CHAPTER 1

Change or Transition?
"She’s fine,” said my husband’s voice on my cell phone as soon as the line engaged. She was our five-year-old kindergartner at the time. “What do you mean, she’s fine?” I responded on the edge of panic.

When my phone rang I was stepping through the door to a trendy, gorgeously appointed restaurant on the banks of the Thames River in London, England. I was with 12 of my colleagues, a mixture of executives from our international and US businesses. Mostly they were men, save for me and one other woman.

We had been holed up in a conference room for the day discussing the international businesses’ performance. Everyone seemed to enjoy the brief intake of fresh air on the quick walk between our offices and the restaurant. The Tower Bridge rose immediately in front of us.

I was at the rear of the group talking with a colleague, so it was easy to excuse myself to take the call. I slipped back out onto the sidewalk. It was a pavilion of sorts. Gray granite pavement stretched in every direction to accommodate pedestrian traffic along the river. The street seemed silenced by a long distance behind me. The Tower Bridge stood regally in front of me in the late afternoon light.

My husband went on to inform me that it was an early release day at my daughter’s school. Early release, the bane of most working parents, is a day dedicated to teacher development during which children are let out of school earlier than regularly scheduled.

I was instantly happy that I had had the good sense to tell her teacher that I would be in London for the week. A simple step amid the swirl of reminders for Dad, the new nanny, two different schools, various neighbors, and Peapod, our local supermarket’s delivery service. You get the picture?

Our five-year-old had stood waiting, with her Angelina Ballerina backpack, on the raised landing outside of the school’s auditorium, an honorary zone reserved only for the school’s kindergarteners at dismissal. Parents and care givers wait there for this daily ritual. That day no one arrived for my daughter.