

Maya Hawke, Mermaid Bar

There was no moon, black sky, on the night
I jumped from the bridge t'ward the river,
But I swear I saw silver starlight
On the water's surface, a shimmer.

Pounded, the pulse I couldn't finish,
Didn't hear a splash or feel the cold,
Was full of bubbles for a minute,
turned to ice, then cycloid scales of gold.

My lungs deflated. My fingers weaved.
Ribs separated for gills to breath.
Ran my tongue over my sharp new teeth.
Panic swimming collapsed in the reeds.

Taken with the current to the sea
The tide disrupting desperate dreams
My belly empty my body weak
I had no sound no way to speak

I was close to quiet death again
When new instincts woke me from the spell
I killed a diamondback terrapin.
I was most scared of my awful self

I cut ripples with my dorsal fin.
I mimicked manatees and dolphins
I had no image no reflection
No way to make a comparison

I washed up on cold stones, broken glass
A winter beach at long islands end.
I found that I could still maneuver,
Slip slide on the sand and the cement.

I opened sardine dream mermaid bar.
We serve just oysters and caviar.
Leave your seashells in our tall tip jar.
There are more like me. I swear there are.

Come for scallops! Come to hear our song!
Come if you're in awful bad trouble!
Come if you're certain you don't belong!
Cause some that fall don't land in bubbles.