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"Crude Encounters"

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Encountering crude oil out of place: Wind your way through the forest, grasses skimming against your legs, the chatter of squirrel monkeys above your head, to come upon a swimming pool-sized pit of old crude leftover from oil extraction decades ago. Covered in plants and debris, vines from

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the trees reach down to brush the surface of oil that has lost its luster. Take a step out onto fallen logs and branches—a wobbly ledge to stand on—and you gaze at the waste pit. The guide slowly submerges a long branch. It moves downward until it hits the ground, one, two, sometimes three meters below, indicating the depth of hydrocarbon waste held in the pit. Donning a latex glove, you reach forward to touch the oil brought up from the bottom of the pit. Black and incandescent, it glints in the light. Squish it between your fingers, smell it, contemplating the interconnections of the substance—the transformation of the remains of organisms from a different epoch, the way it fueled your own arrival at this very pit, its sociopolitical reverberations throughout the region. (From the article)

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