

# **streetwise and Valentine**

**By Jerold London**

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## streetwise and Valentine

Summer. Manhattan. A young, homeless FEMALE (maybe redhead) enters, pulling her belongings (on wheels) behind her. She stops to search a trash can for some treasure, finds none, and walks on. Part way down the block she is stopped by a female TV REPORTER, accompanied by her male cameraman.

**REPORTER**

Miss? May we talk with you?

**FEMALE**

Cheers.

**REPORTER**

Are you having a good day?

**FEMALE**

Every day's a good day to have a good day, thank you.

**REPORTER**

Any words of street wisdom? For our viewers?

**FEMALE**

Friends. Remember:

There's nothing new under the sun that lasts forever. Not even virus.

**REPORTER**

Anything else?

**The homeless FEMALE takes a piece of paper out of a pocket, tears it into several smaller pieces, and puts them on her tongue. Then, making a face, she moves her tongue, back and forth, in and out of her mouth a few times, wiggling the pieces of paper on it.**

**FEMALE**

What am I?

**REPORTER**

I don't know. A hair dryer?

**FEMALE**

A lizard.

**REPORTER**

Oh.... Anything else?

**FEMALE**

**Swallowing, then pointing at her ears.**

To mine ears, butchers hook, me Mum oft times said,  
right down to her ante-penultimate breath:

If you cross-eye a glass of a wine when 'twas red,  
be prepared for a fate worse than death....

About the last thing I remember her telling me.

Except she loved me.

Cwtches.

I'm from Wales, you know. Me Mum was.

And here's me Valentine.

**Pulls a red cut heart out of a white envelope from her pocket, waves it over her head, and puts it back.**

Do you know what day today is?

**REPORTER**

No.

**A man passes them on the street, looking.**

**FEMALE**

[*to him*] Sir!

**Embarrassed, he walks away. The homeless FEMALE returns to her conversation with the REPORTER.**

**FEMALE**

Today is the day I bought myself a Summer Valentine.  
For Dydd Santes Dwynwen Haf.  
'Cause yesterday I found me Valentine.  
Walking in the rain. Taking his shirt off. Here. In Manhattan.  
Just talking about how air conditioning is Hell's way of ruining our health.  
And rain is Heaven's way of giving us muddy puddles.

**REPORTER**

[*rhetorically*] Muddy puddles? Where have I heard that before?...  
Did he say anything more to you?

**FEMALE**

'Tis strange, Valentine, two things about you.  
How I don't know a real name for you.  
And how two minds alike, locked in two vagabond bodies like ours,  
could ever find each other,  
on the streets of New York,  
in the rain.

I do hope I see you again.  
With your shirt on, or with your shirt off.  
Either way. It doesn't matter to me.  
There's something I forgot to ask you.  
Before we waved Goodbye, and you signaled to me to call.  
Have you ever slept in the library? Like I have?

Or gone to the movies? Or to a Broadway show?  
Is there a family who's forgotten you?  
A wife? A child?  
Have I ever seen you before?

**FEMALE**

In Millet?  
In Van Gogh?  
In Dorothea Lange?  
In Gordon Parks?



In England?  
In Scotland?  
In Wales?  
Will I ever see you again?  
Fleeing the hound of heaven,  
down the homeless nights and down the homeless days?

Will your mind ever touch mine again?  
Like it did, eye to eye?

**REPORTER**

Did he say anything more to you?

**FEMALE**

He gave me some advice:  
When you apologize, it doesn't count if you don't look eye-to-eye, he said.  
What if he told me he loved me? Eye-to-eye? Which I don't suppose he did.  
But just, what if?  
In the rain? Across muddy puddles?

**REPORTER**

Did he?

**FEMALE**

He touched me heart. I can tell you that, eye-to-eye.  
Though, maybe he never meant to.  
'Cause maybe ... maybe truth is a slave to me imagination.  
Maybe truth is a slave to me needs.  
Maybe truth is a slave to me loneliness.  
Maybe hunger is a slave to a hunting life.

I spent me lunch buying the Valentine I showed you.  
And this.

**Pulls a red padlock out of another pocket, and then puts it  
back.**

In New York, on a bridge, or a fence, you can lock your hearts to it.  
For all time.  
For everybody to see.  
'Cause he did something to me yesterday he probably didn't mean to.  
He shared himself.  
With a stranger.  
Like in Matthew 25.  
And me, too poor to buy more oil for me lamp.

**Pause.**

**REPORTER**

Anything else?

**FEMALE**

So here's me questions.  
Did he ever have a Valentine of his own?  
And want to go to that someone who loved him,  
and touch them again with his mind?  
Do homeless people even have the right to dream like that?  
When we waved Goodbye, he signaled me to call him.  
What a lie!  
[questioning] Wasn't it?...  
Or was it just a joke?

**REPORTER**

Was it?

**FEMALE**

The last time I touched a phone was 9-1-1, when me Mum died.  
She was the last person to love me.  
Nothing lasts forever, you know.  
And 9-1-1 was the only number our phone would ring.  
“What’s your emergency?” they asked.  
I told them it was dark.  
“*That’s* your emergency?” they said.  
“I think me Mum’s dead.”  
“Why?” they asked.  
“Listen,” I told them.

**Holding out her hand, like holding out a phone.**

“We don’t hear a thing.” they said.  
“Close your eyes.”

**The homeless FEMALE takes a few deep  
breaths, and then stops breathing.**

“She stopped breathing?” they asked.  
“Yeah.”  
“Did you take her pulse?”  
“I didn’t take anything of hers.  
She was just lying here, in me arms, and stopped breathing.”

**REPORTER**

Did she say anything to you?  
Before she died?

**FEMALE**

She said she loved me. Always.  
And beware of the wine, when ‘tis red.  
And ffarwél.

**REPORTER**

What did she look like? Before she died?  
Were her eyes closed?

**FEMALE**

It was dark.

**REPORTER**

Oh. Yeah.  
I forgot, you said.



**FEMALE**

Like she was asleep, I would think.  
Probably happier than she'd ever been.

**REPORTER**

Oh.

**FEMALE**

Do you believe there's a Heaven?

**REPORTER**

I don't know.

**FEMALE**

That's okay.  
9-1-1 didn't know either.  
I expect there's Heaven for some.  
But not, for others.  
And that's okay, too.  
It doesn't matter either way, does it?  
It's all a dream, isn't it?

**Pause.**

**REPORTER**

What happened to her body?

**FEMALE**

They said they'd send somebody.  
I just got up. Took what was mine. And left.  
We had no money for a paid-for burial anyway.

To everyone out there who loves their mother and Wales:

When I am old and white,  
And everybody knows me name,  
I want to know me name,  
I'll lift a homeless dream to flight:

I'll buy a cottage yon,  
For two, no ruckus out the door.  
Most rocks: Aberdaron,  
And salty ocean's endless roar.

**The homeless FEMALE again pulls out  
her Valentine, and waves it.**

**FEMALE**

Cheers, Welsh lovers, everywhere.

**END**