

The Death of Ann Kristel Paris
By Naima Phillips

Proverbs: “Fear makes the old woman trot” and “To stand in one’s own light”

This is a room in a larger piece. The room smells like candles or incense. It exudes both the warmth of the sun and the chill of winter. It is plastered wall-to-wall, floor and ceiling in gold leaves, except for the fourth wall which is open. A coffin lies in the middle of the room. Additional gold leaves, or these could be autumn leaves, have been sprinkled onto the coffin and the ground. A light shines into the room.

A woman walks into the room. She takes it in. She looks at the coffin and collapses. When she is ready, she stands up and walks straight to the coffin. She might need to stand at the edge of the space, leaning against the wall, before she is able to make her way to the coffin. When she does, she takes out a teapot and two cups. She pours a cup for herself and another for the deceased. She holds out her cup to the deceased and takes a sip or two. She speaks the following words with a calm voice. She may choose to sit still, to arrange the golden leaves on top of the coffin, to hold the coffin in her arms, to dance, to crawl, or all the above.

When they told me the fear had made you trot,
I tried to fight what my gut already knew
words soon followed
Our dearest friend is leaving us

You’ve stepped into your true light
Light of an angel
a smile that says what words don’t dare

Last breaths slipping through your lips
I try to catch them, to slip them back
But you’re ready
And who am I
To claim it’s not your time

I use words that sound too big, that feel too small
To tell you what I hope you know
That you’ll be missed, that you are loved

For what should I tell an angel on her deathbed?
Should I wish you a happy journey?

I wish you...
Sweet sleep

Remember.

Thank you

For your voice

For finding mine

For being strong

For being bold

Thank you for your time, your wit, your love.

I sent you energy from here. Did it reach you? I sent it far far above our heads.

Its arch reached the moon then made its way down to your bed.

You're on your way

away

I sent you a thousand thanks and kisses

Did they reach you?

Silence. Honking. Silence. Light flash. Neighbours. Cars driving past. Silence.

I wonder what you see when you're about to die.

Eyes. Tearing up. Shying away. Love.

Worries hidden under strength

now yours is past.

It's strange to eat before you go.

Eating for eternal sleep

What is the meaning of your smile?

Taking care of us once more

Even as you march

To the other side

Skin so luminous

And that smile...

You'll slip out of this life soon

Nothing holds you back

But the voice of an angel

She sings the following words to the melody of Amazing Grace. She pours the second cup of tea around the coffin.

They said the fear had made you trot, my gut already knew

A smile that said what words don't dare, that said what words don't dare

Our dearest friend is leaving us, her voice made angels weep

You've stepped into another light, into a silent light.