

The nurse-log.

2014-15

An impression of the Quinault and  
Hoh rain forests.  
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*Sun and air.*

From ten thousand meters  
Sun shines on a rucked blanket  
Of bright white storm clouds

*Rain-clouds dripping.*

Misty, dark below  
Storm clouds rush up the valley  
Enshrouding the trees

*Wind shaking forest.*

Between cloud and earth  
The forest canopy heaves  
Blowing in the wind

*The snag.*

A bleached spire rising  
Stripped bare and grey  
Shivering in squalls  
Stumpy branches knocking against still-  
living neighbors  
Failing roots still holding against the blast

*The tree tossing.*

A fir,  
a hundred feet tall,  
swaying at the top, whipping back and forth,  
the shushing of the wind through its  
branches and  
the clatter as they strike each other

*Saplings in a row.*

A dozen saplings  
All bits of the same flesh  
Reborn in a row

*Huckleberry.*

The huckleberry  
Grows a cloud of little leaves  
And tiny red berries

*The fern.*

Poking through the moss  
on a tree, little wood-ferns  
peer down on clumping sword-ferns

*The nurse log.*

Spongy, crumbling, damp  
A long hump in the forest floor  
Still, unassuming

*Moss.*

Trees branches dripping green  
Outlines of trunk, stick, log  
All softened, smoothed

*Roots twining.*

All the bushes' roots  
From the large to the threads  
Winding together

*Slow fire.*

Faint white filaments  
Mold and fungus and rot  
The slow fire that burns  
A hundred years

*The duff.*

Uncountable needles  
Dry and waxy and brittle  
Falling year on year

*Drops from ferns.*

Mist collects on fronds  
Vapor to silver shimmer  
To one drop falling

*Grit.*

Dig underneath the needles and twigs  
Down a few inches  
To the wet gritty soil underneath  
Sand, sharp little stones,  
Black and white and grey

*A puddle.*

In a low spot,  
Water collects in a little pool,  
Reflecting bits of grey sky above  
Diffracted into circles as a drop falls

*Running water.*

Drops collecting drops  
Flowing together, merging bit by bit  
Into a rivulet that jumps off stones  
And scours out its channel in the forest floor  
Heading down hill and out  
To merge with the stream, the river, the bay