

*Robyn Ashley Weddings*

NYC WEDDING OFFICIANT

THE OFFICIANT'S CUT

# The Secular Ceremony Script.

*A full ceremony with no religion in it: the welcome, the benediction, the one line the law requires, and a secular swap for every God-language moment.*

AS SEEN IN

*Tamron Hall · Brides · The Knot*

FROM ROBYN'S DESK

## No God talk, *and* *no DMV either.*

A couple once told me, almost apologizing, that they wanted nothing religious but they also did not want it to feel like the DMV. That is the real fear, and this script is built to answer it.

It is set in large type on purpose, so whoever is officiating can read it at arm's length without losing the line. Each religious beat has already been swapped for a secular one that does the same emotional work. The one line the law actually requires is flagged.

In the margins are the cues I have learned over 300+ ceremonies: where the room goes quiet, where to hold a silence, where the couple needs you to step back. At the close are the swaps for blending in a softer or more spiritual feel, and the lines to say if the moment slips.

Read it once, out loud, in your own voice. Cut anything that does not sound like these two people. A secular ceremony lives on the parts that could only be said about them.

# Robyn

ROBYNASHLEY WEDDINGS · BROOKLYN ·  
NYC



# No higher power *summoned* *us.*

— *[Wait for the room to settle on the couple before you begin.]*

Good evening, everyone. We are here for the simplest and best of reasons, to witness **[PARTNER 1]** and **[PARTNER 2]** marry each other.

No higher power summoned us tonight. You did. Every one of you is in this room because at some point you chose to love these two, and they chose to love you back.

— *[Slow down here. This is the line that replaces the prayer, so let it carry the weight one would.]*

That is the only authority this ceremony needs, and it is the strongest one I know. So let us begin by looking at them, and letting them feel how many people showed up.

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

An invocation only ever did one job, point the room at the couple and say why everyone came. Naming the guests as the authority does the same thing *without renting it from scripture.*

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# The part you *cannot borrow*.

[PARTNER 1] and [PARTNER 2] met [WHERE AND HOW, THE REAL VERSION]. [ONE TRUE DETAIL ONLY THESE TWO WOULD RECOGNIZE.]

What I want you to know is this. [THE THING THEY SURVIVED, BUILT, OR DECIDED TOGETHER THAT MAKES THIS LOVE SPECIFIC RATHER THAN GENERAL.]

— *[Look up from the page on the line below. Say it to the couple, not the crowd.]*

That is not a story you could tell about anyone else. And that is the whole point of standing here tonight.

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

A religious ceremony borrows meaning from a text the room already reveres. Take the text away and the couple's own story is the only thing strong enough to replace it. Spend your prep here, *not on the structure*.

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# The one line *the law needs.*

SAY THIS CLOSE TO AS WRITTEN

*The only legally required moment of a secular ceremony. The wording can flex, the consent in front of you and a witness cannot.*

[PARTNER 1], do you take [PARTNER 2] to be your spouse, to share your life with, from this day forward?

*I do.*

[PARTNER 2], do you take [PARTNER 1] to be your spouse, to share your life with, from this day forward?

*I do.*

— *[Wait for each answer. Do not rush it. The pause is the moment.]*

# The promise *in their own words.*

[PARTNER 1] and [PARTNER 2], please face each other and take both hands.

— *[Step half a pace back so the couple has the room. Keep your eyes on whoever is speaking.]*

If they wrote their own, allow them in full now. If they are repeating after you, here is a secular line that carries:

*I promise to keep choosing you. To be honest when it is hard, gentle when it counts, and on your side when the rest of the world is not. I am yours.*

— *[Do not fill the silences. If a partner's voice goes, hand them the tissue you brought, then wait.]*

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

Carry tissues even if both swear they will not cry. The hand-holding cue is what keeps a nervous partner from forgetting their own words.

# Circles of *metal*, and a *promise*.

The rings, please.

— *[Hold them up briefly so the room sees them.]*

These rings have no power on their own. They are circles of metal. What gives them meaning is that every time you catch sight of yours, you will remember the promise you made out loud tonight, in front of all these people.

**[PARTNER 1]**, place the ring on **[PARTNER 2]**'s finger and say: *this is my promise*.

— *[Pause for the line. Wait for the ring to go on. Then repeat for the second partner.]*

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

Saying the rings have no power on their own is the secular move. The meaning comes from the promise and the witnesses, *not from anything outside the room*.

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# A silence, then *a wish*.

Before I make this official, I want to give everyone here one job. Take a breath with me. In the quiet, hold a single wish for **[PARTNER 1]** and **[PARTNER 2]**. Pray it if you pray, hope it if you do not. Just send it their way.

— *[Hold the silence for a slow eight to ten seconds. Resist filling it. Then go on, softly.]*

Here is mine. May you keep choosing each other, especially on the days it is harder than tonight. May your home be loud with the people you love. May you argue fair, forgive fast, and may you always be each other's safest place.

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

The shared silence lets religious guests pray inside it and everyone else simply hope, with the room still together. Said slowly, the "may you" repetition carries the rhythm people *associate with something sacred*, while asking nothing of any deity.

# By the love *in this room.*

Then by the power vested in me by the State of **[STATE]**, and by the love in this room, it is my joy to pronounce you married.

You may kiss.

— *[Step back. Let the kiss happen. Let the applause build before you raise your voice over it.]*

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

The classic line sources its authority from God. The secular version sources it from the law and the people, same cadence, same weight. In many states the exact pronouncement wording is not required at all, so phrase it however fits the couple. Check your own state before the day.

# For the *first time*.

Everyone, for the very first time, **[HOW THEY WISH TO BE INTRODUCED]**.

— *[Gesture to the couple. Let the recessional music start. Your job is done.]*

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

Keep it short and let the room take over. The end of the ceremony is the start of the party, and it belongs to them.

# If it gets *away from you*.

*If you lose your place.* Say, "Give me one second here. This part matters and I want to get it right." Then look down, find the line, and go on. The room reads it as care, never as a stumble.

*If your own voice goes.* Say, "Forgive me, I have known these two a while and this got me." It is true almost every time. Take one breath and carry on.

*If a ring sticks or drops.* Say, "We will get it on at the reception, the promise already counts." Light, warm, and then move.

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

The difference between a first-timer and a pro is not that the pro never freezes. It is that the pro has a line ready for the freeze, says it warmly, and keeps moving.

# Clean up the *borrowed words*.

Some phrases sound neutral but carry religious weight, and couples often do not notice until it is read aloud. Before you write a word, ask the couple which to avoid. These are the usual three.

*For "holy matrimony."* Use "marriage." It is plainer and it is exactly what is happening.

*For "sacred union."* Use "partnership" or "commitment." The gravity stays without the church.

*For "join these two souls."* Use "join these two lives" or simply name the two people. Keep the warmth, drop the doctrine.

# A unity ritual, *matched to them.*

Unity rituals grew popular because couples removing religious elements needed something to fill the time those elements used to take. Place one right after the rings and before the pronouncement. Match it to the couple, never to a trend.

*For blended families.* Sand. Two colors pour into one vessel and can never be separated, and every kid can add a color and watch themselves become part of the whole.

*For gravity and old-world theater.* Handfasting. Binding the hands with cords is the literal origin of "tying the knot," ceremonial without being religious.

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

Whatever you add, protect the declaration of intent. Everything else is yours to write or cut. Keep the whole ceremony to about twelve to fifteen minutes so the room stays with you.

# Three things *before you read it aloud.*

*This is one secular ceremony, marked the way I would mark my own. Treat it as a working draft and it starts sounding like these two people.*

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*i*

*Fill the story page first, not last.*

A secular ceremony lives on specificity. Write how they met, the one true detail, the thing they survived together. If a line could be read over any other couple, cut it.

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*ii*

*Read it out loud, all the way through, once.*

Whoever is officiating reads it start to finish in their own voice, alone in a room. Mark every line that does not sound like them, then rewrite it or cut it. Fill every [BRACKET] a week out, not on the day.

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*iii*

*Highlight the cues in a second color.*

The pauses, the held silence, the tissue, the wait for applause, these are the parts officiants forget under pressure. Mark them so the eye catches them at a glance.

*"We did not want anything religious but we were terrified it would feel cold. The worksheet walked us through our own story and the secular swaps so we never had to guess. Our officiant said it was the easiest script he had ever read."*

MAYA · MARRIED IN BROOKLYN, 2025

IF THIS SCRIPT IS DOING ITS JOB

## The whole thing, *built like a worksheet.*

This is one secular ceremony in one tone. The Couple's Ceremony Kit is the version you fill in like a worksheet: a structured secular script with the swap-ready wording for every religious moment, a set of unity scripts you can read as written, and the prompts that turn your real story into the lines that carry. The same craft I would bring to writing yours, packaged for your kitchen table on a Tuesday night.

# \$79

Open the Ceremony Kit →

ONE-TIME PAYMENT · LIFETIME ACCESS · 48-HOUR MONEY-BACK

# Where this *came from*.

## PULLED FROM

The secular and interfaith ceremonies I write and read aloud across NYC and the Hudson Valley, with the cues I actually use. The structure is field-tested over *more than 300 ceremonies*.

## WHAT IS IN THE KIT

The fill-in secular script, the swap-ready wording for every religious moment, the unity scripts, and the story prompts that make a ceremony specific. All of it in *the Couple's Ceremony Kit*.

## USE THIS FREELY

Print it, mark it up, read it at the rehearsal, hand a copy to whoever is standing up front.

## IF YOU MARRY WITH IT

Email me. I read every one.  
*hello@robynashleyweddings.com*.

*Marked from a working ceremony, with the cues I read from at the front of the aisle.*

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*About this script, and where it has been read.*