

Karin

NEW LOVE

At the age of 46 Karin Swerink, editor in chief of Dutch Vogue found out she was pregnant again. Of boyfriend Rob, her second great love. "My newborn son showed me I can have a new start. I chose to go back to my family, away from the rat-race."

*PHOTOGRAPHS LISELORE CHEVALIER STYLING VALERIE VAN DER WERFF
WORDS PAM VAN DER VEEN*





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Her body was hurting for weeks. She was constantly tired. She thought maybe it was because of work — maybe she’d finally taken on too much. But that was before a visit to the GP told her she was pregnant. Again. Karin Swerink. Editor in chief of Vogue. Age: 46. Pregnant. Would become mom to another child, one with Rob, her second great love.

“I was over the moon when I found out, but there was definitely a sense of panic, too. How would I manage this? Was I not too old? How were we going to manage this? I called Rob and told him he’d better sit down. He was shocked but thought it was pretty cool too.”

Karin watched as her initial feelings of doubt turned into a big YES. Sure, if one were to look at her career and what was still to come, you’d probably say that having a baby wasn’t the most sensible thing to do. But life isn’t sensible. Life is life and there’s never a right time. When she had her first son Joris (16) and daughter Sam (20) she’d been working hard then, too. Long hours and multiple commitments. “But they turned out all right!”

Joris and Sam have embraced baby Perre. Joris likes to kidnap him and take him up to his teenage lair, play him music and makes him shriek with laughter. “Seeing those two together gives me a happiness that goes straight to my core.” But now, months later, Karin is in doubt again. After four months of maternity leave, she is more than ready to return to work. But she’ll also miss home. She’ll miss Perre. Working in the kitchen with a baby on your lap would soon be a thing of the past. The halcyon days were over; the outside world was waiting. To Rob and Joris though, it was high time for her to return. They were ok with Karin running the house as an office until she started to stick Post-its everywhere. That was enough: “Please go and be an editor in chief in your own office.”









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To a large degree, Karin feels her job defines her. “Its my identity, my reason to live. If I don’t have my work, my responsibilities, it seems like there’s less of me. If I’m not working then I’m looking to the boys to tell me I’m an excellent cook at home: I become a moping housewife.” In her time off she’s embarked on adventures like making chutney from the apples and grapes that grow in their garden. “My friends are bored to death by all the jars that I bring them as gifts.”

Time to get back to Vogue. The new fashion season is fast approaching and there’s a lot to do. Ideas are flowing, models need to be booked, shoots need to be planned. She feels up to it, her old self returning. She’s a monomaniac, perpetually feeling like she might be missing out on something. She finds it hard to delegate. But Perre has shown her that she can have a new start. She can make choices. “Back to my family, away from the rat race, spend more time on the things that matter.” Like time with her daughter Sam with whom she shares so much, living in London as an au pair right now. She’s just like Karin, enterprising, wanting to be everywhere at the same time. “One moment she’s unhappy not being with us, next moment she buys a ticket to Cape Town. I’m very proud of her.”

Her house close to the sea, is cluttered, colorful, eclectic. Rocks, old paintings, jars, skeletons, and taxidermy wildlife fill the shelves (Rob is both photographer and collector). It’s when they’re there together, with the garden doors open, that Karin is at her happiest. Enjoying a glass of wine with Rob in the sun with the smell of the sea all around them. Being a forest girl from Twente, she needs that. “The air and the freedom. Tranquility. When I walk on the beach after a week of work, I feel the stress leave my body. It’s like it pours straight into the sand.”

She sees her life through a new pair of rose-tinted glasses. Her love, her children, her job and baby Perre. Sure, soon there’ll be kid CDs and toys all over the car again, the sweaty swimming lessons and kids parties. Things “will take quite a bit of organization. I know this. I’ve opted for a career *and* happiness. And maybe this means I’ll turn up at a party one evening in jeans and sneakers because I had no time to get dressed. But so what? I have the best excuse imaginable.”



