Good evening, everyone. For those who don't know me, I'm Sam, and I've been Dave's best friend since a college dorm room where we were assigned to each other by a computer. Twenty two years later I still think that computer knew exactly what it was doing.

Dave turns forty today. Forty.

I want to start with the grill. Most of you have seen it. It's out here somewhere, leaning to the left like it's listening for something. Dave built that grill in the summer of 2019. He did not open the manual. He has never opened a manual. When he finished, there were four bolts left over on the patio table, and I asked him what those were for, and he looked at me with total calm and said, "That's the design."

That is the whole man in one sentence.

Erin, I want you to know that the rest of us admire what you deal with.

Here's the thing about Dave, though. That same confidence, the one that produces crooked grills, is the reason he's the person everyone in this yard calls first. He doesn't hesitate. I have moved three times in twelve years, and three times Dave showed up at seven in the morning with coffee and a bad plan and a truck he borrowed from someone he barely knows.

I've watched him play Sunday basketball for over a decade with the shot selection of a man who has never once considered passing. And I've watched him spend fourteen hours babysitting a brisket for people he sees twice a year, because he heard they liked barbecue.

I could tell the Nashville story, where he lost the car keys inside a barbecue joint

and we searched a parking lot in the dark for two hours. I won't tell it. Erin has heard it enough.

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Dave, here's what I want for you at forty. Fewer emergency trips to the hardware store. One grill that stands up straight. And a lot more Sundays exactly like this one, where the people who love you are standing in your yard eating something you cooked too long.

Everybody, please raise your glass. To Mully. Forty years old, still not reading the instructions, still the first guy to show up.

Happy birthday, buddy.

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