Don't Wait for the Deus ex Machina
(after Cormac McCarthy)

Burma-shave signs of the apocalypse
line the ancient empire post road;
the message our caravan gathers
is dispensed brief couplet by maddening line.

Once there were the lab-grown plagues and
no one agrees what the year is anymore.
The city which has light and juice flowing
is an energizing rumor, scuttlebutt
for foot-propelled nomads on pilgrimage,
the city of reemergence…

Dinah says she saw children one time,
that's happy crap, impossible. Who could blame her though?
Mirages and campfire stories, small triumphs of optimism
are freely offered and accepted.
Despair is the next fever's incubation space.

We come through the western desert-lands,
where even saints lay down in dry lakebeds.
The last standing radio tower
has our names scratched forever
into the uppermost crossbeam.

Walking down the mountain pass
drinkable sweet water springs dotting the descent
I tell Dinah how this will play out.
If she knows I borrow turning points
from *Arabian Nights* and a half-remembered television plot,
to her credit she shows only hope.

It rains battersea buckets,
lets up when we reach the valley floor.
The million or more crowning wildflowers
bloom an afternoon spectrum,
their names blanks I fill with false ones,

> their names gone away
> with almost everyone.

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