

When Mama's away on a work trip...

Since adopting Daniel four years ago, I have traveled three times for work: once when our university's men's basketball team was competing in the NCAA Tournament in Pittsburgh, once for a staff retreat in Western Maryland, and once this week for a meeting in Richmond, Va.



I did all I could to prepare for being away. I packed an extra lunch for Daniel to take to preschool on the morning I would be gone, asked my mother to invite John and the boys over for dinner, and explained to our sons when I would leave and when I would return. John promised our boys a chance to sleep on the floor of our room—the best thing ever—and I knew they would have fun.

Then I threw a few clothes into a bag and I was off.

As I waited for my train with my colleagues, I thought about how exactly four years earlier John and I had been boarding a [plane for China to adopt our younger son](#). That day it felt strange to board a plane without Leo, who stayed home with my parents while we made the two-week trip to welcome his baby brother into our family.



This time it felt a little strange to travel without my family. But I wasn't a tourist on this trip. I barely saw Richmond at all. And I knew I would be only a few hours away from my family.



We stayed in an amazing, historic hotel, The Jefferson, which was opulent and yet tasteful and very Southern. I'm not sure even the hotels we enjoyed in China were as lovely—though it's hard to compare.



When I checked into my room, I imagined our sons running in circles across the carpet, throwing themselves onto the bed, and begging to take a bath in the Jacuzzi tub.



Then I saw the TV in the bathroom mirror. That, I knew, would have been the highlight of the trip for them—except I could almost hear them saying, “Why doesn’t it get Netflix, Mama?”



No one pounded on my bathroom door or asked to play on the iPad.



I fell asleep in a quiet room and set an alarm for the first time in I don’t know how many years.



In the morning I woke up in the silence and only needed to dress myself.



At breakfast I read a newspaper while a waitress filled and refilled my coffee cup. In fact, I didn’t cook at all.



It was all lovely and the meetings were interesting. I was so happy to be able to be a part of the

conversations. Then I boarded a train and rode back to Baltimore. Home sweet home.

There will be no freshly brewed coffee in the morning. And there's certainly no TV in a bathroom mirror. But I know I don't need to set an alarm tonight. Soon enough someone will be sneaking into our bed to curl up next to me.

I'm not complaining.

