Opening

1 / 11

Good evening, everyone. My name is Rachel, and I've been Nicole's best friend for sixteen years. I'd like to tell you how we met, because it involved a freezer, a lot of sprinkles, and a very strict manager.

Part 2

2 / 11

We were seventeen, and we both took summer jobs at a roadside ice cream stand called the Dairy Dock. On the first day, the manager handed us two paper hats and said, 'Smile like you mean it.' Nicole took the hat, looked at me, and whispered, 'I'm wearing this under protest.'

Part 3

3 / 11

By the end of the week, we had a system. She worked the window, and I worked the cones, and we never let a single customer leave without a laugh. By August, there was a line out to the road. The manager said it was our smiles. It was not. It was Nicole.

Part 4

4 / 11

Here is what Nicole does. She asks the person in front of her a second question. 'What's your favorite flavor?' is the first one. The second one is, 'And why?'

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One afternoon, a man ordered butter pecan and told her it had been his wife's favorite, and that this was his first time ordering it alone. Nicole gave him an extra scoop and sat with him on the curb for ten minutes. The line waited. Nobody complained. She was seventeen.

I have watched her do that for sixteen years. I love that about her. She sat with me through my father's surgery, and she sat with me the night I didn't get into the program I wanted. She never says the right thing. She says the true thing, and then she stays.

Jamal, I remember the first time she told me about you. We were on the phone for an hour, and she said 'I have to go' five times, and each time she kept talking. I said, 'You're in love.' She said, 'I just like talking to Jamal.' I said, 'Nicole.' She said, 'Okay, I'm in love.'

Jamal, you ask the second question too. I've seen it. At dinner with my family, you asked my grandmother where she grew up, and then you asked her why she left. She talked for forty minutes. She still brings it up.

Part 8 **9 / 11**

Nicole, you taught me that the second question is the one that matters, and I'm lucky you asked it of me. I'd like to ask you two things tonight. First, are you happy? I can see that you are. Second, why? And I think the answer is sitting right next to you. Nicole, I love you, and I am so proud to be standing next to you.

Part 9 **10 / 11**

Nicole, Jamal, I wish you a marriage full of second questions: the ones that start with 'and why?' and end with 'tell me more.' I wish you the patience of two people on a very long line in August, and I wish you a lot of butter pecan.

Closing **11 / 11**

Please stand with me and raise a cone, or a glass, to Nicole and Jamal. Cheers, you two.