Good afternoon everyone.

Thank you for being here, for pausing your lives and travelling, for ironing shirts that haven't seen daylight since 2019, and for making this room feel like home.
Seeing all the faces from our families and our friends in one place is a sight I won't forget.

A special thank you to our registrar for guiding us so calmly and clearly through something that, on paper, is straightforward, but in the heart is anything but.
And to our wedding party—thank you for the steady reminders, the missing button sewn back on at the last minute, the snacks slipped into my hand when I forgot to eat, and the reassurance that everything really would happen on time.

Before anything else, I want to honour someone who isn't with us today—Eleanor's Grandad Peter.
He was the kind of person who could make honesty sound like kindness.
When we told him we were engaged, he said, "That's very sensible. Now, don't make a fuss about it—but be happy every day you can."
We hope today would have met his standard for not making a fuss.
We miss you, Grandad Peter.

I first met Eleanor in a book club in Cardiff where everyone pretended they'd read the book.
Eleanor had actually read it.
She had notes.
She also had opinions that made me realise I'd understood maybe three pages and one of those was the contents page.
That night, we argued cheerfully about endings—about whether characters earn them or whether writers hand them out like free biscuits.
She made me laugh, properly laugh, the sort that loosens your shoulders.

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And she listened the way someone does when they're not waiting for their turn to speak.
I went home thinking two things: I'm going to start doing the reading, and I hope she'll let me buy her a coffee.

Coffee became walks along the Taff, became raincoats, became the kind of conversations that last past closing time and carry on all the way to the bus stop.
Eleanor was, and is, compassionate and principled.
She'll help without advertising it, stand up without raising her voice, and then land a joke that makes you think and laugh at the same time.
I am—on my best days—thoughtful, steady and supportive.
In other words, I'm the one who remembers the flask and carries the wet blanket back to the car.
Somehow, our temperaments clicked.
We both care about the people around us, about our street, our town, the places that have shaped us.
And we found that when we put our effort in the same direction—whether at a fundraiser, a beach clean, or a bake sale that got wildly competitive—we could make small things feel significant.

Then I moved to Edinburgh for work.
We discovered that the distance between Cardiff and Edinburgh is exactly three phone calls, one bad train sandwich and two people trying not to fall asleep on FaceTime.
If you want to know what resilience looks like, it's Eleanor on a Sunday night train, drafting a letter for a local campaign while texting me photos of a sunset so I won't feel left out.
We learned new routines—who phoned at lunch, who phoned at midnight, and how to make a cheap airline feel like a lifeline.
We also learned that missing someone doesn't get easier, but it does get clearer.
You learn what matters.
You learn who matters.

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Our first holiday together was to the Isle of Skye.

I packed like a cautious boy scout; Eleanor packed like a person who trusts the weather to behave if you give it a firm look.

We walked until our legs ached, ate chips in the wind, and misread a tide table badly enough to invent a new route back to the car involving optimism and wet socks.

There is a photo from that trip—both of us on a cliff path, hair in a state of emergency, grinning like we've just won something.

When I look at it, I see us realising we could have a shared life that wasn't just parallel lines.

I also see the moment I learned that Eleanor's brilliant sense of direction disappears in the presence of a nice view.

Then came Bramble.

We were very sensible and adult about it.

We agreed a rota, a budget, and the rule that the dog would under no circumstances sleep on the bed.

On night three, I woke up to find Bramble sprawled across my pillow while Eleanor whispered, "He seems settled, don't move."

Bramble has since become the third member of our long coastal walks, the official inspector of Sunday roasts, and the creature most likely to find the only patch of mud on a clean beach.

Having him taught us another kind of care—patient, repetitive, full of small, daily promises.

There was the cottage, too.

When we say we "restored" a cottage, what we mean is that we discovered every form of dust known to science and learnt that a "quick job" involves three weeks, a head torch, and an emergency call to my dad.

Eleanor can hold a paintbrush like a conductor's baton.

She picks a colour, then a better colour, then the exact right colour you didn't know existed.

I like straight lines and lists and checking sockets twice.

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We laughed when the ceiling refused to dry, and we finished in time to host a Sunday roast where my mum said, with heroic diplomacy, “It’s… very you.”
It is very us.
It’s imperfect, but it’s ours, and it holds our winter evenings, our muddy boots, and the sound of our friends talking over each other.

We’ve kept to the rituals that make ordinary life feel bright—long coastal walks where silence is as good as speech, volunteering at local charity events where every raffle prize seems to involve jam, and Sunday roasts with family where there’s always one extra potato “just in case” that somehow disappears.
Sometimes we sail, which sounds elegant until you’ve seen us trying to untie a knot we proudly invented fifteen minutes earlier.
Eleanor learned quickly; I learned slowly; Bramble remains unconvinced.
But there’s a moment, once the faff is over, when the water settles, and it feels like time widens out.
Those moments built this day as surely as any plan we made.

On New Year’s Day, at her family farm, we went for a walk that we’d taken a dozen times before.
The frost had that crisp sound, the one that makes you want to step more carefully.
I’d rehearsed what I wanted to say, but when we reached the old gate, the one Grandad Peter used to lean on, it all went very simple.
I asked Eleanor if she would marry me.
She said yes, as if we’d always been heading this way and we were just now catching up.
We told our families over soup that steamed up the kitchen windows, and it felt like an ordinary day and the start of everything at once.

Today is the joyful, official version of what we’ve been practising for ten years.
But it isn’t only ours.
So thank you—to our families, for loving us into being the sort of people who could love each other well.
To our friends, for showing up, over and over, for lifts, late-night advice,

emergency outfits, and the kind of laughter that stops a wobble in its tracks.
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Thank you for the kindness you've shown not just today, but in the long run-up to today.
We're so grateful.

In lieu of favours, we've made a donation to the local hospice that has cared for people we love, with a tenderness that can't be measured.
It felt right to send something from this big day toward the quiet, important work that goes on every day.

Eleanor, there are things I want to promise you, and I want to say them plainly.
I promise to listen properly—to the words you say and the ones you don't.
I promise to be steady when steady is needed, and to be daft when daft will help.
I promise to show up to the small moments as faithfully as the big ones—putting the kettle on when the meeting ran long, doing the boring errands without fanfare, and learning, finally, where the good scissors live.
I promise to keep choosing you, not as a single decision, but as a daily practice.
And I promise that when we disagree, I will not aim to win; I will aim for us.

You are compassionate, principled and brilliantly funny.
You don't just believe in better—you do better, in ways that are often invisible unless you're paying attention.
You make people feel seen.
You make me want to be brave.
You also steal my chips, argue passionately about punctuation, and have a laugh that, I am convinced, could end a minor war.
I love the person you are, the person you've been for ten years of my life, and the person you are still becoming.

To everyone here—thank you for witnessing this.
For making this civil ceremony feel full of warmth and heart.
We will carry your faces, your words, and your hugs with us into the days ahead.

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And to my wife—how good it is to say that out loud—let’s keep walking the long paths, keep pitching in when there’s work to be done, keep welcoming people to our table, and keep finding our way home, together, again and again.

Thank you.

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