

The Maris Institute for Wayward Artists

December 2042

Greetings, and Happy Holidays to all!

Supposedly, there is an ancient curse that goes, "May you live in interesting times." Well, these are interesting times indeed. The last year has been an eventful one for our family, the Institute, and the world.

I'll spare you the dreary details of this summer, when my grandson Damien saved the planet and I (briefly) became Leader of the World. If you're interested, you can read all about it in Phil Meade's book *Dance for the Ivory Madonna* (which for arcane reasons of his own, he's releasing under the name Don Sakers). Instead, let me catch you up on events since then.

Damien and Penylle were espoused here at the Institute on the day after Thanksgiving. It was a lovely, intimate Umoja-style ceremony attended by three hundred close friends, and netcast to the entire populations of Earth, Luna, and Mars. The Unholy Three gave a concert, Gail Danube entertained the troops, and ex-President Byrne delivered one of his patented incoherent speeches. Damien and Penylle were so radiant that no one looked at *me* all night. In case you're one of the six people who missed seeing it, the extravaganza is preserved for the ages at

nexus.nex/2042/events/november/dpwwedding

I would be derelict if I didn't remind you that Umojan wedding tradition calls for expensive presents to be sent directly to the couple's surviving grandparents.

Rose Cetairé has completed work on the new year's line for Cetairé-Maris Designs. She thinks that she has invented a brand-new color; I maintain that it bears a striking resemblance to ochre, and that no self-respecting Winter would be caught dead in that shade. Do me a favor, when the new line rolls out in January, don't tell Rose that you think it's hideous? Thanks.

Efia Sembene has found herself a beau, and they're talking about tying the knot soon. Mati and Babi, our resident vampires, developed a killer recipe for Bloody Marys; they've got half the residents walking around sipping the concoction from intravenous bags. Jackie Paper is adjusting nicely to his new life of freedom, especially when I can pry him away from nefarious influences like Mati and Babi. Princess Mahlowi and Hollow Robin are still dead.

Since Gravity and I have been unable to work out an agreement for peaceful coexistence, we are moving ahead with plans to relocate the Institute to Mars. There, gravity is only one-third its force on Earth. Victoria Hacktrell has decided to join us — in case you aren't aware, Doctor Hacktrell is a full two months my senior. I just thought I would mention that. We've found a lovely crater in Tharsis that can be roofed and pressurized without much trouble; robots are at work there even now. In six months, we should have a home on the Red Planet. (Rose says that her new color is inspired by the sands of Mars. I think it's inspired by a few too many celery stalks in her Bloody Mary, if you know what I mean.)

So, this is likely the last holiday letter you'll receive from the Maris Institute. Next year, knock plastic, you'll be hearing from the thriving community of New Athens, Mars.

Until then, may we all have good fortune, and may peace prevail, on Earth and wherever else Humankind's wanderings take us. Happy Holidays to all!



Miranda Maris