

# FLATTMANN FILES

August 2021

“Quality Is No Accident”

TO THE DOGS I LOVED AND THOSE WHO LOVED ME BACK

## Meet Deuce, Merry, and Millie

August can be a long, hot month, earning it the moniker “the dog days of summer.” Rather than focus on the sweltering heat this month, I want to introduce you to the dogs that have made our lives infinitely better — even during those hot August days.

After my wife and I first got married, we lived in a duplex in New Orleans and decided to adopt our first baby, Deuce. My wife and I found Deuce at the Jefferson Parish SPCA. We fell in love with this small, 8-week-old terrier mix — at least, we were told he was a terrier mix.

Deuce ended up being a lab mix, and by the time he was fully grown, he weighed 70 pounds. Much like his namesake — he was named after our then-favorite New Orleans Saints player, Deuce McAllister — Deuce was full of energy. He loved to visit the dog park and swim on the inlet of the Mississippi River. We would toss logs and frisbees onto the levee for him to fetch. He became a total New Orleans dog.

And soon, he wouldn't be alone.

Just after Hurricane Katrina and around Christmastime, I was repairing a fence at our house, and along came a pup. She looked homeless and like she had survived Hurricane Katrina all on her own. We tried to find her family, but after no one claimed her, we took in Merry as our own. (Since it was Christmastime, the name felt obvious!)

Merry was the opposite of Deuce, although she did grow to be the same size. I don't think she ever fetched a ball in her life. Laid-back, she let Deuce do all the work when they would play. She would often lie on her back, begging for belly rubs. At first, we thought this is how she cowered, scared, but as she grew older, we realized she just loved the affection.

Deuce and Merry were great dogs when my wife and I had our children. They showed patience with each of them, even as the kids climbed on top of the dogs to “ride” them. (We have photo evidence!) Deuce and Merry both lived to be 15 and 16 years old, and we could not have asked for more out of them. They were our first babies and great companions to our family when we needed them.

While we missed Deuce and Merry terribly, I did look forward to a little less responsibility; we wouldn't have to worry about them on vacation or pay veterinary bills. *But* that soon went out the window!



I came home from work one day, only to find that my children had spent all day crafting a PowerPoint presentation on why we should get an indoor, hypoallergenic dog. They even included details on how they would help care for it. (I mean, what parent can say no after that?!)

And that's how we found Millie.

Named after actress Millie Bobby Brown from “Stranger Things,” our Millie is much different than Deuce and Merry. She's a miniature schnauzer who is endlessly spoiled. It's not uncommon to see her watching TV, snuggled up under a blanket. (We're not sure how she pulls the blanket on top of her!)

Millie is as sweet as can be, and even though I originally protested getting another puppy, she is a blessing for our family. She may be a little yappy at times — we always know when someone is outside — but she's made a good companion. She's filled Deuce and Merry's shoes very well. She's even excited to see me when I walk through the door every day after work!

That's the true value of dogs. All they want is to be loved, and in return, they give you so much love right back. They teach us a lot of valuable lessons, like responsibility for another living creature and how death accompanies life, but more importantly, dogs provide us with a whole lot of love. And that makes them invaluable.



-Grady

# Have Celebrity Divorces Always Been Crazy?

What is it about celebrity marriages — and their subsequent endings — that fascinates society? Depending on how you measure, telling the stories of makeups and breakups is a multibillion-dollar industry for media organizations online, in print, and on TV. Are we really that hungry for nasty headlines? Or is something deeper going on in the human psyche?

In the last 12 months, we've seen some of the worst marriage breakups in Hollywood history, but Amber Heard and Johnny Depp's libel suit took center stage. As usual, "Whom do you believe?" was the question of the day, but it became obvious that both parties needed a therapist to work through serious emotional problems but tried unsuccessfully to do it on their own, instead.

Perhaps the most disturbing element in the Heard/Depp trial was the violence that seemed to pervade their daily lives. But that's nothing new; in fact, the violent behavior of both partners is likely what drew so much attention in the first place.



That was certainly the case with O.J. Simpson's breakup with his wife, which didn't get half the headlines her murder would (and the "trial of the century" that followed) two years later.

You could argue, though, that we're getting better. When we look at the roots of the "celebrity divorce" phenomenon, it goes back in time to the realm of myth. The gods of Greece and Rome were always leaving each other and getting back together, a clear indication of the drama that interested our ancestors. But the most famous celebrity divorce of the pre-19th century (and perhaps of all time) was Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. It had all the hallmarks of modern public breakups: People took one side or the other, with other parties still "shipping" Henry and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Henry and Catherine's divorce led to the trauma of war across England and Europe.

Like today's celebrity cases, it didn't last long. Anne was executed a few short years later when someone new caught the king's eye. Henry VIII was the archetype of the modern Hollywood actor with the wandering gaze, and Catherine and Anne typified the women willing to give him "one more chance."

Seeing how *that* ended, perhaps we should be grateful that things today are aired out in the media — instead of on the battlefield!

## 5 Tips for Your Next Affordable Getaway

Are you excited to explore the world again? Or maybe you've just gotten back from your latest vacation! In either case, the economic challenges of the pandemic might require travelers to plan their trips a little smarter. Here are five tricks to do just that.

### 1. Consider your budget while choosing your destination.

Any destination heavily impacted by tourists is going to be more expensive to visit. So, consider taking a tour through various French countryside towns instead of Paris! Not only could it be more culturally immersing, but it may even be more relaxing and less stressful than visiting a dense area.

### 2. Sign up for Scott's Cheap Flights.

One of the most important parts of booking an affordable vacation is booking it at the right time. Scott's Cheap Flights will track all the cheapest flights at an airport of your choice — you'll get over 50%–75% savings on highly rated airlines. This will get you stress-free travel for a much lower price!

### 3. Travel in a group.

If you travel with friends, your expenses become a lot more manageable. Let's say you and a partner travel with two other couples — renting a swanky cabin at \$200 a night will only cost around \$33 per person. Plus, you will create some amazing memories together!



### 4. Plan your meal budget ahead of time.

Looking forward to eating certain dishes? Find local menus and prices to ensure you don't spend more than you planned. If you want an authentic and homestyle culinary experience, consider signing up for a peer-to-peer dining experience through Traveling Spoon or Bon Appetour, which is tax-free as well!

### 5. Consider volunteering for vacation.

Want to go on a self-discovery trip? Why not cut your expenses in half by volunteering? For example, Habitat for Humanity offers a nine-day Mexico trip for \$1,200 with lodging, food, and activities included. You'll get to build structures and create something permanent for the local community.

Traveling on a dime is no sweat with the right tools. Best of luck, traveler!

# TAKE A *BREAK*



- Beach
- Fishing
- Friendship
- Garden
- Heat
- Outdoors
- Pool
- Rainy
- Rhubarb
- Sardonyx
- Schooling
- Vacation



Earlier this year, Russia announced it would abandon its missions to the International Space Station in favor of a new, Russia-only station orbiting Earth. At the same time, China has begun working in earnest on its own permanent space installation, raining construction debris down on coastal Africa and other places. With private American interests gaining traction in orbit (and the confidence of our government), things are getting awfully crowded up there — and not by actors that typically play well together.

All of which begs the question: Will the 21st century see the first violent conflict in space?

We have to delve into “space law” (yes, it’s really called that) to understand this question. It started in the 1940s and ‘50s, when the USSR launch of Sputnik signaled a new ground for scientific competition in the Cold War, as well as fears of more direct, armed conflict. The landmark “Outer Space Treaty” of 1967 was the response, and nations continued to deal with space concerns until the end of the century.

The general principles were those of cooperation and goodwill, and that made sense in the 20th century, when it was unlikely any power would be able to seriously colonize stations in orbit or the moon itself, nevermind other planets. But in the past 20 years, many countries have been unwilling to *seriously* commit to more specific agreements or laws. When you see the rapidly increasing presence many countries are seeking in orbit, you start to understand why. Nobody wants to hamstring themselves and compromise their interests when the resources of our solar system are made available through technology.

Even though this may be a new arena, the problem is an old one. International Law — of which “space law” is a subset — is not typically enforceable and never has been. Private ventures, like those of Elon Musk, may face crackdown by their governments or the international community. But nations themselves will take what they want, when they want it — and right now, that could make peace on the final frontier a long shot in the 21st century.



## TOMATO AND WATERMELON SALAD (YES, REALLY!)

*Inspired by BonAppetit.com*

*Bon Appétit magazine calls tomato and watermelon “soul mates,” and they’re right! This surprising gourmet salad will be a hit at your next barbecue.*

### Ingredients

- 1 tsp peppercorns, coarsely crushed
- 1 tsp coriander seeds, coarsely crushed
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1/4 cup coconut oil
- 4 cups seedless watermelon, rind removed and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 2 heirloom tomatoes, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 8 oz feta cheese, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- Sea salt, to taste

### Directions

1. In a small saucepan, sauté spices and herbs in the coconut oil for 3 minutes over medium heat to create turmeric oil. Take the pan off of the heat, then let it cool.
2. Combine the watermelon, tomatoes, and feta on a large platter or in a bowl. Drizzle with cooled turmeric oil. Now, simply sprinkle with sea salt and enjoy!



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## Fight SAD Early!

### Start Taking Vitamin D Now, Before the Sun Goes Away

Do you get SAD? We’re talking about seasonal affective disorder, which affects 1%–10% of the population depending on the state you live in. Symptoms of SAD are similar to symptoms of depression, but unlike chronic depression, which can occur at any time, people with SAD only experience symptoms during a certain time of year, usually winter.

SAD has been strongly linked with shorter days and less sun — although summertime SAD can result from long days that make sleep difficult, resulting in irritability and mood swings. In most cases, however, winter is the problem season, likely due to a link between less sun and a vitamin D deficiency.

Depression is one common symptom of vitamin D deficiency, especially in patients who aren’t prone to depression due to other circumstances. Unfortunately, very few foods are good sources of vitamin D. The best source is sunlight itself.

There are a few ways to combat wintertime SAD. Establishing a regular sleep schedule is important, as is an exercise routine and healthy diet. As mentioned, it’s hard to find vitamin D in foods, but milk and other food products are often intentionally enriched with it during processing.

The most common solution, however, is taking a vitamin D supplement, which can be purchased over the counter at drugstores and grocery stores. It is commonly recommended for people living in places with harsher winters, and although there are negative side effects if taken in excess, a regular daily dose of vitamin D is a healthy way to ensure you have the right levels in your system.

This month is the perfect time to begin that process. Vitamin D can take several months to build up to effective levels in our bodies. It may be the hottest time of the year in many places, but it’s also the ideal time to start fighting SAD early!

