Opening 1 / 7

Hello, everyone. I'm Lionel, Stuart's brother. I flew in yesterday after twenty-two hours and three airports, and I'm told I may be speaking in whole sentences by dessert. Bear with me.

Part 2 2 / 7

For the past two years, I have been stationed far away, in a place where it is already tomorrow. Stuart and I have talked every Sunday on a video call. Half the time, the picture freezes. I have a whole collection of my brother frozen in the middle of a laugh, one hand in the air.

Part 3 3 / 7

Here is what I learned from those calls. When the picture freezes, Stuart does not hang up. He waits. He says, 'Take your time, I'm right here,' to a screen that cannot hear him, and then the picture jumps forward, and he is still there, still talking, as if no time passed.

Part 4 4 / 7

That is how he has always been, in person and from far away. Distance did not change him. He was here for me the whole time, even when I was not.

Part 5 5 / 7

Anita, you were on those calls too, more and more. One Sunday the picture froze just as Stuart said your name, and I looked at that frozen smile for a full minute. I knew. I did not need a better connection.

Part 6 6 / 7

Stuart, I am so glad to be here in the room. Thank you for asking me, and for keeping a place for me, even from the other side of the world. Anita, thank you for making my brother so happy. I will be back for every holiday I can.

Closing 7 / 7

Stuart, I'm home. Please raise a glass, everyone, to Stuart and Anita, and to every call that never freezes.