**“Christmas” 2020**

**My Dearest Our Friends,**

**It has been nearly a year since our last “Christmas” letter which makes sense since it’s been nearly a year since last “Christmas” which brings to mind for me that great speech by James Earl Jones in FIELD OF DREAMS when he’s waxing eloquently about Karen’s idea that Kevin Costner and -- Karen’s the little tyke who’s about to choke on a hot dog sending Old Doc back to the cornfield portal and although you probably knew that already I felt a moral duty to clarify this in this very long m-dash comment due to all the negative attention that has been given this year to “Karen” who until moments ago I thought had been named *TIME* magazine’s”Person of the Year” but it turns out that Essential Workers have received this honor and rightly so I might add unless my information on this might be faulty as well which is a very strong possibility but it’s so hard to find out what is truly true these days and besides the only thing that matters is that Karen is definitely, no way, uh-uh, not *TIME* magazine’s 2020 person of the year, so that whole confusion on my part about Karen and *TIME* was probably an *Onion* headline or perhaps just another clever product from one of those smarty pants teenagers, or one of those *умные штаны подростка* as we like to say here in our lovely little tundra village way up north here but before you go wondering exactly where it is that we live I just want you to take a big breath because there are more important things to pay attention to at the moment, the most important of which is that we’re rolling out of this whopper m-dash comment so glance back up and get your bearings and remember that we’re talking about Karen’s idea that Kevin Costner and -- that ma and pa don’t have to sell the farm because people will come.**

**Why will people come? Because, as Mr. Jones notes in that pre-Karen-choking-on-a- hot-dog moment, baseball is the one constant through all the years. I am not a fan of baseball although I do like the occasional game like a game in which the Chicago Cubs are in a late inning against the Cleveland whatevers and Jesus Christ himself summons rain clouds over the stadium and the skies unleash such a torrential downpour that it sends the players back to the locker room where apparently the Cubs get their Zen and Chi and all four tires balanced and the rain lets up and the players return to the field and the Cubs freakin’ win the god damned game and the World Friggin’ Series which is obviously a very decent baseball game but as I said I don’t much like baseball but that monologue by James Earl Jones is so moving to me that it sometimes fools me into thinking I do like baseball but I don’t and I am not alone in the family because none of us Jincklebergs go for that sort of thing but we do enjoy this annual tradition of the “Christmas” letter which is why writing it brings to mind for me the baseball monologue because, like baseball, this “Christmas” letter tradition is the one constant through all the years.**

**As you know after all these years of exchanging letters, I usually begin to work on the “Christmas” letter just as soon as they start singing “Auld Lang Syne” to herald the start of the New Year or maybe it’s to certify the end of the old year; I don’t know and I also don’t know much of anything at all about “auld or “lang” or “syne” and I never much cared for that song anyhow and quite frankly I get upset and depressed and angry and panicked whenever I hear that song which is why I start writing this letter right away at the stroke of midnight.**

**This year of 2020 was no exception to that decades-long practice on my part but I grew a bit unsteady as the year unraveled and then there was that whole pandemic thing which is still a thing and which will still be a thing as we roll into next year which you’d think couldn’t be worse than this year but of course last year we would never have imagined how worse this year could be so let’s not go saying anything about how worse one year could be compared to the next because that whole idea of a “year” is really rather arbitrary when you think about it except for maybe its connection to planetary motion which is admittedly very regular and predictable and therefore almost the opposite of arbitrary unless you consider that the universe itself is arbitrary which could be the case if you’re into quantum physics or maybe just even into Camus or Sartre but who needs physics or philosophers to make the case for arbitrary when you can get there just as quickly by glancing at the names of the months which do not make any sense at all what with October being the tenth month when it really should be the eighth month which apparently it was at one time cuz the Roman year used to be ten months long until Julius Cesar added two months to the calendar (January and February in case you’re wondering) and if that historical fact doesn’t compel you to set this letter down and physically demonstrate the universal mind-blown gesture even if you are reading this in the bathroom because that is the only place you can get a quiet moment alone then you are a more stable individual than me or any of us Jincklebergs here up north because when we first learned about this addition of two months many “years” ago our minds were collectively blown and whenever it comes up in casual conversation such as after our meager Sunday dinners when Grandpa Jinckleberg finishes his soup and, after a very long time staring out the window onto the tundra says “I remember when the year only had ten months in it,” all of us Jincklebergs instantly do the mind-blown thing and not just in that moment but often throughout the following days because we can barely look at one another without thinking of the mind-blowing fact because we are very sensitive to mind-blowing facts which we think all humans should be as well but apparently that is not the case this year which has been like a daily mind blower especially when we watch news from the American cable shows and hear such things that are not fit for human ears because ears are like old barn windows that never close and you can’t stop anything from getting in them and wafting straight into the brain where they of course blow the mind over and over and over again.**

**Anyhow, as I mentioned above, I grew a bit unstable this year and had to go into intensive therapy again which is no easy thing on the phone because you can’t tell whether or not the therapist is listening as opposed to when I’m in his office where it is easy to tell if he is listening especially when he nods off and starts snoring or whimpers and “runs” when he’s in the throes of a bad dream but as you can tell my thoughts are much more organized and I’m doing gooder and gooder with each passing day; gooder enough to take a look at my Claire Danes full on *Homeland* “Where is Brody?” floor-to-ceiling cork board wall of pictures and dates and newspaper clippings connected together with different colored yarn and push pins not to mention the notes that I was able to scribble on napkins or carve into the drawer of that old dresser during those “lucid” moments of my “dark months” of this year.**

**As it turns out, I apparently missed some spectacular Jinckleberg moments this year during those dark months such as that the twins – Jacob and Jacoby – were the first identical twins blasted off the planet on one of Elon Musk’s SpaceX thingies. Apparently they went to the ISS and one of them was supposed to come back a month or so later but whichever twin it was they missed the moment (bless them both but they were never on time for anything here on Earth!) cuz the rocket back to earth had to keep a strict schedule lest it bounce off the atmosphere like could have happened to Apollo 13 were it not for the calm leadership of Tom Hanks whose voice I wish I could get on my voicemail message by winning some contest on a radio show if that were ever a thing but now that I think of it I believe the ISS is in our atmosphere so there must have been a different reason why the return rocket had to take off without one of the twins. As you probably guessed by now, Jacob and Jacoby are still up there and while I miss them more than words can say I also don’t miss them much at all because the skies are very clear here up north and I can like practically see them like almost every 90 minutes or so because their tin-can home-away-from-home for now is going fast enough that it orbits the earth like every 90 minutes. I know it’s not the same as seeing them face-to-face but who sees anyone face-to-face this year so I’m just grateful I get the chance to wave at them 16 times a day when they’re in the “neighborhood.” I tried Zooming with them once but they were both floating and that made my mind blow and I had to find my old pills and swallow one down with seltzer water to calm my nerves.**

**I have however kept in touch with the triplets! Maria Elena, Maria Theresa and Maria Maria Jinckleberg all send their love from Hollywood, California, America, where they are apparently thriving in the business of making movies for pleasure and uplifting which honestly I don’t fully understand but I think that’s probably because of the poor translation from English like you see on some instructions you get such as: Apply the biological lubricant to affected areas. I hope they will hire a better translator soon but until that day I myself am with pleasure and uplifted knowing my daughters survived their “shipping container trip” to the America so many long years ago.**

**That leaves me to share the most amazing news with you about the quadruplets! In case you haven’t guessed it yet, they have been working so hard all these years to perfect their breakdancing routine and you cannot imagine, I mean literally, and I do not use the word “literally” lightly, you cannot imagine the roof-exploding joy that Billy and Bobby and Timmy and Tommy exhaled from their lungs upon hearing the very recent news that breakdancing will be a sport in the 2024 Olympics in Paris. Talk about a *mon dieu, sacre blue, merci beaucoup* moment! They are still exhaling and inhaling all the time about it, even as they helped Papa Jinckleberg repair all the holes in the roof from the explosion which is very important to do this time of year when the temperatures rarely get above zero.**

**Speaking of Papa Jinckleberg, he had to leave the rest of the repairs to the quads because he was already running late (a Jinckleberg trait!) in terms of getting in the car to make the long drive to Oslo to accept his Nobel Prize in Freakanomics. Boy oh boy, when that man from the committee showed up here whenever that was because they’d been trying to reach Papa by phone (only we don’t have a phone as you all know which I think the Nobel committee should have known cuz they’re supposed to be all smart and knowledgeable and such but that’s all in the past and it’s sure not worth holding a grudge or carrying bad feelings into the new year so enough of that), when that man from the committee showed up we all thought it was a big fat joke or what the Hollywood Marias might call a “punk” that the other family on the tundra thought would be funny because of how they used to make fun of Papa before that whole Freakanomics thing he came up with became an actual thing. Turns out that other family has long since succumbed to the harsh winters here on the tundra and that it’s just us now so not only are we the only family on the tundra, we are also the only family on the tundra whose Papa won a Nobel Prize.**

**Between Papa’s Nobel news, the twins in space, the triplets doing their movie thing, and the quads still exhaling about their Olympic chances in Paris assuming we all survive the pandemic, I almost forgot to let you know about the quintuplets!**

**I don’t keep as close in touch with the quints as I do with the other multiple births, because quite honestly, “five inside” as Papa used to say which was no joke at all even though you could catch him laughing each and every time he said it, well, “five inside” is one too many or maybe two too many, or maybe it was all the prior multiple births but whatever it was I can barely talk to them without this or that PTSD moment of all those months toting them around inside my big old belly coming up for me and triggering thoughts that I can only describe (and this is extremely charitable on my part) as grossly inappropriate if not borderline pathological. I do love them or perhaps I should say that I “love” them which is probably more accurate. But the fact that I merely “love” them did not keep me from making the same kind of notes about them with pictures and post-its and newspaper clippings connected by yarn and push pins. And it is their success that I will share with you as the last part of this “Christmas” letter.**

**It is with what the translators on all the Marias’ movies might translate as the utmost “pleasure and uplifting” that I am pleased to report that Girls 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (Papa insists that choosing to name them by numbers all those years ago is what gave rise to his Freakanomics theories in the first place) have pooled their sizeable financial resources together and purchased the continent of Australia. Why Australia as opposed to the other continents? Well, apparently because their names were numbers, the girls felt like freaks(hence Papa’s coinage of the term “freakanomics”) growing up and apparently many Australian animals have felt like “freaks of the animal kingdom” for about 165 million years or so after the full and formal split from Pangea (if you believe that story that there used to be only 1 continent). Naturally the girls identified with the whole freak thing so Australia seemed as good a continent as any to buy after you’ve made a fortune parading around the world as the only number-named quints on the planet.**

**There is so much more to share but I am running out of ink and papyrus so I’ll close this “Christmas” letter with a little secret the Jincklebergs have been keeping to themselves all these years. Our little tundra home is right on the edge of the north pole, and, truth be told, unlike Sarah Palin, WE CANNOT SEE SANTA’S HOUSE FROM HERE.**

**Why?**

**Because there is no house to see. There. I’ve said it. Once and for all. This whole “Christmas” thing is a myth. The mythiest of all myths. Maybe not all, but it’s right up there with other myths. Certainly mythier than Big Foot or the Loch Ness and frankly I just don’t see any other myths anywhere near as mythy as these two except maybe Stonehenge so I’ll leave that as a possibility but what I’m trying to say is that even though there is no such thing as Christmas or Santa, we as existential humanists can make our own reality and, by the mere fact of bringing it into existence we can, as Gandhi would say “be the change we want to see in the world” and thereby bring about “peace on earth” and “good will toward humans” and that is all I have ever hoped to accomplish through these yearly letters.**

**Until next year’s “Christmas” letter, and on behalf of all the Jinckelbergs, ours and mine wish you and yours health and humor and hope enough for whatever comes next.**

**Happy Hanukkah from the Jincklebergs in Hanatevukkah!**