

Clouds  
that mean  
something

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- POEMS BY -  
LINNEA OGDEN

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*Clouds that mean something*

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poems by linnea ogden



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# Acknowledgments

A version of “Something must have percolated” – *Aufgabe*

“Having you while I wait” and “Pruning one supposes” – *We Are*

*So Happy to Know Something*

“Powderhorn Park” – *Pleiades*

“I washed my feet” and a version of “Property” – *Gulf Coast*

“Consent” – *Lit*

“Katharine Nash Gallery” – *Konundrum Literary Review*

“Contact” – *The Boston Review*

“Excessive compensation” – *Cannibal*

“The possibly amazing future home of me and J” – *Coconut*

## *Something must have percolated*

The city's view of us  
before a party,  
everyone lit up on Scotch  
and wasabi. Night wrapped  
in graffiti from  
the hospital next door, inhabitants  
no longer writing,  
borrowed concrete diggers  
at rest. Skipping rocks  
across high tide, a beach that smells  
of bloodmeal. What is  
the best way of getting back.

## ***Having you while I wait***

I probably bought that porous explanation

Your green lobby painted halfway  
In patches like the sun

I hear we have made some passage  
Make the most of it

Make stitches  
The streets an ancient delineation

Of romance  
I would walk my bike for you

*Dear J,*

Nothing but fancy description here. My nights are bored and the words of who I read all run together. Do you remember that T-shirt with the tyrannosaurus rex you slept in. Do you need the medicines, the earrings, the debris.

## *Powderhorn Park*

Small half-Siamese cat of the neighbors

Climbs out the window to cry on the front steps.

He is new here and can be forgiven the noise.

At our place unread novels hide under read ones.

A friend's son needs stitches. The girders

Of a half-built ramp make a cross

Against the sky. I would trade it in for certain.

## *Company*

Driving through fog and other people's  
homes, stalled cars, radio neither live  
nor recorded, we have not  
alleged takings, are not generous,

have no sense of being heard, enclosed  
by our words, a window won't  
roll down, we don't contend that our stuff  
is anything but eye contact

refused again and again. That personality  
will crystallize, that it all went wrong  
in the process of meeting in the middle,  
that communication did nothing

to bring us closer, with each other  
or anyone else, that we are trapped in  
clear resin is a given, like sculpture made  
without feeling for the boundary between us.

## *Grease spot*

There should be persimmons  
Not hard nor jelly sold  
By the family whose son died  
Last fall  
Apples with holes

Their seeds in star pattern show  
A friend trusted to embrace  
Catharsis  
Though are we saying it all  
If something external like  
Partly cloudy

Descended on the sky  
Like a dog looking up at her  
Purebred master I  
Hurt with small appropriate  
Absence

## *Property*

Tulips offer up  
the shape of last week's blooms

my neighbor does a decent headstand  
the state has been defrauded since

it doesn't feel better

and when a metaphysical entity  
goes beyond windows and ourselves

the neighborhood refuses  
to make sense of it

keeps going the wrong direction

right on being exempt.

## ***I washed my feet,***

got in my own way in the kitchen. There was a peach skirt that showed my underwear and I left it out of shame. The time was spent alone and walking, phone booths crackled, and when it rained I wanted to get wet. I went one place new each day and lost them all. The country's one stern market selling oranges by the bag.

## *Consent*

Every spring  
Trees cover themselves  
In time for garage sales, have  
Given them for totally other purposes  
To create the compulsory association of  
Front steps in the shade

In a minor act of refusal  
Despite the wealth of records in the back  
Of a VW van I buy  
A grammar book, spend the money  
Put these people in possession of something  
I held for a little while

There's only so much to look at but  
They can't tell what I think of the periwinkle  
House, a little girl  
Who doesn't want to walk  
This authority compromises mine  
You can know about most  
Of your money contributed in a campaign  
And be entirely separate from results

What kind of ritual is this  
In which we go from stranger's house  
To house, forced to belong and they have  
Accepted us  
Clothing hangs on fences, children may object  
Affirmatively but other concerns  
Will have to wait

They can't expect anything  
Except my willingness to admit  
Every action  
Is complicit, right down to Sunday  
And similar institutions

## *Sunday*

Already lamenting helpfulness

May my heinous

Past experience enrich

My pedagogy

Stiff magnolias

In the company of strange men

Neon powwow

My dog allergic to wheat

Your dog allergic to dogs

Those who have died engage in

An odd contract

Held aloft while crying

For the comfort of a leash

## ***Excellence is giving***

them the slip. A stationary leaf becomes a stationary bird that flies off in the morning when you're not looking. What do you think about. Nothing. There's no way to know when someone might ask.

## ***Traverse that portion***

The manager of the land believed the land  
was covered in plastic snow

The kind you see  
only in a cinematic journey

## *Clouds that mean something*

Limp T-shirt flopping on the bed  
Obscurely what befell is  
A disgrace to past lives and selves  
To need product even on the weekend  
Drink at 3 pm the paler the better  
O to be a neighbor cat

Who inserts a curled paw through the screen  
Not to replace anything broken  
But to lay it on a street corner  
My deli closed  
Across the street the empty storefront  
We approach the problem sideways

Yet completely master the angles  
Do not speculate  
On the benefits of polyamory  
Specifically as we apply  
To ourselves strictures like  
The white cliffs of somewhere British

## *Once / lit*

a candle in a church with gold mosaics. Once a woman's perfume smelled of something nearby. The mountains were big and more or less what I saw. The fruit all fit in the palm of my hand.

## *Holistic imagery device*

Future Tuesdays glimmer  
I call the parents of a dead friend

Hot tubs containing skin cells  
Of ancient humans wink out

Over the hillside  
You accept amalgam therefore

My mane grows at the same rate  
As your favorite TV detective

## ***Katharine Nash Gallery***

The color of each car named in passing  
Strapping & unstrapping the seats

Andy Goldsworthy could use the locust leaves  
Pressed to the gutter. A poor parking job

Each event continues after my arrival

The mousetraps are a little cleaner each morning  
When touched with a nail, they spring

To go to openings with children is to suffer  
Get lost, freeway. We know the side streets

It can be so refreshing to take out the screens

Now I will go to clubs (I have never gone to clubs)  
Now I will be young (I have never been young)

What's the difference between a mother and Bob Ross  
The hands are shriveled, held near the cheeks

Maybe no one's given you any lanolin

## *Pruning one supposes*

Gut makes a motion down  
Plausibility the  
Intention to remove shoes  
That old serious feeling and then  
Watercress

Might as well be in Paris  
For all the French we're not speaking  
Then some boundary falls  
Toward me  
And the work I can't do

Like the fact they put quail eggs  
In my salad  
My heart of palm  
Some crescendo of thinking  
Done concretely

Dry leaves discarded by the crew  
The moment a crow pulls wings in  
I lose it  
And covet your unordinary  
Countenance

***On apple a maple***

I call a friend who wants to be a friend.  
Red leg cramp.  
A wine bottle sealed and filled with tea—  
This jealous substance made of jewelry.

## *Contact*

. . . and the fact you know the rule  
of opposites, rule of attraction is to sit  
on the counter letting mice eat the peanut  
shells. The rule is to keep quiet if possible,  
tempered if not. The rule of the grass  
as fake plastic in which seeds attempt to grow

allowed for a re-opening of the appeal, just  
to let the points of contact form themselves.  
A grackle sitting on a gravestone surveys  
the cemetery. Several maples, one named,  
all old and knotty. What living things do  
is come together, whether violently or by

looking at the end date of an order, make sure  
boundaries are sufficiently established,  
failing that, productively breached. I hate  
nothing except certain problems I have;  
the integration of such behaviors would be  
acceptable by most standards, yet if

the notice of appeal is filed by that date,  
there may be reprieve, there may be proper  
connection, there may be crystallized papaya  
and contact out of solace, not misdirection.  
I admit responsibility lies with the wooden spoon  
mashing fruit into the vodka;

it would seem to me the party who  
fantasizes is lost. Our rich interiority becomes

a flock of migrating birds in a tree  
whose leaves are just beginning to show.  
When discovered they move, make noise  
or disappear and the fact that their position

is adversely affected may object on that  
level where attention is negotiable. In a certain  
sense I never left that kitchen, never left the  
counter, all scenes co-exist since they  
can't be reconciled. This is not news.  
It explains being drawn to porches on that

basis, saying listen, you have no authority to do  
anything without interrogating the atmosphere,  
why the river smells like the ocean, why everything  
becomes more possible and conflicted  
in late spring. It's irresponsible to blame  
the weather, irresponsible to say

this, what are you doing in connection with  
something that during any other season,  
any other month would be unthinkable?  
Reconciliation is internal, twisted, and  
like the tree, seldom labeled with  
a name that illuminates it.

## ***I*graced **M**onday**

with my presence. Tuesday J. called me muffin or penguin.

Friday morning I came, I didn't come, I baked bread.

Other days I muttered small and selfish prayers.

## *They can do it some*

Well I think we can communicate  
Something about ourselves  
You have a raincoat and the  
Sun won't cast its shadow from  
One side of the street

I take issue that it worked very well  
If we knew this could happen we  
Wouldn't answer the phone  
To accomplish your means different  
Tactics are identified  
Requiring a maximum of physical  
Interaction

Let's make it time-sensitive but  
The truth is you decide  
August was a little sub-par  
And somehow friends on the other side  
Argue there's another way  
Of making choices I would choose

## ***Excessive compensation***

Are there specific vertical restraints  
locust trees and something like cherry  
that's definitely Japanese and attempts  
to eliminate lead on the street where I live

Are signals optional and does laddering refer  
to groups of men painting who never go home

Can we predict the near event or discern  
what happens in other houses since  
we know there were babies and may again be  
babies but that's about it

Does anti-trust apply where we're working  
against complacency which is not boredom  
or love which is not settling in to the easy thing

We ask infrequently what takes place  
at the intersection of our values  
where art emerges from interrogating what  
we'd rather not occur

We are focused exactly on these practices  
as with a magnifying glass on a clear day

We want to save the ants

We want to save ourselves

## ***Vanua Levu***

Blue fish in small ponds, seed pods.

Dogs on the island are one dog.

If the palm trees are silver, turn

back. If they lean out from the shore,  
if the reef herons, the wood surface,

the reticent crabs. Welcome.

***The possibly amazing future home of me & J***

The gnats protect my tattoo pigment.

I trust your peeling city studio.

The end of the fold-out bed falls off.

What's annual elsewhere is perennial here.

We traveled all summer to be here.

We are cultivating radish and yellow lupine.

The past in coffee grounds and eggshells

Moves inexorably towards the genuine self.

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a H\_NGM\_N portable document format chapbook

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