

My beloved beloved Ali

Speaking to you today your voice sounded so little. You, who are always so incredibly, almost ridiculously, strong ... and who have been tested so many many times in the smallest and hugest of ways. My heart aches aches aches for you ... I cannot begin to imagine how hard it must be just to be. And I want to hold you tight and let you weep as you must.

I'm sure that people try and find the right thing to say, but I don't think there are right words for what you have been through, so I won't bother to try and find them.

The other night I remembered that you gave Renee and I each a copy (am I right?) of 'the invitation'. I've just been online to find it again. I have always been struck by the verse about sitting with pain, and the one about getting up after a night of grief and despair. They've always struck more of a chord with me even than the beauty and dance of some of the other verses. I'm copying it – because they are such beautiful words, because you and Ren have just been through so many nights like that together, because you and I have shared so many nights like that in our past, because I read it at Deb's wedding. We are all so connected, and yet so much of that loss has been yours ...

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living

I want to know what you ache for

and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are

I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool

for love

for your dreams

for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon...

I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow

if you have been opened by life's betrayals

or have become shrivelled and closed

from fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain
mine or your own
without moving to hide it
or fade it
or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy
mine or your own
if you can dance with wildness
and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your
fingers and toes
without cautioning us to
be careful
be realistic
to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me
is true.

I want to know if you can
disappoint another
to be true to yourself.If you can bear the accusation of betrayal
and not betray your own soul.

If you can be faithless
and therefore trustworthy.I want to know if you can see Beauty
even when it is not pretty
every day.

And if you can source your own life

from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure
yours and mine
and still stand on the edge of the lake
and shout to the silver of the full moon,
"Yes."

It doesn't interest me
to know where you live or how much money you have.

I want to know if you can get up
after a night of grief and despair
weary and bruised to the bone
and do what needs to be done
to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know
or how you came to be here.

I want to know if you will stand
in the center of the fire
with me
and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom
you have studied.

I want to know what sustains you
from the inside
when all else falls away. I want to know if you can be alone

with yourself

and if you truly like the company you keep

in the empty moments.

My angel, I have no idea why this has been so true for you. I know that your beloved children are at peace together. I can see them, with my mom and dad and your mom and dad. My last clear image of Aidan is of the strong, beautiful, healthy young man who popped into my home a few years ago, before this incredibly hard journey that took him away from you. But knowing that they are now at peace, after having lived through every day of their pain and suffering, must make you feel terribly alone. All I can send you is my love, love, love ... and I will hold you in the light and pray hard to help you breathe your way through each day

Love love love love

Vaun