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Friends, family, and all who loved Em,

Thank you for being here today to honour Emily Claire Watson—our Em—
my wife for 17 years,
my partner in everything from parenting to weekend projects,
the steady centre of our home.

Em was born in Toronto on March 22, 1982,
grew up in Scarborough,
and somehow kept that grounded Scarborough grit even when life got loud.
She studied nursing at Ryerson—now TMU—
and found her calling at SickKids as a paediatric nurse.
If you ever saw her at work, you saw what purpose looks like:
calm under pressure,
voice low and steady,
hands sure.
You also saw the pocketfuls of goofy stickers she carried for anxious kids,
the way she'd put a dinosaur on a pulse-oximeter and suddenly the room felt lighter.

She organized toy drives at the hospital every winter,
the kind that seemed to appear out of thin air but were actually the result of a hundred quiet phone calls and lists in her neat handwriting.
She mentored new nurses the same way she did everything:
practical advice, no fuss,
and a sense of humour that arrived at exactly the right moment.
When a night was going sideways,
Em would tilt her head, smile with her eyes,
and say, "Okay, here's the plan,"
and somehow, there was one.

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Em loved our kids more than words can hold.
Aiden, Sophie—your mum never missed a school concert.
Not once.
Even after an early shift,
even when the day had been hard,
she was the parent in the second row,
leafing through the program like it was an opening night on Broadway,
holding a crumpled tissue and whispering, “That’s our kid.”

She was the kind of daughter and sister who showed up before you knew you needed her.
Linda, George, Natalie—
she adored you.
If you called and said, “We might need a hand,”
she would already be halfway out the door with a casserole and a to-do list.
Fiercely loyal was her default setting.

At home, Em had a laugh that started in her eyes.
She baked butter tarts that never made it to the cooling rack because someone—usually me—would declare them “broken” and therefore taste-testable.
She ran the waterfront in the mornings, even on days that looked like November was never going to end.
She cheered for the Leafs with the resilient optimism of someone who knows patience is a virtue.
She loved mystery novels and guessed the twist by chapter five, then read to the end anyway because the characters deserved it.

And Muskoka was her refuge.
We kept a canoe by the dock like other people keep slippers by the door.
My favourite memory is a foggy morning paddle on Lake Muskoka.
The water was glass.
A pair of loons called back and forth across the bay.

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Em dipped her paddle into the mist and whispered,
“This is my favourite kind of quiet.”
I didn’t reply.
You don’t talk when the world is that still.
You just learn what your heart sounds like.

Em believed in small, consistent goodness.
Family first.
Kindness over convenience.
Do the right thing even when no one’s watching.
She lived those lines in the spaces most people never notice:
the 5 a.m. Tim’s run for a double-double on the way to an early shift,
the text to a friend who was having a rough week,
the neighbour’s driveway mysteriously shovelled before sunrise.
She made our house feel like home
with hot tea, a clear head, and a place for every mitten that tried to escape.

She was practical and brave.
Brave didn’t always look like big speeches.
It looked like holding a tiny hand while a parent gathered themselves,
or telling me, “We can fix that,” when a project had gone sideways,
or showing Aiden how to make pancakes without setting off the smoke alarm,
or reminding Sophie that courage can be quiet but still counts.

People will miss her steady hand in chaos.
They’ll miss the way she could walk into a complicated room and gently sort it into something everyone could carry.
I will miss waking up to her notes on the counter—
a quick heart drawn next to a list that included things like “buy bananas, call Natalie, hug the kids twice.”
I will miss the way she looked at me when I was worrying about ten steps ahead and she’d say,
“Let’s do the next right thing,”
and somehow, doing just that was enough.

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To the nurses and colleagues who worked alongside her,
thank you for loving her like family.
To our friends and neighbours,
thank you for being the community she believed in.
To our families—Linda, George, Natalie—thank you for shaping the woman I got to love.
To Aiden and Sophie—
your mum’s lessons are stitched into you.
Your kindness,
your grit,
your way of noticing people—
that’s her.
When you hear a loon on a quiet morning,
when you help someone without being asked,
when you choose the hard good over the easy shrug,
you are carrying her forward.

Today hurts.
There’s no getting around that.
Em passed away on April 5 this year, at 44.
We wanted more time.
But the years we had—our 17 as a married pair, our messy, joyful partnership from parenting to fixing leaky taps—were fuller than I knew a life could be.
She taught us that love is a practice,
that community is built one showing-up at a time,
and that the best kind of strength doesn’t shout.

If you want to honour her,
tell a child they’re brave.
Bring soup and a plan.
Buy the extra pack of stickers.
Cheer hopeless teams with hopeful hearts.
Take the early shift coffee to someone who needs it.

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And when the fog lifts off the lake—or off your own day—pay attention to that kind of quiet.

Em, my love,
you made our world kinder and sturdier.
You left fingerprints on every good corner of our lives.
We'll keep going the way you taught us:
together,
with open hands,
doing the next right thing.

Thank you for everything.

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