

## **SPEECH SIXTEEN**

For what seems like the 10th time today I find myself rising from a warm seat clasping a piece of paper in my hand.

Ladies and Gentlemen, for those of you who don't know me, my name is Raymond and I have the privilege of being John's best man. As such, it is with great pleasure that I get to thank John for his kind words about the Bridesmaids, Ushers, Page Boy and the Flower Girl. I think you will all agree they look fantastic and have done an excellent job of helping to make today such a great occasion.

It's fair to say that being a best man can be a fairly nerve racking experience and there's one person here this afternoon feeling really nervous, apprehensive and queasy about what lies ahead. All I can say is don't worry, it's probably because you've just married John and I am sure it will pass!

Anyway getting started I know John and Jane appreciate all of you being here today both old friends and new. As a Southlander myself, I fully understand how far people will travel for a free meal and a couple of glasses of wine!

Since John has moved to Vegas I don't see as much of him as I used to, but a couple of weeks ago I stayed with them one Sunday night and got press ganged into helping John put up the new kitchen blinds. As those of you who know John can imagine, the preparation for this relatively simple task involved a great deal of measuring, checking and re-checking, before we had finally marked the places where we needed to drill. At this point it became clear that John's DIY experience has not improved over the years, as he went to get his "tool kit" and came back holding just a screwdriver with 6 changeable bits and what I can only describe as a glorified electric screwdriver. It had multiple battery packs in it and looked like something from a Star Trek movie, so I could see why John had bought it, but it was a triumph of form over function.

Luckily Jane was in the kitchen at the time and on hearing my comments, mentioned she had a few tools of her own and came back with a proper set of screw drivers, a mains powered hammer drill, circular saw, hammer, a wide range of raw plugs and suitable screws so I for one am taking some comfort from knowing she will be able to look after him in the future.

Now I think one of the topics I am meant to make reference to is the drunken John debauchery that took place on the Stag Do but I would be lying if I tried to do so. This was clearly good news for John, but rather unfortunate for me as I had my hopes pinned on this event to give me something to talk about today. As it was, about the only funny thing that happened was seeing John trying to explain how he had really not lost on a race, as he had won nothing. The fact that he had bet a total of \$200 and so was actually \$100 down seemed to escape him.

This got me thinking to what John must have been like at school and Paul, his older brother, was kind enough to provide me with some details that did help explain the difficulty John was having. John was actually a slow starter and at Playschool he was different from all the other 5 year olds. He was 13! By the time he was at secondary school, it seems his teachers were getting very concerned about his performance. He wasn't so much falling behind he was getting lapped!

Stuart also tells me that when his parents were asked what they thought John would be when he finally left school their usual reply was "about 35"!

Now I am aware the above give a slightly negative view, and I feel as his best man I must come to his defence and say that in all the time I have know him I can honestly say no one has ever questioned John's intelligence. In fact I have never heard anybody even mentioned it.

The only other vaguely interesting event that happened at the Stag Do was my attempt to get John one of his favourite drinks, a Blue Lagoon, but which he affectionately calls a Blue Meanie. This is easy to make and is just vodka, blue Curacao and lemonade. John developed his passion for this drink when we shared a house, and spent a pleasant Saturday evening in watching videos and drinking them - by the pint. Never being a big drinker, John accidentally forgot to finish his final drink, so I did what any friend would do and put it in the fridge for him. I could tell he was happy that I had done this, as next day when he finally staggered downstairs at lunchtime, went to the fridge to get something to eat and inhaled the intense orange aroma of the Curacao, it clearly brought a lump to his throat.

As luck would have it Stuart came to visit us that afternoon, and brought a Sarah Lee Cointreau cake for tea, which also had the same lovely orange aroma. John was obviously feeling rather emotional that day, as he seemed to get all choked up over that kind gift as well. Ever since then I believe he has always associated this smell with happy memories. Coming back to the Stag Do, I decided a Blue Meanie would be just the thing to help John round off such a memorable day, so I tried to order him one. The barman however was clearly not the connoisseur that John is, as this was the first time I have ever had somebody refuse to make me a drink, not because I was too drunk to serve, but simply because he thought the drink was that pathetic.

Having failed miserably to help make that event more special for him, I was determined not to make the same mistake today, so .....

From looking at the clean plates that were taken away earlier I believe everybody except me seemed to enjoy the meal. For some reason I did not manage to eat very much. Those of you who know John will probably have realised that he did not actually have anything to do with planning the menu. Whilst he knows a great deal about many things, food is generally not one of them. In fact I will never forget the time he was tucking into a fajita, exclaiming how this was the best tasting chicken he had ever had, when it was pointed out to him that this was probably because it was beef. The look on his face at this point had to be seen to be believed particularly as he was avoiding eating beef at the time due to the mad cow disease scare. Now by this point you must be wondering what someone as beautiful and intelligent

as Jane sees in John apart from their shared passion for gadgets and household appliances with ludicrously large numbers of displays and switches on them. The answer is that whilst John is the groom here, really he's also the best man, not me. In all the years I have known him he has been a kind and generous friend, who cannot do enough for those he cares about and as such I would like to thank him for everything he's done for all of us. In two days time I will have been married for 10 years, an event at which John was my best man. As such, before I propose the toast, I thought it might be helpful if I took the opportunity to pass onto him a few pieces of advice he may find useful:

1. Don't leave the toilet seat up
2. Remember birthdays and anniversaries
3. Don't leave the toilet seat up. I know I have mentioned this before, but this gets me into such trouble I thought it worth mentioning again.
4. Buy flowers regularly, but not so often that it becomes suspicious
5. Keep telling Jane those 3 important little words, "you're right dear".
6. Most importantly make sure you get on with your mother-in law. To start with I didn't speak to mine for two years. It wasn't because I didn't like her it's just I thought it was rude to interrupt.

As such finally Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to propose the toast. To the Bride and Groom!