

My name is Molly Yurchak, and as a loving friend of both Amanda and Matthew, I am truly honored, and overjoyed, to welcome you all today.

Now, I'm going to ask Amanda and Matthew to turn around, and before we go any further, I'd like to invite everyone to take one last picture. After this, I would respectfully ask that you not only turn off your cell phones, but also tuck your cameras away. At Matthew and Amanda's request, we'll leave the picture taking to the fine professionals hired for the purpose, and, instead, commit ourselves fully to being present here in this moment, actively participating in the blessings to be shared today.

Matthew and Amanda have written this ceremony with me by weaving threads from their own personal and family traditions to create a unique fabric representing who they are together.

With this in mind, we welcome the Divine - and we honor the Divine in each of us - as we witness and bless the marriage of Amanda and Matthew. As they enter into the sacred and joyous covenant of marriage, we are blessed to witness the magnificence of their love, their open hearts, and their vibrant and willing spirits.

Inspired by their love, let us rededicate ourselves to the loving relationships in our own lives. May we be enriched for having shared this day together.

Now that we're on the subject of audience participation, I'm going to take this opportunity to send something around to every one of you. This little bag holds the rings that Matthew and Amanda will shortly exchange and subsequently wear forevermore. Before they slip them on each other's fingers, please take a moment and hold them in your own hands, and pass along a silent blessing or wish to sanctify these physical tokens. You don't need to take more than a few seconds, but send your energy and help create the sacred space that unites us all here today and that will be manifest in the rings- the physical sign of Amanda and Matthew's commitment. And, please help make sure that, by the end of the vows, the rings are safely back up here with me.

**STATEMENT OF SUPPORT**

Amanda and Matthew, by being here with you, each of us is declaring our support for your decision to join together in marriage.

Once again, please turn around and face your friends and family. They have come here today to remind you that your joy is shared, and that your love for each other is multiplied by theirs for you. As they profess the following vows to you, take this time to look into their faces and absorb all the love here today, because it is meant to send you out into the world transformed.

*(To Guests)* As families and friends, you form the community of support that surrounds Amanda and Matthew. Each of you called upon to uphold them in honoring and loving each other.

Please answer “We Will” to the following:

Will you always stand beside them, never between them?

Will you offer them your love and support, not your judgment?

Will you encourage them with your kindness and loving hearts?

Will you honor this marriage into which they have come to be joined today?

Thank you.

## **RECOGNITION OF LOVED ONES**

In addition to your love and support, Matthew and Amanda are also blessed by a community of friends and family who have shared their love but cannot be here in person today. Their spirits are with us, and Amanda and Matthew would like to give them special recognition at this moment.

We would like to recognize UNCLE PHILIP AB-SURE who is serving in Afghanistan, and MONKEY POPPA PLATTS-MEYER and MALLORY LIP-STINE, who were unable to make the trip.

We would especially like to remember the following loved ones who are no longer with us but who are in our hearts:

GRANDMA KATHLEEN AB-SURE,  
NANA GLORIA PLATTS-MEYER, MIMI WILLOW,  
POPPA SID LIP-STINE, NANA IDA LIP-STINE,  
GRANDPA HERMAN EP-STEEN, GRANDMA IDA EP-STEEN, and AUNT SHARON LIP-STINE.

Amanda and Matthew would also like to acknowledge their parents, whose love, support, and nurturing are such an essential part of who they are today. They thank you for being their first teachers of the power and possibilities of love. Amanda and Matthew honor the steadfast commitments made by you that still hold strongly today.

A further recognition of the support of family is the chuppa- or wedding canopy- under which we stand. The chuppa symbolizes the framework of the home, supported by the friends and family who stood by Matthew and Amanda

throughout their lives and now stand by in loving support of their marriage. THIS chuppa is created with a cloth from Matthew's GRANDMOTHER IDA EP-STEEN's home, and it serves as a reminder of the ancestry that has borne them to this moment.

## READING #1

I'd like to welcome Steffie Nelson to come and give the first reading.

Litany by Billy Collins

*You are the bread and the knife,  
the crystal goblet and the wine.  
You are the dew on the morning grass  
and the burning wheel of the sun.  
You are the white apron of the baker,  
and the marsh birds suddenly in flight.*

*However, you are not the wind in the orchard,  
the plums on the counter,  
or the house of cards.  
And you are certainly not the pine-scented air.  
There is just no way that you are the pine-scented air.*

*It is possible that you are the fish under the bridge,  
maybe even the pigeon on the general's head,  
but you are not even close  
to being the field of cornflowers at dusk.*

*And a quick look in the mirror will show  
that you are neither the boots in the corner  
nor the boat asleep in its boathouse.*

*It might interest you to know,  
speaking of the plentiful imagery of the world,  
that I am the sound of rain on the roof.*

*I also happen to be the shooting star,  
the evening paper blowing down an alley  
and the basket of chestnuts on the kitchen table.*

*I am also the moon in the trees  
and the blind woman's tea cup.  
But don't worry, I'm not the bread and the knife.  
You are still the bread and the knife.  
You will always be the bread and the knife,  
not to mention the crystal goblet and--somehow--the wine.*

## MOLLY'S SERMON

Okay, so some of you are probably wondering just what makes me qualified to be up here. I would be with you, but these two asked me, and when you're invited to tea at Windsor Castle, you don't ask the Queen for a rain check.

And, since I've had a chance to think about it, I do have some experience. I'm one half of a working marriage - my husband and I will celebrate our 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary next month and we were together for five years before that. So now that I've been given this opportunity to reflect on marriage, I realize there are a few things I'd like to share with you as you head into yours.

I've also had a while to ponder the beautiful poem we just heard- and WOW, is it YOU. But also, really, it's an incredible evocation of being in the NOW, not just feeling love but exploring it from every angle, measuring and quantifying it, figuring out the ins and outs of another person, deciding who is *the dew on the morning grass*, and who is *the shooting star*.

But, as important as this act of love, this being in love, is to the marriage that you begin today (and everyone always says that the greatest thing is love), I think there's an equal act you're making today, an act of faith.

In fact, what happens today is really a pledge of faith – the act comes later. Because right now your love is basically quantifiable- you know who's who and what's what. You fell in love, you became engaged, and you stand here today because you believe with great conviction that this is the love of your life, the one for you, your other half...And you're right. She is. He is. But, the thing to be ready for- I've learned this in my own marriage, for sure – is that that one of you who stands here today and is "*certainly not the pine-scented air*" might very well one day wake up to be, in fact, strongly pine-scented.

There will come a time, it's true, when you wake up and marvel at how much your partner has changed. Or how much you've changed. There will be a time when you can't figure out who is who anymore, and it might even feel like you don't want to know.

And that, my friends, is when true faith kicks in. Or, it needs to.

Faith is not for what you can see and touch and hear, but for the darkness, the invisible, the unknown. It is not for the vows you'll share that describe how you love and how you will love. Faith- in God, in the Divine, in each other, it's yours to name- is for something bigger than you, bigger than what you know.

And, all I know - and anyone else who has persevered in marriage long enough knows - is that faith delivers. No matter what, all you have to do is NOT throw in

THE PROVERBIAL TOWEL. You need to wake up each day and, no matter how you're actually feeling about it, make the same choice that you're making today.

To do that, you need to be stubborn, and you need to remember the way you feel today, so soak it up. You're also going to need to forgive- this is the big one, I think. You need to forgive your partner, and you're going to need to forgive yourself, too. And you'll have to remember, above all, that you're on the same team. It's Team LIP-STINE, and you're the captains.

Those of us who HAVE held on to our towels can all tell you that in fact, faith delivers, and that person next to you becomes identifiable again. Maybe not the basket of chestnuts that they used to be, but something equally warm and delicious.

And, there's more good news: you are not alone, the two of you. There are HUNDREDS of people, staring right at you, me included, who are making an act of faith with you.

We believe in you, and we believe you will weather all storms and live long and happy lives and produce many strong and good and gorgeous children.

We will be here, even if you are in doubt, to remind you, to carry you, to love you. You can count on us, you can call us up, you can come visit, you can eat our food, and keep us up all night talking.

Remember us. And remember today. And remember to have faith- it's actually what got you to this point, to have waited long enough and turned down other options along the way, to have believed that there was something better, more perfect out there. So keep your faith. And hold on to your towels. And hold on to your hats.

## **READING #2**

I'd like to welcome Zachary Hinkle and Alejandro Marti.

*Ian Love - "The Only Night"*

*We drive all night  
Till the sunrise  
It shines on our face and we notice  
Well there's an old house  
Lets step inside  
Now there's no one in this world but you and I  
Now there's no one in this world but you*

*And I stay quiet  
We're so patient  
As the stars jump side to side  
And this feels like the only night*

*So please tell me something  
To ease my mind – you know  
Tell me everything's gonna be all right  
We're dizzy from circles  
Through tears we drive  
But no more fears - take a look in my eyes  
So have no more fears*

*And I'll stay quiet  
We're so patient  
As the stars jump side to side  
And this feels like the only night*

### **Declaration of Intent**

Since it is your intention to join in marriage, kindly join hands and with your hands, your hearts. As you hold the hands of your beloved, listen to what I am about to say.

Above you are the stars, below you is the earth; as time does pass, remember: like the earth should your love be firm, grounded in your humanity. Like a star should your love be constant, imbued with the light of peace. Let the powers of the mind and of the intellect guide you in your marriage, let the strength of your wills bind you together, let the power of love and desire make you happy, and the strength of your dedication make you inseparable.

Do you, Matthew, take Amanda to be your wife and pledge to her your respect and faithful love from this day forward? *(I DO!)*

Do you, Amanda, take Matthew to be your husband and pledge to him your respect and faithful love from this day forward? (I DO!)

## VOWS

Amanda and Matthew have each written their own vows, and will now share them with each other for the first time.

*AMANDA: Matthew, when I was trying to write words to describe our love for my vows, a powerful image came into my mind. I thought of us in the front row of a roller coaster. I know many people think of a roller coaster as a negative metaphor when talking about relationships. However, I see the rollercoaster as a beautiful image to describe our love. It is thrilling and sometimes scary. It leads us one way and then suddenly takes us another. It goes up and down, and it feels like we are flying. There are dazzling lights all around us, and the wind blows against our faces. And through all of it we are laughing.*

*I love this image of us, and I vow that I will do everything I can to make our ride together thrilling. I will throw my hands up in the air and savor the exhilaration with you.*

*I vow that when it gets scary, I will hold you. I will protect you when it feels like the bottom is dropping from beneath us. Likewise, I will turn to you when I am scared and trust you to protect me. Even if we don't know what is coming around the next bend, we can be sure that we will face it together.*

*I vow that I will be flexible and calm when we seem to be going in one direction and we suddenly jerk another. I will try to point out the positives whenever I see them. Remember, you're marrying this! Focus on the positives!*

*I vow that I will love you when we are ascending up, up, up and it seems like there is no end to our climbing. I vow that I will love you when it seems we are crashing headlong into the ground below.*

*I vow to look around and take in the lights and the stars and the carnival music all around us while we soar.*

*I vow that I will always laugh with you while we share life on this earth together.*

*MATT: Amanda, today I join my life to yours.*

*I love you for so many reasons.*

*In you I have found my best friend. Someone whose company I never get tired of. A person who loves to laugh and keeps me laughing.*

*You have the ability to see the best in people and in the world that we live in.*

*And I get the pleasure of witnessing your beauty everyday.*

*In times when I may be focusing on the negative, you always remind of the positives in life. I don't know if you realize it, but by doing that you show me the best thing there is: and that's you.*

*Today, on our wedding day, I vow these things to you:*

*I will offer you my love in every season of the year, fully acknowledging that you're mostly concerned with the summer.*



*I will continue to sing you made-up songs about everything we see, but I can't promise that every line will rhyme.*  
*I vow to always make music a part of our lives.*  
*I pledge that if it's possible in our lifetime to travel into space I will buy the tickets to get us there*  
*I promise to always give you the window seat on an airplane regardless if that puts me in an aisle seat or a dreaded center seat*  
*In times when we don't see eye to eye I pledge to view things through your eyes*  
*Because your happiness is so important to me, I will help you grow as an individual, supporting whatever goals you aspire to.*  
*Because you deserve no less than the best of me, I will strive to be more fully myself.*  
*I promise to hug and kiss you every day – from now until eternity.*  
*I vow to be your husband always.*  
*Amanda, my love for you is bigger than the Earth and higher than the sky.*  
*I am so glad that I found you and that I waited for my dreams to come true.*  
*I will be faithful to you all of my days, will be honest with you always, and will cherish and adore you every moment of my life.*  
*You are, and will always be, my love.*

#### **BLESSING/EXCHANGE OF THE RINGS**

Amanda and Matthew, these wedding rings symbolize the holiness, perfection, and peace of your marriage. They are blessed by the divine and imbued with the joyful wishes of each one of your family and friends here today.

Your rings are the outward symbols of the love, friendship, and faithfulness that you share. As circles, they have no beginning or end. They are as infinite and without weakness as we hope your marriage will be. May you be blessed with joy as you journey through life together surrounded by the circle of your love.

*(Repeat after Molly, one at a time while placing the ring: Matt first, then Amanda)*

With this ring I give you my promise - that from this day forward you shall never walk alone.

We will walk together in life, as partners and best friends.

I promise that I shall always do my best - to love and accept you exactly the way you are and support you as you grow.

With this ring I give you your freedom and my trust.

I give you my heart until the end of time.

I have no greater gift to give.

## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

Because, Matthew and Amanda, you have showered our hearts with expressions of your love and promised each other the joy of all your days it give me great honor and pleasure to now pronounce you husband and wife.

And now the moment we've all been waiting for... give her a kiss!

As a final seal on the joyous ceremony we have witnessed here today, I invite Matthew to perform the traditional Jewish ritual of the breaking of a glass. There are many, varied symbolic meanings to this tradition, but let's go with this one: we wish that your happiness be as plentiful as the shards of glass you create!

*(Matt: Break the Glass)*

**Mazel Tov!**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, I proudly present...**

**Matthew and Amanda LIP-STINE!**