

A Monstrous Friend

Quest Legal Advocates attend hearings in every County Court in England. Attending thousands of hearings each year.

This can sometimes invite pressure onto the shoulders of our talented advocates, one of whom has shared a personal experience with this very pressure and how it can also help guide.



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Hello, I'm Dan Law. I come from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and I have been an advocate with Quest for close to 4 years now having joined straight after passing my Bar exams at Leeds University.

There is a popular trope in fairy tales where a mysterious monster lurks in the shadows and follows the protagonist throughout the adventure. It intervenes in crucial moments along the story, causing some chaos and giving the impression that it is a foe. When finally confronted and accepted however, it turns into a friend whose actions were actually in the service of helping the protagonist all along.

I think pressure is that very same monster.



Pressure comes when force is applied. This force can be external; coming from people or situations, or internal (i.e. the pressure you place on yourself). It is present in all facets of life but its mechanism and consequence are made exceedingly clear in court.

In that environment, time is limited and the other factors present constrict an advocate tightly. Just like water coming out of a hose when squeezed, the knee jerk reaction is to rush. Race through all the thoughts and crash land into a decision. More often than not this leads to mistakes. But if the pressure and stress is accepted, it can help guide us to the right areas of consideration. Let me recount to you one such case I attended that led me to that discovery.

Some years ago when I was just starting out as an advocate, I had a hearing in Manchester and, not entirely unusually I have since realised, I was only given the trial documents in a piece meal fashion. It did not include the other side's evidence and it looked like they had neglected to enter any at all. When I checked in with my opponent however, it was made clear that their evidence had been filed and served correctly and in good time. Without more than a few minutes to process this, the hearing was called. My predicament was provided to the Judge, who was not in favour of adjourning (lest an adverse costs order be given against us) and the instructions obtained from the solicitors were to proceed.

That moment was intense. I was given 10 minutes to go through the evidence and commence with cross-examination. The pressure made my mind race but I quickly realised that there was no other way forward but to accept the situation. Without having much time to prepare questions, I re-entered the hearing and allowed the pressure of that moment to move me through the process. It forced me to look only at the most relevant areas of the evidence and then with that, the right questions arose. New questions came from the answers that were given and the cross-examination flowed naturally in that way.

While I can't remember the outcome, I can remember doing well and that after the experience, I had noticeably grown as an advocate. The pressure that day was monstrous but it also guided me. May it help guide you as well.