

## Dear Friends and Relations!



Well, here it is, that time of year again, #Holidays<sup>1</sup>. Merry Holidays and a Wonderful Winter Solstice To You All! Welcome dear friend, fond relation, and Gentle Reader to the ninth First Annual Holiday Letter. Some people see this as proof that there are still some constants in this world that you can rely on. Most just see it as proof that we haven't lost your damn address yet.

I'm sure you all caught our great reunion on Facebook, when Julie and I got back together after last year's divorce. I told her I could never live without her, she muttered something about the devil you know (#LoveIsInTheAir), and that was that. Since we hadn't actually moved out anyway, the kids never noticed.

In celebration of our renewed nuptial bliss, we took an extended beach vacation, by which I mean we spent 8 hours next to the water, #sunburn. We applied sunscreen, which washed off faster than a milk-dipped cat, and burned so badly that we had to spend the rest of the vacation drinking beer. Bummer, I know.

The kids are doing great, as usual. Annalise was pleased to finally achieve a scholastic "first" among her siblings – she got detention, of course. I mean, what else was left? Kate continues in her never-ending quest to ensure her teachers retire – her Spanish teacher bailed out by Thanksgiving. We didn't have the heart to tell Señora Anderson that she was just the latest in a long line of teachers who give up after having taught Kate – let her think it was just her. Kate is also contributing to the sum total of human knowledge, studying the effects of various chemicals on crickets. My yard is now populated by super-crickets who drive cars up and down our deck and hang out by the stairs to smoke – #JamesDeanWithSixLegs, #SexyCrickets.

Mind you, some crickets don't live through the genetic transmogrification, and since no self-respecting Holiday Letter would fail to include a cathartic tale of loss, we hereby share our annual outpouring of grief and subsequent catharsis with you, dear friend, fond relation, and Gentle Reader. The crickets. Oh, the humanity. But hey, science!

Connor has found a new way to get back into reading, by having his computer confiscated by the FBI. He's reading about tort reform and eminent domain, but at least he's reading. He has also become a well-respected voice in the Brony world, singing the praises of Rainbow Dash like an evangelical minister talking about the joy that comes from filling the collection plate, as long as you don't mind finding god in a My Little Pony doll that shits rainbows. Me, I'm pretty agnostic about that kind of thing, #Heathers, #ILoveMyDeadGaySon, #You'veGotToBeKiddingMe.

In other news, I got a new job this year, by which I mean I'm in the same office working on the same project for the same client. On the plus side, the new team took me out for lunch on my first day, with the President. Not the president of the company, the President of the United States. And Joe Biden as well. President Obama has enormous hands; Vice President Biden has a very firm grip. I was going to ask POTUS how he felt about being the first Muslim President, but the Secret Service lady gave me "the look" and I figured I'd better not. Still, a nice first day at work.

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<sup>1</sup> Say, "hashtag." Say it. SAY IT NOW.

Julie has given up on trying to grow her kidney stone business – the economy just isn't ripe for it. In the mean time, she's taken to recreational gluten use, getting tight off baked goods and the occasional cookie. I tried to make her go to rehab, but she said, "No, no, no."

On the home front, we have new neighbors. Again. I know we say that every year – you must think we live at the corner of Revolving Door and GTFO. Or that we don't shower, leave the blinds up while naked, and never mow the lawn. (#2Outta3AintBad.) Anyway, we like them, and we're hoping they stay awhile. And that they don't ask a lot of questions about the old neighbors. Or about the freshly disturbed earth in our "garden." Or about that restraining order.

But 2013 wasn't all about us. There were bombings in Boston, secrets from Snowden, and a new heir to the throne with the arrival of young Prince George of Cambridge. There were musical losses, since Patti Page is now jamming with Lou Reed and George Jones, with Van Cliburn on keyboards. In politics, Margaret Thatcher is now debating Hugo Chávez while Ed Koch moderates. Don't you just wish you could watch that one? And it was a tough year for writers: Elmore Leonard, Seamus Heaney, Frederik Pohl, Tom Clancy, and Jack Vance are collaborating on an epic murder-mystery adventure poem, set just outside the event horizon of a super-massive black hole, which has gone missing. #WhoDunIt?

Also, and I know you might not have heard because it wasn't covered much on Fox, but Nelson Mandela died or, as the Onion put it, became the first politician to actually be missed (#EdKochNotwithstanding). This is in stark contrast to Old Pope Palpatine<sup>2</sup> XVI, who stepped down in a bloodless coup engineered by New Pope Francis, who was clearly tired of just sitting around being pious from the sidelines. Palpatine XVI was the first to step down "voluntarily" since Celestine V, which was 719 years ago. (Not that we blame Francis – that old Pope was a dud.) There were plenty of other changes as well: Some of our good friends changed their name to the Ravens, just all of a sudden – very odd. I suppose it's easier to spell than their old name, which I've already forgotten. But all in all, we're glad to have all that change, and the rest of 2013, behind us.

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 we just didn't have that much else to say. So, in accordance with the dictates of the Annual Holiday Letter, I will once again conclude by wishing everyone a wonderful 2014. May all your neighbors be uninquisitive, may all your tweets have relevant hashtags (#ReadThisLiveOnTwitterDec24<sup>th</sup>), and may all your crickets look like James Dean!

With #LotsOfLove and #HolidayHashtags,

- Doug, Julie, Kate-Bryce-Harper, Connor, Annalise, Flitwick, and Albus the Gay  
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<sup>2</sup> Admit it, the old Pope was a dead ringer for evil Emperor Palpatine in Star Wars.