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Chair | CBA Young Lawyers Section

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# This Too Shall Pass

was in hell. Strangely, though, I wasn't dead. The ebb-and-flow pain in my chest confirmed this much. Instead, I was trapped in a puddle-jumper holding 10,000 feet above LaGuardia.

It was tepid and cramped. The guy next to me hacked a crackling cough, each heave trumpeting homage to cold and flu season. I tried holding my breath, sealing myself to the squadron of germs swarming in recycled air hissing above. Blue-lipped and dejected, I succumbed with a breath not even a minute later.

It was 7 p.m. Below me, families collaborated over dinner; socialites readied for another night about Manhattan; and senior citizens played along with Vanna and Pat. Somewhere, somebody drew a new life as winning lottery numbers were called.

But I was stuck in a tin can with wings.

In less than 12 hours, I had to write a brief; prepare for a full day of meetings on only marginally-familiar topics; return six phone calls; reply to 50 e-mails; finalize a few bills for clients; pay more than a few of my own; schedule a development lunch (because of course there was time) and call my wife about something very important—exactly what I couldn't remember—probably because I held my breath too long. And did somebody mention sleep?

Many lawyers have found themselves in their own metaphoric hell. When all things great and small convene to create the perfect storm. The Big One. The one we're sure will cause us to swap our PDAs and late-night hospitality suites for anything, as long as it involves certainty and an eight-hour day.


One thing I've noticed about our more tenured siblings of the law is their ability to navigate through stormy seas with far steadier hands than those of us who've been at it for only a brief time. I'm certain this derives from their perspective—their ability to know no storm is “perfect” and all storms will end.

No new lawyer needs reminding they've chosen a personally and professionally demanding career. That's evident well before the first law school exam.<sup>1</sup> But it never hurts to be reminded of four simple words that offer a port in any storm:

## **This too shall pass.**

I'd be willing to bet if you took a moment to digest the storms you've weathered, they'd share one common fact: You landed on your feet (or at least landed, dusted yourself off and moved on). It's not easy, but keeping this in mind can make all the difference when the deck seems insurmountably stacked against you. The storm always passes. The clouds always break. The world always rights itself somehow.<sup>2</sup> Friends can play a big role in this process. Be sure to thank them when they do; to stand ready to return the favor.

As for my storm, I finished the brief with a little help from a friend; educated myself just enough to be dangerous at my meetings; returned the phone calls and e-mails; finalized bills that were sent; paid bills that were received; and called my wife—to let her know the dogs still needed dinner. But not all landings are perfect. I never made lunch and was the flu's unwilling bedfellow three days later.

I should've held my breath longer. 

<sup>1</sup> For the students reading this, if the law's rigors aren't evident by now, then clearly you're not being challenged. In that case, I'd suggest foregoing fluency in legalese for the real test of Clown College. See Wikipedia—Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Clown College, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ringling\\_Brothers\\_and\\_Barnum\\_&\\_Bailey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ringling_Brothers_and_Barnum_&_Bailey)

<sup>2</sup> Clown College (stating that it is statistically far more difficult to gain admittance to Clown College than to law school).

<sup>2</sup> I'll refrain from breaking into “The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow,” but I'll bet my bottom dollar that now you'll be singing it the rest of the day. Better close that office door, Annie.