

Stories from

CANDY



Confections from One of
Hollywood's Most Famous
Wives and Mothers

CANDY
SPELLING

Stories from Candyland



Stories from Candyland



Candy Spelling


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To Aaron,

My love . . . and the man who entertained
the world with great stories.
I hope my storytelling makes you proud.

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Acknowledgments



I always thought writers lived the most solitary of lives. I know my late husband, Aaron Spelling would often lock himself up in his office or get up in the middle of the night to write, and it never was a group activity.

When I started to write *Stories from Candyland*, the silence was deafening. I thought I had fun stories and one-of-a-kind experiences to relate but wasn't sure how I'd be able to tell them. Aaron Spelling had been a great storyteller. Candy Spelling was a good listener.

As soon as I began, I realized writing is a very collaborative experience. So many people helped me with this book, and I want to thank them.

First the dogs, starting with my Madison, who was there every night, all night, when I was at my computer telling my stories. I think my wheaten terrier stood, sat, and curled up by me to make sure she was included in the book. She is.

Next, here's a note to Madison's friends Izzy and Sarge:

It was while visiting my past and present I found a muse who knew just when to push, when to encourage, and when to laugh. Thanks, guys, for letting her spend hours on the phone listening to my ideas and stories and, yes, a bit of grouching, all the things that go into writing a book. Among the pages of *Stories from Candyland*, I found a sweet and dear friend, your mom, Linda Dozoretz.

I'd like to thank my editor, Elizabeth Beier, at St. Martin's Press. You referred to me as an "archivist" and not a "collector" or "hoarder." I can't tell you the psychological good you did for me. When you giggled and said, "I know you have a fun book," that day at my house, I experienced a combination of excitement and fear that hasn't gone away. That's not bad, though. Thank you for all your help.

Sally Richardson and her team warmly welcomed me to the St. Martin's family. Michelle Richter, Steve Snider, John Murphy, Ann Day, Courtney Fischer, Meg Drislane, Kathryn Parise, and Jennifer Dolan were also great at navigating their first-time author through this project.

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encouragement about telling my life stories means so much. I appreciate Kim Dower's helping me overcome my shyness to tell these stories. I'm still a work in progress.

Thanks to Dr. Andrea Brandt, who helped me hum happier tunes.

I am blessed with friends who have been part of my life since the earliest days in school. To Nancy Blumenfeld, who has been my sister since I was five years old, plus my Mah-Jongg buddies Wil Erlicht, Fran, Sheila, Darlene, Linda, Lucy, Joyce, Kris, Wendy, Fabienne, Pitzie, and Cheryl. To the Simmons family, Denise, Danny, Victoria, and Laura, who have been such a major support for as long as I have known them. My Syrian sister, Ghada Irani, has graciously taken me everywhere in the world. I love her dearly. To Alicia Rose and Paula Meehan, I appreciate the love, laughs, and inspiration. You told me I could write a book. I think I'm beginning to believe you.

I have a great personal team, too. Alana Voeller seemed to be spending more days making copies and air-expressing photos than she spent at home. Rodney Baer helped me find the items in the attic, then counted boxes, found descriptions, and assured me that I was as organized as I hoped I was.

Other special help came from Bob Dally, who not only decorates my homes but brightens my life. Beverly Callison, who remembered all the little things, which is why Aaron loved her; and Kevin Sasaki. Thank goodness he hired people with great memories.

I loved telling my son, Randy, about the stories I was relating and laughing with him at some of the memories and experiences our family shared. I love you, Randy.

Some of my inspiration came from knowing that I have two grandchildren, Liam Aaron and Stella Doreen, thanks to my daughter, Tori, and her husband, Dean. I wanted them to hear about the grandfather, grandmother, mother, and uncle and know how great life can be.

I truly appreciate all the support and encouragement from so many special people in my life. As in any "game," I look forward to the next move.

Introduction



I hadn't done a lot of writing in my life.

Growing up, I had learning disabilities before ADD and dyslexia had names, and my education was dedicated to pursuits such as being charming, polite, and fashionable, plus learning sewing, cooking, decorating, good posture, proper etiquette, dancing, and preparing to be the best wife ever.

Once I married Aaron Spelling and tried to be the best wife ever, I didn't think much about writing. I was married to the man who would become the most prolific producer and writer in television history. His influence helped define pop culture for decades. I was his collaborator, cheerleader, executive assistant, housekeeper, trophy wife, companion, and support, and I loved almost every minute of it.

After Aaron died in June 2006, I realized that much of my life's job was done. As Mrs. Aaron (Candy) Spelling, as etiquette suggested, I ran businesses, raised children, designed and built houses, and had my charitable work and many friends and activities—but Aaron had listened to me, communicated with me, had been my barometer for social, cultural, and political issues and much more.

I realized I could have a voice, but I wasn't sure anyone wanted to hear what I had to say. Someone said, "Start blogging." I looked up the word *blog*, wrote a few, and fell in love with the interaction and access in today's world.

The more I spoke, the more I realized that anyone who did think he or she knew me defined me as that rich woman with the gift-wrapping room. I was the mother who may or may not have given her children all the money they thought they deserved, the quiet woman on the arm of one of Hollywood's most powerful executives, and another one of the wives of Hollywood with the beautiful clothes at the star-studded parties.

Exposing my opinions means exposing myself. It has been scary, but enlightening, threatening, and exhilarating, and I'm having fun.

When I was offered the opportunity to write a book with stories about my life, I instantly said yes and was ready.

I've always loved telling stories. As a shy child and, later, as a wife not encouraged to speak, I often created stories about my surroundings, people I'd see, places I wanted to go. I'd look at characters in paintings or figures in statues and imagine what they were thinking or what they'd do next. I'd imagine how much fun my friends were having on dates, or how happy Tori and Randy must be at school with their friends and favorite teachers while I was cooking their dinner at home.

This book relates many of the stories of my life and the stories I've imagined about how life can be.

I've been on a wonderful ride, exposed to some of the most interesting people and places in the world, while struggling with the issues of my baby boomer generation as we moved from innocence

children to conflicted teens, through marriage, motherhood.

Things might have been a lot different if my parents had encouraged me to write rather than on napkins. I remember two letters I did write as a child. One was to my father, apologizing if my cooking had caused him to have an ulcer. My parents thought it was adorable and gave it to the local newspaper to publish.

And I wrote a will when I was nine.

My family was eating dinner, and half a worm emerged from my artichoke. Convinced that I had just eaten the other half, I screamed and announced I was probably going to die. Neat and organized from an early age, I decided I had to write “my will” and say goodbye to my family. I found out years later that my mother kept it. She could at least have corrected the spelling and punctuation for me.

MY WILL

When I die from eating a worm I leave all my possessions to my family, Mom, Pop & Brother & Morgen.

To My Mom, I will leave $\frac{1}{3}$ of my estate & to My Pop I leave $\frac{1}{3}$ of my estate & to my brother I will leave $\frac{1}{3}$ of my estate, which is \$30.00, and also I leave my dog Morgen to my Mom and Morgen will get the rest of my possessions, which whatever they may be.

Signature / Candy Marer

1954

Fortunately, I did not die. Morgan was my stuffed animal and best friend, and I remember being worried that my mom might not take as good care of him as I did.

Anyway, looking back, I see that my writing, spelling, and punctuation could have used some help, but my business acumen was clearly in place.

My mother and I never talked about it, and I hadn't thought about that will for years until Aaron mentioned it years after we got married.

I couldn't imagine how he could know the story of my will, even though, by that time, he was working on *The Mod Squad* and had produced detective shows such as *Honey West* and *Burke's Law*. He'd uncovered the evidence just as easily as his TV characters did.

With a flourish as suave as Amos Burke's, he showed me that my mother had given him my will. He handed me my note, attached to a letter, written in her beautiful handwriting on Beverly Hillcrest Hotel stationery, which read:

My Darling Aaron,

Please take good care of this for me, as I'd die if it ever got lost. It's one of my fondest memories of Candy—before she married you and got smart & learned to spell.

I love you,

“Mom”

It was nice to hear that my mother thought I'd “got smart,” but I never did learn to spell very well.

Aaron, of course, was a great speller.

~~I've been fortunate to have people looking out for me. Now I'm enjoying starting to realize what actually right for me.~~

I've sure had an interesting time living my *Stories from Candyland*. I'm glad you're coming along to read them.

Stories from Candyland



Chapter 1



My Rock for the Ages



I loved Fridays. Instead of taking the school bus home, I'd go in the opposite direction and run to the big newsstand where all my favorite movie magazines were sold. I could barely contain myself until I'd seen the black truck full of afternoon newspapers and weekly magazines approach, heard the thud of the heavy stacks of magazines hitting the sidewalk.

I was always hungry on Fridays because I had long ago decided that my money was better spent on magazines than on another elementary school lunch. Nevertheless, I had the strength to move aside the magazines about cars and food and sports until the movie star covers appeared.

One special Friday I ran into my house hugging two full-color, star-studded magazines of celebrity secrets to my chest. I found my mother in the kitchen and announced, "Mom, I might be late for dinner. I have a lot of reading to do."

"Candy, you're never going to have any money if you spend it all on those movie star magazines."

That's what my mother told me constantly. This was the same mother who had named me "Carole Gene," after Carole Lombard, a movie star my mother loved when she read about her years earlier in the same movie star magazines.

Carole Lombard was an okay star, and no one called me "Carole" anyway. I was Candy, and I was in love with Rock Hudson. I knew it from a young age, when the twenty cents that copies of *Photoplay* and *Modern Screen* cost far exceeded my allowance. Thank goodness for birthdays, holidays, and teeth falling out, which were all good for a few more cents.

Rock's photo was on the cover of the February 1957 issue of *Photoplay*. "Rock Hudson's Life Story," the headline promised. I devoured every word. I discounted the photos of Rock with his wife. In the August 1954 issue of *Modern Screen*, the cover had asked the question "Is Rock Hudson Afraid of Marriage?" If he was afraid in 1954, why was he married? Hmm. Maybe the marriage wouldn't last. One of my friends' parents were getting divorced, and Rock and his wife didn't have kids.

I found out that his name was originally Roy Scherer. I didn't know anyone named Rock or Roy, but that would change someday. I knew he would be mine in just a few years, as soon as I grew up. One day I discovered there was even a food named for the two of us, a clear sign we were meant to be together. I found a recipe for rock candy, and learned how to make it in different colors. Rock and I would eat it every night for dessert to celebrate our love.

I learned that Rock might be afraid of marriage around the time I saw the ad for his new movie *Magnificent Obsession*. I had no idea what the title meant, but I read and reread the words in the ad. "This was the moment unashamed . . . when this man and this woman felt the first ecstasy of the *Magnificent Obsession*." No clue. Good photo, though. My parents wouldn't let me see the movie. Now I own it on DVD.

Screen Album magazine wrote in the summer of 1956, “Tall, handsome, in demand as an escort, Rock Hudson played, and committed himself to no one. I’ll marry when I’m 30 said he—and who, in his position, would have rushed? The world can be fun for a man with no ties, and a pocketful of green money.” Wait, Rock. Wait until you’re closer to forty, so I have time to grow up. I’m growing as fast as I can. I’m not sure why you’re married now, but don’t get married again until you’re forty and ready for me. Okay?

The stories sent me on a roller-coaster fantasy life. My copy of the “Big Spring Issue—Who Loves Who in Hollywood!” of *Motion Picture* magazine in 1956 named the couples who were most in love: Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher, Liz Taylor and Michael Wilding, Janet Leigh and Tony Curtis, and (sigh) Rock Hudson and Phyllis Gates. Something was fishy. I had recently seen photos of “Rock and Liz in Texas” in *Silver Screen*. He didn’t look like he was thinking of anyone named Phyllis, and she didn’t seem to be a Michael on *her* mind.

Then again, maybe his marriage wouldn’t last. *Motion Picture* described the wedding day: “He was dressed in a brown suit and he looked wonderful, so handsome. Phyllis, warm, friendly, curly-haired, did him the honor as his wife.” I knew that’s what a wife should do. I didn’t like that magazine because it wrote about Rock’s wife, and I vowed not to buy it again, even though it was cheaper than the others, at fifteen cents.

Stop the presses. My *Photoplay* in May 1957 was all about the “Todd-Taylor Marriage.” More hope! Maybe Mr. Wilding would take the honorable Mrs. Gates Hudson away from my Rock. There was hope again.

My collection of Rock Hudson stories and photos grew. I had seen *Pillow Talk* about twelve times (I had a bigger allowance), as I kept growing closer to Rock’s age. I knew I had it made in 1962 when *Motion Picture* (“first and best” and twenty-five cents) wrote about Rock’s “reflections.” He was so deep and dreamy.

Asked what he admired about Jackie Kennedy, Rock said, “I think she has beautiful hairdos.” Guess what! I had a Jackie Kennedy hairdo, although my hair was blond and fine. Oh, Rock! The writer asked what he liked most about Doris Day. “I like her humor, her sunniness.” Rock, people tell me I look like Doris Day, and I have a good sense of humor. Perfect! But my mother insisted there was no such word as *sunniness*.

By the middle 1960s, I was ready to get together with Rock. Yes, I’d dated a lot of boys at school, gotten married at seventeen and divorced at nineteen, and dated again, but I would have dropped everything now that I was old enough to marry Rock Hudson. Sometimes, when I was out to dinner in a Beverly Hills department store, people would say, “Rock Hudson was here just last week.” Bad timing for me, but I was still optimistic.



In 1966 I started dating a man named Aaron Spelling. He made me nervous because he had quite a reputation as a playboy. Even though I was twenty, I knew I was no match for a sophisticated and worldly playboy. I agreed to a date, we enjoyed ourselves, and I accepted a second date. I liked him a lot, even though his playboy image, social ease, and maturity scared me.

“Candy,” Aaron’s voice crackled from the massive car phone that took up half his front seat, “I’ve been invited to a party for Grace Kelly on Saturday night. We can go there on our date.”

A party for Grace Kelly? Oh my. Grace Kelly was the most beautiful, most elegant woman alive.

think that if she had been a star when I was born, my mother might have named me “Grace Gene.”

I was so excited that I missed Aaron’s next sentence: “The party is at Rock Hudson’s house in Hollywood. Candy, do you want to go to Rock’s for Grace Kelly’s party?”

“What rocks?” I said.

“I told you. The party is at Rock Hudson’s house.”

The world stopped. Everything started spinning. I was afraid my heart was going to fly right out of my chest. I was going to Rock Hudson’s house!

The next four days seemed to take four years. I shopped for clothes I couldn’t afford, and looked through every fashion magazine over and over to find the right hairstyle and makeup look for the evening. I also called all the people who had ever made fun of me for having a magnificent obsession with Rock Hudson. Carole Gene Marer was going to Rock Hudson’s house.

By the time Aaron picked me up in his black Cadillac Eldorado Brougham, I was giddy. I’m a very shy person and don’t talk much, but Aaron couldn’t shut me up. In retrospect, I think I sounded like Alvin and his chipmunk friends, chatting incessantly.

We arrived at a white house surrounded by beautiful flowers at the top of a hill in Hollywood. The house started shaking. Were we having an earthquake? Oh no. Not tonight. Please.

It wasn’t an earthquake. It was my nerves.

We walked in, and every one of the stars whose photos and lives I had studied and admired in movie magazines appeared before my eyes. Someone snapped our picture. And then, suddenly, there he was. Rock Hudson! He was tall, dark, and handsome, just like the magazines said he was. He was smiling. Wait. He was smiling at Aaron and me. He was walking toward us. Rock Hudson was just feet away from my feet.

Then my feet took me to Rock Hudson’s bathroom, and that’s where I stayed the entire night. I was so nervous, so scared, so overwhelmed—so of course the answer was to lock myself in Rock Hudson’s bathroom and hope no one would need to use it.

I remember all three of the sentences I said to guests at that party that evening. “It’s occupied. You can’t come in. Go away.” Anyone who tried the door, knocked, stomped, or asked if anyone was in there got one or all of my three phrases.

I also remember what people were saying. Many of the voices were familiar. I found out that celebrities talk about their kids, the weather, vacations, cars, clothes, and all the other things normal adults do.

Aaron’s voice was always in the distance. He had this Texas accent that gave him a very distinctive sound. He’s a playboy. He’ll find someone else to hang around with tonight, I remember thinking. He won’t even miss me.

I’m not sure how long I was locked in the bathroom, but soon I was jolted by the realization that the person knocking on the door was my date, Aaron.

“Candy. Is that you in there? Are you sick? What’s the matter? We have to leave. The party is ending. Candy?”

I froze right there on the toilet seat in Rock Hudson’s bathroom. I had been discovered. I hadn’t really thought this through. I hadn’t realized I’d have to leave the bathroom eventually.

Okay. I had taken ballroom dancing lessons, gone to etiquette class, studied movie star habits, and had very polite relatives, so I could do this right.

I casually strolled out of the bathroom, took Aaron’s hand, and we walked quickly out the front door.

“What in the world happened? Why were you in the bathroom all night?”

“Aaron, I was so scared. You know how shy I am. I’ve wanted to meet Rock Hudson all my life. And when it was time, I knew I’d have nothing to say or I’d sound stupid, and that I shouldn’t be with those kinds of people, and I just ended up in the bathroom.”

Aaron took my hand and laughed. And laughed.

I remember thinking that this suave, popular playboy wouldn’t be asking Candy the social misfit out again.

I was wrong. We had a third date, although it was very unconventional. Aaron spent our entire third date tutoring me. We worked on looking at each other right in the eye. We shook each other’s hands over and over. We practiced small talk. He trained me for future dates. He said I had passed. We had a fourth date, a fifth, sixth . . .

We didn’t go to a lot of Hollywood parties on the next few dates. We went to the Cocoanut Grove nightclub and heard dreamy Eddie Fisher sing. We went backstage after the show, and I played with his puppy while he and Aaron spoke. We would go to the popular local clubs, the Daisy, the Factory, or the Candy Store. Aaron was a great dancer, and I wasn’t too shy about my dancing. None of our succeeding dates involved Rock Hudson.

I did finally get to meet Grace Kelly many times in later years. But better still, Rock and I became great friends, and he even later appeared in Aaron’s series *Dynasty*. I don’t know if he even remembered that I was the perfectly coiffed young woman who had occupied his bathroom for hours. He was such a nice man. If he did remember, he would probably have been too polite to mention it. I liked thinking that he didn’t know it was me.

Aaron and I had a very happy marriage for thirty-eight years. We loved the time we spent laughing with Rock and his friends. I never told Rock any of my stories about my infatuation for him and my plans for when I grew up. I probably would have locked myself in the bathroom in embarrassment if he had ever found out.

But I have kept many of the magazine stories about him all these years.

Chapter 2



Dr. Spock or Mr. Spock: Did We Really Listen to These Guys?



I've lost count of how many e-mails I've received about how we baby boomers grew up to be successful independent people because we rode our bikes without helmets, were herded into cars without seat belts, car seats, or air bags, lived in homes painted in pretty lead-based colors, filled up on white bread and butter, drank tap water, got Band-Aids instead of trips to the emergency room for cuts and scrapes, played outdoors after dark, and engaged in all kinds of now-primitive-sounding activities. The punch line is that, by today's standards, it's a miracle we survived.

I think we had more fun. We had more freedom, were encouraged to be creative and less structured, and learned those good old values and work ethics. (No, I'm not running for office.)

And all this despite all the parenting experts who, like us, were breathing lead-based paint fumes and risking their lives in station wagons and on scooters.

I wonder how many more virtues we could give ourselves if we and our parents hadn't spent so much time listening to people like Dr. Spock and Mr. Spock.

Sometimes, when I try to figure out what my mother was thinking during her child-rearing years, I remember the copy of *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care* that never seemed to be too far out of her reach.

My mother wasn't the only Spock devotee. I recognized his child care manual at all my friends' houses, too. The book was published the year I was born, and I bought the updated versions of the "timeless bestseller" when Tori and Randy were born. I wanted to be as knowledgeable as the mother before me.

I don't think Dr. Spock helped my mother or me very much.

In between advice and thoughts on everything from diaper use to proper diet, from crying to reading, from the limits of love to raising children in a troubled society, from colic to book development, Dr. Spock wrote:

In many ways, we have lost our faith in the meaning of life and our confidence to understand our world and our society. My point here is that you are raising your children in the context of very confusing and rapidly changing times. Your goals and aspirations for your child are going to be greatly influenced by these times and the prevailing ideals and beliefs.

That's not a very positive message. Then I discovered more of his uplifting words:

Parenting is an ideal guilt-generating business, and labor often delivers the first volley. . . The “perfect” parent has yet to see the light of day.

All right. That explains some of my mother’s attitudes, I guess.

By the time my kids were born, I had two Spocks to consult. Dr. Spock kept updating his book, and Mr. Spock of *Star Trek* was among pop culture’s most quoted figures. If Dr. Spock was right about the times influencing our beliefs as they related to child-rearing, I thought I might as well use the other Spock to check in on what people were thinking and believing. Most people I knew in the 1970s didn’t know that Dr. Spock and Mr. Spock weren’t the same person anyway. Both pontificated.

Mr. Spock’s deep thoughts included:

If there are self-made purgatories, then we all have to live in them. Mine can be no worse than someone else’s.

It is curious how often you humans manage to obtain that which you do not want.

I am endeavoring, ma’am, to construct a mnemonic circuit using stone knives and bearskins.

Nowhere am I so desperately needed as among a shipload of illogical humans.

I really couldn’t relate to either of the Spocks. So I decided to investigate what other resources my mother had when my brother and I were growing up.

I remember my first book of *Nursery Rhymes* (which I still have) and my mother reading:

*Little Polly Flinders sat among the cinders,
Warming her pretty little toes!*

Mother would pause here to tell me I had pretty little toes, too.

*Her mother came and caught her,
And whipped her little daughter,
For spoiling her nice new clothes.*

Lesson learned. I never sat in cinders and spoiled nice new clothes.

The *Reader’s Digest* from my birth month featured “So You Think You’ve Got Rationing Troubles,” and warned of “butter-berserk housewives,” “soprano voices demanding beef,” and “improvident housewives.”

My mother was none of the above, but she collected multiples of everything, and encouraged me to do the same. I don’t remember my parents ever running out of anything. I bought my kids two of everything “just in case.” I think I still have some of those obsolete toys and long-out-of-fashion clothes in my attic.

Another *Reader’s Digest* story challenged parents to adopt the new post-World War II role of the United States in the “community of nations” with “service and leadership.” My family was the first on our block to have a fully stocked bomb shelter in the 1950s. I guess that made us leaders.

One of my mother’s favorite magazines was *Country Gentleman*, even though she was a native Los Angeles and a lady. The advice the month I was born was, “Don’t raise hogs for pets.” We only

had one dog—briefly—and never did get a hog.

Her issue of *The Woman* magazine had a sad story: “My Sons Had Polio.” Whenever I complained about anything, from eating peas to too much homework, my mother would say, “At least you don’t have polio.” She was right. I was very lucky.

The *Life* magazine that was on the stands when I was born (with a victorious General Douglas MacArthur on the cover) provided much parenting and life advice.

If my mother brushed my teeth with Ipana, I would never have “pink toothbrush.” (I think I always had pretty pink toothbrushes in my bathroom.) She shampooed my hair with Kreml shampoo, the one shampoo used by “Lovely Powers Models” (and she later encouraged me to become a lovely John Robert Powers model myself). She kept a bottle of the drug *Atropa belladonna* handy in case I developed “deadly nightshade” or anything else that could be cured by the drug that “relieves much human suffering.”

Her magazines helped educate me, too. The importance of the alphabet was stressed in ads for her favorite cigarette. “Your ABC for more smoking pleasure,” the ad in *Life* told her.

Let the first three letters of the alphabet remind you why Chesterfield gives you all the benefits of smoking pleasure . . . Always Buy Chesterfield . . . Always milder; Better tasting; Cooler smoking.” ABCDEFG . . . HIJK LMNO-Puff that cigarette.

I guess my mother was a student of the culture, and that’s how she brought me up.

Good Housekeeping had a story the month I was born that said that trade schools would be the way of the future. Boys would become engineers. Girls would learn advanced sewing and cooking, and the best of the best would graduate from sewing to working in big, important stores. I succeeded. I got a job at Joseph Magnin and worked my way up from salesgirl in Casual (cheap) Dresses to manager of the Lingerie Department.

I was prepared for a career in retail. My parents took me out of public school for a while and sent me to a too-expensive (my father said) private school, where I learned how to be the proper young lady. I curtsied, spoke in the right tone, danced beautifully, could set a table, and missed two years of spelling. My friend Nancy, who went to the same school, misspells many of the same words I do. It has been our private shame, except now it’s being made public, in my book. *Sorry, Nancy. I’d like to ask you’re forgiveness.*

I tried to be like my mother. She was beautiful. I’d try on her wigs and hold her cigarette the way she did, to look chic. She said I looked silly.

We had lots of rules in our house, and I was expected to follow them all. Her wish for me was that I marry a successful man, so I wouldn’t have to struggle the way she had.

“You’ll never marry a rich man if you don’t listen to me,” she would say, as she told me I was too shy, that I slouched, that my hair wasn’t right, or that she didn’t like the expression on my face.

I was terrified of making a mistake. My shyness intensified. I didn’t want to say the wrong thing or make an inappropriate move. I thought that if I looked down, people wouldn’t notice me. I was never sure what I was supposed to do. Half the time, I was sent away from the dinner table, and I was rarely told the reason. But I did know I was being “trained.”

The biggest pressure, though, was that I was commanded to be “perfect.” My brother was imperfect, but my parents decided (as did his teachers and the parents of his friends), so I had to make up for his behavior. I tried hard. But perfection and I never bonded.

Mothers want the best for their daughters, and mine was no exception. She wanted to be a decorator

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