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Dear family, dear friends,

thank you for being here to honor the life of my sister, Linda Marie Brooks—our Linda, our Aunt Lin—born on November 10, 1952, and entered into rest at the age of seventy-one.

We gather in grief,
and we gather in gratitude.
Both belong here today.

I speak as her older brother,
someone who learned early that my kid sister possessed a steadiness I would come to lean on more times than I can count.

Linda was born in Cleveland, where we grew up in a neighborhood of porch steps, snow shovels, and modest dreams that felt big to us.
She chose nursing not because it was expected, but because a calling found her early and would not let go.
She studied hard,
and then she gave thirty-five years of her life as a pediatric nurse, where precision mattered,
but presence mattered even more.

If you want to understand Linda,
stand with me in a memory that returns to me often:
a hospital hallway,
the murmur of machines,
a frightened child clinging to a mother’s sleeve.
And then Linda appears,
quiet-voiced, sleeves neatly rolled, the small puppet dog she called “Mopsy”

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folded into the palm of her hand.
With a tilt of her wrist, Mopsy came alive—sniffing, nodding, a little bow as if to say, “I see you.”
Tears slowed.
A brave giggle broke the spell.
In seconds, a room changed temperature.
She did not distract children from their fear; she walked them through it, step by steady step.

That is the nurse she was,
and that is the person she was:
compassionate healer, meticulous in her craft, humble to a fault, courageous under pressure.
She never made the moment about herself.
She made space for the smallest person in the room.

After decades on the pediatric floor, Linda retired to Savannah.
“Retired” is not the right verb.
She exchanged a time clock for a calling’s next chapter.
At a free clinic, she measured out care like she measured flour for her famous lemon bars—carefully, generously, with an intuition for what each situation required.
She mentored young nurses,
not with speeches but with questions:
What do you see? What do you hear that isn’t said? Where can you slow down and still be thorough?
She had a way of making standards feel like an embrace.

Faith steadied her.
Not in the loud declarations,
but in the quiet keeps:
a worn devotional near the breakfast chair,
a penciled margin note beside a psalm,
a hymn hummed under her breath as dawn lifted over the river.

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When strength was needed,
she drew from a well she had deepened over years of ordinary mornings.
If you ever walked near her on those early morning river walks, you might have caught a fragment of a tune—often Ave Maria—which she has asked us to include in this service.
It was not ornament for her; it was prayer.

Her life held room for delight.
Watercolor pads on the kitchen table,
a jar of brushes standing like a bouquet,
little studies of marsh grass and ibis tucked into envelopes for birthdays.
A pair of binoculars by the back door because a flash of wings waits for no one.
A recipe card smudged with lemon zest and sugar because “baking is accuracy with a sweet ending,” she used to say.
And always those early walks,
when the city was quiet enough to tell you something you needed to hear.

Linda was a devoted sister—to Elaine and to me—and a loving aunt, our Aunt Lin, who never outgrew curiosity about the lives entrusted to her.
She delighted in three nieces and two nephews,
and in time became a doting great-aunt to four little ones who knew that her lap was a safe harbor and her pockets might hold a peppermint.
She would listen to each child as if no other errand existed,
and when the phone rang later, her voice, low and reassuring, could move a worry from the center of your chest to the edge where it could be managed.
If we had to name what so many will miss most,
it is that voice on the phone,
and the unwavering belief she carried in the goodness of people—even when goodness was hard to spot.

Humility shaped her days.
When honors came, she deflected them with a smile and a nod to the team.
When hardship arrived, she did not dramatize.
She organized.

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Lists on the counter,
tasks allocated,
facts gathered,
hands washed,
and then the work of kindness began.

I think of a winter storm back in Cleveland when we were young and the power went out for two days.
We huddled under blankets in the living room, watching our breath in the air.
Everyone was grumbling.
Linda quietly built a small city out of candles,
placed a pot of water near the fireplace,
wrapped an old scarf around our terrier because “there are no unimportant creatures under this roof,” and began to read aloud from whatever book was closest.
By nightfall, the house felt less like an emergency and more like an odd adventure.
That was her work in any weather:
she brought order, light, and a tone that settled people.

As a nurse, she embodying courage under pressure.
It is one thing to keep calm when the procedure is routine.
It is another to remain composed and precise when the room is contested by urgency.
Colleagues tell me that when the flashing lights and clipped voices rose, Linda’s voice lowered.
Her movements got smaller and cleaner.
She did not ask for apologies later,
because she had made good choices sooner.

And then there were the details she loved in the margins of a day:
how a kingfisher arrows over water,
the way lemon peel oils the air when it hits warm sugar,
the small victory of a watercolor wash that dries exactly as intended.

Meticulous, yes, Create your own personalized speech at funeralspeechai.com
but never fussy.
Hers was the thoroughness of someone who took responsibility seriously and herself lightly.

Our family will feel the shape of her absence in ordinary places.
We will reach for the phone,
remember a Saturday errand that became an excuse to talk,
wait for the quiet “Mm-hmm, tell me more” that signaled you could slow down and be honest.
We will keep looking for Mopsy in the bottom of a drawer and smile at the thought of a toy that taught adults how to be brave.

To Elaine, to our nieces and nephews, to the little ones who knew her as great-aunt,
to the colleagues she trained, the patients she comforted, and the volunteers who stood beside her at the clinic,
I want to say this:
what Linda began is not concluded.
It has changed address.
It lives now in the way we answer a late-night call with patience,
in the way we default to generosity instead of suspicion,
in the way we measure our words as carefully as we measure our doses.

Today we will hear Ave Maria, as she requested.
Let it be for us what it was for her:
not an ending,
but a way of placing what we cannot carry alone into hands larger than ours.

And if you are asking, as I am, what it means to honor Linda beyond this afternoon,
she has already told us.
She asked that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the children’s clinic where she volunteered in Savannah.

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It is a practical expression of love.
It is also a continuation of her life’s work:
to ease fear,
to restore dignity,
to give young professionals the mentoring that yields excellence with compassion.

In the quiet of these last months, when we spoke about time and memory, Linda did not want grand statements.
She wanted the truth told plainly.
So let me say it plain.
She was a woman of steady Christian faith.
She served where she stood.
She loved her family—her siblings Thomas and Elaine, her nieces, her nephews, her great-nieces and great-nephews—with attention that did not flag.
She walked by the river at first light.
She painted what she saw.
She watched the sky for birds and the faces of children for courage.
She listened as if listening itself could heal.
And often, it did.

Sorrow is the measure of affection.
We feel both strongly today because she gave us much to love.
But I also believe she would ask of us something more than sorrow.
She would ask that we keep noticing small goodness.
That we look for the child in the room who is afraid and offer a calm voice and, if necessary, a well-placed joke from a small dog named Mopsy.
That we attend to the work in front of us with care enough to be called meticulous and humility enough to laugh at ourselves afterward.
That we remember courage is seldom loud.

Linda, my sister,
your road began in Cleveland’s winters and led you to river light and salt air.
You met the world with clear eyes and generous hands.

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You used your voice to steady others and your gifts to lift them.
You did not seek applause.
You sought to be useful and kind.

We will carry you in the ways that count:
in hymns that return unbidden,
in recipes pulled from a drawer and dusted with sugar,
in sketches left between the pages of a book,
in the habit of answering the phone with patience,
and in a belief—still unwavering—that people can surprise us with goodness.

May flights of angels sing you to your rest,
and may the children you comforted, the nurses you formed, and the family you loved feel your steadying hand in the work we continue.

Thank you for a life well lived, Aunt Lin.
Thank you for the quiet courage, the careful work, the gentle humor, and the faith that held when it mattered most.

We love you.
We will miss your voice.
And we will go on, together,
doing the next kind thing,
as you taught us.

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