# Letter to a Daughter on the Eve of her Wedding Day

Dear Katy,

So here we are – your last day as a Blackwell. Tomorrow you will make the biggest commitment of your life so far and all your family and friends will gather together to witness the vows that you – and Frank – are about to make.

The day is yours, but your marriage belongs also to family and society at large, for a wedding is not just about the joining together of two people, but the beginning of a family unit. Whether that remains the two of you, or whether you are blessed with children, I know that you both will take that responsibility seriously.

He’s a nice chap, that Frank. To be honest (I daren’t say to be frank!) I was a little concerned at first, knowing that you’re likely to remain as poor as church mice for the foreseeable future. Your tastes have always run more to Tiffany and Moet rather than H Samuels and beer – in other words you have what my Nan used to call a “Champagne taste on a beer income”. But I see the way he looks at you, I have watched how he has cared for you and loved you, and I see the difference that love has made to you and I know you are both wealthy in all the ways that matter. Plus I am actually quite fond of him ;-)

Dad will be making a speech tomorrow. Ominously, it’s all in his head and he won’t discuss it. So I thought I’d say what I want to say here. After 31 years I think I can claim to be reasonably knowledgeable about marriage. So here, for you, and any young woman reading, is my checklist for a happy marriage (from the woman’s point of view – maybe I should write a separate letter to Frank…!)

* **Always, always, be kind**. Kindness is a grossly underrated virtue. If you can love him in spite of his faults, and forgive him when he messes up (as, inevitably, we all do at times) and treat him with gentleness and understanding, you will continue to grow closer, year on year.
* **Never lose your ability to empathise.** This follows on from the first point, but can’t be emphasised enough. Recently, I asked an elderly gentleman how he and his wife had stayed married for more than 50 years. This is what he said: “If she always puts *you*first, and you always put *her*first, you can’t go wrong. It’s not rocket science.”
* **Hang in there when times are bad**. Chances are you will fall in love with each other again, and if you give up, you will never know. In a long marriage you will, inevitably, have ups and downs. Remember, love is like the tide – it ebbs and flows. When times are bad, it’s your friendship that will get you through, so never neglect it.
* **Let him be a man**. This is an important one. In today’s society, men tend to be held up for ridicule far more often than they are praised. As a man, he has attributes that are *different* to, but that *complement* yours. Allow him to do things his way and in his own time or you will spend half your life nagging.
* **Stay in touch with your girlfriends**. Much as you love him, he will never be able to use as many words in a day as you. It’s not the way men are made and you will get frustrated with him if you sense he’s not listening. It’s a wild generalisation, I know, but most women process things by talking them through, most men go quiet.
* **Put him first**. This might seem to contradict the previous point, and echo the second, but what I mean is, you are now a unit and no one should ever be allowed to come between you. Obviously, there will be times when it is only right that one of you will step aside to give the other space to put someone else first, but generally he needs to be confident that he is your priority, as you are his. I hope I will always be an Important person in your life, but I now happily and gracefully (I hope – might cry a bit tomorrow!) step aside and take my proper place in your lives.
* **Be wrong sometimes**. In the few moments when I was alone with my dad before we left for the church, he offered me these words of wisdom, which I pass on to you in his memory: “Jo, you’re always right. *You* know at. *I* know that. But if you want to be happily married, sometimes you have to pretend to be wrong.” I laughed at the time, but over the years I’ve come to realise what he meant. Sometimes, you have to let go of the need to prove yourself right and just choose to be happy.

That’s about it really. Take the time tomorrow to breathe and enjoy the perfect day you have planned so carefully. And step into this new chapter of your life with a spring in your step and a light heart – there is no better way to live than with someone you love, who loves you, by your side.

Good luck, my darling, and may all that you wish for yourselves come to pass.

Love always,

Mum xxx