Opening

1 / 12

Good evening, everyone. I'm Gavin, and I have known Ben since the second grade, when he traded me half a peanut butter sandwich for a pencil with a dinosaur on it. I still think I got the worse deal. Ben denies it.

Part 2

2 / 12

Thirty years later, here we are. Between then and now, the most important thing we ever did together was a paper route. We were twelve. Our town had one hill, and the route had all of it. Every morning at five forty, we met at the corner of Alder Street with two bikes and two canvas bags.

Part 3

3 / 12

Here's what I learned about Ben that winter. He had a rule. Every house got its paper on the porch, never in the bushes, never in the driveway, never in the snow. I thought this was ridiculous. I threw mine from the street, like a normal person. Mine landed in the bushes. A lot.

Part 4

4 / 12

One morning, Mrs. Okafor at number nine came out in her robe and waved us down. I figured I was in trouble. She wasn't mad at all. She said Ben was the only kid in forty years who had ever put her paper where her knees could reach it.

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Part 5 5 / 12

She gave him a dollar. She gave me a lecture about bushes. I want it on the record that I earned that lecture. From then on, I threw my papers onto porches. Ben didn't say a word about it. He just nodded, the way he does, and rode a little slower so I could keep up.

Part 6 6 / 12

That's my friend. He has never once made me feel behind. In thirty years he has been the first to call when I was down and the last to hang up when I was fine.

Part 7 7 / 12

Tessa, I remember the night Ben met you. He came to my apartment at eleven o'clock and said, 'I met someone,' and then said nothing for ten minutes. He just sat there, smiling at my refrigerator. I have known this man since he was seven, and I had never seen him lost for words.

Part 8 8 / 12

He's quiet about big things. That's his way. So let me say what he would not. He loves you in the paper-on-the-porch way: carefully, every day, and exactly where you can reach it.

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Part 9 9 / 12

Ben, one more thing. Last month I rode our old route by myself. I stood at the bottom of Mrs. Okafor's driveway for a minute, and I thought about two kids on bikes who had no idea what was coming.

Part 10 10 / 12

Here is my advice for a long marriage, from a man who is not married, so take it lightly. Deliver the paper to the porch. Say thank you when someone does it for you. And when the other person throws something into the bushes, go and pick it up without a speech.

Part 11 11 / 12

Ben, you were my first friend, and you've been my best one ever since.

Closing 12 / 12

Please stand and lift your glasses. To Ben and Tessa: may your porch light always be on, and may every delivery arrive right where you need it.