



Chapter 12

Jews Don't Camp, Except At The Hollywood Hyatt

Jewish Girls Don't Camp: Part 1

As if the Jews didn't suffer enough for the last several thousand years, I volunteered my family for our first real camping trip through my son's Boy Scout program at school. My intentions were, in part, a well-meaning attempt to dispel the old adage that Jewish girls don't camp.

Despite protests from my husband, who is more comfortable with a computer than a compass, and ridicule from my mother, who hassled me, "What are you, crazy?" I was determined to take advantage of this perfect opportunity to bond with my children in the great outdoors.

Since many aspects of Judaism stress the importance of being one with Mother Nature—*Tu Bishvat*, for example—I wanted to make

this camping adventure a religious experience. So did Scott, who prayed everyday that I would change my mind.

I convinced myself that we could all benefit from a change of scenery and surely we could survive 24 hours in the woods. After all, we were surrounded by a pack of den leaders and every one of them knew how to utilize those mysterious gadgets hidden inside a pocketknife. As a devoted Scout mom, I figured the least I could do was sacrifice the comforts of home for one day so that my son could earn more arrow points.

Little did I know that our outdoor overnight would make Camp Sabra seem more like Club Med. To this day, I'm still afraid to zip myself into a sleeping bag. If only I had paid attention to the warning signs—and there were plenty of them—I would have saved my family from the humiliation of being the only campers to sneak out of our tent before the crack of dawn and watch the golden sunrise from our heated minivan.

The first hint of trouble began before we even pulled out of the driveway. That's when my kids panicked that the batteries in their Nintendos might die during the two-hour drive to the campground. I solved that problem when I borrowed a handful of double-As from inside a remote control car that no one seemed to use.

The kids organized their toys and batteries in their backpacks, while I loaded the van with enough food and supplies to last all summer. I piled in pillows, blankets, sleeping bags, grubby clothes, coolers, ponchos, old tennis shoes, towels, baseball gloves, toilet paper, bug spray, flashlights, a frying pan, and enough kosher hot dogs to gag a grizzly. I woke up my neighbors as I banged around the camping gear, including a lantern, family-size tent, plastic tarps, a stove with

propane tanks, and two inflatable air mattresses that I borrowed from a friend and had no clue how to use. To make more room, I contemplated strapping the kids to the roof of the Dodge Caravan®.

As the morning fog lifted, I tried to remain calm when my neighbor, an experienced outdoorsman, waved another red flag in my face and informed me that camping is “miserable fun.”

At last, we were ready to hit the road when the phone rang. I assumed that it was my mom in a last ditch effort to bribe me with an offer to baby-sit the kids if we changed our minds and stayed home. Instead, it was our den leader Christine on the line, and her voice sounded weak. She told me how she was up all night with the stomach flu, but she assured me that she would be okay as long as she stayed off her feet and consumed nothing more than over-the-counter medication. I tried to sound sympathetic, but honestly I was more concerned about how Scott and I would pitch a tent and build a fire without her.

When we arrived at our destination, the beautiful Lost Valley Lake Resort in Owensville, Missouri, I jumped out of the van and stretched my arms up to the beautiful blue sky.

“Now *that's* fresh air!” I declared before I realized I had forgot the Claritin®. I yanked the video games from my kids' paws and pointed them in the direction of the hundreds of acres of wooded wonderland.

“Go collect firewood, and try not to poke out anyone's eye with a stick,” I yelled to the screaming Scouts as they scrambled into the tall timbers. “And watch out for poison ivy!”

None of the other moms seemed to pay any attention to where their

kids disappeared into the forest, so I pretended not to worry either. Everybody had a job to do, and it had to get done before daylight was gone. Scott was in charge of the tent, which continually collapsed around him, and I had the daunting task to unload all the stuff that I struggled all morning to cram into the van.

After all our hard work, we were starved and couldn't wait to sink our teeth into thick, juicy steaks and sweet potatoes smothered in butter and cinnamon sugar that cooked over the fire. Unfortunately, the frozen meat and giant potatoes took longer than our rumbling bellies could stand, so we curbed our appetite with weenies on a stick.

After dinner, the dads grabbed their flashlights and the kids for a nighttime hike. Meanwhile, Christine and I hurried to clean up the food and crumbs before the raccoons made themselves at home. Now I get why everyone tied their trash bags to the middle of tree trunks.

I tried to relax on a log, but I was told to gather my family's bedtime clothes and toothbrushes before the pitch-black sky blinded us. The lantern came in handy as I crawled around the cramped tent to find sweatshirts, socks, and, most importantly, my library book *Appalachian Trails*, which I planned to read by flashlight.

When Scott and the kids returned from their adventure, they fell into the tent and dressed in layers for the chilly night ahead. For a few minutes, I actually felt very calm and comfortable, like I floated on a cloud. Unfortunately, the peaceful moment didn't last long because the air mattress was slowly leaking. When Scott whispered something to me about a hissing sound, I noticed cold air escaping his mouth.

“What kind of hiss-hiss-hissing sound do you mean?” I stuttered. “If there’s a rattlesnake in our tent, I’m-I’m-I’m gonna die.”

I tried not to let the kids hear my teeth chatter when I continued, “I can hear my mom say, ‘I told you so,’ when we are rushed to the hos-hos-hospital with venom poisoning.”



Me, Jack, and Scott pose innocently next to the infamous tent before the nightmare begins, April 2003.

The four of us were scared and huddled together to stay warm. We laid still, either frozen in fear or from the falling temperature outside. I heard another noise, what sounded like a wild animal tearing into the bag of potato chips that I negligently left outside our tent.

Then, I heard silence, all except for a faint but steady “whoosh” sound that came from a tiny hole in the air mattress beneath me. As I gradually sank to the cold, hard, rocky ground next to my frostbitten daughter, I knew in my heart that I had experienced “miserable fun” for the last time. I tried to stop the leak with a bandage from my first aid kit, but it was useless.

Throughout the night, I felt daddy long legs crawling all over me and I heard the strangest chirps, squawks, howls, and crunching leaves from the footsteps of God-only-knows-who, maybe an escaped convict. Plus, in the tent next to us, my girlfriend’s four-year-old daughter cried all night long because her daddy forgot her binkie.

If that wasn't bad enough, my husband snored so loudly that I had to wake him up, and he swore he never slept a wink. I was embarrassed that our friends would hear him or, worse, someone would think he was a bear and attack him in his sleep.

By the time I nodded off again, my daughter woke up because she had to pee-pee in the teepee. Thank God we brought a portable potty chair so that we wouldn't have to walk a mile to the nearest bathroom. In desperation, I never thought I would stoop so low, literally, but I was ready to burst myself.

Finally, I couldn't make my family suffer one minute longer. That's when Scott and I decided to break the rules and get out alive...

Jewish Girls Don't Camp: Part 2

It was the longest night of our lives. Even my eyeballs were cold, if that's possible. We all were tired, dirty, grumpy, and miserable as we laid on top of the deflated air mattress that covered the rocky dirt like a cheap tablecloth. I guess it was about 5 a.m. because the birds started to chirp and the sun was still half-asleep when I realized that my family was not cut out for camping after all.

My realization was confirmed when Sari told me that she felt sick and started to cough. Instinctively, I grabbed the nearest plastic grocery bag and held it in front of her. Only then did I realize how many s'mores she had devoured the night before. Gross.

Sari's sickness was my breaking point. I sermonized to anyone who would listen that the Jews had suffered long enough in history and so had my family on this nightmare campout. No Boy Scout badge

was worth this torture and I was determined to escape from our nylon jail as soon as possible.

We frantically unzipped our tent and raced to our parked van that awaited us at the top of the hill like a five-star hotel. The morning dew made the ground slippery and I tripped over a hard-as-a-rock potato that had refused to cook at last night's dinner. I watched the leftover potato roll away like a forgotten casualty in a war zone.

When we finally reached the parking lot, my kids lunged into the van and clung to their comfortable upholstered spots. Immediately, Scott cranked the heater full blast. I was embarrassed that someone would hear the motor run, but I didn't care.

I stretched my stocking feet on the dashboard and grabbed my journal. I wanted to document the details of our disastrous camping trip right away because I knew I had enough material to publish a story. I jotted notes about the gorgeous reddish-orange ball that I watched from the dirty windshield rise above the pine trees. I fantasized about the nearest Starbucks® while Scott clenched his teeth and gripped the steering wheel. Sari sat frozen in the backseat and stared straight ahead. Jack found his Nintendo® in the glove compartment and was in another world.

If Scott had his way, we would have hit the road by now. Somehow I convinced him to stick it out, at least until after the pancake and sausage breakfast. Our eyes were glued to the mounds of nylon cocoons scattered throughout the campground like a weird alien invasion. We waited for signs of life. Nothing. I was afraid that everyone was frozen dead.

Finally, a burly Eagle Scout with a serious five-o'clock shadow

crawled out of his tent and stretched his arms into the overcast sky. We turned off the engine and scrunched in our seats as we watched the den leader rub his arms and try to shake off the cold.

I felt like a voyeur as we hid in our vehicle and observed in amazement how the brave man gathered logs and twigs to build a fire. He poked the wood around and somehow made smoke signals. We waited until the fire was nice and hot before we stepped out of the van with our heads hung low. I felt kind of guilty as we warmed our bodies around his roaring fire without having done any of the work ourselves. Then again, my pride was long gone since I had desperately borrowed Sari's portable potty in the middle of the night.

Another campfire began to crackle and someone brewed a bit of heaven in a blue-speckled coffeepot. I debated how morally permissible it was to hop from one campsite to the next.

Finally, the morning sun began to thaw our bones. We peeled off our hooded sweatshirts and relaxed a bit while the kids played hide-and-seek in the forest. I actually began to enjoy myself for the first time, but Scott couldn't wait to go home. He was the last parent to put up his tent and the first one to take it down.

I thought about what I learned from my first camping experience—besides never put aerosol cheese in a cooler. I guess if I learned one thing, it would be to never pass up an opportunity to bond with my family in the great outdoors, as long as I have a comfortable bed to come home to. Or a heated minivan.

Mishegas Meets Hollywood: Part 1

I was in full party planning mode for Jack's *bar mitzvah*. Nothing could distract me from my to-do list. Suddenly, without warning, my party planning came to a screeching halt. That's when I found out that I was going to Hollywood (yes, that Hollywood!) for the trip of a lifetime.

It all started on the Monday before Valentine's Day, which is the typical countdown to whether my husband will end up in the doghouse or not. That's when I learned that I had been selected as the grand prize winner in a writing contest for *In The Motherhood*, a groundbreaking online comedy series starring the gorgeous and talented actresses Leah Remini, Chelsea Handler, and Jenny McCarthy.

Seven days later, Scott and I were on a plane heading to Los Angeles to meet the stars and experience the behind-the-scenes making of the story that I wrote on my family camping disaster (see that doozy above!).

The unique concept behind *In The Motherhood*, which is the brainchild of MindShare Entertainment, is that real moms, like you and me, submit over the Internet a few simple paragraphs about mom-focused topics, such as toddler tantrums, sibling rivalry, and other embarrassing real-life moments. Then, online readers and an advisory committee vote on their favorite entries.

Next, professional screenwriters bring to life the best stories in a series of innovative, short, scripted comical webisodes. More than 20 million viewers tuned in to watch the hysterically funny *In The Motherhood*. Needless to say, my ordinary suburban life as a stay-at-

home mom (who never stays home) has been changed forever, or at least was for a few days. Here's how it all started:

So, one evening I'm about to whip up something spectacular again for dinner—a recipe that involves Rice Krispies® cereal, over-ripe bananas, and skinless chicken breast—when I decide to check my e-mail again, a compulsion of mine. As I routinely delete a bunch of junk messages, I stumble across an e-mail marked “Urgent!” I open it and quickly skim the letter that explains how I'm invited to Los Angeles next week to see the taping of a show that is based on a story that I submitted to the *In The Motherhood* writing contest last year. I have less than 24 hours to accept my grand prize, which is sponsored by Sprint and Suave, and I'm required to notarize an affidavit that proves my identity to the promotional company in New York.

What?!! I can't believe what I'm reading. Surely, there must be a mistake because I never win anything. I figure there's a catch; I either have to buy a case of Suave® shampoo and conditioner every month for the rest of my life or at least upgrade my cell phone to a Sprint BlackBerry® in order to be eligible. This incredible prize also includes a three night's stay at the Hyatt® on Sunset Boulevard, a makeover at Lukaro Salon in Beverly Hills, a photo session with a celebrity photographer, limo service, and some other surprise perks.

I reread the e-mail again out loud about 10 times. Finally, when the news about an exciting free vacation and a possible big break in my writing career starts to sink in, I scream, “No way! No way! No way!”

I try to catch my breath as my kids read the e-mail over my shoulder, and then we all scream some more. “No way! No way! No way!”

Sari scrambles to find the phone underneath a seat cushion. "I'm calling daddy and telling him that you won a trip!" she exclaims. I overhear their conversation while I read each word of the e-mail another time.

"Daddy, guess what? Mom won a writing contest...Her camping story is going to be a movie...She is going to California in a few days...I can't hear you daddy because mommy is still screaming...What?...No, she didn't make anything for dinner..."

I ditch the *bar mitzvah* plans like a bad blind date and make a new list of things to do to get ready for my spur-of-the-moment getaway and sudden taste of fame. As the sleet outside my window freezes the mailbox shut, I can't wait to soak up the warm, California sunshine. I waste no time and drag a heavy suitcase from the basement. I start to throw in clothing when I realize that my wardrobe needs some spring cleaning.

I ask a flight attendant, who I meet on Wednesday at my daughter's Valentine school party, what women in California are wearing these days. She tells me anything short and tight. Yeah, like that's going to happen. I settle on a few cute blouses, flared jeans, a hot pink swing jacket, hoop earrings, a black patent leather handbag, and high-heeled sandals that I can barely walk in.

All this time I think I'm traveling solo, so I don't worry about who's watching the kids while I'm gone. Scott plans to stay home and bond with Jack and Sari. Then on Thursday, four days before I'm supposed to leave for my whirlwind holiday to the land of the movie stars, I find out that I can bring a guest. I debate whether to bring my husband or a girlfriend, but Scott gives me no choice. He needs a vacation as much as I do.

I call Scott at work right away and announce, “Happy Valentine’s Day, honey! You’re going to California! Now it’s your turn to shop for a few nice dress shirts to go with your stonewashed jeans. By the way, who’s taking care of the kids?”

Fortunately, Grandma Vicki and Grandpa Norman come to the rescue and offer to stay with Jack and Sari and schlep them to school and all of their activities. Meanwhile, I hurriedly put everything in order to get ready for my Hollywood debut. Plus, to prepare the grandparents, I type a detailed itinerary of my children’s upcoming schedule and a comprehensive list of names, phone numbers, and addresses of their pediatrician, dentist, orthodontist, orthopedic surgeon, dermatologist, otolaryngologist, school principal, neighbors, close friends, miscellaneous emergency hotlines, and, of course, the veterinarian.

I feel like I’m making progress and start to get excited about meeting the actresses, especially since I’m a huge fan. Leah Remini was the star of the sitcom *King of Queens*. Chelsea Handler is the outrageous comedian, best-selling author, and host of *The Chelsea Lately Show* on the E! network. And Jenny McCarthy is famous in her own right and for bringing much-needed awareness to autism.

Whoa—if I’m really going to meet these celebs then someone pinch me now because I must be dreaming. Then a nightmare happens. Jack wakes up Friday morning with a mysterious rash. He is itchy from head to toe with red bumps all over his body. I freak out that he might have chicken pox. I’m even more worried that Scott has to stay home and I’ll have to find my own way around Los Angeles International Airport.

I call the doctor and she tells me to bring Jack into the office

immediately for a cortisone shot because his symptoms sound like an allergic reaction to his acne medication. She asks me if his tongue is swollen or if he has trouble breathing. "No, he seems fine, but I'm ready to pass out," I say in a panic over the phone.

As I silently drive Jack to the doctor's, I rationalize in my head that my trip to Hollywood isn't meant to be. Maybe fate is interfering with my plans so that I don't board a hijacked airplane or something. Instead of feeling happy, I'm stressed out and exhausted.

When we get into the exam room, Jack hesitantly drops his drawers and the nurse pokes a stinging needle into his buns. "Don't worry," she reassures both of us. "The quick-acting medicine will give him immediately relief."

Afterward, I let Jack miss school and drag him to Macy's so that I can buy myself new makeup and underwear. My embarrassed son, then 13, wishes he was in school detention instead of with me in the lingerie department.

When we get home, I overdose Jack with Benadryl® so that he finally conks out and stops complaining. Eventually, I get into bed after midnight and fall into a deep, comatose sleep when Jack wakes me in the middle of the night because he feels even more miserable. Before my very eyes, his hives manifest into red splotches all over his body, eyelids, hands, and scalp. I give him more antihistamine and the next morning we schlep back to the doctor's office for the second day in a row.

I'm in a fragile state of mind as I grip the steering wheel and stare through the dirty windshield. I begin to cry quietly to myself when Jack notices tears rolling down my face.

“Are you thinking about my *bar mitzvah* again, mom?” Jack asks me. “Because if you’re crying already, then you’ll be a basket case when I’m on the *bimah*.”

I chuckle as I pull into the parking lot and head to the pediatrician’s office. As we sit in the waiting room, I warn Jack not to breathe in too deeply or touch anything because of germs. After looking at Jack’s rash, the doctor prescribes a quick round of prednisone and is confident that the boost of medicine will do the trick.

With that crisis resolved, I feel a little guilty about leaving the kids, so I call a family powwow in our bed on Sunday morning, the day before we leave for Los Angeles. The meeting comes to order:

Me: “I just want everyone to know that we’re all winners of the *In The Motherhood* contest.”

Jack: “What are you talking about?” he mumbles from underneath a pillow.

Me: “Well, without you guys we wouldn’t have gone camping and there wouldn’t be a story.”

Sari: “But you get to go to California with daddy. No fair.”

Me: “Daddy and I deserve a little time to ourselves. Besides, we’ll take you on a cruise this summer.”

Scott: “What?! We have a *bar mitzvah* to pay for!”

Mishegas Meets Hollywood: Part 2

Before Scott and I leave for the airport, I check my purse one last time: tickets, camera, extra batteries, lemon drops, business cards, lip gloss, hand sanitizer, cell phone, and a blank notebook for autographs. I’m good to go. The only items missing are baby wipes

and juices boxes, which, on this trip, I won't need.

The older I get, the less I like to fly. So when we board the 747 and walk to our seats in the very last row of the economy section next to the lavatory, I start to feel a little uneasy. Sure I have a window seat, but a gigantic wing completely obstructs my view. For the next several hours, I cover my head with a winter coat because the vibrating high-pitch roar of the airplane engine causes me to almost hyperventilate. Not even ginger ale calms my nerves. Still, Scott and I are looking forward to this trip of a lifetime, even if the flight attendant forgets to offer us peanuts.

When we finally arrive in Los Angeles, a chauffeur named Reynaldo waits for us at the baggage claim and escorts us to a luxury BMW right outside the door. After I settle into the plush leather seats, I roll down the window and take in the warm breeze and tropical palm trees. Like every tourist, I search for the famous Hollywood sign in the foggy distance. We weave through traffic and eventually arrive at our hotel on Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood, where someone rushes to open the car door for me. I can get used to this.

Before I have a chance to unpack my toiletries, I'm sipping a tangy mojito and tipping a guitarist who serenades Scott and me with a soulful rendition of Stevie Nick's *Landslide*. Like Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz*, I whisper to Scott, "We're not in Kansas anymore."

The next morning, a talkative driver named Steve, who claims that his regular clients include Mel Gibson, Drew Barrymore, and Leonardo DiCaprio's agent, whisks us to our destination. We are on our way to meet the cast and crew of *In The Motherhood* on location, which is at a fitness center in Burbank, California. When we pull into the parking lot, Steve opens the door for me and the driver and

I exchange business cards (hey, I might be back!). I ask Scott to take a quick picture of the chauffeur and me together next to the black Lincoln Town Car.

On the set, I notice all the trucks, trailers, cameras, equipment, tangled electrical cords, and lots of busy people scurrying around with jobs to do. We meet our contact person, Marisa, from MindShare Entertainment in New York, which produces the show. She greets us enthusiastically and introduces us to her colleagues, including Greg, the executive producer, and David, the president of the worldwide media company and creator of the successful *In The Motherhood* campaign.

We take our seats in director's chairs, plug in our headphones, and listen and watch the famous actresses on the other side of the window say their lines and crack jokes between takes. I'm in awe of how Hollywood filmmaking works, especially when I'm so lucky to be a part of it on this day. We are told to whisper while the cameras are rolling, so I try not to laugh out loud.

Marisa asks if we're thirsty or hungry and offers us cake. People eat cake in Hollywood? I thought everyone's dieting all the time. Before we break for lunch, we actually get to meet the three stars of the show: Leah Remini, Chelsea Handler, and Jenny McCarthy, who are gorgeous, down-to-earth, and hysterically funny. I tell the talented trio that I'm a huge fan, and they probably think to themselves, "Stop kissing up to us. You already won the contest," but it's the honest truth.

We put our arms around each other and take a couple of pictures together. While the actresses retreat to their fancy RVs, Scott and I hang out with the fun gang from MindShare Entertainment and

other friendly folks who work for Sprint® and Suave®, the sponsors of the series. By coincidence, I meet a dark-haired, blue-eyed girl named Jeanne, who is from St. Louis and went to my high school.

After we exchange, “No ways!” Jeanne gives us the scoop on lunch, which in the biz is called “craft services.” We enjoy a delicious all-you-can-eat buffet of grilled fish, barbecued chicken, corn on the cob, salads, and cheesecakes. By the way, snacks are also provided all day long and include everything from fruit and candy to sodas and aspirin. We all sit together and eat at picnic tables under tents.

Everyone is casual and friendly and I don't even bother reapplying my lipstick when a cameraman from the television show *Access Hollywood* and a reporter from *In Touch Weekly* magazine stop me in the parking lot and ask me for an interview about winning the contest.

“Me? Are you kidding? You want to talk to me?” I nervously ask them as I turn around and look for the person I assume they are after. “What am I supposed to say? Do I have time to put on lip gloss?”

“Just be yourself,” advises the guy with the microphone. Sure, like that's going to put me at ease.

After a few more hours of taping the first film, the crew packs up all the equipment and we share rides to another location miles away to shoot my camping webisode. This time we set up shop at the scenic Griffith Park in Los Angeles. The production company continues to ask me questions on camera and documents my step-by-step experience as the first mom invited to the set of *In The Motherhood*.

As evening approaches, the air turns chilly. I notice that the wooded

acres are so fragrant with pine needles that I swear someone is spraying scented air freshener to get the actors in the mood. For most of the time, we sit in a comfortably heated tent and sip espresso while we watch on monitors how the adorable lead actress Remini delivers one sarcastic line after another, right on cue.

To get closer to the action, I sneak up a hill with my digital camera and watch how the director patiently sets up each scene. The sleeping bags, flattened tent, lantern, and the sound of crunchy leaves bring back memories of when my family barely survived our first overnight camping trip several years ago. In the familiar sketches when Remini and her daughter go wee wee in the woods, I feel honored to play a role in this comedy.

As if a full day of Hollywood filmmaking isn't enough excitement, the next morning Scott and I are treated to a makeover at the exclusive Lukaro Salon in Beverly Hills. A Suave® representative named Sara escorts us to the Mediterranean-style building with the famous 90210 zip code.

Lukaro is the same salon that Brooke Shields, Luci Liu, and other movie stars trust for their locks, so we're in good hands. First, the manicurist paints my nails with the most fashionable Hollywood color, black-brown. Then, the makeup artist shapes my eyebrows perfectly and brushes blush on my cheeks. The next thing I know a celebrity photographer named Chris snaps my picture again and again and makes me feel like a celebrity. With every click of the camera, he tells me, "Life is good!"

Luke, the owner of the salon, trims my hair and blows it dry for a straight and slightly feathery style. My hair will never look this good again. Luke is magical with scissors and comb and his outgoing

personality and charisma is as unique as his white splotch of hair that reminds me of a tamed Sweeney Todd wig. Luke works wonders



Leah Remini, Scott, Me, Jenny McCarthy, and Chelsea Handler in Hollywood, February 2008.



Me getting pampered in Lukaro Salon in Beverly Hills, February 2008.



Me after my Hollywood makeover, February 2008.

on Scott, too, and gives my husband a handsome new cut and touch of color. Scott and I are all smiles as we pose for the zoom lens all over again.

We end up staying an extra day in California because our flight is cancelled due to an ice storm in St. Louis. We pack in another day of sightseeing, including visits to the Kodak Theatre, the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and we even squeeze in souvenir shopping at The Grove at Farmers Market.

Eventually, we say goodbye to Hollywood, at least for now, and are anxious to return home and see Jack and Sari again. It doesn't take long for me to get back into my routine of washing jeans with pens in the pockets, making creamed cheese and jelly sandwiches for school lunches, and opening my own car door. Even though my life is changed in some ways, it's still the same. One thing is different—the *Vanity Fair* Hollywood issue replaces *Real Simple* magazine on my coffee table.