

GASTON\_GOT\_JURY\_DUTY

S.G



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[BONUS\_CONTENT] edition [2026]

# THE ARCHIVE:

Hey, Babes!

Welcome to this week's edition of "The Archive," where we roll out the welcome mat, pour you a tall glass of sweet tea, and invite you to savor some adult because us material cooked up just for the faithful readers.

So, settle in, enjoy this exclusive treat, and keep your eyes peeled for even sweeter surprises coming your way in the next editions. A little mischief makes life interesting.

**Lots of love & a little spite.**

**S.G**



# GASTON

## LET'S TALK ABOUT CIVIC FUCKING DUTY.

It sounds noble, right?

That is, until the universe picks your name out of the hat and suddenly you're the sacrificial lamb, dragged from your cozy Tuesday morning into a torture chamber full of splintery wooden chairs that have seen more butts than a public pool and probably haven't been updated since the dinosaurs got jury duty.

Picture me:

On time, Hallway outside Courtroom B, clutching my crumpled summons in one hand and a full pecan pie in the other, like some deranged Southern Mary Poppins.

I swiped it from Maribelle's this morning, convinced jury duty is just code for 'snack time with a side of people-watching.'

I'm ready to judge parking violations and questionable fashion choices, not, you know, actually do anything important. My only real civic goal was to not spill pie on my shirt before 10 a.m.

Except now I'm walking through the courtroom doors,

Adrian Fontenot is sitting up there on the judge's bench like some kind of tattooed avenging angel in black robes, and I can see the exact moment he clocks me walking in because his mouth does this thing, this tiny twitch at the corner that could be a smile or could be him planning my demise, you can never really tell with Adrian.

“Sheriff Guidry,” he says, voice carrying across the courtroom with that particular deadpan authority that makes grown men confess to crimes they didn't commit. “How delightful to see you've answered your civic summons. Please take a seat in the jury box.”

“Your Honor,” I say,

*because what the hell else am I supposed to call him when he's up there in his judgy bitch chair, and I'm down here holding a pie like an idiot? Apparently, I'm just supposed to pretend I haven't seen the same man do a legendary kegstand.*

“I feel like there might be a conflict of interest here. I'm law enforcement, and you're, well, you.”

“Your concern is noted and overruled. Jury box. Now.”

I shuffle over, trying to figure out how to sit down while holding an entire goddamn pie without making it obvious that I brought an entire goddamn pie to jury duty.

I squeeze into the second row between a woman who smells like cigarettes and regret and a guy in a Saints jersey who's already asleep, and I set the Tupperware on my lap real casual-like,

trying to angle it so Adrian can't see it from up there on his throne of judgment.

*Except Adrian sees everything.*

*That's his whole thing.*

*That's why he's terrifying.*

He's looking at me right now with those dark eyes that have seen some shit, literally, we've both see some shit together, usually at three in the morning when someone's done something spectacularly stupid, and there's this moment where we're just staring at each other across the courtroom, and I know he knows about the pie.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,” Adrian begins, leaning back in his chair with his hands folded, as if he's about to deliver a profound sermon or perhaps a death sentence.

*It's hard to read him when he has his serious face on. Why does he seem so intimidating like this?*

“Welcome to the justice system. You are here because your names were randomly selected from voter registration records, which means you've already demonstrated more civic engagement than sixty percent of the population. Congratulations.”

“Today's case involves a dispute over property boundaries, which sounds boring as hell and will probably be boring as hell, but that's the beauty of jury duty—you don't get to choose the

entertainment. You just have to sit there and pay attention and pretend you understand what an easement is.”

I’m biting my tongue so I don’t cackle, because this is Adrian unleashed—barely holding it together under all that judge-speak. Meanwhile, my lap is turning into a pecan-scented sauna. The pie is calling to me like a siren, except Odysseus never had to resist dessert. I want to eat it so bad it’s basically a medical emergency at this point.

“Now,” Adrian continues, “I’m going to explain your duties as jurors. You are to listen to the evidence presented. You are to weigh the credibility of witnesses. You are not—” and here his eyes cut directly to me, “—to bring outside food into my courtroom, Sheriff Guidry, because this is a place of law and order, not a damn potluck.”

The cigarette lady next to me turns to look at my lap, where the Tupperware is clearly visible now that Adrian’s called me out, and I can feel my face getting hot.

*I fucking goddamn hate it here.*

“Your Honor, this is a medical necessity,” I say, which is a lie but also kind of true because if I don’t eat something every few hours, I get cranky and nobody wants a cranky sheriff on their jury. “Low blood sugar. Doctor’s orders.”

“Your doctor ordered you to bring pie to jury duty.”

“Pecan pie specifically. It’s got protein. Nuts are a source of protein. In fact, there are three grams of protein per one ounce of pecans.”

*Just ignore the three cups of sugar.*

Adrian stares at me for a long moment, and I can see him fighting the urge to either laugh or hold me in contempt, possibly both.

“The pie stays closed until lunch recess,” Adrian finally says. “If I see you so much as crack that lid open during testimony, I will hold you in contempt, and you will spend the night in your own jail, which I imagine would be awkward for everyone involved.”

“Yes, Your Honor.”

“Good. Now, as I was saying before, I was interrupted by baked goods—”

There’s that edge in his voice—that sardonic bite that makes him sound two seconds away from either brilliant insight or complete chaos.

“—You are to remain impartial. You are to base your verdict solely on the evidence presented in this courtroom. You are not to discuss the case with anyone outside this room, including—” another pointed look at me, “—your drinking buddies, your poker group, or whatever group chat you, people have going where you share memes about municipal ordinances.”

*I do have a group chat like that.*

*Adrian's in it.*

*He sent a zoning law meme last week.*

The bailiff calls the first witness, and I settle back against the wooden bench, the Tupperware warm and heavy on my lap, and I catch Adrian's eye one more time.

He's got this look on his face, professional, authoritative, completely in control, but I can see the corner of his mouth twitching again, and I know we're both thinking the same thing:

This is the most ridiculous goddamn Tuesday either of us has had in months, and we've had some pretty ridiculous Tuesdays.

I am absolutely demolishing this pie at lunch, out of pure spite.

Who does Adrian think he is, the Pie Police? Not on my watch.



**THREE HOURS LATER,**

I'm pretty sure I'm dying.

Not like dramatic dying, not like gunshot-wound-bleeding-out dying, but the slow, soul-crushing death that comes from listening to a man in a beige suit explain, for the fourth time, the difference between an easement and a right-of-way for the fourth goddamn time while sitting on a wooden bench that was apparently designed by someone who hated the human spine.

The witness, some surveyor named Dale who looks like he's never had a fun day in his entire life, is currently pointing at a map with a laser pointer, and he keeps saying "well, actually" before every single sentence, like he's preparing to teach a graduate seminar in Suffering. By the third 'well, actually,' my left eyelid starts to twitch.

"Well, actually, if you look at the 1987 property assessment—"

If Dale says 'well, actually' one more time, I'm going to fake my own death and haunt this courthouse, forever whispering zoning laws through the vents.

I'm going to stand up in this courtroom and scream until someone tackles me or Adrian holds me in contempt or possibly both, and honestly, either option sounds better than listening to Dale talk about property assessments.

The pie on my lap has gone from pleasantly warm to uncomfortably hot, and I can feel the heat seeping through the Tupperware into my thighs, and the smell, Jesus Christ, the smell of butter and pecans and sugar is filling my nostrils and making my

stomach growl so loud that the cigarette lady next to me keeps shooting me dirty looks like I'm doing it on purpose.

I swear I'm not doing it on purpose. My body has just decided to wage war against the entire concept of civic responsibility.

Saints jersey guy is fully asleep now, head tilted back, mouth open, making these little snoring sounds that would be funny if I weren't so jealous of his ability to escape this hell through unconsciousness.

There's a woman in the front row who's staring at the wall with the kind of thousand-yard stare I usually only see on people who've witnessed actual crimes, and the guy next to her is doing that thing where you're technically awake, but your soul has left your body and is probably somewhere better, like getting a root canal or filing taxes.

The fluorescent lights overhead are humming with this persistent buzz that's drilling into my skull, and someone, I don't know who, could be anyone at this point, keeps coughing these dry, sad little coughs that sound like they've given up on life.

I shift in my seat trying to find a position that doesn't make my ass feel like it's been beaten with a hammer, and the Tupperware slides a little on my lap and I have to grab it quick before it falls, and Adrian's eyes flick to me from up on the bench and there's this moment where I can see him fighting not to react, fighting to maintain that perfect judicial composure while Dale drones on about "the northeastern boundary marker as established in the original land grant."

“Well, actually,” Dale says again, and I swear to God I see Adrian’s jaw tighten just a fraction, just enough to know that he’s suffering too, that behind that black robe and that position of authority, he’s just as trapped in this purgatory as the rest of us, except he has to pretend to care.

The defendant’s lawyer, some woman in a gray pantsuit who looks like she’s regretting every decision that led her to law school—is taking notes, but her pen hasn’t moved in like ten minutes, she’s just holding it against the paper like she’s forgotten how writing works.

The bailiff is standing by the door, looking like he’s contemplating a career change.

The court reporter’s fingers are moving on her little machine, but her eyes are glazed over like she’s transcribing in her sleep.

We’re all perishing together, comrades in misery. This is how civilization crumbles, not with a bang, but with Dale droning on about property lines until we all turn to dust. At this rate, the court reporter is going to start typing 'Zzzzz' just to keep things honest.

I try to take a sip from the water cup they gave us, but it tastes like sadness, plastic, and possibly the tears of everyone who’s ever sat in this jury box before me. I set it back down and stare at the clock on the wall, which has definitely stopped moving, time has ceased to function in this courtroom.

My back hurts.

My ass hurts.

My brain hurts from trying to care about whether the fence line was established in 1987 or 1989 and what that means for the current property dispute, which I still don't fully understand and honestly don't want to.

*The pie is torturously warm.*

*I could just crack the lid a little, just enough to—*

Adrian clears his throat, and I look up and he's staring directly at me with those dark eyes that say 'don't you fucking dare', and I hate him a little bit in this moment, hate him for being up there in his position of power while I'm down here slowly losing my mind, hate him for the fact that he gets to call lunch recess whenever he wants and he's choosing to let this continue.

"Mr. Dale," Adrian says, his voice calm and warm, cutting through the surveyor's explanation with a gentleness that's somehow more commanding than anger. His smile is genuine and patient. which does *not* match the look in his eye, "I want to thank you for your detailed explanation.

Your expertise is evident, and I know the jury appreciates your commitment to clarity. However, in the interest of everyone's time—and lunch—I'd be grateful if you could summarize your key point for us. We certainly don't want your knowledge to go to waste, but we also don't want to test anyone's endurance more than necessary."

“Well, actually, Your Honor, I think it’s important to establish—”

“I’m sure you do.” Adrian leans forward, his expression nothing but gracious. “Your attention to detail is admirable, Mr. Dale. But it is now 11:47, and I suspect the jury, and perhaps even yourself, might appreciate a pause for lunch. Let’s take a break and return refreshed, so we can give your testimony the focus it deserves.”

His eyes flick to me for just a second.

“We’ll reconvene at 1:30. Court is in recess.”

The gavel comes down, and it’s like someone’s opened the gates of heaven, like we’ve all been granted a pardon from death row, and the entire courtroom exhales as one collective sigh of relief so powerful it could probably generate electricity.

Saints jersey guy jerks awake.

The cigarette lady is cracking her neck.

The woman with the thousand-yard stare blinks like she’s returning to her body from some distant astral plane.

I’m up and moving before anyone else, pie clutched to my chest like a football, making a beeline for Adrian’s chambers because we need to have words about this whole “lunch recess” situation, and also I need to eat this goddamn pie in a place where Dale the surveyor can’t see me and judge me for my life choices.

Adrian's already at the door to his chambers, black robe swishing behind him like some kind of legal superhero, and I'm right on his heels.

"Adrian, we gotta talk—"

"No." He steps into the doorway and turns, one hand on the door, blocking my path like a bouncer at the world's most boring nightclub.

"Come on, man, just let me—"

"Absolutely not."

"I just need five minutes—"

"You need to go eat your pie somewhere that isn't my chambers."

I try to step around him to the left, but he shifts with me, still holding the door. "This is ridiculous, I'm a sheriff, I have authority—"

"Not in my courtroom, you don't." He's got that deadpan expression on his face, the one that says he's enjoying this way too much. "Go eat in the hallway like everyone else."

"The hallway smells like sadness and floor wax." I feint right, and he blocks me again, and now we're basically dancing in the doorway, and I'm still holding this damn pie.

"Your chambers have air conditioning and probably a chair that doesn't hate my spine. Also, zero chance of Dale popping in to explain boundary markers."

"My chambers are for judges. You're a juror. There's a hierarchy."

"There's a friendship!" I grab the edge of the door and try to pull it open wider, and Adrian pulls back, and for a solid ten seconds, we're just standing there in a tug-of-war over a door like we're five years old fighting over a toy truck.

"Let go of my door, Gaston."

"Let me in your chambers, Adrian."

"No."

"Yes."

"This is beneath you."

"This is beneath both of us, and yet here we are—locked in mortal combat over the fate of *MY* pie."

I'm pulling on the door, and he's pulling back, and the pie is somehow still balanced in my other arm, and I can hear people in the courtroom behind us, probably watching this whole thing unfold like it's dinner theater.

"You're making a scene," Adrian says, under his breath, not even breathing hard, which is annoying because I'm definitely breathing hard.

"You started it with your 'no pie until lunch' bullshit!"

"I'm maintaining courtroom decorum."

"You're being a fucking dick!"

"I'm being a judge." He yanks the door hard enough that I stumble forward a step, and then he's stepping back into his chambers and starting to close the door. "Go eat your pie, Sheriff. Somewhere else."

"This isn't over!" I whisper and yell at the closing door.

"Yes, it is," his voice echoes through the wood, muffled yet somehow still laced with mocking humor.

"Court reconvenes at 1:30. Don't be late."

The door clicks shut. I'm left in the empty courtroom, breathing hard, clutching my pie like it's my emotional support animal.

Through the wood, I can hear Adrian laughing, the laughter of a man who knows he's won this round of "Who's really in charge?"

Where's the goddamn fire alarm?