

Dear Friends and Relations!

Wake up bitches, it's time for some Holiday Awesome!

Well, here it is, that time of year again. Merry Holidays and a Wonderful Winter Solstice To You All! Welcome dear friend, fond relation, and Gentle Reader to the sixth First Annual Holiday Letter. Six – it's more than five!¹



Every year we send this out to celebrate “The Season” – the whole bit about having made it through another winter, the days becoming longer again, the return of the sun, all that good stuff, and I decided to think about why. Why do we feel this primal need to connect to people with this letter every year? I was going to ask my shrink, but then I remembered I'd fired her after I caught her updating her Facebook status while I was telling her about my feelings. Did you know there's a direct relationship between the number of shrinks per capita and the rise of the commercialization of the holiday season? Could it have something to do with millions of people celebrating the Winter Solstice by telling their children about an overweight cat burglar from the North Pole who breaks into their houses while they sleep and leaves them a bunch of stuff, most of which needs the one kind of battery you don't have in the house right now? No?

Anyway, I finally realized that we send this letter to bring closure to the year, to put it behind us by reviewing the year, to try to recap and recount our experiences and our memories by sharing them with good friends.

But you'll do.

Why do we call them “cat burglars” anyway? When was the last time someone stole the damn cat? You can have mine – no need to break the window. Fuzzy little bastard calls himself an artist, I think his Frontal Lobes are going. Let's just say it's not avant-garde when the cat thinks outside the box in my house.

And so another holiday draws nigh, bringing with it Wal-Mart's full of effing cheer and Costcos full of good frigging will. The only thing better than shopping is the music, filled with vague threats of “you'd better watch out,” the post-date rape therapy sessions (“Hey, what's in this drink?”), and the classy and cheerful “these 5-inch CFM spike leather heels would make her smile for Christmas, and I want her to look beautiful if Mama meets Jesus tonight.”

Anyway, it was Annus Horribilis here at the Lang house. I applied for a great new job this year – I'm going to be the new Advice Guru for Good Morning America. I'm not sure why they haven't called me yet. In my application, I cited my obvious proficiency in telling people what the hell their problems are and what they should do about them. I may have gone overboard in admitting that I wrote both the Book of Acts and the Gospel of Luke in a previous life, but I just wanted them to have all the facts.

Since they haven't called yet, I gave myself a hefty raise. OK, I adjusted my W2 withholdings to claim every Barbie in the house as a dependant. It's amazing how much of your check you can keep when you use your imagination! Besides, it's no accident that the IRS is an anagram for “Vile revenuers, I earn cent.”

¹ By one! This concludes the math in this letter.



Then there was the vacation, which was fantastic and wonderful. When I say “fantastic and wonderful,” I mean for the cats, who party like it’s 1999 while we’re out, and think as far outside the box as they like. We, on the other hand, had a lovely view of the ocean. When I say “a lovely view of the ocean,” I mean swimming. Luckily, there was a lawyer in our lifeboat, which solved both the problems of “shark” and “who do we eat first?” We were finally rescued when we downloaded iRescue@Sea onto Julie’s iPhone – oh hey, there’s an App for that!

Everyone did their little bit to bring in some extra money this year, which is a good thing because my accountant is yelling about the W2. Hey, we’ve got hundreds of tiny plastic mouths to feed over here! Julie got a great new job this year, in, um, manufacturing. The salary’s OK but not the big draw – the benefits are amazing! Free medical and dental! Also, free room and board. And they provide an exercise room and a library on site! Plus, conjugal visits once a week!

Annalise had a great year in school – she’s the class champion in staring contests. Mind you, they don’t know about the episodic seizures she’s been having, but she wins the staring contests every time. She also landed a bit part in the new NBC Gary Coleman vehicle, Four Feet Under. We’re so proud of our Reigning Queen of Pink.

Kate’s acting as well; she has a role in her 6th Grade school play, “Carrie.” She was also selected for a George E. Lang Memorial Scholarship², which will keep her in 39 Clues books for a while. She’s also coding new apps for the iPhone and iPad, such as the new iToldMyDadImCoding app. It seems to generate random code snippets that look like homework while you actually play a round of – hey, give me that! You’re grounded. Um, nevermind.

And Connor continued to bring in money by extracting his own teeth. He actually puts them under his pillow, “even though there’s no Tooth Fairy.” When I asked him why exactly, if there’s no Tooth Fairy, he put the tooth under his pillow, he told me, “So you’ll give me money for it.” Never mind what you or I believe, we have a PROCESS here, damnit. Living with Connor is less like raising a son and more like having a short, quirky roommate who narrates out loud the DIY sit-com of your life. Sometimes he even supplies the sound track.



We spent a good part of the year working on insulating the house. With paint. Six million years from now, future archeologists and paleontologists will call this the “Sherwin-Williams Epoch.”

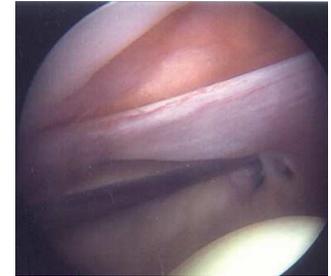
Speaking of the house and surroundings, I should mention the neighbors: This year, we had three out of four wonderful neighbor families move away, and we went from 15 kids on the block to 6. (Sheesh. You self-register for the sexual offender database and suddenly everyone moves.) The remaining wonderful neighbors always wanted to be our favorites, and now they are, by default. Selfish bastards.

In health news, just because I had been feeling left out of the club, I developed pneumonia. Do you have any idea how irritating it is to drop \$20K on medical bills and not spend any of it on yourself?

² No relation.

This year was MY TURN, baby, so I jumped in on some of that action. Not to be outdone, Annalise also contracted pneumonia, so we had a set of contests to see who could spike the highest fever. (She won with 104.3.) For a while, I was excited that I'd be able to send this posthumously, but no dice.

Julie continued her quest to be the most organically efficient woman in the world, having yet another of those "optional" body parts removed. This year, it turns out there's quite a number of things in your knees that you don't really need, and they joined the other dozen or so organs and extras in her "parts" jar. (At birthday parties, our kids are the ones hanging up an anatomy poster and playing "Pin the Gall Bladder on the Mommy.") Pictures are once again included, because nothing says "Holiday Letter" like an arthroscopic scan of someone else's insides.



Julie's Plica, off practicing law somewhere

In a home-run headline roundup, we were all happy to see George Steinbrenner hire Billy Martin again, and in the feelgood story of the year, a rescue effort in Chile set the new world record for "longest birth canal" as thirty-three sons of the earth were reborn into the light of day. Ah, motherhood.

Speaking of rescues, do you have any idea how hard it is to get an animal shelter to let you go home with a really old animal?

"Hi, I need the cutest, oldest critter ya got."

"Um, what?"

"You know, a nice cute pet for my kids that won't make it to Christmas? I need something really old, that will die tragically before December, dog, cat, gerbil, I don't care as long as it's cute, fluffy, and in really poor health."

"I'm calling the police."

It took multiple trips to four different shelters, two rolls of duct tape, 87 feet of tram cable, three pounds of raw shrimp, and a Richard Nixon mask to finally get Mitzi the rabbit home with us. I'm sure you'll be shocked to hear this, but she died last week.

She had been a test rabbit for a number of big pharmaceutical companies, and while the vet said it was natural causes, we're pretty sure Pfizer put a hit out on her before she could spill her guts about those "Not Tested on Animals" labels. The children were of course devastated, but we feel better having told you about this cathartic story of loss in our holiday letter!

Besides, we've now cured pneumonia and we're able to shrink our own polyps! Thanks Mitzi, wherever you are!

While Julie and I feel strongly that two pages is not only less painful to read but cheaper to mail, upon careful consideration this year we decided, dear friend, fond relation, and Gentle Reader, that more pictures were better. So, in accordance with the dictates of the Annual Holiday Letter, I will once again conclude by wishing everyone a wonderful 2011. May your polyps be small, and may all your painkillers be addictive!

With Lots of Love and Holiday Pharmaceuticals,

- Doug, Julie, Kate, Connor, Annalise, Flitwick, and Albus the Gay
<http://www.dougangjulie.com>



**NOT TESTED
ON ANIMALS**

[No animals were harmed during the production of this letter.]