**MAID OF HONOR**

**SPEECH FOR**

**JESSICA VESSIA**

Hello everyone..... for those of you that may not know, I am Jessica and I am happy, proud, and honored to be here, as Natalie’s Maid of Honor, and to witness this moment for my best friend. I once heard someone say that “ Some people arrive and make such a beautiful impact on your life that you can barely remember what life was like without them.” That’s **EXACTLY** how I feel about my friendship with Natalie.... of course the fact that we met in **first grade** helped a little.... (**Wait for the laugh**). Someone else that made a “beautiful impact” was Yoav, and the “aftershocks” of that impact have lasted and grown, and they radiate to wash over all of us tonight and for all of their lives.

Yes.... a very nice little girl moved to my neighborhood when I was just six years old. Her name was Natalie and, as a testimony to the pure and honest reactions only possible between young, open, joyful children, we became best friends almost immediately. I cannot imagine a time in my life when I didn’t have the love, support, wisdom, and friendship of this great girl. All through the years, no matter what I had to face.... and believe me, there were some tough times, I always knew Natalie was there for me.... Even though I’m not one to quote from the classics, an Ancient Greek philosopher said that, “A friend is a second self.” ... **NOW** I can see why those old, wise men and their wisdom lasted for thousands of years.... they were **SMART**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). I get it!!! Natalie has been my partner in crime, my “study buddy,” my mirror, my conscience....everything.... even when we were too young to know how important our friendship was or would grow to become, we knew our lives just had to include one another. It’s like something else I saw when trying to find the words to express just how much having a friend like Natalie means to me.... “Best friends are like walls.... they provide support.... they shelter us from the elements... sometimes you lean on them and sometimes it’s just good to know they are there...”

Natalie really is a unique and beautiful soul.... and even more beautiful as a bride.... and for those of you that know my best friend almost as well as I do, you know that she is free spirited, caring, loving, smart, funny, and loyal. She proves the theory of the laws of attraction with each interaction... just look at her smile.... you all fell for it... **DIDN’T YOU**?!?!? ( **Wait for the laugh**). No... **REALLY**... I mean it...we all know that Natalie has a smile that radiates... so much so that it’s impossible to **NOT** smile along with her.

Over the years my bond with Natalie was cemented over and over and over again. She was and literally has been a part of my family for as long as I remember. She was also extremely close with my mom who was like a second mother to Natalie, and even though my mother passed away seven years ago, while I had been forced to go through hell and back throughout that ordeal, Natalie never let me go through those horrors alone. She was there for me no matter what and unfailingly made sure I knew that she was my wall, my rock, my strength, even when I had no idea what or if I would ever feel again..... and for that, I am grateful beyond anything mere words can express.

Natalie also enjoyed the great times with us too... thankfully life wasn’t **ALL** drama and we held those great memories close to us... thank goodness they’re available when we need them!!! We’ve gone on multiple trips and vacations together. One of the most unforgettable was the time we went to the Bahamas with my mother, when she was still alive. Another incredible time we had was when my mother, my sister Gabrielle, and I planned a trip to Big Rock in the Adirondacks. A trip like that **COULD NOT** have been complete without Natalie and she really, **REALLY** wanted to go, but there was a problem... Natalie had a very important soccer game during the time we would be away, and it was impossible.... until my mom called her dad.... fortunately he was easy going and agreeable, and before anyone knew it, we showed up at Natalie’s house, gave her fifteen minutes to pack, and we were on our way!!! Natalie was **ECSTATIC** to put it mildly and we had the most **AMAZING, MEMORABLE** trip. (**If Natalie’s father is there and you feel it’s appropriate, you can turn to him and say**), \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, if I haven’t already said it a million times, thank you for “cutting Natalie loose that day... we had such a great time!!! (**If any of Natalie’s old soccer team buddies are present, you can say**) .... and to you girls on that soccer team... thank **YOU** too for letting my friend share that weekend with us!! (**And wait for the laugh**).

And then there was Yoav.... I’m not gonna lie... there were other “suitors” that preceded his arrival into Natalie’s life, but clearly **NONE** of them left the same impression on our girl... I don’t know about Natalie, but **I** **KNEW** he was **THE ONE** after only a few dates.... and anyone else that was around to witness this miracle knew too...just by the way her face would light up when she would talk about it.... and **HIM**... Their love is truly one of a kind their connection and caring for one another is the type of bond that each one of us might ever wish for. Yoav, thank you for finding, loving, and appreciating my wonderful best friend. Your relationship really gives me hope that such connections can exist and that it’s possible to one day meet the love of **MY** life.

Yoav, I want to welcome you to **OUR** branch of the family... and I wish you both endless and boundless happiness, joy, health and all good things.... may you continue to live, laugh, and love together as you inspire all of us. Congratulations!! We love you!!