Dedication

This book is dedicated to my daughter Melanie, her daddy Stanislas, and to my parents Simone and Ronaldo, who provided an incredible support network for raising my daughter.

Introduction

My dear, this book is a way for me to share a little bit about our daily, weekly, or monthly routine and the stories we've experienced together. I know that over time, we tend to forget many things, and you wouldn't remember because you're still so little. So, with this diary, you'll be able to learn about the adventures we've had, your development, as well as many stories from Mommy's past that I'm trying to turn into some sort of teaching, tips, or guide for your future.

Remember, everything in this book is just tips and advice. You're not obliged to follow anything if you think differently. Every human being is unique, and you'll have your own ideas and ideals.

I hope this book is fun and useful for you. I wrote it with the greatest love and care in my heart. It was quite a lot of work, and many days and weeks I fell behind because being a mother isn't easy, it's busy; but I always tried to find a little bit of time to finish this goal I had.

Melanie, you are the love of my life. I hope this is a gift that you carry with you wherever you go, if not the physical book, then the stories in your memory. Don't read everything all at once, enjoy each story slowly, and ask if you need to ask. And if I'm no longer here, ask your father, because so far he has lived all these stories with us.

It's important for me to mention that I started the diary in January 2023, meaning you were almost three months old. I didn't start earlier because the first three months, a newborn requires a lot of work. I didn't have time. But I believe we truly began living together and having stories to tell from then on. Enjoy reading, princess!

PS: When the end of each chapter contains "*(Includes videos/pictures on the blog/twitter)*" it means that this specific chapter includes photos/videos on the blog or Twitter, which you can access through the following links: https://twitter.com/mydaughtermel (you'll have to look for it searching for specific dates on the system) or https://nataschamartins.blogspot.com/

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To my daughter Melanie (January, 2023)

18/01 - Chapter 1: Introduction

Hello, my daughter. This is my diary addressed to you. Luckily, in today's digital age, I can type, as I would likely struggle to write on a daily basis given that you're just a baby and pretty much all my time is devoted to you.

While reading a book my mom gave me, I found out about the Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and I'm freaking out. You are almost 3 months old and so far you have been sleeping with blankets everyday. Not only blankets to cover you but blankets around you like a crib protector. Now I just spent tons of money on baby racks for you, but it's going to take a while so hopefully you can hang in there with just your bear rack for now.

You're growing beautifully and healthy. As you approach your three-month milestone, you have been smiling frequently and have even started to giggle, though, curiously, mostly when in the company of your grandmother. You're also kicking a lot, moving your limbs like crazy and refusing to be lying down. When you're awake now you want to be seated otherwise you complain - a lot.

My baby is growing!

Btw, I am still providing you with breastfeeding, which accounts for approximately 90% of my time. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue producing milk for your nourishment.

19/01 - Chapter 2: Getting to know daddy again

Today was your 3 months anniversary, my love. We celebrated the ocasion dressing both of us as Snow White. However, the most significant part of the day was that your father returned from overseas to be with you and at your party.

Initially, you were interacting and smiling at him. After my mother arrived to assist with the party preparations, I left to pick up the food and the cake, leaving your father in charge. However, after some time, he called me in a

state of desperation because you were crying your eyes out. Literally screaming. And he didn't know what to do. You didn't even want to take your milk bottle. When that's the case, it's usually colic. Well, I called grandma to go upstairs ASAP and help me and later we figured out it was not colic. You were just uncomfortable not being around with someone you know - we presume - hopefully you'll get used to him again. Give him a chance again and let him in. If I did it, so can you!

My mom in the end calmed you down but you were still sobbing uncontrollably.

After that episode, I returned and the party was quite delightful! Here a few pics.

Happy 3 months my love!

Following the party, it was our first time sleeping in the apartment after a while. You slept in the stroller but you seem uncomfortable! Let's take into account that you were slipping for a long time in your grandparents house in a massive crib and with your arms completely open. Now in the stroller you can't do it. But don't worry. The super hero of your grandpa found a way to fit the massive crib in our tiny little room. You'll be just fine and you'll be able to sleep with your open arms again lol.

You slept around 11:40 p.m. and woke up around 5:30 a.m. Not perfect as always but still pretty good! You sleep every day 12:30 a.m. and I wake you up at 7:30, then, you sleep again at 8 and wake around 10 - 12.

Amazing huh?

20/01 - Chapter 3: Bad blood

Good morning, love! Today you'll have the meningitis vaccine! I don't have courage to enter the room with you and for that I'm really sorry because I know you need me. But I can't stand to see you suffer (or in pain) even for a few seconds. But I'll be outside eagerly waiting to embrace you! I know today it's gonna be hard but you got this! Hopefully you'll be way braver than I am when the subject is needles.

We took you to have your meningitis vaccine and I took the Pikluk to help with pain (you can look up what is Pikluk – not sure if google still exists but probably) and it did help. Your daddy mentioned that you cried for just

5 seconds! Yeah, this time daddy and grandma went with you. Mommy still doesn't have enough courage. And guess what? To my surprise, you remained in good spirits throughout the day, and it didn't even seem that you were vaccinated. I'm so proud of you. Hopefully you won't develop the same fear of needles as I have. You're undoubtedly much braver than me!

One friend from my childhood came to visit you for the first time today. Karina, known as Kedy. There are a bunch of old pics of her and mommy on google drive. We had bad blood in the past, but now it's all good.

Bebesita… the political situation here is really bad. Lula (a thief, dishonest and a morally compromised figure) has suspiciously been re-elected. Due to this, I'm planning to leave the country with you later this year. But I wanna tell you something important that is lacking in this new world: Please, respect other people's opinions. People's perspectives will differ from your own, and that's perfectly fine. People have different education backgrounds, they live in different places, have different upbringings, diverse cultures and ways of thinking, in addition to facing their own unique challenges.

Although mommy doesn't like Lula, for instance, I don't wish harm to anyone who voted for him. I don't get it, but I have to respect.

Mommy has a dear friend who voted for him, titia Girleide, and I love her! While we may have opposing political views, we choose to avoid such conversations. Thus, it's very important that you respect different viewpoints. And this principle applies not just to politics but to all aspects of life. Hopefully, you'll have the opportunity to explore new places and experience different cultures, all of which will be unique in their own ways. So learning how to respect is crucial. Even when it is difficult to comprehend, remember that each individual's life is a unique journey. By learning to respect people and remaining true to your character and ideals, you'll become a remarkable human being.

The world is sick, my love. People are wishing harm and death upon others simply because of differentiating political beliefs. People are really wishing harm to others. It's insane the amount of hate. I witness this hate daily on social media platforms, which has compelled me to reduce my activity on Twitter and focus more in your diary.

My heart is not filled with hatred. I don't wish people harm and I get sick to my stomach to see what people have become. I hope I can raise you better than that. I hope you change the world for better, because the world

right now is a dark place. But you make this world a better place; you're a ray of sun, that's why I always sing to you: "you're my sunshine". Do not, I repeat, DO NOT let the world extinguish your light. Stay true to yourself. Be good. DO good. Let go of the hate.

I love you. I hope the world is in a better state when you're able to read those words, rather than worse; but I really have my doubts. But is it possible to get worse? Let's hope not. I hope you can teach people respect and love. I love you more than words can express, Melanie.

21/01 - Chapter 4: Sweet childhood

Today was a peaceful day. I set up your little pool and filled it with warm water, you really enjoyed. What I truly want is for you to enjoy your childhood, as I can assure you that it is the best time of our lives.

One day, you'll wish to be a kid again, take my word for it. And if it's up to me, you'll play a lot, with toys, with me, others, and you won't be wasting too much time in front of television, tablets or any sort of screens. Naturally, I'm not going to ban it, but I'm going to find the right balance between these activities.

Rest assured, we'll be watching many Disney movies together, but we'll also play a lot. Playing outdoors with people, cousins, kids, it's truly one of life's greatest pleasures, trust me. I was fortunate to have had a perfect childhood filled with friends and cousins. I have so many things to say and much advice to give and I'm not even 30. But I went through a lot and I have a lot to keep up with you. Hopefully I will have the chance to tell all my stories in person, but who knows, life is unpredictable.

(Includes vídeos/pictures on the blog/twitter)

22/01 - Chapter 5: You deserve LOVE!

Another pool day, but not for you. Cuca's family were here and you slept pretty much the whole day. The only highlights of the day was you puking A LOT and another altercation between Tayna and Rafael. Your grandparents are right now talking to both of them but to be honest Mel, I think their relationship is going to end very bad and I feel sorry for your cousin, Rafinha and for my parents. I fear that the worst might happen.

It really felt like when your aunt gave birth things were finally getting better but for a while now it's really bad again. I hope they can manage to figure things out even if it's separately.

My love, PLEASE, never find yourself entangled in a toxic relationship. And it's important to say that I don't use this word lightly. All too often, people employ it lightly and label relationships as "toxic" when the reality doesn't merit such a characterization. When I mean toxic, it's really toxic. Such as: don't EVER be in a relationship where respect doesn't exist. Physical or verbal harm is utterly unacceptable, as is humiliation. While a touch of jealousy is natural, excessive jealousy is a cause for concern and is detrimental to a healthy relationship.

If you ever find yourself entangled in such a situation, RUN. Keep in mind that LOVE and RESPECT are way more important than passion, desire and lust. While it is admirable if you can nurture love and passion in tandem, always prioritize love if you must make a choice.

I have so much to say about that… hopefully I will be able to discuss in person but who the hell knows. Either way, it's a serious talk and I will cover that over time here. For now, remember this: always choose love over passion, and never allow yourself to remain with someone who makes you feel bad in any way. Love is not that. Love doesn't hurt, love is not lust. Love is respect, love is feeling butterflies in your stomach, love is what the word is: love. But I will cover this up along the way because it is a very wide subject and I have to be very careful with that. Maybe it is too early, but yeap, keep those things in mind for now. Healthy relationships always. I love you.

24/01 - Chapter 6: *Officiellement française*

Greetings, my petit française. Guess what? Today we went to take your French passport. YAY. One more step - hopefully - to get out of Brazil. As of now, you possess dual citizenship, with the italian passport still pending, will make it three. However, it's interesting to consider that you could potentially acquire three more, possessing a total of six passports.

Your great-grandma (my grandma) is Portuguese, your dad's mom is Belgian and your father's dad is Moroccan. So yeah, you could definitely be a CIA agent. Think about it.

Imagine if you had been born in the USA, as I had once envisioned, you would have seven citizenships. Geez, that's too much. Nevertheless, it seems that you will likely settle with the Brazilian, French, and Italian citizenships. Unfortunately, I'm not close enough to your grandparents to consult them on this matter.

While we awaited your passport appointment, you had a rather messy incident of diaper leakage, courtesy of those blue Huggies diapers. There was poop all over my dress... These blue Huggies diapers are so bad. People were right, it is indeed a very bad diaper. It's a no no for me.

Upon our return, we spent some quality time reading together, which was simply marvelous. You clung tightly to me, and it was a heartwarming moment. However, the serenity didn't last long, as you experienced frequent bouts of vomiting throughout the remainder of the day, requiring us to change your clothes at least four times. It's a result of your reflux, my baby, which you've been grappling with since day one. It's disheartening to witness you endure such discomfort. According to the pediatrician, there's not much we can do other than introducing formula since it's thicker and can alleviate reflux. Nonetheless, she believes that my breast milk is working splendidly, and she recommended against making any changes. So, I'll continue to endure the endless cycle of changing and washing shirts stained with puke, all the while ensuring that I can continue to breastfeed you.

But yeah, the puking so far is the most challenging thing. I intend to set up an appointment with a specialist to explore potential solutions.

The other thing that also happened was your godmother… AGAIN! It seems that her tumultuous relationship with uncle Rafael persists, despite your grandpa's earlier advice that they take a break for a while. … It's becoming increasingly clear that they have a deeply flawed relationship, which exhibits a rather unsettling and inexplicable obsession with each other... They may believe it's normal, but it most certainly is not.

Again, I hope one day you find someone who treats you right, with kindness and respect. There's nothing wrong in being like me, dreaming about a Prince Charming and a happily ever after. Wrong is being in a relationship with physical and verbal abuse.

In the realm of relationships, real life is quite distinct from fiction. So, it's acceptable to dream as long as you can distinguish between fiction and

reality, and maintain reasonable expectations. Don't try to find the perfect person. It doesn't exist. And it's worth mentioning that being in a movie love story not only is unrealistic but just in case you do - which is highly unlikely but not impossible - it's like winning the lottery, so appreciate it and don't take it for granted.

BTW, a few favorites mommy's movies (romantic ones):

- The notebook (Classic one)
- A Walk to remember (Just as good)
- If only (Underestimate. Not a lot of people know this movie, but it's a masterpiece)
- He's not that into you. (Lighter)
- Crazy, stupid love (Way lighter)

Returning to the topic of your godmother, I can't help but feel that something catastrophic may unfold in their relationship, or perhaps even individually. I just hope there's a God somewhere and protects your cousin, Rafinha. No child should go through that. They prioritize their relationship with each other over their responsibilities as parents, which has a profound impact on Rafinha. His excessive bouts of crying and sleep disturbances seem to be overlooked or dismissed as unrelated to their environment, which I find disheartening.

When the day arrives for you to become a parent and experience the profound love that it brings, always remember to prioritize your child above all else – even your own parents. A mother's love is unparalleled and cannot be compared to the love between a husband and wife. This is a lesson that my sister has yet to grasp.

(Includes vídeos/pictures on the blog/twitter)

25/01 Chapter 7: Every ordinary day is truly an extraordinary day

We spent a very nice family day outdoors! It brought immense joy to your grandfather, and it was a precious opportunity for you and your cousin to spend time together.

It appears that your godmother and Rafael have reconciled, which seems somewhat surreal. It's like nothing has ever happened. Bizarre.

I've asked your grandfather to check our air miles so we can go to Orlando but he went to bed way too early. Let's see if I can accomplish this tomorrow.

Additionally, I was very torn between going or not going to Caragua tomorrow with my parents. At the same time I want to take you to the beach, have a little fun and get out of the house, but I have my concerns if it's the best thing for you, after all you're still so tiny. Mosquitos, for instance, they are a concern.

Today I saw on Facebook a mom posting a video of her preemie princess baby close to her chest… fighting for her life. Sadly, she passed away. I checked the profile of the baby's mom on Facebook and she wrote she doesn't want to live anymore, her pictures are heartbreaking…
This little one has born a few days before you and it simply destroyed me. As a mom now, I can't even imagine going through this. (you can check the video on your twitter).

It's funny how I lived 29 years without you, yet now, I can't live or envision my life without you. You're my life now. Don't ever leave me.

(Includes vídeos/pictures on the blog/twitter)

26/01 - Chapter 8: Let's go to the beach, beach

Bebesita, as it turns out, after much internal struggle, I decided to come to the beach and the first thing I noticed: I forgot your Fisher Price chair! Damn it! That's where you're supposed to sit at the beach.

My mind doesn't work properly often. Anyways, we have safely arrived, and you had a pretty decent sleep on the car. I thought you'd give me a hard time to sleep at night because you slept a lot and because of the new environment but you didn't. You're perfect!

What I did observe it's that my milk supply was very low after we arrived at the beach. Weird. My milk supply comes and go. It's weird.

27/01 - Chapter 9: You have to be joking

Today we started with the left foot. We finally took you to the beach, something I had been eagerly looking forward to. Initially, we had a wonderful time. We put your tiny feet in the sand, and we were taking pictures of your cutie mermaid outfit. We were having fun until you fell asleep in my arms.

A while after that my dad needs to pee and my mom tells him there is a little house at the end of the street that charges very little to use the bathroom. So they go together…

Took them a little while to come back, but when they did my mom started to whisper at me:
- Did you hear all the yelling?
- No?
- It was us. A man hit your dad, almost killed him.
I was in disbelief:
- WHAT? What happened? Why?

And she told me that happened after my dad was seen peeing behind a big trash bin.

While I was digesting the news, in the back there were a bunch of police officers talking to a man and my mom told me that was the man who assaulted my dad. Meanwhile, my dad was breaking the news to my grandparents.

I decided to approach the officers, carrying you in my arms, which, in retrospect, was a mistake. But I want to tell them my dad was assaulted by that man.

While I approached turning my back to your dad and my dad telling me not to go, I didn't speak much until his furious wife suddenly began yelling at me and came menacingly close while I was holding you. I was completely caught off guard. If the officers didn't separate her from us, she would have hit me with you in my lap and the worst could have happened.

I couldn't fathom why someone would confront a woman carrying her child in such an aggressive manner. It was evident that she was under the influence of something, possibly alcohol or drugs. Anyways, when I realize your grandpa was already trying to punch the guy, and while your dad was trying to take me away from there, I just saw my dad kicking the woman,

then falling in the sand with his belly up and out of the blue and a dog getting in the middle and sitting down on your grandpa's belly, not allowing him to move.

Things scaled very quickly. After that, I'm not entirely sure about the details, but I saw my dad talking to a new and huge police officer. This officer didn't seem to be aware of what had happened earlier, and when my dad explained the situation, it appeared that he might have a bias.

A nice worker from the kiosk went to tell the huge officer that he saw the lady coming at the woman (me) with a baby (you) and the officer responded:
- Oh, do you want to be his witness then?
It was like he was saying:
- Are you really gonna get in the middle of it? Get out.
And then the men replied:
- No.

He didn't want to go to the police station as a witness for anyone, he was merely explaining what he had seen. I can understand his hesitation; getting involved as a witness can be a risky move, as you never know who you might be testifying against. Following this exchange, tensions escalated even further.

My dad was super angry, insisting the officer was obligated to enroll the witness, but the police officer was repeatedly saying "no." This greatly infuriated my dad, and he was approaching the officer without any hesitation. Argh… I started to get in the middle - not with you anymore, I've learned my lesson, believe me. I was desperately pleading with your dad, begging him to make your grandpa STOP! However, your grandpa wasn't listening, he continued advancing towards the office, shouting and pointing his finger. He even mentioned that he was being arrested?

Anyways, I could already envision the officer getting his gun and shooting my dad and this thought made me sick to my stomach…. I screamed: "Dad, stop it, think about your grandkids: RAFINHA. MELANIE! STOP, PLEASE". By this point I was in tears, BEGGING HIM TO STOP.

Your dad was also trying to reason with him, but your grandpa was beyond reasoning. He continued to shout: "Let me go. Let me go. Get out". In a moment of true panic, I fainted. I fell like a lifeless sack of potatoes.

Now you might be wondering if that stopped my dad? The answer is no! And how do I know? Your dad and your grandma told me afterwards. I'm not sure what exactly happened, but when I woke up my dad was no longer there. The next time I saw him, he was talking to a bunch of officers, but not the huge one as before. I never saw that particular officer again.

Anyways, after enduring ALL OF THIS and waited for what seemed like an eternity, the officers told me that the assailant wanted to APOLOGIZE. Without hesitation my dad agreed to talk to him, and what happened next? They HUGGED it out. (Not the officer, the crazy one). I was pissed and thinking: YOU HAVE TO BE JOKING!!!!!!!!!

Melanie, the reason I was pissed it's because after EVERYTHING they put us through, they simply HUGGED each other? I'm sharing this with you for specific reasons:

1) Your dad gave me a fair lecture about the risks I took by bringing you along, and he was 100% right. I deserved to listen.

2) Engage in physical altercations is never the right answer. Unless, of course, it's a matter of self-defense. My mom later told me the man gave a head block on my dad and it was choking him (which made me really sad thinking about it later). In such situations, you have to defend yourself. But in this case he didn't have the chance because the guy was literally choking him. Your grandpa just got away with it because my mom was screaming and a few people came to help.

3 and last) Your grandfather is a person who holds no grudges (one of the seven deadly sins). He knows how to forgive with all his heart, even those who have wronged him in significant ways. It's not an easy thing to do. Can you imagine forgiving someone who has harmed you? But he does, and when he forgives, he knows how to let go of the past. Forgiving is a genuine and selfless act. No matter how challenging it may be, I encourage you to try to forgive. It will bring peace of mind not only to those who seeks forgiveness, but also to you. Forgiveness is good for the soul, and precisely because it is difficult, it becomes a beautiful challenge to overcome. However, if you choose to forgive, do it wholeheartedly, without concealing the wrongdoing, never throwing the past at the person's face. If that's the goal, it's better not to forgive.

Forgiveness is a challenge and I hope you can overcome it when you need it. But remember: to err is human, but persisting in one's errors is stupid. Mistakes are a part of being human, and everyone deserves forgiveness if

they are genuinely remorseful. Yet, when someone persists in making the same mistake two or more times, they are essentially taking advantage of your kind heart. In such cases, if the error continues, forgive, but do so without allowing those individuals who do not appreciate your forgiveness and fail to learn from their mistakes to remain part of your life. It's crucial to learn from your own missteps
I love you.

PS: If you forgive a second time but remove the person from your life, you won't have to face the pain of forgiving a third - and unnecessary - time again. If a person screw things up for a second time, they will probably repeat the mistakes again because they are not genuinely remorseful.

To make this 27th day even more special, since yesterday (the 26th) the day that we arrived at the beach, I noticed a significant reduction in my milk supply. During the early hours, as you peacefully slumbered for an extended period, my breasts used to be brimming with milk, enabling you to nurse on one side while I expressed the other with a breast pump, usually yielding around 100ml or a bit more for the following day. But today, for the first time, my breasts weren't loaded :(and also for the first time, and you nursed from both sides, so there was no extra milk for later. Consequently, a few hours later we went to buy formula. Despite this, through a combination of persistence and perhaps a touch of luck on my part, I successfully managed to stretch the availability of breast milk for one more day. Each day that I can avoid resorting to formula is a personal triumph. I want you to be as healthy as possible and I know the importance of breast milk.

28/01 - Chapter 10: Failure as a mom

I woke up today with the certainty that I'd have to introduce formula. But, thanks to the hot weather, you slept a lot, allowing me to pump a bit of milk every hour, and that added up to another day of breast milk. Yaaay!

Now, the worst part of the day. Since last night, your grandma noticed what she thought might be a slight sunburn on your little face. I couldn't see it then, but this morning, I noticed that she was right. So we kept an eye on you at the beach today, but despite all my efforts, when we returned, we saw you even redder, now with some sunburn on your forehead and head.

I felt like the worst mom in the world. I'm sorry, baby girl, I still have a lot to learn. Luckily it doesn't seem to be bothering you, but I know that it's harmful. Towards the end of the afternoon, I applied 3m+ baby repellent on you to protect you. A few hours later, daddy prepared your bottle and asked me to check the milk's temperature. What did I do? I stuck my finger in the bottle and only then did I remember that I had the repellent on my hand. Worst mother in the world.

29/01 Chapter 11: Special guest

Today, Celebrity tweet from your dad.
"In the car on the way to the restaurant you started giggling and laughing like never before with mommy. Seeing you so happy and smiley made me cry and filled my heart with the kind of joy that I had never felt before."

The last tweet was indeed from your dad, and I just saw. He's right, you giggled so much with mommy! Look how precious! It was the best part of the day! You're becoming prettier and prettier each day!

After the bath, you cried a lot, A LOT and scared your father. I had seen you cry like that before, either when you had your cramps or simply because you were really hungry, but not him. I reassured him that it would happen sometimes. It truly hurts our hearts when you cry like that.

While walking through São Sebastião center, a lady walking from afar stopped to see if you were real or a doll. You are our little doll, becoming more beautiful every day (and more bald, just like mommy was). You were so hairy, and now so bald lol.

(Includes vídeos/pictures on the blog/twitter)

30/01 - Chapter 12: Mommy's book

You literally slept all day today - you woke up at 9:30 a.m., a bit earlier than usual - went back to sleep on your dad's lap from 10:30-11:30 a.m., and then slept again from 1:30 p.m. until about . 4:30 p.m. When we left for São Paulo around 5:30 p.m., you slept until 9:30 p.m. upon our arrival. I thought there was no way you would sleep through the night, yet to my surprise, it is now 7:40 a.m. and I am breastfeeding you as usual.

You're a perfect daughter and apparently you share a characteristic with your mom: YOU LOVE to sleep. Sleep is something divine, it's as if all human beings have an on and off switch button and when it's time to sleep we finally press that button and our body starts to reset, enabling us to wake up refreshed. Also, it's the only time of the day when we can genuinely set aside our problems and thoughts, letting them go.

For those going through emotional pain, sleep offers a temporary reprieve from pain—a luxury often elusive during waking hours. Mommy always loved to sleep, but I started to REALLY LOVE when I was 16 and I started going through the first pain and suffering of my life. At the age of 16 I developed depression, but we'll talk about that later. As of today, mommy is doing great.

But yeah, when mommy's first boyfriend Marcelo (the most intense relationship I had given my age) broke up with me, my world fell apart, and the only time of day that I wasn't in constant agony, pain, wanting to die was the time I was sleeping. Since then, I've used sleep as a coping mechanism.

Honestly, if you want (only if you want, because I know it must be awkward to read about mom's relationship other than with dad) to know about this mommy's first love, feel free to ask me to read the book I wrote. Yes, I wrote a book BASED on my story (not everything there is true, like the ending). Just ask me, I have the book. But if I'm no longer here with you anymore, just search for "PARA SEMPRE - Natascha Lacava". However, I would prefer you to read this book when you're over 15, okay?

(Includes vídeos/pictures on the blog/twitter)

To my daughter Melanie (February, 2023)

01/02 - Chapter 13: High IQ

Entering February. Yay. Today was a peaceful day, much like yesterday. But yesterday nothing happened and today you astounded us by breastfeeding yourself… with your foot. That's why I thought it was important to mention.

My love, I think you'll be very bright. Your grandpa has very high IQs, and your paternal great-grandfather was a genius with an impressive IQ. We can already discern signs of your intelligence and cleverness in various aspects. Not to mention that your numerology also says that you will focus too much on studies and work (your numerology is available on my Drive, Melanie's folder). It suggests potential professions in IT, Law, Architecture, Engineering, and Politics (although I'd prefer you to steer clear of politics, especially in Brazil, where corruption seems perennial, and you deserve better).

Personally, I would love to see you as an architect or engineer, professions that I never had the aptitude for. It's not that I lack intelligence; in fact, I'm quite smart. However, disciplines like architecture, involving drawing, and engineering, entailing mathematical skills, were always my Achilles' heel.

I struggled so much in high school, especially in Geometric Drawing, where my grades never exceeded 2 (out of 10). It got to a point where I had to leave school mid-year because of this subject... I'll never forget... I've always been HORRIBLE with drawings, always.

On the contrary, your father is a drawing prodigy, which is why he pursued a career as a graphic designer. He draws exceptionally well, and his creations are truly marvelous. Thus, if you decide to become an architect, you'll undoubtedly inherit those skills from him. Regardless, I will love and support you in whatever profession you choose.

EVERY profession deserves to be respected, EVERY profession is WORTHY. But make no mistake, money is important YES, and it makes life a lot easier. And if your financial life is good, please don't forget about CHARITY and helping others whenever you can. I've always helped and I want to teach you the importance of this. Your father and I are dedicated to charitable causes, and we hope to impart the importance of philanthropy to you. When we have money, we always think we need to save more to get

other things. "Oh, I can't spend it, I have to save up to change the car, buy a bigger house, buy an apartment to rent, a fancier handbag." We always need things we don't have yet, but remember that we can have a lot and still help those in need.

Helping others is very important, dear. If you can, visit orphanages, make donations (no matter how small), buy food for someone in need, spend time at a nursing home, adopt a stray animal (or rescue one in order to find a home for the pet), join groups dedicated to helping others. Be the positive force that contributes to making the world a better place just by being a part of it. You already make my world infinitely better, and I'm confident you'll do the same for many others. I love you, my daughter.

Here's the video of you drinking your milk with your foot!

(Includes vídeos/pictures on the blog/twitter)

02/02 - Chapter 14: I can't keep up

Today was tough. Your dad and I were caught up with work, your grandfather had his hands full of work, and your grandmother was taking care of your cousin, and, to help, you didn't sleep ONE MINUTE, Mel. You even tried twice, but every time we put you to bed, you woke right up.

The night was a struggle too. Every time you spat out the pacifier, you cried and woke up. It's happened before, but not this often. And since you stayed awake the whole day, you just wanted to breastfeed and I had to defrost more milk.

At the beach, where everything was so messed up (regarding the milk issue) I managed to get around the situation, and here back home where I thought things would go back to normal, I'm having to defrost milk supply every day. There are only a few more packages left. I don't know how much longer I will be able to avoid the formula. I'm fighting, but it feels like the battle is coming to an end. I even ate oatmeal :(

I'm sorry babe. I really wanted to breastfeed you until at least 6 months.

03/02 - Chapter 15: Already a house-owner

Yesterday was a challenging day but today you made up to me. Despite the not-so-fun trip to the registry office to transfer the land to your name, on the way back, you slept several times and for the first time you breastfed every 4 hours, which is considered ideal. I WAS SUPER HAPPY, and my milk increased a little today. I'm not sure if it was the oatmeal or just a coincidence. But today was a great day! Thank you <3

And by the way, lactation tea arrived today (to increase breast milk). Let's see if it helps!! (fingers crossed)

04/02 - Chapter 16: The first international trip

Today, mommy couldn't even stay with you much because I was caught up in a big work project that I'm trying to wrap up by wednesday before we head off to Ubatuba on Thursday.

On top of that, I had a bit of stress dealing with the plane tickets for our Orlando trip. You see, we wanted to check out houses first before getting the tickets, and thank goodness we did because the prices shot up. We initially planned to go from April 3-17, but those dates turned out to be way more expensive. So, we adjusted our plans to go from April 17-30. However, the cost of airline miles doubled since our last check, which was frustrating, especially since I found the perfect house at an affordable rate.

What did I do? I decided not to risk losing the ideal house and booked it right away. We'll be trying to buy the tickets again on Monday because your dad mentioned that prices tend to go up over the weekend. Hopefully, we can snag a good deal this week; otherwise, we might consider buying the tickets outright in cash instead of miles.

Despite these stressors, we had family over from your grandma's side to celebrate your great-grandma's birthday. We decided to make pizza together, and you ended up having a good night's sleep.

Later on, it was bath time for you, but you weren't as thrilled as usual – you usually love it just like your dad. It took a lot of work to get you to sleep because you weren't sleepy (since you slept a lot at night). And tonight for the first time you're sleeping with your baby sack/sleeping bag. Hopefully it will work. Fingers crossed.

05/02- Chapter 17: How to kill fishes

The sleeping bag didn’t work as expected. You came back with the habit of lifting your feet, causing you to wake up several times. During the feeding at 7:30/8:00 (which you switched tonight to 6:30), I changed you and switched back to the old sack (the one that prevented you to lift your leg last time) and it worked better. However, you persist in lifting your feet and grabbing them the whole time.

Grandpa had a sad day because, after changing the water in his aquarium and cleaning it with chlorine due to excessive dirt, he discovered later that there was still chlorine in the sand. When he put the fishes in, after half an hour or so 3 died, and one struggled for hours, even after being moved to another aquarium. Even fighting so hard for his life, it was already too late. So sad... especially considering they had been around for years.

Matheus and Marcela finally came to visit you after almost 4 months. Better late than never. I should have taken a picture of the two of them with you today to post here, but I forgot. I don't know how long they will remain in your life...

Do you know how your father met Matheus? When your father was living here in Brazil, exploring the possibility of staying here permanently with mommy, we went out and he tried açaí for the first time. Matheus was the one serving açaí that day. Your father asked to try a few different flavors and Matheus brought several small açaís just like he asked him, and so he loved the service and Matheus. Before leaving, your dad told Matheus that he really liked him and asked if they could exchange WhatsApp numbers to hang out someday. That's how their friendship started, and they truly adore each other, often acting like two dorks together.

Then I met Marcela, Matheus' girlfriend. I think Marcela is the most beautiful woman I've ever met in person, beautiful, beautiful. We got along really well and started seeing each other every weekend to eat and play games, especially board games. Your dad and I love board games (we hope to play with you in the future. Maybe do game nights once or twice a week?) and it's challenging to find someone who enjoys playing too. We even spent a night at Marcela's apartment on the Ibirapuera side, but gradually, as they started working more, we lost touch.

During your pregnancy, when your father left when I was almost three months pregnant, I lost contact with them. Marcela sent occasional messages, and I even went to their house one day after your father was gone, but it felt strange.
It seems that when we become mothers, we become protectors of our little ones, and the baby shower website was something that surprised me a lot. I managed to raise almost R$ 10.000,00 in gifts (and in fact I used the money to buy that specific gift that the person gave. I didn't want money, I bought the products because there was still a lot to buy and it was me alone). Anyway, again, the website I made for the baby shower surprised me a lot... but with people I didn't expect. ALL of my clients from the sales group (and from the "Corrente do Bem" group) bought gifts for you, babe. I wasn't expecting anything from them (maybe a message on the website) and many of them bought gifts ranging from R$ 100 to 350 (believe it or not) which blew my mind. There was a day when I felt truly emotional about how people were being kind to us.

On the other hand, from family, relatives, cousins, and even friends like Matheus and Marcela, not a single gift or message on the site. Or a message... It's not even for the value, you know? It's about consideration. The surprise of those from whom you expect nothing and the disappointment of those from whom you expect everything.

Babe, after I started applying the following phrase: "It's better not to expect anything from anyone and might be surprised, than to expect and be disappointed," my life got better. I used to expect a lot from others and always ended up disappointed. Now that I don't expect anything anymore, I'm not disappointed, and sometimes I have some pleasant surprises. The baby shower website was a pleasant surprise.

Life is better that way – avoiding disappointment.

Also, try to be good if you can. Cherish others, and do to others what you would like them to do to you, and DO NOT do to others what you would NOT want them to do to you. I have always applied these two principles in my life. Try to do the same!

06/02- Chapter 18: One year of you!

My love, today marks exactly ONE YEAR since I got pregnant. Yes, I know and remember the exact date, and that's why today is such a special day to me. Many people (most) don't know the day they conceived; it's something rare (but rarity suits you). To celebrate this day, I decided to throw a tiny party at home with some dear people. Sounds silly, but to me it's not. You were my little miracle, and do you know why? Well, I had always dreamed and wanted to have children, particularly dreaming of being the mother of a little girl. Sweety, I had already chosen your name when I was 15/16 years old after reading the book "The Host". Although I liked the name, it was after reading the book that I became certain it was the name I wanted.

When your father and I were living together, trying our lives in Brazil, out of curiosity I asked him to do a spermogram to see if we could have children in the future, if we so decided. He agreed to do it and I think he was also curious to know. To our surprise, when the result came back negative, we were shocked. The result indicated that your father was sterile and would struggle in the future to have children.

We consulted an urologist who detected that your father had “varicocele”, and that he would need surgery to be able to be a dad in the future. Without surgery, it would be PRETTY MUCH IMPOSSIBLE to become a dad, and IF it happened, the chances of an abortion were high. This news TERRIFIED me. But since your father didn't plan to be a father soon (or with me - I'll talk about our relationship when I think it's the right time, later on) he wasn't planning to have the surgery.

I had always taken contraceptives correctly, but due to the test results, I stopped using them. And then, against all the odds, it happened.... You came into existence, proving that nothing it’s impossible.

The day I found out about you was filled with a whirlwind of emotions... I was about to go for gynecological exams, but as I was two weeks late, I decided to take the pregnancy test, WITHOUT ANY EXPECTATIONS, knowing the improbability of pregnancy with your father. It was just a matter of responsibility and precaution.

When I peed on the stick, I didn't see anything, but your dad insisted he saw a faint pink line. I didn't take him seriously, but he kind of "insisted". So not very patient and with zero hope I went to the pharmacy to buy another test. And as soon as I peed on the stick, the plus sign appeared (+):

positive. Disbelieving, I went to another pharmacy and bought 3 more tests, including an expensive one that indicates the number of weeks pregnant. As soon as I took the test, it flashed “pregnant” and started loading for how long: 2-3 weeks. To this day I don't know why I didn't keep that special stick...

Mel, it was a mixture of joy, fear and despair because the first thing that crossed my mind was the high chance of a miscarriage if the unlikely pregnancy occurred, according to the doctor. The thought of losing you was heartbreaking and left me numb. I already loved you so much... Just thinking about abortion was driving me crazy. Was a second miracle about to happen? YES!

Your father that day was appalled. He wasn't ready to be a father and he didn't want to be a father, after all the chances of him leaving Brazil was pretty high and I think he had already made his decision to leave. But considering this, his reaction wasn't as bad as I expected – at least not on the first day. On the 1st day, he even made small jokes when my mother arrived at the apartment to talk to me. However, on the 2nd day, he freaked out, thinking I had done it on purpose (which I hadn't). I don't blame him entirely because I always wanted to have a child, and I asked him to take the test, went to the doctor... it was not a great look, I give him that, but you were really a miracle and I wasn't expecting you AT ALL.

But anyway, I think it's not yet time to go into the depth of the story with your father. All I know is that today, 06/02, we are celebrating exactly 1 year of my pregnancy. I bought a cake at home and invited aunt Rosane, Giovanna, grandma, great-grandmother, and mom's friends: Girleide, Rafaela and Karina. It was a delightful evening, although your father might have felt a bit out of place among all the women.

We faced a little bit of a problem with the cake tho...

(Includes vídeos/pictures on the blog/twitter)

08/02- Chapter 19: It’s happening!

The highlight of the day was that we purchased our tickets to Orlando. Yay. Your grandpa worked his magic with miles, and luckily, prices dropped a bit ($). I was thrilled because just the day before, I was running out of patience and I almost ended up paying more.

Now, fingers crossed that, when your passport arrives, I can make the necessary changes. Just to be sure, I called Latam, and they assured me they can sort things out post-issuance. I made sure to record our chat and got a protocol number for good measure.

LET'S GO TO DISNEY, BABY! Can not wait.

09/02- Chapter 20: I call it madness

Trip day. Yay. Mommy rented an apartment for us to stay in Ubatuba, and since grandpa and grandma decided to go with us, we waited for them... However, your godmother - AGAIN – had a massive fight with your uncle Rafael and your grandma was depressed AGAIN. This story seems like it will never end and your aunt, she doesn't learn... I already gave up, my sister will NEVER change. In addition to affecting her life, it also affects everyone's lives around her, but it's not like she cares, really ... she is killing my parents slowly and doesn't even notice, or doesn't care at all.

Despite my deep affection for my sister, it appears that she is reluctant to mature and take responsibility. She's never going to get her shit together. Apparently - and for now - all that matters in her life is her unhealthy obsession for Rafael, funk, music, favela, and narguillé. This is her world. And all that matters to her. While she initially displayed great joy, anticipation, and emotion upon your birth, it appears that priorities have shifted significantly since then. This is not indicative of a lack of love for you, but rather a reordering of her commitments.

Anyway, all this drama made us leave the house way later than planned. Our check-in was supposed to be at 5 pm, and leaving by 1:30 pm would've been perfect timing. But guess what time we actually left? Almost 7 pm. First, we stopped by your cousin Rafinha's 9-month birthday party. Sadly, our trip coincided with the celebration, and I totally forgot about it when I booked our travel dates. I just remembered that I wanted to stay with Raquel on the same days as she (that's why I booked this trip, so we could stay with auntie Raquel - I'll talk about my friendship with her soon). My sister even teased me about it, saying Larissa is more Rafinha's aunt than I am, and she deserves more to be his godmother. And I agree, she deserves it. She manages to be there and take care of him much more than I can. But you were born right after him, that's the only reason I take less care of him. I love him as much as Larissa. But I also think that, in this case, she should be the godmother.

Back to our Ubatuba Journey -we hit the road and got there AFTER MIDNIGHT, making this trip way more tiring than it should've been. I was on edge the whole way, thanks to an incident near the Tucuruvi subway. Grandpa decided to shout at a pedestrian for crossing in the middle of the avenue just as the traffic lights turned red up ahead: "Go cross at the crosswalk"... As soon as he shouted at the guy, the traffic lights turned red a little further ahead. I had a bad feeling about it and asked your dad to check the rearview mirror, but he didn't pay much attention. Meanwhile I was rooting for the light to turn green. Well... a few minutes later the guy comes to confront grandpa. But first he apologized by crossing... Grandpa started to get nervous and yell, and so did the guy... Your grandpa was already taking off his seat belt to get out of the car and everyone started to yell. Grandpa. The guy. Me. Grandma.... It's been years since Grandpa got into fights, and it's not something I handle well after witnessing so many of them. I have so many TRAUMAS regarding this matter. I don't know how he's still alive till this day. And after so many years, in less than 3 weeks two of these situations happen. I shouted that I would never travel with him again.

The light finally turned green and the nightmare was close to an end. What angers me the most is that he goes blind with anger in those moments, not thinking about us, his own granddaughter. It's infuriating. Doesn't he think he has a 3 month old baby in the car? That the other person might be dangerous and be armed, putting the whole family in danger? That makes me VERY ANGRY. He didn't think about us, his own granddaughter. Don't get me wrong, he's a great grandpa and he loves you with all his heart, but when he's nervous, he seems to forget about everything else. It's insane. I was so upset that it made me realize two things:

1) I want AND I WILL leave Brazil with you. I can't stand to live with this anxiety any longer, thinking I can be shot by anyone, much less with you in the car.
2) It's time to prioritize your safety over just thinking about my parents. I love them, but when things get ugly, Grandpa doesn't think about us. It's not a good place to live.

After that stressful day and almost a 5-hour trip, you slept the entire way. Now, I can only hope you'll sleep well tonight, even though your dad and I are completely exhausted.