eye of a hurricane.
So does it truly matter
if the hands that pull me from the winds
are those of another boy?