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before fire

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before fire

by Stacia Hill

Press palms to black earth,
thrumming beat—life roused underhand.
Raise arms, hands opened to feet, and shoots
of tender pine snake from below. Young green
needles to crush between pebble teeth
of browsing deer. Plucked from soil, teeming
sprinkle of flaxseed beetles. Slick epidermis,
emerge into a wind-whipped land. Call out to mountains.
Plead. The sun is collapsing. Creeping children remember
night below the surface. Gasp in this space as needles
collect underfoot. Browning fuel like little bird bones.
Snap them between fingertips. Bury feet in flakes
of snakeskin mica. Scatter like coned seeds.

Dissolve into smoke.