

# Snow joke

**MR JUSTICE SPINACHFACE** woke up in his four poster bed, pulled aside the curtains, looked out across his modest 500 acre estate in the heart of Norfolk and said "damn and blast".

Somewhere near Chelmsford Ms Araminta Cauliflower, solicitor of the Superior Court, looked out of the window of her bijou thatched cottage and said "oh dear".

And, from his basement bedsit, Albert Pauper, legal aid solicitor, looked up at the small square of sky that represented his only view of the outside world and said "crikey".

Simultaneously, two other solicitors and a district judge were waking up from vague forensic dreams in different parts of East Anglia and staring at the scene that was causing such consternation to their unseen colleagues: it was chucking it down with snow, and the whole world had been cloaked in white. Even the wheelie bins looked festive.

They all punched the snooze buttons on their alarm clocks and returned to their reveries.

That option was not open to Messrs Spinachface, Cauliflower and Pauper. The first hearing of the decade was scheduled to start at the combined court in Norwich (pronounced 'porridge') at 10.30am. The advocates knew that old Spinachface would be entirely dismissive of any excuse related to the weather.

Mr Justice Spinachface lived for the pleasure of tormenting those who appeared before him. He needed to take it out on someone today because his wife had tied him up with his old school tie to one of the posts of his bed and had left him begging for mercy in the cold for several hours the previous night. So it was vital for him to be in court before his prey: it would not do if they were on time and he was late.

In a flurry of clothes, make-up and perfume, Araminta Cauliflower rushed to get herself ready in record time. She had spent hours in preparation, anticipating everything the judge could possibly throw at her. But how to get to the court?

She carved herself a porthole in the snow on the windscreen of her car and set off. Plenty of time she thought. Her sat nav estimated her time of arrival as 9.55am. She would be able to redo her hair before being ushered into the presence of Mr Justice Spinachface.

## 's no go

"What do you mean it won't start?" exploded the judge. He was glaring at Sid Sloley, his manservant who was also his gardener, butler and chauffeur. Sloley slowly looked up from the open bonnet of the Daimler.

"Sorry sir, battery's flat. Someone left the headlights on." Mr Justice Spinach's eyes bulged and his face looked green. He was on the point of delivering one of his well-known tirades to Sid when he suddenly remembered that the previous night he had taken the Daimler out for a spin after being released by his wife.

"Well you will have to take me in your car then." Sid Sloley looked worried. His car was old enough to be his father and had not been cleaned for more than a year. He eased the judge into the back seat after first moving his fishing tackle (and a bucket containing something that had died a long time ago) out of the way.

At the main road, the wheels failed to grip and the judge suffered the indignity of having to get out and push.

Albert Pauper did not have a car. His normal mode of transport was either by bus or by bicycle. The buses would obviously not run and cycling would be too dangerous. Then he suddenly remembered a skiing holiday he had had back in 2000 when legal aid solicitors earned



more than prison officers. Above his wardrobe he still had a pair of cross country skis. He dug them out, evicted a small mouse that had made its home there and put them on. With his rucksack on his back he set off. He was not troubled about looking or smelling sweet before Spinachface. He already knew that he would be eaten alive whatever he did.

Time passed. Araminta sat in a queue of traffic while the police moved several upside down cars off the road. She cursed herself for not bringing her business cards with her. She could have drummed up a month's worth of business in just a hundred yards. But her sat nav was constantly revising the arrival time at court. She began to panic, tried to queue jump, was shouted at by a policeman and had a close encounter with a hedge, but made it through – to the next hold up.

Spinachface was out of the car more than in it as every slight slope slowed Sloley's car to a stop. At one stage, he called on the police to send a squad car to take him to court. The response he received was strangely lacking in respect for the judiciary.

Fifty-five minutes late for the scheduled start, a terrified Araminta raced into the court, not having had any time to do anything to her hair which had frozen horizontally so that it looked as though she was now wearing a loafah.

She was followed a few minutes later by a sweaty Albert Pauper who hung up his skis in what passed as the robing room (it had been used as a broom cupboard for most of the last century).

Nearly an hour later, a damp and dishevelled Mr Justice Spinachface called his court to order. Quaking in his presence (partly from fear, partly from cold) the two advocates awaited their fate.

"Weather's too bad. I'll adjourn you 'til tomorrow. And this time don't be late," he said.

"Bbbbut," spluttered Albert, "couldn't we have a telephoned hearing tomorrow?"

"Out of the question." The judge did not add that life would not be nearly as much fun if he could not personally persecute those who appeared before him.

In the meantime, one district judge (still in his pyjamas) was enjoying a perfectly amicable case management conference on the telephone with two advocates (both also in their nightwear). All looked out from their homes onto snow-covered landscapes as they spoke and all were greatly relieved not to have to go anywhere but back to bed after their hearing.

Moral: clearly the scientists have got it wrong, and we are in fact experiencing global cooling, so let's all work at home. I have written my article now. So back to bed for me.

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