

I almost didn't think I'd get around to writing a letter this year, until I realized I could use it as an excuse to avoid grading papers.

The biggest events of our year occurred during the summer: my brother, Jonathan, married Meig Walz, a bright, fun-loving sister-in-law. Their wedding in Connecticut culminated a whirl-wind bi-coastal family vacation, which began in San Francisco with my cousin Heidi's wedding, and included a visit to southern California to see Matt's grandmother and tour the San Diego Zoo with Uncle Bruce. (Despite panda, hippo, and tiger sightings, Luke and Thomas were most impressed by the safari busses.) We also bought a house in Davidson. It's a 100-year-old white clapboard house with a big front porch and a small, fenced-in backyard. It's in excellent condition—restored by the previous owner (perfect for "hire-someone-else-to-do-it-ers" like us). We're only a block from the local Ben & Jerry's, coffee shop, and bookstore, though for some reason we haven't yet been able to make good on our plan to spend Sunday mornings at the coffee shop reading the NY Times.

...which brings me to Luke and Thomas. At two years old, they are talking, playing, running, joking, and squabbling. We play a "name game" called "Who loves you?" The answer is supposed to be "Mommy," but often Luke will say "Thomas," or Thomas will answer, "Daddy" or "Danielle" (a favorite friend). They've also started to answer, "Mommy loves Daddy," which makes me think that being twins makes them aware they are part of a complex interpersonal web, where love doesn't just go from parent to child, but flows back and forth among children, parents, family, and friends.

Thomas has a great sense of humor, delivering one liners on the changing table such as "'Pee-yooo,' said the poo-pee!" He told his first joke the other morning as I was strapping him into his car-seat; turning from the bright sun, he looked at me a mischievous grin and said, "It's dark outside." Luke's sense of humor is more physical: he likes to play "chase Luke," a game of skill in which he runs into the next room, stops, turns around, and waits to be caught—all the while giggling uproariously. Both Thomas and Luke are typical two-year-olds when it comes to mealtime, taxing our ingenuity with eating games. As soon as they grow bored feeding themselves, they ask for help, demanding that each spoonful be a new vehicle: "I want a firetruck," and we approximate a siren; "I want a dumptruck," and we attempt a noisy engine; "I want a *purple* dumptruck," and—well, you figure it out.

Luke and Thomas have started "school" two mornings a week. The pre-school is across the street from my office, so the three of us walk together, noting every large vehicle on the way. Melinda Smith, our loving, reliable nanny since the boys were 2 months old, picks them up after school. One classmate concluded, "Luke and Thomas have two mommies."

Matt is enjoying his job and feels lucky to have found a law firm that provides intellectually stimulating work in a relaxed atmosphere. Working "North Carolina hours" gives him more time to spend with the kids, as well as to develop interests in mountain biking and taming the jungle that is our backyard.

My job continues to challenge and exhaust me, but I've taken a course reduction for the spring term, which makes it seem less overwhelming. This semester, my spirits were boosted by my composition class—a lively, interesting group of students who frequently had me laughing until I had tears in my eyes. I also team-taught the senior colloquium (a required course for all senior English majors) with a senior colleague. It was an intellectual adventure of the sort one says, "I'm glad I did it, and I'm glad it's over."

By now, you are probably wondering when this letter will be over, so without further delay, I'll conclude with best wishes for a wonder-full holiday and a happy new year. Or, as Thomas put it, "I want to get in the car and go to Kiss-mas!"

Love,

Suzanne, Matt, Luke, and Thomas Churchill