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Family, friends, colleagues, and all who loved Emily Claire Patterson—our Em—thank you for being here today.

We gather with heavy hearts,
and with deep gratitude for the years we were given with her.

I speak as Em’s younger brother,
the one she teased, defended, and coached through more scrapes—literal and figurative—than I can count.
We were close and honest with each other.
She told me the truth when I needed it,
and she made space for my truth when I struggled to find words.

Em was born on September 14, 1987,
and in thirty-seven years she managed what some never do in a lifetime:
she became a steady presence you could rely on,
the person you called at 2 a.m. because her voice could calm a storm.

She was raised in Halifax,
where salt air and a certain plainspoken kindness took root in her.
At Dalhousie, she studied nursing and found not just a profession but a calling.
She moved to Toronto and faced the unpredictable world of a downtown ER with quiet courage.
There, she was a registered nurse and a patient advocate who knew that dignity is not paperwork—it is practice.
She volunteered with Canadian Blood Services,
rolled up her sleeves when others hesitated,
and mentored new nurses who now carry her standards forward.

Em was the beloved daughter of Margaret and Daniel Patterson,

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the loyal partner and wife of Liam Chen,
and the devoted mom of Sophie, who was the centre of her days and the source of her biggest smiles.
She was also an aunt who never arrived empty-handed—snacks for small hands, puzzles for rainy afternoons, and time,
always time,
for our nephews who adored her.

What defined Em was not a single moment in a crisis,
but the pattern she stitched through ordinary days.
Compassionate without fanfare.
Steady under pressure.
Quietly witty—the kind of humour that appears at just the right angle, cleans the air, and lets people breathe again.
Courageous when it counted.
Endlessly dependable, not because it was easy,
but because she believed in showing up for people.

My favourite memory is a windy autumn road trip around the Cabot Trail.
The windows were down even when reason said they should be up.
Em sang along to a playlist that didn’t care about categories,
and she insisted—every single time—that we stop at each lookout.
She would lean on the guardrail, hair in her eyes, and say,
“Give it a minute—things look different if you let them.”
It was typical Em—stubborn in service of wonder.
That day taught me her quiet philosophy:
pay attention,
take the long view,
and do not rush past the good that’s right in front of you.

She lived that way in big and small ways.
Trail running along the Don Valley at dawn,
chasing the kind of stillness you only earn with footfall and breath.
Baking butter tarts that somehow landed at the perfect edge of caramel and

salt,
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and then pretending it was nothing when we marvelled.
Cheering for the Leafs with a commitment that survived long seasons,
and debating line changes with more heat than any kitchen thermometer could measure.
Setting a puzzle out on the weekend and turning it into a gathering place—cups of tea, shared silence, the satisfaction of one more piece found.

Em’s values were evident and not negotiable.
Kindness in action—not theory.
Integrity at work—even when no one was looking.
Inclusivity—noticing who was half outside the circle and making space with a gesture as simple as a chair pulled closer.
Gratitude for small moments—a decent coffee on a night shift,
a patient’s hand held for one more minute,
a sunset from a hospital window that said, “We’re still here.”

We will miss her dry laugh that arrived like a side note and somehow became the headline.
We will miss the way she could make a hard day feel manageable by naming the next right thing and guiding you toward it.
We will miss the reassurance of her voice in the hours when everything felt precarious.
For many, that voice steadied pain, resisted despair, and made room for decisions that honoured both care and courage.

To the ER colleagues and the new nurses she mentored:
you knew her standards—clear-eyed, exacting, humane.
You also knew her belief that advocacy is part of treatment.
Keep that close.
To the volunteers who stood beside her at clinics:
you saw how she welcomed strangers as if they had been expected all along.
Carry that welcome.
To our family:

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we saw the grace she kept for home.
Long days, then bedtime stories for Sophie.
Debates about the Leafs sandwiched between baked tarts and laundry.
Care that was not performance, but promise.

Liam,
you were her harbour.
Sophie,
you were her joy and her proudest sentence.
Mum and Dad,
you gave Em the ground she used to stand strong for others; your love is visible in the shape of her generosity.
And to our nephews,
your Aunt Em would want you to keep asking good questions and to celebrate every small victory—especially the ones no one else notices.

Em did not chase the dramatic gesture.
She trusted in the steady accumulation of good choices.
She believed that a life is measured—not by applause—but by the people who can breathe easier because you were there.

Grief can make the world feel thin.
But love has a way of thickening the air again.
If you want to find Em in the days ahead,
you will hear her in the shift-change wisdom passed between nurses,
in a young volunteer learning how to greet someone without rushing them,
in a family puzzle that slowly becomes a picture,
in a winded runner pausing at a lookout just to give it one more minute.

In lieu of flowers, our family asks that donations be made to the Heart & Stroke Foundation,
an organization aligned with the care Em offered every day.
Following the service, there will be a reception with Em’s favourite playlist—songs for windows-down roads and quiet kitchens alike.

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Please come, share a story, and help Sophie learn new angles of the mother who loved her so well.

Em, my sister,
you looked out for me from the start.
You taught me that strength can be gentle,
that humour can be a form of mercy,
and that showing up—again and again—is its own kind of courage.

We release you with thanks.
We will honour you not by perfect words,
but by the way we live:
steadily,
with open hands,
grateful for small moments,
and faithful in the promise to show up for one another.

Thank you, Em.
For the miles,
for the music,
for every lookout where the world looked different because you asked us to pause.

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