Good afternoon everyone,

thank you for being here to share this day with our families and, most of all, with Emily and Oliver.

It means a great deal to look around and see so many faces from different chapters of their lives gathered in one room.
To those who have travelled far, we're especially grateful.
To those who couldn't be with us today, you are very much in our thoughts.

Before I go any further, a few words of thanks.
To everyone who has helped make today happen – from the calm heads who kept the timings straight, to the hands that folded place cards, to the friends who turned up yesterday with a boot full of emergency candles – thank you.
To the bridesmaids and groomsmen for your care and good humour.
To the staff here for looking after us so well.
And to both families, the Carters and the Bennetts, for the warmth, patience and practical help that have brought us to this moment.

Which brings me to a welcome I am delighted to make.
Oliver, to you and to your family – the Bennetts – we're so pleased to be joining with you.
It's a special thing when two families find an easy friendship, and that has been our experience from the start.

Now, as Emily's dad, I could stand here for a long time and tell you how wonderful my daughter is, but there's pasta getting cold somewhere if I do.
So I'll keep to the things that matter.
Emily has always been compassionate and organised – a combination that sounds simple until you live with it.

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As a little girl she ran a “teddy hospital” in the sitting room, complete with sign-in sheets and a rota for plasters.

Later, in school, her revision notes were colour-coded to a level that would have made a civil servant blush.

But the lists and calendars have always served a purpose: to make space for people.

I’ve lost count of the times she has quietly arranged a lift for a neighbour, or remembered to check in on a friend on a tough day, or shepherded the rest of us through life’s small scrambles with a gentle “I’ve already sorted it.”

Then Oliver appeared in her life five years ago, and we began to see a new kind of steadiness in the mix.

I got to know him over the last three years, and what struck me almost immediately was his patience – not the passive sort, but the thoughtful, steady kind.

The first time I saw them at their allotment, they were debating the correct spacing for carrot seeds.

Emily had a ruler.

Oliver had time.

Between them, they somehow produced straight rows and, later, a frankly alarming number of courgettes.

When the slugs launched their spring offensive, Oliver designed a highly diplomatic defence involving copper tape and gentle relocation.

Emily drew a map.

They met, as many modern love stories do, at a Bristol book club, introduced by mutual friends.

I’m told Oliver arrived with the book actually finished, which placed him in rare company.

Emily was there with margins full of notes.

Apparently most of their first conversation had very little to do with the plot and a lot to do with where to find a decent coffee afterwards.

From there it was Sunday roasts, slow walks home and a growing sense that each had met someone who saw the world at the same level.

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Lisbon was their first holiday together.
I heard about a tiny bakery near a square where they ate warm pastéis de nata at a ridiculous hour, and a long tram ride where they got mildly lost and didn't mind at all.
Oliver, true to form, remained unflappable when a ticket machine refused their coins.
Emily, true to form, had photographed the timetable earlier.
Somewhere between tiled streets and sea air, they settled into that quiet humour they share – the kind that doesn't need an audience.

Last year they bought their first home in Bath.
If you've ever bought a first home, you'll know that "move-in ready" is an optimistic phrase.
I helped one weekend and learned that Oliver approaches flat-pack instructions like a peace treaty, and that Emily can turn a Pinterest board into a paint schedule with military efficiency.
I also learned, after an incident with a dripping tap, that they are very good at laughing before the towels run out.

And then, in December, under Christmas lights – the city still and a little bit magical – Oliver asked Emily a question we're all glad she answered the way she did.
When they told us, they didn't make a grand performance of it.
They just came round, coats still on, cheeks pink from the cold, holding hands in that way they do when there's nothing to prove.

What I admire most about them together is how they make room for each other's best instincts.
Emily's compassion widens Oliver's calm into something generous; Oliver's steadiness gives Emily's plans a place to land.
They do the big things, yes – buying a house, planning a wedding – but it's the small routines where love often lives.
Sunday roasts with family, where the conversation zigzags from terrible puns to

the price of leeks. Create your own personalised speech at weddingtoasts.co.uk
The allotment on a damp evening, the two of them discussing whether it's too soon to thin the beetroot.
Those city breaks around Europe, where they have a pact to find one museum, one park bench and one ice-cream, in any order, without hurrying.

As a father, you look for signs that the person your child has chosen understands the tone of her life.
Oliver, I've seen you do that again and again.
In the way you listen when Emily is turning something over out loud.
In the way you shoulder the heavy bag without being asked.
In the way you make a cup of tea and leave it on the stair on the exact step she'll notice.
There's a quiet goodness to you that doesn't need a headline, and it fits with Emily's way of walking through the world.

Emily, you have always been the one to bring people in – to notice the person at the edge of the room, to remember the thing someone said a month ago and follow up with it today.
You once used your pocket money to buy biscuits for the neighbour's dog after it had an operation.
You will deny this, but I have the receipt.
Seeing you now – thoughtful, warm, entirely yourself – is a joy your mum and I do not take for granted.

People sometimes say that on a day like this a father "loses a daughter."
I don't feel that at all.
If anything, I seem to have gained a son, at no extra charge.
Oliver, consider this your formal warning that, as part of the package, you may be called upon for the odd shelf-straightening or to adjudicate the family mince-pie ranking at Christmas.
We are very glad to have you.

To the two of you, as you start married life, I offer just a few observations from

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the far side of several decades:
Keep the kettle within easy reach of the front door.
Plant more herbs than you think you'll need and pick them with shameless abandon.
Write down the in-jokes you're sure you'll never forget.
Say sorry before the washing finishes its cycle.
And when in doubt, go for a walk and look at something growing.

Marriage is not a single promise made once; it's a series of small promises kept often.
From what we've seen, you're already good at that.

Thank you again to everyone here for surrounding Emily and Oliver with such affection today.
Your presence is a gift they will remember when the last candle has burned down and the last chair has been put back.

Now, if I may, I'd like to invite you all to raise your glasses.

To Emily and Oliver – to health, to happiness, to many more Sunday roasts, to gardens that get out of hand, to city streets that lead to good coffee, and to a lifetime of choosing each other, quietly and gladly, every day.

To the bride and groom.

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