The perfect Halloween costume

Fall is easily my favorite time of year. Fall is sweatshirts and football and apple cider. It's chili cook-offs and cool nights and trees that look like they're on fire. It's lazy Sundays and hay rides and more football. It's glorious.

Fall is also, if you're at my house, scrambling at the last minute to complete completely random Halloween costumes, which we did last night, because of procrastination. As I stood in our cold garage spray-painting brown patches on white long underwear to resemble the patterns on the fur of a sifaka lemur, I took a pause to acknowledge the craziness of the situation. We've all been there, right – running back and forth from the garage to the computer to check to see if the lemur's brown marks are on the inside of his arms or more toward his shoulders? Do they stop at his thighs or run down past his knees? Oh, like I'm the only parent whose kid wanted to dress up as a poorly known Madagascan primate?

The sifaka lemur is Grant, the 9-year-old, who would indeed correct me if a patch of "fur" was out of place.

My beautiful, devout wife mostly handled Jacob's costume. The 5-year-old will be trick-or-treating as the red Lego ninja, who, if you weren't aware, has the logo of a lion head affixed to his chest. Though it's clearly a lion, our defiant son (he gets it from his mother) was certain that it is, in fact, a dragon's head. Now, a smart parent would slough this off and just print him out a dragon. I am not a smart parent, so I spent five minutes trying to argue and reason with a kindergartner – "Look!" I said, "that's obviously his mane!" Eventually, reluctantly, I gave up and printed him a dragon. "Dad," he said matter-of-factly, "this is silver; the dragon is supposed to be gold." Of course.

Olivia's costume was considerably less work. In fact, it

wasn't any work at all. She's going as – who else? – Taylor Swift. So basically she's just going to dress as she usually does, only for Halloween, she'll be carrying her microphone in one hand and her candy bag in the other.See, Olivia is a Taylor Swift fan in the truest sense of the word's root: fanatic. She is a bona fide crazy person. She has Taylor Swift posters on her walls and sings Taylor Swift songs at the school talent show. She carts her iPod full of Taylor Swift songs into the bathroom so she can sing them in the shower.

I understand obsession is nothing new. My sister had New Kids on The Block posters and trading cards. My mom swooned over The Monkees' Davy Jones. Her mom probably thought Glenn Miller or Bing Crosby were just swell.

Growing up, I thought (and still think) former Indiana University standout Steve Alford was the greatest player who ever dribbled a basketball, but I didn't constantly watch his "50-minute All-American Workout" videotape.

With all this said, if there is one superstar I could pick for Olivia to emulate, why not Taylor Swift? She's not shocking people with vulgarity like Miley Cyrus or getting in trouble with the law like Justin Bieber. She's not getting caught smoking marijuana or telling parents who object to lyrics in her songs that they need to "get some" like the One Direction fellas. Her songs aren't all nursery rhymes, but they're not raunchy or expletive-filled.

I have no issue admitting this: I'm a 37-year-old man and I like Taylor Swift. I should start a support group. We could drink coffee and discuss our fandom while listening to her new album.

After tolerating her music for years, I became a fan a few weeks before Olivia and I saw her in concert. So as to avoid boredom, I familiarized myself with the songs I'd only previously heard coming from underneath Olivia's bedroom door.

While not necessarily my cup of tea, they were certainly catchy.

For the show, we had general admission tickets in an area near the stage. When the gates opened, Olivia and I sprinted through the halls of the arena and down the steps toward the stage. We were packed in tightly, but Olivia was in the front row, pressed up against the stage, singing her heart out. And I stood behind her, singing along, too. At a couple of points during the show, Taylor walked by, high-fiving her fans. I grabbed Olivia around the waist and hoisted her up. She stopped and grabbed Olivia's hand before moving on.

I've gotten to see many of my favorite bands and artists, but watching her experience such joy puts that show at the top of the list.

If there is anything lasting in Olivia's love of Taylor Swift, it's this: She has not only fallen in love with an artist, but with the art itself. Olivia loves music. She plays the piano and sings in the church youth choir and is a cantor at Mass, and those are blessings.

At some point, the Taylor Swift posters will come down off her walls and she'll stop singing her songs in the shower and at talent shows, but, for now, while she listens to Taylor Swift, Olivia is still our little girl.

And so tonight when we head over to their grandparents' houses, we'll have a sifaka lemur with painted-on fur and the red Lego ninja with a dragon logo instead of a lion. And we'll have Taylor Swift, mic in hand and singing her heart out. And I'll be right behind her, singing too.

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