



**Universiteit  
Leiden**  
The Netherlands

## **Return to sender: a multi-method study of guardianship against transnational sexual exploitation of children**

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## **Return to sender**

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geboren te Bergschenhoek  
in 1989

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# Return to sender

Anneke Koning

“The world is a scary place,”

I think, as my three-year-old niece, startled by the alien sound of a drilling machine,  
is comforted by her mother.

Moments later, she carries on her daily ritual  
of orchestrating a birthday party for her doll,  
unfazed by her one-year-old brother’s attempt to climb a curtain,  
or, for that matter,

by my request for the yellow cake. She routinely explains  
that the yellow piece is reserved for the teddy bear – a rule that,  
like so many rules in our lives,  
provides a sense of safety and control.

I recognize her curiosity, sense of adventure, and joy in everyone I meet.

*to my sisters' infants  
no matter the distance*

This book is dedicated to children everywhere,  
to children at heart,  
and to Anna and David.  
May you fearlessly find your way in this world.



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Explorers travel where none have gone before. Although my exploration was at times a lonely endeavor, I have received help and advice from many along this journey. Here, I wish to express my gratitude to my travel companions, while acknowledging that any flaws in this book are unmistakably my own.

~

The goal of a PhD dissertation is not to write *the* book, but certainly to write a book. This simple sentence is perhaps the most valuable insight that my promotors have bestowed on me (after much effort and patience). It is no exaggeration to say that this book would not exist without the mentorship, support and encouragement of my supervisors Joanne, Johan and Masja. Each of them has picked me up and helped me grow as a researcher, teacher, and as a person.

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~

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~

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~

Some say that completing a PhD is like climbing a steep mountain, and as a Dutchlander, climbing mountains was not exactly my forte when I started this journey. Frequent hikes in Spain made the mission much easier to accomplish. While at times rightfully questioning my work ethos and sanity, Diego never ceased to support, tolerate, and encourage.

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~

My career path to criminology becomes almost predictable when you know that my parents are a policeman and school teacher (now enjoying their retirement). But they have bestowed on me and my sister much more than an unwavering sense of duty to a better world. Their love and support, hard work and fun has inspired us to find our own happiness within that world. I feel incredibly blessed with them, and with Marijke and Jeroen as my siblings. Thank you for being there for me and always welcoming me back.

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May your lives be full of incredible adventures.