

What It is Really Like

Let me tell you a story:

A young girl enters a swimming pool. She climbs down the ladder slowly, trying to adjust to the cold water. She pauses as her feet touch the floor in the shallow end and anxiously glances around, seeing small groups of friends playing in different areas of the pool. She decided today would be the day—the day she swam to the deep end. She hesitantly steps forward, deeper into the pool. She takes a deep breath and steps forward again, feeling calmer and reassured. As she lifts her foot a third time, someone suddenly splashes her. The girl looks over to see someone, smiling and giggling, who splashes her again. She moves away from the splasher, towards the ladder, rethinking this decision to reach the deep end today. As she puts her hand on the ladder to leave, she takes another deep breath and decides not to give up. She turns back towards the open water and barely registers the next splash of water to her face before it hits. She hears more giggling as she wipes her face, squeezing her eyes tightly shut at the sting of the water. Upon opening her eyes, she sees a different person before her. The splasher giggles and asks, “What’s taking you so long? Do you...” She looks around as she lowers her voice to a whisper, “...not know how to swim?” Before the young girl can answer, the splasher giggles again and swims away, their feet kicking vigorously, splashing more water onto her. Though confused,

she decides not to give up trying to swim and starts to step forward again towards the deep end. Splasher 1 calls to her from the other side of the pool saying, "What kind of swimsuit is that? You look so unattractive in it." Splasher 2 snickers and swims up to her friend. They glance at each other, smiling, and turn away from the girl. The girl feels embarrassed, her face flushes, and she ducks under the water, holding her breath to calm down. The cool water embraces her skin as she imagines herself home, relaxing, far away from all of this. She bursts up from the water feeling more confident. However, just as she begins to step forward again, the two splashers swim up to her, watching in silence. She glances at them, and they giggle again. The young girl steps forward despite their harassment. They laugh again. She steps forward again. They follow her, smirking at each other at her attempts to swim. The young girl steps forward again, only to fall forward, her face dipping into the water. She reached a deeper part of the pool without realizing it. The room echoes with the sound of laughter from the two onlookers, yet the splashers do not move forward from the shallow end this time. The young girl begins to tread water as she moves farther into the deep end. She glances back at the splashers, still lurking in the shallow end, but no longer laughing. With renewed confidence, she plunges to the bottom of the pool and kicks off from the ground. She shoots forward, her arms and feet moving to their own rhythm as she sails towards the deepest part of the pool. She turns onto her back and floats on the water, smiling to herself, triumphant.

Law school feels much like that, Future Lawyer. It won't come easy. Most days, it's going to suck. However, the swim from the shallow end to the depth of your potential and talent is far more rewarding than the empty success of titles, plaques

and awards. To graduate from law school is to overcome adversity in your spirit. No amount of studying will prepare you for class exams or the infamous bar exam. You will always feel like you do not know enough. However, remember there is a reassurance that will come to you while taking the exam that will confirm that this is the path for you. You will have a mini victory when someone tells you that they look up to you, they believe in you, or they are proud of you, and that will make the brunt of difficulty you face all the more worth it.

The Plunge

Dear Future 1L



I write to you today to recount a reality often experienced but very underestimated and a tale often embellished. If I can give you any riveting advice it would be: don't answer the phone while driving unless you think it may be a law school acceptance call, then **YOU MUST** definitely pull over and answer the phone. For the call, you'll need three things: a laptop/notepad, a seat, and food and drink. Don't call back until you have all three. You are about to embark on a journey that people dream about, and you don't have the stamina to take that news lightly.

You know all that jive about there being two important days in your life. #ScratchThat. Every single day is the most important. But the day you are accepted into law school, your

life is on the landing strip towards extreme alterations approaching fast. So first, let's see how you classify.

Pre-Law School Cold-Feet: The day you are about to start 1L Orientation, you have found fifteen reasons you are going to fail, no one is going to like you, and you are thinking that you must have been crazy when you clicked submit. (Don't worry we all go through this one, sometimes during the school year and sometimes all year long.)

Law School Rookie: It's your first day. You only have one fear: the infamous "cold call." You read the case, briefed it, and now you must wait. The minute hand begins ticking faster. The professor has not even arrived, but you just know today is DOOMSDAY. You really hope the variation of highlighter colors in your book are enough to show you tried. Your professor just arrived! Now your heart is beating fast. "What is this damn case about? Maybe I should lead with a joke? What if I just say I don't know? Maybe this professor will leave me alone." Class is over. Saved by the bell. Dang, what was class about? (Don't worry everyone goes through this, and YES even the gunners!)

Gunners: I got this class. I have analyzed large quantities of data before, so this should be no problem. I'm going to raise my hand because I know I have the right answer. I think the professor may be confused on how to read the Rule against Perpetuities. I figured out how to explain it to the whole class. (Keep in mind no law school student has ever been able to fully explain this rule). The way I see it, this is how the law is supposed to read. Do you want my two cents on fairness or logic behind the law? Well, I'm going to offer it anyway. It's hard being the only one in class who gets it. Nobody else raises their hand with such confidence. Did the professor just ignore my hand? I must

not have raised my hand in time for it to register. I will try again. Class ends. Boy, I tell you raising your hand all class is hard work. Dang, what was class about? (Don't worry, there is always one who makes an attempt to know every answer. It is only a phase most times, but sometimes it is just who a person is. Don't let that deter you.)

Jokester: If everyone laughs at my jokes, they must like me. You should try to make a joke in every class that is self-deprecating. Get people to laugh at me. Then surprise them with my amazing wisdom. I laugh a lot because life has been difficult, but I do not see class as serious as everyone makes it. I cannot come to class knowing everything. I sure am going to try my best though. Most times, it sounds like I'm joking so people laugh. However, I'm usually seriously confused. (Don't worry laughing is the best medicine for class. Don't lose that spirit, sometimes law school is serious and we need to be focused, but most times we all want some comic relief amidst these long pages of block quotes and law texts. Without your laughs, law school can feel overwhelming at times. Trust me you'll need it – especially on those hard days. In time, you'll get it.)

Spaced Out Cadet: *Cold call* spaced out Cadet: “Yes, I just think if you read the case this way, you can find that the parties were fighting over this as well.” Professor: “Where are you reading that?” Spaced Out Cadet: “I'm not sure exactly.” (Don't worry, that student just made it so much easier for you to understand because now the teacher knows that someone is lost so all of you are probably lost and not saying anything. Thank you, Spaced out Cadet!)

The Quiet One: I'm really not trying to get called on. In fact, I am not going to raise my hand. Let me write down the important points in class and ask questions only when I am

confused. I also need to schedule meetings with my professors. I am trying to figure out which day works best for one-on-one meetings. I wonder if this class will end up being a class I like or one that I have to mentally prepare for every day. Do I care if my classmates think I'm an idiot? A little but not really. I have 15 other things to worry about. Like my family, how I'm going to get food all week, should I start a budget, what classes should I take my 2L year? (Don't worry, if this is you, chances are your professors like you, and your classmates spend all of their time trying to make sure you get your "cold call." You will do just fine and maybe find out that it's better to be quiet most times in law school.)

Now that we've classified you, I know what you really want to know about is the array of emotions you are about to experience. The INFAMOUS schedule awaits!

Law School One Week In: I think I got the hang of this case brief thing. Let's try to outline so I can be ahead for exams. Noooo, there's a bar review. I HAVE to go to that. I mean, right? It's the first week. I cannot be too serious right now. I won't make any friends! Wow, there is a bar tab for free drinks? Law school is awesome! I need to go to more of these. Wait, there are like twenty people here that I know. The rest are upperclassmen! Man, I knew I should have outlined! I am a terrible student. I'm going to fail. (Don't worry you're not going to fail, relax!)

Law School One Month In: One month down, nine to go. No scratch that, we are going to count by semester. One month down, four to go. Wait, did our teacher's just assign us 300 pages for tonight? What happened to the one to three cases a night. Wait, why am I in law school? When do we get a school holiday? Is it Friday, yet? Wait, why in the hell do the

upperclassmen have no Friday classes? This cannot be fair. They always chilling. Maybe I should be chilling. I want to go out and have a good time. But, I guess they earned it. I should, too. (Don't worry you can still go out, just remember eventually you might want to start outlining-- Never mind, go out have some fun!)

Law School Two Months In: Everybody keeps going out to party every week, like when do they study? I cannot hang, or maybe I can? We still have like two months before exams. I heard there is a costume party for Halloween. I HAVE to go to that one. But I probably should be outlining and practicing. Football season is heating up! There is a football watch party tonight! Man, why am I in law school again? I'm tired. Why are all of my friends traveling without me? Do we get a Spring Break in law school? Wait, it's still fall! (Don't worry, this is what everyone likes to call mid-semester crisis. You will get through it.)

Law School Three Months In: I have now accrued enough knowledge and note-taking to formulate this foreign object known as an "OUTLINE." What is it? How does it work? How can I use it to annihilate my law school exams? Upperclassmen, please show me your ways. I should probably join a study group. Well, I guess it's a little late for that or is it? Man, this outlining thing is hard. There's a lot of information. I should have been doing parts of this as I went along. Man, it's been five hours and I am still outlining Torts. Today is just Torts day, I guess. When am I going to read for these classes? Should I just stop reading? What if I've been doing it wrong this whole time? I'm dropping out man. No, I cannot do that. I'm already in debt. And they said I can't work. How will I sustain myself? Why am I in law school again? Exams are in one month! I'm going to fail! (Don't worry, at this point, it is normal to freak out. Go to your happy place (i.e. church, park, restaurant, outside,

Starbucks, etc.) and chill. It's not as bad as you think. Call a good friend for help!)

Law School Four Months In: Today is absolutely the most difficult day of my life. I am about to take my first big exam tomorrow. I don't feel ready. I haven't prayed enough. I have cried too much from total exhaustion. I really know nothing. I feel like this semester was wasted. I don't even have a great outline. I thought I would be more prepared than this. All of my friends probably hate me because I complain so much. I have no one I can call for encouragement. I should probably be studying. No, I need to sleep. I guess I have to give it my best shot. When they call time, I HAVE to be done. I don't want to fail. I really don't. (Don't worry you will not fail. Look at it this way. You made it four months longer than most. You have the stamina to keep going. You are just running up a steep hill right now, but every hill eventually goes down. It gets easier.)

Law School after fall exams are over: I never thought happiness felt like a full box of donuts, a glass of wine, or a drive back home. Oh man. I have missed so much. Time to update social media. #OneSemesterDown. Christmas has to be amazing this year. I need family time. Surround me with love. Wait, why is school starting back so early? January what? I need until like the end of the month at least! (Don't worry if your winter break goes by quickly. Get back in gear right after New Year's. Grades are coming! Batten down the forts and batten down the need to share information like what you thought of the exam, how you think grades will fall, and your job prospects.)

Law School Spring Semester: Who wants a job? Do you have a resume? Attending the job fair this semester? With all of this, you still want me to take classes?! When are semester grades coming out? Should I be wearing a suit to class? Why is

she wearing a suit, does she have an interview? Wait, I need to focus on class. Why are all the professors acting like we are going to be depressed when grades come out? I probably failed, but then again I could have passed. The world may never know until the end of January. Oh my, not the rat race, again! (Don't worry once you get grades things do not get any easier. It is best to start this semester with a blank slate than to wait for grades.)

Law School Five Months In: I just finished being exhausted from last semester. Is it just me, or did the classes get so much harder? Did they just give us 300 pages to review on the first day? What happened to easy transitions? What is so wrong with having syllabus day? You know those days in undergrad where we got mad because we didn't do anything. Yeah, I want those days back. Thank you for the school holidays. Lord, please be a snow storm! I don't want to go to class on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday! Give me a Friday! Is this semester going by faster? Wait, I'm not ready to take exams again. Oh shit, grades just dropped. Time to go look. *Shuts computer and locks self in room, doesn't come out for two days.* (Don't worry some people have very good grades first semester, that is why there is a top 10% in the class. However, just in case you are not one of those 13 people, you are still amazing and grades cannot define you. Work smart this semester and pick yourself up.)

Law School Six Months In: Still recovering from grades. Still feel like a failure. Oh, how nice it feels to be done and not fail. I wish my grades in undergrad could transfer so I could feel remotely well about my GPA. Why is this so hard? I need help. I'm getting a tutor. No, wait you have to pay a tutor. Maybe an upperclassman will have pity on me. Wait, why are we writing a brief? I'm not doing law school work over spring break.

I deserve a break! This is a full week off from law school. I am not doing work. I promise. Well, maybe I will do a little. Ok, I am going to get ahead. I haven't slept in seven days straight trying to crank out this brief. What is wrong with me? Why can't I relax? What has law school done to me? Why am I even here? I'm going to quit. I could get a good job right now just for trying law school. Oh crap, I got a call-back for a job interview. Now, I have to stay in school. (Don't worry so much about grades that you cannot change, focus on the job you just got lined up for the summer, that new executive board position you have, or that journal you are going to write on this summer.)

Law School Seven Months In: What the heck is going on? How do we have exams again? I just got back from spring break. We turned in the brief, but man I failed that! I killed that oral argument though. I can do this lawyer stuff... I think. I HAVE to study early this time. I am going to have great outlines, ask for help, and get in a study group. I will do so much better this year. *Cries for the next two weeks thinking about all the studying.* I plan to ask for help from everyone. Teach me this class again oh wise friend who's an upperclassman. I will make it. I'm tired. Why am I doing this to myself again? It is election time, should I run for something? Nah, I'm tired. However, it may help me to get a job later. You know what, what the heck. I'll run for two things, maybe three. Just when I began to doubt myself, I received a call telling me "I got the job!" This law school thing is starting to grow on me. (Don't worry, you will do just fine, and you have the 2Ls and 3Ls around. Please do not forget to ask for help. It is all around you. You are not alone.)

Law School Eight Months In: The only thing we have to fear is fear itself. I only have one more exam at this point. I am highly considering dropping out because this

semester was so freaking difficult. After this last exam, I can say it. I just have to cry it out until then. I am so unprepared. Perhaps even more unprepared than last semester. I have no idea what I am doing, but I refuse to fail, give up or drop my head. I have to take this last exam. (Don't worry we all feel like a failure after most exams. You ever notice how many people group up after the exam to talk about what they put down and look at you wide eyed like their soul has died a little? Trust me, you did better than you think. If for some reason you did not do well, go meet with your professor and find out why in the fall. Don't forget over the summer.)

Law School after Spring Exams are Over: I'm done. Keep the pencil. #FirstYearDown. I'm no longer accepting calls, emails and texts concerning law school for at least two weeks. Goes ghost. (Don't worry, taking this trip is not gonna set you back. I took a trip to see my best friend graduate after I finished the next morning. I flew out at 5am to another state to be far away from all things law school. You will need a break. Take it.)

Summer Job after 1L Year: You're either paid or unpaid. Clerking for a judge or interning for an office. Answering calls or doing legal research and writing. Training, brown bag lunches, and daily legal jargon. Assignments, drafts, revisions, and more drafts. Your job is never done. Are they going to feed us? Do we get fancy badges? Will I love this job for the rest of my life? Do I hate it? Will they like me? Will I like them? I'm just going to come with an open mind. Wow, this summer taught me a lot about working in this field. Boy, it's a rat race. Morning traffic, 5 o'clock traffic and sleep. All of these are important. This is about more than just the title. Forget LinkedIn likes, do I like me? Is this where I see myself? Who am I? Did I make a journal? Am I going to try out for a competition

team? What else am I going to do to give back? Wow, I'm low-key excited for school. But shhhh, don't tell my classmates. I am silently celebrating but crying on the inside. (Don't worry, by this point you should be a bit excited for school because you made it through a huge emotional roller coaster and they did not kick you out. Summer jobs definitely help you figure out what you do not want to do, so make sure you get your hands in every opportunity you can to grow. Only one more summer before graduation, bar exam, life.)

If you're like me, you're either experiencing one of three emotions after reading all of this: (1) this girl has a lot of time on her hands, (2) how does she know, or (3) how is this going to help me?

Allow my experience to inspire you and give you hope to keep going even when you feel like giving up – you will survive, just like I did.

Best Regards,

Neena R. Speer, Esq.

— A 1L Girl who had to hit rock bottom because she was on top of the pack at Howard, but she needed a lil humbling to get to her next level...

My Law Student Journey 1L

The Journal for
#DearFutureLawyer

By: _____

The End of This Preview