HAPPY 21ST BIRTHDAY SPEECH

FOR

STEPHEN RAYMENT

(SPEECH WILL BE FOR BOTH FATHER AND DAUGHTER:

FATHER’S SPEAKING PARTS WILL BE IN BLACK,

DAUGHTER’S SPEAKING PARTS WILL BE IN PURPLE)

Hello everyone and thank you all for being here tonight to celebrate the momentous occasion of the 21st birthday of my son, and **my brother**, Christopher, but you all know that already, and if you don’t (**Raise your hand in the air and in a louder voice yell out**)..**CAN SOMEONE PLEASE CALL SECURITY!?!?** (**And wait for the laugh**). Tonight will be full of celebration in this elegant scenario. …What a perfect way to reflect on Chris’ life and achievements so far and to usher him into adulthood with **panache**. (**Turn to your son and say**), Chris, it’s time to know the meaning of that word, and no, it is not a new rap star! It means elegance, style, energy and an enthusiasm for life-actually, all qualities you already possess! We are also thrilled to see so many familiar faces from our lives sharing this happy occasion with us. It’s great to see Chris and Natalie’s mother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The last time she and I were together in a crowd this large, a man in a wig wielded a gavel and yelled, “**ALL RISE**!!” (**Wait for the laugh**). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, you know we love to kid about, well, everything, but I do want to say that we have two wonderful children and I want to acknowledge you for being a great mother. I know the early years were difficult as I had to work and travel extensively, but to paraphrase just a bit, the proof of the upbringing is in the 2 fine young adults we claim as our children, so thank you! I am happy to see (**ex-wife’s parents**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and to share this fantastic celebration with you. It’s great to see you two again and may we only meet on happy occasions! To (**ex-wife**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s partner Andrew, I want to say welcome and thank you for being a positive figure in Chris and Natalie’s lives …and please accept my most sincere apologies for opening your post!! What a relief they were **YOUR** bills and not mine! (**Wait for the laugh**). And to all of the family and friends who traveled from really far and really wide-places like America, Europe and Dubai, we appreciate the effort each one of you have made in order to share Chris’ birthday with us. We are aware that times are tough and we all have our challenges, so it is extra special that we can all be together and make the memories tonight that will last us a lifetime…Chris, remember-blood is thicker than water and petrol is thicker and more expensive than either….so you must be fairly special to warrant such a great turnout tonight!

(**Natalie speaks**) **Chris, it’s great having you as my brother. I appreciate the bond we have and growing up, you were hardly ever my bratty younger brother! Of course, when you were shipped off….uh I mean went to boarding school, the separation was a little traumatic…for all of us. I love when Daddy tells the story of ..um…how well you behaved every time you had to go back to school**… (**back to Stephen**) Yes Natalie, thanks for bringing **that** up…yes, **you**, Christopher, in the most ominous tone of voice any 11 year old could possibly muster, would prophecy….”**DON’T FORGET WHO CHOOSES YOUR NURSING HOME!!!!**” (**Wait for the laugh**).

Watching you grow up was a joy and an adventure. Some of my most cherished memories with the both of my kids have been our skiing and boating holidays. Whether we were in the Greek waters or on the slopes of Verbier, those times were just so special. Chris, watching you grow up into a fine, athletic young man while retaining your loving and tactful ways has always inspired me. I remember when you were 16 years old and attending Worth Abbey Boarding School, we watched one of your rugby games, and as the game ended, you walked off the rugby pitch, and in front of God and Man and a bunch of 16-year-old teammates, you made sure to walk over to me and give me a great big hug, and I could not have been more proud of you. By the way, did that mean you **WILL** put me in a good nursing home when the time comes…please? (**Say this with a little pathetic whine and wait for the laugh**). Yes, and then after Worth Abbey, it was off to Bristol University, where, apparently, unbeknownst to your parental units, you were majoring in “**social studies**” …of a sort, maybe one might also say you were minoring in …aerobics? ….. Contortionism? Endurance??? Oh let’s not beat around the bush…. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, our Chris, our birthday boy, managed to rent rooms over a lap dancing bar…. what an experience for a college student!!! What a way to really get to know the deans and guidance counselors (**Substitute the names or positions of the authority figures that he would have seen at university**)!!! What a way to learn how to recover!! Apparently your mother’s wisdom was, “…just like his father!” Yes, that was the time you seemed to be taking the “advanced course” in partying. Perhaps I should have told you the story of the little boy and the worm before you went off to university. Just briefly, it goes like this-One day, a father decided the time had come to teach his son about the evils of alcohol. Knowing his son loved science projects, he set 2 glasses on the kitchen counter. One glass contained water with a worm in it, and the other had whiskey with a worm in it. The worm in the water lived, but the worm in the whiskey? Not so lucky. The father looked at the son and asked if he understood the lesson in front of him, to which the child replied, “Well, Dad, seems to me that if you drink alcohol, you won’t have worms.” (**Wait for the laugh**). Well, thank goodness you don’t have worms and you also learned a great lesson. One of the great things about you is your resilience, and now, after \_\_\_\_\_ years at Kingston, you’re back on track and working hard to earn your Quantity Surveying degree, and “following in your father’s footsteps….I hope the good ones!! Everyone I know who has met you has wonderful things to say about you, and I have been told many times-even by people whom I respect-only kidding! That you’re a wonderful and polite young man and I should be very proud of you …and believe me, I REALLY am. I have always been proud of you and I am particularly thrilled to observe you as you morph into a self assured and mature and respectful young man. I love the close relationships you have with your mother and sister and I really do appreciate how you look out for each other. I know the women in your life –that would be your mothers and Natalie-may tend to spoil you, but I think you do well by taking it all in stride…except for one thing…. will someone please explain to me why you find it **SO FASCINATING** to dress up in those blonde ponytails at rugby matches…. is there something I should know and be worried about? (**Say this with a little exaggeration**). What I do know is that I am really impressed with your love of sports, the knowledge you’ve amassed on the subject and might I also say, your golf skills have surpassed mine!!! Very impressive!!

While we were preparing for, and planning this celebration, I thought I would see how other fathers and sons commemorated this passage into adulthood. I came across some correspondence between John D. Rockefeller and his son John Jr. For those of you who may not know, in the early 1900’s, John D, the father, was considered the richest man in North America, having been the first person to amass a fortune of over **1 billion dollars**-**back then**. So how did an oligarch celebrate his son’s passage into adulthood 100 years ago? With a check for $21.00 and a letter wishing his son well.

Chris, you have been an exemplary son to both your mother and me. (**Natalie)** **And you’ve been a pretty cool brother also-although; it would have been fun if you had some older, cuter friends**… There is a quote from Alfred, Lord Tennyson, that teaches us, “I am part of all that I have met. Take a look around you, Chris, and see all the love and laughter and respect that is in this room tonight to celebrate **you**-your life, your friendship, your love of sports and the respect you show to others. Although you are at the very beginning of your adult life, the foundation you have built and the inspiration you have both absorbed and given will support you to become a fine human being. I am very proud of you and everyone in this room is all the better for having you in his or her life.

I never really thought I had THAT much in common with John D. Rockefeller, but when I read the respect he had for his son, and when I realized he acknowledged his son so thoroughly on the occasion of his 21st birthday, I realized that indeed, John D. and I do share the love and appreciation we have for our children. In his cover letter for the post carrying that massive $21.00 birthday check, Rockefeller expressed these thoughts. He said, “We all join in the hope that this and all the days to come, may bring only good to you, and we rejoice that you know from experience, that good for you, is inseparably connected with the good you bring to others. But this is not a lecture, only a kind word from an affectionate father to a much loved and only son on the occasion of his 21st birthday.” (**Have a check written to your son and present it to him**) Chris, with that having been said, I want to present you with this symbolic check for £21. I also want to suggest that you not cash it. Heaven knows, I’ve written quite a few checks before and I have a feeling I’ll still be called on to write a few more-only hopefully a little less frequently! Instead use it to remind you of this wonderful night. Think of the acknowledgment you’ve received from your family and friends and classmates (and maybe try NOT to think of the ladies at the lap dance bar-your former neighbors!!) and think of the road that lies ahead. Think of what you’ve learned in your life so far, what you’d like to learn, and what it is you’d like to teach people. Think of the way YOU plan to make a difference in this world. You’ve got a wonderful spirit and enthusiasm for life and the world needs people like you. Your turn is coming; actually, it’s here! …And that goes for all of your friends here tonight also! And soon it will be up to all of you to carry on and make this world a better place in which to live.

(**Natalie**) **And Chris, I’d like to add something since I’m a little bit older and possibly somewhat wiser; I thought the words of the American author Mark Twain resounded for me. He said, "When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years." Chris, trust me-now that I’m a “woman of the world” at 24, Daddy’s words DO make sense and he HAS learned an awful lot in the past few years! ,**

Chris, Natalie and I would like to invite everyone to raise a glass as we propose a birthday toast to you:

(**Natalie**) **Happy birthday, Chris. May your future be represented by this room tonight and be as bright as the chandeliers that light this room, and be as filled with friends and joy and light as we see here tonight!!! Have a very happy birthday! We love you!!**