10TH–12TH GRADE

ANISHA L. JOHNSON
Grade 12, Carlsbad
Winner

KEMI ASHING-GIWA
Grade 12, Altadena
Honorable Mention

SABINE HOLZMAN
Grade 12, Newport Beach
Honorable Mention

(2) Indications à hifier d’un trait de plume, s’il s’agit de valeurs réexpédiées.
HUMAN

humans are like oceans
a sea of shining droplets
all the same, but all unique

and sometimes our thoughts—
they gather like the wrappers and bottles on the seabed
like this thought. confused
no direction
what’s next?

we’re angry, too, like the raging seas
sinking everything around us
screaming, empty wind howling from our lips like lightning-lashes:

go away go away go away

then when we’ve sunk enough
the sun claws the clouds to brume,
the light dances on the waves like flowers like stars like diamonds
and in that moment
that moment when we’re happy like the oceans
nothing nothing has has ever ever been so so beautiful perfect

but no one truly understands the oceans
as we never truly understand each other
mysteries, perfect and flawed and love and hate
like how the waves know how to play with a child
tickling them but too gentle to knock them down
a riddle.
something the ocean could teach us all:
   how to love—
   no conditions—
give your warmth and light to all those other droplets around you
do you remember the gleam of a rainbow over the waves?
the way all the sea foam bands to crest a powerful wave?
   together, we can change the world
so don’t waste time pushing and hating
   be the rainbow, be the wave
join together. love. be loved.

   so in the end
yes, humans are like oceans
   except for one thing—
the ocean floor lives in darkness
but take a human
and dive deep down inside their soul, layer by layer by layer
and I’ll tell you what you’ll find:
   light.
because our light doesn’t come from without
our light shines from within, through everything, through every part of us
and that’s what makes us beautiful
   that’s what makes us strong
that’s what makes us—
   human.

—Anisha L. Johnson
DEEP

We know more about space—
Spiraling galaxies, bursting quasars, distant Earths—
Than our own oceans,
On our own planet.

The sea is discovery,
And the rivers our paths towards it.
So we go down, down towards the North Pacific,
To the endless expanse of Gaia’s tears—
To the deep unknown.

—Kemi Ashing-Giwa
ELEGY FOR A GREAT WHITE SHARK

There was the sea & then not the sea.
    The body & Then
    Not the body.

    Listen: the history of you is an easy story to tell.

You were a boy & your mother pulled you
from the water gasping, sweat silver on your back
in the noonday sun. You were a boy.

    Only a boy. You played at pirating.
    Who knows what the treasure was.

Then you were a man & the hook was a knife in your palm.
You named your ship *Slaughterhouse. Killing floor*.

You pulled fish from the water with your mother’s hands.
    Not a boy anymore. Not almost-drowned anymore.

You named the sea *plunder.* & you: pirate.

All the blood on deck & none of it yours.
All the great whites’ backs, silver like yours.

There are some lives you never meant to catch.
Some creatures you never meant to kill. You meant to
make a living. Buy a house. Send your kids to college.

But here you are. Here they are:
skinned, dead, shark out of water,
shark drowning in air.

And here your history ends.
In all your stories you will call yourself
Odysseus. Telemachus.

Whatever makes it easiest when the last shark guts itself
on a line, grieving in a language

no-one can understand.

—Sabine Holzman