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Thank you all for being here today to say goodbye to my sister, Emily Jane Carter — Em to most of us.

It still feels strange to speak about Em in the past tense.
She was only 35.
Born on 14 March 1991, she packed a lot of life, a lot of love, and a lot of service to others into those years.

We grew up side by side in Manchester, the familiar kind of sibling team that shared a dodgy cassette player, sulked over board games, and learnt pretty early that if we stuck together, we were braver.
That never really changed.
Through school, through the scrapes of our twenties, through the bigger chapters that came later — she stayed my best mate.

Em knew what she wanted to do.
She went to Leeds to study nursing, and came back to the NHS as an ICU nurse with a quiet determination that suited her perfectly.
She never needed the spotlight.
She just showed up, shift after shift, and did the work that steadies other people's lives.
She was the one showing the new starters where the gloves were, explaining the alarms without impatience, and asking the sort of questions that meant families felt seen and heard.
At the weekend she'd be found running first-aid courses at the community centre, making it simple and calm and human — because that's how she believed care should feel.

The thing about Em's compassion is that it wasn't sentimental.
It was practical.

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It sounded like “I’ll swing by on my way home,” and “Eat something first, then we’ll talk,” and “Set your alarm — I’ll text you at seven.”
And every morning, the little ping at 7am like church bells, just to check you were alright.
I know many of us will still reach for our phones at that time.

She had a laugh that started in her shoulders and worked its way out, and a dry wit that slipped in under the door just when you needed it.
She could land a one-liner so gently that you only noticed how perfect it was after the room had already relaxed.
In a world that can be too loud, Em was master of the kind of humour that lets people breathe.

One of my favourite memories is from a rainy camping trip in the Lake District.
Everything was damp — socks, sleeping bags, morale.
The tent leaked.
The forecast lied.
Em set about rescuing the day with the worst jokes I’ve ever heard and the best campfire tea I’ve ever tasted.
She doctored the fire like an ICU monitor, coaxing a stubborn flame, and when the water finally boiled she held the mugs like trophies.
By the time the stars showed up, so did our good mood.
That was Em’s gift: she didn’t deny the rain; she worked with it, and somehow made it part of the story you wanted to tell.

She loved wild swimming — that sharp intake of breath, that moment you decide to trust the cold and go under.
She loved baking lemon drizzle cake that tasted like sunshine had snuck into the tin.
She loved indie gigs where you could feel the bass in your ribs.
And she loved walking her rescue dog, who returned the favour by rescuing her on long days.

Her values were simple and stubborn in the best way: kindness, fairness,

service.
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She didn’t keep score.
She just turned up where she was needed.
And when it was hard, she kept going, not because she was fearless, but because she believed other people were worth the effort.

Mum and Dad, Susan and Peter, she carried you both in everything she did — your steadiness, your humour, your sense of what matters.
Sophie, she was so proud to be your sister.
And Liam — she said “fiancé” with a smile you could hear down the phone.
You gave her a future she was excited to walk into.
We all wish we’d had more time to watch you build it together.

There is comfort, too, in what Em leaves behind that we can hold onto.
We will miss that big laugh, those 7am check-ins, and that calm strength that anchored tough days.
But we also get to keep what she taught us by how she lived:
That showing up is a love language.
That listening is a form of courage.
That making tea — properly, patiently — is not a small thing.

Even in her last act, Em was still caring for strangers.
She was an organ donor.
Three people have been given another chance because of her.
It is exactly the kind of quiet heroism she’d have brushed off with a shrug.
But we can say it for her: that choice was brave and generous, and it matters.

There is a particular kind of ache today.
It’s the space where Em’s messages would be.
It’s reaching a hilltop and realising she isn’t there to point out the view.
Grief can make the world feel narrowed.
But Em’s life widened it — for patients, for colleagues, for friends, for us.
If we want to honour her, we can widen it still:
Send the message.

Boil the kettle.

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Turn up for the late shift of someone else’s bad day.
And when it’s raining, tell a terrible joke and light the fire anyway.

To everyone from the NHS who worked with Em — thank you for the care and camaraderie you gave her, and for the work you do that most people only ever hear about in whispers.
She believed in you fiercely.

If you’re wondering what to do with your hands today, with your sadness and your love, there is something simple.
In lieu of flowers, our family is inviting donations to the British Heart Foundation.
It feels right to turn grief into something that helps.

Em, you were my little sister, my co-conspirator, my compass.
You moved through the world with a steadiness that made the rest of us braver.
I don’t know how to end this properly, so I’ll end it the way you started our days.

I’m alright, Em.
I hope you are too.
I’ll put the kettle on.
And I’ll keep showing up.

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