

the Famlet monthly

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Dear Family,

For a bright, talented, hard-working girl, Sophie seems to be experiencing a lot of rejection these days. Last month it was not getting into Montgomery Blair High School's Communication Arts Program. This month she learned that she had not gotten a part in her school's spring play.

Sophie did not even audition for the fall play because she was originally under the impression that only members of the drama class were eligible. She's not in the drama class because she's already oversubscribed with chorus, orchestra, and, you know, actual academic subjects. Plus, let's face it, a teenage girl needs a drama class about as much as I need a breathing class. But she was interested enough in the fall play to volunteer for the "stage" crew. (I put *stage* in scare quotes because the auditorium at Sophie's aging middle school is condemned and the plays are performed in the band room, which, technically speaking, does not have a stage.)

Sophie subsequently learned that she would, in fact, be allowed to try out for the spring play, and so she did. She was called back the following week for a second audition and was told the parts would be posted on the drama teacher's door the following Monday. True to form (we're talking about a drama teacher after all) the parts had not been posted by the end of school Monday, and a piano lesson that afternoon meant that Sophie could not stick around. Later that day, Sophie received excited texts from two friends telling her that *they* had gotten into the play. When Sophie asked whether they had noticed her name on the sheet, they said they hadn't noticed. (The thoughtfulness of middle school girls is perhaps unmatched by any other force in the universe.) The next morning Sophie texted from school that she had not gotten a part.

She is taking it well, but I can't help but think that all this rejection is setting Sophie up to be a very compassionate visiting teacher someday.

But Sophie, being Sophie, wasn't going to leave it at that. Later that day she approached the drama teacher and asked if she could help out, "maybe be an assistant director, or something." It takes a special kind of arrogance, upon learning that you're not good enough to be *in* something, to respond by asking if you can help *run* it. It doesn't sound like she'll get the assistant director job, but I imagine they'll find something for her to do.

It's not as though Sophie doesn't already have plenty on her plate. On Tuesday she was the piano accompanist for the sixth grade chorus at an adjudicated county choral festival. The previous week she sang with her advanced chorus at a similar festival in Clarksburg. The next evening her *cappella* club sang at a choir concert at Northwood High School. I wanted to film their closing number, which was fabulous, but we were too far back and it wouldn't have worked, and, anyway, some idiot two rows behind us took about 80 gazillion pictures with a camera that beeped loudly after each one. I tried all the usual passive-aggressive tactics (half-turn glance, full-turn glare, etc.) but none of these had any effect, and I was compelled to seethe in silence. It annoys me that such stupid things can enrage me so much. Northwood's choir was the last act and was very good, in spite of all the beeping. Sophie will attend

Northwood next year and I think will want to audition for the choir. She is concerned about what she will wear, however, because the ladies' gowns, while lovely, are not suitable for good little Mormon girls. I imagine she'll figure something out. She's pretty resourceful. Then, on Wednesday, the orchestra in which she plays the cello performed in yet another festival.

You can follow Sophie's musical and other exploits [@sophiajwil-lis1](#). She was surprised to learn this month that Twitter is only 10 years old. Strangely, I would have guessed it was newer than that. She probably thinks Facebook has been around since at least the 1960s. I suppose every generation has fun thinking about all the things their children have no concept of a world without.

Grace turned 11 this month with relatively little fanfare. For reasons I won't get into, and that a few of you will understand, we celebrated Grace's birthday about a mile from Lucy's school in Rockville, at Ziki Japanese Steakhouse, and then went out to the parking lot to eat cupcakes and open presents in the van.

Japanese steakhouses are a favorite of our family's. This was our first (and probably last) visit to Ziki. Although the chef was probably the most engaging and entertaining we've ever had, the food was less good than Benihana, which in turn is less good than our favorite such place, Masa Hibachi in downtown Silver Spring. Our chef was also unusual in that he actually looked and sounded Japanese. Most of the chefs at the Benihanas around here are Hispanic. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but it amuses me that authenticity seems to require merely that the chef appear to hail from some international culture. It doesn't really matter which one. It apparently also requires that he be male, as I don't think we've ever seen a woman cook at one of these places. (Sophie, for her part, wants a large built-in hibachi grill in her kitchen when she grows up.)

It's possible the lack of female chefs has something to do with the Girl Scouts. One of the supermoms in Sophie's troop—who has both a Boy Scout and a Girl Scout in her house—has observed that only Boy Scouts learn how to cook. (In contrast, Girl Scouts sell cookies that were made far away by others.) Grace sure can sell them, though. You should see her attack the neighborhood—not to mention the (ahem, "for Church use only") ward list.

Grace also claims to have converted her entire troop to watching Studio C, thus furthering BYU Television's reach in an area largely unaware of its existence.

It will not come as news to those who read Hannah's letters that she continues to be a very happy and hardworking missionary. She and her companion, whom she loves, still have their car but have recently transitioned to more biking and she asked us to send her "thorn resistant" inner tubes to protect against the ubiquitous cacti. I had no idea such tubes existed, and, as an urban cyclist, I wonder whether they work equally well against glass, nails, and other detritus.

Her letters continue to bring us great happiness. They speak of a desire to be obedient, consecrated, useful and competent, along with occasional struggles with feelings of inadequacy and fear of failure. She sounds contently engaged, for which we are grateful, and hope this finds you likewise.

Love, Tim, et al.





Sophie (at piano) accompanies the Silver Spring Int'l Middle School 6th Grade Chorus at Paint Branch HS— 22 Mar 2016.

Grace and Sophie after Sophie's Honors Chorus performance at Walt Whitman HS — 1 March 2016.



Grace (age 11) opens her birthday presents in the parking lot of Ziki's Japanese Steakhouse. (Long story)



Sophie, Lucy, and Grace at Aunt Coco's place with our silk-dyed Easter eggs — 26 March 2016



Sophie sits under a blossoming cherry tree at Brookside Gardens, 25 March 2016.



Lucy leans over the railing of the Japanese Teahouse at Brookside Gardens, 25 March 2016.