

“NKATA”

Hello!

Happy Christmas to you from the Burtons and a prosperous New Year! And thank you everyone for the cards – hope you don’t mind but there were so many that as usual we’re sending out this “round robin” letter to all.

It was a bit of an odd year for Sarah and me – we died! Sorry to be blunt, but I can’t think of another way to put it. We were coming home from Christmas shopping when a truck veered off the road onto the pavement and killed us both (instantly, thank goodness! I’ve never been good with pain and Sarah hates hospitals).

Fortunately, all our affairs were in order – what with me being a financial advisor and Sarah keeping an eagle eye on our paperwork – so the kids will be fine. I mean, financially speaking. Emotionally speaking, they’re both quite upset. It’s rather taken the shine off Tom’s gap year and we won’t now be able to make Patricia’s wedding.

Apart from that (ha!) it was a good year. We finally took that trip to Florence, and the dining-room extension’s almost done. Not that we’ll be using it but it’ll add to the value of the property.

Must go now as we are dead. Joke! I mean, we are dead, but there’s some sort of light beckoning us. Joke! We’re still here.

All the best

John and Sarah

Xxx

--- ---

Hello!

Happy Christmas to you from the Burtons and a prosperous New Year!

And thank you for all the cards – we weren’t expecting any, given the last round robin we sent out where, if you recall, we sadly announced our deaths.

Well, here we are again. Or aren’t. I’m not sure. One minute Sarah and I were floating in a sort of hazy limbo, like we were smoking spliff (uni flashback or what) and the next we were back in our house – which is still our house, that is, since the kids haven’t sold it. You know kids nowadays – they never move out unless you actually evict them. Although they aren’t actually here, so maybe they’re thinking of renting it out, which might not be a bad idea in the current climate.

Either way, we're still here, and we don't know why. Sarah says things could be worse, and she has a point, but I don't know. It would be nice to be somewhere, I think.

In other news – nothing. We haven't been anywhere, and I mean that literally.

All best wishes

John and Sarah

Xxx

--- ---

Hello again.

Happy Xmas and all that.

Once more Sarah and I find ourselves back in our house, which clearly has been rented out judging by the state of the place. Sarah thinks it's students but I think it might be tramps. Joke! It's in a state either way and the kids really need to drop by and sort things out.

As to us being here, both Sarah and I have put our heads together and we think we're still here because something is tying us to the corporeal world. Maybe we have unfinished business, not that we can think of anything, or maybe there's a message we have to give someone. We don't know.

Please help us.

John and Sarah

--- ---

Sarah here. John isn't talking so I think he's sort of given up. It's hard to blame him. One minute we're nowhere, the next we're in the house (which seems to be undergoing some sort of renovation so maybe the kids are selling it) and then we're gone again. And then we come back. We don't know why. We want to move on. Anywhere will do.

Please, if you can help us, do.

--- ---

Hello!

Happy Christmas!

Finally some news! We've worked it out, the reason we're still here.

It's the cards. The Christmas cards. So long as people keep sending us cards, we're alive. In people's minds, anyway. And the more people who think we're alive, the more we're stuck here.

It's such a relief working it out. John and I have no idea how long we've been stuck here. At least three years. The house has been redecorated again – bit soon if you ask me! – and an old couple visited (but they couldn't see us) but that's all.

If you're still reading these round robins, then - we're not joking. We really are dead! And we would like you please to take us off your mailing list!

All the best and thanks in advance,

Sarah and John.

--- ---

We worked out. Well, Sarah did.

There's a reason nobody's taking us off their lists. It's the same reason nobody's reading these letters.

It's not just us who are dead. It's everyone else we know. Time has passed, a lot of it. More than three or four years.

The old couple came back and this time we got a good look at them. It was Tom and Patricia, our children. Our kids. They were young when we last saw them and now they're old.

They're old and years have passed and nobody is reading these letters because nobody is alive. But the cards are still going out. Somehow, the cards are still going out. Someone is still writing them, and sending them to addresses that no longer exist, to people that no longer exist. And whenever a card is sent, someone replies. Someone like us, stuck in limbo.

Please. If you're reading this, make it stop. I don't want to see my children get old. And I don't want to be here.

--- ---

Hi,

Sarah and I talked it over. We've made a decision. We're going to stop writing these letters. It's hard because when you don't exist for a year and then suddenly you do, and

all you can do is write a letter, like literally all you can do, then you're going to write that letter, aren't you?

Then again, maybe if we stop – we'll be breaking the chain. After all, by now we're surely just writing to ghosts. Other ghosts.

And yes, we may cease to exist. Or worse. But that's a risk we'll have to take.

So all the best and goodbye.

It was nice talking to you.

John and Sarah.

--- ---

The postman stood outside the empty house with a small pile of cards in his hand. He was about to put them through the door when something made him look down.

Every single envelope had something written on it in spidery hand-writing.

Not Known At This Address.

"I could have sworn that wasn't there a minute ago," he said.

He put the letters back in his bag.

"Have a good Christmas, anyway" said the postman, and wondered who he was saying it to.

As he walked down the drive, he thought he heard someone call back.

"Happy Christmas to you!"