

To my daughter on her confirmation

Inki, munchkin, before you were born I had no idea what our future would look like. I did not know what it would be like to feel your baby fingers wrap around mine or how your smile would penetrate my soul. You opened a world of love in me that exploded and imploded at the same time and that seems to be never-ending as it continues to grow to this day.

You are still so young but the impact you have already made is extraordinary. You have touched not just my life with your tentative first steps, but every person in this room and many, many more beyond these walls. No matter how hard I may be on you (which I really am not) rest assured that I am endlessly proud of the young woman you are turning into.



You often ask me what I think may become of your future, what you should look for. Although a cliché, I believe that you can do anything at all if you put your mind to it. This surmounts to an almost impossible maze of options, intertwined paths through mountain forests.



I can only give you some advice on your way but I already know that the girl you have been has made the groundworks for the woman before you. You are smart, much smarter than you give yourself credit for; strong, strong enough to hold my hand in public when I falter in the crowds; kind, kind to everyone, no matter their weaknesses; and you are thoroughly beautiful and adventurous.

You are hilarious darling, you don't always mean to be but you are. Like that time we had stayed the night at a Swedish hotel. You were just a toddler, trying to figure the world out. After breakfast you graced our table of strangers with your own little personal farewells as you sat on my hip... "Bye bye man, bye bye lady, bye bye man, bye bye lady"... and you paused for ages when your eyes landed on a very large and very dark American man... and you ended with... "bye bye bear". You can't imagine our relief when everyone at the table roared in laughter, including the very large man!

But what lies ahead for you my angel? Try not to overthink things as that can cloud your options. For work, or a career, start with anything at all and do it to your best abilities so that you can learn a deep sense of satisfaction and pride. Let happenstance guide you, grasp the opportunities offered you no matter how small they may seem to be. Respect the job you start off in and the others around you as they will bring you great joy in life.

You once came face to face with the living kumari of Kathmandu, a living goddess, a prepubescent. She emerged from her rooms after her attendants had turned the crowds away. She had spotted you amongst the throng. The two of you interlocked eyes and stared at each other for what seemed like an eternity trapped in a moment. You were both around 9 years old with such entirely different paths. I often think of her now, especially as you become a woman, as her divinity ended when you both reached "that time of month". That girl, that living goddess you once met, has now been set aside and returned to society. She will perhaps never be free to love who she wants or to work anywhere she pleases as her previous divinity holds a certain amount of fear to anyone around her. But you are free my love. Be open, be free, be adventurous, go with the flow and flourish! Let the little moments in life move you.



It's the little things in life that bring most joy. Silly dances and fearless happiness. Everyone joins in when you exuberate that sense of freedom and let it spread like dandelion seeds in the wind. If you look for sunshine then you will find the sun and that is the *raison d'être*. Go outside with your friends and wallow in it!

Dream big my darling. As big as your imagination will allow. If no one brings you to Madagascar to see the lemurs then you lead the way and bring a lover, a friend or better yet... your mamma. Save your wages and make it happen. Remember that you work to live, you don't live to work. Go out there and explore the world, budget yourself and save your earnings. Try not to spend beyond your means as loans can in turn consume you... Ask any of us for advice before you borrow as we are all here to support you.



One last thing my love. Remember to take time-outs and relax in your own solitude. Think back with fondness and let your face crinkle with laughter. One day you will look in the mirror and the face looking back at you will be wrinkled by a lifetime of expressions. Let that face be marked by happy memories and sunshine. Take time-outs and remember the good times, the good people, the good surprises. Remember today.

I love you so indescribably much my darling. Engelen min. Thank you for making today happen for us!

