

My dearest family, and friends- it is me, MB with 2022 happenings! I know, I know, I didn't write a 2021 letter. I was convinced that all the other world happenings were enough. I hoped, that anxiously awaiting Britney's conservatorship ruling and sitting through Megan, her red-headed side piece, and Oprah yapping would have been enough. And if not, there were so many other things, that could have occupied the mind: to mask or not to mask, Dr. Seuss book-bans, Alec and his "Spanish born" wife, announcing another pregnancy, and shifting the focus off of a tv set murder, blue vs. red vs. blue vs. red vs. ..., and all the other mind- f*@^ s that encompassed 2021!

That was last year! I am back, with the TEA of 2022! In fact, there was so much, even I'm stunned-and I lived it! But don't worry, or be sad, or lose any precious sleep on my behalf. I was blessed with another year and kept around to tell the story afterward. Sit back, take a hit of nature's signature 7-leaf magic, and read on!

12/31/2021-01/2022: With midnight right around the corner, Kelly, Jaxon, and I decided to ditch the crowds, put on our PJs, and celebrate the incoming year with pizza and Goonies. 3..., 2..., 1...! Happy New Year!

I pour Kelly and me some champagne, and Jaxon, sparkling cider, we click our glasses, while forgetting old lang syne, and toasting to a new start! Yes, I know Jaxon is turning 18 in a month, but that is still a month away! I might be living a lifestyle that is less than socially acceptable, in some parts, but I do take my parenting responsibilities seriously! The last thing that I want in 2022, 5 months from high school graduation, and "amicably" figuring out college, is to be in some legal combat with his dad. Four years of supporting my legal team's lavish lifestyle is enough. And as a bonus, a hot ex is hitting me up for a play date. I am going to rock 2022!!

I woke up at 5 am, as I normally do, feeling rested! At my age, 5 hours of uninterrupted sleep without a 3 am pee break is a blessing! I poured myself a cup of coffee, grab a cold slice of pizza, and I am ready to face world vibes the only way a middle-aged Caucasian woman can; I turn on the local tv news to check the weather forecast.

2022 Headlines: Betty White died in her home on New Year's Eve, at the age of 99!

NO! NOT BETTY WHITE!

What a kick in my still-intact ovaries! Yes, I still have them-it is the uterus and the cervix that are gone! Of course, I can still have sex at my age! No, these are internal organs, and are not required for coitus! Seriously? Now I'm confused and wondering what the heck is on the health class's professional development syllabus.

02/2022: February, February, February! The month of love, devotion, and happily ever after! Walmart has moved all the red and pink women's sweaters to the front in the women's department added some holiday love merchandise, and lined the checkout lines with chocolates! Ladies, you can now buy a new sweater for the night of the 14th, reach over to the

shelf on your right, and grab a pair of boxers for your guy with a “my superman” label across the crotch, all in one swoop! The red M&M got its own prime-time commercial! Red Hearts are everywhere! I am feeling nostalgic, butterflies in my gut- this year, finally, cupid is going to send an arrow my way! I buy Tinder Gold and began swiping.

I swipe on Mike, 46, a pilot, who claims to be a hugger, likes to laugh, and is just checking out “what’s” out there (winking emoji). I swipe on Dave, 48, who makes sure to remind his potential match, that his hair has gotten longer during COVID, and since it is still morally irresponsible to leave our homes, is offering a virtual Valentine’s date of pizza and beer (each person pays for their own Uber Eats, of course). I swipe on Shelly 49, 5’8, self-employed, in a pic with his mom, who wants to know if I have a bike, hiking boots, and a tent!

Sheesh, how much more can a girl take? The feeling, the nostalgic gut feeling, the butterflies, it’s all a hoax! It’s time for me to close this app! But what if I keep it open? Might I get hit up by a 30-something, handsome chap that claims he is an international millionaire while asking me to wire him \$10,000? Will I wire him \$10,000? Will I wire him more than \$10,000? Do I even have \$10,000? Yea, I should close the app., and do some self-care instead.

I print Maya Angelou’s poem “Still Rise.” I frame the poem. I hang the poem on my bedroom door. The poem is the first thing I see when I open my eyes in the morning. The poem is the last thing I see when I close my eyes for the night. I send myself a dozen roses, and order sushi: a candlelit dinner at the kitchen table for one is my serenity tonight!

03/2022: The Russian invasion of Ukraine is everywhere. An ex-actor/comedian, who is now the leader of a country, is not only fighting one of the world’s worst dictators from a much stronger, and much larger country, is also telling that same dictator, what he can do with his tanks! Live on CNN with Anderson Cooper!

On the home front, my car lease is ending. I’m told I can no longer drive a car off a lot since there is some chip shortage. I have to pre-order and wait. No test driving! I wonder if it is a Honda thing? People, who buy a Red Cadillac Escalade, do they have to wait? Things that make you go hmmm?

I also owe my legal team another \$873 with the breakdown of an amicable resolution. I am having words with my neighbor about his family leaving their belongings in the common areas. I meet Richie, 55, and he enlightens me, after a brief adult meetup, that a one-night stand can be avoided by doing it more than once. I rearrange the furniture in my living room. I come across Wheeler Walker Jr song “SIT ON MY FACE” and I liked the words. Gas is at \$4.499 a gallon. Jaxon and I visit Kelly at college for spring break to her performance. I finally get to see the Jonny Cash Museum. I learn about Delta 8 and Delta 9 THC differences. And in case you want to know (I quoted and cited my reference to avoid any potential plagiarism accusations):

“Delta 8 and Delta 9 THC are two cannabis compounds that share many similarities in their chemical structure and overall effects. The potential effects include elation, relaxation, and much more euphoric feelings. The main difference

between Delta 8 vs Delta 9 THC is the potency levels and legality. (Forbes Magazine. (2022, October 3). Delta-8 vs. Delta-9: What's the difference? Forbes. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://www.forbes.com/health/body/delta-8-vs-delta-9/>)".

I meet T (have no knowledge of any other letters in his name), 47ish, for drinks at "A" PLACE, and leave while he is asleep at "A" PLACE. I buy a mood ring that I wear on my thumb. I buy a dream catcher that I hang over my bed. I buy a pink pair of UGGs that I don't need and wear them on my feet. I take out my credit card to pay my legal bill and realize that it's \$1,873, \$1,000 more than I originally thought.

When all hope is lost, at least there is TikTok! Which has kept my mind from totally leaving my brain, and has finally worked its algorithm magic by helping me find my tribe! Other teachers, who are unraveling by the minute, and X-ING-off, day by day, the days on their calendars, that are left in this miserable school year!

04/2022: The first known dinosaur fossil linked to the very day of the Chicxulub impact is reported by paleontologists, global food prices increase to their highest level since the UN's Food Price Index began in 1990, and the European Southern Observatory team announces the discovery of micronovae on 4/20, my favorite holiday of the year! Like you, my clan, I also did not know what was a micronovae. I kept thinking it was a new word for that thing I keep in my kitchen for warming leftovers and making popcorn. It's not! It's a new kind of star explosion (And yes, I cited this as well).

(Strickland, A. (2022, April 20). Small 'Micronova' explosion burns through tons of material within hours. CNN. Retrieved November 26, 2022, from <https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/20/world/micronova-star-explosion-discovery-scn/index.html>).

I'm starting to think it's less about plagiarism, and more about trying to show off the skills I learned in my Master's program. The same program that put me in a \$20,000+ hole, from which I dropped out, and now trying to understand what the f*@^ I was thinking in the first place by dropping in. Yes, I AM A MASTER'S PROGRAM DROP OUT!

I also order a large Dunkin Donuts coffee with 12 creams every morning! And each time I go to a new Dunkin Donuts drive-up, where the staff is preparing my coffee for the first time, I place the order and say yes, when asked "12 creams only?" , while hiding my face in shame behind an extra-large prescription pair of sunglasses. Now you know. Now everyone knows. The whole world even! That I, Maggie Brown, with a 4.0 out of 4.0, not only stopped registering for graduate-level classes, but I also have an unhealthy relationship with half and half!

05/2022: What can (not may) I say about May? Just when we thought one pandemic was over, here comes the monkeypox virus, and the WHO (not what) organization holds an emergency meeting to discuss the spread! A supermassive black hole is found in the center of the Milky Way and named Sagittarius A*, after obviously the best astrological sign! Me, well, both my physical and mental health are separating and leaving the empty shell that is now my body.

I develop an ingrown toenail on the same toe I messed up last year. I develop an aggressive foot fungus that not only requires a topical ointment but a pill by mouth that took 2 months to cure. I develop weird-ass stuff happening with my foot that requires arch supports. I develop a growth inside my neck, requiring incisions and stitches, that came back from pathology as non-cancerous, while the other “slightly abnormal” cells in my body have remained the same. I get another bill from my legal team. I finally get my pre-ordered car and my school contract ends- both in the same week.

Jaxson is voted prom king, and graduates from high school only get a case of non-symptomatic COVID for the first time since all this started right, at the pinnacle of all his senior activities (poor kid). He has also decided to go live with his father before he starts college in August with whom, I’m still in child support and college litigation, two months away from the freshman move-in date. Can (not may) we say that I’ve got a bag of doozies handed to me this month?

06/2022: It is mid-year, and I don’t give a flying fig of what’s happening anywhere on this joke of a planet. How can I? I cannot even figure out what is happening under my own roof! My apartment lease is coming to an end. I do not have enough income to renew the lease. What used to be a flowing river of savings, is being slowly drained by The Law Offices of U.R. Screwed, Deal With It & Associates. I keep applying to jobs outside the education system, to no avail! I and every other over-educated educator who walked out of public education in 2022, all with the same skills, who are used to being overworked and underpaid, are now competing for the same jobs. Just another up-yours on a day in June.

Kelly is living out of state for the summer. Jaxson packs all his belonging and is leaving for his dad’s. I watch him pack with a smile on my face, just to step outside, get in my car, and cry. Cars are a good place to cry.

As the last of his belongings are placed in the car and he drives off, I can barely keep my knees from buckling and collapsing to the ground. I somehow manage to get myself back to my apartment, knowing that nothing, nothing, will ever be the same. Ever! Kelly and Jaxson are no longer mine to mold. They are both grown and becoming the adults that would make any parent proud. I have no words for the emotions that are running through my body. And as I write this letter, the emotions are back, and I still cannot give them a name.

I do not have the strength to get out of bed.

I do not have the strength to shower.

I do not have the strength to do anything.

I lay stoned in my bed not knowing what to do.

I have to do something.

I order a protection car mezuzah, that houses a traveler’s prayer scroll from Israel.

I attached the mezuzah to my car.

I don’t bother packing, and throw some basic necessities in the trunk of my car.

I drive.
I visit Kelly.
I drive.
I climb caves.
I see waterfalls.
I swivel through steep mountains.
I see a city made from rocks.
I ride an incline train.
I meet Keith, and feel the wind on my face, as I hold on to him tightly, on the back of his Harley.
I meet Ben, a foodie, who knows where to find the best oysters.
I meet Marco, we share some moonshine and agree to someday, meet again, somewhere, and share some Ayahuasca.
I drive again.
I am in my home town.
I once again see places that brought me joy.
I reconnect with my best friend from high school.
I visit my grandmother's grave.

07/2022: I'm back. Back in my bed. Back to being stoned 24/7 trying to soothe myself. I began thinking about the holiday, which is the highlight of July. The outdoor celebrations. The fireworks. RED, WHITE, and BLUE that is everywhere. All celebrating a proclamation claiming that "all men are created equal". ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL. ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL. ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL. I can't stop thinking about the phrase: ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL. Are ALL MEN CREATED EQUAL?

DEFINITELY, NOT- not the person who was arrested and "accidentally," forgotten to have their Miranda Rights read to them.

DEFINITELY, NOT- not women, or any other person who wants autonomy over their own body.
DEFINITELY, NOT- not the men, women, and children who were kept enslaved by the same guy who penned the phrase ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL.

Heck, even the law of the land agrees that only SOME MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL. And they said so last month.

As I continue pondering my existence, pondering everyone's existence, I get a call for a gig to work the city's biggest food festival of the season. Thank you! Thank you, my angel, for giving me a reason to get up, shower, and to step outside! I also feel that there is more-more of something intangible, more of something that is greater than where I am right now. I must find it, and start selling everything I own. Lamps... Rungs... Dishes... Couches... Chairs... Dressers... Tables... I feel I must get rid of all of it. I can't keep any of it! It all must go! All of it! Everything! I'm moving. I'm moving back to my hometown. I'm moving back with only what fits in my car.

8/2022: August is here. I have 30 days to get my life in order. A lot can happen in 30 days. And a lot happened in 30 days. I limit to whom I speak with on the phone. I limit my social interaction.

I've sold almost everything. I can't be in that bedroom anymore. I move what is left of my belongings into the living room. I do not read or watch anything except TikTok and casting pages. I'm thinking about Kelly and Jaxon and how much I miss them both. I see a submission post; a national morning show is looking for people who need a change. I submitted. I get the segment of my life story. I get a work contract at a pinball factory. I resolve litigation. I get a commercial. I take Jaxon to college. I drive with Kelly to college. I get into a car accident. I attend a party where everyone wants to know why I'm quiet. I just smile.

9/2022: Labor Day signifies the end of a season. A season of sun. A season of fun. A season to stop wearing white pants and white shoes. Labor Day also honors the American worker by giving them a three-day weekend in September to honor and recognized the American labor movement. How do you ask? By keeping the minimum wage at \$7.25 per hour for covered nonexempt employees! American worker, HEAR ME LOUD AND CLEAR: make sure not to spend the \$290 that you have earned for 40 hours of work this week (minus taxes, travel, and the other costs required to get to work) in one place!

The world is also obsessed with the death of Queen Elizabeth. And I get it! She served in the military. She stood up for women's rights. She gave the finger to a prince whose country would not allow women to drive, by getting behind the wheel, with him as a passenger. Queen Elizabeth had balls! Way more than her son, who finally has to get to work at the age of 74.

I'm living in a hotel. I'm working at a pinball factory. I'm watching TLC. I'm wondering why Christine took so long to leave that self-absorbed, weenie Kody. I'm watching Dr. Pimple Popper, and thinking is there a part of my body I can submit for the show? I'm trying to understand how a woman, living a 600 pound has the strength to date, raise children, and has time to act on a tv show. I want her strength. I email her to find out how. I'm feeling content for the first time in a long time. I forgot how being content feels.

10/2022: Monday morning, October 3, 2022. I get up. Brush my hair. Brush my teeth. Grab my backpack, and I'm ready to go to work. Flying ghosts, black cats, witches on broomsticks, and spiders fill the Halloween-decorated lobby of my hotel. Box stores overstock on candy, Halloween costume stores are popping up in empty storefronts that went out of business, and timed inflatables light up lawns. Everyone is ready for Halloween!

I prefer celebrating October 8th! Why? Because it's Octopus Day! Octopi, Octopuses, or octopodes, whatever you call them, are amazing and mysterious beings! An octopus can use its tentacle to help feed itself, feel, smell, and even make decisions. They are also the Houdini of the water world and can escape from the tiniest of enclosures. They can even manipulate their own genetic code! Guess I went on a bit of an Octopus tangent trying to avoid my reality: the end of the pinball contract, the end of living in a hotel-I'm back, paving the streets.

11/2022: Is it still October? Or is it November? I have no idea. I spend all my free time searching for that magic corporate opportunity that will change my life for the better while failing miserably! I know it's only been a month and a half, and what's a month and a half on the

journey of life? For me-a lot! You see, I was forced to grow up fast, and never learned skills that require releasing control. Now, my life is at the will of random people's agendas, and I don't know to deal with it. I keep sending resumes, scheduling virtual meetings, learning how to answer questions such as "tell us a fun fact about yourself", or "tell us something about yourself that is not on your resume?", and realizing that responding with "the fun fact about me is that I have never been fun a day in my life", and "what's not on my resume is the non-exiting page 2", are not proper interview answers.

I also learned that Quite Quitting is a thing, and why it's putting the whole financial world in a tizzy! What's Quite Quitting, you ask? It's a new fancy word for doing your job as required by your job description and then leaving for the day. Why is so dangerous? It requires your employer to hire enough people so that employees can have a work/life balance. What is the workaround? Laying off most of your workforce, and keeping the skeletal crew scared for their jobs.

I'm trying to keep the positive energy going, but it's getting harder by the day. I saw a help wanted sign at a strip club. I wonder if it would show up on a background check? Do ONLY FANS accounts show up on background checks? Asking for a friend.

12/2022: Decking the Halls... Dashing through the snow... Spinning the dreidel.... 'Tis the season to spend your hard-earned money on unneeded amazon trinkets for your loved ones, while not being able to afford groceries, rent, utilities, car payments, or gasoline. Me, I keep searching. I don't even know what I'm searching for anymore. How can I? My entire 2022 is full of pain and heartache. I have no job. I have no permanent home. I no longer color my hair. I'm ready to hang up the whole thing and join a traveling carnival. Kelly sends me a post-Goonies house for sale in Oregon! It's a sign! A sign that I need an adventure! A sign that I need to find a map with my own pirate treasure. I'm not giving up, One-Eyed Willy! Goonies Never Say Die! 2023 is just around the corner for the taking!

And on this note, I will end my x-mas letter the best way I know how ... by wishing everyone a year filled with love, happiness, money, and lots of orgasms!

The only and not lonely, Maggie Brown