

NICHOLAS SAMARAS
Runaway, Below Requa

Where does a fifteen-year-old go?
For days, I lived among redwoods,
happy in the world of sedge and fern,

cliffside and crash of surf below
the cataracted shore of Hidden Beach.
My life—and my life there hidden.

A week for the marks on my body to fade.
The gulls and terns spiraled on eddies,
the seals barked below the cliff,

the expanse of the blue vista I saw
every misted morning through the forest
down from the top of Requa.

Every brief morning in that hallowed California,
I was grateful for living alone, sleeping safe.
For those breathless days,

I washed my growing hair
by sea surf, warmed myself by driftwood,
spoke to myself over the tide sound,

the whoosh and draw of cove water.
Though eventually hunger, a longer fear,
and isolation drove me

back to the barracks I ran from, those scant days
below Requa were good practice for saving
my life, taught me how to start.