

Rejuvenation

“Most of the biodiversity in these forests depends on wildland fire”

- Chad Hanson

Once we have looked away, once we have mourned and banished all smoldering thoughts about the tribe of blackened trees replacing the known world— for now and another season – and the last long fingers of smoke have been ushered out by wind, a ticking begins. No one has seen them arriving in such numbers, but the birds are neither lost nor passing through. They are simply linked tight to the newborn scents of ash and rain, to the promise of white fruits, the riches concealed by bark.

So were the ways of ancestors who began their journeys as specks in the distance, some fifty thousand years ago. Riding the miles of smoky gold, along a known line of hunger, growing closer and closer. The rufous beat of instinct working a migration upstream against the flow of smoke. Into the source, its multiple treasures.

One new arrival looks bright with hope. He preens his dusk-and-opal plumage. Others tap like as if knocking on doors. The answers have all been provided by the ages, delicate as genetic fibers coiled in each cell— beak and bone, muscle and shiny eye. The living are awake to the growth and profusion soon to follow. They will grow with the diligence of all known colors unfurling from the soil’s chocolatey darkness, from the trees re-greening come spring, from the blackness.

- Maya Rani Khosla