Opening 1 / 5

Good evening. I'm Ruth, and Noelle is my sister-in-law, though after eleven years I rarely use the second half of that word. I think of her as the sister I got to choose. Thank you all for celebrating with her and Avery.

Part 2 2 / 5

The first time I came to a family dinner, I was terrified. Everyone knew everyone, and I couldn't find a place to sit. Noelle took one look at me, scooted over, patted the chair beside her, and handed me a plate before I could say a word. Then she whispered, don't worry, nobody here has a clue what they're doing either.

Part 3 3 / 5

That's Noelle. She notices who is standing alone, and she makes room. I have watched her do it at birthdays, at graduations, and at the airport, for people she has known for years and people she met five minutes ago.

Part 4 4 / 5

Avery, I saw the same thing happen the night Noelle introduced you to us. You walked in a little nervous, and within ten minutes she had you laughing at the kitchen table. You looked relieved. You looked at home. And she looked like someone who had just found the missing piece of her own puzzle.

Noelle, I'm so proud of you. Thank you for making room for me, all those years ago, and for making room for Avery now. My wish for you both is simple. May your table always have one more chair, and may the two of you always sit beside each other. Everyone, please raise a glass to Noelle and Avery.