

# Faraway home is where the heart is

On this Father's Day, I know I have a 'daughter of the world'

THOMAS FROESE

It's 10 years later, dear Elizabeth, and it's true: Home is where your heart is. You've said it now in plain words. Your heart, with your imagination, is in our African home.

This is what I know you mean when you say here, with sorry sadness, "Daddy, the roads are too smooth here. Everything's too perfect. I'd rather be in a place where the roads are bumpy but more interesting."



Elizabeth Froese shortly after birth



Elizabeth Froese at (almost) 10

I hope that you don't mind me sharing this, by the way. Because while it's for you, it's also for anyone who's ever held a newborn and marvelled at the wonder of it, flesh of one's flesh and bone of one's bone, holding such joy, and pain too, that's part of parenthood.

Yes, 10 years ago you were born, so close to Father's Day. Ten years ago when, in a column in this newspaper, there was that photo of tiny you beside me, then the headline, "A Daughter of the World." From the beginning you crossed borders and lives.

Now it's your 10<sup>th</sup> and we're at your favourite restaurant on Upper James. The meal and the song and candle-blowing are finished. Our fortune cookies

all come out and you open and read yours with the truth of it: "Home is where the heart is."

It's a perfect message, you say, just for you, a reminder of our African home, your home. It's that home with green space and blue sky and black friends and bumpy roads, that faraway home of more danger and less fear.

You remind me of Cissy, that beautiful girl from the Dickens story, *Hard Times*, the daughter of a horse breaker for a travelling circus. She lives among tightrope walkers and magicians, among fire-eaters and lady acrobats, even elephants and midgets.

Then later, as "Girl Number 20," she's in a classroom of empty knowledge with that teacher, Gradgrind, who asks her to share lifeless facts from some dry text about horses. Cissy, unknown to everyone, actually knows horses rather well because she's ridden horses. She's combed them. She's watched horses give birth and she's watched her father save horses and rub them with liniment.

This, I think, is what you mean. Canada has a certain standard. It also has a stark beauty. But Canada can also be a Gradgrinder sort of place, hollow with walls within walls, a politically correct and anal place that's full of "me" and fads and handhelds and sex, but not very full of heroes or transcendence or magic, really, of any kind. It can be a place where we wear our seatbelts and sanitize our hands, but not where we easily see or touch or feel or heal anyone.

You have your fortune now, Liz. Home truly is where your heart is. Home, say the poets, is also the place we long to leave when we're young, then long to return to when we're old. One day when you're older you might think about this too, maybe while at some crossroads where, I pray, you'll, like those poets tell, choose the road less taken, bumpy or smooth, the road that will make all the difference in your life.

Yes, dear Liz, you are a daughter of the world. But you're not alone. You're never alone. And this is the message in all this.

You have company. There are others like you, your brother and sister and many others, really, so-called Third Culture Kids with a foot in two worlds, children both blessed and torn.

And not only Third Culture Kids, but immigrant children here so close to you, in Hamilton, even in your neighbourhood, your very school, like so many Canadians, kids with tastes and memories or maybe even nightmares from homes so far away.

This very much is also Canada's story. It has to be. So many of us, more than you realize, are in this together, away from home, travellers of one sort or another who are asking, "Where, really, is my home? And if my home is where my heart is, then why does my heart have to be so far away?"

Author and journalist Thomas Froese lives in Uganda most of the year. He and his family are on their annual stay in Hamilton. Follow his blogs on fatherhood at [www.dailydad.net](http://www.dailydad.net) and his columns on the developing world at [www.thomasfroese.com](http://www.thomasfroese.com)