

"The Wedding Speech"

By Matthew C Williams

Time: now

Place: The Marriott Hotel, New York City

Characters:

JORDAN: the groom

BETHANY: the bride

MAXWELL: Jordan's older brother

EMCEE/DJ: The master of ceremonies and DJ for the wedding

RHONDA: Bethany's mother

ROY: Bethany's father

(Al Green's "Let's Stay Together" plays. Lights up on Jordan and Bethany are center stage under slow disco ball lights and periodic camera flashes doing their first dance as husband and wife. EMCEE/DJ is stationed up center behind a music console. There is a family bathroom door on the upstage wall at extreme stage left. Music fades as the EMCEE/DJ, standing behind his music console up center, speaks)

EMCEE/DJ. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr and Mrs. Spencer!

(Offstage applause, cheers, "woots", etc. JORDAN and BETHANY take their sit down at the head table for two down stage right. Their steak filets have been delivered and await them at their places. EMCEE/DJ crosses down center stage with a microphone on a stand.)

EMCEE/DJ. Alright alright alright! Folks, the happy couple's gonna take their seats and finally dig into that filet before it gets cold. In the mean time, we're gonna kick off some toasts up in here and see what the best man's got to say about all this. The brother of the groom and best man, Maxwell!

(More cheers as, MAXWELL runs up to the microphone holding a drink in a short tumbler glass.)

MAXWELL. *(holds up glass)* To the most important people here... The bar staff. Nah nah nah, just jokin'. Just joking. Although, CAN we get a little applause for 'em, cause their workin' hard! *(Cheers for the alcohol. Shoots to JORDAN)*. Jordan!! Holy shhhhhhhabooda brother! Look at you, man. Oh my heart, my heart. It's beautiful. It's beautiful. And Bethany. You are a vision. Valuptuous, victorious, valiant. You clear the room. That is you. But of course, you are more than just a beautiful, very beautiful...person. You're smart. An innlectual. Jordan, you're not dropping this course little brother. *(takes a drink)*. And if you do, make sure you do it before you have kids. You know in all seriousness now, me and Jordan- and I'm sorry on this mom and dad..where are you? You out there? Hold yer hands up. *(scans the crowd under the bright lights)*. Dad?...Da- Ok... Great. *(Shoots back to Jordan)* Jordan!!... and I actually come from a bit of a broken family. Our parents just couldn't keep it together and had to find happiness in separate places. They divorced when we were kids and it took Jordan a long time to recover. *(Jordon gives him a concerned look)* BUT, but... time heals, people go and grow and the next generation gets to get it right, right?! *(a couple of claps and whoops from the back)*. Jordan and Bethany, I'm just so fuckin' happy for y— oh shit- shoot! Sorry, kid's table! Stop serving me. What am I'm trying to say is, I believe in marriage. Not for myself... anymore, but for others.

For YOU. And I'm so happy that these two souls found each other and I wanna rise my glass up. And I'm going to bless this union. And I want to say a prayer that fuses them together so that, "Till death do you part" is for real. Amen? To Jordan and Bethany. May you never split, may your fights be like a productive cough and may you get back what we lost! I'm jealous! I'm kidding! Or I'm not, I don't know! I support you both for ever n ever n never never never. Here here! I gotta pee. Music! (*The emcee/DJ plays out Maxwell with "You Can't Touch This" as Maxwell swills the last of his drink to light applause. He hugs the bride and groom and then heads straight for the bathroom door upstage right but it is locked. He walks offstage*)

EMCEE/DJ. Alright, alright, alright! Next, we're gonna hear from our hosts this evening and the parents of the happy bride, Rhonda and Roy!! Come on up here folks!

(Clapping, cheers, etc. from the guests as RHONDA and ROY approach the microphone, we hear the sound of the hand-dryer blowing in the bathroom up left.)

RHONDA. *(southern accent)* Thank you all so much for being here today. Roy and I always new that our 'lil baby would find a great man one day, but we never thought it would be of all places, here in New York City. La dee da!

(The dryer sound stops and we hear an audible moan from the bathroom. The hand-dryer comes on again. Rhonda doesn't notice and continues)
So when I found out my baby wanted to have her wedding here, me and Roy took out a second mortgage on the house.

BATHROOM *(muffled)*. Oh my god!

RHONDA. *(responding to that)* Oh, no, I'm jokin' of course. We'd do this again in a heartbeat. But seriously it's so nice to see all y'all here. We've got the whole clan from Atlanta in the house *(cheers)*. There's Jordan's entire family who we've been gettin' to know real good and I am am just lovin' ya'll. And who knew, at 101 years old, we'd have our beloved Meemaw.

BATHROOM. *(louder now, but still muffled)* Oh Yes!

(RHONDA responds with a fist in the air. Murmurs and chuckles from the guests. The lights dim on RHONDA and isolate BETHANY and JORDAN.)

BETHANY. What is that?

JORDAN. Somebody's hooking up in that bathroom.

BETHANY. From OUR party? Who?

JORDAN. I have no idea Bethany, there's 200 people here.

BETHANY. Somebody's gotta break them up!

JORDAN. It's a little late now.

(Focusing back to RHONDA)

RHONDA. Before I get to my toast, I'd like to thank Jordan's momma and daddy for all of their help organizing this wedding. There was a lotta emails and about a thousand texts, but WE DID IT-

BATHROOM. GOOD baby!

(The guest shift, murmur, gasp, giggle etc. EMCEE/DJ goes to the bathroom and knocks on the door, trying not to draw attention. The hand dryer goes on again)

RHONDA (*agreeing with the source, but still unaware.*) Yes, we did!

(Lights down on the toast isolating JORDAN and BETHANY)

BETHANY. (*scanning the crowd*) I don't see any empty seats. Wait, right there. Your family table.

JORDAN. It's not Maxwell, he just left the room to pee.. or puke.

BETHANY. Where are your parents?

JORDAN. I have no idea. How could they be gone right now?

BETHANY. How could they miss this!?

JORDAN. I have no idea.

BETHANY. Oh my g— look, they're the only ones missing Jordan.

JORDAN. I guarantee you, it is not them. It must some waiters. Did you forget that they are divorced and hate each other?

BATHROOM. NO! YES!

JORDAN. (*in pain*) Oh, oh no, oh gross. I think that was my dad's voice.

BETHANY. Do you have your phone?

JORDAN. Yeah, I left it on the table for pictures. (*picks up phone*) I'll call him.

(He dials and listens. A beat. Then from the bathroom, we hear the faint tune of "Tequila". The hand blower starts again.)

JORDAN. Son of a bitch... With a waiter dad!? Now?? C'mon man.

BETHANY. You've got to get them out of there now Jordan!

JORDAN. Yeah, OK.

(JORDAN stands, then from the bathroom a high-pitched giggle. JORDAN sits.)
Wait. Noooo. There's no way.

BETHANY. What are you waiting for?

JORDAN. Hold on a second.

(Dials his phone again) A beat, then "I Will Always Love You" by Whitney Houston erupts from a cell phone in the bathroom.)

BETHANY. What Jordon? Who'd you call? Who's he in there with?

(He doesn't answer. His eyes are locked on the bathroom door.)

BETHANY. Jordan??

(As the song continues to play, JORDAN'S eyes start to well up. The song stops and the hand dryer comes on.)

BETHANY. Jordan!?

JORDAN. That's her phone. That's her in the bathroom with my dad. That's my mom. AND my dad.

BETHANY. Go GET THEM OUT.

JORDAN. Yeah, ok. *(He starts to get up then stops)* No, wait. I can't.

BETHANY. What do mean you can't!

JORDAN. Don't you see what this is?

BETHANY. Yes, a very disgusting interruption to our WED-DING!

JORDAN. No, I mean yes. It's that too, but if my parents are together in that bathroom. Together. I haven't seen them together in 20 years. This is a miracle.

BETHANY. This is a nightmare Jordan. Please go stop them or I will!

JORDAN. No, you can't stop them. I'm so sorry Bethany. I know this is our day, but they can't be interrupted.

BETHANY. Why not!?!?

JORDAN. Because...you just can't that's all!

BETHANY. The hell it can't! *(she starts to get up)*

JORDAN. Wait! Bethany, just wait, please.

BETHANY. What is this Jordan??

JORDAN. Ok, ok. When I was nine this same thing happened. I heard them having sex in the bedroom. I thought maybe they were arguing or fighting or something and it scared me. So I knocked on the door to break it up. They stopped, of course, and my mom came out and put me back to bed. She told me they were wrestling and having fun. Then, later that night they got into the biggest argument I'd ever heard. A week later, my dad moved out. I always thought that if maybe I hadn't interrupted them, if I'd just let them finish, they might never have split up. So no, please don't stop them. Please. They have to finish this time.

BETHANY. Wow, ok. We're learning new things. I did not know that about you. That's very sad Jordan. But first of all, it's not your fault that they got divorced. That's not on you. And second of all, they can make up and get back together and get remarried or whatever they want to do with each other, AFTER OUR WEDDING RECEPTION. Now are you going to stop them or am I?

(JORDAN doesn't move. Light back up on her parents who finish their toast. BETHANY chugs her champagne, and stands up. Loud whisper to the EMCEE/DJ.)

BETHANY. Play music now!

EMCEE/DJ. What do you wanna he—

BETHANY. (panicking) I don't care!

(BETHANY grabs the microphone and blocks her parents before they get away. Addresses the guests.)

BETHANY: Now for something really really special. My parents are going recreate their first dance to seal and bless this occasion. Hit it!

(Devo's "Whip it" plays. ROY and RHONDA, confused, start to slow dance. BETHANY makes a B line for the bathroom. JORDAN grabs the mic)

JORDAN. (off mic to EMCEE/DJ) Cut the music!

EMCEE/DJ. But she said-

JORDAN. I'll double your tip!

(He cuts the music)

JORAN. (Into the mic.) Round of applause for Roy and Sheila! (confused smattering of claps) Bethany! (Almost to the bathroom door, stops) I love you. I do. Stop! Look at me. (She turns. JORDAN suddenly notices how stunning she looks) Wow. (beat) We've been so busy today. You look amazing. And you're my wife. My wife. I know we can both have what we want in this marriage. There's gonna be some hard knocks, I know it.

(A steady pounding begins from inside the bathroom and continues throughout.) But look at me Beth. Whatever happens today or tomorrow or the next, I will always be here with you. Nothing can or will break down our walls.

(The pounding is louder now and accompanied by rhythmic moans.)

I'm here for good and I gotta key to prove it. (producing a key from his pocket) When we get back from Turks & Caicos we're not goin' back to Harlem Bethany. There's a house in Montclair that goes to this key. And in that house, there are four bedrooms and two bathrooms and a fireplace. In two of those rooms we're gonna tuck in our kids. There's a kitchen in this house where I'm gonna make us buttermilk pancakes on Saturday mornings. There's a deck in the backyard, were we're gonna put our feet up in the summer and drink margaritas. And there's a dusty old attic that 40 years from now, is gonna be stuffed with all of our junk and treasure. So, I don't care what happens today. I can't control the past. You do what you gotta do, because you're right, this is our day.

(The pounding and moaning has ceased. Bethany goes to Jordan.)

BETHANY. I don't need a key to prove it. You had me at "love", you always do.

(They embrace and the guest cheer and applaud. The bathroom door suddenly opens and Jordan's parents appear, disheveled and winded. Everyone falls silent and looks at them.)

JORDAN'S FATHER. (Points to Emcee/DJ) CONGA!

(Lights black out and "I Will Always Love You" plays)

(end of scene.)