October’s witchy winds sent yellow leaves flying from the stretch of mature trees lining our turn-of-the-century city block in Milwaukee. As I looked out the bay window of our living room I thought it ironic that we lived less than a mile from the house where my mother had grown up. In college, I’d always imagined ending up somewhere more cosmopolitan. I spotted two of the Marino kids playing with a ball on their wide front porch. Three doors down in the other direction a large pumpkin cutout hung at street level with a half-row of lace curtains in the Kelly’s window. Although their daughters were out of college now, Patrick and Laura Kelly remained the all-holidays weathervane for the three dozen kids living on our block.

I had no idea how lucky Ken and I would be when we started the search for our first home. The realtor’s listing description read “perfect for a family” and “lots of kids,” but I’d glossed over those so-called benefits. Kids were not on my career-advancing agenda, and Ken was okay with that. What mattered to us was staying on
the East Side, price, and a third-floor attic with remodeling potential. As it turned out, the home with everything we wanted was in the middle of a street overrun by kids. And not just little kids. Hackett Avenue was a babysitter goldmine.

As I sipped my coffee, watching neighbors rake their yards and children jump into leaf piles, I thought about Harry fitting into this community of kids. I hoped a boy who felt like a girl could be just one of the gang. Then I thought of Aaron, one of Harry’s high-school-aged babysitters from a few doors down. Aaron was a handsome, talented dancer who just happened to be gay. I wondered if he’d told his mother he felt like a girl when he was a toddler. But either way, I knew someone could be creative and straight. Harry’s dad was a designer and fine art photographer, and he wasn’t gay. Oddly though, Aaron seemed a dynamic, androgynous fusion of masculine and feminine. I wondered if that’s what the psychic meant when she told me three years earlier that Harry would be like me. Maybe I should have paid more attention to her.

I remembered that Saturday afternoon in July vividly. Ken and I had just polished off our paper plates of crêpes drizzled with chocolate sauce at the Bastille Day festival downtown.

“Are you ready?” Ken asked. “Paul Cebar and the Milwaukeeans are playing at the stage on Kilbourn, and I don’t want to miss them.”

“Okay,” I said, pulling a cigarette from my purse. “But I’ll meet you over there. I want to stop at the Psychic Faire tent near the park and have my cards read before it gets too crowded.”

I was excited to see a short line, but then found out there was a waiting list on a clipboard. “How long for a tarot card reader?” I asked the man wearing a beret.
“About half an hour, forty-five minutes tops.”
I didn’t want to wait that long for a fifteen-minute reading.
“But I do have a psychic astrologer available now,” he said.
I hesitated. Today I was eager for quick answers from the cards. But a psychic reading was better than no reading.
I paid the man twelve dollars and took a seat next to a small folding table. A travel clock, some crystals, and a few worn books sat atop a blue tie-dye tablecloth imprinted with signs of the zodiac. A woman who appeared to be in her late forties greeted me with a smile. Her soft features were framed by frizzy strawberry blond hair parted down the middle.
She jotted down my birth date, and asked that I not say anything else. She consulted one of her books and scribbled a few notes. Then she asked to hold my hands. She closed her eyes and didn’t speak until she blinked.
“Are you pregnant?” she blurted.
“I-I don’t know,” I said, startled. “I could be.”
Ken and I had stopped using birth control a year after my mother died, but my periods were never regular, so I wasn’t sure if I was just late or not. I put my right hand up to my left breast. It did feel a little sore.
“I think you are,” said the psychic, “and you’re going to have a boy.”
I couldn’t believe it. Was this really happening? I knew Ken would be happy with either a boy or a girl, but I thought my father-in-law would be delighted to hear our baby was a boy. Neither of his two grandsons shared his surname. Then my palms itched as I felt a rush of fear. I was still haunted by Nancy Friday’s 1977 best-seller *My Mother/My Self: The Daughter’s Search for Identity*. Her
research disclosed that a daughter’s feelings of anger and hatred toward her mother could create some sort of motherhood legacy. It was the first time my private nightmare of turning into my mother became public discourse. I shuddered at the time, thinking there might be some inescapable genetic stain that would trigger in me her style of critical parenting and conditional love. Ken understood my fears and went along with the idea of a childless marriage. I never thought I’d have kids, but now that the possibility was imminent, I wondered if I was really ready to be a mother, and a Jewish mother at that.

“No, wait,” the psychic said, interrupting my inner mama drama. “It’s a girl.”

_Seriously, lady? You’ve got a fifty-fifty chance of getting this right._ So which is it?

“No,” she said, hesitating. “You’re having a boy . . . but he’s going to be like you.”

“Okay . . .,” I replied, unsure I could believe anything she said at this point. I studied her face. There was something sincere about her confused expression that kept me from dismissing her completely. She looked as if the universe was giving her crossed signals for the first time ever.

She had known I was pregnant before I did. When she said I’d have a boy who’d be like me, I assumed she meant dark hair and freckles like me, but neither was true. Trying to piece together past and present, I wondered if somehow she knew there’d be something different about Harry. Had she seen that he’d be both a boy and a girl? I was in over my head. I didn’t know if I had it in me to be the kind of good, easy-going mother that I thought Harry
needed. I didn’t know how to manage myself, let alone handle my son who was a self-proclaimed girl.

A few weeks later when I opened the front door to bring in the mail, I wasn’t surprised to find an orange flyer with clip art of dancing jack-o-lanterns. It was the lineup of Friday night events that would transform our street into a full-blown costume party.

I beamed, imagining Harry’s face when I told him what was coming up. At two and a half, he was now old enough to join the block’s Halloween festivities. Last year, he’d spent the day in the orange Alvin and the Chipmunks pajamas that Gramps sent from Florida, topped off with Mickey Mouse ears. The year before that, when he was seven months old, Ken and I had paraded him around in a quilted yellow bunting that doubled as an infant’s banana costume.

Now, the colorful flyer in hand, I headed for the living room where Harry was curled up in the blue leather chair watching the cartoon version of Peter Pan for what was probably the fourth time in as many days. He loved repeating favorites, whether books or videos, and would ask to hear the same stories over and over again.

“Harry, guess what?” I called out excitedly. “Remember when I told you about the Halloween block party? Well, it’s this weekend!” Moving to the TV, I paused the VCR to get his attention, and he looked up at me slowly, his Disney trance broken.

“It’s a Halloween party at night! There’s trick or treating, a haunted house, scary stories, piñatas, a bonfire and fireworks! And you get to dress up in a costume. You can be anyone you want!”

“Okay, I’ll be Wendy.”
“Wendy?”
“Yes.” He glanced back at the picture, now frozen on the TV screen.
“You mean Wendy from *Peter Pan*?”
Harry nodded with a look that said, “What other Wendy is there?”
I didn’t know what to say. I managed a shaky grin, and agreed, “Okay! Wendy!”
He turned back to Neverland and I made my way to the kitchen on autopilot.
What the hell had just happened in there? Why did I have to bring up Halloween costumes while Harry was watching *Peter Pan*? What if he were watching Donald Duck? Would he have said Daisy Duck?
But he wasn’t watching his video of cartoon shorts. He was watching Wendy, and I was stuck with her. Sure, it was an easy enough costume to put together, but how exciting was a blue nightgown, matching hair ribbon and light brown wig? What kind of Halloween costume was that?
Before bed, I told Ken about Harry’s idea for a costume. His face fell.
“I really don’t want Harry to be Wendy for Halloween,” he said.
“I don’t either,” I agreed. “I’ll have to figure out what to do. I already told him he could be.”
“What!” Ken’s stare left no doubt that he was not happy with this new development.
“Well, he caught me off guard!” I said uneasily. “I just finished telling him he could be anyone he wanted.”
Ken didn’t tell me his reasons, but I figured they were similar to mine. I didn’t want anybody making fun of Harry dressed up as a girl. There were no bullies on our block. But there were the two macho neighbor dads. I imagined them snickering as innocent little Harry climbed down our front steps with a plastic pumpkin pail in one tiny fist, Wendy’s skirt in the other.

I wanted to protect myself, too. This wasn’t San Francisco or New York City. If a boy wore a girl’s Halloween costume in 1992, it meant he was going to be gay. And there were still the mainstream experts who espoused the theory that a boy was gay because his mother was domineering. I didn’t really believe it. And I didn’t want to care what my neighbors thought.

But I did care. “Domineering mother” meant bad mother. While I didn’t want anyone labeling Harry or me, I had to consider the other variable in the equation: Being a controlling, overbearing, bad mother meant becoming my mother.

I had three days to reconcile myself to the idea of Harry as Wendy and be a good mother in the process, and I didn’t want to screw it up.

So what was it about little Wendy Darling that made a floor-length blue nightgown so attractive to Harry? Was it their shared fascination with mermaids? Maybe her dress was the draw. I tried to imagine how my mother would handle it, and as usual, I decided that doing the opposite of what she would do was the best way to proceed.

In my mind, I could almost hear her say, “Absolutely not! No son of mine is going outside dressed as a girl. I don’t care if it is Halloween. Playing with a doll in the bathtub is one thing, but a boy wearing a dress in public is asking for trouble!”
The Toilet Paper Bride

The night before the block party, I drove across town through a foggy drizzle on an eleventh-hour solo mission I dubbed “Operation Disney Store.” I felt like a double agent—I was about to trick my own kid and shell out sixty bucks for a costume Harry would wear once.

Back home, I explained to Harry that the Disney Store didn’t have a Wendy costume, but it did have a genuine Peter Pan outfit. I quickly took everything out of the package and held up a green, short-sleeved top with zigzag hem, matching leggings, and puckish brown, felt shoe covers. Then I flashed the showstopper hat.

“Look at this big orange feather!”
He reached for it.

“And check out this Peter Pan knife! Doesn’t it look real? But it’s only rubber, see?”
I stuck the blade into my open hand and Harry gasped as the rubber tip flexed harmlessly. He wanted that knife.

“Do you want to try on the whole costume?” I asked, trying to keep my hopes on the down low.

“Okay,” he said, stabbing his new knife into an end table.

The next day, Harry refused to part with his fake weapon. I sighed with accomplishment and relief. Wendy was history! And I hadn’t had to tell Harry that his parents didn’t want him to go trick or treating dressed up as a girl.

Later, as Harry, Ken, and I walked outside at 7 o’clock to meet Harry’s best buddies and their parents, we found Billy dressed as Count Dracula, while Allison wore a Batman costume.

“It’s what she wanted,” her mom whispered out of the side of her mouth.
The adults chuckled at how cute Allison looked as the Caped Crusader, but a sickening feeling passed through me. I ached with disappointment in myself, trapped by my own double standard. I felt like a bad mother, the wicked Disney queen who had lured Harry not with a poisoned apple but with an orange feather and a rubber knife.

In bed with Ken that night, I felt like crying.

“What’s the matter? Too many Butterfingers?”

“No, it’s not a stomachache. It’s guilt. I’m a terrible mother.”

“What are you talking about? You’re a good mother.”

“Well, I don’t feel like one. I can’t shake the image of Allison so happy as Batman, when I didn’t let Harry be who he really wanted to be. This was his first Halloween, and I failed him. I thought and acted like my mother.”

“You’re being silly, Julie. Harry had a great time. Just forget about it.”

“I can’t. I feel like every decision I make is a big mistake. Like I’m doing everything wrong.”

“You’re making too big a deal out of this. Everything is fine. Just go to sleep.”

Ken leaned over and planted a kiss on my lips that felt like a punctuation mark. He switched off the nightstand lamp and I turned onto my side. As my thoughts raced around my Halloween mistakes, I thought of a night five years earlier, when I was curled up in my childhood bed, at my mother’s house, talking to my little sister.

June lay inches from me on the mattress in my old room. She and Jack had arrived in town a few days in advance of the surgery
our mother was having in the morning to remove a metastasized melanoma. Both were staying with Ken and me, but my mother wanted the three of us sleeping at her house the night before her operation. She didn’t trust us to wake up, drive to her house and get her to the hospital across town by 7 a.m.

I felt June turn onto her back. “Are you awake?” she asked.
“Yeah,” I answered. “I can’t sleep.”
“Me neither. This is all happening so fast.”

She was right. Only ten days had passed since learning our mother’s death was imminent.

“Do you think you’ll have kids now?” my sister asked. “After mother’s gone, that is.”

“I don’t know. That hasn’t crossed my mind. I just always figured I wouldn’t.”

“Me too,” June confided. “I settled on that after mother’s visit when Sandy was a puppy. I was training her on the leash in the backyard, when mother came out to tell me I was doing it ‘all wrong.’ I know that’s what she’d say about my childrearing, too.”

“Wasn’t that the same trip she rearranged all of your living room knickknacks while you were at work?”

“The same,” my sister replied.

I rolled onto my side and propped up my head with my hand. “Well, you don’t even live here, June. Imagine what it would be like for me. She’d be over constantly, interfering, giving unsolicited advice. She’d want to babysit!”

I tensed at the idea and felt my shoulder scrunch up to my ear. I remembered the piercing looks my mother shot at me as a child. I flinched recalling the slap of her hand to my face. “How could I leave a baby with her? Who knows what she’d do?”
“Let’s say we do decide to have kids after mother dies, and one of us has a girl,” my sister said. “Does this mean we have to name her Jane?”

I flopped onto my back. “For God’s sake, June. No, we do not!”

There was no such thing as subtle hints when it came to our mother’s desire for grandchildren or her belief she could control our lives.

“I think you should get pregnant!” she had blurted in the bleachers at my brother’s championship basketball game at the Jewish Community Center in 1979.

“What?! Get pregnant?” I’d replied. “Are you kidding? I’m not even married!”

“I don’t care about that anymore. I want grandchildren.”

I shook off the memory of the fears my sister and I had shared and snuggled up against Ken. I was forty-one years old. I thought I’d be able to handle anything by now. But I wasn’t convinced I was ready, or that my neighborhood was ready. I drifted off to sleep telling myself, “I am not my mother, I am not my mother, I am not my mother.”

Over the next months, as Christmas was approaching, I thought carefully about what I would say yes to and no to. Barbie had been a yes; Wendy a no. I wondered if dividing Harry’s indoor and outdoor worlds was being too controlling. I wasn’t sure what message I was sending him. Would he think playing with girl toys is okay, but dressing like a girl isn’t? I didn’t know what was right. I just knew I wanted him to stay happy and free from teasing.

The Friday night before Christmas, our twenty-five-year-old nephew Dirk arrived from London. Ken had been in bed for hours
and I was moving around ornaments on the tree when the doorbell rang. Dirk was en route to his family’s place in Minneapolis for the holidays and stopped as he usually did to spend a couple of days with us. He had just finished his masters in performing arts and was thinking of moving to Australia. He wasn’t around much, and I wanted Harry to get to know him.

We caught up on our lives as Dirk tossed color-changing pinecones into the fireplace. The only other light in the living room came from the glow of multicolored bulbs on the ceiling-high Christmas tree. Added warmth came from a bottle of chardonnay.

“He wants the Barbie Dream House,” I said. “And I’m so conflicted about it.”

“I always wanted the Barbie Dream House, too,” Dirk replied.

“Really?”

This was Dirk’s first mention that Barbie had played a role in his early life. He’d come out to his parents in a letter the year before. I wasn’t surprised to learn he was gay, but I’d never known he’d wanted the Barbie Dream House, too. I wondered if this were a sure sign Harry would be gay. Maybe Barbie was a genetic marker in Ken’s family and a harbinger of Harry’s development.

“I wanted one ever since I started playing Barbies with my sister,” Dirk said. “I was seven or eight. A friend of ours had one, and we both wanted it.”

“Same with Harry! Did you get it?”

“Not until we were about ten or eleven, when we bought it ourselves at a garage sale. It was stored with Andrea’s toys, with the Barbie stuff. I was forced to be Ken. He always wanted a divorce, I seem to recall.”
I laughed. “I could use a little comic relief on this topic.”

“Okay, cue the wine, please,” said Dirk, extending a glass from his spot on the rug.

I poured more for both of us and then recrossed my legs on the yellow leather ottoman. I told him about Harry’s “inside my head” comment and my recent Peter Pan bait-and-switch.

“I didn’t get him the Barbie House,” I continued. “I looked at Toys R Us, but it costs a hundred dollars! The thing is made of the cheapest plastic ever and huge—three Barbie stories tall! I don’t even know where we’d put it.”

“Barbie dreams big. It’s a townhouse.”

“Yeah, well, there’s no Barbie subdivision here,” I said. “We’re giving him a two-story wooden dollhouse instead. It’s perfect for all the miniature Disney characters he has. But I still feel guilty; Santa is supposed to bring kids what they want.”

“The fat man didn’t get it for me either,” Dirk said, “and I turned out to be quite brilliant, if you ask me.”

“You are perfect, Dirk. Really, you are.”

Dirk was a creative, theatrical, and fun. I could imagine Harry being like him. But Santa guilt was tearing me up inside, along with worry about keeping Harry protected in the world outside.

The day after Dirk left I got a phone call at the office from my friend Harry Gold, an architectural designer and artist in Los Angeles. His full name was Harry James Gold, and I’d named my Harry for him.

Days after my “you’re-over-thirty-five” amniocentesis in 1989 revealed that Ken and I were having a boy, I learned from Harry
Gold that he’d tested positive for HIV. Ken and I hadn’t even talked baby names yet, but I knew that night what name I wanted our son to have. I didn’t care that Jews weren’t supposed to name their children after someone living; I knew this friend I loved dearly wasn’t long for this world.

When I told Ken, he thought I wanted to name our boy after his dad, a Harry who went by his middle name, Allyn. And, in part, I did want to honor him. I loved Ken’s dad and was closer to him than my own father. The middle name James made sense to Ken, too, because his oldest brother Jimmy had been killed in a one-car accident when he was twenty-one. After I explained about Harry Gold, Ken agreed our son would be named for two treasured Harrys.

“Hey, Harry, what’s up?” I asked, leaning back in the desk chair of my corner office. “You never call me at work.”

“I’m having a party tomorrow night, and I want you to come.”

“What? Are you kidding? Tomorrow night? Christmas is just three days away.”

“Well, if you want to see me again, you’ll be here.”

The room felt suddenly cold. “What do you mean?”

“I’ve got brain lesions. My doctor says I only have a few days.”

This was it. My beloved friend Harry had just uttered the words I’d dreaded for three years. And I realized this was the real reason I worried my little Harry might be gay. I was afraid of raising a son I would have to watch die. The thought of getting this call from my Harry some day caused a short circuit in my brain. I could barely process the information as a friend. My stomach twisted and I felt myself wanting to vomit.
“Oh no, Harry . . .” I heard my voice crack. “Fuck!”

I couldn’t believe how fast it had come to this. We’d just met up for a long weekend over my business trip to New York six months earlier. Even though he was taking a ton of pills, he looked as strong and handsome as ever. But he had joked about his T-cell count not being high enough for a decent dinner party.

“Yeah,” he said. “So I’m throwing a farewell party for myself. I’m calling everyone I know who isn’t dead yet.”

So many of Harry’s friends had suffered prolonged, painful deaths, including his best friend Scott. On a visit to Harry the summer before, he’d handed me a book from the shelf in his office. It was called, Final Exit: The Practicalities of Self-Deliverance and Assisted Suicide for the Dying.

“Final Exit?” I said opening the cover. “I’ve never heard of this.”

“It just came out.”

As I paged through, my eyes jumped onto pairs words that held a sense of foreboding, like “plastic bag” and “lethal dose.” I looked up and jiggled my head back and forth, as if I could empty my mind of such thoughts.

“Is this what you’re going to do?” I asked, forcing myself to swallow.

“Not now, but I have to be prepared. I’ve started collecting heavy-dose barbiturates for when the time comes.”

The nausea and dizziness I’d felt that day returned. Harry would be going through with his final exit plan and the reality of it pounded me with an avalanche of grief. This was too soon! I wanted my little Harry to really know his Uncle Harry. I flashed on
the pictures I’d taken of them together in L.A. the year before. My
toddler had taken his first steps at Uncle Harry’s house.

“I won’t miss your party,” I said, wiping my cheeks with a tissue.
“Good. You can stay here.”
“I love you, Harry.”
“Me too. So get your skinny ass over here.”

I hung up the receiver, my eyes still streaming. Then I got up to
close my office door and burst into loud, uncontrollable sobs.

I arrived at Harry’s house the following afternoon. People were
already gathering. His sister Chloe had flown in that morning
from Denver. She and I were the same age, as were our brothers.
We’d all grown up across the street from each other. Their mom,
Alessa, called me her second daughter.

Chloe told me Harry was extending the party another day so
his friends in New York could get there. I was glad I’d planned to
stay an extra day. Then, with eyes red from crying, she explained
he’d lost his peripheral vision and was having trouble seeing any-
thing that wasn’t right in front of him.

When I found Harry, he was in the kitchen laughing, a full glass
of scotch in his hand. He gave me a big hug, and I didn’t want to let go.

“I should have asked you to marry me instead of Ken,” I said
into his ear.

“That’s what all you girls say,” he said.

I stayed in the background that night and the next. I’d had
Harry all to myself in New York. It was time to share him with his
family and friends. Like everyone there, I did my best to stay upbeat.
But I could see from the whispers, the hugs, and the trembling drinks
that everyone was on edge. Harry wanted a festive atmosphere, but
it was hard to have fun knowing that the end of the party meant the end of his life.

I did a decent job of last-party denial until I passed Harry’s shrine on an alcove wall in the dining room. It was a work of art, a tribute to his friends who had died of AIDS. I’d seen it the spring before: a large, hand-carved Mexican crucifix with names underneath in a block of type he’d written in pencil. I put the fingertips of both hands to my mouth and felt the burning sensation in my nasal cavity that signaled imminent tears. There were twice as many names as before.

On Christmas Eve morning I boarded an early morning flight home. I hadn’t slept all night, knowing my closest male friend was drifting to death in the next room. I was glad I’d left the house before anyone else had awoken. I didn’t think I could bear to see a hearse pull up and his body carried out. I couldn’t wait to squeeze my little Harry and tell him how much I loved him.

I heard my son’s small bare feet running on the hardwood floors as soon as I opened the back door.

“Momma!” he said, bounding into the kitchen.

“Hi, Peanut!”

I lifted him up and held his compact little body close to my chest. I pressed my cold cheek to the warmth and softness of his skin and whispered, “I love you.” I breathed in the familiar scent of his and kissed his cheek. He pulled away and put his hands on my face.

“Why are you crying, Momma?”

“Only because I’m so happy to see you, Harry,” I said brushing my face with one wrist. “These are called tears of joy.”
He gave me a kiss on the lips and then wriggled to get down. “Come on, I want to show you something.” He ran past Ken who’d followed him in.

“Are you okay?” Ken asked, putting his arm around me.

“I will be,” I said, feeling my eyes well up again. “It’s good to be home.”

“We don’t have to do this, you know. Jean and Marie don’t have to come over.”

“No, I need family tonight. Really, I do.”

Harry was thrilled with the dollhouse from Santa, which we ended up calling the “character house.” Somehow Santa had opened up Harry’s storage bin of molded-plastic Disney characters and placed them all inside the house. Harry took the two red roof slats out immediately and placed Cinderella on the top crossbar, like the figurehead on a ship’s bow. Tinkerbell, Wendy, and Jasmine got the master bedroom upstairs. Belle ended up downstairs with Mickey, Goofy, Tigger, and Pooh. I could only guess that her yellow, rather than blue, dress had held her back.

We also gave Harry the animated video *Robin Hood*, and it quickly replaced *Peter Pan* as his favorite cartoon movie. He and Heidi watched it most afternoons that winter of 1993. Even with all the characters as animals and Robin Hood a fox, I thought Robin was still a masculine role model for Harry and a good balance to Wendy and Cinderella Barbie.

The movie was playing late one afternoon when I returned home from work. I heard Heidi laughing over the music from the movie’s ending as I walked through the kitchen to the living room to greet the two merrymakers.
I stopped in the archway entrance, where I did a double take. Harry was wrapped up in toilet paper, with a long, flowing piece tied around his head. He skipped around the living room in front of Robin Hood and Maid Marian’s wedding scene finale.

“Hi, guys!” I said. “Harry, why are you dressed like a mummy?”

“Harry’s a bride,” Heidi said, laughing behind hands that covered her mouth. “He went into the bathroom and made his dress all by himself.”

Little Harry looked adorable, and I knew his idea for a wedding dress was creative, but he was clearly relating to the movie’s female vixen and not Robin, the fox. Heidi got up to leave and bent to kiss Harry goodbye.

“See you tomorrow, Maid Marian. Have fun with your mom and dad tonight.”

Harry took hold of my hands and the two of us twirled around the room until I needed to get dinner started. On my way to the kitchen, I drifted into my own thoughts. I loved seeing Harry so happy, but he wanted to be a bride and this wasn’t Halloween anymore.

After dinner, while Ken and Harry colored with markers at the glass table in the living room, I sneaked from kitchen clean up to the guest room upstairs. I pulled Dr. Spock’s book off the shelf and turned to the page marked with the purple sticky tab. I read over the two paragraphs I almost had memorized. Again I was reminded that Harry might not lose interest in all things girl until the age of five or six.

Then, I put the book away and on my way back downstairs resigned myself to a long, long wait.
Striking a pose, 1994