

Friday the 4th of December, 2020.

t h e g a t e s c l a n g o p e n

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 turn around

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

	crumpled brown	from that
	leaves	colossal
		London
nest suspended in		Plane
clusters of		over the
salvia's lush		way
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

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.

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

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 but the morning's rain
divine scent is in the way

a
cluster
of seed
pods
hangs by
a thread
left
behind
by a
broken
stem

o p e n, u
p e n d e d, d i
s p e r s e d

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 touch 4 love
us to

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

the collapsed
pyramid wall is
more broken than
it ever has been

as I turn
the
corner,
heading
eastwards

a g a p i n g s i g h

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.