

December 2017

Nikki and I have long talked about sending Christmas cards, alongside one of those whimsical yearly updates but have never had the motivation to spend hours hunting down addresses, designing the ever important (and as I now realize expensive!!) Christmas card, and assembling a note with enough whimsy to add some cheer to your holiday season. Well this is the year! Enjoy it, because it may never happen again.

There's no use avoiding the elephant in the room, as she is featured prominently on the front of the inaugural Christmas Card. We had a baby. Anastasia Elizabeth was born on her due date November 14th at 16:09 EST. She came into the world weighing 7 lbs 13 oz, (3.5 Kg) and measured 21 inches (53 cm) long. A month later now she's almost 9 lbs. (4 Kg). Nikki, is the real star here after carrying her for a delightfully uneventful pregnancy. So far Anna likes to hiccup, spit up, sleep, and, well you know, abuse the diaper budget. Her favorite food is milk. At risk of jinxing the whole thing, she sleeps 4-5 hours at a time overnight... this seemingly tiny activity has helped to keep the household mostly sane, though the cats are still adjusting.

The first half of Nikki's year consisted of working at a Montessori school in Wayland where she was an assistant teacher. She concluded working there in June with their graduation- very happy to take the hot summer off and "be pregnant." She also continued to teach dance at a studio in Woonsocket, RI up until about 39 weeks pregnant, an accomplishment I'm not certain I would have the mental, physical, or emotional stamina to achieve. She plans on returning to dance in January, just after she is done smoking me in our 2017-2018 Fantasy Football League.

I continue to work at LiveU, a company headquartered in Israel, as a product manager designing software and hardware for the broadcast television industry. Travel this year, as usual, was quite heavy including trips to: New York/New Jersey (at least 10 times,) Israel and Romania (twice,) Cancun, Seattle, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Las Vegas, Ireland, and London (twice, including a two-week stint for their SNAP elections in June, which also included my coworker Gal and I being there for the London Bridge Attacks.) I also was able to slip into the TV station and be the Technical Director for this year's running of the Boston Marathon, which I'm proud to say my brother Alex finished in 2:52:51... just 6 months after finishing a 100 Mile race in 25 hours 30 minutes! Neither of those last two statements are typos.

Vacations were somewhat light this year, though we did manage to get a few weekends in Vermont. The weather this summer was great for boating, and we spent many afternoons and evenings out on the lake with Dad. We were also excited to celebrate the marriage of friends John & Michelle and Jillian & Jared. While Nikki didn't break it down, I certainly did, to the point of losing my voice at the former, and limping around for several days after the latter.

2018 looks to be another dynamic and exciting year. We hope everyone has a happy and healthy New Year. Also, we are currently accepting applications for babysitters. Requirements are to be a human adult, and reside on the planet earth. Baby knowledge optional; ability to use Google search mandatory.

Cheers!

Chris, Nikki, Anna, Leonard (Squeaky) and Penny

December 2018

Look at this! We've managed to get an annual Christmas letter off two years in a row! ...Now where to begin?

Anna, the light of our lives, is growing and learning every day. We hit the lottery with this one too. While her first six months were likely typical for an infant, she now sleeps between ten and twelve hours a night and has done so since six months old. She's healthy, learning to ~~fall~~ walk, ~~throw food on the floor~~ eats nearly everything we give her, and in August started weekly ~~drowning~~ swimming lessons. I have taken the same approach to swimming that mother birds take to flying: push them out of the nest. Anna actually *likes* going under water and thinks it's funny when I pull her into the pool for the "wall safety skills." Most of the other parents treat their kids like they brought their iPhone into the pool... Just sayin'. These water safety skills came in handy when Anna succeeded in diving backwards into the Baptismal Font at her Christening ringing out a large "gong" as her head hit the edge of the metal bowl. She giggled.

Nikki returned, as expected, to dance in January which meant starting the newest and most exciting logistical effort of our lives: child coverage. My travel schedule has not changed much (see below) and combine this with dance 3 days a week, and you have my incredible mother or "Coo Coo" for short, to thank for helping watching our little ~~ticksing time bomb~~ angel. Nikki and I extend our deepest gratitude to Mom and everyone who has helped to ensure that we can maintain our sanity, and surprisingly a good portion of our lifestyle, including: Papa, Grandpa, Erica, and Aunties Jess and Beans.

Nikki was also able to dance in the 2018 Kinetic Synergy Dance Company show, a company she has been part of for nearly a decade. Anna was able to hold it together for exactly fifteen seconds of the show. And I managed not to fall backwards off a ladder before the show this year, which was a win for everyone. I did however (somehow?) end up with a Mono reactivation, which slowed me down for a few months. Not recommended.

Weddings are always highlights in our year, and this year we were thrilled to celebrate the weddings of our friends Chris & Sara and my brother Alex and his wife Alice. Alex and Alice's wedding festivities also included a wedding shower in New York that was better described as a "Wedding Thunderstorm." Fortunately guests are waterproof, and nobody was struck by lightning, so fun times were had by all.

And aside from one stretch where I was home for about eight weeks straight, at which point Nikki was begging me to go back out on the road, I was once again all over the globe. Trips this year included: New York/New Jersey twelve or so times; Las Vegas twice, for a total of almost 3 weeks; Israel and Romania three times; Canada, Mexico, Atlanta twice each; and Brazil, Wisconsin, and California all once. It was an exciting and challenging year as I worked to successfully launch a product called "Matrix" with an international team of cross-functional professionals. Working with so many wonderful people from so many diverse cultures and backgrounds is arguably the single best part of my job.

So as we enter 2019 we would like to wish you our very best. We know 2019 already holds many exciting things for a lot of you. We hope it will be filled with much joy, the ability to connect with old friends, make new ones, travel, and in the case of our family, afternoons on the lake, margaritas on a hot summer evening, and chasing Anna around our still-yet-to-be-babyproofed house.

Cheers!

Chris, Nikki, Anna, Leonard (Squeaky), and Penny

December 2019

The cover of my high school yearbook said, “Seconds pass slowly, but years go flying by”—and as this year has flown by, I can’t help but feel that nothing truer has ever been written.

Anna, aka Sparky or Sparkles or Sparkplug, has officially entered the “I’m going to try and kill myself every day” stage. The result of which, is really, that she tries to kill Nikki and me daily as well. She has met the gas grill table (forehead) and the excessively heavy, absurdly pointy, and incredibly hard coffee table (mouth) among other odds and ends—my personal favorite walking full speed into the glass sidelight next to a glass door at a restaurant. The majority of the time she laughs it off which has earned her a reputation in her twice-weekly Gymboree classes as being “the Beast” – One of the other mothers accidentally hitting her with a ball thrown in class panicked before she realized “oh thank god, it was only Anna,” as any other child would have most certainly burst into tears.

When she’s not at home trying to kill herself with the various other pieces of child-unfriendly furniture, she might be found at swimming trying to drown herself, Coo Coo and Papa’s house trying to throw herself down the stairs, or Grampa’s house engaged in similarly dangerous behavior. This is fun...! On the plus side she eats almost everything, sleeps all night, insists on helping to empty the dishwasher (and somehow knows where everything *actually* goes!) And when she’s not moving in all directions simultaneously, she is talking a combination of 80 different languages, 79 of which can only be understood by her, and maybe the cats, to whom understand every word as “RUN!”

Nikki is looking better than ever as she continues to both teach dance and dance in her 12th year at Kinetic Synergy Dance Company, as well as get up early to workout in the living room. This is most certainly a necessity as my butter-laden French style cooking is good for the soul, but not much else. Nikki continues to post her fitness progress on Instagram, while I have decided I’m done with Facebook for a while and now fill my time doing the New York Times Crossword... or at least *trying* to do the NYT Crossword.

This was a rather heavy year for travel, where for the better part of six months, I was in NYC or New Jersey at least every other week. Other trips included: Miami, Atlanta, Ft. Myers, Las Vegas, Israel (twice,) Romania, Toronto, Amsterdam, Tokyo, Seoul, and Ahmedabad India – and thanks to India I now know I’m moderately lactose intolerant! I too ended up losing a bunch of weight this year, but in a much less exciting way than Nikki.

In other news, there are now two German cars sitting in the driveway, and I’m certain I’ll never buy anything not made in Stuttgart again. We did manage to spend a couple of days down the cape with Nana and got Anna to the beach where she almost got carried off by an errant coyote. The boat has a new engine (thanks Dad!) and we spent many an afternoon on the water. Anna also loves the boat, but all aforementioned rules of Anna apply: 1- tries to kill herself, 2- doesn’t stop moving, 3- doesn’t stop talking.

We attended no weddings this year but congratulations to Mahendra & his wife, and Diksha & her husband who both got married this year in India. Our friends Jess & Doug and Sara & Chris, and my cousins Heather & Matt welcomed children into the world. Looks like there’s a few more babies coming in 2020, and I’m happy to report... that list does not include us. Y’all just got excited for a second there, hua?

Our Best Wishes for an Exciting 2020,

Chris, Nikki, Anna, Leonard (Squeaky), and Penny

December 2020

Certainly this has been a year of numbers, and as someone who works closely day in and day out with some of the largest news organizations in the world, I have been drowning in the tragic arithmetic playing out around the globe. There is little doubt in my mind that there will be a big fat asterisk next to 2020 forever, ultimately pointing to footnotes that are more relevant than the content that required footnoting.* This being said I would like to focus on some of the numbers from our family over the year 2020.

(-129,000) miles: the change in miles flown compared to 2019. Normally I'd be excited to mention all the places I was able to travel this year, and all the amazing people and cultures I was able to experience. Early this year, I travelled to New Jersey, Cancun, and Florida.

One: Anna started preschool this year! It's walking distance from the house, and classes are mostly held outside. She's having a great time but struggles to sit still. Fortunately, there's a fence around the playground so she can just ricochet around like a super ball shot out of a cannon. Subsequently we introduced Anna to "the Roadrunner and Coyote" cartoon— because depending on the day, both the roadrunner and coyote are her spirit animals.

Two: Number of new family members added. In January we got Amy, a "buff" yellow canary. Because one is never enough, in October we added a white canary, Sheldon. I have *always* wanted a bird, and after rationalizing that 10,000 years of feline evolution to kill songbirds wouldn't matter, made the leap. They are beautiful little things, but they are also capricious. One of the books I bought is titled *Brats in Feathers, Keeping Canaries*. Never has a book title been any truer. **

Three: Anna turned three on 11/14. We threw a Zoom party, which went about as well as you would imagine for a toddler with the attention span of a goldfish. Speaking of goldfish, we continued to go to swimming every week once the school reopened this summer. Prior to that Anna would gleefully jump off the boat in the lake, laughing, while the rest of us watched, in some mild state of panic. Given how much she enjoys the water, we enlisted her help numerous times to "wash the car" ...which turns into a big game of "wash the Daddy."

Four inches, 145 decibels, and 27 hours: The size, loudness* and number of hours a day* that male canaries sing. Sheldon is quite the vocalist... To the extent that my coworkers on Zoom ask if I left a window open, and Nikki's dance videos are filled with cheerful birdsong.

Seven weeks: the number of weeks Nikki has taught dance remotely. The performing arts have taken a real hit, and as if learning ballet or modern wasn't difficult enough, teaching it via webcam or recorded videos shared via an app, has proven even more challenging. Nikki has handled this quite well, despite if you ask her, "how's it going?" the response is, "this is hard."

Ten gallons: the approximate volume of water a male canary is capable of throwing out of the bowl onto the floor when taking a 20 second bath.***

*OK, this might be hyperbole, but you get my point.

**Except maybe *Great Expectations*. Great Expectations only lead to *Great Disappointment*, mostly in how terrible that book is.

***Minor exaggeration. It's closer to 10 ounces of water.

Seventy-Five: number of days I spent living alone with my 90-year-old grandmother. I suppose this one needs a bit of context: on *March 11th** I hopped a plane to visit Nana at her home in Florida for a week. On *May 11th* I boarded a plane with Nana in tow to fly back home to Cape Cod to quarantine for 2 weeks, before finally getting to see Nikki and Anna after 75 days away from home.** Nana and I made the most of it though; I would cook, she would do the dishes. Every night in Florida we would have cocktail hour between 5-ish and 6 on the lanai, and dinner sometime around 7. Some nights we would watch TV together, others I would retire to the den and chip away at a project. She saw me turn that same den into a makeshift television studio, and later the office down the Cape too, as I became the host of the LiveU Sports Show for 10 episodes. For my 33rd birthday in April we rented a red Mustang convertible and drove around on a glorious sunny Florida afternoon. And every day she would watch me sit at her dining room table, sometimes quietly working, but more often shouting obscenities or getting into an unwinnable argument in a Zoom meeting. This was one of the most turbulent times imaginable but was true a privilege to spend so much time with Nana. There was a certain calming effect in being around someone with such poise and composure in those dark early days of the pandemic, and I am forever grateful for her strength and steadfast company.

2021: The year. It is with much optimism that we look forward to 2021, but, as Robert Frost wrote in one of my favorite poems, “*There are miles to go before I sleep.*” It is, in this holiday season, I would like to offer two final thoughts:

One, we have so much to be grateful for. Those warm afternoons on the boat. 1000-piece jigsaw puzzles. The technology that enables me and countless others to do our jobs from anywhere. The extended time we’ve had with our families.*** The scientists, frontline workers, doctors and nurses who willingly labor, every day, to dig us out of this mess.

Two, we have so much more to give. Both *right now* and on the other side of this people in our families and communities will need help. If you can, I would urge you to find some way to support those around you. Donate to the local food pantry. Shop local. Call someone and ask them, “*How are you?*” Get takeout.**** Help a neighbor with their grocery shopping. In the early days of this, there was a feeling of togetherness, and despite the unfathomable chaos that has gripped most of 2020, it is my sincerest hope that we will emerge with a stronger sense of together.

So, from our family to yours, we wish you all the best for a healthy, joy filled, 2021.

Cheers!

Chris, Nikki, Anna, and the “cast” of *The Big Bang Theory*: Leonard, Penny, Amy & Sheldon

PS: If you want to see a snapshot of our year in pictures and some of our favorite recipes, visit anastasiaperry.com. Yes, this website is real. Yes, I know I’m nuts. Yes, she will hate me for it when she’s 13. It’s all good.

*AKA “the day the world ended.”

**Nikki is now in on track for canonization after wrangling a 2-year-old alone for this long.

***Though maybe *too* much time for some...

****The effects of this have contributed ~15 pounds to my 2021 exercise goals. Nikki’s obsession with the local donut shop *Rocco’s* hasn’t helped either.

December 2021

Oh, hey there! Welcome to the end of 2021, what I can only say felt like a slightly better-informed version of 2020. Johnny Raincloud here: I think 2022 is going to look much the same.

Given the increased amount of time we've been spending at home, it's only fitting that I begin with all the things we've done at home this year. Early this year we had the carpets sent out for cleaning. The cats thought this was a wonderful joke, and readily handled the situation upon the return of said carpets. Fairly certain this is the last set of cats, or carpets. Unsure of which yet, but let's say it's not looking great for either.

Over the January – April stretch of time I had the ~~opportunity and pleasure~~ of working on remodeling my parents' master bathroom. As is true with any project with my father, I'm not 100% sure how either of us are still alive. I jest, but honestly, he tries to kill me, I try to kill myself, sometimes we try to kill each other... you know, all good. The results are beautiful, but I swear to God if I ever find the person who decided 15x30-inch tile was a 'good idea' I will plaster them into a shower wall. Not jesting.

Back at our house I'm both the proud owner of a Big Green Egg, and the investor in a budding small business: *Find Your Spark Jewelry*. Nikki, in addition to continuing to teach dance at Lyrics in Motion of Woonsocket, RI, decided to take on new challenges this year and begin an Etsy shop making one-of-a-kind stretch bracelets. This activity consumes both Anna's nap time and our dining room table. She has an eye for it and has created some beautiful designs that you can find online at findyoursparkjewelry.com. As her sole investor I urge you to take a look – they make great gifts for all occasions!

Beyond the usual summer activities consisting of dodging raindrops and taking the boat out on the lake, we had a few other fireworks. I managed to blow up the Expedition (granted she's a 2008 and has 140K miles) on my way to my friend Peter's house. Upon arrival smoke was billowing out from under the hood, and full Three Stooges style jumped out of the car shouting for Pete to grab the fire extinguisher. Good news: I only drained the engine of coolant; bad news: it was expensive to fix.

Anna also had her first trip to the hospital after taking a swan dive into the coffee table. It was a wonderfully unique experience. Despite the decent sized dent in her forehead, she proceeded to dance around the waiting room at the ER, with *legitimately sick children* around, shouting "Daddy I dancing!" After eight hours, some glue, and a band-aid, we were almost on our way, when she melted down screaming "I don't wanna go home!" ...to which I replied, "Anna, we can't afford to stay here." And thus, headed home to put rubber bumpers on the corners of the coffee table.

We did manage a short road trip to spend a weekend with our friends the Pisarski's in southern New Jersey. Their new pool is beautiful, and through their eleven-month experience working to install said pool, we've learned that if you want a pool, buy a house with one.

It's understandable to say that the highlight of our year was sixteen days in September on the island of Hawai'i – sometimes called the Big Island. Despite wide-ranging and complex Covid protocols, we had an incredible time, splitting the trip between Hilo on the windward (rainy) side, and Kailua-Kona on the leeward (dry) side.

As it was Anna's first big trip, inclusive of an 11-hour flight from Boston to Honolulu, we asked "Grandma Jan" – my best friend's mother who's known me since I was fourteen – to join us as an "extra set of hands" to help wrangle an always-in-motion 3.5-year-old. The first week we spent visiting Volcanos National Park, visiting botanical gardens, waterfalls, and star gazing on Mauna Kea; the tallest mountain on the planet if you measure from the base of the seamount. The photo of Anna featured on our card is near the summit of Kilauea, which started erupting just two weeks after we left. We went to a vanilla farm and learned that vanilla is an orchid that has no natural pollinators left and therefore needs to be hand pollinated. Yes, every vanilla bean on earth has been hand pollinated. Anna's highlight was red velvet pancakes and riding the elevator at the hotel.

The second week we rented a house with a pool. We visited a seahorse farm, went to the beach, and saw sea turtles. Nikki and I took a dinner cruise for our 12-year date-a-versary. We got soaked by a squall line but were delighted by a magnificent sunset. The highlight for me was a helicopter trip over the Kohala coast on the northern side of the Big Island. It provided views of multi-thousand-foot waterfalls, dense rainforest-laden ravines, and revealed microclimates ranging from incredibly wet to bone dry. Anna was in silent awe. Nikki was silently choking it back.

Despite a wonderful trip that Anna handled amazingly well, no good thing (especially in September, a historically bad month for our family), goes unpunished. Just four hours after our return from the vacation of a lifetime, our tabby, Squeaky (Leonard,) had a freak accident in the living room of all places, where he ended up spiral fracturing both bones in his left leg. Yes, that is as awful as it sounds. Fortunately, we live just seven minutes from one of the best veterinary hospitals in the country, Tufts, so I scooped him up and headed there on zero-sleep over twenty-plus hours of travel. After surgery the next day, and more than eight weeks living in our crate in our living room meowing his head off, he continues to improve, slowly, back towards 100%. Anna *does* seem to be getting along better with both Squeaky and Penny, though both remain skeptical... especially when the princess costumes come out – daily. They come out daily.

While travel remains almost non-existent for me, I did manage to launch a new product at the end of November called *LiveU Air Control*, with the help of teams from both Israel and Romania. It was more than eleven months of work, culminating in a multi-camera production at WGBH in Boston for the launch event, which you can find on YouTube by searching for the italicized text above. LiveU also went through another exit and is now owned by The Carlyle Group. It's been an interesting year at work.

All in, 2021 feels like a success, despite too many close calls with Covid. In looking forward to 2022, we would like to wish you and yours a very Happy New Year. Maybe this is the year; maybe it's not. If the last twenty months have taught me anything, it's that living with uncertainty is certain, and that finding joy in the small things is imperative.

With that, from our family to yours, we wish you all the best.

Love,

Chris, Nikki, Anna, & the cast of the Big Bang Theory (Leonard- Squeaky, Penny, Amy, and Sheldon)

PS: For photos of our year visit anastasiaperry.com!

January 2023

I feel like I need to share a secret with y'all: the real reason we do a New Year's card is because it gives us a several week buffer to get our act together vs. attempting to get out a Christmas card and failing miserably year-after-year. So Happy New Year! All in, 2022 felt... mostly normal. It was a tremendously busy year with lots of change – looking back I can't help but feel like we were attempting to make up for time lost in 2020 and 2021.

Anna completed her 2nd year of preschool and commenced her 3rd in September. She also did several weeks of "camp" over the summer which included lots of activities, the majority of which we can only assume had a singular goal to come home as filthy as possible. She loved every minute. Nikki, who does the lion's share of the laundry, did not. Anna went to dance camp at "Auntie Jess's" studio over the summer, and started dancing at Nikki's in the fall. Two performances in now, I'm happy to report she can dance like a 5-year-old. She continues swimming, *finally* without me having to join her in the pool, and has impressed her teachers with her fearless attitude.

Nikki had a blissfully uneventful year which included making and selling bracelets on Etsy, two spa weekends with her friend Cara, and her 8th season teaching dance in Woonsocket, RI, at Lyrics in Motion. The majority of her time is spent trying to prevent Anna from burning the house down and trying to break up the assassination plot the cats continue to actively scheme. Though the root of the plan currently seems to involve barfing on every carpet in the house, so I'm not entirely sure what the end game will be. We, and our carpets, live in constant fear.

Over the summer we spent a week in a house in Jackson NH with my parents, and were joined by Alex and Alice for a few days too. Despite my sincerest intentions not to, I did end up having fun at both Story Land and Santa's Village, though not nearly as much fun as Anna and Nikki had. We finally got my mother up to the top of Mt. Washington too – via the Cog Railway.

Meanwhile the biggest change this year has been my new job, which I started in March, working for AWS Elemental. AWS Elemental is a 300-person team building video solutions for the broadcast and media industries inside of Amazon Web Services, which runs about 40% of the global public internet... and as the name implies, is part of the behemoth that is Amazon. Business travel managed to reach 2019 levels and included five trips to Portland OR to visit the office, Las Vegas for the NAB Show, Amsterdam for the IBC Show, and a grueling six-day trip to India which encompassed visiting three different cities. One of the photos featured on the back of our card this year is me with my friends Mahendra and Dipesh who were kind enough to fly down from Ahmedabad to explore Mumbai with me during a rare business-travel-fluff-day.

Covid was nice enough to grace our home twice, once for me, after I returned from the "Week of Welcome" at my new job (yes, I felt very welcomed!) and then in November Anna picked it up at school for her birthday ...again... and eagerly provided it to Nikki. Both times I ended up having to be the one to isolate in the 8-foot by 9-foot spare room, so that's awesome – but have now managed to watch every episode of Love Island Australia on Hulu, so there's that.

This now makes 2 years in a row that Anna has had Covid for her birthday, so as a preemptive measure we are henceforth, and in perpetuity, cancelling her birthday. Nikki has already informed me I'm going to lose this fight...

It was a tremendous year for other people in our family too – my cousin Emily got married to fiancé Ethan in August, my father retired after 30 years working at Staples in July, and my brother graduated with his RN and started working at a hospital in Albany NY. This makes Alex the 4th nurse on the Perry side of the family, including Nana, who made the trip to New York to attend his graduation.

Between BBQ birthday parties to attend, and some downright glorious afternoons on the boat, we had a wonderfully *normal* year doing the things we love the most: spending time with our family and friends, watching Anna grow and learn every day, and, thanks to Coo Coo and Papa, Nikki and I even got some Anna-less time in Newport RI and Vermont. Looking ahead, 2023 is already shaping up to be an exciting year with lots to look forward to (no, we're not pregnant – one arsonist in the house is plenty.)

So, from our family to yours we wish you nothing but health and happiness for the year to come. On the off chance you're coming to a city near us, don't be strangers... We won't be.

Love,

Chris, Nikki, & Anna

PS: For photos of our year visit anastasiaperry.com and for all your custom bead bracelet needs find Nikki's handiwork at findyoursparkjewelry.com.

[Late] December 2023

I've spent a great deal of time this year thinking about moments.

Moments are the essence of a photograph. In the best cases no photograph exists to capture that moment because you were wholly living in it. The moments living in my memory are fragments of actual reality: a smell, a taste, a feeling, a gaze, or the strand of a deep conversation. They are as indescribable as they are fleeting, carrying deep meaning and purpose. The value of a moment is derived from its transitory nature: should it live on too long it would be diluted – its brevity ensures concentrated meaning. I can't help but feel that living in that concentrated meaning is what life is all about. So, without further introduction, here are some of the moments I wish to share from our 2023.

My year started off with something of a bang. In late January, while on my way back from dinner in Portland, OR, my rideshare was crashed into by another driver. I'm now fine (and lucky) but did suffer a pretty good concussion. Despite the head injury, there were moments that felt significant. As we waited on the street corner for the ambulance, Officer Byrd, a Portland policeman, asked if I wanted to call my wife to tell her what had happened before I went to the hospital... I declined. He looked at me very confused until I explained that it was 3 AM on the East Coast and there was nothing I could do but worry Nikki. He was still confused.

While at the hospital, one of my coworkers showed up at 1:30 AM and stayed with me while they gave me a CT scan. He helped take off the dress shoes I was wearing, while I lay there in a neck collar. He later helped me back to my hotel at 4:30 AM. In the days following, another coworker and her husband welcomed me into their home. We had an incredible bowl of dumpling soup at an Asian place down the street. And further, yet another coworker stepped up and covered every ball I dropped over the next few months while I recovered. I feel so much gratitude and humility for their kindness and humanity, I would even say I was blessed. You know who you are. From the bottom of my heart: Thank You.

In March, after 3 years away, I finally returned to Israel to visit some former-coworkers-now-friends to *actually see the country* and not just an office/hotel/airport (as most business trips go). I was delighted that my mother agreed to tag along to come experience the amazing culture Israel has to offer. Boy oh boy did my friends rollout the red carpet. We were taken on excursions to float in the Dead Sea and to visit an old fort in the city of Acre (pronounced *ak-Ko*). We dined like the kings of old and basked in the warmth of the people, including at a potluck in my honor at Anat's home. Due to a late winter snowstorm in Boston, our travel home was disrupted for two extra days, so Mom and I had to venture out in Tel Aviv to do laundry. We had the best drip-down-your-arm cheeseburgers while we waited for our clothes to be washed and dried. The next day we went to Jaffa, ate shawarma and hummus, and wandered the flea market, before watching the sunset over the Mediterranean. On the way to the airport the final morning we had to stop on the highway because our taxi driver, Mickey, had to hop over the guard rail to pee. I'd still hire him next time I'm there.

In June, Grandma Jan joined Nikki, Anna, and me on an 18-day trip to the Big Island of Hawai'i, a reprise of our 2021 excursion, sans Covid restrictions. Hawaii Island (the proper name for the Big Island) is far-and-away one of our favorite places on Earth. This time we were treated to a glimpse of the Goddess Pele herself, the deity of volcanoes and fire, and the creator of the Hawaiian Islands. As luck would have it, six days before our trip, the volcano Kīlauea started erupting. We visited during a spectacular day filled with rainbows beaming from bright white cumulus clouds set against a deep blue sky that merged imperceptibly into the Pacific.

But the real magic happened when we returned late the next evening. Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is a 45-minute drive from Hilo up the northeastern side of Kīlauea, which stands at 4,091 feet (1,246 m) above sea level. Most of Kīlauea is situated on the windward (rainy) side of the island; we passed through clouds and heavy showers during our ascent into the darkness. Then, as we were driving down Crater Rim Drive, the

sky began to glow a warm red hue. We parked our car in the lightless parking lot, donned our newly purchased red-colored LED headlamps, and walked to the edge of the Halema'uma'u Crater. There, through the mist about a mile away, was Pele. She was throwing molten rock 30 feet in the air from a single vent. Despite the fact there were around 100 people standing in the 40-degree Fahrenheit (4.5° C) weather, the only thing you could hear was the breeze, otherwise enveloped by defeating silence, and the low groaning rumble of 2,200° F (1,200° C) rock being thrust from the earth.

As luck would have it, I set my tripod up next to an off-duty park ranger and aspiring photographer. She started her day at 7AM. It was now after 10PM. She was taking a few last snaps before going home to sleep for a few hours, vowing to return pre-dawn to catch the sunrise. She remarked, "When Kīlauea is erupting you don't need sleep. You need to be here. There's time for sleep later."

The next night around 11PM we ventured 9,200 feet (2,800 m) up to the observation deck on Mauna Kea. There we could see the entirety of the Milky Way, with Kīlauea, and Pele in all her glory, illuminating the horizon a yellow-orange hue. Turns out, there is in fact time for sleep later.

Towards the end of the trip, with Nikki braving seasickness, Anna, Jan, and I went snorkeling off a sailboat near the James Cook monument in Kealakekua Bay. Anna, refusing to use a snorkel, plunged her face into the water with only swimming goggles. Moments later she came up for air and exclaimed, "DADDY, THERE'S FISH DOWN THERE!!", before submerging her face again to take in the visceral beauty of the reef.

In late July I had the honor of attending Scott and Akash's wedding in Portland. I remember sitting on the back deck of a vineyard making new friends, enjoying wine and cheese, overlooking a field with alpacas. We discussed the art of making kimchi. In August, Nikki, Anna, and I canoed our way through a tropical downpour to Chris (Nikki's Father) and Mary's wedding. They served enough oysters to feed a village. In September, with my mother and father in tow, we attended Ben (Nikki's Brother) and Christine's wedding in Chicago. We rode the subway – Anna's first time. My father hates heights (and therefore the Ferris wheel at Navy Pier). Anna grabbed my hand halfway through dinner at the reception and shouted, "Dance with me, Daddy!" I obliged. Our congratulations and best wishes to our newly married family and friends. We look forward to hearing about the moments you make together.

In October my friend Carolyn and her sons came to Boston from London. We went on a Duck Boat tour with a guide who was so hoarse it felt he was perpetually about three-seconds away from losing his voice. Anna got to drive the boat in the Charles River. We had an amazing lunch at the Union Oyster House and talked about rugby vs. football.

Nana, at ninety-four years young, joined us for Christmas dinner this year. Nothing makes me happier than preparing a specular meal for the Matriarch of the family. Nana: I'll cook for you anytime. Just this week we brought Anna to the Boston Ballet for the first time to see the Nutcracker. I'm now certain you haven't seen joy until you've watched a child experience the magic of suspension of disbelief.

Sadly, I've run out of inches... Maybe I need to switch to A4 paper. For a glimpse of our 2023 in pictures – including the Kīlauea eruption – visit anastasiaperry.com to find our photo album. And so, from our family to yours, we wish you the happiest of New Year's. We hope 2024 is packed with meaningful moments that make you feel love and fulfillment.

All our Best,

Chris, Nikki, and Anna

January 2025

I'm not sure I expected, or was fully prepared, for 2024 to be as full a year as it was. If you need evidence, look no further than the fact it's now mid-January and you're just getting our Happy New Year card... which have been sitting in a box, awaiting this letter, since mid-December. For some of you getting this in the UK, Israel, Romania, India, or Australia, it might be February by now. So Happy Groundhog Day!

Nikki and I kicked 2024 off in style celebrating our 9-year wedding anniversary in Woodstock, Vermont. Sneak preview: we celebrated our 10-year anniversary just a few days ago, also in Woodstock, Vermont. ~~Maybe~~ next year we'll go somewhere warmer.

In some ways 10 years have flown by, in others they haven't. I was flipping through old photos in Lightroom the other day, trying to find a picture of the rainy-day Nikki and I first visited the Kilauea volcano back in 2014. While I found it (and it was a truly miserable rainy day), I was more surprised that just the day before we were on a whale watch off the coast of Maui and saw humpback whales breaching in the Pacific. Based on the sheer number of photos I've got (249) I realized that I failed to *be present*, instead choosing to glue my retina to my camera viewfinder. I'm sure there are several hundred other instances where I should have been present but wasn't, and it is something that I intend to continue working on (which is hard, given my passion for photography). But if I could offer my usual yearly dose of unsolicited advice: put the phone, the camera, the computer, and the internet down and experience the world face-to-face. You might be surprised by the memories you end up keeping.

On February 2, 2024 I decided it was cold here in Massachusetts, and booked a last-minute February vacation cruise to the Caribbean. As it was Anna's first time, we weren't sure if she was going to like it, or feel trapped on a boat. Looking back, and for those of you who know our daughter, I was (am?) an idiot. Of course she was going to love it. Anna dragged us from the arcade, to the ice-skating rink, to the pool, to the climbing wall on the ship. Nikki was kind enough to let me nap in the warm afternoons outside on the balcony lounge chair.

In April I made my usual pilgrimage to the NAB Show in Las Vegas to pay homage to the broadcast television industry. This year I (somehow?) ended up as the executive producer and director of a daily broadcast live from trade show floor. The coolest part of the whole thing was getting to work with some incredibly talented folks here at AWS... who, like me, now all have PTSD from the experience. Thanks to the "Problem Children": Scott, Noor, Ali, Robin, Colin, Jamie, Bryan, Ashley and Simone for sharing in the "fun and games". Sorry for the PTSD. Related (but not really), I also blew up a 289 Wordle streak at NAB. Noor found me on the verge of tears in the Bellagio hallway and comforted me with a bottle of champagne. Speaking of Wordle streaks, Nikki lost her own 209-day streak in December. Oh well.

When at home this summer we threw a few BBQs, including two that had 18+ pound briskets that I smoked for 24+ hours (yes, they were delicious). Anna and I went to visit "The Dan's House" down in South Jersey for a weekend. She's quite the little air traveler... so long as she has a window seat, there are no tears. My father joined me for a trip to Portland, Oregon in June. We took a few excursions to see waterfalls out in the gorge, a drive down to wine country, a delicious BBQ at Margo and Devin's house, and an impromptu visit to the Navy "fleet week" that was happening just a few blocks away on the Willamette River. My best friend Pete joined me in December for the

company holiday party in Portland. My coworkers now know I have a father and a best friend, but are increasingly convinced my daughter and wife are AI generated. Anna is begging to go to PDX so maybe this is the year.

Now that we've made it to page 2, I must tell you that the feedback on last year's letter was "wow, that was very long." My friend Max kept telling me how he would go to read it, but because it was mixed in with the stack of bills and other mail, he would start, decided he was in the wrong frame of mind with a tax statement staring at him, and put it down. Well in October, while celebrating Mayra's birthday, Max decided I should read my 2023 letter, out loud, as though it were a poetry night at the coffee house. So, if anyone needs me to swing by and read this letter to you in 2025, let me know. I have enough air miles to get anywhere at this point.

The "big trip" this year was 2 weeks in Hawaii with Coo Coo and Papa (my parents) in August. We weren't planning on going this year, but you should never underestimate the convincing logic of a six-year-old... "But Coo Coo and Papa haven't been yet!" – The child is an extortionist. We did many of the same things we've done before, but this time Anna did get to hold a live seahorse! Anna also managed to come down with a cold ...that led to some sleep apnea issues ...resulting in a scary night and a visit from the lovely paramedics of the Hilo Fire Department. She's fine. But it was a wrinkle in an otherwise wonderful trip.

For Thanksgiving this year, we went to Disney World to celebrate the first anniversary of 'Aunt' Lori's 49th birthday. It was Anna's first time, and going with the Disney-Pros that are the Pisarski Family made it all the more magical. Special thanks to Maddie and Chloe for being the 'cool big sisters' and playing Minecraft with her.

Anna's now in first grade and loves going to school. She spends recess [every day] trying to improve her monkey bar skills. She still wants to be a baker and an artist. Alex, the boy Anna asked to marry her (by way of note) in kindergarten, and she are still great friends after 1 year. It is fun to watch the power dynamics play out between two 7-year-olds. Fortunately for us, Alex's parents are chill people which is great because Anna introduces Alex as "My Husband" frequently.

After 10 years teaching dance at Lyrics in Motion, Nikki has decided to take a much-deserved break from classes and just do some choreography this year. The extra time at home has been helpful given my travel schedule in 2024 was quite intense. It's also meant Nikki has been able to play the Harry Potter game on PS5 all the way through like 6 times.

We didn't celebrate any weddings this year, but congratulations to Scott and Colette for Baby Hazel, and Jillian and Jared for Baby Joelle. I wish I could tell you it gets easier with baby girls... so instead I'll just say "good luck." Also, an honorable mention to my friend Anat on becoming a grandmother!

And so, from our family to yours, we wish you a wonderful 2025. We can't wait to share it with you.

Cheers!

Chris, Nikki, and Anna

PS: For a glimpse of our year in photos visit anastasiaperry.com