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Family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours,

thank you for standing with us here today, at Queen's Park Cemetery,  
where we lay to rest a woman who steadied so many of us through storms,  
and somehow still found time to bake cinnamon buns on a Sunday morning.

We are here to honour the life of my wife,  
Aisha Noor Campbell —  
Ish, to those of us who loved her and were loved by her —  
born on January 27, 1979, in Ottawa,  
gone from us at 45,  
and present in more ways than a calendar can hold.

Ish and I were devoted partners for twenty-two years.  
She was my wife, my compass, and my truest friend.  
When I forgot who I wanted to be,  
she remembered for me,  
with a glance, a question, or a quiet "try again."

She began life in Ottawa,  
curious, bookish, and already attuned to the needs of others.  
At McGill, she studied medicine with the mix that defined her —  
meticulous work, a deep well of empathy,  
and that steady presence under pressure that made people breathe easier just  
by seeing her in the room.

After graduating, she chose Calgary.  
She used to say the big sky was good for perspective.  
Here, she became a paediatrician dedicated to patient-centred care.  
She led community clinics,

advocated for better asthma care for children

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and made it impossible to confuse “cost-effective” with “care-first.”

When a parent was sleep-deprived and scared,

when a child’s inhaler plan wasn’t working,

Ish stayed until there was clarity,

and stayed a little longer to make sure the plan fit the family’s real life.

Equity. Integrity. Humility. Service to community.

These weren’t slogans for her.

They were the quiet routine of her days.

She was a researcher as much as a physician —

digging into childhood asthma not to publish,

but to fix what wasn’t yet working.

Data were never numbers to her.

They were children’s nights without coughing fits,

parents’ mornings without dread.

She also gave her time as a volunteer camp physician,

the one who could turn a scraped knee into a science lesson

and a vaccination into a badge of courage.

At home, she was playfully silly with kids and unflappable with adults.

Sofia and Liam, you know this better than anyone.

Your mum could be unyielding on seatbelts and bedtime,

and in the next breath turn a story about a kite into a lesson about wind,

patience, and second chances.

Her voice was reassuring without pretending everything was easy.

She never promised you no rain.

She promised she would stand with you in it.

There was a rhythm to our life that fit her values.

Prairie hikes to reset our senses.

Watercolour painting that taught us to pay attention to light.

Piano on quiet Sundays, never for show, always to settle the house.

And the kitchen — that was her small republic of kindness.

Cinnamon buns that asked for a slow morning.  
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Soup that announced someone had been thought of.

Lists, timers, flour on the counter,

and laughter that made our dog tilt his head as if he could understand the joke.

My favourite memory?

Late-night kitchen dances after her shifts.

She would come home,

still in scrubs, sometimes with a dusting of flour because she'd prepped dough before dawn,

turn the music up just loud enough to wake my smile,

and pull me into a slow two-step among the cooling racks.

We never quite had the timing right,

and that was the point.

In those minutes, the house belonged to joy.

A day of hard edges became soft again.

We didn't fix the world there,

but we remembered why we kept trying.

To Sofia, fourteen,

and Liam, eleven —

your mum trusted you.

She trusted your minds, your kindness, and your grit.

She loved your curiosity, your jokes, your stubborn streaks.

She wanted you to know that care matters more than convenience.

That integrity is a daily habit, not a performance.

That equity isn't theory — it's who gets the inhaler, the appointment, the chance.

If you remember nothing else,

remember the way she listened all the way to the end.

Remember how her bedtime stories slipped a compass into your pocket without you noticing until you needed it.

And know this:

the part of her that steadied us is already at work in you.

To her parents, Farah and Hamid,

and to her sister, Leila —

I loved the way Aisha turned to you three.

On big days and ordinary ones,

she carried your teachings forward:

do the work, make space for others,

and use your voice even when it shakes.

She was fierce in her commitments because you made room for that fierceness to grow.

Our family is held up by that foundation today.

To her colleagues and the families she cared for,

thank you for the trust you placed in her.

She carried your stories home with respect and privacy,

but also with pride.

Your courage changed her; your children taught her.

On behalf of our family, we also extend our deep thanks to the teams at Foothills Medical Centre.

You moved with skill and with heart.

You met us with clarity, honesty, and compassion.

You gave us time, and we will not forget it.

What defined Ish?

Empathy, yes, but not the soft-focus kind —

the practical empathy that shows up early,

brings a list, and makes the call.

Meticulous work,

not to be right, but to do right.

Steady under pressure,

not because she felt nothing,

but because she knew panic helps no one.

And with children —

utterly, delightfully silly.

She would wear a paper crown during flu clinics,  
name an otoscope,  
and convince toddlers that stethoscopes could hear bravery.  
She understood that dignity and delight belong together.

What will we miss?  
Her reassuring voice when fear got loud.  
Her wise counsel, offered without an audience.  
The way bedtime stories became gentle life lessons,  
so well told you never felt taught —  
only seen, invited, and trusted.

Grief at a graveside is stark.  
There is little to hide behind here —  
no high ceilings, no distance.  
But celebration is not out of place.  
It lives in every life she made lighter,  
in each child who will breathe easier next winter,  
in the friendships nourished over tea and the last, warm bun,  
in sketches of mountains and sky tucked into our drawers,  
in the piano keys that still remember her hands.

Ish believed that communities are built hour by hour.  
Today, we are a community because of her —  
tethered by the care she invested in us.  
Let's continue her work,  
not in grand gestures alone,  
but in the small, stubborn choices that add up:  
listen longer,  
ask better questions,  
make room,  
and when given the option,  
choose care over convenience.

When I think about how to carry her forward,  
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I return to those late-night dances.

There was no perfection in them.

We stepped on each other's toes, laughed, tried again.

That is how I want to grieve,

and how I want to live —

not pretending not to stumble,

but learning the rhythm together.

In a few moments, we will commit Aisha to the earth,

in the city she chose,

under the big sky that steadied her.

And then we will gather at the community hall for a reception.

There, I hope you will share your stories —

the serious and the small —

so that Sofia and Liam hear, again and again,

the many ways their mum met the world with integrity and warmth.

Ish,

my compass,

my truest friend —

thank you for the years you gave so completely,

for the counsel you offered so quietly,

for the love that made our home feel larger than its walls.

We cannot keep you,

but we can keep faith with what mattered to you.

We will listen like you did.

We will stand with those who need standing with.

We will laugh in kitchens too small for dancing, and dance anyway.

Rest, Aisha.

We will take it from here.

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