Opening 1 / 8

Good evening, everyone. I'm Brendan, Declan's twin. Yes, I'm the younger one. By eleven minutes. Declan has mentioned this nearly every day for thirty-four years.

Part 2 2 / 8

Being a twin means you share a birthday, and in our house that meant sharing a cake. Mom baked one cake with two flavors. Chocolate on his side, lemon on mine, and a little fence of frosting down the middle, so the flavors would not mix. We took the fence very seriously.

Part 3 3 / 8

The year we turned twenty, I was away at school, and I had an exam on the morning of our birthday. I told Declan not to worry about me. I ate a granola bar in the library and felt sorry for myself. At nine that night, someone knocked on the door of my room.

Part 4 4 / 8

It was Declan. He had driven three hours, in the rain, with a pie box buckled into the passenger seat. Inside was half a cake. The lemon half, with the fence still on it, and a candle he had pushed into the frosting.

Part 5 5 / 8

He lit the candle, and sang to me, badly, in a hallway, while two strangers peeked out of their doors. Then he said, 'I'm eleven minutes older, and I still can't enjoy a birthday without you.' I laughed so hard I had to sit on the floor. His own chocolate half was gone. He said it had been a long drive.

Part 6 6 / 8

Noelle, that is the man you are marrying. He does not make a show of it. He does the quiet thing, three hours in the rain, so that nobody he loves has to sit alone with a granola bar. When I first met you, I watched him introduce us. He said my name, and then he said yours slowly, like he was carrying something that might spill. I knew.

Part 7 7 / 8

Declan, for thirty-four years you have been eleven minutes ahead of me, and for thirty-four years you have waited at the finish line anyway. I'm glad you've found someone to walk the rest of the way with. I'll be the one in the hallway with a candle.

Closing 8 / 8

Everyone, please stand. Let's lift a glass to Declan and Noelle: may your life together be sweet on both sides of the fence, and may you never lose the candle.