

My Most Humble Request

by Stephen Stark

To Ms. Angelina Jolie & Mr. Brad Pitt

My Dear Ms. Jolie and Mr. Pitt:

Greetings from your most humble and adoring fan. Let me please, first of all, congratulate you on the new additions to your very large and growing family. How many is it now? Six? Goodness you are most blessedly rich and fecund. Surely eight will not be enough. Surely you will want to have more!

As a father myself, I understand the joys of children and of course the great weight of responsibility they will bring upon your house and upon you as a couple, and how you will now and then wish to exterminate them cruelly.

I recommend you not do this. Those feelings will pass.

Yes, my friends, I know. I have experienced these feelings myself and found the strength to rise above them.

You will have been awake for seventeen days straight with a screaming child and feel that nothing could be sweeter than silence. Holding the blessed fruit of your or someone else's loins in the air and suddenly it will come into your head that maybe giving the baby just a little shake might make it stop this awful noise. Soon there will be quiet and you may at last rest! You may justifiably feel at that point that the electric chair, or a nice trip on a gurney to a lethal injection chamber would be entirely preferable to this satanic infant's ridiculous caterwauling. And then it will come to you that this is what shaken baby syndrome is about.

I assure you that these feelings will pass. Do not shake the baby. Shake the martini. That's what martinis are for.

But do not let me give you unwanted advice. As you now have more children than my wife and I managed in so very many years of blessed marriage, I imagine it is you two, with your money and your glamour, who will have something to teach me and my wife with our modest suburban “cottage” and our very wonderful but needy children!

But my dear Ms. Jolie and my dear Mr. Pitt, I would ask you a single favor on behalf of my very humble self, your most adoring fan, and my wife.

It became clear to me and my wife one evening recently as we were having dinner with our soon-to-be-no-longer teenaged daughters that they know oh so very much about your and your children. In fact, they could name all of your children! Even the twins, who were not yet then born. Is that not wonderful and prescient and precocious? Yes it is. (I assure you that they have not been stalking you.)

And so I and Mrs. Stark (as I sometimes call my wife) were quite overjoyed at their highly intimate knowledge of popular culture, from which of course we do our best to protect our daughters. And not to be outdone at their extraordinary precocity, I said quite gleefully, Ha! Name one U.S. Supreme Court justice! Ha! And ha, ha! I had them there. Not one of our lovely daughters could name a single U.S. Supreme Court Justice. Oh, imagine their chagrin at the very nakedness of their ignorance! As one of them said to me, Yeah! Right! Whatever!, Dad.

Now mind you, Mr. Pitt and Ms. Jolie, these are highly sophisticated young ladies. They are watchers of the fine and highly educational TV show “Six in the City,” a show, I am assured, about six successful young women hard at work in the city, demonstrating how fine young upright women act in a place with entirely too many temptations and delectations for the average not-upright young woman to manage. These six young women even make recommendations on proper footwear!

Our lovely daughters are young women who have traveled to other places in the world, though very certainly they did not rent a

chateau for their sojourns. They have sampled fine foods, including their mother's very own tuna casserole with the very crunchy potato chips on top.

But for all of their sophistication, they do not know the name of a single U.S. Supreme Court Justice. My lovely and eloquent eldest daughter, who sometimes speaks in riddles, said, If we need to know about them, they should be in people. Darling, I said, justices are people, even if they are so very mighty. To which her sister responded, Homer. (They honor me so to think of me as a scion of this very great storyteller of antiquity.)

And it just so happened that shortly after that dinner, when I learned of their shameful ignorance, I also learned of a possible solution. I was blessed to be in the doctor's office, awaiting the examination of an ailment of the anus in which certain tissues become even more inflamed than your most rabid fans. And I saw a magazine called "People," which I am sure you will agree with me is one of the silliest names in the world for a magazine. Yes it is.

And there on the cover was a picture of you two, looking ever so rich and glamorous and not so very different from I and Mrs. Stark.

There, too, were words extolling the birth of your miraculous twins! Glory and wonder, I said to myself. And then, thanks to my doctor, who graciously provides exceptionally long periods of time for quiet reflection and reading in his waiting room, I had more than my share of time to learn not only about the birth of Knox Leon and Vivienne Marcheline but also the break up of Sarah and Jimmy, and how that lovely young Lindsey is getting back on her feet—without the need of any drugs at all!

And I realized that you could be the savior not just of certain very fortunate children of the third world but of my very own naïve children!

And so it is a very small favor that I have to ask of you, my dearest friends.

As you are so blessedly blessed with fecundity and cold, hard cash, and are surely likely to have nine or ten more children, and clearly have no taste whatsoever in names, I would be most grateful if you

would name your next nine children after the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Just think of your very own Nino and Tony and Ruthie and David—or now, perhaps instead a Sandy. Only time will tell. Yes it will. Two of your very own Johnnies, and a Sammy! And then you could round it all out with a little Clarence and a little Stevie! Wouldn't that be wonderful? Yes it would. I would even suggest that you have one of your servants sew them little black robes! Would that not be wonderful? Yes it would!

As a fan of your many humanitarian efforts, I know you will be more than overjoyed at this marvelous idea. Think, I beg of you, of all the sophisticated young consumers who would be blessed with the fecundity of your cleverness. Think of the lasting goodness that you two—who are so dedicated to goodness—could do!

And should you need help in caring for all of these blessed young people, please do not hesitate to contact me. I know of three young ladies of very high moral caliber who would be most certainly overjoyed to be your servants at a very reasonable price.

Your very sincere and most humble servant and most loyal fan,

