

[00:00:00] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:00:02] **Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Personal Gingery Lawyer". Andrea brings the case against her lifelong friend, Jennifer. For years, they've had a holiday tradition of getting together to bake a gingerbread house. And for years, Andrea says that Jennifer messes it all up with gingerbread mischief. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.

[00:00:32] **John Hodgman:** "My sister and I never saw our parents again. It was just the two of us. But we learned a couple of things while trapped in that house. One, never walk into a house made of candy. And two, if you're gonna kill a witch, set her butt on fire."

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.

[00:00:51] **Jesse Thorn:** Andrea and Jen, please rise and raise your right hands.

(Chairs squeak.)

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God or Whatever?

(They swear.)

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he's probably just trying to trick you into climbing into his oven?

(They swear.)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

[00:01:11] **John Hodgman:** Andrea and Jen, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of yours favors. Can either of you name the piece of culture I referenced when I entered the courtroom? Andrea, you bring the case. Let's start with you. What's your guess?

[00:01:24] **Andrea:** I have no idea. I will go with a prepared guess of a Garrison Keillor essay from 1993.

[00:01:32] **John Hodgman:** Garrison Keillor essay from 1993, one of the high periods of Garrison Keillor. Jennifer, what's your guess?

[00:01:42] **Jennifer:** Ooh, I'm going to go with just a classic Hansel and Gretel Brothers Grimm fairy tale.

[00:01:49] **John Hodgman:** Hansel and Gretel Brothers Grimm fairy tale, because I'm talking about—in the voice of someone who walked into a house made of candy and set a witch on fire.

[00:01:59] **Jennifer:** Why not?

[00:02:00] **John Hodgman:** Why not indeed! Because you're very, very, very close, almost correct, but both guesses are wrong. The answer was—it's based on Hansel and Gretel. It's a movie from 2013 starring Jeremy Renner and Gemma Arterton, called *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*. Jesse, can you believe that it's been 10 years since *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters* came out?

[00:02:23] **Jesse Thorn:** Film that changed a nation and marked a generation.

[00:02:26] **John Hodgman:** So many classic quotes from that movie, *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*. “We've gotten a taste of blood, witch blood.”

(*Jesse laughs.*)

Also, “Trolls are extra.”

[00:02:36] **Jesse Thorn:** (*Cheerfully.*) Which blood, John?

[00:02:38] **John Hodgman:** It's about Hansel and Gretel who are grown up and are now paid, for-hire mercenary witch hunters. But according to the IMDb quotes page, at some point one of them says, “Yeah, trolls are extra.”

“You move, you die.” And finally, this one actually is specific to the movie, “Get her wand!” Anyway, quotes. Movie quotes. “Get her wand!”

[00:02:59] **Jesse Thorn:** “Get her wand!” That was my graduation quote in the yearbook.

[00:03:02] **John Hodgman:** But now it's time for you, Jennifer and Andrea, to get your wands and present your cases to me. Who comes seeking justice in this fake internet court?

[00:03:11] **Andrea:** That would be me, Andrea.

[00:03:12] **John Hodgman:** And how long have you and Jennifer been making gingerbread houses, Andrea?

[00:03:17] **Jennifer:** Over 20.

[00:03:18] **John Hodgman:** Over 20 years! And how specifically does Jennifer ruin them for you?

[00:03:23] **Andrea:** Over time—there used to be parental supervision involved, and I'm talking about literal parental supervision.

[00:03:28] **John Hodgman:** You were friends since childhood?

(Andrea confirms.)

How old were you when you met?

[00:03:32] **Andrea:** Three. And once we entered like our university like post—like, we left the nest, things got quite childish, I would say. And there was also a lot of other festive, you know, activities happening at gingerbread night, including some drinking, lots of merriment, a lot of errant candy placement. So, at some point we had to rein it in.

[00:03:58] **John Hodgman:** And how, specifically, does Jennifer ruin your gingerbread houses?

[00:04:03] **Andrea:** Jennifer decides at some point in the evening—when she has had enough—to whip up a batch of Smurf-blue colored icing and head towards the gingerbread landscape and just go to town. Like, she just wants to add a pool or a water feature without consultation.

[00:04:23] **John Hodgman:** A gingerbread pool.

[00:04:28] **Jesse Thorn:** When you say pool or water feature, are we talking about a Bellagio style fountain? What is the nature of the water feature here? *(Chuckles.)*

[00:04:37] **Andrea:** I mean, Jesse, that would be amazing. It is basically finding a place on the landscape of the gingerbread property and installing it without consultation.

[00:04:49] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, but is it—? So, alright, the gingerbread house, first of all, has a gingerbread property on it. It's sitting on a platform full of ginger candy and other things.

(Andrea confirms.)

But what form—what are we talking about, an above ground pool? A lily pad pond? A stream?

[00:05:07] **Andrea:** It varies. It has had some interesting shapes over the years. Sometimes it's almost looking like it would just be a quaint little pond that's frozen over that maybe, in this magical world of gingerbread, people would be skating on. Sometimes it looks completely out of keeping with what is happening on the rest of the property.

[00:05:29] **Jesse Thorn:** How would it be out of keeping with what's happening on the rest of the property? What's happening on the rest of the—are you building gingerbread industrial zones?

[00:05:36] **Andrea:** No, it's more that the themes have gotten more refined, and the color combinations are specific. And the icing, if Jen had her way about it, would always be that very distinctive Smurf-blue.

[00:05:52] **John Hodgman:** Jennifer, what is your obsession with gingerbread pools, lakes, and water features?

[00:05:58] **Jennifer:** I think they're a beautiful thing. Who doesn't want a water feature on their property?

[00:06:03] **Jesse Thorn:** How do you respond to Andrea's charge that you are becoming more childish as you age, going through a process of emotional Benjamin Buttoning?

[00:06:14] **Jennifer:** Yeah, she's saying I'm regressing, I suppose. I mean, I actually think Andrea's the one who's got the issue here. Something either, you know, she really hates water features and pools, which I don't understand. Or it's really just about control and perfectionism that she's kind of, you know, trying to bridle us all in here when we're all just having a good time decorating a gingerbread house for the past 20 years.

[00:06:37] **John Hodgman:** So, alright. Let's go back in time and understand how this all started. You two have known each other for a long time, right? When did you meet Jennifer?

[00:06:44] **Andrea:** Jennifer when I was three or four years old when my family moved onto the street where Jen's family already lived.

[00:06:51] **John Hodgman:** And you started making these gingerbread houses about how long ago?

[00:06:57] **Andrea:** About 20ish years ago.

[00:06:58] **John Hodgman:** Oh, okay. And you were kids at the time, or at least like teenagers, I would bet?

[00:07:04] **Andrea:** We think grade nine.

[00:07:06] **John Hodgman:** Grade nine. Oh, I forgot. You're in Canada.

[00:07:09] **Jesse Thorn:** In Canada, gingerbread houses are free, but you have to join a pretty long waiting list.

[00:07:13] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, there is. You have to make your appointment way ahead of time.

And you mentioned that the gingerbread houses were getting more and more refined over time. What do you mean?

[00:07:23] **Andrea:** Yeah, so it started off well under parental supervision. Usually, Jen's mom would be around. And so, the gingerbread houses looked nice. And then (*chuckling*) once we graduated and went off on our, you know, various pursuits, we would still get together. And so, the university years, I would say, were like the years of developing chaos. You know, as one might imagine you do childish things when you're in university and you don't have any supervision. There would be just so much candy, a lot of eating of the candy, a lot of drinking of the alcohol. No plan as to placement. And then there would also be people—and by people I'm talking about little Playmobil figures and things that Jen's mother would lovingly pack for us to make these scenes in our gingerbread landscape. And they would be positioned in ways that, you know, are not safe for a family friendly podcast.

From that point on, I was just like there is a leadership vacuum here, and I am the person to fill it.

(*They laugh.*)

[00:08:33] **John Hodgman:** Was it during the years of chaos that Jennifer first jumped in with a gingerbread pool?

[00:08:39] **Jennifer:** No! Since the inception of gingerbread, there has always been a water feature of some sort. It's in that photo that we submitted. You can see it. Actually, Andrea's right in front of it. She may have even placed it herself!

[00:08:49] **John Hodgman:** Are you talking about the inception of gingerbread as your tradition, or the inception of gingerbread as a concept?

[00:08:55] **Jennifer:** Well, definitely our tradition. But you know, people have been using pools since like 2500 BCE. Egyptians have pools on their, you know, cave drawings.

[00:09:06] **John Hodgman:** I don't need you to argue that we've been bathing for most of our lives as humans.

[00:09:09] **Jesse Thorn:** And I don't think I need you to argue that Egyptians lived in caves. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:09:12] **Jennifer:** Cave drawings.

[00:09:13] **John Hodgman:** What year was—do you remember the first gingerbread pool you made?

[00:09:19] **Jennifer:** Yeah, I think it was the grade nine house. There was a water feature of some sort.

[00:09:22] **John Hodgman:** That was year one!

(Jennifer confirms.)

So, from year one.

[00:09:25] **Jennifer:** Year one. It's important.

[00:09:26] **John Hodgman:** And what—and can you remember what inspired you?

[00:09:29] **Jennifer:** I think it just creates a nice landscape. You know, you've put this house on this large piece of, you know, cardboard or wood platform. And you need to create a landscape around it. And what adds beauty to a landscape? Water.

[00:09:43] **John Hodgman:** How did your—? You said there are other friends, Andrea, there? Old high school friends, grade nine friends?

(Andrea confirms.)

And how did they react to the gingerbread pool?

[00:09:53] **Andrea:** See, this again was in the era of parental supervision. And so, I have no—I take no issue with that pool. That pool is appropriately sized. It is in keeping with the landscape and the general aesthetic of that property. That pool meets my expectations.

[00:10:12] **John Hodgman:** Well, you both sent in some evidence, and so—and Jennifer, you sent in a photo of what I think is the first gingerbread house meetup, or what you would refer to as the beginning of gingerbread. Let's take a look at Exhibit A. All these photos will be available, of course, on our show page at MaximumFun.org and our Instagram, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). I see a young version of Jennifer. I see a young version of Andrea. I see two people whose faces have been rightfully obscured. They had no consent. They did not consent to be on this podcast or in your photo. And this is in Vancouver, correct? That's where you're from?

[00:10:47] **Jennifer:** Yes. This is at my parents' house, where I grew up.

[00:10:49] **John Hodgman:** And it's—I can't see the pool. I just see a red arrow pointing to a very, very small patch of blue. But I do see your caption, Jennifer, “appropriately colored pool”.

Is that your caption, Jennifer?

(Jennifer confirms.)

And what did you mean by that?

[00:11:06] **Jennifer:** Well, Andrea likes to claim that I make this icing a Smurf blue color every year, and I stand there, and I mix it this horrendous color—which is just absolutely not true. When you look through all of the evidence, there's varied colors of blue that are appropriate to Andrea's dictated themes throughout the years.

[00:11:25] **John Hodgman:** I think that the point that Andrea might be making is that a pool or a water feature as part of a gingerbread house is not very common. Does it feel common to you, Jesse?

(Jesse confirms that it does not.)

I mean, a frozen lake, I suppose. But I don't know. I just don't realize that I had seen that before. Was the concept that it's a frozen lake, or that it's like an above ground swimming pool or a hot tub?

[00:11:49] **Jennifer:** It depends on the year, right? So, sometimes it is a frozen lake. I think there's one where it's, you know, kind of ice crystals. Sometimes we've had like a Palm Springs, mid-century modern themed gingerbread. And that one we had, you know, just a standard pool.

[00:12:03] **Jesse Thorn:** I'll say that in the exhibits that you've presented—both Exhibit A, this very, very early house, and Exhibit B, which is labeled “Past Gingerbread Houses”—I would describe the theme as Several of Everything.

(Andrea concedes.)

[00:12:21] **John Hodgman:** Well, no, maybe it's fair, maybe it's not, Andrea. You submitted Exhibit B, a couple of photos of previous gingerbread houses. Let's take a look at them. So, there are two here. The first one I'm looking at; the house is sitting in front of what I presume is the blue water feature. When is this one from, Andrea?

[00:12:42] **Andrea:** I think this one is 2018. This one—

[00:12:46] **John Hodgman:** Fairly recently.

[00:12:46] **Andrea:** Yeah. And what you see back there is what became the lake. You know, that wasn't sanctioned by me, but the overall vibe of this house was intended to be Christmas at a log cabin.

[00:13:02] **Jesse Thorn:** Would you describe yourself as a gingerbread sanctioning body?

[00:13:05] **Andrea:** Yes. Like, of like the benevolent, like dictatorial type.

[00:13:10] **Jesse Thorn:** There are penguins on this lake.

[00:13:11] **Andrea:** Those were eating candies.

[00:13:18] **Jesse Thorn:** (*Laughs.*) So, are there two parallel supplies of candy for this process?

[00:13:21] **Andrea:** (*Giggling.*) Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely!

[00:13:24] **John Hodgman:** I'm sorry. Did you say they're eating candies?

(*Andrea confirms.*)

What does that mean in this context?

[00:13:30] **Andrea:** So, everyone has their role as part of this process, and—

[00:13:35] **John Hodgman:** Let record show that Jennifer is already shaking her head at the concept that everyone has their role.

[00:13:39] **Jesse Thorn:** She has her hand on her temple.

(*They chuckle.*)

Like a stock photograph of a headache.

[00:13:44] **John Hodgman:** The way you describe a good time with friends usually starts with, “Everyone has their role.”

[00:13:52] **Andrea:** (*Laughs.*) Yeah. So, for example, one of our participants—and really her role is to do the roof and to eat a lot of candy. Like, her whole *raison d'être* for continuing her participation is to like mow candy that she does not have to fight with her children over like once a year, I'd say. That's kind of her thing. So, we now get good-tasting candy and candy that people like that's not necessarily integral to the design.

[00:14:24] **John Hodgman:** You get side candy that you can snack on while you're forming a gingerbread gutter or eve.

[00:14:33] **Andrea:** Because what used to happen is if we didn't have enough candy, then people would want to snack on it. And then all of a sudden we would be like halfway down—

[00:14:42] **John Hodgman:** You'd be eating your own materials. But Andrea, the distinction you made was that the penguins in the lake—those are eating candy. And you said that with a certain measure of contempt, like they shouldn't belong there. Am I misreading you?

[00:14:56] **Andrea:** No, that's accurate. Like, the fact of penguins—which are obviously not indigenous to this landscape—would not be strictly keeping with the theme of this house.

[00:15:06] **John Hodgman:** What's the landscape? Candyland? Just for the people are listening, this is a brown log cabin with a rainbow-colored roof with frosting all over it instead of snow and a garden full of those round peppermints that you get at the dentist. Did you set this theme? Did you set this theme, Andrea? You were the commissioner of this—of gingerbread.

[00:15:31] **Andrea:** We collaborate on the on the general focus of the theme for the year, and then really what I'm doing—

[00:15:37] **John Hodgman:** Does that mean you receive suggestions and then ignore them and come up with your own thing?

[00:15:41] **Andrea:** (*Shamelessly.*) Yes. I believe that there's strong support for this one. And then really what happens is once we are all there, I am essentially like a kindergarten teacher like trying to make a group project happen.

[00:15:54] **John Hodgman:** Kindergarten teachers being the most benevolent of despots.

(*Andrea confirms.*)

[00:16:00] **Jennifer:** I'd love to know how your group projects went in kindergarten.
(*Chuckles.*)

[00:16:02] **John Hodgman:** Jennifer, I'll ask you the question that Andrea seems to not want to answer. What is the supposed landscape of this log cabin in the country? Where does this live in the world?

[00:16:12] **Jennifer:** Right. I believe this was a sort of rustic woods—BC woodland theme, perhaps.

[00:16:19] **John Hodgman:** And are there no lakes in British Columbia?

[00:16:21] **Jennifer:** There are hundreds and hundreds of lakes. British Columbia is full of lakes.

[00:16:25] **John Hodgman:** It's known as the land of hundreds and hundreds of lakes, Andrea. No? So, why is it not in keeping here?

[00:16:32] **Andrea:** We had not decided that this was a lake cabin. But it's also just the way that the water feature added in. It's like Jen decides on Jen's schedule that it's time for, in this situation, the lake. And so, it doesn't matter what else might have been on the go in the back of the property. She just decides, "Oh, it's time!" And then...

[00:17:01] **John Hodgman:** She's freestyling it.

(*Andrea confirms.*)

What is her assigned role that she's ignoring?

[00:17:05] **Andrea:** Jen has always traditionally had the role of mixing the icing that used to be the mortar to the house.

[00:17:15] **John Hodgman:** Jennifer, your job was to mix the mortar! The most exciting job on Earth! Why was that not sufficient to you that you felt you had to go and make a beautiful lake? You had the job! Mix the mortar! What's so—why did you get above your station?

[00:17:29] **Jennifer:** Yeah, I know. It's a good question. I mean, I really think that, you know, the event purpose here—I just want to walk it back to why we actually get together, Andrea. It's not about perfectionist gingerbread. It is about friends, fun, holiday spirit.

[00:17:43] **John Hodgman:** FFHS. Yes. Friends, fun, holiday spirit.

[00:17:46] **Jennifer:** Yes. It is not this like laborious event dictated by your perfectionist tendencies. It's getting out of control.

[00:17:52] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:17:57] **Jesse Thorn:** You're listening to *Judge John Hodgman*. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. Of course, the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, always brought to you by you: the members of MaximumFun.org. Thanks to everybody who's gone to MaximumFun.org/join, and you can join them by going to MaximumFun.org/join.

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[00:22:54] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:22:55] **John Hodgman:** Speaking of out of control, let me just talk about this next photo. This is another photo that you submitted, Andrea, in the past gingerbread house category. This gingerbread house is wild. This is true chaos. What are you trying to show me with this gingerbread house?

[00:23:13] **Andrea:** So, this is the house I believe from 2012 or 2013. And the purpose that I say that this serves my argument is I was not in attendance this night.

(John chuckles knowingly.)

It was a group of rogue participants. I had not—I disclaim any involvement in this house. As you can see, the pool is leaking from the bounds of the property. There is a water egress issue.

[00:23:42] **Jesse Thorn:** As though a Smurf had just been shot.

(Andrea agrees.)

[00:23:45] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, there is a water feature here—quote/unquote, “water feature” here. It seems to be like a stream bounded by white marshmallows. And that is very Smurfy blue indeed.

[00:23:57] **Jesse Thorn:** And that stream does not continue. It is as though a stream has ended near the front of the house.

[00:24:04] **John Hodgman:** Yes, and the stream is full of very Smurfy blood. I'll also go on to say that the whole thing reeks of “no one has a role”. I'm saying this in your defense, Andrea. It's like everyone got gumdrops and just put them in a gumdrop cannon and shot it at this thing.

[00:24:25] **Jesse Thorn:** There are two Santa Clauses here, one of whom is standing atop the chimney like he can't fit in, and the other of whom appears to have been killed and transformed into a door.

(They laugh.)

[00:24:38] **John Hodgman:** So, Jennifer, you wanted to respond to this image as well.

(Jennifer confirms.)

What do you think Andrea is trying to show us, or what do you want us to see in this photo?

[00:24:47] **Jennifer:** Well, Andrea's trying to show the chaos. And I mean, I can admit—and I did admit, publicly, that this was a chaotic gingerbread year. It was at my house, and Andrea's incorrectly assuming—

[00:24:57] **John Hodgman:** Did Andrea force you to confess your crimes in the town square? Is that when you admitted it publicly?

[00:25:02] **Jennifer:** No! I—because I'm a reasonable human being, I just posted on Facebook and I said, “Andrea, we missed you this year. Like, love ya. Hope you're back next year.” You know, like it wasn't any—you know, clearly it's not the best of houses. And she then responds with like, “Oh, you guys missed my vision and bossy oversight?” Which was a little bit much. But what's more important here is that I did not do the water feature here. And I did not mix icing!

[00:25:27] **John Hodgman:** Woah. Woah! Bombshell.

(Jennifer agrees.)

Who made the Smurf blood this year?

[00:25:33] **Jennifer:** So, Andrea invited a friend of hers that was not a high school friend who will remain unnamed. She attended two gingerbread sessions. She was, along with our

other friend—who we previously referenced as a friend of ours from three years of age—they were responsible for this mess. I have a photo of them pointing at it and laughing, and then I have Facebook posts after where Erica says she can't attend next year's, “But KP, get the pool going. I'm looking for you to do it.” Something along that nature.

Essentially, I'm not responsible for it. I didn't mix the icing, nor did I try to control it. Because that's not my nature. So, if people are at my home, they're welcome to enjoy themselves and do whatever they wish and have a nice time together. But Andrea thinks that this is the kind of thing that I do, and I am responsible for, like some sort of pool anarchist. And I'm not!

[00:26:26] **John Hodgman:** Normally, your assigned role is to mix the mortar. What was your role on this evening?

[00:26:31] **Jennifer:** I was the host. So, I think I, you know, purchased candy. Probably did mix the mortar at the initial stages. You know, I was just playing a supportive role.

[00:26:41] **John Hodgman:** Just let anyone do whatever they wanted, apparently. And so, the point of this image, Andrea, is not to prove that water features on gingerbread house properties are bad. It's just what happens when you're not around. Correct?

(Andrea confirms.)

Andrea, you also sent in a more recent photo of you and Jennifer together at work on the house, Exhibit C. Now, as I mentioned, all this evidence will be available on the show page at MaximumFun.org, as well as on our Instagram account, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). But Andrea, I'm more interested in the caption you provided here. Quote, “Mischief/Jen mixing the blue icing behind the box.” And indeed, there's a photo of Jen standing with a mischievous smile on her face, her hands obscured behind a box of some kind of ingredient. What is the meaning of this photo to you?

[00:27:34] **Andrea:** So, what we see here in this photograph is Jen conveniently using a box of Shreddies to obscure her mixing of the Smurf blue icing. Because I had, specifically this year, stated my wishes that the pool—if there had to be one or a water feature—needed to fit the vibe. And Jen's just like got her sneaky little mischief grin, and she's hiding the blue icing. And she was probably, you know, conserving supplies to make sure that she had enough.

[00:28:08] **John Hodgman:** Jen, is this true? Were you sneaking Smurf blue icing behind the Shreddies?

[00:28:13] **Jennifer:** No, and I think you can see by the evidence of the photo of the end result of that house that it was not Smurf blue! It was a nice darkish blue, and it was applied with restraint.

[00:28:27] **John Hodgman:** Do you get up to mischief, Jennifer?

[00:28:32] **Jennifer:** No. I don't think I get up to mischief. I just want to have a good time. I mean, we're all there for fun.

[00:28:37] **John Hodgman:** Why do you think Andrea cares so much about this being a grownup gingerbread house for grownup gingerbread life?

[00:28:42] **Jennifer:** Because she's a control freak. I don't know. I mean, I'm not really sure what's driving this for her. It's perfectionism, control. You know, I really don't know. It's hard to say.

[00:28:53] **John Hodgman:** She's a control freak, you say?

[00:28:55] **Jennifer:** I think a little bit.

[00:28:56] **John Hodgman:** Jennifer, Jesse, is saying that Andrea is a control freak here.

[00:29:01] **Jesse Thorn:** That's what I'm hearing.

[00:29:02] **John Hodgman:** That's what I'm hearing too. Jennifer, I understand that Andrea calls you the Queen of Forced Fun.

(Jennifer repeats the title with a chuckle.)

The Queen of Forced Fun. When you call her the Queen of Forced Fun, what are some of the events that she organizes?

[00:29:16] **Andrea:** It would be sports days when we are camping.

[00:29:22] **John Hodgman:** This is forced sports?

(Andrea confirms.)

How do you think you're going to win this case when you're forcing sports on people in my courtroom? Tell me about your forced sports day.

[00:29:30] **Jennifer:** It's not sports day. It's—you know, there might be a relay event involved. There's, you know, some trivia. There's various types of activities. This is when we're all camping. And you know, people are looking for something to fill their time.

[00:29:43] **John Hodgman:** Are they looking for something to fill their time or are you giving them something to do with their time?

[00:29:49] **Jennifer:** Well, I would say that I—when this particular type of event Andrea is referencing—like, the camping was on my birthday. So, it was a part of the birthday adventure.

[00:29:58] **John Hodgman:** I've been asked to ask you this question. What is a Cinnabonarian walk? Jennifer?

[00:30:05] **Jennifer:** (*Chuckling.*) A Cinnabonarian walk. Okay, so Andrea, myself, and our partners during covid, when there were all the restrictions on, you know, gathering indoors—we started a tradition with our dogs and our partners to go out to this park just outside of Vancouver and walk the trails and enjoy ourselves, get caught up with each other, and then buy cinnamon buns from a world famous cinnamon bun shop here in Vancouver and eat them in a parking lot outside. And we developed this tradition and called ourselves the Cinnabonarians on Sundays.

[00:30:39] **John Hodgman:** Is this forest fun, Andrea? That sounds nice.

[00:30:42] **Andrea:** No, I actually—also, if memory serves me correctly—was the instigator of that religion that we came up with during the dark days of covid. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:30:54] **John Hodgman:** Some might call it a nice way to spend some time with friends during a challenging period. Others might call it a religion that I founded.

(*Andrea confirms with a laugh.*)

[00:31:03] **Jesse Thorn:** I think that if there is any place in North America where a nice walk could be turned into a weird cult, it's got to be Vancouver, British Columbia.

[00:31:13] **John Hodgman:** And I understand that Jennifer also organized something for Canada Day?

[00:31:19] **Andrea:** So, this is another tradition that has definitely had an arc in terms of its complexity. We used to get together and play volleyball. It turned into an event where it was probably—I don't know if I'm overstating this, but maybe like 100 people. One year, just to kind of give you a sense of it, there was a full hay bale stage with professional karaoke set up that went like well, well into the night. And probably at that point there was still 50 people in attendance. So, it was—it ballooned. It really took off.

[00:31:58] **John Hodgman:** What a miserable display of forced fun that is. Ugh!

[00:32:02] **Andrea:** Well, this is the thing. If I choose to attend the Canada Day event, I know what I'm getting myself into.

[00:32:08] **John Hodgman:** Jennifer, why can't you surrender from time to time to Andrea's authority the way she just described surrendering to yours?

[00:32:17] **Jennifer:** I don't think that that's the issue here at all. I mean, I have collaborated on every gingerbread house.

[00:32:24] **John Hodgman:** What if I said it was?

[00:32:26] **Jennifer:** I really have a hard time saying that it is! Because when we look through it, I mean, I've gone along with every theme that we have. I go with the flow! It's really not an issue. I think the status quo is working. We have created different types of gingerbread houses. We get themes going. People do different things. It doesn't seem to me that we need to exert more control here.

[00:32:49] **John Hodgman:** Andrea, is it working for you? Or else why would we be here?

[00:32:52] **Andrea:** Well, I think it's really about what I'm trying to get out of bringing Jennifer to court. And it's really that I would like for her to admit that her modus operandi is motivated by mischief and her intention to annoy me. Which is totally fine! I think that I would like for Jennifer to have to consult as to placement, color, and style of the water feature—because I will begrudgingly admit that it is now also part of the tradition—so that it is keeping with the theme.

[00:33:35] **John Hodgman:** Consult or submit for your approval?

(Andrea confirms.)

That's answer to both. That's answer yes to both of those.

[00:33:41] **Jesse Thorn:** To seek sanction.

[00:33:43] **John Hodgman:** Jennifer, I see you're smiling now. There's a little smile of mischief, I feel like. Can you acknowledge that some of this is just—that sometimes you're getting up in that water feature just because you know it irks your friend a little bit?

[00:33:56] **Jennifer:** I think it's important to note that at a certain point in time in the evening, everyone fatigues except Andrea.

[00:34:04] **John Hodgman:** You're under fake oath. Does it give you some pleasure to annoy Andrea by plopping down a hot tub?

[00:34:12] **Jennifer:** It will now, *(laughing)* since I've been taken to court about it!

[00:34:16] **John Hodgman:** Oh no, Andrea, self-fulfilling prophecy!

[00:34:20] **Jennifer:** But truly, I would say it is not driven by trying to annoy Andrea. It is driven by a tradition. It's driven by fun. It's driven by whimsy and holiday spirit, which I think I bring in spades to this group.

[00:34:32] **John Hodgman:** Andrea, you say in this photo that Jennifer has a mischievous look on her face. And I'm going to say something. It seems that way to me. Give me an impression of Jennifer once she gets up to some mischief during the gingerbread sesh.

[00:34:45] **Andrea:** Okay. So, somebody will say, “Oh, like Jen, what do you have planned over there for the pool?” And she'll just—

[00:34:53] **John Hodgman:** And she's hiding behind the Shreddies.

[00:34:54] **Andrea:** She's hiding behind the Shreddies, and she's just like, (*sing-song*) “Oh, I don't know! I'm still thinking about it. Like, it's almost ready. Like, are you guys ready for it yet?” And—but she won't say where she's putting it.

[00:35:06] **John Hodgman:** Do you deny this, Jennifer?

[00:35:09] **Jennifer:** I wholeheartedly deny this.

[00:35:11] **John Hodgman:** Were you mixing the blue icing behind the Shreddies, Jennifer? Yes or no?

(*Jennifer confirms.*)

Did Andrea say to you, “What are you up to over there?” Or did anyone say to you, “What are you up to over there?”

And you said, “Heehee, heeheehee. You'll see.”

[00:35:23] **Jennifer:** No, I would just be clearly mixing it. The Shreddies weren't placed because of, you know, I'm hiding behind the Shreddies. They just happened to be there. And that's where I'm standing.

[00:35:31] **John Hodgman:** Now we have an element of true like she-said-she-said. Because one of you is not telling the truth. Andrea has experienced—says she's experienced you basically in a teasing way saying, “Oh, I don't know! I'm just up to something!” And making eye contact with her and waggling your eyebrows and being like, “You know what's coming. Here comes that water feature.” And you're saying that never happens, and it never would happen, and it never will happen. Which is true, Andrea?

[00:35:57] **Andrea:** I'd like to answer this by giving you another example of Jennifer's mischief, if that's okay.

[00:36:03] **John Hodgman:** I would love real mischief evidence. Yes.

[00:36:06] **Andrea:** So, recently Jennifer was going to go away on a holiday to Palm Springs with some other friends. And she—we were chatting, and she's like, “Hahaha, I'm gonna pack the bathing suit that Janna”—our other friend who's part of this group—“hates.” And we all know what she's talking about. And it's the fact that Janna gave Jennifer a bathing suit as kind of like a hand-me-down. And Jennifer now packs it on all vacations, because she knows that Janna wishes that she never gave it to her. Because it is old. Probably like wearing out in terms of the fabric. It's like purely just to like get her goat.

[00:36:58] **John Hodgman:** Let me understand this. Janna gave Jennifer a bathing suit a long time ago. Janna regrets that she gave Jennifer the bathing suit. Now it's been years, and Jennifer packs it and brings it on every group vacation just to get Janna's goat.

(Andrea confirms.)

And it's a bathing suit. Jennifer, we're moving from gingerbread pool action to real-time pool action. Are you a goat getter, yes or no?

[00:37:25] **Jennifer:** No! I actually like that bathing suit! It is like a nice halter top. It's reversible, so it can go with all the different colors. I used it for years.

[00:37:32] **John Hodgman:** I'm going back through the record here. And it says here, according to Andrea, you went “heh, heh, heh”. Is that an accurate quote? “Heh, heh, heh”?

[00:37:43] **Jennifer:** I might have giggled because—yes, at that point in time when I was talking to Andrea this year about the bathing suit, I had jokingly said that I would bring it to annoy Janna, because I was going on holidays with her. Which I didn't even do. It was just at this point in time, we all know the bathing suit is well past its prime. I just had a baby. I'm not going to be wearing that bathing suit anyway, 'cause it doesn't fit.

[00:38:03] **John Hodgman:** Getting your friend's goat—it's fun. Jesse, you remember all that time on tour when I would sing those Tom Waits songs?

[00:38:10] **Jesse Thorn:** At every single stop of the tour?

[00:38:13] **John Hodgman:** I got your goat, right?

[00:38:15] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, particularly when you would continue into a second verse.

[00:38:17] **John Hodgman:** I was getting your goat. It's fun. It's fun. I'm not saying that it's the right thing to do to friends. And I apologize, Jesse, if you ever felt like, “Ugh. He got my goat too many times. I'm done. I'm done with this goat getting.”

[00:38:30] **Jesse Thorn:** As long as you never put lettuce in my burritos.

[00:38:32] **John Hodgman:** It's something that happens between friends. People get their friends' goats. Are you unwilling to acknowledge that goat getting is fun, Jennifer, because you're afraid that if you admit, “Yeah, I'm getting her goat a little bit with this tradition of putting this pool in this thing that's lasted since we were kids,”—are you afraid that if you admit that, even in good faith, even just like it's just a joke, that I'm going to rule against you?

[00:38:56] **Jennifer:** No, no. And I'm not afraid of that at all. There is an element of it that is a tradition, and it's fun. What I am problematic here with is that Andrea says that I don't consult or that I'm doing this in a way that is insulting her refined tastes for these gingerbread houses. And that's just simply not true. So... yes, the pool is a bit of a funny thing, and it's a

long part of the tradition. But the fact is that all of the water features, we do consult. And they are done together. So, it's like this—is it mischievous? No. Is it funny? Yes. Is that fair to say?

[00:39:32] **John Hodgman:** Yes, that's absolutely fair to say. Does that make you feel any better, Andrea? I got her to admit to goat getting.

[00:39:40] **Andrea:** Yeah. I mean, I was thinking to myself what would it be if I actually tried to say, “Jen, no pool this year”? And I think that that would legitimately upset her.

[00:39:54] **John Hodgman:** Did that ever occur to you to say that to her?

[00:39:55] **Andrea:** I mean, there's certainly been theme ideas where a pool is—or a water feature is not like an inherent aspect of the design.

[00:40:05] **John Hodgman:** Sure. This year, as Commissioner of Gingerbread, I'm going to suggest a theme, which is gingerbread in a universe on a planet where there is no water. I mean, you have to admit that that would be a fairly passive-aggressive way to say to Jen, “Please, no water this year.”

[00:40:20] **Andrea:** Yeah. And I wouldn't—I don't think I would do that.

[00:40:24] **Jennifer:** No, and others wouldn't want you to do that either. Everybody likes it. The water feature is now a core part of what we do. And other people enjoy its presence. Other people create it and are part of it.

[00:40:36] **John Hodgman:** Andrea, you mentioned that the gingerbread house is something of a bit of a role reversal between you and Jennifer.

[00:40:45] **Andrea:** Yeah. I'm kind of like the chaotic, fly by the seat of my pants, don't really love to plan things. I'm not particularly good, frankly, at planning things. And Jennifer is usually like the over—she puts in energy and is good at getting people together and likes to make fun things happen.

[00:41:04] **John Hodgman:** And so, is this your—is gingerbread house night like your way to try to exert some control in the relationship? Because normally you let Jennifer control the social events?

[00:41:16] **Andrea:** Oh, good grief. Like, if Jennifer didn't control the social events, like none of them probably would ever happen.

[00:41:24] **John Hodgman:** Jennifer has said that it's not her intention to get your goat by making the pool; it's just part of the overall fun and that everything is working perfectly, and nothing should change. When Jennifer goes into her pool mischief, whatever her intent is, how does it make you feel?

[00:41:43] **Andrea:** It makes me feel like... this is a creative project. Jen is great at so many things. She's a much better cook than I am. She's, you know, got a lot of talents. And I am like the weirdy craft person of our group. And so, I guess I'm feeling like just let me be the weirdy craft person of the group.

[00:42:05] **John Hodgman:** Mm-hm. Jennifer, I noticed you nodded there. What's your reaction to that?

[00:42:11] **Jennifer:** My reaction to that is that I really feel like I have embraced your craft leadership during gingerbread, and I submitted many pieces of evidence that demonstrate that I missed you in the year that the Lazy River got a little out of control.

[00:42:28] **John Hodgman:** (*Snorts.*) That river could not have gotten lazier.

[00:42:31] **Jennifer:** At some point in time—we are a group of friends. We are now, you know, full of different expectations in our lives, and we can't necessarily spend as much time, energy, and resources in building, you know, your dream house.

[00:42:45] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, but she's willing to direct the whole thing, and you don't have to spend the time, energy, and resources. She's telling you, “Jennifer, you're on mortar. Do what I say, and everything's gonna be great. It's easy. Relax. I even brought along some eating candy for you.”

[00:43:02] **Andrea:** There's one other component about Jen's participation, if we're not getting too off track. So, it used to be that Jen would mix the mortar. And that used to be an important job. But again, we have over the years just like ditched the mortar altogether. We now glue gun the house together. So, really—(*laughs*).

[00:43:22] **John Hodgman:** Wow. The state of Canadian gingerbread crafting has really gone downhill since 1998.

[00:43:27] **Jennifer:** But I have no job anymore.

[00:43:28] **Andrea:** So, this is the thing is that Jen does not really participate very much, because she has just said like, “The pool is my thing.” And so, when she says it's like everybody is done, and it's her time to do the pool, it's that she's doing not much for the rest of the night other than she makes sure that the snacks are available.

[00:43:53] **Jennifer:** Would that be because I'm allowing you to do your thing? I don't—I mean, I'm not sure what you want me to do in this situation.

[00:43:59] **John Hodgman:** I have to confess, Andrea, I'm not sure either.

[00:44:02] **Andrea:** Well, Jen does not place candies. Jen does not participate in the other aspects, usually, of the house or the yard. Very much.

[00:44:15] **John Hodgman:** Do you want her to do more in the house than the yard but not make a pool?

[00:44:18] **Andrea:** No, the pool can exist now, but it's like the trajectory over time has been that because she's saving up for this like grand finale when she decides that everybody else is done, everybody else is busily working according to their role. (*Chuckles.*)

(John encourages her.)

And she is I guess just at some point maybe getting like frustrated, because she does want to participate, but she hasn't been doing it in another way. So, that's when the pool comes in.

[00:44:50] **John Hodgman:** So, if I understand correctly, everyone is working according to their role in the grand scheme of Andrea. Jennifer is sort of refreshing drinks and hanging around the margins. And then as it gets close to being done, Jennifer then leaps in and goes, "Time to get in the pool." And makes the pool and throws it on there.

[00:45:13] **Jennifer:** Not throws it on there.

(John corrects himself to "places it".)

We say, "It's pool time." And then most of us are involved in getting the pool onto the property. Even the year that I'm not there, pool shows up. People are participating. It's not like I just come and throw down a pool without anybody else's input. Other people are mixing icing. They're participating. You're telling me maybe place it over here. Why don't we add ice crystals on it this year? This year, can we make it white and sprinkle ice crystals on, and it's a skating pond? Sure. I go with it.

[00:45:47] **John Hodgman:** And is the pool the grace note, the end of the gingerbread making typically?

[00:45:54] **Jennifer:** Yeah, it usually is. It's usually when it's kind of time for this part of the crafting to come to a close. And I would say that most people are ready at this time. Maybe, Andrea, you might not be, and you would continue on with more effective placements of trinkets around the property. But at this point in time, we're all ready to just spend time together. And—

[00:46:23] **John Hodgman:** You're trying to wrap it up.

[00:46:24] **Jennifer:** Yeah, I think it's time at that point, and the pool serves a nice purpose.

[00:46:27] **John Hodgman:** Without the intervention of the pool, Andrea and her minions would be stuck doing this until two o'clock in the morning. Andrea is a perfectionist who can never be satisfied.

[00:46:37] **Jennifer:** Not never satisfied. Andrea has a great vision, and she wants to ensure that it comes together in a beautiful way. But I think if she were left to her own devices, she could gingerbread until well into, you know, past midnight.

[00:46:52] **John Hodgman:** Gingerbread 'til dawn.

Andrea, we're recording in November. Holiday time is coming up. I don't know when Canada celebrates these holidays. But you know, what's the theme going to be this year?

[00:47:05] **Andrea:** Right now, the one that has been put forward is kind of like a—it's actually just a twist on a traditional color theme. It's pink and then candy cane red, white, and bright green. So, I would say in that context, a Smurf blue pool would clash.

(Jennifer agrees.)

[00:47:22] **John Hodgman:** So, what color will the pool be this year, Jennifer?

[00:47:28] **Jennifer:** If it's pink? I mean, I would say it would have to either be some sort of lighter blue or maybe a really dark blue. I don't know. I would look to Andrea's leadership to advise on sort of the color palette.

[00:47:40] **John Hodgman:** You understand she's made this thing pink in order to make a pool impossible to begin with.

[00:47:43] **Jennifer:** And she might be. And then we might end up with, you know, a white water feature crystallized again, you know?

(John snorts a laugh.)

I mean, I'm open minded to these things. You can see I'm submitting ideas to do gingerbread farms and things. Just maybe when we have more time, like when we're retired. We can, you know, really run at it. But you know, right now we've got to keep things within reasonable means.

[00:48:02] **John Hodgman:** Do you want there to be a water feature in your Barbie themed gingerbread house this year? Yes or no, Andrea?

[00:48:10] **Andrea:** I begrudgingly accept that the water feature is always going to be part of the landscape in some way, shape, or form. I'm not trying to kibosh the existence of the water feature.

[00:48:24] **John Hodgman:** So, if I were to rule in your favor, Jennifer, you want me to change nothing. According to you, it says everything is working beautifully as it is, correct?

[00:48:35] **Jennifer:** Yeah. I think we have a beautiful tradition, a wonderful group of friends, lovely leadership on vision by Andrea, and a pool that goes with the flow, per se.

[00:48:43] **John Hodgman:** And Andrea, you want me to order Jennifer to admit that she's getting your goat—which I think we sort of halfway did already. I'm not sure whether that was to your satisfaction.

[00:48:57] **Andrea:** No, it wasn't. But it was like a “sorry, not sorry”, kind of a situation. But sure.

[00:49:03] **John Hodgman:** Right. Sorry, not sorry. And to consult more about what the pool is going to be?

[00:49:10] **Andrea:** Yes, I want the order to be that she admits that at least in part she does it to annoy me and that in all future years, until we are dead, that she has to consult with me as to the color, placement, and style of the water feature on the property.

[00:49:36] **John Hodgman:** I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to go into my chambers. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

[00:49:42] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

Andrea, how are you feeling about your chances right now?

[00:49:49] **Andrea:** I'm feeling like at least one of those two orders will be made. I feel like if it's not the accepting of mischief, then there's no basis not to order the second order and vice versa. So, I think I'm at least one out of two.

[00:50:10] **Jesse Thorn:** While I don't follow your flowchart, I appreciate your thoughts. Jennifer, how are you feeling?

[00:50:18] **Jennifer:** I'm feeling good. I mean, I think we've demonstrated how much fun we have on a holiday tradition. And I think it's just going to keep on keeping on.

[00:50:28] **Jesse Thorn:** We'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this when we come back in just a moment.

[00:50:33] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:50:35] **Promo:**

Sequoia Holmes: If you're Black, you probably love you some Paramore, huh? Or what about the TV show *Golden Girls*? Ginger Ale? Daytime television? Don't lie, I know you love at least one of them.

(Rock music fades in.)

I'm Sequoia Holmes, pop culturist and host of *Black People Love Paramore*. Contrary to the title, it is not a podcast about the band Paramore. Each episode, I—along with the special guest cohost—dissect one pop culture topic that mainstream media doesn't necessarily associate with Black people, but we know we like. Tune in every other Thursday to the podcast that's dedicated to helping Black people feel more seen.

(Music fades out.)

Speaker: *Black People Love Paramore* is now on the Maximum Fun network. Check out the most recent episode, featuring Shar Jossell, today!

[00:51:16] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:51:20] **Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, the Van Freaks Roadshow End of the Road Grand Finale Stream is now available to everyone at any moment.

[00:51:31] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. I just want to say thank you again to everyone who joined us on the Van Freaks Roadshow, including our End of the Road livestream last Saturday. It was so great to spend time online with you as we all watched it together. That livestream is still available, but it won't be forever. It's an exclusive couple of weeks for you to get it, so you can still check it out at VanFreaksRoadshow.com.

[00:51:52] **Jesse Thorn:** I watched it with my family—by which I mean, I watched it while my family drifted in and out of the room looking at me contemptuously and wondering why I'm watching myself on the television.

(John laughs.)

And it was a great time. I was so—it's such a gorgeous show, like so beautifully put together, you know, televisually. I also enjoyed the content. And I think everybody is going to have a great time checking out our backstage antics and video that you couldn't see even if you were there live in person and all kinds of stuff. It's so cool. VanFreaksRoadshow.com is where you can find it.

[00:52:30] **John Hodgman:** VanFreaksRoadshow.com. And of course, we'd be remiss if we didn't tell you tickets are now on sale for SF SketchFest. That stands for San Francisco SketchFest, the greatest comedy festival in the country as far as I'm concerned. SFSketchfest.com is your URL for our tickets and all of the great events coming up in January and February 2024 for SF SketchFest. So, get tickets for our shows and all the others as soon as you can. They make a great holiday gift. Wink, wink.

[00:53:01] **Jesse Thorn:** That's VanFreaksRoadshow.com to buy those stream tickets. It is a great time. I promise you. Let's get back to the case.

[00:53:08] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:53:10] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

[00:53:15] **John Hodgman:** So, Jennifer, you said one thing that really resonated with me. When you were talking about getting together with your friends to make the gingerbread house, and you're like, "At a certain point, everyone's just kind of done." Like, it starts out with great precision, and everyone's playing their roles and mixing their mortar. And at some point, something else takes over, and it's like, "Oh, we're all friends here together in a kitchen. Let's just have fun, forget about this ginger house, gingerbread house."

And I flashed back—and this is not a one-to-one correspondence, but I really felt that sense of transition of like this detail work isn't fun anymore. I was in 7th grade or whatever, and we were doing *Johnny Tremain*, and it was like talking about pre-1776 America. And for a project, I decided I was going to make a scale model out of plasticine of Boston Harbor in like 1774 or whatever. And this was a wildly ambitious project that I was not in any way capable of doing. And I spent so much time trying to create the Boston Harbor out of blue plasticine. And then at one point I was just done with this thing, and I decided it just had to be finished.

So, I took a little action figure—an original 1977 Kenner action figure of Yoda—and put him in Boston Harbor in front of an art easel and had him painting a picture. I was done. I don't know what grade I got on that. And really that was more of desperation than like, "Let's have fun!" I was just like, "I gotta put a capper on this! How do I—what's the button on this joke? Yoda? Okay, done." And there is a certain amount of wisdom whenever you're organizing a friendly get together of when to impose structure to get people talking and having fun—whether that's making them run a relay race or putting someone on mortar duty and putting another person on marzipan chimney duty or whatever, like getting it going—and then knowing when it's launched, and it just has to go into a different direction.

And you know, when you are in command, heavy lies the head of the Gingerbread House Commissioner. And I know that you know, Andrea, that the mission is to have fun together as friends. It has been since you were teenagers. The mission is not to create a perfect gingerbread house. The mission is to have a good time together. And it is hard when you're anxious about whether people are having a good time to then surrender and realize, "Okay, it's time to let go. Because everyone's just going to do whatever they're going to do." And there's no fun in forcing people at that point. "No! I told you! You're on artificial grass."

Now, from Jennifer's point of view, she's trying to teach you this object lesson in an extremely roundabout and symbolic way of forcing this water feature into your gingerbread house every time, time after time. And look, you two are very good friends. You care about each other an awful lot. You've been together through a lot of stuff. You're Cinnabonarians together. And it's clear that you have incredible, deep love and affection for each other. And I see it because of the way that you handle each other with such kindness and Canadian dancing around the issue. "I just think that maybe instead of telling Jennifer how I feel, I'll say something very oblique, like I'm not sure that it's servicing the event properly."

(They laugh.)

Very, very, very kind and gentle with each other. Because there is something that's happening here that I think needs to be acknowledged. I think it needs to be acknowledged by Jennifer. Which is this: Andrea is saying, "Just let me have my thing. I just really want to—I just really want to make this thing."

And you're saying towards the end of the thing, "Mm. Now it's my time. Pool time! Not your thing anymore. I'm taking—I'm going to do this pool." And not only that, what you call collaboration is you getting all of your other friends to make the pool with you. And I'm not sure Andrea feels great about that. I talked about how much fun it was to get Jesse's goat by singing Tom Waits to him. And it is fun, but perhaps the reason you don't want to admit that you're getting Andrea's goat is that you know that goat getting—it's a little bit of like, "I'm doing this thing to annoy my friend, because it's funny."

And in some ways—and there are lots of people who say, "That's how we always showed affection to our family. We called each other terrible names!" Or whatever it is. Like, in some ways, teasing is a form of affection, but you gotta be attuned to when it turns into something else. Yeah, I'm jokingly telling you I don't like this. Yeah, well, I'm jokingly doing it anyway! When you have to realize nobody's joking. It's like I don't like this, but you're doing it anyway. Please stop.

So, water feature is not something that I always picture in a gingerbread house. Now I'm not sure I'll ever be able to see a gingerbread house without one. Now that I've seen the water feature gingerbread houses of British Columbia. And I do believe that it is entwined now in the tradition of making the gingerbread house together, the ginger session. But I also believe that you need to acknowledge, Jennifer—and maybe you will or maybe you won't. Maybe I can't order you to do this, but from my point of view, what it sounds like is at that point where everyone's a little bit tired of making the gingerbread house, instead of letting everyone have fun, you're taking over the fun. And you're making this pool, and Andrea doesn't like it. And you need to acknowledge that she doesn't like it. She doesn't love it when you make that pool.

This isn't to say you shouldn't ever make one, but what I think should happen going forward—whether you acknowledge that or not—is that, Andrea, you hold space in your heart and mind and on the gingerbread property that there will be a pool there. In fact, they say about neighbors, and sometimes friends, is that fences make the best ones of them. I think that there should—you should create an easement upon the gingerbread board property that will always be dedicated to the water feature, so that you, Andrea, can make and create the gingerbread house that you want. But then in the land next door, of Jennifer, there will always be some bananas water feature that she's got to put in there. And to let her have that and to let her build it into the process so that you don't feel that you're getting run over by this marzipan hot tub but in fact are making space for it, so that she can do her thing and you can do your thing.

My order is also very clear that, Jennifer, I need to remind you of settled law here in the court of Judge John Hodgman. It's not fun unless it's fun for everyone. And if you can sense that Andrea is not having fun with the water feature, maybe you don't have to do it that year.

There will always be a corner of gingerbread land for your water feature. But it's not an obligation. This is the sound of a gavel.

[01:01:10] **Clip:**

Lord Farquaad (*Shrek*): Run, run, run as fast as you can. You can't catch me, I'm the GINGERBREAD MAN!

[01:01:08] **John Hodgman:** Judge John Hodgman rules that is all.

(Heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

[01:01:13] **John Hodgman:** Andrea, are you feeling?

[01:01:16] **Andrea:** I'm feeling alright about this, because really it means that there will just be like a hived off extra side property that can be like detached afterwards maybe. So, this actually works for me.

[01:01:29] **Jesse Thorn:** Jennifer, how do you feel?

[01:01:31] **Jennifer:** I feel like it seems reasonable.

[01:01:34] **Jesse Thorn:** Were you prepared for your water feature to be detachable?

[01:01:37] **Jennifer:** I mean, I'm prepared to go with the flow (*laughs*) of being a detachable water feature. And I, you know, definitely want to ensure that people are having fun, and if they aren't, that—you know—this water feature wouldn't be the cause of that.

[01:01:53] **Jesse Thorn:** Would you say that going with the flow is a necessary part of being a water feature enthusiast?

(Jennifer confirms.)

Jennifer, Andrea, thanks so much for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[01:02:05] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[01:02:07] **Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We'll have Swift Justice in just a moment. First, our thanks to Redditor JustLooking0209 for naming this week's episode "Personal Gingery Lawyer". You can join the conversation on Reddit. It's at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun) in the MaxFun subreddit. We ask for our title suggestions there. It's always a good time. Evidence and photos from the show posted on our Instagram account at [Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). You can check out that just totally bananas chaos house with the Santa Claus door.

(John laughs.)

Judge John Hodgman was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode engineered by Alexis K. at Blue Light Studio in Vancouver, British Columbia. Our editor this week is A.J. McKeon. Marie Bardi-Salinas runs our social media. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor.

Now, Swift Justice. Small disputes, quick judgment. Kirk says, “Sometimes humans need to walk by themselves. My dog, Goat, thinks that humans always need a furry friend.”

[01:03:16] **John Hodgman:** Oh, I missed the “my dog” part for a minute. I just thought he had a goat.

[01:03:22] **Jesse Thorn:** *(Laughs.)* It was like a “Mary had a Little Lamb” situation, but it's a grown man and a goat?

[01:03:26] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, speaking about getting goats, Jesse, I literally have thought a lot about getting a goat.

[01:03:31] **Jesse Thorn:** I'd love to have a goat.

[01:03:32] **John Hodgman:** Wouldn't that be astounding?

[01:03:35] **Jesse Thorn:** They're not very friendly, but they are the most amusing of all the domesticated creatures. Sideways eyes, eat tin cans.

[01:03:44] **John Hodgman:** Goat's a pretty good name for a dog, Kirk. And I understand, though I do not love the image of you saying to your dog, “Sometimes humans just want to walk by themselves!”

[01:03:56] **Jesse Thorn:** *(Laughs.)* “God, dog!”

[01:03:59] **John Hodgman:** That would hurt Goat's feelings terribly.

[01:04:02] **Jesse Thorn:** Oh my gosh, dog!

[01:04:04] **John Hodgman:** But what you're saying is true. We need social time, and we need alone time, even if you're a dog, and even if you're Kirk. Sorry, Goat, but take a break. You get to go on a walk a little later on.

Hey, listen, I know it's just November, but time moves in one direction. We're all hurtling towards our destiny. So, let's start thinking about spring break! I'm thinking about it already. And all of your group travel disputes. Who in your friend group always gets the good room in the vacation rental? And why do they deserve it? Does your sibling expect you to babysit their kids on your annual theme park trip? How dare they? What's the worst thing you've ever seen someone do at Myrtle Beach? Any kind of group tour, girls or guys getaway, family

reunion, Joco Cruise? Let's hear about your group travel crimes at MaximumFun.org/jjho. And of course, we want to hear everything. Right, Jesse?

[01:04:53] **Jesse Thorn:** Any dispute. None too big, none too small. It's how our show works, and we're very grateful to every single person who submits a dispute of any kind. We talked to some of our litigants the other day in the chat of our live show. And a few people said like, "I wasn't sure if I should submit a case. And then I heard that you really need cases. And I—" And these were some of the best cases we've ever had. So, don't prejudge! If you've got a case, MaximumFun.org/jjho. We love to see them. Big, small, we judge them all. As we like to say.

[01:05:31] **John Hodgman:** Don't prejudge. That's my job! Send them in! MaximumFun.org/jjho.

[01:05:37] **Jesse Thorn:** We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[01:05:40] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[01:05:42] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[01:05:43] **Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

[01:05:44] **Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

[01:05:46] **Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

[01:05:47] **Speaker 4:** Supported—

[01:05:48] **Speaker 5:** —directly—

[01:05:50] **Speaker 6:** —by you!