Good evening everyone,

I’m Charlotte, and I still can’t quite believe I get to say this: I’m James’s wife.

We met seven years ago at a mutual friend’s summer barbecue in Clapham. It wasn’t fireworks or grand gestures at first – it was James quietly offering me the last set of burger tongs and a napkin, like a gentle promise that he’d always have something I didn’t know I needed. That small kindness told me so much about the man standing in front of me.

Our first date was at a tiny Italian in Soho – the sort of place where the tables wobble, the candles lean, and you leave with olive oil on your sleeve and a full heart. We talked until they stacked the chairs, and I remember thinking, this feels like home.

Two years later, we moved into a flat in Richmond and learned that love also looks like taking turns defrosting the freezer, and pretending the Sunday roast experiment was, in fact, completely intentional. We found our rhythm on long walks with coffee, planning city breaks as if they were treasure hunts, and laughing at James’s wry one-liners that always sneak up on you.

And then, on a rainy weekend in the Lake District, soaked through and absurdly happy, we got engaged. I said yes with rain in my eyelashes and mud on my boots, because with James, even the stormiest days feel steady.

People often say that opposites attract, but I think we’re the pleasing kind of balance. I’m thoughtful and organised – the keeper of lists, the maker of plans – and James is patient and quietly funny, the calm that makes room for joy. Together we are steady and kind, always ready for an adventure, even if it’s just the long way round the park to finish our coffees.

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What I love most about us is the simple goodness in the everyday. The way you, James, stand back and let me line up all my plans, then gently take my hand and say, “Come on, let’s just start.” The way you listen, properly listen, and somehow find exactly the right words or the perfect silence. You make space for me to be myself, and you make me braver than I knew.

To our families and friends: thank you for helping shape us into the people we are, and for cheering us on through wobbly tables, moving days, and maps spread across kitchen counters. Your love is threaded through every step we’ve taken to get here.

James, my favourite person to walk with – through parks, through airports, through the beautiful, ordinary hours – I promise to meet you at the door with warmth, to laugh at your jokes even when they land late, and to keep making Sunday roasts that sometimes work and always bring us to the table together.

So, everyone, if you’d please raise your glasses: to steady hearts, kind hands, and adventures that begin with something as simple as a napkin and a smile. To love that’s gentle, true, and endlessly surprising.

To us.

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