

Fire//Water

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PROMPT: Nature and Environmental Poetry 2023

GROUP: Write the World

you're unsettled. last you saw these trees, their
y piled dead were rotting into earth scorched
like bald patches on a sunburn. now, near
seven summers since the smoke cleared the
Smokies, their survivors twist like grappled
snakes that swallow whole and spit out hydras:
burn one down, and two shall take its place. as
sprouting vines strangle the sun, its green gasps
rattle through their leaves in murmurs that un-
welcome your feet. mangled mutant limbs thrust
pitchforks at your Brooks, which snag roots knotted
underneath like skulls, cerebrums splayed out.

from the riverbeds rise stone towers -
cairns built *in memoriam* to the dead.
water slices undergrowth, feeds roots that
suck it greedily, and stitches blistered
skin. at dawnlight, dewdrops bless the trees, fog
pushes forth like exhaled breath, and water pulses
through veins. tumbling falls, misting your eyes with
clarity. you blink refreshed, baptize your
hands, and pray the rivers never dry.