

The Reality of Motherhood Fantasies

By Risa C. Doherty

When my phone rang one ordinary morning, I heard an all too familiar voice say: "Mom, can you drop off my fake blood?" This wasn't a particularly shocking or uncommon request coming from my first-born, although it might seem unusual to some.

I'll admit those aren't the words I always longed to hear when I fantasized about motherhood. Yet, it's oddly indicative of what motherhood has turned out to be, for me.

It seems like just a short time ago my sweet toddler was lining up his Thomas the Tank Engine trains on the carpet. I can see Alec in his shiny mushroom haircut and button-down checkered shirt, purchased at a swanky Manhattan children's boutique.

The voice on the phone was simultaneously that of the one-time bubbly child and now young adult. It was a man's voice; but contained the same enthusiasm of a child.

My then 17-year-old filmmaker needed the blood for a film he was making at school. These days, he selects film titles for me, knowing just what I'd like. He used to follow me from room to room, studying me; he was president of my fan club.

Some days I comb through piles of baby photos. Closing my eyes, I remember his gleeful giggle as his father planted a raspberry on his bare belly and how he'd push his tiny hand in mine as we walked. At 18, he now stands over six feet tall and is broad, like a linebacker. Today, my hand would be lost in his and that giggle is a manly chuckle.

I have no say with respect to his clothes, save for the occasional veto of a risqué T-shirt. He wears a zip-up

sweatshirt, paired with ripped sweats and hightops. His curly hair remains untamed. Somewhere inside this disheveled giant is my little boy.

Then, there's Melissa. Once a petite, headband-wearing trend-setter, with "binkies" to match each outfit, her unending cries of "uppy, uppy" seemed to last forever. We now stand almost eye to eye. Each week she smiles mischievously, dutifully giving me her hand, lining her palm up to mine, thus demonstrating that her fingers are as long as mine.

Like most teenage girls, clothes are her life. For years I could corral her in the girls' 7 to 14 section. But, then it happened, seemingly all at once: her request to shop at Anthropologie. Having barely graduated to the acceptance of juniors, I skeptically complied. Within minutes she stood before me, breathtaking, in an adult-sized, form-fitting dress, revealing the figure of a young woman, her carefully-ironed blond hair cascading past her shoulders. I blinked, remembering the toddler sporting miniature, curly blond pigtails, her chin perpetually coated with dried chocolate ice cream.

At CVS she furtively pops open the tops of a dozen shampoos and conditioners in search of two harmonious scents. Then we head home, where she responsibly dons her eyeglasses, offering to split a candybar as she grabs an afghan and we watch "Lifetime for Women." I don't complain as she parks her boney 15-year-old body on my lap, limbs dangling, because I know that in a blink she'll have one foot out the door, just like her brother. ☺

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