**WEDDING SPEECH**

**FOR**

**HANS ROMMEL**

Hello everyone... it’s really wonderful to be here tonight, and it’s even better when we think about all that this celebration represents. It’s about love, partnership, commitment, reminiscence, and sharing hopes, dreams and wishes for future happiness. It’s about honoring the ultimate expression of friendship and because of that, the light of marriage shines a spotlight on all that’s genuine, positive, and good in this world... something we can all use more of these days... and friendship and connection are high on that list.

Many people believe that after a while, friends become family. It doesn’t matter about distance or frequency of interaction...we just **know** when someone becomes a lifelong friend. I’ve known that for a while about Charles, someone I’ve been very good and treasured friends with for many years. I moved to the US from Germany around thirteen years ago, and wouldn’t you just know...? Charles was one of the first friends I met... I don’t remember exactly where or how, but I **DO** remember where he worked back then... it was at Woody’s, which, at the time, could have been considered the center of the universe... if you know what I mean.... It’s interesting to note that Charles was a bar back when I met him... and I think all of us would agree, “In cocktails Amicitias!!” ...I just made that up... it’s Latin for “In cocktails **FRIENDSHIP**!!” (**Wait for the laugh**).

Over the years, as our friendship grew, we explored what worked and what didn’t... being roommates was great... being co-workers???? Let’s just say.... there’s an expression that goes, “That which doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” We’ll stick with friendship!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

As roommates... friends... explorers... we would go to our usual spots.... and then one night... **there he was**... and there he **wasn’t**.... apparently, Charles was doing “market research”..... we know how much he loves to sip cocktails as much as he likes to make them... and although a cosmic connection was made with a handsome stranger, and although there was “allegedly” a “sleepover,” I learned about this a little later when I was enlisted to help with some further “research....” Charles remembered the street where Chris lived, but that was about it, so, being the friend that I am, I accompanied Charles on this quest... Bob Dylan sang about “Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door,” but I don’t think he mentioned that you have to test many before you find the **ONE**..... and yes... there’s a metaphor somewhere in that adventure. Charles knocked on every door on that block, and, as we know, what you think you’ve lost, when found, is always in the last place you look... and finally, **knock on wood,** there was Chris.... we probably should have had Charles either **tattooed** or **microchipped** with Chris’ number... (**Wait for the laugh**), but as we can see, it wasn’t necessary... it all worked out....

Over the years, Charles and Chris moved in together and I moved on... first to Chicago and then to Washington DC, but as we, who are very blessed, know... true friendship is portable, packable, and timeless, and that’s what I found with Charles. Charles visited me in Chicago a few times and over the years we’ve had many wonderful, memorable moments.... I will never forget Thanksgiving in 2011. My parents were visiting from Germany and Charles and Chris had a gathering.... friends... family...my parents... turkey... cocktails... always cocktails (**Wait for the laugh**)... what a memory... made even more precious by the connection I saw between my mother and Charles... my mother was a chef and she and Charles, who we all know, **LOVES** to cook, really had a blast.... and my dad had a great time chatting it up with Chris.... Charles, I know how much our mothers meant to each of us and I am **SURE** they have gotten together **UP THERE** and are celebrating with us today.

Charles and Chris are generous and thoughtful... I **KNOW** that **WE ALL** know this.... and when I used to visit from Chicago, I would stop by, share a few drinks, we’d pick up where we left off... I’d stay in the guest bedroom... and eventually do it all over again. I will never forget the time... I got to “my room” and there was a sign with my name on the door... chocolate waiting for me on the nightstand... and a silver bracelet on the bed... I saw that small gestures of graciousness meant so much to both of them... and to me as well... One Christmas I visited with my then boyfriend and we spent the holidays there. They had the place beautifully decorated and I remember how relaxing it was. Charles made us cocktails, we caught up , talked about life.... and that, and all of our memories, stay with me, no matter where I find myself, no matter where I go.  Charles, it’s Important for me to let you know that our friendship never really stopped, and as far as I’m concerned, it won’t. Despite distance or the fact that we don’t see each other regularly, when we do get together, it’s like nothing has changed and we just saw each other a day ago. I love you as a true friend and I know I'm your buddy... I’m just glad to have people like you ... and Chris, in my life. We are here for each other.

... And now these two have cemented their bond and are **MARRIED**!!! No more searching... no more lost addresses... just lots of love, partnership, hopes for a wonderful future... and **CELEBRATION**!! Let’s raise a glass to Charles and Chris... Here’s to a life filled with love and health, happiness and prosperity, partnership, humor, good fortune and more than you might ever wish for... Congratulations!!! Thank you!!