

This River Accepts Offerings

Mighty and powerful and cruel rivers,
The Colorado or Rio Grande,
Crush and swallow hikers, swimmers, rafters
And then simply churn and roil along.

Not so the 400-mile, mild Potomac.
Gnarled like the Charles in Massachusetts,
It graciously takes what we provide.
A few of us insist on drowning there.

Ululating siren can mean fire, wreck
Or drowning — surely in that Potomac.
Small-town voyeurs hie to the fire station
To the county chalkboard of tragedy.

Bodies, yes, and booze bottles tossed before
Parents can survey their good children's cars.
And broken Fords disappear off the bridge.
The river took it all, takes it all still.

The omnivorous, hungry Potomac.
It remains the polite Southern cousin
Of mighty and mean waters in canyons
And younger, ragged, and wilder mountains.

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