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Dear family, dear friends, dear colleagues who stood shoulder to shoulder with her—thank you for being here to honor the life of my sister, Emily Jane Carter, our Em.

She was born on March 5, 1986, and she left us peacefully at the age of 40.
It still feels impossible to place those numbers beside her name, because Em filled time with so much purpose that years seemed too small a measure for her life.

To Michael, her husband of twelve years, to our parents, Patricia and Robert, and to all who loved her—your grief is real, and so is the mark she left on you.
What comforts me today is that when people speak of Em, they reach for the same words: steady, gentle, brave, exacting in the best way.
In a crisis, she was the person you wanted to see step into the room.

Em grew up in Boston, where she learned early to balance heart with backbone.
At Northeastern, she earned her BSN and moved into the ICU, a place where every detail matters and every breath counts.
She gave fifteen years to that calling—fifteen years of night shifts and day shifts, of holding hands and holding lines, of making sure that nothing and no one slipped through the cracks.
If you trained under her, you learned how to prime a pump and how to speak to a family at three in the morning.
She mentored new nurses not to impress them with what she knew, but to make them confident enough to trust what they had learned.
And on her days off, she would show up at free clinics with that same quiet resolve—charting, listening, advocating, not for applause but because it was needed.

She was meticulous without being cold.

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She was calm without being distant.
If a monitor screamed and a room filled, Em’s voice would drop just a little lower, and the air would change.
You could feel people breathing again.

But her steadiness was not limited to hospital walls.
At home, it looked like watercolor paper taped to a kitchen table, a brush resting on a mug, and the patient blue of a Maine inlet taking shape in faint washes.
It looked like a Sunday ritual—flour dust on the counter, the measured stretch and fold of sourdough, the kitchen warming as a loaf rose and the week found its center.
It looked like lacing boots for a New England trail and leaving early enough to meet a day at the line where it begins.

My favorite memory with Em is one of those mornings.
We were on a sunrise hike in Acadia, dead quiet except for our footsteps and the gulls somewhere below.
At the summit, before the sun cleared the edge of the water, she pulled a camp stove from her pack, brewed hot cocoa, and sat with me on a cold rock as the first light found our faces.
She handed me the steaming cup and, as if we were discussing nothing more than the weather, said, “You can do hard things, Dan.”
It was not a pep talk, not a slogan.
It was a simple sentence from someone who had watched the hard things up close and knew that courage often sounds like a calm statement of fact.

If you knew Em, you know she spoke that way in notes, too.
Before big days—exams, first shifts, job interviews, the flight you were nervous about—she slipped handwritten lines into the side pocket of a bag or under a windshield wiper.
No flourish, just a few words in her even hand to remind you who you were and that she was in your corner.
I have kept more than I admit.

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Faith was a quiet current in her life.
Raised Catholic, she found strength in prayer, and there were hymns she could hum from memory that seemed to slow the room down.
She did not announce her beliefs; she lived them in the way she tended to the sick, showed mercy to the anxious, and protected those who were unsteady on their feet.
It was a faith that showed up, rolled sleeves, and stayed to clean.

She loved many things, and she loved them well—Michael most of all, our parents, and, in a very particular way, the younger brother she decided early on was hers to look out for.
When I crossed milestones—graduations, first apartment, the early wins and mistakes of adult life—there was Em, cheering just loudly enough so that I could hear her and not lose my balance.
She didn’t remove challenges.
She stood next to me until I could face them.

Today we will miss the parts of her that are so hard to replace.
We will miss her steady hand in a crisis and the way her gentle laugh made you believe a hard day could still be a good day.
We will miss finding a small card tucked into a bag, reading a sentence that made our shoulders drop.
We will miss the way Sunday bread made the house smell like a promise kept.

But we are also here to honor what endures.
The young nurse she coached through a first code who now instinctively steadies another.
The clinic patient who found an advocate and a path forward.
The colleague who learned that precision and kindness are not opposites.
The family habit of looking for daybreak and, when we find it, brewing cocoa and sharing the view.

Em asked one thing of us with that characteristic lack of drama: keep caring for one another, and keep donating blood.

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It is a simple instruction, which is exactly why she trusted it.
Some lives are saved in operating rooms, some in the quiet choice to give, again and again.
If you’re looking for a way to honor her, start there.
Help someone breathe easier.
Make a call.
Write a note.
Show up.

To Michael—your devotion to Em was evident in all the ordinary days, which are the ones that count most.
To Mom and Dad—your daughter carried your love into every room she entered.
And to those who worked with her, who were trained by her, who were held by her care—please know that your stories of her are gifts to us, and they help us see her whole.

We mourn, yes.
But we also give thanks for a life that braided competence with kindness, for forty years that were not measured by their length but by their weight.
Em did hard things, and she taught us we can, too.
We will carry her forward in the way we listen, in the way we act when no one is watching, and in the way we choose steadiness over noise.

Emily Jane Carter, beloved daughter, devoted wife, protective sister, nurse with a calm voice and capable hands—thank you.
For the sunrises and the notes, for the careful charts and the painted skies, for the bread that made a house feel like home.

Rest in God’s peace, Em.
We will keep caring for one another.
We will keep giving.
And when the morning comes, we will meet it with courage.

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