



News from Peef & Lo

KEEPING WARM: The Ongoing Saga of Life Without Heat

The Saga
Continues...

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Winter has not yet arrived. But its phantom breaths are sweeping through the forest (or the city, as it were). Its frosty tongue has lapped at our herbs and painted our lawn with patches of tell-tale white. Its icy hands have graced our backs with chills, and put the fear of God into our souls.

It's difficult to believe that only a few short weeks ago, we were sleeping with a meager sheet over our bodies, and now we've buttoned up our gowns and bundled up into flannels and down comforters. But, it's true.

At the first writing of this newsletter, we had not yet succumbed to the temptation to turn the heat on in our house. Each year, in fact, we make a bit of a game of it — seeing how long we can hold out before turning the furnace on and giving in to the environmental wasteland that is winter in Wisconsin. This year, we made it to mid-October. Sure, we felt badly about not waiting a few weeks longer. But we finally gave in. And we've been warmer and happier campers ever since.

We justified our earlier-than-average breakdown by installing a programmable thermostat. It's something we've been talking about for a year or more, but not something we've buckled down and attended to until this year. With the price of gas looming down on us, we figured it might be best to pay attention to the little things this year. And so, few stones have gone unturned.

The thermostat turned out to be the easiest project we've taken on yet. Fearing the worst, we imagined we'd have to rewire half of our house in order to get the new-fangled technology to jive with our less-than-brand-new furnace. But it turned out to be a snap. It actually took us far longer to wade through the various types of thermostats available at Lowe's and decide on the one we wanted to take home with us.

Once the thermostat was installed, we had a great deal of fun programming it... trying to estimate how low we can take the temperatures in the dead of night without having to run the furnace all day long to get the house back UP to a decent temperature again. We finally settled on keeping everything fairly reasonable — at a balmy 66° during the daylight hours and 60° in the evenings and when we're not home. Even the cats seem happy with the arrangement at this point in time. So, we're quite pleased.

Next up, we must figure out a way to deal with our beautiful-but-drafty windows. Neither of us are very big fans of that lovely shrink wrap you can put over your windows to keep out the cold air (though we succumbed and used a window kit or two last winter). So, we've decided that our next project is going to be installing SEAL & PEEL caulk. This stuff seems pretty cool — and the idea that it's CLEAR, temporary, and can't be sliced by the wiles of feline claws is very appealing.

Rumor has it the caulk itself is a snap to apply, but that the stench it leaves behind is just next to deadly and that it lasts for quite a while. Great gobs of ventilation are recommended — so we're hoping for a nice, warm day in the next few weeks during which we can open the house up before we caulk ourselves in for the winter. Once that is taken care of, we think we're going to relax for a few weeks before thinking of another project to occupy our small DIY minds for another few weeks.

In other efforts to keep warm this winter, we have stocked our cupboards with RISHI masala chai (one of our newest obsessions), which we plan to make on every occasion possible. We are also busily researching the purchase of two new pairs of slippers so that our feet will be happy little snuggly things, even when the hardwood floorboards are creaking with cold. And, if we're both good little boys and girls, we're hoping we can finagle a handy little city-sized snow-blower into our winter budget this year. That won't keep us warm, exactly — but it will prevent us from having to spend too many long hours outside shoveling the wet Wisconsin snow. And that makes us both feel warmer just thinking about it.

In addition to all of those ideas, we're generating lots of extra warm wishes to send out to you and yours this autumn. We'll be back after the holidays — but until then, we hope your fires burn brightly and your toes remain snuggly.

PEEF and LO'S WARM THOUGHTS FOR THE COLD SEASON... things that make us happy about the dropping mercury:

1. There's always a good excuse to turn on the oven and bake something!
2. There are hundreds of good excuses for making hot cocoa with marshmallows (or chai tea with shortbread).
3. We love the crispy leaves and the smell of leaf mould.
4. We celebrate the return of slow-cooked cabbage and crispy latkes for dinner.
5. We get to wear our big, puffy, wool sweaters (not the itchy kind)
6. We don't have to iron the shirts we wear under our sweaters!!
7. Even fighting cats make good toe-warmers.
8. Getting snowed in can be a riot if you suspend reality for a while.
9. There is always more time for snuggling.

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We Have a SCREEN DOOR in our Dining Room.

Does the title of this article eek of desperation and utter lamentation? Does it instill the proper level of gravity to a situation that has us nearly besotted by grief? If not, please insert a frustrated SCREAM where the otherwise happy faces of Peef and Lo might normally appear. In short, we must report that the tides have NOT turned fast enough in the case of our more recent cat introductions. And the natives are getting restless.

Mona has been living with us for... oh, it must be a good three months by now. Or is that three years? We've lost count. In any case, during those lingering days, we have taken great pains in our introductions between her, Elmo, and Zoë. We have been fastidious in our cleaning of the litter boxes, hauntingly accommodating when it comes to feline dietary needs, and disturbingly obsessed in our efforts to encourage the cats to play with strings and mice and one another.

We really thought that peace and harmony would have prevailed by now. If we were dealing with puppies or ferrets or parrots, I am quite certain we would have met with success weeks ago. But alas, we are dealing with the likes of felines. And they are not so easily persuaded.

Instead, our previously homo-centric abode has become a microcosmic utopia for the feline breeds — litter boxes around every corner, fantastic hiding places along every pass, and rest stops stocked with tuna-flavored

tidbits and various sundries. Our living quarters have been divided up into ZONES — some reserved for napping, some reserved for play, some marked explicitly as neutral zones for introductory exercises. We have even gone so far as to install a screened door in between our dining area and kitchen — a place where the cats can meet to make faces at one another and sniff each others' scents without worry of being attacked.

Mona, as it turns out, is the PRIMMA DONNA of cats. We told you that she is a former model — and it shows. She is beautiful. And spoiled. And affectionate. And spoiled. And did we mention beautiful? Elmo and Zoë can't stand the fact that she takes up so much time in the loo getting ready each morning, and they're about fed up with the way she flings her hair from side to side as she walks down the hallway.

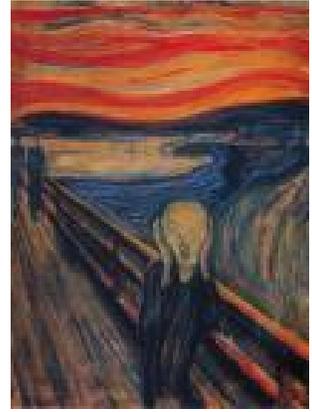
Each morning, we observe various feline rituals on either side of the screen — eating and bathing, and hissing and swatting. Each evening we see similar antics — sometimes preceded by odd sideways stalking behaviors or indescribably loud SCREAMING that can only be described as blood-curdling. Up until this week, we haven't felt fully comfortable with letting the cats interact without the assistance of that VERY SAFE, VERY reassuring screen door. However, we have broken down. We are growing tired of unlatching and relatching the screen door when we feel the need to transverse the house.

We've grown weary of schlepping laundry baskets through the slim opening in a lightning fast motion before one of the cats might have the opportunity to flash past and make an unwelcome entrance into the "other half" of the house.

And we have begun to let the felines mingle. In some ways, the exercise has been encouraging. All parties seem to experience at least a minute level of liberation when the screen door opens... and even Mona seems to realize that the myth of safety perpetuated by the screen was at least, in part, a façade.

On the darker side, the screaming has not yet ceased, though it shows some signs of abating. Elmo seems to have mastered the art of annoying Mona (both with a screen and without), so we're now in a phase of breaking bad habits and forming good ones. And we have stooped to using food as a means for training and bribery as well as for simple sustenance.

Will it take another week? Another month? Only time will tell. In the meantime, we shall hold our heads and hope...



Lo on School...

Among other adventures, Lo is finding out what it's REALLY like to go back to graduate school as an adult. Previous attempts at this adventure, she is finding, were just shadows of the reality... mere midgets in comparison to the giant she seems to be facing in this incarnation.

Some might scoff at this notion — Communications, after all, is a relatively common pursuit even for graduate study. Lo is the sort for whom academic "stuff" is fairly natural. Why would she even flinch at the thought of spending each evening doing a few hours of reading... writing a few research papers... sacrificing every last ounce of free time to do something as mundane as beating the proverbial dead horse?

It seems relatively dull to write an entire article about this phenomenon, so Lo asked that I just share a short, visual representation with you — a "wee test" that she feels she should have taken before embarking upon the fantastic journey that is proving to be graduate school. The test comes courtesy of Mr. Matt Groening, who among other things (namely the SIMPSONS), is also famous for bringing a cartoon entitled LIFE IN HELL to college newspapers everywhere.

Lo scored extremely high on this test, in case you're curious, and has decided to continue on with her degree, regardless of cost to her sanity and that of her dear husband.

SHOULD YOU GO TO GRAD SCHOOL?
A WEE TEST

T	F	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I AM A COMPULSIVE NEUROTIC.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I LIKE MY IMAGINATION CRUSHED INTO DUST.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I ENJOY BEING A PROFESSOR'S SLAVE.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MY IDEA OF A GOOD TIME IS USING JARGON AND CITING AUTHORITIES.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I FEEL A DEEP NEED TO CONTINUE THE PROCESS OF AVOIDING LIFE.

COPIOUS NOTES from the kitchens of ...



If you've been lamenting the fact that Peef and Lo have not invited you over for dinner lately, you can thank their cats in large part (see the stories of our war zone below). Their house has been a bit of a war zone, and that has led to a severe decrease in the amount of palatable food being cooked. If you want another reason or two, they could probably think of some really lame excuses... none of which, at this point, would even border on exaggeration. But it's probably a better idea to stop with the excuses right here.

The truth is, Peef and Lo HAVE been doing some cooking. In fact, Peef has been doing some pretty amazing stuff in the kitchen. (He has been doing most of the cooking in the evening hours while Lo is poring over those enchanting Communications textbooks that she might have mentioned earlier in this newsletter.)

As a result, Peef and Lo have eaten some truly delectable morsels over the past couple of months — including a batch or two of their famous slow-cooked cabbage (both with noodles and without), a great new recipe for caramelized onion enchiladas, and a fairly decent pasta with pumpkin sauce. Just last week, Lo discovered a recipe for apple crisp in a very recent issue of *Bon Appetit* magazine that rivals any that she has ever eaten before. It has a simply FABULOUS shortbread crumble on top that's buttery and rich and really downright sinful (check the October 05 issue if that has you feeling curious). And, to top it all off, P&L are even planning to get together with

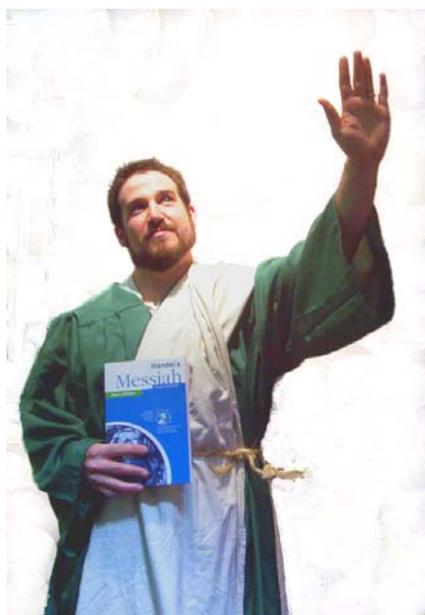
friends in the next few weeks to enjoy some of the season's best — steamed mussels, wine, and roasted veggies with a delicious garlic aioli.

So, why are they tippy-toeing around the fact that they don't seem to have a food column this quarter that is worth reading? Why can't they just come out and admit the fact that they're slimy and deceitful and beyond reproach?

The truth is, if you really must pry into their personal business, their food writer has come down with a very bad case of writers' block, and he won't be doing a column this month. It's sad — but true. They asked me to come here and make a grand effort at putting a bit of salve on the wound that this news would leave. But I'm afraid I'm not doing a very good job at all. In fact, I've probably just made things worse.

So, if you'd do me a service — just please refrain from sending editorials to Peef and Lo complaining about how they didn't talk about food in this particular issue. Just sort of "let it slide" this time, if you will. Maybe pretend that you didn't notice. Or, better yet, if the topic comes up in casual conversation just change the subject before anyone really notices what has happened.

THANKS. I'd be exceedingly grateful.



Take a long, hard look at the guy in the picture just above this text. Do you recognize him? Paul doesn't dress up in his Jesus garb very often, but when he does, there is quite a stir.

Try not to laugh. It's pretty difficult.

Can you Handel this Messiah?

And when you stop laughing, we'll make an attempt to relay the story of how Paul ended up dressed as a prophet above all prophets.

Let us start at the beginning. Every year, around Halloween, Hal Leonard employees get it in their heads that they should dress up as interesting music characters. Some years, they dress up as rock stars; some years, they pay homage to their favorite composers. This year, they decided to dress up as their favorite folios. Folios? Yes, folios.

At first, Paul was stumped.

In a moment of frustration, Paul flipped on his stereo. The comforting strains of Handel's Messiah flowed into his soul like healing balm. He looked in the mirror. He scratched his beard. And all at once, he realized what he needed to do. He came home from work, dug around in his closet, and came out looking quite a bit like... well, let's be honest. He looked like Jesus.

Paul's "Messiah" costume went over so well that other Hal Leonard employees actually asked to take photographs of him. They tossed around the idea of using him as a cover model. Rumors about him spread all the way to Minnesota to Hal Leonard's distribution center. Employees started calling Paul and asking him to bless their work day.

Lest any of you get the idea that we are terrible, terrible people for making a mockery, we hope to reassure you that there was no intention to offend. Anyone who knows Paul understands that, while he is a sweet guy, he's not exactly Jesus in disguise. Paul is also the sort who is sensitive to the fact that some people might not think dressing up like Jesus is a very nice thing to do. So, if you can, we'd ask that you suspend reality for a moment. Revel in the simple joy of playing dress-up. Laugh with us as we uncannily resemble between a poor music salesman and a carpenter's son... it's really quite remarkable.

The Saga Continues...

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AMOR SITIS UNITI

