Opening 1 / 9

Thank you all for coming. My name is Lauren, and yes, I am the best man. Nate asked me over pancakes last spring, and when I asked whether he was sure, he said, 'Who else would I ask?' That is the most Nate answer there is, and it is the reason you see me up here in a dress, holding a microphone.

Part 2 2 / 9

We met in tenth-grade chemistry, seated at the same lab bench because our last names were next to each other on the roster. On the first day, Nate set his sleeve on fire with a Bunsen burner.

Part 2, continued 3 / 9

Small flame, quickly handled, no harm done. Our teacher made him wear a spare lab coat for the rest of the semester, three sizes too big, with somebody else's name stitched on the pocket. He answered to that name until June.

Part 3 4 / 9

Here is what people miss about Nate, though. That spring my mom spent six weeks in the hospital, and I stopped turning in lab reports. Nate never asked why. He just started writing both reports, his and mine, in two different handwritings, and slipping mine into my folder. I only found out when our teacher praised my penmanship, which has never once been good.

Part 4 5 / 9

That is the friend he has been for sixteen years. He notices quietly, and he helps before you can say you need it. When I moved across the country for work, he drove the truck. When I moved back, he drove it again and never said a word about it.

Part 5 6 / 9

Simone, I liked you the moment you corrected Nate's grilling temperature at your first cookout with us. He listened. Nate does not listen to anyone about grilling. I knew right then that you had his full attention, and that you had earned it. You make him braver, and you make him laugh at himself, which takes real skill.

Part 6 7 / 9

So here is some advice from his old lab partner: keep him away from open flames, and keep a spare coat by the door. He will need both more often than he admits.

Part 7 8 / 9

Nate, thank you for asking me. A few people wondered whether a best man could be a woman. You never did. You just wanted your oldest friend beside you, and standing here is one of the proudest moments of my life.

Would you all please raise your glasses with me. To Nate and Simone: may you always notice each other first, and help each other before anyone has to ask. Cheers.