After London by Maeve Henry

It was the quiet that saved us. The whisper of grasses, self-seeded, defying the curfew. Sea-grasses greening the shallow coastal waters, meadow grasses spilling out of the park into the pavements. Some days the hum of bees seemed to drown the flower drenched verges. At night the silence was pierced by owls and foxes. Hedgehogs mated in the roads where cars were rusting. The only visitors to the broken high street were fallow deer, tripping quietly.

We hid indoors as instructed, waiting for nature to reset, waiting for the anger against us to subside. We listened to the blame on the internet and said our prayers. We only came out when some of us were dead and all of us were famishing. We only came out after the night when there was no news, just a repeat of yesterday’s. We knew then they had gone, our leaders. We did not care where;
they had been no good for us. We came out and stood in groups, pale in the sunshine. There was no one to tell us what to do.

It was the strangers who carried quiet inside them that saved us. The ones we had always resented, who had lost their own cities already. The man who hauled his sewing machine across Europe, swimming rivers and ducking under barbed wire. The girl whose mother taught her how to bottle pears in a ruined cellar. The boy who crossed the desert, who could fix any machine you gave him. They showed us what to do as London broke up into a hundred villages, the length of a day's walk.