

Definition by Carolyn

This fictional story is based on The Practice episode "Cause of Action" - a post episode vignette. Alan Shore thinks about his position in the firm.
Rating: G

You don't think of yourself as a lawyer.

Ellenor'd told him that a while ago, the culmination of one of those "You know what your problem is?" conversations that Alan had had so often he'd begun to consider them truth-or-dare for adults. Was the party getting boring? Had something offended you? Have you had a little too much to drink? Liven things up by telling other people how to shape up their lives. Instead of truth or dare, he, always the target (was that indicative of something?) was left with the choice between confession and defense—no choice at all, because the latter of the two invariably led to a scene, just as it did in court. Which was why he usually went in for confession, especially when Ellenor was involved. Not that it really mattered, all things considered.

He hadn't minded it, actually. Because there'd always been that strange, almost perverse hope that someone would get it right. That someone would point their finger at him and pronounce exactly what it was that he was doing wrong.

Patently absurd, of course. Not that his thoughts followed rules of reason or logic. Not that he followed rules at all.

When he'd stood there in that courtroom, watching Eugene walk away without so much as a backward glance...for some reason Ellenor's words had come to mind. He'd stood there and gaped some more, afterwards.

Of course he didn't think of himself as a lawyer. That wasn't a problem, though. Far from it. The paralegal, Tara, she thought of herself as a lawyer. And she wasn't, which could frankly be rather dangerous.

And anyway, what the hell was the difference between a lawyer and some asshole in a sharp suit who happened to practice law?

Nothing, he'd say with a smirk. Reminded him of one of those lawyer jokes, only for this instead of a punchline you got the truth.

You're a lawyer, Ellenor'd reminded him, gently. Like breaking bad news. He hadn't taken it very well, either. Had snorted derisively, thrown down his napkin, strolled away.

He'd only felt bad for having been rude to her. And now they were trying to tell him there was something else to feel bad about.

You represent this firm, Eugene had told him.

Firmly.

No, he couldn't treat this in a cavalier manner. He'd thought it was an honor, up to that point. He'd thought there had been at least some personal investment on Eugene's part, some real feeling behind the impassioned speech.

Well, there had been feeling. It just hadn't been directed toward Shore.

How could anyone love—love!—the law, so hopelessly flawed? How could you (as he didn't doubt Eugene had) give your life over to this all-encompassing...mess, swear to uphold and protect and defend it like you'd just wandered out of the middle ages, a knight in shining armor?

And if he couldn't even conceive of how someone like Eugene could do it, how could they expect Shore himself to? Sure, he liked Ellenor, liked Sheila, was beginning to respect Eugene, but...the law? So abstract. Requiring capital letters where there really shouldn't be.

Sometimes he'd wonder what God told Sheila about him. If God even bothered. Surely He—sorry, She—had more important things to do, although the fact that She was devoting time to helping Sheila sway juries suggested otherwise.

Would God—no, idiotic question. Like wondering if the Law itself considered him a lawyer.

No, he didn't think of himself as a lawyer. Didn't classify himself at all, really.

Classification was all about systems. This he knew. And he just wasn't a systems kind of guy.

And if that was his problem, damned if he knew how to solve it.

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<http://LiveJournal.com/users/3pipeproblem>