**BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**TINA WADHWA**

Hello everyone! Tonight we celebrate a great occasion… Forty years ago, I became a big sister! Well, that’s **ONE** way to look at it! Actually, we all know we are here to celebrate the fortieth birthday of my wonderful sister and best friend, Tanya. Over the years she has tested me and taught me…whether she knew it or not. She’s tried my patience and shown me how she has my back… no matter what. Tanya never judges me and truly understands me… probably better than almost anyone else.

Someone once said that “Siblings are the people we practice on, the people that teach us about fairness and cooperation, kindness and caring…. Quite often the hard way!” We got to practice on each other…. Quite a bit…. Both here and back in India. Tanya and I grew up in India and moved to the United States when we were in our twenties. We lost our father when I was seven and we were raised by our mother…. We were a very tightly knit group, the three of us, and I got to learn first hand just how special Tanya was…. Particularly to my mother! Tanya was the baby… the favorite… the “golden child! Boy did I used to “notice” how my mother treated my little sister…. Whenever my friends would come over for a play date… guess who was there…yes! **WOW!!** , did that annoy me!! There I was, the cooler, older sister, yet my friends had to play with her too! But then again, I guess she had plenty of time to hang out with us… You know what’s more annoying than being forced to play with a little kid? I’ll tell you…. What's even more annoying is knowing your mother is spoiling that same little sister… It seemed like Tanya could get away with **ANYTHING**… is it me or did she **NOT** have to complete her homework? Which one of us do you think got to stay up late on a school night? … and then again, who do you think was held to a stricter standard (**Shyly raise your hand and wait for the laugh**). I honestly couldn't get away with anything….believe me, I tried!

But you know what? Thank goodness we all grow up… we learn our lessons, and we realize the treasures that exist in our open backyards… particularly family. Over the years, Tanya, our mother, Jasmine and I nurtured a bond that grows and deepens every day. We are the daughters of the giver of all givers, and as Tanya and I grew up, we were taught by the best. We were raised with the belief that the meaning of life was to make others happy… to be the caregivers and comforters and hosts. I remember one time when we were particularly tired after a string of numerous family events and birthday parties, we complained to my mom. She very clearly explained and simply answered that we were given a gift… that we have people in our lives that we love and it is our responsibility to make sure those in our lives know how much they matter, and whether it Is a birth, a birthday, a wedding, illness or funeral, this “**dynamic threesome**” kicks into “**high gear**”to make sure others know how special and important they are to us.

And today is the day we make sure Tanya knows the same. Time has taught us and brought us closer together with every day and every occasion. She has been instrumental in helping me to take care of my two children, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when she was single, and they could not have asked for a better aunt. She is always there to root for them, encourage them, and make sure they know how special they are. And actually, they consider her more of a mother… she plays an integral part in each of their lives (**If you want to make a joke you can say**)… Now, if we can just get her to pay for their college tuitions… (**And wait for the laugh**)…I shouldn't joke about that… knowing Tanya, she would!

So here we are, some thirty years later, and the little girl I used to think was so annoying has grown to become one of the greatest gifts of my life. Tanya knows everything about me… what makes me smile…. How to make me laugh… how to read even the most subtle expressions on my face to know, intuitively, if something is bothering me. Tanya is always by my side, always encouraging, never judging, and I **KNOW** she truly understands me. Maybe it was all of those years that she got away with not doing her homework and staying up late that gave her the time to become so wise (**Wait for the laugh**), but something brought me the blessing of this wonderful, generous, beautiful, built in best friend, and I am forever grateful.

Tanya, you're the best gift our parents could have ever given me. (**It might be nice if you mention your husband and kids when you say**), on behalf of some of your biggest fans, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ would like to share a birthday wish for you:

May you have all that you could ever wish for and may you have a long, happy, healthy, colorful, tasty and love filled life! Happy birthday” we love you!