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Kia ora e te whānau, e ngā hoa,
thank you for being here in bright colours to celebrate our brother, our mate,
Tama Wiremu Ngata — Tam.

I’m Kauri, his little brother.
He was my role model and my best friend.

Tam was born in Tūranga-nui-a-Kiwa, Gisborne, on 22 August 1992.
Kura kaupapa shaped him — proud of who he was, steady in his values, cheeky in the best way.
He chased a bigger horizon in Tāmaki Makaurau,
pulled shots as a barista,
then had the courage to open his own café and a tiny roastery out the back.
Warm hands, warmer welcome — that was Tam.

If you ever walked into his café on a grey morning,
you’d get the sunshine smile first,
then the coffee.
Local growers on the shelves,
local artists on the walls,
a quiet pay-it-forward jar by the till.
He never bragged about the community food drives —
he just did the mahi, then slipped out of the photo.

He loved a dawn surf at Wainui.
We’d stand in the half-dark, boards under arms,
and he’d say, “Bro, one wave, then pies.”
It was never one wave.
But it was always pies.
Salty hair, numb fingers, and those ridiculous laughs that follow you all day.

That’s one of my happiest places with him.

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At home, he’d be roasting beans till the kitchen smelled like toast and caramel,
guitar propped on the chair,
touch rugby boots by the door,
a roster of mates coming over for kai.
If you were new,
he made you feel like you’d been there for years.
That was his gift — everyone in the circle.

Our little niece still buzzes about Uncle Tam showing her her first chords.
He didn’t just teach her G and C;
he taught her patience without making it feel like a lesson.
That was him with the tamariki — low voice, big grin, steady hands.
He could turn nerves into music.

Tam lived his values without a speech about them.
Whānau always first.
Manaakitanga not as a slogan but as a seat at the table and the last sausage on your plate.
Kaitiakitanga in the way he chose suppliers, picked up rubbish after touch,
and reminded us the moana gives more if we respect it.
Uplifting others — a text at the right time, a shift covered, a door opened.
Doing the mahi without fuss — that was the norm.

To Mum and Dad — Mereana and Wiremu —
he carried your aroha into every room.
To our sister Aria and to me —
he was the steady one, the banter guy, the late-night problem-solver.
To Sophie —
you brought out his gentlest courage.
To little Māia, four and fierce —
you were, and are, his proudest story.
He wanted you to know the ocean, the guitar, and the goodness in people.

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People will miss his singalongs that started with a hum and ended with a choir.
They’ll miss that quick wit that softened hard corners.
They’ll miss the way strangers became regulars and regulars became whānau.
I will miss the brother who could lift a whole day with a single raised eyebrow.

Tam left us on 30 March 2026, just 33.
Too soon — and yet he packed those years with purpose and joy.
If you’re looking for what he leaves behind,
it’s in the friendships he stitched together,
the artists he backed,
the community fed and seen,
and the way Māia will strum those first chords with his patience in her fingers.

In a moment, Uncle Hone will lead us in karakia.
After, please share a story —
the funny ones, the small ones, the ones that smell like coffee and sea salt.
That’s how he lives on:
not as a statue,
but as a hundred true memories, told out loud.

Haere rā, e te tuakana.
Thank you for showing us how to welcome, how to give, how to laugh at dawn.
We’ll keep the circle wide.
We’ll keep the kettle on.
We’ll carry your light.

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