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On Watching Gelsey Kirkland Dance Swan Lake

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On Watching Gelsey Kirkland Dance Swan Lake

Abstract

Blind eyes staring from paper skin, An ageless frail girl stands:

Keywords

Poetry; Watching Gelsey Kirkland; Swan Lake

On Watching Gelsey Kirkland Dance Swan Lake

by Jean McClure Kelty

Blind eyes staring from paper skin,
An ageless frail girl stands:
Flesh of bone, bone of flesh,
Slippers flattened, bodice stained.
A backstage chill sweeps ancient floors,
Shivering, she bends against the rigid velvet wall.

A clear translucent note sounds:
Great Bird of Love, breathe me wings.

Tissue thin face turns,
And out of the windward while,
With Olympian nobility wings enfold
Small pale hands and slippered feet in gold,
Surrender feathers breasts and thighs in down
And ecstasy transforms the stilted smile.

Death is the whiteness of all,
 Needled through
With azure threads of cobweb harp
 Touched
 Plucked
 Anew.
Poised on the fall of the Spring
 Now I sing
 At the last . . .

Across ebony silences spinning with sound
And slivers of silvery light
Quivering, shimmering
On whirling, singing wings of white
 A feather dances.
 (Leda becomes the swan.)

Death is the whiteness of all,
 Needled through
With azure threads of cobweb harp
 Touched
 Plucked
 Anew.
Poised on the fall of the Spring
 Now I sing
 At the last . . .

Floating

Folding

Falling

Fainting

Stilled.

And fair Helen of a thousand songs in born.