Good evening, everyone.

I’m Emily’s father, and I have been practicing this moment in my heart since the day I first held her. Tonight, seeing Emily Carter become Emily Brooks, I feel both the weight and the lightness of love—our family’s love for her, and the love she and Daniel give so freely to each other.

Emily has always been a force—compassionate and driven in equal measure. She’s the kid who would stop to help a classmate, then go back and finish the project at midnight because it mattered to her to do it right. She has this way of pouring herself into people and goals at the same time, and somehow making both better.

And then came Daniel.

They met, as many great stories do, in a place most of us would not consider romantic: a summer internship orientation in Chicago. But in a crowded room of name tags and coffee cups, they found each other. Their first date was at a jazz club—of course it was. Emily told me about it afterward with this glow in her voice I hadn’t heard before. She said the music felt like a conversation: playful, steady, generous. That’s how I’ve come to think of them. Two melodies that make more sense together than apart.

I met Daniel at our Thanksgiving the following year. It’s not an easy initiation—there are opinions about stuffing in our family that should come with a referee. Daniel quietly asked if he could help and ended up carving the turkey like he’d been at our table for twenty years. He won over Emily’s grandma with his patience—and in our house, that’s like clearing the final level of a very tricky game. I watched him that day: thoughtful, steady, never trying to be the loudest voice, always the surest pair of hands. I understood right then why my daughter

loved him.

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Their story has had those beautiful steps forward. After two years, they moved in together. It wasn't dramatic—it was intentional. The way they divided up who cooks and who does dishes, who picks the weekend hike and who picks the pasta recipe, who hosts the board game night and who pretends to be surprised when Emily wins again. Together, they are supportive and adventurous: she brings the spark, he brings the calm, and somehow they both bring the courage.

And then that cliffside in Big Sur. I wasn't there, but I've seen it in their eyes every time they tell it: the ocean below, the wind, the moment Daniel asked, and Emily said yes with a laugh that sounded like relief and joy mixed together. Two people who are already home finding a way to name the address.

Daniel, you are thoughtful and steady in all the right ways. You look at my daughter with respect and tenderness. You don't try to fix her when she's solving the world, you stand next to her and hand her the right wrench. You are the partner I hoped she would find before I even knew your name.

Emily, my girl, your compassion has always been your compass. You love fiercely and you work hard at the things that matter. You make room for people, and you make the room better. Watching you today, I still see the child who ran to me with scraped knees and big ideas—but I also see the woman who has chosen her life with care and hope.

To both of you: marriage is a long, beautiful hike—familiar trails, unexpected turns, and a view that keeps changing if you keep climbing. Keep being curious, keep cooking new pasta recipes even when the sauce doesn't quite work, keep inviting people to your table and laughing over board games, keep choosing each other when the music is messy and when it's smooth.

Thank you, Daniel, for loving Emily the way you do. And thank you, Emily, for letting me be your dad through every season, including this one.

Now, if you would, please raise your glasses.

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To Emily and Daniel—may your love stay as steady as the hands that carved our Thanksgiving turkey, as compassionate and driven as the woman Emily has always been, and as thoughtful and adventurous as the man Daniel is by her side. May your home be filled with laughter, muddy hiking boots by the door, pasta on the stove, and friends gathered around the table. May the music you started in that Chicago jazz club play on for the next hundred years.

To Emily and Daniel—cheers.

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