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| Good evening. For those of you who don’t know me, my name is Dennis and I am the **proud father of the bride**. I’m privileged tonight to make the first toast. And good news, since I’m not much of a public speaker I’ll keep this punishment as short as possible for the sake of everybody here……..especially me.On behalf of my family and the Cooper family I welcome you here to celebrate the marriage of these two amazing people, Jennifer and Jason. Thanks to everybody for coming tonight. You being here, the family and friends that mean the most in our lives, makes this truly special for our family and truly memorable for Jen and Jason. I especially want to thank those who traveled from out of town to be here. I hope you all have fun.First off I’d like to recognize the Cooper family; Jason’s parents Lynn & Phil, brother Justin (the best man) and his wife Kate, and his sister Jaimie (bridesmaids). Thanks for all you guys have done for our family and our daughter; engagement parties, rehearsal dinner, all the work for the bridal shower and all the help today. Thanks for welcoming us into your homes and especially for warmly accepting our daughter into your family. And most of all, thanks for raising Jason into the outstanding guy he is and for sharing him with us.I know a tremendous amount of planning & organization went into today. And as father of the bride I like to think **I had** a little to do with it. But in reality ….I’m just an innocent bystander. I was permitted to ask an occasional question, as long as it wasn’t “how much?” But that’s it. If they’d relied on me to plan this, we’d probably be eating Portillo’s in my backyard. (PAUSE) But I know Jen and Jason worked very hard over the last several months to arrange everything, and I appreciate it. Also my wife Linda and Lynn Cooper have been dedicated to it. Thanks very much to you guys as well. Many others also contributed and I’m deeply grateful. Now I’m supposed to share some revealing anecdotes about the bride, but don’t worry Jen I promised not to embarrass you in this speech and I meant it. Later, your mom & I will go from table to table and tell as many humiliating stories as we can remember. By then we’ll have had a lot to drink so there should be plenty. Of course Jenny as today got closer I’ve recalled many wonderful memories. I remember the day you were born. You were the cutest little bald-headed baby. When I found out you were a girl, though, I was a little nervous. I thought “what will I say to a little girl. I don’t know anything about girls.” Then the nurse handed you to me to hold and you were so peaceful and quiet and you didn’t even cry. You calmed me down that day.An eye blink later you were a toddler and always chattering away. We couldn’t keep you quiet then. I remember marveling at how smart you were, talking and asking questions a mile a minute….you kept me on my toes.In grade school I remember how determined you were, making up flash cards late into the evening so you could keep studying schoolwork more when other kids were watching TV or already in bed.In junior high I remember how brave you were. I took you for your first flute recital, and when you realized you had to play solo in front of a big audience, you turned pale and said “Dad, I can’t do this”. I offered to take you home but you said “wait”. Then your turn came, you gritted your teeth, walked to the front of the room…….And you played like an angel.In high school I remember your unintended sense of humor when you told me “don’t worry, dad, I’m moving into a dorm at college called SIX PACK.” I never worried until I heard college, six pack and you all in the same sentence. (PAUSE).And finally I remember your many apartment moves in college and after, with me as mover . Down alleys and up stairs, through ever-narrower hallways and doorways. Never an elevator, always overloaded. We had some father-daughter bonding experiences, to say the least. But with all those memories and thousands more, when I saw how beautiful you looked today in your wedding dress, I knew it was the best memory yet. Our lives are far richer because of you, both past memories and future dreams. We’re very proud of the strong, independent, and thoughtful woman you are.Jason, we first met a few years ago when Jen unexpectedly brought you to my birthday dinner. And I have to admit I was a little skeptical. See I’d met a couple of prior boyfriends and they weren’t exactly birthday dinner material. I wasn’t sure about you. But I saw pretty quickly that you were special. You were thoughtful and generous, always respectful and kind. I saw how well you two got along and how happy Jen was when you were together. Everybody in our family liked you. Even Jenny’s maternal grandparents thought you were terrific. Me……. I was still on probation after 30 years. (PAUSE) But Jason, when you showed up out of nowhere on that freezing morning a couple of years back to help move Jen’s heavy furniture up all those stairs into that Wicker Park apartment, I knew then my prayers were answered. A willing and able mover to share the burden of Jen’s oversized stuff, I wasn’t about to let you get away. After a while you guys agreed and here we are. Jason, I’m very proud and honored to welcome you into our family. When our kids were little I used to read them the old Aesop’s fable of the Tortoise and the Hare. Near the end of that story there’s a line that says the secret to winning is to never give up, always keep on trying. And I think it applies to marriage too. Jen and Jason, always keep trying to be each other’s best friend. Always keep trying to see each other’s point of view. And if you do argue, always keep trying to get past it and start again. It’s worked for us for 33 years.Ladies & gentlemen, please join me in this toast to the **new Mr. & Ms. Jason Cooper**.

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