Opening 1 / 6

Hello, everyone. I'm Leonard. I married Annika's mother when Annika was nine, so I came into this family the way a person joins a conversation that is already going. I listened for a long while before I said anything.

Part 2 2 / 6

Every school morning that year, I drove Annika to school, and we had a deal. I would call out a spelling word, and she would spell it. She hated the deal. She spelled 'necessary' with so many sighs that I could hear the letters.

Part 3 3 / 6

Then one morning in March, she said, 'Your turn.' I said I was the one with the list. She said, 'Spell family.' I spelled it, slowly, one letter at a time, while the traffic light turned green twice. She nodded and said, 'Okay. You pass.' That was all. I drove the rest of the way in a very careful silence.

Part 4 4 / 6

She doesn't call me Dad. She calls me Leonard, in a voice that sounds exactly like home, and I would not trade it for any title in the world.

Part 5 5 / 6

Sasha, thank you for being easy to love and easy to talk to. The first time you came to dinner, you asked Annika which of her words she hated spelling most, and then you wrote it on a napkin and kept it. I decided right then. Welcome to our family, from all of us, and especially from the driver.

Closing 6 / 6

Annika, you opened a door for me, and I will spend the rest of my life trying to deserve it. Everyone, please lift a glass: to Annika and Sasha, and to every morning that starts with a small test and ends with a pass.