

## Kelly & Greg Christmas Letter 2022

Well, its officially that time of year again. The stockings have been hung with care, the lords are a-leaping, the maids are a-milking (more on that later) and here I am spending my Christmas Eve writing the Christmas letter that I have been putting off for months. Luckily, 2022 has been a banner year in the Brown household so I should have plenty of material. I won't beat around the bush as I'm sure many of you are already aware of our most exciting news of the year. After endless visits to the doctors, years of feeling inadequate and countless sleepless nights our family's prayers were finally answered....

I grew my first mustache.



*Our little bundle of joy on my top lip*

Admittedly it is a look that screams "must stay 100 yards away from a school zone" but if you have never grown a mustache in your life can you really call yourself a man?

Other than that, there wasn't too much newsworthy that happened this year. I suppose I can mention that after roughly two years of trying, Kelly finally managed to get pregnant in January. To all those people suggesting that I was infertile, you are all certainly embarrassed now aren't you? The update we gave in last year's letter was that we had tried the humping stage (my personal favorite) and the IUI stage (turkey baster baby) with no success and were moving on the IVF stage (petri dish baby). Well it turns out our healthcare system does do more than just siphon money out of my bank account as no less than half a month into the new year we had a positive pregnancy test and were expecting our very own little petri dish baby. As a lot of expecting parents do, we had to come up with a nickname that we could call the baby bump until he popped out. The first true photo we had of him was a lump of cells in a

petri dish that looked a lot like a bowl of Quaker Oats so we decided to roll with "Oatmeal". Cletus the Fetus was also considered but it sounded a little confederate.



***Oatmeal smiling for his first photo***

Obviously we were both over the moon and in all honesty kind of relieved that we weren't broken. If you know Kelly you'll know that she was determined to not let some measly thing like growing a child in her womb stop her from spending her summer out and about. All throughout the pregnancy we were going to concerts, sporting events, travelling back and forth to New England and even spent a week camping in the August heat. She tolerated it all by consuming more Tums than I thought was humanly possible and taking more pee breaks than I thought was medically required. She even handled us calling her "Big Belly Kelly" with all the grace of a 7-month pregnant woman in the August heat without A/C. What a little trooper my Big Belly Kelly is.



***Big Belly Kelly in all her glory***

By the time September rolled around Kelly was starting to look she was smuggling a basketball under her shirt and was more than ready to give Oatmeal his marching orders. Since it was an IVF baby we got to schedule an inducement which allowed plenty of time to prepare for the big day and get all settled in at the hospital. From there, things got pretty intense pretty quickly. I decided against the front row seats for the birthing process, but in the heat of moment curiosity got the best of me. I did sneak one quick glance while his head was crowning and will now have that image permanently seared into my frontal cortex for the rest of my life. Not to be too graphic but it looked like a balding man trying to force his way into a turtleneck sweater that is two sizes too small.

12 hours of contractions and 4 hours of pushing later and out popped a hilariously large beefcake of a baby. Our boy Calvin came out of the womb weighing 10 lbs 13 ounces. To put that in perspective, he clocked in at the 99.4 percentile for newborn weight. As Kelly's aunt Donna put it, she gave birth to a first grader. You could tell it was the talk of the town in the maternity ward because every new nurse after a shift change would take one look at him and say "oooooh you're the one" and then give a sympathetic glance to Kelly. Aside from being absurdly oversized, he came out healthy, happy and hungry. One thing they don't tell you is that they come out covered in uterus sludge that apparently you aren't supposed to clean off for a couple days. Because of this Calvin looked strangely Hispanic for about 48 hours and, if I am being completely honest, it did cross my mind as to whether there was some sort of mix-up at the fertility clinic. Once bathed he looked much more Caucasian (he is a Mooney after all) and now that he's a few months old he's starting to look a lot like baby photos of me when I was that age. Not sure if that is a good thing or not but we'll decide once he grows his mustache.



***Hispanic Calvin, Caucasian Calvin and Baby Greg***

Once we got home, we had a continuous parade of family and friends flying down to help us out and cuddle with Calvin. Kelly's parents, my parents, Kelly's sisters, my sister, and my brother all got in on the action. We even got a rare sighting of my buddy Danny Amaral outside his natural habitat of the 99s Restaurant and Maddie's Diner in Salem NH. From all the visitors to all the generous gifts at the baby shower we had everything we could possibly need to make the first few months a dream. Calvin spent the majority of those first few months staring at the ceiling fan, bouncing on the yoga ball, filling diapers



and being the most adorable little bastard you could imagine. As you'd expect he has had Kelly and I completely wrapped around his finger.

So far, my biggest takeaway from parenthood is that it feels strangely like being addicted to a drug. Rationally speaking, this child is taking quite a toll on you physically, emotionally, and financially. But every time he snuggles into your armpit you get a dopamine hit. Every time you get a whiff of that new baby smell you get a dopamine hit. Every time he sees your face and smiles you get a dopamine hit. Your brain rewires when you get enough of those baby love dopamine hits and next thing you know you are completely powerless, living at the mercy of a 3-month-old child. Sometimes when I am working-from-home I'll sneak downstairs and take a quick hit of baby smell just to fight off the withdrawals until I get off work at 5pm. I thought maybe I would get frustrated or annoyed when things were getting rocky but it's actually the complete opposite. I can be knuckle deep in a mud filled diaper while he screams his head off and I'm just proud that my little guy had a good poopy in his diapy.

One thing we learned very quickly is that the fastest way to quiet a crying newborn is to just throw him on a boob. As far as Calvin is concerned, Kelly was essentially born with two restaurants on her chest so, biologically speaking, the burden largely falls on her. Despite having to wake up multiple times a night for milking sessions, I think the breast feeding has been going about as well as any of us could have hoped. Kelly has the mental reassurance of knowing she can provide for her child, Calvin has as much milk as he can drink, and I now have a wife with huge knockers (always wanted one of those).



### ***My maid-a-milking learning the ropes***

I always knew that Kelly would be an amazing mother, but the real joy has come from seeing how truly happy Calvin makes her. I can just see it in her face when she is looking at him. She has always taken the hurdles in stride but when I reflect back on what it took to get here, you realize what a warrior she has been. From the mental hurdles of infertility to the daily IVF hormone injections to pushing out an almost 11 lb baby, she has earned the right to be this happy. There's no doubt that this whole experience hasn't been a walk in the park but if you told us last Christmas that this year we'd be decorating the tree with our newborn son we would have given anything for that to be true.

In fact, I'm already ready to start thinking about baby number two, because, as I've always said, if some drugs is good, then lots of drugs is even better.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays everyone!



*Uncle Greg and Auntie Kelly getting reps in with Kelly's sisters kid (left) and my sisters kids (right)*



*My very own personal designated driver for the summer*





*Calvin wrapping his dad around his little finger*



*Calvin wrapping his mom around his little finger*





*What use is it having a child if you don't dress them up in silly festive outfits?*





*The ever-expanding Mooney clan*



*Thanksgiving with Steve and his fiancé Lauren. Calvin reacting appropriately to Steve's ugly mug*



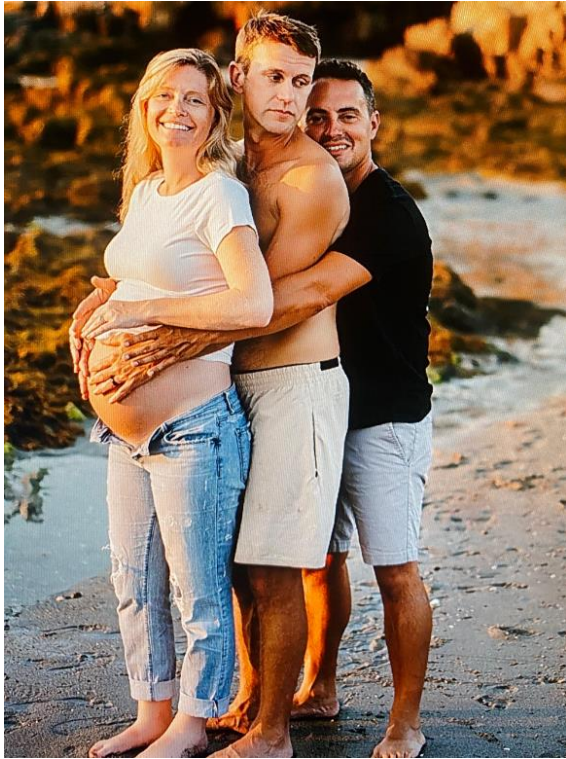


*The Mooney grandparents (left) and Aunty Carolyn and Aunty Lauren (right) getting their cuddles in.*



*The Brown grandparents (top), Uncle Steve and Uncle Dan (bottom) and Aunty Ellie (right) getting their cuddles in.*





*A before and after of Uncle Danny fulfilling his uncle duties*



*Quick shake of the hips and I call this little maneuver "the massage chair"*





*I isolated a frame-by-frame sequence of Calving filling his diaper*