Poetic Tribute – Ella White

Jane Clark Dodgson memorial

St Mary's Barnes, 2pm, 20th October 2026

To GA Jane – A Tribute for my Great Aunt and Companion

The '*great'* aunt bit always feels necessary to me to state, or speak,
even though people often just said, 'oh, your aunt' or 'you're her niece'…
No, to me it felt significant, essentially exploring the generations between us
And in so doing, gave space for the differences and distance that inevitably brought us together.

GA Jane you became in my head
With a playful salute and tip of the hat
Keeping me on my toes, responding to your emails
And generally making sure things were in order… and, well, to your liking 😉

At first it was a lodging arrangement, thanks to Aunt Sally
And my desperate need to find shelter I could afford in this rich city
We somewhat tiptoed about our new arrangement… perhaps both aware of the delicate road ahead,
me wondering if I would make it past our initial 3-month experiment.

I remember being bamboozled at how busy you were, heading into your 90s
Still with monthly trips to Handel House for concerts,
Numerous visitors coming and going, and of course… the musicians and music
Filling number 4 Scarth rd with worthy practice and concert readying sounds.

And then came lockdown… and all went quiet, no planes a Godsend for a while
Those endless blue skies of Spring 2020… grounded we all were, prisoners at times.

I can't remember exactly when, but Sunday Suppers arose… and to the table we took,
Gamay in hand (a grape of the red variety) and 'on offer' thanks to the Wine Society.
From here, true friendship and healing began… we challenged one another and debated,
Listening - undisturbed by phones pinging and notifications flying in.
This was sacred Sunday sups – a space to share the news of the week
Along with stories and memories of family lives, to jigsaw-piece together the holes in time.

In hindsight, I sense we were both perhaps nervous of where this might take us…
Cross-generational politics at the table, along with confusions from the tapestry of family past.
Yet we always made it through, hearts intact and life rebalanced
By an equal desire to share from truth and find harmony in our spheres –
The background, this Now - - ever present moment.

For your 95th birthday, I felt urged to take you to Suffolk
And so we did! Car spick and span, map to hand
Your co-piloting was exceptional, not a road missed or unplanned.
We made it to old friends, lunch at the Oysterage,
Even a walk on the beach! My demand.

I had hoped to record all your stories as I drove
Sub-knowing a time would come when they might be told
By a note other than your quick-witted, wizened tones
By others that now need to carry the old story bones.

Sadly, my designs failed and I couldn't manage the driving, questions and recording…
Instead what I received was cups of T, petrol, and your *deep* appreciation,
which meant the world to me.
Perhaps that idea too was somehow compelled by your sense of duty and obligation
'To history'. 'To the past' you see. To 'all that was,' which in your estimation
Dictates 'all that will be'.

I often begged to differ, and would passionately pronounce
That, no, it does not have to be '*like this*'… because of the past.
We, each of our own, individual and unique selves
Have indeed the power to change things for the better, uncoil, redeem,
And Unshelve all the nonsense of ages gone by…
Now *is* the time to rebuild angelic realms in the skies and in these, our natural born lines.

Indeed, I digressed plenty of times over those suppers of sumptuous food and wine.
Yet, astoundingly you would keep up and question my rhymes or imagination,
Keep me in time – to the ear of *your* generation, and to the respect it deserved.
I learned so much about how to preserve that channel of communication.

My dear Jane, companion and comrade in time – here, now we end this earthly line
Held till that final moment by care's deep dedication
You lay surrounded by true friendship and prayer for completion,
Until that last breath when from your body you flew,
laid quiet in Stephen's pink sitting room,
And overlooking your beloved Ash tree, garden gone wild in Autumn's golden bloom.

My deepest thanks, I know you knew, for all that we have travelled through,
in the bodies of women, this time around.