

Dear Family,

You can't make this stuff up:

Sophie: Lucy, can you play this with me?

Lucy: I don't want to. Play it with your imaginary friend.

Sophie: My imaginary friend is sick today.

Lucy: Well then make up another one.

Sophie: (annoyed) *I only have one imaginary friend!*

—Pause—

Sophie: Actually I have two imaginary friends, but *both* of them are sick today.

One problem with having four kids (or any even number greater than two) is that you have two middle children. Our middle children are Lucy and Sophie and the tension is palpable. But there are also moments of great tenderness, and I believe that if we can just prevent them from killing one another first, they will eventually develop into very close friends.

Fortunately, they both have ways of entertaining themselves that don't involve one another.

Take Lucy (my favorite hoarder—remember [her explanation for soda cans and dishwasher tablets in her bedroom](#)?) She just offered a similar one in defense of the large quantity of lemon juice that was just discovered there). I know she's brewing something in there; I just can't figure out what it is. I've started calling her "Violet" again (after the inventive girl in the *A Series of Unfortunate Events* books). She made a maraca on Easter morning using the Skittles from her Easter basket (plus a plastic cup, paper towel, and rubber band). She's doubtless not the first child to do that, but it's classic Lucy. Better yet, she's likely to make something like that and then stomp around the house wondering who stole all her candy. Now *that's* classic Lucy.

Speaking of Skittles, this month's date with Sophie took the two of us (plus an undetermined number of her imaginary friends) to see *Horton Hears a Who*. I was surprised how much I liked it...right up until this unbearably awful REO Speedwagon musical sequence at the very end. Fortunately the goofy music lasted just long enough that by the time we walked out of the theater, nobody had to know that I might have cried a little during *Horton Hears a Who*.

It used to be I only cried at the end of *Hoosiers*. Now all it takes is a good insurance commercial; or my new favorite book to read to Sophie: *Somebody Loves You, Mr. Hatch*, by Eileen Spinelli. Gets me every time.

But unless I'm watching or reading something with her, I'm not likely to see Sophie. I think this is because she spends so much of her time with her friend Nicholas from next door. I think she likes Nicholas, but really likes Nicholas's TV, which is much nicer than anything we have. I went over there the other day to make arrangements for a moon bounce at Sophie's birthday party this coming weekend (more on that next month), and one of Nicholas's sisters pointed to a empty spot on the large sofa in front of the TV. "That's Sophie's seat," she said.

It's my hope that the arrival of spring will bring with it fewer excuses to sit in front of the TV. (Though with the writers' strike over and all my favorite shows returning to Thursday nights on NBC I'm already feeling conflicted.) With Easter's early arrival this year, many of our traditional rites of spring are already behind us. These included:

Easter Dinner with Mom, Dad, and Pete; Coco; and Grant's family. We were joined there by my Relief Society president (Debbie Chelson—one of my favorite people, in part because she's 10 times smarter than me, but still defers to my judgment). Also at the table was an FBI agent from one of the wards that meets in Mom's/Dad's/Grant's/Andrew's building. He had worked in some capacity with [Robert Hanssen](#) and had some great stories. It was a nice afternoon and Sophie and Grace wailed in protest, as always, when it was time to leave.

Easter Monday trip to the "Easter Farm" (actually a [local orchard](#) whose clever agricultural professionals have transformed various pieces of farming equipment into fun Easter-themed diversions for young children. There's nothing really all that special about the place, but for some reason the girls are absolutely enchanted by it and I can envision Hannah still wanting to go when she's in high school.

Cherry Blossoms Around the Tidal Basin: We followed our standard crowd-avoidance technique by arriving just before 7:00 A.M. on a weekday. The blossoms weren't quite at peak, and the morning wasn't quite as glorious as [last year](#), but it remains one of the most serene ways I know of passing a couple of hours with a bunch of little girls. (Sophie was frustrated by repeated reminders not to walk backwards two inches away from the edge of the basin, but other than that everything was great.) [Pictures.](#)

And that about does it. Grace's 3rd birthday passed with subdued fanfare. I'm sad to report that she has regressed considerably in her potty training. Her latest favorite activity during nap time is to smear the contents of her soiled Pull-up all over the walls of her bedroom (with her fingers). Her work bears an eerie resemblance to prehistoric cave paintings

She also really likes the green wasabi balls in the Asian snack mix her mother buys at Costco. She's a little weirdo. But she's cute.

Have a nice month.





Top Left: Grace picks a flower

Left: Lucy (& some of Sophie and Hannah) pose at Brookside Gardens

Above: Lucy, Michelle (next door neighbor), Hannah, and Sophie take in the cherry blossoms at the Tidal Basin. [More cherry blossoms here](#)

Both of these photographs were snapped by [Annie Ballard](#), a neighbor or ours who served in the same Brazilian mission as Andrew. We (or she) figured this out when she recognized a picture of “Elder Willis” at Mom & Dad’s house. (She and Crystal were there for book club.)

The picture **at right** was taken in the woods that separate our house from the Ballards’.

The picture **below** was taken on the Speaker’s Balcony on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol. (Speaker Pelosi wasn’t there, but it’s still a pretty cool place. That’s the National Mall behind us.) The occasion was the formal [promotion](#) of my friend, Colby Jenkins, to the rank of major in the U.S. Army. The event, at which my friend was the sole honoree, was attended by three U.S. senators and Tom Brokaw. Major Jenkins, a member of [my ward](#), is a Green Beret who has been all over the world and is now a Congressional liaison from the U.S. Special Operations Command. I’ve been trying to get him back out on the golf course (where he regularly outrives me by 75 yards) for some time, but he’s a busy guy and has spent the last three Saturdays building a harp for his daughter.

I’d call him a wuss, but that doesn’t seem like such a good thing to call a guy who could kill me with his bare hands.



Grace (and her mommy)



Major Jenkins (and, well, me)