

Donor Pen Sketch and Goodwill Message

Donor Pen Sketch

Donor 1781

I was born [REDACTED], with bright red hair and big chubby cheeks. As I grew, the hair went bright gold then settled to a dirty blonde. The beard is still ginger though. I was followed at the turn of the millennium by a little brother, annoying for the first few decades but thoroughly good company now. My mother [REDACTED] had big curly ginger hair. She was a managing director at a [REDACTED] company and enjoyed living in the quiet, flat town where I was born – a world away from the busy [REDACTED] she grew up in. My father too, I think, enjoyed the calm of that place, also very different from the [REDACTED] he grew up in. At the time I was born he was managing a wine shop [REDACTED]. He used to spend hours drawing these elaborate window displays, and it always impressed me how he could do it all in reverse from the inside of the shop. He was a wonderfully creative and sensitive man, as well as a natural born runner, but he'd also had a rough childhood and became an alcoholic later in life. My mother eventually divorced him, for all our sake's, and I saw him sporadically until he died [REDACTED] in my [REDACTED] term at medical school. My mother is an incredibly strong woman and to this day I can't think of anyone I admire more. She worked full time and, with the help of my grandparents, provided us with a wonderful childhood full of opportunity.

For the large part I enjoyed school. The work came easy to me and everywhere I went I had good friends I could rely on. I tried all sorts of things as a kid: football, rugby, archery, karate, running, climbing, gaming, debating, and probably a few more I've forgotten. Above all though, running has stuck with me and I still enjoy track, cross-country, and fell running regularly. After school I read History and Politics at a university [REDACTED] and loved every minute. As I came to the end of my time there though I was slightly lost as to what to do with the rest of my life. Thankfully, I met a friendly paramedic via the Army Reserve unit I was a part of and within a few weeks I was set on medicine. I spent my last year in my first degree working as a carer then after I graduated I moved to work as a health care assistant in a [REDACTED] hospital and study for my medical school entrance exams. By the following year I had been accepted to study medicine. So this is where I write to you from as the halfway exams loom, anxious but optimistic. I'll probably take my mind off it later by finishing a woodblock print I'm working on. It took me a while to realise but there really is nothing quite as satisfying as making something.

Donor Pen Sketch and Goodwill Message

Donor Goodwill Message to Offspring

Donor 1781

I have no idea how to write to someone in the future. People change and I've no doubt that if I read my own advice in 20 years' time I'd scoff. So, if this is advice on becoming an adult, let me give you an edited version of someone else's advice that I wished I'd heard:

Wear sunscreen. If I could offer you only one tip for the future, sunscreen would be it. The long-term benefits of sunscreen have been proved by scientists whereas the rest of my advice has no basis more reliable than my own meandering experience. I will dispense this advice now. Enjoy the power and beauty of your youth; or never mind. You will not understand the power and beauty of your youth until they have faded. But trust me, in 20 years you'll look back at photos of yourself and recall in a way you can't grasp now how much possibility lay before you and how fabulous you really looked. Don't worry about the future; or worry but know that worrying is as effective as trying to solve an algebra equation by chewing Bubble-gum. The real troubles in your life are apt to be things that never crossed your worried mind; the kind that blindsides you at 4 PM on some idle Tuesday.

Don't be reckless with other people's hearts; don't put up with people who are reckless with yours. Don't waste your time on jealousy; sometimes you're ahead, sometimes you're behind. The race is long, and in the end, it's only with yourself. Remember the compliments you receive; forget the insults. If you succeed in doing this, tell me how. Stretch. Don't feel guilty if you don't know what you want to do with your life. The most interesting people I know didn't know at 18 what they wanted to do with their lives. Some of the most interesting 40-year-olds I know still don't. Maybe you'll marry, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll have children, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll divorce at 40. Maybe you'll dance the funky chicken on your 75th wedding anniversary. Whatever you do, don't congratulate yourself too much, or berate yourself either. Your choices are half chance; so are everybody else's. Enjoy your body. Use it every way you can. Don't be afraid of it, or what other people think of it. It's the greatest instrument you'll ever own.

Get to know your parents; you never know when they'll be gone for good. Be nice to your siblings; they are your best link to your past and the people most likely to stick with you in the future. Understand that friends come and go, but for the precious few you should hold on. Work hard to bridge the gaps in geography and lifestyle, because the older you get, the more you need the people you knew when you were young. Travel. Be careful whose advice you buy but be patient with those who supply it. Advice is a form of nostalgia. Dispensing it is a way of fishing the past from the disposal, wiping it off, painting over the ugly parts and recycling it for more than it's worth. But trust me on the sunscreen