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Opening extract from  
**Evidence of Dragons**

Written by  
**Pie Corbett**

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# Praise Poem

Let us begin  
with the hottest of days  
and the shock of icy water sipped from  
frosted glass.

Let us begin  
with the tickle of a ladybird  
and the rosebud of its freckled red coat.

Let us begin  
with the fizz of sherbet lemon  
sizzling on the tongue.

Let us begin  
with the sudden grin and giggle  
of a joke cracked open like a walnut.

Let us begin  
with the cat's warm purr  
and the first crazy petals of snow falling.

Let us begin  
with the kicking of legs  
as the swing flings itself higher.

Let us begin  
with a blade of grass  
and sunlight pouring through clouds  
like golden dust.

Let us begin  
with the hot breath of chips on a cold night  
and the surprise of torchlight icing  
the dark.

Let us begin  
by counting the rings on your fingertips  
and the mystery of a magnet's pull.

Yes, let us begin  
with such simple things.

# A Poem to Be Spoken Silently . . .

It was so silent that I heard  
my thoughts rustle  
like leaves in a paper bag . . .

It was so peaceful that I heard  
the trees ease off  
their coats of bark . . .

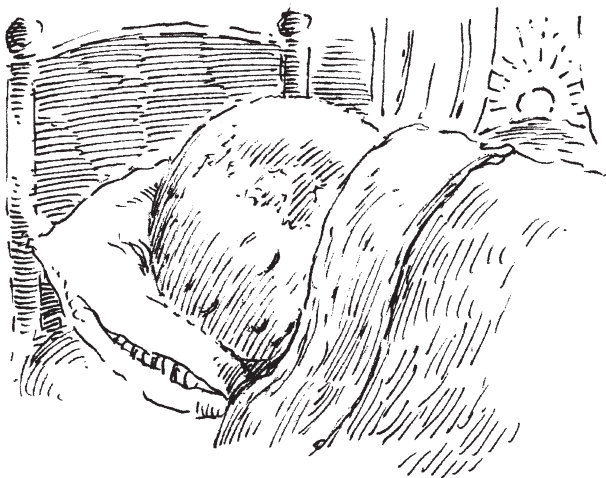
It was so still that I heard  
the paving stones groan  
as they muscled for space . . .

It was so silent that I heard  
a page of this book  
whisper to its neighbour,  
'Look, he's peering at us again . . .'

It was so still that I felt  
a raindrop grin  
as it tickled the window's pane . . .

It was so calm that I sensed  
a smile crack  
the wary face  
of a stranger . . .

It was so quiet that I heard  
the morning earth roll over  
in its sleep and doze  
for five minutes more . . .



# Wings

If I had wings

I would touch the fingertips of clouds  
and glide on the wind's breath.

If I had wings

I would taste a chunk of the sun,  
as hot as peppered curry.

If I had wings

I would listen to the clouds of sheep bleat  
that graze on the blue.

If I had wings

I would breathe deep and sniff  
the scent of raindrops.

If I had wings

I would gaze at people  
who cling to the earth.

If I had wings

I would dream of  
swimming the deserts  
and walking the seas.



# The Cloud Appreciation Society

Clouds are no bother;  
they do not interfere  
with anyone –  
are not known to be  
busybodies,  
keep their noses clean.  
They loiter quietly,  
then shuffle on.

Clouds are cheap;  
make ideal pets.  
Needing no feeding,  
they thrive  
with no real attention.  
The main advantage  
of a cloud  
is that it takes  
no looking after.  
Clouds just get on  
with the job  
of shepherding themselves.  
You do not need a dog  
to round them up.



The sun warms  
a cloud's back –  
the wind sculpts  
its shifting form.

Dawn brings  
another bunch of cloud surprises –  
all shapes and sizes blossoming,  
whether you like it or not.  
For the work of a cloud  
is never finished –  
the job never done.

Perhaps it's not much fun  
being a cloud . . .  
but at least they have no need  
to be perfect.

Nameless, they shift storms.  
Blameless, they ferment lightning.

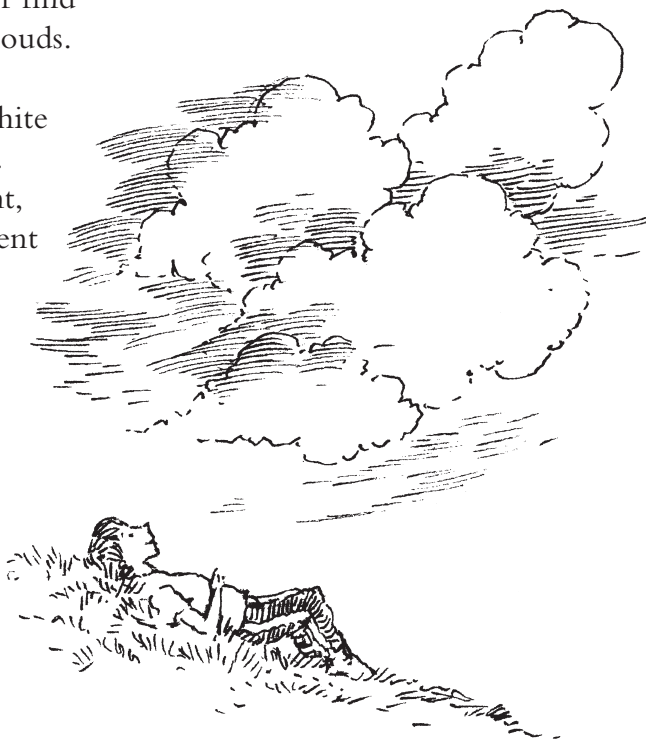
No one has ever tamed a cloud.



I like the way clouds  
look after themselves  
without any fuss.  
A bus needs a driver,  
a ship needs a sail,  
but a cloud moves on  
like a gigantic soft whale  
slowly easing through  
a sea of blue.

New clouds pillow,  
billowing and blowing.  
No cloud is ever the same.  
You'll never find  
identical clouds.

Drift on white  
mystery.  
Ghost-silent,  
each moment  
making  
cloud  
history.



# Are You Sleepwalking?

Cats are more than alive.  
That purposeful purr,  
the ripple  
of muscle and fur;  
and bright eyes seen green  
in midnight  
headlights . . .

But what about trees?  
They too grow slow,  
stretching up;  
their thin limbs  
covered in rough skin.  
They live and die.

But is water alive?  
Like us it sleeps,  
still and deep –  
then shifts restlessly  
like wind-blown silk,  
or silver pouring from a tap.  
If you touch water,  
it moves aside,  
its wet invitation  
lets you slide in.

And rocks –  
may be hard as nails,  
but they wear a thin skin –  
a cold crust of lichen;  
icy in winter,  
warmed by simple sun.  
Like solid old men,  
weathered till  
they too crumble into dust.

You must look close enough,  
to enter their world –  
even the grass seems alive –  
as it uncurls its slim, green skin  
and twists with the wind.



And what of you?  
Have you yet woken to the world,  
sensing its every move?  
Or are you sleepwalking  
through every waking moment?

# Watching

Watching

the red admiral's miracle,  
the opening and closing of wings,  
the gentle fluttering of prayer flags



and the peacocks clustering  
on the purple buddleia.

Watching their dusty colours  
and silks flickering.



Watching the tubby bees  
noisily nudging for a space,  
nectar-greedy.



Watching

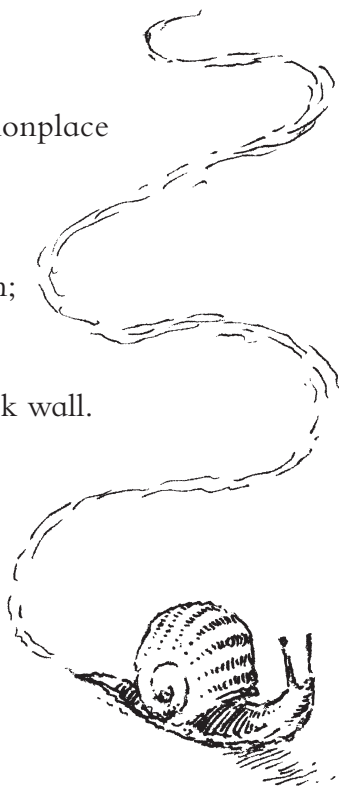
the sunlight catching  
the flowers and speared leaves,  
describing shadows,

and I'm thinking  
how many of the small things  
that I love are free for those

who know

how to see for themselves  
the miraculous and commonplace  
so close to hand –

the ant's hieroglyphic trail;  
the snail's slow determination;  
even the money spider –  
that pinprick of blood,  
perfect on a red-brick wall.



## Go into –

a river as it noses by  
burrowing between banks,  
carving through stone.

Within it must be lonely;  
except for the constant chatter  
of stones rattling along;  
except for the slither  
of eels and the silver of fish.

Go in –  
you might find the sky  
or the moon or your own face  
staring back.

Inside, there is the rush  
of waterfalls and a wave's curve;  
the imprint of a whale  
and the dark shadow of a shark.

Go in –  
it will wash away  
the day's dirt and some may be  
dazzled by its power  
to free the soul  
from sin – so, dip in –  
it may not be as cold  
as you fear.



# Spain – Summer Diary 2001

## Wednesday morning

Cicadas buzz  
like electricity.

It's so hot that  
wasps and bees drink  
from the swimming pool.

Ants carry off trophies from our meal.

Stunned by sun.  
Heat bounces  
off whitewashed walls.  
The track ahead shimmers.

Flies irritate –  
whining,  
stalking the cup's rim –  
settling on my hand.

Towels map the washing line –  
the breeze quivers –  
a distant lorry tugs uphill.

Cicadas are busy.  
The hillside seems alive.

Inside the fridge hums.  
The landscape does nothing too.

Clouds                      drift                      my thoughts

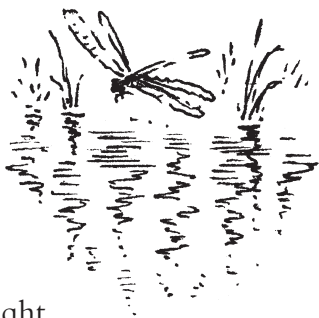
distant hills –  
like a sleeping lion –  
crouch.

The sun steadily  
turns up the temperature.



Pastel-blue dragonflies,  
pencil-slim,  
hover by the pool.

Daisy's wasp sting –  
a white injection mark –  
like a tiny, raised moon.



It's three o'clock at night.  
Lightning bursts over mountains  
in a purple fuzz.

Trying to sleep but  
the room is too stuffy –  
even the pillows sweat.

Moon crumbles              night swim              stars scatter