

Parable #4 - What's Your Perfect Job?



Advocacy Club Parable #4: The Perfect Job

Flash Fiction by John Hollander, 830 words

Have you ever ruminated – just for the heck of it – as to what makes up the perfect job? For you, not for the lawyer in the next office or that classmate who fled to Portugal to open a B&B. You start with the basics – what you would be doing, where and with whom. Then you add in the less significant inputs. What would you end up with? Is the grass greener there?

“Why are you moping, Saul? It’s so unlike you.” This remark came from Jake Murphy, his law partner.

“I feel like I’m in a rut. Same old, same old.”

“How’s that even possible? You’re young, only a year into your first partnership with a group of like-minded friends and colleagues. You must admit that we’ve got it good. No, great!” Saul grimaced, unable to see his situation through the same rose-colored glasses.

“I lost my tail.” Jake smiled at Saul’s Eeyore reference from A. A. Milne’s Winnie the Pooh. Saul finished his thought, “When your tail is missing, remember you have every right to mope.” A direct quotation. Jake imagined the cartoon blue-grey Eeyore looking despondently at his tail-deficient backside.

“What would you do to shake things up, to get your mojo back?”

“I’ve been thinking about that, Jake. Quite a bit.”

“Well, then, let’s talk. Tell me what your perfect job would be? I know it’s not the money.” Saul was comfortable financially, having received an insurance payout after his parents died in a car crash while he was still an undergrad. “Make a list.”

Saul looked up, silently processing. After a few seconds, he started, “First, it would be about people. I get real satisfaction by solving people’s problems.”

“But isn’t that what lawyers do? What we do?” Jake stressed the ‘we’.

“Yes, Jake, but I don’t mean legal problems. I mean real-life problems like getting medical attention or restoring relationships.”

“Hmmm. Lawyers can do that. What else?”

“Second, there wouldn’t be any money involved. Fees, I mean. When money changes hands, emotions become an afterthought.”

“Ever hear of *pro bono*? Wait, you do lots of no-fee work here.” Jake extended his hands as though pleading to an audience.

“Third, I don’t mind being accountable to the people I’m helping, but I don’t want my law partners to suffer, to pay for my obsession with unpaid work. I won’t be a dependant.”

“That’s a bit paternalistic, Saul. Why can’t your partners help others through you? I mean, if they choose to. Why not let them make that decision?”

“Last, I want to feel that I’m building something that blossoms into a solution that helps more and more people. I want to leverage the service so that it makes a difference for people I don’t get to meet.”

Jake shook his head and said, “You’ve done that with the hospital and their patient advocacy program. You expanded that into the skilled nursing facilities. And each of us, your law partners, takes a turn chipping in as needed. We follow your lead. How much leverage do you need, Saul?”

Saul looked skeptical. “Now you’re just arguing with me. Whenever I say that I want something, you tell me that I already have it.”

“Try this. Tell me what we need to do to reconfigure the job you already have, with the people you already work with, so that the result aligns with your perfect job.”

“So long as all of you understand that I won’t always be available to pitch in on your files, attend all the planning meetings, and share the administrative duties that you know I hate doing.” This time, Saul extended his hands to indicate their three other partners, usually gathered around the table where they were chatting.

“We, your partners, have already discussed this while you were working in Texas with your brother. We agreed that you could have as much space as you need. You don’t have a billing target for a reason. We support your vision of how to make the world a better place. We think that we do this in our caseload, but we want to do more. You enable that. If you’re happy by our saying that to you out loud, then there it is.”

“I didn’t realize all that, Jake. Maybe I should have. It would be a lot less stressful if I didn’t have to leave the firm.”

“The moral of the story is that you could already have your dream job by talking to your partners. We can try to make it happen if you only tell us how. We can’t read your mind. You’re always telling us that communication is the best way to resolve your patient advocacy cases. I think that prescription works here, too.”

For the first time that day, Saul smiled. He quoted the venerable sage, Eeyore, “I was so upset, I forgot to be happy.”

The end