**BEST MAN SPEECH**

**FOR**

**WLADIMIR NOEL**

Hello everyone!! Today is really wonderful... we’re here, in our beautiful home country, celebrating past history, both personal and cultural, the meaning of friendship, all of the different ties that bind us.... to the past... to our heritage... to each other... and most importantly... to **LOVE**.... and of course, we are here to witness the making of **NEW** history... with the marriage of Richard and Madona. With all of the challenges and hurdles that life can tend to throw our way, the fact that we can be here... **together**... laughing... dancing... enjoying the colorful, rich, sweet life in celebration of these two “lovebirds,” is ...well... awe inspiring.... Each one of us has a unique road to travel in life. I have to say that I am really happy ... and blessed... that my own path has crossed with that my of my dear friend Richard and has brought me here... today... to celebrate with all of you... and to have the blessing of “standing up” for him as he **officially** joins his journey with Madona’s.

Ah... yes... journeys... challenges... mischief... reunion.... more travel... more mischief??? I’ll make this brief... and I will give you the “public” version of how Richard and I met... which will provide some insight into character... choices... and the bonds of friendship. Let’s go back to 1999...and while the late Prince was “**partying**... “ Richard and I were in junior high school, here in Haiti... I won’t go into details, but let’s say, the two of us might have **ALSO** partied like it was 1999 because we got **KICKED OUT** of school... (**Wait for the laugh**)... don’t judge... clearly we’ve grown up a bit since then... in good ways!!! The following year, I found a school to attend... and guess what? Richard found the same one!! There **ARE NO ACCIDENTS** in life!! Everything happens for a reason... we picked up where our friendship left off and became good, tight friends. ... and as I recall... we behaved... a little better. A few years later, fate, and life, and travel, sealed our friendship further when we both migrated to New York. Although we lost touch for a bit, we found each other and reconnected a few years later on My Space... remember My Space?? The dinosaur of social connections?? I’m just happy our friendship endured beyond **THAT** app!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Life has certainly evolved for all of us... things change... but the important things... true friendship... history... destiny... and of course, **love**, endure. Richard and Madona live in New York now, but here we all are, back home... and what we can all realize is that we are “**home**” when we are with our friends and loved ones.

While Richard has clearly demonstrated, throughout his life, that he is no stranger to having a good time, his wonderful characteristics always lead the way. He’s driven, loyal, and always positive... if that’s not the essential recipe for success in all aspects of life, I don’t know what is! And yes, Richard has proven that he has the winning formula.... professionally and personally. One instance comes to mind very clearly. It was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**Name the year**) and Richard was being honored for his accomplishments in supporting and advancing Haiti’s tourism industry. I had a front row seat to the best event in town!!! It was great to see my friend be honored with such a prestigious recognition, but it was even **BETTER** knowing that he was sharing that distinction with the woman he loved. He was happy about the award, but he was **ELATED** to have his love, Madona, on his arm, by his side, encouraging him. I saw how attentive and loving Richard was with Madona that night and it was clear... I was absolutely convinced that these two were **MADE** for one another... they were born to be together.

And here we are, celebrating love, legacy, past heritage and the making of future memories in this landmark that means so much to Haiti, this couple, and to all of us. Sans Souci... no worries... no matter what any one or any thing endures during its time on earth, it tells a story. This palace has a story.... one of majesty and endurance, and although superficially it has changed over the years, the essence of the structure remains as a steadfast symbol...Through the blessings of having a strong foundation and keen determination, we can still remember and retell Haiti’s history through these stones and this vista. A marriage is sort of similar. It starts off all shiny and beautiful... and I have to say, Madona and her attendants all look spectacular.... and over the years, things change... but it’s purpose...marriage... the reasons a couple wed... the strength they find in one another, does not change. It’s work, but clearly, as we can see with these two, it’s so worth it.

(**If you want to propose a toast, you can say**)

Ladies and Gentlemen, I’d like to invite you to raise a glass as I propose a toast

(**If there is a French or Traditional Haitian phrase you want to say, say it here**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. To Madona and Richard, here’s to a long, colorful life together, filled with love and health, happiness and partnership, prosperity and good fortune, and more than you might ever wish for!!! Thank you!! We love you!!