Opening 1 / 8

Good evening. I'm Isaac, Rory's cousin on his dad's side. Every July for twenty years, our whole family has gathered at my grandparents' farm for one weekend and one very serious softball game.

Part 2 2 / 8

I was the youngest cousin on my team. I was nine. I was also the worst player, and everybody knew it, including me. Bottom of the last inning, we were down by one run, and my uncle put me at bat.

Part 3 3 / 8

I struck out on three pitches. I wanted to disappear into the corn. And Rory, who was fourteen and the best hitter in the family, walked up and put his arm around my shoulders in front of everybody.

Part 4 4 / 8

He said, 'Nobody remembers the last at bat. They remember who stayed in the game.' He had made that up on the spot. I know, because he repeated it every year until I stopped needing it.

Part 5 5 / 8

That is Rory. He is the cousin who walks across the field. He has done it for me, and for every cousin younger than me, and I know he'll do it for Hope on every day she needs it.

Part 6 6 / 8

Hope, our family can be loud. There are forty of us, and we all have opinions about potato salad. You came to the reunion last July and you stayed for the whole game, in the heat, and you cheered for both teams. Welcome to the family.

Part 7 7 / 8

Rory, you were the first person to teach me how to lose, and the first to show me how to be kind about winning. I'm proud to be your cousin.

Closing 8 / 8

Please stand and raise a glass to Rory and Hope: may you always be on the same team.

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