

WEDDING SPEECH, 12th May 2012

Ladies and gentlemen, it was said half a century ago that in the future everyone on earth would get 15 minutes of fame once in a lifetime and I guess that this is mine. People have also told me to make these next few minutes excruciatingly embarrassing and to take vengeance of my enemies. Neither will happen.

When we visited Verona in Italy a few years ago we saw the one and only, the absolutely genuine (if you believe what they say) Romeo and Juliet balcony. It was just like this balcony between two floors that I am standing on, so how very appropriate for this romantic day.

On the other hand and staying with Shakespeare a balcony like this would be ideal for the famous 'friends, Romans and countrymen lend me your ears' speech, so perhaps you will do just that for just a few minutes.

So, a welcome to everyone up there in heaven and a warm welcome to everyone down there in . . . on the ground floor, although rumour has it that there is a lower level to which those who drink too much are escorted never to be seen again.

When my mother was married in 1934 while the reception was taking place her family held a funeral service for her in her absence and never spoke to her again, for religious differences.

When Pilar and I married in Barcelona in 1982 not one member of my family or friends could come and our reception was a pizza for two in La Mama.

So you have no idea what a special, extraordinary pleasure to welcome you here today to a wedding as it should be and exactly as Zack and Lizzie wanted it to be. Pie and mash and all.

Pilar and I as well as John and Debby, and Zack and Lizzie of course want to thank everyone for coming to the wedding, - especially everyone who has travelled a long distance at considerable expense.

- Gloria, Angel, Abigail and Keila from Spain, Rebecca from Dubai, Philippe, Josephine and Michel from Burkina Faso, West Africa

- a thank you to Lizzie's bridesmaids and Zack's ushers and to everyone who has worked so hard to make this day special.

- more thanks to everyone who has provided the finances for the day, so a big thank you to Visa, MasterCard, Amex and Nationwide for second

and third mortgages . . and to everyone else here who has been so generous with their money and time.

Now, there are just too many greetings to read out but congratulations come from Thailand, South Korea, the USA, Brazil, Switzerland, the Congo, Chile and the East end of London. Even better we too many Facebook Likes to count.

Apologies Lizzie, from your close friend Colin Firth, let me say that again, from your very close friend Colin Firth who treasures your photo with him, apologies too that I couldn't persuade Barbara Streisand to come and act Funny Girl for you, apologies that I didn't get Coldplay to sing but after you diverted the crowd's attention from their Glastonbury stage last year, you remain unforgiven. Apologies that I couldn't get Alicia Keys to come and sing New York for you, all these people will be heartbroken to have missed the day. If they had only replied to their emails we could have made the front page of Hello and paid your mortgage off before it even starts. I tried ! However, rumour has it that we have the number one in the UK and the US charts with us in the crowd along with his new film star wife and in a short while Marcus Mumford will be on this balcony.

One final apology Lizzie from the great love of your earlier more impressionable years. He would have literally fought tooth and claw to keep you but alas for him you have chosen another but he knows that you will always have a place in your heart for him, for Robin Hood the Fox.

Lizzie, you are extraordinarily beautiful, we are proud of you and jealous of your looks, educational achievements, sweetness, energy and abilities. Some people, more genuinely prophetic than I saw things in you when you were born and growing up, and said so. Much of what they said has already happened but the best is yet to come.

Now Zack, I should tell you that some months before Lizzie was born I was convinced that our 'miracle' one chance in a million baby was a boy and his name was John. And I told everyone. So the 8th of the 8th of 1988 not only marks Lizzie's date of birth but also the end of my prophetic career. You above all people will be glad that I got it wrong.

However, Zack, there are one or two things you need to know about being married to a Norman and the female of the species in particular.

You will have already discovered that Normans are not good losers, snakes and ladders upwards. On the family coat of arms are engraved the

immortal words in Latin: '*Primo secundus qui venit perdere,*' with thanks to Google Translate – '*he who comes second is the first to lose.*' Actually we have no coat of arms, those words just escaped from my lips before an egg and spoon race in your junior school sports day, allegedly marking Lizzie for life. Nevertheless Zack, Lizzie and I have agreed this very week that sometimes it is wisdom for a Norman to strategically retreat when defeat is imminent. Which is not at all the same as losing. You just wait your moment.

Zack, to make it worse Lizzie has DNA in her from Israel, Lithuania and Yorkshire on my side and from Aragon in Spain, perhaps with a little aristocratic blood, on her mother's side. When it comes to determination, some people say stubbornness, Yorkshire and Aragon together is a mind-blowing cocktail. Zack, the girl you have married went off and did solo tourism by herself in Burkina Faso - at five years old, she survived malaria in Uganda, got through Uni debt-free and was the first girl in her party to reach the top of Mount Kilimanjaro with tears frozen on her cheeks.

Lizzie is a brilliant persuader so you sit back Zack, relax, she loves organising. Just watching her organise her bridesmaids last night brought me a *deja vu* moment of Lizzie and her friends from fifteen years ago. She would sit them in a circle on her bedroom floor, (Rebecca was there), "You say this, you sing that, you pray, I'll lead the meeting." Zack, judging from the rehearsal last night nothing has changed, just evolved slightly. This is how it works: you bring in the money, Lizzie will spend it for you. You try and get the last word.

Yet, Zack, a more tender, fragile, sensitive, fragrant petal you will not find anywhere, than the one you have in Lizzie, otherwise known as Elisabeth with an S, Eliza or (and this is just about the only secret she ever managed to keep): poodlepops . . . @cbeebies.co.uk.

Zack, you are very welcome in our family. We love you, we like you as well, we are always happy to see you and all that is ours is yours. Our mortgage, our bills, the dog, our E-Bay feedback, our Facebook password . . what more can we give you ?

When we first met you I was seriously afraid that your friendship with Lizzie was going to go somewhere. By the way, my fear had nothing to do with you, some silly memories from years gone by surfaced the way they do. It is just as well that God, just like Jim Carrey in Bruce Almighty, has a delete button for stupid mumblings and grumblings.

Two years later I was even more afraid that your friendship with Lizzie was **not** going to go somewhere. And then when our phone rang a few months ago and you wanted to come round - like now, I said to Pilar, "this is either some news we don't want to hear, or it is some very good news - or his car has broken down again." It was good news and to quote X Factor - you got two very big Yes's.

Now we did hear something about some repressed sporting naturist tendencies that came to the surface on your stag night but then again I always say that a man with black Golf GTI can't be all bad, and a man who drives a Mazda MX 5, wears suits from Hugo Boss and shirts from TM Lewin demonstrates impeccable taste and can be forgiven the occasional quirk.

You know, Zack, and maybe it has happened to you, that at Christmas time people sometimes wrap up the last year's unwanted gifts and pass them on. Perhaps it didn't fit them or they don't like the brand or the perfume. You take them, you say thank you, you smile and you keep them in a draw to pass on to someone else the next Christmas.

When earlier today John asked, "Who gives this woman," I replied " I do," and that was one of the hardest decisions of my life because Lizzie is no unwanted gift disguised in glitzy paper. For 23 years I have not been looking forward to that question but you have made it easy for me and for Pilar to give this most precious gift into your safekeeping and God's care. The way that you have faithfully taken care of Lizzie over the last five years has not gone unnoticed. You even made her wedding ring by hand.

We are delighted for you, we will stick with you through your career and the changes that life brings. We know that you will make our daughter really happy in the future as you already do today.

So that's it from me, no embarrassments, no vengeance on my enemies, although with Jordan coming soon I can't promise the truce will last. Those of a more sensitive nature may wish to turn their hearings aids down or even switch them off. All that remains is for me to ask you to raise your glasses to wish Zack and Lizzie every blessing, success and happiness in the future, a toast to a wonderful bride and groom.