



Shirt in Heaven

Jean Valentine

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"Jean Valentine has a gift for tough strangeness, but also a dreamlike syntax and manner of arranging the lines of . . . short poems so as to draw us into the doubleness and fluency of feelings."—*The New York Times Book Review*

Quietly marked by elegy and memory, National Book Award winner Jean Valentine's thirteenth book is empowered by her signature clear music and compassion. Valentine leads us chronologically from childhood drawings and wartime memories to the present, where she addresses aging and the loss of loved ones. These poems of tender grace reflect on the small histories few ever fully see.

Shirt in Heaven

*Come upon a snapshot
of secret you, smiling like FDR, leaning on your crutches—*

come upon letters I thought I'd burned—

I suppose you've got a place with lots of stairs.

I'm at the end of something, you're at the beginning . . .

*—dearest, they told me a surgeon sat down
in the hospital morgue, next to your body, & cried.
He yelled at the aide to get out.*

*His two sons had been your students.
—me too, little-knowing—*

Jean Valentine is the current State Poet of New York and author of twelve books of poetry, including *Door in the Mountain*, which won the National Book Award. She has taught at Sarah Lawrence College, New York University, and Columbia University, and lives in the Morningside Heights neighborhood of New York City.

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