**WEDDING SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BENJAMIN COLE**

Hello everyone... thank you for being here to join Courtney and me as we realize a dream that’s been in the making for the past eight years. It’s amazing how fate and destiny work, and it’s also amazing how true it is that “love is everywhere...” it bridges time and circumstance and continents, takes us to places we’d only imagined, and, thank goodness, “What happens in Vegas doesn’t **ALWAYS** stay in Vegas...” although **SOME** parts are better left in the halls and lobbies and casinos of that legendary place!!! (**Wait for the laugh**)... For us, love really is everywhere... and it’s led us from South Africa to the United States... to Texas and, of course, Las Vegas... back to Texas... to Europe... Germany... Italy.... and this gorgeous “pit stop” of Taormina. Love affirms how much we are all connected, while weddings work their magic and **actually** bring us together... Someday, maybe Courtney and I will wake up and find this was all a dream, but like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz... the people we truly care about are always with us, and as Dorothy realized, (**Point to some people and say**) You were there... and you... and you... and all of this proves that life is beautiful.

What are the odds that some young man from South Africa would settle in Houston, decide to celebrate the Independence Day holiday of his adopted country ... in Las Vegas, and meet the woman of his dreams... his partner for life... in **THAT** scenario??? I should have played Lotto that weekend... I should have bet **BIG** at the tables... I should have **REALLY** rolled the dice..... but apparently I didn’t have to... I had already won... or so I was about to learn.

Las Vegas... the city of lights and legends, where groups of friends go to have fun and mingle.... to forge chance encounters.... and maybe... just maybe... to seal one’s fate. I was there with my brothers and some friends from South Africa... show of hands... who was there **THAT** night???? My “delegation” being as friendly as they... **WE** tend to be, mixed and mingled.... concurrently, there was a group of lovely young women, ready to relax and suspend their daily grinds for a bit of “R and R....” History was about to be made.... we all hear “**it**” only takes a moment... for the world to change. Trust me... it’s true... and after a random series of “moments,” two paths that were clearly meant to be, crossed.

Courtney, since that fateful weekend in Las Vegas, you’ve been in my life, you’ve been by my side, you’ve traveled the world with me, and with every adventure, more and more, you have shaped my world. I know we’ve both waited a long time for this moment... and with every step.... every trip.... every bump in the road that we witness and overcome **together**, we grow closer... I love you more each day. Although it may have seemed at times that we had to put our lives on hold, the truth is, we grew closer.... our understanding and appreciation of each other intensified... and I don’t know about **YOU**... (**Wait for the laugh**), but **I** found that every incident and event we share affirms our bond.

(**Do you want to make a little joke about Courtney’s aunt.... the one she didn’t move in with?**). I want to take a moment to thank Aunt \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for understanding that even with a U Haul filled with the stuff of a life, sometimes we find a fork in the road and pick it up. I will always be thankful that Courtney felt comfortable enough to think fast on her feet, formulate Plan B, and have me move her stuff in with me.... although I have a feeling Aunt\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ would have made a lovely roommate. It was a pivotal point in time.... the first... or second of many.

I would like to take a moment and thank Courtney’s dad, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for your kindness and generosity with wedding arrangements. To my mom, \_\_\_\_\_\_ thank you for **EVERYTHING**... for your unconditional love and support... for making sure I became and am the person worthy of Courtney..... to my brothers Axel and Dominic and my great friend Elton.... thank you for standing up for me as groomsmen and the best friends a person could hope for.... for guiding me through this incredible chapter in our lives, and for always being there... to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, you are a wonderful friend to Courtney and have been a fantastic maid of honor... to Courtney’s sisters, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.... (**If you want to make a little joke you can say**) you’re all **REALLY** stuck with me now!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).... and to all of you that have shown your love for Courtney and me and have taken the time and care to share this special moment and this little piece of paradise with us, we will never forget this time.... and **YOU**. Thank you.

I’d like to invite you to raise a glass as I propose a toast..... to my bride.... Courtney, we **DID IT**!!! Here’s to an even more **incredible** life **together**... filled with joy and happiness, travel and adventure, family, friends, partnership and peace.... and infinite amounts of love. .... and to all of you... Thank you again... Life is pretty great but I really believe, the **BEST** is yet to be... Thank you all!!