

On our second morning alone together, my son stole my glasses. I'd been studying for the LSAT, and decided it would be safe to take a twenty minute nap while Haden watched *Toy Story*—a movie which possesses the magical power to keep him in one place for more than fifteen minutes at a time. Haden stole the glasses off the nightstand while I slept, and I awoke about fifteen minutes later, which was just enough time for him to forget where he'd put them.

“Did Haden hide Daddy's glasses?” I asked him. My son speaks in the third person.

“Daddy's glasses hiding?”

No,” I said, “*where?* Where did Haden hide Daddy's glasses?”

He shrugged.

I followed him around the apartment for ten minutes as he mumbled to himself: “Daddy's glasses? Hide?” Then he lost interest.

I really can't see without my glasses, which made the search more complicated. I spent the next hour-and-a-half throwing boxes out of closets and pulling the sheets off all the beds while Haden finished his movie. At one point my wife called from work. “Did you check his toy box?” she asked. “That's where he puts my keys.”

By then I was getting irritated. “I checked the toy box,” I told her.

“Well, I hope you find them,” she said, and we hung up. Then I checked the toy box.

The glasses weren't there.

I finally found them in the back of Haden's closet behind some of his old baby clothes.

“You found them!” Haden said when I wore them back into the front room.

“Yes,” I said, “I did. And now you pay.”

When my wife was hired on as a legal secretary three months ago, I envisioned hours of bonding with my son. Kim took the job so that I could stay at home, study for the LSAT, and

finish my thesis, but I imagined taking frequent breaks to read Haden a story or take him to the park. I could see us eating breakfast together in the morning—just the men of the house—or going to the library for the puppet shows on Thursdays. I actually believed that when it was time for me to get back to work, he would go to his room and play with his toys if I told him to. “I don’t want to be one of those parents who lets the TV baby-sit their kid,” I told my wife. “I intend to have the TV *off* all day.”

She laughed at me.

One trip to the library was all it took for me to realize that Haden is far more interested in running up and down the aisles than he is in watching a puppet show. He’s also getting tired of my “cooking”—a term I use loosely. To get him to eat I have to pretend I’m going to steal his food before, out of some innate sense of property, he tells me it’s his and takes another bite. I spend most of my days squeezing intermittent half-hours of thesis work, or lesson planning for my freshmen, between cleaning up his messes and trying to keep the apartment livable, if not exactly spotless. The situation hasn’t been ideal for Haden either. The other day he was staring out the window of our front room saying, “No work, Mommy. Come home.” Events haven’t played out the way I planned. Or at least, my vision of how our time together would be have proven terribly naïve.

I’ve been told to expect similar eye-opening from a career in the law.

When I told Mike Payson, my thesis chair, that I’d made up my mind to go to law school, he was disappointed. Mike and I have worked closely the last two years on both his research and mine, and he’s been pulling for me to pursue a PhD in British Lit.

“What are you going to do with a law degree?” he asked.

I gave him the stock response. “Get involved in politics,” I said, “or work for causes I believe in. Maybe environmental law. I want to do something that gives me more of a voice.”

“Well,” he told me, “you’re not my first student to feel that way. Just remember a lot of people got to law school with noble intentions that don’t survive the practicalities of real life.”

Another friend of mine likes to put it this way: “I’ve never met a group of people who know less about what they’re getting into than prospective law students.” I can see that there is a lot of truth to those sentiments. Even now I’m a little embarrassed by the naiveté of what I told Mike that day in his office—that it was a little romantic, that I couldn’t more specifically define my interest in the law.

Perhaps I do have some misconceptions of what law school is really about. In the law, as in anything, there must always be concessions between the ideal and the practical reality, but I don’t think that’s a reason to abandon the ideal. As an attorney I *do* hope to participate in causes I believe in, and to give voice to the voiceless. That ability is what attracts me to the law. I embrace my idealism, though I recognize its flaws. I understand that, as with fatherhood, idealism has to be tempered and adjusted from time to time, and I believe that law school will provide an opportunity to adjust, rethink, and negotiate my idea of what kind of lawyer I want to be.