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Good morning everyone,

Thank you for being here to honour my mum, Helen Margaret Clarke.

Mum was born on 3 March 1958, and she left us at 66. It's a sentence that feels too small for the life she lived, the love she gave, and the quiet courage she showed every single day.

She grew up in Leeds, where kindness was the first language she learned. She went on to study nursing, and, after she married Dad — Peter — she moved to Manchester, rolled up her sleeves and gave three decades of her life to the community as a district nurse. Those years weren't just a job. They were Mum's calling. She believed, deeply and without fuss, that small acts of care change lives. She championed dignified end-of-life care, mentored new nurses, and did everything with that gentle manner people still talk about. Her steadiness calmed rooms, her humour lifted shoulders, and her patience — endless, genuine — made people feel safe and seen.

At home, she was our anchor. Married to Dad for 41 years, Mum to Emily and me, loving sister to John, and the softest, silliest Nana to three grandchildren who adored her. She had that reassuring voice on the phone — the one that could untie knots in your chest in five minutes flat. And those gentle hands that knew instinctively how to comfort. If you were lucky enough to be loved by her, you know exactly what I mean.

I keep returning to my favourite memory of her: evening walks in Heaton Park with flasks of tea, steam curling in the cool air, the two of us swapping stories and laughing until our sides hurt. There was nothing grand about those moments — no big announcements or revelations — just the ordinary magic of a mother and daughter, confidantes, walking the same path. I can almost hear her

now, a wicked little joke under her breath, a squeeze of my arm, that steady, warm presence beside me.

Mum's life looked simple from the outside, but it was full to the brim. Roses climbing the garden fence because she coaxed them there. Knitted blankets she made for the neonatal ward — practical love, loop by loop. Sunday crossword puzzles finished with a satisfied smirk and the occasional triumphant "Got it!" Lemon drizzle cakes cooling by the window, always "just a small slice" that somehow invited seconds. And shoes by the back door, always ready for one more visit, one more neighbour, one more call where she could help.

What defined her? Warmth that asked for nothing in return. A steadiness you could lean on. A quiet courage that faced hard days without fanfare. A wicked sense of humour that kept us honest and kept us going. She wasn't showy. She never needed to be. She was reliable. Fair. Kind. She kept her promises. She turned up.

And she turned us into better people, simply by example. I am especially grateful to her for that — for the way she taught me compassion not as a lesson but as a way to live. On the days I doubted myself, she believed for me. On the days I fell short, she met me with a cuppa and a plan. If I've managed to be brave in life, it's because she showed me how to be brave quietly.

To Dad — Peter — 41 years of love, laughter, and partnership. You and Mum built a life that held all of us. Thank you for the way you cared for her and stood beside her, always. To John, her brother: she was proud of you — of the shared roots, the Leeds stories, the family threads that held strong. To Emily and me, and to her three beloved grandchildren: she loved us beyond measure, and we carry her with us, everywhere.

And to Mum's other family — the community she served, the nurses she mentored, the people who met her on doorsteps and in quiet rooms — you were part of her story too. She believed everyone deserves dignity, especially at the end. If you ever felt safer because she walked into the room, if you ever felt

seen because she spoke gently and listened well, that was her gift to you. I hope, in some small way, we can pass that on.

There's so much we'll miss. The sound of her voice when you rang at odd hours. The feel of her hand smoothing your sleeve before you faced something tough. The way she could make a kitchen a sanctuary and a garden a small, living orchestra of colour. We'll miss her laughter — that bright, wicked glint that could undo the hardest day.

But today, even through our grief, I want to celebrate the life she lived. Because Mum lived exactly as she believed: that small acts of care change lives. A knitted blanket for a baby who needed warmth. A lemon drizzle for a neighbour having a bad week. A new nurse encouraged, a patient dignified, a family steadied. None of it made headlines. All of it made a difference.

If you want to honour her — and I know we all do — do it the way she would have: call someone who needs to hear a reassuring voice. Show up on a doorstep with something warm. Choose kindness when it would be easier not to. Keep your promises. Be reliable. Grow something. Laugh, even on the hard days.

Mum, you were my anchor and my confidante. You were the person I reached for, the one who made me feel I could figure things out. I don't know how to walk the whole road without you — but I do know how to take the next step. Kettle on. Shoes by the door. A little kindness at the ready. And maybe a flask of tea for the walk through Heaton Park, where I'll tell you everything, and listen for the laughter that still lives in the trees.

Thank you, Mum, for the love you poured into this world. We will carry it forward. We will look after one another. And we will remember you not with only tears, but with roses in bloom, cakes shared, puzzles finished, and a courage as quiet and steadfast as yours.

We love you. Always.

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