

And then she fell in Love

Dedication:

To the one and only true love of my life
Thank you for believing in me

And then she fell in love

Lady Middleton

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Cover picture: Courtesy of Tilly Friedrichs
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ISBN: 9789402124729

Prologue

Marilyn was barely 17 when she got married and moved to England, leaving the comfort of her home in The Netherlands. She lived there for almost 18 years with her husband Nathan and their two daughters, Sabrina and Fiona. Having sold their retail diamond business, Marilyn and Nathan moved with their girls to Belgium to start all over again and founded a wholesale diamond company. After 32 years, not being able to stand living in a loveless marriage surrounded with deception, lies and innuendoes any longer; she left Nathan, thus ending her marriage. Marilyn did however continue working with Nathan in their business for another three years before finally severing all ties. Marilyn, finally free, decided it was time to try to gain back her self-esteem and make up for lost adolescent time that she had been made to miss when growing up as a married young adult. It was time for her to spread her wings, to travel far and wide to see the world and most importantly for her to enjoy all that life has to offer, even if this meant doing all of these things alone and without having a loving partner to share them with. Simon, a married man, had been Marilyn's confidant for a number of years and had helped her through the difficult times. Looking back she often refers to him as "the gondolier" (someone who guides you from one life to the next), though at that time Marilyn often struggled with the knowledge that he would never leave his wife and choose a life with her. Having developed feelings for Simon, the situation became so frustrating and stressful that Marilyn, despite this being an extremely difficult thing to do, cut off all ties with him too. Marilyn has always had a motto: "one can only move forward when one is good and ready and only you yourself will know when that moment has arrived".

When that moment arrived, Simon being faced with a terrible dilemma, Marilyn chose to put herself above everyone else and in doing so she met the love of her life and now lives an extremely happy and content life in Switzerland.

AND THEN SHE FELL IN LOVE
THE ADVENTURES OF A GLOBETROTTING GRANDMA

These are the stories of Marilyn's travels by way of her thoughts, feelings and experiences. In order to protect the privacy of those mentioned in the book all names have been changed.

Chapter 1

Alaska

What are the chances that two miracles happen in one day? Well they did happen to me; my first miracle of the day was that I was able to leave the house on time. From the moment I got up and tried to get ready to leave for the airport all kind of well-wishers were phoning to hear the voice of the globetrotter setting off, all alone by herself, for the first time in her life. Family and friends who all mean ever so well and then of course my daily morning call (as if I had not yet heard from her by mail or text message) from my eldest daughter Sabrina. Our conversation was interrupted by the sound of my mobile (by now holding a phone on each ear); it was Janice telling me she was in front of the door, to pick me up, and eager to get going.

Oh my bag was so heavy, I wasn't aware that I over packed but the weight and the sharp pain in my back told me I did. My beautiful new suitcase, not my usual Louis (1) but a new bag I bought after getting excellent advice from Simon: "Buy a cheap large suitcase and if it breaks after a few travels you throw it out and buy a new one". My good old Louis had been cast aside for a younger version, on wheels. This one had cost a fraction of a percentage of a Louis Vuitton suitcase but hey Simon, my boyfriend, had travelled far more than I had, so is there a point in arguing with him over such trivial things?

You would think that leaving at 8.30 am on a weekday in the middle of the holiday season would give us a clear run to

Brussels..... Think again there was no way we wouldn't do the stretch without at least stopping twice in a traffic jam.... Arriving at the airport was a scream, road works, obstructions and believe it or not a kiss and drive area..... kiss and drive??? Oh please! When I get back I must ask the travel agent why exactly she wanted me to be at the airport two hours prior to departure because when I asked the girl at the check in counter she shrugged her shoulders and after telling her that I was going to travel to the U.S and might be needing an extra security check or something, she just looked at me with a sheepish face and said "that's nice dear"....

What happened to security checks, to endless cues taking off your shoes.....? Is this all still to come or did I only encounter this kind of severe methods in my former life because my ex-husband did not keep a Zen attitude at all times and usually would insult the first person in a uniform he encountered. I remember he once mumbled at a security officer (not the most attractive of girls) that she was ugly and then when asked what it was he had said I replied, to soften matters, and told her "my husband thinks you are pretty" she then replied in a distinct Hungarian accent "I am not pretty" and from that moment on we were black listed and forced to open every piece of luggage on numerous occasions and at various checks that day.

As I said goodbye to Janice I wandered over to the security area, there was a fast lane for business Class travellers, and having a business class ticket you would think the scanner allowing you to enter that particular lane would work. Well unfortunately it did not accept my boarding pass but a very kind man let me go through on his. Do you feel a next miracle coming? Well it happened right there and then whilst going through the security arch. It beeped and beeped and beeped again, I stripped down to a minimum of clothing, took all the

jewellery off, my bags, my computer yes I knew I had to leave it all on the table as I had done already. Two security people nearly tackled me they were so happy to encounter someone beeping in such a fashion they must have thought Bin Laden himself was coming through. After having stripped down to my jeans and t-shirt I was ushered away for questioning. It dawned on me that I had a number of nuts and bolts in my arm (I should have bought shares in the hardware store) and decided to show them the scar on my right shoulder (2) . And just then the miracle happened they actually believed me and gave me the go ahead to leave Belgium. Well this was enough excitement for a Thursday morning and as I was offered to wait in the business lounge I went to find it and settled down with a cup of tea. I did try to connect my computer to the widely advertised wireless internet but never succeeded before the departure announcements were made and I had to leave for the gate...

It was an uneventful flight over to Copenhagen except for the fact that you are permanently stuck in a scene from the Muppet show and listening to the Swedish chef....

Yep I know the Swedish chef is Swedish and Copenhagen is in Denmark, but then the Swedish chef from the Muppet show speaks Danish. I bet you did not know this information, useless as it may be, I am always pleased when I can tell something to someone they do NOT already know. Having arrived in Copenhagen my handbag already weighing heavy around my shoulder, why didn't anyone tell me to take a tiny pull along suitcase to take in the plane and the big one to go in the hold. It would have made life a lot lighter; well there is no point in crying over spilt milk. Hey expression where were you last night when I needed you!!!

I really need to clear my mind and think happy thoughts and enjoy this fantastic adventure I am about to begin. I did try

and buy a bag here at the airport but when not frustrated or deeply unhappy, shopping just isn't the same and every penny really counts. The shop assistant tried her best tactics to sell me the ugliest bag I had ever seen in my life. She explained to me that it was an Italian bag but this did not impress me at all. Her second tactic was that it was HER favourite bag in the store. I told her that I would pass on this great opportunity as I would not want to buy something and stand in the way of her having her favourite. She was totally stunned by my reasoning so I graciously thanked her and went about my own business in the business lounge. More smoked salmon and smorgasbord.....

Is this the shape of things to come? Will I have to listen to the Swedish chef for 10 hours continuously on my flight to Seattle?? All will be revealed later when I will be continuing my journey on the plane. I arrived at the gate just like everyone else but was asked to wait as it was so terribly hot at the gate. When I did board I was shown my seat and was not very happy with the fact that I had a travelling mate, male and overweight sitting next to me. If looks could kill I think the poor man sensed that I wasn't happy to see him and to add insult to injury he started to talk to me, obviously an American.

Of all the people in the world I had to sit next to Bill (private joke) "Hi I am Bill and what is your name.....". He talked in rather odd way I think he wasn't sure whether I was dumb, foreign or deaf and could understand what he was saying. I could just picture it 10 hours with Bill telling me all about his work his travels. He was working for Boeing, who cares, a sweaty, smelly very vocal American called Bill lucky me!!! I decided to be polite told him my name and then in a very demonstrative way took out my book and started to read. After a few minutes I told him I was hard of hearing so the

next time he asked me something I just didn't react, that game lasted all about 10 minutes before he got the drift. It was a very pleasant flight no major shakes I read a lot and even managed to sleep for a couple of hours. Before I knew it some Dane kreudipupliedoe through the intercom and I knew we were about to arrive in Seattle. As I was walking off the plane I did have a great feeling, Marilyn goes Seattle, Marilyn is finally free to do as she pleases and this pleased me a lot.

Apart from forgetting to complete my green form in the correct way the customs decided to let me in, was it my blue eyes that caught the officer's eye or just the fact that I told him I had just left my husband, recently had become single again and was coming on this great adventure.... Who cares I am here!!

Maybe I should not listen to everything my boyfriend tells me even if I think of him as the master of travel. The bags arrived and I know that when a cheap bag breaks you just buy a new one but on the first travel? My worst nightmare my bag arrived with the zipper torn.... It wasn't even full what kind of piece of shit did I buy? This never happened with Louis and if it does I have a warranty! It didn't matter that there was a voice over the intercom telling people not to open their luggage whilst in the baggage claim area. I did not want my underwear to fall out, so I did open en close the bag and manage to fix the problem. But then there was another one, the retractable handle on the case was also broken it did not want to retract any more. Louis all is forgotten and you can accompany me again on my next adventure. Oh boy I will have to think carefully next time when buying cheap stuff because it just isn't cheap when you have to replace it right away!

After having wondered at the airport for 20 minutes I finally found my driver. I had booked a town car, using the World Wide Web, but I guess the company was out of those so I was picked up by a limo. Limos are not really my thing but never mind I settled in the back of this huge monster and we drove to downtown Seattle. I had a very friendly talkative driver and he was happy to help me with my damn suitcase. As I pulled up at the front of the hotel I couldn't believe my eyes did I die and go to heaven? As it turned out across the road in the front of the hotel was a Macy's department store and at the back of the hotel a Nordstrom department store. After having inspected my room, which by the way was a trifle old fashion but very nice and comfortable, the first thing I did was buy myself a new suitcase it was on sale but then everything is at Macy's. I hope this one lasts at least until I get home it is much smaller but with some clever packing skills I will manage.

I am now turning in it has been a long day and I want to read some more in the book I started on the plane, and then go to sleep. Not so sure about my day tomorrow because although the old Marilyn would have done anything to go shopping the new and improved Marilyn did not enjoy her walk through the shops at all. Let's put it down to fatigue for now, I know it is all a state of mind but it looks as if that part has died a bit with the separation from Nathan, maybe it is because I find more pleasure in other things now and don't need to revert to spending money just to be happy. I have almost everything I want at home I will do some shopping for the little ones (3) on Saturday and we will see what tomorrow brings.

There must be something in the Seattle air or in the U.S mentality because every person that you meet wants to either sell you something, that is their favourite, or convince you that if you do not they will. From the first moment I set

foot in a department store a salesperson wanted to sell me their favourite, their favourite colour eye shadow, their favourite handbag, their favourite blusher, their favourite jeans. Do any of these girls care whether the person buying the item has an opinion of their own and may want to choose for themselves?? The problem with commission sales is that it is not a question any more of assistance but sheer pushy salesmanship. By lunchtime I was so fed up to hear another "oh let me show you my favourite...."that I decided to sit down for a nice lunch. A Caesar salad with chickenmy favourite, it was an in store café where you had to stand in line, order and pay and you would then be shown to a table.

The host asked me "how many people in your party" there was nobody else but me standing there so I looked to the left, to the right, the back, the front and then said..... "I guess it's just one thank you!" he wasn't amused. As soon as my salad was served by a nice young waitress she put down a small menu and told me it was the desert menu..... She watched me like a hawk while I ate and as soon as I had put down my knife and fork she sped over to my table and asked whether I wanted dessert. A little hesitant because I do not want to gain back the kilo's I just lost I looked up and down the menu. "Which of the desserts are you contemplating" the girl asked. I told her I wasn't sure whether to take a brownie or a chocolate chip cookie. "Take the cookie with macadamia nuts chocolate chips and coconut, it's my favourite" I nearly choked on my Spellegrino (4) and laughed, I gave up and said "alright I will have your favourite" that turned out to be a big mistake and will not be repeated again.

We live in a society where people like to think for each other but call me old fashioned but after having been overshadowed by an overpowering husband for almost 32 years, I like to think for myself. I decided to spend my day

exploring by foot and I walked from North to South East to West. Down town Seattle resembles down town New York but in Disney style. It is all here except it is all 40% smaller if not more. All the shops I usually have to reach by taxi in New York are within walking distance in Seattle. I saw it all today all the shops I am willing to see. It started with a visit to my babies. My babies are all the small diamonds that have been sorted, picked, and chosen by me personally at my wholesale diamond company in Belgium and are now sparkling in Elsa Peretti's jewellery at Tiffany and Co. As the main manufacturer of Elsa Peretti's jewellery in Spain is our main client, I love to visit my babies in every Tiffany store around the world. Whenever I travel to the U.S I always find out if there is a Tiffany store and then I just go to that particular store and say hi to my babies. I usually stand there and say "hi babies out loud. Yep I am nuts but that is part of my charm. I do take pride in what we have achieved with Elsa's jewellery and usually just stand there and gloat. I turned a corner and there was a bed bath and beyond (5) I was so happy and had a little peak there too. An office depot, a hallmark shop, a Levis store (yep I got the 8 pairs of Levis for Jo and Bill (6) and they are already on their way to Belgium).

On every corner there is a Starbucks coffee shop but then they originate in Seattle however on every street corner is a little too much. I decided to go in but found it to be very overrated and not my thing as I never know what to order and whatever it is I order tastes similar. At Nordstrom I became a born again Crème de la Mer (7) person. My friend Janice doesn't stop talking about Crème de la Mer products and I decided that it was time for me to belong to this group of "I use expensive face cream with a French name" and also got educated on the products. So I bought yet another eye cream and hope for the best. She will wish I never got familiar with the stuff because from now on whenever she

travels to New York I will ask her to bring some home for me as this cream is far cheaper in price in the U.S than in Europe. Of course that is if after having used it I don't break out in an allergic reaction by morning. At my favourite Mac counter I got all made up and after a good twenty minute makeover I looked like a real dolled up 49 year old wanting to look 49 I guess a regular glamour babe with fake eye lashes and pink cheek bones. It was fun and a nice way to get off my feet for 20 minutes.

Thank G'd for my ugly walking shoes the best buy I have done all year. Simon all is forgiven (the suitcase saga) because the shoes, are a dream, could not have stayed and walked all these miles without them. I walked from 9 in the morning until 6 in the early evening and only just then could I feel my feet hurting. This is quite an achievement for a couch potato like me. I am thinking of walking over to the widely advertised Japanese gourmet restaurant later on to have some Sashimi (8), not that I am hungry at all but I need to eat at regular meal times otherwise I will never beat the jetlag and then my Alaska trip will be spoiled. I do like a bit of discipline, I know someone who will deny I have discipline of any sort but he is not always right. As far as the shopping is concerned it has been a disappointment and apart from one outfit for Louise (9) I have not yet been able to find any nice stuff for the grandchildren. Tomorrow I will have to do better although I cannot bear to go shopping again (never thought I would admit to this in public). My goodness I have changed, and if I am not successful in finding anything decent in the outlet mall tomorrow than I will wait and buy some clothes for the little ones in Belgium.

I had a lovely meal last night a very good attempt at Sashimi the best I have ever had in Seattle. The Sushi chef took an immediate liking to my face and beautiful blue eyes, I guess

any woman walking in with a svelte body and big breasts must get his attention. So I didn't take it personally..... It did however mean that my Sashimi was above average and I was well taken care of. The only mistake I made was to order a bottle of Sake (10) I felt like sleeping a full night and with some consumption of alcohol that usually works. I forgot however that I walked down 5 blocks to the restaurant and had to walk all the way back again on an upward slope. Seattle is very hilly so this gave me a good way to exercise my bottom.

I did have a good sleep but was nevertheless awake at about 4 in the morning I quickly phoned Sabrina because I wanted to find out how my ex father-in-law Randy was feeling after his stay in the hospital. He had a surgical stent placed to keep one of his arteries open. Not that the ex parents in law have treated me with dignity and respect but I do not wish him pain and suffering so I wanted to find out anyway. It is bad karma to wish anyone misfortune or bad things in life. Someone once told me "what goes around comes around" so when you wish something to someone, wish them everything they deserve. After our conversation I was able to sleep for another couple of hours and then phoned my youngest daughter Fiona who also told me about her grandfather and that she visited him in hospital yesterday.

Everyone was there even his new daughter-in-law, Nathan's new girlfriend, wearing a new engagement ring. My ex-husband had asked me to organize an engagement ring for his girlfriend but assured me he wasn't going to get engaged until our divorce was final in two months' time. I wasn't surprised that the new girlfriend was already asked the big question already because after 32 years of marriage you know your ex can't keep a gift, a secret or a promise for longer than 10 minutes. So the saying "what else is new" sprang to mind. It is interesting how some people can just

replace others within a wink of an eye. It took a mere 24 hours for Maria Louisa to move into my home at the coast of Belgium. Well I have to say that I was warned as Nathan had told me that if I would ever leave him, which by the way I did, he would find himself a new girlfriend within 7 days. Not to worry I am totally cool with this and wish them all the luck and happiness in the world. If they are only half as happy as I am at this particular moment than they are really lucky!! DRIFTING!!!!!!!!!!!!!! This is a story about me no one else so let's move on. When I woke up I decided I wasn't going to repeat the disaster breakfast I did not even write about yesterday as it was awful and inedible at Yep you guessed it at Starbucks..... So I ordered room service.

As I am being picked up by town car, well at least that is what I ordered, to go the Premium Outlet malls I wanted to eat a proper meal before leaving for the day so I ordered my breakfast, by phone and told the gentleman on the phone that I wanted a continental breakfast which normally consists of orange juice, dry toast, butter, jam and a warm beverage.

I tried to order my continental breakfast but was inundated with questions like "what did I want with breakfast, Juice", the person at the room service desk asked.

"Um yes please" I said. "what juice would you like?" what comes with the breakfast" I asked "orange juice" "well that's fine then "He now moved to the next question like he was reading it from some manual. At that point I had a question of my own. "Could I have brown toast instead of white" It was quiet for a minute I think he was taken aback that I posed the questions instead of him... "I could manage that" he answered Great I was pleased! "Coffee or tea?" he then said "Green tea if that is a possibility" I said, this did not pose a problem. "What else would you like" he said "well what else comes with the breakfast apart from all you have already mentioned butter and jam" "that's pretty much it for a

continental breakfast” he said being very happy about telling me that’s it girl. I said “that’s fine” and awaited a knock on the door. This was the life, breakfast served in my room a hairdryer that works and a freshly made up glamour face. I sat down to enjoy my breakfast and then for a split second I felt like a real Jewish princess. I lifted the lid of the plate to find..... burned toast! Well I could live with that I am not much of a complainer but where was the butter??? Didn’t he say jam AND butter? There were 3 pots of jam alright. Shit I really wanted a little bit of butter but phoning room service was not on my mind they must have thought I am one of those healthy people with ordering green tea and stuff. I was ok with that after all I have been dieting for a few months and ever so proud of my new body. But then a slight shimmering caught my eye..... Shit they buttered the toast! The bread was stuck to each other with heaps of melted butter..... who said I wanted butter..... a voice in my head said” a moment ago you were complaining there was none and no you don’t want any?? Just shut up and enjoy your breakfast!” so I did and it was lovely. I have realized another thing the last couple of days as the orange juice flowed down my body I could feel a sharp pain in my stomach. I realized you should be careful what you ask for.

G’d works in mysterious ways he doesn’t answer every question but when you ask a stupid one he does..... Figure that!!! When Simon was admitted to hospital a few weeks ago with some stomach pain and reflux problems I asked G’d to please take Simon’s pain away and if he needed a substitute for the pain I would be more than willing to take it instead. I have had reflux problems for years and since I have such a high pain threshold anyway I figured, what is a little more pain going to do to me? And guess what my wish was granted. Ever since I have been overcome with terrible stomach pains which even my regular stomach medicine

can't take away. I will have it looked at when I return home. The down side of the story is that the other things I asked G'd for at the same time I can now totally forget about. One favour that's it!! Just got a call from the front desk my driver is here.....!

My driver was a sweet Ethiopian man called Zelalem or Z for short. He took me to the outlet mall and waited for me to do my shopping. It was a bit of a disappointment but I still managed to spend some money, not as planned on the grandchildren but on my own two girls. I think the phone calls to Belgium to ask them for size instructions cost more than the clothes but hey that's what a mother is for. They will be happy with the things I bought. I managed to be ready in time to not exceed my four hours I had paid in advance. It is expensive enough and as the mall was a disappointment and I really am starting to hate shopping. I was happy to sit back and enjoy the ride, the lovely views and a very nice conversation with Z. He saved me some money too because he told me to cancel my driver for tomorrow as it is a 5 minute drive to the pier and the company charges a small fortune for this ride because it is a Sunday. As it happens there are lots of taxis around the hotel area so transport will not be a problem.

We have also made a private deal for next Sunday. Instead of taking a city tour with the cruise company for 3 hours and then being dropped at the airport about 5 hours prior to departure, Zelalem is picking me up giving me a private tour and then taking me to the airport. We will spend about 6 hours inclusive of lunch which I have offered to pay for and then he will take me to the airport, the normal two hours in advance. Don't worry mum and dad he is safe! We talked about him, his life in the U.S, his new wife in Ethiopia,

homeless people, beggars all kinds of stuff it was very interesting.

When he dropped me at the Hotel I was rather hungry so decided to go and visit the Cheesecake factory for a nice helping of cheesecake. It turned out it was more of a regular restaurant having a few different kinds of cheesecake on the desert menu. I decided to be a good girl and have a Caesar salad first and an American institution, a large ice tea. I would then end my meal with a small helping of cheesecake. Can you believe these people can actually ruin an ice tea?? A simple plain ice tea I do not know what they put in this particular one to jazz it up but it was just awful. What is wrong with plain old ice tea for goodness sake? Why try to change a good thing. I had ordered a small salad as the waitress told me that it would be enough if I was planning to still have a dessert. Before I could say Bob's your uncle and just for the record to my close friends..... Bob is definitely NOT my uncle (11) the salad was in front of me. "Excuse me this is a small salad?" I laughed and the waitress nodded. "It's bloody bigger than Caesar himself!" I mumble. She didn't care!

This is one of the things I really hate about America Land of opportunity, Seattle a city that has more beggars and homeless people per square mile than anywhere else in the U.S. And then most restaurants serve meals that one cannot finish and if not taken home in a doggy bag, the remainder is just thrown in the rubbish. It is a real big shame to waste so much food! There were beggars in the passage leading up the restaurant holding signs saying "I will kiss for a buck" or "you may verbally abuse me for a dollar" "Kick me in the shin as long as you pay me a dollar" That really makes me very sad.

I went for a long walk after lunch and bought the last little things that Fiona asked me to buy at my friend Amanda's at the MAC counter in Nordstrom's department store. As I was enjoying the late afternoon sunshine I passed by an interesting looking beauty parlour called Myano nail and spa.

My nails have never looked this bad in my life so I decided to go in and have a look. It turned out to be the most beautiful nail salon I have ever seen. There were about 18 chairs with basins on the floor in front of the comfortable chairs to wash your feet. The chairs all have massage units build in and were called Hong Kong Girl massage.....That name did worry me a bit. The place was packed with people having pedicures and manicures and I made an appointment for my nails. About a half an hour later I went back to be greeted by what I can only describe as an Asian nail pimp. He talked to me and re-laid everything I said in Vietnamese to the girls. This is a language I really don't understand and when the Vietnamese communicate, it permanently sounds like they are having a fight of some kind. There must have been 15 Vietnamese girls working there and none of them spoke anything remotely sounding like English. One girl started to work on my nails and kept on speaking to G'd knows who, in her native tongue, unless she was in some sort of twilight zone and thought that I could understand anything she was saying to me. At some point she started to scream at me but I just looked at her with a blank face as it was all Asian to me I really did not understand a word she was saying and this apparently was her best English. She then waved to the nail pimp and he translated for her. She wanted to know if I also wanted to relax and have a pedicure after my nails were done, a so called happy end to the manicure. Why not I asked myself, it's not as if I have a husband and six kids, who have to be fed, waiting back at the hotel for me. I have to say it was one of the best hands and feet experiences I have had in a long time.

Every girl assisting with my pedicure, had another speciality one washed the feet the other cleaned the feet, massaged the feet you name it and the pimp had a girl for it.

I left there feeling like a princess with average looking hands but great looking feet. As my nails needed to dry for a long time I saw most of the girls leaving for the night and I was left to pay the pimp, who incidentally was a very nice guy. Not that I understood what he was telling me but that didn't matter. I expected this experience to be very pricy but for the price of a normal manicure at my regular place in Belgium I got completely pimped.

For dinner I went to Ruth's steakhouse, a widely advertised chain of steakhouses in these neck of the woods, it sure was the best steak I have ever had but am feeling very sick right now because I did not realize it was cooked with a lot of butter and there was a lot of sugar in the sweet potatoes too. I do not react very well to butter and sugar so tomorrow I will take a break from heavy food and make it a very light day! Tomorrow, tomorrow I love you tomorrow you're only a day away..... This is it people now it is really going to start.

Marilyn goes Alaska!!!

Let's talk about hellos and goodbyes, first and last impressions..... This trip is really teaching me the basics of life, things that matter in life and the things we should forget about in order to be happy and carry on a happy and healthy life. It takes a while for a person to realize not to dwell on the past anymore. The past is the past with both its good and sometimes bad memories. One can't change what has been; one can however change or guide what is still to come. The more I think about it, the more I feel like having been in isolation and even to some extent in hibernation for a long

long time. So there it is I say my goodbye's to the old life and welcome the new with a big warm passionate hello!

Last impressions:

This morning I wanted to do something different (I am so used to getting up at 6 in the morning at home to have my morning ritual consisting of breakfast, calling my loved one(s) and getting dressed) so it is hard to beat the habit and I am always awake early. It is either that, or I am still suffering from a mild attack of jet lag. I got dressed finished packing which was a very quick procedure because I never unpacked in the first place I kind of just got a few things out that I needed and left the rest undisturbed in my suitcase. Went down to the lobby and asked where one could have breakfast. I was told to go to the restaurant and had to laugh. On my first night at the Mayflower hotel, I had a small laughing fit as the only restaurant in the hotel is a Spanish style tapas bar, just what I needed it felt like home away from home only I wouldn't have minded to leave the Spanish connection (12) out of my system all together.

Anyway it was in the Andalucía, where they serve gazpacho (13) in three different colours, helloooooo gazpacho is red, always has been red and always will maybe if the Spaniards get fancy they serve green gazpacho but that is it! So guys give up with the always trying to strive being special because this really is ridiculous. Americans will travel to Spain and complain that they cannot get and I quote: "Green gazpacho with Dungeness crab, red gazpacho with a hint of goat cheese and white gazpacho with white almonds and sherry". It also says in the flyer: "Spaniards are passionate about eating" says Chef Wayne. Maybe I should go down to the kitchen and tell him my experience with Spaniards I have a husband who is engaged to one so he could tell you about how passionate

they are about trains too. I think a little word of explanation is needed here.

When asking Nathan, as we are still on very good terms, why he settled down so quickly (within 24 hours) with Maria Louisa who is 9 years my senior, he told me that when he had asked Maria Louisa if she saw any kind of future for them together she had instantly replied that she was 61 and when a train passes by you just have to jump on. I did ask Nathan at that point whether she meant the money train!

Drifting.....!!!!!!! Sorry couldn't help it!

Breakfast!

The tapas bar come room service come breakfast establishment had a choice of different things from continental breakfast (but then I had that yesterday via room service) and all kind of different classic and not so classic dishes. I decided to go All American for the All American breakfast. 2 fried eggs over easy a sage sausage and some Yukon potatoes. I have noticed that you have to particularly ask for something otherwise the chef starts thinking for you again so I did ask for brown toast instead of a croissant because somehow the French and the Americans don't mix. But I did forget to ask for dry toast so the fully buttered version arrived again. I did not have the heart to send it back though. There on my plate were two eggs, potatoes and two small hamburgers. I did ask what happened to my sausages but apparently these extremely nasty looking hamburgers were the sausages..... well who am I to challenge the American cuisine. In my eyes there is only one American that can cook and that is my friend Janice what she manages to do with food is amazing, it is always tasty, well cooked and she makes every dish look so easy to prepare, or at least she

makes me think that is easy to prepare because she doesn't want to admit spending hours in the kitchen. Breakfast was inedible I left the hamburgers and the potatoes and just ate the eggs and toast and ordered a berry cup as desert. Have to have my daily intake of fruit too. It arrived exactly as I ordered it a cup with berries, UN washed berries in a cup, nothing more nothing less. I am sure this must be very fashionable!

I am saying goodbye to Seattle, goodbye to the Mayflower hotel and goodbye to my old life these are the beginnings, of what I truly believe, is a new and better life.

I do not need a train to jump on

I AM THE TRAIN!!