Opening 1 / 7

Hello, everyone. I'm Dana, and Whitney and I have been best friends since seventh grade, when we were assigned the same locker. We shared that locker, then a dorm room, then a group chat that has never once been quiet. Sam, I apologize in advance for the group chat.

Part 2 2 / 7

I want to tell you about Whitney's favorite word, which is shortcut. Three summers ago, she convinced me that a shortcut existed on a hiking trail. There was no shortcut. There was a field, a fence, and eleven very serious cows. Whitney looked at the cows. The cows looked at Whitney. I hid behind a tree and whispered that I was calling a ranger.

Part 3 3 / 7

Then Whitney did something I'll never forget. She walked right up to the fence, said good afternoon to the cows like she was entering a business meeting, and offered them her entire bag of trail mix. It worked. The cows followed her, the gate swung open, and we walked out of that field with our dignity mostly intact and her snacks entirely gone.

Part 4 4 / 7

That's Whitney. When everything goes sideways, she stays friendly and finds a way through. She's also the person who once drove two hours to fix my bad day, who remembers every one of my relatives' birthdays, and who makes me laugh so hard I forget what I was upset about.

Part 5 5 / 7

Let me add one more thing. Whitney learns the name of your dog before she learns the name of your boss. She mails postcards for no reason, leaves voice messages that last four minutes, and has never once been late to anything that mattered to me. She's late to everything else, so I've learned to tell her the party starts an hour early.

Part 6 6 / 7

Sam, on your first trip with us, you ended up carrying her backpack, and she told everyone it was your idea. You didn't mind. You just laughed and carried it another mile. That's when I knew you belonged. You don't even mind the cows. You walk through the field together.

Closing 7 / 7

So here's to Whitney and Sam. May your road have plenty of shortcuts that actually work, and when they don't, may you always have snacks and each other. Whitney, you're my best friend, and I couldn't be happier. Everyone, please lift your glasses to Whitney and Sam.