

## Pregnant Before Practising

# A law girl's bump in the road

By **Jasmine Daya**



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(June 3, 2019, 2:54 PM EDT) -- "Please don't throw up," I chanted under my breath as the contents of my stomach crept up my esophagus. It was our annual "Girls' Trip to New York City." I was so tired. So very, very tired. I just wanted to curl up and sleep. I had made a ridiculous number of trips to the washroom. And I was late.

I ducked into a pharmacy near our hotel. I found the narrow aisle that seemed to hold all things reproductive-related: condoms, pregnancy test and diapers. Odd combination. Big gray bins completely obstructed my access to the top shelf, where the pregnancy tests were. I tried to shove them aside, but the stack was as tall as I am (I'm 5-foot-4), and I hadn't gone to the gym since my first year of law school.

I looked at the box, which had a baby's picture on it, and in large font, the number seven. Sure, the child on the box was cute, but the thought of a baby in my life at this point made me cringe with fear — and a little bit of disgust. The wall of diapers didn't help.

I placed the test on the counter in front of the cashier, acting as though it was no big deal. After studying the box for way more time than was necessary, the young man finally rang it up: "That will be \$15, please."

Back in my hotel room, I flung off my gloves and coat on a chair and bolted for the bathroom, locking the door behind me. I laid out my purchase on the vanity and tried to read the instructions, but my eyes kept skipping words and lines, perhaps because there was still a bit of alcohol in my system.

I sat on the toilet and started to pee on the stick, staring at the empty window on it as I did. Oh, my God! Although I hadn't finished, a pink line was already appearing in the window. This could not be happening. Maybe one line meant not pregnant and two lines meant pregnant?

I was pregnant.

I had graduated with degrees in economics and finance from an American university, but post 9/11, as a brown girl (I'm half-Indian), it was unlikely I would get a work permit to stay in the U.S. Almost every time I crossed the border, I was the person chosen for the "random" check. My underwear has been touched by border guards in at least five U.S. states.

I'd always wanted to be a lawyer, ever since I'd seen Reese Witherspoon in *Legally Blonde*. And I was so close. At this point, I was reminding myself of that on a daily basis. "You're almost finished your seventh and final year of university," I thought. "Just a couple of months left. You can do it."

My parents are immigrants who settled in Toronto. When I'd announced as a child that I was going to become a lawyer, my father's response was: "Lawyers are a dime a dozen!" My father, an accountant turned entrepreneur, had an extremely negative view of those "overcharging bottom-feeders."

My mother also indicated her dismay. "Lawyers have to stay in a library all day and read. Don't you think that sounds so boring?" By the time I entered law school, they had changed their opinion of lawyers because they thought I would handle all their legal issues.

Now all of that seemed pointless. Sure, I had time to finish law school and even the bar exam, but then what? I couldn't start a job just to go on maternity leave after a week. And if I didn't start work right away, how much harder would it be to find a job a year later?

I hadn't even thought about my husband, but now all I could think about was what telling him would be like. We had lived together for a couple of years before I'd gone to law school but at this point we were living in two different cities: I was at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont., and he was in Montreal. In the meantime, we got married.

My Indian mother-in-law thought our living situation was unnatural and loathed it. She'd hated the fact that we'd lived together before marriage, then hated the fact that we didn't live together after the marriage. Some people would never be happy. Although I was pretty sure she'd be happy about the baby.

Telling my husband about the pregnancy took a few tries. He was still upset that I hadn't told him about the law school trip to New York City. He needed to know about the pregnancy, however. Maybe sending a text was a good thing. "I wanted to tell you in person or at least on the phone but you hung up on me. I'm pregnant," I wrote, adding a smiley face emoji.

When I opened the door of our Toronto condo and dropped my bag, I was glad I had dealt with the news. My husband walked up to me with a huge smile on his face and held me, and that was all I needed. All the worrying, all the arguing and all the what-ifs disappeared. We were going to be a family.

*This is part one of a three-part series.*

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