GROOM SPEECH

FOR

NICHOLAS RUDY

Hi everyone!! I want to thank all of you for being here and sharing this great moment with Lacey and me. You all look wonderful!! I thought it might just be me getting a little mushy and sentimental, but I do feel the love in the room and the energy and good wishes from all of you is really inspiring!! And this whole setting- this beautiful place and the ceremony at church honor the tradition and meaning of what a wedding symbolizes and it all takes on a new meaning as I stand in front of you for the first time as a married man. Lacey, when we first met, you caught my heart with your beauty both inside and out, but today there are no words invented for me to express just how magnificent you look and how much you mean to me. If I didn’t know better, I would think I was dreaming, but if I am… please don’t wake me up!!! This is all just too good to be true!!

Life and its mysteries have a way of giving each one of us challenging times and magical moments and I think it’s a safe bet to say that my life has been filled with **PLENTY** of **BOTH** kinds of those moments in the past several years. Today is one of those days that I wouldn’t trade for the world-it’s what makes life worthwhile and to have so many family members and friends with us to witness our joy is really overwhelming. I have no doubt that I am the happiest person on the planet right now. Of course **NONE** of this would be possible without the love, beauty-both inside and out, patience, understanding, and partnership of my spectacular new wife, Lacey. (**Turn to Lacey and say**) Lacey, remember how we first met and we stayed up all night talking? Remember how the conversation just didn’t end… really? And remember how it seemed that even though we had just met, we couldn’t get enough of each other? Well that was just the beginning…. now it’s time for everyone to know just what you mean to me. I’ve been practicing…. I’ve got a lot to say-yes you inspire me… I’ve been doing my breathing lessons, my “mirror work,” my pronunciation practice, and I’ve been organizing my thoughts… If you thought I talked a lot that first night… I was just warming up!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Now it’s time for **EVERYONE** to know without a doubt, just what you mean to me!! And don’t worry, it’s all good… In fact it couldn’t be better!!! By the time I’m done, everyone in this entire room will love you… but I don’t believe it’s possible for anyone to love you as much as I do… but they better back off… cause you’re officially taken!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

(**If you don’t want to say who made this quote, you can change to say, “A wise man once said”)** There is a well-known psychiatrist named Brian Weiss, famous for his research on reincarnation and survival of the soul, who said, “Every individual soul chooses the significant people in that life. Destiny will place you in the particular circumstance; it will dictate that you will encounter a particular person, at a certain time, place.” Let me tell you, when I was on that plane flying back home from Afghanistan on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**name the date right before you landed and met Lacey**) that quote would have meant **NOTHING** to me. I had just spent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**years? months? Name the amount of time**) stationed in a war zone, doing what I had to do, spending whatever down time I had imagining what life would be like upon my return to the states after my tour. (**If any of your fellow Navy? men are at the wedding you can say**). You can ask \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ what it was like. Of course nothing compares to actually living through those times, but I will tell you, and people don’t really know this about me… that every day we fought to survive that hell (**would you feel more comfortable saying “those challenges” instead of “hell?”)** and every night when I was alone with my thoughts, I prayed that I would find a loving woman… someone just like Lacey. Somehow I landed up in Mississippi and what are the odds… **REALLY**… that I would be at the Hard Rock Casino and there would be a blonde angel who just **HAPPENED** to be visiting a friend for a few days? Neither the most creative novelist nor I could make this up if we tried!! (**Wait for the laugh**)… And on top of **THAT,** the person she was visiting had to go to the hospital **THAT** night and she was concerned about being alone in a strange place. (**If Lacey’s friend from Mississippi is there you can** **say**)… Hey, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ were you **REALLY** sick that night… or are you **REALLY** Cupid? (**If the person isn’t there you can say “I don’t know if \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was REALLY sick, but I hope he or she got better quickly-and thanks for being an unknowing Cupid!! And wait for the laugh**)

I know we hear of stories of destiny and how soul mates meet and we never know what might greet us right around the corner… In the next moment one instant can change a life or lives forever. I had been trained to be prepared for the worst to be lurking right around that corner throughout my military commitments, and even though I prayed and consider myself a person of faith, when that lightning bolt hits, part of the magic is that it comes when you least expect it. It may seam surreal at first… It may seem like the fates are playing with you and may just be fooling you, but every so often, those amazing moments are REAL and nothing is ever, **EVER** the same after. My military training and experience had hardened me but in an instant all of that took a back seat. I remember wondering about just who was that blonde girl over there. Of course I had to remain cool, calm and collected, but I was melting quickly… I just couldn’t let on…. what if it were all for nothing? What if she didn’t feel the same? “Am I CRAZY???” I thought to myself. If anything it was a fun night. I was back in the states, starting my new life stationed in Mississippi, and getting ready to think of what the next great adventure would be. Little did I know at the time it would come in the form of a beautiful, sensitive, smart and patient blonde….

The author Richard Bach has said this about finding “The one,” “A soul mate is someone who has locks that fit our keys, and keys to fit our locks. When we feel safe enough to open the locks, our truest selves step out and we can be completely and honestly who we are; we can be loved for who we are and not for who we’re pretending to be. Each unveils the best part of the other. No matter what else goes wrong around us, with that one person we’re safe in our own paradise. Our soul mate is someone who shares our deepest longings, our sense of direction. When we’re two balloons, and together our direction is up, chances are we’ve found the right person. Our soul mate is the one who makes life come to life.” Lacey, I don’t know if you realized it, but I was kind of a goner within the first few hours of meeting you., and the bond we created that night proved to be the real thing and I knew it deeply and profoundly. Two days after we met, I came back to Michigan to see my family and even though we were just getting to know each other, you showed me what it meant to be cared for. Every morning I smiled when I received your sweet “Good Morning!” texts and I still can’t believe you waited two weeks to see me when I returned to Mississippi…. and so the romance began to take hold… we burned up (**say the appropriate thing for how you traveled)** Route \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**say the air lanes if you flew**) as we both traipsed back and forth from Florida to Mississippi to be with each other. Lacey, when you asked **THAT** question after a few months, “So- Are we going to be a couple?” I was sure we were probably overstating the obvious… in my mind and heart I knew you were the girl for me from the very beginning. I guess you could say it was “**WHOA!!”** at first sight and “love at the first twenty-four hours!!” (**Wait for the laugh**). Of course I didn’t want to be too pushy in the beginning-I wanted to be respectful and patient and I didn’t want to come on too strong, but when we decided to move in together, I was the happiest guy on the planet!

Of course life has its ups and downs. Nothing lasts forever and the hard, challenging times just work to remind us to appreciate what we have and the bonds we’ve made. When someone THIS SPECIAL comes into your life, you learn to fight for the blessings that bring you together. Soon after we moved in together, Lacey, I remember you had to move to Colorado for work. It was one of the early challenges that tested us but our love and our bond was stronger than that. I was able to eventually leave the military and join you in Colorado…. and being human, there were other challenges that we faced, but we are a team and we faced them together. I said before that you’re not only beautiful, you’re also loving, gentle and supportive, and NO ONE knows that better than me. You’re fun in a crowd. You’re a great friend. You’re a smart, resourceful and loyal employee, but to me, you’ve proven you’re my **EVERYTHING**. You’re really there when I need you and although you may be half my size, I rely on your strength, intuition, and character more than you will ever know.

There are so many famous quotes and definitions about love. Some of us are blessed to find our own special kind of love. I think that when children give their ideas of what love really is, those thoughts may be the purest expression of what this really is. I came across some kids’ ideas of just what love is.

* Little four-year-old Terri explained it this way: “Love is what makes you smile when you are tired.”
* Billy, another wise four-year-old put it this way. He said, “When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth.” Lacey- I love the way you say my name!
* And then there was eight-year old Rebecca, older, wiser, and more observant of the ways of life and love. She said, “When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn’t bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That’s love.” Lacey, I can’t imagine growing old with anyone else but you. It will be my privilege!
* And of course Noelle told it just like it is when, even at only age seven, she was able to recognize this special feeling. Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt and then he wears it every day.” And Lacey…. If you wanted me to do that, I would, and then I would give it to you if you needed me to… or to at least wash it…. Hey… when it comes to my feelings for Lacey, I may be an incurable romantic but even I’m not perfect!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Lacey, you and I have moved around a lot in the past few years and with each move we’ve grown closer, more in sync, and more in love. Each adventure that we encounter together proves every day that the girl I met at the Hard Rock Casino is the only girl for me. You are truly my dream girl and the answer to my prayers. Talk about having faith in humanity renewed! How did I ever get so blessed? I love you more than anything and being your husband is beyond my wildest dreams. I do believe that saying, “Happy wife, happy life,” and I will do everything in my power to make sure you’re happy, but knowing you, you’re bucket list is not demanding or extravagant. I know what you wish for comes from your heart and I am here to make sure you’re safe and sound, cared for and loved, protected and respected, happy and healthy. You will always have my heart and my loving support- no matter what.

(**If you want to talk about the baby you can say**). And now that we are finally husband and wife, we are elated that within a few months, our own little bundle of love will join us to make this new and happy family complete. I can’t think of anything more wonderful and optimistic than bringing a beautiful little baby girl into this world, and if we’re very, VERY lucky, she’ll be just like you. No matter what, she will be loved and cherished like I love you.

I want to thank all of you for sharing this special moment with Lacey and me. Thanks for all of your love and support, you friendship and your caring, your humor and your insights. May each one of you have the kind of love in your lives that I feel for Lacey and may we all be happy, healthy and wise for many, many years! Thank you all!