

## Today, you are ninety

Let's celebrate her, let's cherish her, let's adore her,

Let's live by her, let's love her, let's welcome her.

All that you are and all that you are yet to be;

the words in my head - a gift to me from you.

For you whispered each happy thought

into my ears and my heart, before I ever existed,

or knew who it was I was to become.

Your spirit has trickled down,

to my mother and settled itself here;

a piece of yourself living at home,

blooming within my bones, reminding me that

I am never truly alone.

My footsteps, my being, my laughter -

gifts that I do not need to unwrap with my hands.

Passed down generously through generations, with love.

Always your love.

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Let's live by her, let's love her, let's welcome her.

A baby born on a Friday in early July 1931 –

“a gift from God” it was proclaimed.

A darling girl, with dark curls aplenty, here to change the world.

Kitty and Billy loved her dearly,

for she was the final piece in the jigsaw that

they didn't know they needed, until they saw

her eyes glistening back into theirs.

She spent her days in the park, dancing beneath the summer sun,

a game of cricket, or two, or three,

her black clogs waiting patiently for her to finish

so that they could take their new owner

on a Lancastrian adventure, just the two of them.

In 1945 a girl guide, who had gone home to check the time, shouted

“it's nine o'clock and the war's over!” and she cheered so.

Let's celebrate her, let's cherish her, let's adore her,

Let's live by her, let's love her, let's welcome her.

She is the reason for you and I.

She is the golden summer sun warming the back of your neck,

that reminds you that happiness is real.

She is the tip of the Earth, she is the pitter-patter of the rain,  
she is vast open water and you are the flow of the river;  
curving and bending your way back and forth home,  
to the centre of your being.

She is everything that we have to be thankful for.

She is the creator  
of this day, this moment, this feeling.

She is the laughter that you feel deep  
in the pit of your stomach  
and the feeling of knowing that when you are around her,  
you are safe.

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Let's live by her, let's love her, let's welcome her.

At fourteen she left school,  
and became a bookkeeper by day;  
but her nights were for dancing  
with her favourite cousins -  
twinkling gently against the crescent moon,  
dreaming of the goodness that tomorrow might bring.

It was at the youth club that she met another Billy,  
(this time a Bill) and her father exclaimed,  
"Oh no, not another one!"

For there was dancing galore and trips to the pictures to be had.

They said "I do" soon after, at St Mary's Church,  
Almost 70 platinum years ago.

And they were at last joined by their children –  
four boys and three girls.

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If I could grow you  
one hundred million billion trillion  
freesias – the colour of the turquoise sea -  
I would.

Each a gift for how much you have given the world.

I will never not eat traffic light jelly and ice-cream and think about  
you.

Or how you always separated the two,  
just for me.

I see how much you love when those dearest to you come and say hello,

But it is nothing compared to the pleasure and comfort  
you effortlessly share with the rest of us.

For without love there is nothing,  
Without you there is nothing.

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They travelled throughout their Red Rose county,  
with Toby the dog, in Horis,  
who was filled to the tip-top with every little thing  
(except the kitchen sink, of course)  
Come rain or shine, their tent stood tall,  
(except when it blew away in a thunderstorm, of course).  
For there was always  
a game of cards to be won,  
a shandy to be drank,  
or a game of cricket to be enjoyed.  
The sun stretched her arms awake in the evening,  
allowing the return of bare toes on the dew of the blades of grass  
and the sound of laughter  
to echo joyfully across the golden fields.

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Let's live by her, let's love her, let's welcome her.

A hand that I often hold in the darkness  
belongs only to you.  
And if asked, I could pick out the delicate shape  
of your fingers in mine, without hesitation.  
Today, you are ninety –  
what a life you have lived.  
A birthday like no other, a day of your choosing.  
Ninety candles on a cake and each time I would whisper,  
how much I love you so.  
I have everything to thank you for.  
But above all else possible,  
running wild in my imagination. I must confess  
I have always believed in magic,  
because you are my grandmother.

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