



That's all for this year. If you're like me and the holidays get you down, or stressed out, don a snowy wig and liberally apply holly lipstick – it helps.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

In addition to Christmas, the end of the year is a time of reflection and a reminder to pause, breathe, listen and relax—a time to close a chapter and start a new one. It's so easy to let the world pile up around us while we focus on work or school. When the dishes, the clothes and the phone messages add up, I always think there will be time tomorrow. Tomorrow soon fades into weeks into months and into years. As a year-end promise to myself, I thought I'd do something classy and send letters to catch up on all the times I meant to call or email.

Starting from the beginning, here's some highlights from this year's chapter. Hopefully you'll enjoy it so much that you'll revisit your own and remember all that you've forgotten.

In January, Joe and I decided to test our relationship for a weekend in Seattle. Three hours trapped in Corgan (yep, the one-n-only '89 Cutlass) both ways and a slight case of the stomach flu fueled Joe's attitude...and mine. But we survived. If you haven't been to the Museum of Modern Music yet, it should be on your "Top 100 Things to do before I die" list.

Erin and Melissa were brave enough to visit Portland mid-April and remind me how to party. The Japanese garden, Multnomah Falls, the North West Beer Festival and an all-chick AC-DC cover band playing at the Cobalt lounge topped the event list.

By July, I decided it was time to find a new place to live since my year lease expired. So I relocated with Joe into a spacious duplex, only a few neighborhoods south. Three weeks later, back in the heartland, I helped (or thought I was helping) Melissa get through the final "single" week of her life. Erin threw one hell of a bachelorette party, and Melissa threw an even better wedding. That week holds the record for heat, humidity and excitement. Everyone at the office convinced me that I lost so much weight on my vacation that I figured I could eat fast food again and gained it all back.

Amazingly, summer ended my run of excitement for quite some time. Sure, there was that night my car broke down on the interstate and I ended up playing a

guitar in front of Castle Rock Video (the porn mega store) for 2 hours while I waited for a tow truck. But that's the sort of random shit that can happen to anyone.

September 5. Pearl delivered four beautiful kittens. The universe decided I needed kittens since I'd shown such a great improvement in the plant-keeping department. So, 2nd weekend in October, Joe and I drove through the Sierras to Berry Creek, a mountain town near Chico, CA with plans to enjoy a sunny weekend with the crazy family and adopt 2 kittens. Little did we know we'd love them all. By Monday morning, we had four tiny, tiny kittens in 2 cat carriers ready to embark on the long 10 hour journey back to Portland. Since that fine, foggy autumn day, they've already quadrupled in size, managed to kill several plants, severely damage the Christmas tree and still win my heart. At this rate, if I ever change my mind and do the "kid thing" some day, I'll have a head-start on the pains of parenting.

Just 2 weeks past, I hosted a family get-together. James drove his new coffee colored '79 Ford Ranchero to surprise us late Monday night. That Friday evening dad and his girlfriend Shelly flew in to join us. I had no clue anyone could drink so much coffee. Every morning we went through at least three pots. High on caffeine, we enjoyed the cool, sunny days with trips to the falls, Chinese garden and Powell's bookstore. (Another item to add to top 100 list.) Justin, our third roommate for 3 months, was getting ready to move out and poor Joe was torn between hanging out with his best friend or my family. Monday night (the last night of family fun) we packed dad, Shelly, James, Joe, Justin, Justin's mom and myself into our 2 bedroom abode. The next day everyone left and by the end of the week James took a job selling magazines in California. Poof...back to an empty house.

And that brings us to today, Friday, December 20. Without snow on the ground, or any snowfall all year, the 25th stealthily slips into the cracks between Thanksgiving and New Years. Today we had our holiday party at work and it finally hit me—this really is Christmas.

Thank you so much for being who you are & being such wonderful friends. Without you I certainly wouldn't be here, in my basement on a Friday night, typing away at my computer.

Love Always,

iewel



"O Christmas Tree"

Christian sang 'O Christmas tree, o Christmas tree, how lovely are your Bran Chex.' He's now (13) and Bran Chex is still one of his favorite cereals." The German version of the same song causes problems for folks, too. One reader thought "O tannenbaum" was "O atom bomb . . ."

"Feliz Navidad"

But then, foreign languages often confuse us. Oregonian columnist John Terry says his nephew, as a child, thought the title of this song was "Police shot my dog . . ."

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Latin is a special challenge. But let's be clear: "in excelsis Deo" is not "undigested bagels." Nor is "dona nobis pacem" "no more obese possums." Candace Noel wrote that as a child when the Christmas congregation sang, "Hosannah, Hosannah, Hosannah in the Highest," she was singing along: "O Santa, O Santa, O Santa in the highest."

"Crimson & Clover"

Moving far from the classical realm, Maggie Powell, writes, "About 30 years ago, my brother Robert, who was in middle school, was walking through the house singing 'Christmas is over, over and over.' " If you suffer from the same confusion, the Tommy James & the Shondells song actually is, "Crimson and clover, over and over." No wonder it's heard so infrequently in December.

"Silent Night"

Finally, as a parting gift, I have combined all the new and old mondegreens I've ever received for the Christmas classic "Silent Night." Make a note: These were never, ever the correct lyrics:

Solid night, Hold me tight
All is calm, all is bright
Brown young virgin, mother hen child
Holy "infantso" tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly pee, sleep in heavenly peas.

HOLIDAY HYMNS

Chance are you're receiving this card after Christmas, but hopefully it's not quite New Year's and you still have room for some seasonal laughs.

Christmas Mondegreens (taken from The Oregonian)

For those of you new to the tradition, mondegreens are misheard song lyrics. Last year reader John J. Mathews suggested the disorder be called "dyshearrhea." It's not just fans of rock music who hear the lyrics wrong. Many of these were incorrectly deciphered by children, but plenty of adults have seasonal hearing problems, too . . .

"We Wish You a Merry Christmas"

For years, Sharon McCoy's in-laws could not figure out why anyone would want "some piggy pudding." The correct lyric, of course, calls for "figgy pudding." Both of which are far more polite than "bring us some friggin' pudding," which is what one reader thought he heard as a child.

"Winter Wonderland"

A few years ago reader Alesia Zorn admitted, "I was 20 years old before I learned the line was 'Later on, we'll conspire, as we dream, by the fire . . .', and not 'Later on, we'll perspire . . .'" And, of course, Alan Zabin was utterly wrong when he used to finish the song, "Walkin' in our winter underwear."

"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"

Jimmy Lee Neeham says he thought the next phrase was "let nothing you display." In fact, it is "let nothing you dismay." Good to remember.

"The Christmas Song"

Make a note: "Chipmunks" are not roasting on an open fire, as Janice Paulsen once sang. "Chestnuts" are roasting. Not only that, Jack Frost is "nipping at your nose." Jack is not "ripping at your clothes."

Meanwhile, it was autumn. "Old melancholy October" I called it.
 There's something olden and golden and lost,
 in the strange ancestral light.
 There's something tender and loving and sad,
 in October's copper might.
 Missing something sad sad sad.
 End of something old old old.
 It was beautiful with falling red leaves aching,
 and then old silver November moved in.
 Bringing fainter flavors and grayer skies.
 Snow you could smell.

-Jack Kerouak
 from *The Vanity of Dulooz*



Portland Sunrise silhouetting Mt Hood.
 View from YMCA track insanely early in the am.



Oregon Coast, near Florence. Thanksgiving weekend.

Since I have no children & I feel a strong urge to keep up the "crazy cat lady" image, I just have to share pics of my "babies".

Zelda



Reeces



Samsonite



Darby

