

## Jane Siberry

# "The White Tent The Raft"

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there's a red leaf that falls from a purple tree it falls it  
floats down  
one red leaf against a clear blue sky it floats down  
past the marbles in the clearing  
beneath the geese in flight  
to the darkening river in the autumn light  
where it touches down  
oh like a great bird landing  
tears of autumn  
there's a white tent that sits in the middle of a raft that  
floats down  
floats down the middle of a river, of a stream, floating  
down  
and the tears streaming from the mind's eye  
streaming back beyond the white sheets that flap and  
fly  
oh tears of wanting  
the white tent the raft  
the white tent the raft  
the white tent the raft  
fists and chests  
mango clearing:  
oh mango in the clearing  
it's his leg or something  
waiting  
everything would be alright  
watching the trees  
then his toes  
then the trees  
deeper into the jungle  
and leaves him there  
we turn off the tv  
never forget that night  
never heard you  
couldn't sleep  
hotel window  
get up to those dark peaks  
everything would be alright  
(transparent):  
there's a clearing to the right  
there's mango  
clutching his knees

looking at his feet  
watching the trees  
bees bees  
like he's always there  
that he doesn't care  
maybe not  
but he's been waiting there  
for them to return  
for a long long time  
i get angry as i watch  
see him wait  
only half alive  
so patient there  
looking at his toes  
picking at his fur  
watching the trees  
... finally she comes  
picks him up  
safe now  
clings to her  
waited all this time  
i guess he was right  
what do i know  
at both things i cried  
and she holds him tight  
knows his little body well  
he's come from her  
she moves back into the trees  
not like northern trees  
but the jungle somewhere  
moves deeper and deeper  
into the thickness  
she leaves him there  
why should he survive?...  
i turn off the tv  
that night we both cried  
i will never forget that night  
another man, dancing  
i came back so alive  
you were so open  
someone i didn't talk to much  
not really talk  
-----  
though travelled side by side  
we cried for mango  
you were so open  
--  
side by side  
mango in the clearing  
the ships in the harbour  
finally fell asleep

cried ourselves  
well, i couldn't sleep  
got up  
frowned alone  
the middle of the night  
the summer breeze  
raised my eyes  
up to the peaks  
so dark and moving back  
the crouch white  
and i knew  
if i could only get there  
everything would be alright  
the white tent the raft  
the white tent the raft  
the white tent the raft  
fists and chests  
great overcoat clearing:  
and when it's not our great overcoat  
it's a grey and yellow dress  
so beautiful the bees they followed you through the  
mall  
to the clearing in the wilderness  
and you lay down and i picked you up  
and i said you must never leave  
your beautiful hands like knitting needles  
and i said-it's jane it's me  
she said-when you go that's when you go  
lighten up and pass the cup  
fifty bucks and that's all you got?  
yeah i love you i love you a lot  
(transparent):  
(ASSISI, ITALY 1986)  
as you move away from me  
for whatever it all means  
i call you back but you don't hear  
at least you have some joy in my dreams  
and when it's not my great overcoat  
it's a grey and yellow dress  
i tried to find for you  
so beautiful the bees followed you too  
through the mall  
out into the fields where the flowers blow  
and when i woke one night  
and the wind was blowing ceaselessly  
and with such violence  
i walked out to the terrace  
to throw myself off  
then the darkness charged

my shirt with such light

i forgot my purpose  
and drifted away  
through the gardens  
to find my great overcoat  
and i sat and waited for you  
i waited and watched  
but you lay transparent and waxen  
only your see-through fingers  
fluttering a description  
of her "silver umbrella  
the most beautiful you had ever seen"  
you can't ever leave me  
because part of me goes with you  
and part of you stays with me  
and waits for the wind to stop  
and understands the silence with me  
and drifts through the darkened garden  
in our great overcoat  
'til we are stopped by a marbled portico  
that stares at us like a map  
i've remembered and will  
for many years  
or all my life  
for who will know  
when i lay back  
the time i go  
my hands will flutter  
in the same way  
like the sifting snow  
the drifting snow  
the silver umbrella  
it was so beautiful...  
i'd never ever ever ever...  
it's very warm  
are you warm...  
there's water nearby  
i can tell...  
(assisi, italy '86)  
and her soul escaped or tried to  
but me- i tried not to let her  
i ran and picked her up  
she was light as a feather  
and her hands were knitting needles  
and we talked about the weather  
and the hands fluttered in the air  
about a silver umbrella she saw there  
her friend has won it at the fair  
the most beautiful she'd ever seen  
fluttered down the autumn leaves  
caught like jags of silver  
in the woolen weave of my love for her

i said - it's me  
you must never ever leave  
and her hands described a silver umbrella  
or was it a silver tent...  
or was it a white tent now...  
there's a white tent that sits in the middle of a raft that  
floats down  
floats down the middle of a river, of a stream, floating  
down  
and the tears streaming from the mind's eye  
streaming back beyond the white sheets that flap and  
fly  
oh tears of hardness  
the white tent the raft  
the white tent the raft  
the white tent the raft  
fists and chests  
overkill clearing:  
found the snake in the clearing  
and it tried to kill him of course  
but then...only after it tried to get away  
he said-youse the meanest ugliest low-down  
and he cursed and swore  
gonna shoot the damn thing  
(i'll never let nobody hurt you)  
i watched from the raft  
and i withdrew my scent  
it's not hard to kill a snake  
the white tent the raft  
the white tent the raft  
the white tent the raft  
fists and chests  
angry clearing:  
what do you mean i love you  
stop saying i love you  
i don't know what you mean anyway  
i don't know what love is and...  
you don't know what love is and...  
it doesn't change anything anyway  
ah...who cares  
who gives a...  
because all i see  
is more hate  
more fear  
less light than before me  
the white tent the raft  
the white tent the raft  
the white tent the raft  
fists and chests  
bird clearing:  
get off my branch...

stick legs-they are not  
this is my tree  
it's getting lighter  
i'm talking to you  
turn down your radio  
dawn is coming  
run!  
every morning when the sun comes up  
as long as he can get up!get up!  
yeah i love you i love you a lot  
lighten up and pass the cup  
there's a thousand white tents on a thousand rafts all  
floating down  
there's a thousand fists and a thousand chests they  
come thundering down  
and the tears streaming for a thousand eyes  
streaming back beyond the white sheets  
that flap and fly  
oh tears of hunger  
there's a white tent that blows in the middle of a raft  
that floats down  
down the middle of a long and lonely dream  
or is it lovely? can't always tell...  
and the clearings pass  
like blowing scarfs  
the slightly familiar  
the slightly apart  
and the river never runs dry  
oh tears of open  
the white tent the raft  
the white tent the raft  
and one red leaf for my love...for your love

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