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Friends and family, thank you for being here to celebrate the remarkable life of my husband, Jonathan Edward “Johnny” Pierce.

I’ve called him a hundred things over the years—my co-conspirator, my compass, the calm in any storm—but most often, I simply called him mine. For thirty-two years, we were partners in every adventure and every quiet moment. Today, even as my heart aches, I feel such gratitude that we all got to share part of the road with him.

Johnny was born on May 10, 1965, and left us at 59—too soon for us, of course. But if you measure life not by length, but by depth, then he lived an abundant one. He grew up in Portland, where, as his mother Eleanor will tell you, he learned early that a kitchen is a kind of sanctuary. Later, he studied culinary arts, fell in love with the craft, and somehow convinced a very practical girl—me—that opening a little bistro called Pierce & Co. was a sensible plan.

It turns out that it was more than sensible. Pierce & Co. became a home for so many of us—family, friends, strangers who walked in and left as regulars. Johnny cooked the way he lived: big-hearted, adventurous, infused with mischievous humor, and creative enough to surprise you every time. He championed local farms before it was fashionable, knew the names of the growers and their kids, and taught his staff that a carrot pulled from the soil with care tastes different—because someone loved it along the way.

He mentored young chefs like they were family. Some of you are here today, and I know what you’ll say if I hand you a whisk—you’ll hear his voice behind you: taste as you go, season with intention, and don’t ever forget the person you’re cooking for. He never hired résumés; he hired hearts. He believed kitchens could be classrooms, and he believed in second chances. He gave a lot of those, and he never kept score.

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And while he built a career that fed this community, he also built our home, slice by slice, Sunday after Sunday. He was a devoted father to our three children: Olivia, Marcus, and Hannah. He made school lunches like tiny love letters. He taught bike riding with patient hands on the seat and ridiculous, encouraging running commentary. He did bedtime stories in the voices of entire imaginary kingdoms, and somehow, every character was just a little bit Johnny. He made waffles on Sundays—waffles that were less about batter and more about the ritual. We'll all miss those waffles, and the laughter that always came with them, laughter that could fill a room and then spill out onto the porch.

He was also a brother to Stephen and Laura—teammate, tempter, and tireless accomplice. With them, his mischievous streak was legendary. If there was a family prank brewing, you could be sure he had the blueprint and the alibi. And to Eleanor, his mom, he was a constant source of pride; he inherited her steady kindness and that fierce loyalty that made people feel safe in his presence.

Johnny cared deeply about this community. Every year, he organized a charity cook-off to support the community shelter. He wrangled chefs, charmed purveyors, and somehow made it feel like a block party where the whole town was invited. He'd look around near the end of the night—exhausted, sweaty, happy—and say, "This is what a shared table does. It makes neighbors of us all." Then he'd hoist a glass and toast, "To simple joys and shared tables—may we never take them for granted." That line has been echoing in my head like a bell ever since he left.

He was spiritual in a way that fit him perfectly—quietly, honestly. He found peace in the ocean, the way the horizon humbles you and returns you to yourself. And before every meal, whether it was a staff family meal or our Tuesday night chaos, he'd insist on a gratitude ritual—a breath, a moment, a reason to be thankful. He taught us that gratitude isn't a season; it's a daily practice. I think he'd want that practice to continue with us now, especially now.

If you knew Johnny, you knew he was an adventurer. He could turn a Tuesday

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into a treasure hunt. My favorite memory—one I'll keep replaying—was a spontaneous road trip where we chased a food truck festival across three states. We had nothing packed that made sense. We followed rumors like breadcrumbs, found tacos that changed our definition of tacos, and when the sky opened up, we danced in the rain to a busker's saxophone. We arrived somewhere we didn't plan to be, soaked and deliriously happy, and he looked at me the way he did on our wedding day and every ordinary day after, and said, "See? The best things start with a silly idea and a full tank of gas." That was Johnny: a compass set to joy.

He filled his days with passions that kept him grounded and alive to the world. He nurtured sourdough starters like they were living friends, and our kitchen looked like a science lab with jars burbling and notes on hydration levels. He cycled at sunrise, chasing that first cool breeze that makes you feel like you belong to the morning. He took photographs at dawn—the kind where light catches the edge of a leaf or a face and turns it sacred. And when the day wound down, he curated his vinyl jazz collection like a museum of moments; he knew which record could save a day and which one could hold a memory.

We're all going to miss that laugh—the kind that started in his chest and took over the whole room. We'll miss the Sunday waffles, yes, but also the way he made everyone feel seen—truly seen. He had a way of pausing in a busy doorway, of catching your eye over a bustling pass in the kitchen, of asking a question that cut right to the center and then listening like your answer mattered more than anything else going on. For Johnny, people were never background noise. People were the point.

To our children, Olivia, Marcus, and Hannah: your dad's love is stitched into every part of you. His adventurous spirit, his creativity, his mischievous humor, his fierce loyalty—they move in you. When you mix batter on a Sunday, when you try something brave, when you notice someone in the corner and invite them in—you'll be with him. He is with you. Always.

To Eleanor, to Stephen and Laura, to all of our extended family and the staff

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who became family: thank you for loving him, challenging him, laughing with him, and building a life around his big-hearted dreams. He drew strength from each of you.

And to the young chefs he mentored—keep going. Keep the standards high and the hearts open. Source from the farm down the road. Remember that a kitchen can be a place of healing. Start your shifts with gratitude. End them with grace. If you're ever unsure, put a little more care into the plate and a little more kindness back into the world. That's how he did it.

As we celebrate Johnny today, I keep feeling this truth: he gave us an inheritance that isn't measured in dollars or awards. He left us a way of being. He taught us to build long tables and pull up extra chairs. He showed us that a toast at the end of a hard day could turn strangers into friends. He believed the ocean could wash your worries clean and that a well-made waffle could fix almost anything. He taught us to be brave enough to be joyful and humble enough to say thank you, again and again.

So, for him, and for us, let's keep telling his stories. Let's cook his recipes and make them our own. Let's organize the next charity cook-off and make it a little bigger, a little louder, a little kinder. Let's dance in the rain when the sky refuses to cooperate. Let's turn toward the sunrise. And at our tables—tonight, next week, years from now—let's raise a glass and say his words: To simple joys and shared tables—may we never take them for granted.

Johnny, my love, you were my favorite hello and my hardest goodbye. Thank you for thirty-two years of adventure and quiet, of courage and comfort, of kitchen chaos and the gentlest hands. Thank you for choosing me, again and again, and for teaching me to keep choosing life. I will carry your gratitude into every meal, your laughter into every room, your tenderness into every day. I will look for you in the ocean's hush, in the click of a bicycle chain at dawn, in the crackle of a record, in the scent of bread coming out of the oven.

We will honor you by living the way you taught us: big-hearted, adventurous,

creative, a little mischievous, and fiercely loyal.

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And when we sit down tonight, we'll save a place for you in our stories. We'll taste and remember. We'll give thanks. And we'll keep the table open.

To our husband, our father, our son, our brother, our friend—Jonathan Edward "Johnny" Pierce—thank you. We love you. We will miss you. And we will celebrate you, always.

To simple joys and shared tables—may we never take them for granted.

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