

# the Famlet monthly

December 29, 2013

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## Dear Family,

A few years ago the planners of our ward Christmas party began a tradition of awarding door prizes as a way of encouraging punctuality. One has to arrive on time to the party in order to make it into the drawing for the best prizes—a small number of beautifully decorated, homemade gingerbread houses. The rest of us are relegated into a drawing for lesser prizes. This year, as the party was winding down, the girls were waiting in line for Santa, and I was in another part of the hall talking to people. (Talking to people at social gatherings isn't really my thing, but it was Christmas and it was church, and so I gave it a shot.) It was then that I heard my name read over the microphone. I had actually won something: a wind-up nativity snow globe that played *Silent Night*. I retrieved my prize and returned triumphantly to the people with whom I had been conversing. They were all congratulating me on my good fortune when a mentally challenged woman I've known for many years, named Sharon, approached me. She admired my new snow globe for a few moments and then asked if she could have it. I immediately recognized this as an opportunity to display my boundless magnanimity (and I did not really want yet another piece of Christmas kitsch cluttering my house, anyway) and so I gave it to her.

Feeling good about myself, I made my way over to the Santa line where I was greeted by Grace. Her eyes were as big as ping pong balls as she exclaimed, "Dad, you won us a snow globe!" She would not have been more excited if I had won PowerBall. It was at that instant that I realized I had just made a terrible mistake. And I had to explain to my 8-year-old daughter that I had just given "our" snow globe away.

Grace did not throw a fit. Instead, she quietly launched into one of her patented, melodramatic, overwrought soliloquys about how all her life she's always wanted a snow globe, and here she thought she was finally going to have one, and yada, yada, yada, "but maybe I can ask Santa for one."

Yeah, maybe. But then I had what I believed to be a moment of genius. I ran back and found Sharon, smiling as always, happily holding her new snow globe. I pointed out Grace to her and suggested to Sharon that she could make Grace the happiest little girl in the world if she were to give the snow globe to her. To my delight, Sharon immediately agreed to this, and I began congratulating myself on the win-win-win situation I had just brokered: Sharon had experienced the joy of giving; Grace had the snow globe she never knew she'd been wanting her whole life; and I didn't have to listen to a whiney child. Everybody's happy.

The gladness lasted until the following Tuesday evening when I got home from work. I was greeted at the door by an utterly distraught-looking Grace who asked whether I had received Mom's message. I hadn't. She then said she was really, really sorry, and ran from the room, crying.

I pulled my phone out of my pocket and found the message Crystal had texted 10 minutes earlier (while I was driving). It contained a picture she had just taken of Grace (I'm including it nearby) accompanied by the words, "This girl just accidentally

broke your snow globe. She is really sorry and hopes you won't be mad."

As I digested the message, a number of thoughts and questions occurred to me in rapid succession: 1) When did the snow globe revert to being *mine*? 2) Am I really such an ill-tempered jackass that my young daughter was crying in fear of my reaction to her having broken a stupid snow globe? (answer: yes, apparently); and 3) Here was an opportunity to demonstrate what a kind, gentle, and forgiving person I am. I told Grace that I wasn't angry with her, that accidents happen, that she is more important to me than any silly snow globe, and yada, yada, yada, she bought it.

Five days later she was in the basement with Grandpa Pat. Grandpa was having trouble finding a particular football game on TV, and he dispatched Grace to enlist my help, adding something like, "I hope your dad won't be mad for having to come help me with this." (Seriously, just how big a jerk must I be?) Grace replied, "He won't be mad. He didn't even get mad when I broke his snow globe."

Yes, indeed. MY MAGNANIMITY KNOWS NO BOUNDS!

I really did not set out intending to devote 75 percent of my letter to this silly little story. Perhaps there is some deeper meaning to it. If there is, could you please [let me know](#)?

Grandpa Pat was here because he and Grandma Carolyn had come east for Christmas. They spent the weekend before the holiday with us and then took Amtrak down to Hampton Roads to spend Christmas with Roland and Marci and their children. We joined everyone down there the following day and had a nice time. (Noah, thanks again for your bedroom.) It was our first road trip of any distance with Ceres. The 200-mile drive can take anywhere from just over 3 hours to just under 3 days, depending almost entirely on the 40-mile stretch between D.C. and Fredericksburg, Va., which is almost always some degree of awful. Amazingly, the trip down on Thursday was a breeze and the trip back yesterday was only unbearable in spots. Ceres did fine between two girls in the back row of our now-10-year-old minivan, and I really had nothing to complain about, which is very unlike me.

Hannah's college applications are all in. She has applied to public universities in Vermont and California and private ones in Pennsylvania, Utah, and Idaho. No responses yet, but let's face it, the private school in Utah (her parents' alma mater) is the only one we really care about. That letter won't come until February, but this week Hannah received a music album (entitled "Echoes of the Sabbath") from the admissions office in Provo, accompanied by a note congratulating her on her academic success. I'm not sure how much to read into that, but I reckon it's not a bad thing. It's also a little amusing. Of all the tchotchkes she has received from all the colleges seeking to showcase their unique coolness, it's hard to imagine any other institution attempting to lure her with something called, "Echoes of the Sabbath."

We hope it works. But we miss her already.

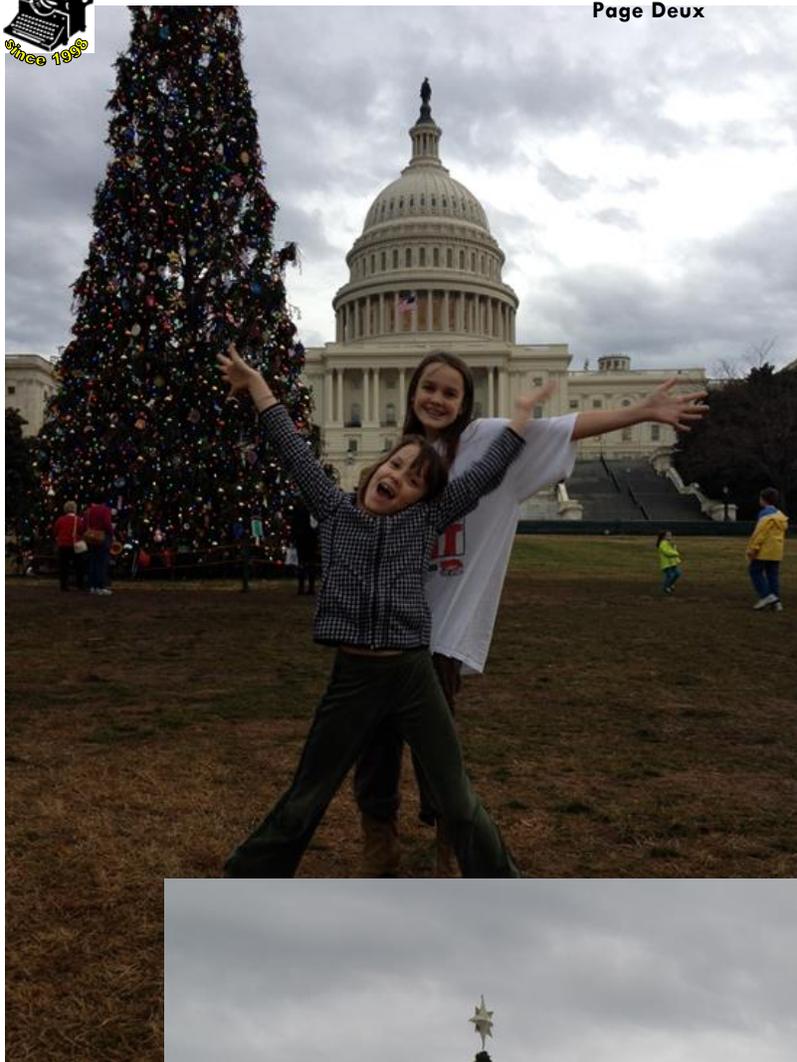
I feel bad that I didn't write about Sophie's choral and cello performances at the school's winter concert. She did great. I also didn't get to Crystal's ovarian cyst (and our 6 romantic hours together in the Holy Cross ER). She's fine now. Hope you are, too.

Love, Tim et al



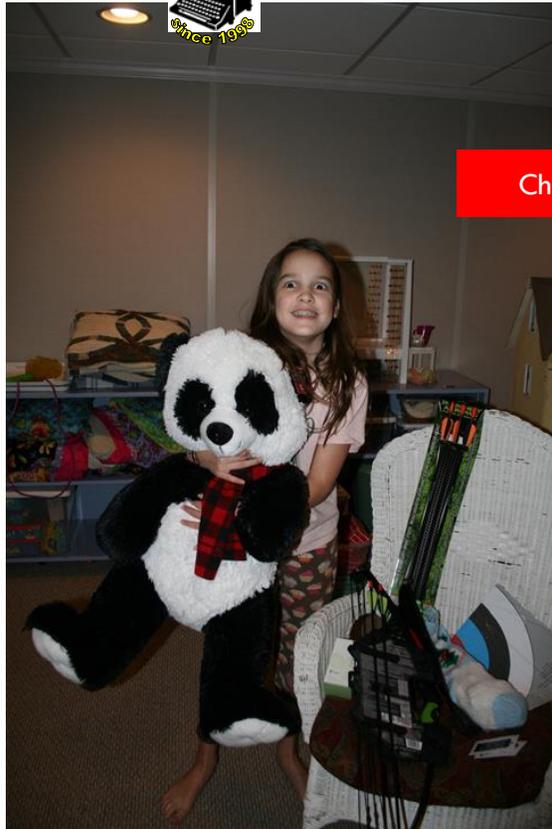


"This girl just accidentally broke your snow globe. She is really sorry and hopes you won't be mad."

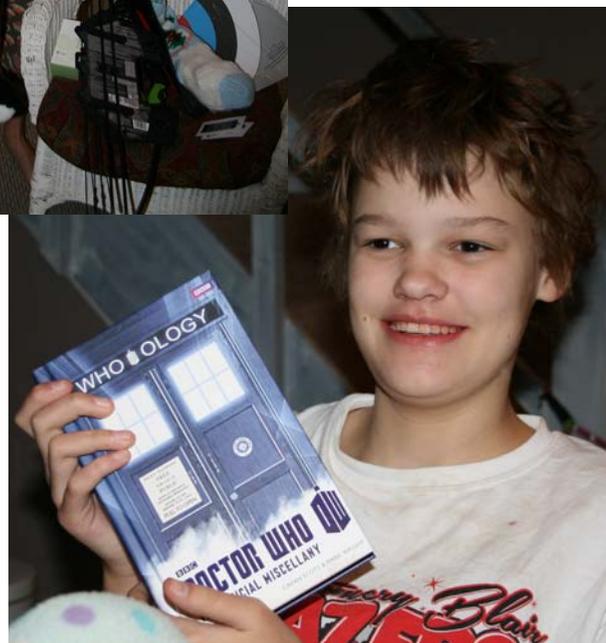


Grandma Carolyn wanted to visit the National Christmas Tree, which, this year, was from the state of Washington, where she lives. These pictures were taken on Sunday, December 22nd, with temperatures in the 60s. (Christmas Eve brought brief snow flurries and temps in the 30s. It was 22 on Christmas morning.)





Christmas morning bliss



Happy 17th birthday, Hannah.