

Emily Pinkerton

Termination Winds

The wind tears for miles, carries the dust down
coats every blade of grass, rafters and eaves.
Even the doorknob creaks
in dry hesitation, rough with grit.

A whole town turned brown
lost in a dry fog, blind and eye-stung—
we retreat and wait, hunched down
in alphabet houses, Army-issue.

The species that thrive here are ugly
As they are hearty. Tumbleweeds piled high
darkening doorways and windows
occasionally burying a car or a house.
More likely just tearing into your chassis

While you drive the freeway at night.
Russian Thistle. Noxious weeds
rolling in the wind. Abscission.
Perfectly suited to gale forces.
The air catches you like a sail, then rushes on.

Black Point

What the photograph cannot capture:
The clarity of the frigid water, its pale blue
refracting sunlight in stripes, gleaming
over gray rocks, on silty beige sand—
the way it makes the rocks, dark slate, shine.
A brief moment before plunging
end over end, freezing pinprick shock
headache (the cold hits with a blunt force)
submerged for a long time and then longer
under one wave then two
the current building in the offshore trough.

An Invocation

Bluer than usual

it smelled like burnt synthetic fiber outside

it smelled like rotting kelp, sun-bleached, bacterial.

Waves built and broke quickly, oversaturated

brightening under whitecaps and foam

closed out bluer than usual. Unwilling to risk

a new infection, I stayed onshore wind-whipped, longing.

The blue-green jewel shining

Mariposa Grove

These are not the oldest living things. Some living, some giant
but not the tallest. Visitors: notice the roots. Stay
sparse, tolerant. Quickly spread impossible seedlings.
Snow blankets Mariposa Grove, these unnatural conditions.

Note: this poem uses a Yellowstone National Park brochure as its source text. The words were originally authored by Jon Kinney, a park ranger inspired by a deep "sense of wonder" for the Giant Sequoias of the Mariposa Grove. The poem recombines and lightly edits select words and phrases found in the brochure.