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Good evening, everyone.

I'm Emily Carter—now Emily Mitchell—and I'm standing here feeling like the luckiest person in the world.

To our families and friends, thank you for being here and for loving us through every season that led to this day. Your hugs, your advice, your patience, your laughter—it all brought us here. We feel so held by you.

James, I still remember the first time I saw you—at that summer music festival, at the merch tent, rain threatening to ruin everything. You turned to me with that warm, steady smile and said, "I've got a spare poncho—want it?" I didn't know you were also handing me a thousand little moments of kindness that would become our life.

Our first date at the food truck park still makes me smile. You made me try the hottest sauce out of sheer curiosity and then watched me heroically pretend I wasn't dying. You ran across three trucks to grab milk, napkins, and a churro because "sugar is medicinal." That's you—thoughtful, patient, endlessly supportive, always one step ahead of what might make someone else feel cared for.

Two years later we moved in together and discovered that the true test of compatibility is assembling a bookshelf with only an Allen key and optimism. We passed. Then came our rescue cat, who instantly decided you were his person and I was allowed to feed him under supervision. Watching you with him—gentle, attentive, amused—showed me how you love: quietly, consistently, with so much heart.

And then Sedona. A sunrise hike, the world still hushed, red rock warming into

light. You asked me to marry you with hands that didn't even shake, which felt unfair because mine were doing all the shaking for both of us. I said yes to you, yes to all the mornings and midnights and messy kitchen experiments, yes to the way you look at me like I'm safe and seen and known.

People tell us we balance each other. I'm the one with the color-coded calendars and far too many lists; you're the one who reminds me when to step outside and just breathe. I organize; you warm the room. I overthink; you laugh softly and hold my hand. Together, we're our best selves.

Some of my favorite days are the simple ones: weekend hikes where we count switchbacks and pretend it's not steep; evenings in our kitchen rolling out pasta dough, flour in our hair, a sauce bubbling away like a promise; our quiz nights with friends, where you somehow know every obscure 80s band and I know the capital of everything. We've built a life out of small joys—tiny rituals that say, "I choose you today." That's our love language.

To our parents—thank you for raising us to love this way. For teaching us patience, generosity, and the art of staying. To our friends—thank you for cheering us on, showing up for our quiz nights, and never judging our pasta carb ratio. You are the family we chose, and we're so grateful you chose us back.

James, I want to make you a few promises tonight.

I promise to keep making lists—and to put "spontaneity" on them, just for you.

I promise to hike the long trails and take the detours, to see the world with you slowly, with wonder.

I promise to keep learning your heart, to hear the words you don't say, to meet you with patience and humor when life gets hard.

I promise to love our ordinary days and to keep choosing you in the tiny moments that make up a life.

I promise that our home will always have open windows, a stocked spice rack, and a seat saved for you beside me.

Seven years in, and I still feel the same thing I felt when you handed me that poncho: that you are shelter and warmth, and that I am safe with you. I can't wait for the next seven, and the seventy after that.

To everyone here—thank you for witnessing this beginning. Your presence makes this joy bigger.

And now, if you would please raise your glasses:

To love that shows up, to laughter in the kitchen, to sunrise hikes and late-night quiz answers, and to the everyday magic of choosing each other. To James, my husband, my heart. To us.

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