**BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**MATT BROWAR**

Tonight… yes it’s finally arrived…. The moment when, in spite of all the trials and tests we’ve been through, tonight… we’re here to mark a milestone in life… one I feel so blessed to have achieved, one that signifies how far I… and we have come in the decades that preceded this one. As I look back, I remember vividly what those early years were like…. And yes, I remember the awakening of my “inner rebel,” even way back then….I’ll just say this about that… Lisa and Gary, you have gorgeous powder rooms in this very special home, however, I **WILL NOT** be re-enacting my legendary disappearing act of 1959…. Yes… that was the year I locked myself in the bathroom for my sixth birthday, refusing to come out…. I suppose we could say I’ve come a long way…. I rarely lock myself up in bathrooms anymore…and although they have gotten pretty cushy as we have “matured,” I can honestly say, there’s nowhere I would rather be than right here, with all of you, tonight.

… and tonight, as we gather here to celebrate my birthday, I believe it’s equally important to acknowledge Lisa and Gary who have allowed me to use their beautiful home for this special occasion. Lisa and Gary, I want to raise a glass in honor of your exceptional generosity and hospitality, but most of all for your friendship… for sharing all the landmark moments and the “every days…” Nancy and I know how truly blessed we are to have people like you in our lives. Thank you very much.

Speaking of…. I want to take a special moment to express my heartfelt appreciation to the individual who has been by my side through thick and mostly thin. I want to thank my incredible wife, Nancy, who has not only put up with me for 43…. No. Wait… **FORTY-SIX** years, but has done so with an unwavering grace and patience that deserves a standing ovation. Nancy, you are my partner in most crimes and you’re **DEFINITELY** my better half. Your love, support, and ability to tolerate me are nothing short of **miraculous**. Through all the ups and very little downs, you have stood by my side with that beautiful smile on your face, making every moment worth living. (**Do you want to add)** …. Thank you for making me realize that wherever you are is where I want to be…. Well, maybe you and the girls can do Mah Jong without me… (**wait for the laugh**) … thank you for allowing me to see that life is so much richer when I **DON’T** lock myself in the bathroom…. Unless you want to join me… (**and wait for the laugh… you can leave off the last part of too racy**). Thank you for being my North Star and the true definition of a soulmate.

For everyone that is here tonight, please know that I consider you more than a friend… I consider you nothing less than family. Thank you all for being here, for gracing me with your presence, and for being an integral part of my life’s journey. As I reflect on the memories we’ve shared, I can’t help but smile at some of the crazy, outlandish times that we have spent together. I have to stop for a second, take it in, and say, “Do you realize how blessed we all are to have one another?” … to have the gift that keeps on giving… to have done those “wild and crazy things,” to have done them together, and to still have enough functioning brain cells to **REMEMBER**?!?! It’s fantastic!!! And it’s all thanks to you….Of course, there are way too many stellar moments to name, but I should just hint at a few “discreetly”… The unleashed excitement at the baggage claim, smashing guitars, Barbra Streisand, Elon Musk, Art Basel lecture, Johnnie Depp, Progressive tip of the iceberg….these moments have defined our relationships but it’s the genuine connections we’ve built that make these memories so special.

Remember when the Beatles… you know, Paul McCartney’s group before Wings… (**wait for the laugh**)… gave us this…

**“There are places I'll remember**

**All my life, though some have changed**

**Some forever, not for better**

**Some have gone and some remain**

**All these places had their moments**

**With lovers and friends, I still can recall**

**Some are gone and some are living**

**In my life, I’ve loved them all.”**

So, tonight as we celebrate this milestone together, let’s raise a toast to friendship- the kind that feels like family. I’m honored and humbled to have such wonderful people in my life and I couldn’t imagine this journey without you. Cheers to all of you and THANK YOU!!