

Hello friends and family! Merry Christmas to you and yours!

I was going to pack this Christmas letter with all the usual Christmas letter goodies... news about the family and yuletide backdoor brags...the custom of these letters. But following our family saga via Facebook posts....who finished their PHD and who is in jail...is way more entertaining than what I can sum up here. No no, my goal with this letter is way more “big picture.”

I think we can all agree that Christmas has become way too commercial and transactional. And in light of that, I wanted to get back to a more traditional approach to the holiday. So I've decided to send each you gifts according to the Christmas classic “The 12 Days of Christmas”.

It's true that the presents that are starting to show up at your door aren't on your Amazon wishlists but they might be on the sugarplum-adorned wishlist of your Christmas heart. Or at least what your Christmas heart wants to have an affair with.

I will admit, once it got away from me, it REALLY got away from me. But it all started fine. Just send birds of random species and amounts to your friends and family. Y'know, like the pilgrims did. Christmas!

Partridge, check. Turtledoves, easy. French hens, there was customs to deal with, but I got the paperwork all filled out *et voila*.

Now the calling birds were tough. What KIND of calling birds? And, trickier yet, it's illegal in this country to hunt songbirds. But it's not illegal to put a bunch of birdseed into a big cardboard box and lie in wait with packing tape. So that took care of that.

I was on a roll with the birds until - well, you know that big showstopper moment in the middle of the song. And have you seen the price of gold these days? So technically those are gold plated rings, but c'mon, we're in a recession, what do you expect?

Then I was right back in the swing of things - got the geese, got the swans. But did you know those birds are kind of assholes? Well, thirteen trips to urgent care taught me that lesson pretty darn well.

Great! But, now we're in the 2nd half of the song. And a quandary: how does one send full human beings through the mail?

Now I want to address all the frowns that just showed up at the mention of this. These people were paid for their time and labor. It's the gig economy at work!

But easy it is not! You ever try to ship a lord? It's a full ass dude...and you're shipping several. There isn't a standard size, neither is there a guarantee that they won't leap in transit, knocking over a bunch of Pelotons in the process. Same thing with ladies

dancing, although I did find a troupe of interpretive dancers down at the college that rhythmically blink, which they emphatically assured me is dancing.

And then there are the accessories. Maids gotta milk and cows are a non-starter. With a little help from Quora, I found out the smallest animal you can milk is an Etruscan shrew, an animal so small it doesn't change my ground shipping rates. Only issue there is whatever the algorithm's gonna feed me now that I've typed "smallest animal you can milk" into a search bar.

Piper's pipping and drummers drumming was a two-for, thanks to a fife and drum corps that had their own van, so I'm now officially done with this fresh Christmas hell.

I hope you appreciate this weird adventure as much as I'm pretending I don't regret it.

But you miss 100% of the shots you don't take. I don't know how this is relevant to any of this, but...y'know...I don't know. It'll come to me.

Next year, I'll just send front teeth and hippos.

Your friend,

Firsty Lastnameski (husband and kids can sign their own letter. Sweat equity!)