

**Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, 2020**

The gates clang open

and the

magpie caws

disapprovingly

from

above

Time to share this place with human people for another couple of hours.

up

up

and under

the

Goose's

Wing

I prop my bike up against the wall, the one that's seen so much over the years.

My front wheel nearly crushes a tiny solitary stem of  
buddleia bursting up through the cracks.

I know the sapling can't stay here; their wandering roots  
can't be left to fracture the foundations of the school  
beneath my feet.

But I won't be the one to tell them, not today.

I follow a flash of colour eastwards  
to something unfamiliar

the green roof of the Clink is green again  
six months ago it had all but turned to dust

and now

the disorderly textures of

euphoria

bubbling

sedums

floundering

dead

grasses

spilling

crown the Clink

all framed by the plaque on the substation wall behind

shouting

1996

and a solitary wandering buddleia growing sideways out  
of one of the Clink's wood-plated walls, from a place that  
was never meant to be hospitable to plants.

I turn around

deep into winter now, the salvias in the infinity beds still

sing bright

crumpled brown

leaves

from that colossal London Plane over the way

nest suspended in clusters of salvia's lush green foliage

this one is Hot Lips, deep red petals edged with white

I look closer

pause at an unexpected pocket of mutation

a cluster of flowers that are

completely red

and on the opposite side of the plant

completely white

and wonder

how this sage came to be 'Hot Lips' and whether I am  
watching them struggle to become whatever they were  
before, again.

a few paces westwards

the shelter of Arthur's seat calls to me on this damp day.

stopping here, still

I surrender to the undulation of the surround

watch spent leaves dangling from a tangle of mallow like  
sad baubles

I struggle for words that can express the spiralling chaos  
of the paths the mallow stalks carve through the air.

Their gnarled angles and relentlessly exploratory habit  
seem subterranean, barely belonging here on the other  
side of the soil.

the willow weeping copper coins for leaves

fills the edges of my peripheral vision from the other side  
of the garden

it's several years before I realise that the tree was never  
willow, but birch

my gaze drifts southwestwards

I see the younger cherry tree nearly bare

remember biting down through tender skin, sweet red  
juice bleeding into the bottom of my mouth

and wonder whether the stones I tossed into the infinity  
beds at the beginning of summer will ever be anything  
other than a stone

back on my feet, I follow a careening hollyhock  
clockwise past the gates

upper reaches giving way as roots hug tight to the inside  
of whatever tiny crevice they have found their way into

this one would be 11ft tall if they stood straight up  
even as the plant bows with the weight of still-flowering  
stems, I feel small, humbled by how much taller than me  
they have managed to grow in their comparatively short  
life

I follow them to the luminous yellow of evening primrose  
flowers

lean in to reach for their divine scent

but the morning's rain is in the way

a

cluster

of seed

Pods

hangs by

a thread

left

behind

by a

broken

stem

open, u

pended, di

spersed

Whatever damaged the plant might have actually helped them to spread their seeds. Not that they needed any help. I'm in awe of just how rapidly and vigorously the evening primrose has spread. Is this their first year here?

((the first year I've paid attention))

It was only a couple of months back that I learned to put a name to the rush of lemon-yellow flowers that seemed to appear from nowhere, when John pointed out that their arrival here was too perfect to plan. A healing herb for women that grows on wasteland.

Now that I know their name, their scent and medicinal uses, I see them everywhere here, find them on every wasteland.

a few steps north

and the white fuzzy boils all over the crab apple tree call me to stop and breathe in its latest iteration of decay



mistletoe shines bright and full through it all  
as it gleans life from the crab apple's withered trunk  
an overwhelmingly happy parasite

in the Irish Corner

the door that invites us to  
touch 4 love

has had its irreverent imperative  
don't dick with a Goose's curse

as I turn the corner, heading eastwards  
the collapsed pyramid wall is more broken than it ever  
has been

a gaping sigh

as the infinity pond looms inexplicably larger than ever  
reeds around its edges cut back to nothing

heading back southwards, towards the Goose's wing

I watch the prostrate rosemary slithering over the  
drystone wall

marvel at their insistent glut of tiny lilac flowers

freshly traced over with purple marker

I wonder who took the time to consolidate it, and wonder  
why now.

as I arrive back where I started

One of the gardeners calls me back to the Irish Corner  
to show me something amazing

We gather around the base of the other, younger apple  
tree who lives at the edge of the infinity pond.

She pulls back the dead grass around the base of the  
tree.

Forty or so yellow-red, bright, jagged yet perfectly straight rootlets spike out from the tree's base, reaching to expand their territory into the not-quite compost.

above them, I see the join where the tree was grafted onto another rootstock

and wonder if this post-industrial microclimate is what causes them to bloom so profusely at the slightest provocation

and I realise that this tree arriving here was never an accident, as I had always thought it was.