

SPEECH NINETEEN

Ladies and Gentlemen, I'd like to thank John for his kind words and have to agree that the bridesmaids have done a fabulous job today and look absolutely wonderful - only eclipsed by Jane herself.

They say a problem shared is a problem halved, but I suspect John is now wondering if he has actually doubled the problems for himself by allowing us both to speak about him. We were very nervous when John asked us to be his best men. Speaking to a few friends and colleagues who have already suffered this dubious honour I was informed that it requires a little creativity, a little patience, some hard work, and some ingenuity. Remarkably John asked us to do the job despite us not possessing a single one of these traits. We therefore decided to have a look on the internet where we found the following checklist of duties...

1. Help the groom dress – fortunately I let David take care of this. Now it may be traditional for the groom to wear a kilt at a Johnish wedding, but today will be the one and only time as a married man John gets to wear the trousers.
2. Make sure the groom uses the toilet – I wish I had now done the first one
3. Ensure the groom's face and hair are in order - Well, God didn't do it right the first time around so neither of us had any hope here.
4. Make sure his trousers are done up - at this point we thought about asking his mother to take our places - and finally...
5. Make a speech to the bride and groom - Now, we thought this meant JUST to the bride and groom, you know, maybe off in a little room for a chat and perhaps a couple of drinks. We were a bit upset to find that we've actually got to do it in front of all of you as well. Still, I know you will all be getting hungry so we will get on with it...

Before we get to the stories, I should really point out what a fantastic, good looking and funny person John is – I should point this out, but I don't feel comfortable telling blatant lies in front of the Minister so I think we should move on...

We have both been friends with John since we were all about 16 years old so we had to turn to his father Steven for an insight into his formative years. Richard told us a story of coming home from a hard day at work back in 1979. It had been a long day, and by the time he got home John was already tucked up in his bed, Richard poured himself a large whisky and turned the TV on. Of course the sound of Daddy coming home had awoken young John, who sneaked down the stairs for a goodnight kiss. However, at this point Richard had left the front room to go into the kitchen. On returning he witnessed a 5-year-old John not only out of his bed but also picking up the whisky and taking a sizeable gulp. There was an immediate reaction from John - he spat all the whisky onto the floor, as you would expect a 5 year old to, and then slightly annoyed declared loudly ..."That's not lager!!!" This was obviously a

sign of things to come.

At this point we'll jump forward to his university days because as far as we can determine nothing else funny happened to John until then. His student days re-ignited his love of a drink, but unfortunately his budget did not quite match his enthusiasm. Luckily his resourcefulness did. I still to this day have not met anyone who could go out with on a Thursday night and arrive home two days later having drunk enough booze to sink a battleship. Not only that, but come home with a newspaper and a PowerAde – as John said this was vital to keep his energy up for university on Monday morning.

I think it was for this reason that John is the only student who decided that far from university being a hardship it was actually a comfortable way of life and rather than just one degree he would complete two instead. I think it's worthwhile mentioning at this point that myself David and the usher Dan are still paying off our student debts as a result of funding John's extended student life!!

John was however, forced to supplement our generosity as there were periods when all 3 of us were unavailable for 72 hour drinking sessions. He therefore took a part-time job in, you guessed it, a local pub. Further evidence of his upstanding character can be seen during these happy times. Obviously having to save all cash for socialising the poor boy would get hungry at work. But John refused to buckle to hunger pains by helping himself to the odd free bar of chocolate or bag of chips.

Moving forward to the day John met Jane. The 25th May 2003 was not just the happiest day of John's life. Myself, David and half of Cork also shared tears of joy. It was clear to all that knew John that this relationship was different. True love blossomed, John's dress sense remarkably became not only impeccable, but fashionable also - clearly the result of the love of a good woman - and within a short period of time John was on the phone to both David and myself telling us he was planning a big surprise. At first we both thought he was might be taking us on a free night out for funding his university years but we should have known better, he was planning to ask the beautiful Jane for her hand in marriage. Fortunately she said yes, and that brings us nicely to the easiest of the best men duties, arranging the Stag Party ...

Since there are 2 of us we felt it was only proper to arrange a Stag party each. I arranged a quiet 2 night break in Queenstown including 2 rounds of golf – all very civilised – at least it would have been had John played golf on the 2nd day with the rest of us instead of drinking all day with the only non golfer – Dan known to his friends as The Liability.

David and I were on the 14th tee when we both received the same text message “get back here now and rescue me from this maniac”. On our arrival 1 hour later John was so drunk it was clear he couldn't make it out of the hotel and by the end of the night was heard to mutter that he was never again drinking.

However, inevitably 3 weeks later he was right up for his 2nd Stag Party which I was left to arrange in Dublin. Now I should point out if John looks like he is shifting uncomfortably in his chair at the moment it's not because he is nervous about what we are going to say, it's

because his rear end has not yet recovered from being spanked by a lovely girl we meet in Dublin's premier lap dancing club. Again, the booze played a big role in this, however for once The Liability was no where to be seen!!

In conclusion, John you have found someone who is beautiful, kind, considerate, generous and loving. And Jane – you have found, well John.

I asked Jane's Mum this morning how it feels to see her daughter get married, and she said "it only seems like yesterday that she was going to bed with her dummy". Funny how history repeats itself.

I am sure you will all agree that they really do make a lovely couple and I am sure we speak on behalf of everyone who knows them when we wish them every happiness for the future. It now gives me great pleasure to toast the Bride & Groom.

Please stand and charge your glasses to Mr & Mrs Smith.