



# Break the Glass

*Jean Valentine*

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## **Break the Glass** Jean Valentine

"As elliptical and demanding as Emily Dickinson, Valentine consistently rewards the reader."—*Library Journal*

In her eleventh collection—honored as a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in poetry—Jean Valentine characteristically weds a moral imperative to imaginative and linguistic leaps and bounds. Whether writing elegies, meditations on aging, or an extended homage to Lucy, the earliest known hominid, the pared-down compactness of her tone and vision reveals a singular voice in American poetry. As Adrienne Rich has said of Valentine's work, "This is a poetry of the highest order, because it lets us into spaces and meanings we couldn't approach in any other way."

### **From "If a Person Visits Someone in a Dream, in Some Cultures the Dreamer Thanks Them":**

*At a hotel in another star. The rooms were cold and damp, we were both at the desk at midnight asking if they had any heaters. They had one heater. You are ill, please you take it. Thank you for visiting my dream.*

\*

*Can you breathe all right?  
Break the glass shout  
break the glass force the room  
break the thread Open  
the music behind the glass . . .*

**Jean Valentine**, a former State Poet of New York, earned a National Book Award, the Wallace Stevens Award, and the Shelley Memorial Prize. She has taught at Sarah Lawrence, New York University, and Columbia University. She lives in the Morningside Heights neighborhood of New York City.

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