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Friends, family, and all who loved Christopher Alan Bennett—thank you for being here.

I stand before you as Chris’s younger brother, a role that was equal parts sparring partner and devoted admirer. We grew up in Boston, where he seemed to find his stride early—captain of the debate team, the kid who could win an argument without raising his voice. He carried that steady grace with him to college, graduating summa cum laude in history, and then straight into a life of service as a public librarian. It suited him—quietly principled, meticulous, and always thinking two moves ahead.

Chris believed in the slow, lasting work that lifts a community. As head librarian, he launched after-school reading clinics and a mobile library that brought books to neighborhoods where a library card felt like a luxury. He didn’t just promote literacy; he made it feel like belonging. If you ever saw him adjust a shelf label, you saw the perfectionist. If you ever watched him kneel to talk with a hesitant child about their first chapter book, you saw the heart.

At home, he was the true north for his family. He was a devoted husband to Laura, and a present, patient father to Owen and Claire—always ready with a dry joke, a quiet lesson, or the kind of listening that made you feel unhurried and seen. He was the cherished son of Robert and Elaine Bennett, a son who carried their values and honored them in the way he lived. To all of you, and especially to Laura, Owen, and Claire: we are with you, and we will remain with you.

What I’ll miss most is our lifelong, friendly rivalry—especially the Thanksgiving chess match. Every year, he’d lean back at some inevitable turning point, slide his queen across the board, and say, “For old time’s sake.” It was his way of disarming tension, reminding us that winning never mattered as much as

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keeping the bond. It was humor, mercy, and big-brother confidence, all in one move. We laughed then; I smile through tears remembering it now.

Chris was shaped by reflection more than ceremony. He found meaning in poetry, quiet mornings, and the occasional service at his Unitarian church. Dawn would find him birdwatching with a thermos of coffee, naming call notes I never could, content to let the world be eloquent on its own. He loved classical music, rare book collecting, the perfect footnote, and the measured wisdom of silence. Above all, he loved people—one conversation at a time.

He had a way of offering counsel that left room for your own thoughts to grow. He listened without interruption. He kept confidences. He chose integrity even when no one would have known the difference. Those are ordinary words—counsel, integrity, listening—but in Chris they felt like rare gifts, and we will miss them dearly.

He often shared a line that brings me comfort today: “To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.” He lives on in the children who found their first favorite story on a bookmobile he championed, in the volunteers he trained who now carry those programs forward, and in the family that carries his steadiness into each new day. He lives on in the way Owen pauses to think before he speaks, in Claire’s careful questions, in Laura’s courage and grace. He lives on in every one of us who learned from his example that showing up—quietly, consistently—is its own kind of greatness.

Chris was born on July 22, 1975, and left us at 49. Those are the dates. The dash between them—his dash—was full of purpose. If we seek to honor him, we can start small and faithful: read to a child, return a call, lend a careful ear, speak the truth without spectacle. And once a year, when the board is set and the room goes quiet, maybe offer your queen—for old time’s sake.

Goodbye, big brother. Thank you for teaching me that strength can be soft-spoken, that leadership can be patient, and that love can sound like listening. You ran your race with dignity. We will carry your light forward,

together.

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