

Internee (an excerpt)

William Kelley Woolfitt

The things they find outside the fence:
greasewood and saltbush to flank the firebreaks,
 ring the new pond.
Bigtooth maple, velvet ash.
Feathers of magpie and rough-legged hawk.
An arrangement of cattails, all their sword-leaves
 and spiky regalia. Edible, perhaps,
 if husked and boiled to a tender pulp.
Thousands of tiny shells, relics of the sea that rose here
 an orogeny ago. Paint with fingernail polish,
 glue to the hair-comb, the brooch.
Coyote scat.
From the shale pits: fossilized coral, trilobites.
Juniper berries, crush and let rise the dark red juice,
 the sharp taste of pine needles, that palates
 may endure rationed beef's monotony and gristle.
A discarded telephone pole.
Petrified wood.
Knots of hair in owl pellets, and masticated bones.
Sagebrush roots for walking sticks.
From lava cavities, from scatterings of ejectamenta,
crystal-shards the color of nectarines.

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