

FADE IN:

(JUDGE JUDY THEME PLAYING)

[Narrator]

You are about to enter the courtroom of Judge Judith Scheindlin. The people are real. The cases are real. The rulings are final. This is Judge Judy!

Terésa Cullen is suing her former boyfriend, 26 year old Steven Bonnell, for the costs of having her car towed and car keys replaced after she ended the relationship with him. Mr. Bonnell is countersuing for defamation of character.

[Officer Byrd]

Order. All rise.

It's case number 69 on the calendar in the matter of Cullen versus Bonnell.

[Judge Judy]

Thank you.

[Officer Byrd]

You're welcome Judge. Parties have been sworn in. You may be seated. Why don't you folks have a seat?

[Judge Judy]

(Looks at Ms. Cullen)

Ms. Cullen, are you chewing gum in my courtroom?

[Audience]

(Laughs)

[Ms. Cullen]

(Giggles)

I am your honor, I apologize.

[Judge Judy]

Mr. Byrd, can you give this napkin to Ms. Cullen so she can dispose of her chewing gum?

(Points at watch)

Ms. Cullen it has been a very long day already and I don't like people wasting my time. Now before we start with this case I have a question for Mr. Bonnell.

Mr. Bonnell, why are you wearing a coat in my courtroom?

[Mr. Bonnell]

My apologies your honor, this is both an indoor and outdoor coat. I wear it indoors all the time.

[Judge Judy]

I don't care, this is a courtroom not an evening party, take it off.

[Mr. Bonnell]

(Takes off coat)

I'm sorry your honor, I will take it off.

[Judge Judy]

Ms. Cullen the defendant is your former boyfriend, is that correct?

[Ms. Cullen]

Yes, your honor, that is correct.

[Judge Judy]

It is your claim that the defendant threw away your car key after you ended the relationship with him last December. You subsequently had to have the car towed to the dealership for replacing your car key.

[Ms. Cullen]

Yeah.

[Judge Judy]

Yes?

[Ms. Cullen]

Yes, your honor.

[Judge Judy]

Why would Mr. Bonnell be responsible for you losing your car key?

[Ms. Cullen]

Basically we were having problems with our relationship.

[Judge Judy]

(Cuts off Ms. Cullen)

I'm not interested in your relationship difficulties Ms. Cullen. Why didn't you have a spare key for your car?

[Ms. Cullen]

I lost my spare key a while ago your honor.

[Judge Judy]

On what date did you first notice your car keys were missing.

[Ms. Cullen]

Uhm, I believe it was on a Friday somewhere before Christmas last year.

[Judge Judy]

Ms. Cullen and I am not interested in what you believe. On what date did you notice the car key had gone missing? Be specific.

[Ms. Cullen]

To my recollection it was on a Friday mid-December. It must have been December 12.

[Judge Judy]

Explain to me why Mr. Bonnell is responsible for the costs of having your car key replaced.

[Ms. Cullen]

Your honor, like, after I got home on Friday I put my keys on the kitchen table as usual. There were, like, other items on the table also.

[Judge Judy]

(Cuts off Ms. Cullen)

Stop saying "like" Ms. Cullen, it's a filler word just as "basically" and "you know". Stop doing that, it's annoying.

[Ms. Cullen]

I'm sorry your honor. As I was saying I put my keys on top of the other items. At some point after that Mr. Bonnell threw away those items and my keys also.

[Judge Judy]

You put your keys on top of other items that were later thrown into the trash bin by Mr. Bonnell.

[Ms. Cullen]

Well I didn't know it was trash your honor. But Mr. Bonnell would have seen my keys. It was a very large bundle of keys with a large key chain. He threw them away because he was mad at me for ending the relationship earlier that week.

[Judge Judy]

Nonsense Ms. Cullen. How old are you?

[Ms. Cullen]

I am 24 your honor.

[Judge Judy]

Old enough to know that you're supposed to put your keys in a safe place so you don't lose them.

Ms. Cullen, I want to paint a picture in my mind of your situation. What do you currently do?

[Ms. Cullen]

I recently moved back in with my parents your honor. I am looking for a job.

[Judge Judy]

So you do nothing. Do your parents support you now?

[Ms. Cullen]

Yes, your honor.

[Judge Judy]

According to your information you moved in with the defendant in August of 2014 and left in January of 2015. Is this correct?

[Ms. Cullen]

Yes.

[Judge Judy]

You moved all the way from Florida to Nebraska to move in with Mr. Bonnell?

[Ms. Cullen]

Yes, your honor.

[Judge Judy]

Did you pay rent or in any other way contribute financially to the house hold?

[Ms. Cullen]

No your honor, not right away.

[Judge Judy]

Did you get a job?

[Ms. Cullen]

I got a job two months after.

[Judge Judy]

What kind of work did you do?

[Ms. Cullen]

I was a part-time sales associate at a clothing store.

[Judge Judy]

For entire duration of your stay at Mr. Bonnell did you pay any rent or any of the utilities?

[Ms. Cullen]

No, your honor.

[Judge Judy]

So Mr. Bonnell supported you for 6 months.

[Ms. Cullen]

(Mumbling)

Yeah.

[Judge Judy]

(Raises voice)

Speak up!

[Ms. Cullen]

Yes.

[Judge Judy]

You believe Mr. Bonnell threw away your keys on purpose because he was angry at you for breaking up with him?

[Ms. Cullen]

Yes, your honor.

[Judge Judy]

Ms. Cullen, so far I'm having a difficult time believing your story. Why did you end the relationship with the defendant?

[Ms. Cullen]

I found out he was talking with his ex-girlfriend your honor. She wanted to get back together with him.

[Judge Judy]

How exactly did you get this information?

[Ms. Cullen]

Uhm.

[Judge Judy]

(Slams hand on desk)

UHM IS NOT AN ANSWER MS. CULLEN!

[Ms. Cullen]

(Pauses)

I read an e-mail conversation between Mr. Bonnell and his ex-girlfriend.

[Judge Judy]

Where did you read this conversation Ms. Cullen?

[Ms. Cullen]

(Looks at the ground)

[Judge Judy]

(Points at her eyes)

Look at me Ms. Cullen and answer the question.

[Ms. Cullen]

I read it on the computer of Mr. Bonnell.

[Judge Judy]

At the time of reading this conversation where was the defendant?

[Ms. Cullen]

He was getting some hot chocolate at Starbucks your honor.

[Judge Judy]

So while the defendant was on an errand you went on his computer without his permission and read a private conversation between him and his ex-girlfriend?

[Ms. Cullen]

It wasn't like that your honor, I was on his computer all the time playing games or watching a movie.

[Judge Judy]

Well Ms. Cullen, using his computer for playing games or watching a movie doesn't mean he gave you permission to read any of his private conversations.

I believe he had a reason to be angry with you Ms. Cullen but I don't believe he threw away your keys on purpose.

He had an incentive to have you move out as soon as possible because you weren't respecting his privacy. Why would he want to keep a person like that around?

[Ms. Cullen]

We were in a relationship your honor. I didn't think he would mind me reading his e-mail. Couples, like, share things with each other you know? I was very open with him.

[Judge Judy]

(Cuts of Ms. Cullen)

I'm not interested in what you think Ms. Cullen. It seems to me you don't think that much. According to yourself you ended the relationship a week before.

I assume you have receipts for me for the costs involved having your car key replaced?

[Ms. Cullen]

Yes your honor. The towing company costs were \$ 470 and the costs for replacing the car key was \$ 340.

[Officer Byrd]

(Picks up receipts and hands them to Judge Judy)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[Judge Judy]

(Looks at the defendant)

Mr. Bonnell, how old are you?

[Mr. Bonnell]

I'm 26 your honor.

[Judge Judy]

What do you do for a living Mr. Bonnell?

[Mr. Bonnell]

I'm self-employed your honor. I'm an entertainer on the internet.

[Judge Judy]

I don't understand, what do you mean you are an entertainer? Wearing a woman's coat in my courtroom isn't entertaining I can certainly tell you that.

[Audience]

(Laughs)

[Mr. Bonnell]

(Moves awkwardly)

I entertain people by streaming content on a website similar to YouTube your honor. People watch my stream and that is how I make a living.

[Judge Judy]

You make enough to support yourself?

[Mr. Bonnell]

Yes, your honor. I make enough to support myself, my son and also the mother of my son.

[Judge Judy]

I still don't understand what it is you do exactly. Can you be more specific Mr. Bonnell?

[Mr. Bonnell]

I stream myself playing video games with commentary and a camera. I mix in a lot of comedy and interact with my viewers while I stream. I also am a frequent guest on online talk shows discussing video game culture.

[Judge Judy]

(Chuckles while looking at Officer Byrd)

So you play video games for a living?

[Mr. Bonnell]

Yes, I use video games as a tool to provide entertainment to my viewers.

[Judge Judy]

And people pay you to do this?

[Mr. Bonnell]

In a way, I generate income by means of advertisements, sponsorships and directly by selling subscriptions.

[Judge Judy]

Officer Byrd do you have any idea what he's talking about?

[Officer Byrd]

A little bit Judge, my son watches these types of shows. I don't fully understand it myself.

[Judge Judy]

How many people watch your shows Mr. Bonnell?

[Mr. Bonnell]

It varies your honor. Usually I get between 3,000 and 5,000 viewers. But on special occasions such as my birthday or streaming with another internet personality it can get up to 15,000 viewers or higher.

[Judge Judy]

To satisfy my curiosity Mr. Bonnell how much did you make last year doing this?

[Mr. Bonnell]

I made a little over \$100,000 last year your honor.

[Judge Judy]

Well congratulations Mr. Bonnell you seem to be doing well for yourself.

[Mr. Bonnell]

Thank you.

[Judge Judy]

Mr. Bonnell, it is your defense that Ms. Cullen neglected to be sufficiently careful about where she placed her car keys and that it was obvious the items on the kitchen table were garbage and about to be thrown away.

[Mr. Bonnell]

That is correct your honor. Ms. Cullen is rather careless with placing her personal belongings around the house, including her car keys.

[Ms. Cullen]

(Interrupts Mr. Bonnell)

That is not true your honor, I am very careful with my personal belongings.

[Judge Judy]

(Slams hand on table and looks at Ms. Cullen)

Don't interrupt Ms. Cullen.

[Ms. Cullen]

(Looks vexed)

[Judge Judy]

(Looks at Mr. Bonnell)

[Mr. Bonnell]

The trash is collected on Friday and I placed several items on the kitchen table that needed to be thrown away. At some point after Ms. Cullen got home I took the trash out. Later that day Ms. Cullen could not find her keys. I asked Ms. Cullen if she remembered where she put her keys. She said she didn't remember exactly but she believed to have put them on the kitchen table. I asked if she put in on top of the trash and she replied with: "Your stuff on the kitchen table?" I explained to her that it was trash and that I had thrown it into the trash bin. By then the trash had already been collected.

[Judge Judy]

Then what happened.

[Mr. Bonnell]

We got into a verbal argument. This was about a week after Ms. Cullen had broken up with me. We looked around the house for the keys but could not find them.

[Judge Judy]

Can you explain to me what the items were on the kitchen table?

[Mr. Bonnell]

They were leftover pieces of carton and plastic from building several computers as well as pieces of cloth that I used for cleaning various computer parts.

[Judge Judy]

You mean left over packaging from newly purchased electronics?

[Mr. Bonnell]

Yes your honor.

[Judge Judy]

What were you doing with multiple computers and these electronic parts?

[Mr. Bonnell]

I am a computer enthusiast and I sometimes build computers for other people for a small fee.

[Judge Judy]

Mr. Bonnell is it correct that your trash is picked up every two weeks on Friday?

[Mr. Bonnell]

Yes your honor.

[Judge Judy]

By this point Ms. Cullen had been living with you for 5 months?

[Mr. Bonnell]

Yes.

[Judge Judy]

Ms. Cullen during your residency with Mr. Bonnell did you ever take out the trash?

[Ms. Cullen]

Yes, several times.

[Judge Judy]

Judging from the testimony of Mr. Bonnell and yourself I conclude you could have reasonably known it was garbage and that it was supposed to be collected that day.

[Ms. Cullen]

Your honor, Mr. Bonnell should have been more careful, he must have heard the keys or seen them when he took the garbage outside.

[Judge Judy]

Well Ms. Cullen, those were your keys and your responsibility. You carelessly placed them on top of garbage. You need to pay the costs of getting a new car key yourself Ms. Cullen. I am going to dismiss your claim.

[Judge Judy]

Now Mr. Bonnell you have a counter-claim against Ms. Cullen for defamation of character. Please explain.

[Mr. Bonnell]

Your honor, about three weeks after Ms. Cullen had moved out I received information from some several acquaintances that Ms. Cullen had been spreading rumors about me. Specifically that I had sexually assaulted her. Which is not true. She was also disclosing personal information about me and my relationship with Ms. Cullen on her own stream.

Furthermore when she went into my personal e-mail account where she found compromising pictures of my ex-girlfriend. She made threats on my website that she would put these pictures on the internet for everybody to see. After finding the pictures she sent them to her own e-mail account so I could not delete them.

[Ms. Cullen]

(Raises hand)

That is not true your honor at all your honor.

[Judge Judy]

(Raises voice)

Don't interrupt again Ms. Cullen, this is your final warning, next time I will throw you out of this courtroom.

Mr. Bonnell do you have proof of the allegations she made?

[Mr. Bonnell]

Yes your honor. I have a copy of a comment she made on her Facebook page accusing me of sexually assaulting her.

[Judge Judy]

Please show me this evidence Mr. Bonnell.

[Officer Byrd]

(Gives paper from Mr. Bonnell to Judge Judy)

[Judge Judy]

(Reads paper)

Well Ms. Cullen these are some very serious allegations you make against Mr. Bonnell. Do you care to elaborate on this further?

[Ms. Cullen]

Yes your honor. During the end of December Mr. Bonnell and I were still intimate with each other. I can't remember the date exactly but somewhere at the end of December Mr. Bonnell and I were having intimate relations. I was starting to feel unwell and I asked Mr. Bonnell to stop and get off me. Mr. Bonnell continued and did not stop for at least several minutes and I kept telling him to get off me.

[Judge Judy]

Did you call the police after this happened Ms. Cullen?

[Ms. Cullen]

No your honor.

[Judge Judy]

You want to give me your version of these events Mr. Bonnell?

[Mr. Bonnell]

Yes your honor. It is true I was still having intimate relations on occasion with Ms. Cullen after she broke up with me. This particular evening we were in bed and after a while she was starting to feel dizzy. I could feel this.

I stopped and asked what was wrong. I got her something to drink and that is all what happened. She went to sleep and got back to my computer.

[Judge Judy]

I believe you Mr. Bonnell and I am going to explain exactly why I believe you.

Ms. Cullen why didn't you call the police after this alleged sexual assault took place?

[Ms. Cullen]

I don't know your honor, I was really tired and wanted to go to sleep. I guess I didn't fully realize what happened yet.

[Judge Judy]

(Raises voice)

BALONY Ms. Cullen. You could have called the police the next day. When did you move out of Mr. Bonnell house? The exact date please.

[Ms. Cullen]

Uhm.

[Judge Judy]

(Slams hand on desk again)

Ms. Cullen look at me. The exact date when you moved out of Mr. Bonnell house?

[Ms. Cullen]

It was the last weekend of January your honor.

[Judge Judy]

You expect me to believe that you stayed for an - ENTIRE MONTH - with Mr. Bonnell after this had happened?

[Ms. Cullen]

(Looks confused)

[Judge Judy]

That is ridiculous Ms. Cullen, you're ridiculous. If you felt threatened by Mr. Bonnell you would have called the

police and have him arrested. You don't stay for an entire month with that person after he assaulted you.

Furthermore Ms. Cullen, you stole private pictures of Mr. Bonnell ex-girlfriend. If you actually carried out your threat of disseminating these pictures the ex-girlfriend of Mr. Bonnell could take you to court. You could have faced criminal charges.

Do you still have these pictures Ms. Cullen?

[Ms. Cullen]

(Looks to the floor)

Yes your honor.

[Judge Judy]

(Yells)

GET RID OF THEM!

[Judge Judy]

(Looks at both Ms. Cullen and Mr. Bonnell)

I don't fully understand the extent of Mr. Bonnell self-employment but I do know that he depends on a certain public image to keep his business. His career could be irreparably damaged by false allegations such as these. You should consider yourself lucky Mr. Bonnell didn't further pursue this matter with the police.

[Ms. Cullen]

(Scoffs and rolls her eyes)

[Judge Judy]

Judgement for the defendant for the amount of \$5,000.
Goodbye Ms. Cullen.