



**Eulogies for Lisa Yoshiko Faden**

June 21, 2019

Rabbi Debra Dressler

Wael Haddara

Rachel Heydon

Hilary Teplitz and Elaine Worthy Thomas

Julie Faden

Rob MacDougall

## **Rabbi Debra Dressler:**

How do you say goodbye to someone who shouldn't be gone yet? What words can possibly do justice to such a remarkable woman and her beautiful family, when her very absence feels like an injustice on the deepest level? But words are the currency of the job we have to do now. And for Lisa, a brilliant woman, words are very much the lifeblood of how we should honor her.

To know Lisa's character and values, one need look no further than her family. Rob, Yuki, Eli, Janice, Michael, Julie—and all of you who love her so dearly. You are remarkable. An inspiration. Your grace and strength during this heartbreaking journey through life with cancer and beyond, and the profound capacity for joy you have simultaneously held on to—this is a lesson in how to make the very best of the very worst, and to love and support each other as strong together, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, year after year...

Janice and Mike, Julie, Rachel, Lisa's Temple people, and all of you I haven't had the privilege to meet in person: you are a beautiful testament to everything that made Lisa's life such a gift. You inspire us and console us by the example you have set.

Over these days you will hear about her childhood and her adulthood, her work and her passions, her friends, her more-than-just-friends, her family. You will see how much she touched and was touched by her parents and her sister, her children and her beloved.

There is little I can add to that treasure trove of all the minutiae of a life lived powerfully.

As I tiptoed slowly through this last week, letting the memories start to flow off and on between the practical events at hand, I found, more than anything, I was remembering Lisa's laugh. The part chuckle, never really a guffaw, but every bit as hearty. But for the life of me, I could not remember exactly what we would have been laughing about. That search for memory drew me back again and again to her social media posts and emails, and eventually, hours and hours into the night paging through her blog, enveloping myself in her words so that her voice could be familiar to me once again in death as it had been during the part of her life I was privileged to share.

Her wit, her erudition, her thought-provoking observations—that some, including Lisa, might call “pointed,” but I think were generally a little more noble than that. She has given us such a legacy of “Lisa-ness,” I face this moment with more gratitude than sorrow, knowing the myriad ways her contributions to this life will live on to accompany all of us in our lives now that she is gone.

I'm not sure that midnight oil really did anything to help me be her Rabbi today, but as we all know, her magical prose just plain helps. And at the moment I came to serve and support

her one last time, she was once again my teacher too. Thank you, Lisa, for that tremendous gift.

Yuki and Eli: I imagine you are going to continue to hear how proud your mom was of you. But what does that really mean? Well, it means that you gave her joy. You gave her challenge, on which she thrived. And you probably gave her a few tears as well. In other words, you gave her everything. Everything a mother, a mom, a mommy, could ever wish to have in a child.

For all of us who loved and already miss your mom, watching you growing up and living your lives will be an endless treasure of moments that will help all of us keep Lisa close.

But at times it might get easy to forget that making your mother proud isn't about pushing yourself to be more than you are—more than she would ask. As proud as she was, your mom was devoted to you as well. She was devoted to you having your childhood, to supporting you on your own very personal path to your adulthood. She was devoted to you making your mistakes, to you trying and succeeding, but also sometimes failing. She was devoted to you knowing that even if she were still here, you will sometimes feel lonely, or scared, or just plain bad. She knows you are going to miss her in a way even she couldn't understand.

But this week you are going to see hundreds of people who knew and were inspired by your mom. And you know from the digital world that there are probably hundreds more people whose life she touched in some remarkable way. These people represent hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of memories.

So whenever you feel like being a little closer to your mom than your own memories can satisfy, remember that all of us—whether we were super close or only knew a small piece of her—we will all be there for you and your family, to share our memories too, to remind you any time you wish how your mommy was just the very best.

Rob: Once again I find myself beyond that boundary where words can truly capture who you are and what you did in that role we inadequately call “husband.” In Jewish weddings the couple are often described as *Re'im Abuvim*: loving companions. You were everything love can be. Everything companionship can be—physical, intellectual, and emotional. From dive bar to parenthood, through disease, and then that final healing into death. Embedded in your memories of joy and peace will be those flashes of the struggle. But struggle is where we are most served by a loving companion. When Lisa could no longer be your partner, you were her honorable steward, never letting go of what you knew she knew, and she wanted, and she needed. You never failed her.

And next week, when you are faced with a new challenge, on your first anniversary as a husband without his wife, we know your experience will largely remain private. But we are

also comforted to know that what you do share with the world will be that exquisite blend of heartbreak and beauty, reminding us of the amazing gift your marriage was in her life.

As I said before, I'm not sure there is much I can add to the fullness that your memories of her already bring. But know that in the moments she shared with me these last few years—up to these last few days—she was everything facing the end that she has been since the beginning.

Lisa was a delight and a challenge. She was curiosity and wisdom, confusion and clarity. Private, yet intimate, she wasn't sure, but she was very, very certain. To borrow one of Rob's words, Lisa Faden was incomparable. The world is better for having had her with us these forty-seven years.

**Wael Haddara:**

I want to thank Rob for the opportunity to share some words with you. I got to know Lisa in three distinct capacities. First, as a colleague at the Centre for Education Research and Innovation. That Lisa was erudite, reflective, helpful and generous with sharing her advanced knowledge and training.

Then we discovered a common bond: an interest in, and gratitude for, interfaith work. We shared an appreciation for our respective faiths and a sense that religion ought to be about what you do, not just what you say you believe (I am paraphrasing Lisa). Unfortunately, we also shared a sense of growing unease and alarm over how some parts of the world were turning more to hate.

Most recently, I got to know Lisa through a series of conversations about how she should approach deteriorations in her health. She reached out because that is my line of work—intensive care—and we call those “end of life” conversations. So we had those conversations. Quite a few of them. In my professional career, I’ve had hundreds, if not a thousand conversations like this. These were the hardest.

Here was another Lisa. The same in some ways: reflective, thoughtful, and asking intelligent, probing questions. But also exuding a sense of near impossible serenity given the circumstances. And by circumstances I don’t just mean her illness per se, but her experiences with the health care system. We like to think things function pretty well in our hospitals. Lisa got to experience some of our not so stellar moments. But she seemed to continue to be able to breathe in and breathe out and look and sound at peace.

I don’t know if there is a female equivalent to the Yiddish “mensch.” But if there is, it ought to be “Lisa.” Goodbye, my friend, and thank you for everything you leave us.

## **Rachel Heydon:**

Lisa was many things, but one thing she was was a wonderful teacher. Here are just a few of the many things she taught me:

Buy the shoes. All the shoes.

Give the shoes away.

Crate and Barrel organic cotton sheets. 2 sets: one on the bed, one in the wash—never sateen.

Let the bras go.

Tuesdays are for tacos.

Daily trips to Farm Boy can be enough entertainment to sustain you through a long Canadian winter—provided you're with the right friend.

Fight for strong social institutions. Every time. The planet is depending on you to do that.

Democracies need public education that fosters criticality ... and cursive writing.

Make a family with the person who recognizes your precise brilliance.

Feed this family lovingly. Let your children know that they are in relation with what has come, what is, and what will be. Let them know that they were always already enough.

Feed your friends lovingly. Let them know what it is to discuss Bruno Latour, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, kale, and lip gloss in the same sentence. Let them know that they were always already enough.

Feed all those who need to be fed lovingly. You are responsible to. Levinas is not hypothetical.

There's a lot you can think your way out of when you're a genius; but not everything. Sometimes you need to just breathe in, breathe out, and say "whatever."

The "whatever" does not allow you to not have your spiritual shit together.

That whatever/having your shit together allows you to find your super power, so that you can teach everyone around you and grow your children while you're living through more than most any other person can know....

And still say, “we all have our things.” Or, “The doctor is busy with other people who need him.” (When there is no one who needs him more.)

Dying might be like waiting for Studio Ghibli’s cat bus—even if your husband says, oh no, it can’t be. We’re all waiting on the cat bus and unlike Godot, he does eventually come. It’s ok. He’s furry soft. He has a tail. He will take you out of the bad weather. And once he comes, there’s nothing left to worry about. It’s peaceful.

It is possible to be a perfect human. Be the most exquisite human being on planet earth. Be the most exquisite energy in the universe. Her name is Lisa Faden.

## **Hilary Teplitz and Elaine Worthy Thomas:**

HILARY: I'm Hilary. I've known Lisa since third grade. And then we met Elaine in seventh grade. We've been a trio ever since. If we tried to describe what more than 35 years of friendship with Lisa means to us, it would take 35 years. Here are a few things:

ELAINE: Lisa loved: a good sale at JCrew.com, the synagogue, fighting for a good cause, the color green—especially the tones only she could pull off (in other words, the ugly ones!) She loved questioning assumptions, challenging others to think deeply, cooking and baking for family and friends, a good book, high tea, travel, Japanese art, Lady Constance, the absurd, and beautiful paper. And above all: Rob, Yuki, and Eli.

HILARY: When Lisa was diagnosed with cancer, she thought carefully about what metaphor she wanted to go into the experience with. Lisa hated the idea of “battling” with cancer. She didn't want to be at war with her own body or her own fate. Instead, she chose the image of cultivating a garden. She grew deep and intentional roots with her family, friends, and spiritual community, and brought meaning to the acts of daily life. Chemo or brain surgery or radiation was just the “weeding” part of gardening. She was all about growth and bloom.

ELAINE: In one of her signature shattering-yet-wry blog posts, Lisa wrote: “It turns out that the thing to do when your story has been put through the shredder is to start telling your story all over again, even if you're not a very good storyteller, and even if you're not sure where it's going.”

HILARY: And that's what she did: each day was filled, more often than not, with baking, yoga when she still could, meditation, FaceTiming a friend, texting all day with others, a lunch date, a little light reading on death and dying—or maybe a novel for book club, or a manifesto on closet decluttering. She'd start a campaign to bring cursive back to the Canadian curriculum, one school at a time. She'd snuggle with Yuki and Eli, and they'd curl up as a family on the couch, listening to Rob read aloud the adventures of Harry Potter or Frodo Baggins. And, sure, there was chemo and brain surgery and tears in the mix. But you get the picture: she lived more each day than most of us do in a week.

ELAINE: Hilary and I have spent a lifetime with Lisa. It may not have been our lifetime, because here we are, somehow expected to figure out what to do without her. But it was her lifetime. And we think she lived it so well, so joyously, so fully.

HILARY: Many of us have an “inner Lisa” voice. It's the funny one. And it's the one that's smarter and wiser than you, so you need to listen to it.

ELAINE: Lisa's voice reminds me that making time to connect with others is always the right choice; that I, under no circumstances, should buy yet another sweater to clutter my closet; and that there's no time to be bitter.

HILARY: Mine is a Lisa laugh that comes out of me sometimes. At other times it reminds me to demand more. Sometimes it tells me I shouldn't wear navy, and definitely not yellow.

ELAINE: And anything true bears repeating: Yuki, Eli, your mother loved you more than anything. When she said she is "always hugging you," she meant it. So listen to her voice when you hear it. It will guide you well. All of us will be here to help you remember. And together we will all live better lives because Lisa showed us how.

## **Julie Faden:**

Oh, where do I even start. First, I just want to thank our friends and family for being here, as well as for all of the wonderful messages I've received over the past couple of days. I'm so grateful I decided to come up here last week and spend the week here—not knowing, of course, what was to come.

The last time I was asked to speak in front of a large group of Lisa and Rob's family and loved ones, it took me at least two to three glasses of wine to work up the courage to do so. It was also 5 o'clock in the evening. I thought it best not to do that this time. At first I declined this opportunity, because (a) I'm still in partial denial and disbelief, (b) I was exhausted and didn't know if I could make a coherent sentence and (c) Lisa, as you all know, was always the one with the way with words. She'd be the first to say that I was blessed with the height, the math skills, and the reflexes. (She wasn't much for organized sports; in fact, I think gym class was the only one where she got below an A.) But she always knew the right thing to say and how best to say it when I struggled to put my thoughts and emotions into words. My best friends reminded me the other day that after Lisa's eloquent toast at my wedding, their first thoughts were, "How are we supposed to follow THAT?" But I woke up this morning, with thoughts of her in my head as I slept last night, and had so much that I wanted to share with all of you.

Things didn't start out so well between us: there's the story of how Lisa slammed the door in a family friend's face when he came to visit me for the first time when I was first born, or how she used to stick Cheerios on my upper lip, just above where my tongue could reach, to torture me, or how she would slam the door in my face as I would playfully chase after her. But I'm guessing most siblings have their moments. Amiright, Yuki and Eli?

As she grew to realize that I wasn't going anywhere, and her parents wouldn't be returning me to the hospital, Lisa fully owned the responsibility of taking care of me and she never stopped. This probably doesn't surprise you, but she was always mature beyond her years. When I was in second grade and she was in sixth, she would walk me to and from school, making sure I got to my classroom safely and home in time to use the bathroom (though one time I didn't quite make it, and she was there to help me with that too). When I was too shy to respond to adults who asked me how I was doing, she would answer for me. On Halloween, Lisa would let me tag along trick-or-treating with all of her older, cooler friends. When I was struggling with writing a book report on *A Wrinkle In Time* in middle school and waited until the last minute to get it done, she allowed me to wake her up at midnight to talk through the overarching theme of the story.

As we grew into adults (though I still feel like a kid most of the time), Lisa continued to take care of me. She took me on some of my first college visits and helped me narrow down my list when I was so stressed out flipping through the hundreds of pages of colleges. When I was having a difficult time my freshman year of college, she came to visit me on campus

and had me come stay with her in Boston as I studied for my exams. When I moved to Seattle for a grad school internship and was struggling with being in a new city and didn't know anyone, she hopped on a plane to take care of me. When I first had my son, who arrived six weeks early, and I was struggling with postpartum depression, she rushed down to Maryland to accompany me to his doctor's appointments, cook me dinner, and brought a suitcase full of Eli's hand-me-downs.

Even during these last three years, she was still taking care of me. She never once complained about how she was feeling, how much discomfort she was in, how much being sick royally sucked. She didn't want me to worry. When we texted or talked, she always asked how I was doing, how my job was going, and how my family was doing. Even during these last few weeks, I did not quite realize how bad things had gotten, and that is why I am still so in shock that we are here today. When I said goodbye to her last Saturday as I headed back home to Maryland, after thanking me for coming to spend time with her, Rob, and the kids, one of the last things she said to me was, "Don't forget to take the hand-me-downs for Jonah." Like I said, always taking care of me.

I still have the urge to text her when something wacky happens, like the fact that one of our flight attendants on the flight here was named Barbie, or when her father butt-dials me for the 187th time, or her mother gets confused about how to post a birthday message on Facebook. (We do have the same parents by the way, but one of our jokes was that I always called them "her" parents when they would embarrass me, which happened frequently. I'll miss the sister humor, her wit, her intelligence, her strength, her poise, her love and care for me, my family, and really, for everyone. I'm so grateful for Yuki and Eli, who have all the best of Lisa in them. (And my son adores them and loves them to pieces.) And to Rob, for loving Lisa so fully and being there for her in every step of this battle.

Thank you.

## **Rob MacDougall:**

Thank you all so much for being here today. Rabbi Dressler, Wael, Rachel, Hilary and Elaine, Julie, thank you for your kind and heartfelt words.

I'm Lisa's husband Rob. On this beautiful, miserable day, at the end of the worst week of my life, on zero hours of sleep and several extra-strength Tylenol to fight the fever I've been running for days, I somehow thought it would be a good idea to stand up in front of one or two hundred people and try to sum up, in a few minutes, the most incredible person I have ever known. I'm afraid my speech is too long and it's not properly footnoted, but I do think it is pretty good in parts. Let's give it a whirl.

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I met Lisa at a party, in Boston, in the final weeks of the twentieth century. We had talked for all of three minutes when a song she liked came on, and she said, not *to* me but not *not* to me, "I'm going to go dance! Does anybody want to come?"

YES.

A three-minute talk, then a three-minute dance to a three-minute song—that was all the interaction we had that night. The next morning, I called her up at 9:03 am to ask her out. I figured 9 am was business hours, and I waited until 9:03 am so I wouldn't seem too eager.

On our first date, because it was 1999, I tried out a conversational riff that dudes like me had been trying out all year: We're on the verge of the year 2000! We're living in the future! So, where's my jetpack? Where's my flying car? Lisa sweetly faked a laugh and said, "Where's my flying public transportation? I mean, why is it easier for us to imagine flying cars than it is to imagine a sustainable urban infrastructure that brings access and independence to everyone?"

And I said, "Daaaamn."

On our fourth date, Lisa gave me two of her favorite novels as a Christmas or Hanukkah present: Haruki Murakami's *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. All she said about them was, "I love both these books. Maybe you'll like them too." But I was smart enough to get it: this was required reading. And before there was any fifth date, there was going to be a quiz. Never have I crammed more avidly for an exam.

If I'm making her sound demanding or strident, then I'm not doing this right. Lisa was the most generous, gregarious, loving person I've ever known. But she had impeccable taste and that meant she had high standards. She loved the colors of the trees in fall—a sign of her New England roots—but she had exacting standards for fall foliage. Often, we would

be driving through some stunning technicolor vista in Massachusetts or Ontario or upstate New York, and I'd say, wow, would you look at those colors. And she'd say, "That's lovely. I think we must have just missed the peak orange." Or, "In another four days, that is going to look really nice."

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When I first met her, Lisa was a fairly new graduate of the Harvard School of Education. She taught history and social studies for a short time at Wellesley High School in Wellesley, Massachusetts, and had just moved to Newton North High School in Newton, Massachusetts.

I want to do something now that Lisa would never, never do, which is to explain why she was not "just" a high school history teacher. For Lisa, being a high school history teacher—no "just" about it—was an achievement, an honor, a noble calling. Nevertheless, I want you to know that Newton North happens to be one of the greatest public high schools in America. It is an amazing place. It is one of the pinnacles of the now-besieged ideal of a democratic public school system—an institution that serves a truly diverse student body with an absolutely top-flight education. I had some exposure to the intellectual discussions in the staff room of the social studies department at Newton North, and they were every bit as cerebral and sophisticated as the history department at Harvard, and considerably more humane. And even at Newton North, at the very top of the heap, Lisa was a star. She won their highest award for teaching; she was beloved by the students and the staff; she made her mark on hundreds of lives.

Lisa taught at Newton for about ten years. She loved it. Then, her husband managed to finally finish his dissertation and find a job—in a different country, at a university and a city neither she nor anyone else in Boston had ever heard of. A city called London, except it wasn't the real London. And a University of Western Ontario? People congratulated us and silently thought, "It's too bad Rob couldn't land a job at the University of Ontario."

But Lisa somehow agreed to leave the stellar career she had built, and the rich life and the amazing friends she had in Boston, to be with me. She started over, and went from being, essentially, one of the top history teachers in the entire United States to being a first-year grad student in a place where nobody knew what Newton North was or what she had accomplished.

Now, she insisted this was her choice, that this was what she wanted, that she was totally ready for this change. And the reason I believed her, the only reason I can live with myself about that choice, is that I can't think of any other single moment when I ever got her to do anything she didn't want to do. So I have to assume she really did want to move to Canada.

Lisa came to love it here. She said, “Canadians make me want to be nicer.” Of course, Lisa was nice; she was sweet and giving. It’s just that coming from the U.S. to Canada gave her superpowers. You’ll all remember that Superman was not super strong on Krypton. It’s only when he came to our planet, and was exposed to the rays of Earth’s yellow sun, that he became super strong. Lisa was the same way. Moving from the hard-charging, urban, east coast United States to the polite, suburban, Canadian midwest gave her superpowers, like her steely teacher’s gaze, and her “I’d like to speak to your supervisor” voice, and her “actually, I think the Ontario elementary curriculum *does* contain cursive writing” smile.

Lisa loved the community she found in London. She threw herself into it, in a dozen ways. She made such dear, dear friends here: at Western’s Faculty of Education, in our Old South neighborhood, at Temple Israel, at CERI, at the Western Fair Farmer’s Market, everywhere.

Lisa only complained about moving to Canada once. She was something like seven months pregnant with Yuki, and seven months into her first Canadian winter. We were trudging across a desolate, frozen parking lot (Springett, for the Western folks) in the howling wind and premature darkness of February. She slipped on the ice, and fell to the ground, twisting and taking the impact hard on her tailbone to protect her precious, giant belly. She looked up at the black sky—Earth’s yellow sun was so very far away—and wailed, “Smarties are not the same as M&Ms!”

But as I say, Lisa grew to love Canada, even in February. Our daughter Yuki is named for Lisa’s great-aunt, who was and is like a grandmother to Lisa, Lisa’s maternal grandmother having died of cancer at the age of 47. But Yuki is also the Japanese word for snow. After Yuki was born, and after Eli was born, many’s the time Lisa would drag the four of us on nature walks in the middle of winter. We’d be trudging through howling blizzards, across frozen wastes of ice, and she’d smile her thousand-watt smile and say, “Isn’t this great, guys? It’s a winter wonderland!”

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When Lisa and I were first married, we were both really struck by a line from a book, a sort of pop-Buddhism mindfulness book that said, “Anything that can happen to anyone can happen to you.” In other words: you could lose your job, you could get hit by a bus, you could get terminal cancer. The only answer to the question “Why me?” is, simply, “Why not you?” This idea seemed really important and ominous to us both. Lisa added a corollary to it. She said, “You have to hold on to your cuties.” This was like a syllogism for her: anything can happen to anyone; therefore, hold on to your cuties.

I remember driving with her on the Masspike on the way up to my family’s cottage for Canadian Thanksgiving. It was the golden hour, and the sun hit that gorgeous fall foliage just right (“In another three days, this is going to look really nice!”) And Lisa was sitting beside me, bopping along in her seat to the car stereo. She was doing what she called her

Muppet dance, all goofy abandon from the waist up. And it was just such a perfect moment, and she was so beautiful, and I was so happy, and I looked at her in the golden sunlight and said, “Wow. If our lives were a movie, this would be the flashback—the impossibly happy, color-saturated flashback of how wonderful my life was before I lost you.”

Why would I say that? And why did we both fixate on that line from the Buddhism book? Were we practicing for today, even then? I don’t think we were. I think it’s more that we were young and we were intoxicated by how deeply, powerfully, and quickly we had fallen in love. But we were frightened when we realized, too late, how much that love opened us up to hurt, if and when anything bad ever happened to the other.

As Lisa cried in the ambulance on the way to the hospice the day before she died, I flashed right back to that flashback. Just like in the movies.

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Lisa was diagnosed with Stage IV breast cancer three years ago. She approached the disease like she approached everything else in her life: she went All In. She researched the medical science and she researched the emotional journey too. She read stacks of medical journals and New Age memoirs and graphic novels.

Lisa’s (award-winning) PhD dissertation compared the narratives used in history classrooms in the United States and Canada. Lisa studied the way we force historical facts to fit preset narrative templates. Historians like me like to think we are telling the true stories of things that happened. Lisa showed that most of us have just one or two basic story patterns that we gravitate to again and again.

The night before her very first session of chemotherapy, Lisa and I went out for an intimate dinner. The single action item on her agenda was to choose the story or metaphor she was going to use to talk about her cancer. Lisa didn’t want to talk about “fighting” cancer. She didn’t want her illness to be a “war” she had to “win.” She tried out a host of metaphors that night, and in the three years to come. “Cancer is like a journey,” “cancer is like weeds in a garden,” “cancer is like an unwelcome guest” (which would make it the only guest ever that Lisa didn’t welcome). One therapist urged Lisa to try to “make friends with her cancer.” “My friend really sucks,” she said to me that night.

A lot of these thoughts and metaphors found their way into Lisa’s writing. Some of that writing was published in newspapers and magazines. A lot of it was posted on her brave, beautiful blog. Too much of it is still scattered around our house in the exquisite little Japanese notebooks that Lisa loved.

As time went on, Lisa had less and less need for metaphor. She became more clear-eyed about what she was facing. She could call things by their actual names. The joke about

looking for a metaphor for cancer is that cancer is itself one of our culture's most formidable metaphors. One day Lisa said, "I got it! You know what cancer is like? It's like... some kind of malignant disease, that hides and spreads inside your body. If only there was a word for that."

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After finishing her PhD, Lisa joined CERI, the Centre for Educational Research & Innovation, at the Schulich School of Medicine. Basically, CERI studies education in a medical context. One of the themes of Lisa's work at CERI involved medical communication: the way all the moving parts of a hospital do, or do not, communicate with one another. Doctors, nurses, patients; the day shift and the night shift; the ways that the work of healing bodies might be helped or hindered by anything from workflows and workplace cultures, to software design, to the physical layout of a hospital, to hierarchies of status, race, class, and gender.

As Lisa lay in a hospital bed recovering from her first brain surgery—not even back in her own hospital bed, but in the post-op recovery room where she had to be under close observation for twelve hours—she got put out by the way one male doctor was interacting with the female nurses. Lisa could barely whisper, but each time a new nurse came by to give her some meds or swab her cracked, dry lips, Lisa would try to get the nurse to stand up to that jerk doctor, to organize, right then and there, to equitably restructure the workplace.

Most of our doctors were not jerks. I want to thank all the doctors, nurses, social workers, and health care people who worked so hard to give us three more years with Lisa. That includes the Ontario health care system (Lisa says: cherish it! Fight for it!) and also Lisa's informal but massive network of friends who just happened to be doctors, nurses, or researchers.

I most especially want to thank those medical professionals who recognized Lisa as an expert in her own right on the subject of Lisa's cancer, who respected her as a more-than-equal partner in her treatment. Those who did not soon learned their mistake. We went once to see an eminent specialist, in either Toronto or Boston. She, the eminent specialist, was startled when Lisa quoted chapter and verse of some highly technical cancer studies from around the world. Lisa mentioned some cutting-edge research happening in California. The eminent specialist, trying to regain her authority in this conversation, said, "I think you'll find that nothing has been published from that study." "I *know*," Lisa said as she opened an Excel spreadsheet on her laptop. "That's why I got them to email me their raw data!"

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So many people loved Lisa. The cards and texts and emails have been pouring in since Wednesday. One thing that has struck me about them is not just the numbers, but the intensity. Many people loved Lisa, but also many of the people that loved her really *really* loved her, often with an intensity that seems surprising given the briefness or lightness of their connection: someone she met on a school exchange, someone with a stall at the Farmers Market, someone she took one class with in 2008 or 1992. The messages I've been getting don't say "Lisa was my friend," or even "Lisa was my best friend," they say, "Lisa was *the* best friend." They say she was the brightest light, the most beautiful spirit. They say she gave the best fashion advice, she had the best shoes.

I'm not sure what created this effect. I think it is that when Lisa talked to you she really wanted to know you and to hear you. Whatever the relationship was, when Lisa was in, she was All In. And that kind of attention, that kind of focus, makes people feel wonderful.

Lisa's dear friend Rachel, who you just heard from, and who I think probably laughed with her and talked with her and commiserated with her every single day of the past year, was telling a story a week or so ago about someone who annoyed her, and then she stopped and sighed and said, "The thing is, I just kind of hate everyone except Lisa." (Rachel's husband Sean was standing right there!) But I got it, I totally got it. I know Rachel didn't mean it literally, and I wouldn't go so far as to say I hate anyone, but I have often thought: if you could talk to Lisa, why would you choose to talk to anybody else?

God, she was funny. Someone once told her, "you're quite good at *physical* comedy" and she loved to repeat that, drawing out the word "physical" so it turned the compliment into a backhanded insult. But her wit! She could be as daffy as Gracie Allen one minute and as sardonic as Dorothy Parker the next.

She was stylish and whip-smart and cool, but also goofy and generous and kind. She was Jewish and Japanese. She was Hermione Granger, but not a doormat. She was adamantine, which means "having the brilliance, luster, and hardness of a diamond." She was a teacher and a scholar and an activist, she was a sage advice giver and a spiritual seeker, she was a rabble rouser and a riot grrrl and a healer and a beautiful spirit.

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I've made it this far—page seven of ten—without using the words "wife" or "mother," and that was intentional. But can there be any doubt that Lisa filled those two roles as magnificently as she did everything else?

I'm not going to reduce Lisa to stories of how she made *me* a better person. But of course she did. On the night we met, she pulled me onto the dance floor, and then she just kept pulling me onto the dance floor for twenty years. Pulling me into new places, new

experiences, new friendships; coaxing me, cajoling me into opening up my heart, not just to her but to the world; getting me to go All In.

I started studying American history because I loved the comedy and calamity of the United States. But like many Canadians, I regarded “the States” as a kind of spectacle on TV. It was the greatest show on Earth, but I did not myself have skin in the game. But Lisa wouldn’t let me remain a spectator. She pulled me onto the dance floor.

Lisa loved Frederic Jameson’s line: “History is what hurts.” For her, history was not an abstract intellectual exercise. It was blood and tears and spirit, the sufferings and triumphs of real people. She opened me up to all that. She made me care, deep inside, in a way that sometimes hurts, about things like democracy and justice and the health of the American republic.

[sarcastic:] Thanks a lot for *that*, sweetie.

Lisa taught me so much about teaching. In my grad school training, the classroom was an arena, where you compete to show off how clever you are. For Lisa, the classroom was a sacred place, where every day you have the opportunity and obligation to repair the world. This is the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*: every day you work in a modest, patient way to rectify an injustice, to fix the system just a little bit, to heal some small breach in the proper functioning of the world.

That same impulse brought Lisa to Temple Israel, and to the wonderful community our family has found there, and specifically to Temple Israel’s Social Action Committee, which Lisa co-chaired with her dear friend Nancy, another adamant Jewish-American woman who somehow got lured by a soft-spoken Scots-Canadian to the frozen north. And there they did good works with the London Food Bank, Share the Warmth, ReForest London, the Interfaith Peace Camp—the list goes on.

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Of course, Lisa was a mother. And Lisa mothered as totally and ferociously and impeccably as she did everything else. Oh Eli, oh Yuki. She loved you guys so much, so much. And whether it was the fun stuff or the hard stuff, the drama or the drudgery, your mother was All In.

You’re going to find as you grow older that her brilliance, her love, her generosity, her intensity—they are all running through your veins. They’re going to give you superpowers. But first, our suddenly small family is going to hurt, for a good long time. And that’s a good thing, because we loved her. They say love and grief are not separable. If we love, we grieve, that’s the deal.

I know that what your mother wants for both of you is for you to always get out on the dance floor; to see the beauty in every winter wonderland; to keep yourself open to love and to grief for other people and for the world.

How are we going to live in a world without her? It makes no sense that she is gone. We three will have to figure out, together, the ways in which she is gone and the ways in which she is not. I know that all I have to do is look at you, either one of you, and I can see your mother, clear as day. Yuki, you might get tired of hearing it, but you are so much like her. Everybody knows it. You are brilliant and sensitive and generous and brave. Eli, this is more secret, but you are her too. You're goofy and spiritual and gentle and wise. I have you guys, and that means that Lisa will never leave me. We will have to find the places you can look to see her too. We will find them together.

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Yuki: You and I have talked quite a bit about Mommy's cancer as it progressed. You're so smart and so perceptive, it made less and less sense to hide things from you or to sugarcoat the truth. I treasure the way you and I can talk about the hard stuff, and I'm determined to preserve it: hard stuff like cancer, but also the hard stuff that 13-year-olds are supposed to worry about, like annoying teachers and drama between friends.

I want to tell all these people how unbelievably brave you have been, but I never wanted you to have to be this brave. You give me strength, but that was never supposed to be your job. I know you don't always feel brave or strong, but your Mom has taught you all you're going to need about being a strong, kind, amazing woman. Last night you told me, kindly but firmly, exactly how long I could stay up writing this eulogy: what time I had to stop working, and what time I had to be in bed with lights out. I felt queasy, because it was like Lisa was in the room.

But listen: that doesn't mean you need to become your mother or live up to her example today. I know you want to take care of me and even your goofy little brother, and I love you for it. But you don't need to grow up right now. I want you to be a kid. Just be a kid. Just be the great kid that you are. The stuff that Mommy taught you is time-released. It's in you, and it will come out gradually, when you need it.

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Eli: Buddy. Huckleberry. You've got her superpowers too.

I can't imagine a sweeter love than the one she had for you. I really hope that without Mommy around, there will still be enough softness and sweetness in your life. I hope that a Dad's hugs and cuddles will be good enough, that I can be as sweet to you as she always

was. We've been working hard to make sure we all get eight hugs a day. We can up the dose for as long as is needed.

Eli, I don't know if you know what people mean when they say someone has "an old soul." Usually it means that someone young seems surprisingly wise. You played your first game of *Dungeons and Dragons*, with me, your mother, and Yuki, when you were four years old. You named your first D&D character "Ancient Eli." We didn't know why, but that was the name you wanted. Much later, we figured out that you had meant "Agent Eli", like a secret agent. But "Ancient Eli" was perfect, and it stuck, because sometimes you seem to have an ancient soul.

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I'm going to close this long speech with a story some of you have already heard. Of course, the person I really want to tell this story to is Lisa.

Lisa, on Tuesday, as we waited for the ambulance to come and take you and I away to the hospice, away from our home and our children for the very last time, I struggled to say something helpful to the kids about the people we love being with us after they die. I think Eli was wrestling with the realization that you would not be at his bar mitzvah the way you were at Yuki's bat mitzvah, just a few weeks ago. And Eli, speaking slowly the way he does when he's working out his ideas, said something like: "When you know somebody, even somebody that's alive, only part of it is actually doing stuff with them. Mostly it's stuff you remember and stuff you think."

And then Yuki said—and the point of this story is both the profundity of what Eli said and also the exquisite mix of admiration and irritation that can only exist between a loving older sister and her little brother—Yuki said, "Ugh, Eli is so *wise*."

And in that moment, Lisa, I thought we might all be OK.

Thank you.