

# MARTEN LAMONEY: 'CONTENTS MAY BE HOT!'

LAMONEY TAKES HIS PICK FROM THE RECRUITMENT BUFFET

*"The highest scoring candidates at the shortlisting stage will be invited to attend a pre-assessment centre lunch (5 September) and the assessment centre (10-12 September)."*

*"The buffet lunch is not part of the selection process but will offer the opportunity to meet fellow candidates and lawyers in the recruiting departments and also find out more about the processes involved on the assessment day."*

This extract was reproduced with kind (lack of) permission from the Special Recruitment Website of the Government Legal Service. They also tell you that applicants must have a First or 2:1. One would have thought that anyone capable of such academic attainment wouldn't need to be reassured that "the buffet lunch is not part of the selection process." But perhaps not; perhaps the GLS is responsible for those helpful little warnings on the sides of coffee-cartons; "Cuidado, Caliente!" Italicised for emphasis... Thanks for that. Yeah, Muchas Gracias, Pajeros.

**“Those helpful little warnings on the side of coffee-cartons; “Cuidado, Caliente!” Italicised for emphasis... Thanks for that. Yeah, Muchas Gracias, Pajeros.”**

I'd like to imagine that the GLS are cleverer than that; that, despite what they say, it's a double-bluff and the buffet-lunch actually is a part of the selection process. I'd like to imagine those hopeful fledgling legal-eagles, immaculate in their breeches or sensible skirts, queuing up nervously behind one another as they proceed slowly - hearts thumping almost audibly - towards a bright, shiny silver buffet-cart, complete

with a transparent fibreglass sneeze-guard. Their assessors would be stern-faced, sharp-eyed and straight-nosed, with silver-rimmed spectacles to match the cart: ring-bound pocket notebook in one hand, and a sharpened pencil in the other, observing closely behind the service.



The first hopeful proceeds. With meticulous care he takes a polished brown tray and places it on the bright silver rails, he equips himself with all the necessary accoutrements: cutlery and crocs. He shimmies slowly - painfully - along. Then, unable to bear the tension; to resist the temptation, he sneaks a fugitive glimpse of his assessors - The Judging Panel. They remain inscrutable as statues. He regains his composure: 'play it cool,' he thinks, 'like Samuel Jackson in that film.' Involuntarily the theme-tune to 'Shaft' begins to play in his head - suddenly, to his horror, he is smiling - it couldn't be any worse! Quickly he controls himself. 'Discipline,' he thinks; 'focus - I got a decent 2:1 after all.'

Steadily, he surveys the plastic compartments of food before him, trying to keep up an air of nonchalance. Picking up that instrument (which is peculiar to buffet-scenarios, like a comically oversized pair of tweezers from some terrible nightmare), he considers frantically what he should select. His arm moves with the mechanical rigidity of an amusement arcade claw, pathetically hovering over

some 'choice' looking slices of pickled cucumber. He looks up timidly, importunately at the assessors, as if for approval. Inscrutably, dispassionately, they simply observe. One blinks, another yawns. The applicant panics; they are growing bored - 'shit,' he thinks, 'I had better make my choice.' Bravely, a little too quickly even, he plunges the metallic freak-tweezers into the gherkin-slices, and emerging, triumphantly allows them to drop onto his plate. He looks up again, this time defiantly - but the assessors are impassive as a row of rooftop gargoyles. Afterwards, his nerves placated, he takes some salmon cutlets and - for added sophistication - a small-sized chicken quiche.

Tortuously, this ritual is repeated twelve times over; one candidate after another: it takes about three hours. Each time the Assessors are just as impassive and dispassionate. Many opt for the cutlets, fewer for the cold saltbeef; but each and every one succumbs to the seductive charm of the chicken quiche.

**“like a comically oversized pair of tweezers from some terrible nightmare”**

It subsequently transpires that the quiche is contaminated with a particularly virulent strand of Salmonella. When all are seated, the inscrutable assessors suddenly undergo a sinister transformation. They adorn themselves with gaily-coloured party hats, pull loud, colourful party-streamers and blow on high-pitched inflatable whistles, whilst prancing around with big red rubber noses attached to their faces. All this takes place to the musical accompaniment of Prokofiev, being blasted in the background.

"Surprise!" they shout sassily, as they dance demoniacally about the applicants, who are left writhing and moaning in agony on the polished parquet floor.