

Greetings from the Centennial State! (Or, I kid you not, the Highest State. Official nickname. Google it.) Those of you who know Greg, know that he's been a nonstop gigglepuss ever since I shared that last little tidbit with him. And those of you who know me know that I'm oh so happy for him. Believe me, if good ol' Mary didn't give me recurring nightmares about my middle school history teacher, I'd be bagging Greg to pass the atomizer. At least, I tell myself, one of us needs a short cut to relaxation.

Since we're on the subject of Greg, his work seems to be going quite well. Not that he ever shares more than a minute and a half about what goes on at his office. But the loans or the contracts or whatever seem to be doing what they're supposed to be doing, so it looks as if we can afford this mortgage for at least one more year.

We'll leave Sue Ellen for last, because on the outside chance that she happens to read this, she'll be crestfallen if she was anything but the closer. (Please remind me to never again name a child after a character on Dallas. Wait. Scratch that. If I ever tell you I'm pregnant, just shoot me.)

B.R. on the other hand, can barely read, so there's no problem with putting him early in the letter. Ever since July, we've officially had two teenagers moping around the house, which hasn't really changed a thing. Poor B.R. got a full dose of Grampa Nelson's genes, and is as large as a school bus. I swear, any time that kid is gone for the weekend, any food in the fridge goes moldy from separation anxiety. Our grocery budget was, by far, the largest slice on the pie chart, but the widow Guthrie (next door neighbor for those new to holiday mailing list) was kind enough to share some of her food stamps. "All I need is pudding," she keeps telling me. Goodness knows what that woman's stool looks like.

Greg keeps asking him if he wants to play football, but B.R., as a rule, is non-committal. I think it's a great idea. Might as well get some muscle somewhere on that frame, and it's not as if we're too worried about potential brain injury.

Of course, mommy's little surprise is teaching us all a deeper meaning of patience. The little brat seems to have learned we're all too tired or too angsty (or too toasted in Greg's case) to give too much of a hoot about why or where he's pitching his latest fit. Now he's transitioned into far more subtle ways of demanding our attention. For instance, Sue Ellen discovered why we're going through all that peanut butter and why the dogs were suddenly fascinated with her shoe closet. Needless to say we'll be heading to DSM more than one weekend in January. (If you know of any credit card that's offering a cash back



discount, please let us know.) Slathering shoes isn't his only tactic, but the rest are a bit too graphic for a holiday letter.

Father Francis says that psychotic behavior in children doesn't necessarily translate into prison time, but I've started googling military school options just in case.

As for me? Well, no major updates there. Still rocking the mom jeans. Still have my love hate relationship with Judge Mathis. Still questioning a majority of my life decisions. Still carving out one night a month to dance and drink until I forget most, if not all, of those life decisions. Oh, and I got Roomba. That's been fun.

Holiday letter veterans may have noticed that '13 edition of *Le Rapport Annuel de la Famille Pembrick* is lacking in colorful paper and a family photo. Yes, I intended for both, and no I'd rather not go into the reasons for their absence. I have chosen a new font though. Let me know if you think it's too... whatever is bad these days.

Finally, we reach the star of the show, Ms. Sae Ellen Pembrick. Not considering her sibling spats with Crowe, it's been a pretty good year for her. To my complete surprise, the little vixen has managed to place herself as the most popular girl in her class. (Don't worry. I fact checked. This time she's telling the truth.) It seems that all my old clothes from college have provided her a fashion palate from which she has created her own unique look. And before you ask, Yes, I'm astounded that anything positive came from my time at college. The kids in her class just assumed that anyone who "makes" their own clothes must be some kind of genius, and Sae Ellen is riding that ignorance as hard and fast as she can. If I told you how many texts or Facebook message this girl receives during a typical day, your head would literally explode. Thank the good lord above for unlimited cell phone plans, or we'd need far more than a part of a widow's food stamp allowance to make ends meet.

Well, I think that's enough damage to the part of your brain where you store temporary facts about people whom you don't care that much. If you find yourself passing through Aurora, give me a call. I'm always up for a drink or a bite. Whether or not I bring any one else from Clan Pembrick is always dependent on the day and how far away I am from my next Xanax.

Love,

Clairre