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To My Daughter

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To My Daughter:

The news of your roommate's engagement was a joy until I learned the couple had known one another for only three weeks!

I think back to the many boys you have known, perhaps whom you adored for three weeks, even three months, but at the end of six months of day-in and day-out exposure, you had changed your mind entirely, to the point of wondering what you had ever liked about them in the first place.

I recall the way you chose your college. You changed your mind time and time again, each time being completely sure that this particular institution was the be-all and end-all in your quest for life and self through education. You spent months reading and rereading catalogues, judging the merits of one college over another and one part of the country over another. One's future was at stake; therefore, one used a fine-tooth comb in surveying the situation. Then, there were evaluations, all manner of tests, College Boards, academic and career surveys; all of which required hours of thought and study.

I remember the weeks of preparation that came before you made your

confirmation. I remember the self-analysis, the study, the questions pertaining to the church which you had to unfold before you took that meaningful step. Now think of the way so many choose a person to be a partner for the rest of their lives, and I am sad.

It appears to me that girls often spend more time choosing a new gown for a special party, a new model car, or perhaps a household appliance than is spent choosing the other parent-to-be for their children-to-be. Good heavens, in the dog world we sometimes spend months finding just the right stud for our bitch. We would be aghast at casually selecting a mate for our poodle friends, Chas and Cocoa! Can we do less for ourselves? Yet we often don't even panic at the news that a carefully reared, lovely and intelligent girl has become engaged after having met a young man a few weeks before!

Can you think of any business you would enter into with a partner of only three weeks acquaintance? I think business and marriage can be mentioned in the same breath, if for no other reason than they usually revolve around a contract. You would certainly have had a future financial partner checked and rechecked, had you not known and observed him yourself over a period of time. You would certainly have

required a dossier containing references, along with statements of experience and background qualifying him or her to be your partner. You would check all this with extreme care. Then, you would check on his mental, emotional and physical health, his family stability, and last, but not least, you would certainly check his Dun and Bradstreet rating. All of this searching to enter into a business contract which, if broken at a later date, can be done without damaging the lives of innocent children. Can you build a lifetime venture on any less a foundation than you would a marketplace business venture? Is it not as important to your over-all life to enter into a marriage contract with a sound, stable partner, as it would be to enter into a business contract with a business partner of stability?

Do I pontificate? I'm sure I do, but please bear with me, because I do so with real love. Are you asking yourself why I keep using the term contract in connection with marriage? I ask you to check *contract* in the dictionary and then read the marriage service in your *Book of Common Prayer*. You will have no difficulty understanding that it is a moral and legal instrument. It is a mutual agreement between two or more parties that something shall be done by one or both. In the marriage service, the contract, of course, is binding on both persons. It also is a pattern for a lifetime existence with another person. When this contract is executed with diligence, self-discipline, respect, love, humor, companionship, communication, mutual understanding and some continuous maturation, it can work! When it

works, it brings to the executor satisfaction and real joy. Life sometimes sprinkles that joy with loneliness and even grief, but this combination of emotions goes toward building strength and character.

To us the marriage contract also is a sacrament. Marriage is based on God's Law. This type of marriage is considered a fulfillment of His law. It also is immortality gained through the children one leaves behind to help build a finer civilization and a greater nation. Yes, there are far-reaching consequences based on one's carrying out the marriage contract!

Are you now wondering where on earth you'll ever find the paragon of virtue to help share the responsibility to fulfill the agreement and try to establish a sound marriage? Are you wondering if you will even recognize him among all those perfectly darling boys whom you date? Well, first of all, look for the more mature young men, those who show some self-discipline and some responsibility toward themselves, their school, their friends, and their families; those who seem to respect themselves; those who recognize their problems and inadequacies for what they are, and through facing this reality, are attempting to solve their problems in a constructive manner. Look for those training for a livelihood or profession, some one whose goals coincide with yours.

Now, I can just hear you, "But Mother, where is *love* and where is *sex*?" Well, I believe that sex and love cannot be separated in an emotionally healthy marriage. One is

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predicated on the other. I believe where there is real love between a man and a woman, and "real" is the key word here, they will want to share that deepest of all experiences with one another. Now then, to that emotion called real love. How do you know? I believe that one can *love* only those whom one respects, unless it be a neurotic or a movie magazine type of love. Respect is the master key that opens the lock to a mature love relationship. I believe that without respect, a female-male union may be many things and contain many emotions, but it has a poor chance of ever successfully fulfilling its potential.

Now, look at some of the types of young men we (or should I say you) find attractive, interesting, exciting, desirable, fun, and who arouse the mother in us. But when we delve into reality, we often find we are dealing with emotional cripples. Perhaps we find them very charming, but cripples nonetheless. There is the young man who always is right and everyone else wrong, and all of society's institutions and conventions are wrong. Then there is the one who is lonely, and you are the greatest thing that has ever happened to him. No one else has ever understood him. But he is not doing well in school, or in his job, yet he thinks that marriage just might give him the stability with which to solve some of his many problems. He is the boy you describe to your sorority sisters as adorable, but he hasn't quite found himself yet. But it's quite possible he may never find himself! Then there's the one who says, "I'm really not good

enough for you," and he just may be telling the truth! He stands in good stead in the morning, when the bar has a high temperature and you are sick with worry yourself. And he is a guard for the chap who says, "I personally do not follow the beliefs of our Judeo-Christian philosophy, but I'll be extremely tolerant after we are married!" Watch this one closely, for you are entering that marriage contract with two entirely different concepts as to its meaning. If he doesn't really believe what it says, what on earth is there to hold him to a monogamous marriage when you're a bit older and perhaps not quite so enchanting as you once were? There *must* be a mutual belief in the principles set forth in a contract, or it is invalid from the start. There must be a mutual understanding of the semantics involved. Just take the word "love" as an example. To us, of the Judeo-Christian religions and traditions, it means one thing, but what does it mean to the pagan or to the communist party line follower? Not the same meaning, are they? In each example, although the same word love is used, the actions will bear out the difference of the real meaning. Talk is cheap, and these definitions should be very clear to both parties before marriage and not several babies and perhaps a heartbreak later!

Perhaps you would try a few more thoughts for size. Marriage is a real career in life. Children are real responsibilities. I am speaking the truth, as I know it, when I say that the greatest love, joy and fulfillment can come to a woman through a

mature love affair with her husband. Therefore, doesn't this vocation deserve at least as much thought and study as any career aims? You will spend many more years at the job of marriage. It is a twenty-four hour day. You will influence many more lives. You will help or hinder a man in becoming his finest self. It is a real challenge! Therefore much insight and preparation are required for the role of being a wife and mother. If you choose to take up this challenge, and look for a super-

or partner, you will know much personal satisfaction. Keep yourself worthy of a fine man who will find his joy in allowing you to know how very important you are to him.

Think long and think hard, and pray. Spend the most wonderful years of your life with a winner, not a loser! I thank God every day of my life that I waited for your Daddy.

Much, much love,

Your Mother

