

7/01

Dear Mom—

There is part of me that dreads writing these cards, not because the feelings aren't heartfelt, but out of fear of repeating myself year after year. But even though my feelings for you are constant, hopefully my perceptions and awarenesses not only change, but mature with age. My memory is that I usually write a laundry list enumerating your qualities, so this year I thought I'd go for the "Less is More" version.

When I started to think about what to write here, I wondered what my earliest memory of you was. The first thing that popped into my mind was the first day of nursery school. I remember being anxious when you took me there at the prospect of being left with all those strange people, and I remember you kneeling down with a pen and drawing dots and a curved line on my thumb, singing the Thumbelina song, and telling me that she would stay with me to keep me company. I remember feeling wonder and amazement, not at the company, but at the audacity of writing on someone's finger. Of all the many gifts you gave me,

I think the biggest is your moments of audacity — that sometimes it's okay to do something wild, or outrageous. It's funny, in some ways you're such a stickler for rules, and almost a "goody two shoes" about life, but then there's this little devil that allows you to play the most shocking practical jokes, or say the most unexpected thing. I treasure that side of you (even if I'm sometimes embarrassed by her). That's the other thing, you make the world so big — you both take so much from every experience, and you give so much. I am in both awe and envy. I'm not sure if I believe that "artists" are a type of person, but you, in addition to the art you make, have also made your life into a type of art — you are so sensitive to every nuance, every subtelty, every relationship, every color, taste and personality, that you change the world from a place to be to a thing to appreciate. Brava! And I guess this is as good a place as any to to wish you a Happy, Happy Birthday — and many, many more happy and healthy ones — and tell you I Love You (though I know you know).

Mark