Ladies and gentlemen, family and friends,

Good afternoon, and welcome. It means the world to see this room so full for Emily and Oliver.

On behalf of both families, thank you for being here, for the effort you've made to travel, and for the warmth you've brought with you. Weddings don't just appear out of thin air, and many hands have worked hard to make today so special. To the teams here, to everyone who has helped behind the scenes, and to those who have soothed nerves, pinned flowers and found lost cufflinks this morning — thank you.

Before I go any further, a word for absent friends and loved ones who cannot be with us. They are part of the story that brought us to this day, and they're very much in our thoughts.

Now, tradition dictates that the Father of the Bride begins, then the Groom responds and toasts the bridesmaids, and finally the Best Man rounds things off. I promise to keep to that order — and to keep the Best Man's job interesting by leaving him a few secrets to reveal later.

I have the rather enormous privilege of being Emily's father. Those who know her well will know why that sentence makes me stand a little taller.

Emily has always had a way of looking after people without making a fuss about it. She's thoughtful in the old-fashioned sense — she notices what needs doing and quietly gets on with it. I've lost count of the times she has appeared with a spare umbrella on a day when the sky looked perfectly clear at breakfast, or remembered someone's tricky week and turned up with a casserole. She does this while being ferociously driven — there's a to-do list somewhere in this

building with tasks already neatly ticked off for next Thursday — and yet she never forgets to be kind.

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One of my favourite Emily moments happened on a grim, rainy Sunday when we had declared a family roast. The oven, with exquisite timing, decided to give up on life. There were potatoes par-boiled, a chicken half-prepared, and I was already constructing a lament about ruined lunch. Emily simply said, “Right, plan B.” Twenty minutes later, she had somehow marshalled three neighbours’ ovens, the potatoes were rotating between addresses like a precision relay, and lunch arrived on the table more or less on time. She didn’t give a speech about it. She just got it done and still checked that everyone had enough gravy.

That, to me, is Emily. Thoughtful, driven and kind — and able to bring order to chaos without making you feel like you caused the chaos in the first place.

And then along came Oliver.

We first heard about Oliver in the context of a charity fundraiser in London. Emily came home very interested in travel stories all of a sudden, which was curious, because she had never previously looked so animated while discussing budget airlines. The tale, I believe, involved arguing cheerfully over which European city is best for getting lost in on a Sunday morning. It was, by the sound of it, an early sign of a very good thing: two people whose eyes light up at the same sort of adventures, whether that’s a side street in Lisbon or the slightly less exotic territory of the local community hall on a volunteer day.

We’ve known Oliver and his family for several years now, and I can say this with confidence: he is as dependable as they come, generous with his time and his patience, and armed with a dry sense of humour that arrives exactly when it’s needed. He’s the person who will quietly fix the wobbly chair without telling you it was wobbly, and the one who will deliver a remark so understated you only catch it three seconds later and laugh all the more for it.

When Emily and Oliver bought their first flat last year, I did what any

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self-respecting father does and offered tools and opinions. Oliver smiled, thanked me, and then proceeded to solve a storage problem with calm efficiency while I was still measuring the same wall for the third time. Later, when I accidentally managed to lock us both on the balcony while “testing the view,” Oliver didn’t panic, didn’t tease, just said, “I think the neighbours liked our rehearsal of charades,” and found an elegant way back in. That’s dependable. That’s generous. And yes, that dry humour is very much alive and well.

Over the last five years, we’ve watched Emily and Oliver find a rhythm together. It’s not grand gestures — though if you get engaged on a beach at sunset in St Ives, you’re allowed at least one grand gesture. It’s the dozens of small things that add up: Sunday roasts that always seem to attract an extra chair or two; city breaks where the best memories are often the small discoveries — the café down a quiet street, the unexpected view from a bridge; weekends spent volunteering at local events, coming home knackered and muddy, but content. The way they share all that with their families speaks volumes.

There was a phone call from St Ives I won’t forget. It came with a photo of two sandy feet, a ring catching the last of the light, and the kind of happiness you don’t have to describe because you can hear it before they say a word. I was standing in the kitchen, and I remember thinking, “Right then. This is happening, and it couldn’t be better.”

Emily and Oliver complement each other in ways that are easy to see and, I suspect, even easier to feel if you’re the one on the receiving end. She brings that driving energy — lists, plans, momentum. He brings that steady anchor — the sense that, whatever happens, it will be handled. And both bring a generosity that spills out to the people around them.

To the bridesmaids — thank you for looking after Emily, today and always. You all look wonderful, and I know the official toast to you comes later, but it would be remiss of me not to say how grateful we are for your friendship and your calm influence this morning. To the groomsmen — thank you for getting Oliver

here on time and in one piece, and for not losing the rings.

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To Oliver's family — thank you for welcoming Emily so warmly and for raising a son who has the qualities we all value and admire. It's been a pleasure getting to know you over these years, and I look forward to many more shared Sundays, whether the oven behaves or not.

Now, as I'm the father, I'm expected to offer a little advice. I'll keep it practical.

Keep doing the ordinary things with care. The way you greet each other at the end of a long day will count for more than the grandest holiday. Keep your Sunday roasts; invite extra people when you can; burn the parsnips now and then so you've got a story. Keep travelling — not just to other countries, but towards each other's point of view when you disagree. Keep volunteering, because giving your time together will keep you both honest and hopeful.

Remember that being driven and being dependable are not opposite ends of a scale; they're the two rails that carry a life forward. Emily, let Oliver slow the pace when the path is steep. Oliver, let Emily set the map when decisions need making. And both of you, keep that generosity in good working order — it's the oil that stops all the little cogs from squeaking.

I also want to say something simple to my daughter. Emily, you have brought joy, noise, and a pantry of entirely unnecessary but apparently essential spices into our home for many years. You are thoughtful, driven and kind not because you've read it on a list of admirable traits, but because that's who you are all the way through. Watching you today, I'm not losing anything. I'm gaining a son-in-law I admire and a picture of your future that makes me very content indeed.

And to you, Oliver — welcome to our family. Officially. You've been part of it in spirit for a long while, but it's good to make it formal. We promise to keep the DIY opinions to a minimum, the Sunday roasts frequent, and the attempts at dry humour at least close to your standard.

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Five years in, a home to call your own, an engagement on a Cornish beach with the tide thinking about turning — and now this day. It’s a fine foundation. Not perfect — perfection doesn’t exist and isn’t needed — but strong, warm, and ready for the weather of a life well lived.

Thank you again to everyone here for celebrating with them. Your presence is not just appreciated; it’s part of what will make their memories of today so rich.

And now, if you would please join me.

Would you raise your glasses to the couple — to Emily and Oliver: may your days be full of good maps and even better detours, of open doors and full tables, of steady anchors and bright horizons.

To Emily and Oliver.

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