

I have known and loved Akka for 15 years in this life, and many more in other lives we've lived.

My husband said to me once, "I understand why so many people love Akka. She is so attentive, so interested in everything you say and do that in her company you somehow feel smarter, funnier, more beautiful, more accomplished, validated and loved. And it's true. Because in Akka's eyes, you were all those things and more.

Akka was such a supporter, an appreciator, a listener, a thinker, a peeler of chickpeas, a tireless helper who would show up with a pair of secateurs and bag of compost over the handlebars of her bike when your garden needed nurturing. She was a wonderful audience and the most beautiful of friends, always quick to laugh and so much fun.

Akka was a devoted traveler, both inward and outward, an explorer, an adventurer, a child of nature – herself a woodland sylph with an uncanny ability to capture the spirit of something and convey it, delight in it, cherish it, no matter how small: a river-tumbled stone, a bird's egg, a cicada carapace glistening against the rough skin of a tree.

It's no surprise then that the words of a seemingly small poem could move Akka so deeply, it inspired her to change her whole life. That poem is

Wild Geese by Mary Oliver.

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about your despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting --
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Akka heard the calls and followed them here, to this beautiful part of the world and to all of you. And now she's off again on a new journey, as is her way, exploring the Great Mystery. I can hear her voice now, and I will always hear her voice saying, "It's really something, hey Nat?"

Farewell, beloved voyager.

Farewell, for now.

Natale Ghent