

A.I Will Kill all Lawyers, Sean Thomas, *The Spectator*, December 2025

A mild December twilight is falling over London. Across the table from me sits an old acquaintance, a senior English barrister. And he wants to speak anonymously, because what he is about to say will earn the loathing of his entire profession.

Let's call him James. I've known him for a few years, and over these years we've discussed all kinds of things, from politics to architecture to the misfortunes of Chelsea FC. We've also discussed technology and AI. James's views of AI were always like his politics: centrist, clever, moderate, sceptical. But now that has changed. In the past few weeks James has come to believe AI will 'completely destroy' the law as we know it: wrecking careers, ending systems, making thousands jobless. And the Armageddon, he says, is coming faster than almost anyone realises.

'Last week, he says, we did an experiment, a kind of simulation. We took a real, recent and important case – a complex civil court appeal which I wrote, and it took me a day and a half. We redacted all identifying details, for anonymity and confidentiality, and we fed the same case to Grok Heavy AI. And then we asked it to do what I did. After some prompting, the end result was...' He shakes his head. 'Spectacular. Actually staggering. It did it in 30 seconds, and it was much better than mine. And remember, I am very good at this. How can any of us compete? We can't.'

He finishes his martini. We order two more. 'With the right prompting, legal AI is now way ahead of people. Barristers or advocates who depend on giving legal opinions and have no client contact are already completely fucked. But more is coming.'

James believes AI will work its way up the legal hierarchy. Eventually the majority of legal jobs will be replaced. 'AI will handle the most complex cases in seconds. The most complicated human skill will be,' he chuckles, sadly, 'to scan and digitise paper documents. Barristers will make arguments in courtrooms that are drafted by AI, and then people will wonder why they are paying human barristers £200,000, and they too will disappear.' I mention the problem of 'hallucinations' – when an AI model presents false or fabricated information as factual – and the need for a human face in court. He waves this all away. 'Temporary bugs and sentimental preferences. The economic argument is overwhelming.'

There is another obvious question raised here. If James can see what is coming down the line, why can't everyone else? James explains that the next generation of lawyers are being trained to believe they can use AI, without being replaced by it. He has another argument, even more pressing. 'Lawyers are arrogant. Lawyers run the country. Keir Starmer is a quintessential lawyer. To be honest, a lot of lawyers deserve what's coming. Too many of them are greedy and selfish.'

I have one last question. Right now, young people are studying law, or considering doing so. Does James have any advice? He sits up, full of passion.

'My niece is a lovely girl, really smart, great at school, and the other day she told me she wants to be a lawyer. And I thought, "Oh my God," I said please do not destroy your life. Do not get into a lifetime of debt for a job that won't exist.'