

Where are You Going, My Beautiful, Dying Friend?

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by Kathleen Stilwell

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~ *for Patricia* ~



*"The beyond is not what is infinitely remote,
but what is nearest at hand."*

~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

You told me you don't know where you are going, but soon you will know.

It's too late to worry about such things anyway, you said. You are content with allowing the next adventure unfold in the same way your life did here.

Maybe we never need to know where we are going, because we are never really here nor there. And wherever we go, there we are. That sort of thing.

You know what I'm saying. If we know who we really are, wherever we find ourselves we will eventually do just fine.

I can feel you smiling as I sit here talking in circles. You

pointed that out once. I follow every declared certainty with a question that challenges its certainty. I can't let myself get away with thinking I know something, after all. What would be the fun in that?

You've stood by me as I repeated the same life lessons of the heart over and over. You know this describes me to a T and you've loved me anyway:

*"I never make the same mistake twice.
I make it five or six times, just to make sure."
~ Source unknown*

This knowing we don't know has been one of our strongest bonds as friends. We have always laughed at ourselves, at our endless questions, at our uncertainties, at our insecurities.

We've disagreed on many things over the years, but always things that never really seemed to matter outside of the moment. They were usually things about the structure of the external world or some perception of "reality", and never about the need for and love of friends who genuinely care and will have our back when times get tough.

Dear loving friend, I wouldn't be surprised to find out you've decided to try out being a fire bird for a while, letting your flaming body burn away any falseness from this world that tried to attach itself but was never really you. I wonder if that's what you've been doing during these recent days of deep sleep as you slowly make adjustments for your shift.

You've been up to something for sure, and it's undoubtedly something remarkable.

When you and your body part company, maybe you'll just swim away, going deeper into a cosmic sea. You'll be a lovely mermaid on an uncharted adventure, happy to forget for a while that you ever wondered who you were or where you are.

Or maybe you'll become that magnificent red dragon you've been creating in fabric art. You'll fly and fly and fly to your heart's content. You'll keep on flying until your soul calls you to a place that feels just like home.

But, then again, maybe the mermaid will decide to leave the sea for a while and be companion to the red dragon, learning to breathe in a new way, feeling the exhilaration of soaring through a different kind of sea.

Of course, there's always that important question of whether or not you are really going anywhere. Maybe there never has been a veil between the worlds and we've always just needed to reset our reality detectors and clear the foggy lenses on our spirit eyes.

*"Death is not extinguishing the light;
it is only putting out the lamp because the dawn has come."
~ Rabindranath Tagore*

I remember, back in the day, when we talked about lifting that imaginary veil together. You on one side and me on the other. Of course, it wouldn't work if we died at the same time. We could see ourselves using some sort of hocus pocus to break through something that seemed so dense, only to burst into laughter when we realized we could have walked right through it at any time.

We humans are so awkward about death. In rebellion against a culture that turned a sacred mystery into something to fear, we keep reaching for better language to pull us closer to what we imagine is really happening. We now pass over, we transition, we go back to source, and so on.

But we also die. We die in much the same way that we die every day, in the way the teenager dies to give way to the adult who insists on bursting out of the cocoon that ties him or her to youth.

I remember how, when Lukas was a child, I would long to keep a copy of him exactly as he was. Each moment was so perfect. His heart, his soul, his body. Every word he said, every movement he made. Yet I could never want him not to change. Each night the child I touched and loved would go to sleep and would awaken in the morning a new being. My beautiful son could never stay the same, nor could he stay near me when it was time for him to go away.

None of us can ever stay the same. Only love remains to remind us of how we know one another and what connects us.

We are all adventurers by nature. Fear might tell us we can't survive death, but we've been surviving death from the moment we were born. Each new breath comes only as the old breath moves on. The old dies to the new but who we are remains in love – outside of life and death.

Some face the death of their body in resistance. They agree to cooperate only when they find themselves kicked out the door of this limited hangout. They are pushed or pulled into a new experience, ready or not.

But you, dear sister, have been ready for a very long time.

From the moment we first met those many years ago, you've talked about wanting to leave the planet, not via death but just wanting to leave all this behind. There are many, many here who share your sentiments. We all want to co-create a better world and there is talk everywhere about raising consciousness and awakening.

For a while now, you've sensed you were dying and, thus, in typical Patti style, took the bull by the horns and started seriously planning to leave.

You joked recently about all the lists and how-to notes you've written for your dear husband, Tom, to read when you are gone, because you worry he'll be lost without you.

Tom, in humor blended with loving awareness and deep sadness, explained these are not just simple instructions, but details on how to handle every aspect of life, including the specific care of each room in the house. Volumes and volumes of practical advice from a woman who never could make heads nor tails of this crazy world.

But, you have been, beautiful soul, always organized in a way that escapes me.

Even when you were deeply depressed, you were organized. And, even when you were depressed, you could create gorgeous works of art. Even when you were depressed, you would reach out your hand to a friend or family member and welcome them in for coffee or wine or one of your delicious homemade meals or desserts.

Yes, in addition to being the most organized person I've ever known, you are a brilliant fabric artist, kindest of friends, magical "green thumb" organic gardener, wonderful cook and baker, lover of all animals and rescuer of several dozen stray cats over the years.

As you begin your passing, beautiful Patricia, our hearts are overwhelmed and our eyes flow with tears. We have no way of fully explaining why. Certainly, we will miss you, but the tears are much more than personal sorrow.

The tears flow as if from the deepest rivers beneath the earth, which carry the tears of our ancestors and of children yet to be born. They are tears of joy, of sadness, of deep gratitude, and they flow as sacred waters from a love without end.

The mystery and the love of who you really are and of what is happening right now are too deep to be defined. We are experiencing something breathtaking, a mystery and love that holds us in awe and we feel to the core of our being, yet cannot explain.

*"I've learned that people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how you made them feel."
~ Maya Angelou*

Dear sweet soul, you and Tom have both always made me feel welcome, and not only welcome, but treasured as friend.

That's a very profound thing in this world. To feel welcome. To be treasured. To be able to show up just as we are with no need for pretense.

I will always remember how you reached out your hand to me when my personal world was rocky and I had some soul searching to do about my own mistakes. We barely knew one another but you cared and, therefore, you intuitively reached out. Regardless of the physical distance between us, you've been there at my side, as my dear sister, ever since.

You, Tom and I have shared many wonderful times together. Most of them have been come-as-you-are parties where we just showed up, talked, shared food and wine, laughed, listened, sometimes cried, and learned more than we could ever say.

How do we ever thank those who show up in kindness, courage and love? There is no greater gift on the earth than a genuine caring heart. You and Tom have both been the truest of friends to me.

My precious friend, I am eternally grateful that you showed up and shared your heart and unwavering friendship with me.

*"There is a sacredness in tears.
They are not a mark of weakness, but of power.
They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues.
They are the messengers of overwhelming grief,
of deep contrition and of unspeakable love."
~ Washington Irving*

As these days of your passing unfold, the tears that we share with you seem to flow from the depths of our being. They are tears of love, of awe, of gratitude, of mystery, of cleansing, of letting go and of holding on to all that is eternal. They are tears of knowing how deeply you are loved and will always be loved.

There's nothing for you to soothe away or rescue here now, but there's also no holding back our tears.

Go now with love under your wings, a John Denver song in your heart (yes, I remember he is your favorite), and have the time of your life.

Added 1/12/2019

Beautiful Patricia made her exit from this world on January 12, 2019.

The same deep love that escorted her in, escorted her out. I heard the waters splash as she dove deeply into her new life.

I stand here now in her wake, feeling love for us all wash over me.

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