Opening 1 / 9

Good evening, everyone. I'm Raymond, Corinne's father. Thank you for filling this room. There is one empty chair at the front, and I want to say something about it before I say anything else, because you are all too kind to ask.

Part 2 2 / 9

Corinne's mother, Ruth, passed away six years ago. She would have loved today. She would also have done most of the talking, with a better speech than mine, and she would have been right to.

Part 3 3 / 9

After she was gone, I did not know how to cook. Not at all. Ruth kept a box of recipe cards in the kitchen, written in her slanted handwriting, with notes in the margins. Corinne came every Sunday that first winter. We stood at the counter and read them together like letters.

Part 4 4 / 9

The soup card said, in the margin, 'Salt until it tastes like a good day.' I had no idea what that meant. Neither did Corinne. We made that soup nine Sundays in a row. It was too salty, and then too plain, and then too salty again. On the tenth Sunday, Corinne took a sip, put down the spoon, and was quiet for a while. She said, 'That's it, Dad. That's Mom's.'

Part 5 5 / 9

I have thought about that margin note for years. A good day is not a measurement. You find it by tasting, by trying again, and by having someone beside you who will tell you honestly when it is not right yet. That is what Corinne gave me that winter, and that is what she gives everyone she loves.

Part 6 6 / 9

Rowan, the first time you came to our house, you asked if you could help in the kitchen. I handed you the soup card without a word. You read the margin, looked up, and said, 'Is it okay if we do it the way she wrote it?' I had to step out to the porch for a minute. When I came back, you had salted nothing, and you were waiting for me.

Part 7 7 / 9

Rowan, that is when I knew. Anyone who treats the people we have lost with that much care will treat the living with even more. Ruth would have set a place for you at once, with a clean napkin and an extra spoon. Welcome. You are very much wanted here.

Part 8 8 / 9

Now, about the empty chair. It is not empty. Corinne put a recipe card on it this morning, the one for the soup, and a small bowl of salt next to it, for good luck. I think Ruth is reading over our shoulders, and I think she approves of the salt.

Corinne, my daughter, you have your mother's laugh and your mother's patience, and you have added a good deal of your own. I love you more than I can say. Everyone, please stand and raise a glass to Corinne and Rowan: may your days always taste like a good day.