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Thank you all for being here today to honour my mum, Helen Mary Carter — Nell to most of us — and to hold one another up as we say goodbye.

Mum was born on 3 March 1959 in Leeds, and she left us peacefully aged 65. Between those two dates is a lifetime of doing the right thing quietly, steadily, and with a warmth that never asked for applause.

She grew up in Leeds, trained as a nurse with the NHS, and in her twenties moved to Manchester.
There she met Dad — Peter — and for the next 38 years they built a home the way Mum did everything: practical, thoughtful, with a good cup of tea close by.
She was Mum to me and to my brother Daniel, and in recent years she became Grandma to Isla and Freddie — a role she wore like a favourite cardigan.
She was also sister to Margaret, a steady point of laughter and honesty in each other’s lives.

For more than three decades, Mum worked on the surgical ward at the community hospital.
If you ever tried to walk with her through a high street near the hospital, you’ll know it took an age.
Someone would stop her to say thank you for a kindness she’d already forgotten she’d given.
She mentored junior nurses with the same care she gave her patients — sleeves rolled up, expectations high, and humour dry enough to cut through a night shift.
She championed compassionate, patient-centred care long before it was a slogan.
She simply believed that if you’re trusted with someone at their most frightened, you meet that trust with skill and kindness, every time.

At home she was our anchor and our daily cheerleader.
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Not the pom-poms sort — more the “I’ll put the kettle on, now tell me everything” sort.
Her texts every morning came like clockwork.
Sometimes it was a weather report.
Sometimes it was a nudge: “You’ve got this.”
Sometimes it was a recipe tip for the Sunday roast I would inevitably overcook.
I’m going to miss those messages more than I can say — and I know many of you will miss that quiet check-in she seemed to manage with everyone.

Her patience was legendary.
Not the passive kind, the practical kind.
She could calm a crisis just by turning the volume down on the room.
I can still hear her say, “Right, let’s deal with what’s in front of us,” and somehow everything would shrink back to its true size.

Mum’s joys were simple and steadfast.
She kept an allotment that looked, to the untrained eye, like organised chaos.
To her it was abundance.
In summer she’d arrive at ours with a Tupperware of something freshly dug, dirt still under her nails, and a plan for scones that would make any gathering feel like a small celebration.
On winter evenings she’d knit blankets for the neonatal unit — row after careful row — a quiet act of love for babies and parents she would never meet.
On Sundays, once the roast was in and everyone had been shooed out of the kitchen, she’d tackle the crossword with a pencil and a raised eyebrow when Dad and I guessed.
She prized getting things right, but she prized getting them right fairly even more.

One of my favourite memories is of Whitby on a windy spring day.
We sat on the pier with fish and chips, huddled in our coats, laughing as the gulls made ambitious grabs for our supper.
Mum tried to outwit a particularly determined bird with the sort of tactical

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movement that would have impressed the army.
When it finally succeeded, she shook her head, dabbed a bit of grease from her chin, and said, “Well, everyone’s got to eat,” and then split the last chip with me.
That was her: fairness, even when it meant you got a little less.

Her values were not complicated.
Be kind.
Be fair.
Do the right thing, especially when no one is watching.
Put community and family first, and don’t make a fuss about it.
She didn’t teach those values by talking about them; she taught them by showing up.
By covering a shift.
By dropping off a casserole.
By listening all the way to the end of your sentence before answering.

There are the things we’ll miss that are easy to name — her legendary Sunday roast, the ones that tasted of time and care; her calm voice in a crisis, the one that steadied our breathing; those morning texts that started the day with a smile.
And then there are the harder-to-name absences — the way she filled a room without ever being the loudest in it, the way she gave you courage without ever saying the word.

To Dad — Peter — thank you for the way you loved her.
Thirty-eight years of partnership that looked, day to day, like cups of tea, practical jokes, shared crossword clues, and a hand that always reached back.
To Daniel, to Isla and Freddie, to Auntie Margaret — we carry her together.
We will tell her stories the way she lived them: straight, warm, a little wry around the edges.

Grief rearranges a family, but so do the gifts a person leaves behind.
From Mum we have recipes and seedlings and a jumble of knitting needles.

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But more than that, we have habits of heart.
We can choose to text each other in the mornings.
We can choose the fair word over the clever one.
We can choose to be steady when things are wobbly.
That is how her life will keep on doing its quiet work in us.

Mum would not want a grand ending.
She would want us to look after one another, to eat properly, and to get some air.
So we will do that.
In lieu of flowers, if you would like to, please make a donation to Macmillan Cancer Support — a cause close to our hearts and to Mum’s.
And after the service, there will be a small tea at the village hall.
She would have liked that — a room of people she loved, a table of something homemade, and time to talk.

Nell, Mum — thank you.
For the patience that steadied us, the humour that surprised us, and the love that never ran dry.
You were our anchor and our cheerleader.
We’ll keep your steadiness, your kindness, and your fairness at the centre of our days.

Rest now, knowing we’ll carry on the work you began — gently, properly, and together.

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