10th–12th grade

ELIZABETH NAIL
11th grade, Pasadena
Winner

JOYCE KER
10th grade, San Jose
Honorable Mention

KATE LIN
12th grade, Fremont
Honorable Mention
BETWEEN

what if people moved like hills
rolling ambling undulating
or like ocean waves

eye are hills, are waves
ever-shifting rises
watery knolls
ancient

our ancestors saw the hills
the same way we do
and the oceans looked on our forefathers
as they planted their flags on their peaks

we drove up Highway 1
a summer’s weeklong vacation
passed Bixby Creek Bridge
as the light was turning golden

my father used to take road trips with his own
from landlocked Moore
to the shores of Galveston

there are few hills in either city
but many in between
and many in the nationless waves

the hills of my California coast
some made of water
some made of earth
blend seamlessly

like the currents connecting
perpetually through space and time
the Gulf of Mexico
to the Pacific Ocean
like the currents connecting
perpetually through space and time
my father to his father
to me

—Elizabeth Nail
STORY MADE FROM OCEAN

_Eleven_ when I nearly drowned
He was watching
I stepped on a sea urchin while snorkeling
Spikes dug into my skin
like shark teeth
Currents of electricity
swam through my foot
as water swallowed me
In my left temple a pulse
my brain pounding
I could not breathe

_Thirteen_ when I met him
Swore I loved him
He put his hands around my waist
“A bit chubby here”
His words stung like brine
pushing me underwater
dee into a chasm
Waves hissed at me
their salt-tongues encrusting my body
Seaweed groped my legs
coiling around my chest, squeezing
I could not breathe

_Fifteen_ when I learned to float
Tossed his words of shrapnel
into the ocean’s abyss
I’m made of sea glass
Jagged-tumbled
Shining
Broke harpoons on my skin
Snapped spears on my neck.

—Joyce Ker
TIDE POOL LOVE

He tells me that his love for me is like the ocean—
vast, deep, and filled with glittering sunsets and marbled skies.
I want to tell him that the ocean isn’t just a static, picture-perfect snapshot
to be displayed on some postcard hastily mailed home.
No, our love is the ebb and flow of tide pools.
At low tide, it teeters dangerously upon the slick, jagged rocks.
It’s the tentative scuttle of the hermit crab, poised to retreat back into its fortress,
the shuttering of the anemone exposed to the harsh rays of the sun,
the stiff spines of the sea urchin raised in defense.
But then the ocean swells and high tide brings a new wave of excitement.
Our love becomes the opaleye breathlessly darting beneath the pensive surface,
the blooming of anemones and mussels,
the vibrant sea stars reflecting the starry night sky.
But most of all, our love is the resilience of the tide pool creatures,
Able to withstand the crash of thunderous ocean waves
And firmly planted down with tube feet through both low and high tide.

—Kate Lin