

for the picture. They looked so innocent it was hard to imagine them ever growing into adults. Adam wondered if somewhere there was a childhood photo of him that looked like this one. A picture in which he was young and smiling and still innocent.

There was a knock at his door that shook him from his stupor. He opened a drawer and swept the money off the desk. His assistant poked her head into the office and said, "Doctor, your next appointment is here."

"Send them in."

She looked at him curiously. "Is everything all right?"

He nodded, trying to act as if nothing had happened.

She closed the door. He opened his computer and saw his scheduling book. The appointment was a young couple. No children. They had some money, but not too much. They didn't want anything fancy with their enhancements. In fact, they had tried to get pregnant naturally but hadn't been successful. The only reason they were pursuing any alterations to the DNA is because they had to go through in-vitro fertilization anyway.

Adam's eyes drifted to the corner of the screen to the blueprint he had typed up for King. He sat upright. He looked at the door, then back to the screen. He began keying commands. He copied the template in its entirety. Then he took out King's final request and made some quick additions: benevolence, compassion, bravery.

The door opened as he was finishing, and he rose and exchanged pleasantries with the young couple. He could tell within seconds they would make kind, loving parents. When they sat and explained what they were looking for—just a happy, healthy baby—Adam smiled, nodded toward his computer, and said, "I've got a template here that is just what you're looking for."



Erika Meitner

Our Holiday Letter

Our holiday letter
is covered in flocked velvet
and bitterness. It starts

with dear friends. We've had
a hard year. I write this
while coughing. I write this

in a place of not-knowing
(despite the season)
if we are healthy, or safe,

or long-lasting. My son
comes home and complains
about Christmas in school—

the songs Ruby's dad
played on his guitar,
the songs they sang

with Mrs. Quesenberry
in Assembly. He could not
name any of the songs.

On the bus, he told Brody
that Santa doesn't exist
and Brody's mother

sent me an angry
text about childhood,
about wanting her son

to remain blissful longer
and I wasn't sure what
to write back. Dear

friends. This year
has dragged like
a broken tailpipe

all scrapes and sparks,
but I'm telling you,
though we've been

tested and tested,
most days, we still
feel blessed, and

wish you peace
in spite of our
hardships, and

maybe joy,
though yesterday,
twenty children

were gunned down
in an elementary
school in Newtown,

and is there anyone
who isn't thinking
about every same

weekday morning—
we wave to the dark
squares of yellow

bus windows our only
child rides to a place
where they sing songs

he's never heard. *What
were some of the words?*
I ask him, and he

can't answer. Dear
friends. Our holiday
letter this year will

be brief. There's been
illness and tragedy,
disappointment and some

anguish. We've kicked
this year down the hill,
like a half-deflated,

stuttering soccer ball.
But now there are
children forming delicate

chains with their arms
on each other's
shoulders—children

being led to safety.
There are children
here. Dear friends.

