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M. Jacqui Alexander

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In the Time of Autumn's Equinox: Praise Song for Angela Bowen

By M. Jacqui Alexander

22 September 2018

Dearest One, dear dear Miss Ange,

You picked up anchor and slipped away just a couple of months ago at 4:00 am, so Jennifer wrote, 'fore day morning,' as we say here in the Caribbean, making your transit while we were still asleep, you adorned in flawless white, left, once you decided that your work on this earthly plane was complete. You knew that the wheel had come full circle, your mission accomplished—as our sister Audre said, having done the work you came here to do.

We met thirty-three years ago, Miss Ange, on Cape Cod at one of the several report back sessions held after the 1985 Conference on Women held in Kenya, you wearing a long, flowered skirt, hair closely cropped, looking fine, dreaming a new capacious world, talking intimacy, lesbian love, politics and justice all in the same mind-blowing sentence, only to learn that our homes were just a stone's throw from each other on Pearl Street in Cambridge, MA. Sister friends forever was just simply inevitable.

Our families made home—we cooked and ate together, joined Black Lesbian support group together, crouched together on our living room floor, our ears pressed to the ground listening to Jennifer's historic radio interview of Audre Lorde; from there we planned Simon Nkoli's visit, Sharpeville to Stonewall, as a way of Building Liberation Coalitions, from that Audre's 'celeconference,' a word you invented, culminating this phase of our lives in New York with Audre's memorial, lighting up the Cathedral of St. John The Divine with 4000 candles, 4000 people, one powerful vision for just change. We inspired each other, Miss Ange, we lived in each other's hearts; we were devoted readers of each other's work, you, consummate grammarian, wordsmith, once premiere ballerina turned compassionate teacher, you stood at the conjunction of the very liberation movements about which you wrote in your later life's work. You were steady, fearless, committed to loving and living with integrity. Like an ancient griot, you had the memory of an elephant!!!

You've left a gap, Miss Ange, a gaping wound, now still so very raw, most of all for the loves of your life, Jennifer, Tombi, Jomo, Alfie, for all of us in the blood and kindred communities you've nurtured, all and for us who've loved you fiercely and up close, since you would accept nothing less. We still do. And we always will. You've left a hole even as you've filled us up.

As you take this journey back into formless form and timeless time, a journey that we all must inevitably take, know that Yemoja will bring you into the folds of her watery abode down into the celestial cities of Her Ocean floor. Oya will sweep you up with her steady winds and take you to places you never would have known, and all of the ancients and all of the Mysteries of this vast, luminous Multiverse will embrace you with their loving care. For in the end all that remains is LOVE. LOVE AND LIGHT. I'll take comfort in the stillness only the forest can conjure, leaning on the orange pink of Sky as guiding compass.

Forever,
Jac.