



**1st Place—Adult Age Group**

i am building sandcastles and watching the tide come in  
the inevitable moon-drunk waves  
stars and the space between

how do you describe the ocean to someone who's only ever seen the rain  
how can i show you the lightness of hollow bones when you are carved from roots and clay

because my wings have hurt you i pluck my flight feathers free  
because my depths have drowned you i build you bridges over me

i turn my open palm skyward and pour out the sand i used  
to smother fires and smooth my jagged edges

because i love you, i become safe.

this is not a topic for polite conversation  
this is the safety of knowing where to find the exits.

i spin and pray i don't get dizzy  
i am movement and repose  
building a harness in freefall

when it all burns down i hope you know i didn't mean it  
that i looked for fire and only found gasoline

By Sasha Gillam