



Gandalf said **“Some believe that it’s only great power that can hold evil in check. But that is not what I have found. I found it is the small things, every day deeds by ordinary folks, that keep the darkness at bay.”**

I’ve tried my best to do Gandalf proud: to notice others, appreciate the small good things in life, and take the time to do ordinary things that bring beauty and life into the world.

I never won a Pulitzer. Our home didn’t win any decorating awards. My trusty old sandals got their share of weird looks. But I’ve lived a lot of years and realized those things don’t really matter much. Here’s what I can tell you. Here’s how I’ve lived. Here’s what I hope you’ll do:

Buy the bouquet of flowers. Show up, even when it’s hard. Raise the cover on the piano keys and play a tune to brighten someone’s day. Let someone go ahead of you in line at the grocery store; you’re not in that much of a hurry. Laugh. Sing. Give the dog at the park a scratch behind the ears. Do the small everyday deeds, **because they’re the ones that matter.**

This life was a full one, and beautiful. Hilarious and ironic. Heartbreaking at times. I’ve traveled the world and camped under the stars and read great words and seen beautiful art. I’ve swam and danced and created. I’ve tried to make a difference in my own small way.

I’ve lost parents and friends...the best of friends. I’ve gained new ones, too. I’ve stood next to loved ones as they’ve fallen in love, married, built homes, and welcomed children to their families. We’ve shared moments of great joy, haven’t we? I’ve also held the hands of family and friends as they’ve faced hard diagnoses and buried those closest to them. I’ve known that loss, too.

And at times, I’ve failed. For the times I’ve messed up or spoken too quickly when I ought have listened, **I’m sorry.** I hope you remember me for the best of the times we shared.

And finally, it’s been my greatest joy by far to walk alongside you through this life, Andrew, and to raise two beautiful children together. You’ve been my greatest ally and defender, the biggest cheeseball I’ve ever known. **I love you to infinity and beyond.**

Tony and Amanda, I’m so proud of you and honored to have been your mom. I hope you continue to **grab hold of life** and experience every beautiful thing this world has to offer. Trust your gut; it won’t steer you wrong. Wear the darn sandals.

You’re my people, and I’m grateful for the time we’ve had together. **Keep on shining brightly.** I’m convinced you’re the ones who will keep the darkness at bay.

Love,

alisse

