Opening 1 / 8

Good evening, and welcome. I'm Walter, Clara's dad, and on behalf of our whole family, thank you for being here tonight. Some of you flew in this morning, and some of you drove all night, and every one of you made this day fuller.

Part 2 2 / 8

When Clara was six, I took her fishing for the first time. She caught nothing. What she did instead was spend the entire morning naming every fish she believed was down there and telling me their life stories. By lunch there was a whole family under that dock, with grandparents and a dentist. I caught nothing either, and I have never had a better morning on the water.

Part 3 3 / 8

That has been Clara all her life. She sees whole worlds where other people see only water. She notices who is left out, and she pulls up a chair for them. And she is brave in a way it took me years to understand, because she has always known exactly who she is and has never once pretended otherwise.

Part 4 4 / 8

Imani, the first time Clara brought you home, you asked if I would take you fishing. I thought you were being polite. You were not. You showed up at six in the morning with your own tackle box, and you landed a bass before my coffee was poured. Clara laughed so hard she nearly fell off the dock, and I remember thinking, this one is going to fit right in.

Part 5 5 / 8

Over these four years I have watched how you love my daughter. You listen to her stories, even the long ones. You call her mother on her birthday without a reminder. You make Clara more herself, not less, and a father cannot ask for more than that.

Part 6 6 / 8

So, Imani, let me say it plainly in front of everyone: you are part of this family now. Not a guest, not someone at the edge of the photo, but family. There is a tackle box with your name on it in my garage, and it is not going anywhere.

Part 7 7 / 8

Clara, I am so proud of you, and of the life you and Imani are building together.

Closing 8 / 8

Would you all lift a glass with me now. To Clara and Imani, and to many early mornings on the water together. Cheers.