

**“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?