Substitution

“Islanders became expert at producing substitutes: parsnip, barley and acorn provided the basis for ersatz coffee.” –The British Channel Islands under German Occupation, 1940-1945, Paul Sanders

It’s also been: “Tobacco.” “Porridge.” “Lard.”
He barks for things his mind can’t comprehend that we don’t have. I stir the foraged brew, abubble on the fire, turn back. His chair is bare. I find him standing in the yard, sunlit and bordered with barbed wire. He snacks on honeysuckle stems, his brain content.

Coffee’s on every corner now. That scent—a cedar-chocolate-charcoal-walnut-wax.
I take a sip of how he liked it, black, it burns and tastes of granite, bleach and rust, dried blood, a dentist’s drill and tooth sawdust, a wire fence, a metal bang on wood.

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