

Classic Poetry Series

Jean Valentine

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Dream Barker

We met for supper in your flat-bottomed boat.
I got there first: in a white dress: I remember
Wondering if you'd come. Then you shot over the bank,
A Virgilian Nigger Jim, and poled us off
To a little sea-food barker's cave you knew.

What'll you have? you said. Eels hung down,
Bamboozled claws hung up from the crackling weeds.
The light was all behind us. To one side
In a dish of ice was a shell shaped like a sand-dollar
But worked with Byzantine blue and gold. What's that?

Well, I've never seen it before, you said,
And I don't know how it tastes.
Oh well, said I, if it's bad,
I'm not too hungry, are you? We'd have the shell...
I know just how you feel, you said.

And asked for it; we held out our hands.
Six Dollars! barked the barker, For This Beauty!
We fell down laughing in your flat-bottomed boat, .

And then I woke up: in a white dress:
Dry as a bone on dry land, Jim,
Bone dry, old, in a dry land, Jim, my Jim. .

Jean Valentine

Elegy For Jane Kenyon (2)

Jane is big
with death, Don
sad and kind - Jane
though she's dying
is full of mind

We talk about the table
the little walnut one
how it's like
Emily Dickinson's

But Don says No
Dickinson's
was made of iron. No
said Jane
Of flesh.

Jean Valentine

Late

Late have I called &
late my
beloved
was blessing me

I was covering
my breasts with my arms

"Those doves"
you said

In the sun I took my arms away

Submitted by Jimmy Lo

Jean Valentine

To Plath, To Sexton

So what use was poetry
to a white empty house?

Wolf, swan, hare,
in by the fire.

And when your tree
crashed through your house,

what use then
was all your power?

It was the use of you.
It was the flower.

Jean Valentine

X

I have decorated this banner to honor my brother.
Our parents did not want his name used publicly
-- from an unnamed child's banner in the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

The boatpond, broken off, looks back at the sky.
I remember looking at you, X, this way,
taking in your red hair, your eyes' light, and I miss you
so. I know,
you are you, and real, standing there in the doorway,
whether dead or whether living, real. -- Then Y
said, "who will remember me three years after I die?
What is there for my eye
to read then?"
The lamb should not have given
his wool.
He was so small. At the end, X, you were so small.
Playing with a stone
on your bedspread at the edge of the ocean.

Submitted by Jimmy Lo

Jean Valentine